Pulling Focus Pictures Inc.

AWAY FROM HER

Written by
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Based on the short story “The Bear Came Over The Mountain” by Alice Munro

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Grant, a handsome man in his 70’s, with a constant twinkle in his eye, drives down a suburban looking street in a poor area of a small Ontario town. He consults an address that lies on the seat beside him. Looks at the houses as he passes them. Mostly rental houses. Some of the yards are marked by car tracks, the windows plastered with tinfoil or hung with faded flags. He finds the address he’s looking for. A small house on a quiet street. He pulls into the driveway. This house is much better looked after though still modest. There are flowers freshly planted. He takes a moment. Stares at the house. Takes a deep breath.

GRANT’S MEMORY: of a beautiful 18 year old girl. She is leaning against the rail of a pier overlooking a great lake. It is windy and cold and raining lightly. The wind blows her pale blonde hair into her face. She is confident and strong. She is smiling, staring straight at us. She is yelling over the wind, a glimmer in her eye. We can’t hear what she’s saying. We hear the voice of a man in his 70’s.

GRANT (V.O.)
She said, “Do you think it would be fun – Do you think it would be fun if we got married?”

A younger woman’s voice is heard.

KRISTY (V.O.)
What did you say?

GRANT (V.O.)
I took her up on it. I shouted yes.

The 18 year old girl grins. She turns away and looks out at the water, happy.

GRANT (V.O.)
I never wanted to be away from her.
She had the spark of life.

She looks back at us. Right into our eyes.

The image dissolves to white, ski tracks melt over her face.

“Harvest Moon,” by Neil Young plays on the soundtrack.
A bird’s eye view of a snowy, ice covered lake. A couple skis through frame. We follow their ski tracks in the opposite direction. To where they came from.

GRANT (V.O.)
Over our many winters, her hair went from pale blonde to silver.
That’s all. I don’t think I noticed exactly when.

Credits over the ski tracks as we follow them. We arrive at a warmly lit cottage. It is old and large but not ostentatious. We pause here and then we continue on around their property. We find FIONA AND GRANT ANDERSSON, skiing together through their field. Grant is in his 70’s, Fiona in her sixties. They are both stunning and sexy, with humour in their eyes. We recognize Fiona as the beautiful girl we saw at the beginning. She is ethereal, light, and sly. As though always enjoying a private joke. They pant hard as they ski side by side, glancing at each other.

CUT TO:

They stand in a gazebo at the edge of the lake, staring at the sunset over the frozen water. They stare silently, mesmerized.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON Grant and Fiona’s fingers, unlatching their skis from their boots.

The cottage is warm and comfortable. Rugs crooked on the floor and cup rings bitten into the table varnish. FIONA and GRANT are both tastefully dressed. They prepare dinner together. There’s a sense of easy routine about it. Grant chops vegetables while Fiona tends the stove. There’s not a lot of conversation about what they’re doing. As he maneuvers around her to dump the vegetables into the pan his arms encircle her waist and he steals the spatula from where she has left it on the counter.

FIONA
Careful.
He hides the spatula behind his back. She turns to look at him, knowing what he's done.
FIONA
Give me that.

He stays still. She scuffs his hair on the way out the door.

FIONA
Alright then. You do it.

He smiles. Continues her work at the stove. We hear the television come on. A news segment about an election.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM -JANUARY 2003- EVENING

They eat a good looking dinner. Not labour intensive but carefully made.

FIONA
Then they showed this totally irrelevant clip of him running. Apparently he likes to run when he’s canvassing.

GRANT
It must have had some context.

She takes a sip of wine. He laughs.

FIONA
It didn’t. And he runs like a goalie.

GRANT
Oh and you’re such a hockey fan. Show me how a goalie runs.

FIONA acts out a goalie running, laughing her head off. She sits back down.

FIONA
Oh, It’s too sad. He wants to be a good samaritan in the most boring possible way.

Grant laughs. A pause and then they both start giggling again. She looks at his clothes.

FIONA
Don’t you have another shirt?
FIONA and GRANT clean the kitchen together. A warm quiet between them. Grant steals tender glances at her as he does the dishes and she dries them. It’s as though he is watching for something. She goes about putting the dishes away, oblivious to his eyes on her. This goes on for a while. We watch them work in silence, she puts the dishes in the cupboards. He hands her a frying pan. She stares at it for a moment. She opens the freezer and puts it inside. As he hears the freezer door open, he turns to look at her. She looks back at him, oblivious. She goes back to putting the dishes away in their proper places. He smiles at her. When the last dish is put away she leaves the room, feeling like she’s missing something.

FIONA

I’ll go make the fire.

He waits until she is safely in the other room, and then, sadly, takes the pan out of the freezer and puts it in a cupboard.

FIONA lies with her head on GRANT’S lap. There’s a fire in the fireplace, the house orderly and cosy. It’s snowing outside, big fairy tale snow flakes. He reads to her from a book of poetry.

GRANT

(reading)
You climbed the bank and said
This is how you touch other women
The grass cutter’s wife, the lime burner’s daughter
And you searched your arms
For the missing perfume
And knew

Fiona strokes his face. Interrupts him.

FIONA

Don’t worry darling. I expect I’m just losing my mind.

GRANT

Sshhhhh.

He grabs her hand. Kisses it.
GRANT
What good is it to be the lime
burner’s daughter
Left with no trace
As if not spoken to in the act of
love
As if wounded without the pleasure
of a scar
You touched your
Belly to my hands
In the dry air and said
I am the cinnamon
Peeler’s wife. Smell me.

She falls asleep as he reads. He watches her sleep for a few moments.

8 INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM –JANUARY 2003–NIGHT

GRANT strokes FIONA’S hair. She smiles up at him, warm. They kiss, and slowly and calmly make love.

Title Card:

The Diagnoses

9 INT ANDERSSON’S BATHROOM –JANUARY 2003–NIGHT

GRANT is peeing. He finishes and washes his hands, catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror. On the mirror is a sticky note. It says “7am Yoga. 7:30 – 7:45 teeth, face, hair. 7:45–8:15 walk. 8:15 Grant and Breakfast.” He puts his fingers to it, touched by it’s precision.

10 INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM –JANUARY 2003–NIGHT

GRANT gets into bed behind FIONA. He spoons her, holding her close, kissing her neck.

GRANT
That was lovely.

FIONA
What was lovely?

He thinks for a moment.

GRANT
Nothing.
He looks at the back of her head, guilty and wondering. He
leans over and kisses her forehead. She smiles. He turns away
and closes his eyes.

EXT MARIAN’S HOUSE –FEBRUARY 2005– MORNING

Grant sits in his car, in the same shot as the opening. He
gets out of the car and knocks on the door of the house in
the rundown neighbourhood. Marian, an attractive woman in her
60’s opens the door. She holds some flowers in her hand, as
though she was just about to put them in a vase. She speaks
with a fairly heavy American accent.

MARIAN
Yes?

GRANT
I don’t quite know how to introduce
myself. I used to see your husband
at Meadowlake. I’m a regular
visitor there myself. Those are
some lovely flowers.

We will keep returning to this scene throughout the film,
always picking up right where we left off.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM– JUNE 2003– AFTERNOON

Fiona arranges wild flowers while Grant makes drinks. Warm
spring light pours through the house.

GRANT
I’ve never seen those white ones
before.

FIONA
The earth must really suit them
there.

Grant goes to the kitchen and notices something as he goes to
get a spoon to stir the drinks. On each of the kitchen
drawers there are post it notes saying,”cutlery, dishtowels,
knives.” He looks at them, debating whether or not to say
something. He laughs.

Fiona is busily arranging the flowers.

GRANT
You could always just open the
drawers. Remind yourself.
FIONA
What?

He comes into the livingroom and stands in the doorway to the kitchen.

GRANT
Maybe all the labels... All the lists are defeating the purpose. (MORE)
If you stop thinking about things the moment you write them down, maybe that’s the end of your need to recall.

Fiona seems unperturbed by this question. Doesn’t turn around.

FIONA
If only we recalled just what we needed.

She lets this hang in the air a moment. Then continues lightly.

FIONA
There was a story I heard at a dinner party, about the German soldiers on border patrol in Czechoslovakia during the war. Remember that Czech student you had? Veronica? We spoke once at a dinner party.

Grant is absolutely still. She tosses this casually.

CUT TO:

12A INT 1970’S DINNER PARTY

Veronica, a gorgeous young girl looks at us across the table.

CUT BACK TO:

12B INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - JUNE 2003- AFTERNOON

Fiona glances at Grant. He is stock still.

FIONA
Don’t get nervous. It’s a good story.

And now she looks at him with a smile.

FIONA
She told me that each of the German patrol dogs wore a sign that said Hund. Why? said the Czechs, and the Germans said, Because that is a Hund.
She gives him an amicable smile. Not threatening in any way. He watches her, his breath is caught in his throat. She leaves the room and he lets his breath out. Stares at the post it notes. We flash quickly in and out of:

INT DINNER PARTY - 1970’S - NIGHT

GRANT’S MEMORY: Veronica, a beautiful creature with dark hair and shiny eyes, talks to someone animatedly at a dinner party, stealing furtive glances at us. We see her foot crawl up a pant leg under the table.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - JUNE 2003 - EARLY EVENING

The doorbell rings. Fiona answers the door. Phoebe and William Hart, a couple in their 60’s stand at the door. Fiona throws her arms around Phoebe.

PHOEBE
Where the hell have you two been?

WILLIAM
Phoebe’s a nightmare to live with when she hasn’t played bridge in a while. Call more often will you?

INT LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

They have drinks in the livingroom

FIONA
Well at least we’re all waiting together.

WILLIAM
You wouldn’t say that if you were waiting for a transplant.

PHOEBE
(to William)
Who have you become all of a sudden? Jesus, you sound like one of those “Stand up For Canada” conservative commercials.

FIONA
(winks at William)
Well he’s not as young as he used to be Phoebe.

Grant is poking the fire. His hands covered in soot.
WILLIAM
I just don’t think you can ignore
how serious a problem these waiting
lists are.

FIONA
I think they are a problem. I just
don’t think the solution is a
shorter line for those who can
afford it and longer lines for
those who can’t. Oh look, now
you’ve made me all earnest and
boring.

Grant looks down at his sooty fingers. He gets up and as he
passes Fiona, he touches her face, leaving a big sooty
fingerprint on her cheek. She looks up at him knowingly. She
knows there’s a mark on her cheek and tries hard not to
smile. He tries not to smile too. It doesn’t really work. He
sits down.

FIONA
You’re an idiot. Do you know that?

GRANT
It worked for you.

FIONA
It’s a wonder I ever brought him
home to the parents.

INT LIVINGROOM- JUNE 2003- NIGHT

They eat dinner.

FIONA
It was one of those craft shows
where you look around and wonder
that the laws of supply and demand
have allowed for the production of
so many macrame ducks.

PHOEBE
God those are everywhere. What do
you do with them.

GRANT
You’ve got one of those as a
little, whatdoyoucallit, light
fixutre holder or whatever it is.
PHOEBE
I do not. Oh wait a minute I do.
Fiona gave it to me.

FIONA
Yes I did!

Fiona laughs. holds up the wine bottle.

FIONA
Would anyone like some more...

She stops, totally unable to find the word she’s looking for.

FIONA
Some more...

Grant looks at her, looks at the HART’s to see their reaction.

FIONA
Ween.

She furrows her brow. Stares at the wine bottle.

FIONA
Wane. Wane....

GRANT
No, but I’ll have some wine.

PHOEBE and William stare at her. William breaks the silence.

WILLIAM
Yes. Yes that would be wonderful
Fiona. Some more “wane.”

They laugh.He holds his glass out to her. Fiona doesn’t move to fill it. She stays standing there, thinking. Begins talking as though to no one in particular.

FIONA
The thing is...

17 OMITTED

18 EXT LAKE- FLASHBACK TO: SUNSET - JANUARY - 2003

Fiona is skiing around the lake at sunset. She looks determined, focussed. Gradually she slows down.
Glides a little. Her focus becomes less clear, her face more and more blank.
FIONA (V.O.)
Half the time I wander around looking for something which I know is very pertinent. But then, I can’t remember what I’m looking for…once the idea is lost, everything is lost and I have to wander around trying to figure out what it was that was so important earlier.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM – JUNE 2003 – NIGHT

Phoebe and Grant stare, speechless.

FIONA
I think I may be beginning to disappear.

PHOEBE
Oh Fiona. You’ve always been a funny sort of person though haven’t you? I mean, remember – you’ll remember this Grant – Remember when you two went to Florida that year? And Fiona left her fur coat in storage, and then just forgot about it? Remember that?

GRANT
Oh that was unintentionally on purpose. Like it was a sin you were leaving behind.

Fiona sits back down at the table, joining into the process of brushing the awkwardness aside.

FIONA
Well. The way some people made me feel about fur coats.

They laugh. Go back to more playful banter. We move to look out the window and move towards the snowy fields.

GRANT (V.O.)
Uh… How is your husband doing?
MARIAN (V.O.)
He’s okay.

EXT MARIAN’S HOUSE – FEBRUARY 2005 – MORNING

Marian still stands in the door. (We will keep returning to this scene throughout the film, picking up right where we left off.)

GRANT
My wife and he struck up quite a close friendship.

MARIAN
I heard about that.

GRANT
So. I wanted to talk to you about something if you had a minute.

EXT WOODS – APRIL 2003–LATE AFTERNOON

Grant and Fiona walk together through the woods. They reach a little hollow, skunk lilies everywhere. They are the size of platters and spring up like flames. It’s surreal, and beautiful beyond belief. Fiona and Grant look at each other, amazed. Fiona bends down and touches one.

Fiona looks at the flower. Then away from it. Then back at it again. Closes her eyes. Opens them. Grant watches her quizzically.

FIONA
When I look away, I forget what yellow means. But I can look again.

She pauses. Thinks.

FIONA
Sometimes there’s something delicious in oblivion.

Grant is moved.

FIONA
They generate a heat of their own.

Grant bends down to feel one.
FIONA
They generate a heat of their own.

She stops a minute. Thinks. She may have already said this. Looks at Grant hoping he didn’t catch it. He smiles.

