

JOLT: A SAGA OF SURVIVAL

PART ONE: MELTDOWN AT MAGDUM HEIGHTS

Written By

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Based on *Jolt: A Rural Noir*

A Novel By Roberta M Roy

EXT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Stern DODY (70s), wears painters overalls.

He peruses the cabin and surrounding area.

SUPER: "Early Fall, 2017"

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

A large, rustic yet comfortable one room.

An easel cradles an in-progress landscape oil painting that shines in light from a skylight.

Dody's son, THEODORE HORATIO ALEXANDER WAMP (30s), prefers THAW, tall and fair skinned with long dark hair.

He adds finishing touches.

Shelves hold finished, vertically stacked paintings.

A Baggie of Pot and rolling papers evident on a shelf.

TUFTY, a black and white mixed breed English Setter, snoozes on a dog bed.

A KNOCK.

Thaw and Tufty welcome Dody.

Fake relaxed, Thaw's brow creases with a bit of dread.

THAW
Hey, Dad. C'mon in.

Tufty licks Dody's hand. He yanks it away.

THAW
Okay, Tufty. Lie down. Dad doesn't like that.

Tufty returns to her bed.

DODY
How's civilian life? Like the cabin? You've done a lotta work.

THAW
New wallboard and paint. Sealed around the skylight.

Dody pulls the corners of his mouth down.

He points his chin at Thaw's work.

DODY
Still dabbling with color, huh.
Haven't found anything reliable?

Thaw's nod: grin 'n' bear it.

THAW
Sorry to disappoint you, Dad.

Dody points to the rolling papers and Pot.

DODY
What's this here?

THAW
When I was stationed in the Middle
East, some of us smoked hash. It's
too much for here so I smoke weed.

DODY
(scoffs)
Thought the military would make a
man of you. Not a pothead.

THAW
C'mon, Dad. It's no big deal.

DODY
It is to me!

THAW
It's occasional...

DODY
Yeah. Get your life in order.

Dody heads for the door.

As he leaves, over his shoulder,

DODY
Get a real job. And get your life
in order. When you do, come see me.

Thaw quiet at the door as he watches his father drive off.

LATER

Thaw paints oils on a large canvas.

A KNOCK.

Thaw answers to find LEM (50s), a retired veteran who wears worn camo fatigues.

THAW

Good morning, Lem. C'mon in.

Tufty wags her tail, circles Lem.

He pets Tufty.

LEM

Hey there, girl! Happy to see old Lem? Atta girl.

He lugs a large photo album.

Thaw nods his head at the album.

THAW

Whatcha' got there?

LEM

Brought you a present.

Lem offers the album to Thaw.

THAW

Wait 'til I clean my hands.

Thaw rinses away paint-tinted lather and dries his hands.

THAW

Can't wait.

Thaw accepts the album, pulls out a chair for himself, offers one to Lem.

THAW

Make yourself comfortable. Coffee?

LEM

Been up since six.

He opens the album, turns plastic-covered pages.

THAW

Beautiful work, Lem. These are great.

LEM

Figured if you're going pro, a quality portfolio might help.

Thaw closes the book and passes a hand across the cover.

THAW

Wow. What a production.

Thaw looks to Lem.

THAW

I thought you would do nice smaller ones. But eight by tens? So much better. Makes my work definitely look good.

LEM

(broad smiles)

I'd hoped you'd like them.

THAW

Boy, do I ever.

Thaw peruses the album a second time.

THAW

I think the framer, Rory, will be impressed. Must've taken you days.

LEM

The toughest was the light then the exposure to stay true to the color. These are as close as I could get.

Thaw closes the book and the two stand as one.

He claps Lem on the shoulder.

THAW

Here I thought I was going to get drugstore four by fives.

LEM

When are you going into the city?

THAW

Thinking about this Thursday.

LEM

So soon. Lucky for you I work fast.

Lem and Thaw trade smiles.

THAW

Sure is. You gonna be around then?

Lem: as-far-as-I-know shrug.

THAW

I'd like to leave Tufty with you. She and Bain just don't mix. None of the motels there accept pets and as far as I know, Natalie is still in a deep funk. I'd come back the latest Sunday evening, but most likely I'd be here Friday night. I could call you from Bain when I know.

Lem hunkers and pats his knee to call Tufty who comes.

LEM

Sure, fine. Right, girl? Tufty thinks it's fine, too, don't you, girl?

Tufty nuzzles Lem's knee.

THAW

When do you want me to pick up the paintings?

LEM

Anytime. Now. Later today? Whenever's convenient.

Thaw nods toward the door.

THAW

I've got an idea for a painting I just started. If I pick them up now, I can work the rest of the day. In case I get on a roll.

LEM

Let's go.

THAW

Before we go let me square with you.

Lem holds the door open, waves Thaw ahead.

LEM

We're square. Except I'd enjoy a steak dinner at The Meat House.

They exit to --

EXT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

THAW
C'mon, Lem. What do I owe you?

LEM
You pay next time at The Meat House.

Lem slaps his arm across Thaw's back.

LEM
After you've had your first show in Bain and sold your work there.

THAW
You're just going to give me these?

LEM
Have I ever given you anything before?

THAW
Well...

LEM
Well. So I am now. What's not to enjoy?

THAW
What a gift. Geez, man. Thanks.

Thaw throws his arm across his friend's shoulder with a bit of a squeeze as it lands.

THAW
Thanks. Thanks so much. I'm sure they'll be a big help.

INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARY MATTERS (30s) lays an affectionate hand on the arm of husband LOU (30s).

MARY
Listen.

LOU
To what?

MARY
No ruckus. The house to ourself.

LOU

Nice that Jason and Marty are old
enough to go to a movie with pals.

Lou places his hand over Mary's but she pulls it away, clasps
both hands together.

MARY

I had an awful dream last night.

LOU

A meltdown. At the plant?

MARY

A green sticky goo spread from the
plant like lava and flowed to our
front door. It oozed under, across
the vestibule and down the stairs.
I woke up drenched in sweat.

LOU

Sounds terrible.

Mary rises to put the cream in the refrigerator.

MARY

Suppose you're at work? Or I have
to pass by on my way home?

LOU

The longer I work at Magdum, the
more you worry.

Mary turns and confronts Lou.

MARY

The plant is over 15 years old.
Given 9-11 and Fukishima, I can't
help it.

LOU

You want me to find another job?

MARY

Don't you think commuters from
Verde North share my concern about
the safety of the plant?

LOU

Doubt it. Trains run on
electricity, too.

MARY

You think they just see the plant
as essential? Safe and clean?

Lou nods to the side.

LOU

Yup. Sad and bitter as it may seem,
that's probably the truth of it.

MARY

I just can't figure it, Lou. How
could we ignore the fact that it
releases radioactive gases into the
air a few times each week? Wouldn't
we be aware of it even though it's
done in the dead of night?

Lou rises and approaches Mary.

LOU

Come on, Mare. You know how much
they advertise the importance of
the plant. How East Cordoban
Electricity is the cheapest,
cleanest, easiest and best way to
light and air condition Aesopolis,
Verde and expanding suburbs north
and east. Everyone knows the source
of that power is the Magdum Heights
Nuclear Power Plant.

MARY

Yeah. I suppose that as long as the
plant remains profitable nothing's
gonna change.

Mary, crestfallen.

LOU

Mary. What're you doing? Why do you
wear yourself out with this? Denial
is denial. The only thing for us to
do is to find a new job and move.

MARY

Would that be too much to ask, Lou?

LOU

Maybe it's time.

He takes her into his arms. Mary buries her face in his
chest.

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - NIGHT

Snow frames the window panes.

SUPER: "A New Year, February, 2018"

Thaw's girlfriend, NATALIE FLYNN (20s), highly educated, more city than country, washes dishes.

Her long auburn hair messy, Natalie faces away from him.

A very relaxed Thaw admires her back.

NATALIE

We've got chemistry, Thaw.
Chemistry.

THAW

I'd say. Enjoyed our fun afternoon,
but Natalie... six years? There's
got to be more to it than that.

NATALIE

Like what?

THAW

You like talkin' to me.

NATALIE

I do.

Thaw rises and takes a step toward Natalie.

THAW

And walkin' with me?

NATALIE

Yeah, so?

THAW

And pullin' out fish with me?

NATALIE

So what?

Thaw approaches Natalie and puts his hand on her waist.

THAW

Don't those things mean something?

NATALIE

I suppose.

THAW

Then you agree. There's more to it than chemistry.

NATALIE

You didn't ask me that.

Thaw give Natalie a small pull toward himself. Natalie does not turn toward him.

THAW

If I did?

NATALIE

If you did what?

Natalie is very intent on scrubbing a frying pan.

THAW

Come on, Natalie. If I asked you if we enjoy doing other things beside having sex, doesn't that mean there is more than, as you put it, just chemistry?

NATALIE

Well, you haven't asked me.

THAW

Natalie, you're getting to me. Come on. All right. I'll ask you. If we enjoy doing things other than making love, don't you think this suggests there must be more to us than just this chemistry you're always talking about?

NATALIE

Well, yes.

THAW

Sounds more like a question than an answer the way you put it.

Natalie is still scrubbing a stubborn spot on a pan. Her speech flattens.

NATALIE

I guess it is, 'cause I just can't see myself enjoying walking and fishing and talking about things like chemistry with someone with whom I just don't have any.

Natalie under Thaw's skin. His pitch rises.

THAW

Well, did it ever occur to you that the only reason we have any of the goddamn chemistry is exactly because you enjoy walking, talking, and being with me to begin with, Natalie?

Natalie does not turn but raises her sweet pitch in a question.

NATALIE

Thaw...?

THAW

(loud)
Yeah.

NATALIE

(sweet)
You're getting kind of loud now.

THAW

(aggravated)
I don't care. The noisiest woman I ever met, whether it's cooking, washing pots and pans or making love. I raise my voice two decibels and she tells me -- ME -- I'm getting loud. Never could talk sense to you... for all your college degrees and city ways.

Natalie scrubs the pan with more vigor.

NATALIE

Thaw, I don't like it when you yell. And I don't like it when you say things like that.

THAW

Well, it's true.

He drops his voice to a whisper, clenches teeth.

THAW

So now I'm going to tell you something, woman, just in case you don't already know it.

Thaw reaches around Natalie and snatches her wrist. He tosses the scouring pad in the water.

When he pulls her around to face him, Natalie's eyes drop to the floor. Thaw's voice softens.

THAW

Natalie. Listen to me. Look at me.
Please.

Thaw takes her other soapy hand and holds them both in his.

THAW

Damn it, woman...

He draws her near then slips a hand around Natalie's waist. Thaw turns Natalie's chin to align her parted lips with his.

Natalie loses a giggle of surprise and, without losing a beat, responds with a passionate kiss.

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

A kettle of water steams on the wood stove.

SUPER: "March, 2018"

Thaw paints bold horizontal strokes with a broad brush.

In the loft, Natalie raises on one elbow to better observe him create a vivid landscape in greens, blues and purples.

NATALIE

Morning.

Thaw's below shoulder length hair hangs freshly washed and combed. He continues to paint.

THAW

Morning, Nat. Sleep well?

Natalie smiles at the back of Thaw's head.

NATALIE

Couldn't have slept better. How long have you been up?

THAW

Didn't check my watch.

The rhythm of Thaw's strokes remain constant.

NATALIE

You could turn and look at me when you talk to me.

