

FADE IN

EXT. EMPTY LAWRENCEVILLE ALLEY - WINTER - WEDNESDAY, 2 AM

Under the sodium vapor haze of a solitary street lamp, a beige Crown Victoria idles quietly. Gentle puffs of exhaust spill from the tailpipe and dirty the dry snowflakes floating through the crisp river air. A faint "ding, ding, ding" resonates through the alley, stinging the silence and signalling in vain that the driver's door is ajar. Dressed in a cheap brown suit without an overcoat, RON PEKOVIC (43) slumps behind the steering wheel, snoring and drooling heavily. There are tiny burn holes on his yellowed collar. Despite the cold and snow, small beads of perspiration dot his forehead. Serpentine trails of dried blood weave through his severely chapped lips. Crumpled packs of cigarettes and small empty glass vials litter the passenger seat. His limp left hand is curled around a GLOCK 23 and rests inches from a tiny glass pipe gathering snow on the pavement. A polished gold badge fixed securely to his ragged black leather belt shines prominently in the streetlight.

Ron is a PITTSBURGH ZONE 5 MISSING PERSONS DETECTIVE and something's not quite right in Pittsburgh tonight.

CUT TO

INT. PEKOVIC'S HIGHLAND PARK HOME - KITCHEN

MANDY PEKOVIC (41) sits alone at her yellowed Formica kitchen table smoking a thin Capri cigarette down to the filter. She listens intently to the police scanner spewing static gibberish from the greasy windowsill underneath the flickering fluorescent lamp above the sink. She shivers a bit; her faded pink, threadbare robe not offering as much warm comfort as it used to. It reminds her of her husband.

How many nights has she sat like this since VINCENT was abducted?

She vigorously stamps her cigarette out and lights another. The police scanner continues to crackle.

MANDY

Goddamn you, Ronnie...

You still have a fucking family.

Mandy doesn't notice the 5 YEAR OLD BOY peeking through the kitchen door as she gets up and shoves the scorched coffee pot back into the machine.

EXT. EMPTY LAWRENCEVILLE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

A dark figure strides cautiously towards the idling Crown Victoria. His baggy jeans hang low and his Steelers cap

is cocked to the side. There is not a soul in sight and the only sound is the soft rumble of the automobile engine. Ron remains oblivious to the world, his fingers still curled tightly around his police issued weapon. JERRY (17) inches closer to the open driver's door. *What is he doing?*

A black cat rustles in a nearby bush, startling Jerry. Ron unconsciously licks his lips. Jerry slowly creeps closer to the car. There are no sounds but the idling engine and the redundant ding of the door monitor...

He reaches the door. Ron doesn't move. An eerie equanimity envelops Jerry as he reaches for the key in the ignition. *Is he going to steal the car? Steal the gun? Or is he going to help Ron?*

CUT TO

INT. PEKOVIC'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mandy pours another cup of bad coffee and flops back into the kitchen chair. She sucks down the last of her cigarette and immediately lights another. CASSIUS (5) stops peeking and silently shuffles to the living room couch. The door emits a faint squeak as he disappears. Mandy wheels around when she hears the noise.

MANDY

Cassie!?! Cassie honey? Are you there?

She looks expectantly at the door. Silence...

She doesn't leave the kitchen.

EXT. EMPTY LAWRENCEVILLE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Jerry is about to yank the key from the ignition when he notices the crack vials littering Ron's passenger seat. Suddenly frightened, he pulls back and accidentally smacks the horn. Ron shocks back into consciousness. Still amazingly high, he surges upright and punches Jerry in the face, sending the fifteen year old sliding through the ice and snow, blood pouring from his nose. Jerry immediately begs for forgiveness.

Ron pulls himself out of the car, unable to focus on anything. Light streaks, sounds screech. He unleashes a primal scream.

RON

Viiiiinnnnccccceennnt...

Ron has no idea where he is or who he is or what he is doing. The crack still pulses through his veins, controlling his senses and corrupting his thoughts.

JERRY

Oh crap, oh crap, oh crap! I'm sorry
Mister! Don't freakin' hurt me!
Don't freakin' hurt me! I'm sorry!
I'm so sorry! I was just on my way
home from the GetGo; I had the late
shift tonight. First one they ever
let me have. I just was trying to
help you! My meemaw says I should
always help people when I can. God
smiles on Samaritans!

Jerry exudes deference; he's totally harmless and probably a bit slow. But Ron is too whacked to notice.

RON

Fuck your God.

He twirls around, hugging himself tightly, moaning, then...

JERRY

God smiles on Samaritans! GOD SMILES
ON SAMARITANS!!!

RON FIRES TWO SHOTS INTO JERRY'S FACE, killing him instantly.

Ron immediately falls to his knees, audibly wrestling his conscience. The drugs still have control of him, but his cop instincts suddenly take over. He stands and rushes to his trunk. He pulls out an unmarked .38 and fires three more shots past Jerry into the garage behind him. He then quickly grabs a large towel from his back seat and runs to Jerry's body, searching for anything valuable. He rips off two fake gold chains, a digital Penguins promo watch, and pulls 42 dollars from Jerry's ratty wallet. He purposely lets the watch and some cash fall to the snowy ground. Ron throws the wallet into the bushes and shoves the money and chains into his pockets. He then wheels around and drags Jerry's bleeding corpse away from his car towards the bushes, creating a surreal trail of blood and snow. He tosses Jerry's body half way over the bushes, but then yanks him back, ripping his jacket and slicing his already destroyed face even more. Ron wraps the towel around Jerry's mangled face, throws him over his shoulder and races back to his car. He tosses Jerry's corpse in the trunk with the unmarked .38, then hops in and quickly speeds all over the tracks he just made, making it virtually impossible to tell how many vehicles have driven through the alley that night.

As Ron races down the alley, away from the crime scene he just created, his glass crack pipe peeks innocently from under the bloody snow...

INT. PEKOVIC'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The police scanner suddenly crackles to life.

POLICE SCANNER

*All units. All units. We've got
shots fired in zone 2. Repeat.
Multiple shots fired in zone 2. The
vicinity of Harrison Street.
Suspects presumed armed and
exceptionally dangerous... Repeat.
Multiple shots fired in zone 2. All
units proceed with extreme caution.*

Mandy's head collapses into her hands and she sobs uncontrollably.

EXT. LAWRENCEVILLE STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Ron speeds down Butler Street, pops open some smelling salts and sniffs deeply. He throws the empty canisters out of the window. He hooks a strong left down 48th Street and arrives on the scene just after a patrolman. The cop (RANDY) already there carefully exits his vehicle with his revolver drawn and motions for Ron to do the same.

He does. But after a few moments of anticlimactic silence, Ron holsters his weapon and approaches the patrolman, trying to act cool.

RON

Whatta we got, officer?

RANDY

Looks like some kind of armed robbery with shots fired. I see some money on the ground over there. Some holes in the garage. Lots of blood. Someone musta been hit or something.

Another detective in an unmarked Crown Victoria screeches to the scene. Ron lights a cigarette.

RON (TO RANDY)

Nice work, Sherlock. Let me know if you come up with any other brilliant deductions.

Ron walks over to the arriving detective's car. HAROLD (48, portly but strong) ambles out, grunting and smoking a large cigar.

HAROLD

Yinz sure know how to ruin a fucking good, quiet night. And what the fuck is this? Mister Medal of frickin' Valor? What the fuck are you doin'

'ere, Ronnie? And holy fuck you look like shit.

RON

I couldn't sleep. Was down at the GetGo. Heard this shit on the scanner.

Harold grabs Ron's collar. Ron smacks it away. He is desperately trying to keep the drugs still coursing through his system under control.

HAROLD

What the hell, buddy? Did you drop an entire pack of lit cigarettes on your way over?

RON

It's an old fucking shirt, you nebbly bitch. Besides, look at yours. 1986 called, it wants it style back.

Harold feigns a laugh.

RON

Look, I gotta be at the station at 6AM and I don't see any suspects around, think your fat ass can handle this?

HAROLD

You mean the city's golden boy ain't gonna stick around and take credit for this one, too?

Harold's words hit a little too close for comfort. *Does he know?* Ron fights the effects of the drugs and musters an unconvincing smirk.

RON

And by the looks of all these tracks, whoever got hit is staining the backseat of someone's '84 Buick right now. Alert the Stater's and tell them to check anything abnormal on the roads. Anything. Run normal diagnostics here, and make sure Einstein over there doesn't contaminate the crime scene. The cavalry will be here momentarily.

RANDY

Hey! There's a crack pipe over here!

Ron struggles to hide his blooming fear and anxiety.

HAROLD

Of course there is, sport. It was a fucking shoot out in the ghetto with real bullets. You think you weren't gonna find crack?

(TO RON) Ron, I know how to do my job. Go home.

Ron wipes the snot slowly spilling out of his nostrils.

RON

Okay, Harry. You need anything, you know where to find me.

HAROLD

Take it easy, superstar. I've been doing this since you were still trying to figure out how to finger bang your date at the prom. And whether you admit it or not, I'm a good fucking detective. We'll find these fuckers before the end of the week.

RON

That's why I love you, Harry. And if you ever want to finger bang, you know I'm your man.

HAROLD

Get the fuck outta here and get some sleep.

Ron heads towards his car as more police cruisers arrive. He is almost free.

HAROLD

And Ronnie!

Ron slowly turns.

HAROLD

Don't forget. Mandy and Cassie are still there for you.

Ron flicks his cigarette to the ground.

HAROLD

Be there for them.

Ron says nothing, gets in his car, and drives away just before the environment blossoms into a true crime scene.

INT. PERKOVIC'S HOME - 5 AM

Ron stumbles through the front door. The bottle of Jack Daniels he carries is almost empty. He frivolously throws his jacket on the couch, covering the wide-awake

Cassius. Mandy rushes in from the kitchen and confronts Ron. She could kill a lesser, sober man with her stare. A loaded silence traps the room.

MANDY

Every night, Ron? This is every single night.

We can't live like this anymore.

Ron doesn't answer.

MANDY

You know you still have a family, don't you? We need you Ron! You know, Vincent-

Ron explodes.

RON

You don't need shit! I give you everything. A house. A car. A life. You don't even fucking work anymore. I'm the one who needs things. I NEED THINGS!

MANDY

Oh what do you need, Ron? What do you fucking need? Another fucking hit? Another drink?

Ron takes a swig of the whiskey. Mandy smacks the bottle out of his hand. It shatters on the hardwood floor. Cassius curls up even deeper into Ron's dirty jacket, the escalating violence scares him to death. Mandy smacks Ron across the face. She starts to weep.

MANDY

Who are you, Ronnie? Who are you? I don't even recognize you. What happened to you?

Ron grabs Mandy's face and squeezes. He is at once filled with pure love and pure hate. Mandy sees insanity in his eyes. Her face turns red. She tries to talk, but Ron is too powerful. He starts to hurt her and she swings her arms, trying to retaliate, but Ron just keeps squeezing.

MANDY

R-r-ronnie... you're hurting me...

Suddenly Ron hears the quiet sobs of Cassius from the couch. He stops squeezing, but doesn't let go of Mandy's face.

RON

I should have saved Vincent...

Suddenly Mandy sees her husband again for the first time in a long while. She reaches up and gently strokes Ron's face.

MANDY

Oh Ronnie. You couldn't have done anything. You were the best father you could have been. Nobody could have prevented what happened.

RON

I don't- I don't deserve anything. Any of this...

MANDY

Yes you do, honey... Yes you do. You deserve everything. And you deserve little Cassie. You're his father. Be his father. Be the father I know you can be. He deserves you more than anything.

Cassius peeks over the side of the couch. Ron catches him out of the corner of his eye. Ron gently kisses Mandy and walks over and sits down next to him. He puts Cassius on his lap.

RON

Hey kiddo.

Cassius says nothing. He just stares at his father with big, blue, sad, tearful eyes.

RON

Are you scared?

Cassius nods.

RON

Well, Dad's been in a real weird place for a while, buddy. In fact, I'm kinda there right now. Pretty crazy, huh?

You see; I have some things I really need to tell your big brother. And since he was taken away from us, I just- I just don't know how to do that.

Do you ever want to tell your big brother things?

Cassius nods.

RON

And how do you do that?

Cassius hops off Ron's lap and runs upstairs. Ron looks over at Mandy.

RON

I need to tell you something.

INT. PEKOVIC'S KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mandy sits nervously across from Ron. Her leg shakes and her lip trembles. She can't believe what she just heard. She takes a long, hard pull from her thin cigarette. Ron's head is in his hands.

MANDY

What the fuck are you going to do, Ronnie?

RON

I don't have a fucking clue.

MANDY

And you're sure no one has any idea you did it?

RON

Harold's running the investigation. He hates gangbanger drug addicts, but he's also fat and lazy and too nice. As far as he's concerned this is open and shut. The less paperwork, the better.

MANDY

Goddamnit, Ronnie. This family can't function without you. We will die. Period. You do what you have to do to make this go away. I need you here. Cassie needs you here. I'll get over this someday, but if you leave, Cassie never will.

Just then, Cassius enters the kitchen. He carries an old cassette machine. Without concern, he hops up on Ron's lap, puts the machine on the table, and presses "play"

CASSIUS TAPE V.O.

Hi Vinnie... Mommy made your favorite cookies yesterday. I ate 6 of them, but Mommy thinks I only ate 3. I told her you ate the other three and she started to cry again. By the way, is Daddy with you? Sometimes he is here, but it's not really Daddy. I think Daddy is with you. Bring him home with you. I love you, Vinnie. Tell Daddy I love him too. Bye-bye.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Ron fidgets at his desk. Harold saunters over.

HAROLD

Had some fun at your little crack party last night. Found some interesting shit. Lotsa bullets and bad juju. Maybe I'll get one of those little medals for this bust.

Ron smiles nervously.

HAROLD

... I fucking hate crackheads. Don't you, buddy?

Harold smacks Ron on the shoulder and saunters over to his cluttered desk. Suddenly, the CHIEF bursts into the office.

CHIEF

RON-BO! Line 3! Got another runaway in Larryville.

INT. LAWRENCVILLE BROWNSTONE - LATER THAT DAY

REGINA (78) prepares a two glasses of ginger ale as she talks with Ron in her kitchen. She fights the urge to cry with each word.

REGINA

... and he just started growing up. Taking care of himself a little bit. He got a job, bought his first pair of shoes with his own money. You know, it's just so tough for a boy like him. He's a little slow, if you know what I mean. His daddy hasn't been around since he was five. It really, really affected him. He would never run away from me. Something happened to him. Somebody took him..

Why would someone take him? Tell me Detective. Why would someone take my little Jerry?

RON

I assure you ma'am, we will do everything to find your boy. If you don't mind me asking, what happened to his father?

REGINA

He got in a bit of trouble with folks like you. They sent him away. It

was just easier to tell Jerry he
passed away.

Regina pauses. She grabs Ron's hand.

Detective Pekovic. Please find my
grandson. All he wanted to be was a
good Samaritan.

God smiles on good Samaritans.

Ron's eyes fill with tears.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.