

Stronger than Fiction
ft. Rupert Smythe-Pryce
"Harry Hunting"

an imagining of the lost last episode
by David Silvester

TRANSCRIPT
STRONGER THAN FICTION S02E12
TITLE: HUNT AND HECK "SERIES FINALE"
PRODUCTION CODE A19

TEASER

ANNOUNCER

In this final episode of Stronger than Fiction:

CLIP: RUPERT BACK-MOUNTED RIG AT TREASURE PURSE

RUPERT

What the [bleep] was that? What the bloody [bleep] was that??

ANNOUNCER

Rupert and the team brave the American South to uncover the shocking truth about one of fiction's most persistent and baffling mysteries.

CLIP: LILLY ISOLATION SESSION IN BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

LILLY

Is Harry Hardiner here?

CLIP: LILLY REACTION SHOT

LILLY

[bleep]! Holy [bleep]!

ANNOUNCER

And later in the hour,

CLIP: RUPERT AT BOOKBRIGHT MERCANTILE

RUPERT

Can you tell me anything about the Hardiners?

LOCAL RESIDENT

Well good [bleep]damn, you're talkin to one.

PETRA

You're a Hardiner?

ANNOUNCER

The search for Harry Hardiner continues... with some unexpected consequences.

CLIP: AT BARBED-WIRE FENCE

RUPERT

Ah, be careful. There was a mean-looking bull here, and now he's gone.

LUMLEY

Gone?

CLIP: LUMLEY BACK-MOUNTED RIG, AT A SPRINT

LUMLEY

[bleep] [bleep] [bleep] behind me [bleep]ing RUN!

OPENING CREDITS

RUPERT SMYTHE-PRYCE (v.o.)

I'm Rupert Smythe-Pryce.

CLIP: RUPERT IN COTTAGE ROOM ARMCHAIR

RUPERT

Oh, hallo.

RSPvo

Professor of Anglophone Literature and Parapsychology at Cymysymst University.

CLIP: RUPERT IN DIM SITTING-ROOM WITH DECREPIT GENTLEMAN

RUPERT

You're the visitor from Porlock?

VISITOR

Aye.

RSPvo

I've dedicated my life to investigating the greatest mysteries English literature has to offer.

CLIP: RUPERT IN PERE-LACHAISE WITH GUIDE

RUPERT

What do you mean this isn't Oscar Wilde's body?

RSPvo

And along the way, I manage to contribute to the field... in my own unique way.

CLIP: RUPERT AT SIGNING FOR HEART OF DARKNESS: JOSEPH THE RIPPER
FAN

You're a monster.

RUPERT

Thank you, sir.

(to camera)

He's the fifth person to tell me that, and he's only eleventh in line.

(cameraman laughs)

RSPvo

Come along with me as I demystify literature in an attempt to prove, once and for all, that truth... is Stronger than Fiction.

TITLES

RUPERT OPENER

RUPERT (in armchair)

Oh, hallo. I'm Rupert Smythe-Pryce. Welcome to another episode of Stronger than Fiction. I must admit, the subject of this week's episode is one very close to my heart. When first I proposed this program to the BBC, the tale of Harry Hardiner's spectacular disappearance was included in my pitch. Of course, this was for good reason.

CLIP: PUBLIC READING FOR HARRY HUNTERS

RUPERT

"Most of the town of Bookbright can feel off-limits to visitors. Perhaps because it is."

RUPERT (in armchair)

My first bestseller was a nonfiction novel about those who've dedicated their lives to finding the author, missing now for more than a decade. Perhaps a few of you have read it.

(photograph of Harry Hardiner in New York City.)

RUPERT (v.o)

Harry Hardiner, writer of the cult series "Rosewire", had produced nine novels and a modest fanbase when he vanished, apparently into thin air, from his home buried deep in the American South.

(photograph of Hardiner Hollow)

RUPERT (v.o.)

Neighbors reported bright lights coming from the property. When fire brigades were sent to investigate a possible blaze at Hardiner Hollow, they had no idea that they would be the first responders to one of the strangest discoveries in the world of literature.

REPORTER v.o. (file footage (c)1999 WKRN)

Authorities tonight report the disappearance of a local author – A possible abduction in Murfreesboro has police baffled – as fantasy writer Harry Hardiner, author of the “Redwire” [sic] books, seems to have vanished from his Murfreesboro home, leaving soup boiling over on the stove – and a mysterious message apparently burned into the wall.

(“MESHARE” photograph)

RUPERT (v.o.)

Many theories have been put forth over the source of the lights seen above the writer’s home and the meaning of Mr. Hardiner’s final message. Tonight, though, we will summarily chuck them all to tackle a theory long discounted by American authorities:

(book jacket photograph of Harry Hardiner)

RUPERT (v.o.)

...that Harry Hardiner’s disappearance was an elaborate hoax staged by the reclusive author himself in an attempt to duck out of his burgeoning limelight and move back to his evocatively-named hometown of Bookbright, Tennessee.

RUPERT (candid in armchair)

And number 19. Thus ends the longest in a long line of longest days of my life.

(stands and pulls off microphone.)

BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Coming up on Stronger than Fiction:

CLIP: LUMLEY AND CLAY OUTSIDE TOWN HALL

CLAY

Dude, the mayor.

LUMLEY

She locked the bloody door on us, Rup, [bleep] slammed it in our faces.

COMMERCIAL BREAK



INTRO BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Welcome back to Stronger Than Fiction.

CLIP: CAR RIDE INTO BOOKBRIGHT, TN

ANNOUNCER cont'd.

In this week's dramatic series finale, we take the plunge deep into the American South with Rupert and the crew as they attempt to demystify the story of the vanished author, Harry Hardiner. Their footage has not been digitally altered in any way, except in some instances to improve video or audio quality. This week, we shall resist commenting on the team's adventures so that their images may speak for themselves.

CLIP: CAR RIDE, CONT'D

RUPERT

Bloody bleak, isn't it?

PETRA

I'd call it "morose."

LUMLEY

Haunted.

CLAY

Bookbright. Just call it by its name.

(camera pans to shots of fields and trees passing)

CLIP: RUPERT OUTSIDE TOWN HALL

RUPERT (candid)

Make sure to get a good shot of the mayor, he used to love a good photograph.

CLIP: RUPERT ON TOWN HALL STEPS

RUPERT

Mayor Jemison Kent has been proudly serving the town of Bookbright for more than twenty years. I'm just about to go inside to ask him to commit to video something he told me in 2001 while I was researching my book. (candid) And in case he doesn't play nice, (dark) In 2001, Jem Kent, mayor of this dreadful little burg, told me he'd seen Harry Hardiner himself within the town limits many times since his supposed disappearance two years before. In his opinion, claims of Harry Hardiner's death were extraordinarily premature. (candid) Now we go inside.

CLAY

It's locked, man.

RUPERT

Locked.

LUMLEY (voice)

Why'd you think we're standing out here?

RUPERT

In case things went sour and we couldn't get another shot... Have you knocked?

CLAY

Yeah, we knocked.

RUPERT

Knock again.

PETRA (off)

Rup?

RUPERT

What's going on, hon?

PETRA

Who'd you say was mayor?

RUPERT

Jem Kent.

PETRA
Come look at this.

CLAY
Oh. Hi. Is the mayor here today?

(sound of door slamming)

LUMLEY (voice)
Clay?

CLAY
HEY.

LUMLEY (voice)
Clay.

RUPERT
What did you say?

LUMLEY
She locked the bloody door on us, Rup, [bleep] slammed it in our faces.

CLAY
I just asked her if the mayor was—

RUPERT
You [bleep], she IS the mayor.

CLAY
Oh, [bleep].

RUPERT
Ma'am? Ma'am?

CLAY
Dude, the mayor.

MAYOR (deep voice)
Ya'll go on away now.

RUPERT
We'd just like a moment of your time.

CLAY

Tell her I'm sorry. I'M SORRY.

RUPERT

He's just a bloody stupid American. I come from the Commonwealth.

MAYOR (voice)

Commonwealth.

RUPERT

Please, I won't ask any more of your time, I just need to ask if you know where Jemison Kent lives, the old mayor.

MAYOR (voice)

Yessir. Bookbright Cemetery.

RUPERT

I'm sorry to hear that.

LUMLEY (voice)

[bleep].

RUPERT

I'm sorry to have taken up your morning. Oh, oh, may I ask: how did he die? Ma'am?

MAYOR (maybe)

Old, I expect.

RUPERT (under his breath)

Okay.

PETRA

I'm sorry, Rup.

RUPERT

Thank you for your time. Godbless.

CLIP: WALKING TO CAR

CLAY

How well did you know him, Rupert?

RUPERT

Clay.

CLAY

Oh, come on, the viewers like a little personal drama.

PETRA

Clay.

CLAY

Trust me, you people may have given us algebra and the cotton gin, but in reality TV, America is king.

RUPERT (nearly inaudible; enhanced)

Wait until we get to the car. People see you off, here.

CLIP: DRIVING AWAY, CURTAINS MOVING IN TOWN HALL

CLIP: APPROACHING BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

RUPERT

Save time on those things, we only brought the one disk.

