

ONUS PROBANDI

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FADE IN:

EXT: CRANTHORNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The old weatherboard house sits alone down a country road. A single fluorescent light only just illuminates the back door.

A shadowy figure emerges from the dark. A man in black, wears a surgical mask, latex gloves and carries a large yellow handled screwdriver.

Deliberately prizes the screwdriver into the lock. Tries to be as silent as he can.

A jolt. The screwdriver releases the lock. The shadowy man enters the house.

EXT: CRANTHORNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Wide view of the house. A light in a room switches on.

The sounds of a violent struggle. Grunting, groaning. Some punches. This is life and death, only one will walk away.

THUMP!

Muffled gurgling screams which gradually fade to silence.

EXT: ROAD - NIGHT

Out of the darkness the shadowy man now runs, rapid panting, a mix of exertion and adrenaline. The mask has slipped to his chin. This is MIKE who we are very soon to meet. Bloodied gloves and blood specks on his face.

There is no screwdriver.

As he runs he dissolves again into darkness leaving some faint red shoe prints on the concrete path.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - SECURITY CAMERA - DAY

Black and white grainy footage.

A table. Three chairs. Paper cups and a jug of water.

The door opens. Three people walk through. All take their seats.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

In the corner is MIKE WAGNER (35), who we met earlier. Built strong, he exudes a commanding presence. Looks tired and dishevelled.

The two sharply dressed detectives, DANIEL BOURIC (42) and ELISE WATT (32), take their time to sit. Both holding a folder and a notepad.

MIKE yawns.

DANIEL
Tired, mate?

MIKE glares at DANIEL for a second.

MIKE
Well it's been a pretty fucking eventful week. Excuse me for not getting much sleep.

DANIEL smirks.

ELISE
Mike, thanks for meeting with us. There has been an interesting development. Just exploring some leads at the moment.

MIKE
Mmm Hmm.

ELISE opens her folder and reads some notes.

ELISE
Look, your wife's case is still ongoing as you know.

MIKE
Yep.

ELISE
And we have interviewed a dozen or so people.

MIKE
Including me.

ELISE
Yes. And we are, or were, getting close to act on information.

MIKE slouches into his chair. Folds his arms.

MIKE
Well you should have acted earlier.

ELISE
Mike, as I said in the car there
has been a new development, and...

DANIEL holds up his hand and ELISE stops mid sentence.

DANIEL signals ELISE to come closer. He whispers in her ear.

MIKE
(points to camera)
Shouldn't you two be talking so the
recording can hear you?

DANIEL
We'll set the guidelines here mate.
Your job is to answer our
questions. Simple as that.

DANIEL whispers something else to ELISE. She nods.

MIKE smirks and shakes his head.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Mike, what do you know about Steven
Cranthorne?

Mike slowly shakes his head.

Thinks for a while before he delivers his response.

MIKE
Well. Just that he murdered my
wife.

DANIEL
You seem very sure of that.

MIKE
Oh I'm uber sure.
(points to them both)
But you cunts let him go.

DANIEL
So you would have plenty of reasons
to want to see Cranthorne harmed?

MIKE shakes his head.

MIKE
You're kidding, right?

DANIEL

Well Mike. Something has happened to Cranthorne. But I think you already know that, don't you?

A silent stare between the two, uncomfortably long.

ELISE

Mike. Where were you last night?

MIKE

Home.

DANIEL

Was anyone else there with you?

MIKE

Ah, no Sherlock. I don't have the pleasure of living with my wife anymore, do I?

DANIEL opens file and looks at a paper.

DANIEL

And you wanted Cranthorne to pay, right?

MIKE

Well you let him walk last week.

ELISE

At that point we didn't have enough evidence to charge anyone.

DANIEL

But now he's dead, Mike. Murdered. And I think you might be the key to solving this.

MIKE raises his eyebrows and laughs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So that's funny, eh?

MIKE

That's fucking hilarious, mate.

DANIEL

What? That he's dead? Or that you are the prime murder suspect?

MIKE

(scoffs)

Both.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - SECURITY CAMERA - DAY

Black and white image.

Fast motion, no sound. The interview continues.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A piece of paper is placed in front of MIKE.

He reads it, then flicks it back across the table.

MIKE

Oh so all that, we've just got a few more questions, blah, blah, blah, was bullshit. Just to get me here and without kicking up a fuss when you raided my house.

ELISE

So the warrant has been enacted and officers are searching your home at the moment. And we also have a court order to keep you for up to 24 hours without charge.

DANIEL

And we've got your DNA from last week. All the forensics will be in tomorrow morning. We'll find something Mike. So why don't you make it easy for everyone and just tell us the truth.

MIKE glares at DANIEL.

EXT: MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Police tape across the driveway, a car with all doors open. Officers sift through the vehicle. Photo flashes.

Two officers walk past with clear plastic bags containing a laptop, phone, iPad, some clothes and a wad of papers.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

DANIEL signals ELISE to hand him a photo.

DANIEL

Have a look at this.

Passes to MIKE.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Gagged. Tied. And killed with a
long yellow screwdriver through the
throat. It's exactly the same mate.
Same as your wife's.

MIKE
(smiles)
Top effort. That has made my day.
Got any more?

ELISE
Audrey's murder details were never
publicly released. But Cranthorne's
killer must have known.

MIKE continues to study the photo with a grin.

MIKE
I know you found his DNA at her
scene. And you let him go.

DANIEL
And we found your DNA as well. We
also let you go.

MIKE scoffs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Cranthorne and Audrey were having
an affair. And we know that you
knew that. So there's two motives
for two murders right there, mate.

SMASH!

In anger MIKE swipes the paper cups in front of him off the
table.

DANIEL walks over and pulls the photo from MIKE's hands.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
So I figure it's like this. We
either have a revenge killing,
which is what I'm leaning towards.
Or, we have serial killer with
quite a unique calling card. And
that puts you in the frame for both
murders.

EXT: HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET- DAY

Two DETECTIVES talk to a HOUSEOWNER, across from MIKE'S house. They point to a security camera. The HOUSEKEEPER nods and opens up his phone.

EXT: POLICE STATION- NIGHT

Evening has descended over the town. The yellow hue of the street lights barely illuminate the station.

INT: POLICE INSPECTORS OFFICE- NIGHT

Senior Detective GERARD MACKAY(53), sits behind a desk and flicks through papers. The many years of hardened service are evident in his face.

ELISE and DANIEL across from the desk. ELISE studies messages on a phone.

GERARD looks up.

GERARD

Okay, where are we up to with Wagner?

ELISE opens her file.

ELISE

Look Chief, nothing yet. He's not giving much up at all.

DANIEL

Yeah, but he's fucken as guilty as sin, boss. Gravel Beach is about 4 hours north. So Wagner had plenty of time to get up there, murder him, between eleven and one. And get back. He wouldn't have got any sleep though.

ELISE

And he's so tired he can hardly keep his eyes open in there.

GERARD

Yeah, well this is getting to be a right royal shit show now. I've got the Commissioner up my clacker. Two fucking murders in ten days and no one charged yet for either. The media is in a frenzy.

(MORE)

GERARD (CONT'D)

We've gotta get something concrete
before tomorrow's press conference.

ELISE holds up her phone.

ELISE

So I've got word from forensics
they'll have the reports in by 8 am
tomorrow. That'll give us DNA,
prints, fabrics, phone records and
all that.

DANIEL

And we are getting downloaded home
security camera footage from across
the street, and some in town.

GERARD

Okay. Well get back in at 6.30
tomorrow morning and hammer
something out of him.

ELISE

Yeah I'm not sure we are going to
get a confession boss.

GERARD points his finger.

GERARD

Well that's your job Detective. You
guys have told me he's guilty. And
if he's guilty then any half decent
D is going to crack him. Yeah?

DANIEL

Absolutely sir.

GERARD sighs.

GERARD

Look. I don't actually give a fuck
who killed his wife now. Tell him
if he confesses to Cranthorne we'll
take him out of the frame for her
murder. But lay the double homicide
on thick if he keeps holding out.

DANIEL

Okay Sir. Sounds good

ELISE closes her file.

EXT: POLICE STATION- DAY

Dawn breaks over the Police Station.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM, SECURITY CAMERA - DAY

Black and white image. Fast motion, no sound.

The morning interview is in full swing.

Fast food paper bags, wrappers and coffee cups(x3). The trio eat and drink. The talking is mostly done by the cops.

INT: POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

DANIEL screws up his paper coffee cup and basketballs it into the bin.

DANIEL

So we're going in circles Mike. In less than an hour we'll have the forensics we need. It's going to look much better for you if you tell us the truth before we prove it with evidence.

MIKE rolls his eyes.

MIKE

Well I can't tell you any more, mate. It wasn't me. You'll find nothing.

DANIEL

Oh we will. Look, just make your case for diminished responsibility and all that, and you'll probably get a much, much lighter sentence. You'll have the media on side, and with a good lawyer you'll probably serve just five to seven with parole.

ELISE

And Mike, if you confess, we're going to close your wife's murder case. It'll be attributed to Cranthorne, done deal. That's from the top brass.

DANIEL

But if you choose to fight it,
Mike, we are full steam on the two
murders with you. And then you're
fucked mate. You are then a serial
killer. Fucked.

MIKE laughs.

MIKE

As if I'd believe anything you pigs
spewed up anyway.

He leans back in the chair.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm over this crap now. I'll just
enact my right to remain silent
now. Let me know when it's 11.15
and I can fuck off.

DANIEL stands.

DANIEL

Righto Mike. We'll leave you here
stewing okay. But as I said we'll
be back soon with some forensic
evidence to discuss with you.

ELISE stands and follows DANIEL out the door.

INT: POLICE STATION- DAY

As ELISE and DANIEL walk down the hallway, GERARD is in front
of them. He is on his phone.

GERARD

Yes sir, I truly appreciate the
gravity at the moment..
(holds up his hand to stop
the duo)
... I did see the Minister on TV
this morning, yes...
(beat)
... I agree it looked pretty bad...
(beat)
... okay I promise you
we'll have a breakthrough
to announce at the 10am
presser.(beat)
Okay sir, thanks.

Taps his phone.

GERARD confronts the detectives.

GERARD (CONT'D)
Okay. Give me some fucking good news.

ELISE looks at DANIEL, who immediately looks down.

ELISE
So sir, he um, isn't budging from his position. He's just clammed up.

GERARD
Well that's just great, isn't it?

ELISE
But the forensics are due in any minute so we'll get something there for sure.

GERARD
Yeah well you'd better. Otherwise it's my fucking neck getting a screwdriver through it.

PING!

ELISE picks up her phone and reads the message.

ELISE
Okay Sir, they're in.

GERARD
GO!

INT: POLICE ROOM- MOMENTS LATER

DANIEL paces around the room. ELISE stares blankly at some papers.

ELISE
I just don't get it. Nothing.

DANIEL
What are we missing here? Let's go over it again. Fine tooth comb.

ELISE
Okay.

EXT- ROAD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Out of the darkness the shadowy man now runs, rapid panting, a mix of exertion and adrenaline. The mask has slipped to his chin. Bloodied gloves and blood splashes over his face.

ELISE (V.O.)
Cranthorne's house there were no fingerprints found.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Shoe prints were found in the house and outside.

MIKE leaves some bloodied shoe prints on the concrete path.

ELISE (V.O.)
None of his shoes matched those prints or had any traces of blood.

As he runs he dissolves again into darkness.

EXT- BEACH PARK - NIGHT

MIKE carefully doffs gloves and washes his hands under a tap.

DANIEL (V.O.)
What about the clothing fibres?

A backpack is retrieved behind a bush. MIKE takes out a large plastic garbage bag and places the gloves in it. His shoes and socks follow.

He strips naked and washes himself under the beach shower.

Shivers.

ELISE (V.O.)
No match with any of his clothes.

MIKE takes out a towel from the pack. Dries off.

Takes out a package of folded clothes and a fresh pair of shoes wrapped in cling film.

He piles the dirty clothes and shoes in the garbage bag.

EXT - BEACH - NIGHT

The beach is abandoned except for small camp fire flickering in the sand.

MIKE looks left and right before he deposits the garbage bag into the fire.

He sits for a while warming his hands as black smoke rises.

INT: POLICE STATION- DAY

A map on the computer screen. Tracking a route.

ELISE

So his phone never left town.
(points to track)
Drove from work to home. Looks like he then walked down the street to the park and back in the afternoon. And did the same thing in the morning.

DANIEL

Well he's smart. Leaves his phone at home. Still gives him enough time to drive up there and back.

ELISE

But look here. He's ordered a meal through Uber eats at 8.13pm via his phone. Checks out with his credit card. And a message from his mother at 10.42 which he replied to.

DANIEL

So he's hired someone to do it?

ELISE

But there is nothing at all on his phone, or computer or anything that comes close to suggesting that. And really he would have only had a couple of days to organise it all, and that seems pretty remote.

DANIEL

What about his car?

ELISE

Clean as a whistle. Nothing.

DANIEL stands and starts pacing the room.

DANIEL

Credit cards, accounts? Anything suss?

ELISE
No, everything checks out. No
unaccounted money in or out.

DANIEL
What about the security cameras?

ELISE studies the screen.

ELISE
Oh yep, the clips with him have
come in, hang on.

She clicks on the screen.

INT: POLICE STATION- DAY

(Security Camera footage: Across the street)

ELISE (V.O.)
Here he is arriving home. 16:24

Car disappears into garage.

ELISE (V.O.)
And now coming out with his dog at
16:52

MIKE walks the dog. Wears a fluoro tradie shirt and long blue
workwear trousers.

ELISE (V.O.)
Okay, the footage from library on
main street, yep they've sent four
clips.

(Security camera footage: Library on Main St)

MIKE and dog walks along the street. Time stamp 17:06.

ELISE (V.O.)
Okay, and he is on his way back at
17:51. Yep.

Walks back with the dog.

(Security Camera footage: Across the street)

They come back to MIKE'S house and enter.

ELISE (V.O.)
And back home at 18:08.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Uber Eats?

ELISE (V.O.)
Yep. Next clip. Delivered at 21:02.

A delivery guy walks to door and delivers a food parcel. The door opens and an arm reaches out to collect the food.

INT: POLICE STATION- DAY

ELISE and DANIEL continue to stare at the screen.

DANIEL
(points to screen)
There's more clips there.

ELISE
Yep, next morning.
(clicks on mouse)
Mike walking the dog again at 5:52

Footage shows him in the same work gear, he leaves the house with his dog.

ELISE clicks open a new clip.

Both security camera footages show the same as ELISE'S dialogue.

ELISE (CONT'D)
Past the library at 6:04 to the park.

Footage. Clicks again.

ELISE (CONT'D)
Library at 6.44 on the way back.

Footage. Clicks again.

ELISE (CONT'D)
And home at 7.01.

Footage. Clicks again.

ELISE (CONT'D)
Then driving out for work at 7.24.

DANIEL
Walking his dog two times a day? A bit strange.

ELISE

Nah. Neighbours say it's his normal routine if the weather is okay.

ELISE turns to DANIEL.

ELISE (CONT'D)

And what we don't see is, his car ever leaving overnight. Parked at 4:24 pm and left again at 7:30 the next morning.

DANIEL

Well then how the fuck did he get up to Gravel Beach?

EXT: BEACH PARK - NIGHT

MIKE walks from the beach on the path.

Puts the backpack on. Takes a set of keys from his trousers.

Straddles a large CC motorcycle, turns over the engine.

He rides off into the night.

INT: POLICE STATION- DAY

ELISE sits with her head in her hands. DANIEL continues to pace.

DANIEL

So. We have a murder. We have a motive. We have a murder weapon. And we know who did the fucking thing.

ELISE

(mumbles)

But we've got no evidence. Nothing.

DANIEL walks calmly to the desk. Picks up a coffee cup. And,

SMASH!

Throws it against the wall.

INT: POLICE INSPECTORS OFFICE- DAY

At the door, DANIEL and ELISE look nervously at each other.

They knock.

GERARD (O.S.)
(shouts)
Get in here!

EXT: POLICE STATION- DAY

Two uniformed police officers escort MIKE out the front door.

On the street a helmeted man sits on a familiar motorbike and passes MIKE a helmet.

The two ride off down the street.

EXT: MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY - (TWO DAYS AGO)

MIKE takes his dog out from the house and walks down the street.

EXT: MAIN STREET - DAY

They continue on the street and pass the library.

EXT: PARK - DAY

MIKE sits on a park bench with his dog. He flicks through some pages on his phone.

Looks up and sees a man wearing a helmet, black jacket and wearing a backpack.

MIKE looks around to check if there is anyone watching. He then nods his head towards the disabled toilet.

INT: TOILET FACILITY - DAY

Both men and the dog are in the toilet.

The stranger takes off his helmet. This is MARK WAGNER (35), MIKE'S identical twin. Same build, same haircut, same features. Perhaps only their mother, and certainly no distant security camera, could tell them apart.

They undress in unison.

INT: TOILET FACILITY - DAY

MARK now wears the fluoro work gear and MIKE wears the bike gear and backpack.

MIKE

Alright. Back here at sunrise,
about 6:15-ish okay? We'll do it
all over again.

MARK nods. MIKE hands MARK the phone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So you got my passcodes and pins?

MARK

Yeah mate. I'll order some Thai.
You finally get to buy me a meal
you stingy bastard.
(points to backpack)
And the fake plates for the bike
are in there as well. Here ya go.

MARK hands MIKE a set of keys.

MIKE

And the screwdriver?

MARK

300 mill, yellow flat head and
still in it's packet. Paid with
cash and no receipt as directed.

MIKE

Cool. Mum always texts me after ten
or so. Just reply I'm okay.

MARK nods. Picks up the dog leash. Pats the dog on the head.

MARK

Come on Braxxy, let's go!

EXT: PARK - DAY

MARK and the dog walk from the toilets and head towards town.

MIKE dons the helmet and heads the other direction.

FADE TO BLACK.