

FEATHERSTON

Written by

James Sutherland

tokyopictureshow@gmail.com
+81 080-4728-4793

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Rain SLAMS the windshield. The car idles on the side of a long rural two lane state highway.

Through the rain blurred side window, light pierces the darkness. The headlights of another car appear.

It hurtles down the highway, a real speed demon, refracted by the trickling rain on the window.

Chasing close behind the car, a large truck. SPEED. TENSION.

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car rockets past the parked car. A small flash of light.

A BANG!

Tire blows, spins off its rim. SCREECHES on the wet surface.

The lights swirl, the car hydroplanes on the slick road, its rear fishtails, bounces up, slams down on its suspension. Steering, speed, friction all work in perfect concert.

The car's weight shifts to one side, tires finally lose their grip on the wet road.

The rear end comes unstuck rotating over the front right, the car tips, flips, FLIES up into the air.

The car lands, METAL CRUNCHING FLIPS send the car over and over. Glass shards fly into the air.

An EXPLOSION of metal and glass amidst thunderous shredding and tearing SOUNDS.

The car ends the violent roll on its roof, spins along the road, a CRASH of steel and glass into a cement abutment. Pieces fall off, gas spews.

Steam HISSES, billows from the hood. Flames lick edges of the wreckage.

BLACK.

EXT. FEATHERSTON RAILWAY STATION - DAY

Small town, real small. An empty main street, few shops, in the distance the renovated Royal Hotel.

Picturesque, peaceful. Doesn't get more country than this.

A CHYRON READS: A WEEK EARLIER

JAMES BURNS (40s) battle scarred reporter, lean, from an unhealthy lifestyle, mistaken for a cynic, loves fighting the powers that be, get the job done anyhow kind of guy.

He smokes on the small town station platform, a small ticket office in the b.g. Behind that, a large full car park.

Burns watches the large DF class Locomotive hauling SW carriages slow, come to a stop at the platform.

YOKO ADACHI (30s) Japanese, timeless beauty, composed, reliable, steps off the train, DSLR slung over her shoulder.

YOKO

Nice to meet you, you beat me.

BURNS

Wanted to get the lay of the land.
Welcome to nowhere.

They take a look out at an old truck, two dogs on the rear trailer, rolling over the train crossing, disappears.

BURNS (CONT'D)

What'd you do to get stuck here?

YOKO

Oh, I wanted this.

BURNS

Help you with your bag?

YOKO

I've got it, thanks.

They head off the platform, walk out of the carpark. A sign reads: WELCOME TO FEATHERSTON GATEWAY TO THE WINE TRAIL.

YOKO (CONT'D)

You grew up here?

BURNS

Close enough.

Burns gazes across at a questionable looking Hotel.

YOKO
That's not us, we're ten minutes
walk that way.

A sign of relief from Burns.

YOKO (CONT'D)
Amazing job, by the way. Any advice
for me?

BURNS
Yeah, don't let the assholes win.

They make their way down a quiet suburban street, behind
them, a car horn HONKS.

MAYOR JOHN O'CONNOR (50s), waves, an ambush.

John, who looks more like a boss of a small town crime family
than mayor of three neighboring towns, leans out of his car.

JOHN
Hey there, offer you a ride?

BURNS
We're just down there.

Burns gestures in the distance to the Royal Hotel.

JOHN
Jump in.

Yoko throws Burns a sly smile.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

They turn onto, cruise down the state highway, the main
street cutting a straight line through the town. Yoko aims
her camera out the window, shoots photographs.

The clash of cultures everywhere. They pass bakeries, up
market home stores, second hand clothing stores.

A car bumper sticker reads: No war has ever been fought in
the name of Wicca.

YOKO
So quaint, I mean that as a
compliment.

JOHN
Must be compared to where you're
coming from.

Burns turns to Yoko in the back seat, throws her a what does he mean look. Yoko returns an I don't know shrug.

BURNS

So on the record what would you like us to call you?

JOHN

Your Worship. Kidding, John's fine.

BURNS

Looks as though money has really changed this place.

JOHN

Sure has. We've a population of around three thousand, and have increasingly become a satellite town, 36% of employed Featherston residents work over the hill.

BURNS

Wellington.

JOHN

And the Hutt Valley. Proximity to the capital, and low house prices, makes us popular with artists, those with young families, which has lead to an upsurge in investment. And we are a part of the classic New Zealand wine trail.

YOKO

Don't see any wineries round here.

JOHN

Martinborough, that borough, as well as Greytown and Featherston have all been amalgamated.

They cruise past the Royal Hotel.

BURNS

The King of the South.

JOHN

You bet. Where you staying?

BURNS

At the Royal Hotel, back that way.

JOHN

Be honored if you join my wife and
I for an early dinner.

BURNS

We were actually...

YOKO

We'd be honored.

JOHN

Great! The Royal is newly
renovated. The restaurant and bar
serve local produce, it's full of
character and charm, NZ Colonial
and Victorian architecture.

BURNS

You should've been a salesman.

JOHN

I'm a politician, no greater
salesman than that!

The car turns right into the entry of a long dead end street,
the town stops framed by a large long mountain range. Then.

Endless green paddocks. Endless. Yoko looks out the window.

YOKO

Oh. My. God.

EXT. TARUREKA ESTATE - DAY

Yoko stands, dumbstruck at the size of the O'Connor's house.

The grounds meticulously maintained, vast country-style
gardens, a lawn tennis court, past that, grazing paddocks for
livestock or further development.

John walks past, swings around.

JOHN

Come on in.

INT. TARUREKA ESTATE - KITCHEN - DAY

Renovated, large, formal living areas, and an interconnected
kitchen and dining space. A reflection of its colonial past.

Burns and Yoko across from each other at the dinner table. At
one end, John stands, slices meat from a large roast.

At the other FAY O'CONNOR (50s) lounges at the head of the table, old town wealth posing as a housewife, nurses her large glass of gin with a conservative amount of tonic.

BURNS

This is delicious Mrs. O'Connor
thank you very much.

FAY

Call me Fay, and it's my pleasure.
Welcome to our little town. Taken
in the sites yet?

YOKO

I don't know about James, I just
arrived.

BURNS

Was interested in retirement homes.

FAY

Retirement homes. Why on earth?

JOHN

Darling you promised not to pry.

FAY

More Gravy? John dear, get them
some more gravy.

BURNS

I heard there were maybe some
people still in the area who worked
here during the war.

FAY

I'm certain there are, isn't that
right dear?

BURNS

Wanted to interview them for an
anniversary piece. It's a thin
lead, but it's the only one I got.

FAY

An anniversary piece?

BURNS

The old prisoner of war camp.

FAY

It attracts so many weirdos.

JOHN
Tourists. Darling.

FAY
Is this appropriate, in front of..
Fay gestures towards Yoko.

YOKO
They were laborers. Allied forces
outnumbered and overwhelmed them,
then took command of the island's
key locations, including an almost
completed airfield.

BURNS
Henderson Field; an important base
for the allied push into the
pacific.

JOHN
You've done your research.

FAY
Sounds bleak if you ask me.
Fay leans in, reaches for SILVER CHERRY BLOSSOM NECKLACE
around Yoko's neck.

FAY (CONT'D)
That's a lovey necklace dear, where
did you get it?

YOKO
It was my grandmothers, a gift from
my grandfather.

JOHN
I think an anniversary piece is a
great idea. Anything to shine a
light on the region. Not sure about
any retired soldiers though.

BURNS
Reservists. Not soldiers.

JOHN
Could make a few calls if you like.

BURNS
Oh no I...

JOHN

I insist, I'm rather well connected
I'll have you know.

BURNS

I appreciate the help.

FAY

Who's prying now?

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Steampunk themed boutique. Intricate time pieces on the walls, bell jars of oddities placed like museum displays.

James and Yoko stroll through the reception to the

PUB

An uncomfortable silence falls, side glances, whispers.

YOKO

Hospitable much? Forgive me if I'm
overstepping, you don't seem to
want to be here, so what'd you do?

BURNS

I hurt someone's feelings. Beer?

EXT. ROYAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Burns and Yoko sit in a beer garden, look down the street.

It's quiet except for the music coming from inside.

BURNS

The mayor mentioned earlier,
something about where you'd been,
what was all that?

YOKO

A photo journal gig.

BURNS

What kind of gig?

YOKO

Watching people hurt each others
feelings. God I'd kill for a
cigarette.

Yoko looks to Burns, clocks the cigarette pack in his top pocket, he doesn't flinch. She gives up.

BURNS

Odd he knows that, don't you think?

YOKO

Good leaders do their due diligence, don't you think?

BURNS

Maybe he's got too much free time on his hands.

Flashing lights and SIRENS approach, three large fire engines scream down the main street.

YOKO

Where they going?

Burns flashes a smile, throws Yoko the car keys.

EXT. CROSS CREEK RETIREMENT VILLAGE - NIGHT

A large building completely consumed by flames.

Fire fighters rush about, drag hoses, shoot water into the building, scramble to control the blaze.

Burns and Yoko pull up, they are stopped by DUTY OFFICERS. Yoko leans out the driver's side window.

YOKO

What happened?

DUTY OFFICER

Don't know yet, but everyone inside is gone.

BURNS

How many people were in there?

DUTY OFFICER

Don't know, but no one has come out since I've been here.

All the buildings windows blow, like the sky erupts, glass and plaster falls and pelts the ground around them.

DUTY OFFICER raises his arms over his face, can't avert his gaze from the destruction.

The sky rains fire, the flames rise to their fullest.

Burns gets out, walks the periphery of the blaze. He carries a cup of coffee, gives one to the officer guarding the scene.

A row of bagged bodies on the ground, some POLICE TAPE cordoning off the area. He sees DETECTIVE SARGENT ROB STEIGER (40s), tall, clean shaven, lean, gunning for promotion, approach the Duty Officer.

He looks around, kneels down near the bodies, imagines the origin of the blaze, its trajectory through the building.

Burns works: quiet, internal, thorough. He might spend an hour here, just thinking...but he is not alone.

In the distance, a FIGURE watches him.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - PUB - NIGHT

Burns on the phone, disgruntled. Yoko dances, all smiles.

On the other end, MARIA CHEN (40s) Editor-In-Chief, Chinese, patrician, waspish. These two don't go way back.

BURNS

Hear our on-line side is exploding.

MARIA

I like our online team, the way they write. They're hungry, cheap, and they pump out copy every hour.

BURNS

I know. I cost a fortune, take forever. I know nothing yet.

MARIA

That's a shame.

Burns jots down some notes. Yoko sees he's writing a lot.

BURNS

Is that a concern?

MARIA (O.S.)

From what I understand readership is down, the Internet is cutting into the Classified business and, I'm going to have to take a hard look at things.

BURNS

So you anticipate more cuts?

MARIA (O.S.)
What I'm focused on is finding a
way to make this paper essential to
its readers.

Burns turns, glances over at Yoko.

BURNS
I'd like to think it already is.

A LOCAL in a flannel shirt pats her on the bum. She spins,
pushes him, SMACK, a slap across his face. Three other
figures rise, move to Yoko, encircle her.

MARIA (O.S.)
I just think we can do better.

Burns sees it, turns away.

Other PATRONS move to the melee, quell the chaos.

Burns slams the phone down on the receiver. Scuttles over to
his chair, falls in, knocks back his pint. Yoko approaches.

YOKO
So, chivalry is dead.

BURNS
I'm a lover, not a fighter.
They're leeching us.

YOKO
They sent a woman from Auckland to
run things. That should help.

BURNS
Has Chen even spent time in
Wellington?

YOKO
Maybe we should buy her a map. I
have a friend at the Herald, said
Chen cut 15% of the staff.

BURNS
So it's this or find another job.

YOKO
This?

BURNS

This! Write about how a bunch of
Māori's and disabled idiots
defended a hundred square miles of
fucken sheep against a horde of
yellow vegetarians.

YOKO

You're drunk.

BURNS

No. I think you're drunk.

Yoko sits frozen. Disbelief on her face, did those words just
come out of his mouth?. She rises, storms out.

BURNS (CONT'D)

What?!

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - YOKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Door slams, a big sigh, leans against the door.

Yoko tosses her camera on the bed, walks to her bag, reaches
in, pulls out a small bottle of whiskey, takes a swig. She
rips off her sweater, heads to the

BATHROOM

Black and white with snaking copper pipes. Yoko closes the
door behind her, turns the shower on.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - IN THE WALLS - NIGHT

A tiny circle of light hits the face of a MALE FIGURE coming
from a hole in the wall. The spot of light hits his eye.

He peeps through the hole.

Yoko undresses, she's in her bra. She places her hand behind
her upper back, unhooks her bra.

The figure watches as Yoko removes her bra. His eye runs up
and down the unseen figure of Yoko.

Yoko slips through into the shower, closes the shower curtain
covering her complete nudity.

She stands, under the shower head, washes the day off her.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - BURNS ROOM - DAY

Burns comatose on the top of his bed. Mouth wide, snores.

It's already a reporter's lair, a chaos of notes and files.

Two loud KNOCKS.

Startles Burns awake, he drags himself to the door. Opens it.

YOKO
I got a lead.

EXT. NANA & POP'S DAIRY - DAY

Yoko gets out of the driver's side, Burns falls out the passenger side, squints, stretches, yawns.

Yoko holds her cellphone up, checks the reception. One bar.

YOKO
Let's get you some coffee.

INT. NANA & POP'S DAIRY - DAY

A TINKLE of a bell above the hinge announces their arrival.

A few aisles of sundries, CHIPS and GUM and MINCE PIES. A couple of humming FREEZERS with an assortment of beverages.

ONE NEWS plays on a TV SET above the counter, currently being watched by the station's owners.

NANA and POP (70s). Salt of the earth. Lower North Island accents. They turn towards Burns and Yoko.

NANA
Well, hello there?

YOKO
We're wondering if you sell coffee.

POP
I'm sorry dear, you'll have to go to the supermarket or one of those fancy cafes for that.

NANA
Oh, be quiet you old fuddy duddy, we have instant down the back if you want.

Burns shuffles off down the back of the store.

YOKO

Thanks, could you tell us if we are close to the soldier settlement.

NANA

Sure are, it's fifteen minutes that way. Who are you looking for?

YOKO

A retired reservist.

NANA

Hear about that fire last night? Horrible.

POP

Old Jack Morrison lives out there.

NANA

They say no one survived. Nothing, all burned.

YOKO

We've been asked...

Burns returns from the back with some coffee.

BURNS

More like forced...

YOKO

...to write a piece on the anniversary of the Featherston massacre.

BURNS

You hear anything about war profiteering back then?

NANA

No, my dear, and you take what old Jack says with a grain of salt, he's as old as the hills now, memory might be a bit, you know.

Nana and Pop watch them leave, glance back at each other.

EXT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - DAY

Car drives past views of Lake Wairarapa, a peaceful retreat.

The car passes established trees, a sheltered orchard, easy-care gardens, and a secluded spa pool under cover.

YOKO (O.S.)
From now on, if you have something
to say to me that's not work
related, keep it to yourself. We
clear?

BURNS (O.S.)
Crystal.

Car stops. Yoko turns car off, removes the keys, fumes.

BURNS (CONT'D)
What'd I do?

YOKO
No wonder you're alone.

BURNS
What's that supposed to mean?

YOKO
You burnt all your bridges long
ago, you should have invested more
time in your relationships with
people and less time in quick feel
good fixes.

Burns throws a sloppy salute her way.

YOKO (CONT'D)
By the way, you stink.

Yoko gets out walks to the front door, knocks on the door.

Burns falls out of the passenger seat, slides around the side of the house, wrap-around covered verandas to the north and east, he jumps up on the veranda, peers in the window.

VOICE (O.S.)
Can I help you two?

Yoko and Burns turn to see JACK MORRISON (70s), wiry, white hair, history written into his wrinkles, stands as tall as his age will allow, a double barreled shot gun rests in the crook of his arm.

Burns holds up both hands, in one a bag of instant coffee.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - DAY

Yoko swans in from the kitchen to the table with coffees. She places Burns mug on the table, hands Jack his mug, smiles.

JACK
Thank you my dear.

Jack studies Yoko's face, squints, recognizes that smile.

JACK (CONT'D)
You remind me of an old friend?

She plants herself as far as she can from Burns.

YOKO
A lady friend?

JACK
No.

Burns sniggers, Yoko swings around, stink eyes him.

JACK (CONT'D)
A friend from a long time ago.

BURNS
Speaking of a long time ago, I'm
from the newspaper...

JACK
Reputable one I hope.

YOKO
Are there any?

BURNS
We were hoping to ask you about
your time serving there.

(O.S) a GUNSHOT from a pistol. CHAOS. MEN SCREAM in Japanese.
Another SHOT.

Jack jumps, his smile fades.

JACK
I think you should leave.

BURNS
It's just an anniversary piece on
the day of the rebellion.

JACK
You don't know what you're dealing
with.

BURNS
Enlighten me.

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Yoko and Jack watch Burns fall back in his car seat.
He tosses his notebook onto the dashboard, rubs his face.
Driver seat still empty Burns looks back toward the door.
Yoko turns to Jack in the doorway.

YOKO
He was accused of stalking a police
officer after trying to contact her
at home. The union emailed his name
and photo to thousands of members
and told them not speak to him
claiming it was unacceptable for
journalists to approach officers at
their homes. He later found out
that officer was leaking
intelligence to organized crime for
tens of thousands of dollars.

JACK
You trust him?

YOKO
He's an asshole. But he's a good
journalist.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

Yoko and Burns back at the dining table, lean in.

JACK
I was out here housing POWs until
the end of the War.

BURNS
You were a guard?

JACK
A translator, of sorts.

EXT. WELLINGTON HARBOR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Untouched by the horrors of war. JAPANESE PRISONERS OF WAR board two American tank landing ships.

JACK (O.S.)
I remember the words of King
George.

A CHYRON reads:

DECEMBER 1945.

JACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let us pray that from the defeat of
Japan may be many happy reunions of
those who have been long separated
from each other.

A younger Jack and AKIRA ADACHI (30s), short, clean shaven, muscular but lean, wild eyes, stands, full attention on the docks.

Adachi relaxes, smiles, reaches inside his jacket, takes out an envelope, hands it to Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's this?

ADACHI
Kireji.

JACK
Kireji. I didn't learn that word.

ADACHI
A cutting word that creates a pause
or sense of closure.

Jack reaches out to shake Adachi's hand, Adachi offers a deep bow. Jack returns with a deep bow of his own.

JACK (V.O.)
That's who you reminded me of dear.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Yoko swallows her emotions, Burns sits across from Jack as he sips on his coffee.

YOKO
But he didn't return home, did he?

JACK
I saw him board.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Burns and Yoko eat, strange silence.

YOKO
You say Chen was from Auckland.

BURNS
You said that. I think she was at
the Times.

YOKO
She wasn't here.

Yoko looks up from her meal, notices patrons peering at them.
Burns doesn't, he's too focused on his food.

BURNS
You know more than you're letting
on. Don't you?

YOKO
What makes you think that?

BURNS
How'd you know that guy didn't
return home?

YOKO
A guess.

BURNS
You're a great liar.

YOKO
Adachi Akira is recorded as
arriving at Wellington Harbour with
the other POWs but when the boat
docked in Japan he wasn't on it.
I don't think a simple anniversary
piece has got any meat in it,
especially for where your career is
now. I'm just saying...

BURNS
Yes, what are you saying?

YOKO

There's going to be others looking into angles on this, you don't want them getting ahead of it..

BURNS

Angles on this? An anniversary piece about a middle of nowhere town where the last news worthy thing to happen here was eighty years ago. Don't worry, no one's looking into this.

EXT. FEATHERSTON CAMP - COMPOUND - DAY - FLASHBACK

LT. COLONEL DONALD DONALDSON, camp commandant (50s), gaudy as a peacock, lacks any battle experience, studies the compound.

A CHYRON reads:

DECEMBER 1943

CAMP ADJUTANT MALCOLM ADAMS (40s) tall, lean, a chilly manner, the stamp of an English gentleman, and Jack huddle around Donaldson as he watches for prisoners in compound two to exit their barracks.

Donaldson checks his watch. 6.28am.

DONALDSON

Losing my patience with that lot.

He scans the compound through his binoculars, checks his watch. 6.30am. Jack runs over to compound two.

LABORERS from compound one, OFFICERS from compound three and four all exit their barracks, organize themselves into lines.

Donaldson looks over to compound two. No one emerges.

Donaldson watches as Jack stands at the door of one of the barracks in compound 2. He nods, turns, puffing, approaches Donaldson on his veranda.

JACK

They are refusing to work. Sir.

JACK (V.O.)

The compound had democratically elected Lieutenant Adachi as their representative.

JACK
He's demanding a meeting with you.

DONALDSON
He can shove it up his proverbial
ass. Let Malcolm handle it.

INT. FEATHERSTON CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Malcolm lounges in Donaldson's chair, boots on the desk.
Adachi stands rigid at attention.

MALCOLM
This is bad for business.

Malcolm picks up the phone.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Get three platoons of guards in
compound two, on the double.
Position two guards on the roof.

Malcolm hangs up, relaxes back in Donaldson's chair, slides a
pair of binoculars between himself and Adachi.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Take a look.

Through the binoculars Adachi sees the remaining 240
prisoners from compound two cross legged and silent on the
compound's concrete quadrangle floor.

Armed guards rush into the compound. Two guards with tommy
guns take position on the roof, flank the prisoners.

Guards below, attach bayonets, point them at the POWs.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I order you to return to the
compound and communicate to the
prisoners they have to work.

Adachi turns, returns to the

COMPOUND

He slips into the seated crowd of POWs, all eyeball Malcolm
who stands at the front of the sit down.

Malcolm returns their gaze, refuses to break eye contact.

Adachi stands, grits his teeth, fists clenched. TENSE.

A guard shoulders his rifle, reaches towards Adachi. The bayonet from his rifle STABS a nearby PRISONER in the leg.

The prisoner SCREAMS in pain, he grabs the bayonet with both hands. The guard PULLS the bayonet out of his leg.

The blade SLICES through the prisoner's hands SEVERS the tendon and bones of all of his fingers.

Other prisoners see this, RISE, defend their position, a SCUFFLE breaks out between them and some guards.

Malcolm unbuckles, draws his Enfield sidearm, stares at Adachi, raises the Enfield into the air.

He fires, BANG!

Only more CHAOS. Scuffles grow, PUSHES, pushes into PUNCHES.

Malcolm raises his pistol again, takes aim, FIRES.

BANG!

The bullet RIPS through Adachi's shoulder, he spins like a top, ENTERS and EXITS the head of a PRISONER behind him, he collapses, blood pours out of the remains of his head.

WHACK! A rock strikes Malcolm on the head, he grimaces.

All the prisoners rise, a FULL RIOT breaks out, FRENETIC.

They charge, throw rocks and improvised throwing stars.

Malcolm climbs the roof snatches a Tommy gun from a guard, fires.

RATATATATATATAT! RATATATATATAT!

CHAOS. Other armed guards follow, FIRE at the prisoners.

BANG! BANG! RATATATATATAT! BANG! BANG!

Prisoners twist and fall in rapid succession. Pieces of flesh scatter the compound. The ground, a river of blood.

