

COLDER

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FADE IN.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

The dated kitchen of a small house. The decor tells us it's home to old people and to prove it, one's sitting in a chair in the corner.

JERRY is a miserable looking seventy year old. He hums tunelessly to himself and stares into space, with small cruel eyes.

A twinge of pain. He winces and touches his chest, pushes himself upright, shuffles painfully over to a cupboard mounted on the wall.

Inside, among the crockery and clutter, is a bottle of pills. He goes to the sink, pours a glass of water and swallows a couple.

Back in the chair he sits a few moments before his wife RITA comes in through the back door. She's about the same age and looks tough by necessity but kind by nature.

She hoists her two shopping bags onto the table and begins to unpack them.

RITA
What you been doing?

JERRY
Not much. Cleared the yard.

RITA
Take it steady. You know what the doctor said.

He mutters dismissively.

Rita takes a bottle from a bag.

JERRY
Orange soda?

RITA
You know we've got Michael with us tonight.

JERRY
Doesn't mean we have to bankrupt ourselves though, does it? They take advantage.

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RITA
No they don't. He's your grandson,
for Pete's sake.

JERRY
'Grandson'? I sometimes wonder. He
don't like baseball, don't like
football, I don't know what he does
like.

RITA
He's only seven.

She pulls a GI Joe type figure from the bag.

JERRY
What's that?

RITA
Something for him to play with.

JERRY
It's a doll.

RITA
No it isn't. He's wanted one of these
for ages. We can afford to treat him
now and again.

JERRY
Spoil him, more like.
(beat)
Don't suppose there's any beer in
there?
(off her look)
I thought not.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

CHRISTINE, Rita and Jerry's 25 year old daughter comes in
with MICHAEL, a placid doleful looking kid.

He holds a shopping bag full of toys in one hand and a
balloon in the other.

Rita and Christine hug.

CHRISTINE
Hi Mom.

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RITA

Hello Honey. And who's this big guy?
Wow!

She hugs Michael.

CHRISTINE

Say hello to Grandpa, Michael.

Michael looks uneasily over at Jerry.

MICHAEL

Hello.

JERRY

(encouraging)

Do it properly, Mickey. Come over and
shake old Grandpa's hand.

As Christine and Rita start to chat, Michael reluctantly
shuffles over and takes Jerry's outstretched hand.

JERRY (cont'd)

That's right. Attaboy.

Jerry gives Michael a slightly menacing smile. He certainly
isn't your usual fond and caring grandparent.

JERRY

Shake your old Grandpa's hand.

Christine and Rita are still chatting and don't notice as
Jerry gradually tightens his grip on Michael's fingers.

Michael winces and avoids Jerry's gaze as the old man
squeezes harder.

JERRY

Come on lad, squeeze back. Don't be a
wuss.

Only after several seconds does Michael let out a little
whine of pain. Rita turns and takes in the situation.

RITA

Jerry! Stop that now. What are you
doing? Leave the boy alone!

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JERRY

Only playing , aren't we Michael? I told you, keep your finger stiff and it doesn't hurt. You forgot didn't you, son?

Michael rubs his white hand.

CHRISTINE

Please don't tease him Dad. You know he doesn't like it.

JERRY

'Doesn't like it'! Plenty of things in this life he won't like. He needs to toughen up.

RITA

What's the matter with you?

(to Michael)

Take no notice of him Hon. Here, look what I've got for you.

She holds out the GI Joe and Michael takes it.

CHRISTINE

You shouldn't spend your money like that.

Jerry gives her a 'tell me about it' look.

CHRISTINE (cont'd)

What do you say Michael?

MICHAEL

Thank you.

He sits on the floor and begins to play with his new toy.

Jerry looks on, irritated. A sudden twinge like he had earlier. He touches his chest again.

Christine looks a little concerned.

CHRISTINE

You alright Dad?

JERRY

I'll live.

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CONTINUED: (3)

RITA

Serves him right for being a bully.

Rita takes the tablets from the cupboard and gives JERRY a couple.

Michael looks up from his toy as Jerry swallows them down.

MICHAEL

Can I have some?

RITA

No, you don't want those horrible things, dear. They're just medicine for nasty old Grandpas, not good little boys.

Christine looks at her watch.

CHRISTINE

I aught to get going I'm meeting the girls at six. Thanks for having Michael, I'll collect him first thing in the morning.

RITA

Take all the time you need. Making pancakes for breakfast. We might never give him back.

CHRISTINE

I might take you up on that! Gotta go. Thanks mom. Bye Dad!

RITA

Have fun.

Christine leaves with a last wave to Michael who is still playing quietly on the carpet.

RITA (cont'd)

I'll go and make up your room Michael. Grandpa'll keep you company.

She leaves.

Michael opens his bag of toys. Among them are a dozen or so Hot Wheels cars.

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Jerry picks up his paper and starts to read. It's like a wall between him and the little boy.

Michael plays. GI Joe is a giant knocking over lego houses and tramping on the Hot Wheels.

After a while he looks up at the paper wall.

MICHAEL

Grandpa, I need to go to the bathroom.

JERRY

Go on then. You know where it is.

Michael heads toward the door.

JERRY (cont'd)

And Mickey...

Michael turns back.

JERRY (cont'd)

...Don't forget to wash your hands.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Michael gets to the top of the stairs.

Through a half open door he sees Rita making the bed. He watches impassively for a moment.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY.

Michael's obediently washing his hands. Flushes the toilet.

We follow as he comes down the stairs and back into the kitchen. Jerry is still reading in his chair but now he's started his tuneless humming.

Michael sits back on the carpet amongst his toys, but GI Joe is gone. he shoots a look at Jerry who just carries on reading.

MICHAEL

Granddad, where's...

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CONTINUED:

The paper folds down and Jerry looks at him.

JERRY
The dolly soldier? He's on maneuvers.

MICHAEL
Where is it, Grandpa?

JERRY
Deep cover, son, deep cover. Heck,
you might never find him.

Michael looks upset, but Jerry's back reading again, humming quietly to himself.

Michael looks around, desperately scanning the room. Spots a tea towel on the draining board tented by something beneath it. He moves toward it.

JERRY (cont'd)
(without looking up)
Warmer...

Michael picks up the tea towel but all that's underneath is pile of cutlery.

Michael looks around again. Goes toward the cooker.

JERRY (cont'd)
Colder, colder.

Michael looks around, wet eyed now. He goes toward some drawers.

JERRY (cont'd)
Oh! Freezing!

Michael's chin is trembling. He gets down on his hands and knees and scurries around looking under the chairs and tables.

JERRY (cont'd)
Bit warmer. Warmer...

Michael throws open doors under the sink, reaches in, feeling about.

JERRY (cont'd)
..and freezing again!

Jerry looks over clearly enjoying the torment. Michael begins to sob.

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Rita comes in, sees the little boy's distress.

RITA
Honey, what's the matter?

JERRY
We're just playing a little hide and seek.

She immediately notices that the soldier is missing and gets what's happening.

RITA
Where is it?

JERRY
Just having a bit of fun with the boy.

RITA
Where is it?

JERRY
Jeez, what's wrong with...

RITA
Where is...

JERRY
(irritated compliance)
...it's in the cupboard.

She goes over and opens the cupboard door. There's GI Joe shoved in among the plates and glasses.

Michael's POV. As Rita retrieves the toy, we momentarily see the tablet bottle in there too.

RITA
There you are honey.

She gives the GI Joe to Michael who begins to play again.

RITA (cont'd)
(to Jerry)
I don't know why you have to be so horrible. I hope you aren't going to be a pain in the ass all evening.

JERRY
Some beer would help.

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CONTINUED: (3)

RITA

Is that what this is about? If I get you beer you'll behave?

JERRY

Just saying it'd help.

RITA

OK. I'll go buy you some beer if you promise to be a regular human being for a few hours.

She pulls on her coat and grabs her purse.

RITA (cont'd)

I swear you're more of a child than he is.

She leaves.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY.

Jerry sits on the toilet reading the paper.

A noise from downstairs. He scowls. 'What's that damn kid doing now?!'

INT. STAIRS - DAY.

Jerry painfully shuffles down the stairs one at a time on his stiff arthritic legs, annoyed that he can't move faster

A low shot. We see what he doesn't. A row of toy cars is now arranged in a neat line across a step.

Jerry's stockinged foot comes down onto them.

A cry of pain turning to alarm as his foot slides away and he starts to fall.

Jerry flailing to keep his balance - legs twisting as he grabs the banister for support. His grip fails and he slumps forward down the last two steps and collapses onto the hall floor.

A moment of breathless gasps then the pain in his chest is back but worse this time. Hand grasping at his heart and agony in his eyes.

He pulls himself up and staggers toward the kitchen door.

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From his POV the room seems empty. He comes in, heading toward the cupboard and the precious pills.

A flash of movement behind him. The balloon. A pin.

BANG.

Jerry jumps - lurches down onto his knees - eyes and mouth wide with shock - grabbing at his startled heart.

Through the pain he sees his chair where GI Joe has been casually posed as if to watch his distress.

Wheezing progress on his hands and knees toward the cupboard. He pulls himself up, slipping and falling, reaching a trembling hand to the cupboard door, pulling it open.

But the pill bottle ISN'T THERE.

Rising panic as he rakes around inside bringing plates and glasses smashing to the floor.

He looks at the chair again. Could he have left them there?

He drags himself over, knocking GI Joe aside and delves panicky fingers between the cushions. Nothing.

He slumps down gasping, real fear and pain in his face. Eyes darting to the table. Could the pills be there? He begins to crawl toward it but stops half way. Lies there on the carpet, wheezing and exhausted.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

You're cold.

JERRY looks round.

On the other side of the room stands Michael. Placid as ever. The burst balloon dangles from his hand.

JERRY

What?

MICHAEL

You're cold.

JERRY

This....isn't...a game.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MICHAEL
Just a little hide and seek.

JERRY
Where are they?

MICHAEL
(emotionless)
Heck, you might never find them.

Jerry starts panting with pain and glancing wildly around the room.

From his low angle of the floor he suddenly spots the pill bottle under a chair.

He starts to pull himself toward it, his legs useless and dragging behind him.

Slow painful progress but he gets there - grabs the bottle with a flicker of relief.

But it's empty.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Colder.

Jerry looks over. Michael is still watching.

For an instant, the ghost of a smile flickers on the child's impassive face.

MICHAEL
You're freezing.

We hold this shot and hear Jerry's ragged breathing as it becomes less and less frequent.

Then stops.

FADE OUT

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12.

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13.