

"The Fallen"

by
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1

EXT. SWACKHAMER HOME - MORNING

1

BILLY SWACKHAMER, 17, wearing a gray hoodie and a Red Sox ballcap, is reluctantly raking leaves on the sizeable front lawn of his family's three-story home. There are *many*, and he has barely begun. A compost bag beside him is less than a third full.

He suddenly hears a lilting, female voice (GIRL) from near the street behind him.

GIRL

May I have your leaves please?

Billy turns. The girl is about his age and petite. She is wearing a knee-length, cream-colored sweater - hardly warm enough against the weather that's moving in.

Her hair is blonde, and her skin is white. Very white.

Rake in hand, he walks to her, circling around his car in the driveway.

BILLY

(confused)

You want the leaves?

GIRL

Please.

BILLY

How much?

GIRL

I'm sorry?

BILLY

Money.

GIRL

I don't understand.

BILLY

What do I need to pay you to do the job?

GIRL

Nothing.

(beat)

As a matter of fact. . .

She takes some tiny steps toward him and removes a folded bill from a sweater pocket. She holds it out to him.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL

. . . you may have this.

Billy is amazed. A fifty!

BILLY

You want to pay *me* for the leaves?

GIRL

Yes.

BILLY

That's not the way it usually
goes. The person who does the work
gets the money.

The girl tucks the fifty into one of his hoodie's
pockets.

GIRL

Yes?

BILLY

Thanks.

He passes her his rake, which she holds upside down.

BILLY

Are the others coming soon?

GIRL

Others?

BILLY

Your helpers.

GIRL

I need no assistance.

BILLY

J-Just you?

(beat)

You'll never finish.

GIRL

Do not doubt me.

BILLY

All the leaves need to be bagged
by three o'clock, when my parents
get home.

GIRL

Plenty of time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She turns the rake over.

BILLY

You're sure you don't. . .

She looks at him.

BILLY

If you don't finish on time, my
dad will have my butt in a sling.
I'll be grounded all weekend, and
I have plans.

The girl gently takes one of his arms and pushes him
toward his car.

GIRL

Go.

BILLY

(beat)
Just a minute.

He runs to the house and checks the door. Locked! He
walks back to her.

BILLY

The compost bags are by the tree.

He points at the open bag.

BILLY

I started one.

GIRL

Not to worry.

Unsure what to make of this whole thing, Billy gets into
his car, starts the ignition, and backs out onto the
street.

FADE TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S - MOMENTS LATER

Billy sits in a booth, slowly eating his value meal. He
is clearly nervous.

He looks at the clock on the wall. 12:45. He nods
nervously.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

BILLY
(sotto voce)
Better go.

He wolfs down the rest of his lunch, throws away the trash, and hurries to his car.

FADE TO:

3 EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

3

Driving, Billy nears his house. He doesn't see the girl.

BILLY
Son of a . . .

He quickly pulls into the driveway.

The rake is leaning against the tree, and all the leaves are gone. Not a shred of one remains.

He walks to the rake. The four compost bags are folded neatly underneath it - even the one he started before the girl showed up.

He scratches his head.

BILLY
She *must* have had help!

He nervously walks to the house door, which is still locked tight.

FADE TO:

4 EXT. SWACKHAMER HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

4

ACROSS THE SCREEN: ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER.

Billy, now 42, pulls his beloved, but tattered, Red Sox ballcap over his balding head. He is wearing a hoodie.

His dad comes out of the house and, cane in hand, heads for his car.

Billy hurries to him.

BILLY
Dad, hold up!

(CONTINUED)

DAD

(bothered)

What is it, son? I *really* have to go. I'm late already.

BILLY

(hopefully)

May I come with you?

DAD

Sorry, but no.

(beat)

The doctors will only let one person at a time see your mother, and that's me.

BILLY

But -

DAD

She'll be *really* tired after her chemo. All she'll want to do is sleep.

(beat)

Better that you go home.

BILLY

(disheartened)

OK. Give her my best, huh?

DAD

I always do.

He opens the car door.

BILLY

I'll visit as soon as the doctors allow it.

DAD

She'll be happy to hear that.

(beat)

Leave the raking for me. I know how you hate it.

BILLY

True, but -

DAD

I'll do it later.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED: (2)

4

DAD (CONT'D)

It. . . It takes my mind off of things.

FADE TO:

5

EXT. SWACKHAMER HOME - MOMENTS LATER

5

Dad has left. Billy, rake in hand, is about to begin his annual hated chore.

GIRL

Hello again.

He drops the rake and quickly turns. It is the girl from before - the one who bought the leaves.

However, unlike him, she doesn't look a day older. She walks to Billy.

GIRL

May I have your leaves please?

She reaches into her sweater pocket, pulls out two fifties, and hands them to him.

GIRL

I figure that, after all these years, the price has gone up.

(beat)

Now, why don't you go enjoy yourself somewhere while I get to work?

FADE TO:

6

EXT. SWACKHAMER HOME - NIGHTFALL

6

There is not even a *hint* of a leaf on the lawn as a very tired Dad pulls into the driveway. Cane first, he slowly gets out of his car.

He looks around with his puffy eyes.

DAD

Nice work, son.

BILLY

It wasn't me. Some school kids came by. I gave them a few bucks.

(beat)

You need your rest.

(CONTINUED)

Dad sighs.

DAD
I think you're right.

BILLY
(anxiously)
How's Mom?

DAD
(longish beat)
She's holding her own, but it's
gonna be a long road.
(beat)
You may as well go home. We can
talk tomorrow.

BILLY
You don't want me to stay with you
tonight?

DAD
No thanks. I'm beat right down to
my socks. I'm going straight to
bed.

Billy walks to his dad and gives him a big hug. He sneaks
a fifty into one of his father's jacket pockets.

FADE TO:

EXT. SWACKHAMER HOME - EARLY EVENING

ACROSS THE SCREEN: ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER.

Billy, now 67, puts his beloved, old Red Sox ballcap onto
his bald head. He is wearing a puffy jacket against the
chill.

A sign at the end of the driveway says the house is now
for sale and that you should contact realtor Jim Walsh if
you're interested.

A wind scatters the fallen leaves around Billy's feet. He
looks at the house for a bit and swallows hard. He dabs
at his eyes with a coat sleeve.

BILLY
Miss ya both.

His cell rings.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY

Dammit!

He fumbles in his coat for the phone. He finds it and answers.

BILLY

(into the phone)

Hello?

(beat)

Yes, Mr. Walsh? . . . No, I struck out. Believe me, I *tried*, but it's too late in the day to hire someone to bag up the leaves for your surprise client tomorrow.

(beat; sotto voce)

Talk about short notice.

Billy sighs a heavy sigh.

BILLY

If you want to come and help while there's still light, I have *two* rakes. . . I didn't think so. . . I'll do what I can.

(beat)

Goodbye.

He hangs up the phone and puts it back into his pocket.

BILLY

Damn money-hungry realtor.

He feels a gentle tap on his shoulder and turns quickly.

The girl - and *still* not a day older than when they first met nearly fifty years ago.

GIRL

Remember me?

Unsure, Billy stares at her.

BILLY

(confused)

I feel I *should*, but the old brainpan's been foggy lately.

She reaches out a hand and, for a few seconds, presses her thumb gently against his forehead. He swoons a little at the touch. She withdraws her hand and uses both hands to keep him from falling.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL
(hopefully)
Now?

He smiles at the returned memory.

BILLY
The leaves.
She nods.

GIRL
That's right.
Billy grins and gestures at the lawn.

BILLY
If you want more, I've got plenty.

GIRL
Not today.

In the moonless night - as if on cue - a cutting wind starts blowing down the street. Billy shivers in the chill, but the girl doesn't seem bothered by it.

A large, diamond-shaped aircraft glides down above the street, like a surfer on a wave, and hovers over Billy and the girl. The unraked leaves blow in all directions.

Billy shields his old eyes against the glowing and blinking lights on the ship's belly. The girl takes one of his wrinkled hands in one of her alabaster ones.

GIRL
Come.

FADE TO:

An alien craft lands on the multicolored planet Kymar.

Billy, who fell asleep for most of the trip from Earth, is gently nudged by the girl.

He awakes groggily, his eyes focusing on her. She helps him to his feet.

The interior of the craft is sleek, with barely any visible controls. Several people, nearly identical to the girl, stand at attention while on duty.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY

What -

The girl puts a delicate finger to his lips.

GIRL

Shhh! First, see.

She presses a large, red button on the bulkhead, and the hatch slides up into itself. Billy takes a breath of the sweetest air he has ever known and smiles.

The planet he sees outside the hatch is covered with leaves of many colors and shapes - all of them organized into their own compartments. Dozens of inhabitants stroll on a gleaming walkway between the immense leaf piles.

BILLY

Why so many?

The girl leads him down a ramp, which has extended from below the hatch to the walkway, and takes him on a stroll.

GIRL

The oxygen. We needed it.

Billy takes another deep breath.

BILLY

Feels great.

GIRL

Now, but before all this work,
there wasn't enough air for the
tiniest beast to breathe.

They walk past thousands of vibrant, octagonal leaves happily squirming against each other and letting out frequent bursts of oxygen from tiny holes in their faces.

A little further on, circular, bright-yellow leaves hum an alien tune as they take turns making oxygen by spinning in the air.

