

FADE IN:

INT. MEADOWGLEN RETIREMENT HOME - CORRIDOR - DAY

Faded wallpaper, worn furniture. JOHN BECKER (late 70s), in good shape - tall, lots of hair, mouth full of teeth, approaches a counter. There's a medicine cabinet behind it. Becker walks to the cabinet, tries it, it's locked.

BECKER

Hey, what a tenant has to do to get his prescription filled around here?

A nurse, LOUIS (60s), motherly type, hurries toward the cabinet. She grabs a medicine bottle, extracts a pill, hands it to Becker.

LOUIS

Here you go.

BECKER

Should have been here me go ten minutes ago. What if my life depended on this Serranat Forte?

They walk toward a large lobby.

LOUIS

It's a mild sedative, Becker. Could have been a placebo, would have no effect on someone like you anyway.

BECKER

If you're saying I'm so pumped that this won't calm me down you're absolutely right. I made a living helping people and how that paid off? My daughter pays for my stay here because I can't afford it. Laughable.

LOUIS

I'm surprised you have a daughter.

LOBBY

Filled with the tenants. Some watch TV, others play games.

Becker and Louis approach a coffee station. Louis pours two cups, hands one to Becker. Becker takes his pill with coffee.

BECKER

So am I. Hey, you're away from the drug cabinet again.

In another corner, several ELDERLY watch Pink Panther.

LOUIS

Might as well get back. I can't stand this movie or any kind of parody for that matter.

BECKER

How's that a parody?

LOUIS

An inept detective is trusted with a crime of a century. Hello?

BECKER

A reality star leads a country of losers into whatever he's leading us to. All he's lacking is French accent for crying out loud.

Becker walks around the hall, searching for something. While at it, he observes other TENANTS.

An elderly, Grace (80s) with a bad case of a cough, leafs through a catalog of caskets. She likes something, presses the paper to her chest as if trying the casket for size.

Another female elderly, MISSY (80S) tries to change the TV channel with a remote that works the doors. The doors open and close, but Missy doesn't get it.

BECKER

Hey, Louis, have you seen my morning paper? I need a distraction from all of this.

LOUIS

Na-ah. You won't be getting it. It upsets you. What's worse you start sharing your thoughts.

BECKER

Ok, then let me share what I think of this place. This is not a retirement, this is a home for mentally disabled people rejected by their non-caring folk.

Missy reacts to Becker's words.

MISSY

The remote here doesn't work that's for sure.

Another elderly, JIM (75), extremely obese, approaches Becker.

JIM

Hey, Doc. I was wondering if you could take a look at my eczema.

BECKER

First of all, I'm not a Doc anymore, haven't been for good five years now. Second of all, why don't you ask Doctor Martin to do that for you? He's not too bad, I mean, it's true they won't employ anyone worthy here, but he knows stuff.

JIM

I have a bit of an insurance problem right now. My son forgot to file for an extension.

Jim turns around, exposes his hip to Becker. Becker shields his eyes.

BECKER

Woah, put that away, will you? A female may agree to see your heiny, I'm not interested. Georgine I hear used to be a dentist, true, that's not a real doctor, but close. Maybe she'll have something for you.

Becker sips his coffee and squirms disgusted at the taste.

BECKER

Did you make it yourself, Louis?
When, three days ago?

LOUIS

This coffee is ten dollars a pound, Becker. Trust me, if I could get you a shot of fine espresso, I would.

Becker looks around:

Jim shows his eczema to someone else.

Missy tries an air-conditioner remote now. The lady, who tried the coffin catalog for size, GRACE (80s), finds the TV remote, hides it from Missy for laughs.

BECKER

Make it a shot of whiskey. Or two.
I used to treat the aged, prolong
their lives, now I see all I had to
do is to offer them booze and send
them home wishing they were
finished sooner than they had to.

Grace overhears Becker. She approaches, coughs directly at
him as if to pass an infection to him.

BECKER

Don't waste your breath, I know
you're not contagious. Not hard to
tell from your cough.

Becker walks away from the Lobby.

Jim approaches Louis.

JIM

You said he's a brilliant doctor,
didn't mention he's a schmuck.

