

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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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.

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.

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.

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 doors 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.

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 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.

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  
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?

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.

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  
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.

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

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

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.

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

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)

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.

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 (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?

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.



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?

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?

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

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.

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.

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

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.

**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?

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)

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.

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

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.

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.

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?

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

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.

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

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.

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  
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  
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.

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

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.

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?

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