

# **FIRE MELT STONE**

**by**

**Kemuel DeMoville**

# FIRE MELT STONE

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### **DEDICATION:**

This play is dedicated to my wife, Ashley, and to our three sons: Tennyson, Barrett, and Finlay. I began writing **Fire Melt Stone** just as the world stood on the brink of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the writing process, news reports grew more dire, and everything around us began to shift. In the midst of it all, Ashley was hospitalized with placenta previa while pregnant with Finlay. She remained in the hospital for 90 days, and as safety protocols intensified, our two older boys and I were no longer allowed to visit. Despite the uncertainty, the play moved into rehearsals, and Ashley — unwavering — continued to serve as producer from her hospital bed. I was grateful to be present for Finlay's birth, and soon after, the five of us entered lockdown together. This play is also dedicated to the cast and crew of the premiere production in Spokane. They brought this story to life with such heart, even though the pandemic allowed only a single public weekend of performances before shutting everything down. The pandemic became its own kind of cultural fire, echoing the historic devastation at the heart of the play. And yet, the message endured — both for the company and for my family: *“The things holding us together are stronger than the things tearing us apart.”* I believed that then. I believe it now.

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**“Fire Melt Stone”** was commissioned by The Spartan Theatre and Spokane Arts. The production premiered at The Spartan Theatre at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Washington under the direction of Chris Hansen, with Ashley DeMoville producing. Set Design was by Chris Hansen, Lighting Design was by John Bongard, and Costume Design was by Kimberly Heide. Victoria Worley served as Stage Manager for the production. The cast was as follows:

**Margaret “Matty” Heartshorn:** Megan Barlow-Jones

**Doretha “Dot” Heartshorn:** Nalini Jeffords

**George:** Dani Healy

**Mom:** Sarah Plumb

**Dad:** Matthew Gerard

**Bess:** Kat Snyder

**Frank (Franny):** Nikki Green

**Wendell (Winnifred):** Bree Castillo

**Klein:** Conner Gracio

**Whispers:** Bex Nelson, Breanna Briggs, Nalini Jeffords, Dani Healy, Sarah Plumb, Kemuel DeMoville, Kat Snyder, Nikki Green, Bree Castillo, Conner Gracio, Chris Hansen, Emily Nelson, John Bongard, and the indominable and lovely Ashley DeMoville.

**Monster:** Conner Gracio, Chris Hansen, and Kemuel DeMoville

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### **NOTE ON PRODUCTION:**

**Fire Melt Stone** was written with the generous support of a Spokane Arts Grant. When my family and I first moved to Spokane in 2017, one of the first things I did was dive into the history of the area. I remember coming across a small footnote—unfortunately, I’ve forgotten the book's title—that mentioned how large parts of downtown Spokane were destroyed in the Great Fire, and that firefighters at the time resorted to using dynamite to blow up buildings in an attempt to create a firebreak. The idea of a fire so intense it had to be fought with explosives fascinated me. In much of my work, I try to connect the spirit world to the physical world, tying the unseen to a specific place. I knew I wanted to write a play that reflected the community of Spokane in a way that honored that connection—without being so didactic that it might alienate younger audiences (or adults, for that matter). To me, the things that connect us to a shared history are not just facts and dates, but the deeply human struggles we continue to see repeated across time. While developing this play, those themes became even more personal. In 2023, my family and I were living in Medical Lake when the Gray Fire broke out. We had to evacuate with almost no notice, leaving behind much of our home and belongings. We spent weeks in a hotel waiting to learn if our house had survived. We were lucky—the fire came within a mile of our home and burned through half the city. But the experience deepened my understanding of how fast life can change, and how fragile our sense of safety really is. Some characters in the play are inspired by real people. Doretha Heartshorn is based on my best friend’s grandmother, who let me live in a small room off her garage when I was in my 20s. She was kind, compassionate, funny, and deeply generous. Klein draws inspiration from Jacob J. Klein, who provided one of the earliest eyewitness accounts of the Great Fire. And George is based on my

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friend and colleague George Morse, the Spartan Theatre’s Master Carpenter, whose positivity and support have meant so much to me over the years.

