

ACT I

SCENE 1

BLACK MOUNTAINS, NORTH CAROLINA. OUTSIDE TRAILER-NIGHT.

(There is a clearing next to the woods. This is CYNTHIA SCOTT's backyard. Light is shining from the back porch. The lighting is dim.)

CYNTHIA is a woman in her late sixties. She is dressed in jeans and a Carhartt jacket. Clothing is clean but rumped. Her hair is cut short—it looks like she cut it herself.

DEL is a young man in his early twenties. He is wet, exhausted. He carries a backpack. DEL has longer hair, tattoos, etc.)

CYNTHIA

Who's out there?

DEL

Sorry to bother you, ma'am. I'm just passing through.

CYNTHIA

What are you doing out here it's the middle of the night?

DEL

I got lost off the trail.

CYNTHIA

You got lost?

DEL

Yes, ma'am. I made it to the top of the mountain before dark but I lost the trail.

CYNTHIA

Where you headed?

DEL

Home. I was just going to come onto 80 and catch a ride.

CYNTHIA

So, that was your plan, huh?

Del /
Cynthia

ITMON

DEL
Yes, that was my plan.

CYNTHIA
(to herself)
The best laid plans of mice and men.

DEL
(confused)
Ma'am?

CYNTHIA
Make a plan—watch God laugh.

DEL
Listen, ma'am, I just want to tell you that there's no need to be afraid of me.

CYNTHIA
I'm not afraid of you.

DEL
I'm not trying to hurt nobody.

CYNTHIA
Worse come to worst I can shoot you. I've got my pistol on me.

DEL
You don't need to shoot me.

CYNTHIA
Hope not. Are you a criminal?

DEL
Not in the way you think...

CYNTHIA
What kind of answer is that? Are you a criminal or are you not a criminal?

DEL
I was incarcerated...for a period of time.

CYNTHIA
For what?

DEL
I was in love with a girl. She was almost 16 and I was 18. They call that a crime in this state. It's not a crime in Hawaii or Iowa...but it's a crime in this state.

Raylean/Cynthia

ITMON

He wanted art lessons. CYNTHIA

What did you tell him? RAYLEAN

What do you mean what did I tell him? CYNTHIA

About the art lessons... RAYLEAN

I told him 'No'. CYNTHIA

Oh, thank God... RAYLEAN

I'm not teaching that boy. CYNTHIA

I thought you might have said, "Yes". RAYLEAN

I'm too old to teach anymore. I'm through with it. CYNTHIA

Please, please, please, promise me something. Please, Ms. Scott, please... RAYLEAN

Promise you what? CYNTHIA

Please promise me you'll get yourself a dog. RAYLEAN

CYNTHIA

Jesus Christ, Raylean, would you stop with the damn dog...

RAYLEAN

I have visions I'm going to find you one day up here with your throat cut wide open.

CYNTHIA

God, Raylean...

RAYLEAN

It would be traumatizing for me to see you cut up in pieces...blood everywhere...

CYNTHIA

Raylean...

RAYLEAN

Your legs twisted up behind your back...hands tied together..

CYNTHIA

What are you talking about?

RAYLEAN

I'd never be the same if I saw that. Everything would be different for me from that moment forward.

CYNTHIA

Nothing like that is going to happen.

(small pause)

You've got a crazy imagination, Raylean. Do you know that?

RAYLEAN

Please get yourself a dog.

CYNTHIA

No.

RAYLEAN

Please.

CYNTHIA

No, Raylean. I'm not getting a dog.

RAYLEAN

(small pause)

Well, suit yourself.

CYNTHIA

I will.



Cynthia Monologue

ITMON

Finally, by the beginning of the last day, when everyone had just about enough, Karen stood up, got right in his face and said, "Tommy, if you say one more word--just one more word--I am going to kick your ass in front of all these people".

(small pause)

That's when I fell in love with her.