Donaldson runs out, shouts.

DONALDSON
Cease fire! Cease fire!

The gun fire continues.

DONALDSON (CONT'D)
Cease fire! Cease fire!

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Burns leans in, absorbs Jack's every word. His 'if it bleeds it leads' ethic bubbles. Jack falters.

Burns looks across at Yoko, mouths the word: Angles.

Yoko shoots Burns a stare, crosses her arms, her right hand on top, fingers ball into a fist, all except one, the middle.

Burns turns back to Jack.

JACK
You heard of the white feather?

BURNS
A pacifist symbol, yeah.

JACK
A symbol of cowardice, a proof one is not of the true game breed. Many believed we had our own Order of the White Feather here in town.

BURNS
So the Adjutant, Malcolm?

JACK
Even before he heard the news about his brother, something just wasn't right about that man.

EXT. FEATHERSTON CAMP - DAY - FLASHBACK

Heavy segments of huts, wall panels, eaves sections, being dragged by teams of men like some ancient Japanese industry.

A CHYRON reads:

APRIL 1943

Malcolm's distracted by voices, two men, a GUARD, and a PRISONER argue where some barracks are being erected.

JACK (V.O.)
One incident I'll never forget.

The prisoner breaks off the dialog with a wave of his hand, stalks back to a half-finished barracks.

The guard, sees Malcolm approaching, moves to meet him, waves a small Japanese dictionary.

GUARD
I can't understand a word.

MALCOLM
Long story short.

GUARD
Says foundations were poured wrong.

MALCOLM
And.

GUARD
I told him it's a barracks, not a
hotel, fucking Jap engineer.

MALCOLM
Language.

GUARD
Sir.

Malcolm studies the prisoner at the shell of the building.

Prisoner comes over. In half English, half Japanese.

PRISONER
Zenbu dig up, pour again.

Prisoner gesticulates.

PRISONER (CONT'D)
No, Zenbu, fall.

Guard scrolls through his small dictionary.

GUARD
Zenbu. Means everything. I think.

MALCOLM
Thank you private.

Malcolm considers, pretends as if he knows about such things.
He swings back around to the prisoner, a calm glare.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You argued with my private.

Other prisoners look over, still their hammers.

Malcolm grabs the prisoner by the scruff of his neck, drags
him behind a half-built wall. DING! A shovel hits bone.

Another DING.

DING! DING!

Malcolm returns from behind the wall, shovel in hand, to his stunned inferior. He hands the shovel to the guard.

He fixes his hair, gestures to behind the wall, with his hand raised he addresses the prisoners.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
That's somebody who knew what they
were doing. Take it down, repour
it, rebuild it, like he said.

He turns, walks away. Everyone stands, frozen.

JACK (V.O.)
He ruled with impunity. If he was
the disease, Adachi was the cure.

INT. FEATHERSTON CAMP - DAY

Adachi stands in front of Malcolm and Donaldson at full attention, immaculately dressed in his POW uniform.

A CHYRON reads:

NOVEMBER 1943

MALCOLM
Name?

ADACHI
Adachi Akira.

MALCOLM
Rank?

ADACHI
Lieutenant, Imperial Air Force.

MALCOLM
Age?

ADACHI
Thirty six

MALCOLM
Wife?

ADACHI
Unmarried.

MALCOLM
General condition?

ADACHI
Medically class A1.

MALCOLM
Prisoner dismissed.

INT. FEATHERSTON MAYORAL OFFICES - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

O'Connor behind his desk, on the phone, Burns appears at the door, Yoko behind, O'Connor gestures just a moment.

He slams the phone down, rises, returns to putting practice.

JOHN
So, Adjutant Malcolm?

BURNS
Yeah, any town records on this guy?

JOHN
You could check with our Archives department or possibly the local rag...here, let me show you something.

From his office, John exits. Yoko and Burns follow.

JOHN (CONT'D)
How's it going out there?

YOKO
Good, it's a beautiful property.

BURNS
He's very open.

JOHN
He's lonely. Just take what he says with a grain of salt. Long time ago, fake news and all that. Probably PTSD.

YOKO
From being a translator?

JOHN
Things affect different people differently, the rebellion certainly could've caused some trauma.

Burns and Yoko follow the Mayor. He leads them

OUTSIDE

They stand in front of the Mayoral offices.

Mayor O'Connor gestures to the New Zealand national flag hanging from the flagpole.

JOHN

Those stars are us. Ideals.
Achievement through endeavor as
Captain Cook might say. The blue
expanses. That too is us. Sense of
openness, of adventure. Always
something new to challenge us.

Yoko rolls her eyes, John turns, she back to feigning interest. John glances at Burns.

BURNS

Poignant. I have another question,
will there be an inquest into the
regions egregious rates hikes?

JOHN

We're halting urban growth because
the towns have reached wastewater
capacity.

BURNS

That's low-to-nil incoming
development contributions and
negates any additional ratepayers
to the financial base.

JOHN

We are working towards a realistic
Long-term Plan for that works
through various infrastructure
issues with affordable rates and
the transition of Local Water
reform in mind. Does that answer
your question Mr.Burns?

YOKO

Where is your Cemetery located?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Burns and Yoko search along aisles of headstones, Burns stops, eyes Yoko.

BURNS

So when were you going to tell me?

YOKO

Tell you what?

BURNS

That, that guy Jack's talking about was, is your grandfather.

YOKO

I wasn't.

They stop, Adjutant Malcolm's headstone looms below them.

BURNS

Clear conflict of interest, don't you think?

YOKO

What's the side hustle you're on? Rates? A bit left field don't you think?

BURNS

This place.

YOKO

There's a good story here somewhere. I need to know what happened to him.

BURNS

What makes you think you're going to find it here?

YOKO

Why is he buried here? Thought he was from Picton.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - DAY

Burns packs his bags, on the bedside table, a boutique cappuccino, through his window the bustle of the town.

A KNOCK at the door.

BURNS

It's open.

Yoko enters, see Burns over his open suitcase, hides her surprise, moves to the window, watches the main street.

YOKO
How's the article?

BURNS
It's not.

YOKO
Isn't this your meal ticket, your
road back to the top?

BURNS
Don't fool yourself, I'm not
getting back to the top. With the
paper face-lift, the cuts, Chew.

Yoko considers an answer, then refrains from giving it.

BURNS (CONT'D)
What?

YOKO
Nothing.

Burns goes back to packing, throws some clothes in his
suitcase, Yoko approaches.

YOKO (CONT'D)
We've got a missing man, and a
racist bully who probably committed
war crimes, you could break this
story wide open, it's more than
just an anniversary piece now.

Burns stops, turns to Yoko

BURNS
Any of what you told me to be true?
About your grand father?

YOKO
Apart from his age, no.

BURNS
Humor me.

YOKO
Married my grandmother Akiko,
daughter of his father's partner in
a small commercial business, in
Ibaraki City, Kyoto Prefecture. He
felt certain other things more
sharply than separation from his
family.

BURNS

Like what?

INT. FEATHERSTON CAMP - DAY - FLASHBACK

Adachi stands at full attention before Lt. Colonel Donaldson, who sits behind his desk.

A CHYRON reads: NOVEMBER 1943

Jack stands guard by the door, fumbles a dictionary and note pad in his hands, at the ready.

YOKO (V.O.)

Shame was a prisoner at all, shame he wasn't dead. Fear that he would survive his imprisonment and return to the humiliation of his parents. Hence his desire that he died.

Jack opens his note pad, licks his pencil, listens.

ADACHI

You cannot be a part of history and expect life to be comfortable.

DONALDSON

There are now eight hundred prisoners in this camp. Five hundred of these are from work units, the virtual coolie class, who offer no problems to speak of. There are three hundred NCOs and other ranks who are marginally more intelligent, usually tractable, and probably not bad soldiers into the bargain. Apart from occasional moroseness quite a tolerable kind of prisoner. And a small third group, positive showers.

ADACHI

This group is comprised only of officers. Drawn from a superior class, better educated, more articulate in their aspirations and demands.

Realizing Adachi's English is near native, Jack pockets his pencil and notebook.

DONALDSON

Precisely.

ADACHI

When your ultimate officer, I refer to of course the emperor, when that officer is, in fact, God, obedience becomes a good deal more than the average western soldier understands.

DONALDSON

We do have the King's Commission, damn it.

ADACHI

Please excuse my skepticism at the comparison.

DONALDSON

And you continue to insist that you are still at war? As combatants?

ADACHI

We still insist that our duty and our privilege is to assure the triumph of Japan.

DONALDSON

Dear, oh dear.

ADACHI

The purpose of our existence is still to kill.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Police run do not cross tape around the smoking black husk of a house. Firemen rush to clear the house, douse small embers, hammer axes into walls.

DR. FERGUSON (40s) chubby, hairy, somehow well groomed, inappropriate humor, covers up a twisted and burnt cadaver.

Paramedics cover the cadaver, carry him off on a gurney.

O'Connor hovers in the background, surveys the scene.

Dr. Ferguson addresses Rob.

DR. FERGUSON

Nasty way to go.

ROB

Seems he tried to have a fry up and left the gas on.

DR.FERGUSON

They say you shouldn't eat late at night.

John approaches, looks to a spectacularly groggy Rob.

JOHN

So what do we reckon Detective Sargent?

ROB

We've set up a proper cordon, keeping people back, waiting for the fire crew to finish then forensics will do a thorough sweep.

JOHN

Right. Sounds like you have everything under control.

Rob spots a crew of workmen on the periphery, waiting to clear the scene.

Burns appears, cellphone in hand, voice recorder on.

BURNS

Sargeant, a quick word?

ROB

Please. A statement will be issued shortly.

John leads Burns away.

BURNS

What you thinking? Foul play?

JOHN

Maybe.

BURNS

Was this guy a reservist? Did he work at the camp?

JOHN

I know most people around town, to be honest I'd put money on it that's what he did.

BURNS

That's two fires and a fuck ton of people dead in less than a week.

JOHN

Most of those were found to be accidents. People have accidents everyday.

BURNS

But the victims knew each other. They were all retired reservists.

JOHN

Everyone knows everyone around here.

BURNS

So someone must've seen something suspicious?

EXT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

Jack stands near a large fire inside a forty gallon drum, he tosses objects into the fire.

A car approaches, flashlights illuminate Jack. Car stops Burns and Yoko get out. Jack turns.

JACK (V.O.)

What we must acknowledge is that no one walked away with their nose clean.

INT. LT. COLONEL DONALDSON'S BARRACKS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A table set with China, silver. Malcolm relaxes in his pressed uniform with COUNCIL MEMBERS from the Featherston local council.

COUNCIL MEMBER 1.

It can be moved and installed by the prisoners at no cost to you, no rent, no...

Jack flies in, breath heavy.

JACK

I apologize for interrupting..

He works his way around the table, reaches the Lt. Colonel.

DONALDSON

Please have a seat. Gentlemen, this is Private Jack Morrison, our resident translator.

Some surprise reactions from the guests, impressed. Malcolm takes a good long look at Jack.

MALCOLM

We started without you.

Jack takes a seat, shakes a napkin onto his lap, a prisoner holding out a bottle of champagne approaches him.

He replies in the Japanese to the prisoner.

JACK

No, thank you.

Malcolm watches him. The others watch Malcolm.

COUNCIL MEMBER 1.

I was explaining the benefits of moving some of our work here.

MALCOLM

We have no agreement defining our relationship to the prisoners, so..

COUNCIL MEMBER 1.

Which could be a virtuous situation for us, the Featherston Camp has great economic prospects.

Lt. Colonel Donaldson leans in.

MALCOLM

One quarter of the total are now either involved with market gardening or clearing land for development and concrete works..

DONALDSON

And what is the annual valuation of this prospect?

