

Event: The 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of Evil Angels 1988.

## AFTERWORD

WERE IT FICTION, no new and risky character would appear so late, but the ways of unruly fact drew in David Brett, leading him here from a quiet English village. Brett was a young man with a belief in the occult, and a liking for the rituals which bring good fortune. He had in mind to see as much of the material world as he could while his own fortunes stayed good enough. From Harley, in Kent, he journeyed to the Australian east coast and lived there for around four years. His close friends were mystics, in whose judgment David Brett could expect some peak of destiny only with his death, by suicide, which they were encouraging. He was not as convinced of this as they were, and he left them for his mother, and home.

While Brett was back in Kent, people whose beliefs lay more in the direction of the hard science were still investigating how Azaria Chamberlain may have died. In a laboratory in Germany, Doctors Baudner and Storiko were fast coming to the conclusion that blood found in the Chamberlains' yellow hatchback should not be identified as foetal, but may well be as adult as the Chamberlains said it was. They were much persuaded by Professor Barry Boettcher, who not long before had walked into the laboratory and pumped a sample from his own bared vein for its routine identification, which then classed the professor as a newly born baby.

At Kansas State University in the U.S., Randall R. Bresee, an associate professor in textile sciences, was comparing, under many magnifications, damage to the fibres of babies' jump-suits and singlets sent to him from Sydney. The clothes had been chewed by a dog and by a dingo, the threads neatly sliced by the teeth, in no way different from damage the professor had seen before on

textiles bitten by coyotes. They were also identical with the cuts on the Chamberlain garments.

INSIDE THE HIGH COURT building in Canberra, where the baby's own garment lay in custody, three inquisitive laboratory analysts who were picking over the tousled and sordid fibres for any other indications of chewing, happened on specks of flesh, glistening as the magnifications were turned higher, suddenly and shockingly meaty. So far as anyone could tell, these were the remnants of Azaria Chamberlain.

Around that time, at the Turnbull Research Institute in Melbourne, Hans Brunner, who had now developed a method of classifying species of mammalian hair, turned to the identification of hairs taken five years ago from the jump-suit and the singlet. He had nine of them, and throughout the trial they were thought to be cat. Brunner found two were human. Another he couldn't place at all. The other six he was sure about. They were canine.

And away at Cooranbong, Leslie N. Smith was tracking down the source of the blood patterns in the footwell of the Chamberlain car. This was known to everyone by now as the Arterial Spray, the baby's very last heartbeats, the vivid and indelible place of slaughter. Smith worked with the Sanitarium food factory. He was responsible for automated equipment there, and this made him fussy about patterns which seemed to betray some sort of repetitive structure. He took photographs of the car-panel, close-up, and enlarged them further. He could see, over the peaks the ridges of these dark stains, a haze of colour that reminded him of overspray from paintwork. From the spray to the bottom of the footwell he drew lines in the air with taut strings, a cat's cradle which pointed slyly at a grommet in the sedan floor. Then he made for the car-assembly plant. This was not the blood of a murdered child. It wasn't blood at all. The Arterial Spray was a sound-deadening emulsion which General Motors called Dufix HN1081.

NOT MUCH OF THIS was known to anyone beyond the inquiring scientists and the people to whom they reported their findings, and certainly none of it was

known to David Brett in Kent. Brett had discovered in himself certain familiar longings. He was taking telephone calls from his friends in Australia. His mother didn't like it. More worrying, he was making plans to go back.

When certificated copies of those scientists' reports landed on the desks of the Law Department in Darwin, they came with a petition for a judicial inquiry and for Lindy Chamberlain's release. She had so far served two years of her term, long enough to outlast the term in office of Chief Minister Everingham, who had moved to political life on the other side of the continent. His replacement was Ian Tuxworth, a politician of blustery mode, but no-one now with legal qualifications sat on the high benches of government, and Tuxworth chose, as his attorney-general, Marshall Perron, who had the clean and regular features of a graduate from law school, though he was nothing of the sort. Perron passed the new Chamberlain plea back to the Law Department. The petition was denied.

To clear the air, Tuxworth handed around a press release, and brought to the debate a perspective all his own: "This campaign has as its intended effect the building up of antagonism toward the Northern Territory Government, which it seeks to portray as hard, cruel, and lacking in compassion. At stake is law and order, and faith in the due process of a legal system recognized as the fairest in the world."

Newspapers which carried this statement also ran reports, attributed to ministerial sources, that Lindy Chamberlain should expect to serve twenty years. Avis Murchison, her tiny and vigorous mother, didn't believe it for a moment. From the Adventist manse in Nowra she wrote to a friend. 'We know that, in God's good time and in His way, this terrible injustice will be resolved. May victory come, and bring glory to His Name.'

The friend to whom she was writing was not religious. So Avis penned, by way of a defiant letterhead, 'Our God Is Able.'

WHEN DAVID BRETT arrived in Ayers Rock summer was at its worst. Six months living on the east coast again had taken off the pallor of Kent; he was

robust enough now, but here the sky was mercilessly clear day after day, the sun blazed, the desert oaks sighed, and the heat seemed to come equally from the zenith and the sand underfoot. Not many tourists wandered around. If Brett had been a follower of the Chamberlain case he would have seen that the settlement here was much changed. The faded motels had gone. Now camping sites, and hotels with outdoor bars and veiled swimming pools, lay in a discreet hollow.

Brett had come here to climb the Rock. He was camping alone, so he had no one's capacities to consider beyond his own. He was fit, but so hot was it that a day climb was out of the question. He chose evening, and set out just before sundown, carrying a small knapsack of light clothing in case the air up there got chilly. He took the ascent route on the western side, with the post-and-chain as a guide, as far as a ledge below the peak.

No one had told him that a dawn climb was preferable to dusk because the arcose of which the rock is made holds the heat a long time on the west ridge. He rested a while there. Then he swung the knapsack over a shoulder and started up again.

The sun had well gone, but he still had light to see by, enough that a group of departing tourists watched him climb, a small figure, high above the southwest face. He kept climbing east. The air was cool, but not crisp enough yet for need of a sweater.

Something was happening, now, of which he would have to be careful. It was as if the altitude and the stillness of the night were together pressing from the air a faint but tricky dew. He came to a bluff, which must have located him then somewhere above the great smudge of lichen the Pitjantjatjara call the camp fire of the Sleepy Lizard.

It seems he had chosen a nighttime climb because of the radiant wonders of the heavens, and here they were, within happy reach of the mind - the stars, the planets, the luminous ways, the whirling galaxies, the emblems that begat the zodiac, all the forces of the universe, in glittering and dizzy display.

DAVID BRETT'S BODY was found below the bluff, eight days after his fall, in the scrubby gully with which news reporters were already familiar. It was here that Wally Goodwin had found Azaria Chamberlain's clothes, five years back. The local police sergeant, Mike Van Heythuysen, roped the ground off for a hundred paces each way. He didn't want anybody watching this. The dingo lairs around here were many, and now the corpse was not entire. By radio he called in rangers and maintenance staff, and directed a search. It was not that he thought they might find any trace of the smaller parts, but the right arm was gone and there might be a chance of finding bone that size.

They walked abreast, kicking aside shrubs and dusty grasses. The dingoes had evidently pillaged the fallen knapsack, and they located a T-shirt, shorts, a kerchief. Further along a ranger next in line to Van Heythuysen gave a grunt and stooped to inspect the sand by his feet. He tugged at a knot of something buried there, the gritty crust broke away, and he pulled it free. Whatever it was, it had once been white. The sergeant took it and turned it over. A baby's jacket, knitted, with stiff, tiny sleeves. A button at the neck hung by a thread.

"Stay right here, and don't move," the sergeant said, and headed for the radio in his truck. He wanted some very clear instructions about what he should do now.

POLICE COMMISSIONER McAulay was heading for the Chief Minister's office. McAulay was a stocky man, precise in his ways, who was happiest when things ran according to police manuals and statute books. He'd had the feeling, for some time now, that the Chamberlain case was guided by rules with which he wasn't familiar. When the Chamberlains' petition had come up with solid scientific support, he had expected an inquiry as a matter of legal course. A lawful conviction was one thing, but it seemed to him that scientific opinion had unbalanced the sort of scales of justice he had trained with, and the time had come for someone in judicial authority to rule on it. When he said so, he was told

it was a legal matter for Cabinet. Since there were no lawyers in Cabinet, it seemed he was being told it was a matter for politicians.

He expected the matinee-jacket should turn the manner of debate around, even in the judgment of politicians. It was always part of the prosecution's case that there was no matinee jacket, and that Lindy Chamberlain had lied when she said there was. It was thought a convenient phantom, to explain why no saliva was found on the underlying clothes, and an effort to link the after-image of a knitted fabric, which Murray Haby found in sand, with the dingo tracks alongside.

More importantly for McAulay, the jacket now altered certain slight balances of authority. It was recovered during a search under his jurisdiction. He had already decided to have it sent to independent laboratories in Melbourne for examination rather than to the Darwin Forensic Science Unit. The jacket gave him some standing in the argument, right where he wanted to be.

A secretary led him into the Chief Minister's office. Tuxworth, too big for his chair, Perron, easing his neat slacks, and the sweaty Crown Solicitor Martin lounged around the desk, jackets off. They stopped talking when McAulay entered. This was the wet season, the air-conditioner at full blast, the vapours damp and smelly.

They let him stand. Perron took the easy question. 'So it is the jacket?'

"Without doubt," McAulay said. Since no one seemed ready to offer anything more, McAulay said, 'You have to hold an inquiry now. There's no alternative.'

Martin ran a hand over his sparse hair. Tuxworth sat back in his chair. Perron shook his head, irritated, as if they'd spent too much time talking this through already. 'No,' he said, 'that's not the way to go.'

McAulay turned for the door, red-faced. He had decided to put his recommendations in writing from here on and let them deal with it that way. And he was coming closer to a conclusion of a different nature. He had seen, in a government bulletin, an advertised post with the Federal Police force. More and more it seemed an attractive way out of here.

Maybe the falling out of allies should play no part at all in the administration of justice, at least no executive role, but that is the way it was, and no one in government seemed to understand the rate at which it was happening. At the offices of the News, Darwin's daily, a short stroll up Mitchell Street from the Chief Minister's suite, one of the government's long-standing alliances was in poor shape.

Anyone who could remember the last time the News and the government fell out had a long memory, but a scoop was a scoop, and right now the News had one it wasn't going to let slide.

Journalists at the News had discovered that someone had been feeding them misinformation. The acting editor then was Jack Ellis. When the Attorney-General denied the Chamberlains' petition for an inquiry, the department's reason satisfied Ellis, until he found that they didn't at all satisfy two of the prosecution's own scientists, Andrew Scott and Tony Jones, who were now calling for a new investigation. Not long after, the leader of the political opposition in this town, Bob Collins, took up the issue in the House, but word got around to the presses that Collins was a Seventh-day Adventist. People at the News thought this explained a great deal, until they found that Collins was an Adventist for a time brief enough to fit between his fifteenth and sixteenth birthdays and had been a church-going Catholic ever since.

Ellis doesn't like to be made a fool of, and at times like these anger makes him unusually single-minded. He assigned staffers to the Chamberlain case, full time. Because he judged that the finding of foetal blood was the crux of conviction, he instructed his reporters to head in that direction. They came up with a copy of Andrew Scott's report, and another from Professor Orjan Ouchterlony, who had written, from Sweden, protesting the way the prosecution had used the procedures which bore his famous name.

But it was the Germans who gave them the lead story. The News's staffers telephoned Behringwerke, makers of the testing solution. Dr Baudner came on the line. He spoke a convenient amount of English. Certainly, he said, he had advised the Law Department in Darwin that the testing solution should not have

been used as it was in the Chamberlain prosecution. So dismayed was he over the denial of the Chamberlains' petition, that he had written again to the Crown Solicitor, asking for reconsideration. The date on the letter was two weeks old. The astonishing fact was this: since that time, the Law Department had kept Baudner's judgement to itself.

Ellis decided to run everything he had. This was a Friday morning. A nine o'clock radio bulletin reported that 'Government ministers are confident there will be no new inquiry into the conviction of Lindy Chamberlain.' The layout Ellis chose ran the Behringwerke story, page one, with the Scott and the Ouchterlony letters in support. It was more space than the News had ever before used on the Chamberlain case. There were small-town niceties to be observed here, so Ellis dispatched a messenger-boy to the Attorney-General's press secretary, with a copy of the lead story and a courteous note.

