

A Country of Strangers

written by

Sean Armstrong

Principato-Young Entertainment
c/o Susan Solomon and Peter Dealbert
9465 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 900
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
310-274-4408

OVER BLACK;

A Dedication:

"For those that never came back... for the ones that did, and the faces they wore."

~Anonymous

FADE IN:

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- NIGHT

In a non-descript room, GEOFF HARPER, 59, sits solitary - as pale as a lost child - staring into one of the very first HOME VIDEO CAMERAS. He takes a deep breath and begins.

HARPER

Everyone in Australia knows who the Beaumonts are. Or were. If you were a kid in the sixties you were taught to fear the tall, blonde man the same way the Americans feared the commies. They ruined it for everyone. You couldn't go anywhere on your own anymore. Not without your parents.

(beat)

Not without being taken.

FADE TO:

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- MORNING, 1966

A quaint picture of suburbia. The lawn freshly mown, the garden tended to, the windows spotless...

HARPER (V.O.)

It was January at the time; Australia Day. But it was Adelaide.

(beat)

And it was hot.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- SAME

Nancy Beaumont's face looms large as she yells up the stairs:

NANCY

Get a move on, kids!

CONTINUED:

She takes a seat next to her husband, JIM. On her left, ARNNA, 9, continues talking, upset at being interrupted.

ARNNA
--An' she said her mum said she
could keep it!

NANCY
Her mum's lettin' her keep a 'Roo
in the house?

ARNNA
It's a baby!

NANCY
It's gonna ruin her car.

JANE, 10, trots down the steps and into a seat as Arnna keeps going.

ARNNA
So can I?

NANCY
Can you what?

ARNNA
Can I have one?

NANCY
Oh, I don't think so!

Arnna starts sulking.

ARNNA
I never get anything I want!

Jane shoots her a look.

JANE
Mom said "no," so cool it.

ARNNA
No one asked you, Jane!

Nancy leans over to Jim. He's reading the paper.

NANCY
So you're goin' in?

JIM
Might as well--

CONTINUED: (2)

GRANT, their seven year old, races down the stairs in an oversized collared shirt. Jim takes one look at the boy:

JIM (CONT'D)

Oh no mista, you're not wearin' one of my shirts again - it looks like a dress on you!

GRANT

Men can wear dresses!

JIM

Yeah - *poof-tahs!*

Nancy elbows him, smiling.

NANCY

What daddy means is people usually dress down at the beach.

GRANT

I have bathers on unda'neath.

He lifts his shirt up to show them.

JIM

Thanks Grant, we coulda imagined 'em. Now go change.

GRANT

I will not. There will be severe *reaper-cushions* if you make me!

JIM

Grant, do not do what I think you're gonna do. We had a meetin' at school about this. Rememba' what Ms. Kelly said--

GRANT

I'm not in school...

JIM

We talked about this - it's inappropriate.

GRANT

You're forcin' me!

JIM

Grant! Cease and desist right now--

CONTINUED: (3)

GRANT
--You ass'ed for it!

He leans over and shakes his rear, laughing like it's the height of sophistication. It's too ridiculous. Jim and Nancy both break down laughing.

Jane and Arnna shake their heads. They've seen it too many times before. Jim takes a cue from them.

JIM
No! It's not funny. Look Grant,
I'm not watching! I can't even see
what you're doing!

Jane gets up and with much sisterly-wrenching forces Grant to sit down. She takes her seat back and blows the hair out of her face, exhausted.

JANE
Phew... kids!

Nancy grins at her.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- HALF HOUR LATER

Jim Beaumont backs his car out into the street. From the front stoop, Nancy prods the kids out the door.

NANCY
Say bye to daddy!

They do; cheerfully out-of-tune.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Back on the Noon bus, 'kay?

Bogged down by BEACH CHAIRS and TOTE BAGS with TOWELS in them, the kids make their way down the drive. Before rounding the corner, Grant turns and waves.

GRANT
Bye, mum!

She waves back as they walk out of sight:

NANCY
Bye loves!

EXT. CORNER; HARDING & PETERSON STREETS -- 10:10 A.M.

Jane, Arnna, and Grant stand on the roadside waiting for the 10 o'clock bus.

CONTINUED:

JANE
It's late.

GRANT
How d'you know?

She points above the treetops at a partially-obscured CLOCK TOWER.

JANE
Glenelg Tower. It's near the beach.

Grant tries to look; stands on his tip-toes.

GRANT
I can't see it!

ARNNA
That's because you're short.

The bus slowly approaches from just a dot on the horizon. They climb on, dragging their belongings with them.

Jane's the last, seeing the younger two safely up the steps. She pulls herself up, almost losing her copy of LITTLE WOMEN in the process.

INT. ADELAIDE BUS-LINES -- CONTINUOUS

The kids find a spot to sit as the BUS DRIVER watches them go. When they're clear of the landing he swings the doors shut and pulls away from the curb.

HARPER (V.O.)
The Driver, a Mr. I.D. Monroe, recalled seeing the Beaumonts on his morning route as did a female witness who later came forward...

The children find a seat across from a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. Jane goes right back to reading her book, practically burying her face in it. It makes the woman smile.

Lacking space, Arnna shoves Grant over.

ARNNA
Move!

GRANT
Now I don't have any room!

ARNNA
Tough.

CONTINUED:

GRANT

You're just mad 'cause Mum loves me more.

ARNNA

No she doesn't. If she loves anybody more, it's me.

(bitter)

Or Jane.

Jane speaks without looking up from her book.

JANE

You were BOTH mistakes. I was the only one they planned for.

GRANT

You just think you're better than me cause you can read!

ARNNA

No Grant, she is better than you because she can read.

GRANT

Who cares about books? I'm the handsome one.

EXT. ADELAIDE BUS -- CONTINUOUS

The Bus continues along passing STREET SIGNS illustrating the way:

Down a hill along DIAGONAL WAY,
through a light at BRIGHTON ROAD,
left on JETTY WHARF,
finally stopping on MOSELY STREET.

EXT. COLLEY RESERVE -- CONTINUOUS

The children shuffle off the bus dragging their beach-things behind them. Their sun-shocked brows carry the brunt of the load. Behind them, GLENELG TOWER tells the time.

HARPER (V.O)

They arrived at Glenelg Beach no later than 10:15 a.m. Not much is known about how they spent the next forty-five minutes - it's assumed they went for a swim...

CONTINUED:

Jane ushers the other two across the street and onto the not yet crowded BEACH.

EXT. GLENELG BEACH -- MOMENTS LATER

Coming out from behind the CHANGING ROOMS, the threesome throw their TOWELS, BAGS, and CHAIRS onto a patch of unoccupied sand and make for the surf.

HARPER (V.O)

...but at some point in there it's certain they met the man in question.

EXT. JETTY -- SECONDS LATER

Grant and Jane reach the water first and dive right in. Arnna, lagging behind, is about to follow when:

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Well, hello there!

Arnna whirls around to see a gaunt, yellow-haired MAN dressed in a pair of blue swimming briefs and an open, silk button-up.

SCRIPT NOTE: The man is shot from chest down, or behind; his face never, ever on display.

ARNNA

Hello.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

You're Arnna, right? You've seen me on the pier befor'. I had my shepherd collie a few weeks back. Rememba? My name's Victor.

She looks up at him, shielding her face from the sun in her eyes.

ARNNA

(somewhat timid)

Yeah...

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Now see you're very smart. You're not supposed to talk to strangers unless they're good and you know them. And you know me so there's nothin' to be afraid of.

CONTINUED:

She smiles a little, slowly being won over. Behind her Jane emerges from the water and sees her sister talking to a stranger. She slogs her way out to Arnna.

JANE
Arnna, come swim...

ARNNA
This is my friend, Victa'.

The tall, blonde Man looks into the sun and smiles.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN
Where your parents at on this fine,
fine day?

He winks at Arnna. Jane isn't having it.

JANE
Daddy's upcountry with clients.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN
(as Grant joins them)
Well then, I'd hardly be a
gentleman if I didn't look out for
you three. I know a crackerjack
hidin' spot if you're playin' hide
and seek.

Jane takes Arnna by the arm.

JANE
Let's go, Arnie, we gotta be home
soon--

Arnna wrings her arm free.

ARNNA
No! He's my friend! If you wanna go
and do somethin' else that's fine!
You're just jealous a grown-up
wants to spend time with me and not
you!

GRANT
Yeah, you're always tryin' to boss
us around. I'm sick of it!

They walk off. Jane hesitates a minute, then follows.

JANE
Hey, wait up!

EXT. HOLDFAST SAILING CLUB -- 11:00 A.M.

A Seventy-four year old Woman sits on a bench outside the doors of the Sailing Club.

HARPER (V.O.)

They weren't seen again until 11:00 a.m. when the first of our three witnesses saw them playing on the Lawn of the Colley Reserve...

The Woman lowers her sunglasses to see:

EXT. COLLEY RESERVE, LAWN -- CONTINUOUS

The Man lays on his stomach, his back to her, smiling as he watches the children frolic in the SPRINKLER. Even Jane. They're laughing as he runs a hand through his sun-dappled hair.

Grant cups some water and splashes it on the Man's back. He bites the lure, getting up to chase them around.

They retaliate, flicking him with their wet towels.

EXT. MILK BAR -- 11:45 A.M.

The Man waits outside, against the shacks' wall, unseen, as the children step up to the head of the Snack Bar line...

HARPER (V.O.)

...The second witness didn't recall seeing the children until 11:45 a.m. Mrs. Beaumont is adamant she let the children leave with only six shillings. Yet they showed up with a one-pound note, buying enough candy and pastries for all three of them and most curiously...

(beat)

A meat pie.

Jane hands the Man his MEAT PIE and he goes to work on it.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Thank you...

It's gone in three bites.

EXT. BENCH QUEUE -- CONTINUOUS

The Man walks over to a nearby bench as he shoves the last of the Pie into his mouth. His pile of clothes is there. He digs through the pockets and comes out unsatisfied.

He turns to the people sitting on the bench next to him. There's a FORTY-YEAR OLD WOMAN and an ELDERLY COUPLE with their GRANDDAUGHTER, watching her eat an ICE CREAM CONE.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Did anyone touch my stuff? Did you see anyone riflin' around in the pockets?!

They look where he's pointing, but shake their heads "no."

HARPER (V.O.)

Witnesses Two and Three, both female, were on a bench near the Man's clothes. He questioned them, but didn't get what he wanted...

The Man stalks away as if they were to blame. Then turns back, justifying it:

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

There was money in there...

He grabs Jane by the wrist and drags her to him.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN (CONT'D)

Come on, we have to go.

JANE

(wrenches free)
Oww, you're hurting me!

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

We need to get changed.

He takes down her bathers and rifles through Jane's bag for her dry clothes.

The 2nd witness, the Younger Woman, looks on warily.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF MISS PATTI DANIELS -- PRESENT DAY

The YOUNGER WOMAN from the bench is now ELDERLY; hooked up to an OXYGEN MACHINE. She speaks straight into the Camera, Documentary-style...

CONTINUED:

PATTI DANIELS

I remember thinking at the time
that the little girl was perfectly
capable of dressing herself.

She fumbles with some HAND-WRITTEN NOTES in her lap.

PATTI DANIELS (CONT'D)

I wrote all this down a few years
back when they started asking me
about it regularly.

(beat)

My brain isn't what it used to be.

A WOMAN'S VOICE asks:

VOICE (V.O.)

And you're sure they were the
Beaumonts?

She answers without hesitation:

PATTI DANIELS

There's not a doubt in my mind.

EXT. BENCH QUEUE -- BACK TO SCENE

Jane yanks the clothes back from the Man.

JANE

I can do it myself!

He looks at her pale flesh... blind to everything else.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

...We don't have time.

JANE

Time for what?

He shakes the thoughts in his head away.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Nothing...

(beat)

Let's go.

He gets up, off his knees, and is about to leave when he
notices Jane's SHIRT TAG sticking out. He quickly, lovingly
tucks it back in.

CONTINUED:

Grabbing his clothes off the bench, he guides Grant and Arnna towards the CHANGING ROOMS. Jane hurries to catch up, only mildly embarrassed at being naked in public.

EXT. FOOTPATH -- 1:45 P.M.

A balding, overweight GENTLEMAN walking down towards the beach moves sideways to let the Blonde Man and the Beaumont Children pass him.

HARPER (V.O.)

They're not seen for another hour and a half if the Man from Broken Hill is to be believed. At the time, I was of another opinion. I thought it was more than likely that the perpetrator's weird behavior on the beach spooked the kids and they gave him the slip--

EXT. CHANGING ROOMS -- 12:15 P.M.

The tall, blonde Man tries to grab Jane by the arm, but she shakes him off and takes Grant and Arnna by the hands and leads them away.

EXT. MOSELY STREET -- 1:45 P.M.

The children jog down the street towards the Jetty Wharf. They see their MAIL MAN down the way and yell happily.

GRANT

Hey, it's the postie!

They run towards him as he smiles and waves back.

HARPER (V.O.)

The last person to see the Beaumonts alive was their Mail Man, a Mr. T. Patterson.

INT. CONCRETE ROOM -- PRESENT DAY

Harper, again talking into the camera:

HARPER (V.O.)

What initially hindered the investigation was the Postman's statement. He testified that he saw the Beaumonts at the tail end of his route.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- 1966, DAYS LATER

Patterson sits sweating under heavy lights in an Interrogation Room surrounded by Cops.

HARPER (V.O.)

What eventually came out was that he had crossed paths with the Beaumonts earlier in the day - as they were on their way to the Beach.

(beat)

So if he was wrong... and the Man from Broken Hill was wrong... then...

EXT. CHANGING ROOMS -- 12:15 P.M.

Back to when Jane ripped her arm out of the Man's grasp.

He turns angry, pulling her into his arms and seizing the other kids; marching up the same FOOTPATH, but no 'Man from Broken Hill' is present.

Grant beats at the only part of the Man he can get to: the Upper Thigh. The tall, blonde Man now has a single WHITE STRIPE going down both legs of his BATHERS.

HARPER (V.O.)

What we missed, and what went undiscovered for almost twenty years was the White Stripe on the bathin' suit the Man was wearing. Had we known - had anyone known - the Police would have realized that the colors belonged to members of the "Henley Beach Lifesaving Club." When this finally came out it was with an extra shock, as the Henley Beach Club would burn down just one month after the Beaumonts went missing.

(beat)

With all their records left inside.

FADE TO:

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

Nancy sits at the LIVING ROOM table, having tea with a friend, MEREDITH CRAIG. She chatters on as Nancy checks the time on her watch: 2:09 p.m.

CONTINUED:

MEREDITH
Somethin' wrong?

NANCY
Kids were supposed to be home by
noon. Thought they missed the bus
and took the 2 o'clock...

MEREDITH
You wanna go look for them?

NANCY
No, it's okay. Jane's with them.
I'm sure they're fine. Besides we'd
probably miss 'em - they take a
different way back everyday.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- LATER

Nancy waves goodbye to Meredith as Jim pulls into the
driveway.

MEREDITH
Tell me when they get home, kay?

NANCY
Absolutely.

Jim passes Meredith on the way up the drive.

JIM
Bye Mere'.

MEREDITH
See ya, Jim.

Nancy leans in through the Driver's side window.

NANCY
You're back early.

JIM
I rang, they weren't in.

NANCY
Kids aren't back yet.

JIM
Eh, no worries. Grant's probably
dragged them someplace. You want me
to look for 'em?

CONTINUED:

NANCY

Could you?

JIM

Yeah, you stay here - 'case they
come back.

He pulls back out into the street and takes off.

EXT. ADELAIDE STREETS -- DUSK

Jim drives through the suburbs looking down quiet, vacant
streets. He calls out their names one-by-one:

JIM

Grant?!

(no answer)

Arnna?!

(still silent)

Jane?!

No response, save the sounds of the crickets coming out...

EXT. GLENELG BEACH -- LATER

Jim gets out and wanders the Beach for a while. No one's
there; the population having gone home for the evening.

He looks this way and that, getting worried.

EXT. MOSELY STREET SHOPS -- NIGHT

Dusk has given way into full-blown night. Jim's head darts
back and forth, scanning ALLEYWAYS and STREET CORNERS.

The harsh, electric streetlights cast seedy shadows over
everything...

EXT. GLENELG TOWER -- VARIOUS

The CLOCK TOWER lapses from late night to early dawn. And at
the first signs of the world stirring again, Jim Beaumont
returns home.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- MORNING LIGHT

Jim makes his way out of the car and into the house.

HARPER (V.O.)

I met the Beaumonts that first
morning, having drawn an unlucky
night shift. It was the last call
I was going to make.

CONTINUED:

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- 6:45 a.m.

Jim walks in the side door to find Geoff Harper, age 25, sitting next to his wife at the Kitchen Counter.

NANCY

Any luck?

Jim shakes his head. Harper manages a half-smile.

HARPER

Hello, Mr. Beaumont.

NANCY

Jim, this is Inspector Harper. He was just asking me something.

HARPER

I said, 'can you think of any reason your children would want to run away?'

NANCY

No. They were happy.

HARPER

Think really hard, Mrs. Beaumont. If it is a kidnapping, nine times out of ten it's someone the victim knows. And if it is, we've got a really good shot of catching this guy.

NANCY

And what about the other ten percent?

HARPER

You don't wanna know, ma'am.

NANCY

Humor me, Inspector.

Harper looks up at Jim, as if he'll step in and save him. He's leaning against the fridge, arms crossed; listening, but somewhere else entirely.

HARPER

They're taken by a sicko. For them it's random.

Nancy takes this in. Thinks about it. She slowly turns to Jim.

CONTINUED: (2)

NANCY

This is your fault.

It takes him a moment to realize she's talking to him.

JIM

What?

HARPER

Now there's no cause to blame each other--

Nancy plows right past him.

NANCY

--you did this. You allowed it to happen. You let the kids run around the neighborhood with no regard as to what they might be doing--

JIM

How can you say that?

NANCY

--You let them jump on the beds when I'm not here - don't think I don't know! You let Grant wear clothes he's already worn days before; you have no concern for their health, their well-being, their--

JIM

Yeah? *Well, who let 'em go to the beach?!*

Her words choke in her throat. So do his--

JIM (CONT'D)

Answer me that.

She says nothing and Jim retreats up the stairs.

INT. THE CHILDREN'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jim marches straight in and begins looking...

JIM

Come on kids, this isn't funny.
Stop playing!

He flings open CLOSETS, pushing the CLOTHES aside to see if they're hiding.

CONTINUED:

He looks in TRUNKS, deep down into their tiniest crevices. Sifts through piles of DIRTY LAUNDRY...

He moves aside BUREAUS, CURTAINS, even tosses off all their BED COVERS.

JIM (CONT'D)

Come out! *Please come out!*

The room's a mess, but he carries on. Lying down on his side, he looks under each one of their beds.

Jane's...

Arnna's...

Finally, he gets to Grant's. He lifts the trim up. There's nothing there.

He lies with his face pressed flush against the hardwood floors. Panting hard.

Defeated.

FADE TO:

EXT. ADELAIDE COAST -- MORNING

AGENTS on GLENELG BEACH and OFFICERS in SMALL DINGHIES and MOTOR PATROL BOATS explore the coast.

HARPER (V.O.)

The next morning when the Beaumonts were officially declared missing, the coast was searched for several kilometers along the city of Adelaide.

EXT. PATAWALONGA BOAT HAVEN -- NOON

The Harbors WOODEN GATE is locked shut as divers go to work exploring the area.

HARPER (V.O.)

On Thursday, February the third, at low tide, the Patawalonga Boat Haven was closed to search for their bodies...

A line of POLICE CADETS wade their way through waist-deep mud, using LONG, DULLED PITCHFORKS to plumb the sandy depths.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the men discovers a discarded TOILET SEAT and lifts it high above his head.

HARPER (V.O.)
They found nothing.

INT. CONCRETE ROOM -- PRESENT DAY

Harper COUGHS and pauses to catch his breath. He takes a sip of water from the stool next to him.

The Woman that's been interviewing him, LIDDY TOURNEAU, takes advantage of the silence to ask a question:

LIDDY
So you're not in the camp that believed they drowned?

HARPER
I mean, use your head. Even if it was possible that three children could be swept out to sea on one of the most popular beach days of the year - what happened to their stuff? Towels, chairs, a book... was all this drowned with them?

He COUGHS again into his hand.

LIDDY
Hair of the dog?

HARPER
Excuse me?

LIDDY
The cough, the blotchy complexion... just how many years have you been drinking for?

HARPER
It'd be easier to ask how long I've been breathing for.

LIDDY
I'm serious.

HARPER
So am I. What does it matter.

LIDDY
Drunks make poor sources.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Who said I was a drunk? I've been honest and forthcoming. And if you ask me, I've about had it up to here with the attitude.

LIDDY

Oh please, you can spare me.

HARPER

Spare you? You know, you should be so lucky as to have me--

LIDDY

--I know about the book, Mr. Harper. Know you've been shopping a book about the crimes and that interest has waned. So let's just drop this, "I'm lucky to have you" routine. We're in the same boat, you and I.

She watches as he sits there, stewing.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

Can we continue?

He huffs.

HARPER

Yeah, alright.

(beat)

Anyhow, back at the house Mrs. Beaumont was kept under sedation.

LIDDY

Why sedation?

HARPER

Because without it... she'd just scream.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- FEBRUARY 3RD, 1966

Nancy Beaumont cries out from the couch she's on, convulsing, as her friends, Meredith among them, try fruitlessly to hold her down. She keeps for her children, inconsolably.

Relatives hurry around trying to make themselves useful as POLICE OFFICERS circulate freely through the house.

OFFICER NGUYEN, 22, is about to shut the back door when Harper walks in. He smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NGUYEN

Well look who's back from vacation!
You miss us?!

HARPER

Only you, Nguyen. Your mother says
"hi," by the way.

NGUYEN

That's not funny - my mum's in a
wheelchair.

HARPER

Must be why we got on all the rides
for free.

Nguyen LAUGHS, but hearing Nancy's screams wipes the smile
off both their faces.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Jim listens to his wife's shrieks from the other room, his
face the pallor of white rice. He smokes an endless string of
cigarettes as the Police install a telephone.

Harper's partner DEAN DAWSON, 38, walks over to him.

DAWSON

Mr. Beaumont, we've put in a phone
so that if you need us or we need
you, either one of us can be
reached.

JIM

We can't afford a phone...

DAWSON

This one's on the Police
Department, sir.

Jim muffles a quick:

JIM

Thank you.

He takes a look around; sees the frenetic pace of those
around him.

JIM (CONT'D)

Do me a favor?

DAWSON

What is it?

CONTINUED:

JIM
Make these people leave?

DAWSON
'Scuse me?

JIM
You're the police. Can you make
'em leave?
(beat)
I don't need these strangers in my
house.

DAWSON
Whatever you say, Mr. Beaumont.

Dawson YELLS out:

DAWSON (CONT'D)
Alright gents, pack it in! Family
and friends only!

On his way out, Harper catches up to Dawson.

HARPER
I think he meant everybody. Even
family.

DAWSON
And what makes you so smart?

HARPER
I think if you'd ask him he'd tell
you that.

DAWSON
And I say that this man and his
wife need family right now. The
second I start listening to a cadet
is the day I retire.

HARPER
I passed the service exam--

DAWSON
So you keep tellin' me.

He walks out of the room.

INT. CHANNEL 9 NEWS ROOM -- NIGHT

Jim Beaumont sits in a chair behind a NEWS DESK. Behind him the stations CALL NUMBERS are illustrated in LIGHT BROWN and YELLOW FELT. He's seated next to ROB KELVIN, the local Newsman.

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT comes over to speak quietly to Mr. Beaumont.

P.A.

Do you need anything before we start, Mr. Beaumont?

JIM

No.

As she walks off the set, the P.A. starts the countdown:

P.A.

On in 5, 4, 3...

She goes silent and cues Rob, who puts down the mirror he's using to fix his hair. He smiles wide.

ROB KELVIN

In the past five days no story has captured our imagination and sympathy like that of the disappearance of the Beaumont Children. In our studio tonight, we have a special message from their father, Jim Beaumont. Jim?

He turns to face Mr. Beaumont. Jim just sits there staring at Kelvin.

ROB KELVIN (CONT'D)

Go on, Mr. Beaumont...

He slowly revolves to face the camera. And takes a hard breath.

JIM

Whoever...

He trails off, his face swelling. He tries again.

JIM (CONT'D)

Whoever has my children, please...

His gaze drops from the TELEPROMPTER. If there's a script - he's off it.

CONTINUED:

JIM (CONT'D)
 ...Arnna needs her ear drops... and
 Grants blood sugar might be low and
 Jane doesn't deal well with new
 people, so whoever you are -
 whoever has my kids, please...
 (beat)
 ...please...

He's unable to finish, choking out the words--

JIM (CONT'D)
 --Give 'em back.

ROB KELVIN
 It's okay Mr. Beaumont.

Jim sits back in his chair. Kelvin happily takes over.

ROB KELVIN (CONT'D)
 The local police have asked the
 assistance of every citizen in
 Adelaide to search their homes
 through and through. That means
 backyards, sheds, basements, crawl
 spaces - anywhere small children
 may be prone to hiding.

INT. PRINTING PRESS -- DAY

MONTAGE:

CLOSE on the flicking gears and fluttering paper of a PRESS
 moving at full speed. FLYERS with the Beaumont Children's
 faces on them land in a pile underneath the machine.

HARPER (V.O.)
 And people searched...

A set of hands scoops the pile out and boxes them.

HARPER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 If you ask me what I remembered
 from looking for the Beaumonts all
 that summer: it would have to be
that song...

INT. FAMILY DEN -- MORNING

A YOUNG GIRL turns on her radio and happily hears Tommy James
 and the Shondells singing "*Crimson and Clover.*"

CONTINUED:

HARPER (V.O.)

It was everywhere. We'd long since had an unwritten agreement with the Brits and the Yanks regarding a culture exchange - they sent over art, films, and music...

(beat)

...and in return, didn't listen to a word of ours.

CLOSE on the radio as Tommy James sings in a high falsetto:

RADIO (V.O.)

*My my, such a sweet thing,
I wanna do eveeeeerrrythang,
What-a beautiful feeeeeling...*

EXT. ADELAIDE -- VARIOUS

The Adelaide Community is out in droves, searching anywhere they can think of. Families turn their homes upside down, in hopes of finding something...

HARPER (V.O.)

The search became the biggest ever mounted in Southern Australia.

Harper and Dawson go door-to-door around the neighborhood.

HARPER (V.O.)

Hundreds of calls were received from people believing they'd seen the Beaumonts. Each one was investigated.

INT. SUBURBAN TAXI SERVICE GARAGE -- DAY

TAXI DRIVERS take to their cars.

HARPER (V.O.)

When the drivers of the Suburban Taxi Service - of which Mr. Beaumont used to be a driver - found out it was his kids that had gone missing they volunteered to help.

EXT. ADELAIDE HILLS -- NIGHT

VOLUNTEERS and DEPUTIES explore shrub-laden desolate hills with FLASHLIGHTS.

CONTINUED:

HARPER (V.O.)

The Adelaide Hills were turned
inside and out, to no avail.

EXT. GLENELG BEACH -- DAY

Cleared of swimmers for the afternoon, a mass of people crowd
GLENELG BEACH.

HARPER (V.O.)

The day they searched the dunes, a
thousand people showed up.

They fan out, digging through the sand with the sides of
their shoes and their hands.

Nearly every inch is covered... nearly...

Behind them, the sand falls down an embankment towards a
GRILL-COVERED STORM DRAIN.

Looking through the bars we see... a copy of LITTLE WOMEN,
soaking wet and covered in SEA MOSS and ALGAE.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. BEAUMONT GARDEN -- AFTERNOON

The Beaumont's side door opens. Meredith stands arm-in-arm
with Nancy, helping her down the stairs.

HARPER (V.O.)

Whoever it was who decided Mrs.
Beaumont should have given that
Garden Press Conference, I'll never
know. She was brought out, half in
the bag...

(beat)

I don't even think she remembers
what she said.

As they emerge, the line-up of PRESS AGENTS at the back fence
comes through and into the Beaumont's backyard, crowding for
an exclusive. Meredith and Nancy stand next to CHIEF of
POLICE, DREW BILLIS, 63.

CHIEF BILLIS

Mrs. Beaumont will answer a few
brief questions and then we'd
kindly like all of you to leave her
yard.

Rob Kelvin elbows his way to the front.

CONTINUED:

KELVIN

Mrs. Beaumont, do you regret not going to the beach with your children?

She pulls her sweater tighter, as if protecting herself.

NANCY

What kind of a question is that?

KELVIN

What do you say in response to the reports that the Stranger stopped and dressed your oldest, Jane?

NANCY

He did?

KELVIN

Yes ma'am.

NANCY

I'm surprised... Jane is a very shy child. I can't believe she'd let anyone dress her.

(beat)

She doesn't even let me dress her.

Nancy cups a hand over her mouth. The other Reporters clamor forward for their turn, but Kelvin presses on--

KELVIN

--If you had it to do over again do you think you would have made the right decision?

NANCY

And just what would you have done, Mr. Kelvin?

KELVIN

I wouldn't have left my kids alone for a second.

(beat)

Not one second.

Chief Billis sees the reaction this causes in Nancy.

CHIEF BILLIS

That's it - get him out of here!

An OFFICER pushes through the crowd.

CONTINUED: (2)

OFFICER

Alright mate, let's go--

He takes Kelvin by the shoulders and pulls him back.

KELVIN

Okay, okay - I'll go! You don't have to touch me.

The Cop lets him be. Kelvin smooths his suit back down and walks out of the garden.

EXT. ERWIN'S GARAGE -- DAY

A car rolls onto the oil-stained cement drive, bleating like a dying calf. The mechanic, ERWIN GROSSER, 31, hears the noise and comes over, wiping his hands. The DRIVER steps out to meet him.

DRIVER

Need some petrol.

GROSSER

Sure, but there's something wrong with your carbie'.

DRIVER

I said, fill it up...

He lifts up his shirt to reveal a pistol wedged in his belt. Erwin's mouth drops open.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- LATER

The frightened Mechanic sits talking to Dawson in a side room. When Dawson walks out to get some coffee, Harper joins him.

HARPER

You think he's telling the truth?

DAWSON

Only lead we got to go on. 'Said they were headed to Nuriootpa. You know what that means? Not our problem anymore.

HARPER

Come on, Dawson! He also said the Man was five-foot-nine and had jet black hair! *He's a crank!* It conflicts with every sighting we have so far!

CONTINUED:

DAWSON

So get him to sign a statement and charge him with falsifying a police report.

He starts to walk away. Harper yells after him.

HARPER

You know these fake tips are gonna keep happening - people need to know who it is they're looking for.

DAWSON

And just what did you have in mind?

INT. VAN CZAR RESIDENCE -- NIGHT

A drunk, stumbling man, PETER VAN CZAR, retires to bed. He kicks off his slippers and falls back, pulling the sheets out from under him.

When he's finally comfortable, the PHONE RINGS.

VAN CZAR

Oh, what the fuck!

He fumbles around until he finds the switch for the bedside lamp, then gropes for the RECEIVER.

VAN CZAR (CONT'D)

What is it?

He listens for a moment.

VAN CZAR (CONT'D)

I just laid down.

(beat)

Dammit! Fine!

Van Czar tosses the covers off and shoves his feet back into his slippers. He stomps away to get dressed.

EXT. HYATT REGENCY, PERTH -- PRESENT DAY

Van Czar, many years older, sits at the Hotel's lavish Swimming Pool Bar.

VAN CZAR

I'd been the Cartoonist for the Adelaide Observer goin' on sixteen years.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

VAN CZAR (CONT'D)

The Glenelg Police had nothing in the way of a traditional "identikit." The night I got the call I'd already been drinkin' heavily in the arvo. But when I found out what I was there for...

(beat)

...well, I never sobered up so quickly in my life.

INT. ADELAIDE OBSERVER BUILDING -- LATE NIGHT: FEB. 7th, 1966

Van Czar marches into his office, shrugging off his coat, annoyed. His EDITOR meets him at the door.

VAN CZAR (CONT'D)

You've gotten me out of bed - now what's all this about?!

He sees a somber-looking WOMAN waiting on a bench down the hall. It's the FIRST WITNESS from the beach -- the one with the SUNGLASSES.

INT. ADELAIDE OBSERVER, EDITOR'S OFFICE -- MINUTES LATER

The Witness describes the Tall, Blonde Man to Van Czar. He makes notes on a portfolio; drawing and erasing, editing and undoing.

VAN CZAR (V.O.)

Had they told me they were holding the front page for this, I mighta spent a bit more time on it. But as it stood, every time you used association with the woman, the whole thing would fall apart. What she remembered was a skinny man with sandy blonde hair - the color of "grain" she said. Parted on the side. And the face was gaunt - gaunt as could be - as if someone had taken an ice cream scoop to the man's cheeks.

He adds some final details, then puts his pencil down. He turns the pad around and holds it up.

The Woman clutches her chest.

WITNESS #1

My God...

She visibly shudders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WITNESS #1 (CONT'D)
You've drawn a ghost.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, FRONT YARD -- THE NEXT MORNING

Nancy opens the door and shields her face from the sun. She steps out to get the paper.

On the front page, as promised, is the POLICE SKETCH. She lets out a gasp.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- LATER

Nancy busies herself with the dishes, trying to keep her mind occupied.

