

FADE IN:

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - BRONX, NEW YORK - DAWN

Patches of snow melt on front lawn. Winter gives way to spring. Two ALTAR BOYS chat at the side entrance of an old stone Roman Catholic church. FATHER KHELDIGA, 50s, Albanian, congenial, opens the side door, beckons boys inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - LATER - SAME DAY

Albanian families arrive for Sunday Mass. Once threatened refugees, now free to worship in America. Father Kheldiga greets his parishioners. He takes one parishioner's hand.

FATHER KHELDIGA

Good Morning. I was by the hospital to visit your grandmother yesterday. They lowered her meds... a good sign.

(speaks Albanian)

God bless you, too.

TWO ALBANIAN YOUTHS stand curbside, eyeballing this priest. One of the youths' sports a New York Yankees baseball cap. Both youths seem out of place amongst the faithful.

ALBANIAN MOTHER takes hold of priest's hand.

ALBANIAN MOTHER

Father, please. Help my son.

FATHER KHELDIGA

Send him by. Now, go inside and be attentive to God's word.

Parishioners enter church, not through the main doors, but through the basement entrance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLY TRINITY - DAY

Basement community room. Father Kheldiga conducts Mass to a standing-room only crowd of Albanian Catholics. Every devout eye cast upon him, the sound of his voice competes with restless youngsters on metal folding chairs.

FATHER KHELDIGA

(in Albanian)

Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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CONGREGATION  
(in Albanian)  
Amen.

The two youths, earlier from outside, stand at the back of the room. One still wears his NY Yankees cap. ELDERLY USHER nudges youth, gesturing for him to remove his cap. Youth refuses... turns his back on the pestering old timer. Only when others begin to stare, does the defiant youth remove the sports lid.

YOUTH #1  
(under breath)  
... pains in the ass.

INT. SACRISTY - LATER

Father Kheldiga removes holy vestments. Altar boys prepare to leave.

ALTAR BOY #1  
Bye, Father K!

ALTAR BOY #2  
Take it easy, Father.

FATHER KHELDIGA  
Thank you, boys.

They dash out. Father Kheldiga closes vestment closet. Caught in the reflection of the closet MIRROR, Father sees the two youths behind him.

ALBANIAN YOUTH #1  
(with Yankees cap)  
Father?

Priest turns, startled.

FATHER KHELDIGA  
Oh. Thought everyone had gone.

Albanian youths move in closer.

ALBANIAN YOUTH #2  
Father Kheldiga?

FATHER KHELDIGA  
Yes.

ALBANIAN YOUTH #2  
Can you can help us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER KHELDIGA  
Of course. What can I do?

ALBANIAN YOUTH #2  
(in Albanian)  
We're not Catholic.

FATHER KHELDIGA  
(in Albanian)  
No matter.

ALBANIAN YOUTH #2  
(in Albanian)  
I'm Hashim... this is Fehim.

Father Kheldiga extends his hand.

FATHER KHELDIGA  
Welcome to Holy Trinity.

EXT. EASTCHESTER ROAD - THE BRONX - SAME DAY

Middle-class immigrant neighborhood. OFFICER CATHERINE GOODHEART, late 20s, petite and pretty, fit and feminine even in standard NYPD attire, hauls ass down the city street.

Retired homeowners stop afternoon yard work... to watch the woman cop dart across traffic... followed frantically by a U.S. POSTMAN, 30s, African American.

GOODHEART  
THIS ONE? SHOW ME!

Breathless, postman points to a rundown house.

POSTMAN  
THAT ONE... RIGHT THERE!!

They rush the austere residence. Postman drops mail bag.

POSTMAN (CONT'D)  
*Smell it?!*

GOODHEART  
Who lives here?!

POSTMAN  
Some priest. Kheldiga.

The name registers with the officer.

Officer Goodheart kicks gate open leading to the 1920's two-story wood structure with a tar-paper roof.

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Beginnings of a vegetable garden out front, broken tomato stakes in the ground.

GOODHEART  
(breathless)  
Did you... look inside?

POSTMAN  
His mail and newspapers been untouched  
for days.

GOODHEART  
DID YOU GO INSIDE?!

POSTMAN  
Hell no. They say this place is haunted.  
(on her look)  
That's why I got you.

Goodheart KNOCKS on door. A sign in the door window reads "Solicitors Welcomed". Officer RINGS doorbell... shimmies doorknob. Turns easily. Unlocked.

