

A Valediction

By

Evan Davis

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Evan Davis
959 N. Lincoln Ave
Davenport, IA 52804
563-528-2326
evandavis80@gmail.com

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

TYLER (Early 30's), is walking on the sidewalk. He has a blank stare on his face. His eyes are yellowish.

DR. ALLEN (V.O.)
It's pancreatic cancer.

TYLER (V.O.)
What does that mean?

DR. ALLEN (V.O.)
We didn't catch it quick enough.
It's spreading. Rapidly.

TYLER (V.O.)
So what do we do?

DR. ALLEN (V.O.)
There's no cure. We have
treatments, but (silence)

Tyler's phone rings.

TYLER
Hello?

ANNA (V.O.)
(concerned)
How are you?

TYLER
I'm going to die, Anna.

ANNA (V.O.)
Tyler, do the treatments. It'll buy
you time. We can get through this.

TYLER
What's the point?

The phone beeps as another call rings in.
Anna, hold on.
(Beat)

Hello?

MARK (V.O.)
Tyler, it's Mark. Where are you?

TYLER
I'm fine. I just need some time.

(CONTINUED)

MARK (V.O.)

Listen man you gotta do the treatments.

TYLER

Yeah I know.

(Beat)

I gotta go.

Tyler hangs up the phone. It begins ringing again, it's Anna. Tyler answers.

TYLER

What?

ANNA (V.O.)

Don't what me. I'm your big sister, it's kind of my job to worry about you.

TYLER

I just need time to think.

Tyler hangs up. The phone rings again, it's Anna. Tyler clears the call.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - MORNING

Tyler is standing along the river holding onto a rail when he starts to scream (silence). People see him and move away, a mother grabs her child and rushes him off.

FADE OUT

EXT. BENCH ALONG SIDE THE RIVER - MORNING

Tyler is sitting on the bench, watching life pass him by. The phone rings. It's Anna. He clears the call. Fourteen missed calls. The phone rings again. Tyler stands up, screams and throws the phone, then takes off running.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATE MORNING

Tyler is walking on the sidewalk. He passes a bar, he stops then walks into the bar.

INT. BAR - LATE MORNING

The bar is empty with the exception of the BARTENDER (Early 50's), who is leaning against the bar reading the paper, he doesn't look up. Tyler takes a seat at the bar.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER
(walking over to Tyler)
What can I get ya?

TYLER
The strongest thing you got.

BARTENDER
I guess that all depends on the
occasion.

Tyler looks at the bartender, not wanting to talk but
wanting to let it all out.

BARTENDER
I've been doing this for sometime.
I pretty good at getting the
perfect drink for the right
occasion.

TYLER
(pause)
What do you got for dying.

Bartender nods slowly, understanding and sympathetic. He
grabs a glass and begins filling it with water.

BARTENDER
What is it? Cancer?

Tyler nods.
How much time you got?

TYLER
Less than a year.

The bartender hands the glass of water to Tyler. Tyler looks
at it confused.

BARTENDER
I've been doing this for over
twenty years. I've never seen
alcohol be the answer to anyone's
problems, but it has been the cause
of many them.

Tyler stares at the water.

BARTENDER
It may not be what you think you
want, but I promise you it's the
perfect drink for the occasion.

(CONTINUED)

Tyler takes a drink of the water and then looks at the bartender.

TYLER

Aren't you supposed to give me some kind of sage advice or something.

BARTENDER

I'm a bartender not a philosopher.
(beat)
You want advice?

Tyler doesn't respond but just looks at the bartender, clinches his jaw, takes a drink.

BARTENDER

Alright. My wife died almost five years ago.

Tyler looks down, rubs his hands uncomfortably.

BARTENDER

Breast cancer. It spread faster than the treatment could heal.

(beat)

I watched her get sick, weak, lose her hair.

(beat)

You know every time I looked at her she was smiling.

Tears start to stream down the bartender's face.

BARTENDER

She's there dying, and she's acting as if nothing's wrong. You know?

Tyler looks up at the bartender.

BARTENDER

Finally at the end, she could barely stay awake. This one time she woke up, looked at me, squeezed my hand and smiled right at me.

(beat)

You know, I finally couldn't take it anymore. I asked her how in that moment she could be so brave.

(beat)

You know what she said?

TYLER
(shaking his head)
What?

BARTENDER
No regrets. Yeah, no regrets.

The bartender wipes the tears from his face and composes himself.

