

RAW INVESTIGATION

by

Daniel Brent

EXT. STREET - DAY

ERIC (44) takes out the last box from the removal van.

From the corner of his eye, he notices a 'Missing' poster, and walks towards it.

He analyses the photo, a middle-aged man with wispy hair, and an unmistakable bright yellow handkerchief in the pocket of his blue jacket.

He sniffs as a strange smell distracts him. He turns his head to discover the smell is coming from his neighbour's house; with a grimace he takes the box inside his house.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Eric is peering at his neighbour's house through the side window, his eyes following a silhouette in the house. He sniffs again.

The doorbell rings and he moves to the door and opens it. CAROL (41), DAVID (39) and SUSAN (37) are standing in the doorway.

CAROL

Hi, we thought we'd welcome you to the neighbourhood. I'm Carol, and this is David and Susan.

SUSAN

Hi!

DAVID

Hey there.

ERIC

Nice to meet you, I'm Eric. Why don't you come in for a cup of tea?

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The four are sitting on a sofa and chairs, holding their cups of tea, surrounded by cardboard boxes.

SUSAN

...and after David and I got married, we moved here.

ERIC

It's a nice place. A few changes to be made here and there, but that's why I moved here.

BEAT.

ERIC (CONT'D)

So what's up with this missing guy?

CAROL

Ah, Aaron. He lived across the road. Went missing shortly before you moved in, actually. We don't know much.

DAVID (JOKINGLY)

I reckon someone here's in on it.

Susan slaps David gently on the arm.

SUSAN

Sorry about my husband. He can be a bit...provocative sometimes.

Eric smiles politely, but appears unsatisfied.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eric is watching his neighbour's silhouette through another window. A crime show is playing on the television. He grabs and opens a small cardboard box from the floor and pulls out a pen and paper, and begins taking notes.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm blares from Eric's phone from his bedside table. He sits up with a jolt.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Eric opens the front door and steps outside.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Eric bends down to grab the newspaper. David and Susan walk by, holding hands.

SUSAN

Good morning, Eric.

ERIC

Morning. Oh hey, I just wanted to ask if you knew anything else about Aaron?

SUSAN

Oh... Well I guess he didn't really fit in too well...oh and I do know that he lived alone. Why do you ask?

ERIC

I see. And no reason, I just haven't seen the guy next door yet, he doesn't seem to go out much.

DAVID (AMUSED)

You're suspecting Stefan?

ERIC

No, no... I guess he just seems a bit shady. Don't tell him that, though.

DAVID (JOKINGLY)

Yeah, I never liked that guy. Definite murderer material if you ask me.

SUSAN

Will you two stop it? Come on, David, or they'll be all sold out.

David and Susan wave goodbye and walk off. Eric looks at Stefan's house before walking back inside.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Eric is watching a crime show before he hears distant voices.

He quickly moves towards the window, nearly tripping over an unopened cardboard box on the way, and sees Susan talking to a figure inside Stefan's house, before stepping inside.

Eric grabs his notebook and writes something down.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Eric, holding his notebook, is watching silhouettes in Stefan's house before putting on his shoes. He opens the door and steps outside.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Eric sneaks over to Stefan's house and attempts to listen in through the side window.

SUSAN (MUFFLED)

Well, it was nice seeing you again.

Susan opens the door and steps out. Eric quickly tries to look busy.

ERIC

Oh hi, Susan.

SUSAN

Hi Eric.

Susan, with no emotion, walks off. Eric appears confused, but eagerly writes down something in his notepad.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Eric, Carol and David are sitting in the lounge. Susan is not present.

DAVID (JOKINGLY)
So, Eric, you think Stefan is
involved in our missing man?

ERIC (LAUGHING)
Don't be silly. How come you
weren't at Stefan's too last night?

DAVID
She...was at Stefan's?

ERIC
I...uh...assumed you knew?

DAVID (IRATE)
She said she was going to her salsa
class. I knew she was acting
suspicious lately. That cheating-

David goes to storm out of the house, but Eric and Carol
hold him back.

CAROL (SYMPATHETIC)
We don't know that that's what's
happening yet, David.

DAVID
That Stefan...fine I'll say it. The
last time I saw Aaron, he was going
into his house.

Eric and Carol go silent.

CAROL
Eric, if you'd like us to help with
your investigation-

ERIC
I'd prefer to do it alone, if
that's ok. Too many people could
make it look like we're onto them.

Carol looks a little disappointed.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Eric is compulsively looking at Stefan's house, surrounded
by photos and notes. The cardboard boxes in his room remain
untouched.

He watches the silhouette in the house until he notices
laughter coming from just across the street.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

He begins to run downstairs, this time actually tripping
over a box and hitting his leg on the banister.

He winces in pain, but determinedly continues hobbling downstairs.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Eric moves towards the window and watches as both Susan and David walk across the street, holding hands, towards Stefan's house.

Eric takes his phone out of his pocket and attempts to take a photo, but the flash goes off.

He desperately struggles to hide his phone, but Susan and David have already stopped and are looking at his house.

Eric peers through the corner of the window, hiding and holding his leg, and sees David whisper something into Susan's ear before they both continue walking.

Breathing heavily, Eric scrolls through his phone contacts and selects Carol's number. She quickly picks up.

ERIC

Hey, Carol...I've just seen David with Susan walking towards Stefan's house.

CAROL (THROUGH PHONE)

They probably just made up, Eric. You're overthinking things.

ERIC

But remember what David said about Stefan?! There's no way there's not something fishy going on.

CAROL (THROUGH PHONE)

...I guess you're right, that is a bit weird. Can I see everything you've found so far tomorrow?

ERIC (STANDOFFISH)

Uh... Yeah, ok, you can see it. (Laughs) You could even be my understudy!

CAROL (THROUGH PHONE)

Are you taking this seriously, Eric? This isn't a laughing matter.

INT. HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Eric is standing desperately switching glances between Stefan's house and looking for Carol to come over.

He sees her walk up and opens the door, subtly beckoning her in.

CAROL

Let's see what you've got then.

Eric hobbles into the living room, which is a mess, with Carol. He still hasn't unpacked, and has scattered all of his notes and photos on the floor.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Have you hurt your leg?

ERIC

Oh, it's nothing.

CAROL

This looks like one of those investigations you see on TV shows. You've...spent a lot of time on this.

ERIC

Does it?

Carol points at one of the photos, a picture of her.

CAROL

When did you take this?!

ERIC

Ah... That was early on. I had to be careful, you see.

Carol then picks up another photo.

CAROL

And this is the one you took yesterday?

ERIC

Yeah. I'm surprised they haven't said anything.

CAROL

That does seem strange. What's this?

She points to something poking out of Susan's bag on the photo.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Isn't that-

Eric's eyes lighten up.

ERIC

From the missing poster! Carol, you're a genius! How did I not notice that?

Carol's face drops.

CAROL
I never thought...

ERIC
Just think of it! We're gonna be in
newspapers...

CAROL
But...

Carol's expression turns from upset to determined.

CAROL (CONT'D)
This is very serious, Eric. We need
to confront them.

ERIC
Do we need a weapon for protection?

CAROL
I have an idea.

She leads him quickly to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Carol grabs a carving knife.

CAROL
This'll do.

She tucks it away into the bag around her shoulder.

ERIC
Good idea. Let's go.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

The two determinedly walk up to Stefan's door, despite Eric's bad leg, and Eric knocks. He sniffs as the smell from before is very prevalent. David opens the door.

DAVID
Oh, hi guys. We're all inside, come
on in.

Confused, Eric steps inside, followed by Carol. A number of people are seated inside, including Susan, all talking amongst themselves until Eric walks by - silence fills the room.

Their heads turn as he walks through, lead by David, towards the kitchen door.

It opens, and STEFAN (46) steps out.

STEFAN
Welcome, Eric. I've heard a lot
about you.

Eric turns and looks at Susan, who glances away.

ERIC

Stefan.

Stefan kindly smiles.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Don't act so smug with me. We've figured out what you've done.

STEFAN

Relax, Eric. Look, we're a very close community and it's time you joined us one way or another.

Stefan hands Eric a small dish holding a few burgers. Eric winces as the smell is stronger than ever.

He looks back at Carol, who nods reassuringly at him, and gestures towards her bag. He takes a bite.

STEFAN

I've heard about your little...investigation. I'm impressed. I have a feeling you'll never find Aaron though. He never...fit in.

He gestures towards the burger in Eric's hand. Eric looks down at this, eyes wide in shock. He spits out the mouthful.

ERIC

You...ate him?! What kind of sick place is this?!

Stefan sarcastically claps.

STEFAN

Well done, you took long enough. Outsiders don't tend to last long in this neighbourhood of ours. We thought you were different.

ERIC

This is...I...I'm calling the police!

STEFAN

It's a little too late for that now, I'm afraid. Although you came just in time, Aaron here is nearly all gone. And look, you can't exactly run away.

ERIC

Carol, we have to go.

Maintaining eye contact with Stefan, he attempts to hobble back out of the house.

STEFAN

You can't leave, Eric. Where's your backup?

Eric bumps into Carol and turns around. She is holding the carving knife in her hand, with a smile on her face.

His eyes widen.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END