

SMOKE & MIRRORS

A feature film

Written by

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FADE UP
LONDON, PRESENT

1 INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 1
A strong hand reaches into a wardrobe for a black tie. The mirror door closes. A hauntingly sad reflection. JACK KINCAID, 30, jaw set as he packs the tie into a holdall. A sense he's been here before.

2 INT. HALL - DAY 2
Jack heads for the front door, pulls on a London Fire Brigade baseball cap. His phone alerts him to a message.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN - "HOPE ALL GOES WELL. PICK YOU UP AT AIRPORT TOMORROW 3PM. CHRIS"

Shouldering his holdall, Jack's out the door into heavy rain.

3 EXT. STREET 3
A black cab waits, engine idling. Jack clambers in.

4 INT. BLACK CAB 4
To the rhythm of windscreen wipers, Jack peers out through condensation and rain on the cab window.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
What do you see, Jack? Tell me what you can see, love.

The sound of a car racing past breaks the memory.

5 EXT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS 5
Jack pays the Driver. Looks up at an aircraft overhead.

6 INT. FLYSURE AIRCRAFT - LATER 6
Jack boards the crowded aircraft. Peers down the cabin looking for his seat. First Officer MITCH MITCHELL, 30, enters the cabin from the cockpit, paperwork in hand. Pinches his forehead with a pained expression. He notices Jack.

MITCH
Jack..?

Jack turns.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Christ, I don't believe it! Jack
Kincaid -

JACK KINCAID
Mitch!

The two friends buddy hug.

JACK KINCAID (CONT'D)
Must be.. Ten years?

MITCH
At least. Last time I saw you was -

JACK KINCAID
- torching my A-level results
before your mum saw them.

MITCH
She'd have forgiven you a couple of
C grades. Teacher's pet!
Still fighting fires?

Jack doffs his baseball cap.

MITCH (CONT'D)
What brings you home then?

JACK KINCAID
Grandad Eric's funeral.

MITCH
Ah I'm sorry. He was a lovely guy.

JACK KINCAID
He was a grumpy old sod - but yeah,
a real character.

MITCH
(laughs)
Look, I have to get stuck in (off
paperwork) but a few of us are
meeting at The Lancaster on Brewer
Street - half seven?

JACK KINCAID
I don't think -

MITCH
It's just down the road from your
dad's.

JACK KINCAID
I'm... staying at the Airport Inn -
straight back tomorrow on the two
o' clock flight.

MITCH

I'll be your chauffeur then too.
Come tonight. We're celebrating -
from next week I'm on long haul.

Jack slaps Mitch's shoulder.

JACK KINCAID

Always knew you'd be top gun outta
us lot.

Jack is jostled by PASSENGERS in the tightly packed area.

JACK KINCAID (CONT'D)

Hey - any chance of an upgrade?

MITCH

For a 35 minute flight? Save it
'til I fly you to the Big Apple.

Jack shuffles with the crowd. Down the cabin towards his seat. Grimacing at an unpleasant smell, he glances down as a beer-bellied passenger wriggles his dirty, sweaty socks.

Jack lobs his holdall into the overhead locker, takes the window seat and belts himself in. His nostrils flinch again. He's now several rows back, but the smell is still there. He peers out of the rain-streaked aircraft window.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

What do you see, Jack?

SMALL BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)

Cars. Lights and -

KELLY SHAW, 33, jars Jack's elbow with her bag as she sits.

KELLY SHAW

Oh! Sorry - had to cram everything
into one bag. Budget airlines huh.
Still, it was cheaper to fly than
get the bloody train up to
Newchester. Crazy innit.

She pulls out a wooden toy fire engine, chatters incessantly.

KELLY SHAW (CONT'D)

Got it for Jonny - my li'l boy.
Fireman crazy. (stuffs toy away)
First time he's been away from me.
He's with his dad. We're just
divorced. Course, first thing he
does is move back to Newchester -
custody's a bloody nightmare. I'm
Kelly by the way - Kelly Shaw. (off
Jack's cap) Ooh, you're a
firefighter!

(MORE)

KELLY SHAW (CONT'D)
 What my boy wouldn't give to have
 five minutes with you. Did I tell
 you he(fades)

The engines roar as the aircraft hurtles down the runway.

LATER

The aircraft taxis towards Newchester terminal.

AIR STEWARDESS (V.O.)
 Welcome to Newchester Airport.
 (fades)

Kelly switches on her phone. A picture message arrives, makes her smile. She holds the screen towards Jack - a smiling five year old wearing a yellow plastic fireman's helmet.

KELLY SHAW
 Bless him!

As Kelly and Jack stand, he removes his fire service baseball cap. Hands it to Kelly with a smile.

KELLY SHAW (CONT'D)
 Wow he'll be made up!

Kelly gives him a little hug. Jack grabs his holdall, stands in line as a STEWARDESS by the exit door says 'goodbyes' to the passengers. Through the half-open door to the cockpit he glimpses Mitch. Is about to call to him but stops. Sees the anxious Captain watch as Mitch hangs his head, massages his temples.

7 INT. ROOM AT AIRPORT INN 7

Jack hangs up sombre clothes and the black tie. His mobile rings.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN - "DAD".

He hits "decline call".

8 EXT. THE LANCASTER WINE BAR - EVENING 8

Hands in pockets Jack lingers outside the crowded bar. Watches a happy crowd inside. Turns to head off. Through the window we see BETTY MITCHELL, 60's, spot Jack. Hurry out of the door and catch his arm.

BETTY MITCHELL
 Jack! Mitch said you might be
 coming.

She embraces him warmly.

BETTY MITCHELL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry to hear about Eric.

A gust of wind blasts rain into her face.

BETTY MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Come on, let's go inside.

Jack follows obediently.

9

EXT. THE LANCASTER WINE BAR - MINUTES LATER

9

Through the rain-streaked window, we see Mitch clink his tumbler of water against Jack and Betty's champagne glasses.

More friends gather. Jack remains on the fringe as he watches SARAH, 27, chatting animatedly. As she looks across at him, he quickly shifts his gaze. Seeing Jack alone, Betty nods to Mitch. He draws Jack in to chat with GARY, 30.

MITCH
Hey Gary, you remember Jack from school?

GARY
How could I forget - Potty Potts' chemistry class..?!

Jack winces. Chuckles all round. Sarah listens, intrigued.

MITCH
The white phosphorus..!

GARY
Johnny Storm here knocked the jar over -

MITCH
- went up in flames, singeing Potty's cardigan -

GARY
- until our very own Human Torch doused him and -

JACK KINCAID
Alright, alright.

BETTY MITCHELL
Poor Mr Potts. Like a drowned rat, he was. Never heard language like it in the staff room!

Full blown laughter from Gary.

GARY

Reckon that inspired you to become
a fireman, huh Jack?

Mitch and Betty look awkward. Jack looks at his feet.

JACK KINCAID

I.. Um.. bit before then.

Gary winces at his gaffe, pats Jack's shoulder.

MITCH

Jack, you haven't met Sarah?

SARAH MYERS

Sarah Myers.

JACK KINCAID

Jack Kincaid.
AKA Johnny Storm. You fly?

Sarah jokingly looks at her glass.

SARAH MYERS

Few more of these, maybe.

MITCH

Sarah just joined FlySure's
management programme.

Betty raises her glass, watches Mitch's trembling hand as he
clutches his water.

BETTY MITCHELL

To Mitch, and to FlySure.

GARY

And all who fly with them.

CROWD

To Mitch!

As the friends focus on Mitch, Sarah slips away. Jack is
about to follow. His phone rings.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN - "DAD".

Jack declines the call. Glances after Sarah.

BETTY MITCHELL (V.O.)

His world fell apart too that day.

Jack leans forward, kisses her forehead. Heads for the door.

BETTY MITCHELL

Come back soon - under happier
circumstances.

JACK KINCAID

Promise. (to Mitch) Make sure you get a good night's kip. No falling asleep at the wheel tomorrow - I'm already a nervous passenger!

Jack hurries out after Sarah.

10

EXT. NEWCHESTER STREETS - NIGHT

10

The rain has stopped. At the far end of a wet street, we see Sarah and Jack are bouncing off one another well as they saunter along. They draw closer to camera. Sarah laughs at something Jack has said.

SARAH MYERS

You don't mean that! I've only lived here a few months, but I like Newchester.

Jack shrugs.

JACK KINCAID

Nothing here for me now really.

SARAH MYERS

You've got friends here. Family?

JACK KINCAID

My nan. And my dad. But we're.. not on the best of terms. You?

SARAH MYERS

They divorced when I was four. Used to think it was my fault.

JACK KINCAID

And now?

Sarah shakes her head. It starts to rain again.

SARAH MYERS

Now I know him, I'd have divorced him too! But then I'm a 'strong-willed little madam, as mum says. Only child see. Any brothers or sisters?

JACK KINCAID

A brother. He died.

SARAH MYERS

Sorry I...

JACK KINCAID

It was a long time ago.

The rain is heavier. Sarah flags down a cab, opens the door.

SARAH MYERS
 (to driver)
 Bishopsgate - number twenty three.

Climbing in the back, she looks at Jack, the door still open. He hesitates. Climbs in beside her.

11 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - ALMOST DAWN 11

Jack dresses quietly as Sarah sleeps. He pauses, drinks in the sight of the beautiful girl tucked beneath the sheets. Leaves.

12 EXT. STREETS - ALMOST DAWN 12

Montage of Jack wandering deserted streets as dawn breaks - Jack peering down streets of back to back houses. Jack wandering slowly past a child's playground. Jack stopping at tall, locked wrought-iron gates.

INSERT SIGN - NEWCHESTER CREMATORIUM AND CEMETERY

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 What do you see, Jack?

SMALL BOY'S VOICE (V.O.)
 (crying)
 Nothing. I can't see you, mum.
 Mum...

Jack grips the iron gates, stares through at the gravestones reaching up through the damp dawn light.

13 EXT. NEWCHESTER CEMETERY - NEXT MORNING 13

In a sombre suit and black tie, Jack stands by a grave.

INSERT HEADSTONE: "ROSEMARY KINCAID, BELOVED WIFE AND MOTHER" BENEATH THIS INSCRIPTION, A SECOND. "MATTHEW KINCAID, BELOVED SON AND BROTHER". THE DEATH DATES ARE THE SAME.

Jack turns away, walks the mossy pathways to the crematorium chapel where a small crowd gathers.

14 EXT. CREMATORIUM CHAPEL

14

Jack helps his frail grandmother, MARY, 78, out of a black car. Slips his arm about her shoulders as they wait.

ALAN KINCAID, 59, ambles towards the crowd. His awkward gait visible as he discreetly sips from a hip flask.

ALAN KINCAID
So sorry, Mary.

Mary dabs her eyes with a tissue as she nods a half-smile.

ALAN KINCAID (CONT'D)
Jack.

JACK KINCAID
Dad.

Mary's eyes widen. She's seen a hearse slowly approaching.

ALAN KINCAID
It's been a -

Eyes riveted on the hearse, Mary collapses to the ground. Jack drops to his knees, immediately checks her for pulse, breathing. Begins CPR.

JACK KINCAID
Get an ambulance!

15 INT. HOSPITAL HDU ROOM - LATER

15

Mary lies in bed, wired up to a bank of machinery. Her eyes flicker open. She smiles at Jack.

MARY
I... I didn't ...

JACK KINCAID
Shhhhh. You'll be fine - everything will be fine. Just rest, Nan.

She takes his hand in hers.

JACK KINCAID (CONT'D)
I should go get Uncle Norman and -

MARY
He loved you y'know. In his own way. Don't ever forget that.

JACK KINCAID
Grandad was very special to me.

MARY
Not your grandad, love.

She squeezes his hand.

MARY (CONT'D)

What d'you think your mum would say? Two of the people she loved most not -

JACK KINCAID

Nan, it'll be fine. Don't worry. You just concentrate on getting well again.

He lifts his hand, still clasped in hers. Kisses her fingers. Slowly moves towards the door.

MARY

Don't leave it too late. None of us are getting any younger.

16 EXT. HOSPITAL - MINUTES LATER

16

Jack bounds down the steps, checking his watch. Three o'clock. Half jogs across the car park as he switches his phone back on. It rings immediately. He looks at the screen: 'CHRIS CALLING'.

JACK KINCAID

Chris I'm so sorry, mate. I -

CHRIS WILSON (V.O.)

Jack?! Thank heavens! Where the hell are you?

JACK KINCAID

I missed the flight and -

Jack stops. Listens, open mouthed.

17 INT. OFFICE, LONDON FIRE STATION - CONTINUOUS

17

Sat behind a messy desk, Chris wears a senior fire-fighter's uniform. Holds his head in one hand.

CHRIS WILSON

Your flight was ... It crashed just after take off.

18 EXT. HOSPITAL

18

JACK KINCAID

Wh -

CHRIS WILSON (V.O.)
There were no survivors, Jack.