CONTINUED:

BUD (CONT'D)

Sounds like this marriage was on the ropes.

MEGAN

Mike's body still in the house?

SAM

Yeah. We haven't gone inside yet.

MEGAN

Good. So many firefighters have been in and out of there. I don't want any more disturbance.

BUD

Tell that to the Arson Investigators.

MEGAN

(looking around)

Where are they?

Bud nods to the building.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

(not)

Fantastic.

AS they head inside --

INT. JILL'S ROWHOUSE - NIGHT

The house is a smoldering, charred mess. Megan, Bud and Sam enter to find RAY EASTON, late 40's, smart, confident, Megan with a PFD badge, instructing SKIP RAMIREZ, 20's, like a puppy dog with a PFD badge, both sifting through the debris.

RAY

Let's get behind the fridge. See who or what started this thing.

(looks up)

You must be the M.E. I'm Ray Easton. This is my partner Skip Ramirez.

MEGAN

Doctor Megan Hunt.

(they shake)

Where's the body?

RAY

I kept tripping over it, so I had Skip here put it in the pickup.

(CONTINUED)
Megan stares daggers at Ray.

SKIP
It's behind you. Near what's left of the front closet.
(then)
We haven't touched it.

MEGAN
(turns around)
That's why Peter didn't see him.

Megan takes a knee at the BODY. His face looks MUMMIFIED, unrecognizable. His torso is still clothed but covered with SCOT. His pelvis is CHARRED, bone exposed. Sam joins Megan. Mike is curled up in a defensive posture like a boxer.

SAM
Looks like Mike died fighting.

MEGAN
It's called --

RAY
Pugilistic pose. Fire causes muscles in the body to contract.
Skip made the same mistake at his first scene.

SKIP
The hell I did.

RAY
Mike almost made it out. Smoke must've been too much for him. It looks like the fire started in the kitchen.

He points to a scorch MARK on the wall that ends behind the fridge.

SKIP
Scorch marks form a V, like an arrow, showing where a fire started.

Ray is about to explain, but --

MEGAN
Point of origin. I know.
We also found evidence of forced entry.

MEGAN
My partner said he kicked down the door to get inside.

RAY
When he gave the fire all the oxygen it needed to consume the living room.

MEGAN
He saved a woman's life.

RAY
If he had waited for PFD to arrive, we might have been able to save two lives.

MEGAN
Or you might have lost both.

Megan focuses on Mike's body. She opens his mouth.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
I see soot in Mike's nostrils and throat. That confirms he was alive while the fire was burning.

RAY
There's more pronounced fire damage at his pelvis. Someone may have poured accelerant on him.

MEGAN
Why don't you concentrate on what started the fire. Let me worry about Mike Applebee.

(to Bud)
With the extensive burn damage, I'm going to need some extra time. So let's meet in autopsy in an hour.

Megan stands, de-gloves.

RAY
You'll be in there alone.

MEGAN
Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

SKIP
(apologetic)
We haven’t finished our initial assessment. Nothing leaves the scene until we’re done.

MEGAN
How long will that be?

SKIP
As long as it takes.

Megan looks at Bud and Sam, exasperated. Bud shrugs.

BUD
Structure’s secure. It’s Ray’s call when to release the body.

Megan can’t believe this.

MEGAN
I’m going to get some coffee.

As she heads for the front door, Ray smiles.

RAY
If you wouldn’t mind, I take mine black.

Bud smirks, truly enjoying this. Megan, however, keeps on walking.

INT. M.E.’S OFFICE - AUTOPSY ROOM - DAY (DAY 2)

Mike’s BODY is finally on the table.

MEGAN
Three hours. That’s how much time I lost to Ray Easton.

BUD
You and Ray didn’t seem to get along so good. Which is a surprise since you’re usually such a people person.

Megan ignores the dig, as she begins her external.

BUD (CONT’D)
I worked the Badlands with Ray’s pop. He’s a good man. Second generation cop. Strange that his son went PFD.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

CURTIS
We could be looking at heat fissure. If temps got high enough to dehydrate the brain, the pressure could’ve caused the break in the temporal bone.

MEGAN
I don’t think so. Take a look.

Ethan and Curtis lean in.

ETHAN
Hemorrhaging.

MEGAN
Someone definitely hit John Doe in the head while he was still alive. And whatever did this may still be on the scene.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Peter sits at Jill's bedside. Concerned. Skip enters.

SKIP
So you're the superhero?
(off Peter’s look)
Skip Ramirez. Arson Investigation.

PETER
Peter Dunlop. M.E.'s office.

They shake.

SKIP
You look good for a guy who ran into a burning house.

PETER
My shoulder’s pretty banged up.

SKIP
How’s Jill doing?

PETER
They’re still treating her for carbon monoxide and cyanide toxicity.
CONTINUED:

SKIP
At least she's doing better than the John Doe we pulled out of the house.

PETER
There was someone else inside?

SKIP
Yeah. Your boss is trying to ID him now.

