

# **TOM THOMSON IS MISSING**

**One-Act Drama**

## **Synopsis**

On a sunny July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1917, iconic Canadian painter Tom Thomson disappeared on Canoe Lake. Accident? Murder? Suicide? In his last week, Thomson had help from his friends, Ann and Shannon Fraser, on his first solo exhibition, struggled to collect a loan, and learned that his lover, Winnie Trainer, was pregnant.

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

### Cast

TOM.....	39, a passionate lover of the natural world, TOM avoids emotional commitments to concentrate on painting. (Ideally, the actor should resemble the historical figure. His costume should include Tom’s trademark red mackinaw jacket and navy wool watch cap.)
WINNIE.....	37, a local woman, desperate for marriage and a family, now pregnant, WINNIE seeks a commitment from TOM. (Her costume should include a long-sleeved cotton blouse and a long skirt of the period.)
SHANNON.....	42, a businessman, SHANNON, uses anyone and any means to keep the Mowat Lodge afloat. (His costume should consist of a long-sleeved shirt, tie, vest, and a fedora.)
ANN.....	40, a Scottish immigrant, ANN is loyal to friends like TOM but even more determined to keep her family together though it often means placating SHANNON. (Her costume should include a long-sleeved cotton blouse, a long skirt of the period, and an apron.)

### Stage Setting

The environs of Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park, 1917. Upper Stage Right is a table covered in a blue sheet to represent Canoe Lake. On the table is a prop of a canoe. In the play, the actors either refer to it or in later scenes, paddle it.

### Props

A triangle for marking scene changes, Tom’s sketchbox, paintbrush, paddle, a painted panel, his body bundled in a tarp; Winnie’s disguise (when playing Lawren Harris); Ann’s fake eyeglasses and moustache (when playing Dr. MacCallum); Shannon’s hunting cap (while playing Chester), a plastic whiskey bottle and shot glasses, (his woman’s hat with a kerchief for the gallery scene), two hats when for playing other characters in that scene.

### Sound effects

These are straightforward except for the traditional song, *The Canadian Barn Dance*, samples of which can found on CDs of traditional music or on YouTube where the dance steps can be viewed.

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SCENE 1: PROLOGUE

(Period music or a tonal piano piece signals the start.)

(SHANNON rings a triangle. The actors enter from the corners of the stage, ghosts, repeating Thomson's name.)

SHANNON, WINNIE, ANN, TOM

Tom Thomson, Tom Thomson, Tom Thomson, Tom Thomson...

(The actors form a line. SHANNON steps forward and rings the triangle again, he puts it on a stool.)

SHANNON

Shannon Fraser is the name. Tom Thomson did some work for me. Thomson painted what you'd call, classic Canadian landscapes like "The West Wind."

(TOM strikes a noble pose.)

TOM

I'm Tom Thomson. When I painted "The West Wind," I was inspired by the poet Shelley.

(Reciting) 'O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves, dead

(SHANNON, WINNIE, ANN start making ghostly gestures and noises.)

SHANNON, WINNIE, ANN

Whoo—oo-oo.

TOM

Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing...'

(SHANNON, ANN, WINNIE applaud and TOM bows.)

WINNIE

I'm Winnie Trainor. I wanted to marry Tom. But his life was cut tragically short. Tom died at 39.

(TOM falls backward into the arms of the other actors who release him to the ground where he lies prone.)

ANN

I'm Ann Fraser, Shannon's wife. On July 8, 1917, Tom went missing in Algonquin Park, northern Ontario. Searchers found his empty canoe.

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(SHANNON, ANN, and WINNIE walking to another part of the playing area, mime the search, then the discovery of his overturned canoe.)

SHANNON

July 15<sup>th</sup>, eight days later, Thomson's body was discovered floating near Little Wapomeo Island in Canoe Lake.

(SHANNON and ANN find TOM and react with shock.)

ANN

Did Tom die by accident? Or foul play?

(During WINNIE's speech, SHANNON and ANN examine TOM's body as if they were coroners.)

WINNIE

Foul play! One, Tom could have easily swum to the shore of Canoe Lake. It was 300 yards! A sunny summer day! Two, a drowned man's lungs usually fill with water. Tom's lungs had air in them. Three, his left temple looked bruised, injured. Four, years later, the park ranger, Mark Robinson, recalled a fishing line wrapped around Tom's ankle. Why? To keep his body hidden underwater. It took eight days, in the middle of a hot summer, for his body to rise to the surface of Canoe Lake.

(SHANNON and ANN help TOM stand up.)

SHANNON, ANN, and WINNIE

Tom's ghost theorizes about his death.

TOM

Was I killed in a drunken fight, brained by poachers, bushwhacked by a German-American? Or, did I slip on a rock while carrying my canoe? Hit my head on the thwart while standing in my canoe to pee? Jump into the lake to commit suicide? Suffer a heart attack? Or, was I drowned by a giant water spout?

SHANNON

That story has remained a mystery -- until now! Today, we present the last days of Tom Thomson.

(SHANNON, ANN, and TOM exit.)

SCENE 2:

(The sound of a steam-engine train pulling out of a station.)

(WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces the triangle.)

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WINNIE

(Narrates) *July 2nd. Late afternoon. Canoe Lake Station. Tom! Tom Thomson.*

TOM (rushing over with his sketchbox.)

Oh, my God, Winnie!

WINNIE

I've been here two hours.

TOM

I missed the early train.

WINNIE

Two hours, Tom. One train after another. Finally, the station master asked, 'Miss, are you still here?' I barely had the nerve to speak to him.

TOM

I'm so sorry.

WINNIE

I don't know how many people from Huntsville saw me leave. It felt like the whole town.

TOM

Huntsville again, God help me!

WINNIE

Tom, I live there -- Even the people who didn't see me leave for Canoe Lake, would have heard by now. 'Winnifred Trainor, town spinster, "What's she up to?" Such a little fool!' If I had sense, I wouldn't be here.

TOM

We couldn't meet in Huntsville, Winnie.

WINNIE

There'd be talk. But at least you'd be waiting for me for a change.

TOM

I can't go to Huntsville, you know that.

WINNIE

So you say.

TOM

I got called out there. Twice. A woman handed me a white feather. Soldiers at the station called me, 'Slacker,' 'Coward.'

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WINNIE

I thought Tom Thomson didn't care what people think.

TOM

I'll take a swing at anyone who calls me a coward.

WINNIE

So, you do care. What are you going to do about it? Hole up in the park til the war ends?

TOM

What can I do?

WINNIE

The war might last four more years.

TOM

Sometimes I think that. So much for civilization, we're shooting and stabbing each other by the hundreds of thousands. Now the army's so short of fighting men, it's even taking painters. Half the artists I know – A.Y., Harris, Jeffreys. And you know what's coming next, conscription, single men.

WINNIE

We both know there's a remedy for that.

TOM

Winnie, let's just have a nice evening together.

WINNIE

I don't know why I put up with you. Do you know how long we've been courting? Five years.

TOM

We've known each other five years. I don't think we've been courting that long.

WINNIE

How long then?

TOM

Winnie, I'm sorry I was late. I didn't mean anything by it.

WINNIE

Where were you?

(TOM shrugs.)

WINNIE

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Tom, I'm asking...

TOM

You're angry at me. With good reason, Winnie. I've been an ass. (Beat). Why don't you just kick me?

(TOM turns his backside to WINNIE and slaps it.)

TOM

Go on. I deserve it. Give me a good kick.

WINNIE

Don't be ridiculous, Tom.

TOM

C'mon, you feel like clobbering me.

(TOM turns his backside to her again.)

WINNIE

(Pushing him away) Oh, for heaven's sake. For the last time, where were you?

TOM

All right...I was painting a stump.

WINNIE

A stump?

TOM

You know Mark Robinson, the park ranger? He told me about this big spruce stump. A big ugly stump just off the trail. Near the old loggers' camp. I went to see it. In the afternoon light, this stump was now richly coloured. Russet brown. Sorrel. Chestnut...BEAUTIFUL. So, I started to paint it.

WINNIE

You were painting! You were late because you had to finish a painting.

TOM

Boy, is Mark going to be surprised when he sees it!

WINNIE

You're impossible, Tom Thomson! I don't know why I'm wasting my time on you.

TOM

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I love you, Winnie. I do. But that painting might have been another “West Wind.” “The West Wind,” Winnie. I can’t tell when lightening will strike. And when I did “The West Wind,” I was inspired!

WINNIE

“The West Wind” ---

SCENE 3: (The sound of waves crashing on a beach.)

(TOM picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces the triangle. He picks up his sketchbox and a paintbrush from behind the stool.)

TOM

(Narrates) *Algonquin Park, Spring, Tom Thomson painting the “The West Wind.”*

(ANN and WINNIE put on men’s caps; ANN, fake spectacles and a pencil brush moustache, and WINNIE, a small moustache. SHANNON dons a hunter’s cap and joins in a mime of pulling up some canoes. They walk around.)

TOM

So, we pulled up our canoes, Lawren Harris--

(WINNIE waves.)

TOM

His brother, Chester—

(SHANNON responds.)

TOM

Dr. MacCallum--

(ANN signals.)

TOM

All visiting me in the park. I tied the boats up and we walked around. And around. And around.

WINNIE (as Lawren)

We’ll see who finds their subject first, Tom!

ANN (as Dr. MacCallum)

Good luck, Tom!

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SHANNON (as Chester, arms crossed, shaking his head.)

Artists!

(The other actors freeze.)

TOM

Then I saw it. My painting. It had everything! The lake. The far bank. The open sky. And in the foreground, on the rocky shore, this big, old, gnarly pine.

(TOM begins painting.)

I started blocking in the rocky shore. Outlined the trunk of that twisty old pine in red. Backed that in. Then the branches and leaves.

(TOM closes his eyes.)

(The sound of a wind growing in intensity.)

A strong wind. I felt it touch my hands. My cheek. And I could forget. About next month. Or next week. Forget about tomorrow.

(SHANNON, ANN, and WINNIE begin moving and pointing at the waves during TOM's speech.)

TOM

(Opening his eyes and peering at the lake) I saw whitecaps on the water. A ragged white. On grey, no, brown waves. Yes, brown. The pine tree branches, Sherwood and Hunter green, spreading like fans. The pine tree branches now slanted in the wind.

(SHANNON, ANN, and WINNIE react to the growing wind.)

TOM

The thing I liked most about the wind --no blackflies!

(TOM paints. ANN, and WINNIE hang onto their caps blowing in the wind. SHANNON fights the wind, too.)

TOM

The wind seemed to be blowing all my problems away!...The paint drying fast. A push here, a pull there. Pure joy. I just might get it. Lift it up. Bring it out.

(WINNIE searches for a spot to paint. ANN marches about, taking notes in a journal. Both are fighting the

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wind. SHANNON throws up his arms in confusion and blows away.)

TOM

I looked over. The doctor was marching about. Jotting down notes in his journal. And there's Lawren still setting up. I don't know where Chester went.

TOM (Paints quickly.)

The spring light is amazing. It sings to me.

TOM (Shouts to WINNIE above the wind.)

Lawren, old chum, the light's perfect, it'll be gone soon. Hurry!

TOM

That wind blowing off the lake was growing. Flowing and growing. Blowing away my problems, my concerns. It was a West Wind. Who cares about Winnie Trainor. Or the Great War? The machine sucking up men and grinding their bones? I painted furiously there with my friends. Never happier. Never.

TOM (Shouts to WINNIE )

How do you like Algonquin Park so far, Lawren?

WINNIE (Waves and shouts back.)

Nobody ever painted like you Tom, nobody.

TOM (Shaking his head and shouting a reply.)

Algonquin Park's a painter's country, Lawren.

WINNIE (Shouts a reply)

It's a painter's country all right. It's Tom Thomson country!

ANN

Tom Thomson country!

TOM (Addresses the audience and ANN and WINNIE react in shock.)

Now you're not going to believe this. I have trouble believing it myself. A blast of wind come up. C-R-A-C-K.

(The sound of a crack. The noise of the wind stops.)

TOM

It knocked that pine tree on me. Swear to God. The doctor and Lawren ran over. Lawren's face white as paper.

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(TOM falls over with his sketch. ANN and WINNIE run over to check on TOM. SHANNON rushes to join them.)

TOM

(Springing up) I sprang up. I picked up my sketch, "The West Wind."

ANN

That tree damn near killed you!

TOM (Laughing as he shouts a reply).

Kill me? You said so yourself. It's Tom Thomson country.

(WINNIE, ANN, and SHANNON form a tableau admiring THOMSON.)

WINNIE, ANN, SHANNON

Tom Thomson country!

(They all laugh. ANN and SHANNON exit.)

SCENE 4:

(The sound of a passing train.)

(SHANNON, ANN, and WINNIE take off their disguises. WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it.)

WINNIE

(Narrates) *July 2nd. Late afternoon. Canoe Lake Station.*

WINNIE

Wait! Wait a minute, Tom Thomson, you just wait a minute! You're not painting Algonquin Park. You're hiding in it.

TOM

You mean, from the war?

WINNIE

From me.

TOM

Winnie, I told you. I'm not the marrying kind.

WINNIE

What do you mean?

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TOM

I'm almost forty. I have my wool trousers, and my pipe, and a suit someone was buried in. I get room and board at Mowat Lodge when I work there. Mostly, I live in a tent and paint. I can't support you.

WINNIE

I can help, Tom. I'm clerking in a store now. And I've got savings. Things won't be that bad. You've been selling paintings in Toronto. You told me yourself, you sold a painting there for two hundred and fifty dollars.

TOM

Two years ago. Maybe I just got lucky.

WINNIE

You sold other paintings.

TOM

This year I'm not even sending my paintings to Toronto.

WINNIE

That's crazy. Aren't you trying to make a living?

TOM

I'll find something. Always have.

WINNIE

Why, Tom? You might be able to live off selling your paintings. At least people would see them. What are you afraid of?

TOM

I'm not afraid.

WINNIE

Then why not sell your work? Why not send it out?

TOM

Critics, okay? I don't like exhibitions. I don't like reviews in newspapers. What does some newspaper writer know about my life? Or my paintings? This year I've painted more than sixty-two sketches of Algonquin Park. Spring and summer. Nobody's ever done that.

WINNIE

And nobody's ever going to find out, either.

TOM

Maybe I'm just painting for myself.

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WINNIE

I wish that made sense, Tom. I wish it did. (Beat). I don't know how to tell you this. I'm struggling.

TOM

Tell me what? (Beat.) What is it?

WINNIE

The thing is, I'm pregnant. For sure, I'm pregnant.

TOM

...Ah...okay. Okay. Okay –I mean, I'm going to be a father?

WINNIE

Yes! What do you think?

TOM

Are you sure?

WINNIE

I was sure three weeks ago. Now I'm certain. Even thinking about food makes me queasy.

TOM

That's some thing to think about. I mean, you're pregnant.

WINNIE

Yes, Tom, I'm pregnant. I know, it takes time to absorb, doesn't it? It took me weeks. (Beat.) Tom, we didn't plan for this. But it happened.

TOM

We were so careful.

WINNIE

I was so shocked. (Beat.) Now I just dread telling my parents.

TOM

I was just beginning to think your mother liked me.

WINNIE

I can't tell my parents til we have a plan. They'll be so upset. They're going to be horrible to me. They're going to force me out of the house. You don't know what kind of person my father can be.

TOM

I do, your father's going to shoot me.

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WINNIE

My father's not going to shoot you.

TOM

He'll kill both of us. With his double-barreled shotgun.

WINNIE

Stop it, Tom, be serious.

TOM

Winnie, this is all happening very fast. Maybe we should think about this a little more. Getting married's a big step.

WINNIE

Wait for what, Tom? This baby's coming.

TOM

Winnie, you might not want to hear this. What about adoption?

WINNIE

You can't mean that. I can't give our child away.

TOM

It's not really giving away. We might be fulfilling someone else's dream. Someone who wants a child and can look after it. Someone with a proper home.

WINNIE

I'm thirty-seven. This may be my only chance. (Beat.) So, what are you going to do?

TOM

What am I going to do? That's the question.

WINNIE

I know you're in shock. Put your hand on my stomach.

(WINNIE moves TOM's hand to her stomach.)

WINNIE

Nothing? (Beat.) Soon, you'll feel the baby. Our child, Tom. Having a child can be a creative thing, too. It could be a beautiful opportunity for us. So what are you going to do?

(TOM doesn't reply.)

WINNIE

Tom? What about it?

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TOM

(Resignedly) Well. It's our baby. We'll do this together. Maybe we'll go to Toronto after all. I could get a job in commercial design again. It'll take a little time to get started, but I can do it.

WINNIE

Oh, Tom.

TOM

I'll sort things out. That painting I sold. I didn't tell you but I squirreled away most of that money. I was hoping I could stretch it out for another year of painting. Now I can use it to buy us some time.

WINNIE

That's wonderful, Tom.

TOM

I left the money on account with Shannon.

WINNIE

(Shocked) Shannon Fraser, keeping money for you?

TOM

Better than the bank in Huntsville. I can get it whenever I want here.

WINNIE

You must be kidding. Shannon Fraser?

TOM

Shannon's promised me interest, too. He said he'd pay me back, any time I want. I'll see him tomorrow.

WINNIE

I sure hope you're right.

(WINNIE shakes her head and shrugs.)

Tom, I told my parents I'd be staying in their cottage tonight.

(TOM moves over and WINNIE puts her head on his shoulder.)

TOM

You'll be at the cottage alone?

(WINNIE reaches for TOM.)

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WINNIE

I hope not.

(They embrace.)

TOM

Tonight!

(They exit in different directions.)

SCENE 5:

(Mowat Lodge. The sound of early morning birds continues through the scene.)

(ANN picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it.)

ANN

(Narrates) *Early next morning, Mowat Lodge.*

(ANN sweeping vigorously, muttering.)

(TOM enters hurriedly, disheveled, and carrying a sketchbox.)

TOM

Annie, I've got find Shannon.

ANN

Tom Thomson, what's the hurry?

TOM

Where's Shannon, Annie?

ANN

You mean 'The Laird of Mowat Lodge'? (Beat.) I don't know. When I'm not slavin' fer Shannon, or his mother, 'the Lady Fraser,' it's our wee little Aileen. (Beat.) Have you tried the stable?

TOM

I've checked there.

ANN

Shannon thinks I don't know he hides his whisky in the stable. (Beat.) Tom, the lodge is not doin' well...If it's summat tae do with Shannon and money, t'would be easier tae get soup from a stone.

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TOM

We had an agreement.

ANN

Did you now? Tom, all this rushin' about. Talkin' about money. Tis summat with Miss Trainor, is it?

TOM

What do you mean?

ANN

Yer expression.

TOM

Okay, I'm getting hitched.

ANN

I canna' believe it! The most confirmed bachelor in Algonquin Park? (Beat.) You been seein' Miss Trainor some years now, Tom. Did something come up?

TOM

Things happen.

ANN

A bun in the oven? (Beat.) Now I'm beginnin' tae appreciate yer predicament.

TOM

I've got to do what I can. (Beat.). And how about you? Is your Old Man getting any better?

ANN

When Shannon's drinkin', he's a terror, I grant you that. I try tae keep clear of him. He canna' control himself.

TOM

Say the word, Annie. Just say the word.

ANN

Nae, nae, he feels so bad afterwards. Sometimes weepin' in my arms like a babe. Tom, I don't know how tae feel. What tae think. My mind's confused.

TOM

You're better off without Shannon.

ANN

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Better off? A single woman with a bairn? Besides, with his business so bad, Shannon needs me more than ever.

TOM

Annie, you're always helping me. Feeding me. Letting me paint here.

ANN

Yer fine company, Tom.

(TOM opens his sketchbox and passes a panel to ANN .)

TOM

Annie, what do you think of this painting?

ANN (Examining it.)

The Northern Lights. Tis a powerful likeness.

TOM

Think so? I painted it at night.

ANN

How? How could you see what you were paintin'?

TOM

A lamp light. I spent the night at George Rowe's cabin. Set up my sketchbox on a table. I'd walk out, look at the lights, then go back in and paint. (Beat). I want to give it to you.

ANN

I canna' take it.

(ANN returns the painting to him.)

TOM (Looking it over critically)

What's the matter? Not good enough?

ANN

Nae, Tom, tis pure barry. But yer too poor to give yer work away. I canna' afford tae pay you fer it. Send it to Toronto. Sell it there.

TOM

(Offering it again) Please take it. It's all I got.