The News generally hits Darwin streets at three in the afternoon. Ellis sent the stories off to the setting tables at midmorning. A reporter fresh back from the government office said something was going on there, an emergency meeting of Cabinet was scheduled in a few minutes' time, and the Police Commissioner was in the Attorney-General's office. Ellis drank coffee and waited at his desk. The presses would roll in an hour. The way things were done in the Territory, he could expect a visit from a ministerial aide anytime now.

The call came at midday. It was the Chief Minister himself. He addressed Ellis as 'Jack,' and his voice was loud and amiable. 'I know what's on the presses, but I've got a better story for you,' he said. 'We're letting her out.'

PERRON CALLED a news conference. Every reporter and news photographer in town was there. He handed around copies of a prepared statement which announced an inquiry, and the immediate remission of Lindy Chamberlain's sentence. He read it aloud. By the time he finished, no one doubted how deeply he wished the problem over. 'Although Mrs. Chamberlain's remission is subject to the usual condition of good behaviour, 'he said, 'it is not my intention that she should be taken back into custody, regardless of the outcome of the inquiry.'

*Melbourne Age:*

CHAMBERLAIN IS SET FREE

Rejoicing as new evidence leads to inquiry.

*The Australian:*

LINDY FREE TOP-LEVEL INQUIRY

The story that intrigued the world.

*The Telegraph:*

LINDY SET FREE

NT promises: She will never go back to jail.

Adventists at the Avondale College painted 'Welcome Home Lindy' on a cotton banner and carried it, skipping, to hoist above the gates. On the way back, they tied every tree for the length of College Drive with a yellow ribbon. The pastors responsible for Sabbath prayer were in merry conference, fashioning a service of thanksgiving around the verse 'I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry' (Psalms 40:1).

A juror from the trial, Yvonne Cain, told journalists of a recent prescience, a dream in which Azaria had spoken to her from the dead, and was joyful. At his desk on the editorial floor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Malcolm Brown had been taking calls, all afternoon, from reporters with news like this. Every stringer in Darwin had print-fever. A freelancer newshound outside the gates of Berrimah Prison had watched Lindy Chamberlain, frail, in pink frock and sunglasses, climb into the rear seat of a darkened limousine while a tearful woman in slippers and a housecoat tried to get close enough to give her a clutch of flowers. Reporters in hire cars and taxi-cabs dawdled the inbound traffic lanes but were warned off by motorcycle police.

Photographers were staked out around a bungalow in town where Lindy Chamberlain was thought to be now, but frangipani and bougainvillea blocked any sidewalk view of the windows.

BY THE TIME Brown had used enough incidents of this nature to fill a newspaper headed 'The Final Chapters,' it was late. He sent the sheets away with a copy-boy. Brown preferred a typewriter to a terminal, and since he was now the paper's chief reporter he could work any way he chose. He still liked, for example, to stand his typewriter upright on its heel at the end of a day. It implied a natural conclusion and was at the same time his salute to tradition. He slipped into his jacket and snapped out the light. No one else was around. All the activity in this building was closer to the presses now.

He rode the lift down and stepped out onto the pavement. It was a warm evening, soft and indigo. The bright footpaths of Broadway were busy with summer-night crowds. A sudden need to be with them made his pass up a cruising cab. He strode seriously along, huge and splay-footed. Brown would have described his gait as jaunty, but the hint of anything so personal rarely makes it as far as his shoe-leather.

There happy crowds and garnish lights seemed to him emblematic enough of a carefree and splendid world, but a candid source for his own humour was not so easy to come by. Brown knew there was a deep sense in which Lindy Chamberlain's freedom had somehow released us all, but he was thinking, now, more of the other casualties, those along the way, the Lowes, Wests, Whittackers, Murray Haby, and Wally Goodwin, all of them united in a chill understanding that they had not so much taken part in a courtroom trial as in some theatre of illusion.

All of them imagine a measure of personal blame, because they did not see early enough what the prosecutors were making of them, because they did not think quickly enough in the witness-box, because they did not give their testimony well enough. Justice was not done, as they reckon it, by their defaults. They are quite wrong about that. We know, when their voices are gone, when the stories close, our lives don't work that way, at all.

