GRUNCLE

Written by

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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 sides 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


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.

Grunacle merely stares.

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

Grunacle 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?

Grunacle 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.