FADE IN:

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - SOMEONE’S POV - A PAN - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: LOS ANGELES, 1990

We HOLD ON a dark corner in a good neighborhood in the Hollywood foothills. WE HEAR POUNDING FOOTSTEPS, and, in the distance, TWO JOGGERS appear, running down the street.

NEW ANGLE

ON the JOGGERS, a GUY and a GIRL. The girl is RONDA RATHBUN and she’s memorably cute, 22 or so, a brunette we won’t be able to shake from our memory.

When they arrive at a corner, they come to a stop but continue to run in place.

RONDA

Go again on Wednesday?

GUY

Yeah, sure. I’ll run you home.

RONDA

Three blocks. I’ll be fine.

The GUY smiles, waves, and disappears up a block. RONDA continues on down the street. We FOLLOW her as she runs.

We notice a RED BARRETTE holding her hair in a ponytail. And then WE HOLD as she runs away FROM us, passes the glow of a streetlight, and disappears into blackness.

POV FROM A CAR (MOVING) - RONDA

As she runs along the shadowy sidewalk, oblivious to the fact that she’s being observed.

NEW ANGLE

A DARK SEDAN, we can’t really make it out, follows her along the dark street, then passes her and disappears. Then, far in the distance WE SEE the sedan’s BRAKE LIGHTS flash and fade.

WE HOLD for a few seconds, then BOOM UP, HIGH ABOVE the block.
LOS ANGELES - NIGHT TO DAWN (INTERVALOMETER)

City lights. Hollywood, and in the distance, downtown on one side and Century City on the other. A dot, then a flicker, then a stream of light begins to change everything. Hookers off their corners, cockroaches bedded down, rats in their holes. Dawn.

CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - A SPOT OF RED

on pavement, surrounded by broken glass.

A FINGER touches it.

DEKE (O.S.)

That's blood.

BURNS (O.S.)

Good. I hope they bleed to death.

WE PAN FROM the finger TO its owner: DEKE. His Christian name’s JOE DEACON and he wears a sheriff’s deputy uniform plus the toilsome demeanor of someone who’s seen 100 years’ worth of this world. Too bad he’s only 50.

EXT. BLACK ANGUS RESTAURANT (BAKERSFIELD) - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: BAKERSFIELD

The restaurant manager, BURNS, short, bald, livid, stands over Deacon.

BURNS

Third time in two months. There’s 47 bulbs in the letter ‘G.’ $3.10 a pop. $145.70 every time. That’s 13 additional dinners I gotta sell to float. Not counting lost business. Are you listening to me?

Deke stands, nods.

BURNS

Half our take is from the Interstate. You drive by, look up... I mean, gastronomically appealing, it’s not.

Deke steps back, takes a look up at...

(CONTINUED)
THE SIGN above the restaurant -- lit bulbs spell out -- BLACK ANUS. The broken glass is the bulbs from the “G.”

DEKE
Not exactly a Happy Meal.

INT. KERN COUNTY SHERIFF’S - DAY
Deke walks down a hall. End of shift. He spots a newspaper on a desk. The headline reads: “FOURTH VICTIM FOUND.”

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, Deke?...

INT. CAPTAIN DAVIS’ OFFICE - DAY
HENRY DAVIS is 60, soft; the foreman of the shop. Deke looks in.

DAVIS
Remember a punk named JJ Kendricks?

While Deke rummages through his brain...

DAVIS
Robbed the Kwik-mart on Yaupon; shot and killed the owner? We’ve got a witness who I.D.‘ed him, but she’s gettin’ the guilts; can’t be absolutely, positively sure he’s the guy. All she knows for certain is he was wearing a really nice pair of boots. Fancy stitching. ‘Unforgettable,’ she says.

DEKE
(remembers)
What about the .38 he used?

DAVIS
Ah, the fog lifts? Two searches -- his apartment here and Granny’s in L.A. Nada. But, they came up with a pair of ‘unforgettable’ bloodstained boots. Crime lab ran an ABO. Both Kendricks and the vic were eliminated but Kendricks is a suspect in a robbery down there.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
Is this headed somewhere?

DAVIS
Yeah, and so are you. There’s a prelim day after tomorrow with a motion to dismiss. You drive to L.A. in the morning, bring back the boots, she I.D.’s them, and the judge sets a trial date.

Deke grimaces at the prospect.

DEKE
Sounds like the D.A.’s problem to me.

DAVIS
It’s our problem. No evidence, no conviction. Sheriffs with low conviction rates don’t get re-elected.

Deke stares, then utters a word that’s foreign to him...

DEKE
Please...?

Davis considers the odd plea, then shrugs...

DAVIS
I got nobody else.

... and hands the file to Deke.

EXT. DEKE’S HOUSE (HIGH DESERT) – DAY

The sun rises on a single adobe house stuck in the middle of the desert. Deke’s Bronco is parked out front.

Deke, carrying the file, exits the house and locks the door. A CUR DOG trots down a dusty ridge and up to him.

DEKE
Don’t look at me like that.
You’ve been gone for two weeks.

The dog rubs against Deke’s pants leg. He lifts a boot and scratches the hound’s back, sending the pooch to Heaven. Then Deke walks to the Bronco, reaches in, and finds a bone; tosses it to the hound.

DEKE
See ya tonight.
Reporters, civilians, and law enforcement officials move in and out of the huge building.

CAPTAIN CARL FARRIS sits behind his desk, staring blankly ahead. On the wall hangs an embroidered Bible verse. He reaches into his ever-present jar of designer jelly beans.

SGT. JIM BAXTER, 35, lean, handsome, appears in his doorway.

BAXTER
Whataya need, Cap?

FARRIS
I scheduled a press conference for 5 today. Give an update -- leads are being followed, suspects questioned, progress, etcetera.

BAXTER
I just did one three days ago.

FARRIS
Four dead girls, Jimmy. Haven’t been under this much scrutiny since the Night Stalker. (beat) There’s talk.

Baxter doesn’t know how to take this.

FARRIS
Sheriff hinted we might consider reaching out to the feds for help. At some point.

BAXTER
Are you kidding me?!

FARRIS
‘At some point,’ Jimmy. ‘At some point.’ Not today. Today you’re gonna work the case and do this press conference. That’s why I scheduled it. To keep you front and center.

Baxter grimaces but takes it.

(CONTINUED)
FARRIS
I know it’s a hustle, but if anyone can put the right spin on this, it’s you.

BAXTER
(on exit)
Yeah, that’s me. Three-card monte.

INT. HOMICIDE - BULLPEN - DAY

Baxter enters the bullpen -- a large area with a multitude of desks, charts, and coffee machines.

SAL RIZOLI, 45, (but he’s looked 45 for 20 years), spots Baxter and whistles to JAMIE ESTRADA, 30, the youngest and most attractive (though she tries to hide it) of this group of detectives.

Baxter points to Rizoli as he approaches.

RIZOLI
The ‘possible’ we were looking for has been in fed lockup for six months; the acting class angle was a wash and the lab called to say the clothing re-test results are the same.

BAXTER
(to Jamie)
Re-interview Nichols’ landlord.

JAMIE
Re-re-interview?

BAXTER
Yeah. Sal, go back to the first one, Paula Simons. If he slipped, we’ll probably find it there. I’m going to Serology. Mistakes happen.

SAL
Yeah, but twice?

But Baxter is already gone, leaving Sal and Jamie staring.
As the radio plays a love song, Deke drives, his eyes on...

Los Angeles. Sprawling. Smog-lidded. Oz for some, Hell for others. His eyes rest on the Cahuenga Pass Cross -- a huge, white monument high above the freeway.

DEKE
City of Angels. No sweat. In and out.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
In our top story, sheriff’s officials have confirmed that the rash of killings that have occurred over the past two months are, in fact, connected. The fourth victim --

Deke turns off the radio.

Deke pulls into the small parking lot. No empty spaces. He stifles a curse, pulls directly behind an unmarked vehicle, blocking it, parks, and gets out.

An undersized room stuffed to the gills with file cabinets and boxes. A few lab-coated workers move to and fro.

BAXTER sits across from AMY ANDERS, 30, a serologist, as she hands over packages filled with bloodstained clothing.

ANDERS
Simons... Fineman... Holland. All re-screened. All victim’s blood only.

Baxter opens one of the packages, pulls out a blood-soaked sundress and stares at it.

DEKE enters. He and Baxter lock eyes.

DEKE
(proffering form)
Here to pick up seized evidence. Property said it was here.

(CONTINUED)
She holds up a finger -- “One sec.” Deke moves back a step.

BAXTER
You’re promising me, this is absolutely as thorough as you can be?

Anders gives a half-hearted nod.

BAXTER
(under his breath)
I need this, Amy. I really need this.

She sighs and reaches for one of the packages.

ANDERS
So... we screen ‘em again.

BAXTER
Thank you.

Baxter rises and again locks eyes with Deke on his way out.

ANDERS
Yo, Kern County?

Deke hands over the form. Anders hurries away. Deke gingerly opens the paper evidence bag and fingers the blood-soaked sundress.

CLOSEUP - DEKE
transformed to another place and time...

CLOSEUP - THE SUNDRESS
“tie-dyed” in blood.

FLASH TO:

ANOTHER BLOOD-SOAKED DRESS
A HAND fingers it gingerly.

ANDERS (O.S.)
Hands off.

DEKE comes to and releases his grip on the dress. Anders hands back the form.

(CONTINUED)
ANDERS
The evidence is here but it’s not leaving without a signature.

Deke reaches in his breast pocket for a pen.

ANDERS
Not yours. I need authorization from Homicide to release.

DEKE
There’s a prelim tomorrow...

ANDERS
Not my problem. Captain Farris put a lock on this item for testing.

DEKE
It’s already been tested...

ANDERS
Don’t I know. He wants it re-tested. It’s become a thing. We’re up to our ass in dead girls.

DEKE
So I hear.

ANDERS
Look, you get me a signature and you can walk out of here wearing the damn things for all I care.

EXT. EVIDENCE LAB (DOWNTOWN) - PARKING LOT - DAY

DEKE walks out the door and spots...

BAXTER watching as a TOW TRUCK DRIVER hooks his crane to the back of Deke’s Bronco.

DEKE
Hey!... Hey!

BAXTER
This yours?

DEKE
(to tow driver)
Unhook it.

The driver sighs and does so.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
You blocked me in.

DEKE
Why not just ask me to move it?

BAXTER
Because I don’t have time. You want special treatment, go back to Kern County.

Deke gives Baxter a look, gets in the Bronco, and drives away, leaving Baxter standing there, shaking his head.

INT. L.A. SHERIFF’S - PRESS ROOM - DAY (LATER)
A glassed-in room surrounded by offices. It’s full of reporters. Baxter walks in and straight to the podium.

BAXTER
Sorry, I’m late...

INT. LASD - HALLWAY - DAY
Deke walks past uniforms and plainclothes cops. A few recognize him. He ventures a nod now and again as he spots Baxter at the podium. Deke settles in at Farris’ door.

Farris looks up and almost groans. The two men share a look. These guys have a history.

DEKE
(re: verse on wall)
I see Brother Love’s salvation show’s still in operation.

FARRIS
Everybody needs a little faith. Even you, Deacon.

DEKE
(re: Baxter)
Got yourself a new disciple?

FARRIS
Great detective. Great guy. You should listen in; might learn something on both counts.

Deke, in no mood for this, holds up the requisition form.

(CONTINUED)
FARRIS
The lab called. You leaving town when you’re done?

DEKE
Why? You wanna take me to dinner?

FARRIS
I want ya out of here. They’ll run the tests first thing in the morning. If there’s no match, you’re gone.

DEKE
No. Tomorrow’s no good...

FARRIS
I called your C.O. Had a nice chat. He said you should hang till the tests are complete, deliver the evidence tomorrow.

Deke knows he’s stuck. He bites his lip and turns to go.

FARRIS
(sarcastic)
Look at it this way: It’ll give you a chance to visit all those friends you left behind.

DEKE
Nice seein’ you, too... Captain.

INT. LASD - HALLWAY - DAY

Deke exits Farris’ office, stops, and watches Baxter -- THROUGH the glass -- in the press room. A detective, ROGERS, spots Deke...

ROGERS
Who says bad guys don’t return to the scene of the crime? How’s it feel to be back in uniform?

DEKE
Still paddin’ your overtime, Rogers?

ROGERS
That’s Sergeant Rogers now, Deacon.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE  
(sarcastic as hell)  
Couldn’t happen to a nicer guy.

Rogers walks away, grumbling...

BAXTER  
(at the podium)  
... and I’m pleased to report we’re making good progress...

His attention drifts to...

THROUGH THE GLASS -- IN THE HALL -- DEKE stands watching. Then he walks through the door and into the press room.

BAXTER  
... following leads and interviewing potential witnesses...

DEKE leans against the wall. A REPORTER, FLANDERS, slides in next to him. Baxter continues in the b.g.

FLANDERS  
Niceta see ya, Deke.  
(re: Baxter)  
He’s good, huh? Camera ready.

BAXTER, mid-answer, still eyes Deke, who whispers something to Flanders. Flanders raises his hand. Baxter notices but continues...

BAXTER  
It’s a complicated case with multiple crime scenes and a surplus of evidence, which will hopefully lead us to the killer. We’re being both methodical and light on our feet in our efforts.  
(points to Flanders)  
Yes?

FLANDERS  
So, correct me if I’m wrong, but what I’m hearing is: After two months and four victims you don’t have a suspect.

BAXTER  
(holding anger)  
None that I can discuss.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE smiles, shakes his head, and exits.

EXT. TWIN TOWERS - NIGHT
Deacon exits the building.

VOICE (O.S.)
Sonofabitch!!

Deke looks up to see SAL RIZOLI approaching. Deke smiles, offers his hand.

DEKE
Hey, Sal. You still hanging around?

SAL
No rest for the ugly. What are you doing here?

DEKE
Don’t ask, don’t tell.

SAL
I was just on my way across the street. Lemme buy you a cup.

Deke weighs the offer.

SAL
Come on. What’s one cup of coffee?

INT. TWIN TOWERS - NIGHT
Glassed-in stairwell looking out on the parking lot. Baxter descends with DENNIS WILLIAMS, another detective.

WILLIAMS
You wanna grab a bite?

BAXTER
Naw, I’m gonna surprise Ana and come home for once.
(beat; out the window)
Who’s that Kern patrol dep talkin’ to Sal?

WILLIAMS
That’s Joe Deacon...

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
Joe Deacon? You’re kidding?

INT. NICK’S - NIGHT

Sal and Deke...

SAL
... a bunch of Nancies. End of shift, I have to beg for somebody to grab a beer with. They got no soul, these new guys. They weeded all the heart outta the place. But then, you know that better than anybody.

Baxter walks in, catches Deke’s eye, strolls over.

SAL
Hey, Sarge. You know Joe Deacon?

Baxter nods a less-than-generous greeting. Deke gives it right back to him. Sal watches nervously.

BAXTER
You get what you came for?

DEKE
I will.

BAXTER
And you’ve got nothing better to do than bust my balls in the meantime?

SAL
Nuthin’ personal. Deke busts everybody’s balls.

DEKE
You wanna bullshit John Q into thinkin’ the worst is over, that’s your business. Until the ‘next time.’

Baxter just glares.

DEKE
But, hey, it’s your shift.

BAXTER
Yes, it is.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
I hear you’re a good cop.

BAXTER
I hear things, too.

Deke offers his hand. They shake. Tension lifted. Sal’s relief is evident.

Baxter’s pager goes off just as there’s a TAP on the window. JAMIE motions to Baxter.

BAXTER
Excuse me.

And he walks to the entrance and meets Jamie.

SAL
(to Deke)
He is a good cop, Deke. College boy and he’s a bit of a Holy Roller, but, hey, I’ve been thinkin’ about joinin’ myself. Get on the fast track for a promotion.

Deke sips his coffee. Baxter finishes with Jamie and turns, stares at Deke and Sal...

SAL
Looks like ‘next time’ is here.

Sal tosses a coupla bucks down, rises, shakes Deke’s hand.

SAL
Wanna stay with me and the wife tonight?

DEKE
No, but thanks.

SAL
Okay, well, good seein’ ya, Deke.

Deke nods, but his eyes are on Baxter... and Baxter’s on his. They turn to walk away, then Baxter stops, turns...

He and Deke lock eyes. After a beat...

BAXTER
Ride over with me. Maybe you can even give a few pointers.

That does it.
Seedy. Two radio cars are out front alongside a white utility truck. Cones and police tape. Everyone’s outside waiting.

A brown unmarked car pulls up and Baxter steps out, followed by Jamie, and, a few seconds later, by Deke. Sal strides up.

**SAL**

   Everybody outside, nobody in.
   Dollar to a dime it’s a ‘decomp.’

The “first officer,” HENDERSON, 25, green, scared, walks up, notepad in hand. He writes down --

**BAXTER**

Baxter. 362071. What’s everybody waiting around for?

**HENDERSON**

Power’s off in the victim’s building.

**BAXTER**

You call Edison?

**HENDERSON**

They’re workin’ on it now.

**BAXTER**

You been inside?

Henderson gulps and nods.

**BAXTER**

How big’s the place?

**HENDERSON**

Two-room efficiency. Due to victim’s body position, access is through the adjacent apartment’s fire escape.

**SAL**

(a thought)

We got generators in the truck.

**BAXTER**

Let’s let the Wazoo boys go to work.
SAL
You wanna superglue the whole apartment?

BAXTER
Why not? We’re dead in the water until the power comes on.

CUT TO:

THREE MEN emerge from the back of the white truck.

The “Ghoul Squad.” They are dressed in “moon suits” -- covered head-to-toe in plastic. Carrying various tools of their trade, they make haste to the apartment.

BAXTER walks over to Deke and smiles.

BAXTER
You familiar with all this?

DEKE
No.

BAXTER
They fume it up with cyanoacrylate -- superglue. Everything shows up under black light -- fingerprints, blood, hair, sole prints... to the wazoo.

(beat)
Things have probably changed a lot since you left.

DEKE
You still gotta catch him, right?

BAXTER
Yeah.

DEKE
Nothing’s changed.

INT. DARK APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT (LATER)

Deke, Baxter, Sal, and Jamie stand in the dark.
Flashlights on.

Sal’s nose wriggles at an invading smell. He reaches into his pocket, extracts a pack of Kools, tears the filters off two cigarettes, and sticks them in his nose.

(CONTINUED)
SAL
Anybody wanna menthol?

THE MOON-SUITED WAZOO BOYS exit through the adjacent apartment and nod to Baxter.

MOON SUIT
Everyone eat?

Deke just glares. Baxter flicks on his flashlight and heads through...

The adjacent apartment door, past the APARTMENT’S OCCUPANTS -- an Hispanic couple and three grandkids -- all sitting at a kitchen table, watching the procession of cops in the dark.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Baxter exits the “adjacent apartment” window, steps onto the fire escape, walks “next door,” pulls plastic off the window, and climbs through, followed by Sal and Deke.

INT. THE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dark, save a little moonlight creeping through the window.

BAXTER
Lights off.

Off go the flashlights. Baxter switches on the black light and the room...

LIGHTS UP. Fingerprints, handprints, blood -- on the wall, the floor -- all with a phosphorescent whitish-green hue. The room has transformed into a haunted house of evidence.

DEKE, SAL, BAXTER -- eyes peeled as the black light...

PANS across the room -- past fingerprints, blood spatters -- and finally rests on, the very dead body of a 22-year-old girl, lit by a veritable light show taking place all over her nude body, which leans, propped against the front door of the apartment, covered in dried blood.

BAXTER
Jesus.

Then, all at once, ELECTRICITY COMES ON -- LIGHTS, an electric fan, a clock radio -- sensory deprivation to overload.

(CONTINUED)
We see too much of everything -- the bloody mattress, bloodstained floor, and... the body. Her name is, was, JULIE BROCK -- stabbed to death, caked in blood... a plastic bag over her head.

DEKE, BAXTER, SAL, JAMIE -- squint from the light, too numb to comment.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

The room is now fully lit and all the CRIMINALISTS are hard at work. BAXTER stands in the middle, the ringmaster.

BAXTER
Alright, everyone, you know the drill, hands in pockets, eyes on the floor, moving clockwise. We're all drinking from the same well here, so be careful, be courteous, be patient. She's dead; let's not murder the crime scene.

As Baxter turns in place, eyeing -- blood on the wall in the pattern of a sound wave --

BAXTER
(almost to himself)
Arterial wound -- pulse, pulse, pulse...

A puddle of blood in the middle of the bedroom.

BAXTER
Stab wound, body cavity... another stab wound...

Bloody hand and footprints leading into the kitchen.

BAXTER
Crawled to here... This is where she died.
(beat)
So why... is she there?

DEKE, standing against the wall, stares down at the window ledge -- footprints all over it.

DEKE
(sotto; to Sal)
Did they lift the prints from this window?

(CONTINUED)
Sal turns, walks up to Baxter, says something and Baxter glances at the ledge, then to Deke, then turns to the room...

SAL
Hey, Jimmy, they dust this ledge yet?

BAXTER
You got to be kidding me... Hey, get me the first officer now?!

A PHOTOGRAPHER/LATENT PRINTS MAN moves slowly around the room, TAKING SHOTS of anything and everything --

-- the window, blood on the floor, spattering of red against one wall, a Schlitz beer can on the dresser, the unmade bed, the tennis shoe near the body, and finally, moving up the body of the girl to the garbage bag pulled tightly over her head.

A WOMAN with a doctor bag, the coroner’s assistant, FLO DUNIGAN, steps through the window. She's 45, carries a few extra pounds plus a ton of likable attitude, and will never understand why she's not a prize catch in the dating market.

DEKE
Still makin' house calls, Flo?

FLO
Good lawd.

DEKE
How are you?

She spots the dead body, bag still over her head.

FLO
You in town for awhile?

DEKE
No.

FLO
Stick around till I'm finished?

Deke nods and Flo goes immediately to the body. With medical precision she lifts the victim’s arm at the elbow to check for rigor.

FLO
You can rule out suicide.

Baxter doesn't laugh.
SAL slides in next to Deke, nods to the corpse, and reads from the first's notes.

SAL
Joe Deacon, meet Julie Brock. Julie's five-four, a buck twenty, and hails from Manhattan, Kansas. She's currently working as an ad agency temp but one day hopes to fulfill her dream of fronting a rock band and winning a Grammy. (beat) This job sucks.

SAL walks away, crossing BAXTER, who points to the ledge as he confronts Henderson.

BAXTER
Hey. Our killer exited the same way we came in. It's your responsibility to secure and protect the premises; from anyone who might spoil it. From the moment she expired to the time I cuff whoever did this, she belongs to me! (ALT: We work for her.) You got that?! Get out of here.

HENDERSON nods and exits through the window, careful this time to step over the ledge.

Deke watches Baxter, appreciating that they are of like minds.

FLO makes a liver incision and sticks a thermometer in. Then she checks for rigor in the fingers, toes... None.

A CRIMINALIST uses a gloved hand to lift a bloody flannel shirt from the floor. He places it carefully in a plastic bag.

Two other TECHS stare at the POOL OF DRIED BLOOD and play a game of "Geographical Rorschach."

TECH #1
It's startin' to look a lot like Illinois.

TECH #2
Naw, it's Michigan. See, there's Cheboygan!

BAXTER
That's enough.

(CONTINUED)
SAL opens the fridge, checks the contents, makes a note.

SAL
This been dusted?

TECH #1
Yeah, but it's broken; the stuff's rotten.

Sal squeezes open the top on a quart of milk, sniffs it, lifts the container, and pours some into his open mouth.

SAL
Not all of it.

BAXTER walks over to Sal.

BAXTER
(re: Deke)
So when is Columbo going to break * my case for me?

SAL
Deke’s got his own style. He's a ‘mudder.’ Wins the rainy day races the other horses don’t wanna run.

QUICK SHOTS -- evidence brown-bagged, numbered; a tech removes the dust bag from a vacuum cleaner; another swabs the residue from the kitchen drain.

FLO makes notes, checks wounds, opens gaping holes, peers in, over and around the body of the once pretty, but now very much dead, Julie Brock.

Baxter walks over and squats down. His eyes go from a large dried bloodstain in the center of the room to the dead body.

FLO
She assumed room temperature 2, 3 * days ago. Know more when we take her in. Probably the knife insteada the bag.

BAXTER
Lean her forward.

Flo doubles the body over forward. Julie’s hands are tied with electrician’s cord. Her back has several purplish spots on it.

BAXTER
Postmortem lividity. She died on her back. She was moved.

(CONTINUED)
Bingo. Anybody relocate her? The landlady, the ‘first’?...

(beat)

The way this looks she was moved a long time after she died.

Baxter mulls this over.

FLO

You ready for the unveiling?

Baxter nods and Flo unties and slowly lifts the bag off the girl's head.

Julie Brock. Mouth and eyes open. Purplish bite marks cover her face and neck.

DEKE stares for several seconds, then, when he blinks...

WE --

CUT TO:

**FLASHBACK** - **EXT. BRIDGE** - **NIGHT**

A small but ornate bridge lit only by moonlight. It traverses a cozy hillside neighborhood. An unmarked car pulls up and stops on the bridge behind a patrol cruiser.

Two detectives step out of the unmarked sedan. As they walk TOWARD us, we can see that it's Deke and Farris.

Sal, in the uniform of a patrol deputy, runs up to them, out of breath, scared.

SAL

We got two under the bridge.

Fresh. Real fresh.

DEKE

Call in backup; set a perimeter.

Suspect might still be here.

Sal races to his cruiser and grabs the radio. Deke and Farris trot to the end of the bridge.

*
AN ABANDONED BUILDING across the alley.

Deke walks slowly across the alley, his eyes up on the abandoned building.

He carefully makes his way up a rickety side stairwell.

Deke enters the dark apartment. He points the flashlight and... A DOZEN OVERSIZED RATS scurry for cover.

DEKE takes in the room... empty save a kitchen chair, lying toppled in the middle of the room.

Baxter, in the midst of the crime scene, watches... THE FLASHLIGHT moving to and fro in the abandoned building.

Deke walks over to the window and pushes the ratty shades open. A streetlamp throws a BEAM OF LIGHT 15 or so feet into the room. He walks alongside the beam and stops, stares at...

The chair, in the dark, just beyond the light. Deke lifts the chair, takes a seat and smiles... because he’s looking at...

A direct view of the BROCK APARTMENT. Julie, the belle of the ball, sits dead center.

Deke walks over to the dejected first officer, Henderson.

DEKE
Reamed you pretty good, huh?

HENDERSON
Yeah.

DEKE
Wanna make it up to him?

Henderson, confused, looks at Deke.
SAL AND JAMIE watch as the body is taken out. Show’s over.

SAL
When I was a kid, I couldn’t sneeze without a neighbor wantin' to quarantine the block. A vicious murder happens down the hall and nobody heard, nobody saw nothin'? Jeezus. The Ghoul Squad come up with anything?

JAMIE
A ‘partial’ fingerprint on her thigh. Other than that, nada. My maid should be so thorough.

SAL
You got a maid?!

BAXTER, nearby, speaks into a pay phone...

BAXTER
Half an hour or so. The girls asleep?... I love you, too.

He hangs up and moves next to Flo, who, along with a tech, is in the middle of a conversation with Henderson.

BAXTER
What’s going on?

Henderson points to the abandoned building across the street.

HENDERSON
I spotted an abandoned apartment across the alley. When I inspected, I recognized it as a possible viewing point of the victim's domicile.

Flo gives Baxter a look that says she's impressed. Baxter nods to the tech, who grabs a co-worker and heads across the street, evidence bags in hand.

Baxter eyes Henderson, then spots... DEKE standing by himself, 20 yards or so away.

BAXTER turns on Henderson.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
When you left your post, the crime scene perimeter could have been compromised. Congrats, Sherlock, you’ve screwed the pooch twice in one night.

Henderson, dejected, nods and walks away, passing... Deke.

HENDERSON
Thanks a lot.

INT. BAXTER’S CAR - NIGHT

Baxter drives and gives Jamie notes while Deke sits in the backseat.

BAXTER
... canvass the block, knock on every door, quiz every hooker, find out the girl's habits, friends, suitors, enemies.

JAMIE
They get anything across the street?

BAXTER
Lifted a print. Tested stains on the floor for semen. All negative. Oh, and pull files on any known sex offenders in the area; Peeping Toms; neighborhood arrests; transients included. Cross-reference traits against prior vics; lean on the lab for prints...

Baxter scours his mind for other details, then turns to Deke.

BAXTER
Awful quiet back there, Kojak. Am I missing anything?

DEKE
Your other girls have bites?

JAMIE
Carrie Holland.

BAXTER
One of 'em. Why?

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
Similar to a case... up north.

EXT. TWIN TOWERS - NIGHT

Baxter pulls up to Deke's Bronco. Deke slides out.

BAXTER
Sal says you're here overnight. Why don't you buy me breakfast tomorrow?

DEKE
Why I wanna buy you breakfast?

BAXTER
Okay, I buy. Nick's. 0800.

DEKE
If I'm still here...

Deke shuts the door.

EXT./INT. DEKE'S BRONCO - NIGHT

As he drives through the streets, eyeing every hooker, scoping every corner, drinking in the darkness and shadows.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The crime scene is several hours old. Criminalists and cops work the evidence and a large xenon lights the whole area.

Farris off to the side. Sal walks up with a notepad.

SAL
Fillin' out my report here and...

They hold a look for several seconds.

SAL
You make the call, Sarge. But, if it makes any difference, you know I bleed blue. I mean, I'm a team player... if it makes a difference.

(CONTINUED)
Farris turns his gaze across the crime scene. Sal follows his look and the two men stare at...

Deke, sitting on a big, flat rock, staring into space, holding a bloody dress.

EXT. A 24-HOUR COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT (PRESENT)

THROUGH THE WINDOW WE SEE DEKE, sitting, the only customer. A WORKER vacuums around him; A WAITRESS fills salt shakers.

INT. LASD INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

STAN PETERS, 40, sits nervously, alone in the yellow room.

INT. INTERROGATION OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Sal watches Peters, then exits.

INT. HOMICIDE - DAY

The place is a zoo. Baxter works at his desk with a look that says he's been here for awhile. Sal walks up.

BAXTER
He fall asleep yet?

SAL
Nah. Nervous. Like an innocent man.

The phone RINGS. Jamie picks it up.

JAMIE
Homicide.

She listens for a few seconds, starts jotting notes. Then she turns to Baxter...

JAMIE

Baxter, in the midst of his own problems, turns to Jamie.

BAXTER
It's yours.

(CONTINUED)
Jamie is startled, then regroups and speaks into the phone.

JAMIE
I’ll be there in 15 minutes.
Estrada. E-S-T-R-A-D-A.

As she hangs up, Sal and other detectives raise a cheer.

SAL
Gentlemen, raise your mug to Jamie, who just got her first primary.

And they all do. Jamie nods, smiles, grabs her coat, and exits the room. Then, after a few seconds, she returns, red-faced, opens her drawer, grabs her revolver, and leaves.

SAL
A Lynwood banger shot in a block of junkies. Thanks, Jimmy. Misdemeanor homicides I can do without.

BAXTER
If she can't close it, nobody thinks the worse of her. If she does, you owe her dinner.

Baxter checks his watch, grabs his jacket, and races out.

EXT. NICK’S DINER – DAY

As Baxter enters, he spots...

A POSTER -- on the diner window. It has a picture of a pretty young girl with her name -- RONDA RATHBUN -- underneath. We remember her from the first scene. In bold lettering at the top it says: HAVE YOU SEEN THIS GIRL?

BAXTER stares at the poster for a moment.

INT. NICK'S - DAY

A clear bag containing A PAIR OF BLACK, BLOODSTAINED BOOTS, sits on the counter. WE PAN TO DEKE, haggard, in the midst of a conversation at a nearby pay phone.

(CONTINUED)
DAVIS (V.O.)
Surprised the D.A., too. She made a second degree offer; Kendricks copped a plea.

DEKE
What do I do with the ‘unforgettable’ boots?

DAVIS (V.O.)
Forget ‘em. Don’t need ‘em. I’ll see you tomorrow.

Deke hangs up, sees Baxter sitting at the counter next to the boots. A waitress delivers Baxter a cup of coffee.

BAXTER
Morning.

DEKE
Morning.

BAXTER
Look, I know it was you that spotted the observatory across the street last night. Might have missed it without you.

Deke’s look says, “you’re welcome.”

BAXTER
When you taking off?

DEKE
Now.

Deke tosses money on the counter.

BAXTER
Got something you might wanna sit in on. Guy picked up twice for peeping in the victim’s neighborhood. Sheet says he’s a KSO. Stan Peters.

Deke's face shows a hint of recognition.

BAXTER
Picked up this morning on a Ramey warrant. Letting him stew a bit. He wants a mouthpiece.
  (noticing)
Nice boots.
INT. STATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Deke sits alone, staring THROUGH the one-way glass at... STAN PETERS. Baxter enters with a file.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Baxter sits and opens the file to a graduation photo of Julie Brock. Baxter turns over the photo to the next -- a coroner's shot. Peters’ face literally drops.

PETERS
Where’s my lawyer?

BAXTER
In the building. It takes awhile.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sal holds back a cheap-suited PUBLIC DEFENDER with one hand.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
He's already ‘requested’ and I've been standing here for 20 minutes.

SAL
And we've told him you’re in the building. But until he makes a demand to see you...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Peters and Baxter...

BAXTER
I gotta tell ya, Stan, this doesn't look good. A girl from your neighborhood, dead, and you, a known sex offender...

PETERS
Like I said before, I was takin' a piss, and I was in the alley, and this girl... this girl...

BAXTER
Teenage girl, Stan.

PETERS
She was just walking by!

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER

Four other complaints, one other arrest...

PETERS

You gotta believe me! I got nuthin’ to do with this!

BAXTER

KSO -- that’s what it says in the file. I dunno, Stan...


INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Deke picks up the phone, holds it to his ear...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Baxter spots the blinking light on the phone, picks it up, listens, then sets it down. Considers a second, then --

BAXTER

The name Mary Roberts ring a bell?

Peters face falls into anguish.

PETERS

What?!...

BAXTER

Mary Roberts?

Peters looks at the phone, then at the one-way glass. He rises, walks to the glass and stares into it. Anguished.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Deke sits calmly as Peters places hands on the glass, a distraught look on his face. He knows who’s behind it.

EXT. TWIN TOWERS - DAY

Deke and Baxter walk and talk.

BAXTER

Mary Roberts? Stan Peters?

DEKE

A dead girl and a suspect.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
Was he your boy?

DEKE
You never know.
(beat)
Just sayin' hello to an old pal.

BAXTER
Your ‘pal’ says you broke his jaw once.

DEKE
You gotta kiss a lotta frogs to find your prince.

Captain Farris walks up, spots Deke.

FARRIS
What are you still doing here?

DEKE
Just leaving.

And he does. Baxter and Farris watch him walk away.

BAXTER
Sal said you and Deacon were partners.

Farris nods, then grimaces and walks back inside.

INT. HOMICIDE - DAY

Baxter walks up to Jamie’s desk.

BAXTER
Order up the ‘poor boy’ on a ‘Mary Roberts.’ I’m goin’ for a sandwich. Want anything?

