

FOUR OLD LADIES AND THEIR GUNS

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FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

It's mid afternoon, the alley is just wide enough for a truck to drive through and have dumpsters and trash cans along the side. The surrounding buildings are tall and not a lot of light gets to the ground.

Four short men wearing rubber masks and dark clothes enter and briskly walk to a location behind a dumpster where they can't be seen from the street. They quickly remove their rubber masks and wigs to reveal four ladies in their 70's: Mary, white; Lupe, Hispanic; Shari, black and Chen, Asian.

After grabbing brightly colored backpacks from under the detritus next to the dumpster, they begin to remove their outer clothes, revealing brightly colored outfits suitable for tourists.

They stuff the masks and dark clothes into the backpacks.

Mary rapidly sorts the money into four stacks, then puts one of the stacks into her backpack.

The others grab a stack and stick it in their backpacks.

They stand up, shoulder their backpacks, nod at each other seriously, then head back the way they came.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A quiet side street, though SIRENS can be heard.

The ladies walk out the alley and stop dead.

Five COPS race toward them with guns out.

Chen and Shari instinctively put their hands up.

EXT. DROPOFF AREA - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Some time ago...

Covered entrance area for a retirement home. A family sedan parked, but idling. In it are two GRANDKIDS in the back seat. In the passenger seat is daughter-in-law (DIL). They're observing the action.

Hovering in the background is ATTENDANT1.

SON takes some luggage out of the trunk and places it next to the feet of Mary, who's observing with a frustrated expression.

Son gives Mary a brief hug, which is not returned.

SON
Good luck.

Son hops into the car.

As Son puts car in gear,

DIL
Hope you have a great time.

Grandkids wave from the back seat.

Mary's eyes follow the car as it leaves, continuing with a frustrated expression even after the car goes out of sight.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - DAY

A pleasant, if plain, efficiency apartment. Mary, with a neutral expression, is standing next to the open door while Attendant1 sets her bags down next to her. As Attendant1 leaves,

ATTENDANT1
If you're up for some socialization,
most people gather in the common
room. Just follow the noise.

Mary absently nods as Attendant1 closes the door. As she looks around, she sighs, shoulders slumping somewhat.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

A room large enough to comfortably hold 30-40 people at tables, couches, chairs, etc. There's a small stage with some musical instruments set up. The average age of most of the people is in the 70's.

Occasional much younger ATTENDANTS move in and around the others. As promised, the RACKET of people talking over each other just borders on painful.

Mary stands in the entrance, face neutral, surveying the area.

She's noticed by a couple of the people sitting around and there's a CHORUS OF GREETINGS.

At a card table nearby sit Shari, Lupe and Chen. It's clear the ladies are playing for money. They look up to see Mary. Together,

SHARI
Hey, we need a fourth!-

LUPE
Join the Rainbow Table!-

CHEN
Wanna play cards?-

Mary shrugs, walks over and sits on the empty chair to the left of Lupe.

Lupe gathers the cards, starts to shuffle.

LUPE
I'm Lupe,
(pointing)
Chen and Shari. Poker?

Mary nods her head while she alertly examines the state of the table.

There are plenty of chips, with folding money tucked around.

Mary looks up,

MARY
I'm Mary. What's the buy in?

With a slightly predatory smile,

CHEN
We don't want to bankrupt anyone, so
usually start with twenty dollars.

Mary's mouth quirks with a slight smile as she reaches into her pocket to pull out some folded cash that clearly totals more than twenty dollars.

Shari and Lupe get slight predatory smiles as they see Mary's wad of cash.

Mary peels off twenty dollars in small bills, then puts the rest back in her pocket.

As Mary places the money on the table,

LUPE
You have a favorite?

Mary shakes her head. Smiling,

MARY
I like learning new games.

The other ladies all smile in a slightly predatory way.

Shari starts counting out some chips.

LUPE
How about we start with five card
draw?

Lupe sets the shuffled deck to her right, in front of Shari.

Shari cuts the deck, carefully placing the bottom on top and squaring the corners.

MARY

Sure.

Lupe deals the cards.

Mary has her cards in her hand, but is looking at the other players as they look at their cards.

