

"WITHOUT AIR"

By

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One Character Short Story

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FINAL DRAFT

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FADE IN

INT. ROSIE'S BEDROOM (LYING DOWN) - NIGHT

The bedroom resembles a dark, dirty, and silent storage room. ROSIE lies asleep in bed, stretched out on her back.

Rosie begins to fidget lightly, which slowly cascades down into one rapid jerk of her leg. Her head springs off the pillow, now fully alert.

She rubs her eyes into focus and turns on the lamp that rests on her nightstand. Her eyes pan around the room unaware about what woke her up, but see nothing.

She shrugs it off with a yawn, stretches her arms out in the air, and then thrusts herself back into her safe and comfortable pillow.

Suddenly it happens again, this time stronger. She begins to feel a shortness of breath. Her head involuntarily heaves upward toward the ceiling as she gasps for air in panic. She reaches toward her husband's side of the bed in desperation, only to dreadfully remember that he is not with her anymore.

She notices something out of the corner of her eye and turns around toward the nebulizer on the floor near her dresser.

INT. ROSIE'S BEDROOM (ON FOOT) - NIGHT

ROSIE pulls her legs bedside and exhaustingly lifts herself up.

She stumbles over to the nebulizer, flicks it on and quickly positions the mouthpiece. But it is completely empty of her medicine. Her breathing grows more erratic. She tries to get air straight from the compressor tubing itself but finds that it is not enough.

She turns to the phone on the dresser and rests her palm over the receiver. She hesitates, showing reservations about calling the hospital due to the fact that she has always neglected to follow their advice in the past. She gives in, picks up the receiver, and dials 9-1-1.

A receptionist answers the phone, but all Rosie can hear is a muffled male voice because the intensity of the pain is beginning to overwhelm her senses. She tries to state the emergency, but her constant gasps for air override her persistent attempts at speaking.

She frustratingly drops the receiver. It occurs to her that she had accidentally left her ventilator downstairs in the living room. She heads out of her bedroom and into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Feebly, ROSIE starts scaling the soot stained walls of the hallway with her hands, leaving finger trails in her wake. She peers out past the staircase railing and sees her ventilator sitting next to her favorite chair.

The sound of mists attracts her attention further down the hallway. She sees mists from her two son's air purifiers billowing out of their bedrooms. For a moment she thinks about going to them for help, but decides that even in her current distress she is not going to disturb their rest.

She walks over to the staircase railing and begins to descend step by step, hand over hand. Every movement causes her breath to grow fainter. In between breaths, she starts to cough up small amounts of tar.

She is completely slouched over the railing by the time she reaches the bottom, her skin as pale as a cadaver.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The living room is dimly lit with a mess of children toys on the floor. The furniture is scattered and very unkempt.

Hunched over and off balance, ROSIE begins her trek toward the coffee table for something to lean on. Suddenly she trips over one of her son's toys, and tumbles toward the table's glass surface with a loud crash as she watches an overflowed ash tray spill onto the ground near her.

She tries to pry herself up from the dirty floor using nearby furniture, but only manages to slide her arm over a lamp table and knock down several family picture frames in the process.

On the floor, she bobs her body back and forth and lunges her elbows forward in a swimming motion. Her weak breaths barely manage to compensate all the physical activity.

Rosie stretches her right arm out toward the ventilator as she continues to pull herself along with the other arm. She feels her lungs begin to violently hemorrhage.

Now within reaching distance, she finally grabs the mask and cuffs it over her face with her right hand. After several seconds of nothing, the fresh oxygen starts to revitalize her. She savors her first healthy breath as she feels life rush back inside her.

She hears two light pairs of footsteps hurriedly clattering their way down the staircase to check on the loud noise. Not wanting her boys to see her curled up on the floor with a ventilator, she extends her left arm out toward the floor and begins to hoist herself onto her favorite chair.

On the way up, she notices a fallen photo of her late husband buried in a pile of ashes. She embraces eye contact but feels a strong, disapproving gaze. Rosie takes the photo in hand and removes the mask from her face. She gently kisses her husband on the forehead and whispers privately.

She caresses the photo in her palms as her boys finish their investigative approach.

CUT TO BLACK