

"BACKDRAFT"

Screenplay by

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SHOOTING DRAFT

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - STORAGE ROOM - 20 YRS. EARLIER

rocks
room

Darkness. Then the GLINT of a flashlight. Its beam crazily to and fro across the inside of a small storage room as we hear two children arguing.

OLDER KID

You're doing it wrong.

YOUNGER KID

Shut up.

OLDER KID

You're doing it wrong.

whipping
beef
African

It's hard, but we get a sense of the room in the beam of light. Huge, dark coats lined up like sides of on steel batons. Bent, stained helmets hung like masks.

struggle

Beneath them BRIAN, 7, and STEPHEN, 12, are trying to into a pair of the ludicrously massive coats over their pajamas.

STEPHEN

It doesn't go like that.

BRIAN

Who asked you?

STEPHEN

If you do it like that it'll open in the fire. Then you'll get burned and **DIE.**

It's a
stands

The door suddenly opens, morning sunlight roaring in.
fire station storage room full of fire gear. A fireman
in the doorway, tall, athletic, their father; DENNIS
McCAFFREY.

DENNIS

Who's going to die?

STEPHEN

Brian. He's not doing it right, dad.
He never does it right.

DENNIS

(gestures for them to
come out)

Well, let's have a look.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - DAY

out
coats
empty

The two boys tromp out of the closet. The rubber turn-
boots are as high as their thighs. The ends of the
drag on the floor. They salute, Brian's arm just an
sleeve. Dennis kneels down and re-fastens Brian's coat.

DENNIS

Your brother's right. If you don't
fasten these correctly they could
open and you'd get burned.

STEPHEN

And DIE!

BRIAN

You wouldn't let me die, would you,
Dad?

DENNIS

McCaffreys are smarter than fire,
Brian.

(playfully slaps their
shoulders)

How 'bout lunch, huh?

STEPHEN

Fireman shit?

DENNIS

Hey, what's with the mouth? Where'd
you grow up, a barn?

STEPHEN

Firehouse.

DENNIS

Cute.

ALARM

-- The station suddenly fills with the BELLOW of an
KLAXON.

DENNIS

(sighs)
Never fails...

A young fireman, ADCOX, appears with the dispatch card.

DENNIS

Big deal?

AXE

Medium deal.

DENNIS

Want to come along, Brian? Watch the
old man earn his keep?

STEPHEN

(pissed)
Dad!

DENNIS

You've come along a dozen times,
Stephen, give your brother a chance.
We'll be back in a few minutes.

(to Brian)
How 'bout it, sport?

BRIAN

Sure!

engine
their

Dennis scoops Brian up and loads him into the fire
cab. The other three firemen climb aboard and take
places.

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - DAY

engine

There's a cough of diesel, a crunch of gears, and the
is pulling out of the station.

DENNIS

Hit the button, Brian.

light
down
last
older

Brian stamps his foot on the siren button. The red
snaps on, the siren growls and blares, and they're off
the street. Brian turns around in his seat and, at the
instant before the corner, makes eye contact with his
brother.

They stick their tongues out.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY - 20 YRS. EARLIER

sandwiched
at
people on
emergency

The engine howls its way through the city. Brian,
between his father and Adcox, looks out in wonderment
at intersections zipping past like picket fences, at
sidewalks holding hands over their ears, at the red
lights bouncing crazily off shop windows.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY - 20 YRS. EARLIER

block.
jumping
and
his

Lazy smoke curls out the second story of a commercial
Medium deal. The engine pulls up and the firemen are
off like ship rats. Dennis opens his door, hops down,
pauses just long enough to point a serious finger at
son.

DENNIS

Stay near the truck.

(winks)

And keep an eye out for us, huh?

We're short handed today.

Dennis

Brian nods vigorously, taking the command seriously.

toward
the

smiles and is off, dragging a hoseline with his crew
a doorway they disappear into. Brian climbs down from
cab.

ENGINEER

Don't stray too far, little man.

better
taking

Brian smiles to the pumper operator. He just wants a
look. And he gets it: Smoke turned evil and dark now,
on purpose.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY - 20 YRS. EARLIER

Brian
Adcox
window

There's a level of apartments above the storefronts. As
watches, a window opens and out steps his father and
onto a small fire escape. Their attention's on the next
over, out of reach, wrapped in leaky smoke.

armed
balcony.
breaks out

Suddenly Dennis climbs up onto the fire escape railing,
with only an axe, and JUMPS across to the next metal
A ballsy, dangerous move. He kicks in the window,
the frame with his axe, and dives in.

terrified,
railing
a

A beat later he reemerges on the balcony with a
smudged little girl. He hands the little girl over the
to a fireman now coming up the more traditional way --
ladder.

than
swirling
pride,
releasing
roof.

Dennis's face lifts and grins at Brian; dirty, bigger
life, invincible. He winks a wink only possible between
fathers and sons and he's gone again, back into the
darkness. As Brian stands there, full of love, full of
he sees a piece of awning along the roofline crack;
a sickly yellow tongue of flame that slinks over the

Shhh,
The flame seems to pause, to stare at Brian a beat.
don't tell anyone. Brian is transfixed, his little head
staring up in astonishment.
Nobody else has noticed it.
Brian can see his father and Adcox through the window;
probing, looking for the flame lurking just above.
Brian
starts to call out in a small, hesitant voice,

BRIAN

Dad...

He tries to call louder... But suddenly everything is
happening very fast in slow motion:
-- Brian can see Adcox testing the ceiling with a pike
pole
as Brian steps forward, under the power of a flame that
beckons him as --
Dennis suddenly THROWS his body against Adcox, knocking
him
clear just as a flame EXPLODES DOWNWARD from the
ceiling
fully against him as -- All the building's windows BLOW
OUT
and it's like the sky's erupted for Brian, a burning
hailstorm
that falls and pelts the ground around him. Plaster,
wood,
and something metal that cracks against the pavement
and
spins slowly.
A fire helmet.
And Adcox is coming out the door now, blackened and
torn,
hopeless tears streaming down his face.

AXE

Get us some backup! We need some
goddamn backup!

And, spotting Brian, he runs towards him. And the
helmet
spins and spins and Adcox keeps running, and the sky is
raining fire, and the flame on the roof has risen up
now to

laughing at
and we

its full, horrifying size and it's laughing now,
the little boy as the helmet finally stops spinning,
read the printing on the neck guard.

MCCAFFREY

Brian
his

And Adcox is sobbing and has his arms around the boy,
protecting him from the fire, the world, but it's like
doesn't see him. He pulls away from Adcox, walks up to
father's helmet, And puts it on.

captures

The scene EXPLODES with a flash as a photographer
the instant.

INT. SEEDY APARTMENT - DAY

Sequence omitted from original script.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - DAY

of
it's
seat
live
now
and
up
"McCaffrey

Hold on the freeze-frame. Let it become an aged cover
LIFE. The magazine jiggles and rocks and we see now
sitting atop a box of knick-knacks jostling in the back
of an aging BMW. There's plenty of other boxes here, a
on the move, and in the driver's seat, BRIAN MCCAFFREY,
27. There's piles of empty burger wrappers, Coke cans,
Florida knick-knacks on the dash board; a little blow-
palm tree, a cheesy hula girl emblazoned with
High-End Stereo Sales".

EXT. HIGHWAY - MONTAGE - DAY

country,

Brian and his battered BMW shoot past prairie, cow
nervous suburbs and finally a sign: WELCOME TO CHICAGO.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

graves Wind tugging at his bangs, Brian stares down at the
of Dennis and Mary Elizabeth McCaffrey.

INT. CHICAGO GAS STATION RESTROOM - DAY

his In a crusty sink he combs his hair, knots a tie around
neck.

EXT. CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT TRAINING ACADEMY - DAY

his Brian walks through its sculpted columns, straightening
deep tie. He comes to a door, FIRE ACADEMY CHIEF. He takes a
breath, steadies his gaze, and enters.

INT. FIRE ACADEMY CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Out The ACADEMY CHIEF sits at his desk going over a file.
action. the window can be heard a FIRE TRAINING CLASS in

CHIEF FITZGERALD

Is this a joke?

Brian's sitting in the seat opposite.

BRIAN

If it was a joke, sir, you'd be laughing.

CHIEF FITZGERALD

You walked out on this academy six years ago. One week to graduation. You think we forgot that? You think I did?

BRIAN

I want another shot, Sir.

CHIEF FITZGERALD

(beat)

Look, everybody remembers your old man. Being his son, all you had to do was breathe to graduate here. Dead Hero Father Rule. But you blew us off. Why should I take you back?

BRIAN

If you remember, sir, my test scores were in the top --

CHIEF FITZGERALD

-- I don't give a damn what your test scores were, maybe you could have been a good firemen, but you had your shot.

BRIAN

I need another one, sir.

CHIEF FITZGERALD

Sorry, but it's out of my hands. Try again next year.

BRIAN

No, it isn't out of your hands or you wouldn't even have met me. If I push you have to let me back in. Dead Hero Father Rule. Sir.

CHIEF FITZGERALD

(simmers)

Even if you graduate this academy, you've still got nine months of probation. That's hard duty, son. If you don't really love this job, it'll kill you.

BRIAN

(rises)

See you Monday. Sir.

As we hear the BLOW OF A WHISTLE

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO FIRE DEPT. TRAINING ACADEMY - GRADUATION

DAY

And everybody lined up at attention in dress blues.

CHIEF FITZGERALD

(at podium)

Though the world changes every day, some things are truly forever: Courage, devotion, and honor in what we do. This class is a special one, for we dedicate it to the three firefighters that have fallen this

year: Donald Knowlton, Richard Walter
and Michael Petzold...

(silent beat)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with
pleasure that I certify that Candidate
Class number 322, having successfully
completed all academy requirements,
are hereby graduated to the Chicago
Fire Department.

feet.
at
strangely.
And

Candidates and their relatives CHEER and leap to their
Something struggles inside of Brian. He doesn't stand
first. Another Candidate, TIM, 20, looks at him
So does the Academy Chief, his eyes finding Brian's.
Brian's standing slowly now, joining them...

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

An expensive one. We hear a window BREAK.

INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

SLAMS
And a
their

Through the dimness a file cabinet. An AXE SUDDENLY
into it, RIPPING it apart. Files crash to the floor.
picture. 1970. Four young guys marlin fishing. Time of
lives.

INT. BROWNSTONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

door.

And a GREY PUTTY being SLAPPED along the edges of a

INT. PUB - NIGHT

axes and
proudly
"CHICAGO

A split-level firemen's dive; complete with mounted
personalized T-shirts from various engine companies
declaring "LADDER CO. 6 -- AXE FIRST, HOSE LATER" and

FD, 150 YEARS OF TRADITION UNIMPEDED BY PROGRESS".

have

Tonight the place is firmly in the hands of an army of
recently graduated candidates. A few on the back patio

and
Survey

hooked up a charged hoseline and are taking potshots at balloon targets, each other, the neighbor's cat. Brian Tim, still in their uniforms, enter from the street. the scene.

BRIAN

Completely out of control.

TIM

What the hell are we waiting for?

appears

As they shoulder their way inside, another CANDIDATE holding proudly a fistful of sealed envelopes.

CANDIDATE

Hot off the presses, guys. Station assignments.

Brian

Tim and everyone else but Brian eagerly tear into them. nonchalantly shoulders up to the bar.

BRIAN

A beer, Willy!

The barkeep turns and smiles.

WILLY

Well, if it isn't the littlest McCaffrey.

(to candidates with hose)

Hey! You break anything with that you buy it!

(to Brian)

Sorry, there must be something wrong with my eyes. I keep thinking that's a fire department uniform.

BRIAN

It's in my blood, Willy.

exclaiming
They
nice

The candidates are ripping open their assignments, to each other: "All right! Engine 117! That's a slum! get cookers every day!". "Oh no, Engine 10, that's a nice neighborhood"...

a

Willy turns to the bulletin board behind him and unpins
stack of business cards.

WILLY

Really. Well, let's have a look at
what else was "in your blood". I
always look forward to getting these,
they make such a nice collage for
the bar... "Assistant Director, Sales,
Aspen Snowmobile Tours..."

BRIAN

Didn't offer the kinda growth and
challenge I need.

WILLY

Uh huh. And "Pioneer's Pride, Mobile
Log Cabins". That was in your blood
about six months wasn't it?

BRIAN

Management were pin heads.

WILLY

"Laguna Jamming, Custom Surfboards"?

BRIAN

Coffee sucked.

WILLY

And just this year, "Brian's Sound
Spectrum". Your own company even.
Big step.

BRIAN

I was ahead of my time.

WILLY

You know, I've got a perfect little
spot here for "Brian McCaffrey,
Fireman"...

Tim holds an envelope marked McCAFFREY out to Brian.

TIM

Aren't you even curious?

BRIAN

Engine 115, right?

TIM

(opens it, surprised)
How'd you know? These are supposed
to be sealed.

BRIAN

Lucky guess.
(winks)
And a case of scotch to a captain in
station assignments.

TIM

You crooked son of a bitch. Why 115?

BRIAN

Lots of fires. They promote faster
there. Take a look at the last Lt.'s
list, half the guys on it came from
that battalion. Gotta think about
your future, Timmy. 115's the station.

TIM

Ah man, if you're gonna bribe your
way into a station, why not 17 with
me and your brother?

On Brian's reaction

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

50,
saw
the
A Porsche knifes through darkened streets. The DRIVER,
is dressed for success. Pulling up to the brownstone we
earlier, he gets out and rubs his eyes. Another day in
salt mines.

lock
do.
Climbing the short stairs, he sticks his key into the
and opens the door. It is the last thing he will ever

A THUNDERING EXPLOSION ENGULFS the stoop.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

The place is packed now with girls flirting with the

horseplay
SIREN.

candidates, putting their helmets on, etc. The
around the bar suddenly stops at the sweet sound of a

EXT. PUB - NIGHT

comes, the
and

Everyone steps outside, cocks an ear. And here it
real thing, SCREECHING past in a full-tilt rush. Shouts
raised toasts.

TIM

Hey, that's my cousin's company!
C'mon! Let's go!

As Brian turns, he suddenly confronted by an elderly
LITHUANIAN WOMAN.

BRIAN

(surprised)
Mrs. Viatkus...

Brian
up.

She grabs his cheeks and rattles off in Lithuanian.
can only smile. Then two attractive jean-clad legs step

JENNIFER.

JENNIFER

Brian.

BRIAN

(surprised)
Jennifer.

JENNIFER

You're back.

BRIAN

You look great.

JENNIFER

Thanks for calling.

BRIAN

Uh... I've been sorta keeping a low
profile... the academy... I graduated
today.

JENNIFER

Huh.

BRIAN

So... I see you're still in the neighborhood.

JENNIFER

Not quite. Just visiting. I live in Lincoln Park now.

BRIAN

Yeah? What have you been up to?

JENNIFER

I work for city hall.

BRIAN

Really? No kidding.

JENNIFER

What, you think I just dried up and blew away when you left? The world does turn once in awhile Brian, even without your permission.

Just then, Tim OPENS UP the hoseline, DRENCHING Brian.

TIM

Don't want you overheating, Brian!

his
and
Brian ducks the stream and PULLS a length of hose near feet, FLIPPING Tim. Brian JUMPS him, shuts off the hose pins him to the pavement.

TIM

Okay okay! Uncle!

Brian walks back toward Jennifer

JENNIFER

You've certainly matured.

She turns to leave.

BRIAN

Well, if nothing else, it's nice to know we can still be friends.

JENNIFER

I don't want to be your friend, Brian.

grabs
Another in a series of fire engines HOWL past. Tim
Brian by the shoulder.

TIM

Let's go, man!

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

down
red
suddenly
their
Brian and Tim jump into Brian's car. They shoot blindly
the street looking for the fire engine, running down
lights or anything else that gets in their way. Brian
hits the brakes, SCREECHING to a stop. They roll down
windows. Far off can be heard the wind-up of a siren.

TIM

(points)

That way.

EXT. STREETS - FIRE ENGINE - NIGHT

there
up
shakes
the
SCREECH. They fly around a corner, down a block, and
it is, lights flashing up ahead. Brian GUNS it, roars
alongside the fire engine. Tim leans out the window,
a bottle of beer, and lets loose a foamy eruption in
truck driver's face.

DRIVER

Tim! You crazy motherfucker!

But he's laughing.

TIM

What'cha got?

DRIVER

Box alarm. Walton Ave.

TIM

We'll meet ya.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - WALTON AVENUE - NIGHT

already
explode
movie.

As Brian and Tim pull up two engine companies are
dragging lines toward the rolling brownstone we saw
earlier. Tim cheers the firemen on like a drive-in

him.

Brian watches the fire with uneasy fascination. Embers
whipping into the night, drifting to the ground around

now. He

One of the engine companies is entering the doorway
watches as they willingly crawl into a place any sane
person would run for their life from. Jesus Christ. FLASH --

person

Brian

turns at the blinding snap of a camera. Several locals
are gathered around a parked car, some taking pictures.

are

Brian

notices that right away. It takes a beat longer to

notice

the CHARRED CORPSE stuffed head-first through the

windshield.

It's the Porsche driver, his legs sticking out at crazy
angles. A dog barks furiously at it.

TIM

(also looking at body)

Man. Something sure put a crimp in
his evening.

BRIAN

Backdraft.

noisy

The brownstone fire quickly transforms itself into
clouds of dirty white steam. And one of the firemen is
coming back out now, walking toward Brian.

coming

mask

When he's just a few yards away he pulls off his air
and helmet and we shudder with Brian, because the man
is a dead ringer for HIS FATHER.

is a

STEPHEN

Well, look what we have here. Nice
costume. Rent it?

BRIAN

I want to thank you for coming to my graduation, Stephen. It was a great inspiration to me.

STEPHEN

So you're going to fight fires now, huh?

He pats Brian's cheeks, leaving behind large charcoal smears.

STEPHEN

(re smears)
Doesn't work on you.
(turns to leave)
See ya around, little brother.

BRIAN

Not likely.

STEPHEN

(turns)
Well, see you're wrong already. Had a talk with Chief Fitzgerald, and we decided in the interest of brotherly love, that maybe you shouldn't be way over on the other side of town. So starting tomorrow, your assigned to company 17. My company.
(Brian's color drops a hue)
One case of scotch, you're getting cheap in your old age, Brian...

And Stephen turns for his own men, Tim staring at Brian as clouds of smoke drift past like ghosts.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - ACROSS THE STREET - NIGHT

A flame LEAPS up into the foreground. Touches a cigarette. The cigarette glows, lingers, then lowers slowly from the mouth of RIMGALE, fifty-five years old and six and a half feet of solid granite. Wearing a windbreaker and grey slacks tucked into fire department rubber boots, he takes another

windshield.
looks up
boot,

slow drag. Looks at the body stuffed into the
It's twenty yards away from the brownstone. Stephen
as Rimgale drops the cigarette, crushes it with his
and crosses the street to the building.

INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Rimgale
crouches

Charred walls hiss and snap in the steamy darkness.
is there, gloomy in the beam of his flashlight. He
down, plays his flashlight along the ruined baseboard.

SHADOW

If you stare any longer Stevie, I'll
start charging you admission.

Stephen is leaning in the doorway, watching him.

STEPHEN

Got a cause?

SHADOW

Are the glory boys actually showing
interest in Investigation's work? I
may have a stroke.

STEPHEN

The glory boys just want to finish
their report so they can go home.

loose
walls,

Rimgale's flashlight finds a wall socket that he pries
and holds up to the light. He lowers it, takes in the
the room.