PETRA

So the deferential in-memoriam look, head bowed, fingers steepled, reverence, awe, etcetera, etcetera. So Lums, that means—

LUMLEY

I know the drill, black and white, IR filter, lots of brooding landscape with poignant clouds. The bit we used when we found Garcia-Lorca.

PETRA

Spot-on.

BROODING CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

RUPERT

From 1982 until his death in early 2008, Arthur Jemison Kent - "Jem" to his friends and loyal constituents - served the noble town of Bookbright in its highest position as Mayor.

LUMLEY (voice)

Bit flowery, Rup.

PETRA (voice)

Keep on, we're losing light.

RUPERT

When I first arrived in Bookbright to do research for my bestselling Harry Hunters, I began at the center of operations, the heart of the city: town hall. I met there with the mayor, Jemison Kent, who swore an oath on his sacred office that on that very day in the year 2001, he had spoken with Harry Hardiner. This man was lucid and sharp as a whip until his regal dying breath. And cut. [bleep]dammit, the light rushed me, I started effusing.

PETRA

That's not a word, Rup.

CLAY

We headed to the hotel?

LUMLEY (voice)

Hotel?

PETRA

Rupert didn't tell you?

CLAY

Tell me what?

PETRA

Rupert, for [bleep] [bleep].

CLIP: INFRARED CAMERAS DEPLOYED

LUMLEY

And there goes usable light, unless we whip out the lamps.

RUPERT

You know we can't, Lumley.

CLAY

What the [bleep] am I doing here?

RUPERT

They're pushing a ghost angle for the episode. In order to shoot it our way, we also have to shoot it their way.

CLAY

Those [bleep] [bleep] [bleep].

RUPERT

Yes. Well, we play nice, they play nice, I like a paycheck for doing what I love... It works out great for everyone.

CLAY

How late are we going?

RUPERT

You're not afraid of graveyards, are you?

CLAY

As a matter of fact, I am.

LUMLEY

Ooh, wickle Yankee don't like ghosts.

CLAY

Little Yankee don't like vagrants.

PETRA

There are no vagrants in Bookbright.

CLAY

Then farmers with pitchforks. Graveyards are off-limits at night. I don't know why it's that way, but it's the way it's always been. I just don't like it. How late are we going?

RUPERT

We pay our respects and don't [bleep] people off. In this way, we avoid any sort of local dispute. We have our headlamps, Petra?

PETRA

Got em.

RUPERT

We've got light, we've got military-grade night vision equipment. We go until sunrise.

CLAY

U.S. military-grade?

LUMLEY

Swiss.

RUPERT

We can start out with some EVPs and plop some people out there alone. Who wants to go first? Clay? Get it out of the way?

CLAY

[bleep] no.

RUPERT

Get him the backpack rig.

CLIP: INFRARED BACKPACK RIG, CLAY ALONE, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

RUPERT (over radio)

How are you doing out there? Find the Hardiners yet?

CLAY

Not yet, man.

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG, CLAY ALONE, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

CLAY

Who's there?

BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Coming up on Stronger than Fiction:

CLIP: MOVING AROUND THROUGH ABANDONED HOUSE

ANNOUNCER

Could signs of life in Harry Hardiner's childhood home lead to a surprising discovery?

LUMLEY (voice)

YOU GUYS?!

COMMERCIAL BREAK

INTRO BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Welcome back to Stronger than Fiction.

CLIP: RUPERT AND CREW OUTTAKES, SOTTO VOCE

ANNOUNCER

This week, Rupert and the crew brave the American South to search for horror novelist Harry Hardiner in his childhood hometown. We let the footage speak for itself.

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG, CLAY ALONE, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

RUPERT (over radio)

How are you doing out there? Find the Hardiners yet?

CLAY

Not yet, man. Oh, here they are.

RUPERT (over radio)

Perfect. Squat down for us, there's a good lad.

CLAY

What exactly am I supposed to be doing?

RUPERT (over radio)

Turn on your digital voice recorder and ask some questions. We'll review it back home, and anytime your rig creaks we'll say, "LISTEN! Did you hear that? It says "GET OUT."

CLAY

Beautiful. And if someone says, "GET OUT"?

RUPERT

Then get the [bleep] out, man.

CLAY

Sounds like a plan.

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY PARKING LOT

RUPERT

"And if someone says", he's clearly never seen the show.

PETRA
He's afraid of spooks.

LUMLEY
And the poor, he said.

(lights in the distance)

RUPERT
What in the bloody hell is that?

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG, CLAY ALONE, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

CLAY
I'm speaking to the ghost of Harry Hardiner. If he's dead. And if he's not, I'm speaking to the ghost of... his ancestors.

PETRA (over radio)
Clay.

CLAY
Jeezum. I didn't know what...

PETRA (over radio)
Clay, come in.

CLAY
I'm busy talking to ghosts, over and out. [bleep]s don't make me sit in the middle of a cemetery and then scare the [bleep] out of me with radio static. I'm not gonna be your [bleep] teaser.

(rustling noises)

CLAY
Is the ghost of... Hello?

(rustling noises stop)

CLAY
Hello? ...Is the ghost of Harry Hardiner here with me? If there is someone with me, please make yourself known. For [bleep] sake, I sound like the Ghost Hunters. Um... if anyone's, like, seriously out there, please come out. I don't react well to surprises. What is that?

CLIP: CLAY HANDHELD, HOVERING LIGHT, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

CLAY

What is that? (over radio) This is Clay, come in. Hello? Over. Whatever. Rupert, are you headed over here? Over.

RUPERT (over radio)

Not me, Clayton. Did you turn your radio off?

CLAY

I'm seeing a light over here. That's not you coming towards me?

RUPERT (over radio)

Not any of us, Clay. We saw some lights earlier (static) towards you.

CLAY

Holy [bleep].

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY PARKING LOT

RUPERT

Clay? Do you read?

PETRA

I don't hear him, Rup.

RUPERT

Someone should go bring him back.

LUMLEY

I'm not going to be the one to walk in on something.

PETRA

Clay, come back, over.

RUPERT

He's switched us off again, hasn't he?

LUMLEY

I'm not going out there.

RUPERT

Nobody asked you to, Brian.

(tense chord)

PETRA
Is that him?

CLIP: PETRA HANDHELD, RUNNING THROUGH GRAVEYARD, HOVERING LIGHTS

PETRA (voice)
Clay!

LUMLEY
Petra, be careful!

PETRA (hurt)
UNNH.

RUPERT
What is it? What is it?

PETRA
I fell over a tombstone.

LUMLEY
[bleep], I told you not to go running out in the dark like that.
Look, they're already back.

CLAY
Why the [bleep] didn't anyone tell me my girlfriend was here?

LILLY
Tell him we called him. He doesn't believe me.

RUPERT
Don't turn your bloody radio off.

CLAY
What happened here?

LUMLEY
She fell over a tombstone.

CLAY
He [bleep] told us not to go running out in the dark graveyard
like that.

PETRA (voice)
Well I didn't listen, [bleep].

RUPERT

Turn the cameras off, we've got to get her seen to.

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG, PETRA ALONE, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

PETRA (over radio)

Yes, I'm fine. And I'm here.

RUPERT (over radio)

Start your EVP session and get back over here, I don't like you up and about on that ankle.

PETRA (over radio)

How many times do I have to tell you I'm fine?

RUPERT (over radio)

How many times to do what, Pet?

PETRA (over radio)

Beginning EVP session, so let's try for radio silence, over and out.

CLIP: PETRA HANDHELD, BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

PETRA

I'd like to speak to the spirit of Morgan Hardiner.

(moment of static)

PETRA

Oh, wow. It just got really cold.

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG

PETRA

If Morgan Hardiner is with me, please make your presence known. Oh, [bleep] I sound like the bleeding M again. Rupert's going to kill me.

(static)

PETRA

Oh, wow. (over radio) Rup, the handheld just blinked out there for a second. I said "make your presence known" and it just went out. Over.

RUPERT (over radio)
You mean it's dead, Pet?

PETRA
No, Rup, it's back now, it was just for a mo. Like someone was saying "Yeah?"

RUPERT (over radio)
We're going to ask you to try it again and maintain radio silence, over and out.

PETRA
Is Morgan Hardiner here with me? Do you know where your son Harry is? (over radio) Rup?

RUPERT (over radio)
Happen again, Pet?

PETRA
No, Rup. Did one of you go out by the treeline?

RUPERT (over radio)
We're all back at the parking lot, Pet.

PETRA
There's someone standing in the trees beyond the plot, I'm getting their eyes and they're, Rup, I think they're watching me.

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY PARKING LOT

RUPERT
I didn't want her out there on that ankle.

PETRA (over radio)
They're moving, Rup. It's definitely a person, just, this black shape.

CLAY
A black guy?

LILLY
Clay! [bleep] alive.

RUPERT (over radio)
Pet, I'm gonna have to ask you to come in.

PETRA (over radio)
I'm here.

RUPERT (over radio)
I mean come back to the parking lot, love, you're too pretty to be out there alone.

PETRA (over radio)
I think it's moving towards me.

RUPERT
For [bleep] sake.

LUMLEY
Take the thermal imager.

CLIP: RUPERT HANDHELD THERMAL, RUNNING THROUGH GRAVEYARD

RUPERT (voice)
I see Petra. PET!

PETRA (voice)
It's gone, Rup!

RUPERT (voice)
Nothing in the treeline.

PETRA (voice)
So it's really gone.

RUPERT (voice)
Are you sure you saw anything, Pet?

PETRA
Don't talk to me like that, Rupert.

RUPERT (voice)
Come on back to camp. Your time's up anyways.

BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Coming up on Stronger than Fiction:

LILLY

Is Harry Hardiner here?

CLIP: LILLY REACTION SHOT

LILLY

[bleep]! Holy [bleep]!

COMMERCIAL BREAK

INTRO BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

Welcome back to Stronger than Fiction.

CLIP: IR BACKPACK RIG, LILLY ALONE, HARDINER PLOT

ANNOUNCER

This week, Rupert and his crew take on the American South. Their footage has not been edited, except in certain instances to enhance video or audio quality.

LILLY

And I just ask questions to nothing?

RUPERT (over radio)

Pretty much the idea, hon. Over and out.

LILLY

Okay... So this is the hot gig my boyfriend got?

(static)

LILLY

(inaudible) get buried here?

(static burst)

LILLY (over radio)

How long am I supposed to wait for a response?

RUPERT (over radio)

Few seconds, at least. Just listen around. Jump if you get scared, the producers love some liberal bleeping, I think they have an in with the censorship people.

LILLY

Is Harry Hardiner here?

CLIP: LILLY HANDHELD

LILLY

What is that? (over radio) I've got something out by the treeline. Um, looks like eyes. Over.

PETRA (over radio)

That sounds like exactly what I saw. Hit it with the thermal.

LILLY (over radio)

It says there's nothing out there. Over. UM, but it's totally moving, over again. Guys it's coming towards me. [bleep]! Holy [bleep]!

CLAY (over radio)

Lilly, I'm coming over there, just stay calm and keep your eyes on it.

LILLY (over radio)

Don't bother, over.

CLAY (over radio)

What's going on, talk to me. Over.

LILLY (over radio)

It's gone. It's just gone. And there was nothing on the thermal. My eyes must be playing tricks on me is all. Graveyards. Over.

CLAY (over radio)

This isn't your job.

RUPERT (over radio)

We'll compensate you, but he's right; you haven't signed anything, so hop on out if you're at risk. Our insurance won't cover it, I don't think.

LILLY (over radio)

I'm okay. I'm going to continue talking to nothing. Maybe it's a ghost and it'll come back to talk to me. Radio silence, this thing scares the shit out of me.

CLIP: LILLY IR BACKRIG

LILLY

If Harry Hardiner is here, is he dead or alive?

(static)

LILLY

I should have brought my coat. (inaudible) at least twice.

CLIP: LILLY HANDHELD, CIRCLED EYES

LILLY (over radio)
Guys I'm getting the eyes again. I'm coming back in, the thermal's not registering anything, but this is creeping me out, over. I'm sorry, over.

CLIP: LUMLEY IR BACKRIG

LUMLEY
So I'm going to ask your typical icebreaker: how'd everyone die? In the interest of keeping this quid-pro-quo, I'll tell you what's gonna get me: one too many red steaks.

(static)

LUMLEY
Bloody hell.

CLIP: LUMLEY HANDHELD

LUMLEY (over radio)
Rupert, you'll never believe, but I'm getting the eyes too, over.

RUPERT (over radio)
I believe it, over.

LUMLEY (over radio)
I'm going to try to chase them down, see if I can figure out what the hell's going on here. God, the producers will ruin their drawers.

RUPERT (over radio)
That's for sure. Keep us posted please.

LUMLEY (over radio)
He's not reading on the thermal, but it's definitely a guy. I can nearly see him, he's still in the shadows.

RUPERT (over radio)
You say he's not reading on the thermal?

LUMLEY (over radio)
He must be wearing OH [bleep] he's running.

(panting)

RUPERT (over radio)
Lumley, are you okay, over?

LUMLEY (over radio)
I can't keep up, but I've got him on the thermal.

RUPERT (over radio)
He's on the thermal now you say?

LUMLEY (over radio)
Yeah, he's running through the trees, he must be taking off whatever he's wearing. Oh my God.

RUPERT (over radio)
What is it?

LUMLEY
Oh my God. Oh my God. (panting)

RUPERT (over radio)
Come in, Lumley.

LUMLEY (over radio, panting)
I don't know, he's hot, Rup, it's like he's getting hotter every, every second, oh my God.

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY PARKING LOT

RUPERT
Oh my God.

PETRA
Is that fire?

LUMLEY (over radio)
I don't, I don't know what happened, he was running, he just went up like a candle.

LILLY
Oh my God.

CLAY
Oh my God.

CLIP: LUMLEY IR BACKRIG, RUNNING

LUMLEY

Oh my God. Oh my God.

RUPERT (over radio)

Can you get to him?

LUMLEY

There's nothing left, Rupert. Oh my God.

CLIP: LUMLEY HANDHELD, SMOKE

LUMLEY (over radio)

He's [bleep] gone, Rup. It's nothing but smoke and black leaves over here.

PETRA (over radio)

Oh my God.

MONTAGE: CREW HANDHELD FOOTAGE, SMOKE, CHAR

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

RUPERT

It was out here.

SHERIFF

Mhm.

PETRA

He just went up like a candle.

SHERIFF

I imagine that must have been pretty shocking.

LILLY

Oh my God.

LUMLEY

Quite shocking indeed.

RUPERT

Listen, Sheriff, I'm not sure if there's a procedure for this, but we have a schedule we're looking to stick to. If there's any way the questioning could happen tonight so we could continue our work in order to make our flight, I'd very much appreciate it. We work in basic cable, we can't afford to rebook.

SHERIFF

First of all, call me Tinsel.

RUPERT

Of course, "Tinsel." "Tinsel." "Sheriff Tinsel", naturally.

SHERIFF

It's Sheriff Feathertop, Tinsel Feathertop.

RUPERT

Oh my God. Well, I guess we can't choose our name.

SHERIFF

What makes you think I didn't choose my name?

RUPERT

Is there any way we could move this along?

SHERIFF

Sounds fine by me. See you folks around. Or not, I hope.

RUPERT

You're not going to ask us any questions, look at the, well, not the body—

SHERIFF

Nothing to look at. Probably saw a hallucination. Swamp gas. Happens a lot around here.

RUPERT

There are no swamps.

SHERIFF

Forest gas, then. Ball lightning come out of earth batteries. Tricks played on your eyes from an underground natural nuclear reactor. Either way, no body, no problem.

RUPERT

You're not from around here.

SHERIFF
I moved to town a long time ago.

RUPERT
Were you a Harry Hunter?

SHERIFF
As a matter of fact, I was. Why are you filming me?

PETRA
Because the author of Harry Hunters is back doing a documentary.

RUPERT
Well.

LUMLEY
Broad stroked.

SHERIFF
Is that a fact?

RUPERT
In essence, yes. You wouldn't happen to want to speak maybe tomorrow on camera...

SHERIFF
Maybe. Come by.

RUPERT
And... and the burning?

SHERIFF
Don't worry about it. Trust me: it happens all the time.

CLIP: CAR INTERIOR

LUMLEY
"Happens all the time." That man was off his head.

RUPERT
Hey. That man is a fan. So that goes without saying.

CLAY (voice)
So where are we going to sleep?

PETRA
Rupert.

RUPERT
Ah, yes, the big reveal. (dramatic) We'll be staying in Harry Hardiner's childhood home.

LILLY
Neat. Who lives there now?

RUPERT
Nobody.

LILLY
Oh.

CLIP: APPROACHING HARDINER HILLS

LUMLEY
I keep watching the footage, over and over.

PETRA
Stop it, Lumley. You can't obsess over it.

LUMLEY
It was a person. I know it was a person.

RUPERT
You heard the Sheriff. "Happens all the time." Put it out of your mind.

CLIP: UNLOADING AT HARDINER HOUSE

PETRA (voice)
Rup?

LUMLEY
He went round back.

PETRA (voice)
Rupert!

LUMLEY
HE WENT ROUND--bloody...

LILLY

Clay, come here.

CLAY (voice)

What is it? I'm trying to get an establishing.

LILLY

Someone was waiting for us.

CLAY AND LUMLEY

What?

LILLY

Someone was inside, waiting for us.

LUMLEY

What do you mean "waiting"?

LILLY

Like someone said, "You're finally here," and then was gone.

LUMLEY

He didn't vanish in a puff of flame, did he?

LILLY

He just backed around a corner and was gone. But we don't want to walk up in the house if, you know, there's someone waiting for us up there.

LUMLEY

What the [bleep] is this place?

CLAY (voice)

It's Bookbright, baby. Weird enough to make Harry Hardiner.

LUMLEY

Wait, if you're here, did you just leave Petra inside alone?

