

24 To Black

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EXT. MID WEST - BRIGHT DAY - (IN THE PAST)

In the clearing of a mid western field a small child runs up behind his father. The child launches his body into his fathers leg. The father turns and his son looks up at him.

CHILD

Pa?

FATHER

Yeah.

CHILD

When am I gonna die?

In a loving, cheerful, but supportive voice.

FATHER

My son, you have your life and the whole world ahead of you... Your life is just beginning! You're not going to die my boy.

CHILD

Not even when I'm 24.

FATHER

Not even when you're 24.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT (CURRENT TIME)

The steel blue exterior fills the sparsely occupied dwelling of Frank Miller. His Apartment, well lived in but disturbingly missing most normal furnishings. Red coal ambers illuminate his silhouette while cigarette smoke floats through the fingers and oily longish hair of a broken man.

FRANK MILLER

Getting out today, tonight. What to do... what to do.

A strange smile creeps across Miller's face.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT (CONT)

Sleep deprived and half naked, Frank sluggishly transfers himself to the kitchen. He passes a wall smudged by the words - "long and hard is the way leading out of my hell"

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN (CONT)

The air filled with the sound of an AM radio in the background while Frank is having coffee. A preacher speaks about his concerns for the world.

RADIO PREACHER

I know that some of you are doubtful, and skeptical, but I tell you... here and now, the world is coming to an end. Life, the way you know it... will cease. In the end, all that you will be left with, is the life you led, and the choices you made.

The Radio play drives Frank into a catatonic like state as the preachers words nullify his senses; reverberating doubtful, skeptical, the choices you made, the world is coming to an end.

CUT TO:

**EXT. DETECTIVES BUILDING - MORNING
(IN THE NOT SO DISTANT PAST)**

The cool air of the early morning sits on the front steps of the local police department.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MORNING

The sound of typewriters, the smell of 100 year old mahogany, yesterday's body odor, and screeches from the heavy feet of a bustling detectives department, fill the office of Mike Grant. Grant, fastidious, late forties, and accomplished in his department; stares deeply as he stirs his morning cup. The phone rings at his desk.

DETECTIVE MIKE GRANT

Grant... yes chief.

CHIEF DETECTIVE COBERLY

Grant, I don't want you near this guy. You have no evidence, and I'm not going to issue you a warrant. Look, I'm sorry. I know what this means to you but I need more than the word of your snitch. Work the case... but stay away from this lead till you have what we need to prosecute.

DETECTIVE MIKE GRANT
Will do.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MORNING (CONT)

Grant hangs the phone on the receiver; still and poised, a look of determination illustrates his intentions. Grant phones his secretary.

DETECTIVE MIKE GRANT
Jan, I'm going out for my...

SECRETARY JAN (PHONE FUTZ)
Let me guess, your daily stroll around
the block?

DETECTIVE MIKE GRANT
Yes, my walk. Please forward all messages
to my service and contact me on my cell
in case there are any anonymous calls,
you know the kind.

SECRETARY JAN (PHONE FUTZ)
You got it.

INT. CHIEF DETECTIVE COBERLY'S OFFICE

The chief detective walks to close his office door and shuts the blinds. He places a call on his personal phone.

CHIEF DETECTIVE COBERLY
I don't think I can get our guy to stop.
Do what we need to, make it clean... NO
TRACE.

EXT. DETECTIVES BUILDING - MORNING

As if someone is watching him from a far, we see Grant walking down the steps of the building, he proceeds down the street to think outside the office.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT -BATHROOM- DAY- (CURRENT TIME)

Frank shirtless and unshaven for days, stares at himself directly into the bathroom mirror. As oily water drips from his face he hears 3 slow evenly paced knocks at the door. Startled, he makes his way through the apartment to answer.

FRANK MILLER
Yes... who is it?

INT. APARTMENT - AT THE DOOR (CONT)

He hears no answer.

FRANK MILLER
Hello

INT. APARTMENT - AT THE DOOR (CONT)

Again 3 slow knocks at the door. A myriad of deep expression runs across Frank's face as he holds himself still. He begins to gesture towards the door knob. All of a sudden, 3 slow knocks at the door! Filled with anxiety he retracts, backing himself against the wall. Slowly, he tenses down to a sitting position with his hands in his face. Another set of knocks seem to pound like boulders against a bending door as day light rips through the cracks. Frank's mind phasing the real world out as his distorted perception of reality forces him to curl up on the ground.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

A delivery courier stands at Frank's door realizing he had the wrong address, he walks out of frame.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - SURROUNDING AREAS

Television news anchor's broadcast over montage of the city. Downtown LA coverage.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) FEMALE

In other news, the search for a suspect connected to the death of senator Conrad Wise during his local visit, has turned over no new leads. Mike Grant, the detective at the forefront of the investigation; stated today that he will work closely with federal agents to bring light to the identity of the gunman. More on this story at the 9 o'clock hour. Next up, sports current with our own Dan Wyatt, and then Nick Franco for your week in weather.

CUT TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - MILLER'S APARTMENT - DUSK

The view of Frank's apartment door is captured almost as a still. An annoying resonant sound loops as we're pushed into the apartments interior.

INT. FRANK MILLER APARTMENT - REAR ROOM

Frank rummages through boxes and clothes. In his peripheral vision, he sees his handgun in the scatter. An undefinable look sets in as his body stands as cold and motionless as Greek statue. Then... someone knocks at the door breaking his mind free from the moment. He cautiously walks to the front door.

