

# ARMAGIDEON

by  
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# ARMAGIDEON

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*The playwright hopes that a percentage of box office revenues from productions of ARMAGIDEON will be donated to the International Red Cross Landmine Survivors Fund.*

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**TIME:** mid-day, tomorrow

**PLACE:** the Aunt's house

### **CHARACTERS:**

**VIOLET** - a wiry, white-haired spinster “aunt” in her 70s, somewhat eccentric. She is the *husband*, with a grasp of reality thrust upon her.

**MOLLY** - a round, white-haired spinster “aunt” in her 70s, somewhat eccentric. She is the *wife*, given to orbiting reality and the moment, with spurts of a sort of verbal/thought Turrets syndrom.

**SEANASY** - a pasty-white, hairless 9-year-old boy, ward of the “aunts” (*Seanasy pronounced ‘shin-AY-zee’*)

**NATHAN** - a robust, well-groomed commando sergeant in full combat kit,<sup>1</sup> in his early 20s; “nephew” of the “aunts,” up tight and AWOL. When in doubt, he tries to revert to his training, regardless of its appropriateness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><sub>4</sub> NATHAN's undershorts should be military-issue, but they should be neither too baggy and comical nor too form-fitting and revealing

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### SCENE I

*The action of the play takes place at the onset of an unlimited nuclear war in a militarized state, in and around the Aunts' quaint, comfortably old-fashioned house. The furniture is over-stuffed, the colours muted but cheerful. There is a front door up-centre, between two windows, a basement exit and clothes closet down-right, a kitchen area up-left, partitioned by a partial island counter, and a back door and upstairs exit down-left. In this otherwise normal setting, there is the odd surreal element: many huge locks on both front and back doors; a huge crossbeam on the back door; broken and skewed-time clocks. There is an eerie sort of orange hue to the light outside. At the top of the scene, the house stands empty and quiet.*

**MOLLY.** *(Off-stage)* All have sinned and fall short of the glory of god. *(She enters from the backyard, carrying a basket of poor-quality, oddly-sized and shaped vegetables, and one dead magpie. These, as well as her hands and feet, are soiled with green-hued dirt. She is wearing a large sunhat, gardener's apron, knee-pads, gardener's gloves, rubber boots, and sharp-spiked 'aerator sandals'<sup>2</sup> and she carries a rusted pair of broken pruning shears. She calls out her pronouncements upwards while fearfully checking and rechecking that she has not been seen or followed.)* Is nobody listening? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts like filthy rags. *(Calls out)* Seanasy? Seanasy! *(To herself)* Repent, then, and turn to god, so that your sins may be wiped out. *(Calls out)* Seanasy! Come out and give your poor old aunt a hand, will you! There's a good boy. For the lord will settle disputes among great

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<sup>2</sup> Aerator sandals over-sized plastic platforms with approximately 13 two-inch nails protruding downward; worn strapped to the bottoms of shoes or boots, used for walking on grass in order to make multiple air holes in the turf

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nations. They will hammer their swords into plows and their spears into... putty knives. Nations will never again... *(Forgetting)* ...never again... Nations will never again... *(Calls out)* Seanasy! Where's the Gideon? Where's the Gideon! Where *is* the Gideon? *(She puts the basket on the kitchen counter and begins to frantically search for the Gideon. The telephone rings loudly, startling her. She backs off, clutching her chest, and then she stands frozen to the spot, staring at the ringing telephone. In a small, frightened voice)* Go away! Don't talk to me! Oh, go away! *(The old answer machine starts, replaying VIOLET's voice)*

**VIOLET.** "You have reached the North Atlantic Treaty Organization hotline. By dialling this number, you have initiated first-strike capabilities against enemy nations. If you do not leave your name and number after the tone, the launch process will be completed and you will be responsible for starting the next world war. Thank you." *(There is a beep, and then NATHAN'S urgent message)*

**NATHAN.** "Oh Jesus! Auntie Vi, what the hell is that? You've gotta get rid of that before they... Oh, never mind. It's Nathan. Are ya there? Auntie Vi? Aunt Molly? *(Gently)* It's okay – pick up the phone..."

**MOLLY.** *(Frightened)* Oh, no, no, no, no, no!

**NATHAN.** "Auntie Vi! Jesus, you better *not* be there or I'll... Okay, okay, never mind. Look, I'm gonna come – *(Lowering his voice)* I've gotta see you, *today* – you and Aunt Molly. Look, I think they're listening – I can't talk now. Just remember. *Today!*" *(The machine beeps and stops)*

**MOLLY.** Nathan! Oh lordy! *(calling out)* Seanasy! Seanasy, where are you? *(She frantically hides the basket and begins to take off and hide her gardening clothes. She imitates the answer machine.)* Beep! Nathan's coming! And nations will never again... Where's the Gideon? *(Remembering)* *Go to war!* Never again – Nation's will never again go to war, never again prepare for battle again! *(Throughout, she stashes her gardening accessories – the inverted hat becomes a table centre-piece; knee-pads cozy the teapot. She doesn't know what to do with the inverted 'aerator sandals' She throws her boots and gloves into a cupboard and jams the shears into the kitchen knife-block. She forgets she's still wearing her apron)* Seanasy! Your cousin Nathan is coming! Isn't that good news,

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dear? It'll be so nice to see the poor boy again. So long as the *snake-pit* doesn't report my daylight gardening, we should have a grand old visit...  
*(There is a loud commotion outside the front door as Violet urgently but cautiously approaches with her supply trolley)*

**MOLLY.** *(Panic-stricken)* The Authorities! My garden! It's a raid! *(She slams the back door shut and cross-bars it with the huge wooden beam)*  
Oh you lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you – and to those who have the good sense to keep their mouths shut. *(She calls out, cross)* Seanasy! I told you to keep your eyes peeled! You want them to take away your poor old Auntie? Trust in the lord forever, he will always protect us...

