

The Walk To Work

A Short Story

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Edited by Asher Warren

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The Walk to Work

Aaron Wilson was a single father living in Encinitas, California. He lived in an apartment with his two kids, Jackson and Rudolph. Rudolph was his four-year-old daughter who was named for a birth defect that made her nose unusually red. Jackson was seventeen years old and he was quiet, not doing well in school, and didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. Earlier that year, they had lost their mother, Aaron's wife, Lisa. She had been battling with cancer on and off for three years before it finally beat her.

Aaron worked as a waiter at Union, a restaurant near where he lived. After his wife passed, he had to sell the car to afford rent so he had to walk to work. He lived a mile and a half away from his job, not too far, but also not too close considering he had to walk. His work hours consisted of 11:00 am to 11:00 pm. The walk there was nice, but the walk back was scary. People drove like maniacs and even though he took the sidewalk, everyone was drunk and it wasn't very safe.

On the morning of February 2nd, Aaron woke up early as usual to make his kids breakfast before they had to go to school. He rolled out of bed and stumbled into his bathroom so he could shower and brush his teeth. Once he was all dressed and ready, he hobbled into the kitchen to cook breakfast. His kids both liked a simple breakfast, eggs, and bacon.

As he scrambled the eggs and cooked the bacon in a heap of butter, Jackson walked into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes.

“Morning, son,” greeted Aaron.

“Morning,” grumbled Jackson. He took a seat at the table while his dad finished up breakfast.

“Did you wake your sister?” Aaron asked.

“No, I didn’t.”

“Well go do it, you guys both have school in an hour.” Jackson was a senior at San Dieguito Academy and Rudolph was in kindergarten at The Rhoades School. Both schools were close to each other so Jackson would walk her to school while Aaron stayed home to relax before work.

“I just sat down, do I have to go wake her up now?” asked Jackson.

“Yes!”

“Why can’t you do it!?”

“I’m making breakfast for you guys, just go wake your sister!”

“I’m too tired.”

“Too tired!?” shouted Aaron, “I work twelve hours a day every goddamn day just so you guys can have a home and food! The least you can do is wake your sister!” Jackson groaned but did as he was told.

“Fuck you,” muttered Jackson as he walked out of the kitchen and went into his sister’s room. Jackson and Aaron didn’t have the best father-son relationship, Aaron was a good dad, but Jackson didn’t see it. A few minutes later, Aaron was done with breakfast and he was setting it up on the dining room table as Jackson walked back in with Rudolph.

“Breakfast is ready!” sang Aaron. Jackson and Rudolph sat down and started to eat, Aaron joined them after washing his hands.

“Dad, some of my friends are going to get food after school, can I go with them? I’ll be home by seven.”

“No, you need to walk your sister home from school first. She’s not old enough yet to walk home by herself. After you get her home, then you can hang out with your friends,” said Aaron.

“But they can’t take me if I walk her home, I would have to go straight after school.”

“Then I’m sorry, but it’s a no.”

“She literally lives five minutes away. She can walk home by herself,” argued Jackson.

“Jackson, I said no. She’s four years old, it’s not safe for her.”

“C’mon, can I please go with my friends?” Jackson asked in an aggressive tone.

“I said no!” screamed Aaron.

“You’re the fucking worst!” Jackson screamed back. The two of them got into a long and loud argument, Rudolph didn’t know what was going on and she started to cry. The argument lasted about five minutes before Jackson grabbed his bag, commanded his sister to leave with him, and stormed out the door. Aaron was left alone, sitting at the table, his voice coarse from all the yelling. The last words they had said to each other in the argument were, “I wish you weren’t my dad!” shouted by Jackson, and, “You should’ve died instead of your mother,” which was said by Aaron.

Aaron loved his son and he didn’t mean what he said, he was just frustrated. He loved his kids, he really did. He just had a super stressful life and never seemed to be able to catch a break. Aaron cleaned up the table and kitchen before walking into his room and getting dressed for work. Even though it was only 8:00 and his job wasn’t for another three hours, he still wanted to be ready. Once he was dressed, he sat down on his bed and turned on the TV. He needed to relax before going to work.

After about two hours of mindlessly staring at the TV, he headed out and made the trip to work. As said before, the walk was about a mile and a half and it took about half an hour. He grabbed his coat and headed to work. The walk was typical, he said hi to a few people along the way and avoided some people that he wasn't too fond of. Once he got to work, he clocked in and his shift was normal.

During his shift, he could only think about how bad he felt having that argument with his son, and he was hoping that Jackson would listen to him and not go out with his friends after school. His shift ended a bit late, around 11:26 p.m. Aaron said goodbye to all his coworkers and then headed out. It was super cold and even though he had a jacket, he was still shivering. The dangerous part of the walk home was at the halfway point. There was a large crosswalk where drivers barely paid attention to crossing pedestrians.

Aaron waited at the light for it to signal that he could cross. He noticed that on the other side, there was a group of drunk teens. Aaron sighed and crossed when the signal was given. Cars were moving at crazy fast speeds and he was being careful not to get hit. As soon as he and the group of drunk teens passed each other, one of them accidentally bumped into him. Aaron's feet crossed over each other and he lost balance, he tripped over to the side and out of the bounds of the crosswalk.

A car speeding by caught him at just that moment, sending Aaron rolling down the street. As soon as the bumper of the car made contact with Aaron's fragile body, he was killed. The driver slammed on the brakes and exited the car to see the damage he had caused. The driver who had hit Aaron was of course drunk, the reality that he had just killed a man barely resonated with him. Aaron Wilson was gone, he was never

going to see his kids again and the last thing he said to his son was, “You should’ve died instead of your mother.”

Later that night, around midnight, Jackson opened the door to his apartment. He hadn’t listened to his dad and he’d gone out with his friends. He was wasted and could barely function. As he stepped inside the house, he saw his little sister sitting on the couch in the living room with a police officer.

“What’s going on?” asked Jackson, stumbling over his own words.

“You might wanna sit down,” said the officer. Rudolph was crying and the officer had a very serious look on his face.

“Where’s Dad?” Jackson asked, Rudolph cried harder.

“Please, sit.”

“Where’s Dad!?” Jackson screamed before coming to the realization that his dad was gone.

“I’m sorry, son,” said the officer.