

TWO CLOSE: A STORY OF SURVIVAL

by

Roberta M Roy

Based On The Second Book in the Award Winning Jolt Survival
Trilogy

"Two Close: A Story Of Survival"

by

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ACT I "THE MELTDOWN"

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "April, 12, 2018"

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - LENORE'S CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

LENORE SOLER (40s), drives south. She tilts her head, perplexed by unusual, heavy northbound traffic.

EXT. SANDRA'S HOME - DAY

Baby sitter SANDRA (20-30's) meets Lenore at the door. RICKY (11) and brother STEVEN (8) ready; jackets on, backpacks in hand.

LENORE
Hi, Sandra. Boys, ready?

They both nod yes.

SANDRA
It's terrorism, Lenore.

LENORE
What are you talking about?

Sandra pushes Ricky forward with her left and grasps Lenore's left hand tightly in her right. She holds Lenore's eyes.

Ricky has a tight grip on Steven's hand.

SANDRA
Terrorism!

LENORE
Sandra, calm down. Where? What?

SANDRA
Call Carlos. The plant is down.

LENORE
What!?

SANDRA
A lot of power lines are down. The area around the plant for five to 15 miles is likely affected.

LENORE
The electricity is out?

She nods an emphatic yes.

SANDRA

Try your cell phone. I think it's gone. But Carlos's is in Bain, no? Maybe you can reach him.

As Lenore reaches for her cell phone, it rings.

LENORE

Carlos. Yes. I'm picking them up now.

(nods)

Yes. We'll go directly to the downstairs bathroom. I'll take a cooler, can opener, canned food, bread, bottled water, milk.

(listens)

Pillows and sleeping bags. I'm sure the boys will help.

(listens)

We'll stay away from the windows and where the walls are thickest. Hurry home.

Her Sons fidget, a little frightened.

LENORE

Carlos says radioactivity from a meltdown can spread ten to 30 miles.

SANDRA

We're almost 40 here.

LENORE

Falling ash can make an area radioactive for 72 hours.

SANDRA

Best stay here.

LENORE

It's a half hour to our house, and too soon for fallout.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - MARY'S CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

ROAD SIGN: "Magdum Heights Power Plant 12 miles"

Mary rolls down the driver side window, dials Lou.

MARY

Hi, Hun. How are you? I'm on my way to our lunch date. Meet you outside the gate. About 20 minutes. Love ya! See ya soon.

She lays her phone down next to a container of wet wipes and continues to the rendezvous with left arm out the window.

POPULATION CENTER

Mary tools past K through 12 schools, dozens of commuter apartment buildings and major rail hub.

Ahead, a massive regional hospital.

A van SQUEALS over double yellow to pass then cuts Mary off.

MARY

Lunatic!

The van SCREECHES to a halt past the hospital driveway. It turns to drive across the front lawn. To the main entrance.

A quarter mile away, Mary gapes in disbelief. She slows.

The van picks up speed. It smashes into the front entrance.

In a split second, the van vaporizes in a massive explosion.

Bits of concrete and steel pelt Mary's car. An airborne side view mirror from the van shatters the windshield.

A dusky soup of smoke and dust swirls around the car.

MARY (V.O.)

Dirty bomb?

Her view obscured, she manages to pull over a half mile on. Mary swabs her left arm with wet wipes.

Smaller pieces of debris rain down.

Mary leaps from the vehicle and disrobes. She tosses the clothes to the side of the road.

She pops the trunk, dons a sweat suit and flip flops. Mary mounts the car, rolls up the window. She peels a U-turn.

MARY (V.O.)

Lou. Jason. Marty.

SCREAMS rise in the black smoke.

EXT. MAGDUM HEIGHTS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT - SAME TIME

Lou strolls past the security shack. A friendly wave to the Guard and one back. Lou checks his watch.

As he waits, a LOW RUMBLE from the plant. Lou spins around to see water vapor explode from the cooling towers.

Explosions rip the cooling towers. Pieces break off and fall. Red flames lick the sky.

Lou hustles to the building.

A van barrels down the driveway, crashes through the barrier arm next to the shack.

The Guard fires their weapon, hits the van Driver. The van flips and skids to the side of the building. It detonates.

The force throws Lou head first into a light pole.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A volunteer fire department siren BLASTS nearby.

MARTY (10) and JASON (13) watch a distant red glare and smoke through the living room window.

EXT. BIG BOX STORE - SAME TIME

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

The BLARE of a volunteer fire department siren.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

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 at the distant glow and smoke.

BASEMENT

Ready to go, the Boys stuff items in their backpacks. Jason pockets the cash from the 'For Emergencies Only' tin box.

EXT. 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. BIXBY - LOCAL ROAD - GAS STATION - DAY

ROAD SIGN: "BIXBY"

Hank turns in.

HANK

This is as far as I go. My house is down the next street. You can use my phone to reach your dad. Or there's a pay phone here.

They enter woods until they no longer see the road.

Jason sits at the base of a tree. Marty plops next to him.

JASON

Chow down.

The Brothers eat in silence, finish sodas.

JASON

Okay, Marty. Ever onward.

They walk deeper into the woods and find --

AN ABANDONED HOUSE

Small, paintless. Windows and door intact. Porch, rotted and missing boards.

Jason treads across the porch. It holds.

He tries the door. It swings open with a CREAK. They enter --

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dry, a wood stove but no sink or toilet.

JASON

Here we are, Marty.

Jason lays his backpack on a bed, Marty on another against the opposite wall.

MARTY

(laughs)

Lucky, I guess.

Jason smiles and tousles his Brother's hair.

JASON

Guess so. Close enough to walk to the gas station. For food. Or phoning.

MARTY

What's outside?

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jason and Marty find an outhouse and a water pump. Jason pumps the handle. Nothing.

JASON

Needs priming, I guess. We can get water from the stream and prime it.

MARTY

There's a kettle inside we can use.

JASON

First, let's shake out the bedding while we still have light.

MARTY

If we get the pump to work, do you think we can drink it?

JASON

For washing. We'll get soap at the store. For drinking, bottled water.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lenore pulls food from the cabinets.

Ricky adds cartons of milk to a cooler with ice while Steven searches for requested items he carries downstairs.

CARLOS (40s), Lenore's husband, bursts through the door.

CARLOS

Boy, traffic's heavy!

Lenore finds kitchen implements she places on the counter.

CARLOS

I think everyone's headed home.

LENORE

Or going far away.

(to Steven)

Could you take our pillows to the downstairs bathroom?

Steven nods to Lenore.

LENORE

What do we do, Carlos?

CARLOS

Hunker down.

STEVEN

Hunker down?

RICKY

We stay inside and away from windows. For three days and nights.

CARLOS

Remember how I said a plant is not the same as an atomic bomb? That when one goes down it does not make a Hiroshima?

RICKY

What about Chernobyl?

CARLOS

If the Plant went down it's not like Chernobyl, Ricky.

RICKY

How do we know for sure?

CARLOS

It's a different design. It won't blow out. The dome will drop into the silo to shut down.

RICKY

Like the trunk of a car?

Carlos' nod: yes.

CARLOS

There could be fission that affects the immediate area. But no significant cloud of radioactive ash.

RICKY

We're 35 miles from the plant.

CARLOS

Which makes the chance of the radiation reaching us very low.

Carlos curls an arm around Lenore's waist.

CARLOS

We hunker down for 72 hours, stay inside and drink only bottled water.

RICKY

Sounds gudta' me.

CARLOS
Right now we need action.

RICKY
Action?

CARLOS
We need a large garbage bag. Our clothes might be contaminated. The bags are downstairs in the closet next to the bathroom.

RICKY
I'll get one, Dad.

STEVEN
Mommy, I'm hungry.

CARLOS
First things first, son.

Carlos lays a hand on Steven's shoulder.

CARLOS
Take the boys to the bathroom for a shower. You too. Put the clothes in the bag. I'll get rid of them later.

STEVEN
Why?

CARLOS
Deconning. In case radioactive ash fell on us. That's why we're staying in the downstairs bathroom. No windows.

LENORE
Boys, get a change of clothes.

CARLOS
Sneakers too. In the bag. Have something else for your feet after the shower.

Carlos heads to the master bedroom.

CARLOS (O.S.)
Then it's everybody downstairs.

LENORE
Boys, if you have a special game or toy bring it when you come.

Carlos returns to the kitchen, clothes and slippers in hand.

CARLOS

Done.

LENORE

No ifs, ands or buts.

INT. HOSPITAL - SEMI-PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "Two days after the Magdum Heights meltdown"

A NURSE (40s) checks Lou's drip.

Bandages surround his head.

The Nurse starts when she sees Lou gape at her.

NURSE

Hello. Are you awake?

Lou blinks in response.

NURSE

Can you talk?

He blinks again. The Nurse pats Lou's arm.

NURSE

Be right back.

Lou looks a little lost as he scans the room.

The Nurse returns with tall, dignified DR. GEORGE (50s) and CONNIE WILLIAMS (30s), a speech pathologist.

Lou looks each in the eye. He blinks twice at each after reading their badges. Dr. George offers a handshake to Lou.

DR. GEORGE

I'm Martin George, your doctor.
You've had a pretty severe injury
to your head.

Blink.

Connie holds cards with pictures, words and phrases.

CONNIE

I'm Connie Williams, a speech
language pathologist.

Lou blinks.

CONNIE
Is speaking difficult for you?

He blinks an answer.

CONNIE
Yes. Let's try yes-no questions.

A slight nod from Lou.

CONNIE
One blink for yes and two for no.
Do you understand me?

A blink.

CONNIE
Good. Can you read this card?

Yes.

CONNIE
Do you know your name?

Two blinks.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dr. George scans records on a laptop.

CONNIE
What do you think, Doctor?

DR. GEORGE
Given the extent of the damage to
the right side of his brain, it's
encouraging he remembered his first
name.

CONNIE
And could spell it.