Her hands are moving so fast in the soapy water it isn't a surprise when she nicks her finger on something.

She wrenches her arm out then goes back in to find the culprit. It's a small PARING KNIFE.

She stares at it in her hand, then holds it up to where she got sliced.

Out of nowhere, she begins to cut herself again, trying to make the wound deeper. She grimaces, but swallows back tears in an attempt to work something out.

Finally, she cries out in pain.

Hurling the knife, she slaps wildly at the sink water, screaming.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- LATE NIGHT

Nancy sits in the dark at the Kitchen table. Her hand is wrapped up in a dish towel to staunch the flow of blood. She's found her husband's cigarettes and has taken up the habit.

The NEWSPAPER lies crumbled in the middle of the counter. Jim walks in; a bathrobe on, the beginnings of a beard. He sees the paper between him and his wife.

JIM
So you've seen...

Nancy takes a long drag off her cigarette. She appears not to have noticed him.

JIM (CONT'D)
You want the lights on?

CONTINUED:

She doesn't answer. He starts to go.

NANCY

What...

JIM

Do you want the light on?

NANCY

Not really.

He pauses, wanting to say something, but decides against it. He moves to leave finally when she turns to him, a bitterness in her face that wasn't there a moment ago.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I just can't shake this feeling...

JIM

What feeling?

NANCY

Like I've forgotten something...

(beat)

Like I've left the back door wide open.

She holds her head in her hands.

NANCY (CONT'D)

If I could rememba' one thing I'd know where they are - I just know it.

He almost goes to her then, but she's returned to her dazed state.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- MORNING

Harper sits at his desk looking at MUG SHOTS. The front door opens and KAREN JONES, 18, a young girl of aboriginal descent enters.

She looks around, asking the first person she sees for directions. They point her to Harper and she walks over.

KAREN JONES

You workin' the Beaumont case?

Harper glances dismally at his messy desk.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

I'm trying. Can I help you with something?

He motions to a desk chair directly across from him. She sits down -- and immediately starts crying.

KAREN JONES

I'm so sorry! I shoulda said something a week ago, but I couldn't and now it's probably too late--

HARPER

--Whoa, whoa, whoa, slow it down a bit. Take a breath...

He hands her a tissue. She blots her eyes and blows her nose.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Now... start again.

KAREN JONES

I want to apologize. I shoulda come earlier. I shoulda! Now there's probably nothing you can do!

HARPER

Let me be the judge of that. Just calm down--

KAREN JONES

Okay...

She tries to collect herself.

KAREN JONES (CONT'D)

Last Friday, I snuck out of my house. My father doesn't let me leave after eleven...

HARPER

You were going on a date?

KAREN JONES

Yeah, how'd you know?

HARPER

(smiles)
It's always the case.

CONTINUED: (2)

KAREN JONES

My father can neva' know what I'm about to tell you.

HARPER

It won't leave this room.

She sniffs back a fresh sob and leans forward.

KAREN JONES

So last Friday, my boyfriend and I are parked. You know what that means, right?

HARPER

I can imagine.

KAREN JONES

We got into a fight and he left me there, four kilos from home. I had to walk.

HARPER

Sounds like a nice guy.

KAREN JONES

He's a prick. Anyhow, I'm down in the West Torrens and it's the middle of the night and I see this boy just walking by himself.

Harper digs through the PHOTOS on his desk. He finds a PICTURE of GRANT taken on holiday a year before and hands it to Karen.

HARPER

Is this the boy you saw?

KAREN JONES

Yes...

(beat)

But he was different. He was messed up. He looked... drunk...

EXT. MORPHETT RD. -- JANUARY 26TH, LATE NIGHT

Karen, wearing a revealing dress and looking a bit man-handled, tries to manage the precarious, broken sidewalk in the heels she has on. She hears a TRASH CAN topple over and follows the noise to its source.

Across the street, Grant trips his way down the sidewalk, barely standing, but somehow still walking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

His direction isn't clear, but he's definitely moving away from something. He slips and almost falls, but manages to regain his footing.

He continues on a few more steps when suddenly a TALL, BLONDE FELLOW swoops in and savagely *seizes him up*.

The Man looks around, making sure he wasn't seen. Karen quickly ducks behind a car, terrified.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- BACK TO SCENE

Fat tears roll down her face.

KAREN JONES

I should have done something for that little boy!

HARPER

You are now. That's what counts. And you're sure this is what you saw?

She nods.

HARPER (CONT'D)

What time was this?

KAREN JONES

About one, one-thirty--

She's cut off as the whole station starts *buzzing with activity*: Officers throw on their jackets, walkie-talkies sound off -- almost everyone makes for the door.

Harper stands and flags down Nguyen.

HARPER

What happened?!

NGUYEN

What happened? *We caught the guy that's 'what happened?!'*

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

The Beaumonts sit on opposite sides of their couch across from Harper and Dawson.

HARPER

There's been a development...

CONTINUED:

DAWSON

That's putting it lightly! We
caught the man that took your kids
Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont!

Jim and Nancy look at each other, hope in their eyes for the
first time in months. Harper glares at his partner.

HARPER

I'm not so sure...

JIM

Please, just tell us what happened.

HARPER

Are you sure you and your wife want
to hear about this?

NANCY

If it has anythin' to do with my
kids, tell me right now.

Harper sighs.

HARPER

It seems... well, it seems there
was an attempted kidnapping
yesterday and the circumstances
under which they happened lead some
people to believe they were
committed by the same person who
abducted your children.

EXT. WARNEET BEACH WHARF -- THE DAY BEFORE

SHANE SPILLER and his best friend, YVONNE TUOHY, both 11,
wander down the beach playing. In his belt loop, the boy
carries a colorful, toy TOMAHAWK.

SHANE SPILLER

Okay, I'm Lionel Rose and you're
Fightin' Harada.

YVONNE TUOHY

I don't wanna play boxing--

SHANE SPILLER

--come on, it'll be fun!

YVONNE TUOHY

Why do I always gotta lose?

CONTINUED:

SHANE SPILLER
Because I'm the male.

The two of them suddenly find themselves covered in the shadow of a man who has appeared out of nowhere. DEREK EARNEST PERCY, 21, scoops up Yvonne, placing a knife to her throat and drawing some blood.

PERCY
Come along now, boy...

He pulls Yvonne tighter and goes after Shane. The boy quickly plucks the tomahawk from his belt and furiously back pedals wailing away with it.

Percy runs flat out at him, trying to avoid the blade. Shane somehow manages to slice the man's forearm. Percy tears the appendage back, cupping the blood that's spurting out.

He hears shrieks behind him. People have started to notice Yvonne's SCREAMS.

Percy takes one last look at Shane then high-tails it into the darkness under the pier.

Shane sits in the sand watching him go, covered in Yvonne's blood and suffering from deep, white shock.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Nancy stifles a cry as Jim stares straight ahead.

JIM
Where's he now?

Dawson takes out his notepad.

DAWSON
Good news there - as Percy fled a witness got a good look at his car. It had badges on it. Turns out Derek was a naval rating. We found him three hours later, where his ship was docked on weekend leave...

INT. H.M.A.S. CERBERUS -- THE DAY BEFORE, DUSK

The Police kick in the door to Percy's BED CHAMBERS. He whirls around, caught red-handed -- bloody shirt in hand.

The dirty bar of soap he was using to clean its stains falls aimlessly to the floor... next to Yvonne's lifeless body.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Mrs. Beaumont leans forward.

NANCY

Could it have been him?

HARPER

It's possible. He admits to being in Adelaide last January. But the Witness on Glenelg Beach said the man looked to be in his late thirties, early forties...

DAWSON

That doesn't mean anything. I had a cousin who when he turned nineteen, looked like he was forty-two.

Harper impatiently waits for Dawson to finish. When he does, he nods to Mrs. Beaumont:

HARPER

We'll keep our ears open.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, FRONT YARD -- MOMENTS LATER

Harper and Dawson make their way to the Squad Car.

HARPER

I can't believe you in there!

DAWSON

What did I do?

HARPER

Doesn't matter who, doesn't matter where - just as long as we catch somebody, am I right?

DAWSON

That's right.

HARPER

Look, you've put in the years - I got it. But sittin' on your fat ass for two decades doesn't qualify you to draw a pension. Not on my watch.

DAWSON

You act so confident. But you have no idea what's out there.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Yeah? Well, I know he's brilliant.

DAWSON

Brilliant?!

HARPER

Yes. Make no mistake, Dawson, he is brilliant. He'd have to be. And I know what you're thinkin' - if the people searching for him are only half as smart as you are, then we're fucked. But rest assured, some of them are like me.

DAWSON

You think because ya' went to Uni that makes you smart?

HARPER

It certainly puts me at an advantage.

DAWSON

It makes you unprepared for the job. You're as green as they come. And until you put some kilos on the engine - I don't trust you.

HARPER

How will I sleep at night?

DAWSON

Let me tell you somethin' about pedophiles - they'll get off whenever and wherever they please. The only question is: when are we gonna catch 'em? And do me a favor: don't ever second guess me in front of other people again. I don't need to take etiquette lessons from some piece of shit, fresh off the boat!

HARPER

That might mean something if I actually listened to a fat fuck like you!

Dawson makes a mad dash for him, but Harper's ready. He takes his revolver by the service end and pistol whips Dawson across the temple. Dawson goes straight down as Harper stands over him, fist-cocked.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER (CONT'D)

You better listen up and listen good! I don't care what you eat and I don't care who you screw over! I don't care if you still think I got pampers on - you hinda' this investigation one more time and I'll shove this gun so far up your ass that the cock-back'll kill you!

Harper goes to get in the car as Dawson YELLS at him from the ground.

DAWSON

Where d'ya think you're goin'?

HARPER

Back to the station.

DAWSON

What the fuck am I supposed to do?

HARPER

Why don't you walk? It'll be good for you, Sergeant.

He peels away and leaves Dawson there, bleeding in the street. Dawson CALLS after the quickly fading car:

DAWSON

I won't be a Sergeant forever! And I will get you back for this! *I always get people back!*

INT. OPERATOR'S ROOM; KANIVA, VICTORIA POLICE HQS -- MIDDAY

Senior Constable RON WALLACE, 45, leans into the room and KNOCKS--

WALLACE

Lunch break!

Operator JIM THATCHER, 32, pulls off his HEADSET and stretches.

THATCHER

Thank God, *I'm fam-ished!*

He hands the headset over and the Constable takes his seat. Wallace pulls out the lead wire and, going down the checklist, examines each FREQUENCY.

CONTINUED:

Hearing nothing, he moves on -- until he comes across a hushed conversation a MAN and a WOMEN are having.

The feed BUZZES IN and OUT...

WOMAN

...they're brats... the lot of 'em...

MAN

...comin' or goin?

WOMAN

...they're leavin'...gotta be moved...

Wallace frowns, puzzled. He's about to move the wire again, when:

WOMAN (CONT'D)

...he'll run again... you give him the chance...

MAN

...beaumonts... a tricky bunch.

Wallace's mouth drops open with the find of a century. He scrambles back to slot number one; the main SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR:

WALLACE

Lydia! Incoming from circuit--

He struggles to read the board.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

--Numba' one-thirty-seven. I need you to find where it's coming from.
(he waits, listens)
Whaddy mean you can't say exactly?
Then give me the town!

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

"*Crimson and Clover*" wafts across the room from a corner RECORD PLAYER. A person, cut off at the chest, carries the morning paper inside. He throws it on a table.

The byline reads "*Crossed Wires a True Find*," with a subtitle revealing Jim Beaumont on his way to Kaniva, Victoria.

CONTINUED:

The Man goes back to his task: folding a child's laundry. He gets to a weathered, bleached LONG-SLEEVED SHIRT. He folds it and lays it atop a pile of other neatly folded clothes.

Only then does he notice the TAG sticking out of the shirt. He plucks it off.

Picking up the rest of clothes, he walks back towards the door - but something stops him...

Backtracking, he lays the clothes down on the table. His lithe, spotless hands reach for the paper. Under his nails lie thick clumps of dirt.

He reads the photo excerpt:

"Senior Officer Stan Swaine and Jim Beaumont (pictured, far left) travel from the Beaumont's Home at 109 Harding Street, Somerton Park, to follow a lead in Kaniva."

The Man's clutching grasp relaxes and he lets the paper drop to the table...

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, FRONT STOOP -- DAY

Meredith comes outside to grab the mail.

HARPER (V.O.)

The Kaniva lead turned out to be anything but; just some couple, gossiping. But it led to so much more...

She arrives at the mailbox and looks at the day's letters quickly: Junk Mail and Bills.

She's about to go back inside when one catches her eye. It's addressed to "Mommy and Daddy."

The other letters fall by the wayside.

Meredith's mouth drops open. Behind her, Jim's at the open front door. He sees her reaction.

JIM

What is it, Mere?

She holds the letter up, speechless.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- LATER

Dawson, Harper, and several other Officers convene in the Beaumont's Living Room. Jim and Nancy wait eagerly on the couch.

After FORENSICS finishes dusting the letter, a LAB TECH hands it over to Harper.

TECH AGENT

No prints.

HARPER

None?

The Tech shakes his head. Harper turns to Nancy and hands her the letter.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Okay, Mrs. Beaumont - whenever you're ready.

She takes it tentatively and reads the heading.

NANCY

It says it's from Jane... but it's not her handwriting.

She turns the note over, looking at the back.

NANCY (CONT'D)

It's not any of theirs.

Jim reads over her shoulder.

JIM

And they've spelled Arnna's name wrong.

Nancy shakes her head.

NANCY

I can't read this--

Harper puts a hand on her back and takes the letter.

HARPER

It's okay, you don't have to.

He quickly gives it a once-over.

CONTINUED:

HARPER (CONT'D)

It says he's tired of them... wants to give 'em back... says if you're in Dandenong on the 26th, he'd be happy to be rid of them.

Nancy looks up smiling.

NANCY

They're alive?!

Harper nods, allowing himself to smile too.

HARPER

Seems like it...

Nancy turns to her husband and hugs him as hard as she can.

EXT. DANDENONG SQUARE -- EVENING, FEBRUARY 25TH, 1968

An unmarked Van pulls under a HOTEL OVERHANG. The Beaumonts duck their way inside.

HARPER (V.O.)

The Beaumonts were ferried into Dandenong early that weekend, as the letter warned that if any police were involved they wouldn't see their children again.

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- MORNING OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH

Jim stands on the landing of the stairs in front of the Post Office.

HARPER (V.O.)

The letter demanded Mr. Beaumont be in front of the Post Office at 9:00 a.m. wearing a pair of white trousers and a dark coat.

He waits, nervously, as no one comes.

HARPER (V.O.)

The whole thing was a mess; botched before we left the state.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, KITCHEN -- THE DAY BEFORE

Meredith covertly picks up the newly-installed phone's receiver. She glances over her shoulder before dialing.

After a moment, a MALE VOICE answers and she speaks:

CONTINUED:

MEREDITH

You still offering money for leads?

INT. CHANNEL 9 NEWSROOM, EDITING BAY -- MOMENTS LATER

PETER LEWELL, Executive Producer of the *Channel 9 Evening News*, hangs up the phone after talking to Meredith.

He sees Rob Kelvin eating a cruller and reading over his script for the night.

PETER LEWELL

Kelvin, guess what - you're goin' to Dandenong!

Kelvin answers; his mouth full--

KELVIN

Pete, I'm eating here, I don't wanna go to Melbourne--

PETER LEWELL

--Rob, the Beaumonts are on the move.

Kelvin's face immediately brightens. Smelling a lead, he drops his pastry in the trash, grabs his coat, and heads for the door.

EXT. DANDENONG -- THE NEXT DAY

Jim Beaumont stands where he's been told to stand. He looks this way and that for anything to happen. People walk past, motorists drive by. To the untrained eye, nothing remains out of the ordinary...

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY -- SAME TIME

High above the city, an OLDER BOY stands watching Mr. Beaumont wait.

Behind him a MAN with spotless hands places one of them on the BOY'S SHOULDER.

MAN'S VOICE

Come on, let's go.

The Boy turns and follows him inside.

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- SAME TIME

An elderly Secretary, Miss ALICE PARKER, comes outside and carefully descends the many stairs. She makes her way to Mr. Beaumont.

ALICE PARKER
Are you Jim?

JIM
Yes.

She hands him a folded up piece of paper.

ALICE PARKER
Message for you. The person said -
and I hope I'm getting this right
- that *'Grant isn't feeling well
and we won't be able to come until
after lunch.'*

JIM
Thank you.

ALICE PARKER
Welcome.

She turns and stares at the ominous predicament the stairs present. Jim reads the handwritten note anyway. Before the woman is out of range, she says to no one in particular:

SECRETARY
That looked like Jim Beaumont!

INT. GARVIN'S PUB -- NOON

Jim accompanied by Harper, in plain clothes, finds a dark, unpopulated corner in which to sit, eat lunch, and drink.

HARPER
Can I see the note?

Jim fishes it out of his pocket.

JIM
Yeah, it's in the old bird's script
though.

He's about to hand it over when he sees a familiar face: Rob Kelvin at the bar, ordering a drink.

JIM (CONT'D)
Jesus, no...

CONTINUED:

All the air seems to go out of him. Harper follows his gaze as Kelvin walks up to them.

KELVIN

Hello, mates! Oh, Mr. Beaumont!
What are you doing in Dandenong?!

Harper stares at him.

HARPER

The question, Kelvin, is 'what're you doing here?' You know journos aren't allowed in private businesses.

KELVIN

Who me? I'm just gettin' a drink...

Jim speaks through gritted teeth.

JIM

If you're the reason I can't see my children again--

Kelvin cuts him off with a pitying:

KELVIN

Ohhh...

He smiles.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

You still think you're getting your kids back?

HARPER

Kelvin, leave now!

KELVIN

What is it they say in the states?

He puts a finger on his chin, mugging for all around.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Ah, yes...

(beat)

It's a free country.

HARPER

Rob, I'm warning you--

Kelvin turns on him abruptly.

CONTINUED: (2)

KELVIN

*And what are you warning me about?
You're not in Glenelg anymore. You
have no jurisdiction here. I'm
just trying to ask Mr. Beaumont
here a couple questions...*

Jim leans forward in his chair, urgently keeping his voice down--

JIM

Stop saying my name!

It's no use; Kelvin continues -- his tirade aimed at Harper.

KELVIN

*--I don't need to be accosted just
because Jim Beaumont happens to be
newsworthy!*

People have started to notice...

JIM

Lower your voice!

Kelvin finally rounds on Jim, his voice practically a YELL.

KELVIN

*And just how would you like me to
act, Mr. Beaumont?!*

It's all Jim needs to hear. He launches himself over the table tackling Kelvin to the ground. He pummels the man channeling all the aggression of the last two years.

INT. GARVIN'S PUB, PARLOR ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A DRUNK flies through a side door into an ADJOINING ROOM to alert everyone --

DRUNK

It's on for young and old!

An old BARFLY sits up in his stool.

BARFLY

Who's fightin'?

DRUNK

*Jim Beaumont and that asshole from
the news, Rob Kelvin - ya' know,
the one with the hair!*

CONTINUED:

The few local attendants scramble to their feet to see--

INT. GARVIN'S PUB -- CONTINUOUS

Harper tries hopelessly to pull Mr. Beaumont off Rob Kelvin. But Jim continues to rain down punches.

JIM

You son of a bitch! You cost me my kids!

Kelvin SCREAMS out through beaten teeth:

KELVIN

Someone! Get this man off me!

Harper, with the help of the BARTENDER, finally manages to do just that. Kelvin continues SCREAMING, unabated:

KELVIN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna sue you, Beaumont!

Jim tries to scramble back over to Kelvin but Harper holds him back.

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Jim Beaumont waits for anything to happen. A PRESS AREA has been cordoned off and members of the MELBOURNE HERALD, the ADELAIDE OBSERVER, and various TV NETWORKS crowd the sidewalk across from him.

HARPER (V.O.)

Mr. Beaumont returned that afternoon to wait.

(beat)

No one showed.

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- THE NEXT DAY

Jim waits again.

HARPER (V.O.)

The same was true of the next day...

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- THE THIRD DAY

Jim, resigned, remains where he is.

HARPER (V.O.)

...and the next day.

EXT. DANDENONG POST OFFICE -- DUSK, THE THIRD DAY

The sun finally floats below the horizon.

HARPER (V.O.)

At Dusk, on the third day, he went home.

FADE TO:

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- MONDAY

Jim and Nancy once again sit on opposite sides of the couch. Harper stands, holding a brand new letter addressed to just "Daddy." He reads:

HARPER

You have crossed me for the last time. You won't see your kids again. I can promise you that. I have no choice but to keep them.

Nancy dissolves into tears once again. Jim's lost somewhere in his own head. Harper tries to finish...

HARPER (CONT'D)

It's signed - "Arthur Friend."

Meredith's the only one who can find words.

MEREDITH

So what's next?

HARPER

In a manner of speaking...
(beat)
Nothing.

NANCY

Nothing?

HARPER

With all due respect, we have zero to go on. A negro girl who says she saw Grant in the West Torrens is the last person to have seen one of your kids, Mrs. Beaumont. And she's not coming forward any time soon. Unless this letter turns up something - and it severely looks like it won't - then we have nothing to go on at all.

CONTINUED:

He takes a moment, avoiding the hard part.

HARPER (CONT'D)

There's only so long we can keep
our best men on this...

Nancy sits straight up in her seat.

NANCY

Wait, you're giving up?

HARPER

No, Mrs. Beaumont. Just taking a
breatha'. I can promise you - if
one more spec of evidence turns up
this whole station'll be looking
for your kids--

She stubs out her cigarette.

NANCY

--This is ridiculous. My children
are out there somewhere - alive.
You said it yourself. They're
alive! And Meredith asks you what
you can do for 'em and you say
nothing?! Well, fuck you! *I'll find
my own damn kids!*

She stalks out of the room as Harper calls after her:

HARPER

Mrs. Beaumont!

But she ignores him.

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- PRESENT DAY

Harper, now an old man, exhales deeply.

HARPER

...and that brings us to the night
of the second kidnapping.

Liddy stands and stretches.

LIDDY

A good a time as any to quit for
the day. We'll pick this up
tomorrow if you don't mind. I do
appreciate you doing this.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Oh, my pleasure! Keeps my mind sharp remembering this stuff.

She takes off his MIC.

LIDDY

I'll walk you out...

EXT. GLENELG BEACH FRONT -- MINUTES LATER

Harper and Liddy make their way side-by-side towards Harper's car.

HARPER

I'm sorry about earlier.

LIDDY

Oh, don't mention it. People have rough edges. I learned that a long time ago.

HARPER

I guess I'm just wondering why you're making this documentary.

LIDDY

To some day - with all the evidence that's still out there - to find the kidnapper.

HARPER

You think you're gonna find some scrap of evidence we didn't?

Liddy smiles.

LIDDY

You know, most people think you're obsessed. That your preoccupation with the Beaumonts has gone to your head. What's your interest in their case? What's made it so important that you've given up forty years of your life?

HARPER

I like a good mystery. What about you? We know why I'm here. Your "Fisherman" documentary the only reason you're here?

CONTINUED:

LIDDY

Hey, James O'Neill is a legitimate suspect in the Beaumont and Adelaide Oval kidnappings.

HARPER

I never said he wasn't. But he's not your guy.

LIDDY

How can you be so sure? He was in Adelaide at the time the Beaumonts went missing and the pattern of his crimes match what happened on Glenelg Beach.

HARPER

Not if you look closely. O'Neill was prone to random fits of violence. All his crimes seem to show him succumbing to some deep, carnal wish. They're immediate, spur-of-the-moment...

(beat)

Our guy romances his victims.

Liddy tries to refute it, but can't.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Besides, you're not asking the right questions - you're not looking in the right places.

LIDDY

And where should I look?

HARPER

The Postie, let's start there. First he says he saw the kids around three in the arvo, then after questioning it seems more like 10 a.m. as they were walking to the bus...

EXT. MOSELY STREET -- JANUARY 26TH, 1966

The Postman, quite paranoid by now, crosses the street after looking over his shoulder for anyone following him.

EXT. GLENELG BEACH, PARKING LOT -- PRESENT DAY

Liddy and Harper have reached his car.

CONTINUED:

LIDDY

And what about the money that went missing from the suspects pants?

HARPER

We haven't gotten to that yet.

LIDDY

So you know?! Not one of my sources could tell me! Who took it?!

HARPER

We'll get to that...

He smiles sidelong at her.

HARPER (CONT'D)

You know, you're starting to think like me?

LIDDY

How's that? Paranoid all the time?

He LAUGHS.

HARPER

Maybe...

He catches himself staring at her.

HARPER (V.O.)

Listen maybe I'm bad at this, but do you wanna get a drink or something?

She grins.

LIDDY

It's that "or something" that gets people in trouble, isn't it?

(laughs)

I would really, but I have to meet my dad for dinner and--

She looks at her watch--

LIDDY (CONT'D)

--Oh, and I'm late! We'll pick this up tomorrow, kay?

She turns to her car and pulls out her keys. Over her shoulder:

CONTINUED: (2)

LIDDY (CONT'D)
'Bout three, yeah?

Harper smiles thinly, a little disappointed.

HARPER
You bet.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Harper enters with a bag of groceries. Setting them on the counter, he grabs a beer from the fridge and drains it.

Instead of putting the food away, he fishes another beer out and collapses into his living room recliner.

There's hardly any room to move in the house: the halls, floors, and walls are lined with boxes upon boxes of evidence from the Beaumont Case.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- DAY TWO

Both Liddy and Harper settle into their chairs.

LIDDY
Yesterday we left off at the night of the Adelaide Oval kidnapping.

HARPER
You just don't think that these horrible people can be so bold. I mean, to take two young girls in plain sight of 3,000 screaming fans? It requires a certain type of person, doesn't it?

LIDDY
Do you remember the girls?

HARPER
It's hard to forget them...
(beat)
Their name's are burned in my memory.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, BLEACHERS -- EVENING, AUGUST 25TH, 1973

A bored looking four-year-old, KIRSTE GORDON, sits next to JOANNE RATCLIFFE, 11.

CONTINUED:

Kirste's there with her grandmother. Both the old woman and Joanne's parents watch the match, enthralled.

HARPER (V.O.)

Kirste was four and Joanne, eleven.
Their families were seated next to
each other in the stands.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, PLAYING GREEN -- CONTINUOUS

North Adelaide's Football Team, wearing the proud red and white, are making easy work of the Norwood Club they're pitted against.

HARPER (V.O.)

It was the night North Adelaide
trounced the 'red-legs' seven-nil.

On the field, North Adelaide draws a free kick and scores handily.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, BLEACHERS -- CONTINUOUS

Joanne's parents cheer with the rest of their section. Joanne leans towards her MOTHER and yells over the clamor:

JOANNE

I've got to go to the toilet--

Her mother waves her past. As Joanne gets up to leave, Kirste's GRANDMOTHER grabs ahold of her arm.

MRS. GORDON

Did you say you're going to the
toilet? Can you take Kirste with
you?

Joanne looks at the chubby little child next to the Woman.

JOANNE

Sure.

She takes Kirste by the hand and leads her down the stairs.

INT. ADELAIDE OVAL, MAIN GATE -- MOMENTS LATER

Hand-in-hand they make their way towards the bathrooms.

Some ways behind them, a man in a PLAID JACKET and FEDORA, discreetly follows.

He has a familiar tuft of blonde hair jutting out the back of his neck.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, BLEACHERS -- LATER

North Adelaide scores again and the roar is deafening. When it finally dies down, Joanne's Mother looks to her side... to Joanne's empty seat.

HARPER (V.O.)

Some twenty minutes later, Joanne's mother noticed that her daughter had not returned. She became visibly worried.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, GROUNDS -- LATER

The Man in the Plaid Jacket carries Kirste over his shoulder. Joanne follows, concerned.

HARPER (V.O.)

Over the next ninety minutes, no less than thirteen witnesses saw the girls with a tall, blonde Man; each assuming they'd seen a father with his two unruly children.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

A young girl, SYLVIA WOHLING, 11, walks with her tail-gating FATHER back towards the Oval. He turns away from her and starts to urinate.

SYLVIA

Daddy!

MR. WOHLING

Gotta piss, sweetheart! Keep a look-out!

She rolls her eyes, but does as she's told. It's a second or two before she sees the Man and the girls coming out of the shadows. The Man's stumbling gait makes him stick out...

SYLVIA (V.O.)

He walked with a lean, like he was drunk...

She stares at his appearance; his hat, in particular:

SYLVIA (V.O.)

His hat had a wide brim... very Queensland Country, I remember. I don't think anyone's mentioned that yet.

INT. WOHLING RESIDENCE, NORWOOD -- PRESENT DAY

Sylvia Wohling, now many years older, sits in a comfortable armchair by her glassed-in patio.

SYLVIA

I told my father what I had seen and he thought what most parents thought: you know 'spare the rod,' and such... but it bothered me for days after and even more so when I made the connection in my twenties. I knew I'd seen what I'd seen. So I kept at my fiancé about what happened that night. He finally told me to just come in and give my statement.

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, BACK LAWN -- NIGHT, 1973

Sylvia watches as they disappear back into the night. Joanne beats the Man's legs as hard as she can; an effort to get him to let go of Kirste.

SYLVIA (V.O.)

The Parents of that girl should be proud. She did everything she could to save her little friend.

(beat)

Sometimes it's never enough.

EXT. SERVICE ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The Man drags Kirste, with Joanne in tow, towards the BACK ROADS.

A NORWOOD FAN sees the tussle and pulls over some ways down the street. He gets out of his car.

HARPER (V.O.)

A Man driving past the Oval was the last person to see the girls. He stopped and almost said something...

The Fan shakes his head and gets back in his car.

HARPER (V.O.)

...but in the end, decided it was none of his business.

He drives off, leaving a cloud of dust, as the tall, blonde Man rounds the corner and walks headlong into the woods.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- THE NEXT DAY

Chief Billis slams the morning paper down onto a table.

BILLIS

Soak it in, boys - we look like
idiots!

Every available member of the station house crowds forward to see. The headline reads, "*The Pied Piper of Adelaide.*"

NGUYEN

The Pied Piper? What's a pied
piper?

Harper takes a break from reading the article.

HARPER

In folklore, he's a traveling
musician who comes to a town
overrun with rats. He makes a deal
to play his pipe and lure the rats
away. When he does though, the
townspeople, having been freed of
the rats, decide not to pay him. So
he turns to using his talents on
the townspeople's children.

NGUYEN

What happened to the kids?

HARPER

He made them drown themselves.

Newspaper in hand, Nguyen shakes his head.

NGUYEN

This is in horrible taste.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Jim finds himself alone for the time being. He walks around aimlessly, looking at the countless PICTURE FRAMES of his children. They seem to be laughing at him...

He makes up his mind about something. Leaving the room, he comes back with a box and starts loading any and all photos of the kids into it.

When he's done, he carries the lot of them out back.

EXT. BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Crossing the grass, he finds a spot for the box on a shelf in the open GARAGE.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- SAME TIME

A toilet FLUSHES and moments later, Nancy walks in drying her hands. She immediately sees the BARE WALLS and EMPTY CABINET TOPS.

Looking around horrified, she sees Jim through the window, walking to get the mail.

She hurries out the back door.

EXT. BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Nancy finds the box all too quickly. She brings it back inside.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

As she walks in with the box, Jim enters with the mail. She holds the contents out to him.

NANCY

What the hell is this?

He sees what she's carrying.

JIM

You know exactly what it is.

NANCY

Why?

JIM

You can't look at a picture of their's without losing it. Each time you do it's like you're gone again. And I'm here alone.

NANCY

Is it so easy to forget them? I'm sorry Jim if I'm just not ready to yet!

JIM

How can you say that to me?

CONTINUED:

NANCY

*Because they mean more to me than
they do you!*

JIM

That is not true!

NANCY

Then why aren't you angrier?!

JIM

What good does it do? I see you
getting loud. I see you making
noise. And it's all to make you
feel better! Every time I walked
out that door I did it for you and
the kids - I didn't know I shoulda'
been home watching them! I didn't
know I *had* to be there--

NANCY

--That's what a parent does!

JIM

Then, why weren't you watching
them!

His words have shaken her. She begins to cry once again.
But the tears don't seem to affect him this time.

JIM (CONT'D)

I'm goin' for a walkabout.
(beat)
I'll be back later.

He turns and leaves. He's out the door by the time she
whispers:

NANCY

Take me with you.

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, FRONT STOOP -- CONTINUOUS

Jim closes the door behind him and walks down the front steps
to his truck.

CONTINUED:

HARPER (V.O.)

What most people don't know and the news never picked up on was that Jim left his home every night after work and searched for those kids - like they'd simply taken the wrong way and gotten lost on their trip home.

INT. JIM'S BUICK -- MINUTES LATER

Jim pulls over to let his children into the car.

JIM

Hey kids, climb on in...

They crowd into the backseat. He drives off, grinning.

JANE

Hey, daddy!

GRANT

Hi, dad!

Arnna doesn't say anything, but smiles a wide, apologetic smile as if she's taking the blame for everything. Jim fixes his rearview mirror and smiles back at her.

JIM

You've missed so much, kids...

(beat)

But there's nothing we can't get back. Everything's gonna be right as rain...