SHADOW

They're gonna have to wait a few
days on this one.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

the
wagon.

Tim's talking to his cousin. Brian hangs back, watches
body-bag people load the Porsche driver into a meat
There's a still an audience for this, still stray dogs

car,
circling and barking. Brian walks up, looks inside the
and sees on a seat the ragged remains of a FINGER.

BRIAN

(to coroner crew)
Hey, you forgot... this.

smiles
They're already climbing into the wagon. The driver
creepily.

CORONER DRIVER

We always leave something for the
dogs.

walking
glance.
Brian looks across the fireground, sees his brother
back to the fire engine. They share a brief, edgy

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

walks
toy
A modest one. South-side Irish old fashioned. Brian
up. There's a little kid, about five, playing with a
fire truck on the drive.

BRIAN

Hey, Sean. What's goin' on, man?

The kid stares at him without a glimmer of recognition.

BRIAN

It's Uncle Brian. Y'know.

He makes his hand into a talking puppet.

BRIAN

(bandito accent)
"Spinach? We don't need no stinking
spinach". Remember?

The kid drops his toy truck and flees inside.

KID

Mom! Mom!

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE

Brian follows, sticks his head in the door.

BRIAN

Hellooo...

A warm looking woman, 30's, HELEN, comes around the corner.

HELEN

Brian?

BRIAN

Hi, Helen. Man, you look great.

HELEN

You look like... Brian.

She gives him a tentative hug.

HELEN

'Bout written you off. How long have you been in town?

BRIAN

Four months.

HELEN

Four months?

BRIAN

I know, I know, Should'a called. I've been really busy. I joined the fire department.

Helen's expression suddenly saddens.

HELEN

Oh Brian...

(beat)

You guys... you really know how to put each other through it, don't you?

The little kid is peeking fearfully from the kitchen doorway.

BRIAN

That's Sean? Jeez, he's a giant.

HELEN

Yeah, you'd be surprised what three years can do to a kid.

BRIAN

Sean, come on out, man. What, you forget your favorite uncle?

HELEN

Stephen told him you were killed in a hot tub accident.

SEAN

(intense)
Dad was kidding, Mom.

And the kid runs unexpectedly away, angry.

BRIAN

Well that's two things to strangle Stephen for. Where is he, anyway?

HELEN

(beat)
Stephen's not staying here now, Brian. He moved out last April.

An embarrassed sting.

BRIAN

Oh, man, I'm sorry.

HELEN

You guys ought to try picking up a phone once in awhile.

EXT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - MARINA - DAY

Except
trawler.
badly

A small one on the river. Several boats bob peacefully. one. Raised high in dry-dock, it's an ancient fishing Bachman-Turner-Overdrive drifts up from the galley on fuzzed speakers as Brian climbs the ladder.

BRIAN

Hey.

the
Brian.

Stripped to the waist, Stephen's bent-over cleaning out guts of the inboard motor. He looks confused to see

BRIAN

I talked to Helen...

Wrong thing to say. Stephen turns back to his work.

BRIAN

...Man, I thought dad's boat was finally retired to the family graveyard. Don't you worry about falling out of this thing?

grease.
deck
Stephen straightens up, his forearms smudged with
Brian admires the unwashed cereal bowls and peeling
paint.

BRIAN

I like what you've done with the place.

STEPHEN

It's comin' along... want a beer?

pops it,
in the
Stephen tosses him a beer from the fridge. As Brian
he sees the small pile of city-issue gallon size cans
corner. Armorall, solvent, extinguisher foam.

BRIAN

Been ripping off fire stations?

STEPHEN

It's old stuff Adcox gave me that the department was going to throw out anyway. Still good enough though for this tub.

Brian winces at the music coming out of shot speakers.

BRIAN

Bachman Turner Overdrive?
(looks through music
rack)
...Buffalo Springfield?... Stephen
Bishop? Oh man...

it
relic.
Brian lifts one of the tapes -- an 8-track -- and holds
carefully in his palm as if it were a rare and fragile

BRIAN

My God, an actual operating 8-track.

STEPHEN

What, you've never seen one before?

BRIAN

In the Field Museum once.

STEPHEN

It works.

BRIAN

It worked when you were in sixth grade.

INT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - DAY

Sequence omitted from original script.

EXT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - DAY

Brian opens the trunk of his old BMW. It's full of boxes marked BRIAN'S "SOUND SPECTRUM".

INT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - CABIN - DAY

Brian's gutted the speakers and is re-wiring them.

STEPHEN

People actually used to pay you for this?

BRIAN

Millions, Stephen -- And sexual favors.

STEPHEN

Sheep don't count.

BRIAN

Yeah? What about Laura --

STEPHEN

That was never proved.

Brian moves over to another speaker.

STEPHEN

Why'd you come here, Brian?

BRIAN

stereo

I wanted to know why you messed with my station assignment. I mean, is this really gonna have to one of those big brother -- little brother "you broke my GI Joe and I'm still pissed" games?

STEPHEN

(sighs)

What is it with you, man, huh? How do you manage to keep coming up with new and amazing ways to screw up? That scotch bullshit? Am I really supposed to believe you came crawling back home because you suddenly felt heart strings moan for the family biz? You were bankrupt, man.

BRIAN

Hey! You don't know me --

STEPHEN

I know you cold, Brian. The scary thing is, you probably could have faked it for awhile. But you see, in this job there's no place to hide. Isn't like selling log cabins. You have a bad day here -- someone dies. And that's not fucking good enough. Want another beer?

BRIAN

So that's it? Big bad brother's gonna ride my ass till I cough blood?

STEPHEN

Big bad brother is going to treat you like any other probie -- that I don't think is going to make it.

switches
clear --
Brian staples the last of the audio cord in place and on the tape player. The cabin fills with sharp, crystal Stephen Bishop.

BRIAN

There's only so much technology can do.

(picks up his tool
box)

Thanks for the beer.

STEPHEN

Thanks for the speakers.

EXT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - DAY

Brian climbs down off the boat. Looks up at Stephen.

BRIAN

Y'know, I told myself a million times I didn't want to be a fireman. I said bullshit to that line about tradition and family legacy. I know I split, and I know how you felt...

STEPHEN

Yeah, you know. You know what it felt like.

BRIAN

I gotta do this, Stephen. I gotta know.

STEPHEN

I think you're gonna find out, Brian. Don't be late tomorrow.

INT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

blues as
back,
doing...
A simple one-room walk-up. A stereo blares Chicago
Brian buttons up his uniform in the mirror. He steps
looks at himself, -- and oh man what the hell am I

EXT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - STREET - MORNING

gets
frustration.
Brian climbs into his car, turns the key -- nothing. He
out, looks under the hood, then SLAMS it down in

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN - MORNING

Midwestern
year war
into
A pissed-off Chicago, hauling itself off to work in the
morning snap, passes by Brian's window. Tough
brick. Tough Midwesterners. Heads-down in their 150
with a wind committed to pushing the whole damn thing

Lake Michigan.

EXT. EL STATION - MORNING

The train clacking away above him, Brian walks down the sidewalk carrying his fire equipment. He turns a corner and comes on.

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - MORNING

Brian stands there. It's his dad's station. Turn of the century abused. Sooty with stone gargoyles and a pair of faded red doors that suddenly CRANK OPEN as Brian comes up the drive. Fire engine 17 and ladder truck 46, lights flashing, pull out onto the apron.

The fireman sticking his head out of the passenger window is Stephen. One look at the silver trumpet on his collar and we know this isn't Fireman McCaffrey but Fire LT. McCaffrey.

STEPHEN

You're too late, probie.

Tim, in ladder truck 46, waves a small bye-bye as both rigs begin heading down the street.

BRIAN

(chasing)
Goddamn it, Stephen...

Brian bolts full-out for the engine. At the last instant before he falls on his face a fireman reaches out and drags him aboard.

INT./EXT. FIRE ENGINE 17 - DAY

It's Adcox, the fireman from the first scene, now a veteran.

AXE

Why baby McCaffrey, how ya doin'?

as
The Pumper driver, SCHMIDT, pops in a howling ROCK TUNE
they zoom off.

SCHMIDT

(re Brian to Adcox)
You know this rug rat?

AXE

Know him? I practically raised him.
(Jewish mom)
And he never calls, he never writes...

seat
Brian shouts over the noise to GRINDLE, 35, one more
down.

BRIAN

I'm Brian.

GRINDLE

I'm sorry.

begins
Grindle sticks his nose out the window, sniffs, then
buckling up his coat.

GRINDLE

Boys, I do believe we have a
barbecue...

As Brian and Adcox fasten up their own equipment --

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

of a
pull up.
Smoke pours with confused indecision from every window
five story factory as the pumper and ladder company

GRINDLE

(staring at confusing
smoke)
I hate it when we gotta fucking go
look for it.

STEPHEN

(to Schmidt)
Call in another alarm. We're gonna
need some back-up.

drags
illegally

Everyone begins strapping on air tanks and masks. Adcox the rig's suction line to the hydrant. A beautiful parked Mercedes is blocking the way.

AXE

(to Stephen)
Oh these moments do try me...

STEPHEN

(admiring car)
Be gentle.

through
it
hydrant.

Whistling to himself, Adcox SMASHES the brass coupling the passenger window, runs the line through and SMASHES out the other window before connecting up to the

right.

Stephen and Grindle pull hose off the bed and move out. Brian's so jacked up he can't get his air tank on Schmidt calmly helps him into his gear.

SCHMIDT

It's only rock 'n roll, kid.

ready
when
incoherently at

Stephen, Adcox and Grindle are crouched at the door, to go. Brian takes a hose roll and runs to catch up he's cut-off by dazed Latin workers shouting him in SPANISH.

STEPHEN

Hey, probie! How 'bout it, huh?

the
air

Brian pushes past the workers and takes his position on hose line. Stephen reaches over and re-adjusts Brian's tank strap.

STEPHEN

You're doing it wrong.

out

Stephen eases the door open. Thick smoke rolls sickly over their heads.

STEPHEN

(to Brian)

Stay beside me.

And in they go...

INT. BURNING FACTORY - DAY

they
on
Inside the smoke is like liquid lead. Going by feel,
hump the hose up one staircase after another, crawling
their hands and knees toward a dull red glow. Turning a
corner, they enter

INT. BURNING FACTORY - A VAST ROOM - DAY

buffeting
timbers
in
thing
Totally ablaze. Brian looks up in wonder at the
waves of flame in the ceiling, at the SCREECHING
crumbling to the white-hot floor. At the walls HOWLING
bestial agony. It is the most horrifying, and wonderful
he has ever seen.

AXE

Wash it to the windows?

STEPHEN

No, we'll hit the son of a bitch
head on.

AXE

It's gonna flash, Stevie. We gotta
get behind it.

STEPHEN

Nah, listen to it. It's a pussy.
It'll just steam on us. It won't
flash. Go high in the ceiling.

tight,
loose
fire
steam
Adcox and Grindle shrug and pull their helmets down
expecting the worst. Adcox opens up the nozzle, turning
a high pressure BLAST OF WATER into the ceiling. The
SCREAMS in manic anger and HEAVES a cloud of HOWLING

gasps
see
that WHIRLS back and BAKES them like lobsters. Brian
for air as swirling ash batters his facemask. A window
somewhere EXPLODES. Somebody shouts. Christ, you can't
anything. Stephen HOOPS in victory.

STEPHEN

(to fire)

I knew you were a pussy! C'mon! Steam
us!

(to firemen)

Let's go!

the
walls,
faces.
corner.
The chase is on! Going for the throat while the fire's
confused and defensive, the firemen SCRAMBLE through
boiling cloud. They hit it in the ceiling, in the
forcing it back and back. It HOWLS and CLAWS in anger,
furiously throwing cinders and broken timbers in their
The walls ECHO with its SCREAMS as it retreats to a

STEPHEN

Ya love it, probie?

BRIAN

I'm in heaven, Lt.

STEPHEN

Hook us up to a stand-pipe.

the
his
Brian runs back to the wall to hook up his hose roll to
building water system. He goes to unscrew the cap with
hydrant wrench but it keeps slipping off the nut.

STEPHEN

Jesus, how 'bout man, huh? We're
gonna loose this!

Brian finally gets it hooked up and runs back.

EXT. FACTORY - OTHER SIDE - DAY

Tim and three guys from his ladder company, come up an
extended aerial ladder, CRASH through a window and

INT. FACTORY - DAY

BOOM!
building
RUSH...

begin HACKING their way toward Brian's company as --
It's a sudden, shattering vibration that shakes the
to its foundations. Then, a sucking sound: RUSH-RUSH-
Stephen speaks calmly into his radio handset.

STEPHEN

Hey Otis, is it...?

SCHMIDT

(into radio)

Yeah.

STEPHEN

Goddamn it, where's our backup?
Where's the second-in companies?

SCHMIDT'S VOICE

Sorry, man. John Wayne time.

STEPHEN

(to firemen)

Dig in!

looks

The firemen hesitate. PENGELLY, the Truck Company Lt.,
at Stephen with concern.

STEPHEN

Dig in, goddamn it!

floor.
barrier. A
BOOM!
behind
hoselines

The crews immediately gather in the center of the
They turn over tables, chairs, anything to form a
circling of the wagons. -- BOOM! rush-rush-rush --
Each louder than the last. Stephen and Brian are ducked
an overturned desk. Adcox and Krizminski clutch
like frontiersmen's Winchesters.

STEPHEN

You're gonna love this.

comes

-- rush-rush-rush -- CRAAAASH!! On an instant the world

hail
SHRIEKING

apart as all four walls of factory windows EXPLODE in a
of glass. A wave of HOWLING FLAME POURS IN after it,
and HISSING.

sewing
THROUGH,
UP

At the same moment, part of the floor beside a heavy
machine GIVES WAY and a ladderman, SANTOS, FALLS
grabbing the edges at the last minute as flames BELLOW
from underneath. He SCREAMS as his grip loosens.

arms and
SHOVES him

Grindle leaps to the ladderman's side, grabbing his
coat. Brian hesitates just an instant and Stephen
out of the way to back up Grindle.

SANTOS

Help... Oh God...

and
curdling

Adcox's taken the hoseline and is opening fire. Water
flame crash and snarl across the floor in a blood
ROAR. It's a thrashing, murderous standoff.

bad.
is
the

Stephen and Grindle have got Santos but the angle's
Blow it now and all three could take a header. Santos
panicking, losing his grip. Grindle bores his eyes into
man's with the calm and conviction of Moses.

GRINDLE

You go, we go.

little,
continues
the
flame.
down
NIGHTENGALE,

They may all die, but they won't leave him. He calms a
hangs on till they PULL him out of harm's way. Adcox
with the hose as suddenly, everyone HITS the deck as
fire EXPLODES over them, BURSTING their coats into
Tim's company opens up their line, WASHING everybody
before CHARGING after the fire. A ladderman,

steps on Brian's back.

BRIAN

Hey!

NIGHTENGALE

Sorry man, I thought you were dead.

Stephen
over
into a
its
dying.

Brian, stunned, sits up, his coat and helmet smoking. seems totally unaffected and is already on his feet and the top of the barricade, the others backing him as he mercilessly drives the fire back, trapping it finally corner. The fire hisses, spits, shakes the walls with furious anger. But it's all bluster now, the fire's

PENGELLY

(ladder co. captain)

Stephen! BC's on the radio. Says they think a civilian got left behind downstairs.

STEPHEN

Adcox! Take Tim and do a search.

Stephen

Adcox leads Tim downstairs. Brian looks shaken up. helps him roughly to his feet.

STEPHEN

Don't you fold on me now, man.

Brian burns at that and shakes his brother's arm off.

STEPHEN

Clear the hose for me.

hears it.

Brian's walking over to clear the hoseline when he small voice. Faint. "Help me..."

BRIAN

Hey, I think it's coming from a different staircase.

on his

Nobody hears. -- Brian takes off down the other steps own.

INT. BURNING FACTORY - DOWNSTAIRS

machines.

It's only the fire's ghost here, lazy and slow.

Off the corridor are rooms full of commercial sewing

Brian enters one and drops to his knees.

stand.

Looks under a table, flashes his light behind a work

TONGUE OF

Nothing. He turns to backtrack his way out when A

him,

FLAME suddenly LEAPS up through the floor in front of

hisses

cutting off the door. Brian lands on his ass as it

and giggles and dances unreally in front of him.

childhood. He

I never forget a face, kid. -- That fire from

looks

could maybe force his way through but Jesus, the way it

at him --

--

-- Brian ROLLS away from it. Looks for another doorway

on

And ends up in thick smoke. He drops to a crawl, stays

Behind

his belly where the air's clear. When he sees it.

body.

some furniture. Something flesh-colored. Shit. It's a

the

He crawls up closer. It's a woman. Adrenalin pounding

down

top of his skull off, he grabs her and stumbles back

the hall, makes a turn --

BRIAN

I got one!

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

fire

-- And now he's bursting from the building onto a short

escape, shouting at the top of his lungs.

BRIAN

I got somebody! I got somebody!

have
through
fire

A sea of media flashbulbs ERUPTS in his face. The press arrived in force, crowding the street. Brian pushes them to a clear spot on the far side of the engine. Two paramedics rush over as he lowers the figure.

BRIAN

Is she... Is she alive?

The paramedics suddenly stop their efforts. Turn to Brian.

PARAMEDIC

I'm afraid you're a little too late with this one.

strange.

They step aside. Brian looks down. The woman looks Mostly because she's a heavy store DRESSING DUMMY. The paramedics burst into laughter. Brian, looking pale and shaken, turns and walks away. He passes Grindle and

Tim,
woman

sitting on the pumper's tailboard helping the REAL that was found inside.

GRINDLE

Sorry to hear about the mannequin. I heard you two were close.

Dizzy,
clog
quickly

Photographers have appeared and are flashing the woman. Brian wanders off, tries to help out with the choking of singed factory employees before finally turning into

EXT. FACTORY ALLEY - ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

one
terror.

Where he barfs his guts out in private. Doubled-over, arm on the brick wall for support, we see the raw The demons rushing out of him.

BRIAN

Shit...

Someone else does too. Jennifer. Dressed now in a long

with

expensive coat, she's standing at the end of the alley
a clipboard. Brian, ashes smeared across an ashen face,
spittle on his chin, doesn't notice her.

STEPHEN

(appearing beside him)
You all right?

hasn't

Stephen isn't pale. He's flushed and buoyant. All this
taken anything from him. It's made his day.

BRIAN

Yeah. Fine. I'm a little busy right
now.

Stephen leans against the wall. Folds his arms.

STEPHEN

Y'know, you got an awful short memory
for direct orders. I told you to
stay beside me.

BRIAN

-- C'mon, Stephen.

STEPHEN

-- You split the team, man. And what
was that crap with the standpipe?
You'd think you and a hose were never
introduced before.

Stephen turns to leave. Brian yells after him.

BRIAN

Goddamn it Stephen!

STEPHEN

-- I told you to stay next to me!

BRIAN

-- I was doin' it! I was up there
fucking doin' it. You don't know,
man, you don't know what I did!

STEPHEN

What you did was drop the ball,
Probie. Get that right.

PENGELLY

(from end of alley)

Hey! Stevie! They're callin' for ya.

Stephen turns to walk away. Pauses.

STEPHEN

Bet 30,000 dollars a year and twenty
two days a month off sounded pretty
good twelve weeks ago, huh?

at
and
watches
ALDERMAN

As Stephen leaves, we see that Jennifer's been standing
the end of the alley, listening to them. She's turns
walks as Brian looks up. We register his surprise. He
her head toward a dynamic-looking guy in his 40s,
SWAYZAK, surrounded by reporters.

EXT. BURNED BUILDING - FRONT - DAY

SWAYZAK

(to reporters)

Roger, Paul... How's it going, guys?

REPORTER

Another fire in this district. Getting
to be Cinder Alley up here.

JENNIFER

(walking up)

You used that last week.

She hands Swayzak a clipboard.

AXE

(yelling down from
window)

(to Brian)

Hey! Probie! We're still workin'
here, man.

INT. BURNED BUILDING

and
sparks.

Brian and the rest of the company rip open the walls
beat the last weak flames in a final flurry of dingy

appear

The moment the smoke clears just a fraction, cigarettes

easy
Ash
afterglow
one

in everyone's mouth. Was it good for you? The talk is
and obscene, the intense camaraderie of shared danger.
clouds are thrown playfully back and forth in the
of having taken on the worst there is and walking away
more time.

GRINDLE

(to Adcox)

Stephen man, what's going through
that guy's head? Takin' it on in the
first room... this shit's happening
too often. It could've flashed.
Should've flashed.

AXE

But it didn't. Guy knows.

GRINDLE

Guy's lucky.

Adcox sees Brian. Smiles.

AXE

Hey, baby McCaffrey. First one's the
clincher. You did okay.

BRIAN

My Lt. might have something to say
about that.

AXE

Ah, everybody screws up some, Brian.
You're working for the toughest Lt.
on the job. Saw him once pick up a
probie he thought was moving too
slow and throw him into a burning
building. It's just bad luck you're
family.

BRIAN

(beat)

John, when you're in there... in the
fire... do you ever see...

STEPHEN

(from across room,
interrupting)

C'mon ladies, let's roll some hose...

BRIAN

(to Adcox)

-- Never mind.

Swayzak

Brian turns and sees out the window Jennifer and standing near Rimgale's red fire dept. sedan.

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

Rimgale walks up to his sedan.

SHADOW

Alderman Swayzak.

SWAYZAK

Investigator Rimgale.

SHADOW

I need to get in the trunk.

them.

Swayzak's leaning on it. We sense the dislike between

Swayzak steps aside. Rimgale pops the trunk.

SHADOW

Awful expensive shoes to be wearing at a fireground, Alderman. But then I guess you haven't been to too many fires.

JENNIFER

I wanted to talk to you about Alan Seagrave's death. We still haven't gotten a fire report from your office.

SHADOW

You'll have an answer as soon as I do.

SWAYZAK

People are asking how a prominent taxpayer got stuffed through the windshield of his own car. They're asking me.

JENNIFER

--The point is, Investigator, you haven't even told us yet if the fire was accidental. We're starting to get the feeling your office is

dragging out this case to embarrass the Alderman because of his fire dept. reorganization program --

SHADOW

-- You mean his firehouse closing program, -- Don't you?

JENNIFER

We'd just be very disappointed if it turned out your office was playing politics.

SWAYZAK

-- Because I'm not. I care about this city, and I care about this department --

Rimgale cuts him off with the shutting of his trunk

lid.

SHADOW

(calm of a monk)

Alderman, I have a remarkably uncomplicated job. To decide if a fire's arson, and if so catch the pain in the ass doing it. But to be honest, if my methodical investigative methods just happen to muck up the campaign of certain mayor wanna-bees, well, I guess I can't say I sleep any less peacefully.

And he walks back to the burned building.

SWAYZAK

I wish I could just fire the son of a bitch.

STEPHEN

Hey! Swayzak!

cameras
pops
Stephen's leaning out of an upstairs window. As the TV turn, he drops down onto a fire engine hose bed and right into Swayzak's face with a murderous grin.

STEPHEN

We almost lost a whole company up there, Swayzee buddy. Isn't any back-up since you closed '33. And we really

appreciate it, the guys and me.
Honest. I know you've got my vote
for mayor.

there,
Grindle and Santos start walking for Stephen. Brian's
following after them.

SWAYZAK

Look Lt., I'm on your side. If there's
a problem, please, work with our
task force to fix it.

STEPHEN

Oh yeah, your famous task force...
three guys have already died this
year because of the cuts made by
your "task force"...

GRINDLE

Stevie, c'mon man...

Swayzak
Stephen silences Grindle with an outstretched hand.
leans close, out of earshot of the cameras.

SWAYZAK

You see that funny glow that's
starting to blink in the corner of
your eye, Lt? That's your career
dissipation light -- and it just
went into overtime.

STEPHEN

If anybody's light's gonna blink,
it's yours.

moment
Stephen
face
Swayzak holds his ground. It's a tense, out of control
between them. Ringale turns from his work, watches
with concern. Adcox suddenly inserts himself face-to-
with Swayzak and we see the raw hatred.

AXE

You're in firemanland now, Swayzak.
Do yourself a favor and just walk
away.

Brian
Swayzak holds Adcox's gaze, then turns for his car.

watches Jennifer climb in beside her boss.

BRIAN

This is your city job?

Jennifer shrugs as they pull away.

INT./EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - LATE DAY

driveway.
the
Brian jumps down from the rig as it backs up the
Across the street a middle-aged woman flashes them from
balcony of her apartment.

AXE

That's Franny. She likes firemen.

STEPHEN

Tim, fill out the alarm card.

(to Brian)

Clean the pipe poles, wipe down the
ladders and hang some hose.

Brian
floor
turns
beast,
with
Adcox watches Brian and Tim exchange looks. Tim shrugs.
sighs and pulls out the pike poles, starts across the
before freezing suddenly at a murderous GROWL. Brian
and sees a DOG. Sort of. It has the rib cage of a wild
fangs, long greasy hair. It blocks his way, SNARLING
hate.

GRINDLE

That's The Thing. You can't stay
unless he likes you.

Slobber drools out of its mouth as it GROWLS.

BRIAN

Have you guys got something against
dalmatians?

looks
Brian wipes some of the crusted grime from his face,
back and forth between Franny and The Thing, and sighs.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - BUNKROOM

Sequence omitted from original script.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - LOCKER ROOM

opens
legs
YOU'RE

Brian enters, strips down his battered uniform, and his locker. The mannequin from the fire SPRINGS OUT, spread. A sign taped to its mouth says: "TAKE ME BRIAN, MY SUPERMAN!"

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - WASHROOM

bodies
of

Brian and the others scrub the morning's fire off their in the station shower. Tim keeps filling his mouth full water and launching it upward in a stream.

BRIAN

Do you have to do that?

TIM

(pumped)

Could you believe that fire? Man! First day! There I was, Adcox and me, pullin' that lady right out of the fire's fuckin' throat! I love it here -- No surround and drown for this company. Fighting 17th! Goddamn Stephen's amazing. You see how he took that fire by the balls? I'm gonna be that good some day, you watch.

Brian compares himself to the praise heaped on Stephen.

TIM

Y'know what Stephen said to me, right when all the shit was coming hard? "You never know till the moment the fire stares you down if you're just gonna do this job or be great at it".

BRIAN

Ah man, is he usin' that line now on you? What, you think he made that little gem up? Jesus Christ, I used to have to listen to my old man use that every morning.

Brian shuts off his shower and walks out.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - BUNKROOM

strained
begins
knee.

Stephen sits alone at his bunk, slowly stretching a
and ruined back. He blows out a long, tired breath, and
working ointment into an anciently scarred and battered

memorabilia
there,
his
shirt

On the wall is a small glass case full of station
through the years. There's a two battered fire helmets
set reverently on velvet. Beside it is a photograph of
father. Grinning. Top of the world. He's wearing a T-
proudly stenciled FIGHTING 17th.

Father and son exchange a long, awkward greeting.

not

In the doorway, Brian stands watching his brother, who
even 40, suddenly seems an old and broken man.

towel and
the

The ALARM KLAXON suddenly sounds. Brian, just in a
Tim, in boxers covered with little dinosaurs, dash for
fire pole.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - APPARATUS FLOOR

Tim and Brian slide down and bounce off the floor.

GRINDLE

-- C'mon! C'mon! Go! Go!

their

Brian and Tim rush for their equipment. Grindle grabs
arms.

GRINDLE

No! C'mon! This way!

doorway,

He hustles them across the apparatus floor, through a
and into the kitchen.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - KITCHEN/DINING AREA

Brian and
is
The makings of a meal are laid out on the counter.
Tim come to a screeching halt. The rest of the station
sitting calmly at the kitchen table, watching.

BRIAN

What's going on?

PENGELLY

Dinner, Probies. Get started.

CUT TO:

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - KITCHEN

of
Tim and Brian, still in their boxers, set down plates
food.

STEPHEN

Better be good.

SANTOS

Or we feed you to The Thing.

wall
Everybody digs in. The table is a craze of half a dozen
different conversations. On the TV mounted above on the
are news shots of Seagrave's body sticking out of the
windshield.

silence.
Adcox stands and tinks his glass with a spoon for

AXE

Gentlemen, please... As 17's official
toastmaster --

SANTOS

And bullshitter.

AXE

Thank you, Santos. Did I happen to
mention that you were cut out of my
will?

(company laughs)

I think it appropriate that we
recognize the two asswipes -- I mean

probationary firemen -- among us who today were baptized officially into the world of Old Man Fire. First to Tim, who despite being handicapped at birth with a rather dull expression and a really hideous pair of ears, not only took on the beast but pulled from its clutches -- assisted by a more famous and brilliant firefighter -- me -- a kicking and screaming civilian that will probably end up suing us for breaking her fingernail.

(laughs)

And to Brian, who's own contribution was both more beautiful and less likely to sue.

seated
Thing.
Adcox puts his arm affectionately around the mannequin,
with honor at the head of the table. Right beside The

AXE

Y'know, when I heard that both McCaffrey brothers were going to be assigned together here, well, my heart was filled with... a sudden desire to transfer.

(laughs)

So raise a glass, lads. To funny-looking Tim, and the McCaffrey brothers, who despite years of getting on each other's nerves have managed with great effort... to still be pissed off at each other. Gentlemen!

COMPANY

(together, a toast)

Fuck you!

groan
The klaxon suddenly rings. Two bells. The ladder guys
and get up.

STEPHEN

Bye, boys.

SCHMIDT

(winks)

We'll keep it warm for you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - BUNKROOM

and
at
fully

Dawn lightens the room as Brian slowly opens his eyes
sees in extreme, fish-eyes close-up: THE THING GROWLING
him. Brian turns the other direction and sees Stephen,
dressed, standing over his bunk.

STEPHEN

Clean the toilets.

INT. APPARATUS FLOOR

of
caps
them,

Bleary-eyed, the nine firemen line up raggedly in front
their rigs, dressed like shit but for peaked uniform
they wear only at this moment. Stephen stands before
does a quick glance up and down the line.

STEPHEN

Okay, company dismissed. -- See ya
guys tonight at Fitzgerald's
retirement party.

They shuffle for the door. As Brian passes,

STEPHEN

You want a ride?

EXT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Stephen pulls up. Brian opens the door.

BRIAN

Thanks.

STEPHEN

Brian --
(a beat that hangs
there)
-- See ya tonight.

INT. RESTAURANT - RETIREMENT PARTY - NIGHT

An
City
firemen
RETIREMENT
out a
clearly

That's been cleared out for a huge PARTY in full swing.
Irish folk band cuts loose a merciless bagpipe beat.
brass--including Alderman Swayzak -- a few reporters,
and their families all mix together for this is a
PARTY for the Captain Fitzgerald. Brian enters, seeks
beer at the bar. Stephen's there, swaying with what is
not his first drink of the evening.

STEPHEN

Hey.

BRIAN

Hey.

Chief.
man.

CHEERS as a one joke gift after another is laid on the
Stephen sees his ex-wife, Helen, dancing with another
He turns away.

STEPHEN

I gotta change the view...

Santos and Grindle walk up.

GRINDLE

Heard you didn't make the list for
captain, man. I'm sorry...

Stephen just shrugs.

Refined
and
accepts,
red

Brian sees Jennifer across the room. She looks great.
as she expertly works the room, schmoozing and hugging
calling various politicians by their first name.
As she speaks to one, a waiter offers a drink. As she
a bottle appears over her shoulder and splashes it with
syrup.

BRIAN

(holding bottle,
interrupting)

With grenadine, right?

JENNIFER

When I was twenty.

BRIAN

Oooh, very sophisticated. Having fun?

Annoyed,
at
Her attention broken, the politico has slipped away.
Jennifer leads Brian aside and speaks low, but angrily
him.

JENNIFER

Look, I'm not the same girl who had nothing better to do than wrap her legs around you on a Saturday night. This isn't about fun. I'm working here.

BRIAN

Carrying Swayzak's notebook?

JENNIFER

Let me tell you something. Martin Swayzak is going to be this town's next mayor.

BRIAN

Yeah. Swayzak. Humanity's last hope. How can you work for that guy?

JENNIFER

Why do you think Marty came here tonight? Because he cares about your department. You don't know how hard he works. You don't know about his programs helping West Side --

BRIAN

-- All I know is that his programs are getting firemen hurt.

JENNIFER

Bullshit. Marty's plan is only about efficiency. I've got two cousins on the job, you think I'd work for him if I didn't believe in it?

passes

Jennifer instantly cuts off as a well-dressed COUPLE
and switches stunningly into schmooze-mode.

JENNIFER

(to man)

-- Tom, how nice to see you. I know
Marty'll be very happy you came.
Thanks so much for the donation.

(to woman)

Marie... how's little Kevin? Really?
Seen the polls? This is the year...

just as

They move away. Jennifer turns to Brian and switches
fast back to their argument.

JENNIFER

-- The thing that really makes me
angry is the way your union has --

Brian can't help it. He cracks up.

BRIAN

What was that? Oh man, you have picked
up a few moves since John Paul II
Boulevard.

JENNIFER

Yeah, well I like to think I'm just
a little past hanging out on JP II
watching the Irish pick fights and
Litwalks barf in the planters.

BRIAN

I seem to remember some pretty good
nights on JP II.

Brian turns and walks away.

ACROSS THE ROOM

brought

Adcox is talking with another knot of firemen. He's
a date, SALLY, a hot little number that has a habit of
standing on her tip-toes when she talks.

SALLY

(looking at Swayzak
across room)

Yuck, what a scumbag.

AXE

(to Santos)

Fuckin' city transferred Sally three months ago out of parking violations into Swayzak's office. Now I gotta pay my own goddamn tickets and she's stuck with an asshole.

SANTOS

Pay more?

SALLY

(shrugs)

No, but there's more exercise -- being chased around a desk.

group of There's a commotion at the other end of the bar. A firemen have gathered around a weekly magazine.

GRINDLE

Aw, I don't believe this shit.

SCHMIDT

Somebody get a shovel! You seen this, Stephen?

titled As they hold it up to Stephen we see a photo spread

DARING FIRE RESCUE.

photo The first photo shows Brian rushing out of the burning building with seemingly a woman in his arms. The second shows the backs of Adcox and Tim's helmets as they administered aid to the real woman they saved. The implication is it's the same woman.

BRIAN

What?

TIM

(reads)

"Probationary Fireman Brian McCaffrey, on his very first fire, showed the kind of bravery and courage of a veteran firefighter when he risked life and limb to double-check a burning floor alone, emerging victoriously with Anna Rodriguez, a seamstress for the North Shore

Clothing Company... McCaffrey first gained prominence as the subject of a 1972 Pulitzer Prize winning photograph taken at the scene of his father's death..."

The old photo is there too. Brian and his dad's helmet.

GRINDLE

Whadda we gonna do about this?

Stephen glances over the headlines.

STEPHEN

Y'know, I think it's a union bylaw that if a guy gets in the paper -- especially if it's bullshit -- he owes the company a drink. In fact...

(motions to waiter)

...I'll have a double. On the hero.

them. The other firemen jump in with drink orders. Dozens of

BRIAN

(confused)

What's going on?

Tim shows him the magazine. Brian reads with horror as Alderman Swayzak appears beside him.

SWAYZAK

Brian McCaffrey, right?

JENNIFER

Brian, this is my boss, Alderman Swayzak.

(to Swayzak)

Brian's a big fan of yours.

BRIAN

Yeah. Big fan.

SWAYZAK

And I'm a huge fan of what you did to save that woman, Brian.

BRIAN

Uh, I think there's been a mistake. I didn't save that woman.

SWAYZAK

No need to be modest, Brian.

BRIAN

No, you don't understand, I saved a mannequin.

SWAYZAK

-- That really was incredibly work you did. You and your brother, fighting fires together, helluva image, isn't it? You must feel lucky to be assigned under his command.

BRIAN

Every little boy's fantasy.

SWAYZAK

Brian, let me come to the point. I'd like to offer you a job.

BRIAN

I have a job.

SWAYZAK

This one's still with the fire department. One of our best investigators, Don Rimgale, is working on a very difficult, visible case right now. We think he could use another pair of hands and you're exactly the kind of guy I want representing us: An authentic hero from a traditional firefighting clan.

BRIAN

Yeah, we got all kinds of traditions -- like dying young.

SWAYZAK

Not every job in the fire department comes with a tombstone, Brian. This could be a great opportunity to move... beyond a fire engine.

Brian looks at Jennifer, then smiles at Swayzak.

BRIAN

Thanks anyway, Mr. Swayzak, but fire engines sorta run in my family. Politics don't.

hand.
at the

-- A man suddenly steps between them to pump Swayzak's
Brian shakes his head and walks away. Swayzak shoots a
concerned glance at Jennifer. She catches up with him
buffet table.

JENNIFER

Boy, took you all of thirty seconds
to blow that.

BRIAN

C'mon Jennifer, he's just another
North-Side jag-off with a mouth.

JENNIFER

Brian, do you always have to be so
stupid? Think about your future for
once.

BRIAN

So now you suddenly care about my
future?

JENNIFER

Look, I didn't mean to take a piece
out of you back there, I just thought
you'd call when you came back. You
didn't and...

(beat)

Don't blow it just because of this
garbage between us.

BRIAN

Hey, sorry if I made you look bad in
front of your boss. But I'm not gonna
be a poster boy for him, I'm trying
to do something here. There's five
hundred smoke eaters in this room
that do that stuff for real every
day. Tell Swayzak to talk to one of
them.

Helen
hard.

Across the room, Stephen's at the buffet, watching
dance with her fireman date, the drinks hammering him

PENGELLY

Aw man, how can she dance with that
guy?

SCHMIDT

I hate that guy. He's a dispatcher.
I hate his voice.

STEPHEN

Whatever...

PENGELLY

I mean, I know women have gotta bang
somebody, but why that son of a bitch?

Stephen gives Pengelly an icy, sideways look.

SCHMIDT

Hey Stevie, he's an asshole...

Helen as

Stephen smiles and pushes off the bar -- right for
she dances.

STEPHEN

Uh, Helen, I wanted to talk to you a
second about Sean...

HELEN

Stephen, I'm kinda busy here, can we
talk about this later?

DATE

How ya doin', Stephen?

STEPHEN

Jackson.

dogs

Jackson steers her away but Stephen isn't done yet. He
them.

STEPHEN

(to Helen)

What's wrong with right now? He's
your son for christ's sake. He's --

JACKSON

Hey, Stephen, what about that dumb
ass brother of yours, huh?

STEPHEN

...Yeah?

JACKSON

Savin' a mannequin... How fuckin'

stupid can a guy get?

Stephen suddenly PUNCHES Jackson.

STEPHEN

You can't talk about my brother like that...

HELEN

(sighs)

Here we go...

