

DRAFT RADIO SCRIPT

The Break Out

Katherine Melvin

Adapted for Radio by Harold O. Wilson

CAST:

Narrator: Tom Welsh

C J Swift: Megan Davis

Louise: Judy Hearn

Mildred: Robin Finley

Father: Hal Wilson

Policeman: Chris

Josh Bradey: Jim King

Receptionist: Robin Finley

Reporter: Judy Hearn

NARRATOR: CJ Swift pulled into the parking spot. What was her grandmother dragging her into now and what would her father say when he found out. A break out plan was what it was. Her Gramma had cooked up a plan to break out of the nursing home and CJ had been talked into helping.

CJ parked her silver Mini Cooper, raised the soft-top, hopped out, and stood in front of the Potomac Twilight Center, which wasn't in Potomac at all, but in Gaithersburg, Maryland. As she approached the doors and pulled off her sunglasses, it occurred to her that she'd never meet anyone special hanging out with her grandmother. And who was this Mildred person, anyway?

CJ strode across the foyer and breezed past the information desk.

RECEPTIONIST: Excuse me... Excuse me... Ma'am ... you need to sign in please. Ma'am... All visitors *must* sign in.

CJ: Oh, sure. Sorry about that.

NARRATOR: CJ flashed the woman a brilliant smile, the one that had landed her a leading role in *Baltimore Streets*. All the schooling to become a bioengineer at Hopkins, and she ended up working in television, making a lot more money. A lot more! Due to the show's success, it was getting difficult for her to go out in public unrecognized. Today, she'd tucked her long dark hair under a red National's cap and applied no makeup. At least the woman hadn't recognized her. *Good. This was a covert operation.*

NARRATOR: The previous night's text exchange with her grandmother had set the scheme into motion.

U free 2moro, her grandmother wrote.

AFAIK

Rehoboth

Beach?

Yes, beach. Get us 2moro. ♥ Gma

Us?

Me & Mildred. Time2 break out.

RU ok?

Not in jail. Tell no one

OK

CJ signed the nursing home register "Dixie Dortmunder," in honor of her grandfather, who gave "John Dortmunder" as his name for all restaurant waiting lists. He was certain it got them seated faster than using actual names. Turned out Dortmunder was a German beer. A tasty one, too.

LOUISE: There's my girl. I knew you'd come. You're taller.

CJ: Gramma, I think you're shrinking.

LOUISE: Nah! Can't be.

NARRATOR: C.J. studied her grandmother. It was the final week of summer and she hadn't seen her since May. She looked fragile and her pants were dusting the floor. As CJ took her hand, she noticed the skin, while soft, was paper-thin.

LOUISE: Did you bring the stuff? *(she imitates Cheech and Chong)*

CJ: (*whisper*) Yes, I've got the stuff. It's in the Target bag. (*normal voice*) Why is your hair blue?

LOUISE: You like?... Tired of gray. Bor-ing. Mildred's is orange. We've been friends since your father was in kindergarten.

CJ: That's a long time. You've never mentioned her.

LOUISE: You don't tell everything, dear. We got into a lot of trouble over the years.

CJ: Here, let me help you undress.

LOUISE: Okay... but I'll do the shirt... Turn your head. You're too young to see what happens to the boobies. All the trouble they caused with your grandfather—that's how your father got here—and this is what you get in the end. Tube socks.

CJ: TMI, Gramma. Is this it, those hot-pink capris with the matching shirt? And the red sneakers? Well, there. You look so cute.

LOUISE: Cute? I don't want cute. I want hot mama.

NARRATOR: She stood up, looked at herself in the mirror and wiggled her rear end.

LOUISE: Well, I guess those days are behind me... Now for the bangles. Help me out, kiddo. I love sea glass, don't you? You want these bracelets when I die?"

CJ: Would you stop, Gramma?

LOUISE: What? It's gonna happen sooner rather than later.

MILDRED: Ready, everyone? Ready?

NARRATOR: Mildred popped her curly orange head in the room. She was a perfect picture in purple: cropped pants, checked top, high-topped sneakers, even ruffled anklets—all purple. She hadn't wizened down as much as Louise.

CJ: Oh, you must be Mildred. You look lovely, but why isn't your cane purple?

MILDRED: Couldn't find one. But I do have these purple sunglasses. Can you see yourself?

CJ: Okay, everyone, let's go. It's a long way to Rehoboth. Anyone have to use the bathroom first?

MILDRED: Not me... Let's blow this joint.

NARRATOR: It took longer than expected to get out the door and into the car. CJ sighed. Maybe she shouldn't have agreed to take two eighty-year-olds to the beach. What if something happened to them? She'd never live it down. But the beach meant so much to her grandmother; she couldn't say no.

