

EG AND THE ELEPHANTS
BY SUSAN LEE HAHN

Inspired by a true story of two female elephants who were reunited at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee after years of being apart.

Susanleehahn@mac.com | (847)224.5356 | SusanLeeHahn.com
7352 Highway 70 S. #1507, Nashville, TN 37221

EG and the ELEPHANTS

By Susan Lee Hahn

FADE IN:

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAM SEQUENCE) - DAY

A lanky African Mahout, **UMBUTU** (11, dark skinned) meanders down a dusty road with a baby white elephant by his side.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as the journey ends at the watering hole. Umbutu bathes his playful companion, their black and white bodies glisten in the sun; two different species, one timeless connection. The faint sound of snoring seeps in.

The SOUND of school kids laughter filters into this idyllic scene, then the school bell interrupts this magical moment.

INT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

A room full of sixth graders in a Chicago public school laugh as Eg wakes up from a nap as the school bell RINGS. Freedom!

EGBERT SIMON (EG, 11) a lanky, awkward boy with a very light, coffee-colored complexion and an old soul gets jolted out of his dream. The students race toward the door.

TEACHER

Family History Presentations are due right after fall break. You should be working on them now! And Egbert Simon, will you please get some sleep tonight?

EXT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eg walks quickly to his bicycle, followed by MADDIE HAYES (11) a small, quirky African American girl.

MADDIE

Hey Eg, wait for me!

EG

Oh, Hi Maddie.

MADDIE

So, did you see the dead body?

EG

What dead body?

MADDIE

Didn't your grandfather just die?

EG

Yeah, but I didn't see the dead body.

MADDIE

How do you know he's really dead if you didn't see the dead body?

EG

I saw the casket and my Grandma Georgia cried a lot. My grandpa Morries is really dead.

FREDDY (12) a mean, hefty Caucasian boy taunts them.

FREDDY

Egghead. Madness.

MADDIE

My name's not, *Madness* you idiot.

FREDDY

No? Still have your pet bug?

MADDIE

He died.

FREDDY

Real normal, *Madness*.

EG

Leave Maddie alone, Freddy.

FREDDY

Why? Because *you love her*?

EG

Because she's my friend!

FREDDY

(mimicking him)

She's my friend! You love her, Egghead. You know you do.

Freddy rides off on his bicycle, cackling to himself.

MADDIE

I'm sorry about your grandfather.

EG

I'm sorry about your pet bug.

MADDIE

It's okay. I've got another one.

Maddie pulls out a glass jar from her backpack that's filled with leaves, sticks, and a black caterpillar. She takes out her new pet and lets it inch up her finger.

POV The caterpillar - Maddie and Eg peer at it, eye-level.

EG

What's this one's name?

MADDIE

Harry.

EG

(to the caterpillar)

Hello, Harry.

MADDIE

(voicing the caterpillar)

Hello, Eg.

EG

He's cuter than the other one.

MADDIE

I think so too. You like bugs?

EG

Sort of.

MADDIE

Thanks for telling Freddy that I'm your friend.

EG

You are my friend.

MADDIE

I like being your friend, Eg. You never make me feel like I'm weird.

EG

I don't think you're weird.

MADDIE

Even though I'm a *Bug Whisperer*?

EG

I think that's cool.

MADDIE

You do?

EG
Yeah. I've got to go.

MADDIE
Okay. Bye Eg. See you tomorrow.

EG
Bye Maddie. Bye Harry.

MADDIE
(voicing the caterpillar)
Bye Eg! I'll miss you!

She watches him ride away, smitten and smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO'S NORTH SIDE/LINCOLN PARK - CONTINUOUS

Eg rides his bike through Lincoln Park toward the zoo.

EXT. LINCOLN PARK ZOO - CONTINUOUS

Eg jumps off his bicycle at the entrance and walks to the empty elephant habitat where there's a sign with photos and the names of two sister elephants, LOLA and POPPY. Eg hangs on the railing and stares at the dirt of the abandoned cage.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEPHANT HABITAT - FLASHBACK

For an instant, Eg is five again, perched on his father's shoulders watching the sister elephants from above the crowd.

A CRACKLING SOUND like an untuned radio reaches little Eg. He raises up his arms, as if conducting a symphony. The two elephants raise up their trunks as if communicating with him.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT/KITCHEN - DAY

Eg sits at the kitchen table in their highrise across from the Lincoln Park Zoo with his grandmother GEORGIA SIMON (70, stunning and soulful) drinking tea as he snacks.

EG
Grandma Georgia?

GEORGIA
Yes, Egbert, my Egbert.

EG
I have a project for school about my family history and I already know all about my mom's side because they talk a lot.

GEORGIA
I've noticed.

EG
I don't know much about your side. Dad says there's not much to know.

GEORGIA
What do you want to know?

EG
Did you and Grandpa Morrie live in Albany when my dad was born?

GEORGIA
When your dad was born...

EG
If you don't want to talk about it because of Grandpa Morrie being dead and all, I understand.

GEORGIA
I'd like to talk about it. I was twenty when your dad was born, and he wasn't born in Albany. I didn't even meet Grandpa Morrie until I was twenty-five.

EG
When my dad was five? So where was my dad born?

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNE IN TENNESSEE - JULY 20TH, 1969 - NIGHT

A group of happy, GRUNGY HIPPIES sit around a campfire smoking a joint. It's a warm July night. One of the guys runs out of a small cabin all excited.

HIPPIE #1
Hurry! It's almost time!

The Hippies all rush into the two-room cabin, which has electricity and a black and white television.

They hover around the TV as Neil Armstrong takes the first step on the moon. The SOUND of groaning overlaps his walk.

In the next room, twenty-year old GEORGIA a beautiful and brave woman in the throes of labor grips the hand of EGBERT (Bert) FREEMAN (20) a strapping, African American male.

Bert is so frightened and emotional that he cries while she pushes and screams. The baby's head crowns. A female MIDWIFE (40) encourages Georgia to push again. She pushes fiercely.

In the next room, the hippies surround the small black and white television and watch as Neil Armstrong walks on the moon - "One small step for man; One giant leap for mankind."

Georgia pushes out the baby. The Midwife smiles. Bert cries. Baby NEIL takes his first breath to the sound of cheering. The midwife wraps up the baby and hands him to Bert. Tears stream down his face. He brings the baby to Georgia.

They hold baby Neil as the midwife takes a photo. The world has just changed instantly, and Neil's first cries punctuate this monumental moment.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Eg stares at Georgia who's sitting beside him. He's stunned.

EG

You mean, Grandpa Morrie isn't my dad's real dad?

GEORGIA

He adopted your dad when he was six, right after we got married.

EG

What happened to my dad's real dad?

GEORGIA

I don't know. We lost touch.

EG

How could you lose touch?

GEORGIA

Things were complicated back then.

EG
Things are complicated now.

GEORGIA
I suppose they are.

EG
Who is he? How do we find him?

GEORGIA
I shouldn't have said anything.

EG
Did you love him?

GEORGIA
Yes. Very much.

EG
Do you still love him?

GEORGIA
He was the great love of my life. I loved Grandpa Morrie, he was a good man, but Bert was something else.

EG
What did he look like?

Georgia takes out a worn photo that was taken at the birth.

GEORGIA
That's your dad and that's his dad, Bert, your namesake.

EG
What's a namesake?

GEORGIA
Someone who has the same name.

CLOSE UP of another photo - Five-year old Neil is flanked by his parents with an arm around each of their necks.

For an instant the photo comes to life. Neil kisses his parents, Georgia smiles, Bert looks lovingly at his family.

Georgia spreads out other photos. Each one comes 'alive' for an instant. Eg captures all of them on his phone.

The SOUND of the elevator surprises them as Georgia quickly puts the photos back in her purse.

NEIL (O.S.)
Hello! Eg? Mom? Where are you?

GEORGIA
We're in the kitchen!
(to Eg)
Don't say anything.

EG
What's my namesake's full name?

GEORGIA
Egbert Freeman.

NEIL SIMON (50) a handsome, light-skinned African American man who could pass for white, kisses him mother and son.

NEIL
What are you two talking about?

EG GEORGIA
Homework. Dinner.

GEORGIA
Let's try that new pizza place.

Neil looks at her, then Eg. *Something's up.*

EG
Grandma Georgia was helping me with
my homework. I have a project due.

NEIL
Really? She was helping you?

GEORGIA
I'm as surprised as you are that I
can be of any assistance in the
homework department.

Eg and Georgia exchange a knowing smile.

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eg sits in bed with his laptop watching the 'ELE-CAM' on the Elephant Sanctuary's website. It's a moonlit night, so he can see some of the Tennessee topography, but no elephants.

On his desk is a photo of him at five on his father's shoulders in front of the elephant habitat. His arms are raised as Poppy and Lola's trunks are also raised.

He Googles, **Egbert Freeman**. A sculptor's website pops up. Eg studies his biological grandfather's face, fascinated. BERT FREEMAN (70) is a strong, handsome African American man with kind, sad eyes. Eg makes note of his Tennessee address.

Neil knocks and Eg quickly switches back to the Ele-cam.

NEIL

What were you and Grandma Georgia talking about when I got home?

EG

She's really sad.

NEIL

It's a loss. We're all sad.

EG

She was helping me with my homework.

NEIL

Is that so?

EG

I have to do a presentation about my family. Can I do it on Lola and Poppy? They're my family!

NEIL

I'm really sorry about Lola. I know how much you loved those elephants.

EG

It's a loss.

NEIL

Technically, you need to be the same species to be family.

EG

No you don't! Can we drive down to the elephant sanctuary in Tennessee and see Poppy over my fall break?

NEIL

Your fall break is in two days.

EG

It's not that far. I mapped it out.

NEIL

Your mom's working on a big case.

EG
So, just the two of us can go!

NEIL
I've got a client meeting on Friday
afternoon. There's not enough time.

EG
I really miss her. *Please, dad.*

NEIL
I'll think about it. I love you.

EG
I love you too.

Neil kisses him good night and turns off the lights. Eg
sneaks another peek at Bert's website.

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE/POND (DREAM SEQUENCE) - DAY

Back to the lanky, young African Mahout, Umbutu and his
glistening white elephant at the water hole. They have fun
and frolic as Umbutu lovingly washes his elephant companion.

There's a similar CRACKLING sounds to Eg's conversation with
the two sister elephants. There's a strange transference as
Egg and Umbutu become super connected.

A NOISE in the bushes startles them. It's the SLIDE, CLICK of
a hunter's rifle reverberates. Umbutu looks frightened.

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S BEDROOM - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

ADINA (40, businesslike, energetic) bursts into his room.

ADINA
Eg! I woke you half an hour ago.

EG
I had that dream again.

ADINA
Tell me in the car. I've got a big
case in court today. I'm calling
for the elevator in five minutes.

EG
I'll ride my bike to school.

ADINA
There's no time. Let's go!

Eg watches the "ele-cam" on his iPad while brushing his teeth. Then he sees her. Big. Gray. Beautiful. It's *POPPY*. CLOSE UP of the elephant as she stops, as if posing for him. A SOUND of crackling whispers a psychic message.

EG
Poppy! What is it, girl?

More psychic chatter between them. He stops brushing. Adina bursts back in and catches him in front of the screen.

ADINA
Eg!

She gives him a halting look and rings for the elevator. Eg gets dressed in record speed. Neil opens his door.

NEIL
Almost ready?

EG
I saw Poppy. Something's wrong!

NEIL
She's fine. They take great care of the elephants at the sanctuary.

EG
I know she's fine, but Lola is not!

NEIL
Eg, Lola's not alive anymore. She died during the trip to Tennessee.

Neil goes to the vestibule. Adina gives him a look.

ADINA
(quietly)
He needs professional help.

NEIL
He's just got a big imagination.

ADINA
He's overly attached to those elephants. It isn't normal.

The elevator buzzes as Eg dashes in. Doors start to close.

EG
Can Maddie come over after school?

NEIL
Who's Maddie?

EG
My friend.

ADINA
As long as Maddie isn't an
elephant, she's welcome anytime.

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Eg daydreams out the window. His eyes glaze over, lost.

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAMLIKE NARRATIVE) - CONTINUOUS

In his daze, Eg imagines the continuation of the dream as two
hunters emerge from the forest, rifles aimed. Umbutu stands
bravely in front of the beautiful white elephant.

TEACHER (V.O.)
EGBERT!

INT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The whole class is looking at him. He slumps down.

TEACHER
Egbert Simon. Is there something in
that courtyard that you'd like to
share with the rest of the class?

EG
What?

TEACHER
We're talking about the Thirteenth
Amendment. In here, not out there.

EG
Oh. The Thirteenth Amendment. Okay.

TEACHER
Please tell the class everything
you know about the Thirteenth
Amendment to the Constitution.

EG

Sure. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and was ratified in 1865. Even though it *technically* freed the slaves, it took almost one hundred years until the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 to show that the law would support everyone's right to an education, regardless of their race.

Then, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 finally granted some real rights to African Americans, but it took almost a hundred years and we still have a long way to go towards real racial equality.

TEACHER

Well. I didn't know you knew so much about American history.

FREDDY

(mumbles loudly)

He should know. His father's **black**.