ANN

I canna' ...

(TOM puts the panel away.)

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TOM

Annie, now that my life is going to change in some big ways, could you help me? What about if I hang all my sketches in the dining room? Make a show of them one night. Maybe sell some to your guests.

ANN

Sounds like a fine idea, Tom. But Shannon's the one tae ask, not me.

TOM

And I'd like to see all my Spring sketches together, one time. Noone ever's tried to paint a season in Algonquin Park before. And I could use the money, Annie.

ANN

Tom, it's Shannon's business.

TOM

(Smiling) Would you speak to him, please? Just about the art show. I'll keep on him about my money.

ANN

Smile like that, Tom, I canna' say no...I'll do what I can. Try tae talk Shannon 'round.

(SHANNON enters.)

SHANNON

Always the same goddamn thing. Skinflint locals staying at the lodge, nothing but bloody complaints. And the handwringin' when I give them their bill.

TOM

Shannon!

SHANNON

Thunderin' Jesus, Tom, old buddy. What can I do you for? Say, Tom, you'll like this: "What's the difference between a Canadian and a canoe?"

TOM

A canoe sometimes tips.

SHANNON

Gotcha! (Beat.) Tom, I gotta' tell ya, business is bad! We had lots of Americans at Mowat Lodge over the years. Fine fellas, families, too, free-spending. Not like your typical Canadians. And now America's at war. The Yanks are going to Europe this summer -- there goes the business! Unless the German tourists start coming over in submarines.

TOM

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Shannon, it's about the money I lent you.

SHANNON

Money, that's why you're here?

TOM

I need my loan back. We had an agreement.

SHANNON

That loan?

ANN

I've things to attend. (ANN flees but listens nearby)

SHANNON

Thomson, let me tell you something. Back in the day, things looked plenty promising for Mowat Lodge. A railroad. Articles in magazines about the need for 're-creation.'

TOM

You got paying guests now.

SHANNON

I'm not even breaking even, Thomson.

TOM

For Christ's sake, Shannon, I lent you two hundred and fifty dollars. You promised to repay me with interest..

SHANNON

Back off, Thomson. (Beat). First of all, it was two-thirty-five, not two-fifty. I recall you had a bit of a bender at the lodge. Last year, October?

TOM

Right, sorry, I forgot. Call it two hundred and thirty-five dollars.

SHANNON

And don't forget, you stayed at Mowat Lodge whenever you liked. Only seventy-five cents a night. Well, food and fuel has gone up in the last two years. Room and board has been a dollar sixty-five for the last year and a half. War-time inflation.

TOM

Then what about my war-time chores? Cutting ice, chopping firewood, putting in your garden. I've been working for you for months -- a dollar-ten per night.

SHANNON

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You're not working every day -- a dollar thirty-five. My last offer! (Beat). Ann, I know you're out there listening. Get me a paper and pencil. We'll fix the terms.

TOM

I haven't agreed to anything.

SHANNON

Ann, paper, pencil!

(ANN hurries in.)

ANN

I was workin' nearby.

SHANNON

I bet you were. You were listening at the door. You might as well be a witness, too.

ANN

Very well. Shannon, Tom, why don't you each write down what you think yer accounts should be. Then you can check this against yer records.

SHANNON

I said, witness. Not judge.

TOM

I agree with Ann. I want to check a calendar. I didn't stay in the lodge much last year.

ANN

It's easy tae make mistakes with accounts. I make them all the time.

SHANNON

(To ANN ) You stay out of it.

TOM

I'm listening to her.

ANN

It takes a wee bit of time, Shannon. I am certain things'll work out.

SHANNON

Do what you want, damn it! I'm not promising a thing.

ANN

I know yer both worried about money. But here's summat I thought of. Shannon, yer always thinkin' of new ways tae entertain our guests, and to charge them. Why not have an exhibition of Tom's paintings next Saturday?

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SHANNON

Why would I do that?

ANN

Here's the thing. I could make some pies. You could sell food and drink.

SHANNON

You know how the park rangers feel about liquor.

ANN

There be exceptions. Cordials. Medicinals. I'll leave that tae you.

TOM

Shannon, if we have an exhibition and I sell a few paintings, I'll let you choose two.

SHANNON

Pay me in paintings? I'll take cash, thanks. A percentage.

ANN

Sure, we won' take money from Tom.

SHANNON

(Warning her) Stay out of it. (Beat). Twenty percent.

TOM

That's gallery rate. (Beat). Ten. And we invite everyone around Canoe Lake.

ANN

We could have a dance.

TOM

I could ask George and Lowrie to play.

SHANNON

Let me think this through. Next Saturday, Tom puts up his paintings for sale in the lodge.  
(Looking at Tom) I get fifteen percent--

TOM

Ten—

SHANNON

--Ten. We throw a party with a dance where I sell drinks. There's food which I also sell. (Beat).  
How much do I pay George and Lowrie for the music?

TOM

They'd do it for drinks.

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ANN

Donna' give them too many.

SHANNON (offering his hand)

It's a deal. Next week, Saturday night. Shake?

TOM

(Shaking Shannon's hand) Shake on it. (Beat.) Now I've got some painting to do. And some accounts, Shannon.

(TOM leaves).

SHANNON

The cheek of him! (Beat). And what were you doing? Taking his side. We've got a business to run. And I can't even depend on you.

ANN

You were ready tae pummel each other.

SHANNON

So what? I could take him, easy. Some people around here need a good smack every now and then.

ANN

He's yer friend.

SHANNON

I'm beginning to see Thomson for what he is. A grasper.

ANN

(Pleading) Tom's desperate. He's marryin' Winnie Trainor. Between you and me, I would nae be surprised were she in the family way.

SHANNON

Oh, is that it? You should have told me before. (Beat). I wonder what Winnie's parents are going to say about that? I don't see old Hugh Trainor taking the news very well.

ANN

You would nae tell.

SHANNON

I don't know what you said. I never made any promises to Tom. Hugh Trainor's my neighbor. At least when the family's at the cottage, he's my neighbour. He has a right to look after his daughter.

Tom Thomson Is Missing

ANN

I told you about Winnie in strict confidence.

SHANNON

I might tell Hugh now. I might tell him later. The way I see it, there's been a lot of broken faith lately. People disappointing me, 'specially you.

ANN

Shan, I've got a great many things tae do. I haven't started the guests' lunch.

SHANNON

You remember last time? I didn't think you'd forget that quickly.

ANN

Don't touch me.

SHANNON

(Pointing) You need to learn something about loyalty.

(SHANNON propels her offstage.)

SHANNON

Come on.

SCENE 6:

(The sound of a train arriving.)

(WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces the triangle.)

WINNIE

(Narrates) *Morning. Canoe Lake Station.*

(WINNIE waits, arms crossed, without her bag. TOM rushes over.)

WINNIE

Only half an hour late this time. You're getting better.

TOM

(Breathless) I'm a new man, scared straight. How are you, Winnie?

(TOM touches her belly.)

