

The Wake

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Logline

After the death of his best friend, a two-strike felon is given a 24-hour furlough for the funeral, but when he suspects murder he goes on the lam, risking life in prison to uncover the truth.

Genre

Urban noir murder mystery; imagine *The Fugitive* meets *The Wire*.

Structure

The Wake is a mini-series comprised of 12 one-hour episodes following fugitive Sam's hunt for the truth behind community organizer David's death. Early episodes follow Sam as he evades capture and collaborates with a range of untrustworthy characters. After an explosive twist, Sam and his allies are pulled deeper into the mystery of David's life. The final episodes see Sam's allies stripped from him, one by one, until he is left to stand alone against Marlowe, a faceless - and seemingly omnipresent - enemy. The series culminates with a flashback to David's final 24 hours to see how it all played out, with shocking details revealed.

Themes and vision

The Wake is a story of influence and corruption, the title not only refers to the location of the inciting incident but also to the ripple effect our lives have on each other. It is a big story with many characters and subplots, and through these we see David's effect on the city and its populace. It isn't until Sam begins investigating that the truth raises to the surface. Influences include noir and neo-noir classics such as *The Killing*, *Night of the Hunter*, and *Chinatown* and recent series such as *True Detective* and *The Night Of*, but also intimate documentaries such as *How to Draw a Bunny*, *Finding Vivian Maier*, and *Dear Zachary* - all stories about ordinary people hiding big mysteries.

On the surface, *The Wake* is about corruption as a ripple effect of economic decline. David was an ambitious young man with fingers in many pies, but first and foremost he was a concerned citizen trying to reverse the deterioration of his community. He took a stand against the harmful elements he and his peers faced every day - dangerous gangs, dirty cops, inhumane businesses, unresponsive government, and, most terrifying of all, the phantom pulling all their strings. Marlowe. Through his struggles, David stood tall while his allies failed around him. But standing tall made him an easy target, and before he could reveal Marlowe's true identity he was struck down and his reputation dragged through the mud.

Below the surface, *The Wake* is about the emergence of Sam's political consciousness. If politics is the art of controlling your environment, Sam is on the sideline. The show opens with Sam in prison, with the spectre of a 3rd strike looming large, and politically ambivalent until he takes up David's activist causes. His nemeses, primarily Marlowe, Det. Welles, and the [BRAND] Corp, are, respectfully, the embodiments of neoliberalism, fascism, and runaway capitalism. Although Sam is a model prisoner who intends to comply with the rules of his furlough, the opportunity is taken from him when violence erupts at David's wake and he goes on the run with a USB drive filled with David's secrets.

Aided by David's kid sister and a dyslexic computer programmer, Sam wades through the city's murky underbelly searching for the complex answers to one simple question: Who killed David?

Episode 1 “The Wake”

It's sunny. We're in a vibrant rust belt town in the midst of gentrification. People play in the river, friends drink ice-cold beverages in quaint cafes, children race through sprinklers, the water drains into the gutter. Moving against the flow into a seedy part of town, traveling uphill towards the city's reservoir. Pulling away from the concrete shore we catch a glimpse of the skyline in silhouette before coming to a stop on a bird's eye view of the water. It transforms from murky blue-green to red as a body floating facedown drifts into view...

Days later. Sam (22) is on a bus, wearing the same drab outfit as the other passengers, all convicts. As the bus takes us from rural fields to urban decay, we learn Sam has a 24-hour furlough to attend the funeral of his best friend, community organizer David. Firing up his old flip-phone, he listens to voicemails from friends while he's been in jail, transitioning from jovial well-wishes to dire warnings, and culminating in a final message from Lara: David's death was no accident.

At the bus station Sam is greeted Brain (real name Brian but he's dyslexic.) A tech guru and joker, he's eager to cheer Sam up by hacking and removing Sam's ankle monitor. Sam's not amused, he has no room for error. Before he leaves, Brain jots Sam's suit size into his phone.

Sam visits his family home, and after a blowout argument with his stepfather, it's clear Sam isn't welcome so he wanders his old neighbourhood and runs into Rubin and Lara. He tries to talk privately with Lara about the voicemail but they're interrupted by a man with a package for Sam – a gray suit from Brain. Sam learns there's an app to make a quick buck running errands. The man says that as an ex-con, Sam should get used to the term “gig economy”. He warns Sam: “Ike is looking for you. Keep your head up and your temper in check.” The message is loud and clear, but it isn't welcome - Ike and Sam have a contentious history.

Taking Sam for a pre-funeral meal, Rubin reveals that ex-cons push drugs for gang leader Spade. Working with crooked parole officers, he puts them to work in public-facing jobs in cafes, bars, and restaurants, so Sam won't have to worry about a job when he's released. Sam changes into the suit and slips the ankle monitor into his pocket.

After the funeral, guests arrive at David's family home for the wake. It's a beautiful house in a nice part of town. Sam keeps a low profile until he is approached by Lara who slips him a USB drive, telling him to deliver it to Mac. She warns, “Whatever you do, don't let Marlowe get it, it's proof David was murdered.” As Sam processes this, he is pulled aside by David's family and Lara disappears into the crowd.

Sam locates David's little sister, affectionately known as Muscles, who avoids the gathering by playing videogames in her bedroom. She claims she hasn't seen Lara, but when Sam leaves, Lara emerges from hiding and sneaks out the window. Continuing his search, Sam realizes the ankle monitor is missing from his pocket.

Rubin arrives with gang members - Ike included - who have come to pay their respects. Someone jokes that Sam and Rubin have the same tailor because their suits are identical. Arguing with guests, Rubin reveals David is dead because he was a snitch. Things get heated, and the gang makes for the exit but not before Ike spots Sam.

Parked across the street, Det. Lt. Mac, a plainclothes detective in an unmarked car, looks up from his notebook as Ike charges back into the house.

Cornered by Ike, Sam makes the fateful decision to fight back. He's a Grade A fighter and doesn't hold back. Ike doesn't stand a chance.

Two shots ring out, glass shatters, guests scream and duck for cover as Rubin falls to the ground. As Mac responds to the scene, Ike stumbles out, his face pulverized. A moment later, Sam bursts out of the house. As he races away, Mac discovers something else odd here – Sam's GPS monitor strapped to the corpse's ankle...