

*Scene: A passenger van. Carol is driving, with Doris next to her. Father is sitting behind the driver, Mark next to him. Penny is alone in the back seat, with a picnic basket next to her, a bottle of wine sticking out. Whenever the atmosphere gets tense she takes a swig from the bottle.*

CAROL

A quiet day in the country. Lovely, eh, Dad?  
*(No response. Louder.)*  
I said, a quiet day in the country. Lovely, eh?

FATHER

Oh, yes. So good of you.

CAROL

You're comfortable back there?

FATHER

Yes, thank you.

CAROL

It seems to work better for everyone when you're in the back with the front seat pushed forward.

FATHER

*(After long pause.)*

I won't be eighty-six for much longer, you know.

PENNY

That's right, Dad. You'll be eighty-seven very soon.

DORIS

Getting a bit windy out there. Look at that line of trees... bending.

FATHER

Bending... bending with the wind.

CAROL

Now that wind might make a difference. I thought we could go to one of the beaches... but not now... too exposed there.

PENNY

But we packed a picnic.

FATHER

So nice to eat out in the fresh air. Eating outside makes me think of some happy times—long ago.

DORIS

Eating outside makes me think of ants and wasps and sand in the food.

MARK

So, that's why you said we should eat in a restaurant... because it would save you making up a picnic basket.

DORIS

I didn't say that.

MARK

What's the point of saying you didn't say it, when we all heard you? Didn't hurt you to butter a few slices of bread.

DORIS

And you, brother dear, could have pitched in, too, instead of watching that stupid baseball game.

MARK

While you were in the kitchen, keeping an eye on your soap opera!

PENNY

It was *All My Children*. I watched it too.

DORIS

Yes, Penny, I'm sure you did.

PENNY

It was so interesting. Trey and his father are having this fierce argument about who his father is. And he suspects it's Richard because Vanessa used to live in Hollywood the same time as Richard when they were both trying to make it as young actors. But she shouts at him that he should stop asking questions that he really doesn't want the answers to!

DORIS

You lost me.

MARK

That didn't take much.

CAROL

Stop it, you two! This outing is especially for Dad and we want to make it as pleasant as possible.

MARK

That's right, and we'll have a good time, won't we, Dad?

*The van lurches.*

FATHER

It looks nice out there. The sun is still shining.

MARK

Yes, and the wind won't stop us from having a good time.

DORIS  
Well...

CAROL  
Well what?

DORIS  
Well, if we can't go to the beach we'll have to go somewhere else. Obvious, I would have thought.

PENNY  
What about our old favourite picnic spot by the lake? We've had fun there. The swimming was always good, too.

DORIS  
Swimming, for God's sake. Do you think Dad's going swimming at his age?

PENNY  
Well, maybe he could paddle.

DORIS  
Paddle? How embarrassing. A man his age standing in the water on those match stick legs.

CAROL  
This isn't your day, it's his day.

DORIS  
Mom used to go there a lot with Dad when they were young. Maybe he doesn't want to be reminded of those days, did you think of that?

CAROL  
Maybe he does. Who knows what goes on in his mind.

DORIS  
I think we should go to that lookout on the mountain. The view from there would do him good.

MARK  
God! If it's too windy for the beach, do you think it would be any better on a bloody mountain top? Use your brain, Doris! What would we do when we got there? Sit in the car like a bunch of idiots!

DORIS  
Well, if you're so smart, think of something better.

MARK  
We should head inland—away from the wind, away from people, away from everything. A nice little stroll among the really big trees.

DORIS

So Dad can trip over a root and end up on his back for six months.

*The van lurches.*

CAROL

*(Correcting the van.)*

It's too far, for goodness sake! The poor soul would be exhausted by the time he got there.

MARK

Still the best place. What Dad needs more than anything is peace and tranquillity.

DORIS

Peace and tranquillity! What do you know about his needs? You never think about him—never do anything for her.

MARK

Yeah? And who gets those large-print books out of the library for him?

DORIS

Yes, and look at the junk you pick out for him. No wonder his mind isn't as sharp as it used to be.

MARK

I took him to quite a few movies.

DORIS

That was years and years ago.

MARK

Well, I only stopped taking him when he didn't seem to be enjoying them anymore.

DORIS

Of course he didn't enjoy them—you only took him to the kind of trash you liked. And the music you keep playing when he visits you...

MARK

He needed younger music. After Mother died, he was always listening to that old heavy stuff—gives you the creeps.

FATHER

Do you have a radio? I wouldn't mind some music.

*(DORIS fumbles with the radio. Music.)*

CAROL

Not that!

*(DORIS keeps turning the dial.)*

PENNY

He still listens to it—living with his memories, I guess.

MARK

Living in the past isn't healthy; one should get on with one's life.

DORIS

How would you know? There's never been much in your past.

MARK

I don't tell you everything, sister dear.

CAROL

*(To DORIS.)*

Just leave it. I can't concentrate with this racket.

*DORIS turns off the radio.*

MARK

It's a pity Dad and Sarah couldn't have stayed together. He might have been happier.

DORIS

That woman! Totally unsuitable for Dad. The stupid things she was always saying.

PENNY

I thought she was very educated.

DORIS

Educated, ha! Only thing she did was regurgitate things she read in the papers.

MARK

Doris always hated her—that's probably the reason he broke it off.

DORIS

Well, that's something useful I've accomplished in my life.

CAROL

She had a marvelous figure for a woman her age.

*The van lurches.*

DORIS

Shut up and think about your driving. That was the third time you almost had us in the ditch.

*(Lurch.)*

There you go again. You're not concentrating.

CAROL

*(Yells.)*

How am I supposed to concentrate with you and Mark snapping and snarling all the time?

DORIS

Stop the car! Stop the bloody car!

CAROL

*(Pulls over and stops.)*

Now what?

DORIS

I'm going to drive, that's what!

CAROL

But —

DORIS

No buts.

*(Gets out.)*

I'm going to drive! Out.

CAROL

Okay, okay, it's your car.

*(Gets out, walks around car. Doris gets out, goes to the driver's seat, moving it back.)*

I'm going to have to move this seat back for my legs.

*With bad grace, Mark gets out of the van, walks around it and laboriously tries to help Father over to the other seat.*

MARK

It won't work, Dad. You'll have to get out and walk around.

*Painfully, Father does so and eventually gets settles in his seat. Mark settles himself.*

DORIS

Right.

*(Rummages furiously in her bag.)*

Just a minute. Oh, shit.

CAROL

Now what?

DORIS

My glasses—they're not here!

PENNY

You can use mine.

DORIS

Yeah, right.