

Swan Song: Romantic comedy and sports - odd bedfellows or complementary teammates?

By
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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this exegesis and screenplay has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the exegesis and screenplay has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the exegesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the exegesis.

Production Note:
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Russell Edwards

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ABSTRACT

Working within the established film genre of romantic comedy, the screenplay *Swan Song* is about a man and a woman reaching that narrative moment when their loving commitment to each other is confirmed. The screenplay blends the romantic comedy with the odd bedfellow of the sports film. This combination has rarely attempted in the genre-based American cinema and remains untried in the Australian context. The advantage of mixing the two genres is that the traditional audience for romantic comedy (generalised as women) can be matched with the traditional audience for sports films (generalised as men).

The second half of the material submitted is an exegesis addressing the theoretical issues investigated during the script's development. It represents an argument for blending the romantic comedy and sport genres and explores the issues generated by this radical combination. Endeavouring to confine my discussion to Australian film history, the exegesis focuses on Australian Rules football and romantic comedy as sparsely represented in Australian cinema over the past forty years. Both the romantic comedy and the sports genre place import on the creation of a 'magic space'. A hybrid of these two genres creates a sacred space that is significant for both men and women. Following on from this magic space concept, discussion focusses on cinematic representations of masculinity in the Australian context, the problematising of maleness in Australian cinema and how Australian male stereotypes have presented difficulties for the development of Australian romantic comedy. Also discussed are local films that have chosen to highlight different representations of Australian masculinity, without demonising it. These are films that represent male characters pursuing feelings and vulnerabilities frequently denied to Australian males in our domestic cinema. Linked with this, the exegesis argues that the locally untapped genre of romantic comedy – with or without sports – is possible in Australian cinema. *Swan Song* blends romantic comedy and Australian Rules football and, as such, lends support for the cinematic depiction of different masculinities to those the 'sports film' could create in isolation. Instead of hegemony, the 'magic space' of romantic comedy actually permits success for men and women at the same time. My script *Swan Song* argues for entertainment, laughter and love – for both men and women – rather than one privileged over the other.

INTRODUCTION

My Masters of Creative Arts comprises two parts. The first is a feature screenplay representing the major creative component. The second is the research component as represented by the exegesis.

Working within the established film genre of romantic comedy, *Swan Song* is about a man and a woman falling in love and reaching that narrative moment when their commitment to each other is confirmed. The screenplay uses some historical facts about the Australian Rules football team the Sydney Swans and the American baseball team, the Brooklyn Dodgers as a point of departure. The script is not about sport, but I hope that those with an interest in sport – particularly Australian Rules football – will be enticed to read it or better still see it, if the script is ever successfully filmed.

Genre film-making is predicated on reinventing itself while still remaining familiar to audiences. In the search to remain fresh while replicating previous patterns, genre hybrids have been a regular feature of commercial film enterprises. The combination I have sought to explore is that of the sports film and romantic comedy. It is an unusual and mostly untested hybrid of genres. When it has been ventured in American film, the experience has mostly been to the financial detriment of the producers involved.

In the Australian context, this combination of genres has not been attempted. If only for this reason, my script can be considered an original work and the accompanying exegesis an exploration of uncharted territory. Lack of success would suggest that these genres cannot

successfully be combined. They are certainly odd bedfellows. I understand why the use of an exclusively Australian sport would increase a producer's scepticism of such a film's financial viability. However, I believe that the two genres can successfully be combined in an Australian context. Given that hundreds of thousands of Australian people watch every professional Australian Rules football game – either at a sports stadium or on television and sometimes both – surely success could come from attracting such a large audience to an Australian film.

The advantage of blending the two genres is that the traditional audience for romantic comedy (generalised as women) can be matched with the traditional audience for sports films (generalised as men). Theoretically this would create an overlap which would increase box office share. This has rarely been attempted in international cinema including the genre-driven commercial film industry of the United States. Such a concept has never been tackled head on in Australia.

The second half of the material submitted for consideration is a theoretical presentation on the issues investigated during the script's development. It represents an argument for blending the two genres - romantic comedy and sport. This exegesis is also an exploration of the issues that are generated as a result of this radical combination.

As my script is an original proposal for the Australian context, I have endeavoured to confine my discussion to Australian film history, focussing on Australian Rules football and romantic comedy as sparsely represented in Australian cinema over the past forty years. Addressing each genre separately, I take a chronological approach to my discussion of the appearances of Australian Rules football and romantic comedy in

Australian cinema. However, as the American cinema is the most internationally successful proponent of genre film-making, some references to Hollywood films are inevitable. These references are required to make a larger point about film genres. This is particularly true when Australian attempts at the genres have yet to manifest comparably successful examples of a genre trope.

While discussing the romantic comedy and the sports genre, I will look at how each genre, individually, creates a 'magic space'. When a hybrid of these two genres is created, such a space proposes to bring men and women together in a way that is significant for both genders. Following on from this magic space concept, I will focus discussion on cinematic representations of masculinity in the Australian context.

Growing out of the discussion of romantic comedy, the exegesis considers the problematising of maleness in Australian cinema. In the course of this discussion previous representations of Australian masculinity are discussed. I will consider how these Australian male stereotypes have presented difficulties for the development of Australian romantic comedy. I will also discuss some local films that have chosen to highlight different representations of Australian masculinity, without seeing the need to demonise it. These are films that represent male characters pursuing feelings and vulnerabilities frequently denied to Australian males in our domestic cinema.

Linked with this, I argue that the locally untapped genre of romantic comedy – with or without sports – is possible in Australian cinema. My script *Swan Song* blends romantic comedy and Australian Rules football and, as such, lends support for the cinematic depiction of

different masculinities to those the 'sports film' could create in isolation. Instead of hegemony, the 'magic space' of romantic comedy actually permits success for men and women at the same time. My script *Swan Song* argues for entertainment, laughter and love – for both men and women – rather than one privileged over the other.

GENRE PINNACLE & GENRE MANQUE

My script *Swan Song* is a blend of two established genres. One, the romantic comedy is regarded as one of the most successful in the history of cinema, particularly the American cinema. The other, is what James Monaco dubbed a 'genre manqué' (Monaco 1979: 54) for its reputation as a blighted genre, doomed to failure: the sports film.

Briefly, *Swan Song* is the light-hearted 1980s story of two people who fall in love. Jill is a freewheeling woman from Brooklyn who seeks a better life by escaping her crazy parents and her chequered past by immigrating to Australia. The other is Greg, a commitmentphobic Melbourne man who feels out of step with his surroundings. This clearly is the romantic comedy aspect as defined by Frank Krutnik:

Validating love as a traversing of borders, romantic comedy moves each partner from the territory of the known to the sexual and emotional space of the other. (Krutnik 1998: 26)

For my argument, I concentrate on the romantic comedy genre as the humorous, amorous collision of two equally weighted protagonists. This criteria eliminates discussion of a wide range of comedies that feature a protagonist (often a comedian trading on a comic persona) with a subsidiary romance. *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) is a key Australian example. This also eliminates consideration of romantic comedies which take an ensemble approach. In the Australian context, *Love and Other Catastrophes* (Emma Kate Croghan 1996) and *Strange Planet* (Emma Kate Croghan 1999) are two such constructed romantic comedies and, as such, are not considered.

The sports element in *Swan Song* is handled in two ways. Greg, due to a childhood trauma at a football game, refuses to have anything to do with the Australian Rules football team, the South Melbourne Swans. When the insolvent Swans are kicked out of Melbourne to Sydney, this has little initial impact on disconnected Greg. Jill, is the daughter of an alcoholic baseball fan. Her father, like many Brooklynites, has never come to terms with the eviction of the Dodgers to Los Angeles in the 1950s. His trauma has impacted Jill's life since the day of her birth, which coincided with the demolition of Ebbets Field, the Dodgers' home ground.

These central characters are a variation on the traditional focus of the sports genre film, which usually centres on athletes rather than fans. Gerry Crawford identifies that sports fans are usually depicted in a negative fashion.

Sport fans are often portrayed as obsessed and dangerous fanatics, such as Gil Renard (played by Robert De Niro) in the 1996 film *The Fan*, or as socially and emotionally immature, such as Colin Firth's character, Paul in *Fever Pitch*. (Crawford 2008: 19).

Contrary to Crawford's assertion, the appeal and the subsequent success of *Fever Pitch* (David Evans, 1997) is in its charting of the male protagonists' journey to maturity and preparedness for relationship. It is Paul's ability, ultimately, to allow that intimate relationship to comfortably co-exist with his passion for his soccer team, that gives the film its satisfactory conclusion. Perhaps more than any other film, *Fever Pitch* demonstrates that though sports and romantic comedy are odd bedfellows, they can also be complimentary team-mates. They have enough in common to create a plausible match.

The centrality of the Australian Rules football setting in *Swan Song* should make for a solid basis that will appeal to Australians' sense of themselves. At the same time, I have been careful to ensure the script doesn't pander to Australian audiences by perpetuating false myths about sport that exclude, rather than include, non-sporting Australians who appreciate the communal aspect of sports fandom.

Part of my objective in writing a script about sports fans, rather than emphasising the teams is to rectify a key failing of the genre: its attempt to reproduce sports events. A film that presents a facsimile of a sports event has two unwanted effects. One is that such films tend to alienate film fans who don't like sports. Secondly such films often disappoint sports fans who have a strong sense of a game's reality from years of seeing the real thing represented on television. Upon recognising cinematic fakery, sports fans tend to disengage from a sports film's narrative. David Thomson has written about director James Toback's attempt to set up a still unproduced basketball film called *Harvard Man*.

Toback had the sense to ask (Leonardo) DiCaprio to show him a few moves on the basketball court. Reality dawned. DiCaprio was suddenly revealed as a rather uncoordinated young man ... basketball is a game on screen where – as with Fred Astaire dancing – you have to show the whole figure doing what he does best. (Thomson 1996: 13)

I have taken great care with my script *Swan Song* to avoid the common pitfalls of the sports genre, while honouring the traditions of romantic comedy. In *Swan Song*'s climax, Greg does get his moment on the field, but it is not supposed to be a time where he surpasses or even equals the athletes around him. Greg is an interloper – an inappropriate insert into the game – and therein lies part of the joke. The

inappropriateness of Greg's presence also touches on a vital point raised by R.W. Connell that despite the masculine aura of sport, 'Most men participate in commercial sport only as consumers, with the aid of TV, snack foods and beer.' (Connell 2000: 189)

Film is a medium that allows us to identify with protagonists who can do what we cannot do, and films that feature sporting triumphs are an excellent example of this. But there is also an aspect of identification in film - and romantic comedy is a genre where this is allowed – where the protagonist does exactly what the audience would do if they were in an identical situation.

Greg journeys toward adopting the roles he has previously rejected: husband; son; sports fan and briefly, albeit comically, even sportsman. Jill's journey is a more complex arc which brings her to love a man who – freed of his troubled relationship with a sporting team – is able to receive her love and respond to it.

A CULTURAL BLINDSPOT

The combination of romantic comedy and the sports genre has rarely been attempted in international cinema including the genre-driven commercial film industry of the United States. Such a concept has never been tackled head on in Australia. Oddly, in Australia, both of these genres have sat in what appears to be a cultural blind spot.

The sports film may have a jinxed reputation, but in the Australian context where sport, particularly Australian Rules football, approaches omnipresence, the sports film's absence as an established genre is

baffling. The absence suggests an aversion at looking at one of Australian culture's dominant forces. Could there be a yet-to-be-identified society-wide fear at work?

A similar cultural phenomenon seems to exist with the other genre represented by *Swan Song*, the romantic comedy. Since romantic comedy is so popular internationally, it is surprising so few Australian attempts at the genre have been made. The successes are fewer still. Debi Enker has suggested that because it is so uncommon for couples to remain united in Australian cinema that it is actually subversive for local film scripts to adhere to the Hollywood 'happily ever after' standard. She cites *Lonely Hearts* (Paul Cox, 1982), *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) and *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992) as key examples of this Australian narrative subversion.

Australians are natural sceptics where love and happy endings are concerned, more at ease with fighters than lovers, more comfortable with stories of male friendship than heterosexual - or overt homosexual - love. (Enker 1994: 222)

It has been argued by Kathrina Glitre that traditional American romantic comedy acted as a way to solve the problem of femaleness (Glitre 2006: 31), with the independent, financially unconstrained woman brought to heel by the more grounded (and often lower class) man. *It Happened One Night*, (Frank Capra, 1934) where Clark Gable's earthy journalist tames the wildcat heiress on the run (Claudette Colbert), set the template for decades of romantic comedies to come.

Warwick Mules makes the suggestion that with Australian films like *Tom White* (Alkinos Tsilimidos, 2004) and *Three Dollars* (Robert

Connolly, 2005) “Masculinity has become the site of a problem, a position once held by the feminine.” (Mules 2009: 213)

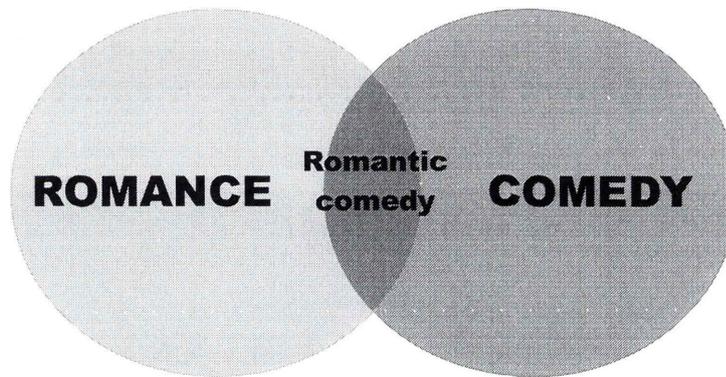
Mules searches in vain for a third masculinity to arise from the ashes of what he calls the “old man” and “new man” values but only finds the “corporate man”. My creative work posits that there are other Australian masculinities to be found and nurtured. This masculinity will allow a man to have sport in his life without playing it, or acting out sport’s capacity for violence in his relationships. Likewise the female protagonist Jill can outgrow the dysfunctional legacy of her father’s tragic love affair with baseball, so that it no longer has a lingering negative affect on her life.

By pushing these genres out from behind the suggested blind spots, I hope to accommodate a masculinity different from the narrow definition usually proffered by Australian cinema.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC COMEDY & SPORTS FILMS

Geoff King observes that ‘Defining romantic comedy as a clear cut genre is difficult, because of the prevalence of both its constituent terms in popular film.’ (King 2002: 51) This encapsulates what many have observed about the genre of romantic comedy and the perennial presence of its elements in commercial cinema. The very naming of the genre is autological. This is illustrated in the following Venn diagram (fig 1.) where the genres of romance and comedy overlap. The larger, or more complete the overlap between these two genres, the clearer a film’s separate identity as a romantic comedy can be seen.

Fig 1. Romantic/Comedy



In contrast, as the next diagram (fig. 2) demonstrates, a thriller, could happily absorb both genres and still maintain its dominant identity as a thriller as is the case in *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959).

