

Dead Air

Genre: Drama-a Murder Mystery set in Katoomba NSW in 1968-1969 Script Copyright©2023 by Les Thompson.
globalcentre@hotmail.com

Based on the novel by Les Thompson 2021 Australian Writers Guild: AWG 16590 Reg. JB010353

1.EXT. THREE SISTERS ROCK FORMATION ECHO POINT KATOOMBA-MISTY MORNING

The camera descends from the rocky formation slowly through the mist deep into the Jamieson Valley and through adjacent valleys, with music gradually changing from soft tones to mysterious crescendo. SUPER: `Christmas 1968' Sue Baker's

2.INT. SUE BAKER'S' BEDROOM - MORNING

SUE BAKER, a young and attractive hairstylist, wakes up to the sound of a radio playing her favourite song, "Where Do You Go To My Lovely" Peter Sarsted.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Oooh la la...gotta love that French accordion... n'est-ce pas? That was Peter Sarsted's huge hit, Where Do You Go To My Lovely...when you're alone in your bed? Well, his Italian girlfriend, Marie-Claire, left him alone in his bed and went off to live in Paris!

Sue smiles and gets out of bed, half-listening to the announcer's voice. She recognises it as MIKE HELMS, a handsome and charming radio host with whom she has been having an affair with for the past fortnight.

FLASHBACK TO:

3. INT. HYDRO MAJESTIC HOTEL - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A Christmas party is in full swing, with a 4-course gourmet meal being served to a few Katoomba celebrities who have been invited to dine at the luxurious hotel on Christmas Eve. Among them is SUE BAKER, the young and attractive hairstylist who feels a little out of place. MIKE HELMS is the Master of Ceremonies. HELMS, a dark-haired, handsome man in his early 40s and dressed in formal clothing, is on the stage, entertaining the guests with his witty remarks and jokes. He spots Sue at one of the tables and smiles.

MIKE

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you're enjoying your dinner and the festive atmosphere. I know I am. Especially when I see such lovely faces in the crowd. Like you, madam.

MIKE points at Sue, who blushes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What's your name, my dear?

SUE

Sue. Sue Baker.

MIKE

Sue Baker. What a lovely name for a lovely lady. And what do you do, Sue?

SUE

I'm a hairstylist.

MIKE

A hairstylist? Well, that explains why your hair is so beautiful. And I'm sure you make other people's hair beautiful too.

SUE

Thank you.

MIKE

Well, folks, I think it's time for me to wrap up my part of the evening and let you enjoy the rest of the night. But, before I go, I have one more thing to say.

He looks at Sue again.

MIKE (CONT'D)

The sun is about to set over the valley and I would love to share that moment with all of you. Sue, would you do me the honour of joining me for a stroll outside?

Sue is surprised and flattered by his invitation. She nods her head. Mike joins her at her table and they follow the other couples outside to share the sunset experience.

4. EXT. HYDRO MAJESTIC HOTEL - NIGHT

SUE and MIKE walk out of the hotel, following other couples who are heading to the viewing platform to watch the sunset.

MIKE

So, Sue, tell me about yourself.

SUE

As I said, I'm a hairstylist. I have my own salon in Katoomba.

MIKE

Really? That must be very demanding. You have to deal with all kinds of people and their hair problems. That's a curly situation.

SUE

(laughs)

You have no idea. Some of them are very fussy and some of them are very funny.

MIKE

Do you have any hair-raising stories to share?

SUE

Well, there was this one time when a lady came in with a terrible perm. She looked like a poodle.

MIKE

A poodle?

SUE

Yes, a poodle. She wanted me to fix it, but I didn't know what to do. So, I told her to go home and wash it out with vinegar.

MIKE

Vinegar?

SUE

Yes, vinegar. I read somewhere that it helps to loosen the curls.

MIKE

And did it work?

SUE

No, it didn't. She came back the next day with her hair smelling like a salad.

They both laugh as they reach the viewing platform. The evening air is warm, and Helms soon has her laughing at his radio anecdotes as the night descends on the already darkened viewing platform.

MIKE

You know, Sue, you have a great sense of humor. And you're very beautiful.

SUE

(flattered)

Thank you, Mike. You're very kind.

MIKE

No, I'm serious. You have a sparkle in your eyes..... like champagne bubbles

SUE

(smiles)

Well, thank you again. You're not so bad yourself.

MIKE

You're welcome. So, tell me, why are you here tonight? Who invited you?

SUE

Oh, I was invited by the hotel management. I think they expect me to promote their charm to my clients.

SUE

What about you, Mike? Why aren't you inside hosting the party?

MIKE

Oh, it's not a paid gig, Sue. I only agreed to jolly the guests along prior to the dinner and then have the night off to enjoy the occasion myself while their own entertainment people handled the rest.

Sue liked the honesty he displayed about his small part in the event.

SUE

I see. But surely you didn't come alone on Christmas Eve.

Helms seemed to have anticipated the question and soon adopted a serious expression.

MIKE

Sue, there's something I need to tell you. My wife and I are no longer close. She is talking about divorce, and we have decided to live separate lives.

Sue is surprised to be told he is married but sympathetic.

SUE

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, Mike. She touches his arm gently.

SUE (CONT'D)

But I'm glad you told me.

She looks into his eyes and hears sincerity in his voice.

MIKE

Yes, well that's why I accepted this offer tonight; it's time to meet new people.....like you!

He looks directly into Sue's eyes as he speaks. He leans in and kisses her softly on the lips. She kisses him back, feeling a spark between them. The sun sets behind them, casting a warm glow over their faces.

5.INT. SUE'S SALON - DAY

SUE is working on a client's hair, while the radio is heard in the background. The phone rings

SUE

(into phone)
Hello?

MIKE (V.O.)

Hey, Sue. It's Mike.

SUE
 (into phone)
 Hi, Mike.

MIKE (V.O.)
 How are you?

SUE
 (into phone)
 I'm good. How are you?

MIKE (V.O.)
 I'm great. Listen, Sue, I'm calling to
 ask you on a dinner date tomorrow
 night at the Carrington.

SUE
 (into phone)
 Wow. Yes. That will be nice.

MIKE (V.O.)
 Great. So, how about we meet at 8
 o'clock at the Carrington Hotel? Is
 that okay with you?

SUE
 (into phone)
 Yes, that sounds perfect.

MIKE (V.O.)
 Wonderful. I'm really looking forward
 to seeing you again, Sue.

SUE
 (into phone)
 Me too, Mike. Me too.

5 INT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The Carrington is a heritage-listed, refurbished manor that attracts patrons from near and far to enjoy its old-world charm and splendour. It offers a choice between fine dining and casual dining, as well as stylish rooms for couples wanting to spend an intimate weekend away from the city. SUE and MIKE arrive at the hotel entrance, both dressed in smart casual attire. They smile at each other and walk inside. They attract some curious glances from the locals who recognise MIKE as the radio host.

MIKE

You look lovely tonight, Sue.

SUE

Thank you, Mike. You look handsome yourself.

MIKE

Thank you, Sue. You're very kind. They approach the reception desk, where a friendly staff member greets them.

STAFF MEMBER

Good evening, Mr. Helms. Welcome to the Carrington Hotel.

MIKE

Good evening. Thank you for having us.

STAFF MEMBER

It's our pleasure. Do you have a reservation?

MIKE

Yes, we do. Under the name of Helms. For the Grand Dining Room.

STAFF MEMBER

Of course. Right this way, please.

He leads them to the elegant dining area, where they are shown to their table. They sit down and look at the menu.

MIKE

Ah, I feel like tucking into a Beef Bourguignon with all the trimmings; how about you Sue?

SUE

Well, someone seems hungry tonight.

Sue smiles, but she senses that MIKE is a little uneasy.

MIKE

Oh, I'm sorry. It's just been a busy day at work with one of the guys there starting to bug me, so I'm keen to eat and relax here tonight.

SUE

What happened? I thought the 2BM boys were all one happy bunch.

MIKE

For the most part, we are, but it only takes one overly ambitious joker to wreck a good line-up!

SUE

Who is that?

MIKE

Well, I'll have to take you inside to see the studio setup. The guy is a fellow who wants my breakfast job.

SUE

Really? I'd love that!

MIKE

Now, Milady, which items on this magnificent menu are to your liking? MIKE moves his chair closer to her so that he can look at the menu as well.

MIKE

So, what are you in the mood for, Sue?

SUE

Ah, definitely the John Dory. It's the fish of the day with the fennel, zucchini, rocket salad and a hazelnut dressing.

MIKE

A very healthy choice!

Mike beckons to their waiter, who comes over.

WAITER

Good evening, sir and madam. Are you ready to order?

MIKE

Yes, we are. I'll have the Beef Bourguignon with all the trimmings, and she'll have the John Dory.

WAITER

Very good, sir. And what would you like to drink?

MIKE

Do you have a wine menu?

WAITER

Yes, we do. Here you are. The waiter hands them a wine menu and they choose their wines

WAITER (CONT'D)

Very well then. I'll be right back with your drinks and your food.

He leaves and MIKE turns towards SUE.

MIKE

This will be fun; we can have a nice dinner and get to know each other better and I won't have to drive home. I've booked a lovely spacious room with a spa.

SUE is surprised by his revelation.

SUE

You have?

MIKE

Yes, I have. Why not? I wanted to treat myself. And maybe you too, if you're interested.

He winks at her suggestively. SUE is unsure how to respond. She likes him, but she wonders if he is inviting her to spend the whole night with him.

SUE

So, are we still going to visit the radio station tonight before you retire to your luxury hotel room?

MIKE

Yes, of course, Sue. The night is still young, and we have plenty of things to explore before this night is done.

He looks at her closely for her reaction.

SUE

Well, I'm having a good time already!

Sue smiles and tries to hide her nervousness. They enjoy their dinner and their wine, talking about their personal lives and sharing their thoughts on many topics. They seem to have a lot in common and they laugh a lot. They also drink a lot. By the time they finish their two bottles of wine, they are both tipsy and happy.

SUE (CONT'D)

Didn't you promise to show me the studios tonight, Mike?

She checks her watch and sees that it is almost midnight.

MIKE

Oh, yes. You're right. I did promise that. He glances at his watch and looks surprised.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Wow, time flies when you're having fun. I'm sorry, Sue. We should get going.

He calls for the waiter and asks for the bill.

6 EXT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - NIGHT

SUE and MIKE walk out of the hotel, holding hands.

MIKE

Let's take a look at the radio station.

Steve Kranson, our night jock, will have shut down the transmitter and he would have left the building.

SUE

Oh, I see.?

MIKE

I want to show you where the magic happens. And because I have a special way of getting in.

SUE

You do?

MIKE

Yes, I do. But don't worry, it's not illegal. Well, maybe a little bit.

SUE

You're either very clever, Mike, or you have a criminal mind.

MIKE

Maybe a bit of both.

He winks at her and she laughs. They walk down Katoomba Street, where the radio station is located at the top floor of a bank.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So, Sue, do you want to know why I don't like one of the guys at the radio station?

SUE

Not really. (pauses) OK, who is he?

MIKE

He's the morning host. His name is Larry Thomas.

SUE

Larry Thomas? I've listened to him. He sounds nice.

