Writer’s Note

Golden Years began with a joke I posted years ago when I had a fairly active Twitter account: “My retirement plan rests solely upon either winning the lottery or spending my golden years in prison.”

The joke got a strong response, and for years I thought there might actually be a movie hiding inside it. Eventually I combined it with another idea that made me laugh: a geriatric *Ocean's Eleven*, except instead of trying to get away with the crime, everyone desperately wants to get caught.

I also had tremendous fun imagining the movie as an old-fashioned ensemble comedy filled with very different comic personalities. I had specific performers in my head while I was writing, purely as a private creative exercise, and played around with the kinds of rhythms, attitudes, and contradictions I have always enjoyed watching great comic actors bring to a role. As the screenplay developed, though, the characters became their own people. I can imagine a completely different group of older actors coming in and making every one of them their own.

The ridiculous premise started connecting to something much less ridiculous: the cost of getting old. Assisted living, long-term care, medication, and medical treatment can consume an extraordinary amount of money. I started thinking about what happens when someone works for decades, does everything reasonably expected of them, saves what they can, and simply lives longer than the money lasts.

That became the engine underneath the comedy. The residents of Sundown Senior Living aren't planning a heist because they want yachts, diamonds, or glamorous retirements. They are watching corporate ownership raise fees, reduce services, cut benefits, and quietly calculate how expensive each resident has become. Then someone notices the absurd alternative sitting right in front of them: federal prison comes with housing, food, healthcare, and climate control. If they commit a serious enough felony, the government could provide the retirement security they can no longer afford for themselves.

I wanted the plan to remain completely ridiculous while allowing the circumstances behind it to be uncomfortable because they aren't quite ridiculous enough. The screenplay also gave me room to make fun of the way corporate language can make cruelty sound perfectly reasonable. Human beings become operational costs. Reduced services become efficiencies. Everything sounds much nicer once you put it in a spreadsheet and give it a professional name.

But I never wanted *Golden Years* to turn into a lecture about elder care. First and foremost, it's a silly ensemble comedy. These people argue, flirt, complain about technology, plan a spectacularly ill-advised heist, and discover that being underestimated because of their age can occasionally be a tremendous tactical advantage.

The movie began because the idea of committing a felony as a retirement plan made me laugh. What kept me interested was the very real fear underneath the joke: reaching the point in life when people need the most care and discovering that the system has started looking at them primarily as an expense.