WINNIE

(Taking his hand) We're fine.

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

TOM

Your parents still don't know, right?

WINNIE

Mother's watching me. I've been sick alot.

TOM

Do you think you can keep it a secret for a few more weeks?

WINNIE

I think so. What do we do now?

TOM

Get married, I guess. Less of a shock when they find out you're pregnant.

WINNIE

Oh, Tom, married! (Beat.) Wait, we can't get married in Huntsville.

TOM

Any place but Huntsville. I've got a friend near Bella Lake. We can get married at the Billie Bear Lodge. I'll write ahead and ask them to set up a minister. We could stay the weekend. A honeymoon.

WINNIE

I've never done anything like this in my life. It's like something from a story.

TOM

Cinderella?

WINNIE

Cinderella had a gown and glass slippers. What am I going to wear? (Beat). Tom, you're not wearing your old suit.

TOM

It's a black suit.

WINNIE

It's so dirty. It could probably stand by itself.

TOM

It's black. Who's going to know?

WINNIE

It's our wedding day. You need a new suit.

Tom Thomson Is Missing

TOM

Winnie, shouldn't we save a few bucks?

WINNIE

What about that money from Shannon?

TOM

You can go ahead and get a new dress. I don't need anything.

WINNIE

You're getting a new suit, Tom Thomson. (Beat.) What happened when you met Shannon?

TOM

We're discussing things.

WINNIE

Shannon Fraser, I knew it.

TOM

Everything will work out. Shannon's even offering me a show. Next Saturday, my paintings will be hanging in the lodge. And I'll be selling some to the guests. There'll be a big shindig that night. Can you come?

WINNIE

I don't think so.

TOM

It's going to be my first solo exhibition. (Beat.). Remember, you said I should show my work.

WINNIE

I'd love to come, Tom. (Beat). But what do I tell my parents?

TOM

Right. They're not going to let you spend the night with me.

WINNIE

Wait, I could ask my friend, Irene. She'll be taking her family to her cottage next Friday. I could tell them I was going to stay with her. (Beat). It means telling Irene something.

TOM

Can she keep a secret?

WINNIE

Cross her heart and hope to die?

TOM

Tom Thomson Is Missing

Two weeks?

WINNIE

Ten days.

TOM

(Taking her arm) We'll be married by then.

WINNIE

(Gently pushing him away) Tom, you never asked.

TOM

Winnie, c'mon, do I have to get down on one knee? Like something out of King Arthur's court?

WINNIE

Uh hunh.

(TOM bends down on one knee. WINNIE offers her hand.  
TOM takes her hand and kisses it.)

WINNIE

(Withdrawing her hand) Not good enough. Not nearly.

TOM

Miss Winnifred Trainor, a lady of Huntsville, Ontario, may I have the privilege?

WINNIE

You never asked to marry me.

TOM

Miss Winnifred Trainor, a lady of Huntsville, Ontario, will you marry me?

WINNIE

(Withdrawing her hand) Not quite.

TOM

What do you want?

WINNIE

I don't know, you'd better start thinking.

(TOM takes a ring from his pocket. He takes her hand and  
places the ring on her finger.)

TOM

Tom Thomson Is Missing

(Haltingly) Winnie, I'm not the best of men. I don't have a job or prospects. And we're marrying in haste. For a good reason. But in you, I see a very special woman, honest and loving. I'll try my best to make you happy.

(TOM kneels down and takes her hand.)

TOM

Will you marry me?

WINNIE

Yes, Tom, I will.

(TOM and WINNIE exit.)

SCENE 7:

(Mowat Lodge. Sound of birds which continues throughout the scene.)

(ANN picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it. She begins sweeping.)

ANN

(Narrates) *Mowat Lodge. Saturday afternoon.*

WINNIE

(Entering) Ann, what happened to your face?

ANN

I fell.

WINNIE

That must hurt. Can I help in the kitchen?

(ANN pulls the broom back.)

ANN

I don't need your help.

WINNIE

Ann, there must be so much to do. And I'm so grateful that you got Tom a show. He always talks about his friends at Mowat Lodge.

ANN

Tom's partial tae my cookin'. So, I'm puttin' out his favorites. Crackling pork belly. Roast deer.

WINNIE

Tom Thomson Is Missing

There must be something I can do. (Beat.) Please, let me help.

ANN

I'm not certain you should be here at all. Tom's a batchelor. If people see an older lass hangin' on him, well, I donna' think I need tell you.

WINNIE

You have a lot of nerve.

ANN

Is that so? There's some with little reputation. (Beat.) We looked after Tom a long time.

WINNIE

And I'll be taking over.

ANN

Tom prefers his own company. He's not a social man.

WINNIE

How would you know?

ANN

I see a fair number of people at the lodge. Tom is different. He loves walking alone in the forest, talkin' to himself. Sometimes I think he's like a songbird, the red-breasted robin. Or the blue jay. You hear their bonny calls in the woods, in the clearin'. You never domesticate them. You never put one in a cage.

WINNIE

You don't know what you're talking about. Tom asked me to marry him.

ANN

What choice did he have?

WINNIE

Is that what you think? (Beat.) You say you've done so much for Tom. You've been quick to take advantage. And Shannon still hasn't given him his money.

ANN

I have nothin' to do with that!

WINNIE

I think I can make Tom happy. I'm going to try to make that true.

ANN

There's no need fer you to tarry here, Miss Trainor. Be on your way.

Tom Thomson Is Missing

WINNIE

I'm coming back here tonight. And I don't want to talk to you about Tom or anything else. This is Tom's night. I think we both want his success. I'll leave you to your kitchen.

ANN

May you find the married state to yer likin'.

WINNIE

To Hell with you!

(WINNIE exits.)

SCENE 8:

(ANN picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it. TOM enters.)

TOM

(Narrates) *Saturday night. Mowat Lodge.*

(TOM mimes carrying in paintings and finding places for them on walls.)

TOM

I've hung my sketches around the dining room. Not enough room! I've put some in the parlor. And the sitting room.

(TOM mimes, searching through his wood panels.)

*Woods in Winter. The Pointers. Spring Flood. Tea Lake Dam. After the Storm.* So many panels! I've placed them in the order I painted them – at least I tried. (Beat.) Sketch by sketch, someone walking through the rooms can follow the seasons.

Melting snow. Creeks and rivers bursting the ice. Patches of new, green life. All around me, the spring.

(WINNIE enters. The sound of a small and growing crowd.)

WINNIE

Has anyone in this crowd even been to an art gallery? They like Tom well enough. Maybe they'll like the show and buy something. They're coming in!

(ANN enters and removes her apron. WINNIE goes to TOM and slips her arm into his. They freeze.)

(The sound of the crowd stops.)

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

ANN

Look at that tart! Who's she? The Queen of Sheba? I got Shannon tae let Tom hang his pictures. I got the bruises to show fer it.

(ANN freezes.)

WINNIE

There's Ann. I wonder where that witch's broomstick is.

(The noise of the crowd resumes, growing.)

(ANN walks over to TOM and WINNIE and slips her good arm into TOM's. He is surprised and delighted. WINNIE is very annoyed. They look at paintings. WINNIE and ANN exchange nasty looks.)

(SHANNON enters carrying a tray with a bottle of whiskey and shot glasses. He takes orders for drinks. He looks at Tom's paintings and then at the crowd, in the direction of the audience. The other actors freeze.)

SHANNON

Look at that. There's a helluva of a lot people here. And Thomson's put up every painting he did this year. Each painting, twenty dollars. Apiece. That's nearly two weeks' stay at the Mowat Lodge. You can't tell me it takes him two weeks to do a little painting. It's not fair.

TOM

Shannon, how about a shot!

(SHANNON brings over the whiskey bottle and TOM takes a shot and passes it back. SHANNON takes another slug.)

(Sound of fiddlers tuning up their instruments.)

WINNIE

George and Lowrie are tuning up!

(The actors begin to clap their hands, and stamp their feet in Rhythm to the beat of *The Canadian Barn Dance*. Fiddle music builds.)

TOM, WINNIE, ANN, and SHANNON

The Canadian Barn Dance!

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

(The four actors form two couples, TOM and WINNIE, SHANNON and ANN, facing anticlockwise, the men on the inside, and the women on the outside. As each couple dances, the characters exchange remarks and look toward the paintings hanging on the walls. In this traditional folk dance, men and women change partners. In round two, TOM dances with ANN and SHANNON with WINNIE. In a twist, for round three, Tom dances with Shannon, Winnie with ANN.)

1- 4 Each dancer starts with their outside foot, walks forward for three steps, and hops, walks backwards for three steps, and hops.

5- 8 Each dancer skips sideways away from their partner, men towards the centre, women moving outwards for two steps. With a clap, each dancer returns to their partner in a waltz hold.

9-12 Each dancer skips sideways (the women on the men's left) for two steps and back.

13-16 Each couple polkas anticlockwise round the room, then the male dancers look over their shoulders, take two steps back, and take the arm of their new partners, beginning round two.

Everybody from Canoe Lake's here!

WINNIE (Dancing with TOM)

Are they going to like my work?

TOM

Is he going to sell any?

SHANNON (Dancing with ANN )

Of course he will!

ANN

(All four actors bow to their partners and switch them so that TOM and ANN dance and SHANNON and WINNIE.)

No one's buying.

TOM (Dancing with ANN )

Give them time, Tom.

ANN

You're getting heavy.

SHANNON (Dancing with WINNIE)

You're getting older.

WINNIE

In the family way, are you?

SHANNON

WINNIE

Tom Thomson Is Missing

How dare you?

(WINNIE angrily breaks off her dance with SHANNON. TOM moves from ANN and crosses to intervene. SHANNON stops TOM. Suddenly, arguments break out and the two different pairs, TOM and SHANNON, WINNIE and ANN all start arguing at once.

You're making sales, I feel it.

SHANNON

Ten percent. That's all you get.

TOM

Tom used tae be a free-spirit.

ANN

You mean he worked for free.

WINNIE

When do I get my percentage?

SHANNON

When do you pay me back the loan?

TOM

I looked after him at Mowat Lodge.

ANN

You looked after yourselves.

WINNIE

(ANN and SHANNON leave.)

SCENE 9:

(There is the sound of a crowd, sometimes raucous laughter.)

(WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it.)

WINNIE

(Narrates) *Tom's exhibition, Mowat Lodge.*

(ANN puts on the same fake spectacles and moustache that she wore in Scene 3. SHANNON puts on several different

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

different hats, signifying a middle-aged woman, a cheapskate, and an old timer. As these different characters walk through the exhibition, TOM follows them anxiously, and reacts accordingly.)

WINNIE

People have been looking at Tom's paintings all evening. Dr. MacCallum came –

ANN (as Dr. MacCallum)

(Shaking hands with TOM) Glad to be here, Tom.

TOM

Thank you so much for coming, Doctor.

ANN

(Waving him off) Had to see how the old boy was doing.

WINNIE

Everyone else was local.

SHANNON (Wearing a woman's hat with a scarf

tied around his neck) These all landscapes from here?

ANN (as Dr. MacCallum)

Every single one.

SHANNON

All from Algonquin Park?

ANN

Yes, Tom painted them in Algonquin Park.

SHANNON

I've lived here for --- for a while, I don't recognize any.

ANN

Not one?

SHANNON

Not one.

ANN

Well, m'am, to each his own.

SHANNON

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

The same to you, sir.

WINNIE

People have different reactions, of course. An artist has his own way of looking at things, his own feelings to express. A painting is not a photograph. I wish people here understood.

I like 'em. All of 'em.

SHANNON (as a local, with a tuque and pom pom)

Thank you.

TOM

How much do you want?

SHANNON

Twenty dollars.

TOM

Twenty bucks? For one? Any one?

SHANNON

You heard me.

TOM

Would you take five?

SHANNON

No.

TOM

People don't realize when they buy a painting, how much thought and effort went into it.

WINNIE

Thirty-nine years, a lifetime!

TOM

(Wearing a different hat, an old timer, he points to a picture.) I like this one very much.

SHANNON

You do.

WINNIE

Only Tom could have painted this.

SHANNON

WINNIE

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

That's our boy.

SHANNON

I'd love to own a Tom Thomson. This one really suits me. I know the spot well, Tea Lake Dam. I been there many a time.

WINNIE

You going to buy it?

SHANNON

I'd like to. Really would. But where would I put it in my old cabin.

WINNIE

Just when it looks like no one is going to buy a painting, someone is buying one. It's Dr. MacCallum. He's taking it down. No, two! He's buying two paintings.

(Dr. MacCallum mimes taking two paintings down that he admires. TOM rushes over to him.)

TOM

Thank you, Doctor.

ANN (as Dr. MacCallum)

I love them. (Gesturing to the other paintings.) These are some of the best panels you've ever done. I'm taking two right now.

TOM

Could you take a few more?

ANN

Tom, I'm heading up to the cottage. I can't carry too much. I'll see you in Toronto.

TOM

In Toronto, then.

(ANN passes some money to TOM, exits. TOM counts the money and SHANNON carrying a tray of glasses and whiskey again, comes over with his hand out.)

WINNIE

Two paintings sold? From the whole show? Forty dollars. And the good doctor would have bought the paintings anyway. Now Tom has to pay Shannon ten percent. Poor Tom!

(TOM pays SHANNON the money.)

SHANNON

Tom Thomson Is Missing

(Shaking his head) Just two paintings sold. I made more coin on the pies and drink.

TOM

People are tired of looking. God, I could use a drink!

(TOM reaches for a drink from SHANNON's tray, but SHANNON takes the whiskey bottle and glasses away.)

SHANNON

The party's over, Thomson, you're cut off --

(SHANNON, ANN, and Winnie exit.)