THAW

Why?

(laughs)

Don't you think I know what you look like?

NATALIE

How can you have a wake-up conversation with a woman and not look at her.

Natalie stays quiet for a tick then bolts upright.

NATALIE

All right. You win. It's more than chemistry.

Thaw paints.

NATALIE

I'm 28 and not a smidgin of hope of us ever marrying let alone me becoming a mother when the man with whom I choose -- I use the term loosely -- I should say am driven to be with by the chemistry if nothing else, lives in a cabin heated by a wood stove and supports himself by selling fish, face painting and doing caricatures at flea markets and occasionally -- very occasionally I might add -- sells one of his works of art.

Tears trickle down Natalie's cheeks. Then she laughs and cries at the same time.

Thaw drops the brush, runs to the loft two steps at a time.

Natalie lies against Thaw.

THAW

Oh, baby. Don't cry. Please don't cry. I've never seen you cry. I hate to see you cry. How could I know? You never told me. Always flippant and sure. Always with a quick laugh and a quicker answer. I love you. If I thought marrying you would help, I'd do it in a minute. But what's a man to do? What's a man to do?

The sobs subside.

NATALIE
I don't know, Thaw. I don't know.

EXT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - DAY

Dody and MARTHA (60s), a retired school librarian, wander around a drab and rundown Thirties Victorian.

MARTHA
The bathroom door. I think it
needs...

MARLENA, Martha's impetuous Airedale, licks Dody's hand.

He jerks it away.

DODY
Dang. God dang.

MARTHA
Off. Marlena. Off

DODY
I hate your dog! Dang blast it!
(grabs ear)
Ouch!

MARTHA
Dody, what is it?

DODY
Bee bite.

Dody lowers his hand to show her a swollen and red ear.

MARTHA
Take anything for it?

DODY
Owey. No. Why?

MARTHA
Benadryl, Dody. Benadryl. Ask the
druggist.

They continue around the home.

MARTHA
Do you think it needs be hung. The
bathroom door.

DODY
That's why I'm here.

INT. BAIN - BAIN PLANNING DEPARTMENT - NATALIE'S OFFICE - DAY

At her desk, Natalie looks off. Distracted. Then becomes active, perusing papers.

NATALIE
(Talking to self)
Meetings, dinners, presentations,
but not much significant movement
forward. City Planning not so
idealistic as I imagined.

Picks up and peruses an Inter-County Planning brochure.

NATALIE
Hopefully they make me an offer.
Wetlands and open spaces. Much more
interesting.

Puts brochure down and determinedly dials the phone.

NATALIE
Thaw? It's me. Nat.

THAW (V.O.)
Natalie. Glad to hear your voice.
How are you?

NATALIE
I've been thinking.

THAW (V.O.)
Aren't you always?

NATALIE
This time it's different.

THAW (V.O.)
I'm listening.

NATALIE
I think we need to stop seeing each
other for a while.

A tick of silence.

THAW (V.O.)
You do?

NATALIE
I need to sort things out. Decide
where I'm headed with my life. My
friends may be right. Maybe I need
a change.

THAW (V.O.)
Is there someone else?

NATALIE
No. No. There's no one. I need a
change. Do you understand?

THAW (V.O.)
Yes. And no.

NATALIE
I don't really understand it
myself. That's why I need time.
I'll call when I've thought it
through.

THAW (V.O.)
How about if I call you?

NATALIE
Please don't. I'll call you. It
might be a while. But I'll be in
touch.

THAW (V.O.)
Okay, Nat. Love you. But okay.

When Natalie hangs up, she dabs tissue on tears that stream
down her cheeks.

MONTAGE - NATALIE'S CAREER / SOCIAL LIFE

INT. BAIN - CITY HALL - PLANNING DEPARTMENT - DAY

Planners cram Natalie's office to confer with her they peruse
a map on the wall.

NATALIE
Doesn't seem that complicated. All
I see is a crossroad.

INT. BAIN - NATALIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Natalie hosts a lively gathering of friends over for drinks.

NATALIE
Yeah, SUSAN, here I am, a mature
city woman involved with a drop
dead handsome, financially strapped
and probable commitment phobe,
woodsman slash artist. What do I
do?

END MONTAGE

INT. BAIN - NATALIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Natalie wipes her eyes, blows her nose.

She thumbs through a stack of mail.

NATALIE

(Talking to self)

Amnesty International. Electric
bill. NARAL Environmental Defense
Fund. Office of the Governor...
Office of the Governor!?

Natalie tears open the letter.

NATALIE

(Reading aloud)

Dear Ms. Flynn. In response to your
recent application to join the
Midstate Inter-County Planning
Department, we are pleased to
invite you to interview with us at
your earliest convenience. Oh, my
goodness! They're interested! My
foot in door.

EXT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Thaw packs a spare pair of pants, backpack and portfolio into
his truck.

He whistles Tufty onto the passenger seat, starts out.

EXT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - DAY

Thaw pulls up.

Lem greets him through the open passenger side window, spots
the portfolio in the truck.

THAW

Can't wait to see them framed.
Imagine a show at the gallery.

LEM

Lookin' forward to it.

THAW

With any luck I'll see you the
latest Sunday. If things go well
with Natalie.

LEM
What's it been? Three months?

Lem pets Tufty who is on the passenger side seat.

THAW
Yeah. I might be back late tomorrow
or early Saturday.

LEM
Whatever works.

Lem opens the door to let Tufty out.

THAW
I'll call her this morning.
Hopefully she'll go to lunch with
me.

Tufty licks Lem's hand. Lem closes the door and looks at
Thaw.

LEM
(jokes)
Who knows? Hopefully lunch will
last through tomorrow.

THAW
First she has to say yes. I'll call
when I know what I'm doing.

LEM
It doesn't matter. Take your time.
You could always use the weekend
for poking around in the galleries
and museums if they're open.

Lem steps back from the truck, his hand holding Tufty by the
collar.

THAW
Thanks, Lem.

LEM
You're welcome. Good luck.

Thaw waves and drives off.

INT. COUNTY ROAD - THAW'S TRUCK, TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Thaw, lost in his thoughts.

EXT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

With Tufty nearby, Thaw talks with Lem.

SUPER: "Fall 2017"

THAW

An interview with Dr. Milford
Owens. Milfy.
(laughs)
And me, teaching art at Nick-Sue.

LEM

New Carlton State University?

THAW

That's right. Forgot you're new to
the North Country.

INT. BAIN - NEW CARLTON UNIVERSITY - ART DEPT. - CHAIR'S
OFFICE - DAY

DR. MILFORD "MILFY" OWENS (60s) gestures to a chair for Thaw
who accepts then opens his portfolio.

Milfy studies each for a few seconds, thumbs both forward and
backward to make comparisons.

After the last picture, he leaves the book open on it.

MILFY

Mr. Wamp... do you prefer I call
you Mr. Wamp? Or Theodore?

THAW

Theodore is fine. Most people call
me Thaw.

MILFY

So, Thaw. How can I help you?

THAW

I'd like to teach. Oil painting or
sculpture.

MILFY

We don't have courses in sculpture.
Can you make jewelry?

Milfy leans back in his chair, sizing up Thaw as he does so.

THAW

It's not my strength but I can and have worked with silver a bit. But I don't think I have the knowledge and experience needed to teach it. But I think I do for oil painting. And of course, acrylics.

MILFY

How long have you been painting?

THAW

Since I was a teenager. It wasn't until after I was out of the service I began to explore and develop skills. It's pretty much all I've done for about ten years.

Milfy leans inward. More interested.

MILFY

You support yourself with your art?

THAW

More or less. When times get tough, I do carpentry and caricatures at flea markets and fairs.

MILFY

And now you want to teach.

THAW

Yes.

MILFY

What kind of degrees do you hold?

THAW

I don't have a degree. But I can paint. I've read and studied about many of the world's greatest artists. I think I have my own style and that one day my work will become well known.

Milfy leans back in his chair again.

MILFY

That's a pretty big mouthful you just said there. In the university art world we sometimes blink at the absence of a degree. We don't really have a full-blown fine arts department.

(MORE)

MILFY (CONT'D)

Our students take art as electives and for the fun of it. It's possible that we could hire you but only in a pinch. But how often do those situations arise? Not very often. Not often at all.

THAW

I thought I'd apply just in case.

Silent for a bit, Milfy thumbs through the portfolio.

MILFY

But your work has style. You clearly have a fine command of the media, color, balance, form, even content. Get me a copy of your resume, attach to it a few photos of your work, go home, don't wait for my call, get about your life, and put on as many shows as you can.

THAW

I'm looking forward to a show at La Petite Galerie.

MILFY

If necessary, find an agent if you don't already have one and try for some shows in Aesopolis. You have talent. More talent than I've seen in long time.

Dr. Owens closes the album and passes it back, stands, and offers Thaw his hand.

MILFY

I'll keep your resume. And keep up the fine work.

Delighted, Thaw smiles and shakes the hand.

THAW

Thank you, Dr. Owens. Thank you so much.

Dr. Owens watches Thaw as he leaves his office.

INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Marty and Jason complete homework on the kitchen table.

Mary enters, leaves her briefcase in the living room.
She joins her Sons in the kitchen and washes her hands.

MARY
Hi, guys.

Mary hugs the Boys.

MARTY
Mom, can you help with my science
project?

MARY
After dinner. How are you, Marty?

MARTY
Okay.

Mary waits for more.

MARTY
Kara got a new pup.

Marty opens a notebook.

MARTY
She calls it Felicia. It's a French
poodle. Black.

MARY
How old is it?

MARTY
Six weeks. I'll do math first.

Marty picks up a pencil and tackles long division.

MARTY
Still needs a bottle.

Mary takes some food from the refrigerator and looks at
Jason.

MARY
How about you, Jason?

JASON
Scored a goal at soccer practice.

MARY
Yay, Jay!

Mary ruffles Jason's hair. He looks at her.

JASON
How about you, Mom.

MARY
Somethin' came for us in the mail.

JASON
What?

MARY
Potassium Iodide. Just in case.

MARTY
In case of what?

Mary stops what she is doing in preparing the meal and looks at her sons.

MARY
In case of a meltdown. Iodide protects from absorbing radiation. It also stops thyroid cancer.

JASON
Where are they?

MARY
Cellar. With the dosimeter in the go-bag. In case of a meltdown.

MARTY
Cool, Mom. Leave it to you.

Lou enters, waves and heads to the bathroom.

LATER

Newly showered, Lou hugs and kisses Mary, gives Jason a pat on the shoulder and Marty a hug.

MARTY
What do you think, Mom?
(to Lou)
Cleanest guy in town.

MARY
Don't we all wash up when we come home from school?

MARTY
Well, yeah. We do. But we don't take a shower before hugging.

Lou laughs.

LOU
Since when can you see
radioactivity?

MARY
Which of you sets the table
tonight?

JASON
My turn. Marty clears.

MARTY
Hey, Dad. Mom got us some K-I to
use in case there's a meltdown.

Mary busies with dinner.

Lou remains nonchalant.

LOU
Yeah. Never hurts to have some.

After a bit, he helps Marty with homework.

INT./EXT. BAIN NEW CARLTON UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - THAW'S
TRUCK, PARKED - DAY

Thaw on a call.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Hello. Bain Planning Board. Natalie
Flynn here.

THAW
Hello, Natalie. Thaw.

INT. BAIN - BAIN PLANNING DEPARTMENT - NATALIE'S OFFICE -
SAME

Natalie on phone.