LOUIS

Cut Becker some slack. He gave up
his practice after being wrongly
accused of malpractice. His patients
went berserk, found the accuser and
gave him hard time, but it was too
late, Becker left his apartment for
his daughter and moved to a nursing
home. Then another nursing home.
This one is his sixth.

JIM

Let's see how much time it takes us
to stick a fork into his eye.

LOUIS

Well, whatever you do, don't tell
him you know he's a doctor from me.
He wants to get as far away from
the medical practice as possible.

INT. BECKER'S ROOM - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Becker walks into his room to see his daughter, SARA (30s).
Next to her is his granddaughter, CHRISTINE (7). Christine
runs toward Becker, hugs him.

BECKER

Hey, you. Have you been a good girl? A good teeth-brushing, hair-combing, face-washing girl?

SARA

Hi, Dad. It's good to see you.

They embrace, she hands him a newspaper.

SARA

I figured they've started hiding it from you by now.

Becker puts his glasses on, looks at the paper. He sits down, reads something. Laughs.

SARA

Hey, Christine, go play in the hall, I must talk to your grandpa.

BECKER

Don't send her there. I'm the only sane one in this place, believe me. (re the newspaper) Look, a psychologist used hypnotherapy to rape his patents after he put them to sleep. Boy, this is twisted, I don't blame Louis for hiding it from me.

He sees Sara's face.

BECKER

You look upset. Are you hungry? I know a controversial little eatery called Meadowglen cafeteria. You ask for chicken, they serve you tuna and say it's chicken of the sea. Let's go have lunch, huh?

SARA

No, Dad. Let me tell you what I came here for, the sooner I get it off my chest the better. It's about my job, I lost it. I won't be able to pay you for your apartment anymore, but you could lease it out to someone else and continue staying here.

BECKER

Hey, hey. So, you lost your job. Go look for another.

He rises, holds Sara's hands.

BECKER
I can't leave you and my
granddaughter on the streets.

SARA
Well, then, the only thing left is
for you to move in with us.

Becker ponders over it for a second.

BECKER
Sure, why not! If you don't find
anything, I will move in with you.

He kisses Sara on the forehead.

BECKER
Now, let's go eat some of the worst
patties ever. Just don't tell the
people here I'm leaving, or they'll,
you know.

SARA
(laughs)
I know. That should make them happy
and we don't want that.

BECKER
On second thought...

INT. CAFETERIA - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Becker enters with Sara and Christine. Some of the elderly
are eating, others are in line for food.

BECKER
Hello everyone. This is my fiance,
Sara. We're moving in together, so
I'll be leaving this... wonderful
place very soon.
(to Sara, in a whisper)
Play along, will you?

They walk in an embrace. The elderly watch, appalled.

Becker sees Jim, reaches into his pocket, hands him an ointment.

BECKER
Hey, Jim here's an antibiotic for
you. Apply freely twice a day. You
don't have eczema, it's a simple
case of ringworm.

He addresses Jim's party, a couple of FEMALE TENANTS.

BECKER

And here's something for you to know - his ringworm is highly contagious. You're welcome, Jim.

One of the women at Jim's table, Grace, the one that was coughing earlier in the lobby, starts coughing again.

BECKER

Know what, while I'm on a free advice spree I might as well recommend you have your thyroid inspected. It doesn't look like you're choking on saliva and, it's not a cold. Make sure you check your T3 free. If it's low, you're good, but I bet it's not.

GRACE

Where do I locate this T3?

BECKER

You'll need a blood test for that.

She reaches for a toothpick. Becker sees that.

BECKER

Just to be clear, it's not something you do on your own.

GRACE

I know that!

At a table behind Becker, sits Missy. She pulls Becker's sleeve.

MISSY

What about me?

BECKER

You're the one who tried to switch the channels with the wrong remote, right?

MISSY

I'm Missy, nice to meet you.

BECKER

Yeah. Ask Dr. Martin, I'm not good in the head department.

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Louis walks Sara and Christine to the car.

LOUIS

Well, it'll be very disappointing to say goodbye to your dad in such a short time. It's been a week, but I feel like I've known him for ages.

SARA

I'm sure he made himself known on the very first day. Thanks for tolerating him and if I'm sensing correctly actually liking him. He still has a couple of days left.

LOUIS

(not happy)
I know.

INT. DOCTOR MARTIN'S OFFICE - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

DOCTOR MARTIN (30s) sits at his desk. Opposite him is Becker.

DR. MARTIN

So, Doctor Becker...

BECKER

I haven't been a doctor for good five years. Evidently I have to tattoo it on my arm.

DR. MARTIN

You've been giving medical advice to tenants. That makes you a doctor.

BECKER

Fearing for your office? That's a joke. You want me to stop, am I right?

DR. MARTIN

That's correct.

BECKER

You got it. Just tell those people to keep away from me. Someone babbled I was a geriatrician, now they are all over me with their stupid wounds.

Becker rises.

BECKER

By the way, I thought this forsaken place is not eligible for a normal caregiver, but you're doing well.

DR. MARTIN

Thank you. I agree I'm pretty normal.

BECKER

And Louis seems okay, too. Her coffee is crap, but she's decent.

DR. MARTIN

I'll pass your kind words to Louis.

BECKER

You don't have to actually, I won't be needing her to like me. See, my daughter can't pay for me any longer, so, I'll be leaving pretty soon.

INT. BECKER'S ROOM - RETIREMENT HOME - NIGHT

Becker walks in, shuts the door. He sits on the bed, his shoulders slump.

BECKER

"Move in with us". Crazy.

He looks around, sees the ceiling fan. He climbs his bed, reaches for the fan, starts rocking it to see how well it's fastened to the ceiling. Satisfied, he steps down.

He walks into his closet, rummages there. He finds a piece of rope. Walks back to the fan. Climbs his bed.

There's a knock on the door.

BECKER

Hold on. I'm naked.

LOUIS (O.S.)

Becker? You don't sound good. Open up.

Louis tries the door, it's open.

BECKER

Hey! I told you I was naked. Boy, was I wrong about you being normal.

Louis walks in - Becker is not naked.

BECKER

And how can you tell I don't sound good if I didn't say anything?

Louis sees the rope in his hands. She sits on his bed.

LOUIS

What are you up to, angry man?

BECKER

Did I invite you to come in and get yourself comfortable? All you left to do is send me out for coffee.

LOUIS

Coffee wouldn't hurt.

BECKER

Yours does, believe me.

LOUIS

I know about your troubles, Becker. But I'd never put you down for someone who may hang himself.

BECKER

Oh, that. Well, all my vitals are good, which means I'll remain alive for at least another ten years. But that's not my decision. Why should it be done for me?

LOUIS

There's always a chance of getting run over by a car.

BECKER

Yeah, yeah. See, Sara needs a place of her own. Having her dad around is not the best choice for her.

LOUIS

Put that rope away and get a hold of yourself, you're a grown man.

BECKER

And that's why I'd like to have options.

Louis rises to leave. She stomps away, shuts the door behind.

Becker looks at the rope, shoves it under the bed.

BECKER
Might as well postpone.

INT. MEDICINE CABINET - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Becker walks around the stand, tries the cabinet.

BECKER
Louis! To think you talked me into
living yesterday. What for? This?

Louis hurries toward the cabinet. Opens it, gives a pill to
Becker. Then hands him the whole bottle.

LOUIS
Here, I trust you.

BECKER
Thanks, but I won't help you cut
down on your morning chores.

They walk toward the--

LOBBY

Becker looks around. Tenants watch TV. Tenants play dominoes.
Tenants play chess. One of the chess players is Missy.

BECKER
Classic, a chess player can't
figure out a remote. Too bad I have
to leave, or I'm starting to enjoy
myself here. Unless...

He walks toward the chess board. Missy moves a knight as if
it's a rook.

BECKER
Just what I thought. They pretend.
It's kindergarten all over.

Louis hands Becker coffee.

LOUIS
Here, drink some before you start
pissing everyone off around here.

Jim approaches, shows Becker his behind.

JIM
It's gotten better, thanks, Becker.

BECKER

Don't make me regret I tried to help you.

GEORGINE (70s) walks toward Becker.

GEORGINE

Becker, right? I'm Georgine.

BECKER

We met. Couple of times before.

GEORGINE

I'm a dentist. I hear you're a doctor. Why don't we help each other out?

BECKER

(to Louis, appalled)

Is she talking about sex or something?

GEORGINE

I help you with your teeth, and you tell me why I keep having my period once every six months or so?

BECKER

Ew. And, three words - Ask. Doctor. Martin.

GEORGINE

Marty is too young for this type of question. And then you know, he might take an extra liking in me.

Becker smirks.

BECKER

Believe me, no one will take no liking in you unless it's some kind of a creep...

He notices Louis' face and stops mid-word.

BECKER

You know what, you're right, he'll fall for you, sure. Well, it's normal to still have your periods now and then. That's part of the menopause. How old are you? Seventy something?

GEORGINE

Asking my age already? Men!

BECKER

Right. Bottom line is, this happens.
Don't worry your head over it.

GEORGINE

Thanks, Doc. Be sure to show me
your teeth whenever you ready.

Becker walks away from her, looks at Louis, twists his finger
at his temple when off Georgine's look.

GEORGINE

Look at that butt. You could use it
for a trampoline.

BECKER

Just don't attempt to bounce it,
will you?

He joins Louis at the coffee station.

LOUIS

Georgine's not crazy, she's
sclerotic, that's all.

BECKER

And horny. Hey, Louis, it's my last
few days here, in this place. Why
don't you give me my paper?

LOUIS

No can do. Your last days shouldn't
be the most miserable time for me.

BECKER

You mean watching these lunatics
day after day is fun and I bring
you misery?

LOUIS

They are happy! You are not.

Missy grabs the TV remote and walks toward the door trying to
open it. She flips the channels on TV. The tenants scream at
her but she can't understand what's wrong.

Missy's opponent in the chess game grabs a board from another
game and tries to line the chess pieces on it.

BECKER

Why is he doing that?

LOUIS

He wants to come up with a new game.
He's ninety but keeps looking for
another career, how cool is that?

BECKER

Let me guess - their folks don't
frequent Meadowglen, do they?

LOUIS

You're right. These people could use
some warmth. Be nice to them, Becker.

BECKER

I'll make you a deal, you give me
good coffee and I'll be good to
everyone here, even the floozy, the
mental, and the ringworm guy. But
that ain't possible, is it?

INT. CAFETERIA - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Becker eats at a remote table, alone. Jim approaches with his
tray, seats himself on two chairs at once.

Missy and a few others, come to their table as well.

BECKER

Please don't tell me you want to be
friends with me.

JIM

As a matter of fact, we do. Why not?

BECKER

Hmm, well, I guess we could eat and
talk if you think that would make
the meal a more pleasant
experience. Let's start with you.

Becker points at Jim's plate. It's filled with fatty foods.
Becker grabs a greasy piece of chicken, bites at it.

BECKER

See, this won't hurt me, mister.
But it's sure as hell gonna put you
to bed. Truth be told, I'm
surprised you're alive at this age.
What are you, ninety?

MISSY

He's seventy-five!

BECKER

Well, he doesn't look it. And,
you'll do worse if some of Jim's
ringworm gets on you.

Missy grabs her tray, about to move to another table.

MISSY

You're offensive to people. I need to
clear my head after listening to you.

BECKER

Clear your head, huh? That won't
take long.

Missy's gang follows Missy away from Becker.

JIM

Cheer up, I'm staying with you
right here.

Becker rolls his eyes.

INT. BECKER'S ROOM - RETIREMENT HOME

Becker is getting ready for bed. He sits on the bed, reaches
under it. Can't find what he's looking for. He kneels down to
give it a better look - the thing is gone.

He stands up, walks to the door, opens it and yells.

BECKER

Louis! Louis!

Louis comes rushing in.

LOUIS

What is it with the yelling at this
late hour?

BECKER

First my paper, now rope? As a
kleptomaniac you're a disappointment,
going for rubbish like that.

LOUIS

Calm down. You'll get back your
rope on your leave day.

BECKER

I'm surely not suicidal, Louis,
think you should know better. I need
a rope for different reasons.

LOUIS
What reasons?

BECKER
What if I'm... practicing the
knots? I always dreamt of sailing.

LOUIS
What reasons, Becker?

BECKER
I wanted to measure my height.

LOUIS
For the right casket size?

Louis marches out.

BECKER
Just give me back my rope or I'll
report a property theft!

Becker shuts the door behind her.

BECKER
You can't live in this place, you
can't die in this place. How these
people do both?

INT. CAFETERIA - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

It's another day. Becker sits at his table when Jim
approaches with his tray.

BECKER
Better move to another table next time
before they name this one after us.

Jim reaches somewhere under the table, he's got a wooden sign
in hands. Engraved on it is "Becker and Jeremy".

JIM
What do you think of that?

BECKER
I think it's stupid. And come on,
you're Jeremy? Who abbreviates
Jeremy to Jim?

JIM
Your name is Becker, you don't see
me complain.

BECKER
It's actually John. John Becker.

JIM
Nice to meet you. This is the
beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Both start eating.

BECKER
Ok, so what are you? Like the leading
tenant here, the captain of the
Meadowglen team of loonies or
something?

JIM
I see what you're doing, but I'm
not moving away.

Jim points at his plate. It's mostly salad.

JIM
Remember you put me on a diet. Guess
what? I'm sticking to it.

BECKER
I didn't put you anywhere, just
asked to keep away.

Becker shares some lean meat and bread with Jim.

BECKER
Don't cut your meals like that,
just shave the fat. The trick is to
have balanced diet, not starve
yourself to death.

Louis happens to be nearby their table. She overhears, frowns.

INT. DOCTOR MARTIN'S OFFICE - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Becker sits opposite Dr. Martin. Louis sits next to him.

BECKER
Listen, doc, I know I've continued
offering them medical advice. But
guess what, I'm not even sorry. These
people need to hear what they got to
do time and time again. One of them
is obese, he has to be put on a diet.
The other one needs a neurologist.

DR. MARTIN

We don't employ that kind of specialist and Missy refused to see one when I brought him in. About Jim, I put him on a special diet a year ago, but he didn't listen. However...

BECKER

Well, whatever you say, doc. I'm leaving in a week or so, anyway.

DR. MARTIN

However, Jim got on a diet as of yesterday. I think it's because you publicly shamed him. And Missy asked me about "the head doctor".

BECKER

Oh. It's probably too late for them, but I'm happy they followed my advice. Sorry, they don't listen to you. People tend to hear all the wrong people.

DR. MARTIN

About that. I know you're leaving us, but here's the deal. Don't go and help me as my assistant. In return, you'll be getting a free stay here as well as a small pay. It's a modest offer, but something.

BECKER

Haha. You're kidding, right? No? You must be one of those people that don't joke around.

DR. MARTIN

Do you want to think about it, Doctor Becker?

Becker fumes. He rises.

BECKER

No, I don't want to think about it. There are reasons I gave up my practice and neither of them was to become someone's assistant in five years. Hey, I know medicine is moving forward and as a medical professional you must know more than I do even though I graduated from the top university and practiced medicine for forty six years, but you're what?

(MORE)

BECKER (CONT'D)

Thirty something? How would it feel to boss around an eighty-year-old?

DR. MARTIN

I'm not going to. Besides, we won't tell them you work here. Your advice works well when they don't know you're trying to treat them. You also helped Jim with the ringworm. And Georgine stopped hitting on me.

BECKER

Hey, that's not me, she wanted to bounce me, I didn't.

DR. MARTIN

The point is, you're a keeper. I don't want you to go. Neither does Louis.

Becker walks toward the exit.

The phone rings.

DR. MARTIN

Martin speaking. Jim...? Already? Ok, I'll be there.

Becker stops, listens. Dr. Martin hangs up.

BECKER

What is it with Jim? He hasn't come to dinner tonight.

DR. MARTIN

He's leaving us.

BECKER

Well, seems like decent people don't stick around here. Good for us.

INT. CORRIDOR - RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Another morning.

The corridor is narrow. Becker walks behind a very slow Missy, but can't walk around her. He mutters something under his breath. By the time he approaches the medicine cabinet, Louis hands him his pill.

BECKER

Did you make a deal with the slowpoke to get to the medicine cabinet before me?

LOUIS

Shh. She might hear you. Today is her birthday, by the way. We're celebrating in the lobby in ten.

BECKER

Thanks for not inviting me.

LOUIS

Too late. I've already told you.

LOBBY

Cupcakes, coffee and champagne. Becker looks around. Lots of tenants, but Jim is not there. Louis hands him the cupcake.

BECKER

So, Jim is so preoccupied with his leave that he didn't care to come? Too bad, he's missing what I think is the Meadowglen event of the year.

LOUIS

Shut up.

INT. BECKER'S ROOM - RETIREMENT HOME - NIGHT

Becker is getting ready for bed.

A knock on the door. It's Louis.

BECKER

It's eleven p.m. What if I have a sleeping disorder, and can't go back to sleep once it's disrupted?

LOUIS

Here's the ointment you gave to Jim. Thought it might get lost tomorrow.

BECKER

Is he too proud to use it all of the sudden? Or maybe I'm jumping to conclusions, maybe he died and...

LOUIS

He'd be happy to see you by the way if you care to say goodbye.

BECKER

You know what, Louis, I feel hurt. Jim and I became something like friends, but he didn't even mention he was going to leave. He even rubbed some of his ringworm on me, so I get it too. How could he not tell me he was about to go home?

Genuinely upset, Becker follows Louis into the hall.

INT. JIM'S ROOM - RETIREMENT HOME - NIGHT

Emaciated Jim lies in bed hooked to an EKG machine. Dr. Martin sits next to him.

Jim opens his eyes, sees Becker and Louis come in.

BECKER

What happened?

DR. MARTIN

A history of heart aneurysm. He had to be on that diet a long time ago.

BECKER

Oh, brother. I'm so sorry, Jim. I knew you had a reason not to make an appearance at our table for two days in a row.

JIM

Yeah, I was dying.

BECKER

That's a very good reason.

JIM

Thank you for the ointment, it helped. You know how I got the ringworm? I was fooling around on the grass if you know what I mean.

BECKER

Nice of you to share.

JIM

You know, John, I liked you from the moment I heard you complain about that coffee.

BECKER

You think it's crap, too, don't you?

JIM

Not that. You're so bitter and pessimistic, I wanted to help you.

BECKER

Okay. You're dying, so I'll keep my mouth shut.

JIM

It's good to be dying. That shuts people up.

BECKER

Well, I'm sorry to see you go, I really do.

JIM

Hey, John. There's something I wanted to ask you.

BECKER

Sure. Go ahead.

JIM

I kind of took care of the ladies around here. Would you do that for me after I'm gone?

BECKER

In what respect? I don't have to...
(in a whisper)
you know, I'm not into sex or any weird stuff.

JIM

Just make fun of their folks if they care to visit. They are non-caring brats, just like you put it yourself the other day.

BECKER

Oh. You got it. I can do that.

JIM

Sure, you can. And, John. I haven't told you why I liked you. I'm gay.

Becker looks left and right. And behind to check who is Jim talking to. It's him after all.

JIM

Give me a goodbye kiss, Becker. You can't say no to a dying man.

BECKER
Well, Jim, I don't know what to say.

JIM
Try kissing me.

BECKER
I was going for I'm straight but...

Becker leans over to Jim. Jim pulls away.

JIM
Get away from me. I was just making a
joke. Never thought you'd go for it.

Suddenly, Jim stops talking. His face straightens, he closes his eyes. Becker turns to Dr. Martin.

BECKER
May I?

Dr. Martin nods. Becker checks Jim's pulse.

BECKER
If I wasn't a real doctor I'd
think he was playing dead. May he
rest in peace.

Becker walks to the door, turns to Dr. Martin on his way out.

BECKER
...too bad he had to pass away so
soon. Listen, Doctor, if you haven't
changed your mind about making me
your assistant doctor, I'm up for
it. You let me know.

Slumping, Becker opens the door and steps out.

DR. MARTIN
Doctor Becker. Is there something you
want to ask before you get to your
duties tomorrow morning?

Becker stops and smiles - he's a doctor again.

BECKER
Yeah, there's something. I want
Louis to stop hiding my morning
paper from me.

He grins smugly at Louis. Exits.

FADE OUT.