

Blood Allegiance

By Alex Witherow

EXT. FUNERAL SITE FOR FATHER'S FUNERAL - DAY

Modern day, 20 years later to the day after Luke ran away from home. Family members standing around. Not a large funeral, maybe 10 people. John is delivering the eulogy to family and friends, his wife standing by his side. He's well dressed and articulate.

JOHN

Who I am today was built on taking care of my Dad. He was a loyal friend to many, a loving father, and a faithful member of our local community. While he had his challenges, we celebrate his life.

We see Luke in the distance leaning against a tree with violence and grief in his eyes. He is somewhat disheveled, watching from afar. Luke is John's brother. He ran away from home at age 13 because he couldn't bear to live in the house.

JOHN

To honor his last wishes, his ashes will be spread here - a place where he often came to find solace.

He spreads the ashes. People leave flowers on the ground paying their respects. John sees Luke in the distance. Luke sizes him up as he approaches.

JOHN

Hi Luke, good to see you. (beat) Thanks for being a part of our service.

LUKE

Not today, man. I don't need your boy scout bullshit, ok? This is the best I could do.

JOHN

How's the job?

LUKE

Good, thanks for hooking that up. Sorry about missing Christmas.

JOHN

I'm glad you're here now. Listen man, I think it would be good for us to have some closure with Dad.

Luke checks the time on his phone not really interested in this idea, but he acquiesces.

JOHN

(He gathers his thoughts for a moment)

I know you hadn't seen Dad in a long time, but he expressed many regrets before he died.

LUKE

I can't wait to hear this.

JOHN

He was going through a lot the two years after Mom left - before you ran away. He admitted he took it out on you and had a lot of remorse for that before he died.

LUKE

Give me a break. He could've picked up the phone. He was fucking horrible to me, John. I was the family whipping boy. Belts, golf clubs, anything he could swing, it hit me. You saw it, you were there.

JOHN

I know it was hard for you. It was hard for all of us, but this was 20 years ago. Let's just move on. I want the best for you.

LUKE

I'm not having this conversation today. I know Peter Jacoby is wrapping up the legal details. Last I heard I wasn't in the will - big surprise. Dad hated me. See you around, big brother.

Luke walks off, disappears.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - DAY

John walks into Peter Jacoby's office.

JOHN

Peter! How are you?

PETER

I'm doing great, thanks John. I won't keep you too long. I know you're a busy man.

John listens with rapt attention.

PETER

Your brother is coming shortly as well.

JOHN

Luke is coming today? Why? The last draft of the will didn't have him as a beneficiary. He doesn't need to sign anything, right?

Luke enters Peter's office. An awkward silence. He sits.

LUKE

Hi. Thanks for having me today, Peter. (to John) Peter called me last night, he said I needed to sign a few things.

PETER

Good to see you, Luke. So after your father's death, we've tallied up the final details of the trust. He had approximately 1 million dollars in final assets after the Parkhurst property was sold. He had an outstanding balance of \$30,200 to pay to the assisted living home before he passed and another \$45,000 in hospital bills, which was taken care of by Merrill Lynch. All of that said, (beat) each of you will receive 50% of the remaining assets.

John lets this register, which confirms his fears.

JOHN

. . . you've got to be FUCKING kidding me! When did he change this?

John erupts in the office. Luke contemplates and stays seated.

PETER

Look John, I'm sorry. I know this isn't easy to hear. I worked with your father to draft this and while he was incredibly grateful for everything you did taking care of him, at the end of the day, this is your brother and his son.

JOHN

Save it, Peter. (he looks to Luke) You and I both know this is absolute bullshit. You left our family TWENTY years ago! Now you come back to collect what you think is yours?

LUKE

I didn't ask for this, John. He wrote me into the will.

JOHN

Then give up your portion. Peter, he can do that, right?

PETER

I mean, yes, but we'd have to—

LUKE

(he stands) No, John. That's not going to happen. Dad gave me this money and I'm taking it.

JOHN

Like hell you are!

John lunges towards Luke. He throws Luke across the room. They fight.

PETER

Guys! Stop it!

Peter interrupts them. John storms out of the office, Luke follows.

LUKE

What the hell is your problem!

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PETER'S OFFICE IN PARKING LOT - DAY

They both exit to the parking lot. Luke finally unloads.

