

FADE IN:

1 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

1

An ELDERLY MAN lies in a bed, in a semiprivate hospital room, with tubes and wires connecting him to several machines. The heart rate MONITOR drones out it's BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.

The man stares at the ceiling with a vacuous look on his sad face. His eyes are pale blue and very tired. His complexion is ashen.

A NURSE, EILEEN, mid-thirties and very plain, wheels an elderly woman, MRS. CHARLOTTE HARRINGTON, into the room and along side the other bed, which is empty. The elderly woman looks tired, but not quite as bad as the man. She is wearing a hospital gown.

NURSE

Ma'am, here, let me help you.

The nurse takes the woman by her hand and helps lift her to the bed. She hands the woman a pillow.

The elderly woman's voice is still strong, but soft and sweet at the same time.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Thank you sweetie. Here, I can get that.

The nurse helps the woman get the pillow situated and pulls up her covers.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Thank you. What's your name sweet heart?

The elderly man's eyes blink and widen.

NURSE

Eileen, ma'am.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Eileen, that sure is a pretty name.

NURSE

Thank you ma'am.

The nurse goes about her duty of checking the woman's blood pressure and getting her hooked up to the heart rate monitor.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Are you from around here, sweet heart, I mean Eileen?

NURSE

Yes ma'am.

The woman waits respectfully for the nurse to finish listening through the stethoscope, while taking her blood pressure.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Where exactly are you from Eileen?

NURSE

I grew up in Indian Springs.

The nurse is used to older patients chatting with her, because they are lonely, so she is polite.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Where did you go to school?

NURSE

I went to nursing school at Samford.
Where are you from?

The elderly woman's face lights up.

MS. CHARLOTTE

I grew up in Forest Park and I went to Montevallo. Back when it was an all girls college.

NURSE

Well that's been a little while ago.
You certainly don't look that old.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Thank you for those kind words dear,
but I'm afraid it's true. It was called Alabama State College for Women and that was 1944.

The elderly man's heart rate monitor speeds up enough to get the attention of the nurse. She looks over in the direction of the man's bed, however, there is a curtain separating the two beds. The monitor levels off at the higher BPM. The nurse brings her attention back to the woman.

NURSE

I'm sorry ma'am, what was that you were saying?

MS. CHARLOTTE

I was just saying that it was 1944 when I was at Alabama State College for Women. It was during the war, which made it harder for all us girls to find dates. Since it was an all girls school and boys from nearby schools were off at war.

NURSE

That must have been awful. So did you ever have a date while you were in college?

MS. CHARLOTTE

I sure did. The very first weekend I was on campus. It was orientation weekend and the school had brought in some ROTC boys from Auburn. They were so handsome in those uniforms. Of course, there was a lot more patriotism back then and respect for men in uniform, even if they were just ROTC.

The nurse starts to get caught up in the woman's story and sits on the edge of the bed.

NURSE

So what happened?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Well, of course every girl on campus was dying for one of the boys to ask them out for the weekend dance. I mean, these girls were all over them. Flirting like you've never seen. And the boys just ate it up.

NURSE

Well what did you do?

The woman pauses and leans in for dramatic effect.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Nothing, of course. I was raised a lady and I would never think of flirting so overtly. And I was actually a little shy back then. So, I just hung back from the rest of the girls and let them make fools of themselves.

NURSE

But weren't you worried that those boys would get away?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Secretly, yes, but I wasn't going to let them know that. And that is when he looked straight at me.

The nurse scoots closer to the woman on the bed. And the old woman leans back and just glows. She knows she has the nurse wrapped in her story and will have a friend to talk to for awhile.

NURSE

Who? WHO?

The elderly woman raises her hand to her forehead.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Oh my, I'm feeling a little dizzy.
It must be all this talking I'm doing.

NURSE

Would you like me to get you some
water?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Yes. Would you mind dear, that would
be nice.

The nurse gets up and leaves the room. The woman just smiles
a great big smile.

The elderly man groans a little and lets out a slight cough.

Ms. Charlotte leans forward in her bed and strains to try
and see around the curtain that hangs between the two beds.
The curtain doesn't quite travel the full length of the bed,
so she can see the lower part of his legs that are under the
white hospital sheets. There is no movement.

The man coughs again.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Sir, are you alright?

The man's heart rate monitor speeds up again, but no other
sound comes from his side of the room.

Ms. Charlotte has a look of concern on her face and looks
toward the door. She doesn't see the nurse. She begins to
pull the sheet back and swing one leg out of the bed when
the nurse comes back in.

The nurse hurries to the woman's bedside.

NURSE

Ma'am, are you alright?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Yes dear, it's not me. That gentleman
was coughing and his monitor started
getting faster again.

The nurse first gets the woman situated and then walks over
to the man's bed.

NURSE

You lie back down and I'll check on
him.

The nurse moves the curtain a little and steps closer to the man. She grabs his hand and checks his pulse. She fiddles with some of the machines, turns the volume on the monitor down and checks his IV.

Ms. Charlotte leans forward and can see almost up to the man's chest. She looks at his hand; it is very still.

The nurse turns around and pulls the curtain down a little. Ms. Charlotte leans back again.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I think he is going to be okay.
Bless his heart, he's been in a coma
for almost a month now and I've only
seen a couple of people come visit
him. His family must live in another
state.

MS. CHARLOTTE

That is sad. When you are as old as
we are, you've out lived most of
your friends and sometimes your family
just writes you off.

They both pause for a moment.

NURSE

Now are you going to tell me the
rest of that story? Who was *he*?

MS. CHARLOTTE

He was just the most dashing man I'd
ever seen. And when he looked at
me, my heart raced and I felt that I
might faint. I smiled at him ever
so slightly and he winked.

NURSE

Really?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Yes and oh my did that make my stomach
turn into butterflies. I knew right
then that he was the man for me.

NURSE

So what did you do?

MS. CHARLOTTE

What any descent, respectable woman
would do.

NURSE

What?

MS. CHARLOTTE
I walked away.

NURSE
What!?

MS. CHARLOTTE
Yes. I walked away. And guess what?

NURSE
What?

MS. CHARLOTTE
He followed.

Both of them laugh out loud.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Yep, he followed. I walked over to a private little garden courtyard, where I knew we would be alone. That way, I could have him all to myself.

NURSE
Well aren't you the sly one?

MS. CHARLOTTE
Men might like girls that flirt, but a real man would much rather have the prize that requires him to pursue. And that is exactly what he did.

NURSE
So, did he talk to you?

MS. CHARLOTTE
Yes he did. He asked me my name and then he offered his, just like a gentleman. We talked about where we were from and how beautiful the garden was. And then he --

The nurses PAGER goes off with a loud BEEP, and she looks down at it.

NURSE
(annoyed)
Oh, what now?
(beat)
I have to go check on a patient in the ICU. I'll be back in a little while.

MS. CHARLOTTE
There's no rush sweetie. I can finish this old story anytime.

NURSE

No, no. I want to hear it. I'll be back.

The nurse leaves the room. Ms. Charlotte grins and readjust herself in the bed. As she is moving around, she thinks she hears the elderly man say something.

She stops moving and gets quiet. Silence.

MS. CHARLOTTE

What was that? Did you say something?

Silence, except for the heart rate monitor.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Well, I guess it was nothing.

The man coughs again and Ms. Charlotte smiles knowing that was all she heard.

ONE HOUR LATER

The nurse is checking the woman's equipment. The woman is asleep. The nurse starts to leave and the woman wakes up.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Oh, hey deary. I was just taking a little nap. Don't you want to hear more of the story?

The nurse spins around quickly.

NURSE

Yes. I hope I didn't wake you. Are you sure you don't want me to let you sleep?

MS. CHARLOTTE

No, I'm fine. Come back over here and let me tell you more.

The nurse returns to the woman's bedside.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

So, where was I? Oh yeah, we were in the garden, talking. After talking for awhile and getting to know one another, we were sitting in the gazebo. He asked me if he could escort me to the dance that weekend.

NURSE

And what did you say? What did you say?

MS. CHARLOTTE
I say no, of course.

NURSE
NO! What!?

The elderly man lets out another noise that sounds like a combination between a cough and a laugh.

The nurse and the woman look over at the man. His arms and legs are perfectly still.

The nurse looks back at the woman.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Now wait a minute. I just can't believe you told him no. Are you crazy?

The nurse catches herself and blushes.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I may have Alzheimer's, but I'm not crazy, nor was I crazy all those years ago.

NURSE
I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't mean it that way.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I know dear, I'm just havin' a little fun with you. I know you didn't mean anything. In answer to your question, I knew exactly what I was doing. I knew he was interested and I also knew I wanted to spend as much time with him as possible. So, if I had said yes right away, he would have his catch and he'd be off to gloat to his buddies and I'd be alone.

NURSE
Ohhhhh.

MS. CHARLOTTE
This way, he'd have to spend the rest of the afternoon, trying to get me to say yes to him.

NURSE
Well I'll be. You are just about the smartest lady I think I've ever met.

MS. CHARLOTTE

I wish I could take all the credit, but it is wisdom that has been passed down through the women of my family for generations. My grandmother Inez taught me most of what I know.

NURSE

So, when did you say yes?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Not so quickly deary. There is plenty of time.

NURSE

Okay. So, you continued talking in the garden.

MS. CHARLOTTE

No. I told him that I had to go to my dorm room and put some things away.

NURSE

What!? Not again. You have to be kidding me.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Not at all sugar. And he said --

Another nurse steps in the door.

NURSE #2

Eileen, you have a personal call at the front desk.

NURSE

(annoyed)
Who is it?

NURSE #2

I think it's your boy friend again.

NURSE

What does he want now?

The nurse jumps off the bed and walks out the door.

NURSE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry ma'am, I'll be right back.

Ms. Charlotte leans back and closes her eyes again.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Oh, Louis, whatever happened to you?

LOUIS (O.S.)
The war took me away.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I know the war took you, but why
didn't you write?

LOUIS (O.S.)
I did, but some times letters never
make it.

MS. CHARLOTTE
Why didn't you find me when you
returned?

LOUIS (O.S.)
I was wounded and had a long
rehabilitation at Bethesda.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I really thought we had something
special.

LOUIS (O.S.)
We did. You are all I've ever thought
about.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I thought you would return and sweep
me off my feet and marry me. I
thought we'd live happily ever after.

LOUIS (O.S.)
That is all I ever wanted. By the
time I regained my strength and was
able to find you, you had already
married. I figured you didn't really
love me and I didn't want to
complicate matters.

MS. CHARLOTTE
I married out of depression. Oh, he
was a good man, but he never really
got my heart.

LOUIS (O.S.)
I too was married, but you were always
on my mind.

MS. CHARLOTTE
Do you remember dancing cheek to
cheek. The midnight stroll and our
first kiss? No man ever kissed me
like that.

LOUIS (O.S.)
If there was such a thing as destiny --

MS. CHARLOTTE
Why! Why did life keep us apart?
Did you love me Louis? I have
wondered all these years.

LOUIS (O.S.)
My love for you has never waned.
But did you love me? I would like
to know, before I leave -- did you
really love me?

MS. CHARLOTTE
Oh, Louis, the truth is --

The nurse comes in the door quickly.

NURSE
Now where were we?

Ms. Charlotte opens her eyes and sits up in bed. A small
tear rolls down her cheek, but she brushes it away before
the nurse can see.

The old man's heart rate monitor's screen shows that his
heart rate is much slower than before. His face looks sadder
than before.

MS. CHARLOTTE
His name was Louis.

NURSE
What?

MS. CHARLOTTE
The young man I've been talking about.
His name was Louis.

NURSE
Oh.

MS. CHARLOTTE
This is the first time I've told
anyone his name. The memories are
sweet and painful at the same time.

NURSE
You don't have to finish --

MS. CHARLOTTE
Nonsense dear. I want to talk about
him. I was telling you that I left
him to return to my dorm. Of course
he followed. Boys weren't allowed
in the building, so he had to wait
outside.

(MORE)

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I went to my room on the third floor and when I looked out my window, there he was... with wildflowers in his hand. "Have lunch with me," he said.

NURSE

Please tell me you didn't say no again.

MS. CHARLOTTE

I didn't. We had a wonderful picnic on the quad and then parted ways to get ready for the dance.

NURSE

Whew!

MS. CHARLOTTE

We danced the night away. His touch was so tender, but strong. I felt so safe in his arms. Later that night he told me that he was going to have to leave for Europe in a few weeks to fight the Germans.

NURSE

Oh my.

MS. CHARLOTTE

I was devastated. But we continued to dance and talk about how we could reunite after his return. And we kept in touch over the next few weeks. He came to see me several more times. Each time, my love for him grew stronger and our plans more solid.

NURSE

And then he went off to war?

MS. CHARLOTTE

Yes. I never heard from him again.

NURSE

Do you know what happened to him?

MS. CHARLOTTE

At first, I thought he'd been killed, but then I saw one of his buddies. He told me that Louis was in Maryland. He didn't know much more. I figured that if he was alive, he would've come to me, but he didn't. I fell into a depression and some years later, I married.

NURSE

Where is your husband now?

MS. CHARLOTTE

My husband died of cancer 3 years ago.

NURSE

I'm sorry.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Thank you. He was a good man, but I never really loved him like I should have. I just wish I knew if Louis loved me. I just wish I knew what happened all those years ago.

The old man's face has a little more color than before and his eyes start to blink rapidly.

The nurse and Ms. Charlotte sit in silence for a moment.

Ms. Charlotte gets a funny look on her face, as if she has just realized something wonderful.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Eileen? You're going to think this is crazy, but I feel like Louis is right here.

The nurse looks surprised and looks around the room.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

My heart feels so light, so... warm.

Ms. Charlotte starts fanning herself and her heart rate monitor starts to speed up.

The nurse is startled and grabs a cup of water.

MS. CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Oh my. He did love me! I know it, I can feel it... He did love me.

Ms. Charlotte clutches her chest and the heart rate monitor speeds up even more. She falls back against her pillow.

The nurse looks really concerned now.

NURSE

Ok, Ms. Charlotte, just take it easy.

The nurse reaches over and presses a red call button on the wall by the bed. She grabs Ms. Charlotte's arm and takes her pulse. The nurse is standing over her now.

MS. CHARLOTTE

Louis? Louis... I loved you all
those years ago... I've always loved
you so...

Her voice trails off.

The other nurse burst in the room, runs right passed Ms. Charlotte's bed and pulls back the curtain back to reveal the old man. His heart rate monitor's screen shows a flat line.

The nurse grabs his arm and feels for a pulse.

The old mans face has a smile and there is a single tear on his cheek. His eyes are closed.

FADE OUT: