

THE COLD FIRE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A typical bachelor pad. Messy. Clothes are scattered everywhere around the cluttered bedroom. SEAN NICHOLS, 34, is face down on his pillow, in a coma-like deep sleep.

His mobile phone reads 7:14. A second later, it switches to 7:15 and his alarm goes off, infuriatingly loud. Sean begins to stir.

He reaches out for the phone with his finger-tips, finding it, slides the off button and silence fills the air. Groaning, he wearily sits up at the edge of the bed, spying his packet of cigarettes on the bedside table. He grabs them.

Sean pulls out a cigarette and puts it to his lips. He lights it and takes a massive drag, savouring the taste. With that, he slowly raises himself off the bed and heads into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sean stumbles into his living room. Takeaway boxes from the last few nights meals, litter the coffee table. He walks across the room and pulls open the curtains. It's a bright, blue-skied day. The sunlight streams into the room, making him squint in pain.

SEAN

Ahh... Fuck off!

His eyes adjust to the sunlight, as he looks out onto the city streets. It's quiet. Hardly a soul to be seen.

Sean turns and looks around the room. It's clearly a mess. Dishes haven't been done, food has been left out. Empty beer bottles appear to have taken up residence.

He sighs. Then begins to get the apartment into some kind of order, starting with the clothes lying on the floor in front of him.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The camera pans around the room and stops on Sean, who is now sitting on his sofa. He leans over the newspaper spread across the now half clear coffee table. In his left hand, he holds his mobile phone.

His other hand, holding a pen, circles a "Help Wanted" ad in the paper.

SEAN
(optimistically to
himself)
OK. Here we go. Today's the day.

He punches a number on the phone.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hi, I'm calling about the Personal
Assistant vacancy.... Yeah.... Oh,
it's gone.... OK.... Yeah....
Thanks anyway.

He hangs up. Throws the phone onto the coffee table, and lets out a disappointing sigh.

Sean falls back into the sofa, for what seems an eternity. He has the look of a man that has resigned himself to failure. It's not the first time, this scenario has played out.

He shakes his head, gets up and walks into the kitchen. He pulls out a mug from the cupboard. Grabs the coffee jar. No coffee.

He lays down the mug, and moves to the fridge. Bare. No food.

Sean grabs his coat, and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE - DAY

There are several couples seated at tables at the front of the cafe drinking coffee and reading newspapers.

A woman from inside the cafe, comes to the window, eyeing Sean with a coy look.

He notices her and they exchange pleasant looks. Sean takes a final drag of his cigarette. Stomps out the butt. Exhales. Then steps inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, the cafe is quiet as the morning rush has subsided. With only a couple seated by the window, who are immersed in conversation, and an old man nursing a cup of tea in the far corner. Sean makes his way to his usual table near the back wall.

He signals to the waitress, CHARLOTTE BENSON, 28. A gorgeous fair skinned woman. Her dark hair resting beautifully on the shoulders of her slightly hidden, athletic shaped body.

Charlotte comes over with her customary bright smile and starts to take Sean's order.

CHARLOTTE
Hey Sean, how you doing today?
You ready to order?

Sean looks up at Charlotte and smiles.

SEAN
I'm good, I'm even better now I'm
seeing you though. Yourself?

CHARLOTTE
Ahh, can't complain. Early start
today, so I'm feeling a little
tired.

SEAN
Well you certainly don't look it.

CHARLOTTE
(Blushing)
So what you having?

SEAN
(Wry Smile)
Gimme the usual, and kill the
toast; I'm cutting down on the
carbs... Cheers beautiful.

Charlotte leaves with Sean's order.

Sean glances out of the window, and notices a familiar face. A tall thin man, DARREN MILLER, 22, is heading towards the entrance of the cafe. With hair dishevelled, his punctuating eyes from his pale skin, shiftily flick from left to right, taking note of his surroundings.

Darren approaches Sean's table, and takes a seat.

DARREN
You alright there Sean?

SEAN
Yeah Daz, not to bad. You get that
thing sorted the other night?

DARREN
Yes mate. You should have seen the
look on his face when I pulled out
the wedge.

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)
I really think he wanted to kick me out, but that's done 'im for a couple of months.

