

Passive

written by

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FADE IN

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The moon is high in the sky as night falls. The light from it shines through a bedroom window. RONNIE VALENTINE, a former cop turned private detective who works her cases at night is waking up from the day as she rubs the sleep from her eyes. She sits up in bed and swings her legs over the side, walks to the bathroom across from her bed. Once in the bathroom, hands on the sink counter, stares at her reflection.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Why did I have to wake up? The world would be a better place if I just never woke up again. Damn, might as well get this shit show of a day started.

Just as Ronnie reaches for her toothbrush, there's a BUZZING coming from the night stand near her bed. Ronnie walks over and sees her old friend MARLENE JOHNSON aka MARLY is calling her, a detective at Ronnie's former precinct.

RONNIE (O.S.)

What do you want Marly?

MARLENE

Through the telephone speaker, in a southern accent.

Now, is that anyway to greet an old friend sugar?

Ronnie rolls her eyes with a slight smile on her face. As she leans against her bedroom doorway. Light from the kitchen shines in the background and light from bathroom illuminates Ronnie.

RONNIE

Half-bantering, half-serious.

You only call when you need something Marlene, we're friends but this relationship is mostly transactional and we both know it so why don't you just tell me what you want so I can get on with my day?

MARLENE

Well, I never. I was only calling because I found a case for ya and I thought you might be interested. This ones right up your alley.

Ronnie laughs sarcastically.

RONNIE

Which means you're stuck and you don't know what to do?

MARLENE

Stumbles over her words.

Psh, I -- I mean well I tried. But this dad-gum thing just makes no sense.

Ronnie sighs lightly.

RONNIE

Alright, what is it?

MARLENE

Turns her tone serious.

Two hours ago one of the servers at the *Jumbo Factory*, that old seafood place out on Highway 61 was found dead in the parking lot of *Westwood apartment complex*.

Ronnie stands up straighter. She's got a soft spot for cases like this, where a young woman is killed and just left for dead. It reminds her of her sister, who was found dead in a ditch 5 years ago. The killer was never discovered.

RONNIE

Eyes wide and intense.

How old, Marly?

MARLENE

24.

RONNIE

Sucks in a quick breath.

I'm on my way.

MARLENE

I'll text you the details.

Pauses and takes a deep breath.

Listen, Ronnie honey I know how you feel about these cases so thank you for coming to help.

RONNIE

Sighs a little more heavily this time
Of course, Marly. Of course. I'll see you soon.

Ronnie hangs up the phone. Puts it back on her night stand. Goes back to the bathroom. Sits on the toilet and puts her head in her hands.

RONNIE (V.O) (CONT'D)

Why do I do this to myself? Why do I drag up these memories? I'll never be able to solve this. Just like I was never able to find my sweet innocent baby sister's killer either. I'm just gonna fall like I did before.

Ronnie resigns herself to the fact she already told Marlene she'd help. She gets up from the toilet and stands to close the bathroom door.

CUT TO

RONNIE OPENS BATHROOM DOOR

Ronnie is fully dressed now in her classic trench coat and hat, walks out of her bedroom, grabs her keys off the hook and her camera by the door and walks out of her apartment.

EXT. - WESTWOOD APARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ronnie is arriving to the crime scene. There's police tape surrounding the area. The body has been covered with a white sheet. Marlene is standing close by looking over the entire scene with a watchful eye. She's a full-figure woman with curly hair and glasses dressed in all black. Marlene spots Ronnie on the outside of the tape and waves her over.

MARLENE

Getting right down to business.

Her body was moved. She wasn't
killed here.

RONNIE

She live in these apartments?

MARLENE

Walks around the sheet as she talks.

No. Fingerprints found her in the
system. Name is Katie Knowles.
Address has her over on the north
side of town. Buckingham Heights.

RONNIE

Pulls on gloves and a plastic evidence bag out of her jacket
and puts the gloves on.

Oof. That's what? A half hour
commute. Why did she work way over
here?

MARLENE

We don't know. Interviewed her boss
and the co-workers working with her
tonight. Her supervisor says she
left for her break and never came
back. There's no evidence of a
murder weapon. We'll see what cause
of death is after the autopsy.

Ronnie begins to examine the body as Marlene talks.

RONNIE

Lifting the sheet up and looking at the body.

Alright let's see what we've got
here.

Ronnie looks closely at the body while holding the sheet up.
Her face is tight and she looks ready to throw up. But she
keeps her composure.

Suddenly, she sees something and her eyes narrow She picks up a small hair that's on the body and places it into the evidence bag.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
I found something.

MARLENE

Alarmed. Foreshadowing. She reacts with trepidation.

What is it?

RONNIE
A hair.

Ronnie turns to Marlene and holds up the bag.

MARLENE
Alright. I'll get it sent to the lab so we can get an ID off it. It might be the killer.

RONNIE
While you do that I'm going to take photos of the body and the surrounding areas to look over later.

MARLENE
Take as much time as you need. I'll have the "unies" [uniforms] canvas later.

Ronnie continues to take photos the body as she circles the area. Some time later, Marlene comes back with the witness who found the body. His name is DAVID MICHEALS. Ronnie goes to interview him.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Ron, this is David Micheals. She found Katie. I'll let you talk to her while I go get this hair sample to the lab ASAP.

Gesturing towards Ronnie.

David is a student. He's a tall kid, lanky in a hoodie and with a New York accent. He stands at the end of the stairs to the apartment building, bathed in the light of the hallway.

RONNIE
So, David is it?

MICHEAL

Smartass.

At your service detective?

RONNIE
I'm sure Marly checked you out first. I'm just here to jog your memory, see if we can't shake loose something you might not've thought was important.

MICHEAL
I already told the other detective everything.

RONNIE
Alright well, just walk me through it from the beginning.

MICHEAL
Okay.. well I was studying. I wanted a smoke break so I went outside. Got a call from my boy, started choppin' it up. Then I hear this like scream. You know, it's a college campus, that's regular I didn't think anything of it. Then it happens again, then again. I'm like alright maybe I need to check this out. So, I head down around the building and I see like this girl lying on the floor. At first I thought she was like passed out. But then I check on her and she's not moving. So, I get a little closer and her eyes are open, I don't think she's breathing so that's when I think maybe I should call the cops. And I did.

RONNIE
Did you notice anything unusual? Could've been a smell or color or something that just doesn't fit in?

MICHEAL

Thinking hard.

Well, when I was on the phone I was looking around just to see if anyone was gonna come I see something in the distance. Over there.

Points in the southwest direction of the parking lot.

It looked like a white shirt or something. Couldn't see the person or anything.

RONNIE

Okay well, thank you for your time David.

INT. - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ronnie is sitting at her desk. The photos from the crime scene are strewn all over her desk. She's looking intensely at them while she smokes a cigarette. Her thoughts turn inward and she goes down a shame spiral.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I can't do this.

Rubs her forehead in stress.

I'm not good enough to solve this.

Pause.

I'll never be able to find Katie's killer. Just like I was never able to find my sister's killer.

Ronnie takes a long drink from her glass.

I'm no good. I can't believe I agreed to this. What was I thinking?

Voice breaks.

None of this makes any sense. I'll never be able to figure it out.

Her phone rings. She answers more than a little irritated.

What?

MARLENE

DNA results on the hair are in. The captain wanted them sent right over to you. They're being couriered to you.

Fake laugh.

It's like he doesn't trust me or something.

RONNIE

Okay, I'll be here to receive them.

MARLENE

Another fake laugh.

Okay, hey don't open them without me.

RONNIE

Alright, alright. Fine.

Ronnie is slightly suspicious.

MARLENE

Aggressive.

Okay, bye.

Ronnie continues to wait and drink. Some time later there's a knock at the door. The courier hands the envelope to Ronnie. Ronnie sets them on the table. She then reaches for her cigarettes, only to realize her pack is empty.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Shit. I need more. Well I might as well go get some while I wait for Marly.

EXT. - OUTSIDE APARTMENT DOOR - NIGHT

Ronnie leaves her apartment and slams the door behind her, not locking it. After all, she trusts Marlene to let herself in.

She returns some time later and as she's walking up her steps she hears a noise. The door is open. She sees Marlene there with the results, it looks as if she means to steal them. Before she has time to react, Marlene pushes her out of the way and escapes. Ronnie stunned, takes a second to go after her. She gets up and chases after her. But, Marlene has a head start. She races down the stairs. Marlene is getting in her car. Ronnie is too far away. Marlene drives off in rush. Ronnie makes it there in time to see her tail lights as they are pulling out of her parking lot. Ronnie is still in shock.

RONNIE (V.O.)

It was Marlene, this whole time.
She betrayed me. She'll be long
gone by now. What am I going to do?

Ronnie stands on the curb truly dumbfounded and dejected.
Unsure what the hell just happened.

FADE OUT

End credits roll.