Once they were situated, Louise buckled into the back and Mildred up front, CJ started the car. They had only gone a couple of miles when the "girls" started whining like children.

LOUISE: Turn on the radio.

MILDRED: Put the top down.

LOUISE: We're hungry.

MILDRED: Are we there yet?

BOTH: (hooting and laughing)

CJ: You're not going to ask me that for the next three hours are you? Gramma? Miss Mildred?"

LOUISE: I'm offended. Maybe just a few more times.

CJ: We're stopping to get hats. I'm not returning you with burnt heads.

LOUISE: Who said we're going back? (more hooting and laughing)

NARRATOR: On the radio, CJ searched for the oldies station. She stayed on one station long enough to hear the announcer say, "Josh Brady was seen with starlet Penelope Pope outside..." Why did her costar persist with the playboy antics when he could be such a nice guy? Like today. He agreed to meet her at the beach to help with the grandmothers.

LOUISE: Blast the radio! Wait a minute, they're playing Maggie!

(Together they sing, "Wake up, Maggie, I think I got something to say to you.)

LOUISE: CJ, Did you get the money?

CJ: Of course.

MILDRED: What did you say?

LOUISE: I asked her if she got the money.

MILDRED: What for?

LOUISE: To see if she did or not.

MILDRED: What? That's not what I meant. Why do we need money?

LOUISE: For the food, of course—French fries, hot dogs, cotton candy, ice cream—you name it, Millie, we're gonna eat it.

MILDRED: I'll need my teeth. I'll need my teeth if we're going to eat.

LOUISE: Now why wouldn't you have your teeth in, for goodness' sakes?

MILDRED: I don't like 'em. They clack.

CJ: Stop it, you two.

LOUISE: You like to eat, don't you?

MILDRED: In the home, all they serve is mush. Mush for breakfast. Mush for lunch. Don't need teeth for that.

LOUISE: Last night they served chicken, Mildred.

MILDRED: I don't like chicken.

“LOUISE: Yes, you do.

MILDRED: How do you know what I like and don't like?

LOUISE: What? Speak up. I think my ear thingy blew out.

MILDRED: I said, you hardly need your teeth at all for those meals.

NARRATOR: CJ returned to the nursing home's parking lot and pulled into the same spot she'd just vacated.

CJ: Okay, ladies, stay put. I'll be right out.

NARRATOR: Within minutes, they were on the road again, singing with the radio. But before long, the car was silent, except for the old ladies' snores whistling away with the wind.

(CJ's phone rings)

CJ: Oh, hello Dad.

FANTER: The nursing home called.

CJ: Really?

FATHER: I also got a call from Mildred's daughter. Everyone's upset. Take them back, CJ, now.

CJ: I can't. Gramma wants to put her feet in the ocean.

FATHER: Are you kidding me?

CJ: Traffic. Gotta go.

NARRATOR: In Rehoboth, CJ pulled around the bandstand and parked near Dolle's.

CJ: We're here, everybody, wake up.

NARRATOR: Mildred and Louise hauled themselves out of the car and stood on the mosaic cobblestone. They looked small, lost, and a little wobbly.

CJ: You ladies okay? Let's get you to one of the benches.

MILDRED: Give us a minute. Have to get the body moving again.

LOUISE: I've got to pee.

MILDRED: Me too. And I'm thirsty.

CJ: There's a public bathroom right over there by the dolphin statue.

LOUISE: Hay...Over there, Thrasher's! Love their fries. Let's eat!

NARRATOR: Bathroom and food stand visits out of the way, the three women sat on a bench looking at the ocean, enjoying the beautiful late-summer day.

LOUISE: This is what I dreamed of. Now I need to put my tootsies in the water and I can die in peace.

CJ: Is that what this trip is about, Grandma, dying in peace?

LOUISE: Me and Mildred made our bucket list. We can check this off, now.

CJ: What else is on that list?

MILDRED: Line dancing.

LOUISE: We did something like this once before. Remember Millie, when our kids were in school. Took off for a day at the beach.

MILDRED: We have the pictures to prove it. God these hot dogs are good.

LOUISE: Finish the fries. They don't let us eat like this in the *joint*.

MILDRED: Nope. Mush, that's what I said.

LOUISE: Oh, poop.

MILDRED: What now?

LOUISE: Spilt catsup on my new shirt. Oh, well. Finish your salad CJ, time for an ice-cream cone.

CJ: Don't you want to put your feet in the water first?

LOUISE: I can do it better with ice cream.

CJ: Okay. I'll get you ice cream.

LOUISE: I'm coming.

CJ: No...you two wait here, it'll be quicker without you.

LOUISE: You're not the boss of me, young lady.

CJ: Well, I'm thirty-two and I'm not your "young lady."

MILDRED: We don't want to sit around here all day. What if one of those old geezers in the plaid pants hits on us?

CJ: These old geezers aren't going to bother you. Look, this is how it's going to be. I'm getting the ice cream. You save your energy for walking down to the water, okay?

LOUISE: Fine. I want chocolate.

CJ: And you, Miss Mildred?

MILDRED: Strawberry.

LOUISE: I don't know when *she* got to be so bossy.

MILDRED: Got that from you."

LOUISE: What are you talking about? I'm not bossy.

MILDRED: Are too.

LOUISE; Am not.

MILDRED: You *told* me we were breaking out today. You didn't ask me.

LOUISE: I was merely conveying information. Not that place, CJ. The Ice Cream Store over there. It's better. It's homemade.

MILDRED: And tastes so good too.

LOUISE: Isn't this warm sun wonderful, Millie?

MILDRED: Heavenly.

LOUISE: Do you smell it?

MILDRED: The saltwater?

LOUISE: Yes, that, but something else too. Inhale again... Well?

MILDRED: I give up. What is it?"

LOUISE: Cotton candy. Come on, I'm getting some.

MILDRED: And how exactly are you going to pay for it? With your good looks?

LOUISE: Oh, you're a spoilsport, Mildred O'Svenson. Move over.

NARRATOR: They closed their eyes, listening to the sounds: people chatting, children laughing, and seagulls squealing over the hypnotizing swells of waves rolling to shore. Just as they started to nod off, they heard a commotion.

MILDRED: What on earth is that?

LOUISE: Let's go see."

MILDRED: CJ told us to wait here.

LOUISE: When did you become such an old stick-in-the-mud?

MILDRED: I'm not. CJ was nice enough to drive us here. I don't want to be any trouble.
(*siren sounds*) It's an ambulance. Let's go.

LOUISE: Excuse me Officer, excuse me, I need to get over there.

OFFICER: Stay on this side of the street, lady, while the paramedics sort things out.

MILDRED: What happened, Officer? Did some old geezer fall?

OFFICER: No, ma'am. Just stay over here, please.

LOUISE: Probably some old fart walking too fast to get his ice cream. Is there some kind of elderly convention going on, Officer? I haven't seen so many old people in one place in all my life. Not even at the home.

OFFICER: Not likely, ma'am.

MILDRED: There was quite a crowd at George's funeral. You know, George, from down the hall?

LOUISE: Not this many. You think they loaded them up from all the homes in the area and dumped them out here?

MILDRED: Look, young man, we need to get to the ice-cream shop. My granddaughter is over there. We can't be left alone too long. Someone might take us.

OFFICER: Doubt it, ma'am.

LOUISE: Millie, stop waving that cane around, you're going to get us arrested waving that thing.

MILDRED: Look, Louise, the crowd's backing off. That's no old geezer, that's your granddaughter.

NARRATOR: They held out their elbows to the policeman, who sighed and escorted them across the street.

Three ice-cream cones and wrappers littered the sidewalk where CJ had fallen. Tears welled in her beautiful deep blue eyes. A paramedic wrapped her foot.

CJ's cell phone played *Born to Be Wild*. She knew from the song it was her dad.

FATHER: You're on TV, you know?

NARRATOR: *Not good.* She looked around until she spotted the cameraman and the local reporter. *Crud.* Here she was, splayed out on the ground, chocolate ice cream dripping down her shirt, a bloody knee, bruised elbow, and a throbbing big toe, and without a single drop of makeup. Now she really *was* going to cry.

FATHER: And that's the least of your worries, I just saw your grandmother on TV, and it looks like she is in the custody of the Rehoboth police. The nursing home wants to know when you're returning them. Do I need to come help you?

CJ: No! Don't come here.

BRADY: Perhaps I can be of assistance.

NARRATOR: The onlookers oohed as Josh Bradey, CJ's costar on Baltimore Streets stepped into the clearing and flashed the crowd an Emmy-winning smile. At six-foot-two, he was hard to miss. He had the rugged look of a young Tom Selleck, enhanced further by three days' growth of beard and a tan.

"CJ: Hello, Josh.

BRADY: Perfect timing. (*whispers*) Put your arm around me, This will be great publicity.

NARRATOR: CJ thought about ignoring him. However, his instincts were usually right on target; by leaning into him, she could hide most of her face. Win-win.

LOUISE: Is this your young man?

CJ: This is Josh, Gramma. We work together.

LOUISE: I see. You might want to hang onto this one, honey.

CJ: Gramma!

(The onlookers roared.)

BRADY: Ladies, your ice cream is ruined. By the way this is my friend Douglas from the old neighborhood. We'll be right back with more ice cream.

(Louise humming).

