

GONE DEAD

Genre: Crime/Drama/Mystery

Format: Feature Film

Nutshell: *Jesse Stone* meets *Knives Out*



Log Line: When a deputy sheriff's body washes up on shore, two teenagers find themselves entangled in a grisly murder investigation, but suspects are plentiful since the entire town wanted him dead.

Overview:

After spending twenty years as a dedicated NYPD detective, Morgan Barns accepts a job as sheriff of a small town in the bucolic wine country of Long Island's East End and becomes entwined in a puzzling murder investigation when a deputy's body washes up on the local beach. Two teenagers who should be enjoying their last summer of freedom before heading off to college find themselves lead suspects in the gruesome murder. The script leads the viewer in one direction until the shocking conclusion when the true killer is revealed. The final scene provides the audience with an intriguing question of conscience to ponder long after the film's unexpected ending.

Characters

MARIA GARCIA (17) – Daughter of hardworking Hispanic immigrants, she saves money for college by waitressing at the local diner and taking catering jobs at the area's wineries. Her good looks capture the attention of many affluent city boys summering on the East End including Michael Katopodis.

MICHAEL KATOPODIS (18) – A party boy from a privileged family who makes the trek from Manhattan to his parent's waterfront vacation house each summer in pursuit of carefree partying and frivolous liaisons with the local girls.

MORGAN BARNES – An ex-NYPD detective with as many regrets as convictions, his steely façade hides a thoughtful and compassionate man who's witnessed the worst life has to offer; he still has nightmares of the past.

BROOKE – Deputy sheriff who reports to Morgan. Former Ivy League college athlete from a wealthy family, she's way overqualified for her uneventful job. Trusted by the locals, she hides deep-rooted emotional issues.

FINNY MCCARTHY – Young smartass deputy sheriff with a permanent smirk on his face. Son of the town's corrupt mayor, he confidently operates above the law with the encouragement of his crooked father. He's the dead body that washes up on the shoreline.

MAYOR MCCARTHY – A nasty man with a malicious mind and an entitled attitude. His family has ruled this town for generations and he expects his deputy sheriff son to continue the family legacy of government corruption.

Summary:

Deputy sheriff Finny lies in wait for his next victim; his patrol car is strategically parked where vacationers rushing to the pristine beaches can't spot him. Several speeding vehicles pass by, but Finny ignores them, instead waiting for a specific type of driver: a young attractive girl...alone.

When bikini-clad Emma's Jeep passes, the patrol car's flashing lights and siren ignite as the fiendish police officer pulls her over on a secluded side street. When she challenges him, insisting that she wasn't speeding, he blatantly flings a bag of illicit drugs into her car, threatening to arrest her for possession. Finny gives her an ultimatum: certain jail time or sexual favors.

This same scene has been repeated in the small idyllic town of Greenport for six consecutive summers. Despite multiple teary complaints filed at the police station, there's no chance of this predator being convicted for his monstrous crimes since Finny's father is a corrupt mayor who wields power over the police, lawyers and judges. Many residents know about the depraved cop, but they're intimidated into silence by secrets of their own they need to protect.

Each summer Michael Katopodis and his family escape the bustle of New York City to spend summers at their opulent Long Island North Fork vacation home. Like all city boys, Michael's goal is to party, get drunk and hook up with the local girls. This year Maria Garcia, a smart, hardworking waitress who's focused on attending college, has unexpectedly captured his heart.

It's the night of Michael's oceanfront graduation party; the adults convivially converse in small groups on the lavish grounds while a crowd of enthusiastic teenagers frolic in the pool. Maria has been hired to waitress at the party, but Michael can't help protectively stealing glances her way all night, totally captivated by her. Just as the party is about to end, an arrogant Deputy Finny arrives boasting that he's there to answer a supposed call about a disturbance. No one believes him. He begins lecherously hitting on Maria, gripping her around the shoulders and holding her tight while she silently squirms; she doesn't want to make a scene as she unsuccessfully tries to thwart him. Michael notices her distress and angrily intervenes to protect Maria from this predator. The volatile confrontation between Michael and Finny ends with Michael threatening Finny's life.



After the party, Maria and Michael meet at the local beach for a romantic midnight rendezvous unaware that Finny has followed them. While the young couple make out on the beach, the jealous cop clandestinely slits one of Maria's car tires. Later, while Michael is changing the mysteriously flat tire, Finny shows himself and a fight with Michael ensues. The young college boy is no match for the hardened cop and it's not long before Finny chokes Michael unconscious. Now alone with panic-stricken Maria, he tries to rape her. Maria desperately fights to get him off of her and frantically reaches for her car's tire iron on the ground nearby.

When Michael regains consciousness, Finny is dead. A tearful and distraught Maria tries to convince Michael that they need to call the police since it's a clear case of self-defense. But Michael insists that no one will ever believe them, including the dead deputy's father, the town's corrupt mayor. Michael quickly devises a plan to instead tow the body out to sea where the sharks can eat it. Under cover of night, they drag the body into the deep raging ocean and hope for the best. All is good until a few days later when the dead cop's body washes up on the beach.

Morgan Barns is a retired New York City police detective and seasoned professional who's seen it all. His wife left him when she could no longer endure his obsession with his dangerous job. He recently moved to Long Island to take what he assumed would be the undemanding position of town sheriff in an attempt to escape the city's unspeakable crimes, regain his sanity, and hopefully win back his wife. Young deputy sheriff Brooke becomes Morgan's trusted guide to the history of the town and its secretive inhabitants. Together they begin investigating Finny's death.

Preliminary evidence leads to Maria and Michael since their personal possessions were discovered at the beach near where Finny's abandoned car was found. The testimony of those who witnessed Michael's threat to Finny the night of the graduation party appears to seal the deal. Despite intense pressure from the angry mayor who demands that the teenagers be arrested for the murder of his son, Morgan's instincts tell him that these kids are not killers and that there's much more to this crime. He begins looking for other suspects.

Morgan soon learns that practically every town resident had a reason to hate Finny. As Morgan begins to untangle a web of half-truths, lies and false leads, a shocking portrait of the dead deputy sheriff begins to unfold. It becomes obvious that someone is planting incriminating evidence as a diversion, trying to thwart his investigation. After Morgan sets an ingenious trap to identify the culprit, he begins to wonder if his trusted female deputy Brooke could be involved. As Morgan delves into her past, he uncovers the dark secret that could be motivation for murder.

In the final dramatic scene, Morgan confronts Brooke, carefully revealing his evidence against her. Once Brooke realizes that there's no way out, she stoically admits that she was raped in college by the football team captain while her husband was studying abroad. No one, including school officials and the police, believed her since the popular player insisted that the hookup was consensual. Three months later she had a miscarriage and her marriage, reputation and life were destroyed. Brooke went into law enforcement determined to prevent any woman from experiencing what she had gone through.

After receiving multiple complaints from innocent girls who were abused by Finny and knowing that there was no way to prosecute him because of his corrupt father, Brooke began devising a plan for vengeance. She secretly followed Finny to the beach where Maria and Michael were hanging out and watched from behind the bushes in horror as Finny began to overpower Maria, trying to rape her. Not wanting him to abuse another young girl, she emerged from the shadows, picked up Maria's tire iron, and smashed Finny's skull. Although Maria witnessed Brooke's actions, she was blackmailed into secrecy with the threat that Brooke would turn in the incriminating tire iron murder weapon with Michael's prints.

Now Morgan is left with a dilemma; should he arrest Brooke? With a town full of possible suspects, and lack of a murder weapon, Morgan takes justice into his own hands and decides that some people just deserve to die.