

Title: The Cold Plunge  
Author: Sunny Bleckinger

#### CHARACTERS

Myrna Glass  
Female. Almost 40. Depressed, for good reason.

Carl Kovalevsky  
Male. 65. Emotionally deep into retirement.

Petal Bunce  
Female. Mid-forties. Highly capable. Natural helper.

"Fish" (Aleksey) Pishkalnakov  
Male. 20. Overconfident exterior. Broken on the inside.

Mrs Glass  
Female. 70s. Myrna's mother. Has no filter.

"Val" Valentine Ivchenko  
Male. Mid 40s. Town Priest. Insecure.

Narrator / Ghost  
Effeminate male voice. Knows everything.

## EPISODE 1

NOTE: A slash ( / ) indicates where the next speaker's line begins.

100

**EXT. WOODS**

100

SFX - Slow steps in snow. Snort from a large animal.

NARRATOR

This is a moose. Adult, female,  
one thousand pounds. It's late  
winter and there's not much to  
eat, so she goes to a tree, jams  
her lower teeth into the bark,  
scrapes upward and pulls off a  
strip. It's not her favorite food  
but it works.

SFX - Scraping and eating sounds.

NARRATOR

The people in town call her Elena.  
They have a name for every moose  
in the area. And yes, there is a  
reason for that.

101

**INT. PANCAKE HOUSE**

101

SFX - Background CHATTER, cutlery CLINKING plates.

MYRNA

What did you do after Elena...

CARL

Became a moose?

MYRNA

(Hates to say it)  
Yes, what did you do after your  
wife became a moose?

All sounds cuts out.

NARRATOR

This is Myrna Glass. Almost forty.  
Depressed, for good reason.

Background sounds resume.

CARL

Well let's see... that was on a  
Sunday and the next day was Monday  
so... I went to work.

All sound cuts out.

NARRATOR

And this is Carl Kovalevsky.  
Myrna's boss. Sixty-five.  
Emotionally deep into retirement.

Background sounds resume.

MYRNA

That's it? You just went to work?

CARL

It was a Monday, and I work on  
Mondays. So, yeah.

NARRATOR

They're seated at a booth, the  
linoleum floor a chessboard of  
black and white, every seat  
cushion shiny red, the window  
curtains checkered with little red  
chickens.

MYRNA

But wasn't everything different?

CARL

Everything? No.

MYRNA

You were married forty-three  
years. She was always there when  
you came home.

CARL

That's true.

NARRATOR

He opens his pill box, swallows  
his daily dosage.

CARL

The house is quieter and it doesn't smell as good as it used to. But I put on records and I got these plug-in air fresheners.

NARRATOR

The diner is Mischa's Pancake House: not the only game in town, but it is for Carl. He and Myrna just finished the one item on the menu.

CARL

We should have another.

MYRNA

I'm full.

CARL

(calling to server)

Miss. Miss!

(excited)

Here she comes.

MYRNA

Oh Christ she's wearing the shirt.

102

**INT. MAIL TRUCK**

102

SFX - Mail truck driving.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile Petal Bunce, veteran postal carrier, just transferred here from a much warmer region, not by choice. She is now being driven in an old mail truck from the small airport into town. She looks around the cold metal interior, cracked vinyl seats, frosted windshield.

PETAL

This must be an older model.

NARRATOR

Petal's in her mid-forties. Her focus and calm belies the long flight she just took.

FISH

The best model.

NARRATOR

And he goes by Fish. Barely  
twenty. Wears a mullet and a  
moustache. Everything he says is  
weighted with importance.

FISH

You don't wanna break down in  
these parts. You know: *Minus*.

PETAL

You're referring to the  
temperature?

FISH

Sometimes thirty below.

PETAL

Yes well that's why I got this  
coat.

FISH

Gonna need a warmer one.

PETAL

It's fleece-lined, made for arctic  
weather--

FISH

Don't worry, I got all your gear  
at the mail room. We'll hook you  
up.

PETAL

I'm not worried--

NARRATOR

He suddenly swerves in and out of  
the lane.

SFX - Mail truck SWERVES. Passing car HONKS.

PETAL

Woah!

FISH

(proud)  
Chunk of snow back there. I  
crushed it.

PETAL

Ok the road is icy so you should  
maybe--

FISH  
Used to be stands of people  
chanting, Go Fish, Go Fish. For  
me, right? I took Pralenburg  
Puffins all the way.

PETAL  
Puffins?

FISH  
PUFFINS! You watch ice hockey,  
right?

PETAL  
No.

FISH  
No?

PETAL  
No.

FISH  
...Really?  
(excited)  
Oh--oh.

NARRATOR  
He swerves again, crushing another  
chunk of snow.

PETAL  
I wouldn't mind driving.

FISH  
Good idea. Hit the ground rolling.  
Get it? *Rolling*.

PETAL  
You can pull over up there.

FISH  
I will.

