

Toulouse 4/23/78

* Note to artists. Most of the characters are part of the same family. The two girls in Page 3, Panel 3 are adopted. Race, height, weight, and hair/eye color are not specified. Draw as you see fit. In order to not influence one way or the other, the characters are given initials: the main character is named **B.** and her husband is **R.**

Page One

Page 1, Panel 1

Door opens and we see the mid-section of a woman; her arms, legs, and torso sprint through. It is as if she is entering from the left page border and rushing into the story. A 4x6 photo is in her hand, but we cannot tell what it is. Only that she is holding a small object.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 1, Panel 2

Outside. Backyard of a rural Minnesota home during a dark December night. Snow, snow, and more snow. Same woman is hunched over, hands on knees, trying to calm herself from a near panic attack that occurred right before the story began. A small steam cloud escapes. In her rush, she left without a jacket or any winter wear. No hat, glove, nor scarf. The -10 degree chill attempts to pierce her thoughts, but other pains occupy her mind. This is our main character, **B.** She is in her late 30s. Again, we see an object in her hand and can tell it is a paper of some sort.

As noted below, the dialogue is slipping in from the panel's left side, from inside the house **B.** departed. The house doesn't need to be shown in the panel, only implied. The voice is non-threatening, caring, and concerned.

Father (Off panel, entering from the left): There you are.

Page 1, Panel 3

We see the owner of the voice from the previous panel. It is **B.**'s father. Age: early 60s. Nearly retired and counting down the days til her twilight years. He hands **B.** an old jacket that doesn't match **B.**'s body type.

Father: You'll need this. Bit old. Sorry if it doesn't quite fit.

Page 1, Panel 4

Close-up. Father's gloved hand extends with two lit cigarettes from the left. While **B.**'s gloveless hand reaches out from the right to accept the offer.

Father (Off panel, entering from the left): And this.

B. (Off panel, entering from the right): Thanks, but I quit.

Father (Off panel, entering from the left): Yeah, well. So did I.

Page 1, Panel 5

The two enjoy their cigarettes and the silence of the winter night. Their cold breathes and exhaled fumes mix. Two souls in the snow separated by an unseen distance. Both avoiding conversation. Avoiding eye contact. Avoiding moving forward.

*Note to artist. For **B.** since she has no gloves, I picture her with both fists clenched deep in her pockets, breathing out smoke from the corner of her mouth. If you don't, draw as you see fit.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 1, Panel 6

With 3/4ths of a cigarette remaining, the father slices through the silence.

Father: So. You want to talk about it?

Page Two

Page 2, Panel 1

Close-up. **B.** drags the cigarette butt on the bottom of her wet boot to extinguish the flame. We can tell it is **B.** since the hand is not gloved. She finishes her cigarette first, out of a need to calm her nerves and to keep warm.

B. (Off panel, entering from above): Dad, can we skip the lecture this time? It's Christmas Eve.

Page 2, Panel 2

Long shot. Both father and daughter are in the panel. On the far left we see some of the back portion of the house. Don't show too much of the structure. Let the reader fill in the blanks. **B.** and her father are in the center of the panel. The father's action and gesture are unimportant. **B.** flicks her cigarette into the stretching white to her right. At the far right of the panel is the edge of the woods that extends for 4 acres. As with the house, less is more. Since this is Minnesota, the trees are most likely Quaking Aspen and/or Paper Birch. The idea is that **B.** is in the middle between the comforts of home to her left and the expanse of solitude and nature to her right. This will be visually emphasized more on the next page.

* Note for clarification. The story takes place on Christmas Eve 1989. The Minnesota Timberwolves basketball team played their first game on Nov. 3, 1989. By Christmas Eve of their first season, the team won 5 games and lost 20. They weren't good.

Father: Sure. How about this new basketball team up in the Twin cities? Been over a month and these so called Timberwolves only won 5 games.

Page 2, Panel 3

Father savors the final pulls of his cigarette. Tastes the last of it between speech balloons.

* Note to artists. Not sure if SFX is needed. Might be easier/more effective to have a tendril of smoke split the two speech balloons.

Father: Or we can talk about your wife...

Father: and the real reason why **R.** didn't join you and the girls from Tennessee.

Page 2, Panel 4

B. has her head turned to the right, avoiding eye contact with her father. **B.** knows that her father knows that she is lying.

B.: Come on. It's like I told you and mom. He stayed to help out at the church. He's a board member now. No big secret.

Page 2, Panel 5

Inside the house. An empty seat at the dinner table. Place setting unused. To emphasis this is not a flashback, since there are a couple flashback panels in this story, perhaps add a Christmas decorated table cloth or a snow man design on the center of the plate or any easily more imaginative idea than those.

*Note to letterer. Was thinking that each of the 4 sentences be split into their own text boxes. Since this is a voice over, the text boxes have more freedom in their positioning within the panel. Thoughts?

Father (V.O.): Look.

Father (V.O.): This summer it was a volunteering retreat.

Father (V.O.): Thanksgiving, extra hours at the food pantry.

Father (V.O.): **B.**, you can't keep lying.

Page 2, Panel 6

Father places one gloved hand on his daughter's shoulder.

Father: What's going on? Where's **R.**?

Page 2, Panel 7

Close-up. **B.**'s hand is in her pants pocket. The reader cannot see the whole object, but she is clutching the 4x6 photograph from Panel 1 and 2 from Page 1. A corner of the photo peeks out to allude that she is hiding something. **B.** slipped the photo in her pants pocket between panel 2 and 3 on page 1. Since she did not have a jacket at that point, the photo is in her pants pocket rather than jacket's pocket. This photo will be shown and explained on the upcoming pages.

B. (Off panel, entering from above): I don't know.

Page Three

For this page, I was thinking to reaffirm the theme that the left represents a return to the home and family and the right is the unknown, feral aspect of nature. My amateur layout design idea is for six panels, two rows of three. The left side (Panels 1, 3, 5) are all set in the interior of the house. The right side (Panels 2, 4, 6) are images focused on the wooded area along the edge of the property.

*Note to letterer. All dialogue on this page are Voice Overs.

Page 3, Panel 1

Mid-shot of the refrigerator in the house. This is **B.**'s parent's fridge so add a child's drawing attached by a magnet that says, "#1 Grandma" or something similar. There is a larger rectangular magnet that resembles a picture frame. Along one of the borders is the Eiffel Tower. Written in capital letters along another border is the word FRANCE. Add as much French phrases and baguettes as needed to the remainder of the rectangular area. This picture frame magnet is askew and positioned at an odd angle. The 4x6 picture in **B.**'s pocket was underneath this magnet before she yanked it free and ran outside. As you can tell by the title of the story and the heavy emphasis on France, the photo has something to do with Toulouse, France. Perhaps include a small calendar page on the fridge that says it is December 1989 to tell the reader. If you go this route, fill the calendar with notes such as Doctors Appointments and birthdays. (FYI, a doctor appointment annotation would non-directly link to what **B.** says in this panel). As far as the remainder of the fridge, add as much decoration you think an elderly couple would display.

Father (V.O.): What do you...

B. (V.O.): Listen. He's not well. He's been sick for a long time, dad. Maybe before we met.

Page 3, Panel 2

Within the woods. Trees and fresh snow. A wire mesh fence with a sign that says END OF PROPERTY. This fence is a lazy symbology for the fence in **B.** and **R.**'s relationship.

B. (V.O.): There were hints. So many hints that I ignored. After the doctor told us I could not conceive, he'd disappear for a night, two nights, sometimes a week.

Page 3, Panel 3

The two girls are at the dinner table. The younger, around 5/6, is about to wet willy the older sister, age 8/9. The older sister is lifting a spoonful of mashed potatoes to her mouth and doesn't suspect the attack. Keep in mind, the sisters are biological sisters, but **B.** and **R.** are not their biological parents.

B. (V.O.): And no. The girls don't know anything. They think he's out rescuing giraffes. Not sure where they got that idea.

Page 3, Panel 4

Three sets of timber wolf paw prints are in the new snow. One is larger than the other two. This is the mother's prints. The smaller two are her cubs' tracks. This is another lazy analogy for what **B.** is saying in this panel.

B. (V.O.): I thought after adopting the girls, he would feel, well, not whole exactly, but at least less empty. He was. For a short time.

Page 3, Panel 5

View from indoors as if someone is looking out the window. **B.** and her father can be seen standing in the backyard, as well as the forest at the edge of their property. Think of Panel 5 and 6 almost like Ying-Yang. Instead of the contrast and unity of black and white, these panels reflect the contrast and unity of the comforts of home and the unknown, untamed extensions of nature. For this panel, we are within the home, but out the window, in the distance, is a small reminder of that which you cannot control or predict. Please note, that I'm not suggesting that these two panels be shaped like the Ying-Yang, only that the emotional symbology behind these two panels be similar to the ancient symbol, at least to my interpretation of it.

B. (V.O.): One night he was out late. Can't remember the excuse. I waited, but eventually went to bed.

B (V.O.): Phone woke me up. A cop. **R.** was found drunk in a parking lot two states over.

Page 3, Panel 6

This is a similar shot/angle from Panel 5, but is taken from the vantage from the trees on the outskirts of the property. We can see **B.** and her father talking and the house is in the background. For this portion of the Ying-Yang, we are in the darkness of the woods, but can see a small inviting light in the distance from within the house.

B (V.O.): He went to counseling. Court order. It helped, a bit. But after that was done, he began to slip away again. Far away.

Page Four

This is a splash page of **B.**'s frantic thoughts and memories of her marriage. They are listed below in chronological order. However, please draw them in whatever order you want. There should be no panels and gutters splitting the different thoughts. This jumbled order of events should reflect the memories flooding her mind, competing for dominance, just as each memory is competing for the attention of the reader. See if you can merge different memories so they appear like they're occurring at the same time, but in reality, happened 4 years apart. All that I ask is that in the center of the page is the 4x6 photo that is hinted at during this story. This one scene is marked in bold below. The below scenes are a basic guideline. If you think a scene won't work, then exclude it. If you think of something better, go for it. For perspective, the story occurs on 12/24/98. This is added at the end in Italics.

* Note to letterer. Sorry, the order of dialogue and scenes listed below will not be the same order that they are shown on the completed page. This is described in more detail above. Once the artists are complete, we'll create a guide to which scenes are where on the completed page.

- 11/8/74 **B.** and **R.** are in their mid 20s. They appear to be a couple years out of college, yet neither of them went. They are in a loud place, either at a concert or a bar. Whichever is easiest to draw. **R.** is waiting in line for the bathroom and trying to talk to **B.** If you can think of something less romantic then go for it.

R.: You're Jacquyn's friend, right?

B.: What? I can't hear you. I'm getting another drink. Want one?

- 1/5/76 **B.** and **R.** are spending the New Year at a ski resort in Wyoming. They are on the bunny hill as **B.** is attempting to teach **R.** how to ski with little success. This is **R.**'s first attempt at skiing while **B.**, by no means an expert, has been 6 times and handles herself well.

B.: Keep it up. You're doing great.

R.: How did you talk me into this?

- 6/4/77 **B.** and **R.** are driving from Tennessee up to Minnesota to spend a week with **B.**'s parents. **R.** is driving with his left hand and reaching to turn up the radio with his right hand. **B.** is in the passenger seat with her arms across her chest.

Side note: This will be the first time **B.**'s parents meets **R.** This trip was his idea and she doesn't see the reason why they need to drive so far just to see her parents. During this trip, **R.** will tell **B.**'s parents that he plans on proposing to **B.**

B.: This song is awful.

R.: Shut up. You know you love it.

- **4/23/78** A couple weeks after getting married, **B.** and **R.** are in Toulouse on their honeymoon. We can tell it is both the photograph and a memory of having their photograph taken. Outside the edges of the photograph, we can see **B.** remembers more than was captured within the photo's scope. **B.** and **R.** can be seen holding hands within the picture, but outside the frame **R.** is holding a half empty bottle of wine with his other hand.

NO DIALOGUE

- 8/11/80 and 2/27/81 This scene combines two occurrences that are 6 months apart. **R.** sits on the left side of the bed of their Tennessee home in 1980. We presume he is talking to **B.** on the right side of the bed, but we cannot see all of him. Instead the right side of the bed is from 1981, 6 months later, and **R.** is missing. I'm bouncing back and forth if it is necessary to have a note on the 1981 side of the bed. My thinking is the note is folded in half and upright with **B.**'s name written. The note would be his excuse for disappearing for a couple days.

R.: I know money is tight right now, but we'll get through this. We have each other. That's enough.

- 10/2/81 **B.** consoles **R.** in the kitchen. A cutting board with half cut vegetables is near them on the counter. **B.** began sobbing while cutting vegetables, thinking and worrying that she cannot conceive. Wondering if it is her or **R.** that is infertile. **R.** walked in the kitchen and saw **B.** as the thoughts tormented her.

B.: Why? Why can't we get pregnant?

R.: Shhhh. It's ok. We'll see a doctor. It'll all work out. If not, I'll ask the mailman to help.

- 3/30/87 **B.** and **R.** are in their daughters' room the day before they pick them up from child services. The girls are not in this panel, but for a reference they are 4 and 7 years old. Please decorate accordingly.

B.: Can you believe it? Tomorrow we officially become parents.

R.: Let's celebrate. I'll get the special occasion wine from the garage.

- 12/24/89 *Current date of the story.*

Page Five

For this page, **B.** does not hear any of the dialogue from either parent. She is too in tune with the past that she does not here those in the present that are worried for her and love her.

* Note to letter: I was thinking either blank speech bubbles or the words can be there, but faded near to the point of incomprehension. If you want to go the latter, then I can add some dialogue.

Page 5, Panel 1

Extreme close up of **B.**'s face. We see her nose, mouth, cheeks, chin, and upper part of her neck. Since she was bombarded with memories in the previous page, **B.** is facing left to keep with the theme that left represents the comforts of the past. A puff of steam escapes her quivering lips. Tears, cold from the frigid weather and wind, dab her numb cheeks. It is important we don't see her eyes, the source of the tears. Please leave some room on the panel's right side for dialogue in the next panel since Panel 2 is the same shot except with **B.**'s father and a dialogue bubble.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 5, Panel 2

Same shot, but now **B.**'s father is hugging her. **B.**'s father offers his daughter some heartfelt words of advice, but **B.**, and thus the reader, cannot hear them.

Father: [Undecipherable dialogue. About 3 sentences composed of 22 words]

Page 5, Panel 3

Pull back. On the panel's left side is **B.**'s mother inside the doorframe of the house's back door. She is shouting to them both to come back inside and eat their dinner, but **B.** cannot hear her mother. Nor can **B.** hear her father's quick clever quip to her about her mother's request. Depending on what would be more effective for the page, **B.** and her father could still be hugging while the mother is shouting at them both.

Mother: [Undecipherable dialogue. 1 sentence composed of 7 words]

Father: [Undecipherable dialogue. Crass comment only 4 words long]

Page 5, Panel 4

Father walks toward the sturdy house that shelters his wife and grandchildren and warm dinner, leaving **B.** by herself in the Christmas Eve night. Yet again, **B.** is still trapped in her own mind and cannot hear her father's final remarks.

Father: [Undecipherable dialogue. 2 short sentences composed of 8 words]

Page 5, Panel 5

This is a similar shot as Page 2, Panel 7. Instead of shoving the 4x6 photo deeper in her pocket, **B.** pulls out photograph and confronts the object that began the brief chain of events that brought her outside in the winter chill.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 5, Panel 6

Holds photo in both hands. Angled in a way that the reader can see the whole photo. Remember, this should be the same image in the center of the previous page.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 5, Panel 7

Low shot, almost from the P.O.V. of the photo. On the left side of the panel, the 4x 6 photo is ripped in half vertically, lying in the snow. One half is face up, showing **R.** and part of **B.**, but we don't see much of her. The other ripped half is the photo's blank back. In the corner is written **Toulouse 4/23/78** . Yes, we get the title of the story on the last panel. The reason why I suggested to frame the panel from the P.O.V. of the photo is so on the panel's right side we see **B.**'s back as she is walking into the wooded area, choosing nature instead of nurture. In the woods, hidden amongst the trees, we can see the lone mother timber wolf. We can see the footprints in the snow leading from the ripped dropped photograph to where **B.** is near the woods. Maybe add her removing her jacket as she walks toward the woods or the jacket and gloves already on the ground along the trail of footprints. Let me know if all this is too complex to put in one panel.

NO DIALOGUE