JAMIE
The Rathbuns are waiting.

BAXTER
Rathbun?

JAMIE
Missing person. They think their daughter Ronda’s a stat.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
We got a corpse?
(shakes her head)
Then it's still Missing Persons.

He looks up and spots...

BILL AND PHYLLIS RATHBUN, twenty feet away. If they've had a night of sleep in the past days it doesn't show..

BAXTER walks past but can't help but turn for one last look at the grieving parents.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Deke's Bronco enters the freeway, leaving town.

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Deke smiles, happy to be on the road. A car pulls up alongside. Inside the car are two teenage girls, laughing and listening to loud music.

They feel Deke’s eyes on them and the girl on the passenger side looks at him for a long moment, mouthing the word “Hi” before the car speeds up, leaving him behind.

Deke sighs. Smile gone.

EXT. A HILLSIDE - DAY

The Bronco sits on a knoll. We BOOM UP TO REVEAL the 20’-tall Cahuenga Cross. At its base sits Deke, staring out upon the congested freeway as it feeds down into Hollywood and, in the distance, downtown. Deke seems a small, insignificant figure in comparison with the cross and the teeming city below.

INT. CORONER'S - NIGHT

The place is empty, save Flo who stands over a body covered by a sheet.

DEKE (O.S.)
Don't you ever get tired of lookin' at dead bodies?

She looks up, spots Deke standing in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)
Could ask you the same. What’s this all about, Joe?

We got a similar case up north.

Flo nods and turns on a light, focused on the gurney.

Thanks for doing this for me.

No problem. She won’t see the knife till tomorrow. Well, she won’t see another knife...

Deke pulls a tall stool alongside the gurney and sits. Flo pulls back the sheet covering the body. Julie Brock.

General proximity, similar pattern to our other four. The garbage bag was an adornment, placed over her head postmortem. Maybe even when the guy came back.

‘Came back’?

Unless he’s a ‘babysitter,’ he made a return trip, moved the girl, propped her against the door.

Deke mentally chews on this bite of information.

Lividity, stomach contents, plus blowfly maggot gestation place her at room temperature 48 to 72 hours before she was moved and at least 96 before she was discovered.

(beat)

Hey, you wanna turn that up?

He points to a radio. Deke reaches over, adjusts the volume knob... an old, mellow LOVE SONG.

Ah, nice. KHRT -- love songs from the ‘50s and ‘60s.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
You get a ‘dental’ on the bites?

FLO
Yeah, put a rush on it.
Inconclusive but could be the same as we found on the Holland girl.
More sucking than biting.

DEKE
They look like hiccys, love bites.

FLO
Brings back memories.

DEKE
Any saliva samples?

FLO
No, but funny you ask. Found traces of sodium benzoate in the bites.

DEKE
What's that?

FLO
Used in mouthwash, toothpaste. Who wants bad breath when you're on a hot date, right? Oh, and check this... He gave her a postmortem shave.

DEKE
You're kidding?

FLO
Nope. See, he nicked her. No blood.

DEKE
What was in her D-tract?

FLO
One good meal before she died. Speaking of which, you hungry?

DEKE
Pull a copy of an old file for me and I'll buy.

Deke writes down a number and hands it to Flo. She stares at the number, then shoots an agonized look at Deke.

(CONTINUED)
Case up north my ass. What the fuck are you doin'? Huh?!

Deke just stares at her.

I'll give you your fuckin' file but if anything happens I can't be there for you again. Capisce?

Deke nods. Flo sighs and walks out of the room. Deke stares at the dead girl. He reaches out, touches her tenderly.

You knew him. Or at least he knew you. That's why he did that to your face. You let him in, huh? Did he make conversation? Seem like an okay guy? Not your type but could be a friend; can't have enough of them, right? You had that one little feeling -- 'what if?' -- but you waved it away; thought 'what the hell,' life's too short. Well, it is, Julie. It is too short. You shoulo listened to that little feeling. You shoulo listened; just like I'm listenin' now. You can talk to me... I'm all the friend you got.

Flo returns, carrying a file -- a "poor boy."

Who you talkin' to?

EXT. A LONELY TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - NIGHT

North San Fernando Valley. Flat, bushy, lit only by the moon. Deserted except for a single car's headlight.

INT. THE CAR - NIGHT

TINA SALVATORE, 27. Cute. She likes her music loud when she drives. She sings along, lost in her thoughts until...

ANOTHER SET OF HEADLIGHTS appears behind her, out of nowhere. She watches in her rearview, expecting the car to pass.

(CONTINUED)
But it doesn't. Instead, it pulls up closer and flashes its high beams.

Tina rolls down her window and waves the trailing car around. After a few seconds, the trail car, a dark sedan, does just that, but instead of passing, it pulls up alongside her.

THE GUY IN THE DARK SEDAN -- baseball cap, glasses; Peters?... it's hard to get a good look, but he's staring right at her.

TINA slows and the dark sedan steps on the gas and disappears over a hill. We STAY WITH her as she takes a deep breath and continues on.

When she crests the hill she sees...

A hundred yards ahead. The dark sedan is stopped, not off to the side, but in the right lane.

She gasps a bit and makes a decision. Keeps driving, approaching him, and then, when she’s close...

She steps on the gas and races around and past him. He does the same, following behind her at a safe distance, this time.

Tina is shaking as she drives. There is no one around. In the distance she sees a lit-up gas station and she floors it.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

No cars around. Tina drives in, comes to a screeching halt, jumps out, and runs for the front door. It’s locked. She spots a cashier window and runs over. It’s shut. She bangs on it.

TINA
Help! Is anyone here?!

TINA turns to go back to her car and freezes when she sees --

THE DARK SEDAN parked 20 feet behind her car.

TINA takes a deep breath and runs, racing around the corner of the station and out into the field behind it. It’s pitch black and she stumbles forward in the dark. After she’s run 75 yards, she crumbles to the ground and dares to look back --

(CONTINUED)
THE SEDAN DRIVER methodically opens his trunk. He calmly reaches in and carefully puts on a pair of plastic gloves. Then he grabs a duffel, closes the trunk, and starts toward --

IN THE FIELD

TINA, hand over her mouth, hides, lying flat between unplanted rows of dirt. The beam of a flashlight approaches.

Every few seconds the sedan driver WHISTLES a “bobwhite’s call,” almost as if he’s expecting a return whistle.

TINA says a silent prayer as the driver gets closer and closer, the flashlight beam moving back and forth. Then she sees something else -- on the horizon.

The lights of an 18-WHEELER, cresting the ridge.

TINA takes a breath and runs like hell for the --

ROAD

Never looking back, she jumps the culvert and races into the middle of the blacktop, playing a game of chicken with the oncoming truck.

THE 18-WHEELER honks, then comes to a stop in front of her.

She runs to the driver's side. The DRIVER steps down from the cab and is immediately grabbed by Tina.

TRUCK DRIVER

It's okay. It's okay. Settle down, honey. What happened?

TINA

This guy, he’s following me. He was chasing me, then I stopped and he stopped, too. He got out with a flashlight and --

TRUCK DRIVER

-- What guy? What guy?

Tina ventures her first look back. The dark sedan is gone.
INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Flo and Deke are finished eating.

FLO
Hooker dies, nobody misses a wink of sleep. A non-pro? Different story. Times 5 in two months -- Ka-boom. The squib becomes a column, becomes a lead, becomes front page. Above the fold. Suddenly, it's not just bodies; we got a serial killer and TV movie producers are buyin' rights and tryin' to figure out who's gonna play Jim Baxter. He's got a cute tushie, huh?

Deke smiles. Flo's demeanor turns serious.

FLO
You know how I look at the world, Joe? There's good and there's bad. And every day I try my best to line up on the right side. It ain't easy, I know, but you gotta fight it, because, buddy, I look in your eyes and what I see... well, it ain't good.

Flo slowly reaches in her purse and pulls out a key chain. On it is a smashed bullet fragment.

FLO
A daily reminder of what I did... For what we did.

When Deke doesn’t respond, she re-pockets the keys.

FLO
You think you’re going to puff out your chest and fix this, don’t ya? Make everything right.

(almost to herself)
Men...

(to Deke)
Listen to Mick, okay? You can’t always get what you want, but sometimes you get what you need.

They share a look. A BUSBOY clears the plates.

(CONTINUED)
FLO
And I needed this. Haven’t been out to a restaurant since I went on nights. Usually cook a little something and bring it in but my stove's broken. Three days before they can get a guy out to fix it. Can you believe that?

DEKE
Three days?...

Deke's gears are turning.

INT. A DARK APT. - NIGHT

The door opens and Deke enters, turns on the light. Julie Brock's place. Empty save the bloodstains that mark her demise. And another thing: The "superglue" fumes have caused some of the paint to peel. Deke stares for a moment, drinking it in. Then he closes the door behind him.

After a second, he walks to the refrigerator and opens it. Empty. No interior light. He checks the bulb. Looks fine.

Deke puts a shoulder to the edge of the fridge and slides it halfway around. Then he hits a knee and checks the plug.

VOICE (O.S.)
I thought you guys were finished?

Deke jumps a bit and turns to see the LANDLADY.

DEKE
How long has this been broken?

LANDLADY
I don't know, a week maybe.

DEKE
You responsible for repairs?

LANDLADY
Thinkin' about movin' in?

Deke's face says he's not in the mood for humor.

(CONTINUED)
LANDLADY
I called a place to get it fixed but then the girl was killed and, suddenly, that wasn't such a big deal anymore. I mean, I got bloodstains to worry about. Probably have to rip up the carpet.

DEKE
Who'd ya call?

LANDLADY
Place around the corner. ABC Appliance, something like that.

DEKE
The stuff in the fridge was rotten?

LANDLADY
Yeah.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. APT. - BROCK CRIME SCENE - NIGHT
Sal opens the carton of milk and pours some down.

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)
DEKE
Except the milk, right?

LANDLADY
My kid drank it; so cuff me.

DEKE
Anything else?

LANDLADY
Beer. 3 left, why?

DEKE
I'll need it for evidence.

LANDLADY
I bet you will.

She shakes her head and leaves the room. Deke finds a seat on the edge of the bed, still bloodstained.

(CONTINUED)
He stares at... the bloody mattress, the floor, the spattered walls, the door...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. APT. - CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

Julie Brock, as the bag is lifted off her head.

CUT TO:

INT. BROCK APT. - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Deke stares straight ahead. Lost in memories.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Deke and Farris carry flashlights as they rush down an embankment to the area below the bridge. Deke's in the lead. When he reaches the bottom he stops, frozen.

ANGLE ON A LARGE, FLAT ROCK

around which are positioned two nude girls. Their arms are folded and their heads are resting on the rock. Several knife wounds are evident. On their heads are plastic bags.

   LANDLADY (V.O.)
   How do you get used to it?

CUT TO:

INT. BROCK APT. - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The Landlady stands in the doorway, holding three Schlitz beers in their plastic noose.

   LANDLADY
   The smell?

   DEKE
   If you're lucky... you don't.

She hands over the beer and heads for the door.

(CONTINUED)
LANDLADY
Close it when you're finished...
y a creep.

And Deke is once again alone. He rips one of the beers from the plastic webbing, pops the top, and downs a long drink.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD. (HOLLYWOOD) - NIGHT

STAN PETERS, looking harried -- hands shaking, sweat pouring from his chin, his face locked in worry -- walks down the street, looking for a place to cross. He looks both ways, then jaywalks. When he reaches the middle of the street...

A TRUCK brakes hard, stopping a few feet away from Peters. Peters starts to curse the driver but is horrified when he looks at him.

It's Deke, staring right back.

Peters, more nervous than ever, stumbles away.

INT. STAN PETERS’ APT. - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peters, grim-faced, enters the hallway, fumbles with his keys, opens his door, goes in, and closes it.

WE HOLD and then start to PULL BACK. After several seconds... a single GUNBLAST sounds.

EXT. ST. AGNES HOTEL - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

A flophouse on Hollywood Blvd. A gaggle of HOOKERS ply their trade out front, trying to wave down horny motorists. Deke walks past them and into --

INT. ST. AGNES - LOBBY - NIGHT

Two couches, pay phone, and a caged desk, behind which sits the MANAGER. You know what he looks like.

Deke walks in, carrying the files and the bag of boots. The Manager eyes his uniform...

MANAGER
I don't want any trouble. I got no connection to the girls out front.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE

A room.

The Manager sighs, reaches, and pulls a key off the wall.

MANAGER

20 a night. 100 a week.

Deke opens his wallet, extracts some bills and tosses them down. The Manager slides the key across the counter.

MANAGER

Upstairs, turn right. There's some stuff in there from the last guy. He stiffed me. Just toss it in the hall unless... He's about your size.  
(beat)  
Don't worry, the sheets are clean.

Deke starts to walk up the stairs.

MANAGER

Hey, you want some company?

Deke doesn't answer, just continues his climb.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Deke opens the door, flips the light. A bed, a dresser, a "nativity" print, and a Gideon Bible. You get what you pay for.

Deke takes off his coat, opens the closet, and stares at...

A FEW CLOTHES hang on a rack. If this was all the guy had, he didn't have much. Deke sizes up one of the shirts. Too small, hangs it back up and slides the hangers deep into the closet.

DEKE unbuttons and removes his outer shirt, hangs it up, walks to the bed, and sits down.

He slowly opens the file Flo gave him and removes the victim's photograph. But, instead of one, there are three. Mary Roberts. Paige Callahan. Tamara Ewing. Not quite as sweet and delicate as the current victims, but just as young.

WE MOVE CLOSER and can't help but stare at the large surgical scar on Deke's chest.

(CONTINUED)
He rubs it with a finger and stares at the photos as the lights, TRAFFIC SOUNDS, AND HOOKER CATCALLS of Hollywood drift through a breezy, open window.

INT. BAXTER HOUSE - DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Baxter kisses his daughters good night. The oldest, JENNIFER, 8, lies in the top bunk and the baby, CHLOE, 5, in the lower.

BAXTER
Good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite.

JENNIFER
If they do, hit 'em with a shoe --

CHLOE
If they holler, give 'em a dollar --

Baxter smiles and moves toward the door, "thinking hard."

BAXTER
If they plea, hit 'em in the knee.

Baxter closes the door behind him as he leaves. The girls continue the rhymes in the dark...

JENNIFER
If they cry, hit 'em in the eye.

CHLOE
(running low on ideas)
Um, if they fight, squeeze 'em... hard.

INT. BAXTER MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Baxter enters and sees his wife, ANA, in the bathroom, brushing her hair. She feels his eyes and turns to him and smiles. Baxter walks up behind her and rubs her shoulders.

BAXTER
How was your day?

ANA
It was good. You remember the little girl, Luisa, in homeroom?

BAXTER
The one who never talks.

(CONTINUED)
ANA

Now she does.

BAXTER

Really?

ANA

For weeks I’ve been trying to break through. Nothing. End of the day yesterday, I’m doing lesson plans and I look up and she’s standing there, staring at me, and she hands me that.

Taped to the mirror is a second grade drawing of a young girl and Ana, holding hands, with a rainbow behind them.

ANA

And she said, ‘You make the world okay.’

(off his smile)

We talked, actually talked, and today when she came in, it was better, not perfect but better.

BAXTER

That’s wonderful.

She looks at his reflection. His sad eyes.

ANA

I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have... I mean, I can’t imagine what you’re...

Baxter kisses the top of her head.

BAXTER

Shhh. I needed to hear that.

He walks away.

ANA

Did you turn on the alarm?

He stops, looks at her, and nods.


WE MOVE WITH the beam of light as it PANS TO another shot, another dead girl, PAIGE CALLAHAN.

(CONTINUED)
And then PAST a few crime scene shots TO the third victim, TAMARA EWING. All the photos are taped to a wall.

DEKE

shirt off, lies on the bed, flashlight in hand, moving the light over the photos like an usher at a midnight horror movie. He lowers the light, pointing it at...

HIS POV

A LIVE GIRL, 19 or so, with long, stringy hair covering her face. She kneels at the end of the bed and slowly, lovingly removes Deke's shoes. A hooker? Then she starts to rub his feet -- again, slowly, affectionately.

DEKE

watching her work; staring as if she's performing an amazing act.

THE GIRL raises her head and smiles softly, happy that her efforts are pleasing. She seems too gentle, too calm to be a hooker. Then, with both hands, she parts her hair, exposing her adoring face. It's Mary Roberts!

MARY

It's gonna be okay.

DEKE listens like a scared child -- nodding with his eyes... A light comes on and he turns to see --

AT THE SINK -- Two other girls, PAIGE CALLAHAN and TAMARA EWING, standing at the sink, staring at the mirror -- amazed by their lack of reflection. Their movements, like Mary's, are slow, almost lyrical. They turn in unison and smile...

TAMARA

Penny for your thoughts.

PAIGE

Always good to see you, Joe.

Deke turns, once again, to Mary.

MARY

(a whisper)
I've forgiven you, Joe.

(beat)
It's over...

(CONTINUED)
DEKE forces his eyes closed.

JOE
(a whisper)
It's never over.

POV THROUGH DEKE'S WINDOW - SAME TIME - NIGHT (REALITY)
Deke, alone, on the bed, one hand holding the flashlight.

INT. COUNTY HOMICIDE - CAPT. FARRIS’ OFFICE - DAY
The zoo of homicide, as Baxter walks by.

FARRIS
Jimmy!

Baxter stops at the door.

BAXTER
Yeah?

Farris motions for him to enter.

FARRIS
Close it.

Baxter enters and closes the door.

BAXTER
What?

FARRIS
Stan Peters.

BAXTER
What about him.

FARRIS
Killed himself last night.

Baxter is stunned.

BAXTER
... Damn...

FARRIS
You bring the guy in, give him the slow shuffle on his lawyer, then, the same day, he offs himself. The press gets wind of this...

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
-- I’ll handle the press. It’s on me.

Rogers walks past the glass, makes eye contact with Farris.

FARRIS
Something else. What the hell does this have to do with Kern County?

BAXTER
Don't believe everything Rogers tells ya. He's after both our jobs.

FARRIS
You didn't answer my question.

BAXTER
Deacon watched through the glass. He has a similar case up north; a little inter-agency cooperation.

FARRIS
The guy hasn't worked a murder since we ran him off five years ago. You know the book on him?

BAXTER
Bits and pieces. Great homicide cop has a heart attack, leaves town for a post in the sticks.

Farris shakes his head.

FARRIS
The guy worked a case so hard he got a suspension, a divorce, and a triple bypass, all in six months. Complete meltdown. Paramedics found him in a flophouse on Hollywood Boulevard. He's a rush-hour train wreck.

BAXTER
A tad dramatic.

FARRIS
When he left we moved you up from Robbery.

BAXTER
You’re saying I took his spot?

(CONTINUED)
FARRIS
In a manner of speaking, yes.

BAXTER
Am I the man, Carl? Am I the primary?

FARRIS
Yeah.

BAXTER
Let me work my case my way.

Farris nods, settling Baxter down.

FARRIS
Just personal advice, Jimmy. You got a good thing going here. Anybody asks, ‘Who’s your best man?’ I don’t hesitate. It’s you. Don’t get mixed up with this guy. He’s in league with the devil.

BAXTER
The devil? What’s the big deal, Cap? He’s gone.

FARRIS
His C.O. says he’s taking vacation days.

BAXTER
Yeah, so what?

FARRIS
He strike you as the kinda guy to play golf?

Baxter ponders this then starts for the door.

FARRIS
One thing I’ll say for Joe Deacon. He made me find religion. I owe him for that. For makin’ me see the evil in myself.

EXT. SALVATION ARMY - DAY

Deke exits the door, wearing “new” secondhand clothes and carrying his bundled uniform in his arms.
INT. ABC APPLIANCE - DAY
Deke talks to the OWNER. He tosses a notebook to Deke.

OWNER
Nothing. See for yourself.

EXT. ABC APPLIANCE - DAY (LATER)
Deke emerges and shields his eyes from the morning sun.

EXT. STREET - DAY
Deke walks up to his Bronco, sticks in the key, gets in, looks back over his shoulder to pull out, and sees...

A SIGN -- down the block -- “AAA APPLIANCE -- Sales and Service.”

INT. AAA APPLIANCE - DAY
The OWNER, 50, shows a customer the finer points of a used refrigerator. DEKE walks in. His eyes rest on... A SASH OF ELECTRICIAN'S CORD hanging on the wall.

The Owner spots Deke and finishes up with the customer.

OWNER
What can I do you for?

Deke, wasting no time, flashes his badge.

DEKE
I need repair orders for the past two weeks and a list of employees.

THE OWNER groans, retreats behind his desk, and grabs a clipboard full of paper off a nail on the wall.

DEKE ambles to the rear of the sales room. He pulls open a door and stares at...

HIS POV
A large area where 5 EMPLOYEES, repairmen, sit at a makeshift washing machine table and eat sandwiches.

(Continued)
DEKE turns around, walks back to the Owner, who shoves the clipboard across the desk.

Deke scours the pages, looking for Julie’s address. Bingo.

DEKE
This one’s crossed out.

OWNER
Cancellation. The blue number is the order date -- the 11th, the red is the cancellation -- the 15th; before I could get a man out.

DEKE
It always take that long?

OWNER
Hey, we're busy.

DEKE
(re: work area)
Yeah, I see. Who fills these out?

OWNER
I do... or whoever answers the phone.

Deke nods, tears a sheet from the clipboard, and walks away.

SOMEONE'S POV
as Deke exits the store. Whose?

BACK TO SCENE

A repairman, ALBERT SPARMA, colubrine, 30s, watches from the still-open repair room door. After a few seconds, he retreats, closing the door behind him.

INT. SEROLOGY LAB - DAY

Baxter is mid-conversation with AMY ANDERS.
BAXTER
I've worked dozens of stab-homicides and 90% of the time there's blood-mixing. Now you're telling me that we've had five straight, same butcher, and he hasn't so much as nicked himself in the struggle?

ANDERS
So maybe there's no struggle. Look, Jimmy, it's there or it's not.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE IDENT LAB - DAY

Baxter pushes on the door marked "Ident Lab" and enters...

INT. IDENT LAB - DAY

A room with a set-up not unlike the serology lab -- desks, lab coats, microscopes. Baxter walks up to a busy ASSISTANT, a guy named FELIX, pushes aside files and, much to the organized lab-man's chagrin, sits on his desk.

BAXTER
You looked at my print from the Brock apartment?

FELIX
It's no good without one to compare to. The center's missing and the computer can't work without the center. Look on the bright side. The guy finally left a partial.

BAXTER
What exactly is it you guys do?

FELIX
We make you look good in court.

INT. IDENT LAB HALLWAY - DAY

Baxter exits the crime lab office and walks down the hall. Something catches his eye and he stops and stares at...

(CONTINUED)
A “Have you seen this girl” POSTER of Ronda Rathbun, on the bulletin board.

BAXTER's eyes linger on it, taking in the girl's face.

EXT. MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSE (WEST HOLLYWOOD) - DAY

Baxter drives up, checks an address, kills the engine, then stares at the house, pulling himself together.

CUT TO:

A HOME VIDEO

RONDA RATHBUN GOOFING IN THE POOL WITH FRIENDS. SHE LOOKS DIRECTLY AT THE CAMERA AND SMILES.

INT. RATHBUN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Baxter sits on the couch with MR. and MRS. RATHBUN watching the video on the television. Three somber faces.

INT. RATHBUN HOME - RONDA'S BEDROOM - DAY (LATER)

Mr. Rathbun hands Baxter a photo of Ronda. Baxter looks at it and takes in the room.

A WALL OF PHOTOS -- graduation shots, family outings, a cheerleader photo. A smiling Ronda Rathbun in each.

MR. RATHBUN
The night she disappeared she was wearing gray jogging pants, socks, shoes, a blue sweat top.

BAXTER
Anything else? Jewelry, maybe?

MRS. RATHBUN
(comes to mind)
A red barrette. Called it her lucky charm. When she ran, she always wore a red barrette to hold her hair back.

Baxter nods, taking note of this.

(CONTINUED)
MRS. RATHBUN
They said until they know more
they can only assume she ran away.
We know better.

MR. RATHBUN
Maybe the same animal that's done
this to... If she's alive we want
to find her. If she's not... Detective?

Mrs. Rathbun sobs. Her husband puts an arm around her
shoulder.

BAXTER
Jim, please.

MR. RATHBUN
Do you have a daughter?

BAXTER
Two. I have two.

MR. RATHBUN
Jim, would your daughters run
away? Then you know how it feels.

No need to answer. He knows exactly how they feel.

BAXTER
I'll call when I have something.

He shakes Mr. Rathbun's hand to leave. Then he remembers
the photo and offers it back to the grieving father.

MR. RATHBUN
No, that's for you. To keep.

EXT./INT. BAXTER’S CAR – DAY

Baxter closes the door, stares at the photo. His
meditation is broken by the sound of his BEEPER. He
retrieves it and stares solemnly at its message.

INT. DEKE'S BRONCO – NIGHT

Deke comes to a stop at a light, scanning the radio dial
until he finds the old love-song station. AN ODE to
youthful aphrodisia brings a slight smile to his face.
Then...

Two radio cars and a coroner’s van -- no emergency lights
on -- roll through the intersection.
The concrete bridge is lit up and a spotlight is scouring the water below for evidence. A helicopter hovers overhead.

Baxter kneels down to the wet, dead body of a GIRL. He gently pulls aside a strand of matted hair, pulls out the photo of Ronda Rathbun, and compares. No go. Baxter stands up, pockets the photo, and sighs. He spots...

Deke standing nearby, taking it all in.

BAXTER
Really? This how you spend your time off? How did you?...

DEKE
When's the last time you saw two 'hoop-dees' and a meat wagon doing twenty miles an hour?

BAXTER
They didn't wanna come any more than I did.

Deke ignores, then squats and stares at the dead girl’s body.

BAXTER
Deceased fits the M.O.: stab wounds, ligature, killed elsewhere; used to be pretty before some bastard chewed her face up.

DEKE
She a floater?

BAXTER
Yeah, but they dumped overflow in here a few days back. I'm bettin' there's mud in her cavities. Shallow grave, most likely... You ready to tell me about Mary Roberts?

No reply.

BAXTER
Stan Peters swallowed a .12-gauge late last night.

Still nothing from Deke.

(CONTINUED)
ALONGSIDE THE BANK

Sal shines a light on a stick with a shred of cloth on it.

SAL
Hey, Jimmy, come give a look!

Deke and Baxter walk over and eye the flannel cloth as a criminalist plucks and bags it.

OMITTED

FLASHBACK — INT. JULIE BROCK'S APARTMENT — NIGHT

The criminalist picks up the bloody flannel shirt.

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)

BAXTER
(to Jamie)
Have the lab do a comparison for a match to the Brock crime scene.

She nods and leaves.

SAL
Think it belongs to our boy?

BAXTER
Doubtful. He’s red-flagging.

DEKE
Doesn't want a copycat takin' credit for his handiwork.

EXT. ON TOP OF DAM — NIGHT (LATER)

The crime scene is below, lit with work lights and criminalist’s flashlights.

Deke leans on the dam, watching the show.

BAXTER
From up here, if you didn’t know any better, you might say it’s beautiful.

Deke shakes his head. Baxter leans in next to him.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
Sal says you went to bat for me with Farris. That's not a wise career move.

BAXTER
You're not exactly a department favorite.

Deke pulls a list out of his jacket.

DEKE
Maybe I can make it up to you. You might want to run these names for possibles. Employees of two appliance stores in the Julie Brock neighborhood. Long shot but...

BAXTER
aren't they all... Something I gotta know. How does a guy with the best clearance rate in the department work fifteen years without a promotion?

DEKE
I guess I didn't go to the right church.

Baxter smiles at the dig.

BAXTER
You believe in God, Joe?

A beat, before...

DEKE
I see a sunrise, a thunderstorm, dew on the ground, and I know there's a God. I look at all this... and I think he's long past giving a shit.

Several seconds of silence, then...

BAXTER
I still owe you a breakfast.

EXT. BAXTER HOUSE - DAY

A nice, three-bedroom Craftsman on a tree-lined street. Baxter's unmarked car and Deke's Bronco are parked out front.
INT. BAXTER KITCHEN - DAY

An uncomfortable Deke sits at a table, sipping coffee. Baxter, working in the kitchen with Ana, carries two plates from the counter and sets them down.

DEKE
This is great, thank you.

Deke's is eggs, bacon, and hash browns. Baxter's is egg whites and a slice of cantaloupe. Deke eyes the difference...

BAXTER
(to Ana)
Joe's in Kern County now.

ANA
Your wife drag you away?

DEKE
I'm divorced.

ANA
Oh... I'd like to get out of the city but Jim won't leave. You work homicide there, too?

DEKE
No... I'm just a patrol dep.

Baxter's daughter, Chloe, still sleepy-eyed, walks in and sits in her dad's lap. She spots Deke...

CHLOE
Hi.

DEKE
Hi.

Deke smiles uneasily at the little girl -- cute as a button.

ANA
That's Mr. Deacon, Chloe.

CHLOE
How do you do?

DEKE
(taken with her)
Very well, thank you./Fine.

(CONTINUED)
ANA
You have any kids, Joe?

DEKE
Two girls. They're grown up now.

Jennifer walks in with her backpack.

JENNIFER
I'm gonna be late.

ANA
(to Chloe)
We ready to take Jen to school?

CHLOE
Yeah.

BAXTER
What do you say?

CHLOE
Yes, ma'am.

BAXTER
That's my girl.

* 

Chloe kisses her father and gives him a hug. Then she climbs off his lap and waits as Ana grabs her purse and keys and kisses Baxter.

ANA
I’ve got parent/teacher conferences until five so the girls are staying at Mom’s until dinner.

BAXTER
Gotcha.

ANA
(to the girls)
Okay, let’s go.
(to Deke)
Nice to meet you, Joe.

DEKE
You, too.

Chloe watches Deke, who can't take his eyes off her. Then she gives him a quick, very spontaneous hug and leaves. Deke is floored. He follows her exit with his eyes.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
She's beautiful. They all are. *

BAXTER
Yeah.

Deke wipes his plate clean and rises. Baxter can't believe how fast he finished.

DEKE
(explaining)
Too many meals on the run.

BAXTER
I'll run the names on the list. Where can I reach you?

DEKE
The St. Agnes. Hollywood Boulevard.

BAXTER
I've heard of living on the beat, but that's above and beyond. You wanna meet after shift; compare notes?

DEKE
And what's the Reverend Captain gonna say about that?

BAXTER
It's my case.

DEKE
There's a bar near Argyle and Hollywood.


EXT. DEKE'S EX-WIFE'S HOME - DAY

Reseda. Not as nice as Baxter's. Deke parks, gets out, stands in front of a house. He's not even sure why he's there.

The door opens and Deke's ex-wife, MARSHA, stands there in her nurse’s uniform. She's prettier than we'd expect, but with the same no-nonsense eyes of her ex. She looks at him long and hard.

DEKE
You look good, Marsha.

(CONTINUED)
MARSHA
You look like hell, Joe.

DEKE
Yeah.

MARSHA
I was just leaving for work. If I'd known you were coming...

DEKE
I gotta get going, anyway.

MARSHA
Hold on, lemme grab my purse.

He looks at the yard, nudges a sprinkler head with his foot. She closes, locks the door.

DEKE
House looks good. I'm glad you kept it. Lawn, too.

MARSHA
Yeah. Tom's a whiz with the yard.

DEKE
Better than I was...

MARSHA
You never had time for that kinda thing.

DEKE
How are the girls?

MARSHA
Good. Trish passed her CPA. Sue's met a guy; seems like a good kid. You should give 'em a call.

DEKE
Yeah, I should.

MARSHA
You okay?

DEKE
You know me.

MARSHA
Yeah. I know you.

She gives him a quick hug and a kiss on the cheek before she gets in her car and drives away.

(CONTINUED)
Deke watches her go, then kneels down, plucks a blade of green grass, and stares at it, as if for the first time.

INT. TWIN TOWERS - HOMICIDE - DAY

Baxter furiously types the Brock report on a typewriter. Jamie walks up and dumps three files on Baxter’s desk.

JAMIE
Mary Roberts... Paige Callahan, Tamara Ewing.

BAXTER
I just asked for --

JAMIE
-- With three you get egg roll. All the victims were hookers -- all found drugged and stabbed to death at the same location on the same night.

BAXTER
You're kidding?

INT. A DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Deke sits by himself, drinking a beer. He gets a dirty look from A GRUNGE KID at the bar. BAXTER sneaks in next to Deke.

BAXTER
Never figured you to be so hip.

DEKE
Musta changed owners. Whattaya want to drink? Don't worry, I won't tell.

Baxter smiles, points to Deke's beer.

DEKE
Where are you from? Originally.

Baxter sizes up the question before...

BAXTER
The Valley. Where are you from? (beat) Originally.

Deke almost smiles.

(Continued)
DEKE
Birmingham, Alabama. Family moved here when I was 15/teenager.
The beer arrives. Baxter raises his bottle to toast.

BAXTER
Here's to being from somewhere.

They clink bottles and drink.

BAXTER
Last night's victim -- Candace Jacobson is her name -- lived in Sun Valley. Disappeared three days ago. So we got six now. One, Julie Brock, never left home. Three were from north county, bodies dumped here. Two from here, bodies dumped in north county.

DEKE
And they say busing doesn't work?

BAXTER
Same M.O. with the exception of the last two and their hickeys. All knifed, all gagged, all bound, all very organized killings, not a lot of wasted motion. I got a question... Why?...

DEKE
Why what?

BAXTER
First. Geography?...

DEKE
The guy's a shark. He stops, he dies. He likes to drive, has a decent car, maybe two. High mileage. He starts in the neighborhood, keeps at it till opportunity knocks.

BAXTER
Next 'why?' Why the extreme torture, then the love bites?

DEKE
It turns him on.
BAXTER
No rape, no sodomy, no genital mutilation.

DEKE
He kills for sexual pleasure. A few days go by, he needs a fix. If he can’t find another victim, he'll return to the scene and jack off.

BAXTER
Was Peters our boy?

DEKE
(without thinking)
God, I hope not.

Baxter stares at Deke, half-understanding the statement.

BAXTER
Okay, back to the living. Our boy?...

DEKE
He's got balls, I’ll give him that. He goes back to Julie’s place -- after he killed her. He moved her body, shaved her legs, posed her. He brought food, some milk, some beer. Threw himself a little party.

BAXTER
They found partially-digested meat in her stomach. But she was a vegan. Strict vegetarian. Same as Ana. She’d never touch it.

DEKE
Even with a knife to her throat? Nobody likes to eat alone.

Baxter stops and leans against Deke’s Bronco.

BAXTER
One last ‘why.’ Why are you trying to solve a 5-year-old case that everyone else has forgotten about?

Deke stares hard at Baxter. His cover’s blown.
An elegant, if short, bridge connecting Hollywood to Silver Lake. What it lacks in length it makes up for with an old world architectural style that is out of place with the nearby ‘50s housing. The streetlamps throw gaslight-like vapors over the mist-filled gully the bridge traverses.

DEKE'S BRONCO pulls to a stop and the two cops get out.

DEKE
Farris and I were a coupla miles away. We heard a call over the radio. Screams reported. Sal was the first on the scene.