GRANT
I don’t feel it.

FIONA
I think...I think...you’re supposed to be able to put your hand inside the curled petal and feel the heat.

She tries it. He watches her. She looks up at him and smiles. This is a gorgeous place, and they are both a bit overwhelmed.

GRANT
Well?

FIONA
I can’t be sure. I can’t be sure if what I’m feeling is the heat or my imagination.

She stands up. Changes her tone to a more certain one.

FIONA
The heat attracts bugs.

She begins to walk away.

FIONA
Nature doesn’t fool around just being decorative.

Grant watches her walk away. Looks around at the gorgeous flowers, savours the image of his wife walking through them. Then follows.

EXT LAKE HURON BEACH –NOVEMBER 1960’S

GRANT’S MEMORY: Grant and Fiona in their 20’s. They walk, holding hands along the beach. There are dividers every so often. Steel walls that have staircases on either side. They go up and down them. Occasionally there is space between the staircases so that you must walk, balancing on the narrow divide until you get to the next one. Grant helps Fiona over these, holding her hand as she balances. Close on her feet as she walks on the precarious edge. We rise up from her feet to reveal:
Back to the present: Fiona is walking along one of these edges now, with Grant helping her along in much the same way. Their noses red, their breath in the air. They do this in silence. And walk further in silence. They settle on the beach, sitting on a piece of drift wood.

FIONA
We better get back before it gets dark.

GRANT
You think after 50 years we won’t find our way back? Just because it’s dark?

She smiles. Takes his hand. They look out at the water.

GRANT
Let’s stay here. A little longer.

Grant and Fiona are walking along the bridge. Grant holds shopping bags.

GRANT
Cheese. What about cheese?

FIONA
Only if it’s very high cholesterol.

They pass a couple about their age.

FIONA
Hi there Lauren, Michael.

They couple coolly nod their heads. Grant looks uncomfortable. There’s some history here. Fiona sighs.

FIONA
Poor people. Poor human beings.

They continue walking.

FIONA
Oh. I forgot my list.

Grant stops.
FIONA
No no. Give me the keys. You go on ahead and I’ll meet you there.

Grant hesitates for a split second. Then hands them to her.

GRANT
Okay. I’ll see you there.

Grant continues on and Fiona walks in the opposite direction. She sees a dog walk by. She stops for a moment, thinking. She begins to look around, quite confused.
We see her in the distance coming towards us down a steep hill. The occasional car stops and she walks around us. Finally she comes to a stop and just stands there, looking all around her, perplexed. A car comes to a stop in front of her. The driver is stunned. Finally sort of leans on his horn. She looks into the car and waves politely but is still distracted. A police officer, Buddy, hears the horn honk and comes out of a coffee shop and approaches her. She is patient. Doesn’t rush her, even though the driver is obviously irate.

BUDDY
Hi there Mrs. Andersson.

FIONA
Hi Buddy.

She’s not really paying attention to him. Still worried about something.

BUDDY
Would you like to have a coffee with me Fiona? I’m just inside there. In Cafe de Paris.

FIONA
Oh. I don’t drink coffee Buddy. Makes me go to the bathroom.

BUDDY
Alright then. I’ll buy you a tea. How’s that? I think Mac there’s in a bit of a hurry to keep driving on up the road. You know how he can be.

Fiona peers into the car again.
FIONA
Oh. Hi Mac. Is that you? Where are you on your way to?

Mac, an old farmer, leans out the window.

MAC
To the cattle auction if you don’t mind!

FIONA
Not at all.

She stays where she is, looking around. Buddy leads Fiona gently out of the road.

INT CAFE DE PARIS –NOVEMBER 2003– DAY

Fiona and Buddy sit and sip tea at a table overlooking the river.

BUDDY
Can you tell me what your name is?

FIONA
Fiona. Fiona Andersson.

BUDDY
Can you tell me what the Prime Ministers name is?

Fiona laughs a little.

FIONA
If you don’t know that, young lady, you really shouldn’t be in such a responsible job.

Buddy laughs.

FIONA
Listen Buddy. You haven’t seen Edith and George lately have you? I think they ran off on me.

Buddy thinks for a moment.

BUDDY
Who are Edith and George?

Fiona furrows her brow.
GRANT’S MEMORY: Fiona opens the door to the bathroom. She is in her mid 20’s. Crying. She looks up at us, defeated. This image plays over the following dialogue.

GRANT (V.O.)
Edith and George. Uhhh. Edith and George are...were... Some scraggly mutts she adopted some years ago. As a favour to a friend. She devoted herself to them for the rest of their lives.

BUDDY (V.O.)
How long ago...

GRANT
Oh. A lifetime ago.I think it may have coincided with the discovery that she was not likely to have children. Something about her tubes being blocked or twisted - I can’t remember now.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM- NOVEMBER 2003-EVENING

Buddy looks at Grant across the dining room table, Fiona skis on the lake in the background.

GRANT
I’m afraid I’ve always avoided thinking about all that...female apparatus.

BUDDY
So they were dogs. Dogs she had a long time ago.

Grant has a far off look.

GRANT
She picked them up on one of her more eccentric whims. But they were well looked after. I think I may have been picked up in much the same way. I don’t think I understood that until quite recently.

He chuckles to himself.
BUDDY
Have you been to see Dr. Fischer about this?

GRANT
No. I suppose I don’t really want to hear what she has to say do I?

BUDDY
You can’t just walk down the centre of Main Street and then have everything go back to normal.

GRANT
No. I realize that.

INT DOCTOR’S OFFICE –NOVEMBER 2003 – MORNING

Dr. Fischer is a kind, attractive small town doctor in her mid forties. Fiona and Grant sit in the office.

DR. FISCHER
And what year is it?

FIONA
It’s 2003.

DR. FISCHER
And what is the Prime Minister’s Name?

FIONA
(to Grant)
It seems to me Grant that no one in this town reads the paper.

Grant and Dr. Fischer smile and glance at one another. Fiona catches this look and her eyes seem to hone in on something between them. Just as fast as this intensity came into her eyes, it goes away again.

FIONA
Peter Martin.

Grant lets out a small breath.

DR. FISCHER
And Fiona, if you were to find a letter on the street, addressed, with a stamp on it. What would you do with it?

Fiona looks at her.
FIONA
I would mail it.

DR. FISCHER
And where would you put it to mail it?

Fiona is silent. There is an endless pause.

DR. FISCHER
And if there was a fire in a movie theater, and you were the first one to spot the fire. What would you do?

Another endless pause.

FIONA
We don’t go to the movies much anymore. Do we Grant? All those multiplexes playing the same American garbage. Have you seen my jacket?

She begins to look around the room. She gets up, looking under things, behind the desk.

GRANT
It’s on the back of the chair there.

She stops and looks at it. Then picks it up and puts it on.

DR. FISCHER
Fiona. Would you mind if I asked you a few more questions? Would you mind taking a seat?

Sits back down. Feeling their gaze on her.

FIONA
I was feeling a little cold. That’s all.

Fiona and Grant walk out of the office, holding some brochures. They pass a few elderly people and a mother holding a large baby. Fiona comments quite loudly.

FIONA
What an ugly baby.
Grant lets out a laugh. They snicker together as they go out the door.

**EXT COUNTY ROAD- NOVEMBER 2003-DAY**

Fiona and Grant drive through town, and out into the countryside. Down the country roads, through fields, past farms. The brochures sit between them, advertising a retirement home called Meadowlake. Most of them focus on early onset Alzheimer’s. They look at each other every now and then. They turn down the desolate road towards their house. It runs through fields, across train tracks. They turn onto their road, and into their driveway.

**EXT ANDERSSON’S DRIVEWAY - NOVEMBER 2003-DAY**

They turn up the drive to their cottage Fiona looks at the cottage as though for the first time.

**FIONA**
When did we move into this cottage?  
Was it last year or the year before?

Grant stops the car. Answers directly, with courage.

**GRANT**
It was longer than that. It was when I left the University. About 20 years ago.

Shakes her head, casually surprised.

**FIONA**
Hmmm. That’s shocking.

She looks at the brochures. One for meadowlake, a few on living with Alzheimer’s. They look at each other tenderly. She shrugs. Strokes his face.

**FIONA**
Let’s just see how it goes shall we?

**EXT MARIAN’S HOUSE - FEBRUARY 2005-MORNING**

Marian still stands in the doorway of her house. She addresses Grant aggressively.

**MARIAN**
My husband did not try to start anything with your wife, if that’s what you’re getting at.

(MORE)
MARIAN (cont'd)
He did not molest her in any way.
He isn’t capable of it and he wouldn’t anyway. From what I heard it was the other way round.

GRANT
No. That isn’t it at all. I didn’t come here with any complaints about anything.

MARIAN
Oh. Well I’m sorry. I thought you did.

She doesn’t sound sorry. She looks at him for a moment, thinking.

MARIAN
You better come in, then. It’s blowing cold in through the door. It’s not as warm out today as it looks.

Grant enters the house. Relieved that he’s been let inside.

Fiona is pouring through books on Alzheimer’s. Grant glances at her over his paper every now and then.

FIONA
“Never let a person make you feel guilty for your anger with God.”
Hmm. Random.

GRANT
I don’t see what the point is. We can’t even be certain that this is what...you’re far too young.

FIONA
There’s a reason it’s called “early onset” dear. Or maybe I’ve always been a flake. Oh. I like this. “Apraxia is usually present early in Alzheimer’s disease...In the early stages, apraxia may be more apparent when the patient faces several choices. He may have no difficulty putting his shirt on, but when faced with a variety of shirts, ties, underwear, trousers, and coats, he may become confused as to which one to pick first.”
She thinks about this.

FIONA
(with weight)
They left you undiagnosed a long time.

She lets out a little laugh.

She lets this hang between them. They stare at each other. Something unspoken but clear. She flicks through pages. A tense silence. Then she begins to read again.

FIONA
Should the patient afflicted with the disease remain at home, the caregiver will very often be the spouse.

Over Fiona’s reading we see: A pot of water sits on the stove untended, forgotten about. Grant approaches it. Looks at it, sad. He slowly removes it from the element. We stay on his face for a long time. He looks out the window at Fiona skiing around the large field in the pink sunset. She waves cheerfully. He waves back. She continues skiing, until she gradually comes to a stop, gliding a little. We see the earlier sequence that she told the Hart’s about from his POV, through the window.

FIONA (V.O.)
The caregiver must preside over the degeneration of someone he or she loves very much; must do this for years and years with the news always getting worse; not better, ... must every few months learn to compensate for new shortcomings with makeshift remedies; must negotiate impossible requests and fantastic observations; must put up sometimes with deranged but at the same time very personal insults; and must somehow learn to smile through it all.

(MORE)
Caregivers must be able to diagnose a wide variety of ordinary ailments under extraordinary circumstances. Imagine the person you love the most suddenly upset about something but completely unable to communicate the problem or even to understand it himself.

CUT TO:

39
INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - NOVEMBER 2003 - DAY
FIONA ponders this.

She smiles.

FIONA
Sounds like a regular marriage.

40
EXT LAKE - DECEMBER 2003 - LATE AFTERNOON
FIONA and GRANT ski side by side. They glance at each other, in much the same way as we saw in the first scene.

GRANT
I think I’m done. I’m going to head in and get supper ready.

FIONA
You have to try to keep up. You’re with a younger woman, old man.

He laughs.

GRANT
You’ll come back when you’re hungry.

FIONA
I might.

He skis towards the cottage. Leaving her to contemplate the lake.

41
EXT LAKE/WOODS - DECEMBER 2003 - LATE AFTERNOON
Fiona continues on skiing by herself. She stops at the edge of the woods on the other side of the lake. She takes off her skis and enters the woods. The woods are thick. The occasional branch lightly touches her hair or her face. At a certain point she decides to sit down. She sits in the snow. Lies back and looks up at the trees.
Mesmerized by the pink sunset light pouring through the tops of the pines. She smiles.
The sun is down. Grant stands alone, looking out the window and contemplating the ski tracks in the snow. A concerned look on his face.

Fiona is walking across the bridge into town. A train goes by over the river bridge in the distance. She is in her ski boots. It’s awkward. She looks worried, lost. Stops and looks first one way, then the other.

Grant follows the ski tracks. He follows them to the edge of the woods on the other side of the lake. The skis lie unattended. Grant looks around. Worried now.

Grant drives, worried.

Grant drives across the bridge through town. He sees Fiona, staring out at the river. He stops the truck and watches her for a moment. Then he rolls down the window.

GRANT
Fiona.

FIONA
Hello. I was just thinking how nice it is that it hasn’t changed too much in this part of town.

Grant gets out of the truck and puts his arms around her, keeping her warm as they look at the limestone backs of the buildings on the river. Grant looks very concerned.

Grant drives Fiona home. They sit in silence for a long time.

GRANT
Where were you going Fiona?

FIONA
I was trying to get home by following the fence line. I’ve counted on fences always taking you somewhere.
She says this lightly, as a joke. Grant isn’t amused. She looks at his furrowed brow.

FIONA
You’re going to have to put me in that place. Shallowlake?

Grant breathes deeply.

GRANT
Meadowlake. We’re not at that stage yet.

FIONA
Shallowlake, Shillylake, Sillylake. Sillylake it is.

He is irritated by her light manner.

They sit in silence at the dining room table.

FIONA
We are at that stage. Grant.

She puts his hand gently on his.

FIONA
We are at that stage.

Grant holds his head in his hands, his elbows on the table.

GRANT
If we do think of it- If we do, it must be as something that isn’t permanent. A kind of experimental treatment. A rest cure of sorts.

FIONA
Alright. Alright. We can think of it that way.

She strokes his hand lovingly.

MARIAN leads GRANT down the front hallway and past the Livingroom. It is very neat and organized. The house of a truly practical person. Everything polished and organized. A plastic runner down the hall to protect the carpet. It stands in sharp contrast to the comfortable disorder of his house.
MARIAN
We’ll have to sit in the kitchen
where I can hear Aubrey.

MARIAN pulls out a chair for GRANT to sit in. From a room off
the kitchen, he can hear the sounds of a television. The door
is slightly open and he can just see a man’s feet, supported
on a wheelchair.

