1a. INT. NPR STUDIO – DAY

(MUSIC: NPR like chime. SFX: Small studio ambience.)

**CARY ONANON:**

WFIU, Bloomington Indiana. Where you don’t need to be an expert, if you learn something new everyday.

(MUSIC: Newsbreak transition.)

**DAN V. PRESCOTT:**
Jerry had begun to fall back into herself. Something was lurking in her that wanted out. Ernie had learned to sense this something, like how the horses can sense a storm before it happens. But, that didn’t mean he knew what to do. And maybe it couldn’t be helped. Maybe this coming storm required Ernie to hunker in place, wait it out. In any case, it wasn’t quite here yet. Why bring it up when the sun is still out?

**MUSIC SEGUE:**

(MUSIC: WASHINGTON POST MARCH – THE ERNIE PYLE EXPERIMENT MAIN TITLE THEME.)

**ERNIE:**This is Ernie Pyle, The Hoosier Vagabond. And this is that girl who rides with me;

**JERRY:**Not lately. When are we getting the heck out of here?

(MUSIC: Main theme begins to fades out.)

**1b. INT. NPR STUDIO - PRESENT**

(SFX: The ambience of a recording studio fades in.)

**DAN V. PRESCOTT:**

Welcome to The Ernie Pyle Experiment: Episode 6, Thirty Years Too Soon.

(MUSIC: Main theme finishes fading out.)

**CROSS TO:**

**2. EXT. FRONT YARD PYLE FARM, AT THE CAR - DAY**

(SFX: Farm ambience: chickens, cows, and birds chirping. The Model A trunk is closed then Jerry walks on the gravel onto the grass moving to the hood of the car, where she places the wirer recorder. She also is carrying a bottle of moonshine and a tin cup. Over this... NOTE: The scene should start with the mono vintage wire recording SFX then slowly cross fade into a full stereo mix.)

**JERRY:**(Big Laugh)…Howdy Jim! Big surprise! We’re still in Dana,Indiana…just put my suitcase in the car and I thought I’d give you a little piece of my mind…while Ernie gets his junk packed up.

(SFX: Full stereo mix should be in effect by this time. Ernie counts out a few dollars.)

I don’t have much to pack. Three dresses, with undergarments and hose for about a weeks wearing.
Ernie keeps two suit jackets, trousers and slacks, a few ties. One pair of shoes, one pair of boots...I have three pairs of shoes. That’s about it. And the typewriter.
And a couple bottles of what-now and don’t-you-know, and if you don’t I won’t tell ~~but they have a red label with a little fella in tails walking straight-up, …like he hasn’t had any of it himself.~~ And this tin cup. Hard to find sometimes, it rolls under the seat.

(SFX: Jerry unscrews the bottle and pours the moonshine into her tin cup.)

**JERRY (CONT’D):**What are you, a judge? Everyone has an opinion, Jimmy boy.

(SFX: Jerry close the lid on the bottle then begins drinking. Over this...)

**JERRY (CONT’D):**I don’t care who knows, I like a drink. I like a drink! Oops, someone’s on the porch. Darn it. It’s Mary, I think she heard me. Hehehehe.

(SFX: Screen door opens in the distance. Footsteps approaching through the grass.)

**JERRY (CONT’D):**

Well...that cat’s been out of the bag for...Hell, I don’t think that cat’s ever seen the inside of a bag, Jim. Here’s to you Aunt Mary, Cheers!

(SFX: Jerry finishes her drink. Unscrews the moonshine, pours another and screws the lid back on the bottle. Over this...)

**JERRY (CONT’D):**She’s a lone-wolf, Jim, I really like her. She takes no guff, that’s why we get along!

(SFX: Jerry notices Ernie approaching and tries to hide the bottle. Over this...)

**ERNIE:**Don’t put that away.

(SFX: Ernie arrives.)

**JERRY:**You can’t sneak up on a person like that.

**ERNIE:**Well, I wasn’t. If your ears weren’t ringing, you’d have heard me.

**JERRY:**Ahhh…Careful, keep it down. Aunt Mary is on the porch...

(SFX: Ernie waves at Aunt Mary.)

**JERRY (CONT’D):**

...well, don’t wave at her!

