

AM NEWS

**EPISODE 1-01
“PILOT”**

**WRITTEN BY
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EXT. WKKL RADIO STATION - NIGHT

It's a dark night in Camden, New Jersey, with only a sliver of the moon lit up in the sky.

Outside, a transmitter appears to shoot out of the roof of the radio station. The red WKKL-AM neon sign flickers while street lights buzz.

Two cars are parked on the mostly deserted street, along with a station brand-wrapped car.

INT. WKKL NEWSROOM - NIGHT

A small, windowless room is filled with desks at 9:37pm.

Each desk, 6 in all, has a computer with a clunky tube monitor, a microphone, and a phone.

Two men, one about 60 and the other about 30, sit perpendicular at the only two computers that aren't sleeping.

The younger one, AARON MADER, is an up-and-coming journalist who has been with the radio station for a year, and the older one, KEN MCKIM, is a talk show host.

KEN throws his hands up in disgust, spewing a raspy tone.

KEN
I've got jack shit for this
newscast.

AARON turns.

AARON
You want me to run someone down
with the cruiser?

KEN
Well, shit. It would be good if
something happened.

The dull, bluish fluorescent light casts a dead feel across the room.

KEN sparks a cigar.

KEN
What's happening on the scanner?

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Coffee breaks.

KEN grunts.

KEN
Don't get too comfortable- you
might be taking out the cruiser.

The phone rings. AARON grabs it.

AARON
WKKL. Aaron Mader.

Behind AARON is a stack of old, tube televisions on a desk playing a variety of TV news channels, the anchors muffled under the background noise of the station.

Quietly, a woman's muffled voice can be heard bitching.

AARON
I'm sorry, I don't understand.

She rants on.

AARON
No, mam. No. I don't know.

She rants over AARON, irritating him.

AARON
Mam, there's nothing I can do. Mam!

KEN grabs the receiver.

KEN
Knock it off, Esta. For fuck sakes,
it's enough.

He slams the receiver down.

AARON, looking shocked, hangs up his phone.

KEN (CONT'D)
That's just Esta. She's a lonely,
bitter, old bitch.

AARON
She calls here lots?

KEN
Yeah, all the time. How long have
you worked here?

AARON

A year.

KEN

And you've never dealt with Esta?

AARON

Not once.

KEN ashes his cigar on the floor.

AARON stands up, grabs a cigarette from the pack on his desk, and puts a thin, black leather jacket on.

KEN

Going for a smoke?

AARON

Yeah, I'll be right back.

KEN

You can smoke here, you know?

AARON

I know. I just like the cold air.

EXT. WKKL RADIO STATION - NIGHT

AARON steps outside the station, standing in front of the door. He looks to his right, towards Camden's skyline.

He sparks his cigarette and takes a deep breath.

He looks up at the moon, then down the street to the left.

Steam rises from a sewer and a couple walks far in the distance.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - NIGHT

KEN walks in to the talk studio and sits at a round table.

One seat has a computer, mixing board, and mic. Surrounding the main seat are three other seats with microphones.

Directly in front of the main seat is a large glass pane looking into the newsroom.

KEN puts his headphones on. A "WKKL News Hour Update" bumper plays into a music bed.

He slides down one of the faders.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

Good evening, I'm Ken McKim. At 10 o'clock the temperature is dropping. Quite cool through the evening. Full forecast coming up.

He picks up a piece of paper and flips it over.

KEN

It's brought to you by Freddy's. No one does Puerto Rican better. Join me for this edition of WKKL'S Night Pulse after the news.

He outs the paper back down.

KEN

Our top story...

EXT. WKKL RADIO STATION - NIGHT

AARON sighs, then takes a puff of his cigarette, and flicks it to the street.

He heads back inside.

INT. WKKL NEWSROOM - NIGHT

AARON walks through the small sitting area in front of the newsroom, complete with front desk, and into the newsroom past the large studio window.

He looks at KEN starting his show.

AARON takes off his coat and sits back down when he notices commotion on the police scanner.

POLICE SCANNER - MALE COP

...We're going to need another car or two... securing the scene now.

It cuts in and out.

He moves across the room to the shelf it sits on just above eye level. He turns it up.

POLICE SCANNER - MALE COP

We have two victims with injuries consistent... stab wounds.

(CONTINUED)

POLICE SCANNER - FEMALE OPERATOR
10-4 Unit 7. We're sending
additional units to 14-30 Decatur
Street in Whitman Park.

AARON grabs a piece of paper and pencil sitting on a table against the wall. He scribbles down the address and runs to his desk.

He grabs a small tape recorder and a microphone, throws it in his shoulder bag. He puts on his jacket and runs over to the glass pane looking into the studio.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - NIGHT

KEN looks over to AARON at the wall.

KEN
That's next on Night Pulse.

KEN hits a button on the computer screen. A bumper for "770 WKKL's Night Pulse" plays.

He takes his headphones off.

AARON presses a button by the window.

AARON
Police presence on Decatur. Looks
like two stabbing victims.

KEN
Watch your back.

AARON
I'll be fine. You want me to do a
live hit at 11?

KEN
Call me!

AARON lets go of the intercom button.

INT. WKKL ENTRANCE WAY - NIGHT

AARON grabs a keychain from the reception desk.

He exits quickly through the front door.

EXT. WKKL RADIO STATION - NIGHT

AARON darts to the newcruiser, a four door sedan with WKKL-AM 770 branded all over.

He starts the engine, revs it, then takes off.

INT. WKKL NEWSCRUISER - NIGHT

AARON drives through a broken city.

Stores are boarded up, buildings are abandoned, and there is grafiti and vadalism with litter strewn everywhere.

EXT. DECATUR STREET - NIGHT

Dozens of police cruisers and a couple ambulances are parked in the block.

Yellow crime scene tape surrounds a townhouse duplex at 1430 Decatur Street. The front yards are surrounded by chainlink fence.

The tops of the police cars light up the whole block- the houses alternate bright red and blue.