MARIAN
You might as well have a cup of
coffee.

GRANT
Thanks.

MARIAN
My son got him on the sports
channel a year ago Christmas, I
don’t know what we’d do without it.

GRANT
It must be a struggle.

MARIAN
Well. You know. You know what
struggle is by now. Don’t you?

She pours him a coffee.

Grant is standing in his coat in front of Fiona, who is
sipping her tea while she looks out the window.

GRANT
You’re sure.

FIONA
I’m sure.

GRANT
You don’t want to just get a sense
of the place? I don’t want to make
this decision alone.

Fiona furrows her brow.

FIONA
What place?
Grant sighs, goes to answer.

FIONA
Just kidding.

She allows herself a little laugh. He shakes his head. Smiles.

FIONA
You’re not making this decision alone Grant. I’ve already made up my mind.

EXT MEADOWLAKE - DECEMBER 2003-MORNING

Grant stands in the parking lot outside the Meadowlake Retirement Facility.

INT MEADOWLAKE CHECK IN AREA - DECEMBER 2003-MORNING

It’s a clean, bright facility. A few elderly people walk past on walkers. Grant watches a woman look carefully at ten walkers that are parked together. She examines each one, trying to figure out which one is hers. Finally chooses one and goes on her way. Grant looks at her, wondering if Fiona is really at the point where she needs to be here. He watches a nurse tend to one of the women, THERESA, who is also helped along by her son, LIAM. The nurse, Betty, talks to the woman as though she is three years old. Grant watches with concern.

BETTY
Now, Mrs. Taylor. Are you ready for your bath? It’s bath time Mrs.Taylor. That’ll be nice won’t it?

THERESA
Yes, that’ll be fine.

LIAM
I’ll come with you Mom.

Madeleine, the very prim looking supervisor comes out from behind the desk to meet Grant. Shakes his hand sharply, with a pasted on smile.
MADELEINE
Mr. Andersson. Madeleine Montpellier. I’m the supervisor here at Meadowlake.

GRANT
Hi there.

MADELEINE
Now I’m just going to take you on a quick tour of the facility and then we can sit down and discuss Mrs. Andersson’s condition and the appropriate time for admitting her.

She leads him down a long bright hallway, blasting with light.

MADELEINE
As you can see, we get a lot of light.

GRANT
Yes. I see that.

INT MEADOWLAKE CORRIDOR - DECEMBER 2003-MORNING

Madeleine leads Grant past a conservatory where residents are doing a puzzle.

MADELEINE
And there, as you can see, they're in the middle of a puzzle over there. They've always got a puzzle on the go.

They pass MRS. ALBRIGHT and MICHAEL, two residents of Meadowlake who are having a conversation.

MICHAEL
Hello there sweet Madeleine.

MADELEINE
Hello Michael.

They go past a TV area with a giant state of the art television.
As you can see, our entertainment system is state of the art, and residents can gather here to watch together.

She leads him into a dining area, with many windows. An elderly man plays the same key over and over, creating an unsettling soundtrack. The place is decorated for Christmas, with a giant tree and lots of lights. Elderly people of various capacities eat their lunch with varying degrees of help from staff, many have family members visiting. There are many stages of alzheimer’s here, but none as strong and capable looking as Fiona. Grant looks nervous.

Now we can accommodate any dietary preferences or restrictions. We're just serving up our Christmas dinner early for the families.

Grant looks at the people eating. Who, among them, would Fiona ever elect to spend time with?

She leads him to the elevators.

The old Meadowlake is next door. It’s a day centre now. But this one, for the permanent residents, is brand spanking new.
(MORE)
They pause outside the elevators. Madeleine presses the button.

A resident, ELIZA, walks by leaning on her walker. On her walker is a cup of tea. She walks at such a slow pace, it seems to take her forever. She looks up at Grant.

ELIZA
Just taking my tea for a ride.

Grant smiles warmly at her. Another woman, Florence, walks by. Eliza addresses her.

ELIZA
Look at this one Flo. A real charmer isn’t he? Would you say? Are you a charmer?

Grant laughs.

GRANT
Oh I think you could say I was a bit of a charmer.

He gives her a lovely smile. Dashing.

ELIZA
You’re a rascal. Are you moving in with us?

MADELEINE
Mr. Andersson is here about his wife, Eliza. Behave yourself.
ELIZA
Oh I should have known it. At this age it’s....what do the kids call it Flo? A real cluster fuck. The charmers are all taken. Or dead.
Mostly dead.

Grant laughs. The elevator doors open and before he gets in he give Eliza a little peck on the cheek. She’s thrilled.

GRANT
You’re pretty charming yourself sweetheart.

Eliza beams.

INT SECOND FLOOR - DECEMBER 2003-MORNING

The elevator doors open and Madeleine and Grant come onto the second floor. The residents are being fed by young attendants. Something Brittany Spearsish is playing on a cheap stereo system. Almost everyone here is totally silent except for a few that are moaning. These people are very far gone. Grant looks alarmed.

MADELEINE
Now this is the second floor - our extended care wing. The elevators here have a lock down system. This is where residents can move to once they get more progressed.

Grant smiles.

GRANT
Interesting choice of words.

Madeleine looks at him. She doesn’t like him much. Smiles anyway. That pasted on smile again.

MADELEINE
I’ll show you some of the rooms here while we’re at it. Then I’ll show you our regular floors where Mrs. Andersson will be living.

GRANT
That won’t be necessary. My wife won’t be “progressing” to this floor.

He says it with determination. Looks right at her.
MADELEINE

Alright.

They press the elevator button again. Wait. An awkward pause in the conversation between Grant and Madeleine. A Britney Spearsish song is playing. Something occurs to Grant. He turns around to glance at one of the young attendants. She sings along to the music.

GRANT
Who chooses the music?

MADELEINE
I'm sorry?

GRANT
I'm assuming it's not the "residents." I don't see any of them singing along.

Madeleine glances back.

MADELEINE
The rooms on our regular floors have their own stereo systems. The residents can play whatever they want.

They enter the elevator. Grant stares at the 2nd floor and its residents as the doors close.

GRANT
How kind.

56
INT MADELEINE'S OFFICE-DECEMBER 2003- MORNING

Madeleine sits across from Grant and hands him some documents.

MADELEINE
Now we don't accept anyone during the month of December, so Mrs. Andersson would have to wait until January to make the big move. Then we'd have one of our executive rooms available just like the one I showed you.

Grant looks at her questioningly.

MADELEINE
December...Christmas just has so many emotional pitfalls.
GRANT
Right.

Kristy, an attractive woman in her late thirties enters the room.

KRISTY
Sorry to interrupt Madeleine. I’m just looking for the documents on Aubrey Bark.

MADELEINE
Go ahead. Mr. Andersson, this is Kristy, our managing nurse.

Kristy reaches out her hand. Jovial, sweet.

KRISTY
Against some people’s better judgement.

MADELEINE
Mr. Andersson is here about his wife, Mrs. Andersson who will be a resident here with us in January.

KRISTY
Hi there.

GRANT
Hi.

Madeleine gets back to business. Kristy is searching the binders on the bookshelf.

MADELEINE
We also have a policy that our new residents can’t receive visitors or take phone calls for the first thirty days. To give the resident time to adjust.

GRANT
What kind of visitors?

MADELEINE
Everyone. Even close family.

Grant looks taken aback.

GRANT
I couldn’t just leave her here.
MADELEINE
Well, we understand this is really the hard part.
(MORE)
MADELEINE (cont'd)
But most people need that time to get settled in. Before we had the rule in place, they’d often forget over and over again why they were being left here. Whereas we find, if they have a month to adjust, they end up happy as clams. Meadowlake’s their home then. After that, it’s perfectly fine for them to take a little visit home every now and then. Of course, that doesn’t apply to the ones on the second floor. It’s too difficult, and they don’t know where they are anyway.

GRANT
My wife isn’t going to the second floor.

MADELEINE
No. I just like to make everything clear at the outset.

Kristy is heading out the door with a binder. She gives Grant a squeeze on the shoulder.

KRISTY
We’ll take good care of her. I promise.

She smiles warmly, genuinely. Grant looks up at her. Trusts her. Gives her a smile.

57

INT MEADOWLAKE DINING AREA - DECEMBER 2003 - AFTERNOON

A female resident at Meadowlake sits absolutely silently. Her friend, about the same age, sits equally silently, her hand on her friend’s face. They stare at each other lovingly, tragically. Many residents eat with children and grandchildren. Meadowlake is heavily decorated for the holidays, and a turkey dinner is being served. The camera moves among the tables catching snippets of conversation. Michael sits with his family, talking, as do MRS. JENKINS and MRS. ALBRIGHT. Mrs. Albright’s daughter, REBECCA, complains to her that she complains too much. Eliza sits with her family. She speaks in sign language to her hearing impaired daughter, STELLA. She is very affectionate with her. The rest of the family talks among themselves, not paying attention to either of them. We travel along the tables catching snippets of conversation.
A woman a little younger than Grant, MARIAN sits down beside him, staring at a man in a wheelchair who sits among the other residents, staring vacantly. She watches him, with tears in her eyes. Grant looks in her direction compassionately. She gives him a little smile through her tears. She picks up her purse and walks out.

Grant watches as the families take leave of their relatives. Slowly, in a series of dissolves, the common area empties out. Leaving the residents feeling empty, alone, and gasping for more.
They stare out windows, or wheel or shuffle themselves back to their rooms. The light has changed. It is late afternoon and Grant has been sitting there watching for a long time.

59  INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM -DECEMBER 2003- NIGHT
Grant lies in bed staring at the ceiling while Fiona sleeps.

60  INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM -DECEMBER 2003- MORNING
Grant still sleeps. Fiona gets up quietly.

61  INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM -DECEMBER 2003- MORNING
Fiona sits at the dining room table stirring her coffee. Grant enters in his housecoat, rubbing his eyes.

GRANT
Smells good.

FIONA
I was going to go for a ski but I thought I shouldn’t chance it. What with the Alzheimer’s and all.

She smiles at him.

GRANT
Why didn’t you wake me?

She picks up some forms from the dining room table.

FIONA
What are these Grant?

GRANT
They’re the... The forms to fill out. If you decide to go to Meadowlake.

She looks frustrated.

FIONA
But that is exactly what I have decided. You were to go and sign these forms. And leave them there. Is it cold? Is it dark?
GRANT
No. It gets a lot of light.

She looks at him, questioning.

GRANT
I wouldn’t be allowed to visit for 30 days.

She comes around to him, puts her arms around him.

FIONA
30 days isn’t such a long time after 44 years.

GRANT
I don’t think I like the place.

FIONA
I don’t think we should be looking for something we like here Grant. I don’t think we’ll ever find that. I think all we can aspire to in this situation is a little bit of grace.

Grant sees her unmovable determination and nods.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - DECEMBER 2003 - NIGHT

There is a Christmas tree lit up and a fire in the fireplace. Grant and Fiona dance to “Harvest Moon” by Neil Young. She puts her feet on top of his and he leads her around the room. They murmur softly to each other.

INT ANOTHER HOUSE ( LATE 50’S)

GRANT’S MEMORY:

Grant and Fiona (in her teens), dance exactly the same way. He moves a strand of hair away from her forehead lovingly. She bats his hand away laughing. Pulls his earlobes lovingly.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - DECEMBER 2003 - NIGHT

Grant tries to move a strand of hair away from her forehead. She lets him for a moment. Then playfully bats his hand away in much the same manner as when she was younger. Again, she tenderly pulls his earlobes.

INT ANDERSSON’S FRONT HALLWAY - JANUARY 2004 - EARLY MORNING

Fiona’s bags are packed. She is dressed up a little. She looks at herself in the mirror. Grant watches her.
FIONA
I guess I’ll be dressed up all the time. Or semi dressed up. It’ll be sort of like in a hotel.

She puts on her good coat. Applies her usual red lipstick.

FIONA
How do I look?

GRANT
Just like always. Just as you’ve always looked.

FIONA
And what does that look like?

GRANT
Direct and vague. Sweet and ironic.

FIONA
Is that how I look?

She looks directly at him. They watch each other. Smile.

EXT COUNTY ROAD -JANUARY 2004- EARLY MORNING
67

Grant and Fiona drive in silence. “Harvest Moon” continues to play. Fiona spots something just off the road.

FIONA
Oh. Remember?

Grant looks and sees the little hollow where they walked in the spring. The bright yellow flowers are gone. Now it is covered in snow. Grant smiles at her. Looks ahead. It’s all he can do to not turn the car around.

FIONA
You look surprised Grant.

GRANT
Not surprised. Just grateful. I’m grateful you can remember that.

INT MEADOWLAKE CHECK IN AREA -JANUARY 2004- MORNING
68

They stand in the check-in area, waiting for someone to come to the desk. A tear falls down Fiona’s face.

FIONA
You’ve been good to me Grant.
Grant clutches the hand on his face. Kisses it desperately. Madeleine comes out of her office. Senses the weight of the moment she is walking into.

**MADELEINE**
Should I give you two a moment?

**GRANT**
Yes please.

**FIONA**
No thank you. I’ll go to my room now.

**MADELEINE**
Alright Mrs. Andersson. We’ll get you settled into your room. And then I’ll take you on a tour of the facility.

Grant looks pleadingly at Fiona.

**FIONA**
Yes. That sounds lovely.

She gives Grant a squeeze on the arm. He reluctantly follows them towards the rooms.

**INT FIONA’S ROOM – JANUARY 2004- MORNING**

It’s a nice room. A bright window. Tastefully decorated.

**FIONA**
Yes. This will do just fine.

Madeleine glances at the few suitcases they brought in with them.

**MADELEINE**
I’m glad you like it Mrs. Andersson. Is this all you brought with you today?

**FIONA**
For now.

**GRANT**
We’ll see how it goes.

Madeleine takes a gage of their different ideas of the situation. Talks to Grant, pointedly.
MADELEINE  
Well. You let us know if you need any help arranging things.

He shoots her a glare.

