A PATIENT MAN by

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FADE IN:

EXT. QUIET STREET - DAY

An ugly, brown apartment towers, lifeless like a monolith erected to some lost civilization.

In front of it, trees pepper the boulevard, their leaves in the midst of changing colors.

A gentle breeze lifts a fallen leaf off the ground and carries it down the deserted street.

The leaf dances down the sidewalk, comes to a rest at the base of a mailbox perched on a wooden post.

EXT. OUTSIDE A QUAINT HOME - DAY

A tiny home with wooden clapboard siding and colorful trim is perched on a slight hill. It is completely dwarfed by the imposing buildings on either side.

A sign is firmly planted in the middle of the yard; it reads: WALTER'S SMALL MOTOR AND APPLIANCE REPAIR.

This home looks like a tiny, solitary flower growing amongst a field of stone.

A metal mailbox stands guard at the end of the home's long walkway.

The front door CREAKS opens. Out steps WALTER, early fifties, gaunt and aged beyond his years.

He closes the door behind him, fishes a single key from his breast pocket, LOCKS the door, replaces the key. He takes a deep BREATH, fills his lungs with the brisk air, steps off the raised porch.

Walter approaches the mailbox with some hesitation; he reaches for the door, pauses, bites his lip. Then tentatively opens the mailbox, looks inside, all sense of hope drains from his face; he lets out a long, drawn out SIGH, closes the mailbox.

INT. OUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is devoid of any luxuries. Machinery parts and small appliances litter the floor and tables. A lone, leather easy chair and end table sit in the middle of the room.

Walter sits in the chair, sullen and beat.

He reaches beside him, takes a framed picture from the table, looks longingly at it.

It's a black and white photo of a beautiful, raven haired young woman.

She looks sixteen, fair skin, wholesome-looking, a big smile spread across her face. She suddenly comes to life, covers her mouth, GIGGLES.

EXT. CARNIVAL MIDWAY - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

The Midway is a flurry of activity. The MUSIC is so loud it nearly drowns out the Carnies BARKING at PASSERS-BY. The lights on the rides flash so much that they are sure to induces seizures.

MAGDALENA, the girl from the photo, is flanked by two fellow GIGGLING GIRLS, also sixteen, all wearing modest dresses. They raise their hands in a dainty wave.

A young WALTER, twenty, wearing coveralls and a dirty cap, a day's growth on his face, leans up against the controls of the Ferris Wheel. He acknowledges his admirers with a tip of his cap.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

INT. QUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

A loud KNOCKING at the door startles Walter. He pulls the picture close to his heart.

WALTER

(whispers)

Magdalena?

He puts the picture back on the end table, stands up with a soft GRUNT. He makes his way to the front door, licks his hand, mats down his thinning hair, straightens his collar.

A smile spreads across his face as he UNLOCKS the door, YANKS it open.

His smile fades: before him stands ERIC, thirties, in a thrift store suit and a two-dollar hair cut; the man extends his hand and a fake smile.

ERIC

Good afternoon sir.

Walter stares blankly. Eric pulls his hand back.

ERIC

Ok then. I'm Eric Johnson with R and E Developers. My employer is interested in this land. If only you'd --

Without a word Walter begins to close the door, Eric stops it with his foot.

ERIC

But sir, if you'd only let me look around, assess the property, you'll find we can make you a generous offer.

Eric flashes a toothy smile.

WALTER

I'm not giving up my home and my business!

With that he CLOSES the door.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is virtually empty, there is a table in the middle of the room and an old storage chest nearby.

RACHAEL, early thirties, long black hair, sits at the table, looking through a small photo album; an open leather pouch lays on the table beside her; a syringe and spoon lie next to it, brown powder is sprinkled about.

The door BURSTS open! Eric storms in, SLAMS the door behind him. Rachael looks up, startled by the sudden outburst.

RACHAEL

(trepidly)

I take it it didn't go well?

Eric THROWS his keys on the table.

ERIC

No dice. The old coot wouldn't even let me look around. We'll have to be more... forceful.

He looks down at the table, notices the syringe.

ERIC

Damn it Rachael! I said lay off the smack 'til after we get the money. We don't have much left.

He scoops up the paraphernalia, puts the pouch in his pocket.

Rachael pulls a yellowing newspaper clipping from a sleeve of the photo album, unfolds it, lays it on the table.

RACHAEL

Are we even sure he has the money?

ERIC

Only one way to find out. Look at the paper...

Eric picks up the clipping.

The headline reads: VAULT TAKEN FOR 100 GRAND, NO SUSPECTS.

Below the headline and photo, handwritten in pen: 233 WEST 15TH STREET.

ERIC

Your grandpa was the bank manager back then. Two weeks later he moved his family to Chicago... you said so yourself. Seems pretty damning to me.

Rachael grabs the clipping from Eric, folds it, returns it to the album.

RACHAEL

All I'm saying is that he never mentioned anything, and my mother died before I had a chance to know her.

Eric flips the lid of the storage chest, DIGS through its contents.

ERIC

There had to have been a partner, and maybe this is his address.

RACHAEL

(mumbles)

Seems pretty flimsy.

