

FADE IN:

OLD, WITHERED HANDS work a pruning tool on a jungle of potted plants against a sun-filled window. SNIP, SNIP.

INT. HALLWAY - GOLDEN YEARS SENIOR CARE FACILITY - DAY

HARRY GRIEL, 84, tends to the greenery as if they were unruly children. Sighs at the ANNOUNCER'S VOICE on the radio -- his team is losing. Behind Griel, a regal-looking Black Man, NED STOKES, 74, approaches, cane in hand.

STOKES

'Lo.

Griel acts like Stokes isn't there. SNIP, SNIP.

STOKES (CONT'D)

Guess we haven't been introdu-

GRIEL

Name's on the door. Same as everybody.

Stokes eyes the "Mr. Griel" nameplate on the nearby door.

STOKES

I'm Ned Stokes. Moved in this morning.

GRIEL

No kidding. Like Normandy, making all that racket.

(to the radio)

Throw a strike, will ya'?

STOKES

Know where a fella' can grab lunch? By the time I found the cafeteria, it was closed.

GRIEL

Lunch ends at two. Sharp. Have to wait 'til dinner.

STOKES

When's that?

GRIEL

Five-thirty to six-thirty. Don't be late. They run a tight ship here.

STOKES

Thanks...well, you have a good day.

GRIEL
 (to the radio)
 The cut-off man. You got to hit the
 cut-off man.

Griel keeps grumbling to himself as he strips dead leaves.
 Stokes opens his door and enters--

INT. STOKES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blank walls and stacked boxes. Stokes faces the burden of
 unpacking. Sits on a stack. Notices a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH in
 an open box. Picks it up.

INSERT: A YOUNG STOKES in uniform embracing a PRETTY NURSE.

Stokes picks up another PHOTOGRAPH.

INSERT: a more recent STOKES at a 50th anniversary party with
 the same WOMAN -- smiling, elegant, now in her late 60's.

Stokes hobbles over to a shelf, stands the photos upright.
 Sadly traces the Woman's face with a finger.

CRASH -- something smashes outside. A high-pitched NOISE
 follows. Stokes rushes to the door--

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE STOKES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--and finds Griel on his knees in a mass of broken pots, dirt,
 and plants on the floor. The radio lies next to him, cracked,
 emitting a piercing WAIL.

Stokes winces as he kneels, switches off the radio, and helps
 Griel upright. His hand has a bloody cut.

STOKES
 I'll call the nurse.

GRIEL
 NO...I'm fine.

STOKES
 You don't look fine.

GRIEL
 I'll be all right. It's nothing.
 (desperate)
 Don't tell anybody, Stokes. Promise
 me. You've got to promise me.

STOKES
 You might need stitches.

GRIEL
I can handle it. I'll wrap it
myself. I'm not going to the ward.

STOKES
Be in a mess of trouble, that gets
infected.

GRIEL
Swear you won't let them take me to
the ward.
(beat)
Swear.

A WOMAN'S VOICE surprises them from behind--

WOMAN'S VOICE
Mr. Griel--

It's NURSE SCHUCK, heavy-set, 30's, sacharine-sweet. She
moves quickly to Griel, checking his injury. An ORDERLY
appears at the other end of the hallway, heading towards them

NURSE SCHUCK
What happened here, Mr. Griel? Did
you fall? That's the second time
this week. I'm getting worried about
you. And that hand--

GRIEL
(to Stokes)
They're butchers. Don't let them
take me.

NURSE SCHUCK
Oh, Mr. Griel, that's certainly
uncalled for. Mr. Stokes just moved
in with us and you're scaring him for
no reason at all.
(waves to the orderly)
How about we take you down to the
ward and get you checked out?

GRIEL
No...

NURSE SCHUCK
I'm sure Mr. Stokes won't mind
looking after those pretty azalias
while you're gone.

GRIEL
 (to Stokes)
 Help me.

NURSE SCHUCK
 Jimmy.

On cue, the Orderly lifts Griel into a wheelchair. Nurse Schuck turns to Stokes and smiles good-naturedly.

NURSE SCHUCK
 Are you okay, Mr. Stokes?

STOKES
 Sure.

Nurse Schuck and the Orderly wheel Griel away. Stokes listens as Griel's CRIES echo and fade down the hallway.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A clatch of four residents trade barbs over their dinner trays: GEORGE, 73, fiesty; CARLOS, 69, jovial; ROSEMARY, 85, serene; and VIVIAN, 77, plain angry. George eyes his watch.

GEORGE
 Forty minutes late for Tuesday stroganoff. Harry Griel's officially a weasel.

CARLOS
 Say what you want about Harry, but he's never Welshed a bet.

GEORGE
 There's a first for everything. It's not my fault his team can't hit the cut-off man.
 (beat)
 He knows I'm looking for him. I called, went by his room -- he's ducking me, I tell you.

ROSEMARY
 Stop being dramatic. I saw him this morning. He probably just got busy.

VIVIAN
 With what? A visitor? Harry's son shows up even less than my Katy.

CARLOS

Maybe he's tired of eating with a bunch of old farts who have nothing better to do than gossip.

GEORGE

Maybe he's at the track throwing away my money.

ROSEMARY

Maybe Harry got lucky.

VIVIAN

Maybe, maybe, maybe. Who knows where he is?

Tray in hand, Stokes approaches the table and sits.

GEORGE

You're the new guy. The one they put next to Harry's room.

ROSEMARY

Forgive my friends. They've forgotten their manners in their old age. I'm Rosemary.
(going around the table)
This is George... Vivian... and Carlos.

STOKES

Name's Ned Stokes. How y'all doing?

Ad-lib greetings all around. Stokes sizes up the cafeteria.

STOKES

Nice place you've got here.

GEORGE

We make do... so, Stokes, have you seen Harry lately?

CARLOS

George, the man's barely had a chance to sit down.

GEORGE

It's dinner. I'm making conversation.

STOKES

I don't mind. I moved in this morning. Met Mr. Griel this afternoon.

GEORGE

I was right. The weasel's ducking me.

STOKES

Sad to say, he had a little accident. Nurse showed up to help.

VIVIAN

An accident?

STOKES

Mighta' slipped and fell. Cut his hand. Didn't look too serious.

CARLOS

This nurse -- you catch a name?

STOKES

Can't say I did. Heavy woman. Bad hairdo.

The four exchange worried glances. Stokes covers with--

STOKES (CONT' D)

Harry said he was okay, but she wasn't taking chances. Took him straight to the ward.

An icy quiet seizes the table. Stokes senses the mood.

STOKES (CONT' D)

I'm sure he'll be fine. Needed a few stitches is all. Prolly' waltz in here any second.

ROSEMARY

He's in the ward, Mr. Stokes. Nobody comes back from the ward.

STOKES

Whaddya' mean? Nothing but a scratch. I've had worse shaving.

ROSEMARY

There are... spirits.

GEORGE

Rosie.

ROSEMARY

They come. To collect you.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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