CLIP: LUMLEY HANDHELD, HARDINER HOUSE EXTERIOR

PETRA (voice)

AAH!!

(screams)

CLIP: HANDHELD RUNNING, HARDINER HOUSE INTERIOR

LUMLEY (voice)
WE'RE COMING!

BUMPER

COMMERCIAL BREAK

INTRO BUMPER

TITLES: RUPERT AND HIS TEAM MAKE A DARING RUN ON THE MYSTERY OF HARRY HARDINER'S ELUSIVE WHEREABOUTS. THEIR FOOTAGE, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED, HAS NOT BEEN ALTERED IN ANY WAY.

CLIPS: BEFORE

LILLY

Someone was waiting for us.

LUMLEY

What do you mean?

LILLY

Someone said, "You're finally here."

LUMLEY

Did you leave Petra inside alone?

PETRA (voice)

(screaming) AAH!

CLIP: LUMLEY HANDHELD, MOVING INTO HARDINER HOUSE

LUMLEY (voice)

PETRA! WE'RE COMING! Petra. Are you okay?

PETRA

I... I...

CLAY

Hey. What's going on?

LILLY

Where did he go?

PETRA

Nobody, he wasn't here, there wasn't anybody, that's why I screamed, (incomprehensible).

LUMLEY (voice)

Pet, you've gotta slow down.

PETRA

I closed my eyes because I thought I saw something, and then because my eyes were closed, I think I heard something, like the house settling, but I just felt something grab my neck and I screamed, I just screamed. I just screamed.

CLIP: CLAY HANDHELD, HOUSE INTERIOR

LUMLEY

There you are. You're okay. You're alright.

PETRA

I'm okay.

LUMLEY

Let's give her a minute.

CLAY (voice)

I'm just doing my job.

LUMLEY

She's shaken up.

CLAY (voice)

The producers love that, you said.

LILLY

Clay, don't get fired again.

LUMLEY

You turn that [bleep] off.

CLAY (voice)

Make me.

PETRA

I'm alright.

LUMLEY

Don't tempt me, boy. Now give me the camera.

CLAY (voice)

You people don't control the planet anymore, you know. The British Empire has collapsed, bub, and we're the folks who stepped up and got those [bleep] dominos falling--

LUMLEY

The Revolution's over, John Adams. Or are you still upset about us not picking sides in your ridiculous brother war?

LILLY

He's not usually like this; he loves Absolutely Fabulous.

CLAY (voice)

You can't stick me out in a haunted cemetery waiting for the ghost of Johnny Storm to make an appearance. You can't stick me and my girlfriend in the middle of some haunted house. Not without telling me, up-front. I'm reporting you to Craigslist.

LUMLEY

You can't honestly believe in things like that.

CLAY (voice)

I don't know that I do. All I know is, when the villagers have stayed out of the forest for hundreds of years, it's for a reason. They might call it spirits or whatever, but it may as well be, like, an electromagnetic field or something; but if they've been staying out, they stay out for a very good reason.

LILLY

What are you saying, Clayby?

CLAY (voice)

I'm saying ghosts or not, places called "haunted" are unhealthy and to be avoided. You'd have warned me if we were going to Chernobyl, wouldn't you?

PETRA

Where's Rupert?

CLAY (voice)

What?

LUMLEY

Why didn't he come running when he heard Petra scream?

CLIP: RUNNING HANDHELDS, BACK OF HARDINER PROPERTY, HILLS

PETRA (voice)

RUPERT!

LUMLEY (voice)
RUPERT!

LILLY (voice)
RUPERT!

CLAY (voice)
MR. SMYTHE-PRYCE!

PETRA (voice)
Oh my God.

CLIP: RUNNING UP TO BODY

PETRA
There's a lot of blood.

LUMLEY (voice)
Oh my God.

CLAY
Is he breathing?

LILLY
Is he alive?

PETRA
RUPERT!

(tense chord)

RUPERT
Mmmm.

PETRA
Rupert, can you sit up?

RUPERT
Mmmm.

PETRA
Good.

LILLY
There's a lot of blood.

LUMLEY (voice)
Let's get him cleaned up.

CLIP: RUPERT BACK AT CAR

RUPERT
I don't know what happened. I must have slipped and fallen on something sharp. I'm lucky it missed my eye.

CLIP: GROUND, BACK OF HARDINER PROPERTY, HILLS

RUPERT (voice)
There it is. What is that? Looks like a bit of old crystal. Bloody broken glass everywhere. This must have been the source of his 'shattered goblet' image towards the end of Rise. God. I wonder what the story was here? There's bloody bits of broken glass everywhere. Damn stroke of luck, really. Note to self: tell Tim to dig up that Rise animation, the one that charts all the plots. Should be somewhere in the Occupy Fanbase folder.

CLIP: OUTSIDE HARDINER HOUSE FRONT DOOR

RUPERT
So we go in as a team, we search every corner, and look for our mysterious guest.

PETRA
Rup... Lumley went on ahead.

RUPERT
What?

CLIP: MOVING AROUND THROUGH ABANDONED HARDINER HOUSE

LUMLEY (voice)
YOU GUYS?!

CLIP: CLAY HANDHELD, RUNNING INSIDE HARDINER HOUSE

RUPERT
What is it?

PETRA
Oh my God.

LILLY

That bed is beautifully made.

LUMLEY

Everything else in here has gone to [bleep]. Why does this bed look like someone changed the sheets this morning?

RUPERT

I can't explain this. This is something I can't explain.

LILLY

You guys...

CLAY (voice)

What, Lilbaby, what? Oh, wow, guys.

PETRA

"Mene mene tekel upharsin." What [bleep] [bleep].

RUPERT

It's from the book of Daniel. It's the Writing on the Wall.

LUMLEY

Looks like it was burned into the wood.

PETRA

What [bleep] [bleep]? "Meshare."

RUPERT

Could be some connection...

PETRA

It looks just like "Meshare." Is "Meshare" in the Bible?

CLAY (voice)

Isn't he the guy who got thrown into the fiery furnace?

RUPERT

That was "Meshach."

CLAY (voice)

Maybe he was having a stroke.

RUPERT

Maybe...

LUMLEY

We need to get some sleep, so we're going to have to set up watches. Make sure nothing goes bump in the night.

PETRA

We'll have to cut that line, you've used it ten times this series.

LUMLEY

No I haven't.

PETRA

You have. I'll put together a montage when we get back.

(static)

CLAY (voice)

So who gets the pretty bed?

LILLY

Not it. I'd rather sleep in the sleeping bags, thanks.

RUPERT

I'll sleep in the bed.

CLAY (voice)

Of course you will.

CLIP: FAST-MOTION TIME LAPSE

(silent)

(static)

CLIP: MORNING, SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND PARLOR

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

I come from Alabama.

RUPERT

And how did you manage to wind up here?

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

I came here looking for Harry Hardiner.

RUPERT

Okay. Could you elaborate on that? Why are you so sure he's still alive?

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

Who says I'm still looking?

RUPERT

You stuck around.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

Maybe I realized that this little town was lacking for a man of law. Maybe I want to help keep this place straight. Maybe I know all the ways a dumb tourist can mess up peace and order around these parts. So maybe I was tailor-made for the job.

RUPERT

Nice session. Very nice. Thank you.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

I've been thinking about last night.

LUMLEY (voice)

Oh?

RUPERT

Have you?

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

I'm pretty sure you must have been tired, and your eyes were playing tricks on you.

LUMLEY (voice)

I told you last night--

RUPERT

We have footage, Sheriff. Lots of footage, a ball of light, moving like, well, like a person. The smoke, and, and evidence of a fire.

LUMLEY (loud voice)

Why are you so dead-bent against me seeing what I saw, huh? Why--

RUPERT
Lum, Lum, law enforcement official.

LUMLEY (voice)
Freedom of the Press.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP
I'm firmly convinced that what you saw was not what you think you saw. Before this conversation takes a hostile turn, I think we'd better call it quits, don't you?

RUPERT
Absolutely, ripping idea. Always nice to meet a fan.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP
Be careful out there.

LUMLEY (voice)
What d'you mean, "careful"?

CLIP: CONT'D, CLAY HANDHELD

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP
People like their privacy around here. Just be sensitive to that, and no one should come after you.

LUMLEY
Come after us, you should bloody well protect us then.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP
You have to understand: I love this town, and I want to see it revitalized. I'd like very much for Bookbright to be able to keep pace with the rest of the country, yes sir. But the people out there don't want to be known for the wrong reasons--

LUMLEY
How is anyone going to move in if everyone here is so damn hostile, then?

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP
More people coming to Bookbright would be the absolute worst thing for this town. You have to tell me again: where is this airing?

RUPERT
Across the ocean. Don't worry about the tourism.

SHERIFF FEATHERTOP

I'm worried about the tourists. Is that thing still running?

RUPERT

Clay, shut it off.

CLIP: WALKING TO CAR

CLAY (voice)

What now, Captain? What cursed bog shall we traverse next? Do we need to slay Grendel?

PETRA

That was the season opener.

CLAY (voice)

Liar.

