

Miles To Go

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FADE IN.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A clear, blue sky. A vibrant green palm tree blows gently in the wind. It moves gracefully, softly floating and exuding tranquility.

EXT. WINDOW OF A HOUSE - DAY

A MAN stares through the pane of a window focusing on the top of the aforementioned tree. He's full of tension but the calming effect of the plant almost washes something off of him.

Something he can't live with anymore.

This is ROBERT. Early 70s. A hidden pain hides underneath all his years. Anguish covers his face.

He clutches a rosary in his hand...

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A framed 8x10 picture sits on a table. It's a professional headshot style portrait of a WOMAN, late 60s. She's beautiful, thoughtful and full of life. This is MARGERIE.

Next to the picture are some vases of flowers. Then more flowers. And then a few half eaten platters of food.

But this isn't a festive celebration.

Into the living room, several FUNERAL GUESTS dressed in black sit around a table making small conversation.

BILL and NANCY, normally cheerful neighbors of Robert and Margerie, sit quietly grieving. As supportive close friends, they feel helpless in an awful situation.

BILL

Gone. Just like that.

NANCY

So sudden...

FUNERAL GUEST #1

Who would've thought...pneumonia
is scary...

FUNERAL GUEST #2

(whispering)

(MORE)

FUNERAL GUEST #2 (CONT'D)

I can't imagine how Robert
feels...

FUNERAL GUEST #3

This house looks so lovely...

NANCY

She didn't seem sick at all...

A YOUNG WOMAN, late 20s, sits near them, but doesn't seem so convinced by their words. She's looking down, hearing everything but remains polite.

There's a resilience on her face that is fighting through the heartbreak. This is DAWN.

This is the first time she's sat down since her mother passed. Through her fidgeting, her discomfort shows. The innocuous conversation grates on her ears.

NANCY

Dawn, your mother was...the
kindest woman.

DAWN

(almost to herself)
I know.

Dawn pauses, rises and then leaves the room. Nancy wonders if she said anything out of turn. The guests sit uncomfortably...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dawn enters and puts one of the half eaten bowls of food on the counter top. She makes no effort to do it gently or without noise--

And it SLAMS.

Robert jumps, startled by the noise. His window gazing interrupted and soft focus shattered. He turns around and sees his daughter--

They stare at each other. Neither expecting the other.

A pause--

DAWN

I'm leaving.

ROBERT

Ok. Are you sure-

DAWN
Yes.

ROBERT
Do you need anything-

DAWN
No.

ROBERT
Dawn-

DAWN
(nearly exploding)
No. I told you this could happen
if she wasn't treated-

ROBERT
I know. I know.

Silence. Robert looks down. He knows there's nothing he can say that's going to keep her here.

Dawn knows this isn't the place for this conversation. She notices his shame and almost feels bad.

But not quite.

DAWN
I have to go. The babysitter is
waiting...

ROBERT
Right.

Dawn sees her Mother's rosary in his hand. She takes it from him. Efficiently.

DAWN
You won't be seeing me again.

In one final attempt, Robert goes to reach out to her.

ROBERT
Can I call? Later..?

But Dawn pulls back.

DAWN
I don't know.

She wipes away a tear. After one hardened look at her father, she turns and leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dawn exits aggressively through the front door. She moves hurriedly, full of rage and despair as she makes her way to a car.

She struggles to open the car door. She finally gets inside, slams the door shut and then stops--

SHE SCREAMS.

And then speeds away.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Robert watches from the window as Dawn leaves.

He turns around to see the final group of remaining guests in the room behind him. Everyone looks ready to leave and is in the awkward state of goodbyes.

A couple approaches Robert.

FUNERAL GUEST #1
Can we bring you anything?

ROBERT
I'll be alright.

FUNERAL GUEST #2
Call if you need anything.

ROBERT
Thank you for coming.

The guests, one by one, hug Robert goodbye near the foyer and then exit.

Bill and Nancy then solemnly walk up to him.

NANCY
Can we help you clean up? I'd feel just terrible leaving you in the house like this.

ROBERT
Thanks, but I got it.

NANCY
Please, it's no trouble at all.

