

FADE IN:

CREDITS ROLL

SERIES Of real-life Hero Dogs with their owners relating and scenes showing what makes them heroes:

OWNER ONE

On Sept. 11, 2001, my guide dog (for the blind), Roselle, and I were working in the World Trade Center on the 78th floor of Tower One when the airplane crashed into our building. From the outset, Roselle guided and did her job perfectly, as we went to the stairwell and traveled down 1,463 stairs. After leaving the building, we were across the street from Tower Two when it collapsed. Despite the dust and chaos, Roselle remained calm and totally focused on her job, as debris fell around us and even hit us. We found a subway entrance, where we could escape the heavy dust. All that day, Roselle worked flawlessly. She saved my life and truly is the greatest dog hero of all.

OWNER TWO

Stacey Mae is a 4-year-old greater Swiss mountain dog who delivers teddy bears and stuffed animals for kids in the hospital and adults in a nursing home. So far, she has received and distributed almost 2,000 teddy bears and stuffed animals from all around the world. She visits the nursing home 2-3 times a week with her family, as well as passing out baked goods. She has helped brighten the lives of those who are often forgotten about. It's hard to say goodbye, but knowing you were there to brighten their lives makes it a bit easier. Stacey is going to continue her community service work for as long as she can. She loves helping those who are in need.

OWNER THREE

Dutch shepherd Bino served the U.S. Army's 35th Military Police Detachment at Ft. Gordon, Ga., as a Narcotics
(MORE)

OWNER THREE (CONT'D)

Detection/Patrol K-9 for almost 11 years. He deployed in Iraq for 14 months, as well as serving special missions with the Border Patrol in the war on drugs. Upon retirement, Bino learned a new skill set as a post-traumatic stress disorder Demo Service Dog. He and his handler go on numerous weekly "training missions" at Ft. Bliss, Texas, to teach Wounded Warriors and their dog partners the do's and don'ts of public-access training. Bino shows them how to navigate without distraction or panic attacks in grocery stores, busy malls, on elevators/escalators, and through airport security. He is a true example of a tirelessly serving K-9 hero who never quits giving.

OWNER FOUR

Harley became my hearing dog when I was 52 and had been severely hearing-impaired all my life. I had limped through school and my adult life, hearing very little of what was said around me. When Harley arrived, his sound work showed me how much I had missed all my life. He taught me that I'd never spent time just thinking – reflecting, contemplating – because I'd always been working so hard listening for sounds. Oh, the thinking I can do now! Finally, Harley has given me self-confidence and a feeling of equality with others that I'd not experienced before. All of these gifts are priceless to me, but to imagine they came from a dog is almost unfathomable!

OWNER FIVE

Ricochet was slated to be a service dog, but her natural instinct to chase birds caused her to be released from that role. However, she was destined to serve in another way. Ricochet surfs with special needs kids and people with disabilities for therapeutic purposes. As a surfing dog, she has inspired people all over the world, encouraging them to be who they truly are, focus on what

(MORE)

OWNER FIVE (CONT'D)

they can do, and turn negatives into positives. A video of her journey "From Service Dog to SURFice Dog" on YouTube went viral with 3.3 million Views. She has raised more than \$100,000 for a number of human and animal causes and has helped inspire many people.

OWNER SIX

A nationally certified accelerant detection K-9, Sadie works in the Major Crimes Unit of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. She has worked approximately 400 fires, and has assisted in cases resulting in numerous arrests, including high-profile arson/homicide cases where her nose has detected critical evidence for collection and prosecution. She has never lost in court. Sadie has worked in extreme environments (high-rise buildings, collapsing structures, snow-covered mountains) and never missed a call to duty. She has an incredibly friendly demeanor and conducts approximately 50 demonstrations a year to promote fire safety and fire prevention. Sadie is truly an ambassador for all working dogs, and I am humbled to be her partner.

(NOTE: for these dogs and others, with their videos, see www.Facebook.com/herodogfilm)

CREDITS END

EXT. ALLEY - EVENING

A homeless streetmutt who's name eventually will be HERO, scrounges in an alley in an industrial area of Los Angeles.

P.O.V. HERO THROUGH NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

Through the GREEN GLOW OF NIGHT VISION GOGGLES someone watches as Hero finds some food near a dumpster and eats. The POV swings to a fence opposite the dumpster with a door onto the alley from the vacant lot behind the fence.

BACK TO SCENE

ED BUGHOUSE, a fairly demented animal control officer who thinks he's some sort of one-man stray animal SWAT team with

his dark military uniform, hands swathed in thick leather gloves, a SWAT helmet on his head, moves the goggles up onto his helmet, a wicked smile on his face.

BUGHOUSE

You're going down, you worthless
four-pawed street-trash.

He creeps towards his animal-control truck parked up the street.

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Hero carefully picks at the garbage to find the edible bites. Behind him, resting on the fence door, a long pole with a loop of plastic on the end slowly comes towards him across the alley.

A SQUEAK makes Hero pause and look from side-to-side. The pole stops moving until Hero goes back to eating.

The top of Bughouse's head, wearing the night-vision goggles again, appears above the fence door.

P.O.V. NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

The pole slowly advances over Hero.

BACK TO SCENE

As Hero chews a bit, the pole and loop lower towards him. Hero sniffs then just moves his eyes up.

P.O.V. HERO

The shadow of the approaching noose is on the dumpster.

BACK TO SCENE

Hero continues to chew, but as the loop swoops down to capture him, he ducks and moves quickly to the side, the loop missing. Hero spins and looks at Bughouse who tries to lasso him again, Hero easily evading him and beginning to trot away. Bughouse drops the pole and steps into the alley, pulls a TRANQUILIZER DART GUN from his holster and aims it at Hero who starts running. Bughouse takes aim, but before he can fire, Hero turns a corner and vanishes.

BUGHOUSE

I'll find you! You won't get away!
I'll find you!

EXT. STREET OF SMALL FIRE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Hero moves along a street lined by small small commercial businesses, most of them closed, maybe a pizza store opened for business. He keeps glancing back to make certain Bughouse isn't behind him. As he comes up on a fire station, an engine is stopping to back up into the opened bay doors. One young, good-looking fireman, JACK BALLANTINE, swings off the engine to guide the driver. He sees Hero who's stopped and is waiting.

JACK

Good dog. Wait there, now.

Hero sits down and Jack is impressed. He guides the engine to its parking spot and then turns to the dog.

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay, you can go by now.

Hero rises and passes by the fire station. Jack begins taking off his gear as he goes inside.

EXT. DARKENED STREET OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS - MOMENTS LATER

Hero moves along a darkened street of small apartment buildings, an occasional house. As he passes one of the apartment buildings, a smell catches his attention and he stops and sniffs the air. He sees nothing then goes forward to the driveway at the edge of the building and sees flames coming from a basement window. Hero begins BARKING loudly. He runs to the front of the building and BARKS again and again. There's no response. Hero turns and runs as fast as he can back the way he came, disappearing around the corner.

EXT. STREET OF SMALL FIRE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack is just coming out of the fire house heading for his jeep at the curb as hero comes dashing up the street and stops in front of him.

JACK

You're back.

He barks and spins and takes a few steps the way he came then looks back at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

What's on your mind?

Hero crouches and barks then takes a few more steps down the street and looks back.

JACK (CONT'D)

You want me to follow you?

Hero barks and starts walking away, looking back once. Jack walks after him. When hero sees him coming, he barks again and starts walking faster, Jack keeping up.

EXT. DARKENED STREET OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS - MOMENTS LATER

Hero hurries down the street and this time it's apparent there's a fire. Jack runs up to the front of the building getting out his cell phone, speed-dialing.

JACK
(into phone)
Bobby -- 122 Grove. Apartment
building is on fire. Make sure they
bring my equipment.

He clicks shut the phone and runs into the building followed by hero.

INT. BURNING APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

In the smoke, Jack begins YELLING:

JACK
Fire! Fire! Get outside! Fire!

He continues to yell running one way down the hall banging on each door, hero barking. PEOPLE come out, and hurry for the exit.

JACK (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Help your neighbors! Help your
neighbors!

Most of them just keep running out. Jack goes down the other way in the hallway to alert the tenants, Hero still following. Jack goes up the stairs to the second and top floor, doing the same thing as he did downstairs, more tenants fleeing. An old couple is going down the stairs and the elderly woman stumbles, Jack catching hold of her and helping her down the stairs.

EXT. BURNING APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack gets the elderly couple outside and away from the building. FLASHING LIGHTS AND SIRENS are coming down the street. Jack and hero turn to go back inside when a WOMAN bolts from the doorway carrying a wet blanket shielding a little girl.

WOMAN
Help! Help!

Jack and hero run to her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

My other baby. She was in the blanket! I lost her. I've got to get her!

JACK

I'll get her. Get back out of the way.

WOMAN

I've got the get her!

JACK

I'm a fireman. I'll get her. Where did you lose her?

Hero is SNIFFING the blanket the woman is holding.

JACK (CONT'D)

(beat)

Where did you last see her?

WOMAN

On the second floor -- up the stairs.

JACK

Which way on the second floor? Left or right?

WOMAN

Left.

JACK

Get further away to safety with your child here. I'll get your other child.

Jack takes off for the building with hero following.

INT. BURNING BUILDING STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hero passes Jack and goes up the stairs sniffing in the heavy smoke, FLAMES all around by this time. Jack comes up on him and tries to turn him around to go back downstairs.

JACK

Get out of here. Go. Go! You've done enough.

Hero keeps turning to go up and finally Jack gives up.

JACK (CONT'D)

I don't have time.

At the top of the stairs, Jack turns to the left, scanning carefully for the child. Hero sniffs to the right then looks at Jack going down the hallway the other way. He sniffs again and goes the opposite way.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY AT JACK - CONTINUOUS

Jack scans in the smoke and flames for any sign of the child, the hallway empty.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY AT HERO - CONTINUOUS

Through the smoke, hero sees the child helpless in the hallway. He turns and BARKS loudly a bunch of times.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY AT JACK - CONTINUOUS

Jack hears the barking and stops, puzzled. He keeps moving forward, but the BARKING continues and Jack looks back. He looks ahead, unable to see the end of the hallway and takes a few steps forward. Hero barks some more and Jack looks both ways, torn on what to do.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY AT HERO - CONTINUOUS

No one's coming. Hero turns and carefully gets the blouse of the unconscious little girl in his teeth and begins dragging her to the stairs. Jack appears.

JACK

Glad you didn't listen. Good dog.

He grabs up the little girl and carries her to the stairs.

INT. BURNING BUILDING STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

As he steps onto the stairway, it gives way and he falls, turning as he goes down so the little girl lands on him. Hero pulls back and looks down.

P.O.V. HERO - CONTINUOUS

Jack lies knocked out on the first floor, the little girl in his arms next to him.

BACK TO SCENE

Hero looks for some way down but there's none. He carefully gets set and then jumps, landing hard and bouncing into the wall.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hero slowly gets up, one front leg injured. He limps to the doorway.

EXT. BURNING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Hero appears in the doorway BARKING. The first fire trucks have arrived and some FIREMEN take note and start towards the doorway.

INT. BURNING BUILDING HALLWAY FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hero returns to Jack and the little girl. He drags the little girl up onto Jack's chest then gets hold of Jack's jacket at the shoulder and begins dragging him towards the entrance doorway. Jack's revives a bit and sees the little girl on his chest and puts his arms around her, glancing back at Hero. Two other FIREMEN come in and take over, Jack handing the little girl up to them then letting the firemen help him up. As they all head out, Jack looks at Hero.

JACK

A good and brave job, my friend.

Hero limps along and Jack reaches down and picks him up, carrying him out.

EXT. BURNING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The woman rushes to her baby.

WOMAN

(to Jack)

You found her, thank god, thank you!

JACK

The dog found her. She was down the right hallway.

WOMAN

Oh my god. I meant left when I was coming down.

Jack nods.

JACK

Thanks for this dog's nose.

WOMAN

(to Hero)

Oh, thank you, dog. Bless you.

She kisses Hero's head then an EMT takes her and the child to an ambulance where the EMT is tending the other baby. The other FIREMEN congratulate Jack, rub Hero's head, then go back to work. Jack carries Hero to an EMT vehicle.

JACK
(to an EMT)
Get a blanket for our hero to lie
on.

The EMT gets a blanket and folds it for a bed and sets it
down by the back of the vehicle, Jack carefully laying Hero
on it. Fire Captain CORRY comes up to Jack.

CORRY
You okay, Jack?

JACK
Yeah.

CORRY
What's with the dog?

JACK
Mutt's a hero. He led me from the
station to the fire and then guided
me to the little girl, was dragging
us out after the stairway collapsed
and I got knocked out.

CORRY
Where did he come from?

JACK
No idea. He just showed up. He
hurt his paw somewhere in there. I
want to have him checked out.

CORRY
Really?

JACK
He's a hero.

CORRY
I want you to get checked out.

JACK
I'm okay.

CORRY
Get checked out anyway. And good
work on that little girl.

JACK
Wouldn't have happened without this
dog.

They look at Hero.

P.O.V. JACK AND CORRY - CONTINUOUS

Hero wags his tail.

BACK TO SCENE

CORRY

Never guess it to look at him.

(beat)

Anyway, good work Jack.

JACK

Let me see how the girl is.

He heads for the EMT.

EXT. REAR OF EMT VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

The two children and the mother are in an EMT getting ready to leave, the little girl he brought out conscious and okay as Jack comes up. The mother comes to the door.

MOTHER

(to Jack)

Thank you so much. You saved her life. May god bless you and your dog.

JACK

You're welcome. I'm glad she's okay.

An attendant carefully closes the door and Jack heads back for the other vehicle.

EXT. BURNING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack crouches down next to Hero.

JACK

How about that, fella? You're the hero.

Hero tries to lick him once again.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, don't get all slobbery on me now.

Jack stands up and goes to one of the engines, checking for his gear.

EXT. REAR OF EMT VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

As Hero licks his injured foreleg, from behind the EMT vehicle the loop on the pole of Bughouse slowly moves towards Hero.

Again Hero smells and then sees what's happening and tries to get away stumbling on his injured leg. Bughouse jumps out from behind the EMT and lunges to get the loop over Hero's head, but Hero dodges and hobbles away. Bughouse chases Hero who is still faster than Bughouse, disappearing around the corner, Bughouse behind him.

Jack returns from the engine with his gear on and looks for Hero. He searches around, upset that Hero is gone. He turns to FIREMAN ONE.

JACK

Where did the dog go?

FIREMAN ONE

The dog catcher was chasing him.

JACK

What?

FIREMAN ONE

Some dog catcher was trying to get him and he took off. The guy chased him.

JACK

You're kidding me. Where'd they go?

Fireman One points to the corner.

JACK (CONT'D)

That's not right.

Jack hurries to the corner.

EXT. DARKENED STREET AROUND CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Jack looks, but the street is deserted. Jack scowls and heads back.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hero is running down an alleyway, Bughouse appearing at the far end and turning in to chase Hero. Hero finds the far end of the alleyway ends in a wall with no where to go. He turns around and confronts Bughouse who comes up on him.

BUGHOUSE

Okay, mutthead. No way out.

Hero moves at Bughouse and fakes right and left trying to get around him and then runs right at him where the extended lasso pole is useless.

Bughouse looks frightened and drops the pole and grabs his tranquilizer dart gun with both hands, trying to line up on Hero who gets past him and takes off down the alleyway. Bughouse fires and Hero flinches as the dart hits him in his hip. As Hero continues down the alley, Bughouse grabs his pole and hurries after him.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Hero wobbles as he crosses the street, heading for another alley.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Bughouse comes out of the alleyway and sees Hero as he disappears into the other alley.

EXT. SECOND ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Hero is wobbling badly as he stays back in the shadows heading further down the alley, his walk unsteadier than ever. As he looks back, he sees Bughouse turning into the alley.

P.O.V HERO - CONTINUOUS

Bughouse is a psychedelic wavering demon figure in Hero's drugged vision.

BACK TO SCENE

Hero ducks behind a dumpster and crawls under it.

Bughouse scans the alley, frustrated there's no sign of Hero. A RAT scurries out from under Hero's dumpster, crossing the alley. As Bughouse looks down at it, he sees the tip of Hero's tail sticking out from beneath the dumpster. Bughouse gets his pole ready and crouches at the end of the dumpster.

P.O.V. BUGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hero is unconscious, his tongue hanging out the side of his mouth, the dart sticking out of his hip.

BACK TO SCENE

Bughouse grins.

BUGHOUSE
Got ya scummutt.

He drags Hero out from beneath the dumpster.

EXT. BURNING APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

The fire is out, Jack and the others packing up. An attractive arson fire investigator, LINDA WESTON, approaches Jack.

LINDA

Excuse me.

Jack is instantly attracted to her.

LINDA (CONT'D)

The incident commander, Captain Corry, told me you discovered the fire.

JACK

Actually, a dog discovered it -- led me right to it.

LINDA

Smart dog.

JACK

Saved my life and the life of a little girl, too.

LINDA

Wow. That is something. Where is she?

JACK

I don't know. He took off.

LINDA

Huh. Anyway, what was the condition of the fire when you arrived?

JACK

There were flames visible, looked like the fire was rising from the basement. Moderate smoke when we went in...

LINDA

We?

JACK

The dog and I.

LINDA

Oh, right.

JACK

I alerted the tenants and helped out an old couple. A woman had lost her child on the second floor and when we went back in, the flames were much thicker. They'd compromised the staircase by that time. It was moving fast.

LINDA

Any unusual smells? Something that suggested an accelerant?

JACK

No, nothing like that. I think it was just an old building -- but I case it's your job to make the determination.

Corry calls to her.

CORRY

Ms. Weston!

He gestures for her to come over.

LINDA

Thanks for your help.

JACK

Anytime. If you need more info, I'll be here awhile or you can reach me through the station.

She smiles, wondering if Jack is coming on to her, but work calls and she heads for Corry, Jack watching her go. Finally he turns back to put equipment away. He looks again at the blanket where Hero was lying, a thoughtful look on his face.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - AFTERNOON

Jack tends to some chores in his small kitchen off the living room. He stops and thinks. He putters some more. Then thinks again. He makes some decision and goes to his computer.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Jack comes out of the elevator to the lobby of his building carrying a printout. The door of an apartment off the lobby opens and a sour-looking older woman, MISS MABEL ERMITANG, steps out.

JACK
 (under his breath to
 himself)
 Every time.
 (to Miss Ermitang)
 Hello, Miss Ermitang.

MISS ERMITANG
 Good afternoon, Mr. Ballantine. You
 got the flyer about avoiding excessive
 noise?

JACK
 I don't have any excessive noise.
 But yes, I got I, thank you.

He hurries out as she scowls after him.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack goes to his Jeep parked on the street, gets in and pulls
 away.

EXT. FIRST ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - LATER

Jack parks the Jeep, gets out and goes into the building.

INT. FIRST ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack goes to the reception desk. FIRST RECEPTIONIST gets up
 from her desk and greets him. (*NOTE: Jack's description of
 Hero will be more specific when Hero is cast.*)

FIRST RECEPTIONIST
 Can I help you?

JACK
 Yes. I'm looking for a dog that
 would have come in last night from
 an animal control officer.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST
 Any tags on it?

JACK
 I don't think so.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST
 Don't think so? Is it your dog?

JACK
 Not exactly. I'm a fireman. The
 dog saved two lives, one of them
 mine.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Afterwards, someone saw an animal control officer chasing the dog. I can't get him out of my mind. I think I owe him.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST

That's something. But I don't think any strays came in recently. Let me check the log.

As she checks on a computer on a nearby desk, Jack looks over his printout. The woman comes back.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Nothing last night at all. Yesterday afternoon we had a poodle brought in.

JACK

Okay, thanks for checking. Let me ask you - the fire was on Grove Avenue...

FIRST RECEPTIONIST

Oh, I heard about that on the news.

JACK

Yes. I have this printout of the animal control centers. Do you know what one would take in a dog picked up around there?

He turns the printout towards her and she points to the second on the list.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST

Effingham Avenue would probably be the place. I'd try there next.

JACK

Effingham Avenue. Thank you, that's wonderful.

FIRST RECEPTIONIST

That dog sounds wonderful, saving two lives including yours. I hope you can save him.

JACK

I'm trying. Thanks again.

Jack heads out.

EXT. EFFINGHAM AVENUE ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - LATER

Jack's Jeep is parked in the lot of the animal control center.

INT. EFFINGHAM AVENUE ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack is at the desk already having enquired about the dog to the EFFINGHAM RECEPTIONIST.

EFFINGHAM RECEPTIONIST

This is where any stray would be brought from that area, but no, we haven't received any dog like that since... I don't remember.

JACK

You're sure.

EFFINGHAM RECEPTIONIST

Absolutely. I'd know of it. Sorry.

Jack nods and heads out.

EXT. EFFINGHAM AVENUE ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack looks at the list, stuffs it in his pocket and gets in the Jeep.

EXT. THIRD ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - LATER

Jack opens the door and goes in to the smallest and most dilapidated of the animal control centers.

INT. THIRD ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bughouse is behind the counter scribbling something and doesn't bother looking up even as Jack comes and stands at the counter.

JACK

Excuse me.

BUGHOUSE

(not looking at him)

Yeah.

JACK

I'm looking for a dog that was picked up last night.

Bughouse looks at Jack hearing that.

BUGHOUSE

A dog?

JACK

Uh huh. It was around Grove Avenue.

BUGHOUSE

Grove Avenue?

JACK

That's right.

BUGHOUSE

A stray scroungy mutt.

JACK

I don't know about scroungy. It would have been picked up last night somewhere around Grove Avenue. A male. Do you know anything about him?

BUGHOUSE

About who?

JACK

The dog I'm looking for.

BUGHOUSE

Why are you looking for this dog?

Jack is becoming suspicious of Bughouse.

JACK

Why am I looking for him?

BUGHOUSE

Yeah. What's your interest in this dog?

JACK

(beat)

He's my dog. He vanished from a fire we were fighting, someone said they saw an animal control guy chasing him.

BUGHOUSE

An animal control officer.

JACK

Yeah, animal control. You have my dog?

BUGHOUSE

He's your dog he should have had tags.

JACK
So you do have him.

BUGHOUSE
Did he have tags?

JACK
Maybe they were lost in the fire.

BUGHOUSE
So there were no tags on him?

JACK
I don't know. It's possible. Look,
I want my dog if you have him.

BUGHOUSE
What's his name? You know your dog's
name don't you?

JACK
(beat)
Hero.

BUGHOUSE
What, like the sandwich?

JACK
No, like a dog that risks his own
life to save others. Something you
wouldn't know about, I'm guessing.

BUGHOUSE
Yeah right.

JACK
Look, I want the dog. You have him,
don't you?

BUGHOUSE
I'll look.

JACK
This is a municipal facility. I'm a
fireman, I want to look with you.

Bughouse doesn't want to let Jack see the animals.

BUGHOUSE
I can check. You don't have to
bother.

JACK
I'll come with you.

Bughouse doesn't like it, but can't stop Jack. He goes to the door to the rear, Jack following.

INT. THIRD ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER CAGES - CONTINUOUS

There are rows of cages, thankfully many empty. Bughouse tries to lead Jack towards the back, but Jack looks down the first row and, sure enough, there's Hero lying dejectedly in one of the cages. Jack goes and stands in front of the cage.

JACK

A fine mess you've gotten yourself into.

Hero looks up at Jack and jumps up staying off his sore paw and BARKS ONCE happily. Another dog BARKS then another and then the whole pound erupts in BARKING.

BUGHOUSE

Shut up, all of you!

It does no good.

JACK

Get him out.

BUGHOUSE

He should have tags. I'm going to have to cite you.

JACK

Fine. Now get him out of there.

Bughouse goes to get his pole with the noose and Jack ignores him, opening the cage with Hero coming out quickly and nuzzling Jack.

BUGHOUSE

Hey, you can't do that.

JACK

I just did it.
(to Hero)
C'mon.

BUGHOUSE

There are procedures. I'm going to cite you.

Jack just leads Hero to the doorway back into the office, opening it and going through with Bughouse hurrying after muttering darkly.

INT. THIRD ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jack waits with Hero moving towards the outside door eagerly.

BUGHOUSE

You shouldn't have him running free
like that. He could attack someone.

JACK

Sure, sure. Give me the citation so
I can get out of here.

Bughouse fills out the citation as Jack bends to rub Hero's head.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to Hero)

How you doing, buddy. Hero. Hero.

Hero seems to like his new name. Bughouse pushes the citation towards Jack.

BUGHOUSE

Sign here. You have to have proof
of his rabies shot and his
registration.

JACK

Fine. You didn't do anything for
his paw, either.

BUGHOUSE

This is a pound, not an animal
hospital.

JACK

This dog saved at least two lives
last night, including mine. You
should be ashamed.

BUGHOUSE

(sarcastically)

Oh, I'm so upset.

Jack shakes his head and leads Hero out.

EXT. THIRD ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack leads Hero to the Jeep and opens the passenger door.
Awkwardly with his sore paw, Hero gets in, Jack helping him.

JACK

There you go, buddy. Good dog.

Hero goes to the driver's door and waits for Jack who comes around and has to move him back to get in, Hero licking at his face.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

JACK
You're a friendly mutt. Going to have to get you some breath mints though.

Jack reaches and buckles Hero into the seatbelt.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm glad you don't object.

Hero sits happily. Jack is amazed.

EXT. FIRE HOUSE - LATER

Jack's Jeep pulls up to the fire house and parks. Jack lets Hero out of the seatbelt and helps him get down, Hero following, intrigued by everything he sees.

INT. FIRE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack leads Hero into the fire house. FIREMAN TWO greets them.

FIREMAN TWO
Jack, you found that dog.

JACK
Luckily. I don't think he was long for this world in that place.

FIREMAN TWO
Can't let that happen to a hero.

JACK
That's his new name, too. Hero he is.

Fireman Two pets Hero.

FIREMAN TWO
Hero. It fits. We're going to have to get you treats.

JACK
Steak.

FIREMAN TWO
(to Hero)
Good treats.

Jack heads upstairs with Hero.

INT. FIRE HOUSE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Jack gets some blankets and lays out a bed for Hero in a corner.

JACK

I'll get you some food and drink.

Jack disappears. Hero limps around in a circle and flops down. Jack reappears with two dishes and sets them down next to Hero's bed.

JACK (CONT'D)

You look comfortable. Here's water
and I found some cold hamburger.
That should hold you.

He reaches to pet Hero who licks his fingers.

JACK (CONT'D)

You're not going to stop that
slobbering, are you?

He laughs and rubs Hero's head.

JACK (CONT'D)

You relax and I'll take care of some
business. Okay?

He snatches his hand away as Hero tries to lick it again. Hero goes to the bowl and gobbles the hamburger.

INT. FIRE HOUSE LOUNGE - LATER

Hero is sprawled out in his bed when Jack reappears. Hero perks up.

JACK

Okay, Hero boy. You're comfortable
there. I'll be back tomorrow and
we'll get you looked at and get some
tags.

He starts out, but Hero trails after him.

JACK (CONT'D)

No, boy. Go lie down, you stay here.
You'll be fine. I'll see you
tomorrow.

Hero just stands and when Jack heads out again, Hero follows.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You can't come with me. My apartment
 doesn't allow pets.

Hero just stands and stares.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Will you go lie down?
 (beat)
 Lie down?
 (beat)
 You're not going to lie down, are
 you?

Hero sits but keeps staring. Jack sighs.

JACK (CONT'D)
 All right. Come on. I'll sneak you
 in. But no barking, all right?

Hero stands up and limps towards Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You're spooky. I really believe you
 understand everything I'm saying.

Hero purposefully brushes against his leg and looks up at
 him.

JACK (CONT'D)
 I'm probably going to have to move,
 but that's okay. I'm thinking you're
 worth it. Maybe we'll get that leg
 looked at now.

They head out of the fire house.

EXT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of BLOOM VETERINARIAN CLINIC, Jack's Jeep
 parked in front.

INT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

Jack leans against a counter in an examination room, Hero on
 the table. DR. BLOOM enters holding an X-ray that he clips
 up on a light tablet. Jack moves next to him.

DR. BLOOM
 It's not broken. He must have just
 sprained it a bit. He doesn't seem
 to be in any undue pain when I move
 it, so I'll just tape it up. Try to
 keep him off it as much as possible.

JACK

Well, he's got a mind of his own about things like that, I'll tell you.

DR. BLOOM

He's not always been a stray. Someone had him neutered. If you're getting him tagged, I can give him the shots you'll need with the certificate.

JACK

That would be great.

DR. BLOOM

A lovely dog, very healthy. And a real hero from what you told me.

JACK

That he is.

DR. BLOOM

Looks like he's found himself a good home. Lucky dog.

Hero looks at the doctor and wags his tail.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Jack pulls up to his apartment building.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Hero has his foreleg bandaged. Jack lets him out of the seatbelt.

JACK

We're going to have to sneak you in.

Hero starts to follow him as he gets out, but Jack stops him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Wait.

Hero sits.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack gets out and from the back of the Jeep takes a fireman's coat. He opens the front passenger door.

JACK

I'm going to put this over you and carry you up. Okay?

Hero kind of lowers his head and Jack drapes the coat over him and picks him up, kicking the door shut. He heads for the elevator, Hero's tail sticking out beneath the coat.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Jack comes through the door into his apartment, again using his foot to close the door behind him, setting Hero down onto the floor and taking off the coat.

JACK

Now remember, no barking. We can't let anyone know you're here.

Hero climbs on the couch and lies down.

JACK (CONT'D)

Probably never had a chance of keeping you off the furniture.

Hero wags his tail. Jack goes to the small kitchen area and gets a bowl that he fills with water and puts on the floor. From the cabinet he takes a can of chicken, opens it and puts it on a plate he sets next to the water.

JACK (CONT'D)

There you go if you get hungry or thirsty. No drinking from the toilet, okay?

Hero watches him.

JACK (CONT'D)

I wonder if you know to let me know if you have to go out.

(beat)

Guess I'll find out. Well, thanks again my friend. You did great. Glad we met.

Hero wags his tail again.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll leave the light on low for you.

He adjusts the light. He gives Hero a rub on his head.

JACK (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Hero. See you tomorrow.

He heads into the bedroom. Hero eases off the couch and follows him into the bedroom.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

JACK

No, no. Maybe we'll get you your own bed tomorrow but tonight the couch is for you.

He leans down and gently turns Hero around, urging Hero towards the living room.

JACK (CONT'D)

Go now, go ahead. The couch.

Hero looks at the bed.

JACK (CONT'D)

No, no way. Go to the couch now.

Jack waits, but Hero doesn't move.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm going to lose again, aren't I?

Hero leaps onto Jack's bed, turns a couple of times at the foot and flops down.

JACK (CONT'D)

Never mind the dog license -- I may just get us a marriage license.

With his head on his paws, Hero looks up at Jack and wags his tail again. Jack turns on the TV to a sports station, flopping on the bed, smiling at Hero.

JACK (CONT'D)

Still, kind of nice having you here, Hero my friend.

Hero likes the set up as well.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

P.O.V. JACK - AFTERNOON

Jack opens his eyes on Hero sitting and staring at him, wagging his tail, his mouth open.

BACK TO SCENE

JACK

What?

Hero spins around and goes down on his front paws but doesn't bark.

JACK (CONT'D)
You have to go out?

Hero spins again and goes to the door.

JACK (CONT'D)
Oh boy. Can you wait for me to take a shower?

Hero spins again. Jack sits up in the bed.

JACK (CONT'D)
It's going to be like this for a long time, isn't it? You're lucky you saved my life.

INT. APARTMENT DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Hero is at the door as Jack comes up.

JACK
No leash. No collar. Do I try to sneak you out?
(shakes his head)
No, I don't think I do.

He opens the door.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

As they come down to the front door, Miss Ermitang comes out of her apartment and scowls as she sees Hero.

JACK
(to himself)
My luck holds.
(to Miss Ermitang)
Hello Miss Ermitang.

MISS ERMITANG
That dog. No pets allowed. You know that Mr. Ballantine.

JACK
That dog saved the life of a little girl and me. His name is Hero. And he's not going anywhere, except for his walk right now.

MISS ERMITANG
Well you can't keep him here.

JACK

In that case, I'll be putting in my notice. I'll move at the end of the month.

MISS ERMITANG

The dog can't stay here anytime.

JACK

If you put in an eviction notice, it will take longer than having me move on my own. So in any case, the dog will be staying until I move, the sooner the better believe me.

MISS ERMITANG

I'll be expecting your formal notice, Mr. Ballantine. And any damage the dog makes will be deducted from your deposit. The dog should be on a leash as well.

JACK

I can tell you there's a mother glad Hero wasn't on a leash because it meant her little girl didn't die. You'll get my notice.

Jack and Hero head outside.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL CENTER - LATER

Jack steps up to the counter at the Animal Control Center, putting down the citation he got and the certificate of rabies vaccination from Dr. Bloom. The female ANIMAL CONTROL CLERK looks over the papers.

ANIMAL CONTROL CLERK

Cash or credit card on the ticket?

Jack gets out his credit card and puts it on the counter.

ANIMAL CONTROL CLERK (CONT'D)

The same card for the registration tags?

JACK

Yup.

The woman begins processing everything.

EXT. JACK'S JEEP - LATER

Jack returns to his Jeep, Hero sitting on the passenger seat waiting. Jack gets in.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Jack shows Hero the tags.

JACK
You're all legal, now.

Hero tries to lick Jack's face but only gets his hand.

JACK (CONT'D)
I told you -- no slobbering. Let's
get you a collar you like.

He reaches across and puts the seat belt across Hero who resists licking him.

EXT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Jack pulls away.

INT. PET SHOP - LATER

Hero gets to accompany Jack in the family pet shop. They look at a rack of collars.

JACK
No choke chains. I like this one
with velcro. Breaks open if you get
caught on something. What do you
think?

Hero likes it.

JACK (CONT'D)
Have to get a leash, too, but just
for show. I trust you, buddy.

Hero appreciates it.

EXT. FIRE HOUSE - EVENING

Jack strolls in carrying his backpack and a dog bed, Hero walking proudly with his new collar and tags. FIREMAN THREE greets them.

FIREMAN THREE
You got him a bed, Jack?

JACK
Just like us - home away from home.

FIREMAN THREE
How's the pooch's leg?

JACK

Hero. I named him Hero.

FIREMAN THREE

Tough name to live up to.

JACK

He's done it already. And it looks like his leg is okay. The vet said just a strain and he's not limping at all.

(to Hero)

Want that bandage off?

Hero sits and lifts his bandaged paw.

FIREMAN THREE

Wow. It's like he knows what you said.

JACK

I think he does. He may be an alien in dog-form. But he is a hero.

Jack unwinds the bandage and Hero licks his fur where it was and WOOFs once. Jack dumps the bandage in the garbage and Hero follows him up the stairs.

EXT. COMPUTER STORE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of large computer store on a deserted street.

INT. COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

In the darkness, a man, FASUDA, unrecognizable in the darkness, is crouched by the wall where he has the cover of an electrical outlet removed. A small flashlight on a band around his head illuminates the outlet. He loosens one of the screws on the plate and pulls the wire free. He takes from a pocket a small plastic container filled with a liquid, carefully pouring it into the wall. As he looks at his handiwork, he fumbles the container and the liquid spills out on the bottom of his trousers and the floor. He caps the container and puts it in his pocket, then pulls out a HANDKERCHIEF and mops the floor and his pants with it. He stuffs the handkerchief in his pocket then puts the plate back in place and carefully puts the screws in holding it to the wall. He picks up a power cord connected to a computer and plugs it into the wall socket. He stands, surveys what he's done, rubs at the drying floor once again with his shoe, switches off the light on the band his head and puts it in his pocket. He turns and heads out, opens the back door and goes out.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

FASUDA crosses the parking lot heading for the dark sidewalk. As he walks, the handkerchief falls from his pocket. He doesn't notice, disappearing in the darkness up the street.

INT. FIRE HOUSE EXERCISE ROOM - LATER

Jack is running on an exercise treadmill with Hero also running on another one next to Jack, effortlessly trotting to keep up with the machine. The FIRE ALARM goes off. Jack gets off the treadmill and shuts it off, turning off Hero's as he jumps off. They hurry out of the room.

INT. FIRE HOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

In the hallway, the firemen slide down the pole to the first floor. Hero goes to the hole in the floor and looks down, but he's not sliding down the pole. He sprints for the stairway and heads down.

INT. FIRE HOUSE FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hero arrives as the firemen are pulling on their equipment which had been set out by where each gets into the truck. As Jack gets in the back seat, he holds the door open for Hero.

JACK
(calling)
Hero, c'mon buddy.

Hero leaps into the truck and gets up on the seat and sits down. As Jack closes the door, the fire truck pulls away, the SIREN WAILING.

EXT. FIRE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Several fire trucks exit the fire house and scream away down the street in the darkness.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Hero is looking out happily as Jack finishes with his gear.

JACK
Hero...

Hero looks at him.

JACK (CONT'D)
I don't know if you can understand me, but so far you've been one smart dog. This is the real thing.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

You did good at your first fire,
but you can't just go doing anything
you want now. You're going to have
to listen to me.

FIREMAN FOUR in the front seat, looks at Jack having this
discussion with Hero.

FIREMAN FOUR

You're losing it, Jack.

JACK

(to Fireman Four)

You haven't seen him in action yet.
I'm pretty sure this dog is smarter
than you.

FIREMAN FOUR

You're the one talking to him.

JACK

(to Hero)

You understand me, don't you. You
listen to me when we're at the fire.
You do what I tell you.

Hero goes for Jack's face with his tongue again, Jack letting
him get in a lick this time.

FIREMAN FOUR

Watch out for the frenchie, Jack.

Hero goes back to looking out the window.

EXT. FRONT OF COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The computer store and the nail shop on the side where the
arsonist set the fire in the wall has flames coming out the
roof, smoke billowing in the rest of the store. Jack's truck,
the first to arrive, brakes to a stop and everyone hops out.
Jack stops Hero.

JACK

Hero -- these stores are closed,
there's no one in them, we're not
going in. You stay outside and safe,
okay?

Hero sits down.

JACK (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Jack takes off to fight the fire. Hero watches a moment then rises and strolls down the street towards the corner, disappearing around it.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Hero comes around the corner into the parking lot where other fire trucks are parked battling the flames. Hero keeps out in the parking lot away from the trucks, walking up towards the store. He smells something, sniffing and following the scent. He comes upon the HANDKERCHIEF and sniffs at it. He then backs away and walks up towards the fire trucks, watching the firemen spraying the blaze then continuing through the parking lot towards the next corner.

EXT. FRONT OF COMPUTER STORE - LATER

Hero is back by Jack's fire truck, lying down. The blaze is out, the two buildings a darkened, smoldering ruin, firemen spraying the mess with water. Jack comes up and bends down and pets Hero.

JACK

You been here the whole time just like I told you? Good dog.

Hero wags his tail. Jack begins taking off gear and sees down the street the fire investigator, Linda Weston, talking with a fireman and writing on a clipboard.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to himself)

There she is again.

He watches as she shakes the fireman's hand and moves down the street studying the burned building then turning the corner and disappearing. Jack stows some gear then looks where she disappeared. He ambles down to the corner, Hero trailing.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda is up near the rear door, looking into the smoldering building, the rear less damaged than the front. Jack and Hero approach and Linda smiles at them.

JACK

Anything interesting?

LINDA

Excuse me?

JACK

You're the fire investigator.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I spoke with you at the Grove Avenue fire.

LINDA

You told me about the dog finding the fire.

JACK

That's right. And there he is.

He points out Hero who's sniffing by the back door of the burned building.

LINDA

That's the dog? You found him.

JACK

I did, in the pound. I adopted him. His name is now Hero.

LINDA

Wow. That's some story.

JACK

I'm Jack Ballantine, Division 8, by the way.

LINDA

(shaking hands)

Linda Weston.

She then jots his name and division on her clipboard.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Your division was a first responder here. What did the fire look like when you arrived?

JACK

It was localized to the computer store on the end towards the nail shop, flames out the roof. Heavy smoke.

LINDA

What color was the smoke?

JACK

Dense gray, billowing.

LINDA

Any smells?

JACK
Nothing out of the ordinary.

Hero follows the scent a bit across the parking lot in the same direction the arsonist took. Jack calls to him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hero. Come here, boy.

Hero comes over and Linda bends down to pet him.

LINDA
So you're some hero I hear. What a good dog.

She gets up and Hero heads for the handkerchief.

JACK
You know, I have a degree in arson investigation -- Cal State Northridge.

LINDA
Really? Why aren't you practicing?

JACK
No openings when I graduated and then I began thinking maybe I like the action more than I would poking around in the remains.

LINDA
Adrenaline junkie?

JACK
Must have some affinity.
(beat)
Maybe we could have breakfast when you're finished here.

Hero suddenly makes a quiet but insistent bark, looking at Jack and Linda.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's up, Hero?

Hero spins and looks at them.

JACK (CONT'D)
He wants something.

LINDA
From what you said, I guess we should see what.

They go over to Hero who lies down pointing at the handkerchief. Jack and Linda come up and look at it.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Don't touch it.

JACK
I know.

Linda gets down on her knees and bends to sniff it.

LINDA
Could be some kind of accelerant.

Linda sits on the pavement and opens her carrying case. She brings out a video camera.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Could you run the video while I mark this? I usually have a partner, but...

JACK
No problem.

She starts the camera and hands it to him. From her pack she takes a marker that she sets near the handkerchief then gets up and takes out a digital camera and takes shots of the handkerchief, getting both close-ups and overall scenes. Finally, she takes out a paper evidence bag and writes on the lines the location, object, date, time, and signs it. Pulling on latex gloves, she gently places the handkerchief in the bag and seals it and puts it in her carrying case.

LINDA
Pan and get the entire setting.

Jack does as she directed.

LINDA (CONT'D)
That's good.

She takes the camera, shuts it off and stows it in her pack.

LINDA (CONT'D)
He might have picked up the scent by the doorway.

She leads the way back towards the building.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Some kind of dog. You sure he's not been trained?

JACK

I don't know anything about him except he seems too smart to be real. He's stubborn, too.

LINDA

You should see if someone lost him.

JACK

I don't really want to know. He's my dog now.

Hero barks happily as if he understands what Jack just said.

LINDA

I see what you mean. He is kind of spooky.

JACK

In the best ways.

(beat)

What about that breakfast?

LINDA

I don't think so.

Jack is a bit embarrassed at being rejected until she explains.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Hero's discovery means I'll be here well into the morning trying to prove if this was arson or not. But I'd love to talk with you. Let me give you my cell number and you can give me a call.

She begins writing on a piece of paper on her clipboard.

LINDA (CONT'D)

If my phone isn't on, I'm sleeping. Leave a message.

She hands him the paper. Jack looks at it and puts it carefully in his pocket.

JACK

That's great. I'm looking forward to it.

LINDA

Me, too. Bring Hero. I'll get him some kind of reward.

Again he seems to know what's being said, giving a short happy bark. They both look at him and shake their heads in wonder.

INT. BARBERSHOP - AFTERNOON

Jack is getting his hair cut, the stylist washing his hair, Jack looking relaxed.

INT. DOG GROOMERS - AFTERNOON

Hero is getting groomed, the groomer giving him a bath, Hero looking dejected and cowed.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - LATER

Hero is riding in the passenger seat not looking like his usual bouncy self, Jack spiffy with his new hair cut.

JACK

Oh, c'mon, it couldn't have been that bad. You look terrific.

Hero looks over at him but doesn't cheer up.

JACK (CONT'D)

Linda said she has a nice steak meal for you. And she has a dog. A female poodle named Gracie. You'd better be nice.

Hero, unimpressed, looks away out the window and Jack chuckles.

JACK (CONT'D)

You are something else.

EXT. LOS ANGELES UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Jack's Jeep moves along in a wealthy neighborhood of Los Angeles. The Jeep slows in front of one of the large houses.

INT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Jack stares at Linda's house with shock, turning into the driveway.

JACK

Cripes.

He parks in the driveway.

EXT. FRONT OF LINDA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack is at the front door carrying a box of gourmet coffee cake. The door is opened by Linda.

LINDA
Hi there. Good to see you.

JACK
I thought servants would be opening
the door.

Linda laughs.

LINDA
No servants. A nanny/housekeeper,
but she's off today. My daughter is
with her grandparents. Where's Hero?

JACK
He's in the car there.

LINDA
Get him. We're eating out by the
pool and I'm dying for Gracie to
meet him. That was an arson by the
way. I even might not have caught
it except for Hero. Brilliant.

JACK
Wow.

LINDA
His steak reward is all ready.

Jack hands her the coffee cake.

JACK
I think he'll like that more than
this. I'll get him.

She takes the box and Jack goes and opens the Jeep's door, Hero hopping out and not having to be told to bound for the front door, Linda holding it open as Hero goes in followed by Jack.

EXT. BACKYARD OF LINDA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda leads the way to the table set under a trellis at the back of the house, a large green yard with a full-size pool to one side, a very nice GUEST HOUSE to the side by the driveway and multi-car garage.

Under the table that is set with salad and a tray of finger sandwiches, a full-sized black poodle, GRACIE, looks up as they all come out of the house, standing up as she sees Hero who stops in his tracks when he sees her.

JACK
I've got to say I didn't expect
such... Nice place.

LINDA
It's comfortable.

JACK
No, I know comfortable. This is
more.

LINDA
Sit. What would you like to drink?

JACK
An ice tea would do me.

LINDA
You've got it.

She goes back into the kitchen as Jack sits. Hero comes and sits by his side, staring at Gracie who's lain back down and appears to be paying no attention to Hero. Jack rubs Hero's head.

JACK
Hope you two can get along. Me too.

Linda comes back out with a tray with two ice-tea's, sugar and lemon, and two bowls, setting it all on the table.

LINDA
Hero's filet mignon.

At the sound of his name, Hero perks up.

JACK
He's really getting spoiled, but I
guess he deserves it. He'll love
that.

She takes the bowls and puts them down by the dogs, Gracie getting a smaller portion than Hero who dives into his while Gracie eats with more gentility. Linda takes her tea and adds some sugar.

LINDA
I didn't know how you like your tea.

Jack adds some sugar and squeezes in a bit of lemon.

JACK
Lovely. Thank you.

LINDA
Cheers.

She holds her glass up and Jack clinks his against hers.
They drink and sit a moment then...

JACK
I've got to say, not many fire-
fighters I know could afford this.

LINDA
It came with my husband. His family
is wealthy and he did all right,
too. A lawyer.
(beat)
He was killed two years ago. Fell
while rock-climbing in the Tetons.

She has to look away a moment to compose herself.

JACK
I'm so sorry to hear it.

She shrugs.

LINDA
You take what the universe serves
up. And he died doing what he loved.
He enjoyed taking risks so it wasn't
a total surprise...even though it
was.

JACK
(beat)
How old is your daughter?

LINDA
Lisa is nine. That's the only problem
I have with the job -- going off at
odd hours, being away too much. But
my own Mrs. Doubtfire takes great
care of her.

JACK
Mrs. Doubtfire?

LINDA
Just like her except she's a real
woman. Evelyn McAllister from the
highlands. I'd have to quit my job
if not for her.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

And Lisa has my parents and Robert's -- my husband that is -- so it seems to be working. I love the job and don't know what I'd do with myself except for it. That combination of fires and detective work. For me there's nothing like it.

JACK

So you've been an arson investigator for...?

LINDA

Seven years. My father was a fireman in Chicago when I was growing up so I had it in my blood.

(beat)

You think you might like it? You went to the trouble of getting that degree.

JACK

I did. But then when there were no openings, it faded for me. I convinced myself I liked the action too much.

LINDA

Maybe it's time to give it a try.

JACK

Maybe.

LINDA

My partner, Pompeii Franchiotti, just retired with heart problems so there's an opening on the task force. That's why I was alone at those fires. I could put in a good word for you. You've already got Hero. No joking, with his nose he's perfect for canine accelerant detector training. It would almost assure you got the position.

JACK

Now I need the dog to get a job.
(rubs Hero's head)
You're taking over my life.

LINDA

Quite the way you two hooked up.
You're a dog person?

JACK

I had a dog when I was in elementary school but not since then. The job makes it difficult. I'm getting kicked out of my apartment for having Hero. One day and the landlady catches me with him. Just my luck.

LINDA

Really? That's a shame.

JACK

It was just an apartment, nothing special. I just have to find somewhere that allows pets.

LINDA

(beat)

Would you like some salad, a sandwich?

JACK

Love it.

They both take some salad and a sandwich.

JACK (CONT'D)

How about you? Have you always had a dog?

LINDA

My whole life it seems. Poodles for some reason. All sizes.

JACK

I hear they're smart dogs.

LINDA

You've got to give it to Hero though.

JACK

Smartest animal I've ever run across.

Hero looks at Jack, seeming almost pleased.

LINDA

(beat)

I don't know if I should.

JACK

Should what?

LINDA

I want to suggest something, but I don't want you to take it the wrong

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)
way. It would benefit both of us, I think.

Jack looks puzzled.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You see the guest house there. Two bedrooms, kitchen, living room, completely furnished. It's going to waste. And it's just Mrs. McAllister, Lisa and I in the house. I'd feel better knowing you and Hero were right there -- fellow fire-fighters. So, if you'd like, I'd be happy for you to take it. No rent, no chores. It would really be a favor to me. But again, I don't want you to take it the wrong way.
(beat)
I'm not coming on to you.

JACK
Well thank god for that.

He laughs and she smiles.

LINDA
Would you like to see it?

JACK
I'd love to. But I have to tell you -- if it's a hovel, completely unlivable, Hero and I are still moving in -- if you'll have us.

At that she truly smiles.

LINDA
(getting up)
Let's go look at it.

As they walk side-by-side towards the guest house, Hero walks next to Jack, Gracie next to Linda, but the two dogs glance at one another shyly.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - DAY

Jack and Hero drive towards Linda's house, the back of the Jeep piled with belongings. As they pull into the driveway...

JACK
I think we're going to like our new home, Hero.

In the wide driveway, they pass an expensive car pulled up by the back door.

JACK (CONT'D)
Company for Linda.

He parks by the garage, the guest house next to it, getting out with Hero following him.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Jack takes things from the Jeep and carries them towards the guest house, looking at the main house, Hero also looking for Gracie. Jack opens the door to the guest house and goes in.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He carries the things to the rear bedroom and looks around.

JACK
(to Hero)
I think we'll be comfortable here.

Hero jumps on the bed and lies down.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're always comfortable.

Hero rolls over. Jack laughs and heads back out, Hero jumping down and following.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

As Jack and Hero head for the Jeep, Linda and an overly well-groomed man, dressed far too upscale casual, DAVE EGAN, come out heading for his expensive auto. They meet.

LINDA
Hi Jack, Hero. Dave, this is Jack Ballantine and Hero the hero dog. Jack's a fire-fighter. They're taking the guest house. Jack, this is Dave Egan.

DAVE
(shaking hands)
How do you do?

JACK
Nice to meet you.

It's not nice at all for Jack which surprises him a little. Hero is looking towards the house, but Gracie is nowhere to be seen.

LINDA

How are things shaping up with the house?

JACK

Beautiful. I'm in love with it already.

LINDA

The yard will be nice for Hero, too. He has free run of it.

JACK

Thank you. You're very generous.

LINDA

All fire-fighters are heroes.

DAVE

(to Linda)

Well, the plane is waiting.

(to Jack, not very sincerely)

Nice to have met you.

JACK

Likewise.

(to Linda)

Where are you flying to?

LINDA

Oh. We're taking Dave's plane out to Catalina. Do some horseback riding.

JACK

That sounds like fun. Hero and I will be moving things from my apartment to the house. That should be fun, too.

LINDA

(smiling)

I hope you enjoy it.

DAVE

Have a nice day.

Dave takes her by the arm and guides her towards the car. Jack watches them go. Hero keeps staring towards the house.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Jack, dressed in a sports coat, approaches a door to an office reading "Arson Task Force" and goes in.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A woman RECEPTIONIST is at a desk.

JACK

Good morning. I have an appointment
with Chief Lewis.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Ballantine, yes. Have a seat,
he'll be right with you.

JACK

Thank you.

Jack sits down while the receptionist speaks on the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Ballantine is here.
(to Jack, pointing to
interior door)
You can go right in.

JACK

(getting up)
Thank you.

INT. CHIEF LEWIS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF LEWIS Comes from behind his desk to greet Jack. On
his desk is a name plaque reading "CHIEF MERIWETHER LEWIS."

CHIEF LEWIS

Jack, good to see you.

JACK

(shaking hands)
Chief Lewis.

CHIEF LEWIS

Sit, sit. Would you like some coffee?

JACK

No, thanks, I'm fine.

The captain takes his seat behind his desk. Jack points to
the name plaque.

JACK (CONT'D)

Meriwether -- after the explorer?

CHIEF LEWIS

My father was a history professor,
the Lewis and Clark expedition was
(MORE)

CHIEF LEWIS (CONT'D)
his specialty so he stuck me with
this name. Anyway, what's on your
mind?

JACK
You may remember that I applied a
couple of years ago for the task
force after I got my degree.

CHIEF LEWIS
Yes, of course. I was disappointed
you'd changed your mind when a
position finally opened up. Don't
tell me you've changed your mind
again?

JACK
I'm afraid I have -- at least I'm
considering it. I was told there
might be an opening.

CHIEF LEWIS
Who told you that, if you don't mind
my asking.

JACK
Linda Weston. I met her at a computer
store fire and we got to talking.

CHIEF LEWIS
The computer store. That was your
dog that found the accelerant rag?

JACK
She told you about that? Yes.
Anyway, she mentioned her partner
was retiring and there might be this
opening, so... Here I am.

CHIEF LEWIS
You're serious about joining the
task force?

JACK
I'm here, I must be. Ms. Weston
mentioned that Hero, my dog, might
be good for canine accelerant
training.

CHIEF LEWIS
Have you spoken to Captain Bonnet
about this yet?

JACK

No, I wanted to see how things looked before I brought it up with him.

CHIEF LEWIS

(beat)

You have more seniority now so you should put in a new application I suppose. And about this Hero -- I'll speak to the canine unit, see what's what there.

JACK

That sounds great. I'll see Captain Bonnet and let him know what I'm thinking.

CHIEF LEWIS

(both stand up)

Good. I'm glad you came in, Jack. I think I can say with some confidence that I'm looking forward to you joining us.

JACK

That would be great, Chief Lewis. Thank you. I'm glad I came in, too.

Chief Lewis puts his hand on Jack's back as they head for the door.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - EVENING

At the dining table are Jack, Linda, her daughter LISA and the nanny/housekeeper, EVELYN MCALLISTER, who is not serving but having dinner with the others. Hero is alert in a corner.

LISA

(looking at Hero)

He looks hungry. He can have some of mine.

LINDA

He ate just a few minutes ago, darling. And we don't feed him or Gracie from the table.

LISA

Why can't Gracie be here?

LINDA

Gracie's sleeping upstairs. She's fine.

LISA
Are she and Hero girlfriend and
boyfriend?

LINDA
No, darling.

JACK
Not yet.

Linda smiles.

MRS. MCALLISTER
Would you like some more sweet potato,
Mr. Ballantine?

JACK
No, thank you, I'm fine Mrs.
McAllister. Everything is wonderful
though. Just delicious.

MRS. MCALLISTER
Please, Mr. Ballantine, call me
Evelyn.

JACK
Then you must call me Jack.

MRS. MCALLISTER
It's a deal, Jack.

JACK
Evelyn.

LISA
(to Jack)
And you may call me Lisa.

JACK
Well, thank you, Lisa. Please call
me Jack.

LISA
Thank you, Jack.
(to Linda)
May I call you Linda?

LINDA
You may call me mother, mom, Mrs.
Weston, but not Linda.

LISA
Why?

LINDA

I don't really know. I just don't think I'd like my nine year-old daughter calling me by my first name. It seems too formal somehow.

LISA

But you call me Lisa?

LINDA

I named you Lisa. It doesn't feel formal to me to call you Lisa.

LISA

Maybe it feels formal to me.

LINDA

Would you like me to call you daughter?

LISA

(beat)

No. I like Lisa better.

LINDA

I do, too. Case closed.

(to Jack)

So Hero is all ready for his accelerant detection classes?

Hero looks up.

JACK

He's always ready. Thanks again for putting in the good word with Chief Lewis.

LINDA

Oh, he was keen to have you -- and Hero. I think you two are going to be wonderful partners. I didn't tell you -- Chief Lewis thought it was too expensive to run DNA on the handkerchief but finally gave in. It turned up a profile, but it didn't match anyone. We find a suspect, though, we have something to ID him with.

JACK

Really? That's terrific.

LINDA

(to Hero)

You deserve another special treat.

Hero likes the sound of that.

MRS. MCALLISTER

And how are you finding your new accommodations, Mr.... Jack?

JACK

Evelyn, they couldn't be more comfortable.

(to Linda)

And thank you so much for them. It was truly generous.

LINDA

We like having you nearby.

LISA

If there's a fire, you can come over and put it out really quick.

LINDA

Really quickly, darling.

LISA

Yes, very fast. It's quite a comfort knowing you and Hero are so nearby.

JACK

(smiling)

I'm glad we can put your mind at rest, Lisa. And may I say, you are the most well spoken nine year-old I've ever met -- and I might add, the prettiest as well.

Lisa can't hide her smile.

LINDA

You're going to turn her head, Jack.

JACK

And such a pretty head to turn.

Lisa giggles.

INT. CANINE DETECTION CLASS - DAY

A group of fire-fighters stand in open warehouse-like detection training room with their dogs on leashes at their side, Jack and Hero among them. An INSTRUCTOR faces the class.

INSTRUCTOR

Most people think dogs just smell better than humans, and they certainly do. But not just better. We can barely comprehend the way a dog smells. Say you go into a fast food restaurant. If it's well ventilated, you may smell the disinfectant they recently used on the floor. Or you might be able to smell the meat frying, perhaps the oil used on the french fries. Your dog, however, can smell the meat, the oil, the vinegar used in the oil, the grilled mushrooms somebody ordered, the mustard and ketchup, the disinfectant -- whatever there is to smell in that place. And a strong odor doesn't blot out the weaker ones for a dog. That's why drug smugglers can't mask the odor of the drug by encasing it in coffee grounds or something. Beyond that, they smell independently through each nostril, able to discern the relative strength of the smell. This means as they're following a trail of accelerant, they'll be able to lead you to the main pour even if the perp has spread the accelerant. Your dog will find the scent stronger towards the main pour and lead you that way. So we're not teaching the dogs how to smell. They naturally do that. Our goal is to train them how to indicate to us the presence of the accelerants normally used in arson -- to pick them out of all the smells that will be present and alert us. So, let's get started...

INT. CANINE DETECTION LAB - AFTERNOON

A series of rooms set up to test the dogs, different accelerants in differing situations. Jack and Hero are going through the rooms, Hero on a leash wearing paw protectors is leading the way, the instructor with a clipboard following. In one room, Hero sniffs thoroughly and pushes past a number of boxes and cans before sitting at a particular spot.

JACK

Show me.

Hero points his nose directly at a small plastic container in among other boxes and containers. Jack takes out a plastic baggie and a large set of tweezers.

JACK (CONT'D)

Check.

Hero sniffs at the bag and tweezers and stands.

JACK (CONT'D)

No contaminants on them. Good dog.

He offers Hero a treat and Hero is happy to accept. Jack looks at the instructor.

INSTRUCTOR

Perfect. Our star pupil.

Hero thinks he should get another treat for the compliment and Jack gives him one.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

You indulge him.

JACK

Yeah, I'm afraid he's got me. If he was a woman, I'd marry him.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - DAY

The handlers and dogs are all dressed in uniform, lined up, with the FIRE BRASS arrayed opposite to award the Completion Certificates to the teams. To one side are onlookers, other fire-fighters and family including Linda.

INSTRUCTOR

(announcing)

Investigator Jack Ballantine and his Canine Accelerant Detector Hero.

Jack leads Hero to the Instructor who hands him the official certificate and shakes his hand as do the other officials.

ANGLE ON

In the crowd, Linda claps and smiles.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack and Hero rejoin the line and Jack shows Hero the certificate, Hero pressing his nose against it.

JACK

Smells good, doesn't it.

EXT. PARKING LOT SPORTS FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Hero walk towards Linda as she approaches.

JACK
Well, we made it.

LINDA
I'm so happy for you both.

They walk together towards the parking lot.

JACK
Thanks for coming. It was nice of you.

LINDA
We are going to make a great team -- the three of us.

JACK
I'm looking forward to finally getting started.

LINDA
I'll be glad you're there. There's a lot of work to do.

JACK
I like the setup for Hero being right there with us.

LINDA
Took a little convincing of Chief Lewis, but it worked out well.

JACK
Yeah, Hero doesn't like being left alone.

They reach Linda's car, Gracie sitting patiently with the windows all half open.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hey, you brought Gracie.

LINDA
She likes to ride, too.

JACK
I was going to take Hero to the dog beach. Would you like to go?

LINDA
You're going in your uniform?

JACK

I have a change of clothes in the Jeep. I wasn't about to wear this getup all day. You're welcome to come along.

LINDA

(beat)

Why not? I've never taken Gracie to the beach. She might like something new.

JACK

Great.

LINDA

I'm going by my aunt's later so I'll follow you.

JACK

You don't want to watch me change?

LINDA

I hope you're not changing while you drive. Remember, I have arrest powers.

JACK

So do I, now.

LINDA

Good. You can arrest yourself then.

JACK

(smiling)

I'll change when we get there.

EXT. DOG BEACH PARKING LOT - LATER

Jack, in shorts and a polo shirt, carrying a rolled beach towel, comes up to Linda's car, the door open. She's trying to coax out Gracie who is staring at the ocean.

LINDA

(to Gracie)

C'mon, let's go. There's nothing to be afraid of.

Gracie doesn't look convinced.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

She's scared I think. She's never seen the ocean.

JACK

(to Gracie)

It's all right, sweetheart. You'll
like the water.

Suddenly, Hero crouches on his front paws and barks a couple of times. He rises and turns and takes a few steps towards the beach then looks back at Gracie. He then continues towards the beach and suddenly Gracie slowly gets out of the car and hesitantly follows Hero. Jack and Linda look at one another.

LINDA

So it's Hero she listens to.
Interesting.

JACK

Well, he is kind of cute.

Linda laughs and she and Jack follow the dogs towards the water, Hero leading but not going too fast as Gracie still is not crazy about the water. When they reach the beach, Hero waits and Gracie comes up next to him. Hero steps out on the sand and after a moment Gracie follows, curious about the feel of the sand. Hero takes off running towards the water, crouching as he heads for a flock of seagulls that take off squawking. Gracie doesn't break into a run, but she does start trotting after him, her fear dissipating.

Jack is laying out the towel as Linda watches the dogs. He and Linda sit on it.

LINDA

Hero is the teacher.

JACK

I brought him to the beach once before
and he either knew the water or just
wasn't afraid...took to it right
away.

LINDA

He ran into a burning building. I
think he's got boldness in his blood.

JACK

He is something. I love him.

Linda looks over at Jack.

LINDA

So, you know something of my story.
What about you?

JACK

Me?

Linda nods.

LINDA

Nothing too revealing.

JACK

Well... My parents live in Santa Barbara. I have a sister who teaches history of religion at Cal-State Northridge. She was the one who always got the good grades. I played sports.

LINDA

And now you've got a dog.

JACK

And just a dog?

LINDA

Only if you're comfortable.

JACK

The one I was serious with was a bank vice-president. She... She wasn't thrilled about me being a fireman. That's when I went to Cal-State to become a fire investigator. I got the degree and she still wasn't happy about it. I just didn't think it would work, so... Now I have Hero. He's not so judgmental.

They look at the dogs, romping by the water.

LINDA

I think Hero is winning Gracie.

And maybe Jack is winning her.

JACK

No puppies though. The vet told me Hero's been neutered.

LINDA

Good. There are too many strays already.

JACK

They can always adopt.

BEEPING of cell phone, Linda finding it's hers.

LINDA

(into cell phone)

Hello.

(beat)

What? I couldn't hear that.

(beat)

No, there's something wrong with
on this phone. It cuts in and out.

(beat)

Okay, I guess. You chose a good
place, I'm not dressed.

(beat)

So I'll meet you there about forty
minutes.

(beat)

I took Gracie to the beach.

(beat)

Okay, good. See you there.

She clicks off the phone and puts it away.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Got to go. Dave came back early
from his business trip. We're going
out to eat.

JACK

Oh. Okay.

Linda stands up and looks at the dogs, Jack joining her.

LINDA

They're having fun.

JACK

Leave Gracie. I'll bring her home.
I'm going right back from here.

Linda hesitates.

JACK (CONT'D)

Unless Dave will wonder where she
is.

Linda looks at Jack with a slight smile on her face.

LINDA

(beat)

Are you sure? I don't want to impose
on you.

JACK

No trouble. They're having fun and
this way she won't have to sit in a
car.

LINDA
That's thoughtful. Thank you.

Almost impulsively, she gives him a peck on the cheek.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Bye.

JACK
Bye.

He tries not to stare as she heads off across the beach for the parking lot, but he keeps glancing at her. Near her car, she looks back and waves. Jack waves back, pleased.

EXT. SECOND COMPUTER STORE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a computer store in a strip mall.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

The rear of the computer store is on a narrow alley with a wall down the far side. In the darkness, the perp from the first arson, Fasuda, appears at the top of the wall, watches, then slides over into the alley. He goes to the back door of the computer store and from the backpack he's carrying takes out a lock-picking kit, using it to open the door, and he slips inside.

INT. SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

Fasuda moves through the back room of the computer store into the show room. He goes to one side where a number of computers are plugged into a power bar. From the backpack he takes out a cord matching the ones on the computers. He exchanges one of the cords for the one he's brought with a break in it. As he plugs it in, there is a brief flash and it begins to heat up. From the backpack, he takes out the familiar container of fluid and this time carefully pours it over the power bar and moves the bar closer to the wall, pouring the fluid down the wall onto the power bar. The break in the cord is glowing redder and he puts the container back in the backpack, checks his work, and heads for the backdoor.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

Fasuda crosses to the wall just up from the computer store and pulls himself up, scraping the wall near the top. He balances on top and then jumps off and there is the sound of THUMP from the other side when he lands. A GLOW comes from a grill-covered window on the back of the computer store.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness, a DOORBELL RINGS. Jack awakens and switches on a light. Hero is up and alert. Jack gets up and goes out of the bedroom, Hero following.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack turns on a living room light as he heads for the front door. He opens it and finds Linda at the door, dressed in her fire investigation uniform, a large case in her hand.

LINDA

Jack, I'm sorry to wake you. I got a call. There's been another computer store fire.

JACK

What time is it?

LINDA

Five. I really want Hero there for any accelerant. It could be a serial arsonist.

JACK

You're dressed. Let me get ready. It'll only take a second.

Jack goes to the bedroom.

LINDA

Hello Hero.

Hero wags his tail and nuzzles her. She pets his head.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You like Gracie, Hon?

Hero looks as if he does like Gracie.

LINDA (CONT'D)

We'll see. She makes up her own mind, but you are attractive.

Hero likes the sound of that. Linda moves around the room waiting for Jack who appears in his uniform looking still only half-awake.

JACK

Ready, I guess.

She and Jack and Hero go out, Jack carrying a backpack.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Jack's Jeep is in front of the house. Parked to one side in the large driveway is Dave's car, Jack noticing it.

JACK

Dave getting to sleep in, lucky dog.

Hero thinks Jack is talking about him.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to Hero)

Not you this time. Another dog.

Linda glances at him.

LINDA

Shall we take two cars or...

JACK

Let's grab my Jeep. How does this work? Do we go to the office after the fire site?

LINDA

We'll play it by ear. We're going in off-hours, we don't have to show up at the office, but we'll probably want to at least for a time. Put on your odometer for mileage compensation.

Jack opens the back of the Jeep and they store the packs. Linda opens the passenger door and Hero waits to see if he should get in. Linda looks at him as Jack goes around to the driver's door.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Be my guest, darling.

Hero jumps in and sits in the passenger seat as Jack gets in. Linda has to shoo Hero into the back seat. Jack backs out.

EXT. FRONT OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - LATER

Jack's Jeep pulls up to the taped-off fire scene, Linda putting an official parking permit up on the dashboard. The fireman guarding the scene sees it and their uniforms and lets them in to park. They all get out and retrieve the packs from the rear of the Jeep. From her case, Linda takes out a video camera, a small digital camera and an aluminum notebook holder, putting them in a shoulder bag. Jack puts a leash on Hero and picks up his backpack.

LINDA

We'll stay together, ease into our partnership.

JACK

Sounds good. To tell you the truth, I'm feeling a bit intimidated.

LINDA

You'll get it easily.

(to Hero)

How about you? You intimidated?

JACK

Not much intimidates him.

LINDA

Let's get to it.

She turns to a nearby fireman.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Incident commander?

The fireman points to an older official, LIEUTENANT VOLKLER, outside a trailer. Linda, Jack and Hero go to him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Sir, I'm Linda Weston, this is Jack Ballantine and his canine accelerant detector, Hero. We're with the arson task force.

VOLKLER

Lieutenant Volkler. Glad to have you on scene

LINDA

Glad to be here. Do you have a list of first responders and those first in?

INCIDENT COMMANDER

Yes, I'll get you a complete rundown. I know the procedure. I'll have all the information for you -- who reported the fire, building owner, reports of the scene when the first responders arrived, security systems in operation. You can just go ahead and survey the scene. It's secure.

LINDA

Very good, that's great. Thank you very much.

She leads Jack and Hero towards the burned out building, beginning to record the scene with the video camera.

LINDA (CONT'D)
First we'll circumvent the scene,
get a sense of it overall.

They move across the front of the building.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda, Jack and Hero come down the alleyway behind the store.

LINDA
It's similar to the other computer
store -- rear door though the other
was more open back here.

She takes a pair of latex gloves from her pack and pulls them on as she goes and examines the back door lock and handle.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Nothing obvious.

They continue on, Hero sniffing everything though nothing grabs his attention.

EXT. FRONT OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

LINDA
Time to plunge in. I'm going to use
the still camera. Can you run the
video?

JACK
Sure.

He takes the leash off Hero and puts it in his pocket then they both get from their packs latex gloves. He then gets a pair of doggy booties from the pack and puts them on Hero's paws.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to Hero)
Stay by me.

Hero walks right next to Jack who concentrates on the video he's shooting while Linda takes the stills. They enter the burned building.

INT. SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

Linda moves carefully into the building, Jack just behind her, Hero next to him sniffing.

She keeps shooting, Jack moving the video camera around getting everything everywhere.

LINDA
Let's find the initial ignition point.

JACK
It looks like the most damage is towards that wall.

They slowly move that way. As they approach the spot where the arsonist set the fire, Hero moves ahead of them, sniffing left and right, going directly to the power bar where the accelerant was poured. He sniffs at it and sits. Jack and Linda look at one another.

LINDA
That was fast.

Jack gives Linda the video recorder and she films as he goes in his pack and takes out the large tweezers and container and calls to Hero who comes over to him. Jack lets him sniff the implements and Hero shows no hits on them.

JACK
Canine accelerant detector indicates no contamination on equipment.
(to Hero)
Search.

Hero goes back to the power bar, sniffs again and sits. Jack and Linda come up to him.

LINDA
Appears the power bar was the cause of the fire. We're taking still shots.

Jack takes the video recorder and Linda gets out an evidence marker from her pack and sets it next to the power bar then shoots a number of stills. Jack hands her the recorder. The power bar has melted sufficiently that it's not connected to anything and Jack carefully lifts it and places it in a bag that he seals. He then gets out a sharpie and writes on the lines on the bag the details of the evidence collection, consulting his wristwatch for the time which he notes on the bag.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Another electrical connection cause. Pretty similar to the other computer store fire.

JACK
Somebody doesn't like technology.

EXT. FRONT OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - LATER

It is getting light as Jack and Linda come out of the building and remove their protective gear, Jack taking off Hero's booties. They shoot stills and videos of the onlookers outside the taped perimeter of the fire scene. They go back to Volkler, the incident commander.

LINDA
We're finished inside.

VOLKLER
Here's the preliminary report.

He hands her a fairly thick loose leaf folder.

VOLKLER (CONT'D)
My contact info is there if you need to reach me about anything.

LINDA
That's wonderful. Thank you. We'll be at the Arson Task Force office if you need to talk with us.

They go to Jack's Jeep and pack their things in the back.

LINDA (CONT'D)
One last thing I want to do is check out the alley behind the store. Hero found that accelerant rag behind the other store. I'm thinking the perp probably goes through the back.

JACK
Good idea.

They get in the Jeep, Linda getting Hero in first and again having to shoo him to the rear seat.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack's Jeep pulls up just before the burned out store. They all get out.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

They move along the wall opposite the shops. It's dirty and full of marks, but they persevere. Just up from the shop where the arsonist went over the wall, Linda stops and examines a slightly newer looking mark near the top of the wall.

LINDA
Does that look fresh to you?

Jack looks at it.

JACK

Could be.

LINDA

What's on the other side?

Jack, taller than Linda, jumps up a couple of times to see over the wall. Hero jumps up with him the second time.

JACK

It's a yard -- of a house.

LINDA

We'll go check it out on the other side.

Jack is impressed with her sense of assurance. Linda notices.

LINDA (CONT'D)

What?

Jack shakes his head, a slight smile on his face.

LINDA (CONT'D)

No, really. What?

JACK

(beat)

You know how to take charge.

LINDA

I was the oldest child. My father treated me like a boy.

(beat)

I wanted to be treated that way, truth be told. I may as well admit it. I was a tomboy. I still am.

JACK

It's...admirable, I think.

LINDA

Dave doesn't like it.

She regrets saying it immediately.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Anyway, let's go check out the yard. Never can tell what you'll find.

Jack looks at her with a slight smile on his face.

JACK
That's the truth.

He's not speaking about what they may find in the yard. Linda walks quickly to the Jeep and gets in, closing the door so that Hero has to get in on Jack's side.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

JACK
Let's put on our seatbelts. Safety first.

Linda doesn't look at him as she pulls on her seatbelt.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to Hero in the
backseat)
You're on your own, buddy.

Hero doesn't mind.

EXT. REAR OF SECOND COMPUTER STORE - CONTINUOUS

The Jeep moves off down the alley.

EXT. STREET BEYOND ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Jack's Jeep pulls up at the house opposite the scuff mark on the wall. They all get out.

LINDA
We'll see if anyone's home. If we find any evidence, it could make a difference if we have permission to be on the property.

JACK
Good to know.

They go to the door and Linda rings the bell. They wait and she rings again. No one answers.

LINDA
Okay, no one home. Can't risk destruction of evidence so we should be okay to go in.

They head for the back yard.

EXT. BACKYARD OF EVIDENCE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They cross the yard and go to the wall which is shielded by bushes.

JACK
This is the spot.
(to Hero)
Search.

They carefully examine the ground while Hero moves around sniffing, but he finds nothing.

LINDA
(pointing)
Look.

Jack looks where she's pointing.

ANGLE ON

An impression in the ground of a shoe tread pointing into the yard at an angle.

LINDA (CONT'D)
It's pointed the right way if the
perp dropped here. Let's get an
impression of it. I'll get the dental
stone.

JACK
(to Hero, pointing to
one side)
Go there and lie down and stay.

Hero walks to one side and lies down.

LINDA
Did you train him to do that?

JACK
No. I swear I think he could talk
if he had the vocal chords for it.

LINDA
Some dog.

Linda heads for the Jeep. Jack continues to examine the ground and the wall but finds nothing. Linda returns with her pack.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You video everything I do here.

Jack takes the video camera and records what she does. She first gets out an evidence marker and then a photographic scale -- a right-angle ruler that she carefully places next to the footprint. She then takes a number of still shots of the footprint with the ruler for reference, reviewing the pictures to make certain they're clear.

She removes the ruler and takes from the pack an open wooden frame and carefully places it around the footprint. She then opens a bag of powder and from a container pours water into it, closing the bag and mixing the powder and water until it is a thick paste. She opens the bag and squeezes the paste down over the footprint then puts everything away as the paste hardens. She and Jack stand together waiting. Hero makes a faint whine.

JACK
(to Hero)
Yeah, okay, c'mon.

Hero happily joins them, nuzzling for a head rub which he gets from both of them. Linda tests the back of the impression and finds it hardened.

LINDA
Film this.

Jack gets the video camera and records as with great care she lifts the frame and turns it over. The shoe impression is clear.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Perfect. You can stop filming.

Jack puts away the camera.

JACK
Now all we have to do is find out
who's foot it is.

LINDA
Every little bit helps.

She sets down the impression and gets a box from her pack, putting the impression in it and writing the data on it. Jack picks up the other things and they head off.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - LATER

Jack, Linda and Hero come into their office in the Arson Task Force offices. They have two desks facing one another, file cabinets and in the corner a bed for Hero with food and water bowls nearby. Hero goes and drinks while Jack and Linda collapse into the chairs at their desks.

JACK
I hope every day isn't like this.

LINDA
We'll log the evidence and do a
preliminary report and then get out
of here.

JACK
Okay. While you take care of that,
I'll take a nap.

LINDA
Ha, ha, ha. How about instead you
do the report and I'll log the
evidence?

Jack looks at Hero who is eating.

JACK
And Hero will have a snack and then
a snooze. Anyone who thinks there's
no free lunch should talk to him.

LINDA
Gracie has it even easier, but what
can you do? We're stuck being humans.

JACK
Has its moments, though.

Linda smiles and nods.

LINDA
Let's finish and get out of here.

JACK
(booting his computer)
Sounds like a plan.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - LATER

Jack's Jeep pulls into the driveway. Dave's car is gone.
They all get out.

JACK
Home again, home again, hippity hop.

They stand for a moment.

LINDA
You know, I'm tired, but I'm not
sleepy. I think I'll take a swim.
Would you like to join me?

JACK
That sounds nice. I'd like that.

LINDA
Okay. I'll see you at the pool.

They both head for their houses, Hero following Jack.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - LATER

Jack comes out of the house in his swim trunks and a polo shirt, carrying a towel, Hero following. Linda is in a bikini on a lounge chair by the pool, a pitcher of ice tea, cut lemons and glasses on a table, Linda's filled glass on a low table between the lounge chairs.

LINDA
There's ice tea if you'd like.

JACK
Nice.

He pours himself a glass, sets it on the table and puts his towel over the lounge chair and pulls off his shirt before lying down on it.

JACK (CONT'D)
That feels good.
(beat)
Where's Lisa?

LINDA
She's not here when Dave is over.
She's at her grandparents.

JACK
Ah.

Hero is staring at Linda.

LINDA
(to Hero)
What?

Hero barks once.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You want me to get Gracie?

Hero barks again.

LINDA (CONT'D)
(to Hero)
You promise to behave yourself?

Hero whines and lies down, still staring at her. Linda laughs and gets up and goes to the house, both Jack and Hero watching her. She goes inside and in a moment comes back out, holding the door for Gracie who comes out walking regally. Hero gets up but Gracie plays it coy, going and lying down next to Linda on the lounge chair.

JACK
Think I'll take a dip.

LINDA
Sounds good.

They both get up and Jack dives into the pool, Linda waiting until he comes up before she gracefully dives. She comes up near Jack. Hero follows to the edge of the pool.

JACK
(to Hero)
Stay.

LINDA
No, it's all right. Gracie comes in the pool all the time.

JACK
Really? You don't mind?

LINDA
I'm not squeamish -- if you don't mind.

JACK
No.

LINDA
(to Hero)
C'mon. C'mon.

Hero looks to Jack.

JACK
Okay, c'mon in.

Hero looks back at Gracie who gets up.

LINDA
(to Gracie)
You may as well come in, too. Your boyfriend's coming in.

As Gracie comes up, Hero runs and jumps into the pool. Gracie looks at Linda.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Yes, come in. Have fun.

Gracie jumps in the pool and Hero doggie-paddles over to her, the two dogs paddling through the water happily.

LINDA (CONT'D)
They make a cute couple.

JACK
You're awfully nice to him. And to
me. I want you to know we appreciate
it.

Suddenly Dave's car pulls into the driveway. Linda frowns.

LINDA
(to herself)
What...?

Jack notes her reaction. She moves to the edge of the pool
but doesn't get out as Dave comes across the lawn.

DAVE
Hey you.

LINDA
Hi. What are you doing here?

The dogs head for the exit, going to the stairs at the shallow
end and climbing out, Gracie following Hero.

DAVE
They said at your office you'd gone
home early. Just thought I'd see
how you made out.
(to Jack)
Hello.

JACK
Hello.

LINDA
We went out at five, got back maybe
an hour ago.

DAVE
I see.

The dogs come up by Dave and suddenly start shaking themselves
dry, spraying Dave who cringes for cover.

JACK
Hero, get back.

Hero does as he's told with Gracie following as Dave moves
away and flaps at his clothes with obvious annoyance then
forces himself to appear pleasant

DAVE
Anyway, I was thinking you might
like to go out to an early dinner.

LINDA
That's nice, but I'm beat. I'm going
to take myself in to an early bedtime.

DAVE
Ah, okay. Some other time then.
I'll give you a call.

LINDA
Great.

DAVE
(to Jack)
Goodbye.

JACK
Nice seeing you again.

Dave goes back to his car, waves again, and backs out.

LINDA
(to Jack)
Well, I guess I'll get to that sleep.

JACK
Sleep sounds good.

She and Jack climb out and dry off, the dogs coming over.
Both Jack and Linda use the towels on the dogs when they're
finished.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'll see you at the office tomorrow.
You have a nice sleep.

LINDA
And you also.

Kind of awkwardly, they touch hands then head off for their
respective homes. At his front door, Jack looks over to
Linda's house and is pleased to find Linda at her door looking
back at him. Hero looks and sees Gracie glance at him and
he's pleased as well. Jack and Linda wave and they all go
inside.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack stares lost in thought then looks at Hero.

JACK
Might be nice to have company, huh?
(beat)
You're good company, too, though.

Hero woofs, Jacks pets him and they head for the bedroom.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - DAY

Linda and Jack are at their desks.

LINDA
(into the phone)
That's great, yes, thank you very
much.

She hangs up the phone.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Nike Zoom Hyperdunk, size nine, a
hundred and sixty dollars retail.
Our serial arsonist isn't poor.

JACK
Or he spends what he has poorly.
We'll have to go back to that house
and find if anyone there or the
neighbors wears that kind of shoe.
It could be completely innocent.

LINDA
One of a million things to check
out.

JACK
I'm kind of liking it though. It's
a real challenge.

LINDA
That's good. Liking it is ninety
percent of the battle. Let's go see
Chief Lewis about putting out a BOLO.

They get up and gather their things to go, Hero waking
instantly and joining them.

JACK
(to Hero)
Chief Lewis already isn't crazy about
you. You have to wait.

Hero doesn't want to wait.

JACK (CONT'D)
Can't bring you. Go lie down. We'll
be back in a few minutes.

Reluctantly, Hero does as he's told.

INT. CHIEF LEWIS'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda and Jack are sitting with Chief Lewis.

LINDA

Both of the computer store fires have been confirmed arsons. It appears the perp goes in through the rear door by picking the lock. I know you were reluctant to spend the funds for the DNA test on the accelerant rag we found, but it came back with a profile. No matches, but if we find a suspect... And we have what we believe to be a shoe-print from the perp. We found it in the yard of a house over the wall from the second computer store location. Appears to be a young person's shoe, size nine Nike basketball. We're thinking the police department should issue a BOLO for suspects around any computer stores, especially young men late at night.

(looks at Jack)

Anything to add?

Jack shakes his head.

CHIEF LEWIS

(to Jack)

How's that dog working out?

JACK

Terrific.

LINDA

He's hit on accelerants at both locations. He's unbelievable.

CHIEF LEWIS

Good. This BOLO... A shoe print from a yard behind the store? It seems thin. Could have been from anyone.

LINDA

From the direction and depth, it appears it was made by someone dropping from the wall. And a scuff mark on the wall looked fresh. We're going to canvas the neighborhood for youngsters, see if anyone fits the shoe.

CHIEF LEWIS

The BOLO seems okay, but I don't want to specify any age or type.

(MORE)

CHIEF LEWIS (CONT'D)

It might just keep them from being alert for any possible perp.

LINDA

All right.

CHIEF LEWIS

Anything else?

LINDA

Not that springs to mind.

(to Jack)

You?

He shakes his head. The chief stands and Linda and Jack follow.

CHIEF LEWIS

Keep me informed.

LINDA

Absolutely.

Linda and Jack head out.

EXT. STREET BEYOND ALLEY - LATER

In Jack's Jeep, Hero happily riding, they pull up at the house behind the second computer store where they took the impression of the shoe in the backyard. They get out, Hero joining them, and go up to the house, ringing the bell. A woman ANN BILZARIAN, not too young, opens the door looking quizzical.

ANN

Can I help you?

Linda flashes a badge in a holder at the woman.

LINDA

I'm fire investigator Linda Weston and this is my partner fire investigator Jack Ballantine. We're looking into the fire in the store across the alley.

ANN

What's with the dog?

JACK

He's a fire accelerant detector.

ANN

Oh.

LINDA

Yes. We were in your backyard the other day, you weren't home. We suspected someone came over the wall into your backyard and we got an impression of a shoe in the dirt back there. Is it all right that we were in your yard?

ANN

You think someone connected to the fire came through my yard?

LINDA

It's possible. We have your permission to be in your yard?

ANN

Yes, of course. Do anything you need. My goodness, that's alarming they were in my yard.

LINDA

Do you have any children?

ANN

Yes.

LINDA

Are they at home?

ANN

She lives in Seattle -- Washington. My daughter.

LINDA

Grown daughter I take it.

ANN

Yes. She has three children of her own.

LINDA

I meant any children living with you.

The woman shakes her head.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Do you know of any young men that live in the neighborhood?

ANN

The Gregories two houses over.

LINDA
Which way would that be.

The woman points up the street.

LINDA (CONT'D)
The house beyond your neighbor there?

ANN
That's right.

LINDA
Well, thank you for your help Mrs...?

ANN
Bilzarian. Ann Bilzarian. My husband
is Frederick, but he's not home at
the moment.

LINDA
Oh, we don't have to speak to him,
Mrs. Bizarian. Thanks for you help.
Have a good day.

JACK
Thank you.

ANN
You're welcome.

They go down the walk as Ann watches a moment before shutting
the door. They turn up the sidewalk heading for the other
house.

EXT. STREET BEYOND ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

They knock on the door of the Gregory house. It's opened by
a large man in his thirties.

LINDA
Mr. Gregory?

MR. GREGORY
Yeah?

Linda flashes her badge again.

LINDA
I'm fire investigator Linda Weston.
This is my partner, fire investigator
Jack Ballantine and his dog Hero, a
canine fire accelerant detector.

MR. GREGORY
Fire investigator?

LINDA

We're investigating the fire in the store beyond the alley.

MR. GREGORY

Oh yeah, that. What about it?

LINDA

We understand you have a young man living with you.

MR. GREGORY

A young man. I suppose you could say that. He's seven.

LINDA

The young man in your house is seven years old?

MR. GREGORY

Yeah. My son Billy. I'm pretty sure he didn't have anything to do with the fire.

LINDA

No, I'm sure. We didn't know his age. He's the only young man here?

MR. GREGORY

That's it. I wanted my wife to have another child, but... Just the one.

LINDA

Any other young men in the neighborhood you know of?

He shakes his head.

MR. GREGORY

It's kind of old people. I'm thinking of moving actually. No one for Billy to play with. It's weird.

LINDA

Well, sorry to bother you.

MR. GREGORY

No trouble. You think kids started that fire?

LINDA

Possibly. Thanks for your help.

MR. GREGORY

Kids. What is wrong with them?

Linda smiles and she, Jack and Hero head down the walk.
Mr. Gregory bangs the door shut.

JACK
So much for that.

LINDA
Didn't seem likely a serial arsonist
would choose a store right where he
lived.

JACK
We'll have to get together a list of
other computer stores. It could be
a competitor cutting down the
competition.

LINDA
While we're in the neighborhood we'll
check for video up and down the
street. We have when the fire was
reported, we can use that time-frame
for review.

JACK
I don't think the day is long enough
to do this job.

LINDA
Ah, now you're getting the feel for
it.

JACK
Do we really ever catch anyone?

LINDA
We do. Which is why we do all the
pesky little tasks that don't seem
to go anywhere. You never know which
one is going to break the case.

JACK
I'm looking forward to that.

LINDA
It's the fun part.

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

Fasuda, wearing size nine Nike Zoom Hyperdunk basketball
shoes, walks on the busy street. His cellphone RINGS and he
answers. On the other end, unseen, is CHIEF LEWIS.

FASUDA
Hello.

CHIEF LEWIS

(on phone)

Fasuda. They have your DNA and an impression from your shoe. I want you to go to the safe house in Seattle, stay out of sight.

FASUDA

My DNA? Where did they get that?

CHIEF LEWIS

You dropped a rag at the first fire, some dog smelled it out.

FASUDA

Oh man.

CHIEF LEWIS

It's all right. You don't have a record. They can't match the DNA to you. Just go to Seattle and make certain you don't get arrested. They'll never find you.

FASUDA

What about the mission here?

CHIEF LEWIS

Cinco can do it. You've been teaching him well. You just get out of town, stay low, everything will continue.

FASUDA

All right. I'll leave right away.

CHIEF LEWIS

Good. Have a safe trip. Endnetarchy will win.

FASUDA

Endnetarchy freedom forever.

Fasuda shuts the phone, looks around as if the police are about to descend upon him and walks faster as he hurries off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jack and Linda are coming out of a gas station, Jack carrying several surveillance discs.

LINDA

You've never reviewed surveillance before?

JACK

Nope.

LINDA

You're in for a real treat. You have to watch nothing with detailed attention. Since the perp parked behind the stores, we probably won't get anything close to the fires. We'll go through the discs from the computer stores and maybe we'll match someone from them with someone we see on these. But probably they'll only be useful when we identify the perp.

Suddenly, Linda's phone rings. She looks at the caller ID but doesn't answer the phone.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(almost to herself)

Dave.

JACK

You're not going to answer it?

She puts the phone away in her pocket.

LINDA

(beat)

Would you like to have dinner tonight? Lisa's with her grandparents. I'm sure Hero would like to see Gracie.

JACK

I have to tell you. Whenever you ask me if I'd like to have dinner with you, my answer is always going to be...yes, I would love to have dinner with you.

LINDA

You say that now, but Evelyn cooked our last dinner. What if you don't like my pot roast?

JACK

I'll fake it.

Hero barks from the Jeep.

JACK (CONT'D)

And Hero would love to see Gracie anyway.

LINDA

Good.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - EVENING

In a montage of shots:

Linda serving dinner to Jack.

The two of them laughing as they eat.

Hero and Gracie having their dinner.

Jack helping Linda clear the table.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Linda bringing drinks and joining Jack on the couch.

Hero and Gracie settling down in the living room close to one another.

Jack and Linda close to one another on the couch watching a romantic movie such as *Casablanca*. Jack puts his hand on Linda's shoulder, she looks and he leans in and almost kisses her and she finishes, kissing him.

Gracie rolls against Hero who licks her neck once.

Jack leaves his arm around her as they pull back and look at one another, both of them pleased.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - LATER

Linda is at the door with Jack outside, a plate of leftovers in his hand. Hero is looking at Gracie who's just inside the doorway next to Linda.

JACK

I had a lovely evening. Thank you.

LINDA

I did, too. Thanks for coming. And pretending you liked the pot roast.

JACK

I didn't have to pretend about liking anything. I loved it all.

They look at one another a moment then Linda leans close and Jack kisses her. Hero nuzzles Gracie and everyone is happy.

LINDA

Goodnight.

JACK
Goodnight. Sleep tight.

Linda slowly closes the door and Jack and Hero head for their home, both of them beaming.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to Hero)
Pretty good night, huh?

Hero woofs once.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a server warehouse, a sign reading "SECURE SERVER SERVICE", in an upscale industrial mall.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE ROOF - CONTINUOUS

A large man, CINCO, is using tools from a bag to remove an air vent on the roof of the server building. He twists the air vent off and lays it on the roof. He flashes a light into the air vent and then carefully enters it carrying the bag, disappearing from sight.

INT. SERVER WAREHOUSE CEILING - CONTINUOUS

Cinco carefully moves along above the false ceiling, examining the wiring. From the pack he takes a filter mask that he fits over his mouth and nose, then a manual pump spray container, pumping up the pressure. He sprays a liquid completely around the edges of the ceiling then down the entire length of the main electrical conduit. He goes back to the the air vent and lights a cigarette that he tapes to a pack of matches, adding two stick matches as a backup. When he's satisfied that the cigarette is burning reliably, he places the pack on the floor in a pool of the liquid and climbs back out the vent.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE ROOF - CONTINUOUS

He emerges onto the roof and replaces the vent, putting the screws back in place and checking to see he left no traces. He heads for the edge of the roof where he picks up the rope ladder he hooks over the edge and climbs over.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE REAR - CONTINUOUS

He climbs down onto a compressor. The ladder has an extendible stiff piece that he uses to push up the hooks on the roof, brings it down and stuffs it away. He hangs down and drops to the parking lot and walks off casually, bolder than Fasuda.

INT. SERVER WAREHOUSE CEILING - CONTINUOUS

In the ceiling, the cigarette ignites the matches and the liquid carries the flames completely around the perimeter of the ceiling and down the main electrical conduit, the flames climbing higher.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness, the DOORBELL RINGS. Jack awakens and switches on a light. Hero is up and alert.

JACK
Here we go again.

Jack gets up and goes out of the bedroom, Hero following.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack turns on a living room light as he heads for the front door. He opens it and, as before, finds Linda dressed in her fire investigation uniform, a large case in her hand.

JACK
I'll get dressed.

He heads back to the bedroom.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jack's jeep pulls up and parks, Linda, Jack and Hero getting out. The entire server warehouse is in flames.

LINDA
A big one.

JACK
Won't be going in there for awhile.

LINDA
Let's start gathering background.

They head off to find the incident commander.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE - DAY

A crowd behind the police tape looks on at the wreckage of the server warehouse.

INT. SERVER WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack is running the video with Linda taking stills, Hero in his booties sniffing as they move carefully through the destroyed building. Linda and Jack stop and survey, Hero continuing to sniff.

LINDA

It looks like the entire ceiling
dropped down as a piece. I don't
think they're trying as hard to make
it appear a natural fire.

JACK

They're stepping it up, too. A server
warehouse. Looks like they hate
computers in every guise.

Hero sits at a piece of wreckage and Jack gives Linda the
video recorder and she films as he goes in his pack and takes
out the large tweezers and container and calls to Hero who
comes over to him. Jack lets him sniff the implements and
Hero shows no hits on them.

JACK (CONT'D)

Canine accelerant detector indicates
no contamination on equipment.

(to Hero)

Search.

Hero goes back to the piece of wreckage and sits. Jack takes
the video recorder while Linda sets out the evidence marker
and takes stills. She then records while Jack collects the
evidence and fills out the information on the collection
bag.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to Hero)

Good job, Hero.

Hero knows it.

EXT. SERVER WAREHOUSE - LATER

It's been a long night and morning for Jack and Linda who
are wearily carting their things to the jeep. Hero trails
behind them passing the small crowd still gawking as the
firemen move about. Hero begins moving his head to sniff
something, not sure where the smell is coming from. He puts
his nose down and follows the faint odor, heading for the
crowd. Cinco, the arsonist, is standing near the back of
the crowd and notices Hero sniffing as he winds through the
crowd towards him. Cinco turns and begins walking away,
Hero moving faster as Cinco is hampered by the crowd.

Jack looks for Hero who is hidden by the crowd.

JACK

Where's Hero?

LINDA

He was coming.

Cinco reaches the edge of the crowd and begins walking fast, but Hero is picking up the smell from him and is overtaking him. Cinco begins running and Hero goes after him, barking. Jack sees Cinco running up to the corner with Hero chasing him barking.

JACK

Hero! Hero!

Cinco turns the corner, Hero on his heels.

LINDA

He's onto something. We should have walked him through the crowd. C'mon.

They get in the jeep and make a U-turn to follow.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cinco's running flat out but is no match for four legs, Hero right behind him barking. Cinco tries to kick at Hero who evades the blow. Cinco crosses the street right in front of a car, Hero having to wait and run behind it as the driver BLOWS HIS HORN and swerves to avoid Cinco. With a slight lead, Cinco runs up an alleyway, Hero coming behind.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cinco tries a doorway but it's locked. He runs further and Hero is gaining on him. He's getting near the end of the alley at the next cross street when Hero is right on his heels barking furiously. Cinco reaches in his jacket and pulls out a flip knife that he opens, turning to face Hero who stops and backs away slightly, still barking. Cinco slashes at Hero who dodges the knife and then springs and bites into Cinco's wrist. Cinco SCREAMS and tries to pull away but Hero hangs on as Cinco stumbles and falls backwards. Hero rips at his wrist and Cinco drops the knife and flails backwards. His other hand bumps into a piece of pipe lying against the building. He grabs it and raises it and hits Hero in the side of the head, staggering Hero who still doesn't let go. Cinco hits Hero again and Hero lets go and back away a bit, a bloody piece of Cinco's shirt falling from his mouth. Hero staggers and falls over unconscious. Cinco grabs his bloodied wrist, rises and runs out the far end of the alley and disappears.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Linda are on the other street searching for Hero and the guy he was chasing. Linda glances up the alley where Hero is lying and sees something.

LINDA

Stop!

Jack pulls to the curb beyond the alley.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Back up. It might have been Hero up there.

Jack carefully backs up to the alley.

LINDA (CONT'D)
There. I think it's Hero.

Jack turns into the alley and accelerates up to Hero. He screeches to a stop and they jump out.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

They rush up to the unconscious Hero.

JACK
Oh no.

They carefully pick him up and when Jack has him securely in his arms, Linda runs and opens up the door of the jeep. Jack lays him on the back seat and heads for the driver's seat while Linda gets in with Hero. Jack accelerates away.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Jack accelerates to the next street and around.

JACK
Hang in there, buddy. Stay with us.

Linda cradles Hero.

INT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - LATER

Jack paces the waiting room of Dr. Bloom's veterinarian clinic, Linda sitting in a seat, both of them clearly worried. Dr. Bloom enters removing his smock. Linda gets up and joins Jack, both of them on pins and needles.

DR. BLOOM
Well, the x-rays show no fractures of the skull and his vital signs are stable. He might have a concussion. We'll watch for swelling.

JACK
How do you feel about his chances?
He's not going to die, is he?

DR. BLOOM

Unless something more crops up, an infection, I think he'll pull through. Generally, a blow to the skull that doesn't result in a fracture or kill quickly doesn't prove fatal. I'm optimistic.

LINDA

That sounds good.

Jack still looks distressed. Linda comes over and hugs him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

He'll make it. He's tough.

Jack nods and takes a breath.

EXT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Linda come out and get in his jeep.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

LINDA

We have to go back to the alley and look for more evidence.

Jack nods and pulls away.

JACK

Someone's going to pay big time for this.

LINDA

Never mind the arson. Assaulting a law enforcement animal is a felony. He'll be going to jail for a good long time.

JACK

Not long enough.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LATER

Jack's jeep pulls into the alleyway where Hero was beaten. Jack and Linda get out.

LINDA

We're going to have to check all the businesses between here and the fire to see if there is video of that guy.

JACK

I should have taken Hero through the crowd. I completely screwed up.

LINDA

We screwed up.

Jack suddenly sees the bloody piece of Cinco's shirt that Hero ripped off.

JACK

Look at this.

LINDA

It looks like part of a shirt cuff.

JACK

It's fresh and right near where Hero was and the blood is on the inside.

LINDA

I think it's from the perp. This could nail it.

She goes to the jeep to get an evidence bag and the tweezers while Jack continues to check the area. He sees the knife.

JACK

(calling)

I found a knife.

Linda, carrying the backpack comes to look.

JACK (CONT'D)

This might be what Hero was fighting off.

LINDA

Let's collect this stuff.

She gets out the evidence markers while Jack fires up the video camera.

Linda comes and looks at it.

LINDA (CONT'D)

So he goes for Hero with the knife, Hero clamps on his wrist, he bashes Hero on the head, Hero pulls back ripping off the piece of shirt with the perp's blood on it, the perp drops the knife and runs.

JACK
Lots of evidence. We should find
this guy.

LINDA
We will.

She begins setting out the evidence markers while Jack films.

INT. JACK'S JEEP - LATER

They drive along towards the arson task force office.

LINDA
You know, if Hero tore a piece out
of the perp's arm the way it looks,
he might have gone to a hospital or
doctor to get it treated.

JACK
Can we find the perp without a warrant
for medical records? How would we
get that if we don't know who the
perp might be?

LINDA
Under the Health Insurance Portability
and Accountability Act of 1996, a
health facility must turn over
information to law enforcement
requests for information to identify
or locate a suspect, fugitive,
witness, or missing person. We don't
need a warrant.

JACK
(beat)
You are good at this.

LINDA
I try. Let's get a list of hospitals
in the vicinity.

EXT. FIRST HOSPITAL - LATER

Jack and Linda come out the front doors of the hospital and
stand a moment.

LINDA
Zero for three. Why can't it ever
be the first place we try?

JACK
It's usually the last.

LINDA
It better be because there are no
more on the list.

EXT. SECOND HOSPITAL - LATER

Jack and Linda are at the receiving desk looking at the
admissions records.

LINDA
Edward Nettles. Six stitches left
wrist from an dog bite -- one hour
after the attack on Hero. No doubt
about it.

JACK
That was easy -- thanks to Hero.

LINDA
I can't believe he'd be stupid enough
to use his real ID.

JACK
Let's go find out.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Jack and Linda are at the apartment complex's mailboxes.

P.O.V. JACK AND LINDA - CONTINUOUS

The mailbox is marked "Nettles" and "Fasuda."

BACK TO SCENE

LINDA
He is that stupid.

JACK
Bingo.

LINDA
Let's see the captain about getting
a warrant.

They head off.

INT. CHIEF LEWIS'S OFFICE - LATER

CHIEF LEWIS
I don't think this is sufficient to
apply for a search warrant. Even if
this was the same man, we don't know
why this dog attacked him.

LINDA

With all due respect, Chief Lewis, this dog was trained as a canine accelerant detector and has proven himself in the field.

CHIEF LEWIS

He wasn't on a leash. He just started chasing some man from the crowd and, apparently, viciously bit him. There's no evidence this man, whoever he was, was involved in any crime. We're more likely to be sued than find anything useful. I think we just let this one go.

LINDA

I just can't agree with that.

CHIEF LEWIS

That's fine, but it's my call. You're doing well. Just keep on with your investigation. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an urgent appointment.

He stands up and, reluctantly, Linda and Jack follow.

LINDA

I really hope you'll reconsider. This Nettles was treated for a dog bite on his wrist one hour after the incident in the alley where we found a bloodied piece of shirt cuff. We can match the blood, we may even find the shirt. There's really no doubt he was the perp.

CHIEF LEWIS

Again, he can't be considered a perpetrator of anything. He might have been a victim of this dog attack, but that doesn't implicate him in anything further.

JACK

Hero keys on accelerants. If he chased this man, it was because he detected accelerant on him.

CHIEF LEWIS

Pure speculation and the dog is new to the field. Who knows what went on. Now, I really have no more time. If you'll excuse me.

Reluctantly, Jack and Linda go out.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE BUILDING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

JACK

So what do you think?

LINDA

I think Nettles is our man and I don't care what anyone says or does, including the chief. We are going to get him.

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a police building.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Linda are waiting in the lobby of the building when approached by DETECTIVE BOBBY CLOBBER.

CLOBBER

Linda, how are ya?

LINDA

Good, good, Nice to see you again Bobby. This is my partner, Jack Ballantine.

CLOBBER

(shaking hands)

Nice to meet ya. C'mon back.

They follow Clobber to his office.

INT. CLOBBER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Linda sit in front of Clobber's desk as he comes in carrying some printouts.

CLOBBER

Nettles had a record. Here are the printouts.

He gives some of the printouts to each of them.

P.O.V. LINDA - CONTINUOUS

She looks at the photo printout of Nettles/Cinco while Jack looks at the list of arrests.

BACK TO SCENE

JACK
Mostly minor drug stuff.

LINDA
Thanks for this, Bobby.

CLOBBER
I'm surprised Chief Lewis didn't go
for the warrant. It sounds like you
had enough on this guy.

LINDA
I don't know, but we'll keep you out
of it for sure.

CLOBBER
Don't worry about it. I'm there if
you need me.

LINDA
Love you, Bobby.

CLOBBER
If only I wasn't married.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Nettles' apartment complex.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Linda approach an apartment door in the hallway and
Linda's prepares her gun just in case.

LINDA
These things can go sideways quickly
so be prepared.

Jack gets ready and Linda knocks on the door. Nothing. She
knocks again. Still nothing. An APARTMENT WORKER carrying
a stepladder with a ring of keys on his belt appears in the
hallway.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You work here?

He nods.

APARTMENT WORKER
You down for Cinco?

LINDA
Cinco? We're looking for Edward
Nettles.

APARTMENT WORKER
Yeah, that's Cinco. Street name.

LINDA
This is his apartment.

APARTMENT WORKER
Not no more.

LINDA
He's gone?

APARTMENT WORKER
You just missed him. Two hours ago.

LINDA
You mean he went out or...

APARTMENT WORKER
Out for good. Said keep his deposit
and the stuff he left and he be on
his way.

LINDA
Where was he going?

APARTMENT WORKER
Said his mom was ill in Texas.

LINDA
He leave a forwarding address?

APARTMENT WORKER
Nope. Just stuffed his car and split.

LINDA
What kind of car? You know his
license plate number?

The guy shakes his head.

APARTMENT WORKER
Little silver Japanese thing. I
don't know what kind.

LINDA
Did he leave alone or was there anyone
with him -- the guy on the mailbox,
Fasuda?

APARTMENT WORKER

No, he was alone. Fasuda moved out a couple of days ago.

LINDA

Where did he go?

APARTMENT WORKER

No idea. He wasn't on the lease.

LINDA

Did you see other people visiting either of them, maybe staying over?

The guy shakes his head.

APARTMENT WORKER

Just those two.

JACK

So this Cinco completely vacated the apartment, gave it up. It's not his anymore. Mind if we go in? Check it out?

APARTMENT WORKER

Who you be?

Jack and Linda show him their badges.

APARTMENT WORKER (CONT'D)

Convinced me.

He takes the key ring and searches for a key and then opens the door.

APARTMENT WORKER (CONT'D)

Just close up when you leave. I got things to do.

LINDA

Will do. Thanks.

APARTMENT WORKER

I always cooperate when I can get arrested.

LINDA

No, we're...

APARTMENT WORKER

Just kidding. Make yourself at home.

He heads off and they go inside.

INT. NETTLES APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They move about the two bedroom apartment, the furniture left behind battered and cheap, an odd assortment of food in the refrigerator that Jack looks in. They move into the bigger bedroom

INT. NETTLES APARTMENT FIRST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They move about looking in the closet, the dresser. An odd assortment of clothes left behind, the bed unmade with the blankets and sheets still on it.

LINDA

He left a lot behind.

JACK

Junk.

LINDA

Still he just abandoned all of it and his home and left in a rush. Yet he was so stupid he gave his real name and address at the hospital. Someone smarter than Nettles must have wised him up. We'll have to check his phone records.

JACK

We're going to need a warrant.

LINDA

Now that this Nettles has fled, I don't see how the captain can turn us down.

She heads for the second bedroom, Jack following.

INT. NETTLES APARTMENT SECOND BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's smaller than the first, Fasuda's bedroom, much emptier than Nettles's, Fasuda not having left in such a rush. Still, in the corner of the closet are a pair of battered shoes. Linda picks one up.

LINDA

Oh, look at that. About a size nine I'd guess.

JACK

The same size as the perp's at the first fire.

LINDA

Yes. Charles Fasuda. Interesting.
We get his DNA, no name or address,
and he takes off. How would he know
we're on to him in any way? Then we
ID this Nettles, and almost instantly
he's gone as well.

They both ponder that.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Linda are searching for the apartment worker. They see him in the hallway heading for another apartment.

LINDA

(calling)

Excuse me!

He stops and waits as they come up.

APARTMENT WORKER

Get what you need?

LINDA

Yeah, thanks for your help. Hey
look, I want to give you my number.
If you see Cinco or the roommate,
this Fasuda, or anyone comes around
about the apartment, I'm hoping you'll
give me a call. Anyone wants to go
in or rent it, I'd appreciate your
letting me know. There'd be something
in it for you.

APARTMENT WORKER

Yeah, I can do that.

LINDA

Great.

She gives him a business card, writing her cell phone number on the back.

LINDA (CONT'D)

That's my cell number there.

APARTMENT WORKER

Great. What's this all about?

LINDA

I'm sorry.

APARTMENT WORKER

Yeah, I figured that. Fire investigators. I think I'm glad he's gone.

LINDA

Again, thanks for your help.

He nods and puts Linda's card in his shirt pocket and they head out.

EXT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT.

INT. VETERINARIAN CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

Jack is pacing, Linda standing, as they wait in the office. A door opens and Dr. Bloom wheels in Hero lying on a cushion on a gurney but awake and alert. He raises his head when he sees Jack and Linda. Jack and Linda pet him.

JACK

Oh, I'm so glad to see you like this.

LINDA

How are you feeling, hon? You were a hero again.

Hero looks tired but happy.

DR. BLOOM

He's on a sedative to keep him from moving around. I'll give you his other medicines.

JACK

Thank you so much, Dr. Bloom.

DR. BLOOM

I've never had a patient I feel so close to. He's remarkable. He seems to understand everything I say.

JACK

I've said he could talk if he had the voice box.

LINDA

Is there anything special we should do?

DR. BLOOM

Not really. No heroics at least for awhile.

JACK
He seems to find them.

Linda leans and kisses him and he tries to lick her.

LINDA
You're the best.

JACK
And he's got all the luck.

Linda sort of rubs Jack, a consolation prize.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - LATER

Jack's jeep followed by Linda's car pull into the driveway and park in back. They get out, Jack opening the passenger door and carefully extracting Hero on his pad. The back door of the house opens and Evelyn and Lisa and Gracie come out. Lisa rushes to Hero, Jack stopping for her to see Hero.

LISA
Oh, Hero.

She gently kisses Hero who makes another attempt to get in a lick. Hero looks at Gracie who makes a whine and gets up on her hind legs and licks Hero who kind of nuzzles her in thanks.

JACK
Boy, you are a lucky dog.

LISA
Is he going to be all right?

LINDA
Yes, he's going to be fine. He just needs a bit of rest.

MRS. MCALLISTER
That's so good to hear. Who would do such a thing to a dog?

LINDA
We know who. Now all we have to do is catch him.

MRS. MCALLISTER
Oh, I hope he gets a proper punishment.

LINDA
That's what we're hoping, too. Well, let's let Hero get some rest.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

Evelyn has volunteered to watch Hero tomorrow so bring him over before heading into the office.

JACK

Evelyn, thank you so much.

MRS. MCALLISTER

Jack, I'm just so pleased I can help. Lisa and I will take the best care of him.

LISA

Gracie will help, too.

LINDA

I'll bet she will.

Linda and Jack smile at one another. Jack then heads in with Hero while the others return to Linda's.

INT. CHIEF LEWIS'S OFFICE - DAY

CHIEF LEWIS

I can't believe you continued with this Nettles fellow when I expressly ordered that you leave him alone.

Linda and Jack are surprised by the chief's reaction.

LINDA

He's fled. It's a virtual confession to his involvement.

CHIEF LEWIS

It's nothing of the sort. You said the manager told you Nettles was going to see his sick mother in Texas.

LINDA

Not going to see. He moved out and left his furniture. That obviously was just a cover story.

The chief leans back.

CHIEF LEWIS

I think you've let this investigation get too personal, Officer Weston. I'm going to reassign you.

LINDA

I beg your pardon?

CHIEF LEWIS

I believe you heard me. I'll decide where I'm going to place you. That will be all for now. Officer Ballantine, I'd like to speak further with you so please wait.

LINDA

With all due respect, Chief Lewis, I find this highly irregular.

CHIEF LEWIS

That will be all, Officer Weston. Please excuse us.

JACK

If I may say, she's done an outstanding job.

CHIEF LEWIS

I'll speak with you in a moment, Officer Ballantine. Ms. Weston...

Astonished, Linda gets up and leaves. Jack shifts in his seat.

JACK

She really is as good as they come. And this thing with Mr. Nettles...

CHIEF LEWIS

I don't think it's working out for you, Officer Ballantine. I'm going to let you go.

Jack is staggered.

JACK

Let me go? You're firing me?

CHIEF LEWIS

I just don't think you're cut out for investigation. It would be best, I think, if you returned to fighting fires rather than investigating them. And your canine accelerant as well. I just hope we avoid the lawsuit I still foresee from this person your dog attacked.

JACK

My dog, Hero, proved all three arsons. And he almost certainly led us to the perpetrator. Nettles is no innocent.

CHIEF LEWIS

You're still in the probationary period, it's my call, Office Ballantine. We thank you for your efforts, but I'm afraid my decision is irrevocable. Please have your desk cleared out by noon.

Jack is about to argue further then decides it's useless. He stands up.

JACK

All right. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm sorry it didn't work out...in your estimation.

CHIEF LEWIS

Thank you. Good-day.

Jack goes out.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Linda is at her desk pondering when Jack comes in.

JACK

I'm fired.

LINDA

What?

JACK

The chief fired me and Hero. Told us to go back to fighting fires.

LINDA

What?

JACK

Wants me gone by noon.

Jack shrugs as Linda just stares open-mouthed.

LINDA

This is beyond belief. I have no idea what's happening. If he fires you, I'm leaving.

JACK

No your not.

LINDA

I am.

JACK

It's a lovely gesture but completely unnecessary.

LINDA

I'm not working for someone who's utterly insane. This makes no sense at all.

JACK

Listen to me. I'm brand new at this job. I can leave it without regret. You love it. Sitting around your house would drive you crazy. It's not going to accomplish anything for you to leave.

LINDA

(beat)

I don't know.

JACK

Don't do anything rash while you're mad. You can always decide to leave.

Linda thinks for a minute then nods.

LINDA

All right. I'll take some time, but I may end up leaving anyway.

Jack nods.

JACK

Time for me to leave at any rate.

Linda shakes her head, dismayed. Jack puts his hand on her shoulder and she covers it with her hand.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - LATER

Jack's Jeep parks at the back of the house and Jack gets out. He surprised to find Evelyn, Hero and Gracie in the back yard by the pool, Lisa swimming. Hero gets up and trots towards him, followed by Gracie and then Evelyn.

JACK

(to Hero)

Well look at you, will you. Hi Gracie.

LISA

(calling)

Hi Jack. Look at Hero.

JACK
(calling back)
Hi there. It's great. He looks
terrific.

Evelyn comes up to him.

MRS. MCALLISTER
I didn't expect to see you home so
early.

JACK
Neither did I. I got canned.

MRS. MCALLISTER
Canned?

JACK
Fired. Hero got fired, too. How's
he doing?

MRS. MCALLISTER
Fine, fine. Why on earth were you
discharged? From what Linda told
me, you were both making such good
progress.

JACK
I don't really know.
(quieter so Lisa
doesn't hear)
Evelyn, if Linda says anything to
you about her quitting, I'd appreciate
it if you'd do your best to talk her
out of it. She was inclined to resign
over me being fired, but I think it
would be a mistake for her. It's
not that serious for me. But she
loves her job. I don't want her to
lose it over nothing.

MRS. MCALLISTER
I'm just in shock. But yes, of course
I'll do my best.

JACK
That's wonderful, thank you.
(beat)
I'm so glad Hero's feeling better.

MRS. MCALLISTER
Yes, it's a miracle. A full recovery.

JACK

Let me take some things in and I'll join you.

She nods and heads back for the lounge chairs to watch Lisa. Hero and Gracie stay with Jack who goes to his Jeep, opening the back and getting a cardboard box of his things from the office. As he's about to head inside, his cell phone rings and he sets the box back in the Jeep and answers it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hello.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Linda is on the office phone.

LINDA

Jack, I just got a call from that guy at Nettles apartment. He's got Nettles mail and thought we might like to see it. He said there's a phone bill. Lewis wants me to go with him to some industrial fire -- evaluate my performance he said. I have no clue what's going on. Anyway, can you go over and get Nettle's mail?

JACK (O.S.)

(on phone)

Yeah, I'll get right on it.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

JACK

I'll call you on your cell if there's anything interesting.

LINDA (O.S.)

(on phone)

My cell died while I was talking to the guy. I think the battery's no good. I'll either call you when I get back to the office here or I'll see you at home. How's Hero?

JACK

Looks terrific. He's here in the back yard with Gracie and Evelyn and Lisa is swimming

LINDA (O.S.)

(laughs)

Wonderful. Hey, don't forget I promised that guy we'd give him something for information.

JACK

I'll take care of him. Want to talk to anyone?

LINDA (O.S.)

I have to go, but give my love to them. I'll see you later.

JACK

Bye.

He clicks shut the phone and puts it in his pocket. Jack goes over to Evelyn, Lisa swimming underwater.

JACK (CONT'D)

That was Linda. She had a task for me so I'll be going out again. She sends her love.

MRS. MCALLISTER

We'll take care of things here.

Jack picks up the box and heads inside his house, Hero following with Gracie.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chief Lewis comes in to Linda's office and looks at Jack's empty desk.

CHIEF LEWIS

I see Mr. Ballantine has cleared out his things.

LINDA

(coldly, restraining herself)

Yes.

CHIEF LEWIS

I know you're upset about the situation, but I think you'll come to see it was for the best.

LINDA

(nearly sarcastic)

Oh yeah.

CHIEF LEWIS

At any rate, let's get on our way.

Linda gathers her things and heads out with the chief.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

Jack comes out with Hero and Gracie.

JACK

(to Hero)

You stay here, now.

Hero stares at him.

JACK (CONT'D)

No really, c'mon now. I want you to rest.

Hero whines.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm not going to win, am I? All right.

Jack opens the passenger door of the Jeep and Hero jumps in. Trouble is, Gracie also wants to go.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh, c'mon now. Both of you?

Gracie whines and Hero seconds the motion.

JACK (CONT'D)

(calling to Evelyn)

Gracie wants to go with us. Will that be all right?

MRS. MCALLISTER

She and Hero are madly in love. It would be a crime to separate them.

Jack laughs and waves.

JACK

(to Gracie)

C'mon sweetheart, stay with your beau.

Gracie happily joins Hero in the Jeep, Jack smiling as he climbs in.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Jack in his Jeep pulls up to Nettles' apartment complex.
Jack gets out.

JACK
(to Hero and Gracie)
You guys stay...and no fooling around.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Jack finds the manager's apartment and knocks. The door is opened by the apartment worker.

APARTMENT WORKER
Hey.

JACK
How're you doing. Officer Weston
said you had Nettles' mail for us.

APARTMENT WORKER
Right. Let me grab it.

He disappears for a moment then comes back with a couple of envelopes.

APARTMENT WORKER (CONT'D)
His phone bill is in there. I thought
that might help you guys.

JACK
Good thinking. This is great. Let
me give you something.

Jack gets out his wallet and hands the guy a twenty which seems to please the guy who hands Jack the mail.

APARTMENT WORKER
Anything else comes up, I'll let you
know.

JACK
Great.

Jack turns to leave and the guy closes the door. Jack looks at the mail, everything except the phone bill useless junk. He opens the bill and is pleased to see a list of phone numbers Nettles called.

JACK (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Who you been calling, Mr. Nettles.
Let's go find out.

EXT. INTERNET CAFE - LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a wired internet cafe with outside table seating. Jack gets out with his laptop computer and goes to the passenger door by the curb to get the dogs.

JACK

All right you guys, come out but stay by me.

As usual, they prove to be the most obedient dogs on earth, doing what Jack tells them. He goes to one of the tables and gestures for them to lie down.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm going inside, I'll be right back.
You stay here and out of trouble.

They get comfortable and Jack goes inside. The dogs can see him through the window.

P.O.V. DOGS - CONTINUOUS

Jack gives his order, waits and gets a coffee and heads back out.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack sits down, opens his laptop and goes to an internet reverse phone directory service. He gets out his credit card and goes through the sequence to pay for a search then takes out the list of phone numbers Nettles called. He looks through the list and...

P.O.V. JACK - CONTINUOUS

He circles a particular number that is listed the most on the sheet.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack enters the number in the reverse search which takes a moment and then comes up with the name Meriwether Lewis and an address. Jack is stunned.

JACK

(to himself)

Chief Lewis? It can't be. But Meriwether...?

He stares at nothing for a moment, thinking, then abruptly signs off the internet and closes the laptop and gets out his cell phone and dials Linda.

JACK (CONT'D)
C'mon, c'mon!

AUTO-OPERATOR (O.S.)
The party you have dialed is not
available. At the tone...

He clicks off and gets up.

JACK
(to the dogs)
Let's go, fast.

He opens the passenger door and the dogs jump in. He gets
in the driver's door. The Jeep speeds away down the street.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE OFFICE - LATER

Jack rushes into Linda's office and finds her gone. He rushes
out.

INT. ARSON TASK FORCE RECEPTIONIST - MOMENTS LATER

Jack comes up to the RECEPTIONIST'S desk.

JACK
Linda Weston. Where did she go?

RECEPTIONIST
Excuse me?

JACK
Officer Weston. She was going on an
investigation with Chief Lewis. I'm
Officer Ballantine and have vital
information, I need to know where
she was going.

RECEPTIONIST
With Chief Lewis? Let me check.

The receptionist dials an internal extension.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Marley, this is Edna. I have an
Officer Ballantine here who needs to
reach Officer Weston and he says she
was going on an investigation with
Chief Lewis. He needs the address.
(beat and then she
writes on a pad)
Wonderful, thank you.

She hangs up and rips off the note and hands it to Jack.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Corrugated Industries at that address.

Jack takes the note and is headed out as he calls back:

JACK
Thanks very much.

The receptionist thinks he's rude and mutters:

RECEPTIONIST
You're so welcome.

EXT. ARSON TASK FORCE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Jack jumps in his Jeep and speeds away, the dogs looking excited.

EXT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - DAY

The large building has had a bad interior fire though its been long out, manned police barriers up to keep everyone out, various pieces of machinery making a racket. Chief Lewis and Linda are allowed through instantly, carrying their investigation kits.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

As Linda and Lewis enter the building, the elevator bank is open and burned out. They carefully look at it, looking upward. The NOISE in the building is fairly loud.

P.O.V. LINDA AND LEWIS - ELEVATOR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

It is burned and open to the sky, debris hanging in it.

BACK TO SCENE

LINDA
Most of the damage is on the top floor.

CHIEF LEWIS
They're going to need a new elevator to get up there.

Linda takes out the video camera.

CHIEF LEWIS (CONT'D)
I don't think we need that yet.

LINDA
Regulations say we document the scene. I'll run it.

The chief wants to protest but can't think of a reason to make her stop. Linda shoots video of the elevator shaft, then heads for the stairs and starts up, the chief following.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - TOP FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

They appear at the head of the stairs on the top floor which is a charred mess with large parts of the ceiling and roof hanging down.

LINDA

It appears that the fire started at that far end.

She starts weaving her way through the debris for the far end of the floor, Lewis trailing. He glances around to make certain they're alone, taking from his pocket and concealing in his hand a SPRAY CAN OF MACE.

EXT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack's Jeep flies to a stop at the police lines. Jack and the dogs jump out and without asking permission rush inside, a SECOND INCIDENT COMMANDER calling to him.

SECOND INCIDENT COMMANDER

Hey...!

JACK

(calling back)

Fire investigator, canine accelerant detectors.

He disappears into the building and the incident commander just shrugs and goes back to his work.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Jack stops just inside to listen, the dogs stopping with him. There's no sound.

JACK

(to Hero)

Find Linda. Find her.

Hero puts his nose down and heads for the stairs. Gracie and Jack follow.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - TOP FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Linda and Lewis approach the burned elevator shaft, OUTSIDE LIGHT coming in through the gaping hole, debris hanging down the shaft.

CHIEF LEWIS
Linda, look at this.

She looks but sees nothing.

CHIEF LEWIS (CONT'D)
There, by the wall.
(gestures at the video
camera)
Let me take that to get a shot of
it.

Puzzled, she hands him the camera and bends to look where he pointed. She straightens and looks at the chief.

LINDA
I don't...

He sprays her face with the mace, Linda immediately GAGGING as she ducks and wipes uselessly at her face. Lewis drops the camera on the floor and grabs her, shoving her backwards towards the open elevator shaft, Linda stumbling and clawing at the air. One foot goes into the opening and she falls downwards, her torso hitting the floor and bounces towards the opening. She reaches out and grabs the edge, just hanging on.

CHIEF LEWIS
I'm really sorry about this.

He starts towards her.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack is going up the stairs as fast as possible.

The dogs are way ahead of him.

INT. CORRUGATED INDUSTRIES BUILDING - TOP FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As Lewis heads for Linda, Hero followed by Gracie come off the stairs and runs towards him, BARKING. Lewis turns and backs away.

LINDA
Hero! Hero!

Hero runs to her and lies on the edge of the hole and reaches over and grabs her jacket in his teeth, getting a firm grip, trying to pull her up but able to only hold on. Gracie comes up but doesn't know what to do. Lewis grabs a piece of debris and reaches out to push Hero over the edge. Gracie SNARLS and jumps at Lewis, driving him back. Jack comes off the stairs.

JACK

Linda!

LINDA

Jack, help!

As Gracie keeps jumping at Lewis, he turns and runs. Jack ignores him and goes to the open shaft, lies and grabs Linda pulling her with Hero back up and away from the shaft. They lie on the floor and embrace, Hero going to Gracie and then the both of them coming over to Linda and Jack and jumping on them, licking. Jack takes out his handkerchief and gently wipes at Linda's face. She takes it and rubs her own face heartily, finally able to see.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

My hero.

She hugs the dogs.

LINDA (CONT'D)

My heroes.

EXT. LINDA'S BACK YARD - DAY

Linda, Jack, Lisa, Evelyn, are around the pool in the back yard, Hero and Gracie romping with one another, the grill going, Linda and Jack putting plates on on the table loaded with food and drinks.

MRS. MCALLISTER

(to Linda)

That is quite the tale. The fire chief himself having all those fires set, trying to take your life, just because his son had gotten in trouble by what he himself was foolish enough to do on the internet.

JACK

I think he was insane. Endnetarchy. What a crazy concept.

LISA

(to Linda)

I'm so glad he didn't get you.

LINDA

Me too.

MRS. MCALLISTER

The dogs got there just in time, thank the lord.

LISA

And Gracie was a hero with Hero.

LINDA

Yes she was. Gracie and Hero and Jack.

JACK

(to Linda)

And you.

LINDA

If I was a hero, it was a reluctant one. I never want to go through that again.

MRS. MCALLISTER

I should think with the evidence on the video machine we won't be seeing him around any time soon.

JACK

That and the testimony of Nettles and Fasuda. The prosecution rests.

LINDA

All's well that ends well. Let's eat.

They all begin loading up their plates, Hero and Gracie getting in line for their food. Hero looks at the camera and BARKS.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END