This lands on Peter. He looks at Jill, remembering...

PETER
She called me "Dad."
(off Skip's look)
I should've looked for another victim.

SKIP
Don't beat yourself up. You did more than most people would've.

Skip sees a bag filled with Jill's CLOTHES in Peter's hands.

SKIP (CONT'D)
Those Jill's clothes?

PETER
Doctor Hunt wanted them. They might have some evidence of who did this to Jill.

SKIP
Ray sent me to get Jill's clothes too. I guess I'm too late.

PETER
Great minds, right?

Peter stands, winces.

PETER (CONT'D)
I should get back to the office. I'll let you know if we find anything on the clothes.

SKIP
Take it easy on that shoulder.

PETER
Trust me. It's been through worse.

(CONTINUED)
Kate offers nothing.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
He must like you. He doesn't spend
other people's money on just
anyone.

KATE
You have no right to indict my
relationship with Todd because of
the failure of yours.

MEGAN
I'm just trying to be helpful.

KATE
Your kind of help I can do without.
Not that it's any of your business,
but we're going to a gallery opening.
(then)
I know this is hard for you. But
this relationship is happening.
The sooner you can come to terms
with that the better.

MEGAN
Easy for you to say. Your boss
isn't dating your ex-husband.

KATE
There isn't anything easy about this
situation. You've made sure of that.

Kate exits, leaving Megan frustrated.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Peter watches SURVEILLANCE VIDEO on the TV. Skip enters with
a box of Donut Stop DONUTS and two COFFEES.

SKIP
From the Donut Stop. In honor of
Jill. Try the Bavarian Cream.
Best in the city.

PETER
Good call.

Peter grabs a donut. A beat, as they watch the video.

SKIP
Heard you used to be a cop. How'd
you end up at the M.E.'s office?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PETER
I got shot. So I was in and out of the hospital and realized I enjoyed working with medical professionals. Being a medicolegal investigator combines the cop and the medical. Plus you get shot at a lot less.

(Then)
How about you?

SKIP
My mom was killed in a house fire when I was eight. Cops arrested my dad. Every year, I visit him in jail wearing my PFD uniform to show him I'm nothing like him. I guess that's why I'm an arson investigator.

PETER
Hell of a story.

SKIP
It is what it is. It's not like I got shot or nothing.

Peter sees something on the TV.

PETER
You see that?

He Rewinds the image.

SKIP
What? Daniel Robinson?

PETER
No...

He pauses the video on a teenage girl who the astute viewer will recognize as --

PETER (CONT'D)
That's Daniel Robinson's daughter. Emily.

OFF Peter's surprise --

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR
PETER
While you guys talk to the big fish, I'll reach out to Skip and see what I can get out of him.

INT. M.E.'S OFFICE - MORGUE - NIGHT

It's after-hours quiet. Megan has Bud's SAP in her hand. She checks it against Ben and Jill's wounds. She lines up the wide face of the sap with Jill's circular-shaped wound. It's almost a perfect match.

Then she turns the sap on its side and places it against Ben's temple. It's also a near-perfect match.

MEGAN
One instrument. Two different impressions.

She smiles, then turns around to see --

RAY, standing behind her, blood in his eyes.

INT. TOY STORE - NIGHT

Peter and Skip walk toward the stuffed animal display.

SKIP
Thanks for the call and everything. But besides this being a toy store, I don't see how this connects to our serial arsonist.

PETER
We recovered an incendiary device. It was pretty simple. A styrofoam cup filled with petroleum jelly-covered cotton balls.

SKIP
Where is the evidence now?

PETER
Forensics has it. We also found cannon fuse. It was used as a delay, so the arsonist had time to exit the store.

SKIP
That might explain why we haven't recovered anything at the other fires.

(MORE)
SKIP (CONT'D)
The cannon fuse, styrofoam and
cotton balls would all burn pretty
completely.

Skip looks at the burned electrical box, the toys and stuffed
animals still sitting beneath.

SKIP (CONT'D)
This was where it started, huh?
(off Peter's nod)
Most of these dolls are made of
synthetics with a polyester fiber
fill. They're flame resistant to a
point. But once they burn, they
burn pretty good.

Skip pats a stuffed bear that survived the fire on the head.

SKIP (CONT'D)
This little guy got lucky. It's
too bad Jill didn't have sprinklers
at her house. Her stuffed turtle
might have made it out okay.

Peter's antennae go up. Skip notices.

SKIP (CONT'D)
Everything all right?

PETER
Yeah, it's just been a long day.

OFF Peter, mind racing --

INT. M.E.'S OFFICE - MORGUE - NIGHT

Megan grips Bud's sap, as Ray walks toward her.

RAY
I heard about your little
investigation. The idea that I'm
responsible is absurd.

MEGAN
We recovered cannon fuse at a
failed toy store fire.

RAY
So now you're investigating arsons?
Did they teach you that in medical
school too?

(CONTINUED)