

# Back Home Again

by

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A couple try to make their way back home while dealing with their grief and estrangement.

FADE IN.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR. DAY

MELANIE, (42), drives up to Sonoma County from San Francisco where she has been staying for the past two years taking care of her elderly father. She calls her estranged husband, DAVID, (42).

DAVID (V.O.)

Hey, Mel..

MELANIE

Hi...I'm on my way up there. I was wondering if you'd meet me at the lot.

DAVID (V.O.)

Today?

MELANIE

Yeah, say around 1:30?

DAVID (V.O.)

Sure, I can make...it'll be nice to see you. Everything done at your dad's?

MELANIE

Yep, closed escrow last week, and everything is outta the house.

DAVID (V.O.)

Wow...that was a big job. Anyway, we can talk when you get here.

MELANIE

OK, see you soon.

EXT. SANTA ROSA HOUSE SITE. DAY

She meets Dave at the property. The trees are still charred from the fire nearly four years prior. Weeds and debris have overrun the foundation and there are large piles of debris in the backyard. Melanie pulls into the driveway, Dave is already there. She gets out of the car. It's been almost a year since they've seen each other. Neither know where they are at with each other.

MELANIE

Hey,  
(she hugs him, awkwardly)  
How are you?

DAVID

(he kisses her cheek)  
I'm good...you?

MELANIE

I'm alright...how's work going?

DAVID

It's going...no changes, I suppose  
that's good. Some stability, right?

MELANIE

Yeah, that's true.  
(beat)  
Hey...I was thinking...I'd like to  
use my inheritance to rebuild the  
place.

DAVID

(taken aback)  
Really? I thought we were gonna  
just sell the lot.

MELANIE

Yeah, I thought so too...but, I  
don't think I wanna let this place  
go. It's our place.

DAVID

It was our place. I don't know,  
Mel...it's really painful to even  
be here now. If we are still "we",  
maybe we should make a fresh start  
somewhere else?

MELANIE

It's just...I've been thinking,  
this is the only place I feel close  
to him...not his grave, but here,  
where he lived.

DAVID

(looks at her tenderly,  
but distant)  
Mel, Mel...we have so much work to  
do to rebuild "us". Rebuilding this  
house might end everything..for  
good.

MELANIE

But, Dave...don't you wanna take a chance. I know things have been tough the past couple years, I've not been there for you, but...I didn't know I'd have to take care of my dad..right after losing Danny. I couldn't deal with everything...but I really do feel that rebuilding our house will help us. Rebuild "us".

DAVID

(approaches her and hugs her)

I'm not too sure about that...but, OK, I'll think about it.

Dave walks around the lot.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You'll need to talk to a contractor for sure, just to see how much we're looking at. You know all the insurance money's gone.

MELANIE

Yeah, I know.

DAVID

Should I call Chris?

MELANIE

Oh yeah...he's close, local. Yes, thanks...really, thank you.

DAVID

Where you staying?

MELANIE

I'm just gonna go to the cabin and stay there for awhile. I don't think Brian will mind.

DAVID

I'd offer you the couch at my sister's, but it's pretty crowded over there.

MELANIE

It's OK, tell her I say hello.

DAVID

Tell your brother I say hi too.

They both get into their cars and drive off.

INT. LOCAL STARBUCKS. DAY (A MONTH LATER)

Melanie and Dave meet with CHRIS, a general contractor, to go over their project. Chris carries a roll of plans, and Melanie has file folders. These are spread out on a table in the restaurant.

MELANIE

So, you got the original plans from the City?

CHRIS

Yeah, your original house wasn't that old, and we can rebuild it pretty much the way it was. Good thing it wasn't too big...the costs could be high.

(looking at the plans)

The foundation is in tact and the site utilities just need cleaning up.

DAVID

Mel, do you want to change anything?

MELANIE

Not really, but we might as well upgrade some while we're at it.

CHRIS

I've drawn up a construction contract,

(pulls out documents)

I will rebuild the house according to the original plans. The cost will be approximately \$325,000.00.

DAVID

Wow...

MELANIE

Wow is right!