NATALIE
Hello, Thaw. How are you?

THAW (V.O.)
Doing well. And you?

Natalie hesitates a second or two.

NATALIE
Pretty well, thank you.

INTERCUT - PARKING LOT AND OFFICE

Thaw and Natalie talk by phone.

THAW

I'm in Bain. I'm working on a show
in one of the galleries here.

NATALIE

Which one?

THAW

La Petite Gallerie. Do you know it?

NATALIE

Yes. I've gone to a number of
openings there. Very nice.

Natalie moves some papers on her desk.

THAW

Do you know Rory? The framer?

NATALIE

I do. They say his work is museum
quality. Best in the area.

THAW

He's framing 20 of my paintings
which I'm showing at the gallery.

NATALIE

That's quite a number, Thaw.

She plays with a lock of hair that falls on her shoulder.

NATALIE

When's the show?

THAW

I don't know yet. We haven't set
the date. Framing first.

NATALIE

That ought to cost you a pretty
penny.

THAW

I suppose. But not in comparison to
what he thinks I can get for the
framed paintings.

NATALIE

Really?

Natalie releases the lock of hair.

THAW

Natalie, I didn't call you to talk about me. I want to talk about you. I miss you terribly. I'm working hard on changing my lifestyle to one your parents and friends could understand better. I was wondering. Could you meet me for lunch or dinner? I don't plan to return before Saturday morning. Just picking out frames will take me into tomorrow afternoon at least.

NATALIE

I don't know. I'm still thinking. What day did you say your show opened?

Somewhat bothered, Thaw looks out over the parking lot.

THAW

I told you. I don't know yet.
(a breath.)
We haven't set the date. Have to get the framing done first.

NATALIE

Why don't you call me again when you know when the show will be. We can talk then.

THAW

That might not be for a couple of months, Nat.

NATALIE

(laughs)
Well, move it up then.

Thaw looks at his hand. Flexes it.

THAW

Oh, Nat.

NATALIE

Look, Thaw, I'm really busy right now. Call me when you have a date for the show. All right?

THAW

All right. I'll call you when I have a date for the show.

NATALIE

Good luck. With the show I mean.

THAW

Thanks, Nat. Bye.

NATALIE

Talk to you. Bye.

INT. BAIN - NEW CARLTON UNIVERSITY - ART CLASSROOM - DAY

A bit nervous, Thaw prepares for his first students' arrival.

Milfy enters and gestures at the room's expanse.

MILFY

Well, this is it. I'm sure you'll be fine, Theodore... Thaw. The students will orient you on small matters. Anything that you feel is beyond them, you can talk about with Charles Martin across the hall or Mary Elaine Stewart next door to you. They expect you and have offered to provide any support you might need.

He pauses to look Thaw in the eye.

MILFY

Anything else we need to talk about?

THAW

No, Dr. Owens. Not right now.

They shake hands and Milfy is off.

LATER

Thaw turns as SILVIA (20s) enters, takes a seat at her easel.

The class fills as students arrange their stools and easels and prepare unfinished oils for painting.

Thaw rises.

THAW

Good morning, all.

A few mumbled good mornings.

THAW

This is Art 3-0-5, Intermediate Oil Painting. This week we're painting a monochromatic still life in oils.

Thaw pauses, scans the class and writes on the whiteboard.

THAW

My name is Theodore Horatio Alexander Wamp.

Turns back.

THAW

You can call me Mr. Wamp. But my nickname is Thaw.

Thaw pauses, smiles.

THAW

I think my mom had indigestion the night she named me.

A few appreciative smiles flit around the room.

THAW

You can call me Thaw. Mr. Wamp or Thaw. Up to you.

Thaw lays down the marker.

THAW

Belittle my name and you flunk the course.

He gives the class an easy smile, a few return it.

THAW

That said, be happy to answer any questions you might have. I may share an observation or comment on your work. If you have questions, just fire away.

SILVIA

Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

THAW

I'm an artist. Mostly in oils. I've had no formal training, but my portfolio landed me this position.

(MORE)

THAW (CONT'D)

I've spent time in the military and was born and live in the North Country.

(looks around)

Should you like to see my work, I anticipate an exhibit in the near future at La Petite Gallery in Bain.

LATER - STUDENTS PAINT

Thaw wanders. The students either smile or ignore him.

He peruses a Male's painting done in shades of orange.

THAW

Very nice contrast in density and light.

The next -- a Female Student.

THAW

Is it your intent to make half the painting more realistic than the other half?

FEMALE STUDENT

No.

THAW

Perhaps it might make sense to lessen the realism throughout? It might be easier to increase the realism on the other side.

FEMALE STUDENT

Wouldn't that be taking the easy way out?

THAW

(smiles)

Art is finding the easy way out. Indeterminate choices mess up the process. So, you have to make them work for you. As for an easy way, if you can find one just give a whoop and go for it.

The Female Student smiles and blushes.

Two Students within earshot share smiles and shrug.

Thaw checks the clock.

THAW

It's been a pleasure to be greeted in my first class on campus by such a mature, talented and hardworking group of students.

Thaw takes a beat.

THAW

Are you sure you need me here?

LATER

Milfy enters the empty class.

MILFY

Hey, Thaw. Thought I'd drop by to see how your first day went.

THAW

Nice students. Many quite talented.

MILFY

As you leave today, stop by my office. Katy will give you keys and assign a mailbox. There's a faculty meeting tomorrow afternoon at four.
(then)

A few students from your classes stopped by. They had very positive comments about you.

THAW

Really? Well, that's certainly nice to hear. Thanks again.

MILFY

And thank you, Thaw. See you tomorrow at four.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Martha places a call.

MARTHA

Hello, Mrs. Wamp?

MRS. WAMP (V.O.)

Yes. Hello?

MARTHA

It's Martha, Mrs. Wamp. Is Dody there?

MRS. WAMP (V.O.)

Dody?

DODY (V.O.)

Hul-looo.

MARTHA

Dody, you sound terrible.

Martha sits down.

DODY (V.O.)

I have summthin' la-ik the flu.
Feel terrrrrible.

MARTHA

Oh, Dody. I'm so sorry. I wanted to find out when you were going to finish the house. Especially the living room. Call me back when you feel better.

DODY (V.O.)

Look, I don't know when I'm going to be able to get over there to paint. These HUD houses are really taking my time and I've got a September deadline.

MARTHA

Dody, you've done such beautiful work.

Martha sips her coffee.

DODY (V.O.)

(mutters)

Lotta work!

MARTHA

But I do need the living room painted. I've ordered some new furniture for it. Whaddaya think? Could you squeeze it in?

DODY (V.O.)

I'll try.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - MUDROOM - DAY

In her kennel outside, Marlana BARKS.

When Martha opens the back door, she finds Dody there.

MARTHA
Come in, Dody.

Dody enters without a word, heads for the --

LIVING ROOM

Martha follows.

MARTHA
Dody, I thought you were sick.

DODY
Am. Feel awful. Got this dang cold
sore.

MARTHA
Anbesol.

DODY
Anbesol? Bet you're one of those
people who is always worrying.

MARTHA
I'm not a worrier. I just like
researching for answers. Ask the
druggist what he recommends.

Dody nods: okay.

MARTHA
Well, the dining area and living
room. I feel like I'm living on the
open desert. No curtains. No
shades. No furniture.

DODY
Mike said he ran out of paint.

MARTHA
Mike didn't run out of paint.

Martha indicates three cans of paint near the wall.

MARTHA
He ran out of ambition. He didn't
want to do the windows. He took
down all the curtains and shades
and then just stopped.

DODY
Well, he's been needing some
advice. Going back to college now.
Senior, ya know.

(MORE)

DODY (CONT'D)

Has to buy a suit for his interviews. Asked me what he should get. Whaddaya think?

MARTHA

Tell him I'll take him to buy the suit. Probably doesn't need a suit anyway. Sport jacket and some slacks would probably do just as well. If he knew what he was doing he could go pick up a nice one at half the price.

Dody picks up one of the cans of paint and inspects it before putting it back down.

DODY

Yeah. But he doesn't know what he's doing.

MARTHA

Tell him I'll take him.

DODY

Well, listen. I'm gonna call up Mike and see if he could come over here now and do whatever you want him to do first today and then have him come back and finish up tomorrow.

INT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - DAY

With Tufty near, Thaw talks with Lem over coffee.

SUPER: "MARCH, 2018"

THAW

So guess what Milfy wants now?

LEM

For you to chair the department?

THAW

Good one.

(laughs)

For me to display my work in the departmental art show.

LEM

So?

Lem sips his coffee.

THAW

Well, turns out I can use the pieces I've had framed for the show at the La Petite Gallerie. So, yes. I am. I'll ask some of my students to do signage and labeling.

LEM

Things are going well then.

THAW

Yeah. I feel comfortable there. Students are nice. Faculty includes me in whatever is happening. Can ya' believe almost the end of my second semester there!?

INT. BAIN - NEW CARLTON UNIVERSITY - ART GALLERY - NIGHT

The Crowd mills about in no particular hurry.

They gather near Thaw's paintings or help themselves to punch, cheese and crackers.

MILFY

I especially like the depth of contrasts in his work.

NATALIE

It's just wonderful to see Thaw's work so appreciated. And he does enjoy the Nick-Sue environment, Dr. Owens.

Thaw joins Milfy and Natalie.

THAW

Show seems to be going well.

NATALIE

Very enjoyable, Thaw. Dr. Owens and I were just talking about the success of your painting style.

THAW

Haven't Sylvia and Bernard done a great job with the placement of the works and the food and drink?

Silvia chats with Bernard near the refreshments table. She wears high heels and an understated black dress.

Natalie casts a jealous eye at Silvia.

NATALIE
Silvia seems quite sweet.

THAW
Very sweet. Helpful.

Thaw glances toward Silvia and then elsewhere.

THAW
She's in charge of refreshments.

Thaw smiles and waves to a faculty member.

THAW
Quite talented. Great sense of
color and balance.

NATALIE
She works for the department?

THAW
Dr. Owens suggested I ask students
to help me set up. When I did, she
and Bernard volunteered.

A Male Faculty Member and his wife stop to shake Thaw's hand.

MALE FACULTY MEMBER
Congratulations. Excellent show,
Thaw.

THAW
Thanks for coming.

Thaw greets People who pass.

LATER

Thaw smiles at the refreshment table where Silvia returns an
inviting smile.

She offers two cups of punch. He returns to Natalie.

THAW
Here, Nat. Brought you something to
drink.

Natalie accepts the punch and takes a sip.

NATALIE
You know, I'm really enjoying the
event, your art and meeting your
colleagues. I'm almost sorry it'll
be time to go soon.

THAW

Yeah. I wish you'd been willing to let me pick you up and drive you home.

NATALIE

I thought it's been so long since we spent time together, I'd rather test the waters first. But next time'll be better.

THAW

Can we plan a lunch together?

NATALIE

Sounds good.

INT. BAIN - LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

Natalie sweeps into the luncheonette, joins Thaw in a booth.

Thaw is delighted by Natalie's appearance.

THAW

Hey, Nat. Definitely looking tres belle!

Intense in elegant dress, she exudes an electric presence.

NATALIE

Thanks. Beats my usual weekend jeans.

(sigh)

What a day! The planning department is deeply engaged in a legislative fight to save the wetlands along the river just north and west of the city.

Natalie peruses a menu.

THAW

Sounds like a struggle you'd enjoy.

NATALIE

Just wish it were less intense.

(on the menu)

How are the preparations for your show going?

THAW

Just left Rory. Delivered the works I had in the Nick-Sue art show to him. Next week my show opens there. Ya' up for it?

NATALIE

I thought I might bring my sister, Judith.

THAW

You think she'd be interested?

Natalie holds Thaw's hand.

NATALIE

Definitely.

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Thaw paints as Natalie watches from behind him.

NATALIE

Thaw, don't the oil paint fumes give you a headache?

THAW

Sorry, Nat. Too cold to open the windows.

NATALIE

Sorry, Thaw. The truth, I'm fed up. I can hardly breathe with those volatile organic compounds and chemicals, as you so delicately refer to them. Sick of the V-O-Cs!

With this, Natalie storms out of the cabin, slams the door behind her.

A BEAT

Natalie re-enters.

When he hears the door open Thaw turns from his painting.

Thaw places his hands on her shoulders.

She looks him in the eye.

THAW

Look, Nat. You're right. I've been thinking about it.

(MORE)

THAW (CONT'D)

During the winter I'll not use oils. I'll carve and when I paint, I'll use acrylics.

NATALIE

Really?

THAW

If I use high viscosity acrylics, I can get almost the same effect I get with oils. If I combine the use of higher and thinner viscosity acrylics, I create an appearance of both oil and watercolor in the same painting.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME- MUDROOM - DAY

Martha in the doorway between the kitchen and the mudroom

Dody in the mudroom.

DODY

How about you choose the tile and pick it up in Bain. Unless you want to go to Hartsville for fairly good prices. Then call me when you have it and we'll arrange to go to work on the bathroom.

MARTHA

If I pick it up this week, when might you start?

DODY

I got some slow time a couple of days next week, and if it doesn't matter which days we start, we could do it then.

MARTHA

Doesn't matter. Any day would be fine. I'm home most days and if I'm not, I'll leave the back door open for you.

Marlena kick up a fuss, jumps around, BARKS out the window.

MARTHA

That must be Lem. I see his truck out there.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

He brought me fresh lake trout this morning, so I invited him and Thaw to dinner along with Carol and her husband.

MUDROOM DOOR

Martha opens the door for Lem while Dody has headed to the farside of the kitchen.

MARTHA

Lem. Welcome. Come in. Dody and I were just finishing up some plans for tiling the upstairs bath.

Lem passes her a bottle of wine.

MARTHA

How sweet. White Zinfandel. My favorite.

Martha plants a welcome kiss on Lem's cheek.

They head to the --

KITCHEN

Lem reaches out his hand to shake Dody's.

LEM

Dody, I just want to tell you how much I enjoy your son.

DODY

(dry)
Ya' don't say.

LEM

Yeah, we manage to get out fishing two or three times a month. He brings Tufty, who loves the boat. It's a rare day we don't come back with two or three nights' supper. Sometimes even more. Right, Martha? We have a deal going. I bring fish for the bunch of us. Martha cooks and we eat together. Fun.

Lem turns sideways and sees Martha just behind him.

LEM

We ought to get Dody to join us sometime. What do you think, Martha?

MARTHA

Sure thing. How about it, Dody?

DODY

Thanks, but, well, I'm not a real fish eater. Never have been. Used to drive my dad crazy. He'd bring in a pile of fresh fish and I'd refuse to eat any. Couldn't stand the look of them, so to speak.

LEM

Maybe we can all get together for a few drinks. Thaw has taken an interest in image editing and can explain how it works pretty easily. Just won't use it. I have it for my natural forms' photos. Offered to let him use my computer anytime he wants to use it. Won't do it though. Says he's a painter. I'm the photographer. Nice young man, your son, Dody. I like him a lot.

Dody raises his hand and slaps an unseen bug that bites him on his right upper arm.

DODY

Dang mosquitoes. Never leave me alone. Wife says it's 'cause my blood is so sweet. Must be that morning coffee.

Martha touches Lem's forearm.

MARTHA

Lem, why don't you open the wine now? Dody, you can join us for a before dinner drink. What do you say?

DODY

Gave that stuff up years ago. Had my fill, so to speak. Overdid it. More than once. And for a long time. Wouldn't touch the stuff now with a ten-foot pole. My wife's expectin' me for supper soon anyway. Thanks, but no thanks.

Marlena makes the rounds.

DODY

Get, Marlena. Get!

Dody's turn to have his fingers licked.

DODY
Dang dog. Never gets the message.

LEM
Don't like dogs, Dody?

DODY
Hate 'em, Lem. Hate 'em all.

LEM
Any special reason?

DODY
Can't explain it. Just hate 'em.

MARTHA
I'll put her out. Come on, Marlina.
You can come back in after Dody
leaves.

Marlina pads behind Martha as she leads her out the mud room.

MARTHA
Out you go.

Thaw pulls in.

He moves around the back of his truck toward the back door.

MARTHA
Oh, Thaw. Here you are. Come on in.
Lem's here. And your dad. But then
you probably saw their trucks.

THAW
Hi, Martha.

Thaw kisses Martha's cheek.

THAW
Smells good.

Thaw enters the room, spots Lem and Dody.

THAW
Good evenin', Lem. Hi, Dad.

Thaw registers surprise when Dody nods at him.

LEM

I was just about to ask your dad if he saw Martha's latest acquisition of your work.

MARTHA

No, I don't think he's been in the front of the house since I hung them.

Martha turns to Dody who stands in the door frame between the kitchen and study.

MARTHA

Dody, have you been in to look around the living room lately?

DODY

Not since I helped you bring in that desk.

MARTHA

I thought not.

(to Lem)

Dody rarely gets past the kitchen when he comes. Likes the back of the house more.

(to Thaw)

And don't we all? Easier to park.

Martha gives Dody a nod in the direction of the living room.

MARTHA

So come, Dody.

Martha, Dody and Lem move to the --

LIVING ROOM

Thaw's paintings hang on the wall behind Martha's desk.

MARTHA

Come take a look.

Thaw remains behind in the kitchen, lost in thought.

MARTHA (O.S.)

Aren't they just lovely?

LEM (O.S.)

I'm telling you, Dody, you're one lucky man having a son like Thaw.

(MORE)

LEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 One of these days we're going to
 see his works in the Aesopolis
 Museum of Art.

KITCHEN

Thaw's brow furrows, mortified as Lem continues.

LEM (O.S.)
 Yes, he definitely has his own
 style. And he's prolific.

MARTHA (O.S.)
 So, what do you think, Dody?
 (laughs)
 That young man of yours is going to
 break me yet. First it was this one
 with the Yellow Dog Tooth Violet.
 Then I wanted the one with the Jack-
 in-the-Pulpit.

LEM (O.S.)
 Great colors and balance, don't you
 think, Dody?

LIVING ROOM

Thaw joins the rest.

DODY
 Well, I guess I gotta giv'im that.

Silence reigns for a moment or two but Dody hates silence.
 The others have an air of expectation in their expressions.
 Dody shrugs: what the hell, might as well go for it,

DODY
 Thought for a long time he was
 gonna' come to nothin' or at least
 next ta it.

Dody steps toward a painting, focuses on it and continues.

DODY
 Takin' off like he did ta fight
 that war. An' against my wishes.

Thaw at the door between Martha's study and the living room.
 Dody picks up a magazine from the table and flips through.
 The conversation crashes to a stop.

Dody rekindles it,

DODY

Then comin' back and holin' up in
that cabin with the smell of weed
and god knows what comin' out so
strong any time I stopped by. I
didn't have the courage ta knock.

Thaw in shock and not prepared as his dad lifts the curtain.
Where is his father going with this?

Dody lays the magazine down and looks across the room to
where Thaw stands in the doorway.

Dody's look, expectant.

Martha reads the room.

A slight rankle.

Thaw on the spot in her house.

MARTHA

All that's changed now, Dody. Just
look at these paintings. Just look
at how they liven up the room. But
what I am most happy about is...
look at this statue.

Martha reaches for the two-foot-high mother and fawn carving
from atop of the mantelpiece.

She holds it out for Dody.

He accepts it yet broods a bit to himself.

Dody, not finished -- once the dam opens...

DODY

Felt like a failure as a father.
Tried early on and then just gave
up. Thought he was as good as a
goner.

Thaw considers his father with different eyes.

He can no more move across the room to where his father
stands than he can change history.

Frozen to the spot, his words spill out -- unplanned,

THAW

Look, Dad. I'm sorry. I've tried to tell you that, but you just never seemed willing to listen. So, I guess I gave up, too.

Dody turns the statue over, examines it.

He crosses the room, hands it to Thaw who takes it.

Dody scratches his head and nods to the side -- near unseen.

DODY

Well, Son, maybe I gotta do some rethinkin' on it.

THAW

Yeah, Dad. Maybe we both do.

The front door OPENS and CLOSES.

Tension breaks.

MARTHA

Will you stay for supper with us?

Dody: a tiny shake of his head indicates he will not.

RICK (30s) looks like a former football player. Wife, CAROL (30s), slight, fair-skinned brown mouse of a woman, follows.

Rick shakes hands all around, kisses Martha on the cheek as he grasps her hand.

In the confusion of the moment, Dody waves a small hello and with a quick wave goodbye manages to snake his way into the --

KITCHEN

-- and out the back door before anyone can stop him.

Martha leads her dinner Guests to the --

KITCHEN

MARTHA

Might as well sit down. Everything is ready. Marlina's out. Lem brought us White Zinfandel. Carol, want to grab us wine glasses?

In the kitchen, a familiar ritual.

Carol passes wine glasses to Rick.

He passes them on to others.

The Men choose seats.

Carol waits for Martha's guidance about how she might help.

Martha and Carol put out the food while Rick pours the wine.

All seated, Lem raises his glass and looks around the table at the smiling faces before him.

A toast,

LEM

May the sun always shine on your
face.

Outside, a small bird SINGS.

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Thaw paints a flower caught by sun and a tiny bird in flight.

Nearby complete paintings bring the eye to a focus on an animal, sparkling stream or delicate flower.

THAW

I'm getting the feel for acrylics.
Whaddayathink, Nat?

Natalie stretches out on a divan.

Out of sight behind him, bored Natalie.

NATALIE

Gosh, T-W, look at the quality
you've achieved despite the lack of
toxicity, and in spite of the
archival quality of your work.

Thaw pauses, turns to Natalie.

She wears only a towel as a turban and holds a bed sheet to cover her naked body.

THAW

Feeling neglected, Nat?

Caught by her availability, Thaw lays down his brush and moves to her.

He lifts Natalie in his arms and carries her to the loft.

THAW
 God, Natalie, I love your coloring.

INT. BAIN - LA PETITE GALLERIE - BACK ROOM - DAY

RORY (30s), the gallery owner, medium height, auburn hair, wears informal jeans, tie, jacket and work boots.

He and Thaw prepare for his opening.

RORY
 Look, Thaw. If you don't value your works, others won't. Pricing the them between two and three thousand each will help.

THAW
 If you think so.

THAW'S SHOW - LATER

People wander around the gallery, comment on the works.

Thaw and Natalie mingle.

ANEILDA (50s), the governor's will o'wisp wife approaches Thaw and Natalie.

ANEILDA
 Goodness. Such a young man to have so much talent. What a delight.

She extends a hand to Natalie.

ANEILDA
 Wonderful work, don't you think?