BARTENDER
(softly chuckles)
My wife was not a brave woman. I'm telling you, at the sight of a spider or even a bug, that woman would scream bloody murder.

They both chuckle softly.

BARTENDER
But at that moment, when she's staring death in the face she had no fear. She voluntarily gave up her right to be afraid, to make it easier on me.
(beat)
That's it right there. Not to be harsh, but we all die. Death is the great equalizer. But the man who is afraid to die, is the man who never really lived. Peace is found in the decisions we make and how we live out what short time we have with those around us.
(beat)
Maybe that's not what you were looking for, but that's what I got. Make whatever time you got left worth it.

Tyler and the bartender look at each other for a moment. The bartender picks up a towel, throws it over his shoulder and walks away.

FADE OUT

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Tyler exits the bar, and starts walking down the street. As he passes an alley way he pauses to look down it. There he sees VICTOR (40's) a homeless man digging through the trash bins sorting out bottles and cans. After a moment he resumes walking.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Tyler is walking down the sidewalk. He hears children laughing and playing across the street in a park. He crosses the street.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

Tyler is sitting on a bench staring at the kids playing on the playground equipment. ELLEN (late 20's) sits down on a bench just over from Tyler. Ellen looks over at him, she looks away when he looks over at her.

TYLER

I'm not a creep you know.

ELLEN

I'm sorry?

TYLER

I'm not a creep. I'm just saying

ELLEN

Okay.

(beat)

Which one is yours?

TYLER

Um, well, no. I don't have. I'm just sitting here watching them.

ELLEN

(teasing)

So your not a creep? You don't have a kid, and your just watching other peoples children play?

TYLER

Well when you put it like that.

ELLEN

(softly laughing)

I'm teasing.

(beat)

So why are you here?

Tyler pauses for a moment to think about his answer.

TYLER

(choking up)

I'm trying to remember what it's like to be worry free, I guess.

Ellen moves to the bench where Tyler is at.

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

May I?

Tyler nods as Ellen sits down next to him.
I'm Ellen.

Sticking her hand out to shake, Tyler shakes her hand.

TYLER

Tyler.

They sit there for a moment in uncomfortable silence.

ELLEN

(breaking the silence)
Oh to be young again, right?

Tyler half smiles and slightly nods.
You know, it takes a long time to
become young.

TYLER

(half chuckles)
Did you come up with that all
yourself.

ELLEN

No, Picasso did, I just have the
quote hanging on the wall in my
studio.
(beat)
But I think it's relevant. Right? I
mean, what are the attributes that
kids have?
(beat)
No worries? No fear? Imagination?
Joy? Unconditional love?
(beat)
As we grow older, life happens and
little by little those attributes
are chipped away from us.
(beat)
Then one day we are sitting on a
park bench trying to remember what
it's like.

Tyler takes it in.

TYLER

What if you don't get to grow
older?

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

What do you mean?

TYLER

What if you found out you had a year left to live. What would you do?

Ellen realizes what he's saying.

ELLEN

(sensitive)

A year? A year is a lot longer than some get.

(beat)

My husband was a police officer.

(beat)

Every day when he left he would kiss his family goodbye. Everyday he would walk through that front door, pause, turn around, and take one last look at us. Then he would close the door knowing that he may never come back through it. He knew today might be the day I don't make it back. Then one Tuesday morning he didn't.

TYLER

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be insensitive.

ELLEN

No.

(beat)

I just want you to know, no next day is promised. Everyday is a gift given.

They both pause and look at the kids playing. Ellen points.

See that boy there. That's my son. He is the reason I get up everyday and live it to the fullest. He reminds me that loving someone is the greatest gift you can get.

(beat)

Life's greatest lessons are learned in life's darkest moments. Another quote on my wall.

Tyler chuckles.

You know why there are so many people completely miserable in this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN (cont'd)
life? It's because deep down the only people they love is themselves. If they would only open themselves up to love and be loved. We're to afraid of being rejected that we don't even ask to be loved. If you want to learn anything about life from a child, it's that. They aren't afraid to be loved, and they aren't afraid to love. No strings attached, just unfettered love.

A child begins to cry. Ellen jumps up and runs out to the playground. Picking her son up and brushing off his body. His arm and leg are scuffed up from a fall. She carries him back over to Tyler. Reaches into her pocket, pulls out her business card, hands it to Tyler.

ELLEN
I'm sorry I have to take care of this. Call me sometime.
(beat)
You know if you want, or want to talk, or whatever.

TYLER
(smiling)
Thanks.
(beat)
You know for everything.

Ellen smiles and walks away. Tyler watches her leave, leans back, closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. Opening his eyes he looks to the sky.

TYLER
(quietly)
If you give me a second chance,
I'll do whatever, I'll be better.
Just not like this.

Leaning forward and bowing his head.
Let me fall in love, let me have kids. I promise, I'll be better.
(beat)
Just give me a chance.
(beat)
Please.

FADE OUT

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Tyler is walking down the sidewalk, when he passes by Victor walking down the street. They make quick eye contact, before Tyler looks away.

EXT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Tyler is walking when he see's a church sign that reads:
Sundays Sermon: Hope for the Hurting Psalm 22:24.

Tyler stands there and stares at the sign. He shakes his head, starts to walk past the entrance, then turns back and walks into the church.

INT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

The church is empty as Tyler walks into the sanctuary. He takes a seat at the back pew. PASTOR JOHN (Mid 30's) walks by the sanctuary and see's Tyler sitting there. He walks into the sanctuary next to Tyler.

PASTOR JOHN
Can I help you?

TYLER
(startled)
Oh sorry. I just.

Tyler begins to stand up. Pastor John puts his hand on his shoulder.

PASTOR JOHN
That wasn't an invitation to leave.
That was a genuine question.
(emphasizing the question)
Can I help you?

Tyler sits back down, with Pastor John sitting down next to him.

TYLER
I, um, I just saw the sign out front.

PASTOR JOHN
You're a little early, it's Thursday.

TYLER
(soft chuckle)
Yeah.
(starts crying)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TYLER (cont'd)
But I'm still hurting.

Pastor John grabs a tissue from the box at the end of the pew and hands it to Tyler.

PASTOR JOHN
Whats going on?

TYLER
I just found out I have cancer.

Pastor John nods and listens.
It's spreading faster then they can treat it. I have a year at the most.

They sit there in silence for a moment.

PASTOR JOHN
I'm sorry.

TYLER
Everything's different now. You know?

PASTOR JOHN
Yeah.

TYLER
How do I move forward knowing that a year from now I won't be here? Plans don't matter now, nothing matters anymore.

Pastor John sits for a moment trying to collect the right thoughts.

PASTOR JOHN
Why do you think nothing matters anymore?

TYLER
What's the point?

Tyler looks at Pastor John, wanting a genuine answer.

PASTOR JOHN
Have you ever thrown a stone in pond before?

TYLER

Yeah.

PASTOR JOHN

OK. Well lets say we are the stone and when the stone hits the water, we call that an impact event.

TYLER

OK.

PASTOR JOHN

An impact event is any decision we make or anything that causes our course to change. Like finding out you have cancer, impact event. With me so far?

TYLER

Sure.

PASTOR JOHN

After the impact event there's that splash right?

TYLER

Yeah.

PASTOR JOHN

That splash is the immediate fall out from that impact event. An immediate reaction to what happened.

TYLER

OK.

PASTOR JOHN

Then comes the ripple effect. The ripples distort the water outward from the impact event.

TYLER

Yeah.

PASTOR JOHN

Same thing happens in life. First the impact event, then the immediate fallout, then the ripple effect. The ripple effect is how our impact event effects the world around us. Every impact event has a ripple effect.

TYLER

OK. So what your saying is my impact event is finding out I have cancer, right?

PASTOR JOHN

Exactly.

TYLER

Then the immediate fallout, is what? My decision to get treatment or not?

PASTOR JOHN

Sure it could be that, it could be any number of things. But when you asked me what the point was, well the point is the ripple effect, because it is what effects the world around us.

TYLER

(slightly shaking his head)
I don't know.

PASTOR JOHN

What have you done to make the world a better place? A better place for those around you? On a human level?

TYLER

I don't know. Nothing really I suppose.

PASTOR JOHN

You asked me whats the point. The point is we are all connected. Placed here to impact each others world. Whether we like it or not we are not in this world alone. How our ripples interact with each others is the legacy we leave behind. It is what lasts for generations.

(beat)

So you shouldn't be asking what's the point. You should really be asking how will I impact the world for the better with what time I have left.

(beat)

My advice to you, leave the world a better place because you were here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PASTOR JOHN (cont'd)
That is the point, that is the
purpose.

Tyler looks at Pastor John, and nods. His eyes well up, and he drops his head.

TYLER
(choking up)
Thank you.

Pastor John puts his arm around Tyler.