GOODHEART  
Stay put.

POSTMAN  
No need to tell me twice.

Goodheart pulls her service revolver.

INT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Goodheart's immediately hit with a bad stench. She cups her nose... walks into dark foyer... shields nose with forearm.

GOODHEART  
(aiming gun)  
POLICE!! HELLO?!

Peers into kitchen. Formica table overturned. Garbage on the floor. She proceeds to living room. Scans the room. Aiming gun...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Room ransacked. Goodheart pulls shirt tail out, places it over her nose and mouth. She turns, spots something horrifying.... fabric muffles a GASP.

AIMS weapon... at what is... our VICTIM... a dead, middle-aged man sitting upright in a leather chair.

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CONTINUED:

Goodheart trips, regains her composure, and approaches. Breathing shallow... eyes alert... she steps closer... victim's hands and feet tied with phone wire... side of skull open like a watermelon... face bruised, bloated and black. Tape wrapped around his mouth and a cord dangles from his neck.

POSTMAN (O.S.)  
(frantic)  
... OFFICER?!!

Goodheart bumps desk, causing a framed picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to fall off the wall and crashes at her feet.

EXT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Officer Goodheart bolts residence, heaving her guts. She rushes to far end of the porch, hits her knees, puking.

She keys uniform radio.

GOODHEART  
Post... 6... to Central!

Postman approaches her. Neighbors gathering now.

POSTMAN  
... Officer? What is it?

GOODHEART  
Post 6 to CENTRAL!!

CENTRAL (V.O.)  
Post 6, go ahead.

POSTMAN  
Is he...?

GOODHEART  
(to central)  
I got a DOA on Eastchester Road.  
(at postman)  
What's the address?! House number?!

POSTMAN  
1312.

GOODHEART  
(keys radio again)  
1312... Eastchester Road... send  
detectives. Victim's a priest.

EXT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - LATER

Residence transformed into a crime scene. DETECTIVE MIKE DALY, early 40s, good-looks, arrives with a swagger, flashes shield at officer on duty, rushes by.

INT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Forensics does its thing just like you see on TV. Mike Daly talks to Officer Goodheart, who's more composed now than when we last saw her.

Cops place odor-killing cream under their nostrils.

GOODHEART  
That's how I found him.

MIKE  
Don't let anyone through that door.

GOODHEART  
Yes sir.

MIKE  
And don't disappear.

GOODHEART  
Wasn't planning to.

MIKE  
You okay?

GOODHEART  
(shaken a bit)  
I've had better days.

MIKE  
(gestures to victim)  
So has he.

Mike approaches victim. Also in the room is DETECTIVE WILLIE ROBERTS, mentally retired, age 35, lifts victim's slumped head.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Choked with his clerical collar still on.  
Christ, that's ballsy.

MIKE  
Media will have a field day with this one.

GOODHEART  
His name's Father Kheldiga.

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Mike and Detective Roberts turn to Goodheart.

GOODHEART (CONT'D)  
He's well-known in the neighborhood.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Well-known... but not popular from the  
looks of it.

Mike takes a closer look at deceased.

MIKE  
Black.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
White. Skin's decomposing.

MIKE  
Check upstairs?

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
What kind of douche bag kills a priest?  
I mean, I'm agnostic myself...

MIKE  
... who cares what you are.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
... even I respect a man of the cloth.

Mike points at Goodheart and door.

MIKE  
No press inside. Got it?

GOODHEART  
Got it.

MIKE  
Hey, what's your name?

GOODHEART  
Officer Catherine Goodheart.

MIKE  
*That* your real name?

GOODHEART  
(it's been a long day)  
No, my stage name.

Detective Roberts laughs, pulls off latex gloves.

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DETECTIVE ROBERTS

I had a partner once named Rocco Romeo.  
How's that for a baptismal tag?

SFX: UPSTAIRS DOOR SLAMS. This gets all their attention.

MIKE

Anybody up there still?

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

No.

Mike shoots them a look, ascends stairs.

INT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Window open -- WINDY. Mike enters. Not exactly the luxury suite. Twin bed, paper thin mattress, cross on wall, three-drawer wood dresser, one smashed on the floor, a closet. Statue of the Virgin Mary on dresser. Mike touches bottle of holy water.

INT. KHELDIGA'S OFFICE - SAME

Desk overturned, papers scattered, file cabinet busted. Mike spots a safe on the wall... emptied.

