

From the full length/one act play:

CHECKING IN

By Tracy Wells

WIDOW/WIDOWER, older person, sitting in a hotel room, taking their first trip alone after the death of their spouse

WIDOW/WIDOWER

Oh, you know—when you’re young and just starting out, you are anxious to begin your life. You find a great job...get married...settle in quickly...set up house in your new apartment...work on getting a promotion...start saving for a home of your own...start having kids...have even *more* kids...finally buy a home...get settled into your home...decide you need to *remodel* your home...take care of the kids...worry when your kids become teenagers...send those teenagers, now young adults, off to college...watch those young adults get married...settle into life as an empty nester...plan to take some trips but save for retirement instead. Then you retire, and now finally you are going to take that trip you always planned to—

(Looks down sadly.)

—only now one of you isn’t well. Something isn’t right. You go from doctor to doctor but no one knows what’s wrong. You go to an internist...a cardiologist...an endocrinologist...you get CAT scans...and PET scans...and biopsies...and finally you have an answer. The oncologist tells you that there’s time. Only the oncologist can’t possibly understand that it’s not enough—that there will never be enough. But you hope. So you start the chemo...and the radiation...and the surgeries...and the physical therapy...and the occupational therapy. And when those don’t work you try the vitamins...and the herbal treatments...and the acupuncture...and the holistic approaches. You take your life savings and you fly to a foreign land hoping they have the answers you are looking for. Only...they don’t.

(Pauses, sighing, then straightens her shoulders.)

So you gather your strength...and you sit by his side...and you hold his hand. You keep him updated about the kids and grandkids...and you tell him funny stories from your life together...and you tell him everything that’s inside your heart that you’ve never said.

(Looks down, a tear falling down her cheek.)

And in those last moments...when he musters everything he has inside him...he tells you that after he’s gone...when the casseroles are all eaten...when the family and friends have returned to their own lives...when the house is quiet and lonely—he tells you to take that trip...the one you always meant to take together...the one you’ve been waiting for and saving all your life for...the trip of a lifetime. He tells you to go...and take it for the both of us.

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