

**[Note: The following takes place during Act I Scene ii of *North to Maine* by Brenton Lengel]**

*Lights up on the Blackrock shelter in Shenandoah National Park, Virginia. It is late May. Kevin enters from Stage Left, He is a man in his mid-fifties. He is bearded, massively thin, and knotted with muscle. Various faded tattoos cover his frame including a large and prominently displayed “Death Before Dishonor”. He is clearly very tired, but the way he carries himself belies a great, hidden strength. His backpack is old and worn, with a massive exterior frame. His boots are worn, heavy, and made of leather. He sits inside the shelter, pulls off his sweat-covered “Mets” cap and drops his pack behind him with a satisfied “thud”; then he rubs his sore shoulders, takes a bandanna from his pocket, and wipes the sweat from his brow and neck. Nick enters from Stage Left. He is thin, in late twenties, and decked out with the newest backpacking gear and designer outdoor wear. He wears a pair of dark designer sunglasses, a civil-war era confederate officer’s cap, and carries a set of trekking poles. He looks at Kevin, but does not speak.*

**Kevin:** *(Slight New Jersey Accent)* Howdy. Kevin *(Indicates himself)*.

**Nick:** Trail name?

**Kevin:** My name.

**Nick:** *(He is aloof, but acknowledges Kevin with a nod)* Creature Man.

**Kevin:** I’ve seen you in the log. You tenting?

**Nick:** Shelter. You?

**Kevin:** I was thinking I would. Plenty of space.

**Nick:** Yeah.

*Nick sets his pack down on the opposite side of the shelter and starts to remove his equipment, which he spreads all over the inside of the shelter. Kevin fishes two old plastic soda bottles out of his pack. Their labels are removed. One is empty, and one is half-filled with water. He drains it in one gulp.*

**Kevin:** I like your hat.

**Nick:** *(Smiles, he is pleased)* What rank am I?

**Kevin:** *(looks at the hat)* Lieutenant.

**Nick:** *(Surprised)* Right. What division?

**Kevin:** The Seventeenth. Virginia. Cavalry.

**Nick:** Nope, artillery.

**Kevin:** Cavalry.

**Nick:** How do you know?

**Kevin:** Yellow-band. That's cavalry.

**Nick:** Guy at the store said it was artillery.

**Kevin:** I could be wrong. *(He pulls an empty water bag out of his pack)* I'm dry. You see anything about a water source?

**Nick:** *(Pulls a book out of his pocket)* the Wingfoot guide says it's point four on a blue blaze. Downhill.

**Kevin:** Piped?

**Nick:** Scoop.

**Kevin:** *(Pause)* Well, I'd better get a move on then. You want me to fill you up?

**Nick:** *(Pulls a half-full water bag out of his pack and pours it into an empty Power-aid bottle He drinks the rest then hands the bag to Kevin.)* I'd be much obliged.

*Kevin picks up the empty bottles and his water bag and starts to exit. Just before he gets offstage he stops and turns back to Nick.*

**Kevin:** While I'm down there, think you might want to kindle a fire? Looks like someone left us some wood.

**Nick:** *(Reluctantly)* Sure.

*Kevin exits.*

*Nick produces a Zip-lock bag filled with toilet paper (not on a roll) from his pack. He breaks off a few squares and wraps them around his hand. Then he retrieves a Zippo lighter from his pocket. He walks over to the fire pit and tosses the paper, and a few sticks onto it and lights it. A small flame starts to burn. He throws a few more sticks on the fire and blows on it. A cloud of ash flies back into his face, choking him. He coughs loudly, then looks back at the fire and tries again with the same result.*

**Nick:** *(To the fire, still coughing)* Oh Fuck you.

*He gives up, and the fire dies. Nick walks over to his backpack and pulls a camp stove out. Adam enters stage left. He is very dirty and entirely exhausted. His*

*clothes are covered in salt from where his sweat has dried. He hobbles over towards the shelter and sees Nick. He looks at Nicks gear.*

**Adam:** The shelter's not full, is it?

**Nick:** *(looking up, noticing Adam)* No. No. Sorry. I didn't think anyone else would be coming by tonight. Sorry, I'll move my shit. Just give me a second...

