

Planning for the Past

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INT. NURSING HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Through a large window, a bright sunlight illuminates the place.

The room is immersed in a deep silence.

LEO, a well-kept man in his 80s, sits alone on one end of the dining room table. He hunches over a bowl of cereal.

He has the labored chewing style of a man who wears dentures.

A MAN'S voice coming from a distant room interrupts the peaceful scene.

MAN (O.S.)
Okay girl, time to go out, a little vitamin D, D for DORY, right?

INT. NURSING HOME - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

DORY, 75, a nice looking, delicate woman, sits in a wheelchair. She stares into space.

She is attended to by a health-care worker, MANUEL, 30, all muscles and a friendly smile. He wears blue plastic gloves and a white uniform.

Manuel speaks with a slight Spanish accent.

DORY
Are you bringing me outside?

MANUEL
Yes, the doc said you need some sun.

DORY
Ask Leo if he wants to come.

MANUEL
He's not under my care, you know.

DORY
Please.

Manuel looks in the direction of a framed picture on the night table.

MANUEL
Is it you?

DORY
Yes, myself and Leo.

MANUEL
Nice couple.

INSERT - FRAMED PICTURE

"The picture shows Dory and Leo at a party, in happier and healthier times. They hold a glass of champagne frozen in a jubilant toast."

BACK TO SCENE

MANUEL (cont'd)
Okay, but it's not my job. I hope you'll remember me at Christmas.

Dory winks and smiles at him.

DORY
You know I will.

EXT. NURSING HOME - GARDEN - DAY

Leo and Dory sit in their wheelchairs in a sunny section of the garden.

They wear their coats. AUTUMN can be chilly in New York State.

LEO
How are you feeling today?

DORY
The same as always, as an old woman. And you?

LEO
This damn pain in my back is bothering me. Something isn't working well.

DORY
What did the doctor say?

LEO
Nothing. He gave me some pain pills.

DORY
Are you taking it?

Leo stares at Doris with a solemn, determined expression.

LEO
No, no pills for me.

DORY
Why not? You should do what he said.

LEO
I'm fine, I'm fine, don't worry.

DORY
You just told me you're in pain.

LEO
(irritated)
Forget the pain, okay? It'll go away.

A brief pause. He stares at her with a smile.

LEO (cont'd)
You look great.

DORY
Oh, thank you.

LEO
More beautiful than ever.

Dory lowers her eyes and smiles. She is visibly gratified.

Leo looks at her with a tender gaze.

LEO (cont'd)
Were you happy to see me when I
arrived here?

DORY
Yes, I was, but also surprised. Many
times, during the past years, I asked
myself what had happened to you.

LEO
Nothing much, I was just busy getting
old.

For a couple of minutes, Leo appears immersed in deep,
elaborate reflections. Then suddenly...

LEO (cont'd)
Do you want to marry me?

Dory looks at him with an astonished expression.

DORY
(softly)
What did you say?

LEO
You heard me, I asked you if you want
to marry me.

DORY
Why didn't you ask me that when we
were younger?

LEO
I know, I have been a damn fool. I
beg you, give me a second chance.

DORY
Leo, we are in a nursing home, we are
old, why should we get married?

Leo looks at her with an intense, penetrating glance.

LEO
Because I love you.

DORY
You think it's love, but it is not.
It's just loneliness. You want
company, not a wife.

LEO
You're wrong, I miss you when you
don't come to lunch, I worry that
something has happened to you. When I
see you enter the TV room, my heart
beats faster, don't you think this is
love?

DORY
Leo, I was very much in love with you
but you left me. We were ready to get
married, remember? I cried and cried,
I felt the world was crumbling down on
me, it was terrible.

LEO
The past is gone Dory. Now we have
only the present and the future.
Marry me.

DORY
I don't know what to say. Please,
give me some space.

LEO

We don't have much time. Answer this question, do you still have feelings for me?

A long pause. Dory lowers her head.

DORY

Maybe, I'm not sure. It was half century ago...

Dory rotates her wheelchair to face Leo.

DORY (cont'd)

(forcefully)

Why, all of the sudden, you want to marry me?

LEO

Because I need you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you.

DORY

I, I, always I.

LEO

I'm sorry, I didn't mean--

Dory appears upset.

DORY

You didn't change Leo, you always come first.

LEO

Dory, let's face the reality, we're alone. You and I with our memories. Isn't better to live our lives together?

DORY

We're not alone, we've our children.

LEO

Yes, our dear children, they put us in a nursing home to die.

DORY

They have their own lives.

LEO

Promise me you'll think about my proposal.

Dory looks pensive.

Leo gazes at her with inquisitive eyes. She nods.

LEO (cont'd)
When you gonna let me know?

DORY
I don't know, don't pressure me, I
need a few days.

LEO
I'll talk with the priest.

DORY
Wait, please. Don't rush--

Leo looks excited.

LEO
It'll be a beautiful ceremony.

DORY
You don't have my yes, yet.

Leo smiles.

LEO
I'm optimistic.

Leo maneuvers his wheelchair close to Dory's. He bends over
and slowly kisses her.

She does not return the kiss but tenderly caresses his
cheek.

LEO (cont'd)
I love you.