And Stephen PLOWS into Jackson. Another fireman JUMPS to Jackson's aid. And Brian's there, defending his brother, PUNCHING OUT a fireman. The crowd finally pulls the two apart.

JACKSON

You're crazy, man!

STEPHEN

Leave me alone!

AXE

Goddamn it, Stephen, lay off!

(Stephen calms a little)

You stupid dumbshit, you never know when to fucking quit, do you? You ever wonder why your career's in the fucking toilet? Why you're gonna be stuck a Lt. for life?

STEPHEN

No.

(beat)

I need a drink.

Stephen takes a step for the bar -- then suddenly turns and JUMPS Jackson again. Brian pulls him off and drags him for the door.

BRIAN

You don't need a drink, man. You need to get outta here...

As Jennifer watches Brian lead Stephen out the door.

JENNIFER

(to Swayzak)
Ah those McCaffreys... just hate
leaving a party with anyone left
standing...

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Brian leads Stephen toward his car.

STEPHEN

I'm okay... leave me alone...

Stephen pushes Brian away and promptly stumbles to the sidewalk.

BRIAN

So you got a 'roid going with Jackson
or what?

STEPHEN

Nah, he's nothin'. It's just
sometimes... sometimes you just gotta
punch somebody out, y'know?

Brian stands there and folds his arms.

STEPHEN

I don't think I can get up.

Brian lends an arm.

STEPHEN

Look, Brian, a photographer. Maybe I
can get on the cover of LIFE magazine,
too.

BRIAN

C'mon, let's crawl home.

EXT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - NIGHT

Stephen throws an arm over Brian's shoulder as he leads
him
up onto the boat.

STEPHEN

...Adcox, those guys...they don't
get it... it isn't the goddamn
promotion... or dad... I'm not my
old man, y'know? No fire's gonna get
me... I don't give a shit about being
a captain... it's just... it's just

they don't trust me anymore...
(blows out painful
breath)
...they don't trust me anymore...

INT. STEPHEN'S BOAT

Brian's flops his brother on the bed. Unties his shoes.

STEPHEN

If you'd get out of my fuckin' way.
I could take my own goddamn shoes
off...

He clearly can't. Brian slips them off.

STEPHEN

You're such a pain in the ass...
You've always been a pain in the
ass...

There's just a grim wall lamp above Stephen's face.

STEPHEN

Jesus, it's too damn bright in here...
Like a goddamn spotlight... I'm goin'
blind...

BRIAN

(touching light)
This?

STEPHEN

Yeah... too bright...

Brian turns off the dim light. Stephen's breathing
deepens.

STEPHEN

They don't know... they don't know
what I hear in there...

Brian tucks the blanket around him.

STEPHEN

...This boat could be okay, huh?...
Take it out weekends... Sean 'n me...

Stephen's voice drifts off into sleep. Brian watches a
moment,
leaves.
the rare look of peace on his brother's face, then

EXT. FIRE ACADEMY - NIGHT

the
Dark and still. Brian, carrying a roll of hose, scales
chain link.

EXT. FIRE ACADEMY - EXERCISE GROUND - NIGHT

then
hydrant
again,
Is a practice stand-pipe. Brian counts down to himself,
rushes the stand-pipe, spinning off the cap with a
wrench and attaching the hose coupling. He does it
over and over.

EXT. FIRE ACADEMY - DAWN

the
street,
The sky's gone pink and blue as Brian climbs back over
fence. Adcox, coming out of a donut shop across the
sees him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - CHICKEN ACCIDENT - DAY

its
scurrying
It's
ghetto
the
A truck has JACKKNIFED across the avenue and SPILLED
contents -- several THOUSAND baby chicks. They're
everywhere as Brian's company tries to round them up.
hopeless as the exhausted firemen stuff handfuls of the
cheeping cargo into their turn-out coats. There's
kids all around, grabbing at the chicks, grabbing at
fire engine.

STEPHEN

(at kids)

Hey! Knock it off!

Brian stops a beat. Rubs his eyes.

AXE

(smiles)

Maybe you should have gotten more

sleep last night.

means?
He Brian looks at him. Does he mean what he thinks he
Tim is coming out of a small store across the street.
hands a small bag of groceries to Adcox.

TIM

This everything you wanted?

Everyone grows suddenly silent.

EXT. WIDOW'S HOUSE - DAY

mailbox,
cleaning
playing
A fireman's without even saying so, "Petzold" on the
Engine 17 parked out front. Brian's alone outside,
the diesel fuel off his arms. Watching a small kid
with a toy fire truck in the drive.

INT. WIDOW'S HOUSE

fridge.
Adcox
with a
Tim and Brian are loading the groceries into the
Stephen and Grindle are fixing a loose cabinet door as
sits caulking a faucet fitting at the kitchen table
young WOMAN.

WOMAN

(to Stephen)

Can I help you guys at all?

STEPHEN

Nah, we just about got it.

WOMAN

(noticing Adcox's
shirt)

Sally must be finally ironing your
shirts.

AXE

It's just new. Couple'a shifts and
it'll be as thrashed as the rest.

cloud.
The sight of uniform is too much for her. Her eyes

WOMAN

I'm sorry...

Adcox reaches out and lets her weep on his shoulder.

AXE

It's okay...

WOMAN

I miss him... I just miss him,
y'know?...

EXT. WIDOW'S HOUSE - DAY

Adcox stands out at the fire engine smoking a
cigarette,
toy
lost in himself, watching the little boy play with his
fire truck. Stephen's followed him out.

AXE

This job... This fuckin' job
sometimes... To buy it trying to go
the extra yard, man, that's one thing,
but to buy it just because there
wasn't any back-up... it's bullshit...

Stephen leans down close.

STEPHEN

Yeah, it's bullshit. So what? Fuck
Swayzak. Fuck 'em all. We don't go
into fires for them. You know that.
Christ, you taught me that.

A beat of understanding between them. Stephen looks
back at
the house.

STEPHEN

You know Knowlton pretty well?

AXE

Yeah...

STEPHEN

(beat)
Kind of an asshole, wasn't he?

Adcox can't help but smile.

AXE

Biggest in two battalions.

STEPHEN

(beat, smiles)

We're gonna be okay, man...

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - DAY

of the
As Brian and Tim scrub down the fire engine, the rest
company lies sprawled in

THE STATION REC ROOM

snared
Watching a weepy soap. Schmidt walks through and is
by the TV's glow. He hesitates. Shares the moment.

SCHMIDT

Is she going to get the divorce?

SANTOS

(sighs with honest
concern)

Hell if I know, man.

A ladderman, WASHINGTON, walks in with a memo.

WASHINGTON

Hey, Pengelly, you made the captain's
list!

"All
apparatus
Everybody clasps Pengelly on the shoulder. "Way to go".
right, man". Brian turns and sees Stephen out on the
floor, watching. Watches. Pengelly's younger than him.

**EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - TRAINING BUILDING/HOSE TOWER -
DAY**

Built
training
each
ready
An expanse of concrete lying out back of the station.
in one corner is the concrete shell of a five story
building, just wide enough for a stairway and room on
level. Twenty yards away, Brian, Tim and Adcox stand
beside a pile of coiled hose rolls.

STEPHEN

(looking at watch)

Alright... Go!

his
building.
drags
Tim picks up a roll of hose, 50 pounds, throws it over
shoulder and runs with Adcox to the foot of the
There's a fixed standpipe that Adcox ties into as Tim
the other end inside and up a flight of stairs.

STEPHEN

Go!

for the
building.
Brian lifts another hose roll under his arm and runs

STEPHEN

That isn't a football, probie. Get
it on your shoulder.

end.
another
Tim heads down for another roll as Brian drags his up
two flights. It's a bitch.

coming
up with another roll.
Sweating, he barrels back down the stairs, passing Tim

BRIAN

Having fun, fireman?

roll.
Tim flips him off. Brian laughs and sprints for another

STEPHEN

You're not breaking any records,
Brian.

grabs a
alongside.
Brian holds it under his arm and takes off. Stephen
roll himself, hoists it to his shoulder and runs

STEPHEN

Your shoulder. Like this!

Brian lifts it to his shoulder.

STEPHEN

Come on! Pick it up!

follows
word
they go
pounds. A
throats
and
on his

They come to the doorway. Instead of stopping, Stephen Brian in and runs alongside up the stairs. Without a spoken it's become a race between them. Brian's face explodes in sweat. His heart pounds as up flight after flight. The hose rolls weigh a 100 thousand. Neck 'n neck all the way; grunting, their burning, only one flight from the roof Stephen STUMBLES SCRAPES his leg. Brian pauses. Stephen's already back feet.

STEPHEN

Run, damn you!

ready
roof,
roll,
Brian

Brian does, Stephen already gaining on him -- getting to pass him -- when they burst gasping out onto the Brian the "winner" by a nose. Stephen drops his hose sticks his face into Brian's, -- And laughs. Unsure, starts to join in. Stephen stops suddenly.

STEPHEN

Roll the hose.

BRIAN

What, are you kidding? By myself?

back

Adcox and Tim, down below, have already disappeared into the station.

STEPHEN

You heard me.

scraped
blood.

We see now what Stephen apparently doesn't. He was badly, his pant leg torn and leaking dark circles of

BRIAN

What, is it the stairs? Christ, I'll let you win next time.

STEPHEN

(in Brian's face)

You got a problem with drilling, probie?

BRIAN

No, Lt., I don't have a problem with drilling. But let's just have one drill. Not one for the company and one for me.

STEPHEN

Roll the hose.

Stephen turns and walks away. Brian stands there watching him in blind fury, finally exploding.

BRIAN

Goddamn you Stephen, I'm not gonna quit. You hear me!

An awkward beat between them that's interrupted suddenly by the station alarm klaxon. Stephen smiles.

STEPHEN

Well, thank God for fires...

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - HOSE TOWER - BELOW - DAY

Sequence omitted from original script.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE SHORE MANSION - NIGHT

Sequence omitted from original script.

EXT. LAKE SHORE MANSION - NIGHT

Sequence omitted from original script.

INT. LAKE SHORE MANSION - FRONT DOOR

Sequence omitted from original script.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - DAY

Smoke and confusion. A MOTHER is screaming hysterically
at
Stephen as he jumps down from the engine.

MOTHER

(grabbing his coat)
My baby! My baby's still up there!

BATTALION CHIEF

Hang on a sec, Stevie, we got a
hoseline coming.

Brian
Stephen doesn't even pause and enters the building.
hesitates a beat, then follows.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING - DAY

LASHES
feet
Where they bomb up a staircase just as a WALL OF FIRE
DOWN, KNOCKING them on their ass. Stephen jumps to his
with an axe as Brian struggles to get up.

STEPHEN

Don't take that kind of shit from
it! Don't let it know you're scared!
Come on!

fire,
Stephen, with just his axe, CHASES up the stairs at the
HAMMERING at the flaming boards. The fire retreats into
another room, SLAMMING the door shut behind it.

on
axe
and
side.
Brian struggles up the stairs. The two of them slide up
either side of the closed door, Stephen cradling his
like a SWAT team shotgun. The door breathes in and out
something animal scratches and snarls on the other

thing
Brian can feel the panic rising in his throat. That

out.
behind the door, that slobbering, evil thing. It wants
It wants... him.

STEPHEN

Ready?

BRIAN

Christ, Stephen, let's wait for the
hose team...

STEPHEN

Listen to it, Brian... Jump when I
say... It won't get us.

door
Stephen **HAMMERS** the lock with his axe and **KICKS** the
open. A **WALL OF FLAME ROARS** out past their cheeks, then
BACKWASHES in.

STEPHEN

Now!

CHARGES
WELLS
flame
DROPPING
Stephen picks up the door, and using it as a shield
into the flames. Brian tries to follow but the fire
UP, cutting him off. He hesitates. It's that goddamn
again, leering at him. Daring him. It **BUCKS** suddenly,
Brian to his knee. He **GROANS** in pain.

with a
bellow
there.
-- And now Adcox and Grindle are coming up the stairs
hoseline **WASHING DOWN** the room. Clouds of furious steam
out and across the ceiling. Nobody could be alive in

emerges
a
Except Stephen. His entire outfit smoldering, he
from the clouds like a fucking god, carrying in one arm
gasping child.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - AFTERMATH - DAY

fire
engine
Most of the firemen have gathered together for post-
coffee and stories. Brian sits off alone on the fire

bumper, apart from them. Santos walks up.

SANTOS

They think she's gonna live...

Stephen walks up. Sits down beside him.

STEPHEN

You okay?

BRIAN

I waited... I would have fucking waited...

STEPHEN

That's not what it's about, Brian. The point is there was a kid in there. And what if there'd been two? I went in because that's what I do. It's my way. It's dad's way. It isn't everybody's way.

BRIAN

Dad's way? Where did he tell you that? In a fucking seance?

STEPHEN

You said you wanted to know something, Brian. What did you learn today?

(Brian doesn't answer)

What do you say, Brian, huh? Time to move on?

Brian lingers only a moment before standing.

BRIAN

You're right, Stephen... You win... You're the best, man...

Brian hands Stephen his helmet and walks away.

INT. SWAYZAK'S OFFICE - DAY

There's only six like it in city hall, and this one has
a
view.

SECRETARY'S VOICE

(on intercom)

Brian McCaffrey on line two for Jennifer.

JENNIFER

I'll take it in my office.

SWAYZAK

(turns to her and
smiles)

Go get him.

INT. CORRIDOR/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

to her
Jennifer comes out of Swayzak's office and walks down
own.

INT. JENNIFER'S OFFICE/INT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

-- It's a tiny, bleak little rat hole. She picks up the
receiver...

JENNIFER

Brian?

We see Brian in his apartment.

BRIAN

I've been thinking about what you
said the other night... If the offer's
still on the table, I'd like to talk
about it.

JENNIFER

(beat)

...Okay. I'll arrange things with
your assignment captain.

(beat)

Marty's a good man, Brian.

BRIAN

Yeah...

Brian hangs up. He stares at it a moment, then SLAMS it
against the wall.

Jennifer stares at the phone with something almost like
sadness.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

fried
the
blown-out

Stephen drives past the burned-out brownstone that
Alan Seagrave. He parks in the alley behind, walks up
building, and PULLS OFF a plywood sheet covering a
window.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Back
night.
something...

Stephen walks through the creepy, brutalized silence.
to where Rimgale had focused his investigation that
He searches the floor, the wall, looking for

EXT. ARSON HQ/FIREHOUSE - DAY

on
himself.

A crumbling one in Chinatown. Brian checks the address
his slip of paper. He stands there a beat, hating

INT. FIRE STATION/ARSON HQ

the
Standing

It's a regular station but for the rear that has been
converted into arson squad offices. As Brian approaches
office door he can see Rimgale sitting at his desk.
nervously beside it is a fresh-faced, uniformed PROBIE.

SHADOW

(to probie)
...So stop me if I get this wrong...
The fire's almost out... You're
upstairs on the unburned floor
checking for heat. You've been told
by your Battalion Chief, your Captain,
by me, not to do anything up there
until ordered. But now the itch
starts, and all of a sudden comes
the Glory Boy Flash: Hey, I'm a hero.
Heroes don't just stand around. So
on your own you decided to punch out
a window for ventilation. Was that
before or after you noticed you were
standing in a lake of gasoline?

The kid is dying a thousand deaths of humiliation.

SHADOW

You could've crispered half your company with that little stunt, but more importantly you wrecked the physical evidence I use to prove it's arson. You've made my day longer, Probie. Go home and think about that.

falls on The kid shuffles off hang-dog. Rimgale's angry gaze
Brian.

BRIAN

Uh, I'm Brian McCaffrey. Your new assistant.

SHADOW

Your Dennis' kid.
(beat)
I work alone.

marooned in And Rimgale walks into his office, leaving Brian
stands the doorway. Stepping behind a small partition, Rimgale
stomach. changes his shirt. Brian can just glimpse from where he
a horrible burn that has consumed most of Rimgale's
Rimgale catches the look.

SHADOW

Are you still here?

BRIAN

Get used to me, Inspector. I'm not going anywhere.

SHADOW

Then go find a corner. I don't want you in my way.

BRIAN

I think we should get something straight here. I was assigned to this office by the city.

SHADOW

Look, I knew your father, he had a helluva reputation on this job. But that don't mean you get any slack. Swayzak sends you down here, okay, I gotta eat you, that's the rules and

I got nothing to say about that. But
Swayzak or no, you live with me.
Step out of line, and I don't care
who knows you, I'll swing the hammer.

(beat)

You think you're the first?

picks up

Rimgale glances at his watch, puts on his coat, and
a small paper bag.

BRIAN

Where are you going?

SHADOW

Pest control.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX SECURITY PRISON - DAY

bandaged

chair --

uniformed

And the face of RONALD, an unremarkable man in his 40s.
Unremarkable but for laser eyes and two heavily

hands. Go wide and find him sitting in an institutional

handcuffed, actually -- in an institutional hall. A

guard stands nearby as Brian and Rimgale come down the
corridor. Ronald smiles upon seeing Rimgale.

RONALD

Shadow.

SHADOW

How ya doin', Ronald. Staying
comfortable?

RONALD

Didn't think you'd make it.

SHADOW

Wouldn't miss this for the world,
pal.

RONALD

(looking at Brian)

Who's this?

SHADOW

He works for me.

RONALD

Is he a fireman?
(smiles)
I like firemen.

SHADOW

You like everybody, Ronald.

Ronald's eyes pick up Brian's name on his prison ID badge.

RONALD

Brian McCaffrey...
(eyes light up happily)
Oh this is really a treat. Brian McCaffrey. Lost a dad to the animal, huh?

BRIAN

(heating up)
Hey, do I know you?

SHADOW

You don't know him.

RONALD

I know you.

BRIAN

(to Ronald)
What the hell are you talking about my --

Rimgale silences Brian with a threatening hand.

SHADOW

Knock it off. Now.

RONALD

Tell him about me, Shadow?

SHADOW

Ronald here likes telephones. Used to tape wooden matches to the bell striker and wrap it in cotton. Came up with a whole little thing there, didn't you Ronald? When you got bored, what did you do? You just started making calls... mostly day care centers and retirement homes, wasn't it?

RONALD

Did he tell you how we finally met?

SHADOW

Nobody cares, Ronald.

RONALD

Oh, but it's a good story, Shadow.
You're depriving our famous young
friend here...

VOICE IN CORRIDOR

Okay... Ronald Bowland...

marching
The cop helps Ronald to his feet and all four are
down the hall.

RONALD

It was on State Street, right?...
Just your basic warehouse torch for
the owner. Cakewalk. But the animal...
turned on me... 'Ol Shadow here, he
shows up -- whole place is going
like hell -- my hair, my hands...
could've just let the animal take me --
but Shadow, he's a good camper, so
he tries to pull 'ol Ronald out.
Guess he didn't notice the tub of
phosphorous next to me...

(smiles)

Notice you're still a little shy
about rolling your sleeves up, Shadow.
Show him your stomach yet?

INT. PRISON - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

and
Ronald in the hot seat before a parole board, Rimgale
Brian on the sidelines.

MAN

...All right, the parole board has
received Mr. Bowland's fitness report,
his ID-44, endorsement from his
section warden... Dr. Norris?

WOMAN PSYCHIATRIST

As supervising psychiatrist I would
describe Mr. Bowland's progress as
remarkable. Taking into account his

disability and the six years already served, I recommend parole.

MAN

Mr. Bowland, do you regret your crimes?

RONALD

Yes. I understand now the pain I caused.

MAN

If released, will you commit these crimes again?

