

A LITTLE SMILE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE

A shabby, run-down mass of a building becomes visible amongst a jet-black skyline, as a limping figure shuffles to the massive wooden doors that cover the entrance. A small teenager with dark curly hair and wearing a dog tag necklace, named RAFAEL, is seen slightly poking out the limp, colorless drapes beyond an upper story window, with a gloomy expression. The figure, now approaching the dim glow of the light at the entrance, is now more easily seen, with two small scars running diagonally across his face, dark hair, a glum expression, and a nametag that reads "Hi... My name is TERRENCE." Terrence approaches the door and uses the doorknocker three very methodical and distinct times, as if to alert someone specifically of his presence.

INT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE FOYER

MRS. PARKER runs over to the front of the room, as we see her shuffle a gallon of paint and a pair of glasses to a table stand in the corner of the room. She approaches the large, gaping doors and slowly opens them to reveal a tired Terrence.

MRS. PARKER

Ah... Terrence, hello.

TERRENCE

(smiling)

Hi Mrs. P! I missed this place! May I come in?

Mrs. Parker looks somewhat concerned, but she nods her head yes and beckons Terrence to come inside with her hand. Terrence immediately brightens up as he gazes around the place in wonder, smiling at the sheer scale of the place.

MRS. PARKER

So, what brings you here at...

Mrs. Parker stares at the large grandfather clock in the center of the room. The hands seem rusted with age, but they continue to move along with no issue.

two-forty-five in the morning?

Terrence, blatantly ignoring Mrs. Parker, walks around the large foyer, gazing at the sporadically painted walls, the large circular wooden table with a missing leg in the center of the room, and the various doors that lined each separate wall, three contained on each side.

TERRENCE

So, you're repainting huh?

MRS. PARKER

(smiling)

Yes... we got a few extra donations and some unexpected funding from the government, so I figured we would liven things up a little bit for the kids.

Terrence turns around from staring at a suspicious old wooden door with a few scratch marks on the handle to face Mrs. Parker.

TERRENCE

(nodding in approval)

I like it.

Small footsteps are heard creaking down the old, rickety wooden staircase. As Rafael is slowly creeping down the stairs, he sees Terrence and looks extremely conflicted. Terrence locks his eyes with Rafael and shoots him a slight grin. Rafael does not return this gesture. Mrs. Parker follows Terrence's gaze and notices Rafael, her face turning from happiness to concern.

MRS. PARKER

Rafael? What are you doing up so late?

Rafael slowly climbs down the rest of the stairs, gazing at Terrence and then shifting his attention to Mrs. Parker.

RAFAEL

(indistinguishable)

I lost my glasses.

MRS. PARKER

Excuse me?

RAFAEL

(mumbling)

I lost my glasses.

TERRENCE

Raffy... she needs you to speak up.

The word Raffy sparks a light of very quick anger and recognition in Rafael's eyes.

RAFAEL

(raising his voice)

I... lost my glasses.

Mrs. Parker smiles sweetly, walking over to the stand where she put them on in the corner of the room, only to find that the glasses were not there anymore. Rafael brushes past Terrence with his shoulder, frustration building on his face as he follows behind Mrs. Parker.

MRS. PARKER

(a look of confusion on her face)

I just put them here. I swear.

Terrence smiles, pulling out from his khaki pants pocket a pair of old, wiry brown glasses, fixed up with scotch tape.

TERRENCE

(waving them in the air)

Looking for these?

Rafael angrily stomps over to where Terrence is standing and snatches the thin glasses out of the air. Rafael grabs them, plops them on his face, and sprints up the old staircase in anger.

MRS. PARKER

Rafael! Aren't you going to say thank you?

Rafael pauses before taking the last step, glaring harshly at Mrs. Parker, then proceeds to shift his angry gaze towards Terrence, frustration filling every corner of his face.

RAFAEL

(mumbling)

Thanks.

Rafael sprints up the last step and into the upstairs hallway, angrily stomping down on each floorboard he walks in the pathway. Distant, thunderous crying is heard, wailing that only starts to increase over time. Terrence and Mrs. Parker lock eyes, both brimming with intensity and frustration.

TERRENCE

Should we?

MRS. PARKER

Aren't you worried about what he might say?

TERRENCE

(a hopeful look plastered upon his face)

Not a chance.

