

NORTH Corel was quiet when he returned; the same as ever. There was no welcoming committee, no delegation of elders to formally retract the contempt they had held him in all these years; he had told himself not to expect it.

But there was just one sign: a girl about the age of his own Marlene, who walked out from between some of the tents to shyly tug at his slacks, and murmured, “Daddy says you were one of the people who stopped Meteor,” – and he noticed, before too long, that people weren’t avoiding his gaze anymore.