No pause for Natalie's reply.

Instead, Aneilda turns to Thaw.

ANEILDA
 I apologize, but I am in a bit of a hurry. There is a rather large function at the Statehouse tonight. Sometimes I can't resist to take a peek.

She scans the works.

ANEILDA
 And so glad I did.

The Attendees and Members Of The Press gather round.

Aneilda raises her voice to be heard over the din.

ANEILDA

In fact, the Governor and I were just talking last night about how it was time to change some of the art in the mansion. You see, we try to rotate works of local artists so that we and others have the chance to better appreciate their talents. Some of the work is brought in by the curator. Some the Governor selects. But the Governor and I have agreed that for the small inner room where we tend to entertain our friends most, I am given free reign over the selection of the works.

Aneilda pauses to let the facts settle in, raises her eyebrows and continues.

ANEILDA

So, if you would be so kind, I should very much like to take on loan for one year the picture of the yearling that hangs near the entry door.

Aneilda walks to the painting and stops for a photo op.

The Press obliges.

Thaw follows Aneilda.

ANEILDA

Do you think it would be possible for you to loan the Governor's Mansion the painting of the *Fawn in Spring* for a year? I promise you it will be handled in the most careful of fashions and that many art connoisseurs will sip tea beneath it.

Thaw needs only a moment to take in the proposal.

He offers his hand which she takes.

THAW

It would be an honor.

The Governor's Wife continues to walk and smile.
She talks over her shoulder, more to the Audience than Thaw.

ANEILDA

Then I'll let the press know now.
I think it will be helpful to you.
And I am sure the governor will
love it. Thank you so much.

Adept at her role, Aneilda plays to the media.

ANEILDA

Despite its gentle subject matter,
the painting itself has a certain
power to it. As it turns out, its
colors would show particularly well
in the soft light of my favorite
room in the inner mansion where
Governor Martin and I often
entertain our closest friends.

Aneilda pauses for a gracious smile sent to Thaw.
The Press eats it up. Flashes burst light upon them.
Aneilda addresses her court.

ANEILDA

As such, I am pleased to announce
that Professor Wamp and I have
talked and with his consent, I have
selected *Fawn in Spring* to be among
those to be hung in this coming
year.

A round of APPLAUSE and a few BRAVOS.

Natalie swept back to the role of just another Attendee that
gathers to hear the First Lady's comments.

With the last announcement, she fills with a sense of pride.

Natalie smiles broad, CLAPS with the others.

LATER

Only one guest left that Rory talks with.

Thaw and Natalie clear away the glasses and plates.

NATALIE

Isn't it wonderful? Two paintings sold, one to go in the Governor's Mansion. My family will be impressed. I'm so sorry Judith couldn't come. Her daughter, Hannah, is sick and needed attention.

THAW

Can't wait to tell Lem. Please tell Judith I'm sorry she couldn't make it. But she's welcome to stop by anytime. Rory'd be most welcoming.

INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Without a word and to avoid close contact, Lou presses past Marty and Jason.

Marty looks to his mother at the kitchen table.

He raises his arms in a broad shrug.

MARTY

Guess Dad's home?

MARY

You know how he is. Just wants to decon before coming near.

MARTY

Wish he didn't work at Magdum Heights.

MARY

Problem is the power plant pays well and until he finds something else...

MARTY

Imagine working somewhere where you didn't worry about making your family sick.

MARY

Imagine if I didn't wash my hands after a day at school with the kids.

OFFSCREEN: The SHOWER runs.

JASON

Come on, Mart. Let's go. Time to go.

The family DOG rises and leans against Mary's legs.

She pats its head with an absent stare.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell RINGS.

Martha answers to find painters JOE (30s) and NEVILLE (40s) with brushes in hand.

NEVILLE

G'mornin', Martha. I'm Neville.
This is Joe. Dody said you had some
paintin' ta do?

MARTHA

Welcome.

After they enter, Neville opens a can of paint by the stairs.

Joe opens one in the living room.

MARTHA

(to Neville)

You're the one who tiled the mud
room. Great job. I love it.

Neville smiles at the compliment.

NEVILLE

Yeah. House had a lot of work in
it. Never know how much 'til you
start doin' it.

MARTHA

If I had, I probably wouldn't have
bought it.

Neville casts a shy glance at Martha.

NEVILLE

Ah, you'da bought it anyway. Where
else would you find a view of the
lake like this?

Martha laughs.

MARTHA

Yeah, I guess you're right,
Neville.

NEVILLE

So, what do you want done? I only
have t'day so best we do what you
want done most.

Martha indicate the area.

MARTHA

Living room and stairs, I guess. So
I can furnish it.

NEVILLE

What about installing the ceiling
fans? I like workin' with electric.

MARTHA

Well, you can do them if you finish
painting the living room.

NEVILLE

Okay. I'll finish the stairs. Joe,
you can do the living room.

Martha seats herself in a folding chair near the front
hallway between the men and watches in silence for a bit.

Neville paints around the corner out of sight of Martha.

MARTHA

(to Joe)

Been painting long?

Joe speaks with a slowness of speech and local accent.

JOE

Yeah. Painted all over th' place.
Arizona. Nevada. You name it, I've
painted there.

MARTHA

How'd you get into painting?

JOE

Worked for a man. Perfectionist.
Took all the fun out of it. But I
learned a lot from him.

MARTHA

I can see.

JOE

Thanks. But I'm going to have to stop soon. It's almost 2:30 and I have to take my son shopping for school clothes.

Neville, silent. Out of sight in the corner.

Marlena noses around Joe's paint pan.

White paint highlights one ear and a spot on the side of her wiry cinnamon coat.

Joe smiles but gives her a pat and a push to keep her where she belongs.

MARTHA

My dog bothering you?

JOE

No problem. Used to dogs. Had a black lab. Nice dog. But wouldn't stay on the property. Got three acres and it wasn't enough. Put up a fence and she went under it. M' wife and me both work so even with three acres we couldn't take care of her. Had ta find her a new home. But I like dogs. This one's very sweet.

Marlena beats one of her rope toys to death on the floor.

MARTHA

Yeah. And very delicate.

Joe stops to watch Marlena swing her head back and forth.

He returns to task.

JOE

Yeah. Sure.

From around the corner the sound of quiet laughter.

NEVILLE

She's a real lady.

Joe gathers his paint can, brush and pan.

JOE

Well. Two-thirty. Gotta go.

Martha stands to face Joe, moves backward toward the door.

MARTHA

When do you think you'll be back?

JOE

No idea. Busy now. Real busy. Just came down today because Dody sent me to help you out.

She opens the door for him.

MARTHA

Thanks, Joe. Thanks a lot. Hopefully it'll be ready for me to furnish before the snow flies.

She closes the door.

Martha moves her chair closer to Neville, faces him.

NEVILLE

Do you want the risers painted all the way to the top.

Martha nods assent and watches for a bit.

MARTHA

Do you have any children, Neville?

NEVILLE

One. A little girl. Nine months old. And my wife has two daughters from her previous marriage.

MARTHA

Your wife's daughters by her first marriage?

Neville becomes more intent on his painting.

NEVILLE

Oh, them. He wanted them, he got 'em. Not that my wife doesn't try to see them sometimes. But he can afford them, so he takes care of them. Oh, we'll buy them something, too, sure, but not anybody else.

MARTHA

How old are they?

NEVILLE

Twelve and 14. My wife talks to them. Talks to them whenever she can.

MARTHA

Oh?

NEVILLE

Nothing like Dody and his son. Dody never talks to Thaw. Nothing can get him to do it. His own son.

MARTHA

So you see your wife's daughters.

Neville again fixes on his brush strokes.

He avoids eye contact with Martha.

NEVILLE

Oh, yeah. My wife's not like that. How'd it feel if you had a parent and that parent refused to talk to you? Just because when you were in the military you used drugs and stuff. I wouldn't care what my kid did. My kid would be my kid and I would talk to him. No matter what. How do you think Dody's son feels with his dad refusing to talk to him? I mean maybe if he talked to him, showed a little care, maybe he coulda helped his son work through his problems faster. Don'cha think? But Dody won't talk to Thaw. Refuses to see him. Doesn't talk about him. Doesn't want to hear about him.

MARTHA

How old's Thaw?

NEVILLE

In his thirties.

MARTHA

Still uses drugs?

NEVILLE

Dunno. Never seen 'em.

MARTHA

Lots of time young people stop using drugs as they get older.

Neville looks up to Martha.

NEVILLE

I don't know about Thaw. But Dody
won't talk to him.

Neville, back to the brush.

Lost in thought -- half wait, half watch -- Martha does not
move away.

NEVILLE

I'd talk to him though. If I were
Dody I'd talk to him.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Neville works alongside Dody to pull up old shag carpet.

NEVILLE

Saw your son the other day.

Dody YELLS.

He shoves a finger into his mouth and talks around it.

DODY

Dang it all. Nicked my finger.

Dody pulls the bloody finger from his mouth and inspects it.

DODY

Blasted blade is dull.

Neville remains on task.

NEVILLE

All suited up. Like for a date.
Getting gas up on 22. No sign of
Tufty with him. In kind of a hurry.
Probably headed to Bain. No place
around here to get that dressed up
for. 'Specially that early in the
morning. Sure wasn't going fishing
in those clothes.

DODY

Yeah fine, Neville. Where'd I leave
those blades? Could've sworn I put
them on the windowsill there.

Dody searches.

NEVILLE
They're there.
(lifts Dody's gloves)
Just gotta look. Your gloves were
layin' on top.

Neville tosses Dody the box of blades.

Dody stands with the finger in his mouth, takes it out to
look at it.

NEVILLE
Here. Why don't you put on your
gloves. Protect you some.

DODY
Yeah. Guess I won't bleed to death.

Dody shoves his hands into the gloves.

NEVILLE
Didja hear me? Didja hear what I
said? I never even thought he owned
such nice clothes. But there he
was. All decked out. Probably
headed to Bain.

No response from Dody.

Neville continues to work on the carpet, comments without a
look up.

NEVILLE
Dody, did you hear what I said
about Thaw?

DODY
Yeah. I heard ya.

NEVILLE
Well, you didn't act like you did.

DODY
Well, I cut my finger.

NEVILLE
Yeah, sure. The last time I
mentioned Thaw, you just remembered
you'd forgot to turn the thermostat
down.

DODY
Can't expect a man to be perfect.
Everybody forgets things sometimes.

Neville stops his work to look at Dody.

NEVILLE

And the time before that you just remembered you'd forgot to pick up your wife.

Dody studies his injured finger.

DODY

Told ya I'm not perfect. Danged finger.

Dody pulls his hand from the glove, sucks on it then shoves the glove back on.

NEVILLE

(to himself)

I just don't get it.

Neville's words come out low.

Nothing wrong with Dody's hearing.

DODY

Get what? What's there to get? You bring the news. I hear the news. What else is there to do? Just stop it. Just stop it.

NEVILLE

Whatdja gettin' so excited about? I'm not doing anything.

Dody intent on serious carpet cuts.

Neville pulls on a length of carpet as Dody counter-pulls.

NEVILLE

What didja just remember? You have to go someplace?

Dody ignores the hint of sarcasm and irony from Neville.

CUTS and RIPS continue.

INT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Fall.

A sketch of Natalie asleep in a cloth-covered chair. Natalie's hand lies on a nearby table to support her head.

Thaw paints.

Thaw answers the telephone RING.

THAW

Hello. Thaw here.

RORY (V.O.)

Good morning, Theodore. Rory, here.
I have your next four pictures
framed. You can come see them or
pick them up any time.

THAW

Let's see.

(thinks)

How about Thursday?

RORY (V.O.)

Thursday's fine.

Thaw puts his brush down and sits.

THAW

By the way, my friend Lem really
likes your work, Rory. Said I was
lucky to have found you.

RORY (V.O.)

(laughs)

Lucky we found each other.

THAW

Said I needed a businessman as a
partner.

RORY (V.O.)

I like this Lem. So I figure you
should get around \$2,500 per
painting. That way selling two
would cover your costs for the
show.

Thaw rises and returns to his painting.

THAW

Sounds a little high to me.

RORY (V.O.)

You gotta think of it, man. These
are pretty work intensive. At \$250
per frame you'd need to spend
\$6,520 on framing alone.

(MORE)

RORY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then 20 percent commission or about \$13,000 to me. Then you have cost of canvas, paint, transportation, and your share of the advertising. When all is said and done, you'd be making at most about \$40,000 a year... if you're lucky and sell a painting every other week.

THAW

Not bad.

Thaw picks up his brush.

RORY (V.O.)

But if you finished and sold one painting every two weeks that would be about 25 paintings a year, with a gross of \$65,000.

THAW

(laughs)

Given my work at Nick-Sue, I'd be happy with \$30,000 a year.

RORY (V.O.)

That's the problem with artists. No business sense. That's why you need guys like me. Trust me. If you don't value your work, who will? I say \$2,500 a painting. And it's a bargain.

THAW

Some bargain.

RORY (V.O.)

Look, Thaw. Those rich gals need to be able to go to the hunt club and brag about the bargain they got. They can't go in and brag look at the bargain I got. \$250.00. No, they have to brag about bargains in thousands even millions. But you and I are doing the thousands. What do you say?

Thaw is back to painting.

THAW

Look, Rory. You're the businessman. I just paint.

RORY (V.O.)
 Sure. What the heck. Why not give
 it a go?

THAW
 All right. Twenty-five hundred. But
 some need to be less expensive.

RORY (V.O.)
 And some need to be more expensive.

THAW
 You're something.

RORY (V.O.)
 Well?

Thaw laughs. Stands back to appraise his work.

RORY
 Yeah. And some need to be more
 expensive. Now you're talking. So,
 Thursday. See you Thursday.

THAW
 Thursday.

EXT. BAIN - LA PETITE GALLERIE - DAY

SUPER: "Thursday, April 12, 2018"

In suit and tie, Thaw pulls up to the curb, notes his watch
 reads 11:18.

Thaw carries several large piece, four feet long by three
 feet wide.

INT. BAIN - LA PETITE GALLERIE - CONTINUOUS

As Thaw opens the gallery's front door, the bell JINGLES.

RORY (O.S.)
 Be right with you.

A second later Rory appears.

RORY
 Theodore. Well if it isn't Theodore
 Wamp in the flesh. I was wondering
 when you were going to stop by.
 How's it been going, man? Painting
 up a storm? Whatcha got there?

Rory lifts the painting from Thaw's hands and lays it face up on the counter before the frame samples.

RORY
Nice. Very nice.

Rory positions frame samples beside the painting.

RORY
Yes. Genuinely nice. Definitely needs gold.

Rory lays out a small black corner.

RORY
That would never do it justice. Too small. Closes in the picture. What you want is an openness. Something that will complement not stop the colors.

Rory tries a few more frames.

RORY
Nope.

Rory returns to his original choice.

RORY
Yup. That's it. What do you think?

THAW
Well, I like it. I like it very much. But will I like the price?

RORY
Remember what I told you. Frame cheap. Sell cheap. Frame well. Sell high. If someone is going to invest a thousand dollars in a picture they might as well invest fifteen hundred and go home happy. That's my job. I frame. I sell. I send my people home happy.

Thaw, straight to the point.

THAW
What's a job like this going to cost me?

RORY
That depends. How many do you have?

THAW
Suppose I bring you five?

RORY
About \$250.

Thaw picks up a corner from the display and inspects it.

THAW
Suppose I bring you ten?

RORY
Two twenty-five.

Thaw puts corner down and picks up another.

THAW
What about twenty?

RORY
Two fifteen. But no lower.

Thaw puts the corner down and considers a moment then looks at Rory.

THAW
Okay. Two fifteen. But you can't do them all the same.

RORY
I never do two the same unless they're a pair.

THAW
Some are smaller, and some are larger.

RORY
How much larger?

THAW
Five by seven feet.

RORY
We'll use cheaper framing lengths. Not so fancy.

Thaw moves to look at a piece on the wall.

THAW
What about if they're smaller?

RORY
How small?

THAW

Two feet by three feet.

RORY

We'll use fancy framing, or we'll mat them and throw in a fillet.

Thaw turns toward Rory.

THAW

What's a fillet?

RORY

It's a tiny frame inset inside the mat. Really rich. People go crazy over pictures with fillets in them.

THAW

How about if you do them in batches of five and I give you 500 down toward materials each time you take a set and pay you the rest when the batch is done.

RORY

Deal.

THAW

Deal.

Thaw and Rory formalize in a handshake.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - THAW'S TRUCK, TRAVELING - DAY

Thaw on his cellphone.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Good afternoon. Bain Planning Department. Natalie Flynn speaking.

THAW

Nat.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Thaw. Didn't I just talk to you? What's going on now?

THAW

But Nat...

NATALIE (V.O.)

Nat what?

THAW

I moved it up, Nat.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Moved what up? Oh, no. Not that.

THAW

You promised, Nat. You promised.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Oh, Thaw.

A smile creeps into her voice.

NATALIE (V.O.)

I guess I did.

THAW

The show will be in six weeks. Last week of April, first week of May. At Rory's gallery. Will you go with me?

NATALIE (V.O.)

Only if I can bring my sister. I need protection.

THAW

Bring your sister. Bring your boss. Bring the whole town. Just go with me.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Oh, okay.

THAW

And what about lunch tomorrow?

NATALIE (V.O.)

I don't know. I'm awful busy right now. The governor is planning for development of an inter-county planning board and I'm supposed to prepare Bain's recommendations for review by the County Legislature and present it at their regular meeting on Tuesday. And we're all caught up in a lawsuit involving the question of whether or not a toxic waste site was incorrectly zoned. It's crazy here right now. Just crazy.

THAW

But you gotta' eat, Nat. We can go next door to where you work. That little deli place... with the tables.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Oh, okay.

She sounds resentful, continues with a bit of snap.

NATALIE (V.O.)

But I'm going to Aesopolis with my sister for the weekend so no talk about Friday night or Saturday. Got it? I still need some time, so eating with you is not getting back with you. Got it?

THAW

Got it.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Good. Eleven forty-five. Before the crush. All right? I'll have about half an hour. No more.

THAW

Half an hour. No more. See ya', Nat.

NATALIE (V.O.)

See ya' then, Thaw.

THAW

And Nat?

NATALIE (V.O.)

What now, Thaw?

THAW

Thanks, Nat. Thanks.

INT. BAIN - LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

Thaw settles into a table next to the window.

Natalie and Friends enter. She carries a large shoulder bag.

She spots Thaw, speaks to her friends and joins him.

Natalie bends to kiss him on the cheek and then slips into the seat opposite him.

NATALIE

You look great.

(smiles)

Sorry. Not much time. Have you ordered yet?

THAW

I'm up for a ham and cheese sandwich on whole wheat bread. You?

NATALIE

A small Greek salad and a glass of milk.

THAW

Watch my backpack.

He rises to put in the order.

LATER

Thaw and Natalie almost done with lunch.

He reaches for his backpack.

THAW

Look, Nat. I know we don't have much time, but I want to show you something Lem did.

Thaw unzips the backpack and hands the portfolio to her.

Natalie opens the first page.

She stops and looks Thaw in the eye then proceeds to review the full book.

She closes it and keeps her eyes fixed on the back cover.

Nothing. No comment at all.

Finally, she makes eye contact with Thaw.

THAW

What do you think, Nat?

Tears brim in Natalie's eyes and a few overflow.

She dives for a tissue in her bag, blows her nose.

Natalie pushes the book back to Thaw then stabs a last mouthful of salad, jabs it between her teeth and chews.

THAW

Natalie. Are you all right? Can I help? What's up? Is it something you can talk about?

Natalie laughs.

NATALIE

Oh, Thaw. You know me. I'm just happy. Happy for you. I would like so much for you to be a success. This album is great. Lem did a great job, and your work is wonderful. If only you could get some recognition for it. If only you could begin to have a reliable income from it.

THAW

We'll see, Natalie. I just wanted you to know about it.

NATALIE

Look, Thaw. I have to get back. My office buddies have left. We're in such a pinch.

THAW

Leave, Natalie. I'll take care of things. And Natalie... thanks.

Natalie's eyes rise to meet his.

She reaches for her lipstick and follows the shape of her lips with its pink tip.

Natalie gathers her things and leaves, but not before a quick kiss to Thaw's cheek.

EXT./INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - GARAGE - DAY

SUPER: "Thursday, April 12, 2018"

Marty and Jason squat beside a rectangular terrarium in the corner of the garage.

MARTY

How'er yer nature studies goin'?

Jason looks up from the well kept terrarium.

JASON
Checking out taste preferences.
When he sees a preferred food he
darts his tongue in and out
quicker.

Marty shakes his head with irony.

MARTY
Oh, yeah.

JASON
Yeah. When he pulls his tongue in,
he pulls the scent from his prey in
so he can appreciate it more.

MARTY
Ya don't say.

Jason intent on his task.

JASON
He doesn't care if it's a fly or
spider, meat or a dead worm.

Marty shoots his brother a quizzical look and laughs

MARTY
Do ya' blame him?

Jason responds with a small push to Marty's shoulder.

Marty frowns, reaches to the floor to maintain balance.

JASON
Gimme a break. It's a snake. I'm
makin' a study.

Jason raises an eyebrow, exaggerates pride.

JASON
That's why I keep changin' what I
giv'em to eat.

Marty tips his head forward to challenge Jason.

MARTY
You're not gonna give him any of
our frogs!

JASON
No, knucklehead. I wouldn't do
that.

Marty raises his brows and speaks with a threatening tone.

MARTY

Better not.

(then)

So, what're you using?

JASON

Different kinds of bugs, worms,
snails and maybe a tadpole or two.

MARTY

(firm)

No tadpoles.

Jason focuses on the snake.

JASON

Mostly bugs and worms. But I think
it's time to return this guy to the
stream.

Marty stands to leave.

PRISSY, their cat, rubs up against his legs. Marty pets her,
holds the cat close to his face.

He puts Prissy on the floor.

MARTY

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jason smiles at Marty's response and shakes his head.

JASON

Never mind the yeah-yeahs.

He lifts the terrarium and readies to leave through the open
garage door.

JASON

I'm gonna take Rocky down and free
him near the stream. Wanna come?

Prissy rubs against Jason's legs, purrs and half-meows.

She follows Jason out the garage door.

Marty leaves with Jason.

He closes the garage door behind them.

JASON

When we get back, we can go bike riding. Mom's school has parent conferences so she may be home early. Around three.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - THAW'S TRUCK, TRAVELING - DAY

Thaw drives home.

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM TONES overcome COUNTRY WESTERN music on the truck radio.