Baxter and Deke move to the edge and look over. Then Deke turns and points to a bridge streetlight.

DEKE
Lights were out. Switching problem. Guy at Edison told me it happens once a decade or so. Off for one night.

Deke turns his attention to a nearby house and points.

DEKE
See that lady watchin' us in the window?

THE NEARBY HOUSE. A head is silhouetted in the lit window.

DEKE
Gladys Fulcher. A spinster. Ugly as homemade soap. She's kinda the eyes and ears of this neighborhood. A pain in the ass to the local cops, but a godsend to a detective.

BAXTER
So what'd she have to say?

DEKE
She was out that night. Lied about it at first out of sheer embarrassment but later came clean.

BAXTER
Embarrassed about what?

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
Her first date in 15 years and she slept at the old guy's house.

Baxter has to chuckle.

DEKE
So the night of the hat trick we had a combination of no lights and Gladys getting laid. Two million-to-one long-shots crossin' the finish line in a dead heat.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER)
Deke, flashlight in hand, walks down the grassy embankment followed by Baxter. He stops at a tiny creek.

DEKE

Deke points his flashlight to a large rock.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT
The two girls sit, dead, propped against the rock.

DEKE (V.O.)
Two of the victims were against that rock. Drugged elsewhere, brought here, stabbed to death, then posed facin' each other, heads bagged, laid down, like the rock was a table.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)
Deke squats down and stares at the rock.

DEKE
A tea party where the guests fell asleep.
Farris catches up to Deke and the two men stand there for a moment, horrified by the sight. Deke knows the girls are dead but Farris goes to work, checking for pulses. None.

FARRIS
Warm. This just went down!

He and Deke share a look then Farris makes his way back under the bridge to scour the area.

BAXTER (V.O.)
Where was the third victim?

CUT TO:

Deke continues to stare at the rock.

DEKE
Close by.

Baxter squats down, too, staring at Deke.

DEKE
You work the evidence and come up with zeroes. Happens to everybody. Then you draw the black bean. Maybe the victim looks like a kid you picked on in the schoolyard. Maybe their green eyes remind you of your old lady. Or maybe it's something else. But for some reason they're your lifelong responsibility. You own 'em. They're wherever they are and you're their angel; trying like hell to turn the ledger from red to black... Word to the wise, Jimmy. Stay outta the angel business.

BAXTER
Sounds pretty religious for a guy who claims to be a Deist. Just what is it you're looking for from this?

DEKE
I wanna finish the job... Just like you.
Deke drives Baxter back to his car.

BAXTER
It's not the same boy. Guys that kill 'pros' are a different breed from ones that go after solid citizens.

DEKE
Nobody's this good out of the block. Your boy practiced his trade before all the recent stuff started.

BAXTER
But the same guy can't be responsible for both. He's a shark, remember? If he stops, he dies.

DEKE
Who said he stopped? Maybe he took his show on the road...

BAXTER
(re: his car)
Gotta be a record. Two hours parked on this street and it's in one piece.

Deke stops the Bronco. Baxter remembers something, pulls a sheet from his jacket and hands it to Deke.

BAXTER
Almost forgot. Two of the five appliance store employees have records. One's 55, the other's in his 30s, lives in Hollywood. Both simple assaults. Looks like a wash to me but you got all the info there.

Deke nods. Baxter gets out, leans in the window.

BAXTER
For the record, your hunch? I don't think it holds water.

DEKE
Then why the interest?

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
You wanna clear your conscience, that’s your problem. But, if you gotta solve my case to solve yours, who am I to moan?... But you piss on my leg and call it rain and we’re through.

Baxter walks to his car. Deke pulls up beside him.

DEKE
Hey! Julie’s last supper: What was it?

BAXTER
Roast beef, I think. Why?

DEKE
It's the little things that are important, Jimmy. It's the little things that get ya caught.

Baxter watches as Deke drives away.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

A YOUNG WOMAN jogs in the street TOWARD us. Coming up behind her we see the headlights of an approaching car. Strangely reminiscent of Ronda Rathbun’s abduction.

The car slows to move alongside the jogger.

It’s Baxter driving...

BAXTER
Hey!

The Girl notices him, shakes her head, and keeps jogging.

BAXTER
You shouldn’t be out here by yourself.

JOGGING GIRL
Leave me alone, you perv.

She turns down a street and disappears in the dark. Baxter sighs and drives away.

INT. BAXTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT


(CONTINUED)
Hey. Where have you been?

Just going over some stuff.

Were you out with Deacon?

Yeah.

Baxter unloads his pockets -- keys, change, pager. She stares back at him.

I’m not sure I like him, Jimmy.

Baxter smiles, sits on the edge of the bed.

He’s not so scary. Just real ‘old school.’ He’s tough. He’s interesting. And he’s good. I don’t know why, but I kinda feel sorry for him.

It’s more than that.

What do you mean?

It’s something about the way you look at him.

The way I look at him?

I understand it. There’s something about his eyes that give him away. They’re deep. They’re dark. Like he hasn’t slept in years. He’s damaged. He’s damaged.

Deke checks the printout and scours apartments for addresses. He finds what he's looking for and parks.
Deke walks along the carport, shining his flashlight on each car, until he sees...

A LICENSE PLATE on a dark sedan, parked in the shadows...

DEKE
One-Peter-Henry-Peter-Two-Six-Four.

ON THE GROUND... a homemade CAR FOR SALE sign and a # to call.

DEKE walks to the car and shines his flashlight on...

THE TIRES... good. THE TRUNK... locked. THE INTERIOR... plain but clean. THE ODOMETER... 202,733 miles.

VOICE (O.S.)
Can I help you?

DEKE, cool as a cucumber, turns to see...

ALBERT SPARMA, the appliance repairman, a trash bag of garbage in his hand. Deke returns the stare.

DEKE
Saw the ‘for sale’ sign.

SPARMA
That was for another car.

DEKE
Got a lot of miles. You a salesman?

SPARMA
No.

DEKE
How's the trunk space?

SPARMA
Standard, but...

DEKE
Can I have a look?

Sparma hesitates...

SPARMA
It's not for sale.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
I'm in the market. I can give you
top dollar, but I'll need to look --

SPARMA
-- I said it's not for sale.

Deke stares a hole through Sparma, then nods, clicks off
his flashlight, and walks away.

Sparma watches Deke until he gets in his Bronco and
drives away, then drops his trash in the garbage can and
walks back to his apartment. We HOLD ON THE TRASH BAG.

INT. ST. AGNES - LOBBY - NIGHT

DEKE enters, carrying the TRASH BAG. He stops at the pay
phone, dumps the bag, and dials.

THE MANAGER takes note of the bag.

MANAGER
What the hell's that?

DEKE
Takeout.
( into phone)
Sal Rizoli.

The Manager shakes his head and retreats to his desk.

DEKE
( into phone)
Sal, hey, wanna do me a favor?
Run a DMV check on Albert Leonard
Sparma -- S-P-A-R-M-A. See if he
sold a car in the last few months.

INT. ST. AGNES - DEKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Deke rips open the trash bag and dumps its contents onto
several sheets of newspaper strewn on the floor. He
kneels down and begins picking through the contents...

A RAG... no blood... into the discard pile. CHICKEN
BONES... discard. NEWSPAPER... discard. JUNK MAIL...
discard. MILK CARTON... the keeper pile. A SCHLITZ
CAN... keeper. PIZZA BOX... open... one slice left, half-
eaten.

DEKE holds up the half-eaten slice and stares at it.
INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Flo, with a small metal device, tries to measure the bite on the slice of pizza. After a few seconds, she tosses the tool, looks at the crime scene closeups, then up at...

DEKE -- staring, waiting...

FLO
Inconclusive. But there are similarities to both Brock and Ewing. See? A partial of an incisor on Ewing’s cheek.

Deke looks at the photo from the 5-year-old file.

FLO
A nice shot. Charlie Frazier had a knack for making those closeups jump at you, didn't he? God rest his soul.

DEKE
What about Brock?

FLO
A partial on a bicuspid. Something else...

DEKE
What's that?

FLO
He's from back east. Folds his pie.

Flo demonstrates with the half-eaten slice. Deke smiles, grabs his jacket, and walks to the door.

FLO
One thing's for sure... He's a sick puppy.

Deke halts his exit, turns to a smiling Flo...

FLO
Double anchovies.

EXT. AJAX RENT-A-CAR - DAY

Deke emerges from the office with a set of keys. He gets into a midsize, gray sedan and drives away.
WE FOLLOW HIM around the corner, out of sight from the rent-a-car establishment. He stops, parks.

INT./EXT. THE CAR - DAY

Deke pulls a screwdriver from his pocket and goes to work on the plate holding the interior overhead light. He pulls it away, tosses it in the backseat, and unscrews the bulb.

CUT TO:

DEKE
takes off the interior fuse box cover, pulls three fuses, and tosses them in the backseat.

CUT TO:

DEKE
steps out, opens the door, and a single "BELL" sounds.

He pulls another fuse, reopens the door. No bell.

EXT. AAA APPLIANCE - DAY

Albert Sparma exits the front of the store and walks... across the street... to a deli.

INT. DEKE'S CAR - DAY

Deke, sitting, watching. He chuckles when he sees...

The sign above the deli -- THE BEST ROAST BEEF IN TOWN!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEKE’S CAR - DAY (LATER)

Deke checks his watch. 4:00. But the sweep second hand isn't moving. He gives it a good shake. It starts ticking again. He mutters a curse and comes to attention when he sees...
Sparma, coffee Thermos in hand, exits and walks to his car -- the one that was parked in the carport -- and drives away.

Deke methodically starts his car and settles in to follow.

Sparma's car enters the freeway. Two cars back, so does Deke.

DEKE’S POV -- Sparma puts on his blinker -- it's unusual; blinks too fast -- changes lanes and takes an exit ramp.

looks over his shoulder, changes lanes and follows, slowing down to let another car get between him and his prey.

A strip joint, even though the sign says, "Exotic Dancing." Sparma enters the nondescript doorway.

Deke adjusts his driver's side mirror to give a FRAMED VIEW of... the entrance to the strip joint.

(to himself)
We got roast beef. We got strippers.

CUT TO:
Deke shines his flashlight around the crime scene. Then he hears a sound, a rustling sound -- movement from the brush -- and he takes a cautious step toward the ravine.

CUT TO:

IN THE MIRROR, Sparma exits, heads to his car, gets in, and drives off.

Deke watches for a few seconds, then follows.

SPARMA gets his order from the drive-through and exits, passing... DEKE, parked near the exit driveway.

Just as Deke puts his car in drive, he sees...

Sparma’s car pulls over by some hookers hanging nearby.

Deke watches stoically. Then he lowers himself in the car.

DEKE
We got roast beef. We got strippers. We got Big Macs. We got hookers. I’m up to my neck in your ass, Albert.

HIS POV
Sparma's car pulls out and drives away from the hookers.

BACK TO SCENE

DEKE
Come on. It's a school night.

THE NIGHTSTAND CLOCK reads 4:05... and counting. Ana, half-asleep, rolls over and feels for Baxter.
He's not there. She squints, looks at the clock, and gets out of bed.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
Ana, now in a robe, searches. She stops cold when she sees...

Baxter sits alone on the patio. Lit by moonlight. Staring into the night. WE HOLD. His lips are moving but we hear no words -- Praying for answers to impossible questions.

Ana just stares. Her husband is a million miles away.

EXT. NORTH COUNTY - DAY
MAGIC MOUNTAIN in the distance. Sparma's car crests a hill. WE HOLD. Twenty seconds later, Deke's car follows.

INT. DEKE'S CAR - DAY
As he crests a hill, he sees...

HIS POV
Sparma parked on the roadside just over the crest.

BACK TO SCENE
Deke tries his best to stay calm but can't help but sneak a peek as he passes...

EXT. ROAD - DAY
Deke drives several hundred yards over another hill and comes to a stop on the shoulder.

INT. DEKE'S CAR - DAY
He sits, waits, watching the rearview mirror. No Sparma.

EXT. BACK OF DEKE'S CAR - DAY
The reverse lights come on as Deke backs up.
INT. DEKE'S CAR – DAY

Deke, looking in his rearview mirror, slowly backing up the crest of the hill.

HIS MIRROR POV

No Sparma. Disappeared.

BACK TO SCENE

Deke spins around in his seat. Nothing. Then he spots...

HIS POV

The opposite side of the highway -- where sits...
SPARMA'S CAR, facing the opposite traffic direction.

INT. DEKE'S CAR – DAY

Deke sits, stares.

DEKE
Okay, so you made me. Wanna better look?

EXT. THE HIGHWAY

Deke sticks the car in drive and takes the exit underpass to go to the other side.

INT. DEKE'S CAR – DAY

As he enters the opposite side of the freeway.

No Sparma.

DEKE drives up to the spot where Sparma’s car was and stops. He grimaces when he sees...

Sparma -- on the opposite side of the highway -- parked in the exact spot where Deke last parked.

DEKE just stares; settles in to sit it out.
The standoff continues. Then Sparma's car starts forward, disappearing down the exit.

DEKE sits, waiting. He checks his rearview mirror.

The underpass. Nothing. Then Sparma's car drifts slowly into view and approaches. Closer. Closer...

Sparma's car pulls up next to Deke on the driver's side. So close he can't open his door.

Deke turns and stares at... Sparma, who swivels slowly, stares at Deke for several seconds... then laughs.


Deke continues the stare-down. Sparma shakes his head, puts the car in drive, and wheels away. Deke just watches.

Baxter picks up the phone.

Baxter.
In the distance, we see Deke on the callbox. We hear the conversation...

**INTERCUT DEKE AND BAXTER:**

**DEKE**
The second girl, the ditch pitch... Where'd you find the body? Exactly.

**BAXTER**
A couple hundred yards off the 126.

**DEKE**
Did you leak that to the press?

**BAXTER**
No.

**DEKE**
You sure?

**BAXTER**
It went out over dispatch but it was never given to the press. Why?

**DEKE**
What was the nearest mile marker?

**BAXTER**
Hold on...

WE PAN until Deke is on ONE SIDE of the FRAME and the MILE MARKER is on the OTHER.

**BAXTER (V.O.)**
Here it is. The nearest mile marker was 467. 4-6-7.

And that's, in fact, what the mile marker reads.

**Baxter hangs up the phone, staring, thinking. Sal, at the next desk, on the phone. He turns to Baxter...**

**SAL**
There's this guy Deke asked me to run a vehicle check on...

(MORE) (CONTINUED)
Sparma? Seems that Topanga Tow has a car registered to him. Found it abandoned two weeks ago.

BAXTER
Reported stolen?

SAL
Nope.

BAXTER
Well, tow that sucker in.

INT. CAPT. FARRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Deke stands outside while Baxter makes his case...

BAXTER
He leads Deacon to an Old West standoff less than 500 yards from where we found Shari Fineman. Sparma fits the profile, has a prior, lives in the neighborhood, and had access to our fifth victim.

Farris mulls it over, then nods.

FARRIS
Bring him in now, you pop his cherry. If he is our boy, he's gonna know the ropes next time.

BAXTER
I wanna put him on notice. Maybe he'll try to cover his tracks and give us something.

Farris mulls it over, then nods.

BAXTER
And I want Deacon there when we pick him up.

FARRIS
Come on, Jimmy. The guy has no jurisdiction here.

BAXTER
I can’t be there, I’m racing to the lab.
If, and I say if, Sparma lets us in his apartment, name another set of eyes you'd rather have in there.

INT. HOMICIDE - DAY

Baxter enters the room and gives Jamie a thumbs-up. She jumps to and hands over Sparma's assault booking sheet.

BAXTER
I'll take his prints to the lab. Tell 'em I'm on my way. Grab Deacon and a patrol dep and pick up Sparma.

JAMIE
What about Tina Salvatore?... The possible witness?

She motions to Tina, who sits on a nearby bench --

BAXTER
Get her a magazine.

INT./EXT. SQUAD CAR - DAY

The car is parked near Sparma’s house. A DEPUTY at the wheel. Jamie sits passenger, Deke in back.

JAMIE
Why not just pick him up at work? What good is his apartment without a warrant?

DEKE
You just keep him busy. Keep him talking. Tell him to take his time, change his clothes; whatever.

INT. IDENT LAB - DAY

Felix shows Baxter his comparison study on the Brock apartment partial print with Sparma's.

FELIX
11 identifiers. County requires 18 for I.D. LAPD requires 12.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
So, we're one short of somebody's legal requirements. That says something!

FELIX
It says you're 7 short.

BAXTER
Look me in the eye and tell me this isn't my guy.

Felix holds up a different print page and shows it to Baxter.

FELIX
This other fella, let's call him Mr. X. He's got 9 identifiers. Only two less than Sparma. Maybe he's the killer?

BAXTER
Who...

Felix inks and holds up his own thumb.
SAL

Definitely.

BAXTER
(on exit)

Keep at it. Let me know.

EXT. SPARMA’S APARTMENT - DAY

The cop, Deke, and Jamie move to Sparma’s door. When they arrive, they pause. Deke nods to the cop, who KNOCKS. In the middle of the first knock, the door opens and Sparma, still in his work clothes, stands there, blocking their view.

SPARMA
We ready to go?

Deke sighs.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Tina Salvatore sits nervously, talking to Baxter.

TINA
Just like I told the police. It was dark. He had a hat, glasses...

BAXTER
If I showed you some photos, you think you could identify him?

TINA
Maybe. Probably not.

JAMIE enters. She leans over and whispers to Baxter.

JAMIE
It was like he was expecting us.

Baxter turns to Tina.

BAXTER
Okay, Tina, would you mind waiting until we can pull some mug shots to look at?

TINA
I guess not.

