

STUCK

Years after a tragic event, Jay must decide whether to hold on to his guilt, or accept forgiveness.

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INT. GARAGE. DAY.

From darkness, a band of daylight creeps through the bottom of the screen. As the band of daylight grows larger, the darkness diminishes.

It is a garage door slowly rising, revealing a car pulling into the driveway. It parks in the garage and Jay hops out. He is a single, middle-aged man. His appearance is very casual, a bit shabby. He looks as if he hasn't shaved in a few days.

Jay walks and retrieves the mail from the mailbox before making his way inside, closing the garage door as he enters the house.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

His home is a little messy, the furniture looks dated. Dirty dishes are scattered over the kitchen. A pile of clothes covers the couch. A small crate of old kids' toys sits in the corner of the living room.

Jay puts his backpack down and begins flicking through the mail. One envelope catches his eye. He turns it over to reveal who the sender is.

The envelope reads:

Emily Matthews
5 Fountainview Way
Mt Hawthorn 78536

Jay stares for a moment, not wanting to open the envelope. He puts it down and pulls a scotch glass from the cupboard. He retrieves his whiskey from a nearby cabinet and pours himself a drink. He sits at the breakfast bar, looking at the envelope which sits on the bench in front of him. He takes a drink. Sunlight peeks through the venetian blinds, creating bands of light across Jay's face.

Jay opens the envelope.

It is an invitation to Emily & Frank's 10-year wedding anniversary, at which they plan on renewing their vows. There is also a letter.

Jay unfolds the letter and begins to read. The camera slowly dollies in as he reads.

EMILY (V/O)
I hope this letter finds you well,
Jay. As you probably now know,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (V/O) (cont'd)
Frank and I have decided to renew
our wedding vows.

Jay takes a sip of whiskey.

EMILY (V/O CONT'D)
It's been a long time, Jay, and
although we still think about Zac
everyday and miss him terribly,
it's time to move on.

INT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

We see Zac, a 2-year old boy, playing at Jay's house. He is
colouring in a picture on the floor. Jay comes up and starts
to tickle him. We see Zac laughing and smiling.

EMILY (V/O CONT'D)
We'll never 'get over it'. But we
need to move past that tragic day.
We owe it to our little man.
(Pause)
I miss you too, Jay.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

Jay is still holding the letter, tears welling.

EMILY (V/O CONT'D)
You're my only brother, and I
haven't seen you for so many years.
I mean, it's my fault.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE. EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Emily & Jay are standing on the front lawn, she pushes him
as hard as she can. Jay falls over. His hand doesn't let go
of the whiskey bottle though. He is clearly drunk. Emily is
yelling for him to leave. The neighbours look on from across
the street. Jay tries to get up, pleading with Emily. We see
his lips say sorry.

Frank comes out the front with a baseball bat, threatening
Jay to leave.

EMILY (V/O CONT'D)
I was angry, so angry. So hurt,
devastated.
(Pause)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (V/O CONT'D) (cont'd)
But I can't live anymore with this
anger. You made a mistake. But I
think I'm ready to forgive you.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

A couple of tears now run down Jay's cheek. He wipes them away and has a drink.

EMILY (V/O CONT'D)
I want to see you, Jay. Please come
and visit so we can talk.
Emily.

Jay sits there, a little stunned. He wipes his eyes, not quite knowing what to make of the letter.

He gets up from the breakfast bar, fills his whiskey, then leaves the room.

EXT. PARK. DAY.

A couple of kites dance in the blue sky. We see 2 kids flying them. They seem happy, the sound of their laughter resonates throughout the park.

On the opposite side of a man-made lake, Jay waits on a park bench. He gazes towards the kite-flyers before turning his attention to his hip-flask. He pulls it from his pocket and takes a drink. At that moment, Jay's good friend, Bobby, arrives.

BOBBY
Hey.

JAY
Hey, Bobby, thanks for meeting
me.

Bobby takes a seat next to Jay. Bobby is dressed in a suit and carries a briefcase. He is clearly on his way to work.

JAY (CONT'D)
I know you're busy.

BOBBY
Yeah, got a big meeting today. If I
win this contract, mate, there's a
nice bonus in store for your old
mate Bobby!

Jay smiles.

(CONTINUED)

JAY
How's the girls?

BOBBY
They're great.

Jessica's just started kindy. She's loving it.

Evie turns 1 next month, she's just started trying to walk. 6 steps on her own is all she can manage.

And of course Robyn is as gorgeous as ever. Super mom she is.

Jay simply nods and offers a hint of a smile in reply. There is an uncomfortable silence for a moment, before Bobby cuts through the small talk.

BOBBY
So what's up?

I know you didn't ask me here to chat about my family.

Jay looks at Bobby. Then he pulls the letter out of his pocket and gives it to him.

Bobby reads the letter while Jay sits, contemplating and waiting for Bobby to finish. He glances over to the kids again. They are reeling in their kites, preparing to leave.

BOBBY
Mate, this is good.

Jay turns his attention back to Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Have you seen her yet?

Jay shakes his head.

JAY
I don't know, Bobby. I don't think it's a good idea.