**Adam:** *(Drops his pack and collapses onto the bench. He is beyond the end of his energy, and can barely speak.)* Oh. My. God.

**Nick:** Tired?

*Adam glares at him.*

**Nick:** Sorry. *(He pushes a large section of the clutter aside, then pulls out a Lipton side and a Nalgene bottle filled with water. Then he walks back to his stove and begins to light it.)*

*Adam ineptly reaches for his boots, and begins the arduous task of removing them. This is clearly painful. Once he has one boot removed, he pulls his pack closer to him and places his water-tube in his mouth and sucks. No water comes. Adam pulls open the top of his pack and yanks out the bladder. It is empty.*

**Adam:** Where's the water source?

**Nick:** There's a spring one-fourth of a mile that-a-way. Downhill.

**Adam:** Piped—?

**Nick:** Scoop.

**Adam:** You've got to be kidding me.

**Nick:** 'Fraid not.

**Adam:** *(Groans and pulls his boot back on)* I should've filled up sooner—

**Nick:** *(Picks up the Power-aid bottle. He tosses it to Adam)* Here. Don't say I never did nothing for you.

**Adam:** You sure?

**Nick:** Yeah, it's just fucking water.

**Adam:** Is it treated?

**Nick:** Nope.

**Adam:** Shit.

*Nick watches as Adam starts rooting through his pack.*

**Adam:** That's a cool hat by the way.

**Nick:** *(Smiles)* What rank am I?

**Adam:** I dunno.

**Nick:** Just guess.

**Adam:** Captain?

**Nick:** Wrong. Lieutenant. What division?

**Adam:** I don't know.

**Nick:** Guess.

**Adam:** *(Looking at the big "17" on the hat)* Seventeenth?

**Nick:** Seventeenth what?

**Adam:** Artillery?

**Nick:** *(A faint pause.)* Wrong. Virginia Cavalry.

**Adam:** *(Going back to his backpack)* Cool.

**Nick:** You can tell by the yellow band.

**Adam:** It's a very nice hat.

*Adam drops two pills into the water, then replaces the cap and shakes it up. Finally he places it on the table, and starts fiddling with his watch.*

**Nick:** What the hell are you doing?

**Adam:** I'm timing my iodine.

**Nick:** What?

**Adam:** Well, it takes fifteen minutes to clean the water so—

**Nick:** Dude, just drink it.

**Adam:** What are you crazy? Something might be in it.

**Nick:** It's *spring water*, taken directly from the source. We're in a *National Park*, like three-thousand feet above sea level. What's going to be in it?

**Adam:** (*Looking at the water*) Giardia.

**Nick:** That iodine is gonna make it taste awful.

**Adam:** It's better than crapping my brains out.

*Nick shakes his head. Adam goes back to timing the water.*

**Nick:** (*A pause*) People pay through the nose for bottles of that stuff back in the real world, and here you're ruining it with chemicals.

**Adam:** Dude, why do you care?

**Nick:** Because it's my bottle.

*Adam looks from him to the bottle incredulously.*

**Adam:** It's just an old Power-aid bottle with the label peeled off—

**Nick:** It's MY old Power-aid bottle. I peeled that label off the day I summited Mt. Springer, and now, it's always going to look like it's filled with piss.

*Pause.*

**Adam:** Are you serious?

*Pause.*

**Nick:** (*Laughs*) Of course I'm not serious. It's just a fucking bottle.

*Adam stares at him.*

**Adam:** What is wrong with you?

**Nick:** (*Still laughing*) I'm sorry man,

**Adam:** So it's okay if I treat the water?

**Nick:** Yeah dude, it's fine.

**Adam:** Right.

*Adam continues looking at his watch, Nick returns to cooking his dinner.*

**Nick:** So what's your name?

**Adam:** (*Warily*) Adam. What's yours?

**Nick:** I'm Creature Man.

**Adam:** Creature?

**Nick:** No, not creature comma man. Creature Man, like Preacher Man, you say the whole thing.

**Adam:** You're fucking with me again.

**Nick:** No. I'm not. My trail name is Creature Man.

**Adam:** Your trail name?

**Nick:** Yeah. My trail name.

**Adam:** What is a trail name?

**Nick:** Dude it's...Holy Crap. You don't know what a trail name is?

**Adam:** No...

**Nick:** Hang on, this is your first night out, isn't it?

**Adam:** No.

**Nick:** How long you been out?

**Adam:** ...A couple of days.

**Nick:** A couple of days when? When did you start?

**Adam:** Friday.

**Nick:** Friday? Two days ago Friday?

**Adam:** Almost three.

**Nick:** Holy shit. Well, welcome to the shit: a trail-name is a name you go by on the trail.

**Adam:** I figured that much. So how do you get one? Do you give it to yourself?

**Nick:** If you're lame you do, but other hikers are supposed to give it to you.

**Adam:** Who gave you yours?

**Nick:** Juice-box.

**Adam:** Who's Juice-box?

**Nick:** Wow, you really are new out here. You haven't heard of Juice-box?

**Adam:** Should I have?

**Nick:** Well yeah, she's a girl.

**Adam:** ...And?

**Nick:** And she's hiking alone...

**Adam:** ...So?

**Nick:** Wow, you really haven't been out here long.

**Adam:** So what's up with this chick? Is she ridiculously hot or something?

**Nick:** Well, if she wasn't before, she is now.

**Adam:** Why?

**Nick:** Let me paint you a picture newbie. Who do you think of when you think of a hiker? What picture comes to mind?

**Adam:** Well, uhhh-

**Nick:** A guy! You think of a guy! A *straight*, bearded, Anglo-Saxon! That's the archetype, and they make up at least sixty-percent of the people out here.

**Adam:** Okay, I can see that.

**Nick:** Well, another twenty-percent is made up of their wives and girlfriends. So like, MAYBE five-percent are single, available women of appropriate breeding age.

**Adam:** What about the other fifteen?

**Nick:** Misc...well and dykes.

*Pause.*

**Nick:** What?

**Adam:** Should you really be using that word?

**Nick:** Do you see anyone around to be offended?

*Pause.*

**Adam:** Whatever.

**Nick:** Anyway, what do you think that sixty-plus percent of red-blooded, straight, Angelo-Saxon paragons of masculinity are going to talk about?

**Adam:** Juice-box?

**Nick:** Any kind of box frankly. Last single chick I saw out here practically had a harem hiking with her.

**Adam:** So why weren't you with them?

**Nick:** Please. I've still got some dignity. Can you hand me the register?

**Adam:** What?

**Nick:** *(Pointing at a composition note-book in a plastic bag in the corner of the shelter)* The register. That thing. Right there.

**Adam:** *(Picks up the register and hands it to Nick.)* Here. What's it for?

**Nick:** *(Flips it open and shows it to Adam)* You write in it, draw in it, sign it. Whatever you want. It's a cool way to keep track of people, and if you get lost, the ridge runners come by and check the register first so that they know where you stayed last.

**Adam:** Do people get lost often?

**Nick:** Can't say I've ever heard of it. I just use it for amusement. Oh shit.



**Adam:** What?

**Nick:** Some asshole's written another bible verse in here. (*Starts writing*)

**Adam:** What are you writing?

**Nick:** I'm responding.

**Adam:** Why?

**Nick:** Why not?

**Adam:** Will that guy even see it?

**Nick:** Well...no.

**Adam:** So why are you responding?

**Nick:** Because...I can't let him get away with it.

**Adam:** Get away with what?

**Nick:** With being *wrong*.

*Pause.*

**Adam:** Okay.

*Nick finishes his entry and signs his name. He then flips through the book.*

**Nick:** Well, it looks like Juice-box and her entourage, haven't been through here yet. I guess they took a couple of zeros in town. You want the book?

**Adam:** Might as well.

*Nick hands it to him. Adam begins to read.*

**Nick:** You know, I'm surprised you just started. I had you pegged for a thru-hiker.

**Adam:** I am.

**Nick:** No you're not.

**Adam:** (*Signs his name and closes the register.*) Yeah I am.

**Nick:** If this is your second night, you didn't start at Springer.

**Adam:** No...I- You're right. I didn't start at Springer.

**Nick:** So where did you start?

**Adam:** My Dad dropped me off at the road back there.

**Nick:** Seventeen miles back?

**Adam:** More like twenty.

**Nick:** The Highway?

**Adam:** Rockfish Gap.

**Nick:** Then you're not a thru-hiker.

**Adam:** What you have to start at Springer to be a thru-hiker?

**Nick:** Or Katahdin.

**Adam:** Look, who cares, I'm hiking. Okay?

**Nick:** You should be clearer in your terminology.

**Adam:** Why are you being such a dick?

**Nick:** I'm not-

**Adam:** Yeah, you are.

**Nick:** Look, it's not my fault if you can't keep your shit straight.

**Adam:** I'm never going to be able to keep my shit straight when you're taking issue with everything I do!

**Nick:** I am not taking issue-

**Adam:** You know what, it doesn't matter. Thanks for the water. I've had a rough day, could you just leave me alone?

**Nick:** Sure. Fine.

*Nick finishes boiling the water, and pours his noodles into a tin cup. He begins chopping garlic on a pot-lid with his pocket-knife. Adam pulls off both of his boots,*

*pulls a pair of flip-flops out of his pack, and puts them on. Then returns to staring at his watch. Adam looks back and notices him.*

**Nick:** So what was so rough about your day?

**Adam:** What?

**Nick:** You said you had a rough day. Tell me about it.

**Adam:** I don't wanna talk about it.

**Nick:** Well, you'd better. You're not going to last long out here unless you start blowing off your steam.

**Adam:** I blow off my—

**Nick:** No. You don't.

**Adam:** I—

**Nick:** *(Pours the chopped garlic into the pot)* Dude, you're *timing* your water. The rod up your ass must have a rod up it's ass. Now come on kid, talk to me.

**Adam:** I'm not a kid.

**Nick:** *(Cuts open his tuna packet and stirs it into the concoction)* All kids say that.

**Adam:** I'm twenty-three.

**Nick:** You're a freaking kid.

**Adam:** How old are you?

**Nick:** *(Starts eating)* Twenty-seven.

**Adam:** How did it feel when Rome burned?

**Nick:** Shut up. There's a big difference between twenty three- and twenty-seven.

**Adam:** It's only four years.

**Nick:** Okay. Take your current age and subtract four. Were you smart back then?

**Adam:** At nineteen?

**Nick:** Yeah. Nineteen. Nineteen year olds are idiots. I was an idiot when I was nineteen, and you were an idiot when you were nineteen, and you're just as big of an idiot now, It's just going to take another four years for you to figure it out.

**Adam:** So how do you know you're not an idiot now?

**Nick:** 'Cause I'm twenty-seven. *(Returns to eating his dinner)*

*Adam looks at Nick incredulously. A pause.*

**Nick:** Shake your head. Your eyes are stuck.

**Adam:** Creature–

**Nick:** Creature Man.

**Adam:** *Creature Man.* That doesn't make any–

**Nick:** Who cares? Look, I'm still four years smarter than you. Take my advice, loosen up. You're freaking me out!

*Adam's watch beeps.*

**Adam:** My water's ready. *(He returns the register and pen to the plastic bag and places it back inside the shelter, then grabs the bottle and begins drinking.)*

**Nick:** Oh my GOD! See? See? Look where we are man! We're in a national park, miles from the nearest town, neither of us is employed, and you're still obeying the Beeps man! I got away from that! I got away from cell phones, and alarm-clocks, and pagers. I got away, from all those tiny little electronic noises telling us when to talk, and when to eat, and when to shit, and here you are bringing them out here! You're messing with my groove man!

**Adam:** You're insane.

**Nick:** Am I?

*Adam glares at him.*

**Nick:** Well maybe a little...But I have *rights*.

**Adam:** Look, I already had to deal with one crazy person today, okay? I really don't think I need–

**Nick:** Who'd you have to deal with?

**Adam:** Do you really want to know?

**Nick:** Yes I want to know. If you're dealing with a crazy person then I might have to deal with that same crazy person. We're miles from the nearest town. Now was he normal crazy or cut-your-face-off-and-wear-it-as-a-hat crazy?

**Adam:** I dunno. Normal crazy I guess.

**Nick:** What happened?

**Adam:** Well, I'm walking down the trail and I see this guy walking towards me. Uphill. So I raise my hand and yell down to him: "Hello!" He doesn't say anything. Doesn't look at me, doesn't acknowledge me. He just turns and walks the other way. So I—

**Nick:** Did he have a backpack on?

**Adam:** No, not—

**Nick:** Okay, he was a townie. Sometimes they can be weird, but they don't come this far out so—

**Adam:** Will you let me finish?

**Nick:** *(Pause)* Sure. Sorry.

**Adam:** So I figure he's just a jerk or something. I follow him down the hill 'cause—

**Nick:** Where else are you going to go?

**Adam:** Right. I follow him down to the bottom of the hill and I see him fiddling with a backpack—

**Nick:** So he was a hiker.

*Adam glares at Nick.*

**Nick:** Sorry. My lips are sealed. What happened next?

**Adam:** He pulls a roll of toilet paper out of his pack. Drops his drawers, and proceeds to...do his business.

**Nick:** Right there on the trail?

**Adam:** A couple of feet off.

**Nick:** Whoa.

**Adam:** Yeah.

**Nick:** With you right there?

**Adam:** Right there.

**Nick:** And he was cool with this?

**Adam:** Dude, he tried to talk to me.

**Nick:** What, during...?

**Adam:** Yeah. I yelled "WHOA!" and held up my hand to shield my eyes. He looked up and noticed me and was all like: "Hi." Then he started giving me advice about the trail.

**Nick:** What sort of advice?

**Adam:** He told me the trail got confusing up ahead.

**Nick:** Did it?

**Adam:** Of course not. You just walk across a road, hop over a fence, and head across a field.

**Nick:** That is fucking weird.

**Adam:** It gets worse. So I figure this guy's completely out of his mind. He's going to kill me or something. So I start hiking really fast to get away from him. Well, after about fifteen minutes I start going up the next hill, and I notice him about fifteen feet behind me. I figure I'll just slow down and let the psycho pass me, but when I do he slows down too! I speed up again to try and lose him, and he speeds up. I'm basically running up the mountain at this point and there he is fifteen feet behind me the whole way...He was like a machine!

**Nick:** What did you do?

**Adam:** When I got to the top of the mountain he was out of sight, so I just jumped off the trail and hid behind a tree. He went by about a second later.

**Nick:** WOW.

**Adam:** Yeah.

**Nick:** Well I've got to concede that's pretty creepy. I never heard of a thru-hiker chasing somebody like that before.

**Adam:** Well it happened.

**Nick:** I was ahead of you today, I wonder if—

**Kevin:** *(enters carrying the water)* Got your water Creature—

**Adam:** *(His jaw drops)* It's YOU!

**Kevin:** *(Recognizes him)* Oh. Hey...

**Nick:** *(Pause)* So, you guys have met?