NARRATOR  
Up ahead on the right the trees  
clear and the snow thins, a  
perfect spot to pull over. And  
Fish drives right past it.

PETAL  
That was the spot.

FISH  
There's a better one. I'll show  
you.

103     INT. PANCAKE HOUSE

103

SFX - Background CHATTER, cutlery CLINKING plates.

SERVER  
Who's ready for more!

NARRATOR  
The server, early 70s, wears a  
shirt that reads No Pain, No Gain,  
with a black and white photo of  
two babies silkscreened  
underneath.

CARL  
I am.

MYRNA  
I'm full.

NARRATOR  
The server sets two heavy plates  
with pancakes next to their empty  
plates still sticky with syrup.

SFX - Heavy plates on table.

SERVER  
They're real warm and the maple  
syrup is warm and together they're  
just mmmmm--

MYRNA  
I'm not eating this.

SERVER  
--mmmmmmmmmm!

MYRNA  
Also, you know that shirt is maybe  
not the most professional--

SERVER  
Twelve hours of labor, but I'm not  
complaining.

CARL  
I've never heard you complain.  
Just a hard worker.

SERVER

That's right. Did you see what it says? It says, No Pain, No Gain. See?

NARRATOR

She grabs the bottom of her shirt and pulls it down a little so the front goes tight against her cone-shaped wire bra.

CARL

Oh wow, that's yeah, I see it.

NARRATOR

Carl blushes and looks down at his food like a teenager.

MYRNA

I can't do this.

NARRATOR

Myrna starts to get up.

CARL

Wait, your question. Maybe she can help.

MYRNA

No.

SERVER

What question?

MYRNA

Oh my god.

CARL

Myrna's wondering what people do after their other half becomes a moose.

MYRNA

It's okay, really, I don't--

SERVER

When your father went, that son of a bitch--

MYRNA

Mom.

SERVER (MRS GLASS)

What? He left me alone with two babies.



MYRNA

He didn't know you were pregnant.

NARRATOR

She lets go of her shirt and reaches over the table to pick up Carl's empty plate, looking at him as she does so.

MRS GLASS

All alone.

CARL

That couldn't have been easy.

MRS GLASS

It wasn't.

NARRATOR

She stays leaning over the table far longer than necessary while locking eyes with him.

CARL

I think I need another pill.

MRS GLASS

I'll get you some water.

NARRATOR

But she doesn't move, just stares at him and he stares back, a deer in headlights, wanting very much to look down her shirt but holding her gaze instead.

At the same time Myrna pours the entire pitcher of warm maple syrup onto her empty plate and rests her cheek right there in it. If anyone were paying attention they'd see her reflection shimmering in the sweet substance as it coats her hair. They'd see the smallest of smiles spreading on her face, the same smile mirrored in the syrup. They'd see that for her right now the world gets quiet and she feels better and it is nice to see her this way, if only for a moment.

Brief musical interlude carries us to:

NARRATOR

Fish finally pulls over to his chosen spot, which doesn't look much different from the one that Petal had pointed out. They switch seats and Petal's driving the mail truck now, something she's done a million times.

FISH

You'll want to shift into third.

PETAL

I know.

FISH

Past this corner is the best view. Uncle Jo's spot.

PETAL

Your uncle lives up here?

FISH

I mean, in the vicinity.

NARRATOR

They round a bend and Petal slams on the breaks just in time to avoid hitting a moose nibbling at something in the road.

SFX: Truck BREAKS hard, mailbags and anything not bolted down flip forward into the back of their seats.

PETAL

Whoa, that was close.

NARRATOR

The moose lifts its head to look at them, its antlers rising well beyond the height of their truck. An absurdly large creature.

PETAL

It's huge.

FISH

Careful. Uncle Jo's sensitive.

PETAL

Oh I thought you meant your real uncle.

FISH  
I do.

PETAL  
Okay... Is it safe to go around  
him?

FISH  
Nope.

PETAL  
So... what do we do?

SFX: Moose blares. It's coming from outside, so somewhat muted.

FISH  
Kill the engine. You gotta hear  
this. It's epic.

NARRATOR  
Petal hesitates.

FISH  
It's okay. Don't worry.

NARRATOR  
Petal fights her instincts and  
turns off the engine. Fish rolls  
down his window. The moose blares  
again, rich overtones that almost  
change the color of the air.

SFX - Moose BLARE.

FISH  
Wow. Just look at him. Oh--  
actually don't.

NARRATOR  
The moose gives them a hard stare  
while urinating in the road.

FISH  
Don't look. He can't go / when--

PETAL  
He's doing just fine.

NARRATOR  
As if on cue, the moose stops mid-  
stream.

FISH  
See? He couldn't finish.

PETAL  
Is he making eyes at us?

FISH  
Told you not to look.

SFX: Moose BLARES again.

NARRATOR  
The moose lowers his head, paws at the ground and charges--all fourteen hundred pounds of him running straight at the mail truck.

PETAL  
Woah, woah. WOAH!

SFX: Big THUD, CRUMPLING METAL. Entire mail truck shakes.

PETAL  
(terrified)  
What do I do? Shit. What do / I--

FISH  
(authoritative)  
Uncle Jo! What are you doing?

SFX: Moose BLARES again, much closer.

NARRATOR  
Fish snaps off his seatbelt, pulls a handgun from the glove box and steps outside. Normally Petal might ask why he keeps a firearm in a federal vehicle, but right now all she can muster is:

PETAL  
Jesus Christ Fish what fuck Jesus!

Mic stays inside.

FISH  
(outside vehicle)  
Uncle Jo! What did I say? Remember last time?

NARRATOR  
He raises the gun and shoots at the icy blue sky.

BLAM!

NARRATOR

The moose startles, but doesn't back up. He snorts and takes a step towards the mail truck, lowers his head and leans his face right up to the windshield, his antlers rubbing the roof and his nostrils fogging the glass. He looks deep into Petal's eyes, who is frozen in terror.

FISH

(outside)

Uncle Jo-ooo.

NARRATOR

The moose snorts again, holds eye contact with Petal as a glob of mucous lowers from his nostril and touches the windshield, slowly wobbling down the glass. An eternity of a moment passes until finally, finally the creature turns and ambles off.

PETAL

(Close to mic)

Oh my god. Oh my god.

NARRATOR

Fish gets back into the passenger seat and returns the gun to the glove box.

SFX: Door pulled shut.

FISH

(back in truck)

Anyway, there's a pretty good view of the town. Over there.

NARRATOR

Petal, in shock, looks to where he's pointing, a snowy valley with a small town, little chimneys curling smoke into the air.

FISH

That's where we're headed. Pralenburg, Alaska. Founded in 1894, exactly one-hundred years ago. Yup.... Well, we should probably get moving.

NARRATOR

Petal doesn't move, just watches the little dot that is the one stoplight in town turn from red to green as a pickup truck that looks from here like a toy stutters through the intersection.

FISH

You want me to drive?

PETAL

Okay.

NARRATOR

The distant pickup truck drives another block and then turns and parks at the Pralenburg Post Office. From here Carl and Myrna are barely visible as they step out and go through the employee door and into the Mail Room, which hasn't changed in thirty years.

105

**INT. MAIL ROOM**

105

Mail sorter chortles in background, fluorescent lights hum above.

NARRATOR

They walk past the walls which are still coated in the same honeydew-melon green, past the same grid of cubbies filled with envelopes, past the ramp at the loading dock and the cage on wheels half-full of snow-dusted packages, past a sorting machine chugging away and the mail bags bulging in a corner. They even pass the counter where Fish and Petal will soon be standing, as he issues her federally mandated gear.

FISH

Mail bag. Sorting apron. Postal Shorts. You'll need these.

PETAL

Am I still in shock or is it really this warm in here?

FISH

Nice, right?

PETAL

Can we crack a window?

FISH

Then the heat would get out.

PETAL

But some fresh air would come in.

FISH

Alaska air is the best. Now, you got more gear coming.

NARRATOR

The only post office in town was built in 1961, just two years after Alaska became a state. Radiators were installed, turned up way too high, and no one's ever been able to adjust them. The mail room is the worst, which is why everyone keeps a pair of shorts in their locker.

FISH

Flashlight.  
(clicks on and off several times)  
On / off switch right there.  
Flashlight.

PETAL

We're not gonna talk about what just happened?

FISH

It's your first day.

Someone starts playing arpeggios on a TROMBONE behind a closed door roughly 20 feet away.

FISH

I'll let it slide.

PETAL

Shouldn't we report the vehicle damage?

FISH

Get it? Slide?

PETAL

A wild animal rammed our / truck.

FISH  
I mean, the mechanic will fix it.  
(muttering)  
Wild animal. He is not / wild.

PETAL  
And who is playing trombone?

FISH  
That would be Post Master Carl.  
He's good, right?

NARRATOR  
This is not the first or last time  
that Petal doesn't know how to  
respond.

Trombone in background continues as we cut to:

106

**INT. CARL'S OFFICE**

106

We're now in the room with the same trombone.

MYRNA  
Carl. Carl. CARL!

SFX - Trombone playing stops.

CARL  
What?

MYRNA  
(exasperated)  
What? You just--oh my god.

NARRATOR  
Myrna sits in a metal chair in  
front of Carl's grey tanker desk,  
hugging a canvas bag full of mail.  
Her hair juts out on one side in a  
wild direction, hardened and shiny  
from the maple syrup.

CARL  
Your mother sure is nice.

MYRNA  
That's why you asked me in here?  
Look, if you want to date my mom--

CARL  
I don't.



MYRNA  
(muttering)  
She obviously does.

CARL  
You think so?

MYRNA  
I think I should get started on  
this mail.

NARRATOR  
She gets up and Carl blurts:

CARL  
I'm retiring in two days.

MYRNA  
I know.

CARL  
You could be the next Post Master.

MYRNA  
I know.

CARL  
But you won't.

MYRNA  
I--no, I'm sorry. It's not for me.

CARL  
It's a good job. Why will no one  
take it?

MYRNA  
I think it's hard for people to  
imagine anyone but you in the  
role. Someone will step up. Wait,  
did you ask everyone before me?

CARL  
Not everyone.

MYRNA  
Oh Jesus.

CARL  
He might be good.

MYRNA  
His frontal lobe hasn't developed.

CARL  
No one else will do it.

MYRNA  
So don't retire. It's not what you think.

CARL  
Don't retire? That's funny. Like one of those jokes. You know those jokes? Those funny jokes?

MYRNA  
I should get to work.

CARL  
Oh yeah me too.

107     INT. MAIL ROOM

107

FISH  
And that is the full allotment.

Trombone arpeggios resume, twenty feet away, behind a closed door.

FISH  
The postal shorts are not required but they are recommended. In here.

PETAL  
Yeah I get that. Whew it's warm. Shouldn't I get started on my route?

FISH  
*Uno momento.* First week you have to ride with someone. We bend the rules sometimes but mostly not. Case in point: You see this mullet?

PETAL  
My eyes keep going there.

FISH  
I understand. It's a beautiful object. Not strictly a violation but you know, frowned upon. And no one says a word.

PETAL  
Okay...

MYRNA  
(approaching mic)  
Hey are you the new transfer?

PETAL  
(relieved)  
Hi, yes. I'm Petal Bunce.

Her last word betrays her reaction to Myrna's hair.

NARRATOR  
Petal's eyes dart to the side of  
Myrna's hair, stiff from the maple  
syrup and reaching out like a  
plant searching for sunlight.

MYRNA  
Myrna Glass. You're riding with me  
this week.

NARRATOR  
Petal is unsure if this is a good  
or bad development and she  
responds with a word that could  
mean either.

PETAL  
Great.

Mic stays with them as they walk away from Fish.

FISH  
I issued all her gear. Myrna? I  
issued all her--

108     **INT. MAIL TRUCK**

108

Myrna's DRIVING.

NARRATOR  
Myrna's driving her mail truck.  
Petal's in the passenger seat,  
twisted around, digging through  
mail bags behind her.

PETAL  
(not facing mic)  
Where are the trays?

MYRNA  
I don't use trays.

PETAL  
 You don't? Then how--  
 (face mic)  
 --how do you sort the mail?

MYRNA  
 It's all in the bags.

PETAL  
 So It's not sorted.

MYRNA  
 I have a system. It works fine.

PETAL  
 Really.

MYRNA  
 Yes. By the end of the day we'll  
 do twenty, maybe thirty houses.

PETAL  
 That's it?

MYRNA  
 You can do better?

PETAL  
 Yeah, like five or six hundred.

MYRNA  
 In one day? Right, and then with  
 five or six hundred mistakes. No,  
 I'm not going to rush this.

NARRATOR  
 Myrna parks under a spruce tree at  
 the end of a residential street:  
 small houses with thick strips of  
 snow between them.

SFX - Shift into park.

109

**EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET**

109

NARRATOR  
 They step outside and Myrna yanks  
 one of the canvas mail bags from  
 the back and lets it drop in the  
 snow. She loosens the cord at the  
 top of the bag and peers at the  
 pile of envelopes inside.

MYRNA

Just let me find the mail and you  
walk it over to the boxes.

NARRATOR

She reaches down into the mailbag,  
deep enough that her cheek now  
rests on top of the envelopes, and  
her syrup-stiffened hair is  
pointing straight up. She suddenly  
relaxes, smiling at Petal.

MYRNA

(under mic)

It's still warm. From the mail  
room.

PETAL

Right.

NARRATOR

Petal stands there with her arms  
folded while Myrna closes her  
eyes and feels around inside the  
bag.

MYRNA

(under mic)

Found one.

NARRATOR

Myrna stands up, pulling an  
envelope out of the bag and  
handing it to Petal.

MYRNA

(at mic)

Walk this over to that box, I'll  
find the rest.

PETAL

Sure.

NARRATOR

Petal walks over to one of the  
mailboxes. The flag is up, she  
opens the box and pulls out a  
stamped envelope, then inserts the  
one she was holding.

SFX - Creaky mailbox opens and closes.

NARRATOR

This simple, familiar motion  
relaxes her and she almost laughs,  
looking forward to the day when  
this is a funny story that she can  
tell another post office in  
another town very, very far from  
here. She turns to look back and--

PETAL

Holy God.

NARRATOR

A large moose is standing right  
behind Myrna, watching her dig in  
the mailbag. Petal feels paralyzed  
and barely able to speak.

PETAL

Moose. That's a moose. Myrna!

NARRATOR

Almost in perfect symmetry, Myrna  
stands up from the mail as the  
moose lowers its snout, licks its  
lips and then--licks her hair.  
Myrna smiles as if it's a trusted  
pet. She reaches up to rub the  
creature's neck as it licks her  
head clean.

SFX - Myrna laughing in the distance.

MYRNA

(in middle distance)

Okay buddy, okay. Easy now.

110

**INT. MAIL TRUCK**

110

Myrna driving.

MYRNA

They like maple syrup.

PETAL

Yeah but that is dangerous. I've  
encountered moose before and they  
are very dangerous. I know.

MYRNA

Well according to the town he's my  
father so--it must be fine.

PETAL

What?

MYRNA

Don't worry, I don't believe in any of that. I'm one of the only people that knows.

PETAL

Knows what?

MYRNA

That you don't become moose just by jumping in a lake.

PETAL

Of course you don't.

MYRNA

Right. Sorry, you're not from here. Sometimes I forget the rest of the world is normal.

PETAL

It is not.

MYRNA

I know, but in this one way I guess.

PETAL

So that's why Fish called that one his uncle, because...

MYRNA

He thinks it's really his uncle.

PETAL

And you're saying people jump in a lake--up here? Isn't it frozen?

MYRNA

There's one lake that doesn't completely freeze. It has this opening in the middle. People jump in and--and they don't come up.

PETAL

Oh my god.

MYRNA

Yeah.

PETAL

So... your dad?

MYRNA

Yeah.

PETAL

And Fish's uncle.

MYRNA

It's sort of the religion here.  
Well not sort of. It is.

PETAL

How in the world did this start?

MYRNA

I guess how they all start. With a  
priest. Or at least a guy who  
plays the role.

111

**INT. RECTORY**

111

SFX - CRACKLING fireplace.

NARRATOR

Val Ivchenko the Fifth wears  
clothing that is one-size too  
small, and despite his salt and  
pepper hair, has always appeared  
too young to be the town priest.  
Maybe because his father and  
grandfather before him were all  
larger, more confident men.

VAL

(clenched teeth)

Fuckity, fuckity. Fuckity.

NARRATOR

Or maybe he hasn't quite grown  
into the role. His small home  
attached to the church is toasty  
from the fire he built this  
morning, though it never seems to  
relax him.

VAL

Baaaaallsssh. Ballsssh.

NARRATOR

No one swears around the priest,  
so he's never learned how. But  
it's the one unwritten rule he  
breaks, only in private of course.  
Sometimes he's even creative.



VAL

Beaver weaner.

NARRATOR

It does seem to help him focus, especially when engaged in a difficult task, like preparing the weekly sacrament. There is no bread or wine involved. Rather, local religion has the residents inhaling the essence of tree bark from a sitka spruce and chewing on dried strands of pondweed, common foodstuff in the diet of a moose. He's engaged in these preparations now and it is, well, difficult.

VAL

Fuckity, fuck-crack.

NARRATOR

The pondweed must be pulled apart into strands no wider than a human hair, which are then laid out to dry on a strip of muslin. Val uses a wooden ruler to ensure that each strand is set exactly one-and-a-half inches apart. But sometimes he lays one down an eighth-of-an-inch off, and doesn't notice until he's laid down ten more, all of them now needing fine adjustments.

VAL

Baaaaaaaallssshh.

NARRATOR

Of course it doesn't matter if they're exactly an-inch-and-a-half apart. These rules were written down in a moment of drunkenness by his great, great grandfather, Valentine Ivchenko the First, a man who turned out to be a monster. Our Val, the fifth, looks out the window and sees a mail carrier bending over a mailbag, her arms deep inside the canvas.

VAL

Myrna.

NARRATOR

Anyone else who felt as he does  
would burst through the door and  
run to the woman whose hair is  
always askew from maple syrup or  
moose saliva, often both, the  
woman with thick eyebrows and  
heavy depression. Anyone else  
would already be at her feet,  
confessing their love. But Val has  
chosen to kneel where is,  
carefully pulling the laces  
through his boots so that they are  
perfect and snug.

VAL

And now the left shoe...

112

**EXT. RECTORY**

112

NARRATOR

He finally steps outside, wanting  
very much to hustle, but he is not  
supposed to hustle. He is supposed  
to stroll, hands behind his back,  
his priestly robes swaying like a  
church bell, and he just barely  
gets to her in time.

VAL

Lovely day.

NARRATOR

Lovely day. There is so much he  
wants to share with Myrna, and  
that's what comes out.

MYRNA

Petal, can you give him his mail?

NARRATOR

A mail carrier he's never seen  
before climbs out from the mail  
truck and eyes him suspiciously.

PETAL

Uh, sure. Here you go.

NARRATOR

She holds out several envelopes  
for Val.

VAL

Those are supposed to go in the mailbox, over there.

NARRATOR

He points to the church mailbox, a hundred feet away. And Petal loses it.

PETAL

Are you fucking serious?

NARRATOR

Val's world explodes with color. For the first time in his sheltered life, homeschooled with his priest father, no television or VCR, only a collection of records, mostly choral music and Bach, Hildegard von Bingen, endless sonatas on recorder, clarinet, oboe, anything with reeds. The most lusty object in the house was the small hammond organ which he was allowed to play on Friday nights, and even that came with a twinge of guilt. And now, finally, this outsider talks to him like a regular person, and shows him how to say the word "fucking."

VAL

Thank you so much.

PETAL

Jesus Christ you're passive aggressive.

NARRATOR

She starts walking his mail to the mailbox.

PETAL

(walking away from mic)  
You're so welcome!

MYRNA

Sorry about her Father, she's new.

VAL

Quite alright.

NARRATOR

He smiles and blinks at her.

MYRNA

Well, probably see you here tomorrow.

VAL

Yes, probably.

NARRATOR

She turns to leave and--

VAL

Wait, do you see anything different? I'm trying to make some changes in my life.

NARRATOR

He stands up straighter and somehow looks smaller.

MYRNA

That's good. I don't see it, but good for you.

NARRATOR

She gives him a thumbs up, then turns to join this new person and he wishes so desperately that he could do something extravagant. Sing, dance, beg, bury his burning face in the snow. But he stands there, breathing shallow breaths, hands behind his back. His teeth are chattering and he realizes that he is incredibly cold. He went outside without his coat. That's something. That's new and different. He is changing, and this gives him comfort.

113

**INT. POST OFFICE**

113

NARRATOR

Back at the Post Office, Fish is sitting at the front desk, the same sad, frustrated face he used to wear in the penalty box, where he spent most of his time in ice hockey. Back then people believed the box to be his secret weapon. Every single time, the moment he was let out, he'd score the winning goal, then start another fight.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He's been sitting at this desk now  
for two years, waiting for a  
similar moment of glory. Carl  
approaches him.

CARL

Fish.

FISH

Boss.

NARRATOR

They don't look at each other,  
just watch the snow fall through  
the foggy glass-front of the  
building.

CARL

How you uh, how you holding up?

FISH

Had an angry patron earlier. It  
was nothing.

CARL

Good.

(beat)

Should be lunch time soon.

FISH

Yeah. I'm pretty eager to get out  
there.

NARRATOR

A quiet minute passes.

CARL

Something I've been meaning to  
ask.

FISH

Oh yeah?

CARL

You know I'm retiring in a couple  
days?

FISH

That's right. Your ol' lady's been  
moose for what, whole year? Bet  
you're excited to join her.

CARL  
(non committal)  
Yeah.

NARRATOR  
They watch the snow fall for  
another minute.

FISH  
Was that your question?

CARL  
No, I, well... remember your hockey  
days?

FISH  
That time's over.

CARL  
You were a natural leader, on the  
ice.

FISH  
Only got two knees and one of em's  
ruined.

CARL  
But you're still a natural leader.

FISH  
What can I say. People look up to  
me.

CARL  
(non committal)  
Yeah.

(beat)

FISH  
So, was that your question?

CARL  
Yeah.

NARRATOR  
Carl walks outside and gets in his  
old pickup, starts it up and  
drives down the road, stopping at  
the one stoplight in town. He  
waits until the red light turns to  
green and when it does he eases on  
the gas.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
His mind preoccupied, he doesn't  
notice as he passes Myrna's mail  
truck going in the other  
direction. They don't notice  
either.

SFX - Two trucks passing each other.

114      **INT. MAIL TRUCK**

114

Myrna driving.

PETAL  
So I gotta ask: do people have a  
choice when they jump? Is there  
some kind of lottery?

MYRNA  
The tradition is they jump at  
retirement.

PETAL  
Jesus.

MYRNA  
They spend their whole life  
preparing for it.

NARRATOR  
They hit the one stoplight and  
wait for the red to turn to green.  
Several blocks behind them, Carl  
arrives for his appointment with  
the priest.

115      **INT. EMPTY CHURCH**

115

Footsteps reverberate on a wooden floor.

NARRATOR  
He walks past the empty pews to  
the front of the church and sees  
the familiar strands of pondweed  
drying on muslin, each exactly an  
inch-and-a-half apart. He grimaces  
at the sight, the acrid taste from  
the last time he took the  
sacrament still fresh in his  
memory.  
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He considers turning around, going for pancakes instead, but then the priest appears, swinging his silver incense burner from it's chain, back and forth, back and forth. Thick and pungent smoke weighted with the essence of spruce bark surrounds Carl, who coughs.

VAL

Breathe in deeply. Your body fights it because you fight it.

NARRATOR

Carl takes a deep breath, pulling thick tendrils of smoke into his lungs.

VAL

Accept it as if it were pure mountain air and your body will accept it as well.

NARRATOR

Carl exhales and barely stifles another cough. Val sets the incense burner on its tray and pinches one of the strands of pondweed, lifting it high and letting it sway in the smoke. Carl winces at the sight. He's chewed on these things for all of his life, and despite what they told him as a child, he has never gotten used to it.

CARL

I did have a question.

NARRATOR

Val keeps his eyes on the pondweed, watching it blur in and out of the smoke.

VAL

Go ahead.

CARL

Well I was wondering...



NARRATOR

Carl searches for every word, as if he's speaking a foreign language.

CARL

...how I might initiate a delay?

VAL

It is five days before your plunge. If we delay your holy sacrament, then we must delay your plunge.

CARL

I was actually wondering if I could delay my plunge.

VAL

You can't. It's scheduled for Saturday. And the final plunge is the next day. The final plunge. There is nothing after.

NARRATOR

Carl looks for a moment like a sad child.

VAL

How long did you want to delay?

CARL

I hadn't really thought about it. But--well--five years would be lovely.

NARRATOR

The priest blanches.

CARL

Or one.

Incidental music fades in.

NARRATOR

Carl's face glows as he imagines a full year, the different seasons and outfits, the different foods and holidays, spending them all with Mrs Glass.

VAL

The final plunge is this weekend.  
(MORE)

VAL (CONT'D)  
If you delay past that it won't be  
for one year. You will delay this  
for the rest of your life.

CARL  
Really? Wow.

Music continues through next scenes.

116     **INT. MAIL TRUCK**

116

Myrna driving.

MYRNA  
Anyway it's all ending soon  
enough. One last person will jump  
in and then that opening in the  
ice is freezing over, for good.

PETAL  
How do you know?

MYRNA  
Everyone knows.

117     **INT. EMPTY CHURCH**

117

CARL  
But how do we know?

VAL  
It's written in the scripture. The  
blessing on the lake will last one  
hundred years. The date is clear.

NARRATOR  
Val can tell that Carl is still  
confused.

VAL  
Sometimes it helps to explain the  
science behind it.

CARL  
Really? Sorry, I just never  
thought that you...

VAL  
I have nothing against science.  
What it tells us is correct.  
(MORE)

VAL (CONT'D)

But it's young, whereas religion is ancient, and shrouded. So we must trust religion until the science catches up to explain. In this case, we're lucky. The science is there.

118      INT. MAIL TRUCK

118

MYRNA

It's so obvious. Any fifth grader can see it's a hot spring. Although "hot" isn't the word. The heat's been fading as long as we've been here. That's why it doesn't do much to the lake, most of the surface freezes. The few bubbles of warmth that do rise up, they're only enough to keep this slushy opening in the center. It's not warm, but not nearly as cold as the rest of the water.

119      INT. EMPTY CHURCH

119

VAL

Shall I tell you again about the Princess, and my great great grandfather?

CARL

The Priest.

VAL

The Founders. They were the first to discover this magic. And they knew.

CARL

The magic is real.

120      INT. MAIL TRUCK

120

PETAL

Why moose?

MYRNA

I guess 'cause they're around. An easy thing to point at. I don't know. None of it makes sense. The things people buy.

PETAL

But not you. You grew up here. I would understand if you believed in all this. But you don't.

MYRNA

I've seen the bodies. In that lake? Nobody's turning moose, they're just dying down there.

PETAL

You have to you show people.

MYRNA

No one will go. They say you're only supposed to go when it's your time. And only with the priest.

PETAL

What made you go?

Music gradually fades out.

MYRNA

I guess I was curious. I was twelve and I wanted to see where my dad went. I had never met him. The story was he got a wild hair one night, it was after my mom got pregnant but before either of them knew, and he ran out there and jumped in. Anyway at twelve I walked to the center of the lake, right up to the edge of that slushy opening.

SFX - Footsteps on crackly ice.

MYRNA

I couldn't see anything through all the pebbles of ice floating there, so I squatted down and put my hand in, swirled 'em around. That's when the ice that I was on, it snapped. And I fell in.

SFX - The sound of her plunge in slow motion carries over Val's next line.

VAL (CONT'D)

The founders of our town loved  
each other so much that a spell  
was created, a hundred year spell,  
to keep them together for  
eternity.

As the sound of the plunge recedes, incidental music fades in.

122      INT. MAIL TRUCK

122

MYRNA

These people they spend their life  
eating fucking tree bark and pond  
weed, as if that's gonna prepare  
them. They have no idea--what it  
feels like? Freezing cold water?  
All of your nerves light up. Every  
inch of your skin clenches and  
screams the same thing: get out.  
This is a mistake. The biggest  
kind.

123      INT. EMPTY CHURCH

123

VAL

And everyone after, once they can  
no longer perform their duties, at  
the time of retirement, they may  
also transform.

124      INT. MAIL TRUCK

124

MYRNA

And down there I saw them.  
Skeletons, some with skin, blotted  
green and black. Everything seemed  
to slow down. I don't know if I  
had swallowed water or what but  
the panic I felt was gone and I--  
it didn't seem like I needed air.  
That moment still haunts me. I  
think it must be when everyone  
thinks they'll transform. But it's  
when you give up, something  
happens in the brain that makes  
you accept it, even welcome it.

