

IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THE HEAT

Written by

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1 EXT. SAM'S FAMILY RESTAURANT - NIGHT 1

A quiet, local restaurant. Welcoming, well-worn, familiar.

*There's nobody around but ghosts.*

A young man paces in the shadows. Trying... too hard to be inconspicuous. Dressed in all black. This is NATHAN (20s, M).

Nathan walks up to the back door. Pulls out a lock-pick. Pauses as we HEAR sirens drive past, then picks the lock and hurries inside.

2 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 2

Nathan hurries through the back door and whips it shut. Takes a crumpled piece of paper out of his pocket, and punches a code into the alarm system next to the door.

He closes his eyes... the code works. He looks like he's not sure of what he's about to do....

He walks to the nearby counter and takes off his BACKPACK. Takes a name tag marked KEVIN S. off the counter, and puts it on.

*His hands slightly trembling*, he reaches into his backpack and takes out a bag of kitchen flour marked FLAMMABLE.

In the corner, he sets down mouse traps next to a cable, and cuts open the wire. *He then takes the flour, and starts sprinkling it over the floor.*

He takes a lighter from his pocket. Flicks it. *It doesn't work.*

3 INT. FRONT ROOM - NATHAN 3

In the dark, Nathan walks into the main room and starts rifling under the front desk for a lighter.

Suddenly -- A *KNOCK AT THE DOOR*. BILL ANDREWS (50s, M) -- a man who looks straight out of a classic *hard-boiled detective noir* -- is standing outside, in the doorway.

Nathan jolts upright, petrified. Briefly catches Bill's eye. Bill starts knocking on the front window enthusiastically.

BILL

Hey, kid.

Nathan tries to hide his face in the shadows. Bill shines his flashlight into the restaurant.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 Didn't know you guys were still  
 open.

Walking closer, Nathan looks down and sees an emblazoned DETECTIVE BADGE on Bill's chest. *Oh no.*

BILL (CONT'D)  
*I have to ask, though... you think  
 I could grab a quick bite before  
 you close...?*

Looking down, Nathan realizes that in his "inconspicuous" attire, he looks, ironically, like a waiter.

Nathan shakes his head at Bill, but Bill shines his flashlight right in Nathan's face.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 Hey, between you and me... *Kevin,*  
 is it?

Nathan looks down at his *KEVIN S.* name badge.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 I knew your boss, very well, way  
 back in the day... *he owes me one,*  
 know what I mean?

NATHAN  
*I-I'm sorry-*

BILL  
 In and out, 10 minutes, I promise.  
 Then I'm out of your hair.

Nathan looks back at the kitchen. Looks back at Bill's badge.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 Come on, just a coffee...?

4 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

4

The *WHIRRRR* of a coffee machine. *Next to it, a picture of a young girl.*

Nathan looks out from the kitchen at Bill, who has made himself *quite* comfortable in the other room poring over various documents.

Suddenly, the landline rings. Confused, Nathan picks up.

NATHAN  
Er... hi?

There's a deep, distorted voice on the other end of the line.

JULIA  
THE COP. GET HIM OUT.

NATHAN  
Wait, is that you? J-

JULIA  
*DON'T SAY THE NAME.*

NATHAN  
Sorry. He'll be out in ten.

JULIA  
*NOT TEN... NOW.*

He tenses up. Thinks of a way to explain things.

NATHAN  
I... I hear you. But... he's the last person we want to upset right now. Right? And if I just get him some coffee...

JULIA  
*IT'S BAD ENOUGH THAT HE'S SEEN YOUR FACE. I'M NOT ASKING. YOU KNOW WHAT I CAN DO.*

The receiver CLICKS as Julia hangs up.

5 INT. FRONT ROOM - LATER

5

Nathan hovers in the corner with the cup of coffee. Visibly musters his courage. As he walks up, though, *without even looking behind him, Bill starts to speak.*

BILL  
*You don't have to do it.*

Nathan stops dead in his tracks. Is Bill... talking to him?

A beat. Nathan gulps. But Bill doesn't seem to know he's there. He starts walking up again.

BILL (CONT'D)  
*You don't have to do it.*

Nathan looks over Bill's shoulder. He's looking at a bunch of printed out documents... probably active cases.

BILL (CONT'D)

I wish I could tell them all. You don't have to do it.

*Is Bill talking to himself?* Nathan, meekly, forces himself to walk towards Bill, gathering all his courage to speak--

BILL (CONT'D)

I wish I could tell them all... you don't have to do it... you don't have to do it... *YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT.*

Suddenly, as Nathan gets close... Bill POUNDS the table. Nathan FLINCHES, SPILLING the coffee on himself.

Bill turns around, finally noticing him.

NATHAN

Oh- sorry... I'll get you another... sorry...

