ALONE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

It’s a perfect day through a bustling neighborhood filled with KIDS playing in the streets and COUPLES tending to their yards.

A content JACK BRAND, 40s, jogs along the sidewalk. At his side is his Dalmatian, TANK. People wave as they jog past.

EXT. CEMETERY ENTRANCE - DAY

Jack jogs up to the entrance of a small cemetery. He halts as if a force blocks him from entering.

His content expression drops to an unreadable expression. He hangs his head before walking beneath the iron entrance banner.

EXT. GRAVE - DAY

Jack stands at the foot a relatively fresh grave. Tank settles quietly at his feet. ELLIE BRAND is the name written on the tombstone.

JACK
I’m all settled into the new apartment. Tank doesn’t like it.
(grins)
Too much noise, constantly waking up and barking at whoever passes by the door.

Jack looks up and surveys the cemetery, pain swallowing his eyes.

JACK (CONT’D)
To me, it’s too quiet. I use to want to come home to a quiet home, but you would talk the whole night through about your day. Now...
(pause)
Now I wish I could hear anything about your day. My days are boring. Counseling is painful, but I’m done now.

Jack nods proudly.
JACK (CONT’D)
I’m all done with that now. I can finally return to work. Today is my first day back; I’m pretty excited. I miss the boys, the smell of smoke.
(chuckles)
You used to burn toast on purpose when I slept. I’d look a fool running into the kitchen thinking something has happened.

Jack is overcome by deep sadness again.

JACK (CONT’D)
Something did happen this time, and I wasn’t there. Forgive me, Ellie.

Jack is silent while he pulls it together.

JACK (CONT’D)
I better go, I’m helping a neighbor move in today.
(at Tank)
Come on boy.

INT. CLAIRE’S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack settles in the last box. A pretty CLAIRE, 40s, brunette, claps.

CLaire
Well, thank Heaven’s that’s done.

JACK
Yep. Though I will have to say, this home’s foundation seems to be a little old.

CLaire
It is. My husband’s insurance policy will help pay for repairs and renovations. I don’t intend on moving anymore.

JACK
Then it should be easy street from here.

CLaire
True. I got rid of a lot of things before I moved.

(MORE)
CLAIRE (CONT'D)
(avoids Jack’s eyes)
Keep the important stuff, you know?

JACK
Yeah, I do know. How did your husband pass?

CLAIRE
Freak accident, of all things. He constructed homes. Slipped off the roof, head first.

JACK
Ah, geez. I’m sorry.

CLAIRE
He always said the worst part of a home was the roof. He was right.

Silence.

Claire gives a chipper huff, changing the subject.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
What about you? How did you become a widower?

JACK
Ironically, fire.

Claire shakes her head.

JACK (CONT’D)
The one time I wasn’t in town. I was upstate fighting the Rembrandt fires. By the times the guys got to the house, it was way too late. She was trapped inside.

Claire’s eyes fill.

CLAIRE
How awful.

JACK
Yeah, it was.

CLAIRE
Therapy?

JACK
Yes, I’ve finally finished it. I’m going back to the station today for my first day back?
CLAIRE
So soon?

JACK
I feel I’m ready. I can’t keep sitting at home.

CLAIRE
I understand.

The two cross the room to her door.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
Well, good luck on your first day back. Are you excited?

JACK
I am. It’ll be nice to see the guys again.

CLAIRE
Good.

The two smile. Jack gives a quick wave goodbye.

EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY

An SUV pulls into the station’s lot. A tall African-American TREVOR BARNES, 40s, hops out of the SUV. He retrieves a heavy duffle bag from the passenger seat.

On his way to the door, he notices a small pickup truck. He squints, puzzled.

INT. FIRE STATION - KITCHEN - DAY

Three younger firemen, MIKE (30s), PHIL (30s), and DARYLL (mid 20s) swarm around the small kitchen.

Mike boots up the coffee machine. He TAPS the counter impatiently as it BREWS.

PHIL reads the newspaper.

DARYLL chugs on an energy drink and head bangs to music on his phone.

Trevor enters, everyone lights up.

MIKE
HEY! There’s the man of the hour.
Daryll snatches off his headphones; he extends his hand for a handshake. Trevor takes it.

TREVOR
What are you listening to?

DARYLL
Luther Vandross, like you said. I gotta say, this guy is great.