The girl leads an amazed Billy around, showing him many wonderful things.

Finally, they come to an immense pile of silent and still leaves - deteriorating, brown, crunchy, and dead.

Earth's leaves.

The girl gestures at them.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL

Behold!

BILLY

(longish beat)

These are from my. . . my trees?

GIRL

From your *planet*.

(beat)

They give us nothing. We'd like to return them to you.

She points, and Billy sees that the dead leaves stretch the distance of several football fields.

GIRL

All the others produce oxygen to some extent. That's how our scientists made Kymar livable again.

BILLY

Our leaves make air when they're on trees.

GIRL

Only then?

BILLY

I think so.

(beat)

It's been a *long* time since I was in school.

The girl sighs.

GIRL

Our scientists have been wasting their time.

BILLY

How?

GIRL

Every other leaf here produces oxygen - the tropo, the puy, and many you haven't seen yet. Only your world's don't.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GIRL (CONT'D)

Our scientists thought they must be missing something, that there *had* to be a way to make the Earth leaves contribute to our atmosphere. They've long tried in vain to fix what they thought was a solvable problem.

(beat)

Now we know it can never happen.

BILLY

(shyly)

Sorry.

GIRL

The Earth leaves must be destroyed to make room for air-giving ones.

(beat)

How do you propose we start?

BILLY

Me?

GIRL

They are a product of your world.

One of the circular, yellow leaves, momentarily separated from the others, swirls around Billy's head. He gently snatches it from the air. It giggles in his hand.

GIRL

Careful!

BILLY

(amazed)

They feel?

GIRL

Of course.

He opens his hand, and the leaf flies away. He looks again at the *many* Earth leaves.

BILLY

Getting all these here must have been exhausting.

GIRL

It was!

BILLY

Did you ever take a break?

(CONTINUED)

GIRL

A what?

BILLY

A breather? A rest?

GIRL

Of course not. We had a world to save.

Billy nods.

BILLY

The Earth leaves are dead?

GIRL

Yes.

BILLY

Nothing can harm them?

GIRL

Correct.

Billy backs up several paces. He waits for some chatting Kymarians to pass him on the walkway.

He takes a deep gulp of the sweet air and runs as well as he can headlong into the dead leaves. The girl and the other aliens are shocked at his action!

He quickly rises from the pile, some of the leaves clinging to his jacket and ballcap.

BILLY

Surprise!

The girl walks to him. She speaks from the illuminated walkway while he is still in the leaf pile. Several Kymarians stop and eavesdrop.

GIRL

(concerned)

Are you well?

Billy smiles.

BILLY

Absolutely fine.

GIRL

What did you just do?

(CONTINUED)

BILLY

You never tried it?

GIRL

I never even *thought* about doing it.

BILLY

I used to do it every autumn when I was a boy. It's the best use for our fallen leaves.

(beat)

Try it.

The other Kymarians are getting interested.

GIRL

Does it hurt?

BILLY

No. It's *fun*.

She walks to where Billy started his run and, doing her best imitation of him, jumps into the Earth leaves. Laughing, she soon pops up from underneath. Her cheeks are red, and her eyes twinkle.

Soon, other Kymarians imitate her. Still others copy *them*.

Before long, the once-worthless pile of dead leaves is crowded with fair-skinned, chuckling aliens jumping in, jumping out, and going under once more.

The girl wades through the leaves to Billy.

GIRL

This is what you call "fun?"

BILLY

Yes.

GIRL

I never suspected leaves that didn't give oxygen could be of any use.

She picks up a handful, holds them high, and lets go. She smiles as they fall back among the others.

GIRL

We were raised to respect all leaves. Without their gifts, Kymar would be uninhabitable.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GIRL (CONT'D)

That's why I yelled when you
grabbed that leaf.

(beat)

Now we know *these* leaves can also
be beneficial.

BILLY

So you *don't* want to get rid of
them?

GIRL

Certainly not! We may even need
more.

BILLY

You can have all of mine.

She reaches out and clutches one of Billy's liver-spotted
hands.

GIRL

You showed us something I wouldn't
have thought possible. How can we
repay you?

BILLY

(longish beat)

Take me back to Earth?

GIRL

Of course. Whenever you choose.

He smiles as he looks at all the Kymarians having fun for
probably the first time in their lives.

BILLY

(longish beat)

A couple of minutes.

FADE TO:

The alien vessel hovers over the house. A beam of light
shoots down from the bulkhead and deposits Billy onto the
lawn.

Seconds later, all the leaves are sucked up into the ship
before it speeds away.

Billy looks up at the departing diamond-shaped vessel, a
few tears in his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

BILLY
(sotto voce)
Have *fun*.

FADE TO BLACK.