(small pause)

We bought a house together. It wasn't a big house, but it was cozy. Had this wrap-around porch where you could see everyone going by. There was a coffee house around the corner. Art galleries. Restaurants. A bar. And we made a life there. Our life was there.

(small pause)

So, I retired five years ago, and Karen had two years until she retired. She had a sabbatical for the spring semester and we were going to get an RV and drive around the southwest. New Mexico, Utah, Arizona.

(small pause)

Toward the end of the fall semester she started complaining about falling. She said she fell down hard three times in a week. The next weekend we were bringing groceries into the house and she tripped going up the porch steps and bruised her knee. Two days later we were talking in the bathroom and she started slurring her words. That got my attention. We went to the hospital. They did a bunch of tests and it turned out she had ALS. Lou Gehrig's disease.

(small pause)

David / Interviewer ACT II

ITMON

SCENE 8

(Interior of trailer. CYNTHIA is watching the video tape she's seen previously. It is at the end of the tape. A bottle of wine and a glass are by her side)

You were selfish.

INTERVIEWER (off)

DAVID

Yes, completely selfish. Underneath, I was just afraid.

INTERVIEWER (off)

Of what?

DAVID

Everything. Other people. My own insecurities. Death. I was especially afraid of death.

INTERVIEWER (off)

Are you afraid of death now?

DAVID

No, not at all. I know what's on the other side. And once you're no longer afraid of death, what else is there to be afraid of? Nothing. Nothing at all.

(small pause)

This body is going to die. My thoughts are going to die. My feelings are going to die. But I'm not going to die.

INTERVIEWER (off)

Your spirit lives on.

DAVID

Spirit...soul...energy...whatever you want to call it...it goes on. And I just don't believe this is true...I know this is true. Without a doubt.

INTERVIEWER (off)

David, thank you so much for talking with me today.

DAVID

It's been my pleasure.

Cynthia / Ms. Trudy

31

SCENE 6

ITMON

INTERIOR TRAILER. NEXT MORNING.

(The sound of wind and ice pellets hitting the trailer. MS. TRUDY is a woman in her late 70's/early 80's. She is dressed simply. CYNTHIA remains in the recliner chair wrapped by blankets. It is freezing cold in the trailer)

MS. TRUDY

There's two ways you can come here from Nashville--the highway and the back way. The back way's faster and you get to see things. The mountains and little towns. Churches. People. My daughter wanted to go the highway because she gets car sick driving twisty roads. So, that's the way we came. I wasn't driving so I had no say.

(small pause)

Are you cold, honey? We'll get some heat going in a few minutes. My son's getting the other generator and we'll set up some space heaters.

(small pause)

Are you sure you won't come down to our place? We got a wood stove and plenty of room. It wouldn't be any bother.

CYNTHIA

(weakly)

No, I'm fine.

MS. TRUDY

I get it. This is your place. This is where you got your things. It's hard to be in someone else's house. I lived with my daughter up in Nashville for five years til I couldn't take it anymore. Last month I moved back here with my oldest son and his wife. Got my own room at least.

CYNTHIA

Who are you?

MS. TRUDY

Trudy. My Christian name is Gertrude but you can call me Trudy. What's your Christian name?

CYNTHIA

What?

MS. TRUDY

Your Christian name--your first name?

CYNTHIA

Cynthia.

MS. TRUDY

Cynthia--that's fine. You call me Trudy and I'll call you Cindy.

CYNTHIA

What are you doing here?

MS. TRUDY

Raylean called me. She said she couldn't bring the trays today because of the weather. Wanted me to check up on you make sure you're doing alright. I was going to come over anyways I wanted to meet you. I saw you in your yard talking to some boy Monday and I told my son, "I'm going over there and meet that lady."

CYNTHIA

You know Raylean?

MS. TRUDY

She goes to my church. Started bringing me lunch trays after I moved back here last month.

(small pause)

I never figured her for a helper. She was always more interested in trying to impress other people. Something must have possessed her...or scared her to death. Either way, it's an improvement.
