

GRUNCLE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Walking along are MATT, 15, lean and clever, and TYLER, 15, heavier and not as quick, classmates and buds. After school, hauling backpacks, they're happy and free.

MATT

Hey, thanks for this, I owe you.

TYLER

For nothing. If you're going to play a cowboy, you need a cowboy hat.

They turn into the driveway of your middle class home, nice but nothing outstanding. Matt looks up and spots an old man, GRUNCLE, 75, a man lost in the fog of dementia, sitting in a rocker on the front porch.

MATT

Who's that?

TYLER

That's Gruncle.

MATT

Gruncle?

TYLER

Great uncle. Hey, watch this.

They step onto the porch.

TYLER

Hey, Gruncle, what day is it?

GRUNCLE

Tuesday.

TYLER

What time?

GRUNCLE

Five twenty-seven.

TYLER

What did you have for breakfast?

GRUNCLE

Smoked salmon eggs Benedict.

TYLER
 (laughs)
 Yeah, right.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Tyler walk through a typical middle class home, complete with fireplace.

MATT
 What was that about?

TYLER
 Gruncle's lost it. Every day is Tuesday. It's always five twenty-seven, and he had eggs Benedict for breakfast. Yeah, right.

MATT
 Does he know who you are?

TYLER
 I guess, most days. It's in the attic.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Like most attics, this one is full of stuff. Boxes, clothes, the flotsam and jetsam of life. Matt and Tyler search.

TYLER
 We're the only family he has, and he sure as hell can't live by himself.

MATT
 Natalie's grandmother is like that, away in la-la land. What's this?

Matt pulls out a foot locker covered with stickers -- NEW YORK, PARIS, LONDON, RIO, places from around the world.

TYLER
 Gruncle's trunk. He was a sailor. Went all over the world.

Matt opens the foot locker and finds it full of post cards, show reviews, stickers, and playbills.

MATT
 What the hell, he's been everywhere.

TYLER

That's what sailors do, duh.

MATT

No, I mean he's been *everywhere*.
Look at this stuff.

Tyler doesn't look, just keeps searching.

TYLER

Dude, you're not helping.

Matt sifts through the contents of the locker even as Tyler plucks a plastic covered cowboy hat from behind a box.

TYLER

Got it.

MATT

(waving a program)
Golden Jubilee Test, nineteen
eighty.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Matt leans against the railing, the cowboy hat on his head. Tyler sits in a chair next to Gruncle who holds the program in his hands, his eyes alive.

GRUNCLE

February nineteenth, Bombay India.
Sunshine and cricket. The
legendary Mushtaq Ali sat two rows
from me. The British seemed to be
in trouble when Bob Taylor's ball
was pouched by Syed Kirmani.

The boys look at each other.

GRUNCLE

Taylor thought that wrong which led
to a phenomenal display of
sportsmanship. The Indian captain,
Gundappa Viswanath, convinced the
umpire to change his call. The
British went on to win the Test.

MATT

Wow.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - MATT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matt reads from his computer. On the screen in big letters--

GOLDEN JUBILEE TEST 1980

MATT

Wow.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Matt walks with NATALIE, 15, cute, smart, everyone's friend. With backpacks, they're coming from school.

NATALIE

What do you mean Mr. History?

MATT

Just wait and see. I don't want to spoil it.

They turn into Matt's drive.

EXT. MATT'S HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Natalie sits next to Gruncle. Matt and Tyler lean against the railing.

TYLER

Go ahead, ask him.

NATALIE

(to Gruncle)

What day is it?

GRUNCLE

Tuesday.

NATALIE

And the time?

GRUNCLE

Five twenty-seven.

NATALIE

Breakfast?

GRUNCLE

Smoked salmon eggs Benedict.

NATALIE

I don't get it.

Matt reaches into the foot locker and grabs a sticker that says Luzon. He hands it to Natalie.

MATT
Give it to him.

Natalie looks at Matt as if this is some kind of joke.

MATT
Do it.

Natalie hands Gruncle the sticker. Gruncle looks at it and smiles. He rubs it in his hands.

GRUNCLE
October 13th, nineteen-seventy.
Typhoon Joan. Super typhoon by the
time it hit Luzon. One hundred
seventy mile per hour winds. Trees
snapped like twigs. Waves as high
as mountains. Five hundred and
seventy-five people died. Almost
two hundred unaccounted for.
During the worst, all you could do
was hang on and pray.

Natalie looks at Matt, her face shows disbelief.

MATT
Give him another one.

She reaches into the foot locker and pulls out a program--
Rose Bowl 1985. She hands it to Gruncle whose face lights
up.

GRUNCLE
January first, nineteen eighty-
five. University of Southern
California versus Ohio State.
Perfect sunshine for the best
parade I ever saw. USC always had
the prettiest cheerleaders.

Natalie can hardly believe her ears.

INT. NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Laptops open in front of them on the table, Natalie and Matt
sip sodas.

NATALIE
What was that date again?

MATT
October thirteenth, nineteen-
seventy.

She types on her laptop.

NATALIE
That was a Tuesday.

MATT
You're kidding. And January first,
nineteen eighty-five?

She types again.

NATALIE
Tuesday.

MATT
They're all Tuesdays?

She nods.

MATT
No wonder it's always Tuesday for
Gruncle.

NATALIE
Yep, but why five twenty-seven and
eggs Benedict?

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Matt steps onto the porch. The rocking chair is empty. Matt opens the foot locker. He rummages through the flyers, programs, and stickers. At the very bottom he happens upon a newspaper clipping.

The headline reads

LONGEST NIGHT ENDS

The subhead reads

WOMAN MURDERED

Matt reads the date.

November 10, 1965

Matt stares.

NATALIE (V.O.)
It's not a Tuesday.

INT. NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Natalie turns her laptop so Matt can see.

NATALIE
It's a Wednesday.

MATT
Why is it different?

NATALIE
Don't know, but I've got homework.

Matt gathers his laptop.

MATT
I wonder if Gruncle remembers?

NATALIE
Ask him.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - MATT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matt reads his laptop and jots notes in a notebook. He grabs his cell phone and hits speed dial.

MATT
(on phone)
Hey, want to have some fun.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Matt hands Gruncle the newspaper clipping. Gruncle's hands shake. On the other side sits Natalie.

MATT
Tuesday, November ninth, five
twenty-seven PM. New York City
goes dark. You were what? Twenty-
five? Sailing away in two days?
You had smoked salmon eggs
Benedict, a specialty in New York.
You met a woman named Patty.

Gruncle looks up from the paper; fear narrows his eyes.

MATT

And that night in the dark, you murdered her.

Gruncle's hands shake harder.

MATT

A sailor's knot in the stocking you used to choke her. They never found the murderer.

Natalie hands Gruncle the Golden Jubilee Test program.

NATALIE

Her name was Kalpana. I'm guessing you had left port before they found the body.

Gruncle's shoulders shake. Natalie hands him the Rose Bowl program. Gruncle looks around in fear.

NATALIE

Not a USC cheerleader, Amber attended UCLA. Stocking, sailor's knot. Never solved.

MATT

I'm pretty sure that if we dug deep enough, we'd find murders on Luzon and in Rio at Carnival.

NATALIE

And Melbourne Cup Day and other ports you visited on a Tuesday.

MATT

How many were there, Gruncle? How many Tuesday murders?

Gruncle drops everything, his whole body shaking. Gruncle pushes himself erect and shuffles slowly into the house.

NATALIE

Do you think he believes us?

MATT

Hell no, he can't remember shit.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Matt, Tyler, and Natalie walk toward Tyler's house. They turn into Tyler's drive. The porch is empty.

MATT
Where is he?

NATALIE
The foot locker is there.

They walk onto the porch.

TYLER
I can't believe you're messing with
an old man.

NATALIE
We'll do something nice to make up
for it.

Matt opens the foot locker. It's empty.

MATT
What the hell...
(to Tyler)
What did you do?

TYLER
Me? I didn't do anything.

NATALIE
Where's Gruncle?

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The three enter and stop. Sitting in front of a fire Gruncle stirs the ashes with a poker. Falling to the side is the mostly burned sticker--Luzon.

Gruncle slowly turns to the kids. And he smiles.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Gruncle rocks away. Matt, Tyler, and Natalie arrive from school.

TYLER
Hey, Gruncle, what day is it?

GRUNCLE
Tuesday.

NATALIE
And the time?

GRUNCLE
Five twenty-seven.

Natalie takes a seat. Tyler leans on the railing. Matt opens the foot locker.

TYLER
What did you have for breaky?

GRUNCLE
Smoked Salmon eggs Benedict.

MATT
Tell us about this.

Matt pulls a Luzon sticker from the foot locker. Gruncle looks at the sticker a moment before he pushes out of his rocker.

TYLER
Hey, Gruncle, where you going?

As Gruncle disappears, they high five.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gruncle shuffles into the room. He goes straight to the fireplace.

No ashes. The fireplace is clean.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Gruncle feeds stickers and programs, the stuff from the foot locker into the fire.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Unshaven, Gruncle rocks. Matt opens the foot locker and pulls out a program.

Doubt and fear fill Gruncle's face.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Gruncle, bearded, haggard, in ratty robe, rocks slowly. Tyler leans. Natalie sits. Matt rifles the foot locker.

TYLER
Hey, what day is it?

GRUNCLE
I...I don't know.

NATALIE
What time is it?

Gruncle shrugs.

MATT
What did you have for breakfast?

GRUNCLE
I can't remember.

MATT
(holding out program)
Tell us about this.

Gruncle merely stares.

NATALIE
Can't remember? Or were you never
there?

Gruncle looks at her.

TYLER
All this stuff is fake, isn't it?

Unsure, Gruncle turns to Tyler.

MATT
Who did you get this stuff from?

Gruncle covers his face.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Matt and Tyler coming home from school.

TYLER
What do you mean missing? I
thought she skipped because
Wednesday means volleyball in gym
class.

MATT
First, her mom called and then the
police. Natalie's disappeared.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Tyler reach the front porch where a shaved and showered Gruncle rocks away.

MATT

What's got into Gruncle?

TYLER

Who knows. Want to play?

MATT

Why not.

Matt opens the locker and on top is the front page from Tuesday's paper. Matt picks up the paper and shows Tyler.

TYLER

Hey, Gruncle, what day is it?

GRUNCLE

Tuesday.

MATT

What time?

GRUNCLE

Five twenty-seven

TYLER

Jesus.

GRUNCLE

I had smoked Salmon eggs Benedict
for breakfast.

Matt and Tyler can only stare.

FADE OUT.