

GRANDPA GANJA'S EMPORIUM

(Sanctuary)

Evan Keliher ©2009

FADE IN:

EXT. DAY.

EARL approaches the Emporium and lurches into a MAN coming toward him. They collide and EARL spins around and faces the way he'd been going.

He raises his cane and barks at his unseen assailant who stops and looks on wonderingly as EARL threatens empty space.

EARL

(scowling)

Hey! Why don't you look where you're going, buddy? Why, for two cents I'd give you a shot...!

Muttering, EARL turns and starts off the way he'd come and the MAN shakes his head, takes him by the arm and turns him around.

MAN

You were going the other way, pal.

EARL

Huh? Oh, yeah. Thanks.

He flexes his shoulders as if he'd just routed a would-be attacker and heads for the store. As he enters BETH looks up from the table where she's opening a key of Vancouver Haze.

BETH

(looks up)

Oh, it's you. I thought you were a customer.

EARL

Nope. If I was a customer I'd have to buy something.

BETH

If Grandpa depended on you as a customer he'd be living on his Social Security.

EARL

Impossible. Nobody can do that.

BETH

(wryly)

I know. I tried.

EARL

Gramps not in yet?

BETH

He has a doctor's appointment.

EARL

Just routine, right?

BETH

I think so. He said something about a prostate exam.

EARL

(sits at table)

How old is Gramps?

BETH

I don't know. Close to eighty?

EARL

He's lucky he's still got a prostate. A lot of guys that age had it taken out and now they can't get it up anymore.

BETH

If a man's eighty years old he shouldn't care if he can't get it up.

EARL

That's easy for you to say.

BETH
(grins)
Yeah, it is, isn't it?

EARL
(frowning)
Sounds like age discrimination to me.

The door opens and two TOURISTS wander in. They're seniors and naïve.

BOB
(looking around)
See, Molly? Just like a regular store.

MOLLY
Well, it is, isn't it? I expected to see a lot of derelicts with hollow stares and bad breath.

BETH
(aside)
I think she's looking for you, Earl.

EARL
(aside)
Who says I've got bad breath?

BETH
(to Molly)
The regulars don't show up till after lunch, ma'am.

BOB
Well, we're sorry we missed 'em.

MOLLY
Why?

EARL
Yeah, why?

BETH
Anyway, welcome to Grandpa Ganja's Emporium, L.A.'s version of Lourdes. We've got medicine that's as old as antiquity and as new as yesterday.

BOB

Hear that, Molly? Maybe I can stop taking my Lipitor.

MOLLY

What? You didn't tell me you had a bad heart! What will I do with an old fool who has a bad heart?

BOB

(explains sheepishly)

We just came from Vegas. We got married yesterday.

BETH

Oh, congratulations! This calls for a celebration! Have a cookie on the house.

(offers plate to Molly,
then pulls back)

Oh, I almost forgot. You need a doctor's letter to get marijuana, you know.

BOB and MOLLY exchange looks and shrug.

BOB

We don't have letters...

BETH

Uh, well, uh, may I ask how old you are?

MOLLY

Bob's 79 and I'm 85.

BOB

What!? You said you were 76! Why would I want an old bat almost 100 years old?

MOLLY

(airly)

Because I'm good in bed.

BOB

(mollified)

Yeah, well, there *is* that.

EARL

She's got a point, Bob.

BETH

Hey, you two are made for each other! Anybody can see that!

EARL

I can't see it.

BETH

Look, if you're a senior citizen there's got to be something wrong with you. So, that means you qualify for medical marijuana. Here. Have a cookie.

She thrusts the plate at them and both take cookies. EARL cocks an ear as he follows the plate's progress.

EARL

(thoughtfully)

You know, Beth, I think a cookie about now would raise my spirits and give me a new lease on life but...

(he feels pockets)

I seem to have left my wallet...

BOB

Say, let me buy you a cookie, sir!

