

THE WAY OUT

Written by

SS

FADE IN:

INT. OPEN-PLAN OFFICE - DAY

Banks of deserted desks in disarray, the doors barricaded from the inside. An overhead light flickers.

A few flakes of snow drift through a small gap in a rusted top swing window.

At the opposite end of the office sits JACOB, a guy with three decades of commuting and working in artificial light etched in every inch of his DNA.

He types and clicks away at his workstation, his only companion is the skeletal remains of a colleague propped up in the chair opposite.

Jacob leans back, loosens his tie and rotates his neck.

His eyelids flicker, he drifts off to sleep.

The storm intensifies, a gust of wind sweeps the office.

A low-growling noise emits from a corner room. The door plaque reads, MANAGING DIRECTOR.

Jacob awakes with a start. He blinks, resumes his work.

The storm eases off, the growling subsides.

INT. OPEN-PLAN OFFICE - DAY

Jacob carries a stack of papers over to a bulky printer.

He places them on the in-tray and presses a button. The machine vibrates, shakes, makes god-awful clanking sounds as it drags each page in for photocopying.

A water dispenser is nearby. He grabs a paper cup and holds it under the tap. A couple of drops dribble out, followed by thick black goo.

He scrunches his face in disgust, drops the cup in the trash.

The printer shunts to a halt mid-print, the control panel flashing red. Jacob presses a few random buttons.

With a snarl, he unleashes all his fury, all his pain and resentments on the inanimate object, pounding the machine with his fists, kicking and shaking it to no avail.

Jacob's shoulders slump. With a nervous glance at the manager's office, he leans down, opens a side flap.

Inside the paper is jammed good and proper. It's a mess.

He reaches inside, begins unclogging the pulp.

The printer fires into action! He pulls back his hand just in time to stop it being crushed, but his tie is lodged stuck!

It pulls his head towards the printer, grabbing the tie he yanks himself back.

The storm intensifies as Jacob struggles to escape. Wind and snow blows throw the window, files and bits of paper spiral across the floor.

Growling from the manager's office as beads of sweat pop up on Jacob's forehead. His face turns ashen as he chokes.

The telephone on Jacob's desk rings. The growling intensifies into a roar.

Jacob twists himself round in an effort to escape. Another pull and the printer wobbles. He tries to steady it with his shoulder.

Something pounds on the manager's door. It shakes with the impact.

The storm is like a mini-blizzard in the office, the snow forming small drifts.

Telephones on every desk light up and ring for attention.

Jacob accidentally kicks over the water dispenser. Gallons of dark liquid pour across the floor towards the power socket.

Spotting the danger, he heaves with all his might, nearly passing out due to lack of oxygen.

With a sharp cry, he yanks himself free as the machine topples over, rolling away as it crashes to the floor.

Jacob stumbles to his feet gasping for breath and dashes over to his desk.

He picks up the phone, a loud chorus of screams emit from the earpiece. Jacob nods, mumbles an apology, resumes his work.

The chaos in the office subsides.

The telephones cease ringing.

The storm reduces to a thin trickle of snow.

Blessed silence from the manager's office.

Jacob opens his desk drawer. Inside is enough prescription medication to run a hospital.

He pops a few tabs, takes off his tie and glances at the skeleton. His fate awaits.

INT. OPEN-PLAN OFFICE - DAY

Jacob wanders towards the restroom.

The door is partially open. A light flickers inside. Flies buzz around the doorway.

He covers his nose with his sleeve and enters.

A few moments pass.

He bursts out of the restroom, choking and spluttering, and wipes saliva off his chin.

The managing director's door is open! Inside, total darkness.

Jacob's eyes widen. He glances around the floor. There's no sign of anyone.

An angry bark from the depths of the manager's office.

Jacob shakes his head.

Another bark, louder, more insistent.

With tears streaming down his face, Jacob steps towards the office and the darkness within.

He passes by the skeleton and pauses.

A glance back at the window.

Jacob screams in defiance. He grabs the arm of his former colleague and wrenches it out of its socket.

He rushes over to the window, smashing the glass. The full fury of the storm flows in.

All the telephones light up, ringing.

The manager roars from the depths of his domain.

A chorus of screams erupts from the telephone speakers.

Pummelled by the snow, Jacob drags himself up to perch on the window frame.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(singing)
You are not alone.

The distant voice causes Jacob to pause. The song is beautiful, deep and haunting.

WOMAN (O.S.)
You are not alone.

He lowers himself from the window. Oblivious to the chaos around him, all other sounds are drowned out by the singing.

Jacob battles against the elements as he tears apart a barricade in front of the main entrance.

He yanks open the door and steps into a...

INT. DIMLY LIT STAIRWAY - DAY

... and makes his way downstairs.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Don't be afraid. You are not alone.

He follows the singing down into a...

INT. LONG CORRIDOR - DAY

...with a single light shining brightly above a doorway in the distance. The moving melody continues.

WOMAN (O.S.)
You are safe now. You are not
alone, and you never were.

He is close enough to see a sign above the door, "WAY OUT".

He opens the door; the light outside is impossibly bright. Snow streams through. He covers his eyes and steps back.

A hand appears in the doorway. The singing intensifies.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Come, take my hand. There is hope
yet.

He glances back at the way he came; the darkness stretches towards him. It seems like something is lurking there, a shadow within the shadows.

He takes a deep breath, grabs the hand and is yanked through.

EXT. PARK - EARLY MORNING.

The sun is just rising on the horizon.

Jacob lies cradled in the arms of a WOMAN (30's) on the floor near a tree. A dog runs around them yapping, its lead trailing along the floor.

WOMAN
(singing)
You are not alone.

Overhead, a noose hangs from a branch. A pair of stepladders lie against the trunk. A siren wails in the distance.

The woman strokes Jacob's head as she sings. He shivers and sobs in her arms.

The woman looks up as if she's looking directly at us all.

WOMAN
(singing)
Don't give up. You are not alone.

FADE OUT.

