(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

Cards On fire

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INT. FIREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

FADE IN:

A poker chip spins across a battered firehouse table, wobbling until it falls flat. The buzz of lights fills the heavy silence.

TERRY, worn down and desperate, sits hunched at the table. Empty coffee cups, loose bills, and scattered cards surround him.

Across from him sit two sketchy looking men, shadows clinging to their faces.

SKETCHY MAN (EDWARD)#1
(smug)
Clock’s ticking, Chief.

Terry’s hand shakes as he reaches for his chips.

Suddenly—

THE FIRE ALARM BLARES.

Red lights flash across the room.

Terry freezes. The men stare.

SKETCHY MAN (NICO)#2
Don’t keep us waiting.

Terry rises, torn, then rushes out.

INT. FIREHOUSE GARAGE - NIGHT

TRAVIS, calm and controlled, moves with practiced precision into the garage.

TYLER, annoyed and unworried, jogs in behind him.

TYLER
Always when I’m finally relaxing.

They climb into the firetruck.

Travis glances toward Terry’s dark office.

TRAVIS
He’s not there.

Tyler shrugs.

TYLER
Maybe he’s out back.

They say nothing more as the truck pulls out.

Terry is no where to be seen and does not go to the fire.

INT. FIRETRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Lights flashing. Engine roaring.

Travis grips the wheel, eyes forward.

TYLER
It’s a small fire. Quick in-and-out.

TRAVIS
Something’s wrong.

Tyler looks at him, uneasy.

INT. FIREHOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The station is quiet.

Travis enters and stops cold.

Poker chips on the floor.

Cards scattered.

A chair fallen over.

Tyler walks in behind him, chewing a protein bar. He freezes.

TYLER
Whoa.

Travis kneels, picking up cards.

TRAVIS
He’s gambling again.

TYLER
(sighs)
Knew it.

A heavy silence.

EXT. FIREHOUSE PARKING LOT - NEXT AFTERNOON

The brothers walk toward their cars.

A BLACK SEDAN rolls in slowly.

EDWARD, he looks slick and dangerous, steps out.

EDWARD
Gentlemen.

Travis squares his shoulders.

TRAVIS
Something you need?

EDWARD
I’m looking for your father.

Tyler focuses his eyes.

TYLER
Why?

Edward smirks.

EDWARD
Just need to clear up some unfinished business.

He gets back into his sedan.

TYLER
Dude looks like trouble.

Travis watches the car disappear.

TRAVIS
That's him, I know its hims

INT. FIREHOUSE LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Terry sits alone in his office, staring at a photo of his wife and sons.

He closes his eyes, gripping a poker chip tightly.

The door opens.

Travis and Tyler enter.

TRAVIS

We saw him. We saw Edward.

Terry's shoulders drop.

TERRY
He talked to you. He knows he is not supposed to do that.

Tyler steps forward.

TYLER
Too late.

Terry hides his face in his hands.

The FIRE ALARM BLARES.

Travis hesitates.

TRAVIS
We'll talk after.

The brothers leave.

INT. FIRETRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

The brothers sit in tense silence.

TYLER
We can't let Dad go down for this.

TRAVIS
No. But Edward? He's done.

They exchange a determined look.

The brothers come back from the call and park the truck in the garage.

INT. FIREHOUSE - COMMON AREA - LATER

The fire is out. The station is calm.

The brothers sit at a table, planning.

TYLER
We just need proof.

TRAVIS
We already have it.

He shows Tyler the poker chip he found—marked with Edward's gang symbol.

TYLER
(grinning)
Let's end this.

INT. FIREHOUSE - POKER ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark.

Edward enters, confident.

EDWARD
Terry? You better be—

CLICK.

The overhead lights flick on.

Travis and Tyler stand waiting.

TRAVIS
Game's over.

Edward smirks.

EDWARD
You boys think you're heroes?

TYLER
We're firefighters. We save people.

Travis pulls out his phone.

TRAVIS
And we recorded everything.

Edward's face falls.

Travis shows security camera footage of him zoomed in enough to where terry is not seen.

Sirens approach outside.

Edward runs toward the door.

The brothers block him.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - POKER ROOM - NIGHT

Police cars skid to a stop.

OFFICERS rush inside.

INT. FIREHOUSE POKER ROOM - NIGHT

Edward is handcuffed.

He glares at the brothers.

EDWARD
This isn’t over.

TYLER
(smiling)
It is for tonight.

The police drag Edward out.

Terry appears in the doorway, devastated but relieved.

TERRY
You didn’t turn me in?

TRAVIS
We turn in criminals. Not our father.

Tyler nods.

TYLER
But you gotta fix this. For real this time.

Terry wipes his eyes.

TERRY
I will. I promise.

The three stand together—broken but bonded.

FADE OUT.

END

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Travis and Tyler sit in the quiet bay, the firetrucks looming beside them. Rain taps against the garage doors. Both brothers look exhausted, weighed down by everything they've uncovered.

TYLER
I always thought Dad was unshakable. Like… the guy who'd never screw up.

TRAVIS
(sighs)
He's human. Turns out that's a lot messier than we thought.

They sit in silence for a moment.

TYLER
Should we tell him what we're planning? About Nico?

TRAVIS
No. We protect him. But we still do what's right.

TYLER
(conflicted)
Feels wrong picking one over the other.

TRAVIS
(quiet)
Sometimes doing the right thing is still gonna hurt.

EXT. WILLY B'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A single streetlamp flickers. Travis, Tyler, and the undercover OFFICER Cole Palmer wait in the cold. Officer palmer, calm and confident, checks his notes.

PALMER
You're sure Nico uses this spot? Same night every week?

TYLER
Every Thursday. Runs a buy-in game with his crew.

TRAVIS
He’ll show.

Palmer studies their faces.

PALMER
You boys understand how dangerous this is? You stay behind me. No hero moves.

TYLER
We’re not the heroes here.

Headlights approach from the distance. A black SUV rolls into the lot.

PALMER
That’s him. Stay low.

EXT. WILLY B'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nico steps out, in front of two men. They carry metal cases.

NICO
(grinning)
Didn’t think you’d have the guts to meet me. But I’m glad—

He freezes. Officer Palmer steps into the lamplight, badge raised, gun drawn.

PALMER
Police! Hands where I can see them!

Chaos unfolds. One of Nico’s men bolts. Another reaches for something—

TYLER
(shouting)
Gun! He’s reaching!

Palmer tackles the man before he can pull a weapon. Travis runs to pull Tyler back from danger as backup units arrive, lights flashing.

Nico tries to run but slips in the mud. Travis races forward and grabs him, pinning him down.

TRAVIS
(gritting teeth)
We got Edward and now we got you. It’s over, Nico.

NICO
(panting)
You think this fixes everything? You two don’t know a damn thing.

But Travis doesn’t say a word.

Officers cuff Nico and his crew.

Palmer approaches the brothers.

PALMER
You two did good. You stopped something bigger than a poker game.

Tyler looks shaken.

TYLER
We just didn’t want Dad caught in the middle.

PALMER
He won’t be. Nico ran his own show. Your father stays out of this.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - MORNING

The sun rises over the town. Terry stands outside the firehouse drinking coffee when Travis and Tyler walk up.

TERRY
Heard something happened last night.

The brothers exchange a glance.

TRAVIS
We took care of it.

TERRY
(taking them in)
I knew you boys were smart. But I didn’t expect you to be brave in all the ways that matter.

TYLER
Dad you can stop the game now. For good.

Terry considers this. His jaw tightens, but then softens.

TERRY
Yeah. I can.

A quiet, warm moment settles over the three of them.

TERRY

Proud of you. Both of you.

The brothers share a relieved look.

EXT. OUTSIDE FIRE HOUSE- DAY

Traffic flows normally again. Life returns to its usual pace.

Travis and Tyler walk side by side, calmer than before.

TYLER
You think things can go back to normal?

TRAVIS
(smiles)
hopefully better than normal.

They continue walking, sunlight warming the street as the town carries on.

FADE OUT.

END