

THE BENCH

by

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OPEN ON BLACK:

The SOUND of COOING.

FADE TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

A PIGEON sits perched on top of a WOODEN PARK BENCH.

It flaps off as an OLD MAN in his 80s shuffles up. He dusts the bench off with his HANDKERCHIEF and takes a seat at the near end, placing his BAG on the ground beside him.

He checks his WATCH, then looks across the bench into the distance expectantly. Whoever he's waiting for hasn't come yet, so he unzips his bag, reaches in, and pulls out a JAM SANDWICH wrapped in plastic. He starts to eat.

A YOUNG COUPLE comes along. They pass in front of him, then stop at the far end of the bench. Silently, they go through the motions of considering sitting down.

Without looking up, the old man nonchalantly lifts his bag from the ground and puts it on the other end of the bench. The young couple decides to move on.

The old man waits until they're gone, then smiles to himself with satisfaction. He puts his bag back on the ground, then starts rummaging through it again.

While he's distracted with that, an OLD WOMAN, also in her 80s, shuffles up to the bench. She looks for a moment over at where the old man is sitting, then sits at the other end.

The old man hasn't noticed her arrival, and comes up from rummaging in his bag with a SILVER FLASK. He grins at it impishly.

Then he sees her, and for a moment he freezes. He quickly puts the flask away.

The old woman ignores him. She opens her HANDBAG and pulls out a HANDKERCHIEF, which she spreads on her lap. Then she pulls out a JAM SANDWICH wrapped in plastic.

The old man sees it and laughs to himself silently. He raises his own identical sandwich in a mock toast, then takes a bite in secret camaraderie.

They sit there eating in silence, with the old man sneaking glances at the old woman.

Once the old woman has finished half her sandwich, she folds up the rest and puts it back in her handbag. The old man puts away what's left of his sandwich too.

While he's turned to do that, the old woman SIGHS. Her shoulders slump, and she starts to CRY SOFTLY.

When the old man sees this, his expression darkens. He reaches out tentatively to touch her shoulder. And right as he does-

-the old woman turns in his direction. She doesn't look directly at him. Instead, she looks down at where he's sitting.

The old man stoops to look into her eyes. Then he slowly leans in-

-and puts his mouth very close to her ear.

He whispers something we can't hear. The old woman's eyes close tight, and she smiles.

A gentle breeze blows through, catching her hair-

-and we see that she's alone.

She kisses the tips of her fingers and touches them to the aging BRASS PLAQUE on the back of the bench.

It reads:

*In memory of my father,
Who could soothe an aching heart
With a jam sandwich.*

Then she gets up and goes.

The camera CRANES UP to follow her as she shuffles away along the path-

-past bench after bench in the vast park.

FADE OUT:

THE END