BOBBY
What?

Jay doesn't respond.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Look, Jay. Ever since the accident...

JAY

It was my fault. It's on me. If it wasn't for my stupidity he'd still be here.

BOBBY

You made a mistake. Yes it was stupid, but you can't keep beating yourself up over it.

JAY

I destroyed their lives!

Bobby looks away and shakes his head. Jay just stares straight ahead.

BOBBY

I've known you a long time, Jay. And since that day, you've been stuck.

Something inside you broke, and you're stuck.

You say you destroyed their lives, but from where I sit, you destroyed yours as well.

Bobby looks at Jay.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

This is your chance. She says she wants to forgive you.

JAY

I don't deserve to be forgiven.

Bobby offers a mild laugh.

BOBBY

No one does, Jay. No one does. But that's the beauty of forgiveness. It's a gift.

This catches Jay off guard and he contemplates Bobby's words.

(CONTINUED)

BOBBY

Go see Emily. Talk, cry, reconcile.
And get un-stuck.

Bobby and Jay look at each other, then Jay looks away, the words sinking in. Bobby gets up to leave. He picks up his briefcase.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I've gotta get to the office. I'll
see you soon.

Bobby pats Jay on the shoulder, then heads off. Jay remains sitting, staring across the lake. Bobby stops after a few moments and turns back to Jay.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

And, Jay...

Jay looks over to Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

It's time to quit the drinking.

Bobby pauses for a moment, before turning to continue his walk to the office.

EXT. HOUSE. EVENING.

Jay is standing over the empty pool in his backyard. A drink is in his hand. The golden glow of the setting sun lights his face. His eyes are glassy as he remembers the events of that day.

EXT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

Jay, whose appearance is now neat & clean-shaven, is outside cleaning the pool when the doorbell rings. He rests the pool scoop against the wall and heads inside. A brick, holding the pool gate open, remains unmoved.

INT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

The front door opens. It's Emily, dropping off Zac.

JAY

Hey, buddy!

Zac runs inside.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY
Everything he might need is in this bag.

Emily hands a backpack to Jay.

JAY
No problem.

EMILY
Thanks so much for this.

Jay's phone starts ringing.

JAY
No worries at all, Em. Good luck with the interview.

EMILY
Thanks.

Emily leaves and Jay quickly rushes to get the phone.

JAY
Hello?
(Pause)
Yes, John, thanks for calling. I just had some questions about a couple of things on the plans.

EXT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

Zac enters through the open gate, into the pool area. He leans over and splashes the water.

We see Jay through the window talking on the phone.

Zac is walking on the edge of the pool. He spots something and leans over to try and reach it. He falls.

INT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

Jay has his back to the pool. He is talking and looking over his laptop.

EXT. HOUSE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

In the foreground, an out of focus object floats in the water. In the background, Jay rushes out of the house, towards the pool. He grabs the object, which is now in focus.

We know it is Zac.

Jay is frantic. He tries to find signs of life, but there is nothing. Kneeling, Jay screams while holding Zac's lifeless body in his arms.

EXT. HOUSE. EVENING.

Tears fill Jay's eyes as he remembers. He drinks the remainder of his whiskey, then walks inside to refill the glass.

INT. HOUSE. EVENING.

Jay grabs the bottle of whiskey off the kitchen bench and begins to refill the glass.

Something stops him.

Tears begin to stream down his face. Suddenly, he grabs the whiskey bottle and glass and starts pouring it down the sink.

After a moment he drops the bottle and sinks to the floor. He breaks down crying. Through his sobs we hear him speak.

JAY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Jay tries to calm himself. He sits on the floor, his back leaning on the kitchen cupboards. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the letter. He looks down at the words.

"I want to forgive you"

Jay stares into space.

EXT. CAR. EVENING.

We see a low angle shot of the tops of trees moving through the frame. Rays of light cut through the trees.

CUT TO:

Close up of the cars wheel turning, moving forward along the road.

INT. CAR. EVENING.

Jay is driving, deep in thought. Anxiety is written across his face.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE. EVENING.

Jay pulls up on the street outside Emily's house. He hops out of the car and stops. He stares at the house, remembering the last time he was here.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE. EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Jay is struggling to get off the ground in his drunken state.

EMILY

I don't ever want to see you again.
You did this. It's your fault.

JAY

I'm sorry.

EMILY

Get away from me.

Emily moves in to hit Jay and pushes him again.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE. EVENING.

Jay continues to stare at the house for a moment. He looks around. Across the street, a man is placing his garbage at the end of his driveway. The man looks towards Jay and nods his head, before heading back up the driveway. Jay turns his attention back to Emily's house. Slowly he begins to make his way up to the front door.

He hesitates, but rings the doorbell.
(Pause)

The door opens. It is Emily.

EMILY

Jay.

(CONTINUED)

Emily is nervous, Jay is too. He doesn't say anything. Frank appears behind Emily. Jay just stands there, not sure of what to say.

FRANK

Here come inside, come inside. I'll
make some coffee.

Jay tentatively enters.

The camera slowly pulls back as the door closes behind Jay.

Slow fade out.

The end.

