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SF PERUSALS

A Great Wilderness

Samuel D. Hunter

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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A GREAT WILDERNESS was commissioned and first produced by Seattle Repertory Theater in January 2014. The performance was directed by Braden Abraham, with sets by Scott Bradley, costumes by Erik Andor, lights by LB Morse, sound by Obadiah Eaves, and dramaturgy by John M. Baker. The Production Stage Manager was Stina Lotti. The cast was as follows:

WALT . . . . . Michael Winters
ABBY . . . . . Christine Estabrook
DANIEL . . . . . Jack Taylor
EUNICE . . . . . Mari Nelson
JANET . . . . . Gretchen Krich
TIM . . . . . R. Hamilton Wright
VOICEOVER ON TV . . . . . Evan Whitfield

A GREAT WILDERNESS was then produced at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in July 2014. The performance was directed by Eric Ting, with sets by Wilson Chin, costumes by Jessica Pabst, lights by Matthew Richards, sound by Brandon Wolcott, and dramaturgy by John M. Baker. The Production Stage Manager was Lindsey Turteltaub. The cast was as follows:

WALT . . . . . Jeffrey DeMunn
ABBY . . . . . Mia Dillon
DANIEL . . . . . Stephan Amenta
EUNICE . . . . . Mia Barron
JANET . . . . . Tasha Lawrence
TIM . . . . . Kevin Geer
VOICEOVER ON TV . . . . . Claire Karwowski

A GREAT WILDERNESS was developed at The Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference (Preston Whiteway, Executive Director; Wendy Goldberg, Artistic Director) in 2013. It was directed by Braden Abraham.

CHARACTERS

WALT – Mid-seventies, male.

DANIEL – Sixteen, male.

ABBY – Mid-to-late sixties, female.

TIM – Mid-to-late sixties, male.

EUNICE – Forties or early fifties, female.

JANET – Late forties or early fifties, female.

VOICEOVER ON THE TELEVISION – Male or female.

SETTING

The common room of a decaying camp on the outskirts of a wilderness area in Idaho. There are full boxes everywhere, much of the space has been packed up. Only essential furniture remains, along with some camping gear, books including several numbered Bibles, a television, etc. A hallway leads to other bedrooms and a bathroom; a kitchen occupies a section of the stage.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Dialogue written in italics is emphatic, deliberate; dialogue written in ALL CAPS is impulsive, explosive.

A "/" indicates an overlap in dialogue. Whenever a "/" appears, the following line of dialogue should begin.

The television frequently plays underneath the dialogue, and should be only slightly quieter than the actors. The effect should be that it's imposing, present – just short of irritating. The television dialogue is not always constant, but there should always be a twee, cheaply produced soundtrack playing in the background whenever the DVD is playing.

Dedicated to the memory of Jerry Manning.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(Late morning.)

*(***DANIEL** *stands near the door holding a duffel bag. He looks around the room, obviously nervous.)*

*(***WALT** *stands on the opposite end of the room, looking at him, smiling warmly.)*

(a tense silence)

WALT. Are you hungry? You've gotta be hungry.

(no response)

I think I have – there's plenty of food, you can help yourself to whatever you like. And I'll be cooking us our meals, I'm actually pretty good at, uh. Your mom probably told you all this, she –.

(no response)

Come in. Daniel. Please.

*(***DANIEL** *pauses, then slowly moves inside, setting down his duffel.)*

WALT. Was your ride okay?

DANIEL. It was fine.

WALT. The ride up the mountain can be bumpy, a lot better than twenty years ago though, I'll tell you that much. And it's pretty, uh, was it pretty?

DANIEL. I don't –. I was sitting in the middle, / I didn't really –

WALT. Oh, that's –

DANIEL. I feel sort of turned around, I don't really feel like I know where I am right / now –

WALT. That's really a shame. Bobby should have let you sit up front, usually he lets my boys sit up front.

(pause)

DANIEL. The van was pretty full. Hunters or something.

WALT. Fishers, more likely. There's some very nice fly fishing around here. Bobby's been shuttling my boys up here for years / now –

DANIEL. "Your" boys? That's what you call us?

(pause)

WALT. Sorry, I –. I won't call you that if you don't –.

(short pause)

You're hungry. You've gotta be hungry.

(pause)

DANIEL. I'm okay.

*(***DANIEL** *glances around the room a bit, his eyes land on the book on the podium.)*

WALT. Oh that's neat, take a look, you'll like it.

*(***WALT** *goes to the book.* **DANIEL** *approaches it cautiously.)*

DANIEL. Is it a Bible?

WALT. No it's a dictionary, see –

*(***WALT** *grabs the magnifying glass.)*

WALT. It's a compact edition of the complete Oxford English Dictionary, all twenty volumes in microprint. Here, look –

*(***WALT** *motions for* **DANIEL** *to look through the magnifying glass.)*

Over five-hundred thousand words in here, you believe that?

DANIEL. Huh.

WALT. I've always loved dictionaries. Ugh, that makes me sound so boring, doesn't it? "I've always loved dictionaries."

DANIEL. Why?

WALT. I guess, I just – like knowing I have the help, if I need it. If I couldn't find the words.

(pause)

I'm not explaining myself very well. I just like dictionaries.

(awkward pause)

WALT. Are you sure you're not hungry?

(pause)

DANIEL. Okay.

WALT. Sandwich?

DANIEL. Okay.

(pause)

*(***WALT** *moves into the kitchen.)*

WALT. You like anything in particular? I have turkey, roast beef –

DANIEL. Whatever's fine.

WALT. Well what would you like?

DANIEL. Whatever.

*(***WALT** *comes out of the kitchen.)*

WALT. I know that this must be uncomfortable for you. And I'm sorry about – , there are usually many more people here, at times we've had nine or ten people staying in here at one time, some summers we had as many as thirty boys come through here. But I really want to make you comfortable, and safe, it's *important* to me that you feel safe. For the next few weeks, this is your home.

(pause)

DANIEL. I don't like roast beef.

WALT. So turkey?

DANIEL. Whatever.

WALT. I think there's baloney.

DANIEL. Turkey.

*(***WALT** *goes back into the kitchen, makes sandwiches.* **DANIEL** *tentatively sits down.)*

WALT. There are some really beautiful hiking trails we can do together, or if you just want to do them by yourself that's fine, I just ask that you don't go further than the ridge there if you're by yourself. There's a great lake you can get to but it's a day's hike. I don't know if I could make it that far, I'm –. But once Tim and Abby come, maybe they'd like to take you.

DANIEL. Tim and Abby?

WALT. Yeah, they –. Didn't your mom explain this to you?

DANIEL. She didn't –. She didn't tell me a lot.

WALT. Oh.

(pause)

Well, they – they're friends, Abby helped me start this place, her husband Tim has been a counselor here for many years. And they'll be taking over this place once I –… Your mom really didn't explain this to you?

DANIEL. No.

(pause)

WALT. You know there's candy in that jar in front of you if you want some – is there candy in there?

*(***DANIEL** *opens a candy jar on the coffee table in front of him.)*

DANIEL. Uh – yeah?

WALT. There's candy?

DANIEL. It's like – I think it's all tic tacs.

WALT. *Tic tacs*? I'll get some candy. *Tic tacs*, what is wrong with me?

DANIEL. So they're – your friends are coming here? To stay?

WALT. For a while, they'll help me pack up. And they'll be taking over this place next summer.

DANIEL. Are you moving?

*(***WALT** *finishes making a couple sandwiches, brings them out into the main room, hands one to* **DANIEL.***)*

WALT. I am. To an "assisted living center" or some other euphemism, "Shady Gardens" or "Garden Grove" or some other stupid thing. A place for people so old they fill their candy jars with tic tacs. I'm moving right after you finish up here.

DANIEL. So I'm your last – patient or whatever?

WALT. "Patient"? Are you sick?

DANIEL. Am I?

(pause)

WALT. You look fine and healthy to me.

(re: the sandwich)

Try it.

*(***DANIEL** *inspects the sandwich a bit.)*

WALT. I didn't poison it, I promise.

DANIEL. What?

WALT. I'm kidding.

DANIEL. About *poisoning* me?

WALT. Alright, sorry, I'm –. Sorry?

*(***DANIEL** *pauses, then takes a bite of the sandwich.)*

Okay?

(Pause. **DANIEL** *nods.)*

The good thing about being the only one here, you can have any room you like.

*(***DANIEL** *pulls out an iPhone.)*

It can get a little cold at night, I'd rather you didn't use the space heater, I don't trust those things, I can give you a hot water bottle.

DANIEL. A what?

WALT. A hot water bottle, to sleep with, to keep you warm.

(Pause. **DANIEL** *looks at him.)*

DANIEL. You want me to sleep with a bottle full of warm water?

WALT. No, it's –. It's not like –

DANIEL. *(re: his iPhone)* There's no signal here?

WALT. Here? Heck no. I've heard when you walk up the ridge you can sometimes get, uh, signal. And there's a phone here. It's a rotary phone, you know how to use a rotary phone?

DANIEL. I don't know what that is.

WALT. Oh.

(Awkward silence. **DANIEL** *stares forward.)*

DANIEL. *(suddenly)* You're not gonna like *shock* me or anything, right?

WALT. "Shock" you? No, / we're –

DANIEL. Because you really don't need to do that, I don't –. Mom just sort of shoved me into a van without telling me anything, like *anything*, like *I don't even know your name*, and I read on the internet that sometimes people use electricity or whatever, / but I don't need that.

WALT. No one's going / to –

DANIEL. And why am I the only one here?! I really wasn't expecting to be the only one and I'm already feeling really uncomfortable, I can't even call anyone and you're making *jokes* about *poisoning me* –

WALT. I'm Walt. My name is Walt. Call me Walt.

(pause)

We don't shock anyone. We don't hurt you, we don't scold you, we don't try to beat you down. The only thing I've done, the only thing I've been trying to do for thirty years, is to raise you up. I know what you're feeling, you're feeling tired, confused, angry. I used to

think I had it worse when I was a boy, but I'm convinced it's ten times harder nowadays, when all you have to do is open up a laptop and –.

(pause)

The first thing I want you to know, the first thing you need to know – you are safe here.

(pause)

You are safe here.

(pause)

DANIEL. So what are –? What are you going to do to me?

WALT. I'm not going to do anything "to you." We're going to talk, read scripture together, go on hikes, pray. I don't have any set curriculum here, this is all about you. Getting back to who you really are, the person you want to be.

DANIEL. A straight person.

(pause)

WALT. That's not really the best way to talk about it, it's not / about –

DANIEL. What if I told you I wasn't sure I wanted to be straight?

