

Dark Release
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Craft I
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Final Draft

EXT. ROAD- DAY

A police cruiser barrels down a nearly empty highway.

The side of the cruiser reads:

"SHERIFF".

EXT. CEMETERY- AFTERNOON

The cruiser enters, passing an ornate set of open gates. Slows its speed. The car is turned off. Door opens and...

Out steps JAY BROWN, late 50's, in uniform. His eyes and face are weary. Ring on his finger. Brown holds a bundle of FLOWERS in his hand.

He walks toward a sea of tombstones, all indiscriminate.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

Brown picks at his food. There are two place mats at the kitchen table. Only one diner.

He glances over at the other place mat- then looks down and continues to eat.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

Brown, in a white tee and boxers, slips under the covers.

INT. BEDROOM- HOURS LATER

Darkness.

The SHRILL RING of a phone.

Brown flicks a light on, grabs the phone and answers.

BROWN
Sheriff Brown.

MAN (O.S.)
Hey Jay, it's Tom. Sorry to bother
ya this late but we've got some
trouble.

Brown straightens up a bit, his interest peaked.

BROWN
Where are you?

JACOBS (O.S.)
Difficult to say. Outside some nuts
house.

INT/EXT. BROWN'S HOUSE- MOMENTS LATER

Brown, now dressed, opens the front door. TOM JACOBS, late 30's, smile on his face, stands there. Tom enters the house and moves into the...

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

BROWN
You want anythin'?

JACOBS
I'm alright.

They sit down at the kitchen table.

BROWN
You ever hear of a guy named
Bell...Alex Bell?

JACOBS
That Jimmy's kid? The one that owns
the hardware store?

BROWN
He's the guy that invented the
phone. It's a pretty nice invention
when you know how to use it.
(beat)
I know you ain't come all the way
out here just for work.

JACOBS
You holdin up alright?

BROWN
I'm fine. Just fine.

JACOBS
Just makin sure.
(pause)
Got a pretty nasty 187 in that
condo complex off Fuller. Neighbors
called it in- smelled the body.

Brown looks at the ring planted once again on his finger.

BROWN

It's a day for death, ain't it Tom?

JACOBS

Suppose so.

BROWN

You think anything's gonna break with this one tonight?

JACOBS

Nah, wouldn't expect it to.

BROWN

Okay then. Think I ought to try and hit the hay. Can you handle this one till mornin'?

JACOBS

Yup, all taken care of.

BROWN

Sure you'll be alright?

JACOBS

Don't worry bout it, it's covered. You sure you'll be alright?

INT. BEDROOM- HOURS LATER

Darkness. The uneasy RUSTLING of a sleepless night. An alarm clock on the dresser reads- 3:26 AM. A light is turned on. Brown drags himself out of bed.

INT. KITCHEN- MOMENTS LATER

Jay walks over to the refrigerator. It's full of pictures- most are of Brown and a beautiful blonde.

One catches his eye- a much younger Brown, smiling, his hand resting on the protruding belly of the blonde.

He opens the fridge. It's a typical mans fridge, consisting primarily of condiments and soda. Not a solid food in sight.

EXT. DINER- NIGHT

An old, flickering multi-color sign that reads-

"Paradise Diner. Now Open 24 Hours."

Brown's cruiser pulls up in front of it.

INT. DINER- MOMENTS LATER

Brown walks up to the register. Behind it stands SUSIE, late 40's, an old friend. She smiles at him.

SUSIE

Good to see ya, Jay. Didn't expect to see you...today. How ya doin?

BROWN

I'm alright.

SUSIE

I'm so sorry I didn't get around to call. Been workin since noon and we've been so busy...

BROWN

That's fine. Ain't much of a special reason to call anyway.

SUSIE

If there's ever a day to call, I'd say today would be a good one.

Silence.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Say, I heard bout that killin down off Fuller a little while ago. You already clean that up?

BROWN

Nah, left Tom to handle that one.

Susie's eyes almost seem to bulge out of her head. Utter shock.

SUSIE

Things certainly have changed.

The Sheriff looks around the diner- there's no more than three customers scattered across twenty or thirty tables.

BROWN

Well, think I could get a booth or are ya'll too busy?

Susie laughs. Grabs a menu from behind the register.

SUSIE
Come on, smart ass.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER- MOMENTS LATER

Brown sits quietly in a booth- menu folded in front of him.

He looks around the diner- to his right, above cases of desert on display, is a TV. The local news channel. Nothing interesting.

Susie walks over to him, pad in her hand.

SUSIE
So what can I get ya?

BROWN
Usual, I suppose. Well done this time.

Susie jots something down. Grabs Jay's menu.

SUSIE
Alright then.

Susie turns to walk away when...

BROWN
Actually...what was that dish Liz used to love? I could never remember...

SUSIE
The Paradise Parmigiana.

BROWN
I'll take that too.

SUSIE
You want the parmigiana...too?

BROWN
Well, I ain't just sayin it to hear myself talk.

Susie's puzzled, a look of concern paints her face.

SUSIE

Oh...okay.

She stalks away. The Sheriff reaches into his pocket. Retrieves his cell phone. It's vibrating. He checks the caller ID. It's a 1-800 number.

Brown shakes his head. Flips the phone open and shuts it off. It makes a loud WHIR as the screen turns black.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER- MOMENTS LATER

Susie walks over to the table, two steaming plates in her hand.

SUSIE

Alright, here ya go.

She places both next to Jay. He nods politely. She walks away.

He takes one of the plates and slides it to the other side of the table across from him. As if he's eating with someone.

Susie looks on from the register, growing even more worried.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER- MOMENTS LATER

The Sheriff's plate is almost clean. The one that sits across from him remains untouched. He picks at the remainder of his food silently.

SUSIE (O.S.)

(alarmed)

Jay.

He whips around to see Susie- pointing at the TV.

On it:

INSERT: A breaking news bulletin.

A large headline- "Standoff in Progress. 1 Hostage Taken."

Images of a building swarming with the flashing lights of cop cars.

A reporter speaks.

REPORTER

...We've just gotten word that the standoff at the Truman Center appears to be directly related to the gruesome homicide we reported just a few hours ago. It seems that the killer, identified as 36 year old Martin Berk, has a history of drug use and numerous felonies on his record. We have yet to receive confirmation of the hostage's identity.

The Sheriff stands up, reaches into his pocket with urgency. He picks up his cell phone. Remembers it's off.

He turns it on. It vibrates loudly and a message appears- "4 New Voicemails".

Jay throws a twenty dollar bill on the table, rushes out of the diner.

INT. CAR- NIGHT

Brown barrels down an abandoned road. The needle on the speedometer creeps past fifty five, slowly rising.

There's silence; nothing but the hum of the engine. And then the radio CRACKLES-

VOICE (O.S.)

(frantic)

Shots fired! Shots fired! Officers in need of assistance. Truman Center, 310 Rosita.

Brown steps on the accelerator- hard. His eyes dart, a bead of sweat drips down his forehead. The needle pushes seventy.

EXT. TRUMAN CENTER- NIGHT

Brown's cruiser pulls up to the scene.

It's not as busy as one would expect- only about six or seven police cars and another two or three ambulances in addition.

Typical yellow police tape closes off the scene. A few pedestrians gather behind it- trying to catch a glimpse of the proceedings.

As the Sheriff parks- an ambulance starts its engine. Turns on its siren and pulls away with its lights flashing.

Brown exits the car- walks over to an officer that stands on guard in front of the tape.

He nods at him and the Officer raises the tape as he steps under it.

Another COP stands in front of the building's entrance. Brown approaches him.

COP

How ya doin tonight, Sheriff?

BROWN

Just great, just great. Care to tell me what happened here?

COP

(matter of fact)

Well, it all went down...I'd say no more than ten minutes ago. Jacobs led the raid.

BROWN

The...raid?

COP

Oh yeah, well, he was in command without you here. We decided that this guy was fittin' to go nuts any minute so we stormed the place.

BROWN

What happened then?

COP

Figured you at least heard that part. Jacobs got hit- right in the chest. Didn't have his vest on. The ambulance just took him away. You saw it- didn't ya?

Brown's floored. A mixture of emotions wash over him- guilt being the prevalent one.

BROWN

Yeah...yeah...suppose I did.

(an afterthought)

And what happened with the girl?

A stretcher is quickly wheeled down the entrance passing the Sheriff and our Cop. On it- a body bag. No idea who's under it.

The Sheriff looks at the Cop- questioning.

COP

Nah. That ain't her, she's fine. We got her out and that Berk guy got five shells to the chest. Ought to have a hell of a time tryin to sew that one up.

The Cop laughs.

INT. HOSPITAL- MORNING

JACOBS EYE

Opens wide.

He looks around, bewildered. Unsure of where he is. He sits up straight in his bed, surveying the room.

He looks like hell- his neck bandaged so heavily that it almost appears as if he doesn't have one.

He notices a CUP OF COFFEE that lies on the windowsill. Someone's visited. And just as he comes to this realization...

Brown enters. Surprised to see him up. He looks tired- like he's been up all night.

BROWN

You alright?

JACOBS

Oh, I'm great. Glad it's not swimmin season. Ladies would love the bullet through the six pack look.

Brown smiles, not easily humored.

BROWN

Look...you shouldn't have led the raid, you shouldn't have been in that position...

Jacobs puts his hand up weakly in protest.

JACOBS

Come on now, just stop, Jay. This would have happened whether you were there or not. Hey- maybe it's for the better. I get the girls and a fat disability check for a few weeks. Not to mention plenty of sympathy points from my boss.

He smiles widely, desperately trying to make Brown feel better.

JACOBS (CONT'D)

That's assuming I'm gonna make it. I am gonna make it- right?

BROWN

You're gonna be just fine. Talked to the doctor bout an hour ago. Surgery went well. You're damn lucky. Bullet just missed your spinal cord. You'll be out in a week.

JACOBS

Alright then.

(pause)

Can I get some kind of medal or somethin for this? They give out ribbons for gettin shot? That'd be pretty nice.

Brown's phone RINGS. He glances at it.

BROWN

Gotta run. I'll be back in a little while.

He turns and walks out the door but stops. Faces Jacobs.

BROWN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Sorry again.

INT. RANDY'S OFFICE- AFTERNOON

Brown sits across from RANDY ALBERDA, mid 40's, jovial and reassuring. Pictures hang on the wall- Randy cutting ribbons, at fund-raisers, etc.

RANDY

Sorry things had to turn out this way. If the media hadn't got a hold of this thing...we coulda' kept it real quiet. But it's only two weeks. Jacobs will fill in for ya.

(beat)

Guess that about covers it.

Randy stands up, extends his hand to Jay. A not so subtle indication that this meeting is over.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Well, it was good to see ya, Jay.

Brown rises. The two shake.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Sure ya just need some time. You gonna be okay?

For the first time- silence. No easy answer.

EXT. CEMETERY- AFTERNOON

The Sheriff walks toward the sea of graves- once again.

He holds an envelope in his hand. Reaches a grave and places it on top of the tombstone. Fastens it with a rock.

INT. BEDROOM- MORNING

The alarm reads 6:30 AM. It buzzes loudly. Jay rises, turns off the alarm. Rubs his eyes.

INT. KITCHEN- AFTERNOON

Brown sits at the table, cup of coffee in hand. Absolute quiet. He sips.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

The Sheriff sits on the bed. A series of papers and photographs are sprawled all over it. He rummages through them.

INT. SHOWER- MORNING

Water beats down on Jay- hard and cold. He splashes it on his face.

BROWN (V.O.)
...just need some time.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

The empty kitchen. There's something noticeably different- the table only has one place mat.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

Brown is propped up on the side of the bed- his dresser drawer open. He slowly begins to pull his wedding ring off of his finger.

BROWN (V.O.)
...just need some time.

He places it in the drawer and shuts it closed. Sits. Almost lost.

Brown waits a moment.

BROWN (CONT'D)
(to himself, reassuringly)
One more night can't hurt.

He opens the drawer, slides the ring back comfortably on his hand. A moment later- darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.