EXT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - LATER

TV news trucks arrive. REPORTERS hustle toward a ROOKIE PATROL COP behind barricade. REPORTER, years on the city beat, barks at rookie.

REPORTER

Murder, suicide... what is it?

PATROL COP

No comment. Back up. Crime scene.

REPORTER

I got a live hit in five fucking minutes.  
You got a stiff priest in there or what?

INT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S PANTRY - SAME

Mike checks kitchen drawers. Catch-all clutter. Opens a side cabinet... finds what appears to be a photo album. He opens it... as Detective Roberts enters.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Family picture book? Know it ain't a  
wedding album.

Mike flips pages, blown away by contents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

Holy shit.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Don't tell me. Porn?

MIKE

Baseball cards.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Priest had a hobby. Better than MJ-ing little boys. Mike, what do you think? Should priests be allowed to marry? It's gotta be an awful lonely life. You know, not getting laid.

MIKE

You should know.

Mike flips pages, intrigued.

MIKE (CONT'D)

This is no hobby.

Roberts peers over Mike's shoulder... scan baseball cards of Hall of Famers, all in mint condition: Joe DiMaggio, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, Reggie Jackson, Rod Carew.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Is that a Mickey Mantle?!

MIKE

... and Kid Nichols.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Kid who?

MIKE

Nichols.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Never heard of the bastard.

MIKE

Boston Beaneaters. Hall of famer, pitched ten straight years, twenty plus wins.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

*Whoa, dude, that is a Mickey Mantle!*

Mike takes a seat at table, flips pages with reverence.

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MIKE

They ransacked this entire place...  
and missed these.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Mikey, how much do you think a book like  
that's worth? Serious business.

Mike looks at Roberts.

MIKE

More than your life and mine -- put  
together.

Roberts opens another cabinet, as Mike scans pages.

MIKE (CONT'D)

*A Joe DiMaggio.*  
(flabbergasted)  
... his rookie friggin' year.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Mike.

Mike's nose is deep in the book.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS (CONT'D)

... Mike!

MIKE

What!?

Mike pulls eyes from book long enough to see Roberts staring,  
awestruck, into another kitchen cabinet.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

There's *four* more albums in here.

INT. KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - LATER

Mike talks on cell. Roberts remains in kitchen looking  
through albums. Goodheart consoles a WIDOW PARISHIONER, 60s,  
crying, grief stricken.

Goodheart speaks to the woman in Albanian.

GOODHEART

(speaking Albanian)

I'm sure he would appreciate being  
remembered that way.

Mike overhears Goodheart. He doesn't know what the hell  
she's saying, but he notices how she communicates with the  
woman.

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MIKE  
(into phone)  
Lieutenant, get down here.

EXT. KHELDIGA RESIDENCE

Flowers and candles outside. Some parishioners crying or reciting the rosary.

INT. KHELDIGA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Goodheart steps inside, as Mike and Roberts talk to MEDICAL EXAMINER.

GOODHEART  
Bishop's on his way to administer last rites.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Little late.

MIKE  
By two days at least.

GOODHEART  
Some faiths believe when a person dies suddenly and violently that a soul lingers at that site as long as necessary.

Mike approaches Goodheart.

MIKE  
Goodheart, do me a favor? Go canvas the neighborhood. Dig up everything and anything you can on this... Father Kheldig.

GOODHEART  
*Kheldiga.*

Goodheart heads out.

MIKE  
... Goodheart?  
(she turns back)  
Whatever you do uncover -- report to nobody but me.

Goodheart leaves. Mike returns to victim... studies the man's decomposing face. He blesses himself out of view of the other cops.

EXT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S RESIDENCE - LATER

Black town car pulls up. BISHOP RYAN, 60s, exits with the help of a LACKEY PRIEST. He escorts the holy man toward the crime scene.

INT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Bishop kneels over dead priest. Handkerchief to his face.

MIKE

Don't touch the body.  
(on the Bishop's look)  
Crime scene evidence.

Bishop whispers close in dead priest's ear.

BISHOP RYAN

The souls of the just are in the hands of  
God, no torment shall touch them.

Bishop rises. Mike ushers the bishop outside to the back porch for some fresh air.

EXT. FATHER KHELDIGA'S PORCH - LATER

Mike and Bishop converse. Lackey priest stands nearby, within ear shot.

MIKE

Bludgeoned, then strangled with a  
telephone cord. Place ransacked top  
to bottom.

BISHOP RYAN

A robbery?

MIKE

The office safe upstairs is cleaned out.

BISHOP RYAN

Why would someone rob him and not the  
Church? There's little value here in  
residence.

MIKE

We found something.

Bishop awaits.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Baseball cards.

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BISHOP RYAN  
Pardon me, Detective.

MIKE  
Several albums of baseball cards and not the bubble gum kind either. We're talking collector items, top dollar memorabilia. Not something you'd find on Ebay.

Bishop looks at lackey priest, who immediately steps away to make a phone call.

BISHOP RYAN  
These shall remain in your possession for now?

MIKE  
I define myself in four ways: a Yankees fan, a cop, Irish... and Catholic.

BISHOP RYAN  
Not in that order, I hope.

MIKE  
Depends on the day.

BISHOP RYAN  
What is first for you today?

MIKE  
Depends if you value Yankees' baseball cards or a man's life more.

BISHOP RYAN  
(touches detective's arm)  
God bless you, detective, someone from the Archdiocese will be in touch.

EXT. KHELDIGA RESIDENCE - LATER

Archdiocese of New York van pulls curb side. Two OFFICIOUS-LOOKING PRIESTS exit, carrying crates. Cops let them pass through.

INT. KHELDIGA PANTRY - CONTINUOUS

The two priests pack the baseball albums into crates. Mike and Roberts rush in.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Men in Black. Who let you in?

PRIEST #1 addresses detectives, without stopping task.

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PRIEST #1

We're almost finished, detective.

MIKE

Nothing here leaves the premises.

LIEUTENANT MARK PARKER, 50s, enters pantry.

LIEUTENANT

Detectives -- outside.

MIKE

(to priests)

Nothing leaves.

LIEUTENANT

... Mike.

MIKE

Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

Let 'em finish up.

Mike has little choice but to follow orders. One of the priests tapes box shut with tape. Mike, Roberts, and lieutenant step outside.

MIKE

What the hell's going on?

LIEUTENANT

Bending the rules.

MIKE

I see that. Why?

INT. SQUAD ROOM - NYPD - DAY

Mike hangs up telephone. Walks over to Detective Roberts, who finishes up a call. Roberts with radio earpiece in, listens to sports talk radio. Holds a mini baseball bat, the kind they pass out on Opening Day.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Albanian community's tighter than a clam's ass. No leads, no motives, no witnesses.

Mike pulls earpiece from Roberts' ear.

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MIKE

No ball game tonight.  
(looks around)  
Where's what's-her-name?

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Vouchers.

INT. VOUCHERS DEPT. - SAME

Goodheart vouchers victim's personal items... a gold wrist watch, eight dollars cash, coins, rosary beads, a gold ring.  
VOUCHER COP, 40s, smarmy, tags items.

VOUCHER COP

Soakin' up some OT?

GOODHEART

Missing my yoga class.

VOUCHER COP

Doin' yoga long?

GOODHEART

I teach it.

VOUCHER COP

Hear yoga does amazing things for the body. You look limber, Catherine. Bet you can get your legs way back over your head, huh?

GOODHEART

Not in your lifetime.

Detective Roberts rushes downstairs, spots Goodheart.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Hey, Goodheart!

She turns, looks up at detective on stairs.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS (CONT'D)

Detective Daly wants you.

VOUCHER COP

(under breath)  
Don't we all.

Goodheart rushes upstairs.

GOODHEART

Will this take long? I got plans.

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CONTINUED:

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Yeah? Stuff your plans.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - LATER

Mike, Detective Roberts, and DETECTIVE SHAPIRO, 50s, listen as Officer Goodheart reads her report. Roberts grabs a golf putter from behind desk and air putts.

GOODHEART  
Father Kheldiga came to the United States from Albania five years ago, assigned to St. Mary's parish in Hell's Kitchen... two years later sent up to the Bronx, Holy Trinity, where he...

MIKE  
Save the Obit. What's the word on the street? What are we dealing with here, Goodheart? A perverted priest? What?

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Yeah, was he diddling little boys?

Mike throws a pencil at Roberts. Bounces off his chest.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
I could get lead poisoning from that.

MIKE  
Stop bashing the Church.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Oh, like you don't. Don't take your Catholic guilt out on me.

Mike turns to Shapiro for help.

DETECTIVE SHAPIRO  
Don't look at me. I'm a Jew.