TREVOR
Was great. He’s dead now.

DARYLL
That sucks.

Daryll pulls one headphone back on.

TREVOR
Whose car is that in the drive?

The three guys exchange quick glances.

Mike pours a cup.

MIKE
It’s Jack’s. He traded his car in for a small truck since it’s just him and Tank now.

TREVOR
Jack’s here?

PHIL
You didn’t know? Today is his first day back.

TREVOR
So soon?

DARYLL
That’s what I said.

Mike shrugs.

MIKE
He said he’s better, that he can work. He’s in his room.

INT. FIRE STATION - JACK’S ROOM - DAY

Jack is unpacking his suitcase when a KNOCK comes. Tank jumps up.
TREVOR (O.S.)
Jack? It’s me, Trevor.

JACK
Oh! Come in!

The door opens. The two light up at the sight of each other. They bear hug each other with hard smacks to each other’s back.

TREVOR
I can’t believe it. You’re back.

JACK
It’s good to be back.

The two separate, Trevor sits in a nearby chair. He surveys his friend.

TREVOR
You look great.

JACK
Thanks. I’ve been jogging more, trying to stay fit so that these young boys won’t replace me.

TREVOR
They can never replace you, Jack. You trained all of us. You aren’t going anywhere if we can help it.

JACK
That’s really good to know. I appreciate it.

Trevor leans over to give Tank a ruffle through his spotted fur.

TREVOR
How was therapy? Are you still going?

JACK
Nope. I’m all done with that. I’m better now.

TREVOR
You sure it isn’t too soon for you to come back. I figured you’d want to take a vacation or something.

Jack avoids Trevor’s concerned stare.
JACK
No, I’m fine. I need the work. The
distraction. I miss the station. I
miss you guys.

Trevor chuckles.

TREVOR
Well I, for one, am very glad
you’re back.

The two grab hands and shake.

SUDDENLY, Daryll bursts into the room.

DARYLL
Guys! We got a call, fire at a
sorority, at least fifteen girls.

Daryll bolts away. Trevor turns to Jack with a smile.

TREVOR
You ready?

Jack beams.

JACK
Let’s save some lives.

EXT. SORORITY HOME - DAY

PEOPLE watch in horror as the two-story colorful home burns.

GIRLS pour out of every entrance.

Jack is the first to jump out; he surveys the entire scene.

He takes control and barks orders at the guys.

JACK
Daryll and Phil, stay out here and
help with those coming out of the
house, Mike, Trevor and I will scan
the house.

The guys break apart. Mike, Trevor, and Jack pull on their

helmets.

INT. SORORITY HOME - DAY

Fire torches the dainty sorority home’s furniture.

Jack signals to the guys to spread out.
Mike runs toward another room. Trevor and Jack carefully climb the staircase.

EXT. SORORITY HOME - NIGHT

POLICE and back up FIREMEN cover the yard. The ambulance CREW loads a girl into their truck.

Parents hug their daughters tight.

The guys gather around their truck as they watch the family.

Trevor heads toward them.

JACK
Everyone accounted for?

TREVOR
Alive and well.

Jack nods, proud.

JACK
You did it, guys.

Mike gives Jack a handshake.

MIKE
Good to have you back.

JACK
Glad to be back.

DISPATCH sounds through from the truck. Daryll hops in the truck.

MIKE
Drinks on me tonight?

PHIL
That’s the best thing I’ve heard all night.

The guys laugh.

Daryll hangs out the window of the truck.

DARYLL
Hey guys! We got a call! A senior home five blocks over say the fire is burning fast.
JACK
All right guys, let’s go!

The guys scurry into the truck.

PHIL
So much for that beer!

EXT. SENIOR HOME – NIGHT

The scene is a chaotic mess. STAFF help to pull SENIORS from the burning building.

CITIZENS try to help with water and blankets.

NURSES work fast to help with injuries.

The guys hop from their truck. A WOMAN runs over to Mike.

WOMAN
Oh thank God! Please help, a lot of the seniors and staff are still trapped inside.

MIKE
Okay, we’ll take it from here.

Mike turns to Daryll.

MIKE (CONT’D)
Call for more back up, we’re going to need a lot of help.

Daryll jumps on the phone.

Mike, Phil, and Trevor pull on extra gear. They head for the building.

Trevor turns back to see Jack gazing at the building.

TREVOR
Hey Jack! You all right?

Jack snaps out of his trance.

JACK
I’m good! Let’s go.

INT. SENIOR HOME – CONTINUOUS

Jack stops the guys at the entrance.
JACK
We’re gonna do a floor by floor sweep. Move fast and remember the golden rule, leave no one behind! Mike and Phil, you start on that side. Trevor and I will start over here. We meet up in the middle. Don’t miss a room if you can help it. Good luck guys!

The teams split up.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT
Fire blazes down the hallway. Thick smoke fills the air. Jack and Trevor bounce from room to room.

Trevor comes out of the room with an OLD WOMAN on an oxygen tank.

TREVOR
I’ll be back!

Jack gives him the thumbs up!

He comes across a locked door. He kicks it in.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT
Jack scans the room.

JACK
Anyone here?

Jack goes to the side of the twin bed. An OLD MAN lies lifeless on the floor. Next to him is a WOMAN, possibly his wife, holding his hand.

JACK (CONT’D)
Ma’am? We need to get you and your husband out of here.

The old woman shakes her head.

OLD WOMAN
No.

JACK
Ma’am, the fire is burning fast, soon we won’t have a way out. You need to come with me now!
The old woman shakes her head again.

Jack goes to her and snatches on her arm to pull her up, but she fights back.

OLD WOMAN
Leave me alone! I want to stay with my husband.

JACK
He’s dead. We have to save your life.

OLD WOMAN
I won’t let him be alone! Leave me!
Leave me!

Jack freezes. He watches as the woman sobs over her dead husband.

He slowly backs away from the couple. All the sounds of the fire disappear, all he hears is the sound of his POUNDING heart.

SUDDENLY, part of the ceiling falls. He jumps.

He turns and leaves the couple behind.

EXT. SENIOR HOME - NIGHT

Trevor finishes talking to police. He spots Jack tearing out of his firemen suit. He goes to him.

TREVOR
Jack?

Jack jumps. His eyes are full of terror.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
Are you okay?

JACK
I’m fine.

Trevor looks at Jack’s hands, they’re trembling hard.

Jack clenches his fists.

TREVOR
Jack-
JACK
I’m fine. How’s everyone? Everyone okay?

TREVOR
Everything’s fine. They’re still doing roll call. It’ll be an hour or two before we know anything. The Marshall is here.

Jack nods.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
You should go home. We can handle this.

JACK
I said I’m fine.

Jack walks off from him to the other side of the truck.

Jack hyperventilates. He slides down the side of the truck crouching. He holds himself, body trembling with fear and exhaustion.

INT. FIRE STATION - KITCHEN - NIGHT
Phil, Trevor, and Daryll laugh and joke together.

Phil yawns. He rubs his weary face.

PHIL
I think I’m gonna call it a night.

TREVOR
Me too.

Mike comes into the kitchen, his face hard with shock.

DARYLL
What’s up Mike?

The other look at Mike’s concerned face.

MIKE
That was the Captain on the phone. He reports that two bodies were found in the building next to each other. Investigators are saying they were a couple.

Shock spreads on each of the guy’s faces.
TREVOR
How was that possible? We cleared every room, every room was accounted for.

MIKE
I don’t know.

Everyone is silence as the news sinks in.

TREVOR
It doesn’t make sense. How could we miss two people? Were they in a bathroom? A closet?

MIKE
No, right in the middle of the room.

PHIL
That’s not good.

TREVOR
No, it’s not. We’re going to catch hell for this.

MIKE
I should have done a second sweep.

TREVOR
You couldn’t, by the time our first sweep was over, half the building was gone.

MIKE
The Marshall is coming by tomorrow to collect details.

Phil ruffles his hair hard.

PHIL
Shit! This is lawsuit territory. They might fire or suspend us.

MIKE
We’ll see.
(looks around)
Where’s Jack? He needs to know this.

TREVOR
He’s in the room. I’ll tell him.
INT. JACK’S ROOM - NIGHT
Jack sits on the edge of the bed. He nuzzles his intertwined fingers.
A KNOCK comes on the door. He says nothing.
Trevor opens the door and steps inside.

TREVOR
Hey Jack, bad news buddy.

Jack looks up.

JACK
What is it?

TREVOR
Fire Marshall found two dead bodies in the building. Apparently, we missed them during our sweep.

Jack stirs.

