FADE IN:

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME – DAY

A long winding road reaches to the horizon up and over hills of grass plains. Clouds race overhead, casting their shadows as they pass over green fields and across the long road.

In the distance, a point of light, a reflection, a car.

A Cadillac speeds past an open metal gate, a top the gate...

A sign reads: MORNINGSIDE ASSISTED LIVING

The Cadillac pulls into the only visitors spot left.

Three cars occupy the other spots, fallen leaves lie scattered on their tops and windshields, shallow graves.

The Cadillac’s door SWINGS open, a seal on the door reads:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Stepping out of the car...

...MICHAEL BENNET(30’s) fit, short cut, wearing a three piece suit, briefcase in hand.

He heads toward the entrance, glancing at the cars as he passes them.

INT. MORNINGSIDE HOME – DAY

Inviting, the foyer is bathed in a yellow light, crown molding on the ceiling compliments a large chandelier.

Michael enters the home, he pulls out a small bottle of sanitizer, cleans his hands.

He passes a pair of lovely ladies...

... LOVELY LADIES(80’s) One in an impressive floral one piece and sun hat, another with a walker smile at Michael as they pass, he returns the glance.

They swoon as they enter the elevator.

Micheal brushes off his suit, ever the one to impress. He approaches the reception desk.

At the reception desk, the RECEPTIONIST(50’s) Gives him the once over.
RECEPTIONIST
Make sure you sign in with our ledger against the wall there.

MICHAEL
I’m here to see Mr. Hodges.

RECEPTIONIST
Take a seat.

Michael settles into a modest sofa chair, the small table to his side is littered with cards of well wishes, happy birthday, Happy Anniversary. On the table at its center rests a vase, in the vase, xeranthemums, well tended to.

Briefcase in hand, Michael spins around in his seat to get a scope of the place.

Across from reception is an open concept dining area, in a fancy leather booth against the wall sits an old gentleman...

...OLD GENTLEMAN(80’s) thin, sickly. An oxygen tanked rests at his side, a tube runs from the top of the tank to a mask fixed on his face, a panicked look.

A LARGE ORDERLY approaches his table. He places a hot steaming cup in front of him. The Orderly slowly turns his head towards Michael, a similar glance.

Michael’s face fills with unease.

VOICE (O.S.)
Waylon Hodges. What can I do for you?

Standing at Michael’s feet...

...WAYLON HODGES(55) portly, receding hairline, in a striped dress shirt, suit vest and pants, thick black framed glasses.

Hodges extends his hand, a big toothy smile. Michael rises to his feet, takes his hand, a hardy shake.

MICHEAL
Michael Bennet, I’m with the Health Department.

Waylon looks to the receptionist with disdain.

WAYLON
You caught me by surprise I must say...
MICHAEL
Can we go to your office please?

WAYLON
Yes, well, right this way.

Michael follows in tow.

INT. HODGE’S OFFICE – DAY

Organized chaos, Files stack a modest oak desk. Behind the
desk. A large map of the retirement grounds stretches across
one of the walls, a row of windows line the opposite wall,
behind the windows, darkness.

Waylon gestures to a comfortable sofa seat in front of his
desk. Michael observes the room, looks to the darkness from
behind the windows, takes a seat, places his briefcase to his
side.

MICHAEL
There has been a steady stream of
complaints Mr. Hodges.

WAYLON
Yes well, we’ve been working very
hard to address the concerns.

MICHAEL
Has anyone visited the home
recently?

WAYLON
Not since the tenth.

MICHAEL
I couldn’t help but notice a couple
of cars in the visitors parking.

WAYLON
The extra care staff has been using
what parking we have. We don’t
really leave.

Waylon lets out a faint GIGGLE.

MICHAEL
If only I could find the humor in
this.

WAYLON
It’s been a long week Mike.
Michael looks to his paperwork, looks through some various charts and important papers, then to the dark through the windows.

MICHAEL
I’ve been quite busy because of these,... problems. Some families have not heard from your residents in days. I see the authorities were at the home recently without an issue yet the complaints haven’t stopped.

WAYLON
Some things never change.

