

CROFTON

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An old man, CROFTON (80) sits on his bed, facing out towards the bright light seeping through the curtains. A slow breeze. The rest of the room is shadow. A blank expression on his face turns sour.

The room is full of Crofton's history: pictures of him and his family. An old photo of two young men outside a menswear store called "IXL". A pin-board with various leaflets and a Chinese restaurant menu. A scrap of paper with phone numbers of people: Anne, Millie, taxi company.

He looks to the clock to his right. 9:32am.

Crofton sighs and rises from the messy bed. He starts to tidy the bed but is startled by the phone ringing. Crofton stares at the ringing phone for a moment before continuing to tidy.

The ringing stops and the answering machine starts. A woman, ANNE (55), can be heard.

ANNE

Happy birthday Daddy! You must be in the shower so I'll just leave you a quick message. (Pause) We have a little surprise for you so if you could wait in the lobby at 11 there will be someone to collect you.

We can hear children shouting and running around from the phone. Anne shushes them. Crofton approaches the dresser and takes out pants, trousers and a shirt before getting dressed.

ANNE

Also I've spoken to the people at the home and they've said you spend a lot of time in your room. (Pause) By yourself. I don't mean to pry but it, well... it just worries me a little.

After getting his shirt on, he opens the wardrobe to take out a suit jacket and tie. He starts to put them on.

ANNE

I know... I know it can be difficult, especially now. (Pause) And it certainly doesn't get any easier but perhaps we can help? (Pause) We could

get you out of that home more? Just an idea.

He tightens the tie and neatly folds a handkerchief from the table, putting it in his suit pocket. Crofton goes close to the mirror and takes a comb, straightening the last few grey hairs on his head. He picks up a walking stick from by the door and leaves the room, taking his keys off the table with him. We can still hear Anne talking as the door shuts.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME HALLWAY - DAY

We see Crofton come out of his room. Anne's voice is muffled. He fumbles to lock the door and drops the keys. He steadies himself with his stick to pick them up. An old woman MILLIE (70), comes out of the room next to his and walks towards him.

MILLIE

Let me.

Millie bends down to pick the keys up and hands them to him. Crofton squints, trying to figure out who she is. She looks at the keys in his hands.

MILLIE

You've finally come out of your room.

CROFTON

Which one are you?

Millie looks up but ignores the question.

MILLIE

No point spending all this time by yourself. You should pop by for some tea. (Pause) I am your neighbour.

Crofton is still trying to work out who she is. She sighs as she helps Crofton lock his door by taking his hand towards the handle and pushing in the key. He is startled by her hand touching his. He looks at her as they lock it.

MILLIE

You know me.

Crofton still looks confused. She hands the key back and looks at him deeply, as if she is searching too. After a moment, she sighs knowing he doesn't recognise her.

MILLIE
Crofton, its me. (Pause) Millie.

CROFTON
Millie? Oh, yes I knew that.

She laughs and walks past him.

MILLIE
Of course you did. Have a lovely
birthday!

She continues down the hallway. He watches her go.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

A warm, late morning glow comes through the windows on either side of the small room. We can hear the scribbles of a pen from the receptionist and the delicate flow of a tacky water fountain. A slight rush from cars outside and birds chirping. Crofton is slumped in the chair, a despairing look on his face. His eyelids are low, eyes lazily wondering off. The eyelids shut.

SLOW FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. Day. Lobby.

A dark, dull blue covers the small room. The receptionist has gone. The water fountain has stopped. The room is lifeless. Crofton looks at the clock: the hand creeps towards 11am.

He rises to stand facing the heavy door. A bright light slowly seeps through the bottom. A pause. He looks to the clock again and back at the door. Another pause. Just as he turns his head to the clock again the doors burst open. The shadows run and hide. Crofton puts his hand up to shield his eyes from the light. He adjusts, and slowly puts his hand down again to see a black silhouette floating towards him. As it gets closer, it appears to bounce ever so slightly. The bounce turns into footsteps and soon the shadow is a figure: A person dressed in a black suit and black hat. They walk straight towards Crofton. The person, a CHAUFFEUR (30) looks down at Crofton.

CHAUFFEUR
Are you Mr. Keating?

A long pause. Crofton hesitates before answering.

CROFTON
I am.

