

EXT. OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE MIDDAY

The sun is shining. The steps up to the courthouse is covered with journalists, like ants making their way up a hill. There is an eerie silence as they all wait. It lasts but a moment until the doors burst open, and they all flock to swarm the lawyer (WILLIAM JONES) with his CLIENT on his right as they make it through the mass.

JOURNALIST 1:

"How does it feel to be a free man?"

JOURNALIST 2:

"What of the allegations of bribing the judge?"

WILLIAM JONES:

"No comment. Please let us through."

William Jones is a smartly dressed man in his mid 50's. His face is pulled into a pleased smirk as he tries to shield his client and get them to the car waiting for them at the bottom of the stairs.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE KITCHEN NIGHT

William is sat at his dining table with a scotch in his hand. The table is covered in papers and a pair of reading glasses rests low on his nose as he looks through the next case. Abandoned and dirty plates cover the area around the sink and the bin is slightly overflowing with take-away boxes. The shrill ring of the landline breaks the silence, and with a grunt the man makes his way to the phone hanging on the wall.

WILLIAM JONES:

Yes, hello, William Jones speaking.

He lights up in a smile as he listens to the person on the other end of the line and changes his position so he is leaning on the wall.

WILLIAM JONES:(CONTINUED)

Thomas! What a surprise. I hope nothing is wrong?

He listens and frowns. It does not take long before he sighs as well and runs a hand through his greying hair.

WILLIAM JONES:(CONTINUED)

Of course. The two of you are always welcome, you know that. But there is

no need for either of you to come, I am doing just fine. I focus on the work needed to be done.

William keeps his eyes on all the papers covering his dining table, and steadfast refuses to look at the mess of the rest of the kitchen. He turns as he listens and checks the calendar he has placed conveniently close to the phone. He rubs the bridge of his nose.

WILLIAM JONES:(CONTINUED)

Very well. Do as you please, I will have the rooms ready for you.

He hangs up after a short goodbye and settles back into one of the stiff chairs. He picks up the scotch and swirls the amber liquid before downing it in one gulp.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE LATE AFTERNOON

William pulls the car into his driveway and takes a deep breath before he exits the car. He makes it through his front garden as quick as he can and keeps his eyes glued on his phone, until he is in front of the door. He starts pulling out his keys.

MRS. BROWN:

Oh William! So good to see you. You rarely come home this early!

William turns to see his neighbour, the elderly MRS. BROWN, coming around the fence from her garden. She dusts off her dirty gloves on her pants before walking up to him. He forces on a polite smile.

WILLIAM JONES:

Yes, well, the children are coming home tomorrow, so I have to get their rooms ready.

MRS. BROWN:

I haven't seen those two since... Well, it's been a long time. Will Sarah be fixing up the garden?

William does not have to follow her hand gesture to know that his garden looks miserable. He grits his teeth and sighs.

WILLIAM JONES:

I fear Sarah never got her mothers gift for gardening, only the fashion

part.

MRS. BROWN:

It's such a shame. Especially with the competition coming up. And I was so sure Ellie would have won this year.

WILLIAM JONES:

She certainly would have tried her best. Now if you would excuse me, I have a lot to get done in the house.

William bows his head to the lady, but pushes himself into the house before she can interject anything else.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC STREET NIGHT

The street is dark. The streetlight only illuminates small circles. A female body (MARY) falls to the ground in one of the circles. Boot-clad feet walk up to the body. The culprit looms over the body.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE MORNING

William comes out of his house in a hurry. He swears as he fumbles with the key. He manages to lock the house and hurries to his car. He throws the suitcase into the backseat, but pauses before he himself gets in. There is a great commotion further down the street. He frowns as he makes his way there.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC STREET MORNING

Police tape sections off part of the street and officers are milling about. Many of his neighbours have gathered outside the police tape. He stops and folds his arms over his chest as he regards the scene. He frowns as he looks upon the female body being searched by labcoats. He barely turns as Mrs. Brown stops next to him.

MRS. BROWN:

How could this happen all the way out here?

WILLIAM JONES:

Do we know WHAT happened?

MRS. BROWN:

Apparently Mary, from 55, was found dead this morning. Such a horrible thing to happen.

WILLIAM JONES:

Indeed. And to Mary of all of us. She seemed such a lovely lady.

MRS. BROWN:

Ah yes. She was one of those divorcees bringing you food, was she not?

William nods as he tries to recall what this particular lady had brought him, but his frown only deepens as he find it impossible to recall.