COUNCIL MEMBER 1.

Upwards of ninety to one hundred thousand a year Lieutenant Colonel.

Malcolm watches Jack with growing amusement.

COUNCIL MEMBER 1. (CONT'D)

Since labor is housed on-site, it's available at all times.

MALCOLM

Work them all night if we want.

LT. COLONEL DONALDSON
Policies, conventions, whatever
they've been in the past, will
continue to be, respected.

Jack starts in on the plate of food that's set down in front
of him, glances over to Malcolm nonplussed.

MALCOLM
I have to know, where do you get a
haircut like that? It's great.

JACK
I'd get you one but the man who
gave it to me you've probably
beaten to death, I don't know.

Malcolm just smiles, he shrugs like, those are the breaks.

Council members watch the two of them, unsure how to react.

JACK (V.O.)
I tried confronting him about his
treatment of those in our charge.

A silence, broken by.

JACK
There are bruises over many of the
prisoners.

MALCOLM
Work related.

JACK
They're unable to work.

A shrug from Malcolm finally, and a nod; Jack's right.

They study each other, Malcolm shrugs.

MALCOLM
Occasionally, sure, you have to
make an example. That's good
business.

He glances off to a prisoner coming in with a tray of sweets.

JACK (V.O.)
He couldn't see past their numbers,
under their uniforms, they too were
men with wives, sons, daughters.

There's a bruise on his face. He sets the tray down, trying to avoid clatter, looks to Malcolm for further instructions.

MALCOLM

Thank you.

Malcolm smiles. Glances back to Jack.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I was told something about you.

JACK

What's that?

MALCOLM

You know the meaning of the word gratitude. That it's not some vague thing to you like it is to others.

Jack nods. Malcolm tries to put the situation in perspective:

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea what's involved in building this camp? In one week? The paperwork alone? Forget you have to build it all, the fucking permits, that's enough to drive you crazy. Then the prisoners show up. They stand around, argue about drainage, I'm telling you...

JACK

You could make things easier for everyone.

Malcolm mulls it over, his shrug says "maybe, maybe not."

JACK (V.O.)

Donaldson didn't start it, he didn't stop it either.

A silence before.

JACK

I'd be grateful.

EXT. FEATHERSTON STREET - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Burns watches a military procession move down the main street. Drums BEAT, band plays, colors fly.

Four groups of OLD MEN, members of the 5th and 7th Battalion in military uniform escort a coffin, lead by a PARADE MARSHAL, COMMUNITY GROUPS take up the rear.

They move to the

WAR MEMORIAL

Candles flicker. TOWNSPEOPLE gather in solemn silence. A podium stands at the center. John O'Connor steps up.

JOHN

Tonight, we honor those who gave
all, and remember the value of
order, loyalty, and sacrifice.

Burns and Yoko stand among the crowd.

More SPEAKERS follow. Every one uses phrases like: "Order through loyalty." "Sacrifice ensures peace."

BURNS

Sound scripted to you?.

Yoko watches a COUNCILMAN hand a small ledger to another elder. She snaps a photo.

Across the crowd, FAY O'CONNOR watches. Eyes locked on Burns.

Mayor O'Connor approaches from behind.

O'CONNOR

They say he passed in his sleep. No
luck catching the culprits then?

BURNS

We haven't confirmed if it's more
than one.

O'CONNOR

One of the darkest and most
misunderstood days in our military
history. A riot, a mutiny, a
massacre.

BURNS

Or just the climax of a tragic
misunderstanding mixed with
stubbornness and arrogance from
both sides?

O'CONNOR

That's one opinion. Is that how you are going to write it up?

BURNS

That depends on what I can verify.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - DAY

Jack twitches his fingers around his coffee cup, dips his ginger nut biscuit into his coffee, it drops in.

JACK

When it comes to supply and demand in terms of economics, profit is the most important end. He couldn't have done that alone.

BURNS

So it's not luck they run the town

JACK

Do you know the O'Connor's and the Donaldson are related?

BURNS

If the Donaldsons and the O'Connor's are complicit, it's gotta be more than one person.

YOKO

Come again?

BURNS

More than one killer.

YOKO

The Donaldsons, now it's the O'Connor's too?

BURNS

Maybe it still is. Maybe they're not alone. Maybe there are others.

YOKO

Who exactly?

BURNS

I don't know but it hit me.

YOKO

James.

BURNS
Yes?

YOKO
A moment?

INT. HALL - DAY

Burns steps into the hall, Yoko follows, Burns turns to her.

BURNS
We've got a running story here.

YOKO
You've got to ease off a little.
The Donaldson's, the O'Connor's.
They're like Wairarapa royalty.

BURNS
With respect.

YOKO
I've seen this before.

BURNS
Huh?

YOKO
You've come from places where
there's danger round every corner
and it's driven you round the bend.

Burns visibly sags. He becomes listless and compliant.

YOKO (CONT'D)
Listen, you're an exceptional
reporter, but you have to let the
police do their job. If there's
anything amiss, we'll hear soon
enough.

BURNS
Ok.

YOKO
Do yourself a favor. Sleep on it.
If you feel the same way in the
morning, I give you my word, we'll
get right on it. Ok?

BURNS
Ok.

YOKO

Good boy.

The sound of SIRENS in the distance.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Medical examiners wheel away a body in a bag on a gurney.

Burns and Yoko try to catch a glimpse inside the house, walls covered in blood stains.

Rob wanders past. Burns and Yoko get up and approach.

BURNS

Anything?

ROB

He may have fallen, hit his head
then succumbed to his injuries
indoors.

YOKO

Forensics?

ROB

Right now it's not a crime scene,
no forensics are required.

BURNS

Another accident? Do your job,
detect!

ROB

This isn't the city. Not everyone's
a murdering psychopath. High time
you realized that.

A furious Burns puts his head in his hands.

YOKO

Maybe we should leave.

BURNS

What do you mean?

YOKO

Well, there's nothing going on is
there? He just said no crime.

BURNS

Have you listened to anything I've
said?

YOKO
What do you mean?

BURNS
Has anything I've told you in the last week got through that head of yours?

YOKO
Yeah...

BURNS
Oh really?

YOKO
You don't know how to switch off.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Forensic pathologist PROF JAMES GRIEVE (50s) approaches Rob.

PROF GRIEVE
You asked me to look at the death of Mr. McKandie.

ROB
Yeah, I did, something not right about that Dr. Ferguson.

PROF GRIEVE
When I initially opened the body bag he had some very severe head injuries which gave me anxiety. It is very evident that this has to be regarded as suspicious.

ROB
See the crime scene photos?

PROF GRIEVE
Yes, they did not allay my fears, and indeed made me very concerned.

ROB
We've sent them to a blood spatter analysis expert.

PROF GRIEVE
I'll know more after the full post mortem examination.

INT. LT. COLONEL DONALDSON'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Lt. Colonel Donaldson stands, Jack enters, salutes.

JACK (V.O.)
I tried to confront him, it didn't
work, that's when I decided to go
over his head.

DONALDSON
At ease, what is it son?

JACK
I'd like to make a formal complaint
sir.

DONALDSON
About what?

Malcolm enters. Jack not backing down.

JACK
The Adjutant and his treatment of
prisoners, sir.

DONALDSON
It's not a matter of who's holding
the gun, or who's behind barbed
wire, is it?

BEGIN MONTAGE

RESTAURANT - DAY

A side of beef, whole chickens and several boxes of
vegetables are carried into the back door.

DONALDSON (V.O.)
Not as simple as that. It's the
difference between thinking white
and thinking yellow.

The owner of the place pays Malcolm in cash, steps away from
the truck filled with food and peat.

FEATHERSTON CAMP - KITCHEN - DAY

Cabbages, onions and meat tear under the knives of the
prisoner-cooks.

RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

A solitary chef in white clothes and hat dices tomatoes, carrots, scallions, and meat purloined from Featherston Camp, purchased from Malcolm, arranges it all in neat piles.

FEATHERSTON CAMP - KITCHEN - DAY

The cooks upend pots of chopped cabbage and onion and meat into deep vats. It all falls far to reach the bottom.

RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

The lone chef rakes his cornucopia of ingredients into a pot on a stove, holding back some to avoid its spilling over.

FEATHERSTON CAMP - DAY

Tepid watery soup spills into the bowls of the prisoners as they file past the prisoner-servers.

RESTAURANT - DAY

A waiter comes through the swinging kitchen door into an elegant dining room with a steaming tureen of soup.

FEATHERSTON CAMP - DAY

A prisoner spoons at his thin broth searching for something solid in it. It's like a treasure hunt.

RESTAURANT - DAY

The WAITER ladles rich thick soup into bowls and places them on plates in front of a well-dressed couple.

DONALDSON (V.O.)

Get them to think white, and we're halfway there.

A WOMAN dips her spoon into the bowl, draws it to her mouth.

JACK (V.O.)

It could've been hidden. If they'd stolen with some discretion.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Languid. Dreamlike. A refrigeration room of a MORGUE.

Rob, Professor Grieve, and a MORGUE attendant, are on the periphery. Their conversation is indiscernible.

At the center Mr. McKandie's BODY lies on a slab, half in, half out of the morgue refrigerator.

Rob arcs the slab, examines the body.

PROF GRIEVE

There'd been at least 15 separate blows to the head, I would have to suspend any credibility to explain these by saying he had fallen over again and again.

ROB

Thanks for this.

PROF GRIEVE

I'm not a forensic scientist but when I saw photos of the blood stains, it seems Mr. McKandie was struck more than once outside the cottage, then dragged into the hallway. Cast-off blood patterns in the hall suggest he was struck multiple times there.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Burns alone checks names on the clipboards hanging from each of the freezers, pokes around boxes of personal effects from bodies. Professor Grieve enters.

GRIEVE

They're talking about putting a camera in here. You're gonna have to play by the rules like everyone else.

He checks the tag on the box he's examining: MacKandie's PERSONAL EFFECTS, roots through with a pen detective style.

BURNS

Be nice if they spelled his name right. It's MacKandie with an ie.

Prof Grieve finds the freezer, pulls the clipboard.

PROF GRIEVE
Yeah, well, nobody's even come for
his stuff yet. It's appalling.

BURNS
Wouldn't happen to a younger man.

PROF GRIEVE
Skip it. I'm not in the mood.

BURNS
No love. No politics. What're we
gonna talk about?

PROF GRIEVE
We're not. You're gonna get out of
here before we both get in trouble.

BURNS
I heard one attacker. You buy it?

PROF GRIEVE
No idea.

BURNS
Drugs?

PROF GRIEVE
This guy was the place kidneys go
to die.

There's A PHONE in MacKandie's personal effects bag.

BURNS
Toss me a pair of gloves.

PROF GRIEVE
C'mon...

A dispenser behind Burns. He pulls himself a pair.

BURNS
Close your eyes. I just want to
check the phone...

Professor Grieve can't bear it, takes the clipboard back.

PROF GRIEVE
You watch, this'll be the moment
they decide to come pick all this
up. What's gonna happen then?

Burns too busy to answer, scrolls through the numbers on
MacKandie's phone, scribbles them down in a notepad.

PROF GRIEVE (CONT'D)
What do I tell Detective Steiger if
he walks in?

Burns ignores him, jots down numbers.

INT. MORGUE PARKING - DAY

Burns heads towards his car, he has a list of the last ten
phone numbers MacKandie called.

He dials the first from his own cell. We hear:

MACHINE VOICE
(through speakers)
"...the number you have dialed is
currently not in service, if you
feel you've reached this message in
error..."

That's no help. Burns tries another.

INT. STREET - DAY

Burns ambles, juggles the phone and his notebook, something
it looks like he's done a million times before.

New call, except this time IT RINGS...and AGAIN... and then

JOHN O'CONNOR'S VOICE
Hi! You've reached John O'Connor. I
can't take your call right now, but
if you leave your name, number, and
the time you called, I'll be sure
to get back to you.

BEEP. Burn's not sure what just happened.

That's all wrong. What was that? He re-checks the number.

Still walking. Punching it in again, and:

JOHN O'CONNOR'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Hi! You've reached John O'Connor. I
can't take your call right now, but
if you leave your name, number, and
the time you called, I'll be sure
to get back to you.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Lost in thought, Burns approaches the counter, where SAMMY, a Chinese man, is serving.

SAMMY
Hey, Mr. Burns.

It's the first time they've met.

BURNS
All day breakfast bagel, please.

SAMMY
Big story?

BURNS
Uh-huh.

Burns juggles his notebook, bag, wallet. Drops his bag to the floor to fish out money, pays, drops the change in a tip bowl. Grabs his roll, looks back down: bag gone.

Rising tide of panic. An immediate, wild, hopeless scan of the customers concurrent with under-the-breath curses.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Burns comes out fast, eyes everywhere, scanning, is anybody running? Cars pulling away, anything...

Nothing.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Burns sits at a table surrounded by archived volumes of the Wairarapa Times Age. He rips through the pages at speed.

Burns scours articles, photocopies pages, highlights crucial sentences, corrects the odd typo. A blizzard of information.

Burns highlights a sentence reading John O'Connor has applied for planning permission...

A headline: John Of The Jungle: O'Connor Buys Featherston.

A photo of Malcolm. The headline: Adjutant Convicted of War Crimes.

EXT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Jack stands outside near a large fire, he throws objects into the fire. The objects are identification papers. They read:

Jack Morrison.

Akira Adachi.

A car approaches, flashlights illuminate Jack. Car stops
Burns and Yoko get out. Jack turns.

JACK (V.O.)
No one left there with their nose
clean.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Another article with photos of Jack and Adachi. The headline reads. Pair missing.

The pages rip faster, the words start to blur.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Burns leaves the library. Yoko follows, confused.

YOKO
Hey. What's going on?

BURNS
Nothing. I was just, I'm gonna go
back and crash for a bit.

YOKO
Oh okay. Need a lift?

BURNS
No, I could do with the walk.

Burns walks off.

EXT. CEMETARY - NIGHT

Burns digs, the moonlight guides him deeper and deeper.

He shovels dirt out from a large three to four feet wide and eight feet long hole in the ground. Dirt piles high.

Burns is digging up a grave.

Above him the gravestone reads: Malcolm Adams.

THUNK! His shovel hits something hard, the burial container.

He scrapes dirt off the top, reaches round to the side, pries open the coffin.

EMPTY.

BURNS

Jesus.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING - NIGHT

A small newsroom, even smaller gaggle of REPORTERS gathered.

ROB

We are officially launching a murder inquiry into the death of Mr. McKandie. We are speaking to people and trawling CCTV footage in the search for clues, a trace, investigate, eliminate strategy. Jack Morrison lives nearby, he has known Mr. McKandie all his life, and has shared police appeals for information.

Yoko strides in, parks up next to Burns.

BURNS

Any connection to the recent fires?

ROB

At this point, no.

REPORTER

Is Morrison a suspect?

ROB

We view no discrepancies in what he has told police about being outside Mr. McKandie's home in the days before he was attacked, so, no. Forensic scientists have said no DNA was found linking the two men.

BURNS

The assailant could have been wearing gloves, or changed clothes.

ROB

The negative conclusions could all
be explained if Morrison was simply
not involved in the murder of Mr.
McKandie at all.

Burns phone RINGS. Burns answers.

BURNS

Yeah. Okay.
(hanging up, to Yoko)
Chen wants to talk to us.

YOKO

Us?

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Burns and Yoko enter. Maria's on the phone. Beside her the
newspaper in house legal consultant, MIKE JACKSON shuffles
through papers.

MARIA (INTO PHONE)

Okay, thank you. Yes. Okay, thanks.

Maria hangs up as they sit.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I set up a meeting for tomorrow
with outside counsel...

BURNS

Jon Williams?

MARIA

Yeah.

BURNS

Who's the Judge on this case?

MARIA

Uh, Caroline Sweeney.

BURNS

Tough.

MARIA

Why's that?

BURNS

Born in Featherston.

Maria pushes on.

MARIA

Judging from what I've read, it doesn't seem like we've done a thorough investigation of the Donaldson case. Is that right?

BURNS

No it's not. We looked hard at Donaldson and Malcolm for profiteering, abuse and complicit businesses.

Maria isn't impressed.

MARIA

Okay, just so I understand, beyond our daily coverage, we haven't committed any long term investigative resources to the question of whether or not Featherston Leaders knew about this?

BURNS

No, we haven't.

MARIA

(to Yoko)

That's the kind of thing you do?

YOKO

We're still prospecting the story.

MARIA

Could you set this aside?

YOKO

We could.

BURNS

No we couldn't, we have success in large part because we pick our own projects.

MARIA

Would you consider picking another one?

BURNS

He was lead translator for him on the ground. Like others, who are now dead and worked in the same place, he's a threat to a lot of money for those guys.

Maria eyes the others, looking for reactions. No takers...

MARIA

Got to love him for it. Give him a week, a couple of dead bodies and he turns it into a full-blown conspiracy.

BURNS

You don't think there's a connection?

MARIA

No, but then I'm the kind of gullible fool who thinks that Elvis really is dead.

BURNS

The guy who burnt down the retirement village was the same guy who blew up the house and beat Mr. MacKandie to death. Spoke to the coroner, MacKandie didn't fall, he was violently assaulted. Police have just opened a murder investigation. That doesn't sound like the work of someone trying to keep a secret to you?

MARIA

Maybe before we all get ahead of ourselves I should remind you that we are a newspaper, and as such we need news to print on paper.

BURNS

Did I tell you there's an empty coffin in the cemetery with Malcolm Adams name on it.

Maria sighs: Dubious? Annoyed? Hard to tell. Then:

MARIA

OK. Mike. How long do we have before all this has to go the police?

She throws him a look. He gets the point...

MIKE

Time to verify, consult relevant case law... 48 hours, tops.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL RECEPTION - NIGHT

Burns slopes through the empty reception, spots Yoko leaning against the wall, staring at the ceiling.

YOKO
What if they bury it?

Burns stops, gazes at the floor, a sigh.

YOKO (CONT'D)
What if Chen spikes the piece? What
if the town spins it and paints
John a patriot?

BURNS
Then we lose.

YOKO
Ever think we're just part of the
story they'll erase too?

Burns looks up at her. For once, no wisecrack.

BURNS
All the time. But if just one kid,
reads this in fifty years and
thinks twice before saluting a flag
without asking what it's hiding,
maybe that's the best we get.

Yoko nods. Quiet. Heavy. She crosses to him.

YOKO
Then let's make damn sure it gets
printed.

Burns offers a smile, slopes off down the

CORRIDOR

Takes out his key. He notices his door is ajar.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - IN THE WALLS - NIGHT

A tiny circle of light hits the face of a MALE FIGURE coming from a hole in the wall. The spot of light hits his eye.

He peeps through the hole.

Male figure watches Burns enter, slink around, check the coast is clear.

Burns breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. ROYAL HOTEL - BURNS ROOM - NIGHT

The door flies open...A MASKED FIGURE lifts Burns off the ground, throws him inside and slams the door behind.

Burns hits the wall with a thud. He gets up, throws several punches, but stops, clutches his injured hand.

The FIGURE picks Burns up in a bear hug. Burns struggles, pulling the assailant's mask off to reveal

JOHN O'CONNOR.

They look at each other for a second. Burns brings his fists down on either side of John's head, runs out reaches the

LOBBY

Empty. Everything quiet. Burns can hear his own breathing. He starts towards the exit and out toward the

CARPARK

Then out of the corner of his eye he sees:

A reflection in the glass door. Burns stops. Looks.

Is that a reflection of O'Connor just inside the door?

Movement again, almost imperceptible. Shit! O'Connor has come outside and is lying in wait...

Burns turns, looks for an alternative escape, he moves as quickly and quietly as he can to hide behind a car.

O'Connor approaches where Burns hides. Fear in Burns eyes.

O'Connor draws near, Burns takes off his wristwatch, throws it as far as he can behind O'Connor. It hits a car, O'Connor whips around.

Using the diversion, Burns runs across the open space to a large group of parked cars.

O'Connor hears Burns footsteps, spins around, catches a glimpse of Burns as he disappears behind a car.

O'Connor's hunting his prey. He moves among the parked cars. Searching.

O'Connor draws nearer to Burns.

The rear door to the Royal Hotel opens, an ASIAN FAMILY appears, chattering. Joking. They make their way towards their car, close to where Burns hides.

Burns watches them.

O'Connor fiddles with a bunch of keys, pretends he is trying to get into a car.

The Asian family notice O'Connor, quiet down. They get into their car.

Burns watches them as they leave.

The car reverses out of the parking space, changes gears to go forward. The driver slams on the brakes: a manic looking Burns stands in front of them gesticulates and shouts.

BURNS
LET ME INTO YOUR CAR!

Terrified, the driver throws the vehicle into reverse. Burns runs along side, putting the car between himself and O'Connor, opens the door, tries to get in.

The occupants of the car hit, kick and shout at him.

The car swings around, the driver starts forward at high speed, towards the carpark exit, trying to shake Burns free.

Burns clutches on to the door, it is going too fast and he lets go, rolling to the ground. Burns looks up, O'Connor looms over him.

A whistle from offscreen. John turns.

Yoko stands behind him, brandishing a POT PLANT.

SMASH!

Yoko hits John across the head. John drops.

Burns, pulls out a pack of cigarettes, pumps one, lights up. He looks at Yoko, offers her the pack, she smiles, takes one.

Burns pulls out his phone and dials.

ROB (O.S.)
You've reached Rob Steiger. Please
leave a message after the beep.

BURNS

Rob. John O'Connor just tried to kill me. I, we don't know who to trust.

YOKO

What are we going to do?

BURNS

See, if you were working television news and this shit happened, they'd get you a hotel room.

INT. FEATHERSTON TOWN ARCHIVES - NIGHT

SMASH! Glass breaks, a HAND reaches through unlocks and opens the door. Burns and Yoko enter, flashlight beams cut through the dark. Dim and dusty.

Shelves sag with aging ledgers, town registers, war memorabilia. Fluorescent bulbs flicker above.

YOKO

Jesus, no one's been here in ages.

Burns opens a cabinet, flips through folders.

Yoko eyes a wooden box on the back shelf labeled CIVIC MORALE COMMITTEE - 1943.

She opens it: feather-stamped meeting minutes, rosters, wartime directives, a flowchart.

Flowchart shows names under a hand-drawn feather insignia. At the top: F. DONALDSON-O'CONNOR.

BURNS

Jesus. Fay's a Donaldson?

YOKO

The Order of the White Feather, real, organized, and generational.

EXT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

Door opens, Jack has a surprised look on his face.

JACK

Hello there.

BURNS
We were just attacked by John
O'Connor.

JACK
Oh my god, are you alright?

Burns knows he shouldn't be doing this, but he hands Jack a photo and press clipping of MacKandie's murder.

BURNS
You know MacKandie? Beaten to death
some nights ago.

JACK
We've been neighbors for years, so?

BURNS
I think the person who killed
MacKandie killed you.

JACK
What?

Burns looks straight into Jack's eyes.

BURNS
Who would have wanted him dead,
Malcolm?

The surprised look on Malcolm's face morphs into a smirk.

MALCOLM
You got me.

Yoko slaps Malcolm, Malcolm pulls his old Enfield.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
This is the same weapon I used to
kill your grandfather. Do you know
what it will do to you?

INT. BARRACKS - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jack and other soldiers shower, dog tags on the bed.

Malcolm slides into barracks fossicks through Jacks gear,
finds Jacks dog tags, takes them.

EXT. HARBOUR - NIGHT

Fireworks crack in the night sky. Malcolm steps out of the shadows, cocks the hammer of his Enfield.

CLICK.

Jack and Adachi stop, turn.

MALCOLM

A man does something, he's brought
in before me, he throws himself
down on the floor, begs for mercy,
knows he's going to die... and I
pardon him. This worthless man. I
let him go.

Malcolm points his Enfield at Adachi.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Or not.

Jack lunges at Malcolm.

BANG!

Malcolm shoots Jack in the head, gunshot hidden under the noise of the fireworks celebration, Jack's lifeless body slumps off the wharf into the harbor waters.

Adachi lunges at Malcolm's gun. Malcolm fires.

Adachi wedges the webbing between his thumb and index finger into the closing hammer.

Adachi smashes his forehead into Malcolm's nose, it explodes, blood everywhere. Malcolm drops the gun, grabs his face.

Adachi pulls the hammer back pulls the hammer pin out of his hand, puts the gun on the ground. Rises fists raised.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Want to do this the old fashioned
way aye?

Malcolm lunges, Adachi with cat like reflexes shifts to the side, kicks Malcolm in the stomach.

Malcolm crawls to the Enfield, turns over onto his back
Adachi is on him, Malcolm fires.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Adachi collapses, motionless, blood leaks from his wounds.

MALCOLM (V.O.)
Your grandfather fought bravely.

Malcolm rolls Adachi's body off the wharf in the harbor.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Malcolm points his Enfield at the pair.

YOKO
What made you think..?

MALCOLM
Made me? You think I did this
alone? Your grandfather and his
friend were a convenient
opportunity to get off the hook.
The other business, that takes a
village my dear.

Yoko throws a vase at Malcolm; SMASH! BANG! Weapon goes off
grazes Burns in the arm, spins him like a top.

Malcolm on the ground in a daze, Yoko grabs Burns, they dash
out the door, jump in the car.

BANG! SMASH! The rear window blows out! The car SCREECHES off
in a cloud of dust.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Burns speeds along the highway. Yoko tears at her shirt.

BURNS
What are you doing?

YOKO
Making a tourniquet, looks like it
only grazed you but lets see if we
can stop that bleeding.

Behind them, lights flash. Burns slows down, pulls over.

YOKO (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

BURNS
Getting help.

In the mirror Burns watches TWO YOUNG POLICE OFFICERS getting
out of their car behind.

Sitting cool and easy, he watches the 1st Officer stop back of his right rear fender.

He pats his pockets, makes a sheepish show of searching for a wallet as the 2nd Officer comes on up to the open window.

OFFICER 2
You're that reporter.

BURNS
Might not be soon.

The Officer smirks.

OFFICER 2
What's happened here?

YOKO
We were out at Soldier Settlement,
we were shot at.

BURNS
There's a guy out there
impersonating Jack Morrison.

OFFICER 2
Driver's license?

BURNS
Wouldn't you know? I don't have it
on me.

He reaches to his right, unlatches the passenger-side door.

OFFICER 2
Step out, please.

BURNS
What for?

OFFICER 2
Just get out. Not too fast.

YOKO
We haven't done anything!

Burns sees Officer's hand go down to holster, pops his eyes in scared surprise, fumbles at the door handle.

That's his last fumble.

Like a steel spring he slams the driver's-side door open into gut of Officer 2 standing at it.

He races towards the other Officer at the back of the fender, Officer pulls his weapon, they wrestle for it, BANG! Officer 1 is shot by Officer 2!

BANG! A shot pierces the tire of their car, air rushes out.

Burns spins around in front, FIRES at 2nd Officer writhing windless on the ground where door slammed him.

EXT. NANA AND POP'S DAIRY - NIGHT

Burns and Yoko run. Burns QUICKENS HIS PACE, a second wind upon seeing this oasis of safety, PUSHING.

HARDER AND HARDER for the dairy until they finally

BURST THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR.

A TINKLE of a small bell announces a customer has arrived.

And a moment. Just a moment. To breathe.

ONE NEWS plays on a TV SET above the counter, currently being watched by the station's owners, Ma and Pop.

POP
Oh, hello again!

They turn towards Burns, sweaty, out of breath... HOLDING THE OFFICERS GUN AT HIS SIDE.

Pop puts up his hands, nervous.

POP (CONT'D)
There's thirty dollars in the register. It's all yours.

BURNS
What's going on here?

NANA
What?

POP
Look, son. We don't want no trouble. Just take the money and...

BURNS
I don't want your money, what the fuck is going on?

Nana and Pop exchange a confused look.

NANA
Featherston.

BURNS
You sure it's not the twilight
zone?

NANA
Twilight zone? What do you mean?

BURNS
Is everybody here crazy?

YOKO
C'mon... gimme a hand.

Yoko grabs a LARGE MAGAZINE RACK, starts to pull it to BLOCK
THE DOORS. Burns pitches in.

THE RACK slides in front of the doors.

Burns looks out the window. Coast SEEMS clear. Turns towards
a terrified Nana and Pop.

BURNS
You got a phone?

NANA
Please, please, we have children.
Grandchildren.

BURNS
Do your grandchildren have a phone?
That's all I'm asking for. A
fucking phone.

Nana, still freaked, picks a cordless receiver from its dock
on the counter, offers it to Burns who takes it and DIALS.

POP
Son, whatever's going on...

BURNS
What's going on here is we're being
goddam hunted.

Nana takes them in. Furrows her brow.

NANA
But you have a gun.

BURNS
For defense.

CLICK. A calm FEMALE DISPATCH.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
What's your emergency?

BURNS(INTO PHONE)
Hello, yeah, there's a fucking
murder spree happening. You need to
get out here right now.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
There's a... what happening, sir?

BURNS
A murder spree. A massacre. In
Featherston!

That WORD again. But Dispatch is CLUELESS.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
I'm sorry, sir... Where?

BURNS
Featherston. Fucking... Google it!

DISPATCH (O.S.)
I know where Featherston is sir.

BURNS
Jesus, just. Listen, we got shot at
by a man impersonating another guy,
two policemen tried to kill us.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Policemen, sir?

Yoko keeps anxious watch from behind the magazine stand
blocking the door, wanders through the snack aisles, looking
for something to eat.

BURNS(INTO PHONE)
We're journalists, the last thing
...Fuck... okay... Listen. They
they're trying to kill us, they're
right down the fucking road they're
gonna be here any fucking second!

DISPATCH (O.S.)
What is your location, sir?

BURNS
I'm at a dairy...can't you just
trace me?

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Of course. That's a great idea.
We'll trace you, sir.

Burns furrows his brow.

BURNS
Okay... good.

DISPATCH (O.S.)
Sit tight. Help is on the way.

CLICK. Dispatch hangs up. Burns looks at the phone. Huh.

YOKO
What'd they say?

BURNS
They said they're coming.

YOKO
Thank Christ.

She finds a box of RITZ CRACKERS. Takes it from the shelf.

BURNS
Gimme one of those.

YOKO
Get your own box.

She gestures to the cracker aisle as Burns returns the phone to the counter where Nana and Pop remain, hands up.

Unsettled by the chaos that has descended upon their sleepy little store. Pa nods to Burns.

POP
Son, you mind putting that gun away? You seem a little, worked up and you wouldn't want it to go off by accident.

Burns seems offended by the implication.

BURNS
It's not gonna go off by accident.

And that's the end of it. Except.

NANA
The people shooting at you. They're just exercising the very same choice.

Burns raises an eyebrow.

BURNS
What are you talking about?

NANA
Defending themselves.

WHAT?!? This is just... WEIRD now. Burns looks at Pop nods to Nana as if she's clearly suffering from Alzheimer's.

BURNS
She okay?

POP
Sure. She's fine. How're you?

O'Connor's words echo in Burn's head; No luck catching the culprits then?

Burns ponders his response; It's just the one actually. The words resonate.

Something is very... not right here.

YOKO
The fuck?

Burns turns towards Yoko, who stands in the food aisle looking into her Ritz Cracker box, CONFUSED.

BURNS
What?

Yoko turns the box over. WHITE POWDER pours out on the floor. Flour? SUGAR? The fuck INDEED.

Burns strides over... grabs a third box off the shelf... rips it open, turns it over. MORE POWDER.

Burns confused, turns towards Nana and Pop at the counter.

BURNS (CONT'D)
What the hell is...

But he never finishes his sentence.

While his back was turned, we failed to notice...

Pop holds a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN.

BURNS (CONT'D)
Whoa whoa whoa...

Pop leans in, all traces of his charm gone as he intones.

POP (THRU GASMASK)
For the record... Climate change
isn't real.

Yoko sholder barges the old man, grabs the shotgun.

BANG!

Nana points a pistol at Yoko and Burns, Yoko spins points the
shotgun, squeezes the trigger.

BANG!

They take in TWO BODIES.

A car outside.

BURNS
Find the keys!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

It's raining hard.

Speedometer reads 90 kilometers per hour. Dashboard clock
reads 11.31. Burns fingers grip the steering wheel.

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A gigantic gasoline tanker truck reveals itself foot by foot,
pulling a tank trailer, each of them having six wheels.

The grinding strain of the truck's motor. The vertical pipe
spews dark smoke which clouds back across the trailer.

The truck trailer narrows ahead. The word flammable printed
across the back of the trailer, red letters on white
background.

Parallel reflector lines across the bottom half of the tank
clumsily applied with a stencil.

Massive black rubber flaps sway behind the rear tires.

Burn's car closes in on the truck and trailer.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Burns starts to edge his car toward the opposite lane.

He steers back behind the truck as he sees a curve ahead.

He edges out again, pulls behind the truck again.

EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Burns car accelerates, pulls out, passes the truck.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Toward the back of the car through the rear window the truck, its fenders a dingy purple color, paint faded and chipped.

Burns glances at the rear view mirror, steers back into the proper lane, increases the distance between them and the truck. He relaxes.

Burns looks back at the highway, the roar of the truck motor makes his eyes snap back into focus, he looks to his left.

The truck, gaining ground.

BURNS

What's with this idiot?

The trucks reflection appears in the rear view mirror.

He looks up at the mirror as the truck behind him in the distance, closing in gives him an extended horn blast.

YOKO

What's that a greeting or a curse?

Burns alternates worried glances between the rear view mirror and the highway ahead.

YOKO (CONT'D)

What's with this guy?

The truck pulls ahead, passes them, then slows down. Burns decreases his speed. The odor of the truck's exhaust reaches him again, he cranks up the driver's side window.

Burns spots a passing lane, edges to the left to check. He sees there's no third vehicle ahead, jars his foot down on the accelerator, starts to steer to the right.

The car reaches the middle lane, accelerates further.

The truck edges into the middle lane, blocking his way.

BURNS

Oh, for...

The driver has his arm out the window, waving him on.

BURNS (CONT'D)

About time.

He twists the steering wheel, accelerates again toward the other lane. His face goes blank with shock.

Another car hurtles toward them.

Gasping he jerks the steering wheel around returns to the left lane the car end starts to fishtail.

The other car shoots by in the other lane, misses them by feet, the driver of the car honks his horn in angry reaction.

Burns struggles to control the zigzag whipping of his car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

HEADLIGHTS of Burns and Yoko's car come zigzagging down the highway, from total darkness, refracted by the trickling rain on a window.

Burns car flies past the parked car. A BANG!

A small flash of light. The tire blows and spins off its rim.

Tires screech on the wet surface. The lights swirl and skid, the car bounces up, slams back down on its suspension.

The car's weight shifts to one side, tires finally lose their grip on the wet road, the car flips, flies up into the air.

METAL CRUNCHING FLIPS send the car over and over. Glass shards fly into the air.

The car ends the violent roll on its roof, spins along the road, pieces fall off, crashes into a cement abutment.

Steam HISSES from the hood.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Burns jolts himself awake. He's upside down, still belted into the car. He unbuckles himself, falls onto the ceiling.

Burns checks the backseat. He scans the front through the smashed windshield.

BURNS

Yoko?

Yoko's not in the car.

Burns kicks the door open, crawls out, gets to his feet, blood streams from his head, he holds his arm winces in pain.

BURNS (CONT'D)

Yoko!

He stumbles out onto the highway, shakes his head, looks around. He turns into bright lights.

An approaching vehicle slows.

Burns collapses, unconscious.

EXT. CRASH SCENE - NIGHT

Flashing lights. Ambulance pulls away. What's left of the car. Standing next to it is FORENSICS GUY, smarter than most.

He's thinking, head leaned back, eyes closed. Rob approaches and SLAPS the car.

ROB

What do we got?

Forensics Guy thinks of something that makes him frown.

FORENSICS GUY

This thing's clean. I mean it's filthy as shit, but we didn't find anything.

Rob seems unfazed by this piece of news, thinking.

ROB

Whoever took her could have been wearing hats and gloves the whole thing. So no prints, no hair fibers.

FORENSICS GUY

If there was a struggle in here I would have found something. I'd start searching the woods nearby.

ROB

Yeah, half the force are doing that right now.

Rob walks off.

ROB (CONT'D)
When you're done with this thing
take a team over to Morrison's
place.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Heart monitor BEEPS, Burns drowsy, opens his eyes, squints at the light. In front of him Maria. She looks furious.

Burns looks around, no Yoko.

BURNS
I know what you're gonna say, but
the real story's Malcolm Adams.

MARIA
THE REAL STORY IS THE SINKING OF
THIS NEWSPAPER! CHRIST!

That shook walls. Everyone in the hospital heard it.

MARIA (CONT'D)
We have new management to answer
to; they're interested in SALES, I
can't tell them why we're suddenly
behind a story that we were once in
front of. So we're going to run
with what we've got. Period.

BURNS
Can't do that.

MARIA
We've got two other deaths linked
to O'Connor; we've got your old
friend giving us the white feather
photos indicating a conspiracy
capped off with our senior reporter
attacked shot at and run off the
road last night by half the town.
Now your partner is missing. No one
else has any of this, and we're
running it.

BURNS
You run that now it'll blow the
rest of the story.

MARIA

I don't give a damn about the rest
of the story!

BURNS

There's someone else. This person's
the key.

MARIA

I look forward to hearing who they
are and what they tell you. But
we're going to press tonight.
You've got 8 hours.

She storms out past Rob who avoids slamming into her.

BURNS

Did I pass?

ROB

What?

BURNS

The poly whatever, the lie detector
I took this morning.

ROB

Yes, we appreciate your cooperation.

BURNS

Where's Yoko?

ROB

Hoping you could tell me that.

BURNS

Don't fuck me around, we spent last
night running from everyone in
town. And you think I did something
to her!?

ROB

We're considering all
possibilities, I'm not crossing
anybody off the list yet.

Burns doesn't answer, looks far from satisfied.

BURNS

Where am I?

ROB

Masterton, a few towns north of
Featherston, you're safe.

BURNS

My mother lived out here, she loved it, but she'd talk about the astronomical rates she had to pay. After she died her diary was full of calculations, trying to make ends meet.

ROB

Can I ask you a few more things?

BURNS

Go.

ROB

Senior reporter for The NZ Herald.

BURNS

Uh-huh.

ROB

Uncovered important information about...

BURNS

A town protecting a self made millionaire and war profiteers.

ROB

Who himself has disappeared. Fancied himself as a property developer.

BURNS

Uh-huh.

ROB

Had big plans for the old Featherston site.

BURNS

Attacked me in the Royal Hotel last night.

ROB

Got the voice message. Was a good friend and worked for..

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rob strolls and Burns stroll-limps arm still in a cast and sling down the street.

BURNS
The town, everyone. Malcolm, he
worked for Malcolm!

ROB
But crucially, where did he work
after the war?

BURNS
Council.

ROB
Specifically?

BURNS
The department of planning and
development.

ROB
Where John O'Connor had secured
permission to build his dubious
estate.

ROB (CONT'D)
Good at identity theft.

BURNS
Most certainly and we both know
whose?

BURNS (CONT'D)
Jack Morrison.

ROB
Lead translator.

BURNS
So...

INT. STATION - DAY

Back in the office, the energy lags. Burn's head rests on the
table, Rob flicks endlessly through his notes.

BURNS
Jack Morrison was onto something
about Malcolm before he died who
was into something with John
O'Connor who was up to something
with other retirees and the town.

ROB
Malcolm has something to do with it
all.

BURNS
Where is he now?

ROB
I don't know.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - DAY

Rob busts in through the door weapon thrust in front of him.
Burns trails behind, they move into the

KITCHEN

Malcolm is on the floor motionless.

BURNS
You smell that?

Burns and Rob move through the kitchen open windows, Burns
turns to the oven, turns off all the switches.

BURNS (CONT'D)
You think it's O'Connor?

ROB
Maybe it was an accident.

BURNS
Oh come on!

Burns spots a note on the kitchen table, opens it, it reads:

IN 24 HOURS SHE DIES.

Burns turns gestures to the note.

BURNS (CONT'D)
You call this an accident?

INT. ROB'S DESK - POLICE STATION - DAY

Rob walks to his desk, stares at the disarray. He straight-
arms everything to the floor, computer monitor and all.

No one walking by dares make mention of this.

His desk is now bare but for an evidence bag.

Rob looks a mess, stares at a photocopy of a white feather.

FAY
Detective Steiger, I was hoping to
talk to you.

ROB
I'm a little busy at the moment.

FAY
It's about my husband, I haven't
seen him since last night.

ROB
I said I'm a little busy at the
moment, could you make an
appointment.

FAY
I'm really worried..

ROB
Mrs. O'Connor will you please
follow correct procedure and make
an appointment, you can't just come
in whenever you like!

Fay stands frozen, in shock. She turns, scuttles off.

Rob drops his hands, knocks a cup off his desk.

He reaches to pick it up, something catches his eye...

On the floor, the crime scene photos of Malcolm's corpse. A
close-up of a white feather.

Energized, he pulls the photocopy of a map from his pocket,
unfolds it, sets it on the desk next to the photo of the
white feather...Rob's phone RINGS.

ROB (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yeah?

FORENSICS GUY (O.S.)
We found something.

INT. SOLDIER SETTLEMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A darkened mess of a room with mazes drawn on the walls and
ceiling. Forensics Guy and Rob enter.

FORENSICS GUY

Burns helped ID a few pieces. The feathers. And this book, he made it out of notes, old pictures we found in the attic.

Forensics Guy grabs a beat-up hardcover off a table.

ROB

(reading the title)
Finding the Invisible Men.

FORENSICS GUY

It's about a theoretical group of suspects he claimed was responsible for war profiteering. Totally discredited I guess, but I read some of it, kind of interesting.

Forensics Guy flips through the book showing Rob some full page photographs of white feathers.

Something occurs to Rob. He pulls out his note pad, flipping through the pages, until he comes to:

THE CAR? OPEN WINDOW

INT. CAR CRASH - CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

Rob walks through the bushes, flashlight out, searching.

Rob looks at the ground.

He looks down, notices two deep footprints filled with water, someone dropped hard from the car.

He looks around, checks the bushes. His eyes go wide, he picks something up. A WHITE FEATHER.

He deposits it in a little plastic bag.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Rob rings the doorbell, he stands at the door.

FAY (O.S.)

Just a minute.

Fay O'Connor opens the door looking a little out of breath. She holds a big ice pack around her hand.

FAY O'CONNOR
Hello again.

ROB
Hello. I was, I was hoping you'd
allow me to apologize.

She looks a little baffled.

FAY
For what?

ROB
For scaring you the other day at
the police station.

She nods, regaining her poker face.

FAY
I burned myself. Feeling a little
icky today. But I'm glad you came.
Come in, you can make me some tea.

Fay shows Rob inside to the

VESTIBULE

She closes the door, turns, walks to the kitchen.

Rob lingers in the vestibule, watching her, considering...

FAY
What are you waiting for?

He stops, looking caught.

ROB
What?

FAY
Come on in and make me some tea.

Rob moves into the

KITCHEN

Rob turns on the faucet, fills the tea kettle with water.

He turns on the gas fueled stove burner, stares down into the
little blue flame.

ROB

I know you know where she is.

He turns around, the ice pack falls from her hand, revealing a .38 revolver. She stands, gun leveled at Rob's head.

FAY

Put your hands on your head and turn around.

Rob doesn't move.

FAY (CONT'D)

You don't know me, Mr. Steiger.
Believe me when I tell you I won't let you go.

Rob considers, watching her. Her eyes don't waver.

Her hands don't shake...

He puts his hands on his head and turns around. She moves in and lifts the back of his coat.

There's a pistol tucked into his holster. She grabs it out and tosses it into a nearby wastebasket.

FAY (CONT'D)

Right in front of you. The top drawer. Open it.

Rob takes a breath, and opens the drawer...

Inside is a rusted old pair of handcuffs.

FAY (CONT'D)

Put them on.

Rob doesn't move.

FAY (CONT'D)

Put them on.

Rob takes his time picking up the handcuffs, observes their corroded condition.

He clamps them on his wrists.

Keeping the gun on him she opens the refrigerator and takes out a 2 liter bottle filled with laced grape-aid.

FAY (CONT'D)

You don't have to drink the whole thing.

(MORE)

FAY (CONT'D)

About a third should be fine for a man your size. Something to keep you manageable. Even in handcuffs I have a feeling you're going to be a problem.

ROB

Forget it.

FAY

Drink it, Mr. Steiger, or I'll kill you right here in my kitchen

She cocks the .38. He stops, looking for something to grab, something to duck behind, but there's nothing.

Rob grabs the bottle. Drinks, eyes on her. A third of it gone, he sets it back on the table, grimaces, wipes his purple lips.

FAY (CONT'D)

Good, isn't it. It was John's recipe.

A RING TONE stops them both. Burns looks down at his coat pocket as his cell phone continues to RING.

FAY (CONT'D)

Take it out of your pocket. Do not answer it.

With a little trouble due to his shackled hands, Rob pulls out his ringing cell phone. The caller ID displays: BURNS

FAY (CONT'D)

Put it in the sink.

Rob does as he's told, then:

FAY (CONT'D)

And your car keys, on the table.

Rob pulls his keys from his pocket, drops them on the table.

Fay motions for him to move aside.

She pockets his keys, then goes to the sink and pushes the phone down the garbage disposal.

It's still RINGING when

She turns on the disposal. THE SOUND OF METAL GRINDING

EXT. BACK YARD - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Rob, hands cuffed in front of him, exits the house through the back door, Fay follows, pistol in hand.

FAY
Walk to the car.

Fay digs the gun into his back.

FAY (CONT'D)
I was like you once Robert. I believed in the immutable word of the law. That is until the night my father was taken from me.

ROB
You're a Donaldson.

FAY
You see, no-one loved Featherston more than him. He was head of the Men's Institute, chair of the Moral committee, ran the Neighborhood Watch before John. I've never seen such dedication. My Father made so much money from the war we just paid people to keep quiet, if they refused, well you know what happens then. My father slowly lost his mind. He drove his car off the Remutaka ranges. The inquiry said it was an accident but I knew better. From that moment on I swore that I'd do him proud. And whatever the cost, we'd keep Featherston ours.