EARL

Ah, you're too kind. I'll pay you back the very next time I see you.

BETH

(mutters)

That's the truth.

(aloud)

You are kind, sir, and Earl's as good as his word, but his credit is good with Grandpa.

(hands EARL a cookie)

MOLLY

When does it start working?

BETH

Just as soon as I get you some hot coffee. Here, have a seat.

As BETH seats BOB and MOLLY several more people arrive and she and EARL hustle to wait on them. All look robust and brimming over with good health. PETE and SID, bodybuilders on their way to Venice Beach, step up to the counter.

BETH

Well, Pete and Sid. Haven't seen you guys in two, three weeks.

PETE

We were in Vegas.

SID

For the Mr. USA contest.

EARL

(interested)

I signed up for that myself but they rejected me on racial grounds.

PETE

How did they know you're black?

EARL

I sent 'em my picture.

Everybody stops and looks at him.

BETH

I think you're right, the picture kept you out but it wasn't because you're black.

All mutter agreement.

"That's gotta be it." "Yeah, that explains it." "No wonder."

EARL

Oh, yeah? Just wait'll I tell Al Sharpton about this.

(to Pete & SID)

So, how have you been?

SID

Good, I'm good, except for my back, of course.

BETH

Of course. And how's your neck, Pete?

PETE

Okay, except for the constant pain, of course.

BETH

Of course. What can I get you? We've got a special on Kentucky Blue. Only 10 bucks a gram.

PETE

Any Panama Red?

BETH

Not a gram. It goes out as fast as we get it in. In fact, we just had a delivery yesterday and...

(EARL starts out)

Earl?

EARL

What?

BETH

Do we have any extra Panama Red?

EARL

That depends on what you mean by extra.

BETH

You put some aside, didn't you?

EARL

That depends on what...

BETH

Earl, go get it. Anybody can see these poor guys have chronic pain...

(both rub neck & back
and grimace)

...and they need their medicine.

EARL

Well, what about me? Panama Red helps me see better. I smoke that stuff and I can see the world as it really is.

PETE

Why would you want to do that?

BETH

Yeah, I didn't know you liked horror stuff.

EARL

What horror stuff? What are you smoking? The world's not a horror picture; it's a goddamn comedy. Politicians are clowns when they're not busy stealing things. Our generals are idiots, our admirals can't swim, the last veep was as crooked as a dog's hind leg, Gore was robbed, the Iraq war was a lie and so is the Afghan war...
(leaves muttering)

MOLLY

(calls out)

Nothing's happening!

BOB

(looking at her)

Yes, it is. You're...different somehow. Your eyes are different colors.

MOLLY

Contact lenses. I've got another pair just like these at home.

BETH

(aside)

There they go.

EARL

(nodding)

Two more satisfied customers.

MOLLY

(to BETH)

Have you got any chips?

BOB

Yeah, chips would be good.

BETH

Sorry. The bikers next door ran out
and they stole ours.

BOB

How do you know it was the bikers?

BETH

Easy. They were still partying when I
opened up.

BOB

(to MOLLY)

They don't have any chips. The bikers
stole 'em.

MOLLY

Wait! I hear sirens! It's the police!

BOB

(defiantly)

You'll never take me alive, copper!

BETH

Relax, they're not coming here.

(goes to window,

peeps out)

Jesus, there are five police cars out
there!

EARL

What?

(hurries to window)

Let me see!

Everybody peers out at flashing lights, cop cars and cops
with guns drawn, crowds in the background. GRANDPA slips in
and tries to close the door but can't because somebody's
jammed in behind him.

GG

Hey, what the...?

BOB

(points at door)

Look out! He's got a gun!

No fool, GG jumps back and a man tumbles into the room and kicks the door shut behind him. He rolls to a sitting position and points the gun in a sweeping manner to assure everyone that he has one.

BOB

(nodding at MOLLY)

Uh, if you're going to shoot somebody you should start with the oldest one because she's lived the longest.

MOLLY

Why, you...!

BOB

(shrugs)

Well, it just seems fair...

GG

(taking charge)

Nobody's going to shoot anybody.

(to the gunman)

You. What the hell's going on? Are those cops after you?

JUAN scrambles to his feet and half-crouches as he goes to the window and peers out. He is twenty-six, slim and neat in clean jeans and khaki shirt, and scared.

EARL

Man, what'd you do? Shoot the goddamn mayor?

BOB

He looks like a terrorist to me.

MOLLY

(gazing about in wonder)

Wow, this stuff is amazing! It's like they're making a movie with me in the middle of it!

JUAN

Listen! I'm innocent! I didn't do anything wrong!

BETH

What's with the gun, then?

JUAN

(looks at gun)

It's not a real gun. It's my kid's.
(he throws it down,

GG

So, why are half the cops in LA after
your ass?

JUAN

It's not my fault. Look, I got two kids
two and four. I'm a citizen and my kids
were born here but my wife isn't a citizen
and they want to deport her!

A bullhorn voice interrupts.

VOICE

We are the police. We have you surrounded.
Come out with your hands up or we'll shoot!

EARL

(to JUAN)

I think he means you, man.

JUAN

Hey, don't I get to make a phone
call before they shoot me?

GG

Not according to the Patriot Act.

BETH

What's your name?

JUAN

Juan Lopez. I'm a substitute teacher
and I'm a junior in law school.

VOICE

This is your last warning! Come out or
we'll shoot!

MOLLY

That's our last warning!

BOB

Holy shit!

GG

I'm almost sure they're bluffing.
Earl, go out there and shake your
fist at them and call their bluff.

EARL

Do what, Gramps? I told you before and
I was right. Put Vaseline on your hair and
your mind will slip. Why don't I put a
target on my chest just to taunt 'em a
little extra?

GG

Say, that's not a bad...

BETH

Is everybody nuts, for god's sake? What
are we going to do about the SWAT Teams
out there? How about you, Juan? Any ideas?

EARL

I say you should fight for your family,
Juan. Stand your ground. Look 'em right in
the eye and tell 'em to go to hell.

(white handkerchief out
and starts for door)

And I think all that should start right
after I'm gone.

JUAN

Wait! You haven't heard my plan.

BOB

He has a plan?

MOLLY

I knew it!

GG

(dryly)

I'll bet we're in it.

JUAN

Look, this is a marijuana dispensary,
right? So, pot's called the sacred herb
isn't it?

GG

That's true.

EARL

It says so right in the Bible.

JUAN

So, you keep sacred things here and that makes this like a church, a holy place.

MOLLY

Isn't this a movie set?

GG

Wait a minute. What did you do to make the cops want to shoot you?

JUAN

Nothing. I want down to the Immigration office to see about getting an extension and the guy told me to get out or he'd have me arrested. That's when the gun fell out of my belt.

BOB

You dropped your gun?

JUAN

Yeah, it just fell out and the guy went loco. He started yelling for security and saying I had a gun and I ran. The cops stopped me five blocks from here and I took off. And that's when I made my plan.

VOICE

This is the police! This is our final warning! Come out with your hands up or we'll open fire with tear gas! We mean it this time!

GG

Still bluffing.

BOB

What's your plan? Should we rush 'em?

BETH

(at window)

The cops are bringing up a battering ram. Looks like they're going to do the rushing.

GG

And your plan is?

JUAN

Sanctuary! I'm claiming legal sanctuary in Grandpa Ganja's Emporium and nobody can arrest me as long as I'm in this holy place.

GG

I'm not sure the cops will buy that.

JUAN reaches out and takes EARL'S white handkerchief and goes to the door. He opens it and waves the signal and cops tentatively raise their heads while looking through rifle sights.

JUAN

Hello!

CAPTAIN

Who are you?

JUAN

I'm Juan Lopez. Who are you?

CAPTAIN

I'm Captain Sam Brown...

(adjusts his belt)

Never mind who I am. Are you surrendering?

JUAN

I want a priest.

CAPTAIN

What?

JUAN

A priest. I'm claiming sanctuary in a holy place and you're not allowed to enter here to arrest me.

CAPTAIN

Sanctuary? Are you nuts? This isn't the goddamn 15th century, for Christ's sake. If you don't surrender when I count to three I'll open fire. One!

JUAN

Hey, man, I know my rights. If you don't get a priest I'll report you to the Vatican and you'll be excommunicated.

CAPTAIN

Two!

At this juncture a figure advances from the crowd and goes to the CAPTAIN. He's the police CHAPLIN and looks it.

PRIEST

Uh, Captain?

CAPTAIN

Oh. Padre. Just in the nick of time. Tell this bozo there's no such thing as sanctuary and we're coming in after him.

PRIEST

I can't do that, Sam. It's in the Old and New Testaments and the Church made it official in 509 AD. It's a sin in the Catholic Church for armed men to enter a holy place and most secular governments still honor it in their laws.

CAPTAIN

But this isn't a church! It's a goddamn pot store full of wacky dope smokers who are all in cahoots with the Devil!

JUAN

And that's why I need a priest! I want justice and that makes me one of the good guys, man.

EARL

(sticks head out)

And we demand more warnings! Nobody only gets two warnings! You think we're amateurs?

CAPTAIN

Hey, I was counting to three! Each one is a new warning. Two and a half!

JUAN

Don't shoot! I have an infernal machine, Sam!

CAPTAIN

What?

JUAN

A bomb. It goes off if my pulse gets too slow. Shoot me and the whole block explodes.

GG

(scoffing)

You can't make a bomb like that.

JUAN

(to GG)

No, but he doesn't know that.

(shouts)

Send the chaplain in or else!

CAPTAIN

(to PADRE)

He says he's got a bomb.

PADRE

You think he has?

CAPTAIN

Hell, no. I'll just I'll call his bluff.

PADRE

You're a brave man, Sam.

CAPTAIN

(thumbs in belt)

It's my job, Padre. I'm the leader and the leader has to set an example for his men no matter the risk.

(calls a nearby cop)

Sergeant, the guy claims he's got a

CAPTAIN (cont'd)
bomb but I say he's bluffing. Go on
in there and arrest his ass.

PADRE
Wait! What if he really does have a bomb?
Bystanders could be hurt.

CAPTAIN
You're right.
(gestures to others)
Stand back, folks. Clear the area. We
don't want innocent folks hurt.

SERGEANT
(aside)
What about innocent sergeants?

PADRE
But there are people in there! They'll
be hurt if he does have a bomb.

CAPTAIN
Fuck 'em. They don't count. They're
just dopers and lowlifes. Who needs 'em?

PADRE
(stung into action)
I'm going in, Sam!

SERGEANT
(relieved, brightens)
You are?

CAPTAIN
No! It's too dangerous!

PADRE
It's okay. I'll be safe.
(cross up)
I win even if I lose.

The PADRE strides purposefully toward the store. GG,
watching from the window, turns to the others.

GG
He's coming! Everybody light up! Smoke
something!

BETH hands out joints and everyone quickly puffs away and the ambient air starts clouding up. The PADRE enters and GG slams the door shut behind him. JUAN crosses himself.

JUAN

Thanks for coming in, Padre. You're a brave man.

PADRE

(smiles offers hand)

I'm safe because I'm wearing my St. Christopher medal.

(shows medal)

GG

It didn't help St. Christopher. They burned his ass at the stake in the 3rd century.

PADRE

(offers hand to JUAN)

I'm Fr. Ortiz.

JUAN

Juan Lopez, Padre.

GG

(extends hand)

I'm Grandpa. You from the Blessed Bleeding Stigmata parish, Padre? We do a lot of business with them.

PADRE

No, I'm a freelance priest. I just go about doing good works here and there.

EARL

What does a job like that pay, Rev?

PADRE

(piously)

I depend on the Lord to provide for me.

EARL

I know a guy tried that. He lives under a bridge.

BETH

Just how generous is the Lord, Padre?

PADRE

Very. He provided me with a trust fund.

EARL

It's a miracle!

BETH

How considerate!

GG

God is a financial planner now?

MOLLY

(to BOB)

I think we're in the wrong movie.
Maybe we should go.

BOB

No, wait. We can't go now. We have to see the end. Will the padre save Juan from the evil immigration cops? Will Captain Sam ever fire the tear gas? Will Juan's wife be deported and his family made homeless? Will we get out of here alive?

MOLLY

(holding on)

I think the furniture's moving!

GG

Here, Padre, have a seat How about some coffee and a cookie?

BETH is already putting coffee and cookie on the table and the smoke builds up. GG steers the priest by the elbow to the table.

JUAN

(sits, picks up cookie)

How long is the sanctuary good for, Padre?

PADRE

(sits, takes cookie)

Days, weeks, even years.

GG

Look, the question is, can Juan get away with this sanctuary stunt? Or is his wife a goner and he gets 20 years for disturbing the peace?

The bullhorn sounds again.

CAPTAIN

Padre Ortiz! Are you safe? Has he agreed to come out? If you don't reply I'll fire the tear gas and order the SWAT squad to attack!

EARL

(jerks door open)

Will you shut the hell up? The man's trying to think in here. Why don't you go play cop somewhere else and give a citizen some peace?

CAPTAIN

Why, you...!

(turns to AIDE)

Get the city attorney down here. I'm gonna check that sanctuary crap and get a legal answer.

AIDE

He's already here. He saw us on TV. He's talking to the chief now.

CAPTAIN

Get him here. Quick!

The AIDE leaves and the CAPTAIN scowls. Moments later, Sneed at his side, the CAPTAIN bellows again.

CAPTAIN

Hold your fire! I'm coming in with the city attorney!

BETH

He's bringing a lawyer?

EARL

I wonder whose side he'll be on?

GG

I'll get the door.

GG opens the door and the CAPTAIN and CITY ATTY SNEED enter. Both look like and are assholes.

BOB

Humph! They look like assholes to me.

GG

Don't mind Bob, Cap'n. He's got Tourette's Syndrome. He can't help speaking the truth when he sees it.

SNEED

(fans smoke from face)

See here, Mr. Ganja, this is no laughing matter. This man is armed and dangerous and a disturber of the peace.

JUAN

All I want is my wife to stay here with my kids! I'm a citizen, don't I have any rights?

EARL

Not anymore, you don't. The man took 'em away. Ask José Padilla.

The smoke is now thick and having its way with the receptors in everyone's brain.

CAPTAIN

(cuffs out)

You're under arrest, buddy.

PADRE

And you may go to Hell under canon law for violating a holy place!

CAPTAIN

Sneed, tell 'em about this sanctuary crap.

SNEED

It's an illegal act. Felons who flee from the authorities cannot take refuge in a church and claim sanctuary.

GG

Juan's not a felon.

SNEED

What?

GG

He's never even been arrested.

CAPTAIN

Say, Gramps, you're defending this guy. You could get jail time for harboring criminals.

BETH

Try some of our coffee, Captain. It's arabica mocha and often served at the White House.

CAPTAIN

(fans smoke)

Well, thanks. I love good coffee.

EARL

(aside to BETH)

The White House?

BETH

(shrugs)

I made it up. The man's an idiot.

GG

Have another cookie. The first one always tastes like another one.

SNEED

These are good, Sam. This may be the best cookie I've ever tasted.

CAPTAIN

Yeah, it's...

(looks at BOB)

Do I know you?

BOB

I don't know. Do you?

MOLLY

(primping)

We just got married yesterday.

SNEED

(to BOB)

Knocked her up, did you?

GG

Say, we're forgetting Juan. His wife will be across the border before we can form a committee at this rate.

JUAN

Look, I'm not a criminal. I got my gun at Toys R Us. I...

CAPTAIN

What about your infernal machine?

JUAN

I lied. I don't have a bomb. I only want to get an extension so my wife can stay here. Nobody will listen, it's all red tape and bullshit.

Everybody are stoned now and things proceed accordingly.

PADRE

I'm going to call the Cardinal!

EARL

He's practicing birdcalls?

GG

He's calling in the big guns. The Cardinal could excommunicate every asshole out there.

BOB

Why, that would be half of the population!

MOLLY

When do I go on?

CAPTAIN

So, Sneed, what's the verdict?

SNEED

(admiring cookie)

They're delicious! I'll bet you could
sell these for \$5 apiece!

GG

(wryly)

Or even more.

CAPTAIN

Is it legal or not?

SNEED

Is what legal?

CAPTAIN

Uh, what were we talking about?

JUAN

Uh, you were saying how unfair it is
that my wife is being deported.

EARL

Yeah, and she should get a green card,
too. That's what you said, man.

SNEED

You got any more of these cookies?

EARL leans over and blows a mighty draft of pot smoke into
the CAPTAIN'S face. He blinks.

GG

(leans in)

Cap'n, maybe you haven't noticed, but
everyone outside there is Mexican. Juan
is Mexican. You want to deport Juan's
wife, also Mexican, with a million
Mexicans watching on TV. Very tricky.
Arrest Juan and get a million enemies
on the spot or give his wife an extension
and make a million friends. Your call.

EARL

If you're gonna arrest him give me a
head start before you tell the crowd.

SNEED

(warily)

Is there a back way out?

BOB

Why don't you give Juan a head start?

MOLLY

And his wife, too!

GG

Look, Cap'n, this isn't right and everyone knows it. You're breaking up a family here. It's about justice and fair play and doing right and that's what that crowd out there is pissed about.

JUAN

Let me go home with my wife and kids, Captain. Help us get the extension from Immigration Office so we can appeal the order. America is our country and it's Rosa's country, too, and we want to stay here.

CAPTAIN

But there are a million Rosas in this town and if we let 'em all in they'll ruin us!

EARL

You mean like the Irish and the Italians and Brits and Germans and Jews and Asians and all those other immigrants who were going to ruin America?

SNEED

You know what? There's something funny going on here. I think we're running out of time.

BOB

Yeah, I don't know how they did it but they made time slow down.

BETH

You've only been in here for ten minutes.

SNEED

No, I mean time its self. I can't remember what time it is or how much we have left.

GG

It's the pot. It makes you smarter. Every time you smoke the stuff your IQ jumps 20 points and you start thinking really heavy thoughts like are we running out of time or whatever happened to Judge Crater.

JUAN

Say okay, Captain. Let Rosa stay.

CAPTAIN

I can't.

EARL

You better.

BOB

Last chance.

MOLLY

(alarmed)

This is our last chance?

The PADRE wanders in and closes his cell phone en route.

GG

(straw grasping)

Any luck with the Cardinal, Padre?

PADRE

No. Someone said he should sell some of his jewels to help the poor and he had a stroke. Four Cardinals tried to help him and they all had strokes, too.

EARL

Maybe God's trying to tell 'em something.

GG

(waves everyone off)

Okay. Enough bullshit. It's a done deal! Juan, you're free to go. Tell Rosa we're delighted to have her and her family in our city.

JUAN jumps up and claps his hands and runs to the door, throws it open, and waves to the onlookers to come on in. In no time dozens of joyous well-wishers fill the Emporium and all turn out to be exponents of deep breathing exercises. Somebody sends out for pizzas and GG tosses cookies hither and yon and a great time is had by all.

The End

Sanctuary bit GG sitcom #7

Cops priests crowds TV national news
infernial machine bit

Old geezer pissed with pols