

HUNTER / PREY

Written by

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Based on the novel "Hunter/Prey"
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FADE IN

EXT. AVOCA BEACH THEATRE - WINTER EVENING

The Marquee is advertising the Premier of "A Step Too Far". The red carpet is lined with photographers from the big cities. Fans throng, excited to see the stars of the movie shot in their neighbourhood.

A shiny black limo rolls to a stop and MAC (50s, stocky, short cropped hair on a balding head) steps out of the front passenger seat. Uncharacteristically he's wearing a tuxedo.

MAC (V.O.)
Fucking monkey suit.

Mac adjusts his cuffs and opens the back door. STEVE RYAN (late 20's, gleaming smile, very fit) steps out with JESSIE (20, lithe, blonde and gleaming).

The crowd erupts. Mac squints at the barrage of flashes from the digital SLR cameras.

MAC (V.O.)
Not my normal gig, but Steve-o's
throwing me a bone. The money
doesn't hurt. Security for a star,
in a little two-bit town.

Mac walks up the short red-carpet a step and a half behind Ryan and Jess. He scans the crowd.

Ryan stops at intervals along the carpet, signing autographs. Mac leans close to Jessie during one of the stops.

MAC
How you doing, Jess? Having fun?

Jessie beams, a hand on Ryan's shoulder.

JESSIE
Well, it's not kite-surfing, but
it'll do.

INT. THEATRE - LATER

The lights rise as the closing credits roll on the screen. Ryan stands and turns to face the applauding audience. He holds his hands up to quiet them.

RYAN

Thanks, all of you. I appreciate your applause. This was one of the hardest movies I've ever made.

Ryan walks to the stage and takes a seat beside the director and his co-star. He picks up a hand mic. Mac walks on stage and stands in the wings.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I couldn't have done this movie without Mac Durrige's help. That's him in the wings. Come on out, Mac. Take a bow.

MAC (V.O.)

Fucking hell.

Mac takes a half step back, out of sight.

RYAN

He's shy. But trust me, what you saw on screen was me being him.

Mac takes a deep breath and slides another half-step back.

MAC (V.O.)

Not even close.

Mac watches the Q&A for a while, not listening to the fans' inane questions or the panel's contrived answers. He periodically scans the crowd. Things are stable.

Ryan eventually stands, claps along with the crowd, acknowledging them and the others on the panel with him.

RYAN

That's it for now, folks. Head out to the lobby and enjoy a drink or two on me.

Ryan heads to the wings.

MAC

Well you looked completely in your element.

RYAN

I didn't think you were that shy.

MAC

Putting my face in front of a lot of people makes it difficult to surveil those same people later.

Mac gestures toward the lobby.

MAC (CONT'D)

And how long is that going to last?

RYAN

A couple of hours, mate. Enjoy.
You're getting paid well and
nothing is going to happen up here.

INT. THEATRE LOBBY

Mac stands on the periphery. Clumps of people gather around Ryan, or his co-star, or the director, chatting and drinking champagne. Jessie is hanging onto Ryan's arm, basking in the attention.

MAC (V.O.)

This is really not in my
wheelhouse. I'm more of a skulker.

Mac eyes the crowd. It is, for the most part, an unruly lot. He tracks a middle-aged couple and their daughter. Mum and dad look upper-middle-class well off. The GIRL is a tall and gangly teen.

The parents press forward into Ryan's clump of admirers. The Girl holds back. Mac takes a closer look.

The Girl isn't dressed as well as her parents. Her shoes look worn and her clothes old. She has an old coat draped over an arm.

The Girl turns and bumps into a distinguished middle-aged MAN, wearing expensive clothes and more expensive shoes.

She mutters something, tucks her hand under her coat and continues scanning the crowd.

MAC (V.O.)

That girl has had practice...

Mac catches her by the elbow.

MAC

That was very well executed.

The girl looks up at Mac.

GIRL

You gonna let go of me mister, or
am I going to start screaming rape?

MAC

In a crowded room? You overestimate
my talents.

Mac reaches under the coat and retrieves a wallet.

MAC (CONT'D)

I almost didn't catch that. You're
good. Let's go talk to your
parents?

GIRL

Who?

Mac nods toward the couple she came in with.

MAC

Those two.

GIRL

Right. I came in here on my own.
Let go.

Mac presses a little firmer just above her elbow and
approaches the wallet owner. He taps the Man on the shoulder
with the wallet.

MAC

Excuse me, sir. I believe this is
yours? You must have dropped it.
The young lady found it.

The Man pats his pockets, passing his drink from hand to
hand, then takes the wallet.

MAN

Thank you very much, miss.

He opens the wallet one-handed and extracts some bills. Mac
puts a hand over his.

MAC

No need. She lives to help.

Mac turns away, Girl still in his grip.

GIRL

What are you going to do, mister?

Mac scans the crowd. Walks her to the exit.

MAC

The police station is just around the corner. I'd only be gone a second.

The Girl takes a step closer to Mac, bares her teeth and swings a knee at Mac's groin. Mac twists out of the way. She catches him with a glancing blow.

Mac tightens the grip on her elbow and pushes her against the door frame.

MAC (CONT'D)

Go home. Get out of here and I'll forget I ever saw you.

The Girl hesitates for a second, then bolts out the door. Mac watches for a minute, then limps back into the lobby. Steve sees him and wanders over with a huge smile on his face.

RYAN

You okay? She dropped you like a dirty napkin. Maybe I'm paying you too much for protection, yeah?

Mac scowls, a small smile threatening to break through.

MAC

I'll be over in the shadows, keeping an eye on you. I think you're safe now.

EXT. WATERFRONT MANSION - HERMIT BAY - SAME NIGHT

An overweight VINNIE WATSON (short, late 30s, uncomfortable in a suit and tie) paces his patio. The lights of the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge flicker in the distance.

Vinnie checks his watch, sighs and removes his tie. Pops the top button of his shirt. The quiet MURMUR of an approaching boat gets his attention. He neatly rolls his tie, places it on the patio table and sits, waiting.

Prime Minister George LAMBERT (distinguished 50's, tall, grey short-cropped hair) walks up stairs from the boat beside China's President LANG Ke Shou (indeterminate middle-aged, black hair, medium height).

They reach the top of the stairs leading up from the small jetty. A large Chinese man walks behind them, carrying a large aluminium case.

Lambert spots Vinnie and smiles.

LAMBERT
 President Lang, this is my Chief of Staff, Vincent Watson. And this is his beautiful house.

He gestures toward a chair at the table, waits for the President to sit, then sits beside Vinnie.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
 We can talk here in complete privacy. Anything you want to say to me, you can say to him.

Lang motions his muscle over.

LANG
 So nice to meet you, Mr Vinnie. This is my man Huang. Speaks no English. So, very discrete.

Lang smiles and Huang places the case on the table.

LANG (CONT'D)
 I'm pretty sure we can finish our business tonight.

He opens the clasps on the case, turns it toward Lambert.

LANG (CONT'D)
 Mr Prime Minister?

Lambert stands and slowly opens the case. The interior is lined with deep red velvet. A flat blue and white dish, delicate engraving showing its quality, sits in an indentation designed for the artefact.

Lambert's hands hover over it.

LAMBERT
 Beautiful. Yuan dynasty? Fourteenth Century?

LANG
 Good eye. It is to your liking?

LAMBERT
 I thought this was sold at auction in 2014. How did you manage?

LANG
 Delighted you like it.

LAMBERT
 Oh, I do.

Lambert closes the case.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

That's about six million. The rest?

LANG

Sit. Let's discuss what remains to be done.

Lambert settles into his chair.

LAMBERT

The mine sale? I'm introducing a new resource tax tomorrow. It'll drive the share price well below what you want to acquire it at. Once you've purchased the depressed shares on the open market, I'll rescind the bill. Okay?

Lang smiles and stands. Holds out his hand.

LANG

That sounds very good. Get the price under \$22 a share and we'll conclude our business. An additional nine million will be transferred to your account.

Lambert stands and shakes Lang's hand. He nods at Vinnie who hands him a slip of paper. Lambert checks it, then hands it to Lang.

LAMBERT

The account details have changed since last we talked.

LANG

Nothing serious?

LAMBERT

Precautions. Can you find your way out? I need to stay and talk with my aid.

Lambert says something to Huang and smiles.

LANG

No problem. As long as that young man on the boat can get us back to where we started.

Lambert and Vinnie wait until the motor starts at the bottom of the stairs.

VINNIE

That guy fucking creeps me out.

LAMBERT

That guy is fucking loaded. And when he's happy, I'm happy.

Lambert stands and adjusts his suit jacket.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

The account?

VINNIE

Old one is cleaned out. Scrubbed. Shouldn't be a trace of it left.

LAMBERT

The ones in Macau?

VINNIE

Still a problem, but I'm on it. It's late. You've got a busy morning tomorrow.

Vinnie looks at his watch.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

Today. And you need to get across the bridge.

LAMBERT

My driver should be arriving soon. I'll sleep on the way back.

Vinnie stands and stretches. Pats his pockets and grabs his tie off the table. He picks up the case and hands it to Lambert.

VINNIE

You better take this.

Lambert takes the case and Vinnie's phone warbles with an incoming message. He reads it and grabs Lambert's arm to stop him from leaving.

LAMBERT

What? I'm tired.

VINNIE

Your wife has disappeared.

LAMBERT

She said she was going to Vanuatu.

VINNIE
Never made the flight.

LAMBERT
That was two days ago. I'm finding
this out now?

Vinnie opens an attachment to the message and shows it to Lambert.

VINNIE
And my guy found this note.

Lambert reads it and goes pale.

LAMBERT
Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.

He points at Vinnie.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
No cops. Find her. Make sure you
clean up any mess you make on the
way.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE - TWO DAYS LATER - MORNING.

Mac pads into the kitchen and makes a cup of instant coffee.

MAC (V.O.)
The only thing worse than mornings
are winter mornings. And instant
coffee.

Mac sips coffee, winces and turns the TV onto the news. A blonde, impossibly full-lipped ANCHOR looks concerned.

ANCHOR
Prime Minister George Lambert has
cancelled his visit to the United
States scheduled for next week. His
spokesperson reported that more
pressing issues have arisen with
the recent arrival of China's
President Lang Ke Shou. The
President is in town to sign
bilateral agreements with Australia
later this week.

Mac takes another sip and winces.

MAC (V.O.)
Yeah, I can't drink this shit. I
need high octane stuff.

He pulls on a jumper and pours the coffee down the sink.

EXT. BOTTOM OF STAIRS TO HIS APARTMENT/OFFICE

Mac slows as he reaches the bottom of the stairs. LINDA CARMONDY (bottle-blonde, blue eyes, the firm skin of youth) is holding a microphone attached to her mobile phone.

CARMONDY
Mr Durrige, I'm Linda Carmondy of
the Central Coast News Network. I'm
doing a background piece on the
arrest of George Harris, Tom
Jackson, the back robbery behind
their arrest and the subsequent
murder of Tom Jackson. Do you have
a few minutes?

Mac laughs and keeps walking.

MAC
A few minutes? That's two books
worth.

Carmondy scurries along beside him

CARMONDY
I can break it up into smaller
pieces. Here. Take my card. Call me
when you've got some time. Please.

Mac takes the card and puts in his shirt pocket without
looking at it.

MAC
I appreciate your interest. I've
got to run some errands first.

Mac leaves her behind, crosses the street and aims for The
Pelican.

MAC (V.O.)
There's something about the smell
of bacon and freshly brewed coffee
on a cold winter morning...

INT. EXPANSIVE OFFICE

Sitting at a large oak desk, with a foot rest on the floor to support his feet is Larry DAWKINS (40s, immaculate, short, sandy hair).

Dawkins is writing something in a ledger when his phone rings. The display on the desk phone says STEWART. He pokes the speakerphone button.

DAWKINS

Stewie, what's up. Any luck?

STEWART

(filtered)

Dead end down here. Nothing. She's either west or north. Unless she's left the country.

DAWKINS

Nope. Got eyes on the border controls. I suspect north. Don't bother looking further north than Newcastle.

There's a pause on the line, then:

STEWART

(filtered)

No, not me. I've got cases down here I need to take care of. I can't take the time.

Dawkins rubs his hand over his face. Leans into the phone.

DAWKINS

Stew, we pay you good money. And expenses. We'll double your fee.

STEWART

(filtered)

I'll tell ya what I told ya the first time. Get the Feds involved. You must know someone from your time on the force.

Dawkins takes a deep breath.

DAWKINS

Triple the fee.

STEWART
(filtered)
You're doomed to fail. Count me
out.

Dawkins looks at the phone while it sends him a dial tone. He pokes the button to hang up and holds his head in his hands.

DAWKINS
Fuck. Kath? Can you come in here?

KATHY Dawkins, (late 30's, weathered, but well put together) pokes her head in the office.

KATHY
What's up, hubby?

DAWKINS
I need you to find me some PIs on
the Central coast. Maybe a bit
north of that. Urgently. Thanks.

INT. THE PELECAN

Mac wipes up the last of his breakfast with the last of his toast. Washes it down with the last of his coffee. Belches and pushes himself away from the table. Catches Jessie's eye, holds up a fifty and leaves it on the table.

MAC (V.O.)
Only fair. I've stiffed her enough
times in the past.

EXT. MAC'S APARTMENT

The reporter is gone. Mac walks unhindered up the stairs to his office. The door is ajar.

MAC (V.O.)
See, this is the shit that pisses
me. Off. I'm almost 100% positive I
locked it. But not fully 100%.

He braces himself against the door frame and slams the door open.

MAC
FREEZE!

The door bounces off the inside wall and springs back toward him. He stops it with his hand.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Eight people are sitting or standing in his office. They stop talking to each other and turn as one to Mac. NAZMI (young, tall and tattooed) laughs.

NAZMI

What the fuck was that supposed to be, Mac?

MAC (V.O.)

Jessie's folks, Kaye from the real estate place, old Beryl from the craft shop. Jennifer from the servo. All they needed was pitchforks and torches. What did I do now?

MAC

Jesus, Nazmi. Breaking into a PI's office? Does That seem like a smart thing to do?

Nazmi pulls an envelope from his back pocket and drops it on the desk. BERYL (late 70's, white hair, everybody's grandmother) drops a file folder on the desk on top of the envelope.

BERYL

We're pooling our resources. Three grand in the envelope. Find the girl in the photo. She's been robbing us blind.

Mac scans the contents of the folder. Most of it is an inventory of stolen items. He looks at Jess's parents.

MAC

Gerry, Sue, she stole something from The Pelican?

NAZMI

They recommended you. Came along for moral support.

Mac continues flipping through the contents of the folder.

MAC

I'm not sure what you think I can do. This is a police job.

NAZMI

Already there. They didn't seem too interested.

MAC

I'll do what I can, but-

He flips to the last page. There are two security camera screen grabs of a young girl. The girl from the theatre. He holds up the page.

MAC (CONT'D)

Wait. Is this her?

MAC (V.O.)

What a small fucking world. Should have kept a hand on her.

He looks closer at the photos. One is profile, partially obscured with a hood. The other is almost full face on.

NAZMI

Took forever to get those. She's sneaky.

Mac nods, puts the sheet back on the folder and drops it on the desk. Rifles through the bills in the envelope.

MAC

She is. I've seen her around. Shouldn't be too hard picking her up. I'll get on it right away.

He held the door open.

MAC (CONT'D)

Go on. Get out of here. I'll let Nazmi know what I find out.

He closes the door behind them, picks up the envelope and smiles.

MAC (V.O.)

Easy money.

He rifles through the money. Fans it out and places it on his desk. His phone rings.

MAC

Durrige speaking.

DAWKINS

(filtered)
Malcolm Durrige?

MAC

Mac will do. Who is this?

DAWKINS
(filtered)
Larry Dawkins of-

MAC
-Dawkins and Associates. Yeah. What
do you want?

DAWKINS
(filtered)
I need some feet on the ground up
there. Missing persons case. The
pay is-

MAC
Pass. I've got a case.

DAWKINS
(filtered)
What? Let me tell you about it.

MAC
Not interested. You guys are
gaining a reputation of being
stingy with expenses. Taking
forever to pay. Don't need that
hassle. Thanks for considering me,
though.

Mac terminates the call and starts sorting the cash by
denomination.

INT. DAWKIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS.

Dawkin's stares at the phone, dial tone coming from the
speaker.

DAWKINS
Motherfucker!

Kathy pops into the office.

KATHY
What happened?

DAWKINS
Tell Wilson to get the truck ready.
We're heading up to the coast.
Nobody turns me down like that.

EXT. VINNIE'S PATIO - MORNING

Vinnie sits at his patio table in his bathrobe, nursing an early scotch. He fishes his phone out from the robe pocket and places it on the table in front of him. Unlocks it and dials.

Vinnie
Dawkins, the boss just left. I need
an update.

INT. BLACK SUV

WILSON (tough looking bald man) is driving, Dawkins is in the passenger seat, Kathy is in the back, in the middle

DAWKINS
Stew's a washout south of town-

INTERCUT BETWEEN DAWKINS AND VINNIE

VINNIE
I don't like that guy. Don't trust
him.

DAWKINS
-and I'm heading north to talk to a
guy up there. Durrige. Pretty
good. Discrete.

VINNIE
Okay. The boss was very explicit.
Maximum discretion. And when we
find her, eliminate anyone and
everyone connected to this. All
under the radar.

DAWKINS
And by eliminate you mean...

VINNIE
Exactly what you think it means.
Problem?

Vinnie leans back and takes a sip of his drink.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
Well?

DAWKINS
It's a skill I'll need to
outsource.

VINNIE
I don't need to know the details.
Just invoice me.

Vinnie stabs the "end" button and drops the rest of the drink down his throat.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
The fucking shit I get myself into.

EXT. THE PELICAN - BACK WALL

The teen is EMMA. She snugs a thin coat around her shoulders and slides down the wall until she sits. The back alley is lettered with trash. Dumpsters line the far side.

Emma rummages through a canvas shopping bag and digs out a pack of cigarettes. She clumsily lights one, takes a long drag and violently COUGHS.

BARRY (indeterminate aged homeless man) steps out of the shadows between two dumpsters.

BARRY
Those things will kill you.

Emma pushes herself against the wall and throws the pack of cigarettes at him.

EMMA
Who are you?

Barry slows, holds his hands out in front.

BARRY
Relax. I'm not going to hurt you.
Name's Barry. Friends call me Baz.

Emma pushes herself up and wrinkles her nose.

EMMA
Jesus. Do I smell that bad?

BARRY
Hard to say. It's all relative. You run away from home? You look like you need food. You hungry?

EMMA
Back off, perv.

Emma backs away, toward the mouth of the alley.

BARRY

Oh, relax. You're, what, fifteen? Maybe double your age and I'd be interested. Give your mummy and daddy a call and go home. You're too young for this life.

Emma scoffs and turns to run down the alley. And almost collides with Mac.

MAC

Been looking for you, young lady. You've been pissing off a lot of people.

BARRY

Hey, Mac. Take it easy on her. She's hungry.

Mac holds her gently by the shoulders.

MAC

You going to kick me in the nuts again? What's your name?

Emma's shoulder sag. She looks down at the ground. She speaks in a low voice.

EMMA

Emma.

Mac moves closer to hear her and she bares her teeth and launches her knee into Mac's groin. Again.

He spins her and grabs her from behind. Barry is doubled over laughing.

BARRY

She's got your number, Mac. Watch out.

Mac hoists and carries her.

MAC

Hangry? Gerry can help you out. They owe me.

EMMA

Jesus Christ. Put me down.

He gets to the back entrance of The Pelican, lowers her feet to the ground and bangs on the door. A couple of seconds elapse and Jess pokes her head out.

JESSIE
What do you want?

She spots Barry behind Mac.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
He's not coming in.

Mac continues to hold Emma by the arm.

MAC
Sure. Baz will stay out here. Let
Emma and I in. I need to feed her
and we need to have a little chat.

EXT. FARM HOUSE OUTSIDE OF TOWN

BOB (large, sandy-haired in his early 40s) sits on a lawn chair on the front porch. He sips on a soft drink and watches the light traffic go by.

A black SUV with three antennas speeds up the road and hits the traffic circle too fast, leaving rubber on the road as it turns right.

INT. FARM HOUSE

Bob drops his drink and runs in the house. His brother, DOUG (larger, balder and late 30s) is asleep on the sofa. He snores lightly. A thin string of drool joins his chin to the sofa.

Bob shoves his brother.

BOB
Dougie, wake up.

Doug opens an eye and groans. Throws an arm over his face.

DOUG
What's going on?

BOB
Black SUV with fed antennas just
sped by. I think they're on to us.
Ninety percent.

Doug sighs and rolls over, his back to his brother.

DOUG
You may be older, but fuck, bro,
you're not smarter.

BOB

We got to relocate.

Doug grunts and sits up. Looks to the back of the house and lowers his voice.

DOUG

We are not relocating. Took to long to find this place and it's too much of a risk moving her. No fucking way.

Doug stands and stretches. Scratches his ample stomach. Wanders into the kitchen and looks around.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I'm awake now. Thanks. And I'm hungry. No way I'm getting back to sleep. Pizza or roast chicken?

INT. THE BLACK SUV

Dawkins phone warbles as they wind through a rural road. He reads the name of the incoming caller and sighs.

DAWKINS

About to meet my guy, Vinnie. What do you want?

VINNIE

(filtered)

Bring him to my place. That's not why I called. You know that guy...

Dawkins listens to paper rustle over the phone line

VINNIE (CONT'D)

..Stewart something or other?

DAWKINS

My guy in the shire. What about him?

VINNIE

Talking to the press. Just letting you know. I'll take care of him. Anyway, bring that Durrige down here. I want to meet the guy face to face.

DAWKINS

Yeah, sure thing, Vinnie. I'll call when we get closer.

EXT. SMALL OFFICE BUILDING - SOUTH COAST

Stewart (50s, solid, handlebar moustache) steps out of his ground floor office. He gets in his decades old Mazda and starts it. He and his office are at the bottom of a long medium grade hill.

Stew digs through the papers on the console until he finds the one he's looking for. Dials the number and presses the phone to the side of his head.

KIRK
(filtered)
Kirk Hanson, K99 news. Who's this?

STEWART
Let's keep this anonymous for now.
Maybe I'll let you know who I am if
you run with this.

A double dump truck crests the hill behind Stew and downshifts as it takes the grade.

KIRK
(filtered)
Run with what?

STEWART
Have you heard from the Prime
Minister's wife lately?

The truck gets closer. Stew presses the phone to the side of his head to drown out the truck noise.

KIRK
(filtered)
She's in Vanuatu, under the radar,
or something. Why?

STEWART
I'm a private investigator. I'm
working on a missing person's case
and-

The double truck hits Stew's Mazda at speed, driving the small car into a large tree. It crumples and bursts into flames. The driver of the truck jumps out and walks briskly away.

INT. THE PELICAN - BACK KITCHEN

Emma wipes the last of the tomato sauce with her last fry and chomps on it.

EMMA

Thanks for the food, but no way.

MAC

Then I hand you over to the police.
Better you stay here with Sue and
Ger.

Mac stands and reaches for her arm and she grabs the plate and frisbees it at his face. He ducks, but the plate glances off his forehead and shatters.

MAC (V.O.)

Fucking hell. That's that. I don't
fucking need this. Three grand
isn't half enough.

Emma bolts out the door and Mac staggers against the wall. Blood flows down his face. A small fragment of plate is stuck in his forehead.

Gerry and Sue run into the kitchen and Sue grabs a tea towel and hands it to Mac.

SUE

Oh, my. You've - erm - got a piece
still stuck in your face. Here. Let
me.

Sue gently pulls the small piece of plate from his forehead and pressed the towel against the small, but bloody wound. She leads him to a small bathroom.

GERRY

I'll get the first aid kit.

MAC

Fuck, fuck, fuck. What in the hell
is wrong with that girl?

Mac washes blood off his face. A small flap of skin is still leaking blood. He presses a piece of gauze against it sticks a plaster on it. Washes the blood off his hands.

MAC (V.O.)

I look like a fucking moron.

Mac sits at the table and uses the napkin to dry his hands. Gets back up and moves his chair out of the way of Sue, sweeping up the mess.

MAC

Sorry about that.

SUE
The poor dear.

MAC
I'll be fine.

Sue looks up at Mac with scorn on her face.

SUE
Emma. The poor thing is in a tough spot.

Mac looks at Gerry for support and doesn't see any in his face.

MAC
Let me know how much I owe you for the plate. Thanks.

Jessie comes into the kitchen from the front of the cafe.

JESSIE
Mac, you're still here? There's a guy out front looking for you.

Gerry sighs and nods at Jessie.

GERRY
Send him back here.

Jessie disappears for a second and returns with Dawkins. Mac squints down at him.

MAC (V.O.)
This day. Every minute better than the next.

MAC
I thought I said no.

Dawkins holds out his hands, placating Mac. Gets in front of Mac and nods toward Gerry and Sue.

DAWKINS
Confidential stuff here, Durridge. Can we talk without these two?

SUE
"These two"? We own this place, mister. You can leave now.

MAC
Don't take it personally, Sue. He's a pompous prick.

DAWKINS

Reset, okay? Mr Durrige, your
Prime Minister needs your help.
This is a huge case and every bit
helps.

Mac leans back a shade. Looks at Gerry and Sue. Exhales a
deep breath.

MAC

I didn't vote for the guy, but
okay. I guess.

Mac touches the plaster on his forehead.

MAC (CONT'D)

Nothing better to do. Come over to
my office and give me the details.

Dawkins smiles and clasps his hands together.

DAWKINS

Fantastic. My client wants to meet
you. At his place.

Dawkins looks at his watch. Does some mental math.

DAWKINS (CONT'D)

If we leave now we can get you back
here by midnight.

EXT. VINNIE'S HOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

Dawkins leads the way, Mac and Kathy following. Before they
reach the front door it is flung open. Vinnie stands at the
entrance to his house, bathrobe open, his gut hanging over
his boxers.

VINNIE

It's fucking late. Fucking get the
fuck in here. You're disturbing the
neighbours.

He turns and walks into his house.

MAC

That guy's a bit of a dick.

DAWKINS

That's Vinnie. Follow him.

EXT. VINNIE'S PATIO

The lights from the Manly Ferry reflect off the outer harbour as it passes on its way to Circular Quay. The garish lit mouth of Luna Park is visible below the Harbour Bridge.

Dawkins and his wife stand at the railing, admiring the view and giving Vinnie some privacy.

Vinnie pours himself a glass of scotch and sits at the patio table. Mac pours a glass and joins him.

MAC

So what's this about? Kidnapping?

Vinnie grabs a coaster and puts it under Mac's glass.

VINNIE

For fuck's sake, respect the property. Yes. A kidnapping. The Prime Minister's wife. Dawkin's says you're the guy. You the guy?

Mac takes a deep breath.

MAC

I barely know Dawkins. Why aren't the police involved?

Vinnie fumbles with his bathrobe and pulls out his phone. Glances at Dawkins and shakes his head in disappointment. Enters the code on his phone and scrolls through his e-mails.

MAC (V.O.)

This guy has no sense of security. 1-1-2-2-3-3 for a code? Jesus.

VINNIE

Look at this.

Mac reads the e-mail: By now you know she's gone. The price is \$5 million. No police or she's dead. We'll contact you Monday morning with more details.

Mac holds out his glass.

MAC

Can I get some ice in this?

Vinnie grumbles and takes Mac's drink to the bar fridge. Mac glances at Dawkins and Kathy and forwards the e-mail to his own address.

Vinnie returns the drink, with ice and conspicuously places it on the coaster.

MAC (CONT'D)

Thanks.

He hands the phone back to Vinnie.

MAC (CONT'D)

You want her recovered without paying the \$5 mill.

Prime Minister Lambert steps out of the shadows and lights a cigar.

LAMBERT

I'll pay if I have to, but I'd rather mete out the punishment myself.

Mac stands. Wipes his hands on his trousers and sticks one out.

MAC

Mr Prime Minister. This happened at least two days ago. Why are you only talking to me now? Last resort?

Lambert pulls out a chair and sits at the table. Holds up his cigar and looks questioningly at Vinnie. Vinnie grumbles, gets an ashtray and places it in front of Lambert. Stands deferentially to one side.

LAMBERT

Please, Mac, sit. Not last resort. You've got a -- background that suits what needs to be done.

MAC

Plus, getting 5 mill together on short notice is difficult, I'd imagine. Even for you.

Lambert nods at Vinnie.

VINNIE

You sure?

Lambert stares at Vinnie for a second, then Vinnie breaks, lifts a large gym bag onto the table. Lambert unzips it and shows the contents to Mac. It's crammed full of bank notes.

LAMBERT

The money isn't a problem. It's the principle of the thing. You find these guys for us.

Lambert picks five stacks of bills from the bag.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

A hundred now. Another hundred when you find her and let me know.

Lambert leans forward.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

And if by some miracle you manage to kill the scum that took her, you get everything that's in this bag.

MAC (V.O.)

The man is insane.

Mac looks at the stack on the table, then pulls apart the zipper to look at the contents of the back.

MAC

That's a lot of money.

LAMBERT

If you do the job. There'll be no paperwork, and I only deal in cash.

MAC

What stops me from taking the cash and doing nothing?

Vinnie starts forward and Lambert puts up a hand to stop him.

LAMBERT

I'm a good judge of character.

He takes the cigar from the ashtray, inspects the ash, and draws a mouthful of smoke. Tilts his head back and exhales.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

And Vinnie isn't a very nice guy when it comes to things like that.

Mac looks at Vinnie, then back at Lambert. Smiles. Stacks the five bundles of cash.

MAC

Gotta bag I can use?

INT. MAC'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING**BEDROOM**

Mac wakes, opens his eyes and the stack of money on his bedside table comes into focus. He sits up, taking his hand out from under his pillow. It's wrapped around his .38 revolver.

He places the revolver on the bedside table and picks up one of the stacks. Riffles the bills with his thumb. They're real.

MAC (V.O.)
What the fuck am I missing?

OFFICE

Opens the bottom drawer of his file cabinet and removes the file hangers at the back. Takes about a quarter of one stack out and leaves it on the bedside table.

Places the remaining money in the file drawer and places some old tax returns on top. Steps back, takes a look and shuffles some of the papers around.

MAC (V.O.)
That'll do for now.

He scrolls through his phone and calls.

MAC
Alf. We need to talk. Pelican. Half an hour. I'm buying.

INT. PELICAN - HALF AN HOUR LATER

ALF (bad comb-over, 50s, overweight and suit half a size too small) is sipping on a cup of tea. Mac slides into the booth across from him.

MAC
Outside, buddy. We need some privacy.

EXT. PELICAN PATIO

Mac peels a \$100 bill off the pile and gives it to Alf.

MAC
You're hired. The usual attorney-client privilege is in effect.

Alf looks at the bill. Crisp and new.

ALF
This is real?

MAC (V.O.)
Oh, I fucking hope so. I didn't
think of that.

MAC
It's real.

Alf folds the bill and puts it in his shirt pocket. Looks at
the wad of cash in Mac's hand.

ALF
So what have you done now? That
looks like a couple of grand in
your fist.

MAC
About five, actually. A hundred is
even better, right?

Alf sits back, concerned. Waves Jessie over.

ALF
Order. I'm hungry.

MAC (V.O.)
Shit, I hate it when he gets all
judgey.

EXT. PELICAN PATIO - LATER

Jessie collects the plates and tops up Mac's coffee and Alf's
tea. The men stay silent until she leaves.

ALF
The Prime Minister's wife? Jesus.
You're convinced it's real?

MAC
What, the kidnapping?

ALF
Did you see a ransom note, or hear
a tape? Anything like that?

Mac nods and sips coffee.

MAC

An anonymous e-mail. Another message expected Monday with details of the transfer.

ALF

Vinnie has a rep. I wouldn't want to be on his bad side.

MAC

Haven't told you the best part. In addition to the extra hund-o I get if I find the wife, if I take out the kidnapers I get the full five million.

Alf almost drops his cup of tea. Places the cup with shaking hands on the saucer with a rattle.

ALF

Okay, that's insane.

Mac nods.

MAC

I know. Two hundred grand is crazy enough. I think he was just trying to make a point.

Mac stands and pushes his chair in.

MAC (CONT'D)

I've got to get to work. Think about this, okay? See if you can think of another angle. In the meantime, I need a computer whiz.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Mac sits at his desk, feet up, playing with his phone. He stops flipping it in his hands for a second and checks the time.

MAC (V.O.)

Jesus, kids these days. A whiz on computers and one of the fastest kids on the footie field, but can't make it to a meeting on time

Mac scrolls to recent calls and presses Cameron's number. It rings on his phone and through the door. He disconnects as the door opens.

CAMERON (almost 2m tall, and muscular) lopes in.

CAMERON

Sorry, Mac. Had to finish my workout. What is it you want me to do this time?

Mac taps the spacebar on his computer, waking the monitor.

MAC

I've got an e-mail here. STRICTLY confidential. A hund-o an hour for your discretion.

CAMERON

A hun-hundred an hour? For real?

MAC

Discretion. See if you can trace it back to the source. IP address or whatever it is you look for.

Cameron sits at the computer. Reads the e-mail.

CAMERON

Holy shit. Hang on, Mac. Is this for real?

Mac hold a finger to his lips.

MAC

Discretion, right?

CAMERON

Fuck.

MAC

Send me a picture of her, okay?

CAMERON

Cheryl? The wife? You could -- you know, never mind. I'll do it.

Cameron writes a note to himself on a piece of paper on the desk.

MAC

Thanks. Let me know if you find anything.

MAC (V.O.)

Where would I hide in a small town if I had a famous face and didn't want to be noticed?

INT. REAL ESTATE AGENT CAR

KAYE GREEN (early 50s, average height, brunette with flecks of grey) pulls to a stop at the bottom of the stairs to Mac's office. She drives a small hybrid.

She sits there idling for a second, then Mac gets in, bangs his knees on the dash and jacks the seat as far back as it will go.

KAYE

Easy, Mac. Only car I've got. So let me get this straight - you're looking for any homes on the market currently that are vacant, right?

Mac fishes the seat belt from under his arse and connected it, stopping the incessant beeping.

MAC

Exactly. Thanks for making the time for me.

KAYE

Looking to move?

MAC (V.O.)

If creative lying was an Olympic sport, I'd be a gold medal contender.

MAC

That runaway. I think she's hiding out in one of your vacancies.

KAYE

Really? Let's go then.

INT. REAL ESTATE AGENT CAR - LATER

Mac crosses the third address off a list of seven Kaye had given him.

MAC

Okay, next? Out on Wyee Road. A little out of the way, isn't it?

KAYE

You wanted all my vacancies - that's all of them.

Mac tries stretching his legs and is hampered by the size of the car.

MAC

You can't afford anything bigger than this?

KAYE

Hey, it's a hybrid. I fill it up once a month whether I need to or not.

Kaye rolls to a stop across the road from the house. She gets a text and focusses on her phone, reading and replying.

Mac looks intently at the house. A sheer curtain on the front of the house flutters. Mac checks if Kaye noticed. Her head is still down.

A black Holden Statesman is parked in the back. The tail end pokes out enough to identify it.

MAC (V.O.)

Got ya.

MAC

Kaye, let's head back. I need a break. Thanks again for all your time.

EXT. WYEE NURSERY - AFTERNOON

Mac's car rolls to a stop and Mac steps out, stretches and flips the hood up on his jacket. Reaches in and grabs a pair of binoculars.

MAC (V.O.)

Plan of attack - stealth mode. Confirm she's actually there, then move. Fifteen minute walk from here. Stealth mode. Blending in.

Mac starts walking toward the house. Half way there he crosses the street to the side of the road opposite the house.

The opposite side of the road is bush. A grade down the side of the road provides some coverage. Mac lies down on the grade and watches through his binoculars. The car is still there. The curtain flutters.

MAC (V.O.)

Someone's in there.

The front door opens and a Doug steps out. He walks to the back of the house, starts the car and leaves. Mac continues watching the front of the house.

The drive is gravel. An old rail tie separates the drive from the scrub yard. Mac looks both ways then sprints across the road.

Grabs the tie and lifts it across the drive, blocking the way in. Sprints back across the road and drops down the grade. Watches the front of the house for a minute then rolls over on his back.

MAC (V.O.)

Killing my neck. I'll hear them
when they move the tie.

He lies on his back on an incline, staring at the blue sky. He scrolls through his phone and calls Cameron.

MAC

Kiddo. Any luck with the email?

CAMERON

(filtered)

Been trying. It hops around a bit.
Keeps looping back to the starting
point. I must be doing something
wrong. I'll get it.

MAC

Okay. Keep on it. See if you can
dig up a picture of the wife, will
you?

CAMERON

(filtered)

Shit. Fogot. No problem.

MAC

Text me when you get something.
Work on it tomorrow if you get
stuck.

CAMERON

(filtered)

No can do, Mac. I'm starting a new
job tomorrow. Interning at an AV
shop. Really cool shit.

MAC

Interning? I'm paying you. You like
money, don't you?

CAMERON

(filtered)

This is a dream job, Mac. I gotta take it.

MAC (V.O.)

Fucking dreams.

MAC

Okay. Do what you can today. And good luck.

Mac thumbs the call off and stares at the sky.

MAC (V.O.)

Well, I could think of worse things to do with my day.

Mac closes his eyes then hears the tie dragged across gravel. He rolls over and puts the binoculars to his eyes. Doug is out of the car dragging the tie across the road.

Bob comes out of the door and talks with Doug. Mac can't hear what they are saying. But sees that they are animated in their conversation.

He oscillates between the two men as the conversation goes back and forth, then realises they aren't talking to each other. They are both looking across the road. Directly at him.

MAC (V.O.)

Fuck.

Mac stands, glasses hanging around his neck. He waves at the two walking across the road toward him.

MAC

Hey guys. You see my dog around here? He slipped his lead.

The two stand at the top of the rise, arms crossed. Mac is at a disadvantage, standing half way up the incline. He looks up at them.

MAC (CONT'D)

You guys brothers? Cousins? My name's Matt. What's yours?

Matt sticks out his hand. Bob reaches down and shakes it.

BOB

I'm Bob. My brother, Doug.

Doug smacks him on the arm.

DOUG
For fuck's sake, bro.
(to Mac)
What are you doing here?

MAC
Told you. Looking for my dog.

DOUG
Where's the lead? You're full of
shit, mate. Why were you watching
the house? You need to fuck off out
of here.

Mac holds his hands up and walks up the rise.

MAC
Guys. Come on.

Doug throws a haymaker and Mac raises his arm to block it. The punch glances off his shoulder and he spirals into the ditch. He looks up at them from the ground.

MAC (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ. What the fuck?

Mac grabs a branch and pulls himself to his feet.

BOB
My brother axed you a question.

MAC
Asked.

BOB
Yeah.

MAC
I'm looking for my dog. Fuck. You
guys deaf and dumb?

MAC (V.O.)
I knew that was the wrong thing to
say before it came out of my mouth.

Mac walks up the rise to the road, nudging Bob out of the way.

MAC
See you later, guys. It was rude
meeting you. If you see a-

Doug drives a fist into Mac's gut, doubling him over. He grabs the back of Mac's head and lifts his knee into Mac's face.

Mac gets his hands in front of the knee in time to push it out of the way, then stands quickly, catching Doug under the chin with the back of his head.

Mac lashes out, swinging wildly, connecting with something before Bob pins his arms behind him. He struggles, gets an arm free and swings an elbow back, catching Bob in the jaw.

Then Doug catches Mac across the back of the head with a large stick, dropping him like a rock.

Everything goes black.

EXT. DITCH - LATER

Mac is facedown, headfirst into the ditch. It's dark out. He groans and rolls onto his back. He winces into the light cast from the nearby streetlight.

MAC (V.O.)

Well isn't this a fine mess I've gotten myself into.

He attempts pushing himself up. His left arm collapses under his weight.

MAC

Ah, fuck.

Mac holds his arm, favouring his wrist. He gets to his knees then stands and carefully walks up the incline to the shoulder of the road.

The front door of the house he had been surveilling hangs open. There is no car.

MAC (V.O.)

It's times like this I wish I'd paid more attention in school. Trained up as an accountant or something.

Mac takes a deep breath and groans

MAC (V.O.)

Wrist and ribs. Happy fucking days.

Mac unbuttons one button half way up his shirt and gently slides his damaged arm in for support. Crosses the street and walks up the steps to the small porch.

Other than the distant thrumming of trucks on the highway about a kilometre behind him, the night is quiet. The house is empty.

MAC (V.O.)

Great. Back to square one. Like a real-life Where's-fucking-Wally.

He takes one more glance at the house and retraces his steps back to his car, walking a lot slower than earlier.

Awkwardly digs his phone out of his left-hand pocket with his right hand. It's almost 2:00 am.

Slides it in the right pocket and repeats the exercise to extract the keys.

The drive to the hospital exposes every bump, pothole and gravel patch. At one speed bump his head bounces back off the head rest and he winces.

He holds the wheel with his knees and touches the back his head.

MAC

Fuck!

His fingers are covered with blood.

INT. A&E - WYONG HOSPITAL

The population waiting for medical help at 2:30 in the morning is fairly thin. A couple of young guys look like they've been in a fight. A couple sit with an abnormally quiet baby. A health, sturdy man sits reading a magazine.

JASON (young nurse, Asian, short cropped hair) sits behind Perspex screens with a thin vertical gap. Mac leans his head on the clear plastic.

MAC

Help a guy out here?

Jason slides a clipboard through the vertical opening.

JASON

Fill in the important bits. Give me your Medicare card while you're doing that.

Mac swaps his card for the clipboard and starts filling in the blanks.

JASON (CONT'D)
Malcolm Wilson Durrige?

MAC
Yup.

JASON
Still at this address?

MAC
Yeah. This going to take long?

Jason slides the card back and takes the clipboard.

JASON
What brings you here?

Mac holds up his left arm.

MAC
Something feels broken in here. And I've got cracked or broken ribs on the same side.

JASON
Accident?

MAC
I sure as fuck didn't do it on purpose.

Mac takes a deep breath, winces, and holds up his right hand.

MAC (CONT'D)
Sorry. I had a bit of a run in with some apes. They won.

Jason looks past Mac, then back at Mac.

JASON
No police?

MAC
No police. Don't need police. I drove here myself. Parking is only free for three hours. Will I be out by then?

Jason slides a form out through the crack and points to Mac's right.

JASON

X-Ray is that way. Follow the red line on the wall.

The door behind Jason opens and JANE (early 40s, tall, short dark hair) enters the waiting area.

MAC (V.O.)

Jane. Fuck me in the ear. Just what I need.

JANE

Mac? What are you doing here? You get yourself in trouble again?

MAC

How's Australia's oldest intern?

JANE

Doctor now. Just coming off my shift. Seriously, why are you here?

Mac hefts his left arm with his right hand.

MAC

Nothing serious. I'm sure Jason can handle it. You take off.

JANE

I'm sure he can. Wouldn't want me working on you anyway. Too emotionally involved.

MAC

Like fuck.

Jane winks at Mac and passes by him to the waiting area. The sturdy man reading the magazine stands and they embrace. Mac watches, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

MAC (CONT'D)

You finally going to free me from my financial bond and marry this guy?

JANE

Mac, this is Paul. Paul, my ex-, Mac. Don't listen to anything he says. He's full of shit.

MAC

Nice to meet you Paul. Take my advice: separate bank accounts.

Jane takes Paul's arm and waves at Mac with her fingers.

JANE
Go fuck yourself, Mac.

EXT. WYONG HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - LATER

Mac casts a lonely figure walking from the hospital through the empty lot to his car.

MAC (V.O.)
Mild concussion, bruised ribs and a
hairline fracture in the ulna.
Doesn't even need a cast. I'm
getting soft.

He pulls the parking ticket off the windscreen, jabs the key in the ignition.

MAC (V.O.)
And really fucking tired of this
shit. Where the hell are you,
Cheryl?

INT. MAC'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mac sits at his desk nursing an instant coffee. A pack of pain pills sit beside a half full bottle of water. He scans the list of properties Kaye left behind.

MAC (V.O.)
Three left. She's in one of them.
No other choice.

He dials a number.

MAC
Dawkins, you got the rest of my
money?

DAWKINS
(filtered)
Who's this?

MAC
Durridge. Central Coast.

DAWKINS
(filtered)
Who know where she is?

MAC
Just get up here. Call when you're close.

Mac hangs up and calls Cameron.

CAMERON
(filtered)
Mac? What's up?

Mac looks at his phone as a return call from Dawkins tries coming in. He rejects it and goes back to Cameron.

MAC
Need you to do some quick computing stuff for me. Couple of hours max.

CAMERON
(filtered)
Mac, sorry, I really can't. I have to head into the city. Opportunity of lifetime, right?

MAC (V.O.)
Shit. I forgot.

MAC
Yeah, yeah. No problem. Good luck.

Mac hangs up and drops the phone on the desk. Looks at the time.

MAC (V.O.)
Assuming Dawkins got in his truck the second after he hung up, I've got about ninety minutes to check three houses within a 5 klick radius. Easy.

He stretches, winces and holds his ribs, and grabs the keys off the desk.

INT. DAWKIN'S OFFICE

Dawkins squeezes the handset for a second, then drops it in the receiver a little harder than necessary.

Kathy comes in from the outer office

DAWKINS
We're up.

KATHY
Up? What do you mean, "up"?

DAWKINS
Durridge says he's located her.
Contact the team. We're heading
north. I want six. Maybe eight.

KATHY
Eight. Special circumstances,
right?

DAWKINS
Right.

Kathy starts scrolling through her contacts and sending messages.

KATHY
I'll get them to form up here.
We'll travel together.

Dawkins nods absentmindedly as he unlocks his gun safe and puts on his shoulder holster.

DAWKINS
Hey, get them to form up here.
We'll travel together.

EXT. HOUSE #1 ON THE LIST

Mac rolls to a stop outside the house. It's small, freshly painted and crammed between two larger houses filled with kids.

MAC (V.O.)
If I was trying to hide a kidnap
from the prying eyes of the world,
this would be the last place I'd
use.

The front door to the house on the immediate right opens and three pre-teen kids pile out, screaming as they chase each other.

MAC (V.O.)
One down, two to go.

Puts his car in gear and pulls away.

EXT. HOUSE #2 ON THE LIST

Large house stuck in the corner of a large lot. Mac sits at the curb and watches for a minute. A sheer curtain flutters in one of the front windows.

MAC (V.O.)

Bingo.

Mac removes a length of pipe from the boot of his car and walks around the back of the house. Tests the door knob. It's unlocked. He eases the door open.

Someone is sitting at the table with a blanket around them, their back to him, hunched over with their head on their arms.

MAC (V.O.)

Don't judge me. Sneak attacks are absolutely permitted when you've already been taken apart.

Mac lets out a yell and swings the pipe at the person's back, registering at the last moment who it is. He adjusts his swing, slamming the pipe into the table beside Emma's head.

Emma lurches to the side and lands on her arse on the floor with a scream.

MAC

Jesus. Sorry. I thought you were someone else.

EMMA

Fucking hell. I am someone else, you fucking maniac. What the hell?

Mac holds out his hand. She refuses his help and stands on her own.

MAC

What are you doing here? Sue and Gerry really want to help you.

EMMA

Bullshit. I don't take charity.

Emma sits back in the chair and pulls the old blanket around her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

And what's in it for the Sue and what's his name?

MAC

Always "something has to be in it for somebody" to help you? They just want to help you. They're nice people.

Mac looks around the vacant house. Knocks on the table top. Comes to a decision.

MAC (CONT'D)

You're good with computers, right?

EMMA

I don't code or anything. I know my way around them.

MAC

You're hired. Same rate I gave Cameron.

He holds the back door open.

MAC (CONT'D)

Can you start immediately?

Emma looks confused. And wary.

EMMA

What's in it for you?

MAC

Oh, Jesus. Enough with that shit. I'm old. I'm crap at computer stuff. I need help. Let's go. I'm under a bit of time pressure. I'll pay. No charity.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Mac holds his chair and nods toward it.

MAC

Come on. Time is money.

Emma holds her hand out.

EMMA

Speaking of which...

Mac pulls the wad of bills and peels off five. Fans them and places them on the keyboard.

MAC

Five hours in advance.

Mac writes a name on a piece of paper. Pauses, then writes his password to the computer. And his mobile number.

MAC (CONT'D)

Find me some pictures of this woman. Text them to me when you find it.

Emma walks slowly to the business side of the desk. Picks up the bills and counts the money.

EMMA

Seriously, \$500 isn't a sane amount of money for sending you a picture.

MAC

Buy yourself a better coat. Grab a bite at The Pelican. Be better to yourself. But first, send me that pic. I've got to run.

Mac pauses for a second.

MAC (CONT'D)

How'd you end up on the streets in the first place?

Emma sits back in the chair, re-counting the cash. She looks up and frowns.

EMMA

How is that any of your business?

Mac looks at Emma and nods.

MAC

Absolutely right. Tell me when you're ready. Or not.

Emma tucks the money in her pocket. Types the password into the computer.

EMMA

My mum left when I was little and dad hooked up with some other bitch. The he got put away and the bitch started parading meth heads through the house. The latest one thought I was part of the deal.

She looks up from the computer and smiles a little.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I think his nuts are still swollen.
I'm legit better off without them.

Mac nods approvingly. Holds his hands up in surrender.

MAC

Noted. I'll keep that in mind. When you find some good pictures - not fuzzy, and something from this decade - of that woman, send them to my phone.

Emma gives him a two finger salute and Mac leaves.

EXT. HOUSE #3 - WYONG

Mac parks across the street from a large house on acreage. The nearest property is over two hundred metres away. The black sedan is parked at the side of the house. Shadows flit across the window.

MAC (V.O.)

Damn, I'm good.

Mac looks at his watch. Scrolls through his phone and dials.

MAC

Dawkins? How far out are you?

DAWKINS

(filtered)

About thirty-five minutes. We meeting at your place?

Mac looks at the house. The car is there. There are people in it.

MAC

Wyong. Call me when you're at the station. I'll give you directions from there.

DAWKINS

(filtered)

Send me the address.

MAC

I'll meet you at the station. Spook them and they'll fuck off again. This needs to be handled carefully.

Mac disconnects and tosses his phone on the centre console. He settles down in the seat and watches the house. The traffic on the street is light.

MAC (V.O.)
This is the bulk of detective work.
Sitting and watching. Boring as
fuck.

The front door opens and Mac slides down a bit. Bob steps out on the front porch and looks at Mac's car.

MAC (V.O.)
Ah, fuck. I'm not up for this right
now.

He slides a little lower in his seat, keeps an eye on the top of the big guy's head. It stays on the porch for a second, then goes back into the house.

Mac sits up straighter and gingerly touches the plaster on the back of his head. Then his phone warbles at the same time as the front door open and both Bob and Doug step out and stand on the porch.

MAC (V.O.)
Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He looks at the message on his phone. Emma has sent him a picture. Cheryl, a striking looking woman in her 50s, flanked by two large men.

Two very familiar looking men.

The caption says "Cheryl Watson and her brothers, Robert and Douglas."

MAC (V.O.)
I'm sure this could be worse. It
can always be worse. But I'm
drawing a blank on how it could be
worse than this.

He dials his last number called and holds his phone to his head, watching the two brothers watch him.

DAWKINS
(filtered)
We're still twenty minutes out.

MAC
Yeah, yeah. Meeting me at the
station in Wyoming, right?

DAWKINS
 (filtered)
 Wyong. You said Wyong.

MAC
 Why in the fuck would I say Wyong
 when I'm sitting in Wyoming? For
 fuck's sake, hurry up. I think
 they're about to leave.

Mac terminates the call. Watches.

INT. DAWKINS' SUV

Dawkins looks at his phone for a second then call a number.

DAWKINS
 Matthias, ping the number that just
 called this phone. Find out where
 it is. Wyong or Wyoming. As soon as
 you know, you let me know.

Dawkins throws the phone onto the centre console at looks at
 his driver.

DAWKINS (CONT'D)
 Wilson, I think we're being fucked
 over.

EXT. HOUSE #3

Mac gets out of the car and walks down the middle of the road
 toward the house. Bob and Doug step off the porch and
 intercept him before he gets there. They square off.

DOUG
 Didn't we hit you hard enough?

Mac's hands are out, placating, surrendering.

MAC
 Guys, guys. Hang on. First, yes,
 you most definitely hit me hard
 enough.

They take a step forward and Mac takes a step back.

MAC (CONT'D)
 And, hey, hey. Look, I just figured
 out what was going on.
 (MORE)

MAC (CONT'D)

Sure, Dawkins hired me to find you,
but I thought Cheryl was kidnapped.
Now I know better. And look-

BOB

I don't think we hit you hard
enough.

Mac looks over his shoulder. Steals a glance at his watch.

MAC

Look, Dawkins and no doubt a crew
of heavies are on their way. I'm
really, really sorry. It's my
fault, but they fed me a line that
your sister was kidnapped.

Doug raises a fist, but Bob puts a hand on him, stopping him.

BOB

Let him finish.

MAC

We need to get the hell out of
here.

BOB

We? WE?

Bob shakes his head and turns back to the house.

BOB (CONT'D)

Come on Doug. He's right about one
thing. Time to split.

Doug leans close and pokes a finger in Mac's chest.

DOUG

Back the fuck off or we'll hit you
a lot harder next time.

Mac stands in the middle of the street and watches the
brothers walk back to the house. Seconds later the black
sedan roars out from behind the house and down the road.

MAC (V.O.)

Dammit. Back to square one, but
worse.

INT. DAWKINS' SUV

The truck is pulled to the side of the road, sitting on a narrow shoulder. Four SUVs are lined up on the shoulder behind him.

The passenger's side window is down and Dawkins leans his head out of the window and spits.

WILSON

How long are we sitting here, boss?

DAWKINS

Until I fucking say different.

Dawkins' phone dings with an incoming message. He looks at it, the smacks Wilson on the shoulder and shows him the message.

DAWKINS (CONT'D)

Wyong. This address. Fast.

He sends a text. The fourth truck peels off at the next intersection.

EXT. SERVICE STATION

Mac pulls his car into the parking lot and runs into the shop. Grabs a pre-pay phone off the shelf and tosses a hundred dollar bill on the counter.

MAC

I'll come back for the change,
Jenny. Thanks.

He rips open the box, dials the number on the box to activate the phone and enters his credit card number to get minutes.

MAC (V.O.)

Dawkins has to have someone in the
phone company. Guaranteed.

Mac gets back in his car and thinks for a second then dials a number.

KAYE

(filtered)

Green Real Estate. Kaye speaking.
How can I help you?

MAC

Hey, Kaye. Mac here. Need another
favour.

KAYE

(filtered)

I've gone through the list. That's all the vacancies we have. Sale or lease.

MAC

There's got to be something else. That, uh, run-away has to be somewhere. It's winter. Not a big selling time is it? Middle of the school year?

Mac listens to silence while he starts the car.

MAC (CONT'D)

You thinking about something?

Kaye is slow to answer, hesitant.

KAYE

Yeah. Caravan parks. Don't know why I didn't think of it earlier. There's a couple of big parks in the area. Most of the caravans are locked down for the season. You know them?

Mac closes his eyes for a sec.

MAC

Yeah. Thanks. I'll let you know if I find anything.

KAYE

Not my properties. Don't care. Later, Mac.

Mac sits in the car and scratches his chin. Sighs.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

It's dark. There's a jangle of keys and the door opens. Mac enters, turns on the light, looks at the empty office, turns off the light and closes the door. It's dark again. The jangle of keys, then the door locks from the outside.

INT. THE PELICAN

Mac stops at the cash register and get's Jessie's attention.

MAC
Emma come in here?

JESSIE
The tall delinquent? At a window
near the patio.

EXT. HOUSE #3

Dawkins gets out of his SUV. Three other trucks park along the street and the doors open, six over-muscled men in suits converge on Dawkins.

DAWKINS
Door knock. She was around here
somewhere.

The muscles split up in pairs and he stops them.

DAWKINS (CONT'D)
Hang on. I wasn't finished. You
find them, one stays to make sure
they don't piss off, the other
comes and gets me. It ends today.

The six men split off in pairs, each taking a house along the street.

Dawkins alights the porch of a small, yellow one-story. He knocks on the door, waits while the noises inside coalesce to a walk to the door.

The curtain on the small window on the door is pulled back and an elderly lady looks out.

LADY
What?

Dawkins holds up his identification.

DAWKINS
Ma'am, I'm looking for missing
woman.

INT. THE PELICAN

Mac sits at a table with Emma. A new coat is draped across the seat beside her. In front of her, an almost empty plate with the crust of a hamburger bun, a couple of french fries and smear of tomato sauce.

Mac is halfway through a feed of fish and chips. He dips a chip in tomato sauce and devours it.

MAC
So, nice coat.

Emma smiles and looks at it.

EMMA
Thanks.

She pulls a foot up onto the chair and rests her chin on her knee.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Sue says I can sleep here tonight.

MAC
Good. Glad you've smartened up.

She smiles and flips him the bird. Picks up the last chip, smears the rest of the tomato sauce and eats it.

EMMA
Sue says she'll pay me to help in the kitchen.

MAC
You? Work? Amazing.

Mac smiles and leans back. Picks at the battered fish with his hands. Emma looks at Mac's food, then back to Mac.

EMMA
Yeah, well, they do seem to be real people. Not like the fucktards I left. And Jessie's pretty cool. Never had a big sister before.

Mac pushes the plate to Emma.

MAC
Well, I've got places to see, people to do. I'll pop by once in a while. Hire you if I need any computing stuff done.

He nods at Jessie on the way out. He's pushing the front door open when he sees a black SUV suddenly brake to a stop in front of his place.

Two overly-muscled men in suits get out of the truck, check something on their phones, and run up the stairs.

MAC (V.O.)
Son of a bitch. The little shrimp.

Mac backs into The Pelican, goes behind the counter and into the kitchen. Gerry is at a desk doing paperwork. Looks up when Mac enters.

GERRY
No customers back here, Mac.

MAC
I'm no customer. There's a couple of meatheads ransacking my place right now. Need to lay low for a bit. Okay with you?

Gerry waves at a chair. Puts his attention back to the paperwork.

GERRY
Grab a beer. Don't bother me.

MAC
Everything okay?

Gerry puts down the paperwork and stares at Mac.

MAC (CONT'D)
What?

GERRY
Sue and I were a couple of months away from finally being alone again. Jessie's heading off to ANU to do, believe it or not, a degree in criminology.

MAC
Wow. Great for her. She'll do well.

Gerry sighs and shakes his head.

GERRY
So the empty nest has been preempted by your Emma. At least another three years before that finally being alone time. Thanks.

Mac slides a little lower in his chair. Shrugs. Gerry holds the glare a few more seconds, then returns to his work.

INT. PELICAN - LATER

Mac is still in the chair, asleep, chin on his chest. Gerry walks by and kicks the bottom of his foot.

GERRY

Ya gotta go, Mac. Closing up.

Mac stirs, yawns and stretches. Winces and holds his ribs.

MAC

Thanks. I'll get out of your way.

INT. MAC'S APARTMENT

All the light are on. Chairs are tipped over, the computer is on the floor, file cabinet drawers are pulled open and files litter the floor.

The door opens and Mac steps in, instinctively reaches for the light switch. Stops in the face of the mess. Slowly closes the door and locks it.

MAC (V.O.)

Those fuckers. I have to clean this up.

Mac cleans up. Puts the computer back on the desk, rights chairs. Collects files and places them back in the file cabinet in some semblance of order.

Realises something as he's closing the last file drawer. Yanks open the bottom drawer, looks in the back where he'd stashed the cash.

Empty.

MAC (V.O.)

Those fuckers.

Mac kicks the drawer shut, walks into his bedroom.

EXT. CARAVAN PARK - BUDEGWOI - NEXT DAY.

Three arcs of caravans with a now locked up administration office at the centre of the arcs make up the caravan park.

Mac parks in the visitor's parking area beside the admin building and walks from caravan to caravan.

MAC (V.O.)

This is the second park. Got run out of the first park for trespassing by a very large man and his very ugly dog. I usually like dogs.

Steam is curling out of the louvered front window of a caravan at the centre of the curve. There's a small garden with dead flowers at the front with a low brick wall around it.

Mac steps on the brick and peers in the window. A woman is at the sink just inside. A boiling kettle is providing the steam. He taps on the window and the woman jumps back in fright.

Mac holds up the picture on his phone.

MAC

Hey, sorry about that. Have you seen this person?

The woman cranks the window shut and pulls a set of small curtains closed.

MAC (CONT'D)

So is that a no?

He steps down from the small brick wall and turns to come face to face with Doug and Bob.

DOUG

You're really starting to piss me off.

MAC

Fucking hell, you startled me. I was looking for you.

Bob pokes Mac in the chest. He takes a step backward, trips over the low brick wall and lands ass first in the flower garden.

BOB

Ya found us. This is really your last warning. We don't need the attention. Piss off, don't show your face again, or my brother and I will end you.

Mac gets up, brushes dirt off, keeps his distance from the brothers.

MAC

I don't doubt that. It's worse than you think, though. Dawkins and a bunch of his muscle are in town looking for you three and me.

Bob leans forward.

BOB

Larry Dawkins?

Mac nods and looks around.

MAC

Where are you guys stashed? You're sitting ducks out here.

DOUG

Do we look stupid?

MAC (V.O.)

Keep your mouth shut, Mac.

MAC

He's close. Ransacked my place last night.

BOB

We've avoided him this long. We'll be fine. Piss off.

Mac takes a deep breath in through his nose, holding it against the pain. Clenches his fists in front of him.

MAC

Guys, I think you're underestimating the threat.

DOUG

I think you're -

MAC

Shut up. I've led them here to you. I've got to help. They aren't going to let any of you out of this alive. Any of you.

Bob shakes his head and turns away.

BOB

Come on Doug. We've warned him. He's full of shit. Next time he crosses our path you've got my permission to flatten the fucker.

DOUG
I don't need your permission.

Mac watches them walk away.

MAC (V.O.)
Why do I have the feeling I'm
really going to regret this?

MAC
He was going to pay me five million
to kill you all.

Bob and Doug stop walking. Confer for a second, then turn back.

BOB
More bullshit.

MAC
No bullshit. I need to talk to your
sister. And don't ask me if you
look that stupid. You won't want to
hear my answer.

Mac holds his arms out to his sides.

MAC (CONT'D)
I have no weapons. Check. Time's a-
wasting, boys.

Bob pats Mac down, looks at his brother and shrugs.

BOB
If it's bullshit I'll hold him
while you beat the tripe out of
him.

DOUG
Deal. We're at the end.

INT. CARAVAN

It's a standard layout. A small kitchen immediately to the left of the door when coming in, a fold away table directly in front and a larger table that converts to a bed to the right.

CHERYL (average height, slim, short sandy hair, expensive casual cloths) watches her brothers and another man walk toward her. She picks up a knife from the table and stands behind the door.

The opens out. Cheryl stands with her back to the wall beside the door, waiting for someone to enter. The handle turns and Mac is pushed into the caravan and slams into the table.

Doug follows him in and puts a hand on Cheryl's arm.

DOUG

It's okay.

Mac rights himself and sits at the table. Takes a considered look at Cheryl.

MAC

The picture doesn't do you justice.
You're stunning.

Cheryl slowly sits at the table, knife still in hand. Doug leans against the wall and Bob keeps an eye out the door window.

CHERYL

Who the fuck are you?
(to her brothers)
Who the fuck is this?

DOUG

Some local PI Dawkins hired to find
you. Us.

Cheryl grips the knife tighter.

CHERYL

He's pretty fucking good then.

She leans forward and taps Mac on the back of his hand with the knife handle.

MAC (V.O.)

Ow. Shit, that hurt.

CHERYL

Why shouldn't I gut you right now
and leave you in the back of the
bush?

Mac rubs the back of his hand and laughs.

MAC

You're tougher than you look.
Dawkins hired me, true, but he told
me you were kidnapped.

Mac looks around the caravan. Nods at Doug. Gets nothing in return

MAC (CONT'D)

He didn't tell me you were on the run. And now, unfortunately, he knows I know he was lying to me and is looking for all of us.

CHERYL

Logic says we split up. So fuck off.

Mac stands and Bob and Doug look more alert.

MAC

At ease, boys. I'd fuck off, Cheryl, but these guys are coming to kill you. I feel kind of responsible.

Cheryl drops the knife on the table and stands face to face with Mac.

CHERYL

Why do you think I'm running? I know he wants to kill me.

MAC

Why?

Cheryl sits back at the table. Drops the knife with a clatter.

CHERYL

You should leave. Don't get involved.

MAC

I'm already involved. There's no clean way out of this now. May as well join forces.

Mac picks the knife from the table and puts his hands up in surrender as Doug approaches.

MAC (CONT'D)

We're on the same side. Why's he trying to kill you?

Cheryl pats Doug on the arm.

CHERYL

Down, boy. Mac, sit.

Mac slides into the seat and places the knife on the table.

MAC

You must have really good dirt on him.

CHERYL

He's more corrupt than you could possibly imagine. I put up with it, even benefitted, for a while, but enough's enough.

Bob suddenly ducks down.

BOB

Hit the floor. Now.

Doug bundles Cheryl on the floor and covers her. Mac stays in the seat, a step out of synch. Doug grabs him by the leg and pulls him to the floor.

DOUG

Bob isn't prone to hysterics. If he says get down, get the fuck down.

It's crowded on the floor of the small caravan. Mac is nose to nose with Bob.

MAC

Why are we down here, Bob?

Bob sighs and lifts his head to peer through the window. Two muscled men in suits are approaching the caravan.

BOB

Couple of meatheads. Nice suits. Dawkins would have sent them.

Cheryl brushes off Doug and stands, looking out the window.

CHERYL

Get up, girls. There's only two of them, and they obviously know where we are, somehow. George won't stop until I'm dead. Time to take the game to them.

EXT. CARAVAN - CONTINUOUS

The door flies open and Cheryl steps onto the road. Doug and Bob scramble out behind her. A second later Mac walks out.

MAC (V.O.)

Great. We're going to have a fuckin' party.

Bob and Doug rush to get in front of their sister.

BOB

What do you want?

The two lugs don't slow their pace. One texts something on his phone and slips it in his inside suit jacket pocket.

Cheryl pushes between her brothers.

CHERYL

Tell Dawkins to tell Vinnie to tell my husband to fuck right off. He's not going to get what he's looking for. And if he stops chasing, it'll never see the light of day.

The thugs don't slow their approach. Doug takes his sister by the shoulders and gently moves her out of the way.

DOUG

I think the lady told you to fuck right off.

They keep coming.

Doug rushes forward with a yell. The one with the phone pulls a knife out of his pocket and flicks it open. His friend does also and lunges at the rapidly approaching Doug, slicing at his torso.

Doug grabs his side and doubles over, blood seeping between his fingers.

CHERYL

Doug!

Her rush forward is stopped by Mac grabbing at her arm. She falls, off balance and the swinging blade just misses her face.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

You FUCK.

She lashes out and catches the attacker in the side of the knee with her heel. His leg buckles. Mac pulls Cheryl out of the way and slams his right elbow into the attackers head.

He follows up with a left and at the last second pulls the punch to protect his arm. The man swings his knife at his face. Mac ducks under the knife and comes up with his fist under the man's chin.

The man hits the ground and Cheryl finished him with a rock to the head. Doug crawls across the gravel leaving a trail of blood. Bob grapples with the other man and looks like he's on the losing side.

Mac takes the rock and finishes off the second man.

MAC

Cheryl, take care of Doug. Bob and I have to clean up a mess.

Mac reaches into the second man's front suit pocket and extracts a phone.

MAC (CONT'D)

Find the other guy's phone. Break it.

Mac breaks open the phone, cracks the SIM card in half, throws the battery into the bush. Bob does the same. Mac grabs his guy by one arm and drags him into the bush.

He looks at the guy. Drags him a little deeper into the bush. Drops his arm, satisfied, then kicks him in the head.

MAC (CONT'D)

How ya going, Bob?

Mac hears a grunt in the bush, then the wet sound of breaking flesh. Bob comes out wiping blood off his fist.

BOB

He's out for a bit.

Mac laughs.

MAC

Good man. Let's see how your brother is doing.

MAC (V.O.)

It's unlikely you can understand how absolutely fantastic that felt.

INT. CARAVAN

Doug is flat on his back on the table. Cheryl is pressing a bloody cloth against his side. Blood is seeping through it and onto her hand.

MAC

This needs professional help.

CHERYL

I'm taking him to the hospital as soon as I plug this leak.

Mac looks through the cupboards in the small bathroom. Returns with a bottle of peroxide.

MAC

Hospital is a bad idea. Cops will get called and Dawkins and his friends will be all over us. Lift that cloth for a minute.

Cheryl lifts it slowly. The blood still seeps, but not as fast. Mac pours peroxide along the cut. It foams when it hits the open wound. Bob turns away. Mans the window.

DOUG

Fucking son of a bitch. That hurt.

CHERYL

Baby. What are you suggesting, Mac? I can't fix this. You a doctor?

Mac lifts the handset off the land line phone.

MAC

No. But I know someone who might help.

MAC (V.O.)

Me, calling my nemesis. What has gone wrong with my life?

He closes his eyes and thinks for a second, then dials.

JANE

(filtered)
This is Jane.

MAC

Don't hang up, Jane.

JANE

(filtered)
I'm hanging up.

MAC

No, please don't. I'm with a guy who had his gut sliced open. I need help patching him up.

JANE
(filtered)
Take him to a hospital.

Jane hangs up. Mac scrubs his face and dials the number again.

CHERYL
Who's Jane?

Mac moves the mouthpiece out of the way while he listens to the ring.

MAC
My ex. Good doctor. Terrible person. We didn't split on good terms.

It rings one more time.

JANE
(filtered)
Fuck off, Mac.

MAC
We can't go to the hospital. Someone is trying to kill us.

JANE
(filtered)
Call the police and they'll take you to the hospital.

Mac leans his head against the wall.

MAC
Come on, Jane. If it was that easy don't you think I'd have done it already? Fuck. You think I'd actually call you if I didn't have to?

He recites the address for the caravan park.

MAC (CONT'D)
Lot 34. Please. Hippocratic oath and all that. Do what's right, okay?

Mac hangs the phone on the wall.

CHERYL
She coming?

MAC

Fingers crossed. How is he?

DOUG

I'm right here. And it stings like a son of a bitch. How long will she be?

Mac lifts the cloth. The pasty white skin is stained pink with blood. The cut up his side looks like a thin-lipped sideways mouth. Fifteen cm long and almost a cm deep.

MAC

That looks horrible. She's close, if she comes.

CHERYL

If?

Mac smiles and shrugs.

MAC

She's a horrible person. What can I say?

Bob looks away from the window.

BOB

She about your height? Short dark hair, nice tan?

Mac looks out the window. Jane is getting out of her microbus. She has a medical bag in one hand. She raises a hand to rap on the door and Mac opens it.

JANE

Fuck off, Mac. Point me to the blood.

Cheryl steps out of the way and Jane pulls on a pair of latex gloves and takes over applying pressure.

JANE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

DOUG

Doug.

JANE

On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the worse pain you've ever experience, what would say you're experiencing?

DOUG

An easy seven. Closing in on an eight.

Jane looks at him for a second, then takes his hand and presses it on the cloth.

JANE

Hold this.

She dig through her bag and extracts a box. Rips it open and hands Doug a green whistle.

JANE (CONT'D)

Allergic to any drugs? No? Good. This contains methoxyflurane. Take six or seven deep puffs on it and the pain will go bye-bye.

Doug hands it back.

DOUG

Thanks, but I need my head clear. Stitch me up. I can handle it.

Jane takes a sealed pack from her bag and holds it up for Doug to see.

JANE

Disposable stapler. No stitches. That's so 1990. You sure about the whistle?

DOUG

Do it.

Jane dabs the wound with alcohol swabs, eliciting a wince from Doug. Jane uses one hand to pull the edges of the wound together.

JANE

Tighten your abs.

Doug laughs.

DOUG

Ouch. I haven't had abs in decades. Do your best.

Cheryl presses down on Doug's stomach and pulls the trigger on the stapler.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Shit.

JANE
Only ten more.

Jane punches another staple through his skin and he clenches his teeth in pain.

JANE (CONT'D)
You're doing good.

She finishes off and applies antiseptic cream and a long plaster along the cut.

JANE (CONT'D)
Best I can do under the
circumstances.

Doug eases off the table and stands, balancing himself against the wall.

MAC
Thanks. Now get the hell out of
here before anyone else shows up.

JANE
Dramatic much?

Mac points at Doug and gets in Jane's face.

MAC
You think he cut himself shaving?
Someone tried to kill him. The guy
who did it is unconscious in the
bushes. With his friend. And they
have friends who will be wondering
where they are.

Jane looks at Doug and Cheryl and recognition dawns on her face. She points at Cheryl.

JANE
I know you. They're saying you're
on vacation.

CHERYL
My husband is trying to kill me.
Us.

Jane looks like she doesn't believe her. Then looks at Mac. And Doug's wound.

JANE
Christ on a crutch. Go to the cops.

CHERYL

He owns them. I call the cops and his thugs show up.

JANE

Shit. Where are you going from here?

CHERYL

North. Somewhere. Away from here.

JANE

You're coming to my place. No link to any of you.

She looks at Mac.

JANE (CONT'D)

Mostly.

Bob hits the ground

BOB

On the floor.

Mac is first down. Drags Jane with him.

MAC

Bob doesn't say that unless he means it. Bob, what the fuck this time?

Bob shuffles to the window and looks out.

BOB

Black SUV just rolled by. Looking for their friends and by extension, us.

He waits a beat.

BOB (CONT'D)

They've gone around the corner. We go now or they find us.

Doug struggles to his feet holding his side.

DOUG

What's it feel like when a staple pops out?

Bob and Mac flank Doug and help him to Jane's microbus.

MAC

Toughen up, mate. You'll live. If we get out of here.

They help Doug into the front seat. Or try. Doug shrugs them off and pulls himself in.

JANE

Everyone in? We're going. Now.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE

Jane pulls her microbus to the curb and turns off the engine.

DOUG

Park in the drive, at least. Walking hurts.

Jane chews the inside of her cheek and shakes her head.

JANE

Don't like backing up. Can't see if there's anything behind me. You'll live. Trust me. I'm a doctor.

EXT. CARAVAN

Dawkins get out of his truck. Two other trucks roll to a stop behind him. His phone is pressed to his head.

DAWKINS

This is the last location they were at?

He bends down and picks up a piece of plastic shaped like the back of a phone.

MATTHIAS

(filtered)

Precisely.

Dawkins hangs up. Looks at the caravan in front of him. Tosses the piece of phone plastic to one of his muscle.

DAWKINS

Find the owner.

He enters the caravan. Notices the blood on the floor and the table. He calls Matthias back

MATTHIAS
 (filtered)
 What?

DAWKINS
 Any calls from any of the phones
 being monitored in the past -

He touches the blood with a fingertip. It's tacky

DAWKINS (CONT'D)
 - hour, at most?

He wipes his bloody fingertip on a curtain while he listens to his phone tech type.

MATTHIAS
 (filtered)
 Nothing.

Mac looks around the small caravan.

DAWKINS
 I'll call you right back.

He picks up the phone on the wall and calls Matthias' number.

MATTHIAS
 (filtered)
 This you?

DAWKINS
 Yeah. Find out anything you can
 about any number called from this
 line in the past hour.

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - EVENING

LIVING ROOM

The furnishings reflect the life of someone who has been in school for a long time and is finally starting to get ahead of the debt.

Old chairs beside a new leather sofa. A new TV on an old TV stand. It's clean and the home of someone proud of what they have.

The door opens and Jane tosses her keys on the table by the door and heads to the kitchen.

JANE
 I'll order some pizza.

CHERYL

My brother. Please. We can eat
later.

BATHROOM

Jane sits Doug on the edge of the tub. Mac follows them and stands at the door. Jane helps Doug lift his shirt and gently peels back the plaster.

MAC (V.O.)

Okay. So she drives me fucking
mental, but she's good at what she
does.

One of the staples in the middle of the incision has ripped free. Cheryl pushes Mac to one side and squats on the floor beside her brother.

CHERYL

Is he okay?

JANE

This is not the ideal situation.
This wound needs to be cleaned
properly. It needs surgery.

Jane tapes the wound shut and hands a box of painkillers to Doug.

JANE (CONT'D)

Non-opioid. Can't staple it again.
It's torn the flesh.

(to Mac)

What in the hell have you gotten me
into?

CHERYL

Apologies. My fault.

LIVING ROOM

Doug eases into the chair. Bob stands by the window. The venetian blinds are closed and he has two slats pulled apart to watch the street.

JANE

Am I in danger?

MAC

Probably not.

CHERYL

Don't bullshit her.

JANE

Why is your husband trying to kill you? I can't believe I just said those words.

Cheryl pulls a thumb drive out of her pocket. Holds it up for all to see.

CHERYL

Copies of illegal contracts. Photos of him with people he said he never met, who he should never have met. Documented evidence of offshore bank accounts where he launders a shitload of cash.

MAC

Fucking hell. Dump it on the internet. It'll go viral in minutes.

Cheryl is shaking her head before Mac finishes talking.

CHERYL

Right. He'll call it fake news, I'll be the unstable ex-wife making shit up to hurt a Prime Minister who, you might have noticed, is doing good in the polls. Inexplicably.

JANE

So what's the end game?

CHERYL

Still trying to sort that out.

MAC

Might have worked that out before you triggered the events that led you here.

JANE

Fuck off Mac. You're not helping.

Bob hits light switch at the front door and backs away from the window.

BOB

Hit the rest of the lights. Get away from the windows.

CHERYL

Oh, Jesus. What now?

BOB

Three black SUVs just rolled up and parked on the other side of the street.

Jane's mobile rings.

JANE

Hello?

DAWKINS

(filtered)

Put Durrige on the phone.

Jane hands the phone to Mac.

JANE

A friend of yours. How'd he get my number?

Mac takes her phone and goes to the window. Dawkins is leaning against the side of his truck with his phone to his head. The nearest street light barely illuminates him.

MAC

What's the end game here, Dawkins?

Dawkins Pushes himself off his truck. Stands in the middle of the quiet street.

DAWKINS

(filtered)

Disappointed in you, Durrige. But I guess I should be more used to disappointment.

MAC

Go home. There's no way this ends well for any of us.

DAWKINS

(filtered)

She went way too far over the line. There's only one ending.

Mac watched Dawkins terminate the call and signal to his men.

MAC

Is there a back way out of here?

Bob runs to the back of the house. A sliding door opens to a patio.

JANE
The back yard is fenced in. Why?

MAC
We need to get out of here. Fast.

The sound of glass smashing against the front door is followed immediately by the WHOMP of fuel igniting. Mac dives away from the door.

MAC (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch.

Two almost simultaneous smashes of glass shattering against the back of the house. The patio engulfs in flames. Bob backpedals into the living room.

JANE
Upstairs.

Mac grabs her by the arm.

MAC
Are you insane? Are you the dumb
blonde in a horror movie?

Jane pulls her arm free and shepherds Cheryl and her brothers up the stairs.

JANE
Come on, Mac. Move it.

MAC
You better know what you're doing.

JANE'S BEDROOM

Jane closes the bedroom door and pulls the quilt off her bed.

JANE
Fuck you, Mac. Sorry I ever met
you. Burning my house down.
Motherfuck.

She rolls the quilt into a long tube and jams it along the bottom of the bedroom door. She runs to the other side and unlocks the sliding door onto a balcony.

Mac grabs her by the arm.

MAC
What are you doing? Fuck. Open that
and we're in a chimney.

MAC (V.O.)
 Leave it closed and we're in an
 easy-bake oven.

JANE
 Grab me one more fucking time and
 I'll cut you.

She slides open the door. Flames below them make the heat almost unbearable.

MAC
 What in the hell?

Jan steps out on the small balcony, squinting against the smoke. She motions Cheryl to follow. Points to the left.

There's a balcony on the house next to hers, about three metres away, railing to railing.

JANE
 You can make this jump. Clear
 things off when you get there.

CHERYL
 You've done this before?

JANE
 I've popped over a time or two this
 way.

MAC
 That's Paul's place isn't it?

CHERYL
 What about Doug?

JANE
 We'll figure something out.

Cheryl gets up on the railing, balancing with a hand on the house. Smoke swirls around her.

JANE (CONT'D)
 Go!

Cheryl squats, then launches herself forward, easily clearing the far railing. She throws a chair over the railing onto Paul's back yard.

A second chair flies over and Paul's patio door opens and the legs of a ladder come through.

Paul extends it across the space and Mac grabs the end and braces it against the outside wall.

MAC

Jane, go. You're next.

Jane pulls Doug forward to the ladder.

JANE

It's narrow, but pretend you're climbing a ladder. Go as fast as you can. I'll be right behind you.

Mac shakes his head and moves out of the way as Doug climbs on. Smoke and embers swirl around the balcony. Mac steadies the ladder as Doug creeps across the gap.

Jane follows across and Bob pats Mac on the back. He coughs on the rising smoke.

BOB

I'll be fast. Then you get off of here. This place is falling apart.

Bob gets on the ladder and scurries across to the far side. Waves at Mac to follow. Mac climbs onto the ledge and the ladder and feels the balcony shift below him.

MAC (V.O.)

Everything about this I hate.

He crawls across the narrow ladder, every step accompanied by another shift of the balcony. Jane's balcony finally drops as Mac is a step away from his destination. He lunges and grabs onto Paul's railing.

EXT. PAUL'S BALCONY

Bob and Paul pull Mac over the railing, dumping him on the floor. Mac looks up at his benefactors.

MAC

Bob, thanks. And, Paul, isn't it?

He holds out a hand and is helped up.

PAUL

We've got to get out. The fire department wants me to evacuate. You okay?

MAC
I'm just fucking fantastic. Where
are the others? How's Doug?

PAUL
Downstairs, waiting for you both.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Jane and Cheryl check Doug's injury. Jane stands as Paul comes down the stairs and hugs him.

JANE
We need to go out the back way.

PAUL
How'd the fire start? It was fully
involved almost immediately.

Mac checks the patio door at the back of the house.

MAC
It was lit by a couple of bad
actors. What's out this way?

Paul's head swivels between Jane and Mac.

PAUL
Someone did that?

MAC
Focus. Out the back. What's there?

JANE
There's a dirt road that runs
parallel with the beach. But I've
got to get my van.

Jane looks out the front window. The SUVs are still parked on the far side of the street. The lights from the fire trucks flash across the houses, reflected off the truck windscreens.

Jane's microbus is parked directly in front of her house. Flames reflect off the side windows.

JANE (CONT'D)
Get everyone out to the dirt road.
I'm getting my wheels.

INT. JANE'S MICROBUS - LATER

Doug sits in the front passenger seat, blood spreading across his shirt. Some pools on the seat. He's pale and tilting to the left, resting on the door window.

Cheryl leans between the seats. Mac, Bob and Paul sit in the back.

CHERYL

Need to take Doug to the hospital.
There's too much blood.

JANE

Ten minutes. Hang in there, buddy.

INT. A&E - WYONG HOSPITAL

Doug comes through the door propped up by Bob on one side and Mac on the other. Jane taps on the Perspex and gets Jason's attention.

JANE

Admit this guy. Don't report anything to the police. I'll sign off on it. He needs to be prepped for surgery. I'll be getting ready.

Jane points at Cheryl.

JANE (CONT'D)

This is Cheryl. She's his sister. Nobody gets in to see him unless she okays it. Understand?

Jason smiles.

JASON

Most excitement we've had around here in ages. No problem, Doc.

Jason nods at Mac.

JASON (CONT'D)

How you doing? Still sore?

MAC

I'll survive.

Jane walks Doug into an examination room.

Mac places a hand on Cheryl's shoulder.

MAC (CONT'D)
He'll be fine. Jane'll take good
care of him. We need food.

Cheryl
Like we've got-

MAC
It's nearly 10. I'm starving. We
need food.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFE - LATER

Empty plates, almost empty coffee cups on the table. Paul, Mac, Cheryl and Bob are quiet. Thinking. Cheryl interrupts the silence.

CHERYL
So what's the plan?

Mac leans forward. Rests his elbows on the table.

MAC
Dawkins thinks we're still in
there. We need to track him down
and take him out.

CHERYL
He'll be at the house until he can
confirm with his own eyes that
there are bodies in the house.

Mac shakes his head.

MAC
Don't think so.

Bob sticks his chin out and places his hand on Cheryl's.

BOB
If my sister says he's there, he's
there.

Mac takes a deep breath.

MAC
Okay. So he won't be expecting us.
Except my car is still at the
caravan park.

Jane appears over Mac's shoulder and drops her keys on the table.

CHERYL

How is he?

Mac turns and sees Jane.

MAC

Jane, thanks. I-

JANE

He's doing fine, Cheryl. He's out right now. Probably will be for a couple of hours. Surgery was easy and uncomplicated.

Cheryl visibly relaxes. She stands and hugs the taller Jane.

CHERYL

I owe you. Thanks heaps.

Jane disengages with a smile.

JANE

It's what I do.

Mac stands and takes the keys from the table.

MAC

Thanks Jane.

JANE

Not doing it for you.

Jane plucks the keys from Mac's hand and gives them to Cheryl.

JANE (CONT'D)

Go finish this. Let me know if I can help.

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - LATER

The fire is still burning, but under control. Two trucks are manning the hoses.

Dawkin's SUV sits a few houses away on the opposite side of the road. Two identical trucks are lined up behind him.

INT. DAWKINS' SUV

Dawkins picks up a small two-way radio.

DAWKINS

Clear out, boys. I'm hanging here until the embers are cold. No need for you to hang around any longer. I'll debrief tomorrow.

Dawkins watches in his side mirror as the two trucks pull from the curb, execute a U-turn and disappear down the road.

WILSON

How long we going to sit here, boss?

DAWKINS

As long as we need to. Cop will be leaving soon and at first light the arson investigators will arrive. I'll check then.

Dawkins leans back in his seat and closes his eyes.

DAWKINS (CONT'D)

Grab some shut eye.

INT. JANE'S MICROBUS

Cheryl is at the wheel, Mac beside her. Paul and Bob are in the back. Paul leans between the front seats. Reflections of the fire trucks' lights reflect off distant trees.

PAUL

Turn right. Just ahead.

Two SUVs pull out of the street as Cheryl turns in. She sinks down and watches them as they disappear down the road.

MAC

You know them?

CHERYL

Not specifically them. I know those kinds of trucks, though. Too many antennas.

She points out the front window at Dawkins' truck.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

There's the third in the set.

She slows and rolls the microbus to the curb about twenty meters behind the SUV. Mac looks in the rearview mirror at Paul.

MAC

Ready?

Paul nods and slides open the side door. Mac, Bob and Cheryl watch as he approaches a fireman and points at his house. There's a short conversation, the fireman nods, and Paul enters his house.

CHERYL

So far, so good.

MAC (V.O.)

Don't jinx it, lady.

The front door opens less than a minute later and Paul returns, passing by Dawkins' SUV. He takes a quick glance in the windscreen as he passes.

Bob slides open the side door as Paul approaches and closes it after he gets back in. Paul holds up a fistful of cable ties in one hand and a long-handled barbecue fork in the other.

PAUL

These'll work?

Mac nods.

MAC

How many in the truck?

PAUL

Dawkins is the little guy with sandy hair, right? He's in the passenger seat and a bigger guy is behind the wheel. Didn't see anyone else.

Mac cracks open the passenger side door. The cable ties are in his right hand.

MAC

You get in front of me and shield me. Pretty sure Dawkins will recognise Cheryl before Bob, so Bob, you shield her.

Paul steps out of the microbus and stands by the front fender.

MAC (CONT'D)

As discussed. In and out fast.

CHERYL

What about the firemen?

MAC

They're busy and at least fifty metres away. Fingers crossed. We need a little bit of luck, right?

Mac gets behind Paul with the barbecue fork and waits until Bob is at the driver's side with Cheryl tucked in behind him.

MAC (CONT'D)

Okay, let's go. And make it fast.

Paul grabs the front door and yanks it open. He presses the barbecue fork against Dawkins' neck and draws blood.

DAWKINS

What the fuck, you little bitch?

Mac presses a little harder and looks across the car. The driver isn't there any more. He's out of the vehicle, out of sight.

Cheryl and Bob are kicking something. Hard.

MAC

How 'bout you release your seat belt. Slowly. And hand me the weapon in your shoulder holster. Real slow.

Mac presses even harder. Blood seeps out of Dawkins neck around the tines. He releases the seat belt and Paul grabs him by the arm and pulls him onto the ground.

Mac backpedals and gouges Dawkins' neck with the fork. Dawkins lands on the ground beside his truck, his hand clasped to the side of his neck.

Paul continues dragging Dawkins around to the back of the truck. Mac keeps an eye on the firemen -- their focus remains on the blaze.

He turns his attention to Dawkins. Reaches under the man's jacket and relieves him of his sidearm. Toe-punts him in the ribs.

MAC (CONT'D)

Give me your phone.

DAWKINS

Fuck, but you're dead.

MAC
One last chance.

Dawkins tries getting off the ground and Mac jabs him in the chest with the barbecue fork.

MAC (CONT'D)
That was your last chance.

Mac kicks Dawkins in the head. The Sydney PI falls back on the ground, unconscious. Mac goes through his pockets until he finds Dawkins' phone. Uses the detective's thumb to unlock it, then changes the password.

MAC (CONT'D)
Truss him up, Paul. Put him in the back of his truck.

Mac walks to the far side of the truck. The driver is unconscious and bloodied. Cheryl is cradling her fist.

CHERYL
Vinnie's next. That's going to be more difficult. This was way too easy.

MAC
I've got an idea about that. Bob, get that guy tied up and in the back of the truck. Paul, stash them in your garage. We're taking their truck

INT. VINNIE'S HOUSE

Vinnie is in his bathrobe, untied, sitting in a leather chair watching television. It's coming up on the 11:00 p.m. news when his phone rings. He checks the caller ID and mutes the TV.

VINNIE
Boss, how's it going?

LAMBERT
(filtered)
It's been hours. I haven't heard anything. I need an update.

VINNIE
Dawkins tracked them down and cornered them in a house. Lit it on fire.

LAMBERT
 (filtered)
 All of them?

VINNIE
 Including Durrige.

LAMBERT
 (filtered)
 So it's done, then.

Vinnie leans back in his chair and takes a sip of whiskey.

VINNIE
 Probably. Dawkins is waiting until
 the fire's out to confirm the
 bodies are there, but it looks
 good.

LAMBERT
 (filtered)
 So call him and get an update. Let
 me know when you've got something.

VINNIE
 Right b-

He gets three tones in his ear. The PM has hung up.

International news has finished and local news is displayed
 on the TV. Vinnie un-mutes the audio to:

Linda Carmondy breathlessly reporting on a house fire on the
 Central Coast.

CARMONDY
 -Carmondy with an update on the
 house fire in Lake Munmorah.

Footage from earlier in the evening airs, when the house was
 fully engulfed.

CARMONDY (CONT'D)
 Witnesses report that at least four
 people were in the house when the
 fire started, and none have been
 seen to have escaped.

Linda's face is replaced by the fire on full screen. Her
 voice continues:

CARMONDY (CONT'D)

Officials have reported that there were a number of ignition points around the house, indicating that the fire was deliberately lit.

Vinnie pauses the video and rewinds it. Pauses. The camera is in the middle of panning from the house fire to the left, toward one of the fire trucks.

The house to the immediate left is about three metres away and a mirror image to Janes. He kneels on the floor in front of the screen and advances the image frame by frame.

He sees a flash of something moving between the house on fire and the house to the left. Advancing frame by frame a ladder extends from the back of the left house to the back of the burning house.

Slowly, unfocussed blobs, too pixilated to discern identity, traverse the ladder away from the burning house. He counts four blobs before the ladder falls and the house starts collapsing.

Vinnie stands and throws the remote at the wall, shards of plastic flying through the air.

VINNIE

Mother FUCK.

He dials Dawkins number. It rings out to voice mail.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

They got out. They fucking got out. I hope to fucking hell you've got your eyes on them. Answer my fucking calls or never work in this town again.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bob is asleep on the sofa. Cheryl paces while Paul gets drinks from the kitchen. Paul is listening to Vinnie's voicemail

VINNIE

(filtered.)

-fucking calls or never work in this town again.

Mac terminates the call.

