

If Only!

You could feel the heat from these flames, this heat that instantly scorches and blisters the paint on your fire helmet, searches for any part of your unprotected body to burn, that forces your heartbeat and pulse to reach dangerous levels, where even above the roar of the fire, you can hear them, beating like a drum inside your head!

This heat that forces you to the floor, instantly sapping your strength, stealing your energy, the only thing keeping you going, your training, adrenalin and will power. Devouring everything in its path, its one purpose to consume and destroy. It will attack the limited protection given by your fire gear, making it unbearable to touch, turns your sweat into steam that will scald your own body. Snuff out your life in an instant, given the conditions that added time allows!

IF ONLY!

You could experience that sickening smell of burned flesh that tells your senses instantly that you are dealing with a fatal fire. That sets your brain into overdrive, how many adults, kids, a family? The smell that you can literally taste, that sticks to your fire gear and in your nostrils for hours, in your memory forever, never ever to be forgotten!

IF ONLY!

You could be the one having to push the boundaries, who discovers the child that has hidden under the bed. That limp, lifeless body you will have to carry, all of the time trying so hard to breath your life back into, theirs stolen away! This child who has only just started out in life, another victim to be lost in lies called statistics that say this doesn't happen anymore. Another ghost for your private nightmares!

IF ONLY!

You could be the one fighting back the tears as the distraught parents ask are my children safe? Did you find them? Yes you found them but you must be strong, whilst trying to force the images of your own children from your mind. Your own children that you are now praying to God in your head, please keep them safe! You want to hold them, tell them how much you love them, but this will have to wait, as now you must give the respect and dignity deserved!

IF ONLY!

You could be the one that has missed yet another hot meal because of calls that has not had any proper sleep for another 48 hours. That had to listen to the screams of agony and for help from the driver and passengers, trapped in yet another MVA at 3am on yet another rain soaked early morning!

IF ONLY!

You could be the one, who day after day, night after night, has been sometimes chest deep, in freezing water and sewerage, manning pumps attempting the impossible, to beat and reverse nature, trying to help those that have lost everything, some not for the first time. Trying to help them retrieve their pets, treasured belongings, whatever they can salvage, listening to their worries, trying to give reassurance, as they wonder how they can rebuild their lives!

IF ONLY!

You could feel the aches and pains in every muscle and joint, bought on by years of doing this continuously throughout their careers. Be the one to help their memories forget what their eyes have seen!

IF ONLY!

You could experience the bond formed by being part of this dedicated group of professionals, this bond that lasts throughout their career and beyond, that keeps them united and that ensures that they cope with these daily horrors, that can never be put into words, only lived, experienced, depending on each other, so many times risking their own lives to save others!

IF ONLY!

You could understand they love their job, they don't wish to do anything else, they don't ask for praise, medals, politicians salaries or hero worship, they only ask for a fair playing field. Pension rights and working conditions that don't break contracts signed up to!
Something that the public who they protect and you choose to ignore, think is only fair!

IF ONLY!

You could do any of the above just once, then, maybe, just maybe you would start to understand what it's like to be a fire fighter!

Thank you for taking the time to read this!

By Kevin Wright, a retired London fire fighter, 32 years' service.

"I have put these words together for fire fighters all over the world!! To all those cutting the fire service, attacking the fire fighters pensions and working conditions I say, IF ONLY!!"