TEACHER

Frederick. That's enough from you!

The bell rings. The students all scramble to get outside.

EXT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM/SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Eg waits for Maddie. They walk out together.

MADDIE

Did you ride your bike today?

EG

Nope.

MADDIE

What are you doing after school?

EG

Nothing. What to come over?

MADDIE

Really? Sure!

CUT TO:

EXT. LINCOLN PARK NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Eg and Maddie walk home through the zoo. She finds a green caterpillar and puts it in the jar.

MADDIE
Harry's going to be so happy.

EG
How do you know they'll get along?

MADDIE
They might be different colors, but
they're meant for each other.

CLOSE UP on the two caterpillars who inch toward one another.

EXT. LINCOLN PARK ZOO - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Eg and Maddie, the weird, wonderful duo stop in front of the Elephant habitat. She looks at the photos with their names.

MADDIE
Who'd you like better, Lola or
Poppy?

EG
I love them both.

MADDIE
I liked Lola better.

EG
How come?

MADDIE
She looked like the kind of
Elephant who could stand up to
anyone.

EG
Are you also an Elephant Whisperer?

MADDIE
Nope. Just a bug whisperer.

EG
I might be an elephant whisperer.

MADDIE
That's cool.

EG

Lola could stand up to anyone and she was super smart. They say she died, but I don't think she did.

MADDIE

Let's go to your house for a snack.

INT. EG'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maddie looks at the photo of him on his dad's shoulders when he was five and conducting the elephant symphony.

MADDIE

You're lucky you're dad's black.

EG

He thinks he's white because he looks white and he was raised by two white people.

MADDIE

He looks black to me and black men are cooler than wimpy white guys!

EG

Can you keep a secret?

MADDIE

Nope, but tell me anyway!

Eg opens up his laptop and shows her Bert's website.

EG

Maddie, you can't tell anyone.

MADDIE

Who is this guy?

EG

He's my dad's real dad.

MADDIE

I thought he just died?

EG

That was my Grandpa Morrie, he adopted my dad when my dad was six, just after he married my grandma.

MADDIE

This black guy is your grandfather?

EG
I guess so.

MADDIE
Have you ever met him?

EG
Nope! I didn't even know he existed
until yesterday.

MADDIE
Let's find out more about him.

Maddie calls the number on the website from Eg's cell phone.

EG
Maddie! What are you doing?

MADDIE
Calling him up. Let's ask him some
questions.

EG
WHAT! No!

Maddie puts her hand up to quiet him from speaking.

BERT (O.S.)
Hello?

MADDIE
(into the phone)
Hello! Is this Mr. Egbert Freeman?

BERT (O.S.)
It is. May I ask who's calling?

MADDIE
My name is Maddie Jones. I'm a
friend of Eg's, I mean Egbert. He's
eleven years old, lives in Chicago,
and he might be your grandson.

Eg hides under the covers. The voice on the phone is silent.

INTERCUT between Eg's bedroom and Bert's house.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

BERT FREEMAN (70) still a strapping, stunning man grabs a
steaming mug and walks outside. He sits on the back steps.

MADDIE (V.O.)
Hello? Mr. Freeman? Are you there?

BERT
Call me Bert. I am his grandfather.
May I please speak with Eg?

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S BEDROOM/CHICAGO - SAME TIME

Maddie smiles, flips off the covers, and hands Eg the phone.

MADDIE
He's your grandfather and he wants
to speak to you. He's got a nice
voice. Very polite...

EG/BERT
Egbert? It's me.

Maddie sits next to him, so they're ear-to-ear, listening.

BERT
I'm so happy to hear your voice.

EG
You knew about me?

BERT
I did.

EG
How come I didn't know about you?

BERT
Well now you know about me.

EG
How did you even know about me?

BERT
I've been keeping an eye on you,
and your dad, and your grandmother
Georgia for many years.

EG
How come you never came to meet me?

BERT
Out of respect for your grandmother
Georgia. She had a husband and a
life and I wanted her to be happy.

EG
Her husband just died, you know.

BERT
I know.

EG
How do you know?

BERT
I read his obituary online.

EG
Have you always lived in Tennessee?

BERT
Except for about seven years, five months, six days, and eleven hours.

EG
What?

BERT
It's complicated.

EG
Do you live anywhere near the elephant sanctuary?

BERT
I do. I sometimes help them plant grasses and food for the elephants.

EG
Do you know Poppy?

BERT
The new girl from Chicago?

EG
Yes!

BERT
She's a sweetheart, kind of shy, or maybe she's just a little lonely.

EG
She might still love you, you know.

BERT
Who Poppy?

EG

No. My Grandma Georgia. She told me
you were the love of her life.

Bert has tears streaming down his face.

BERT

Is that so?

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dinnertime and Eg, Neil, and Adina sit around the table.

EG

I have a big project due after fall
break and I want to do it on Lola
and Poppy, the best sisters ever!

ADINA

They're not your real sisters, Eg.

EG

But I saw them every day of my life
and they're sisters to each other.

NEIL

We know you're sad about Lola.

EG

I'm sad about *all the elephants* who
are going to die for no reason. Did
you know that elephants could
become extinct in my lifetime? I'm
eleven. *Extinct*. Imagine that.

ADINA

I think it's wonderful that you
care so much about elephants.

EG

Humans are their only predators.

Neil exchanges a look with Adina. Eg reaches for his laptop.

NEIL

Maybe we could call the elephant
sanctuary to get an update on-

EG

I mapped out the drive to
Hohenwald, Tennessee, dad.

(MORE)

EG (CONT'D)

It should take about eight hours if we leave early and avoid traffic.

ADINA

Hole-in-the-wall, Tennessee?

EG

It's Hohenwald, mom.

ADINA

When do you think you're going there?

EG

Wednesday.

ADINA

Wednesday, as in *tomorrow*?

EG

Dad has a meeting on Friday afternoon. We could leave early tomorrow, spend two nights, leave really early Friday morning so we get back in time for his meeting. I made hotel reservations, just in case you said yes.

NEIL

(smiling at Eg)

You do have your mother's gift for persuasion.

ADINA

Neil. You can't be serious.

NEIL

It'll be good for us to get away. You know how we love adventures.

Eg jumps up, hugs him, overjoyed. *They're going!*

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY CAR - DAWN

They pull away before dawn. Eg looks so excited.

NEIL

Tell me about school and Maddie.

EG

She's my best friend, my *only* friend.

NEIL

What's Maddie like?

EG

She's a bug whisperer and she always has weird bugs with her.

NEIL

You two must get along great because you think you're an elephant whisperer.

EG

I don't *think*, ***I know I'm an elephant whisperer.***

NEIL

I'm happy for you that you found a friend with a big imagination like yours.

EG

I don't have a big imagination. It's real. I can hear elephants and understand what they're saying.

NEIL

I only hope you can apply that mind-reading gift to women when you're older.

EG

Why would I want to do that?

NEIL

Oh the joy of being eleven!

INT. THE FAMILY CAR - LATER

Hours later, Eg plays Country music and sings along in a silly way. He's so happy. Neil tries to sing too.

NEIL

Since when do you like Country music?

EG

Since we're going to Tennessee, home of Music City!

A SERIES OF SHOTS as they cross state lines to Indiana, then Kentucky, then Tennessee. Eg let's out a cheer.

EG (CONT'D)

We're in Tennessee! How does it
feel to be back home?

NEIL

This isn't home. Chicago is home.

EG

What about Albany?

NEIL

How do you know about Albany?

EG

Grandma Georgia told me.

NEIL

What else did Grandma Georgia tell
you?

EG

She told me about your real dad,
the guy I'm named after. *Egbert*.

NEIL

Grandma Georgia told you about him?

EG

Said he was the *love of her life*.

NEIL

I'll make you a deal. You can ask
me anything you want. We can talk
about elephants. We can even listen
to country music, but let's not
talk about my real dad. Okay?

EG

Why not? Because he's black?

NEIL

That's not why.

EG

Then why?

NEIL

Because he left us when I was five.

EG

What if you could see him again?

NEIL

Let's talk about something else.

EG

How about the Thirteenth Amendment.

NEIL

To the Constitution?

EG

Yeah. Dad, are we black?

NEIL

Okay, my biological father was African American, but I grew up with Grandma Georgia and Grandpa Morrie. They're white. Your mom's white. We're mostly white.

EG

But we have some *African American* blood in us, right?

NEIL

Yes. We have African American ancestors, but for all practical purposes, we're white.

EG

I don't think I'm white.

NEIL

Well, you look white.

EG

I think I'm African American inside. Or maybe just African.

NEIL

I thought you were an elephant whisperer?

EG

That's where it comes from.

EXT. THE NATCHEZ TRACE - DAY

The crackling psychic SOUND get louder and more distinct as they drive the historic Natchez Trace Parkway, sheltered by tall trees and a shifting sky. The rolling hills are untouched by commercialism and unfold in vibrant colors.

Eg closes his eyes. In the space between waking and sleeping, he catches a glimpse of Lola in a cage. ***She's alive!***

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - DAY

Hundreds of acres stretch across the rolling hills of Middle Tennessee beneath a ridiculously huge house that sits up on top of a hill at the end of a mile-long, gated driveway.

DAMON REYNOLDS, a bald, cold-hearted billionaire (70+) visits the caged animals in his make-shift zoo, located in one of the barns on his property (a gazelle, zebras, warthog, etc).

In a big cage at the end of the barn sits LOLA. She moves toward Damon defiantly. Their eyes meet.

Their veterinarian, TODD DUKE (38, a sun-bleached and salty guy) tries to reason with Damon.

TODD

If we let Lola roam the property, she'll feed herself. She'll be bigger, happier, and give us all a break. She eats about 500 pounds of food a day! It's hard to keep up.

DAMON

That's not going to happen.

TODD

She also needs the exercise.

DAMON

She'll roam when I say she can roam. I don't want her to escape.

TODD

Escape?

DAMON

I can't risk her missing my seventieth birthday party.

TODD

She was a zoo animal. She doesn't do tricks or anything like that.

Damon stares at Lola. He's pure evil and with the money to indulge himself in all his wicked fantasies. Lola senses Eg's proximity to her and TRUMPETS for help. Todd brings more hay.

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY CAR - DAY

Eg nods off in the front seat, he sleeps restlessly.

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAMLIKE NARRATIVE) - DAY

Back to the moment the TWO HUNTERS emerge from the jungle with leathery skin and cruel eyes. They aim their rifles at the white elephant. *Eg looks through the eyes of the African Mahout in his dream.* He helps the elephant submerge in the water, then stands between her and the hunters.

The white elephant TRUMPETS out a cry of danger, which overlaps the actual TRUMPET from Lola, which gets louder.

CUT TO:

INT. DAMON'S ESTATE - ELEPHANT BARN - CONTINUOUS

Damon points the rifle between Lola's eyes as Eg dreams of a hunter pointing a rifle at the white elephant's eyes. Todd hauls in a bale of hay and sees the silhouette of Damon.

TODD

Mr. Reynolds! Stop!

DAMON

(lowering his rifle)

I'm not going to hurt her.

TODD

Why do you have your rifle out?

DAMON

I'm going hunting.

TODD

It's not hunting season, sir.

DAMON

It's always hunting season on my property.

Damon walks out, laughing to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOHENWALD, TN - DAY

They arrive in the small, town of Hohenwald, Tennessee, which is a 'Main Street' kind of town, a throw-back to another era.

INT./EXT DINER - DAY

They sit in a booth as the sole waitress, SAVANNAH (40+ burlesque pretty, truck driver tough) hands them menus.

SAVANNAH
(heavy Southern accent)
Hi y'all?

EG
What's your name?

SAVANNAH
I'm Savannah. Who are you?

EG
I'm Eg!

SAVANNAH
Isn't that just a fine name to walk into a diner with! Are you an *easy-over* egg? A *scramble-y* kind of egg? A *soft-in-the-middle* kind of egg?

EG
I'm a *sizzle-y* fried Eg.

SAVANNAH
Well, all right then! What can I get you to drink, Sugar Pie?

EG
Is sugar pie a drink?

SAVANNAH
Bless your heart. Sugar pie is a term of endearment, Mr. Sizzle-y.

EG
I'll have a Coke.

NEIL
He'll have water. I'll have coffee.

SAVANNAH
(with innuendo)
How about some sugar for you?

NEIL
Black. Thanks.

As she gets the coffee, she overhears their conversation.

EG
Thanks for driving down here, dad.

NEIL
You excited to see the elephants?

EG
Super excited.

SAVANNAH
Oh, baby, you talking 'bout the
elephant sanctuary?

EG
Yeah.

SAVANNAH
You can't get in there.

NEIL
Why not?

SAVANNAH
It's not open to the public. Lot of
tourists make that same mistake.

EG
(avoids Neil's gaze)
We're still going to see them.

SAVANNAH
Is that so?

NEIL
(to Savannah)
Why can't we get in to see them?

SAVANNAH
Because it's a sanctuary. The
elephants go there to live in peace
without the public gawking at them
or making them do stupid stuff.

NEIL

(to Eg)

Did you know about this?

EG

I made special arrangements.

NEIL

What kind of special arrangements?