MRS. BROWN:(CONTINUED)

And she was in such high spirits, all prepared for the competition. Now I reckon Alice or Suzanne are sure to win.

They both turn to look at the aforementioned ladies. They are both standing together, and though William has seen them many times before, he struggles to place who exactly they are.

WILLIAM JONES:

Oh, don't say that Mrs. Brown. Your roses are as lovely as ever. I bet they'll make the judges go wild.

Mrs. Brown blushes.

MRS. BROWN:

Now, now, William. Flattery will get you nowhere with an old lady like me. You should save that for those divorcees.

William clenches his teeth, but his polite smile remains in place as he uncrosses his arms and looks at the old lady. Before he can get another word in, she spots another old lady (MRS. PETERSON) making her way towards the crime scene.

MRS. BROWN:(CONTINUED)

Oh, is that Mrs. Peterson?

William follows her with his eyes as she walks away, but quickly turns to survey the scene. A young detective (DETECTIVE FERGUSSON) is talking with some other cops while taking notes on a pad. William continues to turn and looks at the different groups gathered around. He catches bits and pieces as he listens in, but nothing of interest. As William sighs he senses someone looking at him. He turns back to the crime scene and finds the detective walking towards him. He

shakes the detectives offered hand and raises an eyebrow.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Good morning, Sir. I am the lead on this case, Detective Fergusson, may I ask you a few questions?

The man waves his badge so fast, William is tempted to ask for it again.

WILLIAM JONES:

Certainly. I would love to help, Mary was a dear friend of my wife's.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Ah, would I be able to speak to her as well?

WILLIAM JONES:

Unfortunately not. She passed away last year.

William looks away for a short moment as he takes a deep breath.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

My condolences, awful business when someone dies so young.

William nods and clenches his fists.

WILLIAM JONES:(CONTINUED)

Unfortunately I have not had much to do with Mary since then. She brought food around once in a while, but we never talked.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

So, did you hear anything between...

The detective looks down into his notes.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:(CONTINUED)

2am and 4am?

William scratches his chin while he thinks.

WILLIAM JONES:

No, I am afraid not. My job in the city keeps me busy, so I always go to bed early. And when I sleep, I wake

for nothing but my alarm.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
And what work do you do in the city
Mr...?

WILLIAM JONES:
William Jones. I am a lawyer.
Corporate law, mostly.

William reaches into his suit and pulls out a business card that he hands over. The detective skims it before stuffing it in his pocket.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
A lawyer, eh? I imagine you could live
in a better neighbourhood than this.

WILLIAM JONES:
I probably could. But my wife loved
this area, and I have not had the time
to consider moving yet.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
Are you close with the neighbours?

WILLIAM JONES:
Not anymore. That was Ellies thing. We
used to see them all the time, but I
have too much work for it these days.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
Do you know if Mary had any arguments
recently?

William smirks.

WILLIAM JONES:
With the competition coming up, I
imagine she has had arguments with
half the street. At least the female
half. They get a bit intense.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
Would this be the gardening
competition? I've heard it mentioned.
Is it a big event around here?

The detective studies his notes.

WILLIAM JONES:

I take it you are not from around here then?

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

I was moved here recently. The department needed a detective.

WILLIAM JONES:

Well then. The competition is the biggest event of the year, aside from the Winter Parade. My wife would compete every year. Her garden was her pride and glory.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Are you taking part this year then?

William chuckles.

WILLIAM JONES:

No, I have neither the time nor the skills for that. I am afraid I have let the garden fall into quite the state.

The detective glances over his notes one last time before he closes the notepad.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

That should be all then. Unless you have anything to add?

WILLIAM JONES:

I am afraid not. Maybe talk to Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Peterson. Those two make it their job to know everything around here.

They bid each other farewell, and William does not stay around to find out any more things. He is late enough as it is.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE LATE AFTERNOON

William has just sat down to do some work, when the doorbell rings. With a sigh he takes off his glasses and makes his way to the front door. He barely has it unlatched before it is pushed open and he finds himself with an armful of his youngest (SARAH JONES). She swiftly manoeuvres around him and is already talking in a high pitch as she makes her way

through the house. William looks through the open door as his son comes in with all the bags.

THOMAS JONES:

Hi dad. Good to see you again.

William closes the door behind him and regards the bags. He guesses the designer suitcase is Sarahs and the small bag slung over Thomas shoulder probably belongs to the young man himself. His son is wearing jeans and a hoodie, while the short look he got at his daughter tells him she is smartly dressed. She is still going on about the state of the house and the garden and anything else on her mind as she throws windows open and starts dusting off pillows in the living room. The two men enter the dusty room, though Thomas lingers by the door. Sarah finally pauses and regards her father.

SARAH JONES:

How are you dad?

WILLIAM JONES:

There is nothing new since I saw you for lunch, Sarah.

THOMAS JONES:

The two of you still do that?

SARAH JONES:

Of course. You would know if you ever came around or called at all. How are the children?

Her fake smile reminds William of why he should never keep them in the same room. He interrupts before it turns into a fight. As he knows it will.

WILLIAM JONES:

I had hoped you would go at least a day without fighting. Thomas, did you pick up your sister on the way?

Thomas is still glaring at his sister.

THOMAS JONES:

I picked her up, but not on the way. I arrived yesterday. I stayed in a motel.

WILLIAM JONES:

You could have stayed here.

THOMAS JONES:
It was late. I checked in around 2 am.

SARAH JONES:
That was the same time Mary was
murdered, wasn't it dad?

THOMAS JONES:
Someone was murdered?!

SARAH JONES:
Apparently one of those ladies who mom
used to hang out with. They found her
on the street this morning.

THOMAS JONES(EXASPERATED):
How can you be this calm about it?

Williams sighs and closes his eyes as his children start
arguing again. He had hoped they would have grown out of that
annoying trait by now.

EXT. ALICES HOUSE NIGHT

The street is pitch black. A hand reaches out to knock on the
door. Noises comes from inside the house as someone moves to
the door. Alice smiles as she opens the door.

ALICE:
Oh, are you alright? I wasn't
expecting you.

Her smile wavers as he does not answer. She starts to close
the door, but the man pushes into the house.

INT. HALLWAY NIGHT

Alice face turns to fear as she races for the stairs. The man
follows in a calculated pace after he closes the door.

INT. UPSTAIRS NIGHT

The man follows close behind as she runs into...

INT. BEDROOM NIGHT

... Alice tries to slam the door in his face, but the man
shoulders it open. Alice stumbles back with her hands in
front of her. The man grabs her and covers her mouth, before
he pulls out a knife from under his coat. He stabs her
multiple times, his gloved hand absorbing the screams. When

she goes limp, he lets go and she falls to the ground. Dead. He looms over her as he looks at a picture enclosed in his pocket-watch.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE MORNING

It is early morning when William is awakened by knocking on his door. Or more like pounding. He dresses quickly and simply in loose jeans and a tee before making his way to his front door. He rubs a hand over his face and scratches at the stubbles on his chin and cheeks. He opens the door with a polite smile plastered on his lips.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Mr. Jones! Good to see you up this early.

WILLIAM JONES:

I take it you have questions that could not wait?

William looks past the young detective, but finds nothing of interest behind him. Judging by the sky though, it must be early enough that even Mrs. Brown is not up yet.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Unfortunately we have had a rather early start to the day, and I wished to go around and ask some questions.

WILLIAM JONES:

Oh? Something happened?

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Indeed. Alice...

The young man looks to his notes.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:(CONTINUED)

Smith, was found dead in her house this morning.

WILLIAM JONES:

Another one from the competition?

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

I'm afraid so. At least we have a pattern. May I ask where you were yesterday?

WILLIAM JONES:

Of course. I went to bed fairly early. I have my two kids visiting, and they tire me out even more than my work.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

And they were both here yesterday? None of them left the house?

WILLIAM JONES:

Thomas might have left for a walk. He used to do that late in the night.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

Could I possibly have a word with him?

William sighs but steps away from the door to below up the stairs. He expects both of them to be up with the noise the detective made, but neither has shown themselves yet. Some stumbling is heard from upstairs before Thomas comes running down.

THOMAS JONES:

What's the matter?

WILLIAM JONES:

The detective wishes to ask you a few questions about last night. Seems there has been another murder.

As Thomas takes his fathers place in the door, Sarah emerges from the top of the stairs. Dressed to impress like usual.

THOMAS JONES:

I don't know if I would be able to help a lot. I did take a walk through the nearby forest pretty late, but i didn't hear anything unusual. I didn't even meet anyone on my way.

Thomas rubs his neck and shrugs.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:

And you are sure of this? When was it?

THOMAS JONES:

It must have been around midnight. I think I made it back before 2 am, but I can't be completely sure. I went straight to bed.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
Do you often go wandering in the woods
that late at night?

Thomas shrugs and turns his eyes to the ground. William steps up next to him.

WILLIAM JONES:
Detective, do you have my son as a
suspect?

The detective sighs and closes his notepad.

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
For now we can't rule anything out.
And your son was the only one we know
of who was outside last night. At
least for now I ask that he remain in
town.

Thomas is about to protest, but William silences him with a hand gesture.

WILLIAM JONES:
He will stay here. Though I fail to
see how this does not have a
connection to the competition?

DETECTIVE FERGUSSON:
It might, or it might not. For now we
follow all leads. I'll be back if I
have more questions.

The detective walks off with a final wave. The neighbourhood is slowly waking up and William shuts the door to their prying eyes. Thomas grunts and makes his way back upstairs. He shoulders past his sister, who sends him a glare before joining her father.

SARAH JONES:
I will stay as well then. Gives me
some time to deal with the garden.

WILLIAM JONES:
Sarah, I don't care what you do inside
the house, but leave the garden alone.

Sarah flinches at the hard tone as her father walks to the kitchen. She follows him with her hands up in defeat.

SARAH JONES:

I'll fix the house instead then. It's a shame you have let her garden down like that though.

WILLIAM JONES:

She's the only one who knows how to deal with those flowers anyway.

SARAH JONES:

Hmm. And Suzanne of course.

William shrugs as he sets out to make breakfast.

SARAH JONES:(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Brown told me you're popular, so I took the liberty of setting up a date with Suzanne. You're having dinner at her place.

Before William can turn and yell at his daughter, she has already fled the room. He rubs a hand over his face and tries to rub the headache away.

EXT. SUZANNES HOUSE NIGHT

The sun has barely set when William walks up to Suzannes house. At his daughters behest he came nicely dressed, though he mostly felt like cancelling the whole thing. He takes a deep breath and puts on a charming smile before knocking the door. Suzanne opens it almost immediately. William raises an eyebrow as he catches sight of the low-cut dress she is wearing.

SUZANNE:

Come in, William. The food is almost done. Always such good timing.

William follows her in.

INT. SUZANNES HOUSE NIGHT

He follows her through the house as he barely listens while she talks. Her voice is grating on his ears and it takes everything just to keep a smile up. He sits down at the table he is guided to and tries to answer here and there, but it would seem the lady is content to do all the talking. He leaves her to it as they continue on to dinner. He makes sure all the subject stays innocently enough, and insist on asking about her garden whenever she gets too close to talking about Ellie.

SUZANNE:

You must soon be looking for a new wife. Even Sarah thought it would be good for you.

WILLIAM JONES:

Ahh, but I have so much work, there is no time for such things. I was lucky to find one woman who understood my passion for work, I doubt I'll find a second.

He smiles genuinely as he sees her falter for once.

WILLIAM JONES:(CONTINUED)

You must be excited. You're all set to winning the competition now.

SUZANNE:

But of course! Surely I would have won either way. Nobody can compete with my garden. Ellie was close, but she kept those ugly Forget-Me-Nots, and they simply don't belong in a competition.

William clenches his fists behind his back as he stands up and walks behind Suzanne.

SUZANNE:(CONTINUED)

I'm sure I could fix that garden right up if you would let me. It had such potential, and I'm sure Sarah would love to help me.

William lets her talk as he puts his hands on her shoulders and start massaging her.

SUZANNE:(CONTINUED)

Of course, Thomas is the one who is in the most need of help. He must have his hands full up north. He should just move home again.

William leans forward and puts his lips on her ear to whisper:

WILLIAM JONES:

You are the last one.

Before she can express her confusion he grabs a knife from the table and slits her throat in one smooth movement. She

slides to the side and lands on the floor where she desperately clutches her throat. He puts the knife back down and wipes his hand off as he finally lets the smile drop.

WILLIAM JONES:

Ellie loved those Forget-Me-Not's and they would have won her the competition. You are vermin compared to her. All of you.

William dials 999 and reports a murder before hanging up, knowing that they will already have tracked the call. He sits down at the table to finish his wine as he waits for the young detective. He looks to Suzanne's dead body.

WILLIAM JONES:

At least he will have solved his first case. Ellie would never have forgiven me if I didn't let them catch me.

EXT. SUZANNES HOUSE NIGHT

The blue and red lights from the police cars illuminate the night. Many of the people in the neighbourhood have gathered as close as they can, as they wait with baited breath. Finally Detective Fergusson emerges with William Jones on his right side. He guides the man through the chaos and yelling, before pushing him into the backseat of a police car. The man looks peaceful as he closes his eyes to the noise.