

BUTTERNUT VILLAGE

"Pilot"

written by

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TEASER

INT. BACK OF A CAB - DAY

ART MERGANTHAL, handsome at eighty years old, opens his wallet. There's a black-and-white photo of a young man and his beautiful bride inside. Art hands over cash.

CAB DRIVER

Thank you for not using Uber!

EXT. BUTTERNUT VILLAGE ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Art stands outside a looming building with his rolly carry-on suitcase: "Butternut Village Independent Living."

INT. BUTTERNUT VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Art pushes open the door with difficulty. A handwritten sign says "OUT OF ORDER until 9/9. (Crossed out) 9/17." MEGAN, the bubbly, idiotic receptionist, crosses it out and writes "9/30."

MEGAN

Sorry, sir, I'm going to have to ask
you to use the back entrance.

ART

But I'm already inside.

MEGAN

It's for your own safety. Thanks for
your patience and understanding. Have
a Butternut Day!

Megan ushers Art outside and closes the door on him.

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Art, now sweaty, rolls his suitcase up to the back door.
Tries the handle, but it's locked. There's a keycode panel.

ART

Oh, c'mon.

Gladys, the self-appointed Neighborhood Watch, exits in her
Sunday Best with a walker. Art tries to sneak past.

ART (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

GLADYS

Intruder!

ART

I just need to get to my room.

GLADYS

Security!

ART

Shh - shh!

Awkward jostling between Art's suitcase and Gladys' walker.
Gladys wins, slamming the door before Art can get in.

GLADYS

If any of my cows go missing, I'm
coming for you.

She leaves.

ART

Dammit!

Art bangs on the door.

ART (CONT'D)

Hello? Is anybody there? Hello?

BOOTS appears in the window of a first-floor apartment, in his mid-eighties but still sporting a military buzzcut.

BOOTS
(shouting through the glass)

Keep it down, soldier!

ART

Can you let me in?

BOOTS

Go to the front.

ART

It's closed.

BOOTS

YOU'RE closed!

ART

Huh?

BOOTS

Sorry, buddy. It's cocktail time.

Through the window, Boots' wife Marjorie throws back a martini and dances, half-dressed. Boots pulls the curtains closed.

END OF TEASER

ACT I

INT. BUTTERNUT VILLAGE BACK ENTRANCE

ART

Thanks for letting me in.

BOOTS

If you ever bang on the glass again, I
will wrestle you to the ground.

ART

Sorry. It's my first day.

BOOTS

(Buttoning his open shirt)
Why didn't you say so? I'm Boots.

ART

Art. Can you point me toward the desk?

BOOTS

Don't bother! Come have a drink with
Marjorie and me.

ART

It's ten in the morning.

BOOTS

Art, if there's one thing the military taught me, it's that you can die at any moment and old people can do whatever we want. Let loose. Have a little fun.

ART

Maybe another time.

BOOTS

Hey, come back later for coffee. Unless you only drink coffee in the morning? Like a follower?

ART

No, no, that sounds great.

Boots goes back into his apartment.

Art looks to his left down a long hallway. He looks to his right down an identical hallway. Back to the left - suddenly there's a gaggle of ladies in bathing suits and swim caps right up on him - The Aqua Ladies.

AQUA LADY #1

Can we help you?

ART

I'm looking for the front desk.

AQUA LADY #2

We'll show you!

AQUA LADY #3

I'm Betty.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Aqua Ladies orbit around Art and babble over each other. They pass Miss Georgine, sitting in her wheelchair.

AQUA LADY #1

What's your name?

AQUA LADY #2

Widower?

AQUA LADY #3

I'm in 317. The one with Betty Boop on the door. Because I'm Betty.

INT. SAME HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

AQUA LADY #1

And I said, "It's been four hours.

You're calling the doctor!"

AQUA LADY #2

And that's why they don't let Bob lifeguard anymore.

AQUA LADY #3

I call Bingo every other Wednesday.

They call me Bingo Betty. Because I'm -

It's too much. Art breaks away and ducks into a random door.