Mrs. Parker nods knowingly, and both sprint up the old rickety staircase, every creak of each stair getting louder and louder with each passing moment.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Mrs. Parker sprints off into the distance of the loud wailing, disappearing into an unknown room at the end of the hall. Terrence sprints over to a specific room with an uncountable number of tally marks etched on the front of the door. Terrence jiggles the doorknob multiple times, sensing it will not budge. He knocks on the door repeatedly, trying to elicit a response.

TERRENCE

(visibly worried)

Raffy... open the door.

RAFAEL

(heard muffled cause of the door)

Don't call me that.

TERRENCE

What?

RAFAEL

(raising his voice)

You heard me. Don't call me that name.

TERRENCE

(visibly shocked)

Raffy... Rafael, this is not you, please talk to me. I'm here for you.

RAFAEL

(determination in his voice)

Go away.

TERRENCE

Don't make me come in there.

Terrence jiggles the doorknob once again, until he pulls out a rusted, yet frequently used lockpick from the back of his nametag. Terrence begins to pick through the lockpick, and as he does, he hears distant shuffling coming from inside the room. After a slight minute, Terrence succeeds in opening the door. Terrence opens the door to find a disheveled room.

INT. RAFAEL'S ROOM

Terrence observes the room, seeing scattered, broken framed pictures of two young boys going fishing, throwing darts and one picture of the two laughing in uproarious laughter. Terrence smiles in recognition, seeing an old map full of marked points pointing to famous landmarks, an old desk full of papers and letters, an old dingy lamp, a small closet with broken shutters and an unmade bed with a ripped pillow, looking half close to falling apart. Rafael is nowhere to be seen, hidden by shadow and dim light.

TERRENCE

Raf..Rafael, where you at?

Terrence checks under the half-destroyed bed, then shifts his attention to behind the old dresser, finding nothing.

TERRENCE

(looking at the bed)

Mrs. Parker's gonna beat your little behind if this old thing isn't made before she gets back.

Terrence's attempt at humor falls sharply flat. The silence is quite deafening. Terrence shifts his attention to the old closet.

TERRENCE

Raffy... come out, I'm just trying to talk to you, bro.

Rafael, sensing danger, leaps out of the closet angrily and brushes past Terrence and plops down on the bed.

RAFAEL

What did I say about calling me that?

TERRENCE

(saddened)

I always used to call you that.

RAFAEL

I don't care about used to. You used to say we would make it out of this place together, and what happened? You're out living your life, adopted by a family and seemingly happy without me.

Where am I? Stuck here in this place.

Rafael throws his hands up in frustration at the state of the disheveled room around him.

TERRENCE

I-I-

Terrence is at a loss for words.

RAFAEL

(clearly hurt)

I what? Get out of my room, Terry. Now.

TERRENCE

But-

RAFAEL

No buts... not this time.

Rafael pushes Terrence out of the room and slams the door in his face.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

The wailing and screaming had stopped, and Mrs. Parker was waiting at the door, clearly eavesdropping, with tears in her eyes. Terrence stares at her in complete shock.

MRS. PARKER

(crying)

I'm sorry, Terrence. I really am. He hasn't smiled one bit since you left three years ago.

TERRENCE

I miss him a lot, Mrs. Parker. Did you ever tell him about me before he got here? Did you show him the room?

MRS. PARKER

(still crying)

He wouldn't let me. He was convinced you would come back for him, that he refused to hear about you, saying you would tell him for yourself.

Terrence looks down at his scraggly shoes, saddened by what Mrs. Parker was telling him.

MRS. PARKER

(collecting herself)

I think he lost hope.

Tears start to stream down Terrence's face, pained by Mrs. Parker's words.

TERRENCE

(starting to cry)

I'm sorry I couldn't-

MRS. PARKER

I know you couldn't afford the ticket... I'm sorry Terrence.

TERRENCE

Did he have any company? Where's Lisa, Michael, Adrian, Tommy?

MRS. PARKER

(shaking her head)

They all got adopted... he has been by himself for almost a year. Well other than the quintuplets we received roughly a few months ago.

TERRENCE

I'm sorry I couldn't be here for him... I genuinely am. Raffy's all grown up... I remember when he was a scared little twelve-year old.

Shuffling is heard from behind Rafael's door. Mrs. Parker shoots the distraught Terrence a weak smile. Rafael opens the door, to see the crumpled Terrence on the floor.

RAFAEL

(reserved with anger, yet curious)

What is this about his room?

Rafael nods at Terrence, signaling him to get up. Terrence stares at Rafael, seeing no hint of happiness or enjoyment. Mrs. Parker starts walking towards the stairs, signaling for the two boys to follow her.

CUT TO:

INT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE FOYER

Mrs. Parker leads the way down the staircase, as they enter the foyer, walking up to the door with the doorknob with a few scratch marks that Terrence was gazing at earlier. Terrence spots Rafael curiously looking at the scratch marks on the knob.

TERRENCE

(sorrowful)

I wasn't a good kid... I was angry, I wanted to leave badly. I was a damn handful for poor Mrs. Parker here.

Mrs. Parker silently nods, grabbing a keychain off the wall, slowly gliding through each individual key until she finds the one for the door. The old wooden door creaks open. The three walk inside.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRENCE'S OLD ROOM

They all walk into a room with a destroyed bed, a broken mirror, a slashed, open closet, and bright red marked x's on the peeling, faded wallpaper. The entire room is dusty, with a small hole in the ceiling, patched up with duct tape, clearly a repair of the ceiling fan lying in the corner of the room. Rafael looks shocked, as he sees Terrence with tears in his eyes.

TERRENCE

(embarrassed)

I was such a mess. I was one of Mrs. Parker's first kids too.

RAFAEL

(shocked)

You did this?

Rafael gestures at the mess around the room.

TERRENCE

Yes... I probably would've done more, i-if-

Terrence starts to lose his sense of speech, beginning to cry.

RAFAEL

If what?

Mrs. Parker, recognizing what Terrence will say, finishes the sentence for him.

MRS. PARKER

(smiling with tears in her eyes)

If you had not come along.

Rafael looks at Terrence, shocked, and frozen in place.

TERRENCE

I'm sorry Raffy... I really am. I should have been here more, I should have known letters weren't gonna cut it with you.

Rafael looks shocked, then runs across the tiny room into a tight embrace with Terrence. Terrence rubs his scraggly, curly hair affectionately, clearly missing Rafael in a way that goes beyond words. Mrs. Parker watches on smiling, tears in her eyes.

RAFAEL

I missed you bro.

TERRENCE

I missed you too.

MRS. PARKER

Should we head to the table to talk?

Rafael and Terrence both join Mrs. Parker in walking out of the musty room.

INT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE FOYER

Rafael, Terrence, and Mrs. Parker sit in the chairs surrounding the old table.

MRS. PARKER

Terrence, you never told me why you decided to come here in the first place.

TERRENCE

Well, that's the funny thing Mrs. Parker... I'm here for Raffy.

Rafael and Mrs. Parker look confused.

MRS. PARKER

You're here for Rafael?

Terrence shoots a very wide grin at Rafael. He takes out a dog tag necklace fastened around his neck.

TERRENCE

(nodding at Rafael)

You still have yours?

RAFAEL

(looking relieved)

Of course.

Rafael reaches around his neck to reveal the dog tag on the necklace. The two dog tags reveal an inscribed time of three thirty-three on the back.

TERRENCE

(tears welling in his eyes)

I thought you lost hope.

RAFAEL

Not a chance.

Terrence grins at Mrs. Parker.

TERRENCE

(grinning widely)

My family's adopting Raffy, so he's gonna officially be my little brother, even though he's always unofficially been that to me.

Mrs. Parker smiles happily, grinning at the two boys with delight. Rafael, Mrs. Parker, Terrence get up from the table, and walk over to the grandfather clock.

MRS. PARKER

You know we need a guardian's signature, right?

TERRENCE

Oh, I know... but you must've forgotten, it's my eighteenth birthday, Mrs. Parker. Raffy, go grab your stuff.

Mrs. Parker hastily grabs the adoption papers, and Terrence finalizes the paperwork. Rafael runs downstairs with his belongings, almost trampling Terrence. Terrence grins.

TERRENCE

Hey Raffy, I think it's time to go. You ready?

RAFAEL

One hundred percent.

Terrence thanks Mrs. Parker and takes Rafael to the front doors. They step out into the dark, hand in hand.

EXT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE

TERRENCE

(smiling)

Hey Raffy?

RAFAEL

Yeah Terry?

TERRENCE

(smiling)

A little smile never hurt.

Rafael smiles for the first time in years, a look of relief plastered upon his face.

CUT TO:

INT. MCCADDY'S ORPHANAGE FOYER

The old, rusted grandfather clock hand stops at the time of three-thirty-three.

FADE OUT:

THE END.