“**Fire Melt Stone**” was awarded an **Honorable Mention** in the 23rd Annual Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Contest sponsored by the New England Theatre Conference.

“**Fire Melt Stone**” was developed (in part) with funding support from the Spokane Arts Grant Awards (SAGA).

### **RESOURCES FOR DRAMATURGY:**

The following sources informed elements of **Fire Melt Stone** and may be useful for productions seeking historical context or visual inspiration. Page numbers indicate specific areas of interest.

- Fahey, John, and Robert Dellwo. *The Spokane River: Its Miles and Its History*. Spokane Centennial Trail Committee, 1988.  
See pages 14–15, 29–30 for historical accounts of the river and early settlement.
- Morrissey, Katherine G. *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire*. Cornell University Press, 1997.  
Pages 43–46 offer insight into how the region has been imagined, mapped, and claimed.
- Bamonte, Tony, and Suzanne Bamonte. *Spokane, Our Early History: Under All Is the Land*. Tornado Creek Publications, 2011.  
For photographs and stories of early Spokane life, see pages 90–96.
- Kershner, Jim. “Chief Spokane Garry (ca. 1811–1892).” *HistoryLink.org*, Essay 8713, updated 27 Aug. 2013.  
An overview of Spokane Garry’s life and influence. Available at [www.historylink.org](http://www.historylink.org).

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- Kershner, Jim. “Spokane’s Great Fire of 1889: How a Catastrophe Sparked a Golden Age.” *The Spokesman-Review*, 3 Aug. 2014.  
A compelling narrative of the fire’s causes and aftermath.
- Bauer, Jennifer K. “The Inland NW Frontier Battle Paintings of Nona Hengen.” *Inland 360*, 28 Feb. 2018.  
Features the artwork of Nona Hengen, whose historical paintings offer vivid visual references.
- “Horse Slaughter Camp.” Historic Spokane, City-County of Spokane Historic Preservation Office.  
Background on the site referenced in the play.  
See [www.historicspokane.org](http://www.historicspokane.org).
- “Then and Now: Spokane Steam Laundry.” *The Spokesman-Review*, 14 Jan. 2019.  
Brief history of one of Spokane’s longest-running businesses and its role in the city’s labor history.

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### **CHARACTERS:**

MARGARET “MATTY” HEARTSHORN: (F) 11-13 years old. Brave and fiercely independent, at times to the point of recklessness.

DORETHA “DOT” HEARTSHORN: (F) 6-8 years old. Matty’s younger sister.

GEORGE: (M/F) 10-12 years old. Matty & Dot’s friend. Brave but on the small side.

MOM: (F) Matty & Dot’s mother

DAD: (M) Matty & Dot’s father. A ghost or a memory.

BESS: (M/F) 11-13 years old. She used to be Matty’s friend, but now it’s complicated.

FRANK: (M/F) 11-13 years old. Bess’ friend.

WENDELL: (M/F) 11-13 years old. Bess’ friend.

KLEIN: (M) An older prospector. On the edge of being dangerous.

WHISPERS: (M/F) Ghosts or voices from the past (multiple performers)

MONSTER: (M/F) Pre-recorded sounds.



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### **NOTE ON CASTING:**

The characters of FRANK, WENDELL, and GEORGE can be any gender. Feel free to adjust pronouns and names (ie: FRANCIS, WINNIFRED, and GEORGINA) as necessary for your production.

The WHISPERS can be either present as ghostly figures on stage, or as pre-recorded voices, or as dialogue spoken off stage or from the audience by performers (or as all three ways combined). I leave the decision on how best to portray the WHISPERS to the individual needs, resources, and vision of the respective productions.

Ideally the performer playing KLEIN should voice the MONSTER, but this is not required.

Unless specifically noted in the character descriptions, actors of all ethnicities, abilities, and gender expressions should be considered for any role. The default for casting should not assume whiteness, able-bodiedness, or heteronormativity. Our world showcases the rich diversity of the human experience, and the casting of this play should reflect that as well. While some characters are written to be perceived as male or female within the story, they do not need to be played by actors who match that gender identity. What matters most is the spirit of the character and the truth of the performance. Productions are encouraged to embrace inclusive, representative casting that honors the unique perspectives and talents of their performers.

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### **SETTING:**

The space is filled with clustered strips of lightly scorched wood hanging loosely all around the stage. Piles of stones – some built into stacked cairns, some just loose piles – interrupt the space. The overall feel of the space should be a cross between the vertical lines of a forest and the wooden architecture of early Spokane. The various locations in the play should be achieved through lighting and projection effects, along with one or two minor set decorations that can be brought on and off as needed. Bulky wagons and platforms should be avoided.

Transitions should be smooth, fast, and meaningful.

### **TIME & PLACE:**

The city of Spokane (back when it was known as Spokane Valley) in early August of 1889.

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ACT ONE  
SCENE ONE

*Darkness. The sound of wind, slow at first, then building in intensity. The lights slowly begin to fade up. We hear trees groaning and clacking, leaves shuddering, in the rough winds. Then, after a moment of intensity: silence. Silence. Silence. Then an explosion of noise and movement as the CHILDREN enter into the woodland. They are playing an invented game – a bit like tag or keep-away.*

**GEORGE.** Ahhh! Quick! Hide!

**BESS.** Who's it? Who's the Wood Witch?

**WENDELL.** Matty.

**DOT.** Oh no. She always finds me.

**FRANK.** 'Cause you're no good at hiding.

**GEORGE.** Come on! She's coming.

*The CHILDREN run to different hiding spots. DOT tries to hide with BESS.*

**BESS.** Get out of here. Find your own spot.

*DOT runs around confused for a moment, then hides - but not well.*

*MATTY enters. She has tied an apron or something around her head and there are a few sticks wound into the garment like horns or antlers. She*

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*has a gnarled tree branch in one hand and is acting like a scary wood witch.*

**MATTY.** Where are you little muffins? I can see your footsteps in the muddy earth. I can still smell your breakfast on your breath. Are you... Here! *(She looks behind something, but no one is there.)* No, not there. But I can hear the thumping of your heart. It's calling me. Closer... closer... Here! *(She discovers DOT who screams.)* Now I've got you. I'll gobble you up!

**DOT.** No! No, no! Stop! Stop!

**MATTY.** It's just me, Dot. I'm not really gonna eat you.

**DOT.** You just scare me sometimes. You go too far.

**BESS.** Alright, everyone. Come on out. Dot's the wood witch now. Again.

**WENDELL.** Not again. It's no fun when Dot plays. She's too young.

**MATTY.** That's not true.

**FRANK.** I'm going home. This game is stupid anyway.

**GEORGE.** No it's not. It's still fun.

**FRANK.** Nah. Not as fun as it used to be.

**DOT.** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to mess up your game.

**MATTY.** You didn't. They're just being cruel.

**BESS.** Don't you call me cruel. We've been sweet to you two for a long while now.

**MATTY.** We don't need your pity, Bess.

**DOT.** It's alright, Matty.

**MATTY.** It's not. She's being mean and she knows it.

**WENDELL.** I'm going home. It's getting cold.

**BESS.** What are you gonna do, Matty Heartshorn? You gonna hit me? Momma says you're like a feral cat now.

**GEORGE.** There's not going to be any fighting.

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**BESS.** I don't know about that. She looks like she wants to spit in my eye.

**MATTY.** I wouldn't waste the water.

**BESS.** You think you're so clever, Matty. But cleverness don't scrub cookpots or fold bed linens.

**DOT.** What do you mean?

**BESS.** I mean your sister won't be playing much longer. My momma said you'd be working as a maid or something by the end of the month.

**DOT.** That's not true.

**MATTY.** Your momma sure says an awful lot.

**BESS.** Well, she aint' been wrong yet. She said when your daddy died he left you nothing but mouths to feed.

**MATTY.** Don't talk about our father.

**BESS.** *(A tense moment.)* Fine. Some of us gotta get home anyway. It's getting dark. *(Bess, Frank and Wendell all exit.)*

**GEORGE.** You alright?

**MATTY.** Come on, Dot. We gotta get home too.

**GEORGE.** I mean, things aren't that bad, are they?

**DOT.** See you tomorrow, George.

**GEORGE.** Yeah. Yeah. Sure.

## SCENE TWO

*Image(s) of old Spokane (known at that time as Spokane Valley) buildings and city life. One of the clusters of wooden strips parts to show an empty bentwood chair. We hold on the empty chair for a moment before another section of wooden slats parts to reveal MOM vigorously doing washing. She has been working hard and is visibly tired. After a moment MATTY enters.*

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**MATTY.** Dot's finally asleep.

**MOM.** Good. She needs it. All this has been hard on her.

**MATTY.** Yeah.

**MOM.** Doretha's got a good heart, but she's not as strong as you.

**MATTY.** I'm not strong.

**MOM.** You're stronger than you know.

**MATTY.** Doesn't feel like it.

**MOM.** Come help me with this. My shoulders can't take much more.

**MOM.** Well then come over here and learn something.

**MATTY.** But I just helped with Dot!

**MOM.** And now you can help with this too. It's mostly your clothes anyhow.

**MATTY.** It's not fair.

**MOM.** Don't talk to me about fair. Come here, Margaret. Come here and look at this.

**MATTY.** Looks like a bouquet of creambush and fireweed.

**MOM.** You are your father's daughter. Look here. This is your day dress, Matty. I've been scrubbing it for fifteen minutes trying to get out all these stains.

**MATTY.** I'm sorry. We were playing.

**MOM.** I work all day at the Steam Laundry and then spend my nights huddled over this wash bucket. You finish this up. You made the stain, now you clean it up. (*MATTY starts washing.*) Dot says you and Bess got into a fight today.

**MATTY.** It wasn't a fight. We just had some words.

**MOM.** What were the words.

**MATTY.** Don't remember.

**MOM.** You and Bess have always been good friends. I'm sure you'll work it out.

**MATTY.** I don't know. I don't think so. She's changed.

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**MOM.** Change is a part of life. Sometimes for the better. Sometimes for the worse.

**MATTY.** (*Trying not to cry.*) I wish it wasn't. I wish things were...

**MOM.** I know. But they're not. Your great grandfather used to say, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

**MATTY.** That's stupid.

**MOM.** Might be. But wishing for a horse never made one gallop to our door.

**MATTY.** We wouldn't have anywhere to keep it anyhow. This place is too small.

**MOM.** (*Laughs.*) We'd keep it with you and Dot. Your room already smells like a barn some days.

**MATTY.** That's mostly Dot.

**MOM.** (*After a moment or two*) We need to talk about something that you're not going to like.

**MATTY.** Don't.

**MOM.** I can't keep... I can't keep this up on my own. You're getting older now.

**MATTY.** Don't momma.

**MOM.** I spoke with Mr. Meeks at the laundry and he's willing to let you start out as -

**MATTY.** No! What about school?

**MOM.** I know it's not what you wanted but -

**MATTY.** Daddy didn't want this! He wanted us to go to school. He wanted -

**MOM.** I know what your father wanted. I know he didn't want this. But this is what we have.

**MATTY.** It's not fair! What about my friends? What about -

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**MOM.** Margaret! You're old enough to know that I wouldn't be doing this without good reason. It's not fair. None of this is fair. But we gotta make due with what we've been given.

**MATTY.** Why are you doing this to me?

**MOM.** Come here. *(They hug.)* I know it seems like things are broken now. But we've got each other. You, me and Dot. And we'll hold each other up and make something new for all of us.

**MATTY.** Don't do this. Please don't do this.

**MOM.** Go get some rest. Mr. Meeks said you could start on Monday. I'll finish up the washing.

**MATTY.** I wish it was you. I wish it was you that was gone and not him.

**MOM.** ... .. well, I'm what you've got. Now go to bed, I love you.

**MATTY.** ... I love you too. *(Matty exits. Mom continues washing. A gust of wind blows strongly outside. Mom ignores it and stays hunched over the laundry with an intense focus. The lights slowly fade out on Mom as she straightens and chokes back a wave of emotion. As the lights on her fade to black, the light on the empty chair holds for a bit longer before it winks out at another burst of wind. Then: Blackout.)*

## **SCENE THREE**

*Darkness. Then, slowly, trees begin to grow up out of the stage. We're in a clearing in the woods. Matty sits near one of the piles of stones. She takes a stone, holds it to her face and whispers something into it. Once she finishes she puts the stone down and picks up another. She repeats this a few times.*

**DOT.** *(offstage)* Matty?! Matty!?! *(Dot and George enter.)* Matty! We've been looking for you. George has an idea.



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**GEORGE.** What are you doing?

**MATTY.** Nothing.

**DOT.** It's something our father taught us.

**MATTY.** Dot!

**DOT.** It's not a secret, Matty. And George is our friend. He wants to help you.

**MATTY.** Nothing can help.

**DOT.** Then why bother whispering wishes to that rock?

**MATTY.** You're right. (She tosses the rock onto the pile.)

**DOT.** Matty... that's not what I meant...

**MATTY.** I know.

**GEORGE.** Look Matty, Dot told me about your situation. And I may have something that... or at least an idea about something that -

**DOT.** George has a treasure map!

**MATTY.** You do?

**GEORGE.** Well, not a map. I have an idea. But now that I'm saying it out loud it feels kind of dumb.

**MATTY.** Just say it.

**GEORGE.** My grandfather was one of General Wright's men and fought at hangman creek and horse slaughter and talked to a lot of natives.

**MATTY.** So?

**GEORGE.** Well, he kept this journal. And he wrote about something that one of the Spokane told him. About the river.

**DOT.** I thought you said you had a map.

**GEORGE.** No. Not a map, but it could still lead to something.

**MATTY.** Let him finish, Dot.

**GEORGE.** Well, one of the Spokane told him a legend about the river.

*(Reading.)* "See there was this huge critter that lived down by the Columbia. A monster. Huge claws, and breath that could kill."

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**MATTY.** (*Taking the journal and reading.*) “And when the Spokane tried to scare it off, it ran all the way to Lake Coeur D’Alene, tearing through the earth and making the Spokane River in its tail.”

**DOT.** I don’t hear anything about treasure.

**GEORGE.** No, but when you think about it the monster sounds like something out of a fairytale.

**MATTY.** Like a dragon.

**GEORGE.** Yeah. I mean exactly. Dragons live in England. But maybe like a cousin or something.

**DOT.** That’s a load of snake oil. Momma says there’s no such thing as monsters.

**MATTY.** What momma knows could fill a teacup.

**DOT.** You don’t mean that Matty.

**GEORGE.** Just think about all the mining they do over in Coeur D’Alene. All the silver and stuff they’re pulling out of the earth. If I were a dragon that’s where I’d go. All the stories talk about how dragons love treasure. He even says it’s breath was deadly.

**MATTY.** Like fire breathing.

**DOT.** No. You can’t just do that. You’re making things up. It’s not right.

**MATTY.** I’m not making things up. I’m finding clues.

**DOT.** You’re making up clues that aren’t there.

**MATTY.** What do you know about it, Dot? Is momma making you leave school to work at the laundry? Is she?

**DOT.** No.

**MATTY.** What else have I got? What else can I do?

**DOT.** I don’t know.

**MATTY.** You’re the one who had this idea in the first place. You and George.

**DOT.** I know. It just, now that we’re talking about it, it seems so...

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**MATTY.** Stupid? Childish?

**DOT.** Impossible. (*A moment or two passes, then Bess, Frank, and Wendell enter.*)

**BESS.** I thought I heard some chickens squawking down by the river. Looks like I was pretty close to the mark.

**MATTY.** What are you doing here, Bess?

**BESS.** Nothing. We was just on our way up to Indian Canyon to throw some rocks at the old fella up there.

**DOT.** That's mean.

**BESS.** Sounds like there wasn't a lot of nice happening down here either. We could hear you squabbling through the trees.

**WENDELL.** You should be glad we're not a pack of wolves or something.

**GEORGE.** I think wolves might be kinder.

**FRANK.** Wolves would never let a mutt like you be part of the pack.

**DOT.** Just go on your way. We're not playing with you lot.

**MATTY.** We're not playing at all, Dot.

**BESS.** Why? You got some plan hatched to make you a millionaire or something?

**MATTY.** Just wait and see.

**BESS.** When did you become so selfish, Matty Heartshorn?

**MATTY.** I'm not selfish.

**BESS.** Momma said you probably won't last a week at the laundry, and you and your family will be living in a hut before winter. Seems pretty selfish to me.

