

24 HOUR CUSTODY

Written by

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INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

PAUL, 40, in need of a shave and a haircut looks like he hasn't slept for weeks and has been eating nothing but junk food.

Inside his dim, cold basement he kneels down in front of a couple large heavy looking wooden crates. They have the warning 'explosives' written in big block letters on the side of them.

Paul armed with a crowbar snaps open the top of the boxes. He looks down at the plastic explosives.

He shakes his head, unimpressed.

PAUL  
They ripped me off.

He picks up one of the bars of explosives, weighting it in his hands. Still looking pissed off.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
This best be enough God damn it.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

Paul now sits at a sewing machine. He's very stop-start with it. Obviously not used to using one. But he perseveres.

Sewing in the plastic bars of explosives into fishing vests. It's crude but Paul manages a smile as he finishes one vest.

PAUL  
Nice.

He's proud of himself.

A short break then onto the next vest. He's got three in total to get finished.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

It's early morning, the sun slowly rising.

Paul, looking like he hasn't slept, lays the three fishing vests across the kitchen table. He sets a timer on each of them. Twenty four hours and ticking down.

INT. LIZ'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

LIZ, 39, a pretty woman with a kind face sits up at her kitchen counter, staring at her laptop as she scrolls through a dating site. Looking at different men's profiles.

EMMA, 45, short and heavy set stands over her, forcing the lid of the laptop shut, almost catching Liz's fingers.

Liz snatches her hands away, laughing.

LIZ

Hey, I was searching for my new husband.

Emma picks the laptop up and takes it away from her.

EMMA

You haven't even finalized your divorce yet. And you're already on the hunt for a new man?

Liz stands up, attempts to take her laptop back from Emma. They're playful as Liz tries to take it and Emma attempts to keep it from her.

LIZ

Believe me, it's finalized.

EMMA

I think you need some time.

LIZ

Why?

EMMA

Be single for a bit. Give yourself and your kids some time to heal.

LIZ

I've been single for the last five years. Still legally married to that asshole but living the single life.

EMMA

I just don't want you rushing.

LIZ

For the last ten years I've found myself married to someone who I never should have even given my phone number to.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

But somehow I ended up moving in  
with him and getting pregnant.

Emma gives her a wink.

EMMA

Somehow? There's only one way that  
happens.

Both of them laugh.

LIZ

Please, don't remind me. I must  
have been feeling very charitable  
to have had sex with him.

Again they both laugh.

EMMA

Is another relationship what you  
really need right now?

LIZ

I want my life to be more than it's  
been. I need it to be better. For  
me and for my kids.

Liz finally gets her hands back on her laptop, snatching it  
from Emma. She returns to sitting up at the counter. Back on  
the dating site.

Emma watches her, hands on hips.

EMMA

And there's nothing I can say?

Suddenly there's a loud banging coming from the front door.  
Way over the top, almost like someone is trying to force  
their way inside.

Both women snap their heads across to where the noise is  
coming from.

LIZ

Who the hell is that?

EXT. LIZ'S HOUSE - DAY

Liz answers the front door to Paul. She looks furious. Paul  
stands with a large bouquet of flowers and two large wrapped  
up boxes on the ground at either side of him.

LIZ  
You can't just turn up here  
whenever the hell you feel like it.

PAUL  
I'm trying.

He offers her the flowers. She pushes them away.

LIZ  
Flowers? You can stick them up your  
ass for all I care.

A beat.

PAUL  
You've won full custody of the  
kids.

LIZ  
Because you're a deadbeat.

A beat.

PAUL  
I'm moving to a new city.

LIZ  
A new country would be better.  
Leaving for a new planet all  
together would just be about  
perfect.

PAUL  
I just want twenty four hours with  
them. I won't fight you on  
anything. Just twenty four hours.  
That's all I'm asking.

LIZ  
Get the hell away from my house.

Suddenly ADAM, 10, and NICOLA, 7, now appear behind Liz. Two fresh faced energetic kids.

Paul sees them and smiles. He drops the flowers and picks up the two wrapped presents.

PAUL  
Hey kids. These are for you.

The kids rush forward excitedly ripping off the wrapping paper to reveal their expensive looking shop brought toys.

Paul kneels down and hugs them. A huge smile.

INT. LIZ'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Liz stands at the bottom of the staircase with Paul and Emma.

LIZ  
(to Paul)  
What is this really about?

Paul's still smiling.

PAUL  
I just want to spend one more day  
with them before everything  
changes, for all of us.

LIZ  
And this new city?

PAUL  
Do you care?

LIZ  
Not really.

EMMA  
(to Paul)  
New job?

PAUL  
All you need to know is I'm never  
coming back here and you'll never  
see me again.

Liz rolls her eyes.

LIZ  
Always loved being mysterious  
didn't you Paul, so stupid.

PAUL  
I just want to be with my children.  
That's all I'm asking.

LIZ  
They might not even come down yet.

PAUL  
They seemed to love what I brought  
them.

LIZ  
Buying your children's love, a real  
class act.

The two children come out of their shared bedroom and come running excitedly down the staircase, coats on and backpacks packed.

Liz intercepts them.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
You don't have to go if you don't  
want to.

NICOLA  
I want to.

ADAM  
It's only for one night Mom.

MOM  
Alright. Call me if you need me.

She hugs and kisses them both.

The two children exit.

Paul follows out after them, but not before knocking over a fancy looking vase that's resting on a tall thin table by the front door.

He kicks it on purpose, no accident.

It smashes on the floor. He doesn't even look back, closing the front door shut behind him.

Liz and Emma share a stunned look between.

EMMA  
He did that on purpose didn't he?

Liz nods.

LIZ  
A real asshole. But the kids love  
him. What would you do if you were  
me?

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Paul puts the fishing vests onto himself and then Adam and Nicola. He padlocks them so that they can't be unzipped.

The timers on them are still ticking down. 12 hours, 27 minutes and 15 seconds. 14 seconds. 13 seconds...

The front room is empty. Nothing to even sit on. Adam and Nicola look around. Inspect their new vests then look at each other.

ADAM  
(scared)  
I want to go home.

Nicola pulls at her fishing vest, trying to get it off. She can't.

NICOLA  
This is too heavy. I don't want to wear it.

ADAM  
I don't want to wear mine.

Paul kneels down to them, he wraps his arms around them and hugs them tightly.

PAUL  
I'm just glad that they fit.

ADAM  
I want to go home.

NICOLA  
I don't like this.

Paul stands back up. He rushes over to a cupboard on the other side of the empty room. He pulls out several more wrapped boxes.

PAUL  
I've brought you more presents.  
Ones I know you'll like.

Adam and Nicola's moods soften a little.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Come on, open them up. See what your dad got you.

Adam and Nicola can't help but find themselves getting excited again. They come over and rip the wrapping paper off, revealing more expensive looking toys.

Paul relaxes. The kids are smiling and so is he.



EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - LATER

The kids have opened all the presents. Inspecting the toys as Paul dances around the empty front room with a large bottle of vodka in his hand.

He gulps it down and he's already pretty drunk.

Adam and Nicola share a look.

NICOLA  
(to Adam)  
What do we do?

ADAM  
We need to go home.

PAUL  
Come on kids. Dance with your Dad.  
This is supposed to be a party.  
Whoooooo.

Paul now takes out a clear plastic bag from his pocket. Filled with drugs he snorts most of it up his nose whilst rubbing the rest onto his gums. He continues drinking and dancing alone.

ADAM  
We want to talk to Mom.

PAUL  
No. You're with me now. Let's party.

He drinks more.

NICOLA  
Daddy I don't like it here.

PAUL  
Well bad news, right here is where  
you're going to be staying.

Paul marches over to his kids, forcing each of them to drink from the cheap vodka bottle.

Neither kid likes it, tries to spit it out. But angry, Paul holds the back of their heads and forces them to drink it.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Liz is out on a date, sitting at a table with JEREMY, 29, tall, lots of muscles and handsome. A gym rat who loves his own appearance a little too much. He passes her, her drink.

She takes one sip then puts it back down.

LIZ

Oh no, that's way too strong for me.

JEREMY

You don't really drink do you?

LIZ

No, sorry.

JEREMY

Then why did you choose a bar for us to meet?

She shrugs, laughs.

LIZ

This date sucks doesn't it?

He shrugs, laughing with her.

JEREMY

It's not the best. But I have been on worse.

Liz's phone goes off. A message. She pulls it from her bag and reads.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Who's that?

LIZ

It's from my Son. He's just sent me a text with random letters.

Liz shows Jeremy the message, 'fsxxansnnddogoo333 daddv.'

LIZ (CONT'D)

It's the third message in a row he's sent me like this. I'm really getting a little worried.

JEREMY

Yeah?

LIZ  
How would you feel about doing some  
light spying?

A beat. He considers.

Jeremy then takes his car keys out from his pocket and lays  
down on the table.

JEREMY  
Consider me your uber driver. You  
say where you want to go and I'll  
take you.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Paul stands over the top of Adam and Nicola, they're both  
laying down on the floor. Nicola is sick.

Paul finishes off the vodka bottle. Empty.

The timer on their suicide vests now read four hours and  
ticking.

PAUL  
We're all going to go to heaven. Be  
with each other forever.

Adam tries to get up from the floor. Clearly feeling sick  
from the vodka.

ADAM  
I don't feel well.

PAUL  
Stay down Adam. Try to sleep.

Adam groggily shakes his head.

ADAM  
I don't want to be here anymore.

Paul throws the large empty glass vodka bottle against the  
wall. It smashes into hundreds of little pieces.

Adam collapses back down to the floor in fear.

PAUL  
(screaming)  
Try to sleep. We'll all be in  
heaven soon enough. If I tell you  
to do something, you do it!

The kids stay frozen to the floor, sick and petrified.

INT. JEREMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Jeremy drives with Liz in the front passenger seat beside him.

JEREMY

Are you sure it's around here?

LIZ

Yes.

JEREMY

We've been circling this neighbourhood for almost an hour. We're lost.

LIZ

Let me think.

JEREMY

I had a full tank of gas at the start of this night, but by the end it's going to be empty.

LIZ

Bill me for it.

JEREMY

That's not the point.

LIZ

Then what is the point?

JEREMY

You need to admit that we're lost.

LIZ

We're not lost, I just can't remember which house it is.

JEREMY

Is it the same thing?

LIZ

No.

JEREMY

I'm taking you home.

LIZ

God damn it where it is?

JEREMY  
Alright, time to turn around.

Jeremy turns his car around.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
This was an interesting date to say  
the least, but all good things come  
to an end.

Liz suddenly grabs onto his steering wheel and pulls on the  
handbrake.

LIZ  
Stop!!!

The car comes to a sudden violent halt.

JEREMY  
What the hell! Have you lost your  
mind?

Liz points out of his window.

LIZ  
Right there.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Paul, drunk and exhausted, sits on the floor by Adam and  
Nicola. The timer ticks down, 27 minutes left.

Liz and Jeremy enter the house. Mom sees the mess. She rushes  
over to her children.

LIZ  
My babies.

Liz picks up Nicola, she's sick and drunk from the vodka.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
What the hell happened here?

Jeremy picks up her Adam.

JEREMY  
What's with the vests?

Liz inspects the fishing vest on Nicola. See the timer.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
I have a bad feeling about this.

Liz tries to take the padlock off but can't.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
What is this?

LIZ  
(to Paul)  
What have you done?

Paul stays on the floor. Can barely keep his own head up.

PAUL  
You're not going to take them from  
me.

JEREMY  
(to Paul)  
What happens when the timer gets to  
zero.

Paul imitates an explosion.

PAUL  
(grinning)  
We all go.

Liz is close to tears.

LIZ  
No.

A beat.

Liz brings Nicola over to Paul.

LIZ (CONT'D)  
Take it off of her. Take it off of  
her now.

Paul sits on his hands.

PAUL  
It's too late. It's too late. It's  
too late.

Liz watches as the timer continues to tick down.

Jeremy, still holding onto Adam, is panicked.

JEREMY  
We need to call the cops.

Jeremy places Adam back down on the floor.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

LIZ

Don't go. I need you.

JEREMY

I'm sorry. I'll go get the cops.

Jeremy runs out of the room. Fleeing.

Liz carries Nicola over to Adam, holding onto both of them.

Paul watches her with a smirk.

PAUL

They're my kids Liz. Mine.

Liz watches as the timers continue to tick down. She sees the broken vodka bottle in the corner.

She rushes over to it. She picks up the biggest shard of glass she can find.

Rushes back over to her children. She holds onto the glass and cuts open the fishing vests from the back.

The glass cuts deeply into Liz's hand. She's bleeding heavily but she doesn't care and doesn't stop.

She manages to cut the fishing vest free from Nicola then does the same with Adam. The shard of glass becomes embedded deep into her own flesh.

The fishing vests are off.

Paul staggers up onto his feet.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No! What are you doing?

He rushes over to Liz. She throws the two removed fishing vests at him.

Paul catches them, falling onto his back. He hugs the suicide vest tightly to him. His eyes tightly shut.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let you take them from me.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Liz carries both Adam and Nicola. She gets them into the back of Jeremy's car. He's on his phone, waiting outside the house.

Liz climbs into the driver's side of the car. She speeds off.

Jeremy watches her go in stunned disbelief.

JEREMY

What the hell. My car!

He chases after her.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Paul, still hugging the vests, still with his eyes closed, is muttering a prayer to himself.

The countdown reaches zero.

BOOM!

**FADE TO BLACK**

**THE END**