(CONTINUED)
Thanks. You go with Detective Estrada here, okay?

Tina nods, rises, Baxter pulls Jamie aside.

Sit her down at my desk, get her something to drink. Don't let her wander around, okay?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Tina and Jamie exit and walk toward Homicide.

I need to use the restroom.

It's right there. I'll wait.

It's okay. I know how to get back to your office.

All the way to the back. You want something to drink?

Diet anything.

Okay, when you're finished, go straight there, right?

Tina nods and disappears in the restroom. Jamie walks around the corner to grab the soda.

Baxter stands, waiting. Sal walks in.

The Harvester was clean as a whistle.

Deke walks in carrying a wind-up alarm clock. Deke winds the clock and sets it on the end of the table.

Got this off your desk, Sal.
Sal, leaning against the wall, nods, smiles.

    BAXTER
      Don't hesitate to pick up the phone.

Deke exits, leaving Sal and Baxter in the room. Tick. Tock. Baxter nods to Sal who walks to the door, eyes...

THE HALL. Empty, except a single UNIFORMED OFFICER, JERRY, that stands against a wall.

    SAL
      All clear.
    BAXTER
      Bring him in.
    SAL
      (to uniform)
      Okay, Jerry.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Jerry, the uniform, disappears around a corner. A few seconds later, the bathroom door opens and Tina Salvatore exits, takes a step, stops to tie her tennis shoe laces.

She hears steps coming, looks up to see...

Jerry, with a cuffed Albert Sparma, walking toward her. Her expression changes and...

they lock eyes for one deadly moment. Then he's past. She glances back over her shoulder as she walks to Homicide.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Sparma is led in.

    BAXTER
      We won't need those.

Jerry uncuffs Sparma, who takes a seat and eyes the clock. Baxter turns on a tape recorder.

    SPARMA
      Where's Joe Friday?
    BAXTER
      My name's Detective Baxter.

(CONTINUED)
SPARMA
I know. You're famous. On TV, in the papers all the time. I'm kind of a crime buff.

BAXTER
I'm gonna let you in on a secret. If you're innocent, you should talk to me; clear your name. If you got something to hide and you open your mouth, you're one dumb S.O.B.

SPARMA
Okay, I invoke my 5th Amendment right against self-incrimination.

Baxter looks to Sal then back to Sparma.

SPARMA
Just kidding. Where's my rights waiver card? I know I'm not officially in custody but better safe than sorry, huh, guys?

Baxter reaches in the drawer, pulls out a white card, and tosses it on the desk.

INT. BAXTER'S DESK - DAY (LATER)
A nervous Tina Salvatore sits at the desk.

INT. INTERROGATION OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY
Deke sits alone in the room, focused like a hawk on...

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY
The interview continues...

SPARMA
Look, Jimmy...

-- Detective Baxter.

SPARMA
Whatever. Like I said, the car was stolen. Thanks for finding it. I'll drive it home.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
We'll be keeping it a few days. Why didn't you report the theft?

SPARMA
I did. I don't know about you guys, but I'm ready to get to the juicy stuff.

INT. BAXTER’S DESK – DAY (LATER)
Tina Salvatore finishes thumbing through a magazine, sets it down, looks to Jamie, who walks by...

JAMIE
Shouldn't be much longer.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM – DAY
Sparma looks at a graduation photo of Julie Brock.

SPARMA
Cute li’l thing... wasn't she?
Baxter takes the photo back.

BAXTER
Who said she's dead?

SPARMA
I know the drill, Jimmy, but the truth is, I’m not the guy. If you had anything, I'd be under arrest, right?

BAXTER
Do you wanna be?

SPARMA
Yeah. I'd like to get a peek at all this hard evidence you say you got.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM – SAME TIME – DAY
Deke picks up the phone. It buzzes and Baxter picks it up.

BAXTER
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
You get the feeling he's enjoying this?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY
Baxter listens for a few seconds, then hangs up the phone.

DEKE enters the room, carrying a paper bag.

SPARMA
Cavalry's here.
(to Baxter)
We day-trip together sometimes.

Deke sits down directly in front of Sparma.

SPARMA
Where we going next? 'Cause I know a cute little spot for a picnic.

Deke sets the paper bag on the table. It's the bloody flannel shirt taken from the Brock apartment. Sparma stares at it, then smiles at Deke, who gives Baxter a look.

Baxter nods to Sal, who leaves the room. Baxter slides back against the rear wall to watch.

Deke turns off the recorder and opens one of the files. He extracts a manila envelope; drops it on the table.

SPARMA
Whatta ya got there?

Deke nods to Sparma and then to the envelope.

INT. INTERROGATION OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY
Sal watches.

SAL
You wanna look, you bastard. You know you wanna look.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY
Sparma chuckles nonchalantly, reaches out, and unclasps the envelope.

(CONTINUED)
He takes a glance inside (not as long a glance as he wants to), then drops the envelope back on the table.

Deke stares at Sparma, then relaxes down in his chair.

Sparma tries to do the same but his eyes go to the envelope.

Deke nods to him. ("It's okay. Go ahead.")

Sparma waits a second longer, then shrugs ("Okay, no big deal, I'll look"), reaches out, and takes the envelope.

He stares at Deke and turns the envelope upside down. Forty 8 x 10s of the Brock crime scene paint the tabletop red.

INT. INTERROGATION OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Sal watches, eyes glued to...

THROUGH THE ONE-WAY MIRROR -- Sparma is carefully perusing the photos, which are splayed on the table. Every few seconds, he returns to a particular shot and stares hard.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Baxter, lying back, watches --

Sparma, totally engrossed, slides a few shots around on the table, looking for a particular favorite.

Deke plucks a hidden one from the pile, holds it up.

Sparma

Uh... yeah. That's it.

Deke hands it to Sparma. Deke moves closer, sitting on the edge of the table, his eyes on Sparma. Sparma lasers in on the photo -- his glazed eyes flutter a bit. The clock TICKS...

Then Deke knocks the photo away and grabs Sparma's crotch with one hand and his neck with the other, pushing the man and chair backwards. He gets in Sparma's face.

Deke

What the fuck is this? What do I have in my hand?

Baxter jumps forward --
Sal races from the room. WE PAN AND HOLD OUR VIEW THROUGH THE ONE-WAY MIRROR.

Baxter and Sal pull Deke away.

Sparma starts a WHEEZING CHUCKLE.

Sal and Baxter pull Deke off Sparma.

BAXTER

What the hell was that?

DEKE

Guy got hard just looking.

Before he leaves the room, Deke stops to admonish Sparma.

DEKE

(calmy)

We know. Me and you. By the balls, you hear me? That's how I got you.

Deke exits. Sparma continues to tauntingly CHUCKLE, looking straight at Baxter. Then he juggles his crotch with one hand.

SPARMA

How about you? You want some?

Baxter's face stiffens. In an instant of time, he kills the guy twenty times... in his mind. Then he walks away.

Baxter exits the room, mad, frustrated. Jamie approaches.

BAXTER

Where's Deacon?

JAMIE

I think he left. You ready for her?
Baxter sits while Tina looks at a stack of photos. She turns one over. No hint of recognition.

Baxter watches. Jamie's eyes dance between Baxter and Tina.


Baxter, wanting this bad, bites his lip... A PHONE RINGS.

SAL (O.S.)
Jimmy. It's your wife.

Baxter, annoyed, waves off the call and looks to Tina, who's still looking at the photo.

BAXTER
Whattaya think?

TINA
I dunno. Something about the eyes. Maybe if I could get a better look.

BAXTER
(puzzled)
Whattaya mean, a better look?

TINA
At the guy. You got him here in the station, right?

Baxter looks at Jamie, then slams his fist on the table.

Jamie hurries to catches up to Baxter...

JAMIE
Look, I'm sorry. What about a line-up?

BAXTER
We've got no 'cause.' Besides, the I.D.'s tainted beyond repair. She saw him in cuffs, for God's sake.

And he storms away, leaving Jamie staring.
INT. FARRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Rogers sits calmly while Farris and Baxter go at it...

FARRIS
I told you! I warned you...

BAXTER
I take the heat. I'm the primary!

FARRIS
For now.

BAXTER
What the hell does that mean?

FARRIS
It means I've got 6 bodies, no witnesses, no evidence, and no killer. Two guys questioned. And why are they suspects? One, who later sucks on a .12 gauge, for malicious unzipping, the other for carrying a concealed hard-on. Whattaya want the D.A. to do, feel him up on the stand?

Rogers grins. Farris sits down, calms himself...

FARRIS
Sheriff's calling in the feds, filling out the behavioral science paperwork now. They got a guy coming in Monday. At that point, we take a step back... revamp.

BAXTER
Revamp?

FARRIS
We 'task force' the detail and they take charge.

Baxter bites his tongue, turns to leave.

FARRIS
One more thing. Were you aware that Sparma confessed to a murder eight years ago?

Baxter's face drops. He didn't know.

(CONTINUED)
ROGERS
Wasn’t in the computer but old paperwork says he walked in, spent ten hours going through the thing, signed a confession. We cut him loose the next morning --

BAXTER
Why?

ROGERS
Because he was lying. He knew all the details but he wasn’t within ten miles of the killing.

Rogers smiles smugly. Baxter turns to Farris...

BAXTER
So I’ve got two days?

Farris nods slowly. Baxter turns to go.

ROGERS
Hey, you and Deacon, what is it? You wanna be the one that finds him after his next heart attack?

Baxter holds his ground, staring at Rogers.

ROGERS
It's his destiny. Don't make it yours.

EXT. ST. AGNES - NIGHT

Baxter pulls out in front, gets out, and slams his door.

INT. ST. AGNES - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Baxter walks straight down the hall, finds the room he’s looking for, turns the handle, and the door opens.

BAXTER
Deacon?!

INT. DEKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter enters, dark except for a nightstand light. He takes in the room and gulps when he sees... THE WALL OF PHOTOS. GRUESOME.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER stares, trying hard to understand the demons signified. The look on his face mixes disgust and reverence.

DEKE

Boo.

Baxter jumps, spins, sees --

DEKE sits in a dark corner, in a chair, he’s wearing the boots and drinking from a bottle of Scotch.

BAXTER

What is all this?

DEKE (O.S.)

It's not much, but I hear it's goin' co-op...

Baxter charges over and... throttles Deke with a hard shove to the chest, pinning him against the wall. The bottle clatters to the floor as Baxter shoves him again. Deke offers no resistance, just takes the punishment.

Baxter buttonholes Deke against the wall.

BAXTER

What the hell are you tryin' to do to me?!

Baxter releases his hold and Deke slumps to the ground.

DEKE

He asked for hard evidence. That stuff was S.O.P. in the old days.

Baxter takes a look around the room. He kneels down to Deke, still leaning against the wall.

BAXTER

This is sick. You need to get some help.

DEKE

Don't point fingers. I know all the symptoms.

This gives Baxter pause. Deke places a finger in the pool of Scotch and holds it in the air.

DEKE

A toast.

BAXTER

A toast to what?!
DEKE
We've got a suspect, my friend.

Baxter wants to ignore this, but he knows Deke is right. He, too, slumps to the ground. Deke licks his finger.

BAXTER
Did you know Sparma confessed to a murder eight years ago?

DEKE
So?

BAXTER
Made it up. Yanked Rogers' chain for a whole shift. He's a crime buff, said so himself. Walk-in confessors aren't killers. We got nothing on this guy.

DEKE
You got the same ache in your gut as me. We got something, maybe we just don't know what it is yet... I get inside his place for five minutes and I know.

BAXTER
We don't have enough for a warrant... Know what?

DEKE
If Sparma’s our boy...

Baxter mulls the option for a moment, then dismisses it.

BAXTER
We'll catch a break.

DEKE
What is it you want from this?

BAXTER
I wanna nail the bastard.

DEKE
For who?

BAXTER
For the girls he killed... and --

Baxter reaches in his pocket, pulls out the Rathbun photo.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER
For Ronda Rathbun, wherever she is.

DEKE
That's the difference between us, Jimmy. I wanna nail the bastard, too. Only I'm doing it for me.

The two men stare at one another. From this point on, they're bonded together, all the way down the chute.

DEKE
Five minutes.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH NEAR SPARMA'S APT. - NIGHT

Baxter dials, then...

SPARMA (V.O.)
(through phone)
Hello.

BAXTER
Hey, Al.

SPARMA (V.O.)
Who's this?

BAXTER
A guy with something to show you.

SPARMA (V.O.)
Oh, yeah, what's that?

BAXTER
Something you left behind. Something cops would like to see. Meet me at Pikes. Near your house, on the 'bully.'

When Baxter hangs up he notices... A "Have you seen this girl" POSTER with Ronda Rathbun's photo on it. Someone's drawn a mustache and goatee on the girl's face.

INT./EXT. DEKE'S CAR/NEAR SPARMA'S APT. - NIGHT

Deke sits, watching the window and back, upstairs door. Baxter gets in, closes the door. Deke gives him a look and Baxter shrugs --

BAXTER
We'll see.
They both notice a light going off in Sparma’s apartment and watch as Sparma exits, walks down the stairway.

INT./EXT. DEKE’S CAR/STREET - NIGHT

THROUGH the front car window we see Sparma emerge from under a streetlight, look around, and cross the street.

Baxter and Deke share a look. “Are we going to do this?” Deke answers by opening his door.

EXT. SPARMA'S APT. - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Deke walks to Sparma’s door. He opens a burglar's kit, but when he touches the lock, the door squeaks open.

INT. SPARMA'S APT. - NIGHT

Deke enters, closing the door behind him. He puts on his gloves then opens the door and wipes the handle.

He eyes the kitchen.

Deke opens the fridge -- milk, beer, no leftovers. Deke opens the freezer, shines the light on it... Not much there.

Deke walks to the sink, a can of Lysol sits on the counter. He spots a LONG, STURDY KNIFE in the drying sink, picks it up, shines the light on it... serrated edges.

CLOSEUP - THE TIP

only the very tip, is... missing.

A MUFFLED VOICE behind him. Deke spins and stares at...

A POLICE SCANNER. A DISPATCHER'S VOICE comes through the airwaves, calling out instructions to a radio car.

INT. DEKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Baxter sits inside, waiting, watching Sparma's window.
INT. SPARMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
THE LIVING ROOM -- very neat, very clean and organized. 
The fleshlight fixes on...
THE TV -- a rerun -- sound down.
THE BEDROOM
THE BED -- made. THE DRESSER -- a few knick-knacks on it...
A BOOKSHELF -- a few hardbound, a few paperbacks -- all on crime: forensics, whodunits?, serial killers...
EXT./INT. PIKE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Not too busy. Sparma enters, looks around -- two guys at the bar, a few folks eating dinner. SPARMA sits at the bar, checks his watch, looks around for a few seconds, then nods to the bartender.

SPARMA
Gotta phone?
INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT
Deke enters, shines the light and sees clear liquid in the bathtub. Water? Deke turns on the bathroom light and --
The room turns red. He’s using it as a dark room. Deke notices a DENTAL BRIDGE in the bottom of a glass of water.
Deke picks up the two-tooth bridge. He thinks for a second, grabs a bar of motel soap from the sink, wets it, and firmly plants the bridge on the bar. A solid imprint on the bridge appears on the soap. He pockets the bar.
INT. DEKE'S CAR - NIGHT
Baxter’s eyes dart between Sparma’s window and the street.
Deke reenters the living room/bedroom, notices a slide projector on a small table. His eyes go to the bare wall with a single nail it's aimed at.

Deke flicks it on and a light hits the wall. Nearby is a case of slides. He takes one out, slides it in the projector and the image is projected on the wall --

It's an old family photo -- nothing too interesting.

Deke stares at it for a second, then walks to the wall, bends down and picks up an empty picture frame, attaches it to the nail on the wall and --

It perfectly frames the projected image. He turns off the projector, replaces the slide and --

He walks -- feeling with his feet for irregularities. He kicks over a throw rug, hits his knees, and knocks on the wood. Hollow. He slips a pocketknife blade into the wood, turns it slightly and lifts the board. Inside, in a 2' by 2' cavity...

is a BOX. A lockbox.

Baxter checks his watch, looks around, then gets out of the car and starts walking toward the nearest busy street.

Deke opens the box.

Deke takes a deep breath. Inside...

THE BOX is chock full -- letters, papers, postcards, clippings. Deke stares at the yellowed clippings...

They're all articles and police beat photos from murder scenes. There must be 20 of them. He stares at one...

THE CLIPPING -- Shakespeare's Bridge newspaper crime photo.

CUT TO:
Deke holds his revolver over his flashlight as he takes one cautious step after another. The guy’s a hunter, in his element as he stalks whatever is out there in the brush.

Deke is lost in memories, until...

SCANNER VOICE (V.O.)
All units. Officer needs help. Officer down. Repeat. Officer down. 10929 San Marino Street.

Baxter walks up to Pike's and looks in the window -- Sparma's not there.

Two LAPD SQUAD CARS, lights flashing, blast past him on the way to Sparma's. Baxter races back toward Sparma’s.

Two cops kick open the door, flashlights and guns in hand. One cop tries the light switch. No light.

COP #1
Anybody in here?!

One cop tries to turn on the light -- nothing.

Baxter runs up, showing his badge. An LAPD OFFICER, steps in front of him.

BAXTER
What’s goin’ on?

COP #3
Officer down. Two guys inside now.

Baxter moves ahead. The Cop stops him.
COP #3
All respect, Detective, your jurisdiction doesn't start for another twenty blocks.

Baxter sighs and steps back, his eyes on Sparma's window. And then he starts to run for the phone booth by Deke’s car. When he gets there, he throws in a coin, hurriedly dials. When someone answers --

VOICE (V.O.)
(on phone)
Sheriff’s.

BAXTER
Baxter. 362071.

And then he pauses, what can he say?

VOICE (V.O.)
(on phone)
Detective Baxter?... Detective Baxter?

To say anything would give himself up. He hangs up and makes his way back toward Sparma’s apartment.

INT./EXT. THE APARTMENT - NIGHT

One cop shines his flashlight up at the bare bulb above them and screws it back in. The bulb lights up. Deke unscrewed them.

Outside the back door we see Deke standing. He looks down -- a cop with a flashlight is right below him and an LAPD cruiser is nearby.

He starts to move slowly down the exterior hall toward the front/side of the building.

EXT. THE PARKING LOT BELOW - SAME TIME - NIGHT

An LAPD cop moves and shines his light.

EXT. REAR OF APARTMENT - SAME TIME - NIGHT

Deke makes his way to a corner, then climbs up on the railing and lifts himself to the roof.
EXT. STREET - NIGHT
Baxter eyes the apartment.

INT. SPARMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
COP #2
There's nothin' here.

They hear FOOTSTEPS above them and grab for their radios.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME
A nearby cop’s radio blares --

VOICE (V.O.)
(on radio)
6 Adam 67; show a Code 4. No officer down. Advise that we have a possible prowler suspect fleeing the location.

Baxter’s eyes find --

HIS POV
DEKE slowly walking on the slanted roof to the opposite side of the building.

BACK TO SCENE
Baxter sees a cop exit Sparma’s back door and look around. The cop goes down the steps and looks to the roof, shining a flashlight to and fro.

Baxter hears laughter and spins to see --

Sparma, sitting on a short wall, not twenty feet away, watching the disturbance he’s created. He’s eating chips from the restaurant.

Baxter jumps in Deke’s car and pulls away.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT
Deke squats down to avoid the light beam, then moves quietly to the edge of the building and takes a look down. Too far to jump. The flashlight moves past him, getting closer.

(CONTINUED)
He sees a vertical water spout, turns around, and, feet first, climbs down. He has to drop the last six feet or so, hitting the ground hard.

INT. DEKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Baxter, driving, looks to and fro. Suddenly, Deke appears and jumps into the car. Baxter throws it in reverse, does a three-point turn and drives away as Deke shakes a pill from a bottle and sticks it under his tongue.

BAXTER
Sparma called in an ‘Officer down.’

DEKE
Wily sonofabitch, huh?

BAXTER
Wily enough to keep his apartment clean?

DEKE
Not that wily. He's definitely top of the list. Guy's got a box of clippings, knickknacks. Souvenirs.

BAXTER
By any chance you see a red barrette?

DEKE
Red barrette?

BAXTER
Ronda Rathbun was wearing one when she disappeared.

DEKE
Maybe. I dunno. It was stuffed full... If I had five more minutes.

He looks to Baxter. A plea.

BAXTER
You're out of your fucking mind.

INT. LASD - CORONER'S - NIGHT

CLOSEUP -- A SERIES OF CORONER’S X-RAYS OF ALL VICTIMS.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER (O.S.)
Would a metal knife tip
absolutely, positively show up?

FLO DUNIGAN
sitting at her desk, analyzing the soap bridge mold,
speaks without looking up.

FLO
Absolutely, positively.

BAXTER pulls the X-rays off the viewing light.

BAXTER
So, it's somewhere else. All the
more reason to find Ronda.

Flo puts away her measuring instrument, tosses the soap
bar back to Baxter, and shakes her head.

BAXTER
How come the only time physical
evidence is conclusive is when I
have two eyewitnesses and a
confession?!

DEKE
We work the case. It'll happen.

FLO
The voice of experience. Besides,
Detective, I could ask how you got
that bar of soap.

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Sal, Jamie, Dennis Williams hover around Baxter's desk.

BAXTER
Okay, we focus on Sparma. Jamie,
I want you to re-canvas the areas
within a mile of where each of the
north county bodies were found.
Talk to anybody, everybody. Show
'em this 'six-pack.'

Baxter hands over a manila sheet with six photos, one-of
whom is Sparma. The others look nothing like him.

JAMIE
Two of 'em are Latino. Won't this
taint any possible I.D.?

(CONTINUED)
If they pick him, we'll rehabilitate with a line-up. Sal, you take the in-town sites. Dennis, work the files. I want names of anybody who knew the guy, dated, fed, or hated the guy. Sparma's got a scanner, so stay off frequency. I'll check in, but you got my beeper and here's the pay phone number near the apartment... We've got two days...

They nod, stand, and stare at him.

BAXTER
So, what we waiting for?

They leave. Baxter spots Rogers, at his desk, smiling. Baxter swallows a comment, grabs his coat, and leaves.

Jamie catches up to Baxter...

JAMIE
I think I've got a lead on the Watkins case. A dealer, pretty skittish, says he thinks he can I.D. the shooter.

BAXTER
So?

JAMIE
So, I was gonna bring him in today.

BAXTER
That guy's not going anywhere.

JAMIE
Yeah, but, Jim...

BAXTER
-- You got your detail.

Baxter walks to his car.

JAMIE
I know you're under the gun. But, my dead guy is just as important to me as your dead girls are to you.

(CONTINUED)
THE LITTLE THINGS - 9/23/19 (Full Blue) 109.

CONTINUED:

210

Baxter stops, turns, gets in her face.

BAXTER
A Lynwood banger gets blown away
and you expect me to give a shit?

JAMIE
Yeah. You used to...

Baxter is stung by this. Without answering, he walks away.

211

EXT. A RUN-DOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Deke parks, gets out, negotiates his way through the front yard -- past a '72 Chevy up on blocks -- and to the door of a house. He KNOCKS and waits. KNOCKS again. He walks to... THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, to a rickety fence, and peers over.

A WOMAN, 45, on her hands and knees, digging in a 7' by 7' garden full of dead and dying tomatoes.

WOMAN
What do you want?

DEKE leans against the fence.

DEKE
Mrs. Roberts, you probably don't remember me. I'm...

MRS. ROBERTS (WOMAN)
-- I remember you.

This takes him back a bit. She doesn't even look up, just keeps working. Finally she plucks a golf ball-sized spotted tomato, and holds it in her hand, examining it.

MRS. ROBERTS
Tell me, Detective. I water, I shade, I spray, and still they die. Why do they die?

She tosses the worthless tomato aside.

MRS. ROBERTS
What do you want?

DEKE
I wanted to bring you up to date on your daughter's murder.

(CONTINUED)
MRS. ROBERTS
Bring me up to date? She's five years dead and buried.

DEKE
I've got a good suspect. I wanna send the guy away; put this thing to rest.

Mrs. Roberts stares at Deke and shakes her head.

MRS. ROBERTS
It is at rest. I'm at rest. Poor Mary, she's at rest. Five years of peace and quiet. Five years with no tears, no worries about where she is, if she's okay, if she's even alive. She's dead, she doesn't hurt anymore, and I've only got to drive three miles to sit and talk to her. We never talked much before she...

She wipes a tear, an angry look on her face.

MRS. ROBERTS
Five years since I've cried over her. God knows I wept when it happened, but He also knows I stopped a day later. God gave me peace, Detective. Ask Him. He'll give it to you.

Deke is dumbfounded. He starts to mumble something, then finds his shoes with his eyes. She stares at him hard.

DEKE
I'm gonna... I'm gonna nail this guy.

MRS. ROBERTS
I'm sorry. I got no medals for you.

And she goes back to work. Deke stands for a moment, then slowly walks away. After he's gone, she breaks down sobbing.

EXT. STREET - NEAR SPARMA’S APT. - DAY

Baxter on the nearby phone.

BAXTER
Got it.

(CONTINUED)
He hangs up and walks and gets into --

Where Deke sits in the passenger side. He's staring at Sparma's apartment.

BAXTER
Bad news first. Sparma did file a 'stolen' on the wagon. Lost in the computer or something. The good? Sparma left town less than six weeks after your murders. He moved back five months ago.

DEKE
Where was he?

BAXTER
Detroit.

DEKE
Any unsolved bodies up there?

BAXTER
Detroit?!... We're checkin'.

DEKE
He knows we're here. He knows we're watching him.

Good.

Baxter holds up a box of Taco Bell.

BAXTER
Cold taco?
(as Deke doesn’t answer)
You okay?

DEKE
You ever think maybe it's not worth it? Sitting, watching. Spending your time in another guy's shadow...

BAXTER
One, wherever he goes, I mark it for search warrants. Two, he does it again, I catch him in the act. Three, when I'm with him, nobody dies. Nobody dies on my shift.

(CONTINUED)
And how long's your shift?

As long as it takes.

Deke looks at Baxter, seeing himself in the younger man's eyes. The mantle has passed.

Sparma exits, walks down the street, buys a Sunday paper from a newspaper machine, and sits down on a bus bench.

Baxter shakes his head and starts his car.

The bus? The guy’s got a car and he's takin' the bus?
217  EXT. STREET - DAY

Slow traffic. THE BUS inches forward.

A few cars back, DEKE AND BAXTER sit and wait, stuck in the same traffic. "I WILL FOLLOW HIM" by Little Peggy March comes on the radio. Deke smiles at the irony.

218  EXT. BUSY STREET (NORTH HOLLYWOOD) - DAY

A DIFFERENT BUS stops at a corner and Sparma gets out.

219  INT. BAXTER'S CAR - DAY

The game is wearing very thin.

    BAXTER
    Lived here all this time and had no idea how many buses it took to get to the Valley. This is fucking comical.

Deke smiles, a bit surprised by Baxter's strong language.

    BAXTER
    We're runnin' out of sand and the guy's takin' public transportation.

SPARMA starts a lazy walk up the block.

    DEKE
    We could offer him a ride.

220  EXT. "THE ZOO" STRIP JOINT - DAY

Sparma walks in.

    DEKE (V.O.)
    Did you 'run' this place?

    BAXTER (V.O.)
    Yeah, no connection.

221  INT. BAXTER'S CAR - DAY

They park, side-view mirror covering the entrance.

    BAXTER
    Let's say you're Sparma. You're a killer. Can't live without it.

(MORE) (CONTINUED)
It's your day off. Been a whole week without the good stuff. What do you do? Do you take a bus to a strip joint in the Valley? Sure, you get to look at naked women, but the closest you get to blood is the color their fingernails.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT (TWO HOURS LATER)

Absolute quiet. Baxter sits up straight when he spots...}

EXT. THE ZOO STRIP JOINT - NIGHT

Sparma saunters out.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT

Back to business. Baxter starts the car.

EXT. STREET NEAR SPARMA’S - NIGHT (LATER)

A bus stops at a corner and Sparma gets off. He stretches his arms and walks AROUND THE CORNER to his apartment stairwell. After a few seconds, the blue light of the TV comes on.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - SAME TIME - NIGHT

Baxter, parked, bangs the dashboard in frustration.

DEKE
Hey, Jimmy... Jimmy!

Baxter calms only a little, his eyes on fire.

DEKE
Look, you work the case. That's all you can do. It's like fishing. You go days without a bump, then bam! You get a strike. If you're impatient, you come home with nuthin' for the skillet.

Baxter sighs, looks up at a streetlight.

BAXTER
(a plea; a prayer)
I'm dyin' here...

(CONTINUED)
DEKE
Go home. I'll put him to bed.

BAXTER
Fuck you.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT (LATER)

And again they sit and wait. Deke shakes his watch. Not working. He looks up, spots...

DOWN THE STREET -- A 24-hour MINI-MART.

DEKE
Whattaya think? They got watch batteries over there?

BAXTER
Maybe. Bring me a black coffee --

Deke gets out and walks away. Baxter stares at...

SPARMA'S WINDOW -- still coated in television blue --

Baxter, a bundle of nerves, sits. Then we hear a phone RING.

Baxter looks down the street at the pay phone on the corner.

Baxter makes a decision, gets out of the car. RING. RING. He arrives, picks it up --

BAXTER
Yeah?

Only the sound of a LOUD TV coming through the receiver.

BAXTER
Hello...

Baxter's eyes find the poster of Ronda Rathbun, still taped to the kiosk. Then, he feels eyes on him and spins to see...

Sparma, standing five feet away, smiling.

SPARMA
Must be a wrong number.

(CONTINUED)
Baxter hangs up, pulls his gun.

BAXTER
Put your hands in the air. Walk

to the gate. Do it now. Hands on

your head. Interlace your

fingers. Point your fingers to

the sky now. Spread your legs.

Then, in a flash, Baxter is all over Sparma -- throws him against a wall, frisks him for a weapon.

SPARMA
I'd think twice. I mean,
everybody saw what happened at the station.

Baxter takes away the knife.

BAXTER
Spread your legs. You have any

more weapons on you?

SPARMA
Just a California lawn snake in my

pocket.

Baxter shows him Ronda Rathbun photo.

BAXTER
Where is she?

SPARMA
The original. How'd you wrangle that?

Baxter turns him around.

SPARMA
You don't wanna rough me up; you

wanna kill me don't ya? Trust me,
ya don't have it in you.

Baxter shows photo of Ronda Rathbun again.

BAXTER
Where is she?

Sparma just smiles.

SPARMA
Dairy Queen? You don't wanna know. Not really.

Baxter slams Sparma against the wall.

(CONTINUED)
SPARMA
Okay, okay, you win. I’ll take * you to her. Come on.*

And he walks away. Baxter hesitates, then follows a few steps behind Sparma as they walk toward the carport.

INT. MINI-MART - NIGHT

Deke waits in line behind a BUM buying a blistered hot dog.

(CONTINUED)
CORNER -- TWO DELINQUENTS play a video game. DING. DING.

DEKE watches them play, then tosses a coffee, the watch battery, and a bill on the counter. DING. DING. DING.

IN THE CORNER -- The game ends. An amplified, sinister, deep DRACONIC VIDEO VOICE announces...

DRACONIC VIDEO VOICE (V.O.)

The game is over!

KID #1

Aw, man. That sucks!

CLOSEUP - DEKE

VOICES in his head as he grabs his change and stumbles out of the store.

MARY (V.O.)

It's over...

EXT. CARPORT - NIGHT

Sparma gets in his car, starts it, and backs up alongside Baxter. They look at each other for a moment, then Sparma rolls down the window --

SPARMA

Coming?...

Baxter hesitates, checks the street for any sign of Deke.

SPARMA

Tryin' to figure if you could get back to your car in time to tail me? You can't. Come on, get in. We've got a drive ahead of us and I've got to go to work tomorrow.

Sparma whistles a few bars of "FINAL JEOPARDY" THEME MUSIC as Baxter hesitates. Then...

SPARMA

Ya already felt me up. You're armed and I'm not. What are ya scared of?

Baxter takes one last look down the street and gets in.

SPARMA

Buckle up.
Deke looks up, spots... SPARMA'S CAR exit the alley, with Baxter in the passenger seat (they don't see Deke). He drops the coffee and runs toward Baxter’s car.

Silence as Sparma moves through light traffic, looking over at Baxter every so often.

Deke jumps in Baxter's car and takes off.

Deke's eyes dance all over the place looking for... Far ahead. In the distance -- SPARMA'S CAR enters the freeway.

Sparma, enjoying this, can't take his eyes off Baxter.

Baxter keeps one eye on Sparma, the other on their journey. Sparma puts on his blinker and crosses lanes of traffic.

Deke spots Sparma change lanes to exit onto the 170.

Sparma, enjoying this, can't take his eyes off Baxter.

BAXTER
Just where is it we're going?

SPARMA
Ronda Rathbun?
Deke. Determined to catch up. We hear WHISPERS, but we can't make out what the voices are saying.

Sparma's car takes the I-5 and continues onward.

Sparma puts on his blinker. THE HIGHWAY SIGN -- 14 EXIT -- moving right over them.

SPARMA
Let's recap for the fans at home.
101 north, 170, I-5 north, 14.
Daddy, Daddy, how much longer?

Deke spots the I-5 freeway and blasts onto it. He steps on the gas and realizes he has a decision to make when he sees -- the highway splits 3 ways, the 14 on the right.

Deke slows down and comes to a stop on the overpass shoulder. Then he jumps out and climbs on the roof of the car.

HIS POV

the three different highways. On the third he spots AND WE ZOOM TO, in the distance, THE ERRATIC BLINKER...

Sparma changes lanes, exiting the 14 freeway and making an immediate right, heading toward the dark stillness of the Antelope valley. Their headlights beat a path down a gravel road, sending the occasional roadrunner fleeing for cover.
INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving along 14 -- Eyes everywhere. Deke spots -- far in the distance -- a single pair of headlights beating a dusty path through the darkness.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT

Sparma's car slows and turns onto a dirt road blocked by a locked, swinging gate and cattle guard.

INT. SPARMA'S CAR - NIGHT

Sparma holds up a single key, hands it to Baxter. Baxter mulls it over, gets out, unlocks, and swings open the gate.

Sparma drives through, past Baxter's grim stare, and stops.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Baxter swings the gate closed. He hangs the lock on it and gets back in the car. WE HOLD as the car drives on, on, on into the dark. Then several hundred yards away, it stops and the brake and headlights die, leaving only the darkness.

EXT. IN A FIELD - NIGHT

Sparma's car sits, engine still thumping as it cools in the night air. Sparma steps out and leans on the hood. Baxter gets out, stands by the door.

SPARMA
I knew a guy had a hunting lease here 5 years or so back. Nice spot, huh? And we got the moon tonight.

BAXTER
Where is she?

SPARMA
All business. I tell you what. You start walkin' that way.

Baxter hesitates, then starts walking into the moonlit pasture. After 20 or so yards he veers left.

(CONTINUED)
SPARMA
Chilly.

Baxter, not understanding, turns and looks at Sparma.

SPARMA
Come on, you remember the game, don’t you.

Baxter keeps walking left.

SPARMA
Chilly. Chillier. Chilliest. You really suck at this game.

Baxter sighs and walks right. Baxter continues to walk slowly, deliberately...

SPARMA
Warm. Warmer. Warmiest. Hot. Hotter. Bingo! Now look down at the ground...

SPARMA
... and say... ‘Hello, Ronda.’

BAXTER
Fuck you.

BAXTER'S EYES slowly lift and he stares at the smiling Sparma, who chuckles then goes to the trunk, opens it, grabs a military shovel, and walks toward Baxter.

Baxter quietly unbuckles his holster strap.

SPARMA
You're going to need this.

He tosses the shovel to...

Baxter, who grabs it midair without blinking. He holds it, looks at it, casts his eyes on the ground, then tosses the shovel back, pulls out his gun, and points it at Sparma.

BAXTER
You dig.

SPARMA
Devil's in the details, ya know? FINGERPRINTS, witnesses, physical evidence. You'd have to get rid of my body, get rid of my car. A lot to consider.

(MORE)
And besides, like I said: You don't have it in you.

Sparma hands the shovel to Baxter, who grimaces, slowly re-holsters his weapon, and starts to dig.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT

Deke drives down the road -- looking left, right. Nothing.

MARY (V.O.)
It's over...

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT

Baxter's car goes past the gravel road gate and continues on.

EXT. IN THE FIELD - NIGHT

Baxter digs, digs, digs. He stops for a second, takes off his jacket, tosses it aside, and goes back to work.

THE HOLE -- a couple of feet deep and growing. SPARMA leans in for a closer look.

SPARMA
You know, come to think of it, this doesn't look that familiar.

Baxter stops digging, glares at Sparma, who walks 10 or so feet away. He spits on the ground.

SPARMA
But this spot here; this looks very promising.

BAXTER
What did you say?

SPARMA
This spot here; this looks a lot more promising.

Sparma shrugs an "up to you."

BAXTER
This spot looks promising? Well, I better get digging.

(CONTINUED)
Baxter takes the shovel, walks over, glares at Sparma, then begins digging anew.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT

Deke mutters a curse as the gravel road essentially ends. Blocking the road is a huge piece of farm equipment.

PAIGE (V.O.)
Always nice to see you, Joe.
MRS. ROBERTS (V.O.)
It is at rest.

MARY (V.O.)
I forgive you, Joe. It's over...

DEKE throws the car in reverse.

EXT. THE FIELD - NIGHT

Baxter, sweating, continues to dig. Sparma watches with mock fascination as each spade of dirt is removed.

Sparma's smile drops and he shakes his head.

SPARMA
Hmmm...

Baxter stops and stares at Sparma, who shakes his head and walks a few more yards away.

SPARMA
(whispers; singsong)
Ronda? Ron-da?...

Then he cups his ear and leans down --

SPARMA
(whispered mimic)
I'm... down... here...

He picks up a stick and makes a grand gesture of drawing an X in the dirt. Then he squats like a coach and waits.

SPARMA
X marks the spot. Come on, Jimmy. Third time's a charm.

Sparma motions "come on" with one finger.

BAXTER
Cut the bullshit!

SPARMA
Okay, you want the truth? I never killed anybody in my whole life. Do you believe me?

Baxter's hatred shows in his eyes.
I can tell from your face that you don’t; that you think I did all those horrible things to those girls. The ones you’ve found... and the ones you haven’t. Well, what you think is out of my control. If you believe me, we can get in the car and drive home. If you don’t...

And he points once again to the spot of dirt. Baxter's face tells us he's about to crack. He spits and stares at the "X."

Say, what if this guy just quit killing? Cold turkey. Fell back into his life. Nine to five. Maybe gets a girlfriend. He can have any woman he wants, you know? I mean, if he did that, you'd be fucked, wouldn't you? 'Cause you’d have nothing.

Baxter just stares down at Sparma.

Hell, he prolly wouldn't even have to stop. He could do it over and over and over again. Because he's smarter than you. He doesn't even have a high school diploma, but he's forgotten more than you'll ever know. That's gotta be frustrating, huh? To be that powerless?

Baxter's face hardens, his squinting eyes shooting darts. Sparma's smile drops and he stares back. A face-off.

What are you, five, six deep, and no end in sight? I saw a picture of your lovely family.

Baxter takes this in with a scowl.

Probably shoulda stayed outta the public eye.

What kind of father are you?

(CONTINUED)
How can you protect those two beautiful daughters when you can’t even begin to help one of those poor girls or their families? You’re insignificant. You don’t matter. This will go on and on.

Sparma grins lasciviously, then starts to chuckle. And the chuckle turns into a loud, resounding CACKLE.

SPARMA (an evil clown)
And there’s nuthin’ you can do about it!

Baxter, in an instant rage, suddenly no longer a cop but an outraged father, grabs the shovel like a bat and...

BRUTALLY WHACKS Sparma’s head. The CACKLE stops on a dime and the next and only sound we hear is the THUD of Sparma’s body hitting the ground, echoing in the still night air.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT
As Deke retraces the gravel road, he stops at...

THE GATE AND CATTLE GUARD. He pulls onto the road, nudges the front bumper against the fence... and it swings open.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT
The headlights move along the swirling dust. Deke spots -- in the distance, SPARMA'S CAR.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT
Deke freezes as he hears more RUSTLING. Then he COCKS his revolver and continues forward. One foot in front of the other, eyes never blinking, a coiled spring.

He uses the flashlight to avoid a branch and --

A GUTTURAL HUMAN SOUND -- releases Deke's spring. He fires into the dark and spins the flashlight to see what's gone down.

(CONTINUED)
IN THE FLASHLIGHT BEAM -- A GIRL with long, blonde hair, MARY ROBERTS, on her knees, partially nude, bleeding from stab wounds. She glances at the fresh bullet wound in her chest then up at Deke, a puzzled look on her face. She holds out her arms to him and falls, face first, on the ground.

Deke is frozen. A lifetime crystallized in a single, defining moment.

CUT TO:

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The car comes to a stop. Deke stares straight ahead into the darkness.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Farris, on the run, having heard the gunshot, pushes past brush then stops dead in his tracks. Sal, not far behind, freezes when he sees...

SAL
(stunned)
Oh, Jesus...

Deke, kneeling over the body of Mary Roberts.

MARY (V.O.)
It's over...

CUT TO:

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Deke, still staring. He closes his eyes, hoping the sight before him will go away.

It won't. He opens them and stares at...

HIS POV

The headlights illuminate Baxter, kneeling over the crumpled body of Albert Sparma.

DEKE (V.O.)
(whispers)
It's never over...

(CONTINUED)
CLOSEUP - DEKE

His face...

FADE TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT (LATER)

CLOSEUP -- BAXTER, in shock. He leans against the hood of the car and stares, numb. The two have become one.

WIDER ANGLE

DEKE rolls Sparma's body over and fishes in his pocket for his keys. The guy is deader than dead.

Deke finds the keys, walks over to Baxter.

BAXTER
(edgy; nervous)
It was him. We got him. He was our boy. He as much as told me.

DEKE
Nothing we can do about it now.

Baxter gives Deke a look of pure fear.

BAXTER
We gotta call somebody... What am I gonna say?

DEKE
Nothing... Stick him in a hole. Pick one. At least four feet deep.

Deke's proposal hits Baxter, who just stares.

DEKE
I'll be back in a few hours. Just stay put, all right?/Just sit tight, all right?

Baxter is too shocked to nod.

INT. SPARMA'S CAR - NIGHT

Deke drives it along the freeway, his mind racing.
INT. SPARMA'S APT. - NIGHT

The door opens and Deke enters. He gives himself a second to think then...

SERIES OF QUICK CUTS

1) Deke, hands in plastic gloves, puts trash bags in different spots.


3) Slides trash bags across the bed.

4) Deke takes the clothes out of the closet.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE

SLOW, LANGUID PAN FROM ONE SIDE OF THE ROOM TO THE OTHER. DAMN NEAR EVERYTHING IN THE APARTMENT IS IN GARBAGE BAGS. WE HOLD ON DEKE, SITTING ON THE FLOOR, STARING AT...

THE THROW RUG in the center of the main room.

HE'S put this off till last. Deke slowly rises, walks over and, with one foot, he rolls it aside.

DEKE

Be there. Still be there.

He kneels, opens the floorboard and stares into the hole.

THE LOCKBOX still sits there.

DEKE pulls it out, opens it, staring for several seconds at contents we can't see. Then he sets it aside.

EXT. SEEDY STREET - NIGHT

Somewhat industrial area. A group of tough-looking Latinos sit on cars, smoking and talking. This is their jurisdiction. DEKE drives past them and parks Sparma's car alongside the curb and gets out.

The toughs stop talking and stare as he walks toward them.

(CONTINUED)
There’s something about his look that gives them pause. When he’s close, Deke tosses the car keys to one of the toughs and walks into the night.

INT. DEKE'S BRONCO - DAWN

Deke drives, focused but dead tired -- a long night behind him, but miles to go before he sleeps.

The back end of the Bronco is filled with trash bags.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - GATE - DAY

Deke's Bronco drives slowly through the gate.

INT. DEKE'S BRONCO - DAY

Deke peers ahead, driving back to the mess he left only a few hours ago.

Then he slows and brings the Bronco to a stop. The look on his face says what he’s looking at is something he wishes he didn't have to see. He rubs his tired face with one dirty hand, looks up again. Still the same.

EXT. THE FIELD - DAY

The bloody, still very dead face of Albert Sparma -- in the same position as we left him. In the b.g. we hear DIGGING NOISES. WE BOOM UP to reveal... the first two holes Baxter dug... three more holes... And finally, from a view HIGH ABOVE we see...

A FIELD OF HOLES, at least 20 of them. Baxter, shirt off, still digging, searching...

EXT. FIELD - DAY (AN HOUR LATER)

Deke tosses dirt on a pile. A grave. He wipes his brow and takes one last look at the field.

All holes filled.

INT. DEKE'S BRONCO - DAY

Baxter, stupefied, sits shotgun, staring blankly.

DEKE walks to the Bronco, tosses the shovel in the back.

(CONTINUED)
BAXTER  
(mumbling)  
He was our boy, right, Joe? I think he was our boy...

And then he starts to cry. Deke watches a few seconds, then pulls Baxter out, jacking him up against the truck.

DEKE  
Nobody's gonna give a damn. I've taken care of this. You listenin' to me? You go back, tell Farris that Sparma was a wash and you need a break. A coupla weeks. You tell him I left town on Saturday and you went home. You hear me?!

It's all too much for Baxter to comprehend.

DEKE  
It's history. Forgotten. He's rotting in the ground and the only thing he can do to you now is what you let him. Don't ever go back to his place, don't ever pull his file, don't ever let his name cross your lips. 'Cause if you do, he's gonna rise right up outta that dirt and do ya in.  
(beat)  
It's the little things, Jimmy. It's the little things that rip you apart. It's the little things that get ya caught.

Baxter, still numb, offers a slight nod. Deke pats his cheek.

DEKE  
That's my boy.

The irony of the phrase gives Baxter pause. He looks up into Deke's eyes with a mixture of hatred and trust.

EXT. THE FIELD - DAY  
HIGH ABOVE. Now with one more secret to hide?

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:
INT. ST. AGNES - HALLWAY - DAY
The Manager and a maid walk to Deke's door, push it open.

INT. DEKE'S ROOM - DAY
Empty. He left in a hurry. The Manager steps in, looks around and shakes his head. Deke’s Salvation Army clothes are on the floor. He also sees --

A PILE OF TRASH... the photos of Paige Callahan, Tamera Ewing, and Mary Roberts.

MANAGER
They leave clothes I can't wear; pictures of girls I don't know.

The Manager bends over, picks up -- a grisly crime scene shot -- and tosses it, a look of grim displeasure on his face.

MANAGER
I gotta get outta this town.

Near Deke’s thrift shop clothes sit the unforgettable boots.

INT. DEKE'S BRONCO - DAY
As Deke, in his sheriff’s uniform, leaves Los Angeles far, far behind, the radio station's last LOVE SONG plays.

DJ (V.O.)
And that brings to an end the world as we know it. Thanks for listening for all these many years... It's 12 o'clock.

There's a long pause -- DEAD AIR on the radio. And then...

DIFFERENT DJ (V.O.)
It's noon, El-Lay. This is Bobby Saunders and I'm sayin' welcome to the new KKNG, the king of talk radio, where what you have to say matters.

Deke's eyes gaze at... the WHITE CAHUENGA PASS CROSS, perched high above him.

(CONTINUED)
Then he looks at LOS ANGELES IN HIS REARVIEW MIRROR, reaches down, and turns off the radio.

INT. HOMICIDE AREA - DAY

GREG ALBERTS, 45, handsome, an FBI behavioral specialist, addresses the Homicide unit in front of a large blackboard. On the chalkboard is a profile list of traits.

ALBERTS
... A white male between the ages of 25 and 40. He is of above average intelligence; socially competent; works as a skilled laborer; probably firstborn or an only child; follows the crimes in the media...

CUT TO:

EXT. SEEDY STREET (HOLLYWOOD) - DAY

Sparma's car, sans wheels and seats, sits up on blocks. When night falls, the vultures will come back and pick the bones.

ALBERTS (V.O.)
... He has at least one car in good condition, maybe two...

CUT TO:

INT. SPARMA'S APT. - DAY

Empty. A stick of furniture here, a pile of trash there.

ALBERTS (V.O.)
... has a propensity for changing jobs; picking up, leaving at a moment's notice.

CUT TO:

INT. HOMICIDE AREA - DAY

ALBERTS
That, ladies and gentlemen, is the guy we're looking for.

(CONTINUED)
What about the leads we're following?

I think it's safe to say we're at square one on this operation. One thing I can promise you... we'll get the bastard.

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

Captain Farris is at the microphone. Behind him stand Alberts and Rogers.

With Agent Alberts and the FBI's help, we hope to stop this killer. I'll take a few questions.

What will Detective Baxter's role be in the revamped investigation?

Detective Sergeant Baxter has done a fine job as the primary on this case. But, under our new task force configuration, Detective Sergeant Rogers will be acting in concert with Federal Agent Alberts.

Rogers takes a tiny step forward and nods.

Isn't it unusual to change primaries mid-stream?

Detective Baxter is on a self-requested, open-ended leave of absence.

Ana stands at the kitchen window and looks out at... THE GIRLS playing in the pool. BAXTER sits nearby, staring into space. The doorbell RINGS.

Ana walks to the door, opens it. There stands Sal, holding a package envelope.

(CONTINUED)
Hey, Ana.

Hi, Sal, come in.

Nah, I gotta get goin’. He okay?

Ana just looks at him. What can she say?

Yeah, well, we miss him already. Joe Deacon gimme this, said it was for Jimmy.

He hands her the envelope. She takes it, stares at it.

Baxter sits in a pool chair under a table umbrella, staring at his daughters playing in the pool. The girls stop splashing for a moment and stare at their father, very aware of his uncomfortable state.

In a world of his own.

CUT TO:

OF RONDA RATHBUN GOOFING IN THE BACKYARD POOL WITH HER FRIENDS. SHE LOOKS DIRECTLY AT THE CAMERA AND SMILES.

Jimmy?...

Ana kisses Baxter and sets the envelope on the table.

Sal brought this by.

Baxter doesn't even look at her.

He said it was from Joe Deacon.

(CONTINUED)
Ana walks back into the house. Baxter stares at the envelope on the table, then slowly reaches over and slides it across. He quietly opens it and pulls out the contents...

A NOTE. It reads: NO ANGELS.

BAXTER sets the note down and turns the envelope upside down. Out falls A SMALL OBJECT. Baxter takes it and stares at...

A RED BARRETTE.

BAXTER grips the barrette like it's a St. Christopher and looks once again at his beautiful daughters in his beautiful pool in his beautiful yard.

JENNIFER AND CHLOE -- watching him back.

EXT. DEKE'S HOUSE (DESERT) - DUSK

Deke takes the last trash bag to a 55-gallon drum fire and dumps it in. The flames engulf it.

Deke returns to the Bronco, reaches in, and grabs the lockbox. He opens it again, hoping for a different result but...

It's still VERY EMPTY.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

After hours. The place is empty. FLO DUNIGAN is performing a hush-hush autopsy.

In a chair, emotionally drained, sits DEKE, eyeing the floor. Behind him stands Farris, wearing a grimace --

Flo uses a large set of tweezers to dig into the subject's chest. She fishes for, extracts, and holds up...

A bullet, flattened. The one that ended up on Flo's keychain.

The three share a look -- a shattering, hideous moment that defines them forever. Flo sighs and looks to Deke.

FLO

Cause of death -- massive stab wounds.

(MORE)
Deke slowly turns to Farris. The two men stare at one another, then Farris, hating himself, nods and walks out of the room.

Flo drops the bullet in a metal pan and she, too, walks away.

Deke just sits, staring at the body of Mary Roberts. He doesn't even flinch when...

her head slowly turns toward him... and she smiles, ever so slightly.

EXT. DEKE'S HOUSE - DUSK (PRESENT)

The fire still blazes. Deke walks to the front passenger door of his Bronco, opens it, takes out a small grocery sack, reaches in, and pulls out...

A CARDBOARD BARRETTE PACKAGE -- price tag still on -- several barrettes pinned to cardboard backing. One missing. The red one.

He tosses it into the flame, then senses someone coming...

Over the ridge -- THE CUR DOG -- returning home. The mutt wanders up next to his leg and Deke obliges with a boot back scratch.

THE FLAMES engulf Sparma's belongings. All of them. And the barrettes, too.

ANGLE HIGH ABOVE

Deke walks into the house, followed by his sometimes pet.

... as... WE HEAR a BOBWHITE’S LONELY CALL split the desert air...

FADE TO BLACK.