MATCH CUT TO:

6

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

6

Nathan wipes hot coffee off himself. He's back on the phone.

JULIA

I DON'T NEED AN APOLOGY. I NEED YOU TO ACT.

NATHAN

Look, I'm not really the biggest believer in adding *friction*, when I do things-

Suddenly, we hear the CHIME of the front door opening.

Nathan looks out into the front room again. A young woman -- MARY (20s, M) has appeared in the front, wearing a cashier's uniform.

JULIA

WHAT WAS THAT?

NATHAN

It's fine. I'll make it work.

JULIA  
TELL THEM WE'RE CLOSED.

NATHAN  
I mean, I can't do that, right? I  
already let him in... isn't that  
suspicious?

RICHARD (20s, M), a preppy-looking college student, enters  
through the front door, although his face is obscured...  
Nathan's face falls.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
...Shit.

JULIA  
DEAL WITH THIS. NOW.

Richard starts RINGING THE BELL, looking around for a waiter.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
...DO YOU HEAR ME?

*DING. DING. DING.*

JULIA (CONT'D)  
...NATHAN?

Nathan panics and hangs up the phone.

7 INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

7

Bill, Richard, and Mary are sitting in different booths as  
Nathan passes out menus.

Nathan walks up to the booth Richard is sitting at. Suddenly:

RICHARD  
...wait, Nate... is that you?

Nathan FREEZES. Looks up at Richard. Recognizes who it is.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Oh my God, how long's it been?  
Four... five years?

Nathan looks over his shoulder. *Bill's sitting close by.*  
Looks down at his KEVIN S. nametag.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
I think the last time I saw you...  
that party, at the barn? Remember?  
You were so fucked up.

Behind Nathan, Bill is muttering to himself, not noticing the slip.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Wait, didn't you *dome* that kid who-

NATHAN  
(abruptly)  
*And what will you be having today?*

Richard looks at Nathan skeptically; Nathan plays it off.

8 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 8

Nathan walks up to the stove and sets out all his utensils and ingredients.

He walks over to the flammable flour, picks it up from next to his tools, and sets it down next to the other food.

The phone rings behind him, but he doesn't answer.

9 INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT 9

Mary is sitting in a booth, looking over her menu.

She looks up at Richard. Accidentally makes eye contact. Looks away.

Suddenly, she hears muttering from one booth over... it's Bill, talking to himself.

BILL  
*You don't have to do it...*

Curious, she gets up and walks over to him. She looks over his shoulder, and *realizes something*.

MARY  
What are you doing?

Bill realizes she's standing behind him.

BILL  
Was I being too loud?

MARY  
-No need to apologize.

An awkward beat. Mary realizes what she's said.

MARY (CONT'D)

Er- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

Another awkward beat.

BILL

I'm Bill. And you are?

MARY

Mary.

They shake hands. Bill looks over and sees Richard looking at both of them.

BILL

...and you?

Richard looks down until he realizes Bill's talking to him.

Awkwardly walks over and shakes Bill's hand.

RICHARD

I'm Richard... you look familiar.  
Do I know you?

Bill shrugs.

BILL

Dunno. Used to come here a lot,  
back in the day... Sam was a good  
friend of mine.

MARY

Sam?

She looks down at the menu. "SAM'S FAMILY DINER".

BILL

God rest his soul.

MARY

Oh... I'm sorry.

Bill shakes his head.

RICHARD

Have you been back here?

BILL

Not since the funeral. I couldn't.  
I still remember the last time I  
was here. Sam was telling me...  
well, *some personal stuff*. I think  
he knew he was dying.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

He told me to live with my mistakes, but not die with my regrets... scared the shit outta me, really. I changed my whole life around the next day. Quit my job, and... well, here we are.

On the table, we tilt up from the menu to see more clearly what is on Bill's table -- photos and documents from crime investigations, and next to it, a *lined script*.

*Bill's an actor.*

BILL (CONT'D)

I just got this part... you two wanna help me run lines?

Mary smiles at Richard; they both sit down across from Bill.

They start looking at Bill's script *as our camera moves back towards the kitchen...*

10 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 10

Nathan's got the hang of things. Moving around the kitchen a bit more deftly.

He puts something on the stove to cook as he hears the chime of the front doorbell again.

He walks to the window to go see who it is.

11 INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS 11

JULIA (20s, F) is sitting at the bar, waiting for Nathan. She looks stressed. Nathan runs out of the kitchen.

NATHAN

Julia? What are you-

She GRABS his hand and squeezes it painfully hard.

JULIA

*Hi, I'd like to see a menu for take-out, please.*

He winces in pain. She tilts her head towards the others.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to drop by so late, but I tried the phones, and no one was answering.

NATHAN

We're a bit busy at the moment.  
Probably going to be a bit of a  
wait.

JULIA

*Well, that seems unprofessional.*

Nathan looks nervous. Looks over at the others. Bends down to speak to Julia directly.

NATHAN

Look, Juli- er, *ma'am*... are you  
sure this is still a good idea?

Julia's says nothing. She looks almost angry.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I mean, do you think your dad would  
want you to-

She squeezes his hand, even harder; he gasps.

JULIA

*He made his decisions.*

Nathan looks fazed.

NATHAN

There's a cop over there. I could  
report you.

JULIA

Because we all know you're so  
popular at the station.

NATHAN

*That was one time.*

JULIA

*Nathan, at the end of the day...  
I'm just a customer. Who are you?*

A tense beat.

Nathan is angry -- but walks back into the kitchen...

12

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

12

Only to find the kitchen FILLED with smoke.

The food he's been cooking caught fire while he was talking to Julia.

Nathan FREAKS out. Hurries across the kitchen.

We see the light of a fire flicker against the photos and decorations on the kitchen wall. On the picture of Julia.

Nathan wades through the smoke. Grabs the fire extinguisher. Sprays it at the stove.

The light of the fire fades. Nathan, sweaty and somewhat traumatized, collapses against the wall of photos, panting.

He looks over at the door. Hears the voices of the people sitting outside. *Has a moment to himself...*

RICHARD (O.S.)

*I mean, it's confusing. You go outside, everyone's pretending to be someone else.*

13

INT. FRONT ROOM - LATER

13

Nathan, now with the food, walks out into the main room. He still looks in shock.

Bill and Richard are running lines.

RICHARD

*How can you tell the good guys from the bad guys?*

BILL

*It's in the choices you make. Not everyone gets the same ones. But no matter what you choose, a poor choice will make the world worse, but a good choice can always make the world better. I just wish I could tell them all... you don't have to do this.*

Nathan seems affected by this.

He looks over at Julia... then slides a bill presenter onto the table quietly.

NATHAN

*For when you're ready.*

He walks quickly back into the kitchen.

We watch Julia as she sips her water. Behind her, we see the three customers start to get up and grab their coats.

BILL

Oh, wow, it's getting late. I have  
call... I might need to take this  
to go.

RICHARD

You need a ride?

BILL

...Which way are you going?

They make their way out the front door as Julia watches out  
of the corner of her eye.

She waits a few moments, then gets up herself. Shouts to  
Nathan over in the kitchen.

JULIA

*They're gone.*

No response.

JULIA (CONT'D)

*So I guess you know what to do.*

Again, no response. The camera pans over towards the window  
into the kitchen...

JULIA (CONT'D)

*Nathan? Are you there?*

...where we see Nathan quietly letting Bill in through the  
back door. They both crouch down behind the kitchen counter.

PAN back over to Julia, who walks over to the other door to  
the kitchen and looks inside.

She doesn't see anyone -- it looks like Nathan's made a run  
for it.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Huh.

She looks over her shoulder again. Walks to her place at the  
bar. Reaches into her handbag and pulls out a lighter.

Walks into the kitchen...

A few beats. Then:

BILL (O.C.)

*FREEZE!*

Julia walks briskly back into the main room, her head down.

Tries to walk towards the doors... but Richard and Mary are blocking them.

She turns around again -- Bill is blocking her from the other side.

*She's trapped.*

She turns to Bill. Tries one more desperate thing.

JULIA

Oh, thank God you're here. I was just in the kitchen... that server, Nathan, I think? It looked like he was trying to start a fire!

RICHARD

Don't you mean *Kevin*?

Julia's face falls as she sees Nathan walk back into the room, into foreground.

*She's cooked.*

14

EXT. SAM'S FAMILY RESTAURANT - DUSK

14

The night is almost over.

Nathan sits alone, sitting on the curb as Bill walks out of the restaurant, locking the door behind him.

BILL

We should be fine. Might try to keep an eye on the place, and make sure she doesn't come back.

Bill sits down next to Nathan. Hands him the bill presenter from earlier.

BILL (CONT'D)

That was some quick thinking.

Nathan opens it up. Inside is a scribbled handwritten note, and the photo of Julia from the kitchen.

NATHAN

You said you were a regular... I figured you'd give a shit.

Bill looks at Nathan.

BILL

You're better than this.

Nathan looks down.

NATHAN

Maybe. I'm not expecting sympathy  
from a cop.

Bill gets up.

BILL

Yeah, well... *I'm not a cop.*

He begins to walk away from the restaurant, leaving Nathan in shock.

NATHAN

Wait... what are you?

BILL

*I'm Bill.*

(beat)

Hey, take care of yourself. It's  
lonely, working nights.

Bill turns around and walks off...

Leaving Nathan right where we started -- standing alone,  
outside the restaurant.

*Once again... nobody around except ghosts.*

*FIN.*