



# DURHAM COUNTY

## SEASON TWO

### Synopsis

Durham County is set amidst the bleak landscape of new suburban developments. The scenery conveys a palpable sense of alienation and illusion, of being willfully cut off from the rest of the world. We're reminded always of the social and environmental costs of such a perspective, the empty streets, the hydro towers that loom out of useless fields. Everything is without history, homogeneity pervades in the neighborhoods.

In this setting, we deal with the aftermath of a serial killer's impact on his family, his surviving victims and their family. The question is how do the families move on after being so traumatized by the heinous acts of a killer? Ray Prager (Romano Orzari) has left both families in a fragile and broken state. Newly promoted Detective Sergeant Mike Sweeney (Hugh Dillon) and his wife Audrey (Hélène Joy) are divorcing. Ray's wife Traci (Sonya Salomaa) has gone elsewhere to heal, leaving her son, Ray Jr., (Greyston Holt) alone to finish school. Mike's daughter, Sadie, (Lawrence Leboeuf), one of Ray Prager's victims, is acting out, willfully putting herself in danger. Both families are on the edge, there is no grounding force for anyone.

Our new antagonist is Penelope Verrity (Michelle Forbes), an attractive forensic psychiatrist who is brought on to assist Mike on a case. Where Season One explored male rage, Season Two explores the internal dynamic of female rage. Pen is her own best victim, but that will not spare those closest to her. We can't entirely withhold our sympathy from this antagonist, rejected by her husband, abandoned, and grieving for a daughter we can't be certain she didn't kill. We come to understand her, and we come to compassion as we see the forces that shaped her, forces she might have transcended if she could have kept her family together – if things had been different.

They might have been if her husband had been Mike and not the womanizing egotist who is Jonathan. Mike is deeply attracted to her, and he's in almost the same situation: vulnerable and fearing the consequences of his imminent divorce both for his family and for himself. He's angry and confused, full of conflicting emotions, blaming himself particularly for not being able to save Sadie. Pen senses his fears and keeps him afloat. But as the story moves forward, Pen finds she needs Mike to protect her from her husband and to forestall the accusation of homicide Jonathan's made against her. Mike feels indebted to her emotionally because she's treating Sadie and helping her find the courage to come to terms with what happened so she can testify at Ray's trial. More and more threatened as Mike wavers (he wants to get back together with Audrey, meaning he will leave Pen), she tries to bind him closer, telling him a lie – that Ray did assault Sadie – and attempting to ruin his "date" with Audrey by spiking the chocolates she finds irresistible. That mischief goes horribly wrong, and Audrey nearly dies when the drug interacts with the medications she's taking.

Mike's colleague and friend, Detective Tom Bykovski (Patrick Labbé), is on to Pen and tries to make Mike see that he's being duped. Mike senses something's wrong on one or two occasions, but he believes in Pen. He can't bring himself to cast her as a villain. But Pen is increasingly subject to psychotic episodes that drive her to the edges. She murders their nanny, Molly, when her testimony threatens to expose her. And when she discovers that Sadie's investigation of a cold case could compromise Mike, Sadie becomes a target.

Pen is ultimately more dangerous than Ray. She has the affections, respect, love and protection of Mike

Sweeney. Her manipulations, intentional and otherwise, are tied to his character, to who he is as a man. It will take an extraordinary effort for Mike to free himself... because he loves Pen. In Season Two, we will be on the edge of our seats wondering what Pen will do next, who she might target and whether Mike will realize the terrible threat she poses before it's too late. It's through his discovery of who Pen really is, that Mike learns compassion both for her, and for himself. Unlike Season One, where Mike finished with a lie, the Mike of Season Two is a man who faces all the dark truths, and accepts them.

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