

TELEVISION

# Netflix's 'Seven Seconds' is chilling but predictable



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USA TODAY

*Seven Seconds* is enough time to change lives, or end them.

That's the story behind the title of Netflix's latest crime drama (streaming now, ★★☆☆), the first season of a planned anthology from *The Killing* creator Veena Sud.

Like AMC's *The Killing*, *Seconds* is focused on one crime and its ripple effects, and its protagonist is a driven female investigator, this time an assistant prosecutor named K.J. Harper (Clare-Hope Ashitey). But *Seven Seconds* has neither the addictive quality nor the gravity of Sud's former drama. And while it tries to make big statements about police and race relations in



Jablonski (Beau Knapp) looks for cover from DiAngelo (David Lyons). NETFLIX

America, it gets lost in a sea of unlikable characters and predictable plot lines.

*Seconds* covers the aftermath of a hit-and-run accident (which lasts about

seven seconds) in which an off-duty white cop in Jersey City, Peter Jablonski (Beau Knapp), strikes a black, bike-riding teenager in a park. Instead of reporting the accident, Jablonski calls friends on the force, who help him cover up the crime and leave the teen bleeding in the snow. He dies in the hospital, mourned by his mother, Latrice (an underused Regina King), and father, Isaiah (Russell Hornsby). The detective on the case, Joe "Fish" Rinaldi (Michael Mosley), is eager to write it off, insisting the victim is "just a (gang) banger." But K.J. suspects there's something more.

The series is populated with stock characters and situations. The cops who help Jablonski are mostly corrupt white Italian-Americans with thick Jersey accents. Latrice and Isaiah are lower-middle-class churchgoers with roots in the projects. The cops are sexist and make

derogatory comments about K.J., even when she's in the room.

*Seconds* spends so much time trying to create moral gray areas for its characters that it ends up painting them all with the same brush. Jablonski is remorseful for what he's done, but he's angry and borderline abusive to his wife and relatives. K.J. is the only crusader for justice, but she's a (barely) functioning alcoholic who drops the ball on other cases.

If *Seconds* has a true villain, it's the system. The series does make its point: that nothing is fair and the institutions designed to protect us are broken, even if it does so with a heavy hand. It's hard not to be reminded of ABC's superior *American Crime*, which more deftly handled complex social issues and told a better story in the process.

If only there were a little more depth behind those *Seven Seconds*.

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