

AUTUMN WALK

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To a tune by Norm of The DrabbleCast

Assuming a 15 sec intro, 2 verses to 42 sec, and a chorus.

AUTUMN WALK

(I) Walk by the side of the river and
Watch how the leaves start a-shimmerin',
Fall to the water and... (beat)
Ripple over rocks away.

(I'm) Warm in my scarf and my jacket, but
Drawn to the cold of the riverbank,
Mourn lost leaves of the tamerack
Floating like my love away.

Chorus

(beat) Autumn walk, water dark,
Damp and cold kills a spark.
It won't live unless you
Cherish it with all of your heart.
(repeat)

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 1

A quiet tree-lined street. In the distance, apartments and commercial buildings. It's a sunny autumn day and there's a nip in the air.

From the distance MARSHALL PICKETT strides briskly. A man in his 60s with an outdoor look about him, dressed in a warm jacket, scarf, jeans and hiking boots. He makes an abrupt turn into...

EXT. PARK - DAY

a small park squeezed between the street and a river. A path leads directly to the river. Flanking the path are grassy areas with park benches. In the distance, playground equipment, shrubs, gardens etc.

On one of the benches is a MOTHER reading while her SMALL CHILD plays on the grass with a BLOW-UP BALL. A STROLLER is next to the bench.

Marshall strides down the path, looking neither right nor left, and turns onto...

EXT. RIVER WALK - DAY

A pathway that follows the river bank into the distance.

EXT. PARK - DAY

From the street comes CATHERINE, walking with a single elbow crutch. In the distance a CAR drives off.

Catherine sits on a bench near the mother and turns to the sun with eyes closed. She is middle-aged and looks ill. She is warmly dressed in long jacket, furry boots, scarf, bobble cap, all in neutral earth tones.

The child randomly kicks the blow-up ball. He kicks it against Catherine's leg. The mother looks at Catherine with concern.

MOTHER

Oh, I'm so sorry.

(to child)

Don't do that.

Catherine flicks the ball to the child with her crutch.

CATHERINE

Don't worry. I used to play soccer with my boy.

Marshall returns from the river walk. He strides up the path towards the street and disappears. Catherine notices him.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 He's well-preserved for his age.
 Hasn't let himself go. I like that.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 2

Marshall approaches, striding along the street in his jacket and boots, and turns into the park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Marshall walks directly down the path. He does not look at the mother and child on the bench.

Catherine enters from the street and sees Marshall turn onto the river walk. She walks to the bench next to the mother. She puts her crutch behind the bench, out of sight. She has a red bobble hat on, otherwise dressed as before.

She and the mother watch the child play for a while. The mother studies Catherine covertly, then their eyes meet.

MOTHER
 Are you from around here? I
 haven't seen you before.

CATHERINE
 I'm from a small town you never
 heard of. Getting some tests done
 here, then I'm going back.

MOTHER
 Oh, have you been ill?

CATHERINE
 Very, but it's over now, touch wood.

Marshall strides back up the path to the street, looking straight ahead.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Oh look. It's that man again.

She puts her hands either side her eyes like horse blinkers.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 (mocking, under her
 breath)
 Careful, you might see us.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 3

Catherine gets out of a car and walks into the park, without her crutch.

In the distance, Marshall approaches with his usual brisk stride.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Catherine seats herself on her usual bench. She is wearing a bright scarf as well as her red bobble hat. The mother and child are already there.

Marshall turns into the park and strides directly down the path to the river.

Catherine sits up straighter and fiddles with her hair when he appears. When he turns onto the river walk without noticing her she looks a little miffed.

CATHERINE
(to herself)
What's his problem?

MOTHER
What was that?

CATHERINE
Nothing. I wonder if I can
remember my soccer skills?

Catherine gets up a little unsteadily, takes off her bobble hat and shakes out her hair.

She gently kicks the blow-up ball to the child, and they start a soccer match. The child is better than she is.

Soon a bit of color returns to her cheeks and a sparkle to her eye. She repeatedly glances to the river walk, obviously waiting for Marshall to return.

A car's HOOTER sounds.

CATHERINE
Damn. That's my son. I gotta go.

She is panting from the exercise. She picks up her hat.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
See you tomorrow.

MOTHER
Bye.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 4

It's brighter and warmer. Catherine gets out of the car with more energy and walks into the park. In the far distance, Marshall approaches.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Catherine wears nice boots and a short jacket with bright scarf. Her hair is loose. She walks directly up to the mother and child on the bench. She picks up his blow-up ball.

CATHERINE
 (to child, baby voice)
 Do you want to play soccer?
 (to mother)
 You don't mind, do you?

The mother looks up from her book. She's also responded to the warmth and is showing a bit of cleavage.

MOTHER
 Not at all. I'm so pleased someone else will play with him.

Catherine starts kicking the ball nearer and nearer to the path.

Marshall turns in from the street and strides down the path, looking straight ahead as usual.

Catherine KICKS THE BALL RIGHT AT MARSHALL'S FEET.

Marshall sees the ball coming, and like a bullfighter evading a bull, he DODGES THE BALL and continues on his way without a glance to Catherine.

Annoyed, Catherine picks the ball up from the other side the path, then leads the child by hand to its mother.

CATHERINE
 I'm going to wait for my son on the street.

The mother realizes Catherine is trying to attract Marshall's attention and is sympathetic but also amused.

MOTHER
 You coming to the park again?

CATHERINE
 Maybe. Another couple of days and I'll be finished with those tests.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 5

Another warm autumn day. Marshall strides along the street, jacket unbuttoned, and turns briskly into the park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

He marches down the path, and, for the first time, LOOKS TOWARDS THE BENCHES.

The mother and child are there, but not Catherine.

Marshall registers no emotion, but continues to...

EXT. RIVER WALK - DAY

Marshall walks along the river bank.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Catherine walks up to the mother, pulling off her scarf and shaking out her hair.

MOTHER

I was afraid you weren't coming today.

CATHERINE

I nearly didn't...
 (to child, in baby voice)
 But I miss you, my widdle soccer buddy.

MOTHER

He's...

She rolls her eyes and indicates with her thumb that Marshall is on the river walk.

Catherine snorts. Who cares? She starts playing soccer with the child. But she keeps one eye open for Marshall.

Marshall returns. As he turns into the park, Catherine KICKS THE BALL RIGHT AT HIS HEAD.

It sails wide, he attempts to grab it, and knocks it into the river.

He dashes knee-deep into the river and grabs it before it floats away.

CATHERINE

Ohmigod. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
 I'm sorry.

Catherine holds her fingers to her mouth in horror. It is obvious she doesn't have a wedding ring.

Marshall squelches into the park with the ball under his arm. for the first time, he looks at Catherine and smiles.

MARSHALL

Don't be sorry. It was my fault.
 I guess I did a Maradona there.

CATHERINE

The hand of God?

MARSHALL

How do you know about Maradona and the hand of God?

CATHERINE

My son. He had all these soccer posters when he was little.

Marshall carries the ball and walks with Catherine and the child to the mother.

Marshall holds out the ball to the mother and smiles.

MARSHALL

I think your team needs a better striker. This one's
(rolls eyes to Catherine)
a bit wild.

The mother leans forwards to take the ball. Marshall is transfixed by the large amount of cleavage she shows, and hangs on to the ball a moment too long.

Catherine notices Marshall noticing.

The mother is used to stares and unfazed. She smiles.

MOTHER

Perhaps you want to join our team, mister, uh..?

MARSHALL

Marshall. Call me Marshall.
(suddenly abrupt)
Not in wet boots. I must go change.
Bye. Bye.

Almost with anxiety, he says goodbye and shquish-shquish-shquishes away rapidly.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 6

A colder autumn day. Marshall is nowhere to be seen.

Catherine gets out of the car just as the mother arrives pushing the stroller. Both are warmly dressed.

CATHERINE

Am I early or are you late?

MOTHER

(smiling)
A bit of both, I think. After you.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Catherine and the mother stroll together towards the benches.

MOTHER

You're looking so much better.
You've got color in your cheeks,
you're walking okay...

CATHERINE

(re: child in stroller)
Thanks to my little personal
trainer here.
(to child, baby voice)
Yes you, you little tyrant. You
make me run up and down, up and
down, all day long.

They sit together on one bench. The mother puts the child on the grass and he plays by himself.

Catherine looks around.

CATHERINE

I wonder if Marshall's here
already. I'll go check.

EXT. RIVER WALK - DAY

Catherine peers down the walk. No one.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Catherine looks up and down the street. No Marshall.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Catherine sits next to the mother.

CATHERINE

(disappointed)
Looks like he's not coming.

The child deliberately kicks the ball against her leg.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

(groans)
Okay, coach. I get it. No slacking.

Catherine plays soccer with the child, unenthusiastically.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 7

A cold and misty day. Marshall is not visible.

The car pulls up and Catherine gets out. She is smartly dressed for traveling, she's not in warm clothing. She walks hurriedly into the park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The mother and child are on the bench, warmly wrapped.

Catherine walks up to them and stands rubbing her hands and shivering, feeling the chill in her light jacket.

CATHERINE

I'm so pleased you're here. I
just came to say goodbye. My son's
taking me home.

The mother gets up, surprised.

MOTHER

Going? So soon? We never even got
to know you.

She embraces Catherine, then holds both her hands and looks into her eyes

MOTHER

Are you better now?
(off Catherine's nod)
I'm so pleased for you.

She hugs Catherine again, then squats next to her child.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Say goodbye to the nice lady.

She holds his arm out to Catherine for a handshake.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(baby voice)
Bye-bye nice lady. Thank you for
playing soccer with me.

Catherine smiles and shakes the child's hand.

The mother gets up and walks with Catherine towards the car.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(to child)
Wait there for me.
(to Catherine)
So, what about our new teammate.
Are you going to see him again?

CATHERINE

Our new teammate. The one who
didn't turn up for practice?

MOTHER

Yes, him. Well-preserved for his
age, I thought you said.

CATHERINE

That's true, I did. I also said
he hasn't let himself go. That's
also true, in more ways than one.

MOTHER

Meaning?

CATHERINE

Meaning, he's holding himself in. He's afraid to even look at a person, in case he might reveal himself. I want someone I can relax and laugh with, and who can do the same with me.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

They have reached the car. They stop. Catherine hesitates to speak.

CATHERINE

There's another thing...

MOTHER

Yes...

CATHERINE

You saw the way he looked at you, your--

(she make voluptuous
breast motions)

Let's face it. I'm not young and attractive any more. I'm a middle-aged woman who had a serious illness.

(near tears)

I'll never interest a man.

MOTHER

Don't say that. What do they say in soccer, "It's not over till it's over?"

CATHERINE

Boxing, actually. "Rocky."

They have a last hug.

MOTHER

You keep going, champ. It's not the last round yet, not nearly.

CATHERINE

(sniffling)

Maybe. Look after yourself, and your boy.

Catherine climbs into the car, rolls down the window, and drives off, waving.

The mother walks into the park.

In the far distance, Marshall approaches.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Marshall walks up to the mother reading on the bench. He doesn't have his normal brisk stride. He is rather embarrassed and hang-dog.

MARSHALL

Oh, hi. I'm sorry I didn't see you yesterday. My boots took a long time to dry out.

(apologetically)

I've only got this one good pair of winter boots.

The mother looks down. He is, indeed, wearing the same pair of boots.

She looks up at Marshall. He cannot read her expression.

MOTHER

Shame. But thank you for rescuing the ball.

Marshall looks at the child who is sitting batting at the ball with his hand.

He has difficulty saying what he really wants to say.

MARSHALL

Er, would you like me to kick the ball around with him for a bit?

MOTHER

No offense, but I don't know you. I'd prefer it if you didn't play with my child. A mother has to be careful, you know?

MARSHALL

Of course. I understand. Er, tell me, the other lady, the one that plays soccer...

The mother looks up at him, still with a neutral expression. She's not going to help him say what he wants to.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Uh, is she here?

MOTHER

No.

MARSHALL

Is she coming?

MOTHER

No, she's been. She came to say
goodbye. She's going home today.

MARSHALL

(stricken)

Home? Where?

MOTHER

I don't know. A small town
somewhere.

(suddenly businesslike)

Look Marshall, I can't help you.
I don't know who she is or where
she lives. She's a lady who sat
in the park. You had every chance
to get to know her if you wanted,
and you did nothing. I happen to
know she liked you, and wanted to
know you better. It didn't happen.
Too bad. Deal with it.

(to child)

Come to mommy.

She picks up her child and puts him in the stroller, and
walks off.

Marshall stands stricken for a few beats, then turns and
walks slowly towards the river.

EXT. RIVER WALK - DAY

The song AUTUMN WALK plays.

Marshall walks along the river bank, slowly and reflectively.

He reaches into an inside pocket and pulls out a small and
scraggly posy of flowers, obviously picked very amateurishly
by himself.

Bit by bit he pulls the flowers apart and throws the pieces
into the river, where they join the autumn leaves floating
downstream out of sight.

THE END