BILL
We don't mind, really-

ROBERT
(strong)
No.

A beat.

NANCY
Alright. Well. Remember, we're
just down the block if...

BILL
Just say the word.

ROBERT
Thank you.

NANCY
I'm so...so-

Nancy, trying to keep it together, gives him a long hug.

BILL
Let's get out there and hit the
greens when you're ready. Could be
good, buddy.

ROBERT
Yeah.

Robert and Bill man-hug and they all move toward the front door.

INT./EXT. DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert waves goodbye as his friends walk away. He closes the door. Exhales.

He turns around and sees the empty house. Just the flowers and half eaten plates of food are left.

The picture of Margerie stares back at him. He can't look at it and turns it facing away.

FADE TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A couple weeks later.

The same flowers are still there but far from alive. In the kitchen, dirty dishes fill up in the sink. A nearby trash bin is overflowing.

The house is in a state of decay. The portrait of his wife is still turned around and facing away.

Robert, in a similar state as the house, enters through the kitchen and puts a dirty water glass on the counter. A beard has now covered his face.

He sighs and reluctantly heads to the garage.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Robert opens the garage door. He looks out on the street. Another bright sunny day. Stillness in the air.

Across the street, the palm tree wavers softly in the wind...

He walks over to a corner and wrestles with his golf clubs. They're a bit dusty. It's obvious he doesn't want to do this.

Bill, right on time, pulls up in a golf cart. He's slightly taken aback for a split second by Robert's messy appearance.

BILL

Hey, there he is. Glad you picked up the phone this time. 'Bout time to get you outta the house. This is going to be great..!

Robert lugs his golf clubs over to the back of the cart and places them on.

ROBERT

Hi.

BILL

Can I give you a hand with those?

ROBERT

I got it.

Robert ignores him and goes over to the passenger side of the cart, gradually getting inside. Bill, ready as ever sits in the driver's seat and turns to his friend--

BILL

How are you doing? Lookin scruffy, huh? That's alright. I like it! Beards are in these days, I hear. Good day to play, huh? It'll be great to get out there...

Robert appears blank as they drive off. Bill, noticing the lack of usual comradery, attempts to fill the empty space.

BILL
 Been awhile since we played,
 huh...

Robert glares at Bill.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

On the tee box for the first hole, Robert and Bill are joined by two other male GOLF FRIENDS, 60s. One of them has just teed off.

Robert's turn is next but he doesn't move. Bill encourages him with a hearty pat on the back.

BILL
 C'mon buddy, you'll be great.

Robert, somewhere between apathy and disdain walks up to the tee. He bends down and places the wooden tee in the ground.

GOLF FRIEND #1
 The green is only 300 yards from
 here.

Robert attempts to place the ball on the tee, but it falls off. This happens a few times.

GOLF FRIEND #2
 You havin' trouble gettin it up?
 That's never been a problem for
 you before.

GOLF FRIEND #1
 Just pretend it's a young piece of
 ass!

The Golfers laugh. Bill gently smacks Friend #1 and gives him a glare as to say, 'Shut. Up.'

Finally, Robert places the ball on the tee.

He looks down at the golf ball, still oddly nervous. His hands are sweaty. He can't focus. He exhales, straightens his stance. He looks back at the ball, motionless. He inhales and arches his swing back--

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Later that day.

Robert and his friend sit in the golf cart, driving back from the course.

Bill rambles, filling the otherwise empty conversation space.

BILL

Hey, don't feel bad, everyone has tough days. Sometimes the green gets the better of you. But you're out there. You're doing it. Good to get outta the house, y'know.

ROBERT

Maybe I'll take a road trip.

BILL

Yeah? That's a great idea! Get outside. See part of the country. Just you and the open road. Take in the sights! Boy oh boy would I like to do that. Maybe we could do it together..!

Bill keeps chattering on while Robert is motionless...

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Robert throws his golf clubs back against the wall and heads inside the house.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert walks into his empty house and grabs his dirty water glass from the counter top.

Next to the glass is the landline phone with a new message on it. Out of habit, he presses play.

He takes the glass and goes over to the fridge. He fills it with fresh water and takes a long drink.

VOICEMAIL MACHINE

Hi, we're calling to let you know that you have qualified for a free quote on quality life insurance. Please give us a call at 352-633-9231 at your earliest convenience and we can review your free estimate.

Robert, exhausted, leans back against the fridge--

VOICEMAIL MACHINE

First saved messaged. Hi, this is Dr.

(MORE)

VOICEMAIL MACHINE (CONT'D)
Walker calling from Clermont
Medical. I'm following
up...personally, on the last
appointment we had. It's crucial
we discuss Margerie's current
medical state in regards to the
advancement of Huntington's
disease--

Robert, enraged, rushes back into the room and SLAMS DOWN on the voicemail machine, cutting off the message.

INT. SHOWER - LATER

Robert showers. The water pours down his face. The liquid hides his emotion and we can't tell if he's crying or not.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Robert sits down on the couch. Looks at the TV. It's off. He reaches for the remote. But in his sightline is a picture of Margerie and Dawn.

Of the two women in it...one won't talk to him and the other is dead.

Robert backhands the picture to the ground.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert lays in bed, staying on one side only. The bed feels too big for just him.

He shifts positions, trying to get comfortable. He can't sleep.

The ceiling fan above spins round and round. He watches it encircle him. The fan seems faster and faster, sending Robert into a haze...

The Doctor's voicemail creeping back into his brain...

DR. WALKER (O.S.)
Hi, this is Doctor Walker calling
from Clermont Medical. I'm
following up...personally, on the
last appointment we had. It's
crucial we discuss Margerie's
current medical state in regards
to the advancement of Huntington's
disease.

(MORE)

DR. WALKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I can't stress how important it is
that you take this seriously and
come in for another appointment...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - FLASHBACK

DOCTOR ANN WALKER, African-American, 50s, sits at her desk reviewing paperwork. She's calm and thoughtful in her movements. Everything you hope a Doctor would be.

Robert enters the office and glares at Dr. Walker.

DR. WALKER
Please have a seat.

Robert remains standing.

DR. WALKER
Where's Margerie?

ROBERT
She can't make it in today.

DR. WALKER
Is she sick?

ROBERT
No.

Dr. Walker does her best to hide the slight annoyance in her tone.

DR. WALKER
This is a follow up appointment
for her.

ROBERT
I know. I told her she didn't need
to be here today.

DR. WALKER
Ok. I get the impression you don't
want to be here either.

ROBERT
Well, I know you want us here.
Better for your bottom line-

DR. WALKER
Mr. Cioco, your wife has an
advanced stage of Huntington's
disease.

Robert sits down.

DR. WALKER

This has been verified with a secondary medical lab. And while the symptoms might not show easily, this is a degenerative, life threatening disease.

ROBERT

So you're telling me this is fatal? She's in perfect health.

DR. WALKER

You might think she's in perfect health, but she's not. While the disease might not in itself be fatal, she is susceptible to a range of other illnesses which could be deadly. While there's no cure, we can at least start to think about treatment options.

A beat.

DR. WALKER

We should really be discussing this with Margerie.

Robert digests this for a moment--

ROBERT

And whatever treatment you're suggesting...I'm sure it's pretty costly.

DR. WALKER

No major medical treatment is going to be inexpensive. No matter which facility you receive treatment at. But I hope you understand the seriousness of the issue here.

ROBERT

All you're telling me is Margie *might* get sick at some point. And if that happens it'll be as it always is, and I'll take care of her.

DR. WALKER

And I'm telling you that you won't be able to.

ROBERT
You think I don't know what's best
for my wife..?

DR. WALKER
Respectfully, you haven't
convinced me otherwise.

A pause--

DR. WALKER
You would have to become the full
time primary caregiver but a more
ideal situation is to have an at
home professional who can attend
to the demands of the disease-

Robert stands up--

ROBERT
This is ridiculous. I don't need
some woman with fancy science to
insult me-

DR. WALKER
It's not an insult, these are
facts. Medical facts.

ROBERT
Thanks Doc but we're not
interested. I have a tee time to
get to.

Robert heads for the door. Dr. Walker stands up--

DR. WALKER
Mr. Ciego this is more important
than golf-

ROBERT
We'll call if I change my mind.

Robert slams the door on his way out.

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Present day. Robert is in bed with the sheet draped over him
like a scared child.

He looks at the bedside clock. 4 AM.

He untucks his hand and places it on Margerie's side of the
bed. He closes his eyes hard, trying to remember the feeling of
something that he'll never, ever have again.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robert stares at the phone. He picks it up.

He makes his way to a wall, back against it, and slowly slides down. The weight of the world pulling him to the floor.

He dials a number. The phone rings. And rings. It goes to voicemail--

DAWN (O.S.)

Hi, this is Dawn, sorry I missed
ya but leave a message and I'll
call you back. Thanks.

Robert breathes. He doesn't know where to start.

ROBERT

Am I really talking to you? Or am
I talking to...You sound just
like...

Robert stops himself.

This is the worst phone call he's ever made in his life.

ROBERT

I know...she loved you more. Well.
She loved you better than I did.
Maybe that's it.

A beat.

ROBERT

There's a punishment for this
behavior. Blind...male...behavior.
It's...overdue.

Robert pauses...

ROBERT

Is there Heaven up there you
think? But my fate is...Look, I'm
not asking you for
forgiveness...I'm not asking for
anything anymore...This isn't
about me. You're the one who
deserves a better life. And your
daughter. My...grand-...

Robert wipes away a tear. Takes a moment.

ROBERT
Parents...want their children to
be...better than they are. Wiser.
At least I know that's the case
with you.

Robert takes a deep breath.

ROBERT
I...I'll be seeing you. I hope.

A pause--

ROBERT
I love you.

FADE TO:

EXT. SKY - MORNING

A pulsating orange sun rises in a clear blue sky.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Robert cleans all the dirty dishes in the sink. He wipes them dry and neatly puts everything away.

He goes around the house and collects the dead flowers. He places them in a black trash bag.

He picks back up picture frame from the floor. He carefully removes the picture of his wife and daughter from the frame...

He looks at the happy, smiling family.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The entranceway of a modest apartment. Dawn, wearing scrubs, enters through the front door.

This is her home. And she's happy to be here after a long day of work.

She places a stack of mail and her phone on the table. Right next to Margerie's rosary.

One her phone, one missed call from Robert...

Dawn exits to the next room.

BACK TO:

Robert places the remnants of the broken glass into the trash. He ties up the bag and places it near the door to the garage.

Dawn walks back to the table, flips through the mail, and uncovers a large envelope.

She doesn't know what it could be...she checks the address label--

It's from her father. She focuses on the middle name--

Robert Miles Cieco.

 DAWN
 (confused)
 Miles?

And she realizes that not only is this another secret that he's kept but just how little she truly knows about this man she's called her father.

Music starts to play...

In the bathroom, Robert shaves his face clean.

Robert takes one last look at the house. Cleaner, but still empty. Everything seems to be in order. He assesses then instantly stops. Something is wrong--

He goes over to the picture of Margerie and turns it back around.

He surveys the house again. Better.

Dawn, annoyed, opens the large envelope. It's full of legal documents. She looks closer--

Its Robert's will.

He left her everything.

Robert turns off the lights, picks up the trash bags and heads into the garage.

Dawn's initial disdain is overcome by confusion. She pauses for a moment...

But why would he send me this?

She thinks. Looks over at her phone.

The voicemail.

Wide eyed, she grabs here phone and her keys and runs out the door--

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Robert opens the garage door. He places the black bags in the trash can.

He turns and looks outside. Another beautiful day.

He stares at the same palm tree. He smiles softly at it, in the way that a man who can never truly smile tries to.

The spirited palm floats behind him in the sky...

Robert takes one last look and then heads into his car. He turns on the ignition--

He adjusts the seat and checks his mirrors. He lowers the windows all the way down.

He looks at the passenger side. Resting on the seat is the picture of his family.

He takes his wedding ring off and places it on top of the photo.

He appears at peace.

Robert inhales--

And presses the button for the garage. The door closes as the sunlight slips away and the space around Robert becomes pitch black.

THE END