MIKE

Never judge a radio host by his on-air persona, Sue. For instance, you're beginning to learn that I'm substantially different from how I act on my radio show.

SUE

Well, yes, you are. I imagined you quite differently and thought that you might be a womaniser.

MIKE

Really? Why did you think that?

SUE

Because you mess around quite a bit on your program. You flirt with your female callers and make jokes about your love life.

MIKE

That's just part of the act, Sue. That's what the listeners want to hear. They want to be entertained and amused and seduced by my voice.

SUE

This Larry Thomas guy, do you actually *hate* him?

MIKE

If he keeps trying to get his show more popular than mine, I'll kill him!

SUE

Don't say that, Mike! You're tipsy, that's all.

MIKE

I'm serious. No one gets away with trying to undermine me!

SUE

Okay, let's move on and sober up.

Mike leads her into a parking area and towards an unmarked door at the rear of a bank building.

SUE (CONT'D)

We're not going to break into the bank, are we? I didn't bring my balaclava with me!

MIKE

No, we're not going to break into the bank. We're going to break into the radio station.

He smirks a little and tries to open the door. It is locked.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I have a trick for this door. Watch this. He lifts the door and pushes it upwards and sideways. The latch snaps away from the plate and the door slides open.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Ta-da!

SUE

Wow! How did you do that?

MIKE

It's an old trick I learned from one of my former colleagues.

SUE

Okay.

She follows him inside.

7 INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

They enter the building and find themselves in an amenities block, where there are toilets and wash basins. There is also a steep staircase leading upwards from beside the toilets.

MIKE

This is the amenities block. It's shared between the staff of the bank and the staff of the radio station.

SUE

I see.

MIKE

The radio station is upstairs. Come on, I'll show you.

He starts climbing the stairs past the rest room and she follows him.

SUE

How do you manage to get to the toilet down here when you're on the air hosting a program?

MIKE

Well, when ya gotta go, ya gotta go. We just look for a long record to play to give us time to rush down, do what we have to do, and then rush back hoping the music hasn't finished to create what we call 'dead air'.

SUE

What's 'dead air'?

MIKE

Dead air is when the announcer stops speaking or there is no noise from the studio and therefore no signal for the transmitter to broadcast.

Sue had reached the top of the stairs and entered a corridor with several doors on both sides. MIKE led her to one of them and opened it with a key.

8.INT. RADIO STUDIO - NIGHT

MIKE

And this is where it all happens. The studio. He switched on the light, and they entered the studio, which was a small room with a console, a microphone, a computer, a CD player, and some speakers.

SUE

Wow, this is where you work?

MIKE

Yes, this is where I work. This is where I make people laugh and cry and dance and sing.

SUE

It's amazing.

MIKE

It is, isn't it? Come on, let me show you around. He walked over to the console and pointed at the various buttons and knobs.

MIKE (CONT'D)

This is the console. This is where I control the sound levels, the music, the commercials, and everything else that goes on the air.

SUE

It looks complicated.

MIKE

It's not that hard once you get the hang of it. Here, let me show you.

He sits down on the announcer's chair in front of the console and motions for Sue to sit next to him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

See this button here? This is the microphone switch. When I press it, I can talk to the listeners. He pressed the button and spoke into the microphone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hello, hello, testing, testing. One, two, three. Can you hear me?

Sue, wearing headphones, hears Mike's voice

SUE

I can hear you loud and clear.

MIKE
(into microphone)
That's good. And can you hear me now?

He had pressed another button and spoke into the microphone again.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Hello, hello, testing, testing. Can
you hear me now?

SUE heard nothing from the headphones and looked puzzled.

SUE
No, I can't hear you now.

MIKE
That's because I pressed this button
down. The upward button is cue switch.
When I push it upwards, I can talk to
someone outside this studio without it
going on the air.

SUE
Oh, I see. That's clever.

They smile at each other and lean closer together. They feel a strong attraction and a desire to kiss each other. Mike withdraws his hand from the console and kisses her lightly on the cheek.

MIKE
You are so wonderful to touch, Sue.

Mike's hands keep moving around her neck and then down to her waist. Sue sighs softly. Mike then gently touches her neck, sweeping her hair upwards to softly press his lips on her bare neck and then moves his fingers towards her ears. His movements are slow and tender, and she feels herself breathing in short bursts as he runs his fingers lightly down her back.

MIKE
Let's have a really wonderful
experience tonight at the Carrington
suite.

SUE

YES!

9. INT. LUXURY BEDROOM -CARRINGTON HOTEL - NIGHT

Inside the hotel room, there was no time for coffee; they quickly disrobed, splashed into the jacuzzi for a few erotic moments before clambering out of the hot water to explore in comfort all their sensual pleasures as their bodies yielded to each other on the room's King-sized bed.

10 INT. SUE'S HAIRDRESSING SALON - DAY

The radio station plays softly in the background as customers chat while Sue works on their hair. It's early February and Sue is continuing her affair with Mike Helms the station's breakfast announcer. They plan to meet every Friday night at the Carrington for a joint 'sleep-over'. During her work, Sue listens to the talk segments in 2BM's morning program. She tries to understand why Mike dislikes his co-host, Larry Thomas. Sue finds Thomas' segments interesting and engaging, as do her clients.

11 INT. SUE'S HAIRDRESSING SALON - LUNCH BREAK - DAY

The salon is closed during the lunch break, and Sue listens attentively to Larry Thomas' talkback segment. She laughs at the entertaining interactions with callers, including one about a neighbor's tree dispute.

12 INT. 2BM RADIO STATION - STUDIO - DAY

Larry Thomas, the talkback host, sits confidently behind the microphone, engaging with callers on his morning show. (Larry is muttering to his audience using a mute-to-caller device so that his audience hears what he is saying and the caller doesn't)

LARRY THOMAS

(Only the audience can hear)

Imagine trying to talk about rights
with this woman!

LARRY THOMAS
 (now mocking caller) Madam, what type
 of tree is it? What family does it
 belong to?

CALLER (V.O.)

(annoyed)

To the family next door, of course!

Larry knows he can provoke a grumpy response from the caller,
 and he can use the call to entertain his listeners.

LARRY THOMAS
 (exaggerated serious tone)
 Madam, it's obvious that the people
 next door are starting a family branch
 without your permission. I suggest you
 talk to them about it. If they won't
 desist immediately, call the Council,
 and if they don't act, try the Family
 Law Court. Thank you for your call!

Another caller is soon on the line.

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

(haughty voice)

Good Day. My name is Christopher
 Hammersmith. I'm calling to complain
 about your unprofessional behaviour
 and your recent, dreadful radio series
 that you dared to call "History of the
 Blue Mountains."

LARRY THOMAS

(polite)

Oh! Please explain to the audience
 what terrible transgression I have
 made.

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

(pompous and aggressive)

You put to air bits and pieces of ordinary people telling you their 'impressions' they had gained from living in various localities! Total rubbish, utter gossip, it was!

LARRY THOMAS

(taking the accusation seriously)
So, you are dismissing the information provided by the historians attached to local libraries after each interview?

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

Librarians! What would they know? You should have spoken to me!

LARRY THOMAS

And tell me again. Who are you?

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

I am Christopher Hammersmith, an acknowledged historian and an expert on the recorded history of this region.

LARRY THOMAS

(warming up to the subject)
I do apologise if the series offended you. I did inquire about you, but I was told you were away in Papua New Guinea helping to authenticate copper ore deposits there.

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

Well, I am also an expert on copper mining. Anyone who knows my work over recent years in the Cobar region knows that.

LARRY THOMAS

(playing along)

So, you're a geologist as well as a historian, Mr. Hammersmith! You must have many degrees.

CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH

(trying to avoid the question)

Well, it's the experience that counts and qualifies me to speak on these subjects. You should have waited for my return before making those dreadful programs. It's all in the Library's records.

LARRY THOMAS

(Teasing)

Oh, so you mean the same information that I obtained from the libraries and added to my program! The source you dismissed so easily before is exactly what you would have used! Thanks for your call, Mr. Hammersmith. I think we've heard more than enough from you today!

There is silence from Hammersmith, and Larry proceeds with pre-recorded commercials, confident that he has won the debate.

Another caller joins the program.

FEMALE CALLER (V.O.)

Larry, what are your thoughts on Reincarnation?

LARRY THOMAS

I have an open mind on such subjects, but if I had lived before, I don't have any memory of it.

FEMALE CALLER (V.O.)

Well, I think you do know about it, Larry. What about that nurse you know who lives in the next street from where you reside in Oatley Avenue? I know you've been talking to Amanda, and you know that she thinks she's the ancient Egyptian Queen, Nefertiti, reborn but with the same soul, doesn't she?

LARRY THOMAS

(realising the time has run out)
Well, I do know I will be reincarnated for another program tomorrow. See you all then!

The radio station changes to a pop music format introduced by the popular afternoon host, Johnny Coates.

FADE OUT.

13.EXT. RADIO STATION - NEXT DAY

A gray, nondescript building stands in the background, indicating the radio station.

SUPER: The date "Friday 7 February 1969" is superimposed on the screen.

14 INT. RADIO STATION OFFICE - RADIO STATION - DAY

LARRY THOMAS walks into the announcers' room and nods to MIKE HELMS through the glass panel. Larry settles into one of the announcers' chairs to prepare for his radio program. Larry is jotting down notes for his program, preparing commercial logs, and considering possible topics to discuss. He turns to speak to a secretary arriving for work

LARRY

Hi! We've got a big evening tonight. It's a get-together at the Carrington Hotel. Johnny Coates has arranged it for my birthday celebration; I wonder if Mike Helms will bring his new girlfriend. I was surprised that Mike agreed to come; he's been cold towards me lately. His affair with that hairdresser helped lift his spirits.

Not wanting to gossip, the secretary just shrugs her shoulders and walks away into an office. The Radio station Manager, NIGEL CONTI (50s, stern-looking), and the legal adviser, MICHAEL MCCREADY (40s, composed), enter the office. Larry looks anxious.

NIGEL CONTI

(sharply)

Larry, before your broadcast today, we need to talk, in my office!

Larry follows the two men into Conti's office, taking a seat opposite Nigel and Michael, expecting a stern lecture. Larry faces Nigel and Michael, who present complaints against him, from CHRISTOPHER HAMMERSMITH and AMANDA BUTLER.

NIGEL CONTI

(Serious)

I won't sugarcoat this, Larry. According to Mr McCready, there are serious complaints about your handling of calls on your program yesterday.

Michael opens his notebook and begins reading the complaints.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(without looking up)

Christopher Hammersmith called yesterday, threatening legal action over remarks you made, you suggesting he wasn't qualified for his charitable work or advising mining companies.

Larry listens attentively, realising the implications of the situation.

NIGEL CONTI

(Angry)

We cannot afford to be sued, Larry. This could cost the station a fortune.

Larry looks remorseful, knowing he made a mistake.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(calmly)

However, we can resolve this without going to court. You need to issue a full retraction and apology to Hammersmith during today's broadcast.

Larry listens attentively, realising the implications of the situation.

NIGEL CONTI

(angry)

We cannot afford to be sued, Larry. This could cost the station a fortune.

Larry looks remorseful, knowing he made a mistake.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(calmly)

However, we can resolve this without going to court. You need to issue a full retraction and apology to Hammersmith during today's broadcast.

Larry nods, understanding the severity of the situation.

LARRY THOMAS

(resolute)

I will do it. I'll make it right.

McCready continues reading from his notebook, addressing the second complaint.

MICHAEL McCREADY

(reading)

A Miss Amanda Butler, a nurse at the local hospital, claims that you allowed a caller to ridicule her beliefs on reincarnation. The caller commented on her firm belief of being once an Egyptian queen in a previous life, and you didn't intervene or cut off the remarks. She found it very offensive.

Nigel Conti glares at Larry, disappointed by the situation.

NIGEL CONTI

(angry)

The 7-second delay system is there for a reason. Why didn't you stop those remarks from being broadcast?

Larry speaks up, looking remorseful and apologetic.

LARRY THOMAS

(regretful)

I'm sorry, Mr. Conti. I shouldn't have engaged in a debate with Hammersmith on-air about his attacks on my 'History of the Blue Mountains' series. I believed it was in the public interest to address his lack of qualifications.

Nigel raises his voice, trying to emphasise the station's interests.

NIGEL CONTI

(firmly)

It's not your place to decide what's in the public interest. Your primary concern is the station's well-being! Think of the money we'd have to spend to defend a defamation action!

Michael intervenes, providing a rational perspective.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(calmly)

Nigel, I spoke with Hammersmith last night. He doesn't want this to escalate further; it could harm his reputation. We should give him what he wants - a full retraction and apology from Larry on his program today.

Before Nigel can respond, Larry agrees to comply.

LARRY THOMAS

Okay, I'll do it. Ultimately, the listeners will form their own opinions.

Nigel is infuriated by Larry's response and issues a warning.

NIGEL CONTI

(sternly)

You won't say anything of that sort on-air, or you'll be fired immediately!

Michael intervenes again, suggesting a solution.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(sincerely)

I've already written the retraction and apology, Larry. You must read it in full and with sincerity, and this matter will be resolved.

NIGEL CONTI

Larry, make sure you don't add anything extra to it. Now, what about the issue with Amanda Butler

Michael offers a suggestion to handle the situation appropriately.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(calm but firm)

She hasn't asked for an apology. Instead, show respect for her beliefs on the show. If you genuinely show interest in her experiences, it might intrigue the listeners.

Nigel is skeptical but curious.

NIGEL CONTI

(puzzled)

Shouldn't we apologise to her?

MICHAEL MCCREADY

(smiling)

In her complaint, she seems more concerned with respect than an apology. If you treat her beliefs as credible, it could make her an interesting topic for the listeners.

Nigel looks back at Larry, questioning his ability to handle the situation.

NIGEL CONTI

(doubtful)

Can you do that and sound credible,
Larry?

LARRY THOMAS

Absolutely, Mr. Conti. I was already
considering discussing reincarnation
on my show today.

NIGEL CONTI

Remember, don't mock her beliefs in
any way.

LARRY THOMAS

Of course, Mr. Conti. I'm a performer;
I can handle it professionally.

The tension in the room subsides, and Larry's attitude shows his determination to address the situation adequately.

Michael hands Larry a prepared statement.

MICHAEL MCCREADY

Read this apology on-air, and we can
put this matter behind us.

Larry takes the statement and stands, ready to face the consequences of his actions.

He leaves the office, prepared to rectify the situation during his broadcast

CUT TO:

15.INT. RADIO STATION - STUDIO- DAY

Larry prepares to go live on-air, ready to address the issues and follow the advice given by Nigel and Michael.

He adjusts his headphones and smiles, ready to take calls. He looks up to see Station Manager, Nigel Conti, standing outside the studio, glaring at him through the thick glass of the airlock doorway. The red 'On-Air' light hangs directly above Conti, adding to the intimidating aura.

As the hourly News feed from Sydney finishes, Larry flicks his microphone downwards and begins his show.

LARRY

(cheerfully)

Good morning, everyone! We've got a
great show lined up for you today!

Larry notices Conti's intimidating stance and decides to proceed with caution.

LARRY

(serious tone)

Listeners, during a discussion on this
program yesterday, I made a terrible
mistake.

Larry pauses dramatically, observing Conti's approving expression.

LARRY

(continuing)

In a discussion with a well-respected local identity, Mr Christopher Hammersmith, we discussed his activities as a historian and adviser on mining sites. I then made a remark that implied I was questioning Mr. Hammersmith's qualifications in both fields. I had absolutely no reason to suggest that. Therefore, I retract that erroneous statement and apologise unreservedly for my spurious behaviour.

Unseen by Conti, Larry slyly flips his microphone switch upwards and speaks only through the talkback speaker outside the studio where only Conti can hear him.

LARRY

(through the outside speaker)

Despite him being a ratbag and a con-man!

Conti, enraged, pushes the door open and storms into the studio. However, he is met with Larry's somber tone once again.

LARRY

(looking directly at Conti)

I hope you can all forgive me for my error.

Conti realises he has been tricked. Larry, still grinning, continues.

LARRY

(smiling towards Conti)

Now, let's get on with today's topic for you all to consider. Weeell, it seems the boss must know what the topic is today; he's come into the studio to hear more about it!

Conti retreats briskly out of the studio, infuriated by Larry's mockery.

Undeterred, Larry decides to set up the talkback topic for the day.

LARRY

(leaning close to the microphone)

No, the boss doesn't want to give us his opinion on this subject that was also raised in my 'talkback' segment by a caller yesterday. So being a Friday, I think I'll expand the 'talkback' session, and everyone can have their say on this very interesting topic. Let's talk about reincarnation!

Larry sets up the 7-second delay system to prepare for the talkback segment on the theory of past lives.

As the discussion on reincarnation begins, Larry plays a song from the Broadway musical 'Hair' to set the mood.

V.O. "Good Morning Starshine" fades after chorus

LARRY

(whispering softly)

You know, there have been a few whispers on this program about one of our Katoomba residents who firmly believes in reincarnation. It's like that movie 'Hair,' when people air their views about having lived before, they seem to be speaking another language and saying things like 'gliddy glup gloopy, nibby nabby noopy, la la la lo lo.'

Larry fades up the track from the Broadway cast album, as he continues to set the mood for the talkback segment.

The radio listeners are unaware of the tension between Larry and Conti, as they enjoy the engaging discussion on reincarnation.

CUT TO

16 INT. NIGEL CONTI'S OFFICE - DAY

Nigel Conti, still seething with anger, sits at his desk in his office. He picks up the phone and dials MichaelMcCready's number. McCready, a legal adviser and close friend, answers the call.

CONTI

(tense)

Michael, it's me. I need to talk. No pleasantries. Thomas has crossed the line, and I want him gone as soon as he finishes his program!

MCCREADY

(calmly)

Nigel, I understand you're upset, but let's review the situation first.

CONTI

NO! I'm ready to strangle Thomas for making a fool out of me in front of the whole staff.

MCCREADY

Normally, the Studio Supervisor should handle disciplinary measures.

CONTI

(fuming)

Thomas is the Studio Supervisor! I hired him for that role along with being the Morning host!

MCCREADY

(quietly)

Well, he did apologise as we asked, Nigel.

CONTI

(angry)

Then he said defamatory words only for me to hear, knowing it wouldn't be broadcast. It was deliberate provocation!

McCready tries to reason with his friend.

MCCREADY

(calmly)

Nigel, try to look at this objectively. Thomas's playful attitude is what makes him popular with listeners and advertisers.

Conti is not convinced.

CONTI

(dismissive)

He was wilfully provoking me, and if I can't fire him, I'll choke the arrogant bastard!

Conti slams the phone down, ending the call.

17.INT. RADIO STATION STUDIO - DAY

On the air, Larry Thomas continues his entertaining program, discussing the topic of reincarnation with callers.

CALLER 1

Amanda Butler should be respected for claiming to be 'Nefertiti' in a past life.

LARRY

Absolutely, let's be honest; nobody can prove her wrong. Next caller!

CALLER 2

It's disgusting! She's obviously not a Christian woman. This bunkum about past lives is evil. I'll tell you what it is. it's "the Devil's work."

Larry doesn't comment. Instead, he makes a howling noise with reverb and then takes the next call.

The final caller, a male, offers a different perspective and speaking with an authoritative tone.

FINAL CALLER

I believe people should be able to express their strong convictions about their past lives.

LARRY

So, have you lived in the past?

FINAL CALLER

Only in my memory, Larry.

LARRY

Isn't that what people who talk about reincarnation mean? They remember being there?

FINAL CALLER

Precisely, they remember something that happened to them in the past.

Larry is ecstatic, realising the significance of the caller's statement.

LARR

Amanda Butler would be pleased to hear that! So, as a final comment, are you agreeing that there is real truth in people having lived past lives?

FINAL CALLER

Not the way you're saying it, Larry. You see, we all have lives that we remember from our past. We remember our childhood, our schooling, our parents; all those things are memories of our life, but in this lifetime. If we are affected by deep trauma or mental health issues, false memories are often triggered, and we're affected by events caused by dramatic episodes. That's when people imagine that they have lived before.

Larry Thomas realises that his final caller had eloquently demolished the beliefs of people like Amanda Butler. There was nothing more that he could do but sign off.

LARRY

Thank you for all your calls and naturally these are all personal opinions left for you to consider. I'll be back tomorrow morning for my six-hour stint which is mostly music on the weekends, so I hope you'll join me then! Johnny Coates is next.

19.INT. RADIO STATION - LATER -DAY

As Larry leaves the studio during the 1 pm Newsbreak, he's reminded by Johnny Coates of their plan to celebrate Larry's forthcoming birthday at the 'Jocks' Dinner' at 7 pm.

COATES

Don't forget your big night tonight, mate!

LARRY

See you at 7, Johnny.

Just outside the studio door, Larry sees that MIKE HELMS, the breakfast jock, is still there, as Larry approaches.

MIKE HELM

Interesting discussion today, Thomas.

LARRY

Gotta keep up with the constant chatter on your noisy brekky morning show!

Larry doesn't wish to engage in more banter about his morning program and instead he asks about Amanda Butler.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Spying on me to see how I treat your former close companion, Amanda Butler, were you?

MIKE HELMS

(angry)

She won't be happy when I tell her how you let that last guy on your show describe her like that.

Larry smiles

LARRY

Did you expect me to dump him in the same way you dumped Amanda?

MIKE HELMS

(defensive)

None of your business, Thomas!

LARRY

Well, why are you coming to the dinner tonight?

MIKE HELMS

(smug)

I wouldn't miss it for the world. Maybe I'll get to know a different side of you over a good meal.

LARRY

(sincere)

If you're serious, Mike, I'll look forward to that.

Mike can't resist one more dig at Larry.

MIKE HELMS

By the way, who's Conti got in his office? The door's shut.

Larry isn't sure but guesses as he looks over at the office.

LARRY

(nonchalant)

It's probably our super salesman, Mario Martinelli. Maybe they're talking about me and how much money I make for them.

MIKE HELMS

Be warned, after your little trick on Conti today, the boss is not amused. He wants your scalp!

FADE OUT.

20 INT. SUE BAKER'S SALON - EVENING

Sue Baker is getting ready to close up her salon when her phone rings. It's Mike Helms, and she picks up with excitement, looking forward to the 'Jocks Night' and meeting more of the 2BM personalities.

MIKE HELMS

Hi, honey, it's me. Just wanted to let you know that you'll see how well I get along with Larry Thomas tonight.

SUE BAKER

Okay

Sue doesn't quite understand why Mike feels the need to reassure her. She expects him to behave like a gentleman while introducing her as his girlfriend to his radio colleagues.

MIKE HELMS

I know you thought I was being paranoid about Thomas, but I assure you there will be no unpleasantness tonight.

SUE BAKER

Mike, I trust you completely. I'm just happy that you're letting your friends know that I'm more than a temporary person in your life.

MIKE HELMS

Exactly, Sue. When they see you, they'll be jealous that we're staying together at the Carrington tonight.

Sue is taken aback by the mention of their private plans.

SUE BAKER

(shocked)

What? How do they know about that?

MIKE HELMS

(defensive)

Not from me, honey! You know how this town is; someone might have seen us together, and it's become gossip.

Sue is annoyed by the idea of being the subject of gossip.

SUE BAKER

(irritated)

Well, no one has asked me about it!

MIKE HELMS

(soothing)

Don't let it bother you, love. No one knows the details of our Friday nights behind closed doors.

Sue softens a bit, realising that he's right.

SUE BAKER

(accepting)

I certainly hope not!

MIKE HELMS

So, there's no harm in confirming that we'll be sleeping over at the Carrington. Larry and Johnny won't be prying into our private affairs.

SUE BAKER

OK, Mike. You got it

FADE OUT.

21. EXT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - NORTHERN ENTRANCE -NIGHT

The four guests arrive at the stone gateposts of the Carrington Hotel. Mike Helms, Larry Thomas, and Johnny Coates, in typical small-town celebrity fashion, pay little attention to the heritage of the landmark. In contrast, Sue Baker stands out in her elegant, red, formal evening dress with a double V design.

22 INT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - COCKTAIL LOUNGE -NIGHT

Once inside the Cocktail Lounge, Mike proudly introduces Sue to his colleagues. Larry Thomas compliments Sue on her stunning dress, and Mike proudly acknowledges her as his girlfriend.

Johnny Coates is equally impressed.

JOHNNY COATES

I think we should all go home and change into something flash to match Sue's elegance.

SUE BAKER

(laughing)

Thank you, Johnny! But you guys have enough charm to make an impression anywhere. I'm just trying to get a little attention from the waiters in the midst of you lot so that I don't go hungry!

Mike can't resist a cheeky remark.

MIKE HELMS

You'll be getting plenty of attention from me here, later tonight, sweetheart.

Larry and Johnny smile politely, but Sue blushes, feeling awkward after Mike's remark.

LARRY THOMAS

(redirecting the conversation)

Shall we head to the dining room and
check if our table is ready?

MIKE HELMS

Good idea, Larry.

23 INT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - GRAND DINING ROOM -NIGHT

The Head Waiter welcomes the party into the elegant Grand Dining Room, and Sue receives more compliments on her choice of dress.

JOHNNY COATES

There is always just one rose that
dwarfs all others in a beautiful
garden!

The guests are seated, and Larry expresses his excitement about the evening.

LARRY THOMAS

I believe this is going to be a
wonderful evening!

JOHNNY COATES

Quite so, Mr Thomas!

MIKE HELMS

Larry, we should order some Champagne
to celebrate your birthday coming up
on Sunday

LARRY THOMAS

Sorry, I'll be happy with just a glass of wine with the meal. Don't forget, I've got a six-hour shift in the morning.

MIKE HELMS

(protesting)

Come on, Larry. You can handle that with both eyes closed. After all, you only get one birthday a year to celebrate. This is a birthday celebration! One won't be enough!

Helms orders another bottle of Champagne to keep the celebration going.

LARRY THOMA

Alright, alright, you win. A little bubbly won't hurt.

The evening passes in a pleasant manner, with no signs of animosity between Mike and Larry. They all enjoy each other's company, and the conversation flows smoothly. Sue feel more at ease as she talks about her job and interests.

As the clock strikes 11 pm, Larry checks the time and realises he has to leave. He settles his portion of the bill and stands up to say goodbye.

LARRY THOMAS

(to his friends)

Now, if any of you are awake at 5 o'clock and you don't hear me warming up the transmitter with some country tunes, you'll know I'm running late because of the wonderful time I've had with all of you here tonight!

The others smiled and waved goodnight as Mike jokingly announced that it was time to head to bed.

SUE BAKER

(teasingly)

After we settle the bill, of course!

MIKE HELMS

(laughing)

Exactly!

Mike explained that the waiter was already on the way to their table to handle the payment. He offered to cover the bill for everyone and urged Johnny to give him only fifty dollars for his part of the meal.

JOHNNY COATES

(protesting)

Come on, Mike, I owe more than that.

SUE BAKER

And I should pay for my meal and drinks.

MIKE HELM

No need, my treat tonight. This is a night I want to celebrate!

With the bill settled, Sue and Mike bid Johnny goodnight and head back to their hotel room, where they continue to enjoy each other's company into the late hours of the night.

CUT TO

24.INT. CARRINGTON HOTEL - HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sue wakes up to the sound of the door opening and sees Mike returning to the bed, wearing his underwear.

SUE BAKER

(confused)

What are you doing getting up so early
and already wearing your underwear?

MIKE HELMS

I had to freshen up in the bathroom
for our next round. I must have put
them back on out of habit.

Sue playfully teases Mike about starting to get dressed, but she notices that he seems less enthusiastic than usual.

SUE BAKER

(mock disappointment)

Has my Casanova had a libido plunge
from the drinking last night?

Mike seems slightly annoyed by the remark, as Sue gets up to fetch a hotel dressing gown.

SUE BAKER (CONT'D)

If this is how a few late-night drinks
affect you, we should turn on the
radio to make sure Larry hasn't slept
in!

MIKE HELMS

(protesting)

Come on, Sue! We don't need to hear
that stuff! It's 20 minutes past 5, so
he'll just be playing old country
music to warm up the transmitter!

Ignoring Mike's protests, Sue turns on the radio but hears no
sound.

SUE BAKER

(concerned)

Dead air?

MIKE HELMS

(muttering)

Yes it is. I'd better call Nigel
Conti.

SUE BAKER

(panicking)

Don't do that! You'll get Larry into
trouble!

MIKE HELMS

The station manager has to know when
we go off the air.

Mike calls Nigel Conti and informs him about the situation,

emphasising that Larry was drinking the night before.

MIKE HELMS

(into the phone)

Sorry to wake you, Mr. Conti. I just turned the radio on, and there is just 'dead air.' It seems Larry Thomas had too many drinks last night at the Carrington and has not turned up for work. Do you want me to rush over and take the shift?

Sue is angered by Mike's behavior but waits for him to describe Conti's response.

MIKE HELMS

He hit the roof! He said he would take care of it, saying that this time Thomas had gone too far, and he would take the shift himself, and when Larry arrives, he'll fire him on the spot!

Sue is furious with Mike's actions and can't believe he would be so eager to get Larry into trouble.

SUE BAKER

(angry)

Mike, that was not necessary! You didn't have to call Conti and tattle on Larry like that!

MIKE HELMS

I was just trying to help!

SUE BAKER

(disappointed)

Help? It sounds more like you were
reveling in the chance to get him in
trouble. That was cruel, Mike.

Mike realises he may have gone too far and looks remorseful.

MIKE HELMS

I didn't mean for it to turn out like
this, Sue. I'm sorry.

Sue is seething with anger. She quickly grabs her clothes and
starts dressing.

SUE BAKER

(through gritted teeth)

You're an absolute mean bastard, Mike!

MIKE HELMS

Hang on. You know we have to get the
station back on air or we will all
lose our jobs.

Sue's anger intensifies, and she shouts at him as she heads
for the door.

SUE BAKER

(furious)

You're so full of it! I saw you smirk
as you talked to Conti. A moment ago,
I saw the real you! You set Larry up
and then made sure the boss would get

rid of him! Don't ever make contact
with me again!

Mike tries to defend himself, but Sue isn't having any of it. She slams the door behind her, leaving Mike alone in the room.

MIKE HELMS

(Shouting after her)

Go then. You're not the only kinky sex
partner I can get in this town.

25. INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Sue storms through the hotel's corridors, tears streaming down her face. She feels hurt, betrayed, and used by Mike's callous behaviour.

26 INT. SUE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sue arrives back home, locking herself in her apartment. She allows herself to cry, feeling a mixture of emotions.

FADE OUT

27. INT. RADIO STATION BUILDING - BASEMENT - EARLY MORNING

Mario Martinelli rushes through the rear door of the building, his heart pounding in his chest. He finds Larry Thomas lying lifeless at the bottom of the staircase. Shocked and panicked, Mario attempts to find a pulse but quickly retreats, heading upstairs to the radio station studio.

28 INT. RADIO STATION - EARLY MORNING

Mario enters the radio station office, his mind racing as he realises the gravity of the situation. He dials the emergency number for assistance and describes the scene to the operator. After the call, Mario ponders various scenarios that could explain Larry's fall.

30. INT. RADIO STATION BUILDING - BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

As Mario descends the staircase again, the paramedics arrive. They confirm Larry's death and inquire about the circumstances. Nigel Conti arrives shortly afterwards and seems surprisingly unbothered by the tragic event. The paramedics request a police presence and a possible autopsy to follow protocol.

31. INT. RADIO STATION - MORNING - LATER

Nigel Conti orders Mario to get the radio station back on air and not to mention anything about the accident. Mario hurries to comply. Meanwhile, Mike Helms unexpectedly enters the radio station through the rear door.

32. INT. RADIO STATION BUILDING - BASEMENT - MORNING

Nigel and the paramedic, still below, hear the door open. Mike steps inside and explains how he can unlock it. But upon seeing Larry's lifeless body, Mike falls silent.

NIGEL CONTI

Well, now you know. Larry's dead! He
toppled down the staircase!

Mike Helms leaves as Constable Gary Huxtable arrives at the radio station. Nigel Conti and the paramedic meet him at the Basement door.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

That door of yours is a bit wonky. You
should get it fixed.

Huxtable introduces himself and starts taking notes while examining the scene. He uncovers Larry's body and inspects the staircase.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

How many people have walked up here
after the incident?

NIGEL CONTI

Just the announcer who's now on air in the studio.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

OK. Is anyone else coming in or out today?

NIGEL CONTI

Yes, this is our only entry and exit at the weekend.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

Not this weekend. You will need to make other arrangements. There could be other footprints up there, so I'm sealing off this area and the staircase for forensic police to investigate before it is disturbed any further.

NIGEL CONTI

You can't do that! I've got a radio station to run! This was an accident!

But Constable Huxtable insists on sealing off the area and calls for Detective Inspector George Johansson to come with a forensic team.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

You will be able to speak to my superior very soon. I suggest that you use a less aggressive tone in your dealings with him.

Nigel Conti becomes more cooperative as he finally realises the seriousness of the situation.

NIGEL CONTI

I don't know anything. I was just told that we had 'dead air'. How was I to know that we also had a dead body?

Constable Huxtable instructs Conti not to allow anyone to walk up the staircase and he heads towards the door.

CONSTABLE GARY HUXTABLE

Just don't allow anyone to walk up that staircase.

Constable Huxtable leaves, and the radio station is now sealed off for further investigation.

FADE OUT.

33.EXT. RADIO STATION - MONDAY MORNING

The gray and nondescript building stands in the background, with a 2BM radio banner on a top floor window. Pop music is heard emanating from the studio.

SUPER: Monday 10 February 1969

By Monday morning, 2BM has returned to its daily format with the one exception being the morning program with Johnny Coates playing pop music with his playful banter but without Talkback segments at lunchtime.

34.INT. SUE BAKER'S APARTMENT

Sue has had a tearful weekend and closed the salon for a late start at noon. She sits alone in her living room, reading the newspaper article about Larry Thomas's death at 2BM. She has been deeply saddened by the news and is reflecting on the events leading up to that tragic day.

35.SUE'S FLASHBACK - 'JOCKS NIGHT' AT THE CARRINGTON HOTEL

Sue recalls the 'Jocks Night' at the Carrington Hotel with Mike Helms, Larry Thomas, and Johnny Coates. She remembers how Helms pressured Larry to drink despite knowing about his early shift the next day.

36.BACK TO THE PRESENT - SUE'S APARTMENT

Sue continues to ponder over Helms' behaviour and her decision to end their affair. She questions whether Larry's fall was somehow related to the pressure that Helms put on him.

SUE (V.O.)

Was Larry's fall really just an accident? Why did Mike insist that he drink knowing he had to work early? Something doesn't add up.

As Sue delves deeper into her thoughts, she recalls the moment that she heard a door closing in the hotel room early that Saturday morning.

SUE (V.O.)

Why was Mike up so early? He said he went to the bathroom, but I can't shake the feeling that something wasn't right about him.

Sue tries to dismiss these thoughts, chalking them up to her anger towards Mike and her grief over Larry's death. But she finds herself returning to those dark thoughts.

37.INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Sue is busy at her hair salon, but her mind keeps wandering back to Larry's fate and the questions surrounding it.

SUE (V.O.)

I need to focus on my work here and forget about all this. It's just my mind playing tricks on me.

After closing up to walk home, her attention is caught by a new shop that has opened down the street.

38.EXT. NEW SHOP - DAY

Sue looks through the window of the shop and see a notice offering sessions on 'Past Lives' with Amanda Butler.

SUE (V.O.)

Reincarnation, huh? Maybe I should give it a try. Perhaps it could help me find some closure.

Sue smiles at the irony of Larry mentioning Amanda's name in one of his final program, and now she sees her operating a psychic workshop in Katoomba.

39.INT. SUE BAKER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As night falls, Sue remains contemplative, still trying to make sense of everything. The memory of Larry and the unresolved questions linger in her mind.

FADE OUT.

40.INT. 2BM RADIO STATION -NIGEL CONTI'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Nigel Conti sits in his office, looking pleased with the new program line-up. The absence of inquiries about Larry Thomas indicates that the cover-up for his sudden absence seems to be working.

NIGEL CONTI (V.O.)

Seems like the listeners are buying the story of Larry leaving 2BM. Good, the less they know, the better.

In private, however, Conti's demeanor changes. He picks up the phone and dials the Katoomba police station. his anxiety is evident.

41.INT. KATOOMBA POLICE STATION- DAY

Detective Inspector George Johannson answers the phone. He listens to Conti's request for the post-mortem results on Larry Thomas.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

You should be contacting the hospital, not the police, Mr. Conti. This was a non-coronial inquiry. Thehospital will release the results when they're ready.

CONTI

(nervously)

I was just hoping to be prepared. You know, in case the media starts making a fuss about it.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

It's not up to me to inform you about the results. Be patient and wait for the official statement from the hospital.

CONTI

Yes, of course, Inspector. I'll wait.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

By the way, Mr Conti, be prepared to answer some important questions about all this.

Conti's face turns pale as he realises that he may have a lot of explaining to do once the autopsy results are made public.

CONTI

So, it's not true that police are telling reporters about the possibility of a coronial inquest into the 'accident'?

Detective Johannson, known for his no-nonsense demeanor, responds tersely.

JOHANNSON:

I don't know who leaked this 'incident' to the newspaper, but the police deal in facts, Mr Conti. We have answered reporters' questions truthfully.

CONTI

So, there won't be a coronial inquiry?

JOHANNSON:

(cautious)

As you read, we have not ruled that out. We provide the public with the appropriate information.

Nigel is puzzled and seeks clarification.

CONTI

But why would that be necessary? It was an 'accident'. I asked the police to help us avoid media attention once the hospital released the cause of death.

JOHANNSON:

Mr Conti, you have your station to run, and Katoomba police have their rules to follow. While I understand your concern, I am not certain, at this stage, that we are dealing with what you keep calling an 'accident'.

Nigel becomes more desperate for answers.

CONTI

Why not? Why are the police still investigating?

Detective Johannson decides to share a crucial detail with Nigel.

JOHANNSON:

Possible new evidence!

CONTI

What evidence?

JOHANNSON:

(cautious)

I'll know more after I speak with someone who has an appointment with me later today.

CONTI

Who?

JOHANNSON:

(sternly)

That is confidential information. Good
day, Mr Conti.

Detective Johannson ends the conversation by hanging up the
phone heavily.

Nigel is tense as he realises he is left in the dark about
the ongoing investigation. The mystery surrounding the
'accident' and the potential new evidence deepens.

CUT TO

44.INT. SUE BAKER'S HAIR SALON- REAR OFFICE - EVENING

Sue Baker sits at her desk in the rear office of her hair
salon. It's precisely 6 pm. She stands up after she hears a
knock on the front door. She walks towards it and opens it to
reveal Detective Inspector George Johannson, a tall man in a
slightly weary grey suit. He introduces himself.

SUE BAKER

(amicable)

Detective Johannson, please come in.

Johannson enters, and Sue offers him a seat. He remains
polite but reserved, trying not to be influenced by Sue's
attractive appearance.

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON
Thank you, Miss Baker. A cup of coffee
would be nice.

As Sue prepares the coffee, Johannson thoughtfully reflects
silently on his police work.

Sue returns and places the coffee cup in front of Johannson.

SUE BAKER
You seem a million miles away,
Inspector.

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON

(formal)

Policework can lead your mind along
many paths.

SUE BAKER
Well, thank you for coming here. I
needed to speak privately to you about
the Larry Thomas case.

Sue reveals her romantic relationship with Mike Helms and
details of Mike's behaviour on the morning of Larry's death.

Johannson takes notes.

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON
Was Helms jealous of Thomas?

SUE BAKER
I don't think so. Mike hated Larry but
I can't explain why.

She then reveals that she and Helms spent every Friday night
together in a hotel room.

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON
Why are you telling me this?

SUE BAKER

(emotional)

Because I believe Mike was away from
the hotel when Larry died!

Johannson remains composed.

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON
Miss Baker, how do you know that Helms
left the hotel?

SUE BAKER

(defensive)

I woke up to the sound of the door
closing. And I listened to Mike on the
phone telling the boss that Thomas
didn't show up for work.

He didn't have to say Larry was drunk!

DETECTIVE JOHANNSON

(probing)

Is what you have told me a form of
revenge against Mike Helms?

SUE BAKER

(vehemently)

It's not about that! I want you to
investigate him!

Johannson thanks Sue for the information and the coffee. He bids her 'good night' and leaves through the front door, leaving Sue uncertain about whether he'll take any action based on her statement.

FADE OUT.

45.INT. KATOOMBA POLICE STATION- DESK SERGEANT'S OFFICE - DAY

The Desk Sergeant is on duty when he receives a call from a community member regarding the Larry Thomas case.

DESK SERGEANT

(into phone)

You want to tell the police about whom?

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

(authoritative)

The historian fellow, Christopher Hammersmith!

DESK SERGEANT

(loudly)

What has a historian got to do with the Thomas case?

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

He was a Pharaoh killer before he was a historian. He's just revealed himself during a session at my Mystic shop!

DESK SERGEANT

Madam, I don't appreciate frivolous calls. Who are you, and are you saying you want to report this Hammersmith fellow for exposing himself in your shop?

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

(imperial tone)

I am Amanda Butler, owner of the Past Lives shop, and I have important information for the investigating officer in the Thomas case.

DESK SERGEANT

Have you been drinking or taking prescription drugs?

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

Certainly not! Do you know to whom you are talking? I was Queen Nefertiti during the Eighteenth Dynasty, the Great Royal Wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten.

DESK SERGEANT

(frustrated)

Lady, I don't care if you think you were the Queen of Sheba. You sound like you've got a screw loose.

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

(indignant)

I believe I have important information
about the murder of Larry Thomas!

The Desk Sergeant decides to inform Inspector Johannson about
the call, even though he considers Amanda to be a 'crack-
pot.'

DESK SERGEANT

(on another phone)

Put this caller through to Inspector
Johannson, please. Tell the boss I've
got a woman who thinks she's some
Egyptian Queen.

The call is transferred to Inspector Johannson.

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

(convincingly regal)

Mister Inspector, I am offering you an
insight into the slaughter of Larry
Thomas, and I decree that what I
reveal must be investigated!

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

(without mockery)

Of course, Majesty. I am listening.

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

(excited)

I conduct mystic workshops, and today I recognised Christopher Hammersmith as someone I knew from his past life. He was a member of the royal household in Amarna, and he murdered Pharaoh Akhenaten.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

(probing)

So that's why he became interested in history; he was part of history in his past life.

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

Yes, you understand! Well, Hammersmith confessed to me during our session that he wanted to kill Larry Thomas for mocking him on his radio program. You need to arrest him.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

(formal)

As a former ruler, I respect your desire for justice. Thank you for calling, Miss Butler.

AMANDA BUTLER (CALLER)

Thank you, Inspector. You sound like a very intelligent police officer. Thank you for understanding. Goodbye for now.

Inspector Johannson begins drafting a formal request for a coronial autopsy into Larry Thomas' death.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: A Week After Larry's Death

46.INT. 2BM RADIO STATION -OFFICES AND STUDIOS - DAY

The atmosphere at 2BM offices and studios is somber as Larry Thomas' funeral approaches. Nigel Conti, the Station Manager, knows he has to attend, despite his reluctance.

Nigel is frustrated that Inspector Johannson ordered a coronial inquest, leading to media coverage he wanted to avoid.

In the wake of Larry's death and Johnny Coates taking over the morning program with a music-only format, the radio station is receiving numerous complaints from advertisers wanting to cancel. Nigel appoints Mario Martinelli as Studio Supervisor to handle the situation, but it backfires as Martinelli focuses on programming and neglects advertising clients.

Mike Helms, Breakfast host, is also troubled by Inspector Johannson's investigation into Larry's death. He suspects Sue Baker has spoken to the police about his absence from the hotel room when Larry died.