INT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

Assertive but cautious, Frank approaches the front door. He observes the lock, it's in position. His silhouette shadows the burnished brassy texture of the door knob. With a hand on the door knob, he looks through the peek hole and sees nothing. His chest moves in and out as he re-asserts himself. He unlocks and opens the door.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

Not a person in sight. Heart pumping and almost breathless, Frank's gaze resembles that of a predatory falcon. His senses so acute that the sound of ants walking are like screeches of nails against a chalk board.

HARD CUT:

EXT. INSERT - VISUAL ABSTRACTION

Ants crawling on the floor in a frenzy. The screeching sounds of metal, concrete, and modular electronics.

HARD CUT:

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

As Frank begins to calm himself, the only thing he hears is the lonely whisper of a light wind that surrounds the complex. He steps outside and into a narrow corridor leaving the door open. Slowly, Frank walks to see if there was anyone out of view from his front door.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

A lonely whisper of wind beckons Frank's front door to move. The door starts to creak.

EXT. CORRIDOR - FRANKS APARTMENT

Frank hears the sound of his door and turns to head back.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR (FRANK POV)

He sees his door wide open.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR (CAM POV)

Frank's throat tightens as he tries to swallow, He gazes at the door losing all self confidence.

EXT. FRANKS APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR (FRANK POV)

The door starts to close on it's own in one direction. All sound seems to cross cancel itself out as if in a vacuum of empty space. The door stops normal motion to a dead crawl. The atmosphere comes to a freeze. Then, the old pounding knocks of the door sound in time with small foot steps. At the bottom of the door revealed, is the foot of a small girl in white socks and black shiny shoes.

THE DOOR SLAMS BIG!

LONG DISSOLVE:

INT. FRANKS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Oddly positioned, and terrified, Frank watches an old circulating fan oscillate back and forth. His only comfort is the heat on his fingers from the burning ambers of his cigarette. His hand trebles to bring it up to take a drag.

FRANK MILLER

I can't live like this... I'm sorry...
Forgive me!

INT. FRANKS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONT)

He hits the cigarette for one last drag of smoke. With the exactness of military exercise, Frank picks up his gun lying on the floor out of frame, puts it into his mouth and pulls the trigger. A visceral evacuation of blood and skull hit the wall. His hand hits the floor fast, hard, and still. In the distance, we see the words smudged on his wall,

- "long and hard is the way leading out of my hell"

LONG DISSOLVE:

EXT. IN-TOWN EARLY MORNING (IN THE PAST)

A cab drops off a man in a suit and hat, holding a medium sized case. He walks a few blocks down and finds his destination, a hotel.

INT. HOTEL

The man books a room and we follow him to his suite.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME

The shiny brass door knob turns, the man enters and starts to settle in. He takes off his over coat and lays it on the bed beside his case. He does the same with his coat. He then takes the case to the window over looking the street outside. He opens the window and He lowers the case to the floor, we hear the sound of the case opening up. The stranger pulls out a pair of black marksman gloves and puts them on. He pulls out an assassins rifle and assembles the scope.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME (GUNMAN POV)

From complete black, he removes the lens protector revealing cross hairs over a reddish-orange enhancement of his field of view. A clear sign of a high precision sight lens for use in professional work.

CUT TO:

INT. DETECTIVE COBERLY'S OFFICE - SAME DAY AND TIME

Coberly stands straight with his personal phone to his ear.

CHIEF DETECTIVE COBERLY
He's on his way.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

The gunman ready with in ear communication responds by touching his ear to better hear.

CUT TO:

INT. DETECTIVE COBERLY'S OFFICE - SAME

Beep, Coberly lowers his phone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME

Through the scope we see the gunman line up cross hairs on detective Mike Grant, following him in scope to make a kill.

CUT TO:

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE GUNMAN'S POSITION

A woman pushes her son in a stroller while eying her 8 year old daughter; the family walks to turn a side walk corner onto Main.

MOTHER
Honey don't go to far ahead me on that bike, stay with us.

LITTLE GIRL
It's OK mommy.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET

Grant on foot crosses an intersection and continues down the block, now just adjacent from the gun man.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - GUNMAN

Through the scope we see Mike Grant in perfect alignment, the gunman steadies himself. At the same time, Mike Grant and the little girl on the bike come into a perfect diagonal.

EXT. MAIN STREET

Suddenly, Grant's phone rings, and without stopping He answers the phone, puts it to his ear. It's Jan from the office.

SECRETARY JAN (PHONE FUTZ)
Grant, that anonymous call you were talking about.. Well it came in.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - GUNMAN (POV)

In the scopes view, the gunman fires at the same time Grant is still in motion; with increasing speed, he redirects himself 360 degrees towards the office. Missing Grant, the bullet strikes the little girl in the head, she is dead instantly.

HARD CUT TO BLACK:

In the Black - A woman screams a terrible sound, she is in complete agony, the kind of suffering that only a loving parent could ever feel.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

The gunman, frozen in firing position, slowly lowers the weapon from his brow. We see the face of Frank Miller! Frank - clean cut and well cleansed, turns his body to a resting position and loosens his double Windsor. A perplexed look of bewilderment slowly turns into despair and regret so terrific, and locked into place.

LONG DISSOLVE:

EL FINAL