

"Bingo Night"

by
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1 INT. FAIR OAKS ELDERLY LIVING FACILITY - EVENING

1

We close in on a door labeled "Fair Oaks Elderly Living Facility, Common Room."

The inside of the large, drab room is set with wooden tables, around which sit approximately eight of the place's residents. Some are in wheelchairs. Others have canes or walkers beside them.

On stage is an AGENT standing behind a well-used plastic globe containing many bingo balls. Beside each resident is a burly male observer. We see from some of the bingo cards that the game is in progress and that the residents are the players. Some look eager. Others look afraid.

The agent spins the globe a few times and removes the ball that falls into the cradle. He speaks into a squealy microphone in a stand to his right.

AGENT

B-6.

The residents who have that square on their cards put down a chip.

HERMAN PRUITT, 76 and dressed in a sweater, khakis, and tattered slippers, looks down at the well-worn bingo card before him. His B-6 is unmarked. The OBSERVER next to him speaks threateningly.

OBSERVER

Mr. Pruitt.

Afraid, Herman places a chip on B-6.

The globe is spun again.

AGENT

O-70.

Herman has that one too. He places a chip down before the big guy says anything.

The next call.

AGENT

N-42.

Herman is frightened to see that he has a diagonal bingo. He says nothing, until the observer clears his throat. His hand shaking, Herman marks the called square and speaks in his faltering voice.

(CONTINUED)

HERMAN

Bingo.

The agent onstage takes the mike from the stand and walks to Herman's table. He looks at the card and verifies the numbers marked against his list of numbers called. He smiles when he sees that all is right. He speaks into the microphone.

AGENT

Congratulations, Mr. . .

OBSERVER

(beat)

Pruitt. Herman Pruitt.

AGENT

Congratulations, Mr. Pruitt.

(beat)

Your choice, sir?

The agent gestures wide at the other players. Herman looks at them one by one.

MRS. HALL is wearing her favorite floral dress. He remembers her modeling it for everyone in the cafe on the day she purchased it. How proud she was twirling like a ballerina, albeit a slow one.

Mr. Collins sits dozing beside his observer in his wheelchair, his head bobbing, some drool collecting on his chin.

MRS. BAKER. Herman's thoughts turn to a couple of weeks ago when she was visited by her teenage grandson, on whom she lavished hugs and kisses.

He is not given the time to look at the others.

AGENT

(prompting him)

Well?

Herman returns to the present. The agent is displeased. His observer is glaring at him for taking too much time.

He shifts in his wheelchair and winces from the pain of his advanced arthritis. With a couple of stiff fingers on his left hand, he touches the liver-spotted, paper-thin skin on his right hand.

Herman looks up at the agent standing over him.

(CONTINUED)

HERMAN

Me.

(beat)

I choose. . . *me*.

Some of the residents moan in disappointment. Herman's observer stands, grabs the handles of his charge's wheelchair, and quickly removes him from the common room. Neither he nor Herman meets anyone's gaze.

The agent grabs and tilts Herman's bingo card. The chips slide off. He rips it into several pieces and dumps it into the trash barrel beside the table.

There is a smattering of applause before the common room's door clicks shut behind Herman and his escort. Mr. Collins awakens briefly, then goes back to sleep. Mrs. Baker speaks to no one in particular.

MRS. BAKER

Such a nice man.

(beat)

I will miss him.

The game starts to break up. Next to her observer, Mrs. Hall rises uneasily on her cane.

MRS. HALL

The lucky devil! I was hoping he'd pick *me*.

(beat)

Well, there's always next week.

FADE TO BLACK.