

"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:

pole

-- Brian can see Adcox testing the ceiling with a pike

as Brian steps forward, under the power of a flame that beckons him as --

him

Dennis suddenly THROWS his body against Adcox, knocking

ceiling

clear just as a flame EXPLODES DOWNWARD from the

OUT

fully against him as -- All the building's windows BLOW

hailstorm

and it's like the sky's erupted for Brian, a burning

wood,

that falls and pelts the ground around him. Plaster,

and

and something metal that cracks against the pavement

spins slowly.

A fire helmet.

torn,

And Adcox is coming out the door now, blackened and

hopeless tears streaming down his face.

**AXE**

Get us some backup! We need some  
goddamn backup!

helmet

And, spotting Brian, he runs towards him. And the

now to

spins and spins and Adcox keeps running, and the sky is raining fire, and the flame on the roof has risen up

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 RINGALE, 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 in a corner. The fire hisses, spits, shakes the walls with furious anger. But it's all bluster now, the fire's dying.

**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 hears a 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 on his own.

**INT. BURNING FACTORY - DOWNSTAIRS**

machines.

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

stand.

Off the corridor are rooms full of commercial sewing

Brian enters one and drops to his knees.

TONGUE OF  
him,  
hisses

Looks under a table, flashes his light behind a work

Nothing. He turns to backtrack his way out when A

FLAME suddenly LEAPS up through the floor in front of

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

and giggles and dances unreally in front of him.

childhood. He  
looks

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

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

at him --

--  
on  
Behind  
body.  
the  
down

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brian runs up two flights to meet Tim and connect his  
Tim heads down for another roll as Brian drags his up  
two flights. It's a bitch.

coming

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

**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  
Rimgale 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. Rimgale crouches  
peels back the melted faceplate and examines the wires.  
The  
copper tip is severely melted. Rimgale 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.

Rimgale 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.

(Rimgale just stares)

In another life I was in high-end  
electronics.

Rimgale opens a plastic bag and puts the plug inside.

**SHADOW**

(into recorder)

Have outlet analyzed for any traces  
of flammable accelerants.

Rimgale 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.

([p. 78])

**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  
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 over.

**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.

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

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.

forces

An icy claw tears out his stomach. Gulping breaths, he himself to look at Adcox's back.

the  
two  
walks  
hesitates a

On it is a small, rectangular burn. It's fresh and it's size of a wall socket. At that moment Adcox turns. The of them stare at one another just a beat, then Adcox past him. Just then the alarm bells RING. Brian 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  
stop.  
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

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**

GROANS Brian, Stephen and Adcox react as the roof HOWLS and goes. and huge SPLITS begin racing along it. And then it

SCREECHING The center section DROPS, and in rolling waves of steel, the hole spreads outward; DEVOURING.

hole Adcox shoves them aside and runs for his life as the races for them, SWALLOWING roof.

**STEPHEN**

Jesus Christ Brian, run! Run goddamn it!

one And Brian balls-out dashes for the edge. Stephen's made last corner, Brian desperately heads for another. At the ankles -- instant -- as the HOWLING FLAME BELLOWS UP to his Brian LEAPS OFF the roof --

**EXT. WAREHOUSE - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT**

exterior -- And falls half a story before CRASHING onto an floors fire escape. Flames have cut off the fire escape two onto below, so Brian climbs down as far as possible, crawls 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-way 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**