SEAN
Nice!

Sean smiles and nods in approval.

Charlotte returns with Sean's Full English breakfast.

CHARLOTTE
There you go hun, enjoy!

SEAN
Thanks love.

Darren grabs Sean's attention away from Charlotte.

DARREN
Anyway, thanks again Sean. I'm gonna get myself straight, then I'll sort you out. OK?

SEAN
Yeah, not a problem. You want anything to eat?

DARREN
Nah mate, I'm good... I'm gonna get going yeah...

SEAN
Alright, catch you later then.

Sean watches as Darren briskly leaves the cafe, closes the door, lights a cigarette and heads off down the street.

CHARLOTTE
So what was that all about?

Charlotte looks back to the kitchen area and quickly sits down opposite Sean.

SEAN
Ah nothing, you know just...

Charlotte interrupts.

CHARLOTTE
I hope you're not giving him any money, you know what he's like.

SEAN
He got into a bit of a situation and I've helped 'im out, that's all.

CHARLOTTE

That's all well and good Sean, but I don't need to remind you of what happened last time.

SEAN

Yeah I know, but he's a mate.

Charlotte rolls her eyes in disapproval.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Come on he's a mate.

(Beat)

Anyway onto more pressing matters.

Sean gives Charlotte a sly grin.

CHARLOTTE

And what might those be?

SEAN

Well, I was chatting to your sister the other day and.....

Charlotte interrupts again.

CHARLOTTE

Oh yeah.

SEAN

Yeah... and she kinda let it slip you might be interested in going on a date.

CHARLOTTE

(Smiling)

No she didn't.

SEAN

Yeah.

(Beat)

Nah, she didn't.

Sean and Charlotte start laughing in unison.

The couples laughter breaks the silence of the now near empty cafe, and also brings their intimate conversation to the attention of the man sitting behind the counter reading a newspaper. PETE, the owner of café, looks up from his paper, eyeballing the couple, and decides it's time to interrupt there cosy little chat.

PETE

(Shouting Sarcastically)

Charlotte, I hate to interrupt you, and I'd love for you to be able to sit here all morning, having a laugh and a joke on my time.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)
But tables don't clear themselves,
so if you don't mind..

CHARLOTTE
Ok Pete, just give me a minute.

Pete nods towards Charlotte, then quickly returns his attention to his newspaper.

Charlotte starts writing on her pad, tears off a note and places it on the table, pushing it towards Sean.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Sean do yourself a favour, and give
me a call. That's my new number.

Charlotte gets up from seat, and starts walking back to the front counter. She stops in mid stride, and turns back to Sean.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(Seductively)
Oh and Sean.
(beat)
the next time you see my sister...
tell her she should of let it slip
sooner.

Sean gives Charlotte a huge smile, as she returns to her station. He looks down at his now cold food, and signals to get her attention.

SEAN
(Cheekily)
Charlie, you wouldn't mind whacking
this in the microwave for me would
ya?

CHARLOTTE
(Under her breath smiling)
Cheeky bastard.

INT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Sean makes his way through the cafe tables, to the front counter, and hands Pete the money for his meal. He turns to leave, and as he approaches the entrance of the cafe, he waves Charlotte over. She saunters towards him grinning. Sean slowly leans in to her and whispers something into her ear. She giggles, then playfully hits Sean on his arm.

CHARLOTTE
(Playful)
Oh, behave.

Sean laughs as he walks out of the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The street has very few people walking along it. The distinctive sounds of the city are heard: PASSING TRAFFIC, CARS HONKING, PEOPLE TALKING. Through a small crowd, we see Sean walking confidently down the road. His hands deep in his trouser pockets.

His mobile phone rings. He rummages quickly in his inside coat pocket and pulls out his mobile.

The caller ID: Unknown Number.

He hesitantly answers it.

SEAN

Hello.... Yes it's Sean speaking.

(surprised and excited,
yet nervous)

....Yeah, I'm still looking.....

Yeah, I know it well, I can be
there in a couple of hours....

Great, Ok fantastic, I'll see you
at 2 O'clock.... I look forward to
meeting you to, Mr. Rayne. Bye.
Bye.

Sean hangs up the phone. Delighted.

Then continues walking towards his apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The door of the apartment swings open, and Sean enters, setting down his keys on the table next to the entrance. He continues into the living room.

The faint sounds of the city continue in the background.

He removes his coat. Sets it across the arm of the sofa. Then checks his watch. 12:15.

SEAN

(To Himself)

Better get ready.

Sean goes through his morning routine, showering, getting dressed, brushing his teeth, Etc.

He puts on his jacket, checks himself in his mirror, then adjusts his tie.

He breathes in deeply, then exhales. He is ready.

Sean checks his watch for the time. It reads 12:55. He strides out of the room, opens the front door, and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train station is sparsely filled. A few people are sitting on the available benches, waiting for the train to arrive. Whilst a growing number of passengers are lining up along the front edge of the station platform.

Sean looks at an approaching train in the distance.

It screams past him, then screeches to a halt.

The sliding doors open. Passengers flood out of the train doors and fill the platform. Sean waits for his opportunity, then enters the train.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The train pulls into the station, and noise fills the air. Sean gets off the train and makes his way towards the escalator up to the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Sean walks down the street, past countless office buildings and parked cars. Moderately heavy foot traffic moves along the pavement, and Sean briskly fights his way through it.

Mr. Rayne's office is part of a large office complex, situated in a six storey building with other businesses. Surrounded by big black iron gates, a steady stream of individuals come and go from the entrance.

From across the street, Sean notices it's an older office building with plenty of windows. Most are closed, others venetian blinds, the rest are bare.

He crosses the road. Continues through the iron gates. And into the lobby of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Sean waits for a lift in the lobby.

It arrives. The doors open And Sean enters

INT. LIFT - CONTINUOUS

He presses a number on the keypad.

The doors shut. Then open on the 5th Floor.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sean exits the lift to be greeted by a long sterile corridor, with a series of office doors placed in regular intervals.

He continues along the winding maze-like corridor, eventually arriving at the office of Mr. Rayne.

Sean knocks on the door.

Knock. Knock.

MR RAYNE

Come in.

He cautiously enters the room.

INT. MR RAYNE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

SEAN

(quizzical)

Mr. Rayne?

Sean is greeted by a man in his forties, wearing a smart suit and tie, with grey hair and a neat beard, seated behind a large wooden desk. He turns to face Sean.

MR RAYNE

Yes. Sean I presume. Take a seat.

He closes a file he's been reading, and lays it on his desk.

SEAN

Thanks.

Sean unbuttons his jacket, and takes a seat.

MR RAYNE

So Sean, have any problems getting here?

SEAN

No, pretty straight forward
really... about 45 minutes by
train.

MR RAYNE

Good, good to hear... well, as you
know I'm looking for an assistant.
And having looked through your C.V,
your background and knowledge
suggest you would be an excellent
candidate.

Sean nods in agreement.

SEAN

Ok.

MR RAYNE

Now before we get into the
particulars of the role, I need you
to sign this.

Mr. Rayne slides a piece of paper across the desk to Sean.

It reads "CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT."

Sean quickly scans it.

SEAN

(Quizzical)

What is this?

MR RAYNE

Well Sean. My work is of a rather
sensitive nature. And I need to
ensure that any discussions, with
outside elements, be that an
employee or future employee. Do not
compromise the inner workings of my
business.

Sean looks over the document once again, this time reading it
word for word.

SEAN

Ah... OK.

Sean signs the Agreement, then hands it back to Mr. Rayne.

He verifies that the signature is acceptable, before moving
on.

MR RAYNE

Perfect. Right.
(MORE)

MR RAYNE (CONT'D)

Now Sean, what I'm looking for is someone who can handle a highly pressurised environment. This person needs to be confident, strong willed, meticulous in their approach, and have the ability to see things through to completion. I need them to be able to work to tight deadlines, as well as completely manage the logistics side of the business.

(Beat)

Do you think you possess those Attributes?

SEAN

Yes. Definitely.

MR RAYNE

Well, with that in mind. I'm putting together a very healthy package, with a basic salary of £50k. How does that sound?

SEAN

(Positive)

That sounds great. Yeah.

MR RAYNE

So, tell me about yourself Sean.

