

QUEEN OF THE QUAY



PILOT EPISODE
"IT'S RAINING MEN"
(15 page sample)

1 December 2022

Written by
Jon Rex Williams

© JON REX WILLIAMS
PHONE: +61 402 300 137
EMAIL: jon.rex.williams@gmail.com

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

A series of framed photos sit on an old wooden sideboard:

- a black and white wedding photo of HELENA and REX (mid 20s) c. 1972

- HELENA and REX (mid 30s) in front of their new suburban home with a crying infant TIM c. 1981

- REX (mid 50s) looking unimpressed next to a smiling HELENA (early 50s) and costumed TIM (23) at an amateur Shakespeare play c. 2001

And an urn with "In Loving Memory. Rex Hoffmann. 1945-2022" written on it and a wedding ring on a string around the lid.

HELENA (a squat 75 year old woman in a dressing gown) sits in an old armchair reading Agatha Christie's "The Sign In The Sky". There is a half drunk gin and tonic next to her. A dim lamp lights the room. All the curtains are closed.

TIM (45, wearing a brightly coloured polo shirt with "FREE TOURS" written on it) bursts through the front door carrying groceries.

TIM

Hey Mum, I got tea and milk and pasta. Did we need anything else?

He walks into the kitchen and starts unpacking.

TIM (OOS) (CONT'D)

Oh, and I got some makeup in case you want to go out somewhere. I don't know what colour you wear so I got a couple of options.

Tim walks into the living room holding two lipsticks.

TIM (CONT'D)

This one's red and this one's... red but like darker maybe.

He struggles to see in the low light.

TIM (CONT'D)

How can you see anything?!

HELENA

I'm fine.

Tim walks past her and flings open the curtains. Sunlight pours in.

They're in a high-rise apartment 20 stories up, overlooking the ocean and a mass of other apartment blocks. Helena winces.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Timothy! I'm trying to read.

TIM

I know. I'm helping. Anyway, you said you'd read all your Agatha Christie books.

HELENA

Yes, but I forgot who did it in the first ones so I had to start again.

TIM

(laughing)

Isn't it always the third or fourth person you meet?

Helena thinks.

HELENA

Shit.

She closes the book, annoyed, then changes her mind and opens it up again.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Well it's not about who did it, it's about how they figure it out.

TIM

Mum, you need to get out. You haven't left the apartment since Dad...

HELENA

I went out when we moved here. I didn't like it.

TIM

Well, at least come and look at the view.

HELENA

I've seen it.

TIM

Mum, please.

Helena sighs and turns around. Tim opens the balcony doors and street noise floods into the room. Helena stares blankly at the view.

Suddenly there's a crack and a Japanese businessman falls screaming past the window.

Tim runs to the edge of the balcony and looks over. Helena grabs her gin and tonic and shuffles out after him. Tim looks down at the body on the pavement below. He turns to Helena and starts dry-retching. She eases him way from the edge and looks over herself.

HELENA
Oh, that's terrible.

TIM
Mu... mu...

HELENA
Just breathe, sweetie.

Helena pushes Tim's head between his legs.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Oh, and he's crushed that lovely pagoda.

TIM
A... ambulance...

HELENA
I don't think it'd help.

TIM
Mu...

HELENA
Alright, I'll call the police or something. You go lie down.

Tim hobbles off to his bedroom, still retching. Helena leans out and looks up at the broken balcony railing above her. Realising her railing could break, she steps back. She takes a sip of her gin.

"It's Raining Men" starts to play.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - EARLY EVENING

With the sun setting, HELENA sits in front of the television watching "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" (2008). TIM is in the kitchen, stacking the dishwasher.

TIM (OOS)

I can't get that image out of my head. (beat) I should do a true crime tour about it. People love those. I could talk about today and... well, there must've been other deaths around here. What do you think?

HELENA

No. That's horrible.

TIM

It's not like it's against the law.

There's a knock at the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

TIM opens the front door to see Officers MACKENZIE (32, stern, well built Caucasian male) and LEE (26 upbeat, Chinese-Australian female). He screams.

LEE

Ah, hi. We're just following up on the accident this afternoon.

MACKENZIE

Some old lady called us.

HELENA (OOS)

Who is it, Timothy?

TIM

The po... po...

LEE

Police, ma'am.

HELENA (OOS)

I'm still in my dressing gown.

LEE

We can come back tomorrow if it's easier.

MACKENZIE

No we can't.

TIM

It's fine. She's always in her dressing gown.

HELENA (OOS)
Timothy!

TIM
(to Lee)
It's Tim.

Mackenzie pushes past Tim and heads to the living room.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HELENA stands and fixes her dressing gown.

MACKENZIE
Don't get up. This'll only take a
sec.

HELENA
Helena. Helena Hoffmann.

MACKENZIE
What?

Lee nudges him.

LEE
This is Officer Mackenzie. I'm
Officer Lee. We're from the Surfers
Paradise Police Department.

HELENA
Would you like a drink?

LEE
I'd love a water, thanks.

MACKENZIE
We're fine.

LEE
Right. Well we just need to know if
you heard or saw anything unusual
regarding the man who fell.

HELENA
Oh, I can tell you everything.

MACKENZIE
(under his breath)
Fucking old people.

Lee pulls out her notepad and pen.

LEE

Go on.

HELENA

Well it was 12.15. Or 16. Actually it could've been 17. I don't wear a watch. But my son Timothy-

TIM

Tim.

HELENA

Had just come home from one of his walking tours. He does those silly free ones with the people in the orange shirts.

TIM

(to Lee)

They're really popular. And we do actually get paid. In tips. Sometimes.

HELENA

So Timothy opened the curtains and we were admiring the view when-

TIM

I had to beg you to look!

LEE

It's an amazing view.

TIM

I know, right.

HELENA

Well it was nicer 30 years ago when we bought it. There wasn't all the construction, just the ocean and the-

MACKENZIE

Can you get to the point?

HELENA

Right, well Timothy and I were looking out and I heard a crack or a crunch - definitely something metallic-

TIM
I didn't hear that.
(to Lee)
You can ignore that bit.

HELENA
Well I heard it! And then Mr Akiba
fell past us, screaming.

LEE
So you knew Mr Akiba?

HELENA
No, never met him.

MACKENZIE
So how'd you know it was him?

HELENA
Well I saw his face and it was...
(to LEE)
Japanese. Can I say that?

LEE
Sure.

TIM
Mum!
(to Lee)
I'm so sorry.

HELENA
What? I know you can't say oriental
anymore. And Chinaman's isn't right-

TIM
Mum?!

HELENA
Anyway, he looked surprised. He's
been living upstairs for the last 5
years, at least since Rex and I
moved back here.

LEE
Rex?

HELENA
My husband.

MACKENZIE
And where's he?

Tim points to the urn on the side-table.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Oh.

LEE

I'm so sorry.

TIM

It's fine.

Lee smiles at Tim.

HELENA

Rex was the strata manager so he dealt with Mr Akiba a lot. That's how I know his name and that he's...

(to Lee)

"Japanese".

MACKENZIE

Well if that's all, we may as well-

LEE

Was there anyone in the apartment with him?

Mackenzie glares at Lee.

HELENA

No, he was alone. I heard someone leave around 10 o'clock this morning. I think it was his wife. They were having an argument. She has a surprisingly deep voice for a lady. But I couldn't tell what they were saying because it was all in...

MACKENZIE

Japanese. Great.

LEE

We haven't been able to contact Mrs Akiba yet but we'll keep trying.

HELENA

Well they own the restaurant downstairs. She might be there. Apparently it's very nice.

MACKENZIE

Thanks. Lee?

Mackenzie turns to leave.

HELENA
What if I remember other details?

Mackenzie stares at her blankly.

LEE
(to Mackenzie)
Pete, we have to give cards to
everyone. I've run out of mine.

Mackenzie sighs and checks his pockets. He finds a tattered
old business card and hands it to Helena.

MACKENZIE
We won't need anything else. It's
pretty obvious it was an accident.

LEE
The hand rail was rusted through.

HELENA
Mine seems fine.

LEE
Well don't lean on it, just in
case.

Mackenzie exits.

LEE (CONT'D)
Thanks for your help, Mrs Hoffmann.

HELENA
My pleasure, dear.

LEE
Tim.

Lee smiles at Tim and leaves.

TIM
I'll get the door.

Tim runs after them. Helena picks up her book and replaces
the bookmark with Mackenzie's card.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Joggers run along the street, past old people going for their
morning swim. Business people grab takeaway coffees and
children head to school.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Helena washes dishes in the sink then places them into the dishwasher. There's a window in front of her. Tim enters.

TIM

I don't know if I can go to work.
I'm still pretty traumatised after
yesterday.

HELENA

Well I can't afford to support both
of us. Your father didn't leave me
that much money.

TIM

Fine, I'll go. Will you be okay
without me?

HELENA

Of course.

Tim kisses her cheek and leaves. Helena goes back to her dishes. GARY (40s, upbeat, First Nations man) suddenly appears at the window. Helena screams.

GARY

Sorry. Guess you didn't expect to
see a blackfella this high up.

Gary squirts soapy water on the outside of the window and starts washing it. He's in a harness hanging off the outside of the building.

GARY (CONT'D)

I'm Gary. You've usually got your
curtains closed.

HELENA

Yes... How long have you been here?

GARY

Almost 2 years now. I usually do
Mondays and Thursdays but they
changed it this week. Dunno why.
You're Rex's wife. Ha...

HELENA

Helena.

GARY

Yeah. Sorry about Rex. He was a
good bloke.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)
Bit gruff but I wouldn't be here if
it wasn't for him so...

Helena peers out the window and sees the huge drop below him.

HELENA
Aren't you scared?

GARY
No, my totem's an eagle. I was born
for this.

HELENA
Really?

GARY
Nah, it's a porpoise. But I love it
up here. No crowds, nice view.
Residents barely notice me. Or
they're ignoring me.

HELENA
Were you here yesterday?

GARY
When Akiba fell? Yeah, but I was on
the other side. Heard it though.
Bloody horrible. I mean he was a
dick but no-one deserves that.

HELENA
What do you mean?

GARY
Oh, he just complained a lot. Not
my bloody fault he leaves his
curtains open when he's having...
Anyway, I better get going. Thanks
for the chat.

Gary lowers himself out of view. Helena waits then closes the curtains.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - MORNING - LATER

Helena sits in her armchair reading her book. There is a knock at the door. She ignores it. Another knock. She continues reading.

VICTOR (OOS)
Heleena, it's Victor. Are you home?

Helena sighs and gets up to answer it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Helena opens the door to VICTOR (65, mild mannered man in an old suit and tie), trying to slip an envelope under the door.

VICTOR
Oh Heleena, you're home! You look well.

HELENA
I look terrible, Victor. But thankyou.

Victor laughs awkwardly.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Can I help you?

VICTOR
Oh, I just wanted to give you this.

He hands her an envelope. She opens it.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Bad news I'm afraid. With what happened to Mr Akiba, we have to replace all the balcony railings.

HELENA
Why?

VICTOR
It looks like the sea air's rusted them all so-

HELENA
(looking at the bill)
\$10,000! Each?!

VICTOR
Just for the front units. The back ones are fine. We can't even see the ocean.

HELENA
You're lucky. It's not like we have a view anymore.

Victor laughs.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Did the police test any of the railings?

VICTOR

Well they were pretty thorough. I let them into Mr Akiba's apartment and they were there for a while.

HELENA

I just heard plodding feet and mumbling and then they left. They were just as short when they spoke to me.

VICTOR

When?

HELENA

Last night.

VICTOR

Did they think you knew something?

HELENA

No. I think they had to come because I was the one who reported it. I told them everything I saw; how he looked, how he had an argument with his wife, how my railing seems fine.

VICTOR

You don't think it was an accident?

HELENA

Well if it wasn't, do we still have to replace the railings?

Victor laughs.

VICTOR

Oh Heleena, I forgot how funny you were.

HELENA

It wasn't a joke.

VICTOR

I'm sorry I haven't been up to say hello more. How are you doing?

HELENA

Fine.

VICTOR

We all miss Rex.

Helena nods.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
If you ever need someone to talk
to, I'm always around. Maybe we
could get a drink or something.

There's an awkward pause.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Anyway, better keep delivering
these. Bye, Heleena.

He walks off down the hall.

HELENA
(under her breath)
It's Helena.

She closes the door and looks at the bill in her hand.

HELENA (CONT'D)
\$10,000! I can't afford that.

She throws the letter next to Rex's urn.

HELENA (CONT'D)
This never would've happened if you
were still in charge.

She looks at the kitchen.

HELENA (CONT'D)
I need a drink.

INT/EXT. LOUNGE ROOM/BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Helena walks out of the kitchen with a tall glass of gin and
stares out at the balcony. She notices something.

She opens the balcony door and walks outside. There's a rusty
stain in the top right hand corner of the roof. It's coming
from Mr Akiba's balcony.

HELENA
Shit.

She walks back inside then reappears with a bucket of water
and a sponge. She looks around and sees a small step-ladder.
She places the ladder next to the balcony railing and climbs
up with her bucket. She tries to reach the stain but she's
too short. Tentatively, she steps onto the very top of the
ladder.

She looks down and sees the 20 storey drop off the balcony. She starts swaying and slams her hand against the roof to steady herself. Carefully, she lets go and reaches into the bucket to grab the sponge. She brings it up and scrubs at the stain. It starts to come off.

Having removed the stain, Helena begins climbing back down. The sponge starts sizzling in her hand. She screams and drops it. She loses her balance and falls against the railing, dropping the bucket. Helena hangs there, her feet flailing, waiting for the railing to break. It doesn't. She clambers off and steps back. She shakes it. It's fine. Confused, she turns around to see the bucket and rusty coloured water all over the balcony.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Shit.

She picks up the bucket and winces. Her hand is burning. She drops the bucket and rushes to the bathroom.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Shit! Shit! Shit!

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - LATE MORNING

Helena, her hand now bandaged, opens an old book cabinet and starts flinging books onto the floor; crime novels, cookbooks, photo albums. She finds an old pharmacy textbook, puts it on the table next to Rex's urn, and starts flicking through it. She stops at "Fundamental Bases and Acids" and scrolls down the page with her finger.

HELENA

Ha!

She grabs her Agatha Christie book off the side-table, takes out Officer Mackenzie's card, picks up the phone and dials.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES