December 13th

That night, Greg and Candy, were jolted awake by pounding on the apartment door and the clamor of voices in the hallway. Candy's father answered, and when he returned, he described the visitors as a local policeman and two older, stocky soldiers. They asked about Leon's whereabouts. Candy's father suspected they were looking for him for reserve duty.

"At five in the morning? Coming here, to our house?" Greg asked, peering out the window for any sign of the mysterious officers or their car. The street was frosty, blanketed with fresh snow, eerily calm. However, lights were already on in some of the neighboring apartments—Ursus factory workers preparing for the morning shift.

Confused but fearing the worst, that the long-anticipated government assault on Solidarity might have begun, none of them went back to sleep. They dressed, and Candy made tea, fretting over her brother's safety. Without a phone in their apartment, she went to a neighbor's to try to call and warn Leon, but the line was dead. Soon, other neighbors emerged, knocking on doors and sharing their concerns—TV screens awash with static, radios playing somber tunes in place of the morning updates.

At 6 AM, the news broke: Poland was under martial law. However, for those who tuned to the radio, they heard something different—"war." Poland was in *stan wojenny*, a "state of war" had been declared—that was the phrase everyone heard and repeated, their eyes wide with fear and bewilderment. But what war, with whom? Did the Soviets invade Poland? Though Greg didn't witness outright panic, people were undeniably nervous and worried, moving about aimlessly or hugging each other for comfort. Some cried softly, while others simmered with anger.

Even though the news didn't surprise him, it only made his irritation burn hotter. All those restraints, the good-faith efforts to negotiate with the government—how futile, how delusional it had all been. A bitter truth confirmed too late to make a difference.

It also became clear that the officers hadn't come to ask questions; their purpose was to round up the leaders of Solidarity. Their orders were unmistakable, even though the aging reservists assigned to such actions were ill-prepared to carry them out. Greg knew they'd be back.

People talk about the fight-or-flight reaction, but that night, Greg didn't feel any "or." He grappled with both instincts simultaneously: eager to confront the threat head-on, while also wanting to hide from it, to protect himself and others. Trivial tasks—laying out candles and matches, filling up the tub in case the electricity and water were cut, packing their bags with warm clothing and maps should they need to flee, and discarding the Solidarity pamphlets they had in their bedroom—seemed excessive, maybe even silly, looking back. But in those early hours, fear and speculation guided every move.

The single official radio station broadcast the same speech by Gen. Jaruzelski every hour on the hour, followed by grim updates: the Union's delegalization, suspension of civic organizations, school closures, and a ban on public gatherings. Borders were sealed, airports shut down, train and bus stations closed. Telephone lines were cut, all newspapers except the Party daily suspended. A curfew was imposed from 7 PM to 6 AM.