MILDRED: What's that song, Louise?

LOUISE: Achy Breaky Heart. Don't you love it?

MILDRED: Catchy. *(She joins in)*

NARRATOR: CJ fussed with her phone, searching for the song. When Mildred and Louise heard it, they whooped.

LOUISE: Come on, Millie. Hop up here. Let's dance.

MILDRED: You know I don't hop anywhere. And there you go bossing me around...

LOUISE: Turn it up loud, granddaughter. Isn't technology grand?

NARRATOR: CJ helped them climb the bandstand steps, favoring her good foot. *Quite a sight, what with their colored hair and hot pink and purple outfits.* She restarted the song and watched them shuffle: side step, two to the right, two to the left, step front, step back, clap-clap to the beat of the music. *Almost.* They did it again. And again.

(music)

LOUISE: Come up here, all you folks watching. Don't stand there gawking.

NARRATOR: It wasn't long before a group of seniors gathered on the Rehoboth Beach bandstand singing, while line dancing to "Achy Breaky Heart." They came in all sizes—tall, short, fat, skinny, white hair, died hair, no hair—dressed in a colorful menagerie of Hawaiian shirts, plaid pants, khaki shorts, muumuus, black socks with sandals, and sneakers. They wore an assortment of sun hats, straw hats, and baseball caps, equally split between the Orioles and the Nats.

MILDRED: Play it again! Play it again! We're just getting started.

NARRATOR: Louise blew on her fingers and touched her rump, making a sizzling noise.

CJ heard the reporter's voice before she saw the woman.

REPORTER: This is Eugenia Eubanks with *What's Happening Rehoboth*. And what's happening is a dance-in for people of all ages. We've never seen anything like it.

NARRATOR: CJ groaned as her grandmother mangled the lyrics and then wiggled her rear end at the camera.

MILDRED: Phew! Well, we can cross line dancing off the old bucket list. Here come the boys.

LOUISE: Bless you two. Aren't you the handsome ones though? What have we got here, oh my, lemonade, cotton candy, ice cream, and roasted pecans. Well, don't you know how to capture a girl's heart?

REPORTER: We're standing on the boardwalk with Josh Brady and CJ Swift. Welcome to Rehoboth. What brings the stars of *Baltimore Streets* here today?

BRADY: Well, you should talk to these lovely ladies. They're the special ones here.

LOUISE: I told you, he's a keeper.

NARRATOR: Josh had the decency to blush, and CJ continued to groan, mainly due to the pain in her toe. But also because of the pain in her side called Gramma.

REPORTER: What's your name, honey?

LOUISE: Well, sweetie, no one calls me 'honey' except my husband, and he's dead. But anyway, I'm Louise and this is Mildred.

REPORTER: Are you enjoying the beach?

MILDRED: We sure are. We're going to go in the water.

NARRATOR: CJ was thankful Mildred had her teeth.

BRADY: Let's go, ladies. Time to get in the water. You going to be all right, CJ?

NARRATOR: CJ looked at him, seeing him for the first time. She realized *here was a good man*. Everyone on the set loved Josh Brady, but she always managed to keep her distance. She had no patience for Hollywood glitter.

BRADY: I have grandparents too, CJ. And I was schooled to honor them. Maybe one day you could come to my house to meet my Nana. We live near Reisterstown. I avoid L.A.

CJ: She lives with you?

BRADY: Sure. My parents too.

CJ: What? What about the starlets and the rumors?

BRADY: Image, CJ. Part of the image. My father told me to never believe the press reports. Stay true to myself. I've tried to do that.

NARRATOR: At the water's edge, Josh and Douglas stood with the women where the water rushed over their feet without knocking them over.

LOUISE: Wonderful. Kleenex?

CJ: Don't cry, grandma.

LOUISE: Can't help it. I do love the ocean. Have all my life. Makes me sad thinking I might not ever see it again. Promise me you'll sprinkle me at the beach. In case your father gets other ideas.

CJ: Count on me, grandma. Time to go home now.

BRADY: How about I drive you back? How will you manage with that right foot?

CJ: Oh, I forgot.

LOUISE: Can Douglas take us old ladies home and you two follow?

BRADY: How about it? May I drive you home?

NARRATOR: While the sun set on the beautiful day and the two stars talked, Louise, Mildred, and Douglas continued up the beach. As they climbed into Douglas's car Millie gave Louise one thumb up. Louise echoed the gesture.

MILDRED: We did it, Louise. We did it!

LOUISE: What's next, Millie? The zoo? I want to go to the zoo, the Philadelphia zoo.

NARRATOR: As the car pulled away, Louise texted her granddaughter.

PDH kiddo. Pretty darn happy. We think we'll go to the zoo next time.

CJ: Oh, God!