

WOMEN TALKING

Screenplay by

Sarah Polley

Based upon the book by Miriam Toews

April 12th, 2021-PRODUCTION DRAFT
May 31st, 2021-BLUE REVISIONS
June 21st, 2021-PINK REVISIONS
June 25th, 2021-YELLOW REVISIONS
July 3rd, 2021-GREEN REVISIONS
July 8th, 2021-SALMON REVISIONS
July 9th, 2021-GOLDENROD REVISIONS
July 10th, 2021-BUFF REVISIONS
July 18th, 2021-CHERRY REVISIONS
July 29th, 2021-TAN REVISIONS
August 9th, 2021-DOUBLE BLUE REVISIONS
August 16, 2021-DOUBLE PINK REVISIONS
(44, 44A, 93, 93A)

THE WOMEN:

THE REIMER WOMEN:

*

Greta, the eldest

Mariche, the eldest daughter of Greta

Mejal, a younger daughter of Greta

Autje, a daughter of Mariche

THE FRIESEN WOMEN:

Agata, the eldest

Ona, the eldest daughter of Agata

Salome, a younger daughter of Agata

Neitje, a niece of Salome

THE JANZ WOMEN:

Scarface, the eldest

Anna, the eldest daughter of Scarface

Helena, the granddaughter of Scarface/daughter of Anna

VISUAL NOTE:

The flashbacks of trauma will be shot at 15fps and there will be a "roar" over these scenes, animal and/or machine-like.

1

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING

1

A BOYS FEET WALK ALONG A THIN FENCE. AARON, (13) balances on a fence. We follow him as he walks along the fence all the way along a path that leads to a barn. We follow him around the barn and the pen where a couple of YEARLINGS graze. He is followed, in complete silence, by a group of about 14 BOYS who walk on the ground beside him, watching his every move, wondering if he will fall.

Beside them walks the SCHOOL TEACHER, AUGUST, who watches him silently, willing him not to fall.

AARON manages to walk the entire length of the fence, around the paddock, until its end. When he is done, he hops down and the boys erupt in rapturous applause, as August watches them closely.

August looks off into the distance, where he sees a GROUP OF MEN coming towards the boys, looking stern.

AUGUST (V.O.)

The attacks were originally attributed to ghosts and demons.

2 EXT. ROAD - MORNING 2

A GROUP OF 7 WOMEN walk along a dusty road. A WIND picks up. They hold onto their hats.

3 INT. CHURCH - MORNING 3

DOZENS OF MEN bow, their heads on the floor in silent prayer.

AUGUST (V.O.)

When the women woke up feeling drowsy and in pain, their bodies bruised and bleeding, many believed they were being made to suffer as punishment for their sins. Many accused the women of lying for attention or to cover up adultery.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. FIELD - SUNSET (ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE VOTE) 4

Ona, Salome, Salome's 3 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER MIEP, and August sit in a field. They stare out over the fields, at Miep playing in the soy field.

SALOME

Hundreds of times. All of us.

Salome watches Miep. They all stare in silence at her for a while. WE FOLLOW MIEP, her fragile little body, as she creates a path through the soy field, as we hear the adults' conversation, low in the background.

ONA

They said we were dreaming.
But then we realized that we were
dreaming one dream and it wasn't a
dream at all.

We come back to August's face, tears streaming out of his eyes. He tries to quickly wipe them away. Salome looks at him, she looks away. We go with Miep, deeper into the field.

SALOME (O.S.)

They told us that it was Satan. Or
the result of wild female
imagination.

OVER MIEP WALKING INTO THE DISTANCE WE SEE THE FOLLOWING
TEXT:

"WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN ACT OF FEMALE IMAGINATION."

OVER BLACK:

ONA (V.O.)

I'm glad you're back August. It's
good that you came back.

5 INT. SALOME'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

5

NEITJE (15), hunches over a drawing. SALOME (35), MARICHE,
(29), MEJAL (33), ONA (40), AGATA (70), and GRETA (60), AUTJE
(16) watch her as she draws.

Salome points to three separate drawings as Neitje tells her
what they signify. Salome points to a drawing of a field with
clouds over it.

NEITJE

"Do nothing."

Salome points at a drawing of a man and a woman, knives drawn
towards each other in battle.

SALOME

"Stay and fight."

Salome points to a drawing of a horse, it's back to us.

SALOME/NEITJE

"Leave."

Salome pats Neitje's shoulder, approvingly.

6

EXT DILAPIDATED BARN - MORNING

6

August holds a gun in his hand. He seems to be walking in circles in the field, unsure what to do.

AUGUST (V.O.)

I have been in love with Ona Friesen for most of my life. This morning she found me, having lost my faith in everything.

We are behind Ona, walking towards him on the path. She sees the gun by his side.

ONA

August.

He is startled and tries to hide the gun.

ONA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

AUGUST

Nowhere.

Ona smiles at him. She thinks for a moment. She comes very close to him, her face very close to his.

ONA

Early this morning I saw a squirrel and a rabbit.

A pause.

AUGUST

Oh.

ONA

The squirrel charged the rabbit. Just as the squirrel was about to make contact with the rabbit, the rabbit leapt straight up into the air. Then the squirrel turned around and charged the rabbit from the other direction and the rabbit leapt into the air and the squirrel missed.

August looks at her, bemused.

ONA (CONT'D)

They were playing!

AUGUST

Is that so?

ONA

Maybe I wasn't meant to have seen them playing. It was very early in the morning, and I was the only one roaming around.

AUGUST

But you really saw that?

ONA

Yes. I saw it with my own eyes.

Ona watches him closely for a long time. She takes August's arm and pulls him with her.

ONA (CONT'D)

We need you.

AUGUST

What do you need me for?

ONA

We need you to take the minutes of our meeting.

She walks away. She looks behind her, to make sure he follows. He does.

7

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

7

NETTIE/MELVIN (25), dressed as a man, plays a game of tag with a group of 13 children of varying ages, including JULIUS (7).

We follow the children closely in their game, and feel their sweat and excitement. We drift up to the sky, a flock of birds going by.

8 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON

8

The Women (Agata, Greta, Ona, Salome, Mariche, Autje, Neitje, Mejal, Scarface, Anna and Helena) take off their socks and shoes. Some wear plastic sandals with white socks. The younger women, Neitje and Autje, wear torn canvas shoes with white socks rolled down around their ankles. Mejal and Autje have rope burns on their ankles. The older women wear sturdy leather sandals.

AGATA (V.O.)

We must honour our service to each other. We must represent it. Just as the feet of the disciples were washed by Jesus at the Last Supper, knowing that his hour had come.

The Women wash each others feet. They wash the feet of the person sitting to their right. They take time, they do it slowly. August looks at the ground, not wanting to impose himself.

As the women finish washing each others feet, they murmur "**God Bless You**" to each other. Neitje and Autje try to suppress giggles.

AUTJE

(To Neitje, giggling and whispering.)
Stop. You're tickling me.

NEITJE

(in a solemn, grown up voice)
God Bless You.

This makes Autje laugh even harder. She tries to hide her face in her sleeve. August sits down at a table and writes in a notebook. We hear what he is writing as WE TRAVEL SLOWLY OVER THE FACE OF EACH WOMAN, sitting in silence, waiting for the discussion to begin.

AUGUST (V.O.)

At this moment in time, most of the men are gone from the colony.

(MORE)

AUGUST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All of the able bodied men,
excluding those in wheelchairs, the
elderly, and me, the schoolteacher,
left yesterday for the city to post
bail for the imprisoned attackers,
leaving the women free to talk
openly with one another.

We hear, on the soundtrack, the THUNDEROUS SOUND OF BOOTS.

FLASHBACK TO:

9

EXT. COLONY ROAD - DAWN

9

We see endless pairs of TALL BLACK BOOTS walking quickly in the dirt. They make a thunderous, almost other-worldly noise. The MEN OF THE COLONY, including PETERS, ELDERS, and KLAAS (Mariche's husband) gather buggies in a convoy. The WOMEN, including Mariche, Agata, Salome, Mejal, help load them up. The Women, for the most part, keep their heads down, avoiding eye contact. The Men stand with their horses, looking at the women, who stand there, across from them. Peters eyes them, monitoring.

PETERS

We will be back in two days.

AUGUST (V.O.)

When they return, in 24 hours, the women will be given the opportunity to forgive these men, guaranteeing everyone's place in heaven.

The Men get into their buggies and ride off. The Women watch them go, left in a cloud of dust behind the horses and buggies. A TREMENDOUS SOUND as they rumble off, leaving the women behind. We see them from above, the distance between the men and women becoming greater.

10

INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON

10

We continue to land on the face of each woman, one by one.

AUGUST (V.O.)

My name is August Epp. Two months ago, I returned, from the outside world, to this colony, where I was raised.

(MORE)

AUGUST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am now the colony schoolteacher,
and I have been asked to take the
minutes of the meetings because the
women are functionally illiterate,
having had very little education.

We land on Ona, who watches August writing, tenderly.

AUGUST (V.O.)

Ona Friesen asked me if I would take the minutes, and as I had nothing to do but kill myself, and as I have been in love with her for most of my life and would do anything for her, I agreed.

August looks up at Ona, he smiles lightly at her. He then returns to his writing. The Women set themselves up in a kind of haphazard circle.

11 INT. BARN - MORNING

11

The WOMEN OF THE COLONY (we see over a hundred of them here), take turns in a crudely built ballot box. Some murmur to each other. Coffee is served at a table with summer sausage and buns.

AUGUST (V.O.)

A vote was held earlier this morning.

The women take turns marking the paper, with Neitje's drawings, by writing an "X" next to one of the drawings. We follow SCARFACE JANZ(50) as she puts an "X" next to the "Do Nothing" picture. So do ANNA (30) and HELENA (16.) We watch, as the women all mark down their votes. Ona, Mejal, Mariche, Agata, Autje, and Neitje. Greta thinks for a long moment, and then votes.

12 OMITTED

12

13 OMITTED

13

14 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON

14

The Reimers sit roughly on one side, and the Friesens sit on the other. The Janz family sit further in the corner. There is a table fashioned out of a piece of plywood laid across hay bales. Their chairs are milking buckets. Neitje draws a portrait of Scarface Janz and her girls. *

AUGUST (V.O.)

As the vote was tied between the option of Staying and Fighting or Leaving, representatives of two families of women, the Reimers and the Friesens, have been tasked with deciding whether or not to Stay and Fight or Leave, while the rest of the women tend to the work of the colony. They have invited representatives of the Janz family to be part of the conversation, though they voted to do nothing. They are meeting in Earnest Penner's hayloft, as he is senile and rarely comes in. *

Scarface takes a deep breath and begins.

SCARFACE JANZ

It is part of our faith to forgive.
We have always forgiven those who
have wronged us. Why not now?

SALOME

Because now we know better.

SCARFACE JANZ

Better than God? You know better
than God?

ANNA

Our Lord requires us to forgive,
Salome. Or do you believe yourself
mightier than he?

SCARFACE JANZ

We will be excommunicated, forced
to leave the colony in disgrace, if
we don't forgive the men. And if we
are excommunicated, we will forfeit
our place in heaven.

HELENA

How could any of you live with the
fear of that?

Agata looks at Helena softly.

AGATA

What else are you afraid of Helena?
Tell us. We want to hear.

Agata moves towards Helena and sits on an overturned milk
pail at her side, holding her hand.

HELENA

(quietly)

We can only do what we have
learned.

GRETA

Speak up, Helena. We can't hear
you.

HELENA

(louder)

We have only domestic skills. How
are we supposed to survive out in
the World if we are excommunicated?

ANNA

We are unable to read or write.
We've never even seen a map.

Agata nods, sympathetically.

AGATA

These are all legitimate fears. How
can we address them?

Agata looks around at the women, inviting them to speak.

SALOME

Shouldn't we be concerned about
more than just our survival,
Helena? Is what we have lived,
worth preserving?

SCARFACE JANZ

These questions themselves are
blasphemous.

There is a long silence.

GRETA

Alright. No more blasphemous
questions. I want to talk about my
horses, Ruth and Cheryl.

FLASHBACK TO:

15 INT. GRETA'S HORSE BARN - EARLY MORNING 15

Greta lovingly tends to her team of old horses, RUTH AND
CHERYL. She brushes them, looks into their eyes, smiles
tenderly. She breaks contact, a sadness coming over her. She
gives them a final pat as she walks away.

GRETA

Alright. We'll go.

16 EXT. ROAD - EARLY MORNING 16

Greta drives her buggy along the road with her old horses
Ruth and Cheryl. We see from Greta's POV: Ahead of them, a
ROTTWEILER APPEARS and barks. **Ruth and Cheryl begin to bolt.**
Greta struggles to keep them on the road.

GRETA (V.O.)

When Ruth and Cheryl are frightened by Dueck's Rottweilers on the mile road that leads to the church, their initial instinct is to bolt. These horses don't organize meetings to decide what they will do. They run.

On Greta's POV of Ruth and Cheryl's manes, flying in the wind as they bolt into the field.

CUT BACK TO:

17 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON

17

Agata laughs.

AGATA

But Greta, we are not animals.

GRETA

We have been preyed upon like animals. Maybe we should respond like animals.

ONA

Do you mean run away?

SALOME

Or kill our attackers?

Mariche makes a soft scoffing sound.

FLASHBACK TO:

18 EXT. SHED - 2 DAYS EARLIER - AFTERNOON

18

Salome runs, shrieking, with a scythe at a shed. We see through the slats as THE 5 MEN INSIDE yell for help and try to back into the corner of the shed. Salome breaks the lock. She slashes at one of the MEN with her scythe. She is pulled away by PETERS, along with a FEW OTHER MEN. She is pushed to the ground. We see the blood from the man on her face. PETERS looks around, breathless. He puts his face in his hands, at the end of his rope. When he looks up, he has made a decision.

PETERS

Go. Go to the city. Get the police.

The other men look, questioningly at Peters.

PETERS (CONT'D)

For their own protection. These men need to be taken to jail in the city.

CUT BACK TO:

19

INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON

19

AGATA

In my lifetime I have seen horses confront angry dogs and try to stomp them to death. Animals don't always flee their attackers. They can fight back **and** they can run away.

She inhales deeply.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Either way, it's a waste of time to try to establish whether we are animals. The men will be coming back from the city after they pay the bail for our attackers. Soon.

SCARFACE JANZ

The only important thing to establish is whether we forgive the men so that we are allowed to enter the gates of heaven.

Salome laughs, loudly. She stands up and goes to the south doors and throws them open.

MARICHE

Laugh all you want, Salome. But we will be forced to leave the colony if we don't forgive the men. And how will the Lord, when He arrives, find all the women if we aren't in our colony?

SALOME

If Jesus is able to return to life,
live for thousands of years and
then drop down to earth from
heaven, to scoop up his supporters,
surely he'd also be able to locate
a few women who-

Agata makes a quick gesture to silence Salome. Scarface
shakes her head, appalled.

AGATA

Let's stay on track-

Salome moves quickly back towards the circle of women.

SALOME

Alright. I'll stay on track. I
cannot forgive them. I will never
forgive them.

MEJAL

I can't either.

Autje nods.

MARICHE

But we want to enter the gates of
heaven when we die.

Agata and Greta nod. Everyone is silent for a while. They
sit, thinking.

ONA

Are we asking ourselves what our
priority is? To protect our
children or to enter the kingdom of
heaven?

Salome makes a sound of frustration. She kicks a bucket.
Greta goes and retrieves it and sits back down.

MEJAL

No. That is not what we are asking.
That is an exaggeration of what we
are discussing.

ONA

What are we discussing, then?

AGATA

We will burn that bridge when we
come to it.

SCARFACE JANZ

We have everything we want here.

Salome shakes her head.

SALOME

No.

SCARFACE JANZ

Want less.

Salome looks at her and laughs out loud.

SCARFACE JANZ (CONT'D)

Does entering the kingdom of heaven mean nothing to any of you? After all we have suffered?

ANNA

Are you really willing to give up what we have always lived for?

ONA

Surely there is something in this life worth living for, not only in the next.

SCARFACE JANZ

Are you abandoning your faith?

AGATA

(to Scarface)

We cannot stand by and do nothing when our children are harmed.

SCARFACE JANZ

(to Ona, Agata and Salome)

How are you protecting your children from harm if you turn your back on God? And how will any of you survive? If you stay and fight you will lose. Or if you leave...

HELENA

Where will you go?

Scarface stands to leave. Agata steps towards Scarface.

AGATA

(to Scarface Janz)

All I know is that we cannot do nothing.

(MORE)

AGATA (CONT'D)

By doing nothing we are not
protecting our children who were
given to us by God to protect and
nurture.

SCARFACE JANZ

We will not be damned to hell with you.

AGATA

That is your decision, and we must respect it.

Scarface takes Helena's hand in hers and motions to Anna to follow. Autje crosses the room and lightly touches Helena's hand. As Scarface pulls her way, Autje grabs for it one more time and then lets go. Anna looks back, making eye contact with Mariche, but follows her mother and Helena. Mariche pushes her milk pail back, the edge scraping on the floor, taking her mother's attention. But she does not leave with the Janz women. There is silence after the Janz family leaves. Agata addresses the group.

AGATA (CONT'D)

We must decide now whether we will stay and fight or leave. These are the options in front of us. We will not do nothing.

Autje goes and sits behind her family and Neitje joins her, grabbing her hand.

20 EXT. BARN - AFTERNOON 20

The sun is slightly lower in the sky.

21 INT. SCARFACE JANZ'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON 21

Scarface Janz sits quietly at her spotless kitchen table, her adult children and their children running around doing chores behind her. She looks out the window, looking haunted.

After some time, Anna and Helena enter and sit beside her. Anna is shaking. They sit in silence for a long time. We follow Scarface Janz as she walks through her house and out her front door. She stands and stares at the hayloft in the distance. She turns away and looks at the horizon.

Anna looks down at the kitchen table, breathing hard, trying to contain her panic. Helena puts a hand on her mother's arm.

22 INT. HAYLOFT - AFTERNOON 22

The remaining women sit in silence. Autje swings from a beam above the women. The silence is broken by Greta.

GRETA

I believe the only solution is to
flee.

SALOME

Is this how we want to teach our daughters to defend themselves? By fleeing?

GRETA

Not fleeing, but leaving. I am talking about leaving.

Salome continues as though she hasn't heard Greta.

SALOME

I'd rather stand my ground and shoot each man in the heart and bury them in a pit than **flee**. And I'll deal with God's wrath if I have to!

ONA

(gently)

Salome. Aunt Greta is talking about leaving, not fleeing. The word "fleeing" wasn't what they meant.

Mariche shakes her head, indignant.

MARICHE

Please forgive my mother for using the wrong word. It is a sin so outrageous, that Salome must take it upon herself to rectify for the sake of all humanity.

AGATA

"Leaving" and "fleeing" are different words. With different meanings. They each say something about us.

Agata notices August, watching.

AGATA (CONT'D)

August what do you make of all this? Do you have an opinion too?

Agata goes to August and puts her arm around his shoulder.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Well, August?

August thinks for a while.

AUGUST

I think... I think that it is possible to leave something or someone in one frame of mind and arrive elsewhere, in another entirely unexpected frame of mind.

MARICHE

We are already aware of this.

ONA

We are aware of many things, in our hearts. But it is good, sometimes, to have them said out loud.

MEJAL

I want to stay and fight.

Everyone stares at Mejal, her assurance. She takes a sharp inhale of breath.

MARICHE

Won't we lose the fight to the men and then be forced to forgive them anyway?

ONA

Is forgiveness that is forced upon us true forgiveness?

A bit of straw falls from Autje's swinging into Mariche's hair. She looks up at Autje.

MARICHE

Autje!

MEJAL

Behave yourself. Can't you hear the rafter creaking? Do you want the roof to cave in?

August looks up, smiles to himself. Mejal reaches for her pouch of tobacco and rests her hand lightly on it. Autje gets down and she and Netje play a clapping game with their hands hidden beneath the table.

Greta takes her false teeth out. She taps them on the plywood and pops them back in.

SALOME

I want to stay and fight too.

Everyone looks at Salome.

MARICHE

Of course you do. No one is surprised that you do. All you do is fight. Is this how we are to decide the fates of all of the women of this colony? Just another vote where we put an X next to our position? I thought we were here to do more than that.

SALOME

You mean talk more about forgiving the men and doing nothing?

MARICHE

Everything else is insane. But none of you will listen to reason.

SALOME

Why are you here then?! Why are you still here with us if that is what you believe?! Leave with the rest of the do-nothing women!

GRETA

She is my daughter and I want her here with us.

AGATA

I believe we are capable of hearing opinions other than our own. Or how can we expect anything to change?

Everyone is quiet, respectful of Agata and Greta.

AUTJE

(whispering to Neitje)
This is never going to end.

NEITJE

(whispering to Autje)
We'll be dead and they'll still be talking.

AUTJE

(whispering)
Or worse. We might have to live through it.

Neitje and Autje are in a body language contest of who can convey their boredom the best.

Autje pretends to shoot herself in the head by inserting a rifle into her mouth, then slumping over on her milk pail.

Ona gets a large roll of butcher paper from the corner and hands it to August.

ONA

August. I think you should make lists of the pros and cons for both options. Staying and Fighting or Leaving. And write large. Post it on the wall.

MEJAL

Why? We can't read it.

ONA

No. But we will keep it here as an artifact for others to discover.

SALOME
(tenderly)
Yes. A discovery.

Mejal helps Neitje and Autje post a large piece of butcher paper to the wall and he writes on it. Then they continue to post the pages August has already written on the wall. Mejal looks down at her hands which are trembling.

ONA
I think the first heading should read as follows. **Staying and Fighting**. Beneath that, write Pros.

AGATA
Who will go first?

The Women begin to talk very rapidly, asserting their ideas. August puts his hand up, gently.

AUGUST
Forgive me. Please excuse me.
Forgive me. May I request that you take turns speaking so that I can understand what each of you is saying. It takes me a few seconds to transcribe...I'm a little behind here. I have to catch up.

MARICHE
Shall we put up our hands? As though we are children in your schoolhouse?

AUGUST
I apologize.

SALOME
We won't have to leave.

AUGUST
Excuse me?

MARICHE
Write it down. Under pros. Salome has had a brilliant idea.

MARICHE (CONT'D)
(theatrically, mocking Salome)
"If we stay, we won't have to leave."

Salome glares at Mariche. August writes this down.

NEITJE
 (shrugging, half hearted)
 We won't have to pack.

August writes this down as well.

MEJAL
 We won't have to figure out where
 we're going or experience the
 uncertainty of not knowing where we
 are going. We don't have a map.

Salome scoffs.

SALOME
 That's absurd. The only certainty
 we'll know is uncertainty, no
 matter where we are.

ONA
 Other than the certainty of the
 power of love.

Salome turns to face Ona directly.

SALOME
 Keep nonsense like that to
 yourself. Please.

MEJAL
 Why couldn't that be the case, that
 the only certainty is the power of
 love?

SALOME
 (shouting)
 Because it's meaningless!
 Especially in this fucking
 situation!

AGATA
 (commanding)
 Stop it. Now. I mean it.

They are quiet. Salome bites slivers off her fingernails and eats them. Mejal grimaces in disgust as Salome spits out the nails.

MEJAL
 That is disgusting. Truly.

Neitje and Autje begin to braid their hair into one long braid that connects them.

AGATA

Neitje? Autje? Do you have something to add to the list?

NEITJE

We won't have to leave the people we love?

GRETA

We could bring loved ones with us if we leave.

MEJAL

How? What does that mean? We move the whole colony? What can that possibly mean?

ONA

(gently)

Several of the people we love are people we also fear.

AGATA

We could create the possibility of a new order right here, in a place that is familiar to us.

SALOME

Not simply familiar. A place that *is* ours.

MEJAL

Do we need to write the cons? Isn't it obvious that we must stay and fight?

GRETA

Cons. We won't be forgiven.

August writes **CONS** on the paper.

MARICHE

We don't know how to fight.

SALOME

I know how to fight.

The others ignore Salome.

MARICHE

We don't want to fight.

GRETA

There is the risk that conditions will be worse after fighting than before.

Ona raises her hand.

ONA

May I speak?

AUGUST

Please.

ONA

Would it be a good idea, before we list the pros and cons of staying and fighting, to talk about exactly what we are fighting for?

SALOME

It's obvious: we're fighting for our safety and for our freedom from attacks!

ONA

Yes. But what would that mean to us? Perhaps we need a statement which describes what we want the colony to be like after winning the fight. Perhaps we need to know more about what we are fighting to achieve, not only what we are fighting to destroy.

MARICHE

Why don't we talk about reality instead?

AGATA

Because our reality is an old one. And we are talking about creating a new reality.

Autje and Neitje put their heads down on the table, miming boredom and exasperation. Neitje rests her head on her arm. Her voice is muffled.

NEITJE

(plaintive)

Are we staying or going?

AGATA

Ona. Please tell us more about the statement you are thinking about.

ONA

Men and women will make all decisions for the colony collectively. Women will be allowed to think. Girls will be taught to read and write. The schoolhouse must display a map of the world so that we can begin to understand our place in it. A new religion, taken from the old but focused on love, will be created by the women of the colony.

Mariche creases her brow, dramatically.

ONA (CONT'D)

Our children will be safe.

Greta has closed her eyes and is smiling.

GRETA

"Collectively." You sound like August's mother.

August looks up. He and Ona look at each other.

MARICHE

Ona. You are a dreamer.

ONA

(calmly)

We are women without a voice. We have nothing to return to. Even the animals of the colony are safer in their homes than we women are. All we have are our dreams. So of course we are dreamers.

Mariche scoffs.

MARICHE

Would you like to hear **my** dream? I dream that people who speak nonsense, who have no grasp on reality, are not put in charge of making statements!

Ona smiles, with genuine appreciation. Agata clears her throat.

AGATA

The statement Ona described sounds good to me. We can add to it over time. For now, it will declare what we women see as the future of the colony, whether we are here or elsewhere. Are we agreed?

Greta raises her arms into the air. The women nod, some half-heartedly. Neitje's eyes roll in their sockets as her head snaps back and her jaw drops open. Autje laughs. Greta shushes her. Ona opens a window. Neitje walks over to the packing paper, pulling Autje along with her with their braids still attached, and begins to draw illustrations beside August's words.

GRETA

What will happen if the men refuse to meet our demands?

ONA

We will kill them.

Autje and Neitje gasp. And then smile tentatively. Autje puts her face in her hands, trying not to laugh. Neitje jabs her with her elbow to make her stop. Mejal, perturbed, takes out her tobacco and rolling papers. Agata stands up and puts her arms around Ona.

AGATA

(whispering)

No. Ona. No.

Agata looks at the others while she gently cradles her daughter.

AGATA (CONT'D)

She is only joking.

Salome shrugs.

SALOME

Maybe not.

Agata pokes Salome in the shoulder. Neitje draws a woman killing a man.

MARICHE

What if the men who are in prison are not guilty?

AUTJE

Mother?

MARICHE

Yes I know, Autje.

AUTJE

Then why are you asking-

NEITJE

We caught one of them. I saw him.

