

WALKERS

Written by

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INT. - COURTYARD ENTRANCE OF NORTHLAKE MALL, MORNING

Two men are standing inside the mall entrance. PETE, 79 years old, is wearing a baggy black tracksuit. CHICK, also 79, is in jeans and a grey sweatshirt, and is sipping coffee from a white styrofoam cup.

PETE

(checking his watch)  
Half past, where is this guy already? I'd like to get this walk in before the stores open and it gets busy.

CHICK

(taking a sip of coffee)  
Relax Petey, he'll show. Besides, I can't even remember the last time this place was busy.

PETE

Whatever. I got here early and now I'm standing here waiting.

(sideways glance at Chick)  
You with the coffee again Chick?  
Every morning. You know how it goes right through you.

Chick shrugs.

PETE (CONT'D)

(glances down at Chick's chunky yellow sneakers)  
New shoes?

CHICK

Yeah, my podiatrist recommended them. You remember that corn I kept getting. The wide shape in front is supposed to stop the friction.

PETE

Interesting color.

CHICK

They were marked down.

PETE

Well that's appropriate.

CHICK

(motions to the doorway)  
Hey, here's ED.

ED hurries in through the doorway. He is 77, a little taller than the other two, and has a bit of a belly.

ED  
Sorry, sorry...

PETE  
What the hell man? Forever we've been waiting for you.

ED  
I was on the way over and I noticed that the gas had gone under two-thirds. You know how Barb hates that. So I figured I'd do a quick top up. But at the station there was a line.

PETE  
(irritated)  
You figured.

ED  
(noticing Chick's sneakers)  
New sneaks, Chick?

CHICK  
Yeah, they're...

PETE  
(cuts him off)  
C'mon, let's get going already.

Ed looks at Chick and rolls his eyes. The three men begin walking side by side down the main aisle. A few other people are walking, but it is sparse and quiet since the stores haven't opened yet. Ed reaches into his back pocket and pulls a baseball cap onto his head. It is a red MAGA hat.

PETE (CONT'D)  
You're wearing that fucking thing again?

ED  
What? It's just a hat.

PETE  
No, no, it's not just a hat. It's a particular hat that is walking around giving everybody the middle finger.

ED

Well, my son gave it to me. I like  
how it fits. It's not like I voted  
for the guy.

The three men turn right down the first corridor. Several  
small stores yet to open and others with "space available for  
lease" signs in their windows. At the end of the corridor is  
a sign for the rest rooms.

CHICK

Guys, I gotta pull over,

PETE

Already? The coffee!

CHICK

(quick steps toward the  
rest room, replies over  
his shoulder)

It's not the coffee. It's because  
of the water pill for my blood  
pressure. Makes me have to go.

PETE

(turns to Ed)

It IS the coffee.

(pauses a moment)

So. We never talked about this.  
Tell me, who DID you vote for?

ED

Well, you know, that day it was  
raining and cold and generally  
shitty. And Channel 9 said there  
were lines and there was a long  
wait...

PETE

So - you didn't vote.

Ed sheepishly shrugs.

PETE (CONT'D)

Once every four years isn't hard,  
you know.

ED

I guess I'm just not political like  
you.

PETE

In my book, if you don't vote, you  
don't have a right to complain.

ED  
What do I have to complain about?

PETE  
(glares at Ed, then  
glances at his watch)  
Well, I guess this walk is going to  
take all fucking day.

ED  
You got something to do?

PETE  
I got A LOT to do.

ED  
Like?

PETE  
(irritated sigh)  
One, I gotta go to the post office.  
Then I gotta go to the drugstore  
for a prescription refill. Then I  
need a new battery for my watch,  
even though I just bought this  
battery last year from Sears... and  
now they're out of business, so I  
can't even get a refund.

ED  
(nods)  
Busy day.

Chick comes out of the rest room.

CHICK  
Alright, let's go.

The three men loop back up the corridor and turn right into  
the main aisle.

ED  
Why do you have to go to the post  
office?

PETE  
The electric bill came in. I need  
to get a stamp to send the payment.

CHICK  
You know, my daughter Angela pays  
the electric bill on her computer.

PETE  
Oh no, no, no.

CHICK  
No what?

PETE  
On the computer!

CHICK  
What??

PETE  
Chick, don't you know that when you put your information into the computer then press the button - BANG, they've got all your personals. Then they steal your identity.

CHICK  
They who?

PETE  
Who? The bad guys. Who knows who? Just do not trust it.

CHICK  
Hmmm, I'll have to talk to Angela about that.

ED  
(has been thinking)  
You know, your watch...

PETE  
Yeah?

ED  
A battery should last way longer than a year. Maybe it's not the battery. Maybe it's the watch.