**MATTY.** I'm not selfish. Take it back.

**BESS.** I won't.

**DOT.** Just leave us be, Bess.

**BESS.** Why are you defending her Dot? She'd rather see you living hungry on the street than lift a finger to help her family.

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**GEORGE.** You know that's not true.

**BESS.** I know it is. Otherwise she wouldn't be looking for a way to get out of it.

**MATTY.** You don't know what you're talking about.

**BESS.** What happened to you, Matty? You used to be kind, now you just think you're better than the rest of us.

**MATTY.** No. I just think I'm better than you. *(Bess and Matty start to fight.)*

**DOT.** *(Crying.)* No! No! Stop it! Please!

**GEORGE.** This isn't funny! Someone is going to get hurt.

**WENDELL.** Come on Bess. Come on!

**FRANK.** Take her down a peg, Bess. *(The two are equally matched for a bit, but once Matty starts to gain the upper hand, Frank and Wendell step in and knock Matty over. An article of Matty's clothes gets torn during the fight.)*

**BESS.** You think just because your daddy died you're special? Death don't make nobody special. We've all got our own mountains to climb. That don't make you special. That don't make you better than anyone here.

**DOT.** Get outta here, Bess! Just leave us alone!

**BESS.** Fine. But don't pretend your sister's looking out for you. She only cares about herself.

**DOT.** You're wrong. She's kind and brave and... and loyal... and stronger than you'll ever be.

**BESS.** We'll see. C'mon. *(Bess, Frank, and Wendell exit. Matty is silent for a moment.)*

**GEORGE.** You alright, Matty?

**MATTY.** I ripped my dress.

**DOT.** Let's go home. We can have momma mend it.

**MATTY.** No. No! Momma can't mend this. I can't go home.

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**DOT.** Matty...

**MATTY.** I can't. Dot. Not yet.

**GEORGE.** You mean we're still gonna... look for treasure? ... Matty, I don't think...

**DOT.** There's no treasure. There's no dragon or monster or anything.

**MATTY.** There are all kinds of monsters in this world. You'll see that when you're older.

**GEORGE.** I don't think there's any treasure. It was fun to think there was, but...

**MATTY.** I'm not after treasure, George! I want something bigger. Something better.

**GEORGE.** Like what?

**MATTY.** Like the fire. I'm going. I'm following the river and I'm finding the monster. I can't go home.

**DOT.** Then we'll go with you.

**GEORGE.** We will?

**DOT.** We can make sure you'll get home again.

**MATTY.** ... Fine. Fine then. Let's go. *(They all exit. There is a distant wind again. The sound builds for a moment. Underneath the sound of the wind there is what could possibly be called a growl, or maybe a deep ragged breath, like something large is sleeping and doesn't want to be awakened. The river scene fades to black and the wind dies down again. There is only a moment of darkness before a large horse skull dominates one of the central wooden sections. Other images of horse slaughter camp each arrive with a gunshot. Nothing gratuitous - only two or three shot/image combos. We also hear the subtle sounds of people and horses screaming. A light wind blows all sounds away. The breeze blows the horse skull away as well. All that is left are the realistic images of the countryside around Horse Slaughter Camp.)*

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### SCENE FOUR

*Matty enters alone. She's a little out of sorts. She looks around the space and tries to hold back tears - but she can't. She grabs two stones off the ground and presses them to her eyes or forehead. She moans slightly as if she's in pain or deeply frustrated. She moves both stones to her lips and whispers something to them. George enters. Matty gently tosses the stones down and wipes her eyes.*

**GEORGE.** You alright?

**MATTY.** I'm fine.

**GEORGE.** You started running back there. I thought you were trying to leave us behind.

**MATTY.** No. You're just slow. Where's Dot?

**GEORGE.** She's coming. She's just not as fast as you. *(Dot enters - running and breathing hard.)*

**DOT.** Why'd everyone start running? Are we there?

**MATTY.** No. There's still a long way to go.

**DOT.** Oh. It's gonna be dark soon.

**MATTY.** I know.

**DOT.** Should we... I mean... what do we do?

**MATTY.** Keep going.

**DOT.** Alright. Can we at least sit down for a few minutes? I need to catch my breath.

**MATTY.** Fine. But not too long. We need to keep moving. *(Everyone settles into silence for a moment.)*

**GEORGE.** *(Trying to end the silence.)* Do you recognize where we're at?

**DOT.** Somewhere upriver I guess.

**GEORGE.** Yeah, but where upriver?

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**MATTY.** If we knew, we'd say George.

**GEORGE.** It's horse slaughter camp. My family comes up here for picnics sometimes. Sometimes after the snows you can still find some of the bones.

**DOT.** They really slaughtered horses here?

**GEORGE.** General Wright did. My grandfather used to talk about it after he'd been drinking a bit. He said they shot over 600 ponies so the Spokane couldn't use them. Shot them all right here where the Spokane could see.

**DOT.** That's horrible.

**GEORGE.** He was trying to stop a war.

**MATTY.** Sounds more like he was trying to kill off the Spokane.

**GEORGE.** War's gotta be won somehow.

**DOT.** It's still horrible. There are better ways to win a war than killing.

**GEORGE.** Like what?

**DOT.** Talking. Just stop fighting and start talking about stuff.

**GEORGE.** That's a simple way of looking at it.

**MATTY.** Sometimes talking doesn't work. Sometimes you have to make horrible decisions.

**DOT.** Seems to me that talking's always better than fighting.

**MATTY.** Sometimes fighting's all you get to hold on to what's yours.

**GEORGE.** (*Long beat.*) Anyway, it's a nice place to picnic now. I'm sure it wasn't then, but it's very nice now.

**DOT.** It's getting dark soon. Maybe we should get going. I've got my breath back.

**MATTY.** No.

**GEORGE.** No, what?

**MATTY.** I don't want you coming with me. You should go home. Both of you.

**DOT.** No! We talked about this. We're coming with you.

## FIRE MELT STONE

**MATTY.** You're slowing me down. It's getting dark and you're slowing me down. You need to go home.

**DOT.** Then you should come home too.

**MATTY.** This is something I have to do, Dot.

**DOT.** Why?

**MATTY.** Because it's all I've got left.

**DOT.** You got me. And you got momma.

**MATTY.** It's not enough.

**DOT.** Oh...

**MATTY.** We used to be more. We used to be a family. Now we're just... alone.

**DOT.** That's not true Matty. It's not!

**MATTY.** You need to go home, Dot. You're slowing me down. And you shouldn't be out after dark.

**DOT.** I can be faster. I can keep up.

**MATTY.** No! Go home. Get in bed. And when momma comes home, tell her I'll be bringing back something special.

**DOT.** I want to come with you! Please, Matty!

**MATTY.** This is something I'm doing by myself. I don't want you here. I don't want you part of it.

**DOT.** Fine. Fine just be alone. This is a bad idea anyway and I don't want to be a part of it.

**MATTY.** Suits me.

**DOT.** Maybe Bess was right. You are mean and selfish and... and horrible. *(Dot exits, holding back tears.)*

**GEORGE.** I know what you're doing. We would have gone with you. All the way.

**MATTY.** Yeah. You would have. That's what I was afraid of. Take her home.



## FIRE MELT STONE

**GEORGE.** Here. This is for you. *(Handing her a pocketknife.)* It's just a pocketknife, but it might come in handy.

**MATTY.** Thank you.

**GEORGE.** You sure you don't want to come back with us? There's no shame in stopping now.

**MATTY.** I can't. I don't know what's out there, but I have to see this through to the end.

**GEORGE.** Bye, Matty. Be safe.

**MATTY.** Bye, George. *(George exits. The lights fade like a sunset into a starry night. It's a bit colder with the sun gone, and the moon hasn't come into to sky yet - just darkness and stars. There are plinking and cracking sounds - nothing too regular or overbearing. It sounds a bit like pickaxes falling and cracking stones, or the stars bursting to life, or maybe bones breaking and being ground to powder.)*

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