

Ex-men

by René Vase & Jannik Fuglsang 2023

One act. Duration: approx. 80 min.
Script revised June 2023.

This play ran 65 shows all over Denmark winter/spring 2023.

The plot in brief:

Smarmy film maker and single guy, John, 55, has travelled to Spain to find inspiration and write the screenplay he is counting on to save his ailing career. Now he is on his way home to Denmark for an important meeting with a producer. At the airport, he strikes up a casual conversation with Nigel, a dentist of the same age, who has been visiting his summer cottage. They discover that they have a common connection: As a young man, John was married to Nigel's current wife, Camilla. The two have very different dispositions and any sort of closer relationship does not appear likely.

But then airlines strikes break out and circumstances force the two to share the last available rental car back to Denmark. They encounter a number of surprises and challenges on their journey through Spain, France, Belgium and Germany. Along the way, the two men's secrets and unfinished stories come to light bit by bit. John's new screenplay might not be the 'sure-fire hit' he claims, and there is perhaps more to the idyllic picture of Nigel's beautiful vacation home, where he plans to enjoy his golden years with his wife. In the wake of their difficulties, however, a certain understanding between the two men begins to form. Despite all their differences and latent jealousy about their "shared" wife, they have something that unites them: The path they've been on so far is starting to fizzle out... and the sat nav is not working!

Scenes:

0. Intro
1. What are the Odds?
2. 13A and 13B
3. Last Car to Denmark
4. On the Road 1
5. Corrida
6. Wall to Wall
7. Oysters and Bubbles
8. On the Road 2
9. The Banana
10. Visiting Jim
11. On the Road 3
12. Hitchhiking
13. Hey, Are You Asleep?
14. Neanderthal
15. Reperbahn and Bundesliga
16. The Next Day
17. Off Road
18. The Animal Must Die!
19. On the Ferry
20. McDonalds
21. Terminus

0. INTRO

All roles played by 2 players, who jump in and out of small roles in addition to the 2 main roles. They enter in Scene 0, out of character, addressing the audience.

ACTOR 1

Good evening. Does anyone here know Santiago de Compostella?

ACTOR 2

I know it sounds like a sort of dance, but it's not. It's a small town right in the north-western corner of Spain. Super nice.

ACTOR 1

It has a famous, quite large and very beautiful cathedral.

ACTOR 2

And then it has a small, modest and fairly ugly airport.

ACTOR 1

Yes, the kind that only has eight departures a day and a single cafeteria where they only speak Spanish.

ACTOR 2

It is so small that the local scooter distributor has a part time job as a security guard.

ACTOR 1 changes into role of a security guard.

SECURITY GUARD

Security, security. Please line up for security.

ACTOR 2

This is where our story begins.

ACTOR 2 changes into the role of John.

1. WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

The scene opens. At the airport at check-in.

SECURITY GUARD

Security. Please empty pockets for keys and coins, place belts and jackets in trays, along with laptops and other electronic devices. Please take off high heel shoes and boots. All liquids to be held in separate plastic bags.

John walks in, talking on his phone.

JOHN

Alright. Yeah, that's great, Charlie. I'll call you.

SECURITY GUARD

(interrupts)

Señor, señor! Please take off your boots!

JOHN

Sorry?

SECURITY GUARD

Your boots!

JOHN

Right, of course, yes.

John takes his shoes off.

SECURITY GUARD

Thank you. Have a nice journey.

ACTOR 1 changes into the role of Nigel and enters the security queue.

JOHN

(On the phone)

Charlie! I'm going through security. Yes, I'm at the airport now. You know, I was actually just about to call you, Charlie... Hang on, I'll call you back in five.

John goes through the scanner, but the alarm goes off a few times, so he has to put his metal items in a tray before he finally gets through. Nigel walks through with all green lights; he has everything under control. They are done at the same time but get their shoes mixed up.

NIGEL

Sorry, sir... I think you got my shoes?

JOHN

What? Oh! Yeah. Sure-sure. Sorry!

NIGEL

These must be yours!

They swap shoes.

JOHN
 “ECCO?” You know, that's actually a Danish shoe.

NIGEL
 I know. I am Danish.

JOHN
 Okay? Me too. So why are we speaking English?

NIGEL
 Yes, well, I don't know either.

JOHN
 Bye dude.

NIGEL
 Ta-da!

They put their shoes on. Nigel seems to recognise something about John.

NIGEL (CONTINUED)
 Can I ask, do you own a house here, in Costa Luna?

JOHN
 No. No, I don't.

NIGEL
 Well I thought maybe I had seen you down here?

JOHN
 Nope, just been on a little hike on the camino.

NIGEL
 Alright, that actually goes right past our house. But surely that's over 1000 kilometres long?

JOHN
 Yeah, that is a long way. I just did a couple of days. Research for my new film. It's really cool. You should try it sometime.

Their luggage has also been swapped around.

NIGEL
 I'm probably more of an Ecco shoe man.
 (Passes John's bag to him)
 Is this yours?

JOHN

(Takes the bag)

Oh right, then this is probably yours.

(Hands Nigel a heavy suitcase)

Shut up! What are you bringing home, dumbbells?

NIGEL

Sorry, but I am sure I've seen you before. Film, did you say?

JOHN

Yeah, okay. John Smith. I made 'Picasso on Coke'?

NIGEL

No, that doesn't ring a bell... wait a minute... I know!

(Surprised)

...Camilla!!!

JOHN

Camilla? Who?

NIGEL

You were married to Camilla Scott.

JOHN

Millie? Get out! Do you know her?

NIGEL

Yes, she's my wife.

JOHN

That is so far out. Wait, didn't she marry some dreadfully dull dermatologist?

NIGEL

Dentist. And my name is Nigel.

JOHN

Aah... John.

A brief, awkward moment. They shake hands.

JOHN

Where is Millie then?

NIGEL

Well, she's not ... here this time. I was just taking care of some practical stuff ... with the house... alone.

JOHN

Oh that's too bad. I haven't seen Millie in... what... 20 years I think.

NIGEL

Well, I will tell her hello.

JOHN

Yes, you should! ... Millie? Well well well.

(Smiles at the thought)

We were only married for a few years. But it was intense.

NIGEL

I see.

JOHN

Her parents hated me... horrible people.

NIGEL

That would be my parents-in-law then.

JOHN

Oh right... sorry!

NIGEL

That's okay. They are a bit special.

John is lost in his own thoughts thinking about Camilla. Awkward pause.

(CONTINUED)

Well, they are about to board the plane, but it was fun meeting you.

JOHN

You too. Hey, Niles...

NIGEL

It's Nigel.

JOHN

Yes, I know. Will you give Millie a big hug from me?

NIGEL

John ... sure.

From

JOHN

Why don't we grab a selfie for her too?

They take a selfie.

NIGEL

We'll see if she remembers you then.

JOHN

Oh I think she will.

Change of lighting.

2. 13A AND 13B

Two airline seats on a plane. Airplane cabin noises and Spanish over the speaker system.

Nigel is seated, adjusting his neck pillow and sleep mask. John arrives.

JOHN

Nigel! Oh my God! What are the odds?

NIGEL

Well, hello... again. Are you by the window?

JOHN

Yes please.

John manoeuvres himself in place, annoying Nigel. John has the loose papers of his script in his hand and drops a Post-It note. Nigel picks it up.

NIGEL

This is yours?

JOHN

What?

NIGEL

(Reads from Post-It)

"Car Chase In Pamplona."

JOHN

(Takes the note)

Right! *That* is going to be a great scene. They have that festival with the bulls in the streets... it's like ... pure carnage.

NIGEL

So it's one of those action... mooh-vies?

JOHN
 (Quietly, secretly)
 This is a bit hush-hush... but it's actually the sequel to
 "Picasso on Coke".

NIGEL
 And what was that, again?

JOHN
 Only the Film of the Year 1997.

NIGEL
 Okay. That's quite a few years ago.

JOHN
 See, that's the genius part. 25 years later. The same lads we
 remember from then ... but now life has taken its toll. It has
 more substance, you know?