He looks at them again in the rearview and smiles a wistful smile.

And then, just like that, they're gone; a product of his fevered mind...

He drives on, silently.

EXT. ADELAIDE REC. HALL -- LATER

Jim pulls into the parking lot, crowded for a Thursday night. The sign outside, lit up in dull-neon reads, "Games Center."

INT. ADELAIDE REC. HALL -- A HALF HOUR LATER

Jim sits on a bench in the FOOD COURT drinking a soda. Behind him, PINBALL MACHINES, SHOOTING GALLERIES, and BALL TOSSES fight for floor space.

CONTINUED:

He watches families as they pass. Seeming blissfully happy.

He sees a TOWNIE hitting on a WAITRESS. She twirls her hair, receptively.

The Man's SON plays with a yellow, TOY TRUCK; racing it along the railing that separates the ARCADE from the DANCE FLOOR.

Jim gives the boy a small smile and waves. The kid doesn't notice him. He keeps running with his truck. Too far in fact -- he quickly disappears into a crowd of people.

JIM

Hey, kid!

Jim looks over at the Father. He's busy making out with the Waitress. Jim gets up and races through the crowd.

He looks left and right; the boy is nowhere to be found.

Finally, he comes across him by the front exits.

JIM (CONT'D)

Hey kiddo, you can't go runnin' off like that!

Hearing Jim's voice makes the boy realize he's alone. He starts to cry.

JIM (CONT'D)

Oh, don't worry! I know just where your daddy is!

Jim gives the boy a hug and grabs his hand.

JIM (CONT'D)

Let's go find him...

And as he tucks the tag sticking out of the boy's shirt back in, the child's father comes running up.

TOWNIE

Hey buddy, whattaya doin'?!

JIM

I was just helping him find his parents.

TOWNIE

Oh, I bet you were!

He takes his son viciously back from Jim.

CONTINUED: (2)

JIM

Easy now, you'll hurt him!

He puts a hand of warning on the Man's arm. The Man rips it back, violently.

TOWNIE

Get the fuck off me!

He whirls around and punches Jim in the jaw. Jim lands amid the flashing lights of the Arcade as the Townie stalks away with his child.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- EARLY MORNING

Jim Beaumont sits on a bench outside the booking area, waiting.

Nancy eventually comes in. She takes the seat next to him.

They sit there, silently. After a minute, she places a hand on his knee.

He stares at it, blankly.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, FRONT DESK -- CONTINUOUS

Harper stands watching them through the glass of the Interrogation Room. Dawson walks past. He sees the Beaumonts.

DAWSON

What'a they doin' here? Anything new happen?

Harper shakes his head, resigned.

HARPER (V.O.)

A month later they were divorced. Mr. Beaumont moved out shortly after that.

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- PRESENT, DAY 2

Harper recounts this part of the story with no obvious relish.

HARPER

I once asked Mrs. Beaumont why she never moved. Why she didn't pick up and leave; just get out of town. You know what she said to me? She said--

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- DAY, 1970'S

Mrs. Beaumont sits on her couch talking to Harper in the early years after the kidnapping. Harper's words are her own:

NANCY

What if they come home? What if
they come home and we're not there
anymore? Imagine how scared they'd
be...

EXT. HARDING STREET -- SOMEDAY

Jane, Grant, and Arna walk down the street. They haven't aged a day...

HARPER (V.O.)

...like one day they'd round the
corner of Harding Street and
there'd be Jane with Grant and
Arna holding her hands so
tightly...

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE, DAY 2

Harper continues, uninterrupted.

HARPER

I didn't understand it until years
later...

He tries to find the right words...

HARPER (CONT'D)

...it is their *unique tragedy* that
drives us to find the person
responsible. To make them pay.

(beat)

To make them pay, dearly.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- AFTERNOON

Harper sits by himself in the middle of an office party. He has a stupid hat on his head that reads, "*Congratulations!*"

HARPER (V.O.)

In the fall, Billis stepped down
and Dawson made Chief.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HARPER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

We had a party for him.

By the punch bowl, a young, blonde-haired Cadet named CHASE EBBING asks Nguyen for directions. Nguyen points him towards Harper.

HARPER (V.O.)

I got a new partner, a rookie by the name of Ebbing.

Ebbing makes his way to Harper.

EBBING

I am meeting a lot of new people and... boy! *They do not like you!*

HARPER

It's mostly just one person, but he gets around.

EBBING

Who is it?

Harper takes a large sip of his drink.

HARPER

You're at his party.

EBBING

Oh.

(gets it)

Ohhh! Well, I just wanna tell you I'm coming into this with my mind open.

He looks around, then leans in.

EBBING (CONT'D)

They told me you're mostly interested in this one case... the Beaumonts. You wanna tell me a little about it?

HARPER

Look, I get that you're eager and it's good to have someone in my corna' for once, but police work's not what you see on television. Your generation got sold a bad bill of goods. Proper police work's in the details. Rememba' that.

CONTINUED: (2)

Ebbing takes out his notepad and starts jotting. Harper shakes his head, laughing, and walks away.

HARPER (CONT'D)
You don't have to write it down.

Across the room, Dawson LAUGHS with a mouth full of cake and beer. He's surrounded by supporters.

HARPER (V.O.)
The years began to pass...
(beat)
And for the better part of a decade, the leads stopped coming in.

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- DAY 2

Liddy's about to move on to her next question, but can't.

LIDDY
I noticed that dip in the timeline too. What do you think accounts for it?

HARPER
Beats me...

LIDDY
So, there was nothing... *concrete* in all those years? Nothing at all?

Harper thinks about it.

HARPER
Well, there was one thing...

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

A middle-aged Man is crying. His name is DOUG RODGERS. Harper and Ebbing uncomfortably watch him weep.

DOUG
It was me - okay?!

EBBING
It was you, what?

DOUG
I was only thirteen at the time, but I take full responsibility.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Again... for what?

He looks up at them, horrified at having to say it.

DOUG

It was me who wrote the Beaumonts those letters. The ones that told them to go to Dandenong...

Harper's half-smirk disappears. He explodes:

HARPER

You what?!

Doug holds up his hands, in case Harper decides to attack him.

DOUG

I'm so sorry! I have three kids of my own now and if anybody...

He dissolves into sobs again. Harper SCREAMS at the top of his lungs.

HARPER

Do you have any idea what you've done?!

He knocks over a chair and tears out of the room.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harper, having told Dawson, stands in front of the man's desk waiting for a decision.

HARPER

I think we should go to the press.

DAWSON

And why's that?

HARPER

Because we can now only account for the Beaumonts whereabouts until one a.m. the night after the kidnapping.

DAWSON

Says who? The nigger-bitch?

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Yes Dawson, the black woman who saw Grant get grabbed.

DAWSON

So what you're saying is that there are no witnesses who saw the Beaumonts after nightfall?

HARPER

I just told you - Karen Jones was walking home when--

Dawson cuts him off with a wave of his fingers. He's thinking about something.

DAWSON

You're not gonna tell anyone about the thirteen year old.

HARPER

What?! Why not?

DAWSON

It gives people hope. What makes people feel better: that the Beaumonts went missing that first day, or that their father left the state in a heroic quest to save them?

HARPER

A matter of opinion really. I wouldn't want to be lied to.

DAWSON

Anyway, that's the end of it.

HARPER

Fine. Alright if I go do my job now?

He reaches for the doorknob.

DAWSON

Yeah, about that... major crimes bureau is bursting as it is and 'special cases' happens to have more than one vacancy in it...

Harper gets what he's hinting at--

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

--No fucking way!

DAWSON

Harper, I'm givin' you what you want - cold case. You can review the Beaumonts until your eyes bleed.

HARPER

You know it's a demotion!

DAWSON

Do I? Takes all kinds Harper. All kinds to run a station!

HARPER

I have other cases--

DAWSON

--You haven't been acting like it!

HARPER

You're like a petulant child, Dawson! Do you know that?

DAWSON

Then I'm a child that looks a hell of a lot like your boss - ya got me?!

HARPER

Yeah, I got ya, Chief!

He's about to leave--

DAWSON

Oh, and Harper?

He turns around.

HARPER

What is it?

DAWSON

One more thing, son. You ever pistol whip me again - I'll cut your balls off.

He smiles.

DAWSON (CONT'D)

I told you I'd get ya' back.

CONTINUED: (3)

Harper leaves, but not before slamming the door behind him.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- LATER

Harper sits at his desk, fuming. Across the room, he sees Ebbing leave Dawson's office and waves him over.

HARPER

What were you doing in there?

EBBING

I told him I wasn't goin' anywhere without my partner. Thought it was kind'a chivalrous of me. Anyway, thanks for the pay cut, asshole!

HARPER

You just walked in and told him that?

EBBING

Yeah. Why?

HARPER

Nothing... I just would have loved to have seen his face.

EBBING

He was livid.

Harper grins.

HARPER

You're lucky you weren't fired!

EBBING

Not really. My father's on the town council.

Harper puts a hand over his face and laughs so hard that Dawson has to stick his head out of his office to see what the commotion's about.

EXT. GLENELG BEACH FRONT -- PRESENT, DAY 2

It's the afternoon after the second day of interviews. Liddy again walks with Harper towards their cars.

He does his best not to flirt with her.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

I assume as a documentarian I can say that something's off limits and you won't use it, right?

LIDDY

Of course.

HARPER

Then just because I know you're looking for the whole story... there's something I think you should know.

LIDDY

And what's that?

HARPER

I never really told anybody this, but when I was twelve I was kidnapped. I didn't see my parents for sixteen weeks.

Liddy slows down to a walk, eventually stopping altogether.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I finally escaped through a storm cellar vent. Wandered for days... never could lead Police back to where I'd been.

They arrive at the parking lot and lean against the wooden railing separating beach and asphalt. Harper's face turns graver than it was before.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I think they're still out there sometimes.

(beat)

Maybe that's why I became a cop.

He smiles a sad sort of smile.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Christ, I'm almost an old man and it still bothers me.

He draws a hard breath and Liddy smirks, sympathetically.

LIDDY

Tell you what - you still want that drink after all the interviews are over, I'd be glad to go.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Really?

She nods.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Then it's a date.

LIDDY

You're so old, no one says that anymore!

Laughing, she gets in her car. He watches her drive off.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK;

HARPER (V.O.)

The trail had been cold for years.

Then, without warning - two developments in the same week.

(beat)

It all started with the briefcases.

SUPER: 1986

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST TORRENS RUBBISH DUMP -- AFTERNOON

At the Southern boundary of ADELAIDE AIRPORT, single engine aircrafts take off and land. Opposite the fence, at the end of MORPHETT ROAD sits the West Torrens Rubbish Dump.

In the first dumpster after the entrance, TIM ARNETT, a local garbage man sifts through trash. Outside, another trash man, NEIL LONSDALE, supports him by smoking a cigarette.

Tim lifts what he's been trying to pry free: an old, brown SUITCASE.

TIM

God, there's tons of these - ten to one says they didn't get permission to dump here.

He heaves the briefcase out onto the ground. It lands several yards away - it's lock broken.

With the top off, the contents, HUNDREDS of NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, start blowing in the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Neil leans over and fishes one out of the air. He reads it, comprehension slowly dawning.

NEIL

Ahh, Tim?

TIM

Yeah?

NEIL

You're gonna wanna take a look at this.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

Harper and Ebbing dump the cutouts onto the table. The ones sent alight, flutter to the ground. Every single article pertains to the Beaumonts. And each has been commented on in RED INK by its former owner.

EBBING

Jesus Christ...

They go through them one-by-one. Harper's the first to grab. Over a byline that reads: Beaumont Children; people hunt in sandhills, someone has written "not in sandhills..."

Ebbing's next. The one he's holding, featuring a picture of Mrs. Beaumont on her way to the police station, has the words "I understand" painted over it.

They come fast and furious now: an article on the Dandenong Drop reads, "What a joke."

There's a portrait of the kids taken a few weeks before the kidnapping. Over Jane's picture: "She used to comb my hair..."

And when a Reporter quotes Nancy Beaumont as saying "I believe I will see them again" the red writing responds with a "no, no, no..."

EXT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- DAY, 1986

The once beautiful home has fallen into disrepair.

HARPER (V.O.)

At the same time across town, Mrs. Beaumont was vacuuming in the home the neighborhood kids had taken to calling "*The Murder House*."

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Nancy, much worse for the wear, busies herself with spring cleaning.

In the background, the television's turned on just for the noise. She doesn't notice when the News starts featuring an "Anniversary Special" on the Beaumont kidnapping.

Something gets caught in the VACUUM CLEANER. She turns it off to investigate, in time to hear a VOICE on her television say--

JILL NICHOLS (O.S.)
 --It's been twenty long years since
 the Beaumont children went missing--

Nancy twirls around and drops the Vacuum Cleaner. She hurries to turn the set off.

But when she gets there something stops her: they're showing an old picture of Jim from years earlier. She smiles and reaches for him, but the scene changes.

Now it's B-roll of the search of the Dunes. JILL NICHOLS speaks over it.

JILL NICHOLS (V.O.)
 Two decades ago, this beach front
 community showed up in droves to
 search for the Beaumont Children.
 Today their legend has fallen into
 the annals of folklore with parents
 warning their kids to be careful of
 strangers lest they end up like the
 Beaumonts--

Nancy's about to switch it off when, among the searchers, she spots a mound of yellow hair.

NANCY
 Oh my God...

Tears spring to her eyes. On the fringes of the crowd stands a middle-aged Man.

Gaunt. Tall. Blonde.

His face is obscured by the poor quality film, but the resemblance to Van Czar's SKETCH is uncanny.

The feed from her television cuts seamlessly with--

INT. CHANNEL 9 NEWSROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Rob Kelvin, with more than a little grey hair by now, reads the Evening News.

KELVIN

...Thank you Jill, for that remarkable look back down memory lane. Coming up this hour: pet grooming tips and a North Adelaide teen is kidnapped within a mile of his own home--

Kelvin *falters*. His eyes have caught the IN-STUDIO MONITORS: they're focused on a house he knows all too well. He trails off...

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Fuckin' Christ...

The STAGE DIRECTOR looks up from his clipboard when he hears Kelvin curse. He follows Kelvin's line of sight and sees the Residence on display.

STAGE DIRECTOR

Oh God--
(waves to an underling)
Cut to a commercial! Cut to a commercial!

He rushes to the news desk.

KELVIN

Why is my house up there?! Can someone tell me that? Where's Richard?!

The Stage Director enters the television frame, trying to assuage him--

STAGE MANAGER

Rob, now calm down--

KELVIN

--I'm not gonna calm down! Someone needs to tell me *where the fuck my son is*--

They cut transmission.

EXT. KELVIN HOUSE -- NIGHT

POLICE UNITS and NEWS VANS cover the front lawn and clog the street. Rob Kelvin frantically runs towards his home, shouting--

KELVIN
Richie! Richie, come out!

He gets as far as the POLICE LINE. He's stopped by a SERGEANT who calls for help. Kelvin still tries to push through.

His wife hears him and runs out of the house. He yells to her--

KELVIN (CONT'D)
Marcy! Where is he?!!

MRS. KELVIN
He's not here, Rob!

Kelvin collapses against the Officer, refusing to accept it.

KELVIN
*Tell him to come out! Tell him his
dad says come out!*

Marcy finally reaches her husband. She takes him from the Cop. Once Rob's in her arms, he loses all composure.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE OFFICE, BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE on a PIXILATED GLOSSY of the Beaumont suspect. Dawson passes it around.

DAWSON
This was messenger'd over this morning.

HARPER
What am I looking at?

DAWSON
I'll tell you what you're lookin' at - that woman found something we all missed.

HARPER
This is what Mrs. Beaumont saw?!

DAWSON
The station got their affiliate to send it to Sydney.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DAWSON (CONT'D)

It's been scrubbed. This is as clear as they can get it.

Harper eyes it up and down. Dawson turns to Nguyen.

DAWSON (CONT'D)

Anything new in the Kelvin case?

NGUYEN

Witnesses saw the kid with two men late Saturday night - one unidentified, the other known around town as Bevan Spencer Von Einem.

Harper perks up.

HARPER

Von Einem?

NGUYEN

Yeah, you know him?

HARPER

He's been in here before. Almost positive. Real creepy guy.

DAWSON

Well, let's bring him in and see how creepy he really is.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- LATER

The Station House's officers, secretaries, and operators are hard at work, everyone going about their business.

Then the front doors open and everything comes to a stand-still as...

Nguyen leads a clean-cut suspect inside. The man is dressed to the nines in a new tuxedo. He's skinny with dirty blonde hair.

HARPER (V.O.)

When Von Einem was brought in, I thought, 'this is it... we caught him.'

VON EINEM glides through the station like a ghost. Nguyen steers him towards a holding room.

They pass Harper and for the briefest of seconds Von Einem and he lock eyes.

