

SWANN
By
Sandra Perlman

SYNOPSIS

Elizabeth Wolff is a middle-aged woman who comes to the Rio Grande Gorge bridge to celebrate the first day of her retirement.

Isabel Swann is a young woman who comes to jump.

Together they take off into the desert to see if one stranger can convince another in less than 24 hours that life is worth living. With darkness approaching, they run out of gas. Alone and lost in the desert, they meet a gun-toting priest and his son who live hidden from the outside world.

Under a brilliant New Mexico moon, four lives collide in all the magic, mystery and mania that marks how we live and love in America.

Carlos Castenada. "The trouble with you is you think you have time."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

2 m. 2 w.

ISABEL SWANN.....a young woman from Indiana

ELIZABETH WOLFF.....a middle aged woman who has just retired

SIMON FALLS.....a young man* who has always lived in the New Mexico desert

MARTIN FALLS.....Simon's father, a middle-aged Priest

Playwright's Note: SIMON's Mother was an immigrant from an unspecified country.

He may be cast as any racial/ethnicity - as may any of the other actors.

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ACT 1

SCENE 1

ELIZABETH WOLFF stands in the road at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge wearing sensible shoes. She takes pictures at different angles with her digital camera, then reads notes into a recorder.

ELIZABETH

August 27, 2003, two-thirty-two in the afternoon. I am standing at the Rio Grande Bridge, eight miles southeast of Taos, New Mexico -- no, that is not accurate.

(A young girl, SWANN, strides by ELIZABETH. She wears ear phones and a backpack which she peels off, then collapses on the ground and starts writing. ELIZABETH takes out her travel brochures and begins reading again.)

August 27, 2003, two-thirty-three in the afternoon. I am standing on Highway 64, twelve miles northwest of Taos at the entrance to the steel arch Rio Grande Bridge. This vertigo inducing bridge is the second-highest expansion bridge in the country. And I might add, this was also the very last project my father, Thomas Edgar Wolff ever worked on, but that's another story entirely. It's a breathtaking experience for visitors to see the Rio Grande River flowing six-hundred and fifty feet underneath their feet. And, as the travel brochure from the State of New Mexico reminds us, Quote, "Remember to hold onto your camera and eyeglasses when looking down, and watch for low-flying planes when looking up."

(ELIZABETH reads from the brochure.)

"In 1966 this marvel of man's ability to connect two otherwise inaccessible cliffs of nature was awarded first place for the 'most beautiful span'." (pause) I'm sure it was gratifying for my father to watch this marvelous wonder take shape day after day while his wife and young daughter waited night after night hoping he would return - but....(pause) My personal opinion is that this bridge is magnificent.

(Pause. ELIZABETH starts to put the recorder away and then stops and turns it back on.)

Oh, yes, the gorge is very nice, too.

(ELIZABETH puts her things away, walks over to SWANN and tries to get her attention.)

Excuse me. Miss? MISS! Could I ask you for a favor?

SWANN

(SWANN takes headphones off.)

What's your problem lady?

ELIZABETH

There's no problem, really. I was just finishing up my journal entry and wondered if you could take my picture - by the bridge.

SWANN

You're not from one of those reality TV shows where they ask you to do crazy shit and then videotape you looking like a fool because it's not a good idea to piss off strangers right now.

ELIZABETH

I just wanted a picture. I barely watch TV. But if it's too much trouble I can just wait until someone else comes along.

SWANN

It's fucking sunrise. Who the hell's coming here?

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

(ELIZABETH starts to walk away.)

SWANN

Hey, lady, you do get it?

ELIZABETH

Yes, I see you're very busy.

SWANN

I mean you get the part about these being dangerous times, right? Because we all have to get it. For better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness or in death as long as we all shall fucking live, which might not be that long.

ELIZABETH

Honestly, you're too young to think things are that bleak.

SWANN

Believe me, it's bleak. People get blown up, shot down and what I think doesn't matter.

ELIZABETH

I'll just wait in my car so you can go back to your notes.

SWANN

My suicide note? You did know this is a big bridge for jumpers. One. Two. Three. Whoosh!

(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)

(SWANN is very animated and ELIZABETH drops her large handbag bag. Note cards spill out.)

Okay, it's obvious you didn't know that.

(SWANN starts gathering up the cards.)

ELIZABETH

Thank you. I'm all thumbs today.

SWANN

(Looking at the cards.)

Wow, Day One, Day Ten, twenty. These cards are all numbered and all blank.

ELIZABETH

I drove here straight from Virginia. It's my first vacation.

SWANN

Didn't you count the driving?

ELIZABETH

Actually, no. You see I mapped it all out from this point on. Day One starts here. For better or worse.

SWANN

Okay Day One, stand over there and let's shoot you. Smile. It's just my little joke. How about the old Cheeeeeeeese.

(SWANN aims and shoots as ELIZABETH gives a poor excuse for a smile.)

ELIZABETH

Cheeeeeeeese.

SWANN

Okay. Again.

ELIZABETH

I just need one good picture.

SWANN

Trust me, it's bad luck to go with just one and that one wasn't so good. Try laughing this time.

ELIZABETH

Out loud?

SWANN

That's a start.

(ELIZABETH laughs out loud.)

Freeze.

(ELIZABETH freezes awkwardly)
(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)

Good. Click. Done. You're fucking immortal.
(SWANN starts for the bridge.)

ELIZABETH

You did get the bridge memorial marker in the picture?

SWANN

(SWANN freezes.)

What?

ELIZABETH

That marker over there, I wanted it in the picture?

SWANN

Did you fucking ask for the marker in the picture.

ELIZABETH

I may have been distracted. Sorry.

SWANN

"No" is the right answer. I gave you exactly what you asked for, distracted or not and there was no fucking marker in that request.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, but I really do need the marker in the picture.

SWANN

And that will make you happy?

ELIZABETH

Yes, it will make a big difference.

SWANN

Well, then back right up and we'll do it again because God knows we want you to be happy on Day Number One.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. Where do you want me?

SWANN

You have to back up if you want that marker in the picture.

ELIZABETH

(ELIZABETH backs up a few tiny inches.)

Here?

SWANN

Closer to the bridge. Go on. Back up.

ELIZABETH

Here?

SWANN

Keep going. Keep going. Don't stop now.
(ELIZABETH edges awkwardly
towards the rail. SWANN keeps
looking through the camera and
motioning to ELIZABETH who has
frozen in place.)
Hey? What are you doing?

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. I'm a little phobic about heights.

SWANN

You're on a bridge.

ELIZABETH

And this bridge is known for its dizzying qualities I know
because it says so right here in the brochure.
(ELIZABETH has started back
towards SWANN.)

SWANN

Great, come out to one of the most beautiful spots on earth
and freak out just when we get a decent shot. That was
probably the perfect shot.
(ELIZABETH edges toward the
railing. Then turns.)

Well?

ELIZABETH

Just a another minute.

SWANN

I don't have all day!
(ELIZABETH raises her hand.
SWANN takes picture.)
Good. Got'cha. Are you a bridge freak or something?

ELIZABETH

My father helped build this bridge.

SWANN

Did he look at the scenery?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. My Mother and I went out Christmas shopping and
when we came home he had taken all his things and moved out.
He died a few months after finishing this bridge. I never saw
him again.

SWANN

Sounds like someone should have pushed him off his damn
bridge.

ELIZABETH

I've forgiven him, of course.

SWANN

Why? He was a royal shit squared. Here. Take my picture.

ELIZABETH

They say the damage from unresolved anger is worse than smoking two packs of cigarettes a day.

SWANN

Maybe it's worth the price. Try not to cut off my head off.
(SWANN smiles beautifully.)

ELIZABETH

You have a beautiful smile.

SWANN

I know. I don't forgive anything. Now take the next one from the bottom after I finish up this note.

ELIZABETH

(Speaking faster and faster.)

I think you have a beautiful smile because you have a beautiful attitude. You know? A reflection of the inside outside. It makes perfect sense.

SWANN

Are you fucking kidding?

ELIZABETH

Must you keep saying that word? English is a beautiful language! And even though my father may have done something completely incomprehensible in the mind of a little girl it does not call for that kind of response.

SWANN

Got a pen?

ELIZABETH

Blue, black or red ink?

SWANN

Blue's fine. So he walks out while you're out buying him something nice. Think about it. Incomprehensible doesn't begin to cover it.

(SWANN scribbles on an envelope
then closes it, licks a stamp
and hands it to ELIZABETH)

Trust me, if they ever put "fucker" in the dictionary, they'll use his picture. And if they do, you should rip it out and burn it. But that's just my opinion. If it's not too much trouble, please insert said letter into the proper mail receptacle and have a nice day.

(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)
(SWANN walks toward the railing.)

ELIZABETH
That's it? Just walk away? And leave me with a bad picture.

SWANN
Trust me, it's the best you'll get.

ELIZABETH
I was always told I had a nice smile. Quirky but nice.

SWANN
I wasn't going to bring this up before, but there's this scale that measures just how fake your smile is on a photograph and trust me, this smile is off the fucking chart.

ELIZABETH
Then do it again.

SWANN
What?

ELIZABETH
(ELIZABETH asserts herself for the first time in her life.)
I said take the damn picture again!

SWANN
Whoa. What meds are you on lady?

ELIZABETH
My whole life has been about settling, but starting here and now, that's over. Kaput. Finito! From now on I'm getting exactly what I want when I want it and I want that fucking picture right now! Where do you want me?

SWANN
Okay, whatever you say. Stand over there and try to loosen up a little, and honestly, you've got to watch that language.
(ELIZABETH starts loosening her hair, opening her blouse, moving her stiff body. SWANN shouts directions and responses to ELIZABETH who is moving and laughing, connecting to SWANN in a dance with one another.)