ROB
This doesn't make sense.

FAY
It makes perfect sense, Sergeant. John gathered together a group of the most faithful Featherstonians and showed us how we might limit profits to a small number of special residents.

She directs him to the old Holden parked on the grass.

FAY (CONT'D)

The look on your face when I opened the door, my husband had that very same look the day we took our first reservist. His name was Tiny, his real name, I can't remember. Bloody big Māori fella. So many names. Anybody who dared challenge us, we got rid of. I forgot all about Adachi until I read about him in the paper. Adachi never forgot us though, neither will his bitch grand daughter. They never really get away, their minds I mean. Making old men disappear is how we keep the money flowing, it's how we've done it for the past seventy years.

Rob continues on, woozy. They arrive at the Holden.

She opens the driver's side door.

FAY O'CONNOR

Get in.

Rob gets behind the wheel. The keys are in the ignition. The key chain is an upside down cross.

Standing inside the open car door, Fay puts the gun to Rob's head.

FAY

Start the car.

Rob turns the key. The engine COUGHS.

FAY (CONT'D)

Keep trying.

He keeps trying, while staring through the dirty windshield, maybe planning an escape route...

FAY (CONT'D)

You should know John didn't lay a hand on the old men. I was the one who decided they should go.

Guilt creasing his forehead, Rob starts to look a little sick. THE ENGINE FINALLY TURNS OVER. IT'S LOUD.

FAY (CONT'D)

Put it in reverse. Back up. Slowly.

Rob shifts into reverse and the car starts to inch backwards.
Fay walks close beside it, the gun pressed to Rob's head.

FAY (CONT'D)
Stop.

Rob stops the car, staring straight ahead.

FAY (CONT'D)
Turn it off.

He hesitates for a moment. She starts to push the gun barrel into his ear.

FAY (CONT'D)
Turn it off.

He cuts the engine.

FAY (CONT'D)
Out.

Rob steps out, teeters, starts to lose his equilibrium.

He sees the car was covering a big door size piece of plywood lying flat on the ground.

FAY (CONT'D)
Go ahead, take a look. Maybe that
Asian bitch is underneath. You
never know.

Frantic, Rob drags the plywood aside. But when he sees what's beneath it, the verve just drains from his body...

It's a grave-like hole in the ground, twelve feet deep.

FAY (CONT'D)
Get in.

ROB
You want me to get in there, you're
gonna have to shoot me. I'm not
doing it just 'cause you asked...

BANG. She fires a shot into Rob's thigh. He stumbles, the soil crumbles out from under him and he falls in the

HOLE

Rob lands hard, blood bubbles from the wound in his thigh.

Rob stares straight up: Fay stares down.

FAY

Make yourself a tourniquet. If you can manage to stem the bleeding you might last as long as twenty-four hours. I'd love for you to still be alive when I dump her body down there.

She drags the board back over the hole...

Rob tries to get up, gritting his teeth, and then he sees it: YOKO'S CHERRY BLOSSOM NECKLACE lays a few feet away from him.

As he reaches for it EVERYTHING GOES BLACK...THE SOUND OF THE HOLDEN STARTING UP AND ROLLING OVER THE COVERED HOLE...

Rob hears Fay cut the engine and get out of the car. She walks out to

HILL ROAD

Fay gets in Robs car, starts it up. She drives it into the backyard, out of sight. She gets out, goes back inside the

O'CONNOR HOUSE

The lights in the windows go out one by one

INT. A ROOM - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

YOKO lies on the floor, asleep. THE SOUND OF THE DEADBOLT LOCK TUMBLING. She starts to wake up...

The door starts to open, when the DOORBELL RINGS.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Burns RINGS the door bell again and waits...

EXT. UNDER THE HOLDEN - NIGHT

Rob's fingers peek out from under the plywood he manages to push it off center, giving him enough space to climb out...

Rob grabs hold of one of the Holden's underside pipes, the pipe BREAKS. OIL SPRAYS IN BURNS'S FACE as he grabs hold of another pipe, and pulls himself up and out...

Rob crawls out from under the Holden. He leans against the car, blackened with dirt and motor oil, sucking air...

EXT. FRONT DOOR - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Burns starts back down the walkway, as he's walking he glances back over his shoulder, gives the house a last look and notices something...

A curtain sways, like someone was just peeking out at him.

Burns stops, turns around and walks back to the front door.

He stands there, listening...hears what sounds like someone moving around inside.

BURNS

Mrs. O'Connor? You in there?

Burns rings the bell. Listens. He hears someone moving around inside, TV's on.

FAY (O.S.)

Just a minute.

Fay opens the door. Burn's shaky, struggling to act normal.

FAY (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

BURNS

Good evening Ma'am. I'm James Burns. Remember me?

She recognizes him and smiles.

FAY

Yes of course I do.

BURNS

My partner was abducted. I'm sorry, I guess I didn't think this through too well.

She studies him.

FAY

Would you like to come in?

INT. KITCHEN - O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

A quaint little nook. Burns sits at the table, keeping his bandaged knuckles out of sight.

Across from him sits Fay. She drinks tea.

FAY
You look very tired.

BURNS
I haven't slept much.

There's a long, awkward silence, until.

FAY
You know you remind me of him a little. My husband.

Burns waits for her to go on, and when she doesn't.

BURNS
Oh?

FAY
It's the eyes.

She stares into his eyes, making him uncomfortable.

He looks down, sees a newspaper on the table: O'CONNOR
COMMITTS SUICIDE, LOCATION OF YOKO ADACHI'S BODY STILL UNKNOWN

FAY (CONT'D)
You sure you don't want some tea?

She sees Burns trembling as he slowly swivels the paper around, staring at it in disbelief.

FAY (CONT'D)
Oh God, I'm sorry, Mr. Burns, I thought for sure you knew already. But not knowing where she rests is a horrible thing. I am so, so sorry.

Burns gets up. He goes to leave when his eye catches a framed photo, basked in moonlight:

Fay O'Connor's husband at the beach, wearing an unsettling smile, shirtless, revealing he's wearing THE WHITE FEATHER.

SOMETHING'S KNOCKED OVER IN THE KITCHEN. Burns snaps back to attention, eyes darting, moving now to the ...

HALLWAY

Burns, moves in, holding his breath, back to the wall. He opens a door and looks in at...

A room stuffed with old furniture and junk...

He moves on to the next. The closed door with the deadbolt on the outside...

He turns the lock, Burns opens the door steps into

A ROOM

to see Yoko huddled in the corner. He walks towards her, eyes tearing, breath quickening...

Then stops, sees a shadow on the wall, a figure, looms over Yoko's shadow...

Burns takes a breath, gun ready, inches to the doorway...

Burns walks into the doorway, gun outstretched, eyes focusing:

The shadow isn't Burns. It's Fay, squatting beside Yoko, her back to Burns, starting to inject POISON into her arm.

BURNS

STOP! PUT IT DOWN!

She pulls out the half-emptied syringe, drops it to the floor. Then her back still to him, she straightens up.

FAY

Make sure they cremate me. I don't want to be buried in some box.

BURNS

TURN AROUND.

FAY

It's almost laughable James, your sense of your own worth. What you don't realize is that nobody gives a fuck about what you guys write. A couple days of shit storm then it's tomorrow's wrapping paper. Nobody cares about the news, James.

BURNS

SHOW ME YOUR HANDS. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN YOUR HANDS?!

FAY

We didn't inherit Featherston. We built it on silence and profit. John liked to think he led, but I made the hard calls. I decided who stayed. And who disappeared.

She smiles.

FAY (CONT'D)

You think they will thank you for unearthing us? They are us. Every ledger, every contract, we've been running this town since 43.

She locks eyes with Burns.

FAY (CONT'D)

The Order lives in land sales... in school boards. The war never ended here. We just changed the uniform.

Fay pulls the .38 from the front of her pants, swings around and FIRES at the same time Burns does

SHE GRAZES BURNS FACE RIGHT OVER HIS EYE.

Burns HITS HER SQUARE IN THE FOREHEAD. She collapses, dead.

Blood pours from his forehead, Burns picks up Yoko, now semi-unconscious, gritting his teeth.

EXT. O'CONNOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Burns bursts out the front door with Yoko in his arms, blood running down his face.

He gets her in the back of his car. He rushes around, gets behind the wheel, starts the car and GUNS IT.

INT. CAR - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

BURNS DOES ONE HUNDRED, BLOOD IN HIS EYES, RACING OVER THE REMUTAKA HILLS, ENGINE ROARING.

YOKO IS STARTING TO CONVULSE IN THE BACK SEAT.

BURNS

Almost there, almost there. Stay with me, Yoko, stay with me. Don't die don't die.

Burns comes up on an intersection now RED LIGHT.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

BURNS LEANS ON HIS HORN AND BLASTS THROUGH THE RED LIGHT. A CAR JUST MISSES HIM AND CAREENS OFF THE ROAD!

INT. CAR - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Burns veers on to the motorway's shoulder, squeezing past slow moving cars, bouncing over the craggy ground

EXT. MOTORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burns swerves around cars, skidding through the turn.

INT. CAR - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Burns sees Yoko in the rearview, her convulsing gets worse.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Burns tears down a straightaway, through chicken wire fence across a hockey field... the illuminated hospital sign comes into view.

INT. CAR - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Burns peers back at Yoko.

BURNS
Stay with me, we're almost there.
Don't die. Please, don't die.

EXT. UPPER HUTT HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ENTRANCE

Burns car rolls up on the curb, the front bumper inches from taking out a shocked OLD MAN in a wheel chair.

Burns bursts out of the car, opens the rear passenger door, grabs Yoko out.

He carries her, blood gushes down his face, walks through the double doors, SCREAMS:

BURNS
I NEED HELP!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - HOSPITAL - DAY

A patient lies in his hospital bed, his face obscured by the newspaper he's reading:

SMALL TOWN SUSPECTED OF WAR PROFITEERING FOR SEVENTY YEARS.

The patient folds up the paper.

It's Burns, oxygen tubes in nostrils, bandages over a wound.

A KNOCK, Yoko slides in, Rob hobbles behind on crutches, they approach his bedside...

Yoko in hospital pajamas, echoes of shock cloud her eyes.

BURNS

Hello.

YOKO

I hope we're not intruding. I
wanted to see my hero.

ROB

She's doing real good, be on her
feet in a few days.

Yoko possessed of newfound strength, Burns withered, shaky.

He offers her his hand, notices she's wearing the cherry
blossom necklace around her neck.

And while he does Burns looks over at Rob, picks up on the
guilt underlying his expression.

He senses him reading him and looks away.

Burns gaze moves to Yoko, an unsettling darkness in his eyes.

BURNS

Will you give me a minute?

Yoko nods, pushes towards the exit. Rob by Burns bedside.

BURNS (CONT'D)

I did what I had to do.

ROB

Thank God you did.

The pair share the silence, until:

ROB (CONT'D)

You're a good man.

With that Rob walks out...Burns picks the newspaper up.

INT. NEWSPAPER - BURNS' DESK - NIGHT

Burns, at his desk, the sounds of fingers hitting keys. The impact of this event is still etched on his face.

Then, he's done. He reads a last line one more time, making sure it's right.

Then he hits SEND.

INT. PRINTING PRESS - NIGHT

Dozens of huge machines roll impossibly fast at a deafening volume. THE SOUND overwhelming.

Tomorrow's news flies past on a blur of massive sheets.

As the end credits begin to roll a different noise begins to seep in - the sound of television and radio speculation about Fay O'Connor - was she a psychopath? What did her mother do wrong? Where did she go to school?

As the cacophony builds, we see tabloid headlines, snippets of news-shows all discuss the O'Connor's and the murders....

None of them mention the White Feathers.

FADE OUT: