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NORMAN. Is that what they said? That's a hell of an attitude. No wonder we have no grandchildren.

ETHEL. What would we do with grandchildren?

NORMAN. Toss them on our knees. We're the last of the Thayers, you know. End of the line for a damn good name.

ETHEL. Well, we'll take it out in style. Shhh. *(From the lake can be heard the plaintive call of the loon.)* Norman, the loons. *(The call is repeated. She peers out the window.)* They're calling. Oh, why is it so dark?

NORMAN. Because the sun went down.

ETHEL. I wish I could see them. *(She calls.)* Yoo hoo! Looo-ooooons! *(Norman stares at her.)* Loony looo-ooooons!

NORMAN. I don't think you should do that in front of Chelsea's companion.

ETHEL. Oh, pooh. I'm just talking to my friends. *(She calls again.)* Yoo hoo! *(Now there is the sound of a car in the back of the house.)* Oh, no! They're here! And I'm not dressed!

NORMAN. You look dressed.

ETHEL. Oh, no, I wanted to look nice. I look like an old character.

NORMAN. You *are* an old character. Run upstairs and change. I'll stay here and entertain them. I'll make them feel welcome.

ETHEL. Will you be nice to them?

NORMAN. Sure. I'll explain to them the risk involved in arriving late for an old man's birthday party. *(The door opens and Chelsea Thayer Wayne steps in. Pretty if perhaps the tiniest bit heavy, athletic and tan but with a nervous edginess to her, and plenty of her father's humor. She rushes to Ethel.)*

CHELSEA. Mommy. *(They embrace. Quite intensely. She looks to Norman, who hasn't moved.)* Hello, Norman.

NORMAN. Look at you.

CHELSEA. Happy birthday.

NORMAN. *(Fending off any emotion he may be feeling.)* Look at this little fat girl, Ethel.

ETHEL. Oh stop, she's as thin as a rail. Isn't she, Norman?

NORMAN. Yes. *(There follows a moment of adjustment. Nothing is said. Ethel jumps in quickly.)*

ETHEL. Dear Chelsea. I'm so glad you're home.

CHELSEA. Oh, God. I thought we'd never get here. We rented a car that explodes every forty miles.

NORMAN. You rented a car?

CHELSEA. Yes, in Boston.

NORMAN. Huh. What sort of car is it?
 CHELSEA. Oh, I don't know. Red, I think.
 ETHEL. (*Very cheerily.*) Ooh! A red car!
 NORMAN. No, I meant — what sort of make is it?
 CHELSEA. (*Stymied.*) Um. I don't know.
 ETHEL. She doesn't know, dear. It doesn't matter.
 NORMAN. Of course it doesn't matter. I was just curious.
 CHELSEA. Well, I should have looked, I guess. It's um, very ugly and it breaks down a lot.
 NORMAN. Ugly and it breaks down a lot. That sounds like a [Nash]. I bet they bought up all the old [Nashes] all over the country and are renting them to unsuspecting customers.
 CHELSEA. I'll bet.
 NORMAN. I'll bet, too.
 CHELSEA. Well. Okay. (*A standoff. She turns away.*) Well. The old house looks exactly the same.
 NORMAN. The old house *is* exactly the same. Just older. Like its inhabitants.
 CHELSEA. Well ...
 ETHEL. Where's your friend? You did bring your friend, didn't you?
 CHELSEA. I knew I was forgetting something.
 NORMAN. That's still on then, huh?
 CHELSEA. As far as I know. It was two minutes ago. I may have been deserted. It wouldn't be the first time. Are you two ready?
 ETHEL. Of course. We can't wait.
 NORMAN. That's right. We can't wait.
 CHELSEA. Great. (*She steps toward the door and calls.*) Hey! Come on in. Nobody's going to bite you. I hope. (*Norman and Ethel watch expectantly and Billy Ray enters. He is thirteen, short and flippant, but only to cover his awkwardness. He is eager and bright, his hair long, his posture terrible. He carries a backpack, a duffel bag and a boom box into the room, dumping them unceremoniously on the floor, as Norman and Ethel watch in wonder.*) Mommy and Norman, this is Billy Ray.
 BILLY. How ya doin'?
 NORMAN. You seem awfully young to be a dentist.
 BILLY. I'm a midget.
 NORMAN. Oh, really?
 CHELSEA. This is Billy Ray, Junior.
 NORMAN. Oh. I'm Norman Thayer, Junior.
 CHELSEA. His dad is out trying to soothe the car.
 ETHEL. (*Stepping forward.*) What a nice surprise! Hello, Billy.

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You can call me Ethel. And you can call Norman Norman.

CHELSEA. I like your logic, Mommy. *(She steps to the door.)* I better see if Bill's gotten lost. He was trying to turn around. He probably drove into the lake. *(She exits. Ethel steps to the door and looks out. Norman and Billy stare at each other.)*

ETHEL. It's so dark outside. It never used to be this dark.

BILLY. I hear you turned eighty today.

NORMAN. Is that what you heard?

BILLY. Yeah. That's really old.

NORMAN. Oh? You should meet my father.

BILLY. Your father's still alive?

NORMAN. No. But you should meet him.

ETHEL. *(Turning back to the room.)* This is so much fun! Norman, why don't we put Billy in Chelsea's old room and then he can look out on the lake in the morning.

NORMAN. Why don't we put him out on the float and he can look at the lake all night long.

BILLY. I'd like that.

ETHEL. I'm afraid you'd be eaten alive by all the bugs.

NORMAN. So?

ETHEL. Norman, take him up and show him where everything is.

NORMAN. Come on, boy. Get your clutter. *(Billy does and he follows Norman up the stairs.)*

BILLY. I just had a birthday, too. I turned thirteen two weeks ago.

NORMAN. We're practically twins.

BILLY. We're sixty-six years and fifty weeks apart.

NORMAN. You're quick, aren't you?

BILLY. Oh, yeah. *(They go into the room at the landing. Chelsea steps back in downstairs.)*

CHELSEA. He's coming. He thought he had to lock the doors.

ETHEL. Well, you never know; the changes around here.

CHELSEA. *(Stepping to Ethel.)* Norman looks very old.

ETHEL. Really? Well, I don't know.

CHELSEA. You look great though.

ETHEL. Thank you. So do you. I love your hair like that.

CHELSEA. You do? *(She touches her hair self-consciously. She leans to her mother, not noticing Norman appear on the landing above.)* How's his mind? Is he remembering things any better?

ETHEL. Oh, he's all right.

NORMAN. *(Loudly.)* Come on, Billy. I'll show you the bathroom, if I can remember where it is. *(He disappears into the hallway. Bill*

Billy