**VIOLET.** *(Off stage)* Open the door!

**MOLLY.** *(She remembers the magpie and vegetables, and stashes them and the basket in various cupboards and drawers, and stalls in a sing-songy voice)* Just a minute! Can't rush the dead an' buried, you know! *(To herself)* Oh Molly – don't remind them about *planting* things!

**VIOLET.** *(Off stage)* Open the door!

**MOLLY.** Is this an Inspection or just a social call?

**VIOLET.** *(Off stage)* Open the door!

**MOLLY.** Can't ya just smash it down like ya always do?

**VIOLET.** *(Off stage, kicking the door)* Molly!

**MOLLY.** *(She unbolts the door locks)* Violet! Is that you? Oh, I was sure you were the Authorities! Such a racket!

**VIOLET.** *(She enters, bursting into the house, dragging the trolley full of supplies and checking behind her. She is draped from head to toe in a burlap shawl and rags)* Two seconds more and it *would've* been the Authorities! What's the matter with you? You trying to get me killed or what?

**MOLLY.** I... I just came from the garden.

**VIOLET.** *(Furious)* You went out there in broad daylight?

**MOLLY.** Seanasy was supposed to be watching...

**VIOLET.** Did they spot you?

**MOLLY.** Well, no – but that's why I thought it was them when you came...

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**VIOLET.** *(She races to peek out one of the windows)* You could get us all charged and removed! *(She lowers the blinds on the window)*

**MOLLY.** But if it *was* them, I couldn't let them catch me in my farmin' clothes, could I?

**VIOLET.** *(She stares at Molly's apron and shakes her head)* Oh never mind. Here, help me out of these things. *(They 'un-wrap' the burlap trappings)* Ohhh, it's so hot out there, the tongues of my shoes are hangin' out.

**MOLLY.** Just look at all this stuff! How'd you do it!?

**VIOLET.** It wasn't easy, I can tell ya. *(She notices the remaining windows – urgent)* The blinds, Molly! Get the blinds!

**MOLLY.** Oh... Oh, the blinds, yes, of course... *(Molly quickly draws the remaining blinds and curtains. Viloet begins to unpack and inspect the over-full trolley of goods)*

**VIOLET.** Now, let's see what we've got. *(She slowly, lovingly sorts through and groups the contents. Throughout, she continues her counting over and under Molly's words)* Twelve cans – 454 grams each – evaporated milk...

**MOLLY.** *(She hovers throughout, like an excited child)* How can the cows be so contented if they have to aim into these little cans?

**VIOLET.** Vegetables – eighteen cans – beans, peas, tomatoes, corn.

**MOLLY.** *(She grabs a couple of the cans)* Lordy! I never knew survival could be so awful heavy!

**VIOLET.** Eighteen cans – 426 millilitres – fruit – peaches, pears, applesauce. And juices – eighteen cans – 568 'mill' – apple, grapefruit...

**MOLLY.** *(Making a face)* Did ya get sweetened? I can't take grapefruit juice if it's not the sweetened kind...

**VIOLET.** *(Frustrated, starting over)* Eighteen cans – apple, grapefruit, orange, and tomato...

**MOLLY.** I don't like tomato! You know I don't like tomato juice...

**VIOLET.** When you're sitting on the brink of extinction, ya can't always get what your heart desires.

**MOLLY.** It gets me all loosey-goosey – and *that's not* my idea of survival. Gives me an after-wind like nobody's half-life...



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**VIOLET.** (*Ignoring her*) Cereals...

**MOLLY.** Did ya get bran? I've got to have bran if I'm gonna keep my regular appointments.

**VIOLET.** Forty-two individual packages – wheat, corn, oat *and* bran – sealed in wax paper...

**MOLLY.** Where did all this come from?

**VIOLET.** Six packages of crackers... (*Molly tears into the crackers and stuffs some into her mouth.*) – 454 grams each. Six packages plain biscuits, graham wafers...

**MOLLY.** Oh, I like those! But not anything with sesame seeds – they just get caught up under my bridge...

**VIOLET.** ...melba toast. Six cans of meat – 283 'G's' – corned beef, luncheon meats. Six cans beef and gravy. Six cans – 426 millilitres or 568 millilitres – baked beans, pork and beans. Six jars of cheese...

**MOLLY.** That's *their* idea of survival, not mine.

**VIOLET.** Six cans – 240 'G's' – fish. Soups – fifteen pouches dehydrated, and six cans – 283 'G's' – bean, pea, tomato, and vegetable. Three large jars honey, four kilos of hard candy...

**MOLLY.** Now yer talkin'! (*She reaches for the candy but Violet slaps her hand way*)

**VIOLET.** Three jars peanut butter – ninety teabags – three jars sugar – three jars instant coffee – salt and pepper – three jars instant chocolate powder...

**MOLLY.** Ninety teabags!? I s'pose we'll have to share *and* double-dunk...

**VIOLET.** ...jam, syrup, molasses, jelly, dried fruits and nuts, and, last but not least, chewing gum. Fourteen days' worth – what d' ya think?

**MOLLY.** (*Checking her denture*) I think we can do without the chewing gum.

**VIOLET.** Seanasy can have it.

**MOLLY.** How did you get all this, Vi? Lordy, there must be double, *triple* our allotment.

**VIOLET.** Almost double.

**MOLLY.** But how?

**VIOLET.** Remember how Addie Patrick wanted to come in with us...

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**MOLLY.** Well, now that she's widowed, of course, an' her son's still Missing In Action... (*Tch-ing*) The poor dear's better off – he was such a granny-basher, an' she certainly didn't need all that abuse.

**VIOLET.** Well, I stopped by to get her and her Survival Provisions Cards, like we planned – and she was stone-cold *dead*. Just like that – flat out on th' kitchen floor, stiff as lead.

**MOLLY.** Oh lord mercy! Suicide?

**VIOLET.** Hard to tell, th' way she used to cook.

**MOLLY.** She might've just flown into the window (*For a moment, she envisions this, then gasps*) Vi, you didn't! You didn't loot the dead?

**VIOLET.** No, of course not. Don't be ridiculous. I rolled her over and had a good long talk with her. She said it was really for the best – we could use the extra, especially with Seanasy.

**MOLLY.** She'd have eaten us out of house and shelter the first day anyway.

**VIOLET.** So, I thanked her very much, for the both of us – and then I wished her well in eternity.

**MOLLY.** Did ya tell her to write when she got settled in?

**VIOLET.** I grabbed her one S. P. Card and headed for the Distribution Centre. (*They begin to stash the supplies in sometimes less-than-appropriate hiding places – very slowly, methodically, lovingly, one at a time – hiding and re-hiding each item over and over*)

**MOLLY.** God rest her weary soul. But didn't they question you, claiming the extra allotment like that?

**VIOLET.** I figured they would – so I *liberated* Addie's burlap, and I kept my head down. I just looked like any other “*Authorized Widow*” with a valid *Circulation Pass*!

**MOLLY.** But why couldn't you claim a *quadruple* allotment? Addie should've still had two cards, one for her and one for the mister.

**VIOLET.** I guess she'd already eaten up her spouse's share...

**MOLLY.** Poor woman. (*She bows her head in silent prayer*)

**VIOLET.** In the end, the only thing greater than her appetite was her diarrhea. (*She unwraps a piece of gum*) Here, let's give him a piece now. Where is he?

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**MOLLY.** Hmmm?

**VIOLET.** Seanasy! (*She stares at Molly's apron*) And I suppose you want them to *bury* you in that?

**MOLLY.** (*Flustered*) Oh. Oh my apron, yes. I forgot.

**VIOLET.** (*Shaking her head*) There's a light in the rocket, but there just isn't any war-head, is there dear?

**MOLLY.** (*Gathering up her apron and the burlap*) I'll hide the burlap, too, shall I? Before Nathan gets here.

**VIOLET.** What?

**MOLLY.** Nathan. (*Pointing to the answer machine*) He spoke through that *thing*. He's coming. Here. Didn't I tell you?

**VIOLET.** (*Furious*) When?

**MOLLY.** Well, I thought it was when you got in, I told...

**VIOLET.** When is he *coming*?

**MOLLY.** Oh. Today. Now. Soon. I'm not sure. He sounded upset.

**VIOLET.** Didn't you tell him *not* to come?

**MOLLY.** Oh, I didn't *talk* to him – you know I don't like to go near that *black bell*. (*They both hurry, trying to tidy up*)

**VIOLET.** Oh, I wish he'd give us more warning! He's so damned unpredictable... irresponsible...

**MOLLY.** The boy can't help it, Vi. It's not his fault! Why, it's an offence for him to set foot in this area, never mind visit his poor old Aunties.

**VIOLET.** He should never have let them take him in the first place. He could easily have stayed hidden here with Seanasy and no one would ever have to know. But oh, no, the *great warrior* made his choice – him an' his damned guns...

**MOLLY.** Oh, he's just a boy.

**VIOLET.** “Once a soldier, always a man.” They've got him loaded up with so many chips on his shoulders, he thinks he's a piece of walkin' particle-board. (*Calls out*) Seanasy!

**MOLLY.** (*Looking toward the backyard*) What's that strange contraption out in the backyard?

**VIOLET.** It's Seanasy's – and don't let him hear ya call it a *contraption*! All he's done is nail a board between two trees – so's he can do chin-ups

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he says, when we're *Off Surveillance*. Don't begrudge th' boy some innocent exercise.

**MOLLY.** Well, nothing built that crazy can last. If you ask me, he'd be better off if he spent his time trying to keep his *mind* fit. Do you know, right after you went out today, he tried his hand at *shaving*!

**VIOLET.** What?

**MOLLY.** Tryin' to be just like his cousin Nathan, I guess. Wouldn't let me help him, though. (*Chuckles*) Just as stubborn as Nathan, too.

**VIOLET.** (*Loud*) He doesn't have any facial hair!

**MOLLY.** Well – he did end up cutting himself quite badly and we had to bandage his throat twice before the bleeding would stop.

**VIOLET.** How could you?

**MOLLY.** Well, I had to do something, or he'd have drained blood-dry!

**VIOLET.** How could you let him get his hands on that blade?

**MOLLY.** Well you know how he likes to act all grown up sometimes.

**VIOLET.** (*Angry*) *Advanced alopecia*, Molly! There's not a single hair anywhere on his body! Never will be!

**MOLLY.** Poor boy. If it wasn't for bad luck, he wouldn't have any luck at all.

**VIOLET.** Why do you lead him on like that? I don't think it's right to be filling his head with ridiculous fantasies! Sheltering the boy is one thing, but putting his faith in lies is another! And standing by while he *wounds* himself – are you bereft of your senses? The whole idea is to *protect* him – *save* his soul – *nurture* his innocence. You've got no right to poison that child! Ours is to deliver him from evil. Otherwise, we might just as well deliver him to Nathan!

**MOLLY.** Amen.

**VIOLET.** Amen. Now go fix some food. (*Nathan's silhouette is seen stalking past the windows*)

**MOLLY.** (*Very excited*) I can make a salad! Oh, you wouldn't believe it, the garden's looking so good today! (*Molly goes to the kitchen area and begins preparing a salad. Violet, quietly and concealed from Molly, removes an old revolver from under the folds of her clothing and hides it in the cushion of her easychair*) I got a lovely lame lettuce – and a tiny

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sprig of mint from that mutant seed I found last week. And some of the dwarf cauliflower was salvageable! Oh, and look, Vi – your favourites! A single cabbage and one sterile tomato, and for once, the carrots didn't metastasize and infect the tomato vines!

**VIOLET.** Best harvest this month. (*Nathan tries to open the front door, then knocks softly, urgently*) What was that?

**MOLLY.** I didn't hear anything... (*Nathan knocks again*)

**VIOLET.** (*In an urgent whisper*) It's Nathan! Hurry! Help me! (*They both frantically try to hide the remaining supplies and camouflage the trolley*)

**MOLLY.** You know, I don't know why we worry so. Surely the boy wouldn't report us. He's family, after all.

**VIOLET.** He's a flesh and blood Sergeant, before anything else now.

**NATHAN.** (*Knocking harder*) Aunti Vi! Open up! Aunt Molly! I'm totally exposed here!

**MOLLY.** Oh, my!

**VIOLET.** Just coming, dear! (*Nathan slams his rifle butt and then himself against the door*)

**MOLLY.** Mercy! (*Violet unbolts the door locks and Nathan enters, bursting into the house and immediately shutting the door behind him. He wears full combat fatigues and gear, and brandishes an A.K.-47<sup>3</sup> assault rifle. As Violet goes to kiss his cheek, he reels away to check the Surveillance through the window*)

**VIOLET.** What a pleasant surprise. (*She returns to her tidying*)

**NATHAN.** (*Angry, checking the windows*) What the hell's the matter with you, leaving me out there for all the cameras to see? I shouldn't even be here.

**VIOLET.** Molly, look who's come to visit.

**MOLLY.** (*Calling from the kitchen area*) Hello, Nathan, dear. Good to see you again.

**VIOLET.** Nathan, your Aunt Molly's talking to you.

**NATHAN.** (*Still frantically checking*) If they tracked me here, I'm as good as dead.

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<sup>3</sup> A.K.-47 - pronounced "AY-KAY Forty-seven" - a fully automatic assault rifle

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**VIOLET.** Yes, dear, well right now you're as good as live, and I'll thank you to remember the house rules. *(She holds out her hand, staring at Nathan's rifle)* Give me the weapon, dear.

**NATHAN.** Oh, no, not this time – I'm keepin' this baby right here.

**VIOLET.** Hand it over, trigger-happy.

**NATHAN.** You don't understand, it's not safe...

**VIOLET.** I understand perfectly, Nathaniel.

**MOLLY.** Your Auntie's right, dear. Give her the gun, there's a good boy. *(Violet reaches to take the rifle. Nathan pulls the rifle violently away from her)*

**NATHAN.** No! *(Violet stares at him and he thrusts the rifle into her hands)* Oh Jesus. All right, all right! Maybe we should put it right back out in front of the house so the cameras can pick it up! It's nice and warm, so it'll glow real good on *Fleer*, too!

**VIOLET.** *(Holding out her hand)* Aren't you forgetting something, dear?

**NATHAN.** Jesus. *(He violently removes a second rifle magazine and a large knife from their holders and slaps them into Violet's hand)*

**VIOLET.** Thank you, dear. Aunt Molly – catch! *(She tosses the extra magazine to Molly, then opens the action deftly checks the chamber. She heaves the rifle up the stairs and then violently thrusts the knife down into the answer machine)* That will give us some peace. *(She kisses Nathan on the cheek)* Welcome home.

**NATHAN.** *(Urgently, straining to listen at the window)* Shhh! Quiet!

**MOLLY.** *(Concerned)* Can you hear my hair squeaking?

**VIOLET.** *(She settles herself in her easychair and begins to work at her knitting of coarse rope)* Come sit down, Nathan. Relax! Put your feet up!

**NATHAN.** *(On edge, checking windows)* It's incredible out there. Sharpshooters – Special Weapons Attack Squads on Surveillance. There's Security Checks for everything that moves – a Girl Scout wouldn't stand a chance. Mailboxes being removed – sewer manholes welded shut – there's even killsacks<sup>4</sup> *inside* the perimeter. There's gotta be ten thousand infantry out there – Assault Forces, armed to the teeth. Anything that moves out

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<sup>4</sup> Killsacks are mined areas; usually outside the perimeter

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there has gotta be pink mist<sup>5</sup> in somebody's cross-hairs. (*The two women ignore him*)

**VIOLET.** (*Admiring her knitting; to Molly*) I think Nathan's sweater is going to be quite handsome, don't you?

**MOLLY.** Lovely! Do you think it'll soften up once he gets sweating in it?

**VIOLET.** Nathan's tough – (*To Nathan*) Aren't you, dear?

**NATHAN.** (*He turns away from the windows*) Listen to me! Will you *listen* to me, for christ's sake? They've *changed* the boundaries again! Do you understand? This is an *E.A.P. Zone* now.

**MOLLY.** (*Spelling silently first*) An *eap!* How sweet!

**NATHAN.** (*Exasperated*) No – an E.A.P. Zone is *Expendable-Area-Populace!* First-strike priority! Prohibited Transit! Nobody gets in, nobody leaves! Armed Patrols packin' NuBuC weapons!

**MOLLY.** Oh, new bucks. Is that for catching deer, dear?

**NATHAN.** No. NuBuC is N.B.C. – Nuclear, Biological and Chemical weapons! Unlimited S-and-S – Search and Seizure! Execution on sight! (*The women are unfazed*) ...and you toss my weapon into your bedroom.