ELIZABETH
I think I'm getting it. What do you think?

SWANN
It's looking good. Keep moving.

ELIZABETH
Here?

SWANN
Don't stop.

ELIZABETH
Better?

SWANN
Feel like you're dancing.

ELIZABETH
I'm a terrible dancer.

SWANN
Then think flying. That's it. Feel like you're flying right off this fucking bridge and then freeze.
(ELIZABETH finally poses into the most natural, beautiful and genuine moment of the poses.)

Fabulous.

ELIZABETH
Really?

SWANN
This is going to be one kick ass beautiful shot. Bingo!

ELIZABETH
Why would you think I was on medication?

SWANN
Most old women I know are which is okay if it gets you where you need to go.

ELIZABETH
I get where I need to go without abusing reality.

SWANN
(SWANN shows the camera to ELIZABETH)
Check this reality? Good picture, huh?

ELIZABETH
Do I really look that old?

SWANN
The smile isn't bad, but the shoes say old.

ELIZABETH
I have a very difficult arch. See, I have to wear these special things inside.
(MORE)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
(ELIZABETH takes her shoes off.
SWANN throws them over the
bridge.)

You just threw my shoes Six hundred and fifty feet.

SWANN

Look. They're floating all the way to Mexico. Come here.

ELIZABETH

I do believe you.

SWANN

Trust me, married should not mean dead. And you should learn to dance.

ELIZABETH

I'm not married and now I have no shoes.

SWANN

You're wearing a ring.

ELIZABETH

It's my mother's ring and dancing was never an option.

SWANN

Dancing is always an option. Take my shoes.

ELIZABETH

I couldn't.

SWANN

Of course you can. I don't need them and believe me, they're a helluva lot more comfortable than those boats.

ELIZABETH

I'll take the shoes if you take this ring.

SWANN

What?

ELIZABETH

You heard me. I won't even put on those shoes if you don't take the ring.

SWANN

It's your mother's.

ELIZABETH

She died last month. Take it and then we're even.

SWANN

No!

ELIZABETH

I'm not old or married or taking tap. If you don't want the ring, I won't take your shoes "Miss whatever-it-says" on this envelope. Your handwriting is terrible.

SWANN

Wow, freaked by heights, Dad walked out on you, dead mother, maybe I should be watching you jump.

ELIZABETH

Take the ring and I'll take another picture because it's bad luck to take just one. So shut up and stand over here. What's your name?

SWANN

Isabel Swann with two n's, but don't even think about telling me you read fucking Proust book in college about a cookie.

ELIZABETH

Isabel Swann. They're both beautiful names.

SWANN

And never call me Isabel because she was some fucking French saint who dedicated her life to virginity which is worse than three books about a cookie.

ELIZABETH

Now smile Miss Swann with two n's. There. Perfect.

SWANN

Of course. I can smile to make your grandmother cry.

ELIZABETH

Have you considered that in these times virginity might not be such a bad option.

SWANN

Have you considered that even though most sex is overrated, and sometimes deadly, you can't dive under a rock unless you're a nun, or maybe you can. Here's my last dollar. That should be enough postage to mail that letter. Thanks for the photo shoot and trust me, those shoes are killer on you.

(SWANN starts for the rail.)

ELIZABETH

Please! You have a family. Think of the people you'll leave behind.

SWANN

Did Mister Walk-Out-Of-Your-Life-Without-Looking-Back think about his fucking family?

ELIZABETH

It's not good for someone so young to carry around so much anger. You've got your whole life ahead of you.

SWANN

Is that all you people can ever say? "You've got your whole life ahead of you?" Well, that's just not good enough.

ELIZABETH

It can't be that bad.

SWANN

War, pestilence, famine, good sex, bad sex, safe sex, dead sex, small pox, big pox, vox pox, anthrax, mad cow, west nile, weapons of mass destruction and that's just what freaks me out before breakfast. So, take your pictures Miss "whatever-your-name" is and let me do what I have to.

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth Wolff with two "fs" and my father wouldn't have built this bridge for people to jump.

SWANN

Come on. Along with Niagara Falls and the Golden Gate, this one begs for jumpers.

ELIZABETH

He couldn't.

SWANN

It's tall. It's inviting. Trust me. He knew.

ELIZABETH

Trust me, if my father thought for one moment he was doing something to make life easier for people he would have blown that bridge up before it was ever finished. Come with me.

SWANN

What?

ELIZABETH

My car's right over there. Come with me.

SWANN

Are you crazy?

ELIZABETH

I've got plenty of water and lots of wonderful tourist maps. We'll drive all over New Mexico and if at the end of the day you still want to come back here I promise I'll bring you. But if you go off there before you've given it one more chance you'll never know for sure if you were right. Trust me for one day. Twenty-four hours.

SWANN

It's not a good time to be trusting strangers, hell it's not a good time to trust people you know.

ELIZABETH

Take a chance. It can't be worse than what you came here to do.

SWANN

How do I know you're not a serial killer?

ELIZABETH

Me?

SWANN

It's possible. I read that guy who killed all those women fooled his own mother and only confessed right before they fried him. They say he was a real charmer

ELIZABETH

Then that should be your first clue. I'm not charming. I don't smoke, drink or take drugs. I pledge to my local public television station, pay my taxes on time, and recycle my trash. I'm a government budget analyst not a serial killer. In fact, I'm exactly the kind of person you want to go off with right now.

SWANN

Just a minute. You're not one of those religious freaks because if you think you can save this soul, forget it.

ELIZABETH

My mother was a Christian Scientist, so I guess if you jumped and survived, I'd have to think twice about calling an ambulance.

SWANN

Shit! You're cold. I'll do it.

ELIZABETH

What?

SWANN

Come with you. Just for day one of course. I'm not signing up for the whole damn trip.

(SWANN trips and falls.)

Jesus!

ELIZABETH

(ELIZABETH dumps her purse on the ground and takes out a box of band-aids.)

Here, put your foot up here and I'll fix it.

SWANN

It doesn't matter.

ELIZABETH

Put your damn leg up here and shut up.

SWANN

I said it doesn't matter.

ELIZABETH

And I say it does. Believe me. It matters.

SWANN

Why should I believe you?

ELIZABETH

Because I work for the government.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

A few hours later. ELIZABETH is standing looking out to the sunset.

ELIZABETH

Swann? Come out of the car and look at this sunset. I mean it's not the sunset yet, but you can already see it's going to be special. Come out here.

SWANN

(SWANN comes dragging out)

Okay I'm looking. It's special. Let's go.

ELIZABETH

No, look that way. It's incredible. See? Here, drink some water. Being dehydrated makes you irritable.

(ELIZABETH opens a new bottle of water and drinks.)

SWANN

You must have a bladder like a camel.

ELIZABETH

Drink.

SWANN

Does it ever come out?

ELIZABETH

Does what ever come out?

SWANN

Bottle after bottle, all day long and I'm just wondering where the hell it all goes?

ELIZABETH

I stopped at lunch. You probably didn't notice.

SWANN

Ah, who could forget that perfect lunch somewhere between that crazed drive up into the mountains and then down into the bowels of hell.

ELIZABETH

They call that trip the Enchanted Circle and I thought it was quite amazing. I thought you did too.

SWANN

Why do you drink so much water?

ELIZABETH

I'm prone to kidney stones and they say drinking lots of water in this heat is the only real protection. You really should finish yours. I'm told passing stones is worse than having a baby - Swann?

(SWANN starts to unbuckle her pants.)

What are you doing?

SWANN

Some humans actually have to pee more than once a day.

ELIZABETH

Now?

SWANN

Why not?

ELIZABETH

Here?

SWANN

Yes.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure there's a gas station coming up if you can wait.

SWANN

I can't wait and since we haven't passed another living human being for at least thirty minutes I don't think anyone will care if I pee here or there or anywhere.

ELIZABETH

Could you at least go behind that bushy thing over there? I've got tissues in here and some anti-bacterial wipes just made for moments like this.

SWANN

Some people actually consider urine medicine.

ELIZABETH

I'm not one of them. I'll wait here.

SWANN

Don't hold your breath. My whole family pees real slow.

ELIZABETH

I'll turn and watch the sun.

SWANN

Don't look into it directly or you'll go blind.

(SWANN goes to a bush behind
ELIZABETH.)

ELIZABETH

I hope you're having as good a time as I am. I don't mean right this minute of course. I know I've certainly enjoyed your company. I don't think I've laughed so much in years. Maybe ever. And I find your range of interests exhilarating, almost dizzying. Though your choice of language is not how I would personally express myself, you're a fountain of information. In fact, you probably know things most people wouldn't even think they want or need to know much less say out loud. Which can be a good thing. Actually, I was going to wait to mention this later, but I feel I have to just blurt it out. I think you should consider taking a job with the government. There, I've said it. I know it isn't a popular idea but our government is made up of hundreds of thousands of ordinary and extraordinary people who dedicate their lives to keeping our lives from complete and utter chaos. And work can be so fulfilling. Colleagues who depend on you, smile when you come in to work and miss you when you're not there, which isn't often because it means something to be there and do your job. That's what I'm trying to tell you Swann. You could make a difference in this world. You could be needed and wanted. Believe me, it's only going to get more and more difficult to run this world."You should be working for the government" is exactly the slogan we need now and you're just the kind of bright young woman we want - especially since you're not all tattooed and pierced up in places I can't think about. I know it's only been a couple of hours but I feel we've already had some inspiring moments. Like when we stopped for that small animal crossing the road in its own sweet time.

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Now that's something you don't see when you're driving to work every morning bumper to bumper with no one to talk to and you're not moving for twenty minutes and the news is enough to make you cry. And what about those cottonwoods? I can't even call that color yellow because yellow has never looked like that, certainly not back home in Virginia, which is a beautiful state. Have you ever been there? You know Virginia is home to more President's than any other state except Ohio which had more Presidents assassinated, though I guess that's not something you put on your license plate: Ohio -- Home of Assassinated Presidents. Everything has something special if you look hard enough. Are you hungry? It's been a long time now since we ate and I do apologize for that terrible food. And I apologize for apologizing but the place looked cute from the outside. Who could have imagined God knows what was in that lunch special. You're not feeling sick are you? Oh, are you done already?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

Fifteen minutes later. In the desert.
SWANN walks ahead of ELIZABETH.

SWANN

Jumping off that bridge would have been faster than this.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure we'll find something soon.

SWANN

Another great restaurant. Or maybe a full serve gas station with the whole family working to keep your car on the go while Mom serves up another slice of her homemade apple pie?

ELIZABETH

I said I'm sorry for running out of gas.

SWANN

About a million times but we're still out of gas and in the middle of bum fuck nowhere.

ELIZABETH

The gas gauge started acting up in Missouri, but I kept this log and everything seemed fine.

SWANN

Right. Anyone can see everything's fine.

ELIZABETH

People make mistakes, you seemed perfectly happy before we ran out of gas. Ouch.

(ELIZABETH takes her shoe off.
Looks inside.)

SWANN

That's before I was about to be turned into desert jerky.

ELIZABETH

All I heard when we drove down into that gorge was "owwww" and "ahhhhh".

SWANN

Stop. Something doesn't feel right.

ELIZABETH

Drink more water. We're not going to die out here.

SWANN

No! Listen. It feels like someone's here and I'm not talking God. (Pause) Okay. Continue with your excuses.

ELIZABETH

I filled the car up before I stopped at the bridge and then after you got into the car I completely forgot.

SWANN

So all this is my fault?

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry if you thought I said that.

SWANN

Please stop saying that sorry shit or I'll choke myself to death right here.

ELIZABETH

There's got to be something out here.

SWANN

We could hitch if anyone ever comes down this road again.

ELIZABETH

No!

SWANN

I hitchhiked all the way here from Indiana with two dykes and their in vitro baby throwing up and it was fine.

ELIZABETH

Hitchhiking is dangerous. Being in a car with strangers makes me nauseated. And I think the word is lesbian.

SWANN

You were in the car with me all afternoon and you didn't throw up.

ELIZABETH

That's different. You wouldn't hurt anyone. (pause) You don't have a gun in that backpack?

SWANN

You've got about twenty-two minutes before we're the opening story on the news.

ELIZABETH

Look. There's a house right over there.

SWANN

Where?

ELIZABETH

There.

SWANN

That's nothing but rocks, bushes and rodents.

ELIZABETH

Follow my finger. See.

SWANN

It's definitely a big dirt mound.

ELIZABETH

Look, you can see the roof.

SWANN

Drink some water because that is definitely a mirage .

ELIZABETH

I'm sure it's a roof. Let's go.

SWANN

No.

ELIZABETH

I thought you were full of adventure.

SWANN

That does not look like an adventure.

ELIZABETH

It looks friendly.

SWANN

Yeah, and we know how good you are with friendly.

ELIZABETH

Well you can wait here, but I'm going there.

SWANN

Whoa, stop, can't you read the signs?

ELIZABETH

What signs?

SWANN

It isn't right. That thing you think is a house disappears straight into the ground.

ELIZABETH

It's one of those earth houses. Very ecological. Probably just the kind of people you'd love to sit around with talking about the end of the world. Honestly, I don't see anything wrong.

SWANN

Exactly. No fat little farm girl's cardboard fanny staring at us, no mailbox, nothing. And worst of all, no dish.

ELIZABETH

Dish?

SWANN

Dish. Satellite TV. 1200 channels of absolutely shit. What kind of freaks live in the middle of bum fucking nowhere without cable? Hey, where are you going? I'm not finished.

ELIZABETH

You can sit here and curse a blue streak but I'm going over there to find out what's inside.

(ELIZABETH exits.)

SWANN

(SWANN starts walking after her shouting.)

Great. If we're lucky they'll find our decaying bodies out here by fall! Shit. Don't you understand -- this whole thing started out like a number ten day in a number ten world, one being shit and ten being fab, when Wham! It all collapses, boom, and the worse part was nobody seems to know how to stop anything. So naturally I start asking questions. A million questions. Is the world going to blow itself up. Am I supposed do something to stop it and if I am how the hell do I know what it is? Is my life and the world floating away from all the crap, or heading straight over the falls. Show me something - a burning bush, blood, beasts, boils, something, because I need to know someone is listening. That all this pain means something. Speak to me. Right now. Speak!

SIMON

Put you hands in the air.

SIMON comes up behind SWANN while she is talking. He is young and wears an oversized jacket. He appears to put a gun in his pocket which he shoves quickly into SWANN's back.

SWANN

Whoa...

SIMON

...don't move!

SWANN

...stay calm and we'll talk about this...

SIMON

Don't talk!

SWANN

We just ran out of gas.

SIMON

Keep your hands on top of your head.

SWANN

I thought you wanted them in the air.

SIMON

I did but now I want them on your head so don't confuse me.

SWANN

If you just turn around and look down the road --

SIMON

No! Don't turn around.

SWANN

Okay. (Pause)

SIMON

Why is your mother trying to get into my house?

SWANN

She's not my mother and I told you we ran out of gas. Elizabeth, that's her name, her gas thingie broke somewhere between here and minus Day One and she was just trying to find a friendly neighbor.

SIMON

My father and I do not like strangers, no exceptions.

SWANN

Is he home right now?

Who else is with you? SIMON

Just Elizabeth. SWANN

Who isn't your mother. SIMON

She offered me a ride. Look, maybe I could turn around and we could talk. SWANN

No! Don't turn around. Maybe you should put your hands behind your back. SIMON

I thought you said on my head. SWANN

Did I? (pause) She offered you a ride? Don't you know how dangerous that is? SIMON

She felt sorry for me. SWANN

Why? SIMON

I told her I wanted to kill myself. SWANN

That's not funny. SIMON

It wasn't meant to be a joke. Are you going to kill me?
(SWANN immediately turns around
and stares at SIMON.) SWANN

I told you I wouldn't hurt you. (Beat) Who were you talking to when I came up on you? SIMON

None of your fucking business. SWANN

Are there more of you? SIMON

Yeah, there's a whole bus load of us on the other side of those bushes because this is one helluva hot vacation spot. SWANN

SIMON

Are you making fun of me because I do not deserve your scorn.

SWANN

Scorn? S-c-o-r-nnnn?

SIMON

Who were you talking to before?

SWANN

Get us some gasoline and we're gone. Promise. Poof! Scorn?

SIMON

Don't tell me it was that woman because she was too far away to hear you.

SWANN

Her name's Elizabeth and why were you listening when what I say is none of your fucking business.

SIMON

I apologize, but I can not have you using such language on our land.

SWANN

Tell that to the Indians.

SIMON

(Emphatically) Who were you talking to?

SWANN

To the guy with the gun.

SIMON

You didn't know I was here.

SWANN

Yes I did.

SIMON

I was hidden. Part of the desert. Who were you talking to!

SWANN

All right, it was God.

SIMON

Who?

SWANN

I was talking to God, mother fucker. Okay. Happy? Now put the gun down.

SIMON

Really? That's amazing.

SWANN

Not really.

SIMON

I've never met anyone else who talks to God.

SWANN

This is the desert. Everyone talks to God.

(SWANN drops to her knees in a prayerful position shouting to the heavens.)

Oh Lord, mighty and merciful, tell me how could I find a woman who wants to save me and a guy who wants to kill me in the same day?

SIMON

I don't want to kill you.

SWANN

Mighty and merciful God of the world. What have I done?

ELIZABETH

(ELIZABETH comes rushing in and throws herself in front of SWANN.)

Please don't hurt her.

SIMON

I won't.

ELIZABETH

Let her go and take me instead.

SWANN

Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Take me if you want someone, but let her go.

SIMON

She said you weren't her mother.

ELIZABETH

What does that have to do with it. Just take me instead.

SIMON

She said she was going to kill herself.

ELIZABETH

I took her to lunch at a really horrible place and drove her until the car ran out of gas and I'm truly sorry for this inconvenience.

SWANN

Oh fuck this!

(SWANN jumps SIMON, pins him to the ground disarming his flashlight.)

SIMON

You're hurting me.

SWANN

This is a fucking flashlight.

SIMON

I never said I had a gun.

SWANN

You never said you didn't.

ELIZABETH

Don't hurt him.

SWANN

He terrorized me.

SIMON

I just wanted you to go away. There are no strangers in our house and there are no exceptions to that rule. I swear there is nothing in our house to steal.

SWANN

Like you really might have anything I'd want. And I don't steal.

SIMON

Let me up.

SWANN

Why?

SIMON

Respect for private property is fundamental to our American way of life.

SWANN

Eat me!

ELIZABETH

Isabel, I think you should let him up and then we can just start walking back to the car.

SWANN

I don't think so.

SIMON

Why is she being so contrary?

SWANN

Contrary? Scorn? What century are you from?
(SWANN releases SIMON.)

SIMON

I like the English language. I like people.

SWANN

You have a fucking great way of showing it.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry for any confusion, and she certainly didn't mean to hurt you. You're not hurt are you because we'll leave as soon as we get some gasoline. I saw a shed out back. Do you have any gasoline?

SIMON

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Because that's all we really want.

SIMON

(SWANN takes off.)

Hey, where are you going?

SWANN

To get into your fucking house to get some fucking gasoline so we can get the fuck out of here.
(SWANN exits)

SIMON

Who is she?

ELIZABETH

Isabel Swann. But forget calling her Isabel or she'll bite your head off.

SIMON

I can believe that.

ELIZABETH

She's really very charming when you get to know her.

SIMON

I don't think we'll know each other that long.

ELIZABETH

If you show me where the gasoline can is I'll get started and we'll be gone before you know it.

SIMON

She will never get in that house.

ELIZABETH

I wouldn't bet on that.

SIMON

You couldn't find the way in.

ELIZABETH

She's different. She won't give up. Oops. She's in.

SIMON

What?

ELIZABETH

She's in.

SIMON

No.

ELIZABETH

She's waving like crazy. I told you she can be very charming.

SIMON

You've got to stop her.

ELIZABETH

I can't. She's in.

SIMON

Do something. Scream at her.

ELIZABETH

It's too late.

SIMON

It can't be.

ELIZABETH

Whoops. She's inside.

SIMON

Hey! You? Stop. You can't just walk into my house. You can't.
(SIMON's gone.)

ELIZABETH

I think we can safely say she can.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

Later.

Outside patio area of the berm house. Spare. SIMON is drawing a map on a piece of paper when ELIZABETH enters carrying a gasoline can.

SIMON

I can carry that for you.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, but it's not that heavy.

SIMON

It's no trouble, really.

ELIZABETH

No, really, I'm not that old. Is it Simon?

SIMON

Yes. It's Simon and I swear I didn't mean you were old. Does she always takes this long?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. We just met.

SIMON

At the bridge, I know she told me.

ELIZABETH

It has something to do with her family.

SIMON

Is that why she was going to jump?

ELIZABETH

I meant the reason she takes so long in the bathroom. I think it's structural.

SIMON

Oh, that.

ELIZABETH

I made her drink a lot of water.

SIMON

She told me that too.

ELIZABETH

It's my kidney stones. I wouldn't want to have one of those attacks out here. How close is the nearest hospital?

SIMON

You'd probably pass them before you got there.

ELIZABETH

And you're sure this one can of gasoline will get us to the next open gas station?

SIMON

(SIMON pulls a map)

I made a map. There should be one right here.

ELIZABETH

Really. Where is that?

SIMON

You just go north on this highway for about ten miles and then you go east until you see the second cross road, not the first one. The first one will go nowhere you want to go.

ELIZABETH

Of course not. And which way is east.

SIMON

East is east.

ELIZABETH

I mean do I turn left or right because I have always had a bit of a problem with the north, south, east, west thing.

SIMON

I'll put the left and right turns here on the map.

ELIZABETH

I appreciate that.

(ELIZABETH begins to walk off.)

SIMON

You're leaving?

ELIZABETH

I'll pick up the car.

SIMON

And her?

ELIZABETH

I'll be right back with the car.

SIMON

I didn't mean it mean that way. I just know you're not related.

SIMON (cont'd)

Aren't you going to tell her you're coming back?

ELIZABETH

(Shouting) Swann? I'm leaving now.

SWANN (O.S.)

Great.

SIMON

She has been in there a long time.

ELIZABETH

Be patient. She's fine. She'll come out soon. Good luck.

(ELIZABETH leaves with her gas
can, cookies, water and her
large purse. SIMON paces.)

SIMON

Are you coming out now? (Pause) Aren't you done in there yet?

SWANN (O.S.)

Just a minute.

SIMON

(Speaking loudly)

Your friend's already gone to the car. She's coming back here to pick you up so you can get to a gas station before it closes. I made her a map. A very good map so she won't get lost but you've got to leave now.

SWANN

(SWANN walks out slowly
carrying a few books which she
puts down on the table. She
holds one back, WALDEN, and
smiles slyly.)

Everybody reads in the john, but your books are all in alphabetical order -- now that's whacked.

SIMON

Those are my books.

SWANN

Are these your notes?

(SWANN holds up a ragged copy
of WALDEN)

SIMON

Why?

SWANN

The answer is "yes" or "no"? Is this your copy of Walden?

SIMON

Yes. Those are my notes and no you're not supposed to be reading them.

SWANN

Good. Because I totally agreed with your comments after the quote, "The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men and women; and so with the paths the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity!" I added the "and women" part. It works a lot better.

SIMON

You wrote in my book?

(Grabbing the book and opening
to the page.)

In pen! Thoreau does not need editing.

SWANN

It was written over a hundred and fifty years.

SIMON

Never.

SWANN

I think you're being just a little close minded which surprises me considering these other things you wrote here which indicate a rather eclectic and inquiring mind. You were surprised I used the word "eclectic" weren't you?

SIMON

(SIMON takes the book back and
carefully cradles the tattered
volume.)

You don't know anything about my mind.

SWANN

Okay, I admit I thought anyone who lived out in a place like this must be scrapping their knuckles on the ground weird. This place is a little creepy but I really like the bathroom.

SIMON

Don't like it too much and this place is my home.

SWANN

I was trying to give you a compliment. You do understand that word "compliment" don't you? C-O-M-P

SIMON

I'm not stupid. I can spell, read and my knuckles are not dragging on the ground.

SWANN

Sorry. You don't look happy right now.

SIMON

You're still here.

SWANN

Now I know you're just a little bit intrigued by me, right?

SIMON

My emotional state is none of your business.

SWANN

We should talk about what Thoreau really meant when he said "I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear"

SIMON

If you want to make me happy?

SWANN

Yes?

SIMON

You should just leave.

SWANN

I really think the clue is in the word "deliberately." To live "deliberately" Now there's one we could argue about all night long.

SIMON

Do you ever listen to anyone ever?

SWANN

I'm listening to you. What you wrote here in this book. It's smart and thoughtful and ---

SIMON

It does not matter.

SWANN

It does matter. You're thinking. Alive. That matters. People out there are all just frozen with fear. You matter.

SIMON

Your friend will be back. You will leave. I will not matter.

SWANN

I could stay. We could talk. It's getting dark. We could stay up all night and argue about Thoreau or a million other things no one ever wants to talk about but I'll bet you would.

SIMON

My father does not like strangers here.

SWANN

We wouldn't be strangers. You have to admit our relationship has entered a new dimension.

SIMON

What dimension?

SWANN

We met. We talked. You held a fake gun on me.

SIMON

You tackled me and almost broke my arm.

SWANN

You gave me cold water and cookies and let me read your books.

SIMON

I just let you in the bathroom.

SWANN

We touched.

SIMON

You'll be gone very soon. You won't remember me.

SWANN

You didn't think I could find the door to get in here but I did. Maybe it's a sign.

SIMON

This will never end will it?

SWANN

In some ways this little cave of yours is like your own little Walden, isn't it.

SIMON

It's very efficient. (pause) You can survive out here like the ancient ones. They felt the earth. They were connected. They lived deliberately. I dream about them.

SWANN

That's very romantic but you have to admit that their lives were not really about philosophy. Not when they were being chased by a giant bear.

SIMON

Is all this talk just another delay? Because it won't work.

SWANN

I read a book by this woman who became a Buddhist monk and went off to live in a cave somewhere in India or China.

SIMON

I didn't think women could be monks.

SWANN

See, while you have been living here with your head up your ass women have been doing all kinds of things.

SIMON

Is this a game?

SWANN

Lots of books but no games anywhere. Actually I don't see anything fun in this house.

SIMON

Why would that woman go into a cave?

SWANN

She wanted to overcome her fear of snakes, of course. What about playing "Simon Says"? The kids at school must have really pounded you with that one. "Simon says put your hands in the air , Simon says touch your toes...." Come on. Simon says you're not playing this game at all.

SIMON

But a cave can be full of snakes.

SWANN

Exactly. She was terrified so she went into the cave and the first night there's this snake. Her worst nightmare. Like me.

SIMON

She couldn't have seen the snake in the cave at night without building a fire which can be very tricky. I personally can build a fire almost anywhere in any kind of weather. Did she build a fire and see the snake?

SWANN

She didn't actually see the snake, but she could feel it! Hear it hissing with all those senses you never use.

SIMON

You never use. You can't survive out here if you don't use everything. (BEAT.) Did she die?

SWANN

Of course not.

SIMON

Good.

SWANN

She didn't go in to die. She just stayed up and stared at the fucker until she couldn't keep her eyes opened anymore and then she fell asleep.

SIMON

But she was afraid of the snake. This doesn't make sense.

SWANN

That's the point. She went to sleep afraid and when she woke up the snake was gone if it was ever there at all.

SIMON

I need you to go.

SWANN

(Beat) I think I will stay.

(Sits down)

SIMON

What? NO!

SWANN

You've got room and it's getting dark out there.

SIMON

You can't.

SWANN

You don't want us lost in the desert, crawling around in the dark thinking of you as we take our last breath.

SIMON

You are crazy.

SWANN

I bother you, don't I?

SIMON

You do not bother me.

SWANN

I do. That's why you want me out even though you know it's the neighborly thing to do.

SIMON

You can't stay here.

SWANN

Obviously I do bother you in some way you don't want to admit.

SIMON

I gave you the gasoline for your car. And I wouldn't take money which shows what kind of a person I am.

SWANN

Which shows me your the kind of person who wouldn't let us go off into that desert tonight to die.

SIMON

That is not funny.

SWANN

You wouldn't want company for one night?

SIMON

I said "No".

SWANN

We could listen to Dylan?

(SWANN pulls out her head sets.)

SIMON

You like Dylan?

SWANN

There's a couple of piss poor periods I wouldn't listen to without a gun to my head but I'd be willing to stay up all night and argue about it.

SIMON

It's not possible.

SWANN

It's getting dark and you know we're not going to find any gas station out there now.

(Whispering)

Trust me, Elizabeth has absolutely no sense of direction. Are your parents some kind of Hippie-eat-wild-foods-back-to-nature freaks?

SIMON

My Mom died right after I was born.

SWANN

Oh. Bummer. Dead mothers are bad, very bad, very, very Dickens. The only thing worse would be both parents dead and you were raised by a wicked old aunt and uncle.

SIMON

I don't have any aunts or uncles. No one but my Dad.

SWANN

So what about your Dad?

SIMON

You like Dickens?

SWANN

It appeals to my dark side. You know *Hard Times*. *Oliver Twist*. *Great Expectations*?

SIMON

I found this old copy of *Hard Times* at a yard sale in Taos. The binding looks hand done and you would not believe the illustrations.

(In a fake British accent)

"Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else." So? What do you think?

SWANN

I think people your age don't recite old novels by heart or get all gooey over book binding and they would never use that piss poor British accent.

SIMON

I can build a fire with one match?

SWANN

I can speak some Swahili and a little bad Latin.

SIMON

You really have to go.

SWANN

But you'd like me to stay. Admit it. You find me just a little bit fascinating, don't you?

SIMON

This is not a hotel.

SWANN

Fucking fascinating freaky wonderful?

SIMON

We live here because we don't want this.

SWANN

What the fuck is "this"?

SIMON

You.

SWANN

You're young.

SIMON

Strangers.

SWANN

Who wants to lock you up and throw away the key!

(ELIZABETH walks in still
holding the gasoline can and
her purse.

(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)
She is followed by MARTIN,
SIMON's father, who holds a
rifle on her. He is dressed as
a priest.)

ELIZABETH
Swann?

SWANN
What the fuck.

MARTIN
Don't move.

SWANN
Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH
Don't antagonize him.

MARTIN
Simon, are you all right? This woman had our gasoline can.

SIMON
I'm fine Dad, really. Put the gun down.

SWANN
That's your father. Shit!

ELIZABETH
Swann!

MARTIN
Is this your daughter?

ELIZABETH
No.

SIMON
They're okay. Really.

SWANN
What's with the guns in this family.

MARTIN
Who is she? She says the girl's not her daughter.

SIMON
They're not related. They just met at the bridge.

MARTIN
If they met at the bridge, why are they here?

SIMON

They just ran out of gas.

MARTIN

You know how I feel about strangers.

SIMON

They're fine Dad really. They're okay.

MARTIN

How do you know that?

SWANN

Because he talked to me. And I talked back. You know. Conversation.

MARTIN

Why are you here?

SWANN

Is talking a crime punishable by death?

ELIZABETH

Your son was very kind and gave us this gasoline. And he wouldn't take any money.

SWANN

Why do you people greet strangers with guns? Why?

MARTIN

If you have what you came for then, you can leave us alone.

SWANN

No man is a fucking island, right Simon?

SIMON

Sort of.

(SWANN starts humming *ODE TO JOY* very loudly.)

MARTIN

What's wrong with her? Why is she doing that? Make her stop.

SIMON

You can't stop her once she gets started.

ELIZABETH

It's sort of her strength and her weakness.

MARTIN

Is she crazy?

SIMON

Yeah, crazy like a swan.

MARTIN

(Shouting in her face.)

STOP!

SWANN

I'll stop when you answer my question. "Why do you people greet strangers with guns?"

(SWANN resumes *ODE TO JOY*)

MARTIN

(MARTIN lowers the gun.)

Could you please get her to stop?

ELIZABETH

She's very stubborn.

SIMON

And she talks and acts like nobody I've ever met in my whole life.

MARTIN

(Quietly pleading)

Miss, please, could you stop singing?

ELIZABETH

Swann? Please don't do this.

SIMON

I think she's waiting for an answer.

MARTIN

I want her out of our house. Do something. Anything.

ELIZABETH

I really don't have any power over her.

MARTIN

I have to have some control in my own house. Please.

SWANN

Are you a priest or something else?

MARTIN

Why do you care?

SWANN

Then you are something else?

ELIZABETH

Swann, be careful.

SWANN

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and no, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

MARTIN

What is she doing?

SWANN

"I did not wish to live what was not life , living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. "

SIMON

She's quoting Walden.

SWANN

(Even louder now.)

"I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life... and if it proved to be mean, (to MARTIN) why then to get the whole and genuine meanness to the world; or it if were sublime, (To SIMON) to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "Glorify God and enjoy him forever."

MARTIN

(Beat) I moved to the desert to glorify God's name forever,, to protect my son and to create a life where he never has to be afraid again.

SWANN

Bullshit.

ELIZABETH

Swann?

SWANN

That's one helluva way to show him.

(SWANN runs off. SIMON pauses, then follows her.)

MARTIN

Simon? Where are you going?

SIMON (O.S.)

To find Swann.

MARTIN

Simon!

(Looking directly at ELIZABETH)
Why the hell did you come here.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

ACT TWO

AT RISE:

Darkness. A few hours later on the patio.

SCENE 1

MARTIN is picking at a plate of food. The sound of SIMON and SWANN laughing from inside the berm pierces the stillness. ELIZABETH comes in to clear the plates and MARTIN jumps.

ELIZABETH

I didn't mean to startle you.

MARTIN

Sorry. I'm just not used to company.

ELIZABETH

I think it could be an addiction staring at those mountains. Everyone in the world should see them just once.

MARTIN

This is obviously your first trip.

ELIZABETH

You mean the beauty wears off?

MARTIN

No, the desire to share it does.

ELIZABETH

Are you finished?

MARTIN

Yes, thank you. The food was very good.

ELIZABETH

Frankly, I wasn't sure I knew how to cook anything that wasn't already shrinkwrapped and ready to be microwaved.

MARTIN

You did just fine.

(ELIZABETH starts to remove the plate which is still rather full of food.)

ELIZABETH

I'll take these in now.

MARTIN

No, please, leave it. I'm a slow eater. Always have been. My mother said it was my worst trait.

ELIZABETH

If that was your worst you were pretty damn good. I'm sorry.

MARTIN

She was wrong about me.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure she wouldn't say that.

MARTIN

She's been dead a long time.

ELIZABETH

That's a shame. It'd be nice for Simon to know his grandparents.

MARTIN

Simon never knew any of them.

ELIZABETH

Both of my parents are dead now, too. Funny to be an orphan at this age.

MARTIN

Did you really think I would shoot you?

ELIZABETH

It was very generous of you to let us to stay the night. I know Simon was worried I'd never find my way to the gas station in the dark with or without his map.

MARTIN

I wouldn't have shot you. I'm not a violent person. I am exactly the opposite of violent. You had nothing to fear.

ELIZABETH

This is my first trip in the desert. Actually it's my first real vacation.

MARTIN

I'm sure you'll enjoy the rest of it.

ELIZABETH

I just wanted to say that I do admire what you're doing here.

MARTIN

What do you think I'm doing here?

ELIZABETH

I know it probably sounds terribly boring, but my life's work is actually studying energy costs for the government, I guess they'd call me a numbers cruncher. I respect how you're trying to live without destroying the earth.

MARTIN

Just getting up in the morning changes everything, look under your shoes, We've probably killed something just standing here.

(Laughter and music comes from inside.)

ELIZABETH

It's amazing they all aren't deaf listening to music that loud.

MARTIN

I wouldn't know. I've never heard it before. It's usually very quiet.

ELIZABETH

Look, it's my fault we ran out of gas. Don't be angry with Swann.

MARTIN

You're here because he wanted you to stay. Not because I wanted to discuss philosophy with you.

ELIZABETH

He's seems like a very good son, even if he was holding a gun on Swann earlier... I mean pretending to hold a gun.

MARTIN

He wouldn't hurt anyone. He's a pure soul.

ELIZABETH

(Explosively)

Of course, I thought you were going to shoot me! Why wouldn't I think that? People who point guns at other people are dangerous.

MARTIN

I'm sorry.

(Puts out her hand.)

I don't even know your full name. I'm Martin Falls.

ELIZABETH

I'm Elizabeth. Elizabeth Wolff.

MARTIN

Even you have to admit that a girl like that can be very disconcerting, especially to someone like Simon.

ELIZABETH

That girl is an original and her name is Swann.

MARTIN

I know her name, but we still have the right to defend ourselves.

ELIZABETH

From what? A middle aged woman walking down a desolate road with your own gas can? You already had a gun pointed at my back and I had not given you any reason to believe I was either threatening or crazy. If anything, I appear boring and middle aged. I certainly didn't appear to scream terrorist or murderer or even thief. There was absolutely no reason to point a gun at either one of us no matter how you pride yourself on your right of privacy.

(There is the sound of laughter
as SIMON and SWANN enter.)

MARTIN

(Raising his voice.)

Simon, there are dishes to be cleaned up here.

SIMON

Sure.

ELIZABETH

I'd be happy to finish the dishes, Martin.

SIMON

It's okay. It's my job.

SWANN

I'll help you clean up Mr. Simon Falls.

MARTIN

You both must be tired travelling all day.

SWANN

I'm fine.

SIMON

She doesn't sleep, Dad. She doesn't need sleep.

MARTIN

All human beings sleep, Simon.

SWANN

(Smiling secretly between one
another.)

Exactly.

MARTIN

Are you two done in there for the night because it is getting late and you should be thinking about settling in.

SWANN

Actually we were thinking, maybe?

SIMON

(Interrupts her.)

Actually I was thinking since they're staying overnight anyway.

SWANN

(Interrupting)

And I wanted to mention once again how grateful we are for the invitation.

SIMON

---Shhhhhhhh. I need to do this myself Swann.

(Going)

Dad, tonight Mars is the closer to the earth than it's been for 60,000 years and who knows whether we can ever see it again.

SWANN

Sixty thousand years. That's a long time.

SIMON

And the moon is full, which is something she could ever see back in Indiana.

MARTIN

They see the same moon in Indiana, Simon.

SIMON

You were the one who always said nothing looks like the same out there as it does here. That's true, isn't it? Nothing is the same out there?

MARTIN

What do you want Simon?

SIMON

I thought we could take the truck and drive way up into the cliffs to that wonderful place where we stargaze, you know how amazing it is up there, and we could watch Mars together.

MARTIN

Now?

ELIZABETH

They did say it would be a very special night.

MARTIN

Every night is special here.

SWANN

It'll be different watching it with me.

MARTIN

I'm sure it would be very different.

SIMON

It's just one night Dad and she's got to see it just once the way we see it and I promise to clean up everything when we get back. Please, Dad? Just this once?

MARTIN

(Long pause) No.

SIMON

Dad!

MARTIN

Go out back, Simon. You can see everything you need to see right in your own backyard.

SIMON

But it's not the same thing and you know it.

MARTIN

It's late. There's too many wild things out there for you two to be driving into the mountains in the middle of the night.

SWANN

I live in Indiana. There's a lot of scary things out there.

SIMON

I promise we would be very careful.

MARTIN

Promise all you want Simon, the answer is still no.

SIMON

Just for a few hours?

MARTIN

There's a perfectly good place out back and that's the end of the discussion. Is there any coffee on the stove?

ELIZABETH

Yes, I can get it.

MARTIN

I'll get it. Simon? You heard me.

SIMON

(SIMON takes SWANN's hand.)

Come on Swann.

(MARTIN disappears.)

SWANN

Where are we going?

SIMON

Don't ask. Just follow me and keep quiet.

SWANN

Good night.

(SIMON pulls SWANN away and into the darkness.)

ELIZABETH

Good night. Have a good time.

(ELIZABETH is standing alone when MARTIN returns.)

MARTIN

Why didn't you leave that damn girl at the bridge!

ELIZABETH

She was going to jump, Martin, and I have to believe you would have done the same thing.

MARTIN

You don't have children, do you?

ELIZABETH

No, but I know they grow up and leave. At least they should. Maybe not forever, but long enough.

MARTIN

Enough to want to jump off a bridge. I want to keep him from a life where he would ever consider that an option.

ELIZABETH

And I just wanted to try to show her that there are reasons to go on living no matter what.

(The sound of a truck engine.)

What's that?

(The engine doesn't turn over the first time. Then a second time it kicks in.)

MARTIN

SIMON!

ELIZABETH

What is it!

MARTIN

I'll tell you what that is, it's the sound of everything I have spent my life protecting my son from!

(We hear the sound of truck tires peeling onto the road at a high speed as MARTIN runs out.)

SIMON!

(ELIZABETH is all alone. She walks over and picks up the tattered copy of WALDEN left behind. Without opening it, she recites from memory.)

ELIZABETH

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats."

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

Later. Somewhere near Four Corners New Mexico. Simultaneously on the patio.

Darkness. (NOTE: There will be a seamless overlap between the scenes with SWANN and SIMON and MARTIN and ELIZABETH)

SIMON

(SIMON turns on his light and holds his hand out to SWANN.)

This is it. Come on. Right here.

SWANN

I could have tripped back there and fallen 10,000 feet, or been bitten by some poisonous snake and no one would know.

SIMON

I would. And it's not 10,000 feet.

SWANN

Great. That makes me feel a whole lot better.

SIMON

So, what do you think?

SWANN

We're

SIMON
Yes.

SWANN
This is it?

SIMON
This is it.

SWANN
Okay, that was nice. Now let's pack up and go back.

SIMON
(Energized)
You said you wanted to see my special place and here it is. You can't just leave as soon as you get here. (pause) Well? You're scared. Swann, say it. Simon I am scared.

SWANN
I'm not.
(An animal howl is heard in the distance.)
What's that?

SIMON
"Sometimes I heard the foxes as they ranged over the snow crust, in moonlight nights...
(The animal sounds again.)

SWANN
What is that!

SIMON
...barking raggedly and demoniacally like forest dogs...

SWANN
Thoreau was not in the wild, Simon. He could have walked back to town whenever he wanted and he did. Those are scary sounds out there and I'm scared. Now I've said it. I'm scared. Are you happy? Now let's go.

SIMON
No, I don't want you to be scared and I wouldn't bring you to a place where you could be hurt.

SWANN
You don't know everything that's out there, Simon. You can't. Nobody can.

SIMON
Trust me. I know this place. Look around and feel it. Feel it.
(SIMON turns slowly in a circle.)

SWANN

So do we have enough gas to get home.

SIMON

You'll see the difference if you stop talking and close your eyes.

SWANN

First you tell me to see the difference and then you tell me to close my eyes, so which is it?

(SWANN is finally starting to look around.)

Oh, my.

SIMON

Everything's still the way it always was.

SWANN

Look how bright.

SIMON

Just take a breath, look around and then up there, into the heavens. For once in your life, Swann, just slow down and take a real look .

SWANN

(SWANN slows down and gazes around, her body reacts and she looks in 360 degrees around and up and down.)

Is that...

SIMON

Mars.

SWANN

Oh shit, it's Mars, isn't it. Hi Mars! It's me Isabel Swann from Indiana and my friend Simon Falls is here too. Oh, Simon, I can't believe it. I really can't believe it. (pause) I mean now that I actually stop and see it. Oh Simon, it's so special. Why didn't you tell me it could be like this? That I could feel like this.

SIMON

I did, remember? Now here's a trick.

(SIMON stands behind SWANN, wraps his arms around her and moves her head in line with his so they are both standing looking up.)

Just move your head and look to the side of Mars like this and see.

(SWANN cocks her head.)

Now it's even better.

SWANN

It is. Beautiful.

SIMON

A shimmering red planet with two white polar tips and two moons named Phobos and Deimos which you can't see, but Deimos is my favorite.

SWANN

Deimos, God of fear.

SIMON

Son of Ares and Aphrodite. It's the smallest known moon in the solar system and someday, when I'm a great astronomer, I'll see those planets as close as your face.

SWANN

You were right. This is a magical place.

SIMON

They call it Simon's Rock.

SWANN

After you, "Mr. Astronomer"?

SIMON

(SIMON awkwardly unwraps himself from near SWANN and moves away.)

You're the first person to know I want to be an astronomer. Even my father doesn't know. (Beat)

SWANN

Simon's Rock.

SIMON

My dad says he brought me right here after my mother died, held me up in the moonlight and christened me Simon from the Hebrew name for "listening." He said he dreamed this place, knew it was where we belonged as soon as he saw it.

SWANN

Simon the listener is a helluva lot better than Isabel the "virgin".

SIMON

I think Isabel is a beautiful name.

SWANN

Right.

SIMON

No, listen. Is-a-bell....Is?-a?-bell?...ISABEL....Isa-bell...
(shouting until it echoes)

SWANN

When you say it, it sounds better.

SIMON

You say it.

SWANN

No.

SIMON

Say it or I'll call all the evil scary creatures from the forest to come out right now.

SWANN

(Screaming it out.)

ISABEL!

SIMON

(Screaming with her.)

ISABEL!

SWANN

Now put them all back into their caves and don't lie to me.

SIMON

Never. Cross my heart and hope to die if I ever ever lie.

SWANN

I read somewhere that people always tell their biggest secrets to someone they'll never see again.

SIMON

Then you'll never know mine. We're friends now and you can't just run off.

(SIMON puts his pinkie out and they lock.)

SWANN

This was definitely worth stealing your father's truck.

SIMON

I didn't steal it.

SWANN

You didn't ask and I'll bet you don't do that too often.

SIMON

You like it up here, don't you? No lies.

SWANN

What makes you think that?

SIMON

You've only said that word once.

(SWANN is quiet.)

What's wrong?

SWANN

I look up in the sky and it all makes me feel so small.

SIMON

It makes me feel like I can touch the very first people who built their homes here thousands of years ago. Don't you see, they looked up at this same sky and wondered what it all means just like you and me.

SWANN

Tell me your secret?

SIMON

Then you'll go away and never see this place again, right?

SWANN

Then I might stay. Tell me, Simon. No lies.

SIMON

I feel connected to God here. I talk to God here. And if you listen, just to one side of all that silence and so much noise, you can hear the voice of God talking back.

(SWANN walks away.)

Swann? Where are you going?

SWANN

You can hear that voice, Simon, I just hear something waiting to have me for dinner. And all those people you dream about who were living here are gone now and nobody even remembers their names. They lived, beat the hell out of each other and disappeared. What's the fucking point?

SIMON

Is that why you went to the bridge. Is that why you wanted to jump?

SWANN

Why did you want to bring me here?

SIMON

You said you wanted to see Mars.

SWANN

No bull shit Simon. Why?

SIMON

The earth is waiting to hold you up. Swann, the moon is dying to light you up. Plant your feet in the dirt and let the moon wash over you.

(MORE)

SIMON (cont'd)

I wanted to know what it would feel like to share this place with someone else. Oh, God, I wanted to give you one more reason to live.

(SIMON and SWANN kiss gently.)

CROSS FADE.

SCENE 3

MARTIN is standing alone facing the mountains.

ELIZABETH

(Entering and watching MARTIN.)

Can I get you something? Tea? Coffee? You must be getting tired.

MARTIN

Nothing.

ELIZABETH

You said he knows those mountains like the back of his hand.

MARTIN

Thank you Elizabeth, but I'm fine.

