

THE SHIPPING NEWS

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Third Draft Rewrite
February 23, 1999

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INT. LAUNDROMAT, MOCKINGBURG, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Glaring fluorescence, trash overflowing with cheap detergent boxes, empty Coke machine flashing all lights orange. Only two dryers are humming. It's very late. Keep PANNING to...

...a wiry, gimlet-eyed WOMAN, furtively removing crumpled newspapers from a dryer. She flattens and folds them meticulously, her glance darting angrily everywhere. Top secret mission.

...a natty little black man. PARTRIDGE has spread a late supper on a neat cloth atop a dryer. Small cold fowl. Brie, baguette, olives. Bottle of red. An air of competence, of indomitable upbeatness. He ignores the spy-dressed-as-bag-lady as if she were normal. More curious about...

...a hulking, rumped figure scrutinizing Help Wanted ads as if cramming for life's midterm exam. Thoughtful. Circles one, slowly. Set out on QUOYLE's dryer are one Snickers bar and four empty snickers wrappers. His version of cold supper. He reaches for the candy, but seeing it's the last one, he...

...rises. Goes to the candy machine. Drops in his 65 cents, hits the button. The Snickers starts to fall, but gets caught in the mechanism at the last moment. Quoyale blinks dully. One more retelling of the story of his life. He BANGS the machine half-heartedly. Nope. Shakes it with his shambling strength. Nada. POUNDS the coin return button. Hat trick. He empties his pocket. Studies the results. Not enough. And without so much as a sigh...

...he ambles back to his dryer. Starts to unwrap the last Snickers. Partridge taking this all in. But Mata Hari of the Neat Newspapers goes to the candy machine, KICKS it violently. Out fall the Snickers and the 65 cents. She scoops up both, turns in a single motion to...

...GLARE death at the enemy. Quoyale opens his mouth to comment.
But. Doesn't. Resumes unwrapping his supper, as...

...his dryer STOPS. He pops it open. Stares in. Blinks.
Suddenly YANKS a tangle of graying shirts out onto the grimy floor
to reveal they have been...

...STAINED streaky BLUE by a cheap pen, quietly melting amid the
pile. This slips beneath even Quoyale's expectation level. The
big, soft face is pitifully, yes, even adorably, devastated.

QUOYLE (a murmur)

Ruined.

And to the bystander. This seems a comment on more than shirts.

PARTRIDGE (softly)

Nah. Rub the ink with hot salt and
talcum powder.

Quoyale's head WHIPS around. As if he thought he was alone.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

If you're shocked when someone aims
kindness your way. That oughta tell
you somethin' about yourself.

Watches the little guy's undemanding smile.

QUOYLE (V.O., just staring)

Then again. If you're that kinda
guy. It don't.

PARTRIDGE

And put a cuppa bleach in, next
time through.

As Quoyale gazes at his benefactor, the woman sneaks up, SNATCHES
his Help Wanted ads. Races them over to her dryer. As the boys
watch, she shoves them in, starts the machine with Quoyale's coins,
and glares fiercely back at us. A mother bear protecting her cubs.
Partridge chuckles. Holds out his hand...

PARTRIDGE

Partridge.

Quoyale glances at the little man's cold fowl supper.

QUOYLE

Uh. No thanks.

PARTRIDGE

It's my name.

Oh.

INT. MOCKINGBURG RECORD CITY ROOM - DAY

Shabby one-floor newspaper. Old equipment, listless personnel, stale you can smell from here. Only guy working is Partridge, who is laying out the front page, and glances up to see across the floor...

...Quoyle enter in his best suit. It is also his worst suit. Partridge points to the only enclosed office, and gives his buddy a hearty thumbs-up. Quoyle nods, his smile a rictus, his eyes a glaze of panic. We see now that he is chewing, somehow. On the way into the office, he snags a doughnut from a paper plate by the coffee. Enters...

INT. ED PUNCH'S OFFICE - DAY

...ED PUNCH, managing editor, looks up from a reverie with a startled expression. He wears really thick glasses which MAGNIFY his eyes, giving him a frightening aspect.

PUNCH

Quoyle? You're early.

From the rear, we see Quoyle can barely squeeze himself into the chair.

PUNCH

I don't like that.

All the change SPILLS out of Quoyle's pockets, and CLATTERS onto the wood floor, ROLLING interminably, as Quoyle fidgets.

PUNCH

Partridge says you're not as dumb as you look.

REVERSE ANGLE now to see Quoyle's face. The neat moustache of powdered sugar.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

How could I be?

And takes a healthy bite from what's left of the doughnut.

PUNCH

Anyway, that's why I'm takin' a chance on you. Partridge said he'd re-write

whatever of your stuff. Stay late...

Quoyle nods, dumbly. Knows this.

PUNCH

We're a family paper. Upbeat stories with a community slant. Self-help stuff: Are You a Breakfast Alcoholic?...Guide to Getting Dumped...like that.

Quoyle nods bigger. Like he gets it. Punch shoves an antique tape recorder across the table.

PUNCH

City Planning Board meeting at two-thirty. Three hunderd words max. Sink or swim.

HOLD on Quoyle's eyes. Recalling...

FLASHBACK: EXT. PUBLIC POOL - DAY

...Quoyle as a fat kid in a baggy bathing suit, being savagely pummeled by his vicious OLDER BROTHER...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

I think my brother said that once.

BROTHER

LARDASS! SNOTFACE! FARTBAG!

Being pulled off the sniveling Quoyle by a rough hairy man with dead eyes.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Maybe it was my father.

Quoyle's FATHER hauls him off the deck, and in a single motion, FLINGS him INTO the pool!

FATHER

Sink or swim, pig-butt.

Watches the THRASHING with mild contempt. Turns away before Quoyle simply SINKS beneath the surface.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

I'm not a water person.

INT. CITY ROOM - LATE NIGHT

The empty room a haven of dust motes floating in sickly fluorescence. Quoyle sits across the desk, gazing with endearing fearfulness as Partridge turns page after page...

PARTRIDGE

See, three hunnerd words would be,
like, one page. This is...oh,
fifteen, sixteen.

QUOYLE

So we should cut it.

Partridge does glance up on that.

PARTRIDGE

Gonna have to.

QUOYLE

Or you could tie me in a sack, throw
me in the river. Tell the police you
thought it was oddly-wrapped lard.

PARTRIDGE

Might be quicker.

Nobody smiles. Nobody has to. Quoyle pulls a big glass jar from a paper sack. Sets it on the desk.

QUOYLE

Does your wife like special pickles?
They're fine with cold cuts.

Partridge looks at the cornichons. They look expensive.

PARTRIDGE

Come by for supper, tomorrow. We'll
find out.

DISSOLVE to...

EXT. PARTRIDGE'S BACK YARD - DAY

Sausages on the BBQ, interesting colors and sizes. A huge hand delicately places cut-up pieces of quail on the grill. It is Quoyle, trusted, paying attention. MERCALIA, a slim black woman with fiery eyes and an enticing smile, hands him a glass of white wine, and...

...goes to slip her arm around Partridge. He watches Quoyle's

concentration approvingly. Shares a smile with his sexy wife.
And
raps a knife on his glass. Announcement.

Quoye looks up with innocent eyes. Which makes Partridge
hesitate.

PARTRIDGE

We. Got you this.

Mercalia takes out the package. Wrapped in tissue, a neat ribbon.
She hands it to Quoye, and leans up to kiss his cheek. Quoye
looks down at it, dumbfounded. A silence.

MERCALIA

It's...an anniversary present.
Anniversary of our friendship.

Quoye smiles. Sweet and slightly confused.

QUOYLE

Seven and a half month anniversary?

He starts to unwrap...

PARTRIDGE

Well. Why wait?

...a wristwatch. A nice one. He is overwhelmed, but still
uncomprehending.

MERCALIA

It's because we're happy. About
something.

And steals a glance at her husband.

QUOYLE (BIG grin)

You're havin' a baby!

That stops Partridge's face. No more stalling...

PARTRIDGE

Mercalia and me are movin'.
To California. Friday night.

Quoye so pole-axed he can't even lose the smile. It just turns
stupid and transparent. His friend swallows.

PARTRIDGE

You know she's been learnin' to
drive a rig. She got the Oakland

to New Orleans run. I'm gonna
make her smoked duck sandwiches for
the road. I can edit copy anywhere.

Quoyle nodding slowly, smile still there. Yep. I guess y'can.
Partridge sees that it's a death blow. Mercalia looks at her feet.

PARTRIDGE

Love's all that counts. It's the
engine of life.

As if parting advice. As if Quoyle should file that away. So
Quoyle nods some more. As if he will.

PARTRIDGE

We'll just. Stay in touch.

On this, Quoyle's smile deserts him. So Partridge reaches out his
hand. Quoyle paralyzed, then takes it. CLOSE ON their handclasp,
and DISSOLVE to...

INT. DOUBLETREE MEETING ROOM - EVENING

...a slender feminine hand. Buried in Quoyle's.

PETAL (O.S.)

Petal Bear, Mr. Quoyle.

PAN up to see her. Tiny, twitchy, moist ringlets. A gray-eyed
predator. She looks around at the milling suits and their name
tags. As if they were alternatives.

PETAL

Do you hate this shit, or what?

Quoyle transfixed by her slight form in its loose but clingy
wrapping. The smile that sees him again and flickers...

PETAL

What do you think? You want to
marry me, don't you?

Don't you? No answer. She laughs, as if at some off-color
response. Runs hot fingers up his arm, leaning to his face...

PETAL

Buy me a drink somewhere, it's
seven-thirty. I think I'm going
to fuck you by ten. What do you
think of that?

Quoyle. Blinks. She laughs again. Bright, like whiskey music.

PETAL

You are quite. The raconteur.

INT. QUOYLE'S TRAILER - LATE NIGHT

Petal naked in near-darkness, moves with authority toward the massive lumpy creature nearly overflowing his bed. Draws the covers back.

Stares.

PETAL

Christ. I won the lottery.

Climbs on, the lithe move of a leopardess. Feeding time.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

It was pretty much like that for a month.

Petal RIDING in silhouette, with great, violent swoops. CLOSE on his face, his eyes. Lovelight.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Somewhere in there. We got married.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Horrible place. Smoke and bodies. Quoyale alone, carrying his sloshing beer, apologies unheard, toward...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

After that, I had to follow her to see her.

...the back of Petal, talking to a big guy in a shiny suit.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Which I know was wrong of me.

Closer. Close enough to hear...

PETAL

What do you think? You want to marry me, don't you?

HOLD on Quoyale's face. The lovelight has never left. It shines through the shock. As if in apology...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

She didn't know she was pregnant.

DISSOLVE to...

INT. PARLOR - DAY

One-year-old BUNNY is SCREAMING in a rickety crib festooned with mobiles and bright toys. HEAR Quoyle POUNDING in. He reaches to lift her...

...WAY UP, starts running around the faded little parlor making cheerful airplane noises, as he DIVES and SWOOPS the shrieking kid, until he...

...stops. Sniffs. Oh. Gives her a kiss, which doesn't put a dent in the screaming, and flops her down on the diaper table. She is screaming LOUDER. He is fumbling with the diaper, the Baby Wipes, getting a wad of ten or so at once. When...

...the phone rings. He runs off. Runs back, lifts Bunny, diaper dangling from the tape stuck to her skin, and SNATCHES up the phone, hoping with everything in him that it's...

PETAL (O.S.)

Hey. How do you make an Alabama
Slammer?

He takes a breath. Can hear the noise of a rowdy spot. Country
juke box.

QUOYLE

Uh. Where are y...

PETAL (O.S.)

Alabama. Hence, the question.

Bunny. Has stopped screaming.

QUOYLE

Come home. I'll make you one.

PETAL (O.S.)

That's a swell idea. Now go look on
top of the fridge, where I keep the
Mr. Boston. I'll wait.

What should he do? He sets Bunny carefully on the floor. She starts screaming again, and he LIFTS her quick, cuddles her. LOPES off, leaving the phone on the floor...

...RACES back in with the Mr. Boston, a bag of pork rinds, and

a pacifier. Something for everyone. As he flips the pages, he murmurs into the phone...

QUOYLE

You okay? Except for being thirsty?

She laughs, almost friendly. He smiles. Ever hopeful.

PETAL (O.S.)

I'm busy, I'll see y...

QUOYLE (reads)

Ounce Southern Comfort, ounce Sloe
Gin. Ounce Triple Sec. Three ounces
o.j....

PETAL (O.S.)

Got it.

CLICK. The BUZZ of her disconnect. He glances down at Bunny, working the pacifier. Murmurs to the receiver...

QUOYLE

Me too. I'll tell Bunny you miss her.

Hang up the phone. Kiss a baby. Eat a pork rind. Slow. As he gazes down on Bunny, we PUSH INTO her face, and MATCH DISSOLVE to...

INT. BUNNY'S ROOM - NIGHT, FIVE YEARS LATER

...an ECU of Bunny, now six years old, asleep in the flickering blue light of a nearly-mute TV. Apparently she was watching Sportscenter. PAN the darkened shoebox room. Toys everywhere, in a clutter. A pile of used Barbies, limbs jutting in all directions, waiting for a mass grave. BACK to Bunny, to see...

...she sleeps in her father's lap. His chin resting on her head, an industrial-size bag of cookies handy. Somewhere, a door OPENS..

...SLAMS HARD. Quoyle gently lays Bunny on her bed, and lurches INTO the hall, to see Petal disappearing into her bedroom, and he hurries to stop the door before it slams in his face.

When she turns, she is wasted, feral, and somehow as sexy as ever. Her laser glare. What the fuck do you want?

QUOYLE

There's. Cold chicken.

Really? She tears off her jacket, revealing that she has left her shirt somewhere and is down to her bra. She stalks toward him.

Straight to the doorway. He flinches.

PETAL

Find yourself. A girlfriend.
With what you got down there,
you'll do fine.

Quoyle swallows. Shakes his head.

PETAL

Only thing can work, here. Is
divorce.

No. No. Tears of shock pool in his eyes.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

I knew we had our problems. But
I never thought I'd hear that word.

She shivers with disgust. Walks around in a frustrated circle.
Back to his face. Are you sure? What does a girl have to do? And
now...

...the tears are on his face. She flashes her hardest look.
And
yet...

...her slender fingers reach out. Wipe his face, not as roughly as
she might have intended.

PETAL

Your funeral, pussy.

And CLOSES the door, quietly, but firmly. In his face.

He stares at it. His lips part. But no sound comes. Instead,
he
walks the few steps to Bunny's room, to find her...

...wide awake. Sitting on the edge of her bed. No question, she
heard it all.

So Quoyle smiles. He reaches to the top of her battered armoire.
His eyes damp but dancing for his daughter. Pulls down...

...a box of chocolates. Their stash. He sits on the floor.
Opens
the lid, like buried treasure.

She comes to cuddle in his lap. He feeds her one. She feeds him
one. They've done this before. As they chew...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

I knew if I could take it. In the end. It would all work out.

INT. CITY ROOM - MIDDAY

Everyone trooping back from lunch, twos and threes. Quoye last, alone, still stuffing down a snack cake as he heads for the coffee pot. There's one answering machine for everybody here, glowing a red number 2. Someone hits it, and everybody shuts up a beat, to see if they got lucky.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Lila, it's Daniel. Ten-thirty. Bring the. You know.

LILA doesn't even bother to blush. A shrug is plenty.

FATHER (O.S.)

Quoye, this is your father. Calling you. Dicky's machine is full. Your home one's broke. Well. It's time for your mother and I to go.

Quoye listening. Go?

FATHER (O.S.)

Instructions about the undertaker. The cremation. On the dining room table.

Oh. Go. Eyes are sneaking over now. Lots of them.

FATHER (O.S.)

You'll have to make your own way. I did. Nobody gave me nuthin'. Other men woulda give up, turned to bums. I sweated, wheeled barrows of sand, went without so you and yer brother could have advantages. Not that you did much with your chances.

Everybody just openly staring now. Quoye's snack cake and coffee frozen in mid-air.

FATHER (O.S.)

Hasn't been much of a life. Tell Dicky and my sister Agnis Hamm. Her number's on the dining room ta...

BEEP!

MACHINE (O.S.)

That was your final message.

Quoye nods. Sounded that way. Despite the hateful coarseness of this message, Quoye is deeply moved. Lips pursed inward to stem tears. In the silence...

FAT GUY (trying)

Were they sick, or something?

Quoye stares into distance. Somewhere, feet shuffle.

QUOYLE

Brain tumor and liver cancer.

(afterthought)

One apiece.

FAT GAL (sad for him)

That's rough.

He nods, it is that. Wanders on over to his desk. They're still watching, but he doesn't seem to notice. Turns his ratty Rolodex with solemn slowness. Not to dishonor the moment. Finds the number, dials. Winces at the harshness of the voice he hears. Then...

QUOYLE

Dicky. It's Mom and Poppa. They.

He can't say any more. Turns out, he doesn't need to.

BROTHER (O.S., snorts)

Jeez, they did it? I never thought he'd find the fucking guts.

Quoye licks his lips. His eyes puddling now.

QUOYLE

So. For the funeral, I thou...

BROTHER (O.S.)

You think I'd go pay that prick respects? You got me confused with you!

Quoye shakes his head once. That confused he isn't.

QUOYLE (quietly)

Well. Mom'll be there, too.

Silence.

BROTHER (O.S.)

Hey, Barfbag. They leave us anything, y'think?

QUOYLE

Don't see how. Big mortgage. Spent their savings on the doctors. I hadda send some grocery mon...

BROTHER (O.S.)

Well, see, that's why he did it. I mean, think how it felt. Taking from you.

LONG ANGLE...they are watching him replace the receiver in its cradle. Think. Stumble slightly, as he makes his way toward...

INT. PUNCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Punch looks up, startled at Quoyale's entrance. His oversized glasses seem to magnify his eyes more than ever.

QUOYLE

Sorry, Ed. I gotta drive down to my parents' place. I'll be back, Friday.

A full beat.

PUNCH

Take yer time. I gotta let you go.

Quoyale's eyes sharpen.

QUOYLE

In what sense do you m...

PUNCH

As in canned.

Oh. Once again, life slips beneath even Quoyale's expectations.

QUOYLE (a little dazed)

Uh. Would next week be better?

PUNCH (sighs)

I got the summer interns comin' next week. They're free and they're smart. Gotta do somethin' to fight this slump. But don't worry...

Don't?

PUNCH

Yer not the only one.
(beat)
Eventually.

A beat.

QUOYLE

Should I finish the sawmill piece?

INT. QUOYLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Quoyle enters carrying a spray of violets. HEAR Springer turned up loud. He goes to the parlor to find...

...MRS. MOOSUP, the babysitter, smoking and swigging a Pepsi. She is mean-ugly with flesh hanging beneath her arms. She stares at him, the flowers.

MRS. MOOSUP (dry)
Mr. Quoyle. You shouldn't have.

QUOYLE (taking her literally)
They're for Petal, Mrs. Moosup.
I got something to tell her.

MRS. MOOSUP
Well, that may take awhile.

Uh-oh.

MRS. MOOSUP
She came in at one, packed like crazy. Said she was movin' to Florida with the guy in the red Geo. You know the one.

He knows the one.

MRS. MOOSUP
She says you gotta pay my wages for the sittin'. Seven weeks, comes to \$3080. 'Preciate a check right n...

He is heading toward the hall.

MRS. MOOSUP
Don't bother. She took Bunny with her.

That stops him. Cold. He turns...

QUOYLE

That's the last thing she'd ev...

MRS. MOOSUP

She was real clear about my check.
It's no fun workin' if you don't
get paid.

He TEARS out, DOWN the hall, INTO Bunny's room...

...closet open. Empty. No more tangled pile of Barbies.

He
surveys the wreckage of his life.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

At least she took her toys. Wanted
her to be happy.

He staggers out of the room, down the hall...

MRS. MOOSUP (O.S.)

Mr. Quoyle? I ain't got all day, here!

...into the kitchen. Lifts the receiver. Thinks. Dials.

QUOYLE (quietly)

Yes. I need to report a kidnapping.

And straightens his spine. Just a little.

QUOYLE

Quoyle. Q-U-O-Y-L-...no, Y, then
L-E. Yeh, it's my kid.

He's still holding the violets. He notices this. Sets them
down,
almost tenderly, in the sink.

INT. QUOYLE'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Quoyle alone in absolute darkness. Bumping around the house.
There's a large bag of something in one hand, maybe M & Ms. But
he's not eating. Just murmuring to himself...

QUOYLE

Who knows? Who knows?

INT. QUOYLE'S PARENTS' HOME, BROOKLYN - DAY

Quoyle moving in his parents' cluttered parlor like a man

underwater. A room as drab, as neglected, as Brooklyn through the window. He stands at a shelf now, staring at a row of framed photos. Lifts one...

...a BOY of 15, bundled for winter, stands by a frozen pond. Stocky, sullen, something unpleasant in the narrow eyes. Next to him, not touching, a GIRL, big for 12. Rawboned, husky. Flat gaze, like something's dead or hidden.

