

IN THE HEART OF THE RAIN

The HISS of a heavy RAIN builds.

An old bluegrass gospel song plays from a TINNY speaker --
"The Wrath of God" by Wayne Raney and Family.

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Two **UNKNOWN MEN** cross a slope carrying a body between them, black outlines against the night sky.

The sound of LABORED BREATHING.

MAN ONE seen from behind, coat glistening wet, struggles to stay upright. The **DEAD GIRL's** legs are pinned under his arms.

The halo of a distant streetlight. Heavy rain falls like tracer bullets.

MAN TWO's feet fight through the thick ivy ground cover.

Man Two's fists clench the shoulders of the Dead Girl's white Christmas sweater. His wrist tendons stretch tight.

The knitted reindeer across the chest of the sweater jostle with the motion of the men.

The Dead Girl's hand slides from her stomach, trails along the ground, a silver friendship ring on her finger.

Man Two skids, slips. One knee hits the ground.

The sound of RAIN stops. The BREATHING continues, echoes.

The Dead Girl rests on the ivy, head lolled to one side, flecks of mud on her face.

Man Two's hand reaches, wipes the mud away, leaves a streak.

Rainwater runs through the streak, courses down her cheek like tears.

EXT. WATERFRONT PARK - DAY

TOM GANT (mid-40s) - rangy, intense - leans back against the seawall above the Willamette River. He rubs his temple. His troubled eyes scan the promenade.

His scan ends at the patio gate of a crowded restaurant. He looks at his watch, pushes off from the seawall.

A **WOMAN BICYCLIST** blows past, almost mows him down.

WOMAN BICYCLIST
Watchit, Dickhead!

Before he can apologize, she flips him off and disappears in a flurry of yellow spandex. He's still looking when he hears:

LAURA (OS)
Tommy!

Gant turns toward the restaurant, finds his ex-wife **LAURA MAHLER** (30s) looking elegantly causal as she glides toward the gate through linen-covered tables.

Gant regards his own jeans and worn cord jacket with a half-pained look, then tacks on a smile and moves to meet her.

RESTAURANT PATIO

They embrace. After a beat, she pulls back, appraises him at arm's length.

LAURA
You look like you've gained weight.

GANT
Yeah. Clean living.

LAURA
Well, whatever it is, it looks good on you.

She takes his hand, leads him to their table. When they sit, Gant looks down as if he can still feel her phantom touch.

They exchange awkward smiles.

A **WAITER** with a neon smile appears.

WAITER
May I bring the gentleman something from the bar? The bartender's special is a strawberry Margarita hand-crafted with Oregon berries and Herradura Gold, finished with a sprig of mint. Superb.

Gant and Laura exchange a knowing look.

GANT

I'll have an iced tea.

As the Waiter slips away, Gant tries on a smile, gazes out at the vibrant promenade.

GANT

This is something, huh? What is it, 60 degrees? It's like we all think it's the last nice day we'll ever have.

Laura nods toward the already darkening Western sky.

LAURA

Rain tomorrow.

GANT

(laughs)

Okay, so maybe we've got a point.

The Waiter returns with the Gant's tea. Gant empties three sugar packet into it.

GANT

The real reason I've gained weight.

As he raises his glass, Laura eyes him steadily.

LAURA

I heard you'd quit.

GANT

Yeah, well.... Almost 8 months. 226 days, but who's counting?

He gives his first honest smile.

LAURA

That's nice, too, Tommy. That smile. It suits you. You always seemed so unhappy before, so sad. I never knew what to do about it.

GANT

It was never up to you. Laura-

LAURA

Wait, Tommy. This is an amends, isn't it? Isn't that what they call it in A.A.?

When he doesn't answer, she throws a sad glance at the sky.

LAURA

I just wanted to see you again.

The waiter pours champagne for a couple at the next table. They toast with the PING of glasses. He can almost HEAR the bubble of carbonation.

Gant balls his hands under the table. He searches for something else to look at.

