

LOYAL

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FADE IN

EXT. FRONT YARD - DUSK

A shovel plunges into a four inch blanket of snow, scraping the surface below.

In Ralph Lauren, faux-rugged winter garb, THEO MARKS (32) struggles to clear a path from his house to the street.

A phone chimes from his pocket. He removes a glove, pulls out his cell, pushes up his trendy Clark Kent glasses and reads.

ON THEO'S CELL PHONE

The text exchange on screen reads: JULES: "They're saying at least two more hours delay. I can't wait to get some sun!" - THEO: "It finally stopped snowing here. Guess I'll start shoveling." - JULES: "Did you feed Loyal? He's inside, right?"

With his ungloved hand and perfectly manicured finger he types: "No. I decided to starve him, Jules. LOL" He hits send.

BACK TO SCENE

He shoves the phone back in his pocket, resumes shoveling.

Nearby, a dog frantically barks. Theo slams the shovel down.

THEO
SHUT UP, LOYAL!

The dog stops barking.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

In the LIVING ROOM, a fireplace fills the open area with warm light. It extends into the KITCHEN, where Theo empties a can of dog food into a bowl.

Bowl in hand, he slides open the back door, shivering as he's hit with a rush of cold air. He flicks on the outside light. A low, menacing growl comes from a shed out back.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Cautiously, Theo steps outside, looks toward the shed.

THEO
Hungry, you stupid fuck?

As Theo takes another step, a pit bull emerges from the shed. It lunges toward him, barking maniacally.

Frisbee style, Theo tosses the bowl into the snow and quickly heads back in the house.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

On the safe side of the sliding glass door, Theo smirks as he watches the dog struggle to eat his meal in the deep snow.

The DOORBELL RINGS, interrupting Theo's show. He turns off the outside light and closes the blinds.

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Theo opens the door, surprised to see two POLICE OFFICERS on his porch. SERGEANT DAN JACOBS (40) and OFFICER GRACE EDWARDS (25). Their patrol car parked directly across the street.

SGT JACOBS

Good evening. I'm Sergeant Jacobs, this is Officer Edwards. We're looking for a Juliana Marks.

THEO

She's my wife. What's going on?

SGT JACOBS

Is she home?

THEO

Actually she's stuck in Chicago, at O'Hare. Because of the storm.

As Jacobs speaks, Officer Edwards tries to see past Theo.

SGT JACOBS

You're her husband? I'm going to need to see some identification.

OFFICER EDWARDS

Mind if we take a look around?

Before Theo answers, Edwards enters. Jacob follows, steadies the shovel propped next to the door as he closes it behind him.

THEO

What's happening? What in the world are you looking for?

Theo grabs his wallet from his back pocket, gives Jacobs his ID.

While Jacobs checks his ID, Theo watches as Edwards slowly walks around the living room, her prying eyes scan every framed photo of Theo and Jules. She spots two suitcases in the hall.

OFFICER EDWARDS
Going on a trip?

THEO
(annoyed)
Yes, we are. A cruise for two weeks. We're supposed to leave tomorrow.

Jacobs looks over at Edwards, nods, then returns Theo his ID.

THEO
You need to tell me what's going on.

SGT JACOBS
Mister Marks, we've just received word that your wife's ex-husband escaped from prison a few days ago. You're certain she's in Chicago?

THEO
Yes, she is. Holy shit. You think we're in danger? He's fucking crazy.

SGT JACOBS
I doubt he'd come anywhere near here but we've scheduled extra patrols in the neighborhood, just in case. Perfect time for a vacation, though.

Theo is stunned. Edwards and Jacobs head toward the door.

OFFICER EDWARDS
Just lock all windows and doors. Don't forget the basement.

Both officers exit. Edwards heads to the patrol car, Jacobs stands at the doorway with Theo.

SGT JACOBS
I heard a dog bark when we walked up. Yours?

EXT. BACKYARD - SAME TIME

All is quiet. The moon offers the only light.

THEO (V.O.)
Uh, yeah. Pit bull. Hates everyone
but my wife.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

A sliver of light enters the narrow opening where LOYAL stands guard. Crouched behind him, escaped convict FRANK MURPHY (35).

Hardened eyes, scroungy beard and covered in days of rough travel offer only a faint glimpse of this once handsome man. Frank's filthy hand pets Royal's big head.

FRANK
You're the best boy, Loyal. You've
always been my good boy.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. HOUSE DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Theo shivers. Jacobs talks as he walks away.

SGT JACOBS
Sounded like a good watch dog. I
know it's cold but maybe keep him
out tonight. Enjoy your vacation.

When Jacobs gets to the sidewalk, Theo closes the door. He leans back against the door, stares ahead in disbelief.

THEO
Fuck me.

Over on the coffee table, his phone chimes. He grabs it. Reads.

ON THEO'S CELL PHONE

New message from Jules: "We're finally boarding. Be home in a few hours. Love you."

BACK TO SCENE

Theo drops the phone on the couch, hurries down the hall.

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

Cautiously he opens a door, reaches into the darkness and flicks on the light revealing stairs leading down to a basement.

Reluctantly, he heads down, breaking spider webs and wiping dust off his designer shirt.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Snow crunches below Frank's feet as he heads toward the back door. With military precision, his movements stealthy as he makes sure to remain in the shadows.

From the shed, Loyal watches. Frank looks over at him, gives him the "stay" hand gesture. He remains still. Good boy.

He makes it to the door, quietly slides it open. He gives Loyal one more "stay", parts the blinds then slips inside.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Theo emerges from the basement. He walks across the hall to the BATHROOM

First, he checks the window lock. He washes his hands, the whole time inspecting his reflection in the medicine cabinet mirror.

He brushes basement dust off his shoulders, sees some in his hair. He opens the medicine cabinet, reaches for a comb.

Cabinet open, the mirror reflects the hallway, the closed basement door, and Frank Murphy.

Theo closes the cabinet, straightens his glasses, combs his hair.

A NOISE causes Theo to turn toward the door. He freezes.

Things happen too fast for him to react as Frank lunges toward him, thrusting the handle of the shovel into Theo's stomach.

Theo gags as he's hit, full force. The shower curtain rips off the rod as he falls backward into the tub. Frank stands over him.

FRANK

Where's Juliana?

Only focused on his pain, Theo coughs, gags. Frank pushes the handle on Theo's stomach, aggravating his pain.

FRANK

Where is she you sniveling shit?

THEO

Chic...Chicago. On her way back from Chicago. Home in a few hours.

(coughs)

I'm really hurt, Frank.

FRANK

Well that was the point, dumbass.
And, just the beginning.

Theo cries out in agony as Frank pulls him up by the hair and drags him out.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

"Semper Fi" is tattooed across Frank's back. Freshly showered, he wipes steam from the mirror, lathers his face with shaving cream.

He turns toward a RUSTLING noise, reaches down and pets Loyal who lay at his feet.

FRANK

That's my good boy.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shirtless, bound with rope, Theo lay in the fetal position on the floor. Mouth covered by duct tape, glasses removed.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Frank combs his wet hair, parts it on the side like Theo's, grabs scissors and cuts.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Now wearing Theo's shirt, Frank stands over Theo's crumpled body and kicks him awake. Theo's screams muffled by the tape.

Loyal growls, bites Theo's leg, thrashes. Frank grabs his collar.

FRANK

RELEASE!

With a yelp, Loyal releases.

FRANK

You're a good boy. Let daddy do the
dirty work.

By the collar, Frank gently nudges Loyal out of the bedroom, closes the door.

Focus back on Theo, Frank rips the duct tape off his mouth. He holds up Theo's cell phone.

FRANK

What's your code?

Theo cries out, blood spews from his mouth. He coughs out words.

THEO

You'll never get away with this.
The cops were already here.
They're...

Frank kicks Theo. Shuts him up.

FRANK

Yeah, I saw them genius. Getting
away with it was never a part of my
plan. Just like when I burned your
fucking house down.

Leans down, yells right in Theo's face.

FRANK

Now give me the fucking code!

THEO

Five, five, two, three.

Frank punches in the code, immediately sees Juliana's messages.

FRANK

Debit card code!

THEO

Same. Take whatever, just don't
kill me. Please. Please, Frank.

He rips a new piece of duct tape off the roll, slaps it over
Theo's mouth. He picks up the shovel, poises the handle over
Theo's gut.

FRANK

This is for pretending to be my
friend while you helped yourself to
my wife!

Frank thrusts the handle into Theo's stomach. Theo groans.

FRANK

This is for treating my dog like
shit!

Another thrust in the gut.

FRANK

And this...

Rips off another piece of duct tape, grabs Theo's glasses from
the bed and puts them on.

FRANK

...this is for wearing non-prescription glasses, you pretentious shit!

He slaps the tape over Theo's nose.

Unmoved, Frank looks down at Theo, face turning purple, eyes bulging.

FRANK

And change of plans. I've decided, I will get away with killing you, Theo. And my ex-wife. Adapt and overcome.

Frank leaves, closing the door behind him as Theo lay dying.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A LYFT car pulls up in front of the Mark's home.

The back door opens, JULES MARKS (30), steps out, careful to avoid a slush puddle. She closes the door.

As she steps up onto the sidewalk, the Lyft drives away.

Juliana looks over at the SUV in the driveway, cleared of snow and driveway shoveled out.

She heads up the walkway, juggling her briefcase, garment bag and purse while trying not to slip.

As she reaches the front step, she hears a car slow down behind her. Puzzled, she watches as a patrol car stops across the street from her house.

Keys in hand, she first turns the doorknob to see if it's unlocked. It is. She opens the door.

JULIANA

Babe? I'm home.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Sgt. Jacobs and Officer Edwards watch Juliana stand in the open doorway.

They're jolted when suddenly, Juliana is grabbed and disappears behind the door.

INT. HOUSE - SAME TIME

On the other side of the door, knife deep in her back, Jules clings to life. Frank picks her up, wraps her spazzing legs around him. He slowly backs up to the open door.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

With urgency, Jacobs opens his car door. As he steps out he sees Frank, in Theo's shirt, glasses, same hair. Jacobs sees Jules wildly straddling what looks like Theo, at the front door.

Frank waves, closes the front door. Officer Edwards laughs.

OFFICER EDWARDS

Didn't know that dweeb had it in him.

SGT JACOBS

Me neither.

Perplexed, Sergeant Jacobs closes his door and drives away.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Through the high, arched window on the door, Frank watches the patrol car drive away.

He drops Juliana's limp body onto the floor and walks away.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Eerily quiet. Juliana's lifeless body remains where it was dropped.

KITCHEN

Dog food cabinet left open, now empty.

HALL

Suitcases gone.

BEDROOM

Theo dead on the floor.

EXT. MARK'S HOUSE - MORNING

SUV gone.

A patrol car slows down in front of the house.

INT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Two PATROLMEN look at the house as they slowly drive by.

PATROLMAN 1

Sarge said they're going on a
cruise. Lucky bastards, getting
away from this shitty snow.

EXT. MARK'S HOUSE

The patrol car speeds away.

FADE OUT.