

FADE IN:

INT. A METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER -- DAY

Chaos encompasses the main room, REPORTERS hustling stories and pictures back in forth to their editors, phones ringing off the hook, and fingers rigorously typing on computer keys.

A CLERK bounces through the room delivering mail, memos, and papers of importance. She slaps a stack on...

GEORGE STEWARTS' desk, startling him, waking him up from his daze.

CLERK

Must have been a busy night at the morgue.

GEORGE

Thanks.

CLERK

No problem.

The clerk bolts off continuing her distribution leaving George to sit and stare at the pile before him. He's been doing this too long.

He reaches for his coffee mug. It's empty.

GEORGE

(to himself)

Great. Same day... nothing new.

He stands and walks across the room to the makeshift breakfast / coffee table.

JERRY STOKES, a cocky, too sure of himself reporter, slides in front of George, and snags the coffee pot. He pours the rest of the coffee into his mug, then turns to George.

George stops, realizing it's futile to continue. Jerry steps toward George, totally insincere...

JERRY

How's it going George?

GEORGE

Fine.

JERRY

Good... Still got you on obits?

GEORGE

Yes.

JERRY

Damn... been on that a long time haven't you?

George looks blankly at the empty pot of coffee.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I know how you feel, they had me stuck there for three weeks, when I started here... Keep the chin up... You never know when you'll get the call from the chief.

Jerry hands George the empty pot, then returns to his desk.

George stands there and stares at the empty coffee pot almost willing it to perform on it's own. It seems like an eternity when...

the Clerk races up from behind.

CLERK

George! George!

...gets George's attention on the second call.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Chief wants to see you in his office.

The Clerk races off to continue her rounds.

GEORGE

(to himself)

This could be it.

(smiles)

Writing. Reporting.

George walks over to his desk, sets down his coffee mug, and freshens

himself up trying to make himself worthy of such an opportunity.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Stay calm... stay calm... no more obituaries.

George glances over at Jerry Stokes with his heels kicked up on the desk, talking on the phone.

George picks up his pace as he glides across the room to the Editor's office. He KNOCKS.

EDITOR

Yeah.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE

George opens the door and sticks his head in.

GEORGE

You wanted to see me sir?

EDITOR

Yeah, I do George. Come on in...

George enters.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Do you recall a Walter Phillip Chapman?

GEORGE

No Sir, I don't believe I do.

EDITOR

Let's see if I can refresh your memory.

The Editor picks up the paper from his desk and reads an Obit.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

(reads)

"Walter Phillip Chapman, 56 of 1379 Dayton Road died Wednesday at home. Born in Burlington, NC on July, 19th, 1946.

(angry)

Do I need to continue?

GEORGE

(confused)

No... Sir?

EDITOR

The name doesn't ring a bell?

GEORGE

I can't recall...

EDITOR

This is an obituary in our paper. You did write this, correct?

GEORGE

I'm sure I did... but I don't understand...

EDITOR

I want to introduce you to...

...pointing to MR and MRS WALTER PHILLIP CHAPMAN sitting behind George.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Mr. Walter Phillip Chapman and his wife Ann.

The room silences as a shocked George turns to see the elderly gentleman and his wife.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

I believe you have some explaining to do George.

ANN

(burst in)

I'll say.

(to George)

How on earth can anyone make a mistake like this?

WALTER

Annie.

...to try and calm her demeanor.

EDITOR

Did you try to contact the family to confirm the death?

GEORGE

I...

ANN

(looking at George)

No, he did not. I would have known if he'd called... Young man, do you have any idea what...

WALTER

Annie.

GEORGE

No... I didn't want to disturb the family in their hour of grief.

ANN

Disturb? You don't think this is disturbing, reading in the paper that your husband died. Not to mention the calls from family and friends...

WALTER

Annie please.

ANN

Don't Annie please me. He's the one that's caused all the trouble.

WALTER

Will you let the Editor handle it?

EDITOR

George, did you call the funeral home to confirm Mr. Chapman's death?

GEORGE

No... I didn't... I'm...

ANN

This is negligence... pure negligence...

(to the Editor)

I can not believe you conduct business this way.

WALTER

Annie... he was just doing his job. I'm sure it wasn't his intention for this to happen.

ANN

If he was doing his job properly this wouldn't have happened. I am surprised at your demeanor in all this Walter.

WALTER

What's done is done. Now let the Editor handle...

ANN

Why am I always the backbone of this marriage? You should be the one upset, it was your obituary.

(to the Editor)

What do you intend to do about all this?

EDITOR

George... wait outside.

George lowers his head...

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, please accept my sincere apology. We will write a retraction of the death notice in the next edition and I can assure you...

and exits the office.

EXT. A METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER - DAY

George exits the building carrying a box of his personal belongings.

WALTER (O.S.)

I didn't mean for you to lose your job.

Walter startles George.

GEORGE

What?

WALTER

Sorry... I'm sorry... I hate that you lost your job over something like this.

GEORGE

It's okay really... I don't know how much longer I could've taken it anyway.

George starts to pull away to leave.

WALTER

Let me buy you lunch.

GEORGE

I appreciate it, Mr. Chapman, but...

WALTER

I'd really like to George... please.

EXT. CITY STREET -DAY

George and Walter stroll along the sidewalk, slightly uncomfortable.

George wonders...

GEORGE

Who do you think would've called it in?

WALTER

What?

GEORGE

Your death notice. Someone had to have called it in. We don't just pull dead people out of the sky.

WALTER

I don't know.

GEORGE

Anybody out to get you? Play some kind of sick joke? Somebody you work with maybe?

WALTER

(laughs)

No. Certainly not.

GEORGE

What about your wife? Forgive me for saying this, but she wasn't very nice back there. Could she be crying out for attention?

WALTER

I don't think so... Annie's never had a problem getting attention.

They share a look.

GEORGE

Do you have any children?

WALTER

Three. A boy and two girls.

GEORGE

Could any of them...

WALTER

No. They're good kids. Real good kids... I'm proud of each one of them... Their lives are too full to be messing around with mine.

George stops, looks at Walter.

GEORGE

Well, someone wanted people to think you died... Someone called in that notice... and you don't have a clue do you?

Walter just looks at George.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A cafe is sparsely crowded for lunch. A WAITRESS walks up to George and Walter, and refills their water glasses.

Walter picks over his salad while George devours a sandwich.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything else?

WALTER

Coffee... please.

GEORGE

Make that two...

The Waitress leaves.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I still haven't had my coffee today... Are you retired?

WALTER

Yes.

GEORGE

What did you do?

WALTER

(half laughs)

Taught seventh grade science.

GEORGE

A teacher?... That's a noble profession.

WALTER

I enjoyed it.

GEORGE

You said you have three kids?

WALTER

That's right.

GEORGE

Any grand kids?

WALTER

Not yet... soon... hopefully... My son, Walter Jr. - the oldest, married a wonderful girl a little over a year ago.

Walter warms with the thought of his children. George marvels at the complexity in the old gentleman.

GEORGE

What does he do?

WALTER

A substance abuse counselor for the state.

GEORGE

And your daughters?

WALTER

The middle one's a paralegal for a good law firm downtown, and the youngest... well... she's autistic. Makes chinese paper animals.

GEORGE

That's not an easy thing to do.

WALTER

I can't do it. She found this book at the library when she was young, looked at a few pictures and just did it... she's amazing. Stressful at times, but still amazing. They're all amazing.

Walter thinks about his family. George dives back into his sandwich.

The Waitress walks up and sets two cups of coffee down in front of the two men.

WAITRESS

Be careful it's hot.

WALTER

Thank you.

WAITRESS

Cream?

WALTER

Yes, please.

The Waitress drops a couple of creams on the table.

WAITRESS

Will there be anything else?

GEORGE

No, we're good thanks.

Waitress leaves.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

How about the military? Did you spend any time in the service?

WALTER

Vietnam 66' 67'.

GEORGE

What did you do?

WALTER

That's a time in my life I'd like to forget.

George freezes, then attempts to take a sip of coffee, when...

WALTER (CONT'D)

What did you think about it?

GEORGE

About?

WALTER

The obituary... my obituary. What did you think about it?

George sets his coffee mug down.

GEORGE

To be honest, I don't remember it.

WALTER

Nothing?

GEORGE

Nothing... I've written so many that all the names have become a blur, as soon as I finish the article it's gone.

WALTER

Are there any that you do remember?

GEORGE

Few.

WALTER

Which ones?

GEORGE

Prominent writers, sports stars, and this one eccentric old man who left everything to his Siberian husky.

WALTER

His dog? Really?

GEORGE

I think his name was Balto... the dog. Named after the famous sled dog who made the run to Nome, Alaska... I'd love to have been there when they read that Will.

WALTER

That would have been interesting.

GEORGE

I'm sure his family got a kick out of it. I remember him having four sons, and three ex-wives, each one being younger than the last.

WALTER

Aside from the famous and the eccentric are there any other obituaries that stand out?

GEORGE

No... not really.

WALTER

What about you? Would you remember your obituary?

GEORGE

Mine? I've never really thought about it... I don't think I would.

WALTER

There's got to be something you'd remember. One thing that sets you apart.

GEORGE

Yeah... I guess.

WALTER

What would that one thing be? The one thing above everything else.

George takes a minute.

GEORGE

Honesty. I would like for everyone to remember me as being very honest.

WALTER

That would be memorable. Sad to say, there's not a lot of honest people out there.

GEORGE

I suppose.

WALTER

Loyalty... that's how I'd like to be remembered. Loyal to my wife of thirty-five years. Loyal to my family and friends. Loyal to my students and co-workers... I built a life around being loyal... That should stand for something... shouldn't it?

GEORGE

(feeling of guilt)
It should... You're absolutely right.

WALTER
(to the Waitress)
Check please.

GEORGE
I'm sorry Mr. Chapman.

WALTER
Please, call me Walter... and don't worry there
was no real harm done.

GEORGE
Not about that.

WALTER
About what then?

GEORGE
Your obituary, I'm sorry I didn't take the time to
find out something about you.

The Waitress approaches with the check. Walter looks at the check and
hands her some money.

WAITRESS
I'll be right back with your change.

WALTER
No... no change.

Waitress smiles, nice tip.

WAITRESS
Thank you. Well gentlemen have a nice day.

...as she leaves.

GEORGE
You called it in. You called in your own obituary.
You wanted to see how you'll be remembered, to

know your own mortality. Everyone wonders how they'll be remembered once they're gone, but you took it a step further.

WALTER

That reporter mind of yours is working too hard.

...as he stands to leave. George follows suit.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I need to get going, but thank you, George...
Thanks for having lunch with me.

Walter walks out of the restaurant. George grabs his box and rushes after Walter.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

George stops him.

GEORGE

Mr. Chap...

(catches himself)

Walter... just tell me this... did you find what you were looking for?

WALTER

Perhaps.

...with that Walter strolls down the sidewalk. George watches Walter. A new purpose, a new life explodes in his eyes as WE...

- CLOSE UP ON GEORGE -

INT. A METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER - DAY

- PULL BACK TO FIND -

a fresh pot of coffee resting in his hand. George looks around the office familiarizing himself with his surroundings. He stops at Jerry who's busy at his desk, then confidently pours himself a cup of coffee, glides back across the room with a change in demeanor and new purpose. He slides into his seat, grabs the stack that lays before him. He takes the first

notice, scans it, picks up the phone and dials.

As the CAMERA DRIFTS WE SEE the next OBIT which READS "WALTER PHILLIP CHAPMAN DIED AT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL". THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO DRIFT UP AND AWAY AS IF IT IS TIME TO MOVE ON.

- THE END -