

**JOLT: A SAGA OF SURVIVAL**

EPISODE 1

MAGDUM HEIGHTS MELTDOWN

EMERGENCE

Written By

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Based on *Jolt: A Rural Noir*

A Novel By Roberta M Roy

**TEASE**

EXT. LOCHLEE - THAW'S CABIN - DAY

Stern DODY (70s), wears painters' overalls.

He peruses the cabin and surrounding area.

SUPER: "Early Fall, 2017"

INT. 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.

**END TEASE**

**ACT ONE**

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "Dissonance"

INT. 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

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

The plant is over 15 years old.  
Given 9-11 and Fukushima, 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

Come on, Mary. 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 take her into his arms. Mary buries her face in his chest.

INT. THAW'S CABIN - NIGHT

Snow frames the window panes.

SUPER: "A New Year, February, 2018"

As Thaw watches from the small table where they have just finished dinner. 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 as he enjoys another cup of coffee. They are both very relaxed and the conversation evolves very slowly initially and then, as Thaw frustrates, more rapidly.

NATALIE

We've got chemistry, Thaw.  
Chemistry.

THAW

I'd say. Enjoyed our fun afternoon, but I'd say there has to be more to it than just chemistry.

Thaw takes a sip from his cup.

NATALIE

Yeah? What?

Thaw stops with his cup mid-air.

THAW

Well, Natalie... six years? There's got to be more.

NATALIE

Like what?

THAW  
You like talkin' to me.

NATALIE  
I do.

THAW  
And walkin' with me?

NATALIE  
Yeah, so?

THAW  
And pullin' out fish with me?

NATALIE  
So what?

Thaw places his cup on the table. Natalie never looks toward Thaw, instead, just continues calmly washing the dishes.

THAW  
(Seriously)  
Don't those things mean something?

NATALIE  
I suppose.

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

Natalie holds up a plate to inspect before answering.

NATALIE  
(Coyly)  
You didn't ask me that.

THAW  
If I did?

Natalie continues to inspect the plate.

NATALIE  
(Innocently)  
If you did what?

Natalie places the plate in the rack.

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

(Unperturbed)

Well, you haven't asked me.

Thaw puts his cup down and sits more erectly. He speaks more quickly.

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

(Laconically)

Well, yes.

THAW

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

Natalie scrubs a stubborn spot on a pan. Her speech remains flat.

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 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 crosses the room and snatches Natalie's wrist. He tosses  
the scouring pad in the water.

When he grabs her hand and 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 looses a giggle of surprise and, without losing a beat, responds with a passionate kiss.

INT. 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 you somewhere over 30 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.

**END ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "Striking Out"

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 - CITY HALL - PLANNING DEPARTMENT - DAY

At her desk, Natalie looks off. Distracted.

NATALIE (V.O.)  
Meetings, dinners, presentations,  
but not much significant movement  
forward. City Planning is less  
idealistic than I envisioned.  
I want to cover wetlands and open  
spaces. Hopefully the Inter-County  
Planning Department will have an  
opening for me.

Natalie 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.

NATALIE( V.O.)  
All I can see is a crossroad. What  
am I going to do now?

INT. NATALIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Natalie hosts a lively gathering of friends over for drinks.

NATALIE (V.O.)  
I'm a mature city woman involved  
with a drop dead handsome,  
financially strapped and probable  
commitment phobe, woodsman slash  
artist. What's next?

END MONTAGE

INT. NATALIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Natalie wipes her eyes, blows her nose.

She thumbs through a stack of mail.

NATALIE

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

Natalie tears open the letter.

NATALIE (V.O.)

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. An  
interview. 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 HOUSE - DAY

Thaw pulls up.

Lem greets him, 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?

THAW

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

LEM

Whatever works.

THAW

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

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.

THAW

Thanks, Lem.

LEM

You're welcome. Good luck.

Thaw waves and mounts the vehicle.

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

Thaw, lost in his thoughts.

EXT. LOCHLEE - LEM'S CABIN - 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. NEW CARLTON UNIV. - 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?

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

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

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. 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.

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 Gallerie.

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 passes the album back, 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. 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  
How about you, Jason?

JASON  
Scored a goal at soccer practice.

MARY  
Yay, Jay!

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  
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  
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. 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 PLANNING BOARD - NATALIE'S OFFICE - SAME

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  
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.

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?

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

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.

**END ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "Restart"

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

(looks around)

(MORE)

THAW (CONT'D)

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. 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.

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.

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. 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. 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

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. LEM'S CABIN - 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?

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. 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?

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

Natalie casts a jealous eye at Sylvia.

NATALIE

Sylvia 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

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. 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. 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.

**END ACT THREE**



**ACT FOUR**

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "Gently Onward"

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Martha in the doorway between the kitchen and the former dining room.

Dody in the study.

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

FRONT DOOR

Martha opens the door for Lem while Dody lags in the study.

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 --

STUDY

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.

(MORE)

## LEM (CONT'D)

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, Marlana.  
You can come back in after Dody  
leaves.

Marlana 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. 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)

(MORE)

MARTHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

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?

**END EPISODE**