

THE SWANS

Written by

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Based on Swan Lake

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EXT. AERIAL VIEW - DAY

The camera swoops across a vast area of bayous where the land meets the water in a thousand lakes and inlets interspersed with forests. The golden afternoon sun sparkles and plays off the water. A little town passes quickly below. The camera begins a swooping decent to -

EXT. DAY - DILAPIDATED TRAILER

A run-down trailer sits in a small circle of sand at the end of a rutted, one-lane back road. Off to one side of the trash-strewn front yard, a WWII surplus amphibious airplane, a Grumman Goose, sits on flat tires in a state of disrepair.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

The dilapidated state of the outside continues inside. This is a bachelor pad gone badly to seed. A young Chesapeake Bay retriever sleeps in a worn-out recliner in the small space that serves as a "living area" to the right of the door. A beautiful double-barreled shotgun, the only thing of quality in the trailer, rests in brackets on an overhang above a cramped sleeping alcove in which GEORGE LIGHT, of indeterminate age, perhaps in his mid-thirties, is in bed with a slatternly young waitress, KAREN. The telephone rings incessantly, gradually ruining the "romantic mood." GEORGE struggles out of bed to the island between the kitchen and the living area to answer the phone.

GEORGE

(into telephone)

Yeah? ... Oh, yeah, yeah, she's here. Yeah, I'll tell her. Well, now that you've screwed up my romantic interlude Yeah, okay, four is fine. Yeah, I'll meet you there.

(to KAREN)

That was Randy. He told me to tell you to get your sweet ass in to work.

KAREN struggles out of bed and pulls on her clothes, complaining as she does so. She stumbles out of the trailer on her way to work. GEORGE dresses, then slips on a jacket and a hunting vest over that. He dumps a dozen shotgun shells into one of the large pockets of the vest.

He goes to the kitchen area and carefully fills a pocket flask with whiskey, then puts the flask in the other large pocket of his vest, taking a pull on the bottle before plunking it on the counter. He takes the gun down from its brackets and calls his dog, SAL.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Sal! Com'on girl, let's go huntin'.

SAL leaps eagerly to his side and they stroll outside.

EXT. YARD - DAY

GEORGE opens the door of a beat-up Ford pickup and SAL scrambles in. GEORGE gets in, then heads out along the lane toward the blacktopped state road.

MOVING

They drive along the state road.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

See if you can remember this time, Sal. It's the goose you want to retrieve. You know, the thing with feathers on it.

They turn off the blacktop into a narrow, rutted lane just like the one GEORGE lives on. They go down the lane to the shore of a lake and pull up behind another battered pickup belonging to RANDY ROTHBARD. RANDY, three hundred pounds of animated lard, is standing in the lane, leaning languidly against his truck, with his hunting gear on. GEORGE gets out of the truck and SAL follows eagerly.

RANDY

Hey! Ready to bag some big ones?

GEORGE

Hey. Guess my aim would be a bit steadier if you'd have let me finish what I was doin' instead of interrupting me with you goddamn phone call.

RANDY

Plenty of time for that later.
 Good goose huntin' day is a rare
 thing indeed. Anyhow, Karen's
 gotta make a livin', too, ya know.

GEORGE goes around to the back of the truck and lowers the tailgate, revealing a hodgepodge of tarpaulins, a large net bag full of goose decoys, a pair of waders. He takes off his vest and puts on the waders, then puts his vest back on. He and RANDY go to the shore and wade out through a shallow marshland full of rushes. SAL splashes along behind them. They reach a hunting blind at the edge of the marsh. The hunters and SAL step up into the blind, a three-sided enclosure, thatched with reeds on the outside. Gasping from exertion, RANDY flops down on a low bench that rings three sides of the blind, while GEORGE opens the bag of decoys and throws half a dozen over the front side of the blind. Then he settles onto the bench next to RANDY while SAL curls into a corner to nap.

The afternoon drifts by. GEORGE and RANDY nurse their flasks. Late in the afternoon, GEORGE spots a wedge of geese heading toward the blind and gets ready to fire at them.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Aw, sid down, ya shithead, they're
 outa range.

The geese are out of range, but GEORGE, a bit tipsy, fires wildly with both barrels, anyway.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Din' I tell ya?

GEORGE glowers sullenly at RANDY as he fumbles to reload his gun.

A little while later, the unsuccessful hunters get ready to go home. Out of the disk of the setting sun, the head-on profile of a large bird comes rushing towards them. RANDY grabs the nearest gun, which happens to be George's, swings it to his shoulder and snaps off a shot. Just as he fires, the bird veers slightly to its left and crashes into the reeds about 20 yards from the blind. SAL rushes out into the water and reeds to retrieve the prey.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Aw, shit! I think that was a swan.
 Com'on, let's get outta here. My
 liquor license is up for renewal.
 The last thing I want is another
 run-in with the warden.

The hunters start running back towards their trucks. There is a violent trashing in the reeds, as though the bird is wounded. As he splashes towards dry land, GEORGE calls for SAL.

GEORGE

Sal! Come! The warden'll be on
our ass again. Com'on Sal!

GEORGE reaches dry land, but SAL refuses to come. RANDY lunges into his truck and zooms off. GEORGE puts his gun down and wades out to retrieve SAL. As GEORGE reaches SAL, the violent thrashing in the reeds stops, and he hears the low moaning of a human voice. He stops in his tracks. He hears the moan again. He reaches slowly down to grab SAL's collar, but she bolts towards the sound. GEORGE follows her. As he parts the reeds, he sees a beautiful young GIRL lying naked, face down in the shallow water and rushes. She is struggling to rise up on her arms to keep her face out of the water. As her face comes out of the water, she speaks in the same voice as the moan GEORGE first heard.

GIRL

Help me! Save me!

She collapses back into the water. GEORGE bounds to her side and scoops her into his arms. Though statuesque, she weighs next to nothing, and he has no trouble bounding through the rushes to where he left his gun. SAL follows them. As he runs, he murmurs half to himself and half to the GIRL.

GEORGE

Don't die, Missy. Oh, please,
don't die.

He reaches dry land and lays her next to his gun. He sweeps her platinum blonde hair and the marsh grass from her muddy face. She is badly banged up, with deep gouges on her breasts and arms. GEORGE frantically strips off his hunting vest and jacket, covers her with the jacket and puts the vest back on. He scoops up the girl and his gun and runs the few yards to his truck. He puts the girl in the bed of the truck, padding her with the tarps. He slams the tailgate shut and sprints to the cab. SAL scrambles in. GEORGE puts his gun in the rack behind his head and tears off down the lane for home.

MOVING

GEORGE flies along the lane to his trailer. He leaps from his truck, runs to the trailer to prop the door open, then sprints back to the truck, retrieves the GIRL, and runs inside with her.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

GEORGE gently deposits the GIRL on the unkempt bed, covering her with a couple of frayed blankets. He grabs a dish towel from the kitchen island, using it to tenderly clean the mud and debris from the GIRL'S face.

GIRL

Thank you.

She lapses back into unconsciousness. GEORGE continues cleaning the mud and blood from her arms and breasts, noticing the deep gouges as he does so. He covers her up and searches the trailer frantically for first aid supplies. He finds a pair of worn-out sheets in a drawer built in below the bed. He tears these up for bandages. He finds some disinfectant and anti-bacterial salve and old gauze pads in a first aid kit in one of the kitchen cabinets. He uses these to bandage the GIRL'S wounds, then he tucks her into bed. He slumps to the floor in exhaustion and falls asleep, as SAL curls up in the recliner.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

The early morning sun streams into the trailer. The GIRL, GEORGE, and SAL are all still asleep. The sun wakes GEORGE. He gets up and checks the GIRL, who gradually awakens. She looks at him, disoriented and frightened.

GIRL

Who ... who are you? ... Where am I?

GEORGE

That's okay. You're okay. I'm George Light. I found you down at the lake. You were hurt, so I brought you here. What's your name?

GIRL

The lake?

GEORGE

Yeah, the lake.

GIRL

What was I doing there?

GEORGE

You were hurt. You were lying in the marshes. What's your name?

The GIRL struggles to remember her name. Then a name comes to her out of her subconscious.

GIRL

Um ... Missy. My name is Missy.

GEORGE

Missy? Missy who?

She gazes frantically around the room until her eyes light on GEORGE'S trade name belt buckle.

MISSY

Ford. Missy Ford.

GEORGE

Missy Ford?

MISSY FORD

Yeah. Missy Ford.

GEORGE

Where you from, Missy Ford?

MISSY

I can't rightly remember just now.

GEORGE

Do you remember why you were down at the lake?

MISSY

I don't know. It was dark, very dark. I was in the trunk of a car or something. There was a man. He hurt me. I ran for the lake ... I'm a very good swimmer ... I think he shot me ... something hurt me. I swam ... I think ... I ... I don't know ... I'm not sure of any of this. ... Really, I don't know.

GEORGE

There, there, Missy, don't get upset. We'll sort all of this out later.

MISSY settles back on the bed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Maybe we'd better check those dressings.

GEORGE gently unwraps the bandage around her right arm. He peers under the pad and is astonished to see that the wounds are almost entirely healed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Why ... it looks as though you're well on your way here.

MISSY
I feel fine.

The telephone rings and GEORGE answers.

GEORGE
(into telephone)
Yeah? Hi, Pam. Uh, well, yeah, I guess I can. Yeah, I'll be out as soon as I can. Okay.
(to Missy)
That was old Mrs. Johnson. I do some work for her out at her place now that Chuck's gone. I don't want to leave you here, but I really need the money. We don't have anything to eat. Do you think you'll be okay here by yourself?

MISSY
Sure. I'll be fine. You go ahead. I'll just get a little more rest. I'll be up and around in no time.

GEORGE
No need to push yourself. Just take it easy. But if you think you'll be okay here, I guess I'll get ready to go.

GEORGE goes into the bathroom. SAL bounds off the chair where she has been sleeping and runs over to the bed to make friends with MISSY. MISSY screams and GEORGE comes running out of the bathroom. MISSY is cowering in the corner of the alcove, while SAL has her paws up on the bed, tail wagging.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

MISSY
It's the dog! Get her away! I've always been terrified of dogs!

GEORGE grabs SAL's collar and puts her on the floor.

GEORGE

(to SAL)

Down, girl.

(to MISSY)

You don't have to be afraid of Sal here. She's a loveable little gal if ever there was one. Here. You'll see.

GEORGE takes MISSY'S hand and helps her pet SAL. In a few minutes, they're friends.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You girls just get to know each other for a few minutes while I get ready.

He goes back into the bathroom as MISSY and SAL continue getting acquainted. Soon he comes out again.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(to SAL)

Com'on, Sal. Let's go girl.

(to MISSY)

You get some rest now, Missy. We'll be back tonight.

MISSY settles into the bed as GEORGE and SAL go out.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

GEORGE and SAL get into the truck and drive off.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE and SAL return with a bag of groceries between them. GEORGE parks the truck, grabs the groceries, and goes inside with SAL behind him.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

The inside of the trailer is spotless. There is a bouquet of fresh wild flowers in a Mason jar on the kitchen pier. MISSY is standing in the kitchen with an oven mitt on, looking radiant in some of GEORGE'S old clothes. Her bandages are gone.

GEORGE

What? What's going on?

MISSY

Oh. I'm fine now. Just needed some rest.

GEORGE

What's that I smell?

MISSY

Oh. Did you know you had rhubarb growing out back? I noticed it when I put some of the trash in here on the rubbish pile. Anyway, I made a pie. Thought it would go good with dinner. Let's see what you got.

She takes the groceries from him. He stumbles to his chair and flops down.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Say, you don't look so good.

She gets him a glass of water.

MISSY (CONT'D)

I called Randy's Truck Stop down on Route 301. I found the number on a matchbox you had in the kitchen. Asked if they need a waitress or some other help. Figured I'd better start making my way around here. Got an interview tomorrow morning at 11. Would you mind taking me?

GEORGE

Um. Yeah. Uh, well, gee, I don't think you want to work for Randy. He's a pretty rough character, really, and his place is a dive.

MISSY

Well, I've got to support myself somehow. I can take care of myself.

GEORGE

But maybe you'd better wait until you feel better.

MISSY

I feel fine. Look, are you going to help me out here?

GEORGE

Okay, okay. But don't say I didn't warn you.

MISSY

First thing I'll need is some clothes.

GEORGE

I've got a few bucks left over from the job for Pam Johnson. She always gives me a nice tip. She knows I'd do the work for nothing if I could. Chuck was a good man. Anyway, there's a thrift store in town. You could probably pick up something there to tide you over.

MISSY

Great! I'd really appreciate the loan. I'll pay you back as soon as I can. Looks like dinner is ready.

They eat dinner.

GEORGE

I can't remember when I've had a meal like this.

MISSY

It's the best I could do for now.

MISSY looks at the bookshelf above the sleeping alcove

MISSY (CONT'D)

I see you have an interest in birds.

GEORGE

Yeah. Well, I used to anyway. It was a long time ago. I thought someday I would take hunters out into the back country with the old Goose outside. Maybe give bird watching tours, that sort of thing. It didn't work out. But then I guess you could have figured that out for yourself.

MISSY

Life's full of unexpected quirks. Never can tell how things will turn out.

GEORGE

You remember anything more about where you come from? Any kin or anything like that? How about your parents?

MISSY

Can't say for sure. I know we moved around a lot. I've been on my own for a long time now. Aside from that, everything's a blank.

They clear away the dinner dishes.

MISSY (CONT'D)

I'm pretty tired. I think I'll just turn in now.

GEORGE

Oh, that's fine. You mind if I watch some TV first? I'll sleep in the recliner.

MISSY turns in for the night. GEORGE watches TV and nurses some bourbon for a while. He turns off the TV and stands next to MISSY, watching her sleep and trying to fathom who she is. Then he retires to the recliner. He gets comfortable and listens to the sounds of the night drifting in through the open windows. The moon rises and casts a bar of silver light across him as he drifts off to sleep.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

GEORGE is awakened by the sunlight streaming into the trailer. He gets up and notices that MISSY'S bed is empty. He goes outside.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

GEORGE sees that MISSY is sitting in the co-pilot's seat of the Goose. He saunters over to the airplane and pokes his head through the passenger door.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

MISSY twists around in her seat to look at GEORGE as he looks up at her.

MISSY

Mornin'.

GEORGE

Hi.

GEORGE climbs through the disheveled cabin of the plane, which is full of spare parts in crates, tarps, etc., and slips into the pilot's seat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Whatcha' doin'?

MISSY

She's a beautiful bird.

GEORGE

Yeah. She sure is. She sure is.

MISSY

Beautiful birds are meant to fly.

GEORGE just shrugs and looks away out the front windshield. After a while he slips out of the seat, down through the cabin and walks back to the trailer. MISSY watches him from the cockpit of the plane. Then she slips out of the plane and walks back to the trailer, too.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

GEORGE and MISSY fix themselves a meager breakfast of toast and coffee.

GEORGE

Let's head into town and see what we can do for clothes for you.

They get into the truck and drive off.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE gets some money out of his pocket and gives it to MISSY.

GEORGE

Hope you can get something with this. It's all I have right now.

MISSY

Thanks so much. I'll pay you back just as soon as I can.

GEORGE

Forget it.

They drive along in a comfortable silence, like old friends, or lovers, who don't have to chatter to be together. They arrive in town and pull up in front of Millie's Consignment Shoppe in the frowzy little burg of Dillon.

EXT. IN FRONT OF MILLIE'S - DAY

GEORGE

See what you can find in there. I have to go over to Henry's Garage. He said he might have a hauling job for me. I'll be back in about an hour, if you think that'll be enough time.

MISSY

That'll be fine.

EXT. TRUCK IN FRONT OF MILLIE'S

MISSY gets out of the truck and walks confidently into the shop, dressed in GEORGE's baggy old cast offs, while GEORGE pulls away.

EXT. MILLIE'S - AN HOUR LATER

MISSY stands in front of the shop, waiting for GEORGE. She is radiant in a makeshift outfit consisting of a second-hand, knee length, bone colored dress, matching 2" heels, and a small clutch purse. GEORGE pulls up and pushes open the door for her. She gets in.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

You look fabulous!

MISSY

Don't look too close. All this stuff was well used once upon a time.

EXT. TRUCK

They drive off to Randy's Truck Stop.

EXT. RANDY'S TRUCK STOP - DAY

They pull into the cinder lot, where a couple of big over-the-road rigs are parked. Randy's is a run down little hole in the wall, with a neon sign in which assorted letters are dead. There are a couple of dilapidated picnic tables under the trees in the back of the diner, where RANDY and his family live in an extension of the Truck Stop.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

Well, here we are. I'll wait for you.

EXT. TRUCK STOP LOT - DAY

Missy strides confidently through the big rigs and enters Randy's, which is as dingy on the inside as it is on the outside.

INT. RANDY'S TRUCK STOP - DAY

MISSY strides up to the indifferent waitress, LOIS, Randy's abused wife, lounging behind the cash register. LOIS is awed by MISSY'S radiant beauty.

MISSY

Hi, I'm Missy Ford. I'm here for an interview with Randy.

LOIS

He's in the office.

MISSY makes her way along the counter towards the door at the end, with a faded "Office" sign on it. As she goes, the heads at the counter turn to follow her and the conversations at the tables die down to a hush. She taps on the door and RANDY answers.

RANDY (O.S.)

Yeah?

MISSY pokes her head into the office.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

RANDY sits behind a battered metal desk. Various files, catalogs, magazines, etc., are piled on the desk, on the floor around it, and on the single chair in front of it.

MISSY

Missy Ford. For a job interview?

RANDY waddles hurriedly around in front of his desk and clears the trash out of the chair, then retreats behind his desk.

RANDY

Sit down. Please. Have a seat.

MISSY comes in and sits down.

RANDY (CONT'D)

What can I do for you?

MISSY

You mentioned that you might have a job open soon.

RANDY

We do. We do. Can you start this afternoon? Four to eleven, five bucks an hour plus tips.

MISSY

Sure. But I don't have a uniform or anything.

RANDY

No problem. Anything will do.

MISSY

Fine, then. I'll start this afternoon.

She rises to go. RANDY attempts to help her out, but his bulk is too great for the confined space of his office and she lets herself out.

INT. RANDY'S TRUCK STOP - DAY

MISSY walks along the counter, again followed by the gazes of the patrons, and goes out into the lot.

EXT. TRUCK STOP LOT - DAY

She walks to GEORGE's truck and gets in.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

How'd it go?

MISSY

That was sure easy enough! I start this afternoon at four. Five bucks an hour plus tips.

GEORGE

Well, maybe while you still have your freedom, we should take a lap around the lake. What do you say?

MISSY

As long as I'm back to work on time, why not?

He puts the truck in gear and they head out for a tour around the lake.

MOVING

They speed along the state road looping around the lake. They stop at a fruit stand and buy a watermelon with the spare change MISSY has left over from buying her cloths at Millie's. Later, they share it while lounging on a blanket on a grassy slope at the shore of the lake.

EXT. SHORE OF THE LAKE - DAY

GEORGE checks his watch.

GEORGE

Looks like we'd better head back. Your shift starts in a little while.

They fold the blanket and start the drive back to Randy's.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - DAY

MISSY

I can't wait till the paychecks start rolling in. I'll pay you back the twenty, and then I'll buy myself some clothes of my own. And maybe, in a couple of months or so, I can save enough for an apartment of my own. If I have to, maybe I could ask Randy for an advance on my pay.

GEORGE

Forget the twenty. And you can stay at my place for as long as you need to - really - no strings attached - I know it's not comfortable, but if it takes longer than you expected to afford a place of your own - I don't want you to feel like you're imposing on me or anything. Don't ask Randy for any favors, especially on my account. Once he gets his hooks into you, he never let's go. You'll never be free of him.

MISSY

Thanks. That's very sweet of you. I'll bear it in mind.

They pull up in front of Randy's.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

Good luck. I'll pick you up at 11.

MISSY

Thanks. See you then.

She gets out of the truck and goes into Randy's. GEORGE watches her from inside his truck. Instead of going home, he stays to keep watch over her, settling into his seat to see that all goes well.

INT. RANDY'S DINER - DAY

MISSY strides confidently up to LOIS, who is waiting behind the cash register.

MISSY

Hi. I'm Missy. Randy says I'm supposed to start work here tonight.

LOIS

Yeah. Randy told me to break you in. I'm Lois. You ever waited tables before?

MISSY

No.

LOIS

Oh. Well, here's what ya do. Here's the menu.

MISSY scans quickly through the tattered little menu.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Ya give the guys the menu. Let 'em look at it for a couple a minutes. Then take their order on this here pad. Put the order on this here merry-go-round thing and Cookie will ring this here bell when your order's up. Ya serve the order. When they're done, ya bus the table and pick up your tip. We keep our own tips, but ya better share with Cookie or your orders'll come a little slow. Got that?

MISSY

Yeah. Sure.

LOIS

Desserts are in the case. I'll show ya how to run the cash register later. Ya got a uniform?

MISSY

Oh, no. Not yet. Randy said I could use this in the meantime.

LOIS

Yeah, I'll bet he did. Fine. We got some spare aprons ya can use hangin' on the wall inside the kitchen door. I gotta get back ta work. Here's your order pad. There's pencils next to the cash register. We'll alternate tables.

(MORE)

LOIS (CONT'D)

I got the one in the corner. You take these guys that just come in.

MISSY

Okay. Thanks.

MISSY gets a pencil from a box beside the cash register and goes over to the table, where some hard-bitten drivers, FIRST TRUCKER and SECOND TRUCKER, have just settled in.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Good evening, gentlemen. Welcome to Randy's. Here's our menu.

FIRST TRUCKER

We don't need no menus. We come here all the time. But it looks like there's something special being offered tonight.

FIRST TRUCKER attempts to run his hand up MISSY'S leg. She cuffs him away with a short, sharp flick of her hand that surprises him with its power.

FIRST TRUCKER (CONT'D)

Ow! How'd a pretty little gal like you get so strong?

MISSY

I'm afraid only the items on the menu are available tonight, guys.

SECOND TRUCKER

Well, maybe Randy'll run a special one a these days.

MISSY

No telling what Randy might do. You'll just have to keep coming back to find out now, won't you? So, what's your usual, guys?

FIRST TRUCKER

Coupla' meatloafs with lotsa gravy.

MISSY goes to the kitchen counter to put in her order. LOIS is doing the same.

LOIS

Won't make enough to get away from this dump that way.

MISSY

I'm only selling what's on the menu. They'll be just fine. A little mystery won't hurt a bit. You'll see. Trust me.

Throughout the evening, MISSY moves about the dumpy little diner with a natural elegance, as though she would be at home anywhere. Several other groups of truckers come in and she serves them graciously. The FIRST and SECOND TRUCKERS finish their meals and get up to go, leaving generous tips.

FIRST TRUCKER

(to SECOND TRUCKER, as they go out the door)
We'll have to let the guys know that the scenery at Randy's has improved considerable.

SECOND TRUCKER

That's for sure.

INT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

GEORGE watches as Missy moves about inside the brightly lit diner. She is obviously at ease and doing very well. A little past 11, she comes out to the truck and gets in. She looks as fresh and beautiful as the moment she went inside. GEORGE starts up the truck and heads for home.

GEORGE

How'd it go?

MISSY

Great! It was fun. And I did okay on tips considering that there weren't that many customers and it was my first night.

INT. TRAILER - DAY A FEW MONTHS LATER

The morning sun streams in and wakes GEORGE, who is sleeping in his recliner. He gets up and notices that MISSY'S bed is empty. He goes outside.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

GEORGE walks over to the Goose and puts his head inside the cabin.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

MISSY is sitting in a seat on the far side of the aisle, with her feet propped on the seat facing hers. She is looking at the newspaper.

MISSY

Hey.

GEORGE

Mind some company?

MISSY

Com'on in.

GEORGE hops up into the cabin and takes the seat at the front end of the cabin on the opposite side of the aisle from her.

GEORGE

Watcha' doin'?

MISSY

Just dreaming about a place of my own. Business has been great out at Randy's. Seems like every night there's a dozen more rigs pull in than the night before. Randy says he's thinking of expanding the parking lot. He's already hired three new waitresses and he was talking the other day about making me his hostess. Imagine that. I'm saving up some money now. So maybe this dream might come true.

GEORGE

Oh. Find anything yet?

MISSY

Nah. Just started to browse. Any reason this old bucket can't fly?

GEORGE

Cracked head in number three cylinder of the starboard engine. Of course that's just the major problem. Tires are shot. Probably got a million little things that'll take fixing up now. Haven't checked her over in years.

MISSY

Maybe someday.

GEORGE

Yeah, maybe someday.

After sitting in silence a few moments, GEORGE slips out of the cabin.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

GEORGE shambles back towards the trailer for breakfast. MISSY hops out of the Goose and tags after him.

EXT. RANDY'S TRUCK STOP - NIGHT

MISSY, lingering outside while she waits for GEORGE to pick her up, overhears a violent argument between RANDY and LOIS. Shortly, LOIS staggers out of the rear door of Randy's office and sits shakily at one of the nearby picnic benches. MISSY hurries to help her.

MISSY

You okay, Lois?

LOIS

Yeah. Yeah. I'll be okay. Ain't nothin' I haven't put up with a hundred times.

MISSY

Let me get you some ice.

MISSY goes inside and returns with some ice wrapped in a cloth, which she applies to LOIS's swollen eye and lip.

LOIS

Thanks, hon. I swear, one of these days I'm goin' ta do the world a favor and kill that fat bastard. I'll be okay. You go on home now.

MISSY

I'm waiting for my ride, but he hasn't shown up yet.

LOIS

We can give you a lift if it ain't too far. Where ya goin'?

MISSY

Up to Denman's Reach. Are you okay to drive?

LOIS

Sure. Like I say, this ain't nothin' new for me. Slingin' hash and drivin' with one eye swoll' shut are my specialties. Only things in this worl' I'm good at.

MISSY

I'll just step inside to let GEORGE know he doesn't need to pick me up tonight. I'll just be a minute.

MISSY returns from calling GEORGE. She helps LOIS into her rattletrap car and they start off down the road.

MOVING

INT. CAR - NIGHT

LOIS

I'd leave the miserable son of a bitch if I could. But I've got the little girls to worry about. Two of 'em. Katy and Barb. What am I gonna' do with them?

MISSY

Maybe you could get a job waitressing at another place?

LOIS

Nah. I'm not really good at it, like you are. Randy only keeps me on so's he can slap me around whenever he feels like it.

MISSY

Any family?

LOIS

Mom's remarried to a guy who don't like us much.

MISSY

I wish I could help you, do something for you.

LOIS

Thanks. Don't see nothin' much nobody can do for us now. Guess I'm just gonna have ta hope Randy don't kill me or I don't kill him.

MISSY

Well, stay strong. You never know how things will turn out. Don't give up hope. Turn in here.

LOIS

But this is George Light's place.

MISSY

Yeah, I know. Turn in here.

LOIS

Oh. Okay. You livin' with George?

LOIS turns into the lane.

MISSY

Just sharing his trailer until I can find a place of my own, that's all.

LOIS

Oh. Too bad.

MISSY

Why too bad?

LOIS

No offense, hon, but he's the same sort as my old man. They's huntin' buddies, drinkin' buddies, whorin' Um ...

MISSY

He's been very kind to me.

LOIS

Maybe so. But don' let him fool ya. They all can be sweet when they need somethin'. Maybe I'd better come in with you ta make sure everything's okay.

MISSY

I'm sure everything's all right. But maybe we can take another look at those bruises of yours before you head home.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - NIGHT

MISSY and LOIS get out of the car and go up to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

MISSY and LOIS come in to the trailer and discover GEORGE passed out drunk on the floor. They revive him and prop him in the recliner. MISSY escorts LOIS back out to her car.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - NIGHT

MISSY

Thanks an awful lot, Lois.

LOIS

No problem, Missy. You gonna' be okay now?

MISSY

Sure. I'll be fine. Listen, Lois, I'd really appreciate it if you wouldn't mention this to anyone.

LOIS

You must be the last person in town to know about George's problem, hon. There's nobody left for me to tell.

MISSY

Oh, I didn't know.

LOIS

Well, anyway, I'll be gettin' on now. You take care.

LOIS drives off and MISSY returns to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

GEORGE is sitting with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees. MISSY goes over and kneels down in front of him.

GEORGE

Oh, I feel rotten.

MISSY

Let me get you some coffee.

She gets him a mug of coffee from the kitchen.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Here, try some of this. How can I help you? What can I do?

GEORGE

It's hopeless. Just hopeless. I'm hopeless.

MISSY

You're a good man, George. Please, let me help you.

GEORGE

I've tried before. Oh yeah, I've tried plenty of times before. I just don't have what it takes.

MISSY

I won't believe that. You can find a reason to try again. There must be something you love enough to want to live for.

GEORGE

Ya know why the Goose can't fly? Because I can't fly her, that's why. I flew for Eastern ... right after my tour with the Air Force. But I couldn't stay off the sauce. We'd be fogged in somewhere, or laying over in some godforsaken dump. So I'd pass the time with a bottle. After a while, got so I couldn't fly without a couple a drinks. I figured it wasn't long until I'd make a mistake. Maybe kill somebody. I quit. They never knew why. Didn't catch me or anything like that. I just figured I'd better go. Anyway, I'd had my fill of flying. At least for the airlines. So I came down here and did some odd jobs for a while. Then, one day, I saw this ad for a used Goose. Wouldn't fly, so it was pretty cheap. I figured maybe I could fix it up, maybe give some tours - you know, hunters, Audubon people, kids, that kind of thing. Kind of like barnstorming or something. Took every penny I had even though she couldn't fly. Well, turns out, I couldn't find the money to make it work. Gettin' up late, with a hangover, isn't so good for business even when you're just doin' odd jobs. I got her to fly once.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

First time out, the cylinder head cracks. So I taxied her through the bayous and pulled her out here. Years went by. Paint job faded, tires went flat. I'm just a bum now. Nothin' goin' for me.

MISSY

Get a little rest now. Can't fix your life in the middle of the night. We'll get a start on it in the morning.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

The next morning, when MISSY wakes up, GEORGE is sitting at the kitchen counter with an ice pack on his head and the stub of a red pencil behind his ear, going through the help wanted ads.

MISSY

How's it comin'?

GEORGE shrugs.

MISSY (CONT'D)

You know, while we both have nothing better to do, why don't we start making a few improvements around here? Like that junk yard out front. We could chip away at it a little at a time until we got this place back into some kind of shape. What do you say?

GEORGE

Why bother?

MISSY

You really interested in starting over or not?

GEORGE

Whatever.

After breakfast, MISSY starts clearing the front yard of some of the trash. GEORGE watches sullenly from the trailer. Eventually, he is moved by MISSY'S untiring exuberance to join her. Together, they clear away some of the major trash, such as old appliances, piling it in GEORGE'S truck and hauling it to the dump. Over the next few months, they redo the whole place and it begins to look habitable.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

MISSY strolls in the yard behind the diner, on a break from work. She overhears another violent argument between RANDY and LOIS taking place in their living quarters attached to the back of the diner. LOIS comes staggering out the back door of the diner, holding her stomach. MISSY runs to her side and helps her to a picnic table.

MISSY

You okay?

LOIS

I don't know. He hit me pretty hard this time.

MISSY

Should I call an ambulance?

LOIS

No. No. Just let me hang out here for a minute. I've got to get away. Got to find a place of my own where he can't sock me every time he feels like it.

MISSY

Where would you go?

LOIS

There's an old dump for rent on the lake a coupl'a miles from here, but I don't think I can swing the rent. Say, you wouldn't be lookin' for a place, would ya'? George still treatin' ya all right?

MISSY

Well, I have been thinking of getting my own place. We're getting along fine. But I don't really belong there. It's not my place. I should have a place of my own.

LOIS

Well, why don't we go in together? The place is big enough for you and me and the girls. And together we could probably cover the rent. 'Course it's nothin' fancy. Pretty run down, actually.

MISSY

I'll think it over. We could probably fix it up a bit. Let me think about it.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT - A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER -

GEORGE is driving MISSY home from Randy's.

GEORGE

How'd it go tonight?

MISSY

Oh, fine, fine.

GEORGE

Everything okay?

MISSY

Yeah. Yeah. Everything's fine. Why?

GEORGE

Oh, I don't know. You just seem distracted or something.

MISSY

Well, actually, there is something on my mind. Lois is thinking of moving out of Randy's - that's just between us by the way - I don't think she's told him yet - anyway, she asked me to go in with her. I'm going to check the place out with her tomorrow. If it looks like it will work out, I think I'll try it. She and I get along okay and, well, I think I need a place that is a bit more of my own.

GEORGE

Oh.

MISSY

It's nothing personal. You understand, don't you? I appreciate everything you've done for me and all ... all the help you've given me ...

GEORGE

No. That's okay. I understand. You need more of a place of your own. But you're always welcome here. I want you to know that. In case it doesn't work out or whatever. You can come back if you want to.

MISSY

Thanks, George, that's very kind of you.

They arrive at the trailer, park, and go in.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

GEORGE helps LOIS and MISSY pack MISSY'S few belongings in LOIS'S car, while KATY and BARB playfully tussle with each other in the back seat. As they finish, rain begins to fall. GEORGE says goodbye to MISSY and retreats to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

GEORGE watches through the window of the trailer as the rain becomes intense and obscures his view of MISSY and the car as it sputters its way out of the trailer yard and down the lane.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

MISSY carries her armload of belongings into the foyer of a large, ramshackle farmhouse.

LOIS

There's a bedroom down on this level and one left upstairs. The girls and I have settled into a couple upstairs. Down here might be quieter at night. But the one upstairs has a nicer view of the lake out the back.

MISSY

I'll take the one upstairs.

MISSY carries her belongings upstairs, to the back of the house, where she enters a large, airy bedroom with a rickety bed in it and two large windows that overlook a stretch of lawn leading down to the lake. It has stopped raining and the sun has come out.

MISSY and LOIS look out on KATY and BARB playing in the yard. MISSY begins to arrange her belongings in the closets. LOIS helps her.

LOIS

I sure am glad we could do this together. I really needed to get away from Randy before one of us killed the other.

MISSY

How did he take it?

LOIS

He was mad at first. But then he said that it wouldn't last - that I'd come crawling back, just like I always have. But I know this time will be different. This time it will work. I've got you on my side now.

MISSY smiles in acknowledgment as she puts some cloths on a shelf in the closet.

INT. RANDY'S DINER - NIGHT - ABOUT A MONTH LATER

MISSY is waiting tables. GEORGE comes in and takes a seat. MISSY approaches him with a coffee carafe.

MISSY

How's it goin', George?

GEORGE

Fine. I'm fine. How you doin'?

MISSY

Okay. Everything's okay. Coffee?

GEORGE

Yeah, thanks. ... So, how's the house workin' out?

MISSY

Real well. Lois and I get along fine, and her girls are wonderful. Can I get you anything else?

GEORGE

The raspberry pie looked good.

MISSY
Sure is. Berries are in now.
There's nothing like fresh berries.
I just love them.

GEORGE
Okay.

MISSY waits on another table. KAREN approaches GEORGE at his table.

KAREN
Say there, big boy, haven't seen
you around in a long time. Where
ya been hidin'?

GEORGE
I've just been busy.

KAREN
You? You've been busy? Whatever
could you have been busy doin'?

GEORGE
Lots of stuff.

KAREN
Stuff? Stuff? Doesn't sound like
too heavy an agenda to me. How
about gettin' together again soon?

GEORGE
I don't know.

KAREN
Well, when you get it figured out,
give me a call.

KAREN moves off to wait on another table nearby, straining to eavesdrop on GEORGE and MISSY as MISSY returns with GEORGE's pie.

GEORGE
Um. Say. Ah. I know where we
could pick some berries. Would
you like to go with me some time?

MISSY
Sure. I'd love to. I'm off
tomorrow, if that's good for you.

GEORGE
Sure. That'd be fine with me. How
about two o'clock.

MISSY

Two is fine. See you then.

MISSY moves on to wait on other tables while GEORGE finishes his pie.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY - THE NEXT DAY

GEORGE picks MISSY up at her house and they drive together through the summer countryside. They drive to a remote meadow where GEORGE stops the truck. They get out of the truck and take battered splint baskets from behind the seat. GEORGE leads them deep into the meadow, to a lush patch of berries.

GEORGE

This is one of my favorite places.
The berries are great. They're
almost the size of cultivated ones.

MISSY

They are beautiful.

They begin to pick and continue until their containers are about half full.

GEORGE

It's warmer than I thought it would
be. Let's rest in the shade a
while.

MISSY

You go ahead. I've hit a great
patch here. I'll pick a while
longer.

GEORGE

Okay. I'll be under that old oak
over there.

GEORGE retires to the shade of the tree and watches as MISSY continues to pick berries a little while longer. She comes toward him, brushing the loose strands of hair from her face.

MISSY

What a lovely afternoon! Thanks so
much for bringing me here.

GEORGE

My pleasure.

MISSY

So. How have things been?

GEORGE
Oh, about the same. ... Sal misses
you.

MISSY
Oh, does she? How sweet.

GEORGE
Actually, things haven't been the
same since you left.

MISSY
I thought you might like getting
back to normal.

GEORGE
Somehow, it doesn't seem that way.

MISSY
It will soon.

GEORGE
I don't know. I don't think I want
them to. Things probably seem
pretty different for you, too?

MISSY
Mmm ... a little.

GEORGE
So. What are your plans now?

MISSY
(evasively)
I figure I'll pick some more of
those berries. What do you think?

GEORGE gets up and helps MISSY to her feet. They resume
picking berries in a large clearing lighted by the afternoon
sun. At the end of the day, GEORGE takes MISSY home.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - EVENING

GEORGE helps MISSY from the cab of the truck and hands her
the basket of berries.

GEORGE
I really enjoyed this afternoon.

MISSY
Me too.

GEORGE

I'd like to see you again. Real soon. Would that be okay with you?

MISSY

Sure. Just give me a call or stop by Randy's.

GEORGE walks her towards the door of the house. After she goes inside, he jogs happily back to his truck and drives off.

INT. RANDY'S - DAY - A FEW MONTHS LATER

GEORGE knocks on the door to RANDY'S office.

RANDY (O.S.)

Yeah?

GEORGE opens the door and steps in.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Well, ol' buddy, haven't seen you around much lately. Guess you must be keepin' yourself too busy with Missy to have time for your ol' friends, huh?

GEORGE

This isn't exactly a social visit, either, Randy.

RANDY

Oh. What a disappointment.

GEORGE

Look, Randy, I've got a business proposition for you.

RANDY

Why, surely my ears must deceive me. I thought you just said that you have a business proposition for me. You've got to be kidding. You're in to me for so many bad debts now I could take the shirt off your back and nobody would blame me.

GEORGE

There might be more than one cheat on your part in all of those bad debts, but look Randy, I didn't come to argue with you. I guess you could say that I'm asking for a favor, but, really, I think this might really be an opportunity for you.

RANDY

Oh, an opportunity. I can't wait to hear about it. You know, just a few minutes ago I heard a knock on my door and I said to myself, "Randy, I'll bet that's opportunity knocking." That's exactly what I said.

GEORGE

Okay, okay. Just give me a chance to explain. You know that old wreck of a plane that's in the front of my trailer?

RANDY

Yeah.

GEORGE

Well, I think I can make it flyable. I want to get it back in the air and use it to give tours to bird watchers and hunters and sightseers. I just need some seed money to get it in shape to fly. I figure I'd need about 75 grand to get it back into the air and get the business set up.

RANDY

Seventy-five grand! That ain't even a good joke, George.

GEORGE

Planes like that are worth ten times that much if they can fly. Not that many of them were made. Look. Here's an ad from a flying magazine.

GEORGE takes a crumpled page of a magazine out of his pocket, unfolds it, and lays it in front of RANDY.

RANDY

Big deal. You want me to lay out 75 grand that I don't have on the bet that you can make that rotten ol' crate in your yard look like this picture. I don't think so.

GEORGE

I'll give you a mortgage on the plane and double your money back in five years. Once the plane can fly, your risk will be more than covered by the value of the plane.

RANDY

How long will it take for you to get ready to fly?

GEORGE

Three, maybe four months.

RANDY

You can't stay sober for four days.

GEORGE

I'm a new man, Randy, really I am. I've been going to AA in Dillon for a couple of months. I've got a purpose in my life now, something to live for. Trust me. You'll see.

RANDY

I've seen half a dozen new George Light's before, and, you know what, each one looks just like the next. Not a chance, pal.

GEORGE

I've got more going for me this time, Randy. I'm going to ask Missy to marry me. She'll give me the spunk I need to see the project through. You know that's true. You've seen what she's done around this dump.

RANDY

Hey, hey. You must have had plenty to drink before you came in here. You have even less of a chance of getting her to marry you than you do to get that bucket of bolts in the air.

GEORGE

I'm serious, Randy. I'm going to ask her.

RANDY

Hmm. Listen, knot head, if you can get her to marry you, I'll take a serious look at your deal. I'd practically be willing to bet you 75 grand you can't get her to do it.

GEORGE

I don't know what my chances are, Randy, but I'm going to see if she'll have me.

RANDY

Better sober up before you ask her.

GEORGE gets up and leaves. On his way out, he waits until MISSY is passing him on the way to wait on a table.

GEORGE

Can I give you a lift home tonight?

MISSY

Sure.

INT. TRUCK - THAT NIGHT - OUTSIDE RANDY'S

GEORGE picks MISSY up from work and they head toward her house.

MOVING

They approach the turn-off for Missy's house, but GEORGE keeps going.

MISSY

Hey. That was ...

GEORGE

Yeah, I know. I just thought, seeing as how it's such a beautiful night and all, that you maybe would like a little surprise.

MISSY

Oh?

A couple of miles later, GEORGE pulls into another narrow gravel lane, much like the one on which he lives.

GEORGE

This is another one of my favorite places.

He drives carefully along the deeply rutted little track, the full moon dappling the hood of the pickup with flecks of silver as they pass under ancient trees overhanging the track. In a little while, they arrive at a small, sandy beach on the shore of the lake. GEORGE turns the truck around and backs down close to the shore, then switches off the engine and lights.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Here we are.

He jumps out of the truck and runs around to help MISSY out of her side. He keeps hold of her hand and escorts her to the back of the truck. Then he lets down the tailgate and reaches under a tarp, from which he produces a large picnic basket. He reaches in and takes out a paper tablecloth, which he lays down the middle of the tailgate. He anchors these with a pair of candlesticks, also from the basket, which he lights with a flourish of a cigarette lighter. Next, he produces a sophisticated selection of cheeses and crackers, obviously the product of a gourmet shop in a town much larger than Dillon, a pair of plastic champagne flutes and a bottle of sparkling cider. He lays these all out on the tablecloth. Then he turns to MISSY, who is standing next to him with a smile of delighted surprise on her face. He puts his hand around her slender waist and lifts her up to the tailgate. Then he hops up to his place opposite her.

A delicate spring breeze caresses the lake. The moonlight paints the water silver and sparkles like diamonds off the little wavelets raised by the breeze. They begin to eat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I've lived just about my whole life around this lake. Used to have a leaky little boat my friends and me would row around in in the summer, go swimmin' and fishin', play at bein' pirates. Would you like to walk along the lake?

MISSY

I'd love to.

He helps her down from the truck and they stroll along the lake shore.

GEORGE

I ... uh ... ah ... Missy? Would you ... um ...

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

would you consider marrying me? ... I know I don't have anything to offer you. I just don't want to face life without you. You've made a home out of that dump I was living in. You've picked me off the floor when I'm drunk, but you've never preached at me or belittled me or given me some shallow pep talk. You just seem to accept me for who I am ... whoever that is ... I don't even think I remember anymore. But you seem to have some idea. I'm not going to give up. I'm going to make another run at it. ... I signed up for AA in Dillon a couple of months ago and I think I'm going to get on the wagon for good this time. I've decided to try to make the plane fly again. ... You make me want to be better than I am. Maybe better than I can be. I don't know. But I'm going to keep trying to find out. Will you marry me?

MISSY

Oh, George. How sweet. How wonderful. I'd love to marry you. I really would. But I just moved in with Lois and her girls, and they can't make the rent payments without me. They'd have to go back to living with Randy if I move out. Lois thinks they'll kill each other sooner or later if she has to go back to him. Oh, George, I don't know what to do.

GEORGE

This is our chance to make a life for ourselves, Missy. Come with me, please, please. You can't protect Lois forever. You can't keep your fate tied to hers for the rest of your life.

MISSY

I know you're right, George. I feel, somehow, that you and I belong together. But I can't say "Yes" for sure yet. Not just yet. I have to talk to Lois.

(MORE)

MISSY (CONT'D)

I have to see if there is something I can do for her and her girls before I agree to leave them. I know I can't spend the rest of my life with them, but I can't just leave without thinking about them either.

GEORGE

I know how you feel, but look, I could move in with you and Louis and the girls. I could help pay the rent, too. We can make this work, I just know it.

MISSY

Let me talk to Lois and think it over a little while. I'll let you know soon. Is that okay with you? Can you wait just a little bit for my answer?

GEORGE

Well, I guess I'm going to have to. I can't make you marry me and I sure don't plan to ask anybody else - in the near future, anyway. Just let me know as soon as you can, please, please. We can work this out somehow, I just know it.

MISSY

I know we can, too. I'm sure we can. Just give me a little time.

They kiss passionately. Then they saunter back to the truck and pack up their picnic. They get in the truck and drive toward home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

LOIS and MISSY are cleaning up the dishes in the kitchen of their home the day after GEORGE has proposed to MISSY.

MISSY

I had a bit of a shock last night.

LOIS

Oh?

MISSY

I'll bet it will shock you, too, when I tell you.

LOIS
Now I can't wait.

MISSY
George asked me to marry him.

LOIS
The only thing about that as would shock me would be if you accepted.

MISSY
Oh?

LOIS
So, you did accept? You have to be kidding!

MISSY
No. No. I just wondered why you would find it so shocking, that's all.

LOIS
Well, what does he have goin' for him? What could he offer you?

MISSY
Well, I have to admit he's a little thin in that department. But I know he truly cares for me. And he's found himself now and ...

LOIS
So you're seriously considering marrying him?

MISSY
Well, yes. I'm considering it. Just considering it at this point.

LOIS
You have to be kidding. He's a bum, Missy. A bum. He's a down and out alcoholic with no future. Look, I know what I'm talking about. Down and out bums are my department. And he is one. Pure and simple.

MISSY
I don't think anyone is beyond redemption.

LOIS

Beyond redemption? Now you sound like a preacher. He didn't ask you to save his soul, he asked you to marry him. And anyway, don't forget how people get redeemed. He'll be the death of you, just as certain as Randy would have been the death of me if I'd have stayed with him. Matter of fact, he'll be the death of both of us if you marry him, because I'll have to go back to Randy if you marry George. You can't be serious.

MISSY

Oh, Lois. You make it sound so dramatic. I know it's a big step. But George and I have been dating for a while and I think I know him well. He's a good man - really he is.

LOIS

Who you tryin' to convince, me or you?

MISSY

I'm not trying to convince anyone. I just think that he and I could make a good team together if he gets his act together. I think I could help him do that and together we could do some good things.

LOIS

That's crazy. Look. Me and you make a good team, too. We're startin' somethin' here, not just for me and my girls, though God knows I'm grateful enough for that, but for you, too. We can build a life for ourselves here without dependin' on no no-count men. Don't back out on me now, Missy, please don't back out on me now.

MISSY

Oh, Lois, I just don't know what to do. I know we've got a good thing goin' for us here, but he's asked me to marry him! That's different.

LOIS

Yeah. Yeah, it sure is. Well, I'll tell you honey. You go ahead and you marry your lover boy and you'll find out just how different it is. Don't you worry 'bout me and my girls. We'll jus' go back to Randy and get ourselves killed. An' you an' George go ahead an' build that wonderful new life together an' see how great, and shiny and bright it is.

MISSY

But you don't have to go back to Randy. Really. George could move in with me. He would even be able to help with the rent.

LOIS

You've gone crazy, Missy, really. You need your head examined. You're off your rocker if you think I'm going to let that degenerate within a mile of my girls. Not a chance in hell!

LOIS throws the dish towel onto the counter and storms out of the kitchen. MISSY wanders out of the house and down to the dock.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

MISSY sits on the edge of the dock, with her feet in the water and muses on what to do. A full moon rises out of the lake and a flock of geese flies across the disk of the moon.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY - A MONTH LATER

Old JUDGE CRANDALL is giving a jury a charge in a case of fraud.

JUDGE CRANDALL

In closing then, I want to remind you that, should you find that Mr. Wilson lied in his testimony concerning whether he signed the check in question in this case, you would be justified in finding that he lied in all of his testimony.

(MORE)

JUDGE CRANDALL (CONT'D)

The law has a Latin phrase for this: "Falsus in uno, falsus in omibus," which translates as "False in one thing, false in all things." You have heard my instructions, the testimony of the witnesses, and the argument of counsel. It is now time for you to retire to the jury room and consider your verdict.

The jury retires. JUDGE CRANDALL makes his way off the bench to his chambers, where his CLERKS wait with GEORGE and MISSY, who are to be married.

INT. JUDGE CRANDALL'S CHAMBERS - DAY - A MONTH LATE

JUDGE CRANDALL

Well, George, what a pleasure it is to see you again. And keeping such fine company, too. You must introduce me.

GEORGE

Your Honor, let me introduce you to my bride-to-be, Missy Ford.

JUDGE CRANDALL

It's my pleasure, ma'am. GEORGE is a very lucky fellow, indeed. But then, I've always believed that he's deserved more luck than has come his way. Perhaps that is about to change. ... Well, shall we begin?

The parties take their places.

JUDGE CRANDALL (CONT'D)

We are gathered here to join in matrimony Missy Ford and George Light. Do you, Missy Ford, take this man, George Light, to be your lawfully wedded husband, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, forsaking all others, 'til death do you part? Etc., etc.

MISSY

I do.

JUDGE CRANDALL

And do you, George Light, take this woman, Missy Ford, to be your lawfully wedded wife, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, forsaking all others, 'til death do you part? Etc., etc.

GEORGE

I do.

JUDGE CRANDALL

Then, by the power vested in me by the State of Louisiana, I pronounce you man and wife. ... You may kiss the bride.

They kiss. Everyone shakes hands and MISSY and GEORGE leave. JUDGE CRANDALL exits his chambers towards the courtroom.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

MISSY and GEORGE leave the courthouse and get into his truck, then drive toward home.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

Some honeymoon! Randy gives you one night off and I take you to our shack on the lake.

MISSY

It will be wonderful. We're going to make a life together, and being together is what it is going to be about, not where we go and what we do.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

They arrive at the trailer, get out of the truck and go to the door of the trailer. GEORGE picks MISSY up and carries her inside.

INT. TRAILER - DAY IN EARLY SUMMER

GEORGE and MISSY stand in front of the Goose, admiring it, seeing it in their minds' eye as it will be when they have rebuilt it and it is ready to fly.

GEORGE

I can't believe this is really happening. I can't believe we're going to make her fly again. It seems like a dream.

MISSY

We'll make it come true.

Oh, there's just one more little thing, GEORGE. I almost forgot. No hunters. We can't take any hunters.

GEORGE

Oh, no, Missy, we can't make a go of it without them!

MISSY

Sure we can. We can get bird watchers, and photographers, and honeymooners, and sightseers. Just wait. You'll see. We'll have more business than we'll know what to do with.

GEORGE

Geeze, I don't know, Missy. You don't have any idea of what it takes to operate one of these birds. We're going to have to scramble for every customer we can find. We won't be able to be choosy. If we're going to be turning people away before they even show up, we might as well forget about it right now.

MISSY

Trust me, George. Look, I'll put everything I've got into this venture - everything. But no hunters. I just can't go with hunters.

GEORGE

Damn, Missy! I got all fired up about flying again, and now you just make it a tease.

MISSY

It'll be fine, George. You'll see.
It'll be just fine. What do you
have to lose?

GEORGE

Well, I guess I don't really have a
say in the matter. But I think
we're going to sink a lot of money
and sweat in a losing gamble.

MISSY

I'll put in my share of the money,
and plenty of sweat, too. You just
worry about getting us in the air
again.

GEORGE stalks away towards the trailer, shaking his head.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

MISSY and GEORGE are sitting in front of Randy's littered
desk. Randy slides a pile of documents towards them.

RANDY

Just sign at the tabs and we'll be
all set. That's what my lawyer
tells me anyway. You'll have the
cash to wander around in this
fools' paradise you've talked
yourselves into, and I'll hold the
title on that tired bucket of
bolts you call an airplane. I'm
tellin' you, George, you'd better
make that old crate fly like an
eagle or we're both goin' to be on
the lamb out of the county.

GEORGE

Just keep your eyes on the sky.
We'll be up there in no time.

RANDY

I'm keepin' my eyes on the mailbox.
There better be a mortgage payment
in there every month, whether
you're in the sky or not.

GEORGE

Relax. We'll be good for it.

MISSY and GEORGE slide the signed papers across the desk to
RANDY and leave the office.

INT. TRAILER - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

GEORGE is on the phone ordering parts for the plane.

GEORGE

Yeah. That's right. It's the model 1271A, not 1271. Okay.

MISSY comes in from outside.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Geeze, it has been a major pain in the neck to find everything. And it's costing a fortune. Are you sure we can afford this?

MISSY

Randy says he can use me for extra shifts any time I want and I hit him up for a raise yesterday. He says business has really picked up since I came to work for him. If we're careful, I think we can cover the bills. You having any luck getting stuff on credit?

GEORGE

Nah. But I think I can do almost all of the work myself.

MISSY

Don't forget, you've got an apprentice now, too.

GEORGE

Fine! Let's go rig a tarp over the plane. We can't afford down time from rain if we're going to make this thing work.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

MISSY and GEORGE rig a tarpaulin tent over the Goose, so they can work in any weather.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

MISSY and GEORGE are changing the old cylinder head for the new one. He is on a ladder, entwined in the workings of the engine, while she is handing him tools.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

The Goose is being trailered out of the yard to a paint shop to be painted.

EXT. A MARINA AT THE LAKE - DAY

The Goose is sitting on the shore, resplendent in a bright white paint job, with black engine nacelles, a black nose, and a black stripe down the side, from the nose to the tail. Missy and GEORGE are regarding the plane with intense anticipation. GEORGE climbs in, followed by MISSY.

INT. COCKPIT OF THE GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE is in the left seat, MISSY in the right one.

GEORGE
Well, here she goes.

He fires up the engines.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

Smoke belches from the engines, then they purr. The Goose slides forward into the water and taxis on, the landing gear retracting into the fuselage.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE throttles up and the lake starts to rush towards them.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

The plane gathers speed, forming a graceful bow wave.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE pulls back on the wheel and the plane breaks from the water and swoops over the forest at the end of the lake.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

The plane soars over the lakes and forests, heading out over a sandy beach and lighthouse, and then the Gulf of Mexico. After a few turns around the lighthouse, they head back to the lake.

They swoop low over the trees and skim along the lake, touching down in a beautiful spray of water. They taxi up to the marina and onto the shore.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

MISSY and GEORGE exchange triumphant grins. He gestures for her to precede him out of the cockpit, through the beautifully appointed passenger cabin and out the door.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

MISSY and GEORGE look at the Goose affectionately.

GEORGE

I'd forgotten how wonderful it felt to fly like that.

MISSY

Like I said, beautiful birds were meant to fly.

GEORGE

Well, we're not in business yet. We still have to persuade someone to pay us for the pleasure of flying her.

MISSY

Have faith, my dear. All things in their own good time.

They get in the truck and leave for home.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

A fax machine is reeling off a page, which MISSY reads as it comes off the machine.

MISSY

Well, here it is! Our first order!

GEORGE hurries over to take a look. MISSY reads from the fax.

MISSY (CONT'D)

J. Wilson Black and his wife, Tammy, and William P. Walsh, and his wife Susan, of the Audubon Society of Greater Philadelphia, PA.

(MORE)

MISSY (CONT'D)

Says they'll be here on Saturday.
Here's the list of birds they want
to spot.

GEORGE

That's quiet a shopping list.

MISSY

Nothing we can't handle though.

He gets down a bird book as she spreads out a map on the kitchen pier and they begin planning the trip.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

MISSY and GEORGE drive up in their truck. Waiting beside the Goose are J.WILSON BLACK, his wife, TAMMY BLACK, and WILLIAM P. WALSH and his wife, SUSAN WALSH. They are attired in khaki shorts and shirts, with hats and binoculars, etc., the personification of yuppie bird watchers.

J. WILSON BLACK

Hi, I'm J. Wilson Black, you can
call me Will. This is my wife,
Tammy and these are our friends,
Bill Walsh and his wife Susan.

They all shake hands and exchange greetings.

GEORGE

Well, we got your shopping list.
It's pretty ambitious, but we think
we can give you a pretty good shot
at most of the critters on it. Now
if you'll just step into our
faithful craft here.

GEORGE shows them into the Goose. MISSY follows.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

The passengers settle into their seats, while MISSY and GEORGE go through the pre-flight check list, fire up the engines and taxi into the water.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

The plane does it's takeoff run and leaps into the air, with a graceful turn out over the bayou.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

Sun pours into the cockpit through the windshield as GEORGE and MISSY guide the plane over trackless wilderness and bayous. In the cabin, the passengers take pictures of the spectacular scenery passing below. After a while, GEORGE starts to throttle back and descend towards one in a chain of numerous lakes.

MISSY

No, not here, George. That one,
out near the horizon.

GEORGE

But this is the one we marked on
the map.

MISSY

Yeah, I know, but it's not the best
today. Go for the other one, out
there.

GEORGE

But ...

MISSY

Trust me George, it's the other
one.

GEORGE reluctantly agrees, throttles up and heads for the lake MISSY has selected.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

The plane comes in for a landing on the lake and taxis towards the mouth of a small stream.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

MISSY scrambles forward and heaves the anchor out of the nose hatch. Then she and GEORGE go back into the cabin.

GEORGE

We're here, folks.

They prepare their gear to depart. GEORGE and MISSY open the cabin door and inflate two rafts, then help the passengers into them.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE retrieves two collapsible poles from the cabin of the Goose, giving one to MISSY. Then they set off poling the craft through a dense swampland in search of the birds on the birders' list. Along the way, they spot several interesting specimens, and the birders take pictures and make notebook entries.

J. WILSON BLACK

I think I may have spotted a cherry-throated tanager in that tall pine up ahead.

TAMMY raises her binoculars to check.

TAMMY

Can't be sure. We'll have to get a little closer.

J. WILSON BLACK

(To GEORGE)

Could you get us a bit closer?

GEORGE

Sure.

GEORGE begins to pole them in the desired direction.

MISSY

Wait! Over this way. Quickly!

J. WILSON BLACK

But, I said over there.

GEORGE

Missy! Over this way!

MISSY

Shhh! Follow me.

J. WILSON BLACK

Haven't you ever heard, "The customer is always right"?

MISSY ignores him and poles off in the direction she has indicated. GEORGE reluctantly follows. They pole along through dense growth, MISSY stopping now and then to listen, the passengers seething at being "hijacked" and GEORGE frustrated at being dragged along and apprehensive about alienating the customers. After leading them into the swamp for a while, MISSY stops and points to a dead tree a few yards further on and to the left. Their passengers stand up and observe.

J. WILSON BLACK (CONT'D)
 My God! It's a nesting pair of
 ivory-billed woodpeckers. How did
 you know?

MISSY
 I heard their call.

J. WILSON BLACK
 But they've been listed as extinct
 for years.

MISSY
 Guess they ain't.

The birders make hasty notes and snap some final photos.

TAMMY
 Let's go home and report this
 immediately.

The group poles back to the Goose and flies home.

INT. TRAILER - A WEEK LATER

GEORGE comes in carrying a stack of newspapers and magazines,
 which he plops down on the pier of the kitchen.

GEORGE
 Well, looks like we made the news
 in a big way.

MISSY
 Let's see.

GEORGE
 The "New York Times" science
 section announces the discovery of
 a subspecies previously believed to
 be extinct. Proper credit is given
 to my lovely navigator for her
 effort in guiding us to the spot.
 Then there is the "Philadelphia
 Inquirer," with a similar article.
 And we made this month's
 "Smithsonian," among others.

MISSY
 Nothing like some free advertising.

GEORGE

I'd say so. Speaking of advertising, when I was down at Barney's News picking these up, he said that we should get ourselves a computer and a website. He says we could pick up a used computer real cheap and there's services that could put us on the internet without costing us an arm and a leg.

MISSY

That sounds like a super idea. Even Randy was thinking of doing it for his little dump, until I came along and he got more business than he could handle. Speaking of Randy's, now that it looks as though we're going to be in the flying business full time, I think it's time that I resigned my career slinging hash, don't you think?

GEORGE

Damn straight!

INT. RANDY'S DINER - NIGHT - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

MISSY walks up to RANDY's office door and knocks.

RANDY (O.S.)

Yeah.

MISSY goes in.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

RANDY

Missy! What's up?

MISSY

Our flying business is doing great, thanks to your faith in us, and now it's time for me to be at George's side, in the co-pilot's seat, full time. I've come to give my two weeks' notice.

RANDY

What the hell do you mean? You can't just waltz out of here because "it's time for you to be at George's side"! In case you haven't noticed, I've built my own business around you and I'm not about to just kiss it all goodbye. How do you think I've been able to afford all those new counters out there, and the new parking lot? Huh? I've taken loans against the new cash flow you've generated at this dump, that's how.

MISSY

Gee, Randy, I don't mean to leave you in the lurch. I never really gave any thought to it. But I'm not a partner in the business or anything. I just work here.

RANDY

Oh, so that's what this is all about. "I'm not a partner in the business or anything." Well, okay, if that's what it takes, maybe we can talk about making you a partner.

MISSY

Look, Randy, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. I'm not interested in being a partner in the business. I just want to be with George, doing what we both love, flying. Your place here has been a great place for me to start, and your decision to take a chance on us when nobody else would made all the difference in George's life and mine, too. But it's time for him and me to start living that new life now. Please, let's not have any hard feelings about it. That's just the way things worked out.

RANDY

Just the way things worked out?
Just the way things worked out?
Well things may be lookin' good for you two hot shots now, but nobody walks out on Randy. Nobody.

(MORE)

RANDY (CONT'D)

Those mortgage payments better be in the mail right on time, or I'm tellin' you, I'll foreclose on that bucket of bolts so fast it'll make your head swim, and you'll be standin' here beggin' me to let you go back to slingin' hash out front at minimum wage. Go ahead, make this wonderful new life for yourselves, but don't make any mistakes!

MISSY

Look, Randy, I haven't done anything anybody else, including you, couldn't do. If you'd just start treating the girls like human beings. That's all any of them want, you know. They'd work their hearts out for you and this place, instead of spending all of their time trying to think of how to escape. Help them get some sense of self-respect, Randy, and none of you will ever have to look back. It's not so hard, Randy, not so hard at all. It's time for you to figure it out for yourself!

She storms out of the office.

INT. TRAILER - DAY - ABOUT A YEAR LATER

GEORGE is going over the books at the kitchen pier while MISSY reads a book in the recliner.

GEORGE

You know, Missy, the business is doing really well. I think it's time to move out of this dump into a real home.

MISSY

But this is our home. It's fine, George, really. I'm happy here.

GEORGE

Well, it's improved a lot since you arrived, but it's not what I have in mind for us. Don't decide until you see what I've dreamed up for us. Come on, I'll take you there now.

He takes her hand and leads her out of the trailer.

EXT. TRAILER YARD - DAY

They get in the truck and drive off as evening is falling.

MOVING

They drive to a beautiful knoll overlooking the lake, with the marina in the far distance. They get out of the truck and GEORGE leads MISSY to a spot on the knoll.

GEORGE

I figure we can build ourselves a great cabin right about here. There's no beach for the plane, but we can run a pier out into the lake and commute to work by motor boat.

MISSY

Oh, George, it's beautiful. Do you think we could afford it?

GEORGE

We can get the land cheap. And I have some buddies in the building trade, and they're always looking for work in the off season. And I figure we can do some of the work ourselves during lulls in our flying. We could start small and add on as the business grows. I went down to Merchant's and Mechanics' Bank the other day and showed our books to Cal Winters. He says that he could give us a small mortgage based on our cash flow.

MISSY

That would be wonderful, George. Just a room or two would do for us for now. I'd love it. But I don't want to get in over our heads, George. There's nothing wrong with a humble life. Just a little roof over our heads. We've always got the water and the sky. We don't need anything more than that.

GEORGE

I'll be careful. But I think we can do something special.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We'll take it a little at a time.
Trust me.

They embrace, then get in the truck and head for home.

A montage of scenes shows the modest cabin being built by GEORGE, MISSY, and GEORGE's friends as GEORGE and MISSY take passengers through the swamps, over scenic islands, etc.

EXT. CABIN - DAY - A FEW MONTHS LATER

GEORGE and MISSY drive up to the finished cabin. They walk up to the front door and pause as GEORGE sweeps MISSY into his arms, then carries her inside.

INT. CABIN - DAY

GEORGE puts MISSY down in the living room of a cozy, rustic cabin, with a stone fireplace forming one wall, etc. They both admire the inside.

MISSY

Oh, George, it feels like home
already! I love it!

GEORGE

I'm glad! So do I. I never
thought I'd ever have anything like
our life together. Even when
things were going well for me, I
wanted something I couldn't
explain.

They go back onto a porch that looks over a broad gravel walk down to a long pier out into the lake. At the end of the pier is a little motor boat and in the far distance is the marina and the Goose. They stand on the porch and admire the scene.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Not a bad morning commute, I'd say.

MISSY

Not bad at all. You know, George,
I think that I'll collect plants
from our trips and plant them along
the walk to the pier. As a sort of
scrapbook of our outings.

GEORGE

That would be great. I'm afraid you're on your own in that department, though. I'm a mechanic, not a gardener.

MISSY

All things in due time.

A further montage of scenes of GEORGE and MISSY flying passengers.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

KAREN is standing in front of RANDY's desk.

RANDY

Things aren't lookin' so good, KAREN. I took out some loans to improve this place when Missy was here. I didn't expect that she would take up flying with George and leave us in the lurch. Now that she's left, I'm havin' trouble coverin' the bills. I'm going to have to cut your pay, along with the other girls'. If things don't pick up soon, I may have to let some of you go, or even fold completely.

KAREN

I really can't afford a cut in pay right now, Randy. Isn't there anything you can do to avoid it?

RANDY

Damned if I know! Ain't my fault, babe. Missy put us in this mess and we ain't likely to get out of it without somebody with her natural-born charm, which, I might add, you ain't got.

KAREN

Look whose talkin'. Guess I'll just have ta take some a those fat tips I don't get no more and send myself ta charm school.

KAREN leaves the office dejected.

EXT. THE GOOSE'S RAMP AT THE LAKE - NIGHT

KAREN sneaks under the starboard engine nacelle with a wrench and loosens a fitting on the engine, then sneaks away.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE and MISSY are flying passengers over the Gulf of Mexico in the late afternoon of the following day.

MISSY

George, do you hear that noise?

GEORGE

What noise?

MISSY

That tapping sound. Sounds like it's coming from the starboard engine.

GEORGE

No, I don't hear anything. Are you sure? All of the engine gauges are normal.

MISSY

Yeah, I'm sure. It's getting louder. Are you sure you don't hear it?

GEORGE

Nope.

MISSY

You'd better think about setting her down.

GEORGE

Looks like the waves are a bit high for that, unless it's a real emergency.

MISSY looks out the window at the starboard engine, which is now leaking oil and a plume of smoke.

MISSY

We've got our emergency. You start setting her down. I'll go back and make sure the passengers are okay.

GEORGE starts his emergency descent procedures while MISSY goes back into the passenger compartment.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT OF GOOSE - DAY

MISSY

There's no cause for concern folks. We're having a bit of engine trouble. But one of the wonderful things about a plane like this is being over water is no problem. We think it's best if we land now, just as a precaution. So I'll help you put on your life jackets and get ready for the landing. It's just a precaution, but we have to take care of all of these things, just to be sure we're all safe.

The passengers are all concerned. They put on their life jackets.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, since the water may be a bit rougher when we land than it looks when we are up high, we need to brace ourselves in case there is a bit of a bump. We need to lean forward and grasp our legs, so we aren't thrown forward by the impact.

Everyone complies amidst expressions of fear. The Goose swoops low over the waves.

INT. COCKPIT OF GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE goes through the emergency landing procedures; speaking to AIR CONTROLLER.

GEORGE

Mayday. Mayday. Mayday. This is Grumman Goose 027 X-ray, about 50 miles south southwest of Grande Isle. We've got engine trouble. Oil leaking from starboard engine. Engine is shut down. Making standard descent to ocean landing. We have eight passengers and two crew on board.

AIR CONTROLLER

Affirmative, Grumman 027 X-ray. We have you on radar. We'll dispatch Air/Sea Rescue. We have your emergency beacon transmission.

INT. CABIN OF GOOSE - DAY

They make a rough touchdown in the ocean. Luggage comes loose, everything pitches about. MISSY has secured herself in the foremost passenger seat. After the landing, the plane pitches up and down in the rough sea and heels over at a steep angle as the pontoon on one of the wings floats in the water.

MISSY

Okay, folks, that all went fine. I know it seemed a bit rough compared to your normal landing, but it wasn't too bad. We're still afloat and the Coast Guard will be here in no time to take you off. We're really sorry for this, but it was the best thing to do under the circumstances. In a little while, a Coast Guard helicopter will come to take you all in to shore. We'll be taking you out through the front hatch, so I'll guide you one at a time through the cockpit and out through the front of the plane.

(to passenger attempting
to get his luggage)

Sir, please leave all of your luggage behind. We'll bring it in with the plane and return it to you when everyone is safe.

EXT. GOOSE RIDING ON THE SEA - DAY

A Coast Guard helicopter appears in the distance and grows larger as it nears. It arrives over the Goose, where it hovers and lowers a crewman in a harness.

INT. GOOSE CABIN - DAY

The passengers are all seasick, using air sickness bags and moaning.

MISSY

Good news, folks. The Coast Guard is here and ready to take you all off. We'll start from the front.

She helps the first retching passenger to her feet and through the door into the cabin of the Goose, then out through the front hatch, where a COAST GUARDSMAN in an orange jumpsuit and white crash helmet is standing on the deck in his rescue harness.

MISSY helps the GUARDSMAN put the terrified passenger in the rescue harness and they are winched aboard the helicopter. They repeat this until all of the passengers are safe.

INT. GOOSE COCKPIT - DAY

GEORGE

Is that the last of them?

MISSY

Yes. They're all safe.

GEORGE

Well, up with you then.

MISSY

No way! I'm with you.

GEORGE

Go on! I don't want you to stay aboard. I can take care of this myself! Don't make me put you off.

MISSY

Don't try it, buddy. When could you ever take care of anything yourself? I'm riding this out with you.

GEORGE looks like she just punched him in the face.

MISSY (CONT'D)

Oh, George, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean it. Really. I just want to be with you. That's all.

GEORGE

(over the radio to the Coast Guard helicopter)
We're okay here. We'll take her in to shore and arrange for a commercial tow when the weather calms down.

EXT. SEA - DAY

The helicopter soars away.

INT. GOOSE - DAY

The sea is getting rough. GEORGE gives the remaining good engine full power and heads for the beach, several miles away.

GEORGE

I'm going to see if I can beach her. We can fix the engine and fly her off later or get a tow to a port if we can't fly her. You go up front and see if you can spot any sand bars or reefs. Look for breakers.

MISSY goes to the forward hatch and stands watch as the wind whips spray at her and the Goose pitches through the water. After a while, they approach a barren beach.

MISSY

George! We've got breakers dead ahead. Quarter downwind, off to port! That's it. Steady as she goes.

MISSY guides them through the surf and on to the beach. GEORGE taxis the plane onto the beach. Then he radios the Coast Guard.

GEORGE

Coast Guard Station, Grande Isle, this is Grumman Goose 027 X-ray. Many thanks for the daring rescue this evening. We've made landfall safely. We'll spend the night on the beach with the plane and arrange for salvage operations in the morning. Thanks again for the help.

(to MISSY)

I'm shot, Missy. Just drained. Thanks for sticking with me. I couldn't have navigated through the surf. The sea was rising all the time we were out there. It would have broken her up if we hadn't made it in here. Let's make camp on the beach.

MISSY

Oh, George. I really didn't mean what I said out there. Please believe me.

(MORE)

MISSY (CONT'D)

I just wanted to stay with you. We aren't ever going to be parted, you and I. Never.

GEORGE

Whether you meant it or not, Missy, it's true. I've never been able to make it on my own, and now isn't any different than any other time.

MISSY

Look, George, nobody can make it on their own. Anybody who thinks so is an egotist -- they're just kidding themselves. We all lean on somebody else, whether we know it and admit it or we don't. That's just the way the world is. It's too harsh to survive alone, we weren't built that way.

GEORGE

We'd better get out and make a fire before we freeze in here. It'd be a shame to cheat the sea and talk till we froze on the shore.

They go through the cabin, to a compartment in the rear, from which they take a small tent and some flares. GEORGE hands these out the door to MISSY who is standing on the beach.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

MISSY takes the tent and flares from GEORGE, who then hops onto the beach and helps her carry the tent to a spot where they begin to set it up.

GEORGE

You finish setting up the tent while I go gather some firewood.

MISSY

I'll get the survival rations out of the plane when I'm done.

GEORGE goes off into the gloom to look for firewood, while MISSY finishes putting up the tent. Then she goes to the plane and retrieves their survival rations. GEORGE returns with firewood and they use a flare to start a roaring fire in front of the tent.

EXT. GOOSE - MORNING OF THE NEXT DAY

GEORGE is under the engine nacelle, checking things out.

GEORGE

It looks like the oil drain vibrated loose. I don't know how that could've happened. I changed the oil myself, and I'm always careful to tighten the sumps. Well, anyhow, maybe if we just get some replacement oil we can fly her out of here. I'll call on the radio and arrange to have some flown out here.

GEORGE goes inside to the Goose's cockpit and makes the call, then comes out and joins MISSY at the campsite on the beach.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

They said they'd be able to fly in some oil and a mechanic to check out the engine later today. Let's pack up some of this stuff.

They begin packing some of the things they won't need for the rest of the day. Later a pontoon plane arrives with the oil and a MECHANIC. The MECHANIC helps GEORGE fill up the oil reservoir and check the engine out as best they can before they start it up. Then GEORGE gets in the cockpit and fires up the engine. He and the MECHANIC check it out as best they can under the circumstances. GEORGE is in the plane, operating the engine, while the MECHANIC is observing the dials on a diagnostic machine.

MECHANIC

(to Missy)

Looks like there might have been some major damage. You'll have to get it torn down and checked out when you get it home. Just baby her home and hope for the best.

The MECHANIC packs up his stuff and flies away in the pontoon plane. GEORGE and MISSY pack up their stuff and get in the Goose. MISSY helps GEORGE navigate through the sound and they take off for home.

INT. CABIN - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

GEORGE is finishing up a phone call. He hangs up the phone and turns to MISSY.

GEORGE

That was Mort over at Republic. He says there was a lot of scorching around the valves and our old pal, the number three cylinder head on the starboard engine, warped and will have to be replaced. Repairs are going to take about a couple of months and all the money we have in reserve to fix everything.

MISSY

Well, at least we have the money in reserve.

GEORGE

Yeah, but our cash flow is going to dry up for a while and our schedule is all shot to hell. We don't even have a definite date we can tell people that we will be back in operation by. This is a real ugly mess.

MISSY

We should both start taking whatever jobs we can find in the meantime. Randy was pretty bent when I left, but maybe I could go back there for a while.

GEORGE

No! Whatever you do, you can't go back there.

MISSY

Okay, okay. I'll find something else. We'll make do. I'm sure we'll come through this okay.

GEORGE

You know, Missy, I just don't see how we're going to make the payments on the Goose. I'm afraid that if we don't take on some hunting parties, we're going to lose her completely.

MISSY

Oh, no, George. You know that was the one condition I had on this venture. No hunters. I just can't be part of killing. I just can't do it.

GEORGE

But this is a life or death situation, Missy. You know Randy will foreclose on the plane as soon as we miss one payment. And I don't see how we can keep making them without taking some hunting parties. Just a few. Just enough to fill out our schedule. Until we get back on our feet.

MISSY

I'm not going to make my living killing. I'm just not going to do it.

GEORGE

I don't see any way around it. If I did, I'd take it. But I don't. We don't have any choice.

MISSY

We've always got a choice, George. You do what you have to do, but you're going to have to do it without me.

GEORGE

But you have a gift for finding the best places, Missy. It's going to be touch and go as it is. You can't pull out on me now.

MISSY

Pull out? Pull out? Me pull out on you? How dare you! I'm not pulling out on you! I said from the beginning that there couldn't be any hunting, and I meant it. If that's what it takes to make a go of this business, then, I'll go into another business, thank you very much.

GEORGE

Well this is what my life is and if it takes some hunting now and then to get us over the rough spots, then that is what it takes.

MISSY

You'll just have to go it alone on this one, George.

GEORGE

I'm sorry it's come to this, Missy,
but I've got to do whatever I've
got to do to save the business and
taking hunters is what it takes
right now.

INT. BEDROOM OF CABIN - MORNING

MISSY is just waking up, groping to feel GEORGE next to her in bed, but he is already up and gone. MISSY jumps out of bed, puts on a robe and runs to the breakfast area overlooking the path to the lake, the pier and the lake itself. She sees GEORGE motoring away from the dock on his first flight to take hunters. She runs down the path to the end of the pier and watches as GEORGE motors out into the lake on his way to the marina where the Goose is kept. She slowly returns to the house, SAL at her side. She has a cup of the coffee that GEORGE fixed for breakfast. It is still early morning, so she returns to bed. As she lies awake, she hears the Goose roar overhead. She tosses and turns a while, then drops off to a troubled sleep, in which she has the following dream.

MISSY'S DREAM

The camera swoops low over the same forest and lake where GEORGE and RANDY were hunting in the opening scene. As the camera comes in for a landing in a backwater of the lake, the hunting blind that GEORGE and RANDY occupy comes quickly into view. A hunter leaps above the edge of the blind and fires, hitting the swan/camera, which crashes into the rushes at the edge of the lake and goes dark.

MISSY jolts awake in a feverish sweat. She is deeply agitated. After trying to clear her head, she gets out of bed, dresses in her robe and paces around the bedroom for a while. Then she goes into the living room of the cabin. As she comes out of the hallway from the bedroom into the living room, she passes in front of the muzzle of George's shotgun, which is mounted in brackets on the wall. She happens to glance down the barrel of the gun.

MISSY'S DREAM FLASHBACK

Her dream replays itself, but now she sees GEORGE behind the gun as the blast goes off.

MISSY recoils, horrified, from this waking nightmare. She runs to the deck for some fresh air, where she leans on the rail, attempting to come to grips with this new revelation from her dream. After pacing around the deck for a while, she returns to the house. She writes a note to this effect: "George: Something I don't understand has just happened to me and I need some time alone to figure it out. I've gone to the trailer to be alone for a while. Please don't contact me until I get in touch with you. I need to be alone for a little while right now. Please try to understand. Love. Missy." She goes to her room, dresses, and throws some cloths and other necessary items into a duffle bag. Then she runs out of the cabin.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

MISSY makes her way along the roads and through the forests to the trailer. She unlocks the padlock on the door and goes inside.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

MISSY opens the windows and throws her duffle bag in the old chair. Then she sits down on the bed to try to understand what she has just experienced. She frets all day. By late afternoon, she begins to feel ill, with cold sweats, etc. She lays down on the bed and drops off to a troubled sleep.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE motors up to the dock, gets out of the motor boat and walks up to the cabin. He goes inside.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE reads Missy's note and rushes outside to his truck.

MOVING

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

GEORGE speeds along the country roads to the trailer. He stops in the yard, jumps out, and runs to the door. MISSY has locked it from the inside. GEORGE looks in the door with his flashlight and sees her on the bed. He pounds on the door, and, eventually, MISSY responds.

GEORGE
Missy! Let me in!

MISSY

Go away, George. I need some time alone.

GEORGE

Bullshit! We're together, and that's all there is to it. Now let me in or I'm coming in on my own.

MISSY opens the door and GEORGE rushes in.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

GEORGE

What the hell is going on? Is all of this just because I was forced to take hunters?

MISSY

No, no. At least, I don't think so. Actually, I don't know what it's about. That's the point, I need time to sort some things out.

GEORGE

What things? I can help you sort them out, whatever they are. I've leaned on you plenty of times, now it's your turn to lean on me. You owe me that much, to let me help you when you need it. Say, you don't look so good. You okay?

MISSY begins to feel faint. She slumps onto the bed. GEORGE goes to her side. She lies down.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Just lie here for a minute.

MISSY

I'll be okay, George. You've never hurt me, have you, George?

GEORGE

Why, no, I haven't Missy. I'd never hurt you. I never have and I never will. You have to believe me when I tell you that.

MISSY

I just had this dream this morning, after you left. And in the dream, you shot me with your shotgun.

(MORE)

MISSY (CONT'D)

But it seemed so real. It seemed
as though it actually happened.

GEORGE

Well, it didn't happen, Missy.
Don't worry about it. Just let me
take you home now, where I can take
better care of you.

