

LOST DOG

Written by

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EXT. STREET (FALL 1999) - DAY

A "LOST DOG" flier is stapled to a utility pole. A white Pit Mix with rusty red patches, "Ruby," is pictured with a plea for the pregnant dog's safe return home. A LITTLE GIRL, 8, and her DAD walk away, repeatedly calling out, "Ruby!"

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Dark and dank, junk and boxes. Compulsive BARKING behind a red door, paws scratching at the other side.

A door at the top of the stairs opens, letting in a shaft of sunlight, illuminating a second dog, RUBY. Tethered to the wall with a heavy chain, she nurses newborn PUPS in a dingy kiddie pool. In this grim space they are a hopeful sight.

A Figure blocks the sun, descending the stairs. He opens the red door, enters what looks like a utility room, and slams it closed. Behind it, the barking turns to WHINING and YELPS.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

MAX, 38, is pale with a buzz cut. He drives city streets in an 80s Crown Vic Police Cruiser. The rusted black-and-white is retired, stripped of roof-lights and markings.

ROXY, mid-30s, applies make-up in her visor mirror. Chestnut eyes and skin, hair pulled back tight. Max swerves a bit to throw her off and she gives him a gut punch. He smiles.

Max pulls over. Roxy kisses him but he's distant. She gets out. He waits for her to enter a building, then pulls away.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL - DAY

The stark structure is in an industrial area. Max pulls his cruiser into the back lot, backing into an isolated space. He sits in his car, wolfing two burgers with fries.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - DAY

Max enters, still eating. He makes his way down a long row of kennels. A captive mishmash of mystery mutts and half-breeds. BARKING, pacing, sleeping. Max feeds the last of his burger to an Old Dog, petting it through the chain-link.

TANYA (O.S.)

Hey Max, Bruce wants to see you.

TANYA, 40s, stout and mannish, slips out the back door.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

BRUCE, 30s, is a soft-looking liberal. His office is a mess but he's trying to create order.

Max taps on the open door. He's in full uniform, leather jacket, black boots, and badge. "Animal Control" shoulder patch. Flashlight, telescoping baton, a radio on his belt.

BRUCE

Max, come in.

Max steps inside, noticing "Animal Care & Control" logo design concepts on an easel.

BRUCE (cont'd)

New logo ideas. Animal Care and Control. Care before control. Part of the move to no-kill. Fingers crossed they go for it.

MAX

Tanya said you wanted to see me.

BRUCE

Yes, about the Shift Supervisor position. You've been here for years, I respect that. I do. But I need someone with managerial experience. You're used to working alone. Lone wolf. Tanya hasn't been here long but she's a good fit. I hope we can make this transition easy. Things are changing, we need to work together. Plus, I need you on nights.

Max is stung but remains silent.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/GARAGE - DAY

Max loads some tools into a mid-90s Animal Control truck with an extended cab and box-back with kennels and storage. Max slams a kennel door hard. Then slams it again, and again.

MONTAGE - MAX ON PARTOL - DUSK

- A) Max drives the AC truck with the police radio audible. The setting sun casts warm, dreamy light across the city.
- B) Max passes a Jogger with his Lab, a Woman watching her Mutt pee and some roguish Young Men with Muscle Dogs.
- C) An SUV drives alongside Max, Hound's head out the window. Ears flapping, blissfully sniffing.
- D) A big rock hits the windshield, cracking it.
- E) The AC truck skids to a stop. Max gets out but sees no one. His radio squawks so he gets in and drives off.

EXT. CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

Max rolls by a house with multiple police cruisers out front, lights flashing. A body lies covered, Detectives and Officers scatter the scene. Locals gather behind the tape.

An Officer SLAPS Max's hood, waving him on.

Max parks, getting out to watch. A local TV News CAMERA MAN preps to go live with REPORTER #1 standing by.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max cruises empty streets. His pager BEEPS and he checks it.

EXT. DEAD END STREET - NIGHT

The AC truck creeps down the street, stopping at the "DEAD END." Orange flashing roof-lights come on.

Max steps around the front of the truck finding a dead LAB MIX on the pavement. It has a bloody, congealing, chest wound and random burn marks crisscross its body.

Max documents the scene, flashing Polaroids, pocketing the pictures. He sweeps an electronic wand over the dog.

Max spots a MAN watching him from the front of a dark house.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

As Max approaches, the Man closes his gate. A tall chain-link fence surrounds the packrat property. "No Trespassing" clearly posted. Junk cars, tall weeds, and trash. Muted BARKING comes from the dilapidated house.

Max shines his light on the Man through the fence. He's in his 60s with a rough, ruddy, face. He shields dead eyes.

MAN

Get that light off me.

MAX

Got a dead dog. Abused and shot.

Max lowers his light and shows him one of the Polaroids.

MAX (cont'd)

See anything? Hear shots maybe?

The Man takes a good look but is unmoved by the grisly image.

MAN

You really give a shit about a dog?
Or you trying to be a hero?

MAX

I'm an Animal Control Officer.

MAN

Officer? You got no gun. What you gonna do when you catch up to whoever shot that dog?

This question hangs in the air, amusing the Man.

MAX

I'd do my job.
(shining his light around)
How many animals on the property?

MAN

Ain't your business what I got.
Why don't you do your job and clean that shit off my street!

He turns his back on Max, walking back to his house.

MAX

I'm not done talking to you.

The Man goes inside, closing the door. Max stands alone.

EXT. DEAD END STREET - NIGHT

Max retrieves a heavy-duty garbage bag from the AC truck.

Max crouches beside the Lab Mix, gently stroking its head.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

Excuse me. Hello...

Max rises as a NEIGHBOR hesitantly steps up, cradling a Toy Poodle. He can't help but look at the Lab Mix.

NEIGHBOR (cont'd)

Hey, I'm the one that called in.
(re: his Toy Poodle)
Baxter found it on our walk. Poor thing. Very upsetting. I don't know how somebody could be so cruel. No respect for life.

MAX

You know the dog? Doesn't look stray but it's got no tags or chip.

NEIGHBOR

No, never seen it before. The man you were talking to, I don't know how many dogs he's got but there's a lotta barking over there.

(MORE)

NEIGHBOR (cont'd)

Sad barking. All night sometimes.
I called you guys but nobody came.

MAX

We get a lotta barking complaints.
Sure you're on the list.

NEIGHBOR

I tried talking to him but he got
real nasty. He moved in after his
mother passed. Put up that ugly
fence. Wouldn't surprise me if he
had something to do with it.

MAX

Hard to prove with no witness. If
you see anything, call it in.

Max snaps the bag open and turns back to the Lab Mix.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - NIGHT

Max pulls the AC truck up to the back of the building.
Getting out, he opens a tall garage door. He steps inside
then emerges rolling a steel cart over to his truck.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - NIGHT

A cacophony of BARKING builds as Max pushes the cart, holding
the bagged Lab Mix, down the long row of kennels.

INT. COLD ROOM - NIGHT

Max opens an insulated door and turns on a flickering light,
rolling the cart inside. In the refrigerated space, a dozen
plus euthanized dogs and cats are spread out on the floor.

INT. KITTY KLUB - NIGHT

A Bartender pours a stiff drink and brings it to Max.

It's a cavernous room with colorful lights and thumping
music. A Stripper performs on stage for a handful of men.

Max flips through Polaroids of the Lab Mix. Stark shots of
the dead animal and details from the scene.

Roxy, transformed in a red wig, works the room. High heels,
animal print cami, and garter holding a fan of folded bills.

Seeing Max, she approaches. He stashes the pics away.

ROXY

What you doing here in uniform?
You drinking, too? What's up?

MAX

They turned me down for that job.

ROXY

No... I'm sorry, sweetie.

She puts her arm around him, rubbing his back.

MAX

Shoulda known. I had zero shot but they let me try anyway.

ROXY

All the years you been there, all you do. Fuck them, they got no respect for you. You didn't want to work with them all day anyway. Give up your nights. You'd get bored in ten minutes.

He nods and smiles but she's not convinced.

ROXY (cont'd)

Come to the VIP so we can talk.

MAX

No, I gotta go.

ROXY

Come get me when you're done. I'll buy you some donuts.

She whispers in his ear and steps away. Max watches her work the room. He picks up his untouched drink and downs it all.

EXT. MINI MART - NIGHT

Max exits the store, drinking a Gatorade. He reaches under the AC truck's rear bumper and pulls out a dirty flask.

He opens it, takes a swig, then spikes his Gatorade.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max cruises down an empty main drag. A police cruiser approaches and he waves as it passes by.

Finishing off the Gatorade, he tosses it out the window. The bottle skips across the pavement as the AC truck drives off.

EXT. DEAD END STREET - NIGHT

Max rolls by the dark house in the AC truck and parks at the dead end, killing the lights and engine. All is quiet.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Max approaches the front gate, no flashlight. A call comes over his police RADIO, breaking the quiet. He turns it off.

BARKING comes from deep in the house but the lights are mostly out. Max cuts through the yard next door.

EXT. DARK HOUSE/BACK - NIGHT

The wide back-gate is open. Max creeps up the alley.

He steps onto the property but stays out of the moonlight, making his way to the side of the house. The BARKING emanates from the basement but the windows are painted over.

As Max approaches the back door a motion-activated floodlight comes on. He steps closer and finds the door ajar.

MAX
Animal Control.

He gives the door a gentle push and it swings open. All's quiet but the persistent barking in the basement.

Max steps inside, turning on his flashlight.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Max descends the stairs, shining his light on Ruby. She's on her feet, agitated and BARKING.

MAX
It's okay, shhh, shhh, shhh...

He slowly approaches, kneels, and reaches out to her. Ruby quiets, cautiously sniffs his hand and her tail begins to sway. Max sees the Pups behind her in the kiddie pool.

MAX (cont'd)
Good girl... You just looking out
for your pups, huh? Good Mama...

Petting her, he finds the padlocked chain around her neck.

MAX (cont'd)
Got you locked up tight.

Max looks around, shining his light on the red door.

The ROAR of truck outside gets Ruby barking again. The engine dies and a CREAKY door opens, then SLAMS closed.

Max moves back to the stairs, hesitantly climbing.

EXT. DARK HOUSE/BACK - CONTINUOUS

Max peers out, finding an old pickup truck parked out back with the gate closing behind it. He steps out the door and the floodlight comes on over his head.

The Man appears from behind the truck with a ROTTWEILER. Seeing Max, the Rott pulls at its leash, viciously barking.

MAN

Fuck you doing in my house!

MAX

Door was open and I heard barking.

He takes the radio off his belt and turns on. The Man releases the Rott and it bolts straight for Max.

MAX (cont'd)

(into radio)

10-24, officer in need of
assistance. 624 Pleasant Ave. 10-
24 at 6,2,4 Pleasant...

He drops the radio, readying himself for the oncoming dog.

The Rott lunges, taking Max down in the darkness. It clamps onto his forearm and Max holds a death grip on the dog's collar with both hands to keep it from thrashing.

Max's radio lays in the dirt, audible CHATTER.

The Man steps out of the shadows, watching Max struggle.

MAX (cont'd)

Get it off me!

A distant SIREN, getting louder by the moment.

Max starts to move for the front yard, dragging the Rott.

The Man rushes Max, knocking into him. He stays on his feet, releases his free hand, and grabs his baton. He snaps it out to length and strikes the Man in the head, sending him stumbling back.

Max drops the baton and again grips the Rott's collar. He holds the dog tight, trying to calm it.

MAX (cont'd)

Just let go... Let go...

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

A police cruiser pulls up. The siren dies, blue and red strobing lights dance on every surface. An OFFICER gets out.

MAX (O.S.)
Over here! Dog's got me!

The Officer shines his light through the fence, finding Max entangled with the writhing Rott.

MAX (cont'd)
He's got my arm.

The Officer draws his firearm, aiming through the fence.

MAX (cont'd)
Wait!

A SHOT is fired. The dog slumps to the ground and Max is freed. He scoots back from the lifeless Rott.

MAN (O.S.)
You shot my dog! She's protecting
me and you shoot her!

The Officer shines his light on the Man, taking aim on him.

OFFICER
Hands in the air! Now! Do it now!

MAN
(raising his hands)
I caught him coming out my house.
Right out my God damn door. Got no
right to be in my house!

The Officer opens the gate and steps through.

MAN (cont'd)
Look at my head. I tried helping
him and he hits me with that club.

The Man's got a bleeding lump on his forehead.

OFFICER
Turn around, lemme pat you down.

MAN
Do what you gotta do! I'm
cooperating, but this is bullshit!

He turns around and the Officer pats him down.

MAN (cont'd)
I got no weapon and he hits me with
that club. Goddamn assault!

The Officer guides him down onto the ground.

OFFICER
Alright, stay there. Don't move.

MAN
He's the one you should be
arresting. This is bullshit!

The Officer goes to Max, aiming his light on him. Max pulls back his sleeve and his bloody arm has many puncture wounds.

OFFICER
Shit. Keep pressure on that.

Max pulls his sleeve back over the wounds and grips his forearm tight with his other hand.

OFFICER (cont'd)
Fuck's going on?

MAX
I'm doing a welfare check, he shows
up and lets the dog loose on me.
Tried to help it kill me.

OFFICER
Were you in the house?

Max looks him in the eyes, nodding.

OFFICER (cont'd)
Shit... He see you?

MAX
Coming out, yeah.

OFFICER
Better get your shit straight.
(into radio)
11-41 at 624 Pleasant Ave... Code
three... Ambulance needed.

The Officer steps off, searching around the yard.

MAN
Boy, you fucked with the wrong son-
of-a-bitch. Wrong motherfucker.

A second police cruiser pulls up, aiming its spotlight on Max as he gathers strength, and rises to his feet.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - MORNING

From a distance, Max, in a paper gown, looks agitated as he's questioned by a DETECTIVE. Up close he's on an IV drip, forearm's bandaged, hands scraped and bruised.

MAX

He's lying, he let the dog loose.
Tried to help it take me down.

DETECTIVE

He's a piece of shit but you got no
warrant, no probable cause. His
injuries, his dead dog. What the
fuck? You got some beef with him?

MAX

No. I told you, I recovered a dead
dog by his place. Abused and shot.
I spot him watching me, I question
him and he's cagey. He did it. I
been doing this long enough to
know. Rubbed my face in it.

DETECTIVE

You got no witness and no proof.
We found firearms in the house, a
dog and pups, nothing else. Tell
me again. From the beginning.

Max feels the reality sinking in.

FADE TO BLACK:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. 1969 OLDSMOBILE - DAY - TRAVELING

A pale BOY, 8, is in the back seat holding his BROWN MUTT
close. The Boy stares at the back of his FATHER's head.

The Father pulls to a stop and gets out. He opens the back
door and forcefully pulls the Mutt away from the Boy. He
closes the Boy inside, gets back in, and pulls away.

The Boy looks out the back windshield. The Mutt chases but
can't keep up. They turn a corner and he loses sight of it.

Father reaches back, handing the Boy the dog's collar.

A faint RINGING phone.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Max is in deep REM sleep, twitching a bit. Phone RINGS.

It's a small room, window covered in tinfoil, daylight
penetrating the edges. Max's work shirt hangs on the door,
left sleeve dark with dry blood and cut up below the elbow.

