

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET CORNER - MORNING

Audible traffic noise. Just getting started.

Hammer in hand, CURT DENNON (35) pounds a nail into a telephone pole. A last emphatic strike and he steps back to reveal a POSTER --

LOST DOG
FAMILY HEARTBROKEN

A phone number and a picture of a sweet GERMAN SHEPHERD.

Curt sighs. He's a big guy. Stetson atop his head, LAW ENFORCEMENT emblem on his jacket sleeve.

He leaves and we cut to a

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Nice houses. Upper middle class.

INT. HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Home & Gardens spread. Neat, organized. Coffee brews.

CASSIE DENNON (34), routinely drinks her coffee as she thumbs the pages of a magazine.

The back door swings open. Curt trudges in.

CURT
Anything?

CASSIE
No. Nothing yet.

CURT
Dammit.

She goes to Curt. They embrace.

CASSIE

I'm sorry, honey. It's only been a few days. We'll find him.

CURT

I just can't believe I left the gate open.

CASSIE

Stop it. You can't blame yourself.

He kisses her forehead.

CURT

You'll wait by the phone?

CASSIE

For as long as it takes. Now go to work, take your mind off this. Go catch some bad guys.

CURT

Okay.

He almost smiles as he walks out the door.

Cassie watches him go. She leans against the counter, fingers drumming behind her. She looks up and exhales.

INT. HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Crackling fireplace. A wall clock chimes. 9:00 PM.

Curt on the sofa, trying to read. He can't. Mind is elsewhere. He closes the book when --

RIING RIING. A cordless phone on the table.

He picks it up, checks the number. Beat. Answers.

CURT

Hello?

(nothing)

Hello?

INT. WHITE TRASH HOUSE - NIGHT

A fucking mess. Cheap furniture, strewn beer cans, ancient Chinese food boxes teeming with roaches.

MAN (V.O.)

You dog's got some real nice teeth,
you know that?

HALLWAY

Peeled paint. A poster of a hot chick and a Harley.

MAN (V.O.)

But I've got pliers.

CURT (ON PHONE)

Who the fuck is this?!

MAN (V.O.)

Taylor Swift.

BEDROOM

Dark. A SHADOWY FIGURE gazes out a window, phone pressed to his ear.

MAN (V.O.)

\$10,000 dollars for the mutt. Cash. Or
I start playing dentist.

Through the window, in the backyard, is RANGER, the Shepherd from the poster. He's tied to a tree in a sitting position, snout muzzled.

INT. CURT'S LIVING ROOM

Curt's free hand opens and closes into a white knuckled fist.

CURT

You hurt my dog and I'll fucking kill
you.

MAN (ON PHONE)
\$10,000. You wait by that phone.
Asshole.

CLICK!

CURT
Hello? *Hello?*

He goes to throw the phone. Stops himself. He paces a few steps. Seething. Thinking, then --

Snatches a pen and pad from a nearby table. Grabs the phone, navigates the menu and begins to write.

He dials and waits.

CURT
Hey, Pete. It's Curt. Yeah, I'm good.
I need a favor.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

A car lumbers down a gloomy street, comes to a stop in front of a gaggle of trees. Headlights go out.

Curt emerges from the car. All black clothes, skull cap.

Across the way is a cheerless, derelict HOUSE.

Curt pulls a nine millimeter, checks it. He crosses the street, cautiously edges himself along the house.

He peers around the corner into the

BACKYARD

Ranger! Tied to the tree. His tail wags furiously. Curt's been spotted.

He hurries over. Ranger jumps on him. So excited. Curt snaps his fingers and the dog sits. He takes off the muzzle.

CURT
I'm gonna get you outta here.

A twig SNAPS from behind. Ranger growls, Curt turns and --

WHAM!

The blade of a shovel connects with Curt's face. The gun goes flying.

Ranger goes bat shit. Someone grabs the gun. Someone else locks Curt in a choke hold and drags him away.

Blood pours from Curt's nose as LANCE (20s, built like a bull) holds an ICE PICK to to the back of his neck.

Gripping the nine milli is KENNY, early thirties, emaciated and wild-eyed.

BARK! BARK! BARK!

Kenny levels the gun at Ranger.

KENNY

Shut that dog up.

LANCE

(in Curt's ear)

Do as he says.

Curt snaps his fingers. Ranger obeys. Quiet.

Through blood and snot --

CURT

You know I'm a cop. They're gonna come looking for me.