Sue Baker is still festering over her relationship with Mike Helms. She meets Johnny Coates at 2BM asking for help to obtain Mike's home address at Wentworth Falls.

SUE BAKER

Hi, Johnny! I love the music you have in your show. Listen, can you give me Mike's home address. I'm about to reconcile with him. I miss him.

JOHNNY COATES

Really Sue? That's great news and what a sly dog Mike is; he didn't say a word about it to me when I saw him this morning.

SUE BAKER

That's because we intended to keep it quiet until tomorrow, but I can't wait, so as I have to see a friend down at Wentworth Falls tonight, I'll pop in and confirm it tonight.

Johnny provides Mike's address on a piece of 2BM notepaper, unaware of Sue's true intentions.

Sue plans a "nightraid" on Mike's home to confront his wife, Simone, and confirm if Mike had been truthful about their relationship. She feels justified in seeking the truth after feeling deceived by Mike.

47.INT. MIKE HELMS' HOUSE -LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sue Baker arrives at Mike Helms' house in the village of Wentworth Falls, filled with vengeance. She pounds on the door and calls out his name loudly.

Eventually the door opens, with Helms dressed in a robe.

MIKE HELMS

What are you doing here?

Sue pushes the door open further and confronts Mike face-to-face.

SUE BAKER

I'm here to expose your lies, Mike. Did you really think you could deceive me and your wife?

MIKE HELMS

(defensive)

What are you talking about? You need to leave!

Sue stands her ground, determined to reveal the truth.

SUE BAKER

(angry)

You told me your wife agreed to our affair. Was that another lie?

Helms tries to take control of the situation.

MIKE HELMS

This is none of your business. Get out!

Sue raises her voice, unyielding in her quest for the truth.

SUE BAKER

(confrontational)

I deserve to know the truth, Mike! If you lied about that, what else have you lied about? Who else?

MIKE HELMS

(panicking)

You need to leave before my wife finds you here!

Sue feels a rush of power, knowing she has caught Mike off guard.

SUE BAKER

(smugly)

Maybe it's time your wife knew the real you. The lying, cheating womaniser that you are.

MIKE HELMS

(trying to intimidate)

You have no proof of anything! Get out now, or I'll call the police!

Sue takes a step back, smirking .

SUE BAKER

(triumphant)

I have all the proof I need. You can't
hide from the truth forever, Mike.
Call the Police!

As Sue confronts Mike about his lies, a young woman emerges
stark naked into the hallway.

YOUNG WOMAN

(mystified)

What the hell is all this racket
about, Mike?

SUE BAKER

(apologising)

Oh, I'm sorry, Mrs Helms! I just
needed to find some answers about some
things that have been happening in
Katoomba.

YOUNG WOMAN

(confused)

I'm not 'Mrs Helms.' Mike's not
married!

MIKE HELMS

(defensive)

She's crazy. Ignore her. Go back to
bed, Babe.

SUE BAKER

(Turning to Mike)

I just wanted to let Simone know what you've been doing and saying about her and taking advantage of gullible women like me.

The naked woman, Angela Breakespeare, starts to realise that Mike has been lying to women in Katoomba to seduce them. She suggests that Mike should explain himself, but he rushes from the house.

ANGELA BREAKESPEARE

(addressing Sue)

Come on in. Take a seat. I'll put some clothes on.

Angela then explains to Sue that Mike had picked her up at a pub earlier in the day and invited her home.

ANGELA BREAKESPEARE

(amused)

Mike picked me up at the pub. I knew what he meant by 'come and have a cocktail,' but I was ready for it.

Sue and Angela share their experiences with Mike, laughing about how he would be worried about what Sue could reveal to the police, if he went to them in his dressing gown.

SUE BAKER

Thank you, Angela. I appreciate your support.

ANGELA BREAKESPEARE

(resolute)

I hate liars, so count me in. Feel free to have the Katoomba police contact me if they need to.

As they part ways, Angela jokes about the possibility of a handsome police officer knocking on her door.

ANGELA BREAKESPEARE

(smiling)

It's my fantasy, girl! If they send a good lookin' bloke to my place, I'll invite the cop inside so he can really get to know me!

The women laugh, relieved to have each other's support in exposing Mike's deceit.

FADE OUT.

48.EXT. ST. HILDA'S ANGLICAN CHURCH - DAY

The day of the Larry Thomas funeral arrives, cloaked in clouds and a sprinkle of rain, creating a solemn atmosphere befitting the tragedy that occurred.

Inside the church, a surprising large number of mourners gather to pay their respects. St. Hilda's Anglican Church stands as a local landmark, its impressive Gothic exterior and Bell Tower add to its historical significance.

As the funeral service commences, the congregation seeks closure for the tragic loss of Larry Thomas, a popular young broadcaster.

Nigel Conti, Mario Martinelli, Mike Helms, Johnny Coates, and Steve Kranson, along with other radio station staff, sit in the front rows alongside Larry's grieving parents. Sue Baker positions herself behind them, casting a disapproving look at Helms, who seems unaffected.

Amanda Butler and Christopher Hammersmith, on opposite sides of the aisle, exchange occasional glances as the Rector speaks of Larry's popularity and the need to accept God's plan

The funeral proceeds, and despite invitations, no family members or radio colleagues speak, leaving the Rector to deliver a dignified address to the mourners.

After the service, the procession moves slowly towards Katoomba Cemetery. Funeral Directors have described it as the perfect resting place, with sweeping views across the eucalyptus canopy to distant mountain tops. However, at the graveside, there's no talk of views; there is only grief and a sense of something being amiss about Larry's untimely death.

The Rector offers words of faith, comforting Larry's parents, who are believers. However, others leave with a lingering feeling that there's more to the story than meets the eye.

As mourners gradually depart, the mystery surrounding Larry's death remains, leaving many still questioning what really happened to the young broadcaster.

FADE OUT.

49.INT. KATOOMBA LOCAL COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is hushed as the NSW CORONER presides over the inquest into the death of LARRY THOMAS. Reporters fill the room, and Larry's parents sit quietly in the gallery, seeking closure and justice for their son.

CORONER

(formal)

My principal role in these proceedings is to address issues concerning the manner and cause of Larry Thomas' death. I may also make recommendations about matters that have the capacity to improve public health and safety in the future.

In this case, there was no dispute in relation to the identity, date, place and medical cause of the death.

For this reason, the inquest will focus on the manner and circumstances of the death and on questions about whether his death could have been prevented.

Inspector Johannson was then called and questioned about forensic work carried out immediately after the body had been removed to the hospital morgue.

JOHANNSON

My team found no marks including no traces of fabric of Larry Thomas reaching for the sturdy railing on each side of the staircase as he fell to his death. The first impact site was identified on the third step from the bottom, Scuff marks indicated that he had then rolled from there to the bottom. There is more, Your Honour.

CORONER
Proceed, Inspector.

JOHANNSON
Our inspections at the top of the staircase were not conclusive but the team believed that one of the prints found seemed to differ from the other set. The team's leader found traces of a cleaning fluid that also seemed to suggest that someone could have tried to remove the faded print.

Conti and Martinelli, who were present at the hearing, and seated in the witness area, raised no questions as they listened to the Inspector's testimony.

CORONER
Inspector Johannson, did you suspect foul play after the ambulanceman told you that the fall victim had broken his neck, causing a fatal spine injury?

JOHANNSON
Not at first, Your Honour. However, after a brief examination of the body, I could only see injuries to the head, neck and shoulders. I thought it was odd that there were no smudge marks on his clothing after he had fallen from such a substantial height.

CORONER

(Formal)

Thank you, Inspector. I do note that the reports by independent experts attest to the total adherence to safety standards on the alternative entrance and exit, to and from the building.

JOHANNSON
Except for the rear door, Your Honour.

CORONER
What was wrong with the rear door?

JOHANNSON
It could be manoeuvred in a lift-and-slide motion to open it when it was locked.

Johannson glanced at Nigel Conti, as he replied. Conti and Martinelli again remained silent.

CORONER

(serious)

I will be sure to include that in my recommendations, Inspector. Thank you for mentioning it, you're now excused from this inquest.

Johannson then bowed to the Bench and took a seat to hear Nigel Conti's testimony.

Conti was then sworn in

CORONER
Mr Nigel Conti please tell the Court your position at the radio station.

CONTI

(Haughtily)

Your Honour, I am the station's manager and I still believe that the incident was nothing more than a terrible accident.

CORONER

(Sharply)

Mr Conti, that is a matter for the court to determine.

Conti visibly scowled towards the Coroner but did not respond verbally.

CORONER (CONT'D)

Mr Conti, I do want your opinion of the late Mr Thomas. Is it your belief that he may have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol or if Mr Thomas had any known enemies who would want him harmed.

CONTI

(scoffing)

Well, I can only tell you that I learned of Larry Thomas not being at work after he had been drinking late into the night at the Carrington Hotel before his radio shift. In answer to your question about whether Thomas had people who disliked him, I can only say that nobody liked him. He was arrogant.

CORONER

(bluntly)

Did you dislike him, Mr Conti?

Conti composed himself to answer in a serious tone.

CONTI

Your Honour, it's not my place to like or dislike the announcers as long as they do their job properly!

The Coroner frowned as if he was not satisfied by the answer.

CORONER

(abrupt)

Did Larry Thomas do his job properly, Mr Conti?

CONTI

(smugly)

Sometimes.

CORONER

(probing)

You told the police that you were at home at the time of this incident until awakened by a phone call from another employee, Mr Michael Helms. Is that correct?

CONTI

(defensive)

Yes, of course.

CORONER

Mr Helms later told police that you were furious at Larry Thomas when Helms reported that the radio station was 'off the air'.

CONTI

(self-righteous)

Well, it was sheer negligence of duty. At least that's what it seemed at the time!

CORONER

(probing)

Hmm. Not exactly your most reliable employee by the sounds of it. But you were also vague about being at home with your wife at the time of the incident. You were asked if you and your wife slept together, and you said 'No'. Why was that?

CONTI

(annoyed)

She suffers from sleep apnea. Anyway, it took me half an hour to get to the radio station after I had sent Mario Martinelli there and he reported that Thomas was dead!

CORONER

(reading from police report)

You told Mr Helms that you 'would take care of it', Mr Conti. But instead, you sent Mr Martinelli to deal with the situation."

CONTI

(angrily)

He was closer!

The Coroner then told Nigel Conti that he was excused and called Mario Martinelli, a heavily built man in a suit, to give his testimony.

CORONER

You are at the present time the Studio Supervisor and as such, you would know how staff members feel about each other, did Mr Conti like Mr Thomas?

MARTINELLI

Sometimes.

CORONER

When?

MARTINELLI

When he wasn't there!

The CORONER frowns and some people in the gallery chuckle.

CORONER

Are you trying to amuse this court, Mr Martinelli? If so, I am reminding you that you are giving recorded testimony to an inquest to help determine the cause of death of a fellow employee. So, answer my question, did Mr Conti and Mr Thomas have a good relationship?

MARTINELLI

No.

CORONER

How so?

MARTINELLI

They clashed over his on-air behaviour. He could have cost the station a lot of money with his on-air comments.

CORONER

So, did you also resent him?

MARTINELLI

I didn't think he should be Studio Supervisor. He didn't deserve an administrative role.

