

THE INC. NEVER DRIES

by

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FIRST DRAFT  
(2nd Revision)

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INT. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S OFFICE - DUSK

A small, cluttered space which is dimly lit. A private investigator, LAURA HOLDEN, carefully measures two shots of whisky. Her emotions are as tightly wrapped up as the bun her hair is fixed in. The suit used to be chic but now looks tired and worn.

LAURA (V.O.)

The time before dusk is always the hardest. When the light fades and darkness descends, slowly, inexorably ... like a premonition. It's amazing how much more you see when the light has been banished ... the true sense of things, of people.

She knocks back her precise measure of liquor, sets up the next shot.

There is a KNOCK at the door. A suave gentleman, JOE TOMASI enters.

JOE

Miss Holden? Laura Holden?

LAURA

The card game is down the hall.

JOE

Perhaps I misunderstood. Your associate said -

LAURA

Do I look like I have an associate, pal?

JOE

Tomasi, Joe Tomasi ... and I didn't come here to spend my money on cards.

He pulls a wad of money out of his jacket.

LAURA

You definitely have the wrong girl.

JOE

I want you to follow my wife.

She looks at the cash a moment.

LAURA

Go home Mister Tomasi. On the way, buy your wife some flowers, maybe even some chocolates, go tell her you love her. I hear some women like that sort of thing.

JOE

I want to make sure the right person is doing the telling, you with me? Ten grand, up front.

He holds the money up. Laura walks around the desk, goes to take it from him ...

LAURA

Any idea where I might find her?

JOE

You know the Kitt-e-cat Club?

... hesitates ...

LAURA

Yeah, I know it.

... snatches the money from his grasp. He makes for the door.

LAURA (CONT'D)

How will I recognise her?

JOE

Easy, wherever the spotlight is.  
(props in the doorway)  
For what it's worth, your associate from the DPP said you used to be pretty good back in the day.

He leaves. Laura returns to her booze, slowly pours another glass.

LAURA (V.O.)

Back in the day.

(beat)

There was a time, not that long ago, when the world seemed full of light ... before the city showed its true colours. Most people called it WA Inc.

(MORE)

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

For those poor souls who dared shine a feeble torch on all the corruption, the filth, we simply called it "The Inc." All of us were stained by it one way or another.

She downs the glass of pure malt.

INT. CABARET LOUNGE - NIGHT

A chanteuse in an evening gown, REBECCA, sings 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' as a torch song. She caresses the microphone like a lover. A single spotlight frames her.

REBECCA

(sings)

*The first time ever I saw your face. I thought the sun rose in your eyes. And the moon and stars were the gifts you gave. To the dark and the empty skies, my love, To the dark and the empty skies ...*

Laura enters, takes a seat. She scans the room. Alone at a table is JOHNNY FALCONE. He has only eyes for Rebecca who returns his attention with heartfelt lyrics of love and fidelity.

The song ends. There is scattered applause, most enthusiastically from Johnny. Rebecca glides over and sits at his table. The two are engaged in intimate discussion.

Rebecca kisses Johnny then heads backstage. Laura waits a moment then takes her place.

LAURA

Johnny Falcone, fancy meeting a fine, upstanding gentlemen like yourself in a dive like this.

He looks her up and down.

JOHNNY

Who's doing your hair now?

LAURA

This isn't a social visit.

JOHNNY

Speak for yourself ... oh, I forgot, that's what you do best.

LAURA

You going to play nice?

\*  
\*  
\*  
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JOHNNY  
Name the game.

LAURA  
Truth or dare.

Johnny smiles, leans in close. Laura doesn't pull away.

JOHNNY  
Try me.

LAURA  
Forget the girl and walk away  
now.

JOHNNY  
You want me all to yourself,  
baby? Like old times?

He puts a hand on her knee.

LAURA  
(nods towards backstage)  
Looks like the old times are  
pretty new Johnny.

JOHNNY  
I'm a respectable business man  
enjoying a quiet drink after  
work.

LAURA  
You forget, I know what sort of  
business you're into.

She removes his hand from her knee.

JOHNNY  
You have me all wrong officer.  
I'm one of the good guys now, my  
own construction company and all.  
Might even get to build the new  
football stadium ... if I play my  
cards right.

LAURA  
Funny, I always thought you were  
better at tearing things down.

JOHNNY  
You just can't handle the fact  
you're not in the spotlight  
anymore, can you Laura? You had  
your time to shine baby, but you  
couldn't handle it, could you?  
Went supernova on us, ended up no  
better than a discarded Redhead.

LAURA  
 Better to have burnt brightly  
 than to crawl in the gutter all  
 your life.

\*

Johnny suddenly pulls her close, kisses her.

JOHNNY  
 Come on baby, admit it, you miss  
 me.

She slaps him hard.

LAURA  
 No, my aim's still pretty good.

Laura gets up. Johnny rubs a tender cheek ruefully.

JOHNNY  
 You used to sing for me once,  
 baby. Remember?

Laura stalks over to the microphone. Sings a few lines from  
 "Love Don't Live Here Anymore", stares straight at Johnny.

LAURA  
 (sings)  
*You abandoned me. Love don't live  
 here anymore. Just a vacancy.  
 Love don't live here anymore.*

In the background, Rebecca, now dressed in smart casual,  
 looks at the scene with some curiosity.

Laura finishes the verse, walks off in disgust.

In the shadows of one corner, Joe hunkers down over a wine  
 glass as Laura walks by ...

INT. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S OFFICE - SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER

Laura looks through the blinds, glass of whisky in hand.  
 She barely acknowledges the door opening.

REBECCA (O.S.)  
 Is this where I report a missing  
 person?

Laura doesn't even turn.

LAURA  
 This look like a police station  
 to you?

REBECCA

A certain level of discretion is required.

Laura stirs ... then she sees her ... the chanteuse now dressed in a formal suit with an air of authority not evident at the club.

LAURA

Mrs. Tomasi?

REBECCA

Excuse me?

LAURA

This is highly inappropriate. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

REBECCA

I **believe** you have me mistaken for someone else. \*

LAURA

I'm bound by certain confidentiality Mrs. Tomasi. I shouldn't even be seen talking to you.

REBECCA

The name's Towne and I can assure you my marital status is still **stamped "pending"**. \*

Laura is suspicious.

LAURA

That **sure is** a nice ring lady. \*

REBECCA

Why thank you ... but it's an engagement ring ... and it's not likely to become a wedding ring unless you help me find my fiancé **... the one that's missing.** \*  
\*

LAURA

You're telling me you've never heard of a Joe Tomasi?

REBECCA

Sure, I've heard of him ... he was a hack for the Labor party back in the eighties. You can't possibly think I'd marry such a repugnant creature?

LAURA

I need a drink. You want one?

She busies herself looking for a spare glass.

REBECCA

You going to help me?

LAURA

What did you say your name was again?

REBECCA

Towne ... Councillor Rebecca Towne.

LAURA

You work with disadvantaged youth?

\*

REBECCA

Perth City Council. I'm head of the Planning and Development Committee.

Laura sizes her up, sure this woman's having a lend of her.

\*

LAURA

Rumour has it you're quite the songbird.

\*

\*

REBECCA

Everyone should have a passion in life, don't you think Miss Holden? Something they love above all else. Do you sing?

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\*

LAURA

No.

REBECCA

You should try it some time ... very intoxicating.

\*

Laura's pissed off at the brazen gloating over Johnny ... but suddenly the penny drops.

\*

\*

LAURA

So ... you approve all the construction projects in the city?

REBECCA

My committee does, yes.

LAURA

The new football stadium?

REBECCA  
Over my dead body.

LAURA  
Who'd you say was missing again?

REBECCA  
My fiance, Jonathon Falcone.

Did she just say fiance?! Laura is crushed.

\*

\*

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Joe cleans the hot plates of a gas barbecue. The sliding door opens and Laura arrives in a flurry of pricked pride.

LAURA  
Want to tell me who you really are?

JOE  
Want to tell me how you got in?

LAURA  
Your wife was kind enough to show me through. Except you don't have a wife, do you?

Joe returns to his cleaning, unperturbed.

JOE  
Let's just say I'm a lobbyist.

LAURA  
Long lunches at the Burke and Grill?

JOE  
I don't particularly enjoy cold fish.

LAURA  
More of a carnivore then?

JOE  
Sure, anything that bleeds.

LAURA  
Is that what happened to Johnny?

JOE  
I'm not familiar with his dining habits.

LAURA  
Only his taste in women.

JOE

On that subject, I bow to your obvious expertise.

Ouch, that stings but she takes it in her stride.

LAURA

She's talking about going to the Police.

JOE

Well, he is a most disagreeable character.

LAURA

I don't think she's after a reference.

JOE

Might I suggest that involving the law is not in Ms. Towne, or your, best interest.

LAURA

How much do you normally charge for such penetrating insight?

JOE

What price do you value your freedom ... or didn't you learn your lesson last time around?

One insult too many. Laura turns to leave.

JOE (CONT'D)

Think about it Miss Holden ... that was quite a scene the other night, former lovers quarreling so publicly. Perhaps you were jealous, couldn't stand to see your beloved Johnny in the arms of another woman, followed him home, confronted him, flew into a rage of passion ... such a tragic end for our poor little Johnny.

LAURA

You didn't say you dabbled as a fiction writer as well Mister Tomasi.

JOE

Not a hard story to sell for a woman like you.

LAURA

What would you know about a woman like me?

JOE

The Inc. never dries Miss Holden, you know that.

A beat as Laura considers the trap that has been sent. \*

LAURA

What's in it for me?

JOE

A slice of the biggest construction project of the last twenty years, my dear ... tax free.

He carefully places a carving knife on the side of the barbecue.

INT. CABARET LOUNGE - NIGHT

Rebecca sings a slow lament, a reprise of 'Love Don't Live Here Anymore'. Laura watches from the wings. \*

REBECCA \*

(sings softly) \*

*In the windmills of my eyes. Everyone can see the loneliness inside me. Why'd ya have to go away. Don't you know I miss you so and need your love.* \*

LAURA (V.O.) \*

The only honest woman in the whole damn city, telling it like it is for a lousy twenty bucks an hour. But no one wants to hear the truth anymore, they only want their gleaming monstrosities built with soulless concrete and someone else's guilt. I don't have that kind of luxury anymore. \*

REBECCA \*

(sings louder now) \*

*You abandoned me. Love don't live here anymore. Just a vacancy. Love don't live here anymore.* \*

Laura fidgets with her handbag.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Joe escorts Laura to the front door.

JOE  
You're making a wise decision.

She exits without a word.

Johnny emerges from the shadows.

JOHNNY  
Think she'll go through with it?

JOE  
I think you'll get to make your  
football stadium after all Mister  
Falcone.

The two men shakes hands - honour amongst thieves.

INT. CABARET LOUNGE - NIGHT

It is EMPTY except for Laura who opens her handbag ...  
contemplates the carving knife ... and Rebecca who stands  
morosely behind the microphone stand.

LAURA (V.O.)  
In this town the Inc. never  
dries.

CUT TO:

The Microphone stand tumbles to the ground.

FADE TO BLACK.