

A STEP TOO FAR

Written by

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Based on "A Step Too Far"
A novel by Tony McFadden

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EXT. BUDGEWOI BEACH, AUSTRALIA - DAY

MAC DURRIDGE (mid-50s, thinning hair, slightly overweight) in a short-sleeved button shirt stained under the pits and down the middle of his back, shorts and Volleys.

MAC (V.O.)

Fuck it was hot. Like two rats
fucking in a wool sock, hot.

He walks the beach. LINCOLN, a Border Collie, runs in front of him. Heat waves shimmer off the sand. The few beach goers do the hot-foot dance from their towel to the water.

MAC (V.O.)

Run along, pooch. Take your crap up
there. Maybe I won't notice it.

In front of him, in the middle distance, a young lady is kite-surfing. She spots Lincoln and navigates to shore. She drops the sail on the sand and rides the board in.

This is JESSIE (19, tall, lithe, blonde ponytail). Lincoln bounds through the surf to meet her. There's a tangle of arms and legs until Jessie ends up sitting with Lincoln getting his head scratched.

MAC

Hey, Jessie.

JESSIE

Mac, this your dog? How old is he?
What's his name?

MAC

Lincoln. Almost three.

Jessie coos and scratches under Lincoln's chin.

JESSIE

Ooo, Linky-poo. You're a cutie.

MAC (V.O.)

Jesus Christ. As if getting his
nuts cut off wasn't emasculating
enough.

MAC

You're looking good, Jess. The
break did you good.

Jess gives Lincoln a final pat and stands. She looks at Mac for a second, then gives him a solid hug.

JESSIE

Thanks. I really appreciate what
you did.

MAC
What did I do?

JESSIE
You got the guy who killed Jimmy.

Mac disentangles himself from the kite-surf leads and calls Lincoln over. Snaps the lead on the dog's collar.

MAC
Yeah, about that.

JESSIE
I know people thought I wouldn't give him the time of day, but he was growing on me. He looked so sweet in his Security Guard uniform. And he wasn't always wanting to get on the piss.

She sniffs and wipes her nose on the back of her hand.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I know that Jackson was arrested because of what you told the police. So thanks.

Jessie collects the leads to the kite and stuffs them in a carry bag. Mac picks it up and slings it over his shoulder. He winces.

Jessie tucks her short board under her arm.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
You okay?

MAC
Sure. Ribs are still a bit sore from all that fun a few months ago.

MAC (V.O.)
A few months ago I got the tripe kicked out of me by a couple of large angry surfers. Long story. I won't bore you.

Mac adjusts the bag and Lincoln tugs at the end of the lead as they walk over the dune to the parking lot. An unmarked police car is parked sideways across three spots.

The driver's door opens and SENIOR CONSTABLE WILL GRANGE (50's, neat as a pin, hair slicked back) gets out. The passenger door opens and TOM JACKSON (50, overweight, cargo shorts, too small T-shirt stretched over large stomach) exits.

MAC (V.O.)
Fuck.

Jackson turns his back to Mac and Jessie and talks with Grange over the top of the car. Jessie drops her board and sprints down the walkway with a yell.

She hits Jackson at full speed, driving his fat body into the car. Mac sighs, drops the kite bag and Lincoln's lead and runs down after her.

Jackson is curled in the foetal position on the ground and Jessie is driving her heel into any soft bit she can. And there's lots of soft bits. She is kicking with considerable energy.

Mac reaches her, dodges a swinging foot and grabs Jessie around the waist and pulls her back. Grange has made it around the car and helps Jackson to his feet. Holds him back from attacking Jessie.

Mac leans close to Jessie's ear and speaks softly.

MAC

Ease up, Jess. You can't win this.
Even if you do.

Jess takes a deep breath and relaxes

MAC (CONT'D)

You going to behave?

Jessie glances over her shoulder at Mac, eyes narrowed.

JESSIE

For now. Let me go.

MAC

If you attack him again, Grange
will arrest you.

JESSIE

Okay. Fine.

MAC (V.O.)

Have you ever heard a woman say
'fine' and have it be fine?

Jess relaxes a bit. Jackson dusts himself off, sniffs and tugs his T-shirt down over his gut.

MAC

We okay here, Jackson?

JACKSON

You piece of shit. That tramp needs
to watch what's she's doing. I'll
let it go for now, but if I see her
again, I'm not responsible for what
I might do.

Mac grabs Jessie's wrist and stops her from swinging at Jackson.

MAC

Ease up, Jess. Not worth it.

MAC (V.O.)

But I'd pay good money to watch you take him apart. One day.

Jess shakes her hand free, delivers a glare in Jackson's direction.

JESSIE

Fuck you, Jackson. Fuck off and die. The next time I see you, Mac won't be around to protect you. I'll finish you.

Mac watches Jessie stomp back up the dune to grab her board. He turns back to Jackson and steps close, nose to nose.

MAC

She doesn't like you. I don't like you. You don't have many friends around here anymore. Why don't you piss off out west? Maybe the mines. You'll fit right in.

The lower half of Jackson's face smiles. The eyes are dead. He continues facing Mac while talking.

JACKSON

You buying me a burger, Grange? This asshole's going to fuck off now and leave us alone.

Mac holds the gaze for a minute, then retrieves the bag holding the kite and leads. He jogs over to Jessie's car, Lincoln happily running along side.

Jessie is strapping her board to the roof of her car, jaw set, motion jerky and angry. Mac opens the back door and tosses the bag in the back seat.

MAC

You okay?

She cinches the straps holding the board and gets in the front seat and starts her car. Mac leans down and talks in the window.

MAC (CONT'D)

I don't know what happened. He's out of jail. Some deal he cut.

Mac stands and grabs Lincoln's lead.

MAC (CONT'D)
He's off the force, though.

Jessie stares straight forward.

JESSIE
He killed Jimmy. And he's walking
around. What fucking good are you?

The car accelerates out of the parking lot, gravel flying
from the front wheels.

MAC (V.O.)
What fucking good am I.

Mac walks Lincoln to his car and opens the front door. The
dog hops in. Mac leaves the door open and walks to the picnic
table occupied by Grange and Jackson.

Mac slides in beside Grange, across from Jackson. Jackson
ignores him.

JACKSON
So, Willy, they couldn't make it
stick?

Jackson looks at Mac.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Tainted evidence, or something.

MAC
You're letting this piece of shit
call you Willy? Should be Sr
Constable Grange to him.

Grange rubs the side of his nose and looks at Jackson.

GRANGE
We're all people, Mac. And
Jackson's an old friend. If the
courts think there isn't enough to
hold him, who am I to argue?

MAC
I like you, Grange. You're a good
cop. Don't let this piece of runny
shit ruin you.

Jackson throws his cup of soda, ice cubes bounce off Mac's
face.

Mac launches over the table and swings a right at Jackson's
chin, but misses and overshoots, landing on the sand. He
rolls and just avoids a kick to the kidneys. Jumps to his
feet and dusts off sand.

Jackson has his fists up, ready for a fight.

MAC (CONT'D)
Oh, you've got to be fucking kidding me.

Mac prepares to square off and Grange butts in.

GRANGE
Jesus Christ. Stop it before I arrest the both of you for being fucking idiots.

Grange wipes soda off his shirt.

GRANGE (CONT'D)
Fucking hell.

He takes it off and grabs a clean shirt out of the back of his car. There's a small tattoo on his right shoulder.

MAC
That a tatt?

Grange pulls on his clean shirt and ignores Mac.

GRANGE
You two going to be okay? Or do we have a problem?

Mac holds up his hands.

MAC
Okay. Don't tell me. I'm leaving.

Mac points at Jackson.

MAC (CONT'D)
You don't have a badge protecting you any more. Cross the street when you see me coming.

Mac gets in his car. Lincoln sits on the passenger seat. He turns the ignition and the car turns over two or three times, hard, before it starts.

INT. MAC DURRIDGE PRIVATE INVESTIGATION

Mac lives in his office. His office is the living room of his apartment. Upstairs from a TAB. An old computer sits on a battered desk.

Mac stands in front of the air conditioning vent, letting cold air wash over him. Lincoln sits beside him.

SOPHIE (late 30's, athletic, Mediterranean dark) walks into the office area pulling a suitcase behind her. She's wearing a blue sundress with yellow flowers.

MAC

Soph, you heading somewhere?

Sophie stops. Doesn't turn. Clenches her jaw.

SOPHIE

Don't get me started.

MAC (V.O.)

Oh, fuck. What did I do now?

MAC

Ya know, I can't read minds.
Telepathic skills quit pretty much
the day you moved in.

SOPHIE

Gwen's husband left her for his
CFO. She's ten years older than my
sister. The bitch. I'm heading up
to Newcastle for a few days to help
her kill a few bottles of wine.

Mac opens his mouth to respond and Sophie barrels on.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Can you imagine what that must feel
like? The guy you married, whose
underwear you washed, dumps you for
someone ten years older than you?
No. No you can't. Because you're an
arsehole male like every other
arsehole male on the planet.

MAC (V.O.)

I had nothing.

Mac turns back to the cold air and closes his eyes.

SOPHIE

Are you ignoring me?

MAC

I've got nothing. Larry is indeed a
dick. Gwen has been aggrieved. Go
up there and help her get drunk.

Mac looks over at his girlfriend.

MAC (CONT'D)

You brother heading up there, too?

SOPHIE

Stan? Another asshole male. Fuck
no. Haven't talked to him since he
was arrested.

Mac takes Sophie's hands.

MAC

Go visit Gwen, get her head sorted.
Get your head sorted. Just remember
when you're ready to come back,
this asshole male will still be
here.

GWEN

Thanks. I'm a bit on edge.

She scratches the top of Lincoln's head.

GWEN (CONT'D)

I'll see you in a few days.

She takes her suitcase and leaves.

INT. SALLY'S GARAGE

Mac leaves his car running, air con cranked, and walks into a decrepit looking garage. SALLY (40s, platinum blonde, weathered) is behind the counter, smoking.

MAC

Hey, Sal. How's things going? Hank
still well?

SALLY

Still behind bars. What are you
doing here?

MAC

My car is really hard to start.
Getting harder every day.

Sally looks past Mac through the glass at his car.

SALLY

You still driving that piece of
shit?

MAC

Probably the plugs. It's been a
long time.

DICK (late 20s, short, bulging muscles) comes through the door from the garage, tight singlet displaying steroid-fueled muscles. Tatts cover his arms and shoulders. He's wiping grease off his hands with a rag.

DICK

Sal, someone left a piece of shit
blocking the entrance. I'm going to
drive it into the bush. I'll be
right back, okay?

SALLY

Bring it in. Mac thinks it needs
new plugs. Have a look.

Dick looks at Sal for a minute, then at Mac. He nods and
turns back toward the garage.

MAC

Let me get the dog, first.

SALLY

Sophie giving you a lift back?

MAC

She's visiting her sister in
Newcastle for a few days.

SALLY

Okay, I'll call a cab.

MAC

Don't worry about it. I need the
exercise.

EXT. SALLY'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Mac clips the lead on Lincoln and moves out of Dick's way.

DICK

New plug'll double the value of
this piece of shit.

MAC

Tell Sal to call me when it's
finished.

Mac walks down the road, a comfortable pace that will let him
get the 2 klicks back to his place without breaking much of a
sweat.

After about a minute, with Lincoln tugging his arm as the dog
bounded to every tree for watering, Mac sighs.

MAC (CONT'D)

Shoulda taken up that offer, eh,
Linc? Too fucking hot out here.

A car rolls along side and the passenger's window rolls down.
Mac leans down and looks in. At the wheel is ERNIE (late
40's, short, pudgy).

ERNIE

Get in, Mac. I need you.

MAC (V.O.)

Ernie as in Earn-ie. My most
reliable source of income.

Mac opens the back door and Lincoln bounds in. Mac slides in the front and the dog sticks his head between the front seats and licks Ernie's ear.

ERNIE

Fuck, Mac, call off the mutt.

Mac laughs and points at the back seat.

MAC

Get back there, Linc. What's up, Ern?

Ernie hands a file folder to Mac and pulls from the curb. Mac adjusts the dash vent to collect more cold air and opens the folder. It's a picture of a woman, bank statements, property information.

ERNIE

Betty's missing.

MAC

Since when?

ERNIE

Yesterday. She left her phone behind.

Mac closes the folder and holds it up.

MAC

What am I supposed to do with this?

ERNIE

All of everything I know about her is in there. I need you to find her, Mac. I'm nothing without her.

Mac tosses the folder on the floor between his feet.

MAC

I've known Betty almost as long as you have. I'll do what I can.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE - NEXT MORNING

CAMERON (lanky 20 year old) sits at Mac's computer. Ernie's folder filled with Betty information is open on the desk by the keyboard. His head is down and he's typing and clicking with intent.

MAC

Making any headway?

Cameron grunts. Doesn't raise his head.

MAC (CONT'D)

Right. I'll leave you with it. Call me if you find anything.

MAC (V.O.)

You're not going to find anything.

Cameron grunts again and continues clicking his way through shopping databases.

Mac takes one long last look at Cameron and leaves his apartment/office

EXT. THE PELICAN - OUTSIDE PATIO

Mac leaves The Pelican with two cups of coffee and two breakfast wraps. He scans quickly then heads toward BARRY (indeterminate scrawny middle-aged homeless man) sitting with his back against the railing.

MAC

Baz. Hungry?

He nods toward a table at the edge of the patio. Barry steps over the low railing and is sitting at the table when Mac gets there.

BARRY

What d'ya want?

Mac tosses one of the wraps at Barry and sits at the table. Slides the cup of coffee across.

MAC

You're turning into a cynic, Baz.
Just enjoy.

Jessie parks at the curb. A black trash bag is taped across the back passenger's side window. She gets out of the car and spies Barry.

JESSIE

Mac, get that bum off the patio.

MAC

He's my guest, Jessie. Relax.

JESSIE

My dad'll be out in a minute. He better be gone by then.

Mac shakes his head.

BARRY

Don't worry about it, Mac. I'm used to it.

Two uniformed police officers exit the cafe onto the patio and sit a couple of tables away from Mac and Barry.

COP #1
Fucking Jackson.

Mac stops his coffee half way to his mouth and looks at the cops at the table.

Cop #1 (CONT'D)
Even off the force he's got us
working all night.

COP #2
What do you figure happened?

COP #1
Fuck knows. He's pissed off enough
people. Could've been his ex-, or
one of the dozens he's railroaded
over his career.

Jessie arrives with two menus and drops them on the cops' table She tosses a glare in Mac's direction.

COP #2
Had to be someone big to kill
Jackson.

COP #1
I don't know. He's let himself go
the last couple of months.

Jessie pauses.

JESSIE
Jackson. He's dead?

COP #2
Yeah. Sorry. Didn't know he was a
friend of yours.

Jessie smile splits her face.

JESSIE
Friend? Jesus. No. He's really
dead? Holy fuck. That's fantastic.

COP #1
You don't seem that upset.

JESSIE
How'd he die? Was it slow and
painful, I hope?

COP #2
Whoa, Jess. He was a cop. A little
respect for the dead.

Jessie laughs.

MAC (V.O.)

A side of Jessie I'd never seen before. I think I like it.

JESSIE

Right. Breakfast is on me, boys. Have whatever you want. You didn't tell me what happened.

Mac shifts in his seat, paying attention.

COP #2

We don't really know. We was on traffic. An early morning jogger found him face down in the dunes at Budgie.

JESSIE

Near where Jimmy was found?

COP #2

Generally. Good dump place. Dark road up there at night.

Mac took a last bite of his wrap and grabbed his coffee.

MAC

We'll talk more later, Baz. I gotta date with a dead guy.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Cameron continues to hammer away at the computer. Mac comes in and spots Honda keys on his desk.

MAC

You got a car, Cam?

CAMERON

My mom's. Why?

MAC

The Honda?

Cameron looks up from the computer screen.

CAMERON

Is it okay? Nobody hit it, have they? My mum'll never let me take it again.

Mac grabs the keys off the desk.

MAC

The arse-end is sticking out a bit.
Not to worry. I got it.

Mac beats it out of the office.

EXT. BUDGEWOI BEACH

Cameron's mother's car parks beside two marked cars and a coroner's van. Mac get's out. He's beside the wooden steps he'd walked just days earlier.

Mac joins Detective Sergeant LILY KING (30's, matronly looking) at the top of the dune. She writes in a notepad beside Jackson, face down in the sand.

MAC

Hey, King. What killed him? It is
Jackson, right?

King waves him over.

KING

Was. Just a meat sack, now.

MAC (V.O.)

He never looked better.

King flips her pad closed and tucks it under her arm.

MAC

You got everything you need here?

KING

Yup.

Mac nods, summons a wad of phlegm from deep inside his sinus cavities and let's it fly, landing it in the sand beside the corpse.

King looks at the phlegm, shrugs.

KING (CONT'D)

You're here, why?

MAC

Personal interest. A bit pissed he
walked after killing Jimmy.

MAC (V.O.)

A bit pleased he's face down in the
sand.

King moves out of the way so two men from the coroner's wagon could collect Jackson.

KING

You know how it goes. Either he cut a deal, or there wasn't enough to convict, or some other such bullshit. To be honest, not upset when he left the force. Bad influence on the young ones.

MAC

What happened to Jackson?

KING

Whacked on the back of the head, then strangled with this.

King holds up a clear plastic evidence bag. A two metre length of black rubberised cord is coiled in it.

MAC

Looks like a surf leash.

KING

Yeah. Half of Australia would have one. Doesn't tell us much. Maybe the lab can get something from it.

Mac follows her to her car, walking in thought.

MAC

Tons of suspects, I'd imagine.

KING

Including you. Do you have an alibi for last night?

MAC

What time?

King waggles her hand.

KING

Midnight to 3, I think. Will know more when he's on the slab.

MAC

Nope. No good for me. I was asleep. Just me and my dog.

KING

You and Sophie split?

MAC

She's visiting her sister in Newcastle.

King leans against her car and pulls her notepad out of a pocket. Flips it open.

KING
When was the last time you saw
Jackson?

MAC
Yesterday afternoon.

Mac crosses his arms.

MAC (CONT'D)
You're really putting me on the
list, aren't you?

KING
Doing my job. Where was it. What
did you talk about?

Mac points at the picnic table twenty metres away.

MAC
Right over there. Bumped into him
with Jessie yesterday.

King scribbles notes.

KING
From The Pelican? What was she
doing with Jackson?

MAC
She was with me. Met her on the
beach while I was walking the dog.
Bumped into Jackson and Grange and
it got a bit ugly. She blames
Jackson for Jimmy's death.

Mac slides his hands in his pockets.

MAC (CONT'D)
If I wanted to punch the guy out, I
would have done it then. I showed
remarkable restraint, I think.

KING
Grange was there?

MAC
Feeding Jackson a burger. Seemed
pretty chummy. Listen, if I'd
killed Jackson there would have
been a significant amount of
bruising around his face.

King is all business now. Closes the notepad and gets into
her car.

KING

Thanks Mac. I'll contact you if I need more information.

Mac walks back to Cameron's mum's car, slowly, in thought. His phone vibrates as he reaches the car.

MAC

Mac Durrige Investigations. What can I do for you?

The VOICE on the phone is young and strong

VOICE

(filtered)

Is this Malcolm Durrige? PI up the Central Coast?

MAC

I prefer Mac. Who's this?

VOICE

(filtered)

You don't recognise the voice? I think I should be offended.

MAC

I'm really busy and don't have time for fucking riddles. Thanks for calling.

VOICE

(filtered)

Don't hang up. I'm Steve Ryan.

Mac waits for more information and none is forthcoming.

MAC

That's supposed to mean something?

RYAN

(filtered)

Home and Away? Lifeguard for two seasons?

Mac slides into the car and starts the engine. He shakes his head.

MAC

Haven't a clue what you're talking about. Is that it?

RYAN

(filtered)

That's a little bit insulting, but I've talked to your partner and he says it's okay that you help me.

MAC
Partner?

RYAN
Said his name was Cameron.

MAC
Not a partner. And help with what?

RYAN
I've just been cast in a gritting
drama where I play a hard-boiled PI
and I think I need to do a bit of
research.

MAC
Gritting? You mean gritty, right?
And no. I'm not baby-sitting you.

RYAN
Look, I'm from up there. Haven't
been back in yonks. We can discuss
face to face.

MAC
Blow it out your arse, kid.

Mac hangs up. Tosses the phone on the passengers seat. Sprays gravel as he leaves the parking lot.

EXT. MAC'S OFFICE

Mac parks the car and steps out into the heat. Wearily walks up the steps to his office. He's sweating hard as he pushes open the door.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sitting with half a butt cheek on Mac's desk is STEVE RYAN (late 20s, strong, tanned, perfectly brushed dirty blond hair with frosted tips). He looks up when the door opens.

Mac sees him, stops, and holds the door wide open. He points out the door.

MAC
Out.

MAC (V.O.)
There isn't a form of life I
despise more than an actor. A
parrot, preening on stage, spouting
someone else's words.

Ryan stands and crosses his arms. Flexes his biceps and smiles.

He is a little taller than Mac, and a lot more muscled. He's wearing a form-fitting polo shirt tucked into neatly pressed chinos. His belt buckle looks large enough to serve a good sized lunch.

RYAN

Mac, Mac. Hang on a minute. You haven't heard what I want yet.

MAC

You want to roll with me to get real life experience. You already told me that. Except I work alone and have absolutely no desire to babysit a spoiled, useless man-child.

Mac points out the door again.

MAC (CONT'D)

So, get the fuck out.

Ryan doesn't move. He looks around the office, taking in the old, poor quality furnishings.

RYAN

A grand a day. No. Two grand. Cash. Each day I'm here, with you, seeing what it is you do. Two weeks worth, maybe?

MAC (V.O.)

Mental math time. Fourteen days. Two grand a day. Carry the one, divide by three. That's a shit-tonne of case.

Ryan cracks a broad smile. His teeth are a gleaming white. Mac hesitates a split second, then jams his hand out.

MAC

Deal. We start now. What do you want to know?

MAC (V.O.)

I'm not an idiot. You'd do the same thing.

RYAN

I need to know what the banality of life is for a PI. I suspect there's a lot of drinking coffee, eating donuts in an all-night stakeout, but I'm willing to learn.

MAC

Haven't had an all-nighter in a long time. But yes, with the coffee.

(MORE)

MAC (CONT'D)

There's a lot of it in your future,
usually at The Pelican, shooting
the shit.

RYAN

The Pelican? That's the place
across the-

Ryan is interrupted as Lily King enters the office looking
down at her notepad.

KING

Mac, I need to follow up a couple
of things with you.

She looks up and sees Steve Ryan. Freezes in her tracks. A
light blush creeps up her neck and onto her face.

KING (CONT'D)

Mac, you didn't say you knew Steve
Ryan.

King walks up to him slowly, like she's easing up to a
spooked horse.

KING (CONT'D)

What brings you back here, Stevie?
Do you remember me?

A huge smile splits Ryan's face.

RYAN

Wow, Lily, is that really you?
(to Mac)
Lily used to babysit me. Years ago.
Wow. Different life, now. Come
here.

Ryan envelopes Lily in a hug and the blush on her face gets
deeper.

KING

Oh, my goodness.

Mac rolls his eyes.

MAC

You came looking for me, King.
What's up?

KING

Need you to come into the station
for some questions.

MAC

Why?

KING

You're one of the last people to see the victim before he was killed.

MAC

You talked to Grange?

KING

Not your concern. Coming downtown with me?

Ryan chuckles and heads to the door.

RYAN

Downtown? This place doesn't have a downtown. I'm coming with. Start of my ride-along.

MAC

Okay with you, King?

KING

As long as he doesn't interfere with my investigation.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

King sits at her desk. Mac and Ryan are sitting in chairs along side.

KING

Tell me more about your meeting with Jackson yesterday.

Mac opens his mouth to answer and Ryan dives in.

RYAN

Jackson? Fat fuck Tommy Jackson? He's the victim? What happened?

MAC (V.O.)

Fat fuck Tommy Jackson? I was warming to this guy.

King glares at Mac who places a hand on Ryan's arm. He leans forward, elbows on the desk.

MAC

He's actually got a point. What happened? What have the MEs found out?

KING

Hit on the head, hard, with a blunt object. Cracked his skull and most likely rendered him unconscious.

(MORE)

KING (CONT'D)

Then that length of surf leash was used to strangle him. There's a bruise on the back of his neck, probably from a knee, and his trachea was completely crushed.

King taps on the desk with her pen.

KING (CONT'D)

Mac? Tell me what happened yesterday.

MAC

I was walking Lincoln on the beach. I ran into Jessie kite-surfing and helped her carry her stuff back to her car. When we came down those fucking wooden steps to the parking lot she saw Jackson and had a run at him.

KING

What was Jackson doing there?

MAC

No idea. He was there with Grange. We pulled them apart and Jessie spouted venom at him.

KING

Any idea why?

Mac scratched at his jaw.

MAC

She thought he was behind bars, serving time for killing Jimmy. The kid from the bank.

KING

I know who Jimmy was. What happened after that? Who left first?

MAC

Jessie. I had a chat with Jackson after she left. He's a dick. Was a dick. Who do you think is good for this?

KING

Early days, Mac. Thanks for your time. And thanks for not butting in all the time, Steve.

King collects papers and stands.

KING (CONT'D)

I need to run, boys. Let your
selves out. And thanks again.

MAC

Let's go, Steve-o. I need to pick
up my car.

EXT. SALLY'S GARAGE

Ryan rolls to a stop and turns off the ignition.

RYAN

This is Harry's place. I thought
this place was mobbed up.

MAC

You mean 'gang affiliated', right.
But the prices are good, and they
do good work.

Mac gets out of the car and walks toward the open garage
door. Grange is standing at the hood of Mac's car, Dick is
wiping his hands with a rag.

GRANGE

Give my best to Sally.

DICK

Tell her yourself.

Dick sees Mac approaching.

DICK (CONT'D)

What the fuck took you so long,
Durrige. I was about to close up.

MAC

It runs?

DICK

Four-twenty-five.

MAC

What the fuck? For plugs? a hundred
bucks, you said.

DICK

Said nothing of the sort, Mac.
Maybe Sal did, but she ain't here
right now. \$425 or you don't get
the keys back until it's paid.

Mac clenches his jaw muscles and pulls out his wallet. Digs
out four bills

MAC

Four hundred. Discount for cash.

Ryan steps beside Mac and crosses his arms. Flexes and smiles at Dick.

Dick takes the bills, butts the ends and folds them in half. Slides the money in his back pocket.

DICK

I'll let Sal know you still owe her
\$25.

He underhands the keys to Mac.

DICK (CONT'D)

Now get the fuck outta here.

Mac slides into his car, places the keys in the ignition, pauses, then turns the engine over. It purrs.

MAC

You do a good job, Dick-o.

Ryan leans down and looks in the passenger window.

RYAN

I'll follow you home. Just in case
the fix isn't permanent.

Mac puts the car in reverse and turns in the seat to back out of the garage. His phone rings in his pocket and he reaches for it, then decides to let it go to voice mail.

MAC (V.O.)

I should have taken that call.
Might have made a difference in
what ended up happening.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE/APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Mac is asleep in his bed. In the room behind his office. His phone alarm goes off, the dulcet tones of a marimba jolting him awake. He sits up in the chair, groans and turns off the alarm.

Almost immediately it starts vibrating with an incoming call. The display reads "Actor dickhead".

MAC

Ryan. Why are you calling me so
early?

RYAN

Why are you sleeping so late? I've
been up for hours. The Pelican.
Five minutes. Breakfast. My treat.

INT. THE PELICAN - LATER

Ryan is leaning against the wall flirting with Jessie. Mac brushes past him and points at a table.

MAC

Quit chatting up the high school kid. She's nineteen.

JESSIE

I've been out of school a year now Mac. Mind your own business.

Mac slides into a booth and Ryan sits across from him.

MAC

Jess, can I get a long black and one of those big brekkie things? Extra rashers.

RYAN

I'll have a large fruit salad with yoghurt and a cup of green tea, Jessie. Thanks.

Mac watches Ryan watching Jessie's departing backside. Mac snaps his fingers.

MAC

Mate, she's nineteen. Don't be a dick.

RYAN

A very healthy nineteen.

