

“How People Move” – Coming-of-Age in North Shore New Brunswick

by

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ABSTRACT

Acadian people and the North Shore region of New Brunswick, where a large majority of the French-speaking population of New Brunswick live, have long existed in the margins socially, politically, economically, and geographically. As a bilingual region, northern New Brunswick and its mixed culture are not widely depicted in media outside of tourism, and little of the daily goings-on of the region's peoples or of their continued traumas from early acts of colonialism against the Acadian and Mi'kmaq are discussed in modern film narratives. By tracing the history of colonialism in the Maritimes to modern-day North Shore New Brunswick through research, Acadian cinema, and my own experiences growing up in Bathurst, and using screenwriting and the tools of Slow Cinema, I endeavor to portray what it means to come of age in the North Shore today.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project,

To my mom and dad,

To Jon and Simon, and our former teenage selves,

To Acadia, Gespegeoag, the North Shore— all names for the place I call home,

And finally,

To friendship.

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Introduction

Two-hundred-and-sixty-seven years ago, acting governor Charles Lawrence for the British Crown ordered and executed a large-scale mission to forcibly remove an entire population of French colonial settlers from the north-eastern territories of what is now considered the Maritime provinces of Canada (Jobb 2). Families were separated, people and homes were pillaged, and whole settlements that were farmed and carved out from the soil of these fertile coastal regions were burned and destroyed. The largest mass deportation took place in 1755, but the colonial warfare continued for seven long years as Acadian refugees attempted to escape and were consequently hunted and expunged (Jobb 2). The mission was touted as a “great and noble scheme” by the British, but in reality, it was an act of genocide and ethnic cleansing meant to eradicate an entire minority nation from newly British occupied lands (Jobb 3). According to Jobb, “The deportation was a human catastrophe” that warns us of “the depths of human hatred, the vulnerability of minorities, and the scourge of intolerance and prejudice” (3). Unfortunately, this was not the only colonial trauma to happen in our corner of the world.

The Mi’kmaq, Abenaki, Wolastoqiyik (or Maliseet) and all other First Nations were similarly hunted and very nearly destroyed by colonists. In 1756, the same Charles Lawrence issued a bounty for the scalps of Mi’kmaq men, resulting in the continued and now incentivized murder of Indigenous people (Quon). In his book *We Were Not the Savages*, Mi’kmaq Elder Daniel Paul writes:

The scalping bounties also adversely affected the Acadian population because many of them were part Mi’kmaq or were related to Mi’kmaq

families by marriage. Many Acadians were also scalped by the bounty hunters simply because they were handy and hated. (116)

The scalping bounties, much like the expulsion of the Acadians, were rationalized as a necessary endeavour to kill any attempts at overthrowing British rule in the region. In 2018, Paul noted how this scalping proclamation still existed in our country-making legislature and should be repealed. The Federal government responded by saying that the law was clearly no longer implemented, but Paul argued that it was archaic and offensive and must be removed (Quon). It was a stain from an old wound that the federal government could not understand was still an issue. Since then, multiple mass graves were unearthed in the summer of 2021, baring the bones of hundreds of missing children taken from their homes and murdered by government-funded residential schools (Austen). These schools were acts of assimilation meant to destroy Indigenous cultures in Canada. And like the Acadian Deportation, whole generations of Indigenous people were ripped apart, and cultures continued to be destroyed by descendants of settler-colonizers, some even bearing the Catholic cross they used to evangelize and abuse. The stain may be old, but the sting of collective trauma is real and has continued to fester for centuries.

The colonial mission against the Acadians goes by many names in literature and history. I've seen it written as "The Acadian Expulsion," "The Great Expulsion," "The Deportation," and only recently have I heard it called the "Genocide of Acadie" in a conversation with a good friend. 1 In French, we most commonly call it "Le Grand Dérangement," a term befitting its horrifying scale. Christopher Hodson, in his book *The Acadian Diaspora*, notes how the French word *dérangement* translates to "upheaval," "disorder," or [...] "trouble" (4). *Dérangement* also provides an interesting double

meaning when we consider the English literation of the word derangement as an act or state of insanity.

I had first come to know of this period of great human tragedy simply as “1755” during my school days in Bathurst. The impact of this lesson never fully solidified in me until high school. I remember having countless, in-depth conversations about religion and life with my two greatest friends and recognizing how there would be unspoken moments of understanding between these friends (both Acadian) that I could never fully understand as a cultural outsider. Unlike them, I wasn’t Acadian. I never went to Catholic Mass nor felt the sting of its signature guilt. I didn’t speak French at home, nor did I regularly visit extended family living in more-rural communities along the Acadian peninsula. I could not understand just how, and in what ways, the ramifications of such a deep trauma from over a century ago, could continue to manifest unconsciously in the lives and beliefs of my closest life-long friends. To me, “1755” was a tragic bit of history that had no bearing on my home life or how my parents, and their parents, were raised. I could not understand because I was not given the same tools and troubles as my friends. Now nearing ten years since these teenage conversations, I still cannot fully understand what lay beneath centuries of supposed “moving-on,” nor can I make any claims that I could in the same way that they understand these events. And yet, I feel compelled to try to make sense of this quiet and complicated feeling that I cannot quite express.

Troubles with language are keystones of North Shore living. Important details are often always left lost in translation, and childhood fears of assimilation transform into warranted fears that haunt our bilingual communities. In my screenplay, I’ve chosen to express the inexplicable feeling of living through techniques like extreme long takes and

tracking shots used by experimental films like Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* (1983), Kyung-mook Kim's *Stateless Things* (2011), and Mi'kmaq filmmaker Kennlin Barlow's *Mancanti (or the Violence of Man)* (2016). These troubles with appropriate communication occur throughout Claude and Elie's stories as they attempt to address their issues but can't seem to find (or grapple with) the words needed to describe them. This process leaves them skirting around their issues and feigning that they have "moved on" and are happy now. All of these filmmakers use elements from what has been described as Slow Cinema and inspired much of the self-reflection presented in "How People Move."

Put simply, slow cinema is a practice used by experimental filmmakers that focuses on and heightens the observational quality of cinema. According to Jaffe, a leading voice on Slow Cinema in academia, it is "the approaches in recent slow movies to plot, character, and emotion – and to stillness, motion, time and space – [that] underscore aspects of contemporary existence rarely foregrounded in either popular or art films" (2). Slow cineastes often utilize filmmaking techniques like long shots, long takes, and diegetic sound to communicate the unspoken and quiet struggles of their films' themes and characters. Silence is also a tool used expertly in these filmic moments. And through its use, silence brings to light the unconscious and allows it room to breathe outside of the noise typically associated with mainstream film narratives. In films where "nothing happens," characters are more likely to "observe rather than act" (Jaffe 4). Often in slow cinema, time and space seem to halt and shrink, and while this could make for an awfully boring film where the camera seems more focussed on the background than on

forwarding the plot, it allows for experimentation and duly needed reflection in the medium itself.

Frankly speaking, we seem to have a history of silence around our colonial past, and this silence or inability to communicate about our shared history and its traumas allows it to fester and affect us. Perhaps this is a symptom of “Atlantic Canadians [...] not sufficiently debating the complex issues that arise from the past and stretch into the present and future” (Reid and Savoie 1). Jaffe suggests that in Slow Cinema, “the empty time and space of slow movies open the way to a cinema of contemplation, a cinema congenial to [...] the ‘pensive’ or reflective spectator” (Jaffe 4). Moments from my screenplay that utilize these techniques include the beach sequence, the many movements where characters traverse through various scenes, moments spent at the mural, and the final sequence where Elie and Claude say their final goodbyes and set off on separate paths. For Elie, her major scene of reflection comes when she walks home alone after seeing her friend off and passes multiple houses with moving signs stuck on their front lawns. While nothing, or very little, is said in these scenes, the movement of the person and camera through the space speaks for itself. These sequence shots (a term used by Bazin to describe long takes), or “thinking images,” as Jaffe puts it, are deliberately slow and intentionally contemplative in their construction for the screen (4). In this way, weightier ideas like life, death, religion, old war, trauma, and even love are given the necessary room in the ephemera of the scene without providing any half-answers to these difficult-to-place issues. Instead, they are tumbled together like a broken bottle in the ocean with the hope that they will somehow-someday transform into sea glass.

Silence also plays a part in how scenes like the fireworks and the concert are characterized in Claude and Elie's stories. My fondest memories from the region include these celebrations: feeling the boom of fireworks from the rocks under the bridge with friends, sitting in the old church graveyard and drinking root beer, painting the *Stella Maris* on our cheeks while watching in admiration the eldest women run the festivities. While fireworks are present in the film, the Tintamarre, an important Acadian celebration where community members gather in the main street or a central location to *faire la folie* by banging pots, pans, and all manner of noisemakers, and usually performed on the Quinzou (Quinze-Août - August fifteenth), is decidedly absent from their day of activities. This choice to have it not appear in the film is because celebrations like the Tintamarre are usually held in places like Caraquet and are not usually held in communities that are majority bilingual like Bathurst. In its absence, the music festival and fireworks provide the noise that Claude and Elie must navigate and later becomes catalysts for the quiet moments where these characters are left to themselves. All these events shaped my dearest friends and me and gave us perspective just as they do for Claude and Elie in "How People Move." And participating in them was a privilege that I, as an anglophone child from out-of-towners, would not have been so easily afforded had I not been from here— I can recognize that now.

While my thesis, "How People Move," may not be considered a piece of slow cinema, it does intentionally use the tools of slow cineastes to express the feeling of a place still reeling from its troubled past, albeit unconsciously. "How People Move" certainly has a plot, but as its writer, I would not say that it is necessarily plot-driven. Rather it is driven by movement or the question of where to move next. Friends move

apart, physically and ideologically, people move in and out of town regularly just as the tides do, and the thought of staying still, or better yet, staying stuck in this place is often dramatically characterized as a death sentence, mostly figuratively, but sometimes literally for many of the region's young people.

The goal of my screenplay is to bring attention to these time-images where the audience and characters can contemplate these moments of mundane magic that naturally, or dare I say divinely, occur in regular day-to-day life. The sunshine through ocean spray as a stranger pours out the ashes of a loved one, the boom of fireworks in the presence of friends, the way music from headphones sometimes magically aligns with the beats of your footsteps or the movements of a stranger across the street are moments of magical synchronicity in a place that remains ungraspable in their entirety. For me, these all constitute moments of mundane magic experienced by the film's characters and are important facets of relating the audience to a place and its culture without fully revealing its secrets. The mural painter remains an illusion that comes and leaves with the sun, as does the train in its unassuming majesty. The train horns and ocean waves are omnipresent and remind us of how the town and its residents are in constant movement despite the belief that they are stuck in themselves or this place of no opportunity. The place itself becomes magical and guides Elie and Claude to make their separate life choices despite their apprehensions about whether it is the right or wrong decision for their lives. Ultimately, Elie and Claude start with the belief that happiness can only be found elsewhere and that they have no choice but to comply, but by the end of the film they learn that happiness just like pain and suffering can be found anywhere, and it is up to them to decide to take that leap of faith no matter where it will ultimately lead them.

À la Valdrague, an Acadian TV series coming out of New Brunswick, recalls these same ideas. In the show, an Acadian woman returns home to her quirky Acadian town having failed to get her big break in the city. She learns to let go of her inferiority complexes through working with the townspeople and re-discovers herself and the place she once called home in the process. From this story, we see media from an Acadian perspective that goes against the expectations born out of the region that our young people should move out west to find better opportunities. Similarly, we see a female character returning home and building a new sense of home and self in the process.

Acadian cinema deals with many issues — from language tensions, Acadian history, nationalism, and social issues like the outmigration of Acadian youth and labour — that I explore in my screenplay. The history of Acadian cinema in the region reflects the tensions between the English and French within the country. And depending on the film and filmmaker, Acadian cinema offers audiences a glimpse of the issues around place and opportunities faced by a majority of Acadians in the Maritimes. The first feature film ever produced on Canadian soil was in fact an adaptation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie* (1847). The major motion-picture made in 1913 in Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, has since been lost to time, leaving behind only a few stills and some promotional materials for film historians to sift through (Véronneau 23). Many of Canada's early films, some of which were significant in the curation of Canadian identity, were made by mostly non-Acadian filmmakers who visited the Atlantic provinces and would film short documentaries about the Acadians (Véronneau 23). One example would be Québécois filmmaker Roger Blais' *Voix d'Acadie* (1952) which offered audiences a glimpse at an Acadian chorale

group singing popular French hymns. Another film by Blais called *Les Aboiteaux* (1953) was filmed in the Acadian region. Pierre Véronneau in “A Journey Through Acadian Cinema” notes, “Blais [a Quebecois] [knew] little about the area” and the NFB had to hire now-famed Acadian cineaste Léonard Forest as a researcher and writer (23). This proved to be Forest’s first foot into the growing Canadian film industry (Véronneau 23). The great success of *Les Aboiteaux*, headed by Brault and his team, allowed Léonard Forest the chance to direct his own first film for the NFB, *Pêcheurs de Pomcoup* (1956) (Véronneau 23). It was a docuseries set in the oldest Acadian community in Nova Scotia and covered the community’s distinct and special connection to the ocean and fisheries. From this, Forest goes on to have a long career working for the NFB and producing many quintessential films about Acadians and from an Acadian’s perspective. Forest’s work in the industry and his films that depicted Acadian culture have, for better or worse, created many of the trappings and tropes of Acadians in our media.

