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Alice's History Lesson

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“Are you listening?” her sister asks in the middle of America’s coloniza-
tion, the book stretched out over her prim lap. They are seated by the Thames,
but Alice is supposed to be thinking of Boston, where, she believes, the
orange marmalade can’t possibly be as good. She watches the daffodils waggle
their heads across the lawn and waits for her cat to pounce.

On Monday, Alice had plucked forget-me-nots for her mother and
wrapped the stems in her father’s newspaper. She thought he’d already read
it. Wet, the ink blurred into ants and delightful miniature paw prints. “Where
is my paper?” her father bellowed as Alice handed the blooms to her mother
in the kitchen, the fat cat rubbing and rubbing against her leg.

“We don’t need to tell,” her mother winked, peeling the front page
from the stems and stuffing it down the whirring garbage disposal, “it’s al-
ready happened.”