

FAMILY RECORDS

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FADE IN:

INT. THE GAZETTE - RON'S CUBICLE - DAY

At a desk burdened by stacks of newspapers, notepads, books, sits chubby RON STOFFLE, 47, unshaven, tattered shoes.

Desk phone RINGS.

RON
(into phone)
Yello? Why? But I—alright.

Annoyed, he shuts his laptop, packs it and some notebooks into a tattered messenger bag and turns off the desk lamp.

INT. THE GAZETTE - NEWS ROOM - DAY

Ron limps down a corridor of cubicles populated by smartly dressed reporters half his age. Or younger.

Knocks on his EDITOR'S door. Does breathing exercises while he waits. In through the nose, out through pursed lips.

EDITOR (O.S.)
If you must.

INT. THE GAZETTE - EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ron sits across the tidy desk of his clean-cut young EDITOR.

RON
An apology?

EDITOR
More of a clarifying article.

RON
Everything in the piece was factual.

EDITOR
Some readers felt it went a little—

RON
That's what investigative reporting's supposed to do. By definition.

EDITOR
People don't want exposés any more. Ron. This's the age of Twitter. They want round-ups, briefs. Fun-facts.

RON

So, instead of city hall corruption, you want, what? Three hundred words on which Kardashian has the fattest ass? Best beard oils under ten dollars. Oh, oh, I've got it: nine ways to bleach your butthole at home.

EDITOR

Management's clear: they want to shift focus onto upbeat news. You wanna practice dino-journalism, I suggest you start a nursing home newsletter or build a time machine.

RON

Then why print it the first place?

EDITOR

It was a solid piece. I took a shot.

RON

So, no one actually found any errors. I just stepped on the wrong toes.

EDITOR

Days of controversy selling papers is over. We can't afford to offend the readers. Or advertisers. You can still report on the who, what, where. Just dial back the detail and take it a little easier on your subjects.

Ron stares dumbfounded at the floor. Checks his wrist pulse on the sly while his boss looks at his phone.

EDITOR (cont'd)

(absently)

How's your mom?

As Ron starts to answer, his boss laughs at his phone.

EDITOR

Ha. Noice.

RON

Dead? That's ... why I'm taking the long weekend. We talked ab—

The editor now fully preoccupied.

EDITOR

Right. Well. Bright 'n' early Monday.

Ron glares in disbelief at his oblivious boss.

EXT. THE GAZETTE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Gray sky. Dead leaves swirl in the lot of this medium-sized newspaper in this medium-sized city.

Ron looks hopelessly at his junker of a car, which has a knife sticking out of one deflated tire.

RON
(to himself)
We are not friends.

Stuck to the windshield via fresh dog shit is a newspaper article headlined: "Priest charged with stealing \$1M"

INT./EXT. RON'S TRUNK - DAY

Ron digs around among tools and garbage for the jack.

INT./EXT. RON'S CAR - CITY STREET - NIGHT

The clunker now sports a tiny spare tire.

Panicking, Ron hunches over the steering wheel, hands clenched at 10 and 2. Does his deep-breathing exercises.

Traffic whizzes by, honking at his slow speed.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Inner city apartment complex. Not the ghetto but close.

INT. RON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bare walls. Very little furniture, but what there is is third-hand. Stack of unopened bills on a table.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron packs jeans, socks, deodorant, and an old Alice in Chains t-shirt into a paper grocery bag.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sterile counter tops. Everything in its place.

Ron eats kidney beans from the can with a slice of bread.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bed is neatly made but Ron gets into a sleeping bag on the floor right in front of his closed bedroom door.

Also on the floor nearby, an old combo TV/VCR. He hits "play" on the 1940 movie *His Girl Friday*.

Watching the alarm clock's second hand, Ron puts his fingers to his wrist and counts his heartbeats at a whisper.

RON

One, two, three, four, five, six ...

ONE MINUTE ELAPSES

RON (cont'd)

Sixty-three, sixty-four, sixty-five.
(starts over) One, two, three ...

ONE HOUR, 32 MINUTES LATER

Credits roll on the movie. Ron is still on his stomach, still counting his pulse. He reaches over and hits "rewind."

While the movie rewinds, Ron limps into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ron drops his sweatpants to his ankles like a toddler and urinates without holding his penis. Both his hands are on the towel rack above the toilet to steady himself.

His buttocks and legs are COVERED in long thin scars.

Ron rinses his hands in the sink and blots his face with water. Glares hatefully at his reflection in the mirror.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

LATER. Credits on the movie he's watching roll again. Ron rewinds and hits play and goes back to counting his pulse.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

LATER. Credits on the old movie roll yet again.

This time, Ron is asleep.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alarm clock rings. Ron's eyes open. Another terrible day.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Groggy Ron makes coffee.

At his kitchen table, a paper tablet with scratched out lines: "The Funeral" and "Saying goodbye." Below them, the sentence: "DING-DONG, THE BITCH IS DEAD"

INT./EXT. RON'S CAR - DAY

Ron drives through the city. He slows for the northbound freeway on-ramp but thinks twice and drives on past.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Trying to work up the courage, Ron drives past the freeway on-ramp sign heading in both directions several times.

END MONTAGE

INT. RON'S CAR - DAY

Hyperventilating, Ron stops, blinker clicking, stares at the on-ramp. With a sigh of resignation, he turns around.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

SUNRISE. Another gray day. Scenery gradually turns from city to country. Brilliant colors on the changing leaves.

INT./EXT. RON'S CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Ron does his deep-breathing exercises while driving hunched over the wheel, both hands clenched at 10 and 2.

Speed limit sign reads "55." Ron's speedometer reads "49."

Drivers speed past Ron, honking and motioning angrily.

INT./EXT. RON'S CAR - RURAL GAS STATION - DAY

Ron shakes the tingling out of his hands. Opens his wallet and glumly counts before lifting the nozzle.