

THAT TIME OF YEAR

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FADE IN:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

BILL MARLEY, 80, sits on a stone bench under a glorious sunlit sky. Autumn at a beautiful college. Eyes closed, he might be sleeping as he looks frail. He's a man who has lived a full life but is dying.

HANNAH (O.S.)  
Mr. Marley?

His eyes pop open to see HANNAH, 20, pretty and smart, dressed in university logo shirt and jeans. Behind her is a golf cart with the university logo.

HANNAH  
I'm Hannah. The President's office asked me to be your guide today.

MARLEY  
That's very kind of them.

HANNAH  
(pointing)  
I have a cart. What would you like to see?

Marley pats the bench beside him.

MARLEY  
Sit a moment.

She joins him on the bench.

MARLEY  
You're probably too young to understand this, but in time, I think you'll feel the same way. Every fall, every fall I get the feeling I should be heading back to school. Maybe it's the angle of the sun or the soft light or the smell of leaves. I don't know. I just get the feeling. So, I decided to come back, to see the place that changed my life.

HANNAH  
According to the alumni directory, you're quite successful.

He half smiles at her.

MARLEY

See that building across the street?

He points to a four-story, glass and steel modern building.

MARLEY

That's where the old school of music used to be. When it was warm and the windows were open, it sounded like a symphony tuning up for a performance. Instruments everywhere.

HANNAH

Do you want to visit the new music building?

MARLEY

Verner Hall.

INT. LARGE LECTURE HALL - DAY

By themselves, Marley and Hannah stand at the back of the room, looking down at the large screen, the lectern, and the TV monitors hanging from the ceiling. The modern, padded seats are empty.

MARLEY

Sixty years ago, there were just uncomfortable, wooden seats, a blackboard, and Professor Kline whose sleeves were always covered with chalk dust. Hotter than blazes some days.

HANNAH

I think all the buildings are air conditioned now.

MARLEY

(pointing)

She sat right there, the prettiest girl I ever saw. I spotted her and stopped taking notes. I just stared. She was that stunning. I followed her home.

HANNAH

Home?

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

The sidewalk has been painted with Greek letters in no particular order. Hannah and Marley stand amidst the letters, looking at a two-story, well kept sorority house.

MARLEY

Jonni Palmer lived here. Had a roommate named Sue Carver. I don't remember the Greek letters. They didn't matter.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF SORORITY HOUSE - 60 YEARS EARLIER - DAY

YOUNG MARLEY, 20, in 1950s garb, books in hand, stares at the house. He's almost in awe.

MARLEY (V.O.)

I guess today you would call me a stalker.

Out the front door comes JONNI PALMER, 20, and she is flat gorgeous, that rare combination of symmetry and proportion. With her is SUE CARVER, 20, good looking but overwhelmed by Jonni. They wear 50s clothes, and they look happy.

Young Marley pretends to tie his shoe as the Women walk past, chatting and smiling. He lets them get some bit ahead before he turns and follows.

MARLEY (V.O.)

Back then, it was love at first sight.

INT. LIBRARY - 60 YEARS EARLIER -- NIGHT

Jonni sits alone at a table, studying. Young Marley comes over and sits down across from her.

MARLEY (V.O.)

I ginned up enough courage to ask her out.

At the table, Jonni looks up, smiles, and shakes her head. Nope. No date.

MARLEY (V.O.)

I didn't blame her for turning me down. I didn't let it stop me though.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Hannah and Marley are the only people in the vast stands that seat tens of thousands on football Saturdays. The field is empty.

MARLEY

The old stadium was tiny compared to this.

HANNAH

There's a game Saturday if you're going to be around.

MARLEY

I miss the old stadium. It was cozy. We were playing state. She was there, and I was there, and it started to rain. I gave her my jacket. You never saw a rain-soaked man so happy. My roommate thought I was crazy.

HANNAH

It sounds romantic.

MARLEY

The next day, when I went to fetch my jacket, I talked her into a date as a reward. She agreed because she was a good person.

HANNAH

No one ever offered me their jacket.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Marley and Hannah walk slowly down the center aisle toward the stage in this smallish performance hall. They are alone.

MARLEY

We came here for our first date. I suppose you never heard of the Platters.

HANNAH

I'm afraid not.

MARLEY

The tickets cost more than I made in a week at my job at the garage, but it was worth it.

(MORE)

MARLEY (CONT'D)

We held hands. She had soft hands.  
You remember things like that.

HANNAH

My parents sometimes hold hands.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF SORORITY - 60 YEARS EARLIER -  
NIGHT

Young Marley and Jonni chat under a gorgeous moon.

MARLEY (V.O.)

We talked in front of her sorority  
for what seemed an hour. It might  
have gone on all night if it hadn't  
been for her roommate. Sue didn't  
like me much.

Sue emerges from the house, comes up, and talks to Jonni.  
Jonni smiles at Young Marley and heads for the door. Sue  
remains behind.

HANNAH (V.O.)

Oh, why was that?

MARLEY (V.O.)

I was a poor kid who had to work in  
a garage to make ends meet. I  
wasn't good enough.

As Jonni disappears into the house, Sue shakes her finger at  
Young Marley. A warning.

HANNAH (V.O.)

I would think that was up to Jonni.

MARLEY (V.O.)

Things were different back then.  
You hungry?

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Hannah sips a coke at a table and reads her cell phone.  
Across the floor limps Marley, slow and deliberate. He  
slides onto a chair.

HANNAH

Everything OK?

MARLEY

Don't get old, Hannah. It's over-  
rated.

HANNAH  
So, what happened after your date  
with Jonni?

MARLEY  
We had some more.

INT. WELL HOUSE - DAY

The old, small well house that seems to exist on every college campus. Hannah and Marley sit on a stone bench built into the wall.

MARLEY  
Back in my day, the well was still functional, although no one used it for anything.

HANNAH  
And then there's the legend.

INT. WELL HOUSE - 60 YEARS EARLIER - NIGHT

Young Marley and Jonni stand in the well house, holding hands and looking into each other's eyes.

MARLEY (V.O.)  
They still tell that?

HANNAH (V.O.)  
If a couple shares their first kiss in the well house, they will have a long, happy marriage.

Young Marley and Jonni kiss, a good kiss.

MARLEY (V.O.)  
Fifty-five years.

HANNAH (V.O.)  
She was beautiful.

MARLEY (V.O.)  
What?

INT. WELL HOUSE - DAY

Hannah shows Marley her phone.

HANNAH  
I found her senior picture.

MARLEY

She was beautiful till the day she died.

A small tear leaks from Marley's eye.

MARLEY

I need a rest room. Old man's disease.

EXT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

Hannah sits on a bench in the shade of a tall tree. Marley plops down beside her.

MARLEY

Sorry it took so long. They rearranged the halls.

HANNAH

They renovated the building ten years ago.

MARLEY

I remember when they planted this tree.

HANNAH

I was browsing Jonni, and Sue Carver's name popped up.

MARLEY

Heck Chapel.

INT. HECK CHAPEL - DAY

Hannah and Marley sit in the front pew of an old, small chapel, something as old as the college.

MARLEY

We were married here.

INT. HECK CHAPEL - 60 YEARS EARLIER - DAY

Young Marley, in tux, and Jonni, in wedding dress, stand in front of a PREACHER. With a smile, they kiss.

MARLEY (V.O.)

Tom Davis was my best man. Carol Coppes was Jonni's maid of honor.



HANNAH (V.O.)  
Because Sue Carver was dead.

INT. HECK CHAPEL - DAY

Marley stands and limps to the altar where he rubs his hand over the granite.

MARLEY  
I suppose you read about that on your phone.

HANNAH  
It said she was killed on campus.

MARLEY  
The school did its best to hide the story.

HANNAH  
They never found the killer.

MARLEY  
Or the murder weapon.

Marley pushes off the altar and limps to the wood paneling along the back wall.

MARLEY  
They change everything on a campus, everything but the chapel. I guess it's too sacred.

He finds the small panel he wants and tries to pry it open with his fingers. He can't get it and turns to Hannah.

MARLEY  
Help me.

She joins him and they both pry the panel open a few inches. He reaches in and pulls out a towel-wrapped object.

HANNAH  
What's that?

He unwraps enough of the tattered towel to show her an old tire wrench stained with blackened blood.

MARLEY  
Between Jonni and my job, I was flunking chemistry. Then, Professor Kline brought in his old Studebaker.

(MORE)

MARLEY (CONT'D)

His briefcase was in the front seat, and the answers to the final were in the briefcase. I was copying the answers when Sue showed up. She wanted me to give up on Jonni—or else.

HANNAH

But you couldn't do that.

MARLEY

They would have kicked me out, and that would have ended things with Jonni.

He moves to the pew and sits. Hannah stands by the altar.

HANNAH

Do you want me to call now?

MARLEY

In a minute. I'm not going anywhere.

INT. HECK CHAPEL - 60 YEARS EARLIER - NIGHT

Young Marley stuffs the new towel and the wrench it holds behind the panel.

MARLEY (V.O.)

Every fall I feel I should be going back to school.

EXT. HECK CHAPEL - DAY

Marley and Hannah sit on a bench in front of the small chapel.

MARLEY

You can call now.

Hannah dials 911. Marley looks up at the sun and the gently moving leaves.

MARLEY

It's the angle of the sun or the leaves on the trees or that first cool morning.

FADE OUT