MIKE  
Goodheart -- continue on.

GOODHEART  
Kheldiga's reputation's impeccable -- a living saint amongst his people.

DETECTIVE SHAPIRO  
Saints die like the rest of us.

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GOODHEART

Kheldiga was sponsoring Albanian Catholics to come to America, helping them get established here in New York.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Just what we need... more frigging foreigners. Where's Albania, anyway? Near Europe, right?

MIKE

What am I, a World Atlas?

Mike and Shapiro laugh.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Serious. Where is it?

MIKE

It's near...  
(draws a blank, looks at Goodheart)  
Tell asshole where Albania is.

GOODHEART

Between Italy and Greece.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

That's what I thought.

DETECTIVE SHAPIRO

(to Goodheart)  
Geography aces, all of us.

She smiles.

GOODHEART

True Americans. Isolationists.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Not far from the boot, right?

GOODHEART

Pardon?

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

The curled boot? Near Sicily?

GOODHEART

Close.

MIKE

Mother Teresa was Albanian.

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GOODHEART  
Devout, hard-working people.

Goodheart glances at wall clock.

GOODHEART (CONT'D)  
Father Kheldiga's clean... just a poor  
Albanian priest with no established  
church.

MIKE  
He belonged to Holy Trinity.

GOODHEART  
He came to the U.S. for one reason -- to  
start an Albanian parish. You have to  
understand the culture and history to  
appreciate what that truly means.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Yeah? What makes you so smart?

GOODHEART  
I'm Albanian.

This shuts Roberts up. Mike throws a small stapler at  
Roberts. Nails him in the back.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS  
Hey! I swear you wanna put me out on  
*disability!*

MIKE  
Why not? You've been out on mental  
disability since I've known ya -- put  
your putter away, before I ram it up your  
ass.

DETECTIVE SHAPIRO  
Talk about your hole in one.

Roberts flings putter aside. Plops into chair. Mike turns  
to Goodheart. She's amazed by the office antics.

GOODHEART  
Albanian Catholics attach themselves to  
one priest, one church. Their loyalty is  
like nothing we know here, in America,  
where people jump from parish to parish,  
if even bothering to go to church at all.  
Albanians think nothing of turning over  
thousands and thousands of dollars to one  
priest.

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DETECTIVE ROBERTS

And I whine if asked to throw a buck in the basket.

GOODHEART

The more immigrants Father Kheldiga brought to New York --

MIKE

-- the better the chances were for his new church?

Mike ditches cigarette, pours coffee.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Who wanted him dead?

DETECTIVE SHAPIRO

Motive's robbery.

MIKE

Padre still had his watch and cash in his pockets.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

Albania... Romania... Pennsylvania.

GOODHEART

Seventy percent of Albania is Muslim.

DETECTIVE ROBERTS

That makes us all feel so much better.

GOODHEART

... ten percent Catholic. They take their faith very seriously because they've seen loved ones die for it.

Mike walks over to Goodheart.

MIKE

Get into street clothes.

GOODHEART

I'm through here?

MIKE

See that desk over there in the corner?

Goodheart sees an old metal desk covered with folders, boxes, and catch-all files.

GOODHEART

That's a desk?

(CONTINUED)

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MIKE

Under all that shit it is. Park yourself  
at it until further notice.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

Alarm clock RINGS. Goodheart sleeps alone, except for her  
cat curled on her pillow, and a three-legged shelter dog at  
her feet.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE PARK - MORNING

Goodheart watches dog play in dog-run.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT

Goodheart does yoga on the floor. Morning sunshine pours in  
through open windows. SFX: ANSWERING MACHINE.

GOODHEART'S VOICE

This is Catherine. Not available -- you  
know what to do.

SFX: BEEP. Intimate male voice speaks.

ANDREW (V.O.)

Hey, Cathe. It's me.

She halts pose, listens intently.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Found an apartment close to the beach.  
Put you down as a reference... hope you  
don't mind. Registered for classes...  
only thing that's missing is you.

Goodheart rushes for the phone, but hesitates answering it.  
She listens, emotionally attached to the caller.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

My phone's not hooked up. Calling from my  
cell. Love and miss you.

Long pause. SFX: DIAL TONE.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Goodheart rushes toward station house. She wears dress  
slacks, white blouse and jacket. Looks like she's going on a  
job interview. She totes a white pastry box with bakery  
string tied around it.

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