INT. DONUT HOLE - MORNING

Roxy sits alone at a table, keeping an eye on the entrance. She counts through a pile of cash, mostly dollar bills.

ROBIN, 19, comes over and tops off Roxy's coffee. She's pretty but rough edged, restrained in uniform.

ROXY
Thank you, sweetie.

ROBIN
Lotta money. You dance?

ROXY
Yes, I do. Not a terrible night
but I had better. A lot better.
If I could retire on this, I would.

Robin smiles. Roxy stands and gathers her belongings.

ROXY (cont'd)
You see a guy come in here looking
for someone, tell him she left.

Roxy leaves a few dollars on the table and walks out. Robin grabs the cash and stuffs it in her pocket.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Max lurches awake, ready for a fight. Taking in his surroundings, he lays back, stretching his bandaged arm.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - DAY

The door bell RINGS. Then KNOCKING. Max stays in hiding.

ROXY (O.S.)
Max, you in there? Max?

He peeks past the curtain, watching Roxy walk away.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - DAY

Max looks pale, gaunt. He shakes some pain pills out of a bottle and downs them with water. Phone RINGS.

Max showers, holding his bandaged arm above the spray.

Max carefully peels off his old bandage. He pours isopropyl alcohol over his festering wounds and it burns like fire.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - MORNING

Max watches a bundle of mail come through a slot in the front door, adding to a pile on the floor. Phone RINGS.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Max feeds on a burger and fries, his arm freshly bandaged.

He pops some pills and reaches for his drink. It slips out of his bad hand and falls off the table. It bursts, splattering vanilla shake across the floor.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

The Brown Mutt comes into the kitchen, excitedly lapping spilled milk off the floor as the Boy pets it.

Father comes in, kicking the Mutt away, scolding the Boy.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE/BACK - EVENING

STENCH, 30s, POUNDS on the back door. He's skinny with a shaved head, grimy coveralls, and big boots.

STENCH

Maaaaaaaaax! I know you're in there. I see your car, man.

Max's cruiser is parked by the garage. The yard's overgrown and the house needs paint.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Max stays hidden and quiet, listening.

STENCH (O.S.)

When you coming back? It's been over a week. They looking to replace you. Max, you hear me?

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE/BACK - CONTINUOUS

Stench notices the old NEIGHBOR LADY next door watching him. He gets in his truck, the flatbed stacked with metal cages, one holding a raccoon. He drives off down the alley.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/FATHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max turn on the light and steps into the master bedroom. Bed's made and the space is tidy. He looks at some pictures on the wall with police officers. He wipes the dust off one with a man resembling Max, his Father, accepting a plaque.

Max moves to the dresser. His Father's things lie on top: rings, watch, comb, etc. Everything's blanketed in dust.

Max opens a drawer and pulls out a revolver wrapped in a rag. He slides it out of its holster, feeling the weight of it.

INT. MAX'S GARAGE - NIGHT

SPEED METAL drowns all sound. Old couch, weight bench, deer head mounts and hides. On one wall, and rafters, hang hundreds of used dog collars, small to large.

Max jumps and grabs a pull-up bar. Hanging, he pulls up, feeling the pain. Straining, he can't hold on and drops to his feet, cradling his bandaged arm. Weak and frustrated.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - MORNING

Max watches the RINGING phone then answers the call.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - DAY

TAYJON, 21, wanders the kennels. He's baby-faced, wiry, wearing sneakers and a stiff new uniform with no badge. A thin gold cross around his neck shines against dark skin.

Max enters and the BARKING rises. Tayjon watches him pass through from afar. Once he's gone the barking diminishes.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Max comes in finding a handful of Day Shift Animal Control Officers clocking out. He shakes hands with a couple guys as they leave. His hard edge stands apart.

BECKY, a large woman, gives him an awkward hug.

BECKY
You doing better?

MAX
Yeah, I'm alright. Ready to work.

She leaves and Tanya enters with Tayjon.

TANYA
Good to see you back.
(to Tayjon)
This is our night man, Max.

TAYJON
Nice to meet you. Tayjon.

Tayjon reaches out, giving Max a firm handshake.

TANYA
(to Max)
Bruce is in his office.

Max clocks in.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Max taps on the open door. Bruce cuts off a conversation with a woman seated in his office.

BRUCE

Max. How are you doing?

He comes around his desk, giving Max a halting handshake/hug.

JACKIE, 40s, rises from her chair, shaking Max's hand.

JACKIE

Jackie Chandler, Union rep. We've been trying to reach you.

MAX

I've got a problem with my phone.

BRUCE

How is your arm doing?

MAX

Hurts but I can work. Sick of sitting at home.

JACKIE

Here, take my chair.

Jackie moves and Bruce retreats behind his desk. Max sits.

BRUCE

Have you spoken with the DA?

MAX

No.

BRUCE

They don't have a good case.

MAX

He let the dog loose on me.

BRUCE

I read the report, your statement. Terrible. But you're in the house with no warrant. With his injuries you know how this can go.

JACKIE

His lawyer's been in contact with the city, threatening a lawsuit. He may come after you as well. If they do, you'll need a lawyer. We can protect you up to a point.

Max takes a beat to process all this.

MAX

Am I losing my job over this? Is that what's happening?

BRUCE

I'm doing everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen. But it may not be my call.

JACKIE

If they settle, this could all go away. Goes to trial, it gets ugly.

MAX

So can I come back to work? I thought that's why I was here.

BRUCE

If you're good physically, yes. But until this is resolved you can't be in the field alone.

(to Jackie)

We've agreed on this.

Jackie nods.

MAX

What? Who am I working with?

BRUCE

We've got a new hire. Tayjon Jackson. Train him on nights.

MAX

He's on nights?

BRUCE

For now, we'll see how it goes. You're recovering, he can help.

MAX

(standing up)

I don't need the help.

BRUCE

To be clear, this is no time for more problems. Keep it by the book. As it should always be.

Max agrees.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Tayjon sits on a bench, flipping through the Animal Control manual. Max enters and Tayjon stands up.

Max goes straight to his locker, prepping for his shift. He takes off his shirt, revealing military tattoos. He carefully slips his injured arm into his work shirt.

Tanya peers in the doorway and then comes in.

TANYA

Max, I got something for you.
We're switching to digital cameras.

Tanya hands him a digital camera.

MAX

I'll stick with my Polaroid.

TANYA

It's 1999, don't be a dinosaur.
Finish the film you have then
switch. Use your computer too.

She walks out and Max stuffs the camera deep in his locker.

He sits down, lacing his boots.

MAX

You need boots. Steel toe. Those
shoes won't do shit.

Tayjon looks at his sneakers.

MAX (cont'd)

How much you weigh?

TAYJON

One sixty-five, one seventy.

MAX

You sure you wanna work ONS?

TAYJON

Sure. What's ONS again?

MAX

Overnight Shift. What I do. Abuse
calls, aggressive dogs, fighting.
Police activity. I don't wanna
train you in if you're gonna quit.

TAYJON

No, I need this job.

INT. ANIMAL CHECK-IN - EVENING

Max leads Tayjon into a small room. A desk on one side with a chunky desktop computer and papers piled high.

MAX

This is where we check in cats and dogs. Record the history, if we know it. Take a picture in front of this meadow. Looks less grim.

The corner of the room has been crudely painted like a meadow. A picket fence and plastic flowers are mounted to the wall with bright green turf on the floor.

INT. CAT ROOM - EVENING

Max leads Tayjon through. Cages line the walls with MEOWING Cats and Kittens. Classical MUSIC plays on a boom box.

MAX

Bruce thinks the music relaxes 'em.

INT. PUPPY ROOM - EVENING

Max opens the door and Tayjon steps inside. A pen lined with shredded paper holds many puppies. Tayjon picks one up.

TAYJON

My girl would love a puppy.

Max steps out and Tayjon puts down the puppy, following.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - EVENING

Max and Tayjon enter the kennels and the BARKING builds.

MAX

With dogs and cats, after five days if nobody claims 'em and we can't adopt 'em out, they get put down. Last year we had 8,000 animals come through. A quarter got doinked. Low man has to help with that. You bring 'em in and hold 'em while the Vet inject 'em.

TAYJON

You serious?

MAX

Yep. First time's rough for some but you get used to it.
(pointing to a Pit Bull)
Pits are the toughest. Some take two, three doses, to do the job.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/HALLWAY - EVENING

Max approaches with Tayjon trailing.

MAX

Cold room's where we keep the
animals until they pick 'em up.

INT. COLD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max opens the insulated door and turns on the flickering
light. Tayjon peeks inside, finding the room empty.

MAX

Must've just done a pick up.

Tayjon steps back and Max kills the light, closing the door.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - EVENING

Max leads Tayjon to a kennel holding an agitated Rott Mix.

MAX

Move the papers. Always keep an
animal with its papers. You don't,
Bruce gets his panties in a twist.
(reading the papers)

C-Note. Homeboys name their dogs
shit like that. Felony, Glock,
Hummer. Find an empty kennel and
move the papers.

Max moves the papers, then goes in after the Rott Mix. He
grabs it by the collar, pulling him out. He's hobbled by his
injured arm but gets the job done.

MAX (cont'd)

Hold onto the collar. They give
you trouble, lift and twist.

Max does a quick demonstration, immobilizing the dog.

MAX (cont'd)

Cuts off the air and blood. Do it
long enough they pass out. Real
nasty ones, not much you can do.

Max guides the dog into its new kennel. Closing the gate, he
bumps his injured arm and winces.

TAYJON

What happened to your arm?

MAX

They didn't tell you? This bastard
let his Rott loose on me.

(MORE)

MAX (cont'd)

Bigger than this one, clamped onto my arm and wouldn't let go.

TAYJON

Jesus. How'd you get it off?

MAX

I couldn't. I held on, kept him from thrashing as best I could. Instinct is to whip you around. That's how they do real damage. Cop finally showed up and shot him.

TAYJON

For real? That's crazy.

He goes to the next kennel that houses a Little Terrier.

MAX

Your turn. First, move the papers.

Tayjon moves the papers to an empty kennel. He opens the Little Terrier's kennel and it backs away.

Tayjon tentatively goes in after it but it scrambles past him and out of the kennel. Max just lets it run off.

MAX (cont'd)

Go get him.

Tayjon chases the Little Terrier through the kennels. The BARKING rises to a new level.

The Little Terrier comes around and Max scoops him up.

Tayjon comes up, short of breath, and Max hands him the dog. He deposits it in the new kennel, closing the gate.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max drives as Tayjon eyes the cracks in the windshield. There's a heavy silence as they cruise through the city.

MAX

You know Bruce before?

TAYJON

No.

MAX

His life partner's a black guy.

TAYJON

No, I don't know him.

MAX

Tanya's gay too. Lesbian.

TAYJON

I figured. She did my interview, helped me with the paperwork.

MAX

I don't care. But she works seven months and he makes her Shift Supervisor. I been working eight years. Longer than all of 'em. He's been there a year. No Animal Control experience. And he's scared of dogs. How do you run Animal Control if you're scared of dogs? He wants a "no-kill" shelter. Sounds great but what do you do with all the animals nobody wants? There's too many. Too many fucked up people.

Max's pager BEEPS. He checks it and makes a u-turn.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The AC truck pulls into the large, mostly empty, lot. Circling, they come to a stop when the headlights illuminate a BLACK MUTT with its leash tied to sign post.

Max and Tayjon get out of the truck. The dog cowers, nervously wagging his tail.

MAX

Looks friendly. Go check it out.

Tayjon approaches and the dog couldn't be more friendly. Up close and under light, he's all skin and bone.

TAYJON

Super skinny. Male. Collar but no tags. So they just leave him here?

MAX

Happens a lot. We take any dog, all you gotta do is bring it in, but some people don't want to face nobody. Ashamed or whatever. Lazy. Still better than letting it run the street.

(checking his pager)

Get him in the truck, we gotta go.

Tayjon unties him from the post and leads him to the truck.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The AC truck speeds down a main drag.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max drives fast and hard. Tayjon grips his armrest.

MAX

Drive as fast as I want. Police
don't care, I'm invisible to 'em.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The AC truck jumps the curb, cutting through a park.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - TRAVELING

Its a rough ride as Max drives through a wooded area.

MAX

Go wherever I want.

Max jumps a curb back onto pavement, driving away.

EXT. ALLEY #1 - NIGHT

The AC truck parks, orange roof-lights flashing.

An OLDER LADY approaches from the back of her house, flanked
by two OLD MUTTS. Max gets out, meeting her at the fence.

OLDER LADY

(pointing down the alley)
It's down in the vacant lot.

MAX

You see anything?

OLDER LADY

No. My girls got out and went down
there. I went to see what the fuss
was and found it. Poor thing.

MAX

You know the dog?

OLDER LADY

No. Should I be worried about my
girls?

MAX

No, but keep 'em in the yard.

Max gets in the truck and they roll down the alley.

EXT. VACANT LOT - NIGHT

Max shines his light around the weedy lot, finding a BIG MUTT. It's dead with a bloody wound and crisscrossing burns.

MAX
Motherfucker...

Tayjon approaches but stops short, shocked by the sight.

Max steps back to the truck and aims a mounted spotlight on the dog. Tayjon moves in for a closer look.

Max takes a picture of Tayjon by the dog. He gives him the undeveloped Polaroid and starts documenting the scene.

MAX (cont'd)
Pretty close to the alley.
Probably dumped it here after
killing it. Burns could be before
or after he shot it. Blowtorch
maybe, like a plumber's torch.

TAYJON
Why would anyone do that?

MAX
For some people, a dog don't mean
nothing. I see it all the time.
They're easy to take your shit out
on. Can't talk, can't tell nobody.

Tayjon shines his light on the Polaroid as the image of him standing over the dead dog develops.

MAX (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Lotta serial killers start with
animals. Dahmer tortured animals,
collected road kill. Ted Bundy,
Son of Sam, Andrew Cunanan. Sick
fucks.

Max crouches and takes a close-up of the Big Mutt's face. He then sweeps the electronic wand over the body.

TAYJON (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

MAX
Scanning for a microchip. We put
'em in all the animals we adopt
out... Nothing.

Max stands and sweeps the wand over his leg. It BEEPS every time he passes a spot on his thigh.

TAYJON

You got one?

MAX

Never know, might need to identify
my remains some day.

Max steps to the truck. He returns with a heavy-duty garbage bag, snapping it open and offering it to Tayjon.

MAX (cont'd)

Bag it.

Tayjon takes the bag, circling the dog, afraid to touch it.

MAX (cont'd)

This is the job. If you're out
here alone, this needs to get done.

Tayjon tentatively touches it but can't commit to the task.

MAX (cont'd)

It's dead, it can't hurt you.

Max snatches the bag away from him. Tayjon steps back, watching Max kneel by the Big Mutt and begin to bag it.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/GARAGE - NIGHT

Max opens the tall garage door and wheels the cart out to the AC truck. As he unloads the bagged dog, Tayjon helps the Black Mutt out of the kennel and down to the pavement.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - NIGHT

Max enters, pushing the cart holding the bagged dog. BARKING erupts as he makes his way down the row of kennels.

Tayjon follows with the Black Mutt on leash.