LILLY

They found a skeleton, Clay. Don't you watch the show?

CLAY (voice)

No.

LILLY

Well, it hasn't aired in America yet.

PETRA

How have you seen it?

LILLY

I... haven't, I've just read about them. Very detailed...
Wikipedia articles. Devoted fanbase.

PETRA

I think it was the remains of a whitetail deer, but hey. They said they couldn't prove it via Dna.

CLAY (voice)

Yo. What happens now, Professor?

RUPERT

Now we find lunch.

BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

In the next hour of this special two-part Stronger than Fiction finale event:

CLIP: BOOKBRIGHT MERCANTILE

RUPERT

Can you tell me anything about the Hardiners?

LOCAL RESIDENT

Well good [bleep]damn, you're talkin to one.

PETRA

You're a Hardiner?

ANNOUNCER

The search for Harry Hardiner takes a dark turn.

CLIP: THICK FOG

RUPERT (voice)

PETRA!!!

(gunshot)

BUMPER

COMMERCIAL BREAK

INTRO BUMPER

ANNOUNCER

This week, in the series finale to Stronger than Fiction, Rupert and his crew sound the murky depths of the American South in an effort to determine the true fate of the mysteriously vanished author Harry Hardiner.

CLIP: PINPRICK FLAMES AT BOOKBRIGHT CEMETERY

ANNOUNCER cont'd

Their footage has not been altered in any way, except in certain moments to enhance video or audio quality.

CLIP: CREW LUNCH OUTTAKES

ANNOUNCER cont'd

Stay tuned after this hour for the Stronger than Fiction Retrospective, at 10pm.

CLIP: MAIN STREET, BOOKBRIGHT

CLAY (voice)

Why does okra surprise you?

PETRA

I thought it was only for curries.

LILLY (voice)

Nope, we fry em up.

LUMLEY

Naturally.

LILLY

Actually, what I like to do sometimes is cut it up, toss it with olive oil and some cornmeal and salt, and roast it.

LUMLEY

You do realize you're still slathering it in fat?

CLAY (voice)

Professor, what's your take on okra?

LILLY (voice)

Roast it dry, then.

RUPERT
Hm?

CLAY (voice)
Okra. Hasn't been listening to a word we're saying.

PETRA
Are you okay, Rup?

RUPERT
Bit tired, actually.

LUMLEY
How did that bed sleep?

RUPERT
Stiff, but bearable. I just kept thinking about how odd it was, and then rationalizing it a hundred ways in my head. But this overwhelming feeling of... dread--

CLAY (voice)
A hundred ways like how, how did you rationalize it?

RUPERT
How did I... I would tell myself, the mayor sent someone as a joke. It would have fit with the "You've arrived at last" greeter.

PETRA
He said, "Thank God you've come."

LILLY
Wasn't it, "After all this time, you've come."?

RUPERT
But I kept thinking about the glass in the hills out back, the writing on the closet wall, the made bed, the visitor, our "encounter" at the graveyard: I kept thinking through it all; each thought fed the next, until all there was... was revolution—revulsion. The absolute certainty that something is dangerously wrong.

LILLY
You're not making much sense, Mr. Rupert.

RUPERT

I was afraid so. Does anyone else suspect they served us decaf?

PETRA

I wasn't going to say anything.

CLAY (voice)

I'm doing great.

LILLY (laughing)

How are you doing great?

CLAY (voice)

Energy drinks. For the win.

LUMLEY

I'd rather he'd said "[bleep]".

PETRA

That's definitely getting cut.

LUMLEY

I didn't say I did [bleep]. Kids, if you're ever in a situation where someone tells you to snort [bleep], they're not your friend.

PETRA

Lum, we're not going to use a bunch of Clay's B-roll in the Harry Hardiner special.

CLAY (voice)

Who knows. Maybe this is important.

RUPERT

Ah, energy drinks.

CLIP: ENTERING BOOKBRIGHT MERCANTILE, CONT'D

RUPERT

The mark of civilization.

CLAY (voice)

Maybe the moment Rupert takes his first sip of nitrous-effervescent caffeine, guarine, argine, sugar-ine goodness...

MAN

(continuing)...longest [bleep]ing [bleep] I ever saw, but you're still just a giant [bleep] for [bleep] [bleep], and your teeth went back crooked after high school and I've always wanted to tell you you shoulda worn your retainer like your orthodontist [bleep] told you.

CASHIER

You can get either the lighter or the cigarettes.

MAN

I [bleep] [bleep], I mean [bleep], whatever happened to 'I'll lend you'?

CASHIER

Neither, then. Go away, Buddy.

RUPERT (quiet, enhanced)

Buddy Junior?

MAN

May angels [bleep], and [bleep] [bleep] on you.

RUPERT

Oh, Hallo. (TM)

MAN

[bleep] bar's in Knoxville. Oh, I'm sorry. That's a giant-ass camera you've got there.

RUPERT

Oh, don't mind Clay.

CLAY (voice)

Hey.

RUPERT

He's our village idiot.

CLAY (voice)

Do you have one of those?

MAN

What can I do you for?

RUPERT

Can you tell me anything about the Hardiners?

MAN

Rotten dirty cheating [bleep] sons of [bleep], pieces of [bleep] - the absolute [bleep] of the earth's [bleep]. Dishonest, disloyal, and cruel. Maybe crazy. The jury's out on that last one, thank [bleep].

PETRA

How do I know this is the truth about the Hardiners?

MAN

Well good [bleep]damn, because you're talkin to one.

PETRA

You're a Hardiner?

RUPERT

Mr. Buddy?

MAN

Call me Bud, [bleep].

RUPERT

Rupert Smythe-Pryce. It's nice to meet you, Mr. Hardiner.

BUD

What's the camera for?

RUPERT

Would you mind if we interviewed you?

BUD

What's it pay?

RUPERT

Usually—

LUMLEY

I'll buy you a carton of cigarettes.

BUD

Deal.

CLIP: BUD TALKING HEAD, OUTSIDE HOUSE

BUD

What's this about?

RUPERT

I wrote a book about people who believe your uncle Harry may still be alive here in Bookbright.

BUD

Wait, so you're Limey McNutter?

RUPERT

Well, I'm not British—

BUD

Grandad's name. He hated you.

RUPERT

A lot of people do.

BUD

And he hated a lot of people.

RUPERT

That's certainly true.

(sound of lighter)

BUD

What can I do you for? Still looking for him?

RUPERT

Have you seen him?

BUD

Hell no.

RUPERT

But of course, conspiracy theorists would say that's exactly what you would say.

BUD

Why?

RUPERT

Well, because you're looking out for him.

BUD

I didn't know the man.

RUPERT

Have you ever read his books?

BUD

I don't read any dragon, or [bleep] books.

RUPERT

Mm.

BUD

Look, I'm what you might call the two-headed calf of the family. I don't tow the party line. I mean good [bleep]damn, if you get me a carton of Parliaments for an interview, what would you get me if I gave you Harry Hardiner?

RUPERT

Fame, fortune, and women.

BUD

Now, see, I'm inclined to believe you. And there is nothing I want more in this world. But I'm afraid I can't help you. The man got strung up by one of his neighbors. Folks don't like a showy [bleep].

CLAY (voice)

You think the people of Murfreesboro, Tennessee lynched Harry Hardiner for being gay?

BUD

Stranger things have happened.

RUPERT

It seems fairly far-fetched, you must admit. I've been to Nashville. It's not honky-tonks and Baptists, it's nightclubs and hot yoga.

BUD

Don't you think everything was just a little too perfect, though?

RUPERT

How do you mean?

BUD

Don't you see how they've got you, like, looking for aliens and ghosts and any damn where for mystery. Ogre's razor.

RUPERT

Are you sure you know what Occam's Razor is?

BUD

Sure, the simplest explanation is the explanation.

RUPERT

Well, some people would suggest that exactly that same evidence is proof that Harry Hardiner staged it all, the lights, the burned message on the wall—

BUD

The what?

RUPERT

You've never heard about the writing on the wall?

BUD

Whoa.

PETRA (voice)

What is it?

BUD

It's nothing.

LUMLEY (voice)

First you get the money...

BUD

There's something at my Grandad's house.

RUPERT

The writing in the closet.

BUD

Did you see that?

RUPERT
We did.

BUD
Damn.

RUPERT
What do you know about it?

(long silence)

RUPERT
You don't know anything about it.

BUD
No, I do.

CLAY (voice)
I know the look of someone making up a story when I see it. I used to work at MTV.

BUD
I do know something.

RUPERT
Well, what?

BUD
What's it gonna get me?

RUPERT
You're taking the piss.

BUD
I don't know what the [bleep] that means, but I know it doesn't answer my question, Limey.

RUPERT
One thousand dollars.

LUMLEY (voice)
RUPERT.

BUD (quietly)
Good [bleep]damn.

RUPERT

What do you know?

BUD

I know my cousin was living in that room before he went missing.
Where's my thousand bucks?

RUPERT

That can't be true.

BUD

Why not? I gave you something big.

RUPERT

None of your cousins are missing.

BUD

Why would you think that?

LUMLEY (voice)

That would have been in the news.

BUD

I may not like keeping secrets, but some folks in my family
[bleep] do, for sure. Now where's my thousand bucks?

RUPERT

I'm sorry, Buddy, I should have told you that whatever you told
us had to be real.

BUD

I'm telling you the truth. You don't believe me?

RUPERT

I'm sorry, Buddy, I don't.

BUD

Don't call me Buddy. You want proof? Okay.

RUPERT

Okay?

(sounds of movement)

CLIP: FOLLOWING BUD DOWN MAIN STREET, BOOKBRIGHT, CONT'D

RUPERT

We need our mike back, Buddy.

BUD

You want proof, I'm giving you proof.

RUPERT

Buddy, we'll just take our mike back and leave you alone. We'll give you five hundred for the interview.

LUMLEY (voice)

Rupert, no way they'll spring for this.

RUPERT

Me. Out of pocket. Please, Mr. Hardiner, our microphone, and we'll be on our way.

BUD

My truck's right over here.

RUPERT

We're not getting in your truck, Mr. Hardiner.

BUD

The proof's in my truck, [bleep].

RUPERT

One thousand dollars, Buddy, if you take that mike off and let us move along.

PETRA

How good is this mike, Rup?

BUD

You're not going to want to move along in ten seconds.

(sound of car door opening)

BUD cont'd

How much for that?

PETRA

Rupert... This can't be real.

CLAY
Oh my God.

LILLY
What? Who is that?

RUPERT
That's Maxence Lawrence. That's Maxence Lawrence on a video phone, in Bookbright, TN, holding up a picture.

BUD
Of my cousin.

RUPERT
Why?

BUD
He came looking for him. Said he was his teacher. I didn't ask questions, but he seemed like a [bleep]. They have the tendency to go missing round here.

RUPERT
When did you take this?

BUD
Says right there.

RUPERT
He was in Bookbright in January 2008?

PETRA
Oh my God.

CLAY
[bleep] [bleep].

LILLY
What does that mean?

RUPERT
That means Maxence Lawrence wasn't in hiding for tax evasion.

BUD
Is that what you people think?

RUPERT

That's what everyone thinks.

PETRA

Rup, why could Maxence Lawrence have been in Bookbright in January 2008?

BUD

Because my cousin [bleep] went poof that December, and some idiot sent his teacher a postcard about it. How much for this video?

LUMLEY (voice)

We can go as high as two thousand.

RUPERT

Ten thousand. And we get to keep the phone.

BUD

[bleep], deal. It's a piece of [bleep]. Can't believe it still works.

CLIP: WALKING AWAY, DOWN MAIN STREET

LUMLEY

If Maxence Lawrence was here, how did he end up crammed in a fridge near Harry Hardiner's Nashville house?

PETRA

What do you think—

RUPERT

Can anyone help,

CLAY (voice)

I just can't believe it.

RUPERT

I'm trying to,

PETRA

What is it, Rup?

RUPERT

I'm trying to get my bloody phone to dial out, and look, the screen's frozen, the [bleep],

LUMLEY

Mine's working, Rup, what do you need?

RUPERT

See if you can find this [bleep] Hardiner, look for, look for, Pet, what was his name?

PETRA

Whose name?

RUPERT

The son that moved away, the other son.

PETRA

[bleep].

LUMLEY

Find his house, dial in an interview. Got it.

BUD (voice)

Hey you guys!

RUPERT (low)

Just keep walking.

BUD (voice)

If you're interested in that [bleep] teacher, I can show you what he asked me to show him.

RUPERT

What's that, Buddy?

BUD

A field. A field further up towards the highway.

RUPERT

We're on a very tight schedule, Buddy.

BUD

Don't call me Buddy and [bleep] your schedule. You want to put some freaky stuff on TV, then you come with me. If not, no skin off my back.

RUPERT

We simply don't have the time. I'm very sorry, Buddy.

BUD
There's treasure.

CLAY (voice)
What have you been smoking?

BUD
Parliaments, and earlier, black and milds, really.

LILLY
I think we've got a whole itinerary planned out. Don't we?

PETRA
We're kindof locked in, it's true, Bud.

LUMLEY
What do you mean by "treasure"?

BUD
That's the legend. They say there's treasure at the bottom of the pond. But that teacher was going out there for the haunted palace.

CLAY (voice)
Deer[bleep].

BUD
Swear to God. I'll take you there for another ten grand.

RUPERT
We don't have the money, and we don't have the time.

BUD
[bleep] five thousand?

PETRA
We're not interested, Bud.

LUMLEY
Clay, give that a rest for a moment, we need to have a little discussion.

CLAY (voice)
The people like a "discussion"

LUMLEY

They won't like this one.

CLIP: MAIN STREET, NOT MUCH LATER

LUMLEY

[bleep] [bleep] [bleep], you [bleep] [bleep], because if I don't see [bleep] [bleep], I'm gonna [bleep] your [bleep] [bleep] up your own [bleep], sideways, and at great velocity.

BUD

Well, good [bleep]damn.

LUMLEY

Do you [bleep] understand me?

BUD

Sure, pal. You'll see something. You're gonna get your socks blown off.

RUPERT (low)

Turn it off now, he's winding down.

CLIP: CAR RIDE WITH BUD

BUD

It's right up here.

RUPERT

Bud, why don't you tell our viewers what exactly we're going to be seeing?

BUD

Okay, Mr. Rupert. Hi, America.

RUPERT (low, enhanced)

Not America.

BUD

This morning

RUPERT (low, enhanced)

Tonight.

BUD

(cont'd) you'll be seeing a field my grandfather, Morgan Hardiner, once owned, it's called Treasure Purse. It's called Treasure Purse, because it's always been said there's treasure sunk way down at the bottom of this pond.

RUPERT (low)

Bud, please, not the treasure.

BUD

And also there's this place we called the Haunted Palace. Kinda like a barn, only real fancy.

RUPERT

A fancy barn?

BUD

It was kindof a ceremonial place, sorta for special occasions.

RUPERT

And what happened to it?

BUD

They say that one year, when the drought was much worse than it is right now, a great celebration was going on, a great celebration of the dead was happening.

RUPERT (low, enhanced)

Now a celebration of the dead.

BUD

And it's a mystery, but somehow the palace went up in flames? Just in these pure sheets of flame. And the whole countryside was like this tinderbox, see, but instead of let the town burn, the treasure pond swallowed up the fire.

RUPERT

Charming anecdote, no? What can our viewers expect to actually see at Treasure Purse?

BUD

Some very scary [bleep].

RUPERT

Such as? We might need your explanation as audio, you see.

BUD

Oh, sure, I get it. I watch TV.

PETRA

Which way?

BUD

Um, left. Yes, left.

CLAY

Don't you know what way we're going?

BUD

I know exactly where we're going, I just haven't been there in a few years. It sorta creeps me out. It's some scary [bleep].

RUPERT

Such as what?

BUD

Well, they say the fire that took the haunted palace was supposed to swallow up the whole town of Bookbright, so even though the pond took the whole barn to the bottom, the fire's still burning. So all around the field, there's a thick fog, no matter what the weather is.

RUPERT

Why, wait, okay then, let's go back and do some preliminary explanatory stuff, you know, "What is Treasure Purse".

BUD

It's a field my grandad used to own.

RUPERT

Yes, I actually believe we have that. Let's clarify a few of the statements you made earlier, like, ah, why did you call this place the "haunted palace"?

BUD

It was this grand palace-type place, like a barn, and it was haunted.

RUPERT

I guess that's about... as close as we're going to get to that.

PETRA
Which way again?

BUD
Left.

LUMLEY
We're going in circles, Rup.

BUD
We're not.

LUMLEY
We are. I'll wind back the footage and show you.

BUD
Did you turn left like I said?

PETRA
You know I did.

RUPERT
Where are you taking us?

BUD
I know where we're going. It's a small [bleep] town.

LUMLEY
Then it shouldn't be taking us this long.

(road noises)

BUD
The roads out here have changed.

RUPERT
The roads out here have changed?

BUD
These roads, they're different.

RUPERT
For [bleep] sake, Buddy.

BUD
I know the way there, I just can't get you there.

LUMLEY

I say we put him out here.

BUD

No, I can get you there. I'm looking for Kent Road.

RUPERT

Bud, we're turning around. Thank you very much for the phone, but I believe we're about finished here.

BUD

I'm telling you the truth, the roads are all different. A person doesn't just forget how to find his grandfather's field, okay? Not in [bleep] Bookbright.

CLAY (voice)

Weird.

LILLY

Clayby, hush.

BUD

You: you haven't said much. You believe me, don't you? You can see I'm telling the truth.

LILLY

I haven't said much because you remind me of an ex-boyfriend who gave me chlamydia.

BUD

I promise, I swear.

RUPERT

We're headed back into town, Bud, and we'll leave you by your truck.

BUD

I can tell you about my cousin.

LUMLEY

We don't give a [bleep] about your cousin.

BUD

I can tell you who killed that [bleep] teacher.

CLAY (voice)
He's such a [bleep] liar.

BUD
I know his name.

RUPERT
Are you saying someone from Bookbright killed Maxence Lawrence?

BUD
Sure, man.

RUPERT
Did they kill him in Bookbright?

BUD
Of course.

RUPERT
And then take him to Nashville to deposit him in a refrigerator?

BUD
I guess so.

RUPERT
You know his name.

BUD
Yeah.

RUPERT
What is it?

BUD
Fifty thousand dollars.

CLIP: MAIN STREET, BOOKBRIGHT

RUPERT
Goodbye, Buddy.

BUD
Sure. See ya.

RUPERT (low)
Shut the door.

CLIP: DRIVING BACK UP HIGHWAY

LUMLEY (voice)

The [bleep] wanted to sell us Harry Hardiner murdering Maxence Lawrence, right after telling us he thought his dear Uncle Harry was probably dangled from a tree about eight counties away and eight years before.

PETRA

Clay, you should have offered him a contact at MTV. I bet he would have told us where to find Harry Hardiner himself for that.

LILLY

My Clayby could do it, too. He's got his fingers on some long strings.

CLAY

Hush, Lilbaby, hush.

RUPERT

He was a desperate soul. Let's not make fun of him.

CLAY

In other words, Sir Lumsley, turn the camera back off.

PETRA

Guys.

RUPERT

What?

PETRA

What road did Buddy say he was looking for earlier?

RUPERT

Kent Road.

PETRA

This is it, Rup. It's right here by that same sign from earlier.

LUMLEY

That's not the same sign.

PETRA
Roll back the footage and see.

CLIP: KENT ROAD, BOOKBRIGHT, TN

RUPERT
Bud did say these roads had changed.

LILLY
That's impossible. Clay, that's what I want our porch to look like.

CLIP: KENT ROAD, EXTERNAL

RUPERT
He was [bleep] right, the [bleep].

PETRA
Is that fog? Above the houses there.

LUMLEY
Follow me.

CLIP: THICK FOG

RUPERT (voice)
This is impossible.

LILLY (voice)
Oh my God.

PETRA (voice)
I can't explain this.

LUMLEY (voice)
Rup, tell us what we're looking at, because the camera isn't giving them much.

RUPERT (voice)
We're in the field Treasure Purse, owned by Harry Hardiner's father. Do not adjust your screen. Your picture is not faulty. This is all fog around us.

LUMLEY (voice)
Clammy, warm. Feels like steam.

CLAY (voice)

You're thinking from all the underground reactors in Bookbright?

LUMLEY (voice)

I don't know what I'm thinking, mate. I don't know why this hasn't all dissipated. Where's it coming from, Rup?

RUPERT (voice)

CAREFUL!

BUMPER

COMMERCIAL BREAK

INTRO BUMPER

CLIP: KENT ROAD EXTERIOR

ANNOUNCER

Continuing our perusal of the team's footage will prove challenging. Viewers predisposed to motion sickness may want to avert their eyes. Some sections may have little or no distinct video or corrupt video and audio. We have done our best to clean the footage and make it more presentable to a television audience. Other than this enhancement, their footage has not been altered in any way. We warn parents that this segment may contain images which could disturb younger viewers.

CLIP: THICK FOG

RUPERT (voice)

Do not adjust your screen. Your picture is not faulty. This is all fog around us.

LUMLEY (voice)

Where's it coming from, Rup?

RUPERT (voice)

CAREFUL! Careful up ahead! We're on the edge of a... Looks like a pond, we're on the edge of a pond.

LUMLEY (voice)

You want to hide a treasure, I can't think of too many better places. Can't see the pond to find it, then you have to swim to the bottom...

LILLY (voice)

I hate it here. It feels like a greenhouse.

CLAY (voice)

I'm right there with you, Lilbaby. Guys, let's keep this short. There might not be nuclear plants in Bookbright, but this isn't normal. It might not be healthy.

LUMLEY (voice)

It's just regular moisture, probably trapped here by some freak pressure bubble produced, I don't know, by the landscape. Just because you've never seen it before doesn't mean it's not normal. Don't think it's gonna kill you just because it's a bit spooky.

CLAY (voice)
It's not just a bit spooky, it's Silent Hill spooky.

RUPERT (voice)
It is a damn sight too quiet here.

LILLY (voice)
I feel sick.

CLAY (voice)
I think I should take Lilly back to the van.

RUPERT (voice)
Can you hold on just one moment? We're going to see if we can get a better look at the landscape on the IR or the thermal.
WHOA.

LUMLEY (voice)
WHAT?

RUPERT (voice)
No one get near the water, I repeat, no one get near the water, it's incredibly hot. Hovering around boiling, this says.

LUMLEY (voice)
Bloody [bleep]. Guess there's your explanation, though. Hot spring puts off steam, it collects in this little hollow.

CLAY (voice)
It didn't seem like a depression in the landscape, and why doesn't it roll out over the houses over there?

LUMLEY (voice)
Weather patterns.

(splashing noise)

RUPERT (voice)
What the [bleep] was that? What the bloody [bleep] was that??

LUMLEY (voice)
Is everyone okay? Everybody sound off.

CLAY (voice)
We're both here.

LILLY (voice)
Yeah.

RUPERT (voice)
PETRA!!

(long pause)

RUPERT (voice)
Oh, Jesus, she's fallen in.

LILLY (voice)
OHH GOD!

CLAY (voice)
I need to get her out of here.

RUPERT (voice)
We have to get her out.

CLAY (voice)
How am I going to help you, how are you going to help her, we can't even see her, and I read that Yellowstone death book, hot springs can cook you in an instant, she could be

RUPERT (voice)
PETRA!!!

(pause)

PETRA (faint voice)
RUP?

RUPERT (voice)
PETRA!

PETRA (faint voice)
RUPERT!

CLAY (voice)
I need to get Lilly to the road, she's feeling really nauseous.

LILLY (voice)
My head...

RUPERT (voice)
PETRA!

PETRA (voice)
Why did you leave me?

RUPERT (voice)
I would never leave you.

CLIP: KENT ROAD EXTERIOR

CLAY
Can you stand up by yourself?

LILLY
When will we get out of this fog?

CLAY
Oh.

LUMLEY (voice)
Her eyes.

LILLY
What?

CLAY
How do your eyes feel?

LILLY
Itchy. Like I have a fever.

CLAY
We gotta call a doctor.

RUPERT
You'll have to call, my phone seems to have died altogether at this point. Get her into the van.

LILLY
Oh my God.

PETRA
Rupert.

RUPERT

What, Pet? [bleep]. [bleep] thing.

PETRA

When you were out there, did you guys see any flashes of lightning, like heat lightning?

RUPERT

No ([bleep] rental vans), no lightning. Did you see something? [bleep].

PETRA

I saw something.

RUPERT

You sure it wasn't our equipment?

PETRA

It lit up all the mist, all the steam around me.

RUPERT

Nothing like that. Did you get it on handheld?

LUMLEY (voice)

There's no bloody signal.

PETRA

I never pressed record, first with the fog, with the steam, and then being separated.

RUPERT

[bleep]

PETRA

I just didn't think about it.

CLAY

Why aren't we moving?

RUPERT

The [bleep] van won't start, what do you think, ah yes, I'm just sitting up here pausing and chatting, might as well get a nice cuppa tea while your girlfriend's eyes have bloody melted?

LILLY (voice)

Oh my God!

CLAY

It's not that bad, Lilbaby. Put your hands down.

LUMLEY (voice)

Yeah, Sheriff? We've got a man down on Kent Road, we need some sort of medical assistance. Kent Road. What? Why the [bleep] [bleep]?

RUPERT

LUM, that man's the law!

LUMLEY (voice)

He says it's gonna take him two hours to get here, bull[bleep]!

CLAY

Shh, Lilbaby.

LUMLEY (voice)

We got a girl with no bleeding eyeballs in the back of our bleeding van, how about you get someone out here before I call up every law enforcement official in the state of Tennessee and in the [bleep] [bleep], you [bleep].

CLAY

Why don't you just hang up?

LILLY (voice)

Oh my God...

RUPERT

Hand me the phone. Sheriff? This is Rupert Smythe-Pryce. Please. Sheriff? [bleep] phones.

LUMLEY (voice)

What did you do with my mobile?

RUPERT

It dropped the call. I'm dialing back. Nothing. This [bleep] [bleep] place, [bleep]. Lilly, how are you feeling?

LILLY (voice)

Unnh...

CLAY

I gave her something.

RUPERT

I don't want to know. This van's not starting, we need to get someone to lend us their car.

CLIP: KENT ROAD, EXTERNAL

(faint sound of knocking)

RUPERT (faint voice)
Hello?

PETRA (faint voice)
Hello?

(more knocking)

LUMLEY (voice)
Can you handle it here?

CLAY
Don't know what else I can do.

LUMLEY (voice)
Just hold her. [bleep]. I'm sorry.

CLAY
Sorry.

(more knocking)

LUMLEY (voice)
RUP?

RUPERT (faint)
Anybody there?

PETRA (faint, getting closer)
These houses are all abandoned, there's no one here.

RUPERT (faint)
Somebody!

(more knocking)

LUMLEY (voice)
Bloody hell. Just sheer bloody hell. This isn't right, Pet.

PETRA
LOOK!

CLIP: RUNNING ON KENT ROAD

CLIP: FRONT DOOR ON KENT ROAD

(loud knocking)

PETRA
I saw you! I know you're in there!

LUMLEY (voice)
Pet...

RUPERT (voice)
What's the story here?

PETRA
I saw the curtains move! There's someone here! OPEN UP WE HAVE A
GIRL IN TROUBLE!

(sound of door opening)

RUPERT
Not locked, Pet.

PETRA
We can't just go in.

RUPERT
There's no one here, Pet. This whole road is

(static; video and audio enhanced)

FIGURE (subtitled)
You came about time.

PETRA (screaming)
AAH!

(more static)

CLIP: INSIDE HOUSE ON KENT ROAD

PETRA (continuing)

FROM THE HARDINER HOUSE, the same THE SAME one oh my God, oh my GOD, [incomprehensible]

LUMLEY (over her, continuing)

bleeding GONE, Rup, there's nothing behind that corner to hide behind, just bleeding GONE, as in VANISHED, but I SAW him.

RUPERT

STOP IT!

(sounds of muffled crying)

RUPERT

Something is going on here that we can't explain.

LUMLEY (voice)

Oh my God.

RUPERT

Quiet. Let me be your boss, that is my job. If we are to believe these houses are abandoned, we're fools. Look at them. Look around you. There's no dust. Smell the air. There's been cooking. They're putting us on, they want us out.

LUMLEY (voice)

Then they should COME OUT AND HELP US GET THE HELL OFF THEIR PRECIOUS STREET AND GET THE [bleep] OUT OF THEIR [bleep] TOWN!

RUPERT

Hush, Brian. Hush.

(long quiet, then the sound of a motor starting)

RUPERT

Outside!

CLIP: KENT ROAD, EXTERIOR

LUMLEY (voice)

YOU [bleep]!

RUPERT (voice)

CLAY! CLAY, COME BACK!

PETRA
Please! PLEASE! CLAY! LILLY!

LUMLEY (voice)
Petra, your phone.

PETRA
The [bleep] steam boiled it, it's fried. We're fried.

(long quiet, then the sound of a motor starting)

MALE VOICE
TAKE THE TRUCK I DON'T NEED IT

PETRA
WHO'S THERE?

(silence, engine idling)

LUMLEY (voice)
Oh my God.

RUPERT
He said to take it.

PETRA
WHO did?

LUMLEY (voice)
If they want us out of here, I say we leave by any means necessary. Get the [bleep] in.

PETRA
There's a shotgun in the driver's seat.

RUPERT
Yes, well, I'm sure Clay would make a grand joke about that if he hadn't abandoned us. Move the gun, or I can, and let's please fly from this [bleep]hole.

CLIP: INSIDE TRUCK ON COUNTY ROAD, WEARY BLANK GAZES

(silence, road noises)

(loud explosion, screams or brakes, confusion)

(gasping for air)

LUMLEY (voice)
You shot her.

RUPERT
Turn it off.

CLIP: POSSIBLY INSIDE TRUCK, NO IMAGE

RUPERT (voice)
The gun went off.

LUMLEY (voice)
You weren't touching it?

RUPERT (voice)
Why do you, why do we... Why...

LUMLEY (voice)
I just want to get a handle on what happened.

RUPERT (voice)
SHE WAS DRIVING AND THE GUN WENT OFF. THAT'S THE END OF THE
WHOLE HISTORY, THAT'S THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA. ARE YOU
SATISFIED?

LUMLEY (voice)
No.

RUPERT (voice)
WELL IT'S THE TRUTH.

LUMLEY (voice)
I don't believe you shot her on purpose.

RUPERT (voice)
THE BLOODY GUN WASN'T EVEN POINTED TOWARDS HER.

(pause)

LUMLEY (voice)
I wish you could hear yourself.

RUPERT (voice)

I know you couldn't see it, but it was pointed out the PASSENGER DOOR, ON THE FLOOR. I DID NOT SHOOT MY PETRA.

LUMLEY (voice, quiet)

I wish you could hear yourself.

CLIP: PROBABLY INSIDE TRUCK, NO IMAGE

(sounds of twisted metal)

LUMLEY (voice)

Stop it, you're going to make the whole truck blow.

RUPERT (voice)

Just like I made the gun blow?

LUMLEY (voice)

Maybe so, Rupert.

RUPERT (voice)

I DIDN'T SHOOT PETRA.

MALE VOICE (very faint, enhanced)

I think Kent Road (possibly) did it!

LUMLEY (voice)

Who the bloody hell is that? Do you see him? Out by the tree out there?

RUPERT (voice)

He's bloody waving, of course I see him.

LUMLEY (voice)

I just don't know whether to trust my eyes or not. Is he wearing a suit?

CLIP: HANDHELD, FIELD AND TRUCK

RUPERT (voice)

This is barbed wire, Lum, be extra special careful.

LUMLEY

Oh yeah, Rup, I'm gonna jump through this and sever my femoral artery. Not after today, bud.

RUPERT (voice)
Don't call me that.

LUMLEY
Who's to say this person has a cell phone, Rup?

RUPERT (voice)
Even if they don't, they clearly saw everything. We need to get him to talk to Sheriff Feathertop for us.

CLIP: LUMLEY IR BACKRIG, FIELD, OUTSKIRTS BOOKBRIGHT

LUMLEY
Oh bollocks, where'd he go?

RUPERT (voice)
What do you... You have to be [bleep] me. You turn around for three seconds in this [bleep] town and it's like the rabbits all jump back down their holes.

MALE VOICE (faint, subtitled)
What do you see?

LUMLEY
WHAT?

RUPERT (voice)
He said what do we see.

CLIP: HANDHELD, FIELD, OUTSKIRTS BOOKBRIGHT

RUPERT (voice)
Ah... Shh, be careful. Oh, [bleep].

LUMLEY (voice)
Bollocky bollocks, don't say [bleep], don't say [bleep]...

RUPERT (voice)
I could have sworn that on my camera, just a moment ago, right after he yelled, that there was a mean-looking bull just here, and now, I look up, and he's gone.

LUMLEY (voice)
"Me da got gored by a bull, you know."

RUPERT (voice)
[bleep] you have to be [bleep].

LUMLEY (voice)
No, mate, that was from a film.

CLIP: IR BACKRIG, FIELD, OUTSKIRTS BOOKBRIGHT

(LUMLEY AND RUPERT LAUGH.)

RUPERT (voice)
You're a good man, Brian.

LUMLEY
[bleep] [bleep] [bleep] behind me [bleep]ing run!

CLIP: HANDHELD RUNNING

(sounds of panting, animal grunting, hooves)

(LUMLEY screaming)

(sounds of panting and crying)

SUBTITLES: Experts have analyzed this footage and determined it to be authentic. There have been no edits or cuts, and the timestamp you see has not been tampered with – what you see is what you get: one single, continuous, and utterly unexplainable minute of tape.

CLIP: HANDHELD RUNNING, AUTOCORRECTING FOR DARKNESS

(panting and crying continues)

(sounds of falling)

RUPERT (hurt)
UNNH!

PETRA (voice)
Rupert! Good Lord, what is it?

LUMLEY (voice)
Jaysus, Rup, what is it? Nightmares?

(sounds of Rupert crying)

PETRA (voice)
Oh my God.

LUMLEY (voice)
Oh, wow. I'll go get him some ice.

(sounds of door opening)

PETRA (voice)
Shh, shh. Go on, now. What is it?

RUPERT (voice, subtitled)
You're dead. I killed you.

PETRA (voice)
I'm fine, Rupert. Look at me. Shh. Just breathe. Look where you are.

RUPERT (voice)
No! It's impossible!

PETRA (voice)
Trust your eyes; you know it to be true. You had a bad dream.

RUPERT (voice)
No. No.

PETRA (voice)
It's understandable. The way they're hijacking the show from us is bloody frightful.

RUPERT (voice)
And Brian...

PETRA (voice)
It's alright, love. You were just having a bad dream. Come on. You have the bed for the rest of the night, and I'll take the chair.

RUPERT (voice)
What the [bleep] is going on here?

PETRA (voice)

That damn prescription sleep aid. Come on, Rup. We'll check out in the morning, grab our American handler, and then wrangle that town by its horns.

RUPERT (voice)

No; look! Ha! Ha ha! The camera's still running!

PETRA (voice)

Rup, the camera's on, but we haven't put film in any of them yet. Look.

(static)

SUBTITLES: Rupert Smythe-Pryce, Petra Hammond, and Brian Lumley were reported missing the evening of January 8, 2012. Their gear, including this footage, was recovered from their hotel room, along with their luggage and identification. There has been no sign of their vehicle, a white unmarked van, or of any missing persons in the area named either "Clay" or "Lilly." If you have any information regarding the whereabouts of our valued colleagues and loved ones, please email largecashreward@strongerthanfictionshowwebsite.com.

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