(pause)

WALT. It's your life, Daniel. I'm not here to force you into anything. Like I said, this is about you. Finding the person you've always wanted to be. It's a kind of baptism. But you have to, uh, make a decision about what kind of baptism – , what you're being baptized into. Ugh, that was stupid, I'm sorry. Forget I said that.

(pause)

What I think we should do now is – sit down and eat our sandwiches. I think that can be our start.

(pause)

Yeah?

Scene Two

(Several hours later. **ABBY** *stands in the middle of the room, holding a suitcase and some bags from Walmart.)*

ABBY. *(calling out)* Walt, you here?!

*(***TIM** *appears in the hallway, entering the main room.)*

TIM. He's not in his bedroom.

*(***ABBY** *goes to a window, looking out.)*

He knows we're coming today, right?

ABBY. Well he did when I talked to him yesterday, he –. Oh, it's terrible in here, get the windows?

*(***TIM** *opens a couple windows.)*

ABBY. Where's that air conditioner we got for him?

TIM. He never liked that thing, it's probably sitting in the shed rusting over.

*(***ABBY** *moves down the hall.)*

ABBY. *(offstage)* Well we paid enough for it, I don't –…

(short pause)

He's already packed up.

TIM. What?

*(***ABBY** *re-enters.)*

ABBY. I said he's already packed up, I thought he said he wanted help packing.

TIM. Well it's not / completely –

ABBY. That road, I thought we were going to die. Those sheer drops on the passenger side on the way up, I had forgotten about those.

TIM. Better than it used to be.

ABBY. I'm still shaking. Where's that bottle of cognac?

*(***ABBY** *goes to the kitchen, starts putting away the supplies in the Walmart bags.)*

TIM. We got it for Walt.

ABBY. Oh he won't mind, pour me a glass please?

(Pause. **TIM** *opens his bag, takes out a bottle of cognac.)*

TIM. Okay.

ABBY. Is it really that much trouble / to pour me a glass of –?

TIM. I'm doing it, honey, I'm pouring you a glass.

*(***TIM** *pours two drinks, brings one to* **ABBY.** *They drink.* **ABBY** *surveys the room, noticing a photo on the mantle. Pause.)*

TIM. What?

ABBY. No, I just –.

(pause)

I haven't been here in a while.

TIM. It feel different?

ABBY. Not at all. Looks exactly like it did in the beginning, it –…

(short pause)

I just hope Walt doesn't give me any grief, I have a feeling he's not too excited about going to the home.

TIM. You know, you really shouldn't call it "the home." Not in front of him at least.

ABBY. Oh who cares? It's a home, I'll call it a home if I want to.

TIM. I just – I don't think he'll like that, sounds like we're sending him off to an asylum.

*(***ABBY** *goes back to the Walmart bags, unpacking them.)*

ABBY. Well he's already given them the deposit, it's done. And the time has come, when he fell down last year, if Janet hadn't've stopped by that afternoon, I don't know what –

(rooting through the bag)

You got boat twine? Why did you get boat twine?

TIM. I just don't want him to feel like we're up here to send him off / on some iceberg or something.

ABBY. *(still rooting through the bag)* Well he knows we –… "Iceberg?" What the heck are you –?

(re: the bag) And *duct tape*? Tim, why on earth did you / buy this?

TIM. Oh I don't know, I just bought / some supplies –

ABBY. Are we helping him pack or taking him hostage?

(Pause. **TIM** *sits down.)*

TIM. I just –.

(pause)

It's just sad to see this place go.

*(***ABBY** *regards the room.)*

ABBY. Sure.

(The door opens and **WALT** *enters.)*

WALT. Oh – / Hi –

TIM. *(getting up)* Well there he is!

*(***TIM** *gets up, goes to* **WALT**, *embracing him.)*

ABBY. Hello, Walter.

TIM. Where did you disappear off to?

WALT. Oh, I was just –. I was just out –…

*(***WALT** *disappears down the hall.* **ABBY** *and* **TIM** *look at one another.)*

ABBY. Walt?

WALT. *(offstage)* Just, uh –. Sorry.

*(***WALT** *returns.)*

Sorry! Good to see you. Uh – Daniel isn't here, is he?

TIM. Daniel?

WALT. Yeah, uh –. The boy, was there a boy here?

TIM. No –

ABBY. Wait – you don't have a kid up here, do you?

(pause)

WALT. Well, I just –. I know it's sort of last minute, but / he really –

ABBY. *(exasperated)* Walt, what were you / thinking?!

WALT. I'm sorry, I just –. His mother called me a few days ago, I / just thought –

ABBY. You're supposed to be moving into that place *next week*, they / have your –

WALT. They can wait an extra week or two, I'm still paying / for it –

TIM. You really think this is the best time for –?

WALT. Now listen, I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but –. But he's here, and he needs our help.

TIM. So – where is he?

WALT. Well see this is the, uh. I – don't really know.

ABBY. You don't know?

WALT. Well, he – he said something as he was leaving, he was at the door here, and he said something to me and I just, I can't remember what it was, but –. Ugh, I hate this, I hate it when I can't remember, I hear people saying things and the words travel in one ear / and out the –

ABBY. How long has he been gone?

WALT. Well, I don't know, what time is it?

TIM. *(checking his watch)* It's – almost six?

WALT. Oh.

TIM. When did he leave?

WALT. I guess it was around, uh. I don't know, noon?

(pause)

I guess I've been wandering around outside calling after him for about four hours now, I guess, I really lost track of time, uh.

(pause)

WALT. *(cont.)* Should we be concerned?

(pause)

Maybe we should be concerned.

Scene Three

(Later, nearly dark outside. **WALT** *is standing in the kitchen on the phone,* **TIM** *and* **ABBY** *have opened a few boxes and are rooting around inside them.)*

WALT. *(on the phone)* – well, yeah, I'm not –

(pause)

Wait, what? No, Janet, you're not – you're not understanding me, he's not *missing*, / he just went wandering outside or –

TIM. I'm not finding anything.

ABBY. *(to* **WALT***)* You didn't label any of these, / I don't –

WALT. *(to* **ABBY***)* Try the – oh, I don't know. Open the –

(on the phone)

No. Janet, I don't want the – you know, I don't want people thinking / that we *lost* him for gosh sake –

ABBY. He lives in a *cabin* in the *woods* and he doesn't own a *flashlight?*

WALT. *(on the phone)* I understand that, I really do, but this isn't – it's only been a few hours, I don't know if it's time to, you know, call in the National / Guard or whathaveyou.

TIM. Do we have something in the car?

ABBY. No.

WALT. *(on the phone)* Can't you just – / I don't know, ride around yourself, look for him a bit? Listen, if he's not back in a few hours, I'll be the first one to, you know, call Search and Rescue.

TIM. What about the little –

ABBY. We haven't had that for years.

TIM. What about the flares?

ABBY. *Flares?*

TIM. I was just thinking / that I –

ABBY. It hasn't rained here in three weeks and you wanna walk around in the forest here with *flares?*

WALT. *(on the phone)* / Yes, exactly, that's what I'm –. Yes, thank you, yes.

TIM. I just thought he might, the kid might see them or something. Nevermind.

ABBY. You're such a city boy.

TIM. You know I really don't like it when you call me that, Spokane isn't exactly / New York City –

ABBY. Oh I'm / just kidding, nevermind.

WALT. *(on the phone)* Okay, great. Thank you, Janet, and –. Yes, I appreciate the, uh. Discretion. Thank you.

*(***WALT** *hangs up.)*

WALT. She's gonna, uh. She'll take a ride around, some of the old logging trails, see if she spots him.

TIM. Should we call his parents?

WALT. I just don't want to blow this out of proportion, we've dealt with this before –

TIM. I'm sure it's fine, but maybe we / should –

WALT. Let's just – not alarm too many people right now, alright? If he doesn't show up, you know, in a few hours, then we'll get worried.

TIM. So if he's not back in a couple hours, we call Janet back.

WALT. Yeah, of course.

TIM. For sure if he's not back by / midnight –

WALT. *Yes I heard you yes.*

(pause)

Maybe I shouldn't have done this, maybe I –. His mother was just so – *desperate.* She's already sent him to five or six different pastors –

TIM. Maybe you have a flashlight / out in the shed, or maybe –

WALT. Most of them sounded completely clueless, nowadays I'm not / even sure –

ABBY. Walt.

WALT. Hm?

ABBY. Flashlight.

WALT. Oh. *(pause)* Oh you know I think there's one in that closet there.

ABBY. *Geez*, Walt.

*(***WALT** *goes to the closet, finds the flashlight.)*

WALT. Here just give me a minute, let me figure out where I put my coat and I'll go with you –

ABBY. Walt, just let Tim go, stay here with me.

WALT. He doesn't even know who Tim is, for all you know you might scare him away –

TIM. He's not a frightened deer, he's cold and thirsty and he'll be glad to see / another person –

WALT. Now Tim just give me a second, I said I can go with you.

TIM. *Walt, you'd slow me down.*

(Pause. **WALT** *looks away, hands* **TIM** *the flashlight.)*

WALT. Okay.

TIM. I didn't mean for that to / sound –

WALT. No, you're right, I'm –. I'd slow you down. *(pause)* I should be here if he comes back anyway.

TIM. Sure.

(heading to the door)

Chances are he didn't go too far up the ridge, so I'll just head east a bit. He'll probably see my flashlight, come running.

WALT. Sure.

TIM. I won't go too far.

ABBY. Just watch where you're going, you're gonna / twist your ankle again if you don't watch where you're going –

TIM. I will. I said I will.

*(***TIM** *kisses* **ABBY** *on the cheek, exits. A silence between* **ABBY** *and* **WALT.***)*

ABBY. Walt, you really could have told us if you were planning on taking / on –

WALT. *Yes, I* –. I know. Abby, I've already said that I'm sorry, / I don't –

ABBY. Alright, alright, I'll –. I'll stop, I'm stopping.

(pause)

Look, I'm sure he's fine.

WALT. Sure.

ABBY. He's an Idaho kid, he'll be fine.

WALT. Mm-hm.

(pause)

ABBY. You didn't have to pack everything up by yourself, that's why we're here, you know.

WALT. I don't know, I just – wanted to get it all out of sight. Thought it'd make me feel better.

ABBY. Did it?

(pause)

WALT. No. No it, uh.

*(***ABBY** *sits with* **WALT.***)*

ABBY. On the way up here I was thinking about all those trips we did from town after we bought this place from the Boy Scouts. That time you were bringing the chest freezer up here, almost ran the pickup off the road.

WALT. I did not.

ABBY. You almost killed us both.

WALT. Oh that's such an exaggeration. And it wasn't the chest freezer, it was the stove.

ABBY. It was the freezer. I remember because you bought it from that Chinaman who ran the car dealership, you remember.

WALT. You know we're not supposed to say that now.

ABBY. What?

WALT. "Chinaman." It's racist or something.

ABBY. It's where he was from!

WALT. I know it, I didn't realize either. I used it a few years ago, one of the boys told me I shouldn't use the word, that it's insensitive.

ABBY. I don't even know what to say to that, it's where he's *from.* People are such idiots nowadays.

(They share a little laugh.)

WALT. It's nice to see you both. I'm sorry you had to have this drama the moment you got here.

ABBY. Any minute now Tim will walk in that door with him. We can focus on getting you ready to go to the home.

WALT. I wish you wouldn't call it that, "the home."

ABBY. Oh, Tim got on me for saying that too. I just don't care. I'm gonna say "the home" and "Chinaman" if I dang well want to, they're my words.

(pause)

Are you –…? I mean, how are you – feeling about it?

(pause)

WALT. Had to happen sooner or later. I can hide up here in the mountains from everything but death.

ABBY. Geez, Walt.

WALT. I'm not trying to be dark, I just –. It's fine, it's God's will. There's a pool.

(pause)

I'm just glad you two are taking over this place.

(Silence.)

ABBY. Walt, you know we –. You know Tim and I aren't getting any younger either, right?

WALT. Well, yeah. / What?

ABBY. It's just –. You have to realize, we have lives in Coeur d'Alene. I don't know if we can just pick everything up and move here for three months out of the year.

WALT. Wait, you –? What are you saying?

ABBY. Look, I didn't mean to bring this up immediately, but might as well just get it out there, no use keeping it from you.

WALT. You're not going to keep this place going?

ABBY. Okay, I never told you I would keep this place going, we never said that. It's not like we can just put our lives on hold for three months every year –

WALT. Well then I can hire people! If you / two don't –

ABBY. *Hire* people? Walt, where the heck would we get money to hire a staff? You only brought four kids up here last summer, and two of them you didn't even *charge* anything –

WALT. Okay, Abby –

ABBY. And your rest home isn't *free*, you know? Tim said that even some of the cheaper units can cost five thousand a month, and I know that you don't –… *Darn it*, I don't know why I have to be the one to do this, I don't know why I always have to be the adult.

*(***WALT** *gets up, wandering aimlessly.)*

(silence)

*(***ABBY** *softens, goes to him.)*

Walt, you've done – good work. Great work. But you said yourself, this is God's will. You have to move on.

*(***WALT** *looks at her.)*

WALT. And next year, when there's another boy, another ten boys, who are confused, and suffering, and alone, where are they gonna go? What's out there for them? How many more boys are gonna end up like –…?

(Pause. **ABBY** *gets up, looking around for a moment. She finds her purse, roots around in it.)*

WALT. I'm sorry.

ABBY. No, I'm –. Look I'm just thinking I could drive around a bit to see if I see / anything –

WALT. I said I'm sorry, I / didn't –

ABBY. There's no reason I shouldn't be out there looking for him as well, I'll just –.

*(***ABBY** *heads toward the door.)*

WALT. Abby, wait.

*(***ABBY** *stops, not looking at* **WALT.***)*

Isaac died because he didn't have a place like this. I just want you to remember that.

*(***ABBY** *looks at* **WALT.** *Silence.)*

ABBY. I'll come right back if I find him.

(Pause. **ABBY** *exits.)*

Scene Four

(Later that night. **TIM***, having just walked in the door, watches a DVD that has been left playing on the television.* **WALT** *is at a table, having fallen asleep.)*

VOICEOVER ON THE TELEVISION. – only one mile away, which was awarded a Medicare rating of 83 out of 100. Residents can choose from private condominiums, located only steps away from the golf course, or bedrooms in our Cottage House, a fourteen unit assisted living center for senior citizens with physical or mental difficulties.

*(***TIM** *approaches* **WALT***, reaching a hand out toward his shoulder.)*

Visit us at Shady Grove and you'll find our residents happy, alert, groomed, well-fed, and healthy. You'll find our staff caring, / friendly, jovial, and speaking with attention to speed and volume.

WALT. *(startled)* OH –

TIM. Sorry! Sorry –

WALT. Tim, you really almost just killed me –

TIM. I'm sorry.

VOICEOVER ON THE TELEVISION. / Amenities include a hair salon, bank, gift shop, snack wagon, gym facilities, pool, and library. We also offer regular shuttles to many popular shopping destinations, as well as some of the best restaurants the Treasure Valley has to offer.

TIM. He hasn't come back yet?

WALT. No, you didn't see anything?

TIM. No, I – I went toward the lake, almost as far as the dead forest, I didn't see anything. You're sure he went that way? He didn't go back down the road?

WALT. I don't – I have no idea. He said something, then he was gone.

TIM. You *really* don't remember what he said?

WALT. Tim, if I knew what he said, don't you think I'd *tell you?*

TIM. Alright, alright. Is Abby out looking for him?

WALT. Yeah, she's –. She's driving around a bit.

(Pause. **WALT** *paces nervously, looks out a window.* **TIM** *looks at the television.)*

VOICEOVER ON THE TELEVISION. Every day offers our residents new activities such as crafting, sing-along, reading, monthly communal birthday parties, / cocktail hour, church services, and art classes.

TIM. Is that –?

WALT. What?

TIM. On the TV. That's where you're going?

WALT. Oh, the –. Yeah.

VOICEOVER ON THE TELEVISION. Almost every hallway in Shady Grove prominently displays art by our residents, / like these seen here. Our art teachers are highly trained professionals who have years of experience with –

TIM. It looks nice.

WALT. Mm-hm.

TIM. Art classes, that's –

*(***WALT** *turns off the television. Short pause.* **TIM** *heads toward the door.)*

TIM. I'm gonna head back out, I just wanted to make sure he didn't come back. I'm wondering if he took the trail up around the other side of the ridge, maybe / he –

WALT. Tim, Abby told me –. She told me that you're not taking over this place.

*(***TIM** *stops. Pause.)*

TIM. Listen, I –. I want you to know that I really don't want to see this place close down, I tried to convince her that we could keep it running –

WALT. Mm-hm.

TIM. But you know Abby. She's been talking about you selling this place for at least five years now.

WALT. She has?

TIM. We argued about it the whole way here. I mean when was the last time she spent more than a few nights here? Six, seven years ago? Last summer she didn't want me coming up at all.

(pause)

Listen, even if this place doesn't shut down – that doesn't mean we're giving up. I'm still counseling boys out of my office, I've got one I'm working with right now. And you can always come up to Couer d'Alene to work with me – you could even do some counseling in Boise part time, I could come down a few weeks out of the year to work with you, or –…

(pause)

Point is – this isn't over.

(pause)

WALT. It's an interesting feeling.

TIM. What?

WALT. I don't know. Becoming a dinosaur.

(pause)

TIM. Wait – what do you mean?

(Headlights shine through the window, the sound of an approaching car.)

WALT. Is that Abby?

*(***TIM** *opens the door, looking out.)*

TIM. No, it's –. I don't know.

(Sound of a car door closing.)

(calling out)

Hello?

(After a moment, **EUNICE** *appears at the door. She looks at* **TIM** *for a second, then* **WALT***, not saying anything.)*

TIM. Can we –…?

*(***EUNICE** *pushes past* **TIM***, goes inside.)*

Excuse me?

*(***EUNICE** *looks around, then heads down the hall.)*

Do you know who that is?

WALT. I have no –…

EUNICE. *(offstage)* Danny?!

WALT. Oh.

*(***EUNICE** *re-enters.)*

EUNICE. Where is he?

WALT. Well, we actually –

EUNICE. I got a text from him, I tried calling him back but he wouldn't answer, and the phone number you gave me for this place has been busy for hours. Where is he?

WALT. Oh that phone –

*(***WALT** *goes to the phone, looking at it.)*

It's this stupid old rotary / phone –

EUNICE. *Where's Daniel?*

WALT. Okay, okay, just –. I'm Walt, we spoke on the phone. It's Eunice, right?

(pause)

EUNICE. Yes.

WALT. Eunice. Daniel went out for a walk this afternoon, he hasn't come back yet. But we'll find him, / I promise you –

EUNICE. Oh Lord please no –

TIM. It's really not as bad as it sounds –

EUNICE. Oh Lord, oh Lord / please no –

WALT. Sit down, please –

*(***EUNICE** *sits down on the couch.)*

TIM. Chances are he'll come back later tonight or –… He's probably not even lost, he might just be – I mean, you know how teenage boys can be, they can pull these kinds of things –

EUNICE. Not Daniel. Daniel doesn't do this.

TIM. You'd be surprised at what they're capable of, even the ones you / don't –

EUNICE. I'm sorry, who are you?

WALT. He works here, with me. And we've dealt with this kind of thing –

EUNICE. So what are you doing, have you called the police, the – I don't know – *ranger*, or –

WALT. There's a ranger here who's a good friend, has been for years, she's aware of it, she's on the lookout. If we don't hear from her in a few hours we'll make some more calls. Really, I know how stressful this must be but honestly – it's going to be okay.

TIM. What did the text say?

EUNICE. What?

TIM. You said he texted you?

EUNICE. Oh. Yeah.

TIM. What did it say?

EUNICE. It said "I'm gone."

(pause)

It just said "I'm gone."

Scene Five

(Later that night, around midnight.)

*(***JANET***, a park ranger, is standing in the cabin with an open notebook.)*

*(***WALT***,* **TIM***,* **ABBY***, and* **EUNICE** *sit in various places around the cabin.)*

JANET. I tell you, you could drive for *eight hours* and not see another living soul. *Hundreds* of miles. Or "kilometers" or whatever shit. I'm telling you, Australia – that's some *real* wilderness. Makes this all seem like a city park. My husband and I spent a couple weeks out there, and I can / tell you –

TIM. Janet –

JANET. I'm just saying! You shouldn't be too worried. If he was lost out in the Outback, that's when you'd have to be worried. Plus they have these dingos.

ABBY. So what should we be doing? Is there anything that we / can –

JANET. I mean listen, you guys know how it goes, you've seen this before. Chances are he's already ran into some hikers, this time of year it's damn near impossible not to run into anyone after this long.

(to **EUNICE***)* Honey, you have *nothing* to worry about.

EUNICE. I'm sorry?

JANET. I'm saying, honey, you have nothing to worry about. This kind of situation happens once every couple years, not a single one has died on us yet.

EUNICE. Oh.

TIM. *Janet.*

ABBY. Alright, there has to be something *we* can do?

JANET. Wouldn't hurt to do some driving around, honk the horn a bit. Maybe he found one of the old logging roads, could be following that. Lemme get you a map, we made new ones last year.

*(***JANET** *fishes around in one of her oversized pockets, pulls out a map.)*

JANET. *(cont.)* They're pretty nice now. Used satellites to make 'em, accurate as hell. If you guys wanna drive around, you never know. But honestly, my guess is by now he's run into some hikers, they're probably takin' him to the trail head right now. This reminds me of that one kid from ten years back or so? Remember that?

WALT. Uh.

JANET. The fat little shit from Twin Falls, got lost on one of Walt's nature hikes, wandered around for hours before he ran into that group on horseback or something –

ABBY. Okay, I can do some driving around – Tim, you can head toward the lake again?

TIM. Sure. Walt, you'll stick around here in case he comes back?

*(***WALT** *doesn't respond, lost in thought.)*

Walt.

WALT. Hm? Oh, yeah, I'll –. I'll stay here.

(pause)

TIM. Maybe you should get a little sleep?

WALT. I'm fine.

TIM. There's no use in sitting around / worrying –

WALT. *I said I'm fine, Tim, I –.*

(pause)

If you find him, come right back, okay?

TIM. Sure.

*(***TIM** *and* **ABBY** *both leave.)*

JANET. Okay! Now it's, uh – Eunice? Is that right?

EUNICE. Yes.

JANET. Pretty name.

EUNICE. Okay.

JANET. So it might help if I ask you a few questions, you feel up for that?

EUNICE. Yeah, of course.

JANET. Now just so I know, does your son have any wilderness training under his belt?

EUNICE. Wilderness training?

JANET. You know, was he a Boy Scout, did he go camping, you know –?

EUNICE. He was a Cub Scout. He quit when he was a –, what do you call it, Webelos?

JANET. Okay so he has some training then.

EUNICE. I don't think so. They mostly went bowling.

JANET. Fun! What about camping, would he have any skills along those lines?

EUNICE. He went camping a few times, I don't know. He hated it, I know that much.

JANET. Well anything you can tell us about / his –

EUNICE. Why does this matter, I don't –?

JANET. Well see the thing is, if we know he has some training, experience, we're gonna be better informed about where to look. If he even has some basic knowledge of wilderness survival, that might help us track him, whereas if he really doesn't know anything –

EUNICE. He doesn't know anything. You should treat this – situation like he doesn't know anything.

JANET. Okay! Now it doesn't get too cold at night this time of year, but just in case, was he wearing something warm when he left?

WALT. Yeah, he had –. I think it was – , was it like a – hooded sweatshirt?

JANET. So he had some layers on / then?

EUNICE. He doesn't own any hoodies.

WALT. I remember it was this, green? No, / it –

EUNICE. Shorts and a blue tee-shirt, a tan jacket – if he was wearing it?

WALT. Yes, he – that sounds right. I think that sounds right. I'm sorry.

JANET. It's okay! Now did he say anything to you before he left, anything / about –?

WALT. No see that's just the thing, I can't remember what he –… I mean he did say something, I'm sure he said something to me, and I remember nodding or smiling, and then he left –

JANET. So you can't remember what he said? Maybe just really think about it.

WALT. I *am* really thinking about it. I really just –. I don't remember, I'm sorry.

JANET. Maybe if you think of it you could maybe give me a call, just if you think of it.

WALT. Yeah, I –. Yeah, of course.

*(***EUNICE** *starts laughing softly to herself.)*

JANET. You okay honey?

(pause)

EUNICE. This is so –… This is ridiculous. This is *so ridiculous.*

WALT. / Okay –

JANET. / Honey –

EUNICE. You people are –… I just can't stand your – *attitude* toward this, you come in here and you ask me if he was a *Boy Scout*, you can't even remember what he was wearing, or *what he said to you* –

JANET. *(surprisingly stern)* Ma'am you're gonna have to take it down a notch right now.

(pause) Now there's a few things you need to understand here. I've known this man here for damn near eighteen years, and I can tell you that he cares for each of these boys like they were his own.

EUNICE. Fine, but that's not the whatever, *issue* right now, the issue is neither of you even seem *alarmed* about this –

JANET. You'd rather I freak out, go nuts, scream my head off?

EUNICE. No, I just –

JANET. I want you to know that I take this very seriously. Two summers ago, we had two hikers go missing. First eighteen hours, I wasn't too concerned. Vast majority of the time, people turn up within eighteen hours. But these guys, they didn't show up. So I dialed it up. I called up Search and Rescue, organized search parties on my own, got a friend of mine to take his helicopter up to do some rounds. Found them within four hours. They were thirsty and scared, but they were fine.

(pause)

My gut tells me your son is gonna be just fine, so right now I'm very calm about this whole thing. But believe me, if we get to the point where I need to dial it up, then believe me I'm gonna dial it up.

(pause)

EUNICE. Okay.

JANET. Okay! Now is there anything else you think might be relevant? I don't suppose he's ever been up here before, he wouldn't have any relationship to the area, would he?

(pause)

EUNICE. Well, he –. Yeah, he was up here once.

JANET. Oh yeah?

EUNICE. Yeah, his, uh –. His dad took him up here, couple years ago.

JANET. Close by here?

EUNICE. I mean, I don't know.

JANET. Could you maybe call up your husband and find out where it might have been roughly?

EUNICE. No, I couldn't.

(pause)

JANET. Okay then. Well I think I'm about done here. I just wanna make sure that someone stays here, at all times, there's a good chance that he's just gonna come straight back here to the cabin.

WALT. Sure.

*(***JANET** *puts away her notebook, heads to the door,* **WALT** *walks with her.)*

Thanks, Janet.

JANET. Sure thing. When are you gonna be heading out by the way?

WALT. Uh, soon. Fairly soon, few weeks.

JANET. Well you gotta be sure and let Clint and I cook you dinner before you take off, okay?

WALT. Yeah, uh. Sure.

(pause)

Thanks.

*(***JANET** *exits.* **WALT** *closes the door behind her. He turns to* **EUNICE.***)*

Does his, uh. Is Daniel's father – does he know what's going on?

(pause)

EUNICE. He's fine.

WALT. You don't think he'd want to know?

EUNICE. To be honest Dennis probably wouldn't want to know. He wouldn't come up here, anyway.

*(***EUNICE** *gets up, looks for her coat.)*

Okay, I can't stand this, I'm going to go out there and look for him myself –

WALT. Now, really, that's not a / good idea –

EUNICE. I'm not just going to sit here and chat while my / son is out there *in complete darkness* –

WALT. Really Janet is much more qualified to be / handling these situations –

EUNICE. *Well I don't know what to do, I have no clue what to –…*

*(***EUNICE** *stops, becoming upset. She looks away from* **WALT.** *Short pause.)*

WALT. I understand the instinct, if I was ten years younger I'd be out there screaming his name myself. But there's no use in getting another person lost out in those woods. Honestly, the best thing we can do for him right now – is pray for him. Pray for him to *come back.*

*(***WALT** *goes to* **EUNICE.***)*

Will you pray with me?

*(***EUNICE** *looks at* **WALT.** *Pause.)*

EUNICE. I don't –…

WALT. What?

EUNICE. I don't know, maybe I shouldn't have sent him here, maybe –… I mean, so he looked at a few videos on the internet, so what? You never glanced at a dirty magazine when you were a kid?

(pause)

WALT. Listen, I've dealt with this quite a lot, these things can get out of control pretty quickly. Nowadays, with the kids growing up with these computers, it's all too easy to find.

(pause)

EUNICE. So what did you –… You didn't *do* anything to him, did you?

WALT. What?

EUNICE. I mean I don't really know what goes on up here, I – I mean you didn't do anything weird, you didn't *shock* him, / or –?

WALT. *No,* I didn't –. Why does everyone think I *shock* people? We talked about this on the phone, I sent you all our literature –

EUNICE. Dennis always reads the literature, I didn't look. And I tried not to listen when we talked on the phone.

WALT. Why?

EUNICE. Dennis has sent him to so many pastors, weekend workshops, but this time –. Sending him up here, for weeks up in the woods, I –. I honestly didn't want to know what you –…

(pause)

WALT. It's just – talking, mostly. Talking, praying, reading scripture.

EUNICE. Well it's a nicer approach than Dennis had, I'll give you that.

(Pause. **WALT** *looks at* **EUNICE.***)*

WALT. Pray with me?

(After a moment, **EUNICE** *and* **WALT** *bow their heads.)*

EUNICE. Dear Lord, I –…

(pause)

Please keep Daniel safe out there, please –. Please find it in your wisdom to bring him back to –…

(pause)

Please just let him find some stream to drink out of, let him find some berries or something to eat. Maybe a cozy little cave to sleep in? Maybe just make it nice for him out there, maybe –…

*(***WALT** *raises his head, looking at* **EUNICE.***)*

*(***EUNICE** *pauses briefly, then continues.)*

Maybe it's really nice for him out there, maybe he's happy. Maybe he's –…

*(***EUNICE** *stops, opening her eyes. Pause.* **WALT** *attempts to continue the prayer.)*

WALT. And Lord, we ask that you –

EUNICE. Do you think that someone like Daniel, do you think they can really – change?

(pause)

I mean *you* changed, right?

*(***WALT** *looks at her, doesn't respond. Silence.)*

I'm sorry, I just assumed that you –

WALT. Yes, I –. Many years ago I did – struggle with it.

EUNICE. And how did you – get rid of it?

WALT. If you don't mind, / I'd rather not –

EUNICE. Walt, I don't know if you can tell but I'm sort of at the end of my rope here, I –…

(pause)

I need someone to tell me that this can work.

(pause)

WALT. You know for thirty years parents have been asking me that, they want some reassurance that it *will work*, and –…

(pause)

Just before I graduated high school, there was another boy in my class who I was – close with. We carried on for nearly a year before –…

(pause)

He had started going to this park, this place in Boise where men like him would go to find each other. Somehow his parents found out what was going on, and they sent him to some psychiatrist who would do those electro-shock therapies you were so worried about.

(pause)

I was – terrified, I didn't know where to turn, so I sought out a church. A nice pastor named Clark took me under his wing. He made me realize – the problem was in *me*, there was something in *me* that wasn't right. And I needed to conquer it.

EUNICE. And it worked? You actually – changed?

(pause)

WALT. For me, it –. Yes, I –…

*(***WALT** *looks away, his eyes glazing over. Silence.)*

EUNICE. What happened to him?

WALT. Pastor Clark? Oh, he died years ago –

EUNICE. No, the –. Your friend. The boy.

(pause)

WALT. I don't know.

(pause)

EUNICE. What was his name?

(Long silence. **WALT** *stares forward.)*

Are you okay?

(pause)

WALT. I don't remember. It doesn't matter, anyway.

*(***WALT** *bows his head, praying.* **EUNICE** *watches him, not bowing her head.)*

Dear Lord, we ask that you return Daniel to us. We ask that you keep him safe, and return him back to us. In Christ's name we pray.

(short pause)

Amen.

*(***EUNICE** *continues to watch him.)*

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