**VIOLET.** The only difference between men and boys is the size of their cocks and the cost of their toys. (*Molly giggles. Nathan reels and raises his hand to strike Violet – he stops the blow just before it connects*)

**NATHAN.** (*Retreating*) I'm a dead man. (*He tries to regain his composure*) Look, there isn't much time...

**MOLLY.** We've got all the time in the world, dear.

**NATHAN.** I want you two to leave here – now. Head for a non-target area. If anything *does* survive here, the whole sector will go L.D. -50<sup>6</sup> and ya won't have a hope in hell...

**VIOLET.** Nathaniel, we were all born into LD-50s – and once they figured how big a dose they needed to kill half of us, the rest were free to go. We came out all right, didn't we?

**MOLLY.** (*Reminiscing*) I remember like it was yesterday! There was even

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<sup>5</sup> Pink mist is military black humour for describing what a human becomes when it is blown away by an explosive or a high-powered round - phrase originated in WWI

<sup>6</sup> LD-50 is a test whereby progressively increasing doses of a chemical or substance is administered to a group of subjects until half the group dies – this determines the maximum dose tolerated

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a cute little guinea pig – they force-fed her a lethal dose of heavy water until she died convulsing and vomiting.

**NATHAN.** But nobody can *guarantee* you'll both get into the right fifty percent!

**VIOLET.** *Both* of us? What about Seanasy?

**NATHAN.** He's gotta come with me. Where is he?

**MOLLY.** Haven't seen him lately.

**VIOLET.** If you're so worried about getting caught just visiting, what sort of horrible punishment do you think they've got for *aiding and abetting* a couple of dangerous old fugitives like us? Use your head for once, boy. We might be *Expendable-Area-Populace*, but we won't be herded off to the badlands again – not like the pair of diseased vermin you think you're responsible for, whenever it suits you! I'm gonna live out my last days in this house – and no amount of nonsensical military manipulation is gonna change that! As for Seanasy, your *Happy Cappy Herod* has the entire male species under his command. He's not gonna miss one little nine-year-old. Wear your stripes on your sleeve for once, boy – not your brain. (*Nathan slams his fist hard into the wall*) Nathan, calm down.

**MOLLY.** Knuckle-splints won't help anybody!

**VIOLET.** Least of all you. Come on now. Come sit next to me, there's a boy. (*Exchanging a look with Molly*) Now, supposing, just supposing, we *were* to leave. We couldn't just wander off into the wilderness without protection, now could we? Why don't you tell us all about your favourite subject – what kind of *guns* should we take? Hmmm?

**MOLLY.** It'll take your mind off things, dear. Always does!

**VIOLET.** What would you suggest for your silly old Aunts?

**NATHAN.** (*He finally gives in and quietly moves to sit on the couch, rubbing his wounded fist*) Well... Uh, there's two classifications to consider, okay? One's dee-fensive and the other's off'ensive...

**MOLLY.** (*She listens intently to Nathan*) Oh, we don't want to be offensive to anyone; let's take the friendly kind!

**NATHAN.** Uh, that's right! You want Dee'fensive weapons! (*the more he speaks, the more excited and animated he gets*) You want at least two handguns apiece – but stay away from home-made jobs; they'd probably



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just blow yer hand off. A semi-automatic is best – smooth action, minimum 15-round clip – and you’ll need t’ carry at least two extra clips – I’d suggest a nice Glock <sup>7</sup> with jacketed soft-points <sup>8</sup> – that would do ya just fine. You can pick those up easy over at the market.

**MOLLY.** *Glock!* Is that short for *glockenspiel*?

**NATHAN.** *(Deflating)* Uh, no...

**VIOLET.** Now, don’t you feel better? Look at how much more relaxed you’re becoming, telling us what you know best, putting our minds at ease!

**MOLLY.** *(She suddenly remembers her dead bird and holds it up proudly)* Oh, look what I found in the backyard today! Isn’t he pretty? Must’ve been dead a good week by the look of him.

**VIOLET.** *(Through clenched teeth, trying to re-phrase it to keep Nathan from understanding.)* You mean, when you were exercising your “*Priority-Travel Fallout-Sojourn in the Approved-Countryside,*” right, dear?

**MOLLY.** *(Catching on)* Oh, um, yes, that’s what it was. *(She begins to prepare the carcass for taxidermy)*

**VIOLET.** That’s right, Molly. Go on, Nathan. Please continue.

**MOLLY.** *(She grabs a book, checks to make sure she has the correct volume and reads)* “Advanced Taxidermy.” *(she reads from the instructions as she works)* “Birds. Place tissue in throat...”

**NATHAN.** *(Jumps back in excitedly)* You’ll need some *Anti-Perse* mines <sup>9</sup> – say, twenty or so – each one’ll give you one thousand 4-millimetre steel cubes or six hundred 6-millimetre ball-bearings exploding at groin-level. And that’s good,

cause it’ll give a severe wound, but it *won’t kill* – an’ a wounded man will delay your enemy much more effectively than a *killed* man...

**MOLLY.** “Tuck head under wing. Place bird in newspaper cone for protection...”

**VIOLET.** Molly, not another magpie – please! You’ve already got more

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<sup>7</sup> Glock is a polymer-framed, short recoil-operated, locked-breech semi-automatic pistol

<sup>8</sup> Jacketed soft-points are soft or hollow-tipped bullets designed to expand upon impact

<sup>9</sup> Anti-Perse mines is military slang for *anti-personnel* – pronounced *anti-PURSE*

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than you know what to do with.

**NATHAN.** *(He practically dances with excitement)* You could get a couple of *Colt D.E.A.s*<sup>10</sup> for reserve – 9-millimetre, over eleven-hundred rounds-per-minute. That’ll stand up pretty good against an A.K.-47 or an Uzi.<sup>11</sup>

**MOLLY.** *(She’s made an extra newspaper cone and wears it on her head)* “Place bird and cone in plastic bag and freeze.”

**VIOLET.** The freezer’s full t’ bursting, Molly! Be reasonable now.

**NATHAN.** *(Jumping in)* But what you have to have for your main protection is a couple of *C-MAGs*<sup>12</sup> – one each – fully automatic. It’s small, an’ it’ll only give ya a hundred continuous rounds, and the bullets *are* smaller, full-metal jacket.<sup>13</sup> But, see, the jacket’s a lot *thinner* so the round will fragment easy on impact and give you a more *severe* wound! See, when th’ bullet enters the flesh, it goes in, an’ it *rotates*, and *then* it *fragments*, because of the bend-stress on the bullet during rotation! And that’s what you want! You *want* your bullet to penetrate your enemy, but *not go straight through*, cause it could hit a *friendly*. *(He’s almost orgasmic)* And then there’s the *double-A-1 Fleshette* – that will penetrate right through the *spaces* in the mesh of body-armour! And then, when it bends on impact, it *explodes* thousands of tiny metal darts! One *beautiful ballistically induced aperture in the subcutaneous environment!* *(There is a violent thunderclap and immediate heavy rain)*

**MOLLY.** Lordy, there it goes raining pitchforks again. *(The sound jolts her to stop working on the bird and she goes back to finish fixing the salad)*

**NATHAN.** *(His reverie is broken and he rushes to the window)* No! It can’t! Poorly buffered precipitation – the *p.h. over-content*<sup>14</sup> will double my scent!

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<sup>10</sup> small hand-held fully-automatic firearm – pronounced *Colt dee-ee-ay*

<sup>11</sup> Uzi is a fully-automatic assault rifle – pronounced *oo-zee*

<sup>12</sup> C-Mags are fully-automatic rifles – pronounced *see-mags*

<sup>13</sup> Full-metal jacket is the description for a soft-core bullet in a hard metal covering, limited in ability to expand on impact

<sup>14</sup> *PH over-content* is heightened PH levels of atomic rain – pronounced *pee-aych OVER-CONtent*

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**VIOLET.** (*Distant*) I feel a touch of tomorrow in my bones.

**NATHAN.** How can it rain now?

**VIOLET.** *Anything* can happen now because everything *has* happened.

**NATHAN.** We've got to get out of here!

**MOLLY.** (*She brings the salad to the living room*) Lunch! (*Calling out*) Seanasy!

**VIOLET.** Oh, Molly! You've outdone yourself! C'mon Nathan, dig-in before we lose any more colour!

**NATHAN.** I'm not hungry.

**VIOLET.** Nonsense! I thought all good soldiers travel on their tummies. (*Nathan begins looking for Seanasy and checking out the windows*)

**MOLLY.** (*Calls out again*) Seanasy!

**NATHAN.** Look, you can't hide him forever!

**MOLLY.** Wait'll you see, Nathan! There's *lettuce!* And... (*She's not sure what the rest is, due to the rapid deterioration*) ...well, it's all fresh-picked. C'mon!

**NATHAN.** *We* stick to our M.R.E.s.

**VIOLET.** Well, this meal's ready-to-eat, too – try it. Swallow my pride, for once. (*The women begin eating urgently, with their hands*)

**NATHAN.** (*Relenting – he is hungry*) All right. One bite, that's all I want.

**VIOLET.** What's happened to your appetite since your last visit?

**NATHAN.** I don't eat much if it doesn't walk or fly.

**MOLLY.** (*Between bites*) May the lord himself, who is our source of peace, give you peace at all times and in every way. The lord be with you all – walking *or* flying.

**VIOLET.** Amen.

**MOLLY.** Where *is* Seanasy? I'm getting worried. It's not like him to disappear for so long.

**VIOLET.** We'll have to look for him if he doesn't show up soon.

**NATHAN.** (*Angrily*) All right, that's it! When I find him, he's comin' with me, got it? And you two *will* leave here! No more crap! I am *Officer in Immediate Command!* You two – you're not thinking straight any more. You're turning senile, can't you see that? (*Violet abandons her food and returns to her easychair. Unnoticed by the others, she slowly lights a*

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*cigarette and begins to silently, systematically, burn her arms with it.  
Despite what she does, she feels nothing)*

**MOLLY.** *(Hunting for every last bit of food in the bowl)* Senile?  
Fiddlesticks! We're just *philosophically disillusioned*.

**NATHAN.** *(To Molly)* I want you to leave. Both of you. You can't stay in an *E.A.P!* You're civilian targets now – that means incoming *in-continent ordinance!*

**MOLLY.** Oh, don't fool around with *that* word, dear. *(Distant)* I wish there was more to life than just increasing its speed.

**NATHAN.** Aunti Vi, can't you see... *(He sees her burning herself)* What the hell are you doing?

**MOLLY.** Leave her be, Nathan.

**NATHAN.** Stop it!

**MOLLY.** She's relieving the chaos of her mind, dear.

**NATHAN.** Give me that! For christ's sake! What if Seanasy walks in and sees this? *(He grabs the cigarette from Violet – she sits still, unresponsive, staring straight ahead)*

**MOLLY.** Seanasy does it, too, dear. *(She calmly steers him away)*

**NATHAN.** What?

**MOLLY.** They both do it. It's their little way of coping – it helps them to *feel* something.

**NATHAN.** No! What the hell kind of thing is that to teach a nine-year-old?

**MOLLY.** Oh, he wasn't too sure at first – but your Auntie Vi's a patient soul. I don't have the stomach for it myself.

**NATHAN.** What?

**MOLLY.** *(Hushed)* I found if I keep my mouth shut, I get credit for knowing what I don't say!

**VIOLET.** *(She emits an ungodly, vicious wail, directed at Nathan, and returns from her unresponsiveness)* *Aaaaggggghhhhh!*

**MOLLY.** *(She goes over to comfort Violet)* Hush, Vi – Nathan's upset.

**NATHAN.** He's just a boy, for christ's sake!

**VIOLET.** *(Cold)* And in all likelihood, he'll probably *stay* a boy.

**MOLLY.** He probably won't make it to his tenth birthday. *(She picks up*

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*the sweater and examines it)*

**NATHAN.** What're you talking about? If you give him up now, they'll convict him for Evasion – an' that's two years right there. Then he'll go straight into Training – that's at least another year. The kid'll be older than me before he sees any action!

**VIOLET.** (*Defiant*) I saw three young lads severely wound themselves shooting their own shadows.

**MOLLY.** What sort of *action* have you seen, Nathan, dear?

**NATHAN.** What?

**VIOLET.** (*Picking up on Molly's lead – seductively*) Do you know the smell of a woman? Have you breathed in that special *tang*? (*She grabs the sweater*)

**NATHAN.** I... I... (*He tries to distract himself with the acronym bl-EV-EE,<sup>15</sup> which he then twists into and out of "believe"*) I Bl-EV-ee – Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapour Explosion - Bl-EV-ee, Bl'eeve, B'leev, B'leev, Believe...

**VIOLET.** Ever tasted the sweat of another? (*She crosses threateningly, seductively to Nathan, suddenly and roughly turns him around and holds the sweater up to his shoulders to measure it. He is excited but very confused and uncomfortable with the close contact*)

**NATHAN.** (*Gasping for air*) ...shorten the deployment time of the breathing apparatus and greatly improve the ventilation factor...

**MOLLY.** Oh, dear, oh dear.

**NATHAN.** (*Loudly*) Law is the five bullets in the clip! Justice is the one bullet in the chamber! That's the way it is! That's life!

**VIOLET.** But *life* is a promise none of us can keep.

**MOLLY.** (*Singing, badly, vaguely to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic*) Mine eyes have seen the gory, whorey coming of the guard, they were trampling down my vintage grapes for all the wine they hoard...

**NATHAN.** (*Yells*) He's *not your child*, for christ's sake!

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<sup>15</sup> BLEVE (*bl-EV-EE*) is the acronym for Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion, an incredibly intense chemical fire which builds to an incredibly intense and destructive explosion

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**VIOLET.** (*She slaps Nathan hard across the face*) Shut your mouth! I wish I could put you out of my misery, I really do. Sometimes there's rust on the razor that threatens the throat.

**MOLLY.** (*She goes to the window*) It's raining pitchforks.

**VIOLET.** Where *is* Seanasy?

**NATHAN.** So long as you've got *him*, you've got the future, don't you? He's young, he's growing – everything's new to him. But he won't keep you from growing into obscurity!

**MOLLY.** (*Remembering from a greeting card*) We don't *grow* old – we *get* old by *not growing!*

**VIOLET.** (*To Nathan, very angry*) Don't bleed on *my* floor, Einstein! Do you know what I did yesterday? I spent the whole day talking to Seanasy about you and your beloved military. And do you know how it came about? He wanted to tell me what he was gonna be when he grew up – *if* he grew up. Do you know how to tell a nine-year-old about the future he probably won't have? Do you?

**NATHAN.** (*Trying to remember the official guidelines*) You... you begin by talking about how it makes *you* feel – and how difficult it is to talk to him about it...

**VIOLET.** (*Mocking, reciting from the same remembered speech*) “You acknowledge that you're scared, too.”

**NATHAN.** ...you *listen...*

**VIOLET.** (*Imitating Seanasy*) “Aunti Vi, if I live, do I dare have my *own* children?”

**NATHAN.** (*Loudly*) *Listen* – you *listen...*

**VIOLET.** (*Imitating Seanasy*) “How come those old men have lived their lives and now they run the world?”

**NATHAN.** (*Louder*) You don't interrupt!

**VIOLET.** (*Imitating Seanasy*) “The whole world's expendable and I can't do anything about it.”

**NATHAN.** (*Yelling*) *Listen* to children *without interrupting!* Reassure your children that they're part of a *caring system*. Tell your children that they can come to talk to you *anytime*. Tell your children that everyone is

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working to figure out how to end the problem of global destruction.

**VIOLET.** That's right – I lied to his face. Not exactly a new lease on life, was it? Nobody can give him that.

**MOLLY.** All you can do is show him the fine-print on the bottom of the contract!

**VIOLET.** Let him stay, Nathan. Please. He's not *against* National Defence – but please, let's give him something to defend! Look, talk to him yourself – you'll see what I mean... *(Calls out)* Seanasy! *(Cross)* Seanasy!

**MOLLY.** *(Cross)* Seanasy!

**VIOLET.** Where is he? Molly!... *(She motions Molly toward the stairs as she rushes down to the basement)*

**MOLLY.** Right – I'll check the upstairs... *(She hurries upstairs)*

**NATHAN.** *(He shivers uncontrollably and begins to pace the limits of the room. As his steps quicken, his thoughts spill from his mouth and he tears at his clothes throughout)* Better to die than be a coward. Better to *die*.

First Enemy of Survival. Pain! If you give in to it, it'll weaken your *drive to survive!* Don't try to relieve the pain of others. Always look out for yourself, *first* and always *first!* Alpha, Beta, Gamma! Second Enemy of Survival. Cold! Cold is insidious. It numbs the mind and the body and the will. Third Enemy. Thirst! It will dull your mind. Serious dehydration can occur with exposure to *radiation enhancement devices*, even when there's *plenty* of water! Be *ruthless!* Save *thyself!* *Shared* water is *less* water!

Fourth Enemy of Survival. Hunger! Lessens ability for rational thinking! Increases susceptibility to the weaknesses caused by *cold, pain, and fear!* It is better to die – and eye – and slip the surly bondage – and *sit on your face!* *(He is losing control. He is ravenous for sensation, fighting the feel of his own flesh. He is stripped down*

*to his tee/undershirt and undershorts)* Fatigue! Makes you careless – reduces mental ability. Fatigue represents *an escape* – hopelessness.

Boredom and Loneliness! Two of the toughest Enemies of Survival! And darkness will elevate your level of fear by a factor of six. Survival Readiness-Phase – Warning-Phase – Threat-Phase – Pre-Attack Phase – *Attack-period!* Response-Phase – Rescue-Phase – Recovery-Phase –

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Reconstruction-Phase... doesn't *faze* me! (*Dreamily*) Airborne Vectors, eroding the *will of the population*... My *Radiation Enhancement Device* is an efficient nuclear weapon that eliminates your enemy with minimum damage to *friendly* territory! It's a *neutron cookie-cutter*! It'll kill people inside a threequarter-mile radius *without harming soldiers nearby*! It works by attacking the central nervous system. The body convulses, limbs shake, the nervous system fails, so that all of the automatic body functions, *even breathing*, are affected. Death comes within forty-eight hours from respiratory failure, or swelling of tissues in the brain! (*Dreamily*) Irradiated Fuel Rods leaking weapons-grade plutonium.

Wanted. Enlisted personnel to work on nuclear fissionable isotope molecular reactive counters and phase cyclotronic uranium and plutonium photo synthesizers. No experience necessary! (*He mimics and vocalizes the following warning signals*) *Brrrrrrriinnnnnggg!* Ringing bell and flashing red light – high airborne radioactivity! Evacuate area!

*Wwwwweeehhhaaaooowwwwweeehhhaaaooo!* Siren – wavering tone for three to six minutes. Take Cover! Stay Inside!

*wwwwhhhhhhhheeeeeeeeeeee!* Siren – steady blast for three to six minutes. Evacuation! Go To Staging Area! *Gong-gong-gong-gong-gong-gong-gong-gong!* Atomic Fire. Evacuate! *Aahh-ooo-gah! Aahh-ooo-gah!* Criticality! *Run!* (*Panicking*) Run and tell – *B'MEWS*,<sup>16</sup> your Ballistic Missile Early Warning Systems – and *CO-LOG*,<sup>17</sup> your Co-operative Logistics for a mandated emergency!

Push an *M.F.U.*, your Mobile Feeding Unit for mixed fission products and *always* trust in your Radiation Protection Survey and Computation, *RAP-SAC*,<sup>18</sup> for a chemical cloud dispersion in your Single Kill Probability and your World Wide Military Command and Control System – and go tell it on the mountain, Regional Operation Control Centre, go tell them about Mutual Assured Destruction... (*He collapses to his knees, his torso and thighs upright. Quietly, pointing his finger to his temple*) He had a pistol with him and placed it to his forehead, apparently thinking he would be

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<sup>16</sup> B'MEWS pronounced *bee-MUSE*

<sup>17</sup> CO-LOG pronounced *COE-log*

<sup>18</sup> RAPSAC pronounced *RAP-sack*



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never be found.

**VIOLET.** *(She enters from the basement, covered in dirt. She stops short, staring at Nathan)* Not a word to Seanasy, do you understand me? Nathan!

**NATHAN.** All right.

**VIOLET.** Not a word! If you *dare* take that boy from this house, I will *kill* you, do you understand? Do you understand!?

**NATHAN.** ...no...

**VIOLET.** *(She violently pulls Nathan's arm away from his head)* Nathan!

**NATHAN.** ...yes...

**MOLLY.** *(She enters from upstairs, distracted – she's temporarily forgotten about the urgency to find Seanasy)* You know, I'm sure that was Glynis Walden's granddaughter I saw out back. Don't know what she's up to – she's got the makings of a pretty good fire from the looks of it. Huh. I remember it used to be people cooked *inside* and shit *outside* – nowadays, they're *cookin' outside* an' *shittin' inside!* *(She notices Nathan's discarded clothes)* Nathan, dear, hang up

your clothes, there's a good boy. *(To Violet)* So, he was in the basement? *(Nathan mechanically collects his clothes)*

**VIOLET.** What?

**MOLLY.** Seanasy – he's downstairs, is he?

**VIOLET.** *(Slowly returning her attention to Seanasy)* No... no – he wasn't there. Didn't you find him?

**MOLLY.** *(Frightened)* No!

**VIOLET.** You checked everywhere? The attic, did you check the attic?

**MOLLY.** *(Shakes her head 'yes')* What about the crawl-space? *(Violet shakes her head 'no')* God save us.

**VIOLET.** *(Furious)* Nathan! So help me, if you've so much as *touched* that child...

**NATHAN.** *(He takes his clothes to the closet and opens it, then steps back)* Seanasy.

**MOLLY.** *(She moves to look past Nathan)* Oh my god – what is it?

**NATHAN.** It's Seanasy.

**VIOLET.** *(She looks into the closet and then quickly steps away)* Cut him down.

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**MOLLY.** *(Backing away)* Dear god.

**NATHAN.** He's hanged himself. *(Blackout.)*

**END OF SCENE I**

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