Eric pulls out a stuffed bear, throws it on the floor; pulls out an old radio, inspects it, sets it on the table.

ERIC

This'll do. Tomorrow you take this down to the old man, have him check it out, distract him. I'll take care of the rest.

Rachael doesn't say a word.

She walks over to the window, looks out: a bird's eye view of the quaint home and front yard.

SFX: The time changes from day to night, then back to day.

Walter exits his home, locks the door, makes his ritualistic walk to the mailbox.

INT. QUAINT HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is cluttered, dirty dishes fill the sink, a bowl of old fruit sits on the counter, fruit flies are all about.

Walter makes his way to the cupboard, OPENS it, pulls down an aging coffee can. As he is about to open the lid a KNOCK comes from the front door.

INT. QUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter UNLOCKS and OPENS the door: a woman with raven black hair faces away from him.

WALTER

(tentatively)

Maqdalena?

Rachael turns around, concern on her face.

There is a slight pause - a moment of recognition, before Walter's disappointment sets in.

WALTER

Sorry, not interested.

He goes to close the door, Rachael stops it with her hand.

RACHAEL

Don't you do repairs?

She jabs a thumb over her shoulder.

RACHAEL

The sign?

WALTER

Oh... yes, how rude of me. Please come in. I'm Walter Drummond

He steps aside, Rachael enters with the old radio under her arm, Walter closes the door behind her, LOCKS it.

RACHAEL

Thanks. I'm Rachael.

WALTER

Such a lovely name...

Rachael holds up the radio.

RACHAEL

I have this radio, it was left to me when my granddad died, but I think it still has some life left in it. Think you could help?

Walter takes the radio from her, looks it over.

WALTER

Hmm, I had a radio just like this ages ago. Kept breaking on me. You see, the wiring is pretty flimsy. Easy to fix though.

Walter heads to the kitchen. Rachael looks around, turns the LATCH on the door's lock, follows Walter.

INT. QUAINT HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Walter sets the radio on the table between two sets of dusty plates and silverware, a brand new candle sits in the center of the table.

Walter twists a couple of screws on the radio, lifts the case revealing the insides.

WALTER

Ah yes. Here we go, a loose wire.

He fiddles with the wires a bit then replaces the case, carries it to the counter, plugs it into the outlet.

He turns the KNOB, the radio comes to life, soft MUSIC plays.

Walter closes his eyes, sways to the music.

WALTER

(over his shoulder)
Pardon me for being so bold. But,
you look rather familiar to me.
Have you been here before?

RACHAEL

No, I don't think so. Maybe we met in a former life. Do you believe in reincarnation, Mr. Drummond?

WALTER

No... No, I do not. I believe this is the only life we have. This is our one shot to grab that brass ring...

The MUSIC distorts.

EXT. CARNIVAL MIDWAY - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Walter and Magdalena walk hand in hand past booths that house the games of skill.

The MUSIC is no longer distorted.

Magdalena pulls Walter close to her, points to one of the games; they stop, approach the game.

Walter is given three brass rings. He bites his lip, squints, throws a ring: it lands directly on the neck of a milk bottle. Two more rings fall on the bottle.

Magdalena CLAPS, GIGGLES and points to a stuffed bear. The carny pulls down the toy, hands it to Magdalena.

Walter and Magdalena kiss. Walter's eyes suddenly open wide.

INT. QUAINT HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Walter's eyes bug out.

Eric covers Walter's face with a rag, Walter goes limp.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK:

WALTER (V.O.)

Keep them closed. Almost there.

A car door SLAMS.

WALTER (V.O.)

Ok. You can open them.

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSIDE A QUAINT HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Walter and Magdalena stand on the sidewalk outside of the small house. Similar houses sit on either side.

Walter drops to one knee, presents a small box to Magdalena, opens it to reveal a... key.

Magdalena is in tears, she nods her head furiously. Walter stands, they embrace.

INT. QUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room has been torn apart, someone must have been searching for something.

Walter sits in his chair, chin on his chest, gag in his mouth, duct tape wrapped around his torso attaching him firmly to the chair back, his ankles are taped as well.

Rachael stands behind him, Eric pulls the gag out, SLAPS him.

ERIC

(yelling)

Where's the damn money?

Walter is still groggy, drools.

ERIC

Damn it. Keep an eye on him, I'm checking the basement.

Eric STOMPS off. Rachael squats in front of Walter, brings a bottle of water to his lips; he tries to drink.

RACHAEL

(softly)

Mr. Drummond, where is the money? It'll be easier if you just tell him.

Walter shakes his head.

WALTER

(groggily)

No... money.

Rachael pulls a photo album out of her purse, FLIPS through it, pulls out the old newspaper clipping, replaces the album.

RACHAEL

No money, huh? Can you explain this?

She unfolds the clipping, tosses it on his lap; he looks down at the clipping.

INT. QUAINT HOME, BEDROOM - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Walter lies in bed, Magdalena next to him, nervously rubbing her belly.

WALTER

You're quiet tonight.

She's hesitant, but then it all gushes out, tears, words.