CHRIS

Building costs have skyrocketed since the fire. All of us are super busy, but because it's you guys, we will schedule you in right away.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

If we get started right away, we can have the exterior done before the rain.

DAVID

Mel? Is this what you really want to do? I mean, we can wait.

MELANIE

Wait? Wait for what? It's been four years, and we've had no home, right?

DAVID

Yeah...but...never mind, we can talk about that later.

MELANIE

(looking at him,  
understanding)

Yeah, that we can talk about later.  
(to Chris)  
Yes, let's do it. Where do we sign?

Melanie and Dave read over the contract, and sign. They continue to look over the plans and discuss other aspects of the project.

CONSTRUCTION MONTAGE.

Melanie and Dave help construction crew clean up the site. Construction trailer arrives.

Trucks of supplies arrive at the project.

Melanie and Dave at a restaurant going over floor samples. Dave is distant while Melanie is animated and excited.

Melanie alone at the project watching the framing going up. She checks her watch, makes a call to Dave, he doesn't answer.

Melanie at the job site, three months have passed and the exterior of the house is almost complete.

Melanie in the inside of the structure, looking at the building process. Melanie strings up some Christmas lights.

INT. LOCAL RESTAURANT. DAY

Melanie waits for Dave at a table. She drinks her coffee, looking at paint swatches. Dave enters.

MELANIE

Hey, how's it going? I have the paint swatches.

DAVID

Hold on.  
(he waves down the  
waitress)  
Can I get a cup of coffee?

WAITRESS

Sure...here's a menu.

DAVID

No, thanks, I'm not staying.

MELANIE

(waits for the waitress  
to leave)  
What's going on? We need to pick  
the colors.

DAVID

Mel...I can't do this anymore.  
Haven't you even noticed I haven't  
been around?

MELANIE

Yeah...yeah. Why?

DAVID

Because, this project is too  
overwhelming.

MELANIE

How so?  
(beat)  
The construction, Danny...or me?

DAVID

I don't care about the  
construction, and yes, I can't help  
but see him running around that  
yard. And that's really hard. But  
even that I can deal with...it's  
you. And it's Christmas, and I have  
nothing...I feel so lost.

MELANIE

I see...  
(pinching back tears)  
What, what about me? What have I  
done?

DAVID

It's not what you've done...It's just you're more concerned about that house...than about us. I've been waiting, waiting a long time to see if there is any "us" anymore. And I thought this project would bring us closer. But, it's like I've lost you to this, I don't know, this phantom.

Waitress returns with Dave's coffee.

WAITRESS

(to Melanie)

Ready to order?

MELANIE

(holding back tears)

Uhm...just an English muffin, thanks. More coffee too, please.

Waitress leaves table.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(reaches out to his hand,  
but he pulls it away)

Uhm...I can't stop now..we're almost done.

DAVID

Well, I can, I can't do this anymore...you'll have to finish without me.

MELANIE

Dave..Dave...it's not just for me...it is for us.

DAVID

That's what you think; you know, I wasn't really keen on the idea. Now, I go up there, and you are immersed in the project, and I can't get my bearings.

MELANIE

What can I do? How can I help?

DAVID

Nothing...I have to figure it out.

MELANIE

But...us?



DAVID  
(shaking his head)  
I really don't know.  
(beat)  
Anyway, I gotta go. We'll talk  
soon.

Dave gulps down the last of his coffee, and leaves without a hug or kiss. Melanie watches him leave and drive off.

INT. NEW HOUSE. DAY

Melanie oversees the finishing work in the house. The floor is being put down, and Melanie is cleaning up the new appliances. Chris comes in.

CHRIS  
Hey, how are you? I haven't seen  
you around.

MELANIE  
Ya, I got a job. I figured it was  
time.

CHRIS  
Cool. Well, we are totally on  
schedule, and I think we'll pull  
out of here in about three weeks.  
You ready to move in?

MELANIE  
I guess so. Nice not to have to pay  
storage anymore, and my brother  
will be glad to get the cabin back  
to himself.

CHRIS  
And Dave?

MELANIE  
I don't know.  
(near tears)  
I don't know...I may have pushed  
him too far.

CHRIS  
Melanie...you guys have been  
through so much, I'll be praying  
for you. I hope you guys can work  
it out. Hey, and thanks for the  
work.

MELANIE

Thank you, Chris, thanks for being a friend, and for being his friend. He really needs one.

CHRIS

I'll go see him, and drop off a set of keys for him. Is that OK?

MELANIE

Sure, I don't know if he'll want 'em. But maybe it'll help.

(looking around)

You guys did a great job. It's perfect.

CHRIS

Thanks.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SANTA ROSA, DAY

Melanie walks to Dave's office. She enters.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA. DAY

Melanie walks straight to Dave's office. Melanie greets SUSIE (62), Dave's admin assistant.

MELANIE

Hi Susie...he knows I'm coming.

SUSIE

I know, he told me...Congratulations on the new house.

MELANIE

Thank you, Susie!

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE. DAY

Dave sees her, and waves her to sit down while he finishes his call. Dave hangs up the phone.

MELANIE

Hey...Chris said he dropped off my keys here too.

DAVID

Yeah, they're here...How's it going?

MELANIE  
Good...just busy with this new job.  
(beat)  
Have you gone by?

DAVID  
No...I haven't. This is your thing,  
Mel. I'm gonna...

MELANIE  
Wait..wait...just see the place  
before you make a permanent  
decision. Please.

DAVID  
I can't, it's too late.

Dave opens his desk drawer, and hands her the keys and an envelope which contain divorce papers.

MELANIE  
(in tears, looking at the  
envelope)  
Really...really?

DAVID  
I can't get it together...at least  
I can let you go.

MELANIE  
But I don't want to be let go.

DAVID  
Mel...don't make it harder. Go see  
your house.

MELANIE  
(hurt)  
It's OUR house, David.

Melanie grabs the envelope and keys, and leaves without saying another word.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR. DAY

Melanie drives across town to the new house, crying. She makes her way to the driveway and parks. She gets out of the car.

EXT. NEW HOUSE. DAY

Melanie looks at her new house with tears streaming down her face. She walks around the perimeter. She goes through the side gate to the backyard. She turns the around the corner to the backyard and a bower of yellow daffodils blow and wave in the wind.

MELANIE

What?

She rushes to them and plants her face in the blossoms. She runs back to her car and speeds away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SANTA ROSA, DAY

Melanie parks her car. She runs to Dave's office.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA. DAY

She runs into the office.

MELANIE

Hi Susie...

Melanie runs past Susie to Dave's office.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE. DAY

Melanie barges into Dave's office. Dave turns around in his chair. Melanie is out of breath, flushed but glowing.

MELANIE

Dave, you have to come, you have to come right now.

DAVID

I'm in the middle of something.

MELANIE

No, you gotta come NOW.

DAVID

What, what is it?

MELANIE

(weeping)  
It's the daffodils. It's the daffodils, Dave.

DAVID  
(near tears)  
The ones he planted.

Melanie nodded, sobbing.

MELANIE  
The trailer was there, and all the  
garbage. I forgot all about them.  
Oh Dave..our little boy.

Dave gets up and embraces her. They weep together.

EXT. NEW HOUSE BACKYARD. DAY

Melanie and David stand over the daffodil patch little Danny  
planted five years earlier.

MELANIE  
Remember what he said? Remember?

DAVID  
Ya, I told him they would come back  
every year, and he said  
(wiping away his tears)  
and he said, "Even when I grow up  
and go away, you will always  
remember me when you see them."

Melanie hugs Dave, and he hugs her back tightly. Dave puts  
his hands around Melanie's face, wiping her tears with his  
thumbs. He kisses her lovingly. Then hugs her.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry about the papers...rip  
'em up. I didn't know what to do.

MELANIE  
It's OK..I understand, it's been so  
hard.

They embrace. Dave turns to look at the house.

DAVID  
(grabbing her hand)  
Well, let's go see our house!

Melanie and Dave walk to the front of the house, hand in  
hand, and go in.

FADE OUT.