FIONA  
(politely)  
Thank you Mrs. Montpellier. Now if you wouldn’t mind, I’d like to say goodbye to my husband. We haven’t been apart for a month for the last 44 years. It will be quite something.

MADELEINE  
Absolutely. You just come and find me in my office when you’re ready.

FIONA  
I will.

Madeleine leaves the room.

Grant sinks down on the bed, grabbing Fiona’s hands and pulling her down with him.

GRANT  
Please Fiona.

FIONA  
Grant. You know what I’d really like?

GRANT  
Fiona...

She strokes his face. Kisses him.

FIONA  
I’d like to make love. And then I’d like you to go. Because I need to stay here. But if you make this hard for me I think I’ll cry so hard I’ll never stop.

She has tears rolling down her cheeks. It’s excruciating but he manages to nod. She kisses him again. They make love on the well made bed.
Grant and Fiona lie in each other's arms. He clings to her. She kisses him lightly on the forehead.

**FIONA**
Go now. Go now.

He kisses her passionately. Pulls himself away. Awkwardly puts his clothes on. He is clumsy. He does up his shoes. It seems to take forever. Fiona just watches him. He gives up, leaving his shirt open, his pants undone. He leans in for one final kiss. Tears himself away. Leaves the room. Fiona waves lightly at the closed door.

**INT CORRIDOR —JANUARY 2004— MORNING**

Grant stands outside the door doing up his pants. A nurse passes by. Looks shocked. Grant shrugs awkwardly. Walks down the hall.

**INT CONSERVATORY —JANUARY 2004— MORNING**

Grant sees Kristy, the managing nurse, tending to an old man in a wheelchair. The man has vacant eyes. He tentatively approaches her.

**GRANT**
Hello there.

She warmly extends her hand.

**KRISTY**
Kristy. We met on your tour. Is Mrs. Andersson settled in?

He nods noncommittally.

**GRANT**
I was wondering if I could talk to you for a minute. Ask your advice.

**KRISTY**
Sure. Mr. Bark and I were just reading here. Maybe when I’m finished this chapter I’ll come find you in the check-in area? How’s that?

**GRANT**
Yes. That’ll be fine thanks.
Kristy goes back to reading to this almost comatose man. Clearly, and without condescension.

INT MEADOWLAKE DINING AREA - JANUARY 2004 - MORNING

Grant sits nervously on one of the plush chairs. He watches as Eliza speaks in sign language with a woman in her 30’s who appears to be her daughter. They are animated and involved. Madeleine peeks her head out the door.

MADELEINE
Is she ready for the tour?

GRANT
Uh. I’m not sure. I need a moment to think about all this.

Madeleine comes and sits beside him.

MADELEINE
If I may say so Mr. Andersson. Your wife seemed quite happy to come in today. It can be much more difficult than this. It almost always is. I can’t emphasize enough how valuable a lack of drama can be in a situation like this.

Grant smiles a little. Dumbfounded at her insensitivity.

MADELEINE
I’ll give her a few minutes and then I’ll go and see how she’s doing.

Madeleine leaves. Grant watches as FRANK, male resident is slowly escorted in the doors by BETTY, the nurse. FRANK speaks quickly and constantly as he comes through the doors.

FRANK
And we’re moving down the centre, and young Betty is helping me, and we’re going back up, back up to the second floor and we’re moving past the dining room...

KRISTY
Hi there Mr. Andersson. Now how can I help you?
She takes a seat beside him. She notices him watching the male resident.

KRISTY
Oh. That’s Frank. He used to be the play by play guy for the Winnipeg Jets.

Grant watches him as he goes, still doing a play by play of his every movement. Dumbfounded.

GRANT
Really.

Kristy smiles.

KRISTY
He loved his job too much to retire.

She shrugs.

KRISTY
Frank’s on the second floor.

GRANT
I just... My wife has always been a different sort of person. And I’m wondering. I was told that Alzheimer’s can’t be confirmed until after... And on the way here today, she just... We passed the conservation area where we went on a walk last spring. There were these gorgeous flowers. These skunk lilies.

KRISTY
Those are beautiful aren’t they.

GRANT
They really made an impression you see. And today, even though the whole place was covered in snow, she said “Oh. Remember.” Now that was quite recently. About nine months ago. Isn’t the short term memory the thing that goes first?
KRISTY
Well. Yes. But not all at once. And what’s comforting is the long term memory sometimes stays for quite a long time.

Grant looks uncomfortable.

GRANT
Yes. Her long term memory seems very intact.

This has a weight to it. She looks at him carefully. Absorbing his tone.

GRANT
When she said that. About the skunk lilies. It was all I could do not to turn the car around. What if... What if all this is just her...being herself? She’s so young to...

Kristy lets him think in silence for a moment.

KRISTY
She is young. And this is hard. No doubt about that. A month is a real long time. Between you and me, I don’t know about the policy myself. I think it makes it easier on the staff is what I think. But look. Here’s my pager number. You can call me whenever you want. Call every day if you feel like it. I’ll let you know how she’s doing. And I’ll keep a special eye on her.

She sees he’s still nervous.

KRISTY
Look. We’re pretty nice around here. I don’t know about the ones in charge. But the ones that will be in direct contact with Mrs. Andersson. We’re a pretty nice bunch if i do say so myself.

He sighs.

GRANT
I don’t know what to do.
Madeleine enters again.

MADELEINE
Mr. Andersson. Here’s a note from Mrs. Andersson. She asked that I pass it along.

He opens it up. It reads: “Go now. I love you. Go now. Fona.” He stares at the spelling mistake.

GRANT
(whispering)
Okay. Okay.

He turns to Kristy.

GRANT
Thanks so much.

He leaves the building. Kristy looks after him compassionately.

74 EXT COUNTY ROAD – JANUARY 2004 – MORNING

K.d. Lang’s version of “After the Goldrush” plays over the next several scenes.

Grant drives home sadly. He passes the Skunk Lily Hollow. Looks at it solemnly.

74A INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM – JANUARY 2004 – NIGHT

Grant reads from a book on Alzheimer’s. This voice over continues over the next few scenes.

GRANT (V.O.)
Throughout much of the thinking brain, gooey plaques now crowd neurons from outside the cell membranes, and knotty tangles mangle microtubule transports from inside the cells.

75 INT MEADOWLAKE DINING AREA – JANUARY 2004 – MORNING

Kristy introduces Fiona to the man in the wheelchair with the vacant eyes. She greets him warmly. Sits down beside him.

76 INT ANDERSSON’S KITCHEN – JANUARY 2004 – NIGHT

Grant does the dishes. When he goes to put the frying pan away he pauses. Looks at it. Then puts it in a cupboard.
Grant skis around the lake all by himself. He skis around and around as the sun goes down and leaves the sky pink over a countryside that seems to be bound by waves of blue-edged ice. He stops on the other side of the lake from the house. Stares at the house. Extremely wide shot of Grant standing alone in the snowy field staring at his lonely cottage.

GRANT (V.O.)
All told, tens of millions of synapses dissolve away. Because the structures and substructures of the brain are so highly specialized, the precise location of the neuronal loss determines what specific abilities will become impaired. It is like a series of circuit breakers in a large house flipping off one by one.

Grant stands still on the lake, still looking back at the house. One by one, all the lights in the house switch themselves off.

Grant takes down a string of Christmas lights from the front of the house.

36 fps as Grant laces up his ski boot. Takes a few strides. Decides against it. Heads back to the cottage.

On the kitchen counter there are all sorts of contrivances and appliances - coffeemaker, food processor, knife sharpener, etc. All look new and expensive, as if they had just been taken out of their wrappings or polished daily. Grant decides it might be a good idea to admire things.

GRANT
That’s a great looking coffeemaker. I always meant to get one of those. I saw they had them on sale at the Canadian Tire.
MARIAN
They gave us that. Our son and his wife. They live in Kamloops, B.C. They send us more stuff than we can handle. It wouldn’t hurt if they would spend the money to come and see us instead.

GRANT
(philosophical)
I suppose they’re busy with their lives.

Marian gives a sharp laugh.

MARIAN
They weren’t too busy to go to Hawaii last winter. You could understand it if we had somebody else in the family, closer at hand. But he’s the only one.

She pours the coffee into two brown and green ceramic mugs that she takes from the amputated branches of a ceramic tree trunk that sits on the table. She sits down with him. Grant hesitantly begins to speak.

GRANT
People do get lonely. If they’re deprived of seeing somebody they care about. Fiona, for instance. My wife.

MARIAN
I thought you said you went and visited her.

GRANT
I do. That’s not it.

87 INT ANDERSSON’S BEDROOM -FEBRUARY 2004- MORNING

Grant smooths his hair. Appraises his appearance carefully.

FLASHBACK:

89 INT DIFFERENT HOUSE

GRANT’S MEMORY: Grant, in his 30’s, smooths his hair in the bathroom mirror. Fiona appears behind him. Straightens his tie for him. She encircles her arms around his waist. Kisses his neck. They stare at each other in the mirror.
Grant drives down the long country road to Meadowlake. He looks so excited and happy.

Title card:

**AUBREY AND THE FORGETTING**

Grant goes down the hall quickly, the flowers held awkwardly in his hands. Madeleine sees her office.

**MADELEINE**
There you are. I’ll take you to her.

She looks at the flowers.

**MADELEINE**
Wow. Narcissus this early. You must’ve spent a fortune.

They walk down the corridor.

**MADELEINE**
Funny. They all come in with flowers. Even if they’re not the flower buying type. They all turn into guilty husbands. Only thing missing is the affair. The important thing to remember is you’ve done nothing wrong.

They pass a few people in wheelchairs, staring off into space, murmuring to themselves, etc. A woman passes them, clearly in a haze.

**MRS. ALBRIGHT**
I’m certain I left my sweater in the church. Just this morning. I left my sweater in the church.

Kristy, who is passing by, tenderly places her hand on the old woman’s shoulder.

**KRISTY**
Well maybe someone picked it up for you and put it in your room Mrs. Albright. I’ll help you look for your sweater.
The woman calms down. Nods. Goes back in the direction she came from. Kristy sees Grant.

KRISTY
Great to see you Mr. Andersson.

She gives him a squeeze on the shoulder. She continues down the hall.

MADELEINE
There now. You remember from last time you were here don’t you? There’s her room right there. Her name plate’s right on the door. I’ll leave you to it.

Madeleine leaves. Grant pauses in front of the door. Looks at the handmade nameplate. It is sloppily made, but has “Fiona,” neatly written, and a few yellow clay flowers decorating it. They are very like the skunk lilies. He touches them gently. Smiles. Pauses a moment. Not sure if he should knock or not. Decides he should. Knocks gently. He opens the door.

INT FIONA’S ROOM -FEBRUARY 2004- MORNING

Grant peeks his head in the door.

GRANT
Fiona?

No answer. The room is empty. There is still nothing personal in the room. The bed is made. There is a glass of water and a box of kleenex on the bedside table. No photos, pictures of any kind, not a book or a magazine. He looks around disappointed. Leaves the room.
Residents sit along the walls, in easy chairs, others at tables in the middle of the carpeted floor. The same man that was playing the piano during Grant’s tour, plays it again now. Picking away with one finger and never achieving a tune. A group of residents sit and play cards. Grant sees Fiona, in profile, sitting up close to the card table but not playing. She is sitting very closely beside the man in the wheelchair. She looks a little different. Her hair is pulled back in an unfamiliar style. Her usual red lipstick gone. Kristy comes up behind Grant.

**KRISTY**
There she is. You just go up and say hello and try not to startle her. Remember she may not – Well. Just go ahead.

Kristy looks concerned. Grant walks towards the table. As he approaches, all the card players look up, including Fiona. The rest of the players look back down at their cards again, except Fiona. She smiles her sly, charming smile, pushes back her chair and comes around to him, putting her fingers to her mouth.

**FIONA**
(whispering)
Bridge. Deadly Serious. They’re quite rabid about it.

She draws him towards the coffee table. Sits him down beside her. Speaks to him very politely, as you would an acquaintance.

**FIONA**
I can remember being like that for a while at college. My friends and I would cut class and sit in the common room and smoke and play like cutthroats. One’s name was Phoebe, I don’t remember the others.

**GRANT**
Phoebe Hart.

**FIONA**
You knew her too? Can I get you anything? A cup of tea? I’m afraid the coffee isn’t up to much here.

**GRANT**
I don’t drink tea...
Grant is paralysed. He wants to throw his arms around her but something about her demeanour makes it impossible. At a loss, he searches around for something to say.

GRANT
I brought you some flowers. I thought they’d do to brighten up your room. I went to your room, but you weren’t there.

FIONA
Well no. I’m here.

There is an awkward pause.

GRANT
You’ve made a new friend.

He indicates the man in the wheelchair. The man looks up, Fiona looks back at him.

FIONA
It’s just Aubrey. The funny thing is I knew him years and years ago. He worked in the store. The hardware store where my grandpa used to shop. He and I were always kidding around and he could not get up the nerve to ask me out. Till the very last weekend and he took me to a ball game. But when it was over my grandpa showed up to drive me home. I was up visiting for the summer. Visiting my grandparents - they lived in a cottage on the lake.

GRANT
Fiona. I know where your grandparents lived. It’s where we lived. Live.

Fiona is distracted by Aubrey’s look. He is looking at her quite intensely, with a kind of command in his eyes.

FIONA
Really?

Fiona turns back to Grant nervously.
FIONA
I better go back. He thinks he can’t play without me sitting there.

(MORE)
FIONA (cont’d)
It’s silly, I hardly know the game anymore. I’m afraid you’ll have to excuse me.

GRANT
Will you be through soon?

FIONA
Oh we should be. It depends. If you go and ask that grim looking lady nicely she’ll get you some tea.

She indicates a particularly stern looking attendant behind a coffee urn.

GRANT
I’m fine.

FIONA
So I’ll leave you then, you can entertain yourself? It must all seem strange to you, but you’ll be surprised how soon you get used to it. You’ll get to know who everybody is. Except that some of them are pretty well off in the clouds, you know – you can’t expect them all to get to know who you are.

She leaves Grant and goes back to her chair at the table. She whispers something into Aubrey’s ear and taps her fingers across the back of his hand. Grant watches them for a while. Then gets up and leaves. As he does Aubrey gives him a suspicious look. Fiona gives him a polite little wave.