**ERNIE:**Why not? Try acting normal. I do it all the time.

**JERRY:**She’ll think I’m up to something.

**ERNIE:**Well, aren’t you?

**JERRY:**When do you want to get out of here?

**ERNIE:**Soon.

**JERRY:**I’m ready.

**ERNIE:**I know you are. I saw you packing.

**JERRY:**Really Ernie, can you set a time?

**ERNIE:**No.

**JERRY:**Wouldn’t you like to get to Yellow Springs by sundown?

**ERNIE:**Oh, Yellow Springs, is it? Ye Olde Trail Tavern?

**JERRY:**Why not? A drink and a room.

**ERNIE:**It’ll be there tomorrow.

**JERRY:**Did you finish the last column?

**ERNIE:**Working on it. On, Aunt Mary.

**JERRY:**You aren’t done yet? Ernie, please! How far along? I want to get out. I want to get out! I’m tired. I’m too tired all the time and I want to open one of these inhalers, but I don’t want to do it here.

**ERNIE:**Benzedrine?…You better not. You can wait.

**JERRY:**Well, I will. I’ll open four or five of them at once if you don’t hurry up.

**ERNIE:**Nobody wants to see you hopped-up on Bennies, Jerry. Put them away.

**JERRY:**I don’t want to be so damn tired! I don’t! How far along are you on the story?

**ERNIE:**Far? I’m too near to be far. The page is blank. Say, here’s an idea. Why don’t you take this machine up to the porch and reconnoiter?

**JERRY:**What do you mean?

**ERNIE:**Set it on the ground with a quilt over top of it, hide the microphone.

**JERRY:**And get Aunt Mary to come sit out?

**ERNIE:**Try it. See if you can get me something I couldn’t get for myself.

**JERRY:**Like the sense to know when we should leave?

**ERNIE:**If you can get me enough to write about, I will get you to Yellow Springs by sundown.

(SFX: Jerry places the moonshine on the hood, grabs the recorder and walks off.)

**CROSS TO:**

**3. INT. PYLE FARM. SCREENED PORCH - LATER**

(SFX: Different perspective from the yard but similar farm ambience from the porch: chickens, cows, and birds chirping. Jerry walks up a set of concert steps then walks onto the porch, she bends over places the recorder on the porch next to the porch swing. Jerry takes the quilt from the swing and lazily drapes it over the recorder. She then crosses and opens the screen door. Over this...)

**JERRY:**Mary? Mary?

**MARY(FROM WITHIN THE HOUSE):**

Yes, dear?

**JERRY:**Come join me on the porch?

(SFX: Footsteps from within the kitchen are heard as Mary joins Jerry, the screen door creaks as Jerry holds it open for Mary. Mary crosses the porch and sits in the hanging porch swing as Jerry closes the door and crosses to join her but she remains standing. Over this...)

**JERRY:**Mary, How old were you when George died?

(SFX: Mary slowly swings in the porch swing. Over this...)

**MARY:**It’s been ten years. Sixty.

**JERRY:**And how long were you married?

**MARY:**Twenty years.

**JERRY:**Was it enough?

**MARY:**I suppose not.

**JERRY:**Was he good to you?

**MARY:**Say, what is this?

(SFX: Mary stops swinging.)

**MARY (CONT’D):**

Why are your eyes darting back and forth?

**JERRY:**What? Hahahaha. No! They are not! I’m…I’m just curious, is all!

**MARY:**Are you sure? What’s this inquisition about? You alright?

**JERRY:**Yes.

**MARY:**

Let me look at you.

(SFX: Mary reaches for Jerry’s hand and pulls Jerry toward her.)

**MARY (CONT’D):**

Hmmph. Maybe you should sit down.

(PAUSE. SFX: Jerry takes a few awkward steps back.)

**MARY (CONT’D):**

You really want to know about George?

**JERRY:**
I really do.

(SFX: Mary starts swinging again.)

**MARY:**

Well, OK. There’s nothing much to the story, anyway. Kind of like George. You sure you’re feeling alright?

**JERRY:**

Yes.

**MARY:**

Mmm-hmm. Alright, well…If I had it to do all over… I’d still wait till I was forty to get married because first I’d go to college, and run for Senate.

**JERRY:**Haha!

**MARY:**

I’d bring the voice of reason to Washington, raise heck a few years, then I’d be ready for George Bales. I made him see reason more than once, I tell you.

**JERRY:**Well, I’d vote for you.

**MARY:**Instead, I took on George Bales on the reform ticket! When I should have been taking on Roosevelt...the FIRST one! George would come calling with a broken down mare fronting a racing sulky and expected me to like it. He thought that was special. Just like a man to think stability is approached in half-measures. George would stop in the road and yell for me to come out, he hadn’t the sense to get off and come escort me down. SOMEONE had to help the poor sap with things such as manners and sense. I felt sorry for him... so I married him.

**JERRY:**But you liked him?

**MARY:**Well, sure.

**JERRY:**You made it a long time without marrying. There weren’t any others?

(SFX: Mary stops swinging. Over this...)

**MARY:**Any other what?

**JERRY:**Any other boys?

**MARY:**Why do I feel like I’m on trial here? What do you mean?

**JERRY:**That came calling before George?

**MARY:**Well, sure!

**JERRY:**(BEAT) What were they like?

(SFX: Mary starts swinging again.)

**MARY:**One was a giant. He was twice as tall as me, and ate like an elephant. He was a nice boy, but the thought of cooking for HIM? All that food? I’d never have the time for anything else. He was so big... he didn’t move much.

**JERRY:**So, it was a practical decision?

(SFX: Mary momentarily stops swinging to emphasis, “It was a tactical decision”. Over this...)

**MARY:**It was a tactical decision. A daily routine can’t be a source of suffering.

**JERRY:**Oh, Sure... Ernie doesn’t eat much. I’m glad he doesn’t much care for my cooking.

**MARY:**Maybe the two are related.

(They laugh.)

**MARY (CONT’D):**I’m just teasing.

**JERRY:**I hope so. I get the feeling everybody thinks I don’t do anything.

**MARY:**Well, you aren’t a conventional type of woman, are you?

**JERRY:**I hope not.

**MARY:**Does Ernie think you don’t do anything?

**JERRY:**No. No. He’s the only man that never went out of his way to talk down to me. I mean he does, but I do him as well, so I don’t mean in a general sense. I mean, as if I am just a stupid…half-human.

**MARY:**Well, nobody around here thinks that. All we see is how much that boy loves you and needs you.

**JERRY:**He’s okay, I guess…still feel half-human some days.

(BEAT. SFX: Mary slows the swing into a stop. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Maybe we should do this another time dear, you seem a bit… tired at the moment. You sure you don’t just want to take a nap?

**JERRY:**

No.

(SFX: Mary starts to get up and starts for the door. Over this...)

**MARY:**

I think you need to drink some milk, dear.

**JERRY:**

He talks to himself when he is composing.

(SFX: Mary stops. Over this...)

**MARY:**

What? What are you talking about now, dear?

**JERRY:**

He moves his lips, really. No sound comes out.

(SFX: Jerry takes a few steps and slides into a rattan chair across from the swing. Over this...)

He can be anywhere, in the car...on a street corner. He’ll bob his head, gesture with his hands... like he’s in a conversation with some ghost or something.

(SFX: Mary takes a steps toward Jerry. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Where are you right now, young lady?

**JERRY:**

Last week, we were in a nice hotel. He was typing. I went out for...something. When I got back to the room…

(SFX: Mary walks to the screen door, opens it and calls to Mom. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Maria, will you bring Geraldine a glass of milk out here, please?

**JERRY:**

…I had left the door wide open for some reason and I heard him talking to somebody. I walked in and he was shaving, talking to himself in the mirror. He was saying the same sentence over and over. I stood in the doorway, listening. I knew exactly what would make that sentence perfect, just a simple change in verb tense. I was about to speak when he caught me out of the corner of his eye and it startled him. He nicked his upper lip.

**MARY:**

Mmm-hmm.

**JERRY:**

He just laughed and laughed. Thought it was the funniest thing that ever happened.

(SFX: Mary walks back to Jerry and sits in the swing but doesn’t swing. She just listens intently.)

**MARY:**

He is a good man.

**JERRY:**

I’ll keep him.

**MARY:**

I’m glad to hear it.

**JERRY:**

Hahahahahah.

(Jerry laughs a little too hard, a little too long.)

**MARY:**

What is it now, dear?

**JERRY:**

What else would I do?

(PAUSE)

**MARY:**

What do you want to do?

**JERRY:**

Get rid of this feeling.

**MARY:**

What feeling? What are you talking about?

**JERRY:**

That I’m worthless. I can’t even look myself in the mirror.

**MARY:**

I feel like that. I sure do. All the time. You just got to stay busy…

**JERRY:**

I’m like a book he pulls off the shelf. I’m only there when he needs me. I don’t have anything for myself.

(BEAT)

**MARY:**

Most folks these days don’t. Sometimes the world turns sideways and it’s all you can do to keep from selling apples on a street-corner. You have them beat by a mile, dear.

**JERRY:**

Words. Words. Words.

**MARY:**

Sure. You can say that.

**JERRY:**

At this point, I usually pack my stuff up, throw it in the car and we go. Leave this feeling on the side of the road.

**MARY:**

Or, kick it down the road?

(BEAT. SFX: Footsteps are heard coming from the kitchen.)

**JERRY:**

Am I getting you down?

**MARY:**

It’s OK, young lady.

(SFX: Screen door opens, Mom arrives with the glass of milk.)

**MOM:**

Here you go.

(SFX: Mary quickly gets up and meets mom before she comes out onto the porch. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Thank you, Maria.

**MOM:**

Is she feeling alright?

**MARY:**

Well, that depends. I don’t know what she’s gotten into…

**MOM:**

See if you can get her to fall asleep.

**MARY:**

I’m trying.

(SFX: Mom leaves, closing the screen door behind her as she returns to the kitchen. Mary then walks across the porch and returns to Jerry. Giving her the glass of milk. Over this...)

**MARY (CONT’D):**

Jerry, sit up. Please drink this.

(SFX: Jerry takes the glass from Mary and drinks the milk. Mary takes the glass and sits in the swing across from Jerry. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Let’s just sit here, be calm a few moments. Maybe that’s the trick… maybe to settle down a little bit. (PAUSE) How long have you been at this driving around, now? Two years?

**JERRY:**

Not quite.

**MARY:**

All that driving. You like it?

**JERRY:**

I love it.

**MARY:**

You wouldn’t rather...

**JERRY:**

Nope.

**MARY:**

There has to be something about it that you don’t like.

**JERRY:**

Sometimes I don’t get a vote in things, that’s a something. Like, after we’ve decided on going someplace and I fall asleep and we end up in another. That kind of thing.

**MARY:**

If you drove you could have him fall asleep and then you can be the one to end up someplace else.

**JERRY:**

Well, that would be of benefit. I do drive every now and again. I’m just used to not. I like being able to dwell on the horizon without worrying. That’s my favorite thing, I think, about all of it. Staring. Seeing something at a distance and watching it as long as I can. I like driving through forests and mountain roads, but give me the prairie any time. All I need is a vantage from a slight rise in a plain where I can see something far-off as simple as a farmhouse and barn...where I can stare at it for a good minute or more. I get to wondering who it is that lives there, how old it is and who built it. Do they have kids? Do they like it there?

**JERRY (CONT’D):**

Do they ever think about the cars that drive by in the distance, yonder, and if one of them in one of those cars is looking at them… at the same time. Then I think about all the chores they have to do, that I don’t, and that makes me feel real good. Real good.

**MARY:**

Oh, you.

(SFX: Mary begins very slightly to rock in the swing as the tension ebbs.)

**JERRY:**

Last week I stared for a full twenty minutes at some distant clouds putting a series of little tornadoes out toward the earth. They never touched down. We went up and down over the little rises in the ribbon of road we were on, but we were always high enough that I never lost sight of the little tornadoes. It was...(BEAT) I can’t think of anything but ‘beautiful’ to describe it, because there isn’t a word for what I was...doing.

**MARY:**

What were you doing?

**JERRY:**

Nothing. Looking. When I was little, I used to run around Anoka State Asylum in Minnesota, my dad was a superintendent there.

**JERRY (CONT’D):**

I made friends with all the crazy people. It was all the rage, back then. Anyway, I would sit with this one lady. Martha. Martha never talked. We would sit at a large window looking out at a river. I felt calm. Huh…funny to think of that right now…

**MARY:**

I think it’s plain as the nose on your face!

**JERRY:**

What?

(SFX: Mary stops swinging. Over this...)

**MARY:**

There’s a story in there, somewhere! If you can conjure up moments like that, and explain it like that? Honey, why aren’t you writing yourself?

**JERRY:**

I might stop being useful to Ernie…

(SFX: Mary starts swinging. Over this...)

**MARY:**

He’ll get on just fine. We all do. Look at me! I did just fine after George died.

**JERRY:**

You miss him?

**MARY:**

Well, sure. Every day. But, I got my own way to make now, you know.

**JERRY:**

Why didn’t you ever have kids?

(SFX: Jerry slumps into her chair asleep. Over this...)

**MARY:**

Why haven’t you?

**MARY:**

Geraldine? Jerry?

(SFX: Mary gets up from the swing and picks up the recorder. Then she gets close to the mic and says...)

**MARY:**

I don’t know when you’ll hear this, Ernest.

I’m sure I won’t have the time to tell you face to face. I’m sure you’ll be high-tailing it from Dana now as soon as you can so nobody has time to ask direct questions.

So... Let me say this here then. Your lives need to change. I see nothing but grave circumstances ahead if you don’t. I got to tell you, we love her. We do because you brought her here to us to love, so we do.

But you were never like this. You weren’t brought up like this.

**MARY (CONT’D):**

If she does herself in and you didn’t do all you could to help her you will never forgive yourself. That’s the Ernest I know; forever wracked with guilt and self doubt. I can’t imagine what that’d do to you.

So, I don’t know when I’ll see you next. But, when that time comes don’t let her do this here again.

 **MUSIC SEGUE:**

4a. INT. NPR STUDIO - DAY

(MUSIC: Continues to play under this.)

(SFX: Small studio ambience.)

**DAN V. PRESCOTT:**

So, Ernie listened to that last stretch of wire and got to work, for that storm was on their heels now and wouldn’t be long…

 **CROSS TO:**

**4b. EXT. PYLE FARM FRONT YARD, AT THE CAR - AFTERNOON**

(SFX: Farm ambience: chickens, cows, and birds chirping. Ernie is pecking at the keys of his typewriter while Jerry unscrews the moonshine and pours herself a drink in the passenger seat with the window open. Ernie pulls the page from the typewriter, crosses through the grass and gravel then opens the driver-side door and gets in the car. He closes the door and the ambience changes slightly. Over this...)

**ERNIE:**Listen to this.

(SFX: Jerry throws back what is left in the tin cup then says...)

**JERRY:**Go ahead.

(SFX: Ernie raises the page and begins to read.)

**ERNIE:**
My aunt Mary was born thirty years too soon. If she was forty, instead of seventy, I am sure she would be in Congress now. She always did want to be in politics and national affairs, and she does plenty of first-rate original thinking too. Yet she never went beyond the eighth grade in school.

Aunt Mary was past forty when she married. I remember when uncle George first started going with her.

**ERNIE (CONT’D):**

She lived at our house then, and he would come to take her riding before breakfast. He drove a fractious sorrel mare hitched to a two-wheeled racing sulky with just a little seat on it. He would stop out in the road and yell till we were all awake, then aunt Mary would go out and get in with him. She was ashamed to ride up and down the road in a racing sulky on a tiny little seat with a man before breakfast, but she liked uncle George, so she went.

Uncle George lived on a farm, but he wasn’t a farmer— he was a dreamer. He would fuss all day around his garden and his flowers, and play his beautiful big black square piano,

and order three car loads of lime and fertilizer he couldn’t pay for, and talk by the hour about his prize sweet corn, and spend whole half-days studying the flower and see catalogs he had sent away for.

My Uncle George was a great man and he worked like a Trojan, but he never got anything done and aunt Mary had to make the living. She did a nice job of it, too. She raised hundreds of chickens, and she raised her own hogs and cows, and through twenty years she kept the treasury from going flat. She worked from four in the morning till nine at night, and found time to go to a couple of weekly clubs and run the country church besides. She even bought an automobile as early as 1915 and learned to drive it, and drive it well too, when she was 50 years old.

**ERNIE CONT’D):**

Uncle George never would drive the damn thing, so she had to haul him around too.

Then uncle George died. Aunt Mary was sixty years old. She had been born on a farm, raised on a farm, had never been off the farm. But she was alert, she had more energy than a buzz saw, and she was tall and straight despite a lifetime of killing work. And she was generous and kind. And so, At sixty, she went to Indianapolis all alone, to make her way in the world. And she did make it. She worked at all kinds of jobs. She worked as a supervisor in a girls’ reform school. She worked in a restaurant. She took care of a sick woman. She worked as a housekeeper. And today at seventy

she is still working. Not only making her own way, as we say of boys just out of college, but helping keep a lot of other people, just as she always has.

In the city, Aunt Mary had time and opportunity to keep up with what was going on in the world even better than she did before. She knew all about the New Deal, and was in favor of it. Most farm people and churchman are fundamentalists, but my Aunt Mary would have to take only a couple of jumps to be a full-fledged socialist. She has pretty advanced social ideas, and if she was forty instead of seventy I’ll bet she’d make the capitalists holler. She still has all her old energy. When she writes letters her mind runs so far ahead of her pen that she leaves out half the words.

**ERNIE CONT’D):**

But her main interest still lay in the little community where she lived for sixty years. Every letter to her had to tell how Minnie’s chickens were doing, and who wasn’t at church last Sunday, and when Edith is going to have her baby, and what Grace’s new dress looks like. She gets back often enough. And people would say to her what a shame she had to go back so soon and she would say, philosophically, but spirited like too, “Yes I’d sure love to stay, but I’ve got my own way to make, you know”.

(SFX: We should move from the stereo mix slowly cross-fading back into the mono sounds of the vintage wire recording.)

And there she is, at seventy, still hammering away at life and getting the best of it. She makes a lot of us younger ones look cheap.

**JERRY:**That’s a good one.

(SFX: Ernie folds the page and puts it in his shirt pocket. Over this...)

**ERNIE:**You ready?

**JERRY:**The car is packed. I’m packed. It’s still early enough to make Yellow Springs.

(SFX: Ernie begins to open the car door. Over this...)

**ERNIE:**Maybe. Let’s go say goodbye to everybody.

**JERRY:**Better hurry, I just swallowed a Bennie. Goodbye everybody!

(SFX: Jerry gives a Bronx cheer.)

 **MUSIC SEGUE:**

5a. INT. NPR STUDIO - DAY

(MUSIC: Continues to play under this.)

(SFX: Small studio ambience.)

**DAN V. PRESCOTT:**
Next time on The Ernie Pyle Experiment: **CROSS TO:**

**5b. MONTAGE**

A preview cuts and sound bites from episode 7.

 **CROSS TO:**

**5c. INT. NPR STUDIO - PRESENT**

(MUSIC: Continues to play under this.)

(SFX: Small studio ambience.)

**DAN V. PRESCOTT (CONT’D):**

Back next time with more adventures from The Ernie Pyle Experiment. And verily, I say unto you until the cows come home…The good road will never end, if you can only stay on it!

**FADE TO:**

(MUSIC: “THE WASHINGTON POST MARCH”.)

**CREDIT ROLL**

(MUSIC: Continues to play under this.)

**CARY ONANON:**

WFIU Bloomington, Indiana. Where, apparently, we have devolved into an entire population of beleaguering self-styled humorists. You know who I am by now. I am comfortable with my name. I know who I am. I’m Cary O*nan*on. I have been in public radio since I got into this business. My name itself is a veritable institution, a boilerplate that sooths, and a tradition of the vocal form to all who can hear it. Let’s put a stop to these childish antics, Bloomington. My name is Cary O*nan*on. You know it, I know it, your mom knows it. And for my sake, It’s getting to where I can’t go

**CARY ONANON (CONT’D):**

anywhere, anymore. I have to drive straight from the studio to home. My wife is not happy, and I’ve just been told that someone has hijacked my stool at Nick’s English Hut…

**FADE MUSIC**