FLASHBACK TO:

23 EXT. NEITJE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - TWO WEEKS AGO

23

A din like a roar. Neitje waits by her bedroom window, Autje behind her. They hears something and Neitje sticks her head out of her bedroom window. She sees a YOUNG MAN, creeping up a ladder, a LARGE SPRAY CAN in his hands. He looks back up at her. She screams, Autje does too. He scrambles down the ladder.

ONA (V.O.)

Only one.

SALOME (V.O.)

Yes. Only one. But he named the others.

CUT BACK TO:

24 INT. HAYLOFT - AFTERNOON

24

MARICHE

But what if he was lying?

There is silence for a while.

SALOME

But the point-

Mariche sighs.

MARICHE

We must consider this.

SALOME

No! That is not our responsibility! Because we aren't in charge of whether or not they are punished. We know that we've been attacked by men and not by ghosts or Satan as we were led to believe for so long. We know we have not imagined these attacks, that we were made unconscious with cow tranquilizer. We know that we are bruised and infected and pregnant and terrified and insane and some of us are dead. We know that we must protect our children. Regardless of who is guilty!

AGATA

Alright, Salome, thank you, please sit down.

She tugs on Salome's sleeve. Agata takes a breath and strokes Salome's hair and gently urges her back to the milk bucket. She murmurs words to her as she sits beside her, calming her, stroking her hair. Neitje draws two braids (like hers and Autje's) intertwined.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Shall we move on?

MARICHE

But if there is any chance that the men in prison are innocent, shouldn't we be joining forces to secure their freedom?

ONA

It is possible that the men in prison are not guilty of the attacks. But are they guilty of not **stopping** the attacks? Are they guilty of knowing about the attacks and doing nothing?

MARICHE

How should we know what they're guilty of or not?

ONA

But we do know. We do know that the conditions have been created by men and that these attacks have been made possible because of the circumstances of the colony. And those circumstances have been created and ordained by the men.

MARICHE

But wait, aren't you suggesting that the attackers are as much victims as the victims of the attacks? That all of us, men and women, are victims of the **circumstances** from which the colony has been created?

Ona is quiet for a long time.

ONA

In a sense, yes.

MARICHE

So then, even if the court finds them guilty or innocent, they are, after all, innocent?

ONA

Yes, I would say so.

MEJAL

The elders called them evil.

ONA

But that's not true.

SALOME

It's the elder's quest for power
that is responsible.

ONA

Yes because they needed to have
those-

SALOME

Those they'd have power over.

MEJAL

And those people are us.

AGATA

And they have taught this lesson of
power to the boys and men of the
colony and the boys and men have
been excellent students.

MEJAL

But don't we all want some type of
power?

ONA

Yes, I **think** so. But I'm not sure.

AGATA

The only thing we can be sure of is
that time is disappearing.

AUTJE

But... we caught them. We caught
them.

SALOME

Yes.

MARICHE

Yes you did.

The women look at the girls, somewhat in awe.

AUTJE

Then why are you making it so complicated?

NEITJE

(to herself)
It's very, very boring.

ONA

We could ask the men to leave.

MEJAL

Is that a joke?

SALOME

Are you crazy, Ona?

Agata puts her hand on her chest.

AGATA

No, no...

GRETA

Ask the men to leave?!

AGATA

None of us have ever asked the men for anything. Not a single thing, not even for the salt to be passed, not even for a penny or a moment alone or to take the washing in or to open a curtain or to go easy on the small yearlings or to put your hand on the small of my back as I try, again, for the twelfth or thirteenth time, to push a baby out of my body. Isn't it interesting, that the one and only request we women would have of the men would be to leave?

The Women break out laughing. They can't stop. When one stops for a moment, they quickly resume laughing in a loud burst, setting everyone else off. It is contagious and out of control. Finally, Agata calms.

AGATA (CONT'D)

It's not an option. They wouldn't leave.

The others agree, saying "No."

GRETA

Asking the men to leave is not an option. I'd like you to imagine Ruth and Cheryl-

AGATA

Oh no, not again.

Ona has not stopped laughing.

ONA

Please stop. I'm afraid I'll go into labour!

They laugh harder. Mariche tries not to laugh, but looking at August makes her splutter.

MARICHE

Look! August is still taking the minutes!

This sets them off into new hysterics. August watches Ona as she laughs. Agata slaps August on the back.

AGATA

You must think we're all lunatics.

AUGUST

I don't. And it doesn't matter what I think, anyway.

ONA

Do you think that's true? That it doesn't matter what you think?

August blushes.

ONA (CONT'D)

How would you feel if in your entire lifetime it had never mattered what you thought?

AUGUST

But I'm not here to think. I'm here to take the minutes of your meeting.

ONA

But if, in all your life, you truly felt that it didn't matter what you thought, how would that make you feel?

August considers this. So do The Women. Ona looks around, a new thought occurring to her.

ONA (CONT'D)

When we have liberated ourselves, we will have to ask ourselves who we are.

They sit in silence. Neitje draws a picture of the women laughing.

Neitje and Autje are stifling giggles. Mejal plays with the smoke in her hand. Salome stares wistfully out of the South-facing door, towards the hills, past the soy fields. WE FOLLOW HER GAZE out the window, traveling past the women. A long pause as we look in silence at the landscape. MIEP, (3) in the field, plays with a strand of grass, looks up at the sky.

SALOME

Will we be done by suppertime? I have to give little Miep her antibiotics.

GRETA

Where did you get antibiotics?

AGATA

She walked. She walked for a day
and a half to the mobile clinic.
With Miep on her back.

Agata stays perfectly still after mentioning Miep, mouthing the words to a verse from Psalms. She is very still, predatory. Everyone is silent at the mention of Miep.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. ROAD - MAGIC HOUR - TWO WEEKS EARLIER 25

VERY WIDE on Salome, looking exhausted, small in the distance. She walks down a long, dusty road. We stay close on her profile, occasionally moving back to see the face of her sleeping daughter, resting on her shoulders. We see them from behind as they become specks on the crest of the hill in the distance.

We hear Agata's voice, almost a whisper, softly praying.

AGATA (V.O.)

The Lord is gracious and
compassionate, slow to anger, rich
in loving kindness and forgiveness.

CUT BACK TO:

26 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON 26

SALOME

I have to hide the antibiotics in
Miep's apple sauce or she won't
swallow them.

The Women nod. Agata remains perfectly still, mouthing the words to the prayer.

AGATA

The Lord is gracious and
compassionate, slow to anger, rich
in loving kindness and forgiveness.

Greta goes over to Agata and pulls up a stool beside her. She takes Agata's hand and joins her in the recitation.

AGATA/GRETA

The Lord is gracious and
compassionate, slow to anger, rich
in loving kindness and forgiveness.

August looks around at the silent women. Greta opens and closes her eyes. Mariche comes over and sits beside her and strokes her hand.

GRETA

I'm not crying. I'm moisturizing.

Agata begins to sing. The other women join hands and sing. Ona harmonizes, beautifully. Neitje and Autje roll their eyes and shake their heads.

THE WOMEN

Work, for the night is coming,
Work, through the morning hours;
Work, while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;

Greta winces and she removes her false teeth again. She puts them down on the plywood.

GRETA

(whispering to Mejal)
Forgive me. They are too big for my
mouth.

Mariche stares at the teeth on the plywood. The hymn continues over:

FLASHBACK TO:

27 INT. GRETA'S BEDROOM - DAWN - ONE YEAR EARLIER 27

Greta opens her mouth, blood comes out. She looks down at her hand which has her bloody teeth in it.

CUT BACK TO:

28 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY AFTERNOON 28

Neitje and Autje look mortified by the singing and look downwards. Greta puts her teeth back in and walks over to Autje and pats her hand, encourages her to sing. Autje reluctantly obliges.

AGATA

Well. Let's take a break.

Autje slips down the ladder and out of the hayloft. We watch
The Women slip down the ladder, one by one. A few continue to
hum the hymn, which we hear over the next few scenes:

29 EXT. PADDOCK - MID-AFTERNOON 29

Neitje braids Autje's hair.

30 EXT. BARN - MID-AFTERNOON 30

Mejal lights up a cigarette, leaning on the fence. She stares
up at the barn. Then she looks out toward the field where she
sees, in the distance, the CHILDREN playing tag in the soy
fields. MELVIN/NETTIE is watching over the children. Autje
joins Mejal, much to her chagrin. They keep watching
MELVIN/NETTIE.

MEJAL

Don't say a word about my smoking.
Honestly.

AUTJE

Is she always going to be like this
now?

MEJAL

Like what?

AUTJE

Like a man. Is Nettie always going
to be a man now?

MEJAL

I think she always felt she wasn't
a woman. What happened to her just
made it...final.

FLASHBACK TO:

31 INT. NETTIE/MELVIN'S BEDROOM - SUNRISE 31

Melvin/Nettie, in a nightie, covered in blood from the waist
down, stares at something offscreen, on the floor.

CUT TO:

32 INT. NETTIE/MELVIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING - FIVE DAYS EARLIER 32
Melvin/Nettie smears the blood over the walls, hysterical.

33 EXT. SHED - MORNING - FIVE DAYS EARLIER

33

Melvin/Nettie, still covered in blood, but silent now, sits with his back to the shed. He speaks, without looking back between the slats, where we see pieces of the men inside.

NETTIE/MELVIN

Is my brother listening?

MAN

He is.

NETTIE/MELVIN

Hello, little brother. I don't know if it was your baby or one of your friends. But I think it was likely yours. Because there was something wrong with it. Small as a bun, but with everything intact. I loved it, I think. Isn't that strange? I won't speak of it... or anything else. Ever again.

Slowly, Nettie/Melvin gets up and walks away, a resolve on his face.

CUT BACK TO:

34 EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

34

Present Day.

Nettie/Melvin bandages a cut on a LITTLE GIRL'S knee. Mejal and Autje continue to watch.

AUTJE

But-

MEJAL

But what?

AUTJE

She doesn't speak anymore.

MEJAL

She speaks to the children. I think they call her Melvin.

Mejal shrugs. Mejal stomps out her cigarette. Autje stares at it.

MEJAL (CONT'D)

I mean it. Not one word about my smoking.

Autje walks off.

35

EXT. BARN - AFTERNOON

35

Autje walks to the pump with a pail and pumps it vigorously. August sits nearby, looking out at the fields. He stands up, awkwardly. They are silent for a time. August clears his throat.

AUGUST

You know, during the second world war, in Italy, civilians would hide in bomb shelters. Volunteers were needed to power the generators that provided electricity. They rode bikes. When you were swinging from the rafter earlier, it reminded me of this. You would have been the perfect volunteer. If we were in a bomb shelter.

AUTJE

Where would I ride the bike **to** in such a small space?

AUGUST

Ah yes. Well, the bike would be stationary.

Autje smiles and ponders this for a moment.

AUTJE

I have to get the water to the yearlings.

She looks back at him, smiles.

AUTJE (CONT'D)

Watch this.

She swings the pail of water around in a complete circle without spilling a drop. August smiles, awkwardly.

AUTJE (CONT'D)

I'll bet you didn't learn how to do things like that when you went to University.

August shakes his head.

AUTJE (CONT'D)
Only facts about stationary
bicycles in far off places.

August looks down, nods.

AUTJE (CONT'D)
I suppose I shouldn't be too sad
then. That I won't ever go.

They look at each other for a long moment, trying to read
each other.

AUTJE (CONT'D)
Why were you forced to leave?

AUGUST
My mother questioned things.

AUTJE
She questioned God?

AUGUST
Not God. Power. The rules that are
made in the name of God. She
encouraged others to question
things too.

AUTJE
Like Aunt Ona?

AUGUST
Yes. Ona knew her well.

AUTJE
Did she die?

August nods.

AUGUST
But sometimes, listening to all of
you speaking today, I can hear her
so clearly.

AUTJE
Why did the elders let you come
back?

AUGUST
I went to university. So I could
serve a purpose and teach the boys.

AUTJE

Too late.

There is a silence.

AUGUST

I want to help. And I don't know
how.

Autje shrugs.

AUTJE

You came back for Aunt Ona didn't
you? The way you look at her is...
funny. I don't know why she won't
just marry you. You both say so
much that doesn't make sense.

Autje breaks the gaze and runs to the horses.

36 INT. MARICHE'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

36

We hear, over the next few scenes, a distant sound of a
megaphone, and a truck rolling by. The sound of "California
Dreaming" coming out of a tinny truck radio gets louder as
Mariche tends to her many children. (There are 8 of them.)

Mariche looks up, unsettled.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

I am here to collect data for the
2010 census.

Mariche ignores it. She redirects the children, who are
fascinated and going towards the windows to look for the
source of the foreign sound, and see the truck going by.

36A EXT. MARICHE'S HOUSE

36A

The census truck goes by the house and down the road.

37 INT. GRETA'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

37

Greta makes bread with the help of four of her grandchildren.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

I am here to collect data for the
2010 census. All residents must
come out of their homes to be
counted.

38

INT. SALOME'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

38

Salome crushes a pill into apple sauce and feeds Miep the apple sauce. Miep looks up at AARON, Salome's 13 year old son. He tickles her. Salome smiles, scuffs Aaron's head.

39 INT. SCARFACE JANZ'S SEWING ROOM- AFTERNOON 39

Scarface Janz is sewing with Anna and Helena and two of her other daughters. She looks up at the sound of the voice. She is still.

40 EXT. CHICKEN COOP - AFTERNOON 40

Agata collects eggs. She looks up as she hears the voice booming nearby. She pays little attention.

41 INT. GRETA'S HORSE BARN - AFTERNOON 41

Autje pours water into the horses' trough while Neitje feeds hay to Ruth and Cheryl. A wooden trailer loaded with hay bales sits near the barn.

Autje and Neitje hear the Census Truck approach. They turn, watching the truck stop by the side of the road. They look at each other and smile, then leave the pail and hay behind as they gravitate towards the music.

42 EXT. WASHHOUSE LATE AFTERNOON 42

Mejal sits under laundry, light pouring through white dresses. She braids one of her daughters' hair tightly, as other children play around her, and another daughter (12) washes clothes in an outdoor sink. She hears the loudspeaker, and similarly ignores it.

43 INT HAYLOFT - LATE AFTERNOON 43

August sees, out the East Barn doors, in the distance, the truck, stopped. Autje and Neitje approach it. They stand there, listening. "California Dreaming" still plays out of the radio. The girls are looking into the driver's side of the truck, bopping ever so slightly to the music. We see the drivers face in the side mirror, the girls in the foreground. We don't hear their words, but it is clear they are flirting, and so is he. Eventually the truck drives away. "California Dreaming" continues to play over:

44 INT. HAYLOFT - LATE AFTERNOON 44

August is in the hayloft alone. He looks at the empty milk pails, the hay bales, a small bird flying in the rafters. It feels empty without the women here. He sings "California Dreaming", faintly to himself.

He hears a gentle clatter, as the Women all make their way back up the ladder, with food baskets. They take their places, murmuring to each other, serving each other food and instant coffee.

Neitje slowly and subtly opens the large barn doors facing East. A few of the women notice and give her a curious look. Mariche has brought with her a pair of men's overalls to mend. Salome looks around, as she and Mejal serve coffee to the group. Ona brings coffee to August.

SALOME

Where is Autje?

Neitje shrugs silently and sits down.

AGATA

Well. We must begin without her.

Salome looks at Mejal, who sits beside her.

SALOME

Were you smoking?

MEJAL

Is that any of your business?

GRETA

Please.

AGATA

We must decide this afternoon about staying or leaving.

Suddenly, Autje climbs the ladder. We hear HYSTERICAL MOANS before we see Autje appear at the top of the ladder.

AUTJE

I can't live a second longer! Life is too cruel!

Autje sways and moans, then runs to the window and FLINGS HERSELF OUT THE WINDOW, headfirst.

The WOMEN SCREAM. They all sprint and hobble to the window, to find Autje sitting placidly atop a stack of hay bales on a flatbed truck which has been positioned just under the window. Neitje laughs uncontrollably.

MARICHE

Autje! Wait until I get ahold of you!

GRETA

I could have had a heart attack!

Ona laughs hard in appreciation while the others shake their heads and strive to contain any sign of approval.

Mejal tries hard to contain her laughter but keeps sputtering, which makes Ona and the younger women laugh even harder. Mariche does not look amused.

When it dies down, Autje, looks around at all of the women, her face serious.

AUTJE

Excuse me. Excuse me. The Census taker just told us that one of our men is planning to return late tonight. He is coming to get some old horses to auction.

GRETA

Ruth and Cheryl!

NEITJE

They need more bail money for the attackers.

Greta lifts her arms into the air. She stumbles back to her seat. Agata sharpens her gaze. They all clamber hastily back to their seats for the meeting. Autje climbs back up into the hayloft and takes her seat as well.

MARICHE

Tonight?

Autje nods.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

Which man?

AUTJE

Father.

NEITJE

Your Klaas.

Mariche makes the smallest of small sounds.

MARICHE

(quietly, trying to absorb this)

Oh.

AGATA

So. Time is of the essence. Everyone get back to your seats.

The Women ALL TALK AT ONCE, in an uproar. August struggles to write, to keep notes of all they are saying in the din of noise. Ona looks at August. He looks down at what he has written. It says "Talking at once. All talking at once." He clears his throat, out of nervousness. Mariche glares at him.

MARICHE

Are you trying to call us to order?

AUGUST

No. No. Please forgive me.

MARICHE

Why are you here? Why is *my* presence questioned when there is a man-

GRETA

Pros for leaving:

August writes "LEAVING" on the brown paper. Neitje and Autje post up what he has written so far. Neitje adds more illustrations of the women, the men, the boys. Autje puts up her hand.

MEJAL

(half-heartedly)

We will be gone?

GRETA

We will be safe.

MARICHE

Perhaps not. But the first is most definitely a fact, that if we leave we will be gone.

Mariche looks around at the group.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

Do we really have time to state the obvious over and over?

Mejal rolls her eyes.

GRETA

Add to the list this: We will not be asked to forgive the men, because we will not be here to hear the question.

AGATA

Yes. Autje?

AUTJE

We will see a bit of the world?

There is silence. August, seeing no one else is speaking, begins to write on a new piece of paper. Neitje and Autje get back to rebraiding their hair together.

AUGUST

Let's move on to the Cons of Leaving.

MARICHE

We, the women, will decide what happens in these meetings. Not a two-bit failed farmer who must teach. You have been invited here. You have been invited here to listen to what we have to say and to write it down. Nothing more. Just. Listen.

Greta erupts. She stands up, shouting.

GRETA

Mariche! Klaas is returning soon and you are wasting time! Klaas will return to your home for just long enough to take his animals in order to sell for bail money that will see the rapists return to the colony and he will lay his hands on you and on your children, and you, as always, do nothing but fire away at us all like a Gatling gun with your misdirected rage. What good does that do?

The Women are silent. Mariche is shaking, staring at her mother.

AUGUST

I would like to apologize for wrongly attempting to nudge the proceedings. That is not my place.

The Women say nothing. Mejal, watching August, lets out a burst of laughter.

GRETA

Mejal!

MEJAL

I'll stop.

NEITJE

We don't have a map. We don't know
where to go.

Autje and Neitje sway back and forth, a gentle tug of war
with the braid that connects them.

AUTJE

(laughing)
We don't even know where we are!

The girls laugh together.

Miep, Salome's daughter, climbs up the ladder to the loft.
Greta turns to Neitje and Autje.

GRETA

Hush. Put your hair away.

The girls untangle their braids. Miep looks frightened and
goes to her mother. She snuggles in to her.

MIEP

I hurt.

Agata watches Miep, trying to contain her grief. August looks
down. Salome holds Miep and strokes her hair, whispering to
her, kissing her. Miep has buried her face in her mothers
lap. We hear, but don't see her cry. Ona puts her arm around
Salome's shoulder as she holds Miep.

GRETA

(watching Miep, almost to
herself)
There are no Cons of Leaving.

Ona looks up at Greta, then back down to Miep, and nods
gently. Neitje draws a picture of Miep sleeping on the
butcher paper, beneath August's words.

Nettie/Melvin climbs the ladder and appears. She mimes that
he is sorry for the interruption.

AGATA

Not to worry, Nettie.

Agata begins to sing "Children of the Heavenly Father" and
the other women join in. Autje and Neitje roll their eyes as
the other women's voices soar. Miep snuggles into her mother.
Ona smiles at August. He smiles back. August looks down,
closes his eyes, and listens to their voices.

He stares at Miep, who is drifting to sleep as the singing drifts to humming.

MARICHE

If we do leave the colony, how will we live with the pain of not seeing our brothers and our sons again? The men?

FLASHBACK TO:

45 INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING

45

August looks out at the faces of his students, his young men. Some look up at him attentively. Some laugh and roll their eyes at him. We track along their faces, slowly, getting to know the pores of the skin of each one of these young boys.

GRETA (V.O.)

Time will heal. Our freedom and safety are the ultimate goals, and it is men who prevent us from achieving those goals.

MARICHE (V.O.)

But not all men.

ONA (V.O.)

Perhaps not men, but a way of seeing the world, and us women, that has been allowed to take hold of men's hearts and minds.

NEITJE (V.O.)

So if we leave... if we leave... I will never see my brothers again?

AUTJE (V.O.)

Who will take care of them? Of them all?

CUT BACK TO:

46 INT. HAYLOFT - LATE AFTERNOON

46

Neitje and Autje look suddenly full of grief. This hangs in the air. They are all lost in their own thoughts. Miep lies sleeping in Salome's arms.

GRETA

We can't know if we will stay or
leave before we resolve these last-
minute concerns.

ONA

I wouldn't call the future of our
relationships with the boys and men
we love "last-minute concerns."

Ona glances in August's direction. He catches it. He looks out the window, at the sun getting lower in the sky. Cows can be heard, mooing in the distance. Dogs are barking for their dinner.

The women watch Miep as she falls asleep in Salome's arms. We hold close on each woman's face, watching Miep sleep, and we feel the lowering light move across each of their faces.

Neitje draws pictures of the boys on the packing paper. The light dims over the images as she draws them.

47 EXT FIELD - MAGIC HOUR 47 *

We see the sun lower in the sky. We hear a cow moo. We hear dogs bark. *

48 INT. HAYLOFT - MAGIC HOUR 48 *

CLOSE ON: Miep sleeping. Melvin/Nettie gently picks her up, out of Salome's arms and takes her out of the hayloft. The Women watch in silence as she is taken down the ladder.

ONA

I need some water.

She goes down the ladder and outside. August follows her, awkwardly. The women watch in silence, and then laugh as soon as he is down the ladder.

49 EXT. FIELD - MAGIC HOUR 49

Melvin/Nettie watches the children play while cradling Miep, still sleeping, in his arms. He looks down at her, tenderly.

50 EXT. PUMP - MAGIC HOUR 50

Ona vomits on her way to the pump, August following close behind. He pumps water into a bucket, looks around for something to pour it into.

He cups water into his hands for her to drink from. She pauses for a moment and then drinks from his hands. He takes another scoop of water and she takes another drink. She wipes her mouth and holds her stomach. Children play in the background.

They stand close together, staring at each other in silence, for a long time. Tears appear in August's eyes. Ona quickly wipes them off his cheek. August turns away, ashamed.

They are silent. Ona goes to speak and then stops herself. She holds his gaze for a long time. She puts her hand lightly on his face.

ONA

It's good to have you with us,
August. To remind us of what is
possible. Because it's easy to
forget.

Ona holds her stomach, feeling ill.

AUGUST

I am so sorry, Ona.

ONA

One day, I would like to hear those
words from someone who should be
saying them.

Ona looks out across the field towards where the children are playing.

ONA (CONT'D)

Why does love... the absence of
love, the end of love, the need for
love, result in so much violence?

AUGUST

Ona.

Ona shakes her head.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Ona. I could take care of you and
your child. I want to. I-

He stops himself.

ONA

I know August. You don't have to say the words.

They are silent for a while.

ONA (CONT'D)

If I were married I would not be myself. And so the person you love would be gone.

AUGUST

Your child-

ONA

If we stay and don't win the fight, my child will be given to another family here. Maybe even to the family of my attacker. If we stay and we don't win the fight.

AUGUST

You won't let that happen.

ONA

No. No I won't.

August nods. Ona is silent for a long time, processing something. August nods, understanding that she is coming to a decision. Ona nods, and walks away, determination in her steps.

51 INT. HAYLOFT - MAGIC HOUR

51

Shadows fall now, across the women's faces. Agata and Salome light lanterns. Neitje and Autje are still conjoined by the hair. Neitje has drawn a picture of a woman leaving towards a buggy and reaching out for her son who is behind her. August and Ona enter.

GRETA

August. We want to discuss options for the men and the older boys, if the women decide to leave.

SALOME

Which is a waste of time because we are not leaving.

August takes up his pen and begins recording their conversation.

MARICHE

The men should be allowed to leave with the women if they wish.

Salome laughs. So does Mejal.

MEJAL

Then what on earth is the point of us leaving?

GRETA

They could be allowed to join the women later, when the women have established themselves and are thriving.

AUGUST

(writing it down)

Should we add, thriving as a collective, literate community?

MARICHE

Literate is your word. Not ours. We don't need your university language to make our plans.

August nods, continues to write.

AGATA

Put it in. We know what it means. Continue.

GRETA

Young boys, simple minded boys of any age, Cornelius who is confined to a wheelchair, will accompany the women.

August writes quickly. The Women stare at August, and at the document that they can't read.

MARICHE

I vote for the first option. They should leave with us if they wish.

There is a din of noise as all The Women object to this. Mariche crosses her arms.

MEJAL

The first option is ridiculous and should be crossed off the list.

Mejal rolls a cigarette between her fingers as she speaks.

MARICHE

Why are some ideas written down and considered, and others crossed out?

MARICHE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

I want to leave.

She throws the dregs of her coffee to the floor.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

I'd like to strangle myself.

ONA

But Mariche, it's possible that all the men would choose to leave with us. Then all we'd be doing is re-creating our colony, with all of its dangers elsewhere, wherever we end up.

AGATA

And the men would most definitely leave with us because they can't survive without us.

Greta laughs.

GRETA

Well, not for longer than a day or two.

SALOME

There is no possibility of the men leaving **with** us. Whatever we decide. And we have not decided to leave. I would like to remind everyone of that.

Mejal is openly smoking now. Salome looks irritated. Mejal makes a big show of waving the smoke away from Salome.

AGATA

Clearly these are unrealistic ideas. And how are we to leave at all if we have never been allowed to even see a map of the world?

AUGUST

I can secure a world map for you.

The Women looked shocked.

AGATA

Where on earth would you get a map August?

AUGUST

I also have a map of this specific region.

GRETA

That will do. We aren't planning to travel the planet.

ONA

Perhaps we are. Did you know that the migration period of butterflies and dragonflies is so long that it is often only the grandchildren who arrive at the intended destination?

August watches Ona, admiringly. Autje and Neitje try to suppress laughing at Ona. Mejal nods. Ona looks straight at August now. Some of The Women nod and ponder this.

AUGUST

So. Yes, so.

The Women laugh.