INT BRIGHT HALLWAY- FEBRUARY 2004-AFTERNOON

We watch Grant as he walks alone down the long hallway, bathed in late winter afternoon light.

EXT GRANT’S VEHICLE/ANDERSSON’S DRIVEWAY – FEBRUARY 2004- AFTERNOON

Grant drives home.

EXT ANDERSSON’S COTTAGE– FEBRUARY 2004-AFTERNOON

Grant gets out of the car. Pauses before he puts the key in the door. Sighs. Leans his head against the door.
Grant sees Fiona at the same table she was at the day before. Right beside Aubrey. He catches her eye. She waves politely. Indicates that she’ll be a few minutes. Aubrey gives her a stern look. She places her hand on his. Grant, defeated, sits down on the sofa with the wilted flowers on his lap. Kristy sees him and sits down next to him.

KRISTY
You caught her at sort of a bad moment. Involved in a game.

GRANT
She’s not even playing.

KRISTY
Well, but her friend’s playing. Aubrey.

GRANT
So who is Aubrey?

KRISTY
That’s who he is. Aubrey.

She looks up to see the look on Grant’s face.

KRISTY
They get these attachments. That takes over for a while. Best buddy sort of thing. It’s kind of a phase.

He goes to say something. It’s hard to get the words out.

GRANT
Does she even know who I am?

KRISTY
She might not. Not today. Then tomorrow - you never know, do you? Things change back and forth all the time. You’ll see the way it is once you get used to coming here.

(MORE)
KRISTY (cont'd)
You’ll learn not to take it all so serious. Learn to take it day by day.

They watch Aubrey and Fiona. It is difficult for Aubrey to manage the cards. Fiona shuffles and deals for him, and sometimes moves quickly to straighten a card that seems to be slipping from his grasp. A wisp of Fiona’s hair touches his face and he gives a husbandly frown.

Fiona pushes her chair back and comes over to greet Grant. Grant stands, and awkwardly goes to kiss her on the cheek. She politely accepts, though it’s clear that this makes her uncomfortable. She shoots a nervous glance back at Aubrey who intentionally drops all of his cards to the floor.

FIONA
(to Grant)
Oh I’m sorry. I’ll have to go fix that now.

Grant watches as Fiona bends down and picks up all of Aubrey’s cards. Aubrey calms down as she takes her place beside him and continues on with the game.

Grant watches as Fiona and Aubrey watch golf on television with the other residents. He sits a few chairs away from them. They are totally transfixed. There is silence as the player makes his swing and the ball makes its lonely, appointed journey across the sky. Aubrey and Fiona hold their breaths. Aubrey’s breath breaks out first, expressing satisfaction or disappointment. Fiona’s chimes in on the same note a moment later. Grant notices this with irritation.
He gets up to leave, trying to make eye contact with Fiona, but fails.

Grant sees Fiona pushing Aubrey down the hall.

**GRANT**
Hello Fiona.

**FIONA**
Oh hello there. You’re very persistent aren’t you.

Grant awkwardly holds out some books.

**GRANT**
I brought you some books. I notice they don’t have all that many around here.

**GRANT**
Letters From Iceland by Auden. We always meant to read it together. Remember?

She looks at him blankly. He looks at Aubrey who is staring up at him, irritated at being interrupted.

**GRANT**
Fiona. Do you think... would it be possible to talk alone?

**FIONA**
Oh. I’m not sure. Aubrey’s card game starts in a few minutes and then we usually go walking and then he does his drawing.
GRANT
(irritated)
Well perhaps you could make some
time a little later. I’ll wait
here. Or I’ll come back in a few
hours.

FIONA
(playfully)
You are persistent aren’t you?

She continues walking with Aubrey, leaving him alone. Aubrey
is holding a few drawings on his lap and as they walk away,
one flutters loose. Grant picks it up and is about to hand it
back to him. He stops as he gets a good glimpse of it. It’s a
very precise drawing of Fiona as she looked when she was
younger. He stares at it, and then after Aubrey and Fiona.

INT MEADOWLAKE STAIRWELL -MARCH 2004-DAY

Grant stands looking through the window watching Fiona
pushing Aubrey around. Fiona catches his eye. Now she looks a
little concerned. She turns Aubrey around in the other
direction before he can see Grant.

Eliza comes up behind Grant giggling.

ELIZA
That Fiona and Aubrey. They’ve
really got it bad, haven’t they?

Grant smiles, uncomfortable.

ELIZA
Maybe it’s time you started
branching out too you rascal.

He gives her a polite smile and leaves.

INT MEADOWLAKE TV AREA- MARCH 2004 - AFTERNOON

Grant sits watching a hockey game with some of the residents.
Frank is doing play by play to the game. Grant goes over and
turns of the sound on the TV. The residents clap as Frank
takes over the commentary.
Fiona approaches him from behind. Puts her hand on his shoulder. He looks around with a start. Grasps her hand, thinking she remembers him. She politely pulls it away.

FIONA
I just came down to say. Aubrey is having his afternoon nap. If you’d like to talk.

GRANT
Yes. Shall we go somewhere a little quieter?

FIONA
If you like.

INT FIONA’S ROOM - MARCH 2004 -AFTERNOON

Fiona sits in a chair. Grant sits on the bed. Smooths out the sheets remembering their last encounter in this room. He looks around at the walls which have many of Aubrey’s drawings pinned up. They are all different angles of Fiona, looking so much like the images we’ve seen of her in the past, it’s uncanny.

FIONA
You said you have some books for me.

GRANT
Yes.

He takes the books out.

GRANT
Letters From Iceland.

FIONA
Yes you said. By Auden.

GRANT
(excited that she remembers)
Yes. That’s right.

FIONA
Now where is Iceland.
Grant sinks. As he describes Iceland we see Super 8 and archival footage of Iceland. Earthquakes, geysirs, highway bridges carried off by giant movements of ice and water.

GRANT
Iceland is... It’s in the middle of the Atlantic. It’s an island. It’s the youngest country in the world. It’s constantly erupting. Volcanos and earthquakes. It’s always...shaking itself off.

Fiona replies with casual interest.

Fiona
Hmm. Wouldn’t it be nice. To be from a young country.

GRANT
You are. That’s where you’re from. Where your people are from. They immigrated here in the late 1800’s. Your people were on the first voyage from the north. A place called Akyuyeri. They came to Canada. That’s where you’re from Fiona. And I teach... I taught the myths from there. Norse Mythology.

Fiona looks very vulnerable.

Fiona
I must have been there then. Have I been there?

GRANT
No.

Fiona
But ... Wasn’t I curious?

GRANT
Oh you’re very curious. Very curious.

He smiles tenderly. Strokes her hand.

GRANT
You always said, there ought to be one place you thought about and knew about and maybe even longed for - but never did get to see.
She smiles sadly.

FIONA
Did I say that?

GRANT
Yes. You said that.

She smiles. Then something occurs to her. She looks at him. * Upset. She looks quite angry and quite present. She stares at Grant for a long time, totally familiar and direct. Grant looks afraid of what she might be about to say.

Then her polite manner is back, suddenly. All of a sudden she treats him like a stranger again.

FIONA
Well I better go see to Aubrey. He’ll be wanting a little walk around I suppose. It was nice chatting. I suppose you’ll be back again tomorrow.

She goes to stand up. He takes her hand back. She looks down at it.

GRANT
Fiona.

FIONA
Yes?

GRANT
What are you doing? What are you doing with Aubrey?

She takes her hand back. Looks him in the eye.

FIONA
He doesn’t confuse me. He doesn’t confuse me at all.

She walks to the door. Turns around. Very polite and formal.
FIONA
Well. It was nice chatting. I suppose you’ll be back again tomorrow.

Grant sits on the bed for a while, thinking. He places the books carefully on the bedside table.

INT BRIGHT HALLWAY- MARCH 2004 - AFTERNOON
36 fps. Grant is on his way out the door. He passes Fiona helping Aubrey out of his chair. He holds onto the rail on the wall and supports himself by leaning on her as he takes a few tentative steps. A small group of residents and nurses clap. Both Fiona and Aubrey look somewhat proud and bashful. Grant leaves.

INT DINING AREA- MARCH 2004 - LATE AFTERNOON
Grant and Kristy eat slices of pie and drink coffee.

GRANT
Who is he?

KRISTY
He’s...Aubrey?

GRANT
Yes. Aubrey.

KRISTY
Aubrey. He was the local guy for this company that sold weed killer and all that kind of stuff. He was a fine person.

Grant nods.

GRANT
What happened to him? Did he have a stroke?

KRISTY
When he was not very old or even retired he suffered some unusual kind of damage. They just went on holiday somewhere and he got something, like some bug, that gave him a terrible high fever? And it put him in a coma and left him like he is now.

(MORE)
KRISTY (cont'd)
Between you and me I wouldn’t be surprised if it had something to do with that weed killer. His wife is the one who takes care of him usually. She takes care of him at home. She just put him in here on temporary care so she could get a break. Her sister wanted her to go to Florida.

(MORE)
KIRSTY (cont'd)
See, she’s had a hard time, you wouldn’t ever have expected a man like him—

GRANT
I see.

Grant tries to use a calm, indulgent tone.

GRANT
Do these affections between residents...do they ever go too far?

KRISTY
Depends what you mean.

There is an awkward silence. Grant is getting nervous.

KRISTY
The trouble we have in here, it’s funny, it’s often with some of the ones that haven’t been friendly with each other at all. They maybe won’t even know each other, beyond knowing, like, is it a man or a woman? You’d think it’d be the old guys trying to crawl in bed with the old women, but you know half the time it’s the other way round. Old women going after the old men. Could be they’re not so wore out I guess.

She stops smiling, as if she’s afraid she has spoken too callously.

KRISTY
Don’t take me wrong. I don’t mean Fiona. Fiona is a lady. She’s a real lady.

GRANT
Well I sometimes wonder—

KRISTY
(a little sharply)
You wonder what?
GRANT
I wonder whether she isn’t putting
on some kind of charade.

KRISTY
A what?

GRANT
Some kind of act. Maybe a kind of
punishment.

Kristy looks at him fondly. Pats his hand.

KRISTY
Now why would she do that.

He looks at her in a way that makes her know that he’s
talking about something very real.

KRISTY
Oh.

111  EXT ANDERSSON’S COTTAGE - MARCH 2004 -LATE AFTERNOON  111
Grant shovels snow. He throws himself into the work,
exhausting himself.

112  INT MEADOWLAKE DINING AREA/CORRIDOR-MARCH 2004 - MORNING  112
Grant watches from the the couch in the dining area while
Aubrey walks, a little more confidently now holding onto
Fiona for support. Fiona is wearing a very bright, tacky
sweater. Completely different from her other clothing.
Madeleine walks by. Grant gets her attention.

GRANT
Excuse me. Excuse me!

MADELEINE
Yes Mr. Andersson. What can I help
you with?

GRANT
She’s...Fiona. She’s wearing
someone elses’ sweater.

Madeleine looks over at Fiona.

MADELEINE
It’s pretty isn’t it.
GRANT
No. It isn’t pretty. It’s tacky.
And she would never wear it.

MADELEINE
Well, if you like you can talk to
the on duty attendant on Mrs.
Andersson’s wing.

Grant keeps watching Fiona, supporting Aubrey as he makes his way slowly across the room. Madeleine pauses to watch with him.

MADELEINE
It’s a marvel really. The way she’s getting him up and out of that chair.

She walks off. Grant watches Fiona laughing with Aubrey who is smiling a little. Grant gets more and more upset. He goes up to Fiona, grabs her wrists.

GRANT
Fiona.
She is startled.

GRANT
Fiona. I’m your husband. Fiona.
She looks away. She doesn’t want to see him. Keeps her head locked to the side.

GRANT
Fiona. It’s Grant. Your husband.
We’ve been married for 45 years.
Look at me. Fiona. We live in your grandparents cottage. We ski every day together on the lake. Every night we make dinner together and I read to you and you fall asleep in my lap and I carry you to bed. You proposed to me when you were 18.
That is not your sweater. We’ve had a good life together. Those are your words, not mine. Fiona. That is not your sweater.

Fiona won’t look at him. Has tears streaming down her face. Aubrey is making panicked sounds. Wants to help her get free of Grant but can’t move. She pulls her wrist away from him violently.
Then pulls the sleeves of her sweater straight and composes herself. She helps Aubrey to sit back down in his wheelchair. He is making desperate animal sounds. She coos to him trying to settle him down. Grant puts his face in his hands. Once Aubrey has settled somewhat, Fiona takes Grant’s hand and leads him around the corner. Aubrey’s sounds grow louder and louder.

Fiona looks sternly at Grant. Seems about to say something. A long pause while she looks at him. Whatever it was she was going to say, she decides not to say it.

Fiona
I’ll see you again tomorrow I suppose. Please don’t... Please Don’t.

Grant nods, devastated. Fiona laughs, embarrassed by everything that has just happened.

Fiona
You are persistent aren’t you. I wish I knew what...

She laughs lightly. Brushes her tears away.

Fiona
We’ll see you again tomorrow I suppose.

She walks away from Grant. Gets Aubrey out of his chair again and supports them as they walk down the hall.

112A INT BRIGHT HALLWAY - DAY
Grant watches them go as they walk, together, away from him, down the long, sun bathed corridor. (36 fps)

113 INT MARIAN’S KITCHEN - FEBRUARY 2005 - MORNING
Grant sits nervously at Marian’s table. He is gearing up to say something. Not sure how to begin. He stirs his coffee, thinking. Marian watches him closely.

Marian
You’re not doing too well are you?
No big surprise. What we’re dealing with here isn’t so easy. I thought I’d married someone who’d be there with me to the final stretch. And I’m betting you thought the same. It didn’t work out that way.
(MORE)
So. I think you came here for a reason. I’m the kind you can just say things flat out to. So shoot.

Grant takes a breath and then takes the plunge.

GRANT
I’m wondering if you could consider taking Aubrey back to Meadowlake. Maybe just one day a week for a visit? It’s only a drive of a few miles, it wouldn’t be too difficult would it?

He has an idea.

GRANT
Or...if you’d like to take the time off - I suppose I could take Aubrey out there myself. I wouldn’t mind at all.

This wasn’t part of what he had planned to say, and he’s rather dismayed to hear himself suggest it.

GRANT
I’m sure I could manage it. And I’m sure you could use a break.

While he talks she moves her closed lips and her hidden tongue as if she is trying to identify some dubious flavour. She gets up and gets some milk. Pours it into his coffee. Goes back to the counter and grabs a plate of ginger cookies. They are perfectly round. She sets the plate down in front of him.

MARIAN
Homemade.

Grant picks one up. Marvels at its perfect roundness.

GRANT
Really.
She pours milk into her coffee. Stirs it. GRANT waits in the interminable, awkward silence. Glances at AUBREY’s feet, visible through the door.

MARIAN
No. No I can’t do that. And the reason is, I’m not going to upset him.

GRANT
(earnest)
Would it upset him?

MARIAN
Yes, it would. It would. Bringing him home and taking him back. Bringing him home and taking him back, that’s just confusing him.

GRANT
But wouldn’t he understand that it was just a visit? Wouldn’t he get into the pattern of it?

MARIAN
He understands everything all right.

She says this as though he has just insulted AUBREY.

MARIAN
If I go to all that trouble I’d prefer to take him someplace that was more fun. It’d make more sense to take him to the mall where he could see kids and whatnot. If it didn’t make him sore about his own two grandsons he never gets to see. I’ve got to get him all ready and pack up his chair and maneuver him into the car, and he’s a big man, he’s not so easy to manage as you might think. All that and what for?

GRANT
But even if I agreed to do it? It’s true, you shouldn’t have the trouble.

MARIAN
(flatly)
You couldn’t. You don’t know him. You couldn’t handle him.

(MORE)
He wouldn’t stand for you doing for him. All that bother and what would he get out of it?

Grant considers saying something about Fiona. Decides not to. She gets up and fetches her cigarettes and lighter from the window above the sink.

MARIAN (cont'd)
You smoke?

GRANT
No, thanks.

MARIAN
Did you never? Or did you quit?

GRANT
Quit.

MARIAN
How long ago was that?

He thinks about it.

GRANT
Thirty years. No - more.

Grant’s mind wanders momentarily, remembering the circumstances in which he quit.

MARIAN
I’ve quit quitting.

She lights up.

MARIAN
Just made a resolution to quit quitting, that’s all.

She looks at him, sizing him up.
MARIAN
So your wife’s depressed? What’s your wife’s name? I forget.

GRANT
It’s Fiona.

INT CONSERVATORY—MARCH 2004—NIGHT

Aubrey and Fiona sit by the fountain. They sit among the lush and tropical looking plants. Fiona talks softly to him. We move around the fountain to find Grant sitting alone, catching glimpses of them through the leaves. Mixed in with the sound of the leaves rustling and the birds in the cages and the sound of splashing water is Fiona’s soft talk and laughter. Then a sort of chortle which sounds like it might be coming from Aubrey. Then some words, which are definitely coming from Aubrey. His voice is soft and strained. Grant squints his eyes, trying desperately to make out what he is saying. Then there is silence. Then a few clear words.

AUBREY
Take care. He’s here. My love.

Grant looks into the blue bottom of the fountain’s pool. Stares at the coins.

KRISTY (O.S.)
And how old were you when you met?

EXT MEADOWLAKE — MARCH 2004 —DAY

Kristy takes a smoke break. Grant sips a coffee to keep her company.

GRANT
She was 18.

KRISTY
Holy. That’s pretty young to get married eh?

GRANT
It wasn’t my idea. But it was a good one I think.

KRISTY
She proposed to you?

Grant nods.
KRISTY
Well that’s lovely. That’s what I think. How’d she do it?

GRANT
I don’t think she planned it necessarily. We were in Tobermory, waiting for the ferry to Manitoulin. It was raining and miserable and she was happy and sick of my sour mood.

KRISTY
So what’d she do? What’d she say?

GRANT
She said, “Do you think it would be fun - Do you think it would be fun if we got married?”

KRISTY
What did you say?

GRANT
I took her up on it. I shouted yes.

Grant takes a deep breath.

GRANT
I never wanted to be away from her. She had the spark of life.

116   EXT PIER - 1961

GRANT’S MEMORY: The image of Fiona at 18 from the beginning of the film. She looks at us. Right into our eyes. Over this we hear:

KRISTY (V.O.)
You know. Nothing takes away what happens to you. Where you’ve been, what you’ve experienced. I don’t think so. Even if it’s gone away somehow, even if you can’t remember it. It’s still there. It’s still what you are.

117   EXT MEADOWLAKE -MARCH 2004 -DAY

Kristy watches him, sympathetic.
GRANT
It’s curious.

KRISTY
What’s curious?

GRANT
All that. The “madly in love” part.
The beginning. When I hear myself
tell the story, it sounds
so...crucial. And it was I suppose.
But compared to what we ended up
with it seems very...superficial
somehow.

118 EXT LAKE HURON BEACH - APRIL 2004 -DAY
Grant walks along the beach, up and down the metal barricades
as he did with Fiona. 36 fps.

120 INT CONSERVATORY- DECEMBER 2004 - EARLY EVENING
Grant watches as the residents play Bingo. Eliza plays bingo
with her daughter. They sign to each other. Her daughter
looks absolutely joyous as she plays with her mother, and she
describes to her the game in sign. Fiona, wearing that
bright, tacky sweater helps Aubrey play. Kristy takes a seat
beside Grant.

GRANT
They never sorted out the clothes.

KRISTY
Oh. They...tried to. She’s become
very attached to that sweater.

Grant nods.
Meadowlake is decorated for Christmas again. A badass teenager with blue hair and a whole lot of piercings watches her grandfather and her parents play Bingo. Her grandfather has food all over his chin. The badass teenager leaves the table. Grant sits alone at the fountain, watching Aubrey and Fiona sitting in the distance. They lean in close and whisper, oblivious to the invasion of visitors. The badass teenager. MONICA comes and sits beside Grant on the fountain in a huff. She puts on her headphones which blare thrasher music. Grant notices her. Continues to watch Aubrey and Fiona as he talks to the young girl beside him.

GRANT
Not such a fun place to visit eh?

Monica lifts up her earphone. The music is deafening.

MONICA
Excuse me?

GRANT
Nothing.

She turns off the music.

MONICA
No. What were you gonna say?

GRANT
Just. Not such a fun place to visit eh?

MONICA
Fuckin Depressing.

She glances at him, thinking she may have offended him.

MONICA
No offence.

He smiles.

GRANT
No offence taken.

MONICA
Sorry. I’m just on the rag.
GRANT
That would do it, yes.

They sit in silence for a moment.

MONICA
I’m not in the mood for Grandpa
when I’m on the rag, know what I’m
sayin?

Grant smiles.

GRANT
You never know. I’m not an expert
on families. But someday you might
be glad you came.

Monica looks at him. Assesses him.

MONICA
No one came to visit you eh? That
must suck huge.

GRANT
No. I’m... I don’t live here. I’m
just visiting someone.

Monica makes a show of looking around for the person he’s
visiting.

MONICA
Who? What’s your deal crazy man?

Grant smiles. Likes her. He indicates Fiona.

GRANT
I’m visiting that woman over there.

Monica looks over.

MONICA
Which one?

GRANT
The beautiful one. With the shock
of hair.

MONICA
The one sitting with her husband?
GRANT
You could say that.

MONICA
Why wouldn’t you?

GRANT
Why wouldn’t you what?

MONICA
Say that.

GRANT
Uh...you wouldn’t say that...because I’m her husband.

Monica looks at Fiona and Aubrey, deep in conversation.

MONICA
So...why aren’t you sitting with her?

GRANT
Oh... I’ve learned to give her a little bit of space. She’s in love with the man she’s sitting with. I don’t like to disturb her. I just...like to see her I suppose. I like to make sure that she’s doing well.

He looks at the Monica selfconsciously. Embarrassed.

GRANT
I suppose it seems rather pathetic.

Monica stares at him for a long time. A little tear in her eye.

MONICA
If the guy I’m dating right now? If he was like you? I should be so lucky.

She gives him a hefty pat on the back. Makes him lay her five and goes back to her Grandpa. Grant laughs to himself. The biggest, most genuine smile we’ve seen from him in a long time.

122 INT DINING AREA –JANUARY 2005– MORNING

Grant looks around the card tables for Fiona. Eliza yells out to him, excited.
ELIZA
She’s not here! She’s sick! He’s not here either!

She looks very proud of having this information. And way more out of it than we’ve seen her. Her hair is messy, her clothes awry. Grant nods.
Grant hurriedly makes his way down the corridor to Fiona’s room, a book under his arm. Grant knocks lightly at Fiona’s door. He opens it gently.

Fiona is sitting straight up in the bed, which is cranked up like a hospital bed. She’s wearing a nightgown and looks very pale. Aubrey is beside her in his wheelchair, which is pushed as close to the bed as it can get. His face also has a gray, worn out expression. He is wearing a jacket and tie and his hat rests on the bed. He looks as though he’s going somewhere. As Grant enters, they both look up at him with stony, grief-ridden apprehension that turns to relief, if not to welcome when they see who he is. Not who they thought he’d be. They grasp each others hands and do not let go. Grant is taken aback. He sets the book down at the foot of the bed.

GRANT
I...I brought you a book Fiona.
It’s about Iceland. I thought maybe you’d like to look at it.

FIONA
Why. Thank you.

She turns her attention back to Aubrey who is pulling his hand away from her. He puts his hand over his face as he weeps uncontrollably. He is embarrassed about his running nose, especially in Grant’s presence.

FIONA
What is it? What is it, dear heart?
Oh, all right. Oh, here.

She pulls some tissue out of the box.

FIONA
Here. Here.

She tries to wipe his nose, but Aubrey grabs the kleenex away from her and does it himself.
FIONA
(whispering, to Grant)
Do you by any chance have any
influence around here? I’ve seen
you talking to them.

Aubrey makes a noise. Like an animal wail. He pitches his
upper body towards her. She scrambles half out of bed to
catch him and holds onto him. Grant doesn’t know whether to
help or not. Decides he’d better not.

FIONA
(to Aubrey)
Hush. Oh, Honey. Hush. We’ll get to
see each other. We’ll have to. I’ll
go and see you. You’ll come and see
me.

Aubrey makes another animal wail into Fiona’s chest. There is
nothing Grant can decently do but get out of the room.

INT CORRIDOR - JANUARY 2005-MORNING

Grant closes the door gently. Puts his back to it and leans
on it, sighing. Madeleine walks by.

MADELEINE
I just wish his wife would hurry up
and get here. I wish she’d get him
out of here and cut the agony
short.

GRANT
Should I stay?

MADELEINE
What for? She’s not sick you know.

GRANT
To keep her company.

MADELEINE
They have to get over these things
on their own. They’ve got short
memories. That’s not always so bad.

Grant walks down the corridor, rattled. Stops and looks out
the window to see a woman in a tartan pants suit in the
parking lot getting a folded-up wheelchair out of the trunk
of her car.
Grant arrives at Meadowlake. Looks for Fiona. She’s not there. Eliza sees him and gleefully calls to him.

ELIZA
She’s still sick! But he’s gone!
You must be happy about that!

Grant gently opens the door to Fiona’s room. She is weeping. An untouched plate of food sits beside her. She looks up to see him.

FIONA
Oh. Hello.

She goes back to weeping. Grant is at a loss. He begins to leave, then changes his mind. He comes and sits next to her while she cries. He looks at her hand on the bed, and debates whether or not to take it in his own. Slowly, gently, he holds it.

GRANT
Perhaps I could read you something.
If you like.

FIONA
Oh. Alright. I don’t have any books though.

Grant looks at the stack of books on the dressing table that he has brought over the last several months. He feigns surprise.

GRANT
Oh look. Here’s some. Here we are.
I’ll read something from Letters From Iceland.

FIONA
Ice-land.

He begins to read to her. She is staring into space. Not hearing. We stay very close on her during the following. Occasionally we go to grainy archival footage of Iceland. It appears to be part of Fiona’s memory, or thoughts.

GRANT
Isn’t it true however far we’ve wandered

(MORE)
GRANT (cont'd)
Into our provinces of persecution
Where our regrets accuse, we keep returning,
Back to the common faith from which we’ve all dissented,
Back to the hands, the feet, the faces.

Children are always there and take the hands
Even when they’re most terrified; those in love
Cannot make up their minds to go or stay;
Artist and Doctor return most often;
Only the mad will never never come back.

For doctors keep on worrying while away
In case their skill is suffering and deserted;
Lovers have lived so long with giants and elves
They want belief again in their own size;
And the artist prays ever so gently-

‘Let me find pure all that can happen.
Only uniqueness is success! For instance,
Let me perceive the images of history,
All that I push away with doubt and travel,
Today’s and yesterday’s, alike like bodies.
INT TV AREA—JANUARY 2005—DAY

Fiona watches the news with Grant and some other residents. Scenes of violence and chaos in Iraq.

FIONA
How could they forget Vietnam?

Grant stares at her. This sounds very much like her as she was. Someone switches the TV station to golf. As she looks at the screen she is hit with a fresh bout of grief. She begins to cry silently. Grant reaches out to touch her hair. She bats his hand away.

FIONA
Oh. It’s just the big screen. Hurts my eyes.

INT DINING AREA MEADOWLAKE

Kristy sits and has a coffee with Grant on her break. They watch 2 old men in the common area playing horseshoes. One of them throws the horseshoe and then they both stand there like statues, not sure what happens next.

KRISTY
Her muscles are deteriorating. If she doesn’t improve soon we’re gonna have to put her on a walker.
GRANT
I keep trying to get her walking.
She just doesn’t seem to want to go anywhere.

KRISTY
But you know once they get a walker
they start to depend on it and they
don’t walk much anymore, just get
wherever it is they have to go.

Grant scratches his head. Looks worried.

KRISTY
You’ll have to work at her harder.
Try and encourage her.

Kristy goes and retrieves the horseshoe and gives it to the
man who threw it. He throws it again. And then waits again.

INT FIONA’S ROOM -JANUARY 2005 -MORNING

Grant enters with a lot of energy.

GRANT
How do you feel about a little
field trip Mrs. Andersson?

EXT HURON COUNTY ROAD -JANUARY 2006- MORNING

Grant drives Fiona down the road to their home. They pass the
hollow. He notices it. Looks at her to see if there is any
recognition. She vaguely seems to register something. Touches
the glass of the window.

EXT ANDERSSON’S COTTAGE -JANUARY 2005- MORNING

Grant leads Fiona to the door. She looks at it. Some
recognition.

INT ANDERSSON’S COTTAGE -JANUARY 2005- MORNING

Grant watches as Fiona makes her way around the house.
Touching things, admiring pictures and objects. He watches
her intently.

FIONA
They’ve kept it so like it was.

GRANT
Who has?
FIONA
The people who live here.

EXT ANDERSSON’S COTTAGE -JANUARY 2005- DAY

Fiona walks out the back door. Grant follows. She sees the skis propped up against the wall. She touches them gently, her eyes welling up with tears. She sinks down on the ground.

FIONA
Everything...

Grant kneels down beside her. Takes her hand. She takes it back.

FIONA
Everything just reminds me of him.

Grant searches her eyes which are staring off into space, right past him.

FIONA
I wasn’t enough I suppose.

GRANT
Who?

She is silent.

GRANT
Who Fiona? Who does everything remind you of?

She looks back at him.

FIONA
I’d like to go now if you don’t mind.

He sits with her. We pull away from them, sitting together on the back porch. She’s a million miles away.

EXT COUNTY ROAD -JANUARY 2005- AFTERNOON

They drive past the hollow again. Fiona smiles ever so slightly. Looks at Grant. He smiles back at her, trying to ascertain whether or not she remembers.

FIONA
Everything just reminds me of him.

He looks ahead. Defeated.
Kristy has a smoke and wraps up a cell phone call. Grant comes out to join her.

    GRANT
    I think I want to ask you about the
    second floor. Just to know a bit
    more about it.

    KRISTY
    Well. It’s for people who have
    really lost it.

    GRANT
    And what do they do? What happens
    after they’ve...lost it.

    KRISTY
    Some just sit. Some sit and cry.
    Some try to holler the house down.
    You don’t really want to know.
    But...sometimes they get it back.
    You go in their rooms for a year
    and they don’t know you from Adam.
    Then one day, it’s “oh, hi, when
    are we going home?” All of a sudden
    they’re absolutely back to normal
    again.

Grant looks vaguely hopeful.

    KRISTY
    But not for long. You think, wow,
    back to normal. And then they’re
    gone again.

She snaps her fingers.

    KRISTY
    Like so.

Grant stares off. Tears in his eyes.

    GRANT
    Are you married? I haven’t even
    asked you about yourself.

    KRISTY
    Technically I guess yeah. Got three
    kids. Their father’s somewhere in
    Alberta I think. Makin it rich
    maybe. I wouldn’t know.
GRANT
How old are your kids?

KRISTY
Ten, three and eight.

GRANT
Must be a struggle.

KRISTY
Oh, ya know. It knocks the wind out of ya every now and then. But you pick yourself back up like everyone else.

Grant looks at her, thinking.

GRANT
I suppose... I suppose our lives must seem easy to you. We got through life without too much going wrong. What we have to suffer, now that we’re old hardly counts I suppose. That’s what you must think.

Kristy stares at him, shocked at the condescension in his tone. And thoroughly insulted by the sentiment. There is a lot of anger in her eyes. She half smiles, glaring.

KRISTY
You don’t know what I think. To tell you the truth I’d rather be the one who stayed than the one who left. I’ll bet you weren’t always the doggedly devoted husband. Am I right? When you said you thought maybe she was punishing you for something. I’ll bet maybe you had something pretty specific in mind didn’t you?

He looks at her for a moment.

KRISTY
You see a lot in this job. You see the end of things, all day long. In my experience, at the end of things, it’s almost always the men that think not too much went wrong. I wonder if your wife feels the same way.
Grant looks off into the distance.

    GRANT
    I wonder that too.

    KRISTY
    I’ll bet you do.
He turns to look at her. Decides to confide in her, now that she seems to have lost all respect for him anyway.

GRANT
Do you remember the day we came in here? How badly I didn’t want to let her go?

EXT COUNTY ROAD –FLASHBACK–JANUARY 2004– MORNING

We’ve seen the beginning of this scene before. Grant and Fiona drive in silence. “Harvest Moon” by Neil Young plays in the tape deck. Fiona spots something just off the road.

FIONA
Oh. Remember?

Grant looks and sees the conservation area where they saw the skunk lilies. Grant smiles at her. Looks ahead. It’s all he can do to not turn the car around.

FIONA
You look surprised Grant.

GRANT
Not surprised. Just grateful. I’m grateful you can remember that.

FIONA
I’m not all gone Grant. I’m just going.
She leaves a pregnant pause. The scene continues.

FIONA
There are things I wish would go away but won't. Things we don't talk about.

Grant looks very unsettled. Fiona continues on. Sincere. No venom at all. Almost lightly.

FIONA
You never left me. You still made love to me in spite of disturbing demands elsewhere. You never stayed away from me a single night. There was no making up elaborate stories in order to spend a weekend in a tent on Manitoulin Island. You went easy on the dope and the drink. You continued to publish papers, make progress in your career. You never had any intention, so far as I could tell, of throwing up work and marriage and taking to the country to practice carpentry or keep bees. Thank you for that. That would have been ugly.

She means it. He is stunned.

FIONA
But all those sandals Grant. All those bare female toes.

CUT TO:

142 INT UNIVERSITY CLASS - 1970’S

GRANT’S MEMORY: We see glimpses of long hair, toes in sandals. A University class, full of young women looking up at us with adoring eyes.

FIONA (O.S.)
What could you do but be a part of the time you were a part of. All those pretty girls. It didn’t seem like anyone was willing to be left out. And hey. You got in shape.

CUT BACK TO:
FIONA
You quit smoking even. A wife of twenty years knows that it isn’t for her. Do you remember how hard I tried to get you to quit when we were first married. You felt so sick when you finally did it. But you kept to it. And I thought. “A big reward must be coming his way.” But you seemed happier. Even though you were...away from me sometimes. You were easier to live with in many ways. I think you did alright. Compared to your colleagues. The ones who left their wives. And the women who wouldn’t put up with it.

She gets wistful.

FIONA
I never quite understood those women to tell you the truth.

She loses her train of thought. Is silent for a moment.

FIONA
I think people are too demanding. Aren’t they? People want to be in love every single day. What a liability.

Grant goes to say something. She interrupts him.

FIONA
And then that silly girl. That silly girl Veronica. Girls that age are always going around talking about killing themselves.

CUT TO:

GRANT’S MEMORY: of Veronica. Close on her face, looking into our eyes. Pain and anguish in her eyes.
FIONA (V.O.)
That was it for then. No more New Year’s or Christmas Invitations for the Andersson’s.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT MEADOWLAKE PARKING LOT JANUARY 2004 - MORNING

They pull into the parking lot.

FIONA
We moved out here. Without making the mistake of confessing. You promised me a new life. We moved out here. And that’s exactly what you gave me.

She smiles fondly.

FIONA
How long ago was that?

GRANT
Twenty years.

Fiona shakes her head.

FIONA
Well that’s shocking.

She smiles serenely.

FIONA
So you see. I’m going but I’m not all gone.

Fiona goes to open the car door. Grant grabs her hand.

GRANT
Fiona.

FIONA
Yes dear.

GRANT
Don’t go.

She pats his hand. Gives him a kiss.

FIONA
That’s what is happening Grant. It’s happening right now.
She gets out of the car. Like a zombie he follows her. Takes her bags out of the trunk and follows her, blindly into the building.
Fiona approaches the front desk, Grant following behind, trying to keep up with her with all the bags.

GRANT
Fiona...

FIONA
(to receptionist)
I’m checking in today. My name is Fiona Andersson.

GRANT
Fiona let’s come back another time.

The receptionist brings up a file.

RECEPTIONIST
Yes Mrs. Andersson. We have your room all ready for you.

FIONA
Perfect. Will you show me to it please?

RECEPTIONIST
Absolutely. We’ll have our supervisor Mrs. Montpellier show you. Now you haven’t taken the tour yet. Is that correct?

FIONA
Yes. That’s correct.

RECEPTIONIST
I’ll go fetch her. She’s just in her office right now. But she’s expecting you.

The Receptionist exits into the back office.

GRANT
Please Fiona. Not now. I can’t go away from you like this.

Fiona smiles a little. Lets this sink in for a minute. Puts her hand tenderly on his face.
FIONA
You’ve been good to me Grant. We had nothing to tie us down Grant. You could have just driven away and forsaken me. But you didn’t. And I thank you for that.

Over Fiona’s face, looking sincerely up into Grant’s we hear Grant, telling Kristy the rest of the story.

GRANT (O.S.)
And then we went to her room, and she asked me to make love to her there and then go. And so I did. I went. And I never really saw her again... Or she never really saw me I suppose.

EXT MEADOWLAKE - JANUARY 2005 - DAY
Kristy watches Grant. Taken aback. She shakes her head. She stubs out her cigarette and walks away from him. Grant watches her go.

CUT TO:

INT MEADOWLAKE STAIRWELL - JANUARY 2005 - DAY
We see Grant stand alone as Kristy walks away from him. Pull back to reveal Fiona, watching.

INT CONSERVATORY - FEBRUARY 2005 - DAY
Grant reads to Fiona from Letters From Iceland. She is far off.

GRANT
The desires of the heart are as crooked as corkscrews
Not to be born is the best for man
The second best is a formal order
The dances pattern, dance while you can.

Grant notices how far off Fiona is. Stops reading.
GRANT
Fiona?

She doesn’t respond.

GRANT
Is there any way to let this go? Do you think?

Fiona smiles sadly. Strokes his hand.

FIONA
(weakly)
If I let it go, even for a minute, it’ll only hit me harder when I bump into it again.

GRANT
Okay. Okay.

Grant grabs her hand. Kisses it.

He goes back to reading to her. She cries silently.

GRANT
Dance, dance, for the figure is easy
The tune is catching and will not stop
Dance till the stars come down with the rafters
Dance, dance, dance till you drop.

149 INT MADELEINE’S OFFICE -FEBRUARY 2005 -DAY

Madeleine sits across from Grant, Fiona’s file in front of her.

MADELEINE
The thing is, I’m sure you know, we don’t do any prolonged bed care on the first floor. We do it temporarily if someone isn’t feeling well, but if they get too weak to move around and be responsible we have to consider upstairs.

Grant thinks for a moment.
GRANT
Would you happen to have Aubrey’s address?

MADELEINE
Excuse me?

GRANT
Aubrey and his wife. Do you know where they live?

INT BRIGHT HALLWAY - FEBRUARY 2005 - LATE AFTERNOON

Grant watches Fiona walk away from him down the long corridor, bathed in that late afternoon light.

MARIAN (O.S.)
Fiona. Her name’s Fiona huh? And what’s yours? I don’t think I ever was told that.

INT MARIAN’S KITCHEN - FEBRUARY 2005 - MORNING

Marian stares at Grant, inquisitively. GRANT looks down, feeling slightly defeated by her attitude.

GRANT
It’s Grant.

She suddenly sticks her hand out across the table.

MARIAN
Hello Grant. I’m Marian.

He shakes her hand, tentatively.

MARIAN
So now we know each other’s name, there’s no point in not telling you straight out what I think. I don’t know if he’s still so stuck on seeing your – on seeing Fiona. Or not. I don’t ask him and he’s not telling me. But I don’t feel like taking him back there in case it turns out to be more than that. I can’t afford to risk it. I don’t want him getting hard to handle. I’ve got my hands full with him as it is. I don’t have any help. It’s just me here. I’m it.
GRANT lowers his voice to a whisper.

GRANT
Did you ever consider - it is very hard for you - did you ever consider his going in there for good?

MARIAN doesn’t seem to feel the need to lower her voice.

MARIAN
No. I’m keeping him right here.

GRANT
Well. That’s very good and noble of you.

MARIAN
You think so? Noble is not what I’m thinking about.

GRANT
Still. It’s not easy.

MARIAN
No it isn’t. See, I don’t have much of a choice. If I put him in there I don’t have the money to pay for him unless I sell the house. The house is what we own outright. Otherwise I don’t have anything in the way of resources. I get my pension next year, but even so I could not afford to keep him there and hang on to the house. And it means a lot to me, my house does.

GRANT
It’s very nice.

MARIAN
Well, it’s alright. I put a lot into it. Fixing it up and keeping it up.

GRANT
I’m sure you did. You do.

MARIAN
I don’t want to lose it.
GRANT
No.

MARIAN
I’m not going to lose it.

GRANT
I see your point.

MARIAN
The company left us high and dry. Basically he got shoved out. It ended up with them saying he owed them money and when I tried to find out what was what he just went on saying it’s none of my business. What I think is he was doing...well he was pretty stupid. But I’m not supposed to ask so I shut up. You’ve been married. You are married. You know how it is. And in the middle of all this we’re supposed to go on this trip with these people and can’t get out of it. And on the trip he takes sick from this virus you’ve never heard of and goes into a coma. So that pretty well gets him off the hook.

GRANT
Bad luck.

MARIAN
I don’t mean exactly that he got sick on purpose. It just happened. He’s not mad at me anymore and I’m not mad at him. It’s just life.

GRANT
That’s true.

MARIAN
You can’t beat life.

She flicks her tongue in a cat’s businesslike way across her top lip, getting the cookie crumbs.

MARIAN
I sound like I’m quite the philosopher don’t I?

(MORE)
They told me out there you used to be a university professor.

GRANT
Quite a while ago.

MARIAN
I’m not much of an intellectual.

GRANT
I don’t know how much I am either.

MARIAN
But I know when my mind’s made up. And it’s made up. I’m not going to let go of the house. Which means I’m keeping him here and I don’t want him getting it in his head he wants to move anyplace else. It was probably a mistake putting him in there so I could get away, but I wasn’t going to get another chance, so I took it. So. Now I know better.