Trevor paces.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
How in the hell did we miss them, Jack? We went door to door, room to room. There’s no way. We cleared every room.

Jack fidgets.

JACK
Not every room.

Trevor stops pacing. He looks at Jack who eyes the floor.

TREVOR
What do you mean?

Jack looks up into Trevor’s curious eyes.

JACK
I left them there.

Trevor’s eyes buck.

TREVOR
What!
JACK
I went into the room as usual. I found the husband already dead on the floor. His wife was next to him.

TREVOR
Please tell me she was dead too.

Jack shakes his head. Trevor covers his mouth in horror.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
You left her burning alive?

JACK
She didn’t want to leave her husband.

TREVOR
Jack! The golden rule, NO ONE left behind. No matter what, even if you have to drag them by their hair.

JACK
I know.

TREVOR
Then why Jack? Why would yo--

JACK
She didn’t want to be alone!

Trevor stares.

JACK (CONT’D)
She didn’t want to live without her husband. She would have rather sacrifice her life spending her last moments with her husband than to spend her remaining years alone without him. I couldn’t... I just... I couldn’t do it. I left.

TREVOR
Jack... you know what this means? That’s intent to kill. Murder. You could go down for murder.

Jack nods.

JACK
I know. I just couldn’t do it. All I could think about was Ellie. (MORE)
She was alone in her last moments before she burned to death in the house. No one was there to be with her.

Trevor gazes at his hurt best friend. He bites his lip in contemplation. He ruffles his short beard.

TREVOR
Go home Jack.

Jack looks up at him. Trevor places a hand on his shoulder.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
I will talk to the guys. We’ll come up with some plan to protect you. As far as we know, it was an accident. Things like this happen all the time. I’ll talk to the guys. They’ll help.

Jack nods. He grabs his duffle bag and heads out.

Trevor stands in the middle of the small room. He sighs.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
God help us.

INT. FIRE STATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The dining room is silent as a grave. The guys stare at Trevor in absolute shock and dismay. No one breathes.

TREVOR
We have to come up with a plan to protect Jack.

Mike throws back.

MIKE
Protect him? Are you crazy?

PHIL
That’s obstruction of justice. We’ll do time for that if they find out.

TREVOR
They won’t. We tell them we made a mistake, the worst that will happen is a lawsuit or suspension.
MIKE
No. Absolutely not. I’m not doing it. I have two daughters who need me. I’m not going down for him. This was his decision and his alone.

TREVOR
Jack has been there for all of us in our time of need. He had protected us when we nearly destroyed our reputations in this line of work.

MIKE
Nobody committed murder!

TREVOR
He was trying to help the woman. She didn’t want to leave her husband.

Mike stands from the table.

MIKE
The golden rule Trevor: Leave NO ONE behind. Even if you have to drag them by their hair, you get them out of the building to safety. That’s our job; our job isn’t to play God. He doesn’t get to make those decisions!

PHIL
I knew he came back too soon. He wasn’t ready to deal with it.

DARYLL
What do we do now?

MIKE
(retrieves phone)
We call it in. The longer we wait, the more guilty we look.

TREVOR
Mike, no. This is Jack we’re talking about, our friend.

MIKE
He stopped becoming a friend when he decided to put all of our lives at risk! We’re going to catch serious hell for this, Trevor. (MORE)
MIKE (CONT'D)
You may not care about what happens to your family, but I care about mine. I won’t let my family suffer while I’m branded a murderer. I’m calling it in.

Mike turns to Phil and Daryll.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Guys?

The two nod.

PHIL
Call it in.

TREVOR
Phil...

PHIL
Sorry Trev, I got a daughter and a son on the way. He doesn’t deserve to grow up without knowing who his father is.

Everyone looks at Daryll.

Daryll hangs his head.

DARYLL
Sorry Mr. Trevor...

MIKE
Trevor? What’s it to be? Are you with him or us?

Trevor swallows to keep from crying. He hardens.

TREVOR
Call it in.

Trevor leaves the kitchen.

The guys hear the front door SLAM.

MIKE
Very well then.

Mike dials. He listens.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Marshall, it’s Mike, we need to talk, it’s very important.
INT. TREVOR’S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Trevor quietly enters the home.
His wife, JANIE, 40s, unravels out of a throw blanket.

    JANIE
    Thank God you’re all right.

The two kiss.