SCENE 10:

(The sound of waves lapping against the shore.)

(TOM picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it. He goes to his canoe.)

TOM

(Narrates) *Sunday afternoon. Canoe Lake.*

(TOM pushes his canoe into the water and jumps in.)

(The sound of a moving canoe in the water.)

TOM

What the hell do I do? Where the hell do I go? Up the lake? Down it? Catch a train out of here?

(SHANNON and WINNIE take a length of blue cotton or nylon and start waving it like a blanket, simulating waves that TOM must cross during this scene. TOM starts paddling furiously, on one side of the canoe. TOM abruptly stops.)

TOM

I've got thirty-six bucks. I've got Winnie now and a child on the way. I could weep. And Shannon's still got my money. That makes me furious!

(TOM throws his paddle into the canoe. As if his canoe is coming to rest, SHANNON and WINNIE slow down the waving of their blanket.)

TOM

But why do anything at all? I could run away -- free again!

(After thinking about it, TOM decides against this, and he

Tom Thomson Is Missing

picks up his paddle again.)

TOM

No! I'm going back to Mowat Lodge. I'm getting my money back. No matter what I do.

(TOM resumes paddling forcefully. SHANNON and WINNIE pick up their speed. TOM lays down his paddle and exits.)

SCENE 11:

(The sound of a long, lonesome train whistle.)

(WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it. She waits, arms crossed, crying.)

WINNIE

(Narrates) *Sunday afternoon. Canoe Lake Station.*

TOM

(Walking to her) I came as soon as I heard.

WINNIE

I can't go home. My father knows.

TOM

What?

WINNIE

He was gone in the morning. When he came back, he shouted, 'Someone should teach that goddamned Thomson a lesson.' He smelled of whiskey. He stared at Mother. 'What the hell have you done? Raising a daughter like that thing.' He pointed at me, but he never looked. 'I never thought this would happen under my roof.' That's what he said to Mother.

TOM

How did he find out?

WINNIE

Mother said he got it from Shannon Fraser.

TOM

Shannon? He must have beaten it from Annie.

WINNIE

Ann knew?

TOM

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

Annie more or less guessed. I'm sorry, Winnie.

WINNIE

Tom, how could you? My own father told me to leave the house. Never come back. I got a few of my things and went to Irene's house. Tom, what am I going to do?

TOM

Stay at Irene's for a while. Just till next weekend. The Billie Bear Lodge confirmed. They've got us a minister. (Beat.) We'll go West. Make a new start, maybe Banff.

WINNIE

I heard it's a good place for scenery. Good for you anyway.

TOM

There's not just painting. There's a lot of things a fellow can do there. Fishing. Guiding. Rangering. A good life.

WINNIE

For you? What about me? (Beat.) Have you got the money from Shannon?

TOM

I'm working on it.

WINNIE

Oh, Tom. I guess we better not make this any worse than it is. We'll have a few hours together then I better get to Huntsville.

TOM

(Reaches for WINNIE) Winnie, don't worry. It's going to work out.

(They embrace.)

WINNIE

I don't know what to do any more.

TOM

Wait it out. I won't let you down.

(TOM and WINNIE exit.)

SCENE 12:

(The sound of frogs at night.)

(SHANNON picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it. SHANNON, drunk, is taking a swig from a bottle of Scotch. TOM enters.)

Tom Thomson Is Missing

SHANNON

(Narrates) *The Mowat Lodge stable. Eight PM.*

SHANNON

You tracked me down.

TOM

I know where the Scotch is. (Beat.) So does Annie.

SHANNON

Never underestimate women.

TOM

Not Annie.

SHANNON

And why would I do that? (Beat.) Care for a snort?

(SHANNON passes the bottle. TOM swigs from it.)

TOM

Why not?

(SHANNON drinks again and keeps the bottle in his hand.)

SHANNON

Annie's gotta understand. Everything we've worked for. We're this far from losing it.

(SHANNON makes the zero gesture with his fingers.)

TOM

What about the money, Shannon?

(TOM takes out a piece of paper and refers to it).

TOM

You owe me one hundred and sixty-two dollars and forty cents. You can keep the change, Shannon.

SHANNON

Not that damn business again, Thomson. (Beat.) Fine, for old times' sake, I'll give you your goddamn money. Minus your days at Mowat Lodge. By my books, I owe you thirty-five dollars and ninety cents.

Tom Thomson Is Missing

(SHANNON puts down his bottle by the stool. TOM seizes him by the shirt.)

TOM

Thirty-five bucks!

(SHANNON breaks the hold and pushes TOM back.)

SHANNON

Son of a bitch.

TOM

You stole my money!

(TOM pushes SHANNON. He pushes back.)

SHANNON

Big man! If you don't like my offer, so what?

(TOM punches SHANNON. SHANNON shoves him away. They start swinging at each other. A terrific fight begins.)

TOM

You told Hugh about Winnie, didn't you?

SHANNON

(Striking back clumsily.) He had a right to know you were screwing his daughter. You're just a bum, Thomson.

(TOM knocks SHANNON down. He gets up and throws TOM down.)

TOM

(Getting up) You're a wife-beater. You hit Annie!

SHANNON

Shut up!

TOM

You don't think people can tell? You coward!

SHANNON

Goddamn you!

(SHANNON swings the bottle, striking TOM in the left temple.)

Tom Thomson Is Missing

SHANNON

You're a bum!

(TOM falls to the ground. He lies motionless. SHANNON drops the bottle and goes over. SHANNON shakes him.)

SHANNON

You never worked a day in your life. (Beat.) Get up, Thomson, you lazy son of a bitch.

(SHANNON continues shaking him.)

SHANNON

Tom, get up...Holy shit...

(SHANNON finds no pulse or sign of life from TOM.)

SHANNON

Oh, my God! (He rushes away.)

(The sound of long sustained train whistle.)

(WINNIE enters and stands alone.)

WINNIE

Tom, where are you! Tom Thomson.

(TOM, a ghost, rises and walks offstage.)

SCENE 13:

(The sound of crickets.)

(SHANNON picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and replaces it.)

SHANNON

(Narrates) *July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1917, night. Canoe Lake shore.*

(SHANNON drags TOM's body, trussed up in a canvas tarp. ANN enters with a lamp, sees SHANNON, rushes over.)

ANN

Shannon? Shannon –

SHANNON

Tom Thomson Is Missing

Get out of here, Ann. Git back to the house.

ANN

What are you doin'?

(ANN hurries over and looks under the tarp.)

ANN

Sweet Jesus! It's Tom ---

SHANNON

Shut up. Just shut up!

ANN

What 'ave you done?

SHANNON

It was a fight, goddamn it. We were drunk. He swung at me. I knocked him down. He hit his head on the fire grate.

ANN

It's a judgement. I warned you about drinkin'.

(SHANNON grabs ANN.)

SHANNON

You listen to me. He started it. Otherwise it never woulda' happened.

(ANN pushes SHANNON away.)

ANN

Take yer hands from me, Shannon Fraser. It was about Tom's money. (Beat.) You need tae report this. Tell the police it was an accident. He was yer friend.

SHANNON

Oh, yeah. And if they don't believe me? I owed him money. Prison? Maybe even the hangman. And if I'm in prison, what about our business? Tom had a lot of friends. Even if they didn't send me to prison, once this story gets out, my reputation is ruined. Everything we worked for. Gone.

ANN

You got tae tell the truth. It's the Christian thing tae do, Shannon.

SHANNON

Don't get holy with me. What happens to you and Allie for Christ's sake? What about my mother? You'll go to the poorhouse.

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

ANN

And his family? And Winnie? What about them? They have the right tae know.

SHANNON

We can't bring him back. What good's tellin' gonna' do? His family, his friends, Winnie, they're all just going to feel worse. We got to keep quiet about this.

ANN

Don't tempt me.

SHANNON

No, you gotta help me. I've gotta tie some rocks to his body. Wrap a line around his legs. They'll never find the body at the bottom of the lake.

ANN

Stop talkin'! Let me think.

SHANNON

You can turn me in, Ann. Otherwise you gotta shut up about this.

ANN

Stop it!

SHANNON

Everything's gonna' be a lot better if it's a canoe accident. An accident can't be helped. It was no one's fault. It was just fate. Fate. (Beat.) What'll it be, Ann?

ANN

All right, all right. But I'd sooner serve in Hell.

SHANNON

Welcome to Hell. Now help me push out Tom's canoe. We've got to paddle it into the middle of the lake.

(They lift the body nearer to the canoe.)

ANN

I'll ne'er forgive myself. Not if I live tae a hundred.

SHANNON

You're always saying, 'The Lord helps them what helps themselves.'

ANN

That's the Devil speaking.

SHANNON

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

Everyone's gonna' think Tom had an accident. Which he did. (Beat.) When we get back to the dock, I'll get another boat. I'll tow Tom's canoe out in the lake. I'll tip it over. It'll look like old Tom had a canoeing accident...Ann, c'mon, I'm not gonna' let you sit this part out.

ANN

For God's sake. Now you listen tae me, Shannon. Yer never tae lay a hand on me again. Or by Christ, I'll tell all.

SHANNON

All right. I swear it.

ANN

I want tae hear you say that again.

SHANNON

(Raising his hand) I swear never to lay a hand on you. From now on. Ever.

SHANNON

Now let's go.

(SHANNON and ANN lift the body into the canoe. They begin paddling. TOM and WINNIE begin moving the blue cloth to simulate waves as in Scene 10.)

(There is the sound of a canoe on water.)

SHANNON

This is deep enough.

(SHANNON and ANN stop paddling.)

ANN

Sweet Jesus...

(They dump THOMSON over the side of the canoe.)

ANN

(Crossing herself and praying.) The Lord bless him and keep him...and give him peace...Amen.

(ANN and SHANNON leave the canoe and take the body offstage.)

SCENE 14:

(The sound of a summer thunderstorm which continues during Winnie's speech.)

(WINNIE picks up the triangle from the stool, rings it, and

replaces it.)

WINNIE

(Narrates) *Canoe Lake. Epilogue.* Tom! What happened! I call your name again and again. You never answer. You're not there. Only in my dreams. You've left me. Not a widow. Not even a bride. An unwed mother.

SHANNON

(Brushing off his hands.) That was it. No one knew what happened to poor old Tom Thomson. They looked for him. Up and down the woods. Mark Robinson blowing his whistle. Gone. (Beat). Noone suspected me. Then wouldn't you know it? The body floated to the surface. Eight days later. SHIT!

(WINNIE and ANN drag the tarp with TOM's body to the grass. TOM's body rolls out. They mime digging a grave and burying TOM during SHANNON's speech.)

SHANNON

Luckily, the coroner's verdict was accidental death by drowning. Now I had helped organize the search for Tom --in the forest—so, I took on the job of getting my dear friend buried, right near the Canoe Lake cemetery. His body had been in the water a long time. It was a rush job.

ANN

People say that Winnifred Trainor carried her baby tae term. She's supposed tae have travelled tae Philadelphia with her mother fer a few months. There, in a big city, a 'wee un' could be discreetly placed fer adoption.

WINNIE

Right after Tom's death, I contacted his family. Shannon denied he owed Tom money. In fact, he claimed expenses for organizing the search and getting Tom buried. Tom's family hired an undertaker to take the body home to Leith, Ontario, a Mr. Churchill.

ANN

The man arrived at night with a metal casket and he refused offers of help. Now that's strange.

(SHANNON mimes offering help to WINNIE as CHURCHILL. He refuses help, then starts digging, quickly tiring, then resting and fanning himself. Finally, he starts shoving gravel into a metal casket.)

ANN

Working alone fer a few hours with a lamp, Mr. Churchill claimed tae have dug up the coffin with Tom's body inside. He said that he dragged the body into the metal casket. He sealed it and took it to the station, for the first train. When the railway workers lifted the casket onto the train, the contents seemed to shift around. Like dirt and rocks.

## Tom Thomson Is Missing

SHANNON

I did the old boy a favor. Think about it. Tom's mysterious death heightened the Tom Thomson legend. Tom gave me a few sketches, you know. God, if I'd only kept my hands on them! And what about all those twenty-dollar Thomsons we put up that night? A few years ago, one of them little sketches sold for \$780,000. A full-size Thomson painting like "The West Wind" was worth two and a half million dollars! I sure could have used a few sketches when the Mowat Lodge burned down.

ANN

Long after we passed, the Tom Thomson mystery continues. Sure, Tom is buried in two graves. Some think he rests in Leith, Ontario where his family lived. Sharin' a grave with two relatives.

SHANNON

Others believe Tom was never taken from Algonquin Park. That his body lies in that unmarked grave where I had him buried, near the old Mowat Village cemetery, a little cemetery on the hill.

WINNIE

Many times I went to that cemetery over my long, lonely life. A picket fence encloses two graves. A large birch tree with limbs like arms, stands watch. The tree says, "Here, over here."

(WINNIE, ANN, and SHANNON lift TOM from the ground. TOM dusts himself off.)

TOM

When I first came to Algonquin Park in 1912, I found that sad little cemetery. I took a photograph of a gravestone. It had this epitaph --

TOM, then WINNIE, ANN, SHANNON (repeat)  
Remember Comrades (when passing by)  
As you are now so once was I...

TOM

I even painted by that cemetery. Can you imagine? That one day, in a tangle of raspberry vines, and rotting brown leaves, near that same picket fence, circled by a few young spruce trees...

WINNIE, ANN, and SHANNON

You'd lie buried! Buried in the same cemetery.

TOM

So, I painted by Canoe Lake. Making sketches, my records, of how I felt on the land I loved, under the pine and spruce trees. Days of charged, luminous beauty, I awakened you!

(A train whistle blasts twice.)

(TOM collapses into the arms of WINNIE and ANN. The actors freeze.)