LUKE

HEY, DO YOU HEAR ME?? WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR PROBLEM!

JOHN

Go fuck yourself. What the hell do you think happened after you left home for your better life? Guess who took care of him? Yours truly. He was a mess for a long time. I dealt with it. You don't deserve a cent.

Luke is beside himself with fury.

LUKE

A better life? I'm a fucking construction worker, John, and up to my eyes in debt. You think this is a great life? I'm barely scraping by! You've got plenty of money, a huge house and a hot wife, you asshole.

JOHN

(beat) Elizabeth needs a surgery, Luke. We need this money for the operation.

LUKE

And you can't afford to save your wife with your hefty real estate salary? The last time I checked, the company is doing pretty well and you get a nice cut since you're on the board.

JOHN

Unfortunately, the surgery will cost a lot more. Insurance won't cover most of it. We need this, Luke. She's been sick off and on for years.

LUKE

Dad put me in the will. You even said he felt incredible guilt after I ran away. I have \$80,000 in debt to pay off. I am not signing this over to you.

JOHN

Luke, you will hand over this money. I will have my lawyer draw up a contract and you will sign it.

John walks off leaving Luke behind to watch him.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Luke walks into the main office from the construction site, holding his hard hat and tools. Dave, his boss, calls him into the office.

LUKE

Hi Dave, you wanted to speak with me? Why is HR here?

DAVE

Yeah, thanks Luke. Have a seat. I've been told from the higher-ups that I need to let you go. This obviously wasn't my decision, but I was told this came down from multiple levels up.

LUKE

What are you talking about? How is that even possible?

SUSAN

While your performance on-site has been good, you've been late a handful of times the past few weeks. Given the freelance nature of your role here, we have to let you go. We spoke with John this morning since he's on the board. It came down from him.

LUKE

Wow, unbelievable. My brother said this?

DAVE

Yes, I didn't speak with him personally, but I know he was involved in this decision.

LUKE

OK.

SUSAN

We're sorry to have to let you go, Luke.

LUKE

(beat) My brother and Elizabeth still live down the street on 4th Avenue, right?

SUSAN

Yes, I believe so. They've been there for years.

LUKE

Is Elizabeth still sick?

Luke walks into the hallway. He texts John.

LUKE

Your a fucking asshole.

JOHN

Sign the contract or it'll get worse.

Luke exits the office.

EXT. JOHN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Luke walks through the neighborhood and spots John's house. He sees Elizabeth's SUV parked on the side of the street. He approaches with his toolbox, quickly takes out a tool, and slips it down the driver side window to unlock the door. Luke jumps in the front seat. Suddenly, Elizabeth appears behind him.

ELIZABETH

Luke, is that you? What are you doing?

Luke slams the door. Elizabeth pounds on the window as he hot-wires the SUV and takes off. Elizabeth dials John.

INT. ELIZABETH'S SUV - DAY

John dials Luke.

LUKE

Don't fuck with me, John.

JOHN

Jesus, Luke, have you gone off the handle??

LUKE

Meet me at Dad's burial site in 20 minutes.

He hangs up.

EXT. FUNERAL SITE FOR FATHER'S FUNERAL - DAY

Luke arrives first. John arrives shortly thereafter.

JOHN

Have you lost your mind?

LUKE

You had me fired!

JOHN

Elizabeth was beside herself!

LUKE

Elizabeth doesn't need a surgery. I spoke with Susan at the office and she said she hasn't had any health issues for years. But I found out the real problem - you alienated the investors at the new Crown Heights development. That's why you need this money. You're about to lose the company millions. And this whole story of how you took care of Dad "until the end" is horseshit too. I called his assisted living home yesterday. They said you put him in there for his last 10 YEARS! And you think you're the good son! How many lies have you told me?

JOHN

You're right, Elizabeth is fine. And yes, the company is fucked if I don't get this money. (beat) Dad was brutal, and I loved him in spite of it. You left us. I always hoped you would come back when you ran away and you never did. I feel like I've been chasing you my whole life.

LUKE

You could've protected me from Dad, but you threw me to the wolves. It's hard to trust what you say to me. You lie as much as he did. Here's your contract - signed. Keep the money, fix the Crown Heights deal. You're my big brother. See you around.

He walks off. FADE OUT