    TREVOR
    Not quite.

Janie places a hand on her husband’s hurt face.

    JANIE
    What’s wrong? What happened?

    TREVOR
    Two bodies were left behind in the fire.

    JANIE
    Oh my God...

    TREVOR
    It was intentional.

Janie’s eyes grow.

    JANIE
    Did you...

    TREVOR
    Jack did.

Janie gasps.

    JANIE
    Murder?

    TREVOR
    That’s what it’s looking like.

    JANIE
    How could he be so foolish?

    TREVOR
    He was just trying to help the woman whose husband was already dead.
    (waves it off)
    It’s a long story, and I’m tired.
JANIE
What happens now?

TREVOR
The guys decided to call it in. I tried to convince them not to.

Janie backs off from him.

JANIE
What?

TREVOR
Jack is my best friend. He wasn’t in his right mind.

JANIE
Then he shouldn’t have come back to work. What was your plan? Lie to the police? The Marshall?

TREVOR
There’s no proof it was intentional, only a miscalculation. I could have saved him from a life sentence. The suspension would give him more time to sort himself out.

Janie huffs.

JANIE
Let me get this straight, you were willing to commit a federal crime to help your friend so he can get over his depression?

TREVOR
He lost his wife, Janie, in a fire.

JANIE
Yes, I know that Trevor and I’m sorry, but he had no right to do this. His job is to save people.

Trevor goes silent a moment.

TREVOR
He saved our lives, we owe him our lives!

JANIE
And what about our lives, Trevor! What about your son’s life? He looks up to you.

(MORE)
Janie grabs his face, her eyes filling.

JANIE (CONT’D)
Please...

Trevor nods. He pulls away.

JANIE (CONT’D)
Where are you going?

Trevor grabs the doorknob.

TREVOR
To say goodbye.

INT. CLAIRE’S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Jack and Claire sit silently. Claire closes her night robe a little tighter.

CLaire
So what happens now?

JACK
They’ll come for me in the morning.

CLaire
I’m sorry Jack.

Jack nods, eyes on his intertwining fingers.
CLAIRE (CONT’D)
The truth is, I think what you did was merciful.

Jack looks up, surprised.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
You spared that lady every dark lonely night she would have to spend without her husband. You showed her a mercy no one could ever understand.

(plays with robe string)
People don’t understand what it’s like to lose your partner. You don’t just lose the person you married, you lose the love of your life, the center of your universe, the other half of your soul. Waking up everyday with the reality that the person you loved is never coming back is something no therapy in the world could ever heal.

Claire tries to compose her cracked voice but fails. She avoids Jack’s eyes.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
I don’t care what they say, you did right. I would have given anything to be with my husband in his final moments. Hell, I often prayed I’d die in my sleep so that I could be with him again.

Jack lays a hand on her hand.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
They tell you to move on. To what? Better days? My best days were with him. Now, I’m just here, existing. Nothing more, nothing less.

Claire looks up at Jack with hard eyes.

CLAIRE (CONT’D)
Be strong Jack, know that what you did was more than any of those other would have ever done. Your wife would have stood by your decision. Be strong, for her.

Jack nods.
The two stand and hug.

    JACK
    Thank you.

Claire shows him to the door.

    JACK (CONT’D)
    Thanks for understanding.

    CLAIRE
    Of course. Have a good night, Jack.

    JACK
    Good night.

INT. JACK’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack drinks a beer in his comfy chair. Tank at his feet. There is nothing playing, just silence.

A KNOCK comes at the door.

Jack opens the door. Trevor holds up a six-pack of beer.

Jack smiles and nod.

INT. JACK’S APARTMENT - DAYBREAK

Jack and Trevor are wide awake in the silent room. Trevor is stretched out on the couch. Jack reclined.

POLICE SIRENS sound in the distance.

    JACK
    Here they come.

EXT. JACK’S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Jack is lead out of his apartment complex by police.

Bystanders and Neighbors both angry and curious watch as the police walks Jack to the cruiser.

People yell at him. A woman smacks him with her purse.

    WOMAN
    Murderer!

Others try to push past police to get to him.
Jack keeps his head down unable to face the angry people. He looks up one last time, He spots Claire wearing a brave face. She gives him a reassuring “be strong” nod.

Jack nods back before he bends over to get into the cruiser.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is on edge as Jack testifies in court. His attorney, JOHN ROONEY, 30s, watch as he cross-examines him.