DR. GEORGE
He reads. It suggests language
functions may be supported
receptively through reading.

CONNIE
He's still a pretty disabled pup.
(thinks)
His coma lasted at least a day.

DR. GEORGE

Post traumatic amnesia is pretty likely to last weeks to months.

CONNIE

Hopefully, he'll recall his last name. It would be nice if he had some family around him.

DR. GEORGE

The coma shielded him from the worst of the pain from the bruising on his side and hip.

Dr. George types on a laptop.

DR. GEORGE

Being awake means no need for passive physical therapy.

CONNIE

I'm sure he'll be weak.

DR. GEORGE

The likelihood of left side neglect is strong. He pointed with his right hand. With any luck he's right-handed.

He types, pauses.

DR. GEORGE

After you evaluate him, in addition to P-T, we'll set up daily feeding and speech language therapy. You can start anytime. P-T, we'll start tomorrow.

EXT. SOLERS' HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

SUPER: "Three days after the Magdum Heights meltdown"

Mary, weak and tired, climbs the front stairs and rings the bell. Ricky opens the door.

RICKY

Hello, Mrs. Matters. You okay?

MARY

Hi, Ricky. Not really. Is your mother in?

Lenore at the door.

LENORE
Mary! How are you?

MARY
No one else is home. Three days ago
I was near a dirty bomb that went
off. And radioactive dust from it.

LENORE
Come in. Come in.

Lenore steers Mary into --

INT. SOLERS' HOME - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

MARY
I'm clean, but not feeling well.

LENORE
Mary, I'm so sorry.

MARY
I'm going home. Can you bring me
food and water until it passes? The
main thing is to keep clean and
hydrated.

LENORE
You can't go home.

Mary sits.

MARY
I'm pretty low on energy. I'm not
sure the worst has hit.

LENORE
What about the boys?

MARY
They followed our plan and went
north.

LENORE
Stay here. I can't let you go home.

Lenore sits.

MARY
My immune defenses will be low.
I need to be kept clean.

LENORE
And away from people.

MARY
Radiation exposure makes one
vulnerable.

LENORE
Stay in the guest room. We'll sort
everything out. I didn't see Lou's
car, so I figured you all took off
after the meltdown. I didn't know
you were home. Where's Lou?

MARY
(sobs)
I don't know.

LENORE
Oh, Mary.

Lenore reaches for Mary but Mary pushes her away.

MARY
I may be contaminated. I don't
think so but best to stay away.

Carlos joins them.

CARLOS
Mary. Good to see you. I've been
worried about all of you.

MARY
Hello, Carlos.

CARLOS
Is there anything I can do?

LENORE
We're okay. Mary's not feeling
well. Please check Steven. He's a
little freaked out.

SOLERS' GUEST BEDROOM

Mary props up with pillows behind.

Lenore feeds her soup.

LENORE
Chicken and rice?

MARY
Thanks, Lenore.

Mary can only accept a few spoonful before she raises a hand to hold back more. She lays back, exhausted.

LENORE
If you need anything, call. I'll keep the others out to limit germ exposure. I'll check back in a while.

A weak wave from Mary before her eyes close.

KITCHEN

Carlos waits for Lenore to return.

LENORE
Definitely looks like radiation sickness.

CARLOS
Is she nauseous?

LENORE
Not now. Said she had been. Took a few spoonful of soup and a sip of water.

Lenore sits. Carlos sits.

CARLOS
If the dose was substantial she'll be sick for three or four weeks. After that, it depends.

LENORE
On what?

CARLOS
She might have headaches and nausea. If the dose is large enough, hair loss.

LENORE
Best no hair loss.

CARLOS
How's her temperature?

LENORE
Around one hundred. She has chills and dry cough. Really tired.

INT. HOSPITAL - SEMI-PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

A drip flows into Lou's arm.

Connie cranks the bed to a 60 degree angle.

CONNIE

Are you comfortable, Lou?

Lou blinks once.

Connie offers custard in a plastic cup.

CONNIE

We need to find out if you can swallow. Would you like to try this?

Lou blinks once.

Connie feeds Lou a small amount of custard. It goes down.

She continues. Lou swallows with little difficulty.

CONNIE

That was great!

Lou manages a weak smile.

CONNIE

For now, pureed food. We'll try soft foods tomorrow.

He looks at the intravenous.

CONNIE

That'll have to stay 'til you're eating meals. Don't worry. You're doing well.

One blink from Lou.

Connie hands a pad and pencil to him.

CONNIE

Can you try the A-B-Cs?

Lou's writes large, loose and only on the right side of the PAD: "a d L b".

CONNIE

Thank you, Lou.

Connie works a chart of simple pictures with Lou.

CONNIE

What did you do with custard, Lou?

Lou points to the "Eat" picture.

CONNIE

That's a lot, Lou. I'll let you rest.

Lou points to "Lie down."

She adjusts the bed to a 30 degree angle. Lou falls asleep.

As Connie turns to leave the room, Dr. George enters.

DR. GEORGE

How'd he do, Connie?

CONNIE

Well, he can write. Sequence was absent and alphabetic content was incomplete and not in order. He wrote only on the right half of the paper. So, left side neglect.

Connie shares Lou's chart and writing with Dr. George.

DR. GEORGE

Verbal expressive aphasia, reads and writes. Sequencing difficulty. Left side visual neglect.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Lenore sets a breakfast tray on the bed before Mary.

MARY

Jason and Marty probably left immediately.

LENORE

Maybe they saw the fires.

MARY

Fires?

LENORE

Carlos told me that fires were visible almost immediately.

MARY

That explains it. They probably thought it was the plant.

Lenore hands Mary the spoon for her cereal.

LENORE

Carlos thought it might be arson.
But maybe it was dirty bombs.

MARY

That would explain why they left so
quick. Probably hitched a ride.

LENORE

Yes. Probably.

MARY

Jason is resourceful. Marty is
smart and idolizes him. He'll
follow Jason's lead.

LENORE

They're really good boys.

MARY

Their bikes, backpacks, and the
'in case' money are missing. Thank
goodness it's spring and the
weather's warming.

Lenore removes the tray then returns with a basin of water, a
washcloth and soap.

Ricky brings a plastic mat for under the basin.

Steven tags along.

LENORE

Wash up time.

RICKY

Hi, Mrs. Matter. How are you?

MARY

A little tired. But I'll be fine.

STEVEN

You got radiafon on you?

MARY

Yes. But I cleaned it off quickly
and showered when I got home so
I'll be okay. Not to worry, Steven.

STEVEN

Where's Marty?

MARY

He went north. With Jason.

STEVEN

They shoulda come here.

MARY

I guess they didn't want to bother you. They were going for just a few days.

STEVEN

When are they coming back?

Mary looks at Lenore and back at Steven

MARY

After we talk to them and I'm ready for them to come home.

STEVEN

Okay.

Steven heads out of the room.

STEVEN

I miss 'em.

MARY

Me too.

RICKY

Anything else, Mom?

LENORE

No. We're fine. Thanks, Ricky.

KITCHEN - LATER

Carlos hauls in groceries.

Lenore, Steven and Ricky put them away.

CARLOS

Gas stations are open again. What is it now? Two and a half weeks?

Lenore and the Boys work in silent cooperation.

Mary joins them.

RICKY

Mrs. Matters. You're up.

MARY
Still tired. But I think my
temperature is down.

LENORE
Wonderful.

MARY
And still have all my hair.

CARLOS
Even better.

MARY
I think Monday I'll start phoning
about Lou and the boys. I'll start
with the Red Cross.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "Late April"

The Boys freshen beds and sweep.

MARTY
You hungry? I am.

JASON
(stretches, yawns)
I could do with something.

He lifts a carton of milk from his backpack, drinks from it.

MARTY
Me, too.

Marty pulls on his shoes. Jason follows suit

JASON
Let's call home tomorrow. Maybe the
phone is working again.

MARTY
Worth a try. Their cellphones too.

JASON
Problem is the grid may be down.
If we don't get them, we keep
trying until the grid is up.

MARTY
Meantime, we rough it here.

Jason stands. Marty follows suit.

JASON
(laughs)
Don't think we have a choice.

MARTY
Hey, Jay. Let's pick up flashlights
and batteries. A padlock, too.

JASON
Sounds good. Glad it's April.

Jason and Marty head out the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - SEMI PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Connie enters with a cup of custard.

Lou in bed at a near 90 degree angle.

CONNIE
Good morning, Lou. Brought custard
to celebrate two weeks of progress.

When Connie extends the spoon toward Lou, he knocks the
custard from her hand.

Connie moves back.

CONNIE
It's okay. You're all right. The
injury sometimes makes you angry.

Lou shoots an intense glare at Connie.

LOU
Talk.

CONNIE
You said talk. You spoke!

LOU
Talk! Talk!

Connie writes 'talk' on a pad, shows it to Lou.

Lou reads aloud.

LOU
Talk.

Connie writes 'Lou talk'.

LOU

Lou talk.

She adds 'Connie'.

LOU

Lou talk Connie.

CONNIE

Lou, you're talking. Fantastic.
Rest now. We'll do more later.

Lou falls back on the pillows, exhausted by the effort.

Connie rolls the bed down and leaves him to rest.

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Marty and Jason sit under a tree where they take their lunch from a bag and eat it. Jason opens the bag.

JASON

We have to be careful to buy only what we need.

MARTY

Nights are the worst.
(laughs)
Can't hang around the store or we'll get picked up as hobos.

JASON

Best we can hope for is a full moon. The flashlights help.

Marty bursts into sobs.

MARTY

Jason.

JASON

What's up?

MARTY

Just worried about Mom and Dad.

Jason puts his arm around Marty.

JASON

Maybe they're staying with friends.

MARTY

Do you think they're all right?

JASON

Of course. Mom would have been at work or going to Dad. They were going to have lunch because Mom had a half day.

MARTY

Why haven't we heard about them?

JASON

Phone and internet went down.

Marty calms.

MARTY

What happens when you call?

JASON

It rings but no answering machine.

MARTY

The grid is back up then?

JASON

Yeah. I guess. Don't worry. We're safe. I'm sure they are, too.

MARTY

What if they're not?

Jason hands Marty his wrapped sandwich.

JASON

Problem is, there's not much we can do about it. The best thing is to take care of ourselves. When we hook up again, they won't worry about us. In case they have their own problems.

MARTY

Like what?

JASON

Radiation sickness. Injury. Maybe they're both in the hospital and that's why they're not home.

MARTY

How do we find them?

Jason unwraps his sandwich.

JASON

We have to wait. We hole up here
for a while and then go to Bain.
With the grid up, the Red Cross can
help us.

MARTY

Good plan.

JASON

Relax. Time to eat. Tomorrow is
another day.

INT. HOSPITAL - SUNROOM - DAY

SUPER: "AUGUST 23, 2018"

Connie and Lou in a therapy session.

A summer storm brews outside.

Lou's speech: flat with little intonation.

CONNIE

Looks like a storm, Lou.

Lou considers the dark sky.

LOU

Hope Jason and Marty are home from
school.

CONNIE

They probably are.

LOU

Mary comes home later than they do.
Jason will watch over Marty.

Connie masks surprise at his sudden memory improvement.

CONNIE

What does Mary do?

LOU

Same as you.

CONNIE

Mary helps people talk?

LOU

Yes.

CONNIE
Do I know her? What's her name?

LOU
Mary Matters.

Connie pushes further.

CONNIE
You're Lou Matters?

LOU
Lou and Mary Matters.

Connie, nonchalant by this enormous leap in recall.

CONNIE
I bet you're both really proud of
Jason and Marty.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Dr. George and Connie pass and stop.

DR. GEORGE
How is our friend Lou doing?

CONNIE
(smiles)
Well, the good news is he is no
longer our friend Lou. He's our
friend Lou Matters.

DR. GEORGE
He recalled his family name?

CONNIE
His wife and sons' names are Jason,
Marty and Mary Matters -- a Speech
Language Pathologist.

Dr. George smiles.

DR. GEORGE
The search can begin.

CONNIE
I can find her through the state
licensing board.

DR. GEORGE
The Red Cross will help, too.

CONNIE

As an S-L-P, his wife will
understand the flat affect.

DR. GEORGE

Everything in time.

CONNIE

Everything in time.

EXT. WOODS - STREAM - DAY

Jason holds a fishing pole with line in the water.

JASON

It's been pretty nice here.

MARTY

Yeah. Now all we have to figure out
is how to boil potatoes on a wood
stove.

JASON

I bought us cards. And books to
read.

MARTY

We're lucky. The gas station has
everything we need.

Marty skips a stone across the water.

JASON

Including pre-pay phones.

MARTY

With fall coming, we should try to
reach home again.

JASON

Yeah. Let's.

MARTY

The fishing pole comes in handy.

JASON

You wanna try?

MARTY

Sure.

Marty whips the rod back and casts into the stream.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sips tea when the phone rings.

MARY

Hello?

RED CROSS WORKER (V.O.)

Hello. I'd like to speak to a Mary Matters.

MARY

This is she.

RED CROSS WORKER (V.O.)

Mrs. Matters, I'm calling from the American Red Cross.

MARY

Yes.

RED CROSS WORKER (V.O.)

We've located Lou Matters. Do you know him?

MARY

Oh my goodness! Yes. Yes! He's my husband. Where is he?

RED CROSS WORKER (V.O.)

The Waxton Hospital Rehab Center. Do you know it?

MARY

I know it. How is he?

RED CROSS WORKER (O.S.)

Not to worry. He's fine, and would like to see you. Can you come to the Center?

MARY

I'm on my way.

Mary hangs up and wastes no time. She grabs purse and keys.

She stops to make a call.

Tears track down Mary's face. She both cries and smiles.

MARY

Lenore. I'm on my way to see Lou at Waxton Rehabilitation Center. He's asking for me. Can you believe it?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
(listens)
Yes. Call you later.

ACT II "TWO AND TWO"

INT. WAXTON REHABILITATION CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

Connie leads Mary to a --

THERAPY ROOM

Lou waits at a table. As Mary enters, he holds out his right hand to her. She takes it with both hands.

His smile, weak.

MARY

It's been so long. I've missed you terribly, Lou.

LOU

I've missed you. And the boys.

MARY

How are you?

LOU

I'm doing okay.

They sit. Mary takes the seat nearest Lou -- on his left.

Connie faces Lou.

CONNIE

Mrs. Matters. For now, it would be better if you sat on Lou's right side. He has difficulty seeing things on his left due to left side neglect.

Mary nods understanding, switches sides.

She takes Lou's hand in hers. Lou's expression remains flat.

MARY

Has Lou told you about our sons?

CONNIE

Of course. Jason and Marty.

Mary looks at Lou, thinks for a bit.

MARY

Connie, when do you think Lou might be able to come home?

CONNIE

It depends. Currently, he needs close supervision as his judgement is not always the best.

MARY

In what ways?

Connie addresses Lou.

CONNIE

Lou, what do you think? What happens when we cook together?

LOU

I sometimes forget to take care of things on my left. Because I don't see them.

CONNIE

When the pans on the left side of the stove need water or need to be turned down.

MARY

I understand.

CONNIE

He also has left side weakness.

LOU

When I went to take a pot of water out of the sink. I can't hold it with my left hand.

Lou raises his left hand.

CONNIE

You're making good progress, Lou.

(to Mary)

He can dress and feed himself but he needs prompts to use his left arm and hand to do so.

LOU

(to Connie)

And writing?

CONNIE

When he writes he'll forget to hold the paper in place until it slips to remind him to use his left to hold it.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

He has occupational therapy where they're working on the use of the left for everyday tasks.

She laughs.

CONNIE

As well as holding paper while writing.

MARY

Wow, Lou. That's a pretty full schedule.

CONNIE

Lou, the good news is your memory is doing well. Can you tell Mary what we work on?

LOU

My memory. Yes, it is better.

Connie looks from Lou to Mary and back to Lou.

CONNIE

What do we work on, Lou?

LOU

Tying a shoe. Brushing my teeth. I use the toothbrush but forget the toothpaste. Don't get second meanings. Most jokes aren't funny.

CONNIE

He can read. It was slow in the beginning but now he can read a full paragraph and tell me what it was about.

MARY

So you think it's a little early for him to come home?

Connie nods: yes.

MARY

Perhaps I can bring him home to visit.

CONNIE

Possibly.

MARY

What do you think, Lou? Would you like to come home to visit?

For the first time, Lou smiles.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary on the phone as she putters.

MARY

Nora. Called to say hello. August heat as bad out there as it is here?

(listens)

I still get tired as the day wears on, but I'm doing well. Thank you.

Mary moves dishes from drainer to the cabinet.

MARY

And how are you all?

(listens)

So Cal graduates in June?

(listens)

I'm trying to find them.

She sweeps the floor.

MARY

Every day I browse the Red Cross website for missing persons. I try their nicknames and given names. Nothing.

(listens)

No. I'll call you next week. Maybe by then... Okay. Bye.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - DAY

Trees heavy with ripe apples.

Jason balances on a limb, munches a juicy one.

JASON

I've been thinking.

MARTY

What about?

JASON

Winter's coming.

Marty on the limb of another tree. He snatches an apple.

MARTY

I s'pose.

JASON

We need warmer digs. I've been thinking we should move.

MARTY

To?

JASON

Don't know yet. Maybe hitch a ride to Bain. There have to be people still on the road who escaped the meltdown.

MARTY

Yeah. Bain. Yeah. They probably have Red Cross there. We could ask them about Mom and Dad.

JASON

Sure. They must have shelters, too.

MARTY

Wonder if Hank has plans of going there?

JASON

Marty, you're a genius.

MARTY

He said he lived at number ten.

Marty jumps down.

MARTY

Let's go now.

Marty shoves apples into his pockets.

Jason climbs down and swipes apples.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mary on the phone.

MARY

Hello, Lenore. Just calling to confirm.

(listens)

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Looking forward to having you and Carlos over for dinner tonight.

(listens)

Lou doesn't ask about the boys. I'm sure he will tonight when we're alone.

(listens)

You're right. I have to tell him we don't know where they are.

(listens)

Well, he's pretty flat emotionally, so I don't think he'll become too upset with the news.

(listens)

Lou and I will be back around four. We'll eat around five or five-thirty. He gets tired by seven.

(listens)

Chocolate cake would be great. See you around five.

INT./EXT. WAXTON REHABILITATION CENTER - MATTERS' CAR - DAY

Mary holds the passenger side door open for Lou to enter.

She reaches across to secure the seatbelt. He prevents her.

LOU

That's okay. I can do it.

Lou takes the seatbelt in his right hand and clicks it in.

Mary slides into the driver's side, starts the car.

INT./EXT. COUNTY HIGHWAY - MATTERS' CAR, MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Lou breaks the quiet between them.

LOU

Nice being out.

MARY

Sure is. Lenore and Carlos are looking forward to seeing you.

Lou, silent.

MARY

I cooked creamed chicken with rice and peas. You like that.

He swivels his head to see her.

MARY

I don't know when they're coming home.

LOU

Have you talked with them about it?

MARY

I haven't.

LOU

I want to see them. Talk to them about it.

Mary looks at her watch.

MARY

My goodness. It's almost five. I have to put the rice on.

She leaps up and heads for the kitchen.

Lou follows, speaks to Mary's back.

LOU

Maybe we could call them.

Mary does not turn back to Lou.

MARY

Let's wait until after dinner to talk about it.

Lou returns to the couch, becomes lost in thought.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Lenore and Carlos enter.

CARLOS

Lou, my man.

Carlos then Lenore hug Lou.

LENORE

How nice to see you. You look great. Especially after all you've been through.

LOU

You're looking well, too, Lenore.

Lou smiles broad.

MARY

Haven't seen you smile like that in ages.

They seat for dinner; Mary on Lou's left.

CARLOS

Everything looks so tasty.

MARY

Lou. Please pass this to Lenore.

Mary taps Lou's arm to get him to look at her before he attends to the request to pass the cream.

CARLOS

It's really good to see not only you but Mary doing well too.

LOU

Why? Was Mary sick?

CARLOS

Oh. You didn't know?

MARY

Yes, Lou. Before I found you, I wasn't well. Lenore and Carlos took care of me.

Lou turns to look at Mary with his right field of vision.

LOU

You were sick?

MARY

On the day of the meltdown, we were going to have lunch together so I was near the plant. There was an explosion nearby. It was a nice day. I had my window open and my arm on the window frame. A splat of something hit me. I immediately thought "dirty bomb" so I pulled over and cleaned it off.

LOU

Was it radioactive?

MARY

It turned out it was. I threw away my clothes and put on the sweat suit and flip-flops from the trunk.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

After that, I headed home, showered
and hunkered down.

Lou nods his head but his facial expression does not change.

LOU

You did well.

MARY

Within a day I knew I was getting
radiation sickness. I waited 72
hours and went to Carlos and
Lenore's.

LOU

You hunkered down first?

MARY

Yes. The Solers took care of me for
a few weeks. Kept me clean, fed and
hydrated. Gradually, I got better
and knew there would be no lasting
effects.

Mary has grateful looks for Lenore and Carlos.

MARY

I don't know what I would have done
without you both. The phones were
out and everyone was hunkered down.

Lou reaches his right hand toward Mary. She takes it.

LOU

Oh, Mary. I'm so sorry.

They all sit in quiet contemplation for a tick.

LOU

What about the boys? They didn't
hunker down?

MARY

That's what I was waiting to tell
you. When you were ready. When you
asked...

Lou fixes on Mary.

LOU

Yes?

MARY

When I got home there was a note from Jason. They left before the threat of fallout was imminent. They went north.

LOU

When did they return?

MARY

That's it, Lou. They haven't.

Lou thinks a beat.

LOU

They went to your sister's?

MARY

No. They didn't.

LOU

Then where did they go?

MARY

That's the problem.

LOU

What's the problem?

MARY

They went north. I just don't know where.

EXT. NEAR BIXBY - STREET - DAY

Jason and Marty on the street where Hank lives.

JASON

See what I see?

MARTY

Yeah. Can't miss Hank's truck.

They continue to --

EXT. HANK'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

-- and knock on the front door of number ten
Hank answers.

HANK

Look at you two. All summer-tanned and healthy. Whatcha' up ta'?

MARTY

Hank, we were fixin' to get a lift to Bain. Our dad is there for work and he'd have to take time off to come for us. We're wondering if you might be going there soon.

HANK

Danged if I'm not. Gotta deliver firewood to a family who like a real fire in the winter. They're storin' in now. Goin' up tomorrow. Early. Say around six. Like ta' beat the traffic.

Jason and Marty share smiles.

MARTY

Great. See you at six tomorrow. Have a good night.

HANK

You, too. What was it? Jason? Marty?

JASON

You got it, Hank. I'm Jason.

MARTY

Guess that means I'm Marty.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Marty and Jason pack their stuff into backpacks.

MARTY

Do you think we will be able to contact the Red Cross in Bain? You know. About Mom and Dad?

JASON

Should be able to.

MARTY

I'm worried about them. I'd like to know where they are.

JASON

Me, too. I miss Mom's laugh, and
Dad planning fun stuff to do.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mary and Lenore on the phone.

MARY

It's hard, Lenore. They should be
in school. I should be waving them
off to school. Somehow, I still
believe they're safe and sound.
I miss them.

(listens)

Every morning I get up early to
give me time to think about them.
To remember them separate and
together. Celebrate how beautiful
they were... are.

(listens)

I imagine them in a small town.
Jason in charge. Maybe in a
shelter. A lean to in the woods.
And somehow, I'm sure, they're
alive. They're well.

(listens)

Just as Lou and I are reunited, I'm
sure we'll all be together again.

(listens)

Yes, Lenore. I can't give up hope.

(listens)

Mary sips her coffee.

MARY

My days are so busy with school,
visits to Lou, shopping and calls
to the police. Follow up online and
by phone with the Red Cross.

(listens)

Thank goodness Lou is insulated and
accepting. His awareness of the
passing of time might be lessened.
Whatever. His relentless optimism
protects him.

(listens)

The best days for me are exhaust-me
days. It reduces the intensity of
dreams. Sometimes at night I almost
seem to float above my bed. Those
are the worst. I wake up exhausted.

(listens)

(MORE)

MARTY

Umm, a container of milk and an egg sandwich. With ketchup.

LATER

The Brothers eat in silence.

The Couple takes a place next to them.

ELDERLY MAN

Morning.

MARTY

Morning.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You boys are up and out early.

MARTY

We're meeting our dad. Our uncle dropped us off on the way to work.

JASON

Yeah.

MARTY

We heard there's a lot of homeless people here. You know. Since the meltdown.

ELDERLY MAN

(rolls eyes)

Tell me about it.

MARTY

Is it bad?

ELDERLY MAN

Bad enough. They turned that old hotel over there into a shelter. Welcome everybody. There's a smaller shelter around the corner. Used to be a store.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Just sign in, no questions asked; a place to sleep and get free meals.

MARTY

Ya don't say.

Jason nudges Marty's foot with his.

INT. WAXTON REHABILITATION CENTER - THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Mary confers with Connie and RAY (30s), a Physical Therapist, about Lou's progress.

CONNIE

How are Lou's home visits going?

MARY

We usually stop at a diner to eat. I stay to his left so he is protected and guided by me. At home he gets into pajamas and robe then T-V until bedtime. In the morning, I help him dress then make breakfast as he watches.

RAY

It's likely the number of things Lou can do independently is limited by his impulsivity and difficulty handling where he is in space.

CONNIE

What else can he do at home?

MARY

When we eat together, I get the dishes from the cabinet and stack them on the table for him to set. As he's only home one night, he doesn't shower but handles things well in front of the bathroom sink and using the mirror to wash, brush teeth and comb his hair.

CONNIE

How about sequencing?

MARY

He's getting better with daily rituals. Like now he washes and dries his face and remembers to get both toothbrush and toothpaste out rather than just the toothbrush and go back for the toothpaste.

RAY

Does he remember to use his left hand?

MARY

That's really improving, but sometimes I have to prompt him when he has his fork in his right hand to pick up his napkin or knife with his left.

CONNIE

He's lucky to have you, Mary.

MARY

Thank you, Connie. I still think he'll need a care aide when he comes home for longer periods.

Ray stands in preparation to leave.

RAY

Yes. It'll be a while before he can be safe to cook on a stove alone.

MARY

Good news is that he's beginning to show interest in using a computer.

CONNIE

That's great. He'll use both hands. Looking at the screen will improve his left eye movement to read the entire screen.

RAY

His left side strength has improved to near normal, but I think Lou can go home when his impulsivity is adequately controlled. It has improved, but we don't want him going home and trying to use a lawn mower, drive a car, or use a stove.

MARY

He loves it at home. Next time he's there, I'll talk to him about it.

EXT. BAIN - THE BAIN HOTEL - DAY

WINDOW SIGN: "Bain Municipal Disaster Relief Center"

POV - THROUGH THE WINDOW

A Man at a registration table speaks to Jason and Marty. He points to a door to --

INT. BAIN - DISASTER RELIEF CENTER - DORMITORY - CONTINUOUS

A steady stream of People come and go.

Privacy blankets hang to divide spaces in the large room.

The Boys claim two unoccupied single beds. Jason sweeps back the blanket that separates him from Marty.

MARTY

Back to school. The social worker
said she'll enroll us tomorrow.

JASON

Missed the first month. We'll have
to catch up.

Marty shrugs, confident.

MARTY

Wonder what the kids are like.

JASON

It's better than wandering the
streets. It's safer. And warmer.

MARTY

Think it's time to call the Red
Cross?

JASON

I don't know. It seems too early to
try. They still have shelters here
so far from the plant. Who knows
what's going on at home? I think we
need to wait. If Mom or Dad are
hurt or in the hospital, it'll give
them time to get better before they
have to take care of us again.

Jason shows his Brother an index card.

JASON

Took this from the supermarket.

MARTY

(reads)

Person needed to trim shrubbery and
mow the large lawn of older home
near downtown Bain. Phone 555-8800.

JASON

Earn spending money. Whaddayathink?

MARTY
What's t'lose?

The Boys unpack their meager belongings.

INT. BAIN - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Jason and Marty dial the number on the index card.

ALICE SUNDERLAND (70s) answers.

Marty leans in close to the earpiece.

JASON
Hello?

MRS. SUNDERLAND (V.O.)
Hello?

JASON
My name is Jason Matters. My
brother and I would like to mow
your lawn and trim shrubberies.

MRS. SUNDERLAND (V.O.)
Two of you? That sounds like a nice
idea. My dad used to hire out when
he was a young; to mow lawns and
trim shrubbery. You sound young.

JASON
I'm almost fourteen and my brother
is going on eleven.

MRS. SUNDERLAND (V.O.)
I'm Alice Sunderland. I pay 30
dollars a week for mowing and 20
for keeping the bushes and grounds
around them.

JASON
That sounds fair.

Marty mouths "fifty a week" then high fives Jason.

MRS. SUNDERLAND (V.O.)
Why don't you stop by so I can meet
you both and we can talk about the
responsibilities?

JASON
Sure. Where do you live?

EXT. BAIN - MRS. SUNDERLAND'S HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Pruning shears lie on a bench and a gas lawn mower cools off near the porch steps.

The front lawn, freshly mowed. Half the bushes, cut back.

Alice surveys the property.

MRS. SUNDERLAND

You boys do nice work.

MARTY

Thanks, Mrs. Sunderland. It's not as easy as I thought.

MRS. SUNDERLAND

I know. My groundskeeper retired. The place was so overgrown.

MARTY

We've been doing the best we can for the past few weeks.

MRS. SUNDERLAND

Your hard work shows. I do appreciate it.

JASON

Thanks, Mrs. Sunderland.

MARTY

Soon the leaves will be falling.

MRS. SUNDERLAND

That's right. But it's ten o'clock. Time for cookies and milk, don't you think?

JASON

Sounds good to me.

Mrs. Sunderland leaves to get the goodies.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - DAY

Late fall. Gold and red leaves float to the ground.

Mary packs flyers with images of her sons into the car.

Lenore lends a hand.

MARY

Checked with the police this morning. Not a thing. Browsed the NamUs government website for anything new. Nothing. I'm going to Bixby tomorrow to put these up around town.

LENORE

I can come with you.

MARY

Would you? I kept Lou out of it. It would be too stressful... for both of us.

INT. BAIN - DISASTER RELIEF CENTER - DORMITORY - DAY

Center volunteer JAKE (20s) offers donated winter clothes.

JAKE

We've got winter coats, hats, gloves and boots. There's blue, green, and red coats.

MARTY

Red for me.

JASON

Green or blue is fine. Maybe green.

Jake finds the jackets and hands them to the Boys.

JAKE

(points)

Help yourselves to gloves and a hat from that box.

Jason and Marty sort through. Both take a black hat and gloves. Marty also stuffs a red pair into his pocket.

Jason grabs Marty's wrist, whispers,

JASON

Put them back, Marty.

Marty stares down Jason but replaces the red gloves.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - MARY'S CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

Mary and Lou tool along.

MARY

Excited to be coming home for the weekend, Lou?

LOU

Sure. Lookin' forward to it.

He looks out the window at the passing landscape.

LOU

What about the boys? What are we going to do to find them?

A quick side glance from Mary.

MARY

I'm working with the Red Cross, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, NamUs for short, and the police.

LOU

What do they say?

MARY

The number of missing people who ran to escape the risk of contamination is still high. About a third of those who left are still unaccounted for.

LOU

Don't they use shelters?

MARY

A lot of people took to the woods to rough it.

LOU

Jason has fair survival skills, and he would watch over Marty. Maybe they're roughing it.

MARY

There are reports of people reuniting after long separations every day.

LOU

There must be something else we can do.

INT. BAIN - DISASTER RELIEF CENTER - DORMITORY - DAY

The Brothers lie on their beds.

Jason spots wrapped candy under Marty's mattress.

JASON
What's that?

MARTY
Some candy I picked up.

JASON
Candies you took?

MARTY
All the kids do it.

Jason sits up and confronts Marty.

JASON
It's the kids you hang with. Not
us. Not you.

MARTY
We do it for the fun of it.

JASON
Fun? Stealing is now fun?

MARTY
Nobody knows. Nobody cares.

Jason reaches under Marty's mattress, pulls out candy, a new deck of cards and a top.

He drops the booty on Marty's mattress.

JASON
I'm not part of the gang you hooked
up with at school. I know. I care.
And I'm thinking it's time for us
to move on. North. To a farm where
they'll put us up in return for
work.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lou at his computer. He looks at Mary who stands beside him.

LOU

My left hand is still coming back, so I use it for Control-Alt-Delete, caps and tabbing and type with my right. Sometimes I go very slow and watch them as I type with both hands.

MARY

How's it going with Facebook and Twitter posts?

LOU

I'm still a little slow reading, but can do it. Every weekend I check to see if anyone's seen Jason or Marty.

Mary pats him on the shoulder before she leaves.

Lou reads the computer monitor. He lights up, excited.

LOU

Mary! Look at this.

Mary hurries back and scans the monitor.

LOU

Read this.

MARY

Hello, I work in a store up the river toward Bixby. Last summer there were two boys who came in regular to buy food and fishing line. They were around a few weeks, but I have not seen them in a few months now. I just figured they were on vacation. They looked a lot like your sons. Let me know if I can help.

LOU

Whaddaya think?

MARY

I think we should call the Bixby police. And write back to ask the man to help by asking around about the boys.

LOU

We should visit Bixby ourselves.

INT. WAXTON REHABILITATION CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

Connie greets Lou and Mary.

CONNIE

Happy Sunday! Nice to see both of you. I have good news.

MARY

Really? What?

CONNIE

We think Lou can begin to spend Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at home. We'll take it one day at a time. If that works, we'll think about Lou living at home full time.

MARY

You really think he's ready?

CONNIE

Yes. He'll continue with O-T and S-T twice a week each at home and P-T once a week. He still has a few areas of weakness, but it shouldn't affect his ability to be safe, care for himself and navigate the home.

MARY

I'm a bit taken aback. But then you're right. He does handle himself well. We've been going to Bixby on weekends. I still have him hold my hand but rarely have to watch what he's up to in order to keep him safe.

She laughs aloud, grabs Lou's hand and looks him in the eyes.

MARY

Oh, my goodness, Lou. Perhaps I have been babying you too much.

LOU

I love it when you baby me... Baby.

Lou hugs Mary. They have warm smiles for each other.

CONNIE

You can pick him up Sunday night or Monday morning. Your choice.

MARY
LOU
 Sunday.
 Sunday.
 The both laugh.

EXT. NEAR BIXBY - HANK'S STREET - DAY

A weary Mary and Lou plod down the sidewalk.

MARY
 We've driven north so many times.
 Maybe today. Thanksgiving is coming
 and I want them home.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DOOR TO DOOR

Mary knocks on a front door.

She shows the flyer to the TALL RESIDENT (30s)

MARY
 Hello. We were wondering if you've
 seen these boys?

TALL RESIDENT
 No. Sorry. I haven't.

The next house.

MARY
 Have you seen these boys?

The ELDERLY RESIDENT (60s) dons glasses to look at the flyer.

ELDERLY RESIDENT
 Can't say I have.

Hank's tumbledown house.

They knock. Hank answers.

HANK
 Yeah? What can I do ya' fer?

MARY
 We were looking for our sons. Jason
 and Marty Matters.

Mary shows Hank the flyer.

HANK
Let's take a looksee.
(recognition)
Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I know' em.

MARY
Really?

HANK
Yeah. The boys I picked up down
near Ariana. They was hitchin' a
ride north to join their father.

MARY
When?

Hank hands back the flyer.

HANK
Last April. What I didn't know then
was there was a meltdown at Magdum
Heights. Dunno if they was runnin'
from it or not.

MARY
Where'd you take them?

HANK
Dropped them off at the gas station
up the street. Told them if they
ever needed anything, I lived at
number ten.

MARY
Was that the last you saw them?

HANK
Nope.

Hank steps out onto the porch.

MARY
You saw them again? When?

HANK
Musta been mid-October.

MARY
Where were they?

HANK

They came to my doorstep. Hadn't seen them since I dropped them off at the station. But there they were.

MARY

What did they say?

HANK

Well, they wondered if I would be goin' to Bain any time soon.

MARY

And...?

Hank sits down in a rocker.

HANK

I told them I was the next day and to be here in the mornin' if they wanted a lift.

MARY

Did you give them a lift?

HANK

Yup. Right to the center of Bain.

MARY

Where in Bain?

HANK

Main drag near the donut shop. They said their dad lived not far from there.

MARY

You just let them out.

HANK

Yep. Right.

MARY

And that was in mid-October?

HANK

Yep. Nice boys. Polite. After the meltdown, gave a lot of people lifts here and there. But they seemed to have family they was going to.

MARY
Thank you so much...

Hank stands. Shakes Mary's hand.

HANK
Hank.

MARY
(hands him a card)
Hank. Our contact info. Just in case.

Mary and Lou head to their car.

MARY
There's a trooper's barracks north of here. Let's stop and fill them in. When we get home, maybe you can update everyone on the internet. I'll contact the Red Cross and the police in Bain.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Lou and Mary over dinner.

MARY
You've been doing so well. Calm. Patient. Motivated. I'm so glad you have a computer for use at the Rehab. You seem more adept at using it than you were. Especially in the search for the boys.

Lou's speech evidences a fair amount of vocal variety.

LOU
Thank you, Mary. Why don't we drive a bit farther. To Bain? We can look for them ourselves.

MARY
I've been thinking that. Except I'm not sure you're ready to navigate an urban area.

LOU
Maybe Carlos would go with us. I'll ask him.

ACT III - "THE ARMS OF CARE"

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - SOLERS' CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

Carlos drives with Lou in the passenger seat. In the back, Mary checks a list of shelters to visit in Bain.

CARLOS

You'd like to stop at that the donut shop. Yes?

MARY

To ask if they've seen the boys. And put up a poster.

INT. DONUT SHOP - DAY

Mary, Lou, and Carlos speak to a WAITRESS (40s).

SERGEANT MURRAY (40s) watches from the counter's end.

MARY

Hi. I'm Mary Matters and this is my husband, Lou and our good friend, Carlos. We're looking for these boys; our sons.

Mary hands out flyers.

MARY

We thought you might be willing to let us post a couple here.

WAITRESS

Sure.

Murray approaches Mary.

SERGEANT MURRAY

I heard what you said. Why don't you give me a flyer to post at the station.

Mary hands him a flyer he studies.

MARY

That would be wonderful.

SERGEANT MURRAY

They're listed with NamUs. Are they also listed with the police?

MARY

Yes. And the Red Cross.

SERGEANT MURRAY

From Ariana, eh. Been gone a while. What makes you think they might be in Bain?

MARY

We found out a little while ago that a man gave them a lift here sometime in mid-October. We understand there are a number of shelters in Bain. We're hoping to get addresses and phone numbers from you.

Sergeant Murray nods.

SERGEANT MURRAY

Good idea. There are lots of shelters. In fact, there's one just down the street and another around the corner. Stop by the station and I'll give you a list.

MARY

Thank you. But first could you point out where the one down the street is and tell us how to find the one around the corner?

EXT. BAIN - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Marty and Jason wait for the train. They lug backpacks.

MARTY

Great day for a ride to the North Country. Can't wait to see the mountains.

JASON

We should get snacks for the ride. Lochlee is four stops. I figure about two hours from here.

INT. DISASTER RELIEF CENTER - INTAKE - DAY

Lou and Mary wait at the desk.

LOU

This is our twelfth shelter. We've been at this more than a month. It'll be summer soon. Why can't we find a trace of them?

JAKE

Hello. I'm Jake. May I help you?

MARY

Hi, Jake. I'm Mary and this is Lou. We're looking for our sons and wondered if they had stayed here?

JAKE

No boys here. Not now. We did have two who stayed the winter with us. But they headed north to be with family.

MARY

Would they happen to be these boys?

Mary shows Jake the flyer.

JAKE

That's them.

LOU

Jason and Marty. Right?

JAKE

Right. They arrived in the fall. Social worker enrolled them in school. Did after school odd jobs: walking dogs; mowing lawns. In the winter, spread salt and shovelings. Nice boys. Marty was a blast at times. Jason kept him in line.

LOU

They're not here now?

Jakes presses his lips together and nods.

JAKE

Nope. According to Marty, Jason gave up calling home last spring. At first the phone didn't answer and then it didn't pick up.

MARY

That must have been while I was sick and the phones were down.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
 They came back on but I wasn't
 there to hook up the answering
 machine. I had radiation sickness.
 Their dad was hospitalized, and
 whereabouts unknown.

JAKE
 Awful sorry. Do they have people up
 north?

LOU
 No. But they were all right? Not
 sick. Not hurt. And going to
 school?

Jake raises his eye brows, widens his eyes.

JAKE
 They're fine. I kinda miss 'em.
 They were a bright spot in the day.
 Liked 'em both. Nice boys.

MARY
 Have any idea where they went?

JAKE
 I would guess they hopped a train.
 They had the money for the tickets
 from the odd jobs. Jason bought the
 two of them cell phones. They had
 warm coats, hats and gloves that we
 gave 'em so even if they wound up
 in a mountain town north of here,
 they would be safe.

EXT. LOCHLEE - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Jason and Marty follow a sign to Lochlee -- north.

JASON
 Wonder how far Lochlee is?

MARTY
 No more than a mile.

Jason and Marty walk along the --

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

Ahead, a local road.

MARTY

Why don't we see what's up here?

JASON

Maybe we can find a place to bunk
for the night.

MARTY

Yeah. Why not?

The Brothers turn onto the --

LOCAL ROAD

Country quiet. No traffic. No cars or trucks parked at two
cabins. They pass the first, go on to the second.

They walk around the cabin. Marty knocks on the door. No
answer. Jason at the side and back. No one.

Jason heads to the opposite side. A DOG appears from the
bushes, BARKS a ruckus.

Marty spies an open window. He hitches himself up and drops
out of sight into the cabin just a Jason appears.

Jason swings a big stick at the dog.

He reaches into his pocket for the last bite of a sandwich.
Jason throws it. The Dog chomps it down, quiets.

Jason tosses a small stick,

JASON

Fetch!

The Dog runs for the stick, brings it to Jason. He pets him
and tosses the stick.

JASON

Fetch!

Jason moves closer to the window.

LEM (50s), a retired veteran in worn camo fatigues pulls up,
stops and descends from a truck.

He carries a loaded shotgun.

LEM

Mornin'. How you boys doin'?

JASON

Pretty good.

Lem offers a hand to Jason.

LEM

I'm Lem.

Jason shakes back.

JASON

Jason. Nice to meet you, Lem.

Lem nods his head toward the open window.

LEM

Jason, think you could get your friend out here?

JASON

Yeah. Sure.

(yells)

Hey, Marty. You can come out now.

Marty pokes his head out the window.

LEM

Whatcha' doin' there, Marty?

MARTY

Cleaning.

LEM

Cleaning? You mean cleaning out the refrigerator?

MARTY

Yeah. Something like that.

LEM

Well, Marty, before you come out, suppose you put back whatever stuff you have to where you got it. My friend would miss it when he got back if you don't.

Marty disappears back inside.

The Dog approaches Lem, dances around Jason to restart the game of fetch.

JASON

What's his name?

LEM

That's Tufty.

JASON
Fetch, Tufty.

Jason chucks the stick.

JASON
I'd better go help Marty. Make it faster.

LEM
No. You stay right there. You got the benefit of the doubt this time. But not that much. I figure you and your friend are hungry kids looking for a handout.

Marty climbs out, joins Lem and Jason.

LEM
You can stand there and think about how you're going to explain to me that you were an accomplice in breaking and entering into my best friend's home. And how as the older one you set your younger friend up to become a thief.

MARTY
I'm not a friend. I'm his brother.

LEM
That so.

JASON
We're sorry, Lem. We've been on the road since the meltdown.

MARTY
We haven't been able to talk to our parents.

LEM
You boys are telling me since the meltdown you've been on the road? No contact with your family?

JASON
We stayed in a shelter in Bain for a while.

MARTY
We had our own cabin in the woods, too.

LEM

How did you get here from Bain.
Train?

MARTY

Yeah. Pretty cool.

Marty pushes his hands out, thumbs up, and moves them with the rhythm of a train on the rails.

JASON

Whatcha' gonna do with us?

LEM

First I'm gonna' to take you to my house and give you each a bowl of soup. Second, I'm gonna' take you to the Red Cross station so they can arrange for you to get your next meal.

Tufty drops the stick at Jason's feet.

Jason looks up to Lem as he pets Tufty. Relief on his face.

INT. LEM'S HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

With Tufty near, Jason and Marty share a meal with Lem.

LEM

Assuming it's as you tell it, you two lived a real odyssey.

MARTY

Don't know what I would've done without Jason. I don't even think I would've realized there was a meltdown until it was too late.

LEM

I'm sure it took the two of you. Very resourceful. Both of you. Brave. And responsible.

JASON

My dad taught us well. And my mom. We just wish we knew where they are. And how they are.

Lem offers Jason the bread. He takes two slices.

LEM

The Red Cross may be able to locate them. How'd ya find livin' in the shelter?

JASON

It wasn't bad. Marty's cot was next to mine. Close enough to be sure he was safe. We were company for each other.

MARTY

Jason found ways to earn money.

JASON

Some of the kids were a little rough. Into stealing. I decided it was time we left. Before one of us got into trouble.

Marty bends over with head down, pets Tufty.

MARTY

Come on, Jason. It was the gang I was with. Nothing to do with you.

INT. LOCHLEE - RED CROSS CENTER - DAY

Lem, Jason and Marty meet PATRICIA (40s), a Red Cross worker.

LEM

Patricia. I'd like you to meet my new acquaintances, Jason and Marty Matters.

Patricia extends her hand to each, smiles.

PATRICIA

Jason. Marty. Nice to meet you.

LEM

We thought you might shelter them, and help locate their parents.

PATRICIA

I want to hear all about you and record it.

Patricia logs into a computer and pulls up a blank form on the Red Cross database.

She enters details as the Brothers recount their tale.

JASON

I'm Jason Matters. This is my brother, Marty. After the meltdown, we were so close we knew about it as soon as it happened. Our parents had a plan they taught us to go on the road.

Patricia: a puzzled look for the Boys.

PATRICIA

You've been on the road ever since?

MARTY

More than a year.

JASON

We can't find our parents. We don't know what it's like back home but tried calling for the first month. The grid was down and then there was no answer. Not on the house phone or my parents' cells.

PATRICIA

You have no relatives in the area that could tell you anything.

MARTY

No. Just in Ohio.

PATRICIA

Have you talked with them. They might know something.

Patricia types in Ohio.

JASON

No. They're far away. We only visit them once a year or so.

PATRICIA

Do you know their phone number?

JASON

No.

PATRICIA

What's their name?

JASON

Bob and Nora Stykes. . . Spelled with a 'y'.

Patricia types in Robert and Nora Stykes.

PATRICIA
Do you know where they live?

JASON
A farm near Springfield.

Patricia types Springfield.

INT. LOCHLEE - RED CROSS CENTER - DAY

Patricia on the phone with Lem.

PATRICIA
Good morning, Lem. It's Patricia.
Thought you'd like an update. We
put them up in one of the trailers.
(listens)
I have good news. After the boys
settled in, I located the Stykes
number. I tried it this morning and
their aunt Nora answered. She was
thrilled to hear the boys were all
right.
(listens)
She promised to call me after
speaking with her sister. Then I'll
arrange for the boys to talk with
their mom.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary over a late breakfast. The phone RINGS.

MARY
Hello?

NORA (V.O.)
Mary. It's me.

MARY
Nora. How are you? You sound
excited.

INT. OHIO - STYKES' FARM - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Nora enjoys coffee at the table.

NORA

I am, sis. I just got off the phone with the Red Cross. They've located Jason and Marty.

INTERCUT - MARY AND NORA'S HOMES

Mary steadies herself.

MARY

Oh my goodness. I can't believe it.

NORA

We talked about them coming here. I know that sounds crazy. But I couldn't think of what else to suggest. What with Lou not well and you working.

Mary, stunned.

MARY

You say they found the boys? And they are all right?

NORA

They're fine. What should I do?

MARY

I'll have to talk to Lou about it. Do you have the Red Cross number?

She jots it.

MARY

Thank you. Speak soon.

END INTERCUT

Mary hangs up, the news sinks in.

MARY

Lou!

LIVING ROOM

The phone on speaker. Mary and Lou lean into the phone.

MARY

Hello. Yes. This is Mary Matters. I'm calling about my sons Jason and Marty.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
I'm Patricia. I've been expecting
your call. Yes, Jason and Marty.

MARY
Can I talk to them? The boys?

PATRICIA (V.O.)
Certainly. They're in our layover
room. I'll get them. Hang on.

Mary squeezes Lou's hand.

Lou's comforting nod: it's okay.

MARTY (V.O.)
Mom!

She gasps. Her eyes tear.

MARY
Marty. How are you? We've been so
worried.

MARTY (V.O.)
Us, too. We're fine.

MARY
Jason?

JASON (V.O.)
Yes, Mom.

MARY
So good to hear your voice.

MARTY (V.O.)
Where's Dad, Mom? Is he all right?

Mary puts the phone on speaker.

LOU
Jason? Marty?

JASON
Hi, Dad.

MARTY (V.O.)
Hey, Dad. How are you?

LOU
I'm good. And you?

MARTY (V.O.)
I'm fine. And so is Jason.

LOU
How wonderful to hear your voice.
Both your voices.

Lou and Mary share looks of joy and relief.

LOU
When are you coming home? Are we
coming to pick you up?

JASON (V.O.)
That's what we're figuring out. We
thought you and Mom were... we
didn't know. We talked to Aunt Nora
about going to Ohio.

LOU
Really?

MARY
(to Lou)
Yes.
(phone)
Well, it's an idea. School closes
in a few weeks. Dad should be able
to leave rehab. So, yes, it might
be good to go out there in June.

JASON (V.O.)
Aunt Nora and Uncle Bob are okay
with that?

MARY
They would be happy to have you.

MARTY (V.O.)
Maybe we can Skype them. Do they
have internet?

MARY
Good idea. They do. We e-mail each
other.

LOU
Lots to talk about, boys.

MARY
For now, Dad and I are so happy to
have found you, and that you're all
right. Love you, boys. Bye.

LOU

Me too. Love ya, guys. Talk to you soon.

MARTY (V.O.)

Love you, Mom and Dad. Bye.

JASON (V.O.)

Love you. Bye.

As soon as they hang up, Lou and Mary hug.

MARY

What do you think?

LOU

Makes sense. By then I could be completely out of rehab.

Mary slides closer to Lou, places her arms around his neck.

LOU

Mary. I can wait. You go.

MARY

Can't. I need to finish the school year. I can't leave you. Not when you've come so far, and I can bring you home during the week.

INT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Bob ushers in the Brothers.

Nora hugs Jason and Marty in turn.

NORA

Welcome to Ohio. Did you have a good flight? Oh, my goodness. You've grown like weeds.

BOB

Nice lookin' young men, eh?

NORA

I do say. But come on. We'll head upstairs where you can unpack and freshen up and when you come down, we'll have cookies and milk to tide you over until dinner time.

KITCHEN - LATER

Jason and Marty munch the promised cookies and milk.

Bob enters, beckons.

BOB
Anybody feel like taking a run to
the barn with me?

MARTY
Yeah. Sure.

Marty follows Bob.

JASON
I'll stay and help Aunt Nora make
supper.

NORA
Isn't that nice of you, Jason. Can
always use a bit of help.

JASON
What can I do?

NORA
Know where the china and silverware
are?

Jason nods: yes.

Nora finds a pot, peels potato into it.

NORA
Just be the four of us.

JASON
Where's Cal?

NORA
Still at college. He'll be home in
a few days.

Jason arranges dishes.

NORA
Cal always comes home early June.
In time for the alfalfa harvest.

INT. STYKES' FARM - BARN - DAY

Bob walks Marty through the milking process.

BOB

You pull the udders like you're a calf nursing. That tells the cow to let down her milk. Next thing, take one of these towels and wipe the teats with iodine. Wanna' try it?

Marty nods and follows the directions.

BOB

We call these four milkers the claw. We attach them to the teats. First, we press in the stopper here so the vacuum will work.

(stands back)

In four or five minutes the vacuum releases. For the cow it feels like a calf is drinking.

When the milkers release, Bob fits a funnel shaped cup on the end of a hose --

BOB

We dip each teat in the iodine to prevent germs from hurting the teats.

-- and dips each teat.

BOB

And we're done. We open the gates and the cow returns to the housing area. She feels comfortable and we have our milk.

MARTY

Pretty neat.

BOB

Wanna try?

MARTY

(laughs)

If you stay with me.

Marty reaches for a clean towel.

INT./EXT. STYKES' FARM - PICKUP, TRAVELING - DAY

Bob drives Jason across the fields.

He stops next to a tractor.

BOB

That tractor seats just the driver.
I know you can't drive yet. Still,
thought you might like ta' climb up
and get the feel.

Bob and Jason descend from the truck.

BOB

Would you like to drive it?

JASON

I'll need some help.

BOB

Well, let me think about it. And
talk to your mom about it first.

Jason climbs to the tractor seat.

INT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jason and Bob return as Marty and Nora bake cookies.

NORA

Enjoy the tour of the farm, Jason?

JASON

Yeah, it's cool. I didn't have a
clue how big the farm is. Or how
tough it must be to manage.

NORA

Always something. If it's not
harvesting, it's planting. If it's
not driving the tractor, it's
fixing it. And then there's the
weather.

JASON

Uncle Bob says I can learn to drive
the tractor. If Mom says okay.

MARTY

You can ask her. Mom called. We're
gonna Skype. With Dad and Mom.

JASON

When?

MARTY

When you came back; right now.

Nora sets up a laptop, places a Skype call.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Mary's laptop at the ready.

Lou and Mary wait for the Skype RING.

INSERT LAPTOP - SKYPE WINDOW

The Boys' faces on screen. Nora and Bob behind them.

MARTY
Hey, Dad. Hey, Mom.

LOU (O.S.)
Hey, Marty. Hey, Jason.

BACK

Though Mary smiles big, tears run down her cheeks.

MARY
Hey, guys. How are you?

INT. STYKES' FARM - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

INSERT LAPTOP - SKYPE WINDOW

Mary and Lou on screen.

JASON (O.S.)
We're fine, Mom. And you two?

LOU
It's been a bit of a haul, but
we're doing well. Especially now.
Knowing you two are safe and well.
But it's been edgy.

MARTY (O.S.)
Tell us about it!

BACK

JASON
Hey. We made it.

MARTY
So good to see you.

INTERCUT - MATTERS AND SYKES HOMES

LOU
We'll be out as soon as school
ends.

MARTY
Great.

JASON
Maybe by then I'll know how to
drive a tractor. How about it, Mom?
Dad? Bob says he'll teach me if you
say it's okay.

LOU
Well, you're sixteen.
(then)
Mary? Yes?

MARY
As long as Uncle Bob is willing,
and he's your only teacher.

BOB
Sounds good.

LOU
Hey, Bob. Nice seeing you. And
thanks so much for taking the boys.

BOB
They've grown so much. Marty makes
us laugh.

LOU
So glad you're there.

INT. STYKES' FARM - BARN - DAY

Jason stands beside Marty as he milks a cow.

JASON
We get to Skype with Mom and Dad
again today. How did they seem?

MARTY
Okay, I guess. Dad didn't joke
around. He was skinny and kinda too
white. Mom looked tired.

JASON
Can't wait for them to be here.

MARTY

Me, too.

JASON

I've been thinking.

Marty removes the milker and stands.

MARTY

What about?

JASON

Our time in Bain. And how you fell in with that gang of street kids.

MARTY

Yeah.

JASON

And stole.

Marty busies himself with the milking machine.

MARTY

Aw, come on. Not that.

JASON

Is it over? Or is it you?

MARTY

I've thought about it myself.

Jason folds his arms. Marty remains involved with the milker.

MARTY

At the time everything we had, except each other, was stolen. Those guys thought it was fun.

Jason's brow furrows.

MARTY

It was kinda fun. Like a game. Exciting.

JASON

And since?

Marty takes a beat and turns to face Jason.

MARTY

It's over. Something that passed. Now I like feeling useful and wanted. Having a place of my own.

JASON
And parents.

MARTY
Yeah.

JASON
So, is it done?

MARTY
Yeah. It's done.

JASON
When summer's over?

MARTY
Back to school. Back to hitting the
books. Back to playing sports.

Marty removes a released claw.

EXT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

CAL (20s), Marty and Jason lounge on chairs.

CAL
Good to be home. How're you
enjoying farm life?

MARTY
(Jokingly)
I'm getting 'farmiliar'.

Cal chuckles.

JASON
It's hard work. I like it. Kinda
satisfying.

CAL
You can say that again.

JASON
Driving a tractor is tougher than I
thought. But I am happy to do it.
So much to do.

CAL
Dad said you're good at it.
Careful. How about you, Marty? You
like taking care of the cattle?
Milkin' the cows? Feeding them?

MARTY

It's hard work, but fun.

Jason addresses Cal.

JASON

I saw a small lizard in the rocks
by the stream. Grey, black spots.

CAL

They're wall lizards. Plenty of
them out there. Fun to watch. Used
to keep a female.

JASON

I want to catch one this afternoon.
Wanna come with me?

CAL

Sure thing.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary, dressed for work.

Lou in pajama bottoms and tee shirt.

He smiles at Mary, reaches right arm around to hug her then
seals the circle with his left.

Mary buries her head against his chest.

LOU

Mary -- the love of my life.

They stay in the embrace for a moment.

MARY

I made you egg salad for breakfast
whenever you want. No cooking
except for the coffeemaker, please.

Lou affirms in a nod.

MARY

There's cold cuts, too. I'll be
home by four to cook dinner. Carlos
said he'd stop by to say hello. And
the O-T will be here around one. Do
you have a plan for today?

LOU

Read the newspaper and see if I can still do crossword puzzles. Maybe walk around the yard. Weed. After lunch, T-V and a nap.

MARY

I'm impressed. A whole day planned.

LOU

I cheated a little. Brought home a list of things I could do at home from the rehab.

Mary smiles as she points to the watch.

MARY

Even wearing your watch on the left wrist.

LOU

I forgot to tell you. They're reducing my therapies to a once a month check-in as soon as school's over, and I can come home.

MARY

That soon? You're just telling me this now? That's wonderful.

INT./EXT. COUNTY ROAD - MATTERS' CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

Mary drives Lou home.

MARY

Nice they helped you pack and be ready to leave when I arrived.

LOU

Great bunch. Couldn't have asked for better care.

Lou fiddles with the radio, leaves it on Country.

LOU

Now it's back to the real world. When are we leaving?

MARY

Whenever you're ready. School's out. Early as tomorrow morning if you like. I've talked to Carlos and Lenore. They'll watch the house.

LOU
Let's just drive through.

MARY
We can't drive through. I need to rest every hour and a half or so.

LOU
I can drive, too.

MARY
No, Lou, you can't. It's too early. You can't drive until your left field of vision returns. You know that.

Lou nods in agreement.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary cleans; Lou enters from the living room.

LOU
I printed the route in both map and in steps. Where would you like to make the reservation? Half way? That's about 300 miles from here.

MARY
I can't do six hours of driving in one day. We need to break it into four hours in three days.

LOU
If we change drivers every two hours or so...

Mary stops cleaning, takes a beat, and faces Lou.

MARY
You're being impulsive. What have we decided about you driving?

LOU
That I can't drive as long as I have limited left side vision.

MARY
When the boys were small, we used to put up one night in Billtown, Williamsport and one night in Youngstown. Let's try that.

LOU
Okay. Will do.

MARY
I was thinking. I believe they're
between harvests. You and Bob will
have time together. Even if it
means helping with the picking.

Her phone RINGS.

MARY
Hello.
(listens)
I'll tell the boys you send your
love. And I'll call you. Thanks so
much, Lenore. Hugs.

Mary hangs up the phone.

INT./EXT. INTERSTATE - MATTERS' CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

Mary drives. Lou navigates via the printed map.

LOU
Right on schedule. If I figured it
right, we'll be in Springfield
sometime early this afternoon.

MARY
Thanks for navigating. Love you.
(thinks)
Maybe you should text Nora and give
her a heads-up on our E-T-A.

They breeze past a patchwork blur of farms and small towns.

LOU
I've been thinking. I may not be
able to drive. I may not be able to
work with electricity and machines
with moving parts. I'm still
unreliable with things like turning
off the stove when I'm finished.

MARY
You'll improve.

LOU
I've been thinking of retraining.

MARY
As what?

LOU
A website designer.

Mary takes a beat. Glances toward Lou.

MARY
A website designer?

LOU
For starters, I can take courses online. At rehab, they told me while I was on disability, I could get job training. They'll also help with placement when I'm done.

MARY
What a great idea.

LOU
No need to drive. I can work from home.

Farmland gives way to an urban oasis -- Springfield.

LOU
Can't wait to see the boys.

MARY
Me too.

LOU
They seem so much more mature.

MARY
I'm sure they'll have a lot of stories to tell.

EXT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - DAY

Lou and Mary pull up. No one in sight.

They exit the car, walk to the porch steps to the --

FRONT DOOR

Behind the screen door, an open wide front door.

MARY
Nora? Bob?

The screen door bursts open.

Marty rushes down the stairs.

MARTY

Mom! Dad!

Breathless, Marty cannot decide who gets the first hug.

Jason follows. They take turns with hugs for their parents.

Nora, Bob and Cal follow.

MARTY

Hey, Dad. Did'ya know Jason has a mother wall lizard and her babies. Some people call them geckoes.

LOU

Nice. Where's he keep them.

MARTY

In a jar. Know what we feed them?

LOU

Bugs?

MARTY

When we catch one. They like crickets. We feed them mealworms. Aunt Nora found some in an old box of cereal. We don't have a lot. So, we'll probably take them back to the stream in a couple of days. For now, they're interesting.

LOU

Maybe you can show me later.

MARTY

You have to wash your hands with soap and water when you're done. Salmonella.

INT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As Bob sips coffee, Nora and Mary clean up.

BOB

Marty was so happy to show Lou the gecko.

Nora removes dishes from the table and into the dishwasher.

NORA

Jason gets a kick out of Marty's enthusiasm. It is infectious.

MARY

Let me help you, Nora.

NORA

I can't tell you how happy I am to see you. Lou's doing so well.

MARY

Maybe we should not only talk about his progress, but weaknesses, too.

Bob and Nora focus on Mary.

MARY

Lou suffered memory loss. It seems to have repaired and returned. He had difficulty doing things in order. That's almost gone.

NORA

Talks just as he always has.

MARY

He doesn't get irony, and has difficulty with second meanings.

BOB

Does he get jokes?

Mary thinks a bit.

MARY

Not usually. When he first came home, I jokingly said, "Not too happy to have you home." He said, "I thought you'd be pleased."

NORA

Did it make him angry?

MARY

He's past that. Missing a joke doesn't usually cause any problem.

BOB

What does?

Mary looks at Bob and then at Nora.

MARY

He has a couple of weaknesses that interfere and at times cause risk.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

One is he forgets to turn off the burner when he's done cooking. And the other is a weak left side.

NORA

How does that affect him?

MARY

Early on, he could see but as his left field of vision in both eyes was gone. He did not recognize he was not seeing things on his left. Right side brain injury sometimes causes that. It's like being blind on the left. Unless he moves his eyes to scan to the left with his right field of vision.

BOB

Crossing the street and watching for cars would be a problem?

Mary addresses Bob.

MARY

Yes. Also driving. Especially because he forgets he doesn't always see things on the left. It is better, but it's not like he sees things there 100 percent of the time.

BOB

How do you handle it?

MARY

He accommodates. I accommodate.

BOB

How?

MARY

Well, take the trip. I drove. Luckily, he's reality based and non-macho enough to accept he can't.

Bob presses on. He seems very focused.

BOB

Is that it?

MARY

No. When we walk, I stay on his left side to prevent him from bumping into things and people.

(then)

I sit on his left to encourage increased awareness of it. In the beginning, I'd have to touch his arm to get him to look at me. Put the knife in his hand to remember it. Turn his plate so the left side became the right side and eat the food on that side, too.

BOB

What happens when you're not there?

MARY

He'll sometimes bump into the doorjamb. If there's something hanging at head height, he might bump into that.

Bob shakes his head and looks at Nora.

BOB

That could be a problem in a barn.

MARY

That's why he can never be left alone.

EXT. STYKES' FARM - HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Bob, Lou, and Marty on chairs.

BOB

Early harvesting is done so we aren't using tractors and big machines except for the trucks. Now, we keep the vegetable garden weeded and watered. And care for the cattle. Lou, maybe tomorrow you can go with Marty and me to help us with the milking. How's that sound, Marty?

MARTY

Sounds good to me. How about it, Dad?

LOU

Sounds good to me, too.

INT. STYKES' FARM - BARN - DAY

Marty on his father's left, Bob on Lou's right.

MARTY

Uncle Bob, I showed Dad how to use the milker. He did good. Just like me though, I had to remind him to put in the stopper.

BOB

Lou. You up for it again tonight?

LOU

Sure. First activity I've been involved in outside the house in a long time.

Marty pulls on Lou's left sleeve. Lou looks toward him.

MARTY

Hey, Dad. Why aren't cows rich?

Lou looks at Marty, remains silent.

MARTY

Because farmers milk them.

LOU

I think most cows have milk left when the farmer is done.

INT. STYKES'S FARM - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Nora and Mary prepare dinner.

NORA

Bob and I have been talking and we're thinking it would be good for Lou to stay with us for the summer while you and the boys settle in at home.

MARY

Nora, yes. We were thinking he gets more physical exercise here than he would at home. He's not ready to go back to work, and only beginning to make more conversation.

NORA

Well, it's an offer. He is a help with the milking.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)
He could work with Bob or Cal.
Maybe there's online training Lou
could take here.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The entire Family gathers around.

MARTY
Hey, Cal. Did you hear how the
farmer got his wife?

JASON
(laughs)
Don't ask. You'll be sorry.

CAL
How did the farmer get his wife?

MARTY
Well, he tractor.

Marty mimes driving a tractor.

Laughs all around except for Lou who looks serious. He thinks
and his face brightens.

LOU
I get it. Tractor! Like the one Bob
uses here on the farm.

MARTY
Dad! You got it. You got a joke.

Lou swings serious again.

LOU
I have something to tell you all.

Marty looks from Mary back to Lou.

LOU
Uncle Bob and I have been talking.
(hesitates)
Uncle Bob and I, Aunt Nora and Mom,
have decided I'm going to stay for
a few months while you go back home
and start school.

MARTY
You're staying, Dad?

LOU
Going to help with the milkin'. And
take online courses in website
design.

JASON
How long, Dad?

LOU
Couple of months. To Thanksgiving.

JASON
Aunt Nora's okay with this?

NORA
I am, Jason.

Lou takes Mary's hand.

LOU
Your mom and I talked about it
before I went to the barn this
morning. It was a hard decision,
but I think it's for the best. I
think I can help here. And while I
do, I'll keep getting better. Maybe
by Thanksgiving, I'll be well, and
ready to do web design.

JASON
It's a little quick, Dad, but I
think it's a good idea.

MARTY
I'm okay with it too.

Marty hugs Lou, pulls back and smiles.

EXT. STYKES' FARM - DAY

The Matters family in a group hug. Tears flow.

MARTY
Uncle Bob can tell you jokes so
that by Thanksgiving you get them
better. You're the jokemaster who
taught me.

MARY
We'll miss you so much.

She gives Lou a big hug and keeps her arms around his neck.

MARY

We'll Skype and Facetime. Fall will go quickly. Starting the new school year is always demanding. We can see if the rehab can help us if need be when you return. Who knows? Maybe you'll learn enough about websites to begin to design them.

LOU

(smiles)

One never knows.

Mary and the Boys mount the car. She starts out.

Waves to each other until the car disappears over a hill.

THE END