

The Health Aide

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EXT. STREET - MORNING

ETTA, African-American in her 30s walks briskly along a house-lined street. She drags a carry-on suitcase.

She stops in front of a house and knocks on the front door.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MINUTES LATER

The door opens slowly and an OLD LADY appears on the doorstep. She is seated in a wheelchair.

She is MARTHA, late 80s.

MARTHA
(aggressively)
Who are you? What you want?

Etta attempts a friendly smile. She speaks with an Southern accent.

ETTA
Good morning ma'am, I'm Etta--

MARTHA
Etta what?

Etta smiles.

ETTA
ROBINSON...Etta Robinson, I'm your
new HEALTH AIDE.

MARTHA
I didn't ask for somebody like you.
Where are you coming from?

ETTA
Smyrna, South Carolina, ma'am.

MARTHA
What the hell is the agency doing,
they have no Italians?

ETTA
No, ma'am.

MARTHA
What kind of agency is that?

ETTA
Ma'am, if you think I can't take care
of you, I can go--

MARTHA
Okay, okay, come in...let's see what
you can do.

Martha moves back the wheelchair from the door and Etta
steps in.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Etta stands in the middle of the room glancing at the
antediluvian furniture.

Martha notices Etta's expression.

MARTHA
They offered me millions for these
furniture, you know.

ETTA
It's very good furniture.

MARTHA
Sure it is.

ETTA
Sure, ma'ma.

MARTHA
Did they tell you what I need?

ETTA
Yes, I have the list here.

Etta takes a notebook from her pocket and reads.

ETTA (CONT'D)
At 8 am the THYROID pill, after
breakfast the first BLOOD PRESSURE
pill, at noon the pill for the
MEMORY, at 4 pm the VITAMINS and
before you go to sleep--

MARTHA
Okay, I got it, stop with this
litany. You know that you have to
cook and clean the house, right?

ETTA

My supervisor told me that I have to take care of your health only.

MARTHA

He doesn't know nothing. You've to do what I tell you to do... if you want to keep your job.

ETTA

I need to work--

MARTHA

So, do what I say.

ETTA

Yes, ma'ma.

Etta offers another smile.

ETTA (CONT'D)

I should take your blood pressure now.

MARTHA

My blood pressure is good.

ETTA

I'm sure it is but I want to know it from the machine.

MARTHA

Let me be clear, you follow my order...otherwise, out you go.

ETTA

Please don't let me go, I'll do what you say. I need the money.

MARTHA

Okay, you stay. Do you know how to cook?

ETTA

Yes, ma'am, I'm a good cook.

MARTHA

What you cook?

ETTA

Fried chicken, black beans, corn bread...dishes like that.

MARTHA

No, no, this is not my food. You have to learn how to make Italian food. I don't want to be poisoned by your nigger stuff.

ETTA

Ma'am, this is good Southern food.

MARTHA

Good for blacks, not for me.

Etta looks at Martha with a submissive expression.

ETTA

Okay ma'am, I'll learn.

MARTHA

What you have in that suitcase?

ETTA

Undergarments, two dresses, some books and my computer.

MARTHA

Why you need a computer for? You have enough work during the day.

ETTA

Ma'am, I study at night.

MARTHA

Waste of time.

ETTA

I'm trying ma'am.

MARTHA

At night, you should sleep and be ready for the next day.

ETTA

I sleep good, ma'am.

MARTHA

After you finish cooking, wash the dishes and go upstairs, the first door on the right is your room. Keep it clean. I don't like pigs.

ETTA

Yes ma'am, I'll do as you wish.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Etta is in front of the stove undertaking the challenge of cooking an Italian meal.

Martha is close by in her wheelchair giving culinary instructions.

MARTHA

Now, mix the tomatoes with the minced meat.

Etta put the meat inside the pan.

Stir...slowly.

Etta follows attentively Martha's instructions.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Add three slices of onion and half glass of white wine.

Etta diligently complies.

ETTA

It smells good.

MARTHA

All my recipes smell good. It's not like your African food.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Martha and Etta sit at the table. Two dishes of spaghetti with sauce are in front of them.

ETTA

Before starting, you need to take the blood pressure pill.

MARTHA

I'm fine, I don't need it.

ETTA

Yes, you do ma'am. You have to take it, please.

Etta gives her a small yellow pill.

Martha reluctantly ingest the pill and sips some water from a glass.

They begin to eat.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

The sound of the opening front door comes from the vestibule.

ETTA
(apprehensively)
Somebody entered the house.

MARTHA
I heard it, it's my son JOEY.

ETTA
Oh, you've a son.

MARTHA
Yeah, a nice boy.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Joey, tall, muscular, in his 60s stands on the kitchen doorway.

His face has the features of a boxing fighter.

JOEY
Hi Mom.

MARTHA
Hi Joey. Is everything OK?

JOEY
Everything is fine.

Joey kisses Martha on her head. Then, he looks in the direction of Etta.

JOEY (CONT'D)
(to Martha, softly)
Who's she?

MARTHA
The new aide.

JOEY
Didn't you ask for an Italian woman?

MARTHA
They don't have no Italian women.

JOEY (SUBTITLE) JOEY
 (in broken Italian Commo e'?)
 dialect)
 How is she.

MARTHA (SUBTITLE) MARTHA
 (in broken Italian E' na' neura, nu saccio.
 dialect)
 She's black, who knows.

Joey stares at her with a stern glance.

JOEY
 What's your name?

Etta smiles.

ETTA
 Etta...Etta Robinson.

JOEY
 Do a good job with my Mom, OK?

ETTA
 Yes, sir...I'll do my best.

MARTHA
 Sit down Joey, have some pasta.

JOEY
 I have to talk to you about
 something.

MARTHA
 Okay, eat and talk.

JOEY (SUBTITLE) JOEY
 (in broken Italian E chella?
 dialect)
 What about her?

MARTHA (SUBTITLE) MARTHA
 (in broken Italian Nun capisce nuddo.
 dialect)
 She doesn't understand
 nothing.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Joey sits at the table, takes a gun from his waist and put
 it on the table.

MARTHA
You've a new gun?

JOEY
Yeah, an Italian gun, a BERETTA. The best.

He begins to eat a large dish of pasta.

MARTHA
So, why are you here?

JOEY
I need your help. I have a problem.

MARTHA
What?

JOEY
Are you sure I can talk?

MARTHA
Wait, I'll keep her busy.

She looks at Etta with a commanding glance.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
Wash the dishes and mop the floor.

Etta moves away from the table and approaches the kitchen sink to start washing the dishes.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
(to Joey)
Go ahead.

JOEY
I have to whack VITO.

MARTHA
But he's your brother-in-law.

JOEY
He's a rat.

MARTHA
What did he do?

JOEY
He snitched on the family.

MARTHA
Are you sure?

JOEY
Yes Mom, I'm sure.

A long silence, then...

MARTHA
You've my blessing. We don't want a
stool pigeon in our family.

JOEY
Thank you Mom, God bless you.

Etta now is mopping the floor.

MARTHA
(to Etta)
After you finish, go to sleep.

ETTA
I have to take your blood pressure,
ma'am.

MARTHA
I'm okay, I don't have no blood
pressure.

JOEY
Mom, you have to do it, you don't
want to get sick.

ETTA
Your son is right ma'am. It's
important to know if everything is
fine.

MARTHA
If Joey says so I'll do it, but make
it fast.

Etta puts the cuff around Martha's arm and measures her
blood pressure.

ETTA
Your pressure is normal, now I can go
to sleep. Good night ma'am, good
night Mr. Joey.

JOEY
Mom, I sleep here tonight, I don't
want to be seen around.

MARTHA

Okay, but no hanky-panky, you know what I mean...

JOEY

Don't worry, who wants to go with a monkey.

Etta slowly exits the kitchen.

Her eyes are wet.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Martha and Joey are still seating at the table.

JOEY

Mom, you have to be careful with that woman...blacks steal. Watch your jewelry, okay?

MARTHA

Don't worry, I know, I'll keep an eye on her.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Etta sits in her bed. She holds on her knees her laptop computer.

She types a message.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

"BINGO! "Crazy Joey" is going to be here all night. He's armed. Bring along the SWAT TEAM."

BACK TO SCENE.

Etta sends out the message while a beautiful smile illuminates her face.

The End

