

Bonus scene *A Newfound Land*: In which Isaac attempts to cope with the loss of Magnus.

Autumn 2016

He was angry, mostly. At least when he was awake, in control of his thoughts. Days spent in a miasma of loss, hoping – always hoping – that next time he came home to Magnus' house, he'd be there, the entire house smelling of whatever it was Magnus was cooking. But he never was, and Isaac yet again drowned in anger. First his mother, then his grandfather, and now he was left utterly alone, without one single blood-relative. An exaggeration, he knew, because Dad was just as much his parent as any biological father might have been, and Diane hovered anxiously around him, trying to tell him with her presence that she was there should he want to talk. Except that he didn't, irritated by his step-mother's obvious concern. How could he talk to her, when Diane still had moments when she scoffed at the idea of people travelling through time?

"He chose to do this, you know," Dad said one day, coming to sit beside Isaac. They were standing on Carlton hill, Dad having nagged and nagged until Isaac agreed to go walking with him. It was cold, clouds the colour of slate driving in from the direction of the firth.

"He left me," Isaac replied. "Just like Mama did."

"Alex didn't leave you," Dad corrected, his mouth softening as it always did when he spoke of Mama. "She was yanked out of this time."

Isaac shrugged; semantics, according to him. Mama could have chosen to return to this time with him, all those years ago when Isaac unwittingly stared for too long at one of Mercedes' paintings and ended up tumbling through time, all the way to the seventeenth century and a shocked Mama. Propitiously, Mama had come upon one of Mercedes' paintings in her new time, and sometimes Isaac wondered at this coincidence. Had Mercedes known that someday her daughter might need a ticket back home? He shivered, closing his eyes to force away the image of his grandmother from his head. He'd never met Mercedes, but as his painting skills evolved – and especially while he'd been painting those miniature portals through time, copy-cattling her efforts – she had taken on shape and substance in his head, now and then appearing so real to him he was tempted to talk to her.

"But Offa chose," Isaac said, turning away from Dad. He was not yet seventeen, too young to be left so abandoned. Yet another spurt of anger surged through him.

"You gave him the wherewithal," Dad replied sharply. "Had you not painted that..."

"Shut up! Just shut up! I know, okay? But I did it when he was ill, and I painted two, but you destroyed one of them, so now there's no return ticket, and he is stuck there."

"Assuming he made it there."

"Where else would he be? Generally people don't go up in smoke, do they?"

"Generally, people don't travel through time either," Dad said with a crooked smile.

"No." Isaac sighed. "I miss him so much."

"We all do – and maybe Eva most of all."

The reprimand made Isaac frown. So far, he had avoided spending time alone with Eva, seeing in her eyes the same devastation he felt inside himself.

"What do you expect me to do?" he said. He liked Eva – loved her even – but at present he fled the house when she was there, returning only so late he could go directly to bed.

“Talk to her. After all, you share a home. Common decency requires you to now and then share a meal, a conversation.”

“I shouldn’t have moved in with her.” He’d acted on an impulse, once he’d realised Magnus had left him everything – including the house. Isaac had hoped living in the same house Magnus had lived in would make things easier, but it hadn’t, and there were days when he seriously regretted his rash decision, wanting nothing more than to return home to Dad and Diane, his pesky twin sisters and Cassandra the cat.

“You can always come back home,” Dad said in a light tone.

Isaac shook his head. “I think Eva would hate it if she was there alone.” Besides, Isaac needed to be there, close to his study. Not that he’d as much as touched a brush since Magnus disappeared, but every day he’d detour to the study that used to be Mercedes’ and now was his, a large room with huge windows facing the north. He’d pick up a crayon and try to draw, to at least produce a pleasant squiggle, but his fingers had grown numb and uncooperative. It worried him, in particular because his head was crammed up with images and ideas that had no way out, stuck in a clogged, clamouring queue. Maybe that was why so many artists went insane, maybe it was a reaction to having their heads taken over by pictures they could no longer commit to paper.

If he was angry during the day, Isaac was overcome by grief during the nights. In his dreams, Magnus would be back with him, laughing, cooking, teasing him about girls. But even in his dreams, Isaac knew it wasn’t true; Magnus was gone and wasn’t coming back. It made his heart ache, somehow, and most mornings he woke with an urge to cry. He never did.

Well into autumn, his dreams changed. No more dreams of Magnus as he was, these were dreams in sepias and greys populating his head with vague images he couldn’t quite discern – or remember properly when he woke up. But one morning he rose from his bed and walked straight into the studio

“Painting again?” Eva stuck her head into the study and gave Isaac a wide smile.

“Sort of,” Isaac replied, shielding the easel from her eyes with his body. No, he wasn’t painting; at most he supposed he was drawing, unformed images of tall trees and nothing else. At least his fingers were back to working again, and that in itself was a huge relief. He picked up a stick of charcoal and a bird burst into life on the large sheet of paper. He stood back and looked at it, found a tube of yellow ochre and coloured the breast and head of the bird.

“A Baltimore Oriole!” Eva exclaimed, standing just behind him.

“It is?” Isaac squinted at his drawing, “I had no idea.”

Eva looked at him strangely. “You had no idea?”

Isaac just shook his head, feeling like an absolute freak.

“I just saw it in my head,” he mumbled. Eva was frowning at the sketched trees.

“Sycamores,” she stated and then turned to face Isaac. “This is an American bird and those are American trees.”

“Really?” Isaac tried to sound disinterested without any success. Eva raised her brows at him.

“You’re seeing things,” she stated. Isaac reluctantly admitted that yes, he was.

“I dream, but it’s mostly trees,” he said, “miles after miles of trees.” He tilted his head to one side, raised the stick of charcoal and with a series of swift movements created an image of a long, low house; small windows, snug against a hillside and two chimneys, and as he stood there he suddenly knew that this was where they were – or at least had been.

Eva gnawed at her lip; "Maryland," she finally enunciated. "Good choice, given the colony's tolerant approach to religion."

"Maryland?" Isaac had but the vaguest notion of where that might be, somewhere on the eastern coast of the U.S. Eva nodded and stretched out her hand to nudge at the bright breast of the bird.

"I grew up there," she said, "well, to be quite correct I grew up in Washington D.C. but I spent a lot of time in Maryland with my Dad."

"Was he American?" Isaac sounded very surprised.

"He was a diplomat," Eva smiled, "English to the bone - and an avid ornithologist."

Isaac wasn't that interested; he sketched some more, and there were more buildings, a huge, solitary oak that shaded one side of the yard, and up beyond the house he was sure there was a kitchen garden. On the paper, a small homestead sprang into existence, as yet un-peopled, but very real, for all that it was mostly in greys. Like an ancient black and white photo, Isaac reflected as he took a step back from the easel.

"And these images come from your head as well?" Eva asked shakily. Isaac threw her a look; she'd gone quite pale.

"Yes," he said. He returned to his drawing. Behind him, Eva stood for some moments longer, her breathing very audible in the silent room. Finally she moved towards the door.

"Breakfast?"

"Later," Isaac replied. "Right now I have to finish this."

"Maryland?" John stood back to look at Isaac's by now extremely detailed sketch. A hollow of civilisation in the midst of so much untamed nature, he thought, and wondered how on earth Alex would cope with living there.

"That's what Eva thinks," Isaac said, "I frankly have no idea."

"Hmm," John gave his son a penetrating look. "But we'll never know, Isaac, and we won't set off on a wild goose chase just on the off chance." Isaac muttered something more or less inaudible, and John heard 'soon eighteen' and 'you can't stop me then'.

"Isaac!" John shook him. "There's nothing to find, you hear? Yes, they may have emigrated to the U.S. - that actually makes a lot of sense given what it was like in Scotland back then, but..."

"How like back in Scotland?" Isaac interrupted. John squirmed and in a rough voice admitted that he had been curious about what kind of life Alex might be leading, and so...

"Religious persecution was rife, and especially down in Ayrshire and around Cumnock the former Covenanters were hounded to an inch of their life." John sat down and scrubbed at his face. "Maybe that's what happened; maybe Matthew lost the farm or had to sell it to cover an atrocious fine and so all he could do was take his family over sea."

"But then..." Isaac threw him a desperate look, "but then they'd be destitute! That's all he had, Hillview was the single asset Matthew had." Isaac whirled back to study his depiction of the unknown homestead. "I think this is their home," he said in a low voice, and John sighed at the present tense, "and if so they're not starving, right?"

"No," John agreed, even if had no idea whatsoever, "I suppose they have enough to eat." He poked at his son. "Speaking of food, weren't you supposed to cook for me tonight?"

"Swedish meatballs," Isaac grinned, momentarily distracted, "is that okay?" he led the way downstairs.

In the studio the sketch rustled on the table. The paper seemed to twist with life, a faded shadow darted rapidly from the house to the privy and back, and then the paper subsided back into stillness.

Annapolis – 2017

Isaac had come on a whim. After months spent painting scenery that Eva insisted had to be Maryland, after hours spent pouring over what little information he could find about colonial Maryland, he had decided to come and look for himself, naively assuming that somehow, once he got there, he'd know exactly where they'd gone. No such luck; instead Isaac had spent a very disappointing morning in Annapolis. The enthusiastic lady at the Museum was extremely knowledgeable on the eighteenth century but had only the vaguest notions of how it would all have seemed in the seventeenth century, and when Isaac asked if there might be records dating that far back the guide hunched her shoulders apologetically, explaining that most such records had been lost in fires throughout the years.

"St Anne's was built late in the seventeenth century," she went on, "and I am not aware of any older buildings still surviving from the Providence era"

"Oh," Isaac nodded morosely.

"Are you looking for some long-ago relative?" the guide asked.

"Sort of," Isaac replied.

"You're a bit young to be into genealogy," the guide said with a warm smile.

Isaac felt nervous laughter bubbling up from his belly as he considered how the guide would react if he explained that the people he was trying to find were his mother and grandfather. She smiled again, and he thought she looked very nice when she did that, blue eyes flashing in the sun – almost like Mama's.

"Maybe you should try the antique shop," the guide suggested, "maybe you can find something there."

Isaac perked up. "Are there any shops anywhere close?"

"Shop, not shops. On the other side of the capitol," the guide said. "Up Main Street, cross the park that surrounds the Capitol, and you'll see it."

The bell mounted on the doorframe jangled loudly and a wizened old man popped up from behind the counter, glasses hanging precariously off an impressively long nose.

"Yes?" he snapped, eyeing Isaac as if he were a potential criminal.

"Umm," Isaac said, somewhat taken aback by the brandished gun. The old man followed his look and hastily lowered the pistol.

"It's plugged," he said drily.

"Well, that's a relief," Isaac said and took a step further into the crammed little shop. The whole space smelled of potpourri, and as he wandered around he saw several porcelain bowls filled with dried rose petals.

"My wife," the old man said, indicating the fragrant mixture.

"Oh," Isaac nodded and began a slow walk around the small space. The coming hour woke in Isaac a permanent interest in old things. He had never seen a spindle before and listened entranced as the enthusiastic proprietor explained it to him, he browsed over antique pipes, over enamelled snuff boxes. He handled old books, he bought a beautiful silver brooch for Diane, but so far he had seen nothing that looked old enough to be from the seventeenth century. He did yet another walkabout.

“Are you looking for something special?” the old man asked. In a hesitant voice, Isaac explained that he was looking for items from the seventeenth century.

“Why?” Two curious brown eyes studied him over the rim.

“I have... relatives who came here then,” Isaac replied.

“Mmm,” the man said sarcastically, “and now you’re hoping to unearth a diary full with detail of their long gone mundane life.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” Isaac replied with substantial dignity, “but I’m not entirely daft either, am I?”

The shopkeeper’s lips stretched into a reluctant smile. “Hard to find,” he informed Isaac, “stuff from that long ago has generally perished in...”

“... fire or such. Yes, I know, the guide told me.”

“What little is left is expensive,” the shopkeeper explained, “mostly very expensive – much, much more expensive than that brooch, for example.”

“Not an issue,” Isaac said breezily, hoping Dad hadn’t blocked his credit card or something.

Some more eyeballing and then the old man beckoned for Isaac to follow him into the furthest corner of the shop. One by one he brought down carefully packed items. A chessboard, a battered edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a knife and then a wooden box with an intricately carved rose on its lid.

Isaac’s heart nearly stopped when he saw the initials below it. A.R.G. And when the box was opened he knew immediately who had made these exquisite little figurines, and he blinked angrily at the tears that welled in his eyes. He stroked a sitting Alex, he carefully lifted a laughing Alex to see her better in the light, and his hands were slick with sweat.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” the proprietor said, standing on his toes to peek over Isaac’s shoulder. Isaac couldn’t answer, struggling with a closing sensation in his throat. They were here! Well, no; they *had* been here. “He must have loved her,” the shopkeeper continued in a reverential tone. He extended a square nail to run down the fold of a skirt on a miniature Alex.

“Oh yes,” Isaac replied shakily, “and she him.” Enough to never want to leave him, not even for Isaac ... The little man looked at him strangely.

Isaac gave him a shaky smile. “That’s Alexandra Ruth Graham, and she was married to Matthew Graham, from Ayrshire, Scotland.”

“How could you possibly know that?” The old man tried to sound dismissive, but Isaac saw the excitement coursing through him, how his eyes gleamed with interest.

“Because I have this.” Isaac dug into his pocket and produced yet another little carving – this one very well worn from where Magnus had handled it repeatedly. The shop owner peered at it and exclaimed in surprise.

“That’s the same woman!”

Isaac nodded. “An heirloom, one could say, and now it seems I’ve found the missing pieces.”

Some hours later, Isaac sat on his hotel bed and before him he had ranged them all. So many... Quite a few of unknown children, but the majority were of Mama, and he saw her change from very young to middle aged and every single one of the little images radiated contentment. He fisted the single one that showed him his grandfather, in a broad brimmed hat and breeches and studied it narrowly. So Magnus had made it then, and he looked well enough if somewhat thin. Isaac brought his hand down hard on the coverlet, making the pieces bounce and fall over.

“Offa,” he groaned and his thin shoulders shook as he wept for his mother but mostly for his grandfather. He must have cried for the better part of an hour, all that pent up grief and anger

dissipating into tears. Afterwards, he felt exhausted but relieved. Isaac sat up, wiped his eyes, and pulled the box towards him. As he began replacing the pieces, he noticed that the inside bottom was uneven. Strange; he tried to dislodge it, but it was firmly stuck, and with a shrug he piled the carvings back inside and closed the lid. Once done, he pulled out his phone and dialed home.

“Dad?” he said, and then began to cry again as Dad berated him for giving him the scare of a life time. “Please come,” he said, cutting Dad off mid-steam. Dad promised that of course he would, he would fly to the moon and back for Isaac, but Isaac knew that, didn’t he?

“Yeah,” Isaac mumbled, embarrassed. He promised to remain where he was until Dad arrived and hung up with a smile. He still had Dad – and Diane, and Eva. He fell asleep with the miniature depiction of his grandfather clutched in his hand.