PASTOR JOHN
I'll leave you be. If you need
anything my office is right down
the hall. Take as much time as you
need.

FADE OUT

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Tyler exits the church and is walking down the sidewalk. He sees Victor sitting alone, with a sack beside him, against a building in the shade. Tyler looks at him and finally for the first time sees another human being. Victor is noticeably hot, and tired. Tyler walks over to Victor.

TYLER
Hey. hi. How are you?

Victor startled, tenses up and pulls his sack close to him.
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle
you. I'm Tyler. What's your name?

VICTOR
Victor.

Tyler holds out his hand and shakes Victor's hand. This is the first human contact Victor has had in a long time.

TYLER
Victor, it's nice to meet you.
(beat)
Do you need anything?

VICTOR
Do you have a phone I could use,
just real quick.

(CONTINUED)

TYLER
(reaching into his pocket)
Yeah, sure.

Tyler realizes he doesn't have a phone.
Oh uh, I, I lost my phone.

VICTOR
Oh, OK, well thanks anyways.

TYLER
I'm sorry.

VICTOR
No, hey, I understand and all.

Tyler turns around and walks away.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Tyler is walking down the street, reflecting on everything.

BARTENDER (V.O.)
Peace is found in the decisions we
make and how we live out what short
time we have with those around us.

ELLEN (V.O.)
You know why there are so many
people completely miserable in this
life? It's because deep down the
only people they love is
themselves.

PASTOR JOHN (V.O.)
You should really be asking how
will I impact the world for the
better with what time I have left.

Tyler looks ahead and sees a convenience store.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

Tyler grabs two bottles of water, as he is checking out he
sees a shelf with pay as you go phones. He pauses and then
grabs one.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

Tyler opens the pay as you go phone box, removes the phone and sticks it in his pocket.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Tyler walks to where Victor is sitting.

TYLER

Hey, Victor.

Victor looks up to see Tyler walking towards him. Tyler hands him a bottle of water.

Here. Take this.

VICTOR

Oh wow, thank you.

Victor opens the bottle and begins to chug the water. He then stops and smiles at Tyler.

Thank you so much.

TYLER

You're welcome.

Pointing to the ground beside Victor.
Do you mind?

VICTOR

(dusting a place off)

No, no, please.

TYLER

Thank you.

(beat)

Earlier you asked me to use my phone. Who would you call if I had one?

VICTOR

My mom.

TYLER

Your mom, huh?

VICTOR

Yeah. I'd let her know I was alright. I haven't seen her in years. I haven't talked to her in a year.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VICTOR (cont'd)
The last time we spoke she told me
not to call again until I got my
life straight.

TYLER
Is your life straight?

VICTOR
It's getting there. I'm clean. I
haven't used in 8 months.

TYLER
That's good.

VICTOR
Do you know how hard it is out
here?

Tyler pauses for a moment to contemplate the severity of
that question.

TYLER
(softly)
I don't. I'm sorry, I can't even
imagine.

VICTOR
It's hard.
(beat)
You know people walk by me
everyday. Most look the other way.
Some call me lazy
(beat)
or stupid. Like I'm not even human,
(beat)
they don't care if I'm dead or
alive.

TYLER
I'm sorry people treat you like
that.

VICTOR
What they don't realize is I would
take any job I could get. I used to
work, you know.

Tyler nods his head.

VICTOR
Do you know how hard it is to get a
job when you haven't shaved in
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VICTOR (cont'd)
weeks, when you haven't bathed in
days, when you don't even have
clean clothes, or even clothes to
go to work in.

TYLER
I can't even begin to imagine.

VICTOR
Do you know that every day people
want me to worry about getting a
job, but all I can worry about is
am I going to eat today? Can I
sleep somewhere warm or safe?

Victor pauses and looks at Tyler.
I'm sorry I'm not trying to give
some sob story. I just got carried
away.
(beat)
Thank you for being kind.

PASTOR JOHN (V.O.)
Leave the world a better place
because you were here.

TYLER
Hey Victor can you stay right here?
I'll be right back, OK?

Tyler stands up and briskly walks away.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Tyler walks back with a sack of convenience store food,
along with other items. He hands it to Victor.

TYLER
Here.

VICTOR
(taking the sack)
What's this?

TYLER
Are you serious about turning your
life around?

VICTOR
Yes, of course.

(CONTINUED)

TYLER

That's food for you. You don't have to worry about what you will eat today.

Victor pulls the food out and starts eating.

VICTOR

Wow, thank you so much.

TYLER

Victor, listen to me. If you are serious about turning your life around there is a barber shop just a few blocks from here. They will wash and cut your hair, they will give you a shave. I've already paid for it.

Victor stops eating and stares at Tyler in shock.

If you are really serious about getting a job. I've booked you a extended stay hotel room. You have two months there, you can bathe and look for jobs, without having to worry about where you will sleep or what you will eat.

Tears start streaming down Victor's face. Tyler pulls the phone out of his pocket.

Here's a phone. I pre-paid 3 months on it for you.

(beat)

The last number on there is for the hotel.

(beat)

Call your mom. Tell her you've got your life straight.

VICTOR

Why are you doing this?

TYLER

Someone told me once that life's greatest lessons are learned in life's darkest moments. So here we are.

VICTOR

No.

(beat)

I know why you are doing this.

(CONTINUED)

TYLER
(shocked)
What?

VICTOR
I've been praying for you.

TYLER
What?

VICTOR
Yeah, I've been praying for a
miracle, for a guardian angel, for
a chance.
(beat)
Here you are.

TYLER
(tearing up)
That's all any of us wants right?
(beat)
A chance?

VICTOR
A chance.
(beat)
That's all any of us need.

Tyler reaches into his back pocket and pulls out his wallet as he does Ellen's business card falls out, unnoticed, onto the ground. Tyler grabs some cash and hands it to Victor.

TYLER
Here, I was going to go with you,
but take this and get your clothes.

Victor takes the money, smiles and gives Tyler a hug.

VICTOR
You know what?

TYLER
What?

VICTOR
You are proof that some prayers are
answered.
(beat)
Not always how we think or when we
think, but they are always
answered.
(beat)
Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

With that Victor walks of, a breeze blows and Ellen's business card blows away, Tyler watches Victor leave.

FADE OUT:

EXT. BENCH ALONG SIDE THE RIVER - NIGHT

Tyler sits on the bench, under a street lamp. He opens up a journal and begins to write.

TYLER (V.O.)

This morning I started a journey I didn't know I was taking. I don't like what is happening but I accept it. The things I've learned today, I intend to use for whatever time I have left.

(beat)

To make peace with my decisions, to live with no regrets, to love people unconditionally, to impact the world for the better.

(beat)

It may just be me, but it will be my legacy.

(beat)

Tonight I switched places with a homeless man. Tonight he will sleep in a warm bed, I will sleep on a park bench in the dark. I gave up almost every dollar I have in my twilight so that he could have a dawn. And I have no regrets what-so-ever for that.

Tyler looks up to contemplate his next thought. In the distance a car pulls up, but Tyler is too deep in thought to notice it.

He told me prayers are answered, well I don't know if they always are.

(beat)

Maybe, maybe they are, maybe sometimes that answer is just no.

ANNA

(from a short distance)

Tyler?

TYLER

(looking up)

Anna?

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

(coming closer, hugging Tyler)
Oh my God, are you OK? I've been
looking for you everywhere.

TYLER

I'm fine, I just needed time to
think.

ANNA

I tried calling, your phone is just
going to voice mail.

TYLER

Oh, yeah, I lost my phone, sorry
about that.

ANNA

(joyful and excited)
They were wrong. They made a
mistake. They tried calling you,
but they couldn't get through. They
called me because I was your
emergency contact.

TYLER

What are you talking about?

ANNA

The doctors. Paperwork got messed
up. They said it never happens,
they can't explain it. But its not
cancer.

TYLER

What?

ANNA

Gallstones, Tyler, it's gallstones!

Tyler stands in stunned silence before sitting down.
It's a simple surgery and that's
it.

Tyler slouches over as Anna wraps her arms around him.
Come on, I'll take you home.

FADE OUT

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

SUPER: One Month Later

Tyler is walking out of a store. He looks up to see Ellen walking by. They make eye contact.

TYLER
Ellen?

ELLEN
Hey, stranger.

TYLER
My God. There's like a million
people in this city. What are the
odds that I would actually run into
you?

ELLEN
(chuckling)
I don't know, like one in a
million.

TYLER
(smiling)
I tried to call but I couldn't find
your card.

ELLEN
Well it just so happens I have
another one.

TYLER
What are you doing right now? Do
you want to grab a coffee or
something?

ELLEN
I would love to actually.

They begin walking down the street. As they do a city bus pulls up and Victor gets off. He is clean, well dressed, on his way to work. He looks up to see Tyler. They make eye contact, smile, and nod at each other.

FADE OUT