At the same time, a WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERT TONE shrieks from Thaw's phone

EAS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Attention. Attention. At this time the governor of New Carlton has announced a state alert due to a meltdown that has occurred at the Magdum Heights Nuclear Power Plant near Aesopolis. As such, evacuation efforts are underway for a 35 mile radius around the plant. As such, in particular, areas to the north and west of Aesopolis should anticipate an influx of forced refugees. All communities are asked to do all within their power to accommodate those who travel to their neighborhood or city.

INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jason pours a glass of milk.

Marty runs a drink of tap water.

Jason makes and shares a PB & J.

When finished, Jason gives Marty a sideway nod and they both descend the stairs to the --

BASEMENT, WOOD ROOM

Jason scours for oil to lube his bike chain.

MARTY

Never liked it down here. Never liked the thought we might have to hunker down here. Hurricanes. Fallout. No windows.

JASON

It's for emergencies. See.

Jason ticks off items he points to.

JASON

First aid supplies, canned food, bottles of water, plastic bags, sweatpants and sweatshirts, flip-flops. Dad's dosimeter.

Marty lifts a small box of Potassium Iodide.

MARTY

What's this? For pain?

JASON

No. That's K-I. In case the plant were to go down. It protects the thyroid.

Jason tightens his chain and prepares to oil it.

MARTY

Some wood room. Look at this. Travel games? But not for traveling?

Jason pulls down a can of axle grease.

JASON

Yup. This is what I need. Axle grease.

Jason swipes the can beneath Marty's nose.

Marty concurs.

MARTY

Yup. Axle grease.

JASON

Where did dad put those plastic gloves?

Marty finds them on a shelf.

MARTY

Here they are.

The floor shakes beneath them.

Cans and tools on the shelf RATTLE. Some fall to the floor.

The lights go out.

The boys freeze.

Stock-still in the dim light of the cellar, they seek each other's eyes.

JASON

Stay with me. Come on.

Jason leads the way with Marty close behind.

LIVING ROOM

A volunteer fire department siren BLASTS nearby.

Marty and Jason run upstairs from the cellar.

They see the distant red glare and smoke through the window.

JASON

Marty. It's the plant.

MARTY

Jason. Holy Moley.

EXT. BIG BOX STORE - DAY

Customers gape at the red glow of the distant fire and black smoke that coils in the air.

The BLARE of a volunteer fire department siren.

People trip over each other in a race to their cars.

Multiple fender benders as they speed away helter skelter.

No one stops to trade insurance info.

Some abandon cars to run, eyes wide on the glow.

INT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A serious expression on his face, Jason cradles the landline.

JASON
No answer on Mom or Dad's cells or
work numbers.

MARTY
Are they okay?

Uncertain, Jason lies.

JASON
Of course. They'll be home soon.

MARTY
What do we do?

He takes his Brother by the shoulders.

JASON
What Mom and Dad taught us.
Remember the story?

Marty nods: I do.

For a moment, they glance the distant glow and smoke.

BASEMENT

Ready to go, the Boys stuff items in their backpacks.

Jason pockets cash from the 'For Emergencies Only' tin box.

EXT. ARIANA - INTERSECTION - SECONDARY ROAD AND INTERSTATE -
DAY

Jason and Marty pedal to the intersection. Jason signals a
stop. They ditch bikes behind the trees.

JASON
(points)
There. Across the interstate. We
hitch north.

INTERSTATE SHOULDER - NORTHBOUND

The Boys walk backwards with thumbs out.

JASON
Mom said to get out of the area as
fast as possible. It's 20 minutes
since we saw the red glow. If we
catch a ride in the next five or
so, we're safe.

MARTY

In an hour we could be 75 miles
north of the plant. Right?

Proud of his Brother's keenness, Jason smiles and nods yes.

HANK (60s) pulls his battered pickup over. Jason and Marty
run to it.

Hank calls out through the open passenger window,

HANK

What are you up to, boys? Why ain't
you in school?

JASON

Parent-teacher conference day. We
need to get to Waxton.

Marty opens the passenger door, speaks through the opening.

MARTY

We're meeting our grandparents.

HANK

They tell you to hitchhike?

MARTY

Yeah. My dad's truck broke down
near them.

Jason shows Hank his backpack.

JASON

I have spark plugs and jumpers.

MARTY

Yeah.

HANK

Hop in. I don't usually pick up
hitchhikers, but I don't like to
see kids on the interstate. It's
dangerous. Got grandkids of my own.

Jason pushes past Marty and climbs in first. Marty follows.
They lay the backpacks at their feet.

Marty closes the SQUEAKY door. It doesn't shut. Jason reaches
over Marty, reopens and slams the door.

Gears GRIND as Hank forces the truck into first then goes.

Wires snake from a hole in the dash where a radio should be.

EXT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - DAY

Thaw knocks on Lem's front door, Lem answers -- breathless.

THAW

You've heard?

LEM

Yeah. Listening on the radio.

Thaw enters. Very focused.

THAW

We need to make plans. For the whole village.

LEM

Martha is expecting us for lunch. Think she'd mind if we invited the mayor to join us.

THAW

Don't think so. And a good idea. He's ex-military, and can facilitate setting up a POD.

LEM

We can use Martha's people skills. She's a quick learner. Her years as a librarian should put her in good stead to talk with the community and help with organizing.

THAW

I dropped the fish we caught at Martha's last night. So let's just head over.

Lem picks up his jacket in preparation to leave.

LEM

You know, I think in addition to the meltdown there must have been dirty bombs. Something about a development of newly built and mostly uninhabited larger homes just south of Ariana going up in flames. They think arson, but as they're clearing the area, they have not addressed the cause. Dirty bombs are a possibility. When last I listened they had identified six that were set off between Aesopolis and Ariana.

THAW
So terrorism.

LEM
And panic on the roadways.
Gridlock. Chaos.

INT. LOCHLEE - MARTHA'S HOME - KITCHEN- NIGHT

The remains of a fish dinner before Martha, Thaw, Lem and LARRY (30s), the very dapper and young village mayor.

MARTHA
When can we expect refugees?

LEM
Some on the six o'clock train.
Those coming by car, tomorrow. The
day after.

LARRY
The traffic downstate is bumper to
bumper for miles. That'll slow
things a little.

LEM
Few have military emergency
response training. That puts them
at heightened risk.

LARRY
Those with training will figure
Bain or Bixby are about 100 miles
from the plant. I think they'd head
there. But if they're informed,
they'll prefer a 200 mile buffer.
That means us -- Lochlee.

LEM
And the train from Bain stops here.

Martha has risen and is pouring coffee.

MARTHA
Apparently people either want to
get away or get home. On the radio
they said they're setting up road
blocks to prevent people from
approaching the plant and for those
35 or more miles from the plant to
hunker down for 72 hours.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

They want them to go to their cellars or basements and to stay away from the windows. Not drink or eat anything that is not bottled or canned. Because of the potential for radioactive contamination. But the grid is down around the meltdown so its difficult getting the message out.

THAW

Lem and I think we set up a POD in the firehouse. Lem will take his short wave there and as people come in, in case they have radioactive material on them, they can shower and change their clothes there.

Martha seats herself again.

MARTHA

I can get the women in the garden club to collect clothes, shoes and soap and towels.

LARRY

Where are we going to put them up?

MARTHA

The school gym, for starters. The church?

Thaw leaps up and pulls out his cell phone.

THAW

Natalie. Cheesum.

He heads for Martha's living room.

Lem rises and pulls out his cell phone.

LEM

Waxton. I've got to call my sister.

Lem heads for Martha's porch.

LIVING ROOM

Thaw on the phone.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Bain County Planning Department.

THAW
Natalie? Thaw.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Thank God.

THAW
You've heard.

NATALIE (V.O.)
The sirens haven't stopped. We're just trying to sort out details. It's all very large and unclear.

THAW
You have to leave. You have to come here. You're only 100 miles from there.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Thaw, a hundred miles should be safe.

THAW
Maybe. But they're evacuating everyone for 35 miles. Bain will be inundated with forced refugees.

NATALIE (V.O.)
No!
(then)
My parents. My sister. My niece.

THAW
Look. I'm at Martha's. I'm going home. If you can't get through on the phone, just come.

NATALIE (V.O.)
Just come.

THAW
You heard me. Just come. I'm hanging up now. Bye.

NATALIE (V.O.)
I'll call you. Bye.

DINING ROOM

Thaw joins Martha and Larry.

THAW

The next train into Lochlee arrives at 6:10. Somebody needs to meet it so we can get a sense as to just how bad it's gonna' be. You're welcome to join me.

The screen door BANGS behind Thaw as he rushes out.

MONTAGE - THE AFTERMATH

EXT. LOCAL / INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS - DAY

Bumper to bumper HONKING traffic moves at a crawl.

EXT. BOMB SITE - DAY

Emergency responders load injured People into ambulances.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Doctors and Nurses triage a massive influx of Injured who overwhelm the facility.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

A steady stream of Families heft backpacks and pull wagons piled with belongings.

EXT. LOCHLEE - NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Refugees knock on doors, look for help. Residents welcome them into their homes.

END MONTAGE

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - THAW'S TRUCK, TRAVELING - DAY

Thaw answers his cellphone's RING.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Thaw. It's me. Listen. There have been two more dirty bombs reported since I talked to you. One in northern Aesopolis. One in Waxton. And I'm coming up.

THAW

Good. When are you leaving?

INT. BAIN - BAIN PLANNING DEPARTMENT - NATALIE'S OFFICE -
SAME TIME

NATALIE

In a couple of hours. But I thought about it. My family lives just outside Ariana. To the north. That's only about 40 miles from the Heights. I was able to reach them before they left. They're heading to Bain, and I wanted them to come up to your place. They told me to go on ahead, but I'm going to wait for them in Bain. I've been trying to reach them to tell them to avoid Waxton.

THAW (V.O.)

They might be hours.

INTERCUT - THAW'S TRUCK / BAIN PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Natalie stands near her desk.

NATALIE

I know. I told them to take the secondary roads as the main ones are sure to be jammed. The route is a bit longer, but they would have to drive 30 miles west just to get to Interstate 39. I told them they would be better off taking Three-N. If they stay on it, they avoid Waxton. I'm meeting them at the intersection of Six and Three-N.

THAW

And then they'll follow you?

NATALIE

No. My parents refused to come further north than Bain. And they want to come for, "just a little while, until they can move back home." I don't think they really understand what's happening yet.

THAW

No.

NATALIE

At any rate they'll be better off in Bain than Ariana. I'll give them the keys to my place, they'll have their car and can stay there.

THAW

And your sister?

NATALIE

My sister and her daughter will be with them. I want to bring them up with me. My sister is afraid of the nuclear fallout for her daughter. Children are so vulnerable. She thinks that even if they were to stay in Bain it would be a greater risk. We'll be traveling together. We think we may need one another... in case the going gets rough. Is that all right?

THAW

Good plan.

(sigh of relief)

But you may be stopped because you're only three in the car. If you have to pick up a fourth and bring him or her, do it. You can all stay here. We can use my air mattress and I think I can get a second one from Lem for your sister and her daughter. Do you think they could sleep on them or should they have our bed?

NATALIE

The air mattresses'll be fine. Is there anything I can do while I wait for them?

Thaw thinks a beat.

THAW

Yeah. Go shopping. Fill up the cart with staples. Anything medical. See if you can find Potassium Iodide. If you do, get as much as you can. It comes in two-week supplies. We need one pack for every one of us, but mostly for your sister and her daughter. They're younger and were closer to the sites.

NATALIE
Potassium iodide?

THAW
Yes. K-I. It prevents the thyroid
from taking up radioactive iodine.

NATALIE
Thaw, I know. I was confirming. But
I don't know if we can buy it
around here. I'll have to see
what's open. What they have. If I
can, I'll pick up some for Lem,
too.

THAW
Look, Nat, don't try to do too
much. Just do what you can. Go
slow. Keep calm. Just do what you
can. But most of all -- get out as
soon as possible.

NATALIE
I will, Thaw.

THAW
Hopefully, the wind will remain
calm and westerly. That would give
you a couple of hours.

NATALIE
Thaw, I'm not going to call you
again. I'm just coming when I can.
That way we'll both be free to do
whatever we think we must.

THAW
Good idea. But if you need to, you
can leave messages on my cell
phone. If you should call and I'm
in the car where there is
reception, I'll answer. But I will
not wait to hear from you.

Thaw's throat tightens.

They both pause to collect themselves.

THAW
Natalie, I love you. With all my
heart.

A TRAIN WHISTLE sounds in the distance.

NATALIE
I love you, too.

INT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - DAY

Thaw feeds and waters TUFTY.

Lem prepares vegetable soup.

THAW
How's your family doing, Lem?

LEM
My sister and her two kids are
coming from Waxton.
(realizes)
Probably for the duration.

THAW
Natalie and her sister Judith and
niece Hannah are also coming.

Lem puts out some bowls and soup spoons.

LEM
How are you going to put them up?

THAW
Air mattresses. Then I thought
maybe until we get something
better, I could borrow yours.

LEM
Sure. Maybe Natalie's sister and
daughter should stay here instead.
They could have one bedroom. My
sister and her two daughters could
take the one with the double bed
and bunk beds. I take the couch.

THAW
Lem. It's too much.

Lem ladles some soup into the bowls.

LEM
Four of you in one room wouldn't
be? How old is the daughter?

THAW
Around 12.

LEM

Come on now. Who's sleeping where?
You taking the air mattress? Is
Natalie?

THAW

Well, no...

LEM

Tell them they can sleep here. Let
Natalie's sister decide which she
thinks is better. Hell, I've slept
on that couch many a night. And it
wasn't even open.

THAW

(laughs)

I can guess which Natalie will
choose.

Lem smiles at Thaw and sits down.

THAW

We better call Martha about
tonight.

LEM

Already did. She's coming over.
Said she'd meet the 6:10 train and
agreed we need a game plan. This is
growing way too fast.

DINING AREA - LATER

On a laptop, Lem meets with Martha and Thaw.

MARTHA

Guess we have our work cut out for
us.

Martha places a notebook and pen on the table.

MARTHA

I figured everybody in the town.
Plus with your involvement in
communications and the Internet,
Lem, and both your and Thaw's
military training and experience
along with Larry's position as
mayor and the little training I
have in emergency response, we
should be able to come up with an
agenda for the town council.

LEM

Larry's got a town meeting called for 8:00 tonight to be followed by an open meeting at 9:00. He's put everyone in the town into action: churches, council and volunteer fire department. Be nice if we had a police department at this point if only to handle traffic, but with a population of around a thousand, even with a few hundred people coming in, I think we'll be fine without them. Hopefully, we'll just get a handful of emigrants.

MARTHA

It's hard to guess.

A KNOCK on the door.

MARTHA

Maybe Larry.

Tufty opens her eyes and raises her head as Lem opens the door to let in Larry.

Larry enters, smiles at everyone.

He places a daily planner and yellow pad on the table as he sits to join the group.

LARRY

Evening, Lem.

(pauses)

Really appreciate all your help. We need a well thought out agenda for tonight's meeting and the idea of doing it alone was a bit daunting.

LEM

Maybe I'll bring out my laptop. We might be needing the Internet for research and updates. If we run out of ideas, we can pull in the FEMA and SEMA sites and see what they recommend in accommodating forced emigrants.

Tufty lowers head and closes her eyes.

Larry gets comfortable.

LEM

There are plans for responding to forced emigrations caused by floods or hurricanes that could be put in place. And, of course, they would have information on responding to nuclear disasters. I've reviewed some of the applicable chapters from my old military handbooks. But they don't address dirty bombs as such, although we did talk about them in class. But for now, I think we just pool what we already know.

THAW

Lem, can I ladle up some of that soup for the bunch of us? I'm starving!

LEM

Good idea. Go to it.

LATER

Martha and Thaw clear away the bowls.

His laptop on the table, Lem lingers over his soup. Off and on he sips a spoonful.

MARTHA

Let's see. It's 4:30. If we meet for an hour, we should be able to bang out an agenda for tonight. That will bring us to 5:30. We'll still be able to hit the stores before they close at six and I can meet the 6:10 train in Lochlee to see what that brings. That will give us a sense as to how bad it's going to get.

LARRY

Sounds good, Martha. Now for the agenda.

LEM

Computer's ready.

LARRY

Where do we start?

LEM

Well, I think Thaw should call the hardware store.

(MORE)

LEM (CONT'D)

They don't close 'til six. See if they still have radiation measurement kits left over from the Cold War in the Sixties that they've had displayed. I looked at them not too long ago. They include a small dosimeter.

LARRY

We all agree the Point of Distribution will be the firehouse?

No one responds -- consensus.

Thaw picks up the landline.

THAW

I'll call now.

Thaw pulls to the side, listens to Lem.

LEM

If Annie answers tell her we need the fallout detection meter left over from the Cold War then tell her it's called a dosimeter, in case she's not familiar with what it is.

He dials, speaks into the phone then hangs up.

Lem types on the laptop.

He sits back ready for input.

LARRY

Well, it happens that as a geologist, I have one. But we'll need more than one.

MARTHA

I heard on the radio that downstate they're setting up emergency showers outside to handle large numbers of people. The plan was that no one would enter the hospital before they had stripped and deconned after which they give them hospital gowns to wear.

THAW

I think showers should be high on the agenda.

(MORE)

THAW (CONT'D)

Maybe right after the need to establish a welcoming committee for newcomers.

Lem looks up from his work on the laptop.

LEM

We'll need people assigned to meet the incoming trains as well as a team for cars coming in on the highway.

MARTHA

As we don't have hospital gowns, we also need a clothing drive.

LARRY

Sounds good.

LEM

So, Larry, we'll need plumbers to add outside showers. When we call the hardware store, let's ask them if they have Hazmat stickers. We'll need large leaf bags that we can label Hazmat for people to put their clothes in. We'll need a dump truck to collect the bags and cart them off a safe distance from town for the state to handle later.

Lem types something more.

THAW

If we run out of clothes, we can use the leaf bags until we find some. Just cut holes in them for the neck and arms. I'll take care of the hardware store list. What else do we need.

Lem looks up from his typing.

LEM

How about Potassium Iodide? Except it's not likely that even the drugstore has it.

LARRY

But maybe you might talk to the supermarket about medical supplies in general as hightailing it now to the Ellensville drugstore is out of the question.

MARTHA

Larry, suppose I talk to the supermarket and we set up some kind of a system where authorized people pick up any medical supplies that are needed and they keep a tab for the town council to reimburse them later.

Larry looks up from his computer.

LARRY

Good idea, Martha. We can do the same with the hardware store.

MARTHA

We can't have the whole world running around in leaf bags. So, we need clothes. We need flip-flops. Inexpensive sweat suits. Inexpensive bathing suits. Also, inexpensive housedresses. We need to establish a tab with the clothing store as well as the supermarket.

LARRY

Good idea.

LEM

Let's talk to Dody...

(to Larry)

... Thaw's dad about helping with the showers and sanitation issues. He knows everybody who's anybody in the plumbing business around here.

THAW

We can also use the school or the church for decon. The school has showers in the gym and we could collect air mattresses and the like for sleeping accommodations.

MARTHA

Maybe we should call Doc Evans to help us set up a sickbay in the school. There are bound to be some with radiation sickness.

LARRY

Good idea, Martha. Could you call Doc Evans? So, let's see. Thaw you have the shopping list.

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)

Martha you have the to-do list. And
Lem, you have the agenda and
highlights to be discussed. Yes?

Lem indicates his laptop.

LEM

I'll get everyone a printout of my
notes which includes the agenda.

THAW

Larry, maybe Lem should reach out
to the State Emergency Medical
Agency and the Red Cross. They're
probably overwhelmed at this time,
however they might have Potassium
Iodide we could use. And FEMA. Just
on the odd chance.

INT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S HOME - NIGHT

Lem's sister, MAY (40S) and her two daughters, DAHLIA (8) and
CAROLINE (12), arrive.

LEM

So glad you're here, May. But first
shed your clothes into this bag and
shower. After, Dahlia and Caroline
and you can each put on one of
these tees.

Lem holds a large garbage bag for their clothes.

MAY

Okay, girls, into the shower.
Clothes in this bag.

He gives May t-shirts and jeans to distribute.

LATER

May, Dahlia, and Caroline all in Tees. May wears men's shorts
held up by an extra long belt.

Lem hands May some bills.

MAY

Okay. So use these two fifties to
pick up three pairs of flip-flops
and underpants for us all.

Lem indicates a large green garbage bag.

LEM
 Meantime, I'll get these clothes
 locked in the shed.

EXT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - NIGHT

Thaw hugs Natalie and her sister JUDITH (30s) then shakes hands with her daughter HANNAH (12).

THAW
 So glad to see you all. Any
 problems on the trip?

NATALIE
 No. More traffic than usual but
 came straight through.

THAW
 Good. Now, two things. First there
 is a Village Council meeting in
 just a little. You can attend it or
 not as you wish.

NATALIE
 I'd like to go.

Thaw looks at Judith who closes her eyes and shakes a small negative nod.

THAW
 Okay. Second, as far as sleeping
 arrangements. They've been settled.
 Lem has two bedrooms. I just have
 the loft. So, Natalie, you stay
 with me, and Judith and Hannah, you
 stay with Lem. Also staying there
 will be Lem's sister, May, and her
 two daughters, Dahlia and Caroline.
 As for Lem, he'll be sleeping
 either on the futon in his living
 room or at the firehouse which
 we're setting up as a Point of
 Distribution.

EXT. LOCHLEE - TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Martha greets:

GRANNY (70s) who totes a cat carrier.

MANFRED (20s) and pregnant girlfriend, ELAINE (20s).

A Mexican woman, MARIA (30s), with teenage daughters, JUANITA (13) and ROZLYN (15).

Martha leads them to her --

CAR

They squeeze in for transport to her house for decon and fresh clothing.

MARTHA

Well, we'll do the best we can.
Manfred, suppose you sit in the
middle of the back seat and hold
the cat on your lap.

ELAINE

Martha. It's better if I hold the
carrier. Manfred is allergic to
cats.

MARTHA

Okay. Manfred, you sit in the
front, and Elaine will hold the cat
in the middle seat in the back.
Juanita, you sit on Rozlyn's lap by
the window. And Granny, you sit on
Maria's on the other side in the
back.

Everyone settles in.

MARTHA

Granny, you'll have to sleep on the
couch in the living room so I can
give one of spare bedrooms to
Manfred and Elaine and one to Maria
and her daughters. Now let me
explain about how you will all
decon.

Martha starts the car.

THE END

PART ONE