INT. PUZZLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small, stark room with a single flickering light bulb swinging from the ceiling. A stack of puzzle boxes leans in the corner. It's terrifying.

ADOLF DREYDEL, nineties, definitely a former Nazi, sits at a teetering table with a half-finished puzzle of Farrah Fawcett's iconic swimsuit poster.

ADOLF DREYDEL

Are you here for puzzles?

ART

No, but I'm in a bit of a puzzle
myself.

ADOLF

I do not understand this.

ART

Which way to the front desk?

Adolf raises his hand and points, ominously.

ART (CONT'D)

Thanks...

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Art drags his rolly suitcase yet again. He passes the lending library. A subtly graffitied sign says "BOOKS BOOKS BOOBS."

INT. LENDING LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

We leave Art for a moment and go inside the library. HAZEL, a sweet seventysomething library volunteer, re-shelves books. ALICE, sassy, eightysomething, leafs through papers.

HAZEL

We're going to need a new copy of 50

Shades soon.

ALICE

Again?

HAZEL

What can I say? They love it.

ALICE

Overrated. The Book of Ruth has better sex scenes than that piece of crap.

HAZEL

Alice!

ALICE

Uh oh, Hazel. Looks like we've got another delinquent.

HAZEL

Who is it this time?

ALICE

Harry Feingold.

HAZEL

Again?

ALICE

We ought to revoke his library card.

HAZEL

Yes, we ought to.

ALICE

You went last time. My turn to play Repo Man.

HAZEL

Oh, no no no! You stay here. I'll go.

ALICE

You sure?

HAZEL

Yes. It's no problem. I could use a
little walk.

ALICE

You need the room number?

HAZEL

No, I know - I mean, yes, what is it?

ALICE

227.

HAZEL

Got it. I'll be back soon.

ALICE

(Winking)

Take your time, Hazel.

INT. FRONT DESK - LATER

Art arrives at the front desk - finally. Megan, the ditzy
receptionist from earlier, is on the phone.

MEGAN

(Cupping hand over the phone)

Oh, thank goodness! You're here to
work on the door?

ART

Work on the - ? I'm moving in today.

All I want is my room key.
(Catching himself)

Please.

MEGAN

Oh, I'm so sorry about that. And
what's your name?

ART

Art. Art Merganthal.

MEGAN

(Cradling the phone between
her chin and shoulder, she
types)

Art...

ART

Merganthal.

MEGAN

Mer-gan-thal.
(Pause)

Nope. I don't see you in here.

ART

That's crazy. I've got my paperwork
right here.

MEGAN

Nope, I'm sorry. Is there anything
else I can do for you?
(Pause)

Would you like a brochure?

Art pulls out a piece of paper.

ART

Here it is. Room 202. Move in date:
today. Right there.

MEGAN

Oh! Well, welcome to Butternut
Village, Mr...

ART

Merganthal.

MEGAN

Mr. Merganthal!

ART

Is there someone else I can speak to?

Megan awkwardly offers him the phone, which she still hasn't hung up.

ART (CONT'D)

Is this the manager?

MEGAN

(Speaking into the phone)

I'm going to have to call you back,

Mom.

Megan hangs up and redials. MR. ZIFFER enters the front door.

ART

Can we use that door or not?

MEGAN

Technically, no, but Mr. Ziffer's got

a doctor's note.

(Speaking into the phone)

Hi, Mrs. Croins? It's Megan. Yes, I

still work here! I've got a new

resident at the desk.

(Pause. She looks him up and down)

Eh, seven, seven and a half? Okay,

will do!

She hangs up.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Good news! I'm going to hop down to maintenance and grab you a key.

ART

Thank you.

MEGAN

I feel awful about this whole mess.
Why don't you take a complimentary Butterbucks and get yourself a little snack at our cafe while you wait?

She hands him a paper voucher - "Butterbucks."

ART

And the cafe is...

MEGAN

Oh, it's totally safe now. Have fun!

INT. CAFE

Art walks into the cafe, a snack paradise. Shelves stacked with delicious treats.

Art picks up a granola bar.

ART

Is this the right price?

ANDREW, a high school kid, takes off his headphones.

ANDREW

What?

ART

Is this the right price?

ANDREW

Oh. Yeah.

ART

It's so cheap.

ANDREW

Yeah.

ART

It's all so cheap. How?

ANDREW

Look, man. There's certain things about Butternut Village you just don't question.

ART

Oh. Ok.

ANDREW

You know I can take this Kit Kat to school and flip it for ten times the price? Go crazy, man. Just go crazy.

Cue the hardcore hip-hop music.

Montage: Art shops, tossing item after item into a basket. He picks up two different Activia yogurts, can't decide between them, shrugs and takes both. Andrew throws a mini box of Fiber One cereal into the basket - 3 points! They high-five.

Art lands at the cash register and snaps the Butterbucks at Andrew. Andrew holds it up to the light.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

We've been having a few problems.

Counterfeiters.

There's a crudely drawn Butterbucks taped to the front of the cash register with a note: "HOMEMADE BUTTERBUCKS ARE NOT LEGAL CURRENCY."

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You smell that?

ART

What?

The fire alarm sounds.

ANDREW

That.

ART

(a cinematic scream, shaking
his fists at the gods)

Noooo!

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Andrew puts the basket of treats behind the counter.

ANDREW

The man giveth and the man taketh
away, man.

ART

Wait a minute.

ANDREW

(Re: fire alarm)

Sometimes I think they do this just to
screw with me.

Andrew pushes Art out of the cafe.

ART

No! Don't make me leave!

INT. HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Hazel the librarian stands outside door 227 as the fire alarm
blares. She isn't sure what to do. Suddenly, the door opens
and out comes Harry, a charming gent, putting on his jacket.

HARRY

(Surprised)

Oh!

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

(Then happy)

And what can I do for you?

HAZEL

Harry.

HARRY

That's me.

HAZEL

I - I'm here for your library book.

HARRY

My library book?

HAZEL

The Hunger Games?

HARRY

Oh, of course!

He ducks back inside.

HAZEL

Wait! It can wait.

HARRY

Good. By the time I find it, we'll be

burnt to a crisp. Shall we?

They walk down the hall looking pleased. All around, other residents leave their rooms in various states of annoyance, mobility and undress.

HARRY (CONT'D)

You've knocked on my door before,

haven't you?

HAZEL

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

The Fault in Our Stars. Twilight.

HARRY

What can I say? They appeal to my
youthful sensibilities.

HAZEL

I see.

HARRY

You know my name, but I'm afraid I
don't know yours.

HAZEL

Hazel.

HARRY

For your eyes, I suppose?

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Harry, Hazel and a crowd of residents crowd outside the
building. Smoke trails from the front door. Various moments.

MEGAN

Everyone, please wait here. Do not go
back inside. And don't leave the
grounds until I check your name off
the list. The list is inside so this
might take a minute.

The Aqua Ladies, dripping wet in their bathing suits, huddle
together for warmth.

AQUA LADY #1

I don't see why we had to leave.

AQUA LADY #2

It's not like we're gonna burn up in
the goddamn pool.

AQUA LADY #3

They can't do this! I'm Betty!

Boots approaches Art.

BOOTS

Hey, Art!

ART

Hi there, uh, Boots?

BOOTS

No time like the present.

ART

For what?

BOOTS

That cup of coffee.

ART

We can't go back in the building.

BOOTS

Boy, you love following orders, don't
you? C'mon, let's go.

ART

But...

BOOTS

Shh. Just go with it.

Harry takes off his coat and offers it to Hazel.

HARRY

You must be freezing.

HAZEL

Oh, thank you.

HARRY

So, you enjoy working in the library?

HAZEL

We're starting a book club. Next week.

HARRY

That so?

HAZEL

You should... I mean, if you enjoy
reading. You might be interested.

HARRY

I'll have to look into that.

HAZEL

(Embarrassed. She's been too
forward)

I have to go... see if Alice needs
anything.

Hazel hurries off in Harry's coat. He smiles.

FIREMAN

(Going through front door)

Ma'am, we need to enter the building.

MEGAN

(Shouting after them)

But it's for your own safety!

Firefighters breeze past her. She pulls a small envelope out
of her pocket.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Art? Art... Morgantraub? I have your
key. Has anyone seen Art Mordordog?

EXT. GRASSY KNOLL - CONTINUOUS

A typical grassy berm outside a suburban strip mall. The mood shifts into slo-mo action movie sequence. Silhouetted figures appear over the hill, back-lit and dramatic. Smoke rises behind them.

The figures swagger into view: Boots, his wife Marjorie with her walker, Art pulling his suitcase.

INT. STARBUCKS - CONTINUOUS

A Starbucks barista looks past the counter through the window, sees the Butternut Village residents approaching, with more behind them.

BARISTA #1

Code gray! We've got a code gray.

BARISTA #2

This is not a drill, people!

INT. STARBUCKS - MOMENTS LATER

The coffee shop is packed with seniors. Boots barks drink orders at the baristas.

BOOTS

So that's four Venti Pumpkin Spice
Lattes with double whipped cream, one
Grande Iced Caramel Latte extra
skinny, two Grande Java Chip
Frappucinos, and one tall coffee with
milk and sugar.

BARISTA #1

I'm sorry, sir, you have to add your
own milk and sugar, right over there.

BOOTS

No, YOU add your own milk and sugar!

BARISTA #1
(Cowering)

Okay, okay.

BOOTS

And I'll have the Teavana Oprah Chai
Latte.

Barista gives him a look.

BOOTS (CONT'D)

It's delicious.

BARISTA #1

That'll be \$43.75.

Everyone pulls out a checkbook.

INT. STARBUCKS - MOMENTS LATER

The residents enjoy their beverages, smoke outside the window.

BOOTS

Can I get a refill over here?

ART

I don't think they do refills.

BOOTS
(Trying to get a barista's
attention)

Excuse me? Fill 'er up.

MARJORIE
(Squeezing his leg)

Honey. Keep it down.

BOOTS
(Getting louder)

If you squeeze my leg, I'm only gonna
get louder.

MARJORIE
You married, Art?

Before he can answer...

BOOTS
Refill. Refill. Refill.

MARJORIE
Honey!

Others join in, banging on the tables.

CROWD
Refill! Refill! Refill!

Barista #2 picks up the phone.

BARISTA #2
Donna? We've got a situation here...

END OF ACT II

ACT III

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

MEGAN

It is now safe to re-enter the
building. Wait, I mean, the fire has
been taken care of, but you still
can't use the door. Please walk around
back. Don't go in here!

Grumbling. Some residents turn around, others ignore Megan.
Harry looks for Hazel but doesn't see her.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Has anyone seen Art? Art...
(She checks the name on the
envelope)

Murderball?

ART

Yes! That's me.

MEGAN

Your key.

ART

Thank God. Thank you.
(Pause)

What happened with the fire?

MEGAN

Mrs. Bianchi had an illegal tanning bed with a frayed cord. And our carpeting is quite flammable.

ART

Good to know.

MEGAN

Is there anything else I can do to make you feel at home here?

ART

Can you point me in the direction of room 202?

MEGAN

I'd love to, but I'm already a half hour late for my lunch break, and if I don't take it now, I'll throw everyone else off the schedule, and it's not gonna be pretty!

ART

Never mind.

MEGAN

Welcome home, sweetie!

INT. ART'S DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Art tries his key. It doesn't work. Busybody Gladys reappears out of nowhere.

GLADYS

Intruder!!

ART

This is my apartment.

GLADYS

I knew you were up to no good.

ART

There's something wrong with the lock,
I think.

GLADYS

Maybe you'd like to borrow my - crow
bar??

ART

Just leave me alone, okay?

GLADYS

That's it. I'm calling Megan.

Gladys opens her door, decorated floor to ceiling with cow
crafts, and closes it behind her. Art pushes open her door.

ART

She's on lunch!!

Door slam.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Art is getting the hell out of here. Partway down the hall,
his suitcase bursts open, photographs flying everywhere.

ART

Dammit!

He picks them up. Miss Georgine sits in her wheelchair
nearby.

MISS GEORGINE

Need a hand?

ART

I've got it.

MISS GEORGINE
(Picking up a photo)

What beautiful memories.

ART

You like to think that at a certain
point, it gets easier. Things settle
down. No more changes.

MISS GEORGINE

You know that's not true.

ART

Wishful thinking.

MISS GEORGINE

Who knows? Tomorrow I may stand up and
walk out of here.

She laughs. He joins her.

MISS GEORGINE (CONT'D)

No. Probably not.

ART

You never know.

MISS GEORGINE
(Looking at a photo)

Who's that handsome devil? And the
beautiful girl?

ART

I had everything else moved here ahead of time. I just didn't trust them with the pictures.

MISS GEORGINE

I was living with my daughter and her family for the last ten years. When they told me it was time to move out, I told them they could go to hell. But my first night here, you know what happened? I met Bill. Those nights were the most magical of my life. I'd never go back to my daughter's. Not for all the cheese in China.

ART

Is that a saying?

MISS GEORGINE

Should be.

ART

You found happiness. That's great.

MISS GEORGINE

Oh, hell no. He was sneaking around with that slut Carmen Bianchi and I kicked his ass to the curb.

ART

Good for you.

INT. FRONT DOOR

As Art approaches the front door, he stops. Looks. Spots a switch at the top of the door in the OFF position. He turns it ON. The door slides open. It's fixed. Duh.

Art walks out.

EXT. BUTTERNUT VILLAGE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Art leaves the building, "BUTTERNUT VILLAGE - INDEPENDENT LIVING" behind him.

Drags the suitcase across the parking lot to a neighboring building: "SUNSET GARDENS: ASSISTED LIVING."

The door opens easily and he walks in.

INT. SUNSET GARDENS FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

Ryan, a chirpy receptionist, stands at attention.

RYAN

Art, welcome back.

ART

Hi, Ryan.

RYAN

I think she's sleeping. I know she wanted to hear about your move.

ART

Thanks.

INT. SUNSET GARDENS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Elevator door opens. Art walks down the hallway.

INT. CELIA'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Art hesitates outside Celia's door, then opens it.

INT. CELIA'S ROOM - LATER

Celia, Art's wife, asleep in her bed. Art pins old photographs to the opposite wall. It's almost entirely filled with memories of birthday parties, weddings, vacations, kids.

CELIA
(waking up)

Artie!

ART
Hi, baby. How you feeling?

CELIA
The same. How was your day?

ART
(Kissing her on the forehead)
Perfect.

INT. BUTTERNUT VILLAGE BACK ENTRANCE - LATER

Megan walks in and out the front door, miraculously fixed. She tears down the "OUT OF ORDER" sign, picks up the phone.

MEGAN
Mrs. Croins? I did it. I fixed the
door!

INT. HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Harry finds the Book Club flyer on the activities bulletin board, folds it, slips it in his pocket.

Another flyer is visible: "Tanning Special! 10 min for \$10. See Carmen Bianchi in 145."

INT. HAZEL'S ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Hazel eats an apple and reads Twilight. Harry's coat lays across the foot of the bed.

INT. CAFE - SIMULTANEOUS

The cafe is empty and dark when Boots sneaks in with a label maker. He slaps cheap price stickers on all the snacks.

INT. CELIA'S ROOM - LATER

Art sleeps, leaning over in an armchair next to Celia's bed. The wall of photos is complete.

END OF ACT III

TAGINT. PUZZLE ROOM

There are two pieces left in the Farrah Fawcett puzzle. Adolf Dreydel places one of the pieces with relish.

Andrew, the high school staffer, comes in. They nod at each other. Adolf takes a puzzle box from the stack in the corner, opens it, hands a pill bottle to Andrew. Andrew hands him cash and leaves.

Gladys enters. Adolf reaches into another puzzle box, pulls out a country-kitsch sign that says WELCOME painted with cow spots. She nods, hands him cash and exits.

Adolf places the final puzzle piece. A deep sigh of satisfaction. He counts his cash, pockets it, and pulls the chain to turn off the light.

THE END