

A Walk In The Park

By Carl Alves

Shawna Kidd folded her arms as they drove through the park's entrance. "The gate's closed."

"Of course. It's the off season and the park's officially closed." Rick shook his head.

Rick stopped the car in front of the gate. "We'll park here and walk to the picnic area." He parked in the small lot near the ranger's lodge. There were no other cars.

Shawna had a wide smile on her face. "You would think there would be other cars since it's such a nice day."

"They're probably doing something stupid like going to the mall," Rick said.

It was February, and normally the ground would still be covered with snow. When Rick first mentioned the idea of going to the park that morning, Shawna was reluctant. She

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

wasn't an outdoors person and would have preferred to go shopping. But Rick seemed to have his heart set on going to the park, and this might be a good way to break the ice. Their three year marriage was fracturing. Hopefully going to Chipinak Park on nice day like this would give them an opportunity to talk, something they hadn't done lately.

They exited the car and walked past the gate toward the lake, located in the middle of the park.

When they arrived at a fork in the road, Shawna asked, "Where do you want to go, the trails or the marina?"

Rick shrugged. "I guess the trails. There probably aren't any boats in the marina yet."

"All right." She grabbed Rick's arm as they walked on road that ran parallel to the lake.

They still had yet to see a soul after walking a half hour. Shawna had never gone this deep into the park before. When she and Rick had been to the park before, they had spent most of their time at the lake, which was a hot spot for fishers in the spring. This was probably a good time to turn around.

Before she articulated her thoughts, Rick said, "I have to go to the bathroom."

"Didn't we just pass one?"

"Yeah, I know," Rick said. "I should have stopped then. I'll just run back."

"Okay. I'll go with you."

"You don't have to. I'll be back in a minute."

Shawna frowned as Rick walked back in the direction they had come from. When he disappeared from view, she sat on the asphalt since there were no benches nearby.

She was determined to make the relationship work. The first year of their marriage had been great. They took long walks, had weekend getaways and talked for hours. Since then, Rick had been withdrawn. He had become quiet and brooding. She wished he showed more emotion instead of keeping everything bottled inside. Every once in a while he showed a glimpse of affection that made her melt.

The day was eerily silent, like the wildlife had hibernated for the winter. This was the closest Shawn ever got to nature. Rick suggested camping on several occasions, but she could not understand the concept of not having the conveniences she was used to.

She looked at her watch. Rick was taking a long time. Maybe he wasn't feeling well. She paced around for a few minutes, more conscious of the time. "What the hell?" she muttered, caught between annoyance and concern.

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

After two minutes passed, she walked to the restroom. She called out his name, but there was no answer. She yelled louder. Still no answer. "What's going on?"

Shawna circled the building, but only found trees and fallen leaves. She stood outside the men's door and yelled for Rick. She took a deep breath and did something she had never done before: she entered a men's bathroom.

She quickly looked at all of the stalls and urinals. There was nobody there. She walked out, sighing in frustration, before returning to where she had been waiting for Rick, still calling out his name. She did not know in which direction to walk or if she should stay put. He couldn't have passed her by, so she walked in the direction of their car. Perhaps he lost his orientation when he exited the bathroom.

Fifteen minutes later she was in tears. Either he was playing a horrible joke, or something had happened to him. She returned to the bathroom, breathing heavy, her hands shaking. She hadn't seen another human being other than Rick since they arrived. What if someone else was in the park and had harmed Rick?

She hadn't heard any screams of distress that would suggest a struggle. Maybe he had gotten lost. She stood

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

in place, paralyzed with indecision. She nearly vomited as bile rose into her throat.

This time Shawna walked to the far end of the park. She continued to call out his name. Her voice had become high pitched and hysterical.

After ten minutes, she stopped moving. Tears streamed down her face. She prayed that Rick would show up unharmed, but deep that she knew that wasn't going to happen. Something bad had happened.

She eyed the woods warily. They seemed malevolent. She had always been a city dweller. Moving to the suburbs had been a difficult adjustment.

Wind whipped through the trees. She couldn't bring herself to walk through the woods. Rick would have stuck to the trails.

Shawna dropped to her knees, crying hysterically. She had to leave. Sure, she wanted to find her husband, but she couldn't stay. She was unfamiliar with her surroundings and wasn't sure she could find her car.

She tried to recall the path they had taken, but her mind was a jumbled mess. She looked for signs for the marina, since she thought she could walk back to the parking lot from there. If she could find that, then she would be able to find the car.

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

She was on her knees for so long that they ached when she stood again. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She had to find the car, because Rick would probably go back there if he was lost.

It took her nearly a half hour before she reached the car. It was locked and she did not have the keys. She picked up a rock and considered smashing the window, but put it down. It would be futile, since she couldn't start the car without the keys.

She frantically searched her purse for her cell phone, but it wasn't there. "Damn!" She clenched her fist, convinced she had put the phone in her purse earlier.

Shawna buried her face in her hands. If she had her phone, she could call for help. If she had her keys, she could drive to the nearest police station. Since it was the off season, there was nobody in the ranger's lodge.

She contemplated leaving the park and walking on the road, but she had to find Rick. She wandered aimlessly until she stood in front of the bathroom where she had last seen him. She froze, mouth open wide. Written on the asphalt in chalk were the words, "RICK IS DEAD".

She wailed miserably and stared at it. "I have to get out of here."

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

The air around her seemed ominous. Every time she stepped, she felt like someone was watching her. Forget the car, she had to get out of the park. She would hitch a ride or walk to a police station.

She wanted to run, but her legs would not cooperate. They felt like they were made of oak.

She noticed a piece of light blue material off to the side of the path. It was a torn piece of the shirt Rick had been wearing. Blood stained the collar and sleeves.

“Oh, Rick. This can’t be happening.”

She gathered herself and walked slowly, struggling to convince her legs to move.

Rick’s sunglasses were on the ground by the fork in the road leading to the exit. They had been crushed. She picked up the glasses and held them to her chest, wondering if she would ever see her husband again. Despite some of the problems they had recently, not having Rick in her life would be devastating. They had already made so many long term plans, and were going to start a family soon.

Panic struck as Shawna realized she too would die. Whoever harmed Rick would come after her. Still, she would fight for her survival.

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

Not far from the sunglasses was a trail of blood, leading off the road and to the woods. Shoe prints stood out in the dirt.

She followed the tracks slowly, hoping against hope that her husband was alive. "Rick?" Her voice was barely audible. She walked further into the woods. She thought she had lost the tracks before picking them up again. All she could see in any direction were trees. How the hell would she ever get out?

Shawna broke out into a stumbling sprint when she spotted a huddled mass on the ground. It had to be Rick. When she reached him she dropped down on all fours, completely numb.

The body stirred.

She reached out and touched his shoulders, fearing to turn him over.

"Looking for someone?"

Shawna jumped back as if she were looking at a ghost. "Oh my God Rick, you scared the hell out of me."

Rick laughed.

"What is this some kind of joke?" Shawna cried.

"That's not funny. I was so scared.

"You should be scared." Rick stood up and pulled out a long, buck knife.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

Rick's face tightened. "You think I wouldn't find out? Do you really think I'm stupid? I know you've been cheating on me. You see, I looked at the phone bill and kept seeing this number pop up over and over again. I went on the Internet and found out it belonged to Vince Messina. Then I looked up his address and drove to his house. And who's car did I see? Yours."

She tried to fight back the tears. "It's not what you think. I can explain."

"There's nothing to explain you lying, cheating whore!"

"No, Rick. Please drop the knife. I can..."

Rick pounced on her. He grabbed her by the head and plunged the knife into her abdomen. He took the bloody knife out and stabbed her again and again and again...

Rick smirked as he wrote out the check for this month's cell phone bill. He felt at peace now that he could start his life over without his adulterous wife. He buried her body in an abandoned quarry near Chipinak Park. Officially, she was still a missing person.

The phone rang, and Rick picked it up. "Hello."

"Hello. Is Shawna Kidd available?"

"No."

Carl Alves – A Walk In The Park

"Oh, is this her husband Rick?"

"Yes."

"Hi. I'm Dr. Vincent Messina." There was a pause in the line. "Your wife Shawna is one of my patients and she missed her appointment. I was calling to find out if there is a problem."

"Patient?"

"Uh, yes. I'm Shawna's psychiatrist. Didn't she tell you that she was seeing me twice a week." The phone dropped from Rick's hand. "Mr. Kidd? Hello?"

The End