GEORGE takes MISSY in his arms and carries her out to the truck. He puts her in the front seat and goes back to get her duffle bag. He hops in the driver's side of the truck and drives off toward home.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE drives up and stops outside the cabin. He runs around to the passenger side, where MISSY is slumped, half asleep. He takes her out of the truck and into the cabin.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE lays MISSY on the bed and begins to undress her before he puts her to bed. He notices that her breasts and right arm show slight traces of the wounds she had when he first brought her to the trailer but which had been invisible until now. He is shocked and horrified. After he gets her into bed, he stumbles to the kitchen and recovers a bottle of whiskey from a secret hiding place. He takes a couple of drinks to steady his nerves. He goes back to the bedroom to check on MISSY. She is sleeping soundly and he lies on the bed next to her and falls asleep.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAY - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun streaming in the window awakens GEORGE. He turns to look at MISSY. She is sleeping peacefully and looks radiantly beautiful, despite her illness of the day before. She wakes up as he is gazing at her.

GEORGE

How are you feeling this morning?

MISSY

Much better, thanks. Still a
little woozy, but better than last
night. I think I'll just rest a
while longer.

GEORGE

You do that. I'm not flying today,
so I'll be right here if you need
me.

MISSY

Okay.

MISSY snuggles back under the covers. GEORGE goes out onto the deck and looks over the lake. After gazing at the lake for a while, he comes back into the cabin and goes to his office. He checks his schedule and does some paperwork. In a little while, he goes back into the bedroom to check on MISSY. She is resting lightly and opens her eyes when he comes into the room.

INT. THEIR BEDROOM - DAY

GEORGE crosses to the bed and sits on the edge.

GEORGE

How are you?

MISSY

Holding on as best I can. Whatever
this is seems to come and go.

GEORGE

I just checked my schedule. We
only have to take hunting parties
for about another half-dozen trips.
Then we'll be back on schedule for
bird watchers. Will you come back
and fly with me then?

MISSY

I don't know, George. I want to
say yes, but the way I feel now, I
don't know if I'll be able to stand
up by then. Let me just see how
things come along, okay?

GEORGE

Yeah, sure. Don't hurry yourself.
We're not there yet.

MISSY nestles down into the covers.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE comes out of his study into the living room, where MISSY is lounging on the sofa watching a fire in the fireplace with SAL at her side.

GEORGE

We'll be taking our last hunting party tomorrow. We've got a group of bird watchers two days after that. Do you think you're well enough to fly with me then?

MISSY

I'm still kind of iffy day by day, but, sure, I'd love to give it a try.

GEORGE

Wonderful! That's wonderful! You don't know how I've missed you up there beside me. It hasn't been the same. But, hey, now we'll be back, good as new, just like old times, right?

MISSY

Yeah, sure, just like old times.

INT. GOOSE - DAY - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

GEORGE and MISSY are flying a group of bird watchers out over the bayous.

GEORGE

Any suggestions?

MISSY looks over at GEORGE, but sees a flashback of the muzzle blast of the shotgun. She shakes her head to clear it. They fly on a bit more.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay, Missy, what's your best guess?

MISSY shrugs her shoulders.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Com'on, Missy, there's no pressure here. Just give me your best guess. You don't have to be perfect.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I know you've been away for a while, but I don't have a clue. Your guess will be better than mine even if you are a little rusty. So what is it? Should we put her down here? Or keep going a while longer?

MISSY

Look, George, I don't feel so well. I don't have any idea where the birds are. I don't even have any idea where we are. You're just going to have to haul me along for the ride.

GEORGE

Can you handle a boat?

MISSY

I think so. I'll do my best.

GEORGE

We can go back if we have to. Don't kill yourself over this.

MISSY

No, George. I can handle a boat. Just put her down anywhere and we'll find whatever birds we can find. It'll just have to be good enough for now.

GEORGE

Sure. That's fine with me. We'll just do the best we can on this trip and kind of get back into the hang of it one trip at a time.

GEORGE lands the Goose in the next patch of open water.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT OF THE GOOSE - DAY

The passengers are getting ready to get out of the plane. GEORGE comes through the cabin, opens the door and inflates the rafts. He helps the passengers into the rafts and goes back up into the cabin to get MISSY.

INT. COCKPIT OF THE GOOSE - DAY

MISSY is slumped in the right seat, obviously in distress.

MISSY

I can't go George. Oh, I'm so sorry George. I've ruined everything. I thought I could handle it, but I just can't, I just can't.

GEORGE

There, there, Missy. Just try to stay calm. I'll get them all back into the plane and take you home.

MISSY

No! No, don't do that, George. One of them can pole a boat and just follow your lead. You leave me here. I'll be okay until you come back. I'm not that sick. I can wait until you all come back.

GEORGE

The hell you will. I'm taking you home right now. This trip is over.

GEORGE leaves the cockpit. MISSY reaches out feebly to grab his sleeve, but she is very weak and can't hold on.

EXT. GOOSE - DAY

The tourists are riding in their boats next to the plane. GEORGE sticks his head out of the cabin doors.

GEORGE

Sorry folks, my wife is ill. We'll have to go back right now. Please get back in the plane as quickly and safely as you can.

There is a general moan of concern and disappointment from the passengers. GEORGE helps them back into the plane, deflates the rafts and pulls them back into the plane, then closes the door for takeoff.

INT. COCKPIT OF THE GOOSE - DAY

GEORGE starts the engines while MISSY slumps in the right seat. They take off and cruise for home. As they near home, MISSY rouses some.

MISSY

I'm feeling a little better now, George.

GEORGE

Good. That's real good. I'm glad to hear it. You looked mighty peaked back there at the bayou.

MISSY

I almost feel a little silly. I sure hope I didn't spoil our first outing together for no reason.

GEORGE

Don't talk like that. You looked like you were going to die back there. I was scared stiff. We're going to take you to the doctor tomorrow.

They touch down on the lake.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

GEORGE says goodbye to the passengers while MISSY waits in the truck.

GEORGE

We're awfully sorry for this folks. We know you're terribly disappointed and so are we. We'll send you full refunds within the week. We'll be back to normal real soon, so you give us a call again, or we'll get in touch with you and make another trip with you all. You all have a safe trip home, now.

The passengers disperse to their cars and GEORGE gets in the truck and drives MISSY home.

MOVING

INT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE

We're going to take you to Doc Crawford tomorrow.

MISSY

I really don't think we need to do that, George. Maybe if I just rest a little while longer.

GEORGE

I don't want any argument about it. You're going and that's it. You looked like hell back there and the sooner we get on top of whatever it is that's wrong, the sooner you'll get better and be back up there flying with me again.

They arrive at the cabin. GEORGE helps MISSY inside.

INT. CABIN - DAY

GEORGE takes MISSY to the bedroom. She lies on the bed and he puts a quilt over her.

GEORGE

You lie here and rest for a while. I'll go call Doc Crawford and make an appointment for you.

MISSY lies on the bed, half slumbering, half looking around the room. She hears GEORGE on the phone talking to the doctor's office. He comes back in to the bedroom.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We've got you set for 11 tomorrow morning.

INT. DOC CRAWFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

GEORGE and MISSY are sitting in chairs in front of Doc Crawford's desk. DOC CRAWFORD, a robust man in late middle age, is sitting on the desk top in front of them.

DOC CRAWFORD

I've never seen symptoms exactly like this. I suspect it's some sort of degenerative disease, perhaps autoimmune, like lupus or something of that nature. I've sent my preliminary report to a friend of mine who teaches at the University hospital and I'll send the test results on to him when I get them. Sorry I don't have anything definitive for you right now, but it's the best we can do.

GEORGE

Do you know how long it will take?

DOC CRAWFORD

Probably a week to ten days before the test results are in and Doctor Williams can evaluate them. I'll give you a call.

MISSY

Thanks. Just let us know when you can.

DOC CRAWFORD shows them out of his office.

DOC CRAWFORD

I'll let you know as soon as I hear anything.

INT. CABIN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

GEORGE is going over the schedule while MISSY watches the fire with SAL.

GEORGE

I think I'm going to have to hire a co-pilot for the time being, at least until we figure out what's wrong with you and get it fixed.

MISSY

How can we afford to do that?

GEORGE

I'm not sure right now. It will eat every cent of profit we can make and probably put us in the red. Maybe I could offer the new guy a share of the business if he'll take a low salary for now. Maybe I can find someone who's retired and could afford a deal like that.

MISSY

Oh, George, I hate to see you have to do this.

GEORGE

I hate to do it, too, Missy, but I don't see any way out. I have to have someone flying with me.

MISSY

I know. You'll just have to do whatever you need to keep things going. I just feel like I've let you down.

GEORGE

Don't ever feel that way, Missy. If it weren't for you, I'd never have had a shot at this at all. It isn't your fault that you've gotten sick. We've just got to make sure that you get well, that's all. Then we'll worry about the business, if there's one left when we're done.

INT. CABIN LIVING ROOM - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

MISSY is on the telephone. GEORGE is looking out of the window at the lake.

MISSY

I see. Okay. Well, thanks. Yes, that would be fine. Thanks.

That was Doc Crawford's office. He says that the test results came back, but they aren't conclusive. He has set up an appointment for me at the University Hospital the middle of next week.

GEORGE

I'll fly you up.

INT. OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - DAY

GEORGE and MISSY are sitting in front of the desk of DOCTOR WILLIAMS.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

I'm sorry that I don't have a more definitive diagnosis for you folks. I've discussed this with my colleagues here and with Dr. Crawford, and none of us is certain of just what we are dealing with. Her symptoms are similar to some sort of autoimmune disease, as I have told her, but we can't identify any existing disease that matches the test results.

(MORE)

DOCTOR WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Missy also has some injuries that are consistent with those we see in trauma cases. She says she has some vague recollection of being injured, perhaps by a gunshot, but she can't be sure and can't give any details. Do you know if she has ever been wounded in that way?

GEORGE

No. Not that I know of.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

She said that she was injured in some way when she first met you. Do you have any details about that?

GEORGE

No. No. I can't say that I do. Actually, I found her near my trailer at the time and intended to get some medical help for her, but she was so much better the next morning that it didn't seem necessary. If she had been wounded by a gunshot, that wouldn't have anything to do with her problem now, would it?

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

I don't think so. But some of my colleagues think that a severe trauma of that kind might trigger the type of disease she seems to have. We can't be sure at this point. We'll continue to observe the situation and see what develops. We'd like you to come back for more tests in a few months. With diseases of this type, there are often periods of remission. We can't be sure how this case will develop, since we aren't sure what it is. Even when we do know what we are dealing with, the course of each case is different. We'll just have to wait and see.

WILLIAMS shows them to the door.

INT. GOOSE - NIGHT

MISSY and GEORGE are flying back home. MISSY is slumped in the right seat.

MISSY

Are you sure you don't remember how I was hurt, George? It seemed as though you might have been on the verge of remembering something in Doctor Williams' office.

GEORGE

No, really, I don't. I was just puzzled, that's all, just puzzled.

MISSY

Oh.

MISSY dozes off to sleep.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

MISSY is sleeping restlessly. GEORGE wakes up and watches as she tosses and turns. He gets out of bed and goes to the kitchen, where he retrieves a bottle of whiskey that he had hidden. Then he goes to the living room of the cabin, where he sits in the dark and begins to drink. He becomes more and more drunk. His gaze lights on the shotgun. He takes it down from the brackets on the wall, gets a couple of shells from the drawer of a cabinet, and goes outside.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE walks down the path to the dock, his bottle of whiskey in one hand and the shotgun in the crook of his other arm. He reaches the end of the dock and sits down with his legs dangling over the edge and the shotgun beside him. He drinks some more, becoming more morose. He picks up the shotgun and points it at himself, but has second thoughts. He stands up, tears streaming down his face, and smashes the shotgun to pieces against the end of the pier, then flings the barrel out into the lake. Then he staggers back to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE collapses on the sofa.

INT. CABIN - MORNING

MISSY comes into the living room and finds GEORGE collapsed on the sofa with the whiskey bottle on the floor. He rouses when he senses her next to him.

MISSY

George! What happened? You've been drinking again!

GEORGE

Oh, Missy, I'm so sorry. I've just been worried sick about you. And the business is falling apart. I haven't been able to find a co-pilot and we've had to cancel more flights.

MISSY

We'll pull through yet, George. All that matters is that we're together. That's all that counts. Maybe we can make a go of the business and maybe we can't. If we can't, we'll find something else to do. Hey. Where's the shotgun?

GEORGE

I ... I ... Oh ... I threw it in the lake.

MISSY

It was you, wasn't it George? I was shot, and it was you, just like in my dreams.

GEORGE

No! No! Really, it wasn't. I swear it.

MISSY

Then why did you throw away your gun? You loved that gun.

GEORGE

Oh, Missy, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. I don't believe it myself. I don't know what happened, really, I don't.

MISSY

Try me, George. Because, I'll tell you, right now I'm pretty sure that you, for some reason or another, shot me, and that, on top of it, you've been lying to me about it. You have to tell me the truth, George.

GEORGE

I don't know what the truth is, Missy. I just know you won't believe me.

MISSY

I'm entitled to some kind of explanation, George, even if you do think it's crazy. Go ahead, do the best you can.

GEORGE

It was Randy! Randy shot you. It was a mistake!

MISSY

Randy shot me? Why? How? I've never seen Randy before in my life. What kind of mistake.

GEORGE

We were hunting. We were drunk. He thought he was shooting at a goose and he hit you by mistake.

MISSY

Randy was drunk and he thought I was a goose? You're right, George, I do think you're crazy. How drunk could Randy have been to think I was a goose?

GEORGE

Well ... he ... the sun was going down. It was dusk. Visibility was bad.

MISSY

How bad could it have been? And what was I doing at the lake?

GEORGE

Well ... Missy ... I ... I really don't know. You see, it seems as though you were a swan.

MISSY

What?

GEORGE

Randy thought he was shooting at a goose. He was using my gun. It was dusk. A shape came out of the setting sun. It looked like a goose. But just as Randy let go, the bird turned a little and we saw that it was a swan. The bird crashed into the reeds. Randy ran away, because his liquor license was up for renewal and he's always in trouble with somebody, especially the game warden, so he didn't want to get picked up for shooting a swan. So he ran away. But I looked for the bird in the reeds. Actually, Sal wouldn't come when I called her and I went back to get her. Anyway, when I looked in the reeds, I saw you in the swamp, just where the swan would have crashed.

MISSY

So you think that means that I was a swan before I got shot and now I'm me? You are nuts, George. You've completely lost it. You'd better get some really good professional help, real fast.

MISSY storms out of the cabin, across the deck and down the path to the dock.

GEORGE

Where are you going? What are you going to do?

MISSY

I don't know, George. If you can't help yourself, I'm going to have to get help for you somehow.

MISSY jumps into the motor boat and roars off.

GEORGE

Missy! Wait! Missy!

EXT. RANDY'S - DAY

MISSY arrives at Randy's dock. She jumps out of the motor boat and strides into the restaurant.

INT. RANDY'S - DAY

MISSY heads for the door of Randy's office. She knocks on the door.

RANDY (O.S.)

Yeah!

MISSY cracks open the door and peeks in.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

RANDY

Wadda ya want?

MISSY

I thought maybe we could talk?

RANDY

What about?

MISSY goes in and closes the door.

MISSY

We've had a few setbacks in the flying business, as I'm sure you know, since George told me that he was behind in the mortgage payments. Well, anyway, since things haven't been going so well at the moment, I was hoping that I might be able to come back here and work for a while. It wouldn't be permanent or anything. Just on a temporary basis while we wait for things to take a turn for the better.

RANDY

You have to be kidding! You run out on me, leave me in the lurch, ruin my damn business, and then you want to come back and get a job! Well, you've got brass if nothing else. ... How about if I take your pay out of what George owes me on the mortgage?

MISSY

Well, I don't think that would work out so well right now. We're in need of some cash, actually.

RANDY

Oh, really? Well, I have news for you. You're not the only ones "in need of some cash, actually."

MISSY

I'm sure things are tough for you now, too, Randy. But I never meant to do you any harm. I just did the best I could for you. You know that. ... Look, the stress is really getting to George right now. He's gone back to drinking ... and ... I'm afraid he's becoming delusional. He's told me some pretty strange stories lately. I've got to help him! Even if it's just for a little while. Until the business comes back and he can get back on his feet.

RANDY

You know what? There is something I would like to have even more than cash right now.

RANDY opens a drawer in his desk and produces the note and mortgage for the airplane.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Know what these are? They're the mortgage and the note on the airplane. Just once. Me and you. Just once. Right here. Right now. And I'll sign these off as satisfied. And you and your beloved George can fly off into the setting sun and never lay eyes on me again. Com'on. You know flying is George's life. You can make his dream come true ... not to mention mine. And who can say. You might even enjoy it yourself.

MISSY

I'll see you in hell first, you fat pervert.

MISSY storms out of the office and slams the door. She rushes out of the diner and down to the dock where the boat is moored. She stands on the dock, deliberating about what to do. Finally, she gets into the boat and heads home.

She arrives at the cabin. She moors the boat and trudges slowly up the lane to the house. She walks around to the side porch. She looks into the brightly lighted kitchen and sees GEORGE slumped over the kitchen table in a drunken stupor. SAL is asleep at his feet. She watches for a moment, considers going in, then turns around and walks back to the dock. She motors back to Randy's.

INT. RANDY'S DINER - NIGHT

MISSY goes to Randy's office and knocks.

RANDY (O.S.)

Yeah?

MISSY slips inside.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Well, well. Reconsidered, have we?

MISSY

I want the signed papers, first.

RANDY

Oh, not a problem, not a problem.

He produces the papers from his desk.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Y'all can witness my signature.
 "I, Randy Rothbard, hereby state
 and attest that this mortgage has
 been satisfied in full." And I'm
 doin' just the same for the note
 There. My part of the bargain is
 done. And now, for yours.

RANDY makes MISSY take her clothes off. Then he rapes her. As he does, MISSY has flashbacks of the shooting incident, but now she sees RANDY behind the gun. When RANDY is done, he collapses in exhaustion in his chair. MISSY slowly dresses, gathers the papers, and leaves. She goes out to the motorboat and motors back to the cabin. She looks in from the side porch. GEORGE is still asleep at the kitchen table. Missy writes on the envelope containing the papers and slips them under the door. Then she walks down the lane toward the main road. Along the way, she begins to feel faint. She struggles on a few feet, then collapses in the ditch.

INT. CABIN - MORNING

GEORGE awakens. He stumbles about the kitchen, making coffee and trying to find something for breakfast. He comes across the envelope on the floor near the door. He picks it up and reads the writing, which he recognizes as Missy's. "Dear George: This is my parting gift to you. I will always love you and hope for the best for you. It breaks my heart that we must part, but I know that I must go away and hope that you can use this new start to make the life you have always longed for. I will always be with you, especially when you are up among the clouds. Think of me then, especially then. With all of my love, Missy."

GEORGE opens the envelope and sees the satisfied mortgage and note. GEORGE thinks a moment. Then he realizes how MISSY has gotten Randy's signature on the documents. Enraged, he runs out of the cabin to his truck.

MOVING

EXT. TRUCK - DAY

GEORGE drives at breakneck speed to Randy's. He slides to a stop in the parking lot. There are police cruisers and a rescue truck in the parking lot with their flashers going. GEORGE jumps out of his truck and runs up to OFFICER SMITH.

GEORGE

Hey, Smitty, what's goin' on?

OFFICER SMITH

Randy bought the farm last night. EMT's seem to think he died with a smile on his face. Hard to imagine him gettin' any even if he paid for it, but I guess there's no accountin' for taste. Coroner will tell us for sure. What brings you by here?

GEORGE

Oh, nothin'. Well, actually, I was lookin' for Missy. You seen her?

OFFICER SMITH

No. She been gone long?

GEORGE

No.

OFFICER SMITH

She'll turn up, more'n likely. But
is she don't, just give me a holler
and we'll put out an APB for her.

GEORGE

Thanks, Smitty. Thanks. Well, I
guess I'll be goin' now.

GEORGE walks back to his truck just as the EMT's bring
RANDY'S body out on a stretcher and put it in the rescue rig.
GEORGE heads for home. As he drives along the lane, he sees
MISSY lying in the ditch. He jumps out of his truck and
takes her in his arms. He tenderly puts her in the truck
and tears off for the cabin. Once there, he takes her into
their bedroom and lays her on the bed. She is unconscious.
He tries to bring her around, but is unsuccessful. He goes
to the kitchen and calls for the rescue squad. In a little
while, they arrive and take MISSY to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

MISSY sits slumped listlessly in a wheelchair in an office at
the hospital. GEORGE is sitting next to her while a YOUNG
DOCTOR in a lab coat is sitting on the top of the desk.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I'm sorry to tell you that we still
have no idea of the cause of your
symptoms, Mrs. Light. I've
consulted with the doctors who saw
you at the University and we're
still puzzled. There does seem to
be some new involvement of the
respiratory tract, however. I'd
advise you to keep a very close eye
on that aspect of the disease. If
you experience the slightest
difficulty breathing, please call
the rescue squad and have them
bring you in here. We can put you
on a machine to help you through
the crisis. Whatever it is you
have, it seems to be entering a
more aggressive phase and time may
be of the essence. So, please be
very watchful and hurry back in
here as soon as you experience any
distress. Any questions?

MISSY is in a stupor and doesn't seem to even be listening.

GEORGE

No, doctor. Thanks for all of your help.

With that, GEORGE wheels MISSY out to the truck. He helps her into the cab and puts the wheelchair in the bed of the truck, then they set off for home.

EXT. PORCH OF CABIN - DAY

GEORGE and MISSY are sitting on the porch -- she in her wheelchair, he in a rocker. A car drives up and LOIS, KATIE and BARB get out. As they walk toward the porch, SAL charges up to the girls and they all run off towards the lake to play. LOIS comes up on the porch.

LOIS

Hey.

GEORGE

Hey, Lois. How ya' doin'?

LOIS

Oh, just fine. I just came by to say goodbye and see how you guys are.

GEORGE

Say goodbye? Where ya' goin'?

LOIS

Oh, I don't rightly know. Thought we'd head out to the mid-West somewheres. We'll just see where the wind blows us. I figure we can't do none worse than we done here. Randy left me the diner you know?

GEORGE

No, I didn't know.

LOIS

Well, he did. As often as he said that I'd get nothin' from him, I guess he was just too cussed lazy to change his will. First time his laziness ever did me any good. I'm glad I badgered him into it when Barb was born.

(MORE)

LOIS (CONT'D)

I didn't expect the dump to be worth anything anyway, but a bunch of guys from up north figure there's goin' to be an interstate put through here some day and they think the property the diner is on is goin' to be valuable. Anyway, I was able to get a decent price for it and figured I'd sell up and try to make a new start somewhere else.

GEORGE

Well, the best of luck to you and the girls. God knows, you deserve it. Let us know where you settle down.

LOIS

We sure will. How is Missy doin'?

GEORGE

It's awful hard to tell. Some days are good, some aren't. She doesn't talk much these days, but she never complains. She just tells me how much she believes in me and us and so on. When she does that -- there's something about it -- but I can't help believing her, too. Even on the bad days.

LOIS

Well, I believe her, too. You all just keep fightin' the good fight. It'll all come out okay. You'll see. Well, I guess we'd best be goin'.

(to KATIE and BARB)

Girls! Girls! Come on, now. It's time to go.

(to GEORGE and MISSY)

Y'all take care now.

GEORGE

You, too, Lois. Let us know where you settle down.

LOIS

I will.

She and the girls get in their car and drive off down the lane.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

GEORGE and MISSY are in bed. She begins to have some distress in breathing. GEORGE wakes up. He notices her difficulty and reaches for the phone, but MISSY stops him.

MISSY

No, George, no! Please, don't!

GEORGE

But the doctor said that we have to get you to the hospital as fast as we can if you have trouble breathing!

MISSY

Please. I don't want to go just yet. It isn't that bad. Just a little congestion, that's all. I want to see the sun come up over the lake this morning before we go in. You can take me in after that. Please? I don't think I could stand to be put on those machines without the memory of the sunrise to keep me going. It will only be half an hour till then.

GEORGE

What are you talking about? We don't have a minute to lose.

MISSY

George. Just for me. Just trust me this one last time. I know how I feel and its a whole lot better than the doctors think. Just till sunrise.

GEORGE

Okay. If it will make you feel better. But if your symptoms get any worse, the deal is off and you're going right in, okay?

MISSY

Okay.

EXT. DOCK - SUNRISE AT THE LAKE

GEORGE is sitting at the end of the dock dangling his feet in the water.

MISSY is in her wheelchair next to him, twirling his hair in her fingers. The sun is coming up over the lake. When the full sun is over the horizon, GEORGE gets up.

GEORGE

That was beautiful, Missy. I don't blame you for wanting to see it. I think we'd better be going now, though.

He bends over and kisses her on the cheek. As he does, he thinks he hears her whisper something to him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What? What was that honey?

He bends low and puts his ear near her lips. He still is not sure if he hears anything, but, as he straightens up, this is what he thinks he has heard:

MISSY'S VOICE - INSIDE GEORGE'S HEAD

Help me. Save me.

GEORGE looks out over the lake. It is still covered with mist and the sun is just above the trees. He hesitates for a while, trying to make sense of what he thinks he's heard and trying to tell if he really heard it in the first place. He moves slowly backward, away from the wheelchair, until he is about ten paces back. Suddenly, MISSY gives a tremendous turn of the wheels. She sails out into the lake in the wheelchair and sinks. GEORGE stands on the dock in disbelief. In a moment, he sees MISSY'S arm thrust out of the lake, grasping at the air. GEORGE stumbles backward in horror, fixated on MISSY'S clutching hand. Then he runs forward and dives into the lake. He swims under water toward MISSY.

BENEATH THE WATER

When GEORGE reaches MISSY, she reaches out to him with a smile on her face. Her now powerful arms wrap around him as she unfolds from the shrunken question-mark posture she assumed in the wheelchair to her full statuesque beauty of before. She pulls him to her as they sink further down.

EXT. SMALL BOAT ON THE LAKE IN REEDS NEAR SHORE - DAY

FIRST OFFICER and OFFICER SMITH are cruising the lake in search of GEORGE and MISSY.

FIRST OFFICER

We're an awful long way from the dock, Smitty.

OFFICER SMITH

I don't care if we have to scout the whole damned lake. Just because we found Missy's wheelchair at the foot of the dock doesn't mean they went into the lake there. They could have dumped the chair and taken off to another part of the lake.

FIRST OFFICER

Well, unless they were swimming, which I doubt, I don't figure how they could have done it. Their truck was in the drive, the boat was at the dock, and the airplane was at the marina. They couldn't have gotten far on foot, as they say in the Westerns. At least not from the time George called the doctor and the time they failed to show at the hospital. I know they meant a lot to you, as friends and all, but I've got a lot of other cases, too, and I figure we stand a better chance of finding them some other way.

OFFICER SMITH

Just humor me. I've got a real bad feeling about this.

FIRST OFFICER

Alright. But you owe me one.

EXT. LAKESHORE NEAR THE OLD SHOOTING BLIND - DAY

The OFFICERS are in a small cove near the now-dilapidated hunting blind. As the FIRST OFFICER throws a grappling hook into the water, a pair of swans starts up from the reeds and heads into the setting sun. The OFFICERS stand in the boat, watching the birds disappear into the sunset. We follow them as they soar across the bayous. They fly over Randy's, which is boarded up now. LOIS is in the parking lot, closing the trunk of her car. KATIE and BARB are standing near her, ready to get inside. LOIS slams the trunk shut, they get inside and drive away as the swans swoop to the west.

THE END