

ALONE

Written by

Nikki April Lee

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 use 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)



JACK (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

He wants to be just like you. He talks of nothing else! And your daughter? She believes in you. You're her hero. You're this community's hero. Your reputation ruined would destroy us! We'd have to move to escape the bullying, the taunting, and the backlash. Is that what you want to happen to your family?

TREVOR

Of course not.

JANIE

Then you need to back off from this. He made his decisions. That's not your fault. He is a murderer. Nothing will change that now. Don't put your family at risk for him.

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.