AARON pulls up in the newcruiser and double parks it. A van for B-TV News is parked closer to the scene.

AARON exits the vehicle and puts a DSLR camera around his neck. He grabs the microphone and digital recorder from his shoulder bag and hooks it up as he walks towards the crime tape.

A B-TV News reporter, CARMEN DIME, and her cameraman stand at the scene, watching. AARON approaches them.

AARON
Hey, Carmen.

CARMEN
Hey.

AARON
Know anything yet?

CARMEN
Looks like two stabbing victims.
Pretty sure they're dead...

AARON snaps a couple pictures of the house.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Have they taken the bodies out yet?

CARMEN
No. We're waiting for the money
shot.

The cameraman adjusts the camera's composition on the front door.

CARMEN
Aaron, walk with me.

She nods her head away from the scene, then begins to walk in that direction.

AARON follows her over towards a parked vehicle. They stand beside the back passenger door.

CARMEN
Are you on the night shift?

AARON
Yeah, until 6 A.M.

CARMEN
Want to go for a drink after?

AARON
At 6?

CARMEN laughs, then touches his arm smiling.

CARMEN
No, after my live hits during the
11 o'clock news.

AARON thinks for a moment. He checks his watch.

AARON
Yeah, I could go for a drink.

She smiles again, beaming.

AARON (CONT'D)
One drink!

CARMEN
I won't get you into trouble.

AARON
Where have I heard that before?
Hmm, oh right! You said that right
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AARON (cont'd)
before we broke into the banquet
room to steal liquor at school and
almost got expelled.

CARMEN
We were broke journalism students.

She looks over at the scene as some plainclothes cops step
out the front door.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
We should get back over there- I
bet they're about ready to wheel
'em out.

AARON
I should call a live hit in to Ken.

They walk back towards CARMEN's cameraman.

AARON splits off and walks towards a neighbour standing on
her front steps.

The woman is in her 70's. He shouts over her chainlink fence
to her.

AARON
Good evening, mam. I'm with WKKL
radio. Did you see anything
tonight?

WOMAN
Nothing. There was no noise. I
didn't see anything.

AARON
Who lived there?

WOMAN
Just a young couple with a
daughter.

AARON
How old were they?

The old lady shrugs.

WOMAN
I don't know. The couple might've
been in their late 20's. The girl
was nine, maybe?

AARON

Did you know them? What were they like?

WOMAN

There weren't any problems. I mean, they did drugs, that's well known, but there's a lot of that around here.

She turns around to head inside.

AARON

Do you know what kind of drugs?

WOMAN

No, I think I'm done. I've said enough.

She shuts her door behind her and clicks the lock.

AARON heads back towards CARMEN and her cameraman.

A POLICEMAN is standing nearby, inside the tape.

AARON

Good evening, officer. Can you tell me what's going on here?

POLICEMAN

C'mon, Aaron. You know I can't say anything.

AARON

I have to ask.

POLICEMAN

I know.

AARON

Is this a good one, though?

The POLICEMAN nods.

AARON

Have they wheeled out any victims?

POLICEMAN

I can't say.

A few more officers step out of the front door.

CARMEN slaps her cameraman on the arm excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

CARMEN
Start rolling!

AARON grabs his camera, lifts it to his face, and looks through the viewfinder. He focuses the shot tight on the front steps with the door to the left.

Two paramedics begin moving a stretcher with a black body bag, occupied, out the front door.

CARMEN
You better be rolling, damnit!

AARON snaps a barage of pictures, zooming in and out. He keeps the camera focused on the stretcher.

They wheel the stretcher down the front walk towards one of the ambulances.

AARON checks his cell phone, then looks down the street, Kitty corner at the end of the block is a convenience store and a payphone.

EXT. HAPPY HAPPY FOODS - NIGHT

AARON jogs over to the phone and slips a quarter in it.

AARON
Hey Ken, it's Aaron. Cue me with "We now go live to WKKL's Aaron Mader in Whitman Park at the scene of a multiple stabbing." When are we up? OK.

AARON stands on the phone, looking around the tired neighbourhood. He looks at his cell again.

AARON
Ken- I'm in the 1400-block of Decatur Street where I just saw paramedics remove a body from a home. A neighbour tells WKKL a family lived there, a young couple in their 20's with a nine-year-old daughter. Police will not comment at the scene right now, but we are on location and reporting live. Aaron Mader, WKKL News.

He hangs up the phone, then jogs back to the crime scene.

EXT. DECATUR STREET - NIGHT

AARON comes back up to CARMEN and her cameraman.

AARON
Did I miss anything?

CARMEN
No. Where'd you go?

AARON
To use the payphone.

CARMEN
You could've borrowed my cell.

AARON
No, I think land lines sound
better.

CARMEN has a somewhat disgusted look on her face.

CARMEN
It's AM radio. It's going to sound
muddy regardless.

AARON
Shut up. It sounds perfectly fine.

CARMEN
Whatever.

They stand there looking at the front door for a moment.

AARON looks up at the same sliver of moon, then over towards Camden's skyline. He takes a deep breath, then looks down the street in the opposite direction.

He sees another TV news crew pull up. The reporter and cameraman pull up and jump out of their "Channel 5 NewsWatch" van.

CARMEN
Bleh, channel five.

The Channel 5 reporter, BEN BRAZIEL, runs over with his camera guy, who pushes AARON over.

CAMERA GUY
Excuse me, I need to get footage.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I need to get pictures.

CAMERA GUY

You need pictures. I need video and b-roll. TV trumps radio.

AARON

Maybe you should've got here first, instead of watching our newscasts to realize you should've gotten off your ass.

CAMERA GUY

Yeah, well, suck my dick, Mader.

AARON walks over to stand by CARMEN.

AARON

At least we can get along.

CARMEN bumps shoulders with him.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - NIGHT

KEN is wearing headphones and doing a call-in segment with listeners on his radio show.

KEN

We're coming up to the 11'oclock news. Expecting an update from WKKL's Aaron Mader on a multiple stabbing in Whitman Park. This half hour we've been talking about Camden's proposed 3.7-percent property tax hike. Jennifer, you're on Night Pulse.