CONTINUED:

HARPER (V.O.)

He was the absolute most dangerous man I had ever seen in a bow tie.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, BRIEFING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Across the hall, Von Einem waits in the Interrogation Room, hands folded. People keep sneaking looks at him. He doesn't seem to notice.

EBBING

Why's he all dressed up?

NGUYEN

Cruisa' picked him up at his house. Get this: he was throwin' a Ball. Richest people in Adelaide were there. Cooper even said he saw the Mayor!

EBBING

What's a guy like that doin' in a place like this?

NGUYEN

Apparently, Harper was right. This isn't the first time he's been here.

EXT. GAJ-A-ROO DANCE HALL -- LATE NIGHT, 1972

An effeminate young male gets slapped around by two middle-aged Country-types.

NGUYEN (V.O.)

1972. He sees two men beatin' up a homo outside a dance hall, who they then throw off a bridge.

Von Einem sees them from across the street and calls out:

VON EINEM

Hey! What are you doin?!

He realizes they're about to heave the boy off the ledge and books it across the street.

By the time he reaches them, the victim has been tossed and the perps have run away.

Without wasting a moment, Von Einem goes in after the boy.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, BRIEFING ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Nguyen motions to the Interrogation Room.

NGUYEN

Von Einem there jumps in to save the boy! Or at least tries - kid drowned. Swept out to sea.

HARPER

Nguyen, let me ask you something - they ever find those two men?

Nguyen scans the case file.

NGUYEN

No, somethin' about a partial on a getaway car but... no, nothing. Why? What are you thinking?

Harper leans back in his chair.

EXT. GAJ-A-ROO DANCE HALL -- SAME NIGHT, 1972

Von Einem flirts heavily with the same boy. The kid keeps refusing his advances. Von Einem tugs on his jeans.

VON EINEM

Come on, don't pretend you weren't eyein' me in there...

The boy pushes him off--

BOY

Are you deaf, old man? I said quit it!

VON EINEM

Hey, be nice...

BOY

You don't read signs real well. You make me sick - who would wanna fuck you?!

He turns around to leave as Von Einem's smile fades. He fishes a leather BILLYCLUB out of his pocket and whacks the boy where skull meets spine. He collapses.

Von Einem hitches him up and over the bridge and watches as the body falls into the sea.

CONTINUED:

Then, hearing concerned voices from down the street, he makes a split decision -- and jumps in after the boy.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, BRIEFING ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Harper answers Nguyen's question.

HARPER

I'm thinking someone like that doesn't hear "no" very often.

EBBING

But why would he save the boy?

HARPER

Fame... respect... notoriety - take your pick.

NGUYEN

Harper, why you doin' this?

HARPER

Doin' what?

NGUYEN

His alibi was good enough for the cops back in '72. How come you gotta read into everything? Create new crimes?

HARPER

You really wanna know?

NGUYEN

Yeah.

HARPER

He look like anyone to you?

NGUYEN

Not particularly, why?

Harper throws Mrs. Beaumont's PIXILATED PHOTO across the table. Nguyen takes one look at it.

NGUYEN (CONT'D)

Oh, that's a stretch!

Ebbing takes the photo from him.

EBBING

Wow! I don't know - *I think it's pretty spot-on!*

CONTINUED:

Harper sits up, having decided something.

HARPER
 Nguyen, can I be there when you
 question the guy?

He GROANS.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 Please? I need this.

Nguyen shakes his head. Finally acquiesces...

NGUYEN
 Look, it's fine with me. But if
 Dawson sees you it's my ass!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Harper joins Nguyen inside. Nguyen nervously looks around
 for Dawson as Harper lowers the blinds.

Von Einem thinks it's an intimidation ploy.

VON EINEM
 Nice touch.

HARPER
 Oh, we haven't even started yet.

He pulls out a leather-bound BOOK. It's just been made;
 containing LAMINATED COPIES of the suitcase cut-out ARTICLES.

He shows it to Von Einem. The Man with dirty-blond hair
 flips through it with mild interest.

VON EINEM
 Someone loves to scrapbook...

His voice is cold. Emotionless. Slightly electric.

Harper watches him turn the pages. His hands are smooth and
 dainty, yet under each nail lies a string of dirt.

HARPER
 Are you familiar with Rob Kelvin?

VON EINEM
 The man from my television?

HARPER
 Yes. His son is missing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VON EINEM

My condolences.

HARPER

Are you aware that Richard Kelvin was a member of the homosexual community?

VON EINEM

You don't say...

HARPER

We've been told you were in his company the night before last.

VON EINEM

I'm afraid you'll have to be more specific, I'm in a lot of people's company... so to speak.

HARPER

It would have been a twenty-two year old white male with brown hair.

Von Einem raises his eyebrow.

VON EINEM

Bit young, don't you think?

HARPER

Not for some people, I suppose.

VON EINEM

I don't go out much anymore, Inspector. People tend to come to me. I'm quite popular like that. I used to be real, real good looking when I was younger. My hair used to be blonde and full. It's... kind of dulled with age. But there's a sort of dignity to that, wouldn't you agree?

HARPER

So you're saying you weren't out on Saturday Night?

VON EINEM

No.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Funny. Popular guy like you,
people probably remember your face.
Two witnesses saw you, Richard
Kelvin, and an unidentified male in
"The Tropic" from 10:45 at night
until around three in the morning.

VON EINEM

Far be it from me to call a total
stranger a liar.

Harper leans in.

HARPER

Do the names Grant, Arnna, and Jane
ring a bell?

VON EINEM

They sound like old names. As if
the people they belong to are dead.
(beat)
Are they?

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Harper and Ebbing argue in the hallway.

HARPER

We have nothing - just hearsay. We
gotta cut him loose.

EBBING

You can't just let him go! He's
gonna go out and do it again! Maybe
this time it'll be somebody you
care about!

HARPER

That's not fair!

EBBING

Come on, Harper! The West Torrens
Police even make him for three
unsolved kidnappings!

HARPER

Look! No one thinks he's guiltier
than me. But I watched Dawson act
with reckless abandon for fifteen
years and I did nothing. When I
catch this guy, it'll be legal and
it'll stick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EBBING
You're gonna let him walk!

HARPER
No - we're gonna let him walk!

EBBING
I don't believe you--

MR. B (O.S.)
Excuse me?

They're interrupted by a bald, middle-aged man standing right next to them.

HARPER
Can I help you?

MR. B
You are holding a Mr. Von Einem prisoner, is that right?

HARPER
I can neitha' confirm or deny--

MR. B
--If it's true I have something to tell you.

HARPER
And what's that?

MR. B
He's a very dangerous man.

INT. HOLDING ROOM -- SOON AFTER

MR. B sits across from Harper and Ebbing.

MR. B
I never took part in anything. I want that clear right now. I knew Von Einem, but we weren't friends. We just happen to have... similar interests.

EBBING
We don't need to hear about that.

MR. B
It's relevant. One night he starts tellin' me he's the one who kidnapped the Beaumonts;
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MR. B (CONT'D)

that he did some brilliant surgery on them and connected 'em up. And that one of them had died. He used to brag a lot, but I believed this. He knew... too much.

EBBING

Why should we believe you?

MR. B

Because I was with him when he kidnapped Richard Kelvin.

INT. DISCO TROPIC -- LAST SATURDAY, LATE NIGHT

RICHARD KELVIN, 22, sits drugged, propped up between two questionable men; the thudding electric forbears of early disco moaning in the background.

MR. B

Our friend is falling asleep...

Von Einem drags a dirty fingernail across the boy's cheek.

VON EINEM

Wake up, little prince!

INT. HOLDING ROOM -- BACK TO SCENE

Harper shakes his head, unconvinced.

HARPER

My partner's right. Why should we believe you?

MR. B

He also said he picked up two kids at the Oval.

HARPER

He what?!

EBBING

Come on, Harper - let's go. He's probably some derro who wandered in off the street; read a newspaper and thinks he's god's gift or something!

CONTINUED:

MR. B

I don't. tell. Tall. Tales! If you're workin' under the assumption that he's your man, then I'd say you weren't far off.

Out in the hallway, Harper sees Dawson coming.

HARPER

Please! Do you have anything else that might help us?!

Mr. B takes the longest of pauses. Finally he opens his mouth.

MR. B

He said he dumped the bodies in the Myponga.

EXT. MYPONGA RESERVOIR -- DAY

High up on a walkway: Harper, Rob Kelvin and a MOBILE COMMAND UNIT watch as down below SPECIAL TASK AND RESCUE Officers drag the bottom of the lake.

EXT. MYPONGA RESERVOIR (UNDERWATER) -- CONTINUOUS

Beneath the PATROL BOATS a DIVER excavates for any signs of past life. He brushes silt and debris from the base of the dam floor. It sends little dust clouds up into the murky water.

Finally, his brush catches on something: a handle. He digs deeper and finds it's attached to a METAL SUITCASE.

The Diver pulls it out and tries to lift it. But it proves too heavy. He lets go and surfaces.

EXT. MYPONGA RESERVOIR -- CONTINUOUS

The Diver tears his face mask off and CALLS UP to the Mobile Command Unit:

DIVER

I found something! Lower the pulley!

Next to Harper, a TOW TRUCK backs up to the railing's edge and begins to lower its high-tensile wire.

When it reaches the bottom, the Diver hooks the clasp onto the Suitcase's Metal Handle. He signals for them to retract the pulley and they do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Case lifts free of the water and bangs against the dam wall on its way up. It makes a *horrible scraping noise*.

But the weight is too much for the waterlogged case and the lock snaps...

The BODY of a dead 22-YEAR-OLD is suspended in mid-air for the briefest of seconds.

Rob Kelvin breaks for the railing to get a better look. He sees unhealed surgery scars and sloppy stitch-work.

The body almost looks like it's in one piece, but then gravity takes over and the separated limbs each go in a different direction; falling into the depths below.

Kelvin drops to his knees, trying desperately to catch his breath.

EXT. BANK OF THE MYPONGA -- MUCH LATER

Special Task and Rescue have found and reassembled the various body parts pulled from the water. They now lie under a blanket on the sandy bank of the Reservoir.

Harper leads Kelvin towards it.

HARPER

I know this is horrible, but we need you to identify your son. If you do it now you won't have to come back and do it later. I promise. And we really do need to know. They're only going to show you the face, okay?

Kelvin doesn't make a noise, just stares at the sheet that separates him from the corpse. Harper takes his silence as compliance. He motions for the MEDICAL EXAMINER to lift the sheet.

Rob Kelvin looks at his son. Sees the blood from deeper down under the sheet... sees the dent in the back of his head...

KELVIN

Oh my God...

He vomits into the sand.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, HARPER'S DESK -- AFTERNOON

Harper stares at all the accrued EVIDENCE of the BEAUMONT KIDNAPPING, ADELAIDE OVAL ABDUCTION, and RICHARD KELVIN MURDER piled on his desk.

He almost falls asleep when Ebbing rushes over excited.

EBBING

You're gonna love me!

HARPER

What happened?

EBBING

I had a feeling, so I checked it out. Guess what Nguyen just told me?

HARPER

Ebbing you're givin' me a nervous disorder - what is it?

EBBING

At the time the Beaumonts went missing, Von Einem was windin' his way up through Adelaide.

Harper runs a hand through his hair, exhausted.

HARPER

Jesus, that puts three of the worst criminal sociopaths Australia's ever seen - in or around the Adelaide area at the time the Beaumonts went missing.

EBBING

Must'a been a convention...

HARPER

You're not funny. Look, I wanna go back - recheck everything. What did our mystery witness say? There was more than one person involved? Run down the suspects.

EBBING

You know its Von Einem! He--

They're interrupted. Dawson storms in waving a folder.

CONTINUED:

DAWSON
You're prints are in!

HARPER
On the cut-outs? We catch a break?

DAWSON
The majority of them belong to
Hazel Abbey, 83. She lives in the
West Torrens.

HARPER
Majority? There are others?

DAWSON
You mean besides yours and Ebbings?

HARPER
Oh, don't even start with that!

DAWSON
It would make a lot of sense...

HARPER
Yeah, and pigs may fly and you
might get a date--

DAWSON
--I'm serious!

HARPER
So am I!

DAWSON
Then you should have thought about
proper procedure!

HARPER
Like you have? You know exactly
what you're doing, Dawson!

Ebbing, dazed, stares at the cutouts on Harper's desk.

EBBING
How can they dust all of these?

Dawson throws the file at him.

DAWSON
It's called police work. You'd
know if you were any fuckin' good
at your job!
(turns to Harper)
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAWSON (CONT'D)

I've told you so many times - it's little shit like this that makes a case. The details!

Dawson walks out in a huff. Hearing Harper's own words thrown back at him by Dawson, Ebbing starts to smile.

HARPER

(to Ebbing)

Don't you even dare!

Ebbing wipes the smirk off his face and looks at the case file Dawson threw at him.

EBBING

It's worth exploring this Hazel woman: she lives only a couple blocks from where Karen Jones saw Grant get grabbed.

EXT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE -- NIGHT

Harper and Ebbing walk up the front path to Hazel's house. They're met by her daughter, WANDA, 49.

WANDA

Officers...

EBBING

Are you the daughter? Mrs. Abbey?

WANDA

It's Mayhew, actually, I got married. I'm sorry you had to come all the way out here. My husband and I were trying to clean up for her. We had no idea what was in those briefcases.

HARPER

That's alright. May we talk to your mother?

WANDA

Absolutely, she's in the den.

Wanda leads them inside.

INT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE -- CONTINUOUS

HAZEL sits watching *Jeopardy* with the PATROL OFFICERS that got there before Harper. He waves them off.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Thanks, boys. We've got it from here.

They look a little disappointed to go. One even leans in to shake her hand.

OFFICER

Alright Hazel, we're gonna go now. You take care and I'll make sure I give my wife that Apple Crumble recipe.

HAZEL

Good, *my best to the kids!*

The Officer smiles and he and his partner leave. On their way out they glare at Harper. They're Dawson's Men.

Harper and Ebbing take their place. Wanda grabs a seat next to her mother.

HARPER

Mrs. Abbey, my name is Inspector Harper and this is my partner, Constable Ebbing - do you mind if we ask you a couple questions?

HAZEL

I know why you're here! Now, can I have my suitcases back?

EBBING

Can you have your suitcases back?!

HAZEL

Yes, they're mine and I want them back!

EBBING

Ma'am, do you have any idea how much trouble you've caused this department just by doodlin' on your clippings?

HAZEL

Oh, those aren't mine. They're my tenants. Lived downstairs, noisy fella - up all hours of the night.

Wanda puts a comforting hand on her mother's arm.

CONTINUED: (2)

WANDA

I don't know what she's talkin' about, she's lived alone for the past twenty years.

HARPER

And before that?

HAZEL

(to Wanda)

It was while you were in college - just for a few months, just to get some spendin' money. I had bills, unfair bills, and I'm not sorry.

Harper already has his notepad out.

HARPER

And this was in January of '66?

WANDA

If it was my first year at Uni it'd have to be.

(then, to Hazel)

Mother, are you sure about this?

HAZEL

I'm not stupid! I got cataracts and a fake hip, but I'm not stupid. He kept the door locked mostly, not that I climbed down those stairs often. But he seemed to like his privacy and I left him to it.

EXT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE -- MINUTES LATER

Harper and Ebbing take a moment outside.

EBBING

Why would moneybags back at the station rent a downstairs flat from an old lady in one of the poorest districts in South Australia? It doesn't add up.

HARPER

Sure it does - privacy.

EBBING

You're thinking it's a kill room?

HARPER

Would make sense...

CONTINUED:

EBBING

You just made the forensics department very happy.

HARPER

Let's let 'em loose; they never get a chance to play.

INT. ABBEY RESIDENCE, BASEMENT -- LATER

The number of officers at the house has increased exponentially.

Members of the FORENSICS TEAM have camped out in the Basement. They search, dusting handrails and flat surfaces looking for latent prints.

To one side a LAB RAT black-lights for any signs of semen or blood splatter.

Harper flags one of them down.

HARPER

Any luck?

FORENSIC TECH

Nothing yet. Just a couple cocktail napkins. Shirt tags.

HARPER

You think you're gonna find anything?

FORENSIC TECH

Depends.

HARPER

On what?

FORENSIC TECH

Surfaces... on a nonporous, dry surface a print can last for years. But who knows...

HARPER

Alright, let me know if something comes up.

INT. ADELAIDE AIRPORT -- MORNING

Nancy waits anxiously for a plane to arrive. She cranes to see the face of every person who walks through the terminal. They're not him.

CONTINUED:

Finally, she sees who she's looking for. It's Jim, his face haggard and long. When he catches sight of her he smiles, then just as suddenly, the smile fades.

Nancy waves and runs to him, but stops about five feet away.

NANCY

Hi...

JIM

Hi.

NANCY

Long flight?

JIM

The time flew by.

They hug. Nancy closes her eyes. Jim drops his bag to hold her tighter.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE -- LATER

An all too familiar scene, though it's been years: Harper sits in front of the Beaumonts on their couch.

HARPER

You don't know how good it is to see you two again.

(beat)

I just wish it was under better circumstances...

His words seem to hang in the air.

JIM

So we're here... both of us. What did you have to say?

They steal themselves for bad news.

HARPER

Rob Kelvin's son was kidnapped.

NANCY

I saw on the news.

HARPER

We had a witness who said a man named Bevan Von Einem was the last one to be seen with him. Two days ago we found Richard Kelvin in the Myponga. His body was...

CONTINUED:

Harper hates that he started this.

JIM

His body was what?

HARPER

The body was cut open and...

He chickens out again. Nancy blurts out:

NANCY

Just fucking say it!

HARPER

It was operated on. Cut open and
sewn back together.

JIM

And what does this have to do with
us?

HARPER

The witness said that Von Einem
also bragged about taking your
kids... and that he did the same to
them.

Jim and Nancy meet the news with silence. Harper continues,
just trying to fill the space.

HARPER (CONT'D)

...and it's my belief that he's
telling the truth. That Von
Einem's our man.

JIM

Who's it that told you this?

HARPER

He only came forward on the
condition he remain anonymous.

JIM

Well, how much do you really know
about this witness - I mean, he
could be the guy you're lookin'
for, for all you know!

HARPER

I don't think so. You know me - I
would never come to you if I wasn't
almost a hundred percent sure.

CONTINUED: (2)

NANCY
Well, thank you.

She gets up and leads him to the door.

HARPER
Goodbye, you two. He'll be
arraigned next Thursday, if you'd
like to come.

NANCY
Will your partner be there? I
never did like him...

HARPER
No one does, ma'am. I got a new
partner actually. You can meet him
if you like.

NANCY
I would like that. It was good to
see you, Geoffrey.

She kisses him on the cheek. Harper blushes. He leaves and Nancy closes the door behind him. She leans against it. Jim's still seated, his fists in front of his mouth.

JIM
So that's it...

NANCY
You know it's not him.

JIM
How do I know that?

NANCY
Because I still feel the way I do -
something would change... I'm never
gonna feel right again, but I can
feel *just* and that's seemin' more
and more like it's never gonna
happen!

She furiously starts to shake her head--

NANCY (CONT'D)
It's never gonna be over, Jim!

She storms out of the room. Jim tries to grab her hand, but she yanks it away.

INT. BEAUMONT HOUSE, BEDROOM -- LATER

Jim looks around to see if Nancy's nearby. She's not.

He opens the CLOSET DOORS and kneels down. Leaning forward, he pulls a SHOEBOX out from deep in the back. He takes the top off.

Inside, there's a REVOLVER with STRAY BULLETS lining the bottom. They bang around haphazardly against the sides.

Jim loads the gun and hides it in his belt. He pulls his shirt down over it and shuts the closet doors.

EXT. HEMINGHILL APARTMENTS -- MORNING

It's raining out as Harper leaves his apartment building. He goes to pop his trench coat collar when he's suddenly inundated by a horde of REPORTERS.

JILL NICHOLS

Inspector Harper, what's your comment about "The Family Murders?"

HARPER

The what?

REPORTER # 1

How long have you known there was more than one suspect?

HARPER

Who told you that?

REPORTER # 2

Is it true?

HARPER

No comment -- *now make a hole!*

He pushes his way through them to get to his car.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION, BRIEFING ROOM -- LATER

Dawson is incensed--

DAWSON

The family murders? Well, Congratulations!

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DAWSON (CONT'D)

Now every 'Joe Bloggs' on the street's gonna think that all the serial killers in Oz are operatin' within a secret, well-funded organization - that they know each other and have tea and shit!

HARPER

I don't know what to say, Dawson. It was one angle we were lookin' at. I have no idea how they found out.

DAWSON

I do. Someone in your department thought he'd make a quick buck and give the press a jump on a story--

HARPER

--Look, no one - no one! - in 'special cases' would do that!

DAWSON

Get a hold of your department Harper or I'll find someone who can! In the meantime, I wouldn't buy any new furniture - you probably won't be around much longer to enjoy it.

He slams the door. Harper YELLS after him:

HARPER

Asshole!

He turns to Ebbing. There's a grave look on his face.

HARPER (CONT'D)

You alright?

EBBING

I think... I think this is all my fault.

HARPER

What?

EBBING

I might have told my father what we were workin' on.

HARPER

Why would you do that?!

CONTINUED: (2)

EBBING

He's interested in my life - he checks up on me!

HARPER

I can't believe you didn't tell me this! I mean, with Dawson in the room?! I lied right to his face!

EBBING

I'm sorry.

HARPER

I vouched for you! Fuck--

He stands up and furiously kicks his chair across the room.

HARPER (CONT'D)

You will make this better.

EBBING

Absolutely.

HARPER

You can start by digging up anything you can on Von Einem's past. He goes to trial tomorrow and he is not walking. Do you hear me?! The barrister's office needs all the help they can get.

He steps in close to Ebbing.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Look, you fucked us. You know that. But work hard. Work fast. If I know Dawson he's trying to pin this on us right now. If you're quick you might be able to clear us both.

INT. PURNELL'S PUB ON LEFEVRE -- THURSDAY, MID-MORNING

Jim drinks hard, trying to psych himself up. The patrons give him a wide berth. They know who he is.

He orders another drink and is joined by an unexpected visitor: Rob Kelvin timidly sits down.

Beaumont stares at him. Kelvin looks just as old and as tired as he does.

CONTINUED:

So Jim goes back to his beer as Kelvin orders one for himself.

And they sit there. The grieving... waiting...

EXT. ADELAIDE COURTHOUSE -- NOON

Harper stands at a PAY-TELEPHONE KIOSK. He dials a number. After a second of ringing, Ebbing answers.

HARPER

I'm at the courthouse. They're bringing Von Einem in right now.

Behind him a POLICE GUARD escorts Von Einem up the Courthouse steps.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Where are you? You were supposed to be here an hour ago...

EBBING

You told me to make it right and that's what I'm doing. I went back to Von Einem's house and looked around a bit. Somethin' was bothering me and I think I was right. I got a contact from his rolodex that's got no heading. It's in the West Torrens, near the airport. It might be nothing, but then again it might be something.

HARPER

No that's good, follow up on that.

EBBING

I will. What are you doin'?

Harper turns and watches Von Einem scale the stairs.

HARPER

I'm tyin' up loose ends.

INT. ADELAIDE COURTHOUSE, LOBBY -- LATER

Jim and Nancy walk in the front door of the Lobby.

At the SECURITY CHECKPOINT the Officer seems to recognize them. He barely pats them down, bowing his head shamefully the entire time. He lets them pass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nancy walks towards the Courtroom only to notice Jim's not with her. She turns around. He's five feet away, acting strange.

JIM
I'm gonna use the toilet.

NANCY
Okay. I'll be in there.

He nods and goes into the bathroom.

INT. ADELAIDE COURTHOUSE, BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jim walks in and stares hard into the mirror above the sinks. After a moment, he unbuttons his shirt and rips the REVOLVER out of its hiding spot: taped in his armpit.

He peels the rest of the tape off the gun, then shoves it into his jacket pocket.

Buttoning his shirt back up, he splashes cold water on his face.

INT. ADELAIDE COURTHOUSE, HOLDING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Von Einem is placed in a cage. Nearby, a door leads straight into the COURTROOM. Harper enters through it. He shows his credentials to the GUARDS on duty.

HARPER
I have a couple questions for the detainee.

GUARD
Feel free. He's not goin' anywhere.

Harper pulls up a chair.

HARPER
You know why I'm here.

VON EINEM
I've said all I have to say about the Kelvin boy.

HARPER
This is about the Beaumonts.

VON EINEM
Oh... them.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Yes, them. Let's cut to it.
You're already going to jail--

VON EINEM

--That's not what my barrister
says...

HARPER

You're not on trial for something
you did back in '66. No one even
remembers that far back, do they?
They don't even care...

(beat)

But I gotta know. I've put too
many hours into this not to.

VON EINEM

And I talk and you go and tell the
judge just what I've said.

HARPER

It would be my word against yours.
And if that's all it took, I'd lie
right now; say you poured your
heart out to me. But no matter what
your defender says, you are going
to jail today. Probably for the
rest of your life.

(beat)

So what it comes down to is two
parents have an itch they can't
scratch. An itch that only goes
away with the satisfaction of truly
knowing what happened to their
kids. And then there's me... who's
just dying to find out if I was
right.

Harper leans in.

HARPER (CONT'D)

So was I?

Von Einem smiles slightly.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Think about all the attention you'd
get. They'll write about you for
years. They won't be able to
mention the Beaumont name without
saying "*kidnapped by Bevan Von
Einem*" after it.

CONTINUED: (2)

Bevan nods, grimly.

VON EINEM
Murdered by...

Harper hides the surprise well.

HARPER
They all dead?

VON EINEM
I did my best.
(beat)
It took quite a while.

Harper masks a small tremor in his throat.

HARPER
And it was you who took them from
Glenelg?

Von Einem smiles again.

VON EINEM
Who else would it have been?

Harper leans back. The truth, *finally*...

HARPER
Thank you.

He gets up and walks away; a sad look of accomplishment on his face. Von Einem calls after him:

VON EINEM
Yeah, but I didn't tell you how I
did it! Don't you wanna hear about
that?

Harper keeps walking.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)
How I watched them for weeks... how
I got 'em off the beach?!
(beat)
What I did back at my apartment?!

Harper's almost out the door.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)
*...how I sent their parents letters
about it?!*

CONTINUED: (3)

Harper stops in his tracks. He turns around and walks quickly back to the cage.

HARPER
What did you say?

VON EINEM
Letters. I sent them letters detailing every *horrible* thing I ever did to their children--

HARPER
--I don't believe it. You lied? You lied about everything?

VON EINEM
No. I took them.

Von Einem's panicked. Harper fights off exhausted tears.

HARPER
If these bars weren't here, you'd be dead already.

He sets off walking back towards the Courtroom.

VON EINEM
Is that a threat? I'm sure my counsel would love to hear about that!

He motions at the Guards.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)
And there are witnesses here, too!

One of the Guards looks up from his Newspaper.

GUARD
I didn't hear shit.

INT. ADELAIDE COURTHOUSE, LOBBY -- DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont wait with everyone else for the trial to begin.

Jim's hand is in his pocket, clutching the revolver...

The sound of anticipation in the courtroom is near deafening. Harper comes over to tell them of Von Einem's innocence.

We can't hear a word of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Once Harper says what he came to say, Mrs. Beaumont crumples against her ex-husband. To catch her, Jim takes his hand out of his pocket.

Gunless.

There, in the middle of the all those people - cradling the only piece left of his ruined life -- he finally cries.

EXT. DELANCEY STREET, WEST TORRENS -- SAME TIME

Ebbing KNOCKS on the door of an abandoned house. It looks like no one's lived there in years.

Thus, no one answers. He cups his hands and looks in through the dusty windows. Still nothing.

He KNOCKS AGAIN. More of the same.

He looks around the back and side, leaning over the chipped-paint picket fence. He's determined to find something...

So determined, he doesn't even notice when Meredith rounds the corner behind him with a bag of groceries. When she sees Ebbing, she slinks back behind a nearby hedge.

Fed up, he calls out one last time:

EBBING

Hello?!

There's no answer as unbeknownst to him the trunk door of his HATCHBACK opens. The tail end of a person crawls in and the door silently closes behind them.

Ebbing gets tired of looking. He takes one final appraisal of the House, then gets into his car and drives off.

Some ways down the road, the car skids to a stop and swerves across the road.

A moment passes. And someone gets out.

It's too far away to see who it is.

EXT. WEST TORRENS, ROADSIDE -- LATER

Harper screeches up in his Squad Car. He jumps out and runs to where his fellow OFFICERS are milling around Ebbing's CAR ACCIDENT. One of the Officers sees him and tries to hold him off--

CONTINUED:

OFFICER

--No, Harper you don't wanna see
this--

But it's too late. He catches sight of Ebbing, dead against the steering wheel, his throat slit. Harper immediately throws a hand up to cover his face. It takes him a minute to find words...

HARPER

What happened?

Dawson answers. He walks up behind Harper.

DAWSON

Someone was waiting for him. In the car. The superficial wounds are from the crash.

(beat)

What's he doing in the West Torrens, Harper?

HARPER

I asked him... he was tracking down a lead for me. I thought it was nothing...

DAWSON

Yeah? Well you were right for once in your pathetic life. A neighbor saw him pulling away from the white house on the corner. County records say the house belongs to Meredith Craig. That name ring a bell?

Harper's mouth goes slack as Dawson steps up to speak in his ear.

DAWSON (CONT'D)

Let me ask - where do you get off sending an agent out of district to check up on a lead?

HARPER

It wasn't supposed to be dangerous.

DAWSON

Yeah, they'll put that on your tombstone. You always manage to fuck everything up, don't you?

Dawson shakes his head and moves to walk away.

CONTINUED: (2)

DAWSON (CONT'D)

That's what happens when you go
"above and beyond."

Harper lunges at Dawson, clipping his lip. The other OFFICERS have to pull him off. Dawson staggers to his feet wiping the blood from his face--

DAWSON (CONT'D)

*Get him outta here! You're
finished, Harper! You're fired!*

Harper pulls free and throws himself into his car. He speeds off down the street.

INT. ADELAIDE POLICE STATION -- MINUTES LATER

Harper tears into the Station and heads straight for the FILES ROOM. Nguyen spots him before he can get there.

NGUYEN

Nu-uh, Harper. Dawson already radio'd. I'm not even allowed to let you in the building.

HARPER

Get out of my way, Nguyen.

NGUYEN

Look I'm real sorry about Ebbing but I just can't do it.

HARPER

I'm not asking you to. All you have to do is look the other way.

NGUYEN

Just go home, mate.

HARPER

It'd be a shame to have to pull a gun on you.

Nguyen appraises him quickly.

NGUYEN

You're serious...

(beat)

I guess it's true what they say about you - you just use people until you can't use them anymore.

CONTINUED:

He sighs and lets his arm drop. Harper moves past him, rifling through STACKS of FILES.

NGUYEN (CONT'D)
What are you even looking for?

HARPER
(while scanning)
Ebbing's accident - it took place
on Meredith Craig's block.

He pulls a dusty, old FOLDER from the cabinet.

HARPER (CONT'D)
--My logs from '65 to '68.

Nguyen watches as Harper frantically digs through his back logs.

NGUYEN
What a sad, old man you've become.

He shakes his head and walks to the door. As he's about to leave, Harper glances at him.

HARPER
Thank you, Nguyen. You were always
there for me.

Nguyen smiles despite himself.

NGUYEN
I'll make sure they don't throw any
of your shit out.

Harper goes back to the file. Nguyen moves to close the door, when Harper's head shoots up.

HARPER
Hold up.

NGUYEN
What is it?

Curiosity gets the better of him and he hurries to Harper's side. Harper reads aloud from his notes:

HARPER
I asked who she was married to.
She responded, "no - not married,
just hopelessly engaged."

CONTINUED: (2)

NGUYEN

To who?

HARPER

Mike Berman, a bartender. We need to check his background.

He looks expectantly at Nguyen, who rolls his eyes.

NGUYEN

Jesus Christ!

Nguyen wrenches open a cabinet drawer at the opposite side of the room and begins furiously searching...

HARPER

Odds are he was one of the other men on the bridge in '72.

NGUYEN

I don't know about that, but I have a Michael Jerome Berman from Sutter Place in the Torrens.

Harper slams his drawer shut and joins Nguyen.

HARPER

He have priors?

NGUYEN

I can do you one better--

He turns the binder around for Harper to see. There's a row of BOOKING SHOTS done in portrait. Harper spots Berman, where Nguyen points, front row left -- and instantly recognizes him as Mr. B.

HARPER

Son of a bitch...

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- LATER

Harper takes a seat at a glassed in queue of the VISITING ROOM. Soon enough, various INMATES are filed in. Von Einem takes a seat across from Harper, with only the glass to separate them.

HARPER

Thanks for meeting with me.

VON EINEM

It was this or read a book.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Why did you lie to me before?

VON EINEM

I didn't lie to you.

HARPER

I know Mike Berman was the other man on the bridge that night in '72.

VON EINEM

Just let it go...

HARPER

I was about to walk from this. After everything that happened. I threw my life away in the pursuit of something there probably isn't an answer for. So I think you owe me this.

VON EINEM

I don't owe you shit.

He groans and puts his head in his hands.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)

What's the difference now... they're long gone.

HARPER

Who is? Berman? Meredith?

Von Einem LAUGHS, mockingly.

VON EINEM

Is that what she told you her name was?

HARPER

Berman said you guys had a partnership?

VON EINEM

He would say that... if one of us needed a driver, if things got messy, the other would be there.

(beat)

We cleaned up each others messes...

EXT. HENLEY BEACH LIFESAVING CLUB -- LATE NIGHT, 1966

No one's around. It's silent outside, except for the flapping of a BLUE FLAG with a WHITE STRIPE running down the middle.

Von Einem lights a match and tosses it down onto a trail of gasoline. He watches as the fire races into the building and quickly envelopes the bottom floor...

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

Von Einem continues telling his story behind glass...

VON EINEM

And yet, there was still fun to be had. We played games with each other. Small pranks to fuck the other person up. Berman used to keep candies in his pocket for the kids. Only he wouldn't say he'd dipped 'em in crushed sleepin' pills. You see, it helped... *facilitate things*. We drugged the kids so they were easier to deal with--

EXT. MORPHETT ROAD -- LATE NIGHT, JANUARY 26TH, 1966

Grant stumbles, drugged, down a sidewalk as Karen Jones watches from behind a parked car...

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- RETURN TO SCENE

Von Einem leans in towards the divider, smiling.

VON EINEM

He used to get very mad if anyone misplaced his precious candy...

EXT. GLENELG BEACH, BENCH QUEUE -- DAY, JANUARY 26TH, 1966

Berman searches madly through his pockets -- *they're empty*.

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

Von Einem turns gravely serious...

VON EINEM

When he got back with the kids he was in a right state. He accused me of going too far. We had it out then and there...

INT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE, BASEMENT APARTMENT -- EVENING

The Children cry as Berman chews Von Einem out right in front of them.

BERMAN

--I coulda' been caught!

VON EINEM

But you weren't!

Grant cups his hands over his ears trying hopelessly to block out the noise. With everyone's backs turned, he escapes out a screen door.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

It was too much for Grant. In the confusion he slipped out.

(beat)

Mike had to go get him...

EXT. MORPHETT ROAD -- LATE NIGHT, 1966

Berman comes out of nowhere to snatch Grant up. Across the street, Karen Jones slaps a hand over her mouth to keep from making a sound.

INT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE, BASEMENT APARTMENT -- LATE NIGHT

Berman escorts the kids over to the corner where a large pile of used CHILDREN'S CLOTHES waits.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

Every time he took a kid the pattern began again... bring them back to the apartment... change their clothes...

Berman starts handing clothes to the Beaumonts. Every article of clothing seems to be missing its TAG.

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

HARPER (V.O.)

Why'd he remove the tags?

VON EINEM

You don't have children, do you?

Harper shakes his head.

CONTINUED:

VON EINEM (CONT'D)

If you did, you'd know. What's the first thing a mother does before she sends her kid out in new clothes?

It seems so simple when it finally comes to Harper.

HARPER

...write their names in it.

VON EINEM

Exactly. And that seemed to be his only safeguard. I don't think he expected the press that came with taking the Beaumonts. He became paranoid... started collecting...

INT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE, BASEMENT APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Berman cuts out pertinent ARTICLES from various CITY NEWSPAPERS.

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

Von Einem pauses to let another INMATE pass. He watches him as he goes. Finally he turns back to Harper.

VON EINEM

And it coulda gone on forever like that. But the old bitch got cheap. She upped the rent and when Berman couldn't pay, she locked him out. Had some of the neighba'hood boys box his things up and put 'em outside.

(beat)

They neglected to grab his clippings.

EXT. HAZEL ABBEY RESIDENCE -- NIGHT, 1967

Berman emerges from the bushes, his hoodie pulled tight to conceal his face.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

He tried to get 'em back, but come spring Hazel's children had returned from school and there always seemed to be someone home.

CONTINUED:

Berman pulls a CROWBAR out of his jacket. When he moves to jimmy a window, a LIGHT from inside comes on. He quickly flees.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

Unable to find other arrangements,
he moved in to Meredith's place.

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

VON EINEM

I know you think me a monster,
Inspector. But the truth is, you
have no idea what he put those kids
through. The manipulation. He
laid it out. Told 'em their
parents were dead. Meredith - as
you know her - was the key. The
last vestige of their old life.
They trusted her...

(beat)

And they shouldn't have.

INT. MEREDITH'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Weeks have passed. The children are no longer crying, but
have taken to watching CARTOONS silently.

Coming in the front door, Berman presents a BOUQUET of
PANSIES to Jane and for the first time since losing her
parents, she smiles.

From the kitchen, Meredith stares jealously at the two of
them together. She violently returns to chopping vegetables.

INT. MEREDITH'S HOUSE, BATHROOM -- THAT NIGHT

Meredith washes Jane's hair in the bathtub. She's rough
about it, and Jane seems to sense that something's amiss.

MEREDITH

Tilt your head back.

Jane warily obliges and Meredith starts rinsing the shampoo
out. A little too vigorously...

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

You think you're so pretty. Well
let me tell you, your looks will
fade. I had what you had.

JANE

I'm not even pretty...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEREDITH

That's right, sweetheart.

(beat)

You're not.

She shoves Jane's head underwater. The little girl fights for the surface but it's all for naught.

After a few tense moments, she goes limp.

EXT. MEREDITH'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- AFTER MIDNIGHT

The last house Ebbing ever stood out front of is now younger and cleaner. As if someone could have lived there at some point or another.

From outside, we see Berman yelling at Meredith through the windows.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

When he got off work that night,
she told him all about it.

(beat)

I had never seem him so upset...

INT. MEREDITH'S HOUSE -- LATER

Berman carries Jane's dripping wet, lifeless body from the BATHTUB to his BEDROOM.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

It seems he had been saving her for
a special occasion...

Before he slams the bedroom door, he glares at Meredith as she stands down the hallway, crying.

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- RETURN TO SCENE

Von Einem shakes his head, vehemently--

VON EINEM

I never liked her. And I finally
got up the courage to tell him so
after he got off work one night. We
were to meet alone *on the bridge*.

EXT. GAJ-A-ROO DANCE HALL -- LATE NIGHT, 1972

Von Einem arrives at the meeting point only to see Berman walking up with a now *thirteen-year-old* Grant.

CONTINUED:

VON EINEM (V.O.)

But he had brought the boy along.

Berman steps up, balding now. He and Von Einem share a few choice words. That's when the shoving begins. It's Berman who throws the first punch.

Prepared, Von Einem pulls out a collapsible METAL ROD and cracks Berman across the knee with it. Bone shatters. Blood spurts.

Berman SCREAMS in agony but throws his weight into Von Einem. As Bevan slips backwards, he collides with Grant who's sent over the railing.

Von Einem tries to catch the child, but it's too late. Berman sees what's happened and quickly hobbles away. Von Einem's left there as people respond to the cries.

He YELLS out all he can:

VON EINEM

I need some help over here!

Lifting himself over the railing, he dives in after Grant.

EXT. RIVERBANK -- MOMENTS LATER

Heaving for breath, Von Einem makes it to shore. But without Grant. He looks up at the PEDESTRIANS on the BRIDGE.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

I couldn't save him. I tried. By the time I reached the bank of the river, people had arrived. They'd seen Mike and I, but not our fight.

EXT. BRIDGE -- LATER

Von Einem sits in the back of an AMBULANCE with a blanket wrapped around him as a PARAMEDIC attends to a nasty forehead wound he sustained on the way down.

Berman stands several meters away talking with a POLICE OFFICER.

VON EINEM (V.O.)

Before the Police arrived we fabricated the tale of the homosexual gettin' roughed up. We even gave the cops a partial on a registration plate we had seen.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

VON EINEM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thought about telling them everything right then and there. But I couldn't tattle on Mike. He had just as much on me as I did on him.

(beat)

After that, we went our separate ways. And Mike got sloppier... and drunker...

EXT. ADELAIDE OVAL, GROUNDS -- THE NEXT YEAR

Berman walks out of the shadows, limping with his new injury, carrying Kriste Gordon in his arms with Joanne Ratcliffe following close behind...

VON EINEM (V.O.)

I always knew when one of his deeds made the papers. And always, there you were, just two steps behind. But you never did catch up to him, did you?

(beat)

So I waited, stuck in a stalemate...

INT. ADELAIDE REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY -- BACK TO SCENE

Von Einem finishes up, briskly.

VON EINEM

Until one day he walks into your office and sees fit to push everything on me.

HARPER

And you weren't with him the night Kelvin was kidnapped?

VON EINEM

I hadn't seen Berman in over a decade. Guess he thought that since I was in for one crime, I should be in for all of them. If I were him I don't know if I'da done much different. Kill two birds with one stone. Get me outta the picture and silence Kelvin, who if I'm not mistaken was just about to launch a twentieth anniversary special on the kidnappings.

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Why wouldn't you tell me this earlier? Back when I could do something about it! Why did you cop to the whole thing?

VON EINEM

They had me on my own crimes. I wasn't gettin' out. Besides, what's a few more years on a life sentence?

HARPER

You could have ended it all if you just spoke up.

VON EINEM

But you see, I couldn't. There are still people who could be hurt by all of this.

HARPER

Who?

VON EINEM

Who's left?

Harper searches Bevan's face for the answer. He's surprised to see tears appear in the man's eyes.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)

He said he'd hurt her...

Harper pictures Arnna standing awkwardly as Berman flatters Jane with the flowers.

VON EINEM (CONT'D)

I love her so much.

(beat)

I just can't let anything happen to her.

The bell for visiting hour sounds and the inmates start saying their good-byes. A pair of GUARDS arrive to put Von Einem's RESTRAINTS back on.

HARPER

Bevan, what happened to Arnna?

VON EINEM

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

CONTINUED: (2)

The Guards start to pull him away.

HARPER
Please Bevan...

When Von Einem finally answers, he's too far away for Harper to hear --

HARPER (CONT'D)
What?!

Harper pounds on the glass with both hands--

HARPER (CONT'D)
Bevan, I can't hear you!

INT. CEMENT ROOM -- PRESENT DAY

Harper finishes up his story with a *broken voice*.

HARPER
When I went back the next week it was only to find out that he'd killed himself the night before. Hung in his cell.

He continues on, a little brusque...

HARPER (CONT'D)
I don't know whether to believe the man or not. I go back and forth. Did he speak the truth or was his story the stuff sociopaths are made of; so detailed and believable that even I was fooled. I wasn't the first to suggest that Berman mighta' kidnapped Kelvin simply to blame it on Von Einem. It doesn't matter though. I tried to report my findings, but no one would listen. I'd become the drunken monster I'd always feared I would.
(beat)
I had lost my credibility.

He exhales.

HARPER (CONT'D)
What it comes down to - and what I'd give everything to change - is that I don't know where the Beaumont Children went. Maybe no one ever did.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HARPER (CONT'D)

Maybe they died that very first night. All we know is... no one ever saw them again.

LIDDY

Doesn't it bother you? Not knowing?

HARPER

When I was younger it did. I've learned to relax. I lived the life I was meant to live.

(beat)

You can't be upset with the hand you're dealt.

She nods and turns the camera off.

LIDDY

I think I'm gonna end with that.

She gets up and crosses to him.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

I want to thank you once again for talkin' with me. You didn't have to.

HARPER

No worries.

LIDDY

I'll take your mic if you'll be happy to be rid of it.

He LAUGHS.

HARPER

Yeah, it's a bit limiting, in'it?

She ducks in close to him to remove it. He lifts his arms to help her. They're awkward together. She blurts out the first thing she can think of.

LIDDY

So, you still want that drink?

He LAUGHS again, though it's clear the story has taken its toll...

HARPER

Actually, I'm gonna ask for a rain check. If that's alright?

CONTINUED: (2)

LIDDY
Of course.

HARPER
I'm sure you were just pitying an
old man, anyway.

LIDDY
No. I would have gone.

He smiles.

HARPER
Thanks.
(beat)
You just made my life.

She's done with the mic.

LIDDY
Well, goodbye I guess...

HARPER
Don't worry, I'll stay in touch.

She leads him out the door.

EXT. BEACH FRONT -- DUSK

Liddy holds the front door for him and Harper thanks her. He waves and sets off down the beach. He's unsure on his feet; stumbling, other things on his mind.

Liddy watches him go, pity in her eyes.

SUPER: South Australia Police still receive leads on a weekly basis and still have an officer assigned to the case.

Then the SCENE FADES to when Liddy was younger... to when she was Arna.

EXT. GLENELG BEACH, WATERFRONT -- JANUARY 26TH, 1966

That fateful day: Arna's about to follow her brother and sister into the surf when she hears:

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN
Why, hello there!

ARNA
Hello.

CONTINUED:

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

You're Arnna, right? You've seen me on the pier befor'. I had my shepherd collie a couple weeks back. Rememba? My name's Victor.

She looks up at him, shielding her face from the sun in her eyes. He's still anonymous...

ARNNA

(somewhat timid)

Yeah...

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN

Now see you're very smart. You're not supposed to talk to strangers unless they're good and you know them. And you know me so there's nothing to be afraid of. Besides - you're safe.

(beat)

You're talkin' to a Police Officer.

She smiles a little, slowly being won over. Behind her Jane slogs her way out to Arnna.

JANE

Arnna, come swim...

ARNNA

This is my friend, Victa'.

We whirl around to see who they're talking to: it's Harper, age 25. He's young, skinny, and blonde. He looks into the sun and smiles.

HARPER

Where your parents at on this fine, fine day?

He winks at Arnna.

CUT TO BLACK:

Super: Present, Three Months Later

FADE IN:

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE, BEACHSIDE -- DUSK

Harper carries a FISHING KIT up the stairs to his front door. He fumbles with the keys.

CONTINUED:

His house is in the middle of nowhere. Solitary.

He gets the lock open and is about to go inside when he sees a PACKAGE jutting out of his mailbox. He juggles the keys and the fishing gear and manages to grab it. Fumbling with everything else, he goes inside.

INT. HARPER'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

He throws the gear in the corner and grabs a beer. He opens the package. It's a VHS: a copy of Liddy's movie. He pops it into the machine.

Liddy's voice is the first thing he hears...

LIDDY

Everyone in Australia remembers where they were when the Beaumonts got kidnapped. It was a cultural event; a milestone.

(beat)

I was on a beach in Glenelg.

Harper drops his beer. The video continues...

LIDDY (CONT'D)

Not much was ever known about the identity of the Beaumont kidnapper... until now.

A STILL PHOTOGRAPH taken of HARPER at a crime scene is posted up on the screen.

Harper grabs the television like it's some kind of sick joke.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

When the Beaumonts first went missing, Geoff Harper was coming off two weeks of paid vacation. He'd just made Inspector and his habit of going on "fishing trips" always seemed to coincide with some horrible local crime. But why would a cop commit such a heinous violation of his duties?

Harper watches breathlessly -- *aghast*.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

The answer may surprise some of you. As a child, Geoff Harper was kidnapped.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LIDDY (CONT'D)

He spent weeks deprived of his mother and father and eventually began to sympathize with his captors.

Harper gets to his feet, looking around, positive he's being watched.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

Still not convinced? The scrawlings on the cut-outs found in a discarded suitcase in a Warneet Rubbish Dump were of a very specific special-order red-ink pen. One of hundreds found in Harper's own home.

Harper gets up and tears open drawers and closets. Flowing out of each are thousands upon thousands of RED PENS.

A VOICE comes from behind him:

ARNNA (O.S.)

You like it?

He whirls around, wide-eyed and crazed.

ARNNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's just a first cut, but it should do nicely, don't you think?

Harper squints into the darkness of his hallway.

HARPER

Liddy?

She raises a GUN high above her head. Harper throws his hands up.

ARNNA

Let's not pretend that's my name.

HARPER

Arnna... don't...

ARNNA

They told me you'd try and get out of it. I guess I didn't realize how deeply you believed your own lies...

HARPER

Please, you're confused--

CONTINUED: (2)

She fires once. His hand shatters. He falls, SCREAMING to the ground:

HARPER (CONT'D)
It wasn't me!

Arinna LAUGHS sickly...

ARNNA
That's what they all say.

She raises the gun again and empties the clip into him.

EXT. HARPER'S HOUSE -- LATER

With much difficulty, Arinna drags two bulging TRASH BAGS down the back staircase.

At the base of them sits a car idling. A Man steps out of the driver side to help her.

He has been known by many names. Mike Berman. Mr. B. And finally, and most recently, as The Tall, Blonde Man.

Taking the bags from her, he puts them in the trunk.

ARNNA
It's all done.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN
Almost.

He wraps her in a hug.

THE TALL, BLONDE MAN (CONT'D)
You're the best daughter a man
could ask for...

After fixing the tag sticking out of her shirt, they get in the car and drive off.

And in the darkness, coming from their radio, the sound of "*Crimson and Clover*" fades away...

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END