KENNY

No one's coming for you, fucknut. Your threats are as empty as your marriage.

CURT

What the fuck did you say?

Lance presses the pick harder into Curt's neck.

LANCE

She howls like a wolf.

CURT

What?

LANCE

When I'm givin' it to her. Like a
bitch wolf in heat.

BARK!

Lance turns his head. Curt connects with an elbow to his jaw. Lance flies back, but quickly recovers, and pounds the pick deep into Curt's thigh. He screams in anguish.

Ranger's going ballistic again, trading glances between all three men.

Kenny aims the gun. Doesn't want to hit Lance.

KENNY

Lance!

Lance propels forward. Curt ducks, lifts him by the crotch and slams him to the ground. Hard.

Curt's on top now, frothing and unleashing hell. Lance's teeth splinter at the root, his face caves like a sinkhole.

Curt yanks the ice pick from his leg, and jabs it into Lance's wrist, pinning him to the ground.

CURT

(turns to Kenny)

You.

Kenny backs up, squeezes the trigger.

CLICK...CLICK...CLICK.

KENNY

Fuck.

Curt reaches for the shovel, limps to Ranger. He jams it hard into the ground, severing Ranger's chain.

Ranger doesn't need a prompt. He immediately take's off in Kenny's direction.

Kenny fumbles with the gun, throws it at the dog and runs.

Curt watches, catching his breath, hands on knees.

Lance splayed out on the ground. Eyes crack open. Coming to.

Curt slowly approaches, takes a knee, and grabs a handful of his mangy hair.

In the B.G. -- *SNARLING, TEARING* as Ranger rips apart a wailing Kenny.

CURT

Hear that? That's your friend.

A moment passes. Ranger rejoins Curt. His vicious teeth, bared and bloody, loom inches from Lance's frozen face.

Lance FARTS.

CURT

Don't shit yourself just yet. I'm not through with you.

INT. HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

A sliver of light from under the bathroom door.

Door opens, Cassie exits into the bedroom, yawns and...

SHRIEKS!

Before her, huddled in pain, is Lance.

CASSIE

Jesus Christ! You scared the shit out of me.

She grabs him by the shirt.

CASSIE

Lance, look at me. Look at me.

He looks at her. Lips puffed up like balloons. Both eyes swollen shut. He cracks one open.

LANCE

Yes..?

CASSIE

Is he dead? Is Curt dead?

Lance shakes uncontrollably, tries to speak. He slowly turns around to face a DARK FIGURE --

LANCE

(sobbing)

Oh gawd... Oh gawd pweese...

CASSIE

Lance? Lance, what is it? What--

BAM!

Lance's face explodes. Blood spatters the walls. He drops.

Cassie's knocked back, covered in blood.

CASSIE

JESUS CHRIST!

In the shadows is Curt. Arm extended, gun in hand. Smoking barrel.

CASSIE

Curt! ... Oh, thank God you're here...
This man was gonna kill me! Oh, thank
God...

CURT

(lowers the gun)

Shut up.

CASSIE

Curt, I almost died.

CURT

Your boyfriend, what's left of him,
sang. Like a fucking bird.

CASSIE

What are you talking about?

CURT

Self respect. I never took you for one
to go slumming.

Curt notices some papers laid out on the bureau. He picks them up, skims it over. CAPITAL LIFE INSURANCE can clearly be read at the top.

He locks eyes with her.

CURT

Now *this* makes sense. You figured I'd
go there, right? Get popped, and you
and Needle Dick would sail off into
the sunset...

CASSIE

How could you say that? I love you.

He raises the gun...

CURT

I love you too.

... Aims.

She scrambles against the wall.

CASSIE

Wait... Wait!

CURT

What?

CASSIE

(indignant)

I should've told him to kill your
fucking dog.

Curt shakes his head. Whistles. The sound of paws padding along the hall floor. Ranger trots in, and drops the ice pick into Curt's hand.

CURT

This dog?

(tucks the gun into his
pants)

He has one thing you'll never know
anything about. Loyalty.

Ranger goes to the corpse on the floor and sniffs. With his tongue, he scoops up a piece of brain and swallows it whole.

Cassie vomits in her mouth, pushes it back down.

CASSIE

They'll hang you for this.

CURT

For what? Stopping a robbery in
progress?

CASSIE

It's my word against yours. And you
know they always side with the wife.

Curt thinks about this, then considers the ice pick in his hand. He thumbs the sharp tip.

His eyes look up.

CURT

What wife?

FADE OUT.