

Who They Were

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - DAY

Moving over suburbs, shops and busy roads to a large complex of dwellings. From the car park, paths lead to a reception office, past a big sign that reads:

AUTUMN LODGE RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Over the rooftops to an open garden area within...

EXT. RETIREMENT VILLAGE COURTYARD - DAY

Lush lawn, flowers beds, trees, with gravel bed paths in between. A beautiful place for family visits.

A NURSE exits the main building pushing a wheelchair in which sits an OLD WOMAN - she has to be in her nineties. A cool wind blows leaves but the sky is clear and blue.

The nurse stops in the shade of a huge elm. The old woman turns her head slowly, squints. The nurse adjusts her blanket, murmurs to her; the old woman nods, smiles. The nurse checks her watch before hurrying back inside.

Another NURSE brings out an OLD MAN who is able to walk to a bench and sit. This nurse makes him comfortable then returns into the office. The old man gazes around, sees the old woman. Nods to her, she nods back. They sit, lost in dreams.

A family comes into the garden now - a WOMAN in her thirties guiding her ELDERLY MOTHER to the grass. They sit on a rug. Two children, a BOY and GIRL, both under ten, carry a bag.

The woman takes a jump rope from the bag, ties one end to a nearby tree. She takes out food and drink containers as well, lays them on the rug. The elderly mother smiles, nods to the other old people watching

The kids LAUGH, take turns to swing the rope and jump in it. The old man and women watch silently.

LATER

The family pack up to leave. The mother goes to untie the rope but her elderly mother stops her - 'its ok, leave it here. You'll be back again soon'.

The mother smiles, the kids nod, 'yeah why not'? The elderly mother looks over to the old man and woman, nods again. Soon the family are gone. The old man and woman fall asleep.

LATER

The old woman wakes up with a start. The old man is standing in front of the bench staring at the rope. He looks from it, back to her, back to the rope. Finally he limps oh so slowly to the jump rope. Bends down painfully and takes the end.

He looks at the old woman, raises a feeble hand - 'come over'. She blinks, rubs her eyes because...

Now the old man is a handsome younger man in his twenties. He wears an immaculate suit harking back to the nineteen forties; his hair is clean and neat.

He grins at her, winks, gestures - 'come on, I'm waiting' - as he swings the rope.

The old woman gasps then slowly lifts herself up. She takes a step, totters nearly falls. The young man smiles, nods - 'you can do it, you know you can'.

The old woman closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, steps forward, opens her eyes to find...she's now wearing a long skirt with shiny shoes; a white blouse with an open sweater.

She touches her face, her fair - no wrinkles and her blue rinse is a long and lustrous almond-brown. She's absolutely gorgeous. She smiles, hurries across the grass.

INT. RETIREMENT VILLAGE ROOM - DAY

An old woman alone on her room draws the blind up. Looks out the window to see these two beautiful people enjoying each others company. All around the courtyard garden, elderly faces peer out their windows...

EXT. RETIREMENT VILLAGE COURTYARD - DAY

The young man LAUGHS as the young woman runs up to him, kicks off her shoes, touches his arm. A bracelet on her wrist sparkles. Their faces are only inches apart before she turns to the jump rope.

He swings it faster, in long, looping arcs.

The young woman bides her time before leaping into the rope's zone. Her agile feet dance as she jumps, the rope passing under her feet.

The young man is transfixed by this beauty. So alive, so...free.

LATER

The two silent forms of the old man and woman lie on the grass, the jump rope near them. All around the garden, the blinds are now shut.

The nurse hurries outside, kneels next to the bodies. Frantically takes pulses, listens to still chests.

At last she sighs, stands and beckons to the office. Another nurse comes out along with a doctor.

CLOSE UP - two weathered hands seek the other, touch, hold. For a moment the hands are young again, the bracelet shines.

Then the hands are old once more, liver spotted, aged...a final squeeze and the hands are limp.

FADE OUT

THE END