MAC

What do you expect to get out of this arrangement between us?

RYAN

I was passed over for a couple of the Underbelly roles because - well, I don't really know why. I've been typecast in light and fluffy pieces. I just landed a part as a private eye. I want to nail this. Need to nail this. I want to get out of the pretty-boy rut.

MAC

None of us PIs look like you, mate. We sit around a lot. Drinking coffee and eating crap food. Anyway, all I've got going on right now is looking for Betty. Pretty dull. Young Cameron is doing most of the leg work on that one.

RYAN

Who's Betty?

MAC

Wife of a friend. Will probably be sorted in a week or so. If you're looking for war stories, mine are pretty boring.

RYAN

There was that bank thing.

MAC

Yeah, not much there. A couple of idiots tried to rob the bank from the inside and got caught when they panicked at a surprise audit. Morons, really. Jackson was one of them.

Jessie arrives with a tray and serves them their food and drinks.

She is placing the tray at the wait table when Lily King walks into the restaurant with two uniforms. She spies Jessie and makes a bee-line to her.

KING

Jessie Lingard? I have a warrant for your arrest in the manner of the murder of Thomas Jackson. Place your hands behind your back, please.

Mac lunges out of the booth and intercepts King.

MAC

King, what's happening?

KING

Don't make me pull you in for obstruction, Mac. This is a clean collar. Stay out of the way.

JESSIE

Daddy! What's happening??

Jessie's father, GERRY (mid-40s, overweight) pushes through customers and stops King near the door.

GERRY

What in the fuck are you doing, King?

KING

Stand down, Ger. Find some legal help and meet her at the station. You know where it is.

SUE (early 40s, tiny) runs from a back room wiping her hands on a tea towel.

SUE

What in the hell is going on?
Gerry, What the fuck is this?

King looks over her shoulder, sad, and escorts Jessie out of The Pelican. Gerry is holding his wife back, hands on both of her shoulders.

The door closes behind King and Sue looks up at Gerry.

SUE (CONT'D)

Do something, Gerry.

Gerry catches Mac's eye and motions him over.

GERRY

I've got to get to the station and figure out what kind of shit this is. Stay here with Sue, okay?

SUE

I'm going with you.

GERRY

Better I go on my own. You and Mac see about an attorney.

Mac slides into the booth and Sue sits across from him. They watch Gerry leave and when the door closes behind him Sue SLAPS her hand on the table.

SUE

What. In the HELL. Is going on?

MAC

King has arrested Jessie for Jackson's death.

Mac holds his hands up.

MAC (CONT'D)

I know. Bullshit.

SUE

More than bullshit. Is she crazy?
King?

MAC

No.

Mac takes a deep breath.

MAC (CONT'D)

Where was Jessie the night before last?

SUE
 Bullshit, Mac. It doesn't matter
 where she was, she didn't do it.
 The only legal representation we've
 got are for business related thing.

Mac digs his phone out of his pocket.

MAC
 I know a guy.

SUE
 Thought you might.

EXT. LOCAL POLICE STATION

ALFRED DEAN (middle-aged, a shade too large for his cheap
 suit) stands on the steps, waiting. Sweat is slicking his
 comb-over tight to his scalp.

MAC (V.O.)
 My man, Alfie. I used to work on
 the other side of the table from
 him when I was a cop. He looks like
 a cheap-arsed lawyer, but he really
 know his stuff.

Mac's car pulls to the curb and he and Sue get out. Alf waves
 them toward the station entrance.

MAC
 No. A chat out here, first. Alf,
 have you met Sue before?

Alf sticks out his hand for a shake. Sue keeps her arms
 crossed. He drops his hand.

ALF
 From The Pelican, right? What's up?
 You mentioned something about
 Jessie?

Sue pokes Alf in the chest.

SUE
 There's no way she killed Jackson.
 We all wanted to, but it wasn't
 her.

ALF
 How in the hell is someone as small
 as Jessie supposed to have killed
 that fat fuck? He's twice her size.

SUE
 She didn't.

Sue looks at Mac, scowling.

SUE (CONT'D)
You sure about this guy?

MAC
Alf, can you get her out, as fast
as possible, and find out what
they've got on her?

Alf pulls his collar from his neck.

ALF
Absolutely. Who picked her up?

MAC
King.

ALF
Got it. Get out of this heat. Go
back to The Pelican. I'll bring her
back as quickly as I can.

INT. THE PELICAN - LATER

Mac, Ryan and Sue sit at a booth. Sue and Mac are nursing coffees. Ryan is sipping on a fruit smoothy.

Ryan looks at his watch and then at the front door.

RYAN
How long did this guy way he'd be?

The door opens and Alf leads Gerry and Jessie in. They see Mac and head to the booth. Sue jumps up and envelopes Jessie in a hug. She rounds on Alf.

SUE
Sit. What happened?

ALF
She's out. Gerry put The Pelican up
and I argued close family ties.
She's not a flight risk.

SUE
Of course she's not.

ALF
It doesn't look great. Hang on, let
me finish. It doesn't. No alibi,
the blow to his head matches her
board and the cord used to strangle
him has her epithelial cells on it.

JESSIE
It's mine. Of course it does.

Jessie slams her hands down on the table.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
I did absolutely not kill him.

ALF
Grange witnessed you go after him at the beach. Not far from where his body was found. I was lucky to get bail.

Mac sits back in his seat.

MAC
Damn.

ALF
Pithy and to the point. Unlike you.

SUE
So what's the defence? What are you doing?

ALF
Catching up with the prosecution later today and getting whatever details they have.

SUE
And then what?

Ryan looks at Mac, then at Alf. Then back to Mac. Plasters a huge smile on his face.

RYAN
Hey, I've got an idea.

ALF
Who's this guy?

MAC
I don't like your idea, Ryan.

RYAN
You're a detective. I'm looking for a case to ride along with. Take it. You know you should.

Sue looks at Gerry and they do some husband/wife mental communications. A decision is made.

GERRY
We've got money, Mac. What are your rates?

Mac sighs and rubs his hands over his face. Throws a sidelong glance at Ryan who shrugs.

RYAN

Why not?

MAC

Okay, fine. I'll look into it.
Don't worry about the fee, Ger.
Ryan is helping out.

Mac leans forward and rests his elbows on the table.

MAC (CONT'D)

Jess, tell me everything you were
doing on the night of.

Alf slides out of the booth and stands, shaking Gerry's and
Sue's hand.

ALF

I need to run and get some
paperwork filed. Gerry, Sue,
They're going to need your
signatures. I'll be in touch.

Jessie watches him leave. Looks at Mac with a puzzled look on
her face.

JESSIE

He's good?

MAC

I trust him.

JESSIE

Well to be on the safe side, you
better figure this out.

EXT. BUDGEWOI BEACH - PARKING LOT

Ryan's convertible rolls to a stop and Ryan and Mac step out
into the sweltering heat.

RYAN

And we're here, why? Too fucking
hot to be at the beach.

MAC

P.I. 101, mate. The scene of the
crime.

Mac points up the wooden stairs going up the dune separating
the parking lot from the beach.

MAC (CONT'D)

Top of the stairs and about ten
metres to the left.

Kids hot step up the stairs past Mac and Ryan. Ryan flips up his shirt collar to cover his neck from the hot sun.

At the top of the dune Mac turns left and walks onto the sand to where Jackson's body was found. Police tape flutters in the light breeze, tied to low bushes.

Mac looks at the depression in the sand.

RYAN

What are we supposed to be looking for?

Mac points to a location about five more metres beyond where they are standing.

MAC

That's where Jimmy was killed.

RYAN

Jimmy?

MAC

Jackson had him killed. Part of the bank robbery scam he was part of a few months ago.

Mac turns and points in the opposite direction, at a rock shelf overlooking the surf about twenty metres beyond the wooden stairs.

MAC (CONT'D)

And that's where Jackson killed two surfer dudes in his employ. Blam - blam. One in the back of each of their heads.

RYAN

Not a coincidence that Jackson was dumped here. Someone's sending a message.

Mac nods and turns back to the police tape.

MAC

You might be pretty good at this. Not at my level yet, obviously, but good insight. Let's go talk to Carol.

RYAN

Do I know Carol?

Ryan follows him to the food shack. Mac leans an elbow on the counter and winks at CAROL (middle-age, on the job serious).

MAC

One of those ice things, Carol. A green one. You want one Ryan?

RYAN

Too much crap in those thing. Bottle of water, please Carol.

CAROL

Certainly, Mr Ryan. I'm a big fan.

Carol grabs a bottle of cold water from a cooler and slides it across the counter.

CAROL (CONT'D)

On the house.

RYAN

No, no. I wouldn't think of it.

Ryan digs a money clip out of his pocket and slides a ten across to her.

Mac thanks her for the ice bar and they sit at the picnic table.

MAC

It if was just Jimmy and Jackson up there, I'd be betting on Jessie as the perp, too. But adding Baldy and Shaggy to the mix...

Mac shakes his head.

RYAN

The surfers?

MAC

Yeah. One shaved like a bowling ball, they other in dreads. Both stunk. Both Jackson's boys.

Mac takes a large bite of the frozen ice, then grabs the bridge of his nose.

MAC (CONT'D)

MotherFUCK.

Ryan laughs.

RYAN

So if they were run by Jackson, why'd he kill them?

Mac leans back and takes a deep breath in through his nose.

MAC

They fucked up. An expedient solution to an annoying problem. I assume.

Ryan takes a deep draw of water. Waits for Mac to get his brain freeze sorted.

RYAN

It caught up to him.

MAC

Yeah. And not Jessie.

RYAN

So who? It's a small town. You could door knock almost everybody in under a week.

MAC

That's stretching it. Maybe two.

RYAN

Tough job you got.

Mac opens his mouth to answer but is interrupted when his phone rings. He looks at the display: "King"

MAC

What's up, King?

Mac stands and paces while he talks.

KING

(filtered)

You know the nudie beach?

MAC

Birdie? I do. You getting some sun, Lily?

KING

(filtered)

How fast can you get here?
Something you might like to see.

King pauses and Mac hears surf.

KING (CONT'D)

(filtered)

Something washed up that Mr Ryan might get a kick out of.

Mac chuckles and looks at the actor.

MAC

You're evil. We're five minutes away.

EXT. BIRDIE BEACH PARKING LOT

No services here. No food shack. No picnic benches. Just a small parking lot and a path through the dunes to the beach.

MAC (V.O.)

I hadn't been to Birdie since I was kid in my 20s. In much better shape than I am now. Probably too hot for any sightseeing today, though.

Mac and Ryan trudge through the dunes to the beach. A whistle from their left, north of their position, gets their attention.

King and a couple of uniforms stand around a clump of something on the beach. Coroner staff are waiting with a board and a bag. King waves them closer.

KING

Mac. Stevie. Though you might be interested in this. You know, to help your experience, Stevie.

King steps to one side and Mac and Ryan can see what they're looking at.

It's nothing like what a human should look like. One leg is missing completely. The other is missing from the knee down. A tattered singlet partially covers what remains of the torso.

Ribs are exposed. The little remaining flesh is rotted and gnawed on. A faint image of an octopus tattoo remains on his right shoulder.

MAC (V.O.)

Fucking hell.

Mac looks at Ryan and smiles at the look of revulsion on his face.

MAC

You okay, mate?

Ryan takes a step back and turns his face into the slight onshore breeze.

Mac watches for a second then looks closer at the skull. Most of the teeth are missing. The eyeballs are gone. A bit of scalp remains with dreds.

MAC (CONT'D)

Cause of death?

KING

Will need to get it on the table first.

King nods to the two from the coroner's office to collect.

MAC

ID?

KING

No prints. Will have to hop there's
DNA on file.

MAC

Bullet to the back of the head, and-

-

Mac snaps his fingers a couple of times, trying to jog his
memory.

MAC (CONT'D)

Montgomery. Warren Montgomery.
Jackson shot him and his bald buddy
in the back of the head.

King opens her pad and scribbles a name.

KING

His buddy's name?

Mac closes his eyes for a second.

MAC

Davis Jones.

Mac stands to one side and lets the garbage collectors do
their job. There's a delicate moment when the head almost
falls off during transfer to the body bag.

RYAN

Jesus.

Mac laughs and claps him on the shoulder.

MAC

You asked for a ride-along. Next
part of the job is at the morgue.
You coming?

INT. MORGUE

Disinfectant look. A couple of shiny table with overhead
lights and at the far end of the room, one with Montgomery's
remains laid out.

BOB (thin, balding, drinking a cup of coffee) stands over the
remains. He looks up when the door opens.

Mac enters, Ryan a couple of steps behind.

MAC
Where's King?

BOB
Said she'd be late. Said to start
without her.

Bob gestures at the remains.

BOB (CONT'D)
Not a lot to do here. Cause of
death will be difficult.

RYAN
Shot at the base of the skull.
About four months ago.

Bob looks at Mac, puzzled.

BOB
And who is this?

MAC
He's right. I'll help you roll him.

Bob puts his coffee down and nods at Mac. Tosses a pair of latex gloves at him and puts on a pair himself.

BOB
I'll do the pelvis, you get the
shoulders.

Mac Slowly turned the body over and the head finally removes itself from the rest of the body and rolls off the table onto the floor with a THUD.

Bob picks it up and looks at the back.

BOB (CONT'D)
Definitely shot. Good guess,
stranger.

Bob looks up at Ryan as Ryan makes a beeline for the door, hand over his mouth.

MAC
Man, that couldn't have happened
better if I planned it.

Mac removes the gloves and tosses them in a biohazard bin.

MAC (CONT'D)
I better go check on my friend.
Later, Bob.

EXT. CORONER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ryan sits on the steps, head in his hands. The door opens and Mac comes out and joins him.

MAC (V.O.)

My biggest concern at this point was that I'd blown a beautiful payday.

MAC

You okay, mate?

RYAN

That normal?

Mac pulls his phone out of his pocket and scrolls to Sophie's number.

MAC

Nope. First time for me, too. You okay?

He dials Sophie's number. Hangs up when it goes to voice mail.

MAC (CONT'D)

Shit.

RYAN

Who were you calling?

MAC

Sophie. Should have heard from her by now. You look like shit.

RYAN

His head bounced.

MAC

Not exactly bounced. More of a splat. And he wasn't using it anymore. Didn't use it much when he was alive, to be honest.

RYAN

That'll sure help with my dreams. Thanks.

Steve stands and they walk to his car. As they get near, Dick and HARRY (taller, uglier and more muscles than DICK) intercept them.

MAC (V.O.)

Not a good sign, these two together. Over 200 kilos of mean and ugly.

Harry drives a fist into Ryan's gut, doubling him over.

Ryan grunts and falls to his knees. Harry rests a foot on Ryan's ribs and pushes him over.

Mac goes to bend over to help Ryan, then checks himself.

MAC

What the hell, Harry? He's a guest.

HARRY

He looked at me funny.

Dick pokes a finger in Mac's chest

DICK

We got a message for you.

Mac looks down at the finger and smiles.

MAC (V.O.)

Looks like a gold-plated invitation, doesn't it?

Mac grabs the finger and twists it back. Tries to twist it back.

MAC (V.O.)

Nope.

Dick looks at the attempt and laughs. Punches Mac in the solar plexus with his weak hand, doubling him over. Mac grabs at Dick's t-shirt on the way down, ripping it.

Harry stomps down on Mac's body, just missing as Mac rolls out of the way, wheezing. Harry's foot plants and he follows through with a kick to Mac's back, connecting with his shoulder blade.

Mac groans and tries stabilising breaths. Dick and Harry are laughing. Mac slowly rolls to see what's happening to Ryan. Except Ryan is gone. Harry and Dick are walking out of the parking lot.

Mac pushes himself to his feet and runs to them, launching himself with a fist cocked, aimed for the back of Dick's head.

MAC (V.O.)

Don't believe anybody who tells you I'm sane.

Dick turns at the last second and takes the blow straight to his face. Dick takes a step back, hands on his nose. Mac follows through, pulling his elbow back and hitting Harry on the side of the head with it. It barely rocks Harry.

Harry growls and hits Mac in the ribs. Dick joins in. The blow are designed to hurt, not kill. It ends after a couple of minutes, Mac on the ground, face swollen and bloodied, looking up at his assailants.

MAC

Hey, guys, tell Sal all she had to do was ask for more money for the car. I would have paid. This wasn't necessary.

Mac rolls to one side and spits, ineffectually. Bloody goop dribbles down the side of his face.

MAC (CONT'D)

But seriously, what's the message? It'd be a shame to put all that effort into the beating if you forgot to give me the message.

DICK

Who says there's got to be a message?

Mac sits up, clenching his teeth through the pain.

MAC

We're all over twelve. If you're beating on me and it's not a message, you've killed me by now.

Mac takes a deep, shuddering breath.

MAC (CONT'D)

So, what's the message?

Harry taps Mac on the side of his head with his boot.

HARRY

Ya gotta stop.

MAC

No shit. You don't usually beat the tripe out of someone to make sure they keep doing what they're doing. Stop what?

DICK

Stop helping the bitch what the police say killed Jackson.

Harry and Dick look at each other and nod. Turn and walk away.

MAC

Message delivered.

Mac lies back and closes his eyes. Footsteps CRUNCH in the gravel.

MAC (V.O.)

Fuck. If they're coming back I'm a dead man.

RYAN

You okay, man?

Mac opens his eyes and looks up at the perfect, unscathed face.

MAC

Where the fuck did you run off to?

RYAN

I can't get into a fight, man. My face is my brand. You look like shit. Are you all right?

Mac rolls to his hands and knees. Slowly stands with help from Ryan.

MAC

I'm just fucking awesome. I could have used the help.

RYAN

We've got to get you to a hospital.

Mac shrugs off Ryan's solicitous hand and aimed for the car.

MAC

Nope. Take me home. I've got pain meds and ice. Nothing's broken.

Mac pulls out his mobile. The screen has been cracked.

MAC (CONT'D)

Motherfuckers will pay.

He calls Alf.

ALF

(filtered)

What's up, Mac?

MAC

A couple Sal's goons just tuned me up. A warning. Stop helping Jess.

ALF

I'll call the cops. Do you know who they were?

MAC

Shit no. Don't call the cops. It'll just exacerbate the situation and the last thing I need is more exacerbating. Just give Gerry a head's up, okay?

ALF

You're okay?

MAC

I'll live. Which in and of itself is a surprise, don't you think? They left me alive and able to identify them. Obviously not too concerned about a comeback.

Mac opened the passenger side door of Ryan's car and eased himself in.

MAC (CONT'D)

Gotta run, Alf. Make sure Jessie doesn't find out, though, okay? Don't want her worrying any more than she already is.

Mac terminates the call and drops it in the centre console.

MAC (CONT'D)

Home, James.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Cameron's head is down typing something furiously on the computer. Mac enters and the kid continues to work, not looking up. Lincoln runs over, arse-end wagging as he greets Mac.

MAC

Hey, kid. You find Betty yet?

CAMERON

Wazzat?

Cameron pokes a couple more keys then looks up. Sees the bloody pulp that Mac's face has transformed into.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Jesus. What in the hell happened to you? You look like hell. You okay?

MAC

So, no Betty then?

CAMERON

No Betty.

Mac writes a phone number on piece of paper. Slides it to Cameron, wincing as the arm extension stresses his shoulder blade.

MAC

Forget about Betty. Higher priority right now. The is Sophie Patterson's number. She's gone off the grid. Call keeps going to voicemail. See if you can hack into it or something and see if you can find the location.

CAMERON

Would it be an Apple product?

MAC

Yeah.

Cameron slides the paper back.

CAMERON

Write down any e-mail addresses she has.

Mac writes.

MAC

Just the one that I know of. Text me if you find anything out, okay?

Mac heads to the bathroom and downs a couple of pain pills. Looks at himself in the mirror and gently touches his face and winces.

He splashes water on his face and reaches for a towel with his left arm and almost collapses with pain.

MAC (CONT'D)

Fuuuuck.

He pulls the arm closer to his body and heads back to his office.

RYAN

You look like an untalented kid made a face out of clay.

MAC

You were right. Something's wrong with my arm. Drive me to the hospital?

CAMERON

What about Betty?

MAC
Forget about her for awhile. Find
Sophie.

Ryan leads Mac out of the office and down the stairs to the parking lot.

RYAN
Where's Betty?

MAC
Earl is paying me to find her. And
Betty is paying me to stay hid.

Ryan laughs and grabs ahold of the railing.

RYAN
The kid has no idea?

MAC
None. I'm paying him well, though.

RYAN
And this Sophie?

MAC
Different story. Two days off the
radar. She went to her sister's in
Newcastle, but I can't reach her.
Missed a call from her a couple of
hours after she left.

RYAN
Probably forgot to take the phone
charger with her and it died.
Happens to me all the time.

MAC
You don't know Sophie like I know
Sophie.

INT. HOSPITAL A&E WAITING ROOM

Mac and Ryan sit in adjacent plastic chairs. A few other chairs are populated, but the area is almost vacant.

RYAN
Why are you certain Sophie's in
trouble?

MAC
Leave it alone, mate. Okay?

Ryan puts his hands up in surrender.

RYAN
Hey, whatever.

The triage nurse (JASON - 5'6", a bit round, short dark hair) enters the waiting room with a clipboard.

JASON

Mr Durrige, waiting room 1.3,
please.

Mac stands.

MAC

Take off if you want. I can take it
from here.

RYAN

Oh, hell no. I'm hanging around.
I'll people watch while you're in
there.

Ryan leans back and laces his fingers behind his head. Watches Mac enter the examination room, then looks at the people in the room, imagining their stories.

A couple of minutes in and two police enter the hospital, one middle-aged plainclothes and impeccably dressed, and a younger uniform. They talk to Jason for a couple of seconds, then enter examination room 1.3

Ryan sits up and watches the examination room door. Thirty-seconds after they enter Mac leads them out, in handcuffs, the uniform gripping him by the left elbow. The plain clothes follows.

Mac looks at Ryan and gives an imperceptible shake of his head.

MAC

Warburton, you fuck, take it easy
with the arm. I'm injured.

Mac looks over his shoulder.

MAC (CONT'D)

Grange, You're a fucking idiot. I
thought you said Jessie killed
Jackson.

GRANGE

Shut the pie hole, Mac. We'll talk
at the station.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM.

Mac sits on the perp side of the table. He has no cuffs on. He rests his arms on the stainless steel table, adjusting them and wincing as he tries to ease the pain in his shoulder blade

King and Grange enter and sit across from him. Grange takes out a digital recorder, turns it on and places it on the middle of the table.

Mac leans close to it and speaks.

MAC

Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya.
You killed my father. Prepare to die.

GRANGE

Malcolm Durrige, do we need to provide you with an attorney?

MAC

Oh, fuck off Grange. Are you arresting me?

He pushes the recorder across the table back at Grange.

MAC (CONT'D)

I used to play this game, too. The recorder is a prop. Everything said in this room is recorded. You shut off the recorder and the suspect thinks they're off the record. But I already know this, so why waste your time?

Mac pushes his chair back.

GRANGE

Why did you kill Jackson?

Mac leans in, elbows on the table.

MAC

Why do you think I killed Jackson?
Didn't Jessie kill Jackson? You fishing now?

GRANGE

Jessie would have needed help.
She's a small girl. But the cord used to strangle Jackson has been confirmed to have come from her board. And her epithelial cells are on the cord.

Grange pushed the recorder back to the centre of the table.

MAC

All bullshit, Grange. You're piecing together something out of nothing. Scrambling at loose ends. You've got nothing.

GRANGE

Not nothing. Ample physical evidence and if you remember, I was present when she threatened him. And you threatened him. Not nothing.

Mac pushes his chair back and stands. The clatter of the upended chair resonates in the small room.

MAC

Am I under arrest?

KING

No, you're not. But don't leave the area. We're going to need to talk to you again.

Mac kicks the chair as he leaves.

MAC

You're barking up the wrong tree. Both of you. Do your jobs.

EXT. POLICE STATION

Ryan leans against his car, arms crossed. He checks the time on his watch, sighs, then stands as Mac exits.

RYAN

So I don't have to post bail?

MAC

Jackson was working on his dick points. They've got nothing, but he's digging hard. We need to find out who did this. He's got enough circumstantial evidence to make a case if he bends it the right way.

Ryan hops in the car and starts the engine.

RYAN

Where to?

MAC

Last place I saw the fat fuck alive. Again.

EXT. BUDGEWOI BEACH FOOD SHACK

Mac and Ryan lean on the counter top. Carol attends to a customer then comes over to them.

CAROL
You're back? What can I do for you
today, Mr Ryan?

Ryan looks at Mac and winks.

RYAN
A few days ago my friend Mac had an
altercation with an odious, greasy
fat man.

Carols nods and looks at Mac.

CAROL
I remember. I was about to call the
police when it kinda fizzled out.
There was a third guy and a girl
there too.

MAC
The third guy was a cop. Do you
remember who the grease-ball left
with?

Carol exhales a breath and looks off in the middle distance,
thinking.

CAROL
The other guy - the cop - left in
his car just after you did. The
greasy guy ate his burger and the
rest of the cop's burger before he
left.

MAC
Do you remember the make of car
that picked him up?

Carol shakes her head before Mac is finished talking.

CAROL
He walked out. Turned right at the
entrance.

Mac looks at Ryan then back at Carol.

MAC
You sure?

RYAN
It was at least in the high
thirties that day. He walked?

CAROL
That's what I said, boys.

Mac looks at the outside of the food shack. Scans the roof-
line and the perimeter of the windows.

MAC
No cameras?

CAROL
No point. Punk-assed kids would rip them down within an hour of me leaving. Trust me. He walked. Turned right. Probably got picked up in the road.

RYAN
Thanks, Carol. Appreciate your time.

Mac and Ryan walked slowly back to the car.

RYAN (CONT'D)
So what now, boss?

MAC
I've got to check the road.

Mac passes the car and continues to the main road. He stops at the intersection of the road and the drive into the parking lot and looks up and down the road.

Ryan runs up beside him.

RYAN
Speed cameras?

Mac shakes his head.

MAC
None. No such luck. No traffic cameras either.

He points at a truck parked on the far side of the road. The pickup has a cap on the back with a clear back window. A camera is visible in the back.

MAC (CONT'D)
There's a mobile speed camera, but the odds of it being there last week are slim.

RYAN
And if it was, the odds of it picking up Jackson even slimmer.

Mac sighs and turns back to the car.

MAC
We're fucking nowhere.

He digs his phone out and calls Sophie's phone. Voice mail again.

RYAN
Still nothing from your girlfriend?

MAC
I'm going to have to go to
Newcastle, I think.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND MAC'S OFFICE

Ryan coasts to a stop and leans his back against the headrest. Adjusts the air conditioning vent to play the cod air across his face.

RYAN
I want to go to Newcastle with you.

MAC
It's personal, mate. Nothing to do with a case. Take a day or so off, catch up with some childhood friends. I'll be back in a day or so.

Ryan levers himself out of his convertible.

RYAN
Grange isn't going to wait.

MAC
Fuck him.

RYAN
Jessie?

MAC
A concern. But Grange isn't going to move ahead that fast. I've got a couple of days.

Mac looks up at the sky. Not a single cloud.

MAC (CONT'D)
Picked a good time to come up here.

RYAN
I'm a lucky guy. Most times.

Mac trudges up the stairs, Ryan riding his tail the whole way up. Sweat gathers on the back of Matt's neck and brow. Drips into his eyes and he wipes his brow with hand.

He pushes open his door and steps into cool air conditioning. Cameron's head is down, typing and tapping.

And standing in front of the wall mounted air conditioner, head back absorbing the cold air, her back to Mac and Ryan stands Sophie.

Or so Mac thinks.

MAC

Sophie, I've been trying to reach you. Your phone goes to mail all the time.

She turns and Mac sees that it's GWEN (later 50s, same coloring and hair as Sophie, a bit more angular), Sophie's sister.

MAC (CONT'D)

Gwen? What are you doing here?

GWEN

Is Sophie here? I need to talk to her.

MAC

She left yesterday to see you.

GWEN

I just got here. She didn't arrive.

MAC

Have you heard from her at all?

Gwen shakes her head and slumps in a chair.

GWEN

Not today. I'm worried. Can you help me find her?

Mac takes out his phone and calls Sophie's number again. And again. Voice-mail every time.

MAC

Absolutely. Definitely.

He taps on the desk to get Cameron's attention.

MAC (CONT'D)

Kid, any luck with her phone?

CAMERON

Not yet. Getting close, though. I think. Look, Mac, I've got to run. Tomorrow?

MAC

See you tomorrow morning, kid.

Mac sits on the edge of the table.

MAC (CONT'D)

When was the last time you talked with her? And where was she at the time?

RYAN
I'll get you a cold drink. Gwen,
right?

Gwen watches him walk into the kitchen.

GWEN
Isn't that the guy from--

MAC
Yup. Long story. Sophie? When did
you talk last?

Gwen sighs and leans her head back and looks at the ceiling.

GWEN
She called me just after she left.
Left here, I assume. Told me she
was on the way and that we were
going to drink our troubles away.

She stands and paces.

GWEN (CONT'D)
No word after that.

Mac and Gwen sit in silence, listening to the kid walk down
the metal stairs, then his car start.

Ryan walks back in from the kitchen with drinks. Places them
on the desk and hands one to Gwen.

RYAN
You look a lot like your younger
sister.

GWEN
That's the way genetics works.

Mac takes one of the drinks from the desk and take a mouthful
and grimaces.

MAC
Nonalcoholic, Ryan? Really?

Mac takes Gwen's drink from her and puts it on his desk.

MAC (CONT'D)
Gwen, there's a nice place across
the street. Let's get a bite and a
real drink.

INT. THE PELICAN

Jessie greets them at the door and takes them to a table. She
doesn't take her eyes off Steve Ryan.

MAC (V.O.)

I'll be honest - if there was a murder charge against me, I sure as hell wouldn't be back waiting table. Jessie's made of stern stuff.

JESSIE

Hi Mac. Steve. Sophie.

She hands them menus, continually keeping her eyes on Ryan.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Let me know when you're ready to order.

Gwen watched her leave and opened the menu.

GWEN

She's a bit star struck, Mr Ryan.

Ryan blushes. Mac laughs

RYAN

You don't seem to be.

GWEN

When I was much younger.

RYAN

Ouch. I'm going to get you two some beer.

Mac waits until Ryan has left the booth before talking.

MAC

Why'd you wait for two days before you came to me?

GWEN

I thought maybe she changed her mind. But then she wasn't answering her phone. It kept going straight to voice messaging.

MAC

Same here.

Steve arrived with a server in tow, placing two beers and a sparkling water on the table.

Mac slid the water to Ryan's location.

MAC (CONT'D)

She said you guys don't talk much with your brother.

GWEN

Stan? Hell no. I love him. Like anyone loves a sibling, but he's his own worst enemy. Got into trouble a long time ago and stayed there.

Gwen takes a large mouthful of beer.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Wrong crowd, wrong decisions, not a life I'm willing to acknowledge. If he ever asks for help, I'll help, but it will be with a ton of conditions.

MAC

Any chance Sophie connected with Stan?

Gwen shakes her head. Fiddles with the edges of the menu.

GWEN

Not likely. Her feelings about him are strong. Stronger than mine. Is there any food coming?

RYAN

I've ordered. Should be here soon.

MAC

Have you talked to the police?

GWEN

In Newcastle. Waste of time. The usual bullshit. She's an adult. Less than 48 hours missing.

Jessie delivered a pizza. Mac took a slice, bit into it smiled at Ryan.

MAC

You surprise me, mate. This is good.

RYAN

Cheat day.

Mac takes his phone and places it on the centre of the table.

MAC

We'll try the cops again.

He scrolls through his recent calls and finds the number he's looking for. Dials it and puts his phone in speaker mode.

GRANGE

(filtered)

I'm off duty, Mac. What do ya want?
Surrendering?

MAC

Ha. Not likely. I'm here with
Sophie's sister, Gwen. You're on
speaker.

GRANGE

(filtered)

So what do you all want?

GWEN

Sophie's gone missing. She left
here yesterday morning to visit me
in Newcastle and hasn't shown up.
And now I can't reach her.

There's silence on the line for a few seconds. Then Grange
clears his throat.

GRANGE

Have you talked to the Newcastle
police?

MAC

You know the deal, Willy. They
can't do anything. Hasn't been long
enough. She's an adult. That sort
of shit. Can you help?

GRANGE

If she was twelve, sure. There's
nothing I can do, really. It would
be a drain on resources. I'd advise
contacting the highway patrol and
seeing if there's been an accident.

The call terminates and Gwen stares at the phone.

GWEN

What in the hell was that?

MAC

He's right, I'm afraid.

Mac motions to Jessie.

MAC (CONT'D)

Box up the pizza, Jess. We need to
head out.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Mac tosses the pizza on the table and sits at his computer.

MAC

Try thinking like your sister,
Gwen. We need to know her iTunes
password so we can find her phone.

Gwen pushes Mac out of the chair and takes the seat. She pulls yellow sticky notes from around the monitor, examines them, then discards them in a pile on the desk.

She pulls one of the final ones, reads it and smiles. Types her sister's e-mail into the "find my phone" screen, then entered the password.

RYAN

How much are you paying that
Cameron kid?

The compass oscillates for a couple of seconds, then a representation of Sophie's phone appears on the screen. Gwen clicks on the icon, opening a map.

Small red text appears by the phone. "Old Location", with a date and time corresponding to about 2 hours after leaving Mac's place.

Mac and Gwen stare at the screen for a second.

MAC

Zoom out a bit.

Gwen scrolls the mouse wheel expanding the view. Gwen taps on the screen.

GWEN

I know this place. Near a shopping
center in Kotara.

RYAN

I'm driving.

EXT. KOTARA STREET

Gwen's car rolls to a stop and the three step out.

The street is lined with brilliantly lit fast food shops, pizza places and service stations. A full moon is rising over the eastern horizon, peeking between buildings.

Mac scrolls through his photos until he finds a good head shot. Selects it and sends it to Ryan and Gwen's phone.

MAC

Meet back here. Check every open
place you come across. See if they
saw Sophie Monday. And keep an eye
out for her car. It's a two year
old red Honda.

RYAN
Registration?

MAC
Not a clue. CDX sometihng, I think.
Back here in an hour one way or
another, okay?

Mac stops first at a service station and shows the man at the register the picture.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hey, uh--

Mac reads the name on his tag.

MAC (CONT'D)
--Ahmad, have you seen this woman
on Monday? She was wearing a light
blue sundress. Yellow flowers.

Ahmad takes the phone and looks at Sophie's picture.

AHMAD
No luck, mate. I wasn't working
Monday. Rajiv was, though. He's in
at midnight.

He hands the phone back

AHMAD (CONT'D)
If you haven't tracked her down by
then, check back. Rajiv's got a
great memory for good looking
ladies.

Mac laughs.

MAC
I'm sure he does. Thanks.

Mac continues down the street. Pops into a Hungry Jacks, a KFC, Dominos Pizza and a bowling alley. He is three blocks from where he started and walks into a pub.

No joy.

He walks out and almost walks past her car. The red Honda Accord is parked at the curb. A parking ticket is pinned down by one of the wipers.

Mac pulls the ticket off and tests the door. Unlocked. He hops in the front and picks the key fob out of the centre console. There's a large "S" hanging from the ring.

He sends a text message to Gwen and Ryan. "Back at the car ASAP. I've found something."

He pokes the ignition button, checks his bearings and pulls from the curb.

He's back at the starting point in three minutes. Parks behind Gwen's, gets out and leans on the boot waiting for Gwen and Ryan.

Gwen comes around the corner and Ryan crosses the street at almost the same time.

GWEN

That's Sophie's. Where was it?

MAC

Three blocks that way.

He holds up the key fob.

MAC (CONT'D)

Definitely hers. And a testament to the honest people of Newcastle.

GWEN

Now what?

MAC

No luck finding her tonight. I'm planning on staying up here. Canvassing tomorrow.

Ryan holds up his hand.

RYAN

Some guy in a servo said he was pretty sure he saw her in the back of an old Holden Monday afternoon. Heading toward the highway.

Mac shakes his head and gets back in Sophie's car.

MAC

Pretty sure isn't good enough. I'm going to find place to stay. You two can do what you want.

He scrolls through recent calls, checks the time and makes a call.

CAMERON

(filtered)

Mac, it's almost eleven.

MAC

Sorry, mate. I want to you to ping Sophie's phone tomorrow morning every hour on the hour, okay?

CAMERON

(filtered)

I don't have the creds sorted out yet.

Mac waves Gwen over to the car.

MAC

Her sister will text you the password. Okay? I'm staying up in Newcastle tonight. Keep me updated. Thanks.

Mac Takes Gwen's phone and types Cameron's number in messaging app.

MAC (CONT'D)

Send him the password, okay? Have you two decided what you're going to do?

RYAN

I'm sticking with you, Mac. That's what I'm paying you for.

Ryan get's in the passenger seat and leans his head out the window.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Gwen?

GWEN

You guys let me know where you end up. I'll join you tomorrow for breakfast.

She holds up her phone.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Cameron got the password.

Mac tosses her a thumbs up and starts Sophie's car.

MAC

So, Ryan, you know any good places around here?

Ryan opens an app on his phone and selects some parameters.

RYAN

I might know a place or two.

Mac's phone chimes with an incoming message. He one-hands his phone, opens the message and slowly rolls to a stop at the curb.

There's an image in the message. A blue dot labelled "Sophie's Phone" is positioned on a map with a date and time of about three hours ago.

Mac dials.

CAMERON

You got that?

MAC

That was tonight?

CAMERON

Yeah. One blip, apparently. On the road into Morisset, right by the KFC.

MAC

Thanks, Cam. I'll call you tomorrow.

Mac smacks Ryan on the arm.

MAC (CONT'D)

She's back near home. Let Gwen know we aren't staying. I'll call her tomorrow.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, JUST OUTSIDE MORISSET - MIDNIGHT

Mac pulls to the side of the road. Smacks Ryan on the leg.

MAC

Wake up. We're here.

Mac gets out of the car and stands on the side of the road. A Rural Fire Service depot stands empty. The full moon plays over the empty parking lot.

There's no traffic on the road. The KFC across the road is dark.

RYAN

It was here?

Mac nods. Kicks at some gravel on the side of the road.

MAC

It's after midnight. We're not going to find anything tonight.

He sighs and dry scrubs his face.

MAC (CONT'D)

It's been a long fucking day. I say we get back up here first thing in the morning.

INT. THE PELICAN - NEXT MORNING.

Jessie unlocks the front door of The Pelican and moves out of the way as Mac and Ryan push in.

JESSIE

Hey, Steve. What can I get you guys?

MAC

Probably fruit for him. Two eggs, Turkish toast and a ton of bacon for me. And a black coffee.

They slide into a booth.

RYAN

Is this the real detective stuff now?

MAC

It's always all the real detective stuff. This is the boring detective stuff. Five percent real, ninety-five boring. We're in the 95.

Mac holds his cup of coffee half way to his mouth.

MAC (CONT'D)

There are a dozen or more places to canvas along that road up to town, then a couple of days of door knocking in Morisset.

He sips the coffee and winces at the temperature.

MAC (CONT'D)

Lots of shoe leather.

Jessie arrives with two plates. Puts them in the right place. Not difficult. Fatty, greasy in front of Mac. Fruit and whole wheat toast in front of Ryan.

JESSIE

Shoe leather to find who killed Jackson? Where have you been? I haven't seen you around.

MAC

Ah, shit.

MAC (V.O.)

I was hoping to avoid this conversation.

Ryan chokes on a piece of melon.

JESSIE

What? What's wrong?

MAC

I'm working two cases, Jess.
Definitely focussing on yours, but
Sophie is missing and I'm tracking
her down.

Jessie crosses her arms and glowers.

JESSIE

Dad!

MAC

Jessie, come on. Sophie has
disappeared.

Gerry appears from somewhere and stands beside his daughter,
hands on his hips.

GERRY

What's this?

Mac takes a deep breath, starts standing to confront the
problem. Ryan beats him to it. Slides out of the booth and
gets between Mac and Jessie and her father.

RYAN

Mac has been working 24/7 on both
cases. Gerry, we're getting closer
to finding Jackson's real killer.
We know it's related to Jimmy's
death and the two guys Jackson shot
last year.

Mac slowly gets out of the booth, stands beside Ryan, putting
his hand on his back.

MAC

Thanks, Ryan. He's right, Ger.
We're getting close. I need to do
some canvassing in Morisset this
morning, then we'll follow leads on
the Jackson killer.

Mac looks at his watch and pats Ryan on the back.

MAC (CONT'D)

And we've got to go. Catch up with
you this afternoon, okay?

Mac stuffs the bacon rashers between the pieces of toasted
Turkish bread and nods at Ryan to follow him out.

RYAN

I wasn't finished eating.

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND MAC'S OFFICE

Mac munches on his bacon sandwich, a piece of bacon drops on the ground and Mac does a dance to keep it from hitting his shoe. A splatter of grease hits his cuff.

MAC

Fuck.

RYAN

Fuck, is right.

MAC

Thought you didn't like greasy food.

RYAN

Yeah, not that. Look.

Mac looks up and sees Dick, Harry and two others. Dick is leaning against Ryan's convertible. He's in a new singlet, shoulders like boulders, tats rippling as he flexes muscles.

MAC (V.O.)

Jesus.

Mac blows out a breath and tosses the remains of the bacon sandwich.

MAC

You going to run this time?

RYAN

These the guys?

MAC

Plus a couple.

Ryan and Mac reach the parking lot. Dick pushes himself off the car and his three friends spread out around them.

DICK

You idiots just don't know when to back the fuck off, do you.

MAC

No idea what you're talking about.

DICK

That Jess girl takes the fall, or your girlfriend is gone forever.

MAC

What?

DICK

Sophie. She's dead if Jessie doesn't take the hit for Jackson.

Ryan turns to face Harry, his back to Mac.

RYAN

Are we in danger of slipping into
the 5% or are we still in the 95%?

MAC

Oh, this is well and truly the 5%.

RYAN

Let's dance.

MAC

Fucking right.

Mac clenches his right fist, holds it close to his chest and lunges forward, twists his body hard to the left and smashes Dick on the side of the head with his elbow.

Dick staggers to his right, but stays up. Mac uncoils the twist with as much power as he can and brings his elbow back. Lands it on the point of Dick's chin.

Dick's head snaps back, but he stays on his feet. He lets out a roar and uncurls a hard right haymaker. Mac ducks and catches it on his shoulder.

Mac stumbles, hits the ground and rolls back to his feet before Dick's kicks can land. His back is against Ryan's car. He sees that two of the other three are already laid out and Ryan is working hard on the third.

Mac returns focus to Dick in time to move his head out of the way of a punch. Mac counters with his own, and as Dick raises an arm to block, Mac kicks him in the nuts as hard as he can.

Dick doubles over. Mac moves to finish him off and Dick stands upright with an uppercut. Mac wavers for a second, then lunges forward, stifling the blow before it reaches full power.

But it still has a lot of power. Mac doubles over, looping his right arm around Dick's neck as he falls. He lands on his back on sharp gravel, winces and folds his left arm behind Dick's neck. And squeezes.

Dick pulls his head forward a fraction. Mac reacts by moving his head to the left as Dick snaps his head back.

Dick's left ear is right beside Mac's mouth.

MAC (CONT'D)

Feeling a little light-headed, Dick-
o? Where's Sophie?

Mac doesn't react fast enough. Dick snaps his head to the left, catching Mac's nose with the broad expanse of skull above his ear.

MAC (CONT'D)

MotherFUCK!

Mac squeezes harder. Dick arches his back, digging his heels into the gravel and scrabbling at Mac's arm. He snaps his head back and forth.

Mac grabs Dick's left ear with his mouth and bites. Hard. Dick lets out a scream and pulls his head away, leaving a piece of ear in Mac's mouth.

Dick gives it one last push, kicking at Mac's legs and grabbing at his arm. Mac redoubles his efforts, wrapping his legs around Dick's and squeezing with everything he's got.

Mac and Dick release at the same time, Dick unconscious and Mac exhausted. Mac pushes Dick to one side and scrambles to his feet to help Ryan.

Blood is running down his face. He touches his nose and winces.

MAC (CONT'D)

Ah, shit.

Ryan stands over the third. His knuckles are raw and there are bruises on his face and arms. He gives the body on the ground one more poke with his foot.

RYAN

You think I killed any of them?

MAC

How did you do that?

Ryan looks at the blood running down Mac's face.

RYAN

You need help, mate. You look like shit.

MAC

Fuck, what about you?

Ryan looks at his knuckles and clenches and unclenches his fists.

RYAN

Played a Navy Seal a few years back. Had six months of training. Krav Maga. Really intense.

Ryan drags Dick away from the side of his car.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Still only a shadow of a real Seal, of course. Get in. We've got to get you patched up.

INT. A&E WAITING ROOM

Half a dozen patients are sitting in the waiting room. Ryan exits a treatment room and sits down. To wait.

Room 1.3 opens and Mac exits, an aluminum T taped up his nose and across his brow.

Ryan tips his head back and laughs, then winces and holds his ribs.

RYAN

Oh, that's priceless. You'll frighten kids.

Mac taps it.

MAC

Kinda muffles the pain, too. How'd you fare?

RYAN

Bumps and bruises. A lot of bruises. Nothing broken.

Mac claps his hands together and winces.

MAC

I believe we have some shoe leather to wear out.

RYAN

95%?

MAC

Oh, fuck, I hope so.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD, JUST OUTSIDE MORISSET

Traffic is much heavier. Ryan slows to a stop in the same location they had stopped the previous night.

RYAN

I can't leave the car here. If a truck doesn't clean it up, some punk will steal it. Or strip it.

Mac points to a side road near a mobile fruit stand.

MAC

There.

Ryan guns it and pulls beside an old Holden wagon. Mac and Ryan get out and Ryan buys a bag of apples from the vendor. Tosses one to Mac and takes a bite out of his.

RYAN

It's healthy. You should give it a shot.

Mac looks at the apple, then at Ryan.

MAC

Interesting concept. I'll give it a shot.

Mac's phone rings. Display shows "King". Mac takes a bite of his apple and answers while chewing.

MAC (CONT'D)

King, kinda busy right now. Can I call you back later?

KING

Busy? Really? That explain the four guys behind your place, two in critical condition? There's blood all over the place.

Mac groans and puts the phone on speaker.

MAC

They started it.

KING

Witnesses say you hit first.

MAC

Proactive retaliation. You know me. Do I look dumb enough to wait for Dick to hit me?

Ryan chuckles and leans close to the phone.

RYAN

These guys weren't stopping by for a beer and a chat, Lily. We were lucky to get out as unscathed as we are.

KING

I need you both to come into the station and give statements. You guys were brutal. You've always avoided fighting, Mac.

MAC

We'll get there when we can, King. We've got higher priority work to do.

Mac terminates the call, drops the phone in his pocket and takes a bite. He points down the road. Three kilometres of houses and shops to canvas

MAC (CONT'D)
Welcome to the 95%, Ryan. Hope your shoes are comfortable.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT, MORISSET - LATER

A crowd has gathered. At least thirty people waiting for Steve Ryan, movie star.

MAC
I may as well not even be here.

Ryan laughs. Puts Mac in a friendly headlock., then pats him on the shoulder.

RYAN
Let's hear it for social media.
We're entering my 5%, mate.

Ryan holds up his phone with a picture of Sophie and addresses his adoring fans.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Hi. I'd love to take a picture with each and every one of you, but it's going to come at a cost.

Ryan smiles and holds out his hands.

RYAN (CONT'D)
No, no. Not like that. I'm not looking for money. My colleague, Mac Durrige, and I are looking for a woman named Sophia Patterson.

Mac holds up his phone with Sophie's picture.

MAC
She was in this area last night. It's urgent that we find her. If you've seen her, please let me know.

He looks at Ryan.

MAC (CONT'D)
And get yourself a picture with Mr Ryan.

Mac filters the throng of mostly females, taking notes when one has even fragments of information. The line to get a pic with Ryan snakes through the restaurant.

Mac looks up from the notes he took to the person at the end of the line.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hello, King. How'd you find us?

KING
You guys are blowing Twitter up
like a bomb. Any luck tracking down
Sophie?

Mac flips his notebook closed and slides it in his back pocket.

MAC
Not really. Got some news about
that, though.

King gestures at a booth.

KING
Why don't you guys have a seat. We
need to talk.

Ryan still has a crowd of adoring fans surrounding him. He glances at King and shrugs.

KING (CONT'D)
Just you, then, Mac. What the hell
happened this morning?

MAC
Pretty much like I already told
you. They want us to stop looking
for Jackson's killer.

Mac touches the nose splint.

MAC (CONT'D)
Adamant. Full credit to my friend
taking the happy snappies. If
hadn't been there, I'd be dead.

Ryan takes his final photo and sits beside Mac. He winks at King.

RYAN
Mac tell you what went on? The guy
is an animal.

MAC
You took out three of them.

King places both hands palm down on the table and sighs.

KING
Boys.

MAC

Right. So Dick also said if I didn't lay off trying to find Jackson's real killer, he'd kill Sophie.

Mac leans forward.

MAC (CONT'D)

So pick up Dick, Harry and his fucking friends and squeeze them while I try to find Sophie.

Mac stands and heads for the exit. Behind him Ryan scrambles out of the booth to follow.

RYAN

Sorry, Lily. Gotta run.

EXT. FRUIT STAND

Mac is sweaty and out of breath. Ryan a little less so. Mac jumps over the door into the passenger seat and Ryan gets in beside him. He starts the car and cranks the air conditioning.

RYAN

I think you pissed her off.

Mac angles the vent to blow the cooling air over his face.

MAC

King will survive. She needs to pick up the thugs. Beat something out of them.

RYAN

Where to now?

Mac's phone rings. A number not in his directory.

MAC

What? Who's this?

GWEN

It's me, Mac. Where are you?

Mac puts the phone on speaker.

MAC

Morisset. Have you heard from Sophie?

There's dead air on the phone for a few seconds. Mac checks to see if the call is dropped.

MAC (CONT'D)

Gwen?

GWEN

You need to come to your office. As quickly as you can.

MAC

What is it?

GWEN

Mac, just come.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Gwen sits at Mac's desk, staring at something on his computer screen. She jumps when the door bursts open and Mac and Ryan run in. She stands and runs to Mac and slaps him in the face.

MAC

Fucking hell.

MAC (V.O.)

She's a lot like her sister.

He rubs the side of his face.

MAC

What in the hell is going on?

GWEN

This is your fault.

Gwen points to the computer monitor. Mac sits in the desk chair. There's a video paused on the screen. He scrubs it back to the beginning and presses Play.

The video starts with a fast, blurry pan to a sofa. And Sophie. She sits with her legs under her. There's a corrugated steel wall behind her. Nothing else identifies the location.

SOPHIE

Mac, you need to stop. Stop looking for me. Stop looking for something to clear Jess. Just stop, if you know what's good for you. And for me.

On the video Sophie swings her feet to the floor and leans forward.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

You can't win. You put a couple of them in the hospital, but there are more. Many, many more.

(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

It's bigger than you think it is,
and you getting in the middle of it
isn't going to stop it.

Sophie sighs and leans back.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Tell Gwen I'm sorry.
Just go away for a while and let
things be. It'll be over when it's
over.

The video goes black.

RYAN

She didn't seem to be under that
much duress.

Mac shakes his head and drags the progress bar back to the
beginning.

MAC

Something's not right.

He restarts the video and advances frame by frame. The image
is blurred until the frame with Sophie at the far right. A
massive red toolbox is just exiting left of frame.

Mac jabs his finger on the screen.

MAC (CONT'D)

She's at Sal's. Look. The toolbox.

He grabs the image and zooms into the box. White letters
across the face say "DBackney".

MAC (CONT'D)

Dick's. The son of a bitch. Gwen,
Stay here.

GWEN

She's my sister.

MAC

And the guys we're going up against
broke my nose and put a massive
beating on Ryan. Stay here.

EXT. SALLY'S SHOP

The garage looks closed. Shutters are closed and lights are
off. Mac cups his hands around his eyes and peers through one
of the small garage windows.

A couple of cars in the middle of repair are on hoists. Two
others are nose-to-tail in the garage, filling the remaining
space in the small garage.

Mac moves to the front door and tries it. It opens. Mac pulls his handgun from his shoulder holster and pushes the door all the way open.

MAC

Stay here until I tell you it's clear.

RYAN

No point, Mac.

Mac turns. Ryan is standing with his hands half up, Dick pointing a gun to his head. Mac raises his gun, assumes the Weaver stance and gets hit on the back of the head.

Mac's gun clatters across the floor and Mac lands on his arse.

MAC

Fuck.

Mac looks up at one of the three Ryan had beat up pointing his own gun at him. He slowly stands, hands out at his sides, and turns to face Dick.

MAC (CONT'D)

Dick-o, you look like shit.

Blood cakes Dick's shirt. A bandage is wrapped around his head and blood seeps through where his left ear should be. His neck is bruised. Mac smiles.

MAC (CONT'D)

That looks painful, man.

Three more men walked in. Two other big guys and a skinny rat-faced guy with a wispy goatee having far too much of a good time.

GOATEE

You were right, Dick. They fell for it hook, line and sinker. Hook, line and stinker.

He pauses for a second, looking expectantly at his audience.

GOATEE (CONT'D)

No? Nothing? What now?

DICK

They can join our other guest. Check them for any other weapons.

Goatee pats Mac down, then reaches into his front pockets.

MAC

Hey, punk. You're going to have to buy me dinner if you get any closer.

The guy behind Mac cracks him on the back of the head.

DICK

Shut up. Get them in there.

Dick corrals Mac and Ryan down a narrow hallway. Goatee runs ahead and unlocks and pushes opens the door at the end. Mac trips over the sill, lands on the floor. Ryan trips over him on the way in.

Mac shoves Ryan off his legs.

MAC

For fuck's sake, Ryan, get off me.

Ryan stands and is staring beyond Mac.

RYAN

Well, isn't this interesting.

MAC

What?

Mac turns and sees Sophie, sitting on the sofa, reading the paper, a cup of tea on the table in front of her.

SOPHIE

Didn't I tell you two to let this go? I meant it. You never listen.

The door slams shut and the SNICK of a bolt sliding into place breaks the silence. Mac remains sitting on the floor.

MAC

So what in the hell is going on, Sophie? Are you part of this?

Sophie throws her news paper to one side.

SOPHIE

Oh, fuck no, you idiot. I'm being held to keep you in line.

Mac stands and kicks at the door. Rattles the knob. Runs his hands along the edges.

MAC

And you've got absolutely no problem locking Jessie up?

Sophie is ignoring Mac. She's seen Ryan and registers who he is. She snaps her fingers.

SOPHIE

Hey, aren't you the guy from that show? Mac, what's he doing here?

MAC

Don't change the subject. Jessie will be going to jail and you're just fine with that. We're trapped in this shit hole - you apparently very comfortable - and a young woman is going to jail for something she had nothing to do with.

Mac opens cupboards, pulls open drawers.

MAC (CONT'D)

I don't even know you anymore.

SOPHIE

Jesus, Mac. Jessie won't spend any time behind bars. She's young, first offense, temporary insanity with the rage. Relax.

Mac stops his inspection/inventory check and stands in front of her.

MAC

Relax? Re-fucking-LAX? I've been up and down the north coast for the past 24 hours. Your sister is freaking the fuck out. You could have called.

SOPHIE

Gwen's here?

Mac scoffs and goes back to inspecting the door.

MAC

This is the only way in or out. I've stormed this place in the past and we aren't going through the walls.

He knocks on the door with a knuckle.

MAC (CONT'D)

Solid steel. Where's Dick's tool box?

SOPHIE

He rolled it out into the garage right after he made the film. Why?

Mac points at the hinges. On the inside. He smiles.

MAC

I need something like a flathead screwdriver. These guys aren't brain surgeons.

Ryan joins him at the door, looks at the hinge pins. Tries prying them up with his hands.

RYAN

We just need to pop the pins.

MAC

You're not going to do that with your hands. Spread out. Find something flat. Something we can apply leverage to.

Mac hits the cupboards again. Ryan looks at a pile of scrap in the back of the room. Picks up a piece of corrugated iron, then tosses it aside.

RYAN

This place has already been picked clean. They aren't complete morons.

MAC

They're idiots. There'll be something.

Sophie stays on the sofa, watching Mac and Ryan tear the place apart. She sighs and starts reading the paper again.

SOPHIE

What about Ryan's buckle?

Ryan looks down at the large buckle. Like a small serving plate.

MAC

Is it brass?

RYAN

Damned if I know.

MAC

Is it soft?

RYAN

Mate, nothing on me is soft.

Ryan slips off the belt and disconnects the buckle. Test-bites it. Taps it on the steel door. Mac puts his hand over it.

MAC

Don't telegraph.

Mac takes the buckle and taps under the head of the center of three pins.

SOPHIE

Do the top and bottom first. Any other order and the last one will bind.

Ryan takes the buckle from Mac and taps under the head of the top pin. Three taps and the pin pops out. Mac catches it before it hits the ground.

RYAN

One down.

Mac takes the buckle and pops out the bottom pin. He tosses the buckle to Ryan.

MAC

Now the middle one.

Thirty seconds later and the door still sits in its frame, hinges pin-less. Ryan gives the doorknob a tub.

RYAN

Hey, Mac, what now?

Mac takes the belt buckle and jams it between the doorjamb and the door just above the middle hinge.

MAC

The dead bolt is holding it in place. I'm probably going to fuck up your buckle doing this, but I'm going to pry the door away from the frame. You try getting a hand hold. Put all your bruised muscles into it.

Mac jams and wedges and levers until there's enough of a finger hold for Ryan to grab. He levers one more time.

MAC (CONT'D)

Give it a yank.

Ryan gets his fingers between the door and the frame, bunches his muscles and pulls. The frame splinters around the bolt. Ryan grunts, puts his back into it and pulls the door almost halfway open before the bolt finally pops free.

RYAN

I won the door prize!

MAC

Fuck off. Put that down. We need to figure a way out of here.

RYAN

I thought it was funny.

The interior of the garage is dimly lit from the windows in the garage door. The small garage is packed tight. Mac squeezes past a hoist. Skips the first car he gets to and checks the ignition on the old Toyota up against the garage door.

MAC

Keys. We take this.

RYAN

My car is nicer.

SOPHIE

It only seats two.

MAC

Ryan, can you get the garage door?

Mac and Sophie flank the old Toyota and get in the car.

INT. CRAPPY TOYOTA

The vinyl on the dashboard is old and cracked. Sophie wrinkles her nose.

SOPHIE

Something died in here.

Ryan presses a green button and the garage door slowly lifts. Very slowly. Ryan gets in the back seat of the car and leans between the two front seats.

RYAN

Something died back here. Hey, Mac, I think opening the door tripped an alarm. There was a warning. I think it was real.

The door rises enough for the car to clear and Mac floors it. Smoke comes off the front wheels as they spin.

As the car reaches the end of the drive it collides with the front end of Dick's bike, knocking the bike and Dick to the ground.

SOPHIE

Oh, that's going to piss him off.

Mac slams the car into first gear and floors the accelerator. The car lurches forward, Mac struggles to maintain control and the front wheel drive breaks traction and spins.

Ryan looks out the back window. Dick is righting his bike. He looks at the front wheel then pulls a handgun from the back of his pants and shoots at the departing car.

RYAN

Fuck.

MAC

He couldn't hit a barn from that far away. Don't worry about it.

SOPHIE

Worry about his friends.

Mac looks at Sophie and shakes his head. Accelerates around a corner and makes a beeline for Wye.

MAC

You're a continued source of comfort.

SOPHIE

So where are we going? Sal's guys know this area like the backs of their collective hands.

MAC

I gotta plan.

EXT. LARGE HOUSE

Mac rolls the Toyota past the front of the house and around the back, onto lush green lawn. The house sits on seven acres, all neatly mown.

BETTY (blonde, late 50's, perfectly turned out) sits on the back patio, reading a book, cool drink gathering condensation beside her. She slides a bookmark into the book and leaves the book on the chair as she stands.

Betty waits until Mac turns off the car. Looks down her nose at him.

BETTY

You're ruining my lawn. And you don't look any better.

MAC

Betty, you know Sophie. And this is Steve Ryan.

Betty ignores both passengers.

BETTY

What are you doing here? I'm paying you for peace and quiet. Mainly from the philanderer Ernie.

She finally acknowledges Ryan and Sophie.

BETTY (CONT'D)

But it include peace and quiet from these two also. And anyone else.

SOPHIE

Mac has known where you've been all along?

A small smile graces Betty's face. She winks at Sophie.

BETTY

He has. I've been paying him handsomely to hide me. And now he's here with a party. Why are you here, Mac?

Ryan stands on the porch and looks over the carpet of green lawn.

RYAN

Must cost a lot to keep it this green. It's beautiful.

Betty looks at Ryan and scowls.

BETTY

I don't talk about money to anyone but my accountant. Mac, why are you here?

MAC

Sophie is the target of Sal's boys. I need a place for her to stay for a day or so that's safe. This place is safe.

Betty inhales through her nose and crossed her arms. She looks out over the lawn at the scrub in the distance.

SOPHIE

Betty, I apologise. I had no idea Mac was taking me here to dump me. I don't need your protection.

Betty scowls and grabs Sophie's arm as she turns to leave.

BETTY

Surely you can't be that stupid. Sal's boys are psycho. Stay here until Mac sorts things out.

Mac runs back to the car with Ryan.

MAC

Thanks, Betty. Let me know when you want Ernie to find you.

INT. CRAPPY TOYOTA

Ryan gets in the passenger seat and pulls the door shut. He waits until Mac has turned the car around and has left the property.

RYAN

She had no idea who I was.

Mac laughs and turns left out of Betty's driveway.

RYAN (CONT'D)

What now?

Mac puts his phone on speaker and calls the police station.

GRANGE

(filtered)

This Mac?

MAC

She didn't do it, Grange.

GRANGE

(filtered)

I don't know what you're talking about, Mac.

Mac hits the traffic circle and turns right down Rutley's road.

MAC

Sal's boys just held me at gunpoint, telling me to lay off trying to clear Jessie. That's not the sort of thing innocent people do. Pull them-

GRANGE

(filtered)

Where are you?

MAC

Rutley's. Heading back to The Pelican. Are you going to-

GRANGE

(filtered)

Come in to the station. Make a report. I can't take a statement on the phone.

Three tones and the call is terminated. Mac looks at his phone for a second. One-handed a quick text message and tosses the phone in the centre console.

RYAN

That didn't go as planned.

MAC

You up for another fight?

Ryan clenches his fist and looks out the window. They cross the bridge over the tracks and Mac accelerates into the curve on the other side.

RYAN

What do you have in mind?

MAC

You want your car back, and I'm not interested in waiting for them to track me down. And they will track me down. Not a chance that Dick is going to let this slide.

RYAN

You have an army?

INT. THE PELICAN

Gerry sits across from Mac and Ryan. Mac sips from a large cup of black coffee.

GERRY

What's Sophie got to do with all of this?

MAC

It doesn't matter. The important part is that Sal's thugs are - were - pushing me to stop trying to help her. They know who killed Jackson.

GERRY

And you're getting a posse together? Sounds reckless.

Ryan leans forward and taps on the table.

RYAN

I don't want another fight.

He pauses and clears his throat.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I'm honestly not sure how much more of a fight I can take. I'm going back to Sal's to get my car. We're just looking for a bit of back up.

Gerry slaps both hands on the table.

GERRY

Fuck that. I don't care about your car.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

Get those fuck-knuckles to admit to killing Jackson. I'm up for that.

Mac exchanges a glance with Ryan and shrugs.

MAC

So you're in? Good. I need to talk to Cameron.

INT. MAC'S OFFICE

Cameron sits at Mac's desk, checking his social media on Mac's computer. His phone is on the desk with his messaging app open. "My office. As soon as you can" from Mac.

He logs out, stands and stretches. His hands brush the ceiling. The door opens and Mac and Ryan enter.

CAMERON

What is it you want, Mac? More hacking?

MAC

Grab your phone. Need your muscles this time. Rest your brain.

Ryan pulls Mac to one side.

RYAN

He's a fucking kid, Mac. Those guys will fucking kill him.

Cameron slides his hands in his pockets and edges closer.

CAMERON

What's-what's this about, Mac?

MAC

You're one of the strongest kids I know. I need that this time. Not your brains.

Ryan pushes Mac to one side.

RYAN

Not happening, Mac. They'll flatten him.

MAC

Look at him. Bigger than you, fitter than the both of us combined.

Cameron stands a little bit straighter, his chest sticks out a little bit more.

RYAN

You're on your own. I'm not leading
a lamb to slaughter.

Ryan's trip to the door is stopped when Cameron grabs him by
the arm.

CAMERON

What? I'm strong. What do you guys
need? I can do it.

RYAN

Look, kid, the only fights you've
been in are on the field. You hit
hard, get the ball, take some hits
to defend it.

Ryan wipes the corners of his mouth.

RYAN (CONT'D)

These guys want to kill you. Not
you specifically, but whoever
they're fighting.

He shakes his head and heads to the door.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I can't be part of that.

Cameron tries looking tough. Squares his shoulders, flexes.
Mac pats him on the shoulder and shakes his head. Cameron
slightly wilts.

MAC

Never mind, kid. Ryan's right.

He sees Cameron out of the office and follows him down the
stairs.

MAC (CONT'D)

Ryan. Hang on. You're right. Hang
on.

He runs down the last few steps and intercepts Ryan. Gerry is
waiting beside Mac's car. Baz wanders across the street.

BARRY

So what's going on, guys?

MAC

Heading to Sal's to get Ryan's car
back. We're good.

Mac waves Gerry over and turns his back on Baz.

BARRY

Is Sophie still there? You know
they've got Sophie there, right?

Mac holds up his hand and turns.

MAC
What was that?

BARRY
Sophie's been at Sal's for a couple
of days now, right?

MAC
You know? How?

BARRY
I'm invisible. I know all kindsa
things. I'll come.

MAC
Sophie's fine. Thanks anyway.

Mac looks pointedly at Barry's thin arms.

MAC (CONT'D)
Ryan and Gerry are-

Baz lands a hard right jab to Mac's face, staggering him.

MAC (V.O.)
SON of a BITCH that hurt.

BARRY
Don't underestimate me, Mac. I'm
wiry. And ornery. Fuck with my
friends I'm going to fuck right
back.

Barry glares at Mac for a minute, then gets in the passenger
seat.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Are we fucking going or what?

Gerry and Ryan get in the back seat and Mac behind the wheel.
Barry rolls down his window and a cross breeze blows his
stench into the car. The other three wince and roll their
windows down.

GERRY
So what are doing there?

RYAN
Getting my car.

GERRY
Any chance there'll be a brawl?

BARRY
Ger, these fuckers framed your
daughter.

(MORE)

BARRY (CONT'D)
I'll be extremely disappointed if
you don't get in a brawl.

EXT. SALLY'S SHOP

Mac parks the car beside Ryan's convertible. Turns off the ignition. They sit in the car for a minute, then Ryan gets out and hops in his convertible.

RYAN
I think I'll take this now.

He slides the key in the ignition and the garage door flies open and Dick and four friends stream out.

DICK
Mac. You came back. And they said
you were the smart one.

Dick stays in the centre and two friends each spread out either side of him. A semicircle, Mac and friends with their backs to the road.

Dick hasn't cleaned up yet. The blood on the bandage over his ear is crusty. His pants are still dirty from the last fight.

DICK (CONT'D)
You fucked my bike up, Mac. You're
going to pay.

MAC
You take a cheque?

Barry lets out a banshee scream and runs at the man on the far left. Catches him by surprise and hits him on the chest. Flattens the thug. Drives his bony elbow into the larger man's throat.

MAC (V.O.)
There are no words to express how
badly I didn't want to do this. But
fuck it.

Mac takes advantage of Baz's distraction and drives the side of his foot into the side of Dick's knee. There's an audible SNAP and Dick buckles.

Dick retaliates before Mac can follow up with a fist to the groin. Mac pivots and catches it on the inside of his thigh. His leg spasms and he falls. Rolls out of reach and scrambles to his feet.

Mac takes quick stock.

Gerry is on top of one, punching like there's no tomorrow. Another of Dick's pals is unconscious on the ground.

Baz is face down mostly behind a dumpster, out like a light. Ryan is managing two.

Mac backs up against the garage wall. Dick hobbles toward him, a grin on his face.

MAC

Let's finish this, Dick-o. Tell Grange you killed Jackson and let Jess off the hook.

DICK

I'm finished? You're finished. And after I bury you, I'm going to bury your friends.

Dick hobbles a little closer.

DICK (CONT'D)

Killing Jackson was a necessary evil. You - you're just going to be fun.

MAC

Why Jessie?

Dick shrugs and sidles closer.

DICK

Convenience. Who fucking cares why?

Mac stumbles on scrap debris at the base of the garage wall. Looks down and sees a rusted length of exhaust pipe.

Mac grabs the pipe and swings in one fluid motion. Catches Dick across the forehead, straightens him like a cracked whip. Drops him like a sack of potatoes.

SOPHIE

Fuck, that looked good.

Mac swings around and barely avoids clipping Sophie with the pipe.

MAC

When'd you get here?

SOPHIE

A couple of minutes ago. Betty left the keys in her truck. Wouldn't miss this for the world.

Sophie pushes Mac out of the way of a swinging pipe and kicks the offender in the nuts. Mac follows through with the pipe, taking his legs out from under him. Kicks him in the head when he drops.

Mac helped Gerry finish off his and leans against the Toyota catching his breath. He looks at Baz face down by the dumpster.

MAC

Shit.

GERRY

What did this accomplish, other than being massively cathartic?

Mac pulls his mobile phone out of his pocket and turns off the voice memo app.

MAC

Dickie admitting to killing Jackson and framing Jessie.

Mac points to three of the laid out thugs.

MAC (CONT'D)

Octopus tatoos on their shoulders. Some bullshit gang thing. Shaggy had the same tatt. Dick was getting his own back.

Baz groans and pushes himself to his feet. It's difficult to tell if he's any worse for wear. He leans against the skip and brushes dirt off his shirt. The shirt gets no cleaner.

BARRY

We win?

MAC

This time. You okay?

BARRY

I'll live. Let's get out of here.

Baz makes a beeline for Ryan's car and is intercepted by the actor before he gets close.

RYAN

Oh, hell no. Gerry and I are in this. You can go with Mac.

Mac holds open the back door.

MAC

You're in the back, Baz. At least until we drop off Sophie.

SOPHIE

What?

Mac closes the door on Baz and moves to the front of the car. Points at the unconscious bodies.

MAC

You think they're going to just let this go? You need to be stashed away until they're all picked up. No arguments.

Sophie slumps in her seat.

SOPHIE

No arguments.

MAC

That's a change.

Mac's phone rings. He puts it on speaker, places it on the console and back out of the drive.

MAC (CONT'D)

Who's this?

GERRY

Where you going?

MAC

Putting Sophie somewhere safe, then finishing this thing.

RYAN

Hey, Mac, is Sal going to send anyone after us?

Mac looks at Sophie for a beat, then leans in to the phone.

MAC

It'll be finished within the day. Stay with Gerry and family. You'll be good there. If they want anyone, it's me.

Mac pulls into Betty's drive and rolls up to Betty standing at the front door.

BETTY

You came back.

Sophie gets out of the car. Baz crawls through the middle, over the console and sits in the front seat.

SOPHIE

I did.

BETTY

Where's my truck?

SOPHIE

Sal's.

BETTY
You wreck it?

Sophie laughed.

SOPHIE
No, it's fine. We can get it later.
Once the police have finished
there. Tomorrow, maybe.

EXT. RUTLEY'S ROAD

Baz has the seat reclined, one foot up on the dashboard. He rests his elbow on the centre console and coughs.

BARRY
What are we doing now?

MAC
Gotta get this recording to the
police so they pick up Dick.

BARRY
Got a back up?

Mac pulls over and taps Barry on the arm.

MAC
You're not an idiot, Baz.

He selects the audio file and sends it to Ryan's phone.

MAC (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Mac pulls from the shoulder and dials his phone. King answers after three rings. Mac jams the phone between his shoulder and his ear.

KING
I'm on the way home, Mac. I waited
for you to come in and you didn't.
There's be a bench warrant out for
your arrest tomorrow. If you get in
here before 9:00 am, you might head
it off at the pass.

MAC
Nice talking to you too. I've just
had another run in with Dan and his
friends. Surprisingly walked away
from that one, too. And got Dick on
a recording admitting to Jackson's
murder and framing Jessie. Can you
get someone to pop by and pick the
scum up?

KING
You'll testify to that?

MAC
Yes. I can stop by the station now.

KING
I'm about an hour out. But Grange
is still there. I'll call him and
tell him get to Sals. Meet him
there.

Mac cranks the wheel into the corner off the bridge. Almost
drops the phone.

MAC
No.

Three tones and the call is dropped.

MAC (CONT'D)
Fuck.

BARRY
What?

Mac throws the phone on the console and floors it.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I don't feel like dying today, Mac.
What the fuck?

MAC
I thought you knew everything,
mate.

Mac slows for a hard right and accelerates into the corner.
As soon as he punches it red and blue lights illuminate the
interior of the car. Mac checks the rearview mirror

MAC (CONT'D)
Fuck.

Mac slows to a stop on the narrow shoulder. A few metres
beyond the shoulder was swamp. He rolls down the window and
digs out his wallet.

The uniform leans in the window and smiles.

MAC (CONT'D)
Hey, aren't you the guy that picked
me up at the hospital? Warburton,
right?

Warburton taps on the door and steps back. Unclips his
holster.

WARBURTON

Out of the car, slowly, and head around to the back. You're making this easy. Grange said it would be difficult, but hell. Easy.

Warburton draws his sidearm. Baz cracks his door open and gets out, feet from the swamp

BARRY

At least I'll get three squares while I'm in.

Baz bends down to pick something up off the ground just as Warburton shoots at him. Wood splinters off the gum tree beside Baz and Baz drops to the ground.

MAC (V.O.)

This day keeps getting better and better.

Mac shoves his door open, hard, hitting Warburton and knocking him over. Warburton rolls to his back, swings his gun up, trying to get it out in front of him and aimed at Mac.

Mac lunges from the car and lands on top of Warburton. Grabs his gun arm and directs it away from him and pulls a knee up hard into the cop's groin.

Baz runs around from the far side of the car and steps on the cop's neck. Mac pushes himself to his feet and takes the gun from Warburton. Trains on his head.

MAC

Okay, Baz, let him up. On your feet, Warburton.

Mac backs off a couple of steps, gun trained on Warburton. Baz fidgets, stays a couple of steps away from the cop

MAC (CONT'D)

Drop the belt.

WARBURTON

You guys are so fucked.

Baz jumps forward, smacks Warburton on the back of the head and jumps back out of reach.

BARRY

We're the ones with the guns, you fucking idiot.

MAC

Relax, Barry. Nobody's shooting anyone.

Warburton fumbles with the buckle, hands shaking. He loosens it and it drops around his feet.

WARBURTON

You're so, so fucked. When Grange-

Mac kicks him in the nuts, doubling him over.

MAC

Shut up. Get in the car.

Warburton looks confused, walks toward the police car. Mac taps him on the head with the grip of the handgun.

MAC (CONT'D)

The Toyota, you fucking moron.
Behind the wheel. Baz, get me the
cuffs.

Mac pushes Warburton to hurry him up.

MAC (CONT'D)

You know what to do. One hand
through the wheel. Baz, cuff him
and pop the bonnet.

Mac pops open the fuse panel and pulls them all out.

BAZ

Why'd ya do that?

MAC

Don't want him here honking the
horn or flashing the headlights.
Get in his car. We need to finish
what we started.

Mac gets behind the wheel of the police car. Baz alongside.

BAZ

Never been in the front before.

Mac Puts the car into Drive and floors it.

MAC

A lot of new toys since I retired.

BAZ

Heard you were asked to leave.

Mac looks at Baz and smiles. Tosses him his phone.

MAC

Find Ryan in here and call him,
will you?

Mac gets both hands on the wheel and navigates the twisted road. Baz rests the phone in the palm of his hand, in speaker mode.

RYAN
(filtered)
Where are you, Mac?

MAC
Coming in hot. I need to borrow your car.

RYAN
(filtered)
Use yours. It's across the street.

MAC
I need something fast, mate.

Mac looks at the GPS and other assorted equipment in the police car.

MAC (CONT'D)
And the one I'm in is pretty hot.

RYAN
(filtered)
I'll come with. Where are you going?

MAC
Back to Sal's to meet Grange.

BARRY
Don't forget the kite bag while you're there.

Mac takes a long look at Barry.

MAC
What?

BARRY
Under the skip. When I got flattened I saw it. Almost all the way under at the back.

RYAN
(filtered)
I don't think any of Sal's crew kites. Good eyes, Baz.

MAC
Get ready.

EXT. SALLY'S SHOP

Ryan's car coasts into the drive, engine and headlights off. Ryan rolls the car along side the skip, puts in gear and sets the emergency brake.

Ryan leans his head close to Mac's and whispers.

RYAN

All five thugs are gone. That was fast.

MAC

Get the kite bag. I'm going in.

Ryan eases out of the car and quietly closes the door. He runs around the back of the car behind the skip. Mac gets out and crosses to the drivers side and toward the front door.

The front flood lights blast on and the garage door rolls up. Mac glances toward the skip. Ryan is holding the kite bag and slides behind the skip, into the shadows.

As the door slowly rises Mac sees polished shoes, well pressed trousers, crisp shirt and then Grange's smiling face. He stands, feet apart, arms crossed.

GRANGE

Where's the kid?

MAC

Tied up. On Rutleys. Dollars to donuts he's really pissed off right now. Mostly at you for getting him into this mess.

Mac takes his phone out. Holds it up for Grange to see.

MAC (CONT'D)

Dick on here admitting to the killing, Warburton admitting he was ordered by you to kill us. You're done mate.

Mac slides his phone back into his pocket.

MAC (CONT'D)

Let's not be stupid.

Grange laughs and uncrosses his arms. Has his own handgun.

GRANGE

What, you going to arrest me? Shoot me? You don't have the balls for that.

Grange pulls the trigger and Mac dives behind the dumpster. The shot whines off the metal and Mac ends up nose to nose with Ryan. Grange's feet are visible from under the skip, crunching over the gravel.

Mac stands and braces his back against the wall. Motions for Ryan to take the bag and get out of sight. Waits until the crunch of gravel is close to the skip and pushes with all of his strength.

Not quite enough strength. The wheels scream as they fight against the rust. The bin bounces Grange sideways, but doesn't knock him down. Grange pushes the dumpster back in place and levels his gun on Mac.

MAC

Shit.

GRANGE

I'm not going to kill you here. Too many questions. Give me your phone.

Mac stares at him for a second. Looks at Ryan's car, then beyond that to Grange's big sedan.

GRANGE (CONT'D)

Hey. I'm talking to you.

Mac slides the phone out of his pocket. Considers it for a second and tosses it underhand to Grange.

MAC

Where we going?

Grange steps to one side and motions with the gun towards his sedan. Mac exhales a deep breath.

MAC (CONT'D)

It's not the beach is it? Surely you've got more imagination than that.

GRANGE

Get in the front seat, slowly. Sudden moves aren't healthy.

Granges keeps his weapon on Mac as he gets in the drivers seat. Left hand on the wheel, right across his body aiming at Mac. Grange backs out and accelerates up the beach road.

MAC

No way in hell you'll get away with this.

GRANGE

Are you really that stupid? Of course I will.

(MORE)

GRANGE (CONT'D)
I'll make sure all case evidence
goes through me and drag it out
until it's officially a cold case.

Grange turns into the Budgie beach parking lot.

GRANGE (CONT'D)
Now shut up or I'll make it
painful.

MAC (V.O.)
This was going to hurt, but not as
mush as getting shot in the head.

Mac pops his seat belt and throws the door open, rolling onto the pavement. He rolls twice and scrambles to his feet and runs for the dunes.

He lies flat in a depression. Grange is hollering something. Mac raises his head a fraction and watches Grange turn on the light on his phone.

MAC (V.O.)
It just gets better. Lying in the
same place Jackson died, watching
the architect of his death hunt me
down.

The cop quarters the dunes, slowly sweeping the light back and forth.

GRANGE
You're pissing me off, Mac.

Mac watches the light sweep just in front of his head and Grange turn slightly away from him. He launches himself from the sand and lands on Grange, knocking him to the wooden steps. The gun clatters down the wooden steps and into the parking lot.

Mac and Grange grapple, punches flying. The fight rolls them down the hill to the parking lot. Mac ends up under Grange, copping a final punch to the gut.

MAC
(wheezing)
Christ.

Grange stands and cocks his revolver.

GRANGE
Get on your feet. You know where to
go.

MAC (V.O.)
Shit. Warburton's piece.

Mac looks through the dark toward the beach. Shrugs and shakes his head.

MAC

Give me a clue.

Mac looks around the parking lot. Grange's gun is about fifteen metres away. He takes a sideways step toward it.

GRANGE

Wrong direction. Up the steps to the rock shelf. I'll fucking shoot you here if I have to. I just don't feel like dragging you into the water.

Mac takes another step, then lunges for Grange's gun. He gets his fingers on it when a bullet rips through his thigh.

GRANGE (CONT'D)

Fuck you, Mac. Up the dune.

Mac grabs his thigh. The blood seeps out through his fingers.

MAC

How in the hell am I supposed to walk when you just shot me. Jesus.

GRANGE

It's a flesh wound. On your feet.

Mac stands with the help of the car. Hobbles toward the steps. Grange walks behind him, keeping his gun trained on Mac's back.

GRANGE (CONT'D)

Fucking hop to it, Mac. I've got things to do.

Mac slows until the muzzle touches his back. He clenches his teeth, turns hard to his left, knocking the gun out of Grange's hand and following through with a roundhouse to the cop's jaw.

Grange drops like a sack of old porridge. Mac picks up Warburton's gun and hobbles over to the car to pick up Grange's. He slides it in the back of his pants.

He returns and grabs the back of Grange's jacket and drags him toward the car. It's a slow slog.

Halfway back to the car, headlights turn into the parking lot and sweep across Mac. He stops. Let's go of Grange's jacket. The cop's head bounces on the pavement. Mac dangles the handgun off his index finger and holds his hands out to his sides.

The car rolls to a stop in front of Mac, awash in its headlights. He squints past the beams as the doors open.

KING
Been fishing, Mac?

She steps past the beam, her handgun trained on Mac. Ryan steps past the beam on the other side of King's car.

KING (CONT'D)
Ryan's told me a bit of the story.
What is Grange doing, sleeping on
the ground?

She lowers her weapon and looks closer at Mac's leg.

KING (CONT'D)
You're bleeding.

RYAN
You okay, mate?

Mac taps Grange's head with the toe of his shoe.

MAC
Never better.

RYAN
Kite bag is in the back. Lily
bagged and tagged it. This is
exciting. Five percent?

Mac smiles and gives him a thumbs up.

EXT. BETTY'S PATIO - TWO WEEKS LATER

Mac and Ernie walk onto the patio and sit across from Betty at the glass-topped table.

MAC
Ernie, Betty deserves better than
you, but she still loves you. You
two need to work it out. I'm not
covering for you any more.

BETTY
Covering?

MAC
You better tell her, Ernie. It's
all going to come out eventually.
I've got to go. Loose ends to tie
up.

Mac limps back to Ryan's car and eases in.

RYAN

You okay?

MAC

I'll live. Let's go. The Pelican.
I'll drop you and pick up Sophie.

INT. PELICAN

Ryan, Jessie and her parents are sitting at a booth, laughing animatedly. Mac and Sophie enter and join them. Two large pizzas sit in the middle of the table. A pitcher of beer is half empty.

RYAN

Glad you two could join us. Nice to
be free and clear, isn't it?

Mac sighs and pours a glass of beer.

MAC

Took King two weeks to get it all
sorted.

RYAN

Grange's trial starts next month.
You've got a bit of a break before
you need to testify.

SOPHIE

So what are you guys talking about?

RYAN

I was just telling Jessie and her
folks that I'm going to get the
studio to have the premier up here
somewhere. Jessie can be my plus-1.
It'll be a blast.

He salutes Mac with his glass.

RYAN (CONT'D)

After the past few weeks I think
I'm going to give a very realistic
performance.