NIGEL
 My! Do people still write on paper?

JOHN
 I do. In this phase, anyway. You know, cross things out,
 move bits around.

NIGEL
 Well, if it works for you.

JOHN
 It does. Um, do you have a pen I can borrow?

Nigel finds a pen and gives it to John, who starts writing. Nigel looks out of the
 window anxiously.

NIGEL
 I don't like the look of this.

JOHN
 (Looking out as well)
 What?

NIGEL
 All these parked aircraft.

JOHN
 Isn't it just rush hour or something? We can't be the
 only ones going home to the cold.

NIGEL

No, the climate is somewhat more pleasant down here.

JOHN

Aren't the properties really expensive?

NIGEL

Well yes, but you have to see it as an investment for our golden years.

JOHN

(Makes a face)

Um, sorry, I just hate that expression.

NIGEL

The kids have grown up, we have the time and the money. Now's the time to enjoy ourselves, right?

(Pause)

So are you married, then... again?

JOHN

No man, better to be a single guy. But I do have a daughter. 19. Lives with her mother. She's going to go to Film School. Daddy's girl, you know.

NIGEL

Oh yeah. We have Casper who's 23, Lily is 21 and Sara...

Nigel tries to show the pictures on his phone. John is not listening, putting headphones on.

JOHN

I'm looking for songs for the soundtrack. What do you think about these old boys?

John hands his headphones to Nigel. He listens.

NIGEL

Oh isn't that ... The Whom!

JOHN

The Doors. Best band ever.

Nigel returns the headphones. John closes his eyes. Time jump. A quick 'clip' where time passes. John has fallen asleep with his head on Nigel's shoulder.

JOHN
(Waking up)
Are we there yet?

NIGEL
No, we haven't taken off. Yet. Shhh. They are saying something.

Flight attendant on the speakers in Spanish. Nigel listens carefully.

NIGEL (CONTINUED)
Oh no!

JOHN
What? I understood nada... something about "gasolina"?

NIGEL
They can't get the plane refuelled.

JOHN
Oh wow, someone understands Spanish?

NIGEL
Before we bought the house here, I took a course at SCoLS.

JOHN
Skulls?

NIGEL
S.Co.L.S. Suburban Copenhagen Language School. Shhh.

More Spanish on the speakers.

(CONTINUED)
No, no, no!

JOHN
Now what? Why are we getting up?

NIGEL
We have to deboard. They are on strike. We have to get off the plane.

They get up.

JOHN
Now what? Is there another airport?

NIGEL

No, it's all of Spain. That means probably the trains too. Typically Southern Europe!

JOHN

Isn't there a ferry?

NIGEL

From Spain to Denmark???

JOHN

Well okay, but I have be back on Tuesday for a meeting. What about a car?

NIGEL

That would take 38 hours plus delays on the motorway. And it might not even be possible to return the vehicle in Denmark. So you can forget about renting a car!

JOHN

(Considering it)

I'm going to try anyway.

Nigel leaves first. John packs his things and stands up with the pen to give it back to Nigel, but he is gone. Change of lighting.

3. LAST CAR TO DENMARK

Airport noises. Nigel is waiting at a car rental counter (can be turned around for quick changes). There is some sort of computer, established by keyboard sounds. Rings a bell. AVIS rental agent arrives. Speaks English with a Spanish accent.

NIGEL

¿Por favor?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

How may I help you, señor?

NIGEL

Hola – me gusta alquilar un *carro*?

BILUDLEJER AVIS

Okay? You want to buy a carrot?

NIGEL

No – me gusta alquilar un caaarrrroooo...

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Yes yes, a carrot!

NIGEL

Un carrrrrrro.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

A big carrot!

NIGEL

Carrrrro?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Small carrot? Carrotina?

NIGEL

(Gives up trying his Spanish)

I'd like to rent a car!

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Perfecto, señor! Because this is a car rental service! And where do you wish to return the car, señor?

NIGEL

Copenhagen Airport... Kastrup.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Sorry?

NIGEL

Kastrup.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Gastro?

NIGEL

Kastrup. Danish airport.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Really...sounds a bit like you sneeze...ga-a-a-a-strup.

(Having fun)

NIGEL

Very funny!

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Maybe you sneeze a lot, because it's cold... I check.
(Uses the keyboard)

They rotate the counter and swap roles.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

No car Denmark!

JOHN

What do you mean 'No Denmark'?

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

No Denmark.

JOHN

What about Germany?

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

No Germany.

JOHN

Sweden, Norway, anything?

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

No Sweden, no Norway, no Anyway.

JOHN

So you don't have any cars at all?

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Si señor. We have car, one moment. I check.
(Uses the keyboard)

They rotate the counter and swap roles. Nigel is texting.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

You are were lucky, señor. Last car for Dinamarca.
Dacia Duster.

NIGEL

Great!

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Four wheel drive. Double airbags. Remember, it is a diesel
engine.

NIGEL

Yes yes.
(Not listening, texting)

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

I see you have the new iPhone, señor. Very nice. You know the Spanish radio commercial on radio? It's very funny. I sing it.

NIGEL

I'm a little busy!

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

I have plenty of time.

(sings)

"I phone with my phone

my phone is I phone

So I phone with I phone

(break)

what do YOU phone?"

Funny, right?

NIGEL

Very funny. And now, could I also get... the car?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

I check!

(Uses the keyboard)

They rotate the counter and swap roles.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Si señor, I have one car left!

JOHN

Really?

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Si, one car you return in 2 days.

JOHN

Perfect!

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

In Naples, Italy!

JOHN

Italy? No no, that's the wrong way.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Sorry?

JOHN

Italy is the wrong way.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Oh, wrong way? So you want to go from Italy to Santiago de Compostella?

JOHN

No. The other way.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Yes, that is the other way. You go to Italy, rent car there, drive back to Santiago de Compostella.

JOHN

No no no... just forget it.

BUDGET RENTAL AGENT

Okay, I forget!

They rotate the counter and swap roles. Rental agent hands Nigel a car key.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

So here are the keys, sir. Dacia Duster. Very fancy car for very low cost. You go down here... down, down, down, go down stairs and up stairs and you find the car at B4.

NIGEL

Before what?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

No – not before. Is now. You don't want the car now?

NIGEL

Yes, but you said “before”?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

No, I said B4.

NIGEL

Before what?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Not before anything. B4! It's like before B5. B4.

NIGEL

Before what?

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

No. Look on key.

NIGEL

(Takes the key)

Ah! Number B4! Thank you very much.

AVIS RENTAL AGENT

Adios.

Rental agent exits. Change of lighting. We are in a parking garage. Nigel unlocks the car with a "beeb" and puts his suitcase in the back. John passes by; sees Nigel.

JOHN

What's this, Nigel? Didn't you say: Forget all about a car?

NIGEL

Um, yes or... I considered it ... and then they had the last one.

JOHN

So you just grabbed the last car to Denmark?

NIGEL

What? No... or maybe there's one to Malmö...?

JOHN

And what about the long delays on the motorway?

NIGEL

Well, it's not the high season right now, so...

JOHN

Well, congratulations then on getting the last car. And by the way – you forgot your pen. Thank you for the loan. Have a nice trip.

(Hands him the pen)

NIGEL

(Under pressure)

Well...

JOHN

What?

NIGEL

We could ... You know...

(Long break, takes the pen)

... Do you want to come along?

JOHN

You mean *share*?

NIGEL

Well, yeah.

JOHN

Deal! Cool. The two of us in a car to Denmark? I did not see that coming.

Happy, John puts his bag in the car. The sit, establish a car. Nigel takes the wheel.

NIGEL

No, I guess not.

Change of lighting.

4. ON THE ROAD 1

MUSIC: Herb Alpert: "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You". Miming montage of them driving. There may be visual gimmicks, opening the electrical window, etc. They swap drivers along the way. John opens a bag of crisps while diving. He places it between Nigel's legs. Nigel turns down the radio, music fades out.

NIGEL

Could we agree on 'No food in the car'?

JOHN

Why?

NIGEL

Because it's smelly and messy. You know: "Drive when you're driving," right? I think we could have this one rule.

