

COMMON SPRING

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The fluorescent lights overhead flicker a few times, revealing a large room, sparsely filled with boxes. Overtop a drain, JUDE slumps over, restraints tied to the chair cutting into thin arms. His thin, stubbled and reddened jaw drips sweat down into his shirt.

The lights flicker again, revealing the large windows blacked out with tin foil and a chair a few feet across from Jude. A roll of duct tape sits next to the man's foot and a few pieces lay scattered about.

Then, the light dies out. JUDE mumbles unconsciously.

A DOOR screams out a CREAK and a loud CLACK follows. Then, the door SLAMS shut. Clicking footsteps grow and a SILHOUETTE appears behind Jude.

SILHOUETTE

You hungry?

The man tied to the chair never makes a sound.

SILHOUETTE (CONT'D)

Hey!

A foot kicks the back of the chair, rousing Jude.

SILHOUETTE (CONT'D)

You hungry?

JUDE

No.

SILHOUETTE

You haven't eaten all day.

Jude straightens and his face twists in pain, glasses on his nose foggy. The lights flicker again revealing a JOHN, an average sized man wrapped in a dirty, loose suit. A bag of food and a sweating drink sit in his hands. His gaze rises to the defective light.

JOHN

Bit cliché isn't it? Here. Hold this.

He rounds to Jude's front and gently places the drink in between Jude's legs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's yours. I'll be right back.

John sets the bag of food down near Jude and paces away into the dark. Jude stares down at the drink and closes his eyes.

Moments later, Jude slowly opens his eyes and bends awkwardly to take a drink as John RUSTLES through a box in the background.

John returns with a long bulb and a ladder. He opens the ladder and climbs up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You sure you're not hungry?

JUDE

No.

John replaces the light and it flicks on brightly and steady.

JOHN

There.

John climbs down and wipes his dirt-stained suit. Closing the ladder, he slides it away into the dark. He looks down at Jude, sighs, then walks over, picks up the bag of food and sits in the chair across from the restrained man.

John pulls a sandwich from the bag and takes a bite. Jude, head lowered, closes his eyes. John stares at the man, chewing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Are the ropes too tight?

JUDE

No.

John takes another bite. Jude squeezes his eyes closed tightly. John takes another bite, chews, then spits it out.

JOHN

What's the matter? Ropes hurt? I asked you--

JUDE

No. I have to sneeze.

John chokes out a nervous laugh.

JOHN

Look up at the light.

JUDE

What?

JOHN
The light. When I have to sneeze, I
look at the Sun. Or a bright light.

Jude hesitates. Then, slowly, he raises his head and looks
up at the light. A moment later, he sneezes. Twice.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Two, huh? Me too. They always come
in pairs.

Jude lowers his head, never looking at John. John looks
down at his sandwich, then tosses it back in the bag. Then,
he drops the bag and leans over, staring down at his shaking
hands.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's been a two days.

JUDE
Jesus.

JOHN
I can't keep doing this. I can't
keep hiding this.

JUDE
Does my wife know?

JOHN
No. Mine doesn't either.

JUDE
Thank you.

John raise his head, staring red at his bound captor.

JOHN
Don't. Don't you thank me. I'm
doing this for me. Your blood is on
my hands, not hers.

Jude raises his head now, staring back at John. They share
a brief, pregnant moment, then Jude lowers his head again.

JUDE
Why haven't you done it yet?

JOHN
To be honest, I'm scared shitless.

JUDE
It'll slide.

JOHN

Slide?

Jude's face goes pained.

JUDE

It's a word I started to use. When the pain of it recesses. I wanted to hold onto the pain. But as one part of me weighed heavier, the other slid away. It slid further until I couldn't feel it again.

JOHN

How long did it take, total?

JUDE

Twelve, maybe thirteen years.

JOHN

No, how many?

Jude looks to the right, into the darkness.

JUDE

Seven.

John's face goes tight and his eyes close. His hands ball and his knuckles whiten. Jude's muscles tighten.

JOHN

Tell me about the first.

JUDE

The first?

John chokes down tears.

JOHN

The first.

JUDE

I don't remember.

JOHN

Bullshit.

JUDE

I swear. After the fourth, I couldn't remember.

JOHN

The second then.

After a silent moment, Jude bends and takes a drink from the straw. Then, dribbling a little out of his mouth, he raises his head and stares at the top of John's lowered head.

JUDE

Please. I can't. Just do it, please.

JOHN

I'm not recording it. I'm not writing it down. Just talk. I want to know what it was like. I want to know why.

JUDE

I don't know where to start.

JOHN

How old were you?

JUDE

Twenty seven.

JOHN

Her?

A SIREN begins to whisper in the background. Then, louder, the siren BLARES at a crescendo. Jude's eyes look to the tin-foiled windows. But just as fast as it rose, the siren bleeds out and fades to nothing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You never got to see, but believe me, it's a bad neighborhood. Now, go on.

Jude lowers his head.

JUDE

She was twenty.

JOHN

How did you meet?

JUDE

Class.

JOHN

Be more specific. Which class?

JUDE

We met in Sociology.

John breathes a silent laugh.

JOHN

How?

JUDE

I don't know. However you meet. We just started talking.

JOHN

So wait. You were twenty seven? And she was your fourth? Tell me you know when your first was.

JUDE

Twenty.

John raises his head and looks almost through the man.

JOHN

You started at twenty? Was your first?

JUDE

Yes.

JOHN

They were all twenty weren't they?

Jude takes another pull on the soda, dribbling again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Nevermind. Just--just continue.

JUDE

Why do you want to know this?

John's eyes darken and the room goes silent for a moment.

JOHN

You're right. I don't want to know.

John stands and walks past Jude, into the darkness.

JUDE

Where are you going?

John continues walking.

JUDE (CONT'D)

Where are you going!

JOHN (O.S.)

I'll be right back. Don't worry.

JUDE

Wait. Wait. I'll tell you. I'll tell you whatever you want to know.

John's footsteps stop.

JUDE (CONT'D)

No. No. Okay, I'm sorry. No duck tape.

JOHN

It's *duct* tape.

Jude stares back into the darkness behind him as the sound of the door CLACKS open and SLAMS shut.

Jude cries silently. He looks up into the light and SCREAMS. Then, he strains and pulls on the ropes. They only tighten. Under the pressure, the fast food cup crumples between his thighs and spills soda out into his lap.

Jude sobs in protest, but wet and sweaty, his muscles go loose and the cup falls beneath him and rolls away.

He cries alone a moment longer before John returns through the door. Stopping a few feet behind Jude, John evaluates the puddle beneath his captive.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Did you piss yourself?

Jude begins to laugh silently.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Seriously?

Stepping a little further, John notices the cup beyond Jude.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Jesus. I thought you pissed yourself.

JUDE

FUCK YOU! I'll fucking kill you!

John stumbles back in surprise. Jude breathes heavy and lowers his head.

JUDE (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

I'll fucking kill you.

John gathers his composure and picks up the cup, then walks out of the light, disposes of the cup, and walks back to the chair and sits. He stares at Jude with curiosity in his eyes.

Then, he pulls a photo from his pocket and holds it up.

JOHN

Look.

Jude mumbles under his breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What?

JUDE

Why are you doing this?

JOHN

Look.

Jude sobs.

JUDE

Why?

JOHN

Look up!

After a moment of silence, John jerks up, rushes forward and grips Jude by the long hair, ripping his head back and shoving the picture just in front of Jude's face.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Her. She's why!

JUDE

Please--

Jude pulls away, but John's hand jerks his head back. He swipes the glasses from the restrained man's face and puts them on his own face, staring through them at the picture.

JUDE (CONT'D)

No--

JOHN

Yes!

Tears run down Jude's face. John releases the man and lowers to his haunches, staring at the photo. He falls back onto his butt, behind Jude. He pulls the glasses off his face and throws them down.

The two men sit in silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)

She was three the first time she ran into our room screaming.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I told her there was nothing under her bed. But at that age, their imaginations are vast and deep. It's sad we lose that. But nevertheless, she was convinced that *it* was under there. I never knew what *it* was, but it sure made for a lot of nights with her lying between us. I told her what any father would. I told her I wouldn't let anything happen to her. I told her everything my father told me. And I said it all so she would be quiet and go back to bed. I told her to go to sleep. She was so afraid, and I just wanted her to sleep. So I could sleep. So I could get up and go to work.

He leans back with one hand, resting.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I can't remember the last time she came into the room, afraid and wanting her daddy. I never even felt relief when it ended. I felt nothing. I simply got more sleep. But before we fell asleep, each sleep deprived night, I promised her the same thing. That nothing--

He begins to cry.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And now--

He chokes on his words. Jude hangs his head silently. John wipes his eyes and rises.

JUDE

That's the first time you've cried.

JOHN

So it is.

John walks to a covered window and pulls a piece of foil back. He stares out at the city.

JUDE

What now?

JOHN

What?

JUDE
What--what now?

JOHN
It's not time yet. I still have to
make a phone call.

JUDE
A phone call?

JOHN
I have to tell them where we'll be.

JUDE
So that's it? You're going to do
it?

JOHN
Was there ever doubt?

Jude goes silent. John looks back at the bound man.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't tell me you doubted it.

Jude looks away from John. The suited man walks to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Jude. Don't tell me you doubted it.

Jude's muscles tighten.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Jude. Look at me.

The tied man pulls on his ropes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Look at me, Jude. Tell me you didn't
doubt it.

JUDE
No.

JOHN
Look at me. Share this with me. I
want to see your face when you tell
me you doubted it.

JUDE
No.

John kneels down next to Jude, eye level, staring at the
back of the man's head.

JOHN

Jude.

Jude sobs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We're sick, Jude. You with them.
Me with you.

John puts his hand on Jude's knee. Jude flinches.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But it's not time yet.

JUDE

I swear. I swear. I swear. I won't
do it. Please. I won't do it again.
I'm so sorry.

JOHN

You took her--

John's face cringes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You took her from me.

He cries but suddenly gathers composure.

JUDE

Please. Forgive me.

JOHN

I don't think there can be. I don't
think they allow it.

JUDE

They forgive.

JOHN

Not this.

John buries his face into the palms of his hands. Then, a
moment later, he stands and retrieves a cell phone from his
jacket. He dials a number and walks back to the window.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Hello?...Yes...I would like to...Three
Fifty Five, Crescent Avenue. There's
been a suicide...Yes, a
suicide...Thank you.

Jude SCREAMS. John places the phone back in his pocket.
Then, he walks to the screaming man.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Shhh. Come on.

John reaches into his other jacket pocket and pulls out a screwdriver.

Jude SCREAMS, but John cups the man's mouth with his hand. He places the screwdriver atop Jude's head.

Then, the door CLACKS open and a voice lingers in.

YOUNG MALE VOICE

But this shit here is where we--

John stops and turns, staring back at TWO SILHOUETTES in the doorway.

YOUNG MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck no!

Two GUNSHOTS ring out and John falls to the ground, clutching his stomach. He throws the screwdriver into the darkness at the silhouette. A WOMAN'S VOICE SHRILLS and dies out with fading footsteps.

YOUNG MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Fuck. Where you going--

John shimmies behind Jude, pulls a gun from his pocket and fires blindly into the darkness.

JUDE

No! No! No!

More gunshots CRACK from the darkness and bullets dig into the wall behind Jude and John. One shatters a window.

John empties his gun, aimlessly and with amateur grace. He pulls the trigger several more times after emptying, the hammer CLICKING in the silence.

John lies in front of Jude, staring behind the man into the darkness for a long moment. Jude rolls back, then pushes forward on the chair, but it falls sideways away from John.

John watches, shaken, as Jude SLAMS down on the concrete, and CRIES OUT. Shaking, John rises to his knees and points the gun into the darkness.

JOHN

Hey!

No answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hey!

Jude watches from his side as John crawls over to the darkness, clutching his belly. A few more empty CLICKS sound. Then, PUNCHES ring out.

Jude stares into the darkness for a few more breaths. A gun slides out of the darkness, away from Jude. Then, Jude watches as a silhouette emerges from the darkness dragging a body.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Fucking shot me.

John, doubled over, pulls the body of a GANGSTER KID, his extra large clothing tattered and bloodied, as the light overhead spills atop him. The kid spouts up a little blood.

John stops a few feet on the other side of the drain in the center of the room, letting go of the kid's ankle. Jude stares from his side, still bound to the chair.

Then, John falls to the ground, gripping his side. He looks down at the wound slowly and it dribbles blood.

JOHN (CONT'D)

FUCK!

The gangster kid opens his eyes and stares emptily up at the light.

GANGSTER KID

What--what--

Two streams of blood river out of the kid into the drain.

GANGSTER KID (CONT'D)

(out of it)

Who--

John tries to rise, but falls back down. The kid turns his head and looks blindly to John. His eyes then look aimlessly around.

GANGSTER KID (CONT'D)

(out of it)

What the fuck.

JOHN

Shut up!

Jude struggles with his binding. John rises, slowly this time, to his feet. He stumbles over to the kid and kicks him in the ribs.

The kid cries out and John doubles over in pain at exerting the energy to kick.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Who are you?

GANGSTER KID
(coughing)
Go fuck yourself.

JOHN
You've got to be kidding me.

He stares down at the bleeding kid.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I staked this place out for a week.
What are you doing here?

GANGSTER KID
Go--

JOHN
Yeah, yeah. Go fuck myself.

John stumbles away and plops down, watching Jude struggle with his ropes. John coughs.

A cell phone RINGS OUT in the silence. John jumps and groans. He pulls the phone from his pocket, looks at it, then silences it and pockets it.

John stands slowly, groaning, and stumbles over to Jude. He falls to his knees by the man's head. John's cell phone rings again, but he lets it go.

JUDE
No. No. Answer it.

JOHN
How long do I have?

GANGSTER KID
I'll fucking--

John looks back at the kid, anger in his eyes.

JOHN
(to the kid)
Shut up!

The kid groans and stares up at the lights.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Jude)

It's in my stomach. How long do I have.

JUDE

Twenty--twenty hours.

John chokes a pained laugh.

GANGSTER KID

What the fuck, man? Call an ambulance, man.

JOHN

(to kid)

Shut! Up!

(to Jude)

I'll be right back.

John stands, slowly.

JUDE

No. John. No.

John stumbles a few feet toward the darkness. Jude, still on his side, eyes wide on John.

JUDE (CONT'D)

She--she asked for you.

John stops.

JUDE (CONT'D)

She looked into my eyes and asked for you.

John, staring into the darkness, cries.

JUDE (CONT'D)

I told her not to worry. I told her I wouldn't hurt her. I told her I wouldn't hurt her, John.

John shuffles away into the darkness.

JUDE (CONT'D)

I DIDN'T HURT HER, JOHN. I SWEAR TO GOD, I DIDN'T HURT HER.

JOHN (O.S.)

I told her I would protect her.

JUDE

I did.

JOHN (O.S.)
YOU KILLED HER!

Unable to turn, the gangster kid lies in the middle of the floor, still staring up.

GANGSTER KID
--the fuck are you talking to, vato?

John paces slowly back with the screwdriver in his hand.

JUDE
I killed them. I killed all of them.
But I never hurt her.

John's cell phone rings again. He falls to his knees.

JUDE (CONT'D)
Answer it.

John shimmies back to Jude.

JUDE (CONT'D)
ANSWER IT! ANSWER IT!

John stares down at Jude as the cell phone rings. The two men share a look, then John pulls the phone out. The lines in his face crease as he cries.

JUDE (CONT'D)
It's her.

JOHN
You killed my Ashley.

John slams the cell phone down and places the tip of the screwdriver on Jude's temple. Jude squeezes his eyes shut.

JUDE
Just answer it.

The kid looks over at John.

GANGSTER KID
(coughing)
Don't, man.

JUDE
I did it. I did them all. But not
her. Not her. Answer it.

John stares down with tears in his eyes.

JUDE (CONT'D)
Answer it.

John hits a button on the phone and puts it to his ear. After a moment, tears stream down his face. He places the phone to Jude's ear.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

--A report of a suicide. Police and medical units are en route. Please do not leave the scene. Can you tell me the situation? Sir? Sir, are you there? Sir, if you can hear me, please leave your phone on, we can use it to trace--

John pulls the phone away and ends the call and grabs Jude's neck with the cell phone in hand. With the other, he replaces the screwdriver to Jude's temple.

JOHN

I loved her. So much.

JUDE

I loved her, too.

The kid moves his head slightly and catches view of the scene.

GANGSTER KID

What the fuck are you doing?

The kid, on his back, coughing through mouthfuls of blood, stares at John. John, kneeling on the ground, holds the phone to the ground in one hand. With the other, John holds the screwdriver to his own temple, a hospital band on his wrist. He stares down at no one.

JOHN

(to no one)

I love you so much.

GANGSTER KID

No, man. No.

The gangster kid looks away. John's body falls to the concrete in the background. Silence.

The sounds of sirens stir in the night. Cars slide up outside. Muffled voices cry out authoritatively.

GANGSTER KID (CONT'D)

(muffled)

I'm right here. I'm hurting bad, man. Motherfucker shot me.

The cell phone rings, vibrating out of John's still hand. It rings twice more then stops. Then, it rings again.

On the screen, the caller ID reads: ASHLEY. It vibrates and rings as lights flash outside.

FADE OUT.