

Sundown

Treatment, August 2023
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Logline

A dutiful yet exhausted caregiver shares a special bond with her dementia-inflicted patient.

Characters

Maria - An elderly woman suffering from heart problems and dementia. In a past life, she was very independent and successful, taking great pride in her individual accomplishments and raising her daughter, Sandra, on her own.

Sandra - A young nurse juggling the rigors of her job while caring for her sick mother, Maria. When new exciting opportunities were coming into fruition, she took on the burden to reverse the role of caretaking from mother daughter to daughter mother.

Story Summary

MARIA and her caretaker, SANDRA, behold a beautiful SUNSET on Maria's porch. Sandra brushes Maria's hair while Maria reads from her JOURNAL, recounting events of the day. When she reads a passage about taking HYDRALAZINE, she instantly becomes confused as she does not recall taking any medication or why she would need hydralazine.

Panic arises within Maria when she catches a glimpse of Sandra's striking RING. Maria owns a similar ring - a precious family heirloom - yet she cannot recall its location.

Both women move to Maria's bedroom. There, Maria continues reading from her journal while Sandra prepares Maria's nightly round of medication. When Maria encounters a passage in her journal about eating a vegan dish for dinner, she reacts with both disgust and confusion. Sandra finds the situation funny and informs Maria that she said she liked dinner. The mood turns sour when Maria, irritated, calls Sandra a liar.

In the bathroom, Sandra splashes water on her face. She catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror and barely recognizes her own

exhausted reflection. A TEXT comes in from her husband asking if she's coming home. Sandra starts to respond to her husband's text, but Maria calls for her.

Maria tells Sandra that she wishes her daughter would visit her soon. Sandra asks Maria if she remembers the SONG that she used to sing her daughter to sleep, and then Sandra begins to sing it herself. Together, they finish the first verse. Before Sandra exits the bedroom, she finds a PHOTO that catches her eye. She brings the photo to Maria's bedside table and then finally leaves. The photo is Sandra on her wedding day, sitting while Maria - her mother - places the veil on her head from behind, mirroring the image of the two together at the beginning sunset.

Stylistic Approach

We begin the film with dialogue over a black screen to imply a blank state of mind, confusion, and memory loss. Our dementia patient, Maria, expresses she's scared and Sandra, the caretaker, suggests reading from her memory book. We then show a beautiful sunset to portray the metaphor of "sunset of one's life" since the character Maria is near the end of hers.

Close ups will be key in revealing the subtleties of what remains unspoken between characters. Although there is dialogue exchanged between Maria and Sandra, the nuanced interactions are where we see their respective emotional states. Our close up of Sandra doing Maria's hair is tied to the ending of our film, when we see a photo of Maria doing Sandra's hair at her wedding that reveals the mother daughter relationship.

Camera movements and varying depths of field will be used throughout the film. A dementia mind is constantly moving, and the camera movement will reflect this. Slow movements will be used when tensions are at ease, however, shakier handheld motions will be used during times of emotional distress. Clear images versus in and out of focus will also be used to portray each character's emotional well-being and state of mind. The bigger the tension, the shallower the depth of field and out of focus the shots will be. Only when both characters are finally at peace towards the end of the film will the shots be static and fully in focus.