

Slipping

By

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FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

MARY (75) sits in the hospital bed, her pink bed coat buttoned to the top and not a hair out of place.

A photo of Mary and two other women - smiles and hugs - rests on the bedside table.

ALICE (25) fusses over a vase of flowers.

ALICE

Anyway, he's really nice, Grams.
You would love him.

MARY

And your sister? How is she after
the move?

ALICE

Oh, she's...fine. She's...coming to
visit, actually.

MARY

So soon? Is everything alright?

Alice looks back at Mary, hesitates. She smiles.

ALICE

Of course. Everything's great.

Mary eyes her.

MARY

Helen hasn't come to see me.

Alice picks up her coat and bag, readies to leave as:

ALICE

She...well...you know Mom - she's
just so busy all the time. She'll
come as soon as she can. Anyway, I
have to run. I love you.

She pecks a kiss to Mary's forehead and turns to leave.

MARY

Alice?

Alice looks back with sad, wary eyes.

Mary hesitates.

MARY
Can you get the nurse? I need the
bed pan.

Alice sighs relief and smiles.

ALICE
Bye, Grams.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Mary sleeps perched atop the bedpan, the only light coming from the open doorway.

She opens her eyes and glances around the quiet room.

She shifts, winces. Mary looks down at herself and her mouth gapes, her eyes widen.

MARY
Nurse?

Mary presses the call button.

MARY
Nurse! I'm done!

Silence.

Mary's chin quivers and she cries.

A COUPLE walks past the door in the hallway and their mouths drop at the sight of her exposed bottom on the bedpan.

Mary turns away, humiliated.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR (50s) inspects Mary's bottom with gloved hands and a disgusted look.

A NURSE (30s) holds a plastic bag open and he drops the gloves in.

DOCTOR
She won't be able to use the toilet
or the bedpan. Get a catheter in
and clean her up.

NURSE

Right away.

BARBARA (50s) - one of the other women from the photo -
steps forward from the corner.

BARBARA

Is she okay?

The doctor looks up, seems to notice her for the first time.

DOCTOR

Your mother has a severe bed sore.
We'll need to run a course of
antibiotics to stop the infection.

BARBARA

Will that work?

DOCTOR

Of course.
(to the Nurse)
Doctor Stone is on duty now. Call
him if you need anything.

BARBARA

But -

DOCTOR

(to Barbara)
She'll be fine. Good night.

He leaves as the nurse handles a catheter kit.

She jerks Mary's arm over and pushes a button on the bedrail
- turns the TV on to a soap opera.

NURSE

(mumbling)

Damn, I missed the best part.

Barbara fumes beside the bed across from the nurse as she
hurries to insert the catheter.

Mary's eyes are on the ceiling. She bites her bottom lip and
winces.

NURSE

Now that's enough, Mary. It's done.
All I gotta do is drain your
bladder and then I'll hook you up
to a bag.

Fluid STREAMS into a bed pan as:

NURSE
 (to Barbara)
 My son's graduation is tonight.
 Valedictorian. He's got a
 scholarship, you know?

Barbara glares and the nurse smirks.

NURSE
 We're very proud.

The fluid TRICKLES and stops. The nurse makes a few
 adjustments and nods.

NURSE
 (to Mary)
 See? All done.

Her gloves SLAP as she pulls them off and she leaves.

BARBARA
 Momma? Are you okay?

Mary turns away, touches the photo beside her.

MARY
 Where's Helen?

BARBARA
 She's...she's working. You know how
 she is.

Mary nods, clamps her eyes shut.

Barbara sighs and gets up to leave.

BARBARA
 Love you, Momma.

She closes the door behind her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Alice sits in the corner chair with a magazine:

ALICE
 Aunt Barb said she'll be here
 tonight. She said -

She looks up and sees Mary's closed eyes.

ALICE
(whispers)
Grams?

Nothing.

Alice gathers her things, tip-toes out the room.

A tear falls down Mary's face.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Mary sleeps and someone cries OS.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mary stares ahead with a vacant expression.

The nurse, Alice and Barbara stand around her.

NURSE
Mary? Your family - they have
something to tell you.

She looks to Alice and Barbara.

NURSE
I shouldn't be here.

She leaves. Alice and Barbara share an anxious glance.

Barbara turns to the window and Alice steels herself.

ALICE
Hey, Grams. How are you?

Mary turns her hard eyes to Alice.

Alice makes to speak, but stops.

ALICE
You know we all love you. Right?

Silence.

ALICE
See, the thing is...

Alice watches Mary. She sobs.

ALICE
 (to Barbara)
 I'm sorry. I can't -

Barbara turns and watches as she rushes from the room.

Barbara moves to the bed, sits on the edge and takes her mother's hand.

BARBARA
 You have to understand. We didn't
 want to worry you. We need you to
 get better and worrying wouldn't
 help.

Mary pets the back of Barbara's hand and smiles.

BARBARA
 Momma, Helen died. We buried her
 today.

Mary's hand stops, drops to the bed. Her head lolls back and she stares off.

BARBARA
 Momma? Will you look at me?

Barbara sobs into the bed.

BARBARA
 We tried everything we could. I'm
 sorry. I'm so sorry, Momma.

She cries.

MARY
 (whispers)
 Helen.

LATER

Barbara sleeps against the edge of the bed as Mary pets her hair.

The nurse knocks and steps in, sees Barbara asleep.

MARY
 Isn't she beautiful?

The nurse nods, purses her lips.

MARY

We're having a birthday party for
her next week. You should come.

NURSE

How old will Barbara be?

MARY

Barbara? No, no. This is my Helen.
She'll be six tomorrow.

Mary looks down at Barbara with a faint smile.

She turns back to the nurse.

MARY

Oh, hello. Can I help you?

FADE OUT.