MAX

Take it over to check-in.

Max continues out and Tayjon goes the other way.

INT. ANIMAL CHECK-IN - NIGHT

Tayjon holds the Black Mutt still as he checks him for a microchip, sweeping the wand over his body and tail.

TAYJON

Nothing.

MAX

Okay, now take a picture of him.

Max watches Tayjon lead the dog over to the painted meadow. He gets him to sit but every time he steps back to take the picture, the dog follows. He gets him back in position.

TAYJON

Stay. Stay.

He slowly backs away, getting behind a camera on a tripod and takes a picture.

MAX

You can give him a name.

TAYJON

How about Skinny?

MAX

Sure. Day-shift competes to come up with crazy names. I usually call 'em Sam, male or female.

TAYJON

Sam's good but I like Skinny.
(to Black Mutt)
What you think, Skinny?

SKINNY starts wagging his tail, going to Tayjon.

MAX

Tough for black dogs.

TAYJON

What do you mean?

MAX

They're a dime a dozen. Last ones adopted. In that shape, I doubt anyone's gonna want him. Some people want something to worry about. Sickly, old, missing a leg or whatever. But most just want something cute. Cute and friendly.

TAYJON

This one's cute and friendly.
Someone's gonna take him.

Tayjon gives Skinny a vigorous petting.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Max empties his prescription bottle. He's down to a dozen pills. He takes two, no three, and pops them in his mouth.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tayjon watches Skinny eat voraciously. Max comes up.

TAYJON

Never seen a dog eat like that.
That's bowl three. Three.

Max gives Tayjon a bucket and shovel.

MAX

Shovel out the kennels and hose 'em
down. I'll be back.

TAYJON

You're leaving?

MAX

Yeah. And don't answer the phone.

Max goes out the door and it closes behind him.

Tayjon steps into a kennel, shoveling up a pile of shit.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max cruises the quiet streets, few signs of life.

EXT. STOP LIGHT - NIGHT

The AC truck approaches fast, then slows, coming to a stop in
the middle of the intersection. Max gets out. The air is
still, no vehicles approach in any direction.

He steps to the back and pulls the flask from under the
bumper. Swigging, he finishes off what's left.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Max pulls up and parks the AC truck. He gets out, standing
in front of the dark house, muffled BARKING inside.

Max shines his flashlight in the windows of the house.

The Man comes out the front door, wearing a neck brace.
Seeing Max, he's amused, laughing out loud.

MAN

Got balls, boy. Or you're just a
dumb motherfucker. Both maybe.

He steps closer, showing off the scar on his forehead.

MAN (cont'd)

See what you done. Stitches, my neck's fucked up. Doctor says it could take years to heal.

MAX

Must be delicate.

MAN

Funny. You recording me? Need to say so if you are. That's the law.

MAX

I don't know what the fuck you're talking about, old man.

MAN

You need to start showing some respect.

MAX

You let the dog do the fighting. That ain't tough.

MAN

(quietly)

You here for payback? Kick my ass? I'll let you get over the fence.

He takes a few steps back, giving Max a wide berth.

MAN (cont'd)

Don't be a pussy. Come on! Do it!

Max takes a step back and starts walking away.

MAN (cont'd)

That's right, walk away. Tail between your legs. I'm calling the police. Tell 'em you come here, making threats against me.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Man unlocks the chain around Ruby's neck, pulling her away from her sleeping Pups. She resists, biting at him as he drags her into the room with the red door.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tayjon leads Skinny into a clean kennel, petting him.

TAYJON

Sit, Skinny. Sit.

Skinny sits and raises his paw to shake. Tayjon's thrilled.

EXT. EMPTY ROAD - NIGHT

In the distance a pickup pulls onto the shoulder. The Man gets out, opens the tailgate, and unloads something.

A SHOT's fired, a muzzle flash in the dark.

Up close, Ruby lies wounded on the pavement, bathed in the red glow of the pickup's parking lights.

Headlights appear in the distance, approaching. The Man slams the tail gate, gets in the pickup and pulls away fast.

Ruby's wounded but breathing. She gets on her feet as the headlights of the passing vehicle rake over her.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - MORNING

Max finds Tayjon sitting in a kennel, head slumped and sleeping. Skinny lifts his head from Tayjon's lap.

Max puts two fingers in his mouth and lets out a piercing WHISTLE. Tayjon wakes, startled then disoriented.

TAYJON

What. What's going on?

MAX

You're sleeping on the job.

Tayjon gets up on his feet.

TAYJON

Sorry, I just sat down for a minute... I finished the kennels.

MAX

There's always more shit.

Tayjon steps out of the kennel and Skinny follows. He guides him back inside, closing the gate.

MAX (cont'd)

You know there's cameras all over.

Max points out a camera mounted to the wall.

MAX (cont'd)

Anybody checks the tape they gonna see you sleeping.

TAYJON

You serious?

MAX

They won't unless I say something.

TAYJON
It won't happen again.

Bruce comes in, still in street clothes, approaching.

BRUCE
How's our new guy working out?

Max looks at Tayjon for a beat.

MAX
Made it through the night.

BRUCE
Good, glad to hear it.
(to Tayjon)
We haven't scared you off?

TAYJON
No, it's fine. Lotta work.

BRUCE
Always more to do. But it's worth
it.

Tayjon agrees, not sure what to say.

MAX
(to Bruce)
Can I show you something?

BRUCE
Sure, what's up?

INT. COLD ROOM - MORNING

The door opens. Max steps inside, turning on the flickering light. Bruce follows him in, feeling the chill in the air.

Tayjon watches from the doorway as Max pulls back the bag covering the Big Mutt. Bruce is shocked by the sight.

MAX
Same as before. Burns. One shot
to the body. Look for yourself.

Max pulls a Polaroid out of his pocket, showing it to him.

MAX (cont'd)
That's the dog I found by his place
that night.

BRUCE
Where did you find this one?

MAX

Over north. But that don't mean he didn't do it.

BRUCE

As much as you think it's him, it may not be. You didn't find the first dog on his property. Anybody could have dumped it at that dead end. You need proof. A witness.

Bruce steps out into the hallway and Max covers the Big Mutt.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Max steps out of the cold room, joining Bruce and Tayjon.

BRUCE

Like I said before, this is no time for mistakes.

MAX

What about the dogs?

BRUCE

I don't know what else we can do. But you need to stay away from him and his property. On duty and off.

Bruce walks away. Max closes the cold room door and heads in the other direction, leaving Tayjon behind.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - MORNING

Max, in street clothes, exits the building. He gets in his Cruiser, starts the engine and quickly pulls away.

INT. MAX'S CAR - MORNING - TRAVELING

Max drives by Tayjon, watching him in the mirror.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon zips up, walking faster, eager to get home.

INT. KITTY KLUB - MORNING

Max enters with a blast of daylight. Roxy's at the bar counting tips. He approaches and she's surprised to see him.

ROXY

Don't show up, don't return calls. Where you been? I been worried.

MAX

Had an incident. Dog got me good.

Max holds up his injured arm and she takes it in her hands.

ROXY

Oh babe, I'm sorry. Does it hurt?

MAX

Yeah, but I'm back working.

She gives him a good hug.

ROXY

I'm glad you're okay. You wanna get a donut?

MAX

Sure.

ROXY

Lemme change, I'll meet you there.

She gathers up her money and heads into the back.

EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING

Tayjon runs, making it to the bus just as the doors close. He KNOCKS and the doors open, letting him onboard.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon moves up the aisle as the bus lurches away from the curb. Finding a seat, he pulls his hood over his head.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Max steps out of the Kitty Klub into morning sun, walking against a flow of people headed to work.

INT. DONUT HOLE - MORNING

Max enters the small donut shop and looks over the selection.

ROBIN (O.S.)

What can I get you?

Max looks up, seeing Robin behind the counter.

MAX

Raised glazed with sprinkles and a dozen glazed holes. Two coffees.

He watches her assemble his order.

MAX (cont'd)

You're new?

ROBIN
Yeah, sort of.
(sarcastically)
Pretty great.

Max smiles. She rings him up but he waves off his change.

ROBIN (cont'd)
Thanks.

Robin helps the next Customer and Max takes a seat. She catches him watching her but plays it off.

Roxy enters and sits with Max, taking a bite of her donut.

ROXY
Yum, my favorite. Thank you.

She bring her coffee to Robin at the counter.

ROXY (cont'd)
Can I get some skim milk?

Robin fetches a carton and pours milk in Roxy's coffee.

ROXY (cont'd)
Thanks, sweetheart.

Roxy returns to the table, sitting down.

ROXY (cont'd)
She's sweet.

Max glances at Robin but says nothing.

ROXY (cont'd)
So tell me what happened.

MAX
I was on the job and this bastard let his Rott loose on me. Big dog. Got hold of me good. Cop had to shoot it to get it off.

ROXY
Jesus. Were you in the hospital?

MAX
That night. Then my house.

ROXY
All by yourself? You should've called me. I could've helped.

MAX
That's alright.

ROXY
Yeah, then you'd have to let me in.

MAX
Come on.

ROXY
Did they get the guy?

MAX
No charges. It's messed up cuz I was in his house without a warrant. He's a piece of shit abuser and I might lose my job.

ROXY
That's bullshit. You should quit.

Roxy notices Max's eye has strayed to Robin cleaning tables.

ROXY (cont'd)
Come on, let's get outta here.

She stands, pulling Max up on his feet.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Max's cruiser comes up the alley, parking behind an old apartment building.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - CONTINUOUS - PARKED

Max looks over at Roxy, engine still running.

ROXY
Aren't you coming?

MAX
I need to get some sleep.

ROXY
What, you can't sleep here no more? Take me to your place then. I don't care if it's a mess. I wanna see it. From the inside.

Max just shakes his head.

ROXY (cont'd)
You need to make up your mind, man.

She gives him a gentle kiss and gets out of the car.

Max shuts down the engine and gets out, following after her.

INT. TAYJON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Tayjon comes in, setting down a bag of groceries.

RACHEL, 20, in a fast food uniform, hurriedly gets ready. She's well put together. Their dwelling is small but warm with a bed, couch, and crib.

TAMIA, 1, is on the floor, quietly playing on a blanket.

RACHEL

What took so long? I was worried.

TAYJON

Sorry, long line at the store.

Tayjon gives Tamia a kiss and flops on the couch, glad to be home. Rachel gathers text books and binders into her bag.

RACHEL

You alright?

TAYJON

Tired.

RACHEL

You ask about when you get paid?

TAYJON

Not until the first. Can't change it. But it should be a good one.

RACHEL

So what's it like? You like it?

TAYJON

It's a trip. This dude's a trip.

RACHEL

Tell me later. I gotta go.

She gives him a kiss and hug. He holds on longer than her.

RACHEL (cont'd)

She's hungry. Food's on the table.

Rachel gives Tamia a kiss and she's out the door with a wave.

Tayjon watches Tamia for a beat, energized by her sweet face. He gets up and picks her up, holding her close.

TAYJON

Good morning, sweetheart.

He puts Tamia in her highchair, spoon-feeding her.

INT. ROXY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

It's a tiny space with a big bed. Clothes cover every surface and dishes are piled high in the kitchenette.

Max lays back on the bed. Still dressed, feet on the floor.

ROXY (O.S.)

If she wants my Saturdays then
Dante's got to tell me himself.
Tired of this shit. Money ain't
like it used to be. I need to
seriously start thinking about what
I'm gonna do. Maybe finish
cosmetology school. I don't know.

Toilet FLUSHES. Roxy emerges from the bathroom in pj's. Max is asleep. She climbs on the bed and settles in next to him.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - DUSK - TRAVELING

Max and Tayjon cruise with the police radio audible.

Max spots something and stops the truck. He backs up and Ruby can be seen meandering down an alley.

Max turns into the alley and follows after her. Ruby slowly trots with the AC truck on her heels. She cuts between two houses and Max punches the gas, tearing down the alley.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ruby emerges from between two houses along the river road. She follows the flowing pavement that straddles the thick woods leading down to the Mississippi. The AC truck pops up behind her again and she moves a little faster.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - TRAVELING

Looking over Max and Tayjon, Ruby can be seen through the windshield. Max stays close but gives her a buffer.

MAX

Sometimes you chase a dog and
it'll run home. You know when it
gets there cuz it stops, turns
around and starts barking. Or you
chase 'em so far away from home
they can't find their way back.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ruby leaves the road and disappears into the woods. Max jumps the curb in the AC truck, parking on the grass.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - PARKED

Max gets out and grabs his catch pole, an alloy tube with a heavy-gage wire loop at one end. Tayjon gets out.

MAX

Stay with the truck.

Max runs off and into the trees, leaving him behind.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - DUSK

Ruby goes down a steep, wooded, slope to the river. Max follows on foot, clutching his catch pole.

Making it near shore, Ruby runs off and Max follows. We track each of them as they move through trees and heavy brush, navigating the winding path along the river's edge.

Making it onto a point, Ruby runs out of dry sand. Max stops and squats down, catching his breath. They stand on shore, each waiting for the other to make a move. Ruby's in rough shape with a wound on her side and burns on her body.

MAX

You're one tough old girl.

He reaches out with the catch pole, easing the loop close to her head. He tries to snare her and she jumps in the river.

Swimming with the current, Ruby's carried away but manages to climb up onto the bank down shore. She shakes off and gives Max one last look before going down shore and into the trees.

Max takes a long look at the flowing Mississippi. A crow flies overhead and up river, wings WHOOSHING.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - NIGHT

It's getting dark as Tayjon leans against the AC truck, waiting. Max emerges from the trees and jogs to the truck.

MAX

She headed down river. Get in.

They get in the truck and quickly pull away.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max aims a mounted spotlight on the woods as they creep down the river road. Tayjon searches with a flashlight as well.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Ruby stands in the brush as the light from the AC truck passes by. The bright searching beam has light and shadows dancing all around her but she stays still until it passes.

Emerging from the woods, Ruby makes her way onto the river road. She watches the AC truck slowly move away, lights still searching, before she heads in the other direction.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon get out of the AC truck. Max leads Tayjon into his backyard and a security light comes on.

TAYJON

You live alone?

MAX

Yeah. It was my Dad's place. I got it after he died.

TAYJON

Oh, sorry to hear that.

MAX

Yeah, it was like ten years ago. Police Officer. Died in the line of duty. Shootout and he got shot. They had a big memorial. It was all over local news.

TAYJON

Yeah, I don't remember.

MAX

You were just a kid I guess.

Max unlocks and opens the side door to his garage, going in.

INT. MAX'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Max flips on the lights. Tayjon steps inside, looking around.

TAYJON

Whoa.
(re: deer heads)
You hunt?

MAX

No. My dad did.

Tayjon sees all the hanging collars.

TAYJON
That's a lotta collars.

MAX
I got hundreds. When we put down
dogs they toss 'em so I keep some.

Max gets two Cokes out of a fridge, giving one to Tayjon.

TAYJON
You got a dog?

MAX
No. Once when I was a kid.

Max turns his back to Tayjon and fills his flask from a
bottle of Vodka. Tayjon can't help but see what he's doing.

Max turns around, eyeing Tayjon, and takes a swig.

MAX (cont'd)
Vodka. Won't stink-up your breath.

Wiping the top, he offers the flask to Tayjon.

TAYJON
No thanks.

MAX
Take a drink. Then I know you
won't say nothing.

Max offers it again and Tayjon reluctantly takes the flask
and a quick drink, chasing it with some Coke.

MAX (cont'd)
Takes the edge off... Sit down, I
wanna show you something.

Tayjon sits and Max pulls out a big stack of Polaroids. They
slip out of his hand and fall to the floor at Tayjon's feet.
He helps Max pick them up and is shocked by the many images
of abused, malnourished, and dead dogs.

TAYJON
Oh man.

MAX
Animals are tough. They can take
so much abuse and keep going. Tore
up, shot even, but surviving.

Max hands him the Polaroids of the Dead Dog he found in front
of the dark house.

MAX (cont'd)

Dead dog call, found it by this bastard's house. Tortured and shot. Couldn't prove it but he did it. I went back, found a dog with pups in his basement. Guy shows up, lets his Rott loose on me.

Max holds up his bad arm.

TAYJON

The dog that messed up your arm?

MAX

Yep. Bastard tried to help it kill me. Cop had to shoot it to get it off me. I told you before. Anyway, the dog I was chasing, it's the same dog that was in his basement.

TAYJON

You're sure?

MAX

No doubt. Now it's got the same burns, same shot to the chest.

TAYJON

You gonna tell Bruce?

MAX

No. Not 'til I find her. Don't say nothing about it.

Tayjon agrees and Max takes another swig from his flask. He offers it to Tayjon but he declines.

EXT. KITTY KLUB/PARKING LOT - MORNING

Max parks his cruiser and gets out. Dressed in street clothes, he heads for the back entrance of the Kitty Klub.

Across the lot someone tries to start a rusty VW Rabbit, CRANKING the engine over and over, but it won't turn over. Max sees Robin behind the wheel and moves closer, waving.

ROBIN

You know anything about cars?

MAX

Try it again.

Robin turns the key and the engine groans and dies.

MAX (cont'd)
You got a dead battery.

ROBIN
Great, I gotta be somewhere. Now.

MAX
Pop the hood.

She does.

CUT TO:

Max's cruiser is nose to nose with the Rabbit, hoods up. He connects jumper cables to her battery. Robin tries it and it starts. She SHRIEKS and gets out, giving him a big hug.

INT. KITTY CLUB - DAY

Max enters the club and spies Roxy dancing for an Old Man. Watching for a beat, he walks out undetected.

INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

The Man drives, searching.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

The pickup turns off a main drag, cruising down a quiet street lined with big trees and small houses.

INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

The Man spots a dog. Slowing to a stop he tilts his mirror to get a better look at the Husky behind a fence.

EXT. ALLEY #2 - DAY

The pickup rolls up the alley and stops. The Man gets out and creeps over to the back gate of the yard. All is quiet.

With a WHISTLE he gets the Husky's attention. He tosses it a treat and the dog scarfs it up. He offers another treat and the Husky makes its way closer but hesitates, BARKING.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
What you doing?

The Man turns and an OLD MAN up the alley is watching him.

MAN
(smiling)
Just checking out the dog.

The Man gets back in his pickup and pulls away.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Tayjon comes in finding Max in uniform, lacing his boots.

TAYJON
Sorry, bus was late.

MAX
Hurry up, we got calls already.

Max walks out and Tayjon dresses as quickly as he can.

EXT. ALLEY #3 - DAY

The pickup rolls to a stop. The Man gets out and approaches the back gate of a small house. Inside the fence a YELLOW LAB watches him closely.

The Man offers a treat and it comes over, tail wagging. The Man opens the gate, grabs the dog's collar, and leads it out.

The Man helps the Yellow Lab into the cab of his pickup. He gets in as well, pulling away.

EXT. LAKE FRONT ROAD - DUSK

The AC truck is parked on the shoulder, lights flashing. Traffic steadily passes, rolling over some ROAD KILL.

Max steps into the road, stopping traffic. Tayjon rushes out and scrapes up the flattened carcass with a shovel.

Once he makes it back to the shoulder, Max lets traffic pass. A pissed off driver leans on the horn, flipping them off.

MONTAGE - MAX AND TAYJON WORKING

- A) Max climbs down from a tree. He opens his jacket revealing a Cat, passing it to a grateful Elderly Woman.
- B) Max and Tayjon are in a living room with two College Guys armed with tennis racquets as a Bat flies around erratically. Tayjon ducks for cover as Max goes after it with a towel, trapping it against the wall.
- C) Max is in a crawl-space. Tayjon, Twin Girls and their Mother stand by, all lighting up Max with flashlights. He reaches out handing off kitten after kitten.
- D) Tayjon stands by as Max emerges from a garage with a twisting Raccoon on the end of his catch pole. He guides it into a metal cage and Tayjon closes door, giving Max a high five.

EXT. MINI MART - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon hang out by the AC truck, eating burritos.

TAYJON

Man, that was like the craziest thing I ever saw. I can't believe you been doing this eight years.

Stench pulls into the lot in his truck and parks. A cage on his flatbed holds a SKUNK.

MAX

Here comes Stench.

TAYJON

Stench?

MAX

He traps for us. Skunks and coons mostly. Releases 'em in the woods.

Stench gets out of his truck. As he comes around the back the skunk sprays and he gets out of range as quick as he can.

MAX (cont'd)

Almost got ya.

STENCH

Good seeing you back. How you doing?

He gives Max a handshake.

MAX

I'm alright.

STENCH

I came by your place a couple times to see how you were doing.

MAX

Sorry I messed you. This is a new guy I'm training, Teejon.

TAYJON

Tayjon.

Stench steps to Tayjon, shaking his hand.

STENCH

Steve. It's a shit job but somebody's gotta do it. Right Max?

MAX

Yep.

STENCH

But nobody's got a shittier job
than me. Right, Max?

MAX

Pretty shitty.

Max finishes his Burrito and opens up a storage compartment
in the AC truck, pulling out the caged Raccoon. Stench steps
over, taking it from him, looking it over.

STENCH

We gotta hang out, drink some
beers.

MAX

Sure, I'll let you know. I got a
lot to catch up on.

STENCH

That's cool, I got shit to do, too.
Anyway, glad to see you back.

Stench brings the Raccoon over to his truck.

MAX

He came by one time and my garage
smelled like skunk for a week.

Sniffing his hand, Tayjon tosses his burrito in the trash.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max and Tayjon cruise. Max scans the streets but Tayjon
looks dead tired. The police radio is audible, squelched
voices in code-loaded language.

TAYJON

You understand what they're saying?

MAX

Domestic stabbing. But no animals
so it's not my problem... Listen
close and you hear what's really
going on. Shit people don't want
to know about. Same with Animal
Control. Nobody wants to hear
about all the animals dying, the
abuse. Once in a while they put
some story on the news but it's
mostly stupid stuff. I almost get
killed and nothing, don't even make
the paper.

Max looks over and Tayjon's asleep. Max just turns his focus
back to the streets, scanning all around as he drives.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - PARKED

Max exits the AC truck, quietly closing his door. He makes his way around the back of the truck, opens the passenger door and Tayjon wakes up, nearly falling out.

TAYJON

Whoa! What the hell?

MAX

Stay awake.

TAYJON

Alright, I'm sorry. I ain't used to working nights. My wife works days, plus school, so I take care of the baby. She don't sleep, neither do I.

MAX

Just get out here.

Tayjon rubs his face and gets out of the truck.

EXT. ALLEY #4 - NIGHT

Tayjon comes around the front of the AC truck, joining Max. Before them the Yellow Lab lays dead on the pavement. It has a chest wound and torch burns across its body.

MAX

Same burns, same shot in the heart.

Max sweeps the electronic wand over the dog and it BEEPS.

MAX (cont'd)

Got a chip.
(reading the display)
Number 048364.

Tayjon takes a Polaroid of the Yellow Lab, surprising Max.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - PARKED

Max checks his laptop on the seat between him and Tayjon.

MAX

This thing is so slow.

TAYJON

Can I try?

Max turns the laptop to Tayjon and he starts typing.

A few punk rock kids, sharing a bottle and a joint, approach. Dyed hair, spiked collars, tattered clothes. PUNK BOY starts BARKING at the truck, amusing the others.

PUNK BOY

Ain't you gonna take me to the pound? I'm vicious! I bite!

Max turns the spotlight on them and Punk Boy grabs PUNK GIRL by her collar.

PUNK BOY (cont'd)

Here, got one for you.

PUNK GIRL

Stop. Lemme go!

MAX

Think she wants you to let her go.

PUNK BOY

Nobody asked you, dog killer.

MAX

You see a couple stray Pits? Bit somebody up bad.

Punk Girl hits Punk Boy in the gut, pulling away from him.

PUNK GIRL

Come on, let's go. Now!

They walk away, then starts running.

TAYJON

People do that a lot? Say stuff?

MAX

Yeah. "Asshole" mostly. They love you when you're helping 'em, otherwise you're scum.

TAYJON

What's the number again?

MAX

048364.

Tayjon types it in.

TAYJON

Got an address.

Max starts the engine.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon pull up in the AC truck, killing the engine.

INT/EXT. AC TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - PARKED

Max and Tayjon sit quietly for a beat.

TAYJON

Why'd we stop? This ain't the address.

MAX

I know. Block over is where the bastard who's doing this lives.

TAYJON

What're you talking about?

MAX

Talking about taking the dog and putting her in his yard.

TAYJON

You can't do that.

MAX

All we gotta do is say we found it on his property. I'll put it in his yard. Then we drive over there, find it. You just have to back me up. They'll believe you.

TAYJON

I can't do that.

MAX

I've been dealing with these scumbags for years. I'm telling you, he did it. No doubt.

TAYJON

I can't. I can't lie like that. I'm sorry, I need this job.

Max gives him a long gaze then starts the engine. He pulls away quickly, driving hard. Tayjon holds on, staying silent.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

The back yard is fenced. Tayjon hangs back as Max approaches the front door and KNOCKS.

The porch light comes on, locks disengage, and the door opens. A BIG MAN with long hair and a beard stands behind the screen door, his face in shadow.

MAX
Animal Control. You got a dog
that's missing?

The Big Man opens the screen door and steps out into the
light. He's got soft features and looks to be in his 40s.

BIG MAN
Molly, Yellow Lab. You find her?

MAX
In an alley off Lake Street. Sorry
to tell you but she's dead.

BIG MAN
Oh no...

He's obviously sad but tries to contain his emotions.

BIG MAN (cont'd)
She was in the yard and she got out
somehow. We looked all over. What
happened, she get hit by a car?

MAX
No. She was shot.

BIG MAN
Shot. Why? Who'd want to do that?

The Big Man's WIFE appears behind him.

BIG MAN (cont'd)
They found Molly. She's dead.

He pulls in close as tears well in her eyes.

WIFE
How, what happened?

BIG MAN
Somebody shot her, babe.

This is too much for her so she goes back inside.

BIG MAN (cont'd)
She was our baby.

MAX
You see anybody before she went
missing? Somebody hanging around?

BIG MAN
No. You sure you go the right dog?

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - PARKED

Tayjon stands by as Max opens a kennel and the heavy-duty garbage bag inside. He shines his light on the Yellow Lab to give the Big Man a good look. He's shaken by the sight, quietly crying.

BIG MAN
Yeah, that's Molly. What are those marks on her body?

MAX
Burns.

BIG MAN
Jesus Christ...

Max closes the kennel and the Big Man pulls himself together.

BIG MAN (cont'd)
Whoever did that should be shot.

MAX
Listen, I think I know who it might be. I'll do all I can to get him.

BIG MAN
Do that.

MAX
The city can dispose of her or you can claim her but I wanna hold onto her as evidence if that's okay.

BIG MAN
Sure, if it helps catch the fucker that did that.
(shaking Max's hand)
I appreciate you coming to tell me.

The Big Man heads back to his house.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - NIGHT

BARKING erupts as Max pushes the cart holding the bagged Yellow Lab down the row of kennels, with Tayjon trailing.

INT. COLD ROOM - NIGHT

Max opens the door, turns on the light and pushes the cart inside. Tayjon lingers in the doorway as Max takes the dog off the cart and lays it on the floor. He eases the bag back, revealing the dog's chest wound.

Max puts on a rubber glove and opens his multi-tool into a pliers.

TAYJON
What're you doing?

MAX
Collecting evidence.

Max grabs his polaroid camera, handing it to Tayjon.

MAX (cont'd)
Take some pictures.

TAYJON
Of what?

MAX
When I catch this guy I need as
much evidence as I can get. Find a
gun, we'll match it to this slug.
Wish I'd done this before.

He pokes a gloved finger into the dog's wound, searching.

MAX (cont'd)
There it is.

He inserts the pliers, getting ahold of something. Pulling
them out the tips grip a crumpled slug.

Max hold it up and Tayjon takes a picture.

MAX (cont'd)
Get a couple more of the dog.

Tayjon takes a few more as Max bags the slug.

MAX (cont'd)
Keep it between us, Bruce would
freak.

Tayjon agrees.

INT. MAX'S CAR - MORNING - TRAVELING

Max and Tayjon cruise through the city in Max's car.

MAX
So you grow up around here?

TAYJON
Over north, graduated from North.

MAX
I went to South. Twenty years ago.

TAYJON
Go to your reunion?

MAX

No. I don't go for that stuff.
Didn't have a lotta friends.

Pregnant pause.

TAYJON

How'd you get this car?

MAX

Police auction. I can let you know
the next time they have one.

TAYJON

My wife wouldn't go for it.

MAX

Special police V8.

Max punches it and Tayjon hangs on.

EXT. FOUR PLEX - MORNING

Max and Tayjon pull up to a stop in front of a four-unit building. Rachel, wearing a coat over her uniform, is waiting out front with Tamia in a stroller.

Tayjon waves and she pushes Tamia over. Rachel's not sure what to make of Max's cruiser.

RACHEL

What's this about?

TAYJON

Old police car. This is Max, the
guy I work with.
(to Max)
This is Rachel.

She leans down, getting a good look at Max.

MAX

Nice to meet you.

RACHEL

He tells me what you all do.

TAYJON

No, I don't.

RACHEL

Yes you do. Sounds dangerous too.
(to Max)
You need to watch out for him, he
acts hard, but he ain't.

TAYJON

Come on.
(to Max)
Thanks for the ride.

Tayjon gets out and picks up Tamia, showing her off.

MAX

Cute baby.

RACHEL

Thank you. Nice meeting you, Max.

MAX

You too. Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on him.

RACHEL

You better. He'd do it for you.

Max, not sure what else to say, gives a wave and pulls away.

INT. MAX'S CAR - CONTINUOUS - TRAVELING

Max rolls down the street, watching Tayjon and his family fall back in his mirror.

EXT. KITTY KLUB/PARKING LOT - MORNING

Max gets out of his car and as he's heading for the club he sees Robin at the bus stop. She's facing the other direction and doesn't notice him as he approaches.

MAX

Robin?

She turns around, startled a bit.

ROBIN

Hey.

MAX

What's up?

ROBIN

Car wouldn't start. Want a donut?

She opens a box of donuts and he takes one.

MAX

Thanks. You need a ride somewhere?

ROBIN

No, that's okay.

MAX
It's not a big deal.

ROBIN
You don't even know where I live.

MAX
I know the whole city.

Robin gazes at him, considering.

MAX (cont'd)
You know what, don't worry about
it. Thanks for the donut.

Max starts backing away.

ROBIN
Wait. Okay, I guess so.

MAX
Alright, let's go. I'm over here.

Max lead the way over to his cruiser.

ROBIN
You a cop or something?

MAX
No, Animal Control.

Max opens the passenger's door for her.

ROBIN
Like a dog catcher?

MAX
Animal Control officer. Like an
animal cop.

Roxy smokes behind the Kitty Klub, watching from afar as
Robin gets in Max's car. He gets in as well and pulls away.

Roxy snuffs out her cigarette and goes back inside.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Max and Robin cruise through the city.

ROBIN
You have to kill dogs?

MAX
No. A Vet does that. But we save
a lot too. At least I try to.

ROBIN
So you're some kinda hero.

MAX
I'm not saying that.

Robin watches Max as he drives.

MAX (cont'd)
What?

ROBIN
You're funny.

MAX
Funny, how?

ROBIN
I don't know, you're just funny.

She smiles and Max smiles back.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Max and Robin pull up and he parks by her car.

ROBIN
Thanks for the ride.

MAX
Can I take a look at your car?

ROBIN
No, you don't have to do that.

MAX
Might be an easy fix.

ROBIN
Okay. But I need to get inside.

MAX
Sure, I just need the keys.

She gives him her keys.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Robins enters. It's a messy room with a kitchenette. Opening the box of donuts she takes out a few, putting them on a plate. Taking a small wad of cash out of her pocket, she counts out a few bills.

INT. MOTEL/HALLWAY - MORNING

Robin exits her room and goes to the room across from her, KNOCKING. A hefty woman, the SITTER, opens her door.

ROBIN
Hey, everything go okay?

SITTER
Yeah. He slept some but he been up for a while. Just fed him. He was real hungry.

In the room TREVOR, a toddler, sits in front of the TV. Robin gives the Sitter the box of donuts and some money.

ROBIN
Thank you so much.

Robin picks up the chubby, blue-eyed, boy.

SITTER
(counting the money)
This ain't gonna do it.

ROBIN
I know, I'm sorry. Once I get paid, I can pay the rest. We'll see you later. Okay?

SITTER
That's fine but you gonna have to start paying me in full. And no more donuts, you gonna make me fat.

ROBIN
Absolutely.

Robin quickly gathers Trevor's belongings and takes him out the door and into her room, closing the door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Robin sets Trevor in his portable playpen and gives him something to play with.

INT. MOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robin closes herself in the bathroom, sitting on the toilet. Finally alone, she lets out a tears. Trevor can be heard.

ROBIN
Mommy will be right there.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Max tries to loosen a spark plug, getting a sharp pain in his injured arm. Fighting through it, he gets it loose.

INT. MOTEL/HALLWAY - DAY

Max KNOCKS on a door.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Who is it?

MAX
It's Max.

The Sitter pokes her head out of her room, looking Max over.

Robin open her door to the length of the chain, peering out.

MAX (cont'd)
Can you give me a hand?

ROBIN
Sure, I'll be right there.

She closes the door and Max hesitantly steps away.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Max waits by Robin's car, hood open. She comes out of the motel with Trevor. Max is surprised.

MAX
Who's this?

ROBIN
This is my son, Trevor James.

MAX
Hey, little man.

Max reaches out to Trevor but he turns away.

ROBIN
He's a little shy.

Robin pulls Trevor in close, kissing him.

ROBIN (cont'd)
You needed my help.

MAX
Yes, can you try and start it.

ROBIN
Sure.

Robin sets Trevor down and gets in behind the wheel.

MAX

Okay, give it a shot.

Robin tries to start engine while Max makes some adjustments under the hood. She tries a few times but it won't start.

MAX (cont'd)

Okay, that's enough.

Robin gets out of the car, gathering up Trevor. Max closes the hood, putting away his tools.

MAX (cont'd)

I can fix it but I need a part.

ROBIN

How much will that cost?

MAX

Lemme figure it out. Maybe tomorrow. I work the night shift so I can do it in the morning.

ROBIN

I'm working tonight, too.

MAX

You need a ride?

ROBIN

If you can pick me up at work in the morning that would be great.

MAX

Okay, I'll see you in the morning.
(to Trevor)
Bye Trevor. Nice to meet you.

ROBIN

Bye, Max.

Max gets into his car and Robin heads back to the Motel.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Ruby meanders down the street, following a scent. She's followed by an ANIMAL LOVER in a small SUV. The woman pulls ahead, parks. She quickly get out, blocking Ruby's path.

ANIMAL LOVER

It's okay, it's okay...

The Animal Lover moves in but Ruby dodges her. The Animal Lover calls out to an approaching JOGGER.

ANIMAL LOVER (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Grab her. She's injured!

The Jogger jumps into action, trying to corral Ruby but she evades him as well, running off.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The Man looms over the kiddie pool watching the Pups. He picks one up and it looks lethargic.

He starts to feed milk with a baby bottle and it takes to the rubber nipple. He drops the Pup down and sweeps up another, now squirting milk in its mouth.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - DAY

Max tosses and turns in bed, unable to sleep.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - PARKED

Max sits behind the wheel, seat reclined. He pops some pills, taking a pull from a large drink to wash them down.

He examines his wounds, taking a peek under the gauze. It's sore and sensitive, still festering.

The Man pulls his pickup out of the alley and drives off. Max raises his seat and starts the engine.

EXT. GAS STATION #2 - DAY

The Man fills up his pickup at the pumps. Max pulls into a parking lot across the street, watching and waiting.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Max pulls out onto a main street. Up ahead the pickup's in the flow of traffic. It takes a turn onto a side street. Max follows, trying to maintain a good distance.

Coming to another corner the pickup takes a left turn. Max continues straight, picking up speed and taking the next left hard. He accelerates to the next intersection, seeing the pickup driving parallel one block down.

Max accelerates, then slows for the next intersection, seeing the pickup again. He accelerates, then slows again but at the next intersection the pickup doesn't appear.

Max continues ahead and takes two lefts, searching. He spots the pickup parked down an alley. Max pulls ahead and parks.

EXT. ALLEY #5 - DAY

Max gets out of his cruiser and makes his way back to the alley. He covers behind a bush, watching the pickup but there's no sign of the Man.

Loud BARKING is heard then the Man appears, quickly getting in his pickup and pulling away.

Max makes his way back to his cruiser. Two BOYS on bikes watch him closely.

BOY #1
You police?

MAX
Sort of.

BOY #2
What kinda police car is that?

MAX
Old. But fast.

Max gets in and squeals away, impressing the Boys.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Max turns a couple corners, searching. Passing an alleyway the pickup pulls out behind him, quickly catching up.

Max brakes for a stop sign. The pickup pulls right up behind him, engine rumbling, grill filling Max's rear-view mirror.

Max takes a turn and pulls away fast but the pickup follows. He takes turn after turn but the pickup keeps appearing.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Max speeds down a residential street, making a hard turn at the corner. The pickup follows.

INT. MAX'S CAR - CONTINUOUS - TRAVELING

Max takes a hard turn, checking his mirrors. No pickup.

EXT. ALLEY #6 - DAY

Max turns into the alley. He finds an empty driveway and backs his cruiser into hiding, killing the engine.

Adrenaline is flowing but Max waits quietly, watching and listening. The sound of a truck ENGINE rises slowly.

A scrapper's truck passes by, back loaded with metal. Max starts his engine, pulling back into the alley and away.

EXT. FREEWAY ON-RAMP - DAY

Max rounds a corner in his cruiser and takes the on-ramp, speeding onto the freeway.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - DAY

Max parks by his garage and makes his way into his house.

INT. MOTEL/HALLWAY - DAY

Robin comes out of her room holding Trevor and an armful of toys and supplies. She closes her door, makes sure it's locked, and KNOCKS on the Sitter's door.

Waiting for a beat, all is quiet. She KNOCKS harder.

ROBIN

Come on.

(into the door)

Hello. You in there!

Robin keeps knocking, getting panicky. Trevor gets agitated.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

The Rott Mix is lying on the table, muzzle on its snout. Tayjon holds the dog still as the VET, a woman in her 40s, injects it with a syringe. Its movements slow to a stop.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - DAY

Tayjon comes out of the building. He huddles next to a dumpster, tears welling in his eyes.

Bruce comes out and spots Tayjon. As he approaches, Tayjon stands up and wipes his eyes, trying to compose himself.

BRUCE

You okay?

TAYJON

Yeah.

Bruce puts his arm around Tayjon, trying to comfort him.

BRUCE

There's nothing easy about it.
I've cried a lot here, believe me.
Someday, when we're a no-kill
shelter, that'll change.

TAYJON

Sounds good to me.

BRUCE

You don't have to do more today, I
can help the vet finish up.

TAYJON

No, I got it. Just need a minute.

Bruce goes back inside and Tayjon pulls himself together.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - DAY

Tayjon walks down the line, looking at each dog. A White
Mutt wagging his tail, a barking Brindle Pit, a Golden
Retriever cowering in its kennel, etc.

Tayjon comes to Skinny's kennel. He's happy to see Tayjon,
licking his fingers. Tayjon turns away from the surveillance
camera and stuffs Skinny's papers in his jacket.

Moving to the next kennel, Tayjon opens the gate. Avoiding
eye contact with the FUZZY MUTT inside, he pets her and
attaches a leash.

TAYJON

Come on, time to go.

Pulling her out, he leads her away.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - DAY

Max pulls his cruiser into the lot and backs into a space.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - DAY

Max enters, still in street clothes, checks the clipboard.
Walking down the row there are several empty kennels.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Tayjon sits silent, down-in-the-mouth. Max comes in.

MAX

I see the Vet came. How'd it go?

TAYJON

I don't wanna talk about it.

Max steps out. Tayjon gets up and goes in another direction.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - DAY

Tayjon opens Skinny's kennel, leading her out.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - DAY

Tayjon comes out of the back with Skinny. Leading him across the lot and behind the dumpsters, he takes off the leash.

TAYJON

Go on, get outta here. Get!

He pushes him away but he comes back, wanting to play. Tayjon starts back across the lot and Skinny follows. Tayjon runs for the door, trying to leave him behind.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon squeezes in the door, closing Skinny outside. Tayjon peeks out and Skinny's still there, eager to come back in.

MAX (O.S.)

What're you doing?

Tayjon turns around and Max is standing there watching him.

TAYJON

Just checking out the trucks.

Max steps by him, letting Skinny inside.

MAX

This is your buddy, right? Why wasn't he put down?

TAYJON

I couldn't do it. I was trying to let him go.

Max crouches down, petting Skinny.

MAX

Why don't you take him?

TAYJON

I can't. My place don't take dogs.

MAX

Listen, there's always another dog.

TAYJON

I know but I wanna save this one.

MAX

Okay... Write up new paperwork. New name. That'll buy some time unless day shift figures it out.

Max steps away and Tayjon follows with Skinny.

INT. ANIMAL CHECK-IN - DAY

Skinny sits in front of the meadow as Tayjon takes a picture.
Filling out paperwork, Tayjon writes "Sam" in for the name.

TAYJON

Your name's Sam now. Sam.

Skinny responds to the attention, wagging his tail.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max and Tayjon cruise through the city.

MAX

You got a cute kid.

TAYJON

Thanks, man. She really is. After she was born it was like, we got a baby. Like twenty-four seven. She ain't going nowhere. It hits you. But you love 'em so much.

MAX

My girl's got a son, baby boy. He isn't mine but I'm helping her out.

TAYJON

So you know what I'm talking about.

Max's pager BEEPS and he checks it, making a turn.

EXT. ALLEY #6 - NIGHT

Ruby wanders down the alley when a garage door starts opening, spilling light into the alley. Once the opener stops, all is quiet. Ruby steps closer, into the light.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ruby cautiously enters the garage, sniffing around. She makes her way around the car parked inside.

A TALL MAN enters, unaware of Ruby's presence. He grabs some meat from a freezer and steps out.

The opener starts closing the door. Ruby doesn't move. Once the door is closed she's trapped. She sniffs around, searching for a way out. The light goes out, darkness.

EXT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

The AC truck parks by some police cruisers with their lights flashing. Max and Tayjon get out, talking with Officers.

INT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

Max enters carrying a catch pole with Tayjon on his heels. Officers stand around, three Suspects on the floor in their underwear, hands cuffed, heads covered with pillow cases.

Children in PJ's sit in the next room with a Lady Officer.

INT. DRUG HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon enter from the hallway. Rotted food, garbage, and empty bottles cover the counter. The kitchen table's a work station with cocaine, crack, baggies, and a scale.

Max opens the basement door and a FAT PIT stands at the bottom of the stairs, BARKING up at him.

MAX

Here we go. Follow me.

Max goes down into the dark basement and Tayjon hesitantly follows, closing the door behind him.

INT. DRUG HOUSE/BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Max scopes out the space as Tayjon waits on the stairs. The Fat Pit BARKS at them both but keeps its distance.

Max hands Tayjon the catch pole.

MAX

I'll flush him around to you.

TAYJON

You want me to get him?

MAX

You can flush him to me but he might turn on you.

TAYJON

Okay, just do it.

Tayjon grips the catch pole tightly.

Max moves at the Fat Pit and it runs. It comes around the boiler at Tayjon but he panics, backing away. The dog corners him, snapping at the catch pole.

MAX

Get it around his neck.

Max moves fast, grabbing the dog by the tail and pulling it back. He snatches the catch pole from Tayjon and descends on the dog, securing and subduing it.

MAX (cont'd)
You can't let a dog corner you.
Takes you down, gets you by the
throat, you're done.

Max pulls the Fat Pit up the stairs, leaving Tayjon behind.

EXT. DOG PARK - MORNING

The AC truck pulls up on the grass and parks. A few people are inside, watching their dogs pee and play. Max and Tayjon get out.

TAYJON
What're we doing?

Max reaches inside the truck for the radio handset.

MAX
(over loudspeaker)
This is Animal Control, we need to
clear the dog park. It will re-
open in a couple hours. Thank you.

A couple people make their way out with their dogs but a YUPPIE DUDE is taking his time.

MAX (cont'd)
(over loudspeaker)
We gotta clear it out.

The Yuppie Dude gathers his dogs and approaches Max.

YUPPIE DUDE
What's going on?

MAX
Sir, we need to clear the area.

YUPPIE DUDE
Yeah, I heard you. Why?

MAX
Animal control business.

YUPPIE DUDE
What's that mean?

MAX
Right now we need to run a check on
the facility and in order to do
that we need the space clear. I
appreciate your cooperation.

Yuppie Dude gives up and walks away with his dog.

TAYJON
What're we doing?

MAX
Practice.

He waves Tayjon over and opens one of the kennels enough to see the Fat Pit inside. It BARKS and snarls.

CUT TO:

Max releases the Fat Pit into the enclosure. Tayjon's inside holding the snare and catch pole.

MAX (cont'd)
Alright, go get him.

Tayjon readies himself and starts out after the Fat Pit. The dog isn't paying him much mind, staying clear.

Max notices the Yuppie Dude watching from the parking area.

MAX (cont'd)
(to Tayjon)
Do something.

Tayjon approaches the Pit Mix and tries to get the snare around its neck. It snaps and Tayjon backs away.

MAX (cont'd)
Never run from a dog. Triggers
attack instinct. Only run when you
know you can get away.

Max enters the enclosure, taking the tools from Tayjon.

MAX (cont'd)
Corner him and use the snare!

Max herds the Fat Pit into the corner and snares it. The dog whips around like a big fish on a line. Max gets the catch pole loop over its head, tightening it down. The dog fights but Max has him under control.

MAX (cont'd)
Stay in control. Be the alpha.
They smell fear, that's real.

Max releases the dog and it jumps away. He gives the snare and catch pole back to Tayjon.

TAYJON
Don't you ever get scared?

MAX

Scared? No, not really. There are dogs I'd rather not deal with but not so bad I won't go after 'em. I pretty much know what they're gonna do. People, that's different. Never know what to expect.

Tayjon corners the Fat Pit. He holds the snare open and flushes the dog out and gets the snare around its neck. He quickly gets the catch pole loop over the dog's head as well.

Tayjon's thrilled but the dog starts pulling him around the enclosure. He digs his heels in, getting the upper hand.

Max is mildly impressed.

INT. GARAGE - MORNING

Ruby paces, scratching at the sunlight shining under the garage door. The door starts to open and once it's all the way up the Tall Man can be seen. Ruby starts BARKING and he steps back. She runs out past him and away.

INT. AUTO PARTS STORE - MORNING

Max is in line behind a Mom. As she pays, her Toddler grabs a little stuffed puppy from a display. Mom takes it away and leaves it on the counter, carrying the now WAILING child out.

Max steps up to the counter, eyeing the puppy.

INT. DONUT HOLE - MORNING

Robin helps a Customer while Trevor's at a table alone in a booster seat, frustrated and crying.

Robin comes out from behind the counter and gives him a toy but he tosses it away. She picks him up, trying to calm him.

The MANAGER, 60s, comes out from the back. He exasperated.

MANAGER

This is not a daycare. You need to find somewhere to take him.

ROBIN

I know, I'm so sorry.

MANAGER

You need to take him away.

ROBIN

I'm really sorry about this but I'm done in like twenty minutes.

(MORE)

ROBIN (cont'd)
Can't he just stay, I'm taking care
of everybody. I cleaned up.

Max comes in and Robin quickly pounces.

ROBIN (cont'd)
Here's my friend. He can take him.
(to Max)
Can you please take Trevor. Just
'til I finish up. My sitter
disappeared on me.

MAX
Sure.

ROBIN
(to Manager)
Okay, is that okay?

The Manager grunts, going into the back.

Robin gives Trevor to Max and gathers up his supplies.

MAX
You think he's okay? With me I
mean?

ROBIN
Just keep him busy. Gimme like
fifteen minutes. Come get me if he
starts freaking out.

Max steps out into the sunlight. Robin watches through the
window as he takes Trevor out of sight.

EXT. KITTY KLUB/PARKING LOT - MORNING

Max stands near his cruiser holding a fidgety Trevor. He
sets him down, letting him explore. Max follows closely,
steering him away from any possible hazards.

ROXY (O.S.)
What're you doing?

Max turns around and Roxy's standing there. She's in street
clothes, no make-up, bag over her shoulder.

ROXY (cont'd)
Don't tell me you got a kid.

MAX
No, I'm watching him. Trevor.

ROXY
Watching him for who?

MAX

The girl from the donut hole. Her boss was freaking out cuz she had him in there.

ROXY

I saw you giving her a ride.

MAX

I've been trying to help her out. With her car and stuff.

Max picks up Trevor. Roxy moves in, getting a closer look. Being in the presence of a child softens her a bit.

ROXY

Cute. Never heard you say nothing about wanting to be a daddy.

Roxy sees Robin approaching, lugging a child safety seat.

ROXY (cont'd)

You know what, I'm going to stop myself from saying something I'm gonna regret. Hope you have a good time.

Roxy steps away, heading up the street.

As Robin comes up, tears can be seen in her eyes.

MAX

What happened?

ROBIN

Still got my job but I don't know for how long. He's an asshole.

Robin reaches out, taking Trevor into her arms.

Max retrieves something from his car. Turning around he presents the stuffed puppy to Trevor. He takes it, smiling. This brings a smile to Robin's face and she wipes her eyes.

INT. DENNY'S - MORNING

Max, Robin and Trevor are finishing breakfast. A WAITRESS brings Max the check and gives Robin some to-go containers.

ROBIN

You know if you're hiring?

WAITRESS

I don't think so. Check with the manager, he'll be in later.

She steps away. Robin starts loading up a to-go container with anything edible still on the table.

ROBIN

I don't know what I'm gonna do.
You gonna eat those fries?

MAX

No, go ahead.

She takes his plate, dumping the fries in the container.

MAX (cont'd)

You got family in the Cities?

ROBIN

No. I'm from up north. Near Brainerd. I came down here with my boyfriend. Former boyfriend, I don't know anymore. Trevor's dad. He had a job, got fired. Started using, drinking and using. I don't know where he is now.

MAX

Wow. You thought about going home?

ROBIN

I don't want to talk about that.

MAX

Okay, no problem.

Trevor's nodding off in his high chair.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Max drives. Robin's asleep in the passenger's seat, head slumped against the window.

Trevor's in his seat in the back, sound asleep as well.

Max tries to make it a smooth ride, enjoying the moment.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY - PARKED

Robin wakes up from what feels like a long nap. She's alone in the front and looking in the back Trevor's seat is empty.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Robin gets out of Max's cruiser. Turning around she spots Max working on her car with Trevor playing close by. She makes her way over to them and picks up Trevor.

ROBIN
What you doing?

MAX
Trying to finish this.

ROBIN
You let me sleep.

MAX
Figured you needed it.

Max gets in Robin's car and starts it, revving the engine.

ROBIN
Awesome.

He gets out, letting the car idle, and closes the hood.

MAX
You should be good to go.

ROBIN
Amazing. How much do I owe you?

MAX
Nothing, it's not a big deal.

Robin spots the Sitter entering the motel.

ROBIN
There she is. I gotta talk to her.

INT. MOTEL/HALLWAY - DAY

Max trails Robin as she hurries down the hallway carrying Trevor. She stops at the Sitter's door, KNOCKING.

ROBIN
I know you're in there!
(to Max)
You believe this?

The door opens and the Sitter peers out.

ROBIN (cont'd)
Where were you! You said you'd
watch him!

SITTER
I had things to do.

ROBIN
I had to take him to work. I
almost lost my job.

SITTER

That's your problem. I got my own
shit to deal with. You wanna pay
me, I'll help you out. But I ain't
doing it for nothin' no more.

MAX

How much does she owe?

SITTER

Thirty-five, forty really.

Max takes out his wallet.

ROBIN

You don't have to do that.

Max takes out several bills, giving them to the Sitter.

MAX

That's sixty. What she owes and
some credit.

(to Robin)

That okay with you?

ROBIN

Sure.

(to Sitter)

I'm working tonight. Will you be
here when I bring him by?

SITTER

Yes. I'll be here.

ROBIN

Thank you. I'm sorry for yelling,
I appreciate you helping me. I do.

SITTER

That's okay, sweetie.

Robin gives her a hug and the Sitter slips back in her room.

Robin opens her room, setting her stuff inside. Max lingers,
peeking in as she puts Trevor in his playpen.

Robin steps over to the doorway and Max backs up.

ROBIN

I really appreciate what you been
doing but you can't keep giving me
money. Paying for stuff.

MAX

I make pretty good money. I work a
lotta overtime. For years.

ROBIN
Well good for you.

MAX
Just saying, I got no family. It's
just me. I like helping you out.

ROBIN
Thank you.

She steps out and gives Max a hug, kissing him on the cheek.

She withdraws into her room, closing the door.

Max just stands there.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Robin carefully puts her ear to the door. After a beat she opens it but Max is gone. She closes and locks her door.

EXT. ALLEY #7 - DAY

A HOMELESS MAN comes upon Ruby laying on the pavement. She's breathing heavily and looks in rough shape.

He moves in close, looking her over. He takes some water from a bottle and tries to get some into her mouth.

Ruby laps up what she can, coming to life. She gets up on her feet and starts walking, moving away from him.

EXT. MINNEAPOLIS SKYLINE - DUSK

The sun sets, leaving the city in darkness.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

The AC truck parks on a tree-lined street in an upscale neighborhood. All is quiet except for a BARKING dog.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - PARKED

Tayjon watches Max flip through some papers on a clipboard.

TAYJON
So what do we do?

MAX
Get a recording for evidence.

Max pulls out a mini cassette player and presses record. He reaches out the window, balancing the recorder on the truck roof. They sit quietly, listening to the barking.

EXT. BIG HOUSE - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon approach a grand brick house. Max shines his light on the barking dog in the yard, a standard POODLE.

MAX

Go on, knock on the door.

Tayjon steps up, ringing the bell. No response.

TAYJON

Maybe nobody's home.

Max steps up and POUNDS on the door. A light comes on and he steps down, leaving Tayjon alone on the porch.

POODLE LADY (O.S.)

Who's there!

TAYJON

Ah, Animal Control.

The POODLE LADY, 50s, opens the door, peering out. More dogs can be heard inside but she keeps them out of view.

POODLE LADY

What d'you want?

TAYJON

We've had complaints about the barking.

POODLE LADY

My neighbors are assholes. All of 'em. My dogs don't bother nobody.
(yelling at the Poodle)
Prince, quiet now! Quiet!

The Poodle pauses briefly but starts barking again.

TAYJON

If you can't keep the dog quiet then you need to bring it inside.

POODLE LADY

I don't need to do anything. This is my house, my property.

She SLAMS the door. Max pulls Tayjon back and POUNDS on the door. The Poodle Lady jerks the door open.

POODLE LADY (cont'd)

Why are you still here?

MAX

Ma'am, you need to deal with your dog.

POODLE LADY

Why don't you just leave us alone?

MAX

How many dogs are on the premises?

POODLE LADY

Four, they all have licenses.

MAX

Do you have a permit to house them? It's required for more than three animals in a residence.

POODLE LADY

No, I don't have a permit. I can't believe this. Don't you have anything better to do than harass good people.

Max opens his ticket book and starts writing.

POODLE LADY (cont'd)

Now what, you're writing me a ticket. Fine, I don't care!

MAX

This is for the barking. If I have to come back, I'll impound one of the animals until the permit situation is resolved.

POODLE LADY

You don't touch my dogs. I'll call the city, this is such bull shit.

MAX

The number's on the citation. I'm officer Chase.

He gives her a ticket. She violently throws it back at him and SLAMS the door in his face. Max picks up the ticket and puts it in the mail box.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max and Tayjon cruise.

MAX

I deal with the biggest scumbags in the city but people with money are the worst.

(MORE)

MAX (cont'd)
Look down their nose at you. No respect, think they can do whatever they want.

TAYJON
She was mad.

MAX
More they freak out, more calm I get. Drives 'em crazy.

TAYJON
Can we stop somewhere, I need to use the bathroom.

Max takes a turn and pulls over to the side of the street.

MAX
Go ahead.

TAYJON
I was thinking a bathroom somewhere.

MAX
Just find a spot.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon gets out of the AC truck, looking around. He steps over to some brush and begins to relieve himself.

The AC truck begins to slowly pull away. Tayjon tries to finish as quick as he can.

TAYJON
Hey. What're you doing?

Tayjon zips up and chases the truck as it picks up speed.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max watches Tayjon in his mirror. He stops and lets him catch up. Tayjon reaches for the door and Max lurches the truck forward.

TAYJON
Come on, man.

Max stops and Tayjon gets the door open. He gets in the truck, out of breath and annoyed. Max can't help but laugh.

MAX
How about I let you drive.

Tayjon smiles.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Max and Tayjon each get out of the AC truck and switch sides. Tayjon settles in behind the wheel and pulls the truck away.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Tayjon drives with Max in the passenger's seat.

TAYJON

I never drove nothing this big
before. Got a lotta power.

MAX

Remember how to get to my place?

Tayjon nods and leans on the accelerator, smiling wide.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The AC truck parks by the garage, Tayjon and Max get out. As they approach the garage the security light comes on.

MAX

Hell is that?

Something is laying outside the door to the garage. Stepping closer, it's the white standard Poodle. It's weak but alive, a bleeding wound on its side.

TAYJON

Oh man...

Max shines his flashlight around the house and yard.

MAX

Might be watching us.
(raising his voice)
I see you, asshole!

There's dead silence. Tayjon kneels by the Poodle.

TAYJON

This dog belongs to that lady. The
barking complaint.

MAX

What the fuck? We can try and get
it to the emergency vet. Hold on.

Max goes over to his house, unlocks and enters the back door.

Tayjon tries to comfort the Poodle.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Max goes down the hallway, entering a door at the end.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/FATHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max comes in and turns on the light. He fishes the pistol out of the dresser drawer. Checking to make sure it's loaded, he stuffs it in the waist of his pants.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max drives fast, weaving through traffic as Tayjon hangs on.

MAX

Tell me how else that dog ends up
at my house? In my yard?

TAYJON

How's he know where you live?

MAX

Followed me home. Must've been
following us tonight.

TAYJON

But it's got no burns.

MAX

Maybe he didn't have time.

EXT. EMERGENCY VET CLINIC - NIGHT

The AC truck pulls up and parks. Max and Tayjon get out.

MAX

Go let them know we're here.

Tayjon heads inside and Max opens up one the truck's kennels. Looking inside, Max takes a steps back.

Tayjon emerges from the clinic.

TAYJON

They said to bring her right in.

MAX

Too late.

Tayjon approaches the open kennel, looking inside. Obviously disappointed, he closes the kennel door.

MAX (cont'd)

Now you ready to back me up?

TAYJON
What do you mean?

MAX
We take this dog back to that
fuck's house, put it in his yard
and bust him.

TAYJON
No, that's crazy. End up getting
shot at.

Max reaches behind his back and pulls the pistol from his
waist, showing it to Tayjon.

MAX
Just for protection. You can stay
in the truck, I just need you to
back up the story.

TAYJON
We should tell that lady what
happened to her dog. Maybe she saw
him take it.

Max ponders this for a beat.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - EARLY MORNING

The AC truck pulls up, parking across from the big house.

INT. AC TRUCK - EARLY MORNING - PARKED

Max sits behind the wheel, Tayjon next to him.

TAYJON
You want me to do it?

Max gets out and makes his way to the big house, knocking.

After a beat the Poodle Lady opens the door. As Max speaks
she gets angry, yelling and slamming the door in his face.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - CONTINUOUS

As Max makes his way back to the AC truck, he notices
something on a utility pole. Looking closer, it's one of
Ruby's "Lost Dog" fliers.

He takes it down and gets in the truck, quickly pulling away.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Max and Tayjon come through the front gate and step up to the
front door. Max rings the bell and Dad opens the door,
flanked by the Little Girl.

LITTLE GIRL
Did you find Ruby?
(to Dad)
Daddy, did they find her?

DAD
Go inside honey, let Daddy talk.

He shoos the Little Girl inside, closing the door. Her head pops out from behind the curtain, in the window.

DAD (cont'd)
Did you find her?

MAX
I did but she got away. She was in pretty rough shape, looked like somebody shot her.

DAD
Shot her? Oh my god.

MAX
When was the last time you saw her?

DAD
Almost three weeks. She was in the yard and just vanished. She must've gotten out but it wasn't like her to run away. She was getting ready to have puppies.

MAX
She had 'em but until I find Ruby I can't do anything about it.

DAD
I don't understand.

MAX
Just call Animal Control if she shows up. I'll let you know as soon as I find her.

DAD
Okay, I will. Thank you...

Dad goes back inside. Max makes eye contact with the Little Girl in the window as he and Tayjon walk away.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - MORNING

Max and Tayjon drive through the city in silence.

TAYJON
What are you going to tell Bruce?

MAX

Nothing 'til I got proof. Don't say nothing.

Tayjon just gazes out the window.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - EARLY MORNING

Max unloads the bagged Poodle onto a cart, rolling it into the open garage bay. He waits for Tayjon to get inside then pulls the door down hard behind them.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL - MORNING

Tayjon comes out of the AC building, in street clothes, just as Max pulls out of the lot in his cruiser. He doesn't even look in Tayjon's direction, driving away.

MONTAGE - MAX LOSING HIS GRIP

- A) Max points out a bottle of vodka behind the counter, paying at the register.
- B) Max exits a pharmacy and makes his way over to his cruiser, getting in.
- C) Max pops a few pills and swigs from a bagged bottle.
- D) Max tends to his festering wounds, changing his bandage.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

A SHOT is fired in the dark. Max stands in the corner, firing the pistol again into a hole in the foundation wall.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Muffled SHOTS can barely be heard outside the house.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - EVENING

Tayjon comes in and finds Tanya in the kennels. As he comes up he realizes she's standing by Skinny's kennel.

TAYJON

Hey.

TANYA

Do you know anything about this dog? He should've been put down.

TAYJON

I don't know. I think we got him last night. He was stray.

TANYA

Bruce wants to talk to you.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

Tayjon taps on the open door. Bruce is behind his desk.

BRUCE

Come in and close the door.

Tayjon hesitantly steps inside and closes the door.

BRUCE (cont'd)

Sit down.

Tayjon sits but Bruce remains standing.

BRUCE (cont'd)

I just got off the phone with a woman whose dog was killed last night. She says you and Max were at her home, Max threatened to impound her dog and then comes back and says it's dead.

TAYJON

We found it at Max's house.

BRUCE

You found her dog at Max's house?

TAYJON

Somebody left it by his back door. He's sure it's the guy he got into the fight with. The one killing dogs.

BRUCE

This woman's got it in her head that Max had something to do with it.

TAYJON

No way. I was with him all night. There's something else... I don't wanna get Max in trouble.

BRUCE

What're you trying to say?

TAYJON

He's been carrying a gun.

Bruce sits back, rubbing his face in deep frustration.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - EVENING

As Max approaches the building two Day Shift guys exit. Both give sheepish nods as they pass by him.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - EVENING

Max comes in and walks through the kennels. He comes up on Tayjon feeding Skinny.

MAX
Ruby show up?

TAYJON
No, I checked.

Max checks a clipboard.

TAYJON (cont'd)
Bruce wants to talk to you.

Max walks out. Tayjon kicks a kennel gate, mad at himself.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/HALLWAY - EVENING

Max makes his way down a long hallway, passing Tanya.

TANYA
Bruce is looking for you.

MAX
Thanks, I heard.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Max clocks in and opens his locker, starting prep for his shift. Bruce appears in the doorway.

BRUCE
Running a little late.

MAX
Yeah, sorry about that.

BRUCE
Can you tell me what's going on with the woman and her poodle? I can't find any paperwork on it.

MAX
We found her dog dead. I was going to write it up tonight. Tayjon was there, he knows.

BRUCE

I've spoken with Tayjon but I want to hear it from you. Where did you find the dog?

MAX

Well, I'm guessing he told you we found it at my house.

BRUCE

Do you know how it got there?

MAX

Same man that tried to kill me. That's killed like five dogs. That I know of. And I can't do shit about it.

BRUCE

Have you been drinking?

MAX

No.

BRUCE

Have you been carrying a gun?

Max smiles.

BRUCE (cont'd)

Do you have a gun right now?

Max unzips his jacket, revealing his pistol.

MAX

It's for protection.

BRUCE

You can't carry that. No way. You're endangering yourself and those around you. I need you to give me the gun.

MAX

No way.

Max closes his locker and walks out past Bruce.

BRUCE

Where are you going? Max?

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/HALLWAY - EVENING

Max moves down the hall, looking in doorways, searching.

INT. KENNEL ROOM - EVENING

Max comes into the kennels. He rushes Tayjon, pushing him up against the wall. The commotion gets the dogs BARKING.

MAX
Why'd you tell him?

TAYJON
I didn't know what to do. I'm
sorry.

MAX
How about keep your mouth shut.

TAYJON
Lemme go!

He tries to get away but Max keeps him pinned to the wall. Tayjon starts putting up a serious fight, pushing Max away.

MAX
So you think you're tough now!

As Max gets ready to go at him again Bruce comes up.

BRUCE
That's enough. Get out, Max. Get
out before it gets any worse. Go!

Max storms through the kennels and out the door.

Bruce looks relieved, checking on Tayjon.

BRUCE (cont'd)
You okay? He hurt you?

TAYJON
No, I'm fine.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL/GARAGE - NIGHT

Max enters the garage bay. Ducking down behind the AC truck, he retrieves his flask from under the bumper.

INT. MAX'S CAR - EVENING - PARKED

Max pops some pills, taking a long swig from his flask.

EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL/BACK LOT - EVENING

Tayjon comes out of the building. Looking across the lot he sees Max's cruiser. He starts to move towards it. Max starts the engine, pulling out of the lot and squealing away.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Bruce is putting on his jacket and gathering up his things as Tayjon stands by. Bruce gives Tayjon a big ring of keys.

BRUCE

Until you've got your badge you shouldn't be in the field alone. Tomorrow we'll figure out what we're going to do, maybe Tanya can work nights with you for a while.

TAYJON

There's a lotta barking complaints to follow up on. I could do that.

BRUCE

Okay, but that's it.

Tayjon's pleased.

BRUCE (cont'd)

Listen, you did the right thing. Max is going to get himself in real trouble if he's not careful.

Tayjon's not entirely convinced.

INT. DONUT HOLE - NIGHT

Max comes in finding the Manager behind the counter.

MANAGER

What can I get you?

MAX

What happened to the girl, Robin?

MANAGER

She quit.

MAX

She quit? When?

MANAGER

Today. She came in and took her last check and left.

EXT. DONUT HOLE - NIGHT

Max steps out onto the sidewalk. Not sure where to go, he heads for the Kitty Klub.

INT. KITTY KLUB - MORNING

Max comes into the club and takes a seat at the bar. The club is sparsely populated with a dancer on stage.

Roxy sees Max and walks over, sitting next to him.

ROXY

Look who's here? Took your little girlfriend to get you back.

MAX

What do you mean?

ROXY

Your girl with the baby. She started today. She's been doing a private dance for some man. He's paying big money.

(pointing)

There she is.

Robin steps out of the private room in stripper clothes.

Max rise up, making his way toward her when the Man emerges from the same room. Max comes to a stop, stunned. The Man sees him and smiles, giving Robin a pat on the butt.

Max goes straight at him, taking him down on the floor. Robin SCREAMS, getting out of the way.

A BOUNCER pounces, pulling Max back, restraining him.

MAX

Stay the fuck away from her! She's got nothing to do with it!

The Man gets on his feet, dusting off.

MAN

No, but she's been treating me nice.

(to Robin)

Haven't you, honey?

Robin's not sure what to say. Max fights to get at him again but the Bouncer holds him back.

BOUNCER

Enough!

MAN

He's crazy. I done nothing and he attacks me.

MAX

This bastard tried to kill me.

Roxy comes to Max's defense.

ROXY

(to Bouncer)

You know Max. Let him go.

BOUNCER

Fine, but somebody needs to leave.

MAN

I'll go. But you all saw what he did to me. God damn assault.

BOUNCER

If you're gonna go, go.

The Man puts up his hands and heads for the exit and out.

Robin comes right up to Max.

ROBIN

What the hell, man? What was that?

MAX

He tried to kill me and he's been killing dogs. Stay away from him.

ROBIN

Why'd he come here?

MAX

He's been following me, maybe he saw us together, I don't know. I won't let him hurt you. What are you doing here?

ROBIN

Jesus. What does it look like I'm doing? Just leave me alone. Okay.

Robin walks away and disappears backstage.

Max turns around and Roxy's right there.

ROXY

What the hell is going on?

MAX

She's here cuz of you? You do that?

ROXY

I got nothing to do with it. She
came in here all on her own.

Max just goes past her and out the exit.

EXT. KITTY KLUB/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Max comes out the back entrance. Looking around, there's no
sign of the Man.

Max steps up to his cruiser and his wipers have been raised,
pointing to the sky, and there's spit on the windshield.

He puts the wipers back down and gets in behind the wheel.

Roxy emerges from the club, spotting him across the lot. She
waves, starting her approach and Max starts his engine.

ROXY

What're you doing!

He quickly pulls out of the lot and away. Exasperated, Roxy
goes back inside.

INT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Tayjon cruises, listening to the police radio.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max drives but doesn't seem to have a destination.

EXT. BIKE PATH - NIGHT

Tayjon pulls the AC truck off the street and onto a paved
bike path along railroad tracks.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Tayjon glides down the dark path through the woods. Seeing
something, he slows to a stop, flipping on his brights.

A FOX stands frozen in the path ahead. It gazes into the
light, limp rabbit in its mouth. It slinks into the trees
and out of sight. Tayjon's left awed, rolling on.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Max cruises the winding river road. Headlights appear behind
him. Max picks up speed but the lights keep closing in.

Once they're closer it's clear they are pickup headlights and
the engine is loud. Max picks up speed and the pickup flips
its brights on and off.

MAX
Fuck you doing?

Max slows and takes out the pistol. Pulling over to the side, he stops. As the pickup comes up, Max leans back, taking a bit of cover, readying his pistol.

Stench pulls up in his flatbed pickup and Max lowers his aim.

STENCH
What the hell, why you running?

MAX
Why you following me!

STENCH
I saw you go by, I was just trying to catch up. Ain't you supposed to be working?

MAX
Just leave me alone, alright.

He drops it in gear and takes off, leaving Stench behind.

Max focuses on the road, speeding up, testing the limits.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Max's cruiser approaches fast, flies by, and into the distance. Barely making the turns, close to losing control.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT - STOPPED

Max is stopped at a green light with no traffic in sight. Empty streets in all direction but nowhere to go.

The signal turns to yellow, then red. Max creeps into the intersection, puts it in park and kills the engine.

Max picks up the pistol. He checks the cylinder, making sure it's loaded. He closes his eyes, concentrating, trying to convince himself of something.

Opening his eyes, Max sees movement in his side mirror. Looking in the rear-view, something's trotting up behind him.

Putting the pistol on the seat, he turns around to get a better look at what's coming. To his amazement, it's Ruby.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

Ruby suddenly passes by Max's car and continues down the empty street. She looks hobbled but moves at a steady pace.

INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT

Max can't believe what he's seeing. He starts his cruiser, trailing Ruby, riding alongside her as she keeps on moving.

Max passes her by and pulls to a stop in her path. He gets out as she comes up and stops.

Max moves closer, kneeling and offering his hand. Looking at him for a beat, she moves on, looping around him.

EXT. DEAD END STREET - NIGHT

Ruby rounds the corner, making her way to the dark house. Max follows, pulling past her and parking at the dead end.

Max gets out of his car, checks his pistol, and makes his way over to the dark house.

EXT. DARK HOUSE/BACK - NIGHT

Max makes his way up the alley behind the dark house. The back gate is wide open, no pickup.

Ruby's pawing at the back door under the floodlight, BARKING.

Max goes to Ruby and grabs her by the collar. He pulls her away from the house but she's fighting him.

She snaps at him and he lets go. She goes right back to the door, pawing at it again. Max steps up, watches her, hearing BARKING inside the house.

Max kicks in the back door. Ruby quickly goes inside and down into the basement. Max follows.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Max comes down the stairs, seeing Ruby with her Pups. She looks up at him, then looks at something else.

Max turns and takes a blow to the head, dropping to the floor.

INT. BASEMENT/UTILITY - NIGHT

Max comes to. His mouth is duct-taped, hands and feet bound, and he's chained to the wall by the neck.

A PIT BULL chained to the wall barks at Max, not viciously but as if to warn him. It has burn scars on its body.

The red door to the space sits open and Ruby can be seen with her Pups, chain again locked around her neck.

Max sees a pile of dog collars in the corner.

The Man enters. He's got a big pistol in his pants.

MAN

How many times I gotta say it?
Stay the fuck off my property!

He smacks Max in the face. Max tries to defend himself but he's stopped short by the chain. The Man picks up Max's Pistol off the table.

MAN (cont'd)

Bring a gun to my home, it makes me
feel like I need to defend myself.

He takes aim on Max, cocking the hammer. Max just stares at the Man, waiting. Smiling, he lays Max's pistol back down.

MAN (cont'd)

(kicking Max)

You like what I left for you? My
gift. Don't like it when somebody
comes on your property, do you?
You made it too easy. Just follow
the asshole in the old cop car.

He kicks Max again.

EXT. DEAD END STREET - NIGHT

The AC truck turns the corner. Tayjon parks in front of the dark house but doesn't see Max's car at the dead end.

INT. AC TRUCK - NIGHT - PARKED

Tayjon goes through some papers, checking the address against the dark house. Listening closely, barking can be heard. Tayjon turns off the police radio and presses record on the mini cassette recorder, holding it out the window.

INT. BASEMENT/UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

The Man grabs a torch, turns on the gas, and sparks a blue flame. He steps out, standing over Ruby and her Pups.

MAN

You're as dumb as this bitch dog.
She survived the shot. Guess I
missed her heart. Now she's back
for more. Pretty fucking dumb.

He picks up a BLACK PUP, coming back to Max.

MAN (cont'd)

This why you keep coming back? To
save fucking mutts.

(MORE)

MAN (cont'd)
Fuck's wrong with you? Didn't your
daddy teach you nothing?

Holding the Black Pup, he brings the intense flame close to it. It squirms a bit and Max yells through the duct tape.

MAN (cont'd)
You wanna be the hero? Want me to
burn you instead?

The Man drops the Black Pup on the floor and taunts Max with the flame. Max instinctively backs against the wall.

MAN (cont'd)
Sit still! You want me to pay that
little bitch at the club a visit?
Bring her back here to join the
party? Probably back at the motel.

Max freaks out, fighting to get free.

MAN (cont'd)
Sit still and we can keep it
between us. You understand?

Max settles and nods. The Man brings the flame in close.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Tayjon steps through the front gate and approaches the house. BARKING can be clearly heard inside the house.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Man burns Max's leg. Max yells but can barely be heard through the duct-tape. The Pit Bull BARKS, agitated.

The doorbell CHIMES upstairs. The Man backs off Max, puts down the burning torch, and heads up the stairs.

INT. DARK HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Man peers out a window, seeing Tayjon at his door.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon KNOCKS on the door.

MAN (O.S.)
Who's there?

TAYJON
Animal Control.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Alone, Max manages to slide his bound hands under his butt and feet and get them in front of him. Unable to get his hands free, he starts pulling at the tape binding his feet.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Locks disengage and the door opens. The Man looks out at Tayjon. The Pit Bull can be heard BARKING in the basement.

TAYJON

Hey, sorry if I woke you but we've had complaints about the barking.

MAN

What you doing on my property?

TAYJON

Ah, the gate was open.

MAN

That don't give you the right to go through it!

TAYJON

Sorry, I'm here about the barking.

MAN

I'll shut the dog up. Get off my porch and off my fucking property!

The Man slams the door and Tayjon steps back. He lingers but then turns to leave, defeated.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

His feet finally free, Max grabs the chain around his neck. He tries to pull it free from the wall, but it's solid.

INT/EXT. ANIMAL CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT - PARKED

Tayjon starts the AC truck. Taking one last look at the dark house, he pulls down the street. Turning around at the dead end, his headlights rake across Max's car and Tayjon stops.

Tayjon turns off the engine and gets out of the AC truck. He hesitantly goes over to Max's car. Shining his light inside, he sees Max's flask on the front seat. He shines his light around the area but sees nothing.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Max looks around, desperate to get free. Focusing on the torch, he stretches out to try and reach it. As he balances on one leg, he extends the other within inches of the torch.

Pulling the chain taut, stretching a little further, he knocks the torch over with the toe of his boot. It rolls close enough that he can pull it in with his foot.

Picking it up, Max puts the torch between his feet and burns the tape around his wrists. He pulls away from the intense heat several times before finally getting through the tape.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Tayjon comes up to the front gate. Taking a deep breath, he approaches the front door.

The Man comes out of the dark, jamming his pistol in Tayjon's back. Tayjon freezes, raising his hands.

MAN

Fuck you think you're going?

TAYJON

Please. I'm looking for somebody.

MAN

Shut up.

He pushes Tayjon ahead, following him up to the house.

INT. BASEMENT/UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Max burns the chain with the torch, it glows orange.

MAN (O.S.)

Go down the fucking stairs! Do it!

Max places the burning torch close to where it used to be. Sitting, he puts his hands and feet as if they're bound.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tayjon comes down the stairs with the Man behind. Seeing Max in the utility room, Tayjon stops. The Man cracks him in the head with the pistol grip and Tayjon drops in a heap.

INT. BASEMENT/UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Man steps into the utility room. He reaches for the torch but hesitates, looking over at Max.

Max springs up, attacking him with a flurry of punches.

A SHOT is fired. Max is hit in the torso. Stumbling forward the chain jerks his neck when it goes taut. Getting his balance, Max feels at the wound on his side, finding blood.

Max gazes at the Man then turns around. He grabs the chain, pulling at it with all he's got, trying to break free.

The Man takes aim on Max's back, cocking the hammer.

The chain SNAPS and Max's momentum takes him into the Man. They both go down.

Another SHOT is fired.

Max knocks the pistol away and pins the Man down, beating him until he just takes the blows. Max stops himself, fighting the urge to pummel him to death.

Max peels the tape off his mouth and takes in deep breaths. Climbing off the Man, Max picks up his pistol.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Max steps out of the utility room, finding Tayjon on the floor, regaining consciousness.

MAX

You alright?

Tayjon sits up, out of it but okay. He sees Max's wound.

TAYJON

You're shot. He shot you.

MAX

I know. Go call for help.

Tayjon gets on his feet, quickly climbing the stairs.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Tayjon comes out of the house and runs over to the AC truck.

INT. BASEMENT/UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Max finds some keys and goes to the Pit Bull. Calming it, he unlocks it from the chain. Guiding it to the red door, the dog BARKS at the Man laying on the floor. He's now semi-conscious, starting to move.

MAN

God damn it...

The Man manages to get on his feet. The Pit Bull tries to pull away from Max, wanting to get at the Man.

MAN (cont'd)

Fuck you, asshole!

Max releases the Pit Bull and it goes at the Man.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Max closes the red door and the SNARLING attack is heard on the other side. The Man WAILS but Max holds his ground, waiting till the STRUGGLE quiets down.

He opens the door and the Pit Bull stands by the Man's lifeless body. It's panting, mouth red with blood.

Max strokes the dog, calming it. He takes hold of its collar and pulls it out of the utility room.

Tayjon comes down the stairs.

TAYJON

Got police and ambulance coming.

Tayjon looks in the utility room, seeing the Man's body.

MAX

(re: Pit Bull)

Dog got loose. Tore him up.

Tayjon looks at Max, nodding in agreement.

MAX (cont'd)

Take him out. He won't hurt you.

Tayjon grabs the dog by the collar and Max releases it. Tayjon guides the big beast up the stairs and out.

Max uses the keys to release Ruby from the chain around her neck. She stays with her Pups, sniffing and nuzzling them.

Max finds a cardboard box and empties it. He carefully reaches by Ruby, pulling out the Pups one by one.

MAX (cont'd)

Just wanna get 'em out of here.

Max puts the last of the Pups in the pool out. Tayjon comes back down and Max hands him the box.

TAYJON

Can you get out on your own?

MAX

Yeah, I'm right behind you.

Tayjon climbs the stairs and Ruby follows him out.

Max hears faint WHIMPERING and finds the Black Pup hiding. He gently pulls it out and holds it close.

Max climbs the stairs towards daylight. Reaching the top, he closes the door behind him, blocking out the light.

EXT. DARK HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Tayjon takes the last Pup out of the box, setting it down with the others that nurse from Ruby.

Max makes his way over and puts the Black Pup with Ruby and the others. He looks at Tayjon who's in a state of shock.

MAX

You alright, man?

Tayjon nods but can't stop his tears.

TAYJON

Since he pulled that gun, I can't stop thinking about my baby. My wife and my baby.

Max puts his arm around him, trying to comfort him.

MAX

It's over. You're okay.
(re: Ruby)
Gotta get her to the Vet.

Max can't stay on his feet much longer, leaning on Tayjon.

TAYJON

You alright?

MAX

Just need to sit down.

Tayjon helps him down to the ground. Max checks his wound and he's still bleeding. He lays back, looking up to sky.

TAYJON

Hang in there, man. They'll be here soon. Hang in there.

A SIREN wails in the distance, gradually getting louder.

An ambulance pulls up. The Neighbor can be seen across the street with his Toy Poodle, trying to see what's going on.

CUT TO:

LOCAL TV NEWS IMAGES AND SOUND BITES:

The NEWS ANCHOR comes on the screen with "Breaking News."

NEWS ANCHOR

For more on that bizarre and violent incident in South Minneapolis over night we go to our Leslie Wilson, live at the scene.

(MORE)

NEWS ANCHOR (cont'd)
(to Leslie)
Leslie, what's happening there now?

Reporter #1 stands across the street from the dark house. Detectives and Officers scatter the scene. Onlookers gather outside the tape.

REPORTER #1
Stan, what we know is two Animal Control Officers were held hostage in the house behind me by a now deceased suspect. Shots were fired and one officer was wounded. We don't know if his injuries are life threatening but police will be sharing more with us soon.

Max, strapped to a gurney, is loaded into an ambulance.

CUT TO:

A second local station and NEWS ANCHOR #2 continues the coverage. A series of mug shots of the Man are on screen.

NEWS ANCHOR #2
Wayne William Spur was a Vietnam vet with a long criminal history including, assault, domestic abuse, multiple DUIs and most recently pending charges of animal cruelty and assault involving an incident with Animal Control officer Max Chase...

A DMV headshot of Max with a weak smile is pictured.

CUT TO:

REPORTER #2 stands outside a hospital, mic in hand.

REPORTER #2
Animal Control Officer Max Chase is recovering from surgery but doctors say he's in stable condition.

CUT TO:

Reporter #3 stands outside the Small House with the Little Girl and her Dad in the background.

REPORTER #3
As more details surface it's clear that there is one other hero that has yet to speak to the press. That's because she's a dog. Ruby.
(MORE)

REPORTER #3 (cont'd)
(to Little Girl)
Do you know your dog's a hero?

He holds the mic for the Little Girl to speak but she's shy.

REPORTER #3 (cont'd)
Are you glad Ruby's safe?

She just nods.

DAD
Ruby's had to have surgery and she's recovering at the vet. But it looks like she's going to be fine.

REPORTER #3
And I understand that she had a litter of puppies.

DAD
Yes, the puppies are doing okay. They were pretty weak but they're at the vet to and we're hoping to get them all home soon.

REPORTER #3
You can bet there will be a lot of people out there who'll want to have one of those.

CUT TO:

Reporter stands outside Animal Control with Bruce who has Skinny on a leash.

REPORTER #2
I'm here with Animal Control Supervisor, Bruce Erickson.
(to Bruce)
One good thing to come out of all this has been here at Animal Control. Tell us about that?

BRUCE
Animal Care and Control. And yes, we've had a rise in adoptions. We're really happy about that but we still have animals that need homes, more every day. Everybody loves puppies but we have many older dogs that could be great pets. Like this lab mix, Sam.

REPORTER #2
What a sweet dog.

She reaches down to Skinny and he raises his paw to shake.

REPORTER #2 (cont'd)

Isn't that sweet.

(shaking Skinny's paw)

Hello Sam, nice to meet you. I'm sure when our viewers see this you'll find a home.

CUT TO:

Accepting plaques, Max and Tayjon pose for a series of pictures with Bruce, the MAYOR, and other CITY OFFICIALS.

CUT TO:

Max and Tayjon stand with the Reporter #1.

MAX

I don't know what else to say.

(re: Tayjon)

We were just doing our job.

REPORTER

(to Tayjon)

How do you feel, about that night?

TAYJON

Glad it's over, glad to be alive.

I don't know what else to say.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - MORNING

The sun rises, casting new light on Max's front door.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/FATHER'S ROOM - MORNING

Max wakes up in his father's bed. Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, his wounded arm looks better but scars remain.

Max sits up, puts his feet on the floor. He's bandaged around his torso and over burns on his leg.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - MORNING

Max washes his face, looking at his reflection in a new mirror. His hair has grown a bit, softening his edge.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Max opens the curtains, letting in the morning sun. The living room now shows signs of life. The furniture's been moved around to accommodate a new TV. He clears some dirty dishes off the table and steps out.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Max washes dishes. The kitchen looks cleaner, not spotless but better. Drying his hands, Max gazes out the window.

INT. MOTEL/HALLWAY - DAY

Max walks down the hallway, stopping at a door. He KNOCKS. He hears movement inside then a SKINNY MAN opens the door.

MAX

I'm looking for Robin.

SKINNY MAN

Sorry, no Robin here.

Annoyed, he closes the door in Max's face.

The Sitter opens her door.

SITTER

She left a few days ago.

MAX

She say where she was going?

SITTER

No. Her boyfriend came back and they left. I liked her. Boy too.

With a smile the Sitter closes her door.

Max stands there for a beat, alone in a long hallway.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE - EVENING

The yard has been mowed. The house still needs paint but looks more homey somehow. Max comes out of the house lugging two bags of garbage. He puts the garbage in the bin and opens the side door to his garage, leaving it open.

Tayjon pulls up in the AC truck and gets out. He's in full uniform with a badge.

TAYJON

How you doing?

MAX

Pretty good.

He comes over shaking Max's hand.

TAYJON

Look better. Moving better.

MAX

Little bit.

Tayjon steps over to the garage door, detecting an odor.

TAYJON

Skunk?

MAX

Stench came by for a beer.

Tayjon can't help but chuckle and neither can Max.

TAYJON

I got something for you.

Tayjon steps over to the AC truck and pulls something out of one of the kennels. Coming back, he's got the Black Pup, handing it to Max. It's grown and filled out a bit.

MAX

What's this?

TAYJON

Lots of people want these pups but when I told the family you might want one they were happy to do it.

Max holds it up, giving it a good look over.

TAYJON (cont'd)

You got a good home. Why not?

MAX

He got a name?

TAYJON

Figured you'd call him Sam.

Max sets the Black Pup down, letting it explore.

TAYJON (cont'd)

You know when you're coming back?

MAX

We'll see.

TAYJON

No way you're quitting. I won't let you.

Tayjon's pager BEEPS and he checks it.

TAYJON (cont'd)

Bite call, I better get going.

MAX

You want to come by some time and
barbecue? Bring the wife and kid?

TAYJON

(stepping to the truck)
Sounds good to me.

MAX

Ain't you forgetting something?

TAYJON

Nope. Keep him for bit. You want
me to come get him, I will.

Tayjon gets in his truck and pulls away with a wave.

Max looks over at the Black Pup as it sniffs around the yard.
He reaches for it but it scampers away, wanting to play.

He herds it into a corner and gets down to its level.

MAX

Come, Sam. Come here.

The Black Pup comes to him and Max smiles.

NEIGHBOR LADY (O.S.)

Excuse me.

The Neighbor Lady is standing on the other side of the fence.

NEIGHBOR LADY (cont'd)

Sorry, I don't mean to bother you.

MAX

That's alright.

NEIGHBOR LADY

I wanted to tell you, I saw you on
the news. That was some deal you
got into with that man. I hope
you're doing alright.

MAX

I'm doing better, thanks.

NEIGHBOR LADY

Good... You know, I didn't know
your father that well but I'm sure
he'd be real proud.

Max isn't sure what to say.

NEIGHBOR LADY (cont'd)

Cute puppy.

MAX

Thanks.

NEIGHBOR LADY

Feel the cold coming. Snow's gonna
fly before long.

Getting a chill, she heads inside.

Max picks up the Black Pup, scratching its belly.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DOG POUND - DAY

The Boy makes his way to a kennel containing the Brown Mutt.
Letting it out, the dog is beyond excited, wagging its tail
and licking the Boy's face.

They Boy leashes it and they walk away, exiting the kennels.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - EVENING

The Little Girl comes out of the house with a couple Pups.
As they play, Ruby sticks her head out the door.

LITTLE GIRL

Ruby. Come girl. You can do it.

Ruby steps out of the house. Her torso's been wrapped and
taped to protect her healing wound and burns.

Her Pups bound around so she finds a place to lay in the sun.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The doorbell CHIMES. The hallway light comes on and Max
makes his way to the front door. The Black Pup trails along.

Opening the door, Roxy's revealed holding a bag of groceries.

MAX

You found me.

ROXY

Funny.

She steps forward and leans up to kiss him but stops short,
waiting for Max to kiss her first. He does.

MAX

What you got?

Roxy
Ground meat and pasta sauce. And
pasta to put the sauce on.

MAX
Sounds delicious.

ROXY
Better be.
(to Black Pup)
Come on, Sam. Mama's got a treat
for you.

She heads inside and the Black Pup follows after her.

Max closes, and locks, the front door.

Roxy's heard playing with the YIPPING Black Pup.

Max listens for a beat before turning out the hallway light
and joining them.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

A "LOST DOG" flier is stapled to a utility pole.

CUT TO BLACK.