At another table, a well-dressed woman doodles with her fingernail in the frost on her COSMO glass. The businessman with her lifts a SCOTCH ROCKS to his lips. The ice CLINKS.

Gant dry swallows at the sound.

GANT

Would you mind if we walked?

EXT. PROMENADE - DAY

Gant and Laura move through the pedestrian carnival.

LAURA

How's your mom? I always meant to stay in touch-

GANT

Good. Beth's taking care of her. You know, the good sister.

Laura looks sideways at him.

GANT

Oh, hey, I'm sorry. That's not what I meant. How is your brother?

LAURA

Brian's fine.

GANT

Fine, huh?

Laura gives a resigned nod.

LAURA

Yeah. He's fine. Not perfect. But, hey - that's how it goes. We don't get to pick our family, you know.

A man pushing a triple carriage pass between. Gant looks down at three truly UNATTRACTIVE BABIES.

When Gant makes a face, Laura giggles, shakes her head. Both glad to have a change of subject.

LAURA

I heard you're designing again.

Gant fishes into his jacket, brings out a jewelry box, and hands it to her.

She opens it, studies the PENDANT inside - an emerald-cut sapphire flanked by black coral set in arched white gold.

LAURA

It's beautiful.

GANT

I call it Batman's Jukebox.

She closes the box and hands it back.

GANT

I have some pieces out. In shops.
Just trying to get my name back out
there. Start fresh.

LAURA

Oh.

GANT

It's not as bad as it sounds.

LAURA

No, I didn't mean... You should
come by the gallery.

Gant looks at the pavement and nods.

LAURA

I mean it, Tommy.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

They enter the lot. Laura gestures to the next row of cars.

LAURA

I'm over here.

Laura heads in that direction, Gant trailing half a step behind, the troubled look back in his eyes.

She pulls a set of keys from her purse and points the car key. A new, black BMW CHIRPS.

Gant stops, rubs the back of his neck.

GANT

They tell me I have to make peace
with my past, that if I don't, it
will eat me alive.

LAURA

Maybe they're wrong.

GANT

They're not.

She flashes a sad smile - more sad than smile.

GANT

I was a hope-to-die drunk, Laura. I
don't ever want to be one again. It
was like dying in fire. We don't
have to relive all the bad times.
But I do have to apologize.

She drops her head and nods to herself, waiting.

GANT

I loved you, more than anything,
but I couldn't stop drinking, even
when I knew you'd leave me. Even
when you did leave me.

Her shoulders barely lift and fall. When she raises her head,
her eyes are shining.

GANT

I'm sorry. For everything.

She takes it in. Dabs her eyes.

LAURA

Are you doing this with everyone?

GANT

As many as I can remember.

She cocks her head.

GANT

I was a blackout drunk. There are a
lot of holes. Some of it's coming
back, but a lot's just gone.

LAURA

Maybe that's good.

GANT
I don't see how.

LAURA
Sleeping dogs, Tommy. Maybe it's
better not to drag up old hurt.

Their eyes meet. Her composure is back in place. She pats his jacket above the pocket where he has put the pendant.

LAURA
I've got to run, but I want you to
stop by tomorrow.

Gant opens her car door.

GANT
Seriously, I'm doing fine.

LAURA
Come anyway. After ten. I know
someone who might be interested in
your work.

She pulls out a business card, scribbles on the back of it.
Hands him the card.

LAURA
And call here next time. It's home.

She slides behind the wheel.

Gant closes her door, steps back to let her back out. He stands watching until she's gone, then at the card and grins.

When he turns toward the promenade, the grin dies.

The **DEAD GIRL** is watching from the edge of the crowd, her hair hanging in wet ropes, her face beaded with rain. Flecks of mud spattered on her porcelain skin.

INT. GANT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The wind gusts outside. Rain beats on the roof.

Gant lays on his back, perfectly still, eyes open. He blinks.

A **MALE VOICE**, garbled by time and booze, calls from the past over the DIN of RAIN.

MALE VOICE (VO)
On the count of three.

GANT (VO)
 (slurring)
 What?

A beat.

GANT (VO)
 No.

MALE VOICE (VO)
 Then put her down, God damn it.
 Jesus Christ, let's get this done.

The voice trails into...

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The SOUND OF HEAVY RAIN

Soaked, breathing hard, Gant kneels, looks down at the Dead Girl's face. Her eyes are open. He closes them, wipes mud from her cheek. A fat raindrop hits, leaves a trail.

MALE VOICE (OS)
 Get up.

Another drop. The smear on her cheek dissolves.

MALE VOICE (OS)
 I said get up.

Gant blinks against the rain, drunk to the nth. He struggles to his feet, wads the shoulders of the Dead Girl's sweater in his hands again, and lifts her off the ground.

The two men descend, stop at the edge of a ravine.

MALE VOICE (OS)
 Okay. On the count of three.

GANT
 What?

Gant looks down at the girl. Her head is lolled to the side.

GANT
 No.

MALE VOICE (OS)
 Then put her down, God damn it.
 Jesus Christ, let's get this done.

Gant lowers the girl to the ground. He kneels beside her, brushes the wet hair from her forehead.

A hand shoves him backward.

GANT'S POV: a freewheeling sky, heavy rain. A street light. The dim outline of a car parked on the street above. The faint glow of the city above a line of trees.

MALE VOICE (OS)
Just sit there and shut up.

Gant turns to see the toe of the other man's shoe dig under the girl and roll her into the ravine.

Gant scrambles forward on his knees.

MALE VOICE (OS)
Let's go.

Gant can't look away. The body is sprawled face-down only a few feet below, already half-covered in weeds.

MALE VOICE (OS)
Come on, I said. I ought to leave you here. Get up, or swear to God, I will.

END FLASHBACK

INT. GANT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gant remains still for a beat, then rolls to see the clock. It's 3:12 a.m. Laura's business card next to it.

He dresses, pads to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

He turns on the light, grips the sink, stares at his haunted face in the mirror.

FRONT ROOM

Gant sits at his drafting table, opens a sketch pad to a drawing of a two-carat diamond ring.

He straps a stone mortar into a pair of tongs, then tries to measure out gold pellets. His hands tremble. He pulls a torch from a wall mount and SNAPS it on.

The flame HISSES - the same sound as the rain. Twice, Gant tries to heat the mortar. The shake is too bad.

He stares at the flame, turns the torch in his white-knuckled fist, as if fighting the urge to use it on himself. Finally, SNAPS the torch off, sits looking at his shaking hands.

After a moment, he opens a sketch pad and begins to draw: a crude, half-finished sketch of the Dead Girl.

Gant studies it. He frowns, tears it out, wads it up, then begins again.

INT. GANT'S HOUSE - DAY (NEXT DAY)

A light drizzle against the window. On the table top, on the floor, a dozen wadded up drawings.

Gant pushes back from the drafting table and tries to work out the knots. After a beat, he moves toward the shower, past THREE SKETCHES of the Dead Girl pinned to the corkboard above the table, all three complete and disturbingly life-like.

EXT. GANT'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is in the northwest hills, surrounded by trees. Old lumber is stacked beside the wide porch; in the gravel drive, a Dumpster half-full of rain-soaked siding and sheet-rock.

Gant emerges -- tired as hell. He tucks a SKETCH of the Dead Girl into a THOMAS GUIDE, looks at the sky, then hustles to his battered Jeep Cherokee.

EXT. PORTLAND STREET - DAY

Gant mounts the stairs of the main library. He's nearly past the knot of transients who have taken cover under the old elms when a **HOMELESS WOMAN** holds out a weathered hand.

She grins - bad teeth, eyes intense, alcoholic blue. Even in the rain, he can smell the booze and decay.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Change?

GANT

Sorry.

As she slinks back to the others, he opens the massive door.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Renovation time again. There's scaffolding everywhere.

Gant passes a row of **CLERKS** scanning books without looking up. He climbs the wide marble staircase.

PERIODICAL ROOM

An **ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN** at her desk - a large woman with a rosy face, a smile that's way too cheerfully.

GANT

I'd like to do a newspaper search.

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

National?

GANT

No, local.

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Then you'll want ALGERNON. That's what we call our direct link to the newspaper morgue. This way.

She rises, moves like a dancer as she leads him through the stacks, stage whispering over her shoulder as she goes.

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Morgue. That's what newspapers call their archives. Fascinating, hmm?

GANT

Yeah. Fascinating.

COMPUTER TERMINAL

A single terminal tucked in, surrounded by books shelves. The librarian waves at it like it's a prize on a game show.

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Here we are. Just type in the key words, and ALGERNON will take you anywhere you want to go.

She falters at Gant's twisted smile.

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Well, um, have a nice day.

She leaves, casting one last glance over her shoulder.

GANT
 (to himself)
 Too late. I already have plans.

Gant stares at the menu on the screen and slides into the chair. A sign over the computer reads: "15 MINUTE LIMIT."

ON THE SCREEN: The first prompt asks, "YEAR?"

Gant sits back with a stunned look. Rubs his forehead.

GANT
 Good question.

He types a year, maneuvers the mouse.

ON THE SCREEN: Cursor slips down to "KEY WORDS."

Gant leans closer, squints at the keyboard.

ON THE SCREEN: The blank fills one letter at a time:
 "PORTLAND HOMICIDE..."

Gant one-fingers the remaining three keys, pokes ENTER.

ON THE SCREEN: "642 RELATED ARTICLES"

GANT
 Christ.

He types again.

ON THE SCREEN: "F-E-M-A-L-E," which yields "266 RELATED ARTICLES."

Gant hits ENTER.

ON THE SCREEN: Headlines scroll past.

BURNED REMAINS DISCOVERED

WOMAN STABBED REPEATEDLY

SECRETARY SHOT

BODY IN DUMPSTER

JURY DELIBERATES LENTS STRANGLING

Gant's eyes tighten. He sits back in his chair. The changing screen glow lights his face.

ON THE SCREEN: At last, the scroll ends. At the bottom, a single flashing line: "SEE ALSO: YEAR END SUMMARIES."

A grim smile worms across Gant's face. He moves the cursor and double clicks.

ON THE SCREEN: The headline, "THE YEAR IN HOMICIDE: POLICE PROBE 72 PORTLAND DEATHS," followed by a catalog of deaths.

Gant searches for "PRINT," punches it. The printer beside the terminal hums to life.

A printed sheet slides out, then another, and another - accompanied by the sound of HUNT AND PECK TYPING.

Another sheet: "80 MURDERS THIS YEAR."

Gant is a lone figure tucked between the stacks.

INT. MILO'S CITY CAFE - DAY

On the table, a half-eaten sandwich, COLD COFFEE, and the open Thomas Guide. Gant pores over the printouts.

Most entries are crossed out: FREDRICK MANLEY, SABRINA WU, RETIRED NURSE, FOUND IN BASEMENT. Wrong gender, wrong race, wrong age. Everything wrong.

Some have circled words: FIELD NEAR BRIARVIEW CRESCENT, SUSPECTED RUNAWAY, VICTIM 15.

Gant marks the Thomas Guide and writes a name. There are nine X's, nine names: MARCIA STALEY, APRIL GARRITY, ROBIN GRAZO...

He flexes his hand. Leans back and stretches. Notices the Dead Girl staring in at him.

He jerks back, his knee BANGING the table.

Gant looks around at the temporarily startled **CUSTOMERS**.

He looks back the window. She's gone. Replaced by the gust of a light rain.

I/E GANT'S JEEP - DAY (DRIVING)

The Cherokee moves along a twisting, tree-lined road.

Inside, the RATTLE of a defective heater. The marked Thomas Guide sits open on the passenger seat, two of the marks already blacked out.

Gant spots a road sign, downshifts, makes the corner. A moment later, he pulls over.