Quoyle walks to the table. A cardboard box has been filled with mementos. A slip of paper: AGNIS HAMM, a telephone number. The phone is RINGING now. Quoyle staring at the paper. Finally, lifts the phone, breathes an absent greeting, and...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Is this Mr. Guy Quoyle?

QUOYLE (weary)

He's not here.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

This is Lt. Amos Figg of the Mockingburg, New York Police. Could you have him call me when he ret...

QUOYLE

He's passed on. He's dead.

(beat)

You said Mockingb...

FIGG (O.S.)

We're a small town upstate. I'm actually trying to reach his son. He allegedly went down to his parents' place two days ago.

Quoyle blinks. Not in the mood.

QUOYLE

Are you a detective, Lieutenant?

FIGG (O.S.)

Yes sir.

QUOYLE

Well, as you've probably deduced, I am his son. Cause I'm at his place. As alleged.

Silence.

FIGG (O.S.)

There's no need for that tone,
sir. I'm calling with urgent news.

And says no more. We can feel Quoyle's heart beating from here.

QUOYLE

Which is...?

FIGG (O.S., hesitant)

You want the good news? Or
the bad news.

Ominous. Would be an understatement.

QUOYLE

The good. Please.

FIGG (O.S.)

Your daughter Bunny was sold by
your wife to a child pornographer.
For \$9000.

Quoyle's heart. Has stopped.

FIGG (O.S.)

But she's fine. We got her. And
the doc says she wasn't touched.
Yet. If you catch my drift.

INTERCUT...a dingy kitchen, scuzzier than we could even have
guessed. Bunny in her underpants sliding merrily on a floor made
slippery with dish detergent. PAN past the video camera on its
tripod to the PORNOGRAPHER at the window, also in his underpants,
screaming into a cordless phone. And...

BACK to Quoyle. His heart must have started again, because he is
able to say...

QUOYLE

That's. The good n...

FIGG (O.S.)

Well. Compared.

INTERCUT...a riverbank somewhere high above swiftly-flowing water.
Police and bystanders gathered. A winch reaching its chain into
the depths.

FIGG (O.S.)

Your wife was in a red Geo which
went through a guardrail over the

Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

Here comes part of the Geo. Streaming water and mud.

FIGG (O.S.)

They were doin' 97 in a fog. The

car was cut in half by the impact
with the rail. Her male companion's
body floated up downstream.

BACK to the horrified husband. Waiting in silence.

QUOYLE

And Petal...?

FIGG (O.S.)

May never find the body. But she
was mercifully killed on impact,
without a doubt. They found her
shoes under the dash and her...
trousers for some reas...

QUOYLE

That don't mean for sure she w...

FIGG (O.S.)

...and her purse. With the nine
large.

Oh. Tears finally force their way through the shock. As he
realizes...

QUOYLE (a murmur)

Yeh. If she was alive. Don't
guess she'd a left that.

INT. COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES - DAY

Quoyale moving his bulk FAST down a corridor, a uniformed COP almost
skipping alongside to keep up, watching Quoyale like a hawk all the
way to....

...the threadbare common room. Kids playing, arguing, sleeping,
staring at an antique TV. Quoyale goes THROUGH them all, cop
doggedly in his wake, and sinks to his knees beside...

BUNNY

I can't do this.

Bunny on the ratty sofa, legs dangling, holding out a vintage
Gameboy. She wears clean clothes, freshly-washed hair, and a

comfortable smile.

QUOYLE (very soft)
Me neither.

And kisses her, lightly, on the lips.

QUOYLE (softer still)
Hi.

She kisses him back, much harder, on the mouth. The lopsided grin
of a practicing imp.

BUNNY
Hi, too. That for me?

We hadn't seen them, hidden beside his leg. A bunch of
DAISIES.
He gives them to her. Like her best beau.

BUNNY
Where's our candy?

QUOYLE
In the store. That way, you've
got the whole selection.

And then...

QUOYLE
Give us a minute.

Bunny doesn't understand.

QUOYLE
I mean him.

PULL BACK to the cop, staring down on them from point-blank range.
He doesn't move. Quoyle looks up, with an easy smile that says
he'd just as soon tear all the arms and legs off, and sweat the
consequences later. The cop backs well off. He can take a hint.

BUNNY
Petal went to Florida. She'll be
back soon.

He looks in her eyes. Shakes his head. No.

QUOYLE
She had an accident.

BUNNY

So do you.

He nods, I do. Tenderly pulls a strand of her hair aside.

QUOYLE

There was a car crash, sweetie.
And they found...you know, the
body. Of her friend.

BUNNY

Nestor.

That's right. His big hand has wrapped around one of hers.
She
doesn't seem to mind. Their faces so close.

QUOYLE

Petal can't come back, she's dead.
You know dead. Like the turtle.

She drills his eyes. Calm as a moose.

BUNNY

We found the turtle. And they
found Nestor. Did you find Petal?

He shakes his head.

BUNNY

You never do. But she always
comes back.

And leans her forehead. To rest against his.

BUNNY

Don't worry.

INT. QUOYLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Quoyale stumbling toward the front door, drawing his robe around
him. Squinting through the peephole. OPENING the door, to
reveal...

AGNIS

Nephew, I'm your Aunt. Agnis Hamm.

Tall and rawboned and 60. A rugged, maybe even handsome face, set
with ice-blue eyes. Calm, slightly scary eyes, that drift to his
robe...

AGNIS

You sick? It's nine o'clock.

He is completely off-balance here.

QUOYLE

Uh. No, Bunny and I like to...
uh, early to bed, earl...

AGNIS

Losin' your wife, your folks, and
your job'd depress anybody. It's
a wonder you don't sleep all day.

Not that she seems to approve. Not at all. His eyes now drift to
the large, well-used SUITCASES dangling from her powerful hands.

AGNIS

Thought I'd stay a day or two.
Give you some relief with th...

And stops. The mouth doesn't smile. But the eyes crinkle
slightly
toward...

...Bunny. Who has crept out in her jammies. Hugging a sack of
Pepperidge Farm cookies like it was a teddy.

AGNIS (to Bunny)

You like blue dogs named Warren?

The little girl nods. As if she certainly does.

AGNIS

I got one in the car.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

In the far corner of the room, Bunny plays with WARREN, a sweet,
ugly dog. Toothless and, undeniably, blue.

QUOYLE (O.S.)

I never knew her, really.

See him now, sipping his tea. Wallowing in the detritus of his
emotions.

QUOYLE

But she was driven by terrible
forces, no one could understand.
She was a locked door. Even to me.

Agnis in the good chair. Teacup on her ample lap. Assessing a
photo on the end table, Petal's arctic eyes, rigidly seductive

pose. The snapshot enshrined by a neighboring votive rose in its jelly jar glass.

AGNIS

So she wasn't just a bitch in high heels?

Quoyale's eyes cut instinctively toward his daughter, her innocence protected by distance and absorption with Warren's passivity.

AGNIS

Don't stress. She mighta heard worse from her momma. I'm only guessin'.

QUOYLE

Some people probably thought Petal was bad clear through.

AGNIS

People. Are a cynical lot.

QUOYLE

I think she just couldn't get enough love.

Agnis' unblinking eyes.

AGNIS

I think the evidence. Is on your side.

The eyes study him. Dissect him, even.

AGNIS

I'm headed north, Nephew, to where our family comes from, in Newfoundland. Thought I'd never go back. But the older y'get...

Clucks her tongue.

AGNIS

There's a pull. Becomes an ache. As if where your people started held a purpose for you. Like you're a piece in a puzzle...

Not a smile. But something. A softening of timbre, a flicker behind the eye.

AGNIS

...lookin' for where y'fit.

Lifts her cup.

AGNIS

You, too.

Takes a sip. His eyes have narrowed in a burlesque of suspicion.

QUOYLE

In what sense do you m...

AGNIS

You need to come, Nephew.

Just like that.

AGNIS

Nothin' here but hurt. You got
to start fresh, everythin's gone!

Hmmn?

AGNIS

The trip'll clear your head.
Be educational for the squirt.
Teach ya the world's still spinnin'
outside this toxic slice o'Hades.
And who knows...?

Tilts her head. Who knows.

AGNIS

They must have a newspaper up
there. Somebody's gotta write it.

He just stares. The blankest of the blank.

AGNIS

Tell the truth, I'd appreciate
the company. You two are pretty
much my family.

His face softens. Hadn't thought of it that way. And seeing
this...

AGNIS

A pot o'coffee would hit the spot.
Drop o'whiskey would fit nice in it.

She waits. He rises. And when he does...

AGNIS

Which one's my brother?

He blinks. She looks at two URNS on the mantle.

QUOYLE

Uh. There's Mom. And that's Poppa.

The name of the funeral home tastefully stenciled. He clears his throat...

QUOYLE

Those are temporary.

AGNIS

Coffee. And maybe a sweet.

Quoyle nods, glad to serve. Heads off to the kitchen. Agnis looks at Bunny and Warren.

AGNIS

She needs to go outside.

BUNNY

I know why.

She runs out, the dog trotting after. Alone now...

...Agnis pulls something from her large carpetbag purse. It is an oversized ZIPLOC BAG. She stands. Crosses to...

...her brother's urn. She removes the lid. Turns the huge Ziploc upside down to COVER the urn. Then, in one deft movement...

...UPENDS the urn, a cascade of ash tumbling into the Ziploc. Seals it. Sets it to one side. Then, from her purse...

...another ziploc already filled with replacement ashes. She pours just enough into the urn. That should do it. Stashes the rest back in her purse. Turns now to lift...

...the Ziploc with her brother's remains. Stares at it. Think Hamlet with Yorrick's skull.

AGNIS

What say, Guy? The dumpster?

A beat. Eyes flat and neutral.

AGNIS

Just a thought.

EXT. PHANTOM HIGHWAY - MISTY NIGHT

A world of fog and reflected high beams. Big rig pulls over, and Petal climbs up and in, her short red dress fluttering about her thighs.

The truck is roaring heedlessly through dense cloud. The DRIVER is gross and bald, snot suspended from his nostrils. He lets go of the wheel to run his hairy hands UNDER Petal's dress, while through the shotgun window, we see...

...Quoyale FLYING along outside, like a superhero. Except he is shocked bug-eyed by the tableau. The disgusting driver buries his face in Petal's hair, she throws her head back laughing, and the driver becomes Quoyale's FATHER, Quoyale silently SHRIEKING outside the window, and SMASH cut to...

EXT. DECK, PORT-AUX-BASQUES FERRY - DAY

...Quoyale blinking awake on the deck of a pitching ferry. Fog and cliff and the raw Atlantic. And SOARING alongside, an amazing number of MARITIME BIRDS...the gulls and terns seeming to stare Quoyale in the eye as they glide past. Maybe they prompted his dream.

AGNIS (O.S.)

They draft off our air currents,
it's quite premeditated.

She stands at the rail. Smoking, despite the wind.

AGNIS

They actually know the ferry
schedule. Show up on time
better'n the Newfies.

He smiles a seasick smile. Lurches from his bolted-down chair to join her. She nods back toward...

...Bunny through the glass window, snuggled with Warren, feeding the dog french fries.

AGNIS

...image of m'sister, Feeny.
She's married to a falconer in
Arabia, now. Has to wear a black

thing over her face.

QUOYLE

Like the falcon.

She stares in his eyes. Yes, like the falcon. They are growing
on
each other in a companionable way.

AGNIS

Nice. To be with family.

He smiles. It is nice.

AGNIS

'Specially big shots. Who can
land a job with one phone call.

His smile changes color. A quiet pride in the modest...

QUOYLE

Well, that was my friend Partridge.
Made the call. And it's just an
interview.

When Quoye looks back in at Bunny, he sees she is staring off at
something with full attention. He follows her gaze to...

...a honey-haired MOTHER with her small BOY snuggled in her lap.
She is feeding him an ice cream bar with evident tenderness. And
though the child's face is blissfully vacant, she murmurs to him
with serious intent.

INT. CAR, GREAT NORTHERN PENINSULA - DAY

Quoye driving a winding, rutted road, high above the coastline.
Cracked cliffs in volcanic glazes. Long-abandoned settlements
jutting from raw granite. Icebergs on the horizon above the
rumpled, creased fabric of a brilliant blue sea. Beside him...

AGNIS

On the map, here. Quoye Point.
Named after us. You.

It all seems at once awe-inspiring, frighteningly lonely. And
hostile as hell.

EXT. QUOYLE'S POINT - SUNSET

The car pulls up in a shroud of mist. Our family climbs out,
stares into what seems the center of a dense cloud, until...

...the fog LIFTS. And like a ghost, a GREEN HOUSE appears. Then,
disappears. Then, APPEARS again. This time, to stay.

AGNIS (bottomless pride)
I was born here.

BUNNY

The green makes me hurl.
(Warren whimpers)
Her, too.

The cloud lifts further, and we see the house stands alone on a rocky point. The bay roils far below. Half the window panes are gone. Holes in the roof, paint flaking everywhere. Lonely and scary as any haunted house.

AGNIS

Empty 44 years. And look at that
roofline, straight as a ruler.

Quoye looks at her. Looks at the house. Looks at her.

QUOYLE

Take it easy. Floor mighta fallen
into the cellar.

AGNIS (laughs)
Not likely. There is no cellar.
No foundation, neither.

She takes Bunny's squirming hand and starts toward the house, as if crossing Jordan.

AGNIS (calling back)
The whole thing's lashed with cable,
to iron rings set in the rock!

He just stands there. Sees the cables now, the rings.

QUOYLE (calling out)
Uh. Why would they do th...

AGNIS (calling back)
Long story!

Apparently a private one, too. Keeps walking.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Inside the dank, corroding place. We can feel all 44 years of abandonment. CRASH! The door FLIES open. Quoye with his tire iron steps aside, and...

...Agnis drags Bunny inside. The wind shrieking low through openings like proper spirits. Even this bold child is frightened.

So Agnis leans to murmur...

AGNIS

Up those stairs, Aunt Pinkie slept.
So fat she couldn't get down to her
chamber pot. Wanna see if she's
still there?

Asked as a serious question. Bunny nods. Let's.

ANGLE...upstairs now. Agnis marching through like MacArthur
reclaiming the Philippines. Room after rough-hewn spacious room,
light spiking through a thousand roof holes in assorted shapes.

AGNIS

Well. Too late to drive that road
back 'round the bay. We'll camp
in here tonight. Be right as rain.

Quoyle looks down to his daughter. Who nods, as if that were a
perfectly natural suggestion.

BUNNY

Which one's Petal's room? I'll
sleep there.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE on Bunny's sleeping face. PUSH INTO her closed eyes, and
FADE to...

...a WINDOW, unearthly tendrils of FOG drifting past in moonglow
wisps. Suddenly, a FACE appears, an animal. White. Wolf, or more
likely, dog. It stares in at us, is fleetingly joined by a
grizzled HUMAN ghost, eyes FLASHING crazy, and...

...gone in mist. CUT to...

REAR ANGLE of Quoyle and Bunny, each rolled over onto one side,
asleep in their sleeping bags. His arm across her protectively.
Hers across Warren, who sleeps curled to her chest. PAN up to...

...the window. Only the shimmer of cloud-like mist. SNAP to...

REVERSE ANGLE...Bunny's eyes. wide open.

INT. ROOM - DAWN

CLOSE on Quoyle, stirring at the end of sleep. His eyes flutter
open. A beat. He is alone. sits...

...BOLT UPRIGHT.

ANGLE...front hallway, Quoyle's bulk POUNDING toward us, boots in his hand. The front door ajar. And at the threshold, in a decorous semi-circle, six naked Barbies. Legs spread wide for balance. Each staring out the doorway, to where...

...Bunny sits on the cold ground. Making some craft project with great care. Quoyle can breathe again, she's safe. Ambles out, crouches beside her. Close.

She keeps working. Almost eerie concentration. He sees now that she is weaving a loop of dandelion stems, connected by aluminum pop tops. He leans down. Kisses her head.

QUOYLE

Is that a belt or a crown?

No answer. That concerns him. The intensity of her focus. He notices now, the soda and beer cans with their tops popped. Lined up in a row. He lifts one, liquid sloshes out. They're full.

QUOYLE

Sodas get flat withou...

BUNNY

This is important.

She won't look up. He glances back to the doorway.

QUOYLE

That why the Barbies are watching?

BUNNY

They're being nice and patient.

QUOYLE

They must be chilly, tho. Should I get their clo...

BUNNY

They look better this way. They have great bodies.

He looks back. Well. Maybe so. Holds up one of the heavy boots he's carrying. It has a thick blue shoelace. The other. Has none. Sticks that one in front of her face.

She looks up to him. Tugs on the shoelace, which she now wears as a necklace...

BUNNY

I need it. I look good in blue.

QUOYLE (smiles)

Well. I look good in shoes.

...sees now what she has tugged from inside her shirt. The
shoelace necklace holds a dull metal KEY as a pendant. He blinks.

QUOYLE

I was lookin' for that all over
our old place. The landlady s...

BUNNY

I need it.

He takes that in. The urgency of it. She is staring in his eyes.
So he grins...

QUOYLE

You had quite the heavy morning.
Take the rest of the day off.

She doesn't smile back. Returns to her work. He looks out by the
cliff, to see Agnis staring across the bay, Warren sitting at her
side. He pulls on his boots. Gets to his feet.

QUOYLE

Be right back, and we'll start
talking breakf...

BUNNY (not looking up)

Watch out for the dog.

He looks across the ground toward old Warren.

QUOYLE

Yeh, her farts are pretty scary.

BUNNY

I mean. The white one!

Now their eyes meet. Matter-of-fact...

BUNNY

The White Dog with the big
teeth and the red eyes. The
Skinny Ghost owns him. They
came last night.

He draws a breath...

BUNNY

I didn't dream 'em, don't say
I did.

He thinks this over.

QUOYLE

I was gonna say. I'll keep my
eyes peeled.

And makes a funny gesture, like peeling his eyeballs. She goes
back to work. His eyes linger. Then, he heads off toward the
cliff. When he gets there...

AGNIS (staring across the bay)
I'll get us a carpenter. Fix
the place up in no time. We'll
find a rooming house til th...

QUOYLE

Be cheaper to build a new one.
On the Riviera, even.

Now she looks at him. Her flat, bottomless eyes.

AGNIS

Only I weren't born. On the
Riviera.

O-kay. That's settled. He nods, humbly, dumbly. She points off
across the water. An actual TOWN.

AGNIS

Flour Sack Cove. What time's
your interview at that paper?
Ten o'clock?

Ten o'clock.

AGNIS

The drive's a bitch. We'll buy
us a boat.

He tries a smile. Unavoidably lame.

QUOYLE

I'm not. A water person.

AGNIS (dead straight)
A boat. That's the ticket.

His grin hardens. Just enough to say that on this issue, maybe
even she can't push him. He turns around. Starts back toward his

daughter.

QUOYLE

...not a water person.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Quoyle driving alone in his best suit. Which is also his worst suit. Which is also the suit he wore to interview Ed Punch, years ago. Hard rain. Potholes. Around a curve, to see ahead...

REAR ANGLE of a tall WOMAN, holding the hand of a CHILD as they walk in their slickers through the downpour. As he passes them, they TURN and..

...the woman is Petal. The child is Bunny. They both stick their tongues out at him.

Past now. Looking in the rear-view. The woman is lovely and no longer Petal. The child is a BOY, with a slack face and warm smile. Surprisingly, the same mother and son that Bunny watched on the ferry.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Someone found a pretty wife.

Still staring in the mirror. The receding figures small against the rain.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Someone always does.

EXT. THE GAMMY BIRD - DAY

Quoyle pulls up to a ramshackle place, its sign: THE GAMMY BIRD over a painted quacking duck. As he climbs out, he hears SHOUTING from inside. A door opens, and...

...a crab-like figure scuttles out, jumps in a Toyota truck, turns the key. Kills the engine. He looks out at Quoyle standing in what's left of the rain. Climbs back out. Rasps...

CARD

As you can see, sometimes y'can't get away. I'm Tert X. Card, the bloody so-called managing editor, copyeditor, rewrite man, mechanicals, ad makeup department, mail and distribution chief, and snow shoveler.

More of a leering rictus than an actual smile. TERT CARD is aging,

balding, potbellied over a once-rawboned frame. His face looks like cottage cheese clawed with a fork. He scratches his balls with a rough-hewn hand. He is never happy.

CARD

And you are either a big advertiser come to buy a four-page spread to push your warehouse of left-footed Japanese boots. Or. You. Are the breathlessly-awaited Quoyle.

QUOYLE

That'd be me. The second one.

Card rakes his privates once more, and offers the same hand in dubious greeting. Quoyle takes it.

CARD

Have to do without the Ultimate Cheese, y'll. Himself, Mr. Jack Buggit, is up at the house having charms said over his scrawny chest to clear out that impressive accumulation of phlegm he's been hawking all week.

Claps a mirthless hand on Quoyle's back, leading him into...

INT. GAMMY BIRD NEWSROOM - DAY

A newsroom. Makes the Mockingburg Record look like the Washington Post. Only two employees at their vintage desks. Card points as he bellows...

CARD

Now, there's Billy Pretty. He's something of a landmark and an old fish dog.

BILLY PRETTY is wizened and wiry, pushing 70. A tiny, energetic creature with well-weathered hide, watering crystal-blue eyes, and a slanted smile. He waves a bony hand.

CARD

Billy does the Home News page. Poems, baby photos, household tips, and a gossip column, under the byline of Junior Sugg, that is pretty much straight libel.

Billy nods. That pretty much covers it.

CARD

In short. He writes the only
stuff anybody actually reads.

Little salute from the Managing Editor. If Card likes anybody, he
likes Billy. And he doesn't.

CARD

Now this miserable ugly Brit, is
B. Beaufield Nutbeem. Imagines
he's the foreign news chief. Steals
every story off that foul shortwave
radio and rewrites it in Limey prose.

NUTBEEM (smiling)

Which bloody Card rewrites in a
mystical tongue most charitably
referenced as an unacquireable taste.

NUTBEEM is 50 and gangly. Buttery hair swept behind ample ears.
A thin moustache, a bounteous bowtie, a ratty pullover. He opens a
file folder. Gives Quoyle a piercing, meaningful glance.

NUTBEEM

Mine: 'Burmese sawmill owners and
the Rangoon Development Corporation
met in Tokyo Tuesday to consider a
joint approach to marketing tropical
hardwoods.'

Got it? Turns the page.

NUTBEEM

Card's rewrite: 'Burnoosed sawbill
awnings and the Ranger Devotional
Competition met Wednesday near
Tokyo to mark up local hairwood.'

A stunned. Silence.

CARD

It's shorter, and I got Tokyo right.

NUTBEEM

If misspelled.

CARD

Now what's funnier, Quoyle? My
writing style, or the fantasy that
any Newfie would read that
moosepuckey in the first pIa...

QUOYLE (to Nutbeem)
How'd the meeting go? Did they
agree on a joint marketing approach?

The beginning. Of a beautiful friendship.

NUTBEEM (gentle smile)
Still in progress, old bean.
One can only hope.

Card, who likes no one. Doesn't like Quoyale, too.

CARD

There's your miserable desk, Quoyale.
We've got no idea what yer s'posed
to do. But Mr. Jack Buggit will
drop by someday and enlighten us
all. Til then...

And he turns away. Through the swinging door. SLAM. Quiet.
Except for Nutbeem's chuckle.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

Quoyale pulls up beside the ancestral home. Agnis stands at the
back of a rented truck, sorting through materials in the payload.
Across a stretch of ground, Bunny is earnestly pretend-reading a
book to Warren, who lies listlessly before her.

Quoyale comes up behind Agnis. He carries a newspaper and an
excited air.

QUOYLE

Listen to this. 'Well, we see
the postman has landed in jail for
45 days for throwing the mail in
Killick-Claw Harbor. He said he
had too much to deliver, and folks
could just take a dip and help
themselves.'

He looks up, eager for her reaction. She is still sorting through
bolts of thick cloth, spools of heavy thread, odd mechanical
devices.

QUOYLE

This is great stuff. 'A snowmobile
mishap has taken the life of 78-year-
old Rick Puff, who was on his way
home from what the Widow Puff calls
a 'screech-in and a carouse,' when his
machine fell through the ice. A well-

known accordion player, Mr. Puff had served four years in the 1970s for sexual assault on his daughters. Bet they aren't crying, either.' This Billy Pretty can really write!

AGNIS (absently)
...passes as colorful.

He looks into the truck. Sees all the stuff. She surveys his puzzlement.

AGNIS
Nephew, we can't fix up the house proper on a journalist's wages. So I have un-retired.

Oh. Absorbs that.

QUOYLE
From what?

AGNIS
Upholstery. Been sought after for 33 years, wherever I've lived. This should be the real test, huh?

Quoye nods. Could be that. The sudden sound of footsteps above them, makes him look up sharply, to see...

...a fit young MAN in a toolbelt climbing down a ladder from the roof. The muscles of a stud, the shy smile of a boy, he waves a greeting and HOPS down the last six feet to the ground.

AGNIS
This is Dennis Buggit, master carpenter.

DENNIS offers a hand, and a smile that says he's expecting to like you. Makes the sentiment contagious.

DENNIS
Only til I get my lobster license. I'm a fisherman in my soul.

A strong handshake. On both sides.

DENNIS
It's a Newfie thing, the compulsion to fish. Y'hear yesterday's tragedy 'bout the Newfie who went ice fishin'?

Quoyle hasn't.

DENNIS

Brought home 200 pounds of ice. His wife fried it. They both drowned.

Quoyle laughs good and honest. Dennis likes that.

AGNIS

With me workin', we'll need day care for Bunny after school. Turns out Dennis and his wife send their little girl to this wonderful saintly woman. How's that for us livin' a charmed life?

Quoyle nods, if a bit cautious. Dennis squints out across the bay.

DENNIS

Agnis says yer buyin' a boat. Sooner's prob'ly better'n lat...

QUOYLE (quiet smile)

I'm not buyin'. No boat.

Sounds pretty sure of that. Punctures the amiable ambiance with a shard of silence.

AGNIS

Well, course we're buy...

QUOYLE (to Dennis)

Buggit, huh? Any kin to my boss on the Gammy Bird?

The silence. Just got thunderous. A full beat.

DENNIS (low)

Oh, yeh. He's m'dad.

Even the eyes glance down. What is that? In the wake of it...

AGNIS (cheerful)

Gonna chat up yer daughter, or just ignore her as usual?

Quoyle nods. Better do that. Dennis sends a shy smile, as if apologizing for the awkwardness. Quoyle holds up a finger, be right back, and...

...heads on over to where Bunny is reading to Warren.

BUNNY

Warren threw up in your sleeping bag.
She's got a stomach problem.

Quoyle takes a breath to answer, but stops. He's caught a whiff.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Headline. Dog Fart Fells Freelance
Reporter. Promising Career Nipped
in Bud.

BUNNY

It's called cancer.

Oh. Quoyle holds his face together, as Bunny strokes the limp Warren. Then, he crouches down...

...strokes Warren, too. Good dog.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - MORNING

Quoyle enters. Billy Pretty's on the phone, hand cupped over the receiver, like it's top secret. Nutbeem's tuning his ancient shortwave with a butter knife through the hole where a knob ought to be. And as Quoyle sets down his sack lunch and thermos, as he peels off his parka, he's staring straight into the eyes of...

...Tert Card across the way. Wearing a wicked and mysterious smile. As Quoyle's butt lowers toward his chair...

BOOMING VOICE (O.S.)

ATTENTION QUOYLE!

Quoyle JUMPS a foot. Looks from Card to Billy to Nutbeem. What's going on?

BOOMING VOICE (O.S.)

**IT'S AN I.Q. TEST, ME OLD SON, AND
YOU AIN'T EXCELLING!**

WHIPS around. Through the glass of the only private office, sits a rumpled codger with a bullhorn. JACK BUGGIT, has his rubber boots up on the desk, scale-spattered overalls over his compact, sinewy body. His hair is wisps and shocks, and his face is strewn with stubble split by a leprechaun's grin around a stained hand-rolled ciggie.

JACK (into bullhorn)

**DOES PAYIN' YER SHAMEFUL WAGE ENTITLE
ME TO A PERSONAL AUDIENCE? OR WOULDJA**

RATHER JUST STAND THERE AN' DROOL?

NUTBEEM

Tell the truth.

Jack WAVING him in, with great energetic loops. The grin more rowdy than his boy's. But the charm is there and more so. Quoyle goes...

CARD (O.S.)

Hold onto yer danglies, little sister.

...closes the door behind him. Jack's eyes are crinkly blue. They study Quoyle good. And right in his face...

JACK (into bullhorn)

**I PREDICT! A COCKADOODLE-BRIGHT
FUTURE IN JOURNALISM!**

QUOYLE

Based on my I.Q. test, huh. Where'd I rate?

JACK (sets the bullhorn down)

Advanced squirrel. This ties you with me, an' I own the place.

Holds out a brown fisherman's hand. Quoyle takes it.

JACK

Pleased t'meetcha, Billy says yer workin' out.

A wink.

JACK

Tert Card says he's keepin' an eye on ya. Since he's a self-servin' liar, helluva ad salesman tho, it means he's jealous. And Nutbeem...

Lifts the bullhorn...

JACK (into bullhorn)

**NUTBEEM'S TEMPORARY ANYWAY! YOU HEAR
THAT NUTBEEM!**

NUTBEEM (O.S., through glass)

WITH PROFOUND RELIEF!

Jack's grin grows a twinkle. Soft spot for the Brit.

JACK

Nutbeem's obsessed with actual news. Makes up for it by manning the sexual abuse desk. Can't keep up with the volume there, we're runnin' three, four a week.

Leans forward. Like he's dishing the lowdown.

JACK

Card's in charge. Ya hear this and that 'bout his typos, but typos is part of Gammy Bird. Everyone gets a laugh, and gets to figger 'em out.

Better'n a crossword.

Stabs out his cigarette. Pulls a new one from a damp little box.

JACK

An' Billy. Well, Billy's a writer and a fisherman. Me, I'm just a fisherman.

Offers the box. Quoyle shakes him off.

JACK

Fishin' and the sea is all I am. My pap the same. My boy.

QUOYLE

So he said. Waitin' for his license.

Ah. Jack's smile doesn't actually fade. But the eyes flicker, and Quoyle is sorry he opened his yap.

JACK

Naw, my boy's passed. Went to sea and there he rests. Bless his bones.

His glance goes to a photo. Jack and a strapping blond son. Not Dennis, that's for sure. Somehow, we are suddenly down to business...

JACK

Want two things from ya, Quoyle. First. You cover every local car wreck, take pictures. Front-page photo every week, whether we have a

wreck or not, an' we always do. When we don't, we dip into Card's file, he's got some beauties.

INTERCUT...half a red Geo being fished out of the water. Petal's lifeless torso hanging backwards out the door, arms gracefully extended like a ballerina or Olympic diver. Over this...

JACK (O.S.)

Knack to this. If there's a dark patch on the ground, it reads blood, whether it's motor oil or Diet Coke. Gloves, hat, lyin' in the road...

BACK to Jack. Canny and keen. He knows this stuff.

JACK

...somethin' that humanizes, makes ya feel. That's what a wreck is. It's always saying, 'There but for the grace of God...'

Do ya follow? Quoyle follows.

JACK

Plus. We're starting a feature on the shipping news. What ships come in, what goes out. Whatever's of interest. Throwin' it to you, son. Chance to shine.

A beat.

QUOYLE

Mr. Buggit. I'm not. Well, a water person.

Ah. Jack takes this in. The smile returns.

JACK

Chance. To shine.

If you catch my drift. Quoyle shuts up.

JACK

One peculiarity. I'm no joke, son, and I don't tolerate jokes about Newfies. Or them that does.

SMASH CUT to...

INT. SKIPPER WILL'S DINER - NIGHT

CLOSE on Dennis, holding a half-eaten squidburger in two hands. Oblivious to sawdust, smoke and stench, he is charmingly, engagingly, smashed.

DENNIS

So this Newfie comes to Toronto.
Cabbie says, take ya to meet girls
for a good time. Boy says, okay,
but I only want a Newfie girl.

His audience is Quoyle and Nutbeem. Each holds a squidburger of his own, tentacles dangling. Quoyle has his next one handy by his beer.

DENNIS

Right section of the party district,
he finds a girl, they have sex,
she says that's a hunnerd dollars.
He says fine, tips her another
hunnerd! She says, wow, can y'come
back t'morrow?

Quoyle takes a humongus BITE. Tentacles now dripping from his jaws. Rapt. Hypnotized.

DENNIS

Next two nights, same thing!

Finally she says, I never met so
sweet a guy, where ya from? He says,
Misky Bay, Newfoundland. She says,
really? Me, too!

Quoyle hanging on the punch.

DENNIS

He says, I know. Yer ma asked me
t'give ya six hunnerd dollars!

Quoyle SNORTS his laughter, dislodging a tentacled morsel or two. Nutbeem has to look away, as Quoyle retrieves the chunks, stuffs 'em back in his mouth.

DENNIS

Yer the model Newfie, Q, but fer
th'boat. Why doncha buy Nutbeem's?

Drunken, devilish smile. Quoyle turns, innocent questioning eyes.
You got a boat?

NUTBEEM

I built a Chinese junk. Sailed it
up from Brazil. Missed Manhattan by
a mile or so, got stranded here when
I shipwrecked by Gaze Island.

So casual and falsely modest, Quoyle's eyes are big.

NUTBEEM

Almost finished my repairs. Be
leaving soon. As paleontologists
define the term.

Studies Quoyle's amazement. Confides...

NUTBEEM

She's ugly. And the only thing
I've ever loved.

Dennis rises. Belches.

DENNIS

Yer story tugs at me bladder.

And off he lurches to correct the situation. Once he's gone...

QUOYLE

Him and Jack. Tell it.

Their eyes meet. The Brit sighs.

NUTBEEM

Jack Buggit's psychic, start with
that. He's got the gift. Specially
about the sea.

Thinking. Should he tell it? Quoyle makes a rolling hand motion,
hurry it up.

NUTBEEM

Older brother Jesson, everyone's
favorite, even Dennis'. Goes to
sea like his dad. One day, rest
of the family's sitting by the radio,
and Jack goes white...

That's right.

NUTBEEM

Stands up. Says, Jesson's gone.
Walks out of the house. Grief too
big for walls to hold it.

Sets down the burger. Runs a finger down the frost on his beer mug.

NUTBEEM

So Dennis is forbidden the sea.
But being free, Newfie, and 21,
he goes anyway.

QUOYLE

And that's enough t...?

NUTBEEM

Death storm. Monster wave cracks
her steel hull amidships, one inch
crack from starboard to port. Men
go in the water. Dennis lost.
After a week...

A week.

NUTBEEM

They come to Jack, call off the
search. He stands like a stone. Then
turns, sharp, the way he does. Says
only, 'He's alive. And I know where.'

QUOYLE

Man's a witch.

NUTBEEM

Went to sea, alone, in just a skiff.
Finds him. Can you guess the odds?
Finds him. Finds him. Both arms
broke, 99% dead.

Leans. Close.

NUTBEEM

Boy comes to. Jack says if you ever
step in a boat again, I'll drown ya
m'self. And you know what the kid
said...?

Quoyle glances over. Dennis wobbling his way back through the tables.

QUOYLE

Say it fast.

NUTBEEM

Says fishin' licenses are all spoken

for, I'd appreciate you givin' me yours. Jack looked in his eyes. They never spoke ag...

DENNIS

What's bein' blabbed here?

NUTBEEM (not missing a beat)
Quoyle says you got a nice ass.

DENNIS

Quoyle's right.

He raises his beer.

DENNIS

To my ass.

QUOYLE

I'll drink to that.

And, by God. They do.

EXT. WAVEY'S YARD - AFTERNOON

Quoyle and Bunny climb out of the wagon. A small house, its grassy yard strewn with a phantasmagoria of painted wood figures, galloping horses, dogs balanced on wheels, a row of chrome hubcaps on sticks. A zoo of the mind. To one side, a table piled with crafts, ignored by...

...fifteen LITTLE KIDS running in all directions, like bundled, unbridled banshees. Looks like fun. Two harried MOTHERS are trying to cope with the chaos. And there, under a tree...

...the honey-haired WOMAN Quoyle had seen on the ferry. And in the rain. She is on her knees, tying the shoes of her vacant-faced SON. He trips and sprawls, but he is laughing. The woman smiles tenderly and tousles his brown-straw hair.

Quoyle gets up his courage. Walks Bunny over to them. As we arrive, the woman looks up...

QUOYLE (really nervous)
Hullo. It's our first day, and I
was wond...

BUNNY

What's wrong with him?

Quoyle freezes. She means, of course, the blankly-staring boy.

QUOYLE

Hey, how 'bout we ask what's wrong with you? There's nothing wr...

WOMAN (to Bunny, softly)
Sure, there is. This is Herry, and he has Down's Syndrome. It means he learns things very slowly.

Oh. HERRY smiles at Bunny. Suddenly, wonderfully.

BUNNY (to Herry)
Know how to be a dog?

She DROPS to all fours and starts YAPPING like a terrier. Herry LAUGHS with delight. Tumbles down to the grass and does his impression of a Chihuahua on speed.

BUNNY (to the woman)
He looks fast to me. Maybe he's cured.

WOMAN

Maybe.

The kids waddle off in their canine personas. Alone with the woman now, Quoyle is near-catatonic. Come on, brain!

QUOYLE

Which one of those women is in charge here?

The woman looks at him. Clear cornflower eyes. As comfortable in silence as he is agonized. Then, she squints out at the other women, desperately running ragged after the kids.

WOMAN

Neither of 'em. They're just moms.

Oh.

QUOYLE

Well, my lord, whoever runs the place should be giving this a little more attention.

She looks back at him, blankly.

WOMAN

You think.

QUOYLE

I mean, children need structure.
No one's even guarding that craft
table, they could be running around
with scissors and get hurt.

The woman's eyes bottomless, unreadable. The silence
excruciating
for poor Quoye. He clears his throat.

QUOYLE

Um. I write for the newspa...

But she stands. The grace and quickness of a jungle cat.

WOMAN

Well. I'd better get to work, I
see. Providing structure and all.

Brushes off her skirt. He is in the dawning panic of beginning
to
realize...

WAVEY

I'm Wavey Prowse, and this is
my place. Pardon our antiquated
emphasis on individuality and the
freedom to have fun.

Heads off with a loose-limbed stride. Spins back around...

WAVEY

Oh, yeh. Running with sharp
objects? We save for Tuesdays.

Got it? He gawks like a stupid animal. Nods, got it. She's
already gone.

EXT. BARGE DECK - DAY

Quoye and Billy Pretty stroll the teak deck of a massive,
elegantly-outfitted BARGE. The wiry little fellow keeps his
smile to his eyes...

BILLY

Well, she don't wear a ring, cause
she lost her husband at sea. Just
after the boy was born.

Oh. Quoye nods, blandly. As if it is a matter of no real
concern

QUOYLE

Well, I was just...

BILLY

...sharpenin' those observation skills. First tool of a quality reporter.

Keep walking.

QUOYLE

She has wonderful. Posture.

BILLY (has to smile)

Yer know, I never notic...

MELVILLE (O.S.)

**JESUS F. CHRIST! YOU BOYS WANT THIS
STORY OR NOT?**

Look up ahead to the bow, where a rolling bar has been set up. BAYONET MELVILLE is mixing drinks. He has a florid face and striking white hair. Dapper, arrogant, a guy with more money than he's worked for. As we approach...

MELVILLE

Ever seen anything like her?

Quoyle looks to the sour-faced middle-aged lady, who glances disdainfully at us above her gimlet. SILVER MELVILLE used to be pretty and rich. She's still rich.

QUOYLE (politely)

No sir, your wife is very lovl...

MELVILLE

I mean. The ship.

Oh. Billy keeps a straight face. Silver ROLLS her eyes.

MELVILLE

It was built for Hitler. You've heard of Hitler? Up here in Canada?

QUOYLE

Oh, yessir. He was in all the papers. Way back.

Silver snorts a laugh. Melville wonders if that was irony. Looking at Quoyle, he doubts that's possible.

MELVILLE

Finest botterjacht ever built in
Holland. Flat-bottomed, she can
go right up on shore in a storm.
Incredibly heavy, forty tons of oak.
Not unlike the barges of Henry VIII
and Elizabeth I.

BILLY (helpful)
We heard a them, too.

SILVER
Tell them what happened. In

Hurricane Bob.

He looks at his wife. Clear in a glance they hate each other's
guts. Go on, she nods. Tell it.

MELVILLE
Pounded twelve beach houses.
Expensive ones. To rubble.

SILVER
WHAMM!

Drunk and mean. And smarter than he is.

SILVER
Now tell them. Who let our
insurance lapse.

Silence.

SILVER
Took six very expensive lawyers to
weasel us out of it. An inch from
bankruptcy.

She winks.

SILVER
Moral of the story? When you marry
a tour guide. Confine his authority
to mixing the drinks. Same again,
dear?

And holds out her glass. Billy looks out to sea. Like he
hasn't
heard this.

QUOYLE (cheerful)
So. What brings you folks up

from Long Island?

A beat. While husband and wife glare at each other.

SILVER

My dining salon needs refitting.
And the best custom yacht upholsterer
in the Northern Hemisphere just
moved here. I was forced. To follow.

She turns to Quoyle. Who just gapes at her. Open-mouthed.

Oh. My. QUOYLE (softly)
God.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

Quoyle enters, impressed by the progress of the renovation.
Windows are in, walls patched, floor sanded, lights are working.

Through the place into...

...the kitchen, which is in surprisingly usable shape. Agnis sits
alone at a butcher block table with a set of ledgers spread before
her. A large mug of tea. A bottle of Bushmill's Irish.

QUOYLE

You are a woman of mystery, Aunt.
Mystery and surprise.

AGNIS (still working)
Silver Melville says you was out
there. Be nice in yer story, she's
payin' for a piece of this house.

Silence.

QUOYLE

You said upholstery. Never said
yacht uphol...

AGNIS

...never said not. Ask better
questions, you got a chance fer
better answers. Got my shop set
up in Killick-Claw, now.

Looks up. Sees he's dazzled by how she moves right along.

AGNIS

Two good workers. Mrs. Mavis
Bangs is an old plow horse like

m'self. But Dawn...

She winks.

AGNIS

Dawn's young and on the sexy side. You oughta drop by and say hullo.

He absorbs that. How fast can he change the subject?

QUOYLE

Where's Bunny?

Agnis looks at him. Reaches for the Bushmill's.

AGNIS

Upstairs, in what will soon become her room. She'll be all right.

QUOYLE

What does that mean?

She pours some whiskey into her tea cup.

QUOYLE

Little early in the day f...

AGNIS

Warren died today. That's what that means.

Drinks the whiskey. Stares straight in his eyes. Sees his sorrow.

The honesty in...

QUOYLE

Poor old girl.

Agnis deciding. Whether to tell him...

AGNIS

I used to live with someone named Warren. Died of cancer, after nine years together. Dearest soul on this earth.

Quoye shocked. What can he say? His empathy so naked, so real, even Agnis has to soften her voice...

AGNIS

Went from the funeral, and bought that dog. Named her Warren. Just

so I could say the name a hunnerd
times a day. Women are foolish, huh?

QUOYLE

I never thought so.

A good moment for them. It holds a beat.

AGNIS

Bunny wants to bury the dog with
me. But I told her I'd rather do
it alone.

Quoye nods. Rises slowly. He'd better go to her.

AGNIS

Some advice about the child?

Another sip.

AGNIS

Don't get down on her level, the way
you do. She'll never respect you.

INT. BUNNY'S ROOM - DAY

Bunny sits on the floor in dim light, wearing an enormous blue
sweatshirt. Obviously dad's. Her naked Barbies sit in a semi-
circle watching her braid a meticulous loop out of the paper and
foil from chewing gum wrappers. Quoye enters, and sits close
beside her. Watches in silence, as she works.

BUNNY (not looking up)
Warren died today. She's not
coming back.

No tears. Just a hollow sound in her voice.

BUNNY

That's the difference.

He knows what she means. Strokes her hair.

QUOYLE

Another necklace, huh? Can
I help?

BUNNY

You can watch.

Okay. He looks at the Barbies.

QUOYLE

Do I have to take my clothes off?

She looks up at him. Straight to his eyes.

BUNNY

You look better with 'em on.

Goes back to work. He watches her.

QUOYLE

You know. You do look good
in blue.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Quoyle driving the wagon, Dennis at his side. Up ahead on the road, two figures. Herry holds tight to his mom's hand. Quoyle pulls over, and they stop. Wavey squints at him, against the sun.

QUOYLE

Give you folks a lift?

That extra beat before she says...

WAVEY

We're enjoyin' the walk, thank you.

Doesn't smile. Doesn't look angry either. Just comfortable.

QUOYLE

Well. My aunt can't bring Bunny to the daycare, she's got her shop now. But I worked it out with my boss. So I'll be bringin' her come next week.

No reaction.

QUOYLE

If that's all right.

WAVEY

Love to have her. I'm sorry, Mr. Quoyle, about the other time. Women can be moody, you know. And temperamental.

Now she smiles. One-tenth power. Still a dazzler.

QUOYLE

Only the best ones.

Did she like that? Hard to tell. She looks around him...

WAVEY

Good afternoon, Dennis. Give our respects to Beety and Marty.

He waves, will do. She takes Herry's hand, starts off down the road. Quoyle sits and watches.

DENNIS

Excellent posture.

Quoyle looks over. His pal shrugs.

DENNIS

People talk.

EXT. SHORELINE - SUNSET

Rear ANGLE of Agnis, walking over stones to the edge of the sea, carrying something in her arms. Walking to meet the sun, as it gives its last to the shimmering water. REVERSE ANGLE to see...

...she carries her old dog. On a clean sheet. Rests the burden gently down. The incoming tide laps over. The sheet billows in it. She takes a step back.

AGNIS

You were a good girl, Warren, no trouble a'tall.

Surf rolls out. Swims back in. Flows around her friend.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

An outhouse stands unobtrusively near the edge of the cliff. See Agnis alone, approaching. Something in her hand. As she reaches the outhouse, we see it is...

...the ziploc bag. With her brother's ashes. She gazes back at the house now. Then, at the bag...

AGNIS (cold, low)

Hope ya like. What we done with the place.

She opens the door, enters. Stares down into the deep hole. Unzips the bag, and...

...TIPS the ashes DOWN INTO the hole. Watch them in SLO-MO, falling free. Hear the rustle of Agnis lifting her skirts, and...

They don't look at each other. Poker-faced, just alike, working
side by side.

QUOYLE

The Newfie looks around. Still
nobody. Hollers, WHO ARE YA?
THE VOICE O' GOD? Voice comes
back, NO! THE ARENA MANAGER!

He can't help but snort out a chuckle of his own. Sneaks a look
over at her, and she...

...laughs out loud. Healthy. Sexy, even. But from the delay, he
guesses...

QUOYLE

Heard it before, huh?

She looks over at him. Her eyes dance a little.

WAVEY

Sometimes, passion in performance.
Beats the element of surprise.

And he is lost in those eyes. Knows it's showing. Glances away
to
where...

...Bunny sits in a corner. Reading to a rapt Herry.

QUOYLE

You guys hungry?

BUNNY

Shhh. I'm teaching Herry to read.
Just like I did Warren.

QUOYLE

Is he learnin'?

Bunny looks over at him. He is so dumb.

BUNNY

First is the teaching part. The
learning comes later.

Herry nods. Later. And out of the blue...

BUNNY

Wavey? Now are the berries ready
to pick?

Quoyle looks over to the woman. But instead of Wavey, he sees PETAL, staring at him with slow predatory heat.

PETAL

Want to pick my berries, do you.
Should I climb right up on this sink?

And then, once more she is...

WAVEY

Almost. Almost ready. You know,
it's all about timing.

Quoyle. Takes note.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - DAY

Quoyle alone in the office, pretending to peck away at a story. Actually, he's looking...

...through the window. Where Jack Buggit, Tert Card, Billy Pretty and Nutbeem are all circling around a small, roughly-made boat, attached to its rented trailer. They are talking to each other in learned tones. A Talmudic chat. And...

...in they come. First through the door...

CARD

That's yer boat.

QUOYLE

Said it was.

CARD

One question remains. Why.
Is that. Yer boat?

Uh-oh. He looks from one face to another. Even Billy is irritated. Nutbeem gazes down, embarrassed for him.

QUOYLE

Well. A boat's a boa...

CARD

It's a shit boat. Best thing,
get rid of it some dark night.

Quoyle can't believe this. Hot shame burns.

BILLY

Go hire Alvin Yark to build ya a
sweet little rodney. This thing's

a wallowing cockeyed bastard that'll
sink in a bathtub.

And standing in the doorway, the scariest sight of all. The boss.
Just shaking his head.

JACK (sadly)

You don't have the sense God gave
a doughnut, do ya?

The word from Sinai on Quoyle's worth. A pity.

JACK

I'm goin' fishin'.

Out the door with a SLAMM! Quoyle stares hopelessly after him.

NUTBEEM

Don't jump off a bridge over it.
Anyone can make a brainless, asinine,
devastatingly revealing blunder.

QUOYLE (actually means this)

Thanks.

CARD

What in th' furry pit of Newfie hell.
Is this!?

Holds up some sheets of paper. Photos of the Melvilles'
botterjacht. Reads...

CARD

Hitler's Barge...?

QUOYLE

That goes with the shipping news.
Profile of a vessel in port.

CARD

What about the car accident?

QUOYLE

That's the one I didn't do. Mrs.
Diddolatte sprained her wrist. Period.

Card still reading.

CARD

So you didn't do the one Jack told
yer to do, and you did one he don't

know yer did!

Silence.

QUOYLE

Pretty mu...

CARD

This copy. Is worse. Than yer boat.

He looks up. Equal parts disgust and delight.

CARD

Jack even sniffs this, he cuts you
up fer lobster bait. I've half a
mind to run it.

Quoye straightens his spine.

QUOYLE

Run it.

Strides off for the door. Turns back...

QUOYLE

As for the part about you havin'
half a mind? No comment.

Out the door. SLAMM harder than Jack's.

EXT. GAMMY BIRD - DAY

Quoye stumbling toward his wagon with vacant eyes.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Headline. Reporter Disembowels
Self With Rusty Joke.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE ROOF - DAY

Quoye in a carpenter's belt, climbing very carefully from a ladder
onto the roof. His vertigo apparent as he keeps to his hands and
knees, trying to fight the compulsion to look down. Gives in to
it, peering from the corner of his eye down the cliff, the rocks,
the sea so far below. Not a good idea.

Comes to the shingles. Eases his way into a fearful crouch. Okay.
Starts hammering. And rehearsing.

QUOYLE

Jack, I completely understand, I

would fire me, too.

Nodding, in time to the hammer strokes.

QUOYLE

In a heartbeat.

Hammers LOUDER, speaking in rhythm...

QUOYLE

You give me a chance, and what happens? I buy the wrong boat, I write the wrong story, I am the lowest form of alleged life. In fact, your comment...

Stops.

QUOYLE

...was an insult to the doughnut.

Hear now what the hammering had masked. Someone is reaching the top of the ladder, climbing onto the roof.

Bunny. Somehow she has managed to climb while carrying a sandwich on a plate. And an open bottle of soda. He stares at her, uncomprehending.

BUNNY

Egg salad and Nehi grape.

She sets them down. Stands UP on the steep pitch.

QUOYLE (shocked stupid)

Baby...

BUNNY

They're mine but I'll share.

As the plate and bottle slip neatly OFF the roof and, after a noticeable beat, shatter softly far below. Bunny's turn to be shocked. She's contemplating going after them.

QUOYLE

DON'T MOVE!!

Okay, that was a little loud. It has also scared the kid out of her wits. Quoyle regrets this. Starts scooching awkwardly down the slope, inches at a time...

QUOYLE (too casual)

We're gonna play Wait For Daddy.
Can you play that?

She's just staring over the side. Hypnotized by the sight. He's slipping toward her. Toward the edge.

QUOYLE

And if you don't move. Until I
get there. Then...

Closer, reaching toward her back...

QUOYLE

...then you win!

...GRABS her arm, she STARTLES, violently LURCHING, but he YANKS her to him. Holds her to his heart. Holds her. He is breathing like a freight train.

QUOYLE

That. Was so easy.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - MORNING

Jack Buggit enters with energy. Looks around. Billy's typing,

Nutbeem's reading. Quoyale is cleaning out his desk, pulling things off his little shelf to pack away. Goofy photo of Bunny. Ceramic child-made three-legged turtle. Tiny padded box with what looks to be carefully-preserved empty eggshells.

Jack heads toward him.

CARD

Did ya see the Hitler's barge
piece, Jocko?

JACK

I saw it. And heard from some
who'd done the same.

(to Quoyale)

Good. Neatness.

Quoyale turns. Pretty much all his possessions are in a big cardboard box. Jack peers into it.

JACK

Reorganize. Start over. Good
thinking.

But he's smiling. Like he's got the point.

QUOYLE

Thing about the barge piece? I just thought it'd perk up th...

JACK

Got six phone calls 'bout that piece. Six. That'd be like half a million calls in Toronto.

Grasps Quoye around the back of the neck.

JACK

People liked it, old son. Crowd went down to the dock t'see the thing, but it'd already pulled out.

Quoye stares, slack-faced into the elfin eyes...

JACK

Course you don't know anything about boats, but that's entertaining, too. So go ahead with it. That's the kinda stuff I want, see?

Just now, Card's jaw is scraping his boot tops.

JACK

From now on, you write a column every week. The Shipping News. Gonna order you a computer and everything. And y'know the beauty part...?

Quoye doesn't.

JACK

I don't have to tell Card all over again, cause he's already eavesdroppin'. So I'm free to take m'leave.

QUOYLE

Goin' fishin'?

JACK

Ah. You've an instinct for character and idiosyncrasy, old son.

A wink. He heads toward the door. And never looking at him...

JACK

Zip yer fly, Card.

Card looks down. He zips up, as the door slams. Billy Pretty sends Quoyale a thumbs-up, without turning. Nutbeem clasps his hands above his head, like a winning prizefighter.

Quoyale slides a sheet of paper into his typewriter. Stares at it.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Thirty-eight years. First time anybody said you done it right.

INT. AGNIS' SHOP - DAY

A woman looks up from her stitching. She is solidly built, pushing 60, Emily Dickinson hair. A cheerful, calmly butch way about her. Trustworthy eyes.

AGNIS

Nephew, this is Mavis Bangs. A real professional.

Mavis holds out a hearty hand. Agnis is showing him the shop. A cutting table, two sewing stations. Billowing sailcloth hung over the windows. Racks of leathers and fabrics.

AGNIS

And this is Dawn Budgel. She's a vegetarian.

Dawn, once described by Agnis as young and on the sexy side, is that. Red lipstick and nails. Her eyes float up in a way that suggests reflexive sensuality. Agnis nods to her, and the girl reaches a slender pale hand...

DAWN

Agnis is always saying such...things about you. It's nice to fit a man.

With the name.

And as she releases his hand, her eyes flick to Agnis. Some conspiracy there. Quoyale follows his aunt back to the big cutting table.

QUOYLE

I just, uh, came to see if you'd heard abou..

AGNIS

Silver Melville? Snuck off in the night, they did. Not a penny paid for all we done.

Shows him sheets of baby blue leather.

AGNIS

We'd installed the banquettes in
her salon. Three of the chairs done
and delivered, three to go...

Points to them. A neat row by the makeshift kitchenette.

QUOYLE

That's. That's just terrible.

But Agnis is thinking...

AGNIS

Strange. Leavin' the chairs.

And as he glances off, he sees Dawn across the way. Her skirt
hiked up, as if she were adjusting a stocking.

She isn't wearing any.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Billowy clouds frame a languid KITE, silver and sleek, darting this
way and that. Graceful, in command of the currents.

WAVEY (O.S.)

**HERRY PROWSE! LOOK HOW WELL YOUR
KITE IS DOING!**

See her now, seated atop a grassy slope. It is she who holds the
string, and her boy is way down at the bottom of the hill with
Bunny. Blue jumper billowing, the girl is teaching him how to make
necklaces from wildflowers and garbage bag twisty-ties. Herry and
the naked Barbies watch with great attention. The learning will
come later.

WAVEY

**ARE YOU MAKING IT DANCE WITH
YOUR THOUGHTS?**

On this he looks up. Serious.

WAVEY

**KEEP THINKING YOUR THOUGHTS!
YOUR KITE IS DOING SO MUCH BETTER
THAN MR. QUOYLE'S!**

PULL BACK slightly to reveal that Quoyale has been sitting right
beside her all along. He holds the string of a big, glum kite that

hangs motionless in space with barely a flutter. As she watches the kids, he stares at her, fixedly deciding whether to ask...

QUOYLE (barely audible)
Do you think Bunny's. Strange?

Wavey looks over. Sees that he's worried half to death.

QUOYLE
In New York. They said she had a...
personality disorder.

WAVEY (softly)
And it was named Petal.

Do you understand that?

QUOYLE
All these hallucin...

WAVEY
The White Dog. Sometimes with the
Skinny Ghost. Kids do things like
that, it's called imagination. Like
the necklaces.

The necklaces, yeh. A thought that frightens him.

QUOYLE
You know how many she makes?

She does.

WAVEY
It's a skill, she's proud of it. And
she brings her dolls along. And she
looks good in blue. And she wears a
key for a good luck charm.

Her kind smile. No big deal.

QUOYLE
And she's saving her mother a room.
Did she tell you that?

Wavey's slow nod.

QUOYLE
She talks to her at night. I can
hear through the door.

Very quiet now. The wind. The kites.

QUOYLE

You know how kids think. You have
all those books.

WAVEY

The ones I read to teach Herry.
They don't make me an exp...

QUOYLE (blurring)

Just. Is she okay?

That was naked. He swallows.

QUOYLE

I mean. If you had to guess..

Too serious a subject. Too good a woman. For an easy lie.

WAVEY

That child is the only friend my son
ever had. So she's strange, you bet.

She swallows, too. Her eyes are damp.

WAVEY

I love that little girl. And I will
see to it. That she's all right.

Hold the look.

WAVEY

And I don't have to guess about it.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Quoye RUNNING, huffing, through a bog with every color of berries
imaginable. Around another bend in the path. Stops. Hands on his
knees.

Listens. Nothing. Shit.

QUOYLE

**IF YOU GUYS AREN'T CHASING ME, I'M
GONNA BE COMPLETELY CHEESED OFF!**

More nothing. He trudges back the way he came. Peeks
around a
bend to see...

...Bunny is teaching Berry to pick gooseberries. This time, the

learning has started. They are being very careful.

QUOYLE

If you pick enough, we can sell 'em
for a thousand dollars. And give it
to Aunt Agnis to make up for those
Staties who didn't pay h...

BUNNY (means business)
Then don't. Slow us. Down.

Quoyle SLAPS his hands across his mouth. Sorry! He tiptoes
off.
Rounds a bend. Walking faster now...

Around another bend. And stops. Hold on his face. REVERSE
ANGLE
to take his view of...

...Petal, kneeling in a flimsy sundress, picking berries.
Barefoot, her skirt hiked up, stained with berry juice. And when
she turns to him...

...she is still Petal. Her face is beautiful, and filled with
tender desire. She looks at him the way he has always dreamed she
would. He goes to...

...kneel beside her. Touch her waist. And now she is...

...another woman. His hand is on Wavey's waist, and it comes
slowly away. But her eyes are locked to his. Making her choice.

WAVEY (very soft)
Look. I like you.

Even in kindness, he can smell rejection. He starts to back
away,
but she takes his hand. Holds it.

WAVEY

I want us. To be friends, okay?

He nods, dumbly. Of course. Okay.

WAVEY

And friends. Need. To understand
each other.

QUOYLE (so sorry)
I understand. Believe m...

WAVEY

My husband drowned. Herry was...

Hard for her. He quiets.

WAVEY

He was two months old. And Herold took the boat out. Overnight. To fish for haddock.

Do you understand?

WAVEY

Because I liked. Haddock.

Silence.

WAVEY

It's four years.

She stares in his eyes.

WAVEY

And it's yesterday.

No smile.

WAVEY

Now, did I blow it. Or can you still be my friend?

A beat. Quoyle nods, sure. I'll be your friend. But what she sees is a lifetime of being Quoyle washing past his eyes. It makes her murmur...

WAVEY

What? What are you thinking?

And from his heart...

QUOYLE

I'm thinking I'm sorry. For everything.

He stands up. HEAR him stumble off. HOLD on her.

EXT. GREEN HILLSIDE - DAY

A grassy place above an empty sea. The rest of the world far away.
Two figures climb the gentle hill.

BILLY

How're you doin' with the Tall
and Quiet Woman?

QUOYLE

Cindy Crawford and me is doin' fine.

BILLY

I meant Wavey Prowse.

Oh.

BILLY

My dad used to say there's four
women in every man's life. The
Stouthearted Woman...

QUOYLE

Oh, that'd be Agnis.

BILLY

...the Maid in the Meadow...

QUOYLE (has to think)

Bunny I guess. Weavin' a daisy-chain
necklace.

BILLY

...the Tall and Quiet Woman...

QUOYLE

Well. She does have that posture
goin'.

BILLY

...and the Demon Lover.

On this. Quoyale's smile fades. He looks away. They've reached a
fence where blunt pickets enclose crosses and wooden markers, many
fallen on the ground.

BILLY (wistful)

Me dad said that.

Billy finds the right marker. Sets his satchel onto the grass.
Kneels. His old fingers clear debris from painted words:
**W. PRETTY. 1897 - 1944. THROUGH THE GREAT STORMS OF LIFE, HE
DID HIS BEST. GOD GRANT HIM ETERNAL REST.**

BILLY

That's me poor father. Thirteen

I was when he died.

He hears the thread of feeling in his simple words. And says no more. Withdraws two cans of paint from his bag. One white, one black. Two brushes. Lays them out carefully, for this task is sacred.

BILLY

Every time I wonder. Is this the
last coat?

Pries the lid off the tin of black. And when he sees Quoyle's eyes...

BILLY

Well, there's no one else to do
it, y'see.

QUOYLE (straight back)

There is now.

An easy smile. Stating the obvious.

QUOYLE

There's me.

The old man's face just stops. The eyes sharpen. Into a question.

QUOYLE

Well, you said. There's no
one else.

As if that were enough.

QUOYLE

Hey. If you wanna rest next to
him. I'll paint yours at the same
time. No extra trouble.

Billy stares at him. Stares at him. Clears his throat, gruffly.

BILLY

Then better get Alvin Yark.
T'build yer a real boat. So
yer'll be around.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

Quoyle exits the house, pulling on his jacket, and...

...stops. Something laid across his threshold. A long piece of TWINE has been placed there. KNOTS tied evenly along its length. He glances back up to the second floor, thinking Bunny. Looks at the thing again. Neat work. Odd. Slips it in his pocket.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Quoyle now making his way down a steep primitive trail through lush vegetation. The green house is far above him. The shimmering bay now just below. This way down as treacherous as it is wondrous, and Quoyle SLIPS in the tangle and wet, half-slides through wild angelica stalks and patches of dogberry, suddenly...

...LOSING his balance, TUMBLING roughly down a stretch, rolling, grasping a spruce trunk. Pulling himself to his feet, he hears... RUSTLING. Looks up, just as...

...a WHITE DOG appears through the bushes. Red eyes. Lips curled back. A frozen second of mutual indecision, and Quoyle...

...SCREAMS and falls on his butt. The dog...

...TAKES OFF, bounding down a path we hadn't noticed. Toward an upright SILHOUETTE. Who steps into sun just long enough to become...

...a MAN, grizzled and scrawny and quick. Gone in a flash. Like a skinny ghost. And there, on his butt...

...Quoyle laughs softly. How 'bout that? Murmurs...

QUOYLE

Attaway, girl. You're smarter'n all of us.

As he climbs to his feet, he sees the rocky beach just below. Squints, as if at something that doesn't belong. We see it now...

...a SUITCASE, washed up onto a tangle of rocks, just offshore.

ANGLE...Quoyle wading into the water. Up to his knees, slips, sinks to his waist. Stays upright. Snatches the suitcase from its perch. Brings it back to shore, holding it high. Already, he is making the face of someone smelling something he'd rather not.

He sets it down. The face is worse. His curiosity running the show, he unhooks the latch...

...and stops. Because he's staring inside. Suddenly, he SCREAMS and FLAILS back, his leg STRIKING the case, and out tumbles onto the wet ground...

...the head. Of Bayonet Melville.

INT. SKIPPER WILL'S DINER - NIGHT

Three guys. Three beers. Five squidburgers (Quoyle likes his backups ready and waiting).

CARD

Y'know none a that impresses Jack Buggit. He's not one fer blatant ambition.

Quoyle thinks better of his answer. Chomps a bite instead.

NUTBEEM

Even if you don't recognize 'Human Head Packed in Satchel' as the most compelling piece ever to appear in...

CARD (snorts)

Even if.

...takes his hand from his greasy burger. Scratches his crotch below the table.

NUTBEEM

A triple increase in ad revenue. Does get. The man's attention.

And winks at the silent hero.

CARD

Weren't even double if yer figger it right.

(to Quoyle)

Point is. A real reporter woulda

named the obvious suspect.

QUOYLE

More obvious. Than the wife?

CARD

Yer aunt, ya thick Statie lardface dumbass!

Quoyle. And Nutbeem. Just look at each other.

CARD

She gets stiffed by the guy, after basin' her new shop on that revenue.

And she ain't one ta fool with.
Capable a anything, that woman!

QUOYLE (angry now)
Okay, where's the wife? Agnis kill
her too?

CARD

Okay, where's this week's shipping
news? Or you gonna rest on yer
Crisco-coated laurels.

Quoye viciously BITES into his squidburger.

CARD

Uh-oh. The way he's chewin', he ain't
a fat boy t'be trifled with!

NUTBEEM (quietly)
His piece. Is about oil tankers.

Card blinks. Looks at Quoye with, dare we say, new respect.

CARD

Hope fer ya yet. Now that's
news, the McGonigle oil field.
Petrodollars, a golden flood a jobs.
That's th'future a this god-forsaken
ice rock. Civilization!

Scratches his crotch savagely. To honor civilization.

CARD

That's why those with half a brain
already put our money where our
mouths is!

Puts his squidburger. Where his mouth is. Nutbeem clarifies for
Quoye...

NUTBEEM

Two shares. Of Mobil.

INT. WAVEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ANGLE...brightly lit kitchen. Bunny sits at the little table, a
large mixing bowl filled with popcorn before her, little Herry at
her side. They are watching Freakazoid on a tiny TV. Bunny
shovels in a mouthful of popcorn. Then makes a sage, if
unintelligible, comment about the show to Herry. Still chewing,
she takes another huge handful of popcorn...

...Herry opens his mouth like a baby bird. Bunny stuffs the snack in. It's a stare-and-chew, side by side. Just alike.

ANGLE...cozy parlor. Quoyale sits in a Barca-lounger with a huge bowl of chips in his lap. He is watching hockey on a modest TV, the action is fierce. Stuffs his mouth full of chips, yet somehow manages to say...

QUOYLE

...so there they were, this goofy old codger and his dog, big as life.

PULL BACK to see Wavey now. Curled on the sofa, under a lap robe. She is knitting something in a heavy oxblood-colored wool. He watches her work.

WAVEY (softly)

That'd be old Nolan. He's actually your uncle, last of the crazy Quoyles. I should have realized.

Keeps her eyes on her work.

WAVEY

Sad, really. Lives like a hermit in a run-down shack. No one to look after h...

QUOYLE

Here I was worried about Bunny night and day, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with her.

A silence. Which makes him uneasy.

QUOYLE

Her only problem is her dad worries too mu...

WAVEY (not looking up)

You are a loving and wonderful father. You're not the problem.

She meant to reassure him. Instead...

QUOYLE

So what is th...

WAVEY

Nice to see you.

Looks up with smoky eyes.

WAVEY

...after all this time.

Oh.

QUOYLE

Well. I've been workin' longer hours.
So Dennis and Beety were kind enough
to bring Bunny to the daycare. Fed
her a lotta meals, too. They're real
friends.

Quoyale's smile tries to sell the innocence of his absence.

WAVEY (very quiet)

I thought you forgot. That I'm your
friend, too.

No smile from her. She wants him to know she was hurt. He
shakes his head, serious now. No, I didn't forget.

WAVEY

You want another sandwich? There's
roast pork.

He holds up what's left of his four-decker. This is plenty.
Takes a huge bite to show how much he likes it.

WAVEY

You said. You'd read me your
article.

He did, he nods. But just now he's scared to. And so she smiles.
Which traps him. He pulls out a single sheet of paper. Clears his
throat.

QUOYLE

Nobody Hangs a Picture of an Oil
Tanker. That's the header.

She nods. Likes that. He gestures, go back to your knitting.
So she smiles, slyly. And commences to knit.

QUOYLE (reads)

There's a 1904 photo hung in the
library. Eight schooners heading
out to fishing grounds, sails spread
it like white wings. Beautiful. Beyond

compare.

This means something to him. Hear it in his voice.

QUOYLE (reads)

More common today is the low black profile of oil tankers. Like the ruptured Golden Goose, which last week bled 14,000 tons of crude onto seabirds, fish and boats at Cape Despond.

He stops. As if revisiting that little thought in his mind.

QUOYLE (reads)

There will be more and more tankers. They will grow old and corroded, and their tanks will split. They have already done to fishing. What their spill has done to fish.

He sneaks a glance. She has never looked up.

QUOYLE (reads)

Nobody hangs a picture of an oil tanker. On their wall.

Silence. A full one.

QUOYLE

Well. Whatcha think?

She reflects.

WAVEY

I think when Card sees it, he'll split a gut. I think he'll sit up nights thinking of cheap shots to pay you back. I think he'll never stop until you're fired.

Quoyle keeps nodding at each point. Yep. Yep.

WAVEY

I think I haven't been so proud. Of a friend. Since I don't know when.

Quoyle's heart explodes in his chest. And shines in his eyes.
There is a long silence.

WAVEY (softly)

Maybe another sandwich. There's

roast pork.

He swallows. He just doesn't want to cry from happiness.

QUOYLE

Well, sure.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - DAY

CLOSE on Card. Who is RIPPING the single page in half. Then again. And again. And again. See Quoye now, standing at the desk like a statue. Billy and Nutbeem at their stations, watching as Card...

...flutters the pieces down onto his desk. Like falling snow.

CARD

Oh, I'll run it. Just easier
t'copy edit. When yer can move
th'pieces around.

A hush. A frozen tableau in this room.

QUOYLE

Run it. Like I wrote it.

CARD

How does this suit yer, Quoye?
I'll do my job. You do yers, which
means a four-vehicle pile-up south
a Killick-Claw. And don't ferget
the camera.

He slides the battered camera across the desk. They glare at each other a full beat. Card belches, softly. Quoye takes the camera, heads for the door...

CARD

I fergot somethin'.

Quoye turns. Card doesn't.

CARD

You pinko Greepeace sack a quivering
pigfat.

Thinks.

CARD

Did I leave out moosebutt-ugly?
(nods to himself)
You may go.

HOLD on him. Making a neat little pile of the torn pieces.

QUOYLE (O.S.)

Like I wrote it.

SLAMM! Across the room, Nutbeem stands. Takes his cigarettes.
Passing Card's desk, on the way out...

NUTBEEM

Tough love. Impressive.

SLAMM! Card shoots Billy a challenging look. You got something
to say?

BILLY

I hope you get him fired.

Do you.

BILLY

So I can watch him beat yer to jelly.

Just turns around. Flicks ON his computer. Back to work.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Bunny jumping out of the wagon, running to the house. As Quoye
locks his car...

BUNNY (O.S.)

Why'd you leave the house open?

He looks up. She is pushing the front door with one finger. It
swings OPEN.

BUNNY

Can I keep the necklace?

...and lifts a long piece of TWINE. There are KNOTS neatly tied
along its length. Quoye stares. Stares.

QUOYLE (calm)

Sweetie. Come sit in the car.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - TWILIGHT

Quoye climbing the stairs in fading light. He carries a tire
iron. Stops midway. Listens to the silence.

QUOYLE

**IF ANYBODY'S THERE, YOU BETTER COME
OUT NOW!**

Up, up, to the top. Looking down the empty hall to see...
...knotted twine. At every door.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - EARLY MORNING

Quoye enters, haggard and distracted. The place is lit, but empty. A toilet FLUSHES. From the loo, appears...

CARD

S'tell me. Yer fancy it?

Nodding toward something behind Quoye. Turning, we see that hanging over Card's desk is an oversized framed photo of: QUIET EYE - WORLD'S LARGEST OIL TANKER. Quoye stares blankly.

QUOYLE

Like I said. Nobody hangs those.

Card just goes to the fresh stack of newspapers on his desk. Hands one toward Quoye...

CARD

Yer column's front page stuff. Only now, it's more like a caption, is all.

A photo of the same tanker. That hangs on Card's wall.

QUOYLE (reads)

More than 3000 tankers proudly ride the world's seas. Even the biggest take advantage of Newfoundland's deep-water ports and refineries.

CARD

Spelled everthin' perfect. So as not t'embarass yer.

QUOYLE (reading)

Oil and Newfoundland go together like ham and eggs, and like ham and eggs they'll nourish us in the coming years.

CARD

Even put yer name on it.

QUOYLE (finishes reading)
Let's all hang a picture of an oil
tanker. On our wall.

Stares at the paper. In his hand.

CARD

Man a yer principles. I unnerstan'
resignation is th'only honorable
course.

Quoyle looks up. Card flinches back. But all that comes is...

QUOYLE

How can a man resign. To nobody?

Drops the paper on the floor. Steps on it, on his way toward the
door.

CARD

If yer off to see Jack Buggit,
yer'll hafta swim some.

Quoyle turns back.

CARD

Yer can whine an' beg t'him. But I

runs his paper, every inch of it,
every dirty time-eatin' job which he
would have t'do without me.

A wink.

CARD

An' if yer think he's gonna choose
you over fishin'...yer not as smart as
even you look!

The cackle of the guy holding the straight flush.

CARD

Me an' Jack. Has a sym-bi-otic
relationship. Yer can look that up.

Quoyle puts his hand on the door.

QUOYLE

I know the word, Card. It means
you two deserve each other.

Out the door. It closes behind him. Card alone, crosses his arms

in glee...

CARD
I'LL TELL JACK YER SAID SO!

HOLD on Card. DISSOLVE TO...

INT. GAMMY BIRD - DAY

CLOSE on a box of assorted doughnuts. Two dozen. A hand reaches down toward a raspberry swirl, thinks better of it, moves thoughtfully along the selection to pluck a maple glaze, and bring it to...

...Quoyle's mouth. The box rests beside the cardboard carton into which Quoyle is packing his things. Nutbeem sits on the edge of the desk, nibbling a cruller. Billy is bringing three mugs of coffee. Looks like a going-away party. Through the glass of the only private office...

...Jack Buggit is talking. Card is not. Card stands now, strides to the door, flings it OPEN. Nutbeem taps Quoyle's shoulder with his pastry. They look to...

CARD
So. This is what Jack and I think.

He's looking straight in Quoyle's eyes. Defiant as ever.

CARD
We wanna run Quoyle's oil spill
piece b'cause controversy sells
papers and papers sells ads.

NUTBEEM
Sounds reasonable to me.

Lives to needle this guy. Card keeps his laser gaze on Quoyle.

CARD
And we're gonna let Quoyle have
his head on these columns, up to
500 words. So he'll get his
confidence up.

NUTBEEM
Well, let's not go overboard. He's
rather green doncha thi...

CARD
But we wanna expand his responsi-
bilities to boat crashes. There's

maybe four a week.

NUTBEEM

He'll need a raise. And need to be represented in the negotia...

CARD

And. The oil tanker picture. Stays!

Nutbeem's eyes WIDEN. He mimes catching an arrow shot through his chest. Falls OFF the desk.

CARD (to Quoyle)

All that clear?

Quoyle looks him in the eyes. Starts putting his things back in his desk.

CARD

One more thing...

Hear the SLAMM!

QUOYLE (never looks up)

Jack's gone fishing?

EXT. OMALLOOR BAY - DAY

The sky threatens black. Quoyle picks his way across the rocks to his ungainly, much-maligned boat, as it bobs against the weathered dock. He crouches, and as he begins to untie it, his gaze drifts out toward the nearby point, and...

...something catches his eye. A boulder in the shape of a great dog. And as he stares, there is something below it. Something in a cove protected from intrusion by a jagged ring of menacing rocks...

...it is a MAN in a yellow suit. His head under the surface as if looking for fish. Arms and legs spread out like a starfish, the body slides in and out of a small cave. Tugged by the sea like a top on a string.

Quoyle stares in frozen shock.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Headline. Reporter Becomes Magnet
For Dead Men.

No way in past the pounding surf, the savage rocks. So Quoyle turns sharply. Squints across the bay.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

What was my panic? He was already
dead. Maybe I thought, in some dim
way...

CLIMBS into his boat, TURNS the engine over. KICKS it in overdrive
toward the town across the bay.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

...if it wasn't too late for him.
It wouldn't be for Petal.

STREAKING out, toward the black sky. Racing to open sea where the
chop INCREASES drastically. Closer. Closer...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Once I was past the shelter of the
lee shore, and into the real wind.
I realized my mistake.

...clear of the point's protection, the wind ROCKS the tiny craft,
swells coming BROADSIDE. The boat RISES, then DROPS with cruel
speed. Quoyale tries to swing the boat around, the propeller RACES,
the bow PITCHES violently, SLAMMING down, the stern SWAMPED, the
hull filling, swerving broadside just as the oncoming sea HITS with
all its force, and the little boat...

...rolls OVER, Quoyale suddenly FLYING under water, limbs flailing
in all directions...

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Headline. Reporter Becomes Anchor
Man.

INTERCUT...Quoyale's dad FLINGING him into the public pool, the
youngster SINKING like an anvil in a profusion of bubbles, and
CUT...

BACK to Quoyale, struggling madly somehow to the surface, THRASHING
toward the overturned boat, GRASPING the stilled propeller shaft,
which causes the bow to lift, the next wave turning the boat
upright, FILLING it with water, and it SINKS forever, as Quoyale...

...TUMBLES once more beneath the surface, watching the boat
DISAPPEAR into darkness below him.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Stupid. Stupid to drown with Bunny
so young. No life jacket, no floating
oar. No sense.

Back to the surface, GASPING for air. And then, daintily rowing a

small boat, unaffected by the waves, her filmy dress rippling in light breeze...

PETAL

Look, it floats. Just like you.

Is the lilting smile cruel? Or only the irony that conveys intimacy, even affection.

PETAL

Maybe it's filled with fat.

And VANISHES. In her place, bobs a red BOX. A plastic beer cooler. He LUNGES for it, GRIPPING the handles, resting his chest on its top.

The waves RISE, mountainous now, and he rises and falls with them. He has been swept a mile from the nearest shore.

INTERCUT...a winch pulling part of the Geo, streaming mud, from swiftly flowing water. Police and bystanders gathered.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

And I wondered. Am I going where she's gone?

BACK to the bay. A barely-conscious Quoye still clings somehow to the plastic cooler. But hours have passed. Light is fading.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

...and will I see her?

He turns. And there she is. Beaming at him from the bow of her little rowboat, a smile ambiguous in the growing dusk. It could be love. From behind her a light GLOWS, giving Petal the aspect of an angel.

She drops a wink. FADES away. And the light becomes...

...the BEAM from a fishing boat. Quoye squints his swollen eyes, as strong hands WRENCH him from his box. From the sea. A voice warbles, distorted by wind and Quoye's diminished consciousness...

JACK

Jesus Cockadoodle Christ! I knowed somebody was out here.

Quoye's teeth are chattering so hard, his body shivering so

painfully, Buggit hauls him over the rail and lays him down on a wriggling mound of fish.

JACK

Thank god fer yer figure, me old son.
A thin man woulda froze.

Quoyle burrows into the fish, like nestling in a down comforter.
Jack covers him with a heavy tarp. Crouches down close...

JACK

Good. Yer lost th'boat.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dim light. Quoyle stirs beneath the billowing down coverlet. His eyes flutter. Open. Where...?

VOICE (O.S., very soft)

It's all right. You're in heaven.

His head SNAPS around. She's sitting just beside the bed in half-shadow. Her oxblood knitting across her lap.

WAVEY

Actually. It's just my bed.

Now he sees the cigarette.

WAVEY

Actually, it's not. I just wanted
to see your eyes bug out like that.

Now he sees the smile.

QUOYLE

You don't smoke.

His voice was a croak. So he CLEARS his throat with a massive and disgusting effort. It is gross and funny, and she smiles again.

WAVEY

Only when I'm worried. I don't
worry much.

He rolls over, to see her better. They are very close.

QUOYLE

You don't have to, I'm all right.
I'm in heaven.

WAVEY

I'm not worried. About you.

Oh. As he draws a breath to ask...

WAVEY

You're in the boys' room at Jack's house. Wonder how long since Dennis slept here.

She glances to the nightstand. Beneath the dim lamp. A picture of Jack and blond son Jesson. Guess what they're doing.

WAVEY

Mrs. Buggit called, knew Bunny was still with me. The kids are camped out in the parlor.

A beat.

QUOYLE

Nice. You sittin' up with me.

A longer one.

WAVEY

S'okay. Someday you'll do somethin' nice for me.

He nods. He will.

QUOYLE

Who you worried ab...

WAVEY

You didn't find a second dead man. Just the rest of the first one.

Ah. He nods. Well, that figures.

QUOYLE

I asked. Who you worried about?

On this, she stubs out her cigarette. Takes another from the pack.

WAVEY

You said Bunny talks to Petal at night. You ever listen?

He shakes his head.

QUOYLE

Not really. Wouldn't be right.

WAVEY

Well, I'm not that nice a person.

STRIKES a match.

WAVEY

She plays Petal. Talks to the
Barbies, like Petal talking to her.

Brings her cigarette. To the flame.

WAVEY

She says she's sorry she left them.
It was just to see if they could be
good girls. And they were...

And.

WAVEY

...and she loves them.

His eyes at once rapt and suffering. She watches that.

WAVEY

The Barbies look better naked, Bunny
looks good in blue, guess who said
that?

Draws on her smoke.

WAVEY

So we talked. Just before Petal
left her with that...stranger? Bunny
had snapped her mom's bead necklace.
That's why she's making more.

Do you understand?

WAVEY

When she's made enough. She'll
be forgiven.

Tears are pooling in his eyes. Hers, too. She keeps going...

WAVEY

She saves Petal a room at the house,
but she's also got the key to the old
place. In case her mom would rather
go there.

A thin stream of air escapes from his lips.

QUOYLE

And she talked about it. Just like
that.

WAVEY

Sure, I lied. I said nice things
about her mother.

Bitter smile.

WAVEY

See, there's only one problem.
Petal isn't gone.

Quoyle thinking. Madly. What can he do?

QUOYLE

So we're patient. And we wait, and
we're good to her.

(beat)

And. Maybe. Time.

She stares back. Unease to match his own. Maybe time.

INT. ALVIN YARK'S BOAT HOUSE - DAY

A wiry wisp of an aged elf, ALVIN YARK is shaping the center beam
of what will become a tidy boat. Its wooden skeleton across two
sawhorses in his spacious workshop.

ALVIN (sings softly to himself)
Oh, the Gandy Goose, it ain't no use.
It ain't no use, the Gandy Goose.

Quoyle, Wavey and Dennis stand in a row. Watching the little
artisan shave wood as if his tools were his hands.

ALVIN (keeps singing, as if alone)
The Gandy Goose, she ain't no uuuuse...
Cause all her nuts'n bolts is loose.

Wavey can't help but smile. She really likes the old duck.

ALVIN (never turning)
See, I'm already buildin' yers in me
mind. The singin' helps that. But.
Gotta take a walk in the woods, find a
spruce with jest th' right curve fer
yer stem.

And says no more. Keeps working. They are like acolytes at the

feet of a guru who never bothers even to glance their way.

QUOYLE

Well, hurry up. Thirty, forty years
I'll be rarin' to get back out on the
water.

Everyone smiles. Except the guru.

ALVIN

Gotta build her solid. Who knows,
mebbe Jack Buggit'll give his fishin'
license to his boy. So next time,
won't be nobody to pull yer out.

DENNIS (real quiet)

Jack Buggit's boy is drowned.

Everyone looks. Except the guru.

ALVIN (cheery)

Dennis. Y'hear the one about the
Newfie who lived ferever?

A beat.

DENNIS

No sir.

ALVIN

His kid never got a fishin' license.

Now he turns. A maritime Yoda, squinting to discern if his message
is received.

ALVIN

What we wait fer? She's like
the main stem. Gives us our shape,
doncha see.

He runs his hand along the backbone of the boat he's building.

ALVIN

Death's one shape. Fergiveness is
another.

Crinkly old eyes, laser bright. Dennis isn't angry. Just
resolved.

DENNIS

Thing 'bout waitin' on fergiveness?
Mixes up who's waitin' on who.

No smile, no spin. Just the truth.

DENNIS

Death is simpler. An' a lot shorter
wait.

In the silence. A door opens.

MRS. YARK (O.S.)

Mr. Quoyle...?

A sprightly bird-like woman. Wears apology and concern.

MRS. YARK

The school is callin'? It's about
yer daughter?

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The PRINCIPAL is spare, dressed for England, her voice
authoritarian by its pace, exaggerated diction, and lack of volume.

PRINCIPAL

...not only pushed Mrs. Lumball. Not
only pushed her very hard...

Seated in a semi-circle around the desk of power. Quoyle,
stricken, respectful. Wavey, already pissed off at the principal.
And Bunny, her hat and coat on, arms folded, face crimson and set.

PRINCIPAL

She knocked. Her down.

Do you understand the severity of this, Mr. Quoyle?

PRINCIPAL

And. Refuses to explain her act. Or.
Apologize.

Is that right, young lady?

PRINCIPAL

Under the circumstances. We have no
choice but to suspend.

Bunny looks down. Glaring an evil spell of death at her own
kneecaps.

WAVEY (quietly)

I think Bunny and I. Should take

a walk.

And stands.

QUOYLE

Uh. Wavey? If it's all the same
to you...

EXT. PATH - DAY

Quoyle and Bunny alone, hand-in-hand, walking slow where they once
picked berries. Nobody's talking.

BUNNY

When you gonna ask?

QUOYLE (calm)

When you're in the mood.

Apparently, that hasn't happened yet. More walking.

QUOYLE

She musta done something. Really bad.

Said like he means it. Which he does. And Bunny, squinting up,
sees that.

INTERCUT...the crime. Playground filled with kids. Bunny and
girlfriends on the jungle gym. Bunny the best, a natural jock.
MRS. LUMBULL large, sour, doughy, and betrayed by life, stands with
her silver whistle in the midst of chaos. Her thoughts on a higher
plane.

BUNNY (O.S.)

She's the worst one of all!

Little Herry Prowse comes to tug at the teacher's wool coat. He is
holding his crotch and jumping up and down. This does not require
an advanced credential to interpret.

BUNNY (O.S.)

Herry told her he had to pee. But
the way he talks. He could just
say 'eeee,' like that.

Mrs. Lumbull looks down. From her face as she responds, she has
already devoted, over time, more professional attention to this
troublemaker than should be asked of any dedicated educator.

BUNNY (O.S.)

She told him that recess was almost

over, an' she wasn't gonna make a trip special, an' he could hold it.

Herry, seemingly, disagrees. Still holding his crotch, he jumps up and down with greater agitation. She grabs him, rather roughly, by the arm. Marches him over to...

BUNNY (O.S.)

She made him stand against the wall.

...and walks off, pointedly ignoring him from ten feet away. He screams, pumping his fists in frustration. Grabs himself, suddenly. Whether or not we can see the dampness spread, we can see his humiliation all too clearly. As his tears come...

...a figure BOLTS into frame from behind Mrs. Lumbull. Hunched over like a linebacker, full speed ahead, LAUNCHING herself into the back of the large woman's knees. Her feet go UP, and the rest of her goes...

...DOWN like the proverbial amount of bricks. Herry's tears stop fast. Watching the woman shriek, and keep shrieking. Makes him laugh. CUT...

BACK TO...the berry path. They are sitting on a fallen log.

QUOYLE

See, a good dad would say hitting is always wrong. You coulda hurt her bad. I guess you know that.

BUNNY

She wasn't hurt for real. Just screamed like a baby.

Quoyale pulls out a single Snickers bar.

QUOYLE

Wish I'd seen it. It really sounds funny.

BUNNY

Petal'll think so, too.

He looks at her. Nods, probably will. Peels the candy bar free of its wrapper.

QUOYLE

Well, there won't be any trouble at school. I'll take care of that.

BUNNY

How?

He breaks the candy bar in half. Tho not quite equally.

QUOYLE

Because the best thing about people.
Is they can forgive each other. I
heard that this morning.

BUNNY

That teacher. Is gonna forgive me?

He nods. Oh, yeh.

QUOYLE

That. And she won't want the story
printed in the paper.

Oh.

BUNNY

Well. I don't wanna forgive her.

QUOYLE

Me neither.

He holds out the two pieces of candy. She takes them both. the
bigger one in his mouth. As he chews...

BUNNY

I had to do it. 'Cept for Wavey,
I'm the only family Herry's got.

She nibbles at her own piece.

BUNNY

Like the ghost. Who's not a ghost.

Hmmn?

BUNNY

The one who ties the knots? You're
the only family he's got.

Right? Her father doesn't react. He's even stopped chewing.

BUNNY

You said.

And slowly. Quoyle nods. I said.

EXT. NOLAN'S SHED - DAY

Quoyale picks his way down to the battered boat shed, hidden at the foot of his cliff. He carries a big carton, which we see has made the journey slow and awkward. Across the gravel now, to...

...the door. HEAR the fire crackling, see the smoke curling. Takes a breath. Knocks softly. Then LOUDER.

QUOYLE
UNCLE NOLAN? CAN I COME IN?

No answer. Juggle the box, lift the latch. Enter...

INT. NOLAN'S SHED - NIGHT

The old man and the dog huddled together at the fire. They look over with red eyes. Just alike. Only one growls. Quoyale finds a smile, a soft voice...

QUOYLE
Uncle. My daughter Bunny and I.
We got you some hot bread. And some
meat. Some dried fish. Some squash
and vegetables...a cake...some warm
clothes...

Nolan is listening. Sharp-eared, sharp-eyed. What trick is this? So Quoyale sets the carton down in the squalor. Takes out a loaf of fresh bread. One step forward. Lay it down.

Good faith offering. And...

...Nolan scuttles to it. Like a wary crab. He tears off a chunk of bread. Nibbles. He likes it. And as he eats...

QUOYLE (softly)
You tied those knots, huh?
At my house?

...crouches down to the old man's size. Almost close enough to touch.

NOLAN
Ain't yer house, it's th' Ouoyale
house!

He's found the meat. Ripped off a chunk.

QUOYLE
See, I am Qu...

NOLAN

Old ones. Got run outta Omaloor Bay a hunnerd years ago. Dragged that house across th' ice. On spruce runners.

Stuffs some into his face. Like this, even better.

NOLAN

Hadda lash it to th' rock. She'll tell yer.

She.

NOLAN

Course she never come t'see me. That's obvious why.

And as Quoye draws a breath to ask...

NOLAN

Your Aunt Agnis Hamm, me son. That's cause she can't face me. I knows she killed 'im.

A moment. Of stone silence.

QUOYLE

Him.

NOLAN

That baby she was carryin'. What was she t'do? She wuz only 12. An' it was her own brother what done 'er.

Quoye's wide-eyed shock.

QUOYLE (numb)

Her own...

INTERCUT...a tiny frozen pond. Long ago. A girl of 12, rawboned, husky, skating alone. We've seen her, in the photo at Quoye's dad's house. And as she skates, she looks up to see...

...a boy of 15, stocky, sullen. He was in the same photo. Only now, he steps onto the ice. Unbuttons his pants. Begins to slide toward her on the soles of his fishing boots. She looks around. Snow banked on all sides of the pond. Nowhere to run on her skates.

NOLAN (O.S.)

Her brother, me son. She only

had th' one.

The girl, breathless, skating this way and that. The boy closing in, cutting off her angle. A deadly endgame. There are no words. And...

...he is ON her. Pulling her TUMBLING to the ice in SLO-MO. No sound but their hot breath, the grunt of the struggle, and CUT BACK to...

NOLAN

Course no one alive knows no more.

So her an' me...

(winks)

Our. Little. Secret.

INT. AGNIS' NEW SHOP, KILLICK-CLAW - DAY

Agnis and Mavis are showing Wavey their new shop. It is big and bright with more elaborate fittings, the amount of work piled up carries the scent of success. Quoyale trails behind, as Agnis dotes on Wavey like a prize new daughter-in-law. When she turns, she sees her nephew staring...

AGNIS

What? My hem crooked? As if
I was wearin' a hem.

He was staring pretty intently. Realizes that.

QUOYLE

Naw, I just come from seein' your
cousin Nolan. Guess I was thinkin'
about him.

She holds his gaze with her own. Is she wondering?

DAWN

Mr. Quoyale? What do you think of
my dress?

Everybody turns on that one. Mavis cuts her alter ego Agnis a look. Can you believe this slut?

DAWN

I wore it just for you.

She actually looks pretty good in it. Wavey noticing that.
Watching Quoyale say...

QUOYLE

That was more consideration. Than

I deserve.

Polite banter? Or outright flirting? Hard to tell if it's Wavey or Agnis who disapproves more. Dawn ignores them.

DAWN

Did your aunt tell you about all
the money?

Agnis just blinks. Can scarcely believe she heard that.

DAWN

Agnis told us it came from Macau.

AGNIS (quietly)

Hush yoursel...

DAWN

...from Silver Melville. And it
was more than she expected. And we
shipped the chairs off to her.
Y' know, the three remaining?

A really frozen beat.

QUOYLE (casual, to Agnis)

Uh. Why would she send you more
tha...

AGNIS (to Dawn)

Do you have enough attention now,
young lady?

DAWN

Yes, Ma'am, I think so.

Mavis echoes Agnis' glare.

QUOYLE (really casual)

Macau, huh? So. That where y'sent
th' chairs?

Agnis turns. Sizes him up.

AGNIS

It's flatterin' you showin' me how
you've turned into such a competent
reporter and all. But even if I
remembered where I sent 'em. I
couldn't tell ya.

Puts her fingers to her lips. Leans closer, to confide something
he is obviously unaware of...

AGNIS

Professional ethics.

INT. WAVEY'S KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE on Wavey, cooking flapjacks. Talking to them.

WAVEY

Only you. Could do this.

And she's not pleased.

WAVEY

You fed him. You gave him clothes.
You're the first human ever was kind
to him...

She scoops them expertly into a stack.

WAVEY

Accordingly. You're sick with guilt.

Serves them to...

WAVEY

You sure you're not a complex guy?

...Quoyle, who nods absently. About the one thing he is sure of.
Just now, he's examining the prodigious status of her oxblood
knitting. Still attached to the needles, it looks too broad for
a muffler.

QUOYLE (decides)

Horse blanket.

WAVEY (ah!)

That's what that is!

A beat. Another.

QUOYLE

So if y'called around. Musta
found somepla...

WAVEY (quietly)

One decent golden age home. It's
in St. John's. You can maybe afford
it, tho God knows why you should.

She pushes the flapjacks closer to him, CLANKS down the fork, eat!
She's exasperated. Thinks he's wasting his money.

QUOYLE

I can't put him there, til I go
down to St. John's. See it's all
right.

WAVEY

Great! Let's not be rash!

QUOYLE

Come with me.

And everything. Sorta. Stops.

QUOYLE

I mean, the kids could stay with
Dennis and Beety. Or Agnis, or...

A meaningful beat.

WAVEY

Why. Would I. Do that?

She looks deep in his eyes. Hard to guess the answer she wants to
hear. He clears his throat. Looks down.

QUOYLE

Well. Remember when you said.
Someday, I'd do something nice
for you?

And when he looks to her, she is...

PETAL (Wavey's voice)

And this is it.

A witheringly sexy smile.

QUOYLE

Hey. Overnight trip to St. John's.
All expenses paid.

Petal arches a delicate brow.

PETAL (Wavey's voice)

Overnight?

He blinks. And sees...

WAVEY

What's wrong with a weekend?

With a playful smile. Of her own.

EXT. DOUBLE-DECKER BUS, ST. JOHN'S - DAY

Not London, but it might as well be. Wavey and Quoyale atop a red double-decker bus, wind whipping their hair. She is watching the big city flow past, drinking every inch of it. He's watching her.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Wavey carries an armload of little girl's tights and corduroy pants, picking through a bin of barrettes. Quoyale appears with a fistful of neckties. Holds them up hopefully to his chest one at a time, each more breathtakingly godawful than the last. Well? She SHIVERS with disgust. Lifts from her shopping bag a nice conservative one she's already picked for him. He SHIVERS, just as she did. They share the trace of a grin, just alike. He walks off.

...Wavey trying on furry hats in a full-length mirror, as Quoyale keeps feeding her an endless supply from a double armful. She pouts and poses like a runway model, basically frowning that the

hats aren't working. He's staring at her as if nothing else exists in the universe. She knows it.

...Wavey alone at a cash register. The checker is ringing up a selection of lacy bras and panties. Suddenly, Wavey looks up to see Quoyale at the register one aisle over, staring fixedly at her purchases. Seeing she's noticed him, he holds up a huge pair of loud boxer shorts he's buying, and WAVES them at her. She laughs and waves her bras right back. Civilians watching think they're in love.

EXT./INT. ST. JOHN'S - DAY/NIGHT

...Quoyale and Wavey stroll the grounds of Nolan's future retirement home. It is twilight, and the modest place looks pleasant and welcoming. Quoyale listens earnestly, as the director points things out. Wavey watching Quoyale, her gaze not so disapproving after all.

...CLOSE on Quoyale with a bowling ball, poised, glaring our way. Here he comes. Stumbles. Lets go. REVERSE ANGLE to see the ball rolling, rolling real slow. Quoyale turns his back, strides away with confidence like he doesn't even have to watch, this is too easy. Wavey points, look. He turns in time to see two pins fall. Pumps his fist. YESSSS!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

It's late. It's dim. It's as romantic as urban Newfoundland will ever get. Our couple nursing beers at the corner table of a passably stylish bar. Piano playing show tunes, but soft. He pulls from his pocket...

...a travel brochure. Slightly drunk, completely merry, almost wicked smile.

QUOYLE

Now, listen to this for t'morrow.
After I sign the papers at the home...

She's already grinning. Feels so comfortable.

QUOYLE (reads)

The answer to your annual outing!
Rainbow trout fishing in four ponds.
You pay for what you catch. Prizes
in the ponds. If it drizzles or gets
chilly, heated and lighted building
available, right next to the ponds,
with soft drinks, candy bars, ice
cream and chips!

His subtle smile. A guy could get used to this irony stuff.

WAVEY

Or we could sleep in.

...innocent, natural. At some primal level, his panic begins.

WAVEY

I just feel so guilty about all
your expenses. Two separate rooms.
Both so big.

QUOYLE

Hey, it's my treat. You agreed.

She nods. She did.

WAVEY

Still. Seems like we could figure
out. Something.

Even Quoyle. Has the message. He looks down at his beer, as he thinks about what he should say. Turns the glass in his fingers.

QUOYLE

A friend told me once. Love is
the only thing that counts.

He nods. Almost to himself.

QUOYLE (a murmur)
It's the engine of life.

He looks up. Her eyes are waiting.

QUOYLE
So when you told me how you think
about your husband. I really
understood, becau...

WAVEY
That's what I wanted us to talk
abou...

QUOYLE
...because real love. Just comes
once.

And everything. Stops.

QUOYLE
See, you know some of the stories
about Petal. Some of the bad things.
What you don't know...

But she's looking in his eyes. And so, she does.

WAVEY (just above a whisper)
...is how much you love her.

That's what it is.

WAVEY
Even tho. She never loved you.

A beat.

QUOYLE
Sorta. Because of it.

He sighs. The most miserable and the most honest he has ever been.
All at once.

QUOYLE
See, love. Isn't about what's good
for you. Isn't about what you wish
it was. Isn't about what...would
make you happy.

His eyes are swimming. Can she possibly hear this?

QUOYLE

Love. Is about want. What you
really want. And you can't change
that. Even if it's poison.

Silence. The piano plays something gay and stupid.

QUOYLE

So that's why it's great. To have a
real friend. When you're. Lonely.

The last word was a tough one. It makes her nod. She stares in
his eyes for the longest time. And when she speaks, he can
scarcely
hear her voice...

WAVEY

I know you have to stay tomorrow.
To sign the papers. But.

But. One word. And even a stupid guy. Gets it all.

WAVEY

I should be heading back. Before
Herry. Misses me. Too much.

Wow. He nods, dumbly. Watching his worst nightmare unfold
before
his eyes.

WAVEY

And I'm not feeling so well.
What I get for mixing vodka and
beer, huh.

She gets to her feet. She does seem a little unsteady.

WAVEY

So I'll grab a taxi. You stay and
finish. Listen to the music. Is

that all right?

QUOYLE

I cou...

But he stops. Because she's shaken her head once. Don't.

WAVEY

And don't worry. I'm still your friend.

Her voice chokes a little on that.
grinning at how foolish she feels.
she means it.

She shakes her head, half-
She smiles at him now. Like

And leaves. Without another word.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

She did stay my friend. In her way.
Even tho, for awhile, we didn't see
each other a lot.

He wants to cry. He wants to be sick. He doesn't know what he
wants. Fumbles in his pocket for some wadded-up bills.

QUOYLE (V.O.)

Funny. How one little talk. Can
change everything.

DISSOLVE SLOWLY TO...

INT. SKIPPER WILL'S DINER - NIGHT

The boys, the beers, the squidburgers. The usual.

QUOYLE

Tell me about it. Just get the
aunt's house fixed perfect, and
I gotta move.

Move?

QUOYLE

Three hours to drive from the Point,
with all the ice. Alvin won't have
my boat ready til New Years. Agnis
can stay over her shop. Bunny and I
have to find a room in town.

DENNIS

Stay with us. My kid follows yours
around, they'll bunk t'gether. And
we gotta fluffy couch that's more'n
you deserve.

A good friend. Quoyle is touched.

QUOYLE

Hopin' you'd offer, almost
worth it just t'inconvenience ya.
Unfortunately, I'm too fond a

yer wife.

NUTBEEM (casual)
Take my trailer. Timing's perfect.

The way he said that. They both turn. A shrug...

NUTBEEM
It's two years. My boat's ready.
If I stay any longer, I'll begin
to like it here.

Wouldn't want that. Very silent at this table. Against the
din of
the place. Is he serious?

NUTBEEM (softly)
I'm throwing myself a farewell
party on Saturday. Departure
to follow Sunday. Regrets, soon
after, no doubt.

And smiles. Serious as a heart attack. A long beat.

QUOYLE (a murmur)
Be careful.

Careful?

QUOYLE
Last friend left me. Turned into
a truck driver.

So much feeling behind his eyes. Nutbeem can only say...

NUTBEEM
Well. With that warning.

And return the feeling. With his own.

EXT./INT. NUTBEEM'S TRAILER - TWILIGHT

Quoyle GROANING under the weight of cases of beer and cheap rum
pulled from the back of his wagon. Plenty more to go. Staggeres
into...

...Nutbeem's tiny, threadbare trailer. Every conceivable surface
under stacks of plastic-wrapped party platters of cold cuts, cheese
and red-eyed olives. Nutbeem is jamming beers into tubs of ice.
Quoyle peers into the teensy closet that is the only bathroom...

QUOYLE

What's the barrel for?

SEE it now. Half a sawed-off empty BARREL, with MOLASSES stenciled in orange, fills the shower stall.

NUTBEEM

I'm British. I bathe.

Quoyle sends him a blank look.

QUOYLE

Perfect for th' chips.

He gestures to thirty bags of potato chips, filling the kitchenette.

NUTBEEM

It's coated with two kinds of scum.
Soap. And mine.

QUOYLE

Works. We forgot to buy dip.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

VIEW out a window at the line of HEADLIGHTS still arriving. We are immersed in the ungodly WHITE NOISE of an all-gentleman's Newfie soiree, music pushed beyond the level of distortion, assorted grunts, squeals, unintelligible words, things breaking. As we struggle to look around...

...every square inch is crammed tight with semi-conscious drunks. Tert Card and some boys circle the potato chip barrel, which has become a handy urinal. Near the door, Dennis holding forth, arm tight around Quoyle who listens, listens, chuckles. Then Quoyle fights his way...

...OUT of the trailer, to cold night air where the party is MUCH wilder, given the elbow room. Quoyle steps OVER the supine form of Billy Pretty, who is singing to himself. Finds Jack Buggit with a beer in one hand a rum in the other. Wraps a drunken arm around Jack's neck. Starts to talk in his ear. Jack looks suspicious. A FIGHT breaks out a few feet away. They don't notice. Closing in, to hear...

QUOYLE (shouting against the din)

SO THE NEXT DAY, THEY ALL SIT DOWN ON THE GIRDER. THE BRIT OPENS HIS LUNCH BOX. 'OH, NO! SCOTCH SALMON AGAIN! FAREWELL, BOYS!' AND HE JUMPS OFF THE GIRDER TO HIS DEATH.

Jack nods. Grins. That's pretty funny.

QUOYLE

**THE QUEBEC GUY OPENS HIS LUNCH BOX.
'MON DIEU! MEAT PIE AGAIN! AU
REVOIR CRUEL WORLD!' AND HE JUMPS.**

This. Is even funnier.

QUOYLE

**NOW THE STATIE IS ALL ALONE ON
THE GIRDER. HE OPENS HIS BOX.
'HOLY MOLEY! BOLOGNA SANDWICH
AGAIN! I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THIS!'
AND LEAPS OFF.**

Funniest yet. Jack is chuckling already.

QUOYLE

**AT THE FUNERAL. THE BRIT' S WIFE
SAYS, 'WHY DIDN'T HE TELL ME HE HATED
SALMON?' FRENCHY'S WIFE SAYS, 'WHY
DIDN'T HE COMPLAIN ABOUT THE MEAT
PIE?' STATIE'S WIFE SAYS, 'I DON'T
GET IT. HE ALWAYS MADE HIS OWN LUNCH!'**

Quoyle is chortling. But Jack stares him dead in the eyes.

JACK

YOU'RE SURE. THE FELLER WAS A STATIE.

QUOYLE

OH, YAR. FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE.

At which point Jack BUSTS OUT laughing fit to wet his pants...

JACK

MADE HIS OWN LUNCH!

POUNDING on poor Quoyle, who is also dissolved in hysterics. Nearby, the biggest and ugliest GUY at the party (no small distinction) leaps onto a tree stump brandishing an AXE. Even in this crowd, it commands a certain degree of attention.

BIG UGLY GUY

**NOW WE ALL LOVES OLD FOOKIN' NUTBEEM,
YAR???**

Cries of YAR! fill the woods. Nutbeem himself is HOISTED on shoulders, whooping and sloshing his grog.

BIG UGLY GUY
SO LESS KEEP 'IM 'ERE BYES! AXE
'IS FOOKIN' BOAT! GOT YER CHAIN
SAW, NEDDIE??

An idea that wins IMMEDIATE MASS APPROVAL. Soused Nutbeem's eyes open bug-wide, as he is borne in a tidal wave of mayhem toward the docks. Whatever he is shrieking may well prove ineffective.

And rather suddenly. Quoyle is left alone.

Among the conscious, that is.

INT. WAVEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Knitted wool, the color of oxblood, lies across a timeworn leather ottoman. In front of it, little Herry dances a shuffle-foot jig of his own design. The music seeps from a venerable accordian, played earnestly by his serious mom, nodding and tapping her foot to the time of his steps.

There is a feeling of empowerment and release in Herry. His grin splits his round face. His eyes say that his heart is dancing.

PULL SLOWLY BACK...through the window, past the porch, across the front yard. To a figure. By the fence. He stands motionless. Except his foot is tapping, very slightly, to the time of the music.

We can't tell how much Quoyle sees. But his eyes say that his heart is drowning.

EXT. NUTBEEM'S TRAILER - MORNING

As Quoyle shuffles up, we see Nutbeem's trailer has been turned completely OVER onto its side. Walls are crushed and splintered. It's a train wreck.

Sitting on the cinder blocks that once supported it, Nutbeem, and Dennis swig beers.

NUTBEEM (cheery)
You're looking dishy, Q.

QUOYLE
Feeling that and more. What's the situation?

Nutbeem hands him a beer.

NUTBEEM
One. You're moving in with Dennis, no

matter how fond you are of his wife.

Quoyale looks sadly at the trailer. Realizing it was his place that got trashed.

NUTBEEM (laughs)
And the boat! Omigod!

BILLY
I'm some disgusted. With the human race.

NUTBEEM
I'da never made it, anyway. Storms would have blown me to bits. You boys saved my life. Yes, you did.

The boys look at each other. Humiliated by his generosity.

NUTBEEM

I've gathered my savings, and am flying to Brazil. Where water is swimming pool green. And I grill yellowtail steaks with lime and garlic, watercress and Tobasco. Touch of curry. What?

Quoyale is looking at him somewhat strangely.

QUOYLE (light)
I collect friends who cook. Just can't keep 'em.

Maybe too light not to be obvious. Billy looks from Quoyale to the trailer. And back.

BILLY
It's too bad.

Which seems to cover everything.

EXT. JACK BUGGIT'S SKIFF - DAY

Quoyale alone with Jack in open water. Pulling on a slicker, gloves, picking up a knife. Jack is pronging cod onto the deck.

JACK
Hands might as well be movin' while we chat. Always hated th' sight a grown men around a table workin' nuthin' but their jaws.

And so, together, they begin to clean a small mountain of cod.

QUOYLE

Editorial meetin', y'say. 'Bout what?

JACK

Well, Tert Card's gone, fer one thing.

Doesn't look up.

JACK

Yar, I know, he never said g'bye. Well, don't get all weepy-eyed about it, old son. Try t'be a man.

Quoyle will.

JACK

They called him from St. John's, he tells me. Wants him to help put out th' newsletter fer them oil rig suppliers.

Yup. Believe it.

JACK

He was sassy an' he was smug. Oh, there's a waitin' list, he assures me. They only skims th' cream.

QUOYLE

Well, don't get all weepy-eyed abou...

JACK

Truth t'tell. I was a wee help. B'hind the scenes, doncha know.

Keeps working.

JACK (quietly)

Sometimes. Enough is enough.

No arguments arise.

QUOYLE

Well, Billy'll do a helluva job...

JACK (nods)

...right where he is. Too old a fish t'swim faster'n be wants.

Gotta find someone a little dumber
t'take on a shit job like this!

Uh-oh. You don't mean...

JACK

Spot I'm in, Christmas and all.
Might have to offer th'mess. To you.

Quoyle swallows. Arguably the proudest moment of his life.

QUOYLE

Course. I'd need a raise.

Jack looks at him for the first time. A real twinkle behind...

JACK

Y'know. Yer do have the sense God
gave a doughnut.

QUOYLE (genuinely touched)

I'll try to live up to that.

Said with such sincerity, Jack can only nod. Good.

JACK

Any other outrageous demands?
Seein' as yer got me over a
barrel. Here's your one chance.

And before he can stop his mouth...

QUOYLE

Well, your son...

The mirth dies in his host's eyes. Like a 60-watt bulb in a
brownout. Quoyle swallows the rest.

JACK

You were sayin'...?

Quoyle sucks it up.

QUOYLE

His whole life would be changed.
If he could come upon. A fishing
license.

Jack's eyes. Flat and cold as the cod he's gutting.

JACK

Well, there's only one a those

issued per family. So how exactly
would he do that?

This is not. Going well. A dangerous silence.

JACK

Even doughnuts, y'know. Can
push their luck.

INT. WAVEY'S PARLOR - DUSK

The day care contingent more organized today. Sort of. Bunny
leading a spirited round of red-light/green-light, as...

...Quoyale enters with a big cardboard box full of presents. As he
shrugs off his coat, he looks at the Christmas tree, its winking
lights. The decorations that seem to be everywhere, many handmade
by these children. He watches Bunny call out 'Red Light!', only to
have Herry ignore it and tackle her anyway.

Mixed emotions, to be sure. A feeling of family he can at least
visit, yet will never be his own. The sad edge catches up with
him, so he strolls on into...

...the kitchen. Wavey baking, what else. She smiles to see him.
A friend's smile.

WAVEY (Southern belle)

Why, Mistuh Quoyale. You shouldn't
have!

He smiles back. Takes her in for a telling beat, before...

QUOYLE

Uh. I didn't. Most of these
are for Herry.

Even better.

QUOYLE

There's two. Are yours.

They are on top. Personally wrapped in his slightly bulging,
fine-motor-control-challenged, personal style. Be sets them on the
counter.

QUOYLE

You prob'ly want to wait for
Christmas.

Meaning, please don't. So she wipes her hands on her apron. Lets

him see her eyes dance just a flicker.

WAVEY

Oh, I'm much too excited.

Delicately unwraps the first. Lifts out a PORCELAIN TEAPOT, finely painted with an assortment of BERRIES. She holds it in her hands, at once admiring and wistful. Wondering if there's a message about their moment together while berry-picking.

QUOYLE

It's from a museum catalogue. But
it's not real. It's a copy.

WAVEY (still gazing at it)

It is my favorite teapot.

A simple pronouncement. She opens the second, flat and narrow. It is a TURQUOISE BRACELET. Actually, kind of stunning. She blinks, taken back by the beauty and perhaps the expense.

QUOYLE

It's nice for your eyes. I thought.

She doesn't say anything. Lets it dangle from her fingers, catch the light.

QUOYLE

It's for everyday. You don't have
to save it for special.

She looks to him. Her eyes are shining maybe more than she wants. Her voice perhaps softer than she even intends...

WAVEY

Oh, I'll save this, all right.

Covers. With only a slightly more than friendly smile.

WAVEY

And I'll think of you. When I

put lot on.

He can only nod. He'd like that. She holds up one finger, wait a second. And hurries off.

So he waits. Looking at her kitchen. Feeling his feelings. She is back, with two boxes. Sets them down. Nods, go ahead...

...one is heavy and square. He opens it to find a LEATHER-BOUND CASE. He looks at her, smiles in his childlike way. Opens the

case, which reveals...

...two leather-bound VOLUMES. One a dictionary. The other a thesaurus. He is obviously moved.

QUOYLE (a murmur)
You must have me mistaken. For
a writer.

And when he looks up.

WAVEY
I don't make mistakes. About
that kind of thing.

He stares at her long enough to make her nod toward the other package. Big and flat, but not heavy at all. He lifts the lid, and pulls out...

...a huge comfy SWEATER. In oxblood wool. He is completely stunned to realize...

WAVEY (so pleased)
Well, you can't be surprised. You've
seen me knitting it for months.

QUOYLE
It was so big, I thought it was a
tea cozy for your car. But if it's
for me, it has to be bigger, huh?

Put it on, put it on! So he slips it over his head. Big enough and then some. This worries her. She plucks at it...

WAVEY
Well. You'll grow into it.

QUOYLE
You kiddin'? After the holidays,
we'll have to stretch it.

He's just beaming. Hugs himself to show how warm it is. The silence is companionable. Then...

QUOYLE
Not used to a woman. Giving me
presents.

She raises a brow. Can scarcely believe that.

QUOYLE
One Christmas with Petal, I gave her

eleven things. And I wrapped them.
And watched her open them up.

She holds her friendly smile. But her eyes have changed.
Slightly.

QUOYLE

She didn't have anything for me.
Like every year. But this one
time, she said, 'Wait a minute.'

Wait a minute.

QUOYLE

She ran to the kitchen. I heard
the fridge open. She came back.
With her hands hidden behind her.
Then, she held out...

Even his voice. Betrays the longing.

QUOYLE

Two brown eggs. She gave them
to me from her own hands. They
were cold.

He smiles, self-conscious.

QUOYLE

Must sound really stupid. But
they meant a lot to me.

Silence. A soft...

WAVEY

Well. It's the thought that counts.

He nods. He's glad she understands.

QUOYLE

I broke 'em, careful. Made her an
omelette with 'em. And I saved the
shells. In a little box.

She can't help but show her surprise at that.

QUOYLE

Oh, yeh. They're on a shelf
behind my desk. At the paper.

He looks worried now. Shouldn't have brought this up. And seeing
this...

WAVEY

I know how it is. To hold onto something good. In the middle of all the bad.

He nods. But feels truly awkward now. So...

QUOYLE

Well. I gotta collect Bunny. Beety's gonna have supper waiting.

Right. She nods. She understands this, too.

WAVEY

Thank you. Thank you, very much.

Takes her teapot and her bracelet. Holds them. A gentle barrier. Her hands now too full for a hug.

QUOYLE

Well. Merry Christmas!

With a wonderful smile.

WAVEY

Merry Christmas.

With one of her own.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Quoyale enters a packed auditorium, festooned for Christ's birthday with every trimming imaginable. Rough fishermen in black jackets they wear once a year, women in finery, schoolkids at their well-scrubbed best, antsy with anticipation. The BUZZ is audible, palpable. No Broadway opening could hope for this level of eagerness.

As Quoyale comes down the aisle, we see faces we know. Boys from Nutbeem's party. Billy Pretty with Jack and Mrs. Buggit. Alvin Yark and his bird-like wife. The old-timer who sold Quoyale his boat. Mavis Bangs with an empty seat next to her, must be saved for Agnis. All the kids from daycare. Still, Quoyale searching for the face he doesn't find. And finally...

...to the third row, where Dennis and Beety have saved him a seat. Beety gives him a peck on the cheek, and he smiles, settling in, nervous as hell, just as...

...the school principal, still dressed for England, walks to the

mike at center stage. Holds up her hands like the disciplinarian she prides herself on being, and they quiet pretty fast.

PRINCIPAL

Your friends and neighbors, and
most of all, your children. Have

worked hard to bring you the best
pageant ever.

THUNDEROUS applause, whistling, stamping. She is frustrated for a moment. Then, waves cheerily against the din, shouting...

PRINCIPAL

LET THE FESTIVITIES BEGIN!

And RUNS off-stage, as we DISSOLVE THROUGH a SERIES OF ANGLES...

...the Big Ugly Guy who led the raid on poor Nutbeem's boat stands in a threadworn suit bulging with his bulk, singing DANNY BOY in the sweetest tenor one could dream of. PAN an audience, rapt, motionless. Pavarotti never had more respect.

...Bunny and Marty walk timidly to the front of the stage. Marty dressed in Christmas reds and greens. Bunny all in blue, which does look good on her. Kids CALL OUT their names. The place falls quiet. And the girls begin to sing a plaintive West African HYMN in small brave voices that sometimes harmonize. It is unexpected and breathtakingly courageous. Two dads in the third row have tears flooding their eyes...

DENNIS (gruff whisper)

Not bad, my kid, eh?

QUOYLE (gruffer whisper)

I'll say. She's as good as mine.

...Agnis Hamm walks out alone onto the stage, wearing a brown jersey, tweed skirt, yellow stockings and red slippers. She has an odd look on her face, all serious and curious. The laughter and calls die away to silence. Suddenly, one of her feet SCRATCHES at the stage, her arms become WINGS, and with a CROONING and CACKLING she metamorphoses into a PEEVISH HEN protecting an egg. The house comes DOWN with laughter and UNISON applause. Quoyale glances back at Mavis Bangs who puts her fingers between her teeth and WHISTLES in pure delight.

...Wavey Prowse walks onto the rear of the stage, in a long black smock, carrying her accordion. She turns to the wings, nods, and out comes little Herry clacking across the stage in tap shoes. A beat of silence. Mom calls out: ONE, TWO, THREE, rolls into a savage hornpipe and Herry commences the JIG Quoyale once glimpsed

through a window. Three hundred HEELS coming STOMPING down in perfect rhythm and lift Herry into a joyous bouncing, rattling performance that builds in intensity until the finish. He runs to the edge of the stage, bows DEEP from the waist, stands beaming in their applause. Then RACES offstage, his mom following with dignity, and we go with her into the wings...

Once there, Wavey slips OUT of the smock, revealing to the dimness of the wings, that she is wearing dancer's tights over drop-dead legs. A close-fitting tunic covered with sequins and glass bugles, crystal diamonds, and dozens more glittering baubles that send a shimmer of prisms with her every breath. Herry hands her a top

hat, a cane, and...

...she STALKS back onto the stage, her lithe body strutting and glinting. A hush of stupefaction falls, only to be washed away by SHOUTS and WHISTLES, the kind of which have not been heard since Gypsy Rose Lee startled her first roomful of rubes. In the bedlam...

...she TWIRLS the top hat on one finger, FLIPS it up in a double somersault, catching it square on her head. She leans on her cane

And when at last they quiet...

WAVEY

We all know Billy Pretty's ways.
Never save fifty cents, if you
can save a dollar.

She winks. They laugh. Billy laughing loudest.

WAVEY

Well, last Feb'ry, Billy wants
t'get his grandfather clock repaired.
Calls old Leander Mesher. Local
call. No charge.

Twirls the cane recklessly. In the third row, a goggle-eyed Quoye couldn't blink if he tried.

WAVEY

Well, says Leander, the big cost is
pickup and delivery. Got t'charge
fifty dollars, each way. Two strong
boys. Gasoline. Air in the tires!

That's right.

WAVEY

There's no cost for air in yer

tires!, says Bill. Get wi' th'times,
he's told. Tis called inflation!

WAGGLES her eyebrows, Groucho-style. They are busting their guts
laughing. Connoisseurs of wit.

WAVEY

Billy lives at the top of the hill,
Leander at the bot tom, doncha know.
So Billy gets a rope, HOISTS the
grandfather UP on his back. And
muttering the words fifty bucks...

She puts her toe out, SLIPS wildly, windmilling her arms,
pantomiming as she bends double under the phantom clock.

WAVEY

Mite slick. Four feet thick a ice.

Tears are streaming from a hundred eyes and more.

WAVEY

Meanwhile, at the bottom, Auntie
Fizzard, 91 years young, sets out
in her non-slip galoshes and her
cane with the rubber tip. Didn't
yer, dearie?

Bows to the old gal in the front row, who is scarlet-faced in
hysterics, as all around her applaud. Wavey becomes her, inching
along, casting fierce glances right and left to warn the world.

WAVEY

Meanwhile, at the top...

She is Billy once more, beneath his burden, her long legs stutter-
stepping to one side, then the other, slipping, skidding, the
howling all around her threatening to shatter walls, and...

WAVEY

...OVER he goes, clock-side down,
and PICKIN' UP SPEED!

Miming the wild ride as they ROAR...

WAVEY

...eight blocks, NINE, missing
everything like a miracle, zeroing in on...

She becomes Auntie Fizzard once more, shuffling, looking left,
right, and suddenly up WILD-EYED!

WAVEY

CLIPS 'er into the snow bank!

Nods sadly. Leaning on her cane. When at last they quiet.

WAVEY

Just two galoshes stickin' outta
the snow. She digs 'er way out.
Brushes herself off. Looks at
him sprawled like a turtle on his
back, tied to his massive burden.
She says...

She says.

WAVEY

YOU THERE! BILLY PRETTY!

Levels a dead-eyed killer gaze.

WAVEY

**WHY CAN'T YOU WEAR A WRISTWATCH
LIKE EVER'BODY ELSE?**

The place comes DOWN like a house of cards. Bedlam surrounds
Quoyle who sits still as a stone. Too dazzled to breathe.

EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - EARLY MORNING.

Lonely stretch of wooded road, middle of nowhere. Light snow just
starting to fall. A truck pulls up beneath a tree. Out climbs...

...Wavey. Looking grim, walking slow. Crosses the road to a
weathered diner. The woman who only smokes when she's worried,
pulls out a pack of Camels. Looks through the diner's frosted
window...

...a lone customer sits nursing his coffee. He is 40, lean, very
attractive. Dark hard eyes, set into worries of their own. Wavey
lights up. Watches in silence until...

...the man looks up. Their eyes meet through the glass. Hold.
And on his faint smile...

She turns her back. Starts up the road.

ANGLE...he is walking beside her now. Snow drifting lazy, her
smoke curling up. He watches her anger, how cold and quiet and
closed. Smiles at her profile...

HEROLD

I shoul'da come last night. Seen

the show.

She can't even believe he said that. Never looking at him...

WAVEY

Woulda been a thrill for the
Christians among' em. They
think you're dead.

Keep walking. His smile is gentle.

HEROLD

Well, then we got good news
for th...

WAVEY

So does your son.

A beat.

HEROLD

Even better news for him.

WAVEY (low)

You think so.

Breaking the words off. He's watching her profile.

HEROLD (very soft)

I can't undo the hurt I've done.
Unless you let me.

Gauging the feeling behind the bitterness.

HEROLD

There's a million reasons to send
me away. Good ones. And only two
reasons not to.

Is she even listening? He lets the silence hang.

HEROLD

I love you. And you love me.

She stops walking. Flips her cigarette off into the snow.
Turns
now...

Looks into his face. And sighs.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Rear ANGLE of Agnis, crouching in the lightly falling snow. At the edge of the sea. The spot where she once sent her dog to rest. HEAR footfalls crunching slowly across the rocks. A bulky figure comes into frame. Crouches down beside her. Close. She stares at the gray horizon.

QUOYLE (softly)
Mavis Bangs. Told me where
you'd be.

No answer. But she hears him all right.

QUOYLE
We get so little mention in the
wires. Thought you'd like to see.

He hands the folded print-out to her.

QUOYLE
Head in the suitcase. The mystery's
solved.

She looks briefly at his eyes. Takes it. Starts to read.

QUOYLE
Silver Melville was captured in
Moored with a cruise steward. The
boy was twenty, a looker, wearing
Armani clothes. Driving a nice Lexus.

Agnis keeps reading.

QUOYLE
Says she did it all for love.

She nods at that. Folds the paper neatly, as if conveying
respect.
Hands it back.

AGNIS
She'd call me, time to time.
Husband was a pig. More women should
do what she done. Her situation.

He looks in her eyes. And decides to say...

QUOYLE
Some women. Shoulda done it to
their brother.

The look holds. She sees the compassion in his eyes. Knows
he's

so on her side. She clears her throat.

AGNIS (softly)
Cousin Nolan. Hafta pay him
a visit.

They share a look. He glances at the sea. Beautiful spot.

QUOYLE
Mavis said you buried Warren here.
Called it an anniversary.

She stares deep and unblinking into his eyes. She will tell
him.

AGNIS
Of a loss. But not the dog.

A held moment.

AGNIS
What makes us do that, nephew?
Give ourselves away to someone.
So we can't eat or think or
breathe without 'em?

QUOYLE (just above a whisper)
I don't know. We just do.

Silence. And...

AGNIS
Wonderful, ain't it?

And now she smiles. Something we have rarely seen.

AGNIS
Irene Warren died. The mornin'
after a Christmas. We get one
true love in life, nephew. She
was mine.

He's not surprised. And that, in turn, does not really surprise
her.

AGNIS
Don't mean we can't give love
again. And get some back.

QUOYLE
For some, it does.

AGNIS (straight back)
Not for me.

Strong with that. Sure.

AGNIS

And if that ruffles some small
town feathers...

His smile in return. Very real.

QUOYLE

Y'know what the feathers around
here need th' most? A good ruffling,
I say.

He sounds pretty sure himself. Their look holds.

QUOYLE

Y'know what I need th' most?

She doesn't.

QUOYLE

A really big breakfast!

She nods, one last time. Sounds like a plan.

INT. GAMMY BIRD - LATE NIGHT

Quoyale alone with his cut-and-paste, making up the front page
layout. Moonlight on fallen snow through the window. Late enough,
quiet enough, to hear...

...the vehicle drive up, the engine turn off. The footfalls to the
door, which swings open. The last person he'd expect to see.
Especially with a bottle. Of Cuervo Gold.

They stare at each other. Only he smiles.

QUOYLE

Hey. Congratulations.

She shoots him a quizzical look. We see the edge right off,
even
if he doesn't.

QUOYLE

Last night. On the stage? You
were...

Shakes his head with innocent admiration.
his desk.

She puts the bottle on

WAVEY

It was easy. I just kept thinkin'.
How would Petal do it?

He hears it now, right enough. The anger, the Cuervo. She stalks on over to the coffee counter, only a bit wobbly. Plucks up two styrofoam cups.

WAVEY

We're friends, right? Friends
drink together.

Back to his desk. Shrugs her coat off onto the floor. Pullover and jeans, she looks terrific. Hikes her butt up onto the edge of his desk.

WAVEY

I asked a quest...

QUOYLE (quiet)

I'll drink with you. If you're
not done yet.

Her soft throaty laugh. He hasn't seen her this way.
decide
if it's more scary or exciting.

Can't

WAVEY

Not drunk enough yet to talk about
Petal. Which we always seem to do.

Opens the bottle. About four fingers are gone.

WAVEY

Let's talk about me. Which we don't.

Pours herself another two. Thinks before she says...

WAVEY

Growin' up, all I wanted from this
place was out. Imagine. Give up
all this.

Pours two fingers for him. Stretches her body to slide the cup across the desk. The Cuervo sloshes.

WAVEY

I ran off to Toronto, went to
school. Wanted to be a social

worker. For kids.

She's looking at her cup now. Not at him.

WAVEY

Came back one summer. Fell for
Herold Prowse. That. Was that.

Takes a swallow. Closes her eyes.

WAVEY

Did you know I was a liar?

Opens her eyes. Straight into his. Did you?

WAVEY

Herold liked other women. But you
know how that is.

Sure you do.

WAVEY (whispers)

He didn't die. Not that he didn't
deserve to.

Quoyle blinks. A perfect stunned ox gape.

WAVEY

See, I'm a good liar.

Drains her cup.

WAVEY

He ran off to Seattle with some
bitch. When his damaged son was
two months old. And nobody knew.

An ice-cold wink.

WAVEY

Like I said. It's four years ago.
And it's yesterday.

Pours herself another. Savors the memory.

WAVEY

So I took his boat out. I sunk it.
And told my little story. Grieving
widow.

Shrugs a drunken, careless shrug.

WAVEY

I was leaving, of course. Why
humiliate myself on the wayout?

Yes?

WAVEY (softer)

But a funny thing happened. On
my way out.

Her eyes are deeper now. And for a beat, the anger slips away.

WAVEY

All these funny, odd little folks?
They put their hearts around me.
So I wouldn't be alone. Having
lost the man I loved.

Silence. A real one.

WAVEY

And since I knew, to my shame, that
is exactly what I had lost. I let
go of the will to leave. I did.

I did.

WAVEY

Decided to let my child grow up.
Around folks better than his mom.

Stares in his eyes.

WAVEY

You're quite the talker.

QUOYLE (quiet)

I take pride in that.

So she smiles. But the bitterness is there in it.

WAVEY

Well, this morning. The man I
loved. Came back.

And the world. Ceases to spin. One man's world, at least.
She
watches that. Assesses it.

WAVEY

Told me he knew. I loved him still.

Sips at her second drink. Slides the rest of it down.

WAVEY

Okay. Now I'm drunk enough. To
talk about Petal.

Her eyes ask. Are you?

WAVEY

You're thinking we're kindred
souls, you and me. In love with
our nightmares.

Shakes her head. Uh-uh.

WAVEY

You don't love your Petal. You
hate. Her cheating. Guts.

Means those words as an opening blow. Jacks or better. Here
comes
the hole card...

WAVEY

You have to think it's love.
Because if it's not, you're dead
inside. So you keep that flame a
flickering. Cos it's all you'll
ever have.

Pure contempt. And honesty.

WAVEY

You see. You're a good liar, too.

Lifts the cap. Screws it back on the bottle.

WAVEY

Where's the damn eggshells? That's
all I came to see.

And from his prison of shock and shame. He points to a shelf.
She
is OFF his desk, like a panther...

...SNATCHES the tiny padded box with its treasure. RAISES it
high
to smash it, and...

...stops. To see the panic. In his eyes.

It brings tears. Pooling in hers.

And she sets the treasure down, with the tenderness that decency requires.

WAVEY

Can you guess how I know about
Petal?

He cannot.

WAVEY

Because you and I. Are kindred
souls. After all.

And that. Is what she came to say.

WAVEY

So I told my husband. To fuck
himself. And the ego he rode in on.

She crosses the floor. Scoops up her coat. Walks, just a
little
wobbly, to the door. Sighs.

WAVEY

Thanks for the mirror.

Nods. Means that.

WAVEY

If I don't see you. Happy New Year.

And leaves. The door closes quietly. Quoyle looks from it. To
the eggshells.

And back.

INT. DENNIS' HOUSE - LATER

ANGLE...Dennis and his wife BEETY bundled together asleep, as a
ferocious storm HOWLS around the house.

ANGLE...Quoyle awake on the sofa in Dennis' parlor. Clutching his
blankets around him. Eyes jumping with every SHRIEK of the
marauding wind. Mind racing with thoughts of Wavey. And
eggshells.

ANGLE...Bunny asleep with Dennis' daughter MARTY. The room seems
to vibrate under the violence of the weather's assault. CLOSE on
Bunny now, and...

...her eyes OPEN. A strange intent in them. A knowledge. She slips from Marty's bed in her thin blue nightdress. Through the house in the dark, as the wind SCREAMS its warning. Into the parlor where her father sleeps, as the wind suddenly INVADES, and...

...SUCKS her straight UP the chimney and out INTO the heart of the storm. SAILING like a loosened kite out across the black water. Out and out, as gray light rises, to...

...Quoyle Point, where she is blown FLAT against a granite boulder just in front of the Green House, which SHIVERS and pleads against the wind, its steel cables STRAINING, and suddenly from within the house, lights come ON...

...the WHITE DOG is in a window. No longer snarling and menacing, but whining pitifully, begging to be saved. And on the second floor...

...PETAL alone, wild-eyed with terror. She is dressed all in blue, and her daisy-chain necklace flies about her throat as she POUNDS against the glass, her eyes staring directly AT her daughter, who can only scream soundlessly against the gale as the house...

...begins to come LOOSE, the first cable SNAPPING and WHIPPING about with the fierce destructiveness of unleashed power, then the NEXT, and ANOTHER, and with Petal still visible, HOWLING in horror, windows BURSTING everywhere else like flash bulbs, the house...

...slides FREE, along the rocks, toward the cliff, Bunny screeching as it goes OVER the edge, TUMBLES down toward the sea, and Bunny...

...sits BOLT UPRIGHT in bed, a single GASP as her dad is THERE, holding her tight. She is soaked with sweat. But her eyes are not wild. They are filled with the knowing.

BUNNY (a whisper)
Daddy. The Green House is gone.

He smooths her hair. The wind bellows in rage. Little Marty somehow sleeps on, undisturbed, beside her.

BUNNY (a whisper)
I didn't dream it. Don't say I did.

EXT. QUOYLE POINT - DAY

They climb from the station wagon into cold, clear sunlight. Stare in wonder at the naked rock. The snapped, spent, cables. Only shards of wood and glass leaving a hapless trail toward the cliff.

Bunny RUNS toward the debris, and through it. To a tangle of bushes near the cliff.

He walks to a broken cable. Crouches. His eyes running over the space. Where his ancestor's home once stood. And then. He turns...

QUOYLE (calls out)
What you got there?

We see now. Bunny has unearthed a huge wooden crate from its hiding place. Too engrossed in counting its contents to respond.

As he comes over...

BUNNY (not looking up)
Petal's things.

She is counting her treasure trove of NECKLACES. More than any sound mind could imagine. Yet, in their infinite variety, somehow wonderful. A testimonial to the power of love.

BUNNY
I think they're all here.

She looks up. Sees him staring so fixedly at them.

BUNNY (alerted)
What's wrong?

QUOYLE
They're beautiful. I never saw 'em. All together.

Oh. The kid doesn't smile. She decides whether to ask him...

BUNNY
Will she be proud to wear 'em?

He looks in her eyes. His heart breaks behind his smile.

QUOYLE
Well. Any woman would.

EXT. JACK BUGGIT'S SKIFF - MORNING

Steel gray morning. The sea is more than a little rough, as Jack lays out his lobster traps. Two other boats, not too close by, appear and disappear in mist. He is checking the lines, knotting hefty weights onto the traps to take them down.

JACK (sings to himself)

Oh, th' Gandy Goose she ain't no uuuuse
Cos all her nuts'n bolts is...

Stops. Halfway to lowering the next trap over the side.

JACK (mutter)
Sweet Jesus. I'm turnin' inta
Alvin Cockadoodle Yark!

As it nears the water line, Jack's cat SKIPPER TOM suddenly LEAPS down ONTO the trap. Jack blinks.

JACK
What is this? Suicide attempt?

Tries to let go of the trap and grab the cat in one motion, but the cat JUMPS BACK to the boat, Jack STUMBLING out of his way, STEPS in the coiled line which WHIRRS as the trap goes...

...DOWN, the line STRANGLING Jack's leg and WHIPPING him flailing OVER the side in one startling heartbeat. Almost comic to watch.

But then. It is very quiet. Air bubbles appear at the surface. In a few seconds...

The water is unbroken. The boat bobs silently in the swells.

INT. ALVIN YARK'S BOAT HOUSE - DAY

Quoyle and Alvin inspect Quoyle's newly-finished boat. It is a beauty, to be sure, and the old builder watches Quoyle lovingly running his hand across the smooth gunnel. Alvin doesn't smile. That's not his style.

ALVIN
Gotta paint the name. What'll it be?
'The Tall And Quiet Woman'?

Quoyle glances over. The old boy's eyes are dancing.

QUOYLE
You knew Billy's dad?

ALVIN
Ever'body knows ever'body. But
Billy's pap didn't invent the
Four Women in a Man's Life.

Quoyle nods. Guess not.

ALVIN
Well. Which one is Bunny, I wonder?

The Maid in the Meadow, mebbe.

But Yoda is just staring at him. And quietly...

ALVIN

Doncha know? They're all the same woman. That's the point.

His pupil blinks. Like a crystal bullet of clarity his brain.

ALVIN

The Maid in the Meadow, that's her innocence and play. The Stouthearted Woman, is when you need to lean on her.

For some reason he could never name. Tears are pooling in eyes.

ALVIN

The Tall and Quiet Woman? That's the silent partner who always walks 'longside, so's yer never alone.

Quoyle is nodding, now. It all seems so right.

ALVIN

And the Demon Lover. That's just the frostin' on th' cake.

A soft knocking at the door.

ALVIN

When y'find the woman who's all four? That's when y'got yer one true love.

The bird-like woman enters. The old man nods toward her.

ALVIN

...like m'Gertie.

But she isn't alone. A man enters behind her. It is Dennis Buggit. And there are tears on his face. He brings a dreadful silence with him, because the face is an open grave.

DENNIS

My dad went over the side this mornin'. Tangled in th' sling-stone line.

A sob escapes from this strong man's throat. He ignores it. No one knows what to say.

DENNIS

If you could write a memorial t'
him. Fer t'morrow's Gammy Bird?
I'd be real grateful.

EXT. JACK BUGGIT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The road is jammed with parked cars and trucks and vans and wagons
Folks still streaming toward the brightly-lit house. Ever'body
knows ever'body.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Every room is filled with folks who wear their best. There is
eating and chatter and even some pockets of laughter, as we move
through the crowd. As if some have taken hold of a wake's well-
meaning purpose. Others stand dazed, still wearing their pain and
confusion. There are children here, some hold a parent's hand,
some giggle with each other. Snapshot of a community. Struggling
to cope.

Quoyle and Bunny enter, holding hands, looking around. As they
cross the room...

...two figures step into their path. Two women holding hands,
their bodies close together. Their feeling for each other open for
all to see. One is Agnis. And the other. Isn't Mavis Bangs.

DAWN

Happy New Year, Mr. Quoyle. I'm
sorry I missed you at the pageant.

Slightly startled, Quoyle can't help but smile, despite the solemn
occasion. At the proud look on his aunt's face.

DAWN

I was in the wings, a course.
Wasn't our girl somethin'?

Our girl, a course, is Agnis. Who nearly blushes at the
compliment.

DAWN

I say, y'have t'love a woman. Who's
in touch with her inner chicken.

Well, who could argue with that. Dawn leans up, kisses Quoyle on
the cheek. And with surprising softness...

AGNIS

Nephew. You okay?

BUNNY

He's okay. He's not sleeping in
the box.

Her great aunt looks at this child. Bends to plant an unexpected
kiss on the top of Bunny's head. The kid squirms, tugs her dad
firmly off, as he sends a parting wave.

Into the parlor now. Quieter here, as the new arrivals thread past
Jack Buggit in his open coffin, resting on black-draped sawhorses.
Dennis and his mom stand by Jack, a hand and a word for each. And
moving into the line...

QUOYLE

Remember what I told you.

His words a murmur. Hers are bolder...

BUNNY

If he's not sleeping. Why do they
call it a awake?

He thinks. As if it is a worthwhile question.

QUOYLE

We're the ones have to be awake.
To how much we love him...

Nods to himself. Yes.

QUOYLE

And how we should be good to each
other. While we have the chance.

He looks down. They are almost there.

QUOYLE

You think?

She is thinking. Keeping the thoughts to herself. At the coffin
now, he lifts her up to see. Jack lies motionless, a wax figure of
himself. Serene behind violet eyelids.

BUNNY

He looks like he's sleeping.

Dennis looks over. His stolid, grim face releases a smile for his
friend.

QUOYLE

That's cos he's peaceful. No

worries, anymore. No troubles.

He sets her down. Clasps Mrs. Buggit's hand. And from his
pocket...

QUOYLE

I found this in Jack's drawer at
the paper. I don't know if it's
somethin' special...

An enameled wreath with the initial R, backed by a long, sharp pin
She tears up again, just to see it.

MRS. BUGGIT

Oh, it's his lodge pin. We were
lookin' all over.

She smiles bravely as she takes it. Leans up to kiss his cheek.

MRS. BUGGIT (a whisper)

Dennis showed me what y'wrote fer
th' paper. Did Jack proud.

So they look at each other. Dennis clears his throat, looks away.
And then, Quoyle is leading Bunny off.

QUOYLE

You hungry? There's sandwi...

BUNNY

Petal's peaceful, too.

Just a statement of fact. To no one in particular. Dad squeezes
her hand. Manages...

QUOYLE

You bet. You can count on tha...

But she lets go. Scampers to a corner of the room. To Herry
Prowse. And his mom.

So Quoyle starts toward her, his heart in his throat. And when
Wavey looks up. She is glad to see him. As he reaches her...

She holds up her wrist. Dangling from it, her turquoise bracelet
She wore her best for Jack. Quoyle stands very close. One last
thing from his pocket...

QUOYLE

New Year's present.

A small box. Wrapped as careful as he could. She looks to his eyes, really?

QUOYLE

Oh, yeh. It's a Quoyle tradition.

Well, in that case. She takes it into her slender fingers. Undoes the ribbon, the paper. Lifts the lid to see, resting in tissue...

...eggshells. Crushed almost to powder. Her heart comes straight to her eyes, even before the whispered...

QUOYLE

Thanks. For the mirror.

And across the room, Mrs. Buggit leans with trembling hands to fix the Lodge pin to Jack's lapel. Shaking as she is, the hand lurches, the big pin goes PLUNGING, and...

...a rattling COUGH. Rolls across this room. The world falls silent. Jack's wife grabs her son's arm, and their eyes bug out, staring into the box.

DENNIS

DAD'S COME BACK!

And LUNGES to help his gurgling father free his shoulders from the coffin's wedge. A sudden ROAR, there are SCREAMS, there is even LAUGHTER and WHISTLING, complete chaos. And in the bedlam, a tug on Quoyle's coat...

BUNNY

See. He woke up.

EXT. OMALLOOR BAY - DAY

Sunlit day of crystal perfection. The majesty of ice and towering rock and shimmering water. A scale so majestic, any cynic would be hard put to deny God's hand. And gliding into FRAME...

...a tiny skiff. On its maiden run. We CLOSE to see...

...painted on its side. THE FOUR WOMEN. One woman is rowing just now, doing all the work. Her son sleeps in the bow. And in the middle of the little boat...

...father and daughter. Are unpacking the picnic lunch. There is a lot of food. This could take awhile.

BUNNY

That's a funny thing to say. For

the first thing he said.

QUOYLE

What? 'I'm keepin' m'damn lobster license'?

Yeh. That.

QUOYLE

Maybe he just said it. To make your Uncle Dennis laugh so hard. You think?

She keeps unpacking. Her face quiet and serious. Her thoughts her own.

QUOYLE (very softly)
It's not fair, is it. That Jack woke up. And Petal didn't.

And since he's said her thought aloud. She tells him...

BUNNY

Well. The world's not fair. You said.

She's not looking up. But he knows she's listening.

QUOYLE

That's something the world is always teaching us. And sometimes, the learning comes later.

That gets through. Both adults can see it.

QUOYLE (a murmur)
You taught me that.

Eyes resolutely down, she nods. Remembers.

QUOYLE

You know. What we wait for? It's like the main stem of this boat. It gives us our shape.

Her brow furrows. Doesn't understand that.

QUOYLE

See, I know why you saved a place for Petal. All this time.

On this. She looks up. Her dad is smiling from his eyes.

QUOYLE

Cos I'm the daddy. And you learn
how to do. By watching me.

And...

QUOYLE

You just watched. Better than
I knew.

Still holding Bunny's eyes. He beckons to the woman rowing.
C'mere, a second. So Wavey sets down her oars. Slides over.
And Quoye whispers to his daughter...

QUOYLE

Watch this.

He leans his face. To Wavey's mouth. A kiss so tender, even a
child can't turn away. The moment lingers. And when it ends...

WAVEY

I'm thanking your daddy. For all
my presents.

BUNNY

There was only two.

Wavey looks at this girl.

WAVEY

More than two. Everything I need.
Except...

Except. She gathers all the courage it takes to say...

WAVEY

Except a necklace.

And waits. We can feel her heart pounding in her throat. Bunny
stares back with eyes no one could read. And then...

BUNNY

I got a box of 'em. You could
pick one.

A hush over this bay. A woman stunned and grateful.

BUNNY

Then you'd have everything you need.

Well, that seems true. So, the woman nods. Her eyes flutter
down.
In the silence, she unwraps a sandwich...

WAVEY (a murmur)
You want the cheese?

BUNNY

No.

Okay, then. She hands that one to Quoyle. And as she and Bunny
look for another, we PULL...

...UP and AWAY, an AERIAL ANGLE swirling above the shimmering bay.
The boat so far below us. The people tiny specks. They could be
anyone.

Anyone at all.

FADE TO BLACK. ROLL END CREDITS.