

Three minute theatre

THE QUESTION OF ESCAPE

FADE IN:

SOUND FX: NOISES FILTER LIKE A SYMPHONY- COUGHING, THE BUZZ OF CONVERSATION, A RADIO PRESENTER, CARDS SHUFFLING, COFFEE CUPS ON SAUCERS...AS THE PICTURE BEGINS TO SHOW

INT: CARE HOME

ARTHUR, a blind self determined pensioner with a shrewd grasp of life, is escorted in by CONNIE, the helper with efficient preconceptions of her self importance.

ARTHUR
Why am I here?

CONNIE
You're blind, Arthur, and you can't take care of yourself. And you keep escaping from other care homes so they sent you here where I can keep an eye on you.

Connie spots another pensioner and leaves Arthur standing.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Hetty! Do you need a hand, dear?

With her gone, Arthur does a 180 on his stick and walks back out the door.

EXT: CARE HOME

Connie catches him on the drive.

CONNIE
Arthur! What are you doing?

ARTHUR
Why am I here?

CONNIE
I told you, you keep escaping!

ARTHUR
That's not the right answer

CONNIE
You want to come back inside!

ARTHUR
I'd like an answer to my question

INT- CARE HOME

She sits Arthur down in a chair and fusses. Arthur sits with a straight back, becoming aware of his surroundings.

FX: CLOSE UP ISOLATING EACH SOUND EFFECT IN THE ROOM- THE RADIO, THE TV, CARD GAMES, PENSIONERS TALKING, LIPS MOVING, RETURNING TO ARTHUR AS HE LISTENS. HE INHALES AND WE SEE COFFEE IN CUPS, TOAST ON A PLATE, FLOWERS IN A VASE. BACK TO ARTHUR, TAKING IT ALL IN WITH HIS SENSES.

Connie sees Mildred and rushes to help.

CONNIE
Enough solitaire, Mildred? Time for the toilet, is it, that's right, twenty steps from the table, isn't it?

MILDRED
Stop fussing, Connie!

CONNIE
And just past the fire escape on the left...

Arthur hears this. He stands, listens.

CLOSE UP SHOTS OF: CRIBBAGE TABLE TO LEFT, PENSIONERS SNORING BEFORE THE QUIET TV, CARDS SHUFFLED AHEAD...

He walks forwards to the card table on soft silent shoes. We hear snatches of conversation as he passes and his head cocks to listen- names, details of lives, gossip.

HETTY
Alright, love?

ARTHUR
Fine, thanks! Hetty, is it?

HETTY
That's me!

He touches the table, turns and off he walks, counting steps, turns left at twenty and through the fire escape.

EXT: CARE HOME

CONNIE
Arthur! You have gone far enough!

ARTHUR
Not quite by the sound of it!

CONNIE
What are you trying to prove?

ARTHUR
Connie, Why am I here?

CONNIE
Because you clearly can't look
after yourself!

ARTHUR
In who's opinion?

CONNIE
You're blind. You're disabled!
You need help!

ARTHUR
Am I?

INT: CARE HOME

Connie sits him down and carries on talking oblivious to
whether he's listening or not.

CONNIE
Of course you're disabled! You
need people to look after you!

ARTHUR
What is it to be disabled?
For someone who just escaped
twice, I don't think I qualify

CONNIE
You're blind!

ARTHUR
But I don't need eyes to win
friends in this room or escape
from you.

CONNIE
You have a place where you need
to feel wanted, and that's here.

ARTHUR
What would happen if they took
this off you- gave it to another
carer? Someone different?

CONNIE
Well! I...well...why would they?

ARTHUR
Why are you so afraid?

CONNIE
But they need me!

ARTHUR

Or, do you need them? Look at them...

Camera POV- track around the room- pensioners getting on with their lives. Connie doesn't see it.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Getting on with their lives, making the most...I wonder...

CONNIE

Wonder what?

ARTHUR

Who is actually disabled...?

He looks toward her- and proves the point.