

DROP ZONE

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

MARK, 30, handsome, strong, the man every parent wants their daughter to bring home, stands in the middle of an average sized, well-lit elevator. He's tapping on his phone, his thumbs flying. He mutters as he works.

MARK
Average weight, 1500 pounds. Add
another 180 for me. Height 750
feet. Terminal velocity equals—

The phone ring tone interrupts him, and he frowns as he answers.

MARK (CONT'D)
What is it, Angela?

ANGELA
(on phone)
Mark, you have to rethink this.
You can't do it.

MARK
It's a little late. I'm already
here.

ANGELA
You can quit. You can quit at any
time. And everyone will
understand. No one expects you to
do crazy things.

MARK
It's not crazy. It's physics, and
I'm a physicist.

ANGELA
I don't know anything about
physics, but I know you shouldn't
be doing this, especially not now.

MARK
Have any idea how long I've been
working on this?

ANGELA
Please, if you won't do it for me,
do it for...for...

MARK
For whom, Angela, for whom.

ANGELA
I'm pregnant, damnit. Do you understand? I'm pregnant. We're going to have a baby.

For a moment, Mark can't answer.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
So, you can't do this. You can't leave our baby without a father.

MARK
No one is going to leave anyone. I can do this. It's merely mathematics.

ANGELA
It's crazy, crazy. Just quit.

MARK
And let that engineer win? What do you take me for?

ANGELA
That engineer was hand picked by your brother. Think about it. Hand picked. What does that tell you?

MARK
Rob doesn't play favorites. If he did, I wouldn't be here.

ANGELA
It's all part of the scheme. Don't you see? He sits there watching with all the others, his face twisted by the stress of watching his own brother. But he doesn't care, not really, he's doing it for the rush.

MARK
I don't have time for this. I have to recheck my equations.

ANGELA
There's something else. Rob...Rob called last week. He said he knows how unhappy I am.

MARK

What? What? Wait, what did he say?

ANGELA

I didn't tell you because, because, well, it was so out of the blue.

MARK

What. Did. He. Say.

A disembodied VOICE comes over the elevator speaker.

VOICE

(on speaker)

One minute, sixty seconds till we go live.

MARK

What did my brother say?

ANGELA

He said he knew we were having problems, and that he would be there for me.

MARK

That son of a bitch.

ANGELA

He's running the show, Mark. Think about that. He's running it.

MARK

I don't have time for this. I have to concentrate.

ANGELA

Quit, just quit.

MARK

We'll talk when I get home

ANGELA

Mark-

He kills the connection and closes his eyes for a few seconds. Lips compress into a thin line as he goes back to the app on his phone.

The speaker hisses for a second before ROB's voice invades the elevator.

ROB
(on speaker)
Mark, how goes it?

MARK
You called my wife?

ROB
What, whoa, hey, who told you that?

MARK
She did. You'll be there for her?
You sonofabitch.

ROB
It's not what you think. I was
just thinking about you, about what
you're doing. This is serious.

MARK
I know what it is. What I don't
know is why you're hitting on my
pregnant wife.

ROB
Thirty seconds, Mark, thirty
seconds. We'll talk about this
later. There's no time now.

MARK
We don't need to talk. Just stay
away from Angela.

ROB
Twenty seconds. I have to go.
Good luck.

MARK
You're the one who will need luck.

VOICE
Ten seconds.

Mark closes down the app and stows the phone in his pocket.
He turns to the camera in the corner and smiles.

An ANNOUNCER's smooth voice comes over the speaker.

ANNOUNCER
(on speaker)
Mark, are you ready to face the
Drop Zone?

MARK

Ready.

ANNOUNCER

Before we begin, a bit of housekeeping. Many of you have asked about last week's contestant. I'm happy to say that Trey is out of the coma and expected to have a complete recovery!

Mark can hear the APPLAUSE from the studio audience.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Now, back to the show. We'll go over the rules. The elevator is exactly 749 feet above the ground. At your signal the elevator will go into free fall. You control the brakes. When you press the red clicker, the brakes will engage and stop the elevator carriage in precisely 27 feet. The closer you get to the ground, the more money you win. If you are this season's winner, you claim the ten million dollar payoff. Do you understand?

MARK

Yes, sir

ANNOUNCER

According to the rules, you are not allowed a timing device. Any watch, Mark?

He holds up his wrists.

MARK

Wish I had one.

ANNOUNCER

As did our current leader, Isstar Ramesh, who stopped the carriage two feet ten and three quarters inches short of disaster. That's the mark, Mark.

MARK

Good one. I'll remember it.

ANNOUNCER

Are you ready?

MARK

Ready.

ANNOUNCER

Pick up the start button.

Mark takes a green clicker off a shelf.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And the brake button.

Mark picks up a red clicker and waves both at the camera.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Don't get them mixed up.

Mark chuckles.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

I am required by the underwriters of this show to ask if anyone has offered you any prize other than the ones stipulated in the rules.

MARK

No, sir.

ANNOUNCER

This is your last chance to back out. And no one would blame you if you do. As you are aware, there are no fail-safe mechanisms of any kind. You and only you can stop the elevator. Once you start, there will be no further communication.

MARK

I'm going for it.

ANNOUNCER

That's what we love to hear. Any last words? Anyone you want to say something to?

MARK

To my wife. Angela, you are the sun in my universe. I love you. I'll see you soon.

ANNOUNCER

Anything else?

MARK

That's it.

ANNOUNCER

The moment has come. Along with me, millions of viewers wish you good luck. You now have thirty seconds to launch into the Drop Zone.

Countdown MUSIC plays on the speaker as Mark stares into the camera. Both hands shake. He closes his eyes again, his lips moving soundlessly.

Then, his eyes pop open. He smiles.

And presses the green clicker.

The elevator immediately begins its plunge.

Mark counts seconds to himself, his lips forming one number after another.

The elevator shudders as it gathers speed.

He spreads his feet for balance and concentrates on his numbers. His finger nears the button on the red clicker.

His lips move faster as the count rises. The elevator RATTLES and SHAKES. He sways.

The lights flicker dramatically.

He closes his eyes, concentrating. A few more seconds.

His finger taps on the red clicker.

A grin spreads his face. He presses the red clicker button.

Nothing happens.

He presses it again.

Nope.

Terror spreads his face.

MARK

ROBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB!

The lights blink out, plunging the elevator in darkness even as the SCREE of the brakes overcomes everything.

The lights pop back on. The elevator has stopped.

Mark pants, gaping, and then LAUGHS. He's alive.

ANNOUNCER
CONGRATULATIONS, MARK! While it's
not official until measured with
laser precision, it appears you
have set a NEW DROP ZONE RECORD!

Mark punches the air and breaks into a dance.

FADE OUT