SEAN

I'm a friendly, fun, and energetic person. I put my heart into everything I do. And I find that, getting along with people, makes life more enjoyable and certainly more productive.

Mr. Rayne nods.

MR RAYNE

Would you like some water?

SEAN

No thank you, I'm fine.

Mr. Rayne turns to the office cabinet located behind his chair, picks up his decanter of water, and pours it into an available glass.

He turns back to Sean.

MR RAYNE

What would you say is your greatest strength?

SEAN

Erm... I would say, my time management, and my ability to resolve difficult situations.

MR RAYNE

And how do those strengths help you perform?

SEAN

Well my strength in resolving difficult situations, help me to maintain the ability to focus on the job at hand.

Mr. Rayne folds his hands, and leans in.

MR RAYNE

At times, this role can be very stressful! How do you handle stress and pressure?

SEAN

I've done some of my best work under tight deadlines. I believe I thrive under pressure.

MR RAYNE

Talk to me about the last time you were angry, and what happened?

SEAN

To be honest with you, Anger to me means loss of control. I do not lose control. When I get stressed, I step back, take a deep breath, thoughtfully think through the situation and then begin to formulate a plan of action.

Mr. Rayne scribbles Sean's response on the pad that is lying on his table.

MR RAYNE

Finally Sean. I like passionate people. What are you passionate about?

SEAN

One of my greatest passions is helping others. I grew up with my dad, and When I was younger, I always enjoyed helping him fix things around the house. As I got older, that habit grew, and it made me want to help others as well.

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

I like assisting people, to find solutions that meet their specific needs.

MR RAYNE

Well that's just about all I needed to know. Do you have any questions for me?

SEAN

No. Not really.

(Beat)

Actually, how quickly do you need someone to start?

MR RAYNE

I need someone to start immediately.
What is your availability?

SEAN

I can start straight away.

MR RAYNE

Perfect.

Mr. Rayne pauses quietly while he assesses the man sitting in front of him.

MR RAYNE (CONT'D)

You know Sean, we actually have another unit on one of the lower levels. As part of your role, I'm going to need you to address our need to change our base of operations to another location.

SEAN

OK.

Mr. Rayne stands up, and moves towards the chair in the corner of the office. He puts on his jacket that was lying across the back of the chair, and walks up behind Sean, putting his hands on his shoulders.

MR RAYNE

Come Sean. Let me show you our latest project.

Sean and Mr. Rayne turn and head into the corridor.

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

They walk down the corridor lined with office doors, then exit through the last door on the right, into the deep narrow stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

The 2 men start heading down the stairs.

They reach another door. Mr. Rayne taps a code into the security door and they enter into a further narrow corridor, bolting the door behind them.

INT. A DARK ROOM - DAY

Darkness. Just a faint amount of light is squeezing itself through the crack in the door. Footsteps can be heard approaching from the corridor.

A shadow moves across the light. The footsteps stop.

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Rayne reaches into his pocket. Takes out a key, and puts it in the keyhole. The door slides open and Sean peers through, finding nothing but darkness.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As he looks around the room, his gaze leads to him the solitary figure of a woman.

She is barely clothed in just her bra and torn skirt. Her bruised and bloodied body is shackled to the bed at her wrists and ankles. Her mouth gagged, she is riddled with knife wounds. A deep set of fresh bite marks are clearly visible across her breasts and forearms.

Under the sweat and tears, her eyes show the look of fear, they have seen too much.

Sean is physically shaking, a look of abject terror on his face. He tries to form some words.

Something.

Anything.

Nothing. Sean has no words, for the first time in his life he now understands true fear.

And it's staring back at him.

Sean turns and looks towards Mr. Rayne.

Mr. Rayne is still, staring at the woman. There is a thin smile across his face, barely even a smile at all.

He calmly removes his jacket, taking great care whilst folding it inside out. Then places it neatly to the side.

He glances at Sean.

An overwhelming silence envelopes the room.

MR RAYNE

Shall we begin.

Her muffled cries scream at him, as she struggles in vain to break loose from her shackles.

Sean looks at Mr. Rayne, then reverts his attention back to the woman lying ahead of him on the bed.

He pauses for a second.

Turns.

Then slowly closes the door.

FADE TO BLACK.