ATTORNEY
Did you or did you not leave the Betty Sanders in her room to die alongside her already dead husband, Earl Sanders?

JACK
I did.

ATTORNEY
Why?

JACK
She had no one else.

ATTORNEY
What do you she had no one else? No one else for what?

Jack shuffles in his seat.

JACK
No matter how many kids you have or dogs you have, nothing fills the void of a passed husband or wife.

ATTORNEY
Answer the question Mr. Brand.

JACK
I did.

ATTORNEY
So you’re saying, you left her to burn in her room because if she had lived, she would have suffered in her remaining years not having her husband by her side? Am I correct?

JACK
You are correct.
ATTORNEY
How do you know for certain that’s what it would have been? You don’t think she could have found love again?

JACK
I doubt very many men are looking for an eighty-year-old girlfriend.

ATTORNEY
Is that how you justify letting her die in the fire, save her from being alone because no guy on earth would dare date a much older woman?

JACK
That’s not why I did it? She wanted to die with her husband.

The attorney paces in front of the JURY.

ATTORNEY
What proof you have besides your words? Do you have any recordings?

JACK
No.

ATTORNEY
Then how do we know that’s what she wanted? How do we know she wasn’t delusional from meds? According to her medical file, she was in the mid stages of Alzheimer's disease. Also in her notes, it states that days before the fire she was experiencing hallucinations and some erratic behavior. Did you know this?

JACK
No. We don’t take the time to read the medical files of victims burning in a fire.

ATTORNEY
Well it appears you didn’t have much time for anything seeing as how you decided to leave the couple behind without trying to pull them from the fire.

John pops to his feet.
JOHN
Objection! What does any of this have to do with Jack’s reasoning?

JUDGE
Sustained. Get to the point counselor.

ATTORNEY
Yes, your Honor, my apologies. I’ll withdraw with three questions. First, Mr. Brand, your wife died in a fire a year ago, correct?

JACK
Correct.

ATTORNEY
Next, did you return to working at the fire station despite the therapist’s order not to for a couple of weeks more?

Jack nods.

JACK
I did.

ATTORNEY
Last question, Mr. Brand. Were you thinking of your wife when you made the decision to leave the Sanders behind in the fire?

John stands again.

JOHN
Objection!

JUDGE
Overruled, I want to hear the answer. Please answer the question Mr. Brand.

Jack stiffens. He looks at the judge, then the courtroom audience, then the jury.

He leans to the mic.

JACK
I did.

The attorney nods.
ATTORNEY
No further questions, your Honor.

Gasps and whispers fill the room.
Jack hangs his head, defeated.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER
Everyone stands for the reading of the verdict.

JUDGE
How do you find the defendant?

The JUROR stands.

JUROR
We the Jury find the defendant
guilty of the charge of second-degree voluntary manslaughter.

Large groups of people in the audience CHEER.

The judge HAMMERS his gavel.

JUDGE
Order in the court!

The room falls silent again. The Judge turns to Jack.

JUDGE (CONT’D)
Mr. Brand, you have been found
guilty of second-degree voluntary
manslaughter. In two weeks time, we
shall gather here again for your
final sentencing. This court is
adjourned.

Judge pounds his gavel again.

Cheers fill the room.

Police handcuff Jack.

Jack looks out into the crowd, Mark, Phil, Daryll, and Trevor watch with sadness.

Jack gives a nod and follows the police to the side door.
INT. FIRE STATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dead silent. Hardly anyone touches their coffee. Regret and sadness hang on each of the guys’ faces.

DARYLL
What happens now?

Mike picks up his mug.

MIKE
We go back to work.

TREVOR
Guys...

Everyone looks to Trevor.

TREVOR (CONT’D)
Regardless of what happened, Jack was our friend. Let’s do one last act of kindness for him. It’s going to a big stretch, and it will take all of us to do it, and we’ll need Jack’s attorney’s help too.

MIKE
What did you have in mind?

INT. FIRE STATION - LIVING ROOM - LATER

John gazes in shock at the four guys.

JOHN
You can’t be seriously asking me this.

TREVOR
Just one day John. One.

JOHN
Let me see if I got this right, you want me to go to the Judge and beg him to allow your friend, the one now guilty of murder to spend one more day in his apartment?

