

# The Watermelon Field

## Synopsis

JOE WALKER, an 80-something, former chain smoking, abusive alcoholic is unwillingly checked into Happy Smiles Senior Care facility near Bakersfield, California by his daughter HOPE and her gold digging fiancé LAMAR. The facility, located beside a vast melon growing area, is a rundown dump the site of which conjures up the smell of Lysol and urine. The facility's director, DOCTOR BODERE, is a 40-something, southern non-gentleman who is compensating his income by skimming money off the top of the operation. His welcoming words to Joe; "The sooner you accept your situation the better."

Once in the care facility Joe meets JERRY, an 80-something, Jewish retired CPA. Later in the activities room Joe is introduced to Jerry's geriatric sidekicks: DUKE a free wheeling, former road manager for a sixties rock group; SARAH, a high spirited English women; NATE, an African-American, Shakespeare touting, retired actor with no short term memory; and BOBBY, a paraplegic, ex-minor league baseball player.

Duke tells Joe that Joe's situation is hopeless and gives him the low down on Bodere and his cronies who are bullying the residents. Joe does not believe Duke and clings onto the belief that his daughter will come back and take him home. Later, Bodere finds out about Duke's inflammatory remarks to Joe. After an altercation Bodere makes Duke pull up his garden out back of the facility. Duke, seeking retribution ambushes Bodere with what he calls, The El Paso Chili Wakeup Call.

After Duke's painful revenge Bodere gets his own by putting Duke in "isolation therapy". Meanwhile Joe has a set back when his daughter Hope comes to visit. She almost concedes to Joe's pleading to take him home until she finds cigarettes and booze hidden in his room. At the same time Jerry has just been informed that his favorite grandson is going away for the summer and unless he acts fast, Jerry will not see him for months.

Jerry steals the facility van in order to see his grandson and make good on a promise to his brain dead wife. At Joe's home Lamar has convinced Hope to move in and take

possession of the house, Joe's belongings and Joe's savings. The orderlies finally capture Jerry but not before he visits his grandson and is finally successful at disconnecting his wife from the ventilator. Back at the facility Jerry suffers a massive heart attack and dies at the hands of Bodere's goons.

Duke is returned to the general population and learns of his friend Jerry's death. Distraught he metaphorically compares his life with that of the watermelons in the fields around them. He wants to be a good melon and go to market not a cracked one turned under in the fields for fertilizer. It is then, along with Sarah, Bobby and Nate, that they decide to hatch a bold plan to escape to property that Duke secretly owns in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

Joe, still reluctant to get involved with anything that might jeopardize his chances of going home, refuses involvement in Duke's plan. Later, however, Joe gets a letter that he believes is from his daughter condemning him and his past actions. Unknown to Joe the letter was actually written by Lamar who seeks to slam shut the final door between Joe and Hope. Feeling that his last chance has

evaporated Joe joins Duke and the others and they plan the great escape.

During a movie matinee in town they use fake IDs and disguises to gain access to their moneys that have been taken over by their families. Duke has to give Nate a tape recorder to keep his on-and-off-again memory from jeopardizing their escape. With all the final pieces in place they set the wheels in motion in the predawn hours. They escape with the help of migrant workers on board a watermelon truck from the nearby fields.

Meanwhile back at Joe's house Hope finds a letter from her father that exposes Lamar's deception. Hope drives Lamar permanently from the house with a can of deodorizer to his forehead and goes to bring Joe home. Reaching the farmer's market in Los Angeles, Duke and the others narrowly avoid being taken back by Bodere and his orderlies. After creating a produce avalanche at the market they make it to the bus station where they head south to Mexico.

On the bus just miles from the border, they begin to celebrate their newly won freedom prematurely. Behind them

coming up fast are police cars, Bodere's car with Hope and the van carrying the orderlies. In a desperate act Duke takes control of the bus, throws Bobby's wheel chair out the back and jettisons the toilet holding tank creating a stinky, traffic pile up. Finally reaching the border the bus comes to a screeching halt. Duke, Sarah, Bobby and Joe limp, hobble and walker their way across into Mexico with Bodere and his men in hot pursuit.

Bodere and Duke tussle as the Mexican border police draw their pistols. Duke plants a bag of medicinal marijuana in Bodere's pocket which is found by the Mexican police.

Bodere and his men cry like babies as they are arrested for drug smuggling and hauled off to a Mexican jail. Joe is reunited with Hope and his grandchildren finally getting to return home.

Some time later in a market in Cabo San Lucas, Nate is shopping, walking from stall to stall checking the fruits and vegetables. Forgetting why he is there he finally flips on the tape recorder and hears Duke barking his shopping requests along with Sarah and Bobby. Nate places the tape recorder, with the voices of the others still rambling on,

down among a pile of perfect, green, ripe watermelons.

Duke's final recorded words, "Nate, you're probably

wondering what you're doing in Cabo. Well my friend, we

made it."