JOHN

(Nods)

So, just the one?

NIGEL

Yes!

JOHN

So it's okay to fart!

NIGEL

No, of course not. You'd clench a bit. That's only polite.

JOHN

So two rules?

NIGEL

(Not listening)

If we take three hour shifts, we can spend the night somewhere in the Pyrenees.

JOHN

Great!

NIGEL

After that, the question is whether we take a long stretch... that is, drive at night?

JOHN

Not for my sake. My pitch isn't until Tuesday.

NIGEL

Pitch?

JOHN

That's when you pitch... a script. *Sell* it!

NIGEL

Okay, then let's have one more overnight stay further north. What about Hamburg?

JOHN

Hamburg? Yes! A thousand times yes!

NIGEL

So we could visit that bar ...

JOHN

Yes! I think I know what bar you are thinking of.

NIGEL

The one where the Beatles played.

JOHN

Alright. So that's a different bar.

NIGEL

I've just always dreamed of seeing one of the bars where the Beatles played.

JOHN

Alright. If you want to see it, you should see it.

NIGEL

If there is anything *you* want to see, just say so.

JOHN

Just say so?

NIGEL

Yes.

JOHN

Okay... ON!

John suddenly exits the motorway.

NIGEL

What, *now*?!

JOHN

(Points)

Yes! We're in Bilbao, it's Thursday ... time for Corrida.

NIGEL

Cor-what-now?

JOHN

CORRIDA!

Change of lighting.

5. CORRIDA

Music: "Spanish bullfighting music" Bullfighting arena is established. Audience noises. Nigel and John are in the audience with coffee cups in their hands. Nigel is tapping away on his phone. John films enthusiastically with his mobile phone.

JOHN

(Excited)

So, what do you say? The colours, the ambiance... the smell of bullshit!

NIGEL

(Shows him his phone)

I say that I have just booked us two rooms in a nice little hotel in Bayonne.

JOHN

This is something you won't find *anywhere* else!

NIGEL

No, because it is illegal everywhere else. I mean, what we are waiting for here is basically animal cruelty.

JOHN

(Ignoring him)

This is *authentic*. Sensual. Life and death, man!

NIGEL

So will it be included in your film?

JOHN

What? No, of course not.

NIGEL

Well, I don't know anything about films. I actually don't think I ever saw your ... the Picasso one!

JOHN

Really? You are in the minority then. It won an award.

NIGEL

Congratulations.

JOHN

That really pissed off those culture snobs.

NIGEL

Culture snobs?

JOHN

Yeah, those people care a lot about awards. I don't care at all. It does not affect me one bit.

Change of lighting. Flashback to the award ceremony in 1997. Spotlight on John, who (in contrast with his own telling of the story) is nervous and emotional.

VOICE-OVER (OFF)

And the award goes too... John Smith for 'Picasso on Coke'.

Applause. John makes a "Yes" gesture and gets up.

JOHN

Thank you! Thanks a lot. This is... The greatest thing ever.
Thank you Charlie... and thank you Martin... you two... the three
of us. We're a team ...man...And ... This is eternal.
I just know it. Thank you!

Applause. Change of lighting. End of flashback. John sits back down. Nigel drinks his coffee.

NIGEL

What else have you done?

JOHN

Well, lots.

NIGEL

What?

JOHN

(Deliberately diverting the
conversation)

Okay. Here comes the Matador.

Matador fanfare. They stand up and applaud. The occasional "Olé" is heard.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

Now he is getting the muletta.

NIGEL

Is that the cape?

JOHN

Yes! Sit down now.

They sit back down. Nigel is getting impatient.

NIGEL

So was that it?

JOHN

No, no.

NIGEL

What are we waiting for now?

JOHN

Well, the bull.

Bullfighting continues. Nigel sighs and looks at his watch.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

Did you know that Hemingway was crazy about bullfighting too?

NIGEL

Yes, we read that one in school.

JOHN

The what?

NIGEL

You know, "Death in the Afternoon". Is that not what you were talking about?

JOHN

(He does not know it)

Oh yeah. Is that what it's called? Yes, that one!

NIGEL

I actually think it was on my exam. I got a B.

JOHN

Okay...

NIGEL

No wait, I got an A.

(John says nothing)

Why does he wear that silly little hat!

JOHN

He just does. It's tradition. And at the end he throws it to the crowd, so we have to try to catch it.

NIGEL

If you catch it, I promise to wear it all the way back to the hotel. If we ever get out of here.

JOHN

Right... Here comes the bull! This'll be good!

John thumps Nigel in the back so he spills his coffee.
Audience roaring. Spanish music again. Change of lighting.

6. WALL TO WALL

They are in a hotel lobby in front of the elevator. Nigel is wearing the bullfighter hat. John thinks it is very funny.

JOHN

It actually suits you.

NIGEL

(Holding two hotel keys)

Thank you. Do you want room 401 or 402?

JOHN

The one with a mini bar?

NIGEL

They both have that.

JOHN

(Takes a key)

Then I'll take that one.

NIGEL

But just so you know, those are over-priced.

(Presses button for the elevator)

Tomorrow we have to decide whether to take the western route or the eastern.

JOHN

Okay?

NIGEL

You see... The western route is Bordeaux, along the sea, inland to Paris and then we hit Belgium. It's quite beautiful. And the eastern route goes over the Massif Central up to Alsace – with all the little villages – and then to Belgium. That's also a nice trip!

JOHN

Nigel, which one is the fastest?

NIGEL

Well, that's just it. The funny thing is that according to Google Maps there is only an 8 minute difference. I mean that is funny!

Nigel is giggling; John fails to see what's funny. Ding sound. Elevator muzak. They enter a very small elevator together. Nigel reaches past John to press the button.

JOHN

What are you doing?

NIGEL

Just going to press ...

They huddle closely, awkwardly, waiting in silence for the elevator to stop. No sound, no movement. Finally the doors open with a pling, and they hurry out. End muzak.

NIGEL

So what will it be – west or east?

JOHN

West then! Along the sea.

NIGEL

Why?

JOHN

Because then we pass through La Rochelle, where they have the best oysters in France.

NIGEL

Oysters? *I love oysters!*

JOHN

And the best birds.

NIGEL

I ... *I love oysters!*

JOHN

Good night.

NIGEL

Good night.

They go toward the rooms, but they have the wrong ones. They change places in the narrow hallway.

JOHN

This is a very small hotel.

NIGEL

Yes, but so cosy. How about we get an early start tomorrow?

JOHN

Yes, good idea. Shall we say 11 am.

NIGEL

I would have said 8.

JOHN

10!

NIGEL

9!

JOHN

Half past 9.

NIGEL

Half past 9 it is.

JOHN

Half past 9... at the breakfast buffet. Good night!

NIGEL

Good night.

Change of lighting. They enter their rooms and have separate telephone conversations. Nigel makes an outgoing call. John's phone rings, and he is not happy to see who it is.

JOHN

Oh crud.

(Answers the phone)

Oh hey Charlie! So glad you called, my friend. No, I didn't get a chance to call you back... wha'?... well, it's going really well, terrific. I'm actually working on the script right now... What?...no, it's coming along nicely... I think it's 80% done.

NIGEL

(Leaves phone message)

Hello, Nigel here. Just leaving a quick message. I'm on my way home from Spain... by car actually, it's a bit of a long story... You'll never guess who I met! What happened was...

JOHN

What? Shallow?...come on, there's all kinds of psychological stuff. Did you read the bull fighting scene?... No? Well, I'll send it right over... it's actually something I've added recently... Amazing stuff! It's pure Hemingway: You know the one we used to read: "Death comes... afterwards".

NIGEL

And everything with the house is taken care of just as... as we agreed. The lawyer will need about another week... But I can fill you in when I get home. I think that was it. And this was a message from Nigel.

JOHN

Charlie goddammit, it's a sure thing... you, me, Martin... just like in the old days... What?... yes, of course Martin is on board... He's the name appeal, right...No, I just haven't got a hold of him yet... but I will, no problem... Yes, of course... I'm busy too... See you Thursday... Right, Tuesday!

The both look a bit dejected afterwards. Change of lighting. Music: "French music".

7. OYSTERS AND BUBBLES

At the docks in La Rochelle. Bright sunlight, seagull cries and wave noises. They are standing at a tall outdoors café table in an oyster restaurant with a plate of oysters each.

JOHN

Oh that's good. This was the right decision!

Sounds from an aggressive seagull that is after their oysters. They duck down.

JOHN

Oh get out of here!

NIGEL

They are good grilled too.

JOHN

Seagulls?

NIGEL

Haha, no, oysters. Just a bit of shallots and a some parmesan on top. Wauw! We often do those at SCoBA.

JOHN

You go SCUBA diving for oysters?!

NIGEL

No, S.Co.B.A., Suburban Copenhagen Barbecue Aficionados.
We meet every other month to share our love of grilling.

JOHN

Maybe we should get another glass?

NIGEL

Just a half for me. I am driving next. Garçon!?

(He calls for the waiter, no
response)

Garçon, Garçon!... Pouvons-nous commander une verre
de champagne, s'il vous plait?

(John is amused by Nigel's futile
attempt)

Garçon! I don't believe it.

JOHN

Nigel. Watch this.

John retrieves a bank note from his pocket. Waves it in the air.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

(Friendly tone, in Danish)

WAITER! Please get your arrogant French arse over
here with some ...*champagne!*

Waiter (ACTOR 1) arrives with a bottle of champagne.

GARÇON

Monsieur! Nous avons trois varieties de champagne
de fabricants sélectionnés. Mon préféré est ce
Bollinger à 25 euros le verre...

JOHN

(smiling)

No, I can't do Tuesday. I have to put wallpaper up in the
basement.

The waiter pours. John gives him a tip. The waiter leaves. ACTOR 1 back as Nigel.
They drink.

NIGEL

What just happened?

JOHN

They were on to you ... immediately.

NIGEL

On to me?

JOHN

Can tell you don't tip. Or maybe you do?

NIGEL

Well it's included in the bill. So *no*.

JOHN

You don't get anywhere by being petty.

NIGEL

Hey, I am not *petty*. I just like to have things in order.
That's why I use EasyBill.

JOHN

EasyBill?

NIGEL

Yes. It's this app!

Nigel hands his phone to John.

JOHN

(Reads)

What's this? Bullfighting: entrance, coffee. Are those all our expenses in there?

NIGEL

Yes. It divides them up exactly. That way when we get back we don't have discuss who had a whole and who had a half glass of champagne. *That* would be petty.

JOHN

(Sarcastic)

Didn't you forget the pack of gum you bought at the petrol station?

NIGEL

(Points in the phone)

It's right there. I do love apps. Are you hungry? Just Eat. Problem solved. Do you need to go somewhere? Uber. Problem solved. Can I see what you have?

John hands his phone to Nigel. Nigel checks it out.

NIGEL (CONTINUED)

I have that one too. And that one. And that one.

(Surprised)

Are you on Tinder???

JOHN

Yes sure. Are you horny? Tinder. Problem solved!

NIGEL

Um, this is a very nice champagne!

JOHN

(Shows him on his phone)

Look here. I'll show you how it works. On this map you can see all the women nearby who match your profile... *my* profile, that is.

NIGEL

Oh get out of here! There are so many!

JOHN

Don't look now, Nigel, but this one, she is sitting just over there behind me. Hey! I told you not to look!

NIGEL

But she can't be more than 30?

JOHN

Yes! Matches my profile.

NIGEL

I see. Oh there's one here too.

(Swipes)

JOHN

Hey, now you swiped.

NIGEL

What does that mean?

JOHN

Whether I like her or not.

NIGEL

Well, do you?

JOHN

Which direction did you swipe?

NIGEL

Left, I think ... No, right!

JOHN

Then I liked her! The next step is a date.

NIGEL

Oh God... Good thing it's not me.

(Puts the phone down on the table)

JOHN

A little rusty?

NIGEL

I was never any good at that sort of thing. I hated it when I was young. I always ended up looking at the wrong bits.

JOHN

Her arse and tits?!

NIGEL

No, no. If only. It's because I was a dental student. I once went out with a girl who had the most crooked set of teeth.

Change of lighting. Flashback. They play as Nigel and his date Katherine.

NIGEL

Well cheers, Katherine!

KATHERINE

Cheers Nigel!

NIGEL

(Unsure of himself)

Let's see the menu then. There are two different aligners ... *appetizers*... and *vitello tonnato*, which is Italian steel... *veal* in a toothpaste... tuna paste...tuna *sauce*. Perhaps we should look at the desserts. I don't know if you have a crooked ... *sweet* tooth... or two.... We could also just get an overbite of cheese. *Bite!* Bite of cheese. Retainer... *waiter!* Um ... cheers!

JOHN

(Laughs)

Goddammit, Nigel.

Change of lighting. End of flashback.

NIGEL

It was a relief when I met Camilla. She always said what needed to be said. With Camilla, I could just... ..go along.

JOHN

Oh yeah, Millie! You know, that's probably what went wrong between us. *She* wanted to be in control and *I* wanted to be in control.

NIGEL

I can see that.

JOHN

Cheers! Who is driving to Paris?

NIGEL

That would be me.

JOHN

Garçon!
(He leaves a tip)

NIGEL

You have already...

John drops a bank note on the table and leaves. John honks for Nigel in the car.

JOHN

Come on, Nigel!

NIGEL

Yes, coming!

John honks. They get in. Change of lighting.

NIGEL

Paris?

JOHN

Paris! It's going to be SO cool!

8. ON THE ROAD 2

Miming montage over French music. Music: 1. Tous et foutu. 2. Aznavour 3. Alors on dance 4. Je t'aime 5. Ca plane pour moi. They sing along as they drive. They take turns switching between stations on the car radio. The mood is high and before long they are both singing along loudly. Change of lighting.

9. THE BANANA

Interior. Louvre, Paris. Nigel just found "Mona Lisa" and takes a photo. John joins him, eating a sandwich.

JOHN

So, you found her?

NIGEL

Yes, she is in there in front of all the Chinese tourists.

(Shows him a photo on his phone)

Look, it's Mona Lisa.

(Notices John eating)

I don't think you are allowed to eat in here.

JOHN

Give me a break, Nigel. I'm not allowed to eat in the car either ... Anyway. Let's go to the modern art exhibit, no one's ever there.

Change of lighting. They enter the section for modern art. Stage design becomes "modern" sculptures. Three sets of stairs. They study the art.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

(Reading label on artwork)

"Staircase with two steps".

NIGEL

This one is called: "Staircase with three steps". What is that one called?

Artwork is pushed in from the side of the stage. It is a banana hung up with duct tape.

JOHN

"Reflection"!

(Notices the banana)

Hey, what do you think this one's called?

NIGEL

Oh no! Not that one! If I knew that was here, I would not have gone in here at all.

JOHN

You know it?

NIGEL

There is one at the Museum of Modern Art back home as well. It's a series of four.

JOHN

4? Isn't that called a *bunch*?

NIGEL

(Not listening)

We saw it last year. Camilla and I. We spent a whole day just to see that thing.

JOHN

But it's just a joke, right?

NIGEL

Oh no, it's great art.

(Sarcastic)

And for those who didn't get it, there was an art expert on hand to help.

Flashback to Nigel and Camilla's visit to the museum. ACTOR 2 is an art expert.

ART EXPERT

Here we see the artwork "Banana affixed to wall with 30 cm of duct tape" by Italian installation artist Maurizio Cattalan, purchased by the museum for 800,000 kroner.

NIGEL

(In disbelief to Camilla)

Did you hear that, dear? 800,000?

ART EXPERT

The work symbolizes global trade. An ambiguous comment on 'exploitation, climate impact and transience'. Any questions?

NIGEL

Yes! What do you do when the banana starts to rot?

ART EXPERT

Good question. The work is accompanied by a license, which gives the buyer – in this case us, the Museum of Modern Art – the right to reestablish the work themselves.

NIGEL

So, just stick up a new banana yourself?

ART EXPERT

No. Not quite. Photographic documentation must be sent to the artist, who then approves the size, curvature and correct angle of the banana.

NIGEL

Can I ask one more thing? Why a banana?
Wouldn't a pineapple last longer...
(To Camilla, but she has left)
...especially if it was canned. Camilla?

End of flashback. Back at the Louvre.

JOHN

So it was obviously *not* a joke!

NIGEL

Not at all. We had a fight about it all the way home. Suddenly I was embarrassing and narrow-minded. Just because I don't swoon over a banana. And no... I have nothing against modern art. I just want to have a chance to understand it.

JOHN

I don't think you're meant to *understand* that banana.

NIGEL

Now you sound like Camilla!
(As a parody)
"Nigel, you always need to understand everything. Try to feel, Nigel. Try to feel!" As if I don't feel anything? I do!

JOHN

What?

NIGEL

Well, mostly ... ridiculous. This is the second time I am staring at a banana on a wall, just mocking me. It ruined our whole Sunday. We actually have quite a democratic relationship.

JOHN

What do you call it?

NIGEL

Yes, you know what I mean... both have equal part in the decisions. And she had decided on the Museum of Modern Art, and I had booked our usual table at the local Italian restaurant. But we never got there, did we.

JOHN

And all because of that banana!

NIGEL

YES! A stupid banana! That costs 800,000!?! Should have become an artist!

JOHN

It's just art, Nigel. If you don't like it, don't look at it. Or change it. Watch this.

John takes his sandwich and pins it to the wall with a dollop of chewing gum, just below the banana.

JOHN

Voila. "Baguette in dialogue with banana?" What do you think?

NIGEL

(Shocked)

What did you just do?

JOHN

Yes, and now I think it is time for us to get out of here, quickly. Nigel, I am taking you across the street to meet a real artist!

NIGEL

But ...you ...

They hurry out of the museum. Change of lighting.

10. VISITING JIM

Change of scene. Cemetery in Paris. John is looking for Jim Morrison's tomb. Nigel follows him. They find it, and John becomes almost reverential. They speak past each other for the most part.

NIGEL

Who are we looking for?

JOHN

Look, there he is!

NIGEL

(Reads the tombstone)

Jim Morrison? Right, that's the lead singer from... The
Whom... Doors.

John pulls out some miniature bottles from the hotel mini bar.

NIGEL

Did you get those from the mini bar!?

JOHN

Ssssh – it's for Jim!

They toast to Jim and place the bottles on the tomb.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

He was only 27. What a waste.

NIGEL

I was 27 when we had Casper.

JOHN

I was that age when I started film school. Damn, that was a
wild time!

NIGEL

And then we got married the year after. Beautiful country
inn, 90 guests. That was a really successful party. And you'll
never guess who was the entertainment?

JOHN

Then came the first short film. The one with Martin. We
nailed that one ... everything was just ... You know ...just so!

NIGEL

It was Stig Rossen!

(Substitute for other pop singer of mid-level fame
usually enjoyed by people older than himself)

JOHN

Nigel, could you not stand by Jim Morrison's grave and talk about Stig Rossen?

NIGEL

Oh come on, he has a lovely singing voice! It's a funny story, actually: He used to come to the clinic for several years because... well, due to patient confidentiality, I can't say what it was. JOHN
What was it?

NIGEL

Severe gingivitis. Anyway, we agreed that in return for a discount on the x-rays, he would sing at our wedding. It was a surprise for Camill

JOHN

If I know Millie, she would've been very surprised!

NIGEL

Oh definitely ... I will never forget it. Suddenly the doors open, and there he is!

(Sings a little)

"Bring him home, bring him home, bring him hiiiiim..."

John interrupts him.

JOHN

Nigel, that is tantamount to desecration.

NIGEL

Oh well, each to their own. It certainly was a nice party! And a few years later we got the better of that gingivitis as well.

JOHN

Alright. Look here.

John lifts up his shirt. He has some tattoos.

NIGEL

And you're talking about desecration?

JOHN

Just look!

NIGEL

So you have a tattoo?

JOHN

What does it say?

NIGEL

(Reads the tattoo)

It says: "talking to me?"

JOHN

Oh right, other side.

(Turns).

NIGEL

(Reads)

Riders on the Stor'? What, like in a bike shop?

JOHN

There is an M at the end.

NIGEL

Oh okay, under there.

(Stretching out a bit of fat)

"Riders on the Storm".

JOHN

Exactly. "Riders on the Storm". The last song Morrison recorded. December 1970. A few months later he died, right here in Paris.

(Buttons his shirt again)

"If you give this man a ride, sweet family will die. Killer on the road." Amazing song. A searching soul, a traveller in a storm.

NIGEL

A storm? So he was high!

JOHN

The point is that Morrison needs to be on the move at all times to correct the past, see? ... just like in my film.

NIGEL

Alright. Well, then I also have something for you to see. I also have one.

(Unbuttons, shows his shoulder)

JOHN

Isn't that just a mole?

NIGEL

It's an Indian love symbol, with the children's initials in it. We got it done in Sri Lanka.

JOHN

We?

NIGEL

(Buttons up)

Yes, Camilla has the same one. They were our anniversary gifts for each other.

JOHN

(Shaking his head)

Nigel, goddammit. You are badly in need of some Morrison. Maybe it was the 70's and maybe he was stoned... but it is still the best.

(Hands him his headphones)

I'll drive the next stretch, and you'll get a proper dose of The Doors. Once we hit Belgium, I guarantee: *Doors fan till you die.*

11. ON THE ROAD 3

Music: The Doors: "Roadhouse Blues". Nigel is in the back seat listening.

NIGEL

He doesn't have a very good singing voice, but it's got something.

(Listens a little more)

I like that electric piano.

John just smiles, notices that the car is running low and exits the road.

NIGEL

Now what?

JOHN

We need to fill the tank!!!

NIGEL

I got it!

(Still listening while he fills up the tank)

This is actually really good!

(He gets into the car)

All filled up!

The car doesn't start.

NIGEL
What's happening?

JOHN
It won't start.
(John tries again, unsuccessfully)

NIGEL
But I just put petrol in it?

JOHN
Petrol? In a diesel car?

Musical ending.

12. HITCHHIKING

Side of a main road. John is hitchhiking. A car passes by.

NIGEL
I am really sorry about that.

JOHN
Yes, you have said that 12 times now.

NIGEL
I also think they could have marked it Diesel a little more clearly. I drive a petrol at home, and I mean, you don't think about that when you fill it up.

JOHN
Here comes a minibus! Smile, Nigel.

The vehicle passes by. Nigel checks an app on his phone.

NIGEL
We have been standing here for 2 hours now. We are never going to get a lift.

JOHN
I always get a lift. I have hitchhiked all my life.

NIGEL
But it's not even necessary. We get the car back tomorrow, and there is a lovely hostel right down here in... Haydenhändelhems.

JOHN

Nigel. One thing. I am *not* sleeping in a hostel. I am going to Brussels to a 4 star hotel, and I am getting a delicious hot dinner at a white table cloth restaurant, *and* a cold beer... and you are paying – and tipping. I am *not* sleeping in a hostel.

John is not answering, keeps hitchhiking. Another car passes by.

NIGEL

It's just down here, the app says no more than 500 meters...

JOHN

Will you stop that!
You are always organising everything!

They quarrel. A large truck drives close by, honking its horn. Nigel pulls a startled John into the roadside.

NIGEL

Hostel?

JOHN

...But I am not sleeping in a dormitory!

13. HEY, ARE YOU ASLEEP?

They have ended up alone in a dormitory. In separate beds with bedside lamps. We only see their faces. Their lamps light up when they speak.

NIGEL

It may be a dormitory, but at least we have it to ourselves.
(Pause, switches on his lamp)
I am really sorry about the car.

John switches on.

JOHN

That's alright, Nigel. At least we got to see Haydenhändelhems.

NIGEL

No, I mean at the airport.

JOHN

What about that?

NIGEL

I should have offered to share the car with you right away.
It might seem like I didn't want you along.

JOHN

Well, you didn't want me along.

NIGEL

But I didn't know you then, and there's also the fact that you and
Camilla used to... I'm just not very good with new people.

JOHN

Nah, that's okay, Nigel. Good night!

NIGEL

Good night.

They switch off the light. Pause. Nigel switches his lamp on again.

(CONTINUED)

Sometimes I feel like people get sick of me.

John switches his light on, tired.

JOHN

Oh, *do* you?

NIGEL

They seem to think I am... well... annoying! Take the waiters,
they don't care about my French, but when *you* come along...

JOHN

(Interjects)
... with *tips!*

NIGEL

I must insist that tips should be included...

(Stops himself)
See, I'm doing it again. I become annoying.

JOHN

Maybe you just need to relax... Let your hair down a little.

NIGEL

I would also just like to say that I am actually happy that we ended up on this trip... That's all... good night!

JOHN

Good night, Nigel.

They switch off, but Nigel switches on again immediately.

NIGEL

One more thing. About our house in Spain... I was actually down there selling it.

John switches on.

JOHN

I bloody knew it.

NIGEL

Did you?

JOHN

I'm not a complete idiot. You don't go all the way to Spain to clean the gutters.

NIGEL

It's because we don't use it enough. We had been saving for it for years, but then Camilla suddenly wanted something completely different... Travel around the world and become a yoga instructor. Things we hadn't agreed on at all.

JOHN

And that was something you had both agreed on?

NIGEL

What do you mean?

JOHN

You are pretty good at agreements that involve others. When to drive, rules about eating in the car...

NIGEL

I know I'm the kind of person who sets up agreements and organises things, but someone has to. And that used to be fine. Now it's as if it doesn't matter any more. If I send a long text message to one of the kids, they don't even respond.

JOHN

Come on, you didn't care about your dad when you were 20 either!

NIGEL

No, but that's different. He was an old fart!

(Pause)

If I stayed here In Haydenhändelhems and opened a bike shop, not one person would miss me back home.

JOHN

Come on, Nigel. You have Millie ... And all those friends. The SCUBA SKULLS and all that.

NIGEL

But those aren't real friends. It's just a bunch of boring suburban men who talk about mortgage rescheduling and tax deductions. Did you know that there are four of us one the same lane who own the same model Citroen?

JOHN

That is just a coincidence.

NIGEL

It's the exact same colour! I wish I was more like you. More of a ... Party guy. Well, good night.

JOHN

Good night.

Nigel switches off. John switches off. Pause. John switches on again quickly.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

Party Guy?!

Nigel switches on again.

NIGEL

I meant it a compliment.

JOHN

Don't be jealous of me, mate.

NIGEL

You're the kind of guy everyone likes.

JOHN

Well, tell that to Party Guy's banker who has closed his line of credit, or Party Guy's doctor who says he needs to cut down on the alcohol, and Party Guy's film producer who gets his knickers in a twist if Party Guy's script doesn't have exactly the kind of Party style that all the Partying financial backers want.

(Has become agitated, calms down again)
Navel-gazing and self-pity... we can all do that.
Good night, Nigel!

NIGEL

Good night.

They switch off their lamps. Time jump. Early morning. Lights up. They are lying very close together now.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

Nigel?

NIGEL

Hmmm...

JOHN

Move your hand a bit.

NIGEL

Oh okay.

JOHN

The other hand.

NIGEL

Sure.

JOHN

And your leg.

NIGEL

Yeah-yeah.

JOHN

Thank you.

NIGEL

You're welcome... Good night, Camilla.

Lights out.

14. NEANDERTHAL

Voice-over from an audio tour for tourists.

VOICE-OVER

Bone remnants of the first Neanderthals were discovered here in 1856. The red pole in the landscape marks the precise spot.

Lights up. Spring sun. We are in a green valley in central Germany – Neanderthal. There is a red-and-white marker pole in the field. Nigel is wearing headphones, listening to the audio guide.

VOICE-OVER (CONTINUED)

The Neanderthals lived in Europe for 250,000 years, but were ousted some 40,000 years ago by modern man, Homo Sapiens, who came from Asia.

John walks in, carrying a taco with sauerkraut and a plastic fork. In the following we hear more voice-over as we watch John struggle to eat his taco. Nigel keeps listening.

VOICE-OVER (CONTINUED)

Homo Sapiens had a superior brain to Neanderthals. Not least when it comes to problem solving.

John flips his taco over but can't take a bite.

VOICE-OVER (CONTINUED)

Modern man had the ability to think abstractly and approach a problem from multiple angles.

The taco collapses. John gives up and throws it away. [?] He now has greasy fingers.

VOICE-OVER (CONTINUED)

It is also believed that factors such as better hygiene...

John wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

VOICE-OVER (CONTINUED)

...and greater cleanliness have played a role in making Homo Sapiens a true survivor.

He burps. Nigel takes off his headphones.

NIGEL

This is very interesting. I am glad we made it through here. This is the cradle of Europe. You should take the guided tour, they have them in Danish too.

JOHN

How the hell do you eat this thing?

NIGEL

What is it?

JOHN

A hard taco with pulled pork and sauerkraut. They call it "Ein Neander-taco".

NIGEL

Only Germans could invent such a thing. Listen, we have a 4 hour drive to Hamburg. If we set off now, we might be able to make the last Beatles tour before dinnertime.

JOHN

Oh yeah, about Hamburg, you should probably expect...

(He is interrupted by his phone)

Oops, Facetime. Conference call. I have to take this.

(Passes the taco to Nigel)

You eat this – it's really nice. I'll meet you at the car in 10, okay.

Nigel nods and walks off. John answers his phone, Facetime call. Light on John and light on Martin, who is standing in New York. John is welcoming, Martin is dismissive.

JOHN

Hey Martin!

(Bad connection)

Are you there?

(The connection works)

There you are! So glad you called, my friend!

MARTIN

Hey John. You have been calling me a bunch of times.

JOHN

Yes, where are you?

MARTIN

New York.

JOHN

Alright, New York! What was it we used to say ... "First we take Manhattan, THEN we take a...

(Pause)

...THEN we take a ..." Don't you remember?

MARTIN

We said a lot of bullshit back then.

JOHN

Damn right we did! So what's happening in New York?

MARTIN

Doing Netflix.

JOHN

Okay... Netflix? Don't you want to be doing some real films? Does anyone even watch Netflix any more?

MARTIN

We just landed another season, so it's two more years.

JOHN

Awesome, man. Just remember that the end of the year is blocked, because we are making "Picasso 2"!

MARTIN

Yeah, about that. Let's be realistic, John. That's not going to work, is it.

JOHN

Take it easy. Don't worry. We'll fix it. You're the leading man, after all.

MARTIN

I dunno, there's also ... Well, you'll come up with something, you always do... Use Thomas, he isn't doing anything now.

JOHN

Don't talk to me about Thomas. Listen. This is OUR project.

MARTIN

Nah, it's mostly yours, really. I'm getting too old to be running around blowing things up anyway, you know? They just cast me as a father-in-law. How about that, John. Me? A father-in-law?

JOHN

Well, that's what you are in the new "Picasso"!

MARTIN

(Awkward pause)

Okay?

JOHN

Have you not even read my synopsis?! Martin, goddammit! What's going on? You bloody promised you'd be in it.

MARTIN

You know what, John? I think you should take it up with my manager.

JOHN

Your manager? Come on. A deal is a deal!

MARTIN

Um, I have to go now. It was really good to hear from you. Bye!

Martin disappears. John slumps. Nigel enters, approaches John.

NIGEL

All good?

JOHN

Yes! Yes of course.

NIGEL

Ready for Hamburg?

JOHN

You won't believe how ready I am for Hamburg!

They exit.

15. REPERBAHN AND BUNDESLIGA

Change of scene. We are in a bar in Hamburg. Music: Rammstein. "Sonne". Night club lighting. Nigel and John perform a funny drinking choreography to the music. Lights up. Nigel is making his way back from the bar with a lot of drinks.

JOHN

Nigel, do you have Netflix at home?

NIGEL

No! Fixed interest rate mortgage.

JOHN

I knew it.

NIGEL

They call this a Bundesliga. It's a 4-2-3-1 formation. You start drinking from the defence and it ends with a shot from someone called Mario. Prost!

They toast and drink a few glasses.

(CONTINUED)

They have a plaque in the toilets that says the Beatles played here in 1960 – they played for 93 days in a row before they left.

JOHN

To go where?

NIGEL

The bar across the street. We have to go there next.

JOHN

Of course we do!

NIGEL

John, there's something I have to tell you.

(Becomes confidential)

The first time I saw you, I didn't really like you.

JOHN

Really! I loved *you*.

NIGEL

Did you really?

JOHN

The hell I did.

They laugh.

NIGEL

I'm not done. Since I met you, everything has gone wrong. Airline strike, car broke down, terrible waiters. Everything!

JOHN
Entschuldigung!

NIGEL
No no, just let me... And on top of that, you fart in the car and you are stuffing your face constantly. BUT...the strange thing is that I'm starting to like you.

JOHN
Nigel, you are sloshed!

NIGEL
That might be. I'm just saying, it has been a long time since I, Nigel Jones, of 18 High Street Lane, has had this much fun. Cheeeers!

JOHN
(Something pops up on his phone)
You know what, Nigel?

NIGEL
And I also feel that ..."this is..."... Oh what the hell is it they say in that film, *you will know..."this is that...could begin"...*

JOHN
This could be the beginning...

NIGEL
(Interjects)
...of a beautiful friendship. That's right! There it is!
I am so glad that you feel that way too.

JOHN
You bet I do. And that's why I was wondering if you would do me a huge favour?

NIGEL
Name it!

JOHN
I need you to hold onto my script.

NIGEL
Of course! That would be an honour! Does that mean I'll be in the credits?

JOHN
You'll get top billing!

NIGEL

Haha!... so *when* do you need me to hold onto it?

JOHN

Now, dammit.

John hands him his script.

NIGEL

Now?

JOHN

Yes sure. This has been great fun, Nigel, but we have to part ways now.

NIGEL

What are you talking about?

JOHN

I have a saucy date on Reberbahn in fifteen minutes.

NIGEL

Like hell you do...

JOHN

Look. Gisela, 33.

(Shows him a picture on his phone)

NIGEL

I don't believe it!

JOHN

Yes, they are very big. She is a bartender on the Reperbahn. And if I know myself, I should not be bringing my script along there.

Nigel is hurt; John doesn't notice.

NIGEL

I could come along.

JOHN

No you can't.

NIGEL

Why not?

JOHN

You are a married man – and to Millie! You have your life, and you should hold on to that. That’s bloody important. Hold on to it, Nigel. Okay?
(Going offstage)

NIGEL

So, um ... we’ll just see each other tomorrow?

JOHN

Yeah sure. See you in the lobby tomorrow at 10? And take good care of my script. Good man.

NIGEL

See you!

JOHN

See you, dude!

John staggers out. Nigel is left behind, alone. Lights fade.

16. THE NEXT DAY

Lights up. Hotel lobby music. Nigel is sitting in the hotel lobby with John’s bag, hung over and wearing sunglasses. Tries several times, unsuccessfully, to get a waiter’s attention.

NIGEL

Ober?...entschuldigung?...Ober?...

Gives up, takes out a bank note.

NIGEL (CONTINUED, IN DANISH)

Waiter, get your arse over here with a cup of coffee.

He is served immediately.

WAITER

Ein cafe, sofort herr.

Nigel leaves a message on John's phone.

NIGEL

This is Nigel. We agreed 10 o'clock and now it's 11, so if you and Gisela are done conjugating German verbs...
(Pause, waiter places coffee cup on table)

WAITER

Ein tasse café.

NIGEL

Danke.... and yes, I still have your manuscript in case you've forgotten what you did with it. This was Nigel.

A waiter enters with a cup of coffee. [?] Nigel sips his coffee and opens the manuscript, considers it for a few seconds and then starts reading. Time jump. Halfway through the script. It makes no sense to him.

WAITER

Noch ein cafe?

NIGEL

Ja, bitte!

Nigel nods, busy, messing with the script, writing notes, etc. Waiter exchanges cups, Nigel makes a call.

NIGEL

Nigel again. It's afternoon now, and it's a 4-hour drive to the ferry, so you'd better come now. This was Nigel.

Time jump.

WAITER

Vielleicht etwas zu essen?

NIGEL

Nein danke!

Nigel is deep in the script, which he's clearly having trouble with. Shaking his head. Nigel makes a call.

NIGEL

Right, it's 4:30 now, and if you don't come immediately, I'll have to drive myself.

(Starts packing up)

You can get your script in Denmark. This was Nigel.

John enters with a hangover and his clothes dishevelled. Nigel is angry.

JOHN

Nigel! My man! Good to see you. What a night. Have you ever done it on a houseboat?

Nigel is not answering, keeps on packing up.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

It's a bit special. Kind of like a waterbed: once you get going, the rest is in the swell. So are we going to stand here all day? Let's get going.

NIGEL

Well that sounds like an excellent idea.

JOHN

You mad?

NIGEL

No, no, I'm not mad!

JOHN

Oh okay, who's driving?

NIGEL

I am!

Nigel throws him the bag with the manuscript, hard. They exit.

17. OFF ROAD

Evening. They are in the car. The rain is drumming on the roof. Silence. Nigel is still angry. John turns the radio on and Nigel turns it off.

JOHN

Okay... now we have been playing this game for two hours, how long are you going to be prissy for?

NIGEL

I'm not prissy. I just want to go home. That was the agreement, in case you forgot.

JOHN

Take it easy. The ferries go all night.

(Spots something)

U-oh. Is that a queue up ahead?

NIGEL

Damn. We really do not have time for that...

Nigel turns away from the road quickly.

JOHN

Where are we going?

NIGEL

Alternative route! Come on!

JOHN

What?

NIGEL

We just have to get off the motorway and up to the ferry, how difficult can it be? Come on, quickly now!

Takes his phone out.

JOHN

Let me see... where are we?

NIGEL

We just passed Neustadt.

JOHN

Okeydokey. Then we take a right at the next ... no, left. No, straight ahead actually... I think. Yes, 'gerade aus' is it!

Pause. Nigel is still silent.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

Nigel, goddammit. Is this because I chose a piece of German pussy over the Beatles?

NIGEL

Of course not. You can do what you want. It's not like we're married.

JOHN

Relax, man. Loosen up a bit. Life is short... you have to, like, embrace whatever comes your way, right? What is it they say? It's not about the destination...

NIGEL

(Interrupts, irritated)

Oh spare me your pocket psychology, will you? You sound like one of those guys from your film.

Pause. John is a little puzzled.

JOHN

What the hell do you mean by that?

NIGEL

Nothing.

JOHN

Have you looked at my manuscript?

NIGEL

What? No... or yes... I was waiting for you for 6 hours.

JOHN

Alright. How much did you read?

(Pause)

Did you read it all???

NIGEL

I didn't know that was illegal. You gave it to me.

JOHN

You can't do that. No one except me has read that. And you can't judge something like that.

NIGEL

Well I'm not doing that? Wouldn't cross my mind.

JOHN

(Pause, he is seething)

Fuck, man. Fuck, fuck, fuck!!! Well. So?

NIGEL

So what?

JOHN

Yes, so, what do you think?

NIGEL

I told you I don't know anything about that stuff.

JOHN

Stop it, now you have to be honest with me.
What do you think?

NIGEL

Okay then. I think... it's shit!

JOHN

It's *shit*?

NIGEL

You told me to be honest. I think the story is thin, it's just a lot of racket that achieves nothing and the characters are completely implausible. Weren't you talking about more substance?

JOHN

There is a very important father-son conflict in there.

NIGEL

Oh okay. We hear about that at the beginning, then later it becomes a daughter, and then we never hear about it again.

JOHN

Well it's not a "dentist's record" is it.

NIGEL

No, then you would probably get "sued". And if you *must* quote Hemingway, try reading him.

JOHN

Just stop it now! Don't you sit there with your self-righteous side parting and your titanium spectacles and think you know my work!

NIGEL

You told me to be honest. And I am.

JOHN

Honest? My arse! You have not said anything honest about yourself on this whole trip.

NIGEL

I have!

JOHN

How about your house in Spain. That was a lie. And why is Millie not here?

NIGEL

Her name is Ca-mil-la!

Nigel turns up the radio, e.g. German schlager music. John turns it down.

JOHN

I will call her whatever the fuck I want.

Nigel turns the radio up again. They struggle for control over the dial.

JOHN

Watch out!

Sound of brakes, wheels screeching, loud bang. Lights out.

18. THE ANIMAL MUST DIE!

Dark scene, only dimly lit by blinking hazard lights. They exit the car; they have struck a deer.

JOHN

Damn! What happened???

NIGEL

We hit something.

JOHN

Why did you have to mess with that radio?

NIGEL

Why can't you just shut up?

JOHN

Didn't you say: "Drive when you're driving"!

NIGEL

Oh no, no, no, it's a deer.

JOHN

Oh no, hell no. Is it dead?

NIGEL

I think so.

They take a closer look at the animal. It moves. They are startled.

NIGEL

It's suffering. We're going to have to kill it. Find something in the car.

JOHN

Me?

NIGEL

Come on, quickly now! Owwww, there's blood all over.

John runs to the car and comes back with a warning triangle.

NIGEL

That thing???

JOHN

That's all I could find!

NIGEL

You don't know how to do anything.

JOHN

Says the guy who puts petrol in a diesel car.

NIGEL

Says the guy who disappears all night and shows up seven hours later than agreed.

JOHN

(Mocking)

Agree this, agree that, you and you fucking agreements!

Nigel takes the triangle, walks back towards the car.

NIGEL

I never should have brought you with me. I should have driven back ... on my own!

JOHN

Well, then you do that. Drive back to the bake-off on telly and your boring life in the suburbs with Millie.

NIGEL

Her name is Camilla!!!

JOHN

I really don't understand how she can stand you.

Nigel returns with the statue he had in his suitcase.

NIGEL

Well that's probably why she MOVED!!!
STAND CLEAR!

He pounds the animal with the statue several times. Finally John stops him.

JOHN

Nigel. Nigel. Calm down. It's dead now.

(Takes the statue from him)

Hey, are you okay?

NIGEL

No, I'm not, actually.

JOHN

Did you say she's moved, as in... Moved out?!

NIGEL

Yes, and I don't need to talk about that.

JOHN

No, no, of course.

Nigel sits down. Pause. John still tries to comfort him.

JOHN

But Nigel. You know women... she'll come back. Of course she will.
All the things you have together... the kids, your friends... the house.

NIGEL

The divorce went through last week!

JOHN

Shit.

NIGEL

All that was left was the house in Spain, so...

JOHN

If it's any consolation ... it probably isn't ... but you see...

It was Millie who left me... Back then.

(Sees Nigel's reaction)

You don't want to talk about it, fair enough!

NIGEL

I guess in a way I have always been afraid of it. I always wondered
what she was doing with someone like me...

Do you know that feeling?

JOHN

Hmmm... not really.

John sits down next to Nigel.

NIGEL

I actually thought we were getting there. I felt that I was doing all the right things, but clearly they were not what she wanted. We were just about to begin to enjoy ourselves.

Pause. John looks at the statue.

JOHN

What is this thing anyway?

NIGEL

It's a Saint. Saint Yago. Patron of the pilgrims.

JOHN

Have you been carrying that all this way?

NIGEL

He was the first thing we bought for the house. We put him in the back garden right next to the camino.

JOHN

So like an old school GPS?

NIGEL

Oh yeah. You could say that. That's pretty good. Maybe you can use him in your film?

John hands the statue back and they walk towards the car.

JOHN

I don't think there is going to be any film.

Lights down as they leave the scene.

19. ON THE FERRY

Ferry sounds. Waves. Music: Tom Waits. Lights up on John, standing on the deck in the early morning. He picks up his manuscript, reads one of the pages and then throws it to the sea, then another one, etc. Finally, he lets it all fly.

20. MCDONALDS

They are sitting in a McDonald's on the outskirts of Copenhagen. John apathetic with a cola. Nigel has a tray with burgers and fries. He seems a bit more together than John.

NIGEL

Breakfast is served. McMuffin with double cheese and triple bacon. You need your energy going into that meeting.

JOHN

I am not going to any meeting.

NIGEL

About those things I said... I don't know anything about filmmaking.

JOHN

It's not that. I think it was all just a hopeless excuse to try to repeat something that can't be repeated.

NIGEL

Now you're being a bit hard on yourself.

JOHN

Not at all. Do you know what I am? I am a fucking Neanderthal. No, worse: I am Stig Rossen. No wait, it's even worse: I'm Stig Rossen who thinks he's Jim Morrison!

NIGEL

(Smiles)

That is funny!

JOHN

Funny?

NIGEL

Well, it's sad, but it's also funny. Why don't you write about yourself?

JOHN

Me?

(Ironically)

That'd be an exciting scene, wouldn't it?! A middle-aged has-been at a suburban McDonald's just pissed his last chance away. And his only buddy is a divorced dentist. Who the hell would want to watch that?

NIGEL

I would. Then I would probably wonder: "Hey, how did they end up in that McDonald's?".

JOHN

How?

(Pause, John begins to think about it)

You'd probably need to do a flashback. To three days earlier. Spanish airport; they are stranded because a bunch of lazy Spaniards could not be bothered to refuel a plane.

NIGEL

Okay, and then what happens?

Nigel takes out his pen and begins taking notes on a napkin. John tells the story.

JOHN

Well, then you would typically cross-cut between two car rental services. One of them scoops up the last car to Denmark right under the nose of the other. First turning point! They must share a car all the way though Europe. That feels like a road movie up through Spain and...

Their talk fades out while the music fades up. E.g. Herb Alpert: "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You". We see a photo montage of selfies from their trip on the back wall. Nigel writes everything down along the way.

21. TERMINUS

They are sitting in the metro train at Copenhagen Airport. Nigel takes the last selfie.

NIGEL

Just the last one... There we go!

JOHN

What did AVIS say?

NIGEL

They were very happy to get the car back. There was also a surcharge of 1500 kroner for extra cleaning. Apparently they found cheesy crisps everywhere.

JOHN

Nigel... Let's share that!

NIGEL

(Smiles to himself)

Thank you very much. So where are you going to?

JOHN

My producer lives at Kongens Nytorv. So it's the M2 line all the way. What about you?

NIGEL

Stop at Nørreport. Take the E line up to Hellerup, then change to the A line for Virum. That saves you a full 4 minutes.

(John smiles to himself)

Are you going to try to sell your film?

JOHN

Yes, why not. But that would be *our* film.

NIGEL

Oh right. But let's still agree that they are called Jack and Niles. And Niles is a dermatologist?

JOHN

Yeah yeah, sure. And we can take the bit with Stig Rossen out!

NIGEL

Yeah, he's a really nice guy, you know.

JOHN

And he actually has a terrific singing voice!

(Pause, Nigel looks puzzled)

Don't tell anyone I said that.

NIGEL

(Nods and smiles)

What a trip, eh?

JOHN

You can say that again!

NIGEL

But it is good to be back in Northern Europe again. Where everything just works.

Ding-dong sound (Metro train speaker).

SPEAKER SYSTEM VOICE-OVER

This is the transport authority. Due to frost on the tracks, the following train lines are delayed: A, B, C, E, F and H. Metro trains will be out of service all day.

They look at each other.

NIGEL

Do you want to share a car?

JOHN

Great idea! I'll hail a taxi.

NIGEL

I can order it on my app!

JOHN

There's one right there...

NIGEL

But it's easier with an app and you get the bill right away.

JOHN

Come on, it's a woman driver.

NIGEL

Is it?

JOHN

Do you want to sit in the front seat?

NIGEL

I mean, yeah...

They exit. Music: "I'm getting sentimental".

END

