

"RELATIVELY DEAD"

Logline: Upon the death of Albert Einstein a friend and colleague pays his final respects and completes a promise made in life.

FADE IN:

EXT. MARKER-HOVIS FUNERAL HOME - PRINCETON N.J. - NIGHT

Against a gloomy sky and main entrance of the funeral home ERICH GRUBER, (70) dressed in a baggy suit, enters the old building and...

INT. FUNERAL HOME FOYER

...passed a hastily handwritten chalkboard outside a viewing room of the mortuary...

INSERT - CHALKBOARD

It reads: EINSTEIN, ALBERT 4/18/55 1:30am

... and through musky red velvet curtains to where a plain wood casket rests. The lid is open and it is occupied. ALBERT EINSTEIN's body is within.

Gruber takes pause. In his hand he is holding an ALARM CLOCK, its metallic bell cups glinting the red light of the mortuary as Gruber shifts it from one hand to the next.

DR. THOMAS HARVEY stands next to the casket making notations on a note pad. He is obviously a medical doctor by his garb although he seems out of place in this setting. No one else is present.

HARVEY

(upon seeing Gruber)

Sorry, this is private. There is no viewing.

GRUBER

Albert was a close friend and colleague. And who are you?

HARVEY

I am Dr. Harvey Gruber. I will be performing the autopsy on Dr. Einstein. You know he only just died a few hours ago?

GRUBER

Yes. I was with him when he passed. I wanted to pay my respects while I was able as I understand that there is to be no burial.

HARVEY

It appears that his wishes were for a private cremation followed by a scattering at an undisclosed location. There will be no viewing; I am just completing some paperwork before I remove his body.

Harvey points at the clock in Gruber's hand.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

May I ask why you have that?

GRUBER

It is our private joke. Albert, as you know, dabbled, as he used to say, with relativity...

(noting Harvey's confusion)

Relativity - the Special Theory - time dilation and all that? Albert and I believed that time operated differently relative to where you are in space. We agreed the one left behind would place a wound alarm clock in the casket as a symbol of our, shall we say, mutual belief. That task befalls me, I regret to say.

HARVEY

Ah, yes. I see. A private joke. I don't wish to detract from your last respects. I'll leave you to it then but I must warn you that I will need to move him shortly.

Harvey leaves to a side room out of view and Gruber moves closer to the casket.

Clearly Einstein has not been embalmed - his face looks asleep, familiar deep creased wrinkles and bushy moustache stained from years of cigar and pipe smoking. Einstein is dressed in his baggy suit, shirt wrinkled and a comfortable vest that he always wore. He appears almost amused in his sleep.

GRUBER

My dear friend. You still look distinguished even in death.

Gruber reaches into his vest and withdraws a quarter folded note. He reaches over to Einstein and slips the note in the left pocket of his vest. Then from Einstein's right pocket he withdraws another quarter folded note and slips it into his own pocket.

Off to the side Harvey is watching the action with curiosity.

GRUBER (CONT'D)

We had many a good adventure with the theories, didn't we? My only regret is that we took so long to meet.

Gruber leans over to straighten Einstein's collar and pats his face lightly as if to awaken him. He then takes the alarm clock and winds it up tightly. We can HEAR the TICKING. He places the clock into the casket.

GRUBER (CONT'D)

Rest well dear friend. I shall miss our talks, even if you claim there may be more to come.

Harvey returns to the room.

GRUBER (CONT'D)

(to Harvey)

I am done now.

HARVEY

You were close with Dr. Einstein?

GRUBER

We spent many years communicating by letter - his passion was writing long letters about theory. Yes, we were close. I came to meet him after we had corresponded for almost fifty years, since relativity came to be. The last few days we spent together non-stop discussing our mutual beliefs. It was I who summoned the police when he collapsed a few hours ago.

HARVEY

My condolences Mr. Gruber. I understand that it was a quick death - an aneurysm that had been plaguing him. He did not suffer, I think.

GRUBER

He was such a character. People loved him so much like they do a favorite grandfather. We were so different that way. I shun crowds, hate speeches - phobic disorder you understand.

Albert liked the public interaction especially where the theories were concerned. He was so much better at it than I. He loved the debate. They broke the mold when they made him. We shall not see another like him again.

HARVEY

Of course. But you will always have the time you shared. Take solace with that. We'll take good care of him now. He's in good hands.

I too admired Dr. Einstein. I consider the task ahead my sacred duty.

GRUBER

Thank you Dr. Harvey. iT was a pleasure to meet you. Goodbye.

They shake hands and Gruber leaves the same way he came, pushing aside the velvet curtain as he exits the room.

For a moment Harvey just looks at the casket. He picks up the clock and looks at it, then replaces it in the casket. And then reaching into Einstein's left vest pocket withdraws the note and unfolds it and reads:

INSERT - NOTE

It reads: Dear Al, I promise that I will never tell them that **E=** was not yours. Respectfully, Erich

Harvey looks puzzled. The note makes no sense to him. He folds it and returns it to the vest pocket. Closing the lid of the casket and securing it, he wheels it out of the side exit.

EXT - FUNERAL HOME FRONT DOOR

Gruber stands beneath the overhang avoiding the torrential rainfall outside. It is the dead of night with no traffic and no sound other than the falling rain smacking the street.

He reaches into his pocket and withdraws the note he took from Einstein. Carefully he unfolds it. The handwriting is old style, the cursive of a mathematician. He reads it and a smile crosses his face.

INSERT - THE NOTE

It reads: My dear Erich. I know. I will always know. - Yours truly, Albert

Gruber begins to laugh, a deep guttural laugh that someone who has just clued into a joke can make. It echoes off the buildings as he refolds and pockets the note then steps off the sidewalk and into the torrential rain that buffets his face.

As he walks into the night his laughter continues and we...

FADE OUT