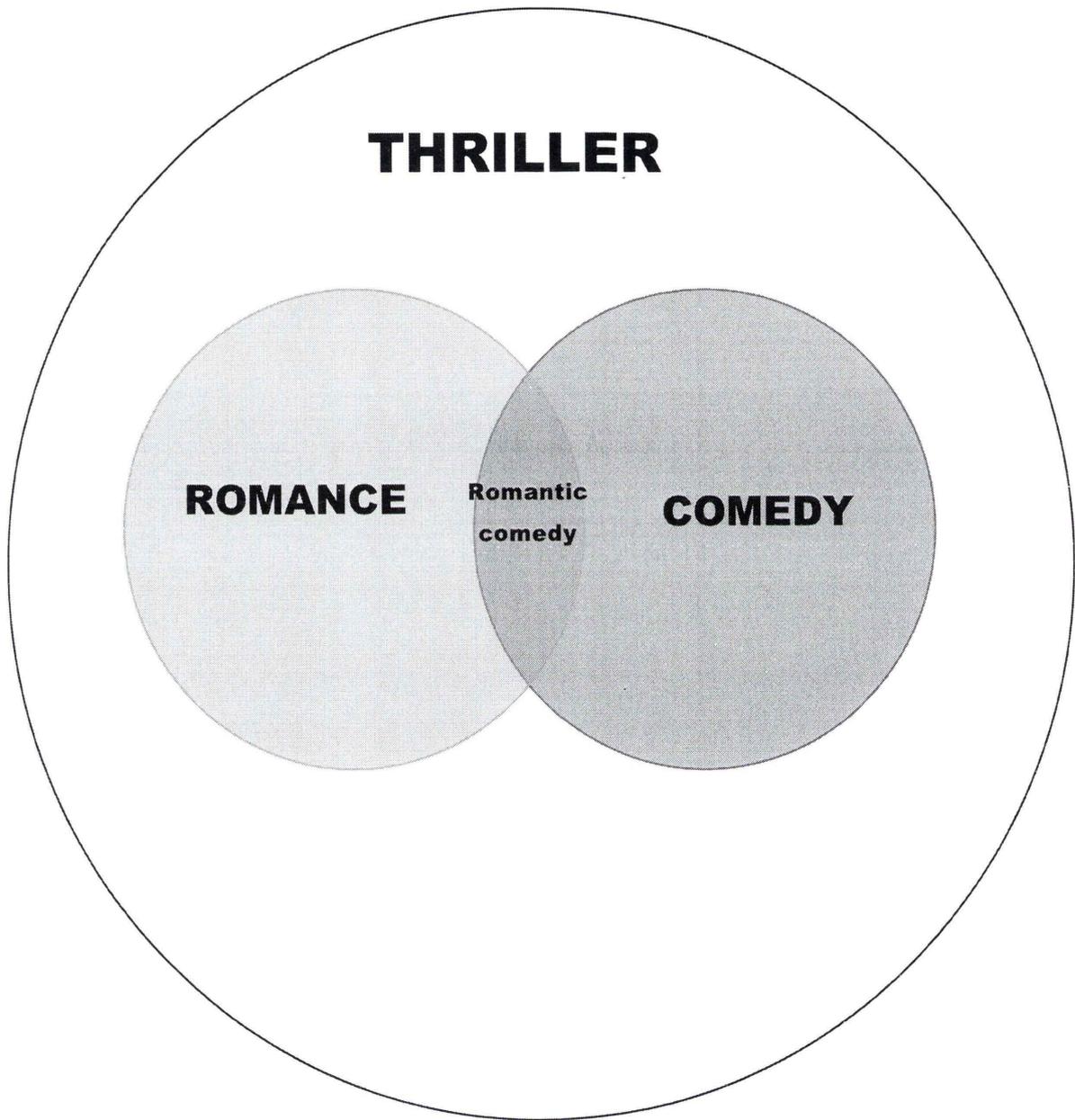


Fig 2 Thriller, Romantic/Comedy

ROMANTIC COMEDY TROPES

Tamar Jeffers McDonald remarks that romantic comedy can – like any other genre – be broken down into visual characteristics and narrative patterns (McDonald 2007: 12-13). For iconography she includes settings which are usually urban; props such as wedding paraphernalia, chocolates, candlelight, and beds. She also identifies stock characters. Examples of this are the best friend whom one, if not both, protagonists confide in. Another stock character is the unsuitable partner, whom a protagonist must reject in order to see that their partner represents their ‘true love’.

While challenging David Shumway’s exclusively heterosexual orientation, McDonald is willing to accept his framework of ‘boy meets, loses, regains, girl’ (Shumway 2003: 157) as a narrative pattern. The most often cited narrative pattern, McDonald puts forward is the scenario which Billy Wilder famously named the ‘meet-cute’. This is the couple’s first encounter which often – but not always - defines the relationship. In the case of *Swan Song*, Greg uses his football prowess gained in childhood to provide Jill with the rescuing male figure she craves. Other narrative patterns McDonald nominates are the masquerade in which a character might pretend to be someone else (used in *Swan Song* when Greg disguises himself as a professional footballer); and the embarrassing gesture in which one of the lovers submits to public humiliation in order to prove their love (used in *Swan Song*’s climactic kiss in the middle of the football field).

While not all of these elements are essential for romantic comedy, they - and other tropes - are common enough to constitute rough rules to the genre. Indeed, McDonald offers that a romantic comedy’s tropes may

differ depending on which sub-genre: screwball; sex; radical; or neo-traditional, that a particular film may belong.

SPORTS FILM TROPES

The sports film also has its individual visual characteristics and narrative patterns, but some of this is disguised due to the multitude of sports presented. Each sport has its required paraphernalia, the ball, the bat, the shoes, the helmet etc. But while these props are interchangeable, some things remain ever-present: trophies; the price of success (often paid by losing, or temporarily losing, a loved one); and the coach who needs to motivate his team or charge. *Swan Song* uses the antique football jumper – part of the game’s paraphernalia - as a motif of family and a team as well as being a trophy. My script also uses the jumper to give the coach his point of inspiration for his pep talk to the Swans team.

To this list of sports genre tropes, Ray Didinger and Glen Macnow in their book about popular sports films also add the last minute victory, when the underdog becomes the game’s winner. (Didinger, Macnow 2009: 11). These motifs are also evident in *Swan Song*’s climactic moments.

ROMANTIC COMEDY and SPORTS – COMMON POINTS

a) CONSERVATIVE

Playing to audience expectations about what should happen, given a set of narrative circumstances, genres are by nature conservative and predictable. Hence for decades a romantic comedy ending was always pre-determined to be the romantic union of the male and female

protagonists. Likewise in sports films, the hero's team would always win in the film's climax.

But, as Thomas Schatz points out, audiences are contradictory in their desires. Audiences not only want something they are familiar with, they also wish to be surprised with new combinations and more complex variations of the original formulas. (Schatz 1981: 16)

For instance, it was not until *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977) that the boy must get the girl rule of romantic comedy was broken. Likewise sports movies once demanded that athletes would always overturn the odds by winning the game/race/match. In *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1975), the protagonist's unexpected defeat against a boxing champ is completely unexpected. In terms of Rocky Balboa's story, the outcome is reduced to a mere sporting result. The more important thematic message is that while victory has been denied, self-respect has been won. However these remain exceptions rather than the dominant genre rule. On the whole, audiences expect a conservative result, but wish to arrive at that pre-determined destination in an original manner.

b) STRUCTURE

The similarity between the two genres is most obvious when considering team-sports movies. In team films like the Australian Rules football movie, *The Club* (Bruce Beresford, 1980), players, the coach and even the club's administrators have their own character arc. The development of their character arcs takes place within the wider narrative arc of the team's story.

Likewise in romantic comedy, couples have their own individual character arc within the story of their joint romance. In this sense, the two genres have similar ambitions. They both portray a wider contest, and the favoured protagonists, the lovers or the sports performer, have their own individual character arcs within the overall structure of the story.

c) MAGIC SPACE

The concept of the magic space has a long tradition in romantic comedy. Celestino Deleyto argues it reaches back as far as William Shakespeare's use of forests and foreign cities as locales for supernatural happenings (Deleyto 2009: 36). In *When Harry Met Sally* (Rob Reiner, 1989) Nora Ephron's script inspired by the films of Woody Allen - imagines New York, particularly the top of the Empire State Building, as a romantic comedy "magic space". New York becomes a transcendent place, glittering, sophisticated and miraculous, where jazz standards always play and true love happens.

This magic space concept finds its echo in the sports genre. A common motif of the sports film is the stadium which is regarded as a sacred place. David Rowe argues:

On and off the screen, sport culture is also always anchored in some way to specific questions of space – the hallowed turf of the stadium, the defined socio-cultural space that produces sport fandom. (Rowe 2008: 32)

A film which differently employs the sports stadium as a magic space is *Blue In The Face* (Wayne Wang, 1995). In this film, the legacy of the Brooklyn Dodgers and their now demolished home ground, Ebbets Field is mourned, celebrated and heralded as a spiritual homeland that

once brought a community together. In the Australian context, David Williamson speaks of similar feelings for the Collingwood football team's home ground in the namesake Melbourne inner-city suburb.

When I was carted off at age five to Victoria Park to barrack for Collingwood, it was like a pilgrim going to Mecca ... Every blade of grass on that oval was sacred. My father told me he wanted his ashes scattered there when he died... (Williamson 2009: 206)

Throughout *Swan Song*, and in particular in its climax, I hope to demonstrate that this shared element of the magic space represents an ideal intersection for the romantic comedy and sports genres. At this intersection I suggest that a supernatural space can contain a number of magic possibilities. It is the intention of *Swan Song* to seduce the traditional romantic comedy viewer to believe that the sports stadium could also hold (romantic) magic for them.

An implied 'rule' of the magic space is that only the privileged can enter it. In the context of sports, the athletes perform on the field while the crowd stay in the stadium. An example of this sanctity is evident in the Japanese sport of sumo wrestling, where the contenders first 'purify' the fighting arena with salt, and the umpire dresses like a Shinto priest. In Australian Rules football, the playing field is guarded by police during the game. However, after the final siren, the sacred ground is flooded with the egalitarian spectacle of youngsters and other football fans playing 'kick-to-kick' as everyday fans commune with their game.

In *Swan Song*, Greg and Jill break the rule of spectators not entering the playing field. Both make that public transgression on

national television in front of a watching crowd. This scene embodies the romantic comedy trope of the public, humiliating gesture of love, with Greg and Jill creating their own magic space for an ephemeral moment in which they *are* the game the crowd/audience watches. This is the moment in my script when the romantic comedy and sports genre synchronise in the magic space. But when the moment is over both Greg and Jill rejoin the crowd as observers – no longer participants - of the sporting rites.

HOLLYWOOD’S ATTEMPTS TO BLEND ROMANTIC COMEDY AND SPORTS

In the United States, there have been a handful of attempts to blend romantic comedy with sports. As it gives a fictional account of how professional gridiron became a respectable sport in the United States of the 1920s, *Leatherheads* (George Clooney, 2008) also offers a screwball comedy romance between a journalist (Renee Zellweger) and a footballer, turned entrepreneur (George Clooney).

Almost the complete oeuvre of Ron Shelton eyes the potential for romantic comedy and sports to overlap. From *Bull Durham* (1988) to *White Men Can't Jump* (1992) to *Tin Cup* (1996), the American writer/director has attempted to blend baseball, basketball and golf, with romance. More often than not Shelton has kept it light enough – and funny enough – for the films to be considered romantic comedies.

But the hybridization of genre can cause an identity crisis for a film. This identity crisis can be most obvious in a film’s marketing which tries to pin down a film’s audience in order to attract that audience. Almost inevitably, one of the genres has the ascendancy. The result is that

fans of one genre are disappointed or worse still alienated, by the scales tipping in the direction of the other genre.

Schatz while discussing the nature of genre and genre films states that:

We should be careful, though, to maintain a distinction between the film genre and the genre film. Whereas the genre exists as a sort of tacit “contract” between film-makers and audience, the genre film is an actual event that honors such a contract. (Schatz 1981: 16)

When a film’s hybridization of genres becomes imbalanced, it can be argued that the contract between the film-makers and the audience has been broken. To keep faith with the respective audiences, it is the duty of a writer who aims to blend genres that the cinematic bridge between hybrids is maintained.

TOO TOUGH FOR ROMANTIC COMEDY?

In academic discussions about the broadening of romantic comedy’s horizons, *Semi-Tough* (Michael Ritchie, 1977) is a regular touchstone. In the course of my argument about combining romantic comedy and sport, this film has particular relevance.

When discussing the film, American film scholar, Brian Henderson (Henderson 1978: 11-23) was concerned that the bringing of sexual innuendo to the surface of a romance demolished the potency – and the delicacy - of romantic comedy tropes. At its romantic comedy centre, the film has two football players (Burt Reynolds and Kris Kristofferson) who platonically share an apartment with the daughter of the team’s owner (Jill Clayburgh). The three-way friendship is disrupted when the woman

begins a sexual relationship with one footballer, thereby arousing the jealousy of the other.

When Henderson famously proclaimed the “death of romantic comedy” (Henderson 1978: 19) he was reacting to *Semi Tough*’s iconoclastic approach to the genre. For instance, not only does the dialogue include the line: “How come we never fucked?” but that line is spoken, not by one of the two football players, but by the woman they both love. Henderson was also disturbed that *Semi-Tough* ends not in marriage, but with a couple still unsure of the form their commitment will take.

If Henderson, had been less shocked by this apparent attack on traditional sexual roles and mores, he might have seen that *Semi-Tough* shares with benchmark romantic comedy, *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940) the prevention of a marriage in order that love may prevail. Of the romantic comedy subset, screwball comedy, Shumway points out:

Unlike Shakespeare’s comedies, for example, which typically end with scenes of multiple weddings celebrated as festivals, screwball comedies typically reject a planned festival, the wedding that does not happen, in favour of a much more private celebration. (Shumway 2003: 88)

Henderson also missed the idea that *Semi-Tough*’s story is about men coming to terms with their love for a woman and doing their best to honour that. Most of all Henderson missed that Woody Allen was revitalising romantic comedy with *Annie Hall* in the very same year that *Semi-Tough* was released. But as Celeyto and McDonald have found, flawed as his argument may be, Henderson’s declaration about the death

of romantic comedy is worth revisiting. As such it has become a touchstone for academia's study of romantic comedy.

Henderson's proclamation drew from a belief that the locker room talk that dominated a film, whose central focus was American football (aka gridiron) had an inbuilt incompatibility with the romance aspect of the romantic comedy genre. The 1970s 'sexual revolution' meant that sexual content previously sublimated with a visual metaphor, such as post-coital cigarette smoking, was brought to the newly uncensored surface. Henderson felt that romantic comedy could not withstand this collision of aggressively sexual and coyly romantic sensibilities.

The post-censorship push to portray nudity and sexuality was a likely factor in why romantic comedy did not feature as a genre in the re-birth of Australian cinema as well. Films like *Alvin Purple* (Tim Burstall, 1973) with their burlesque, aggressive masculine humour had no space for romance. As the contemporary films of American producer Judd Apatow would suggest (*Knocked Up*, Judd Apatow, 2007; *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, Nicholas Stoller, 2008; and *Bridesmaids*, Paul Feig, 2011) the romance must be dominant over the sex for the romantic comedy to remain intact.

In *Swan Song*, I chose to highlight other aspects of sport beyond the obvious – and undeniable – outlet for machismo in favour of other social functions. These other social functions include sport as an agent of social cohesion. I believe when teams are taken as an extension of family, the sports film does allow space for the love tropes found in romantic comedy. Conversely, *Swan Song* also allows for the possibility that sports can still find expression within romantic comedy's own magic space.

Swan Song goes further than the romance inhibiting, soccer obsession of the male protagonist of *Fever Pitch*. In *Swan Song*, the male protagonist not only doesn't play sports, Greg doesn't even want sport to be part of his life. On one level, *Swan Song* is Greg's journey to become an Australian Rules football fan, but his difficulty with football is also a corresponding metaphor for his block to emotional commitment. Unlike the protagonist of *Fever Pitch* who must reduce his sports enthusiasms, Greg is called to increase his interest in football and that level of higher emotional commitment has a direct bearing on his intimate relationship.

DEARTH OF GENRE FILMS IN AUSTRALIA

Genre film-making has had a difficult time gathering faithful adherents in Australian cinema. A recent edition of the AFTRS journal *Lumina* led with an introduction entitled: *Genre is Not a Dirty Word* (Pearlman 2011: 6). The very choice of that title indicates that genre *was* a dirty word and implies some quarters in the Australian film community still need convincing otherwise.

Since the Australian film renaissance in the late 1960s/70s, two genres have dominated. First identified by Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka in their *Screening of Australia* volumes, these genres were: social realism (*Mouth to Mouth*, John Duigan, 1978; *The Fringe Dwellers*, Bruce Beresford, 1986) and what they called 'the AFC genre' after the Australian Film Commission, the primary government film funding body at that time. (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 47)

THE AFC GENRE

The meaning of social realism should be readily understandable, but the 'AFC genre' requires some explanation. Though very different from each other, *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, (Peter Weir, 1975); *My Brilliant Career*, (Gillian Armstrong, 1979); *Careful He Might Hear You*, (Carl Schulz, 1983) and many others were bundled together for their collective tendency to

...fall back on pretty 'period', 'nostalgia' or 'history' films
(...) frequently organised about a strong female character (...)
for example: *We of the Never Never*, *Silver City*, *Emma's War*,
and *For Love Alone*. (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 32)

The AFC films were mostly derived from literary sources and if they were not, posed as if they were. Dermody and Jacka's classification was also adjustable to accommodate films with a masculine focus including *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) and *Gallipoli* (Peter Weir, 1981).

Dermody and Jacka isolated the AFC genre for several reasons. Firstly, for its 'recognisable market identity' at international festivals and at the level of domestic marketing. Less favourably Dermody and Jacka cited the genre for its romantic simplicity, conservative literariness, 'relatively unshaped' stories, motivated by character and interest in 'sensibility' rather than plot. Though often placed in the past, the films had little sense of history, or its political struggles and applied a functional rather than expressive camera where the 'closest thing to *mise en scene* are lyrical pans across picturesque landscape or beautifully dressed interiors'. (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 34)

The international success of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975), gave the Australian film industry the worldwide credibility it had been seeking. The genre films – manifested mainly by the deliberately vulgar ocker comedies like *Alvin Purple* – were consequently pushed aside.

The pushing aside of these films, represent a missed opportunity for romantic comedy in Australia. While the frank (male) sexuality of films like *Alvin Purple*, were not conducive to romance or the feminism of the times, if the comical landscape were maintained it may have been possible for romance to encroach on the established territory and for the romantic comedy genre to take root. However, it was not enough in the mid-1970s for films to be funny - Australian film-making wanted to be taken seriously.

Due to its mysticism, *Picnic At Hanging Rock* was the most atypical of the AFC genre. Yet the gathering of international accolades and local box office appeal made it a logical role model for both filmmakers and Australia's then chief funding body. Despite fundamental misunderstandings about the source of *Picnic At Hanging Rock's* appeal, it came to represent the pinnacle of the AFC genre films that followed in its wake.

GENRE FILMS FIGHT BACK

To provide further context for 1970s Australian cinema's penchant for episodic narrative and often unresolved stories, it must be remembered that even in the dominant American cinema, traditional narratives were breaking down. Contemporaneously with *Picnic at*

Hanging Rock, Robert Altman films such as *Nashville* (1975) and *A Wedding* (1978) found box office success with extended narratives, huge casts and improvisation, while still operating within the Hollywood studio system. If the popular American cinema of the time was looking toward European forms, it is not surprising that Australian cinema also embraced the European art house model with its aversion to narrative closure. It is somewhat more surprising, that when American cinema returned to its decades long adherence to genre rules, that the Australian cinema stayed its established course.

Graham Turner identifies the funding bodies' 'conservative aesthetic' that favours 'literature' (Turner 1993: 102) and its intersection with a nationalistic rejection of Americanism to argue that these cultural tendencies cannot be reconciled with established American genres.

...Like their counterparts in literary fiction, the producers of these Australian films have been suspicious of, and resistant to, the production of 'genre' films--that is, films structured by the narrative codes and conventions of mainstream commercial cinema. While this resistance began breaking down in the 1980s, examples of such films are still infrequent....The twentieth century has witnessed the virtual disappearance of an Australian popular fiction generic forms. (Turner 1993: 102)

The Australian ideological struggle with genre continued with *Mad Max* (Dr George Miller, 1979). One local film culture figurehead, Philip Adams declared his horror at the genre film overtaking his cultural oasis in an article entitled *The Dangerous Pornography of Death* (Adams 1979: 38:41). His dismay is frequently quoted, his acknowledgement of the quality of the film-making is not.

Through sheer brilliance, Dr Miller has not only revived a geriatric genre, but yes he has brought off the impossible. (Adams 1979: 38)

In *Mad Max*'s wake came many cynically made genre films of the schlock horror genre such as *Turkey Shoot* (Brian Trenchard-Smith, 1982). These films thumbed their nose at the earnest AFC genre. The Western found a temporary success in *The Man From Snowy River* (George Miller, 1982) and fish-out-of-water comedy, *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) made a significant international impact to become one of the most popular Australian films ever made. The much more limited success of their respective sequels demonstrates that neither represented a groundswell of genre support.

It is only in the past decade that the Australian genre film began to be regarded favourably either domestically or internationally. The national and state funding bodies began to realise they were missing something when a project by James Wan and Leigh Whannel that was rejected by the Australian Film Commission was subsequently taken to Hollywood and became the multi-million dollar franchise series *Saw* (James Wan, 2004). (Trbic 2004: 45). The success of *Saw* was underlined by the international sales stampede triggered by Australian slasher, *Wolf Creek* (Greg Mclean, 2005) at the American Sundance film festival. The result was a funding re-think by government bodies, which led to the funding of Australian films like the "torture porn" *The Loved Ones* (Sean Byrne, 2009) and the crocodile monster film, *Rogue* (Glen Mclean, 2007). This rebirth of horror films in Australia was further boosted by Madman Entertainment documentary *Not Quite Hollywood* (Mark Hartley, 2008) which mostly used clips from the 1970s and 1980s to promote films in the Madman catalogue.

As a result, genre filmmaking has come to reductively mean thrillers and horror. The danger for Australian film culture is that by embracing these genres which can thrive in an underachieving market, other genres such as romantic comedy will remain neglected in favour of ephemeral shock and awe. In horror and thriller films, the vulnerability of women or men is punished, and pushes audiences further away from the realm of romantic comedy.

AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL – ORIGINS & INFLUENCE

Swan Song is set in the 1980s when the South Melbourne Football Club was moved to Sydney to become the Sydney Swans. This was engineered by the Victorian Football League to complement its national expansion to become the Australian Football League. (Stewart 1983: 110) The corporate mentality that planned to grow the game's influence, acknowledged that without the involvement of Sydney's population of consumers the game could not truly be described as national.

Thirty years on, the results have been mixed, but the Sydney Swans still reside at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Rugby fans may dispute Australian Rules football's place as the country's dominant sport but cannot deny it is Australia's only indigenous sport. The game's origins are a mystery. As Robert Pascoe indicates, it has been traced back to Celtic roots and an Aboriginal game called Marn-grook, with equal uncertainty.

It is ... a historical puzzle how such a unique game could have developed in Australia – a small nation of 18 million people and derivative in most things. (Pascoe 1995: xi)

In 1841, William Thomas a 19th Century advocate for Aboriginal causes observed Wurundjeri men and boys playing a ball game that he found remarkable.

The men and boys joyfully assemble when this game is to be played. One makes a ball of possum skin, somewhat elastic, but firm and strong. ...The players of this game do not throw the ball as a white man might do, but drop it and at the same time kicks it with his foot, using the instep for that purpose. (...) The tallest men have the best chances in this game. (...) Some of them will leap as high as five feet from the ground to catch the ball. The person who secures the ball kicks it. (Brough-Smyth 1878: 176)

Conservative historian Geoffrey Blainey questions the Aboriginal contribution to the game's origins. He points out that:

Ball games have been played, presumably, for thousands of years in many parts of the world. To link those games with modern games requires careful argument and new evidence; but the theory stressing an Aboriginal origin has so far skimmed the task of accumulating evidence. (Blainey 2010: 205)

Blainey places a strong emphasis on white settlement's unwillingness to learn anything from Aboriginal tradition even when it was a matter of survival. The one aspect of the game that Blainey – begrudgingly – does allow as a possible borrowing from Aboriginal sporting traditions is the game's high-flying mark. This feature of the game is celebrated by Mike Brady's jingle turned pop song *Up There Cazaly* and stressed in *Swan Song* by Bill's impassioned speech about the value of the South Melbourne Swans. Blainey does not refer to Marn-grook by name, but is willing to concede that the mark could be derived from the Aboriginal game, as Indigenous players were seen to leap high above the ground in order to catch their ball.

It is just as conceivable that several early exponents of the what became a distinctly Australian form of marking had seen Aboriginals at play in rural areas, gained confidence from watching them and even imitated their style of leaping. (Blainey 2010: 203)

But regardless of the games source(s) it remains Australia's own invention.

The game has travelled internationally but it has never really taken root elsewhere. Pockets of popularity exist beyond Australian shores, but in such instances, the game is usually dependent on the enthusiasm of expatriates.

Celebrating the game as 'one of the greatest achievements of Australian popular culture' Deakin University's Stephen Alomes spruiks its:

...fusion of the creative and the physical, of speed and strength, of subtlety and endeavour, of the aesthetic and the practical, of courage and of stamina, of the individual and the co-operative, despite its occasional moments of disfiguring violence on the field. (Alomes 1994: 48)

All of this makes the game's absence from Australian film culture all the more bewildering. The sport has appeared prominently in Australian cinema only a few times.

AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL ON SCREEN

The Great McArthy (David Baker, 1975) is a manic 'satire' whose financing came too late to benefit from the popularity of ocker comedies, *Alvin Purple* (Tim Burstall, 1973) and, *The Adventures Barry McKenzie*

(Bruce Beresford, 1972). The film centres on a country football star (John Jarratt) kidnapped by the South Melbourne Football Club, and his ensuing fame. Heterosexual relationships are trivialised and played for low-brow laughs. The only sexual relationship not ridiculed is that between footballer McCarthy and a left wing school teacher (Judy Morris). This relationship develops only as the film shifts into a dramatic mode. The story takes an irreverent approach to everything including Australian Rules football.

The Great McCarthy flopped, but did have one admirer according to David Stratton (Stratton 1980: 224). That admirer was playwright David Williamson who soon after wrote his play *The Club* (1977) about the boardroom dealings of an Australian Rules team.

Kristin Williamson's biography of the playwright hits on one reason for the prior absence of Australian Rules football from the arts.

Given the perpetual Australian obsession with sport, it might seem curious that it hadn't been the subject of more plays, novels or films. But the fact was that most people in the arts resented sports ... often because the national gaze seemed fixed on that to the exclusion of everything else. (Williamson 2009: 206)

Like the play, the film of *The Club* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) travelled widely. On stage, *The Club* is an all-male affair transpiring in the un-named club's boardroom. On film, the game is featured, and expands the life of a troublesome, dope-smoking player (John Howard) to include a live-in girlfriend (Maggie Doyle). The female role is perfunctory and adds little to the story. It is neither romantic or comic. As

an all-male vehicle, *The Club* was the least contentious and most popular of Williamson's plays. It also tapped into fears of the fans, who were beginning to realize the consequences of the sport's corporatization.

Cinematically, Australian Rules football dropped from sight for a decade until *The Heartbreak Kid* (Michael Jenkins, 1993). *The Heartbreak Kid* is the story of a high school teacher (Claudia Karvan) who has an affair with an athletic, soccer loving student (Alex Dimitriades). The film's heavy is a macho school teacher (William McInnes) whose belief in Australian football is regarded as indicative of his sexism, racism and parochialism. The film is sometimes erroneously referred to as a romantic comedy, and was described as such during its commercial release for easier marketing. Consideration of the film's dramatic, rather than comedic, foundation and its earnestness about ethnicity reveals *The Heartbreak Kid* to be too sombre to be successfully classified as a romantic comedy.

A further decade-long hiatus of Australian Rules football on cinema screens was broken by *Australian Rules* (Paul Goldman, 2002). The film's drama stems from the way the sport is used to mask societal and racial tensions in a South Australian town. Football itself is demonstrated to be important by the emphasis that both black and white players place on success in the game. On one level, the film does affirm the importance of the sport (in fact, any sport) in Australian society. However, as the ironic title indicates, the film also politicises the football game, making its true subject the Indigenous experience of white racism, rather than the football game itself.

Another film concerned with Aboriginal themes, *Yolgnu Boy* (Stephen Johnston, 2000) shows football in a more positive regard. For Milikia (Nathan Daniels), one of the three Aboriginal adolescent boys featured in the film, Australian Rules football represents a ticket out of the cycle of grinding poverty. The film ultimately posits that connection with the land, and embracing of Aboriginal tribal traditions, is the most spiritual escape from the poverty cycle. However, *Yolgnu Boy* does also allow that sporting prowess can be a potentially positive experience and be an advance on the drug addiction that beleaguers troubled boy Botj (Sean Mununggurr).

It is accurate to depict, as *Yolgnu Boy* does, that Aboriginal males represent a national ‘recruiting pool’ (Rutherford 2004: 65) for Australian Rules football. Historically, Aboriginal men from Polly Farmer to the Krakouer brothers and the so-called Black Swans Michael O’Loughlin and Adam Goodes, have shone as Australian Rules footballers. Nevertheless, in *Yolgnu Boy*, as in *Australian Rules*, football could easily be substituted with any number of sports in which Aboriginal people have excelled such as tennis or athletics to name two.

An aspect of *Yolgnu Boy* that is of greater relevance is the idea of diverse and multiple masculinities. By offering the possibility of choices, the film opens up the reality that there is more than one way to be a man and more than one path toward manhood.

Aboriginal culture’s affiliation with the game is also fleetingly seen as character detail in *Samson & Delilah* (Warwick Thornton, 2009). In this film, Samson (Rowan McNamara) often wears a football jumper and his mates and brothers watch Australian football on TV as respite

from their rock and roll routine. The sport however never has any bearing on the relationship between the two lead characters.

One Australian film that shows the devotion of the Australian Rules football supporter wholeheartedly. The documentary, *The Year of the Dogs* (Michael Cordell 1997), closely interrogates the sometimes tense relationship between the playing of the game and the increasing corporate influence on what was once the province of working class culture.

Like Greg's father who faithfully followed the misfortunes of the South Melbourne Swans in *Swan Song*, in *The Year of The Dogs* an aging woman and her grown daughter - Jenny and Pat Hodgson – are shown to be loyal to the team of their Melbourne local working class district Footscray (later the Western Bulldogs). They remain loyal, even as the club is at risk of being dissolved as a result of impending insolvency. While not examined closely in *Swan Song*, the movement to push the South Melbourne Swans to Sydney and the forced amalgamation of football clubs stemmed from the then Victorian Football League's desire to attract a wider, national consumer base. (Pascoe 1995: 201)

While almost every fictional feature film dallies with romance, documentaries rarely do. In this instance, no matter how unfounded (Footscray kept losing its games) or unrequited, it is clear that the women 'love' their football club. Cordell's film captures the way in which a community rallies around a sports team, and how that team can be seen by fans as a manifestation of their community identity.

Two more cinematic depictions of Australian Rules football deserve mention. Both films are foreign made and are significant for depicting an Australian's devotion to the sport.

The English film *The Hit* (Stephen Frears, 1984) is the story of a hitman (John Hurt) hired to kill retired gangster (Terence Stamp) in Spain. The action moves to a Madrid apartment, where hiding ex-pat Australian criminal Harry (Bill Hunter) is absorbed in video tapes of Aussie Rules games. Realizing he will be killed for witnessing the proposed assassination, Harry chooses to have his beloved football as his dying image as he himself is killed. This sequence catches a devotion rarely granted cinematically to an Australian male in any context.

The last forty minutes of the American film *Funny People* (Judd Apatow, 2009) briefly portrays Australian, Clarke (Eric Bana), a Los Angeles-dwelling male besotted with Australian Rules football club St Kilda. Originally scripted as the American husband of a major character, Bana convinced Apatow to change the character's nationality. The result is an extremely accurate portrait of an Australian male. He is boisterous, friendly, naively though unashamedly racist and can turn violent in a split second. It is only a character sketch, but Bana's creation portrays personality flaws and virtues with an acceptance that contrast markedly with the mean-spirited caricature of William McInnes' teacher in *The Heartbreak Kid*.

These two characters from two non-Australian films exhibit both passion and vulnerability, suitable qualities for romantic comedy.

AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC COMEDIES

The rebirth of Australian cinema occurred at the same time as romantic comedy was in apparent remission in the American cinema. At this point, the definitiveness of closure (boy marries girl; no questions asked) that characterised romantic comedy was out of vogue in many forms of film narrative.

In a mutually exclusive individualism, Australian films have traditionally centered on men *or* women, rather than men *and* women. Enker points out that the majority of memorable Australian cinematic heroes are males who ‘stand apart from the group, perhaps by virtue of their skills as horseman or warriors, rarely by virtue of their prowess as lovers or their capacity as intellectuals.’ (Enker 1994: 214)

The women who have featured as leading characters in Australian films have tended in the words of Dermody and Jacka to be ‘strong, assertive women verging, as in *My Brilliant Career*, on the larrikin’. (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 33) Dermody and Jacka add that in the presence of these strong assertive women, the men are ‘recessive, sensitive in temperament and doomed to failure (including at the box office)’. (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 33)

Even in a rare film that has a successful romance such as *Crocodile Dundee* maleness is privileged. Enker observes of the film’s closing shot: ‘Mick [Dundee] simultaneously embraces his love (Linda Kozlowski) and clasps the hand of a nearby male in a triumphant assertion of the value of masculine teamwork.’ (Enker 1994: 218)

In contrast, one thing that makes Sybylla (Judy Davis) of *My Brilliant Career* such an impressive feminist figure is that her achievement is made more dramatically tangible by her rejection of a handsome, affluent suitor as opposed to the book's less sympathetic male protagonist. (McFarlane, Mayer 1992: 189) With the men and women of Australian cinema tending to remain romantically distant, it is unsurprising that romantic comedy would have difficulty finding fertile ground locally. Some happy marriages (*Return Home*, Ray Argall, 1990; *Dead Calm*, Phil Noyce, 1989) are visible, but if the relationships endure for the entire film they are usually relationships established prior to the beginning of the on-screen narrative. Rarely are successful relationships observed from beginning to an untroubled walk in to the Australian sunset.

1980s AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC COMEDIES

Since the 1970s Australian film renaissance, attempts to make romantic comedy films have been infrequent. In the 1980s, two early attempts at the romantic comedy genre in Australia, *Best of Friends* (Michael Robertson, 1981) and *Breakfast In Paris* (John D. Lamond, 1982) have been dismissed by Brian McFarlane as 'titles to chill the bones of the few people who saw them.' (McFarlane 1987: 110)

Remembered more fondly is *Lonely Hearts* (Paul Cox, 1982) whose amusing scenes probably stemmed from Cox's collaboration with New Zealand humorist John Clarke. The film's fidelity to its drama, particularly the efforts of meek bank clerk Patricia (Wendy Hughes) to escape the controlling grasp of her parents, far outweighs the film's

humorous efforts like the subtle humiliations of Peter (Norman Kaye) at a dating service.

In the deluge of films that came in Australia's 10BA period (after the Federal Government tax break that allowed for substantial investment rebates), romantic comedy was still not seen as worth the risk.

1990s AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC COMEDIES

A renaissance in American romantic comedy came with the international success of *When Harry Met Sally* (Rob Reiner, 1989). Initially, the 1990s also looked more promising for Australian romantic comedy.

Released at the beginning of the decade, *Weekend With Kate* (Arch Nicholson, 1990) in retrospect looks like a missed opportunity for the genre. Despite collecting an AFI award for its central actress Catherine McClements *Weekend With Kate* inspired no imitators. Revisiting the film, it is less surprising. The plot focuses on music industry executive Richard (Colin Friels), and his plan to leave his wife Kate (McClements) during a weekend away in their Pittwater retreat in order to take up with his bossy mistress (Helen Mutkins). Richard's plan is complicated by his having to babysit a self-obsessed touring rock star (Jerome Ehlers) at the house on the same weekend. Both male characters are decidedly charmless cads and are unlikely - as presented - to appeal to women, or men. The men have no respect for women, but still are spineless and powerless in front of them. Regardless of Mick Dundee's conservative character, he has power and even some humility, which both of these men sorely lack.

Similarly, Kate is too sweet for either of the men and it is unlikely she would so readily accept her husband's affair, even if she does have a fling with the visiting rock star to spite him. Kate also lacks the backbone that could make her appealing to men or women.

A couple of months after *Weekend With Kate* was released, it was followed by Australian romantic comedy's most resounding success, *Green Card* (Peter Weir, 1990). The film's origins as an Australian/French/American co-production are partially disguised by its New York setting and two bankable international stars, Gerard Depardieu and Andie McDowell.

Green Card tells the story of Manhattan-residing Bronte (MacDowell), who agrees to marry Georges (Depardieu), a French composer who requires an American working visa (aka a green card) so he can legally reside in New York City. The synopsis makes it sound like a typical American romantic comedy. But as one of the Australian director's rare solo screenwriting credits and with the support of a crew partially comprised of imported Australians, *Green Card* had significant Antipodean input.

Green Card has the emotional depth some Australian romantic comedies aspire to, but doesn't allow that depth to jeopardise its romantic comedy status. In its climax, when the US Immigration Department separates the lovers, the film sows doubt regarding the relationship's future. A teasing lack of closure consistent with other Australian film narratives is played against the happily ever after trope even as the film optimistically implies the couple's reunification.

This suggests Turner's concern about Australian lack of closure and American genre convention can be reconciled.

Green Card also provides a successful example of the magic space which is incorporated into the film's central narrative. As already stated, New York has long been a magic space in American films, but Weir creates other magic spaces within New York. The couple meet at the Afrika Café and the abstract concept of "Africa" (where Georges is allegedly researched music) becomes a place of passion, love and vibrant life. Greenery – present even in the title – is matched with passion – and recurs with a frequency that transcends coincidence. In a sequence that accentuates the connection, Bronte and Georges after studying for their immigration interview in Central Park realize they are late for their appointment. The sudden burst of adrenalin is matched by African-style drumming on the soundtrack. At the same time, the greenery of Central Park dominates the protagonists who are shown small in the frame. A unification of theme and content, this image harks back to the Shakespearean forests where love is possible. At this point in the film the couple become united rather than combative.

The magic space fulfils a similar function in *Swan Song*. Though the protagonists are already in relationship, the question of marriage has brought them into conflict. The script moves them forward to the romantic comedy's magic – and green - space of the sporting arena.

It seems more likely that *Green Card* with its international success rather than the poorly performing box office of *Weekend With Kate* were a spur to film-makers to tackle the romantic comedy. Weir had the advantage of course of an international setting and international stars, but

the proliferation of Australian romantic comedies began in earnest in the 1990s. This also mirrored the revival of the genre internationally in the wake of *When Harry Met Sally*.

Romantic comedies in Hollywood, France and in India, are often made and marketed on the promise of seeing two stars 'fall in love'. *Lucky Break* (Ben Lewin, 1994) is one of the few Australian romantic comedies that qualifies as fulfilling the requirement of two 'star' players. With the recent wedding of its stars Gia Carides and Anthony LaPaglia to aid their public profile, *Lucky Break* came with a true life romantic halo.

Lucky Break is about a polio stricken writer of erotica, (Carides) who in an effort to hide her disability from a jewel thief she admires (LaPaglia), accidentally breaks her leg and inadvertently creates the perfect disguise of immobility. The film is hampered by Ben Lewin's mistaken belief that his own experience with polio gave him freedom to play Sophie's disability for laughs. Carides is not a physical enough performer – nor Lewin a competent enough director - to carry this off. Though the story is built around the romantic comedy trope of a masquerade, *Lucky Break* ultimately, fails as comedy. It is instructive of the delicate balance required to make the genre work. If the romance is taken too seriously, then humour is endangered. However if the attempts at comedy are not successful, the audience is left with a romance that it cannot take seriously.

A more convincing attempt at Australian star matching in local romantic comedy is *Dating the Enemy* (Megan Simpson Huberman, 1996). Claudia Karvan had a national profile due to her child actor status with films like *High Tide* (Gillian Armstrong, 1987) and later *The Big*

Steal (Nadia Tass, 1990) and her crossover film as an adult, *The Heartbreak Kid*. In *Dating the Enemy*, Karvan's co-star Guy Pearce had international interest generated by *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994). The film fulfils both in narrative importance and in 'star quality' the importance of evenly matched protagonists.

Writer/director Huberman exhibits a knowledge of her romantic comedy predecessors, sampling the 'vice versa' cycle of *Switch* (Blake Edwards, 1991) and its man trapped in a woman's body comedy. *Dating the Enemy* also adds the bonus of a woman trapped in a man's body. While *Dating the Enemy's* script had its shortcomings, its actors were able to deliver on the promises of its premise. The actors artfully play with the differences of social styles of Australian men and women to amusing effect. The getting-dressed montage that features both actors in their 'new' bodies, offer equal and genuine laughter as Guy Pearce minces and Karvan walks with a flat-footed stampede. The couple are foisted into the magic space – bickering all the way - by a phase of the moon. The pair are not released from their dilemma until they each accept 'the other'.

In the same year as *Dating the Enemy*, *Hotel de Love* (Craig Rosenberg, 1996) presented a duel between two brothers. Handsome and cool Rick (Aden Young) and always feeling second best Stephen (Simon Bossell) vie for the attentions of their childhood sweetheart, Melissa (Saffron Burrows). *Hotel de Love* suffers as romantic comedy because it chooses to place the relationship between the brothers at the narrative's centre rather than the relationship either of them wish to have with the woman they both love.

In *Swan Song*, I ensure that despite the masculine associations of football, the romance between the male and female protagonist remain central.

One series of scenes that does make *Hotel de Love* worthy of note concerns the bedroom shared by the parents of the brothers. These scenes provide a satirical view of the convergence of the magic spaces of romantic comedy and sports. The titular hotel has a series of themed rooms for its lovers. One room has an Australian Rules football theme, which places a bed at the centre of the field/room. The walls are adorned with a crowd of on-lookers from the ‘grandstands’ and the room even has a goal umpire brandishing erect twin flags in acknowledgement of a goal. For aging husband Jack (Ray Barrett) the room is fun. For his alienated wife Edith (Julia Blake) – and the audience is encouraged to share her perception - the room is a despairing joke representing a mismatching of magic spaces.

Swan Song aims for the opposite effect to bring the sporting and romantic comedy concepts of the magic space together as a congruent whole. My script aims to affirm that the gap in perceptions and expectations between men and women can be traversed, and that love will provide a bridge between the two. The magic space of the Sydney Cricket Ground presented in *Swan Song*'s climactic moments offers the kiss that will seal Greg and Jill's shared happily-ever-after destiny. At the same time the pair are initiated into a wider community of Swans fans. Both Greg and Jill will be healed from their father wounds: Greg loses his guilt over the emotional link between his father's death and football; Jill still exhibits alcoholism, but achieves a sense of connection

compensating for her sense of dislocation carried over from her father's traumatic experience of the Dodgers being evicted from Ebbets Field.

The next attempt at romantic comedy in 1990s Australia was *Thank God He Met Lizzie* (Cherie Nowlan, 1997). Ostensibly, a comedy about a wedding ceremony, Nowlan's film has at its centre the marriage of lonely Guy (Richard Roxburgh) to beautiful, rich Lizzie (Cate Blanchett). As the chaotic wedding ceremony and reception unfold, Guy is haunted by memories of a failed relationship almost a decade before. Guy's prior relationship ended because of his unwillingness to co-operate with the desire of his then partner (Frances O'Connor) to progress beyond co-habitation to parenthood.

The script's comedic potential is continually undermined by its emotional soul-searching. A dour coda, with Lizzie and Guy as parents, underlines why the comedy doesn't work. The film's cynical approach rejects an affirming view of relationships consistent with romantic comedy tropes. Bluntly, the film believes that relationships aren't really funny, but ultimately tragic. Allowing the couple to have their marriage places *Thank God He Met Lizzie* in the same category as films such as *Lonely Hearts* that Enker identified as 'relationship subversive' in the Australian context. However, in *Thank God He Met Lizzie* the marriage is portrayed – despite shining sun, material wealth and healthy children – as a soulless hell. In this sense, the film wants to debunk the genre – a perfectly acceptable creative aim - but it lacks the compassionate eye toward human foibles that can successfully blend laughter and cynicism. This also demonstrates the reason romantic comedy has traditionally postponed weddings rather than ending with them.

The tension between wanting to belong to the romantic comedy genre and the desire to debunk it, also creates problems for *Paperback Hero* (Anthony Bowman, 1999). In Bowman's film, truck driver Jack (Hugh Jackman) tests out plot twists for his romance novels while driving with his cattle dog. Ruby (Claudia Karvan) is the not very literate, manager of an outback trucking station who has known the truck driver since she was a young girl. Not believing a truck driver will be acceptable as a romance writer, Jack uses Ruby as a front to a visiting publisher (Angie Milliken) to market his soon to be published romantic novels. Though the execution is average, it is an acceptable enough romantic comedy plot.

Paperback Hero runs into difficulty with its depiction of Ruby's fiancée Hamish (Andrew S. Gilbert). Romantic comedy heroines with suitors and even husbands that need to be discarded are a staple of the genre. Actor Ralph Bellamy played the milquetoast suitor role so often (*The Awful Truth*, Leo McCarey, 1937; *His Girl Friday*, Howard Hawks, 1940) that the role is now generically known as the Ralph Bellamy role. In these successful examples of the genre the 'Ralph Bellamy character' is a buffoon.

