

**Excerpt from *The Girl Who Was a Hundred Girls*, written by Finegan Kruckemeyer. Not to be presented without official licensing. To enquire, please go to: [www.finegankruckemeyer.com](http://www.finegankruckemeyer.com)**

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## **Prologue**

Eight months ago – shopping centre

*A shopping centre. Boy 1 works at a shop, while Girl 1 stands at the counter, chatting him up. Girl 2 sits on the steps and smokes a cigarette. Girls 3 and 4 look at dresses on a rack. Boy 2 and Girl 5 sit on a bench, a couple. All talk silently, and only speak with volume when delivering the prologue's dialogue. They give no notion of addressing the audience however – it just seems to be a continuation of their conversation.*

GIRL 1: The day the girl gets taken is a warm one. It's the summer holidays, and the air is thick and the carpark's full and everyone's at the shopping centre, living together in the air conditioning.

GIRL 2: Alan Oaks and Charlotte Fisher have taken over the good bench right under the aircon, because they got here early, because Alan's dad works at Shoes For You, so they got a lift.

BOY 2: Matt Newlan is working a six-hour shift at Zeppys, because he's saving for a scuba kit – when he was 12 he read a book about 'the city beneath the sea' and decided he'd become a diver. He talks with Catherine from his French class.

GIRL 1: Matt Newlan has a short fringe and soft hands.

GIRL 3: Lizzie Rieniets just had a fight with her mum who found her easel broken, and she's got an exhibition coming up.

GIRL 4: Lizzie did do it and usually she would have admitted it, but her mum's been annoying her lately by making jokes about her dad, so Lizzie stormed out. She's new at smoking and not very good yet.

BOY 1: Mel and Susannah Keene are trying to find Mel a dress that will make her look hot because on the last day of school someone spread a rumour she was pregnant and she thinks it's to do with her weight. But it's not. Tom Marks started it, and that was just because he tried to talk to her on a bus last week but she had her headphones in and didn't hear. Tom Marks is actually her ideal guy, and she could imagine few more perfect moments than sharing a bus ride with him.

GIRL 5: The girl gets taken at 12:51 today. It's 12:46 now.

BOY 2: The operation is not quick or stupid. It has been planned for some time. It will happen in this place and it will happen to a 16 year old girl.

GIRL 3: Three of these girls are 16.

GIRL 1: It will be followed by the girl being moved in a van to an unused garage, and then two days passing, and then a note being found in the letterbox five doors down from the girl's house. The note will say:

GIRL 4: 'We have the girl that's gone missing on your street. Go to her family with this note, but not the police – if you do that, she dies and you are responsible. Get them to call this number from your phone. Make them do it by five today or she dies and you are responsible'.

BOY 1: The abduction is, of course, about money. It's about a large sum of money, money the parents of one girl can afford because of their high-profile jobs.

*The boys stay relaxed, but the five young women now stare at the audience, concerned.*

GIRL 1: Mum's a florist. Dad works for the RAA.

GIRL 2: My Mum's an artist, and Dad's not around anymore.

GIRL 3: Our Dad's a locksmith. Mum does real estate.

GIRL 5: Dad's a head librarian, and Mum's taking a year off from dentistry because Sean was born in August.

GIRL 4: You're lying, Mel. They're not a locksmith or an agent.

GIRL 3: They are.

GIRL 4: [*Shakes her head – pause*] Dad works for the government. Mum's a judge.

*They look at each other in shock. Everyone else returns to their normal activities.*

GIRL 4: So which one of...

GIRL 2: But of course neither Mel nor Susannah Keene knows that a bad thing will happen in two minutes. It's just a hot day and they're in the shopping centre looking for dresses.

*They return to their shopping, oblivious.*

GIRL 3: Suse, look. I found one.

GIRL 4: Nice. You gonna get it?

GIRL 3: I'll try it on first.

GIRL 4: Okay – I'll wait out the front. I want to tan my shoulders.

GIRL 3: Mm.

BOY 1: And the sisters separate. And that 'mm' is their last word shared, a sound that is not even a word at all.

*Over the ensuing dialogue, Susannah disappears, unnoticed.*

GIRL 1: And the dress does fit Mel. And she doesn't look pregnant.

GIRL 2: And Alan and Charlotte kiss, but already both feel that something is missing. In five weeks they'll split up and Charlotte will move to a country town in next year and eventually get married there and run a farm. And Alan will graduate as a lab technician.

BOY 2: Matt Newlan will become a diver. And he will be very good at it. He'll be most interested in subtropical waters, and become a leading authority on reefs.

GIRL 2: Catherine will work at her mum's florist and when she's 23, she'll take it over when her mum dies from breast cancer. Catherine will make the wreath for her mother's funeral, and her father will cry.

GIRL 3: Lizzie Rieniets will make up with her mother, and will learn how to smoke. She'll go traveling for a long time and marry a Balinese man.

GIRL 4: Mel Keene will feel her life crumble around her as everything she has ever known shifts in six seconds, when she realizes...

GIRL 3: Suse – it did fit. Suse... Lizzie, have you seen my sister?

GIRL 2: Nah, sorry. Maybe she walked home.

GIRL 3: She said she'd wait... Okay. Seeya.

*She walks off. All stop their naturalistic activity and stand, staring after her.*

5 TUTTI: And Melanie Keene walks home to find her sister.  
And she can't. She will call her dad. And soon the police will come.  
And in two days a neighbour will arrive with a note.  
And Mel's mum will push her out of the way in her haste to get to the neighbour's phone.  
And in that push, Mel will see what her life is to be.  
And it's 12:52. And at the lights only 300 metres away, a van is waiting for the arrow to go green.  
And unconscious in the back, there lies a girl.