MAGDALENA

Daddy's moving us. We're leaving tomorrow. He's taking us to --

Walter turns to face her, grabs her hand.

WALTER

Stay. I got this house for you. So we could be together --

Magdalena pushes his hands away, turns her back to him.

MAGDALENA

Can't you see I can't? I have to go. I'm pregnant...

Her words sink in. He grabs her, turns her until they are nose to nose.

WALTER

All the more reason to stay, we can do this --

MAGDALENA

Stop Walter... just stop. You know as well as I, father won't allow us to be together. It would bring shame on the family... on his precious name.

Walter averts his eyes.

MAGDALENA

He'd have you arrested without a second thought. I'm his little girl. He has his suspicions, but I'll never tell. That's why I have to go.

Walter turns over, digs through the nightstand.

WALTER

Write me every week. I'll wait for you.

He pulls out a newspaper and a pen, writes on the newspaper: 233 WEST 15TH STREET.

Magdalena snatches the paper from him, kisses him passionately, leans in close to his ear.

MAGDALENA

(whispers)

I'll return to you.

ERIC (V.O.)

I found a safe... What's the combo?

INT. QUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eric has Walter by the collar, shaking him.

ERIC

(yelling)

What's the fuckin' combination?

Walter shakes his head. Eric winds up, HITS Walter hard.

ERIC

I'll just have to bust it open. There's some tools around here.

He STORMS out, KNOCKS over the end table BREAKING the picture frame that sits on it.

Bleeding, Walter strains against his bindings, tries to reach for the broken picture frame.

RACHAEL

What's this?

Rachael picks up the frame, brushes away the broken glass, looks at it. The color drains from her face, her mouth drops open.

She pulls the picture from the frame, drops it to the ground.

The picture of Magdalena is actually part of a picture torn in half.

She pull the photo album from her purse, FLIPS through it, pulls out an old photo of a young Walter - the other half of the picture she holds in her hands.

RACHAEL

You know her?

Walter nods.

WALTER

(groggily)

Coffee...

RACHAEL

There isn't any, how do you know --

WALTER

Can... Kitchen.

He looks toward the kitchen, she follows his gaze, gets up and walks to the kitchen.

INT. QUAINT HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rachael walks through the doorway, searches the counter, OPENS and CLOSES cupboards until she finds the old coffee can.

She pulls the lid off the top, pulls out a handful of letters, sets the can down. She pulls a letter out of one of the envelopes.

INT. QUAINT HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

POUNDING comes from downstairs. Walter is barely conscious.

Rachael walks in from the kitchen, letters in hand.

RACHAEL

(reading)

I'm just now beginning to get settled. Chicago's not all bad...

She shuffles through more letters.

RACHAEL

(reading)

Daddy's trying to set me up with a co-worker's son. But don't you worry...

She pulls out another letter.

RACHAEL

(reading)

Had the baby yesterday, a little girl. I named her Rachael. She has your eyes.

Rachael stands in front of Walter, tears up.

RACHAEL

Who are you? Why do you have these?

Walter looks up, in a moment of lucidity...

WALTER

Father.

Rachael drops the letters, speechless.

WALTER

Where is... Magdalena?

RACHAEL

I never had the chance to know her... I was still only a baby.

WALTER

Magdalena...

Rachael drops her head.

RACHAEL

It was pneumonia. Tell me about her.

Walter begins to SOB.

The POUNDING from below has stopped, replaced with heavy foot FALLS on the stairs, Rachael quickly replaces Walter's gag.

Eric STOMPS into the room, a garbage bag in hand.

ERIC

Son of a bitch. There's no money.

Rachael stares at Walter, doesn't respond.

ERIC

I said there's no money. Bank money anyway. I found maybe a couple thousand, but the bills are too new.

He tugs at her arm hard, the pictures fall out of her hands, flutter to the floor.

ERIC

Let's get outta here. We gotta take care of the old man though.

He pulls the leather pouch out of his pocket, thrusts it into her hands.

ERIC

Give him a lethal dose; then meet me outside. We gotta get out of here before his family starts looking for him.

Eric hustles out the front door.

Rachael looks at the pouch in her hands, then after Eric.

She opens the pouch, pulls out the syringe.

She looks from the syringe to Walter and back. Then replaces the syringe, closes it up, drops it in a waste basket.

She pulls out a small knife, cuts Walter's bindings.

A car horn HONKS out front.

She leans in close to Walter.

RACHAEL

(whispers)

I'll return to you.

She hurries to the door, OPENS it, looks back at Walter, smiles nervously, leaves.

Walter looks at her.

MAGDALENA (V.O.)

I'll return to you.

He struggles against the loose bindings, they break free.

He gets to his feet, slowly makes his way to the window, parts the curtains, looks out: Rachael gets into a car without looking back.

Walter lets the curtains fall back into place; he drops his head, dejected, abandoned.

He turns, slowly SHUFFLES back to the chair, PLOPS in it. He leans over, pulls the pouch out of the waste basket, opens it.

He pulls out the syringe, turns it over in his hands.

WALTER

(whispers)

We'll be together soon.

A single tear rolls down his cheek.

FADE OUT: