

THE LEISURE SEEKER

Written by

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1 EXT. PICK-UP, MOVING THROUGH A BOSTON SUBURB - DAY 1

A car stereo plays a song from the 1980s...

*'IT'S RAINING AGAIN' BY
SUPERTRAMP (FOLLOWED BY
COMMENTARY FROM THE D.J., WHO
SAYS THAT HE'LL SOON BE
SPEAKING WITH THE DEMOCRATIC
CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE FROM
THE FOURTH DISTRICT OF
MASSACHUSETTS)*

A perfectly-restored Ford pick-up with some vintage objects in the bed drives slowly along a street lined with modest but gracious two-storey houses. The only people passing by at this time of day are a group of elderly power-walkers, swinging tiny weights.

The pick-up stops in front of a lawn that is badly in need of a trim. The radio cuts off and WILL emerges. He's forty-five; average-looking. He pulls a shoulder bag and then two stuffed Whole Foods shopping bags from the passenger seat. When he kicks the truck's door shut we see a sign: "SECOND HAND - VINTAGE SHOPPING ONLINE www.secondhand.com"

2 INT./EXT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY 2

Will enters through the kitchen door without knocking. He puts down the bags and announces his presence with forced good cheer:

WILL

Mom? It's me! You ready? Jane'll be here any minute. I made a cake for Dad, hazelnut and carrot. No butter or sugar, so you can have a slice!

No answer. Will starts to explore various rooms.

WILL (CONT'D)

Where are you guys?

It's a cozy, slightly messy house. There's a living room with a fireplace, a big library. Will collects an open book and shelves it, then folds a shirt that's been tossed on a chair.

He opens the door to the master bedroom. The bed is unmade.

His father John's study. The roller desk is piled high with books and papers. There's a big old desktop computer right in the middle of it all.

On the shelves of a large bookcase that is cluttered with essays and books, there's an old Remington typewriter John used to work with, its beautiful keyboard like a sculpture.

Will emerges from the front door onto the porch, turning off the phone in frustration. He scratches his head. An elderly lady in gardening attire stands in the yard next door. It's LILLIAN, the neighbor. She's gray-haired, friendly:

LILLIAN
Will! How are you?

WILL
(approaches her)
Hey, Lillian.

LILLIAN
(whispers)
I'm glad I caught you alone. I wanted to tell you that if you guys get busy with Ella in the hospital, I'd be more than happy look in on John.

WILL
But they're not here! Mom and Dad - the house is empty!

He redials. Lillian gives him a curious look.

WILL (CONT'D)
(grumbles)
Why'd we even buy her that damned phone? She always turns it off.

LILLIAN
Come to think of it, I heard someone turning on an engine this morning. Very early.

WILL
What motor? Dad's car's right here.

He points to a perfectly-maintained old Chevy in the open garage. And then he realizes the large covered carport is open.

WILL (CONT'D)
Oh my god!

He's white as a ghost. He runs toward the carport. Lillian's also shocked. She murmurs:

LILLIAN
I can't believe this.

Will frantically dials and impatiently awaits an answer:

WILL
Jane! Mom and Dad are gone! And -
can you believe it? - so is the
Leisure Seeker!

3 EXT. THE ROAD, SUBURBS - DAY 3

A 1970s Leisure Seeker camper moves through morning traffic.

4 EXT/INT. CAMPER, MOVING, SUBURBS - DAY 4

And here they are: ELLA and JOHN. He's got a white beard and wears glasses with progressive lenses. He looks like he's totally absorbed in his driving. Every so often he shoots a look at Ella, who uses her gaze to encourage and direct him which way to go, while also keeping an eye on a map spread on her lap. She has a small, golden purse on her knee, from which she occasionally pulls a tiny mirror to check her appearance.

*THE RADIO IS TURNED ON LOW:
TRAFFIC INFORMATION, WEATHER,
POPULAR SONGS*

ELLA
Take a right. Here. Exactly. Very
good.

John follows orders with a mysterious calm. Ella watches him closely.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Couldn't you have worn something
more comfortable to travel in?

He's wearing a checkered shirt under a tweed jacket. A linen handkerchief protrudes from his breast pocket. She leans closer and sniffs.

ELLA (CONT'D)
And I think you've exaggerated a
bit with the eau de cologne. Though
you do smell nice.

John smiles agreeably, but something tells us that he's not really grasping what he's being told. He sniffs the air as the camper's interior fills now with the sound of:

*THE RONETTES SINGING 'BE MY
BABY'*

He finally speaks:

JOHN
Darling?

Eyes on the road, he waits until he has her attention.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Did you fart?

ELLA
Excuse me?

JOHN
(with pleasure)
You did!

ELLA
(scandalized laugh)
What are you talking about? You
can't say that!

But she also sniffs the air, then cranes her neck to look between the seats - there's a wisp of smoke coming from the engine's trap door.

She leans forward to pull a rug from beneath her feet. She places it over the leak.

He glances at her, but soon loses interest and looks back at the road ahead.

They're passing through a leafy suburb filled with banners and signs from the 2016 campaign. A bus full of school kids passes; some of them point and make faces.

Ella waves to them through the window.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Hello! Hi! Such beautiful
children... you can go now, hon.
The street's clear. John? Go! Put
that old engine to work!

JOHN
Yessir.

John accelerates, turning right onto an on-ramp for the interstate. A red gasoline light goes on, accompanied by a:

BEEP

ELLA
Do we need gas, hon?

JOHN
We need gas?

Ella checks the gauge and then glances at the map on her lap.

ELLA
Let's stop at Stuckey's, okay? Like we used to. We could get a Pecan Log.

JOHN
Where?

ELLA
Our Stuckey's, hon. Come on, try to remember.

JOHN
Okay, boss. We'll do just as you say. Like always.

Is he looking for a fight? She blows him a raspberry. Then she laughs.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Why are you laughing?

ELLA
Nothing. Just drive.

5 EXT. STUCKEY'S - DAY

5

The Leisure Seeker cuts across oncoming traffic, causing cars to swerve and horns to sound. It pulls up to a gas pump.

Two attendants approach. They are both Middle Eastern in appearance; around thirty years old. They act like a married couple. The FEMALE ATTENDANT washes windows while the MALE ATTENDANT starts to pump gas. Meanwhile, Ella stares at the station's boarded-up windows.

ELLA

Is the store closed? We really wanted one of your delicious Pecan Logs.

MALE ATTENDANT

(accent)

Opening soon. Just gas now.

ELLA

No, I can't believe it. You hearing this, hon?

John nods, imperceptibly, although he doesn't seem much interested. So Ella makes friends with the attendant.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Every summer we'd head south, and we always stopped at Stuckey's. Jane and Will - the kids - they'd make us stock up on Pecan Logs.

MALE ATTENDANT

Yes, I see.

ELLA

We were visiting my family in South Carolina. That's where I'm from. John, on the other hand, he's a real Yankee. Born and bred.

MALE ATTENDANT

Ah, okay.

He exchanges a puzzled look with the Female Attendant, who, after finishing the windshield, walks away grinning.

ELLA

They were lovely trips. Right, John? I guess I'm just a natural born tourist. I love to travel. Smoky Mountains, Six Flags, Williamsburg... you ever been to any of those places?

MALE ATTENDANT

We are from Syria.

ELLA

Well, they're amazing. You should take the family. Do you have children?

The man's face darkens momentarily with sadness. But he overcomes it.

MALE ATTENDANT

That'll be ninety-one dollars, ma'am.

ELLA

Certainly.

She pulls money from her purse and leans out the window to hand it to him. As she does, she quietly confides:

ELLA (CONT'D)

John is a much more sophisticated tourist than me. Oh, he likes to travel, but he thinks travel should broaden the intellectual horizons, whatever that's supposed to mean...

The attendant pockets the money and gives her a curt nod.

MALE ATTENDANT

Have a very nice journey.

ELLA

Thank you, and I'm sorry if I spoke too much. I do love to chitchat.
(to John) Let's roll, hon!

John does as he's told, putting the camper in gear, but as soon as they start to move the Female Attendant waves them to a stop. There's something in her hand.

6 INT. CAMPER, MOVING - DAY

6

As the camper rolls down the highway, a satisfied Ella unwraps the Pecan Log.

ELLA

What a nice woman! She found one in the storeroom. (She puts on her reading glasses) Its expiry date was last April, but it'll still be all right, don't you think? You want half, hon?

(shakes his head)
I want a burger.

ELLA
It's not lunch time yet. There was something sweet about that woman. She had such pretty eyes. Pretty, but sad. They both did. Don't you think, John?

John seems to consider her question, but then, as if saying it for the first time:

JOHN
I want a burger.

Is his persistence obsessive? Spiteful? Ella sighs, her cheerfulness vanishing momentarily.

7 EXT. METRO CAFÉ - DAY 7

The Leisure Seeker pulls over next to other vehicles in front of the Metro Café, a restaurant topped by a big plastic hamburger sculpture.

8 INT. METRO CAFÉ - DAY 8

CHANTAL
Hi, my name is Chantal and I'll be your server!

This is said with great enthusiasm. CHANTAL is a very young woman, dressed in a company uniform. She hovers over John and Ella, who are seated in a booth by the window.

ELLA
Hello, Chantal. I'm Ella and this is John. Looks like you're stuck with us!

JOHN
I want a burger.

CHANTAL
Might I recommend the Chow Attack? Only \$9.99. That comes with a burger, large fries, a slice of apple pie and a Happy Swirl...

Ella raises her arms to the sky.

ELLA
Happy Swirl! I have absolutely no
idea what that could be, but it
sure sounds promising.

JOHN
I want a burger.

ELLA
Chow Attack for Mr. Grumpy here.

CHANTAL
Okay. And you madam?

ELLA
Just water.

CHANTAL
Nothing to eat?

ELLA
I'll just have a sip of his Happy
Swirl.

CHANTAL
(puzzled)
Ah, okay. *(to John)* Would you like
anything else to drink? Pepsi?
Beer?

JOHN
Burger.

ELLA
That will be all.

JOHN
Burger, please.

ELLA
Thank you, Chantal.

Chantal takes their order on a pad, thanks them, and hurries off. The place is pretty crowded; there are multiple big screens nearby, one with sports highlights, one where candidates debate as part of the ongoing campaign, both with no sound. On another, a music video loudly plays...

...A TECHNO DANCE TRACK

Ella notices a payphone by the counter. She turns to John, looks in his eyes and speaks forcefully.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna stretch my legs. You stay put.

9 EXT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

9

A dejected Will emerges from his pick-up. Lillian, working in her garden, gives him a questioning look, but he shakes his head. He walks briskly toward his parents' front door.

A woman stands on the front porch, talking on the phone. Will's older sister JANE.

JANE

I know, Dr. Tomachewski... I'm fully aware... well, we just have to be patient... I don't know what else to say... we're just hoping they haven't gone too far... okay, my brother just pulled up. We'll let you know if we hear anything.

She hangs up and looks at Will, who:

WILL

I checked all the supermarkets. Nothing.

JANE

I seem to remember it was your brilliant idea that they keep that monstrosity. Not so smart, kiddo.

WILL

There has to be some sort of explanation...

JANE

They ran away.

WILL

But from who?

And then the phone vibrates and rings in Will's pocket. He looks at the number in confusion before answering.

WILL (CONT'D)

Hello? Mom! Where the fuck are you?

10 INTERCUT - INT. METRO CAFÉ/EXT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - ~~DAY~~
(The screen splits in two?)

ELLA
Will, darling, please don't use
that language with me.

While speaking on the phone, she does not lose sight of her husband, still at the table, absorbed by the big screen TV.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You need to calm down. If you raise
your voice again I'll hang up
immediately.

Jane, who's come close to hear what's being said, snatches the phone from her little brother's hands.

JANE
Mom, what is this craziness? You
knew I was coming to get you. Why'd
you run away?

ELLA
We're just taking a little trip,
Jane. We won't be gone long.

JANE
A little trip? Where?

ELLA
This is something I really needed
to do with your father.

Will, who has put his ear close to the phone, buries his face in his hands when he hears the word 'trip.' He begins to pace nervously.

JANE
I can't believe this! We'd decided
everything. Will was going to stay
with Dad...

ELLA
Your father and I didn't decide a
thing. You and Will and those quack
doctors did that for us.

Will cannot resist. He grabs the phone back from Jane.

WILL
Mother - you are sick!

ELLA
Sick doesn't quite describe it,
Will. I'm something else
altogether.

WILL
You cannot be doing this. You tell
Dad to turn that jalopy around and
get right back home.

Jane leans toward the phone to say:

JANE
You need your treatments, mother.

ELLA
I've had it up to here with their
treatment. I've been there, I've
done that, it wasn't pretty.

WILL
They just want to make you better.

ELLA
Kids, try to understand. Let me
have this vacation with your
father.

WILL
Vacation! What do you mean,
vacation?

JANE
Mom, you know full well that Dad
can't drive in his condition.

ELLA
Your father's perfectly capable of
driving. He's doing very well.

Ella sees that Chantal has delivered their food, and John is energetically telling her something.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Kids, we'll manage. We love you.

She hangs up and moves back to the table, where John now harangues an intimidated Chantal.

JOHN
(talking on all cylinders)
...
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

and that's all because his prose is so seductive you just race across the surface having a good time never feeling compelled to look beneath it at the profoundly intricate construction Hemingway created to support it. Joyce knew the beauty of it-

(He looks at Chantal-)

James Joyce? Great, great writer! You should read him. Irish. He acclaimed Hemingway. Called him a giant. But not here, not in America. Here we praise the hell out of our brilliant darlings and then we kill them. Did you read 'The Indian Camp'? Nick's dad does a cesarian with a pocket knife and sews it up with fishing line and you see it all. You put the story down and you suffer an existential crisis. The realization that who we are ends, that that's it! So beautifully crafted. A work of poetry and it's prose - it's prose that's poetry!

The waitress nods with a polite smile.

CHANTAL

No, yeah, I can see that. Definitely.

ELLA

You can just ignore him, you know.

CHANTAL

Oh no, it's super interesting. He's being very nice...

She would like to leave, but John grabs her wrist.

JOHN

Prose that is poetry. That's Hemingway's secret. Do you have any idea how difficult that is to do?

CHANTAL

For sure.

ELLA
John, sweetheart, leave the poor
girl alone.

She gently pries John's hand from Chantal's wrist.

JOHN
Just don't confuse his simplicity
with banality. Did you read...

CHANTAL
(moving away)
You want any special sauces with
that burger?

ELLA
Thanks, Chantal, we're fine.

CHANTAL
Enjoy!

John turns to Ella, who is removing vials with prescription
labels from her purse.

JOHN
I was wondering if she'd read...

ELLA
Eat, John. You want me to cut it up
for you?

John lowers his eyes toward the plate.

JOHN
Not necessary.

He takes a bite.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't forget to take your pills.

Ella remembers; she starts to remove her multicolored pills
from a tiny compartmented container.

ELLA
So how is it?

John nods, raises a thumb.

ELLA (CONT'D)
And now yours.

She hands the box to John, who swallows his pills. She pushes the glass of water toward him.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I'll chase mine with this famous
Happy Swirl.

She swallows her daily dose. Blue pills, white pills. She chases them down with a shot of the frothy drink.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Not bad.

JOHN
(in exquisite reverie)
Or maybe the 'Hills Like White
Elephants.' Gosh...

ELLA
I remember that one. The guy's
telling her to have an abortion,
but your Hemingway never actually
writes the word.

JOHN
Doesn't need to. Prose that is
poetry. No explanations required.

ELLA
It was always so nice when you read
to me in bed.

11 INT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S KITCHEN - DAY

11

Jane sits in the kitchen with a steaming cup of coffee and a slice of Will's cake. He's still very upset.

WILL
I don't see how you can just sit
there eating. We should call the
police. And get Andy to track their
credit card spending.

JANE
Hopefully Mom hasn't lost her
marbles now as well. Maybe they're
just out for a short spin. I mean,
where're they going to go?

WILL
The camper needs to be serviced,
Jane. What if there's an accident?
(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

What if someone sues Dad? We need to figure out where they're going and intercept them. (pause) And yet she continues to eat as if it's nothing!

Jane tries to calm her brother.

JANE

Sit down, Will. Let's think this through.

At this moment, Lillian opens the door and walks right in.

LILLIAN

Yoo hoo? Any news? Have you heard anything?

WILL

Not yet.

JANE

Hey, Lillian. Have a piece of cake. Will really outdid himself this time. It's delicious.

WILL

(dejected)
Made without animal fat.

12 INT. CAMPER, MOVING - DAY

12

The Leisure Seeker rolls down a wide and busy road.

Ella speaks while John drives:

ELLA

... but everybody came to my cousin Jane's wedding. Remember? They sat us at a table by that huge picture window.

John nods up and down. He cannot find the memory...

ELLA (CONT'D)

Do you remember who was there?

JOHN

(hesitates, then:)
Me.

Ella laughs loudly.

ELLA

Yes, John. You were there and I was there and the kids were there. I'm saying who else beside us. You don't remember. At our table, there were Michael's relatives from Charlotte, and... LOOK OUT!

She shouts because an SUV has cut into their lane. Ella braces her feet and closes her eyes, waiting for the impact. But John brakes in time as he instinctively reaches out an arm to protect his wife. The camper swerves. Sunglasses, maps and guidebooks fly off the dashboard. A door slams at the back of the camper as other objects crash to the floor.

Meanwhile, the SUV accelerates away. The camper steadies.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Jesus!

JOHN

We're fine.

ELLA

That was amazing, John.

JOHN

I still have it, don't I?

Showing off, he drives for a moment using just his knees to steer. She smiles lovingly at him, unconcerned by any potential danger.

ELLA

Yes you do.

John puts his hands back on the wheel, his eyes on an array of road signs. One points to Philadelphia and Baltimore.

ELLA (CONT'D)

That way, okay? Old Route 1. You remember the road? We took it a thousand times.

JOHN

We're heading south?

ELLA

That's the plan.

JOHN

To your people.

ELLA

What people? My parents? They're dead, John.

JOHN

They're all dead. (muttering) Like the descent of their last end...

ELLA

I wonder if they're having fun up
there, if it's a joyous place,
where you sing and dance while
drinking Happy Swirls all day. What
do you think happens, you know,
after? John?

John, incongruously, begins to sing:

JOHN

(whispering)

Freedom's just another word for
nothin' left to lose
Nothin', don't mean nothin' hon' if
it ain't free, no no...

Ella smiles and joins in the old Janis Joplin song.

ELLA AND JOHN

...And, feelin' good was easy,
Lord, when he sang the blues
You know, feelin' good was good
enough for me.....

Meanwhile, Ella spots a wisp of smoke coming from the trap
door she earlier covered with the rug.

The Leisure Seeker rolls down the great highway, passing
signs for the Pennsylvania border as they continue to sing:

ELLA AND JOHN (CONT'D)

...Good enough for me and my Bobby
McGee...

13

EXT. CHESTER PARK FAMILY CAMPSITE - DAY

13

The Leisure Seeker idles in front of the reception hut, while

*...THE SONG CONTINUES, NOW
SUNG BY JANIS JOPLIN...*

We see Ella lean toward the receptionist to deliver documents
and money.

CUT TO:

The Leisure Seeker slowly rolls to a stop between mighty oaks
in front of the lake. Modern campers are parked on either
side.

With well-practiced gestures, repeated many times over the years, John connects the RV's electric cable to a big socket, then firmly fastens the water supply hose.

Meanwhile, inside the camper, Ella leans forward to seal the leaky trap door with duct tape.

CUT TO:

At their portable picnic table, John eats the sandwiches Ella has prepared and they both take their medicine.

THE SONG ENDS

14

EXT. CHESTER PARK FAMILY CAMPSITE - NIGHTFALL

14

At dusk, Ella sits at the picnic table, a cardigan draped over her shoulders, enjoying the cool evening weather.

THE CHIRPING OF CRICKETS

She cranes her neck to see what John's up to...

... he's lying on a bench sofa in the dinette, taking a nap.

And then a family returns to a neighboring camper: husband and wife, a kid, a baby sleeping in its mother's arms.

NEIGHBORING CAMPERS

Hey! -

ELLA

(friendly)

Hi there!

While his wife puts the children to sleep, the MALE CAMPER wanders over to admire the old Leisure Seeker.

MALE CAMPER

Whoa, check it out. '75 Winnebago Indian.

ELLA

It was a gift from my parents so we'd come visit them. Our Leisure Seeker. My husband hated it at first - he used to say it was kinda low class. But he got used to it in the end. We've had a lot of great trips in this old rust-bucket.

MALE CAMPER
Chevy Series G engine.

ELLA
Oh, you'd have to ask John about
all that. Though he's taking a nap
right now.

The FEMALE CAMPER appears.

MALE CAMPER
Look at this old beauty, babe. So
have you folks been on the road
long?

ELLA
Actually, we just started. We're
headed south, down to where I grew
up, between Charleston and
Savannah.

FEMALE CAMPER
It's so beautiful there!

ELLA
Yeah, we'd always go on vacation
there. But this time we're going
even further south. All the way
down to the Florida Keys.

MALE CAMPER
Wow!

ELLA
I'm finally taking John to
Hemingway's house in Key West -
have you ever been?

They both shake their heads.

MALE CAMPER
Now, Hemingway was a Confederate
general, right?

FEMALE CAMPER
No, silly, he was a writer. Didn't
he commit suicide?

ELLA
Yes. I never understood why...

Ella's voice trails off. For a moment, she seems deeply moved and lost in thought, as if she's only now beginning to understand why. But then she snaps out of it.

ELLA (CONT'D)

John knows everything about him. He's always wanted to see that house. Every year I'd promise him we'd go, but, you know how it is travelling with little kids... of course we've been to Melville's place. That's just a few hours from our house. Have you been there? He wrote Moby Dick. It's very interesting.

Her neighbors nod, not knowing what to make of all this.

ELLA (CONT'D)

... it was actually a big pain in the rear for me and Will (*she laughs*). My daughter loved it. I think that's why she became a professor. John is so proud of her. He's a teacher too.

The neighbors continue to smile, though now they exchange a look, wondering how to escape this talkative lady.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Poor Will, on the other hand, he's still struggling to find his way...

The Male Camper pats his pockets, looking desperately at his wife - *time to go* - but then John appears at the door of the Leisure Seeker, looking groggy, his hair out of place.

JOHN

Where are we? We're not home.

ELLA

No, honey. We live in Massachusetts. This is Pennsylvania.

JOHN

What the dickens are we doing in Pennsylvania?

ELLA

We're on vacation. And we're having a whale of a time, right?

JOHN

Not me. I want a cup of tea.

He sits next to Ella, who smiles bravely at the neighbors.

ELLA

My husband John. And these are our neighbors...?

MALE CAMPER

Bob Taylor. And this is my wife Janette. Hate to say it, but...

FEMALE CAMPER

...it's a little late...

MALE CAMPER

...uhm, yeah, we need to put the kids to sleep...

They flee.

MALE CAMPER (CONT'D)

Maybe catch you later...

FEMALE CAMPER

Yes, maybe...

ELLA

I hope so! (hisses to John) Just say goodbye...

JOHN

I want a cup of tea.

Ella smiles at the neighbors, as if to apologize. After they close the door, she turns to John in irritation.

ELLA

I'll make your tea when I'm good and ready. I'm quite comfortable sitting here.

JOHN

But I want it now.

ELLA

You'll just be up peeing all night.

JOHN

(raising his voice)
I want a cup of tea!

ELLA

Lower your voice, mister. We're not the only ones here. In fact, make it yourself. You're not an invalid.

JOHN

That's exactly what I'll do.

Instead, he stays seated, immobile. After a moment, Ella reaches out to smooth his hair. The gesture placates John, who asks, gently now, as if he's just thought of it for the first time:

JOHN (CONT'D)

What do you say - how about a cuppa tea?

Ella looks up at the sky, then smiles and sighs as she rises.

ELLA

I give up.

She walks off.

JOHN

(calls to her)

Dodge 440 V8 engine, by the way.

15 INT. CAMPER - NIGHT

15

John and Ella open the bed in the dinette, with coordinated gestures, as they've done so many times. Then John gets under the covers. Ella sits near him, putting drops into a glass illuminated by a small light.

ELLA

Here, drink it all.

She gives him two tablets that John chases down with the drop-filled water. And then she caresses him like he's her child.

CUT TO:

John sleeps noisily back in the darkened camper. Ella sits at a small table, writing what appears to be a letter on a sheet of paper. But then she grimaces in real pain. She pops two blue Oxycodone pills from a blister packet and chases them down with a swig from a bottle of Canadian Club.

16 EXT. CHESTER PARK FAMILY CAMPSITE/INT. CAMPER - DAY 16

The Taylor family's camper starts up and rolls away, revealing the Leisure Seeker, from which John, still in pajamas, emerges to check a small water filter on the side of the camper. He nods, smiling to himself. And then he goes inside.

Ella was sleeping, for the first time we see her short haircut post-chemo style. His bustling wakes her.

ELLA
Good morning, Johnny my dear.

She combs out her spectacular wig that has spent the night on a Styrofoam head on the nightstand, then puts it on.

JOHN
It occurred to me this morning to replace the water filter, so I did but I didn't, amazingly the darn thing's still clean as a whistle.

He closes the door; she sits up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I find myself compelled to admit this old contraption has its good points. There are of course, more elegant ways to travel, but there is no denying that one sleeps extremely well in that stupid bed. How about you, my princess? Did you sleep well?

John's speech seems different, more relaxed, less catatonic. He's in a good mood. Ella is pleasantly surprised.

ELLA
I'm so happy when you come back to me.

JOHN
I was just outside. Your pain?

ELLA
I'm fine.

JOHN
Where are we exactly?

ELLA
Chester County, south of Philadelphia.

JOHN

Chester County? Some really
beautiful country around here.
Country imbued with history. It's
so good to be back on the road
again. I love it. It makes us so
happy. Let's have some coffee!

Ella watches John as he reaches the coffee machine. But suddenly he stops and looks around, bewildered. She continues to watch him, growing worried now.

ELLA

John?

He looks at her, disoriented.

ELLA (CONT'D)

What's happening?

JOHN

Where are we?

ELLA

(sighs)

It's so nice when you forget to be forgetful. Too bad it ends so quickly. I just can't get used to it.

JOHN

What are you saying?

ELLA

Nothing. Let me make the coffee. You should get dressed, my love.

John smiles at her but does not move. Ella grasps him gently by the arm and moves him toward the bed.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Come on, slow-poke.

17 INT. CAMPER, MOVING. DAY.

17

The Leisure Seeker moves down Route 1, passing the skylines of Baltimore and Washington. The road is ugly here. There are car repair shops, fast food restaurants, Walmarts and cheap furniture outlets.

Ella does not like what she's seeing. She has the map open on her lap, while John, dressed in a checkered shirt, drives with his usual absorption.

ELLA

How 'bout we stop at Old Chesapeake? The children loved it and you didn't mind it so much, did you?

Old what?

ELLA
The historical village in Virginia.
You used to love the museum...

After a moment's silence John murmurs.

JOHN
Maybe Dan isn't, after all.

Ella looks at him in confusion.

ELLA
What did you say?

JOHN
He's not dead, is he?

ELLA
Who?

JOHN
Dan. You want to go to him.

Ella sits in baffled silence.

ELLA
Who the hell is Dan?

JOHN
(very serious)
We'd visit your relatives so you
could secretly meet him.

Ella finally understands what he's talking about, but is still incredulous.

ELLA
Oh my God... Daniel Coleman?

She looks at him, expecting more, but he's fallen silent.

ELLA (CONT'D)
(dumbfounded)
What is going on in your mind?

JOHN
You're like Gretta.

ELLA
Who?

JOHN

"Yes, the newspapers were right:
snow was general all over
Ireland..."

ELLA

What on earth are you...?

JOHN

"It was falling on every part of
the dark central plain, on the
treeless hills, on the Bog of Allen
and, farther westward, softly
falling into the dark mutinous
Shannon waves..."

ELLA

Here we go again.

JOHN

"It was falling, too, upon every
part of the lonely churchyard on
the hill where Michael Furey lay
buried. It lay thickly drifted on
the crooked crosses and headstones,
on the spears of the little gate,
on the barren thorns."

ELLA

All right ...

JOHN

"...his soul swooned slowly as he
heard the snow falling faintly
through the universe and faintly
falling, like the descent of their
last end, upon all the living and
the dead."

ELLA

All right, I get it, that story by
Melville, you don't have to recite
the whole damned thing...

JOHN

James Joyce.

ELLA

I'm glad to know there are at least
some things you remember well.

JOHN

Gretta Conroy. You're just like her. You've thought of him your whole life.

Ella can't believe this is happening. Smiling, she tells him:

ELLA

What on earth are you talking about? John?

She takes his arm and shakes him. He keeps his eyes on the road, muttering almost to himself.

JOHN

We'd go to Charleston and you'd slink off to Savannah. Saying you were going to see your aunt.

Ella shakes her head, and then bursts into laughter.

ELLA

I can't believe this. But you should know, if Daniel Coleman is alive - and that's a big if - he's been living in Daytona for the past thirty years.

She closely watches John, who is now driving in silence.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You hear me?

She sighs, then mutters to herself, still in a state of shock.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Dan Coleman. Honestly. Of all the...

John, eyes fixed on the road ahead, asks:

JOHN

Ella, where's my gun?

Ella watches her husband closely.

ELLA

What? We didn't bring the gun...

John doesn't answer. Ella's mind is working: why would he ask that?

18 OMITTED 18

19 EXT. OLD CHESAPEAKE TICKET OFFICE - DAY 19

Soldiers in eighteenth-century uniforms raise their muzzle-loading muskets and shoot, producing a cloud of white smoke.

John watches the performance. He's in line behind Ella and other tourists at the ticket window.

TICKET SELLER (O.S.)

Two people, single day. That'll be 88 dollars, ma'am.

The young man in the ticket booth, also dressed in 18th-century clothes, hands Ella a "Citizen Passport":

ELLA

Goodness, you've become pricey!

She reaches for her wallet.

TICKET SELLER

It's \$40.99 per ticket, plus taxes.

ELLA

When we used to come here with the kids, it was 10 dollars for the whole family.

TICKET SELLER

When was this? Back when we were a colony?

ELLA

That's not a very nice thing to say.

TICKET SELLER

Enjoy your visit.

20. EXT. OLD CHESAPEAKE - DAY

20.

Horse-drawn carriages move through a replica 18th-century village. A military band plays:

YANKEE DOODLE

Ella and John hover near a group of tourists, as a guide describes (and perhaps exaggerates) the history of the colony. John lingers in front of a group of African-American actors portraying slaves. White actors bark orders at them. Ella wants to drag John away, but he resists, grumbling:

JOHN

This is awful.

ELLA

Darling, come on...

Ella takes him firmly by the arm and leads him toward a group of tourists entering one of the buildings.

JOHN

(*whispers*) We have to do something to stop this outrage...

ELLA

It's all make-believe...

JOHN

That's just your southern racism talking.

ELLA

What utter nonsense! Come on, let's go see the library. You used to love that.

John reluctantly follows her. We notice a young woman with two young children, a boy and a girl, in the tour group. JENNIFER. She watches John until she gets up the nerve to approach him.

JENNIFER

Mr. Spencer?

John looks at her blankly.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

It's me. Jennifer Ward. Class of '93. How are you?

Ella interrupts.

ELLA
I'm sorry, Miss, but I don't think
my husband is able to...

But John perks up before she can finish.

JOHN
Jenny Ward! It's you! How the devil
are you?

Jennifer is almost overwhelmed with emotion.

JENNIFER
I am so, so happy to see you!

JOHN
How did you get on at Columbia? You
must have graduated by now...

JENNIFER
I can't believe you remember me.

A surprised Ella follows the conversation.

ELLA
I can't believe it, either.

JENNIFER
A lot has happened since then.
Michael, Emily, this is Mr.
Spencer, the most inspiring teacher
I ever had.

The boy and girl wave shyly.

EMILY
Hello, Mr. Spencer.

JOHN
What was the name of that friend of
yours?

JENNIFER
Lorna Mitchell?

JOHN
The two of you were always
laughing.

Jennifer is getting emotional as she remembers.

JENNIFER

(sighs, perhaps a little
bitterly)

Yes, I was. I'm sorry if I've
disturbed you. I'm just so happy to
see you.

JOHN

Oh, me too, Jenny. Me too!

She wanders on ahead with her children. Ella, meanwhile,
stares at her husband in annoyance.

ELLA

(mocking)

Me too, Jenny. You can't remember
the names of your own children but
you remember that Jenny was always
laughing. I'm speechless. What goes
on in that head of yours?

She takes him away, as he says:

JOHN

She was such a good student.

21 INT. CAMPER, MOVING - DAY

21

On the road again. Ella looks tired and achy. She takes her
painkillers from her purse and swallows them with a drink of
bottled water.

John turns to her, worried.

JOHN

You all right?

ELLA

Yes, John. I'm just dandy.

John keeps one eye on the road and one on Ella, as if
studying her.

Ella sighs.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Who am I?

JOHN

What are you talking about?

As he says this he reaches over and touches her, is dear to her.

ELLA
You're having one of your moments,
aren't you?

John gives her a quizzical look.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You know I'm someone dear to you,
but you're not exactly sure who.

He smiles but doesn't answer. She persists:

ELLA (CONT'D)
Seriously, John - do you know who I
am?

JOHN
Of course I do. Goodness me...

ELLA
Who? Who am I? John, tell me who I
am. *

JOHN
(laughing)
Give me a second, alright? I'm
thinking. *

Ella places a hand on his arm.

ELLA
John, tell me who I am.

JOHN
You don't know? Well I'll tell you.
You're my wife.

ELLA
Very good. But what's my name?

John continues to look ahead, his eyes on the road, but he
seems uneasy. Ella doesn't stop looking at him. She's
waiting. And then it bursts out of his mouth. *

JOHN
(snorts)
Goddamnit, will you ever stop with
all these stupid questions - ELLA! *

Then, softly repeated. *

JOHN (CONT'D)
(in dismay)
Ella! My memory...

*
*
*

ELLA
You know it. It was always there-

*
*

Ella doesn't stop looking at him. She's waiting. And then, out of nowhere, it bursts out of his mouth, then is softly repeated:

*
*

With the palm of his hand John hits his empty head.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Keep your eyes on the road.

The Leisure Seeker rolls on toward North Carolina.

22 INT. CAMPER/EXT. SMALL TOWN, SOUTHERN VIRGINIA - DAY 22

Ella had fallen asleep. But then:

THE SOUND OF A HORN

... makes her open her eyes. She realizes that the camper has stopped at a green light and John is not behind the wheel. She looks around the interior of the van, dazed and worried. Outside the window, she can see the modest houses of a small town. She turns to look through the back window and sees a line of stalled traffic. Some of the cars go screeching around her, other drivers are out of their vehicles, cursing the camper.

ELLA
(murmurs)
Good Lord, where is he now?

Finally she sees him: he's just reached the sidewalk across the street. Patrons of a nearby bar come out to watch, curious, laughing, shaking their heads. John mixes among them, idly watching the traffic jam like it has nothing to do with him.

Ella slaps the windshield:

ELLA (CONT'D)
(shouts)
John!

She leans on the horn.

A MALE DRIVER approaches her window.

MALE DRIVER
Ma'am? Do you need some help?

A FEMALE DRIVER has come out of her car.

FEMALE DRIVER
Could I move your vehicle for you?

ELLA
I'm sorry, please, just give me a
minute...

Ella opens the door, gets out and strides across the road. Everybody's watching her, enjoying her distress.

Ella reaches John, hissing through clenched teeth:

ELLA (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Come with me,
you fool.

She takes him by the arm and drags him toward the camper, pushing him back on board, then hurries to get in her side. By now they are the center of attention. Everybody's watching them, laughing.

John is back behind the wheel. But he doesn't do anything.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Come on, drive! Can't you see we're
holding up the whole show?

John looks at the dashboard in profound confusion, as if he's never seen anything like this before. The gauges, the knobs, the lights, the key in the ignition. It might as well be the cockpit of a 747. He places his hand gently on the steering wheel, touching it as if it is made of a precious substance.

JOHN
What do I do?

ELLA
Turn on the engine. Come on, John,
concentrate. Just turn the key.

She raises her voice because once again because:

HORNS SOUND

ELLA (CONT'D)
(turns around, shouting)
Just a minute! We're leaving!
(hisses at John) Please, turn the
key. Get going.

JOHN

Get going?

ELLA

Right. Just relax. You know how to do this. You've always been a wonderful driver.

But then John takes his hands off the wheel. Ella's really worried now.

A car with flashing lights pulls up. A POLICEWOMAN gets out. She's pregnant, six months at least. She approaches John's side of the camper.

PREGNANT COP

What seems to be the problem?
You're blocking traffic. You have a breakdown?

JOHN

No, ma'am.

PREGNANT COP

Okay, then why aren't you moving?

JOHN

Good point, officer.

John, watched by an astonished Ella, turns the key, starts the motor and drives off as if nothing's happened.

An incredulous Ella bursts into laughter.

ELLA

You really are going to drive me round the bend one of these days...

John, undaunted:

JOHN

Did you see her? That policeman.
She was pregnant!

Ella sits at a picnic table scattered with brochures and maps. Sipping from a bottle of soda, she studies a Florida guidebook. She turns toward the camper and says in a raised voice:

ELLA

Hey hon, did you know that Tennessee Williams had a house in Key West, too? He's one of the writers you really love, isn't he? I remember when you took me to the theater to see that one set in New Orleans... you hear me, John?

She mutters to herself:

ELLA (CONT'D)

Though I preferred the film with Marlon Brando. What a dish!

John comes down the camper's steps, looking alarmed.

JOHN

Ella? Ella? Where are the kids?

ELLA

At home.

JOHN

We left them at the house? I can't believe it.

ELLA

John, please...

Ella understands that John is having one of his "moments."

JOHN

For God's sake, what have we done? We've left the children on their own!

Ella impatiently slams the guidebook on the table:

ELLA

The children are all grown up! It won't be long until they're old. They have their own lives - they're fine.

JOHN

(incredulous)
Seriously?

ELLA

Oh my god. Jane's married to Philip, she teaches college.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)
They've got two kids, a boy and a girl.

JOHN
Really?

ELLA
Yes, John, don't you remember? Good heavens. Rose and Stephen.

JOHN
Toddlers, right?

This seems to calm him. He sits next to Ella.

JOHN (CONT'D)
They're very cute.

ELLA
(sighs) Stephen's nineteen and Rose is twenty-one. Don't you remember her high school graduation ceremony? Stephen played in the band and Rosie made a wonderful speech. You were very moved by it.

JOHN
Stephen played... Rosie made a wonderful speech...

ELLA
(hopeful)
So you do remember.

JOHN
No. I don't.

Now Ella's really angry.

ELLA
It really hurts me that you don't remember things. I'm sick and tired of having to remember everything for you.

There's a profound silence. A mortified John murmurs:

JOHN
Forgive me, Ella.

Ella realizes that she's gone too far. Now she feels worse than he does.

ELLA

No, forgive me, my love. I shouldn't get angry with you.

JOHN

It's my damned memory.

ELLA

I know. Come here.

She takes his hand, she strokes his beard. But after several seconds he again asks:

JOHN

Ella, where are the kids?

Ella sighs and stands.

ELLA

Come on, there's something we need to do. I brought along a surprise.

24 EXT. CAMPSITE, NORTH CAROLINA - NIGHT

24

Slightly grainy pictures from a birthday party circa 1972. Ella, in her thirties, has a kid on her knee who's in the process of blowing out three candles.

ELLA

Which one is this, John? Do you know?

JOHN

It's Jane.

A slide projector on the picnic table casts images on a sheet strung between two oaks. Ella and John sit as if they're at the cinema. Ella works the control button on her lap.

Other images appear. In one, from 1974, Ella grasps Jane's hand as she holds Will in her arms by a river.

ELLA

And where are we in this one?

JOHN

Ella! Look at you!

It's true: she was very beautiful. It's also clear that John loved to photograph her. In many of the photos, the children are cut off in the frame.

ELLA
Chowan River. That marvelous
camping spot at Catherine Creek. We
could put up our own landmark
there.

Another slide. Here, finally, is John, from thirty years ago;
blurry and slightly crooked, embracing Ella.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Jane took this one.

John smiles. Next comes a photo which depicts a crowd of
Thanksgiving guests. Ella, however, stands apart.

JOHN
You were sad that evening.

ELLA
I remember you telling me to make a
happy face, but I just couldn't do
it. What year was that?

JOHN
You were sad.

ELLA
Perhaps '81. '82...

She presses the control switch.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Do you remember these kids?

She's pointing to a group of boys and girls throwing a party
for John.

JOHN
Your nieces and nephews? Down in
Charleston?

ELLA
No, they're your students, throwing
you a birthday party. This was your
favorite class... do you remember?

John says neither yes or no, but he continues to closely
study the photo.

Meanwhile curious campers gather around, notably an elderly
couple, who watch Ella's and John's life like it was their
own.

ELDERLY WOMAN

We should do this, too. We have all those slides in the basement that we never look at...

And meanwhile...

TO THE SOUND OF AN OLD STEVIE WONDER SONG ("IF IT'S MAGIC")

... here are other photos, of trips, dinners, backyard barbecues; the happiness and melancholy of an entire life.

25 INT./EXT. CAMPER - DAY

25

THE SONG CONTINUES

Ella and John sleep in each others' arms. Morning light seeps through the cracks in the curtains. This is perhaps what causes Ella's eyes to fall open. She gently pulls down the covers and runs her hand along the mattress. John has wet the bed. Ella shakes him awake.

CUT TO:

She helps him wash with a sponge, and then dry himself with a towel. Meanwhile:

ELLA

I bought you six new pairs of boxers - didn't you see? Why don't you wear them?

JOHN

I don't like them.

ELLA

What do you mean?

JOHN

I don't like them.

ELLA

Same old song I've heard my whole life. What's so great about briefs?

JOHN

Control.

ELLA

Ha!

CUT TO:

THE SONG CONTINUES

Outside the camper, Ella and John perform a sort of gymnastics together. Ella gives commands like a trainer. And then John wanders off to parts unknown.

Ella shouts after him.

ELLA (CONT'D)

No, no! Where are you going?
Johnnnnn...

THE SONG ENDS

26 EXT. CAMPER, MOVING/EXT. ALTERNATIVE FARM STAND - DAY 26

The Leisure Seeker passes through fields of grapevines. It winds up at a cabin where a young farm couple with an alternative air about them sell organic grapes and grape juice.

CUT TO:

John and Ella are sitting at a picnic table, having a breakfast of grapes. They're the only customers. They eat one at a time, in silence, savoring them, as cars race by. At one point John plucks his handkerchief from his breast pocket and gently cleans a drop of juice from Ella's chin.

ELLA

Do you know what I love about you,
John? Your silences are never
embarrassing. Never once in my life
have I thought: now I need to say
something. It's the thing I've
always liked the best about our
trips.

JOHN

So you still see him.

John speaks this phrase abruptly, as if part of an ongoing conversation. Ella gives him a confused look:

ELLA

What are you talking about?

JOHN
You speak with him on the phone.
You write him letters.

ELLA
Who?

JOHN
(chuckles)
Ah, so now we're pretending like
you don't know... Dan. You said
he's living in Daytona now.

Ella starts to laugh again.

ELLA
Dan. Oh, Dan. Susan Sullivan told
us that at Maggie Tate's funeral.
You were right there beside me!

John does not seem convinced.

JOHN
But you asked about him.

ELLA
What? John, the funeral was ten,
no, fifteen years ago

JOHN
(sad)
All these lies. All these years.

John stands up and goes back into the camper, muttering,
leaving Ella in amazement at the table.

ELLA
John? What are you doing? Get back
here.

The FARM WIFE approaches with a refill. She smiles
sympathetically. Ella feels encouraged.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Can you believe this? He's
convinced that I still think about
my first boyfriend, who, by the
way, dumped me. But Dan was right.
Things would have never worked
between us. Those were different
times. I was nineteen. Oh, my
lord, what a scandal...

The hippy-farmers nod sympathetically.

FARM WIFE

What happened?

ELLA

Well they sent me to Boston to work in my Aunt Rosemary's shop. That's where I met John, this handsome young teacher who came every week to buy a new pair of leather gloves. Then he came back the next week to buy another pair - he said he'd lost them. And then he did it again. I eventually discovered he had a house full of them.

Ella wants to be sure that this woman understands her story.

ELLA (CONT'D)

He was the one for me...

The woman gently asks her:

FARM WIFE

And the first boyfriend, you didn't think about him any more?

Ella considers this for a moment.

ELLA

He vanished from my mind. No, I only had eyes for John!

27 INTERCUT - INT SOUTH CAROLINA SERVICE STATION/INT. WILL'S GARAGE - DAY 27

Ella dials a public phone inside a service station in South Carolina.

ELLA

How are you, darling?

Will jumps to his feet; papers and trinkets fly off his table.

WILL

Mother, where are you?

He's answered the phone in his garage, which serves as the warehouse for his webshop. It's packed with modern antiques: old road signs, toys, a pinball machine, Bakelite telephones.

WILL (CONT'D)

For God's sake, tell me where you are so I can come get you immediately!

ELLA

Now listen Will. We looked at family slides last night. It was beautiful. We were looking at photos from our trip to Nantucket, where you made such good friends with that boy from New York. What was his name - Patrick?

WILL

You listen to me, Mom. Jane and I are seriously thinking about filing a missing persons report.

ELLA

He was so nice. I've been wondering - are you happy with your new work? You were such a good real estate broker. You were able to sell some truly ugly houses...

WILL

Don't change the subject.

ELLA

Was it because you had a fight with your partner? You and Richard were so close... were you two ...?

WILL

You need to come back and resume your therapy. It's crucial, mother.

ELLA

Come on, Will, please talk to me about... oh Christ!

Ella cannot believe what she's seeing. Now seated behind the wheel, John starts the motor and the Leisure Seeker begins to move.

WILL

What did you say? Mom?

But Ella has dropped the receiver without even putting it on its hook. She rushes outside.

Meanwhile, the camper is leaving the service area. John puts on the turn signal as Ella shouts and waves...

ELLA

John! John! Stop! STOP!

...but he joins the highway and disappears.

Will is shouting on the telephone:

WILL

Mom! What's happening? You're
killing me! MOTHER!!!

The Young Attendant, who has begun to pump gas into a Harley-Davidson, looks at Ella and then looks at the camper pulling away. Understanding, he begins to laugh.

YOUNG ATTENDANT

(to the Motorcyclist)

Oh shit, it looks like gramps
forgot his wife.

A powerless Ella is in tears. She doesn't know what to do. She appeals to the Young Attendant.

ELLA

Help me, please!

The MOTORCYCLIST screws on his fuel cap and kick-starts his bike.

MOTORCYCLIST

Hop aboard.

ELLA

On that? How?

MOTORCYCLIST

Piece of cake. (to Young Attendant)
Give her a hand, Joe.

The Young Attendant practically lifts Ella in his arms. She lets him do it, and winds up riding behind the driver.

MOTORCYCLIST (CONT'D)

Hold on tight!

Ella grabs onto the Motorcyclist, who rumbles off.

28 EXT. MOTORCYCLE, MOVING, SOUTH CAROLINA ROAD. - DAY 28

A few hundred yards down the road, they come upon the Leisure Seeker, rolling briskly along. The Motorcyclist steadies the bike, Ella brandishes her crutch...

Inside, John turns to see through his open window this strange guy on a Harley with Ella behind him. They draw closer. John shouts, in an offended tone:

JOHN

Ella, what the hell are you doing on a motorcycle? It's dangerous for God's sake!

29 INT. CAMPER, MOVING, SOUTH CAROLINA ROAD. DAY 29

A furious Ella sits next to John.

JOHN

I don't believe you. On a motorcycle! Without a helmet! And who was that guy?

ELLA

Oh... go to hell!

JOHN

After you, ma'am!

Ella stares out the window in silence, determined not to say a word. After a bit John puts a hand on her knee and says:

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is a lovely trip, isn't it?

ELLA

Go to hell, John. I mean it.

JOHN

(surprised)
What?

ELLA

You left without me.

John doesn't seem to understand.

JOHN
(ridiculous)
I didn't!

ELLA
You left me alone. Where the hell
did you think you were going, you
and your empty head?

JOHN
Me? Going somewhere? Without you?
Are you crazy?

She snorts, tired of this childish bickering. They are silent for a while and then John once again puts a hand on her knee.

JOHN (CONT'D)
How you doing, little lady?

She removes his hand, still shaken, sullen and sore. She rummages through her purse, in search of tablets. She tries to open a bottle of Pepsi but her hands are too shaky. John is watching out of the corner of his eye and reaches for the bottle:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Let me.

She needs to drink it to swallow her pills so reluctantly she lets him take the bottle-

ELLA
Be careful, John.

John smiles, puts his elbows on the horizontal steering wheel and steers with them as he unscrews the cap, but this action causes the Winnebago to swerve gently back and forth, snaking first left towards the other lane, then right towards the shoulder, until the bottle is opened and he hands it to her.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Thank you. Now please put both
hands on the wheel.

POV: The Leisure Seeker has been swerving, heading first towards the opposite lane and then back. There is no oncoming traffic but a Toyota traveling in the same direction as the Winnebago is compelled to slow to a crawl and loudly blow its horn as the Winnebago does its Conga Line down the highway.

The scene is witnessed by a cop, who hits his lights and starts to chase, passing the Toyota as he turns on:

A SIREN

Inside the camper, Ella bolts down three pills, takes a big gulp of Pepsi, then looks in the side mirror.

ELLA (CONT'D)

John.

JOHN

Yup?

ELLA
You need to pull over.

JOHN
You need to pee?

ELLA
The police are right behind us.

John looks in the mirror.

JOHN
So?

ELLA
Pull over.

JOHN
Why? They don't want me...

ELLA
(shouts)
Damn it John, pull over!

Finally John uses the turn signal and pulls over. He puts the vehicle in PARK and URNS OFF the engine-

ELLA (CONT'D)
Let me talk, all right? I need to see if that fool son of ours snitched on us.

They watch as a POLICEMAN gets out of the car and approaches.

POLICEMAN
License and registration, please.

ELLA
They're in here somewhere, officer.

She stands up and opens a hatch above their heads to take out a document case. As she does, we note that there's a shotgun inside. She closes the door quickly and hands the documents to the cop, who examines them.

POLICEMAN
Mr. Spencer. I've stopped you because I saw you weaving between lanes.

Ella, returning to her seat, seems relieved - Will did not call.

ELLA

Excuse me, officer, it was my fault. I gave the bottle to my husband, I couldn't open it.

She shows him the Pepsi. John immediately grabs it and takes a big sip. Ella bites her lip, while the policeman looks at John with astonishment.

POLICEMAN

Ma'am, if you don't mind, I'd like for Mr. Spencer to answer himself.

JOHN

(looking seriously at the policeman, engaged, eager to help)

Yes, sir. I was trying to open the... the thing'n.

POLICEMAN

The thing?

JOHN

That thing.

There follows a short, embarrassing silence. Ella wants to help him, but the word comes quietly to John's head as if it's always been there.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(as if obviously)

The bottle.

Another long silence, John watches the policeman as he looks closely at both passengers. And then John turns his head to Ella and emits:

A LOUD BURP

Ella jolts; she's right on the edge of losing it. The policeman, after glaring at John, says:

POLICEMAN

I'm going to run your license. Wait here.

He walks away.

ELLA

(through clenched teeth)

What are you, insane?

As an answer, John puts his hand on the key and starts the engine. Ella, in desperation, reaches over, turns it off and pulls the key out.

JOHN
Give me back the keys.

ELLA
(whispers)
Don't even think about it.

JOHN
Give them to me!

Ella, getting even more worried, glances in the rearview mirror and whispers.

ELLA
Zip it. He's coming back.

POLICEMAN
What's going on, old timer? You
thinking of running on me?

He's smiling, however, and adds:

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
You wanna wind up on World's
Slowest Police Chases?

Ella laughs and gently claps her hands:

ELLA
That's a good one, officer.

POLICEMAN
Stay in your lane and respect the
speed limits, okay?

ELLA
Yes, officer. Thank you so much.
And have a nice day!

The officer walks away.

JOHN
(grumbles)
Slowest Police Chase. Damned fool.
Who's he think I am? O.J.? Hah!

He takes the keys from Ella, puts the camper in gear and drives. Ella looks at him affectionately, her anger gone. She sinks languidly into her seat as the drugs kick in.

ELLA
Our old trips were never this
adventurous, eh?

JOHN
 (a bit nonsensically)
 Traveling's important. Broadening
 your horizons broadens your mind.

Ella looks at him for a long moment.

ELLA
 Do you love me, John?

John shoots her a look.

JOHN
 Of course I love you. I love you, I
 love you, I love you.

ELLA
 Me too, John. Very much.

30 EXT. CAMPSITE, JEKYLLE ISLAND - NIGHT

30

FULL SCREEN: another slide show's in progress. The subject is Will and Jane as teenagers, along with their friends. They celebrate Will's thirteenth birthday as he blows out the candles on the cake.

ELLA
 And where are we here?

Ella's asking John; they sit together as if at the cinema.

JOHN
 (squints)
 At home? She's Jane. *

ELLA
 And who's the one on the right? *

JOHN
 The littlest one. Our boy.

ELLA
 He has a name, John. It's Will.

JOHN
 Yeah. William.

Lillian is pictured during a summer backyard barbecue. She's still attractive, posing next to Ella, both of them in shorts, their shirts tied up to expose their navels.

ELLA
And the woman with me is...?

JOHN
(studies the picture)
She lives next door?

ELLA
Right. Our neighbor.

JOHN
Lillian?

ELLA
Well done.

Meanwhile behind them someone makes:

AN APPRECIATIVE WHISTLE

Ella notices a group of grungy young men approaching. They are dressed in ripped jeans, old T-shirts, unlaced sneakers.

GRUNGY YOUNG MAN
Ma'am, would it bother you if we
watched as well?

ELLA
Please, make yourselves
comfortable!

They squat nearby and pop open some beers, offering bottles to our couple.

GRUNGY YOUNG MAN
We're celebrating the end of our
world tour.

The other guys laugh.

ELLA
What are you, some kind of rock
band?

GRUNGY YOUNG MAN
Post-grunge-indie-folk-punk,
actually.

ELLA
Excuse me?

GRUNGY YOUNG MAN
It's the kind of music we play.

ELLA
That sounds... fascinating.

And now John and Ella are drinking beer while slides play depicting their yard over the years. In one, Will turns a hose on Jane, who is nineteen and dressed in a bikini.

MORE APPRECIATIVE WHISTLES

The next one shows a pregnant Jane several years later.

*DISAPPOINTED HOWLS FROM THE
BAND*

Ella laughs and sips beer as she presses the button. John, however, does not appreciate the whistles.

Other images flow by, charting the passage of time in their yard.

And then there is a more recent series, depicting John's 74th birthday. Jane's there with her two kids and her husband. Will's already balding and has a bit of a paunch. There's also a large group of students of various ages.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You must remember this. It wasn't
that long ago.

*

John examines the faces, but doesn't seem to recognize any of them, leaving Ella to explain them to the band members.

ELLA (CONT'D)

These are family, friends and
John's ex-students. There always
seemed to be some around the house.
They still come to see him years
after graduating. John was a very
popular teacher.

*

And then come several close-ups of John. His unsmiling expression is distracted, far away. We've seen this look.

The young musicians begin to get up and go.

GRUNGY YOUNG MAN

Good night, thanks for the show.

ELLA

Yes, good night, thanks for
visiting.

Ella stares at John, whose eyes remain fixed on the screen. Although he seems unmoved, tears trickle down his face.

A31 INT. CAMPER/EXT. CAMPSITE, JEKYLL ISLAND - NIGHT A31

John, smiling in his sleep, cheerfully murmurs something like "Ella, where are you going ... don't be that way, come here ... hey, wait ..." He wakes from his happy dream, deeply disoriented. We see the inside of the camper through his milky, fuzzy gaze. Details come into focus: objects on the bedside table, his shoes, and then someone lying next to him: a back, an arm, a neck. Finally, the plucked head of Ella. John shakes her gently. She opens her eyes.

JOHN
Excuse me, where's Ella?

ELLA
(patiently)
I'm right here, John.

John smiles incredulously and shakes his head.

JOHN
No - Ella. Ella Carson. My girl.
22, long blonde hair. She's
gorgeous.

Ella, half asleep, slowly understands what's happening. Unnerved, she rises with some effort. She pulls her wig on loosely, drapes a sweater over her shoulders, and stepping into her shoes as if they were slippers she leaves the camper without a word.

Left alone, dazed, John tries to focus on his location as the dream fades. He gets up and leaves the motor-home.

Outside, he spots Ella sitting alone on a park bench in the moonlight, her back to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Is that really you, Ella?

She answers with controlled fury.

ELLA
Of course it's me. Who are you?

JOHN
I'm me. John.

ELLA
Oh no, you're not.

John steps in front of her, with a hesitant smile, as if to say: look at me, it is me. Ella does not return his smile. She shakes her head.

ELLA (CONT'D)

My John is a young teacher. He's charming and educated and very handsome. And I want him back. You stole him from me and I want him back. Give him back to me!

John considers her words. He sits next to her.

JOHN

Boy, I would if I could. But whoever stole him from you stole him from me, too.

31 INT. CAMPER, JEKYLL ISLAND - SUNRISE 31

The first light of morning filters through the windows. Ella opens her eyes and realizes she's alone.

ELLA

John?

She struggles out of bed. She opens the curtains, then opens the camper door and peers outside. John isn't there.

ELLA (CONT'D)

(louder) John?

Something tells her to open the door of the cabinet where she hides the shotgun. It's there. Ella looks relieved.

32 INT. RECEPTION DESK, CAMPSITE, JEKYLL ISLAND - DAY 32

Ella addresses a young man behind the reception desk.

ELLA

Excuse me, but you haven't by any chance seen my husband passing by? He's tall, distinguished-looking, with a white beard and glasses.

The guy watches her, thinking.

RECEPTIONIST

A guy like that passed by here 'bout a half hour ago.

ELLA

And where was he going?

RECEPTIONIST

No idea ma'am.

ELLA

I'm afraid I'll need your help, then. My husband suffers moments of memory loss, and I'm afraid he may wander off and get hurt.

RECEPTIONIST

Maybe you should call the cops?

ELLA

But don't you have a car so we can have a quick look around? He can't have gone far.

RECEPTIONIST

I can't leave my post. Why not use your camper?

ELLA

It's too big, I can't handle it. Please, I wouldn't ask you if it wasn't important.

RECEPTIONIST

Lemme call my brother Terry.

He dials a number on his phone.

33 INT. PICK-UP, MOVING THROUGH STREETS OF JEKYLL ISLAND - DAY 3

Ella sits in the cab of a pick-up driven by a tattooed young man - TERRY. His bleached hair is gathered in a ponytail; he wears many rings, bracelets and necklaces. They are scouring the streets of the seaside town.

ELLA

(to herself) It's my fault. My fault.

The boy points to an old homeless man who sleeps leaning against the trunk of a palm tree.

TERRY

(excited)
Hey, is that him?

ELLA

Who, that poor geezer? Oh no, darling, I've told you, my John is a very distinguished gentleman. Glasses, well-groomed beard...

TERRY

I get it. Academic from Yankee-land. I like that type.

Ella watches Terry with a knowing smile.

ELLA

I think my son is a lot like you.

TERRY

Like me?

ELLA

You're gay, right? Don't worry, I know it's not a disease. We should all be more gay. Happier. It's a gift from God.

Terry laughs and nods.

TERRY

You think maybe this God could gift me blue eyes and make me six inches taller?

Ella speaks as she continues to scrutinize passersby:

ELLA

Will's never wanted to accept himself. Or maybe he's never understood himself. It's such a shame. Maybe he'd have been happier, more cheerful if he had. You want nothing more than to know your children are happy, especially after you're gone...

TERRY

Will's lucky to have a Mom like you.

ELLA

Unfortunately, he won't have a mother like me for much longer.

TERRY

Don't say that - you look pretty fit to me. That wig is awesome.

ELLA

What makes you think I'm wearing a wig?

Terry gives her a double-take and Ella laughs.

She continues to search, but she is also lost in a memory.

ELLA (CONT'D)

A few months ago I came home and found a shotgun on the kitchen table. It gave me such a fright! John was calmly watching football on TV. When I asked him what the gun was doing there, he couldn't answer. Later I found a note, but all that was written on it was "Ella my love" followed by some scribbles. And then I understood.

Silence. The boy is intrigued.

TERRY

What is it?

ELLA

(mutters)

For such an intelligent man to feel his brain fading away...

But suddenly she lights up, her eyes wide, shouting, beside herself with joy.

ELLA (CONT'D)

There he is! Stop!

She points to a seafront ice cream shop, where John sits at a table.

The pick-up enters the parking lot, stopping practically a meter away from John. Terry helps Ella descend.

ELLA (CONT'D)

John!

He turns to look at her, but does not seem to recognize her. He returns his attention to his cup of chocolate ice cream.

Ella reaches him and embraces him. She starts to cry.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Jesus, John!

JOHN
Why are you crying?

ELLA
Because you weren't there. I
wouldn't know how to live without
you, not for a minute. We have to
stick together. Understand? We
don't have much time left.

JOHN
(serenely)
Then it's a good thing you came
cause you wouldn't want to miss
this. One helluva chocolate ice
cream.

Ella turns to Terry, who looks amused and a bit moved by the scene.

TERRY
Have a seat, ma'am. I'll go get you
your ice cream.

Ella, crying, changes the order.

ELLA
I'd prefer a whisky.

34. EXT. CAMPSITE, JEKYLL ISLAND - ENTRANCE - DAY 34.

The Leisure Seeker, with John and Ella aboard, exits through the campsite's gates and drives off. Ella salutes through the window.

Terry waves cheerfully. His brother gives a more sober nod.

35 INT. CAMPER, MOVING/ EXT. ISOLATED ROAD, GEORGIA - DAY 35

The Leisure Seeker moves through the coastal regions of Georgia. The road is lined by forests of Spanish moss-covered trees. These are interrupted by swamps of tall grass. There are signs warning swimmers and fishermen of Poisonous Snakes and Alligators.

*THE STEREO PLAYS A SWEET SLOW
SONG*

ELLA

(she is saying)... it was cold, but it was beautiful. Remember? Everything was covered by a layer of ice, shiny and transparent, like the world had been covered with glass. I had to take tiny steps to keep from slipping. I was so cold, but you wanted to go on. You were telling me the story of White Fang, keeping your voice low, so you wouldn't spoil the perfect silence. We got home at three in the morning, our hair full of frost. That was the night we made Jane...

The camper starts to sway. John struggles to keep the steering wheel steady.

ELLA (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Can't you keep it straight?

In the cabin, objects begin to fall, plates and jars shake and slam. John slows down and pulls over.

JOHN

It's all right. Just a flat.

CUT TO:

The road is completely deserted. There is no sign of life. John, sweaty and with dirty hands, crouches in front of a flat tire. He tries in vain to turn the jack handle.

Ella approaches, wrapping up a phone conversation.

ELLA

(on the phone)

...good, we'll be waiting for you. Yes, mile marker 21. Thanks!

She hangs up the phone and turns to John.

ELLA (CONT'D)

It's okay, hon. Triple A will be here in half an hour. And I think the spare is flat, anyway. We'll need a tow.

JOHN

I don't need them.

ELLA

I know you don't, but we're on vacation, right? Come on inside, don't stay out here roasting in the sun.

While moving toward the cockpit they are passed by an old Plymouth, which slows and stops a little further down the road, then turns back.

Two kids get out, approaching with shambling steps. They are young, not even twenty. Scrawny and white.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Oh my god, John. These guys are scaring me.

JOHN

Can't you see they're just a couple of kids?

FIRST KID

You folks need a hand?

John looks at Ella: *you see?* But Ella quickly says:

ELLA

No thanks, fellas. Triple A will be here soon.

SECOND KID

How long 'til they get here?

JOHN

(obliviously)
Half an hour if we're lucky.

SECOND KID

Good.

He pulls out a knife.

ELLA

(whispers)
John, you fool.

FIRST KID

Just be cool. We're going to take your shit and then we'll go.

SECOND KID

Gimme that phone!

He points to the cell in Ella's hand. She hands it to him.

SECOND KID (CONT'D)
Your ring, too.

Now the other guy's pulled out a knife. He approaches John.

FIRST KID
Where's your wallet at, old man?

JOHN
Never end a sentence with a
preposition. When you say 'where'
the 'at' is implied...

Wham! He's silenced with a slap.

ELLA
(terrified)
John, just do what they say.

She slips off her ring and gives it to the Second Kid. And then she raises her hands, motioning to John to do the same.

SECOND KID
And you, old woman, shut up and
give me your purse.

ELLA
It's in the camper. Shall I get it?

He gives her permission with a wave. She obeys.

SECOND KID
Just move slowly, all right?

ELLA
As if I have a choice.

She disappears into the camper.

Meanwhile John has raised his hands. The First Kid is trying to pull the wallet from John's pocket.

FIRST KID
Fuck, it's huge. You win the
lottery, old man?

He slices John's pocket open with the knife. He pulls out the enormous wallet, gives it a quick disappointed look, then turns to his companion. His expression changes immediately.

FIRST KID (CONT'D)

Ah, shit.

Ella has come out of the camper holding the shotgun, which she points at the Second Kid.

The First Kid grabs John and holds the knife to his throat.

FIRST KID (CONT'D)

Put down the fucking gun or I hurt him bad.

But Ella continues to wield the shotgun confidently, pointing it first at one, and then at the other.

ELLA

If you hurt him I'll shoot you both. And if you think we're afraid you're dead wrong. I - no, we - have nothing to lose. So drop the knives, you hooligans.

At that moment there's a sound...

*THE CHIRPY RING OF ELLA'S
CELLPHONE*

...in the hand of the First Kid, who looks at the display.

ELLA (CONT'D)

It's Will, right?

FIRST KID

(nods)

I ain't answering it.

ELLA

Well I don't want to talk to him. He's always calling at the wrong time. Toss it on the ground.

The two kids exchange an uncertain look and we realize that they're not professionals. The telephone stops ringing.

JOHN

Sweetheart, make sure the safety's off before you start shooting, okay?

ELLA

Already done it, hon, thanks.

The First Kid drops the knife.

FIRST KID

Let's go, Cody. Just give them back their shit.

He throws the wallet on the ground.

ELLA

Please do as he says, Cody. Put the ring on the wallet and get along. I won't even call the cops if you leave now. Hurry along.

After a moment's hesitation, he obeys, leaving the ring and the cellphone. After one last disbelieving look the two of them move briskly away.

SECOND KID

Your ring sucked anyway.

FIRST KID

And your wallet's full of bullshit.

As they get into their car, John shouts after them:

JOHN

You fellas should consider evening classes. Get your diplomas! Turn things around. S'not too late!

The Plymouth peels away. There's a moment of silence. Ella still has the shotgun pointed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good thing we had the gun. I was afraid we'd left it at home.

ELLA

I thought we might need it. Now - I need a Canadian. Could you get it from the fridge please?

John obeys. Ella takes the opportunity to remove the shells from the gun and throw them as far as she can into the surrounding fields.

A tow truck pulls the Leisure Seeker through a vast flat rural landscape.

On board the camper, John and Ella sit cheerfully. They celebrate the success of their misadventure by passing a bottle of Canadian Club. Ella's on the phone:

ELLA

Yes, darling, I know that your brother called. I didn't answer because I was... held up.

John smiles - he appreciates the pun.

Jane speaks on her cell phone while striding across the campus of the college where she teaches. She juggles the phone and her paper-stuffed shoulder bag.

JANE

We're really worried, mother. Will's getting desperate. I'm going to see him now.

ELLA

Your brother is a Nervous Nelly. It's nice of you to stay near him. Tell him that your father and I are having a grand old time.

Jane's a bit amused by her mother's response.

JANE

So where are you, Mom?

ELLA

Darling, I wish you could see the sky here.

JANE

Okay, I get it, you aren't going to tell me. How's Dad?

Ella shoots a look at her husband, who's taking a big sip of Canadian Club.

ELLA

Full of beans. Oh, he still has his moments. But he's doing well and he's driving, which is a miracle. Would you like to speak with him?

Ella passes the phone to her husband.

ELLA (CONT'D)

It's Jane - she wants to speak with you.

JOHN

Who is it?

ELLA

Your daughter! Take it.

John takes the phone and cheerfully shouts:

JOHN

Hey, Pumpkin! How are you?

Jane is so moved that she is forced into a moment's silence.

JANE

I don't think you've called me that since I was eight, Daddy.

She stops in her tracks. Floored by her father's words.

JANE (CONT'D)

You're being careful, right?

JOHN

You've been so much in my head these days, little one. Do you have any idea how proud I am of you. I bet you're making a big splash at your college. It's not for nothing you're named Spencer.

JANE

Yes, Daddy.

JOHN

I love you, Pumpkin. We'll see you soon...

He passes the phone hastily to his wife.

ELLA

Jane?

JANE

Mom.

ELLA

I love you, too.

JANE

Me too, Mom. You make sure you come home, okay?

ELLA
Kiss the kids for me. And tell your
brother we've spoken.

A choked-up Jane can hardly speak.

JANE
I'll be sure to do that, Mom.

Ella hangs up. She, too, has misty eyes. She says to John:

ELLA
Hey, don't finish all the Canadian.

She snatches it from his hand.

37 INT. WILL'S GARAGE - DAY

37

JANE
Leave them alone. They're having
fun.

She says this to Will, who shakes his head. They're sitting
on a zebra-striped sofa in his garage 'office.'

WILL
Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to
introduce Jane the All-Knowing.
Watch her explain everything to
poor Will. Who doesn't know Jack
Shit.

JANE
(smiles, sighs)
What the hell are you talking
about? I'm just telling you that
there's nothing we can do to stop
them. It's her right to refuse
treatment. We both know how little
good it is now, anyway.

WILL
I know that it's better than
wandering around god-knows-where in
a creaky camper. But you know best,
I guess, because you talked to Dad,
and you two are thick-as-thieves,
even when he doesn't even remember
who we are.

JANE

I don't understand why you're making this so personal, Will...

WILL

Because you live two hours away and phone once a week and come on weekends for lunches that are cooked by me. What do you know about spending long afternoons with Dad when he doesn't say a single thing that makes sense? Do you know what Mom says when she gets sick and I have to run there in the middle of the night? You know what she says when I get there? Don't call Jane. She's busy.

JANE

You've been telling this story about how I'm Daddy's Girl for years. It's bullshit, Will.

WILL

Maybe it is. But it's the only story I've got.

JANE

They're just doing what they've done their whole life. Staying together, the two of them.

Jane wants to hug him, but Will backs away in a sulk.

WILL

There's so much love between them that they forgot about us. Both of us.

JANE

Oh Will..

Jane sighs at the sight of her brother's fragility.

WILL

So you know what happened, when was it, last year? I opened their bedroom door and she was on the bed and he was kneeling in front of her and... I can't even say it.

JANE

(smiling)
Dad was muff diving? Yodelling in the canyon?

WILL
(shivers)
I wanted to vomit.

JANE
(laughing)
Why? I hope it happens to me when
I'm their age.

Will buries his head in his hands.

WILL
God, what a thought.

Jane is struck by a melancholy thought about her life.

JANE
Though I kinda doubt it. For years
now, with Philip and me, it's one
quick kiss and goodnight.

38 INT. CAMPER, MOVING/ EXT. POLITICAL RALLY, FLORIDA - DAY 38

The flat tire has been repaired and the Leisure Seeker is back on the road. Ella continues to write on the pad of paper resting on her knees. But she raises her eyes because the camper suddenly slows down: the road is filled with participants in a Republican election rally.

JOHN
Houston, we have a problem.

ELLA
Just pull over. We can wait.
Hemingway isn't going anywhere.

There are red hats that read 'MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN;' t-shirts and banners with the grinning face of the Republican candidate.

PEOPLE ARE YELLING SLOGANS

John is forced to pull over.

JOHN
Wanta go see.

ELLA
What's to see? You know who these
people are.

JOHN
I want to have a look -

John is out of the vehicle in an instant, and Ella's too tired to chase after him. All she can do is yell:

ELLA
Don't go far!

John turns and gives her an OK sign, smiling. And then he asks someone what's going on.

CUT TO:

A little later, John wears a 'Make America Great Again' hat, drinks beer and toasts rabid supporters as they shout slogans like:

REPUBLICAN SUPPORTERS
- The only good terrorist is a dead terrorist.
- This land is our land!
- No more Muslims! Ban them all!
- Build a wall too tall for Mexicans!

Each of these slogans is greeted by a joyous 'Yes!,' which John echoes with real conviction, as if it were a funny game he didn't understand. This carries on until a hand grabs his arm to pull him away:

ELLA
John, please, come with me.

JOHN
But this is so much fun!

ELLA
Yes, I know, but it's better that you come with me now. We're gonna get a parking ticket.

As she begins to drag him away, John shouts:

JOHN
See you later, everybody! *Make America great again!*

Those gathered nearby raise their beer bottles to toast John.

CUT TO:

John and Ella are once again in the camper. They are leaving; the road is once again passable.

ELLA
John, they were Republicans.

JOHN
(nodding agreement)
Uh-huh...

ELLA
You've voted Democrat your whole life. You volunteered for Walter Mondale. Don't you remember how mad you got when I talked about voting for Reagan?

JOHN
Ray-gun... ha, that's funny -

ELLA
Don't you remember him?

JOHN
(thinks, then nods)
Sure, I remember.

ELLA
That's not true. You don't have the slightest idea. Who am I?

John's mouth falls open. He smiles and looks at her but her name is not coming to him.

ELLA (CONT'D)
 (patiently)
 Think, John. You know my name very
 well. It starts with -

There is a pause and then John looking at her suggests -

JOHN
 L?

ELLA
 Right. Ell. Go on.

It's on the tip of John's tongue.

JOHN
 Lillian!

ELLA
 Sweet Jesus, now you think I'm
 Lillian? Lillian is our next door
 neighbor. I'm your wife. L? LA? *

JOHN
 Ella. My darling Ella. Excuse me.
 Oh, wow, my poor head. *

Ella continues to stare at him, trying to understand what's
 going on inside his head.

39 EXT. CAMPSITE, NEAR DAYTONA - NIGHT

39

The projector's carousel turns. All the slides are of Jane
 and Will: swimming in the ocean, stuffing cake into their
 mouths at a birthday party, Trick-or-Treating, rolling in
 piles of raked leaves, posing rigidly by the fireplace,
 sitting on Santa's lap at a shopping center, close-up
 portraits...

Ella and John are once again seated outside the Leisure
 Seeker like they're at a cinema. There are no other campers
 around, only the deep coniferous woods that surround the
 camp. John eats a sandwich, while Ella swallows a blue
 painkiller. There's no commentary from her this time, no
 narration. She's not in a good way. And then John opens his
 mouth:

JOHN
 Look how cute Jane was!

Ella smiles and nods yes, happy that John is enthusiastic.

Next comes a photo of Will sitting on the shoulders of a
 tall, handsome man with an intelligent expression.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey, look - that's Jim!

But then his expression darkens. He asks Ella:

JOHN (CONT'D)
How's Jim these days?

ELLA
Jim passed, hon. Last July. We went to see him at that human warehouse where he spent his last two years, remember? (she sighs)
Unfortunately, he didn't recognize us.

John thinks, trying to remember. He murmurs:

JOHN
That's terrible. Poor Jim.

Ella watches him, trying to read his thoughts. And then John looks at her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Promise me something.

ELLA
What?

JOHN
If you love me, when the time comes, put the shotgun in my hands, put my finger on the trigger, remind me what I want to do, kiss me and walk away. It's like mud season in Massachusetts. Messy but necessary.

Ella reaches out and firmly grips her husband's hand.

She presses the button to continue the show, but the carousel is at its end. White light almost blinds them. John instinctively pulls out the power cord to kill the painful light, leaving them in near-darkness.

ELLA
John, what have you done? Put it back in.

JOHN
I can't find the outlet.

And then they hear what sounds like an animal in the bushes.

ELLA
What's that?

JOHN
Unlikely it's an alligator. He'd
be on us by now.

ELLA
Oh my god - an alligator?

JOHN
Let's get the gun.

Ella rises.

ELLA
Let's go inside.

Muttering to herself.

ELLA (CONT'D)
We don't have any shells...

She heads toward the camper, but she trips and takes a dive.

JOHN
Ella?

ELLA
Help me, John. I think I've pulled
something in my back. I'm down here
on the ground. Help me get up.

JOHN
Oh shit!

John approaches Ella and extends his hand.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Give me your hand.

ELLA
John, I can't do it like that.

JOHN
Give me your hand.

Ella grabs John's hand. He tries to pull her up, but he loses his balance and falls on top of her. They remain like this, on the ground, a situation comic and dire at the same time.

ELLA
Get up! You're crushing me.

JOHN
I hurt my arm.

ELLA
So what? Get off!

John gathers all his strength and manages to roll off her. Now they are side-by-side on the ground, with no strength left. They look at one another.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Are you all right?

JOHN
What're we doing on the ground?

ELLA
I fell! Don't you even remember?
You tried to help me and you fell,
too.

JOHN
Oh, shit.

ELLA
We need to try to reach the camper.
Can you move?

JOHN
Nope. Can't do it.

Ella does not lose heart. She begins to crawl toward the vehicle. The stones hurt; she's soon covered in mud and dirt. But gradually she approaches the steps. She grabs on and tries to pull herself up, but fails.

ELLA
I can't do it. Get up and get over
here and help me.

John does not respond.

ELLA (CONT'D)
John?

Nothing. And so she makes another effort. She plants an elbow on the ground and clings to the steps with her free hand so she can turn around and rest her back against the steps. Now at least she's sitting up. She looks at John. She can't believe it - he's asleep, right there on the ground.

Snoring, as if tucked snugly in his bed. She begins to pick up pebbles and toss them at him until the snoring stops. John stirs and then, after a direct hit, angrily says:

JOHN

Are you crazy? What are you trying to do, stone me to death?

ELLA

I hurt my back. You need to get over here and help me up. I can't do it on my own.

He pulls himself up - it seems as if that quick nap has helped him recover. But instead of going over to help Ella, he approaches the projector.

JOHN

Hey, the projector's unplugged...

Ella screams at him at the top of her lungs.

ELLA

JOHN! Move your ass and help me!

Finally, John gets up and goes to her. She holds out her arms when he leans over, but he doesn't even see her. Instead, he lowers himself even further, toward her shoes.

ELLA (CONT'D)

What on earth are you doing?

JOHN

Your shoes are untied.

He begins to tie her shoes with care.

ELLA

Thank you, John.

JOHN

With everything you do for me?
This is nothing -

He gets up and kisses her on the mouth. And then he begins to gently wipe the dirt off her face.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're all dirty.

He gives her a gentle pat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What would I be without you? You want to know? Nothing.

ELLA

Don't exaggerate. Sure, lately you've needed my help, but...

John smiles sweetly, shaking his head no.

JOHN

It's been this way our whole lives. Without you I couldn't have done anything, my darling, darling little one. My goodness, look how sexy you are -

Ella has to swallow back the lump rising in her throat. John has always been affectionate, but only in his brusque, dry manner. He's never used an endearment like that with her. In order not to be overwhelmed by emotion, she waves her arms, as if it's a big joke.

ELLA

How about a little pick-me-up?

JOHN

That sounds like an excellent idea.

This time he grabs her beneath her arms and, just like that, they're both on their feet again. He helps her slowly climb the ladder.

40 INT. CAMPER, DAYTONA - SUNRISE

40

Ella is sleeping, but a noise inside the van disturbs her and she opens her eyes. John isn't beside her. She looks at the time on the electronic alarm clock, then lifts the curtain. Outside, the chairs and table are missing.

ELLA

John? What's the big rush to go?

She pulls herself up with great difficulty.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I could've used a little more sleep. John? Oh my God.

Her eyes widen. She's confronted with an unlikely sight: John is pointing the shotgun at her. He's already dressed and has a deeply serious expression.

JOHN

It's the moment of truth, Ella...

ELLA

For heaven's sake, what is this?

JOHN

Take me to him. Now.

ELLA

To who?

JOHN

To whom. To Dan. Dan Coleman. I need to look him straight in the eye.

Ella's not worried about the gun - she knows it's empty.

ELLA

John, for God's sake.

JOHN

I'm not going to wait for some snowy night for you to finally confess everything as you look out the window at the snow falling faintly through the universe -

Ella pulls herself up impatiently.

ELLA

I'm getting so sick of this nonsense.

JOHN

He was always there for you. Dan! I was only ever second-best.

John's words come as a revelation that makes Ella shudder: she feels compassion for him, but also anger.

ELLA

How dare you point a gun at me!

JOHN

Take me to him.

Ella leaps to her feet.

ELLA
I've had enough! I'm sorry you've
been thinking this all these years
but ... you want to see Dan
Coleman? Fine!

She grabs her cell phone from her bag.

JOHN
What are you doing?

ELLA
I'm going to find out where the
hell Dan is - even if he's in his
grave - and take you to him.

JOHN
You will? Finally!

She dials a number and then looks at him as she puts the
phone to her ear.

ELLA
Well, don't just stand there.
Start the damned engine.

JOHN
Oh, I will!

41 EXT. RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER, DAYTONA - DAY

41

The camper arrives at the entrance of a residential care
center for the elderly.

ELLA
(speaking with John)
You can't go in there with a gun!

JOHN
I'm going in as I see fit.

ELLA
Fine. Take it. A hundred cops will
show up and probably kill us both.

42 INT. RECEPTION AND CORRIDOR, RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER, DAYTONA
- DAY.

An African-American Receptionist raises her eyes from a
computer screen.

CENTER RECEPTIONIST
May I help you?

ELLA
We'd like to see Daniel Coleman,
please. I believe he's a resident
here?

Ella forces a reassuring smile. John frowns, and there's a
strange bulge in the left side of his jacket.

CENTER RECEPTIONIST
Daniel Coleman?

ELLA
Exactly.

CENTER RECEPTIONIST
Are you on the list?

ELLA
We're old friends. We were just
passing by.

CENTER RECEPTIONIST
One moment, please.

ELLA
You're very kind.

The receptionist rises from her post and enters an office.

Ella's forced smile becomes a worried grimace when she
realizes that John has begun to walk down the corridor on his
own, his pace lopsided due to what's hidden in his jacket.
She walks behind him.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Hey, she said to wait.

John doesn't answer. He opens the first of a long series of
doors along the corridor and looks inside: there's an
emaciated old man seated at a table, peeling an apple.

JOHN
Is that you, Coleman?

The old man gives him a strange look. Ella reaches John.

ELLA
I'm sorry, we seem to have the
wrong room.

OLD MAN
Who you looking for?

ELLA
We don't want to disturb you...

But John will not be denied.

JOHN
Daniel Coleman. You know him? Which
room is his?

43 INT. DAN'S ROOM, RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER, DAYTONA - DAY. 43

Another room, where Old Man 2, glasses perched on his ruddy nose, lies in bed listening to:

*A HAPPY SONG ON THE RADIO
(MAGIC MOMENTS)*

... and another man, seen from behind, seated in a wheelchair, seems mesmerized by something outside the window.

The door opens and John peers inside, followed by Ella.

JOHN
Finally, we find you!

Both old men turn. We can now see the face of the one seated in the wheelchair: he's a skinny black guy in his eighties with oxygen tubes stuck in his nostrils. John points the shotgun toward the man on the bed, who raises his hands.

Ella tries to hold John back, but it's too late:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I've always wanted to see your
face, Dan Coleman.

Old Man 2 responds, his hands in the air.

OLD MAN 2
But I'm not Dan.

The black man has his hands raised as well. John, getting disoriented, looks at him.

DAN
Who the hell are you people?

ELLA
It's Ella. Ella Carson. Do you
remember me?

DAN
Ella? Who the hell is Ella? What do
you want from me? (shouts) Nurse!
Help!

Ella shushes him. John's not understanding any of this.

JOHN
Where's Daniel Coleman?

DAN
That's me. But who the hell are
you?

Meanwhile, Old Man 2 looks terrified, his hands still raised.
John looks at Ella in confusion:

JOHN
That's him?

But Ella is now gripped by another thought. She continues to
speak to Dan.

ELLA
Do you really not remember me? This
is my husband John Spencer.

John continues to point his gun at Dan as he incongruously
says:

JOHN
Nice to meet you.

Dan stares at him, convinced he's dealing with two lunatics.
As if to confirm this:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Do you wear boxers?

DAN
What?

JOHN
Do you wear boxers or briefs?

ELLA
This is what you want to know?

DAN
What the hell is he saying?

JOHN
(to Ella)
I want to understand where this
fixation with boxers comes from.

ELLA
All right, then - ask away.

JOHN
Do you wear boxers or briefs?

Dan lowers his hands. This is crazy. Meanwhile, on the radio:

*PERRY COMO CONTINUES TO SING
'MAGIC MOMENTS'*

DAN
I wear diapers. (to Ella) Ella who?
I don't remember any Ella.

ELLA
You don't remember me? Shoot this
son of a bitch, John.

The door opens. The very worried Center Receptionist and a
Nurse peer inside.

ELLA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
John, put that thing away.

The Receptionist and the Nurse throw open the door.

NURSE
What's going on here?

JOHN
He doesn't remember my wife.

Ella grabs the gun from John and tells the two newcomers:

ELLA
Don't worry, it's empty.

JOHN
It is?

But the women grab John and lock the door.

ELLA
Wait, he's not dangerous - he's an
English teacher!

The nurse brusquely grabs the gun from Ella's hand.

DAN
(to Ella)
But who the hell are you? Ella who?

44 EXT. RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER, DAYTONA - DAY

44

Ella and John are led to the camper by the Receptionist, the Nurse, a male MEMBER OF STAFF and a man with the uniform of security guard, who returns the gun to John.

NURSE
Next time you come to visit your friend, do it without this, even if it is empty.

CENTER RECEPTIONIST
Just be grateful we didn't call the police.

ELLA
You've been very understanding.

MEMBER OF STAFF
We were thinking that perhaps the two of you might need a little rest. No offense intended.

He shows Ella a brochure describing the facility's amenities.

MEMBER OF STAFF (CONT'D)
This contains a list of all the insurance we accept. We'll call your children so they can come tour the facility...

ELLA
That's very nice of you. We'll think about it.

MEMBER OF STAFF
But are you sure you want to be travelling around on your own? It's nice here. Ask Dan.

The Receptionist is getting embarrassed at her colleague's insistence.

RECEPTIONIST
Come on, Brian...

John, meanwhile, has helped Ella climb the steps. He then gets behind the wheel.

The Leisure Seeker lurches away as the others watch with amazed, amused and worried expressions.

45 EXT. CAMPER, MOVING, FLORIDA - DAY

45

While driving the camper, John strokes Ella's hand.

JOHN
Why are you so sad?

ELLA
I'm just a little tired.

She masks a grimace, then throws down another painkiller.

ELLA (CONT'D)
But yes, I'm also angry. At you,
mostly, but also at Dan.

JOHN
Dan? Dan who?

ELLA
Oh, for Christ's sake!

JOHN
Oh right. The guy who isn't in
Savannah any more.

After a long silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)
He was black?

Ella looks at him, then starts to laugh. John laughs, too, perhaps without even knowing why.

ELLA
He was a little more charismatic
than this at the time.

The camper now passes by a Democratic rally. We might even glimpse Hillary speaking; an echo of her speech reaches them.

AMPLIFIED VOICE OF HILLARY

But the Spencers aren't interested. Ella has stopped laughing; her expression is darkened by suffering. She's really tired and hurting.

ELLA (CONT'D)
John?

JOHN
What?

ELLA
Let's sleep in a real bed tonight.

46 INT. RADISSON HOTEL, CAPE CANAVERAL - NIGHT

46

In the reception area of a high-end Radisson, Ella approaches the reception desk while John looks around with cheerful curiosity. The HOTEL RECEPTIONIST welcomes them with a ceremonious tone.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
Good evening, ma'am. How might I assist you?

ELLA
Good evening. Could we have a nice room that's... (hesitates) economical?

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
I'm afraid there's not much left. (checks his computer) Half the state seems to be here to watch Hillary. We do have a standard double with twin beds.

ELLA
Oh, no, we can't be separated.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
In that case we have the deluxe suite, which has two kings, but that's...

ELLA
We'll take it.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
... that's normally five hundred dollars a night ... but I can let you have it for three-twenty, plus tax.

ELLA
Heavens, we don't want to buy it,
just spend the night.

The Receptionist hesitates before bursting into laughter. She hands him the credit card.

ELLA (CONT'D)
We've never spent that much on a
hotel room in my whole life.

The Receptionist pretends not to have heard her as he hands her the room key card.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
You're in 723. Artie will show you.
Do you have luggage?

47 INT. RADISSON HOTEL, SUITE - NIGHT

47

The room's lights come on. ARTIE carries the bag Ella has packed for the night, while the two guests take in their luxury room. It is new and huge, decorated in beige and gold tones. There's a lounge beyond the bedroom.

ARTIE
I hope this will be to your liking.
There's a minibar. You also have a
DVD player and a stereo. And in
here's the master bedroom...

Artie puts their bag into the master bedroom.

JOHN
It's a beautiful room. Can we
afford it?

ELLA
(embarrassed)
What are you saying, John? Of
course we can afford it.

She rummages through her purse to get a tip, but Artie waves her off.

ARTIE
Enjoy your stay.

He leaves. Ella immediately turns on the stereo, looking for a song she likes, and finds:

'DON'T LEAVE ME THIS WAY' BY
THELMA HOUSTON

ELLA
And now a little something to help
us sleep.

Ella opens the minibar and finds a bottle of champagne. She removes it.

ELLA (CONT'D)
What do you say, John? I think
we've earned it.

She gives the bottle to John, who whistles when he sees it. Ella gets two glasses. John opens the bottle, pours champagne. They toast, while:

*'DON'T LEAVE ME THIS WAY'
CONTINUES*

And then they kiss. John makes her do a pirouette; Ella, laughing, tries to escape. But John insists. She does a pirouette, then another.

JOHN
Come on, darling, boogie with me.

And then she collapses in his arms, leans forward and vomits.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ella...

ELLA
Oh my God, I've ruined the carpet.

In shock, she starts to clean it with her blouse, but John lifts her up and gently wipes her mouth with his handkerchief. And all the while:

*"DON'T LEAVE ME THIS WAY"
CONTINUES*

48 INT. RADISSON HOTEL, SUITE AND CORRIDOR - DAY

48

The following morning Ella wakes to the voice of John mumbling from afar. She checks the clock: it's late.

ELLA
Hon?

She gets up and finds John in the luxurious bathroom, where, already washed and dressed, he's combing his hair in front of the mirror as he describes Santiago of The Old Man and the Sea.

JOHN

'The old man was thin and gaunt and had deep wrinkles in his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert.'

Ella stands there, watching. When he realizes she's there:

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good morning, honey, you sleep well?

ELLA

Like a rock. When's the last time I slept this late?

JOHN

Okay, I'm off, I'll be back at the usual time...

ELLA

Where are you going?

He kisses her, exits the room and heads down the corridor.

Ella follows him in confusion. She stops at the door, watching as he waves goodbye. But after a few steps he freezes, lost. He turns to her:

JOHN

But this isn't our house.

ELLA

No.

JOHN

Where are we?

ELLA

In a good place.

JOHN
This good place have tea?

ELLA
I was thinking the same thing.

49 INT. RADISSON HOTEL, BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

49

Ella walks back to the table with a tray of croissants. She finds John has buttonholed a YOUNG WAITRESS, who listens with a polite smile.

JOHN
Santiago is the perfect character.
He achieved the inner spiritual
success that defines Hemingway's
'true man'. To be defeated but not
destroyed. When we get to the end
of the story Hemingway's watching
the old man lying there, sound
asleep, the skeleton of his great
fish still on his line, and he
writes...

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

YOUNG WAITRESS
"The old man was dreaming about
lions".

JOHN
(over the moon with delight
at discovering a kindred
soul)
You know it!

ELLA
Excuse me, can I have a clean
spoon?

*
*

YOUNG WAITRESS
I wrote my honors thesis on Old Man
and the Sea.

ELLA
I loved the movie with Spencer
Tracy. What an impressive man.

YOUNG WAITRESS
Hemingway's house is in Key West.

JOHN
(thrilled)
That's where we're going!

YOUNG WAITRESS
I've always wanted to go there.

*

JOHN
Me too.

*

YOUNG WAITRESS
There's a quote of William
Faulkner's where he says Hemingway
was "one of the bravest and the
best" -

JOHN
terjecting)
And add on to that for me: "one of
the purest"!

YOUNG WAITRESS

Oh, I totally agree.

ELLA

I'm sure you do. Now how about
that spoon? *

50 EXT. CAMPER, MOVING, PALM BEACH - DAY 50

The Leisure Seeker travels down a coastal road lined with palm trees. Palm Beach's skyline serves as backdrop.

Ella's sick; she cannot stop herself from grimacing. John notices what's happening. He pulls to the side of the road.

ELLA

Don't stop, John. Let's find a
campsite.

51 INT. CAMPER, AT CAMPSITE NEAR PALM BEACH - NIGHT 51

Later, after setting them up, John helps Ella into bed in the camper. He takes off her shoes.

ELLA

I'm sorry, but I really do need to
lie down. If you're hungry, there's
some cheese in the fridge.

John does not answer - he's too focused on being attentive. Finally, Ella's lying comfortably. John asks, tenderly:

JOHN

You better now, Lillian?

Ella looks at him, struck by the fact that John called her that name once again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I won't go home quite yet. Don't fret, I won't leave you alone until you're okay.

A inspired thought crosses Ella's mind. She decides to be Lillian:

ELLA

Where's Ella now?

JOHN

Ella? Ella's at home.

ELLA

At home?

JOHN

Uh-huh. Baby's taking its toll. I should be there. Good God. I'm not right. I better go to her.

Ella's trying hard to stay calm. She swallows back her pride and continues.

ELLA

Wait. Does Ella know about us?

JOHN

You know she doesn't. I mean, I couldn't bear it if Ella knew. Neither could you. It'd break her heart. Mine, too. I'm so selfish-

The question has stirred John up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ella must never know! Never. We have to stop this, Lillian.

Ella experiences a pang to the heart and can barely hold back her tears. But she needs to know everything.

ELLA

Yes, we must stop. It's gone on a long time.

JOHN

Too long, I guess, yes...

ELLA
How long is too long?

John sighs as he thinks back.

JOHN
We said it'd be only the once and
it's been nearly two years now-

ELLA
But do you love me?

John shakes his head and looks at her sadly.

JOHN
Lillian, we've talked about this
and you agreed. We're wonderful
friends. The best, but I love Ella.
We're expecting another baby.

Ella collapses back on the pillow. She's desperate now.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ella's the love of my life, she's
everything to me. We've another
baby on the way, for god's sakes.

Ella knows that she's hearing a great declaration of love,
but she's too angry to care. John extends his arms. Deeply
moved, he says:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but goodbye, dear
Lillian goodbye -

He leaves the camper with a bowed head. Ella rises cursing
from the bed.

ELLA
Son of a bitch! Where are you
going? Get back here! Come here so
I can kill you!

As she screams she grabs objects, dishes, anything at hand,
throwing it all on the ground.

John, hearing the commotion, rushes back in.

JOHN
Ella, what's happening?

ELLA
Oh, so now I'm Ella again? Damn
you!

She begins to strike him with all her remaining strength.

JOHN
(protecting himself)
What are you doing? Why are you so
mad? What's happened?

Ella dials a number, calling someone at reception.

ELLA
Good evening, I'm calling from
space 37. Could you please send a
taxi here a.s.a.p? Thank you.

She hangs up in a fury. John watches her blankly as she
begins to pack a bag, filling it with his clothes.

JOHN
(disoriented)
Ella, what are you doing?

ELLA
Quiet, fool. Our trip ends here.

As usual, when she turns on her phone, someone calls. Ella
grabs it and shouts:

ELLA (CONT'D)
Will - what the hell do you want?
Just leave me alone!

And then she turns off her phone.

52

EXT. CAMPSITE NEAR PALM BEACH - NIGHT

52

A taxi approaches the Leisure Seeker. A confused John stands
in front of it.

CABBIE
You called a cab?

Ella answers as she descends the motor home's steps dragging
a bag.

ELLA
Do you see any other customers
waiting around?

She shows the bag to John.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Here're all your things. Night,
shirt, socks, your damned briefs...

JOHN
What's happening, Ella?

Ella doesn't respond. She turns to the taxi driver.

ELLA
Please help me load my husband and
his stupid bag.

The intimidated Cabbie gets out and obeys. He carefully puts the bag in the trunk. Ella, brusque and furious, opens the back door of the taxi.

ELLA (CONT'D)
(to John)
Get in, imbecile.

JOHN
Why are you so mad, Ella?

ELLA
Mad? Me? I'm not mad at all. On the
contrary - I'm relieved. Happy as a
clam!

She tells the Cabbie, who is back behind the wheel:

ELLA (CONT'D)
Take us to an old folks' home. The
crummiest you can find.

53 INT. RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER, PALM BEACH - NIGHT. 53

Ella puts the bag and John's wallet on the reception counter in front of a puzzled Clerk. John looks around, baffled.

JOHN
This isn't where we live.

ELLA
No it isn't. We're at a place where
they keep old fools like you. (to
the Clerk) Put him a room, please.

JOHN
Ella, why are you so irritable?

The Clerk, very calmly, as if she's speaking to a baby, addresses Ella.

CLERK
Ma'am, we cannot accept new
patients without following
established guidelines.

ELLA
Establish them, then.

CLERK
You can come tomorrow morning at 9:30 to the intake office. If the gentleman falls within the required parameters he will be put on a waiting list. At present, this runs about ten months.

Ella removes documents and credit cards from John's wallet, acting as if the Clerk has not even been speaking.

ELLA
That sounds more like your problem than mine. Here's everything you'll need. Money, credit cards, documents. And this photo...

She puts down a photo from an insurance company advertisement that depicts three smiling generations of a family.

ELLA (CONT'D)
He cut it out of a magazine. He thinks this is us, that this is his family! He carries it around in his wallet! Do you understand now who you're dealing with? All right, I'm tired and you have things to do. He's all yours. Good night.

Ella turns her back before the Clerk has time to respond:

ELLA (CONT'D)
Goodbye, John.

And she moves off quickly, heading toward the waiting taxi.

CLERK
(to John)
She must realize that you cannot stay here.

JOHN
At times she seems like a wounded buffalo, I know. Are you familiar with 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber?' (muttered) His wife got him in the back of the neck with a 6.5 Mannlicher. Women with guns ...

CLERK

What do we do? Call the police?

She's addressing the HEAD NURSE, who is looking over the documents left on the counter.

HEAD NURSE

I doubt they'd take him.

54 INTERCUT - INT. CAMPER/ INT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Ella sits on the double bed in the open dining area. The slide projector's on her knees. She's obsessively viewing slides projected small and crooked on the camper's wall, plucking them angrily from containers. She's looking for Lillian, tossing any that don't picture her in a messy pile.

ELLA

There you are, bitch.

She speaks directly to Lillian, pictured smiling sweetly in a 70s miniskirt.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Look at you, with your thighs on display. Coming into my house all slutty.

She chooses another photo, this one of a barbecue in the garden. Lillian has downcast eyes and a downcast expression. John's back is to her as he grills hamburgers. Ella comes closer to better see Lillian's face.

ELLA (CONT'D)

But look at this face. Are you suffering, bitch? What about me, the woman who so happily takes your photograph?

Ella scours the picture, looking at the back of John's pants. She addresses him:

ELLA (CONT'D)

I bought you those pants. And you took them off for Lillian, you pig.

Angry tears come to her eyes. She takes a sip from the bottle of Canadian Club at her side, then changes the photo. There's no Lillian - she throws it on the pile. She finds one that depicts Jane at the age of four, watching Lillian from below with a serious look.

ELLA (CONT'D)
(indignant)
Jane! You knew! And you never said
a word!

She fumbles through her bag, removes her phone and pounds out a number.

In the guest bedroom, Jane wakes up with a start. Her husband PHILIP gives her a worried look:

PHILIP
Is it them?

JANE
Yes, it's Mom! Hello?

In the camper, Ella speaks to her daughter with a voice that alternates between outrage and near-tears.

ELLA
Your father fooled me all our life
and you knew it.

JANE
Mom, what's happening? Where are
you?

ELLA
You never said a word. Always on
his side! Professor my ass.

In her bedroom, Jane gives her husband a terrified look.

JANE
Mother, you're raving! I'm at your
house with Philip and Will - we're
all here, waiting for you. Where
are you? Let us come get you.

In the camper, Ella is a whirlwind of recriminations, unstoppable, maybe even drunk.

ELLA
I'm alone. I got rid of your father
and I'm coming back home. Or maybe,
I'm going to the seaside. I don't
ever want to see him again.

JANE
(distressed)
Mom - where's Dad?

ELLA

I'm finally free of that horrible creature who ruined my life. I don't give a damn about Hemingway or Melville or those little pedantic lessons that always made me feel like an idiot!

Jane tries to interject.

JANE

Mom...

ELLA

The liar! What do you read in all those books? Just lies!

JANE

Mom!

ELLA

He lied his whole life! And I bet he's pretending to be senile, too. He's just an impostor!

JANE

(raises her voice)

Mom! Calm down and answer me! Where's Dad? You didn't leave him on his own, did you?

ELLA

Never thought you'd have a vindictive mother, did you? You see what I've become? It's all his fault. And yours! Who do you think you are, you two? Go to hell!

Before Jane can interrupt again, Ella hangs up. She clutches her head in her hands. She sobs. In a burst of anger, she rips off the wig, exposing her little bird-like head. Her daughter tries to call her back:

THE TELEPHONE RINGS

But Ella turns it off and slams it on the bed. She throws herself down, then pulls herself up, almost out of breath. She takes another sip of Canadian Club, swallows two blue pills, throws herself back down. She turns out the light. But she's still wide-eyed.

55 INTERCUT - INT. RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTER/ INT. ELLA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT. 55

John sits in a chair in the waiting room. They've placed him in front of a television to keep him happy while the Clerk and Head Nurse discuss this absurd situation.

CLERK

Maybe we should look for his children online? We could explain the situation to them.

HEAD NURSE

I hope they aren't like his wife. Crazy woman.

They stop, because a taxi has pulled up in front of the entrance, carrying Ella. She gets out with her cell-phone pressed to her ear.

ELLA

You're right, Jane darling. I'm sorry. I'm sorry!

She keeps the phone to her ear as she enters the lobby.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I just don't know what came over me. Maybe it was my meds. Everything's fine, darling. Daddy's okay. No, I was only joking. I'd never abandon him. Now, can you do me a favor?

Now Jane is in her parents' living room with Will and Philip, all of them in pajamas.

JANE
(hesitant)
A favor?

Ella's in the waiting room. She steps up behind John. She looks at him, though he's unaware of her presence.

ELLA
Go to Lillian and tell her something.

JANE
Mom, Lillian's...

ELLA
Tell her she's the dirtiest whore on earth.

JANE
(dumbfounded)
What did you say?

Jane, now in their parents' kitchen, raises her eyes to Lillian, who is also there, next to Will. Lillian wears a sweater over her nightgown. After the first phone call earlier that night they've organized a crisis team.

While Jane's been left speechless, Ella, in the waiting room, adds:

ELLA
No, in the universe. The biggest whore in the whole universe.

Ella hangs up the phone and approaches the reception. The Head Nurse and Clerk watch her in astonishment.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Where's my husband?

The Clerk points to the adjoining waiting room.

While in the kitchen Will asks:

WILL
So what's happening?

Jane watches Lillian and stutters:

JANE
Nothing. Everything's fine.

LILLIAN
But where are they?

JANE

I have no idea, but Mom seems very... energized. And she sends her love to you, Lillian.

LILLIAN

Isn't that sweet...

Ella sees John in the waiting room, quietly watching a basketball game on the TV with some other patients.

Ella's still upset, but her anger has given way to bitterness. She touches John's shoulder. He turns and smiles as if nothing has happened.

JOHN

Hi, darling Ella.

ELLA

I understand everything. That night you came home - remember? I smelled of wax, or was it oil? Vinegar? DDT? I was cleaning the floor. All hot and sweaty. Seven months pregnant.

JOHN

(bewildered)

What?

The employees have reached them and are cautiously trying to intervene:

CLERK

Ma'am? Is everything all right? Can we call someone to come get you?

Ella is offended.

ELLA

Can't you see that I'm speaking with my husband?

The Head Nurse exchanges a look with the Clerk, who seems even more frightened. Ella turns to John and continues.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You didn't say anything, but you got down on all fours to help. Then, while I was taking a bath, you got in the tub with me.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

I didn't know anything, but I sensed you were back. And although I knew nothing, I forgave you.

Who knows how much John understands. He kisses her hand. Then he gestures to the man who sits watching the game in the chair next to him.

JOHN

This chap likes the Bulls. Raymond Chandler was a Bulls fan. Hemingway loved bulls. But that was in Spain.

The Clerk talks to them as if they were spoiled children:

CLERK

You really should be going. It's Mr. Davidson's bedtime.

Ella takes John by the hand and pulls him up:

ELLA

Don't worry. I'm not leaving my husband in this dump to be treated like a fool. Come on John.

John gets up nimbly, and when he sees Ella walking with difficulty, he takes her arm.

JOHN

Lean on me, sweetheart.

ELLA

And now I have to forgive you all over again. 48 years later.

John understands nothing of what she's saying, but seems to sense her conciliatory tone.

JOHN

Thank you, Ella.

ELLA

I don't know if I'm a bitch or you're a son of a bitch.

John stops for a second, thinking about it.

JOHN

I guess anything's possible.

And out they go through the glass doors: he's vacant but strong, she's crippled but lucid. The two of them forming one whole person.

56 INT. CAMPER, MOVING DOWN THE OVERSEAS HIGHWAY - DAY 56

The Leisure Seeker seems to skip the surface of the water as it follows the Overseas Highway through the Keys. John drives while Ella is stuck to him like a Band-Aid. John struggles to maneuver, but Ella doesn't relax her embrace.

ELLA
Could you pull over, John?

JOHN
Why?

ELLA
Let's get down to look.

JOHN
Do you think a guy can get a burger
up here?

Ella loses her patience immediately.

ELLA
John, pull this camper over
immediately. I want to get out and
look.

John obeys. Ella opens the door and gets down. She walks to the edge of the bridge, suspended between water and sky. John reaches her after a moment. She hears him coming but does not turn around. She speaks as she takes in nature's sublimity:

ELLA (CONT'D)
Look, John. It's so beautiful.

John looks around in bewilderment.

JOHN
Are we there?

ELLA
Almost.

JOHN
Is this heaven?

ELLA
Maybe.

JOHN

Do you think a guy can get a burger
up here?

57

EXT. KEY WEST CAMPSITE - DAY

57

John and Ella have hooked up the Leisure Seeker in a campsite
and, along with other guests, board a shuttle. John waits on
a bench with other guests to board a shuttle. He continues to
read his new favorite book, "Nature Pop-Ups Land Life." He
points out the pop-up animals to a bemused TEXAN with a
cowboy hat sitting next to him.

*
*
*
*
*

JOHN

(points to lion)
Hemingway shot one of these.
(points to giraffe) But not one of
these.

*
*
*
*
*

As he speaks, Ella steps up behind him. She watches her
husband in despair. His brilliant mind has been reduced to
this.

*
*
*

TEXAN

(helpless)
There's a Cuban restaurant down the
street from Hemingway's house. Good
grub.

*
*
*

John, still absorbed int he book, ignores him

*

TEXAN (CONT'D)

(to Ella)
Get the *pollo y frioles*. You'll
thank me.

*

Ella grimaces in disgust. She's not feeling well.

58

INT./EXT. HEMINGWAY HOUSE - DAY.

58

Hemingway's house is crowded with tourists. There's the
restaurant, a shop full of souvenirs, tour guides who explain
the same things in the same words to different groups. Weird,
slightly evil cats lounge everywhere, photographed by phones
and posted immediately on Facebook. Ella is very disappointed
by the place, which seems to her to be as bogus as the set of
a TV show. She looks at John, mortified. But John doesn't
seem disappointed at all. In fact, he throws himself into a
wedding ceremony taking place in the special wedding site on
the house's grounds. He wanders happily among the guests, as
if they were his relatives. In the drunken chaos, no one
seems to mind him. They are from Miami, a mixture of Anglos
and Latinos; they make a real racket. John toasts strangers;

he even joins the group photo. Ella descends the porch stairs and tries to take him by the arm, to get him out of there.

ELLA

Enough of this farce, John. No one will believe this.

JOHN

But Ella - Gary and Marisol are getting married!

There's a large banner in which the names are interwoven in a heart. Ella's not nervous, she's afflicted with pain.

ELLA

I'm sorry. You've wanted to come
for so many years. And look at it.

But John is no longer hearing her. He's drawn to the bride and her bridesmaids, who have lined up to dance, their white dresses glowing against the deep green lawn. Someone puts on:

CUBAN SALSA TIMBA DANCE MUSIC

The girls in white begin to dance deliriously, all together, as if possessed. John watches this ecstasy, and there's a hint of the dance in his own feet.

Ella, meanwhile, is stricken by a wave of nausea. She soundlessly calls out. John doesn't hear her, he doesn't notice. Ella goes in search of a bathroom to throw up. She's giddy and sweating. She cannot reach the toilet - she's gripped by a dizzy spell that sends her to the ground. She loses consciousness. Nearby visitors call for help.

VISITORS SUMMON HELP

In the garden, John is overwhelmed by the song, by how the wedding guests sing together as the girls dance, like the whole thing was choreographed:

In the house, paramedics load Ella onto a stretcher. No one notices her little golden purse that lies on the ground just outside the bathroom door. She seems to have a glimmer of understanding as they load her on the ambulance. She realizes what's happening, that John is not with her.

ELLA (CONT'D)

John. My husband.

She hasn't the strength to protest more strongly; her voice is just a whisper.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Leave me alone. Please, I beg you.
I can't go. John. Leave me...

The paramedics don't hear her. As they close the ambulance doors, Ella is overcome by feelings of illness and exhaustion. She's taken away mumbling:

ELLA (CONT'D)

John. John.

Working with cool efficiency, the paramedics put an oxygen mask over her mouth, then pierce a vein and insert a drip. The ambulance rushes off with siren screaming.

John walks into the house in a daze. He looks around in amazement. He gazes at Hemingway's desk, which holds an old Remington, just like his back home. He studies the framed photos of the great writer in the company of Fidel and Che; or marlin fishing on his boat Pilar. But there's something missing. He's lost something, but he cannot remember what it is. He approaches a young female GUIDE.

JOHN
Excuse me.

GUIDE
Yes, sir.

JOHN
I'm looking for...

GUIDE
Looking for...?

JOHN
Help me, please.

The Guide speaks to him like he's a child.

GUIDE
Are you looking for the bathroom?
It's out back by the souvenir shop.
Do you feel okay?

JOHN
Thank you, miss. You're very helpful.

He follows her directions. In the hallway outside the bathroom, he sees Ella's golden purse on the ground. He stops, perplexed. It reminds him of something. He picks it up, opens it, pulls out a lipstick and sniffs it.

59 EXT. LOWER KEYS MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

59

The taxi arrives at the hospital, a big modern edifice with mirrored walls. John gets out with Ella's purse in hand. The taxi driver calls him back.

KEY WEST CABBIE
Excuse me - sir?

JOHN
It says dePoo Building.

KEY WEST CABBIE
You want the emergency room
entrance. Now, that'll be 35
dollars.

John smiles sweetly.

JOHN
Don't worry about it.

He walks away. The Cabbie gets out and goes after him.

KEY WEST CABBIE
Hey man, don't try to pull that
shit. You owe me 35 dollars.

JOHN
Do I? Okay.

He opens Ella's golden purse and takes out the money.

60

INT. LOWER KEYS MEDICAL CENTER - DAY.

60

John sits in front of a couple of doctors, who are speaking very seriously, as if he could possibly understand them.

FIRST DOCTOR
...in order to figure out what was
causing these symptoms we did a
full body CAT scan. We certainly
didn't expect a situation as grave
as what we found.

SECOND DOCTOR
The original tumor was in the
colon, wasn't it, Mr. Spencer?

John understands that he is being questioned.

JOHN
I... yes, uh-huh, I'm John Spencer.

The doctors attribute his vagueness to a state of shock.

FIRST DOCTOR
But now there's been a bloodborne
spread through the lymphatic
system, attacking almost all
internal organs.

SECOND DOCTOR

To be honest, Mr. Spencer, it's amazing that she's even alive with her blood chemistry readings.

FIRST DOCTOR

Were you really taking an RV trip?

John looks at them, blinks, and asks:

JOHN

Where is my wife?

CUT TO:

Ella's in her hospital bed, attached to a drip, monitored, half her face covered by an oxygen mask. The door opens and a young CUBAN NURSE enters with John, who has her purse in hand.

Ella opens her eyes as John approaches, then opens them wider in amazement. She pulls away the oxygen mask.

ELLA

Oh my god, John, how'd you get here?

JOHN

I brought you this.

She kisses him on the lips, then realizes that the nurse is watching from the door.

ELLA

A little privacy, please.

CUBAN NURSE

Oh, sorry.

She closes the door. Ella takes the purse and immediately applies some make-up to her face, using the tiny mirror.

ELLA

It's so amazing that you found me. Who helped you?

JOHN

Let's go.

She caresses John's face, deeply moved.

ELLA

I don't know, hon. I don't think they're going to release me now that they've caught me.

But John stubbornly pulls back her covers and takes her hand. He sees her shoes and arranges them beneath the side of the bed, inviting her to get down. He drapes his jacket over the shoulders of her hospital gown.

JOHN

We'll go, now.

CUT TO:

They move through a crowded corridor, walking slowly, John carefully supporting his wife. They pass by the reception desk. Ella, wearing John's jacket, is in great pain and deeply confused. She looks around, not understanding how to get out of here. She straightens her wig and, acting like a visitor, stops a passing nurse:

ELLA

Excuse me, where's the exit?

The nurse, oblivious, shows the way out.

61 INT. TAXI, KEY WEST - SUNSET

61

John and Ella embracing aboard a taxi.

ELLA

I can't believe this. You're my hero.

John smiles innocently.

ELLA (CONT'D)

John? Oh my god...

John's relaxed expression makes her realize that he's taking a big, satisfying piss. A dark stain widens on his pants.

62 EXT. KEY WEST CAMPSITE - DUSK

62

John, his pants wet, helps Ella out of the taxi at the Leisure Seeker. When she can't make it up the ladder, he bends down and picks her up.

ELLA

What are you doing? You'll give yourself a hernia.

JOHN

But you're so light, Ella...

63

KEY WEST CAMPSITE- INSIDE THE CAMPER - DUSK AND NIGHT

63

Carefully he lowers her to the bed. She's exhausted and he's having trouble breathing. He stands in front of the bed, his hand outstretched against the wall for balance, as he tries to catch his breath. She looks at him.

ELLA

You need to change, John. Your clean shorts are in the bottom drawer. You'll have to excuse me for not helping.

JOHN

You rest.

He moves away from the wall. Regains his balance. Breathing okay, now -

John takes off his soaked trousers, puts on his night-shirt, while she takes a bottle of Valium from her bag.

ELLA

We both need a good nap. I'd given up hope in the hospital; I didn't think I'd see our Leisure Seeker ever again.

She's filled a glass with many drops of tranquilizer. She hands it to John.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Drink half of this. Look at you, you didn't even wash. Come here.

As John drinks, she gets some wet wipes from a packet on the nightstand.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Come on.

John obeys. She lifts his night shirt and cleans between his thighs. Something happens that makes her laugh.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Oh, goodness!

John smiles as well, proud of his unexpected erection. He takes her hand and puts it on his cock.

JOHN
Hello, sweetheart.

ELLA
(to his cock)
Well done. But you can stand down-

But John thinks otherwise. He lifts her hospital gown.

He maneuvers above her, on all fours. He starts gently to open her legs

ELLA (CONT'D)
(conscious of impending
pain)
What are you doing?

JOHN
(total concentration)
Will you hand me the 'what's it'
there, please

ELLA
The face creme?

She reaches for the tube/jar of creme on the night table. John takes it and puts some on his cock and on her vagina

ELLA (CONT'D)
I don't think I can, John.

JOHN
We'll try. Just for a second -
Very, very carefully he penetrates her -

JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay? Is it bearable?

ELLA
Yes, darling. Yes. I'm okay -

After a moment he stope his push into her. Their pubic bones are together-

JOHN
(quietly astounded)
I'm there -

ELLA
Yes - there

He is dead still, looking down at her. He sees just the faintest grimaces of discomfort in her eyes

JOHN
(hardly breathing)
Still all right? -

ELLA
(smiling slowly)
Yes. All right.

They lie still, then Ella starts to slowly move -

JOHN
Don't move -

ELLA
(looking at him)
You don't want to come?

JOHN
No, just this -

Ella reaches up to his face and pulls him down to her lips and very gently kisses him. There is an air of ethereal bliss about them -

ELLA
I love you, John -

JOHN
All my life, my darling. All my
life-

They lie there very still feeling every part of their Aristophanic selves united and then, very gradually, he starts to withdraw from her - Ella watches him. He concentrates deliberately on his action

Finally, as if in slow motion, John moves off her and lies beside her.

He is on her right side, his right hand moves between her legs and encloses her vagina -

ELLA
(deeply moved)
This was perfect-

JOHN
Just perfect. Thank you, my darling
girl. You are very, very beautiful -

They lie there, the two of them, together, a whisper of a smile, eyes closed, in a state of outer-worldly wonder and peace.

CUT TO:

When she reopens them, it's pitch black outside. John snores. Ella gets up with difficulty, careful not to wake him.

At the small table, she finishes the letter she's been writing all trip. She folds it, writes 'To Jane and Will' on the back, then leaves it on the table. She downs the remaining half-glass of extra-strength Valium.

She goes to the driver's seat and starts the motor.

She bends down to the floor with a deep sigh to remove the mat that covers the trap door. She rips off the tape. Exhaust fumes begin to spread through the cabin. She joins John in bed and hugs him. The fumes thicken, making everything fuzzy and opalescent.

An image from outside: The Leisure Seeker vibrates with the engine running under a full moon.

ELLA V/O
My darling Jane and Will. Here's
our lawyer's number: I've taken
care of everything, all the
arrangements. There's nothing for
you to worry about, although I
think our final Visa bill will be
outrageous. We had a bit of fun
there at the end.

64 EXT. KEY WEST CAMPSITE - MORNING

64

The following morning, the Texan is having breakfast with his wife. He sees that the Leisure Seeker's engine is running. Perplexed, he goes to knock on the door. Then he opens it.

ELLA V/O
...I'm so sorry to hurt you like
this.
(MORE)

ELLA V/O (CONT'D)

I know how painful it must be. But pretty soon you're going to feel something else. Relief. Relief that you won't have to watch our bodies and our minds fade away. Relief that the burden we were becoming has been lifted from your shoulders. And you musn't feel guilty about that...you musn't.

A deeply upset Texan emerges from the Leisure Seeker, calling for help. Other campers flock to the scene, joined by campsite staff. One of them enters the camper to turn off the engine, while someone else calls 911.

ELLA V/O (CONT'D)

I loved your father. Very much. I didn't have much longer, and I couldn't leave him alone. We were always together. And I hope we're together somewhere now. Who knows?

64

EXT. BOSTON CEMETERY - DAY.

64

The funeral's in their home town cemetery. Will is there, as is Jane, with her husband and their children: 21 year-old Rose and 19 year-old Stephen. Many old friends. And Lillian, who seems the saddest of all.

ELLA V/O

This was our last wonderful vacation. We had some beautiful days. It was our happy ending.

As they walk away, Jane keeps a close eye on her brother, worried that he will not be able to handle this.

Will folds his mother's letter and puts it in his pocket. He's read and re-read it many times. He catches his sister's eye:

JANE

How you doing, kiddo? Sad?

And he, with a bittersweet smile, shakes his head. He puts his arm around her waist and they walk off together.

THE END