TREVOR
He doesn’t have any family to leave his things to. His dog needs a home. Give him one day to sort it through. That’s all we ask.
JOHN
Absolutely not! What’s next? We’ll allow child sex offenders to spend one more day at the park? No. I’m not doing it.

PHIL
Listen, let him be under heavy guard, police with his for the full twenty-four hours.

DARYLL
Enough time to sort his things out. No one needs to know.

John looks at the four men, their pleading faces shining.

JOHN
Fine. I doubt he’ll allow this, but I’ll try. If he says no, then that’s it. Nothing else.

The guys nod.

TREVOR
Nothing else, we got it.

INT. JACK’S APARTMENT – DAYBREAK

Jack and John hide inside of the apartment.

JOHN
I can’t believe the Judge allowed this but it’s done. His rules were very clear, you don’t leave this apartment under no circumstances. You get your stuff sorted out and nothing more. You are not to be seen by anyone. If you need something, the officers downstairs will get it for you. They will bring it to the door. You don’t come out, at all. Understood?

JACK
I understand.

JOHN
Good. I’m going to go before anyone sees me. I’ll be back at dawn to pick you up.

Jack nods. John halts before leaving the apartment.
JOHN (CONT'D)
Thanks for what you did for this community, before all this.

Jack grins and nods. John exits quietly.

Jack looks at all his boxes. He grabs one and tears into it.

INT. JACK’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
It’s the dead of night when an EXPLOSION awakes Jack.

JACK
What was that?

SCREAMS are heard.

Jack jumps from the bed. He looks out the window to see the house across the street a blaze.

JACK (CONT’D)
Claire!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Jack rips apart a box marked “Uniform” and retrieves his firemen suit. He bolts out the door.

EXT. CLAIRE’S HOME - NIGHT
People standing by scream and point at the burning home.

Jack shoves the people aside to get to the house. TWO OFFICERS try to put out the fire reaching the ground. They turn to see Jack.

OFFICER #1
Hey! You can’t be here!

JACK
The house is on fire, call the department! I’m going inside.

OFFICER #1
It’s too dangerous!

Jack ignores him and pulls on his helmet. He kicks in the front door.
INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack quickly studies the room. The room is quickly filling with fire and smoke. The weak foundation burns like sawdust. Time is running out fast.

JACK

Claire!

No response.

Jack bounces up the STAIRS

He opens every door along the HALLWAY

Until he comes to

CLAIRE’S BEDROOM

Barely any visibility.

JACK

CLaire!

Jack finds Claire’s dresser knocked over with her under it. The glass from the attached mirror shattered, a giant piece cut straight through her.

Claire’s mouth oozes blood. When she sees Jack, she stretches her hand up to him.

Jack freezes, this situation again.

Another explosion. The ceiling falls around them. Jack turns, the hallway filled with fire, the window blocked.

There’s no way out.

Jack turns back to Claire. Fear drowns in her eyes. She reaches up for Jack.

Jack removes his helmet and peels out of his coat.

He lays beside her and takes her hand. He brushes her bloody hair from her face and strokes her cheek with his free hand.
JACK (CONT’D)
You’re not alone. Everything will be all right.

Claire nods. Her eyes glued on Jack’s.

Her hand goes limp in his. Her eyes wide open without any sign of life.

Tears fall down Jack’s face.

JACK (CONT’D)
(cracked voice)
You are free now.

He coughs hard as the smoke consumes the room and his lungs. He buries his face in Claire’s neck.

EXT. CLAIRE’S HOME – CONTINUOUS
The fire swallows the home.

Mike, Phil, Daryll, and Trevor work hard to contain the fire. They run to one of the officers.

TREVOR
Is everyone out of the house?

OFFICER #1
No. Jack went in, but never came out.

Trevor’s eyes pop.

TREVOR
Jack? He’s in the house?

OFFICER #1
He ran straight in.

The guys watch in horror as the entire house blazes with no way of going in or coming out.

EXT. CEMETERY – DAY
Trevor stands over Ellie and Jack’s graves side by side to each other. Tank sits at his feet.

He cradles one of Jack’s helmets locked in a glass case in his arms.
He sets the glass case at the bottom of the headstone. He sobs a little before straightening up.

TREVOR
Thank you for everything, brother.
Go home. You are free now.

Trevor smiles. He gives Tank a gentle pat on the head before they turn and leave.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.