The other ladies have fairly good poker faces. They're also careful about exposing their cards, though not in an obvious way.

After a round of betting,

MARY

One.

Lupe deals one card and slides it over as Mary slides one to the middle of the table.

Mary adds the new cards to her hand, but doesn't look at it.

CHEN

Two.

Lupe repeats with Chen.

Mary watches Chen's face closely.

Chen looks at her cards.

SHARI

Hmm. I think I'll take three.

Lupe repeats with Shari.

Mary studies Shari's face.

LUPE

Dealer takes two.

She deals two next to her cards, then pushes two from her hand to the middle.

Mary studies Lupe's face.

Mary looks at her own cards.

LUPE

To you, Mary.

MARY

Check.

LUPE

Chen?

Chen nods as she studies her cards.

Mary is studying Chen.

Chen pushes a stack of chips out.

LUPE

Whoa, got her some cards!

Shari throws her cards in.

LUPE

(throwing cards in)

I'm with you, sister.

Mary studies Chen's face.

Chen does her best to be inscrutable.

Mary pushes a matching stack of chips in,

MARY

Call.

Chen makes a face and throws her cards face down.

Mary pushes her cards face down into the pile of discards in the center of the table.

SHARI

Looks like we got us another card sharp.

CHEN

Or a blackleg?

Mary smiles, collects the cards and begins to rapidly shuffle.

MARY

No blackleg. I always wanted to be a magician, so practiced a lot.

Mary shows the ace of spades, places it on the top of the deck, apparently shuffles, then shows the card's still on the top.

The other ladies look with admiration.

CHEN

Yeah, right.

Mary shows the ace of spades is still on the top, then proceeds to deal the card under the top card, flipping each over to show it's not the ace of spades.

LUPE

Nice!

MARY

So you know, I don't cheat. It's boring.

She holds her empty hands up to the other ladies, then causes cards to appear in her hands one by one.

MARY

But you should always use the Scarne Cut with me.

Mary demonstrates the Scarne Cut.

CHEN

You a rounder?

Mary shakes her head,

MARY

I like to play, obviously, but never needed money. My man made plenty.

SHARI

Edith was a rounder.

LUPE

Yeah, that's why we never tap the deck.

CHEN

Yeah, and randomize our seats each day.

When Mary looks the question at Chen.

Chen takes the cards, shuffles them, then spreads them out in an arc.

CHEN

Everyone picks a card and we turn them over at the same time.

Everyone does so, then all flip the cards over at once. Pointing at the high card,

CHEN

High card sits north.

She points at the chair that's north.

CHEN
Low card south, second highest east
and last west.

Mary nods,

MARY
That's a good system - as long as
you trust whoever shuffles.

SHARI
Sometimes we'll do a Corgi.

LUPE
(smiling)
Yeah, particularly if Edith was
going to deal.

Chen gestures at ATTENDANT2.

Attendant2 comes over to the table,

ATTENDANT2
What can I get for you ladies?

CHEN
Tea and cookies.

Chen looks around at the other ladies.

They either shrug or nod.

Chen nods at Attendant2.

Attendant2 leaves.

Mary gestures toward Attendant2,

MARY
What can we get?

CHEN
The usual, water, soda, tea, but
anything with alcohol will go on
your tab.

SHARI
Yeah, and they charge typical bar
rates!

LUPE
Fortunately, they don't have any
problems with a moderate amount in
your rooms.

SHARI

Yeah, just don't get falling down,
else they'll confiscate it.

Mary shuffles, out toward the center of the table, then gestures for Lupe to cut.

Lupe does the Scarne Cut.

Mary starts to deal,

MARY

How about baseball, threes and
nines?

The other ladies nod enthusiastically.

As she deals,

MARY

So what are you all in for?

SHARI

(smiling)
Aiding and abetting.

LUPE

(looking at her hole card)
Hand in the till.

CHEN

(drawn out)
Murder!

MARY

Oooh, nice!

SHARI

And you?

Mary frowns.

Attendant2 returns with a tray holding a teapot, four tea cups and a plate of different cookies.

The ladies make room on the table and Attendant2 places the material and leaves.

MARY

Unceremoniously discarded. I barely
got a hug from my own son.

The other ladies nod in sympathy.

SHARI
 (gesturing)
 We're volunteers, but there're a
 number of 'inmates' like you.

MARY
 They could easily afford to buy me
 my own place, or, for Christ's sake,
 build me a tiny house on their
 property. Or even an in-law suite;
 the house is large enough.

LUPE
 Hell, for what it costs to live
 here, they probably could've done
 all three.

Mary stares at Lupe,

MARY
 Really? It's that expensive?

SHARI
 Well, alcohol's not cheap, and steak
 night is sirloin rather than filet -
 unless you want to pay extra - but
 overall, they pretty much take care
 of anything reasonable.

CHEN
 Yeah. I wouldn't be here if they
 cheaped out.

MARY
 Hmm.

There's some betting.

Mary deals some more.

MONTAGE

- In the beginning, as the play goes around the table,
 there isn't a clear winner.
- Mary watches each player's face closely when they first
 look at each of their cards.
- The sun goes down and lights are turned on to brighten
 the room.
- The people around the table are boisterous and having a
 good time.
- Later, while the winning hands are even, Mary's wins are
 larger, so she winds up with most of the money.

END MONTAGE

Mary rakes in another large pot.

Shari leans back and stretches.

Lupe looks at her watch,

LUPE

Wow, I haven't been up this late in years, probably.

Shari and Chen look at their watches and nod.

MARY

Early to bed, early to rise around here then?

CHEN

Oh no, there are plenty that'll be up until dawn. Just not us.

MARY

What's for tomorrow?

The ladies all smile,

SHARI

You're in the Matrix now, sweetie. Every day's the same.

LUPE

Yeah, sometimes I'm not even sure what year it is!

The ladies (but not Mary) laugh.

Mary's face is expressionless as she looks from woman to woman.

They all stand up and gather their things.

CHEN

Tomorrow, then. Same bat time,

CHEN/SHARI/LUPE

Same bat channel.

They laugh as they turn and walk away.

Mary expressionlessly watches them leave.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary's under the covers, on her back with her arms behind her head, staring at the ceiling, a thoughtful expression on her face.

She reaches over and turns off the light.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary, asleep in bed.

A gentle knock on the door.

Mary's eyes instantly pop open, wide awake.

CHEN (O.S.)
(quietly)
Mary, are you up?

Mary contemplates for a few moments, then sits up stretching loudly.

MARY
What is it, dawn or something?

CHEN (O.S.)
(chuckling)
No, we're past zero dark thirty.
We're heading down for breakfast,
just wanted to see if you're up for
that.

MARY
I'll be down in a few.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Smaller than the common area, but still large enough to comfortably sit 20 or so people. A handful of the people are clearly having breakfast just before bed, the rest are early risers. The sunlight shining in isn't quite horizontal, but it's definitely early.

There's a buffet set up along one wall and several Attendants wandering around.

Mary is standing in the entrance, looking around.

Shari, Lupe and Chen are sitting at a table and wave when they see Mary.

Mary starts toward them.

At the table, Mary quickly takes note of what everyone has in front of them. Coffee/tea and a muffin, danish or something like that.

Around a mouthful of danish and gesturing toward the buffet,

LUPE
Usually self-serve around here.

Mary nods and heads toward the buffet.

DISSOLVE TO:

Mary, with a tray holding a robust plate of scrambled eggs, bacon, juice and coffee, settles at the table.

The others look at her tray with a little bit of jealousy.

SHARI

Throwing caution to the wind, eh?

Mary, with a forkful of eggs about to enter her mouth, smiles,

MARY

I used to exercise for my husband.
Then for my side piece. Now I do it
just for myself.

Patting her waist,

CHEN

My exercise is walking up and down
the stairs a couple of times a day,
so this is all I can handle.

LUPE

Have you found the exercise room
yet?

MARY

(around mouthful)
Seen it on the map; check it later.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

The ladies are standing, gathered around the same table where they played before.

Around them, other oldies are meeting, greeting and/or settling in.

Lupe shuffles, spreads the cards out in an arc, and the others select a card.

As one, they turn their cards over, then settle in at the locations designated.

MONTAGE

- With their clothes and table positions changing, the otherwise identical game play for what is clearly many days.

- While the others' expressions remain jolly, Mary's smile becomes increasingly forced.

END MONTAGE

A different day, different clothes, different positions, but otherwise almost identical to all the previous days.

Mary has the deck and is slowly doing a Corgi shuffle.

Her face is drawn and pinched, like she ate something really bitter.

Lupe reaches a hand out to Mary's shoulder.

LUPE

You alright honey?

Mary freezes.

MARY

Gahh. How can you all stand this sameness?

SHARI

Uh ohh, Mary's rejecting the Matrix!

CHEN

This is retirement, lady, what else did you expect?

Mary looks around at all their faces.

They're happy and content, a little amused at Mary's discomfort.

Mary shakes her head.

MARY

I envisioned travel, adventure, exotic locals, maybe even a long cruise, but, damnit, the days wouldn't all blend together.

CHEN

(shrugging)

I emptied my bucket list some time ago.

LUPE

Yeah, once you've done it all, what's left?

SHARI

Come on, girls, maybe our Mary hasn't started her bucket list yet.

Mary makes a face, studies her hands as she slowly swirls the cards around on the table.

Looking back at the others,

MARY

I guess that's an element. I did do some traveling, but since I had to get my son to pay for it - who can easily afford it, by the way - I never felt like I got it out of my system.

The other's faces become more sober.

MARY

I suppose you had some time with your husbands after retiring?

Shari and Lupe, with wistful expressions, nod.

Chen shakes her head.

When the others look at her, she makes a face,

CHEN

My husband dumped me for a much younger woman.

When the others look on with sympathy,

CHEN

Oh, don't worry. I fell out of love with him long before. Initially stayed because of the kids, then, I guess, just inertia.

Chen looks down and plays with her chips.

CHEN

I was relieved when he finally asked for a divorce.

(looking at the others)

Really. I kept the house and got part of his retirement. After selling the house and combining with my retirement, I did a little bit of travel before I settled here.

(shrugging)

But without someone to share with, it lost its charm pretty quickly.

Shari pats Chen's shoulder,

SHARI

I'm so sorry.

CHEN
 (defiant expression)
 No, nothing to be sorry about,
 really. Besides, I never had
 wanderlust.

MARY
 Does it have to be wanderlust to
 want something different, instead of
 (gesturing around the
 room)
 the same thing, day after day?

The others look at each other and shrug.

MARY
 Hell, prison can't be much worse
 than this!

CHEN/SHARI/LUPE
 Prison?!

Mary studies their expressions,

MARY
 Yeah! Instead of living a little the
 rest of your life, live a lot and go
 out with a bang!

The others laugh uncomfortably.

Mary shrugs, gathers the cards and begins shuffling.

CUT TO:

New day, new clothes, new positions.

Picking up her cards with a musing expression,

CHEN
Hypothetically, what do you have
 in mind?

Shari and Lupe briefly look scandalously at Chen before
 curiosity overcomes them and they turn to look at Mary.

Mary studies their faces, shrugs,

MARY
 Knock off a bank?

LUPE
 (mild shock)
 Yeah, but if you're caught, then you
 go to...

CHEN

Duh!

SHARI

I don't see how the risk is worth
the reward.

MARY

Just a suggestion to break the
monotony.

Chen slowly nods.

Shari and Lupe are unconvinced.

CUT TO:

New day, new clothes, new positions.

Shari's looking over her cards at the others,

SHARI

We got it pretty good here.
(gesturing)

You really want to give all this up?

Chen's noncommittal.

Lupe's looking around the room.

Mary studies each of the others in turn,

MARY

Gilded cage.

SHARI

But a really nice cage!

CHEN

I wonder what the food's like.

LUPE

Gaah. Makes me want to puke just
thinking about it.

CHEN

Maybe that wasn't a great example.

Chen looks at Shari and Lupe,

CHEN

How often have we gone anywhere
lately? Hell, how often in the last
five years?

Shari shakes her head.

Lupe's expressionlessly looking over her cards at nothing.

CUT TO:

New day, new clothes, new positions.

Lupe looks around at the others,

LUPE
Morals.

CHEN
(smiling)
Morals high ground!

Mary looks at Shari and Lupe,

MARY
Robin Hood.

CHEN
(frowning)
I thought the idea was to piss it
all away.

LUPE
I think she's talking about the
first part.

Mary nods.

LUPE
Think about everything insurance
covers.

Shari, without an expression, looks over her cards at the
others.

CUT TO:

New day, new clothes, new positions.

SHARI
We become Stainless Steel Rats then?

Mary looks at Shari with a blank expression.

SHARI
A Harry Harrison character in a
scifi series.

Mary nods.

SHARI
So only faceless corporations?

LUPE
 (shrugs)
 If it's a victimless crime?

CHEN
 You mean prostitutes?

LUPE
 (shaking head)
 Not what I have in mind.

Lupe studies the other's faces.

LUPE
 If it's going to happen anyway?

CHEN
 You're talking drugs.

SHARI
 Opium dens hardly seem victimless.

LUPE
 (shrugging)
 I was thinking white collar. A tax
 on the rich.

CHEN
 Coke.

LUPE
 Except the tax goes into our
 pockets.

CHEN
 (shaking head)
 I like the bank idea better.

Mary looks around at each of the others.

MARY
 Are we agreeing on something here?

The others slowly lean back, contemplative looks on their
 faces.

They look at each other.

Mary looks at each of them.

Lupe clears her throat,

LUPE
 Maybe we should take this outside?

The others nod and stand up.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Slate stones for the floor, hand-worked stone for the elevated landscaping and a selection of outdoor furniture. There isn't anyone else.

The ladies pick a spot to sit where they can be close together.

They lean their heads together conspiratorial, then,

LUPE
This is stupid, we look like we're plotting. Lean back and relax, just talk in normal voices.

Shari and Chen look a little embarrassed.

Mary looks at Lupe impressed.

LUPE
Actually,
(looking around for an attendant)
We should be totally normal.

ATTENDANT3 looks out from the building, sees the ladies.

Lupe gestures at Attendant3.

Attendant3 walks over to the ladies,

ATTENDANT3
How may I help you ladies?

LUPE
Could you bring us some tea and cookies?

SHARI
And some biscuits and jam, please.

Attendant3 looks at the others.

They briefly shake their heads.

Attendant3 turns to head toward the house.

Looking at Lupe,

SHARI
Done this before?

Lupe looks at Shari conspiratorially, then smiles and winks,

LUPE
 Nope, just watched lots and lots of
 detective shows.

CHEN
 Yeah. We need disguises!

MARY
 Dress as men. Can you sound like
 one?

SHARI
 (best bass voice)
 Sure.

CHEN
 (same)
 No problem.

LUPE
 (same)
 How's this?

MARY
 (same)
 I think this'll work.

LUPE
 I worked a bank for most of my
 career, starting as a teller.

The others nod approvingly.

SHARI
 What to do about all the cameras?

They look at each other.

Attendant3 arrives with a tray.

Mary hops up and pulls a small table over.

Attendant3 sets the tray down.

ATTENDANT3
 Enjoy!

They watch as Attendant3 leaves.

CHEN
 Squirt gun with oily dye?

MARY
 That's the spirit!

LUPE
We gotta do something to get rid of
our disguises.

The others nod.

SHARI
What if we're caught? Should we
agree on a story beforehand?

They look at each other with serious expressions.

CHEN
If we never tell them anything, I
bet eventually they'll offer us a
deal.

LUPE
Yeah, the government wants to avoid
the cost of a trial.

SHARI
Plus, if we don't even tell them who
we are, it might take them a really
long time just to identify us.

MARY
(serious expression)
Prisoners dilemma.

They nod.

MARY
If we can all agree to tell - or not
tell - the same thing, we'll all
wind up with the same sentence, but
it should be fairly short.

The others nod.

Shari gets contemplative,

SHARI
You know, almost any sentence will
wind up being for life?

The others looked shocked.

SHARI
Even a ten year sentence, at our
ages, might be for life.

The others' faces slowly relax.

CHEN
We'll ride this horse until it
drops, or we're bucked off?

They all look at each other and slowly begin to nod.

FADE OUT.

The End.