

SIGN OFF

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RADIO STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

The dashboard clock reads 5:55pm.

TRISTA (late 30's) sits behind the steering wheel of her parked Camry. She drags on a JOINT as she stares, haggard, at the radio station entrance.

She's alone, save for the VOICE on the radio.

SAM (O.S.)
- latest from Flogging Molly. Up
next.

Trista opens the glove compartment, pulls out a HANDGUN.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

SAM (early 40's) sits in the broadcast studio. His fingers dance across the console, a master at his craft. The 'ON AIR' LIGHT blinks off as ANDY (mid 20's) enters.

ANDY
Shouldn't you be leaving?

SAM
Wait your turn, Andy. This chair's
mine for the next five minutes.

ANDY
My adoring fans can wait. Traffic's
a bitch tonight. You're not going
to make it to Mikey's party in time
unless you hit the road. Now.

Sam glances at the clock, unperturbed.

SAM
No rush. I need to knock out a few
things before I leave, anyway.

ANDY
Work can wait, man. Go.

SAM
The party can wait.

(CONTINUED)

ANDY
(sarcastic)
Wow. You, sir, are a class act.

Sam gives Andy the FINGER, then flips the mic back on.

SAM
You're listening to 101.9 FM,
W-I-S-H, The Wish. This is Sam the
Man, signing off for the night, but
before I do -

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

BETH (early 40's) strings up last minute birthday party decorations. MIKEY (11) sets out snacks. The sound of Sam's voice surrounds them, emanating from wall-mounted speakers.

SAM (O.S.)
- I'd like to wish my son, Mikey, a
very happy birthday. Eleven years
old today. Love you, buddy. I'll
see you soon.

Beth smiles. Mikey's entire face lights up.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Sam flips a series of switches, fires up another track. He removes his headphones, leans back, gives Andy a SMUG SMILE.

Andy's retort is on the tip of his tongue when a GUNSHOT rings out in hallway. A SCREAM follows.

The confused look that Sam and Andy exchange is interrupted by another GUNSHOT. Sam reaches for his cell phone, freezes.

Trista stalks into the broadcast studio, gun in hand. She reeks of anger, misery, and desperation.

Andy raises his hands in a warding off gesture.

ANDY
You can't be in-

BLAM! Trista cuts off Andy with a bullet to the gut. She trains the gun on Sam as Andy falls to the floor.

Sam carefully places his cell phone on the console.

(CONTINUED)

SAM
What do you want?

TRISTA
I have something I need to say.

Sam glances at Andy's still form lying at Trista's feet.

SAM
I'm listening.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

The DOORBELL rings. Beth and Mikey greet their first guests.

The song on the radio ends, followed by dead air.

Beth glances at the speakers, perplexed.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Trista motions to the 'On Air' light with her gun.

TRISTA
Turn it on.

Sam hesitates. Andy MOANS from the floor. He stirs, semi-conscious.

Trista points the gun at Andy's head, her eyes on Sam.

TRISTA
(screaming)
Now!

Sam buries his fear and moves with caution. He flips a switch. The 'On Air' light comes to life.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Beth laughs with her guests as Sam's voice returns.

SAM (O.S.)
It's on. What do you want to say?

Beth's smile fades. Her eyes find Mikey. She tries to hide her sudden sense of dread.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Sam gestures toward a mic. Trista moves to the console, but she doesn't sit down.

Trista opens her mouth, but no words come out. Her eyes widen as she's overcome with stage fright. She produces another joint, lights it with a trembling hand, inhales.

SAM

Let's start with your name.

TRISTA

Trista.

Silence. As terrified as he is, Sam can't abide dead air.

SAM

Why are you doing this, Trista?

A troubled expression crosses her face. She keeps the gun at the ready, but she relaxes just a bit.

TRISTA

Do you have any kids, Sam?

SAM

One. My son. It's his birthday.

TRISTA

Happy birthday to him.

Sam doesn't reply.

TRISTA

I've got two. Grace and Joel. Grace starts high school this fall. Joel's going into the sixth grade.

More dead air. Trista seems lost in thought. Sam glances at Andy again, worried. He opts to take a chance.

SAM

Trista, I need to help my friend. I'm going to stand up and get something to stop the bleeding.

Trista pulls the gun back up, points it at Sam's chest.

TRISTA

No.

(CONTINUED)

SAM

If I don't do something, he'll die.

TRISTA

Everybody dies, Sam. It's just a matter of when.

Sam stands up anyway. Trista almost fires. Almost. Instead, she moves the gun to follow his every movement.

Sam grabs a promo shirt and stanches Andy's bleeding. When he feels the barrel of Trista's gun against his temple, Sam raises his hands and gets back to his feet.

TRISTA

Sit.

Sam does as he's told. Trista takes the seat facing him. She drags on the joint, winces, then releases the smoke into the studio.

TRISTA

I'm sick, Sam.

A "no shit" look flickers across Sam's face, but he hides it before Trista can see it.

TRISTA

My husband got laid off a few months back. Money was tight, our insurance dried up, and then I got the news. Cervical cancer. I tried to get help, but no one would touch me. Medically uninsurable.

Sam glances down at Andy. He's still moving. Good.

TRISTA

People can only take so much, you know? The pain is bad, but I've found ways to cope. Jason...

She takes another drag.

TRISTA

I woke up one morning to a note on the kitchen table. "I'm sorry," it says. Married for fourteen years, and with two words, he's gone.

EXT. RADIO STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

The sun is beginning to set as POLICE CARS tear into the parking lot. Officers pour from their vehicles, surrounding the building, setting up a perimeter.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Trista is lost in thought again. More dead air, but Sam doesn't seem to mind as much this time.

SAM

What do you want, Trista?

She considers.

TRISTA

I want my life back. I want to get better. I want to see my kids grow up and get married and have babies and-

Her voice cracks.

TRISTA

I just want the pain to go away.

Trista's fingers wrap tighter around the grip of the gun.

Sam considers his response carefully.

EXT. RADIO STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

The POLICE CHIEF dictates his orders to his team.

An OFFICER stands behind the open door of his cruiser, his gun trained on the front doors of the radio station. His radio is on, set to 101.9 FM.

SAM (O.S.)

I can't imagine the pain you're going through, Trista, but this... this isn't going to solve anything.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Family and friends huddle together in the family room, absolutely silent. Beth sits on the couch with Mikey, holding his hand.

(CONTINUED)

SAM (O.S.)
Think of your kids, Trista. Joel
and Grace. What's going to happen
to them when this is over?

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Sam and Trista lock eyes.

TRISTA
It's not fair, Sam.

SAM
I know.

TRISTA
I just wanted people to know.

SAM
They do.

She studies the gun in her hand.

TRISTA
I'm sorry, Sam.

Trista extinguishes the joint. She takes a deep, calming
breath, then raises her gun.

Sam closes his eyes as he speaks into the mic.

SAM
Beth, Mikey...

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

All eyes fall on Sam's wife and son.

SAM (O.S.)
I love you both very-

BLAM!

The GUNSHOT that erupts from the speakers is deafening.

Mikey's lower lip quivers. Beth pulls him close as an
AGONIZED WAIL escapes her lips.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Sam is slumped in his chair, Trista slumped in hers. The gun lies discarded on the console between them.

BLOOD flows onto the console. Trista's blood.

Sam raises his head, gazes at the woman who just took her own life. Trista's lifeless eyes stare back at him.

Time slows down as the SWAT team storms the studio. They secure the room, secure the weapon, attend to Andy.

Sam reaches across the console and closes Trista's eyes. As he pulls his hand back toward him, he flips a switch.

The 'On Air' light goes dark.

FADE OUT.