ELIZABETH

Honestly?

MARTIN

I feel my heart pounding. I'm shaking all over. Honestly, I'm so afraid.

ELIZABETH

Young people do these things. They just go off.

MARTIN

Did you?

ELIZABETH

I should have but I didn't have the courage to leave. My mother said she'd die without me. So I stayed until she did.
(Shivering)

MARTIN

What's wrong?

ELIZABETH

I've got a chill.

MARTIN

Take my jacket.

ELIZABETH

I'm fine.

MARTIN

You've been standing here for hours with me. Please.

ELIZABETH

(Putting his jacket on.)

Thank you. I only thought about how hot the desert would be in August.

MARTIN

People are always surprised.

ELIZABETH

Those mountains are so big.

MARTIN

And cold. Very cold.

CROSS FADE

SCENE 4

NOW the two scenes seem to flow back and forth between the mountains and the desert. Between SIMON and SWANN and MARTIN and ELIZABETH. A quartet.

SIMON

(SWANN starts to take off her clothes.)

What are you doing Swann? Back there you said you were cold and now you're taking your clothes off.

SWANN

I want to be baptized in the light of the moon.

SIMON

Now?

SWANN

Right here, right now.

CROSS FADE

ELIZABETH

The beltway around Washington is always crowded and the sky is never dark. You could never see the sky and stars. And look at those clouds.

MARTIN

This is thunderstorm season. The rain comes up five hundred miles from the Gulf. Sometimes with no warning.

ELIZABETH

Should we go in?

MARTIN

There's an umbrella right inside the door.

ELIZABETH

Don't worry. I'm sure they both know enough to come in out of the rain.

MARTIN

Simon does.

ELIZABETH

Her name is Swann.

MARTIN

I know. I just can't say it right now.

CROSS FADE

SCENE 5

SIMON has taken off his pants and shirt and they are both wearing boxer shorts and A-frame T-shirts. SIMON laughs.

SIMON

Swan, I can't believe I'm doing this.

SWANN

Just skin and sky. That's the only way to see Mars.

SIMON

I've seen this moon a million times but it never felt like this.

SWANN

What does it feel like being here with me?

SIMON

It feels like -- your kiss.

CROSS FADE

ELIZABETH

I feel as if I'm the first person who's ever seen this sky.

MARTIN

When I first got here, it felt like I was finally home. Were you ever married?

ELIZABETH

No. I've never even been properly in love.

CROSS FADE

SIMON

Talk. Go ahead. Just talk.

SWANN

I thought you said I talked too much.

SIMON

I like hearing you talk. Talk all you want. Talk all night.

CROSS FADE

MARTIN

I'm sorry. What did you say?

ELIZABETH

I'm embarrassed to repeat that I, Elizabeth Wolff, a middle-aged woman who wears sensible shoes, has never been in love.

MARTIN

I didn't mean to embarrass you. It was a personal question.

ELIZABETH

Out here it seems foolish to lie.

MARTIN

God doesn't promise us love in this life.

ELIZABETH

Is that what you believed?

MARTIN

When I was ordained I thought my love of God would be all I would ever need again.

ELIZABETH

Then you weren't in love with Simon's mother?

CROSS FADE

SIMON has his head to SWANN's heart.

SIMON

I can hear your heart. Lub dub lub dub lub dub.

(SWANN laughs)

I didn't mean it to be funny.

SWANN

I wasn't laughing at you. I just liked the way you made that sound. Lub dub. Lub dub. Lub dub. A beautiful sound.

CROSS FADE

MARTIN

Simon's mother had just come to America when I started at my new parish. She was so curious about everything she made my head spin. Her laughter was endless. Her smile infectious. (pause) I never intended to break my vows. She never wanted me to. I taught her English. One night we kissed. It lasted two days. After a few weeks, she just disappeared. When she came back she had our baby with her. He was so beautiful I couldn't take my eyes off of him. We tried to pretend she was just my student and that the boy was someone else's son. She was so afraid someone would find out he was mine. I was so afraid she would leave me alone. One night she went out for milk. A witness said she tried to fight the boys who were robbing her, but they pushed her to the ground so hard she never got up. I heard the sirens and ran outside. The milk she'd bought for Simon was spilled out all over the street. The police let me near her because I was a priest and they thought she needed the last rites but I was the one who needed her. When I took her hand she was already slipping away. I gave her God's sacrament but there would be no kisses. At the end I drew her face close to mine and promised I'd keep our son safe forever. Then she was gone. I disappeared to this place and took the name of a deadman. I disappeared to keep my vow and I have. No man could ever love his only begotten son more than a man who no longer exists.

CROSS FADE

SIMON

I don't want you to die Swann.

SWANN

Shhh.

SIMON

Swann, promise me you won't die.

SWANN

Oh, Simon. Everybody dies.

CROSS FADE

ELIZABETH and MARTIN are sitting silently in the patio.

MARTIN

You don't have to sit here with me.

ELIZABETH

When I was a girl we waited for my father to come back. And after he died, we just waited.

MARTIN

For what?

ELIZABETH

For her life to end. She never imagined being alone.

MARTIN

But you were there.

ELIZABETH

I was never enough. Her life ended the day he walked out that door.

CROSS FADE

SCENE 6

Two lights have been flickering in the blackness. These lights are reminiscent of miners lights, but are just simple lights that people attach to their caps to "night walk."

SIMON

You're supposed to be feeling the earth.

SWANN

You're feeling the earth I'm walking in circles in the dark.

SIMON

You said you wanted to go "night walking" with me.

SWANN

That's before I knew what it meant. I'm through. Give me the flashlight.

SIMON

You'll spoil it if you turn the light on now.

SWANN

Then it's spoiled.

(SWANN turns on flash light.)

SIMON

You didn't have to do that.

SWANN

Owwwww. Touchy. How quickly they forget. Next you'll be talking about how beautiful my tits looked in the moonlight.

SIMON

What's that supposed to mean.

SWANN

It means we had "something" back there or at least I did.

SIMON

This is "something" too. It's just different. It can mean something here too. (pause) Feel the earth Swann.

(SWANN turns her light out and disappears.)

Swann?

(No answer)

Where are you?

(No answer.)

I know you can hear me and I know you're afraid of the dark!

(There is deafening stillness. Suddenly SWANN is all lighted up like a pumpkin smiling.)

SWANN

Boo!

SIMON

Why'd you do that?

SWANN

Tell the truth? You missed me.

SIMON

It was dark.

SWANN

You did.

SIMON

I was worried.

SWANN

I knew you'd miss me.

SIMON

I missed your ranting. I've never heard anything like your ranting. So loud and long and angry.

SWANN

You missed me.

SIMON

I hate your anger.

SWANN

I think it's is one of my best qualities.

SIMON

I wish you could rant without it.

SWANN

Impossible.

SIMON

You were different up there. I liked it. You weren't angry. Say it. "I wasn't angry, Simon.

SWANN

Simon.

SIMON

Say it!
"

SWANN

We're down here now. Closer to the ground. My world. Blah! Blah! Blah! The place where everything breaks my heart.

(Thunder. Lightning. SWANN
looks up.)

See even God agrees.

SIMON

Come on.

(Taking her hand and leaving)

I know where we can go.

CROSS FADE

ELIZABETH

You're still a man of God, even I can see that. You must know something more than your own fear.

MARTIN

I made a promise.

ELIZABETH

You must know something more than your own fear.

MARTIN

I've protected him. That's my job.

ELIZABETH

You think Simon doesn't know what's going on in the world? He's young and bright which means he's going to dig for all those secrets you want to keep hidden from him. Or do you just want to keep him here with you forever.

MARTIN

If it keeps him safe, yes!

ELIZABETH

This isn't a monastery and he didn't take those vows, you did.

MARTIN

You don't understand do you?

ELIZABETH

I know you love him.

MARTIN

I left everything behind for him. This place and this life are all I have now. My love for him is all I have.

ELIZABETH

You still have God.

MARTIN

I can't lose him.

ELIZABETH

Everyone loses somebody they love Martin. It's the price of admission.

(Flash of lightning illuminates them.)

CROSS FADE

Sound of rain. A shallow cave. There are simple drawings over the walls.

SIMON

This cave is the safest place on earth.

SWANN

You've never disobeyed your father before, have you?

SIMON

Look at this.

SWANN

Have you?

SIMON

No.

SWANN

We've been gone a long time. Do you think he'll be mad when we get back? Ground you for ten thousand years??

SIMON

I don't know. He loves me. What about Elizabeth?

SWANN

She's probably said "I'm so sorry," ten thousand times.

SIMON

You like her.

SWANN

Of course, I like her. I wouldn't just go off with someone I didn't like.

SIMON

But how did you know?

SWANN

You went off with me.

SIMON

That's different.

SWANN

The air smells like electricity.

SIMON

The moon's out again. It'll be clear in the morning. Like it never happened.

SWANN

Who lived here?

SIMON

The ancient ones dug these caves out of the soft volcanic rock.

SWANN

But this is your cave?

SIMON

There are hundreds of them around here.

SWANN

Your special place.

SIMON

Later they built houses of stone and mud.

SWANN

Simon?

SIMON

Okay. It's mine.

SWANN

Have you ever brought anyone else here before?

No. SIMON

I knew it. SWANN

What does it matter? SIMON

Ahhh-ooooowwww. SWANN
(SWANN stands and howls.)

Hey, what are you doing. SIMON

Shhhh. Listen. SWANN

What? SIMON

My voice just keeps going and going. It's way out into space now. The actual speed of sound. You do it. SWANN

It's late. SIMON

Did you ever bring your father here? SWANN

No. SIMON

No? SWANN

Not here. SIMON

No one else in the world but me? SWANN

Just you. SIMON

So all these drawings all yours? SWANN

I swear I didn't destroy anything that was here before. SIMON

SWANN

I'm not accusing you.

SIMON

There were never any sacred drawings on these walls. Just mine.

(SWANN is looking at the drawings and putting her hands on the hands.)

SWANN

I love your squiggles and splats all over the walls. Simon's rants.

SIMON

It's just stuff.

SWANN

It's your stuff

SIMON

I didn't expect anyone else to ever see them.

SWANN

Are these all your hands?

SIMON

Yes, years of hands and one foot.

SWANN

Get me the paint.

SIMON

Why?

SWANN

Please?

SIMON

What are you going to do?

SWANN

I want my hands up there, too. Next to yours.

SIMON

Why?

SWANN

I'd like to be remembered so when they find these in a million years my hands will be with yours. Together.

SIMON

Like a memorial?

SWANN

Like the Sistine Chapel way up here in the mountains. A sign.

SIMON

What kind of a sign?

SWANN

That you weren't alone.
(Silence.)

SWANN and SIMON put her hand prints on the wall.

SCENE 7

MARTIN is on his knees praying.
ELIZABETH stands over him holding an umbrella.

MARTIN

My LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself.

(pause)

But I believe that the desire to please you, does please you.
Therefore, I will not do anything apart from that desire.

(pause)

I believe that you will lead me on the right road.
I may seem lost and in the shadow of death, but I know that
you will never leave me to face my perils alone....
I know you will never leave me to face my perils alone..
I know you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

MARTIN repeats this last line over and over like a Novena as SWANN and SIMON dip their hands in paint and mark the cave wall with their overlapping hands.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 8

SWANN and SIMON are walking arm and arm down the road. Poking each other, pushing and teasing like old friends.

SWANN

Will he ground you?

SIMON

I don't even know what that is since I could always talk him out of any punishment.

SWANN

I'll bet you'll get grounded this time.

SIMON

Not if we get home before the sun comes up. Come on.

SWANN

Simon?

SIMON

Hurry up. (pause) What?

SWANN

Whatever happens, I had a really wonderful time tonight.
(Pause.)

SIMON

Nothing's going to happen, Swann, I told you, he won't punish me.

SWANN

Did you?

SIMON

What?

SWANN

Did you have a wonderful time?

SIMON

No. It wasn't wonderful. I'm not sure I even have the words to describe what it felt like.

SWANN

Yes you do. Go ahead. Say it out loud.

SIMON

I never thought I mean...I never thought I would meet...anyone. (pause) I had the best time of my life.

SWANN

Good. Now where the hell's that truck.

SIMON

It should be right around the bend.
(Sound and headlights of a passing pick-up truck.)

SWANN

That's weird.

SIMON

People get lost out here all the time.

SWANN

(A la Pirate.)

Find their bones in caves, do they? YO-HO-HO and a bottle of rum. Walk the plank?

SIMON

I said lost, Swann, not dead. And not a pirate.

SWANN

Are you sure this is the right direction?

SIMON

As sure as I can be about anything.

(Distant sound of the truck
braking, turning around on the
gravel.)

SWANN

Thank you Mister Profound, but that is not comforting.

(Beat.)

Here comes that truck again.

SIMON

Look, we're almost there. Just keep going. Keep going.

(Sound and headlights of the
pick-up truck much closer and
more deliberate.)

SWANN

What the fuck, they've got the whole road. "You've got the whole road!"

SIMON

Just keep walking.

SWANN

Just wide open spaces, huh, cowboy?

(singing.)

Yippee, Yippee, yippee cay yah.

SIMON

That's really bad.

SWANN

Hey, Mister, you insultin' my singing?

SIMON

Quit it.

SWANN

You insultin' me, flat lander, cause partner that's grounds for a shoot out.

SIMON

You're crazy.

(Sound of the truck)

SWANN

Here comes that fucking truck again.

SIMON

Stay close to me.

(The pick-up truck stops in front of them. SIMON and SWANN are illuminated by two blinding beams of lights.)

SWANN

Simon?

(A gunshot rips through the darkness. SIMON grabs his face and crumples to the ground. SWANN screams.)

Simon.....

(Lights go out on the truck as it peels out and away down the road. SWANN drops to her knees sobbing.)

Oh my God, my God, oh my God. What have they done? What have they done to you my dear Simon.

BLACKOUT.

There is the sound of howling.

SCENE 9

Sunrise. Twenty-four hours since the opening of the play. Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. SWANN stands on the outer railing of the bridge. ELIZABETH comes running towards her.

ELIZABETH

Oh, God, Swann you're here. You're here. Are you hurt? Is that blood on your shirt. It looks like you're bleeding. I was afraid you wouldn't be here. Oh, God, I was so afraid.

SWANN

What took you so long?

ELIZABETH

I had to stop for gas and I got a little lost. (pause)

SWANN

I can't move.

ELIZABETH

Jeezus, you are bleeding.

SWANN

Don't come toward me.

ELIZABETH

I've got some band aids, tissues, somewhere in this bag.
(ELIZABETH dumps her handbag on
the ground without thinking
and it spills.)

SWANN

If I'm bleeding and talking at the same time it means I can't
be dead, right?

ELIZABETH

You're not dead. (pause) No, this is real. I'm real. I swear
you're not dead. But there's blood.

SWANN

It's his. Simon's. This is his blood, not mine.

ELIZABETH

I have to fix it.

SWANN

How did you know I'd be here?

ELIZABETH

You promised you'd give me the twenty-four hours.

SWANN

Yeah, that worked out just like you said.

ELIZABETH

You're alive. That means something. Please come down, Swann.
(Lights come up MARTIN cradling
his dead son. This moment,
like the *Pieta*, seems to float
behind the bridge.)

SWANN

They just shot him for, Elizabeth. Just because they could.

ELIZABETH

I know.

SWANN

No. You think you know but you can't understand what it felt
like to see him die in the place he felt safest on this
earth. He talked to God in that place. It was his place, not
theirs. Don't' you understand. They killed him for no fucking
reason and there's nothing I can do about it. Nothing.

(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)
(ELIZABETH starts taking off
her shoes and moving up
towards SWANN.)

Elizabeth, what are you doing?

ELIZABETH

If you won't come down then I'm coming up there.

SWANN

Are you crazy?

ELIZABETH

Quite the opposite.

SWANN

Yesterday you couldn't even stand on that road and now you want to come up here where one little slip can send you down there.

ELIZABETH

Things change.

SWANN

No, they don't. The world is just as big a piece of shit today as it was yesterday. Maybe even worse. Your little trip didn't work, did it? Say it, Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

Let me come to you.

SWANN

What's the point. Elizabeth, what's the fucking point?

ELIZABETH

I want to be with you. I care.

SWANN

What's the point of all this caring if they're just going to rip your heart out.

ELIZABETH

When the police said there had been a shooting, I was afraid.

SWANN

It'll be this way forever, won't it?

ELIZABETH

It broke my heart to think you were gone from my life forever.

SWANN

I only knew him one night. One beautiful night. And you want to know what's really fucked up? In that second right before he died I knew how much I wanted to be alive.

(MORE)

SWANN (cont'd)

He made me see how much I care about this whole thing you call life and he made me want to live again. And now he's gone. Poof. Blown away like so much dust. Will it be like this forever?

ELIZABETH

He changed you, Swann. He cared about you. It means something.

SWANN

It hurts, Elizabeth, it fucking hurts caring so much.

ELIZABETH

I hope you never know how much it hurts to feel nothing.

SWANN

I'm cold. Really cold.

ELIZABETH

Take Martin's jacket. And I've got chocolate kisses left in my pocket. Please eat something. You're shaking apart.

(ELIZABETH takes off MARTIN's jacket and puts it around SWANN who falls exhausted into her arms.)

SWANN

I'll bet Martin's a fucking lunatic.

ELIZABETH

(SWANN gobbles up the chocolate.)

You'll need to get cleaned up. Both of us will when we go to see him and we'll stay as long as he needs us. And then there's the police. I can't imagine what we look like and I really don't care. There, I've said it and I mean it. I don't care! Maybe we can get a room in that funny old hotel we passed before we ran out of gas. You know the one you said looked haunted. Well I'm sure it's not haunted and I'll be they've got hot water. I can just smile thinking about soaking in a long hot bath right in the middle of the desert. I mean they must have hot water, right?

SWANN

If you keep ranting I'm going back to the railing.

ELIZABETH

We'll get a big breakfast. I know it's your favorite meal of the day. Maybe we can find some big overstuffed french toast with butter melting down the sides and lots of syrup. Or eggs scrambled just the way you like them. And lots of hot black coffee.

SWANN

I'm so tired.

ELIZABETH

Just close your eyes for a few minutes because a good sleep can make it easier to go back into the world. I know because I've been sleep walking through my life and now I'm awake.

SWANN

My dear Simon. Gone. Like a comet.

ELIZABETH

(SWANN begins to fall asleep in
ELIZABETH'S arms.)

I'm here and I won't leave you. I promise we can do something so Simon won't be forgotten. We have to. Even if it seems too much too think about right now, we'll get through this moment and the next and the one after that. Then we'll get in that car and we'll drive. And talk. And live. We'll see everything there is in this state and every state in between. Fill everyone of those little cards with beautiful notes. Because we have to. Oh Swann, you were so right. It's a beautiful view from here, and if you hadn't come along, I might have missed it completely.

As the sun rises ELIZABETH cradles
SWANN in her arms. The lights come up
on MARTIN holding his dead SIMON.
The hands SIMON and SWANN left on the
walls of the cave appear glowing in the
darkness. They are all that remain.

END OF PLAY

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