

He Ain't Heavy

By

Zach Jansen

EXT. PRISON - MORNING

Looming, surrounded by razor-wire and cement walls. Fog is beginning to dissipate, replaced with light rain. A near-hidden door in the wall opens - a guard is followed by four prisoners stumbling out to freedom.

The youngest of the newly-freed men is ADAM, 25, baby-faced and easy-going - why was he in prison?

Across from the prison he sees RAY, 27, serious and succinct, dressed like he's headed to a funeral, leaning against a car. Ray glares as Adam marches toward him.

ADAM

Hey, Ray. You're here.

RAY

Who else could come? Adam is suddenly sullen. A beat - then Ray opens the car door.

RAY

Get in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Silence interrupted by the occasional screech of the windshield wipers.

Ray drives, his eyes never diverting from the road. Adam is looking at everything they pass, trying to take in all he sees.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The front door opens - Ray, followed by Adam. Adam glances about the room - it's familiar, yet very strange...

ADAM

So you live here now? I thought you would've sold it or something.

RAY

It's only half mine.

ADAM

With that girl? Sarah, right?

(CONTINUED)

RAY

Christ, Adam, that was five years ago.

ADAM

Sorry. You didn't write or --

RAY

I didn't have anything to say.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Ray and Adam eat dinner at opposite ends of the table. Adam finishes and for the first time in years helps himself to seconds. Ray slowly eats in silence, staring at his plate.

ADAM

Thanks for taking care of my room.
(Ray doesn't answer) So are you in your old room or did you move into --

RAY

I'm in my room. The meal resumes in silence.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Adam ambles down the hallway. He stops at a closed door, opens it.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dust blankets the bed, dresser, drapes, everything... Adam is the first person to open the door in months, maybe years.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Adam lies on the couch watching television. Ray walks through and out the front door, off to work.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Adam rummages the cupboard and fridge. He scans the kitchen - something catches his attention.

He walks to a door, turns the knob. Locked.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ray and Adam eat dinner.

ADAM

Why's the garage door locked?

RAY

Is it?

ADAM

Do you have a key?

RAY

There's nothing in there. I cleared it out years ago.

ADAM

I can break the door down. Or jimmy the lock. A guy inside showed --

RAY

Just leave it. There's nothing in there.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Adam watches television. Ray enters, ready for work, and glowers at what he sees.

RAY

You should get out today, look for a job.

ADAM

Yeah... I just thought I'd take a few days to adjust, you know? I want to be able to relax for a while without someone breathing down my neck.

RAY

You need a job. That's part of your parole. Get the applications and fill them out. You can take a few days waiting for callbacks.

ADAM

If I pick them up, you think maybe you could give me a hand with filling them out?

Ray leaves. Adam watches him, then turns back to the television.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It looks like Adam hasn't moved an inch all day. Ray comes in the front door, home from work.

RAY

You even get up to piss?

ADAM

I'll go out tomorrow, okay? Ray turns off the television.

RAY

As long as you're living here you're going to have to work.

ADAM

I said I'm going out tomorrow. It's not like there aren't any jobs out there.

RAY

That's not the point. You need to get a job.

ADAM

Why? Why is it so important that I have a job?

RAY

I need you to get out of here.

ADAM

I just get home and this is how you treat me?

RAY

I'm not the bad guy here.

ADAM

And I am?

RAY

You're the criminal. Adam strains for a response...

RAY

Look, I just want you gone. The sooner the better.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Adam sits at the table, reading through job applications.
Ray is preparing dinner.

ADAM

It's not good that I have five years of work experience missing, is it? Maybe I should put down the jobs I did in prison? I worked in the laundry for a while. And a little in the mail room. Adam stares at an application, but doesn't write anything.

ADAM

You do know it was an accident. I mean, I'm not a real criminal, you know? I didn't rape or murder anyone, I just --

RAY

Just because you weren't convicted of murder doesn't mean you didn't kill anybody. You're a killer, plain and simple. Maybe not a murderer, but you are a killer.

ADAM

It was an accident. Like you've never made a mistake. Ray slams a pan down and storms out the room.

RAY

No one's ever died from my mistakes.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Adam is at Ray's bedroom door.

He KNOCKS...

No answer.

He KNOCKS again...

Nothing.

ADAM

Ray? Hey, Ray... I think we need to talk. Really talk. About what

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADAM (cont'd)
happened... And what we're going to do. I know we can't live like this, no matter how long I'm here. Come on, man - open the door... I never meant... what happened. Believe me, if I could change it I would. I never meant... The door opens. Ray's stare pierces Adam's being.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Ray unlocks the door to the garage.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

A totaled sedan is parked amongst the yard tools and bicycles. The whole passenger side of the car is practically non-existent. Adam stares at it, under its spell.

ADAM
Why?

RAY
To have a reminder of what you did.

ADAM
You think I don't remind myself everyday?

RAY
Memories aren't good enough. You can't change this.

Adam touches the car, apprehensively at first, but then with more confidence. He leans into the driver side window.

RAY
Tell me.

Adam opens the driver's side door and gets in the car. He slowly grips the steering wheel - hands at ten and two - and inhales deeply, digging up his memories.

ADAM
We were at the Turner's anniversary party.

INT. BAR/BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Fifty people crowded into a room designed for thirty. Early Beatles fills the air. The remains of a large tiered cake is the centerpiece. Mom and Dad are at a table talking with some other guests - everyone has a glass or bottle in their hand.

Adam stumbles over, a couple of new drinks in hand. He hands these to his parents and grabs their near-empty glasses from the table.

He leaves the adults to their conversation. Once he's far enough away, he finishes both glasses.

INT. BAR/BANQUET HALL - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Adam teeters about on a bar stool. Mom and Dad stagger to Adam - who barely registers their presence. Adam rises, with much support from the bar and his dad.

INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Adam is driving, visibly drunk, struggling to maintain his concentration on the road. MOM, late 40's, is asleep in the front seat. DAD, early 50's, sits behind her staring silently and stupidly out his window.

A bright flash of light fills the car. Adam is delayed in his reaction, but pulls the wheel hard anyhow. The car starts to fishtail, then goes into a full spin. Tires screech on the pavement. The cars starts to tip over --

BACK TO GARAGE

Adam still grasps the steering wheel. He starts to cry. Ray reaches out and -- pulls his hand back. He wants to be comforting, but...

RAY
I'll be inside.

He leaves Adam in the garage, alone with the car - and his memories.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Adam staggers in from the garage, wiping his eyes. On the table he sees a small box with a note. He grabs the note:

RAY (V.O.)
Adam, I knew this transition
wouldn't be easy.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - EARLIER

Ray is packing a suitcase.

RAY (V.O.)
I thought we could make it work,
but I will always blame you. Every
time I look at you I think of what
could have been - for you, for
me...

He reaches for a picture from his bedside: Mom and Dad, just married, smiling brightly, ready for their new life together.

RAY (V.O.)
...for all of us.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ray, suitcase in hand, surveys the room. His face is full of longing and regret.

RAY (V.O.)
I can't see my brother anymore.
Only the man who killed my family.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ray leaves the house.

RAY (V.O.)
And since this is my problem, I'm
going to be the one who adjusts.

Ray gets in his car, tosses his case in the backseat. He starts the car and drives away - forever.

RAY (V.O.)
I hope you can forgive yourself,
even if I can't. Ray.

BACK TO KITCHEN

Adam fights back his tears. He holds tight to the note and opens the box:

A photo of Ray and Adam, about five years younger, cheerful, with their arms around each other's shoulders. Their last happy moment together.

FADE OUT.