

FINDING TIME

Crime. Insurance Agent. Homeless Shelter. Pocket watch.

Blood Is Thicker Than Water

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ON SCREEN: A PHOTO of a young man, MATT, early 20's, bright blond hair, youthful energy. A happy moment.

Panning out, we see it's in a *pocket watch* held by--

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - SID'S CAFE - DAY

--JOHN, 60, thick glasses, long rain coat, sad eyes. His gaze lingers on the watch.

BRIAN (V.O.)
The police love you, John.

INT. SID'S CAFE - DAY

With a plate of food and a fresh coffee, John sits across from BRIAN (50), corporate, fitted suit.

BRIAN
Only you proved the claim was a fraud. Sad thing, she only did it to pay her child's medical bills.

JOHN
Still a crime. So, you don't buy lunch for the past. What is it?

Brian chuckles - he's been caught.

BRIAN
I need a favor, with some property damage. I know it's not your thing, but listed building claims can spiral, fast. Can you go tomorrow?

JOHN
No. That's...Matt's birthday. It's when he left. I'm not much use.

BRIAN
My apologies. Any news about him?
(John shakes his head)
How long has it been?

John doesn't want answer, gestures for Brian to continue.

BRIAN
Sure. It's a collapsed fireplace, at an Old Manor. It could be pricey, may need specialist repair.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

John steers the car through a formal entrance and heads toward the Manor. A fine house that's seen better days.

BRIAN (V.O.)

It's now a homeless refuge. If it's normal damage they're covered, but if a resident caused it, less so.

MRS JONES, 50, phone in hand, stands by the front door, a look of concern. She waves to the car and heads over.

DRIVEWAY

John shuts the car door, notepad in hand.

MRS JONES

Is it John? From the insurers?

JOHN

That's right. Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES

I may have wasted your time.

(hushed voice)

We've just found a large bag of drugs, near the damage. The police are on their way. They told me not to alert the residents.

John collects his thoughts and smiles at Mrs Jones.

JOHN

That's ok, it's just the damage I care about. I'll be discreet.

He strides off towards the House.

INT. MANOR - LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

A grand room, with high ornamental ceiling, now covered in dust and debris. On the floor the collapsed fireplace - a mighty structure.

The remains of the chimney stack rise up into the ceiling.

John inspects the damage.

MRS JONES

We were told to wait for you before cleaning up.

She looks behind her, then closes the door.

MRS JONES

The room was locked to keep the residents out. I don't know why we didn't see the drugs before.

JOHN

Oh, where were they?

Mrs Jones points to the side of the fireplace.

MRS JONES

There, I think. Tina brought it into the office straight away.

John studies the area. He frowns. Something's not right.

Most of the fireplace and debris has fallen into the middle of the room, away from where the drugs were found.

MRS JONES

We should leave this to the police.

He gazes up. Where the chimney stack joins the ornamental ceiling, there's a hole to one side.

JOHN

Sure. What's up there?

MRS JONES

Oh, the attic, now bedrooms. We were told they're still safe.

INT. ATTIC BEDROOM - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs Jones knocks hard on a bedroom door.

MRS JONES

Have you been to a hostel before?

(John shakes his head)

We have the keys to all rooms. They get used to us coming in to clean.

(shouting)

Steven, we've just got to pop in for a few minutes.

She unlocks the door and enters the--

ATTIC BEDROOM

--A mid-sized room, with single bed, wardrobe and other furniture. The chimney stack runs up the far wall.

Clothes are dumped on the bed, but nobody's around.

MRS JONES

Oh, must've gone out. I'll tidy up whilst you inspect.

John studies the chimney stack. All seems fine. He drops to his knees scans around the skirting board.

On one side, above the skirting, is an old line of paint, not flush with the wood. The skirting has been moved.

He gets low. Only one of the holes has a screw in it.

MRS JONES
Found anything?

John considers the screw. He reaches in a pocket, finds his keys. One small key fits the top and the screw turns.

JOHN
Not sure.

The skirting pulls away. Behind it is gap allowing access to the area under the floor. Inside, several bags of drugs.

A light shines through the hole in the ceiling of the room below. John smiles to himself - that's how it fell down.

Unaware of John's discovery, Mrs Jones goes to the doorway.

MRS JONES
I can hear someone.

John quickly puts the skirting board back, stands upright, and heads for the door. He stops dead.

In the doorway stands MATT, 30. His youthful blonde hair is now wild and long, but it's him.

Thrown by the shock, John struggles to keep balanced. They study each other - both stunned.

MRS JONES
Hi Steven. We had to check the chimney. We're leaving now.

JOHN
Hello...err, Steven. Mrs Jones, can I talk with him for a minute...
(looking at Matt)
...about all the...damage.

MRS JONES
If quick, but I can't leave you alone with a resident.

MATT
Why should I?

John glances at Mrs Jones, aware of her presence.

JOHN
You may be able to help me. You may know something I don't. About everything that happened.

MATT
It all collapsed, that's what. Nothing I could do but walk away.

Mrs Jones phone rings. She throws a knowing look at John.

MRS JONES

I think it's our *guests*.

As John gets the message, his eyes widen - a thought. Quickly, he glances at the skirting board, then back to Matt.

Thinking fast, he grabs his note pad. He tears off some paper, starts writing and reaches for his pocket watch.

JOHN

A few last notes, Mrs Jones.

(addressing Matt)

I didn't know how much of a problem there was, until I looked closer.

MATT

Maybe if you had been around, you would've understood.

Mrs Jones looks back over her shoulder, puzzled.

JOHN

You're right, I wasn't around. I really would like to know.

MRS JONES

John, we must go.

JOHN

I hope you can find the time.

Mrs Jones beckons John out of the room. Before the door closes, John turns to at Matt with a face full of sorrow.

He holds up his pocket watch, then tosses it onto the bed.

The door shuts, leaving Matt alone.

He gathers up the watch and sighs - old memories.

As he opens the watch, a scrap of paper falls out. Before reading it, he spies his photo inside - a happier time.

He wells ups, struggles to hold back the emotions.

As he reads the note his eyes bolt open.

It reads:

GET OUT - POLICE ON WAY

Matt snaps to, grabs a bag and heads for the door. He stops, somethings been forgotten.

He strides back, grabs the watch off the bed. Quickly, he kisses it for luck, then shoves it in a pocket.

He heads off.