

Feels Like Falling

By

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**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - DAY**

MARCUS KIRBY (53), African American, stands just outside the gates of an old fashioned elevator, wearing the finely tailored, button-up suit of an elevator operator.

With the lobby around him deserted, Marcus plays on his cell phone. He chuckles.

ON SCREEN - Cats do something cute.

From around the corner, SOPHIE GARDNER (25), a chipper young lady carrying a purse, enters the hall.

ON SCREEN - The video closes. The date, "APRIL 17th 2015", is seen briefly.

Marcus pockets the phone and nods.

MARCUS  
Hello, Sophie.

SOPHIE  
Hey, Kirby.

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

Marcus opens the gates for Sophie and follows her in.

MARCUS  
How are them kids of yours?

SOPHIE  
A handful. Better than the parents though. Today a mom yelled at me over a Schoolhouse Rock video that quote, "legitimized taxes."

Marcus laughs as he slides the gates closed.

MARCUS  
Nine?

SOPHIE  
You know it.

Marcus pushes the lever "UP". The lift rises.

Sophie adjusts her hair and her sleeve drops, revealing a DARK BRUISE wrapped around her wrist. Marcus frowns.

MARCUS  
What happened there?

Sophie looks, realizes what she's revealed and pulls up her sleeve, self-conscious.

SOPHIE  
Like I said, they're a handful.

MARCUS  
Must be some pretty big first graders to leave a mark like that.

She says nothing, avoids eye contact.

The elevator dial reaches "9" and Marcus pulls the lever back to neutral. The elevator stops and he opens the gates.

MARCUS  
Tell David I said hi.

Sophie hesitates... then nods and exits the lift.

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Marcus watches from the elevator as Sophie walks down the hall, turns and enters apartment "902". He sighs to himself and sends the lift back down.

**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - DAY**

Marcus waits by his elevator, phone in hand.

ON SCREEN - An online poker game.

The sound of hurried footsteps approaches.

ON SCREEN - The game closes. The date is "MAY 4th".

He pockets the phone as Sophie whisks arounds the corner, carrying her purse and a bag of groceries. He opens the gates to let her through.

MARCUS  
Running a little late today?

**INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Marcus starts the elevator up. Sophie, looking anxious and jittery, watches the dial rise.

SOPHIE

Oh shit.

Her eyes go wide into panic mode.

SOPHIE

Fuck. I'm so stupid.

Marcus halts the lift.

MARCUS

What's wrong?

SOPHIE

Nothing. I forgot something.

But she's trembling. Eyes starting to water. Marcus watches for a moment, then...

MARCUS

Let it out now.

She looks at him, questioning.

MARCUS

If you go in there like this he'll hurt you worse.

Sophie looks at him, shocked.

MARCUS

My pa beat the hell out of me for the first fifteen years of my life. I know. You go in there looking afraid and you're only going to remind him what it is you're afraid of... Let it out now.

She finally breaks. Crumpling against the back wall of the elevator, she begins to sob. Marcus slips away her grocery bag, sets it on the floor and takes her hand.

He waits for her crying to subside and breathing to calm.

MARCUS

Alright, now what did you forget?

SOPHIE  
A bottle of Scotch.

MARCUS  
Can you still get it?

She shakes her head.

MARCUS  
How bad is this?

She just looks at him. Her eyes say it all.

MARCUS  
I know David's a cop, but is there anyone with the police who might listen to you?

SOPHIE  
Even if they did, it'd be in the system. He can bring up a report and know exactly what I said.

MARCUS  
(sighs)  
Alright then. Way I see it, you've only got two choices. You can go up there and spend the rest your life trying not to look too afraid, or talk too loud, or say the wrong thing, or look the wrong way...

He indicates the lever.

MARCUS  
Or I can take you down and you can get the hell out of here right now. You still have a sister in Ohio? I'll pay the cab fare.

SOPHIE  
It's impossible. I have a job. Those kids-

MARCUS  
I know it's scary. I left home at fifteen. Spent the first month living on the street. Scrounging in the garbage. Breaking into cars for a warm place to sleep. Waking up early enough to leave without anyone knowing. The whole thing feels like... like your falling.

(MORE)

MARCUS (cont'd)  
Like mother bird just pushed you  
out the nest and any moment your  
gonna smash on the curb. But pretty  
soon you realize you're not. You  
realize how much more capable you  
are even though you got so much  
less. You're not falling. You're  
free.

Sophie listens, uncertain.

MARCUS  
If I can do it alone on the street,  
you can do it in Ohio with your  
sister.

Sophie looks away, thinking... then nods to the lever.

SOPHIE  
I'm ready.

Marcus lays his hand on it as Sophie grabs her bag and  
straightens up.

MARCUS  
Up or down?

She starts to speak but stops. Thinking... Worrying...

SOPHIE  
(meekly)  
Up.

Marcus sighs and pushes the lever "UP".

They ride in silence until the dial reaches "9".

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The lift arrives and Marcus slides the gates open. Sophie  
exits and walks to apartment "902".

She hesitates... then goes inside.

**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - DAY**

Marcus by the elevator with his phone.

ON SCREEN - A Facebook feed scrolls by.

Sophie rounds the corner. Her eyes light up.

SOPHIE  
Hey, Kirby.

ON SCREEN - Facebook closes. The date is "JUNE 25th".

Marcus pockets the phone. Opens the gates.

MARCUS  
Miss Gardner.

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

They enter and Marcus starts the lift up. Sophie stands in the corner, watching him.

SOPHIE  
Can you stop here?

He pulls the lever to neutral.

MARCUS  
You getting off?

SOPHIE  
No. I want to tell you something.

He gives her his full attention.

SOPHIE  
I'm leaving David.

MARCUS  
(concerned)  
Does he know?

SOPHIE  
No. Today was my last day of classes, so I'll be alone all tomorrow while he's gone. I'm gonna fit a much of my life into a suitcase as possible and go to my sister's like you said. I wish I could say it was all thanks to you, but there's someone else who did some convincing.

She lays a palm on her belly. He understands.

MARCUS  
Is it David's?

SOPHIE  
No. It's mine.

Marcus finally allows himself to smile as he admires the woman before him.

MARCUS  
Well, I'll miss you. Ohio's lucky to have you.

He pushes the lever and the elevator continues up.

SOPHIE  
I wanted to tell you, in case I never got to talk to you again.

MARCUS  
Never talk to me again? Honey, just friend me on Facebook, you'll be sick of me in a month.

SOPHIE  
I'm not on Facebook.

MARCUS  
You should start.

She thinks about it.

SOPHIE  
Okay, I will.

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The lift arrives. Marcus opens the gates and Sophie heads down the hall.

MARCUS  
So...

She stops and turns...

MARCUS  
How does it feel?

SOPHIE  
Oh, it's falling, like you said. But at least I know I've got a safety net down there.

They exchange one last look... then Sophie enters apartment "902". Marcus shuts the gates. He and the lift descend out of view.



FADE OUT

FADE IN

**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Marcus sits at a small table across from the lift, eating a sandwich and sipping at coffee. Footsteps approach and a POLICE OFFICER rounds the corner, heading his way.

Marcus rises and opens the gates.

MARCUS

Going up?

The Officer nods.

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

They file inside.

MARCUS

What floor?

OFFICER

Nine.

Marcus starts the lift up, glances uneasily at the Officer.

MARCUS

What brings you out here?

The Officer considers his answer...

OFFICER

Someone called in a suicide. I guess I beat the ambulance.

Marcus looks at the rising floor dial, worry on his face.

MARCUS

It's not nine-oh-two, is it?

The Officer's shoots him a surprised look.

MARCUS

Oh God. Him or her?

The Officer ignores him, but he already knows. His hand slips off the lever and the elevator comes to a violent halt. Marcus approaches the Officer, visibly upset.

MARCUS

Listen, no matter what he says,  
there ain't no way she killed  
herself.

OFFICER

Will you just-

MARCUS

She was being abused. She was gonna  
leave him. She was *pregnant* for  
God's-

OFFICER

(hostile)

We're capable of investigating this  
ourselves. Now take me to the damn  
floor.

Marcus reluctantly backs off. He sends the lift up the rest  
off the way. It reaches "9" and Marcus opens the gates.

MARCUS

Should I find someone later to give  
my statement?

OFFICER

No. We won't be needing that.

He steps out...

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

...and into the hallway.

DAVID (29), hair a mess, white T-shirt speckled with blood,  
obviously intoxicated, is slumped against the wall across  
from his apartment. He looks up at the Officer.

DAVID

Fred! She did it to herself, I  
swear.

OFFICER/FRED

Shut up.

Fred glances back at Marcus as David rises to his feet.

DAVID

She took my gun and shot herself in  
the mouth.

FRED

I said shut up. Get inside.

David opens the door and enters. Fred steps to the door, but stops... He looks down at something just inside the room.

DAVID (O.S.)

She uh... she shot the floor first.

Fred enters and closes the door behind him leaving Marcus staring down an empty hallway, a mixture shock, bereavement and anger on his face.

The call bell RINGS...

...and RINGS again.

**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Marcus stands by his elevator, looking at his phone.

ON SCREEN - A news headline reads, "Death Declared Suicide" with a picture of Sophie beneath. The subheadline reads, "Officer Reinstated".

There's the sound of feet shuffling and David stumbles around the corner, as drunk as ever.

ON SCREEN - The article closes. The date is "JULY 28th".

Marcus slides the gates open and David stumbles in.

**INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER**

A silent ride. David sways, off balance. He can barely keep his eyes open. Marcus stops at "9" and turns to him.

MARCUS

I know it ain't my business, but I seen the news. Sophie was a sweet girl. You have my condolences.

DAVID

(muttered)

Fucking bitch.

MARCUS

'Scus me.

DAVID  
She got what she deserved.

David tries to open the gate himself, but tugs instead of slides. He hits it in drunken frustration.

DAVID  
You gonna let me out or what?

Marcus reaches past him and opens the gate.

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

David stumbles out of the lift and down the hall.

Marcus glares at him from the elevator as he fumbles with his keys... unlocks the door... and enters his apartment.

**INT. LOBBY HALLWAY - DAWN**

Marcus is nowhere to be seen.

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

The elevator is empty.

**INT. 9TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Marcus stands outside the gate. Staring down the hall. He fidgets... reaches into his pocket and checks his phone.

ON SCREEN - The date is "AUGUST 5th". The time "5:07am"

The door to "902" opens. Marcus slips the phone away.

David hurries out. He's dressed in a suit and tie, but looks heavily hungover, if not still drunk. He sees Marcus.

DAVID  
Hey, hold up!

He locks his door hastily and heads down the hall.

DAVID  
Nice timing. I'm late.

Marcus slides open the gate.

MARCUS  
It's not timing. I know your  
schedule.

David starts to walk through the gate-

and STOPS abruptly with a gasp. He grabs the sides for  
purchase as he finds himself staring down into...

EIGHT STORIES OF EMPTY ELEVATOR SHAFT.

DAVID  
Holy shit! There's nothing here you  
stupid-

Marcus SHOVES hard. David loses his grip and disappears  
into the black shaft SCREAMING.

A second goes by... two...

A sick metal THUD echoes up the shaft. The steel support  
wires RATTLE and TWANG.

Marcus checks around him. The hallway is still empty. He  
takes out his phone and dials.

MARCUS  
(into phone)  
Hello? Nine-one-one?... I run the  
elevators over at Matsen Apartments  
and I think I just heard someone  
fall- or *jump* down the elevator  
shaft... Yeah, I'm going to check  
now.

Marcus heads off down the hall, turns and disappears through  
a door marked "Stairwell".

FADE OUT