ONA

Perhaps, if we went beyond where the map shows us, we could create our own map as we go.

The Women turn their attention to her, mystified.

GRETA

Now that is a unique idea.

SALOME

So now you want to leave? Ona?

The sisters look at each other for a long moment.

Ona suddenly vomits into the milk pail beside her.

GRETA

Oh.

Agata brings her legs down from the milk pail they have been resting upon and walks to Ona. She strokes her back and pulls the loose strands of hair from her forehead into the kerchief.

ONA

I'm fine.

Ona looks at Salome.

Mejal begins to breathe heavily. Her hand is on her chest.

GRETA

What now?

AGATA

Are you alright, Mejal?

Mejal nods her head vigorously.

SALOME

She's having one of her episodes.

Salome goes to Mejal. She holds her hand and whispers softly in her ear. Greta indicates to The Women to pray. The Women bow their heads.

GRETA

Please, God. Restore Mejal's equilibrium.

Mejal rocks on her milk pail. Salome positions herself behind her, ready to catch her as she tumbles off, her fall broken by Salome's arms. Mejal lies in the straw, her body quite rigid. Salome lies down beside her and continues to whisper inaudibly into her ear and to hold her.

FLASHBACK TO:

52

INT. MEJAL'S ROOM - MORNING - ONE YEAR EARLIER

52

ON MEJAL'S LOWER LEGS as she stands up out of bed. Blood drips to the floor. ON MEJAL'S FACE as she looks down, hearing the blood droplets hit the floor with what sounds like a CRASH. Mejal is quiet for a long time. Then she begins to scream, a primal, animal scream which continues over Agata's prayer.

AGATA (V.O.)

Almighty Father, in all humility
and supplication we ask Thee for
Thy abundant kindness this moment.

(MORE)

AGATA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We beseech Thee, have mercy on our
 sister Mejal.

CUT BACK TO:

53 INT. HAYLOFT - TWILIGHT

53

Salome continues to hold Mejal.

AGATA
 Please, in your beneficence, heal
 her. Please, we ask of Thee,
 envelop her in your strength and
 everlasting love, and please drive
 out the sickness that afflicts her
 now.

The Women continue to bow their heads, they are holding hands
 now. Salome has discreetly covered Mejal's ears. Salome looks
 up at Ona.

SALOME
 (whispering)
 Take the cigarette out of her
 pocket.

Ona reaches into Mejal's pocket and fishes out a cigarette.
 Mejal smells the smoke that Salome is putting underneath her
 nose. She rouses. She takes a deep breath.

MEJAL
 Alright. Help me up.

They help her back to her place at the table. They are all
 silent for a while, watching Mejal closely, trying to
 recalibrate.

AGATA
 Praise be to God.

MARICHE
 Why is it only Mejal who has these
 sudden-

SALOME
 Be quiet.

MARICHE
 We were all attacked. Not all of us
 draw so much attention to
 ourselves.

MEJAL

Attention? What attention? I talk less than all of you put together. How have I offended you?

MARICHE

You have these "attacks." You smoke. Why? Why is it so much harder for you than for us? We were all attacked. All of us. And the rest of us are all able to get through a day without-

GRETA

We are wasting time by passing this burden, this sack of stones, from one to the next, by pushing our pain away. We mustn't do this. We mustn't play hot potato with our pain. Let's absorb it ourselves, each of us. Let's inhale it, let's digest it, let's process it into fuel.

Mejal opens her mouth, several times, to speak.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Speak, Mejal. We are listening.

MEJAL

They made us...they made us disbelieve ourselves. That was worse than...

They are all silent for a long time. Salome catches her own tears and then Mejal's. Mariche looks away. Salome kneels in front of Mejal. She touches her hair, tenderly.

SALOME

Mejal?

GRETA

Perhaps Mejal's episode was brought on by the thought of us creating our own map.

NEITJE

But I will draw it if we need-

GRETA

Not a fear of the do-it-yourself map making. But of what it means: that we are masters of our own destiny. That we would be setting off into unknowable space.

AGATA

Yes. It makes sense that one would panic.

Mejal blows smoke rings.

MEJAL

I am not panicking.

AGATA

Yes. But panic, in this case **would** be understandable.

MEJAL

But I'm not.

ONA

Klaas, when he returns, may take horses or livestock that we will need along the way.

SALOME

Along the way? We're not leaving. You are changing your mind, Ona.

Ona takes a deep breath and looks at her sister.

ONA

I don't believe that is a sin, is it?

Salome puts her head in her hands.

MARICHE

How will we be forgiven for all this?

(MORE)

MARICHE (CONT'D)

How will we be forgiven if not by the elders whom we have disobeyed and who, if we leave, we will never see again. It will leave us unforgiven, with black hearts, and unable to enter the kingdom of god.

GRETA

Perhaps there will be other elders or men of God that will be able to forgive us our sins. Ones we haven't met yet.

SALOME

We do not have to be forgiven by the men of God for protecting our children from the depraved actions of vicious men who are often the very same men we are meant to ask for forgiveness! If God, in the book of Matthew asks: Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, then mustn't we consider it a hindrance when our children are attacked? If God is a loving God He will forgive us Himself. If God is a vengeful God then He has created us in His image. If God is omnipotent then why has He not protected the women and girls of this colony? I will destroy any living thing that harms my child. I will tear it limb from limb, I will desecrate its body and I will bury it alive. I will challenge God on the spot to strike me dead if I have sinned by protecting my child from evil and by destroying the evil that it may not harm another! I will lie, I will hunt I will kill and I will dance on graves and burn forever in hell before I allow another man to satisfy his violent urges with the body of my four-year-old child!

Ona moves to her sister and hugs her.

AGATA

(softly)

No. Not dancing. Not desecration.

Mejal goes to Salome and takes her in her arms. Neitje draws Salome, dancing on a grave.

MEJAL

Salome.

She holds out her cigarette, for Salome to take a drag.

AGATA

I suggest that we **think** of what is good. "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things... and the peace of God be with you."

The women bow their heads and say the words along with Agata. Salome stays quiet, thinking intently and breathing hard.

THE WOMEN

Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things... and the peace of God be with you.

Salome looks at her mother, vulnerable.

SALOME

I will become a murderer if I stay.
What is worse than that?

Agata nods. There is silence for a long time as the women watch Salome closely. Agata gets up, she walks to the window, stares out at the sunset. Salome looks down. Mariche paces. The women recite the verse again, mostly to themselves. As the women recite the verse, Ona walks over to where August sits, writing to catch up. She peers over his shoulder. She points at the letters.

ONA

I know what these are. These are letters. But what are these?

AUGUST

They are commas. They signify a short pause, or a breath, in the text.

Ona smiles, then inhales.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

There is also a butterfly called
the comma.

ONA

Is that so?

Mariche rolls her eyes.

AUGUST

Yes. It's called the comma because-

ONA

No. Let me guess. Because it flits
about from leaves to petals, only
briefly stopping on its way?
Because its journey is its story,
never stopping, only pausing, only
moving.

August smiles and nods. Ona punches the palm of her hand in
victory.

ONA (CONT'D)

Aha!

She goes back to her seat. Finally, Agata turns from the
window and walks slowly back to her seat.

AGATA

Salome, there is nothing worse than
being a murderer. If you will
become a murderer by staying in the
colony, side by side with the men
who are responsible for the attacks
then you must, to protect your own
soul and to qualify for entry to
heaven, leave the colony.

Mariche frowns.

MARICHE

We are not all murderers.

ONA

Not yet.

Ona looks at her mother.

AGATA

I have done what the verse from Philippians instructed, which is to think about what is good, what is just, what is pure, and what is excellent. And I have arrived at an answer. Pacifism. Pacifism is good. Any violence is unjustifiable. By staying here, we women would be betraying the central tenet of our faith, which is pacifism, because by staying we would knowingly be placing ourselves in a direct collision course with violence, either by us or against us.

Agata holds back tears.

AGATA (CONT'D)

This colony is the only home I've ever known, and I don't want to leave. But by staying, we would be inviting harm. We would be in a state of war. We would turn this colony into a battlefield.

ONA

We cannot become murderers. And we cannot endure any more violence. That is why we must leave.

All the women watch Salome as she nods her head gently. Greta raises her arms. Mariche makes a noise of objection. Mejal takes a long haul off her cigarette. She exhales and nods.

MEJAL

Let's shake a leg, then.

Ona suddenly feels a kick, which startles her. She puts her hand to her belly. Mariche looks up.

ONA

I'm also thinking about the verse from Philippians and I'm thinking about what is good. Freedom is good. It's better than slavery. And forgiveness is good. Better than revenge. And hope for the unknown is good, better than hatred of the familiar.

MARICHE

What about security and safety and home and family?

(MORE)

MARICHE (CONT'D)

What about marriage and love?

ONA

I don't know about those things,
any of them. Except for love. And
even love is mysterious to me. And
I believe that my home is with my
mother, with my sister and with my
unborn child, wherever they may be.

Ona touches her belly, lightly. Mariche stares at Ona's
pregnant belly.

MARICHE

Will you not hate that child? That
child is the child of a man who
inspires violent thoughts in you.

FLASHBACK TO:

54 INT. ONA'S BEDROOM - SUNRISE - 7 MONTHS EARLIER 54

Ona wakes up, she can barely move her arms and legs. She
looks down, sees blood stains on the bed. A din like a roar
again.

ONA

Mother! Again!

Agata rushes in. She looks around at the bed, and clasps Ona
to her.

ONA (V.O.)

I already love this child more than
anything.

CUT BACK TO:

55 INT. HAYLOFT - TWILIGHT 55

Ona speaks clearly and calmly.

ONA

He or she is as innocent and
lovable as the evening sun.
And so too was the child's father
when he was born.

Agata makes a small noise.

ONA (CONT'D)

Are you crying?

Agata shakes her head. Salome looks at her closely. Salome strokes her head.

MARICHE

(to Ona)

If you are saying that forgiveness is better than revenge, aren't you saying that we must stay here and forgive the men?

ONA

We cannot forgive because we are forced to. But if there is distance, perhaps I can begin to understand how these crimes may have occurred. And maybe from that distance, I can pity these men, and perhaps forgive them. And even love them.

A moment of silence as they absorb what Ona has said.

AGATA

And so we must leave in order to have that distance.

ONA

Not fighting. But moving on. Always moving. Never fighting. Just moving...

Ona seems to be in some kind of trance.

MARICHE

Snap out of it.

SALOME

You snap out of it, Mariche.

MEJAL

All of you snap out of it and focus. Have you lost your minds? The sun is gone.

Mejal jabs at the window, at the darkening sky outside. They stare for a moment at the coming night.

GRETA

I want to tell another story about
Ruth and Cheryl.

Several of The Women groan. Neitje and Autje fall backwards
in boredom.

CUT TO:

56 EXT ROAD - MORNING

56

We see Greta looking far down the road in front of her,
driving her horses forward as she rides in the buggy. TIGHT
ON the back of the HORSE'S HEADS, we see their direction
moving erratically, then finding focus and going straight as
Greta speaks.

GRETA (V.O.)

I was always frightened of the
northern road out of the colony. So
many gullies on either side of the
road that are so deep. And it's so
narrow. The buggy used to lurch
side to side. Ruth and Cheryl were
simply following my commands on the
reins but they were jerky and
frenetic. It was dangerous. It was
only when I learned to focus my
gaze far down ahead of me, down the
road, and not on the road
immediately in front of Ruth and
Cheryl that I started to feel safe.

The buggy goes by the camera, we CRANE UP to see Greta
getting smaller and smaller, disappearing into the distance,
the sun setting over the colony.

GRETA (V.O.)

Leaving will give us the more far-
seeing perspective we need to
forgive.

57 INT. GRETA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

57

Greta sits with her one year old grandchild on her lap,
feeding her porridge. Every now and then she gives her a
little jostle, making her laugh uproariously.

GRETA (V.O.)

Which is to love properly, and to
keep the peace, according to our
faith.

58 INT. GRETA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

58

Greta plays a hide and seek game with her granddaughter, getting down on all fours and hiding behind doorways. Greta is childlike, magical to her granddaughter.

GRETA (V.O.)

Therefore, our leaving wouldn't be an act of cowardice or abandonment. It wouldn't be because we were excommunicated or exiled. It would be a supreme act of faith, a step towards love and forgiveness.

CUT BACK TO:

59 INT. HAYLOFT - TWILIGHT

59

The Women are silent, considering this. Neitje draws a buggy, way in the distance.

GRETA

Leaving is how we demonstrate our faith. We are leaving because our faith is stronger than the rules. Bigger than our life.

This hangs in the air.

Greta grimaces and moves her hand slowly in front of her face.

GRETA (CONT'D)

I am sorry. But I think I might be dying.

Some of The Women rise, in alarm, from their seats. Mejal looks directly into Greta's eyes. She laughs. She removes Greta's eyeglasses and shows them to the group.

MEJAL

Mother. You are not dying. Your glasses need cleaning.

Greta laughs, relieved. Mejal cleans her glasses on her dress and hands them back to her.

GRETA

I thought the lights were going out.

Agata hoots. The Women, other than Mariche, laugh and laugh. Agata struggles for breath. Autje posts the picture of Ona and her baby on the wall.

MARICHE

What are you laughing at? We can't leave. It would be better to stay and fight than leave.

ONA

Do you really mean that you want to stay and NOT fight? Because when was the last time you had the strength to stand up to the aggression of Klaas, to protect your children, or to get out of harm's way?

Mariche is enraged. She rises, ignoring Salome and looking at Ona.

MARICHE

Who are you to tell me what kind of wife and mother to be when you are neither one yourself? You are a spinster, a lunatic! A whore! An unwed mother!

August writes as fast as he can, nervously watching Ona. Salome rises from her milk bucket.

SALOME

Ona was made unconscious and raped like the rest of us and now is pregnant as a result! How dare you call her a whore! Mariche, are you not afraid your own sweet boys will become monsters like their father because you do nothing to protect them or yourself-

AUTJE

(softly)
Stop.

SALOME

(Continuing without stopping)
Nothing to educate them, nothing to teach them the horror of their father's ways, the sickness...

AGATA

Now. I. Have. Heard. Enough! Are
you women not aware that we are
talking about leaving? We are a
large group.

(MORE)

AGATA (CONT'D)

Many things can go wrong and our
time is fleeting! For the love of
our Lord Jesus Christ and precious
Saviour will you shut your
pieholes, please!

Greta lets out an involuntary laugh. Mariche turns to face
Ona.

MARICHE

How dare you pass judgement on me.

Ona meets Mariche's gaze.

ONA

It wasn't judgement. It was a
question.

Agata leans over to whisper to Ona.

ONA (CONT'D)

I am sorry, Mariche. I am sorry
that what I said hurt you.

MARICHE

Fuck it off.

Mejal laughs.

GRETA

Sit down Mariche.

Mejal and Salome share a cigarette. Agata continues to stroke
Salome's arms and hair.

NEITJE

(whispering)

It's "fuck off" I think.

The others nod in agreement. Autje and Neitje laugh. Neitje
draws Mariche yelling at Ona, pointing a finger.

ONA

I am sorry. I am saying sorry, not
just to leave the hurt behind, but
because I feel, truly, that I
should not have said something
harmful.

Mariche watches her, somewhat calmed, but still guarded and waiting to pounce.

ONA (CONT'D)

And Mariche. I am sorry because you don't need or deserve more harm.

MARICHE

Who are any of you to pretend I have had a choice?

Mariche notices Autje, who is watching her carefully.

Autje nods, softly.

GRETA

I am also sorry Mariche.

Mariche looks up at her mother, quickly, startled.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Because, Mariche. I couldn't - I didn't try to protect you or your children from Klaas. All this time. And what you say is true. You had no choice. You forgave him, again and again, as you were told to. As I told you to.

Mariche sits down, taking in her mother's words. She looks around at the group. Salome looks up at her, quickly, then looks away, nodding in agreement with Greta, tears in her eyes. Mariche speaks softly, almost to herself.

MARICHE

It is not only the men and boys who have been excellent students.

Mariche takes the overalls she has been sewing, off her lap, and puts them to the side.

SALOME

Yes. All of us have been infected by a poisoned way of thinking.

MARICHE

And so you have judged me. For what I have endured.

Agata nods gently, looking at her. Autje comes over to Mariche and sits on the floor beside her, puts her head in her lap. Mariche touches her hair, softly.

AGATA

I think, Mariche... I think that we are all very sorry. What you have been required to endure with your violent husband was a...

GRETA

A misuse of forgiveness.

MEJAL

Is there such a thing? Is there a forgiveness that is not good?

AGATA

Perhaps forgiveness can, in some instances, be confused with permission.

Mariche looks up to see her. Mejal touches Mariche's hand. Seeing their acknowledgement, something in Mariche softens. She puts her head down. She appears to be breathing fully, for the first time. She stares at the floor.

ONA

Perhaps it will also be a difficult task to forgive each other, and ourselves, after all that has happened.

Mariche nods at her mother, tears in her eyes. Greta holds Mariche close.

Suddenly Nettie/Melvin, climbs the ladder holding **Julius Reimer, Mariche's son, (5 years old)**. He looks stunned and upset. *

GRETA

What in heaven's name?

Nettie/Melvin thrusts Julius into Mariche's lap. He points at the boy's nose, gesticulating, expressing bewilderment.

AGATA

Nettie. Please. Be reasonable. Make an exception and tell us what is happening. There are only women in this loft. Nettie!

August remains very still. Nettie/Melvin is silent, pondering the request. Julius turns his face into Mariche's chest and howls.

MARICHE

(urgently)

What has happened to him?

Julius points to his nose.

AGATA

Nettie. Be realistic. What has happened to Julius? Please! Just speak this once!

JULIUS

My nose. There is a cherry pit in my nose!

Mariche presses on one of Julius' nostrils.

MARICHE

Blow. Now. Blow, Julius.

Julius blows the cherry pit out and Mariche runs her fingers down his nose and the cherry pit comes out. Ona inserts two fingers into her mouth and whistles. The Women stop talking and look at her.

ONA

If Julius has put a cherry pit up his nose it means he has been eating cherries or he has, at least, been near cherries.

The Women look at her, silently, a realization dawning.

ONA (CONT'D)

We have no cherries in the colony.

MARICHE

(realizing)

Klaas sometimes brings them back from the city.

AGATA

Who gave you the cherries? Julius!

JULIUS

Papa.

MARICHE

Papa is home now?

JULIUS

No. I saw him out on the road. He's collecting animals.

Mariche looks pale. She looks up at Melvin/Nettie who nods.

Agata steadies her gaze and is still. Salome rushes to the window, cursing.

MARICHE

(to Julius)

If you see him again you can tell
him that we are all quilting.

JULIUS

Isn't that lying?

MARICHE

No. It's... something else. Go now.
Go with Nettie.

Julius nods. Melvin takes Julius' hand and takes him down the ladder.

GRETA

Have we made a decision? Are we leaving?

She looks at each woman, and they each, silently, in their own way, agree. Mariche is still.

AUTJE

Yes.

GRETA

We are leaving because-

AUTJE

We know why we are leaving. We are leaving because we cannot stay.

Everyone looks at Autje, taking this in. Mariche beckons to Autje. Autje sits beside her and Mariche puts her arm around her.

NEITJE

What happens when we become hungry? Or afraid?

ONA

We are not animals. Hunger and fear cannot be our guide.

MEJAL

Should we not have more perspective than animals?

AGATA

Animals have perspective. Remember? The dragonflies? They set out knowing that they will not see the end of their journey but their children will.

MEJAL

Please for the love of Joshua Judges Ruth can we start talking practically!

Agata smiles and twists her body from side to side in delight.

AGATA

I like that. "For the love of Joshua Judges Ruth."

GRETA

We will take young boys under
twelve with us. And we will allow
the men to join the women later,
under certain conditions.

AUTJE

I like it.

NEITJE

Me too.

Salome shakes her head, alarmed. Greta smiles at the young women, who look sad.

GRETA

Would everyone agree to this now,
knowing that our minds may change
in the future?

ONA

No. Not yet.

Salome presses her index fingers into the corners of her eyes, trying to push back the tears.

SALOME

We can't leave.

AGATA

Aaron. I know.

SALOME

He is just over twelve. Just
barely.

FLASHBACK TO:

60 EXT. WASHHOUSE FENCE - MORNING

60

Salome leads Aaron home. He jumps up on a fence. He takes a few steps. Salome watches him from a distance as he hops down. She sneaks up behind him, then grabs his waist and screams. He laughs, startled, pretends to be annoyed.

GRETA (V.O.)

The sadness of leaving Aaron behind
for the time being will only spur
us all, all of us grieving mothers,
to rebuild a new and better colony
for everyone.

CUT BACK TO:

61 INT. HAYLOFT - MAGIC HOUR

61

Agata puts her arm around Salome's shoulders. Mejal crosses to Salome's side, tears falling. She puts her arms around Salome. They are silent for a while.

SALOME

Why are boys aged thirteen and
fourteen left behind? Why wouldn't
they leave with us?

AGATA

Surely we can't be afraid of boys
of this age? Why couldn't they join
us if we leave?

Ona looks at August.

ONA

August. You're the boys teacher.
What is your feeling about this? Do
boys of this age pose a threat to
our girls and women?

August stops transcribing. He puts his pen down and thinks.

AUGUST

Yes. Possibly. Every one of us,
male or female, poses a potential
threat. Thirteen and fourteen-year-
old boys are capable of causing
great damage to girls and women,
and to each other.

CUT TO:

62

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING

62

As we hear August's voice, we see the boys of the schoolhouse
racing. They scrum around the victor, and shove each other -
at first playfully and then more aggressively.

AUGUST (V.O.)

It is a brash age. They are
possessed of reckless urges,
physical exuberance, intense
curiosity that often results in
injury, unbridled emotion,
including deep tenderness and
empathy, and not quite enough
experience or brain development to
fully understand or appreciate the
consequences of their actions or
words. They are similar to the
yearlings; young, awkward, gleeful,
powerful. They are tall, muscular,
sexually inquisitive creatures with
little impulse control, but they
are children. They are children and
they can be taught.

(MORE)

AUGUST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm a two-bit schoolteacher, a failed farmer, an effeminate man, and above all, a believer.

63 INT. SALOME'S KITCHEN - MORNING

63

We are close on Aaron. He looks into the camera, staring silently, inscrutable. Two smaller children play in the background.

AUGUST (V.O.)

I believe that with direction, firm love and patience these boys are capable of relearning their roles as males in the colony. I believe in what the great poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge thought were the cardinal rules of early education. "To work by love and so generate love. To habituate the mind to intellectual accuracy and truth. To excite imaginative power." He said "Little is taught by contest or dispute, everything by sympathy and love."

We now see Salome, sitting across the table from Aaron, looking at him tenderly. She puts her hand on his cheek. He moves away, embarrassed. He smiles at her awkwardly, then gets up and leaves her there, the table shining clean in front of her.

CUT BACK TO:

64 INT. HAYLOFT - MAGIC HOUR

64

Neitje has drawn pictures of the boys next to August's writing. In some of the illustrations they do work, in some they are violent, in some they study at school.

AUGUST

I believe those boys should be allowed to leave with the women, providing the women choose to leave.

MARICHE

It was a yes or no question. You shit like any other man, why don't you talk like one?

Mejal laughs. Mariche catches herself, shakes her head and smiles.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

SALOME

I won't leave Aaron.

AGATA

I would like to make a proposal. We must protect all of our children. Not only our daughters. All boys under the age of fifteen, and the ones that require special care must accompany the women.

SALOME

How do you mean *must*?

ONA

What if they refuse? If they don't want to leave?

MARICHE

We can't carry teenagers on our backs.

AGATA

We will try to influence our sons. But we cannot force them, and they may refuse, it is true.

NEITJE

But that would be very sad.

AGATA

Let's talk about our sadness after we have nailed down our plan. August, you would stay here to teach the boys who remain?

August nods. Ona looks at August. They share a long moment in silence. Agata watches them watching each other.

NEITJE

What's the point in trying to teach them? Fifteen-year-old boys still believe that throwing horse turds at the girls while we do the milking shows their love.

Autje laughs.

AUTJE

But a boy who truly loves you will intentionally miss when he throws the shit, or not throw it with quite as much force.

Mejal and Salome shake their heads.

SALOME

My most hopeful dream for my four year old girl is that one happy day a boy will intentionally miss hitting her with a clump of shit.

MEJAL

Yes. The day every mother dreams of, the hope that gets us through the darkest hours.

Autje glances out the east door. She suddenly gets up and goes to it.

AUTJE

He's here.

Mariche looks as though she will be sick.

MARICHE

Klaas.

The other women rush to the east door. They see, in the distance, Klaas, leading two horses, walking away from them.

GRETA

He has Ruth and Cheryl!

They move to hide themselves away from the windows until he is out of sight.

AGATA

Everyone, back to your houses. Go collect your children, and pack up. August, get the map. Greta and I will pack the food supplies. If anyone asks, we were quilting here.

Neitje and Autje are the first to scramble down the ladder.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Neitje and Autje! You must run now
to every house and tell the women,
we are leaving!

SALOME

Tell them to bring everything they
can. We will assemble outside the
washhouse!

Neitje and Autje stand at the bottom of the ladder, looking
paralyzed by the awesome responsibility.

SALOME (CONT'D)

And pin up your hair!

They begin putting up the braids they have left down since
having them tied together, and run off.

65 EXT. PORCH - TWILIGHT

65

A YOUNG WOMAN hangs out of a hammock, asleep on the porch
floor, her legs suspended by the hammock. Another, a MIDDLE
AGED WOMAN lies on the porch chair, also asleep. A TEENAGER
sleeps on the floor. Neitje and Autje kneel down beside them,
waking each of them up, gently, talking to them. They are
bleary eyed and don't seem interested in what she has to say.

MEJAL (O.S.)

I am worried about the women who
have voted to do nothing. If Klaas,
or any other man has returned,
there is a high risk that these
women will inform them that we are
plotting.

66 INT. SEWING ROOM - TWILIGHT

66

Neitje and Autje approach Scarface Janz, who is sewing in the
corner, A GROUP OF WOMEN, including Anna and Helena, working
on various projects in chairs or tables in the room. The
other women nod as Neitje speaks to them. Scarface Janz
stares at her, shaking her head, almost imperceptibly. There
is an endless silence.

ONA (O.S.)

We must have faith that the Do
Nothing women will not inform on
us.

AUGUST (O.S.)

But some, like Scarface Janz,
believe that to fight or to leave
is a sin. What about her?

ONA (O.S.)

What about her, August?

Before Neitje has finished speaking, Scarface Janz goes back
to sewing, turning her back to Neitje. Neitje eyes her
nervously.

AUGUST (O.S.)

Do you have faith in her?

CUT BACK TO:

67

INT. HAYLOFT - TWILIGHT

67

We stay on Ona's face for a long time, as she considers the
question.

ONA

I must have faith in all of us,
right now.

August nods. Greta, as she heads for the ladder, looks at
Mariche.

GRETA

Mariche. Be careful.

Mariche nods lightly. Greta holds Mariche's head to her
shoulder. They all clatter down the ladder.

Agata is a bit out of breath.

ONA

Breathe, mother.