(cont'd)

Hi Ken, great to talk to you. I, personally, am outraged by this tax hike...

KEN grabs a cigar from a box on the talk desk, puts it on his lips, and sparks a lighter. He takes a puff of the fat cigar.

JENNIFER (O.C. CONT'D)

We've had year over year hikes, yet no money is being spent on any city service or infrastructure. No money is being spent fighting crime.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

Crime is at an all time high. We're following a multiple-stabbing tonight on WKKL.

(cont'd)

But see, there's no police to work on preventative measures, just police to work on crimes after the fact.

KEN

No shortage of work there, Jennifer.

He takes another deep puff of his cigar. Smoke swirls off it, adding to the thick blue air filling the talk studio.

(cont'd)

It's insulting. I mean, really. Let's face it. We all know why. Massive corruption at city hall.

KEN

And we're still awaiting the results of that audit behind projects like the new stadium or the downtown shopping complex.

JENNIFER (O.C.)

We all know what it's going to say.

KEN

Jennifer, thank you for your call. This is Night Pulse on WKKL. Coming up after the break, your 11 o'clock news. We'll have an update on the multiple stabbing in Whitman Park. WKKL's Aaron Mader is there. I'm Ken McKim.

He fires an event from the clunky touchscreen. A bumper for "Night Pulse on WKKL" plays.

The old school switchboard lights up with a call. He clicks the bright button.

KEN

What do you got for me Aaron?

He adjusts the microphone in front of him and sits up.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

No, I don't think we need to do an Q and A. Is a multiple stabbing in Whitman Park news?

He leans back.

EXT. HAPPY HAPPY FOODS - NIGHT

AARON stands in front of the convenience store on the payphone.

He scans the street around him as the cop car lights light up the entire block behind him in red, blue, and purple.

AARON

They've removed the second body. Same black bag. Probably going to be winding down here in a bit.

He pulls a handful of quarters out of his pocket and scans them.

AARON

Just cue me with "Questions remain surrounding a violent multiple stabbing in Camden's Whitman Park. We now go live to WKKL's Aaron Mader."

He yawns, then slides the quarters back into his pocket.

AARON

I'll file a few scripts for the morning, then I'm going to grab a bite.

He leans against the payphone, waiting.

AARON

Ken, I'm in the 1400-block of Decatur Street where a second body has been removed from a townhouse here. I've spoken to several neighbours who say they didn't hear anything unusual tonight, but there was frequent drug use going on in the home. They say a young couple lived here with their nine-year-old daughter, but police can't confirm the situation. We're on scene, reporting live. Aaron Mader, WKKL News.

He hangs up the phone, then heads back to the action.

EXT. DECATUR STREET - NIGHT

AARON walks back up to CARMEN.

A flurry of police officers begin to exit the front door.

CARMEN

This is it. Guess we can wrap.

Two paramedics begin to remove a third stretcher from the home, this time with a small, child-size body bag.

CARMEN

Sweet Jesus, Aaron, three dead.

AARON snaps dozens of pictures.

AARON

That looks like the kid.

CARMEN

I'm praying to fuck it is- it's sweeps.

The paramedics wheel the stretcher down the front walk and over to the second ambulance. They slowly load it into the back door.

AARON

Did you get your shots?

CARMEN

Yep, that's a wrap.

She gestures to her cameraman.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

You can cut that for the morning?
I'm going to go grab a drink with Aaron.

CAMERAMAN

Yeah, we're good.

CARMEN

You want to grab that drink now?

AARON

Give me 15 minutes... I just have to phone in another live hit and file three scripts.

AARON heads towards the payphone outside the convenience store.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

AARON and CARMEN sit at the bar in an upscale lounge. CARMEN sips a martini and AARON drinks a rum and cola.

CARMEN lights a long 100mm cigarette.

CARMEN
My night's over.

AARON
Mine too. What else is going to happen?

CARMEN
We had nothing until that stabbing.

AARON
Us too.

AARON lights a cigarette and takes a deep puff.

AARON (CONT'D)
I hate smoking inside.

He blows several "O's" in the air.

CARMEN
Are you liking it at WKKL?

AARON
Yeah. I don't like print and I don't like TV. Radio has this immediacy.

He puffs deeply again.

AARON (CONT'D)
The pay's shit though.

CARMEN
Isn't it for all of us?

AARON
(sarcastically)
Let me Retweet that for you.

CARMEN grins slightly, then touches his arm.

(CONTINUED)

CARMEN

I miss you.

AARON

We cover the same stories all the time.

He puffs his cigarette almost to the filter, then snuffs it out in the ashtray.

CARMEN

I mean, when we used to...

She looks away and lifts her martini to her lips. She takes a nervous sip.

AARON

We can't go back to that.

CARMEN

C'mon. Have a little fun.

He fiddles with his tie.

AARON

How much time do you think I have?

CARMEN

What else are you going to cover tonight?

AARON sparks another cigarette.

AARON

I don't know, I'll go do a Q and A with Ken McKim.

CARMEN

So you can just bathe in a cloud of cigar smoke? Nice.

AARON looks over at the BARTENDER off camera. He comes over.

BARTENDER

Another round?

AARON

For both of us.

CARMEN twirls her cigarette in her fingers.

CARMEN
So, WKKL has you on overnight?

AARON
I'm the Graveyard Reporter. 9-6.
Monday to Friday.

CARMEN
And you like that?

The BARTENDER puts their drinks in front of them and takes their empty glasses away.

AARON
I like working with Ken.

CARMEN
But some of the areas you must have
to go into at 2 or 3 in the
morning...

AARON
I just stick close to the cops,
paramedics, or firefighters.

AARON's cell starts to ring.

AARON
Hello?

CUT IMMEDIATELY TO:

INT. WKKL NEWSROOM - NIGHT

KEN MCKIM is on the phone in the newsroom. Lots of communication is spewing from the police scanner.

KEN
Where have you been?

He pauses.

KEN (CONT'D)
Grabbing a bite? Well, it sounds
like we have another multiple
stabbing. This time at 12-10
Jackson Street.

He lifts up a piece of paper.

(CONTINUED)

KEN (CONT'D)
Yeah, that's in Whitman Park.

He slaps the paper back down.

KEN (CONT'D)
Can you do a live hit at 2? OK,
good.

KEN hangs up the phone and heads back to the talk studio.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

AARON hangs up his cell and slides it in his pocket.

CARMEN perks up.

CARMEN
What was that?

AARON
It was Ken. He said it sounds like
there's been more stabbings.

CARMEN
Ooo, where?

AARON
A couple blocks over in Whitman
Park. Jackson Street.

He pounds the rest of his drink back.

AARON (CONT'D)
Gotta go.

CARMEN
Have fun. I'm off. These martinis
are too fine.

He leans in to kiss her on the lips. It's slightly
passionate, and CARMEN moves to rub his crotch.

AARON
Good night, Carmen.

CARMEN
Good night.

He leaves.

CARMEN looks into her drink, smiles, and sloppily adjusts
her posture in her seat.

EXT. JACKSON STREET - NIGHT

AARON pulls up to a circus of police and paramedics at 12-10 Jackson Street.

He leaves the newscruiser in the middle of the street, near the "Channel 5 NewsWatch" van.

AARON
(under his breath)
Bleh, channel five.

He puts his camera around his neck.

He gets to the police tape. Channel 5 Reporter Ben Braziel stands there with his CAMERA GUY.

The same POLICEMAN from the first scene is standing nearby.

POLICEMAN
You again.

AARON
Hey.

CAMERA GUY
Nice of you to finally make it,
Mader.

AARON
Your shit won't even air until
morning. I'm going on air at 2.

AARON hooks up his recorder and looks at his pocket.

AARON (CONT'D)
Ben, have they pulled anyone out
yet?

BEN
No, but we've only been here 15
minutes.

AARON turns to BEN's CAMERA GUY.

AARON
15 minutes? That's it?

He turns back to the POLICEMAN.

AARON (CONT'D)
Do we know anything yet? This is
pretty close to the first scene.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN
I can't say anything.

He snaps a dozen shots with his camera.

AARON
Figures. Is it a good one?

The POLICEMAN nods.

POLICEMAN
Stick around.

BEN edges in.

BEN
Sounded like two dead on the scanner.

AARON looks over at a small crowd, about five people, down the yellow crime scene tape.

AARON
I'll be right back.

As he approaches them, three scatter. Two stand-by.

AARON
Hi, I'm with WKKL radio. Do you know what happened.

FEMALE WITNESS
We heard some screaming. Loud screaming. It went on for about 10 minutes.

AARON
Who called police?

MALE WITNESS
They just showed up.

AARON moves the microphone towards them.

AARON
Do you mind if I record this?

They look at eachother.

MALE WITNESS
No.

AARON
Do you know who lived there? What
were they like?

MALE WITNESS
They were fucking faggots. They
were probably killed for being
fucking faggots.

AARON whips the microphone away.

AARON
Whoa, I can't put that on air.

FEMALE WITNESS
Then fuck off.

AARON
I'm sorry, I'm just trying to tell
a story. Did they do drugs?

MALE WITNESS
Yeah, they smoked cock.

The MALE WITNESS belly laughs.

MALE WITNESS (CONT'D)
Seriously, though... Fuck off.

AARON walks back towards BEN and his CAMERA GUY.

AARON
He says it was a gay couple,
possibly killed as a hate crime. I
don't know, take that for what's it
worth.

He looks around, searching for a payphone.

AARON
I'll be back. I'm going to call in
a hit.

He heads back to the newscruiser and jumps in.

INT. WKKL NEWSCRUISER - NIGHT

AARON dials the talk studio line into his phone.

AARON
Hey, Ken, definitely looks like
another multiple stabbing.

(CONTINUED)

He puts his phone between his cheek and shoulder, then grabs a notebook from the passenger seat.

AARON

A cop on scene told me to stick around. He said it's a good one.

He starts to scribble some notes.

AARON

Cue me with "We now go live to Whitman Park where WKKL's Aaron Mader is now on Jackson Street at the site of another multiple stabbing."

He finishes scribbling and throws the notebook back down on the passenger seat.

He waits for a moment.

AARON

Ken- the neighbourhood of Whitman Park now has five stabbings to its total this morning. Neighbours tell me the resident of this home was a gay couple. They speculated it was a hate crime, although the crimes appear to be random, and related to the earlier stabbing on Decatur. There, a family consisting of a young couple and their nine-year-old daughter are believed to have succumbed to stab wounds. We're monitoring this on scene and reporting live. Aaron Mader. WKKL News.

He hangs up his cell, slides it in his pocket, then jumps out of the newscruiser and goes back to the crime scene tape.

EXT. JACKSON STREET - NIGHT

AARON walks back up to BEN and his CAMERA GUY.

AARON

What time are you working tonight?

BEN

I'm on until 6.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Channel 5 has a graveyard shift
now?

AARON pulls a cigarette out of his pack and sparks it.

BEN
Guess they liked what you guys were
doing.

AARON
But you guys don't have a cast
until the morning.

He takes a deep puff.

BEN
Yeah, but then we have a morning
show that blow everyone else out of
the water, visually. We're not just
doing a voice over on police stock
footage.

AARON
I see.

He exhales with force.

AARON (CONT'D)
I thought no one watched your
morning show.

BEN
It's sweeps. We're trying to turn
it around.

AARON
Is it working?

BEN
Early research says so.

AARON flicks his cigarette.

POLICEMAN
Hey!

AARON
What?

POLICEMAN
Don't just flick that shit.

AARON
(sarcastically)
Sorry, officer.

AARON sparks another one.

BEN
How are you guys even getting by.
You have one station operating out
of that shithole.

AARON
It's a lean operation and our team
is the best.

AARON takes a deep puff.

BEN
Nobody broadcasts voicemail
classifieds better!

AARON
Hey- Swap and Shop dominates the 10
A.M. timeslot.

They laugh. Smoke drifts out of AARON.

AARON
It's a weird format, but it works.
Our news is solid, and fast.

BEN
I'll give you that. We have no
budget.

AARON
Us neither. Dinosaur equipment.
Young, cheap talent. Want a smoke?

BEN waves his hand.

BEN
No, I'm good.

AARON drops his cigarette butt in the sewer.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - NIGHT

KEN moves energetically in his seat. He's on the phone lines
debating a criminal case with two callers, DANA and MIKE.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

So, Dana, you're telling me Wong's violence should be excused because of mental illness?

DANA (O.C.)

That's exactly what I'm saying, Ken. He's schizophrenic and was not the aware of what he was doing at the time.

KEN sparks a cigar and puffs.

(cont'd)

That's garbage. He's violent. He killed a young man and ate him. I can excuse someone who is mentally ill for less serious crimes-

(cont'd)

Oh, you can, can you?

KEN smirks.

(cont'd)

YEAH, I CAN! Wong chose to go off his medication, then let his hallucinations run wild until he killed that kid.

KEN ashes his cigar on the floor.

KEN

Folks, I'm going to jump in here. We're coming up to the 2 o'clock news. WKKL's Aaron Mader on-location at a second multiple stabbing in Whitman Park. He'll report the latest.

He picks up a piece of paper to read and holds it just behind the microphone.

KEN (CONT'D)

Right now on Night Pulse, we're talking the notorious Bus Beheading case. Bruce Wong on trial. He's said to have suffered a psychotic break brought on by schizophrenia. Lawyers in his defence arguing not criminally responsible.

He slaps the paper down.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

You can dial the talk back line at
555-555-WKKL. We're talking to
callers Dana and Mike.

He puffs his cigar and ashes it on the floor again.

KEN (CONT'D)

You think if someone is violent,
then we must never grant them
freedom? Mike, go.

(cont'd)

It's like drinking and driving. You
can't stand before a judge and say
"I was drunk, I didn't know I was
jumping behind the wheel."

(cont'd)

Pfft.

(cont'd)

He was on drugs to stabilize his
mind, to put him in his right mind.
He made the decision to stop the
drugs and then his state-of-mind
unable of thinking for itself
slaughtered and cannibalized his
victim. He's guilty.

KEN slides open a drawer from a filing cabinet under his
desk. He removes a half-empty whiskey bottle and a small
glass, and pours himself more than a shot. He takes a sip.

(cont'd)

(uncontainable anger)

You're dehumanizing schizophrenics.
We can't punish someone who wasn't
even there at the time. These
people, these humans, can be
rehabilitated and integrated back
into society.

KEN puffs his cigar, then hits two buttons on the
switchboard simultaneously. They darken.

KEN

Great discussion, folks! Coming up
after this break, it's your 2 A.M.
WKKL news. We'll go to Aaron Mader
live on Jackson Street, at the
scene of a second multiple stabbing
in Whitman Park.

(CONTINUED)

He hits the clunky touchscreen, firing a "Night Pulse on WKKL" bumper, before it heads into a commercial cart.

A phone call come in, he answers it.

INT. WKKL NEWSCRUISER - NIGHT

Aaron sits in the newscruiser, his phone between his cheek and shoulder as he rubs his hands to warm up a bit.

The newscruiser's windows are foggy, but vibrate visually from red and blue cop car lights.

AARON

Hey, I sent in a streeter from a neighbour. It should be in the FTP folder.

He looks down at the notebook in his lap, then grabs his pencil and starts to scribble.

AARON (CONT'D)

I'll cue you with you "Neighbours express horror at what happened next door."

He tosses the notebook aside, listening to the call.

AARON

Just intro me with what we used for the last couple of hits.

He pauses.

AARON

Alright, I'm standing by.

He ducks under the mist line on the windshield to look out towards the house. A swampy, orangey-green light splashes across his face with the red, blue, and purple wash flickering behind him. He rubs some of the condensation off the driver's window with his sleeve, then sits back.

AARON

Ken- we're still waiting for officials on scene to remove bodies from the home. Numerous nieghbours tell WKKL police have made strict orders for them to stay inside following an incident they're treating as a homicide. Neighbours express horror at what happened next door.

(CONTINUED)

He pauses while the actuality plays.

AARON

That's Georgia Brown, a widow who lives across the street. Neighbours say it was a gay couple who resided there and they knew of issues the couple ran into in the past because of their relationship. Reporting live, Aaron Mader, WKKL News.

AARON hangs up the phone and tosses it onto the passenger seat.

He starts the newscruiser and leans back.

WKKL plays on the radio, starting with the last few seconds of his live hit.

KEN (O.C.)

Thank you, Aaron. Police tell WKKL they believe one man is responsible for the stabbing and the Jackson Street incident is connected to the stabbing on Decatur late last night. The suspect is still at large. More on this story as it develops. Turning now to city hall...

AARON looks over at his phone, then grabs it.

He opens a text message with AVIVA.
[Note: IMS are in italics.]

AARON (TEXT)

Hey, are you around?

He waits a moment. She begins to type.

AVIVA (TEXT)

Yeah, come now?

AARON (TEXT)

Might take me 20 minutes.

AVIVA (TEXT)

Cool.

AARON straps up his seatbelt, then puts the car in reverse and leaves the scene.

EXT. AVIVA'S STREET - NIGHT

AARON pulls up outside a newer townhouse condo complex in the WKKL newscruiser.

He puts it in park, then looks out the window at Unit C.

AARON (TEXT)

Buzz.

AVIVA (TEXT)

Door's open.

AARON gets out of the car and heads towards AVIVA's condo.

When he gets to the front door, he twists the handle and slips inside.

INT. AVIVA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

AVIVA's front door opens right onto her living room. She sits on the sofa with her girlfriend.

Her feather earrings look as though they're floating in her dreads.

A flamboyant gay man sits on the floor with his back against the couch.

The smokey air surrounds the giggling potheads, and makes the chili pepper lights behind them starburst.

An incense burns down on the middle of the coffee table, and a tall bong stands beside it. A large bag of marijuana sits on top of the table beside a scale and a box of zip-top sandwich bags.

AVIVA

Hey, buddy. The usual?

AARON

Yeah, just a half.

He slides his car keys into his jacket pocket.

AVIVA grabs the bag and stuffs a couple of large buds on the scale.

AVIVA

Busy night, newsman?

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Five stabbings at two separate
locations.

GAY MAN
OMIGOD, that's like, 10 stabbings!

AARON chuckles.

AARON
No, five total stabbings.

AVIVA
So, busy newsnight, man?

She slides a marijuana-stuffed zip-top sandwich bag towards him.

AARON
Yeah, the most excitement I usually
have is an abandoned house arson.

AARON digs six \$20 bills from his pocket, rolled up.

AVIVA
Any fatalities?

AARON
All five.

He passes the wad to AVIVA.

AVIVA
Do you need change?

AARON
Yeah.

She jumps up to head to the bedroom.

AVIVA
One sec.

She comes back in, hands him a \$10 bill, and sits back down on the couch.

AVIVA
Well, it was great seeing you. See
you in a few days?

AARON
You know it. Bye, Aviva.

AARON slips out the front door, into the night.

INT. WKKL NEWSCRUISER - NIGHT

AARON drives down a deserted thoroughfare through a ghetto.

WKKL plays faintly in the background.

A coffee shack drive-thru comes up on the right. He turns in.

He stops the car at the order box.

ORDER BOX (O.C.)
Can I take your order?

AARON
Large coffee, 2 milk, please.

ORDER BOX (O.C.)
Pull up to the window, please.

AARON loops the car around the drive-thru to the window.

The employee walks up and the window retracts upwards.

EMPLOYEE
Hi, large coffee is two dollars.

AARON hands her a couple one dollar bills.

She hands him the coffee.

EMPLOYEE
Have a good night.

AARON
Thanks.

He pulls the newscruiser around to the parking lot and puts it in park.

He pulls the tab back on his coffee cup's lid, and takes a large sip.

He sighs.

AARON
Fuck, that's good.

He sits back in the driver's seat and turns down the radio.

He puts the coffee in his cupholder, then grabs his cellphone from the passenger seat.

He dials KEN at the station.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Hey, I just grabbed a coffee. I was going to head back right away to file a few scripts for the morning.

He takes a sip from his coffee, and puts it back down.

AARON

No, I don't think we need anymore live hits. Nothing's changed. I haven't been at the scene for an hour.

He turns the car off.

AARON

OK. Let me know if you hear anything. Otherwise, I'll see you in a bit.

He hangs up, then tosses the phone on the seat beside him.

AARON undoes his seatbelt, then reaches into the glove box and grabs the owner's manual. He places it on his lap.

He grabs rolling papers and a lighter from his jacket pocket and places them on the corner of the owner's manual.

He grabs the bag of weed from his other pocket, pulls out some bud, and starts to bust it with his fingers.

He rolls a joint and looks at the time on the dash. 3:37am.

AARON

(quietly)
Sorry, Ken.

He changes the radio from WKKL to classic rock, and turns it up.

He puts the joint between his lips and sparks it.

He takes a few long puffs, with long pauses inbetween.

He closes his eyes and listens to the music.

He flicks the roach out the window and turns the radio down. He puts is back on WKKL.

He stuffs the weed and paper in the centre console and the owner's manual back in the glove box.

He starts the ignition, puts his seatbelt back on, then puts the car in drive and heads out back on the thoroughfare.

(CONTINUED)

As AARON drives, his phone starts to ring. He answers it.

AARON
Aaron Mader.

CUT IMMEDIATELY TO:

INT. WKKL NEWSROOM - NIGHT

KEN leans on the desk below the police scanners.

He listens to the latest commotion on the scanner, writing down notes with scrap paper and a pencil.

The phone is nestled between his cheek and shoulder.

KEN
Aaron! Looks like we have another
stabbing. Crossroads are Louis and
Morton Streets in Whitman Park.

He turns around and leans half on the desk, so he's kind of sitting on it.

KEN
You're 15 minutes away? OK, I guess
a live hit at 4 is out. Call me for
the 4-30 news.

He pauses.

KEN
OK, we'll talk soon. Let me know.

He stands back up.

KEN
Aaron- keep watching all around
you. Seriously. Be alert. It sounds
like this guy is still out there.

He slaps the receiver on the hook and walks towards the talk studio.

EXT. LOUIS STREET AND MORTON STREET - MORNING

AARON pulls up in the WKKL news cruiser and parks beside the Channel 5 van a block away because police have taped off a large perimeter.

He gets out of the car and looks over.

(CONTINUED)

BEN BRAZIEL and his CAMERA GUY stand back from the scene, behind the rear of their van.

There are double the cop cars from earlier and half a dozen ambulances. The strobes light up the entire neighbourhood.

He approaches the tape, where a large crowd has formed.

He can just make out a body covered by a sheet in the front yard of a house.

The policeman from before stands over from the crowd, inside the tape. AARON heads towards him.

AARON

Do they always have you on perimeter duty?

POLICEMAN

We have to keep out those pesky journalists.

AARON

What happens if I cross the line?

The POLICEMAN chuckles.

POLICEMAN

I'll have to ticket you.

AARON

A ticket? That's it? Pfft, the station'll cover that.

POLICEMAN

And I can use force.

AARON

You're going to shoot me?

He puts his hand on his holster.

POLICEMAN

Eh, just with the stun gun.

He taps it.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Twelve-hundred volts.

AARON

Nice!

They laugh.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN

I know you keep me anonymous. I can't tell you anything when other reporters are around.

AARON

I know. Is this a good one?

The POLICEMAN nods.

He looks around.

POLICEMAN

We have four dead here.

AARON

Four?! Stabbings?

POLICEMAN

Yeah, it's a spree. Same suspect.

AARON looks around at the police activity surrounding two homes.

AARON

Two homes?

POLICEMAN

Yeah.

AARON

What about the suspect?

POLICEMAN

We have a description, but otherwise, these seem completely random.

AARON

He's still at large?

POLICEMAN

We're canvassing the neighbourhood now.

He walks over to a police cruiser and grabs a megaphone.

AARON watches intently.

POLICEMAN

I have to tell these people to get back in their homes again.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

You think you could wait for me to
do a couple of streeters?

The policeman sniffs.

POLICEMAN

Have you been smoking pot?

AARON

Officer, I don't do that.

He winks and walks away.

POLICEMAN

(shouting)

That's not funny!

AARON waves behind him as he walks away.

He heads over to the crowd.

AARON

Hi folks! I'm Aaron Mader with WKKL
radio.

Many people in the crowd look over.

AARON (CONT'D)

Could anyone tell me what's going
on?

They all quickly look away.

AARON

(under breath)

OK...

He coils up the loose mic cable in his hand.

He moves closer to a crowd and looks at a middle-aged woman
beside him.

AARON

Hi, mam. I just want to know if you
saw or heard anything?

AARON puts the microphone at her mouth.

WOMAN

There was lots of screaming. I
think he went in the first house,
and then the fight in the second
house spilt out on a lawn.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Do you live near here?

WOMAN

I live halfway down the block from the two houses. We was drinking at my friend's over here, so I can't get back in my home because they taped off the whole yard.

AARON

What kind of people lived in those homes? Did you know them?

She looks back at the swarm of police outside the two homes.

WOMAN

I think it was an older retired couple in the one home, and a couple of bachelors renting the other.

AARON

Are you scared?

WOMAN

Why'd I be scared?

The POLICEMAN uses the megaphone to break up the crowd.

POLICEMAN (O.C.)

Please go back to your homes. For your safety and security, please go back to your home and lock the doors and windows.

AARON looks in his direction, then back to the woman.

AARON

Violence so close to home...

WOMAN

Nah, I's a tough bitch.

He stops recording.

AARON

Thanks, mam.

Only part of the crowd has left.

The POLICEMAN uses the megaphone to keep reminding the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN (O.C.)

Please go home and lock your doors
and windows. Please stay in your
homes and return to them promptly.

AARON shoves the mic and cable into his shoulder bag, and walks half a block to get a better vantage point.

He snaps dozens of pictures.

A flurry of officers swell around the older couple's house, the one without the tarped body on the front lawn.

They exit, followed by two paramedics wheeling a black body bag on a stretcher out the front door. They take it to an ambulance close to the home, and far away from the crime tape.

AARON snaps a dozen more shots.

He looks at his phone. 4:24am.

He looks around for a payphone and spots one kitty corner from the two news vehicles. He heads towards the payphone.

To his left, behind the Channel 5 van, BEN BRAZIEL records a stand-up on the street corner.

AARON grabs his notebook from his shoulderbag and flips it open. He slides the pencil from the coil spine and begins scratching down notes.

He puts the pencil against the page he was writing on, then holds them together in one hand.

He fishes change out of his pocket, lifts the receiver, and slides the change in.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - MORNING

KEN throws to commercial, then grabs the phone.

KEN

Aaron, what's going on?

He pauses.

KEN

OK. Yeah, I have the clip.

He pauses.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

Alright. Stand-by. We're coming up.

KEN puts his headphones back on. The "WKKL News Hour Update" bumper plays into a music bed.

He slides down one of the faders.

KEN

Good morning, I'm Ken McKim. At 4-30 the temperature is steady. Warming back up through the day. Full forecast coming up. Our top story...

He scrolls down his computer screen.

KEN (CONT'D)

A spree of stabbings through the night. We now go live to WKKL's Aaron Mader in Whitman Park.

AARON (O.C.)

Ken- I'm at the corner of Louis and Morton where sources tell me another four people have been stabbed to death. Right now, there is a body covered by a sheet in the lawn of one house. Witnesses on scene describe-

He's trails off because of a man's blood-curdling screams.

EXT. LOUIS STREET AND MORTON STREET - MORNING

AARON whips around from the payphone to see BEN being stabbed in the stomach by a man in baggy gangster attire.

AARON

Oh, shit!

He drops the receiver. It dangles there, hitting the support post of the phone.

BEN collapses to the ground.

His CAMERA GUY freaks out and whips the camera and tripod hard at the guy, then turns around to run towards the police.

The KILLER looks over at AARON. They lock eyes.

(CONTINUED)

AARON breaks the stare and starts running towards the police.

The KILLER pursues the CAMERA GUY.

AARON stops to snap a picture.

CAMERA GUY
HELP! HELP ME!

The POLICEMAN notices the CAMERA GUY and AARON running towards him. Then he notices the knife-wielding killer.

He pushes the button on his walkie.

POLICEMAN
Back-up! I need back-up at the west
perimeter!

Handfuls of police come flocking from the two-house crime scene towards all of them.

The POLICEMAN drops the megaphone to grab his gun.

The KILLER lunges at the CAMERA GUY and stabs his leg. He keeps swinging the knife, trying to slash him.

AARON gets to the crime scene tape and ducks under it, disappearing into a sea of police officers.

AARON notices his ringtone. He grabs his phone from his pocket. Five missed calls.

It's KEN at the station. He answers it.

INT. WKKL TALK STUDIO - MORNING

KEN looks angry. He sits tensely in his seat. Commercials fire.

KEN
What the fuck? You swore on-air.
We're going to get an FCC fine!

He hits a button on the switchboard, then hangs up the receiver. AARON's voice sounds in the talk studio, over top of the quiet commercials.

AARON (O.C.)
No- I just watched Ben get stabbed
to death. I mean, I'm sure he's
dead.

(CONTINUED)

KEN sits up.

KEN
What? Ben Braziel?

AARON (O.C.)
Yeah.

KEN
We're going live now.

He fires an event on the computer screen. A "WKKL BREAKING NEWS" stinger plays.

KEN
Good morning, I'm Ken McKim. We apologize for the interruption. We're going back live to Aaron Mader in Whitman Park.

He tweaks the faders downward.

KEN (CONT'D)
Aaron, tells us what happened during the news.

AARON (O.C.)
I was reporting live when I heard the screaming. I turned around and the man pulled his knife out of another reporter's stomach. Ben Braziel. He hit the ground. Braziel had been recording an update.

KEN
This is really shocking.

He looks at the clock. 4:42am.

AARON (O.C.)
Totally shocking. I dropped the phone and ran.

KEN
Where are you now?

AARON (O.C.)
I'm inside the crime tape, behind all the cops. I think they're pursuing the suspect now.

(CONTINUED)

KEN

You said there's a body covered by a sheet in the front yard of a house?

AARON (O.C.)

Yes. I can see it now. I'm actually very close to the scene. There are maybe a dozen civilians near me. All of them look quite scared.

KEN

Alright, thank you Aaron.

He clicks a button on the switchboard, disconnecting the call.

KEN (CONT'D)

A spree of stabbings... WKKL's Aaron Mader reporting horrifying details LIVE from Louis and Molton Streets in Whitman Park. We'll be back to wrap up Night Pulse after this.

He fires another event from the computer. Commercials start rolling.

EXT. LOUIS STREET AND MORTON STREET - MORNING

AARON slides the phone back in his pockets.

He looks down the street at the body in the yard, then up the block at all the officers tackling and hogtying the KILLER.

He runs towards the body under the sheet and snaps a bunch of pictures at a few different angles.

He looks back at the horde of police dragging the KILLER to a cop car.

AARON snaps some pictures.

AARON scurries back into the crowd of scared onlookers who fled towards the crime scene.

He watches as they stuff the KILLER in the back seat and takes pictures of the arrest and the crowd.

He pulls the phone out of his pocket. 5:13am. He calls the station.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Hey. I guess Night Pulse is over.
Does the morning show want any live
hits?

CUT IMMEDIATELY TO:

INT. WKKL NEWSROOM - MORNING

KEN sits at his desk, hunched over his keyboard, with the
phone resting between his shoulder and his cheek.

BLAINE GWYNN, the daytime reporter who's about the same age
as AARON sits at the computer AARON was at earlier.

KEN

Yeah, we're going to bring you on
every 15 minutes. We need you to
stay in the field.

He sparks a cigar and puffs.

KEN

We'll send BLAINE out to takeover
at 9.

He pauses.

KEN

OK, fine. Eight.

He slaps down the receiver and turns to BLAINE.

KEN

Take your own car, I'll buy you a
tank.

He taps the cigar, sending ash to the floor.

EXT. LOUIS STREET AND MORTON STREET - MORNING

The sun is starting to come up.

AARON grabs his WKKL mic and cable out of his shoulder bag,
and hooks it all up.

As the police start to restore peace by rounding up the
onlookers and corral them back out of the taped off area,
AARON approaches a woman and a man in the crowd. The woman's
face is stained from tears.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Hello, mam. I'm with WKKL radio...

The camera lifts up over the corner and scans over the block in a semi-birds eye view.

Towards the top left, another body is wheeled out of the house. Towards the bottom right, BEN is carefully lifted onto a stretcher. His face is covered with a mask and he's unconscious.

A media circus is forming at the scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WKKL RADIO STATION - MORNING

AARON pulls up in the newscruiser and jumps out. He grabs his shoulder bag and camera bag from the back seat.

He slams the car door shut, then walks towards the front door of the station.

PATRICIA FELTS, a woman about KEN's age, stands outside smoking a cigarette. She holds it with attitude.

A smile dashes across her face as AARON walks up.

PATRICIA
Hey, babe!

AARON
Patty! How was the show?

PATRICIA
Pure gold, baby!

AARON pulls a cigarette pack from his shoulder bag, puts a smoke between his lips, and sparks it.

He puffs and looks over at her with the cigarette hanging from his lips. He smirks, then grabs it with his hand.

AARON
What a hell of a night!

PATRICIA
Yeah, that's one for the books.

She takes a deep drag and snuff it out on the ground with her shoe.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

It's after nine. Give me the keys
and go home.

AARON

You'll take care of McKim?

PATRICIA

Yeah, go. You're not filing.

He puffs his cigarette, only half believing her.

PATRICIA

Go!

He stomps out his cigarette. They hug.

AARON

Thanks, Patty! See you tomorrow
morning.

He pulls another set of keys out of his pocket and jumps in
a small, older sedan.

He drives off.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

AARON walks in the small, plain apartment. Bacon and eggs
sizzle in the kitchen, just around the hallway from the
front door.

He enters the kitchen and his girlfriend, KENDRA COLE, turns
around, smiling.

KENDRA

Long night, babe?

AARON

What are you doing here?

He walks up to her and they kiss.

He sits down at the small breakfast table.

KENDRA

I'm on the noon to eight shift. I
figured since we wouldn't see
each other tonight, we could have
breakfast this morning.

AARON flips the folded newspaper bundle over on the table.

(CONTINUED)

KENDRA (CONT'D)
There's coffee.

He looks.

AARON
Thanks, babe. I'll pour it in a
minute.

He flips the newspaper back over.

AARON (CONT'D)
I can't believe they don't even
have one line about the stabbing
spree!

He puts the newspaper down.

KENDRA
Maybe they don't want their
reporters to get stabbed to death.

AARON
Of course they do. If it bleeds, it
leads.

He gets up to fix a cup of coffee. He reaches in the fridge
for the milk and puts it beside the coffee maker.

AARON
Would you like a coffee?

KENDRA
Nope, I've got one.

She plates the food and places them on the table. She grabs
her coffee mug and places it by her plate.

AARON puts the milk back in the fridge and sits down with
his coffee.

KENDRA
So, tell me about your night.

AARON smirks, then eats a piece of bacon.

CUT TO BLACK