CHAUFFEUR
You're to come with me now sir.

The Chauffeur holds out a thin, wiry hand for Crofton to grasp. We can see their face now: A sharp bone structure. Brown, almost black eyes. Intimidating yet charming. Youthful but calm. Crofton holds his walking stick with a firm grip as the Chauffeur takes his arm, guiding him towards the heavy doors. They enter the light.

On the other side is a limousine surrounded by golden sunshine and greenery. Crofton's walking stick falls, his mouth open, eyes wide. The Chauffeur walks ahead to open the door. Crofton looks down at his hands: no wrinkles or scars. He feels the soft skin on his cheeks and the wavy hair on his head. Crofton is now his younger self.

CHAUFFEUR
Do get in.

EXT/INT. CAR - DAY

Crofton feels the soft leather of the seat. He looks in the window for his reflection but cannot quite see. The Chauffeur starts the engine. Crofton turns to the front.

CROFTON
Where are you taking me?

CHAUFFEUR
I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to say.

A long pause. The car creeps out of the retirement village. As it turns a corner the sunlight beams straight through the car. Crofton covers his eyes again.

CROFTON
The light. It burns.

CHAUFFEUR
Close your eyes. This will help.

Crofton does as the Chauffeur says. We can hear the slightest hum. The Chauffeur's voice booms around us.

CHAUFFEUR

You can open them now, sir.

Crofton opens his eyes. The car is still moving, but we can no longer see the Chauffeur. There is a black screen where they once were. A logo of angel wings with a company name: Father & Son's. A pause. Outside we can see green hills turn into cardboard/wooden cartoon hills. Crofton continues to look forward.

CROFTON

Is it nice?

CHAUFFEUR

Is what nice, sir?

Crofton looks around, searching for the voice.

CROFTON

Where we're going. Is it nice there?

The Chauffeur smirks. We can see that the black screen is see-through on their side. They press a button to speak.

CHAUFFEUR

I'm quite sure you'll like it.

A smile appears on Crofton's face. The car leaves the village and starts to go down a hill, towards the town.

Crofton looks out the window and perks up at the sight of something outside. The Chauffeur removes their hat, takes a mint out of a tin and throws it in their mouth.

CROFTON

Oh, that's my old house! (Pause) It looks so dark.

The car stops at the lights, just outside the old, neglected cartoon house. The house floats up and down along with the other houses on the street. Crofton turns to the front as if they are about to say something. He stops himself and looks back. The lights change and Crofton looks at the building as they drive on.

They continue to drive down the hill and into the centre of the town. Everything is in a cartoonish-puppet show style. They drive past shops, one called "IXL". Crofton sits up and

taps on the window.

CROFTON

My work! That's my old work.

A pause. Still nothing from the Chauffeur.

CROFTON

I need to go in.

CHAUFFEUR

Sir I can't let you do that.

CROFTON

No I just want to see if-

CHAUFFEUR

No sir. (Pause) You don't.

The softness of the Chauffeur's voice draws Crofton's attention. Crofton has his hand on the door handle. He holds it tightly, shaking. He looks to the front of the car.

CROFTON

I don't?

CHAUFFEUR

It's behind us now. (Pause) Let it go.

Crofton lets go of the handle. The car's wheels start again. He sits back and smiles. The smile then turns into a chuckle.

CROFTON

Is that it then?

CHAUFFEUR

I don't think I follow, Sir.

CROFTON

Oh you don't have to play pretend any more, *sir*. I know where we're going. (Pause) I'm not there yet though, am I?

CHAUFFEUR

We've still got a little way to go.

CROFTON

I could do anything I like then, couldn't I?

CHAUFFEUR

Of course sir. It is your birthday
after all.

CROFTON

I could do anything! I could go-

He spots something else outside. He shouts and bangs at the
window.

CROFTON

Ronnie! Ronnie! It's my friend out
there. My old work buddy. Ronnie!

CHAUFFEUR

He can't hear you, Sir.

Crofton looks out longingly towards the cartoon man as they
drive away from his friend.

CROFTON

RONNIE! I need to see him!

He opens the door as the car moves.

CHAUFFEUR

Mr. Keating!

EXT. FISH AND CHIP SHOP - DAY

The limo breaks. Crofton gets out. Cars beeping, seagulls
screeching. He stumbles over to RONNIE (90).

CROFTON

RONNIE! It's me, Crofton.

Ronnie smiles but then seems concerned, upset almost.

CROFTON

...You know me.

Ronnie's lips tremble, as if he knows but doesn't have the
strength to say the name.

A YOUNG MAN (20) comes from behind Ronnie to take him.

YOUNG MAN

Come on Pop, we have to go.

CROFTON
We worked together! Ronnie.

YOUNG MAN
We need to go.

Ronnie can barely look at Crofton but manages to speak.

RONNIE
Goodbye.

They turn and walk away. Crofton is paralysed. The Chauffeur runs up to him with a stern look on their face.

CHAUFFEUR
Mr. Keating! I insist you come back to
the car now!

Crofton's mouth is slightly ajar. Eyes wide. The Chauffeur lightly edges him towards the car. Crofton stumbles back to the limo and climbs inside. The Chauffeur gets in the front.

INT. CAR - DAY.

Only the engine makes noise. Crofton stares at the screen.

CROFTON
I don't understand. (Pause) I was
there wasn't I? I was standing right
in front of him and he didn't see me.

A long pause.

CROFTON
He looked right through me. (Pause) Is
this how it works then?

Another pause. Crofton tenses up.

CROFTON
That's it. Without a moment's notice
I'm taken away from my home! I don't
even get to say goodbye.

CHAUFFEUR
Say goodbye to who?

CROFTON
Ronnie!

CHAUFFEUR

You'll see him again, won't you?

Pause. Crofton's eyes light up. A grin appears.

CROFTON

Yes. (Pause) Yes you're right. I will.
Haha yes! Of course I will. Oh I'm
sure Ronnie isn't far behind if that's
the state of him! Besides, he's older
than me.

CHAUFFEUR

Of course sir. Not far to go now.

Crofton looks out of the window at the cartoon seaside. They
continue to drive. Crofton remains content.

Eventually, the car begins to slow down. Crofton's smile
fades. He holds his breath, preparing for what is to come.
The wheels come to a halt.

CHAUFFEUR

We have arrived.

Crofton looks at the angel wings on the black screen. We hear
the Chauffeur get out. He opens the door for Crofton.

Crofton shuffles to the seat by the door and takes a deep
breath. He looks at the angel wings, pauses, and gets out of
the car.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF CAR - DAY

A bright light floods his eyes. His ears ringing. After a
moment his eyes adjust. He looks up and can make out the word
"Paradise Garden" written in gold letters on a red board. He
realises it's a Chinese restaurant and his eyes cast
downwards to see a middle aged woman smoking a cigarette and
man smiling at him. His family. A pause. Crofton is old
again.

CROFTON

Oh for fuck's sake!

He turns around, opens the car door and climbs in, feebly
closing the door behind him.

INT. CAR - DAY

He sits, slumped, on the far side of the car, looking out of the window. The miserable frown has returned.

After a minute, there is a knock on the door. Crofton doesn't respond. The door opens. Anne peaks her head in, still smoking a cigarette. Crofton winces at the smell.

ANNE

Did we do something wrong daddy?

Crofton continues to gaze out of the window. Anne stubs out the cigarette and gets in, waving the smoke away.

ANNE

Everyone's inside waiting for you.
(Pause) They've all come for your birthday.

Crofton still looks away. Anne sighs.

ANNE

Can you come in and show your face?
Some of them have driven a long way to see you.

Another pause. Anne begins to get more frustrated.

ANNE

The least you could do is say hello.

Crofton's eyebrows raise. He turns his head to Anne.

CROFTON

(Pause) I'll come in.

ANNE

Thank you. They'll be-

CROFTON

To say goodbye.

Anne gives him a look. A long pause. Just as she thinks of something to say, the black visor at the front of the limo slowly slides down. The Chauffeur shows their face.

CHAUFFEUR

(To Anne) If I might interject, I'd

get what you can at this point.

Anne looks between the two of them, flabbergasted, then back at Crofton. Deep into his pale eyes. Eventually the slightest smile appears on her face.

ANNE

Okay. (Pause) We can start with
goodbye.

Anne opens the door and gets out. She turns and holds her hand out for Crofton. Pause.

A young man's hand takes it.

END.