

(Name of Project)

(Genre)

by
(Name of Writer)

Name
Address
Phone Number

Agency Information

CHARACTER NAME

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

AGE

GENDER

SETTING: MR. SILLITOE's room at THE EVERGREEN, a retirement community on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State.

TIME: Thursday Morning, December 7, 2023

SCENE:

Mr. SILLITOE is in a chair by his window, looking out at the rain. He is dressed in light brown khaki pants, a dark brown turtleneck sweater, and he has blanket draped over his lap. A half-empty mug sits on a nearby table, beside an old Mr. Coffee coffeemaker. His hands rest above the blanket and belie his age, for they are neither gnarled nor particularly spotted. His feet emerge below the blanket, one encased in a boot, the other in a slipper.

MR. SILLITOE hears a knock on his outer door, takes a sip of coffee, and calls.

MR. SILLITOE

Come in!

MS GREENBERG opens the door and smiles. She is pretty, tall and slender, and with dark, shoulder-length, hair. This is her third visit to MR. SILLITOE, and she has knocked three times this morning. RALPH THE WARD ATTENDANT stands behind her wearing white pants, white sneakers, and a shortsleeved, collared, white shirt. An official 'Chaperone' lanyard hangs around his neck. He is clean-shaven and with short brown hair.

MS GREENBERG

(stepping into the room)

Finally! You were expecting me, weren't you? I was about to give up.

MR. SILLITOE

It's raining again this morning, improving the power of my concentration, but lessening my ability to hear. I can see four different conifers from here; several Douglas firs and cedars and pines, and one hemlock. Can you tell the difference between them? I'm guessing you can't, so if there's time I'll teach you. My favorite these days is the hemlock, though I used to be partial to Douglas firs, with the wonderful straightness of their trunks. Did you know that hemlock needles are flat and attach themselves directly to the branches, as if each represents an individual human life?

MS GREENBERG

I did not know that, and it's a lovely way to put it. Thanks for pointing it out and thanks for finally letting us in, too. It's not only raining, but it's cold, even in the hallway.

She takes off her raincoat and scarf, throws them on a nearby chair, then walks over to MR. SILLITOE and reaches down to shake his hand. MR. SILLITOE tries to put some power into his handshake so she won't think of him as feeble. RALPH THE WARD ATTENDANT is still by the door, standing with his arms folded, a bit like Mr. Clean. MR. SILLITOE draws his hand back. Using it to gesture at the Mr. Coffee.

MR. SILLITOE

Have a cup if you want one. You are here to interview me for a Sunday human interest story for the News Tribune, do I have that right? Or is this another scheme to get me over in Cedar, amongst the walking dead?

Each of the buildings at The Evergreen is named after a tree. Cedar is the Alzheimer's unit. Mr. SILLITOE currently lives in Pine.

MS GREENBERG

I would like to write a story, yes. And no thanks about the coffee. I've had coffee up to here.

She puts the side of a hand up against her forehead, then looks back at RALPH.

MR. SILLITOE

Well, whatever the reason, I'm glad you're here. I need you to help me out of this boot. Or wait, I mean into the boot. I haven't been to breakfast yet.

MS GREENBERG removes a small tape recorder from her bag, shows it to MR. SILLITOE, and set it on the coffee table beside the Mr. Coffee. She takes off her suit jacket, placing it neatly on the back of her chair. Her white blouse is crisply ironed and tucked severely into her skirt.

MS GREENBERG

I can say for sure that you just came from breakfast, since I was over there and saw you. So let's get the boot off, shall we?

She kneels in front of him, picks up his still-booted left foot and rests it on her skirt, even though the boot's not clean. She spends a moment untying and unlacing it, then takes it off of him without much difficulty. She pulls up both of his socks with a sort of finality, and then slips up into her chair.

I don't know how you got your other boot off, since you didn't untie it, either.

MR. SILLITOE

(Though she hasn't put his foot in his slipper, he is moved by her kindness.)

Listen here, I want to lay down some ground rules before you turn that tape recorder on. I don't mean about what you ask, but regarding how you present me. Is that okay with you?

MS GREENBERG

(Crossing her legs and facing him, utterly serious now.)

I guess that depends on what your ground rules are.

MR. SILLITOE

I only have two: You mustn't use the phrase '102 years young,' in whatever you write, and you mustn't veer toward the cute. Saying that someone is 102 years young already veers that way, I'm sure you understand. But is that a deal?

MS GREENBERG

Yessir. I haven't thought about it before, but veering toward the cute is probably ageist.

MR. SILLITOE

It's as ageist as yelling at folks who aren't deaf. But what if I tell a cute story? What will you do then? Will you suck the cuteness out of it or leave it in?

MS GREENBERG

I'll relate your story faithfully, let the chips fall where they may.

MR. SILLITOE

In that case I have one more rule. If I tell a cute story I want you to suck half of the cuteness out of it, somewhat like you might use a half a cup of sugar in a recipe that calls for a whole one. That way, what remains will have a chance of passing muster while still being true to my personality. Are those three rules, okay young woman? Do you mind me calling you 'young woman', since I seem to have forgotten your name?

MS GREENBERG

It's a poor descriptor of me since I'm forty. But I still get carded occasionally when I order a drink, so I don't mind.

MR. SILLITOE

You look younger than you are! I'm glad you told me. Lately I have lost my ability to tell anyone's age who isn't an absolute child.

MS GREENBERG

(Gesturing toward the tape recorder, then turning it on.)

I read an article about you when you turned 100 that said you fought in World War II. Shall we begin with that? If I'm calculating things correctly you were nineteen years old when you enlisted.

MR. SILLITOE

Nineteen, yes. I was born on December 7. That's another reason you are here, is it not, because it is not only the starting date of that war, but also my birthday?

MS GREENBERG

So you were celebrating your birthday when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?

RALPH THE WARD ATTENDANT,
uncrosses his arms. Only MR.
SILLITOE can see him when he
convincingly, and out of the
blue, pantomimes a plane
dropping bombs.

MR. SILLITOE

(Amused, but keeping a
straight face.)

I wasn't celebrating anything. It was on a Sunday morning and I was asleep. Grandpa had the radio on in the kitchen and came into my bedroom to wake me.

MS GREENBERG

You were living with your grandfather? How old was he at the time?

MR. SILLITOE

(impatiently)

No, I wasn't living with him, he was living with us! When he died he was one year older than I am now. How old was he at the time? You figure it out.

MS GREENBERG

(accustomed to his mood
swings, still smiling)

One year older than you are now? What did he do, fight in the Civil War?

MR. SILLITOE

(more calmly)

He did, indeed. He was born in 1844 and my father was born in 1888. Daddy fought in World War I, and my son fought in Vietnam.

MS GREENBERG

So Sillitoe men fought in The Civil War, World War I, World War Two, and Vietnam?

RALPH does a little chugging motion with his arms, like he is a train traveling through all of those wars. He is convincing in his movements this time, too. But he has his arms crossed again when MS GREENBERG turns around.

MR. SILLITOE

And I'm the only one alive to tell about it. Grandpa died from old age and my son took his life. Daddy and Grandpa and I were all named Carson Sillitoe.

MS GREENBERG

(speaking sadly, because of
his son)

So you are Carson Sillitoe III? That's a regal name.

MR. SILLITOE

A stranger might think so. A stranger might also think we were religious because Daddy got religion when Jesus came to cover his shivering body in one of those World War I trenches. But Grandpa and me were atheists. Daddy only lived to be sixty-four, by the way. He died after having his wisdom teeth extracted back in 1952.

MS GREENBERG

He was sixty-four when he had his wisdom teeth extracted? Why so late? That's something people usually do earlier in their lives.

MR. SILLITOE

Why so late? Because they were causing him pain. Mother used to say he died because his brains drained out of the two holes in the top of his mouth and into the two at the bottom, and you can't keep living with your brains in your jaw.

When RALPH transforms into a man with an impacted jaw, MR. SILLITOE outright laughs.