

Neighbours  
by  
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Based on a short story by Raymond Carver

This Draft, April 15th 2009

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING 1

BILL MILLER (47) stands outside the bus shelter, holding a carrier bag, rain dripping down his face. He looks longingly at a poster for *Sandals* holidays, which features a middle-aged couple lying in the sun, drinking cocktails.

In the background, sitting in the bus shelter, is a young couple, kissing passionately. Just as his eyes wander in their direction, a beige hatchback pulls up. Bill hurries to open the passenger door and gets in.

2 INT. CAR - EVENING 2

Bill leans over to kiss his wife, EILEEN (49), on the cheek, and fastens his seat belt. They sit in silence.

3 EXT. DRIVEWAY - EVENING 3

As Bill pulls into the driveway, the front door of the house next to them opens. JIM STONE (51) and his wife HARRIET (38) struggle through the door with several large suitcases.

BILL  
(sighs)  
Just for once, I wish we were  
going away somewhere nice.

4 EXT. NEXT DOOR - EVENING 4

Bill trudges up the Stones' garden path. A taxi pulls up. Jim struggles down the path with one of the cases. Bill walks straight past him, and up to Harriet.

BILL  
Do you want a hand with the  
luggage?

HARRIET  
Oh, you're such a darling!

BILL  
(pointing to a travel  
wallet)  
I think you dropped something

Harriet glances down, looks at Bill for a moment, then turns around, and bends over to pick it up. Bill sneaks a look at her backside.

Harriet smiles, and trots off down the path. Bill follows, dragging her case.

HARRIET

I haven't fed Kitty yet, so she'll be ready by the time you come round. Oh, and I haven't had chance to water the plants.

EILEEN

I'll send Bill after he's had his dinner.

Harriet holds out a shining, metallic pink key, and smiles at Bill.

HARRIET

There you go, darling. Thanks ever so.

Bill grins.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

(rushing towards the taxi)

See you in a fortnight, my loves. Don't do anything we wouldn't do!

Bill and Eileen wave, as the taxi drives into the distance.

5 INT. MILLER KITCHEN - EVENING

5

The Miller house has neutral decor throughout, and resembles something out of an Argos catalogue...from 10 years ago. It is sparse, and functional.

Bill and Eileen sit at the table, eating fish and chips. Eileen has a plate, but Bill is eating straight out of the paper.

Bill finishes his food, crumples the paper, and tosses it in the bin. He picks up the shiny pink key from the dresser.

EILEEN

Remember to give Kitty the liver-flavoured food.

Bill nods.

6 EXT. NEXT DOOR'S GARDEN PATH - EVENING

6

Bill, in slippers, walks up the damp path, stopping for a moment to admire the Koi pond. He unlocks the front door.

7 INT. STONE KITCHEN - EVENING 7

As is the case in most semi-detached houses, the Stones' is a mirror image of the Millers' - at least in structure. The similarity ends there. The decor is lavish, with many exotic artifacts from their travels. The furniture is mostly hand-carved.

BILL

Kitty!

A white Persian cat comes running, and he places a dish of food on the floor. He stands for a while, gazing through the rain-streaked window.

Bill glances down at a framed photo of Jim and Harriet, smiling, and drinking cocktails in some far off location. He picks it up, and notices the bank book it was resting on. He flicks through the pages, stops, and whistles slowly, his eyebrows raised.

8 INT. BATHROOM - EVENING 8

Bill flushes the toilet, and washes his hands. He opens the medicine cabinet door, and picks up several bottles of tablets, one at a time, and examines the labels.

9 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING 9

Bill pours the last drops of water, from a jug, onto a yucca plant. He opens the drinks cabinet and picks up a bottle of brandy. He examines the label, smiles, and takes off the top. He lifts the bottle neck to his nose, and takes a good sniff. He smiles again, and takes a couple of swigs.

He pauses at the doorway, glances at Kitty, asleep on the couch, and switches the light off.

BILL

Night night, Puss.

He leaves, closing the front door behind him.

10 INT. MILLER LIVING ROOM - EVENING 10

Eileen is sitting on the couch, watching TV. Bill comes through the door.

EILEEN

What took you so long?

BILL

I was playing with Kitty.

Bill sits next to Eileen. She is staring at the television, watching a home makeover show. She doesn't break her gaze when he moves closer and rests his head on her shoulder.

EILEEN  
How about a mug of cocoa?

BILL  
(sighs)  
Yeah, OK.

11 INT. MILLER BEDROOM - EVENING

11

Eileen is sitting up in bed, wearing her reading glasses and thumbing through a catalogue. Bill walks in, in his striped pyjamas and flannel dressing gown.

BILL  
Shall I switch the light off?

EILEEN  
If you like.

Bill switches off the light, and climbs into bed. There is the sound of rustling sheets, as he moves his hand to the other side of the bed.

BILL  
Mmmmm.

EILEEN  
Go to sleep, dear.

12 EXT. DRIVEWAY - THE NEXT EVENING

12

Eileen pulls into the driveway, and sees Bill in next door's garden, looking at the Koi pond.

EILEEN  
What are you doing here?

BILL  
It was such a lovely night, I thought I'd walk home.

EILEEN  
(looking up at the grey sky)  
If you say so.

Eileen walks towards their front door, and reaches in her pocket for the key.

Bill follows behind, glances at the house next door, and then runs his eyes down Eileen's back, stopping at her buttocks and smiling to himself.

13 INT. MILLER HALLWAY - EVENING 13

BILL  
Let's go to bed.

EILEEN  
I've got to prepare dinner.

BILL  
Take your dress off.

EILEEN  
What's come over you?

She laughs, and turns to walk away. Bill presses into Eileen, and wraps his arms around her. She turns, and moves in to kiss him. He unzips her dress.

14 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 14

Bill opens his eyes and looks around the room. Eileen is standing at the side of the bed, fastening her dressing gown.

BILL  
What time is it?

EILEEN  
Quarter past eight.

He jumps out of bed, hurriedly putting on his dressing gown and slippers.

EILEEN (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

BILL  
(already halfway through  
the door)  
I nearly forgot about Kitty.

15 INT. STONE KITCHEN - NIGHT 15

Bill walks into the kitchen with an empty water jug. Kitty is licking her bowl clean.

Bill goes through the cupboards, examining the contents. He moves on to the fridge, takes a couple of bites of cheese, and picks up an apple.

- 16 INT. LANDING / BEDROOM - NIGHT 16
- Finishing his apple, Bill walks across the landing. He stops to look through the open bathroom door. He glances at the other side of the landing, and sees a closed door.
- He pauses for a moment, silently considering his options, and walks over to the closed door. He tries the handle. The door swings open. It's dark inside.
- Bill flicks the light switch, glances around, then casts his gaze upon the large, luxurious bed, draped in a white fluffy cover.
- Bill sits on the edge and strokes the fluffy cover. He lies back and wraps it around him, smiling broadly, eyes closed. He is bliss personified.
- 17 INT. BEDROOM / LANDING - LATER 17
- Bill wakes suddenly. There's a knock at the door. He dashes out of the bedroom, stopping briefly to flush the toilet, before heading down the stairs.
- 18 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 18
- Bill opens the front door, to find Eileen.
- EILEEN  
You've been gone over an hour.
- BILL  
I had to use the toilet.
- Bill walks quickly, out of the door, and closes it behind him. He continues to walk down the path.
- EILEEN  
What's that on your shoulder?
- She picks off a piece of white fluff.
- BILL  
(hesitant)  
Erm...must be some of Kitty's hairs.
- 19 INT. MILLER BEDROOM - MORNING 19
- The Millers are in bed, unclothed. Bill is already awake, and is spooning Eileen. She wakes, turns to him, and smiles. They kiss. Bill glances at the clock, which reads 8.25am.

BILL  
Can you phone in sick for me?

EILEEN  
Why?

BILL  
I just feel a bit off-colour.

EILEEN  
That's not like you.

20 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING 20

Bill is sitting at the table, drinking tea and eating toast.

EILEEN (O.S.)  
Are you sure you'll be alright on your own?

BILL  
Don't worry. Have a good day.

Bill waits for a short while, half-reading the newspaper, and repeatedly craning his neck to look out of the front window. He sees Eileen get in the car and drive off. He walks briskly out of the room.

21 INT. MILLER BEDROOM - MORNING 21

Bill, now dressed, is sitting on the edge of the bed, putting on his last sock. He picks up a slipper, pauses, puts it down, and picks up a pair of shoes.

22 INT. STONE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 22

Bill closes the door behind him. Kitty comes running, and brushes against his leg.

He starts climbing the stairs. There's a knock at the door. Bill jumps. He cautiously makes his way back down the stairs, and opens the door.

POSTMAN  
Morning! Mr. Stone?

BILL  
Er, yes.

POSTMAN  
Got a Special Delivery for you.  
Sign there please.

Bill signs and takes the package. They smile and nod to each other. Bill closes the door.

Bill examines the package. There's a small split in the envelope. He manoeuvres it all ways, trying to see inside. The split gets bigger. He shrugs his shoulders and tears it open. It's a plaque, engraved with 'Jim Stone, Salesman of the Year 2007'.

Bill wraps the tattered envelope around the plaque, and puts it on the hall table. He turns, and strides confidently up the stairs, whistling.

23 INT. BEDROOM - MORNING 23

Bill goes over to the wardrobe. He stands for a short while, looking at his reflection, and then opens the wardrobe door.

He picks out an Hawaiian shirt and a pair of Bermuda shorts. He puts them on, and examines himself in the mirror.

Bill lies on the bed, revelling in the luxury. He gazes at a wedding photo of Jim and Harriet, which is on the bedside cabinet. He lifts his thumb, and squinting with one eye, blocks Jim from the photo. He reaches out, and flips it over, facedown.

24 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 24

Bill flicks through the CD cabinet, picks one out, and puts it in the hi-fi. 'One Love' by Bob Marley starts to play.

Bill opens the drink cabinet, and rummages through it. He picks up a bottle of Malibu and fills a glass.

25 INT. BEDROOM - MORNING 25

Bill pours the last of the Malibu down his throat, and takes off the shirt and shorts. He opens the other wardrobe and searches through it. Bill picks out a satin ball gown, and holds it to his face, rubbing it across his cheek.

Bill lies the ballgown flat along one side of the bed. He lies on the bed next to the ballgown and strokes it gently. He slides his other hand under the waistband of his shorts. His eyes close slowly.

EILEEN (O.S.)  
Are you enjoying that?

BILL (O.S.)  
Mmmm, yes. It's lovely.

26 INT. MILLER KITCHEN - EVENING

26

Eileen is picking at her food, smiling shyly. Bill smiles back. They finish the last of their meal, and Eileen clears the dishes. Bill watches her from behind, eyeing her up and down.

Bill stands up, and walks over to the dresses and reaches for the pink key. Eileen grabs it before he has the chance.

EILEEN  
No you don't !

BILL  
(hand outstretched)  
Don't worry pet, I'll, I'll do it.

EILEEN  
No, darling, you're not very well. Just put your feet up and relax.

Eileen glances at Bill's shoulder, and sees a piece of white fluff. She leaves. Bill sits for a moment, but soon begins to pace the floor. He goes over to the window, and looks towards the Stones' front door. It's closed.

27 EXT. STONE HOUSE - NIGHT

27

Bill tries the front door. It's locked. He knocks.

BILL  
Eileen?

He fidgets, and then checks the door again.

BILL (CONT'D)  
(louder)  
Eileen?

There are hurried footsteps, growing louder. Eileen opens the door, looking hot and bothered.

EILEEN  
Have I been gone long?

Bill nods, and studies her face. She glances away, in the direction of the Stones' living room and closes the door.

They head off down the path. Bill spots a piece of white fluff on Eileen's back. He picks it off and holds it up. Eileen, feeling his touch, turns her head quickly, looking even more flushed.

They kiss, stumbling onto the lawn in an embrace. Bill backs Eileen into the hedge, and moves down to kiss her neck repeatedly.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Did you see the photos?

BILL

(still kissing her neck)  
What photos?

EILEEN

The album? Harriet's

BILL

Don't know what you mean.

EILEEN

Honestly? You haven't seen them?

She takes him by the hand, and leads him back towards the path.

BILL

What was it, holiday photos?

EILEEN

No.

BILL

Family photos?

EILEEN

(laughing)  
No, definitely not !

Eileen flashes a naughty look. Bill grins, and quickens his pace. He pushes past Eileen playfully, and heads for the door. She nudges him aside, and runs the last few steps, giggling, and feeling around in her pocket. She checks the other pocket. A look of horror sweeps across her face.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Bill, I've locked the key in the house.

BILL

Are you serious?

Their faces drop. Eileen frantically jiggles the door handle. Bill slumps onto the wall, staring down at his slippers.

FADE OUT.