

HAMMERS ON BONE | OUTLINE
JONA HEADON

An immortal private investigator cursed with the seed of a monster must do everything he can to protect a child from his abusive father while uncovering a sacrificial sect quickly taking over the city.

EPIISODE ONE: MURDER, MY SWEET

Midnight. Deep in Ridley Creek State Park, Philadelphia. Bullets of rain tear through leaves. An eviscerated body has been discovered splayed out on a 200-tonne boulder formation 10ft tall—forming a shrine of offering—it has been formed specifically for this purpose. Police officers and forensic detectives have cordoned off the area. The officers are perplexed as to how these rocks had gotten here, let alone who would do such a thing to a body, but their minds are blown when they realize they're igneous rocks—from a volcano.

DETECTIVE HANNAH BURROWS notices **JOHN PERSONS** in the shadows smoking a cigarette against a tree. He wears a weathered trench coat, a busted fedora, and cracked, peeling leather gloves (the gloves he wears at all times). John has quickly sketched the rock formation down in his notepad. Burrows approaches John—he remarks on the lack of vehicle tracks around—but there's no way humans brought them here. With this density of trees, it's impossible that a crane had entered the forest. Burrows, uninterested in engaging with him on the case, asks him what he's doing here. He begins to reply, but she interjects asking more specifically what he's doing back in Philadelphia. John sarcastically says he's just passing through... Burrows tells him to get out of here; she doesn't need him contaminating another one of her crime scenes—there's clearly history between them. He soon leaves, engulfed by the darkness of the woods—not done with this. Not by a long shot.

Later. John parks his beat-up car and kills his stolen police scanner. A rustic, hand-carved necklace dangles from his rearview mirror. Through his windshield, he watches two scantily-clad sex workers lure a man across the street and into a cheap, rundown hotel. This is the hotel John resides at. He is tentatively welcomed back by the **SEEDY HOTEL OWNER**—greasy and hard to stomach. This hotel welcomes dark and depraved characters from all walks of life, no questions asked. John fits right in. When he enters his pitch-black room—the silhouette of a woman standing at the window startles him. She bolts towards him—until he flicks on the light... just an empty room. John holds it together, barely. He lies back on the bed—the sounds of debauchery and anarchy bleeding through the walls disgust and disturb him. He covers his ears and curls into a ball. The rum bottles on the bedside are empty. Police sirens scream past the tiny window. Desperate for sleep. The lights flicker off again—John is suddenly surrounded by a hundred ghouls watching over him.

Morning. Burrows pulls up outside an elementary school. Her daughter EMMIE sits in the back, already nibbling away at her lunch treats. Burrows catches her, lovingly tells her to save some for her field trip today. A new side to Burrows—sweet, soft. Emmie hops out and joins the queue of children for the school bus. The principal waves to Burrows. She waves back, muttering, 'pervert' under her breath, and then drives off.

John's office is off the main street in a shady part of town. The entire building is vacant and decrepit. All the other businesses have either gone bankrupt or have relocated either online or elsewhere. His office is stuck in the past, just like him. He uses most of the furniture left by previous renters—even the signage on the door is still one of a previous business. A mountain of flyers scrunched behind the door. Dust covers everything. John scrutinizes a tiny newspaper cutout. *'Local Voodoo Doctor Claims Cure for Cancer.'* He pins it up on the wall with hundreds of other snippets—he's been following this story for months, chasing it around the globe. *'It's a Miracle! I Can See! Witch Doctor Fixed Me!'*, *'Where Did He Go? Magic Man Vanishes With Cures.'* John sits back against his desk and mutters that he will find this witch doctor.

A child named **ABEL** peaks through the crack in the door—spying on John. John already knows he's there. 'Either come in or get out.' Abel enters clutching a piggy bank. He's a cute kid with a black eye, bruises on his arms, and plasters on his hands. Abel gets comfortable in the chair and, using his best heartbreaker impression, he tells John how much danger he's in and that he wants to hire him to kill his father **MCKINSEY** before his father kills him and his younger brother. John doesn't buy the act for a second. Besides, this isn't what John does—there are social services to soothe this kid's tummy ache. But then Abel drops the act and shows his true self, a pissed-off, fed up brute—almost like a man in a child's skin. Things just got interesting for John, but it's still a no. Abel climbs onto John's desk in an act of intimidation, and that's when John smells the putrid stink of McKinsey on Abel's skin. But since John doesn't work for pocket change and buttons, he passes up the offer. That is until Abel plays his hand and tells John he knows exactly what John is (a monster, just like his father McKinsey). John falters. Only a monster can recognize a monster—Who the hell is this kid?

John still shows significant resistance. Abel jumps off the table and for a split second, John sees a **YOUNG GIRL** (who in a later episode will be revealed as John's late daughter) standing in Abel's place. John refuses to let another child come to harm at the hand of their own father. John reluctantly takes the job, not necessarily to kill... but for now, John is willing to put this guy in his place with a beat down of his own. He finds Abel's address written on the inside of his backpack: Dunbridge St. He grabs the piggy bank and steps out with Abel.

As if that intrusion wasn't enough, on his way out to flip tables and bark questions, John bumps into **ROSE**, a recent graduate-turned-business-owner who's moving into the office across the hall today. It's the only other office with light bulbs. She is over-familiar, energetic and optimistic, the exact opposite of John! Rose speaks loudly and excitedly into her phone, telling John she's giving her mom the good news on the office space. John is uninterested and irritated at her arrival and offers her a frosty reception. But Rose takes no offense, she sees stubborn people as a challenge. Little does John know that she'll become an asset to him in and out of the office in time to come.

John sneaks back to Ridley Creek State Park to look at the rocks. John can't get any closer than thirty yards with the investigation ongoing. Burrows, irritated, watches from a distance. John turns to leave when he clocks her but then picks up a scent he can't ignore—nestled beneath dead leaves he spots a clue: an "I Voted!" keyring on a set of keys. He kneels to pretend to tie his shoelace, but Burrows tells him to freeze. She approaches and intercepts,

picking up the keys instead. She berates him and chases him off site. John gets in his car and drives off. Burrows watches him leave when her phone rings—an emergency at her daughter’s school—she does well to conceal her panic with anger. John sees her in the rearview bolting to her car. She gets in and quickly overtakes him.

Elementary school: Burrows sprints into the school. John slowly pulls up. He gets out and crosses over to her car. The evidence is in her bag sitting on the passenger seat. Doors are locked—alarm is top shelf—no breaking in without making a scene. A quick look around. Coast is clear. John focuses on breaking down the molecular structure in his arm and eases it through the passenger window. He sweats, this magic looks like agony. A little more... got it! Burrows bursts out of the school, full charge. John ducks—arm still in the window. She gets closer. John yanks. Still stuck. Needs to focus. The principal and a teacher chase after Burrows—offering apologies, support and help. Buys John a few more precious seconds. Burrows shuns them, threatening to arrest them if they don't back the fuck off! Eventually, John’s free. Burrows gets in and screams profanities, none the wiser. John hears her while he throws up underneath her car. She drives off, and he rolls away behind another parked car.

Back in his rust bucket, John takes his gloves off and holds the keyring tightly. He suddenly envisages the owner and the journey of the keyring with the use of more magic. He sees flashes of color/a party/dark trees whipping by/the keyring landing in the dirt and getting kicked over/ images of grinning suits. There’s no order, no logic to the images, but they’re disturbing. He snaps back to reality. He opens the glove box, revealing he also owns a pistol, and then tosses in the keys. The gloves immediately go back on.

Main street: John drives. Suddenly, two drunk men brawling in the street hit John’s car. He slams on the brakes and rolls his window down to berate the fighters. The shorter man runs away, and the other turns and forces his head in through John’s open window. The grimace on the man’s face is terrifying and when he growls at John, unnatural fangs are revealed and throbbing veins pulsate up his neck to the back of his head. This is no man—he’s something subhuman. But John is hardly shaken, furrowing his brow, scowling at his soul. The man eventually retreats and backs away down the street and around the corner. John glimpses the street sign. Recognizes the address: Dunbridge St. John glances at the pink pig in the passenger seat. Grunts.

Abel’s home: a middle-class nightmare, an under-class dream. It stinks of McKinsey’s disease. Abel’s mother **LISA** opens the door. She’s home alone and resistant to talk. Quick on his feet, John impersonates school authorities and barges his way in. She is exactly what he expected: a quivering bird who struggles with eye contact on account of resident shiners across her face. John suggests to Lisa that she’s better off getting out of whatever mess she’s in sooner rather than later, for the sake of her kids. Lisa musters up enough courage to insist John leaves. Not until he gets an address. During John’s questioning, the TV screeches with breaking news! **ADAM PEACOCK**, who was once the borough’s top nominee for Mayor, has been accused of multiple cases of sexual assault. He was set to bring great change to the borough with a wide rejuvenation scheme to improve the area, but is now wrestling with his public image. Lisa’s eyes linger on the screen a moment too long, distracted. John asks if there is something he should know about that look—Lisa gets defensive, finally spewing the address of McKinsey’s workplace: the brickworks factory.

When John leaves, Lisa dashes for her phone and sends a desperate text to a mystery person—yet another text in a list of previously unanswered messages begging for help or to meet.

Burrows charges through the police station. Her fist chokes her bag strap. Everyone knows what's happened to her, but nobody has the guts to speak up—more focused on not getting trampled under her. She bursts into her department and demands to know what her team has come up with so far: 'Where the fuck is my daughter!?' Someone tries to console Burrows but is barked at for leads. She demands results by the time she gets back from the pisser.

Women's restroom: Burrows slowly crumbles, revealing her true emotions: fear. Tears quickly build, but she won't let them fall. Instead, she uses anger again and hurls her bag at the hand dryers. Contents scatter. She collects herself. Deep breath. Packing up the items of her bag, she notices the keys are missing. She frantically checks every pocket. They're gone. A young colleague enters, but before she could even ask, Burrows dashes back to her car to rummage around the foot wells. Fuck. The evidence is gone.