

Jess looks on her siblings with a smile. She carefully rests her spoon on the ground, and walks over.

EXT. BOXCAR - BY THE WATERFALL - THE SAME

Benny and Violet look up from their activities. Watch, tail wagging, runs over to Jess and jumps on her with a pleased bark.

JESS
(laughing)
Down, boy, down!

She bats at Watch until he retreats.

JESS (CONT'D)
Good boy.

She pats him on the head.

VIOLET
How's the stew coming along, Jess?

JESS
Fine, but it needs to simmer awhile. We have some time. And, I was thinking...

Jess zones in on Benny.

JESS (CONT'D)
Benny, it's high time you learned to read.

BENNY
(hopefully)
No school now.

JESS
No, but I can teach you. If only I had a primer!

VIOLET
Let's make one! We saved all the wrapping paper off the packages Henry buys, you know.

Jess stares off into space, thinking. Benny pouts at Violet, who sticks her tongue out at him. Benny looks utterly betrayed. Jess doesn't notice, too caught up in the wheels turning in her brain.

A moment later, she's roused from her thoughts.

JESS

Violet! Remember those wood chips?
We could whittle out letters like
type--make each letter backwards,
(teasing)
you know.

VIOLET

And stamp them on the paper!

JESS

There'd be only twenty-six in all.
It wouldn't be awfully hard. We
won't bother with the capitals.

BENNY

Twenty-six is a lot.

VIOLET

You don't even know how to count to
twenty-six.

BENNY

But it sounds like a lot!

VIOLET

What could we use for ink?

JESS

Blackberry juice!

Jess and Violet clap their hands, delighted.

JESS (CONT'D)

Won't Henry be surprised when he
finds out that Benny can read?!
We'll teach him two words to begin
with. Then we won't have to make
the whole alphabet at once. Let's
begin with "see."

VIOLET

That's easy. And then we'll only
have to make two letters, "S" and
"E."

JESS

And the other would be "me." So it
would only be three pieces of type
in all, Violet.

EXT. BOXCAR - BY THE WATERFALL - LATER

Jess and Violet have finished putting together the primer. They're surrounded by wood chips. Two steak knives, old and rusted, lay at their sides. A small washcloth soaked in blackberry juice is next to the primer.

Benny pets Watch, who has laid down close by Jess. Violet holds the primer up at Benny's eye-level. He studies the primer with frustration.

Jess sits next to Benny, helping him with the words. Her cheeks are flushed and she's sweating somewhat. She obviously feels sick and exhausted, but pushes through it.

VIOLET

Can we finish up? I'm not a human music stand. My arms are getting tired.

JESS

Don't rush him.

Jess takes the primer from Violet and lays it next to Watch's front paws.

JESS (CONT'D)

Don't you see, Benny? This one is "S," the one that looks like a snake.

BENNY

Which one?

Watch accidentally lays his paw on the word "see."

Violet gasps dramatically.

VIOLET

Watch can read! Are you going to let a dog get ahead of you????

BENNY

No! Lemme study, Jess, lemme do it tomorrow! I'll get it!

Jess laughs.

JESS

Good old Watch. Of course you can. Let's do some arithmetic now, then we'll eat. Now, Benny, I think you learned addition in school. What's two plus one?

BENNY

Three!

He turns to Watch.

BENNY (CONT'D)

See! I'm smarter than a doggie!

Jess laughs again.

JESS

So you are. Now, there's something called "subtraction," which means you take away a number. Instead of saying "plus," we say "minus." Understand?

Benny nods his head.

JESS (CONT'D)

So, what's two minus one?

BENNY

Two!

VIOLET

(rude)

No, it leaves one.

BENNY

No, it does not left one! It left two!

JESS

Violet, stop "helping." Here, Benny, suppose you had two apples and I took away one, wouldn't you have two left?

BENNY

You never would!

JESS

No, but suppose Watch took one.

BENNY

Watchie wouldn't take one, neither. Would you, doggie?

Watch wags his tail at the sound of his name.

Jess looks at Violet for help.

JESS

What'll we do with him?

VIOLET

I thought I wasn't supposed to help.

JESS

You can help if you actually help.

VIOLET

Fine. Benny, come with us to the boxcar.

The three of them go to the outside of the boxcar together.

EXT. BOXCAR - THE SAME

Violet pulls a piece of chalk from her sewing bag and writes "2-1=" on it.

VIOLET

Look at the numbers, Benny. If you have two things, and someone takes away one, you have to have one left?

BENNY

I'll show you myself.

He marches over to Violet and snatches the chalk from her hand.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Now, see the two?

He writes a respectable "2" underneath Violet's scrawl.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Now, here's a nice one.

He draws an equally impressive "1" next to it.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Now, s'pose I take away the one, don't you see the two's left right on the car?

He covers the "2" with his hand, then looks at Jess and Violet expectantly.

Jess and Violet look at each other. Then, they burst into laughter. Jess even leans against the tree trunk for support as she rolls over.

The two of them laugh and laugh, but when Violet stops laughing, Jess continues. She collapses on the ground.

VIOLET

Jess...?

Jess starts crying, hysterical in moments. She gasps for air, then falls completely.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Jess!

BENNY

Jessie!

They crowd her. She's still crying on the ground, unable to stop. Her flushed cheeks and the sweat on her face are even more prominent.

EXT. BOXCAR - EVENING

Henry comes up the path, whistling. He sees Violet and Benny in the distance, standing by the boxcar. He cannot see what they're looking at, because their backs are to him and they block out the sight of Jess.

Henry jogs up the path.

HENRY

Jess! Violet! Benny! You'll never believe it! I ran a race today, I won us twenty dollars--

He stops short when the sight of Jess finally comes into view. She's stopped crying, but she's still shaking. The washcloth on her head does nothing to bring down her fever.

Henry falls to his knees.

VIOLET

She has a cold... she won't stop shaking, Henry.

Violet's near tears. Benny clings to Henry's leg.

BENNY

Is Jessie gonna die?

HENRY

Die?

He gets ahold of his shock.

HENRY (CONT'D)

N-- no. Go inside the boxcar, let--
let me see her.

They do so without argument. Henry kneels by Jess's side.
Thankfully, she's weak, but still conscious.

JESS

Henry. I'm fine.

A hacking cough contradicts her. Henry flinches.

HENRY

How long have you been hiding this?

JESS

Just a few days. It's just a cold.

Henry feels her cheek for fever.

HENRY

No, it's not. You're burning up.
You need a hospital.

JESS

No, I can't. If I go there, you'll
have to give my name, and
Grandfather will surely find us.

Fear flashes in Henry's eyes.

JESS (CONT'D)

I'll be fine, Henry. I'll be fine.

HENRY

(standing up)
I'll be right back.

He turns and runs back towards the trail to Intervale.

JESS

Henry!

EXT. WOODS - THE SAME

NUMBER FOUR - REPRISE

Henry rushes through the trees, faster than when he ran the
race.

HENRY

THOUGH MY LUNGS
BURN WITH HEAT
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)
 I WILL NOT ACCEPT DEFEAT
 BECAUSE JESS NEEDS A DOCTOR SO
 I'LL KEEP MOVING MY FEET!
 THE DARK COMES,
 SO MOVE FAST
 I WON'T DARE FINISH IN LAST!
 HENRY CORDYCE,
 BOY OF NOTHING,
 YOU JUST HAVE TO KEEP ON GOING--

He bends over, hands on knees, breathing hard. In front of him, the valley of Intervale lay in the distance.

He pushes himself forward once again.

EXT. INTERVALE - NEIGHBORHOOD - THE SAME

HENRY
 YES I KNOW
 WHAT I RISK
 BUT JESS CANNOT GO LIKE THIS!
 I OWE EVERYTHING TO HER AND
 IT'S HER BEST CHANCE TO LIVE!
 ALL MY FEARS
 AND WORRIES
 IF GRANDFATHER FINDS ME FLEES!
 WITH EACH STEP I TAKE,
 EACH BREATH I GASP
 JESS'S CHANCES TO LIVE COME BACK!
 SO I'LL ROAR...
 AND I'LL SOAR...
 WHY ELSE WOULD I BE
 NUMBER FOUR?

(END OF SONG)

EXT. MCALLISTER HOME - FRONT LAWN - THE SAME

Henry dashes inside the house.

INT. MCALLISTER HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

HENRY
 Dr. McAllister!

Dr. McAllister runs into the living room.

DR. MCALLISTER
 Henry? What are you doing here so
 late at night?

HENRY
 (trying to catch his
 breath)
 Jess... Jess is ill... she needs a
 doctor... she needs a hospital...

Dr. McAllister's eyes go wide.

DR. MCALLISTER
 I'll get my kit. Wait for me in the
 car.

He throws Henry his car keys, and Henry dashes out the front door.

Mrs. McAllister comes into the room a moment later.

MRS. MCALLISTER
 David, what's going on?

DR. MCALLISTER
 There's an ad cut out on my desk
 from J.H. Cordyce. Call the number.
 Tell him I found his grandchildren,
 and one of them is dying.

INT. J.H. CORDYCE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

A sleek, large office. A maid walks through the door.

MAID
 Mr. Cordyce, so sorry to disturb
 you so late, but the phone rang.
 Urgent message for you.

PAN ACROSS:

J.H. Cordyce looks up from his paperwork. He's a man in his late 50's. His dark brown hair is dull, but not grayed as of yet. He has hard lines around his mouth, but softer wrinkles around his eyes. He's dressed to the nines; he's clearly a very, very rich man.

And, most importantly, he's white.

J.H. CORDYCE
 What is it?

MAID
 Your grandchildren have been found.

One cannot describe the look on his face. Too many emotions come at once.