Michael shuffles his papers back in order, place them back in his briefcase. He takes bottle of sanitizer out of his suit breast pocket, cleans his hands, one last glance into the dark.

MICHAEL
I would like to see the rooms please,.. Specifically a Mrs. Carol Stewart.

A beat...

WAYLON
Of course, it’s probably best you see for yourself...

INT. RESIDENCE ROOM – DAY

Unkempt. Bed sheets lie on the floor, newspaper covers the windows. Waylon and Michael stand in the open doorway.

In the corner of the room under a large blanket lies a form, the blanket rises and falls, shallow breaths.

Michael approaches the bedside...

...Slowly lifts the blanket.

CAROL STEWART(80’S) lies with her hands clasped together as if in prayer, long shallow breaths.

Waylon stays close to the door, an ORDERLY(30’s) appears in the doorway from the hall.

Waylon is strangely fixed on the windows, Michael takes notice.
MICHAEL
When did it start?

WAYLON
A few weeks ago.

MICHAEL
Have any of the residents been outside?

WAYLON
The residents prefer to stay on the grounds.

Michael looks to the windows.

MICHAEL
The least you can do is allow them a view.

Michael approaches the large covered window.

WAYLON
I wouldn’t do that...

MICHAEL
It contributes to illness Waylon.

Waylon lets out a faint GIGGLE.

MICHAEL
For god sake! The residents need sunlight!

Michael grabs a corner of paper to pull off the window -- -- Mrs. Stewart lets out a desperate SCREAM.

Startled, Michael grabs his ears.

Waylon slowly walks back to the doorway.

Michael rushes to her side. He takes her hand, caresses her head.

WAYLON
I told you not to do that...

MICHAEL
Carol? My name is Michael Bennett, can you hear me?

No response, only labored breathing. He looks to Waylon who shrugs, Michael can’t believe it.
Michael takes out his paperwork, makes the proper check points.

MICHAEL
Get a nurse in here now.

WAYLON
Of course.

Waylon gestures to the Orderly loitering at the rooms entrance, he makes haste.

MICHAEL
I assume you have legal representation?

WAYLON
Only the best.

Michael gets to his feet. He places his paperwork back into his briefcase, takes out his bottle of hand sanitizer, cleans his hands.

MICHAEL
Is there anything else I should be aware of before I move forward?

WAYLON
There is one other resident you should probably see...

INT. RESIDENCE SOLITARY WING - DAY

Darker now, white walls. Modest chandeliers hang from the ceiling every ten feet. Metal crosses hang on several doors lining the hall.

At the end of the hallway, an elevator...

The elevator opens, Michael stands with briefcase in hand, to his side, Waylon Hodges.

Michael exits. Waylon stays in the elevator.

WAYLON
The last room on your left. Give my regards to Mr. Stalinski.

The Elevator door closes on a grinning Waylon Hodges, a faint GIGGLE.

Michael turns towards the elevator, tries to grab it before the door closes, no such luck.
He hits the elevator call button, It doesn’t light up.

A low unearthly CRY grabs Michael’s attention, SOBBING from one of the rooms.

Michael cautiously walks toward the door at the end of the hall, the further he gets down the hall the louder the SOBS, the darker the hallway becomes.

At the foot of the door, an old dusty welcome mat, frayed on one end, as if torn at by an animal. The SOBS stop.

A cold BLUE LIGHT from the gap between the door and floor casts it’s sickly light at Micheal’s feet. A SHADOW casts its form from behind the door.

Hesitantly, Michael turns the knob, enters.

INT. STALINSKI’S ROOM – DAY

Bright, inviting. A warm orange sun shines through the large bay of windows.

Outside the windows, A beautiful park, SEVERAL CHILDREN at play.

A comfy sofa sits against a wall, on an end table a vase of xeranthemeums, well tended to.

    MICHAEL

    Huh...

    VOICE (O.S.)
    Is that you Nancy? I don’t need house keeping...

    MICHAEL
    I heard crying. Are you alright?

MR. STALINSKI strides in from the kitchen...

MR. STALINSKI (70’s) thin, in a pin striped pair of slacks, a red cardigan with a collared white shirt underneath. A full black and grey van dyke compliments a charming smile.

Stalinski grabs a bar towel tucked under his arm, wipes his hands.

    STALINSKI
    You’re early!

    MICHAEL
    I didn’t know I was expected.
Stalinski puts his arms up in a playful manor. He walks toward Michael, inviting.

    STALINSKI
    Tea’s on. Why don’t you join us
    Mike?

Puzzled, Michael cautiously walks with Stalinski into the...

KITCHEN

Old country style, dark wood cabinets, tacky decor. Michael sits on an old sturdy wood chair, across from Michael, an empty chair rests over a large patch of discolored flooring.

Stalinski rushes to Micheal’s side, tea pot in hand, he pours some water into Michael’s cup.

    MICHAEL
    Have we met?

    STALINSKI
    I’d of remembered you.

    MICHAEL
    You called me mike.

Stalinski grabs a full teapot.

    STALINSKI
    I have my ways, say when.

A nice heaping cup.

    MICHAEL
    That’s quite enough.

Stalinski moves back to his chair, takes a seat.

Stalinski takes a sip of tea, places the cup down.

    STALINSKI
    I may have steeped it a little too
    long.

Michael brings the cup close to his lip, holds his glance on Stalinski, places the cup back on its saucer.

    MICHAEL
    You seem to be in good health.

Micheal takes a long sip.
STALINSKI
We’re all in good health here.

A SCRATCHING, faint at first, then LOUDER. Michael looks around the room, to the side of the stove a door open a small crack, on the other side of the door, darkness.

MICHAEL
Can you hear that?

STALINSKI
Sugar? Cream?

Michael takes another sip of tea. He pulls out his paperwork from his briefcase, pen in hand.

MICHAEL
Are the staff helpful here?

STALINSKI
I haven’t been here long but the hospitality is top-shelf.

MICHAEL
Many problems in the home Mr. Stalinski.

STALINSKI
No problems Mike. We are all quite well.

Michael looks through his important papers, charts.

MICHAEL
How many homes have you been through Mr. Stalinski?

STALINSKI
I’ve stayed with friends mostly.

MICHAEL
Can you contact any of them?

STALINSKI
They are never far away.

Michael’s looks to the darkness beyond the door that is open wider now.

STALINSKI
You’re not uncomfortable right now Mike? You know, considering...
MICHAEL
Considering?

STALINSKI
Sometimes when you look into the
dark, it looks back.

Shocked, Michael composes himself. He must have just heard
wrong.

MICHAEL
I’m sorry I’m not following you.

STALINSKI
Are you familiar with the ant lion
larva?

MICHAEL
Can’t say I am, Let’s get back to --

STALINSKI
-- It creates a pit, when its prey
reaches the bottom of the trap, it
quickly closes it’s mandibles.

Clearly having heard enough, Michael gathers up his important
papers.

MICHAEL
I think I’ve seen everything, Thank
you Mr. Stalinski.

The SCRATCHING becomes louder now.

STALINSKI
You’ve seen nothing yet.

Shaken, Michael pushes the tea towards Stalinski, clearly
done.

MICHAEL
Alright, good day sir.

Michael puts his paperwork back in his briefcase, takes out a
bottle of sanitizer, cleans his hands.

STALINSKI
That can’t help you.

The comment catches Michael by surprise.

MICHAEL
Excuse me?
STALINSKI
All we want is to be left alone.

The SCRATCHING is much louder now.

Michael puts his hands over his ears, looks around the room and then to Stalinski who is seemingly unaffected.

MICHAEL
You,...don’t hear that?

STALINSKI
...just a hungry friend of mine, a friend from the dark. He stopped wailing.

The SCRATCHING stops, Michael Pulls his hands away from his ears.

Stalinski stands to his feet, slowly backs away from the table. A devilish grin paints his face, he looks up.

Michael slowly looks up...

...on the ceiling...

A ROTTEN CORPSE in a hospital gown, limbs broken, legs spread, its arms twist around the other way, bulging white eyes sit in dark sockets.

A big rotten GRIN. It lets go

It falls towards Michael, its mouth open.

Michael’s face fills with terror, a SCREAM.

FADE OUT.