PETE  
My watch is fine.

CHICK  
Angela says I should get one of those - what's it called - an iPhone watch or something. It does all this stuff, like even tells you how many steps you've walked.

PETE

What would you need that for?

CHICK

Umm, so you know how many steps you walked?

PETE

I've been here so often - and counted! - I know EXACTLY how many steps: twice around this floor and twice around upstairs is EXACTLY 4,960. Then you walk from and back to your car in the parking lot gets you to your 5,000.

(pauses and thinks for a moment)

When Sears down at the end was still in business, you could go through tools and appliances for another 380 steps, then another 380 on their second level. But Sears didn't open until 10, so unless you were walking late...

ED

I think the Apple watch tells you way more than just steps. Heart rate, other shit like that. Might be something you should think about, Petey.

PETE

My. Watch. Is. Fine. And anyway, Marie gave this to me.

Ed looks chastened and says nothing.

The three men approach the boarded-up Sears at the end of the aisle. The large blue SEARS letters have been removed from the wall, but the dark shadow of the letters and the rivet holes remain. The men loop around and begin to approach two older women walkers from behind. The woman to the right is coughing intermittently. The men get closer. COUGH, COUGH. And closer. COUGH, COUGH, COUGH.

Pete, irritated, increases his pace and veers in a wide circle around the women. Ed and Chick hustle to keep up. They are quickly past the women and move back into their lane, then turn right down the corridor which contains several small stores and JC Penney at the end.

PETE (CONT'D)  
(exasperated with the  
coughing woman)  
Really? Just stay home already.

CHICK  
Yeah, coughing up a lung there.

PETE  
You know, if I ever get it bad in  
the lungs, the one thing that I do  
not ever want is to be put on a  
ventilator. No way. I've seen  
that shit up close. Just let me  
go. You guys gotta tell them.

ED  
Tell who?

PETE  
Whoever. At the hospital. The  
doctors.

ED  
Alright, but that's okay? I mean,  
they'll listen to us? Don't we  
need a document, like a will or  
something like that?

PETE  
I have a note in the front of my  
wallet. It says NO VENTILATOR.  
And it's got you guys' names and  
telephone numbers.

CHICK  
Jeez, I hope it never comes to  
that.

ED  
The note - is it signed and dated?

PETE  
Uh, no. It's on like a Post-It  
note. But it's right there in the  
front of my wallet

ED  
Okay. I just wouldn't want any  
trouble.

The men turn back into the main aisle.



PETE

I forgot. You could get another like 300 steps each floor of Penney's if you were walking late and they were open. But frankly, I never cared for that.

CHICK

Why not?

PETE

To do the loop on this floor of Penney's, you would have to walk through the ladies' undergarments department. A guy going through there - people look at you weird.

ED

Penney's!

PETE

What?

ED

Your watch battery - I bet that JC Penney could do that for you!

PETE

Yeah, maybe I should do that before they go under too.

CHICK

So many stores in this place are already empty - if JC Penney goes under, that's the end of this mall.

ED

Do you remember when you would come here on the weekend and you couldn't even find a parking space?

CHICK

And at Christmas time, forget it.

PETE

Yeah. I remember the time I dropped Marie off at the entrance and I circled the parking lot for 45 minutes looking for a space. 45 minutes! She finished her Christmas shopping before I ever could park. I didn't even get to walk around the mall with her.

CHICK

Now everybody just shops on the computer.

PETE

Well, you know how I feel about that. Not that I really shop, except at the grocery store.

CHICK

Groceries too! Angela goes on the computer and ticks off the stuff we need and they deliver it all right to the porch!

PETE

But if you don't go the the grocery yourself and look at every fucking thing, how do you make sure that - for example, your apples aren't all bruised? Or that the bread isn't stale? Even at the grocery you have to be careful - you know, they move the expired bread to the front of the shelf so that people just pick it up without checking. I always reach to the back to make sure I get a fresh loaf.

CHICK

I don't think Angela has ever had a problem.

Behind them, in the distance and approaching, the men hear COUGH. COUGH, COUGH.

PETE

C'mon, let's go upstairs.

The three men quick step to the escalator and ride it up to the second level.

PETE (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, let's pick up the pace. Make up for lost time.

CHICK

You know, I like this second level better. The indoor/outdoor carpet up here is much easier on your feet than the tile downstairs.

PETE

I'm surprised you can still feel  
the difference through your yellow -  
what do they look like? Yeah,  
clown shoes! Ha!

CHICK

(hurt)

Go ahead and laugh, whatever. You  
remember how I was last month.  
There is nothing worse than the  
pain from a corn on every step.

PETE

Oh c'mon, there are a LOT of things  
worse than that. Arthritis flare-  
up, for example. Or getting gout.

ED

Or going blind.

Pete and Chick look at Ed quizzically.

ED (CONT'D)

What? Going blind is a worse  
thing. If I had to choose which  
one of my senses not to lose, it  
would be 'sight'.

CHICK

(motioning toward the  
restroom sign)

Hold that thought, I gotta pull  
over.

PETE

Again??

CHICK

Water pill!

PETE

COFFEE!!

Pete and Ed stop and wait while Chick walks off to the  
restroom.

ED

Why do you need to be ragging on  
Chick constantly?

PETE

Ragging on him?

ED

The bathroom breaks, his foot problems...

PETE

I'm getting sick and tired of all of Chick's old man shit.

ED

I hate to point this out, but you're an old man too. Me too.

PETE

Uh-uh, not like Chick. More and more it's like he's - I don't know, elderly.

ED

Well, whatever. You need to lay off. Chick's too nice to say it, but you're really acting like a dick lately.

Pete just glares at Ed. After a moment, Chick comes out of the restroom, and the three men resume walking.

CHICK

So back to what we were talking about.

ED

Yeah?

CHICK

You said the one sense you would choose not to lose is 'sight'. That's the wrong choice.

ED

How so?

CHICK

You should choose not to lose 'smell'. Because if you lose 'smell', you also lose 'taste'. See? Two for one.

ED

(chuckling)

Chick, that is so dumb. 'Sight' is worth more than 'smell' and 'taste' combined.

CHICK

It's just math. And besides, if you lose 'taste', well that's the end of you. Nothing tastes like nothing, so you don't want to eat, and then you just waste away.

PETE

(motioning to Ed's belly and snickering)  
That could use three or four weeks of wasting away.

ED

(scowls at Pete)  
Like I said - you are quite a dick.

Pete scowls back. Out of Pete's sight, Chick looks at Ed with surprise at his insult. Ed just shrugs, then decides to change the subject.

ED (CONT'D)

Hey - how about if we shake things up tomorrow, go to the Eastview Mall up my way?

PETE

Haven't been there in a while. But that place is even worse than here.

ED

How so?

PETE

Well, same shit. A quarter of the stores are closed. And the whole mall is just one level and small, so you have to just keep going around and around in the same circle like a hamster exercise. And worst thing, they've got that pet store at the end of the aisle near the Burlington Coat Factory, and it smells like cat litter and dog shit - turns my stomach.

ED

I think that pet store got shut down a while ago for being a puppy mill. Anyway, the mall is small, but after you do a couple of loops, to break things up you can walk across the parking lot to that giant Home Depot.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

Depot has good aisles to go up and down, interesting stuff to look at.

CHICK

I had a bad experience at that Depot.

ED

Bad experience?

CHICK

Yeah, the last time I was there like nine months ago or something. I did a few laps of the mall, then crossed the parking lot like you said and started doing the aisles in Depot. It was early, the store was pretty empty - but halfway in, I started finding myself in the same aisle as this girl. Aisle 4 - then 7 - then 11. I just kept my pace, but then it happens again and the girl looks at me and says "Excuse me, are you following me?". Like, really hostile. I was so startled, it kind of scared me shitless. I didn't even look up, I blurted out really loud "JUST GETTING MY STEPS IN" and I kept walking and walked right out of the store and back to my car. I haven't been there since.

PETE

I remember you telling me. You know, that right there is like reverse harassment.

CHICK

Yes it is. But I complain to who?

ED

That's not harassment - it's just - in this day and age - a young woman has to protect herself from a creepy old man.

CHICK

Jeez Ed - thanks, thanks a lot.

ED

No, no. Sorry Chick, that came out wrong. I didn't mean you. I meant...

PETE

Ha, creepy old man.  
 (after a few steps, checks  
 his watch)  
 9:15, who knows if this is even  
 right though. It's so late  
 already, maybe just once more  
 around on the first? Then I've got  
 to get going.

ED

To the post office?

PETE

What is it with you that you're so  
 fixated on me going to the post  
 office? Yes, I have to get a stamp  
 to mail my electric bill. And  
 lately it takes forever - this new  
 girl there is a sunny chatty one -  
 "How's your morning going?" -  
 "What's your plans for the rest of  
 the day" - etcetera. I liked it  
 better when they were all  
 miserable, and you could just get  
 in and out.

ED

Why don't you just buy a book of  
 stamps in the vending machine  
 there? Then you wouldn't have to  
 go there every month.

PETE

(sideways glance at Ed)  
 How about you don't worry about my  
 chores?

Pete and Ed approach the escalator, and Chick veers off to  
 the right towards the elevators.

CHICK

See you guys down there.

Pete and Ed step on the escalator and ride down.

ED

I know he's always been like this,  
 but Chick not being able to ride  
 the escalator down is strange.

PETE

Whatever. Makes him dizzy.

ED  
Right, but he doesn't have a dizzy  
problem going up?

PETE  
(shrugs)  
Just down.

Pete and Ed reach the bottom of the escalator, and wait for  
Chick.

ED  
Do you have a will?

PETE  
What?

ED  
I was thinking of the ventilator.

PETE  
Kind of a waste of time. Since I  
boxed up Marie's stuff to Goodwill,  
what's left in the apartment -  
nobody would want any of that. The  
Social Security stops, so there  
would be nothing in the bank. And  
my car would cost more to junk than  
it's worth. Just remember - NO  
VENTILATOR.

Chick approaches Pete and Ed, walking gingerly with a hitch  
in his step.

CHICK  
I don't know, guys. I might be  
getting a blister.

PETE  
For chrissakes, will you just man  
up and get this walk done?

CHICK  
I'll try.

The men take just a few steps, when Ed suddenly stops and  
veers off to the right in quick step. Pete and Chick watch  
him walk several steps then bend down. Ed walks back to Pete  
and Chick, a big smile on his face and holding up a \$10  
dollar bill.

ED  
Yes!! Ha ha, eagle eyes!



PETE

You s.o.b, you're just always falling into money.

ED

I can't believe it, how somebody can just drop a ten dollar bill and not notice it.

CHICK

You know Ed, that ten dollars is found money - you should parlay it.

ED

What?

CHICK

PAR-LAY it - wager it for more. You know, Powerball tomorrow is something like \$65 million. Ten bucks would be five tickets.

PETE

That's a sucker's bet. Odds of hitting the number are way more than 65 million-to-one. You don't even get paid the odds.

CHICK

So what? If it doesn't hit, he loses ten bucks. Which is found money that he didn't even have two minutes ago.

PETE

Plus - you don't get \$65 million - you only get like half when you take a lump.

CHICK

I'd be good with half! Oh my god, can you imagine it? \$30-something million dollars! That is like a dream!

ED

What would you spend that kind of money on?

CHICK

Well - I guess - I never really thought about it.

PETE

Maybe you could spring for a full-price pair of non-yellow shoes.

CHICK

(makes a face, then stops)

You know what guys - I'm gonna have to bail. This IS a blister. I should have realized, new shoes - not broken in.

Pete and Ed stop walking as well. Pete is not happy. He crosses his arms and says nothing.

ED

That's too bad, Chick. Okay, soak it, hope you feel better.

Chick nods and turns to hobble back towards the exit. He glances over his shoulder at Pete, who is still silent and standing with his arms crossed.

CHICK

Okay. Maybe see you guys tomorrow...

Pete and Ed turn and resume their walk.

ED

What the hell, Pete? Giving Chick the silent treatment?

PETE

You're kidding me, right?

ED

No I am not. In fact, I don't even know why Chick stays friends with you! In fact, me either!

PETE

I'll remind you that we started late today because YOU decided you HAD to get gas - which you could have done last night or after we finished. Then Chick's old man shit with pissing every two minutes and hobbling around gets us further an further behind. And now it's already...

(checks his watch)

9:50!

ED

(loses his temper)  
So it's 9:50, so what? All the years I've known you, you've ALWAYS been kind of a dick. But at least you were a funny one. Lately, though, you're - what's the right word? Impatient? Angry? And kind of - MEAN. And not just lately. Really, I guess, ever since Marie.

PETE

(glares at Ed)  
Will you shut the fuck up and just walk.

ED

No, I will not shut up. You gotta get yourself back together. Enough of this already. You're gonna end up with no friends at all.

PETE

Fine.

ED

(angrily)  
Fine. I'm done here. See ya.

Ed turns and walks away. Pete watches Ed walk off, then turns and starts walking again.

PETE

(to himself)  
Fine.

Pete walks for a bit, but soon his pace slows almost to a shuffle. Around him, lights begin coming on in the shops and some open their doors. He stops and sits on a bench in the middle of the aisle. He glances at his watch - 10:05. He sits quietly on the bench, looking forlorn, knowing that he went too far with his friends. Then he turns slightly to the empty space on the bench beside him, and nods, as if in conversation.

PETE (CONT'D)

(quietly, to himself)  
Yeah... yeah, I know... you sure?

He nods, and after a moment boosts himself up and begins walking down the aisle towards JC Penney. He walks through the doors of the store and straight to the jewelry counter. A salesperson approaches him.

SALESPERSON

Good morning - can I help you?

PETE

Yeah... I think I need a new watch.

FADE OUT

**THE END**