MYRNA

I must have been closer to the  
surface than I realized.

(MORE)

MYRNA (CONT'D)  
Someone shoved a tree branch in  
the water. I watched myself reach  
for it and they pulled me up.

Music continues, building.

125

**INT. EMPTY CHURCH**

125

VAL  
Is this what you really want? To  
miss your chance? Your chance to  
reunite with your wife?

CARL  
I don't know.

VAL  
You were married for forty-three  
years.

CARL  
We were.

VAL  
She loves you.

CARL  
She does.

VAL  
And you love her?

CARL  
Of course.

VAL  
Then the choice is easy. Let  
yourself be with your love. While  
you still can.

NARRATOR  
Val brings the pondweed to Carl's  
face. Carl tilts his head, opens  
his mouth and takes it with his  
teeth, chewing slowly,  
deliberately, sneering at the  
taste.

Music fades out.

126

INT. MAIL TRUCK

126

Myrna driving.

PETAL

So who was it? With the branch?

MYRNA

My sister. Twin sister. We had been inseparable since birth, but around then a tension had developed and we were spending more time apart.

PETAL

But not that day.

MYRNA

No, thank god. I didn't know it, but she had followed me out to the woods. She saw me fall in and ran for a thick branch, pulled me out and stripped off my wet clothing, then kind of wrapped herself around me, giving me all her warmth. It was the last time we hugged. We used to hug all the time.

PETAL

You must still talk?

MYRNA

Here and there, but we're only growing further apart.

PETAL

But you're twins, that bond--

MYRNA

Fraternal. So we don't look alike.

PETAL

That doesn't matter.

MYRNA

We don't think the same either. Or believe in the same things.

NARRATOR

Myrna parks at an apartment building with a grid of mailboxes by the stairs.

SFX - Engine turns off.

MYRNA

I told you how normally people take the plunge at retirement, but for the final one they had a contest to see who would go. And my sister was the lucky winner.

PETAL

No.

MYRNA

She thinks it's a great honor.

PETAL

There must be a way to stop this.

MYRNA

I've tried.

PETAL

Or get someone to switch with her?

MYRNA

There is nothing you can do.

NARRATOR

Myrna gets out and walks to the back of the mail truck. Petal sits a moment, floored by the finality in Myrna's tone, then steps out to join her.

SFX - Car door slams shut.

127

**EXT. RESIDENTAIL STREET**

127

PETAL

I know it's not the same but I can give you a hug.

MYRNA

Thanks but we should get moving.

NARRATOR

She yanks out a mail bag and lets it drop in the snow, then tries to loosen the cord at the top. The cord is stuck in a tight little knot and Myrna, struggling with something that is normally easy, looks like she might cry or scream.



PETAL

Here. Let me.

MYRNA

Fine, sure. It's stuck. You just have to...

NARRATOR

Petal kneels down.

PETAL

That is a tough one. I think I-- almost.

NARRATOR

She looks up at Myrna and smiles.

PETAL

Just about there.

NARRATOR

Petal's instincts are kicking in, something she's had all her life. Maybe from being the oldest of four, or maybe because she grew up taller and stronger than all of her friends. Whatever the reason, whenever she sees someone hurting, her instinct is to help. She unties the knot and opens the bag.

PETAL

(below mic)

Okay so then how does it work? I stick my arms in like this?

MYRNA

Oh, yeah um. Yeah, that's right.

PETAL

And what does it feel like? What I'm looking for?

MYRNA

There's a lot of tenants at this building, so...

PETAL

Pick one.

NARRATOR

Myrna hesitates. She's never explained her system to anyone. No one's ever asked.

MYRNA

Well, Miss Schroeder and her secret love, they always send letters. His have scotch tape on them, because he doesn't think they'll stay closed. And Mr Vogel, upstairs, he should be getting his disco magazine. He's shy about that but the company sends them in this thick black plastic. It feels different than other plastic and makes a little squeal if you rub it.

PETAL

I think I found one.

MYRNA

Really?

NARRATOR

She pulls out an envelope.

MYRNA

That's not it.

PETAL

Oh.

MYRNA

But keep trying.

PETAL

Oh good. I thought you wanted to take over.

NARRATOR

That's exactly what Myrna wants.

MYRNA

No it's the only way to learn. You should keep going.

NARRATOR

Petal stuffs her arms back in the bag, going deep enough to rest her cheek on the mail.

PETAL

It's still warm. How is that possible?

MYRNA  
The mail bag is waxed canvas, so  
it traps the heat in.

PETAL  
Feels amazing, hugging it like  
this.

MYRNA  
Yeah, I guess.

PETAL  
Tell me what else I'm looking for.

MYRNA  
Okay.

END EPISODE ONE