A distinct Acadian nationalism emerges from the films following Forest’s efforts to establish an Acadian production house in the Maritimes. Acadian culture and the Acadian Deportation become a popular topic of interest thanks in part to Forest’s feature documentary, *Les Acadiens de la Dispersion* (1967) and accompanying satellite film *Acadie libre* (1966-69), which shed light on the atrocities of the past and propose a future where Acadians are finally free from their collective traumas. Following this, films like Brault’s *Éloge du Chiac* (1969) and *Acadie, Acadie?!?* (1971) made by both Brault and Pierre Perreault, two Quebecois filmmakers, capitalize on this trend of making films about Acadian culture and highlight the emerging nationalism in Acadian communities and the people’s efforts to assert their identity. But as Véronneau points out, “despite the

many merits of these films, they nonetheless portray a Quebecois perspective on Acadian reality,” and one that undoubtedly was influenced by its own culture that valued francophone nationalism (24). While discussing Mi’kmaq nationalism and the nationalist movements of other Indigenous populations, Battiste in her book *Living Treaties: Narrating Mi’kmaw Treaty Relations* reminds readers that:

All cultures and peoples are not alike, notwithstanding our essential humanness, and national movements are not alike, too. They may invoke the same principles of law and essential justice, speak from similar histories of colonization and repression, and aspire to the same broad goal of meaningful collective self-determination, but political movements are made of people— people speaking different languages, digesting their experiences in somewhat different ways, and imagining each their own kind of promised land. This is the greatest strength as well as the greatest weakness of nationalisms. Nationalisms are collective dreams, but who are the dreamers? It is the hearts of the dreamers that beauty and nightmares can be born from the same laws and histories. (116)

As I endeavoured to write a film about modern teens dealing with the ramifications of colonial history, Battiste’s words were incredibly illuminating for me personally as I sifted through research and films about or responding to colonial history in the Maritimes. I am forced to remind myself that, “nationalisms are collective dreams but who are the dreamers?” (Battiste 116). Audiences, filmmakers, and academics alike should remain diligent in our efforts to better understand our biases and privileges. The

works we bring into the world are all shaped by the issues we face and the biases we hold, and in turn, shape the “dreams and nightmares” that materialize in our lives and media.

Films like Forests *La noce est pas finie* (1971) and *Un soleil pas come ailleurs* (1972), showcase the issues around poverty, welfare, and workers’ rights and opportunities for Acadians. The former became a Acadian Cinema’s first feature-length fiction film made by an Acadian filmmaker and the latter a poetic feature documenting the rise in political activism among young Acadians in the region. *La noce est pas finie* (1971) explores the “lives and problems” of a group of Acadians working in New Brunswick (Véronneau 24). *Un soleil pas come ailleurs* (1972) details the growing frustrations of the Acadians towards their government in North-eastern New Brunswick. One of the film’s most iconic scenes includes a protest through downtown Bathurst, New Brunswick that shockingly ends with one of the protesters smashing the window of the town’s government building. This film in particular also includes beautiful interludes in a bar where a singer laments the plights of modern Acadians and the “political and cultural awakening” affecting the region (Véronneau 24).

Our community leaders are aware of the issues of dwindling youth retention rates in the region. Community programs like CBDC Chaleur are attempting to address these issues and better understand why youth retention rates are so low in the North Shore. Similarly, groups like the Multicultural Association Chaleur Region Inc. conducted a region-wide survey back in 2010 where the results concluded that more than 70 percent of that year’s high school graduates planned on leaving the community to pursue better-paying work and education opportunities (CBCNews). While the research is dated and in

much need of an update, these early statistics prove that the beliefs and fears of the region represented in films like *Un soleil pas comme ailleurs*, *La noce est pas finie*, and later films like *Family Business* did in fact impact our youth and continue to have lasting effects. But the obvious is plain to see if you ask the right people and is often represented in much of the output from Acadian cineastes and academics who know the region. Simply put, historically there have been no “good jobs” here that can sustain the growing number of youths coming of age each year in the region. Just like every other community, there are work opportunities in local labour and service positions, but much of it can seem somewhat lacklustre.

Rodrigue Jean’s fiction feature film *Full Blast* (1999) is the first of many Acadian films to spring to mind when considering local labour and outmigration. The film follows the lives of blue-collar workers in Bathurst who are put out of work when the local sawmill goes on strike. The film tackles issues of blue-collar labour, poverty, and queerness in small-town New Brunswick and showcases how its young characters reckon with the issues surrounding their community and the hopes and dreams regarding leaving. Similarly, Xavier Gould’s *Mona* (2021), a short fiction film about a young Acadian drag-queen and her quest to appear on the reality TV show *America’s Next Top Model*, played this past November at FICFA (Festival International du Cinéma Francophone en Acadie) and deals with similar themes of queer Acadian identity and the dreams of escaping small-town New Brunswick. In 2012, Justin Guitard released his short documentary *Family Business* as part of the Tremplin Program, a competition for emerging filmmakers belonging to French-speaking minorities. The film, set in a small general store in Pointe Verte, New Brunswick, shows the daily activities of an Acadian

family running their small business. The business itself caters directly to their community and gives us a glimpse at the family dynamics of the soon-to-retire owners, Nicole and Fabien, and their adult children. However, the children wish to pursue other dreams outside of their small community rather than follow in their family's footsteps. Given the evidence presented in these films by cineastes from the region, it seems that anyone from the North Shore looking for more in terms of education, finances, or opportunity will all have to move elsewhere.

Similarly, Phil Comeau's *The Gossips* (1978) deals with young Acadians moving to rural villages through focusing on the shenanigans of small-town gossips. The film's main character Anastaisie, a middle-aged divorcee living alone in her village, inserts herself into the lives of a new unmarried couple next door prompting her to spy and gossip about the couple. Her gossip rallies the town behind her, giving her a position of leadership within the women despite her divorcee status, but all comes crashing down by the film's climax where the town learns her gossip was wrong. The end of the film highlights how while Anastaisie has lost face in the community for being a gossip, the other women continue the cycle by turning their gossip towards her, and it is only a matter of time before a similar situation happens again. While the film is a comedy bordering on camp, it can be read as a cautionary tale that is an unfortunate reality in small-town communities where the young are often unfairly judged by the community's elders in often passively aggressive ways and under the guise of religious piety.

Much later in Acadian cinema, and forty years after Michel Brault's *Éloge du Chiac* (1969), one of its main characters and one of many children featured in the film, Marie Cadieux returns to the subject of chiac in her film *Celebrating Chiac – Part*

Two (2009). In this film, Cadieux visits many towns in the south-eastern part of New Brunswick, as well as France, to meet with Acadians who are making efforts to preserve the unique character of chiac. As the title suggests, the film celebrates chiac as a language and recognizes the frustrating position many modern Acadians face when confronted with a world that devalues their way of communicating.

Later, cineaste Stephanie David makes her film *Bittersweet Blues* (2015) to poetically illustrate her and her family's troubles with language and being legible to non-Acadians. By tracing personal memories to the ever-evolving Acadian French language, David illustrates what it means to be Acadian in a world where the language that she and her community speak is at odds with "appropriate" and normative French. By the end of the short documentary, she asserts her identity as an Acadian woman by refusing to lose her accent and instead opts to stay true to her roots rather than adopt a more normative French, despite the many difficulties this could pose on her life and work opportunities. In their films, both David and Cadieux touch on similar issues of language and identity. But despite the issues, or perhaps in spite of them, they are proud Acadian women asserting their personhood and place in society. While many of the early films belonging to what we could consider Acadian cinema were financed by the National Film Board and were almost exclusively made by non-Acadian filmmakers until Forest joined, Acadian filmmakers of all flocks, are now being given the chance to speak for themselves in their art and nationally funded cinema. Acadian cinema has had its time to mature, and the scope of Acadian cinema and the subjects its cineastes explore has expanded, but the themes and issues broached by these films, especially those discussing the New Brunswick's North Shore, have proven to remain similar over the decades. Filmmakers

like Daniel Léger, who made *A Sunday at 105* (2007), and Karin Godin, who made *My Radio* (2013), also describe pockets of daily Acadian life and struggle in their respective short films. Léger's film documents the daily happenings and musings of his hundred-and-five-year-old great grandmother as she speaks about religion, sex, politics, and life. Godin's *My Radio* (2013) documents the goings-on of her local Acadian radio station and the strong legacy it has left on the community that continues to stay tuned in. Rodrigue Jean's filmography incorporates the intersectional identity of queer Acadians into the subjects of his films. In his feature-length documentary *Men for Sale* (2009) we are given intimate portraits of several male sex workers as they live, work, and struggle to survive homophobic violence, addiction, and other issues that threaten their lives as queer Acadian minorities. And while all of the films above are very different in tone and subject matter from one another, they reveal issues that have unfortunately not gone away with time and instead continue to affect those Acadians coming-of-age in the North Shore.

In my initial attempt to paint a portrait of a place still reeling from the effects of “old-war” traumas, I ran into quite a few difficulties as to how I should develop the characters that populate my screenplay. I knew that I wanted a Mi'kmaq character brought into the fold during the Acadian Day celebrations. In my screenplay, the gang meets Zach's cousin Theo, a Mi'kmaq teen with dreams of becoming a journalist who currently lives on the Pabineau First Nation reservation (located some thirty minutes outside of Bathurst) in front of the finished mural depicting the Acadian deportation. In this moment in the film, Theo reminds the teens that there is more to the complicated regional history than the mural or celebrations currently offer. Claude asserts that the

mural depicts the Acadian Deportation and given that it is Quinzou (Acadian Day) there is no issue with the mural. But the teens, along with the audience, are confronted with the fact that the traumatic history depicted is further complicated by Theo's presence and his refusal to be a passive bystander or "footnote from the history books." While only a short scene, Theo's presence as a vocal and active character amidst a sea of passive and indecisive teens, proposes a more nuanced and complicated mode of understanding history and our adaptations of history by allowing the teens (Claude in particular) to recognize his biases and reconsider what it means to come from "old war" trauma. I also knew that I wanted to say more about the world Elie and Claude inhabit rather than focus solely on their character arcs. My hope was that audiences would see how the town itself lives and breathes without Claude and Elie, yet it is entirely inseparable from them as people attempting to move forward with their lives, a feeling that is more often felt now that COVID-19 has made many of the region's young people migrate back to their home communities. But as this project progressed, and I myself grew more confident as a person and writer, I feel that some elements of the town, its residents, and the collective "old war" trauma they experience — all things that I wanted to explore — had since fallen away as I came to better understand Elie and Claude as people more than a means to describe a place.

Despite being born and raised in the North Shore, I find it difficult to capture what it feels like to live or be from here. The closest I can think of is my favourite chiac word *pitié*, but pronounced *piché*. I suppose it is technically a French word, meaning pity, but I have only ever heard it matched with a barrage of French and English nouns and adjectives. I've asked Acadian friends and done my own probing through French

language dictionaries (an excellent resource I recently discovered is the *Dictionnaire du Francais Acadien* by Yves Cormier), but the definitions for piché— oh, excuse my French, *pitié*— never seem quite accurate to what it means in the North Shore. “Piché means piché” is what I am often left with, and if you are from here, you would know what that means. For those who aren’t, I suppose piché is an ugly dog in a Santa hat. Piché is a baby falling in the snow. Piché is an unfortunate happening during a happy occasion. In many ways, it is something pathetic that transforms and becomes worthy of love. The word and its difficult-to-describe meaning seem to be the most proficient way of explaining what the collective consciousness of the North Shore feels like: full of pride and love and yet full of self-doubt, inferiority, and a quiet underlying sadness. The roads are bad, but the weather is good when it is. The region is full of beautiful big houses and lush green golf courses, yet the community lacks government attention and funds or opportunities to keep our young adults from leaving. Big businesses, like the mines and mill, are booming until they aren’t, and they won’t boom again for another twenty-something years depending on whom you ask. And the promising children raised here with love and pride and sent to school every morning in segregated school buses based on the language they speak and the school system they belong to, they know all too well what piché means. It is endearment, and it is quietly something more.

Moving forward, I hope to see more academics take an interest in the region. I found in my research a distinct lack of anglophone or bilingual criticism of Acadian cinema. Early films like *The Gossips*, as well as newer films like *Bittersweet Blues* and *Mona* are ripe with potential for future criticism. More studies should be conducted about the region, and its art and stories should be better appreciated. I also

hope that people recognize a bigger need to rectify this language and culture divide beyond the realm of political gains and tourism. In conversations with colleagues and friends, I often ran into people telling me my project and research was too niche and inaccessible. I find that sentiment especially baffling considering we are surrounded by the very people and places that inspired my thesis.

Overall, these perspectives from Acadian and non-Acadian filmmakers, and academics alike formulate a strong yet complicated identity for the North Shore. How can we as a region be simultaneously full of pride and yet deeply disinterested in conducting any kind of self-analysis of our shared history and its ramifications? It seems to me that staying this way only makes us more susceptible to self-depreciation. Perhaps *piché* and the place it comes from has more power and promise than I thought... Perhaps something new and exciting will happen amidst the self-reflection as we continue to move forward.

The year is 2022. As I write this, I am currently sitting at my desk in my childhood bedroom in Bathurst, New Brunswick. My dad is at his own lazy-boy recliner in the living room and eating peanuts. My mom is on the couch next to him wrapping packages for the mail. In many ways, I have grown a new sense of home having come back. Pandemic times have forced me to reflect on why I have never written about home. Again and again, I am haunted by the thought that no one would be interested in hearing a story about the North Shore. Seemingly, few care to even drive the three hours it takes from the provincial capital in the south because at the end of the day what is even up here worth seeing? These are all sentiments I have heard and felt from both strangers and friends over the years and what at first was a joke that I politely acknowledged has since turned into a gnawing hurt that I can't quite shake. Where does this hurt come from and

why does it bother me so much? Is this perhaps a symptom of a far deeper issue plaguing our rural communities in New Brunswick? We are now a little more than two years since the pandemic started, and the world-sanctioned self-isolation has both protected me and compelled me to seek refuge with ghosts. And I am sitting here feeling somewhat like a failure and yet full of pride for everything I am and that I have accomplished. Perhaps we should take a page out of Slow Cinema and consider ourselves “as both the spectators of such movies and the fictive characters who appear in the sidestep frenzy of modernity” (Jaffe 6). From that viewpoint, “a slow, perhaps mythical past [may be] invoked and a future more contemplative than the present [can be] envisioned” if we can allow ourselves the privilege to reflect. Perhaps this is what belonging in life feels like— a bit piché isn’t it?

“How People Move”

Written by

Carlee Jeanne Calver

FADE IN:

EXT. BATHURST - EARLY MORNING

The sound of an ancient horn like a carnyx or trumpet reverberates through the town.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF BATHURST (QUICK CUTS TO MUSIC):

A series of shots establishing the town and its residents.

- A downtown storefront selling artisanal soaps. Some kids rearrange the letters into “artisAnal soaps.”
- The long line of cars waiting in the Tim Horton’s drive thru.
- A drunk man crawling out of his car and entering a Dooly’s bar.
- A woman in a bathrobe watching her dog curl one out on her front lawn.

CUT TO:

A series of shots establishing various home-grown business fronts.

- The faded frontside of the community bottle exchange.
- The faded sign of an out of business hair salon.
- A small family-run Construction Company.
- An old ice-cream parlor with a faded cow statue out front. The statue is wearing an Acadian flag cowboy hat.

We hear more wind-instruments join the initial horn sound and build into a cacophony of jazz riffs and discordant sounds that juxtapose with the sleepy town’s scenery.

The sounds explode into a resonant g-major chord over a final shot of the Baie des Chaleurs (Chaleur Bay) with the sun rising in the distance.

End of opening montage.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STORE FRONT - EARLY MORNING

A mysterious woman in paint covered overalls sets up her stool and painting supplies in front of a store front window.

THE PAINTER turns on a small red portable radio powered by a crank and kept cozy in a rag used for her brushes.

We hear some static as she flips through the stations— we catch bits of news and music in both French and English— until she finds one to her liking.

RADIO HOST (O.S.)

Bonjour Bathurst! Bonne nouvelle, aujourd'hui s'annonce ensoleillé! Maximum de 27 degrés avec des nuages partiels par l'après-midi. Minimum de 15 ce soir avec un ciel dégagé. Pis “just in time” pour les feux d'artifice! “Right now,” il fait un chaud 20 degrés Celsius!

[Gooood morning Bathurst! Great news for everyone, today is looking to be a sunny one! High of 27 with partial clouds in the afternoon but clear skies by night with a minimum of 15, and just in time for fireworks! Current temperature is a bright 20 degrees!]

Using a window marker, the painter begins sketching out a scene depicting the Acadian Deportation— though we can't make out what it is yet.

MADAME GODIN, wearing khaki slacks, a full tote bag, and a large brim sun hat with a small Acadian flag, walks past without seeing the painter. She turns the corner and enters the gas-bar nearby.

INT. GAS-BAR - EARLY MORNING

Madame Godin walks into the gas-bar— a loud ding from the door rattles away as she enters, making a fuss as usual.

Two other middle-aged Acadian women, MADAME COMEAU and MADAME DUBÉ, greet her as they gather around the cash and chat with TIM, the owner.

MADAME DUBÉ

Pis* after dat, elle m'avait dit—
[*And, afterwards she told me—]

MADAME COMEAU

Salut ladies! Tim! Feeling lucky?

MADAME COMEAU hands each woman and the owner a small cup of coffee.

MADAME DUBÉ

Ha-ha! You know it! J'ai un terrible de bonne
feelin' bout aujourd'hui, let me tell you!

TIM

I like the sound of that! You want the usual?

MADAME DUBÉ

God willing, make it double.

Tim reaches under the glass-counter and pulls out three stacks of scratcher
tickets.

MADAME GODIN

She wins bingo once and then
spends it all on des gateux*.

[*scratcher tickets]

MADAME DUBÉ (TO TIM)

Jealousy is a disease.

MADAME GODIN

I'm just pointing out the obvious.

Ta une vraie problème,* Judith!

[*a real problem]

MADAME DUBÉ

Uh-huh. Glass houses, Glass houses.

MADAME GODIN

Oh Tim, some camels too.

Tim grabs a pack of cigarettes from the back wall and tosses it on the counter.

TIM (TO MADAME GODIN)

Shall I add a pack of Twizzlers?

Make it a round fifty!

MADAME GODIN

You're killing me here, Tim...

Another woman, JANE, enters the store. They all stop talking as she walks past them
and to the back of the store. She grabs a loaf of sliced bread and squeezes past them up
to the cash register. The women are all a bit miffed with her attitude.

MADAME GODIN (TO JANE) (CONT'D)

Packed day, today?

JANE

Very busy! Charles was in charge of getting the toasts but he forgot.

MADAME DUBÉ

The things we do for our kids—

MADAME COMEAU

Pis nos maries!—

[And our husbands!]

MADAME DUBÉ

And you think they notice?—

MADAME COMEAU

Hardly!

MADAME DUBÉ

P'tit* bastards! All of them!

[Lil' bastards!]

Madame Godin gestures to Madame Comeau and Madame Dubé.

MADAME GODIN (TO JANE)

We've all been wondering... How has Charles been holding up since... you know—?

JANE

Fantastic! Never better actually! We've had to rearrange some things of course but I'm certain we'll all pull through! Right ladies?

The women nod in agreement.

MADAME GODIN

A little birdie told me ton p'tit Claude will be joining your eldest in his business!

Jane tucks her hair behind her ear and pays Tim for the bread.

JANE

Yes! We're very proud.

The three women look at each other with amusement.

MADAME COMEAU

You're joking! Feels like just yesterday him and mon cocôt* Paul were learning their p's and q's—
[*mon cocôt is a term of endearment meaning "my baby chick"]

MADAME DUBÉ

Paul is off to Université
d'Moncton* in two weeks.
[*Francophone university in N-B]

MADAME COMEAU

For Law! My boy is gonna be a proper lawyer.

MADAME DUBÉ

With a lawyer's salary too!

MADAME COMEAU

'Says he'll take care of me when
I'm old, n'est s'pas cute*?
[*isn't that cute?]

MADAME GODIN (TO TIM)

Ha-ha! *When* she's old?—

Madame Dubé elbows her in the ribs.

MADAME COMEAU

On est toutes si fière!
[We're all so proud!]

JANE

I'm sure.

We hear the sound of music coming from the old dusty radio in the corner window.

JANE (CONT'D)

Well, it's been nice seeing you ladies!

MADAME COMEAU

No kidding! Best of luck today—

MADAME DUBÉ

We all know the men won't be much
help— No offense Tim.

TIM (COUNTING HIS MONEY)

None taken.

JANE

See you for Sunday mass!

Jane leaves the gas-bar. The three women look to each other.

MADAME DUBÉ (TO THE OTHERS)

Mon seigneur.

FADE IN:

EXT. BOUCHARD HOUSE BACK PORCH - LATE MORNING

VIEW-MASTER SLIDE 1: A FISHERMAN SMILING WHILE HOLDING A LOBSTER

Twins, GENNA and GUY, wrestle with a small forest-green VIEW-MASTER showing slides of New Brunswick scenery.

CUT TO:

VIEW-MASTER SLIDE 2: A GROUP OF LOGGERS ON THE ST. JOHN RIVER

GENNA (O.S.)

Arrête, Guy! Ta d'ja eu ton tour!

[Stop it, Guy! You already had your turn with it!]

GUY (O.S.) (MOCKINGLY)

Arrête, Guy!

[Stop it, Guy!]

CUT TO:

VIEW-MASTER SLIDE 3: A GROUP OF FISHERMAN HAULING IN A NET FULL OF FISH

We hear a series of audible whacks as Genna hits her brother.

GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ow! Ma!

GENNA

She left already idiot!

CUT TO:

VIEW-MASTER SLIDE 4: A GROUP OF ACADIAN WOMEN IN PERIOD CLOTHING AND CLOGS DANCING WHILE A MAN IN SUSPENDERS PLAYS THE FIDDLE

CLAUDE, their older brother, comes out onto the porch and grabs the VIEW-MASTER from their hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOUCHARD HOUSE BACK PORCH - CONTINUES

With a hard swoop, Claude throws the VIEW-MASTER far out into the backwoods of their yard. It hits a tree and sends a few crows flying out from the brush.

GENNA

Hey!

GUY runs out to grab it. He picks it up and checks the VIEW-MASTER and yells back—

GUY
Claude! Yé briser!
[Claude! You broke it!]

Without a word, Claude walks back into the house. Guy joins his sister on the porch. She rips the VIEW-MASTER out of his hands and looks through the looking glass.

CUT TO:

VIEW-MASTER'S VIEW STUCK BETWEEN TWO SLIDES: SLIDE 5 - THE ACADIAN DEPORTATION AND SLIDE 6 - A MI'KMAQ SETTLEMENT BEING PREACHED TO BY A CATHOLIC PRIEST.

We hear the frantic audible clicks of Genna pressing the VIEW-MASTER'S keys to no avail.

GENNA
Ostie*!
[*expletive similar to damn]

GUY (TO CLAUDE)
Nobody loves you!

INT. BOUCHARD HOUSE KITCHEN - LATE MORNING

Claude walks in through the sliding porch door and into the kitchen. He passes his dad, CHARLES, who is sat drinking coffee and completing a sudoku at the kitchen table. Claude opens the fridge and pulls out the orange juice.

CLAUDE
Where's mamman?

CHARLES
Mamman est sortie acheter more
toasts au gas-bar.
[She's out buying sliced bread.]

CLAUDE
Hmm.

Claude finishes his orange juice and heads out of the kitchen quickly to spare himself from any more small talk with his father.

CHARLES
Attends— Claude! When you're out
with ton p'tit* girlfriend, make
sure you go see mamman. She wants
to talk to you.

[*your lil']

CLAUDE

Yeah. Sure thing.

CHARLES

Pis, check avec ton frère que tout yé préparé pour d'main.

[Also, check with your brother that everything is ready for tomorrow.]

From the kitchen window we see Claude's older brother Jean-François chopping wood.

CHARLES

Moé pis mamman, on est si fière de toé pis ton frère... You know that, right?

[Your mom and I are so proud! You know that, right?]

Claude plays with the hem of his shirt.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

And everything we do, we do for you. You know that, right?

Claude finds a thread sticking from the hem and pulls on it, snapping it and bunching up the bottom.

CHARLES (STERNLY) (CONT'D)

Claude.

CLAUDE

Oui, j'sais papa.

[Yes, I know dad.]

Unable to look at his father for too long, Claude wraps the thread around his index cutting off the circulation. His fingertip looks like a purple planet.

CHARLES (STERNLY)

Claude, viens ici.

[Claude, come here.]

Claude freezes, uncertain of what his dad wants from him.

CHARLES (SOFTER) (CONT'D)

Viens.

[Come.]

Claude walks over to him. His dad opens his arms wide and gives him a warm tight hug. Claude hugs him back, a bit surprised.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I know things have not always worked out for us... But you're a young man now... A strong, Acadian man. You have a legacy to keep and a family behind you— Always! No matter what life throws at you, never forget your roots. It'll be the thing that saves you when winter comes.

Charles keeps hugging Claude. We hear Jean-Francois chopping wood.

CLAUDE

Why's Jean-Francois chopping wood?

We move past the two and towards the kitchen window where we see JEAN-FRANCOIS outside in the backyard by the woodshed chopping wood. His chops are hard and meticulous in their execution, he is on a mission.

CHARLES (O.S.)

He's preparing for winter. Family always comes first... Remember that.

INT. BOUCHARD HOUSE CLAUDE'S ROOM - LATE MORNING

Claude enters his bedroom. He sits on his bed surrounded by his belongings: A hockey stick, a bookcase full of books, and a couple of 3rd place trophies, all litter his room.

He reaches into the back of his closet and pulls out a duffel bag. He fills the bag with some folded clothes from the hamper left at his door by his mom. He then scoops his arm across his armoire and drops all his toiletries into the bag for the night.

He opens the bottom drawer of his armoire and grabs some underwear, but something falls out from the bottom.

He reaches under and finds an old, tattered journal he had hidden away.

He stares at it for a moment, wonders whether to bring it with him, then places it in his trash bin.

His phone dings alerting him that his best friend, ELIE, is here to pick him up. Claude leaves his room; we focus on the notebook sitting open in the bin.

INT. BOUCHARD HOUSE KITCHEN - FLASHBACK (TWO-YEARS EARLIER)

Claude runs into the house with his camping gear. Jane is sat at the dinner table facing away from him. She plays with a piping hot cup of tea next to her. A honey bear along with her bible is on the table.

Claude goes to the fridge.

CLAUDE
Mamman, I'm home! Where's the jus
d'orange*? Did we run out?
[*orange juice]

JANE
Papa finished it. He's out getting more.

CLAUDE
What? He never gets the right kind.

JANE
There's milk in the fridge.

Claude pours himself a glass. Jane doesn't turn to look at him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Claude...

CLAUDE
Mhm?

JANE
Take out la poubelle*.
[*the trash.]
(Beat.)

CLAUDE
Okay...

Claude grabs the trash bag from the kitchen and drags it out to the garage.

EXT. BOUCHARD HOUSE DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claude opens the garage door and wheels the trash can out to the curb.

He lifts the overfull bag, and it rips open tumbling trash out onto the ground.

He squats down to scoop it back into the bag and finds his notebook.

INT. BOUCHARD HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUES

From the window we see Claude standing a long while at the edge of the driveway looking out at the road. The notebook is clutched in his hand.

INT. BOUCHARD HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUES

Claude walks back into the house. His mom is sat at the table still facing away from him. He looks at her, gauging her silence, and notices the rosary clutched tightly in her hand next to her untouched cup of tea.

CLAUDE

Mamman...

He approaches her slowly.

JANE (SHAKY)

Oui, mon pitou?

[Yes, my pup.]

(Beat.)

CLAUDE

Can I come to Sunday mass with you?

JANE (RELIEVED)

Of course. Anything you need dear...

Jane hugs him tightly. Claude hugs her back stone-faced.

End of flashback.

INT. ELIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING (EARLIER)

ELIE wakes startled from a dream she can't remember. She reaches up to her face and sees that she was crying in her sleep.

We see she's lying in her bed; the morning light and sounds of a distant lawnmower and songbird pour into the room through her open window. She flips over and checks the time on her phone.

Elie sits up and gets ready for the day.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Eating some cereal, Elie looks over her "To Do List."

INSERT OF "TO DO LIST":

August 15 "Acadian Day"

- Do Laundry
- Service Car
- Pick-up Dad's Medications

- Hangout w/ Claude (tell him!)

She crosses off the first two items. Circles the third item and leaves the table with her keys and backpack.

INT. DRUGSTORE - LATER

Elie grabs a cart and heads to the back of the drugstore towards the pharmacy.

PHARMACIST

Oh! Elie! You here again for your father?

Elie smiles politely and hands him the doctor's slip.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

How's Alan? The guys and I haven't seen him out on the water in a while...

ELIE

Dad's doing well.

She pulls out her wallet. The pharmacist hands the slip to his colleague who heads to the back of the pharmacy. Elie hesitantly asks—

ELIE (CONT'D)

Your boy Jeremy... I heard he had just gotten that job at the smelter... How is he?

PHARMACIST

Yeah, rotten luck. He's... doing the same as your dad, I suppose. But he's young, he'll bounce back. Remember your youth Elie. Youth is the greatest quality a person can have. Even an oldie like me still has his youth!

Elie cracks a small smile.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

It's been hard on everyone, hasn't it?

Elie can't bring herself to answer right away. She takes a moment before speaking—

ELIE

You make do with what you're given...

The pharmacist's colleague enters with her dad's prescription and hands it to her. She turns to leave but the pharmacist calls out to her—

PHARMACIST

Elie, wait!

He comes out from behind the counter and hands her a form.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

What are your plans for the year?

ELIE

I... I don't really know anymore.

PHARMACIST

Are you thinking of traveling?

ELIE

Since mom left, I don't care much
for travel...

PHARMACIST

Sorry, I didn't mean—

ELIE

Don't worry about it.

PHARMACIST

I suppose you'll be looking for a
job soon?

ELIE

I... Yeah...

PHARMACIST

I can't pay much but, if you're looking...

The pharmacist hands her the employment application.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it's not a "forever
job." Both you and your father
are always welcome here.

Elie takes the application.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

Think it over?

ELIE

Sure. Thank you, sir. See ya.

Elie exits. The pharmacist turns back to his colleague.

PHARMACIST

*Piché...

[*adjective similar to “poor thing”]

EXT. BEACH SHORESIDE – AFTERNOON

Elie and Claude sit on the far side of an empty beach. Down below where they are sitting is a little sandy path to the water. They sit sharing a vanilla ice cream cone and look out at the beach. Claude is deep in thought.

ELIE

Can I tell you a secret?

CLAUDE

Sure.

ELIE

But you have to promise you won't tell anyone!

CLAUDE

Okay.

ELIE

You have to swear it!

CLAUDE

I swear I won't tell a soul!

Elie takes a deep breath.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

You didn't kill anyone did you?

ELIE

What? No!

CLAUDE

Okay! Just checking. I don't think my poor Catholic heart could handle the guilt of knowing if you've killed. But I could probably manage blissfully ignoring it, so please answer wisely for my sake.

ELIE

I didn't kill anyone! Jeez...

Elie retreats.

CLAUDE

Then what is it?

ELIE

Maybe I shouldn't say.

CLAUDE

No! You can't just go and leave me hanging dry here! What's the secret?

ELIE

Fine! I– I don't think I understand what romantic feelings are. Like I thought it would hit me at some point during puberty, but here we are the end of it and... Poof! Nothing.

CLAUDE

Nothing?

ELIE

Not a thing. I think I might be broken...

CLAUDE

You're the farthest thing from broken. You probably just haven't met the one! I mean you've been in love before, right?

Elie doesn't answer.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Have you felt like... you know...?

Elie looks to her ice-cream cone.

ELIE

I know what love is. Because I've definitely felt it. The greatest love I've ever had has always been friendship– I just never recognized it before. And I guess what I mean to say is, you're my best friend Claude.

Claude scoots closer to Elie and rests his head on her shoulder.

CLAUDE

I love you too.

The ice cream cone melts over both of their hands and into Claude's lap.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Gross.

ELIE

Let's run out into the water.

CLAUDE

What? Why?

ELIE

Just because!

CLAUDE

I didn't bring a change of clothes.

ELIE

You've brought a whole bag with you and it's in the back of my car.

CLAUDE

I- Lemme take my shorts off first.

ELIE

Nope! Too slow! This moment isn't gonna wait for either of us! Come on!

She pulls him up, and they run down the path, kicking off their shoes and throwing the phones out onto the sand. Together they run into the ocean.

EXT. OCEAN WAVES – CONTINUES

The waves break around them as they dive deeper into the water. We are with them, low and in the waves as they splash each other.

Elie playfully dunks Claude's head under the water. Claude grabs her and throws her deeper out into the sea.

Sun shines through the splashes. We whip past them as Claude sees something on the rocky shoreline.

The mood changes. An unknown man in a black t-shirt and shorts stands out on one of the rocks like a statue looking out to the sea. His silhouette is blackened and in stark contrast to the blazing sun above.

Elie and Claude watch the man from their spot in the water.

The man, carrying a silver urn, pours the ashes into the ocean waves from a distance. The sea crashes against the rock where he stands and sends up a spattering of water.

With the sun behind the man on the rocks, we hear a cacophony of jazz riffs mixed with the overwhelming sound of wind and waves.

Elie and Claude stand transfixed and emotional from the sight. Wind picks up and whips their hair and clothes wildly.

Claude reaches out his hand to block the sun from his eyes. Suddenly, Elie cries out and grabs Claude's arm as she slumps down into the water.

Claude turns his attention back to Elie and tries to pick her up but stumbles. She's hurt. The tide comes in and pushes the two back to the shore.

EXT. BEACH SHORESIDE – MOMENTS LATER

Elie limps onto the beach holding onto Claude. He sets her down onto the sand and pulls up her wet pant-leg revealing a red jellyfish sting on her right calf.

ELIE

It bit me!

CLAUDE

It's not too bad.

ELIE

Shouldn't the jellyfish be gone by now? It's nearly end of summer.

CLAUDE

Guess not. Weird, I didn't see any while I was out there. Don't jellyfish usually come in pods?

ELIE

Frick if I know! Jeez there goes my night!

CLAUDE

It's really not that bad. You've never been bit by a jellyfish before?

ELIE

Does it look like I have?

CLAUDE

Right, well, maybe they have a first aid kit back at the shack.

EXT. BEACH KIOSK – CONTINUES

Claude and Elie limp over to the kiosk that is now closed.

ELIE

Great. Just great.

Elie flops down at one of the empty picnic tables in front. Claude walks over and checks the kiosk doors and bathrooms, but they are all locked. We can see the first aid kit neatly inside the locked kiosk. Claude looks back at Elie.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH KIOSK – MOMENTS LATER

Elie and Claude are off screen behind the sun-drenched kiosk. We are pointing away from them and focused on the board walk in the distance.

A line of worker ants carrying crumbs and bits of leaves grabs our focus on the sandy footpath. They move in unison around a small pink sandal left forgotten in the sand. With this image in focus, we listen to what Elie and Claude are doing from behind the kiosk.

ELIE (O.S.)

Is this really gonna work?

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Trust me, I've done this before.

ELIE (O.S.)

No way you've done this before.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Well, I've had it done to me so I know what I'm talking about.

ELIE (O.S.)

Oh yeah? By who?

CLAUDE (O.S.)

My camp counselors.

ELIE (O.S.)

Oh, your counselors? They tag team you?

CLAUDE

Oh god! Don't be gross!

ELIE

You sure they weren't just pranking you?

CLAUDE (O.S.)

No, it really works. Now shut up and let me concentrate.

We hear the sound of Claude's pants zipper.

ELIE (O.S.)

Ah! Warn me!

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Sorry.

Silence falls between them. The ants keep on their mission.

CLAUDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I can't go if you keep staring.

ELIE (O.S.)

Is that what it's supposed to look like?

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Hey! The water was cold!

ELIE (O.S.)

Sorry, not that. I'm sure it's perfectly adequate, I've just never seen one in person before.

A leaf blows into frame.

ELIE (CONT'D)

It doesn't look like how it does in porn.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Please, don't talk about porn right now. You're breaking my concentration.

ELIE (O.S.)

Okay. Shutting up.

We hear water trickling.

ELIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Gross.

Water trickle sound ends abruptly. Our focus shifts from the ants to the man from earlier walking past and pretending not to see them.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Ah, sir this isn't- He's just-

CLAUDE

Elie, stop. Just- just let him go.

They emerge from behind the kiosk sheepishly. Elie shakes her leg and inspects it.

ELIE

My god.

CLAUDE

I told you.

ELIE

No one can ever know.

CLAUDE

Promise?

ELIE

Let's go before someone else shows up.

The two walk hastily back to the car.

CLAUDE

So, if I ever got bit by a jellyfish... would you...?

ELIE

Dude, of course I would. That's not even a question worth asking man—

CLAUDE

Yeah, I know—

ELIE

Don't be dumb now? Come on!

They get in their car and leave.

EXT. BATHURST – AFTERNOON

Series of shots showing the drive from the beach to Elie's house (other side of town).

We listen to music playing from the radio as Claude lets his arm hang out from the passenger window.

Elie's car drives past the marshes near Youghall beach, down the big hill to uptown Bathurst, past various uptown businesses, down the hill to Riverside, and finally pulls into Elie's house near the train station.

End of montage.

EXT. ELIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUES

Elie and Claude hop out of the car.

ELIE

You can bring your bag in now!

He grabs his duffel bag, and they head inside.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE – CONTINUES

Elie kicks off her sandy shoes and Claude follows. She heads upstairs to the shower.

CLAUDE

Your dad not home?

ELIE

No, he's somewhere. I'm gonna shower quick, just throw your stuff down by the couch.

Elie dashes off. Claude is left alone in their living room.

The room is dark with the blinds pulled closed and cluttered with marine biology and natural science books. In the center is an old lazy-boy chair surrounded by crafting supplies.

Claude looks around and takes a closer look at the family photos displayed on their mantle piece.

He picks up a portrait of Elie's mom as a young woman holding a fish and smiling triumphantly. In the image, her stomach is protruding a bit, showing that she's pregnant.

ALAN, Elie's father, appears from behind him.

ALAN

Ah! Fingerprints!

Claude jumps.

CLAUDE

Sorry, sir. I didn't mean—

ALAN

Nah, I'm just joking you boy! Ha-ha!

Claude wipes the frame with his shirt while Alan heads over to his lazy boy. Claude notices that he is using a cane, something he never used before.

Alan sits back in his chair with some pained grunts before speaking again.

ALAN (CONT'D)

You know, it's good of you to wipe your prints off anyway, even if what I said was a joke! Shows that you care for the things that don't belong to you.

Alan drags over his worktable covered in fly-tying equipment and switches on his lamp.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Now, why aren't you both down at the waterfront? Shouldn't the concerts be starting by now?

CLAUDE

Oh, we're heading there soon.

Alan is preoccupied with his project.

ALAN

Yes, that's good...

Alan grabs a tuft of fur from a small bag in his crafting toolbox.

CLAUDE

What are you making sir?

ALAN

Oh this? It's called an Elk Hair Caddis. This little guy is exceptionally good at catching all sorts of delicious river trout! Neat right?

CLAUDE

Mmhm.

ALAN

Fish are really stupid so even something as little and silly looking as this will catch!

Alan pricks his finger on it.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ah! Cheese and rice!

CLAUDE

Oh my gosh! You okay sir?

ALAN

No! I'm bleeding out!

Claude panicked, turns quickly to find a rag or something to help. Alan watches him fondly.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ha-ha! You're a good boy Claude.

Claude finds him some paper towel and hands Alan a square.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I suppose if humans were fish, something like this would catch us too.

CLAUDE

Good thing we're not fish.

They laugh.

ALAN

Are you excited to finally join the family business? Your mom was pretty proud of you and Jean-Francois last time I saw her.

Claude looks down to his hands.

CLAUDE

Ah, well, I suppose so.

ALAN

Not very excited at all, I see.

CLAUDE

Don't tell them—

ALAN

Tell them what?

He gestures that his lips are sealed.

ALAN (CONT'D)

But my silence isn't cheap! In exchange, do me a favor and tell your dad if he wants more tackle and fly-ties to give me a call. I'm thinking of selling these lil' buggers!

CLAUDE

Sure.

Alan goes back to his fly-tie and sets to work.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

I suppose you'll be happy to have Elie out of your hair for a while!

ALAN

Mm.

Claude waits for Alan to crack another joke, but he doesn't.

CLAUDE

When she heads off to McGill? In Montreal?

Alan puts his fly-tie down and looks back at Claude. He hesitates before speaking.

ALAN

Did she not tell you?

CLAUDE

Tell me what?

Elie thumps down the stairs, her hair in a towel. Alan goes back to his fly-tie, avoiding eye contact with Elie.

ELIE (TO CLAUDE)
You didn't put your bag down? Oh, hand it over.
Go shower, I've got a towel out for you.
(Beat.)

ELIE (CONT'D)
Claude! We gotta leave soon if we
don't want to miss Avril's band!

Claude heads upstairs. He watches Elie and her dad talk from the banister but can't make out what they're saying.

EXT. DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT – AFTERNOON

Elie and Claude pull into a parking spot downtown. They walk out into the crowd. Elie sees their friends and drags Claude by the hand over to ZACH's parked car where the band (AVRIL, PAULA, ZACH) is standing.

ELIE
Hey Zach! Paula! Avril!

ZACH
Elie! Claude! Madame! Monsieur!

They take turns tipping their imaginary top hats and shaking hands like businessmen before bursting out laughing.

AVRIL (JOCKINGLY)
Stupid.

ZACH
Dude, I texted you like hours ago—

ELIE
What?

She checks her phone.

ELIE (CONT'D)
Oh shit! My bad!

ZACH
S'all good man! S'all good!

ELIE
What else did we miss?

AVRIL

Nothing really. The old-bags set up their chairs and the little squealers are doing what they do best.

PAULA

Don't mind her, she's just pissed cause they keep bumping us back.

AVRIL

How many local jobies do we even have? It's ridiculous— completely unprofessional!

PAULA

We've been camped here with all our equipment for like two hours and still no word if we're actually playing.

ZACH

The guy said he'd get us a spot if we waited.

AVRIL

That's it! Where is the fucker?

ZACH

Where's who?

AVRIL

The guy Zach! Where's the guy? The one you talked to.

ZACH

Man's busy, I dunno. Probably dealing with the next band.

AVRIL

Criss! We should be the next band! What's his name? I'm gonna go find him!

ZACH

Name? We're not really on a first-name, or any name basis.

AVRIL

Do you even know the guy?

ZACH (TO CLAUDE)

I never forget a face.

AVRIL

Oh yeah? What's he look like? You

must remember what he looks like.

ZACH

Uh, he was like— mid-sized? Long hair, pretty sure he had on a black t-shirt.

AVRIL

You literally just described every roadie here.

PAULA

Be cool Avril! It's gonna work out somehow.

Paula puts her hands on Avril's shoulders and the two breathe deeply together. The breathing isn't working—

AVRIL

I need another Monster.

PAULA

Avril, no! No more energy drinks!

Avril and Paula exit for the gas-bar across the street. Zach leans against his car looking too cool for school.

ELIE (TO ZACH)

I like your bandeau.

ZACH

Thanks! They were Paula's idea. The bandeau makes the band look more cohesive. Avril thinks it'll make others take us more seriously if we have a signature look. So, we're giving the bandeau a try!

ELIE

No, for sure! Very serious!

ZACH

Cool, cool. So, what have you guys been up to?

ELIE

We did the ol' up and down, got ice cream, and went to the beach.

ZACH

Youghhall?

ELIE

That's the one!

ZACH

Nice choice.

Claude shifts from foot to foot. Elie grabs his arm and gently pulls him closer to where she and Zach are standing.

ELIE

You cut your hair since graduation?

ZACH

I did! You're mad perceptive! Got the underside buzzed for the summer, but it's already growing out.

ELIE

I'm gonna miss your long hair. It looks good though! I was thinking of getting an under-cut myself!

ZACH

It was time for a change. Come on over and I'll let you cop a feel!

Zach takes off his headband and reveals his sweaty nape to them. Elie reaches over and touches the back of his head.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Nice right?

ELIE

Not bad. Little wet though.

Elie pulls her hand away. Zach waits for Claude.

ZACH (TO CLAUDE)

Come on now! Everyone gets a feel!

Claude slowly reaches a finger over and brushes the short hairs on the back of Zach's head. We focus on Claude's finger as he gently strokes his hair and lets his finger linger on Zach's nape. Zach shudders at the touch, turns around and smiles at Claude.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Like it?

CLAUDE

What?

ZACH

It's nice, right?

Elie looks over at Claude. Claude steps back from them.

CLAUDE

Yeah. It suits you.

Paula and Avril return with bags of snacks and drinks.

PAULA
You guys wanna picnic?

EXT. DOWNTOWN STORE FRONT – AFTERNOON

On the shop window mural, the painter fills in the larger parts of a red-clad colonial soldier ripping a baby from the arms of an Acadian woman.

Guy and Genna, wearing face paint and Acadian pride novelty hats, sit on the sidewalk next to her.

RADIO HOST 1 (O.S)
Vous écoutez “radio’s best music” !
Il s'annonce beau et doux a Bathurst,
avec quelques risques de bruine tard
dans la soirée. But “no worries,”
Monsieur “le maire” Chiasson–

[You’re listening to radio’s best
music! Weather’s looking nice and
balmy, with some chance of rain
drizzle late in the evening. But no
worries, Mayor Chiasson–]

GUY (TO GENNA)
More like Mayor Shie-caleçon*!
[*name is a pun meaning “Mayor
shitty pants”]

While holding back a smile, the painter lightly smacks him on the back.

RADIO HOST 1 (O.S)
–promet que les feux d'artifice sont
toujours prévu pour “later” ce soir!
Mais qui peut dire “for real” quand
c’est tout dirigé par des politiciens!
Pis- Ah... ma belle “épouse in charge”
me lance un terrible de regard! On
dirait qu’il faudra me taire si j’veux
pas d’venir divorcée! For all my
anglophone listeners, it’s forecasting
that I’ll be sleeping with the dogs
tonight, if I don’t stick to the script!
Fingers crossed that there’s no rain!
Now, pour notre prochaine chanson–

[–promises that the fireworks are
still on for tonight, weather

permitting! But who's to say
really, he still is a politician by
trade! And— Ah... my beautiful wife
and boss is shooting me a look
right now, from inside the studio,
and its forecasting that I'll be
sleeping with the dogs tonight if I
don't stick to the script! Fingers
crossed there's no rain. Now for
our next song—]

The radio runs out of juice.

GENNA

Ahh...

Jane walks past carrying a handful of folding chairs with another woman. She sees her two youngest huddled around the radio.

JANE

Genna! Guy! I told you both to stay nearby.
Where's papa pis* Jean-Francois?
[*and]

GENNA

Dunno.

JANE

They were supposed to watch
you! And where are your
friends?

GENNA

Dunno. Madame Godin and her ladies roped
them into doing their errands. We would've got
stuck serving them too had we not run.

JANE

Yes, well. That was probably smart. But you both
can't be roaming around downtown alone.

GENNA

But you let us go alone last year.

Jane glances over at the painter who is a stranger.

JANE

Well, we're not celebrating in our backyard like last
year now, are we?

GUY

But we're not alone. I'm with Genna and Genna's with me. I'll keep her in check!

JANE

Two children doesn't equal one adult.

GUY

It would if we were stacked and wearing a trench coat.

JANE

What? Just- Come with me, you can help me paint the little ones.

GUY

Oh, come on!

GENNA

Ma!

The painter looks away from her mural and gives Jane a warm smile.

JANE (TO PAINTER)

Ah, hello! I'm not sure we've met before? Are you from out of town?

The painter says nothing.

GENNA (WHISPERS TO JANE)

She doesn't talk.

JANE (TO GENNA)

Can she hear?

They both look at the painter. The painter responds with a smile.

JANE (CONT'D)

Sorry, these two are mine, I hope they aren't causing you too much distraction.

JANE (TO GENNA) (CONT'D)

You and your brother aren't bothering this nice woman, are you?

GENNA

No, we were just listening to the radio.

GUY

Yeah, the radio host is having a mental breakdown on air!

GENNA (EXCITEDLY)

It's very tragic!

GUY

More like hilarious!

JANE

Yes, I'm sure it is.

Jane's phone rings.

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh crud! I have to get back or
Anette is gonna lose it. Come on!

GUY

But mom, it was just getting good!

JANE

No buts! I won't let you bother
this poor woman any longer!

GENNA

We're not! We're important
assistants.

Phone rings again.

JANE

Oh fine! Come find me in an hour!
And Genna—

Guy shakes the radio violently to try and fix it.

JANE (TO GENNA) (CONT'D)

Watch your brother. I've got child
trackers on the both of you!

Jane leaves.

GENNA (TO PAINTER)

What's next?

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STORE FRONT – MOMENTS LATER

Guy speedily cranks the radio. Genna stretches her right arm and shoulder, having already used up her strength cranking the radio. The painter continues her mural, now focusing on the facial details of the woman, soldier, and baby.

We focus on Guy's hand as it speedily cranks the radio. Genna fans him with her hand-held electric fan as he does this. In the distance, we hear the sound of crowd chatter and a man doing a mic test in the downtown waterfront gazebo.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET – AFTERNOON – CONTINUOUS

Long take of the gang walking past various scenes towards the park:

The gang (Elie, Claude, Paula, Zach, and Avril) walk past the Gas-Bar where “Les Mesdames” (MADAME DUBÉ, GODIN, and COMEAU) are seated. Madame Dubé instructs a group of kids (Genna and Guy's school friends) to hold hands and pray as she emphatically calls to God to bless her scratcher penny.

The gang continues past Genna, Guy, and the Painter who are busy painting in the background of the colonial town in the mural.

We follow the gang down the road as they walk and talk amongst themselves. They move past a number of smaller scenes taking place:

Two young pre-teens eating McDonalds and sat on the wall to the old cemetery,

Three children on bikes,

A gang of teens in a beat-up car. The teens rev their motor and our gang give them all the finger as they drive away.

AVRIL

I will never understand teenaged boys.

ELIE

They'll grow out of it one day... right?

They arrive at the park's low stone walls and entrance and look over at the playground in the distance. The playground is filled with noisy children and exhausted parents.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Why do children ruin everything?

CLAUDE

It is a playground.

AVRIL

Let's just go eat in the gazebo.

ELIE

You know, I think we could take them. All we would need is a good attack strategy.

CLAUDE

Once you think of one, feel free to share.

They all laugh, including Elie.

EXT. PARK GAZEBO – AFTERNOON

The gang sets up their lunch of chips, sandwiches and ice teas. Zach pulls out a black sharpie from his pocket and gets to work on one of the marked-up benches.

AVRIL

Do you really gotta do that now?

ZACH

You can't kill the artist when
inspiration strikes!

He starts drawing a penis playing the saxophone. Elie looks at the rest of the graffiti. The bench is full of homophobic and racist slurs and conspiracy theories.

ELIE

Jesus. If they're gonna be racist
homophobes they should at least
learn how to spell.

Paula, with her sandwich in hand, joins Elie by the graffiti.

PAULA

Hey Zach, do you know who wrote
this shit?

ZACH

Not a clue. That's the tragic
beauty of the art-form; It's all
anonymous.

PAULA

The school should really crack down on this shit!

ZACH

Hey! I take pride in my penises!

PAULA

No, the penises are tolerable. It's all of the other
crap that gets scrawled. Fag this! Half-breed that!
It's disgusting!

CLAUDE

Yeah, well it's the truth...

The mood shifts.

AVRIL

What do you mean by that Claude?

CLAUDE

Don't get me wrong! I don't think that! It's just, that's the trash people are all thinking. The unsaid shit no rational person would ever say from their own mouths. But on a wall— it's easy! And it's the truth.

AVRIL

It's not the truth. It may be their fucked-up idea of "truth" but it's not ours. They're all just trolls, don't pay them any mind.

Silence falls over them again. Claude turns back to his sandwich. Avril grabs the pen from Zach's hand and starts blacking out all the slurs. Elie scoots closer to Claude.

ELIE (TO CLAUDE)

She's right you know. Sane people don't write slurs on walls. It's not even a thought in their heads to write the kind of shit you see around us.

CLAUDE

But how would you even know? It's all anonymous right? My own saintly mother could have written that.

ELIE

She wouldn't.

CLAUDE

Mmhm.

Paula calls out to them—

PAULA

Hey guys! Look over here!

They join her by the back wall of the gazebo.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Someone's been clapping back at the bigots!

ZACH

More than clapping back, they're destroying them!

The gang look at the wall in admiration.

ELIE (TO CLAUDE)

See?

CLAUDE

I thought sane people don't write
on walls?

ELIE

Maybe, but when opposing bullshit, good people
do.

EXT. GAS-BAR – AFTERNOON

Madame Comeau, Dube, and Godin are sitting on folding chairs around a small card table in front of the gas-bar. Madame Comeau and Godin are busy scratching their pile of tickets while Madame Dubé is sat back in her chair fanning herself.

MADAME DUBÉ

Criss yi fait chaud!
[Christ, it's hot!]

MADAME GODIN

Ah-ha!

Madame Godin waves her ticket triumphantly.

MADAME COMEAU

Ooh, combien?
[How much?]

MADAME GODIN

Vingt pieces!
[Twenty bucks!]

MADAME DUBÉ (SARCASTICALLY)

Wow, quite the jackpot.

MADAME COMEAU (TO MADAME DUBÉ)

Be nice.

MADAME GODIN

No worries! Every dollar counts and
I'm determined.

MADAME DUBÉ

Determined to make even at best.

The others ignore her. Madame Dubé tosses her fan on the table.

MADAME COMEAU

Julie! Attention*!
[Julie, watch it!]

MADAME DUBÉ
Friggin' Tim ma donner une mauvaise stack!
[Tim gave me a bad stack!]

She leans back in her chair and yells up at the open window near the cash register where Tim is standing.

MADAME DUBÉ (CONT'D)
Traitor! S'pour ça qu'on "trust" pas les Anglais!
[That's why we should never trust the English!]

Tim laughs from the window.

TIM (O.S. TO MADAME DUBÉ)
Ha-ha! Better luck next time!

MADAME GODIN
Don't you know? In life we make our own luck.

MADAME DUBÉ
How 'bout you let me borrow some
instead?

Madame Dubé reaches over and grabs a small handful from Madame Godin.

MADAME GODIN
Hey!

MADAME DUBÉ
Five of yours for five of mine.
What's fair is fair!

Madame Comeau chuckles at the two of them. The three get back to scratching.

MAYOR CHIASSON, his secretary, and a young journalist with a camera walk past the women.

MAYOR CHIASSON (w/ a thick English accent)
Bonne journée Mesdames !

MADAME COMEAU
Bonjour.

MADAME GODIN
Bonjour!

The three women watch them pass and soon start gossiping.

MADAME DUBÉ
That man is such a turkey.

MADAME COMEAU

I think he's... fine.

MADAME DUBÉ

Oh please.

MADAME COMEAU

Ben yé mieux que le dernier. Pis garde comment beau les célébrations sont cette année.

[Well, he's better than the last one. And look at how beautiful the celebrations are this year.]

MADAME DUBÉ

Si beau qu'il fallût les amener

“all da way out” à Bathurst.

[So nice he had to bring them all the way out to “nowhere” Bathurst.]

MADAME GODIN

Moi'je trouve ça “nice.” Semble que quelle qu'un “actually care.”

[I think it's nice. Seems someone actually cares for once.]

MADAME DUBÉ

Care so much he'd make us a summer side-show for the Québécois and American tourists.

MADAME GODIN

Not so loud! Someone will hear you!

MADAME DUBÉ

Hmph!

MADAME COMEAU

Ha-ha! What tourists? C'est Bathurst*!

[*It's Bathurst!]

The women laugh.

MADAME DUBÉ

You're right! You're right! Still though, ça fait pas bon sens*!

[*it makes no good sense!]

MADAME COMEAU

Les politiciens ne fait pas bon sens*! One day they believe this, the next day they say the opposite, and all the while the roads still suck, and our kids keep leaving.

[*Politicians make no good sense!]

MADAME GODIN

Oh yeah? Then why don't you leave? Achète z'y
toé pis ton marie une p'tite cabane en Floride. Or
go out West avec ton fils pis sa famille. What's
keeping you here?
[Go buy yourself and your husband a little place
down in Florida. Or go out West to live with your
son and his family.]

We hear the rumble of music and crowds in the Waterfront.

MADAME COMEAU

Ya poutine chose à faire de s'trafiquer sur le stuff
qu'on peu poutine changer.
[There's no point worrying over
stuff we can't change.]

MADAME DUBÉ

J'men fou des politiciens! C'est
toute d'la marde!
[I don't give a rat's ass about the promises of
politicians! It's all bullshit anyway!]

EXT. DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT – SUNSET

Guy, Genna, and the painter step back from the finished mural.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF MURAL (QUICK CUTS)

- GUY stands transfixed by the mural.
- GENNA stands beside him and transfixed by the mural.
- The Acadian woman's DISTRAUGHT face.
- The colonial soldier's ANGRY face.
- The colonial soldier's hands pulling the child from the woman's arms.
- The DISTRAUGHT child's hands as it reaches for their mother.
- Wooden houses set ablaze by red-coat soldiers.

End of montage.

We hear a woman's screams. Genna turns away and towards the sound.

A group of teenage girls are yelling and laughing as they flirt with some boys across the street. The teens are unaware of the three of them in front of the mural. Genna grabs her

chest and looks up at the painter. Guy stays transfixed by the mural. The painter warmly puts her arm around both kids to comfort them. They look at the mural together.

GUY (TO PAINTER)

Pourquoi y'on fait ça?
[Why'd they go and do that for?]

The painter doesn't answer.

Jane comes around the corner holding pretzels and finds them both looking at the mural alone. The painter is gone along with all her belongings.

JANE

Viens mes pitous! Papa est parké par-
[Come my loves! Dad parked by-]

Guy and Genna run to her and hug her tight. She is startled by their sudden affection. Jane notices the finished mural and holds her children close.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET – SUNSET

From behind, we see the painter walk down an empty street alone with her radio dangling from her knapsack.

She disappears into the sunset as fanfare and crowd noise comes from the festivities downtown.

EXT. WATERFRONT – DUSK

A large crowd of families sat in folding chairs sit watching a local country singer play in the Waterfront gazebo.

LOCAL COUNTRY SINGER

Don't stop my heart, my achy breaky heart!

Series of shots establishing the waterfront festivities.

- The ice cream parlor and Monty Dunkel's pizzeria are open and busy serving guests.
- A group of teenage girls lined up outside the women's washroom while a young boy runs straight into the men's room without concern.
- An older couple dancing together to music while a gaggle of toddlers run past and are corralled by a tired mom. She brings them back to where the family is seated.

End of shots.

EXT. WATERFRONT - CONTINUES

We see Jane sat in a small tent marked with a banner saying “Catholic Women’s League - Chaleur Region.” Her and another woman are painting the cheeks of two children.

The country singer from earlier finishes his song to moderate applause from the crowd. The host of the event walks up to the mic while the guitarist leaves.

HOST

‘Round of applause pour tous les
great musiciens ce soir*!
[*all the musicians tonight!]

Hearty applause— A drunk heckler yells out—

HECKLER

Where’s Cayouche*?!
[*Cayouche is a famous folk
musician, and an Acadian treasure.]

HOST

No worries man! La soirée n’est pas finie just
yet*! There will be more music later tonight in the
beer tent! Tickets are still on sale but they are
limited so if you want to see the one and only
Cayouche perform—
[*The night’s not over yet!]

Hearty applause.

HOST (CONT'D)

You’ll have to get your tickets now! La belle
Jolene, our ticket master, will gladly take your
money next to the stage.

Moderate laughter from the crowd. The host gestures to a young women sat near the stage.

HECKLER

Oh, I know she will!

HOST

But before that, notre nouveau maire élu à quelques
mots pour nous avant qu’on s’avance aux feux
d’artifices !
[Our newly elected mayor has a few words before
the fireworks!]

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - SUNSET

Elie, Claude, and the gang (Avril, Paula, and Zach) come up the street and head towards the waterfront.

They stop at the four-way crossing light. We hear the mayor clearing his throat into the microphone out in the Waterfront Gazebo.

Across the street Zach spots THEO, his cousin, taking photos of the mural and penning some notes. Zach calls out to him—

ZACH

Theo!

CLAUDE

Who's he?

ZACH

He's my rez bro! My cousin! He goes to B.H.S so you wouldn't know him.
[*Bathurst High School: the anglophone High School]

CLAUDE (TO ELIE)

Do we like him?

Elie shrugs. Zach answers for her.

ZACH

Yeah man, we like everybody! He's cool!

Zach runs ahead, the gang follows him across the empty street.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Hey, Theo!

EXT. DOWNTOWN STORE FRONT - CONTINUES

Zach high-fives Theo, you can tell they are close and cut from the same cloth.

THEO

Yo, what's up man!

ZACH

Not much, not much! These guys here are my band!

THEO

Oh sick!

The group takes turns high-fiving each other. Claude is a bit clumsy with the high five but that doesn't seem to bother Theo.

ZACH

What're you up to?

THEO

You see this?

ZACH

No, what?

Theo points to the mural.

PAULA

Oh jeez...

Elie looks at the red coat soldier in the mural. Claude looks at the mother having her baby ripped away. They stand transfixed by the image.

PAULA (CONT'D)

It's... a bit graphic...

AVRIL

It's history...

PAULA

I guess?

ZACH (TO THEO)

Did you paint this?

THEO

Nah... But I'm trying to find out who did, do y'all know?

They all shake their heads.

THEO (CONT'D)

You see anything wrong with it?

The group don't know how to answer.

THEO (CONT'D)

Look at what's off in the corner.

Theo points to a small detail in the mural— A group of Mi'kmaq watching the chaos from a distance. Theo turns to Zach.

THEO (TO ZACH) (CONT'D)

Why do they always gotta paint us like that?
Like we're some passive spectators! Frankly, it's
insulting.

CLAUDE (TO ELIE)
Well, this is a mural all about the
Acadian Deportation.

Theo hears him. Zach defuses the tension.

ZACH (TO THEO)
He doesn't mean anything by it...

THEO (TO CLAUDE)
My point still stands... We were there too... We're
not some footnote from the history books!

ZACH (TO THEO)
Don't pop your top over it...

THEO (TO ZACH)
Funny.

Claude turns back to the mural. He takes a moment to look but can't come up with a response.

ELIE
You're right... It's all... all of this is just... it's too
complicated for one mural to capture.

They stare a long minute at the mural. We hear Mayor Chiasson giving a speech to
cheers in the waterfront gazebo.

THEO (TO ELIE)
Would you be willing to be quoted?
For my article.

Theo pulls out his notepad.

ZACH (PROUDLY)
Theo's gonna be a journalist!

THEO
Theo *is* a journalist!

ZACH
This man right here's got a job
already at the Northern Light*!
[*local newspaper]

PAULA
Oh shit! That explains the press
badge!

THEO
I'm only working there for the

year. After that I'm taking my meager savings and untapped potential out West.

AVRIL

Where out West?

THEO

Dunno yet. Somewhere big and full of art like Montreal!

CLAUDE

No way! Elie's leaving for Montreal tomorrow!

Elie freezes. Paula and Zach turn to Avril for help.

THEO (TO ELIE)

Really? That's rad dude! Which school are you going to? Or is it for work?

Elie flounders for an answer but can't think of one in time. Avril quickly changes the subject.

AVRIL

I'm more concerned about that.

THEO

What?

She points to the baby in the mural.

AVRIL

Why does that baby look like it has two ex-wives and an unpaid mortgage?

We see that the baby's face is drawn much older, like in those renaissance frescos of baby angels.

THEO

No, it- huh...

PAULA

I suppose babies had it pretty rough back then.

EXT. WATERFRONT LOOKOUT – LATER

Claude, Elie, Zach, Paula, Avril, and Theo sit up in the waterfront lookout eating soft pretzels.

ZACH (TO THEO)

What are you doing tonight? You gonna stick around for the fireworks?

Theo finishes the last bite of his pretzel.

THEO

That'd be rad but I gotta head back. My buddy Luca found this old chesterfield in the woods just outside his grandma's house. All summer we've been building out his basement specifically for the chesterfield.

Claude and Elie look at each other.

THEO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We got a dartboard and everything!

AVRIL

Your buddy took a random couch he found in the woods and brought it into his house?

THEO

Yeah! And we're gonna party on it till dawn.

AVRIL

Isn't that kinda gross?

THEO

Nah, man it's chill! He wiped it down. You guys wanna come?

PAULA

We're good, right guys?

They nod.

THEO

Eh, your loss! See ya in Montreal Elie!

ELIE

Yeah, sure thing. It was nice meeting you.

Theo exits. Claude looks to Elie and nudges her gently.

CLAUDE

You okay?

ELIE

What? Why wouldn't I be?

Avril approaches them.

AVRIL

Elie, can I talk to you for a sec?

Elie follows her away from the group.

AVRIL (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing?

ELIE

What?

AVRIL

I may have saved you back there, but I can't keep lying to him. It's not right...

ELIE

I know, and I'll tell him! The timing just hasn't been right.

AVRIL

No! No more excuses! It's cruel!

ELIE

Avril... I'll tell him. Just let me figure out how.

AVRIL

Do it tonight! Cause if you won't, I will!

Avril joins Paula and Zach. They head down to the waterfront where the crowd is sitting and listening to music. Claude waits for Elie.

CLAUDE

What was that about?

ELIE

She was just mad about not playing tonight. Let's go join them before we lose them!

She runs past him towards the gang. Claude glances at the view, the sun is setting over the bay and it is warm. He runs to join them.

EXT. WATERFRONT CENTRE – CONTINUES

In the Waterfront Centre, located below the lookout, another band finishes their set. The host grabs the mic from the lead singer and addresses the crowd.

HOST (O.S.)

Round of applause everyone! Round
of applause. Now, Monsieux Maire—
[Mr. Mayor—]

He hands the mic to the mayor.

MAYOR CHIASSON

Thank you! Merci! Is everyone
having a good time? Ammusez-vous
bien?

The crowd cheers.

MAYOR CHIASSON (CONT'D)

Glad to hear! While this may seem a bit frivolous
on my part, it has been a long-time hope of mine
to finally bring music to Bathurst.

Avril, Zach, Paula, Elie, and Claude walk through the crowds. Like everyone else, they
are only half listening to the mayor's speech.

AVRIL

“Finally bring music to Bathurst”?
The hell is that supposed to mean?

PAULA

What a turkey.

The mayor continues his speech. He senses that he's losing the crowd.

MAYOR CHIASSON

And to have it be so well received is truly a
testament to how we here in the North-Shore love
a good party!

The crowd, a little drunk, cheers heartily. Avril grabs Paula and Zach by the arm. Elie
and Claude follow suit.

AVRIL

Come on! Let's go get to our spot
while mayor windbag has everyone
distracted!

EXT. WATERFRONT ROCKS – DUSK

The gang heads out to empty bridge and past the barricades meant to keep cars from
driving. Using the flashlights on their cellphones, they climb down green grass slopes
towards the water and onto large rocks meant to stop erosion from the sea.

ELIE

Guys, this seems dangerous.

ZACH

That's because it is!

Paula nearly slips.

PAULA

Oh shit!

AVRIL

Careful! You okay?

PAULA

Ha-ha! Yeah, I'm good!

ELIE

You sure we're allowed over here?

PAULA

Trust me, it's the best place to watch the fireworks!

CLAUDE

How so?

PAULA

Oh, you'll see.

ZACH

Can any of y'all swim in case one of us drowns?

AVRIL

If we could all swim, then we wouldn't have to worry about drowning now would we?

ZACH

The question still stands.

ELIE

We could still drown, I have faith!

AVRIL

Bit dark but valid.

Claude grabs a stick and pushes away an old beer can from between the rocks.

CLAUDE

I'd be more worried about tetanus than drowning.

Zach moves closer to look at the can.

ZACH

Hey Claude, let me see that stick.

Claude hands him the stick. Zach sticks it in the can and lifts it gently. A grey sludge of sand and jelly falls out of the can.

PAULA

Oh gross!

ELIE

Ew! Get rid of it!

AVRIL

No wait–

Zach lobbs it out into the bay. The can hops on the water before floating out to sea.

AVRIL (CONT'D)

Way to contribute to our planet's
marine pollution.

ZACH

My bad.

The gang settles back down onto their rocks. Claude looks behind him and sees the crowd walking over to the bridge with their chairs to watch the fireworks.

Zach leans over and whispers in Claude's ear, startling him.

ZACH (CONT'D)

They're coming!

Zach laughs as though that was the funniest joke of the night. He pulls out his vape and takes a long drag before handing it to Avril.

EXT. WATERFRONT BRIDGE – NIGHT

Crowds of people including families settle onto the empty bridge. Mayor Chiasson yells into a megaphone.

MAYOR CHIASSON

Y'all ready for fireworks?

Hearty cheers from the crowd.

MAYOR CHIASSON (CONT'D)

Alright! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

The crowd waits for the familiar boom of fireworks, but nothing happens. Mayor Chiasson turns to his assistant.

MAYOR CHIASSON (TO ASSISTANT) (CONT'D)

What's going on—

The boom of the fireworks goes off and startles everyone.

EXT. WATERFRONT ROCKS – NIGHT

From the rocks, Elie, Claude, and the gang watch the brilliant fireworks shoot above them and over the water. The boom sends shock waves across the water and towards them.

Claude and Elie reach their hands up to their chest and laugh at the startling feeling of the shockwaves.

Zach moves from his place next to Claude and sits closer to Avril. He wraps his arm around her while Claude pretends not to notice.

EXT. WATERFRONT BRIDGE – NIGHT

On the bridge, Claude's family watches the fireworks.

Claude sees his mom staring up at the fireworks, her arms around the twins. Everyone else is smiling watching the sky except for her.

She looks down and for a brief moment makes eye contact with Claude in the distance.

EXT. WATERFRONT ROCKS – NIGHT

Claude looks away quickly. He gets up and escapes down towards the beer tent. Elie notices and follows him.

EXT. WATERFRONT BEER TENT (BACK ENTRANCE) – NIGHT

Elie runs up next to him. Claude is walking faster and away from the sound.

ELIE

Hey— Hey!

Elie runs in front of him and grabs his shoulders, stopping him.

ELIE (CONT'D)

You alright?

CLAUDE

Yeah, I'm fine. The crowds, you know...

Claude catches his breath. Elie pulls him to a spot behind the tent. They sit on two milk crates where the roadies go to smoke.

ELIE

I was feeling a bit claustrophobic too.

Claude stares at his shoes. Elie leans back against the wall.
We hear the sound of fireworks still going in the distance.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Sucks that Avril's band never got
to play.

CLAUDE

Yeah. They would have been great.

ELIE

Avril seemed pretty mad at Zach too. You think
she'll get over it?

CLAUDE

Yeah. She'll get over it. I mean,
it's Zach.

Elie chuckles.

ELIE

Yeah. That's true.

They look out at the water. The moon peeks out from clouds. A cool breeze moves into
the town with the tide.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Do people even listen to Cayouche
anymore?

CLAUDE

Hey! The man's a national treasure.
Does it even matter?

ELIE

Fair.

Silence falls over them.

CLAUDE

Sorry.

ELIE

What for?

CLAUDE

For leaving you without saying anything.
I always seem to leave right when I shouldn't.

Elie scuffs her shoes against the pavement.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Since when did your dad need a cane?

ELIE

Can't tell you, I— I don't really remember.

CLAUDE

You could have told me.

ELIE

You were busy with school, and then graduation... Your dad losing his job too... I wasn't ready to talk about it. It's all good...

CLAUDE

I'm sorry. I should have been... I should have been better.

Elie stands up from her seat.

ELIE

"Every morning that we get up is a step towards moving on!" What's done is done. We're cool.

CLAUDE

Where'd you learn that saying?

ELIE

My mom.

CLAUDE

Did she tell you that?

ELIE

She didn't have to.

The fireworks end to applause. The crowds get into their cars and drive off.

EXT. WATERFRONT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jane packs up the car. Genna and Guy are sleeping in the back seat while Charles and Jean-François are waiting. She looks across the crowds to find Claude but can't see him.

Zach, Avril, and Paula emerge from the crowd. Jane sees them and runs over.

ZACH

Hey, Mrs. B!

JANE

Is Claude not with you?

ZACH

Don't know. Can't be too far—

AVRIL

He and Elie are waiting for us at
the beer tent.

ZACH

You like Cayouche, Mrs. B?

Jane looks towards the tent and can't see them. Charles calls out to her from the car.

CHARLES

Jane!

JANE (TO CHARLES)

Okay, I'm coming!

JANE (CONT'D)

When you see Claude, tell— tell him I— tell him to
be home early tomorrow.

AVRIL

Yeah, no problem.

Jane gets into the car, and they leave. The gang heads towards the beer tent.

ZACH

Damn she's fine!

Avril slaps him on the back.

ZACH (CONT'D)

What? She is?

AVRIL

You're an idiot.

INT. WATERFRONT BEER TENT – NIGHT

Crowds fill the large tent. A large stage with lights is set up near the back with room for standing below. Multiple bar areas near the back are already filled with lines waiting for drinks. The crowd is mostly older folks, Elie, Claude and their gang stand out as the youngest.

Paula whispers something unintelligible to Zach. They are on a mission to get drunk.

Avril, Elie, and Claude stand transfixed by the sight of a roadie's plumber's crack poking out from his cargo shorts.

ELIE (TO AVRIL)

You think that's your guy?

AVRIL

I dunno...

CLAUDE

Maybe go ask him? He might know who it is.

Before she can ask, Paula and Zach wrap their arms over her shoulders.

PAULA

Before you go blowing everything,
let me tell you our game plan!

ZACH

It's foolproof!

AVRIL

I doubt that.

PAULA

Zach's gonna go work his magic on
Mr. Roadie over there and get us
backstage to meet Cayouche!

AVRIL

Why would we wanna do that?

PAULA

Cause then we'll get VIP passes
which means no more paper
bracelets!

ZACH

You see what we're putting down?

ELIE (TO CLAUDE)

Not really.

AVRIL

This is all just an overly complicated
ruse to get drunk underaged.

ZACH

Desperate times call for desperate measures.

PAULA

And that's why it'll work!

AVRIL

I dunno...

CLAUDE

Guys! Elie's leaving tomorrow! And by September, we'll all be separated. This is our last chance to be together like this! We owe it to ourselves to try! Now, are you in?

ELIE

You really don't have to do this for me.

AVRIL (UNDER HER BREATH)

No kidding...

Paula elbows her in the ribs.

PAULA

Are you *all* in?

The gang looks at each other. It's settled—

AVRIL

We need a better plan.

PAULA

Yes! Brilliant! What're you thinking?

AVRIL

How 'bout we go ask him something worth our time. Like where the frick that other guy went.

The gang is confused.

AVRIL (CONT'D)

You know, the guy that was supposed to get us on the local stage? Don't tell me you already forgot!

Avril calms herself.

AVRIL (CONT'D)

Maybe he knows and can take us to him. Or better yet, find us someone who actually has some power around here. If he doesn't want to, we'll slip him a twenty!

CLAUDE

But if that guy didn't care to help us before, why would he care now?

Zach slicks back his hair and tightens his bandeau.

ZACH

Don't worry! I've got us all covered. Take notes cause the magic man has got some important business to attend to.

AVRIL

Good god!

Zach walks over to the roadie. They chat awhile and he gestures back to the group. Paula strikes a pose attempting to look mature and serious. Avril rolls her eyes while Elie and Claude stand stunned and awkward.

Without a word, the roadie grabs his arm and ushers him briskly backstage.

ELIE

Um, where's he taking him?

Zach looks back at them slightly terrified.

PAULA (LOUD WHISPER TO ZACH)

Abort! Abort the mission!

Zach and the roadie go backstage. The group is left dumbfounded in the middle of the entrance.

ELIE

Did he just get kidnapped?

Avril takes a long deep breath. A large bouncer walks over to them.

BOUNCER

Excuse me! I'm gonna need you all to show some ID.

AVRIL

Well... funny story, we—

EXT. WATERFRONT BEER TENT – LATER

Avril sits cross-legged on a milk crate outside the tent. Paula, Elie, and Claude occupy themselves.

PAULA

Avril, it's been like half an hour. Maybe we should just go home.

AVRIL

Have a little faith in the magic man.

Avril winces.

AVRIL (CONT'D)

I can't believe I just said that.

Zach comes out with one of the roadies.

PAULA

Zach!

AVRIL

What the hell, Zach! Why didn't you answer my texts!

ZACH

Sorry guys, but you would not believe what just happened!

PAULA

You got us VIP tickets?

ELIE

We can go see the show?

CLAUDE

Don't tell me! You met Cayouche?

ZACH

Even better! I found "the guy"!

He points to a very stoned roadie stood next to him.

ROADIE

Sup'

PAULA

He's black T-shirt guy?

AVRIL

Jesus Christ.

Zach introduces the roadie to the gang.

ZACH

Fish Fingers, meet my band!

ELIE (TO CLAUDE)

His name is Fish Fingers?

ROADIE

I play bass.

ELIE

That doesn't really explain—

AVRIL

Well, this has been really nice!
Truly! But I think that it's time
we all go home.

ZACH

No wait! Fish, show them!

They all look to the roadie as he pulls out a black backpack full of smuggled beer.

EXT. BEER-TENT – MOMENTS LATER

The gang are sat around drinking their beers. Avril and Zach are fighting a ways away from them.

PAULA

Is she mad or happy?

ELIE

Maybe concerned? Definitely
perplexed. A bit sad?

Avril yells at Zach far from the group. He pulls her into a hug.

CLAUDE (TO PAULA AND ELIE)

No. Something good just happened.

PAULA

And all's well that ends well.

ELIE

He really dropped the ball on this one.

PAULA

Yeah...

ELIE

How do you feel about all this?

PAULA

You mean us not playing? I hate it. It's unfair to
say the least. With the three of us leaving in a
couple weeks, this would have been the last time
we'd ever get to play together as a trio.

Paula takes a swig from her beer and looks out to the couple.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Avril, really wanted to make it
work. I guess it just wasn't meant to
be.

ELIE

You know? We might not be the biggest audience you ever play for but, I would be really happy to see you perform.

Paula smiles. She pulls out her saxophone from her case and warms up the reed between her lips. Elie and Claude sit back and listen.

She plays beautiful jazz riffs— it's a long lament about the end of summer. Zach and Avril walk over. They grab their instruments and join her. The trio play together, and it is magic.

Elie stands from her milk-crate and bows to Claude.

ELIE (CONT'D)

My lady, shall we dance?

Claude reciprocates with a curtsy.

CLAUDE

My-My! What a gentleman!

She guides him out to a spot between where the others are playing. They dance together to the music like jellyfish in rolling waves. The sound of ocean waves joins the swell.

The song ends. Avril looks to them both (Paula and Zach) and smiles. They hug each other, straighten their headbands, and cry in each other's arms. Claude and Elie watch them fondly from the side.

FADE OUT.

EXT. WATERFRONT BEER TENT - CONTINUES

The band from inside the tent starts their set. The gang is significantly drunker now and enjoying each other's company. Paula and Avril drunkenly dance together with Elie to the music coming from the tent. Zach takes a drag from his vape and passes it to Claude.

ZACH

So, what I do is I swish it in my mouth like it's mouthwash. It really helps the flavour coat your whole mouth. See! Now, you try!

Claude takes a drag on it but chokes.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Woah! You good? It's just vapor, you shouldn't be choking on it.

CLAUDE

It was hotter than I thought it
would be.

Zach laughs at him and takes his vape pen back.

ZACH

Maybe vaping isn't for you.

CLAUDE

No, I can do it!

ZACH

I'm giving you an out, Claude. And
I'm asking you to take it.

They laugh. Claude sits back against the wall.

CLAUDE

I wish every day could be like this.

ZACH

Yeah! I suppose it can be now that Elie's staying.

Claude's face falls as he realizes the truth

CLAUDE

What?

ZACH

Hm?

CLAUDE

What did you just say?

ZACH

Claude, I have no clue what I just said.

CLAUDE

You just said that everything can
stay the same now that Elie's not
leaving!

ZACH

What? I— I'm really drunk, I didn't-

The girls look back at the two of them.

ZACH (CONT'D)

I— I'm sorry man... I didn't mean
for you to find out like this...

Claude turns to Elie.

ELIE

Claude—

Heartbroken he grabs his jacket and leaves. The sound of a summer thunderstorm rolls into town. Elie runs after him.

ZACH (TO AVRIL AND PAULA)

I— I didn't mean to...

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET – CONTINUES

Claude runs away from the beer tent and out towards the causeway. Elie runs after him.

ELIE

Claude, I'm sorry! Claude, wait!

She grabs his arm but he pulls away from her.

CLAUDE

When were you going to tell me? We live in the same freakin' town! How long did you think you could hide from me?

ELIE

I didn't mean—

CLAUDE

No! You lied to me! And you roped all of our friends into keeping up this charade! Friends that I introduced to you! Like, what the actual fuck, Elie?

We hear the sound of cheers reverberate across downtown from the beer-tent.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

How could you lie to me like that?

ELIE

I'm so sorry. But I can explain—

Claude turns to leave.

CLAUDE

No! I don't want to hear it!

Elie yells at him.

ELIE

Claude Bouchard, you will listen to me!

Claude stops. Elie wipes tears from her eyes.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He turns to her— It is the first time that he has ever seen her cry and he doesn't know what to do.

ELIE (CONT'D)

I wanted to tell you. And I was going to today, but the moment just kept escaping me and I— I couldn't bring myself to ruin everything.

CLAUDE

Stop it!

ELIE

I already decided.

CLAUDE

How could you? You're only seventeen.

ELIE

Seventeen and three-quarters.

CLAUDE

Same difference. You don't know what your life is gonna be! I mean how could you?

ELIE

“Even a jellyfish has the right to choose where it'll float.”

CLAUDE

Jellyfish don't have brains. How can they even choose without a brain?

ELIE

It doesn't matter. They still have the right to choose. My mom used to tell me that.

CLAUDE

Why didn't you tell me earlier?

ELIE

Because of this! Because I knew how you'd react.

CLAUDE

But, what about Montreal?

ELIE

What about it? You ever stop to think that I don't really want to go to Montreal?

CLAUDE

You can't stay here, Elie. I won't let you.

ELIE

Why not? Go on! Tell me why I can't stay!

CLAUDE

You'll ruin your life.

His words float heavily between them.

ELIE

Says who? Says you? Says your mom?
Get over yourself!

CLAUDE

But your dreams...

ELIE

Can't you see it, Claude? It's screaming at you and yet you keep turning away! Montreal was never really my dream!

It starts to rain. The tide comes in, and with it a cold wind from the bay. Claude looks back across the water to the beer tent. The two are getting cold from the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. ELIE'S CAR – MOMENTS LATER

Elie drives back home in silence. Claude is in the passenger seat, shivering.

She quietly turns on the seat warmers for him. He pretends not to notice. The mood softens slightly.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Elie switches on an upright lamp and kicks her shoes off. Claude follows. They pull out two sleeping bags her dad had prepared and lay them out on the floor.

Sheepishly, Claude heads over to an old record player and turns on the music. Elie quickly turns it off.

ELIE

No music, my dad's sleeping.

CLAUDE

It never bothered him before—

ELIE

I mean it. No music this late, okay?

Elie heads over to a set of drawers and pulls out a box full of medications. She sifts through them and finds the pill organizer belonging to her dad. She grabs a glass of water and heads over to the bedroom door. Claude drunkenly slumps over and watches her.

We see Elie enter the bedroom from where Claude is sitting. She lifts her dad, Alan, gently from his bed. He has a humidifier running and a small night light on the bedside table.

INT. ALAN'S BEDROOM – CONTINUES

Elie gives Alan his pills and water.

ELIE

Dad, you gotta take your pills.

ALAN

Sophie? Is that you, Sophie...?

Elie can't bring herself to answer right away.

ELIE

It's time for your medication.

She feeds him the pills and water. He lies back in his bed.

ALAN

I wish you would visit more often.
Our baby Elie has grown so much
since you last saw her. You'd be
astounded at how beautiful she
is...

Elie fixes his blankets as he dozes off.

ALAN (CONT'D)

You'd be so proud. So proud...

Elie closes her father's bedroom door and exits out into the living room where Claude is sitting.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM – CONTINUES

Elie crawls over top of Claude and plugs her phone into the charging cable.

CLAUDE

What are you doing?

ELIE

Charging my phone.
What'd you think I was doing?

CLAUDE

Nothing.

She lies down and snuggles into him.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Why'd your dad call you Sophie?

ELIE

It's my mom's name.

CLAUDE

I didn't know...

ELIE

He gets a little foggy at night. The doctor says it's because of the medications he's on. But he needs them, so you learn to live with it.

Claude grabs his phone, and they scroll through Instagram together.

CLAUDE

Sophie... that's a pretty name...

Elie changes the subject.

ELIE

You ever get that feeling that this is as good as it's gonna get?

CLAUDE

Don't say that.

ELIE

Why not?

CLAUDE

Cause it's sad. And it's not true.

Claude pushes the hair out of her face lovingly.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

You're gonna be a big shot in Montreal, and one day win a Nobel

Prize. And you're gonna marry the
love of your life, and make a
brilliant life together!

ELIE

Stop...

CLAUDE

You'll get married, and have three kids, and one
of those big fluffy golden retrievers that the rich
people in movies have—

ELIE

I'm serious, stop—

CLAUDE

And you'll name him...

Elie relents.

ELIE

The professor.

CLAUDE

The professor? Really?

ELIE

Why not? It's funny!

CLAUDE

I mean— sure! The professor.

Lost in thought, Elie's smile fades.

ELIE

But this isn't real...

CLAUDE

You never really talk about what
you want, or about your mom...

ELIE

You never asked...

CLAUDE (A BIT HURT)

I didn't know I had to.

ELIE

Sorry, I just— I don't really know how...

CLAUDE

Do you miss her? Your mom?

Elie takes a deep breath before speaking.

ELIE

How could I? I don't know her anymore. Sometimes, I see her in the way my dad makes fly-ties. And in the bathroom mirror before I head out. And I've seen her a few times in my dreams out on the bay in her old sailboat. She sometimes talks to me in those dreams but come morning I can never remember what she said. It probably wasn't that important...

Elie looks at her dad's bedroom door.

ELIE (CONT'D)

It's one thing to miss someone in your dreams because you know that it's just a dream at the end of the day. It's only a figment from something unconscious that doesn't exist anymore. But it's another thing entirely when you start missing them while they're right next door. So, I'm not gonna have regrets over it and take what comes with each new day.

Claude sees her through new eyes. Elie shies away from his gaze.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Life is both incredibly short and unbearably long... What makes you so sure this isn't as good as it gets for us?

CLAUDE

I don't know. I just feel it. Maybe it's male intuition?

ELIE

That doesn't exist.

Elie sits back in her sleeping bag.

ELIE (CONT'D)

A laborer? Claude Boudreau is going to be a laborer. I can't be the only one who sees how ridiculous that sounds!

CLAUDE

Why not? Why can't I?

ELIE

Because you're—

CLAUDE

Because I'm what? Cause I'm fif*?

[*Fif is a homophobic slur]

ELIE

Because it doesn't suit you.

CLAUDE

I can be someone here! Like Jean-Francois, like my dad! I can become someone my family can be proud of! What's so wrong with that?

Claude gets up from his sleeping bag and heads over to the window. The rain outside has since intensified.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna make something of myself.

ELIE

Or die trying?

CLAUDE

I won't. I'm not fif.

Claude picks at his cuticles—the silence weighs heavy on the both of them.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

We could... marry?

ELIE

Stupid.

CLAUDE

No. I mean for serious. We could marry! That way nothing has to change!

ELIE

You don't like me like that.

CLAUDE

You said it yourself! You love me and I love you! Isn't that enough? We could make babies together and start a proper family!

ELIE

No offense, but I really don't want to make babies with you.

CLAUDE

Then we'll adopt! It'll be perfect!

ELIE

I can't marry you, Claude. Rather I won't.

The pitter-patter of rain hits the roof over them. Claude gets back into his sleeping bag.

CLAUDE

My grandpa knows.

ELIE

Claude...

CLAUDE

Everyone knows, they just won't say it.

ELIE

All adults are cowards, Claude.
It's a shame, but sometimes kids have
to be brave enough for everyone. Their
parents included.

Claude turns away from Elie.

ELIE (CONT'D)

It's not gonna go away, you know?
That silence, you must be the
one to break it. You know that
don't you?

Claude doesn't answer. She grabs his hand and pulls him towards her. They look at each other as she rubs the hair off his forehead and hugs him before falling asleep.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM – NEXT MORNING

Sun rises over town and into the living room window. Claude stirs awake. He dresses and heads up for breakfast in a daze.

INT. ELIE'S HOUSE KITCHEN – CONTINUES

Claude enters the kitchen holding his duffel bag. Elie's eating cereal while her dad drinks coffee and reads a fly-tying book. Claude drops his bag in the hall doorway. Elie notices the bag.

ELIE

You want some cereal?

CLAUDE

Sure.

He sits down at the table and pours himself a bowl. Alan pushes the carton of milk across the dinner table towards him.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

ALAN (TO ELIE)

You have fun last night?

ELIE

Yeah, it was fun!

ALAN

I caught the tail end of the fireworks from the window! They weren't as good as last year's.

ELIE

Really? Weren't they bigger this time?

ALAN

Really? Hm.

Claude looks out the kitchen porch window. He sees a moth resting on the windowsill. It is sleepily flapping its wings as if dreaming of flying.

ELIE

I got offered a job at Mr. Robichaud's Drugstore.

ALAN

Really?

ELIE

Yeah, he asked about you... I think I'm gonna take the job.

ALAN

I should go tell him thanks in person.

ELIE

You don't have to do that—

ALAN

It's about time I visited anyway.

Elie smiles.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Now, Claude, how has—?

Claude stays quietly transfixed by the moth. Alan and Elie watch him for a moment. Elie puts her spoon down and heads to the kitchen cupboards. She braces herself against the kitchen counter. Alan checks his watch and softly calls out to her—

ALAN (CONT'D)

Elie-bean, it's almost 8:30.

Elie wipes the hair off her forehead and turns to him.

ELIE

Is it? Already?

She walks out and grabs Claude's bag from the hall and waits for him. Claude stands up abruptly. He's a bit scared but his eyes are determined as he looks at Elie.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

Claude nods. Elie smiles back warmly.

ELIE (CONT'D)

Hey dad, I'll be back in a bit.

Claude and Elie run out of the house. Alan smiles as he drinks his coffee.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE – CONTINUES

Claude and Elie exit to the driveway. Elie slams open the car door and sticks her key in the ignition, but the car won't start.

ELIE

Shit!

Claude grabs her hand and pulls her down to the street. They run, Claude's duffle bag in hand, towards the train station a couple blocks away.

EXT. TRAIN STATION – MOMENTS LATER

Elie and Claude run past a homeless man smoking at the entrance. On the wall, some graffiti says, "Faith and trust, or bust."

INT. TRAIN STATION – CONTINUOUS

Elie and Claude enter the train station lobby. It is mostly empty aside from a woman at the front desk listening to local anglophone radio. Elie sits down on a bench across from the desk. To her right is a wall of windows looking out on the empty train tracks. Behind her is a mural depicting an ocean setting with a happy family walking on the beach. Under the mural we see the town slogan, "No Shore like the North Shore! Bathurst N.-B., Come Stay Awhile!"

Claude goes up to the woman at the desk.

CLAUDE

Excuse me! Did the train to
Montreal leave already?

We hear the sound of the radio as Elie turns to look out at the train tracks.

RADIO HOST 2 (O.S.)
Beautiful skies for today, with a
mild 24 degrees Celsius later in
the afternoon. Overall, it is
looking to be an absolutely
gorgeous day! Enjoy the rays while
you can because winter is only a
few months away! In other news—

Claude sets his duffel bag on the floor and joins Elie on the bench. They listen to the cacophony of crickets resounding through the open window screens across the room.

CLAUDE
It's running late.

ELIE
You want to call your mom? Let her know
you're—

CLAUDE
Mom's not terribly good at Goodbyes.

ELIE
Hmm.

The sound of crickets slowly intensifies.

CLAUDE
It's hot in here.

ELIE
Yeah.

CLAUDE
Must be the windows.

.

ELIE
My dad wanted me to tell you good
luck.

Claude doesn't answer. Elie turns back to her feet.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go to the bathroom.

Claude leaves. Elie watches him go.

INT. TRAIN STATION BATHROOM – CONTINUES

Claude enters the far stall in the men's bathroom. It is clean but old, with a fresh coat of eggshell paint. He rests on the toilet, his head between his knees and trying not to barf.

CLAUDE (QUIETLY)
You're okay. You're okay. You're okay.

A man walks into the bathroom and washes his hands.

Startled, Claude sees a bit of graffiti written on the stall saying, "You can paint over me, but I'll still be here." He stares at the words for a moment, transfixed by their meaning. The stranger knocks on the door.

PASSENGER 1
Hey, are you okay in there?

CLAUDE
Yeah! I'll– I'll be right out!

He flushes the toilet and exits. Claude catches his reflection in the mirror, then quickly leaves.

INT. TRAIN STATION – CONTINUOUS

Claude enters the train station lobby. Two more passengers sit separately by the windows. Elie is chatting with the woman at the desk. Claude sheepishly walks back to the bench.

Moments later, Elie returns with two paper cups of coffee. She hands one to Claude and joins him on the bench.

CLAUDE
Thanks.

ELIE
Don't thank me, thank Cherise.

She gestures to the woman now dealing with another passenger.

CLAUDE
You know her?

ELIE
No, we were just chatting.

Elie checks her phone.

ELIE (CONT'D)

It's almost 9. I keep finding myself wishing that the train never comes. Maybe I'm not so good at goodbyes either.

Elie watches Claude intently as he shuffles in his seat and looking more and more nervous.

Claude pulls out his crumpled train ticket from his pocket and fiddles with it in his lap.

CLAUDE

You don't have to stick around.
Maybe I'm asking too much of you.
My family should be here instead...

Elie looks at the front door of the station.

ELIE

No. If I don't stay, I'll be worried you got on the wrong train.

The piercing sound of a train whistle resounds through the lobby.

ELIE (CONT'D)

You ready?

Claude stares past her to the platform outside. He slowly stands and heads out onto the outdoor platform. Elie follows him.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM – CONTINUOUS

Claude pauses out on the platform. People walk around him and board.

He turns to Elie and hugs her hard.

CLAUDE

I'll miss you.

ELIE

Desperately?

CLAUDE

Like the waves miss the sand.

ELIE

You really shouldn't talk in metaphors— it doesn't suit you.

They laugh. The train whistles out a warning that it'll be leaving soon.

CLAUDE

Come with me?

Elie shakes her head with a smile.

ELIE

Stay?

CLAUDE

I can't. I don't have a home here in the same way you do.

ELIE

Yeah, I know.

CLAUDE

I wish I could be enough...

Elie doesn't know how to respond.

ELIE

If Montreal doesn't work out for you, you can always come crash on me.

Claude grabs his bags and heads to the train. At the door he yells back-

CLAUDE

Your life's not over, you know? You can come crash on me too. Or at the very least, you can crash on my couch!
(Beat.)
See you at Christmas?

She knows he's lying...

ELIE

See you at Christmas.

Claude gets on the train. Elie desperately grabs at the hem of her shirt to stop herself from pulling him off the train.

INT. TRAIN – CONTINUES

Claude looks out the train window and sees Elie standing there looking for him. He waves at her, but she can't see him. The train starts to move.

On the platform, Elie is frantic trying to find Claude. She runs after the train waving.

Claude watches her disappear out of sight, recognizing what he's leaving behind, but remains determined in his decision.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM – CONTINUES

Elie teeters on the edge of the platform and watches the train in the distance. She wipes her face on her shirt sleeves and plugs her headphones into her ears.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE – CONTINUOUS

We follow Elie as she walks home along Riverside Drive.

Elie walks past multiple houses. Along this road, most of the lawns are decorated with Acadian flags, bird feeders, and 'For Sale' signs. A few houses have makeshift banners on bed sheets and cardboard congratulating their children for recently graduating high school. One house has a family moving in and carrying their belongings from a U-Haul into the house. A woman jogs past with her dog. A newly married couple dance to music in their garage while their dog runs through sprinklers.

We hear the diegetic noise of suburban life and distant train whistles. Lightly from her headphones we hear music.

Elie turns into her driveway, and into the house. We linger outside, focusing on the house's facade and a homemade sign on the garage congratulating Elie on her recent high school graduation.

From the open window, we hear her dad watching television. He greets her.

ALAN (O.S.)
You say goodbye to Claude?

Elie cries.

ALAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh, Elie-bean... It'll be okay.
It'll be okay.

FADE OUT TO
CREDITS.

POST CREDITS / EPILOGUE:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CHRISTMAS (YEARS LATER)

Elie stands outside her car in the train station parking lot. She is anxiously waiting for someone.

A few strangers exit the station's main door followed by an older Claude bundled stylishly for winter. He's carrying the same tattered duffle-bag that he left with all those years ago.

He notices Elie and they both look at each other surprised. Elie smiles at him and they walk towards each other.

CLAUDE
I was worried you wouldn't
recognize me...

ELIE
You look beautiful.

Claude tucks his hair behind his ear.

ELIE (CONT'D)
You kept your promise...

CLAUDE
I'm a few years late but... Merry
Christmas Elie.

Elie stuffs her hands in her pockets.

ELIE
Merry Christmas Claude!

CLAUDE
How are you?

ELIE
You know, I'm good. For real this time...

Claude smiles. His eyes start to well with tears.

CLAUDE
To tell you the truth, I didn't think I would ever
come back... I'm sorry for that.

Elie tears up. She pulls him into her arms and he cries.

ELIE
I know.

They cry for a moment.

CLAUDE
Oh my god, my mascara gonna start
running.

ELIE

Don't worry, I've got tissues in
the car.

CLAUDE

It's cold as shit here!

ELIE

Don't tell me you forgot?

They climb into Elie's car.

CLAUDE

I didn't forget, I just...

ELIE

You forgot.

CLAUDE (PLAYFULLY)

Stupid.

They drive out of the parking lot.

ELIE

So, where to first? You wanna do
the up and down or go straight to
your parents' house?

CLAUDE

Oh god, give me minute to breathe
first!

ELIE

Then, you wanna get some coffee?

CLAUDE

Sure!

They turn the street corner and head out into town. We pull out and see the town covered in a plush winter coat of white snow. A yellow school bus drives past some buildings decorated for Christmas. Close to the station, a woman blows the snow out of her driveway. A saxophonist practices from her house nearby.

ELIE

We can also check out the beach later

CLAUDE

Sure! Remember that summer when you
got bit by that jellyfish and I had to—

ELIE

Yeah, let's not talk about that.

They both laugh.

CLAUDE

So, how's your dad doing?

ELIE

Oh, he's the same as always.
He just got a new hobby for
the winter.

CLAUDE

Oh yeah. What is it?

ELIE

You wanna try and guess?

CLAUDE

Is it woodworking?

ELIE

No.

CLAUDE

Uh, pottery?

ELIE

Nope!

CLAUDE

Quilting?

ELIE

Wrong again!

CLAUDE

Oh, just tell me!

ELIE

Origami.

CLAUDE

Really?

ELIE

Yeah, origami!

CLAUDE

It suits him!

ELIE

That's what I was thinking!

CLAUDE

What about your mom?

ELIE

Oh, she's around. She sent me a Christmas card from Barcelona! Cool, right?

The distant sound of the train leaving and the roaring winter cityscape outside joins her tune.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STORE FRONT – CONTINUES

A new mural is painted on the empty shop window. In the mural, we see a future where three figures, one Mi'kmaq, one Acadian, and one Anglophone, are bathing in the bay's warm waters together. Jellyfish float around them, and the scene is peaceful. A 'For Lease' sign hangs on the shop door.

The feeling of something new rumbles in the jazz riffs they create together.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END / FIN.

Note

1. The use of the word genocide, when applied to the Acadian Deportation, has been contested by scholars in the past. Maurice Basque, in “Atlantic Realities, Acadian Identities, Arcadian Dreams,” warns of media, like Longfellow’s *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie*, romanticizing the event and demonstrates that some Acadians do disagree with the label of genocide being attached to their traumatic history (66). Other academics like Dean Jobb, in their book *The Acadians: A People’s Story of Exile and Triumph*, directly calls the event a “brutal genocide” and “an act of [...] ethnic cleansing” (1, 2). For more related, see Faragher and Massicotte as well. The argument over what does and does not qualify as genocide is of little interest to this project.

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