Agata looks at Ona beneath her and laughs. She kisses the top
of Ona's head.

ONA (CONT'D)

Breathe and slow down. You always
hold your breath when you're
exerting yourself.

Agata laughs again.

ONA (CONT'D)

Don't laugh while you're on the ladder. Concentrate.

Agata calls out to the other women, below her and above her.

AGATA

We will have to get an early start tomorrow morning. Let's meet here again at sunrise. All of us.

She goes down the ladder and leaves the barn quickly along with the other women. August moves to the window and watches them go across the North fields.

68

EXT. FIELD - TWILIGHT

68

Mariche collects her many children from the field. She is subdued in her movements, watching each one of them closely. She looks across the field and sees Klaas, beckoning to her from the doorway of their house. Her shoulders slump. Greta approaches her.

GRETA

Don't go. Stay with me tonight. Or I will go with you.

MARICHE

If I don't go home, it will draw attention to all of us. I must behave as though everything isn't about to change.

She gives Greta a small smile. Mariche heads towards the house.

GRETA

Mariche.

MARICHE

Go home, Mother. I will see you at sunrise.

Mariche smiles faintly back at Greta, and gives her a soft kiss. She leads the children home with a sense of dread. Greta watches her go, concerned.

69 EXT. COLONY PATH - TWILIGHT

69

Neitje and Autje walk along the paths, stopping to talk to women as they go. They speak under their breaths to each one they pass.

NEITJE

An hour after sunrise. We
congregate on the road by the wash
house.

A group of women nod. One dark-haired woman pushing a boy in a wheelchair, responds.

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

Do we bring-

AUTJE

Everything. Bring everything.

CORNELIUS

Why?

They look scared.

69A EXT. COLONY PATH - MOMENTS LATER

69A

They pass another group of women with children.

AUTJE

We meet an hour after sunrise. On
this road. We need your buggy.

WOMAN

Thank you, sister.

They nod in solidarity. Autje nods back.

70 EXT. COLONY HOUSE - TWILIGHT

70

Neitje and Autje speak to Clara (20's) in her doorway, her children running around behind her.

NEITJE

An hour after sunrise we leave. We
meet behind the wash house.

AUTJE

And we need your buggies. Both of
them.

Clara catches her breath in her throat.

CLARA

Tomorrow?

She looks behind her at her children, anxiously.

NEITJE

You will be there?

She nods, anxiously.

CLARA

I have so much to do.

She closes the door.

71 INT. SALOME'S KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

71

Salome has just finished speaking with Aaron about the plan. Miep sits in her arms. Two of Salome's other children (8, 10) do chores and play in the background.) Aaron looks stunned. Ona pats Aaron's hand. He pulls it away.

SALOME

So. We will need your help. The horses need to be brushed. Saddled.

Aaron nods, looking away.

MIEP

Mama. I'm hurting.

Salome looks down at Miep, covered in sweat. Salome speaks quietly to Ona.

SALOME

The pills aren't working. I think they are for calves, not people.

ONA

But she is small. They'll work.

SALOME

She is small. But she's not a calf.

They focus on Miep, while Aaron gets up and leaves the table. He stares out the window, furious.

72 OMITTED

72

73 OMITTED

73

- 74 EXT. MARICHE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 74
Autje and Neitje lead Ruth and Cheryl away from Mariche's house, looking nervously behind them.
A light turns on in Mariche's house. Neitje and Autje freeze. The light turns off again. Autje and Neitje continue leading the horses away.
- 75 OMITTED 75
- 76 INT GRETA'S HOUSE- NIGHT 76
Agata, Greta and Mejal quickly load up barrels with cheese, sausage, bread, flour, eggs and water.
- 76B INT. SALOME'S HOUSE - MIEP'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 76B
Salome tucks Miep into bed.
- 77 EXT. WASHHOUSE - NIGHT 77
The moon is bright. Ona sits on the roof of the washhouse. August walks by.
ONA
Psst! August!
He looks up. She laughs.
ONA (CONT'D)
Come. Sit with me.
August climbs up and joins her. He reaches into his satchel.
August nods.
AUGUST
Here is the map.
Ona unrolls it and stares at it, mesmerized.
ONA
Where are we?

August points.

AUGUST

Here.

Ona stares at the spot on the map, puts her finger on it, and smiles.

ONA

Here. This is where we are.

She stares at it, in awe.

AUGUST

I've created a legend.

Ona looks up at him, questioningly.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

For the map. I've drawn asterisks on the map that coincide with pictures in the legend.

ONA

What do the pictures show?

AUGUST

Rivers, roads, towns and cities and borders, train tracks. See?

Ona nods her head. He points to the compass printed on the map.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

This is north... south... east...
and west.

ONA

But the map moves. How do we know
which direction the map should be
facing?

AUGUST

Celestial navigation. Let me show
you.

She rolls up the map. August points to a constellation of
bright stars.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Do you know of the Southern Cross?

Ona nods.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

You... and the women, can use the
Southern Cross for navigation. If
you clench your right fist like
this-

He takes her hand and shapes it into a fist. He holds it up
against the stars. Her arm is rigid, fist clenched, like a
freedom fighter.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Now align your first knuckle with
the axis of the Cross.

He holds her hand, her wrist.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Now. The tip of your thumb, here,
will indicate south.

Ona smiles, nodding, clapping her hands.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Will you show the others?

Ona nods.

ONA

We will have a lesson in
navigation.

AUGUST

Ona.

Ona looks at him, smiling.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
Did you already know about this
little trick?

Ona laughs.

ONA
Of course. Of course I did.

August smiles, sheepishly.

AUGUST
I wish there was something I could
tell you that you didn't already
know.

Ona smiles. They continue to look up at the stars. She
watches him for a while, tenderly.

ONA
What will become of you when we
leave?

August is silent.

ONA (CONT'D)
I hope... I hope that you can help
the boys. I hope that you can help
them to be truthful. And to listen.
Like you do.

She holds his hand for a long moment.

78 EXT. BARN - PRE-DAWN

78

August watches from the window as he sees the silhouette of
Ona teaching the other women how to find the Southern Cross
with her hands. He watches them, silently guiding each others
hands into position, the beginning of the light coming up
over the horizon behind them.

79 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY MORNING

79

August pins Neitje's drawings to the wall around the butcher
paper lists. The Women start to emerge into the loft. Greta
paces, periodically going to the window to peer into the
dark. Her balance does not appear to be very good. Mejal
watches her.

SALOME

Where are Mariche and Autje?

GRETA

They will be here. I pray they will be here.

Greta paces more.

MEJAL

(to Greta)

Concentrate on lifting your feet higher when you take steps. Don't shuffle. You'll trip again.

GRETA

I am very tired. My body is heavy.

Agata puts her feet into Ona's lap and Ona rubs them. Ona quietly sings "On the Old Rugged Cross." Agata sings every word or two, although she seems to be fighting for breath. August watches Ona, and she watches him watching her. Salome is braiding Neitje's hair and tugging tightly.

NEITJE

Please. Please. Be gentle. You are blinding me.

ONA

August. Did you dream last night?

August looks at her.

AUGUST

Yes.

Ona sings for a while. They stare at each other.

Mariche climbs the ladder to the loft. Autje is behind her, helping her. Mariche's face is bruised and cut and her arm is in a sling fashioned from a feed bag. Autje has a bruise on her cheek in the shape of four fingers and a thumb. Greta rushes to Mariche, takes her in her arms. The rest of the women are silent, having seen this before. Some look down.

Mariche and Autje sit down on a haybale. Mejal is shaking with rage. She holds Autje tightly.

GRETA

Is he gone?

AUTJE

He's sleeping. Dead to the world. He was very drunk.

The women stare at Autje, taking this in. Neitje goes to sit beside Autje. She synchronizes her breathing with Autje's. They look ahead together. They are silent.

GRETA
(to Mariche)
Tell me what happened.

Mariche shakes her head.

AUTJE

Father caught me sneaking back into the house, late and then he went to the barn and found we had taken the horses.

SALOME

Did you tell him what we were planning?

Mariche nods. Salome puts her head in her hands.

AUTJE

She did. But it was because he wouldn't stop hitting me and she was trying to distract him.

MARICHE

Yes. But I also told him because I suddenly felt very...

The women take this in.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

I don't think he believed me. And if he did, I don't think he'll remember. He'll be passed out in the barn all morning I'm sure.

She turns to Autje and Neitje.

AGATA

So. Yesterday was a day for talking. Today is a day for action. When Klaas wakes up he may go to the city to alert the other men. We have decided to leave before that happens. Is that accurate?

The Women nod.

AGATA (CONT'D)

We have ruled out the option of staying because-

MARICHE

I thought today was a day of action, not talk.

The other women laugh watch Mariche closely, and are silent, giving her space with her ravaged face this morning. We can hear animals, lowing in the distance. There is a hint of light in the sky.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

We have decided that we want...
that we are entitled to three
things.

GRETA

What are they?

Mariche looks on the wall at August's notes and Neitje's drawings. She stares at a drawing Neitje has made of children, playing.

MARICHE

We want our children to be safe.

Mariche has begun to cry softly, and is finding it difficult to speak. She looks up at a drawing on the wall of a woman kneeling in prayer.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

We want to be steadfast in our
faith.

She looks up at a drawing of a woman looking off, a book in her lap.

MARICHE (CONT'D)

We want to think.

GRETA

Yes.

Mariche looks down, trying to stop the tears so that she can continue speaking.

Agata claps her hands and holds them together in midair.

AGATA

Praise God.

Greta raises her arms above her head like a football official. The older women look jubilant. Salome and Mejal smile.

SALOME
Yes, that's it.

MEJAL
Precisely.

SALOME
Well it's not **precisely** put. But it sounds perfect to me. A perfect beginning.

MEJAL
Salome, will you use your last breath on earth to correct me?

SALOME
Yes, if that is what is needed.

MEJAL
What if we feel guilt? What if it overwhelms us?

AGATA
We will feel pain and we will feel uncertainty and we will feel sadness, but not guilt.

MARICHE
We may **feel** guilty but we will know we are not guilty.

MEJAL
We may **feel** homicidal, but we will know we are not killers.

ONA
We may **feel** vengeful, but we will know we are not raccoons.

The other women laugh.

SALOME
We may feel lost, but we will know we are not losers.

MEJAL
Speak for yourself.

SALOME
I always do. You should try it too.

Neitje places her hand gently on Autje's cheek, over the bruise.

AGATA

We may feel guilt and we may feel sadness. But we will endure it. We're embarking on a journey. We are making a change that we have interpreted as being a testament to our faith and to our instincts as mothers. We must believe in it.

GRETA

We don't know everything that will happen. But we've made our plan. And, yes, we must believe in it.

Agata holds Salome's hand, who takes Neitje's hand, who takes Ona's hand, who takes Mejal's hand, who takes Neitje's hand who takes Autje's hand who takes Mariche's hand who takes Greta's hand who takes Mejal's. Ona walks to August. She takes August's hand and leads him with her into the circle of women. He stares at their hands, holding each other. Greta begins to sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Everyone joins in. August cries.

80 EXT. COLONY ROAD - EARLY MORNING 80

A GROUP OF WOMEN pulling their children along down a road, hear the faint singing in the distance. They stop and look in the direction it is coming from.

81 EXT. SCARFACE JANZ' HOUSE - EARLY MORNING 81

Scarface Janz and her daughters stare at the Barn in the distance, hearing the hymn. Anna, holding Helena's hand, makes a move to run towards the music of the barn. Scarface Janz grabs her arm. Anna breathes heavily, in a panic. Scarface Janz grabs her face with her free hand, and looks deeply into her eyes, holding her there. Anna holds her daughter's hand, tightly, Helena's face pointed towards the direction the music is coming from.

82 EXT. FIELD - EARLY MORNING 82

Nettie/Melvin plays with the children in the field. He motions to them "sssshhh." They all stop and listen, looking into the distance where the sound is coming from. Some of the children, including Julius, sing. We stay on the faces of the young children, listening to the singing, and singing lightly along. Some of them keep playing, oblivious.

83 INT. HAYLOFT - EARLY MORNING

83

When they are finished singing, August raises his hand. Ona smiles at him.

AGATA

You can speak whenever you want,
August, and you don't have to raise
your hand. You're the teacher!

She laughs. The others stare at him. Tears are rolling down his cheeks. Autje and Neitje look mortified by his crying.

AUGUST

It's alright. It wasn't important.

AGATA

There is work to do. We must stop
talking and prepare to leave.

The Women's expressions are stern, grim, desolate, and tight with tension, but they nod in agreement.

There is suddenly the sound of someone climbing the ladder. The Women hold their breaths. An OLD MAN, EARNEST PENNER appears. He can barely walk. He is suffering from dementia. Ona rushes to help him up the last few rungs.

ONA

Uncle Penner!

AGATA

Earnest!

He looks around at The Women, trying to get his bearings.

EARNEST

What are you doing here in my loft?
Are you angels? Are you lost? Will
you help me with my bath?

He is gasping for air, but also laughing in fits and starts. Ona helps him to sit down on a hay bale.

EARNEST (CONT'D)

What are you bitches plotting?

Agata gets up and walks to Earnest and sits next to him on the bale.

AGATA

Oh, Earnest. My sweet cousin. We're getting old, aren't we?

Earnest puts his head on her shoulder and she smooths his wild, white hair.

EARNEST

Are you devils?

AGATA

No. We're your friends.

EARNEST

Are you plotting to burn down my barn?

AGATA

No, Ernie. There's no plot. We're only women talking.

Ona goes to sit beside Earnest. She leans her head on his shoulder. Silence. Earnest seems to ponder this. So do The Women.

EARNEST

Will you help me with my bath?

Mejal moves towards Earnest, her hands outstretched.

MEJAL

Why don't I take you back to your house and give you a washing. I'll give you a bath and get you something to eat.

AGATA

Will you make sure the water you use to wash Earnest is warm, but not hot, not scalding?

AGATA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Be quick.

Mejal nods. She leads him slowly down the ladder. Agata gets up and stands at the top of the ladder, her hands on her hips, watching. She calls after them.

AGATA (CONT'D)

There is mint growing next to the lower barn door!

(MORE)

AGATA (CONT'D)

You could pick some of it and add
it to the warm water. Earnest would
love that!

Agata goes to the window and watches for a long while, as
Mejal and Earnest make their way back to Earnest's house.

84 EXT. LOWER BARN DOOR - SUNRISE

84

CLOSE ON: Mint, lovingly picked. Mejal holds it under
Earnest's nose, invites him to smell it. He smiles. He picks
some himself.

85 INT. HAYLOFT - SUNRISE

85

Agata still watches them in the distance, wondering, tears
streaming down her face.

SALOME

Mother?

AGATA

I'm just saying goodbye.

She wipes her tears, quickly away. She turns to The Women,
who are all watching her closely. Greta looks at her,
vulnerable.

GRETA

I'm nervous.

ONA

We're all nervous. We can't avoid
nervousness.

AUTJE

We hid Ruth and Cheryl for you.
They are ready to go.

GRETA

Ruth and Cheryl!!! Really??!!!

Greta runs over to Autje and kisses the girls.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Well, my girls.

MARICHE

We'll head out, then.

GRETA

Yes. Let's go.

SALOME

We'll need to find guns, in case
anyone tries to stop us.

AGATA

No. We won't have guns. We must
begin peacefully. As we mean to
continue.

Agata looks off, decisive. Salome suddenly looks frightened.

SALOME

We don't know where we are going.

GRETA

We don't. We can't. But we must go anyway.

Nettie/Melvin climbs the ladder. He stands there, silently in front of the women.

AGATA

Are the children clean and ready?

Nettie/Melvin nods.

AGATA (CONT'D)

And their things are packed? They are fed?

Nettie/Melvin nods again. Melvin goes to the window, to look at the children, playing below. Agata follows him.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Melvin.

Melvin smiles for the first time, hearing his name. He smiles at the open window, staring at the sunlight.

MELVIN

Thank you. Thank you for saying my name.

There are tears of joy in Melvin's eyes.

AGATA

Melvin, are you ready for the journey?

Melvin doesn't answer. They wait.

MELVIN

No. I am not ready.

The Women are alarmed. Some open their mouths to speak.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

But I am coming with you.

They smile and sigh with relief.

GRETA

Yes, who of us can say we're ready, after all?

MARICHE

I can.

AGATA

Melvin, please return to the children and play a game with them in the field next to the wash house. That is where the other women will find us, on their way out of the colony.

SALOME

Has Aaron readied the horses for us?

Melvin turns towards Salome and looks at her, warily. He shakes his head.

MELVIN

No.

SALOME

What? Where is he?

Melvin shakes his head and shrugs. Salome takes Melvin's arm.

SALOME (CONT'D)

Speak to me. Please. I won't harm you. I am not your enemy!

Melvin is frightened and backs away, towards the window.

AGATA

You must calm down, Salome. Aaron will be found. Melvin. You are safe.

SALOME

But we're leaving soon. I'm not leaving without him.

Salome climbs down the ladder, panicked. Melvin whispers at the window.

AGATA

Salome! Come back!

They go to the window and watch Salome, running, her skirts flying behind her, bent into the wind, kicking up dust.

ONA

Salome! Aaron will be found. He will leave with us. I know he will!

Ona turns to Agata.

ONA (CONT'D)

But what if she doesn't convince Aaron?

Agata suddenly collapses onto her feed pail. Ona rushes to her.

ONA (CONT'D)

Mother?

Agata doesn't speak. The other women crowd around her. She smiles, eyes wide, nods her head, concentrates on her breathing. They all wait. Greta prays. Ona and Greta each hold one of Agata's hands and synchronize their breathing. Mariche and the young women are quiet, watching. Finally, Agata raises herself up to standing. *

AGATA

We are going to go now.

AUGUST

(not ready)
Now?

AGATA

Yes. Make a list, August.

AUGUST

A list of what?

AGATA

Of good things. Of memories, of plans. Whatever you feel goes into a good list; what we, the women, would want there, please write it down.

She laughs, her breath choppy and laboured.

AGATA (CONT'D)

Thank you, August. For all you have
done. We are all so proud of you.
Your mother would be too.

AUGUST

I will make a list.

Tears stream down August's face. The Women rise, ready to leave. Agata is breathing very heavily now. Ona looks at her, concerned.

GRETA

This will be a difficult trip.

AGATA

I'm aware of that. Today is the day that the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

She turns to Ona and says softly:

AGATA (CONT'D)

I won't be buried in this colony. Help me into a buggy now and I'll die on the trail.

Ona laughs but her eyes tear up. August is trying to keep writing but he can't stop crying. The Women help each other down the ladder, in a chain. August watches them, especially Ona. He moves quickly towards the ladder, to catch a glimpse of her as she goes. Ona looks back at them.

ONA

(between sobs)

What about August?

August smiles and waves, unsure what to do with himself. Agata is the last to climb down. August rises to his feet. Agata turns to him and smiles.

AGATA

August, wouldn't you marry my Ona?

August returns her smile.

AUGUST

I've asked her so many times.

AGATA

And she always said no?

Agata reaches up and pats August's knee. He is towering over her now. He bends to touch her shoulder. She puts her hand on his.

AUGUST

Hang on with both hands.

Agata finishes going down the ladder.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

What about Aaron?

But Agata has already walked away.

August walks over to the window. He sees the women walking away into the distance. Ona is walking backwards, keeping her eyes on him.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Ona. I will always love you!

Ona laughs and cries and keeps walking backwards so she can see him. She waves. She forces herself, finally, to turn around. Agata, closer to the window looks up at August.

AGATA

And she loves you too, August.
She loves everyone.

August nods. Waves lightly.

86 INT. HAYLOFT - MORNING

86

August sits alone, making a list. We travel along the words and illustrations that have been posted on the walls, all around him.

AUGUST (V.O.)

How will I live without these women? My heart will stop. I will try to teach the boys and men about these women, about the new reality of which they dream. I must make a list. A list, from the Middle English *liste*, meaning desire. Which is also the origin of the word "listen."

August looks at the wall of notes, then begins to write.

87 EXT. FIELD - SUNRISE

87

The sun rises. We see beams of sun shining through trees, light dancing on a pond.

AGATA (V.O.)

Sun.

88 EXT. FIELD - NIGHT 88

We are staring up at the sky, the milky way.

NEITJE (V.O.)

Stars.

89 INT. BARN - DAY 89

A pail, sitting alone among discarded tools.

MIEP (V.O.)

Pails.

90 EXT. HOUSE - DAY 90

A newborn baby stares at the sky, adjusting to the light.

AUTJE (V.O.)

Birth.

91 EXT. FIELDS - MAGIC HOUR 91

A two-year old lies sleeping in a cart of cucumbers.

MARICHE (V.O.)

The Harvest.

92 INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY 92

A boys hand writes down a math problem.

MEJAL (V.O.)

Numbers.

93 INT. BARN - MORNING 93

August continues to write his list.

ONA (V.O.)

Sounds. Window.

GRETA (V.O.)

Straw. Beams.

94 INT. SALOME'S KITCHEN - MORNING 94

ON AARON'S FACE, tears streaming down. He looks at us, sobbing. He shakes his head violently.

Suddenly, a SPRAY CAN comes into frame. He screams and drops to the floor.

SALOME (V.O.)

Love.

95 EXT. SCARFACE JANZ'S HOUSE - MORNING 95

Scarface Janz is walking quickly away from us, along a path.

SCARFACE JANZ

I will do what God commands me to do. I will not lie for you.

Salome pushes her down to the ground. She holds out the can and sprays in her face. Scarface Janz goes immediately unconscious.

96 INT. KLAAS' HORSE BARN - MORNING 96

We track along stalls in a barn. We pass a cow, then arrive on Klaas, passed out in a stall on a bale of hay. He begins to rouse. A hand comes into frame with a spray bottle and sprays. We see Salome close the stall door and leave the barn.

97 EXT. ROAD - MORNING 97

We see an image, similar to the one we saw near the beginning. A group of women walk down a road. The wind picks up. They try to hold onto their hats.

SALOME (V.O.)

Futility.

MELVIN (V.O.)

Language.

MIEP (V.O.)

Wind.

AGATA (V.O.)

Women.

98 INT. HAYLOFT - MORNING

98

August hears clambering on the ladder. Salome appears. She takes an axe and a few other big tools from the tack room. August looks at her, questioningly.

SALOME

We may need to protect ourselves.

AUGUST

Where is Aaron?

SALOME

He is in the buggy, waiting.

AUGUST

You convinced him to leave?

Salome doesn't respond, hands him the spray can. August stares at it.

SALOME

Here. You may need this. For protection.

August's eyes widen as he stares at the spray can and begins to understand.

AUGUST

Did you have to-

SALOME

Yes. It's just as though I had picked up a sleeping child in the night and carried him away from a house that was on fire.

AUGUST

Is it?

SALOME

He's coming with me. He's my child.

August nods, looking unsure.

SALOME (CONT'D)

I broke the rules? I did. I broke the new rules already. Maybe I've broken everything. And we haven't yet begun. I sprayed Scarface Janz also. She was planning to go to the city to tell the men.

AUGUST

Does she know how to get there?

SALOME

No, of course not.

AUGUST

So it was an idle threat.

SALOME

But I was afraid.

August nods.

SALOME (CONT'D)

Klaas too. But he wasn't awake yet,
so he won't remember being knocked
out. Just like we didn't.

Salome goes to leave.

SALOME (CONT'D)

Goodbye August, and good luck.

AUGUST

Please take care of Ona and her
baby.

Salome nods.

SALOME

Of course. I promise.

AUGUST

Wait. I need to give you something.

August crosses the room and pulls a gun out of his satchel.
He comes back to the ladder and hands it to Salome.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Here.

Salome stares at the gun.

SALOME

Why do you have a gun, August?

AUGUST

Because...

SALOME

Don't kill yourself August. You
have important work to do.

August nods.

SALOME (CONT'D)
You are the boys teacher.

She tucks the gun away, wordlessly. She begins to climb down.

SALOME (CONT'D)
We really have to hurry.

AUGUST
But you're not fleeing.

She laughs again.

SALOME
That's right. We've chosen to
leave.

AUGUST
But not Aaron.

Salome is quiet for a moment. She looks at him.

SALOME
I will have to live with that.

AUGUST
Don't come back. Don't ever come
back, any of you.

Salome laughs. She nods.

SALOME
I'll miss you. Be a good teacher.
You have straw in your hair.

AUGUST
Wait! I have to give you the
minutes!

SALOME
August! I have to go!

August runs to the table and picks up the notebooks and takes some of the sheets of paper from the walls.

He hands her what he has gathered so far.

AUGUST
Please give these to Ona.

SALOME
But she can't read them.

AUGUST

Her child will read them.

Salome places the notebooks and papers back in August's hands.

SALOME

August. The purpose was for you to **take** the minutes.

She pushes his hand with the papers in it back at him. August looks at her, beginning to understand.

SALOME (CONT'D)

We'll meet again.

AUGUST

We'll meet again.

Salome descends the ladder, leaving August with the notebooks.

August goes to the north doors and opens them. We see him stand there, in a WIDE FRAME. WE MOVE QUICKLY TOWARDS HIM and we see what he sees. He watches Salome, running away, one last time, from the barn. He can catch a glimpse of the convoy of buggies lining up beside the wash house.

99

EXT. WASH HOUSE ROAD - MORNING

99

We run with children through the field, obliviously carefree, in a wild game. They approach the road and are ushered towards buggies by the women. WE MOVE QUICKLY ALONGSIDE THE CONVOY AS MANY BAGS AND SUPPLIES ARE LOADED, children are passed up. Women get inside. A flurry of activity as last minute barrels and cases are loaded in. Among them we see Mariche and her children, Ona, Agata, Salome, Mejal and Greta. Anna, frantic, runs alongside the convoy, holding tight to Helena's hand as they run, bags in her hand, looking scared. Autje grabs Helena's hand and helps her into a buggy with Neitje. Anna sighs with relief and follows her in. There is a commotion at the front of the convoy. One of the buggies behind Autje's gets stuck with the wheel of the buggy in front. Neitje, Autje and a GROUP OF WOMEN spontaneously leap out and help to move the buggy into the correct position. The buggies begin to move.

100 INT. HAYLOFT - MORNING 100

August stands watching the convoy go. A hand reaches out of the fourth buggy, a hand lifted in farewell. It might be Ona's. He lifts his hand in farewell, knowing he will likely not be seen.

101 EXT WASH HOUSE ROAD - MORNING 101

We see the convoy of buggies making its way down the long road. We CRANE UP to see the convoy of women and children, snaking away into the distance.

101A INT. SALOME'S KITCHEN 101A

A tableau of Salome's kitchen as it sits empty.

101B INT. GRETA'S KITCHEN 101B

A tableau of Greta's kitchen. Still and empty.

101C INT. MARICHE'S KITCHEN 101C

A tableau of Mariche's kitchen. Still and empty.

102 INT SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING 102

August stands at the front of his schoolroom. There are some empty chairs, where the younger ones used to sit. He looks at the teenage boys in front of him. He studies their faces, innocent, mischievous, paying attention, not paying attention. He inhales and opens his mouth to speak.

CUT TO BLACK