

TELL-TALE

by

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BLACK

A heart beats. Setting the rhythm. Rising.

EXT. WOODS -- DUSK

A man's chest heaves, drawing ragged breaths. Heart racing.

JACOB KOURIS (60) lies on his back in the dirt; staring up through the trees at the darkening sky. The dying light of a fire burns dances across his face.

His face contorts in pain. *This is it. The end.* The beating of his heart drowns out all else.

Just beyond his finger tips lies a silver, monogrammed LIGHTER. His fingers reach towards it. Slow.

The beating rises. Faster and more frantic.

No longer individual beats but an endless STRING growing louder and more rapid and more violent!

Kouris takes one last rattling breath.

The beating stops.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: TELL-TALE

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS -- DAY

The heart of JARED ANDREWS beats steadily as he waits in line to board the bus in the grungy, open air bus terminal.

Empty spaces sit beneath a row of digital signs: To New York, Pensilvania, Nashville.

A middle aged executive, who's believes his \$5000 suit gives him permission to be an asshole, ANDREWS berates his assistant over the phone.

ANDREWS
(into the phone)
Four hours? Four fucking hours!
They couldn't put me on a flight?

He's at the back of the cue. One of the last onto the bus.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Don't give me that bullshit.
(beat)
No. No. You know what is? Sitting
on a stinky bus next to some sweaty
asshole for FOUR hours.

He climbs the stairs.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS -- CONTINUOUS

...hands his ticket to the driver.

Walks to the back, passing a handful of people.

ANDREWS
Ya whatever. I'm boarding now.

He tosses his bag onto the overhead rack and takes his seat.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)
I don't even have an outlet. Jesus
Chr-

BANG BANG

The ear-splitting noise of GUNFIRE echoes off the tin walls.

Andrews throws himself to the floor behind a pair of seats.
The other patrons scream and scramble.

Then. The bus goes eerily quiet. Everyone waits on edge.
Exchanging nervous glances.

BANG BANG

Shattering glass. A scream for help.

Footsteps make their way up the aisle. Glass crunching
beneath booted feet.

Andrews prays silently. Death meters away.

BANG!

Then--

Suddenly, the silence is broken by a scuffle!

Andrews peers around his seat. Another shot goes off hitting
the roof with a CLANG. He ducks. And then slowly peers out
again.

On the aisle floor two men wrestle for the GUN. The larger man is on top, winning handily.

Landing blow after blow is STANLEY HECTOR (35), large and square-headed, brimming with muscle and rage. His fist lands on the face of MITCHELL CAMPBELL, a stringy teenager, who struggles to put up a defense.

Andrews spots the GUN and snatches it up.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)
Fuck ya! We got him!

A few others start to peak out, some applauding.

Hector pays them no attention. He lands a fierce blow. Mitchell slumps, unconscious.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)
Atta boy.

He puts a hand on Hector's shoulder, the signal to stop. But this changes nothing.

Hector continues to reign down with frenzied blow after frenzied blow. His face is contorted like a mad man. Enjoying it?

VARIOUS NEWS OUTLETS

The media circus in high gear--

ANCHOR 1
Breaking News: A shooting on a Cleveland Greyhound bus leaves 3 dead, but-

--

ANCHOR 2
-things could've been much worse if it had not been for the heroics of one man.

--

ANCHOR 3
Army veteran Stanley Hector risked his own life to disarm the attacker and saved the lives of 22 people.

We go live to the scene with the hero himself.

EXT. BUS STOP -- DAY

The scene is chaos. Police, reporters, EMS. Hector is swarmed by media as paramedics bandage his bloodied fists.

HECTOR

Things happened real quick. I went back to my training.
Just...reacted. I'm not a hero.

BANG BANG BANG

INT. KBL OFFICE - DAY

Jacob Kouris jumps at knock on his door. He puts out his cigarette and fans the smoke away.

Kouris is man of grave disposition, slightly overweight, aged beyond his 60 years.

His office is large and modern. Desk covered in papers. Walls featuring trinkets from his past. This space is his second home - or perhaps more accurately his first home even.

KOURIS

Come in.

His assistant ANNA enters. She's young, driven, and doesn't mince words.

ANNA

Simone is going to kill you if you keep smoking in here.

He looks back to his papers, continuing. Not a minute to spare.

ANNA (CONT'D)

But I guess it's your birthday so you might get away with it.
(adding-)
Happy Birthday.

He barely reacts. Eyes still on his desk.

KOURIS

Just another day.
(changing the subject)
What's on the agenda?

Beat. Anna not surprised.

ANNA

Cynthia Campbell called looking for representation.

KOURIS

We'll pass.

Anna starts to speak up. Kouris cuts her off.

KOURIS (CONT'D)

I don't care what they're offering.
I didn't get into law to defend her homicidal son.

A twinge of pain in his chest. He flinches. Stopping to massage.

KOURIS (CONT'D)

(pained)

What else?

ANNA

Meetings all morning-
(re: his expression)
You okay?

He shrugs off the discomfort, rising to his feet, grabbing his empty coffee cup off the cluttered desk.

KOURIS

Fine. Ya. Go on.

ANNA

-The afternoon to work. All pro-bono like you asked for.

KOURIS

Perfect.

He walks past her.

INT. KOURIS' OFFICE - VARIOUS

Kouris sets his bird-bath sized cup of coffee on the desk. *Down to business.*

A rapid series of clients sits across from Kouris. All are people who would usually not be able to afford to sit in *this* sort of office.

An elderly man:

ELDERLY MAN
They're trying to evict me.

A young mother:

MOTHER
My husband wants to take my kids away.

A young black man:

CURTIS
My boss fired me cause I'm black.

A middle aged woman:

WOMAN
-Sexual Abuse.

An asian man:

MAN
-Discrimination.

They all refrain:

MOTHER
And I can't afford-

CURTIS
I'm broke

WOMAN
No money.

Kouris answers them all the same:

KOURIS
Don't worry about that.

INT. KBL OFFICE / KITCHEN -- LATER

Kouris walks through the sleek office kitchen.

A half-dozen lawyers mill about getting coffee, eating \$19 salads, and chatting. Their conversations stop as he walks by.

He nods to them as he grabs his lunch--
Another bucket of coffee and a hefty slice of birthday cake.

INT. KBL OFFICE - LATER

The office is dark now. Everyone else has packed it in for the night.

KARLSSON (36), bro-y, over-confident, dressed to the 9's, and Anna watch Kouris in his smokey office through the glass walls.

KARLSSON

No billables. No glory. Just work.

ANNA

Just people.

KARLSSON

The dough he's got. The career he's had. And he still breaks his back like his articling. I'd be on the golf course if I was him.

ANNA

I know you would.

KARLSSON

I don't get it. What makes a guy like that tick?

EXT. KOURIS HOUSEHOLD -- NIGHT

Kouris' black, inconspicuous car pulls into the driveway of his large, modern estate. The home of someone who has done well for themselves, but doesn't show off.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Kouris turns off the ignition.

He feels another twinge of chest pain. Grimacing and massaging.

INT. KOURIS HOUSEHOLD -- CONTINUOUS

Kouris walks through the darkened doorway. He turns on the light-

-And a group of people spring up.

GROUP

Surprise!

Kouris is taken-aback. The crowd of family and friends applauds. A dozen or so people fill his minimalist living room.

His wife MARY (57), warm but no-nonsense, greets him. His adult kids not far behind. Son CHRIS (27), works in finance, all business. His daughter STACY (29), clearly her mother's daughter, has a sizable baby-bump.

They embrace.

MARY
Happy Birthday!

KOURIS
Thanks honey.

The house has been decorated with balloons and a banner:
Happy 60th Birthday!

INT. KOURIS HOUSEHOLD - LATER

The group mingles and laughs, in high spirits.

They eat and drink. The platters are large. Champagne flows, charcuterie devoured.

EXT. KOURIS HOUSEHOLD -- NIGHT

Kouris and a few of the others enjoy cigars on the back porch.

Kouris coughs and holds his chest again.

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

The smokers return, sitting at the large table before their dinner.

Kouris sways as he sits. Something is off. He's not feeling well. The world blurs. *Just the alcohol. Or something more?*

Kouris looks down at the plate.

MARY
We made your favourite.
(beat)
Venison.

The scene before him crashes over him like a wave--

People, drinks, laughter - all good things before now are demented and disturbed - warped like a perverted carnival mirror.

MARY (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

Kouris grabs at his chest. His heart pounds. His pain builds. The world grows louder; spinning out of control.

The scene melts together into one massive, unending existential SCREAM as Kouris slips from his chair, toppling to the ground and blacks out.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. FOREST -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A cigarette is lite.

It's in the mouth of MARKUS (47) - Jacob & Esau's father - outfitted in camo, rifle on his shoulder. Ex-military. Imposing. Not someone you would talk-back to.

A number of other men are spread out nearby.

MARKUS
Jacob! Esau! Boys. Keep up.

20 meters back are the boys, feet dragging.

Jacob and Esau (14) are identical twin brothers, and indeed are identical in every way. Their 2 friends walk with them.

ESAU
You know, Dad said that he would let me use his gun today.

JACOB
You're such a liar.

ESAU
I'm not a liar. It's true.

JACOB
He never said that.

ESAU
He did. I swear. He said I could try.
(adding-)
You weren't there, you were inside with mom.

JACOB

Well... he was probably just saying
that so you'd shut up and quit
talking for once.

ESAU

Shut up.

JACOB

You shut up.

ESAU

No you-

A GUNSHOT from up ahead cuts their squabble short.

Cheers follow from the other men. Their father waves them forward.

EXT. FOREST -- DAY

A deer lays bloodied and still on the forest floor.

The boys stare at the felled creature in stricken fascination.

EXT. FOREST -- NIGHT

The deer roasts on the fire. Its cold, black eyes reflecting the flickering flames.

INT. TENT -- NIGHT

Jacob and Esau tuck into their sleeping bags. Through the mesh roof of their tent they can see the stars.

They don't speak, just enjoying the starry expanse and each other's company.

EXT. FOREST -- DAY

The group treks through the brush. Tired, ragged, and dirty.

Again the boys lag behind.

JACOB

Oh my god, I'm so tired. I couldn't sleep with all your farting.

The other boys laugh.

ESAU
I wasn't farting!

JACOB
How do you know? You were asleep.
Sleep farter.

ESAU
You're a sleep farter!

JACOB
Am not!

ESAU
You're so annoying!

UP AHEAD -- SAME

Markus pauses. He clutches at his chest. And then suddenly collapses to the leafy ground.

The boys don't notice until yells from the other men alert them.

JACOB
Dad!?

Esau is frozen. Jacob starts to run over.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Dad!

CUT TO BLACK.

VOICE
(a whisper)
Jacob.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

MARY
Jacob!

Lights flash as Jacob is rolled into the emergency room on a stretcher. Leaving Mary behind.

Medical personnel swarm over him. His ECG beeps loudly, heart beat non-existent.

It's chaos.

Doctors perform CPR. Ribs crack under the pressure. The ambu-bag pumps. All to the screaming whine of the ECG. BEEEEEEEEP.

The Doctors hit him with the paddles. THUMP. No change. They charge up and go again. THUMP.

Things are dire as the whine builds.

The paddles land for a third time with a THUD.

INT. ICU -- DAY

Stillness.

And silence other than the steady beating of Jacob's heart monitor. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

Jacob sits lethargically in bed, staring into space as his wife and the doctor speak in low voices.

Stacy naps in a nearby chair. Chris on the phone, pacing.

Jacob Kouris' stare is vacant. Unseeing.

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WANT TO KEEP READING?

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