MAC
So Vinnie knows we got out.

Cheryl stops pacing.

CHERYL
How? How's he know?

Mac shakes his head.

MAC
Don't worry about it. Plays into
our hands.

He uses the prepay and dials another number.

JANE
(filtered)
This you, Mac?

MAC
It is. How's Doug?

JANE
(filtered)
In recovery. He's doing great.

MAC
Excellent. I need him to die.

INT. VINNIE'S HOUSE

Vinnie is dressed. He stands in front of the television watching the tail end of a news update, his phone in his hand.

Carmondy is on the screen again, Wyong hospital the backdrop. Ambulance light flash, reflecting off Linda Carmondy's hair.

CARMONDY
The Wyong Hospital is reporting
that one of the victims from the
fire in Lake Munmorah has died as a
result of complications due to
third degree burns and smoke
inhalation. Three other victims are
in the hospital in critical
condition.

Vinnie fumbles along the edge of the television until he finds the power button and turns it off. He calls Dawkins. It goes to voice mail.

VINNIE

Can you not answer your phone?
Fucking hell. They're in the
hospital. Make sure they don't
leave alive.

Vinnie hangs up and almost immediately receives a text message from Dawkins. Can't talk. In the hospital. Meet me here. Low key. Come on your own. Security is all over the place. I have a nurse on the inside.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - EARLY MORNING

Mac hands out bacon and egg rolls.

MAC

We've got about an hour before
Vinnie shows up at the hospital.

He holds up Dawkins' phone.

MAC (CONT'D)

And as long as he thinks this is in
Dawkins' hand we can dance him like
a puppet.

Mac takes a coffee and sits at the table.

MAC (CONT'D)

We're going to need to take Vinnie
out of the picture before we go
after the PM.

CHERYL

I could kill him on my own, with my
bare hands.

BOB

Eat. You're hangry.

MAC

And killing him isn't worth the
effort. Eat and we go.

EXT. WYONG HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

Vinnie's driver points the car to the black SUV, sitting alone on the far side of the parking lot, backed on bush. The car pulls in two spaces away from the SUV.

INT. VINNIE'S CAR

Vinnie calls Dawkins' number and hangs up when he hits voice mail.

VINNIE
Fucking hell, I hate that.

A text arrives almost immediately. Heading out of the hospital in a minute. Park on the far side of the lot by my truck.

Vinnie looks around the almost empty parking lot and sends a message back: We're here. Beside the truck. Where the hell are you?

He watches his phone, waiting for a response, tapping his fingers on the armrest. Looks in the rearview mirror at the entrance to the hospital. It's empty.

He jerks his thumb toward the hospital.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
You know what Dawkins looks like, right?

The driver nods.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
Go in there and find the fucking midget and drag him out here.

The driver grunts in assent and levers himself out of the car and lopes back to the hospital. Vinnie watches him in the rearview mirror, then closes his eyes.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
Fuck, I'm tired.

The passenger's door is yanked open and two pairs of hands drag him out of the car.

EXT. WYONG HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

Paul and Bob hold Vinnie by the arms and Mac delivers a solid punch to the fat man's gut.

Vinnie tries to double over, but Paul and Bob hold him steady. Mac looks around the lot.

MAC
Drag him into the trees. Don't want an audience.

Cheryl grabs the same arm Bob does and helps drag a struggling, grasping, overweight Vinnie into a stand of trees on the edge of the parking lot.

VINNIE

I'm going to rip you limb from limb. You're going to disappear, but not before I break every bone in your fucking face.

Cheryl lashes out with a hard right cross to Vinnie's jaw. He head snaps to the side and she reflexively grabs her fist.

CHERYL

Fuuuuck, that felt good.

She shakes out her hand. Blood pools in the folds of Vinnie's neck fat.

VINNIE

I told him he should have killed you a long time ago.

Mac looks at Paul and Bob. They nod at each other. Vinnie is slumped over and Mac brings his knees up under his face, snapping his head back. Blood and a few teeth fly out of Vinnie's mouth and his eyes roll back.

Paul and Bob drop Vinnie on the ground and they stand around the prone body, looking at it for a beat.

Cheryl pushes them aside and starts kicking him in the head with the heel of her foot. She releases a feral scream and straddles the unconscious body and pummels him about the head.

Paul and Bob eventually pull her off of Vinnie. His face is a bloody pulp. Blood seeps from one of his ears and his breathing is shallow.

MAC

That's enough. We don't want to kill him.

CHERYL

We do.

Bob guides her out of the trees to Dawkins' SUV.

Mac grabs one of Vinnie's arms.

MAC

Get the other one. We can't leave him here.

Paul heaves on Vinnie's arm, feels something pop.

PAUL
Think I broke something.

MAC
You okay?

PAUL
No, I mean something of his. Never
mind.

Mac stops at the edge of the trees.

MAC
Bob. Hey, Bob. Turn the SUV around
and pop the back, will you?

While Bob turns the truck around. Cheryl joins Paul and Mac by Vinnie. Kicks Vinnie in the ribs. The unconscious body twitches. Mac grabs her arm.

MAC (CONT'D)
Enough.

The truck backs close and the tailgate pops open as it rolls to a stop.

Bob gets out and grabs Vinnie's legs. Paul and Mac grab him under the armpits and strain as they lift him into the back of the truck.

Vinnie's body is halfway in when:

CHERYL
Mac, look out!

Mac ducks as Vinnie's driver rushes him, swinging a haymaker. The punch glances off the back of Mac's head, pushing his face into Vinnie's gut.

MAC (V.O.)
Fuck.

Mac rolls off Vinnie and stands into a blow to the face. He grabs his nose, blood pouring through his fingers. He blinks against the pain.

MAC (V.O.)
Double fuck. That hurt.

He manages to block a body blow with his upper arm before Bob and Paul grab the driver.

Vinnie lies half-way out of the back of the truck. Mac rips a piece of the fat man's shirt. Hold it to his nose.

MAC

Leave them both here. Someone will find them eventually.

Mac gently touches the bridge of his nose and winces. He goes through Vinnie's pockets and finds his phone.

MAC (CONT'D)

I've got a plan.

He thinks for a second then enters the PIN to unlock the phone.

CHERYL

How'd you know that?

MAC

He's a moron. When is your husband doing his big signing thing with the Chinese President?

CHERYL

No fucking idea. And I don't care. Tomorrow sometime, I think.

Mac texts the Prime Minister from Vinnie's phone: Done. Problem no longer exists. No residue.

He slides Vinnie's phone in his back pocket and retrieves his own. Dials.

CAMERON

(filtered)

Hey, Mac. What's going on?

INT. SHANG-RI LA, SYDNEY - NEXT DAY

BALLROOM

Terra cotta figures line the ballroom from the entrance at the back to the stage. Massive Australian and Chinese flags hang, backdrop to a large table.

Two ornate chairs sit in front of the table facing the ballroom. Two leather folders are placed on the table in front of the chairs.

To the right, facing the stage, is a lectern with two gooseneck microphones. High on the walls, either side of the flags, are two large video screens.

Stock mining footage, interspersed with Australia footage loop on the screens. Media gathers in front of the stage, a steady impatient murmur.

They go quiet as Prime Minister Lambert walks onto the stage with President Lang.

OUTSIDE BALLROOM

Emma stands with a cocked hip, hands in her pockets looking out of place. Mac, with two black eyes, Doug, Bob and Cheryl stand outside the door.

EMMA

You don't need me for this.

MAC

I do. You'll be fine.

He leans his head in the door to watch.

CHERYL

Is he on stage yet?

MAC

Just walked on.

Mac looks at his watch and holds out his hand. Cheryl hands him a thumb drive and he hands it to Emma.

MAC (CONT'D)

Cameron is expecting you. You can't miss him. Long drink of water. Wait five minutes, then start projecting.

Emma smiles and trots to an "Employees Only" door and knocks on it. Cameron sticks his head out and waves at Mac.

EMMA

Let's go, big guy.

Emma pushes Cameron back in the door and the hydraulic assist hisses as it closes behind them.

INSIDE THE BALLROOM

Lambert stands at the lectern and looks at the press. He taps the microphone. Satisfied that the audio is good he leans in.

LAMBERT

Good morning, everyone. We are here today to celebrate the historic trade agreement between Australia and China.

A door at the back opens and Cheryl, Bob, Doug and Mac walk in and stand, behind the press, facing Lambert. Mac smiles and waves.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Th-The agreement with ou-our largest neighbour to the north is monumental, adding a phenomonal market place to Australian businesses.

Notifications and alerts start going off in the press pool. Lambert looks at his notes, ignoring Cheryl and friends and attempting to regain his place.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

In, erm, In addition, the Chinese company Huang Chi has agreed to purchase the Yandikoorup iron ore mine in the Pilbara.

Hands in the press pool shoot up.

CARMONDY

Linda Carmony, Central Coast News. Mr Prime Minister, it's just been reported that your Chief of Staff, Mr Vincent Watson, is in an induced coma in the Wyong Hospital. Would you care to comment?

Lambert looks back at Cheryl and Mac. Mac has a huge, smug smile on his face.

Carmony continues reding something on her phone

LAMBERT

I-I haven't heard that. I'm sure the hospital is providing good care. To the-

CARMONDY

Can you comment on the story that you have been in receipt of unreported gifts from the Chinese government with a value of over millions of dollars?

Lambert grips the lectern and glances at President Lang. He turns back to the media to address the question. None of the pool are looking at him. They look above and beyond his head.

BACK OF BALLROOM

The two large screens above the stage flash alternating images of bank details in Lamberts name; photos of Lambert meeting in secret with President Lang; compromising photos of Lambert with young women.

MAC (V.O.)

So we don't get to pound the shit
out of the guy, but I think this
will hurt him a hell of a lot more.

The press pool erupts. Linda Carmondy walks to the back of the ballroom and joins Mac, Cheryl and her brothers.

CARMONDY

You've made my career. Can I have
ten minutes of your time? I've got
some questions.

MAC

That wasn't the deal.

The side door opens and Emma enters. She hands the thumb drive to Mac. He looks at it, smiles and hands it to Carmondy.

CARMONDY

This is it?

MAC

Everything you need. Have fun.
Cheryl and her brothers stay out of
it.

Carmondy looks at the press pool behind her, thronging on Lambert. Lang has left the stage. She turns back with a smile.

CARMONDY

Deal. Thanks.

She exits the ballroom, thumb drive tight in her fist. Cheryl watches the scrum at the stage. Lambert looks up at her for a second and she smiles at him. Flips him the bird.

CHERYL

Let's get the fuck out of here.

INT. THE PELICAN - A WEEK LATER

Pounding rain outside streams down the windows. Inside, in contrast, is warm and bright. Mac sits at a table with a cup of coffee, Cheryl across from him.

Mac's black eyes have faded to a sickly yellow. The cut on his forehead is healing. He watches Emma in the kitchen getting instructions from Sue on kitchen equipment.

Cheryl follows his gaze.

CHERYL
Your daughter?

Mac chokes on his coffee.

MAC
Oh, fuck no. Runaway. Was a runaway. Bad situation that seems to have worked itself out.

He nods toward the kitchen.

MAC (CONT'D)
Sue was not looking forward to her youngest heading off to university. Seems to have staved off the empty nest for a few more years.

Cheryl picks up her jacket from the seat beside her.

CHERYL
I can't thank you enough.

MAC
Any of it spill on you?

She smiles as she stands.

CHERYL
I'm testifying against the fuck in return for a slap on the wrist. I'll be fine. What about you? Vinnie's still in the hospital. I've seen pictures. You guys did a real number on him.

MAC
Apparently he has no memory of what happened. And Dawkins is too proud to admit he was bested. I'm golden.

She puts on her jacket and looks out the window at the rain.

CHERYL

Good to hear. I think I'll disappear for a while after this is all finished.

She picks up her bag.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

At least you did well out of this.

MAC

How do you mean?

CHERYL

My ex- gave you a hundred grand to find me, right?

Mac looks up at her, wistful smile on his face.

MAC

The deal was for two hundred if I found you. Missed out on the second hund-o

He takes a sip of coffee.

MAC (CONT'D)

And some of his muscles stole most of the first hundred from my flat. No biggie. Easy come, easy go.

Cheryl shakes her head and puts her bag down. Pulls her phone out of her back pocket.

CHERYL

We can't have that. Give me your bank details.

MAC

No. Not necessary.

She puts her hands on her hips.

CHERYL

I have contacts. I can get the details myself. Show me.

Mac unlocks his phone and opens his banking app. The balance is \$2,846.23 He shows her the screen and she copies the account details to her phone.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I handed almost everything over to the authorities.

(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)

But there may have been a couple of bank accounts in Macau I failed to mention.

She laughs.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I'll guarantee you he's not going to bring them up.

She presses a couple of buttons and closes the app. Holds out her index finger for him to wait a sec while she holds up her phone.

It rings.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Yes, this is Cheryl Lambert.

(beat)

Yes, I made that transfer

(beat)

Casino. C-A-S-I-N-O. Thanks.

She hangs up the call.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Now you're whole.

She stows her phone, picks up her bag and leaves, giving Emma a wave on the way out.

Mac looks at the banking app on his phone. He refreshes the screen. The balance still shows as \$2,846.23

The Pending Balance is \$202,846.23

MAC (V.O.)

Like this happens every day.

He smiles and calls a number.

MAC

Alf? Pop by The Pelican, will you?
And bring a good accountant. I need some tax advice.

FADE OUT