DORY
Are you waiting for my "I love you
too?"

LEO
It would be nice.

A long pause.

DORY

The last time you kissed me was fifty-two years ago, and after that, I didn't see you again.

LEO

I remember that night, the moon, your eyes, you were stunning, too beautiful for me to marry. I felt inadequate. This is why I left you.

DORY

I always believed you wanted to marry me. You never told me about your hidden feelings.

Leo stares at her. His eyes are wet with tears

LEO

I don't know what happened to me, I can't explain it. I just wanted to run away from you.

DORY

Why you didn't look for me during those many years, you knew how to find me.

LEO

I was ashamed of what I had done to you, and--

DORY

And?

LEO

I thought you were married.

DORY

Yes, I got married. After you left me, I found a nice man, but, I divorced him after ten years.

LEO

Why?

Dory grins while staring at him. She looks embarrassed.

DORY

He left me for a man.

LEO

Uhm.

DORY
I raised two children by myself. And you, did you get married?

LEO
Yes, then my wife died of cancer. I have one daughter, ANNIE.

DORY
My children live in California, where does she live?

LEO
Not far from here, in Connecticut. She has two children. I'll show you their pictures.

Dory turns her wheelchair in the direction of the sun.
She closes her eyes and faces the soft rays of the Fall sun.

LEO (cont'd)
Are they coming often to see you?

DORY
Once a year at Christmas. I saw them before you came. Did you see your daughter lately?

LEO
No, she's too busy with her job, her daughters and her husband, he's a lawyer.

Leo pauses and stares at the blue, sunny sky.

LEO (cont'd)
It would be nice if our children could see us living in the same room as a couple.

Dory looks at him. She has an expression of uneasiness.

DORY
(whispering)
Yes, it would be...

INT. NURSING HOME - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Father Dom, a portly man in his 60s, is preparing the altar for the mass. Leo sits in his wheelchair facing the altar.

FATHER DOM

Are you sure she wants to marry you?

LEO

She didn't say that, but, you know Father, many years ago, she was very much in love with me, she wanted to marry me--

FATHER DOM

What happened? Why you didn't get married?

LEO

I got scared and left her.

FATHER DOM

Why now then?

LEO

When I saw her, all the beautiful memories came back. I felt the same feelings.

FATHER DOM

You're talking only about yourself, what about her?

LEO

I have no doubts Father, she loves me.

FATHER DOM

I need to talk to her. I want to make sure she understands the consequences of her decision. Many times, we get confused and we make the wrong choices. Marriage is a commitment full of perils, especially at your age. I'll let you know after the meeting.

INT. NURSING HOME - CHAPEL - DAY

Father Dom sits at the edge of the pew.

Dory is in her wheelchair in front of him.

FATHER DOM

He told me that he loves you, Dory, do you love him?

A long pause. She appears hesitant.

DORY
Maybe, I do.

FATHER DOM
"Maybe" is not enough, do you love
him enough to marry him? Are you in
control of your feelings?

She looks at Father Dom in his eyes with an inquisitive
demeanor.

DORY
Father, do you think he truly loves
me?

Father Dom smiles.

FATHER DOM
Yes, I do. I'm convinced of that.

DORY
Can you explain why he ran away from
me fifty years ago?

FATHER DOM
We all make mistakes when we're
frightened. I'm sure he loves you now
as much as he loved you then.

Dory gazes at Father Dom with a serene expression. She nods.

DORY
I'll marry him.

FATHER DOM
You didn't answer my question, do you
love him?

A long beat. She smiles.

DORY
Yes Father, he hurt me deeply, but I
still love him.

INT. NURSING HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Dr. RYAN LOWE, a young-looking man in his 50s, sits behind
his desk.

An elegantly dressed, middle-aged woman sits in an office chair in front of him. She is BETTY, Leo's daughter from Connecticut.

DR. LOWE

We did a CAT scan and an MRI, the original liver tumor has invaded the spinal cord.

BETTY

Is there anything else you can do? A cancer hospital in Manhattan?

DR. LOWE

I got in touch with Memorial Sloan Kettering, we can transfer him there but the prognosis is not encouraging. This is also the assessment of the oncologist who visited him.

BETTY

Did you talk about this with my Dad?

DR. LOWE

Yes, I did.

BETTY

What did he say?

DR. LOWE

Your Dad doesn't believe he's sick. He thinks that the pain in his back is caused by his age. I called you here so you can talk to him and make him understand the gravity of his condition.

BETTY

I'll try but it's not going to be easy. My father is an unreasonable man, very stubborn and a little, how should I say, self-centered.

DR. LOWE

He must go to Memorial as soon as possible, hoping that they can do something for him.

BETTY

How long has he been sick?

DR. LOWE

I don't know, he came to see me about three weeks ago. he didn't look too healthy.

BETTY

How could he have functioned in these conditions? I mean, walking--

DR. LOWE

Cancer is a devious disease. One doesn't feel anything while the tumor is invading the body. And when the symptoms emerge, it's too late.

Betty's eyes fill with tears. Her lips are trembling.

She attempts to compose herself before asking the final question.

BETTY

How much time doctor?

A long, heavy silence. The doctor glumly stares at her.

DR. LOWE

In my opinion, no more than six months.

The End