CORONER

Now, you're Studio Supervisor!

MARTINELLI

Yes.

CORONER

Mr Martinelli, you live closest to the radio station, and you live alone. Were you at home when Mr Thomas died?

MARTINELLI

Yes, of course.

CORONER

You're excused.

The CORONER nods and MARTINELLI leaves the stand. The CORONER then addresses the court.

CORONER

This inquest is adjourned until tomorrow at 2 pm. Some members of the public and the media will be permitted to hear my findings and recommendations, if they so wish.

The CORONER bangs his gavel and rises from his seat. CONTI watches him with a worried expression.

50.INT. KATOOMBA LOCAL COURTHOUSE - NEXT AFTERNOON

The CORONER'S COURT is a small and crowded room with wooden benches and a high ceiling. A sign on the door reads "INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF LARRY THOMAS". The CORONER, a middle-aged man in a black robe, is sitting at the bench, holding a document. In front of him, there is a witness stand, a table for the lawyers, and a microphone. Behind him, there is a large window with curtains. On his left, there is a door leading to his chambers. On his right, there is a door leading to the public gallery.

The PUBLIC GALLERY is packed with people, mostly reporters with notebooks and cameras. Some of them are standing in the aisles, trying to get a better view. Only one seat in the front row is occupied by Larry's father, an elderly man in a suit and tie, who looks sad and weary. He is holding a photo of his son in his hand.

The CORONER clears his throat and begins to read his findings.

CORONER

I find that Larry George Thomas died on the 8th day of February 1969 as a result of foul play, that Mr Thomas was most likely pushed to his death by a person or persons unknown. In relation to the reason for his death, I find that the deceased was murdered. The cause of his death was multiple injuries which I am satisfied he sustained as a result of being suddenly pushed forcefully from the top of a steep staircase by a person or persons unknown and that he was falling so rapidly that he was unable to reach out for the handrails that may have stopped his fall.

The CORONER looks at LARRY'S FATHER, who lowers his head and closes his eyes.

The CORONER bangs his gavel and rises from his seat. The reporters rush to their phones and cameras, eager to report the news. LARRY'S FATHER remains seated, clutching his photo, tears rolling down his cheeks.

FADE OUT.

51.EXT. BLUE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Aerial shots of the scenic landscape of the Blue Mountains, with green hills, valleys, forests, and waterfalls. The sun is shining and the sky is vivid blue.

SUPER: BLUE MOUNTAINS, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

52.INT. FRED ROGAN'S HOUSE- LEURA - DAY

Fred Rogan's house is a spacious and elegant brick home in Watkins Road at Leura. It has a large balcony with a view of the golf course and the mountains. The house is decorated with antiques, paintings, and photos.

FRED ROGAN, an elderly man in sweater and slacks, is sitting on a recliner on the balcony, with his feet up and a walking stick by his side. He is reading a book and smoking a pipe.

He hears a car pull up in front of his house. He puts down his book and looks over the balcony railing. He sees a detective get out of his car and walk towards the stairs.

FRED ROGAN

Hello there!

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Hello, Mr Rogan. I'm Inspector Johannson from Katoomba Police. You called me earlier today.

FRED ROGAN

Yes, yes, I did. Come on up!

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON climbs the stairs and reaches the balcony. Fred Rogan stands up and shakes his hand.

FRED ROGAN (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Inspector. Please, have a seat.

He gestures to a chair next to his recliner. Johannson sits down and takes out his notebook and pen.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Thank you for your time, Mr Rogan. You said you had some information about the Larry Thomas case.

FRED ROGAN

That's right, Inspector. I saw something that night in the early morning that might be relevant to your investigation.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

What did you see?

FRED ROGAN

Well Inspector, once I knew that you were looking for someone involved and after hearing some gossip about the blokes at that radio station not getting along, I remembered seeing one of them at the hospital on the same morning that they think the young announcer was pushed down those stairs.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

How early on that morning, Fred?

FRED ROGAN

Very early. It must have been about 4 o'clock and I awoke to the night nurse yabbering away and sounding angry. She was talking to a man that I recognised as Mike Helms from his photos in the paper advertising him as 2BM's breakfast bloke.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

What were they talking about? Did you hear?"

FRED ROGAN

I did, because they were at the door of the ward where they take you to recover from surgery after the operation on my busted knee. I was no longer affected by the painkillers so I remember the Helms bloke telling Nurse Amanda that his mate Larry was telling everyone at a dinner that she was a 'nutcase' and should be locked up.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

How did the nurse respond?

FRED ROGAN

Well, that's it. She was always a bit aloof, but she started shouting that people like him should be punished! I thought she must be referring to Larry Thomas!

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Was she suggesting that Helms should be the one to punish Thomas?

FRED ROGAN

I don't know, but it sounded that way. I think they heard my bed creaking as I leant forward to listen because they both left the area straight away.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Did you see either of them again?

FRED ROGAN

No, the only person that left shortly afterwards was the night watchman. He must have been down at the end of the

ward and heard the chatter. He was probably at the end of his shift anyway, but I was told a few days later that Nurse Amanda had left the hospital for good. So, I thought nothing about it until I read in the newspaper reports about the Inquest.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Well, thank you, Fred. It's probably not vital info. so don't worry about it. Every little piece of information helps though, and you did the right thing by contacting us.

FRED ROGAN

I'm glad of that, Inspector. Just be careful on those bloody stairs; we don't want you comin' a cropper as well.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

I'll be careful, Fred, I'll be in touch if I need anything else from you.

They stand up and shake hands. Inspector Johannson walks down the stairs to his car. Fred Rogan watches him go.

CUT

53.INT. KATOOMBA POLICE STATION-DAY

Johannson is seen hurrying from his office to the Desk Sergeant on duty at the police station.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Sergeant, I have an urgent task that may require you to arrange more men to exercise first thing tomorrow morning.

He empties the envelope and puts a printed list on the Sergeant's desk.

DESK SERGEANT
What's this, sir?

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON
Today I need 7 copies made of this
list for personal delivery tonight or
tomorrow morning.

DESK SERGEANT

(P.O.V.) The Sergeant reads the document.

[INSERT - INVITATION LETTER]

You are invited as an 'interested party' to attend a formal discussion by Detective Inspector George Johannson to hear the progress of the police investigation into the death of Larry Thomas in Katoomba on 8 February 1969.

Venue: Carrington Hotel Time: 8 pm, 22 FEBRUARY. Please ask at the Reception desk for directions to the '**Police Conference**'.

Those required to attend are the following people:

Sue Baker

Amanda Butler

Johnny Coates

Nigel Conti

Christopher Hammersmith

Mike Helms

Mario Martinelli

Please note that this event will be an informal gathering to allay growing community concerns without any media in attendance.

Anyone not accepting this invitation may be subjected to a more formal investigative environment at Katoomba Police Station.

Please inform the police officer who has handed you this invitation of your attendance or otherwise.

DESK SERGEANT (CONT'D)

I will assign 5 officers to this task,
sir.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Good man, Sergeant. I also have a list
of phone numbers and business and home
addresses for them to use. The earlier
start, the better chance we have of
getting the invitation into their
hands.

DESK SERGEANT

(smiling)

Expecting positive responses,
Inspector?

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Correct!

Johannson leaves the police station with a parting grin to
the Duty Sergeant.

SUPER: 22 February 1969

54.EXT. CARRINGTON HOTEL -NIGHT

A police car is parked outside the hotel entrance.

Inspector Johannson is standing near the entrance, holding a
clipboard with the list of names.

He checks off each name they arrive.

Inspector Johannson leads the group to a lounge area that has
been reserved for them. There is a sign on the door that
reads "POLICE CONFERENCE".

He opens the door and lets them in.

55.INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge area is comfortable with couches, chairs, tables, lamps, and a fireplace. There is also a bar with drinks and snacks.

INSPECTOR JOHANNSON

Please, make yourselves comfortable.
Help yourselves to some refreshments.
I'll be with you shortly.

He closes the door behind him and leaves them alone in the room.

Outside the door, two uniform police officers have taken up their positions.

JOHANSSON

(to an officer)

You know the drill. If anyone comes rushing out during the conference, detain them.

OFFICER

(nods)

Will do, Inspector.

Inspector Johansson returns inside the lounge area.

JOHANSSON

(standing before the group)

Thank you all for coming. Tonight, we'll discuss the progress of the investigation into the death of Larry Thomas.

We now know that the young announcer was pushed down the stairs. We also know there are several suspects for his murder and we are close to making an arrest and laying charges.

As Johannson speaks, he notices several facades of arrogance are starting to crack, revealing glimpses of vulnerability among the 'persons of interest' in attendance. He asks for questions.

SUE BAKER

(nervously)

So, what happens now?

JOHANSSON

(calmly)

This gathering is to address the community's concerns and foster transparency. Rest assured, we'll continue our investigation diligently. But perhaps you would like to hear how the matter has progressed.

The atmosphere becomes more relaxed, and the people in the room seem to be ready for candid discussions about the murder.

The Inspector noticed Nigel Conti, seated next to Johnny Coates, his new Morning Host.

JOHANSSON (CONT'D)

Mr Conti, you contacted us even before I requested the Coronial Inquest. Why did you want to block a more thorough inquest, knowing that the hospital post-mortem examination could not determine the actual cause of Larry's death.

Johannson watched him closely as Conti stood to respond.

CONTI

(defensive)

Well, I had to think of the other employees in the interest of the company. The newspapers were suggesting it was a scandal for the station and I knew that if a Coroner's finding suggested 'foul play' it could have adverse consequences for us all.

As Conti sat back on the lounge, satisfied with his answer, Johansson fired another question.

JOHANSSON

And did you think of Larry's parents while you considered the consequences for yourself?

CONTI

(shouts)

It was a matter of priorities.

JOHANSSON

(Narrowing his eyes)

But you didn't like Larry Thomas, did you? You were probably even glad that he was no longer a thorn in your side.

CONTI

Yes! That might be true, but my concern was for the rest of the staff.

JOHANSSON

Oh, so did you arrange grief counselling for them?

CONTI

(angry)

No one was grieving, I assure you!

The inspector moves to stand directly in front of Nigel Conti.

JOHANSSON

The truth, Mr Conti, is that the scandal that you say you tried to prevent was sanctioned by you and others in your own studios. I don't think you murdered this young man, but you did encourage others to dislike him, and should the murderer be in this room tonight and was part of that disgusting attitude from your office then many would say the station deserves the financial downturn in business that you're getting.

Johansson expected another rebuttal from Nigel Conti, but it was not forthcoming. So, he immediately turned his attention to address the man who had replaced Thomas on-air, Johnny Coates.

JOHANSSON (CONT'D)

You, Mr Coates, are someone we've been investigating as well. Because you can't feel too sad about becoming the new morning host on 2BM, can you Johnny?

Johnny's eyes narrow but there is no response from him, so the provocation continues.

JOHANSSON (CONT'D)

You pretended to be Larry's friend but you knew that Mike Helms loathed Larry so you invited them both to the 'Jocks Night' that you booked at this very hotel. Were you expecting fireworks to explode between them, Johnny?

It was a spark that ignited Johnny Coates' temper.

COATES

I was trying to mend the differences between Mike and Larry. Not everyone disliked Larry, you know. I wanted the on-air team to function properly and attract more listeners as we had been doing.

JOHANSSON

But your plan didn't work did it, Johnny? Instead, Mike tried to get Larry drunk just hours before his morning shift!

Johannson's eyes drifted between Johnny, Mike Helms and Sue Baker.

COATES

(Scornful)

Mike may have unwisely tried to do that, but Larry was not drunk as he left the room.

Noticing that Helms seemed to be expecting to be the next person to be questioned, Johannson deliberately turned his attention to Christopher Hammersmith.

JOHANSSON

Mr Hammersmith, you were furious when during a 'talkback' session on-air with Larry Thomas you were questioned about your qualifications as a historian and as an advisor to the mining groups!

HAMMERSMITH

I, I, I may had been annoyed at the time. But I wouldn't say I was *furious*. Detective, it's not my style.

JOHANNSON

What is your style, Mr Hammersmith? Is it suing people who annoy you?

HAMMERSMITH

Inspector, I demanded an apology and I got one that was broadcast after I had complained.

JOHANNSON

Was that enough? Did you lose clients as a result of Larry Thomas questioning your qualifications in the original talkback discussion?

HAMMERSMITH

My reputation is solid enough to withstand any meaningless words from a mere disc jockey on the wireless.

JOHANNSON

(Abrupt)

My question was 'did you lose any clients'.

HAMMERSMITH

(smirking)

No one of any importance!

JOHANNSON

Then, where were you at the time Larry Thomas was murdered, Mr Hammersmith?.

HAMMERSMITH

At home, asleep.

JOHANNSON

Where is your home and were you alone?

HAMMERSMITH

(amused)

Why of course, Mr Johannson; I'm a bachelor. (pause) I live in Lurline Street, Inspector. I can give your young constables further details if you wish.

George Johannson was aware of the intended humour that Hammersmith, as a well-known gay person in the community, had injected into his answer but he ignored it as he looked around the group slowly with his eyes finally resting on Mike Helms still seated at the end of a lounge.

JOHANNSON

Mike Helms!

The Inspector had called Mike's name firmly as though he was reading out an arrest warrant. Helms responded as though he was in a courtroom.

HELMS

Yes Sir?

JOHANNSON

You know very well from our recent chat at the police station, that I regard you as a 'person of interest' in this investigation?

HELMS

Yes, I got that impression, Inspector, but I can answer any questions to settle this matter.

The Inspector had been looking at his notebook as Mike answered, but raised his head to ask another question

JOHANNSON
Truthfully, Mr. Helms?

HELMS

(firmly)

Yes!

George Johannson always knew when to change interrogation tactics.

JOHANNSON
Good, so we'll come back to that, Mike. Please get yourself comfortable; I wish to ask a few questions of Miss Baker and Miss Butler.

JOHANNSON (CONT'D)
Miss Baker, I have the record of your conversation on the night with Mr Helms here at the Carrington, but I heard that since then you have learned more about his marital status, is that right?

Sue Baker stands and glares at Helms.

BAKER
Yes. I found that he has never been married and that he has had many 'girlfriends!

JOHANNSON
Many 'girlfriends? Including Amanda Butler?

Before Sue Baker has the opportunity to reply, Amanda Butler jumps up from the lounge and shouts at the detective.

BUTLER

(angry)

How dare you bring my personal life into this sordid conversation! I can choose anyone I want for my own needs!

Johannson motions to Sue Baker to stay silent as he moves closer to Amanda Butler and adopts a stern attitude.

JOHANNSON

Miss Butler, you are no longer reliving a 'past life' as you believe. This is a formal police investigation just as you told me you had wanted and if you decide to hamper my investigation, I will have to raise many details of your torrid affair and subsequent long-term friendship with Mike Helms!

BUTLER

(upset)

I thought that you were the one person who understood who I am, Inspector, and that you would respect my decree to reveal the murderer. That's why I came here tonight!

George Johannson was also a keen observer of a person's psychological state and he could see that, if handled correctly, Amanda Butler was likely to break.

JOHANNSON

(reassuringly)

Miss Butler I do accept that you believe that you once ruled Egypt as Queen Nefertiti. I have no problem with that.

The detective's statement to Amanda Butler produced an audible murmur in the Hotel lounge.

JOHANNSON (CONT'D)

To keep my promise to you that I would ensure that I would do all in my power to obtain justice in this case, I now need your assistance.

BUTLER

(firm voice)

You shall have it, Inspector!

Mike Helms jumps from his chair, pointing at Amanda Butler.

HELMS

(shouting)

You can't seriously believe anything this raving lunatic has to say!

JOHANNSON

That's precisely how you're sounding right now. Sit down, Mr Helms!

JOHANNSON(CONT'D)

Miss Butler isn't it true that just a few years ago the Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital suspended you as a nurse to have you assessed by the Government Psychiatrist as to your mental ability to continue nursing?

BUTLER

Yes, they did. However, I was reinstated after being examined for a week in Sydney by a team of that city's most prominent psychiatrists.

JOHANNSON

What was their finding, Miss Butler?

Johannson folds his arms, as he awaits her answer.

BUTLER

I still have the exact wording on their finding of mental proficiency, but I can paraphrase what it says for you, if you wish.

JOHANNSON

This finding has been a turning point in my investigation. So, please continue.

BUTLER

The team was unanimous in their finding that although I have firmly expressed a belief that I have had a previous existence, they viewed such a belief as equal to the faith held by members of different religions who constantly express their belief. They added that through various evaluations that this belief did not in any way affect the mental health of any individual. The report says 'therefore, the team finds that Miss Amanda Butler is mentally competent to perform her duties as a registered nurse'.

As Amanda reveals the result of her tests, Mike Helms falls back into his chair.

JOHANNSON

Thank you, Miss Butler. So, what did your trusted friend, Mike Helms, come to tell you at around 4 am on February 8 at the Blue Mountains Hospital this year?

Helms jumps from his chair again, shouting.

HELMS

I wasn't there!

The Inspector orders again for Helms to be seated and he calls to the constables

JOHANNSON

Please ask Mr Rogan to join us.

A few minutes pass and then Fred Rogan, as arranged earlier with the police, moves into the room.

JOHANNSON (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Mr Frederick Rogan who was a patient at the hospital ward when Mike Helms came to speak there with Nurse Amanda Butler.

Mr Rogan, would you kindly point to the man and woman that you heard chatting that morning?"

Fred Rogan immediately points to Helms and Butler. Helms again slumps back in his chair.

JOHANNSON(CONT'D)

Mr. Rogan, did you see seen anyone else in the hospital ward at that time.

ROGAN

(Pointing)

That gentleman there! He was the night watchman who ran out after them!

Rogan is pointing directly at Christopher Hammersmith.

HAMMERSMITH

(shouting)

That's a lie. He's mistaken!

Johannson thanks Fred Rogan for coming as Fred joins the constables to help him exit the room. Johannson then turns his attention to Hammersmith.

JOHANNSON

After you lost those clients you describe as being 'of no importance', Mr Hammersmith, isn't it true that you took a job as night watchman with the Blue Mountains Hospital?

HAMMERSMITH

(warily)

Well, yes, but short-term, as you would understand, until the clients realised how I had been defamed.

JOHANNSON

Oh, I understand very well, Mr Hammersmith, and you have just been positively identified as being on duty there in the early morning of February 8.

HAMMERSMITH

(angry)

I will contest that allegation, Mr Johannson, and I will sue your department for wrongful arrest! Or um Defamation.

The detective ignores Hammersmith and refocuses the attention on Amanda Butler.

JOHANNSON

Ms Butler, could you provide us with some more details about your encounter with Mike Helms on the night of the murder.

BUTLER

Well, when Mike Helms saw me at the hospital he told me terrible things that he claimed Larry had said about me at the dinner they all had. He said Larry called me a fake and a lunatic.

Sue Baker interjects, defending Larry Thomas, stating that he did not mention Amanda during the dinner at all.

JOHANNSON

You believed what you were being told, Ms Butler?

BUTLER

Yes. I got the impression that Helms wanted me to confront Larry Thomas at the radio station. So I thought that I should and Christopher Hammersmith and I followed Helms to the radio station, where we encountered Larry.

JOHANNSON

Did you speak with Larry at the studio?

BUTLER

(teary)

Yes, but it was a confrontation and emotions ran high. I just wanted to talk but Chris Hammersmith was almost exploding; he demanded a vow from Larry not to mention him or me on-air ever again.

JOHANNSON

Please tell me truthfully, Ms Butler, did the early morning encounter with Larry Thomas become violent?

Amanda Butler begins weeping.

BUTLER

Larry refused, saying he couldn't imagine any reason to mention us. Christopher got furious and demanded the vow again, but Larry ordered us to leave. He was still a gentleman, saying 'Ladies first' as he opened the door and moved to the top of the staircase with us

The room remains silent, gripped by Amanda's chilling account.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

I had reached the bottom of the staircase when I looked back up and saw Larry standing there. I thought he was about to ask Christopher to leave, but he never got the chance. Christopher moved behind him and pushed him down the stairs with great force. I ran to him, but there was nothing I could do. Larry had no pulse.

Amanda's tears flow freely as she recalls the horrifying moment.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Christopher lingered at the top, threatening me to leave and saying he'd kill me like he got rid of my husband, Akhenaten.

Detective Johansson listens carefully, taking in every detail of Amanda's account.

JOHANSSON

(softly)

So, that's why you eventually contacted me about your past life. You realised you had witnessed a murder?

Amanda nods, her emotions still raw.

BUTLER

(whispers)

Yes, I had to tell someone. I couldn't let Larry's murder go unnoticed.

Johansson notices Hammersmith and Helms moving towards the door, attempting to flee.

JOHANSSON

(firmly)

Constables, arrest both Christopher Hammersmith and Michael Helms. We're charging Hammersmith with murder and Helms with being an accessory to a serious crime.

The constables swiftly apprehend both men as the Inspector reads them their rights.

Detective Johansson takes Amanda aside, trying to console her.

JOHANSSON

(softly)

Amanda, as a witness to the murder, I
have to charge you with not reporting
a serious crime

BUTLER

(tearfully)

But I rang you!

JOHANSSON

(nods)

You did, but during that conversation,
you didn't report the murder that you
witnessed.

Amanda breaks down, and Johansson tries to offer some hope.

JOHANSSON (CONT'D)

If you're willing to testify in court
as an eyewitness, I may be able to
drop the charge.

BUTLER

(determined)

I will tell the court everything. He
won't get away with this.

SUPER

The court trial took place 19 months later. Hammersmith pleaded guilty and received a long prison sentence.

Helms was found 'not guilty' of being an accessory before the fact to the murder, but his career is tarnished, and he leaves broadcasting.

Amanda, Sue, and the rest of the group have moved on with their lives, leaving the tragic events of the past behind.

The once thriving 2BM radio station is now in disarray as it faces substantial losses.

Several 2BM staff members have moved on to prominent roles at other radio stations with larger audiences.

Their careers have advanced, but they can't shake off the fear of 'Dead Air'. It still haunts them.