

HOME AGAIN 2020

by  
Roberta M Roy

Based On The Award Winning Historical Novel  
"Home Again 2020"

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**ACT I "THE MELTDOWN"**

EXT. ARIANA, EAST CORDABAN - CREEKSIDE - DAY

Mary and hubby LOU (30s) picnic with Jason and Marty -- here 13 and 10.

Lunch finished, Lou and Mary remain at the table while the Boys quest for frogs.

CREEKSIDE

Marty points to a frog in the water.

MARTY

Hey. Here!

Jason wields a frog net on a long pole. He scoops it into the water but the quick frog leaps away.

Marty lies on his stomach, hands in the water. Moving with deliberation, he clamps his fingers around the back legs of a swimming frog and scoops it from the water.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Got it!

Jason drops the frog in a fishing creel. Marty rinses hands.

JASON

Let's find it some lunch.

The boys search. Marty spots a fly but it eludes him.

PICNIC TABLE

Mary and Lou cuddle.

MARY

Nice day, huh, Lou.

Lou smiles and kisses Mary on the cheek.

LOU

Boys are having fun.

FULL SCREEN TITLE: "Thursday, April 12, 2018"

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

ROAD SIGN: "Magdum Heights Power Plant 12 Miles"

MARY MATTERS (30s) dials husband 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.

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?

EXT. MAGDUM HEIGHTS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT - SAME TIME

LOU MATTERS (30s) 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 - SAME TIME

A volunteer fire department siren BLASTS nearby.

MARTY (10) and JASON MATTERS (12) see a distant red glare and smoke through the window.

EXT. BIG BOX STORE - SAME TIME

Customers gape at the red glow of 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

Not good.

Marty engages with Jason visually and waits a beat.

MARTY (CONT'D)

What do we do?

He takes his Brother by the shoulders.

JASON

What Mom and Dad taught us. In case if a melt down.

Marty nods. He does.

MARTY

Yeah. Hunker down or flee.

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.

A battered pickup pulls over. Jason and Marty run to it.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: "LATE AUGUST 2019"

Mary pads about, prepares breakfast.

Bright and awake MARTY, here 13, bounces in.

MARTY  
Knock, knock.

MARY  
Who's there?

MARTY  
Assene.

MARY  
Assene who?

MARTY  
Assene you were home, so I came  
over.

Mary chuckles then shakes her head at the bad joke. Marty seats himself.

Sleepy JASON, now 15, slogs in. He pecks Mary's cheek, tousles Marty's hair.

He pours a cup of coffee and plops at the table.

JASON  
Mornin'. Feeling okay, Mom?

She smiles, nods yes.

MARTY  
No more radiation sickness?

MARY  
No, Marty. All better.

JASON  
Seems funny without Dad. Seems  
funny being home.  
(to Marty)  
How about you?

MARTY  
It's weird and getting weirder.  
Seeing our friends. Back to school  
after being away.

Grateful, Mary holds both her Sons' hands.

Silence for a bit.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Did Dad really lose all his memory,  
Mom? Like, completely?

MARY  
Not really. And he could still  
read. Just couldn't talk. Speech  
language therapy helped.  
Occupational therapy, too.

MARTY  
How long will it take?

MARY  
It's kind of a slow process. You  
saw him at the farm, he was doing  
great. Understood when he read the  
news headlines.

JASON

Dad has to watch out for things on his left. I don't think he can see too good out of his left eye.

MARY

But a year ago he would use his left arm only when prompted.

MARTY

Can he use a computer?

MARY

Coming along. He mostly scans the left by directing his right side vision to the left.

JASON

And he thinks he'll be able to be a digital designer?

MARY

Yeah. And I think so. Your dad has real strength.

Marty looks skyward and shrugs shoulders.

Jason heads outside.

JASON

Gonna mow the lawn.

MARY

Thank you. After you're done, we'll go to Lenore's. Visit the boys.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell RINGS.

RICKY (14) answers with Brother STEVEN (9) right behind.

Mary, Marty and Jason at the door.

MARY

Good morning, Steven. Ricky. Steven shoots Mary a wave.

RICKY

Jason! Ma man! So glad you're back.

JASON

Nice to see you. Missed you, Ricky.  
And you, too, Steven. How have you  
been?

LENORE (30s) arrives to motion Mary in. They hug.

She leads Mary to the couch. The boys gather near the door.

RICKY

We missed you in soccer last year.  
Second in our section so we did  
okay. We didn't have our star  
forward to kick their butts. With  
you back, we'll make first. Right,  
Marty.

MARTY

Absolutely!

Boys head through the room.

JASON

Looking forward to high school?

RICKY

Yeah. New classes. Biology looks  
tough.

JASON

I went to a high school in Bixby  
for a while. But after classes  
started. Didn't know anybody. Way  
behind in the courses.

RICKY

Musta been rough.

JASON

A little. Didn't finish the year so  
I could be a freshman again. Guess  
I'll see.

Ricky stops and looks at Jason. He has news.

RICKY

There's kids in the high school  
from three different grade schools.

Jason thinks a beat.

JASON

So maybe I won't stick out as new.



RICKY

You and me being in the same  
classes would be great.

(idea)

How about kicking around the soccer  
ball out back?

They head out, Ricky in the lead with Marty close behind.

In the rear, Jason catches up with Steven as they go.

On the couch, Mary and Lenore chat.

LENORE

I'm so happy. The boys back. Lou  
improving.

MARY

It's hard to explain my feelings.  
Somewhere between sheer delight and  
awe. I just want to pinch myself to  
see if it's real.

LENORE

I understand.

MARY

Can't believe the boys were safe  
alone on the road. And watching  
Lou's progress is encouraging.

LENORE

It's wonderful your sister and  
brother-in-law are able to help  
him. It's a godsend he can stay  
with them in Ohio on their farm.

MARY

Bob and Nora are tops. Their son,  
Cal, too. They all quietly protect  
Lou's left side.

LENORE

Terrific all around.

MARY

I'm checking online classes in  
design for Lou. He thinks he can  
work from home.

Mary considers that idea, then,

MARY (CONT'D)  
Given the loss of sight, he'll  
probably never drive again.

LENORE  
That's a shame.

MARY  
He's been approved for disability.  
The government also pays for  
classes.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - ATKINS' HOME - DAY

Across the street from the Matter's home, JIM (Afro-American, 30s) and ADELE ATKINS (30s) and son CARL (12) mill about as Men unload a moving van.

Mary crosses the street.

MARY  
Welcome to the neighborhood. I'm  
Mary Matters.

Mary stretches a hand to the adults, waves to their son who hides behind his parents.

ADELE  
Hi, Mary. Nice to meet you. I'm  
Adele Atkins. My husband, Jim, and  
son, Carl.

They all trade handshakes.

Adele prompts Carl to say hello.

Marty pulls up on his bike.

MARY  
Marty, this is Mister and Mrs.  
Atkins and their son Carl.

MARTY  
Nice to meet you.

Marty shakes hands all round, ends with Carl.

MARY  
Carl, are you in middle school?

Carl nods small: yes.

MARY (CONT'D)  
You and Marty will probably ride on  
the bus together.

MARTY  
Starting Tuesday, it picks us up on  
the corner. We can wait together.  
Carl smiles.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
You want to?

CARL  
Sure.

MARTY  
It stops at 7:15. I'll get you  
around 7:10. We can walk together.  
What grade you in?

CARL  
Seventh.

MARTY  
Me too.

Marty and Carl move off to the side. The adults continue to  
converse.

MARY  
Be nice for Marty to have a bus  
buddy. Due to the meltdown my sons  
have not been in local schools for  
a year.

ADELE  
Jim worked near the plant but the  
office closed. He was lucky to find  
a position here in Ariana schools.

MARY  
I work in the schools. Speech  
Language Pathologist. How about  
you, Adele?

ADELE  
Contract specialist for I-B-M. The  
office stayed open. Ariana is where  
Jim is, so... At least it's more  
than thirty miles from the plant.  
Not that another meltdown is  
possible.

INT. OHIO - LENORA AND BOB'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

NORA and BOB (40s) and their son, CAL (21), gather at the kitchen table with Lou, Marty, Jason and Mary.

Nora serves coffee and milk for all. As Lou sits, he accidentally knocks over the creamer that is sitting to his left side on the table. Without mention of it, Nora rises and wipes up the cream, refills the creamer, replaces it on the table to Lou's right, and sits down.

MARTY

Being in Ohio again is like coming home.

MARY

It's so nice to see all of you.

NORA

So nice to see all of you.

MARY

You're doing well, Lou. You look good. Nice tan.

LOU

I am doing well. Helping with the milking. Everyday. And not bumping into things as much as I used to.  
(laughs)

Except for creamers.

MARY

Yes. I'm sure it still helps to have someone on your left side.

LOU

Still helps.

Bob reaches for a roll and butters it.

BOB

Mostly when we're in a new place. Like yesterday when we went grocery shopping.

NORA

Lou being around is always so pleasant and upbeat. Good company for us. Right, Cal?

CAL

Yesterday morning Lou caught me up  
on what I missed while I was in  
school. Like the new calf.

Lou laughs.

MARY

I'm sure he's gonna miss being  
here. Lou, you need a reevaluation  
at the hospital.

LOU

We'll have to set that up. First  
thing.

MARY

I have a few online courses lined  
up. The boys will be around after  
school until I get home.

LOU

And our neighbors? What are their  
names?

MARY

You mean Lenore, Carlos, Ricky, and  
Steven? The Solers?

LOU

(recalls, smiles)

Yes. That's it. The Solers. Lenore.  
Carlos. Ricky. And Steven.

Mary puts her hand over Lou's right one and looks at him.

MARY

Yes, And Jason and Marty are  
available. There's always T-V.

(recalls)

By the way, we have new neighbors.  
I'm sure you'll enjoy them, too.

NORA

Nothing nicer than you returning  
home to Ariana. And being together  
as a family again. Right, Lou?

LOU

Can't wait. Missed you boys so  
much. There's no place beside home  
I'd rather have been than here.

(thinks)

It's been interesting. Fun.

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)  
Even exciting. Can't wait to tell  
you about the night the calf was  
born. What I've learned about  
raising and gathering crops.

Nora smiles and looks from Lou to Mary and back to Lou.

NORA  
And, Lou, I think you'll be fine by  
yourself now. And, Mary, I don't  
think you'll need to worry about  
him while you're all at school.

BOB  
Gotta hand it to you, Lou. Coming  
up with the idea to be a graphic  
artist and work from home. Smart.  
Really smart. I suspect it's not an  
easy row to hoe but I've no doubt  
that you'll do it. And well.

CAL  
Here's to Lou!

Cal hoists his coffee mug.

ALL  
To Lou!

Raised glasses of whatever they drink by the rest.

BOB  
And to survival. To all of you.  
Moving on despite the meltdown and  
dirty bombs.

MARY  
To all of us. Together again and  
moving on.

INT. SCHOOL - MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Autistic Finn (11) faces Mary. He does not engage her.

MARY  
Good morning, Finn.

Intent on his lunchbox, Finn mumbles good morning.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Would you like to take off your  
jacket, Finn?

Finn hangs his jacket then drops onto the chair.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I see your mom fixed you something  
to drink.

FINN  
It's a high protein drink. To help  
me start the morning.

MARY  
Very nice. I'm sure you need it.  
Your mom says its hard for you to  
eat when you first wake up. And you  
do get hungry.

FINN  
Yeah.

They sit in silence as Finn finishes the drink, puts the cup  
in the lunchbox and closes it.

MARY  
How was the ride to school.

FINN  
We had to stop for a train. It was  
going south.

MARY  
Oh, really?

Finn looks straight ahead.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Finn, do you think you could look  
at me?

He looks for a moment but then looks away.

FINN  
Yeah. A gate dropped down across  
the road so we had to stop. And the  
red lights blinked. Pretty soon  
came the train. Going south. A  
cargo train. No passenger cars. A  
long train. It comes about the time  
we cross the tracks.

MARY  
Trains are interesting. Where do  
you think that one was going?

FINN  
Aesopolis.

Finn has a pointed look for Mary.

FINN (CONT'D)  
May I go now?

MARY  
Where will you go?

FINN  
To class.

MARY  
Will you be polite to the new girl?

Finn engages visually with Mary.

FINN  
Yes. I'll just ignore her. I won't  
look at her. I won't say anything  
to her. I'll start my journal work.

MARY  
And if she says something to you?

FINN  
I won't answer her.

MARY  
And if that is difficult for you to  
do, what will you do?

FINN  
I will ask my teacher for some time  
away and go and sit on the window  
ledge in the hall.

MARY  
Sounds like a plan.

FINN  
Can I go now?

MARY  
Yes. Let me take you to make sure  
you go directly to class.

Mary helps Finn gather his things then leads him out. LATER

Mary greets GIDEON (Afro-American - 12) who pulls out a  
chair, plops on it.



He places elbows on the desk and his fists under chin.

Mary engages him,

MARY (CONT'D)

I know you wanted me to come back later. I already came by to remind you we agreed you would come now.

GIDEON

Right.

Gideon clenches teeth and speaks from behind his fists.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Can we read a book and then print out a picture?

MARY

We could do that. As long as we also talk about the book.

Gideon rifles through the pile of picture books near him.

GIDEON

How about this one?

MARY

Okay.

GIDEON

No, I know what.

Gideon digs to the bottom of the pile.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

How about this one?

MARY

Okay.

Gideon opens the picture book, reads but stops.

GIDEON

No, you read it.

MARY

Okay. I'll read it. But you know that if I read it, I will talk about it. Unless you want me to read it all and you retell it.

Gideon remains silent so Mary accepts that as consent and begins to read.

AFTER THE READ

MARY

Wow! Great listening. And you even  
let me make comments.

Gideon summarizes the story from beginning to end.

GIDEON

Okay. Let's pick a picture.

Gideon pushes past Mary to her desk.

MARY

Gideon. Please. We're going to  
print a picture, but I'll help you  
find the one you like.

Gideon calms.

GIDEON

I'd like a picture of a car.

Mary searches and finds a picture.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

There! Could you print it in color?

Mary prints it out and hands it to Gideon.

MARY

Very nice, Gideon.

Proud Gideon leaves. He inspects the picture as he does.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lou and the Boys are down for breakfast. Jason is just about  
to sit when Lou walks in.

JASON

Welcome back home, Dad.

Lou grins and hugs Jason.

LOU

Thanks, son. Nice being home again.

Lou and Jason sit. Lou hugs Marty who is in the midst of  
eating. Jason helps himself to juice and after a beat,  
speaks.

JASON

I think the farm was good for you.  
When you got there you weren't  
yourself. Like always sad. . . Mom  
said brain injury can do that.

LOU

Even I notice the difference.  
Everything is brighter. More fun.

Jason reaches for a roll.

JASON

Mom said brain injury can make  
people get mad. You never did that.

LOU

Nope. I was just kinda flat. Now  
I'm more like I should be.

(offers)

Coffee?

JASON

Please.

Lou pours Jason some coffee. Marty listens as he eats.

LOU

How's school?

JASON

Marty has a new friend, Carl  
Atkins. The family moved into the  
house across the street. His dad  
works with Mom at the school. His  
mother does something at I-B-M.

LOU

That right?

Marty nods in agreement and continues to eat. Lou sets the  
coffee pot down.

JASON

I like Carl. He's a little quiet,  
but him and Carl like the same  
things... especially music.

LOU

Nice. Glad there's a new friend for  
Marty. How does Carl get along with  
Ricky and Steven?

JASON

Okay.

Lou reaches for a roll.

LOU

What about you?

JASON

Ricky and me have different  
schedules but it's okay.

(then)

Oh! Made varsity soccer.

LOU

That's great! How is it being back  
after living on the road so long?

JASON

The good part is that Ricky and me  
are in some of the same classes.

LOU

Tell me again what you did when the  
plant went down.

Having cleaned his plate, Marty perks up.

MARTY

Followed the plan. We took to the  
road to avoid the radiation.

JASON

We camped in the woods outside of  
Bain for a while and stayed in a  
shelter in Bain. We went to school  
there.

MARTY

Then went north.

Mary shuffles in.

MARY

Morning.

Mary hugs Jason and Marty, kisses Lou, and pours coffee.

LOU

Mornin', hun.

JASON

Mornin', Mom.

MARTY

Mornin', Mom.

LOU

We're just talking about the boys' new year. What about friends?

JASON

I see some of my old ones at soccer practice. There are a lot of new guys so I don't stick out too much. My grades are fine. Ricky and me ride the bus together.

MARY

So nice to have lively conversation around me again.

(hugs Lou, sits)

And wonderful to have Lou back to his old amiable self. Whattya think, boys?

JASON

We were just talking about that.

Lou pours Mary some coffee and looks at her.

LOU

Mary, tell me again how you got radiation sickness?

MARY

I was on my way to have lunch with you when a dirty bomb went off. Radioactive material fell on me when it exploded.

LOU

So wadja do?

MARY

Cleaned and showered A-SAP. Laid low for 72 hours then went to stay with Lenore and Carlos.

Intent, Lou listens.

MARY (CONT'D)

The boys left a note that they followed our plan and fled north. I just had to hope they'd be safe.

LOU

I was in la-la land. I couldn't even remember my last name.

MARY

We're together again. That's the most important thing.

Breakfast over, Mary, Jason and Marty prepare to leave.

Lou cleans up.

MARY (CONT'D)

Listen guys. I gotta go. School awaits. Luv ya all.

Mary kisses Marty, Jason and Lou then bullets out the door.

JASON

Me too, Dad.

Jason hugs his dad and is gone.

MARTY

Me three!

Marty gives Lou two Peace Signs with his fingers, hugs him and follows Jason.

Lou clears the table.

The doorbell RINGS.

FOYER

Lou opens the door to find Carlos.

LOU

Carlos. C'mon in. Weather's good today, huh?

CARLOS

Sure is. How're you doing?

Lou brings Carlos to sit near his computer area.

LOU

Struggling a bit with the computer monitor but I was just going to try out an eye exercise site.

CARLOS

Interesting. Didn't know there was such a thing.

LOU  
It can improve my eye movements.  
Anyway, nice to see you.

Lou and Carlos both take seats in the kitchen. Lou gets out a cup for Carlos. Holds it up for Carlos. Carlos nods in approval.

CARLOS  
I thought I'd go into work a bit late today so I could visit. Glad you're home. Missed ya', buddy.

LOU  
Same here.  
(holds pot)  
Coffee?

CARLOS  
Always.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Enjoy your time in Ohio? Pick up any farming pointers?

Lou offers Carlos a roll and Carlos takes one and butters it.

LOU  
Learned to milk a cow! And Thanksgiving was great! How were things here while I was in Ohio?

CARLOS  
Things were all right. Except my sons missed your sons. And I missed you. But it looks like spending fall there was really good for you. What's next?

LOU  
Looking into online classes to study digital design.

CARLOS  
Lenore mentioned that. What a great idea. No need to drive. A short commute in your pajamas.

LOU  
Yup. The new me.

Carlos lays a hand on Lou's.

CARLOS  
No doubt about it. Heard designers  
make beaucoup bucks, too.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Back from school, Mary approaches Lou busy at a computer.

She puts hand and arm across his shoulders, leans, looks him  
in the eyes and plants a passionate kiss.

Lou rolls back his chair, pulls Mary onto his lap.

MARY  
How ya doin', hun? How was your  
day.

LOU  
Really good. And you?

MARY  
Likewise. Whatcha do today?

Mary rubs her hand across the hair on the side of Lou's head.

LOU  
Downloaded illustration and image  
editing software. I'm gonna need  
them.

MARY  
Of course.

LOU  
I worked on improving my visual  
scanning to increase reading speed.

MARY  
Fantastic.

Mary hugs Lou.

LOU  
I'm up to 150 words a minute. Still  
slow but better than before. Looked  
at the sites you researched. I like  
the Aesopolis Institute of Art and  
Design.

MARY  
Good.



LOU

It sounds perfect for me. Online at your own pace. A personal mentor. Unlimited access to professionals for advice on projects. If you want to start up a business they'll even advise you on how to do it.

Mary lays her head on Lou's shoulder.

LOU (CONT'D)

I'll enroll tomorrow.

MARY

You make me so happy, Lou. I just want to stay like this forever.

DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ricky and Jason pore over homework.

Marty joins them, throws his binder on the table. He opens a seventh-grade science book and, without looking up,

MARTY

Know what my science teacher said,  
"Think like a magnet's south pole  
and stay positive."

Jason and Ricky share a look, shake their heads and return to their studies.

Marty cracks open a loose leaf binder and writes in it.

JASON

Make sure to make the angles face  
left or Mr. Gibson will have a fit  
again.

RICKY

Let's make them to the right just  
to watch him blow his cool.

Jason and Ricky chuckle.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Can't wait for soccer to start.

JASON

Yeah. Me too.

RICKY

Maybe this year I'll make varsity, too. Whattaya think? You've seen me play. I think I'm playing better.

JASON

I think you might. Last season, coach put you in for almost a whole game.

RICKY

I made some goals. And set some up.

JASON

This year we'll both be varsity.

Done for now, Marty slams the binder shut.

MARTY

You guys wanna jam with me? I'll get my guitar. I can read notes now.

JASON

Maybe later, Marty. We have more work to get done. We'll be out when we can. You good with that, Ricky?

RICKY

Sounds like a plan.

Marty heads out.

Ricky and Jason bury in their books.

LIVING ROOM

The Matters and Solers chat.

LOU

I'm studying design, color, typography and layout to develop assets for both print and web. The plan is to build up a portfolio.

CARLOS

Is there a deadline for completion?

LOU

Nope. I can review and study at my own pace.

CARLOS  
Did you tell them about your  
vision?

LOU  
I did. They'd have to know in order  
to better serve my needs.

MARY  
Carlos, coffee? Lenore, some tea?

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - SAME

Jason and Ricky ready to jam.

Marty straps on a guitar.

MARTY  
Listen, guys. Let's make this a  
regular thing. Whattaya say we get  
together to jam each Tuesday after  
dinner?

JASON  
Up to you. You're the only one who  
can play an instrument.

RICKY  
I can bring my dad's bongo.

MARTY  
Can't beat that.  
(chuckles)  
Okay. Next Tuesday.

JASON  
Let's do it.

RICKY  
Let's do it.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary and Lenore over coffee.

LENORE  
My teaching assistant and I have  
been together three years now.  
She's really good. As for my  
students, they're mostly sweet.

MARY

Mine are pretty much the same as last year. Two more on the autism spectrum. Most are learning disabled. They're all emotionally troubled. Sixteen altogether. Thirty-two speech language therapy sessions.

LENORE

Sounds like a busy schedule.

MARY

Probably no busier than you.

LENORE

I wouldn't know what to do without my T-A.

INT. SCHOOL - GIDEON'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Mary at the door.

Gideon yells. Loud.

GIDEON

I'm not going! I don't need it. I talk good.

MARY

Yes, Gideon. You speak very well. But we work together to help you learn how to be a better classmate. A better student. A better friend.

Gideon continues to yell his responses.

GIDEON

I don't care! I don't need help. I don't need you pestering me.

Mary enters and positions behind Gideon.

MARY

That's nice writing you're doing. Suppose I come back later?

Gideon continues to yell his responses.

GIDEON

No! Don't come back later. Don't come back at all.

Mary moves toward the door.

Teaching assistant CHANTEL (20s) follows her.

In a voice loud enough for Gideon to hear,

MARY  
Chantel, if Gideon changes his  
mind, you can bring him to my  
office in a little while.

Mary addresses Gideon directly,

MARY (CONT'D)  
Gideon. Chantel will bring you to  
my office in a little while. I'll  
wait for you.

Mary exits and closes the door behind her.

MARY'S OFFICE - LATER

Mary pushes paperwork.

Chantel ushers in a hostile but willing Gideon.

He sits, lays his head on arms and closes eyes.

CHANTEL  
Mary, I'm sorry Gideon is so upset.  
There have been problems at home.  
Perhaps he'll tell you about them.

MARY  
Gideon. I'm so sorry. What's going  
on at home?

From the depths of his arms, Gideon has a sad edge.

GIDEON  
My mom's gone.

MARY  
Gone?

GIDEON  
She's in the hospital. And I can't  
go to see her.

MARY  
What happened?

GIDEON  
She got mad. I can't talk about it.

MARY  
Oh, Gideon. I'm so sorry.

Mary quiets and contemplates.

She looks at Gideon.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lou and Mary set the table for lunch. He walks to the --

BOYS' BEDROOMS

Lou knocks on Marty's door then Jason's.

LOU  
Lunch is ready. Come and get it.

Marty springs out immediately.

Jason lags behind.

They all return to the --

KITCHEN

The Family takes their places and digs in.

MARTY  
You make the best split pea soup,  
Mom.

Lou smiles at Mary.

LOU  
It is yummy.

JASON  
Almost the end of the semester.

LOU  
How's it been so far?

JASON  
Actually it's been good. I like my  
bio teacher. He's big on climate  
change and how it affects animal  
life.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)  
More and more species are  
disappearing due to temperature  
change, droughts and fires.

Lou reaches for croutons.

LOU  
Did he mention Australia?

JASON  
He talked about destruction there  
due to the drought and all the  
fires. A billion animals died  
because of it. Can you believe  
that? A billion animals. I can't  
get my head around it. I don't even  
know what a billion looks like.

MARTY  
We were talking in class about the  
Northwest running out of water. And  
the polar caps melting.

Lou considers his bright younger Son.

LOU  
Not good. Not good any place.

JASON  
Hundreds of lakes in Russia have  
dried up. With Polar caps  
shrinking, sea water levels rise.

Marty helps himself to more croutons.

MARTY  
(Scoffs)  
Glad we don't live in Florida.

MARY  
There needs to be a bigger push to  
clean energy to reduce carbon  
emissions.

MARTY  
Like what? What's clean energy?

JASON  
Wind, water and solar power.

LOU  
The coal usage of all countries  
needs to be reduced.

Mary toys with her food. Her Family notes it.

MARY

Makes me feel terrible. I don't know why. Maybe because it makes the effects of climate change so undeniable. Even for a non-scientist or non-politician like me. Poor Australia. Poor world.

Lou notes his wife's sadness and changes the subject.

He turns to Marty.

LOU

How are you doing with the guitar, Marty? Still taking lessons at school?

MARTY

A few of us have study hall before lunch so we get together in the music room to play and sing. Lots of fun.

LOU

Your Tuesday night jams are really shaping up.

Marty hams it up with a few riffs on air guitar.

Everyone laughs. Even Mary.

LOU (CONT'D)

Looking forward to the soccer awards dinner, Jason?

JASON

You bet. You're still coming with me, right?

LOU

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

JASON

No medals, but I did okay.

LOU

You contributed a lot to the team.



**ACT II "THE WORLD CLOSES DOWN"**

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "March 16, 2020"

Mary sits on the couch. Looks sad. Lou sits beside her. Puts his arm around her.

LOU  
Whatcha doing?

MARY  
Thinking. What a week. No defense against this Coronavirus thing is in sight. And it's raining.

LOU  
Yeah. And we need rain to avoid drought like West's.

MARY  
Covid will affect Oaklynn's wedding. Such a great date. Like poetry: 5-10-20. This is not the best time. I really would have loved to visit Bonnie in Raleigh. But... Covid.

Lou is lost in his own thoughts. Sits a bit.

LOU  
Last month there were 15 people in California and Wisconsin with Covid. There was also one community transmission reported in California on February 28th.

MARY  
It'll be on our doorstep soon.

LOU  
I'm afraid you're right.

Mary thinks for a tick.

MARY  
I took the high road, Lou. I called Oaklynn and told her I couldn't attend. She understood. I canceled the flight. I just can't risk it.

LOU

You did the right thing. It's not just you and me. The boys. Lou hugs Mary. She looks up at him.

MARY

Moot anyway. Bonnie called. She told me Oaklynn's wedding reception is postponed until September.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM- DAY

SUPER: "March 17, 2020"

Mary at her laptop on a Zoom with the school Principal.

INSERT - LAPTOP, ZOOM SESSION

PRINCIPAL

As you know, all schools in the state are closed as of yesterday through April first. In the week prior to April first, we will decide whether to reopen, and if so in what manner. Remotely or face to face. I need all of you to call the parents of the children with whom you work to assess the availability of internet and clarify what hard copy materials they should be expecting in the mail. Inquire if they can help their children with the written assignments you will send them.

Principal takes a deep breath. This decision weighs on him.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Does anyone have a question? Just type them in.

(reads)

Yes, James. We'll be meeting daily at nine A-M each morning for the rest of the week at which time I will update you on where we are and where we are going. Anyone else?

(waits - nothing)

Fine. I look forward to talking to you tomorrow morning via Zoom. Until then.

END INSERT

Mary closes the Zoom App and shuts her laptop.

Jason enters the room.

JASON

Mom, what's the difference between  
hunkering down and staying at home?

MARY

In the event of nuclear fallout, we  
hunker down for 72 hours and eat  
only canned foods and bottled water  
until the contamination risk  
passes.

JASON

Except for the food stuff, isn't  
that what we're doing now? Still  
don't get it.

MARY

Hunker down has a very specific  
meaning for a very specific  
situation.

Jason nods: okay.

MARY (CONT'D)

The governor wants us to stay home.  
There are no immediate risks around  
us. We stay at home to avoid  
contact with Covid where we might  
be infected by it: crowded bus,  
supermarket.

JASON

We're staying at home. That's all.  
Just staying at home.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary and Lenore on the phone.

MARY

I can't get food delivered. We're  
all right, I think. Guess they  
don't have the trucks to keep up  
with the demand.

LENORE (V.O.)  
Or the supplies. No toilet paper.  
No soap. No paper towels. Carl's  
dad said he tried a few stores. The  
shelves are half empty. Paper and  
cleaning products are picked clean.

MARY  
Instacart will pick up from a  
store. Maybe try that.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Lenore at the table, coffee at her elbow.

LENORE  
I will. Thanks.

INTERCUT - PHONE CALL/MATTERS' AND SOLERS' HOMES

MARY  
How are you doing prepping for the  
distance learning?

LENORE  
Dreadful! I tried to find online  
courses to coach me at the Ariana  
Teacher's Center, but there are  
only a few. I put my name on the  
waiting list for one.

MARY  
Same here. I've been using Youtube  
and trial and error to figure out  
Google Classroom. Horrendous. The  
school librarian answered some of  
my questions. He's our point man.  
Except he's still learning the  
system himself. How are Ricky and  
Steven holding up?

LENORE  
A little antsy. But staying near  
home. Ricky shoots baskets in the  
yard. He and Steven kick around the  
soccer ball. They play online games  
with their friends.

Mary moves to the window where outside Jason and Marty are  
kicking a soccer ball around.

MARY

Same here. The boys are keeping busy with music and soccer. They ride bikes together. Thankfully, they're responsible in social distancing and wearing masks.

LENORE

Carlos picked up masks at the drugstore, but they don't have a place for filters.

Lenore looks at some filterless masks she has on the table.

MARY

Same here. But I looked online. I found one site that had masks with places for filters. I'll send you the link. Don't expect them too soon.

LENORE

Okay, Mary. Thanks. Let's talk again later.

MARY

Later, Lenore.

LENORE

Later, Mary.

END INTERCUT

LOU joins his wife.

MARY

Good thing I stocked up in anticipation of the stay at home order. Peapod won't deliver for two weeks; April 2nd. Luckily we have frozen chicken and canned goods.

Lou checks the cabinets for stores.

LOU

Four jars of peanut butter, four jars of jelly. Cans of corned beef, chili, sardines, tuna and salmon. That should last us a week or more.

MARY

Plus frozen vegetables. Four  
cartons of milk. Sanitizer wipes  
and hand sanitizer.

LOU

Going forward, we need a plan.

MARY

Go with the first available date  
for delivery. When it arrives, we  
wipe everything down with sanitizer  
wipes, throw out the paper bags,  
wash our hands, and store the food  
away.

Lou laughs.

LOU

Don't forget to sing happy birthday  
twice when you wash your hands.

Mary laughs.

MARY

Glad to see your sense of humor is  
returning.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Ricky on his phone.

INSERT - PHONES, FACETIME

JASON

Not fond of distance learning.

RICKY

You said it, man.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Jason, phone in hand.

JASON

Just when I was settling in, too.

RICKY

We can work together. We'll work it  
out.

INTERCUT - SOLERS' AND MATTERS' HOMES

Jason and Ricky talk by phone. Mary is seen seated with her back to Jason taking a course in the use of Google Classroom on her computer. Jason has his laptop in front of him. Ricky is in his kitchen, snacking.

JASON

Maybe you can Facetime if you need help. My mom and dad will help.

RICKY

They're home?

Ricky dips a graham cracker into his milk and takes a bite.

JASON

My father makes his own schedule. When my mom isn't doing schoolwork, she's great. They help me. Why not help both of us?

RICKY

My mom is home on Tuesdays, Thursday afternoons, and Fridays. At her school you can choose to come masked and distance or use remote learning. She's awful busy. As for my dad, he's away five days a week except the days change.

Jason toys with his computer.

JASON

My parents are good at math and science. My mom is good for social studies and English. Except right now she spends most of her days working on learning Google Classroom.

RICKY

Yeah.

(laughs)

Good chance her next degree'll be a Masters of Google.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lou and Jason wait for grocery delivery.

LOU

Jason. Any chance you're up to helping me when the delivery arrives?

JASON (O.S.)

Sure. Give me a shout when it's here.

Lou watches out the kitchen window.

The shopper arrives.

He dons a mask.

FRONT DOOR

Lou opens the door and carries in the bags, sometimes bumping into the door jam on his left side as he does so. Mary is seen working at her computer.

LOU

Jason, order's here.

Jason joins his dad in the --

KITCHEN

LOU

We got most groceries but there are substitutions. They're out of some things.

They wipe down the individual items in silence.

When done, Jason wipes down the counter.

Lou washes hands, mouths Happy Birthday.

JASON

We're a pretty good team.

LOU

The A team. Feel like a cup of coffee?

JASON

Sounds good.

Lou brews coffee and they sit at the kitchen table.



LOU  
How long do you think distance  
learning will go on?

JASON  
It depends.

LOU  
On?

JASON  
On students. Teachers. Families.  
But really on the governor.

Lou pours them each a cup of coffee.

LOU  
How do they communicate. E-mail? On  
Zoom?

JASON  
I don't think all the kids have  
laptops.

LOU  
Maybe the school could provide  
them.

JASON  
Yeah. That'd be good.

They sip, quiet for a moment.

JASON (CONT'D)  
I see you're getting around better.

LOU  
I have a trick: I stay in one place  
and arrange things so I only use my  
right side.

JASON  
That's a good one, Dad.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Jason at a table piled with books, laptop and papers. Mary is  
seen working at her computer.

A Zoom window is open on the laptop.

RICKY (ZOOM)  
It's kinda' neat how on Google  
Classroom both the teachers and us  
can look at our writing at the same  
time.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Ricky, similar.

JASON (ZOOM)  
Took us a bit to get it, but it  
works.

RICKY  
Today, I have to answer questions  
about a story we read.

JASON (ZOOM)  
I've got algebra to do.

INTERCUT - SOLERS' AND MATTERS' HOMES, ZOOM

Mary is seen working at Google Classroom at her computer.  
Both boys have their laptops open in front of them.

RICKY  
I've been doing okay. Don't need  
much help. Right now anyway.

JASON  
Me, too. I like working side by  
side. Even if it's remotely.

RICKY  
It's not the same, but it'll have  
to do without being with the rest  
of our buds.

Jason plays with Google Classroom on the screen.

JASON  
At least most of the teachers  
understand how to use Google  
Classroom and even Google Meet now.

RICKY  
Can't believe how many hours it  
took Mom to learn how to use it.  
Courses. More courses. Independent  
study. It was like a full time job!

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary prepares for distance learning via phone.

She calls Miriam's grandmother, LETTY (Afro-American - 60s).

MARY

Letty. So glad I caught you. How are you?

LETTY (V.O.)

Well, not so good.

MARY

Really? Is working from home too much for you?

INT. MIRIAM'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A despondent Letty at the kitchen table.

LETTY

That's part of it. The worst is Wallace, my husband, is quarantined upstairs in our apartment. Miriam and I stay in one downstairs room with my friend, Samantha.

MARY (V.O.)

Oh, dear. Packed in tight.

INTERCUT - MATTERS' AND MIRIAM'S HOMES

LETTY

To make matters worse, Miriam refuses to do what I ask her to do. I can't get her to admit when she does something she shouldn't have.

MARY

Hmm. I understand.

LETTY

She should be doing more than she is. Her writing is terrible, and she refuses to write better. Her math is sliding. She needs to catch up. She has difficulty dividing and multiplying. When I ask her to practice, she refuses.

MARY

Hmm.

LETTY

She is very rude to me, but will talk to her counselor over Zoom for an hour. Miriam is peaches and cream with her. Nice and polite.

Miriam (Dark haired, fair skin - 12) is observed to be reading a Jo-Jo book. Her Jo-Jo doll sits beside her.

MARY

Any luck with Google Classroom?

LETTY

She refuses to use it. All she wants to do is read stories online and her Jo-Jo books.

MARY

Do you think she might talk to me?

LETTY

I'll ask.

(off phone)

Miriam. Miss Mary is on the phone. Would you like to talk to her?

After a bit, Miriam picks up.

MIRIAM

Hello?

MARY

Miriam. It's Mary. How are you?

Miriam, calm and pleasant.

MIRIAM

I'm fine. How are you?

MARY

I'm fine, too. I was wondering if you'd like to do Google Classroom with me.

Miriam moves toward her computer.

MIRIAM

Sure. Let me go to the computer.

MARY

Well, not right now, Miriam. How about we make a date, and I set up a session for you and me? In the meantime, you can do one of the lessons I already set up for you. Next time we can talk about it and catch up on how you are doing.

MIRIAM

Okay.

MARY

Can I talk again with your grandmother? I need to find out when would be a good time.

MIRIAM

Okay.

(off phone)

Granma?

Letty returns to the conversation.

LETTY

Thank you.

MARY

You're welcome. Letty, I think Miriam will let you help her set up Google Classroom now. If she does, you'll find my lesson for her on it. I'll call Friday around one. Is that okay? I think I remember you don't work Friday afternoons.

LETTY

I'll be here.

END INTERCUT

Mary makes her way to Lou's workspace in the --

LIVING ROOM

She peers over his shoulder at a design he works on.

MARY

I like the way you integrated the font there. Really draws you in.

Lou smiles at her. They kiss.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Marty has a mask in hand. He shoves it in his pocket.

MARTY

Did you bring a mask?

Carl nods and pats his pocket then drags out a Cornhole game.

Marty and Carl share eight beanbags for a game of corn ball.

They also share warm rapport.

CARL

It's going out like a lamb. Right?

MARTY

March? Yeah! Only three months left  
in eighth grade.

The Boys at a stone in the grass 27 feet from the Cornhole.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Fifteen throws each.

CARL

Okay.

MARTY

Okay. The loser puts the game away.  
After, we'll take a bike ride.

CARL

Okay. You go first.

MARTY

Go ahead and toss.

Carl tosses underhand, misses the board.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Candy corn. Too bad.

Marty's toss lands on the platform edge, balances for a  
moment then lands on the ground.

Carl laughs.

CARL

Guess who else has candy corn now?

Carl's toss lands square in the center. He beams.

CARL (CONT'D)  
Not bad for a noob.

Marty winds up and lands a beanbag atop Carl's.  
He gives Carl a friendly push on the shoulder.

CARL (CONT'D)  
So much for noobs.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

On the phone, Mary talks to Carole, Finn's mother.

MARY  
We both know Finn, so I understand,  
Carole.

Mary pauses to listen.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Okay. Talk to you Friday, Carole.  
Go easy on yourself. Working in a  
long-term care facility with this  
pandemic, and your husband away a  
lot, is difficult.  
(listens)  
If you try something and he's not  
ready, I'd remain encouraging and  
accept when he says no. Try to get  
him to commit to another specific  
time or task. Talk to you Friday.  
Have a nice week.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "March 21, 2020"

Lou and Mary together.

She reads a newspaper.

MARY  
Is this the new normal? Listen to  
this...  
(reads)  
They've identified 14,000 cases of  
Covid in the U-S. New York has  
nearly a third of them, 5,673  
cases. Double from just four days  
ago.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

In our county, there are 36 active cases. Twice as many as there were two days ago.

Mary closes the newspaper. Sets it aside.

LOU

Frightening. It's spreading so fast. And no vaccine yet.

MARY

The governor ordered schools to remain closed through the end of this month. He'll reevaluate next month. This affects the learning curve. Better dumb than dead, I guess.

Mary resigned, rises.

LOU

That's one way to look at it.

MARY

We have food delivery. And despite the stay at home order, I still have income. Not everybody is so lucky. Google Classroom is a challenge. Even making contact with the parents. Forget about getting them to work with their children. Only a third seem available.

LOU

Sounds tough.

MARY

I can pretty much forget about coaching students in person. Online, I can't make real eye contact. Finding an audio volume that's comfortable for both you and the student is difficult too.

Lou approaches Mary. Puts his arms around her.

LOU

You're doing great, Mary.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "March 23, 2020"



Mary, Marty and Jason solve a jig saw puzzle.

MARTY

Snowing out. Funny for late March.  
It's gonna melt.

Jason picks up and scans his phone.

JASON

Looks like Italy and the U-S cases  
are doubling at the same rate.

MARY

Poor Italy.

MARTY

Poor us.

Marty puts a piece in the puzzle.

JASON

How's Bonnie and her family doing  
in North Carolina?

MARY

Just staying home. Except Bonnie  
cares for her brother's little ones  
sometimes. Know how lucky we've  
been with food deliveries? Sandra,  
your old baby sitter, called  
yesterday. Her groceries were  
delivered to the wrong house. I  
asked about her family. They're all  
home and don't leave without a  
mask.

Mary puts a piece in the puzzle.

MARTY

Smart.

MARY

I heard the governor on TV this  
morning. He asked all hospitals in  
the state to increase isolation  
wards by 50 percent. Also, Covid  
patients will be transported to  
available beds farther north and  
west as necessary. While there are  
masks available for all, he can't  
promise the supply will last.

MARTY

I heard colleges are reopening but  
online only.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "March 24, 2020"

Lou and Mary arm in arm on the couch.

LOU

Any word on when school will open  
again?

MARY

The boys' district opens on Monday.  
As for mine, it says Monday but to  
watch for changes. I'll hook up my  
new laptop. It has the camera I can  
use with Zoom or Google Meet for  
speech language sessions. Then I go  
to work on strategies for distance  
therapy events. I'm reluctant to  
call them sessions because some are  
likely to be short-lived.

LOU

The online scanning practice site,  
has a news reading function. It  
helps to keep me informed.

(then)

I'll work on web design after I  
make us all lunch.

Mary turns toward Lou and puts her outer arm around him  
giving him a squeeze.

MARY

You're such a sweetheart, Lou. So  
proud of you. How's the reading  
speed?

LOU

Real progress. Up around 200 words  
per minute. With web design, I  
don't have much intense reading.

MARY

I'm sorry for not being more  
available to support you. In fact,  
you're supporting me.

She kisses Lou.

LOU  
That's a pandemic for you. I was  
once an independent professional  
and will be again.

Lou hugs her.

LOU (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
We're lucky, Mary. Everything has  
changed. Yet, in a way, nothing has  
changed.

EXT./INT. ARIANA - PHARMACY DRIVE UP - CAR, IDLING - DAY

SUPER: "March 25, 2020"

Mary at the window.

MARY  
(to pharmacist)  
Yes, thank you. Just the vitamins.

Mary takes a bag the Pharmacist placed in the window drawer.

She pumps antiseptic lotion, wipes hands together.

ON THE PASSENGER SEAT

A box of grocery staples.

Mary drives off to --

EXT. JOHN'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Mary rings the bell.

Elderly JOHN (70s) opens the door. She hands him the box.

MARY  
Hope these help, John. I already  
wiped them down. Have a nice day.

JOHN:

They will. Thank you so much, Mary.

INT./EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

Mary pulls up. Marty kicks a soccer ball around the lawn.

She rolls down the window.

MARY

I feel like a ride, Marty. Wanna go with me? For a look-see?

MARTY

Yeah.

INT./EXT. ARIANA - CAR, TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Mary turns onto the --

MAIN ROAD

She drives past a normally packed mall.

MARY

Looks like a ghost town.

MARTY

People are listening to the stay at home order.

MARY

It's because new cases in the County have almost doubled in a little over a week to 125.

The parking lots: near-deserted.

MARY (CONT'D)

I talked with Bonnie. The stay at home order in North Carolina was only for Charlotte. I can't believe how casual they are down there.

MARTY

Why?

MARY

Many reasons: some personal, some political. All we can do is listen to the experts and follow our own path in dealing with the pandemic.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "April 19, 2020"

Mary at her laptop.

Lou calls her to the --

WORKSPACE

LOU

Sorry to interrupt. Wanted you to look at a few web pages I developed.

MARY

Very nice. Very professional.

Lou shares some images on his screen.

LOU

I wanted your take on the use of color. They're for my design portfolio. My plan is to post them on the website I'm developing by the end of April. These are the last submissions I need to get my certified expert certification.

MARY

I like these colors. It really sets the site's mood. Are you that close to getting your certification?

Lou looks at her with pride.

LOU

Thanks, hun. Yes. As soon as I have it, I'll use the website as a portfolio and look for contract positions with authors and publishers. Or better yet, a full-time position with a web design or publicity firm.

MARY

Sounds wonderful, Lou.

LOU

I'll save these website pages 'til I have some experience.

Mary views the screen over his shoulder.

LOU (CONT'D)

I've named the company M-W-D-S; Matters Web Design Service. As soon as I get my cert, I'll incorporate. M-W-D-S, Inc.

MARY

Look at you -- an absolute miracle.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lou sits in the workspace area with Jason. Mary is working at her computer.

LOU

Have I shown you my certificate in graphic design?

Jason moves to see what Lou indicates on the computer screen.

JASON

Wow, Dad. Congratulations!

LOU

It's only a graphic image. They'll send me a paper one, but it sure is a sight for sore eyes.

Lou pauses then laughs.

LOU (CONT'D)

No pun intended.

Jason laughs.

JASON

Definitely. Sore eyes or not.

They share a laugh.

JASON (CONT'D)

We need to celebrate. This is really big.

LOU

It is... kinda.

JASON

Let's have a cookout. We can do that and still be safe from Covid. This Friday. Whattayathink?.

LOU

Great idea. Let's invite the Solers and Atkins.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary reads a newspaper.

Lou busies at the computer.

Ricky and Jason dive into homework over Zoom.

JASON

What a downer it would be if we had only ourselves.

RICKY (ZOOM)

It's not so much we need to help each another. It's the company.

JASON

Marty told me that him and Carl watched Google presentations four mornings a week. They like doing it together. Marty likes social studies but Carl not so much. And Carl likes math. Marty not so much. It's a good combo to help each other.

RICKY (ZOOM)

(laughs)

After is still best: Cornhole, basketball and soccer. I'm almost done. You?

JASON

I'm good.

Jason closes his laptop and leaves.

MARY

Between May and August, Princeton researchers documented nearly 8,000 demonstrations in more than 2,000 locations across America. All of them peaceful. A hundred Covid healthcare workers and eviction crisis demonstrations were also peaceful.

LOU

You're singing to the choir. I'm with ya, hun.

Mary puts the paper down, places head in her hands.

Lou stands beside Mary with a hand on her shoulder.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: "May, 2020"

Mary on a call with Carole, Finn's mother.

MARY

Hi, Carole. It's Mary checking in.  
It was a nice conversation I had  
with Finn last week. He was polite,  
spontaneous and engaged.

CAROLE (V.O.)

Oh, great. I have Google Meet all  
set up.

Carole starts the Meet.

INSERT - MARY'S LAPTOP, GOOGLE MEET SESSION

Briefly visible, Carole exits the screen.

CAROLE (O.S.)

Just a minute, Mary. Finn is right  
here. Finn.

Finn on the screen.

MARY

Hi, Finn. How are you?

FINN

Fine. Been working with my dad.

MARY

Did you work on clearing out the  
brush from the stream?

FINN

It's very clean. There are fish.  
The other day I saw a frog jump in  
and swim away. Last week I saw a  
turtle.

MARY

Oh, interesting. I thought what you  
wrote about the stream was really  
good.

FINN

Thank you. But I have to go now.



MARY

Oh?

FINN

Yeah. My dad is outside. I have to help him.

Finn exits the screen.

Carole returns.

MARY

From what I see, you work from dawn to dusk seven days a week; cooking, cleaning and balancing schooling your sons, both with special needs. I don't know anyone who works as hard as you. You do it wonderfully. I can see it in Finn.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING AREA - DAY

Marty on his laptop for distance learning.

He TEXTS Carl in a private message window on Google Meet.

MARTY

did u see miss greys eyes when she tried 2 get us 2 b quiet

CARL

no y

MARTY

her eyes got big she couldn't control her pupils

CARL

u think u r funny lol u r smart how do trees get online

MARTY

???

CARL

they log in

Marty smiles and shakes his head.

MARTY

where u learn that science u want 2 b a doctor

CARL  
better than politics can't believe  
u want 2 b a politician

MARTY  
1st a civil rights lawyer

CARL  
then u run 4 office

Marty laughs.

MARTY  
and win

Carl laughs then types.

CARL  
give me science i wanna work on  
climate change

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

On her laptop, Mary ends a Google Classroom session.

INSERT - MARY'S LAPTOP, GOOGLE CLASSROOM

MIRIAM  
Do you want me to read from my Jo-  
Jo book? It's really good.

MARY  
Could we do that next time? I have  
to talk with another student now.

MIRIAM  
Okay.

The screen goes dark.

Mary shakes her head and laughs.

MARY  
Well, I guess that means goodbye.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

SUPER: "June 2, 2020"

Marty and Carl enjoy snacks.

MARTY

Look, Carl. We have to go tomorrow.

CARL

What about Covid? And there could be violence.

Marty reaches for another cookie.

MARTY

The demonstrations in the park have been peaceful. Tomorrow there's a march on the street.

CARL

Not sure my parents will let me.

MARTY

It's a march for equality. For fairness. You're for fairness. I'm for fairness. I say we go. Ask your parents. Maybe you can even get them to go. Who knows?

Marty offers Carl more cookies.

CARL

Okay. I'll ask.

MARTY

I'll ask my mother. She can call your mother. We can go together. We gotta go. Black lives matter.

CARL

You already sound like a politician giving a speech.

MARTY

Tomorrow. One o'clock. We get our schoolwork done and ride our bikes over.

Mary joins them. Marty and Carl trade sheepish looks.

She smiles at them.

MARY

Come on, guys. Talk to me. I couldn't help overhear what you were saying.

MARTY

Mom, I think we need to join the marchers. You should come too. Whattaya say?

MARY

The problem is Covid. There will probably be people there without masks and even if we wear them, we'll be in jeopardy of getting it.

Marty thinks a beat.

MARTY

Okay. Then we go by car.

MARY

Car?

MARTY

Yeah. We go by car.

Mary thinks a beat.

MARY

You want me to drive and join the march in a car?

MARTY

No. You and me and Carl. And dad too... if he wants to.

MARY

Well you and I could do that. But I don't think Carl's family would let him join us. Do you, Carl?

Carl hangs back.

Marty floats an idea,

MARTY

Look, Carl, what we do is make it a family affair. My mom drives you, me and your mom to the march.

Carl considers it.

CARL

Yeah. Yeah. Would you call my mom, Mrs. Matters? We could do that if my mom says okay.

MARTY  
Whattya think, Mom?

MARY  
We'll see what your mom says, Carl.

INT./EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - MARY'S CAR, PARKED - DAY

Strung on the car, handmade Black Lives Matter flags and a banner across the hood.

All masked, Mary, Carl and Marty in the front. Adele and Jason in the back seat.

MARY  
We all in?

ADELE  
All in!

MARY  
Off we go.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

SUPER: "August 23, 2020"

All masked, Lou, Carlos and Jim settle in on the front porch.

They move six feet from one another and remove masks.

LOU  
Six months in and we're still  
learning to cope with Covid. At  
least we have the mask and seating  
arrangements down.

Lou laughs.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Never thought not seeing well would  
require group participation.

CARLOS  
We're happy about your progress.

JIM  
I saw road crews back on the job.  
Masked. Distancing.

CARLOS

Last night Lenore and I ate outside  
at Casa Mexicana.

JIM

How'd they handle that?

CARLOS

First, there weren't many people  
there. The waiter wore a mask and  
wiped down the menus with sanitary  
wipes before he gave them to us.  
They asked us to please pay with a  
card. We saw a waitress wipe down a  
table and chairs after a party  
left.

JIM

More young people are getting Covid  
recently. Summer get togethers.  
Inside. No masks.

CARLOS

They make too much ado about the  
need for masks. I think that either  
you're going to get it or you're  
not going to get it.

LOU

I'm surprised you're not bigger on  
scientific findings. Covid is  
spread by droplets. If you cover  
your nose and mouth, not only are  
you less likely to breathe them  
out, you are less likely to breathe  
them in.

Carlos scoffs.

CARLOS

To each his own. I wear a mask  
because Lenore insists on it. If  
she weren't there, I'd toss it.  
Along with hand sanitizer. Jim and  
Lou move on from this prickly  
subject.

LOU

Almost time to go back to school.  
Nice the district sent Chromebooks  
to kids who don't have laptops.

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)  
Maybe by the time school opens, all the teachers will understand how to use Google Classroom and Google Meet.

Lou laughs.

LOU (CONT'D)  
I think the kids understand them better than some of teachers.

CARLOS  
Lenore has really been challenged in learning them. How about Mary?

LOU  
Tough... just tough. Between the boys and her, I think they've got it knocked. It took most of the spring to set up appointments, and even to begin to use anything other than the phone for parent-student contact.

CARLOS  
Same for Lenore. Difficult.

Lou addresses Jim then Carlos.

LOU  
Mary found families had difficulty maintaining contact. Some just never made it.

CARLOS  
How's your online learning going?

LOU  
Pretty smooth. Finished several courses in digital design and am currently interning with a local publisher who is happy with me working remotely.

Jim extends a hand toward Lou and speaks.

JIM  
How's your vision?

LOU  
I still can't drive. I'll probably never drive again. But I'm reading over two hundred words a minute now, and rarely bump into anything.

CARLOS  
That's great, Lou.

JIM  
The stay at home order is ready  
made for you.

Lou snickers.

LOU  
Looks that way.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "September, 2020"

Mary looks up from her laptop. A pile of masks lie beside it  
on the table.

MARY  
Lou, I need to talk. I'm feeling  
overwhelmed by this "new normal."  
I'm happy the boys are handling the  
distance learning well. And that  
they ask for help when they need  
it. But how do we respond to the  
Black Lives Matter movement? Will  
this time ever end?

Lou looks up from his computer.

LOU  
Not unless there's real change.

MARY  
How likely is that?

LOU  
Anybody's guess.

MARY  
Why is Carlos so defensive about  
any discussion of... anything?

LOU  
He supports a hard line on Cuba,  
emphasis on job creation and the  
pro-life stand.

MARY  
Hmm.

Mary scans the laptop.



MARY (CONT'D)  
Listen to this.

LOU  
Tell me.

MARY  
Labor Day weekend statistics on Covid 19 are not encouraging in Ariana County. There are nearly 5,000 cases in our county alone. And... "Due to the early, unchecked and rapid spread of the virus in Aesopolis, the entire state has experienced 436,164 cases and 32,570 deaths." Thirty-three thousand deaths!

Lou leans in toward Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)  
"Across the United States there have been 6 point 39 million cases, 189,000 associated deaths."

Mary pauses, reads.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Worldwide it's also been bad. According to this article, "Worldwide there have been 27 million cases with 18 million recovered and 881,000 deaths."

Lou rises and comes sit in the chair next to Mary.

LOU  
Look, no need to be down about it. Seems to me our family is coping pretty well. What with masks and social distancing. No sense in letting world statistics shake us when right here, right now, we're okay.

MARY  
I suppose. Still...

LOU  
What are the boys up to?

MARY  
They're outside shooting hoops. Ricky, Marty, Carl, and Jason.  
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)  
Every so often, Steven wanders over  
while Lenore watches him from the  
sidewalk.

LOU  
Are they masked?

MARY  
Yup. Even Steven.  
(chuckle)  
He's so cute!

Lou slips on a mask.

LOU  
C'mon. Let's mask up and join them.  
It's a nice day.

Mary laughs and picks up her mask.

MARY  
Yeah. I could use some fresh air.

**ACT III "APPROACHING NORMAL"**

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Mary and Lenore socially distant with masks near.

LENORE

Have you had any school staff meetings yet?

MARY

A couple over Zoom. Not much discussion. Mostly the principal rule setting and reporting. Apparently the need for student involvement and attendance is a problem for every class.

LENORE

Same with us. Glad it's Saturday.

MARY

Me too. What do you think of the upcoming political conventions?

LENORE

It's a topic I don't dare discuss with Carlos. But we have to vote. Everyone has to vote.

MARY

Even Carlos?

Lenore laughs.

LENORE

Yup. Even Carlos.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Mary sits on Lou's right side then scooches to the left.

Lou pulls her closer.

He hugs his wife and kisses her cheek.

They rest in each other's arms.

Carl makes a goal.

LOU  
Good one, Carl.

The Boys switch positions.

Marty misses a goal attempt.

MARY  
Next time, Marty.

LOU  
Well, as we're now surviving a new school year, I think we should celebrate with an end-of-summer cookout with the Solers and Atkins. You game?

MARY  
I am. I'm a social creature. I miss being with friends.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

The cookout.

Covid protocols followed: distancing and two-layer masks.

The Solers and Atkins attend.

Soda, beer. Potluck dishes.

The Cornhole game ready for players. Lou mans the grill. Burgers and hot dogs sizzle.

PICNIC TABLE - LATER

Social distance seating.

JIM  
We have a lot to celebrate. Not the least is toilet paper returning to the shelves.

Jim laughs and toasts everyone with a bottle of beer.

CARLOS  
We all have learned how to learn distantly.

Carlos smiles and toasts everyone with his bottle of beer.

LOU

And the boys can beat the pants off  
adults at Cornhole.

Lou, Carlos and Jim toast the boys.

LENORE

Then there is the downside. How  
many weeks it takes for online  
orders of masks to arrive, for  
example.

ADELE

Three weeks here.

LENORE

Two and a half. What about those  
fires in the west?

MARY

Smoke crossed the entire country.  
It's why the sky is overcast. You  
can smell the smoke sometimes. And  
the hurricanes down south.

LOU

Climate change; here to stay.

LATER

The Boys and Adults choose sides for Cornhole.

LOU

Line up when your name is called.  
Team one: Me, Carlos, Steven, Jim,  
and Marty.

Team One splinters off.

LOU (CONT'D)

Team two is who's left: Mary, Carl,  
Lenore, Adele, Jason, and Ricky

Marty and Adele flip a coin to choose their team color.

ADELE

Heads.

Marty flips the coin, lifts his hand in agreement.

MARTY

Heads it is.

ADELE

Red.

CARLOS

We're blue.

Carlos tosses a blue bean bag to each of those on his team.  
Even Steven catches his.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Steven, you go last. That way you  
can see how the game is played.

Lou and Lenore toss first.

They both manage to reach the platform for woodies.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

One point each. Tied.

LOU

Your turn Carlos. Then Adele

Carlos sinks a cornhole.

LOU (CONT'D)

Three points, Carlos. Well done!

Adele misses the platform.

CARLOS

Four to one.

Jim and Mary each get a Woody.

JIM

Five to two.

Marty and Jason fare better with a cornhole each. Marty  
performs a smug victory dance.

CARLOS

No fair. You guys have been  
practicing.

LOU

Eight to five.

Carl and Ricky give it a whirl.

Two cornholes.

They smile and high five.

CARL

Wowiee!

RICKY

Eleven to eight.

Steven, a woody.

Lenore misses the platform.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Lou intent on local TV news.

INSERT - TV

TV ANCHOR

Covid 19 continues to pose a threat to our nation. While Ariana County numbers are below a one percent positivity rate, the question remains as to what is the best way for schools to open. The community response is divided. It is possible that those who favor distance learning may work from home or have children able to independently participate, and siblings with whom they can socialize. But there are many parents who argue that their children need the chance to enjoy direct teacher contact and socializing with their peers.

BACK TO SCENE

Mary and Lou trade thoughtful and knowing looks.

INSERT - TV

TV ANCHOR

Special needs students may be seen to benefit more from professional interventions available to them in the school environment. As such, given the mixed reception in the community, Ariana Central School District's decision has been to give families the choice.

(MORE)

TV ANCHOR (CONT'D)

The result is a compromise that results in shorter in-school instruction hours. It is believed to be a decision that best meets the needs of all the families in Ariana.

BACK TO SCENE

Mary turns off the television.

MARY

I talked about this with the boys. We all think that given the high rate of infection, distance learning would be best.

LOU

I agree. I mean, I'm here. You're here.

MARY

Imagine, Lou. Marty going into eighth grade. Jason into tenth. They've grown so fast.

LOU

Great boys. Responsible. And yes, growing up. Too fast.

Mary rises and heads toward the kitchen, talking over her shoulder as she does so.

MARY

Jim's hours as school administrator have increased during the pandemic. Adele has been asked to work from home. The Atkins have also decided to go with distance learning.

Lou rises and follows her.

LOU

According to Carlos, car sales have plummeted. The dealership cut back to Sunday through Wednesday one week and Thursday through Saturday the next week. The need for social distancing, and lack of people buying cars, means only half the staff goes in on any given day. He and Lenore both favor distance learning -- only for now.



INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Sons watch TV.

MARTY

You've been online with those courses a lot, Mom.

MARY

I just finished "Designing Related Services Lessons Using Google Classroom and G Suite." That's a mouthful. Lenore took it too.

MARTY

How many does that make?

MARY

Five maybe six, two to four hour courses. Not to mention the YouTube videos to teach me to use the apps. And my struggle to create lessons in Google Classroom.

MARTY

Ya done gud, Mom. Doncha think?

Serious, Marty pats his mom on the shoulder.

JASON

Fer sure!

Jason smiles broadly.

JASON (CONT'D)

Marty talked with Ricky. Him and Steven are doing just online.

MARY

Lenore and I talked about it. I'm glad for that. Maybe you can work together.

JASON

Fer sure!

MARTY

Fer sure!

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LOU'S WORKSPACE - DAY

Lou at the computer and on the phone.

LOU  
The application for incorporation  
of M-W-D-S Inc. is complete?  
(listens )  
Wonderful. You're just the attorney  
I needed. Appreciate it. Thank you.  
I'll call if I have any questions.

Lou hangs up, dials another number.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Hello, Cassie. It's Lou Matters.  
How are you?  
(listens)  
Great. I just hung up with my  
attorney. My company is formally  
incorporated and I am ready to work  
with you developing the website we  
talked about.  
(listens)  
It's been in process for a while so  
it was near completion when you  
called.

Lou types on the computer.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Glad Adele thought to give you my  
name. The next step is to send  
images to advertise on the website  
along with contact info. I'll get  
to work on the design right away.  
Confirming you want to call it  
Cassie's Corner. And note the works  
are by you and Pamela. She's your  
daughter, right?

Lou listens for a while then repeats what he understands.

LOU (CONT'D)  
"Work by Cassie, Pamela, and  
Friends. Handmade jewelry and bibs.  
Embroidered shirts, two-ply masks  
and insertable N95 filters." Got  
it.  
(listens)  
When I have the basic site map  
ready, I'll forward a copy for  
approval. As soon as the site's  
colors, design, and organization  
meet your approval, I'll add the  
items.  
(listens)  
(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)  
I understand the central item will  
be the masks. Talk with you soon,  
Cassie

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary rapt on TV news.

INSERT - TV

TV ANCHOR  
Yesterday marked the nineteenth  
anniversary of the 9-11 attack on  
the Twin Towers, but today we turn  
attention to the upcoming  
Presidential Election pitting the  
president against the former vice  
president. Covid is a hot button  
issue with both candidates on  
opposite sides of a policy to  
combat the pandemic.

BACK TO SCENE

Mary leans in.

INSERT - TV

TV ANCHOR  
A Yahoo News survey using a  
national, representative sample of  
1,577 U-S adults from online  
interviews leading up to the 9-11  
anniversary report only 16 percent  
of registered voters thought a  
vaccine released before Election  
Day would be safe while 58 percent  
believe the opposite. Sixty-two  
percent believe it's a bad idea to  
push health officials to release a  
vaccine before the election.

BACK TO SCENE

Concerned, Mary rises and clicks off the TV.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Family breaks bread.

MARY

You all know your dad's business is incorporated? Yes!

LOU

Yes. Busy-busy. Cassie Coykendahl had to close down her brick and mortar boutique under the governor's order. She stayed closed to avoid close contact with customers. She and her daughter have been busy sewing masks. Adele suggested she contact me to build a website to sell masks online.

JASON

How's the site going?

LOU

I've been working on it. Maybe after supper you'd like to see my progress.

JASON

Absolutely.

MARTY

Me too, Dad.

MARY

You'll be impressed. I was.

AFTER DINNER

The boys clear the dishes.

MARY

Thanks for helping, guys.

Mary and Lou remain, sip coffee.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm worried about climate change.

LOU

Me too. Things are getting worse.

They sit quiet for a moment, lost in their thoughts.

LOU (CONT'D)

By the way, I don't think I told you about how I'm handling book design requests. But I have a plan.

MARY  
Tell me about it.

Mary picks up her coffee, looks at Lou, and takes a sip.

LOU  
Given my slow reading rate I've decided that while I will do the cover design and copyright page, I'm going to have this young designer I've hooked up with online format the book text where it might be necessary and to read longer passages and pages.

MARY  
Very resourceful.

LOU  
You'll be happy to know that this week it looks like I'll be working 30 to 40 billable hours. Not too shabby, huh!

MARY  
Not too shabby at all.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Marty, Jason, Steven and Carl gather around the picnic table. With barber shops closed, the Boys' hair is a shaggy mess.

Nearby, Lou and Mary trim bushes.

Marty mans a new laptop with Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software -- a portable recording studio for self-production.

The Boys, ready to record.

Marty tunes his guitar then "produces."

MARTY  
Okay, Upbeats. I'm ready. Are you?

He pauses to look directly at the Group.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
The way we're going to do it is first we practice with just guitar as accompaniment. When we sort of have it, I'll work the DAW. To record.

(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)  
We'll listen to it and decide what  
sounds good and what needs to be  
better. Ready?

Nods all around.

Marty slips on headphones.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Let's warm up.

Marty strums a well known popular song.

The Boys join in.

It's not bad.

AT THE HEDGES

Mary stops to listen.

MARY  
Marty tells me he wants to have his  
own musical ensemble. . . They do  
sound good.

LOU  
Lucky for us, they're close in age.  
And live nearby.

PICNIC TABLE RECORDING STUDIO

The Group finishes the song.

Mary and Lou approach.

MARTY  
Wanna hear playback?

LOU  
You bet.

Marty hands them the headphones which Mary and Lou share.

As the tune plays, they smile and move to the beat.

They both clap at the end.

MARY  
Great work. All of you.

Smiles and nods of thanks from the Group.

MARTY  
Hey, Mom. You hear what they're  
doing about detention this year?

MARY  
No. What?

MARTY  
We're doing it distantly.

Lou laughs and messes up Marty's hair.

Marty gives him a 'thumbs up'.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "September, 2020 - Atlantic Hurricane Season"

Mary gazes out the window.

The sunset lurid in red, orange, yellow and purple.

MARY  
Look at this, Lou.

He joins her.

LOU  
Beautiful.

They sit, engrossed by the news of bad weather.

INSERT - TV

WEATHERMAN  
The 2020 hurricane season is second  
only to 1933. Given melting polar  
ice caps, rising sea levels and  
wildfires in the West, it serves  
as a marker for the severity of  
climate change around the earth.

BACK TO SCENE

LOU  
Since June first there have been 20  
named storms, 21 tropical cyclones,  
20 tropical storms, 8 hurricanes,  
and 2 major hurricanes. Sometimes I  
feel the U-S entered an alternate  
universe.

MARY  
Something's gotta give.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Masked, Marty and Carl arrive to find Mary at her laptop and Lou at his computer

MARTY  
Hey, Mom. Funny sunset.

MARY  
What do you mean, Marty?

MARTY  
I dunno. Just different.

CARL  
Kinda gray.

MARY  
Well, night's coming.

MARTY  
It's weird. The sun is a orange  
ball in the middle of it. No  
sunbeams coming from it.

The conversation catches Lou's attention.

LOU  
It might be caused by the smoke  
from the wildfires out West.

MARTY  
Are there wildfires here too?

LOU  
Not here. California. Washington.  
Oregon. An area as large as New  
Jersey is burning. The smoke was  
expected to hit the East Coast by  
tonight. That means us. Let's take  
a look.

They all head to --

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

They gaze a sun dimmed by smoke. It hangs above the horizon  
like a flat pumpkin. The sky, dull gray.



MARY

2020. What a year. A mix of hope  
and awfulness for us.

MARTY

It's good Dad's home but then  
there's Covid.

MARY

Sometimes I feel like the Woman in  
the Dunes.

MARTY

Who's that, Mom?

MARY

It's a movie about a woman who  
lives alone at the bottom of a deep  
sand dune.

Marty shrugs his shoulders.

MARTY

I don't get it.

MARY

It's like we're all in a deep sand  
dune where although it's crazy due  
to the isolation, it makes sense.  
You developing professionally, Lou.  
And you boys. Doing so well despite  
the need for distance learning. But  
out there, societal change like no  
one has ever seen before.

LOU

I never dreamed a nation as great  
as ours might be caught in such a  
maelstrom. It's the year 2020. Will  
it ever end? And if so, how?

Lou puts his arm around Mary's waist and Jason and Marty move  
closer to one another. They fix on the strange sun above.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACK PORCH - DAY

Lou lounges in the sun.

He answers a call.

LOU

Hello.

(listens)

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)  
Yes, this is he. Yes, I did the  
design work for Cassie. Glad you  
liked it. Thank you.

(listens)  
Part time design remote work? Yes,  
I'd be interested.

(listens)  
A Zoom interview? I could do that.  
I look forward to speaking with  
you. Thank you.

Surprised, Lou hangs up and looks at the phone.

Mary walks around the corner of the house.

MARY  
Nice out today. Isn't it?

She edges next to Lou.

LOU  
Guess who just called?

MARY  
You tell me.

LOU  
Harry McFee.

MARY  
And I know a Harry McFee?

Lou chuckles.

LOU  
No. But I do. He's the manager of  
Ariana Business Services. He wanted  
to know if I'd be interested in  
part-time design.

MARY  
And?

LOU  
Told him I was.

MARY  
That would be great. A steady  
paycheck and still time to build  
your own business.

LOU  
Exactly.

MARY  
Love ya, Lou. And love your go  
get'em attitude.

INT. SOLERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lenore on the phone.

LENORE  
Good morning. How are you managing  
the at-home thing?

MARY (V.O.)  
Going with the flow. I do have some  
good news.

LENORE  
I could use some. What is it?

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

Mary stacks dishes as she speaks.

MARY  
You know how happy I've been with  
Lou's steady improvement and  
positivity.

LENORE (V.O.)  
Sure.

INTERCUT - PHONE CALL/MATTERS' AND SOLERS' HOMES

Mary at her computer/Lenore on her porch.

MARY  
It looks as if he'll be working  
remotely as a designer for Ariana  
Business Services.

LENORE  
That's great, but how does that fit  
into the plan to start his own  
business?

MARY  
He'll manage both. At least until  
Matters Web Design Service reaches  
the point where he feels he no  
longer needs outside contract work.

LENORE  
Wonderful, Mary. And remotely.

MARY  
It's perfect. He'll be here to support the boys and me as they learn and I practice remotely.

Lenore rises and checks out one of her flower pots.

LENORE  
Ricky tells me Lou's become quite good in the kitchen, too. That he's aware of time and sequence again and is adapting to his vision loss.

MARY  
It's a miracle, Lenore. Still reads a bit slowly, he tells me. But hey. He understands what he reads. And he's always up to date on the news. He's particularly interested in anything related to climate and climate change.

LENORE  
Will he still receive a disability check?

MARY  
We'll have to look into that. But whatever, he'll have an income and life goes on. Not everyone is so lucky.

LENORE  
That's true.

Mary closes her computer.

MARY  
The other day I went for my annual medical exam. Driving along gave me the chance to see the effects of the stay at home order on traffic and businesses. Traffic was definitely heavier than it was when we were in Stage One. Businesses are still hurting.

LENORE  
It was really that obvious, huh? I haven't been out in weeks.

MARY

I passed the Ariana Mall and while there were more cars parked at the grocery store and book store, they were parked funny. Leaving a parking space free on either side. Lenore laughs.

LENORE

Even cars are social distancing.

Mary laughs.

MARY

But no cars had masks on.

Lenore laughs again.

MARY (CONT'D)

There were a number of closed or downsized businesses in the mall and along the road. Even with restaurants able to use 25 percent of inside capacity, most had outside dining. And the building where the clothing store used to be is still empty. A lot of small storefronts that were open pre-Covid are now vacant. Not sure when that happened.

LENORE

Carlos was talking about it to me, too. What he said was businesses that remained are frequently suited to internet, online, and phone or reading. Those and food markets and a few health-food stores. People still need to eat.

Mary rises and walks toward the kitchen.

MARY

There was a new store that sold exercise equipment. Gyms are probably doing poorly.

LENORE

Carlos also said that while the dealership is open, the sign for the theatre had been half pulled down and there was no movie listed on it.

MARY  
Another victim of Covid -- small  
businesses. And the economy in  
general.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

The Matters family chats over breakfast.

LOU  
Why are you having difficulty  
hooking up with some parents of  
children on your caseload, Mary?

Mary pours Lou some coffee then pours some for herself.

MARY  
The problem is most mothers work.  
One stays with his grandmother but  
she works from home. That means  
only when a child is exceptionally  
independent which, given their  
disabilities few are, that I can  
work with the children without  
direct adult support. Sometimes I  
feel like such a failure. It kind  
of gets to me.

LOU  
You're being too hard on yourself.

MARY  
You may be right. There's only so  
much I can do without seeming too  
aggressive or intrusive.

MARTY  
I'm sorry, Mom. But, yeah. I know I  
have to be responsible to keep up  
with online.

Mary sips her coffee and looks at her sons one at a time.

MARY  
I'm sure you bring joy to your  
teachers, Marty. You, too, Jason.

JASON  
Without you and Dad helping, I'd  
have a tough time keeping up too.

MARY

Thanks, Jason. Your dad has been a bigger help than I've been. Turns out that I'm not only a provider, but also a working mother.

Mary chuckles.

MARY (CONT'D)

I feel lucky when a parent just responds to an e-mail, forget about having them on Google Classroom. Or Google Meet.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Lou on the couch.

MARY

I was just listening to the news. Listen to these statistics: some three point one million acres in California have burned. That's 26 times what burned last year.

LOU

Don't forget Australia. All those poor animals that were lost.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary on her laptop.

She leads a session with Miriam and Letty on Google Meet.

INSERT - LAPTOP, GOOGLE MEET/ON SCREEN INTERCUTS MARY/MIRIAM

MARY

Miriam. Your grandmother is so proud of the progress you've been making.

MIRIAM

Grandma says she's having more fun with me. She is giving me more time to answer her, and understands how I'm shy to say I've done something she doesn't want me to do. Now, she says, "Oh, Miriam," and doesn't make me tell her what I did because we both know what I did.

(MORE)

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'm learning to say when I would rather do something else instead of just doing it or doing nothing.

LETTY

The other day she asked me if I had seen her drawing and when I said I hadn't, she showed me what she had done.

MARY

Miriam, it's so nice of you to share things with your grandma.

MIRIAM

She especially likes it when I show her my drawings.

MARY

Do you have one you might share with me?

Miriam moves off screen and returns with a drawing.

MIRIAM

It's Jo-Jo in her new dress.

MARY

Very nice.

MIRIAM

She loves her new dress.

MARY

Could we put her picture to the side, and write about her new dress?

Without further comment, Miriam arranges the picture in view and writes.

LETTY

We've been putting off starting work on her lessons until Miriam is ready and often it's only a few minutes before she's willing to do the Google Classroom work. So I just set it up and let her tell me when she wants to start. Works much better that way.



MARY

I see she learned to flip between  
Google Meet and Google Classroom  
when asked. Nice progress, Miriam.  
Can can you read me what you wrote?

MIRIAM

Jo-Jo loves her new dress because  
she thinks she looks beautiful in  
it and she loves the color too.

INT. SCHOOL - MARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Mary confers via phone about Gideon.

MARY

I understand that as Gideon's  
school counselor you're well  
informed about the home situation.  
I know his dad is older and has  
been evidencing Alzheimer's.

Mary listens, intent.

MARY (CONT'D)

His mother's mental state has been  
questionable for a while. With his  
mother in a sanitorium, they don't  
feel his dad can care for him by  
himself. Plus, he misses her.

(listens)

Gideon has regressed since the  
hospitalization. Lately, he arrives  
in a very loud and resistant mood  
but he's never violent.

Mary's brow furrows.

MARY (CONT'D)

So they're moving Gideon from a  
home for children and placing him  
with a foster family outside our  
school district? Today? I'm sure  
it's for the best. Thank you.

Mary hangs up the phone. She looks off for a moment, wistful  
and a bit sad, before returning to paperwork.

Gideon throws open the door to her office.

He leans in and smiles broadly.

GIDEON  
Guess what, Miss Mary?

MARY  
I don't know. What?

GIDEON  
I'm going to a new school.

MARY  
You mean I'm not going to see you  
any more?

Gideon remains in the door frame.

GIDEON  
Nope.

MARY  
We've been friends for two years.

GIDEON  
Going to a new school.

MARY  
How'd this all come about?

GIDEON  
They decided I need a new mom and  
dad.

MARY  
Oh, wonderful. Sounds like it will  
work out just fine.

GIDEON  
They have a swing in the backyard.  
I'm going to get a new bike.

MARY  
That's great. I'll miss you.

GIDEON  
I will miss you, too!

Gideon waves then disappears as he closes the door.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Finn and Mary on a phone session.

MARY  
Hello, Finn. It's Mary. How are you?

FINN (V.O.)  
I'm okay, thank you. How are you?

MARY  
Just fine. And looking forward to working with you in this new year.

FINN (V.O.)  
Me too.

INT. FINN'S HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Laptop and papers on the table in front of Finn.

MARY (V.O.)  
How was your summer?

FINN  
Busy.

MARY (V.O.)  
Did you ever catch the turtle?

INTERCUT - MATTERS' AND FINN'S HOME

FINN  
No. But we got a horse. We built him a stall. And cleaned the brush around the yard.

MARY  
Wow. That's a lot of work.

FINN  
The horse's name is Clover.

MARY  
That's a nice name. Tell you what. How about this week you go on Google Classroom and write about Clover. That'll make a great story.

Mary writes the assignment in a notebook.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I'll find you a story to read about a horse. Would you like that?

FINN

Yeah. That sounds great.

MARY

Okay, talk to you later in the week. Could you put your mom back on the phone so we can set up a time.

Finn leaves without saying goodbye.

CAROLE

Hello again.

MARY

Hello. You're working your magic. I can't believe the improvement in Finn.

CAROLE

I can't take all the credit. A lot of the progress has to do with projects he's been doing with his dad. And caring for Clover.

MARY

Finn's definitely benefitted. I've gotta hand it to you, Carole. You have a wonderful family. Finn's lucky to have you.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

An upset look on her face, Mary putters around.

Lou waits at the table.

Mary lays out canned peaches and cottage cheese.

Marty enters and pours himself a mug of tea then helps himself to the snack.

MARTY

Hmm. Tastes good.

Jason joins the rest. He fixes his own tea and snack.

JASON

That was some political rally.

LOU

Mom and I and just watched a bit.

MARTY  
Didn't watch it.

JASON  
He does have a way about him.

MARTY  
Tell me about it. Carlos thinks  
he's wonderful.

They quiet and drink their tea.

Mary steers the conversation clear of politics.

MARY  
How was this week doing distance  
learning?

MARTY  
It's better.

LOU  
How so?

MARTY  
This year the teachers are using  
Google Meet as well as Google  
Classroom. For the first week they  
sent us materials on Classroom but  
this week we were able to talk with  
them on Meet.

JASON  
They must've practiced over the  
summer.

MARTY  
It's still harder than being in the  
classroom.

Marty chuckles as he rinses his cup and bowl.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Never thought I'd ever say being in  
class was easier than being at  
home.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary and Jason over breakfast.

MARY

Do I see you on Facetime with a girl?

JASON

She's in my English class. We proofread each other's work.

MARY

Well, that's nice. Have you met in person to proof yet.

JASON

Nope. Just on Facetime.

Mary smiles recognition of her blossoming son.

MARY

Nice you have a buddy for English. Marty and Carl also help one another with their writing.

JASON

Dad always does a final read.

Jason flips serious and thoughtful.

JASON (CONT'D)

I think our state is ahead of a lot of other states. With the early stay at home order, stressing masks and handwashing. You could get masks everywhere. The governor did a good job.

MARY

I think so too.

JASON

I heard the weather guys used up the English alphabet for this year's tropical storms. Now they have to use Greek letters Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon and Zeta.

MARY

That's 2020 for you.

Jason laughs and hugs his mother.

JASON

Hurry up, 2021!

MARY  
Amen to that.

INT. MATTERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary checks a roast in the oven.

Jason makes tea. They both sit as Jason pours a cup.

JASON  
Dad helped me with trig. It's tough learning all the new concepts and equations. Once I get a handle on it, I'm sure my brain won't explode. At least I hope so.

MARY  
How are you doing in English?

JASON  
Oh, okay. Just can't escape Covid. Even in English.

MARY  
How so?

Jason reaches for a biscotti.

JASON  
The Social Studies and English departments are doing a joint unit on the pandemic. Social Studies is looking at the spread and numbers of infected plus the success of different ways to control it. In English we have to write about it affects us personally.

MARY  
Plenty to say there, I'm sure.

JASON  
Like how I never get to see my friends except over Zoom. It's not the same. I miss hanging out.

Mary reaches for a biscotti.

MARY  
I agree it's not the same but you do see them online.

JASON

The teachers found ways to make assignments more interesting on Classroom. Like now they have essay, completion, and multiple-choice sessions.

MARY

Have you talked with your girlfriend?

Mary sips her tea.

JASON

Wouldn't say she's my "girlfriend." Last night we talked about what we might say in the paper about our pandemic lives.

MARY

I'm sorry, Jason. I don't think you told me her name yet.

JASON

Sorry, Mom. Candi. Candi Corliss. She's a year younger than me. Her older brother is Calvin. He played soccer with me last year. That's how I met her. At the games. When it turned out we were in the same English class, I texted her about homework. Then we Zoomed and emailed. We talk on most days.

MARY

That's nice.

JASON

She's a A student, and a lot of fun. She has a funny way, her own way, of looking at the world. She teases me about my haircut. And loves the color of my eyes.

MARY

Uh huh. I used to kid Dad about his haircut.

Jason blinks: I don't get the connection.

Marty enters in a huff.

MARTY

What's going on, Mom?



MARY  
About what?

MARTY  
Our teacher said there are riots  
across the country over the death  
of Breonna Taylor. Will there be  
riots here?

MARY  
There might be protests but I doubt  
there will be riots.

Marty throws his hands up and leaves.

MARTY  
(mutters)  
Is the whole world going crazy?

Lou strides in.

MARY  
Dinner soon, Lou.

LOU  
The Supreme Court is taking some  
interesting turns.

MARY  
It feels like the world is on the  
verge of slipping down a precipice  
on a path of no return.

Lou comforts his wife with a hand on her shoulder.

Mary touches his hand.

DING. The oven timer.

She lifts the roast from the oven and calls out,

MARY (CONT'D)  
Marty. Please set the table.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

SUPER: "October, 2020"

Three feet distant, maskless Mary, Lenore and Adele chat.

MARY

I thought we had it rough before.  
Now there's hurricanes on the Gulf  
Coast and wildfires in the West. B-  
L-M marches still going strong.  
Covid on the upswing. Conflicts  
over stay at home orders and  
masking. No help from Congress for  
the homeless and jobless. And the  
presidential election is heating  
up.

LENORE

It's beyond imagination.

ADELE

At least 20 White House advisors  
have Covid.

MARY

Really? Terrible. Just terrible.

LENORE

I'll be so glad when the  
presidential election is over.

Adele rocks in her rocking chair.

ADELE

I just don't think about it.

LENORE

How's Lou doing?

MARY

A year ago he was the center of our  
concerns. But he's doing so well, I  
tend to forget he has limits and  
serious vision loss. Instead of  
relying on me, I rely on him.

ADELE STOPS ROCKING.

ADELE

That's good. Right?

MARY

He helps the boys with their school  
work, makes our lunches and puts in  
30 to 40 hours on digital design  
contract work.

LENORE

I think it was before you moved in, Adele, but believe me, his progress has been by leaps and bounds.

MARY

Gotta be thankful.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Lou and Jim have a talk.

LOU

Did you hear about the plot to capture and 'try' the governor of Michigan just because she issued stay-at-home orders to stop the spread of the virus?

JIM

These are wild times.

LOU

Tell me about it.

JIM

With any luck, there'll be enough vaccine in early 2021.

Lou laughs.

LOU

Now all we have to do is get through 2020.

EXT. ARIANA - MATTERS' HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

A new normal cookout. Marty and Jason strategize like generals before a battle.

MARTY

We've got to get this down to a science, Jason.

JASON

Here's the drill: three feet distances or we mask. No political talk. It upsets Carlos. Wooden picnic table moved to outside the circle. Solers, Atkins, and us each get their own metal table to sit at.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)  
Masks on if we're not seated in the  
agreed upon seats three to six feet  
distant from each other.

Marty takes a bow and sweeps his arm to a crude stage: a  
table, a guitar, an amp and a laptop.

MARTY  
Don't forget the stage for the  
Upbeats.

JASON  
I fire up the grill but dad is the  
pitmaster.

Both masked, Lou and Mary join their Sons.

The Boys arrange food and utensils on the tables.

MARTY  
Hey, Dad. Did you hear this one?

LOU  
No. What?

MARTY  
A guy goes into a bar and asks for  
Tornado Twist, Hurricane, and  
Perfect Storm cocktails.

LOU  
Okay.

MARTY  
The bartender gets the drinks and  
tells the guy, "That's 20-20."

Lou looks at Jason.

With straight faces, they both shake their heads.

He looks at Marty and smiles.

LOU  
You gotta tell that one to Carlos.  
He'll love it.

MARY  
Marty, you're so right. That's  
still 2020.

The Family splits off. On task.

**THE END**