



## THE SHIFT

BY

MARCH SCHRADER

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes...*

*“It’s the end of the world” said everybody, everywhere, all at once. In the aftermath of an unnamed catastrophic Armageddon, a younger homosexual man in search of his lost dog stumbles upon an older farmer named Cora. What starts as a hilarious turf battle and butting of heads slowly becomes a heartwarming tale of two drastically different people finding connection within the end of days. At FOTD, we are strictly Hands-Off-The-Script in our mentality of editing: grammar, spelling, formatting mistakes and all. We welcome working drafts and early edits of works in progress. Beyond syntax and grammar, what we hope to find is a compelling story that evokes emotions, questions, and opinions. The Shift by March Scradar is a fabulous example that checks the boxes we could want out of an interesting and compelling story. With characters well-defined by layered personalities and dialogue that balances naturalistic realism with apocalyptic fantasy, The Shift by March Schader offers a page turner of a read. (Spacing is playwright’s own.)*

**The Shift**

**March Schrader**

# The Shift

## Characters

**Cora – Female – White - 55-60** The only child of parents who made it clear that her job was to take care of them as they age. Up until now, she lived a secluded rural life. She has made several small failed attempts to strike out on her own, but could never really leave her parents.

Her husbandry skills are what she thinks defines her as well as her ability to take care of herself. To not need or lean on anyone for her survival.

**Matt - Real name Mateo, but he changed it to Matt– Male 25-30 – Hispanic -** The only child of a single mother who grew up in the south end of Hartford CT. His job was to be successful, but not too much. He too feels that what defines him is his ability to support himself. To have gone to school and studied to be an EMT. Not his gayness or his heritage, both of which he understands but there is nothing special about either of them to him, only part of life. He speaks very little Spanish, and often has the pronunciations wrong. He has visible stitches across their face, as well as a slight limp

These two characters can be any combination of genders. It is important that Cora is roughly twice as old as Matt. Because of their disheveled appearance, there might be some ambiguity about their gender at the beginning of the play. There should never be any sexual tension between the two of them. Over the course of the play, they become more like siblings.

They are wearing clothes that show major signs of wear and tear.

Performers should interpret each other where it feels natural.

The only time the light should go totally black is at the end of the play.

There should be no music for the preset or in-between scenes.

**Setting –An abandoned dog daycare.** A large fenced-in open space for dogs to run around in, at one time there were several small buildings for dog grooming and boarding. Everything is fairly run down and collapsed. The remains of a porch, there might be some kind of lean-to set up on it. Tarps hanging or draped as a makeshift shelter. There's a pile of chains on the porch or off to the side. A small tarnished trophy of a person on the porch. Several bushes or shrubs are scattered about the playing area. Fencing across the back of the stage. A small fire pit used for cooking. There is a deteriorating sign, maybe on a post, or somehow attached to the porch that reads:

Avery's

Where Dogs are Gods. Half of the word Avery's is broken off.

**There is also a faded and deteriorating sign somewhere that reads, “Fresh Eggs”.**

**The sounds of dogs, chickens, and goats, continue sporadically throughout the play.**

**DAY ONE - DUSK**

**(Cora is asleep in front of a smoldering fire pit, with a rifle resting across her lap. Matt enters and takes off an oversized camping frame backpack. Cora wakes up startled, wincing in pain as she picks up the rifle, pointing it at Matt.)**

**CORA**

**You’ve got about five seconds to tell me what you think you’re doing here**

**MATT**

**What**

**CORA**

**Five**

**MATT**

**I’m here, I**

**CORA**

**You wouldn’t be the first person I’ve shot**

**Four**

**MATT**

**Wait, I’m only here to**

**CORA**

**Three**

**MATT**

**(Matt is slightly stunned and confused.)**

**Isn’t this**

**CORA**

**Two**

**MATT**

**I’m looking for**

**CORA**

**One** (Cora is waiting for Matt to say something.)

**MATT**  
My dog, I'm here for my dog

**CORA**  
There are no dogs here

(The sounds of dogs barking.)

**MATT**  
Is this Avery's, Avery daycare, boarding, grooming

**CORA**  
That's what the sign says, what's left of it

**MATT**  
This is where I left him and this is where I expect him to be

**CORA**  
After two years

**MATT**  
It's been three

**CORA**  
No, I've been keeping track, it's been two since everything fell apart

**MATT**  
As near as I can tell the whole planet moved

**CORA**  
The planet is always moving, day, night, day again

**MATT**  
What I've heard from being out, there, is the earth's axis shifted, all the tectonic plate moved simultaneously, earthquakes, probably volcanoes and tidal waves,

**CORA**  
Seems like you'll believe almost anything

**MATT**  
When the earth shakes hard enough, everything falls, in the cities, there's nothing but rubble, fire, dead bodies, dirty water, and cholera, too many people too close, as near as I can tell there aren't that many people left, there's no sanitation, no electricity, just, shit, I

stuck as much as I could to the countryside, it's safer but it adds time, even then you ran into trouble

**CORA**

You're in trouble right now, I told you there's no dog like that here, you don't listen very well do you, move along

**MATT**

You're the one not listening, on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (Whatever the actual date of the production is.) I left my dog here for what was supposed to be a week and now I want him back,  
his name is Pono [Pronounced with two long o sounds.]

(Takes a cell phone out of his pocket.)

This is what he looks like

**CORA**

You got a phone, are you signaling people where we are

**MATT**

There's no cell service, there's no anything

**CORA**

Then how do you have a picture of a dog

**MATT**

We were camping

**CORA**

(Picking up the rifle.)

We, you got somebody with you, I'll shoot you both

**MATT**

I'm here alone. . . I'm. . . alone

I've got a solar charger, I charge the phone up when I want to look at my pictures or to use the compass which is pretty much useless, the phone loses its charge pretty quick now

.....

have you seen my dog

(Hold the phone out again. Cora doesn't look.)

How did you get here

CORA

Instinct

MATT

I doubt that

CORA

This is where I had to get back to, so I did, I live, used to live here

MATT

(Matt takes a filtering water bottle out of the pack.)

Do you have any water

CORA

Then why haven't I seen you in the past two years

MATT

I've been trying to get back

CORA

Where did you come from

MATT

Letchworth

CORA

Where

MATT

It's a state park south of Rochester, there used to be all these waterfalls, but after the earthquakes, everything somehow got rerouted, I heard that there's no more Niagara Falls, just a big lake

.....

I walked

CORA  
I doubt that

MATT

**I got here because I had to, I thought if I make it back, he would be here**

**CORA**

**And is he**

**MATT**

**I don't see him right now, but**

**.....**

**It's taken me almost three years to get here, and I'm not leaving without my dog**

**CORA**

**Two years**

**MATT**

**I walked through the hottest parts of the day today because I know I was close**

**CORA**

**For a dog**

**MATT**

**My dog**

**.....**

**Put that gun down, you're not going to shoot me**

**CORA**

**You don't know that**

**MATT**

**Then shoot me**

**CORA**

**You're pretty cavalier for someone without a weapon**

**MATT**

**Cavalier, wow, what makes you think I don't have a weapon**

**.....**

**He's a mixed breed about this big, tri-colored, black, brown, white**

**CORA**

**Nope**

He's here, I know it MATT

You're not in your right mind CORA

Where do you get . . . . . I need some water MATT

I thought you needed your dog CORA

I need both MATT

. . . . .

What happened to your face CORA

I got in a fight MATT

With a person CORA

Yeah, a person MATT

I suppose you're going to tell me I should have seen the other guy CORA

He . . . . . had a knife, that's what happened to my face MATT

Who put in those stitches CORA

I did MATT

You a doctor CORA

MATT

**I'm an EMT, or I used to be**

**CORA**

**EMTs aren't allowed to stitch anybody up**

**MATT**

**It's my face, EMTs do a lot of things we're not supposed to, if you save someone's life you're a hero, and if they die, you never did it, report me**

**CORA**

**You stitched that up yourself**

**MATT**

**I want my dog, he's got to be here**

**CORA**

**When I found this place there were dogs here, but most of them were dead, and if you're hungry enough**

**MATT**

**You ate my dog, I will fucking kill**

**CORA**

**I didn't eat your dog, I didn't eat anybody's dog, who do you think I am**

**MATT**

**How should I know**

**CORA**

**It's hard to say how long they were on their own, they were all fenced in, I figured they were better off roaming free, but some of these dogs, they didn't leave, and sometimes new strays show up, but mostly now they're on their own, I used to feed them whatever I could but it wasn't enough and hungry dogs are vicious dog, I had to stop**

**MATT**

**My dog, maybe the only living thing I have left**

**CORA**

**That doesn't mean you got a real reason to be here**

**MATT**

**Listen you piece of . . . . I've been shot at, assaulted, broken bones, made more than one deal with God or the devil because of my dog, and now I'm here, I expected . . . and you let him go**

**CORA**

**I did the right thing, they're fendng for themselves**

**MATT**

**I don't think Pono could fend for himself, I always take care of him**

**CORA**

**You'd be surprised what you can do when you have to, don't you think that's kind of an idiotic name for a dog, Pono**

**MATT**

**Jonnie Tsunami**

**CORA**

**Is this part of this shift thing**

**MATT**

**It was a show on the Disney channel that I used to watch about this kid, Jonnie Tsunami, he was a surfer and a snowboarder, and his grandfather always called him Pono, I think it mean dear one**

**CORA**

**Dogs should have dog names like, Rosco, Blacky, Buck**

**MATT**

**You could practically get arrested for naming a dog any of those**

**CORA**

**I doubt it**

**MATT**

**You could have, I didn't name the dog, my partner did, back in the day he probably has a crush on the actor who played the kid**

**CORA**

**You let your partner name your dog**

**MATT**

**Our dog**

**.....**

**Where do you get your water**

**CORA**

**There isn't any water**

**MATT**

**Look you fucktard, you didn't set up camp someplace where you don't have water, I'll find it on my own**

**CORA**

**There's a spring over there**

**MATT**

**Is it clean**

**CORA**

**I drink it and the dogs drink out of it**

**MATT**

**That doesn't mean it's clean, where's the latrine**

**CORA**

**Why would I have a latrine**

**MATT**

**Where do you go**

**CORA**

**Out in the woods**

**MATT**

**That's not okay, it's unsanitary**

**(Cora approaches Matt with the rifle, pointing it at Matt's face, then turns Matt's face with the rifle to see the stitches.)**

**CORA**

**You did an acceptable job with those sutures**

**MATT**

**I used a mirror**

**(Cora rubs her shoulder again.)**

**What's wrong with your shoulder**

**CORA**

**None of your business**

**(Matt stares down Cora.)**

**Hurts**

**MATT**

**Oh really**

**....**

**I could look at that for you**

**CORA**

**Don't think so**

**MATT**

**Do you need something for it**

**CORA**

**What would I need**

**MATT**

**I don't know, maybe aspirin**

**CORA**

**You've got aspirin**

**MATT**

**I've got two left, you want them**

**CORA**

**I don't need anything from you**

**MATT**

**Here is where I needed to be, and I made it, and here is where I'm going to stay, it's getting dark and I'm tired, I came all this way to be with someone, and I'm not going until**

**.....**

**I find my dog**

**CORA**

**Oh no, you're not staying here**

**MATT**

**(Matt takes a key out of his pocket, unlocking a padlock that's keeping everything on the camping frame, he takes the tent off of the frame and starts to set it up.)**

**I'm going to be here tonight and then tomorrow I'm going out there again and I will find him**

**CORA**

**No, stop,**

**(Matt continues to set up the tent.)**

**You're a trespasser**

**(Raises the gun and points it at Matt. When Cora lifts the gun, she winces with the pain.)**

**MATT**

**You don't own this place, technically it would still belong to the Avery's**

**CORA**

**They don't seem to be around, I'm squatting and I was here first so it's mine**

**MATT**

**My tents going up and I'm squatting right there**

**(Cora lowers the gun. Wincing again.)**

**And you should stop pretending that you're going to stop me**

**(Matt goes into his pack and pulls out a container with two aspirin and hands them to Cora who examines them to make sure they are really aspirin.)**

**MATT**

**Where's that spring**

**CORA**

**I'll get my own water**

**MATT**

**I'm not asking for you**

**CORA**

**(Starts to leave towards the stream.)**

**Just because I'm taking these doesn't mean you've got the right to try anything**

**MATT**

**What do you think I'm going to try, you've got the gun**

**(Cora exits to get water, Matt watches Cora go, then continues setting up the tent. Lights fade.)**

## **DAY TWO - THE NEXT MORNING**

**(The sound of a rooster. This causes the dogs to bark, and the goats to start bleating. Cora comes out onto the porch looking around. She is carrying the gun. She carries the gun most of the time. She goes over to Matt's tent, clears her throat then shakes the tent. Cora opens the flap to discover that Matt isn't in the tent. Cora starts looking for Matt. From off stage we hear Matt loudly reciting the Gettysburg Address in Spanish.)**

**MATT**

**Es enteramente justo y propio que obremos de este modo.**

**(Matt enters, carrying a piece of wood with the number 99 on it. As soon as he sees Cora he flips to English. He doesn't realize he has the wrong words in places of the speech.)**

**But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate—we cannot holy—this ground**

**CORA**

**What are you talking about**

**MATT**

**The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here**

**It's the Gettysburg Address**

**CORA**

**I know what it is**

**MATT**

**I had to memorize it in Junior High, I say it a few times a day to remind myself to speak, I realized that I could go a long time without saying anything out loud**

**CORA**

**It's hallow, not holy**

**MATT**

**I thought it was saying that they shouldn't dig up the land**

**CORA**

**It's sort of saying that**

**MATT**

**Then what's the problem**

**CORA**

**Why aren't you in your tent**

**MATT**

**When I wake up, I'm up, the earlier I can get things done, the less I'm in the heat of the day**

**CORA**

**I don't like it when I don't know where everything is**

**MATT**

**I started looking for, Pono**

**CORA**

**He's not here**

**MATT**

**I can see that, I went back to my house, I thought maybe he went back to a familiar place**

**CORA**

**Did you find him**

**MATT**

**I could barely find my house**

**CORA**

**You don't know your own house**

**MATT**

**There wasn't much left, old houses weren't meant to withstand that much ground upheaval, the land is ripped up, the landscape has changed, the river is totally rerouted**

**CORA**

**Rivers don't do that**

**MATT**

**Rivers go where they want, a river can always get through or around something**

**CORA**

**It all seems ridiculous to me**

**MATT**

**Uncertain and ridicules, that's what our lives are now**

**CORA**

**Not mine**

**MATT**

**You're telling me that your life is easier and saner now than it was three years ago**

**CORA**

**Most days**

**MATT**

**My house was destroyed, all that seems to be left of it is rubble and this piece of wood with our house number on it, I suppose if I had done some digging I might have found other things but . . . . . ninety-nine, ninety-nine Wild Brier Road**

**. . . . .**

**I was the first person in my family to buy a house, my mother was so proud, but she wouldn't move out here with me, she said it was too quiet, she liked the south end of the city where she could walk to the market, take the bus if she needed to go somewhere, she couldn't understand why I didn't buy a house in our neighborhood, I couldn't live in Hartford anymore, I started getting ambulance calls for people I knew, people I went to high school with, people with bullet holes or overdoses, or just dead when we got there, out here it was mostly heart attacks, somebody cuts off a finger with a chain saw, the occasional baby**

**(He starts to walk off stage.)**

**CORA**

**Where are you going, I want to always be able to see you**

**MATT**

**Can you see me now**

**(Cora ignores Matt. Matt exits off stage in the direction of the gardens.)**

**(From off.)**

**How about now, I can see you, can you see me**

**CORA**

**Hey, hey, get away from that**

**MATT**

**What**

**CORA**

**Leave them alone**



**MATT**

**We used to go to the farmer's market**

**CORA**

**Somebody had to grow those vegetables**

**MATT**

**I know that, my mom used to have a garden, and I had a herb garden for cooking, we were going to join a CSA when we got back but**

**CORA**

**Farming is my skill, my contribution, what's yours**

**MATT**

**I'm not sure I have any of those kinds of skills besides herbs**

**(Matt puts a mint leaf on his finger and**

**pushes it around his mouth, brushing his teeth.)**

**CORA**

**What are you doing**

**MATT**

**I'm brushing my teeth, it's mint,**

**CORA**

**Mint**

**MATT**

**Yeah, mint, I thought you were growing it on purpose**

**CORA**

**No, why would I do that**

**MATT**

**Clean teeth, fresh breath, keeps ants away**

**CORA**

**I use my finger or a piece of pine cone on my teeth when I remember**

**MATT**

**I can tell, you could make mint tea out of it**

**CORA**

**Don't like tea**

**MATT**

**I get that, tea is like pee in a cup as far as I'm concerned**

**CORA**

**That's gross**

**MATT**

**It is, you've got sage, oregano, and thyme, growing back there too**

**CORA**

**You can identify herbs and you know how to clean teeth**

**MATT**

**Mine, not yours**

**CORA**

**You don't have any real skills**

**MATT**

**(Matt goes over and picks up the small trophy on the porch. Reading the trophy.)**

**Granby high school prize speaking, second place, is this yours**

**CORA**

**Who's else would it be**

**MATT**

**It doesn't have a name on it**

**CORA**

**Are you saying that I didn't win that trophy fair and square**

**MATT**

**No no, I only, don't they usually put people's names on those kinds of things**

**CORA**

**My name isn't important, what is important is that I worked hard to memorize that piece and I force myself to get up in front of everyone that was there and recited it**

**MATT**

**And you took second place that great, you clearly are proud of that, my name is . . .**

**CORA**

**I don't want to know your name, it's of no importance to me**

**MATT**

**I only thought since we're going to be here together for a while**

**CORA**

**We're not, you're going to be moving on**

**MATT**

**Maybe**

**I know how to dig a latrine, which I'm going to do right now,  
(Going to their get their camping shovel.)**

**you know you don't have to carry that gun around, it's not as if I'm going to be taking any  
of your stuff  
(During this next conversation Matt is digging a latrine in back of a short bush.)**

**CORA**

**It's ridiculous that you're digging that, just go in the woods**

**MATT**

**In the past three years, I've eaten some fairly questionable things, and when you make a  
bad food choice, your body wants to get rid of it as quick as it can, I need a latrine**

**It's too random**

**CORA**

**That's what the animals do**

**MATT**

**We're not animals**

**CORA**

**People are animals**

**MATT**

**I like to think we're more**

**CORA**

**We're not**

**MATT**

**Once I'm finished digging this, if you wanted to use it that would be great, I would encourage that, but I'm not going to be monitoring your Johnny Doos**

**CORA**

**My Johnny Doos**

**MATT**

**Do you not know what I mean**

**CORA**

**I, doo**

**MATT**

**Good, I'll leave the shovel here so you can cover up your output, I'm also going to clean up all the dog shit around here**

**CORA**

**Don't you mean output**

**MATT**

**There seems to be a lot of it considering that none of the dogs are inside the fenced-in area anymore**

**CORA**

**Like I said, dogs are animals, they go where they want**

**MATT**

**Yeah, but we don't have to leave it wherever they drop it**

**CORA**

**What do you mean we**

**MATT**

**You are quite the bundle of joy to hang around with**

**CORA**

**I'm only trying to keep us, me, me alive, I'm not interested in being your entertainment**

**MATT**

**And yet somehow you are, I'm going to clean this place up and go in one spot**

**CORA**

**.....**

**I suppose I could do that**

**MATT**

**What**

**CORA**

**Use one spot, but I'm going to pee wherever**

**MATT**

**You know I just heard a story on NPR the other day about a man in New Zealand who trained cows to pee in one spot**

**CORA**

**The other day**

**MATT**

**Yah, on the truck radio . . . . . oh . . . . . it seemed like, in my mind it was the other day, but it had to be over three years ago, time, it can get away from you**

**CORA**

**I'm not a cow**

**MATT**

**Yeah, fine, pee wherever, just don't do it in the quad**

**CORA**

**The quad**

**MATT**

**This community space that we have right here**

**CORA**

**Community space**

**MATT**

**There was you, the farm animals, and the dogs, that was a community, and now I'm here, making me part of the community**

**CORA**

**You're still going to have to contribute if you want to hang around here, can you neuter a dog**

**MATT**

**What**

**CORA**

**You can obviously suture**

**MATT**

**Neutering a dog is like an operation, I'm not a vet**

**CORA**

**They're only dogs, what's the worst that could happen**

**MATT**

**That's kind of a heartless attitude**

**CORA**

**You've got to be useful**

**CORA**

**I can be useful, but**

**CORA**

**I can castrate a dog**

**MATT**

**You castrate dogs**

**CORA**

**I grew up watching my father castrating sheep, he taught me, if you can castrate a sheep, you can castrate a dog, it's easy, just pull'um off then cauterize the**

**MATT**

**Pull them off**

**CORA**

**With your teeth**

**MATT**

**You bit off animal's balls**

**CORA**

**Testacies, you don't bite them you pull them off, you have to do it when they're young, one quick pull, I would think you could do that with a dog**

**MATT**

**You've never actually done it to a dog**

**CORA**

**How much different can it be**

**MATT**

**I have no idea**

**CORA**

**For someone who came all this way for their dog you sure don't know a lot about them**

**MATT**

**I only know about my dog and he came neutered I certainly didn't bite off his balls**

**CORA**

**Pull, you don't bite, you pull,**

**MATT**

**I would have to go in and remove the ovaries, I put things back together, I've never taken anything out**

**CORA**

**You're going to have to do something**

**MATT**

**I'm not cutting into a dog**

**CORA**

**What are you afraid of, I would think it would be a fairly small incision**

**MATT**

**You would think, would you also think that I would be doing that while they're still awake and active**

**CORA**

**Did you put those stitches in your face using some kind of anesthesia**

**MATT**

**Of course not, but let me tell you that it hurt like hell**

**CORA**

**Those are the details for you to work out**

**MATT**

**I won't be**

**CORA**

**You're useless then**

**(Cora moves her shoulder and winces in pain.)**

**MATT**

**Shoulder still not right**

**CORA**

**It's fine**

**MATT**

**Oh yeah, your shoulder seems just fine**

**.....**

**It's obviously not**

**.....**

**even though I'm not going to be neutering any dogs, I can contribute in other ways, judging by the way you're holding your shoulder I would say you've dislocated it**

**CORA**

**I haven't**

**MATT**

**I could fix that**

**CORA**

**How**

**MATT**

**You would have to let me look at it, and by look at it I mean touch you  
(Matt stops digging the latrine, and starts to approach Cora.)**

**CORA**

**I don't think so  
(Matt touches Cora's arm and she winces but doesn't pull away.)  
Ow . . . there's nothing wrong**

**MATT**

**How about this, you help me, and then I'll help you**

**CORA**

**What are you talking about**

**MATT**

**(Taking a small pair of scissors out of his  
pocket.)  
I need these stitches out**

**CORA**

**You're the doctor**

**MATT**

**EMT**

**CORA**

**You can put them in, you take them out**

**MATT**

**I could, but the mirror makes everything backward, and it will take me a while, but you could do it**

**CORA**

**I've never done anything like that before, why do you think I would take those out of your face**

**MATT**

**We're the only people here, if we're not going to help each other**

**.....**

**think of it as a trade of services, I'll fix your shoulder and you remove these stitches**

**CORA**

**If you fix my shoulder and then I would owe you**

**MATT**

**You take out my stitches first and then I would owe you isn't that how it works**

**CORA**

**There are a lot of stitches there**

**MATT**

**Only twelve, probably could have used another one but, 13 stitches seemed like a bad idea**

**(Holds out the scissors.)**

**Gently slide the end of the scissors under the sutures, snip and then pull the thread out  
(Cora hesitantly takes the scissors.)**

**Anyone who can pull sheep testis off and do this**

**(Cora aggressively comes at Matt.)**

**MATT**

**Remember, gently**

**CORA**

**(To the best of her ability, Cora gently starts to remove the sutures.)**

**Like this**

**MATT**

**As long as I'm not bleeding it's going to be fine  
(Cora slowly continues to remove the sutures. She might start to move faster as she becomes more confident with each removal.)**

**MATT**

**Where are all the birds**

**CORA**

**I let them out every morning and I put them back in the coop at night, chickens and goats don't need to be fed if they're allowed to roam around freely, they find what they need, but they can't stay out all night, they could get eaten by predators, I should be tending to them right now**

**MATT**

**I don't mean the chickens I meant the wild birds, chickadees, blue jays, crows**

**CORA**

**They're here**

**MATT**

**Look around, listen, I haven't seen or heard any birds since I got here, I must not have been paying attention when I was traveling, but now that I'm here**

**CORA**

**They're around, of course they're around**

**MATT**

**On Sunday mornings in the summer, we used to lay in bed with the windows open, listen to the birds, then we'd make . . . . it was**

**CORA**

**I don't have time to listen to the birds**

**MATT**

**That's the only thing we've got right now is time**

**CORA**

**There are things to be done**

**MATT**

**Do them today, do them tomorrow, as long as they get done what does it matter**

**CORA**

**How did you last out there with that kind of**

**MATT**

**When was the last time it was winter here**

**CORA**

**Just a few months ago**

**MATT**

**Really**

**CORA**

**Wait, the last time it was winter I was still on the farm, but if it's been**

**MATT**

**So at least a few years**

**CORA**

**That means, where did winter go**

**MATT**

**Winters used to be brutal here, and now they don't exist, look at all the trees, they look like they're dying, they can't take this kind of heat, there's a change in the environment**

**CORA**

**I'm sure there's an explanation**

**MATT**

**I told you, everything has shifted, who knows where the equator is anymore**

**CORA**

**It's in the middle**

**MATT**

**Wherever that is**

**CORA**

**Done**

**(Hands back the scissors.)**

**MATT**

**How does it look**

**CORA**

**You've got a scar**

**MATT**

**I meant is there any gaping, does it look like the gash has healed**

**CORA**

**Where's your mirror, you look and see**

**MATT**

**I'm asking you, does it look healed**

**CORA**

**Yes**

**MATT**

**Good, thank you, let's take a look at your shoulder**

**CORA**

**I don't think so**

**MATT**

**That's up to you**

**(Matt reaches for Cora's arm. She pulls away, but winces with pain. Matt gently touches Cora's arm again and she lets this happen. Matt works his hand up Cora's arm gently manipulating Cora's shoulder.)**

**MATT**

**I'm pretty sure this is dislocated**

**CORA**

**Only pretty sure**

**MATT**

**I'm going to pop it back into place, and it's going to hurt, a lot, and then it won't**

**CORA**

**No**

**(Even though Cora says she doesn't want Matt to do anything she doesn't resist.)**

**MATT**

**I'm going to do this on three, ready**

**No** CORA

**One** MATT

**(Matt pulls the arm, popping everything back into place.)**

**Holy Mother of God** CORA

**Two, three** MATT

**Three, you already did it** CORA

**I know, everybody tenses up just before three, that's why I do it on one** MATT

**You lie to people** CORA

**How's the shoulder** MATT

**It's** CORA  
**(Moving the shoulder around.)**

**Sore, but**

**You probably dislocated it a while ago, do you want some aspirin, they'd be my last two** MATT

**I thought you gave me your last two yesterday** CORA

**I did, whenever I give anyone anything, it's always the last** MATT

**Another lie** CORA

**I have a broad understanding of the truth** MATT

**(Goes and gets two pills out of the backpack.)**

**I could be gone tomorrow and these would be the last two I'm giving you right now**

**CORA**

**You're leaving**

**MATT**

**Not until I find my dog, you want these or not**

**CORA**

**.....**

**Yes**

**MATT**

**(Handing over the pills.)**

**They also might be the last two if I just don't like someone, next time I offer to contribute around here don't be such a pain in the ass**

**CORA**

**Nobody does anything nice unless there's something in it for them**

**MATT**

**Like I said, trade of services, and now back to the latrine**

**CORA**

**What's the point**

**MATT**

**Because I need to use it, in that capital U S E I T kind of way**

**CORA**

**I don't want to see that**

**MATT**

**(Matt goes over to where they left the fresh mint and gives some to Cora.)**

**Then you should probably go over there and brush your teeth**

**A RAINY DAY**

**(The sound of thunder, and rain. Cora has put a makeshift tarp over the fire pit and is trying to start a fire with a flint. Matt enters but stands out in the rain.)**



**That's harsh** MATT

**Sometimes he was** CORA

**Mine is AWOL** MATT

**I was hoping that's what you where** CORA

**You knew I would be coming back, make a decision do you want me to think you're a hick or someone whose smart and dependable** MATT

**I am smart** CORA

**If you say so** MATT

**You have no idea about me** CORA

**You're a person who's only happy when they're miserable** MATT

**And you're . . . . . an ass** CORA

**Oh, that really hurts** MATT

. . . . .

**You shouldn't travel out alone** CORA

**You do know I got here by myself** MATT

**CORA**  
**With a big slice across your face**

**MATT**

**I knew it's dangerous out there and that's a chance I'm willing to take**

**CORA**

**That's your problem**

**MATT**

**Would you have come with me, if I had asked**

**CORA**

**No**

**MATT**

**That's why I just left, I'm pretty sure I can make it out into the countryside, and get back**

**CORA**

**Doesn't look like you found him**

**MATT**

**He's out there, I haven't looked in the right spot yet**

**CORA**

**Why don't you pack up your stuff, pick one of the dogs that's roaming around out there and move along**

**MATT**

**I'm not going anyplace until I find my dog, not some replacement, my dog**

**.....**

**(Cora still trying to light the fire.)**

**Do you need some help with that, it's a lot of rain**

**CORA**

**That's what it does sometimes, rains**

**MATT**

**It was sunny when I left this morning**

**CORA**

**And now it's not, we could use the rain, the trees are looking dry**

**MATT**

**Dry, most of these trees are dead**

**CORA**

**They only need water**

**MATT**

**They're not used to this much heat, this much direct sun, these are all northeast trees and I would be willing to bet that we are nowhere close to the northeast anymore, there are probably palm trees that have died someplace in a too cold climate**

**CORA**

**Information from someone who isn't even smart enough to get out of the rain**

**MATT**

**I'm trying to clean up a bit, if you weren't here I'd strip off and**

**CORA**

**You will keep your clothes on, nobody wants to see that  
(Still trying to light the fire pit.)**

**MATT**

**Somebody used to**

**CORA**

**I doubt that**

**MATT**

**I don't see what the problem would be**

**CORA**

**You don't see the problem with a lot of things**

**MATT**

**You're quite the puritan, I can't imagine that I would be the first man you've ever seen naked**

**CORA**

**You'd be wrong**

**MATT**

**Oh**

**.....**

**I could help you light that because I've got a**

**CORA**

**Are you under the impression that I can't start a fire in the rain**

**MATT**

**I wouldn't know, it doesn't look like you're having much luck right now**

**CORA**

**I don't need any help, I've been starting my own fires just fine for the past two years**

**MATT**

**Three**

**CORA**

**You infuriate me**

**MATT**

**I don't think I have ever met anyone quite as stubborn as you**

**CORA**

**You know you can't start a fire by rubbing two sticks together**

**MATT**

**You need a flint, which I see you have, or a magnifying glass, or**

**CORA**

**You can't use a magnifying glass if the sun isn't out**

**MATT**

**I'm quite aware that it's raining**

**CORA**

**Oh, thanks Willard Scott**

**MATT**

**Sometimes you're just too weird**

**CORA**

**You're the one who walked I don't know how far because of a dog**

**MATT**

**That's not weird, that's dedication, and you know you could be a little more supportive of me finding my dog**

**CORA**

**You think I should be, supportive**

**MATT**

**A little positivity never hurt any situation**

**CORA**

**I think positivity is overrated**

**MATT**

**I think . . . . .**

**(Cora continues to try and light the fire. After a moment Matt reaches into his pocket, takes out a Bic lighter and ignites the fire.)**

**CORA**

**Where did you get**

**MATT**

**Costco, my partner, he and I bought a ten-pack of lighters for our camping trip, it seemed like a lot of lighters at the time, but they have served us well**

**CORA**

**Isn't it kind of odd you do so much stuff with your partner**

**MATT**

**We're a couple, that's what couples do, stuff together**

**CORA**

**Wait, they're not the person you drove an ambulance with, not your EMT partner**

**MATT**

**No, do you have a problem with that**

**CORA**

**I, don't know, I mean that explains a lot**

**MATT**

**Oh really**

**CORA**

**I've never met anyone who's**

**MATT**

**You have**

**CORA**

**. . . . .**

**MATT**

**Here, for you**

**(Matt holds out the lighter for Cora who hesitates for a moment and then accepts it.)**

**.....**

**It's my last one**

**(Matt sits under the tarp next to the fire with  
Cora.)**

**TIME HAS PASSED**

**Matt is using the latrine, he rises from in back of the bush, ties up his pants, and then goes to the stream and wash his hands. Cora sniffs and looks at Matt, Matt holds out his hands and Cora looks at them, maybe even sniffing again. There is the loud cry of some chickens. Cora is about to speak, but Matt indicates that he's got it and exits off toward the chickens.**

**She takes a handful of cherry tomatoes and three hard-boiled eggs and puts them out for breakfast. Matt returns with several eggs and some mint leaves, putting them someplace safe. Cora offers Matt an egg. They both sit down on their haunches and eat. As Cora is about to take a bite when Matt knocks Cora's arm. Cora tries to take another bite and Matt knocks Cora's arm again. Matt is trying to get Cora to play. Cora sneers/growls at Matt then moves away from Matt still on her hunches. Matt moves to Cora, playfully bumping her shoulder causing Cora to topple over. Cora growls at Matt, then moves across the space.**

**Matt goes over to a stack of boards and wood and starts to stack it up. He discovers a hammer and a rusty saw, putting them on the porch. Matt notices that Cora is still pouting.**

**As a peace offering, Matt offers Cora the last egg. Cora takes it, sniffs it, cuts it in half, then gives half to Matt, he finishes it. Cora hands Matt a mint leaf and they both brush their teeth.**

**A BRAND-NEW DAY**

(The sound of hammering off stage. Cora is going back and forth between monitoring the boiling of eggs in the fire pit, and yelling at a dog outside the fenced in area. Matt is heard loudly reciting the Gettysburg Address in Spanish)

**CORA**

Shoo, get away from there, I said get

**MATT**

Forzoso siete años ha, nuestros padres crearon en este continente una nueva nación,

**CORA**

(Yelling off at Matt)

Four score, not forced score, it's four score

**MATT**

(Matt enters carrying a hammer and a circular dog toy similar to a Frisbee.)

What are you yelling about

**CORA**

It's four score, it means eighty years, a score is twenty of something

**MATT**

I thought it was forced, you know it was the civil war and they were forcing people to do things

**CORA**

We may have both learned that speech in school but, they did a bad job explaining it to you

**MATT**

It barely makes a difference now

(Matt starts to leave then comes back.)

How did you, I was speaking in Spanish

**CORA**

No es buen español. Tienes un acento terrible y si yo fuera tu madre me decepcionaría mucho

**MATT**

What

**CORA**

No es buen español. Tienes un . . . . .

**MATT**

I have no idea what you are talking about

**CORA**

**It's Spanish**

**MATT**

**I know that, but I don't speak Spanish**

**CORA**

**You were just saying the Gettysburg Address in Spanish**

**MATT**

**I memorized it in Spanish for extra credit, I learned it off YouTube, why would I want to speak Spanish. I'm an American, English, I speak English, you speak Spanish**

**CORA**

**Sí, lo estudié en collage**

**MATT**

**I don't understand**

**CORA**

**I studied it in college**

**MATT**

**You went to college**

**CORA**

**Community college, two semesters, and I took Spanish both semesters**

**MATT**

**That had to be a long time ago because you're**

**CORA**

**Old, were you going to say old**

**MATT**

**I was going to say . . . . . yeah, old, but how do you remember it**

**CORA**

**I just do, it was easy for me, I'm kind of surprised myself**

**MATT**

**I'm surprised, and maybe even a little impressed**

**CORA**

**Don't be impressed, it's time to stop talking**

**MATT**

**I was working**

**CORA**

**What are you doing out there, why are you always doing things around here like you own the place**

**MATT**

**I'm doing some home improvements**

**CORA**

**This is not your home**

**MATT**

**I'm raising the property value for when we sell**

**CORA**

**What is wrong with you**

**MATT**

**I'm trying to lighten the mood, you're so moody, you flip in a Paso**

**CORA**

**Not funny**

**(Stomping her foot, waving her arms and shouting.)**

**I said move along**

**MATT**

**What's going on**

**CORA**

**I don't like the look of that dog, I haven't seen him around here before, I don't like the way he looks, the way he's walking, I think he's growling at nothing**

**MATT**

**Maybe he's hungry**

**CORA**

**Maybe he has rabies**

**MATT**

**Dogs don't get rabies anymore**

**CORA**

**Animals needed to be vaccinated for rabies every three years, any dog that's wandering around out there now could easily be susceptible, and let's be clear, when a dog is bitten by an infected bat, there is no winner**

**MATT**

**We should put a little bit of food out for it**

**CORA**

**We shouldn't**

**MATT**

**We've got plenty right now**

**CORA**

**I've got plenty**

**MATT**

**You know I do contribute to the daily running of this compound, and that makes both our lives easier**

**CORA**

**Where did you even get those tools, and what is it you're trying to make out there**

**MATT**

**I was cleaning up that pile of boards and found a hammer, some screwdrivers, and a rusty hand saw, it must have been some kind of storage shed before it collapsed, I've been cleaning the nails out of the lumber and reconfiguring it so we can have a shower**

**CORA**

**What do we need a shower for**

**MATT**

**It hasn't rained in almost a week**

**CORA**

**It's only been**

**(Trying to figure out how long it's been since the last rain. Might do some counting on her**

**fingers.)**

**It doesn't make any difference**

**MATT**

**You don't seem to realize this, but neither of us smells that good**

**CORA**

**Just use the stream**

**MATT**

**I can't stand myself right now, and you . . . . We're going to fill that bucket with water in the morning, put it on top of the frame, and let the sun heat it, that's why build a shower, less stink, slightly more civilized**

**CORA**

**The dogs don't care what you smell like**

**MATT**

**The dogs are out there and we're in here**

**CORA**

**There's no curtain, no doors you can't take a shower like that**

**MATT**

**I can, and I'm going to**

**CORA**

**You wouldn't catch me in there**

**MATT**

**When you use it I won't look**

**CORA**

**It seems like a lot of work**

**MATT**

**What else do we have to do**

**CORA**

**You said you were only going to be here until you found your dog, clearly he's not going to show up**

**MATT**

**You're wrong, something is going to happen**

**CORA**

**And now you're building a shower**

**MATT**

**Don't you like having someone besides dogs to be with**

**CORA**

**Not really**

**MATT**

**You do, admit it, we're a good team**

**CORA**

**I was perfectly happy being here alone, doing things the way I want, not having to answer to anyone**

**MATT**

**You don't answer to me**

**CORA**

**You shouldn't be outside of the kennel's fenced-in area**

**MATT**

**The land slopes away from camp so there won't be any mud**

**CORA**

**We've still got to keep an eye out, that's all I'm saying**

**MATT**

**That dog has wandered off, I'm sure it's fine**

**CORA**

**You don't know what you're talking about**

**MATT**

**Look what else I found in all that shed debris  
(Matt jerkily raises up the dog toy and Cora flinches and pulls back.)**

**MATT**

**Did you just think I was going to hit you**

**CORA**

**Sometimes when people raise their hands like that, they do, they hit you**

**MATT**

**I would never**

**CORA**

**Don't, don't say you would never hit me because it's a lie, people say they would never hit you or they will never hit you again, but they do, they always do, so don't say you would never hit me**

**MATT**

**I wouldn't**

**(There is a moment of silence between them.)**

**CORA**

**What is that**

**MATT**

**Apparently, it's a, flippy-flyer**

**CORA**

**And what are we supposed to do with it**

**MATT**

**I'm going to throw it to you**

**CORA**

**I don't catch things**

**MATT**

**Catching a flippy-flyer could be fun, plus it's fun to say, flippy-flyer, it's a dog toy, see, it's even been chewed**

**CORA**

**All the more reason not to use it**

**(Matt throws it, hitting Cora, the flippy-flyer falls to the ground.)**

**I don't do that kind of stuff**

**MATT**

**You mean play**

**CORA**

**Adults don't play**

**MATT**

**Sure we do**

**CORA**

**I don't**

**MATT**

**Nobody's ever taught you that's all**

**CORA**

**I don't need to be taught how to play**

**MATT**

**I think you do, get ready, hold your hand like a lobster claw**

**CORA**

**What**

**MATT**

**Make a C with your hand,**

**(Cora does.)**

**Get ready here it comes**

**(Matt puts the toy in Cora's hand.)**

**Okay, close your hand down on the flippy-flyer**

**(Cora does.)**

**You did it, throw it back**

**(Cora tries to throw it back, but even though she is only an arm's length apart Cora fumbles it, Matt picks it up.)**

**Okay, well, that's a start, here it comes again**

**(Matt backs up throwing it maybe two feet into Cora's hand and Cora catches it.)**

**Yes, throw it back**

**CORA**

**I have to catch it and throw it**

**MATT**

**Then just bring it back, come here**

**(Cora does.)**

**Good, go a little further back, get ready here it comes**

**(Cora catches it again.)**

**Good, good, bring it back, come on, bring it back**

**(Cora returns the toy.)**

**See, this is fun right**

**CORA**

**If you say so**

**MATT**

**It's okay to have fun, to do something fun, ready, go back, back, back,**

**(Cora should now be a fair distance from Matt now.)**

**Here it comes,**

**(Cora catches it.)**

**Yes, look at that, you got it, you got it, good, bring it back, that's right bring it back  
(Cora wildly throws the toy at Matt.)**

**CORA**

**Stop it**

**MATT**

**Stop what**

**CORA**

**Trying to get me to do things that I don't want to do**

**MATT**

**All right . . . . . sorry**

**CORA**

**Don't be sorry, stop**

**MATT**

**I get it**

**CORA**

**You don't, we don't have time for this, throwing, running, playing, there are things to do**

**MATT**

**We're doing things, but there also has to be some kind of fun, and sometimes that's  
throwing a round piece of plastic or taking a warm shower**

**CORA**

**But can't you see that**

**MATT**

**No, I can't**

**CORA**

**I need to finish cooking these eggs**

**MATT**

**They're probably done, you overcook them**

**CORA**

**I do not, and you can't really overcook an egg**

**MATT**

**Ya, well they can get kind of rubbery**

**CORA**

**Ya, well if you don't like the way I cook them you don't have to eat them**

**MATT**

**Ya, well then you can't use my shower**

**CORA**

**It's my shower, my wood, my nails, my hammer,**

**MATT**

**I found them so they're mine, finders keepers**

**CORA**

**Are you trying to antagonize me**

**MATT**

**No, you're bullying me**

**CORA**

**You're bullying me**

**MATT**

**I am not**

**CORA**

**You're an idiot**

**MATT**

**I know you are but what am I**

**(They stare hard at each other for a moment.)**

**MATT**

**I don't have time to talk about this right now, I have to get back to work, I wouldn't want to be accused of not doing my fair share**

**CORA**

**Wait, you need to eat something**

**(Cora hands Matt an egg. Matt takes it and then exits. Cora mutters to herself.)**

**I do not overcook eggs. And when did you become an expert on cooking**

**MATT**

**(From off.)**

**Getaway**

**(A combination of loud snarling, growling, and barking.)**

**CORA**

**Hey**

**(Cora runs off. There are more vicious dog sounds as well as Cora and Matt yelling “Get away.” “Ow.” “Stop it.” The sounds of a struggle, then the sound of a dog crying out loudly like they have been kicked. Cora is helping Matt back onto the stage. They both have blood on their hands, arms, and faces.)**

**CORA**

**This isn’t good, not good**

**MATT**

**Are you hurt**

**CORA**

**I**

**MATT**

**Let me see your hands, your arms, there’s blood**

**CORA**

**It’s not me, it’s you**

**MATT**

**I’m okay, I’m worried about you, sometimes adrenalin doesn’t let you realize you’ve been injured**

**CORA**

**Look at your hands, your arm . . . . . you’ve been bitten**

**MATT**

**(Cora tries to look at Matt’s arm. Matt realizes he has been bitten.)**

**that**

**DON’T TOUCH ME**

**(Cora pulls away, frightened by Matt’s outburst. Matt now speaks calmly and clearly, but intently.)**

**Don’t touch me, you don’t know whether I’ve been infected**

**CORA**

**What do I, do**

**MATT**

**Go to the stream and wash yourself and make sure that you haven't been bitten then bring me a bucket of water so that I can wash up and check myself**

**CORA**

**I'll bring you water first**

**MATT**

**I've been bitten, I need to know that you're okay**

**CORA**

**I'm**

**MATT**

**NO, do what I tell you**

**(Cora goes to the stream. Matt starts to examine his bloody hands and arms. Yelling off to Cora.)**

**A rag, I'm going to need some kind of a rag**

**(Matt starts to pace.)**

**Not good, not good, this is not good . . . . . fuck**

**CORA**

**(Entering with a bucket of water and a rag and puts them down in front of Matt.)**

**I don't think I've been bitten**

**MATT**

**(Inspecting, but not touching Cora.)**

**Let me see your arms, let me see your face**

**CORA**

**I'm fine, how do I help you**

**MATT**

**I don't see any ripped skin, but you may have a puncher, keep watching your arms and hands, sometimes there's a delay**

**CORA**

**I haven't been bitten, but you**

**(Cora reach for Matt's arm, as Matt starts to his wounds.)**

**wash**

**MATT**

**You can't touch me, you have to stay away from my blood, I'm sure there's dog saliva mixed in**

**CORA**

**(Snapping.)**

**There has to be something I can do to help, do you need stitches, I'll get your med kit**

**MATT**

**You don't stitch up dog bits**

**CORA**

**Then what do you need me to do**

**(They stare at each other. After a moment Matt speaks calmly and in control.)**

**MATT**

**I need you to be here with me so I'm not alone**

**CORA**

**You're not alone, you'll tell me the truth, you'll tell me if it's bad**

**MATT**

**I will, it's still bleeding and that's a good thing for now, the bleeding flushes out the wound**

**(Cora gets up and leaves.)**

**Where are you going**

**(Matt starts to wash.)**

**Stay where I can see you**

**(Cora returns with a hand full of cobwebs and places them at Matt's feet.)**

**CORA**

**Here**

**MATT**

**What is that**

**CORA**

**Cobwebs, when you're through washing yourself, put these cobwebs in the wounds and they will help stop the bleeding**

**MATT**

**I'm not sure**

**CORA**

**You will do as I say about this**

**MATT**

**Alright, but don't leave again**

**CORA**

**I didn't, I won't**

**MATT**

**Sit, and stay**

**(Cora sits on her haunches as Matt picks up the cobwebs and places them on their arm. Lights fade.)**

**5 DAYS LATER**

**(Dusk. Matt is chained to the porch with the padlock from his camping frame. He is building drying racks for vegetables. We might not notice the chain until he moves. Dogs are barking. Cora carries the rifle and is agitated, pacing back and forth.)**

**CORA**

**You should be resting**

**MATT**

**It doesn't make any difference**

**CORA**

**You need to conserve your energy**

**MATT**

**For what, all I can do is wait, I want to get these racks done so that you can start drying vegetables**

**CORA**

**We don't need those right now**

**MATT**

**The more things you can dry the more sustainable your food supply will be, building things keeps me busy**

**CORA**

**(Yelling at the barking dogs.)**

**Shut up**

**(Cora charges towards the fence, stumbles and falls. Matt rushes to help her but is stooped short by the chain.)**

**I can't stand it, shut up, shut UP, SHUT UP**

**.....**

**Are you**

**MATT**

**Yes, I'm fine**

**CORA**

**You don't have to do this**

**MATT**

**Until we know for sure what's wrong with that dog**

**CORA**

**It's just a sick dog**

**MATT**

**Hopefully**

**CORA**

**You're the one who's always saying there's plenty of time**

**MATT**

**This is different, it's been five days, by the time we know what's wrong with that dog it could be**

**too late for me, for you**

**CORA**

**We don't know anything for sure**

**MATT**

**This is something you can't take chances with**

**CORA**

**(Yelling at the barking dogs.)**

**Shut up, shut up**

**MATT**

**Look at me . . . . . listen only to me, ignore them, they're dogs, they're just, dogs**

**CORA**

**That's right, and they need to be quiet**

**MATT**

**Find a way to block them out**

**CORA**

**Why is it that people are kinder to dogs than they are to a person, why is it that people always stop to pet a dog but ignore a person, a dog would rip your face off if it thought it could get something from you**

**MATT**

**That's not true, you know that**

**CORA**

**It's not fair**

**MATT**

**If things were fair, he would be here, if things were fair the town would still be here, we'd be able to go to Dunkin Donuts and get a coffee and a, a, a, donut, if things were fair we could get that dog tested and if need be I could get the shots, things are not fair**

**CORA**

**I'm scared**

**MATT**

**It will be okay, it will**

**CORA**

**You don't know that, you're only trying to make me feel better**

**MATT**

**I'm trying to convince myself that everything is going to be okay**

**CORA**

**It will be, I know that, it will be**

**MATT**

**We won't know anything until**

**CORA**

**That dog's moving a little better, it's gaining its strength back**

**MATT**

**Maybe it is**

**.....**

**CORA**

**Are you scared**

**MATT**

**I'm not ..... I don't want to think about it but ..... I'm ..... I tell myself that everything is going to be okay, that this is just another thing that has happened, we don't have signs on our backs that say smite us, what's normal now is the unknown**

**CORA**

**The unknown isn't normal, it's cruel**

**MATT**

**It isn't cruel, it just is**

**CORA**

**If that dog shows real signs of rabies, then we can make some decisions, but until then why chain yourself up, why keep me at a distance**

**MATT**

**You're not at a distance, you're right there, I'm depending on you**

**CORA**

**You can't depend on me, I'm nobody**

**MATT**

**You're the person that's keeping us alive, I'm depending on you to bring me food, I'm depending on you to bring me fresh leaves so I can wipe my ass, depending on you to keep taking care of the animals and the gardens so that I can see that everything is going to be**

okay, I'm depending on you to keep track of the key so that when this is all over you can release me, and most of all I'm depending on you to

.....

**CORA**

**What**

**MAT**

**Do you remember the day I showed up here**

**CORA**

**I need my dog**

**MATT**

**I did, he was the only thing that was keeping me alive, and now that's you**

**CORA**

**You can't expect that of me**

**MATT**

**If not you, who**

.....

**You said that if I didn't tell you why I was here you were going to shoot me, that I wouldn't be the first person you've shoot, is that true, have you shot a person, actually, killed a person**

**CORA**

.....

**Yes**

.....

**It was the worst thing I have ever done**

**MATT**

**But you did it because you knew you had to**

**CORA**

**Yes**

**MATT**

**I'm depending on you to do the same for me**

**CORA**

**No**

**MATT**

**As soon as it's clear that that dog has rabies**

CORA

It doesn't

MATT

You can't wait until I become sick, until I'm . . . . you said that people were kinder to dogs than they are to humans, that's what I need, for you to be kind

CORA

There would be nothing kind about me shooting you

MATT

You know that's not true, it's about not suffering

CORA

Yes but

MATT

You will do this, it will be pitiful, but you will not take pity on me

CORA

(Cora picks up the bucket, exits off stage, and then returns with the bucket with water. Matt puts his hand in the bucket and drinks out of their hand.)

I can be . . . . your dog

MATT

I don't need you to be my dog, I need you to be, I need, someone

. . . . .

We met just before dawn in a Best Buy parking lot, it was dark and really cold, we were both trying to get a P/S 5, he was behind me in line, we chatted a bit, discovered we knew some of the same people at the hospital, he was an anesthesiologist, I had the jumbo cup of coffee from 7-Eleven and he asked if he could have some, I'm not someone who usually shares things like a cup of coffee with a stranger, but I just handed it over to him, he only took a little, just to warm up he said, then he used his t-shirt, wiped the opening of the lid

The line started to move, it was a first-come, first-serve situation, and I got the last one, the look on his face was, I could barely stand it, I invited him back to my house to play God Of War, I gave him my address and then rushed home, my house was a mess and I wiped down the kitchen table before he got there, I didn't want him to think I lived in a bus station

He shows up with Egg McMuffins, hash browns, two coffees, we played all day which lead to ordering a pizza, which lead to . . . . he was the first person I'd ever been with who I could overlook their faults, who I didn't want to run away from because they left the kitchen cupboard doors open, or didn't clean up when they got pee on the bathroom floor

When it started, the violent shaking, we were asleep in the tent. As soon as we realized what was happening, branches falling off of trees, we got into the truck thinking it was going to be safer. A tree . . . . the cab was smashed and so was my leg. By moving the seat back and prying out part of the console I was able to free myself fortunately it wasn't a compound fracture but it was still going to need to be set, he was a doctor but setting a bone wasn't his strength, but between the two of us, tree branches and rope, we managed to get it set as best we could but I couldn't move, I had to keep as still as possible so the bone would fuse

Back three years ago there were a lot more people rooming around, it wasn't as safe, you were more likely to be in danger from another human than a wild animal

We heard them around us, yelling, firing guns, they sounded drunk and possessed, if they found us, me unable to run, it was not going to be good, he knew that, he told me he was going to distract them, to lead them away, I told him no, he said I didn't get a say, that if the situation was reversed that I would lead them away from him and I knew he was right, the last thing he said was that if he didn't come back we would meet at Avery's and get the dog, that no matter how long it took that's where we would find each other

I waited over a month, but he didn't come back

My leg healed enough to start coming here, but it was slow, I knew that if I pushed too hard I would mess my leg up permanently

I, never really wanted that dog, he did, and sometimes you do things because you love somebody, and it played out just the way I thought it would, he was on call a lot, he wasn't going to have time to take care of a dog, that was going to all fall on me, Pono needs a walk, Pono needs food, the yard needs to be cleaned up, Pono needs to go to the vet, I was the one who had to do all that, Pono, what a dumb name for a dog

When I say that out loud it makes me realize. . . . what an asshole I am

CORA

I want to see him

MATT

What

CORA

Your dog, on your phone

MATT

Oh

(Matt picks up his phone that is connected to the solar charger pushing the open button. Nothing happens. He tries again and nothing happens.)

Dead

CORA

No, it can't be, it's plugged into the charger

MATT

That phone wasn't going to last forever

(Matt keeps trying to push the button on the phone until it becomes nothing is going to happen.)

I didn't realize it would be the last time I'd see him

(Cora exits again then returns with a handful of leaves and places them down next to Matt. Matt sits on his haunches looking away from Cora.)

Lights Fade

NIGHT

(Matt is still chained to the porch, he is masturbating. As he climaxes, Cora enters. seeing Matt.)

MATT

I . . . . thought you were asleep

CORA

I sensed something was wrong and came out to investigate

. . . . .

MATT

There is nothing wrong

CORA

That would be a matter of opinion

MATT

There is nothing wrong

CORA

If you want to play with yourself then

MATT

I wasn't playing with myself, that's what parents tell their kids when they wanted them to feel ashamed

CORA

Because it's wrong

MATT

Who told you that, it's a perfectly normal part of life

CORA

Not mine

MATT

Don't try and guilt me

CORA

Somebody needs to

MATT

My mother and Father Rodrigo, both were very clear

CORA

Not enough

MATT

I just didn't listen, you don't have to obey people just because they tell you what to do

CORA

There has to be order, otherwise, there's chaos, rules have to be followed, you don't know what could happen

MATT

(Holding up his hand.)

Look, no hair

CORA

I don't understand

MATT

It's empowering, it's the only thing I have any control over right now, I can't sleep, I don't know where my dog is, I'm chained to this porch

CORA

I'll open that padlock right now and you can come and go as you please

MATT

We don't know when the symptoms actually begin and then it's too late, just another thing I have no control over, but this, it's all in my hands, literally, I maintain the balance, I pick the moment, which is a lie because at some point, even I have no control, and that's the moment I wait for, to have control and then lose it

CORA

What you're doing, it's hedonistic, it's

MATT

And what's wrong with that . . . . What I'm doing is a sorry excuse for being close to someone even if it has to be myself, but that doesn't mean there can't be some kind of, pleasure in it

CORA

You're not guaranteed pleasure

MATT

I won't deny myself

.....

CORA

You used to have someone that you did that with

MATT

Not, that, but the end results, it's not about the . . . there's, intimacy

CORA

I guess

MATT

People need to let themselves be involved with, themselves, the way they want to be involved with themselves, it's different being with yourself, but it's not that you should, or shouldn't, I mean, I'll stop talking now

CORA

That would be different

MATT

Very funny

CORA

Not really

MATT

All I'm saying is some people need

CORA

I'm not one of those people, I never had any interest in, any of that, when I was younger everybody was always up on top of each other, it was what people did, like animals, but I never found it . . . . . everyone thought I was . . . . and if enough people say it than it must be true

MATT

You can't listen to other people, they don't get to say what you are

CORA

They think they do

MATT

They don't, just like you don't get to tell me I'm somehow a bad person because I, there's so little comfort right now, you won't discourage me, I'm happy with how I am

CORA

So am I, happy, there's nobody here to tell me that I'm doing it wrong or making fun of me

MATT

No one should be making fun of you about, that

CORA

What do you mean, that

MATT

How you conduct your . . . . . physical life

CORA

I don't have a physical life

MATT

You use your body here, working, keeping yourself alive, that's a physical life, I'm not telling you what to do, or how to achieve, contentment

CORA

I used to get that from the dogs, a connection, they need me and I somehow need them, I took care of these dogs because they care back, I've always had to take care of something or someone,

farm animals, you take care of them and they give you milk or meat but, I didn't think I would but I miss taking care of something, it's the only thing I've ever done that I was good at . . . . .

MATT

You take care of all this

CORA

I took care of both of my parents, they were both old and miserable, not once did I ever get anything but criticism from them, and when this whole shift thing happened, part of the house fell on my mother, then my father had a heart attack, both of them gone in minutes, and as soon as everything stopped shaking, I went through the rubble and took anything useful, canned goods, this gun, ammunition . . . . .

MATT

And your trophy

CORA

That trophy is . . . . .

MATT

Important to you

CORA

Why would you say that

MATT

The world is going to hell in a hand basket, you take food, weapons, and a trophy

CORA

Neither of my parents were there at the grange the night I won that, they thought I couldn't possibly be good enough to win anything, they thought it was a useless thing to spend my time on

MATT

And you proved them wrong

CORA

Not that they ever acknowledged that

MATT

Sometimes our parents are our best allies and our worst enemies

CORA

Mostly they were neither, when everything was done, everything had stopped shaking, I opened all the gates and fences, and any livestock that was still there was free to go just like me, it was

only me, I was the only one left in my family, and my parents, I left them where they were, dead, and I didn't care, I had taken care of them for nothing, but when I came upon these dogs they needed me, they showed me kindness, even when I had nothing to give them

MATT

You did have something to give them

CORA

They are why I'm here, why I stayed

MATT

We can't stay here forever, we need to go north, whatever direction that is

CORA

Why

MATT

It's too hot here and it's only going to get hotter, plants are burning, we can build some shade structure but eventually, that won't be enough, the trees are all dying, and the chances of one if not both of us getting skin cancer starts to become more of a possibility every day, not to mention we are probably both in line for heart attacks with all the eggs we eat

CORA

I'm not going, this is my home

MATT

It is, and it has served you well, but you need to think about the future and your best chance of survival

CORA

And leaving here, going out into God know what is going to improve our chances, do you think we would take all the animals

MATT

I don't know

CORA

Why would we leave our food source, our water, you can go if you want

MATT

I won't leave you here by yourself

CORA

I was perfectly fine before you got here

MATT

We're both only going to get older, it's easier to keep everything going when there are two of us, it's something to think about, it doesn't have to be today, but we need to keep it in the front of our minds

CORA

I'm not thinking about anything like that until we know you're well

MATT

I came looking for my dog and instead, I found you

CORA

I was here, you didn't find me

MATT

You have to believe things happen for a reason, otherwise, what would be the point of going on, I have to believe that my dog brought me here because of you

CORA

You don't know that

MATT

I do

CORA

And you believe in your dog

MATT

No, I believe in you

CORA

Why me

MATT

Because you're here right in front of me

CORA

Your, boyfriend, your dog, they're real

MATT

They were real

.....

They're not here anymore

(Touches or points at their chest.)

.....

Missing

CORA

Before I found this place, I felt a kind of missing, I never understood how I could be missing something I never had

MATT

You don't have to have had something to realize it's missing, that you want it, or that you need it, everybody needs things, I prayed that he would be here

CORA

And he wasn't

.....

I don't pray

MATT

I didn't pray that he would be here, I prayed that I would get here, which I did, I always assumed that he would be here

CORA

But he wasn't, no one answers our prayers, no God

MATT

It doesn't have to be a white-bearded, throne-sitting God, but you have to believe there is something bigger than us, we can't be it

CORA

I don't believe

MATT

Everyone believes

CORA

I don't

MATT

I've been in the back of plenty of ambulances when people think they're about to die, they ask to be saved, to be spared, they pray to God or Jesus, or Buddha, or any deity they believe in, on more than one occasion they have prayed to me thinking that somehow, I hold the cards

MATT

And did you save them

MATT

Some people lived, some

.....

CORA

If you still had a person who you loved and who loved you, would you have come here, come all this way for your dog

MATT

.....

I'm here because if that God Dam dog was still alive then somehow, he would be too

.....

CORA

I'm here

MATT

Yes

CORA

In the future whatever you want to, play with your, do that, I'll, step away

MATT

I'll be more, discreet, you live here too, I don't want you uncomfortable

CORA

Because according to you, it's all about the comfort

MATT

Sometimes, it is

Lights fade.

## THE NEXT MORNING

(Dawn. Matt is still chained and laying still, we might think that he is dead. After a long pause, the sound of a gunshot. Matt sits up, startled. Cora eventually enters with the gun and takes out a key unlocking the chain.)

## CORA

That dog, was suffering, I offered him a little food, then I did what needed to be done, there were large tumors or cists, lumps all through their body, it probably had cancer, but not, I can't, I need

(Cora puts the gun down and runs off.)

THAT EVENING

(Matt is sitting on the porch holding the rifle. Cora quietly enters. Matt doesn't turn to look at Cora.)

Where have you been MATT

I was . . . . . out there CORA

I assumed that, but where MATT

I, don't know CORA

But you made it back MATT

Yes CORA

I was worried MATT

Why would you worry about me CORA

You didn't take the gun MATT

I didn't want it, do you even know how to use a gun CORA

Not really, but it makes me feel better to know I had it, it connects me to MATT

Why don't you give that to me CORA  
(Matt hands Cora the rifle.)

You're back, that's all that matters MATT

It matters CORA

What don't you understand about, us MATT

What's that supposed to mean CORA

I get it, we don't report to each other, but you can't just disappear, you have to tell me what's going on, it's what friends do, they tell each other important things MATT

We're not friends CORA

You're my friend, and like it or not, I'm your friend MATT

That's ridiculous CORA

MATT

We are, sometimes bad friends, sometimes good, but either way, you're my best friend

CORA

How can I be your best friend

MATT

Because, you're my only friend and that makes you my best, and best friends tell each other when they're disappearing

CORA

I didn't disappear, I'm right here

.....

I was scared

MATT

That's when we need to talk to each other the most

CORA

The world is over

MATT

It's not

CORA

You don't know, I was out there, I haven't been away from this place since I got here, I never wanted to know what was out there, I was happy here, by myself, and then you showed up and messed everything up

MATT

You can't blame me, it was a mess before I got here, you just didn't realize it

CORA

I know that now, I forced myself to go out and you know what I found, nothing, not a sign of any living thing, not tracks, not turds, nothing

MATT

There has to be something out there, these dogs aren't living on the little bit of food they might get from us

CORA

There are fewer and fewer dogs every day

MATT

It's a cycle, ebb and flow

CORA

These chickens, and goats, and dogs, are the only things left

MATT

And us

CORA

Is that enough, are we enough to carry on an entire world

MATT

This, right here, this is our entire world, all we have to do is maintain what we can see, everything else will take care of itself

CORA

You're not listening, there's nothing out there

MATT

That's not true, I can't believe that

CORA

It doesn't make any difference what you believe

MATT

(The daylight is slowly starting to fade and the sky is starting to take on a faint pink sunset hue that gradually builds until the end of the play.)

After you unlocked the chain, and after I realized you weren't coming back, I buried that dog, you were right, it was sick but not from rabies, then I spent the rest of the day working, I dug another garden bed and worked in plenty of goat and chicken manure so we can stagger planting

CORA

You dug around back there

MATT

I found where you buried

CORA

I had to do it

MATT

I know, I make sure that they were covered properly and then continued my day

I rotated the racks so that the vegetables we're drying don't mold, I went over any dogs that were here and pulled off ticks, I dug another latrine because the one we have is almost full, I gathered

up firewood and boiled eggs, so you would have something to eat when you got back, I took a shower and brushed my teeth, and then I started worrying, about you, I accomplished more today than I have in a long time, I can't remember when I've felt this satisfied, I got important things done, not like solving world peace, because maybe that's not even a thing anymore, things that help us

CORA

Did you pray

MATT

I did, I prayed that you would return, I prayed that I wasn't doing all these things for only myself

CORA

I don't think I've ever felt so discouraged as I do today

MATT

I have hope

CORA

How can that be

MATT

You're back, and that lets me know everything is right, something is going to happen, I don't know what, I don't care what, it's enough to feel it

CORA

Or we're going to perish, I don't understand how you can feel that way

MATT

It's how I feel today, and that's enough

CORA

I don't feel it

MATT

You don't have to today, maybe tomorrow I'll feel defeated and hopeless and you'll say "We're going to be okay, we can do this" as long as one of us can see forward, but I can't do this without you, that's what friends do for each other

CORA

What if neither of us can, what if it's too much

MATT

It's why the dogs are here, this, what we have around us, it's what we have to move forward with, it's, essential, can you do that, my dog, gone, he's gone, but you're here, you're what I have to live for now

CORA

This thing that happened, this shift, what if it's more, what if it's some sort of purge, a cleansing, the earth had had enough and it's going to start over, to reset, what if it's trying to get rid of everything that's not good, all the evil in the world

MATT

There is nothing evil here

CORA

I am, I'm not good, I'm not a good person, I have done things that I'm not . . . . .

MATT

Proud of, nobody when they look at their lives is proud of everything, people do things they shouldn't, I've done plenty of things that were wrong

CORA

Like what

MATT

Now is not the time to be looking back

CORA

At some point it's going to get us, we're all going to die

MATT

It was always going to happen, we can't be afraid of it, dogs don't fear death because they don't understand it, when you shot that dog this morning was it afraid

CORA

No, it was, grateful

MATT

That's right

CORA

We're only collateral damage in this whole, upset

MATT

We always were, even before

(Matt takes a ring box out of his pocket. Places it on the ground or might hand it to Cora.)

CORA

What's that

Engagement ring MATT

We haven't known each other long enough for that CORA

It's not for you MATT

I know that, I was trying to be . . . . . CORA

Funny MATT

I think so CORA

I am rubbing off on you in positive ways MATT

You're not CORA

I was going to propose while we were on vacation, I didn't want to bring the dog, I needed a vacation from him, as well as everything else, I wanted the trip to be only about Charley and I MATT

Charley CORA

Yah, his name . . . . . Charles, Charley MATT

That's quite a ring CORA  
(Cora opens up the box.)

It's white gold with an Onex MATT

And there are diamond chips around the edges CORA

MATT

I wanted the diamonds because they're, traditional, I used to think he was strangely traditional, but I realized I'm the traditional one, at least about this

CORA

There's nothing wrong with tradition

MATT

His parents, both doctors, paid for his entire medical school, he had relatives that came over on the Mayflower, money was never an issue for him, I had to take out loans just to become an EMT, we lived in my one bedroom house which at one time was a cider mill, he had a three bedroom apartment downtown that overlooked the park, I wanted to show him that I could hold my own, that I was as good as he was and that ring was going to prove that

.....

I started tending bar at 4Dads to pay for it, Charley was at the hospital a lot and I couldn't buy anything that was going to be good enough, special enough from my EMT job

.....

now it's only a piece of metal and some rocks, now I have no one to give it to

CORA

Keep it for yourself

MATT

It's not for me, it's for someone else

.....

You take it

CORA

I couldn't

MAT

You could

CORA

I'll keep it until you want it back

MATT

I won't

(They both look out over the audience. Matt sits down on his haunches. After a moment there is the faint sound of Canada Geese in the distance that gets louder as they fly over. The sky should be fairly sunset pink by now.)

Do you hear . . . . . look they're forming the V

CORA

You know it's not the same one in the front every time, one of them takes the lead and they all follow

MATT

Do you think they're flying north or south

CORA

I don't think it makes any difference

MATT

I suppose it doesn't

(Cora goes over and is standing next to Matt who is still on his haunches.)

I don't know the last time I've seen the sky so pink, is it like this every night and we haven't noticed

. . . . .

CORA

Cora

MATT

Pretty

. . . . .

Matt

(Cora reaches down and touches the top of Matt's head. Matt might lean his head against Cora's leg. They keep watching the sunset as it comes up over the whole space.)

MATT

It's, I, I didn't realize how much I missed it

CORA

What

MATT

This.

(Dogs quietly barking. Blackout.)

.

End of Play

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *What would happen if the planet upended itself? How would people manage to survive? How far would you go to find the people and things that you loved? How would you get along with possibly the only other person left on earth if you didn't see eye to eye? How to write about characters and situation that is true to the characters, makes them relatable even if we don't always like or agree with them. It's my job as the playwright to listen to the inner voices of the characters and the situations and be true to what makes them unique*

*My wife and I took our sons and their wives away for two weeks of vacation. Everybody kenneled their dogs and I thought who would take care of these dogs if our plane went down, (I know not a cheery thought.) This was the germ of a thought that tuned in The Shift.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** March Schrader is an award wining play write\* who has had plays produced in Hartford, ((Charter Oak Cultural Center.) Boston, (Boston Theater Marathon, Boston Theater One Minute Play Festival.) Long Island, (Northport Theater festival. Best of Fest\*.) Michigan (Second Place\*.), NYC, (Chelsea Rep) as well as numerous high schools.

He lives in Hartford CT with his wife Teri. As a young man he was cast in the original pilot for the TV sires The Partridge Family. At the behest of Shirley Jones, he was replacde by David Cassidy, her stepson. The pilot was never broadcast, and the tape destroyed in a mysterious lab fire.