RONALD

I won't.

MAN

Do you consider yourself ready for society?

RONALD

Yes.

deal. The parole board shuffles their papers. It's a done deal.
Rimgale suddenly stands and approaches Ronald.

SHADOW

Sure Ronald? You're ready alright.

RONALD

Absolutely.

MAN

(surprised)

Excuse me, Mr. Rimgale.

SHADOW

Excuse me.

(to Ronald)

What do you do with little girls?

back. A tortured look comes over Ronald's face. He's holding
baby From the paper bag, Rimgale suddenly tosses a burned
doll in his lap.

SHADOW

What do you do with them, Ronald?

Huh?

Rimgale then lights a cigarette lighter in Ronald's face.

RONALD

(smiles)

-- Burn them.

SHADOW

And old ladies?

RONALD

-- Burn them.

SHADOW

And the world -- the whole world.

RONALD

(smiles)

-- Burn it all.

The parole board stares, stunned. Rimgale stands.

SHADOW

See ya next year, Ronald. Gotta go.

EXT. THEATRE BUILDING - DAY

--
out of
A pre-war theatre closed with a sign: UNDER RENOVATION
OPENING XMAS 1991. DAVID BENTON, mid-forties, climbs
his car and walks to the entrance with some rolled-up
blueprints.

INT. THEATRE BUILDING - DAY

beautiful
to
tiny
as if
It'd
Benton walks through the vast theatre and up to a
Art Nouveau office door: DAVID BENTON, PRIVATE. He goes
insert his key. Drops it. As he reaches down, we see a
wisp of smoke SUCK back under the door. Benton sniffs,
he smells something, then shrugs and inserts his key.
have been a good story if he'd lived longer.

in a
The moment he pushes the door open It EXPLODES OUTWARD

ROARING FIREBALL.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEATRE BUILDING - SUNDOWN

the
Later and engine companies have already knocked down
building fire as Brian climbs out of Rimgale's red
sedan.

SHADOW

(opens trunk)
Hey kid, c'mere -- At least make
yourself useful.

Loaded
He starts handing Brian handfuls of equipment cases.
down, Brian follows Rimgale into the building.

INT. THEATRE BUILDING

the
them, his
LT.
Fire crews are at work in here, including Engine 17 at
other end of the theatre. Brian's surprised to see
eyes locking briefly with Stephen's. An ENGINE COMPANY
walks up to Rimgale.

ENGINE LT

We were lucky with this one. Could've
taken out the whole complex, but the
explosion blew out most of the flame.
Good for us.

(looks to body)
-- Not so good for him.

hands
Rimgale
"Him" is our previous owner, David Benton, just his
and a leg showing from under the collapsed door.
crouches beside it.

SHADOW

Turn this over.

So's
door.
Brian does. The corpse's keys are still in the lock.
Benton. Blown with such force he seems fused with the

melted,
seals

On the door's edge Rimgale notices a small patch of sticky goo. With his penknife he scrapes a sample and it in a glass vial, stands, and walks into the office.

INT. THEATRE OFFICE

BRIAN

What do you want me to do with --

Rimgale, now inside, silences him with an outstretched arm.

SHADOW

-- Shhh.

BRIAN

(after a beat)

What are you listening to?

Rimgale doesn't answer. His eyes drift over the scorched walls as he speaks softly to them.

SHADOW

You sneaky little son of a bitch...
Hide and seek... Come on, tell me
what I want to know...

He scratches at some soot. Smiles and lifts a small hand recorder.

SHADOW

(business-like into
recorder)

Heavy smoke stains observed in entry
room. Demarkation line high. Fire
never got hot enough here to cook
soot off. It started somewhere else...

(walks down hall)

Less soot here. More heat.

(they enter back room)

And very little soot here.

(to Brian)

Get that couch out of the way.

Brian pulls it aside. The lower third of the wall is completely untouched by soot.

SHADOW

(to himself)
So you were happy here. Warm and
cozy and in no hurry...
(into recorder)
Soot high, clean unburned wall low,
indicates slow burn in thermal
balance.
(to Brian)
Find me some glass.

BRIAN

Glass?

SHADOW

Do we have a language barrier here?
Glass.

a There's some on the sill of a blown window. Brian hands
shard to Rimgale, who turns it over in his palm.

SHADOW

(into recorder)
Glass found in ignition room is in
small, thin pieces, indicating
explosion. Lack of discoloration
indicates a long, slow burn. Explosion
must of come after a slow burn.
(shuts recorder off)
You little tease... What were you up
to you little bastard, huh? What
made you that mad?
(then, an idea)
Or scared.
(switches on recorder)
It started in this room. Took its
time, hung out... but the air ran
out. It couldn't breathe. So it was
snuffed. But it wasn't dead... still
all that trapped heat, lying low,
waiting for some sucker to open the
door and give it that one gulp of
air...

BRIAN

-- Another backdraft.

is Rimgale turns to the wall, a section where the plaster
severely damaged. He probes with a penknife.

SHADOW

Finish coat burned away... Severe
spawling of rough coat...

melted
Ringale follows the damaged wall down -- down -- to a
wall socket.

SHADOW

That's our ignition point. Dig it
out. Carefully.

down,
The
Brian chops it out from the wall. Ringale crouches
peels back the melted faceplate and examines the wires.
The
copper tip is severely melted. Ringale sniffs the plug.

SHADOW

(into recorder)

Temperature in this room was about
2000 degrees, but copper wire in
outlet is melted, which requires
5000 degrees. An accidental short in
the plug could of created a spark of
7000 degrees, hot enough to melt the
wire and start a fire.

BRIAN

No it couldn't.

Ringale shuts off the recorder. Stares down Brian.

BRIAN

I mean you'd be right -- with normal
wire. But that's gauge ten in that
plug -- industrial stuff. Who knows
why they put it in here -- but it
won't melt at less than 12,000
degrees. And no natural spark short
of lightning gets that hot.

(Ringale just stares)

In another life I was in high-end
electronics.

Ringale opens a plastic bag and puts the plug inside.

SHADOW

(into recorder)

Have outlet analyzed for any traces
of flammable accelerants.

Ringale stands and walks out.

BRIAN

Don't mention it.

INT. THEATRE BUILDING - NIGHT

vast
his
way
Brian follows Rimgale down from the office into the
theatre. Walls hiss and spit. Brian's surprised to see
former engine mates there, tromping and crunching their
through broken glass, their flashlights like dancing
fireflies. Tim passes by.

BRIAN

Hey, Tim.

chills.
Everybody turns at the voice and the air suddenly

TIM

(distant)

Brian.

SHADOW

(to Brian)

Check the wall for burn patterns.

looks at
And Rimgale's off to another room. Brian turns and
the wall. It's endless.

BRIAN

(to Tim)

So, you surviving without me?

TIM

There's no replacement 'cause of
your boss' cuts, if that's what you
mean. If someone else goes out on an
injury we're really screwed.

BRIAN

Swayzak's not my boss.

separates
Silence. Brian looks over the wall. A dirty puddle
him from it.

GRINDLE

(to Brian)

Ooooh, like the tie. Love the tie.

BRIAN

Grindle, scrape down that wall for me, huh? I would myself, but the tie 'n all, y'know...

Grindle stares at him a beat, then wordlessly steps into the muck and pulls free a section of wall, dropping it on the ground in front of Brian. Santos and Grindle look at each other.

SANTOS

Uh, Brian, if you're lookin' for smoke patterns, there's some good ones over here.

BRIAN

Yeah? Where?

GRINDLE

(as Brian walks over)

Little to the right... further... further... Right behind there. Hey, could you hand me that pike pole?

There's a pike pole leaning against the wall. Brian pulls it aside. SPLASH -- The pole had been supporting a small, sagging piece of ceiling that instantly collapses, dumping twenty gallons of murky, putrid black water all over Brian's civvys. Nobody laughs.

GRINDLE

Sorry, maybe that wasn't it after all.

Stephen appears around the corner. Sees what's happened.

STEPHEN

That's just about enough, guys, okay?

SCHMIDT

See ya around, Brian.

They leave. Brian stands there, humiliated.

AXE

(to Brian)

What the hell's the matter with you, huh? You're steppin' in the shit again. You could've done it. You don't want this.

(the suit 'n tie)

Wake up, kid.

Stephen

Brian burns with shame and anger as Adcox walks away.

hands Brian a towel.

STEPHEN

Here. Dry yourself off.

Brian snatches it from him. Glares at his brother.

STEPHEN

Look, you are sorta making yourself fair game.

BRIAN

Thanks for the insight.

STEPHEN

Brian, look --

BRIAN

Just leave me alone, okay?

Brian walks away. Stephen calls after him.

STEPHEN

Hey, Bri... Rimgale's okay. I don't get half the shit he's talking about, but then everybody says the same thing about me. Who the hell knows?

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY

when she
roof.

Helen, Stephen's ex-wife, is sitting at her kitchen
looks up suddenly at a strange sound coming from the

EXT. HELEN'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

shingle

On the short, sloping roof, Stephen stands hammering a

back into place. Helen sticks her head out the dormer window.

HELEN

Stephen, what are you doing here?

STEPHEN

Fixing my roof.

HELEN

It's not your roof anymore.

He stops and tosses the hammer aside. Looks at his watch.

STEPHEN

Where's Sean?

HELEN

He's got piano lessons.

STEPHEN

Oh yeah? How's he doing?

HELEN

He's going to be a fireman.

STEPHEN

Give up, babe. You can't fight it. Believe me, my mom tried...

HELEN

(beat)

Stephen, you gotta stop just showing up on the roof like this.

STEPHEN

I just wanted to, I don't know, not exactly apologize for the other night -- especially since I don't remember much of it --

HELEN

-- You remember.

STEPHEN

Yeah... I just thought I should say, I don't know, something.

HELEN

The great communicator.

STEPHEN

Sorry I hit Jackson.

HELEN

He deserved it. He was born deserving it.

STEPHEN

He treats you okay?

HELEN

Okay.

STEPHEN

I treated you better.

HELEN

You treated me like shit.

But she smiles.

HELEN

You want some coffee?

STEPHEN

Coffee? Nah, I gotta go.

HELEN

What's wrong, Stephen?

(looks at her)

C'mon, you only beat up the roof when something's on your mind.

(beat)

How's Brian doing?

STEPHEN

He's out.

HELEN

I know he's out, but how's he doing?

STEPHEN

Y'know, I treated him better than any other probie I ever had. He probably hates my guts, but I did the best thing for him. I made him finally look in the mirror.

HELEN

Ah Stephen, that's what this is really about, isn't it? You always have to be right.

STEPHEN

Hey, I'm the first one to admit when I'm wrong.

HELEN

Yeah? When was the last time?

STEPHEN

In a fire? Never.

(beat)

Look, I'm his brother. I care about him, y'know? He was going to get himself killed. Maybe not today, maybe not in a year, but it would've happened. And I couldn't -- I just couldn't...

HELEN

You can't keep being his father...

Stephen sighs deeply.

STEPHEN

You know what I realized today? I can't remember my dad's face anymore. There's pictures of him staring at me everywhere I go, but the guy behind them... he's gone...

He sighs and hops down from the roof to the driveway.

STEPHEN

I'll see ya around, Helen.

She watches him as he walks lonely up the street.

INT. CITY MORGUE - DAY

autopsy
covered

A Lab Tech, RICCO, leads Brian and Rimgale through the area till they come on two corpses lying side by side in plastic.

RICCO

Okay, Alan Seagrave and Donald Cosgrove...

he's

If you say so. Brian's stomach does a half-gainer as confronted by two hideously charred bodies.

RICCO

...Both deaths due to close encounters with stationary objects; office door for Mr. Cosgrove, '89 Porsche for Mr. Seagrave. No non-relevant traumas. No significant blood toxicology. Attitude of both trajectories consistent with explosions.

quietly to Brian is discreetly avoiding his gaze, whistling himself as he looks over specimen jars on a shelf.

RICCO

They ran the residue you scraped from both crispers' front doors. It's a combination of plumber's putty and rayophene gum. Burns almost completely away when you light it.

SHADOW

Putty? On both doors?

RICCO

There's something else kinda interesting...

see Ricco lifts Benton's charred shoulder. Underneath we with his some of his clothes that have melted and co-mingled flesh.

RICCO

See this?

about A credit card has been fried right into Cosgrove's skin where his back pocket should have been.

RICCO

Guess he didn't leave home without it.

instantly Ricco erupts in a honking laugh, then switches back to a business tone.

RICCO

Anyway, down here, take a look...

SHADOW

McCaffrey, hold this for us.

BRIAN

Uh, I don't think that's in my contract...

SHADOW

I just re-wrote your contract.
C'mere...

and With supreme reluctance Brian pulls the crisper's head
shoulder away from the table.

RICCO

Jesus Christ, he isn't gonna try to
sell you insurance, lift him.

Brian gathers the torso up and hoists him higher.

RICCO

(to Rimgale)

See that patch of shirt? We wondered
about the discoloration so he ran a
spectro. On a lucky shot we picked
up some traces of Trychticholorate.
Nobody around here had ever heard of
it.

SHADOW

Trychticholorate? Alright, it's an
absorption catalyst in toxic waste
accidents. It's pretty rare, they
stopped making it a couple'a years
ago.

RICCO

Probably got in Cosgrove's clothes
in a gas state from the fire.

SHADOW

What the hell was it doing in the
fire?

RICCO

That's your job.

SIGHS.
At that instant, Cosgrove's eyes OPEN and his body
Brian DROPS the body in shock and backs away, stunned.

SHADOW

I asked you to hold him, not feel
him up...

INT. RINGALE'S CAR - DAY

guts
his
Rimgale's FD sedan. Brian is still wringing imaginary
off his hands. Rimgale tosses an open fire chem book in
lap.

SHADOW

Read.

BRIAN

"Trychtichlorate is a binary
structured --"

SHADOW

-- Go to the bottom. Under heat
properties.

BRIAN

"During heat episodes of 2000 Kelvin
or higher, Trych breaks down and
dissipates. Will consume magnesium".

SHADOW

Ever burned magnesium? It's so hot
it takes water molecules and BMMM!

him.
Rimgale CLAPS his hands next to Brian's head, STARTLING

SHADOW

Son of a bitch tears 'em apart just
to eat the oxygen. Wouldn't take
much at all to melt ten gauge wire.
Problem's burnt magnesium leaves a
powder trace -- unless you could
find something that would eat its
residue.

BRIAN

Trychticholorate. Then Swayzak can
announce Seagrave was a murder.

Rimgale looks at Brian. He's getting tired of this.

SHADOW

Look, it isn't proof, okay? Someone

may have put the chemical in the outlet, but we found it as a vapor in Cosgrove's clothes.

BRIAN

And the putty around the door?

SHADOW

Even if it was used to seal the air off, that doesn't explain why someone would go to the trouble of a backdraft. A gun's a helluva lot easier

BRIAN

But the right guess on this is arson.

SHADOW

I don't guess.

BRIAN

Some people say you don't do much of anything when it comes to this case.

SHADOW

I don't work for them, either.

INT. ARSON HQ - DAY

paper
Brian's sitting at a desk. He's finishing up a huge clip Tyrannosaurus. The phone RINGS.

BRIAN

Arson.

JENNIFER

Straightest answer your department's given me all week.

signing
she
We see Jennifer's calling from her office, she's busy papers brought to her and okaying campaign posters as talks.

BRIAN

Hey.

JENNIFER

How's it going?

BRIAN

Boss and I are up to about three words an hour.

JENNIFER

(to secretary)

Green committed to a thousand.

(to Brian)

There's another fund-raising party tonight. Marty'd really like you to come.

BRIAN

I don't know, I'm kinda swamped here.

He tosses a paper airplane.

JENNIFER

I could use a date.

BRIAN

Yeah? Well, maybe I can fit it in...

RINGALE'S VOICE

McCaffrey! Come here!

BRIAN

(into phone)

Call ya back.

Brian hangs up quickly and walks back into

INT. ARSON HQ - ANOTHER ROOM - DAY

that's
the
Rimgale's there, crouched excitedly beside a trash can lid's been sealed closed. He tamps a piece of putty on rim and backs away.

SHADOW

Take the top off. Go ahead. Take it off.

tongue
out.
Brian walks over and RIPS OFF the lid. -- Instantly a of flame SHOOTs straight up past his head and BLOWS

BRIAN

Jesus!

Rimgale's grinning like a little kid.

SHADOW

That's it! Oh, that son of a bitch, he's different, goddamn it! You see what this tells us, huh? Our killer doesn't love fire!

BRIAN

What?

SHADOW

(pulls out file)

I got it after we talked to Ronald. Torches. Want to fry the whole goddamn world. But the fires that killed those guys never really burned up much. -- The burns were all lit in outlets surrounded by double firebreaks in the walls. And he made his burns backdrafts.

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BRIAN

But he killed these guys.

SHADOW

But he could have killed everybody there. The firebreaks kept it from spreading in the wall. The backdraft blew out the flame. That's it. That's the reason.

BRIAN

What reason?

SHADOW

Why backdrafts. Whoever fried Seagrave and Cosgrove went to a helluva lot of trouble to make sure they died by fire, but also made sure the fire blew itself out.

BRIAN

That's why the sealant on the doors... So what have we got, a torch with a conscience?

SHADOW

No, we have a stone killer trying to make a point.

BRIAN

Are you going public with this?

SHADOW

No. Do that and I guarantee you'll scare him off. I don't want him running away.

EXT. PARTY BOAT - NIGHT

against
suddenly
boat.
A Latin band cuts loose as beautiful people mill about a beautiful Chicago skyline. An AIR HORN blows, and the skyline is MOVING. We're on a huge, private party boat.

EXT. PARTY BOAT - NIGHT

passing
champagne
Swayzak.
walks
over.
Brian's leaning on the boat railing watching the parade of rich and beautiful. Across the sea of and brie, he spots Jennifer talking with her boss, He has his hand on her back. Jennifer spots Brian. She smile, detaches herself and

JENNIFER

Hi.

BRIAN

(eyes on Swayzak)
Hey...
(beat)
So are you dating your boss or what?

JENNIFER

If you weren't at least the 300th person to ask me that, I'd probably be pissed.
(beat, sighs)
Boy, you sure know it's a man's world sometimes...

BRIAN

Sorry.
(beat)
Are you dating anyone?

JENNIFER

You think that's really any of your business?

BRIAN

Well, you did invite me here.

JENNIFER

Marty did.

(beat, smiles)

But I wanted you to come to.

Swayzak suddenly appears with his entourage.

SWAYZAK

Mr. McCaffrey...

BRIAN

Nice boat.

SWAYZAK

It isn't mine.

(to photographer)

Let's get a picture.

Brian's
sticker

Swayzak swings around and puts his arm cheesily around shoulder. Another staffer slaps a SWAYZAK FOR MAYOR to Brian's lapel. Jennifer rolls her eyes to Brian. I'm sorry... Snap.

SWAYZAK

(seeing someone else)

Larry!

(sotto to Jennifer)

What does he do again?

turns to
hear

Swayzak leads her off in pursuit. Left alone, Brian the railing, stares off at the passing city. You can hear the wind-up of a siren.

Wacker
watches

And there it is now, an engine company zooming along Drive. Something digs and kicks inside of Brian as he it disappear.

JENNIFER

How's the job going?

She's appeared again beside him.

BRIAN

Okay.

JENNIFER

Boy, Ringale's as slow as a snail,
isn't he?

BRIAN

No, he's more of a dinosaur. Guy's
not a dummy, though. He's juggling
alot of balls on this one.

JENNIFER

Yeah, but it doesn't take Albert
Einstein just to figure out if these
guys were killed by accidents or
not.

BRIAN

Jesus, give him a break. There isn't
enough proof yet to go public. Sure,
we found some chemical shit we think
somebody dumped in the plugs to torch
'em, and we've maybe figured out why
backdrafts, but you can't rush this
stuff. Not 'till it's locked.

JENNIFER

But Ringale's probably going to come
around to arson.

BRIAN

In a dinosaur kinda way, yeah.

BAMM!

mind
Both of them look up sharply. A woman drunk out of her
has tipped over in her chair. She laughs, her fellow
tablemates laugh, everybody laughs. Jennifer takes
Brian by
the arm in the opposite direction and smiles.

JENNIFER

Save me.

EXT. PARTY BOAT - NIGHT

rhythm
Brian
through
wonderful
the
locked

The band's completely cut loose now. A wild percussion that has everyone on their feet dancing like madmen. and Jennifer stomp and sweat and shake and giggle hair crazily askew. The lakeshore is twinkling and as it slips past. The drums beat faster and harder and only thing that isn't moving now is their eyes -- eyes on each other.

EXT. ARSON HQ - NIGHT

Brian and

Sweaty, flushed with the evening and a few drinks, Jennifer pull up in her car.

BRIAN

Thanks for the invite.

JENNIFER

Got anything to drink in there?

BRIAN

Oh, there might be something stashed away for emergencies.

INT. ARSON HQ/FIRE STATION

squad's
quiet

The regular engine company's gone to bed and the arson packed in for the night, leaving the apparatus floor and dim as Brian and Jennifer enter.

the
Jennifer's
tin

Brian leads her back past the engine and arson sedan to rear where Rimgale has his offices. As they walk eyes drift up to the old sculpted parapets, the press-ceiling.

BRIAN

This is one of the oldest fire stations in the city. Lotta tradition locked up in here. What do you think?

JENNIFER

Homey.

BRIAN

See that trap door up there? That used to lead to the hay loft when they had horse-drawn engines. It was pretty different then... but kinda the same, y'know?

JENNIFER

Do you miss it?
(he doesn't answer)
You seem like you do.

BRIAN

When I came back, I knew more than anything else that I wanted to be a fireman.

JENNIFER

Then why did you quit?

BRIAN

I wanted to be a good one.

INT. ARSON HQ - BACK OFFICES

They walk into the back arson offices. Brian pokes through a few drawers, one or two shelves. Finally he lifts a squat, specialized fire extinguisher. The bottom has been hollowed out, leaving room for a fifth of bourbon.

BRIAN

Old firehouse trick.

He pours her a glass. Jennifer takes a generous sip of her's, turns, brushes past him and breathes,

JENNIFER

So show me your fire truck.

INT. ARSON HQ - APPARATUS FLOOR

Brian escorts Jennifer along the side of the behemoth.

BRIAN

Well, our specimen here is your basic standard issue piece of primary

suppression equipment. This area is the pumping panel, which controls the rate of liquid insertion into the hose.

JENNIFER

Uh huh.

Brian lifts a narrow, tapered straight-bore nozzle.

BRIAN

This is a six inch playpipe, cast bronze to keep it firm during hard flows.

(picks up another item)

This is our pipe extender, used in forward lays...

(moves on)

This is our hard suction line... Our adjustable insertion nozzle...

(comes around back of trunk)

...And this is the hose bed.

aside. In
and
long
discussed
onto
Jennifer. As

Beat. The air cracks between them. And is brushed an instant they're all over each other. Tangled lips gulping breaths. Jennifer abruptly breaks it off -- And looks mischievously up at the hose bed, with its curling rolls of soft cotton.

Brian doesn't remember this precise scenario being at the academy, but he improvises admirably, popping up the hose bed and offering a gentlemanly hand to they tumble into the soft folds

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

the
Engine 17 roars up, lights flashing, to a high-rise. As crew jumps down Tim trips and falls flat on his face.

GRINDLE

Jesus Tim, if you're going to kill yourself at least wait till the fire, it's better P.R.

INT. ARSON HQ - HOSE BED - NIGHT

Jennifer unbuttons Brian's shirt.

JENNIFER

Tell me about the playpipe again...

She pulls the shirt off his shoulder as we

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH-RISE - LOBBY - NIGHT

the Engine 17 walking up to a frazzled security guard in lobby.

STEPHEN

Where is it?

SECURITY GUARD

Don't know. There's alarms going off on three different floors.

STEPHEN

Wonderful.

They climb into the elevator.

INT. HIGH RISE - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

helmets, goes Strings Tree". It's cramped on the way up with the bulky coats, hose rolls, and the tangible nervousness that always with this kind of fire. The elevator Musak plays 101 version of "Tie A Yellow Ribbon 'Round The Old Oak

TIM

How do we know if the floor's going to be on fire?

STEPHEN

If the doors open and it's hot, don't

get out.

INT. ARSON HQ - HOSE BED

Brian pulls off Jennifer's stockings. As she kicks it away...

INT. HIGH-RISE - UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT

The elevator stops. DING. The door opens. No howling blaze, not even any noise, but enough hanging smoke that you can't see your hand in front of your face.

They fan out gingerly onto the floor, looking for the fire.

Hide and seek in a white fog bank. Everybody stops and listens. Slowly, carefully, they feel their way through the haze.

STEPHEN

It's here.

On cue something snakes past behind the walls, whispers and whines and shivers up and over them and then is silent. Grindle attaches a hoseline to the building standpipe.

GRINDLE

These high-rise gigs give me the creeps.

AXE

Let's wait for a back-up, Stephen. We're early on this one, it hasn't even broke out yet. We're one short as it is with Brian gone.

But Stephen's on the hunt now. Obsessed.

STEPHEN

Want to learn something?

TIM

Yes sir!

Stephen and Tim take the lead, their axes gripped like shotguns. Grindle backs them up with a charged hoseline.

STEPHEN

Adcox, go with Pengelly and check the other side.

AXE

It isn't safe, man. Don't go splittin' us up. Not with this one.

STEPHEN

-- What the hell's the matter with you? You always check the other side. I haven't got time for bullshit right now, okay? We got a job here.

AXE

Let me take the lead, Stephen...

STEPHEN

Goddamn it Adcox! Just do your fucking job!

his
their

Adcox folds. With a stricken look on his face he takes crew down the other way. Stephen and Tim slowly feel way.

CRACK

inhuman

Everybody SPINS around in terror. Nothing. Something giggles down ahead of them. Stephen smiles.

STEPHEN

(like a mantra)

Oh, you're so very sly, but so am I...

(to Tim)

...Listen to it... you can tell when a wall cracks which way it's gonna jump... you can hear the doors breathe if they're hot...

Tim looks confused. He doesn't get it.

the
breath,
inside.

They come to a side door. Stephen runs his hand down jam, feels for heat. Then he steps back, takes a deep and CRASHES the door down with one AXE BLOW. Quiet

INT. ARSON HQ - HOSE BED - NIGHT

deeply.
firemen.
Watching.

Brian and Jennifer are into the rhythm now, breathing
On the wall above them are framed photos of dead

INT. HIGH-RISE - SECOND DOORWAY - NIGHT

him, --
then abruptly turns and CRASHES down another door.

Stephen concentrates on the sound of the fire above

INT. ARSON HQ - ALARM KLAXON GOES OFF - NIGHT

alarm
klaxon BELLOWS. Firemen are coming down the pole now.

Brian and Jennifer lie in a tight embrace, enjoying the
moment, the lull, as suddenly the lights SNAP ON and an

JENNIFER

What's going on?

haven't
ENGINE.

They frantically climb into their clothes. The firemen
noticed them as they climb aboard. They've STARTED THE

JENNIFER

What are they doing?

EXT. ARSON HQ - STREETS - NIGHT

block.
loves
lost
as

And before either of them realizes it, they're suddenly
pulling out into the street and WAILING off down the

The wind's wild in their hair, the siren deafening, the
flashing red lights blinding staccato, And Jennifer

it. She kisses Brian fiercely, he lets out a war whoop
in the blast of air, and together they hold each other
the night screams past and...

EXT. HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

rise
behind to

Engine 17 pulls up into the parking lot of the high-
fire. Firemen leap out of the cab and rush around

curl
come
pull off lengths of hose from the bed. As the folds
away the fireman is stunned to see a woman's stocking
out with it.

disheveled and
the
With equal shock he looks up and watches as a
grinning Brian and Jennifer climb calmly down out of
bed.

BRIAN

Excuse us.

INT. HIGH-RISE - TIM'S DOOR - NIGHT

Stephen and Tim creep along the hall.

STEPHEN

(to Tim)

Lotta smoke, but it isn't rolling...
that means it's hiding... staying
sleepy... one of these doors...

Tim's come to one.

STEPHEN

(to himself)

Easy... no hurry... you're not going
anywhere...

check.
water.
Stephen BANGS down another door. Sticks his head in to
A little woodpecker toy dips up and down in a glass of

courage as
Tim readies his axe before his door, gathers his
Stephen comes out of the room he was checking. Sees Tim
lifting his axe.

STEPHEN

Did you check the door for heat,
Tim?

Tim doesn't hear. The axe is already up.

STEPHEN

Tim?

Stephen
edging

Tim's committed now, coming hard at the door. And
sees it for just an instant -- Small tendrils of smoke
lazily around the door -- then being sucked back in.

STEPHEN

Tim!

whine
follow-
opposite
terror
and
flames
screams,

He rushes for Tim as Tim's axe SMACKS the door and a
behind it builds and roars and howls and Tim's all
through now, hitting the door with his shoulder as
The door EXPLODES OUTWARD, HURLING TIM against the
wall and for an instant he's okay but he freezes in
as A SHRIEKING TONGUE OF FLAME SHOOTS OUT THE DOORWAY
Grindle shouts in horror and opens his hose line as the
wrap Tim like a jealous lover as Adcox hears it and

AXE

Oh God! Oh God no!

mask,
at
ignores
DOUSES
air
wall
what's
corpse

And Tim's screaming now too, because his helmet, his
his face, it's all melting and Grindle dives suicidally
the monster, BLASTING it with his hose as Stephen
the flames and puts his arms around Tim as Grindle
them both, killing the flames.

The monster rolls wounded back into the room, into the
shafts as Tim whimpers incoherently, sliding down the
as Stephen tries to help but oh God you can't tell
face and what's mask and helmet anymore.

Grindle looks back where the fire came from. There's a
in there, burned and lying between two doors.

the end

Adcox rushes to Tim's side sobbing and it's the end,
of the goddamn world...

EXT. HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

when

a

--

into

hold

Brian and Jennifer are having the time of their lives,
suddenly a group of firemen pass by rushing someone on
stretcher to an ambulance and Brian sees -- sweet Jesus
it's Tim. Jennifer turns away in horror. They load Tim
the van as Adcox and Grindle jump in to ride along. To
his hand.

street.

coat

his

Brian.

Stephen watches the ambulance disappear out into the
Frustration and fury tear at him as he takes off his
and slams it to the ground. He kicks it, kicks it till
strength's gone. He turns, his wounded eyes finding

INT. HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

civilian

two

crouched

himself.

Rimgale walks down the smokey corridor. The charred
is there, sitting in the short stretch of hall between
blown doors. Through the haze Rimgale sees Stephen
in the interior room, picking at the debris. Lost in

STEPHEN

Hey, Stevie.

unaware

his

Stephen stands and looks around the room, seemingly
of Rimgale. He walks wordlessly straight out past him,
eyes streaming with tears.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

passes

Brian shoulders his way through the emergency room. He

there,
deep

a small alcove full of vending machines. Adcox is sipping a paper cup, leaning against the machine in anguish.

BRIAN

Is he...

AXE

He's alive.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - NIGHT

there,
to
fire.

Further down the hall is ICU. Grindle and Santos are sitting outside the room, raw and weary. Grindle nods Brian. Everyone's still stained and smudged from the

Everyone but Brian.

been
pair
be a
turns

Brian looks through a door window into the room. There, surrounded by doctors and physicians, lies Tim. He's cut out of his uniform. Gauze bandages everywhere. As a pair of forceps peel some away Brian glimpses what used to be a face, now only reds and browns and leaky whites. He turns away.

BRIAN

Do they think he'll pull through?

GRINDLE

They're not saying.

BRIAN

I should have been there.

NIGHTENGALE

None of us should have been there,
Brian.

and
Brian

Voices rise down the hall. Turn to shouts. It's Adcox and Stephen, tearing heartbreakingly into one another.

Abruptly
toward

can't make out the words but it's ugly, emotional.
it ends and Stephen emerges from the alcove, walking
them upset.

BRIAN

You had to do it, didn't you?

Stephen's got other things on his mind.

STEPHEN

...Not now, Brian.

BRIAN

Had to take on another fire bare-
handed, huh? Had to be fucking myth
man in there instead of looking out
for your probie. Is that what
happened? Is it, Stephen?

STEPHEN

I had that fire. He didn't listen!

BRIAN

He didn't listen? He was a fucking
candidate! He was your responsibility.
He shouldn't have been there in the
first place, Stephen.

(beat)

You burned him.

STEPHEN

Fuck you.

Brian grabs his arm.

against
shouting
in it,
walls.

Stephen SNAPS and roughly PUSHES Brian, knocking him
the wall. Brian comes off it in a flash and is all over
Stephen. They go down and it's all thrashing and
now. A horrible, endless draw. Grindle and Santos are
pulling them apart, holding them up against opposite

eyes.
Both brothers glare at one another, tears filling their
Brian shakes Grindle off and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ARSON HQ - BRIAN'S DESK - MORNING

Brian sits staring blankly. A newspaper drops in front of him. FIRE DEPT. SAYS IT'S MURDER. Ringale stands above him.

SHADOW

Goes on about how the break was made through the discovery of "chemical traces" and a "behavioral link". Oh, and Swayzak's quoted saying the chief investigator is closing in on the torch and expects an arrest "any time".

Brian's eyes wince closed.

SHADOW

Get your stuff and get out.

INT. JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY

She's pouring some coffee as Brian bursts in.

JENNIFER

(surprised)

Brian. What's wrong?

BRIAN

You told Swayzak about our arson lead. It's all over the fucking news.

JENNIFER

I didn't know it was a secret. There aren't supposed to be secrets between the city and its investigators --

BRIAN

-- Bullshit! You knew what I told you wasn't ready for the papers --

JENNIFER

Will you please keep your voice down, there's people --

BRIAN

-- You could have scared the son of a bitch off. We may never bust him

now. All for a couple's political points.

JENNIFER

I was doing my job.

BRIAN

(grabs her arm)

Yeah? And just how much of all this has been "doing your job"?

JENNIFER

(shakes it off)

Let me ask you something, do you really think Marty had you assigned to arson because of your firefighting skills? Who the hell are you kidding? I was there, remember? I saw you and your brother --

BRIAN

Leave Stephen out of this --

JENNIFER

Oh yeah, he's the real fireman.

(beat)

Who are you? Just another probie working for Swayzak --

BRIAN

-- I work for the city.

JENNIFER

You knew what we were asking you to do. Don't suddenly pull out a conscience now. The fit isn't right.

Swayzak appears in the doorway. He looks haggard, as if
he hasn't slept. There's something haunted in his eyes.

SWAYZAK

Mr. McCaffrey... Keeping busy?

BRIAN

Yeah. In fact, I just dropped off a letter to the Times explaining how yesterday's arson announcement was a fabrication by your office. They loved it. And you know what? You were right, my family background in firefighting gave it weight.

JENNIFER

Oh Brian...

Brian shoulders his way past Swayzak and walks out.

INT. HOSPITAL - TIM'S ROOM - NIGHT

ragged
and
respirator
throat.

Brian walks up to Tim's room. Stephen's sitting there, looking. Inside the young probie lies wrapped in tubes gauze and years of wasted promise. An EKG beeps, a hisses, and Brian gulps down something heavy in his

STEPHEN

He's gonna live. Maybe not much else,
but he's gonna live...

Stephen walks away.

EXT. ARSON HQ - MORNING

Swayzak

As Rimgale gets out of his car a limousine pulls up.
opens the rear door from inside.

SWAYZAK

Inspector.

SHADOW

Alderman.

INT. SWAYZAK SEDAN - DAY

unshaven,
before

Cruising through traffic. Swayzak is disheveled, fidgety. A man who hasn't slept and had a few drinks the one he's pouring now. He offers one to Rimgale.

SHADOW

I usually have breakfast first.

Swayzak apparently doesn't.

SWAYZAK

When are you going to catch the prick
that's doing this, Don?

SHADOW

"Don?"

SWAYZAK

Don't you have any leads at all?

SHADOW

No Marty, I don't.

For the first time, Rimgale sees real fear on Swayzak's face.

SHADOW

We still haven't found a connection between the victims.

SWAYZAK

Jesus, open your eyes! Seagrave, Cosgrove, and now Holcomb -- fried in a goddamn high-rise!

SHADOW

Holcomb? I didn't know the name of that victim had even been released yet.

The sedan stops back at arson HQ. They'd gone around the block.

EXT. ARSON HQ - SWAYZAK SEDAN - DAY

Rimgale opens the door, climbs out, lingers.

SHADOW

Is there a connection between them, Alderman?

SWAYZAK

Just catch the son of a bitch.

The door shuts and Swayzak roars away.

INT. ARSON HQ - BACK OFFICES - DAY

Rimgale walks back into his offices. He's surprised to see Brian there working at his desk.

SHADOW

What the hell are you doing here?

BRIAN

I'm finished with Swayzak. I'll do whatever you want me to do. I just want to help catch the guy that burned Tim. You gotta give me another shot.

Rimgale stares at Brian, appraises him.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH-RISE

door
seen
A CLOSE UP of Rimgale POPPING the molding around the frame of Holcomb's burned office. Underneath can be seen traces of the same white residue from the other fires.

SHADOW

I thought 'ol Marty was acting a little strange... And he's right.

Rimgale rubs the white powder between his fingers.

BRIAN

Backdraft?

body
Rimgale stands at the spot in the short hall where the body lied between two doors.

SHADOW

The backdraft was set somewhere in there. It fried Holcomb when he opened the inner door. But the outer door held... and waited for Tim...

Brian steps into the inner office.

SHADOW

So find me the fire.

Defeated.
Brian begins searching, probing. He finally stands.

SHADOW

You're thinking too much of the building and not enough of the ghost.

comes a
Brian's eyes don't understand. From Rimgale's coat

floor

plastic flask. He pours out of it a liquid onto the
and lights a match.

SHADOW

In a word, Brian, what is this job
all about?

BRIAN

Fire.

Rimgale drops the match.

WUMP. A small flame explodes to life.

SHADOW

It's a living thing, Brian. It
breathes, it eats, and it hates.

The fire's climbing a wall, chewing a corner.

SHADOW

The only way to beat it is to think
like it. To know that this flame
will spread this way across the floor
not because of the physics of
flammable liquids or heat convection,
but because it wants to.

and

FWUMP. It darts west. Licks the ceiling. The fire purrs
hisses. Stretches luxuriously and attacks savagely.

SHADOW

Some guys on this job, fire owns
them. It makes them fight on its
level. But the only way to truly
kill it is to love it a little, just
like Ronald.

him... --
instant

Brian stares at the flame. A goblin reaching out for
Woosh! Rimgale hits it with a fire extinguisher. In an
the goblin is gone, the genie in the bottle.

VOICE

What the hell are you guys doin'?

A young woman's entered.

SHADOW

We're the fire department, lady.

WOMAN

Well color me stupid, I always thought the fire dept. put out fires.

SHADOW

(to woman)
You work here?

WOMAN

Till yesterday. What do you think the odds are that a non-refundable ticket to Paris survived this?

BRIAN

Somewhere between zero and no way.

WOMAN

Shit. What a mess.

SHADOW

You seem real broken up about Mr. Holcomb.

WOMAN

Jeff Holcomb? The Darth Vader of tax accountants? He was a sleezeball. Hopefully a sleezeball that carried some insurance.

BRIAN

Go talk to the building owner.

WOMAN

He was the building owner.

BRIAN

Our book lists the owner as Dekom Trust.

all She looks at him like he's the dumbest human she's met
week.

WOMAN

Don't investigators come in adult size?

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - OUTSIDE STEPHEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sequence omitted from original script.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - STEPHEN'S STATION OFFICE - DAY

over
Stephen's lying sprawled on his bunk, his hands pressed
his eyes. There's a voice outside the door.

GRINDLE

Stevie? Ringale's here to see you.

STEPHEN

I'm busy.

GRINDLE

He just wants to --

STEPHEN

-- I'm busy goddamn it, okay?

A beat, then Ringale himself enters.

STEPHEN

What, they don't knock on your planet?

out.
Ringale takes in Stephen's room, the half empty bourbon
bottle. Without a word, Ringale walks over and pours it

He sits down beside Stephen.

SHADOW

I still haven't gotten your fire
report, Stevie. On Tim.

A wave of pain rolls through Stephen.

STEPHEN

I'm working on it.

SHADOW

I deal with this stuff every day.
But a fireman... you never get used
to it.

(beat)

What happened up there? He was a
candidate. Did he pay attention? Was
he listening?

STEPHEN

...He wasn't listening to the right
thing...

SHADOW

What do you listen to, Stephen?

STEPHEN

You don't know... nobody knows...

SHADOW

I might.

Stephen's eyes meet Ringale's and hold.

STEPHEN

It knows us. This one knows us.

SHADOW

(beat)

I need that report, Lt.

Stephen takes Ringale's notebook out of his lap, rips
out a page, and writes angrily in huge block letters.

STEPHEN

Tim-went-to-the-fire-and-now-he-
doesn't-have-a-face.

Stephen throws the sheet at Ringale, stands, and walks
out.

INT. HALL OF RECORDS

around
Brian is
as
An Escher drawing of a place, endlessly vast racks spun
an open central core. High up, lost among its rows,
going through rack after rack of dog-eared record books
Ringale enters down below.

BRIAN

(trying to hold it
together in his mind)

Hey boss, Dekom Trust is owned by
Pan Illinois... which is majority
controlled by Lakeside Dynamics...
which is a division of Windy City
Ventures... who's partners are...

(beat)

Alan Seagrave, Donald Cosgrove, and
Jeffrey Holcomb.

SHADOW

Son of a bitch. They knew each other.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL OF RECORDS

More books. Files. Acres of paper.

BRIAN

So Seagrave and Holcomb were accountants...

SHADOW

And Cosgrove. Coppers figured he laundered money for the mob before getting into real estate. They weren't very high on Seagrave, either.

BRIAN

Nice bunch of guys.

SHADOW

Who all ended up wearing candles for faces...

(beat)

Swayzak's up to his ass in this somehow. Guy can barely hold a drink in his hand, he's so scared.

A beat, then he looks directly at Brian.

SHADOW

We need to get a look at his files.

EXT. ROOFTOP RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sequence omitted from original script.

EXT. LAKESHORE - DUSK

it's

Jennifer

look

With glowing skyscrapers leaping up in the background, an unexpectedly quiet, serene place along the lake. sits alone at a bench, watching an ancient fisherman for dinner, as Brian walks up.

JENNIFER

Hi.

BRIAN

Hi.

JENNIFER

We still talking?

(beat)

Look, I'm sorry about the other day --

BRIAN

Swayzak knows something about the guys that were murdered. I want to know why he keeps that hidden.

JENNIFER

I don't know anything about it.

BRIAN

You could check. It'd be in his files.

JENNIFER

(beat)

Do you know what you're asking me to do?

BRIAN

Yes.

JENNIFER

Y'know, four years ago I was working in a bakery. Two years ago I was bringing Marty coffee and he didn't even know my name. I run that office now. Marty believed in me and I believe in him. You want me to just throw that away?

BRIAN

Your boss is lying, Jennifer.

edge of
And it hangs between them, two people lonely on the
the lake.

INT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sequence omitted from original script.

INT. HELEN'S GARAGE - NIGHT

amongst
At a workbench, under a single lamp, Stephen stands
a confusion of tools, wire, And a wall socket.

socket,
stares at
cascading

With a pair of pliers, he tugs at something within the
puts the face-plate back on and screws it down. He
it, and we feel the sudden wave of hopelessness
through him.

aside

He sets the socket back down -- and SCATTERS everything
in a single, furious move.

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sequence omitted from original script.

EXT. HELEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

in

Stephen's sits quietly against Helen's back door, lost
himself. A light comes on. Helen opens the back door.

HELEN

Stephen?

She sits down beside him.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry... I... couldn't sleep...

HELEN

What's wrong?

STEPHEN

I...

(beat)

It used to be, when I was a kid,
what meant most to me about this job
was there were no ifs. Life and death,
right and wrong. When someone called
the fire department, we came... Those
guys don't know how much I love
them... You don't leave people
hanging... cause that's what it's
all about. It's loyalty. It's 'till
death do us part. Isn't that what
you heard?... It's you go, we go...
Cause without that, it's the end of
families, it's the end of the fire
department... and when the fire
department stops coming... that's
the end of the fucking world...

(beat)
I'm sorry I came, Helen, it's just...
it's just there's nobody I can talk
to...

(beat)
I miss you.

The moment lingers, grows heavy and grey.

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stephen and Helen in bed, holding each other...

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Morning, and Stephen dressed, making eggs for three.

Sean's
him
her.

there, lending a hand, beaming as Stephen tries to show
how to flip an egg. Helen enters in her robe. He kisses

STEPHEN

Cook and I are almost finished here.
Have a seat.

HELEN

Stephen... I... can I talk to you a
second...

the
hall.

Stephen musses his son's hair and follows her out into

STEPHEN

Look, I'm sorry I --

HELEN

-- No, that's okay. It's just Sean...

STEPHEN

-- He's gettin' good on those eggs.
And y'know, he told me he actually
likes the piano.

HELEN

I don't want to confuse him, Stephen.

it.

The blow's so long and hard and deep you don't even see

HELEN

It's... It's just things have changed... you're the same, Stephen, but things are different now... you've got a son... you're the best at what you do Stephen, you always were, but you scare me now...

Just then, Sean sticks his head into it.

STEPHEN

(to Sean)

Hey... Sean-man, your dad blew it. I forgot I had to work this morning...

SEAN

Aw dad, c'mon...

STEPHEN

Next time, huh? We'll do it up big. Promise.

Helen's turned away.

SEAN

Okay.

(then sotto)

Mom's crying, dad.

INT. SWAYZAK'S OFFICE - CITY HALL - MORNING

turned
Jennifer enters Swayzak's inner office. His chair's away toward the window.

JENNIFER

(holding print-out)

Latest polls came in, Marty.

(he doesn't answer)

Marty?

are
Finally the chair turns, revealing a haunted man. Polls far from his mind.

JENNIFER

Jesus Christ, Marty, what's going on?

SWAYZAK

Leave me alone.

his

She sees a fire department file on the murders open on desk.

JENNIFER

We've come a long way together, Marty. I've staked my whole career on you. And now you're sneaking around this office, leaking things to the papers behind my back...

(beat)

Is there something you're not telling me about these deaths?

Swayzak's eyes are dead metal.

SWAYZAK

No.

there a

And he turns his chair around again. Jennifer stands beat. -- Then turns to the filing cabinets.

EXT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

staircase

Brian drives up and parks. He's half way to the staircase when he sees someone sitting in the dark in a car.

BRIAN

Jennifer?

She hands him a manila envelope.

BRIAN

What is --

JENNIFER

Just take it.

Silence.

BRIAN

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

That's a dumb thing to say.

BRIAN

You're right.

She starts her car.

JENNIFER

Goodbye, Brian.

INT. FIRE DEPARTMENT REPAIR DEPOT

on
his
A cavernous hall full of dozens of fire trucks loaded
jacks. Rimgale's sedan's there, the repairman shaking
head in amazement at the undercarriage.

REPAIRMAN

What the hell do you do with this
thing?

him.
Rimgale's looking through the report Brian's handed

SHADOW

This is the copy of Swayzak's manning
report that was released. Everybody
on this job knows it's bullshit but
we could never argue with the numbers.
They're all airtight.

BRIAN

Yeah? Airtight?

He dumps three more reports on Rimgale.

BRIAN

I've got three different drafts of
the same report -- with different
numbers that're all over the place.
Looks like they were just making it
up as they went along.

SHADOW

Did a little check on the consulting
firm that wrote the report. They did
exactly one job -- Swayzak's manpower
study. It's not even really a company.
No employees, no directors, just a
PO Box.

BRIAN

Then who wrote the report?

SHADOW

It had to be someone who knows
numbers. Some kind of fancy

accountant. But what's the connection?

and
of
Brian hands him something else. A photograph. Swayzak
the other three, posing on a fishing boat, 1970. Time
their lives.

SHADOW

I think it's time Mr. Swayzak and us
had a little heart to heart talk.

EXT. SWAYZAK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

and
ajar.
The red arson sedan pulls up to wealthy home. Rimgale
Brian walk up and knock on the door -- it creaks open
They push the door open slowly.

INT. SWAYZAK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark as they enter.

SHADOW

Hello? Swayzak?

the
socket
dimensions
--
Brian and Rimgale split up down different halls. It's
HISS Brian hears first. Then the FLASH of an electrical
FLARING ice-cold cobalt blue. Suddenly the room's
are there in frantic, strobing shadows. Chairs, a couch

burning
shadow,
-- And a figure that JUMPS Brian. the light from the
plug is a fierce strobe as the figure, a confused
crashes Brian to the floor. They STRUGGLE.

pain,
crumples,
him. The
The figure GRABS Brian's throat. Brian PUSHES him back
-- Against the burning wall plug. The figure SHRIEKS in
gets his hand on a crowbar and SLAMS Brian -- who
dazed. The figure stands -- just as Rimgale TACKLES

figure CRASHES across a gas space heater, SNAPPING the
connection off. The figure SLAMS Rimgale HARD with the

crowbar, squirms free, and stumbles out the door.

the
dazed
heater
bedroom
door

Hissss... Rimgale climbs to his feet as fire eats at wall. A baby backdraft wagging its tail. He goes to a Brian's side, lifting him by his armpits and

EXT. SWAYZAK HOUSE - NIGHT

helping him outside. Hissss... The ruptured space pumps gas furiously. Rimgale sees that. He also sees a door ajar on the far side of the house. And through the a couch. And on the couch, A body. Hissss...

INT. SWAYZAK HOUSE - NIGHT

Rimgale rushes back inside. It's Swayzak, unconscious.

EXT. SWAYZAK HOUSE - NIGHT

the
HOWLING
Brian
orient

Rimgale drags him out on the stoop beside Brian just as gas WHUMPS and the doors and windows EXPLODE in a FIREBALL, the shrapnel BLOWING Rimgale off his feet. slowly shakes his head clear. He looks around, tries to himself.

SHADOW

Uh... I sorta got a problem here...

Rimgale
punched

Brian climbs up to his feet and walks over to where lies at a weird angle, a piece of wrought iron fence through his shoulder.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Rimgale lies in an emergency room bed.

SHADOW

Well Brian, I guess you can say it's arson now...

BRIAN

How ya feeling?

Rimgale grunts.

BRIAN

Did you pull me out?

SHADOW

Yeah.

BRIAN

Did I say thanks?

SHADOW

No.

BRIAN

Just wondering.

SHADOW

I hate hospitals. You're so... so
goddamn useless...

it
SNAPS
Rimgale suddenly kicks the bed frame in anger. He kicks
over and over with frustration till something finally
off. Brian waits, let's him vent his frustration.

BRIAN

So what do you want me to do?

SHADOW

I've been lying here hours... just
thinking... We're close...

(beat)

We're not looking in the right place,
Brian. This one knows us and we're
not looking in the right place...

INT. PRISON INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

door
Brian's sitting alone in a chair. Finally the opposite
opens and in enters Ronald.

RONALD

Well, Mr. Life magazine. Come all
this way just to say hi?

Brian hands him a stack of murder files.

BRIAN

I'm close... but I can't get who it is...

RONALD

So you came to me...

(smiles)

Well, this is going to be an interesting afternoon after all...

As Ronald starts to read the files

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER - DAY

Brian still sitting there. Watching Ronald devour the statistics. The photos of charred bodies. Ronald finishes, leans back.

RONALD

Okay, here's the deal. I'll tell you a story, you tell me one. Fair?

BRIAN

Who's doing this?

RONALD

Your first question should be who isn't. It isn't a spark, Brian. Not enough damage. And an insurance pro? Where's the profit margin?

BRIAN

Then who --

RONALD

-- No no, your turn. Tell me a story.

BRIAN

I don't have a story.

RONALD

Sure you do.

LIFE Ronald drops on the table a dog-eared copy of that 1972 magazine with Brian on the cover.

RONALD

Famous story even. Straight burn.
Just an engine and truck first on
scene. What did you feel, Brian,
when you first got there?

BRIAN

What?

RONALD

You gotta tell a story too, Brian.
It's fair. C'mon, don't think too
hard --

BRIAN

I... I thought it was great. I loved
it. It was nothing to these guys...
medium deal.

RONALD

Right. Light smoke, low roll. Couple'a
civilians hollering -- medium deal.
So young fireman Adcox and Captain
McCaffrey, they head up stairs, get
out on the fire escape -- McCaffrey
does the ballsy jump across... what
were you feeling, Brian?

(Brian doesn't answer)

C'mon, you promised. Be honest.

(Brian just stares)

Okay... Guard!

BRIAN

-- I wanted to be him. Right then I
wanted to be him more than anything...

RONALD

(smiles)

Very good, Brian. -- About your report
here. The way to a torch's heart is
through his tools. That's how you
know him. It's the way he talks to
the fire. And to you if you listen.

BRIAN

The outlets.

RONALD

That's a probie answer. You're smarter
than that, Brian.

BRIAN

Trychticholorate.

RONALD

Good. -- So our two heroes, Adcox and McCaffrey, they go back inside. Only there's another fire in there nobody sees. And it took your dad, didn't it Brian? Did you see him burn?

Ronald

In a flash, Brian suddenly reaches across and grabs by the collar.

BRIAN

Who the fuck is doing this?

RONALD

After it took your dad... the fire... did it look at you Brian? Did it talk to you?...

And Ronald sees something in Brian's eyes. He smiles.

RONALD

You see, our world's aren't so different...

Brian releases Ronald.

BRIAN

(quiet)

Who's doing this?

The arsonist smiles a creepy, horrible grin.

RONALD

Think, Brian. Who doesn't love fire, but knows it better than anyone else? Who's around trychticholorate 24 hours a day?

his

A cold shock rolls through Brian as he slumps back in chair.

BRIAN

Oh Jesus Christ...

RONALD

Not such a far walk after all, is it, Brian?

EXT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - MARINA - NIGHT

opens
Brian climbs up onto Stephen's boat. Nobody home. He
the cabin door, goes inside and hits the lights.

INT. STEPHEN'S BOAT - NIGHT

table,
And a stack of fire department supplies in the corner.
His whole body aching with reluctance, Brian begins
looking
through them. Solvents, Armorall, a small specialty can
of
fire dept. chemicals. There's a label of ingredients on
it.
Way down at the bottom, Is trychticholorate. Nausea
wracks
its way through Brian.

BRIAN

Oh goddamn it Stephen...

comes
Footsteps. Brian spins around in stone shock as Stephen
into the cabin.

STEPHEN

Hey, what are you doing here?

BRIAN

Just... Just wanted to say hello...

STEPHEN

So hello.

Brian backs away from the chemicals.

STEPHEN

Well, long as you're here you can
help clean up a little. I've got a
guy coming to look at this in a few
minutes.

BRIAN

You're selling dad's boat?

STEPHEN

Yeah, it's just another memory in my
life right now. And I got way too

many of them...

BRIAN

I really should get back. There's... there's something I'm supposed to do.

STEPHEN

Yeah? What have you got to do?

(beat)

Look at you. Look at your face. All the things you must be thinking. Man, you must really hate my guts. Well, you know what? It's okay.

BRIAN

Look, Stephen, maybe we can talk about this some other --

STEPHEN

-- Okay, so you don't like me. You don't like everything I've done. What, because I wasn't such a genius the way I raised you? Jesus Christ, dad was gone, what was I supposed to do? You tell me, what the fuck was I supposed to do?!

He KICKS the bulkhead wall.

BRIAN

It's okay, Stephen, I --

STEPHEN

-- I tried, y'know? Helen's right. I don't have all the answers, but goddamn it, I've got some.

(beat)

Look, you're gonna do what you have to, and maybe I shouldn't have gotten in the way. I'm your brother, not your father. Go on. You gotta go somewhere? Go...

Brian turns to leave. Pauses.

BRIAN

I saw it.

STEPHEN

Saw what?

BRIAN

When dad died, I saw another fire...

STEPHEN

Everybody did.

BRIAN

I saw it before it got them. I tried to yell, but... He asked me to look out for him. And I didn't do it. I let him die.

STEPHEN

(stunned)

...Jesus, you been carrying that around for twenty years? For christ's sake, you were seven years old! You think he could have heard you in there?

BRIAN

I hate him so much sometimes, Stephen. You don't know how hard it was for me to put that uniform on...

STEPHEN

Maybe I do.

(sighs)

...What a fuckin' mess, huh?

(beat)

People can change Brian.

BRIAN

Sometimes right when you're looking at them.

something
Brian sees the chemicals in the corner again and freezes up inside. Stephen catches the look and there's horrible silence between them.

BRIAN

Oh God, Stephen, what's going on with you?

STEPHEN

I don't know, Brian... I don't know...

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - NIGHT

his.
Brian stands before the fire station. His brother's and

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - UPSTAIRS LOCKER ROOM

looking
on,
Adcox
little.

forces

the
two
walks
hesitates a

Brian PRIES the lock off Stephen's locker. Starts through it. Adcox comes out of the shower with a towel starts shaving in a mirror. He doesn't notice Brian. turns to head for his own locker and the towel slips a little. And Brian's universe caves in.

An icy claw tears out his stomach. Gulping breaths, he forces himself to look at Adcox's back.

On it is a small, rectangular burn. It's fresh and it's the size of a wall socket. At that moment Adcox turns. The two of them stare at one another just a beat, then Adcox walks past him. Just then the alarm bells RING. Brian hesitates a beat, confused, then turns and runs down to

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - APPARATUS FLOOR

looks

Where firemen are scurrying around, suiting up. Brian frantically for Stephen, sees him out back.

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - BACK OF STATION - SUNDOWN

BRIAN

(breathless)

-- Stephen, wait a minute. I gotta talk to you. It's Adcox, he's --

STEPHEN

-- What are you doing here?

BRIAN

I saw Adcox's back! I saw the burn! I put it there! Jesus Christ, Stephen, he's been killing people!

STEPHEN

I know.

BRIAN

How do you know?

STEPHEN

I knew when you came looking for the chemicals. Looking for me.

BRIAN

-- What were they doing there?

STEPHEN

They were for the fucking boat, Brian.

Grindles sticks his head out the back door.

GRINDLE

We gotta roll, Stevie...

STEPHEN

I'll be there.

GRINDLE

They're waitin' man.

STEPHEN

I'll be there, goddamn it!

Grindle goes back in.

STEPHEN

(to Brian)

Anything else?

BRIAN

What are we going to do about this?

STEPHEN

I'll handle it.

BRIAN

We gotta go to Rimgale, Stephen.

STEPHEN

I'm his Lt. He's my responsibility.
I'll handle it. Me.

Stephen turns and walks toward the station.

watching
Adcox.

Brian's eyes go to a window just above it. There,
him, watching the whole exchange between brothers, is

as
Adcox stares at Brian a beat, then finally disappears
Brian hears the cough of diesel engines.

BRIAN

Oh, Christ. Stephen...

He starts running for the station.

INT./EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - NIGHT

engine
-- It's too late. Adcox climbs aboard just as the
company pulls out and whistles down the street.

racks,
jumps
The ladder company is just easing onto the drive. Brian
hesitates only an instant, then runs to the equipment
PULLS off the hooks his helmet, coat, boots -- and
onto the truck as it takes off in pursuit.

INT./EXT. ENGINE COMPANY 17 - NIGHT

stares
understanding...
As it howls down the avenue, Stephen turns around and
at Adcox sitting behind. The glimmer of an

INT./EXT. TRUCK COMPANY 46 - NIGHT

them.
The laddermen look confused seeing Brian sitting among

SLAMS
SKID.
mailbox,
a
A CAR Suddenly CUTS the truck company off. The driver
the brakes, PUSHING the truck company into a HORRIBLE
The back fishtails, the wheels JUMP the curb, BASH a
and then the whole rig ROLLS onto its side and DRAGS to
stop.

unhurt,
under
rise
It's tangled confusion in the rear cab. Firemen,
piled atop one another. Brian slides his way out from
them and looks down the street where plumes of smoke
six blocks away.

He starts running.

EXT. WAREHOUSE FIRE - NIGHT

along
frantically
for
Flames and smoke curl from a huge industrial warehouse
the river as Brian, panting, runs up. He searches
through the maze of arriving engine companies, looking
number 17. There it is but nobody's home. Brian stops a
passing captain.

BRIAN

Where are they? Where's 17?

CAPTAIN

On the roof.

throat, the
Brian looks up at the smoke and whirling firestorm four
stories above him, feels the bile of fear in his
desperation, -- And begins strapping on an air tank.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

an
Brian, now fully suited up, climbs the endless rungs of
extended aerial ladder.

EXT. WAREHOUSE ROOF - NIGHT

Black
as
reminding
it.
Tongues of flame ROCKET skyward through ragged holes.
clouds drift murderously, roofing tars bubble and hiss
the roof itself GROANS like a comatose dinosaur,
you the whole thing could go any minute -- and you with

looks
apart,
Trudging alone across this alien, spongy surface, Brian
for his company. It's almost impossible to tell anyone
faces hidden behind helmets and masks.

firemen
Suddenly a cloud of smoke clears and there's two
near the edge, "17" on their helmets.

BRIAN

Stephen --

other.
The helmets look up. Stephen and Adcox. Facing each
Adcox cradles an axe.

STEPHEN

Brian?

tightens
table.
three
Brian starts to move beside Stephen but Adcox turns,
his grip on the axe, and now all the cards are on the
A hissing black cloud drifts through. They're the only
people on earth.

Adcox's eyes are clouded with tears.

AXE

Aw man, Stephen, listen to me...

STEPHEN

-- What the fuck were you thinking,
huh? Burning people? You're a fireman.

AXE

They were killing firemen, man. When
Sally showed me what was in Swayzak's
files... They were my friends, I had
to do it. I had to do it for the
department.

BRIAN

Did you do it for Tim?

AXE

(pain, to Stephen)
That was an accident! Jesus Christ,
why did you have to go in there so
fucking early? Why didn't you listen
to me!

-
Brian and Stephen are backed up against the roof edge -
sixty feet up. Far below a fireboat has begun pumping a
massive stream at the side of the building.

AXE

You gotta let me finish --

BRIAN

Just come down, John. Just --

AXE

-- Shut up! Your dad would fucking puke if he saw how you've shit on his department!

STEPHEN

-- Knock it off!

AXE

(to Stephen)

-- You can't let him turn you against your friends, man --

BRIAN

-- He killed people --

AXE

-- You know what Swayzak would do to the department if this got out? --

BRIAN

-- Stephen, this is bullshit --

AXE

-- What he would do to your dad's department? You gotta let me finish it --

Stephen's
And there's a horrible glimmer of confusion on
face.

BRIAN

You're his Lt., Stephen...

(beat)

Are you gonna handle it? Are you Stephen?

STEPHEN

Shut up!

AXE

...What do you want me to do, Stephen? Talk to me. What am I supposed to do?

STEPHEN

(beat)

There's a fire. We've got a job here. Let's get on with it.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - ACROSS THE ROOF - NIGHT

The rest of the crews are totally oblivious to what's happening through the smoke on the other side. Grindle and Santos feel the roof go suddenly spongy beneath them.

GRINDLE

Shit... It's going! Clear the roof!
Now!

Everybody drops their equipment and runs for the edges as

EXT. WAREHOUSE ROOF - BRIAN ET. AL - NIGHT

Brian, Stephen and Adcox react as the roof HOWLS and GROANS and huge SPLITS begin racing along it. And then it goes.

The center section DROPS, and in rolling waves of SCREECHING steel, the hole spreads outward; DEVOURING.

Adcox shoves them aside and runs for his life as the hole races for them, SWALLOWING roof.

STEPHEN

Jesus Christ Brian, run! Run goddamn it!

And Brian balls-out dashes for the edge. Stephen's made one corner, Brian desperately heads for another. At the last instant -- as the HOWLING FLAME BELLOWS UP to his ankles -- Brian LEAPS OFF the roof --

EXT. WAREHOUSE - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

-- And falls half a story before CRASHING onto an exterior fire escape. Flames have cut off the fire escape two floors below, so Brian climbs down as far as possible, crawls onto a ledge, KICKS out a window, steps through,

And falls.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - NIGHT

CRASHES
elevator
are
like

Blackness and emptiness, two stories of it, before he
into a pool of water at the bottom. He's in a freight
shaft, thrashing madly, drowning. Great SHEETS of WATER
POURING through an upper doorway and CASCADING down
monsoon rain.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - FIREBOAT

We see it's coming from the fireboat's rushing stream.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ELEVATOR SHAFT

underwater.
water
leans
His

The weight of his equipment is pulling Brian
Struggling against the insane swirls and the sheets of
still POURING DOWN, Brian unhooks his air tank. He
back, tries to float on the rising column of water. --
coat catches on something -- YANKS him underwater. He
struggles feverishly -- finally tears the coat off.

plaster
underwater. The

The building GROANS in earnest. Flaming chunks of
CRASH down around Brian, forcing him to duck
place is coming apart.

main,
SHOOTs

Ten feet above, one of the falling chunks SMACKS a gas
SPLITTING then IGNITING it. A white-hot JET OF FLAME
from one side of the shaft to the other.

flames.

Brian's floating okay, he's floating right up into the

but
heat
under

Brian tries to flatten himself out, to keep everything
his nose below water, but he's still moving up -- the
becoming so intense his face flares and he's ducking

whether to

water now, trying to stay alive, trying to decide
drown or burn --

the

-- When there's a CRASH. And suddenly another door on
shaft is tearing open. There's a glint of an axe. A
flashlight.

It's Stephen.

sees

Brian has about two seconds left. In that time Stephen
the shut-off for the gas line mounted on the wall

opposite.

It's unreachable, a good twelve feet across a

horizontal

curtain of flame. Before we can even assimilate that,
Stephen's already jumped. A crazy leap over the fire.

He

SMACKS the opposite wall, HITS the shut-off, and FALLS
CRASHING into the pool beside Brian.

STEPHEN

You crazy son of a bitch, why couldn't
you stay behind a desk where you
belong?

BRIAN

"You never know till the fire stares
you down if you're gonna be --"

STEPHEN

Oh shut up, huh?
(grimaces)
I think I broke my goddamn arm...

to

Brian helps him stay above water. The level continues
rise, bringing them finally even with an open doorway
scramble through.

they

INT. WAREHOUSE - STAIRWAY - NIGHT

of

It leads to a stairwell that's become a RAGING TORRENT
water spilling down it. No way. They push through to
next doorway and out onto

the

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

fire
begin
their
madly

The place is full of hundreds of chemical drums. The
has cracked its way into the room as WUMP -- drums
EXPLODING, SHOOTING UPWARD Roman candle fountains of
glittering FLAME. Brian helps Stephen as they snake
way past sweating drums -- pressure valves hissing
with desperation. They duck low, round a corner,

INT. WAREHOUSE - CATWALK - NIGHT

Brian's
Adcox.
metal

-- And walk right into an axe handle that SMACKS
throat KNOCKING him gasping flat on his back. It's
Stephen JUMPS Adcox and TACKLES him on the edge of a
platform that extends out from the raised flooring.

STEPHEN

You stupid son of a bitch! What the
fuck are you doing!

AXE

Stevie... I...

Adcox struggles against him, heaving and sobbing.

STEPHEN

Let it go! Goddamn it let it go!

And Adcox releases the axe.

AXE

I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...

chemical
platform
cut-

Brian's on his feet now, coming toward them, when a
drum below EXPLODES, the shock wave BUCKLING the
and DROPPING it several feet before it HOLDS. Brian,
off, is HIT with a wall of debris.

THROUGH

Adcox and Stephen are FLUNG across the platform and
the shattered railing. Stephen grabs a piece of broken,
dangling strut and hangs on with one hand.

In his other hand is Adcox. Hanging below him, his grip loosening.

BRIAN

Stephen!

The
SLIPPING
into
Brian's struggling to get out from under the debris. railing Stephen's hanging onto is slick, his hand along it. But he won't let go of Adcox. His eyes bore his best friend's with absolute conviction.

STEPHEN

You go, we go.

IGNITE
won't
Adcox's
then
The towering shots of FLAME from below have begun to Adcox's pant leg. He's starting to burn. But Stephen let go. Won't let go even as the flames crawl up back. And Stephen's hand is slipping and slipping and it isn't slipping anymore because it's come off.

BRIAN

NO!

way
platform
across
his
Adcox and Stephen FALL. There's a narrow catwalk half-down. Stephen HITS with a sickening CRUNCH. Adcox falls past it, down into the flames. There's an exposed I-beam running from the ruined out over the catwalk. Brian climbs up onto it, balances over the fire below and jumps down to the catwalk where brother lies, battered but still alive.

BRIAN

You're gonna be all right, man.

INT. WAREHOUSE - FLOOR - NIGHT

coming
Brian looks down and across the factory floor. There,

through the doorway, is Pengelly and Nightengale with a hoseline.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

BRIAN

Hey! Over here!

FLATTENING
thrashing
sees

They start for him when another drum EXPLODES, them and launching their hoseline into a crazy, arc. The flame has cut them off from the hose. Stephen sees what Brian's thinking.

STEPHEN

Wait for another hose team...

But Brian's already moving for the catwalk ladder.

STEPHEN

Wait for the goddamn hose team!

and
any
flames
Brian
Same old

Brian puts his feet on the outside rungs of the ladder SLIDES down to the factory floor. He's heading for the hoseline when WHAM! -- The fire cuts him off. Not just fire. That same one from so many years ago. Don't fuck with me, kid. I'm not in the mood. Nightengale's lost his helmet and it's lying near the spinning slowly upside down -- just like his father's. stands there, paralyzed, as the fire laughs at him. little kid with his finger up his ass. Then something different comes into Brian's eyes.

BRIAN

No... No more.

the
practically
SLAMS

There's a pathetic little wall extinguisher mounted on pole. Brian lifts it, approaches the fire. You can hear the flames laugh at him. Brian suddenly turns and

it
flames
that
through

the neck of the extinguisher against the pole, BREAKING
off before HEAVING the cannister HISSING into the
where it EXPLODES -- a cloud of extinguisher powder
STUNS the flames just long enough for Brian to dash
and TACKLE the hose.

Just as

The fire shakes off the powder, rises up to kill --
Brian spins and HITS it with the STREAM.

grapple
opening,
Stephen
Brian

-- And it's like a howling train wreck as the two
with each other -- Pengelly and Nightengale have an
and they're dashing for the catwalk ladder up to
because the fire doesn't care -- it only has eyes for
now --

eyes

-- And Stephen sees Brian tackle the monster, and his
fill with tears --

fury
and
now,

-- And the fire's pushing Brian -- pushing him with the
of a frightened street bully -- but Brian won't give --
now the fire's back's broken -- it's whimpering, dying.
And Pengelly and Nightengale have climbed up to Stephen
pulling him away.

STEPHEN

That's my brother! That's my brother
goddamn it!

as

And the fire's just a little gremlin now, sighing sadly
Brian steps up with the hoseline.

BRIAN

Another time, friend.

And whoosh, it's gone.

EXT. BURNED BUILDING - NIGHT

Brian rushes up as paramedics load his brother into an ambulance.

STEPHEN

(smiles, weak)

You are such a pain in the ass...

As Brian jumps in with him

CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Paramedics swarm over Stephen as the ambulance screams through the night. Brian's right there, holding his hand.

STEPHEN

Don't tell them about Adcox... Don't let 'em...

BRIAN

I'm sorry... I'm sorry I thought... I won't.

His brother squeezes Brian's hand, his eyes never leaving him.

PARAMEDIC

(reading EKG)

Oh shit, give him some lidocaine, now. Now.

STEPHEN

(beat)

Who's your brother?

Stephen's EKG's begun to falter. The other paramedic fires off an injection into his IV.

PARAMEDIC

His pressure's fading -- push some adrenalin.

The EKG's become erratic. Stephen's eyes never leave Brian's.

BRIAN

Oh man, don't you die... Don't you die...

PARAMEDIC #2

He's going south... He's gonna box damn it...

never
They put an ambo bag over Stephen's face. The eyes
leave Brian's.

BRIAN

Goddamn it don't you die now... Not now!

shrieking.
They're breathing for him now. The EKG begins

PARAMEDIC

V-fib!

defibrillator
waver
conviction,
The paramedics begin scrambling to load the pads on Stephen's chest. But the fireman's eyes never from Brian. They look into his with complete complete acceptance, And then they don't.

FADE TO BLACK:

Then, FADE UP TO:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVE - DAWN

Then
creeps
not
twenty,
engines
them.
A silent, quiet street absolutely empty of traffic. over the crest of Chicago's mightiest thoroughfare, slowly a fire engine. It's emergency lights are on but the siren. This engine isn't in a hurry today. Behind comes another fire engine. And another. Ten, all of them creeping slowly along. And behind the now walk firemen in their dress blues. Hundreds of Walking silently in step behind

TWO COFFINS

Grindle,
The
crossed
off.

Loaded in the rear of Engine 17. Santos drives as
Brian, and the men of ladder company 46, walk behind.
silent procession passes under extended aerial ladders
like dress swords. Average people stop, take their hats

EXT. LAKE SHORE DRIVE - THE SILENT PROCESSION

Sequence omitted from original script.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

white
each

Two coffins, lying side by side, draped in the blue and
of the Chicago flag. A single fire helmet rests atop
casket.

hand of
fire
away

Brian stands at attention beside Helen. He holds the
Stephen's son Sean, his eyes clouded with tears as a
dept. honor guard plays Taps. Jennifer's there, too far
to touch.

beside

Rimgale, still wearing a head bandage, stands stiffly
a brass bell and speaks with a voice raw and weary.

SHADOW

In the Chicago Fire Department the
alarm code 3-3-5 signifies that the
company has returned home to quarters.
We will now ring out that code to
welcome home John Adcox and Stephen
McCaffrey...

bell.

With a small hammer Rimgale rings out 3-3-5 on the

casket and

The honor guard folds the flag covering Stephen's
hands it to Helen, who holds it to her breast as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

funeral
A sea of blue uniforms drifting across green as the
breaks up. Brian hugs Helen and Sean. Lets them go.

EXT. CEMETERY EDGE - DAY

Brian
Rimgale's there, resting against his dept. sedan as
walks by, pauses, and leans on it beside him. A beat.

SHADOW

Your brother was a good man.

BRIAN

Yeah.

SHADOW

Another couple of good men get burned
up for their city? Is that how it's
going to read?

(Brian doesn't answer)

You're the only one that knows.

BRIAN

Like it never happened...

Looks
Rimgale turns to walk back to his sedan. He pauses.
back to Brian.

SHADOW

Want to help me with something?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

out,
An elevator opens as Brian and Rimgale walk quickly
down a hall, and BURST into Swayzak's office.

INT. SWAYZAK'S OFFICE - DAY

his
The Alderman's there, giving a press conference from
desk.

SHADOW

Mr. Swayzak! How ya doin'?

SWAYZAK

(confused)

Investigator...

Rimgale sits on Swayzak's desk.

SWAYZAK

I'm a little busy right now --

SHADOW

This'll only take a minute. There's two cops outside that want to ask you about this --

Rimgale drops the manning report on Swayzak's desk.

SHADOW

This is just a guess of course, but I think they're gonna want to know why you secretly paid Donald Cosgrove, Jeffrey Holcomb and Alan Seagrave to create a phony manpower study.

(to cameras)

You guys'll wait, right?

leans
The room explodes with questions. Through the din Brian
over the desk very close to Swayzak.

BRIAN

See that glow flashing in the corner of your eye? That's your career dissipation light. And it just went into high gear.

pauses
smiles
Brian turns and pushes his way out. At the door he
and looks back at Rimgale. The investigator nods and
just a little...

INT. SWAYZAK'S OFFICE CORRIDOR

him.
As Brian walks down it, Rimgale appears and calls to

SHADOW

-- Brian.

Brian hesitates.

SHADOW

Don't keep looking over your shoulder for the ghost. It's gone now.

his
And there's just a beat between the investigator and
probie before Brian nods and walks away.

EXT. SWAYZAK OFFICE CORRIDOR

office.
Brian walks down the hall. He passes Jennifer's small
She's in there, surrounded by packing boxes.

BRIAN

I think your boss is going to need
some spin control.

JENNIFER

I quit two days ago, Brian.

BRIAN

(beat)
What'll you do?

JENNIFER

I don't have the slightest idea...

BRIAN

I'll see ya around, huh?

JENNIFER

It's a small town.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIRE STATION 17 - CITY

the
And morning breaking across the avenues and up against
tired brick of firehouse 17.

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - LOCKER ROOM

his
KLAXON
Brian sits staring into his locker, lost in thought,
equipment stacked up on the bench beside him. THE ALARM

SOUNDS

INT. FIRE STATION 17 - APPARATUS FLOOR

apparatus
And firemen scurrying to their equipment on the

pumper's

floor. They're climbing aboard their rigs now and the diesel is coughing to life.

comes
the

At the last moment, as it begins to pull out, Brian sliding down the pole in his turn-out gear, bounces off floor, and climbs aboard as the engine WHISTLES away.

INT. ENGINE 17 - CAB

get
him.

There's a new fireman beside him on the bench. He can't his coat buckled right. Brian leans over does it for

BRIAN

You're doing it wrong.

EXT. FIRE ENGINE 17 - STREET - DAY

avenue,

And the fire engine slips away from us, down the into the city as we

FADE TO

BLACK

THE END