SAVANNAH

(to Eg)

How old are you?

EG

Eleven.

SAVANNAH

You have to be a VIP to get in and they only let visitors in twice a year, but it's that time of year.

NEIL

Eg! Did you hear that?

EG

It's okay, dad. We'll see 'em.

SAVANNAH

Are you a VIP, Sugar Pie?

EG

No, but I have a friend who is.

NEIL

What kind of friend?

EG

I have to go to the bathroom.

Savannah points to the back. Eg dashes to the back. She checks Neil's finger for a wedding ring.

SAVANNAH

Probably just wanted some time alone with his daddy. Can't say that I blame him much.

NEIL

They don't accept visitors at all?

SAVANNAH

Only if you're another elephant.

NEIL
I can't believe this.

SAVANNAH
Would you like a moment to look at
the menu or are you ready to order?

NEIL
Two grilled cheese sandwiches.

SAVANNAH
With or without?

NEIL
With or without what?

SAVANNAH
I was going to say, a wife, but I
can see that you're 'banded.'

She leans in flirtatiously as she motions to his ring finger.

NEIL
With or without...?

SAVANNAH
Fries.

NEIL
With fries. And a wife.

SAVANNAH
You're kinda cute for a Yankee.

INT. DINER/MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eg makes a call on his cell phone.

EG
He doesn't know... Okay... We're at
the diner... Me too. *Hurry.*

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - SHORT WHILE LATER

Savannah brings their food as Eg avoids Neil's glare.

SAVANNAH
Y'all holler if you need anything.

NEIL

Why did you make me drive all this way down here if you knew we couldn't get in to see them?

EG

It'll be worth it, Dad. I promise.

NEIL

This is what I get for letting an eleven year-old plan a trip.

EG

You and mom are always so busy!

NEIL

Finish eating. We're going home.

A tall, African American man enters the diner. BERT FREEMAN has the aura of a a Shaman and the heart of an artist. He walks boldly toward their booth. His eyes meet Eg's. They're soul mates and instant friends.

Savannah smiles at Bert. Eg scoots over. Neil is confused.

BERT

May I join you?

EG

Sure! Sit next to me.

Eg slides over. Bert slips into the booth next to him.

NEIL

What? No!

Neil's expression changes to recognition, then disbelief. He freaks out. He drops a twenty dollar bill on the table and stands up to leave. Bert stands up too.

EG

Dad, do you know who this is?

NEIL

(to Savannah)

Keep the change.

BERT

Neil, please. I've waited a long time to see you again.

NEIL

Eg, we're leaving. Now.

EG
We just got here. *He just got here.*

NEIL
Let's go!

Neil motions for Eg to follow him.

EG
But he's your **real dad!**

NEIL
No he's not. Grandpa Morrie was my
real dad. He was the sperm donor.

EG
I'm not leaving!

NEIL
Eg. Enough. Get in the car.

EG
Aren't you even a little happy to
see him again?

NEIL
No!

BERT
Neil, just give me five minutes.

Neil stares at Bert who has tears in his eyes. The moment is
powerful and fragile. Eg looks desperate.

EG
(quietly)
Please dad.

NEIL
It's illegal to entice a minor
across state lines.

BERT
He contacted me. I swear to you.

Eg nods guiltily and takes Bert's hand.

EG
I did! He's my namesake. When
Grandma Georgia told me about him,
I looked him up and found him!

NEIL

You can have five minutes to talk to him, then we're driving back to Chicago.

Neil walks out. Bert extends his hand. Eg shakes it.

BERT

(tears streaming)

I'm Bert, short for Egbert. It's my great honor to meet you.

EG

I'm Eg, short for Egbert. It's my great honor to meet you too.

Bert uses the handshake to gently bring Eg in for a hug.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Neil paces around the car. Bert and Eg come out.

EG

Can I have my five minutes with Bert some place else?

NEIL

What? Why? No!

EG

Someplace that's not so public.

NEIL

Oh for Christ's sake, Eg! Talk to him in the parking lot.

EG

I want to see where he lives and see some of his sculptures.

NEIL

You're still a sculptor?

BERT

I am.

Eg stands next to Bert, unwavering.

NEIL

This is too much for me.

BERT
Please. Let's go to my house. I
just want to talk to you.

NEIL
(to Bert)
I have nothing to say to you.

BERT
Can you listen to me, then?

EG
I have something to say to him. I
really need to talk to him.

NEIL
What about?

EG
My dreams.

BERT
I only live about ten minutes away.

EG
Please dad.

BERT
Just five minutes of your time.

Bert looks so sincere. Neil shows signs of weakening.

NEIL
You can have five minutes with Eg.
Then we're leaving.

EG
I'll ride with Bert.

NEIL
You're coming with me.

EG
Don't you need time alone so you
can call Mom and tell her what just
happened and figure out some
horrible punishment for me?

Eg and Neil are in a standoff. Eg wins this round.

NEIL
(to Bert)
What's your address?

BERT
Follow me. I won't lose you. *I*
promise.

EXT. BERT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bert helps Eg climb into his truck and closes the door.

INT. BERT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

They see Neil on the phone in the rear view mirror.

EG
I'm glad I'm not in his car!

BERT
Me too! God it's good to meet you.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE - DAY

The country farm house has a lonely, weathered look. Bert helps Eg out of the truck as Neil pulls up behind them. Bert opens the door to the house. Neil hesitates.

INT. BERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He shows them through his simple home, past the kitchen, and out onto the back porch, which overlooks his expansive land.

Bert takes a pitcher of fresh lemonade from the fridge and a tray with tall glasses, as if he has been expecting company.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Bert sets the glasses and pitcher on the table. Neil stands on the porch as Eg explores the gardens and the chicken coop.

BERT
I'm going to show him around. Want
to join us?

NEIL
I'll wait here.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

The chickens are all exotic Polish chickens with crazy tufts of feathers in bright colors. Bert retrieves an egg.

EG
(quietly)
He's really not mean once you get
to know him.

BERT
(quietly)
How could he be mean if he has a
son as nice as you?

EG
Go talk to him. He needs you more
than I do. I'll stay here.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Bert offers him a seat. Neil stays standing, arms folded.
They watch Eg play with the chickens. Eg is as awkward with
the chickens as Bert and Neil are with one another.

BERT
It's so good to see you again.

NEIL
What do you have to say that's so
important after all these years?

BERT
I know you think I abandoned you,
but that's not what happened.

NEIL
I'll tell you what happened from my
perspective. I was five. You were
my whole world. I end up in a cold
climate after two days on a train,
to watch some old man die. After
months of being there, he dies and
I'm told that I may never see you
again. I thought you died too. Then
I realized that you just didn't
care, so I went on with my life.

BERT
I always cared. I still care.

NEIL
You have a funny way of showing it.

BERT
It's more complicated than that.

NEIL
My life went on. I'm over it.

BERT
I'm not over it.

NEIL
Then that's your problem.

BERT
What about Eg?

NEIL
What about Eg? He's my son and I
want you to leave him alone.

BERT
I swear to you, Neil. He found me.

NEIL
I still find that hard to believe.

BERT
He called me up with his friend,
Maddie. I swear. I was shocked.

Awkward silence as they watch Eg make friends with one of the
fancy polish chickens in the coop.

NEIL
Eg is an odd kid.

BERT
He's wonderful If don't mind me
asking, *how's Georgia?*

Bert gets so choked up when he says her name.

NEIL
I do mind you asking.

BERT
I'm sorry.

NEIL
(loudly to Eg)
Eg! We're leaving. Now.

BERT
I didn't mean to upset you.

EG
Look dad! I made another friend.

NEIL
Kiss the chicken goodbye!

BERT
Will you at least stay for dinner?

NEIL
(quietly to Bert)
No. And stay away from my family.

Eg comes running up the porch, chicken feathers on him.

EG
I thought I was only an elephant
whisperer, but I think I might be a
chicken whisperer too.

NEIL
Say goodbye to Bert, Eg.

Eg and Bert look equally crushed. Neither one moves.

EG
But we just got here and we haven't
seen the elephants yet!

NEIL
We're not going to see the
elephants, Eg. You heard what
Savannah said. *No public access.*

BERT
Unless you're a VIP.

NEIL
You're a VIP?

BERT
I made arrangements when I heard
you were coming. I got you on the
VIP tour this Friday.

EG
We drove all this way!

NEIL
Was that the plan all along? Trick
me into seeing him again? I've got
to be back in Chicago Friday.

EG
But Dad, it's what I dream about.

Neil is bombarded by desperate looks from his son and father.

NEIL

I've had a long day of driving and I need to make some calls. I'm going to check into our hotel -- there is a hotel, isn't there?

EG

Yes! I didn't make everything up.

NEIL

That's reassuring.

EG

Can't we just say one night?

NEIL

Fine. I'm too tired to drive back tonight. We're leaving tomorrow.

EG

Can I stay here with Bert? Just for a couple of hours. Then you can make your calls in private.

Neil hesitates. Bert looks so hopeful, he's about to burst.

BERT

I'd love to show him my studio.

NEIL

I don't think it's a good idea.

EG

It's a GREAT idea! Come on, dad.

NEIL

Why don't you come back for dinner. Eg and I will cook.

EG

It's my only chance to get to know him. *Please dad.*

Eg looks eagerly at Neil. Bert looks so sincere.

NEIL

I'll be back in two hours.

Neil walks to his car. The other two look so happy.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE - CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

Bert and Eg in the chicken coop, Bert sings to the chickens, which is kooky and fascinating as they respond to him.

He motions to Eg, who sings along, making up the words. They're the same kind of quirky.

Bert picks up his favorite chicken (a bearded buff-laced Polish hen) and calms her so Eg can "pet" her.

The moment bubbles up with love. Eg looks at Bert, who's so happy that he's got tears in his eyes.

EG

What's her name?

BERT

Gracie. She likes when you do this.

Bert shows him how to stroke the plume around her head.

EG

Hello, Gracie! How are you today?

BERT

(high pitched voice)

Much better now that you're here!

Bert moves her cap of feathers away from her eyes.

EG

You speak chicken!

Gracie pecks toward Eg, but he flinches away.

BERT

She's just trying to kiss you.

EG

Do you really speak *chicken*?

BERT

I don't know.

EG

(shyly)

I really speak elephant.

BERT

Really? My father spoke elephant.

EG

He did?

BERT

He was known in Africa as a great
Elephant Whisperer.

EG

So I'm not crazy?

BERT

You're remarkable. Have you heard
any elephants lately?

EG

Yes! Lola.

BERT

Who's Lola?

EG

One of the elephants from the
Lincoln Park Zoo who lived across
the street from me.

BERT

Is Lola at the elephant sanctuary?

EG

That's Poppy, her sister. Lola was
supposed to go with her, but they
said she died before she got there.
I'm positive she didn't die.

BERT

How do you know?

EG

Because I keep *hearing* her.

BERT

What does she tell you?

EG

She doesn't really speak in words.

BERT

What does she speak in?

EG

Feelings. Right now, it feels like
she's in a lot of danger. **We have
to help her.**

CUT TO:

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - DAY

Neil pulls up and notices a large bronze sculpture of three figures in the middle of the town park across the street. It's obscured by the circle of bushes surrounding it.

INT. THE COMMODORE INN - FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

Neil checks in. It's an old fashioned place with real room keys and decor that hasn't been updated since the seventies.

He glances outside again to the sculpture and sees the face of a little boy, its bronze patina shining in the sun.

INT. THE COMMODORE INN - NEIL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neil opens the windows and flops down on the bed. He closes his eyes, then opens them a slit and watches white, sheer curtains billow like ethereal visitors. He falls asleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE COMMUNE - DREAM SEQUENCE - DAY

Neil is five years old again and falls asleep in between his parents on their futon on the floor. A similar window has billowing curtains and a breeze that lulls him to sleep. He snuggles between Georgia and Bert as they talk quietly.

GEORGIA
Come with us!

BERT
I would love to, but I can't.

GEORGIA
Why not?

BERT
Because I'm a black man who
fathered his only daughter's only
son out of wedlock. I don't care
how liberal you think they are,
they will not accept me and that
will make it harder for you two.

GEORGIA
But I love you, Bert.

BERT

I love you too, Georgia and I never want to imagine a day when I'm without you and Neil. You're my whole life.

GEORGIA

If I love you, they'll love you.

BERT

Your father is dying. You should do take Neil back there to meet him.

Bert and Georgia fall asleep with little Neil in the middle.

The billowing curtains take on a warm glow from the setting sun. The dream curtains merge with the present-day curtains.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. BERT'S WORKSHOP BARN - CONTINUOUS

Bert slides opens the big barn doors. A life-sized sculpture of Damon Reynolds with hunting rifle in hand catches a splash of sunlight. Eg jumps. The CRACKLING sounds reverberate.

BERT

Sorry. I should have warned you.

EG

You did this?

BERT

I did.

EG

How did you know how to do this?

Eg walks around the workshop, enthralled.

BERT

Some of my ancestors in Africa were sculptors. It's in my soul's DNA.

Eg looks at Damon's arrogant expression, rifle poised. Lola's distress SOUNDS gets really loud in his head.

EG

Why does he look so mean?

BERT

He's supposed to look determined.

EG
He looks mean.

BERT
Well, he is mean.

EG
Who is he?

BERT
Damon Reynolds. One of Tennessee's
most notorious billionaires.

EG
He has a billion dollars?

BERT
More than that, I believe.

EG
What does he do with a billion
dollars?

BERT
Anything he wants.

EG
Could he buy an elephant?

BERT
No doubt. He lives on the property
where our commune used to be.

EG
What's a commune?

BERT
It's a special place where a bunch
of people live together in harmony.

EG
Like a big house?

BERT
Sort of like a summer camp. I wish
you could have seen it. It's where
I fell in love with Georgia. Your
dad was born there, too.

EG
Do you miss it?

BERT

I do. Those were the best days of my life. Until now. Meeting you.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE - DUSK

Painterly streaks of smoky gray and midnight blue swirl across the amethyst sky as Neil pulls into Bert's driveway. A lazy armadillo meanders across his headlights. He HONKS.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Bert and Eg roast fresh corn in the fire pit. The HONK alerts them of Neil's arrival. They exchange a look. Neil arrives on the porch, all worked up.

NEIL

There's a weird animal in your driveway.

BERT

Probably an armadillo. I've got a shotgun in the front hall closet and a pistol in my boot, if you want to kill it.

NEIL

What!

BERT

I'm just kidding. They won't bother you if you don't bother them.

EG

Let's eat. I'm starving.

Eg is about to take a piece of corn. He looks up at Bert.

BERT

Did you wash your hands?

Eg dashes off to wash up. Bert turns to Neil.

NEIL

I washed my hands at the hotel.

BERT

I just want to tell you that you're doing a great job with Eg. He's bright, sensitive, and so funny!

(MORE)

BERT (CONT'D)

This has been one of the best days
of my life. Thank you for letting
him spend the afternoon here.

Bert is so choked up that he can hardly speak. Neil softens.
Eg comes back, wiping his hands on his pants. He's about to
take some corn. He looks at Bert. Stops in his tracks.

EG

Now?

BERT

Let's just take a moment before we
eat to feel grateful for all that
we have and for being together.

NEIL

You mean, *pray*?

BERT

If taking time to feel grateful is
praying, then, yes.

EG

Do you pray all the time?

BERT

I feel grateful all day long, so I
guess I do.

They have a moment of quiet. Bert nods. Eg slathers the hot
corn with butter and takes a bite. He eats voraciously.

A SERIES OF SHOTS AT DINNER

Eg is animated and talks throughout the meal. Bert and Eg
have similar, quirky eating habits, as if they're genetically
programmed. Eg looks so happy. So does Bert. Neil is distant.

INT. BERT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

After dinner, they clear the dishes.

NEIL

Thank you for dinner. Do you want
some help cleaning up?

BERT

That would be great.

EG

Can I go check on the chick?

BERT
If it's okay with your dad?

NEIL
Are there armadillos out there?

BERT
It's in an incubator in my office.

Neil nods. Eg dashes out and leaves them alone.

NEIL
He really likes you.

BERT
We're cut from the same mold.

NEIL
I don't want to stay mad at you for
the rest of my life.

BERT
Then don't.

NEIL
Why didn't you come to Albany after
we left the commune like you
promised?

BERT
I did come to Albany.

NEIL
Please, don't lie to me.

BERT
I got all the way there, but
something happened.

NEIL
What happened?

Bert is so chocked up, he can't say. Eg comes running into
the kitchen, all excited.

EG
She's almost out! Hurry!

Eg grabs Bert's hand and drags him to the back room.

INT. BERT'S HOUSE/OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The three of them arrive as a baby chick pecks her way out of her shell. She's soft and vulnerable and so beautiful.

EG
This is my first time seeing anyone
being born! Have you ever seen
anyone being born, dad?

NEIL
Yes. YOU!

EG
Did I look like this?

NEIL
You were cuter and had less hair.

Eg marvels at the chick's first steps. Neil notices Bert staring at him, moved to tears.

EG
Look at her! Go. You can do it!

NEIL
We should get going.

BERT
Would you consider letting Eg stay
here with me for a few days so we
can see the elephants on Friday?

NEIL
How would he get home?

EG
You didn't say 'no' right away!

BERT
I can fly with him to Chicago or
I'll drive him back myself.

EG
I can fly by myself. I'm eleven.

NEIL
Let me think about it.

EG
Can I stay here tonight? I don't
want to leave the chick or Bert.

Neil looks at the two of them. There's no splitting them up.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - NIGHT

Neil pulls up, alone. He gets out and notices the moon reflecting off the bronze statue across the street. He stops.

INT. BERT'S HOUSE/OFFICE - NIGHT

Eg and Bert watch the chick. Eg fights sleep.

EG
I don't want to go to sleep.

BERT
Me either.

EG
I'm really tired.

BERT
Me too.

They both open their eyes really wide to stay awake.

EG
You're so much like me.

BERT
I know! It's great.

EG
People think I'm weird. Do they think you're weird?

BERT
You're not weird; you're original.

EG
You're the same kind of weird.

BERT
I'm the same kind of *original*.

EG
Was everyone in our family like us?

BERT
I only really knew my father.

EG
What was he like?

BERT
Well...

Eg takes his phone to record Bert's story. Bert nods.

EG
I have a report due in school about my family history. Is this okay?

BERT
Sure. What do you want to know?

EG
Was your father really an Elephant Whisperer?

BERT
He was. My father's name was Umbutu. It means, 'I am, because we are.' He was a tall, proud, strong man who loved his family, loved nature, and loved all of humanity. He was a Mahout, just like his father and his father's father before him in Africa.

EG
What's a Mahout?

BERT
A man who spends his life as an elephant's companion. It used to be a very esteemed profession. My father loved elephants.

EG
I love elephants too!

BERT
Me too. When my father was a boy growing up on the Ivory Coast of Africa -- the Cote d'Ivoire -- it was thought that he was a 'Khru Ba Yai,' someone who has a spiritual connection to elephants.

EG
Did he have a white elephant?

BERT
He did. How did you know that?

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAMLIKE SEQUENCE) - DAY

Bert's story of his own father transports Eg back to his dream of the dark-skinned boy with the white elephant. As Bert narrates the story of his father's life in Africa, the ethereal images harken back to Eg's dream.

EG (V.O.)
I always dream about a white elephant. Maybe it's his elephant.

BERT (V.O.)
Umbutu was only ten years old when he left his home and traveled to the outskirts of the village to live by the river so he could take better take care of his precious white elephant, *Isabelle*.

EG (V.O.)
Were they about the same size?

BERT (V.O.)
I don't know. I wasn't there.

EG (V.O.)
Was she sort of a pinkish white?

BERT (V.O.)
My father told me that she started out a light pink and became an unusual shade of whitish gray.

EG (V.O.)
That's what the elephant in my dream looks like!

BERT (V.O.)
You dream of white elephants?

EG (V.O.)
Just one, with big floppy ears.

BERT (V.O.)
Sounds like our Isabelle.

CUT TO:

INT. BERT'S HOUSE/OFFICE - INTERCUT - NIGHT

Eg starts to fall asleep, so the dream images and the glowing office images interweave for an other-worldly MONTAGE.

BERT

Umbutu's mother missed him when he took Isabelle to the river, so they made arrangements to see each other every month. She would make things for him to take with him.

EG

What kind of things?

BERT

Shoes made out of animal skins and pouches to carry water, dried fruits from the fig trees. Every month, the people of the village waited for Umbutu and Isabelle to arrive back to town. A white elephant was thought to be mystical, a sign of good luck and great fortune. I'm told that Umbutu's communication with Isabelle was uncanny and their connection defied logic.

EG

Like you and me...

BERT

Just like you and me.

EG

Let's name the chick, Isabelle.

BERT

Good idea.

Eg falls asleep. Bert takes out a metal box with newspaper clippings, photos, and memorabilia.

CLOSE UP of the box reveals Neil and Georgia's life as witnessed by Bert from afar: her marriage to Morrie, Neil's high school athletic career, his graduations, etc.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - DAWN

Bert and Eg pull up in Bert's truck. Neil looks tired, uneasy. Bert hands him a travel mug of coffee. Neil catches a glimpse of the life-size bronze sculpture in the park across the street lit up by the morning sun.

INT. BERT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - DAWN

Eg sits in between the two of them. Bert is joyful.

BERT

How about a little breakfast before
you hit the road?

NEIL

We really should get going soon.

BERT

Since you're going to miss
tomorrow, what do you say we take a
hike and see if we can catch a
glimpse of the elephants?

EG

Let's do that!

NEIL

We need to be on the road soon.

EG

We are on the road, dad.

NEIL

I mean to Chicago.

BERT

I know a place where you can
sometimes see the elephants at the
sanctuary. It's not guaranteed.

EG

Please dad.

NEIL

We're leaving right after the hike.

Bert sings, which triggers a childhood memory of Neil's.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLASHBACK THE COMMUNE - OLD STATION WAGON

YOUNG NEIL (5) sits between Young Bert and Young Georgia. They all sing this same song. Bert points to little Neil who chimes in the chorus all by himself. His parents love it!

INT. BERT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bert gets to the same place in the song. He looks at Neil, as if he's aching to point and recreate that moment from forty-five years earlier. Neil looks away. Bert stops singing.

EG

What's the rest of the song?

BERT

Ask your dad.

NEIL

I don't remember it.

In his head, the words unfurl in his childhood voice.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE/ROLLING HILLS - CONTINUOUS

Bert drives along the Natchez Trace. The luminous trees sparkle in the early morning sun. Bert and Eg sing a silly tune, the one they sang to the chickens the day before.

Eg stops singing, interrupted by the CRACKLING of Lola's psyche calling to him as they pass Damon's gated fortress. Eg turns around, looks at Bert. The CRACKLING crescendos. He points to the gate. Bert nods, understands.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - DAY

Todd opens the back barn doors near Lola's cage so she can see the beautiful landscape that stretches for miles. She lets out a cry. Todd brings her food. He's kind and gentle.

TODD

What is it, old girl?

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - DAY

Bert leads them on a rocky trail along the rolling hills. Eg is between them, Neil struggles to keep up with the old guy.

NEIL

Maybe we should head back.

EG

I want to see the elephants first.

BERT

I can't guarantee that we'll see them, but this is our best shot.

NEIL

If we're not going to see them.

EG

We definitely won't see them from the car. We have to at least try!

BERT

You can always wait in the truck and we'll meet you back there.

NEIL

Why can't you just watch them on those elephant cameras?

EG

I want to see Poppy in person so I can find out what happened to Lola.

NEIL

This is ridiculous! You aren't an Elephant Whisperer, Eg. If you're hearing voices again, we're taking you back to the psychiatrist.

EG

They're sounds. They aren't voices.

NEIL

Sounds. Whatever!

EG

Elephants don't need words, dad.

NEIL

This isn't normal. Tell me honestly, ***are you hearing voices?***

EG

No. I just have a good imagination.

Eg and Bert exchange a knowing look.

BERT
You know, he might be an Elephant
Whisperer. My father was one.

NEIL
Don't encourage him to live in this
fantasy world. How much further?

BERT
Depends on where they're bathing
today. Could be a couple of miles,
maybe five.

NEIL
Eg can't walk five miles!

EG
I can walk a hundred miles if it's
to see elephants!

NEIL
What if we dehydrated or lost?

Bert reaches into the side of his backpack and pulls out a
bottle of water and hands it to Neil without missing a step.
Eg and Bert exchange a quick smile.

BERT
We won't get lost. I know the way.

EG
How many do you think we'll see?

BERT
Two or three. They usually go to
the watering hole in the morning.

Bert stops him, motions for them to be very still.

CLOSE UP of a rattlesnake crossing the path right in front of
them. Neil keeps walking and crashes into them. The snake
detects the movement and raises its head, coils into striking
position. Neil freezes, petrified.

Bert reaches down to his boot and pulls out a gun. He aims it
at the rattlesnake. He's calm, collected. They wait a moment.
The rattlesnake slithers into the grass and disappears. Bert
watches it and then puts the gun back.

NEIL
Was that a rattlesnake?

BERT
Are you okay?

EG

Why didn't you shoot him?!

BERT

Because he's a living creature. I don't shoot living creatures unless I'm saving someone's life.

EG

If he bit you, would you die?

BERT

He didn't bite any of us.

EG

You should have shot him!

BERT

If I missed him, he would surely have bitten one of us.

NEIL

We're heading back. Right now.

EG

Don't be scared. Bert has a gun!

NEIL

(muttering to himself)
Hillbilly existence...

They get to the top of a vista and spy three elephants in the distance bathing and playing in the water. Eg hugs Bert.

Bert takes out high-powered binoculars and a camera with a really long lens. They trade off looking through the binoculars and photographing the elephants.

BERT

See anyone you know?

EG

It's her! It's Poppy.

NEIL

How do you know?

EG

I just know.

NEIL

All elephants look alike to me.

Poppy's psychic communication wafts toward him. Bert can tell by the way Eg has his head cocked that he's listening to her.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. DINER - DAY

The three of them get out of Bert's truck and go inside and sit at the same booth. Bert excuses himself to the bathroom.

SAVANNAH

(to Eg)

Hello, Mr. Sizzle-y. Any luck seeing the elephants?

NEIL

We just saw three on a hike.

SAVANNAH

You did? That's great!

Eg looks at Savannah with a miserable expression on his face. Eg slumps down, really playing up the angst.

SAVANNAH (CONT'D)

So why so sad?

NEIL

He's fine.

SAVANNAH

(sits next to Eg)

Come on, Sugar Pie. Tell me what's hanging so heavy on your heart.

EG

I have to leave today and my dad won't talk to my grandfather.

NEIL

I talked to him all morning.

EG

(ignoring Neil)

They say hello and stuff, but they don't really **talk** about anything.

SAVANNAH

Are they mad at each other?

NEIL

I'm sitting right here.

EG

They got separated when my dad was only five and haven't seen each other until yesterday.

NEIL

Eg, please. That's enough.

EG

Now we have to go back to Chicago and miss the VIP tour at the elephant sanctuary tomorrow.

NEIL

You just saw three elephants!

SAVANNAH

You have a place on the VIP tour? That's the chance of a lifetime.

NEIL

Eg! I know what you're doing.

EG

The chance of a lifetime is meeting my grandfather.

SAVANNAH

Can't you see him at the holidays?

EG

They pretend he's not my real grandfather, because he's...

NEIL

Eg! Stop it. Now.

EG

I don't understand why it matters so much what color your skin is. Nobody cares what color your eyes are. What's the difference?

SAVANNAH

I don't understand either, baby. What I also don't understand is why Bert never married all these years. He's never even had a girlfriend, that I know of, and there have been plenty of women who wanted to date him. He said he gave his whole heart away in his twenties and that it wouldn't be fair to anyone else.

Neil storms off toward the bathroom to confront Bert. Eg smiles at Savannah.

INT. DINER/MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neil storms in. *It's time for the showdown.*

NEIL

Why didn't you ever marry?

BERT

Because I was always in love with Georgia and I didn't think it would be fair to be with another woman.

NEIL

That's a load of crap!

BERT

It's my life, Neil. I know where I've been and how I've felt.

NEIL

Well I know how I've felt.

BERT

How? Please, tell me.

NEIL

I've had this conversation in my head for nearly *forty-five years*.

BERT

I'm listening. Go on.

NEIL

What the hell happened to you? You said we'd always be together. You said you'd come to Albany and we'd be a family again. You promised that you'd leave the commune and start a real life, in the real world so I could go to school and make friends and **grow up with you.**

BERT

I did come to Albany-

NEIL

I was five and you broke our hearts, both of ours.

(MORE)

NEIL (CONT'D)

You let us go forward into the rest of our lives without you. Do you have any idea how that feels?

BERT

(really emotional)

I know exactly how that feels.

NEIL

I was the kid. I was the one who was left without a dad. I wanted to forgive you so I could let you go, but I never could.

BERT

Forgive me or let me go?

NEIL

Why do you ask me questions that make me want to scream?!

BERT

I'm so sorry, Neil. For all the pain I put you and your mom through. I love you both so much.

NEIL

She was never the same after that.

BERT

Neither was I.

NEIL

She got remarried, but she lost the spark that she had with you. You took away my father *and my mother*.

BERT

You got robbed, but I wasn't the one who stole it from you. I came to Albany. I saved the ticket stub so I could prove it to you someday.

Bert opens his wallet and takes out the worn ticket stub and hands it to Neil. Neil looks at it, then him. Bert's posture changes. He's about to tell the whole story.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - LATER

Savannah sits with Eg while he picks at his eggs. Bert and Neil return. They look like they've both been crying.

Savannah gets up and pours them coffee. They eat in awkward, painful silence. She brings them some apple pie.

SAVANNAH
It's on the house.

Savannah catches Bert's eye and smiles at him. He nods.

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - DAY

Bert's truck pulls up and lets Neil off.

BERT
We'll be back in twenty minutes.
Got to do a few things at the
house.

EG
I want to say goodbye to Isabelle.

NEIL
Who's Isabelle?

BERT
His baby chick.

INT. BERT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Eg turns to Bert as he drives away from the Inn.

BERT
I'm really going to miss you.

EG
No you're not. *I'm not going back
with him today.* Poppy told me that
Lola isn't dead, but she will be if
we don't help her.

BERT
What do you mean?

EG
Lola was kidnapped by that guy in
the statue. He's going to kill her.

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - DAY

Neil is about to go inside, then detours across the street to where the bronze statue has been beckoning him.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - CONTINUOUS

Neil stands in front of a sculpture of a little boy holding his parents hands and "swinging" off the ground between them. They all have joyful expressions. Neil recognizes himself as the five-year-old between Young Georgia and Young Bert.

The plaque reads: Egbert Freeman, Artist | Title, *Forever*.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Bert and Young Georgia walk toward the train with young Neil between them, "swinging" him off the ground. There's a deep love and a sadness that surrounds them.

YOUNG GEORGIA

Promise me you'll find a way for
all of us to be together again.

YOUNG BERT

I promise.

YOUNG GEORGIA

I don't know when we'll be back.

YOUNG BERT

I'll come to Albany. First give
your dad some time to get to know
Neil and spend his last days with
him. You'll never regret it.

YOUNG GEORGIA

I'll miss you so much, Egbert, my
Egbert.

YOUNG BERT

I love you, Georgia. I will love
you forever.

Little Neil turns to Bert who lifts him up.

YOUNG NEIL

I love you, daddy!

YOUNG BERT

I love you too, Neil.

YOUNG NEIL

I want to stay here with daddy.

YOUNG GEORGIA

I need you to come with me so you
can meet my daddy.

YOUNG NEIL

I don't want to go.

YOUNG GEORGIA

My daddy is dying and this is our
only chance for you to meet him.

YOUNG NEIL

I want my daddy, not yours.

YOUNG GEORGIA

You'll see your daddy again, but I
won't have another chance to see my
daddy again, so we have to go.

YOUNG NEIL

Daddy, come with us.

YOUNG BERT

I'd love to, but I can't.

YOUNG NEIL

How come?

YOUNG BERT

For so many reasons that you won't
understand until you're much older.

Bert holds him close to his heart and whispers in his ear.

YOUNG BERT (CONT'D)

(to little Neil)

Always remember how much I love
you, promise me?

YOUNG NEIL

I promise.

The conductor makes the last call. Neil cries in his father's
arms. Bert kisses Georgia with all the love in his soul.

They get on the train. As it pulls away, Georgia and Bert's
eyes are locked in a loving embrace. She mouths the words,
'Forever.' She disappears as the train leaves the station.

CUT TO:

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - PRESENT DAY

Neil sits on the bench in front of the statue, head in hands.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE - PRESENT DAY

Eg tries to conceal something inside his sweatshirt.

BERT

You can't take her with you.

EG

How did you know?

The chick, Isabelle makes a tiny chirp and lifts her head. Eg hands over his first pet to Bert, then kisses her goodbye.

BERT

I promise I'll take good care of
her. I'll send you photos of her.

Bert brings Isabelle back into the house and emerges with the metal box of photos and memorabilia.

EG

What's this?

BERT

For your report. Open it when you
get home. Open it with your dad, so
he'll know I was there all along.

EG

I told you, I'm not going back to
Chicago with him right now. We have
work to do.

EXT. THE COMMODORE INN - DAY

Neil stands at his car as Bert's truck pulls up. Bert gets out and opens the door for Eg, who gets out without the box.

EG

Dad, I really want to stay.

NEIL

I know.

BERT

He's your dad.

NEIL
(to Bert)
May I please have your cell phone?

Bert hands it to him. Neil calls himself. Hands it back.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Now you have my number and I have
your number.

Neil turns to Eg with a serious expression on his face.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Promise me you'll call me at least
once a day. I'll fly to Nashville
on Sunday morning, pick you up, and
we'll fly home together.

EG
For real?! Thanks dad!

NEIL
Enjoy the VIP tour tomorrow. I'd
hate for you to miss it.

BERT
Thank you, Neil.

EG
What about mom?

NEIL
(to Eg)
I haven't figured out how I'm going
to tell your mother that I left you
in Hole-in-the-wall Tennessee.

EG
Good luck with that!

They hug. Neil extends his hand to Bert. Bert shakes it and
pulls him in for a hug. Neil hugs him and cries a little.
Neil gets in his car, waves, and drives away. Eg hugs Bert.

Eg walks to Bert's truck with commanding determination.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE/ROLLING HILLS - DAY

Bert stops at the gated entrance to Damon's property.

EXT. THE ROAD OUTSIDE OF DAMON'S ESTATE - DAY

Bert pulls up to the intercom and speaks into it. Eg stands up on his seat so his head and shoulders emerge from the sunroof. He listens to the psychic CRIES from Lola.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
May I help you?

BERT
I'm Bert Freeman, the sculptor.
I'll be delivering a life-size
statue of Mr. Reynolds on Saturday
for his party and need to take some
measurements.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
You're not on my list for
deliveries.

BERT
I'm not delivering, just measuring.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
Hold on.

Hidden security cameras surround the property. Someone inside the fortress watches them from the monitors. A few moments later, the huge steel gates open. Bert drives through them and down a mile-long driveway. The sprawling property stretches as far as the eye can see.

EG
Where do you think she is?

BERT
We don't even know if she's here.

EG
Oh, she's here. I'm sure of that!

Bert smiles. They pull up to the enormous home and get out.

INT. DAMON'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Bert drives around the front entrance and turns down a side road to a back loading dock. They get out. Lola's CRIES get louder. Eg points to a barn down the road.

Bert looks back at the house and realizes that they can be seen from any room. He motions to Eg to stay with him.

BERT

Let's make it look like we're here for a reason and not just to see if he's stolen our elephant.

EG

We're not here to see if he's stolen our elephant; we're here to steal her back.

BERT

We can't steal his elephant.

EG

It's not *his* elephant.

BERT

You know what I mean.

EG

Oh, we *are* stealing the elephant.

BERT

There's no "we" here. And let's not call it stealing. We're here to help **relocate** his elephant.

EG

I knew I could count on you!

INT. DAMON'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Damon looks out onto the property and watches them. He's got a couple of bodyguards in the room with him.

DAMON

What is that Negro doing on my property?

Damon picks up his rifle and puts Bert in the cross hairs.

BODYGUARD #1

He's the sculptor, sir. He said he needed to take some measurements for your statue.

DAMON

That's not where I decided to put my statue. And what's he doing with that white kid?

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

As Bert mallets a flag into the ground, Lola calls out in a low frequency RUMBLE, directing Eg to her cage. Eg takes off.

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - BARN/LOLA'S CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Eg races down the service road to the converted barn. He runs past caged animals. The warthog snort loudly, scaring him. He finds his old friend, Lola. She lifts her trunk to greet him.

The psychic, RUMBLING sound ramps up as Lola emits her tale of terror to him. Eg listens closely as Bert runs in.

BERT
(breathless)
I'm sure they saw us running here.

EG
Look who I found!

BERT
Hello, Lola.

Lola raises her trunk toward Bert and makes a NOISE.

EG
She said they're going to hunt her
and kill her on a Safari for his
birthday.

Todd, the veterinarian hears them talking and comes out from the office that's attached to the end of the barn.

TODD
What are you two doing here?

EG
Lola just told me that they're
going to kill her.

TODD
Who's going to kill her?

EG
Whoever gets to her first during
the Safari.

TODD
What are you talking about?

BERT
He speaks elephant.

TODD
If Mr. Reynolds finds out that
you're here, there's no telling
what he'll do.

EG
Mr. Reynolds is going to kill all
these animals. We need your help!

Lola gestures to Todd with his trunk, as if concurring. The
ROAR of an all terrain vehicle alerts them.

TODD
It's Mr. Reynolds!

EG
Tell me your phone number.

TODD
615-555-0212

Eg takes a photo of Lola as Damon's vehicle approaches.

EXT./INT. DAMON'S ESTATE/BARN - CONTINUOUS

Damon and his two bodyguards arrive and go into the barn.

DAMON
(to Eg)
Well, who do we have here?

BERT
I was measuring for the sculpture
and my grandson got curious about-

Damon holds his hands up to signal Bert to stop talking.

DAMON
(to Eg)
Who are you?

BERT
I'm Eg. Short for Egbert, just like
my grandfather, Bert, only I use
the first half of our name.

DAMON
You have the same name?

EG
I was named after him.

DAMON
Why would your parents do that?

EG
Because he's my grandfather.

DAMON
Your grandfather? You two look
nothing alike.

EG
Not on the outside, but we're a lot
alike on the inside.

DAMON
(to Eg, menacingly)
What are you doing in here?

EG
I saw the barn and I thought you
had horses. I like horses.

DAMON
Is that so? Tell me, *Eg*, do you
like elephants?

EG
No sir. I do not *like* elephants.
***I love elephants. I've loved them
my whole life.***

The two lock eyes in a standoff. Bert looks amazed at Eg's
courage. Damon looks annoyed, yet slightly amused.

DAMON
Get them out of here. You're
trespassing.

CUT TO:

EXT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE - NIGHT

Neil's car pulls up to their apartment building, but he
doesn't get out. Instead, he drives away.

EXT/INT. GEORGIA'S HIGHRISE - NIGHT

He gets out, hands the keys to the doorman, goes to the
elevator. It's late. He's emotional and exhausted.

Inside her eclectic, artistic apartment, Georgia is still up painting in her small studio. She paints from a photo of Neil (5) and her and Bert. She opens the door and looks concerned.

GEORGIA
What's wrong?

Neil comes in. He slaps the ticket stub on the table.

NEIL
He came to Albany.

GEORGIA
What?

She examines the ticket stub and looks at him.

NEIL
I saw him this morning in
Tennessee. Eg found him and
orchestrated this little scheme.

GEORGIA
You saw him?

Georgia is so emotional that she sits down, dazed. Neil looks at the room with her studio and understands her pain.

NEIL
I left Eg with him.

GEORGIA
You did?

NEIL
I haven't told Adina yet, so go
easy on me. I couldn't help it.

GEORGIA
I think it's wonderful! How is he?

NEIL
Eg? He's fine. He's Eg.

GEORGIA
No, Bert. How's Bert?

NEIL
He's fine, too. Better than fine.

GEORGIA
God, I loved that man!

NEIL

Did you ever try to find him after
your dad died? What happened?

GEORGIA

You don't remember?

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNE IN TENNESSEE - MID-SEVENTIES - DAY

Georgia pulls up in a car with New York license plates. The enormous gate is being installed at the entrance.

GATE WORKER

Sorry ma'am, ya can't come in here.

GEORGIA

But I lived here for six years.

GATE WORKER

You don't look like no hippie in
that fancy car of yours.

GEORGIA

It was my late father's car. Where
is everyone?

GATE WORKER

Don't know. Don't care.

GEORGIA

Please. I'm looking for someone.

GATE WORKER

(with sexual innuendo)
I'm looking for someone too.

The hillbilly leans into her car, she backs up quickly and nearly hits a shiny new Corvette that has just pulled up. A YOUNG DAMON REYNOLDS gets out of the Corvette, swaggers toward her car. He's the same arrogant jerk, only younger.

GEORGIA

Do you own this property?

YOUNG DAMON

My granddaddy just gave it to me.

GEORGIA

What happened to the commune?

YOUNG DAMON
They're all gone now. Chased 'em
away. Trespassers and freeloaders.

GEORGIA
Where did everyone go?

YOUNG DAMON
Don't know. Don't care.

GEORGIA
I care!

YOUNG DAMON
Whoa! Miss, calm down.

GEORGIA
I lived there with my husband.

YOUNG DAMON
No shit? You people got married?

GEORGIA
We weren't actually married, but he
was my family- *is my family*.

YOUNG DAMON
There's no one living on this
property but me. You're welcome to
come inside.

He leans toward her car. She recoils.

YOUNG DAMON (CONT'D)
Perhaps you'd like to come up and-

GEORGIA
When did all this happen?

YOUNG DAMON
A few months ago when my Granddaddy
died and left me his property. This
here's a hunting farm now, I'd hate
to accidentally kill a 'coon, if
you know what I mean.

GEORGIA
My husband was a black man, is a
black man.

YOUNG DAMON
Shame a pretty white girl like
you'd be with a jungle bunny.

GEORGIA
(dismayed)
There has to be some way to find
him. Where could they have gone?

YOUNG DAMON
Maybe back to Africa where they
belong!

GEORGIA
Did they leave any kind of
forwarding information?

YOUNG DAMON
I'd check the State Pen or the
nearest tree. Not everyone takes so
kindly to freeloading Niggers.

Georgia maneuvers her car and drives off, tears streaming.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE/ROLLING HILLS - CONTINUOUS

She gets out of sight, finds a spot, pulls over. Sobs.

MONTAGE of Georgia Searching for Bert:

INT. HOHENWALD POST OFFICE - DAY

Georgia speaks with the postmaster who nods his apologies.

EXT. HOHENWALD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

In her desperation, she stops people on the street, etc.

INT./EXT DINER - CONTINUOUS

The diner looks similar, approaches everyone who will listen
and shows them the photo of the three of them. No luck.

GEORGIA (V.O.)
I looked everywhere. Found no one.
This was long before the Internet.
I left you with my mother for two
weeks. Morrie came over every day
and helped her take care of you.
Right after that, he asked me to
marry him. What else could I do? He
was a good man and always wanted a
family. I didn't care that he was
so much years older.

(MORE)

GEORGIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I felt safe around him and I loved him, but I never loved him like I loved Bert.

NEIL (V.O.)
We tell ourselves stories about our lives and what we don't realize, is that we can tell ourselves anything we want about what happened in the past or what's happening right now or what could happen in the future.

My whole life I've wanted a different story about what happened to my real dad. I didn't want to be the kid who was abandoned by his father. *I'm not that kid anymore, mom. He didn't abandon us.*

GEORGIA (V.O.)
What really happened?

INT. GEORGIA'S HIGHRISE - LATER

Georgia and Neil have both been crying.

GEORGIA
(light hearted)
Is he still so wonderfully odd?

NEIL
He is! He's the same kind of odd as Eg. It must be genetic or maybe it comes with the name!

GEORGIA
He was so loving and so beautiful. I'll bet he loves Eg so much.

NEIL
You should see those two together. They're connected in their souls.

GEORGIA
Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ELEPHANT SANCTUARY - DAY

Early Friday morning, ANNABELLE (50+ rugged and reliable) leads their tour guide at the elephant sanctuary.

Her narration overlaps with a SERIES OF SHOTS of the group of VIPs and the elephants in the sanctuary as they congregate.

ANNABELLE (V.O.)

Tennessee's elephant sanctuary is the nation's largest natural refuge developed specifically to meet the needs of endangered elephants, giving them the freedom to roam the thousands of acres of land or come into the barn at will when it gets cold. We even have heated floors!

All of our elephants are female since females elephants live in herds. Many of our "girls" have been retired from zoos and circuses, some from private ownership where they have been caged and often mistreated.

We have over 2700 acres with three separate and protected, natural-habitat environments for Asian and African elephants, along with a twenty-five-acre spring-fed lake for the elephants to congregate and bathe. In keeping with our mission of sanctity, when we go outside to tour the grounds, you may be fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of one or two of the elephants at a distance. Please observe them quietly. Any questions before we go outside?

Eg raises his hand. He talks loudly, over the elephant crackling SOUNDS, which only he can hear.

EG

Who should I call if I want to donate an elephant to the sanctuary?

The crowd chuckles. Annabelle looks amused.

ANNABELLE

That would be me.

EG

May I please have your card?

ANNABELLE

(hands it to him)

Call me anytime you have an extra elephant on your hands.

She's sort of smug. Eg thanks her, smiles.

EG

I will. So what happens when a new elephant comes to the sanctuary?

ANNABELLE

Good question. Before we introduce her into the herd, we put her in the quarantine section in the barn, check her out medically, and introduce her at her own speed. The other elephants have a familiarity with each other, so it usually takes a while until they accept a new member into the herd. It's sort of like being the new kid at school.

EG

Unless she already knows one of the other elephants. Right?

ANNABELLE

That's rare.

EG

But elephants never forget.

ANNABELLE

That's absolutely true.

EG

That's because they have large temporal lobes and a Hippocampus that's more than triple the size of a human's brain.

ANNABELLE

Elephants are known to be very intelligent and seem to express a lot of emotion. They're also creatures of habit. For example, in order to give them their daily vitamins or any medications, we give them these big treats filled with peanut butter.

She shows them an elephant treat. Eg looks at Bert.

EXT. THE ELEPHANT SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Outside, the crackling of elephant SOUNDS gets louder.

ANNABELLE

They're quite shy around humans.

Eg nods at Bert as the elephants walk up a hill to a vista, deliberately lumbering in their direction. The VIPs are thrilled and take out their cell phones/cameras.

EG

Just like Poppy promised!

ANNABELLE

I've never seen this before.

Eg listens to the inner SOUNDS, which build to a crescendo.

BERT

What are they saying?

EG

They're all talking at once.

ANNABELLE

We'll have to turn back if they get any closer.

Eg's eyes brighten; he sees Poppy. She walks toward him.

EG

Poppy!

VIP PATRON #2

You know one of the elephants?

EG

We were neighbors when she lived at the Lincoln Park Zoo across the street from me with her sister, Lola. I don't have any siblings, so they were like my family.

ANNABELLE

That could be why they're all coming in this direction. Unfortunately, her sister, Lola died during their transport here. We must go back inside. Follow me.

Eg is glued to the spot on the top of the hill. Bert stays with him as the others head back toward the barn.

Poppy and the elephants stop and look at Eg. The psychic sounds settle down into more of a conversation.

EG
Something's happening on Sunday.

BERT
Sunday is Damon's birthday party.

EG
Sunday is the Safari when they plan
to hunt Lola and the others.

Eg lifts his hands up in the air. Poppy lifts her trunk. The other elephants lift their trunks.

BERT
What does that mean?

EG
It means, *I promise.*

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - DAY

After the tour, the diner is crowded as Eg and Bert eat lunch. Savannah comes over as often as possible to eavesdrop.

EG
We're going to move Lola from
Damon's to the elephant sanctuary.

BERT
It's too dangerous.

EG
We have to save her life!

BERT
I promised your dad that I'd keep
you safe. Kidnapping an elephant
from a blood-thirsty billionaire
doesn't count as safe in my book.

EG
We could move her to the elephant
sanctuary at night when no one's
around. Damon won't know.

BERT

He'll know. Damon is not like other people and there's no telling what he'll do when he finds out.

EG

He won't know until morning, by then it'll be too late and Lola and Poppy will be together again.

BERT

We're not risking our lives for an elephant. Do you hear me?

EG

Imagine how happy they'll be when they're finally reunited.

BERT

The answer is still NO.

EG

What would Umbutu do?

Eg looks at Bert with pleading eyes.

BERT

You're really good at this!

EG

Is it working?

Savannah slides into the booth next to Eg.

SAVANNAH

It's working on me. Sorry, but I couldn't help overhear.

EG

Savannah! Will you help us save an elephant.

SAVANNAH

Of course I'll help you, Sugar Pie. I used to drive a truck, so I can probably get my hands on a rig that's big enough to transport an elephant.

BERT

Do you realize what you're talking about doing?

SAVANNAH
Kidnapping an elephant and
reuniting her with her sister.

EG
Exactly!

SAVANNAH
Count me in, Mr. Sizzle-y.

They look at Bert. He looks over their shoulders at Todd
who's walking into the diner. Todd sits down next to Bert.

TODD
(to Eg)
You called me?

SAVANNAH
(flirtatious)
Well, *hello*. I called you.

TODD
Ma'am.

SAVANNAH
Ma'am is what you'd call my mother.
My name's Savannah, but you can
call me *Ms. Sugar Pie*.

TODD
Pleased to meet you, Ms. Savannah,
uh, Ms. Sugar Pie.

BERT
(to Eg)
You called him?

EG
I had to! We need him.

SAVANNAH
What do you know about this Safari?

TODD
(to Eg)
You're a smart kid. I had my
suspicions, but Damon flat out
admitted that he's going to kill
them all at his Safari on Sunday.

SAVANNAH
Who?

TODD
Damon Reynolds.

SAVANNAH
The billionaire? He's a lousy
tipper and an arrogant SOB.

TODD
He's fixing to entertain his
hunting friends for his seventieth
birthday party and let them kill
some big game on his property, just
like going to Africa on Safari.

SAVANNAH
Oh for the love of God! We have to
do something to save her.

EG
She's right!

Savannah takes off her apron and walks toward the door.

TODD
Ms. Sugar Pie?

SAVANNAH
What are y'all waiting for? Sunday
is day after tomorrow. We don't
have a moment to lose! Let's go!

Eg jumps up and follows her out. The patrons clamor for
service, but she's already out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - DAY

Eg sits at the table with Todd as they make the peanut butter
'knock out' balls. Todd handles the sedatives part, while Eg
take large dog treats and fills them with peanut butter.

Savannah pulls up in a huge truck. She parks it, opens the
back, lowers the ramp, and then drives a mini forklift out.

MONTAGE of their preparations as they plan Lola's escape.

INT. BERT'S WORKSHOP BARN & DRIVEWAY - DAY

Bert crates up the life-size sculpture. Power tools ablaze as
they rig together a crate big enough for an elephant.

Savannah and Todd build a makeshift trough for Lola at the front of the truck with garbage cans and plywood.

They hang the peanut butter/sedative treats inside.

Savannah shows them the retractable side of the truck, revealing an open side, which will give Lola more air. Eg runs into the truck and twirls around. The others smile.

Eg takes Isabelle (his chick) and shows her around.

Bert comes out with drinks. They take a break. Eg entertains them with a colorful Polish chicken on a makeshift leash.

They all go back into the truck, ready for an elephant.

INT. TRANSPORT TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Eg's phone rings. He motions. The others are suddenly quiet. The conversation INTERCUTS between their Chicago home and the truck in Tennessee.

ADINA

Hi Eg? It's mom. How are you?

EG

Hi Mom. I'm fine.

ADINA

What are you doing?

EG

Just hanging out and playing with the chickens.

INT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE - DAY

Adina and Neil hover over the phone. Adina looks anxious. Neil looks relaxed. Eg's cheerful voice jumps out on speaker.

ADINA

Are you sure you're okay? I didn't expect dad to leave you down there.

EG (V.O.)

I'm great! I love it here.

NEIL

Did you see the elephants today?

EG (V.O.)

Yes! I even saw Poppy in person.

ADINA
What are you doing now?

CUT TO:

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Eg looks around from inside the transport truck where his soon-to-be-stolen elephant will ride.

EG
Not much. Just hanging out with
some new friends.

ADINA (V.O.)
I can always tell when you're up to
something.

EG
Did dad tell you about the baby
chick, Isabelle? We saw her being
born. It was so cool.

Savannah makes a tiny chirping noise. The others look at her.

EG (CONT'D)
Savannah's calling me.

ADINA (V.O.)
I thought the chick's name was
Isabelle.

EG
There's more than one chick here!
I'll call you later. Love you.

He hangs up the phone. The chaos resumes instantly.

END MONTAGE

INT. DINER - NIGHT

It's late at night before the *big day*. The diner is empty, except for the four of them. Todd pulls out a map of the property and points as he talks. He looks at Eg.

TODD
The guards are expecting your truck
to deliver the sculpture, so
getting in won't be a problem.

BERT

It's getting out with a five ton elephant that might be a little tricky.

SAVANNAH

We'll start late, so by the time we finish, it'll be dark enough that they won't see us loading her in.

TODD

(to Eg)

I've got enough tranquilizers in those peanut butter balls to keep her calm once she gets in there. Do you really think you can talk her into that truck?

EG

I know I can.

TODD

There will be a lot of people on the property tomorrow getting ready for the party, so we'll have to move quickly.

BERT

With an elephant! This is a bad idea. We should call it off.

EG

We can't. I promised them all that I'd do everything in my power to save her life.

BERT

It's too risky.

EG

It's going to work. Trust me.

Bert looks really worried. Even Savannah looks concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. BERT'S HOUSE/OFFICE - EG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eg is still awake. Bert checks on him.

BERT

You're still up?

EG
I can't sleep.

BERT
Me either.

EG
Tell me about Umbutu and Isabelle.

BERT
It's not all pretty.

EG
Tell me anyway. I want to know.

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAMLIKE NARRATIVE) - DAY

Umbutu and Isabelle are frolicking in the watering hole.

BERT (V.O.)
Umbutu and Isabelle would often travel to their favorite watering hole miles away from the village. It had a waterfall and plenty of fish, which Umbutu would catch and cure and bring back to the village for his family.

Scenes of Umbutu and Isabelle in the water, at the waterfall, catching fish, and sleeping together.

BERT (V.O.)
One day, when they were heading back to the village, Umbutu heard something in the bushes. He had a bad feeling about that noise.

EG (V.O.)
What was it? A tiger? A snake?

BERT (V.O.)
Two hunters. In those days and even more so today, hunters kill elephants for their tusks or just for the sport of it.

EG (V.O.)
That's so terrible.

BERT (V.O.)
A white elephant was very rare and
had an almost mythical status.
Umbutu saw the two hunters with
guns poised and aimed at his
precious Isabelle.

EG (V.O.)
Was Umbutu scared?

BERT (V.O.)
Yes, but there was nothing he could
do. He loved Isabelle and was
willing to sacrifice his own life
for her. Then a shot rang out.

CUT TO:

INT. BERT'S HOUSE - EG'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eg sits up in bed, worried.

EG
What happened?

BERT
I'll finish the story later. We
really need to get some sleep.

EG
Did they kill Isabelle? Did they
kill Umbutu?

BERT
They didn't kill Umbutu or neither
of us would be here.

EG
Oh, yeah. Good point. Isabelle
didn't die, did she?

BERT
I'll finish the story tomorrow. I
promise. Let's get some sleep.

Bert kisses him on the forehead, just like his dad does.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - BARN/ELEPHANT CAGE - BEFORE DAWN

Damon visits the animals who are doomed to be in his safari. He's alone with them as he opens up their cages and scares them out onto the sprawling land with his shot gun.

Lola is last. He opens her gate. She moves toward him, as if trying to crush him. He quickly ducks into another animal's cage, out of her reach. She waits, then leaves.

Damon watches her disappear into the vast landscape as the sun creeps up over the horizon.

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - DAY

Eg is up and playing with Isabelle when he hears Lola's psychic crackling rings in his ears. He stands up.

EG

Lola? What is it girl?

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

Todd pulls up in his truck, presses the buttons with the code, but the gates don't open. He tries it again. An ominous voice reverberates from the intercom.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)

Go directly to the main house.

TODD

I've got to feed the animals first.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)

I've been given strict instructions to have to go to his house and do not stop at the barn. Understand?

TODD

Who's going to feed the animals?

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)

Do you need a security escort?

TODD

No.

The gate doors swing open slowly. Todd looks worried.

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Todd walks up to the over-sized front door. It opens. A bodyguard escorts him to the living room where Damon looks out onto the property through an enormous window.

TODD

You wanted to see me, sir?

DAMON

Thank you. The animals have done very well under your care.

TODD

I love those animals.

DAMON

I know you do.

Damon hands him an envelope. Todd hesitates, opens it.

TODD

I don't understand. Am I fired?

DAMON

A parting gift for your services.

TODD

They still need to be fed and-

DAMON

My party is tomorrow. I thought I'd give them one last day of freedom.

TODD

Where are they?

DAMON

I let roam freely, your suggestion.

TODD

They're not in the barn?

DAMON

It'll be more fun to hunt them if they've had time to get lost on the property.

TODD

You're going to kill them all?

DAMON

I'm not going to kill them all.
I'll let a few of my friends have
some fun too!

TODD

It's illegal to-

DAMON

I won't be killing anything that's
in season in Tennessee. I own these
animals. I own this property. This
is America and we've got Second
Amendment rights. *Thank the lord!*

Damon turns away. The bodyguards lead him out.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERT'S WORKSHOP BARN - DAY

Bert, Savannah, and Eg are going over the plans again as Todd
pulls into the driveway. He gets out, all upset.

TODD

He let the animals out! Lola is
somewhere on the property.

EG

Can't we look for her?

TODD

The property is ten miles square
with hills and rocky terrain.

BERT

I'm sorry, Eg.

SAVANNAH

We know how much you love Lola.

Eg is really quiet. Savannah hugs him.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - LATE AFTERNOON - DAY

The big truck pulls up to the gate with Bert, Savannah, and
Eg in the front seat. The guard opens the gate.

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - BACK OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Damon talks to Bert about the placement of the statue. There are workers setting up tents and such for the party.

DAMON
(peers into the truck)
I'm so excited to see it.

BERT
You've seen the photos.

DAMON
But I haven't seen it in person.

BERT
It's going to take me several
hours. We've got to pour the
concrete and make sure it sets.

Eg avoids looks out into the rolling hills. Savannah opens the back of the truck.

A SERIES OF SHOTS as Savannah and Bert pour the concrete while Eg wanders off into the barn.

EXT. DAMON'S PROPERTY - ELEPHANT BARN - CONTINUOUS

Eg walks into Lola's cage and looks out. He sees what she saw, only from a lower vantage point: sprawling hills, beautiful and lush, an inviting landscape -- *freedom*.

He "turns on" his elephant psychic powers and "calls" to Lola. There's a shift in the SOUNDS in his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - STATUE - NIGHT

The sun sets and a full moon rises. Savannah and Bert have moved the statue of Damon to the concrete.

BERT
It's crooked.

SAVANNAH
So is he!

BERT
It's my work.

They move it with the forklift. The noise covers up the sound of Lola returning. Eg hears her first.

EG

Lola! She's here!

They see Lola lumbering toward them. Savannah jumps off the forklift, opens the door to the truck, and lowers the ramp.

She grabs some peanut butter treats and hands them out.

In the darkness, an animal scurries toward Eg. It's the warthog and he's moving quickly. Bert takes out his gun.

SAVANNAH

(to EG)

Don't move! You can't outrun him.

EG

What do I do?

SAVANNAH

Get big!

They both raise their arms. The warthog advances, but so does Lola, quickly.

BERT

Stay still I'm going to shoot it.

EG

Don't! They'll hear it and know.

Lola intercepts the warthog and gets in its way. Bert throws his peanut butter ball far out. The warthog goes for it.

Lola stops in front of Eg. He lures her toward the truck and rolls his peanut butter ball into the back. She walks in.

Savannah quickly closes the door and raises the ramp. The three of them jump in the truck, Savannah drives off.

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - FRONT GATE- NIGHT

They pull up and the big gates start to open.

INT. DAMON'S ESTATE - MONITORS - CONTINUOUS

The big truck pulls up with Savannah driving.

EXT. DAMON'S FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

The gates stop opening. They look at each other.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
Who are you?

SAVANNAH
Savannah Stiles, the driver for
Bert Freeman.

SECURITY GUY
I don't have you on my list. I'll
have to inspect the vehicle.

Bert leans over so his face is on the screen.

BERT
No need. She's authorized. I don't
see as well at night and I have my
tired grandson here.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
Fine.

The gates open a little more.

SAVANNAH
Thanks. Have a good evening.

Lola makes a NOISE. The gates stop before they get out.

SECURITY GUY (O.S.)
What was that?

SAVANNAH
The forklift releasing compression.

EG
Gassy forklift!

Savannah smiles. He opens the gate the rest of the way. Lola lets out a loud NOISE as Savannah barrels onto the open road.

The three of them cheer and holler. Lola lets out another big TRUMPET as if celebrating her newfound freedom. The CRACKLING chatter between Eg and Lola sounds upbeat.

INT. DAMON'S ESTATE - MONITORS - CONTINUOUS

The monitors clearly show the elephant in the back of the transport truck with her trunk raised through the slats.

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Seconds later, the bodyguards jump in a big, tank-like Hummer, shotguns in hand. They race after Lola and company.

INT. THE TRANSPORT TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bert sees the bodyguards' Hummer pull out of the entrance. Shots ring out. They duck. He shields Eg with his body.

Savannah drives expertly, but the big truck can't get up the speed to outrun the smaller, faster Hummer.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE DAMON'S PROPERTY- CONTINUOUS

Savannah drives in the middle lane, so they can't get next to her. They shoot at the back, but she's relentless.

BERT

Savannah!

SAVANNAH

Watch this...

An oncoming car in the distance is just what she needs. She stays in the middle lane with the bodyguards firing at them.

She moves over just in time. The oncoming car stays in its lane, causing the Hummer to swerve off the road and crash.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TRANSPORT TRUCK - NIGHT

Lola devours the peanut butter tranquilizer treats. She lets out a TRUMPET of joy. Eg responds with his psychic chatter.

INTERCUT:

INT. THE TRANSPORT TRUCK - CABIN - NIGHT

Bert calls Todd.

BERT

We did it! Meet us there.

EG

We got her! We got LOLA!

He's so happy that he cries, then hugs Bert.

BERT
What would Umbutu say?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ELEPHANT SANCTUARY - NIGHT

When they pull up with the elephant, the police are already there, arguing with Annabelle and Todd. The truck stops.

INTERCUT:

INT. TRANSPORT TRUCK - CABIN - NIGHT

The three of them are in dismay.

EG
Are they going to arrest Lola?

SAVANNAH
No, Sugar Pie.

BERT
I've got this.

EXT. THE ELEPHANT SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Bert goes right up to the policemen.

BERT
Gentlemen.

POLICE CHIEF
Did you just steal that elephant?

BERT
Yes I did, and these two had nothing to do with it. They were not my accomplices at all.

POLICE CHIEF
Why did you steal the elephant?

BERT
They were going to kill her, which is against International law, I might add.

EG
We saved her life!

POLICE CHIEF
(friendly, humorous)
You know, Bert it's not legal to
steal other people's property.

BERT
You should have told that to Damon
Reynolds when he stole her in the
first place.

POLICE CHIEF
I'm afraid you're going to have to
come with us.

BERT
Can I leave my elephant here?

POLICE CHIEF
I guess so. We don't have room for
her in the backseat anyway.

Bert and the Police Chief exchange a smile. Bert gets in. Eg
looks worried, but Savannah puts her arm around him.

EG
They can't take Bert.

SAVANNAH
He'll be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEPHANT SANCTUARY - QUARANTINE BARN - NIGHT

(This scene is based on a true story with existing footage.)

Lola gets put in a stall that's sealed off. Her sister, Poppy
comes into the barn and moves into the adjoining stall.

Poppy trumpets out a CRY OF JOY. Lola does the same.

Tears are in both of the elephants' eyes as they wrap their
trunks around one another from their adjacent stalls.

This trunk "hug" is their way of rejoicing and celebrating
their reunion. Eg films their reunion on his iphone.

Both elephants lean into the partition that separates them
with such great gusto that the partition bends. The two
sister elephants are so happy to see one another. Eg,
Savannah, Todd, and Annabelle are all moved by their reunion.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Bert is in a holding cell. Eg and Savannah visit him.

BERT

You can stay with Savannah until
your mom and dad get here tomorrow
morning. I already called them.

EG

But I want to stay with you.

BERT

I know, but this is a jail.

EG

Can I stay for a little while?

BERT

If it's okay with them.

Savannah comes back with cushions from the waiting room
couches. Eg settles in next to Bert on the other side of the
bars. Eg shows him the elephant reunion on his phone.

BERT (CONT'D)

There is no greater gift than
reuniting two creatures who really
love one another. You're a brave
and wonderful human being Egbert,
my Egbert.

EG

So are you, Egbert, *my Egbert.*

BERT

You want to know what happened to
Isabelle when the hunters arrived?

EG

Yes!

BERT

Let's see, where did we leave off?

EG

They were coming back from the
watering hole when they saw the two
hunters. One hunter pointed his gun
and pulled the trigger...

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE (DREAMLIKE NARRATIVE) - DAY

A tranquilizer dart leaves the hunter's gun and flies through the air toward Isabelle.

Umbutu throws his body in front of her, but it's too late. The dart pierces her shoulder. She falls to her knees.

BERT (V.O.)

They weren't after her tusks or her unusual hide. They were after her. She was still young enough to transport overseas and too valuable to kill because of her beautiful color, which was a light gray, sort of pinkish color.

EG (V.O.)

So it wasn't a bullet?

BERT (V.O.)

No. It was a tranquilizer gun.

EG (V.O.)

She lived!

BERT (V.O.)

She lived. They were bounty hunters and intended to sell Isabelle instead of kill her. She was more valuable alive than dead.

The hunters run over to the fallen elephant.

EG (V.O.)

What happened to her?

BERT (V.O.)

They sold her to a circus and she was put on a boat to America.

EG (V.O.)

They kidnapped her too!

BERT (V.O.)

They aren't the only ones to successfully kidnap an elephant.

EG (V.O.)

What happened to Umbutu?

The hunters are about to kill Umbutu, but he pleads with them to spare him. He gestures and makes them understand that he's the only one who can communicate with Isabelle.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Bert and Eg sit next to one another on the floor with the bars of the jail cell between them.

BERT

They almost killed him, but he convinced them to let him live. He spent the rest of his life caring for his beautiful companion. He went with them to the ship and slept below deck with Isabelle on the long voyage to America. He never saw his family in Africa again.

EG

That's so sad.

BERT

A lot of people were separated from their families.

EG

His mom and dad must have been so sad too.

BERT

Like all moms and dads who can't be with their children.

EG

Is that how he came to America?

BERT

Yes. He never left Isabelle's side.

Eg has tears streaming down his cheeks.

EG

He lived and she lived?

BERT

Isabelle lived a long and happy life. I was born a few years before Isabelle died.

EG
You actually met Isabelle?

BERT
I did. I don't remember much, but I have a photo of me with her when I was three. It's in the box that I gave you.

Eg hugs Bert through the bars as he cries.

EG
I love you, Egbert.

BERT
I love you too, Egbert.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Bert and Eg are asleep on the cushions on the floor when Adina and Neil walk down the long hallway toward Bert's cell.

They arrive and see Eg and Bert asleep, holding hands. Adina bends down and wakes him up.

ADINA
Eg, are you okay?

EG
Mom!

Eg hugs her tightly. Adina looks up at Neil, then at Bert.

BERT
You must be Adina. I've heard so many wonderful things about you.

ADINA
Bert. It's nice to meet you, too. I can't stand seeing you in there. Who's in charge here?

Adina shifts into lawyer mode when the Police Chief arrives.

POLICE CHIEF
That would be me.

ADINA
I'm Adina Simon, council for Bert Freeman. Unless you're officially charging my client with a crime, I want him released immediately.
(MORE)

ADINA (CONT'D)

I have records to prove that the elephant in question was obtained illegally, was treated unethically, and would have been murdered if my client hadn't stopped him. His actions should be construed as heroic, not criminal.

Furthermore, Mr. Damon Reynolds is in violation of every hunting law in this state and has violated the international treaty to protect endangered species, which comes with a fine of up to a million dollars and five years in prison! Not to mention the worst offense of all, endangering the life of a minor -- my son!

POLICE CHIEF

Damon Reynolds is a horrible man.

ADINA

Damon Reynolds is the one who belongs behind bars and I intend to see to it that --

POLICE CHIEF

We've already got a SWAT team going to arrest him right now. FBI got involved, so he won't see the light of day for quite some time.

ADINA

(ranting, not listening)

In addition, my client wasn't even trespassing because he was technically invited onto the property to deliver a sculpture, which I heard is quite impressive.

BERT

Thank you.

POLICE CHIEF

(to Neil)

Does everyone in Chicago talk this fast and this much?

NEIL

Not everyone.

ADINA

Does anyone know if my client was
read his Miranda rights?

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMON'S ESTATE - DAY

Damon admires his statue when several police cars and the FBI
swarm the property. Damon is so arrogant, he's amused.

POLICE OFFICER #2

You have the right to remain
silent. Anything you say, can and
will be held against you in a court
of law. You have the right to an
attorney...

DAMON

Yeah, yeah. Just so we're clear, my
lawyers will get me out within 24
hours. Will you look at this view!

POLICE OFFICER #1

I'd get a good look at that view if
I were you because it's going to
be a long time until you see it
again, if ever.

DAMON

Nonsense! Do you know who I am? I'm
Damon Reynolds. I own this town.

A police officer takes a photo on his phone of Damon being
handcuffed and put in a squad car, texts it to Police Chief.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The Police Chief gets a text on his phone, shows them the
photo as he unlocks Bert's cell

POLICE CHIEF

Hope you had a good night, Bert.

BERT

The bed's a little soft, Joe.

POLICE CHIEF

I'll let housekeeping know.

Bert comes out and hugs Eg. Neil gives him a heartfelt hug. Adina hugs him next. The Chief shakes Eg's hand.

POLICE CHIEF (CONT'D)
Thank you, son. If you hadn't come along, he would've killed her. You saved her life.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Savannah waits outside with Todd. Once she sees Bert and his family, she dangles the keys to the transport truck.

SAVANNAH
I'm going to return the rig. Stop by the diner before Y'all leave.

TODD
I'll follow you and give you a ride back.

Savannah winks at Eg. He runs over and hugs her.

NEIL
We'll be in for some apple pie.

SAVANNAH
I sure would love that. And bring your shy wife.

Neil takes the car keys for their rental car.

NEIL
(to Bert)
Dad, you sit up front with me.

Adina and Eg get into the back seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERT'S HOUSE/BACK PORCH - DAY

Bert and Neil prepare breakfast. Eg shows Adina the baby chick, Isabelle. They sit down to eat. Bert gives Eg the box.

BERT
Don't forget this, for your report.

Eg looks in the box, then looks up at Bert. CLOSE UP Of the photo of Bert (age 3) with the white elephant (Isabelle).

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Eg stands in front of the classroom with his presentation splashed across the large television screen.

EG

My name is Egbert Simon. I am named after my father's father, Egbert Freeman who is a very smart, kind, and talented sculptor. He's African American, just like me. I might not look African American on the outside, but I am part of a long line of African ancestors. I don't know most of them, but now I know of some of them. It all began in Africa with my great grandfather, Umbutu who was an elephant whisperer and a Mahout, a sacred guardian of elephants. He was shipped over from the Ivory Coast with a baby white elephant when he was only eleven. Umbutu's mother, my great, great grandmother, used to wait for him to return from the interior jungle to their small village. She made him shoes and clothes and food. Umbutu loved his family and all the people in his African village.

A series of photos piece together his patchwork history.

EG (CONT'D)

Umbutu had only one son, my grandfather, Egbert Freeman or Bert. His mother died in childbirth and Bert spent most of his childhood traveling with the circus since his father was the caretaker of the prized white elephant. When Umbutu died, Bert was only three. He moved around and eventually, he and his dad move to Tennessee. Bert joined a commune when he was seventeen, right after his father died. This is where he met my grandmother, Georgia.

(MORE)

EG (CONT'D)

They lived on the commune in Tennessee together for six years, from 1969 to 1974. My father was born on the commune on the same day that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, which is why he's named, Neil and not Egbert.

During the winter of 1974, Georgia took her only son, Neil to Albany, New York to meet her own father before he died. Georgia's parents, my great grandparents, Bernice and Saul Simon were immigrants from Poland who escaped the death camps in Nazi Germany. Georgia Simon, a Jewish girl from upstate New York and my grandfather, Egbert Freeman, the son an African Elephant Whisperer fell in love during the summer of 1968 and planned to live the rest of their lives together, but were separated when my father was only five.

EXT. ALBANY TRAIN STATION - 1974 - NIGHT

It's late and cold when the Young Bert arrives at the nearly deserted train station. He tries to find a taxi, but there are none. He goes to a pay phone and calls a number.

INT. GEORGIA'S PARENTS' HOME - 1974 - NIGHT

The phone rings. Georgia's mother, BERNICE picks it up.

BERNICE

Hello? Hello. Is anyone there?

INTERCUT:

EXT. ALBANY TRAIN STATION - 1974 - NIGHT

Young Bert is tongue-tied and hangs up. He starts walking.

EXT. STREETS OF ALBANY - 1974 - NIGHT

He wanders through the streets, cold and hungry. He consults a piece of paper with her address. There's no one to ask.

He wears only a few layers of clothes and shivers from the cold. He look like a homeless a vagrant.

EXT. A BIG HOUSE - 1974 - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Young Bert arrives at a home and rings the doorbell.

EG (V.O.)

He didn't know his way around
Albany and he walked the streets
all night. He had no where to stay
and no warm clothes. By the time he
arrived at Georgia's parents' house
- or what he thought was her
parents' house - he was shivering
from the cold and delirious from
hunger or hypothermia.

Young Bert rings the doorbell. Someone answers. He tries to speak, but he's nearly convulsing from the cold. Young Bert looks in her house, hoping to find Georgia and Neil. He tries to push his way in, but she slams the door.

Bert keeps knocking, crying. He so desperately wants to go inside. Soon, a siren sounds in the distance and gets louder. He's too stunned and too weak to run. The police surround him in the early morning light. He looks like a defeated animal.

EG (V.O.)

Bert was arrested on January 4th,
1974. Whoever answered the door
that morning called the police.
Bert was taken to jail. He was a
poor black man in a white section
of town and tried to force his way
into a strange house. He kept
trying to explain his situation,
but no one believed him.

Bert nearly collapses from the cold as two white officers get out of the car and grab him, throw him in the squad car.

CUT TO:

INT. EG'S SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eg looks out. The class pays rapt attention to his story.

EG

They convicted my grandfather,
Egbert Freeman for breaking and
entering and attempted robbery.

(MORE)

EG (CONT'D)

He spent over seven years in jail. By the time he was released, my grandma Georgia had remarried and moved to Chicago with my dad.

My dad grew up in Chicago and met my mom, Adina at the University of Chicago. They fell in love, got married and had me. I just met my biological grandfather, Bert for the first time last week. He gave me this box of photos that he took as he watched our family's life from far away. We never even knew he was there, but he has all these photos that prove he never missed a major event like my dad's college graduation or my parents' wedding.

I inherited so many things from my grandfather and from his father, Umbutu who loved elephants so much, but that's another story...

Eg flips through photos of him as a toddler on Neil's shoulders at the zoo, then the one of Lola that first day at Damon's, then the "trunk hug" from their reunion at the elephant sanctuary, then the photo of Bert as a baby next to the original, white elephant, Isabelle.

CUT TO:

INT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE - DAY

It's Thanksgiving. Neil, Eg, and Maddie wait in the lobby of the building, watching eagerly for Bert's truck.

EXT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE - CONTINUOUS

Bert pulls up in his truck. Eg runs out and into Bert's arms. Maddie and Neil follow. Neil gives Bert a big, heartfelt hug.

EG

Bert, this is my friend, Maddie.

BERT

Nice to meet you in person, Maddie.

MADDIE

Nice to meet you too, Bert!

Bert takes Isabelle, now much larger out of the truck. He has a harness on her. She has grown into a very "fancy" black and white chicken.

EG
Isabelle! I missed you. Maddie,
this is my chicken, Isabelle.

MADDIE
Hello Isabelle! You are beautiful.

EG
(voicing the chicken)
Thank you! So are you.

POV from above as Eg and Maddie take Isabelle for a walk. It's a charming sight, as this spirited chicken and these two spirited kids set off down the street.

INT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator DINGS and Adina gets out. She gives Bert a hug and puts him in the elevator, then sends him up by himself.

BERT
What's going on? Why aren't you
coming with?

The doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Bert looks up. He's alone in the elevator. He figures it out as tears stream down his cheeks. The elevator stops. Opens.

INT. LINCOLN PARK HIGHRISE/PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Bert gets out. The door to their home is ajar. He walks in. Georgia stands by the window, looking out as Eg and Maddie walk Isabelle. She smiles, hears the ding of the elevator.

POV Bert - Georgia turns around. She's so beautiful, he can hardly breathe. He has waited for this moment for decades.

BERT
(quietly, as if praying)
Georgia.

GEORGIA
(with equal emotion)
Egbert, my Egbert.

She moves toward him, all arms and all hearts are wide open.
They embrace, kiss.

FADE TO BLACK.