She shakes out another cigarette.

MARIAN
You’re thinking – there’s a mercenary type of a person.

GRANT
I’m not making judgements of that sort. It’s your life.

MARIAN
You bet it is.

Marian looks at him for a moment. Takes him in.

GRANT
Did your husband – did Aubrey work in a hardware store in the summers when he was going to school?
MARIAN
I never heard about it. I wasn’t raised here.

Grant smiles. He has lost.

GRANT
No. No I didn’t think so.

INT MARIAN’S HOUSE HALLWAY -FEBRUARY 2005- MORNING
Marian opens the door for Grant. He shakes her hand.

GRANT
Thank you for your time Miriam.

She’s suddenly sensitive. A bit vulnerable.

MARIAN
It’s Marian.

She seems hurt. The door closes. MARIAN thinks for a moment. Then leans on the door.

MARIAN
(to herself)
What a jerk.

But that’s not what she’s thinking.

SCENE 153 OMITTED

INT MARIAN’S HOUSE - FEBRUARY 2005-DAY
MARIAN sits down at her kitchen table, pensive. She glances at AUBREY’s feet through the doorway. Stirs her coffee.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM -FEBRUARY 2005-EVENING
Grant presses play on the answering machine. He stands at the table with his head hung. As he hears the message, he turns his head slowly to look at the phone.

MARIAN (O.S.)
Hello, Grant. I hope I got the right person. I just thought of something.

(MORE)
There is a dance here in town at the Legion supposed to be for singles on Saturday night, and I am on the supper committee which means I can bring a free guest. So I wondered whether you would happen to be interested in that? Call me back when you get a chance. 281-3457.

The machine beeps and another one plays. This time, her voice has a little tremor of nerves, an affected nonchalance, a hurry to get through and a reluctance to let go.

MARIAN (O.S.)
I just realized I'd forgot to say who it was. Well you probably recognized the voice. The accent. It's Marian. I'm still not so used to these machines. And I wanted to say I realize you're not single and I don't mean it that way. I'm not either, but it doesn't hurt to get out once in a while. Anyway, now I've said all this I really hope it's you I'm talking to. It did sound like your voice. If you are interested you can call me and if you are not you don't need to bother. I just thought you might like the chance to get out. It's Marian speaking. I guess I already said that. Okay, then. Good-bye.

GRANT stares at the machine for a long time.

INT ANDERSSON’S KITCHEN -FEBRUARY 2005- EVENING
GRANT makes himself an omelette.

INT MARIAN’S HOUSE -FEBRUARY 2005- EVENING
Marian watches closely as Aubrey eats his dinner.

INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM -FEBRUARY 2005-EVENING
GRANT eats his dinner, thinking.

INT MARIAN’S HOUSE -FEBRUARY 2005- EVENING
MARIAN does the dishes, thinking very hard about something. She goes to the phone. Looks at it a long time.
GRANT does the dishes. Grant goes to put away the frying pan. He stares at it for a long time.

MARIAN (O.S.)
Grant. This is Marian. I was down in the basement putting the wash in the dryer and I heard the phone and when I got upstairs whoever it was had hung up. So I just thought I ought to say I was here. If it was you and if you are even home. Because I don’t have a machine obviously, so you couldn’t leave a message. So I just wanted. To let you know. Bye.

Grant picks up the phone.

GRANT
Hello Marian.

Grant knocks on MARIAN’s door. He is dressed in a suit with some roses in hand. MARIAN comes to the door a lot more vulnerable than when we first met her. She’s dressed up a little as well.
GRANT
So.

MARIAN
There you are.

They look at each other. Taking stock of the situation.

GRANT
Here I am.

Marian motions him inside.

MARIAN
I’m just putting on the finishing touches if you get my meaning. Give me a minute. Have a seat in the kitchen if you want. I’ve got the neighbours daughter over to see to Aubrey.

Marian exits to the bathroom. Grant goes to the kitchen. Sits down. Looks around at the orderly details of this life.Monica, who we met earlier at Meadowlake, comes in and turns the kettle on, not seeing Grant. She talks to AUBREY, whose feet are again visible through the doorway.

MONICA
Just gimme a sec Mr.Bark. Your tea’s a comin.

Grant stares at the back of her head, waiting for her to turn around.

GRANT
Hello there.

Badass turns around.

MONICA
HEY!!! How are ya? How’s your long lost love?

GRANT smiles.

MONICA
What are you doing here?

MARIAN enters, all gussied up and ready to go.
MARIAN
Well. Let’s be off. Free drinks only last til eight.

He forces a smile.

GRANT
You look lovely.

He gets up to leave. Monica has her jaw hanging open. MARIAN heads for the door. GRANT goes to follow her but Monica stops him. Monica stares at him, upset.

He looks at her, a little guilty and ashamed.

GRANT
Life is...complicated.

Monica shakes her head. He pats her comfortingly on the shoulder as he leaves the room.

164 INT MARIAN’S HOUSE - FEBRUARY 2005 - EVENING

Monica brings AUBREY his tea. She has tears in her eyes. At the sound of the car driving off, he turns his head mournfully to the window. He slowly shakes his head. Monica holds his hand, but looks away, embarrassed. Evening winter sunlight pours in sadly.

165 INT DANCE HALL - FEBRUARY 2005- NIGHT

MARIAN and GRANT dance. Grant has a far off look, not totally engaged.

FLASHBACK:

December 2003

GRANT’s POV of FIONA skiing beside him in the field behind their house. She looks at him, out of breath and laughing.

166 INT DANCE HALL -FEBRUARY 2005 NIGHT

Grant closes his eyes, trying to block out the image. Marian looks up at him. Direct.

MARIAN
What are you thinking about?
GRANT
Oh. Not much. Skiing.

Marian watches him. Knowing that isn’t all.

MARIAN
Downhill?

GRANT
Cross-country.

She shrugs.

MARIAN
I’m more of a thrill seeker I guess.

She looks off, smiles to herself.

GRANT
What are you thinking about?

MARIAN
I’m thinking. You never know how these things are going to turn out. You almost know. But you can never be quite sure.

GRANT looks down at her. A little shocked at the direction his life is about to go in.

167 EXT WOODS - TIME TRANSITION 167

Close on a skunk lily covered in snow. We stay on it as the snow slowly melts off it, sun illuminates it, rain falls on it, wind blows it, and the snow falls again.

168 INT MARIAN’S BEDROOM - DECEMBER 2005 - EVENING 168

GRANT sits on the bed his thoughts still a million miles away.

FLASHBACK:

169 INT ANDERSSON’S LIVINGROOM - JANUARY 2003 169

Fiona peeks over a Norse Mythology book, lit by the fire, laughing.

170 INT MARIAN’S BEDROOM- DECEMBER 2005 - EVENING 170

Marian’s bare legs pass through frame in the f.g. GRANT smiles up at her, distracted. He is in a thousand pieces.
MARIAN and GRANT on the ski lift. Marian grabs Grant’s hand.

GRANT
I’m thinking...that next time we go skiing It might make more sense to put Aubrey back into Meadowlake. Just for the day. Instead of leaving him at that teenager’s house.

MARIAN
Monica.

GRANT
Sorry?

MARIAN
Monica. That’s her name.

GRANT
Ah. Monica. What do you think?

MARIAN
I’m thinking that sometimes you just have to make a decision to be happy. You just decide. Things aren’t ever what you hoped they’d be. Not ever. Not for anybody. The only thing that separates one kind of person from the other, is that there are some who stay angry about it, and there are some who accept what comes their way.

GRANT
Which kind of person are you?

MARIAN all of a sudden looks very vulnerable. All her hardness just melts away.

MARIAN
I was pretty damn mad. But right now...I’m looking at what came my way...and I think...maybe I could become the other kind of person.

Marian gets embarrassed by how much she has revealed and laughs it off.
MARIAN
Quite the philosopher eh?

She takes a moment. Looks at him knowingly.

MARIAN
I know what you’re doing Grant. I know why you’re here. I’m a little unpolished but I’m not stupid. It’d be easier on me if you could pretend a little. Pretend you’re here for me. Not just to get Aubrey back to Fiona. Think you could do that for me?

Grant takes her hand.

MARIAN
I’m just trying to make the decision to be happy. I could use a little help here.

Grant nods, moved. He takes her hand. They ride the rest of the way in silence. We see them from a distance, the ski lift taking them further and further up the hill and away from us.

INT MARIAN’S BEDROOM—DECEMBER 2005

Grant and Marian have sex. It is quite intense. They are both in their own worlds. Both, for their own reasons, on the verge of tears. When it is over, they fall back overcome. They are silent for a long while.

MARIAN
(with tears streaming down her face)
Now what were we talking about again?

Grant looks at her. They both laugh.

TITLE CARD:

THE RETURN
INT CHECK IN AREA

KRYSTY
Hello there Mr. Andersson.

Madeleine peeks out.

MADELEINE
We didn’t get to see you yesterday.

GRANT
No. I went skiing.

MADELEINE
Good for you to get away.

Grant nods.

INT FIONA’S ROOM - JANUARY 2006 - MORNING

GRANT knocks at the door, opens the door slowly. FIONA is still in bed, looking even paler, even skinnier. He sits beside her. She has her back to him, and slowly reaches out her fingers to touch one of Aubrey’s drawings which is pasted on the wall.

INT MEADOWLAKE ELEVATOR AREA- JANUARY 2006 -MORNING

MADELEINE catches GRANT just as he is leaving.

MADELEINE
Mr. Andersson. As you can see, we’re going to have to move Mrs. Andersson to the second floor quite soon. She hasn’t been out of bed for the last few weeks and...

GRANT whirls around on her, screaming, tears flying out of his eyes.

GRANT
Yes! Yes! I’m quite aware of your policy! I’m more than aware of your fucking policies!

KRYSTY watches him from behind the counter. A lot of empathy in her eyes. Frank, the play-by play guy for the Winnipeg Jets walks through the doors, escorted by an attendant.
FRANK
...and We’re back in Meadowlake, going back to the second floor, and passing a man with his heart broken on the left, broken in a thousand pieces...

Grant stares at him for a moment and then leaves.

176 EXT MEADOWLAKE - JANUARY 2006-MORNING

Grant stands outside Meadowlake, staring at Eliza who is walking around the pond, being followed by her daughter who signs to her, trying to get her attention. She keeps looking back at him, irritated and confused. Finally she stops chasing her. Stands alone, weeping at the edge of the pond while Eliza hurries back into Meadowlake. Kristy appears beside him, smoking.

KRISTY
She was the only one in the family who bothered to learn sign language. Now she doesn’t remember how, or maybe even who she is.

GRANT
Her daughter?

KRISTY
Yup. It’s left her pretty stranded. Marooned.

Grant stares at the sight of the woman, alone, looking to where her mother disappeared.

KRISTY
I thought of you the other day. You know the billboard in front of the United Church in Brantford? They post different biblical type stuff. The other day it said “It’s never too late to become what you might have been.”

Grant laughs at the irony of this.

GRANT
That doesn’t sound all that biblical.
KRISTY
Well. Maybe they’re gettin creative on us.

Grant smiles at her. She gives him a little squeeze on the shoulder and leaves. It means the world to him. He stares out at the pond and thinks.
Grant and Aubrey drive in silence. Aubrey looks straight ahead. He very slowly, almost ominously turns his head to look at Grant. Grant turns to make eye contact. They lock eyes for a moment. Then look away.

Kristy looks up as Grant wheels Aubrey in the door. Her jaw drops. She looks up at Grant, understanding what he’s doing. She smiles at him. Grant looks at her and shrugs.

Grant walks down the hallway. Kristy pushes Aubrey in his wheelchair towards Fiona’s room. Grant takes a deep breath. They stop outside the door. Grant turns to Kristy and Aubrey.

**GRANT**
If you wouldn’t mind...Could I have a moment alone before you come in? To explain things?

Kristy looks up at Grant with all the respect in the world. Aubrey nods.

Grant enters Fiona’s room.

Fiona is in her room but not in bed. She is sitting by the open window, wearing a seasonable but oddly short and bright dress. She has the Auden book in her lap. She looks up at Grant and smiles.

**FIONA**
Look at this beautiful book I found, it’s about Iceland. You wouldn’t think they’d leave valuable books lying around in the rooms. The people staying here are not necessarily honest. And I think they’ve got the clothes mixed up. I never wear yellow.

She runs her fingers over the book tenderly.

**FIONA**
I seem to remember you reading this to me. You were trying to make me feel better. You tried so hard.

(MORE)
FIONA (cont'd)
You’re a lovely man you know. I’m a very lucky woman.

GRANT
Fiona...

FIONA
You’ve been gone a long time. Are we all checked out now?

Grant is very thrown. He doesn’t know how to respond to all this. Decides he shouldn’t. He inhales and continues.

GRANT
Fiona, I’ve brought a surprise for you. Do you remember Aubrey?

She stares at him for a moment, as if waves of wind have come beating into her face. Into her face, into her head, pulling everything to rags.

FIONA
Names elude me.

The look passes, as she retrieves, with an effort, some bantering grace. She sets down the book carefully and stands up. She lifts her arms to put them around him. He holds her, astonished. Settles into the embrace. She pulls his earlobes.

FIONA
I’m happy to see you.

She smiles, smells his shirt.

FIONA
You could have just driven away.
Just driven away without a care in the world and forsook me. Forsooken me. Forsaken.

He keeps his face against her white hair, her pink scalp, her sweetly shaped skull. With tears in his eyes he says:

GRANT
Not a chance.

Kristy opens the door slightly, and sees them embracing. She’s amazed. She looks back at Aubrey, offscreen. Only his feet are visible through the doorway.

Fiona and Grant hold each other like they’ll never let go.

We hear k.d. Lang’s version of “Helpless.”
188  EXT LAKE -DAY
We race backwards over ski tracks in the snow. They go on and on and on until they melt and dissolve into:

189  EXT PIER - 1961 -MORNING
GRANT’s MEMORY: Fiona at 18, looks at us. Smiling. Full of life. She turns away from us.
FADE TO WHITE.