In *Paperback Hero* there is a palpable woundedness that the script and Gilbert's chip on the shoulder performance brings to Hamish's character. As the film takes Hamish and his feelings seriously, audiences know the uniting of Jack and Ruby will be painful for Hamish. And how can audiences laugh when they've been encouraged to feel his pain?

In contrast, *Swan Song* provides Jill with a predatory suitor who cannot be taken seriously. It is the function of Greg's manipulative work

colleague Brian, to up the stakes of the comedy and to represent a comic obstacle from which Jill must escape.

Near the end of *Paperback Hero*, the requisite laughter is sacrificed for an ill-conceived attempt to offer Hamish dignity. Jack, realising that Ruby loves him, is driving in his truck to see her. Hamish, realising he's been passed over, is driving away in his ute. As their paths cross, Hamish and Jack stop their vehicles opposite each other. Each leans out of their vehicle window to share a matey and dramatically convenient exchange that undermines the genre trope by paying a token interest in Hamish's pain before dismissing him.

McDonald refers to the importance of tears in romantic comedy. (McDonald 2007: 10) She says tears can be important in romantic comedy because of the mixed emotions they both depict and elicit. Nevertheless, it would seem that in the case of *Paperback Hero*, Hamish is allowed to crack, but he's not allowed to break. He's not allowed to cry. Men are still straight-jacketed by the personas foisted upon them. Contrary to the established trope, the film shows Hamish in too realistic a light. This is in direct contrast to the levity of a typical Ralph Bellamy role where that suitor is designed to be rejected but never reveals sufficient depth of feeling or intelligence to warrant sympathy.

There is nothing wrong with films that break genre rules or expand genre boundaries. This, as has been argued, is what audiences crave. The difficulty is that audiences also crave fidelity to what the genre has offered before. As Australia doesn't have a genre-based cinema, the training ground doesn't exist for writers to be fluent in the rules that they are breaking. The other difficulty is that the successful breaking of genre

rules requires trust. The Australian film industry has yet to prove to Australian audiences, or even to itself, that it is comfortable with the genre perimeters. It is difficult to convince audiences to take a new direction if it has not been previously established that you know where you are going.

AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC COMEDY – 2000 ONWARDS

After *Paperback Hero* it was a full decade before another Australian romantic comedy was attempted. Drawing on the films of Judd Apatow, and Richard Curtis, *I Love You Too* (Daina Reid, 2010) was written by and co-starred television personality Peter Helliar. Also featuring popular actor Brendan Cowell and fashion model Megan Gale, *I Love You Too*, hoped to draw on all of their fan bases but collected on none. Two elements that undermined the film's narrative success were the choice to portray the central male protagonist as emotionally and intellectually childish and mismanagement of the magic space concept.

In *I Love You Too*, the male protagonist Jim, (Brendan Cowell) is depicted as emotionally stunted. This is evidenced by his obsession with superhero costumes and his job driving a miniature locomotive. These elements appear to be designed to establish his boyish qualities, an alleged Peter Pan charm which could attract the female protagonist Alice (Yvonne Strahovski). However, this rationale for Alice's motivations are undercut by Cowell's literal interpretation of Jim's emotional retardation. It is hard to believe that Alice finds the infantile Jim attractive at all. Instead of the harder work of dramatising an emotional state, Cowell plays Jim as if intellectually disadvantaged. Accordingly, the subtlety of

the inhibition real men can experience when trying to express their emotions within a relationship is denied.

While many of the behaviours exhibited by romantic comedy protagonists are childish, the genre is typically a journey to the maturity that partnership, or marriage, requires. In *Swan Song*, Greg is still emotionally stuck in childish behaviours such as the tantrums he exhibits when frustrated at work or fixing a car. Similarly, Jill returns to drinking to mute her frustration and solve her problems by regressing to a childish, drunken state.

In *I Love You Too*'s finale, the miniature train park in which Jim works is treated as a magic space. Yet, throughout the film the train park is portrayed as a place from which Jim must escape if he is to reach maturity. If he does not grow up, Jim's romantic dreams will not be fulfilled. After Jim has allegedly left his emotional immaturity behind by being vulnerable enough to utter the titular phrase, the finale returns the narrative to the train park. Contrary to its previous representation, the train park is now presented as a carefree space that both lovers can inhabit for their wedding. This cavalier and confusing use of the magic space – where love and other miracles can happen – contradicts the film's earlier suggestion of the train park as a place of immaturity for Jim. It cannot be both and consequently reinforces the idea that Jim has not yet grown up.

I have been careful in *Swan Song* to ensure that the magic space, the hallowed football ground retains its sanctity as a sporting and romantic arena. It is here that the narrative reaches both its dramatic and emotional climax and their union brings closure to their issues with

intimacy. Jill's maturity may still be in doubt, but the fact that Greg has overcome his obstacles is reinforced by the appearance of his father as a 'blood stained angel'.

AUSTRALIAN ROMANTIC COMEDIES - OVERVIEW

Less than a dozen Australian romantic comedies have been produced in the forty years since the Australian film revival of the 1960s and 1970s. Few films in this short chronological list would even be remembered by the Australian public. As a result the inability of romantic comedy to achieve its own listing on the contents page of *Films In Australia: an introduction* (Moran, Vieth 2006: vi) is unsurprising. Moran and Vieth unceremoniously place romantic comedy as a sub-category of the wider non-specific category 'comedy'. But as the previous discussion indicates, though often flying beneath the radar – sometimes disastrously – the genre has been there.

It can be argued that the romantic comedy has always been part of the Australian cinematic landscape. One of the most successful – both nationally and internationally - Australian films ever, *The Sentimental Bloke* (Raymond Longford, 1919) is a romantic comedy that predates the identification of the genre. The emphasis on 'the bloke' is a significant starting point to argue against the idea that a successful romantic comedy cannot feature an Australian male.

MASCULINITY AS PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

What then are the obstacles preventing Australian romantic comedy from succeeding? Film scholar Brian McFarlane writes of dances

in country towns where men and women lined the walls of a local hall, unwilling and barely able to communicate.

It was not a situation to encourage the challenges of relationship but it may be symptomatic of certain aspects of Australian-ness which account for the failure of most Australian films to take the emotional life seriously. By this I mean a reticence in expressing feeling, not on grounds of British reserve, but because you might feel a fool if you tried to be articulate. (McFarlane 1987: 111)

The fear of foolishness that paralysed those men can find its expression in inarticulate violence or a withering humour that threatens violence. In her examination of *Wake In Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971), Kate Jennings identifies that ‘underneath the vaunted easy-going surface of Australians is a deforming truculence, an ugly snarkiness’. (Jennings 2009: 42)

The ugly, sarcastic side of Australian humour that gleefully punctures sacred cows in the ocker genre is poisonous to the concept of romantic comedy. This tone can be detected in *Muriel's Wedding* (P.J. Hogan, 1994). Muriel's triumph over her Porpoise Spit peers comes in the close-up of betrayed bride Tania (Sophie Lee) when her contorted face screeches into the camera: ‘I'm beautiful’. As intended, the woman is anything but at this point.

Similarly, there is no space for generosity or love in the films collectively referred to as the ‘glitter cycle’ (*Strictly Ballroom*, Baz Luhrmann, 1992; *Muriel's Wedding*, P.J. Hogan, 1994; *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, Stephan Elliot, 1994). While *Wake In Fright* held up an untarnished mirror to an Australian society too horrified to gaze upon

itself, the glitter films pose as kitsch and utilize a narrative sleight of hand to convince Australian audiences that they are not the people being satirised. Unlike the romantic comedies they are often erroneously bracketed with, the ‘glitter cycle’ films are energised by fear and loathing, rather than love, acceptance or notions of community.

For the romantic comedy genre to flourish in Australia, scripts need to be expressive of love, not damning of their imagined enemies. If any of the glitter films had been able to show compassion toward their satiric targets, they may have provided a genre stepping stone to a domestic romantic comedy.

Similarly, Australian sports films like *The Club* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) – even as they eventually celebrate sports - are tainted with disappointment at how an idealistic and joyful pastime has been corrupted by money and power. There is no denying sports’ ugly violent side or its corporatisation, but to focus exclusively on those negatives is to wilfully exclude the benefits of sport as an agent of social cohesion. Like romance, Australian Rules football is a team sport that can offer pleasure as well as pain.

MASCULINE STEREOTYPES IN AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

In terms of their love of Australian Rules football, the foreign-realised Australian characters of *The Hit* and *Funny People* hint at greater depths than their domestically-realised counterparts. These films indicate that there is still much unexplored territory, with greater depth and emotional resonance, still waiting beyond the Australian masculinity of the angry men of *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (Fred Schepisi, 1978)

or *Wolf Creek* (Greg Mclean, 2005) or the untarnished heroes like *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) or *The Man From Snowy River* (George Miller, 1982). Connell catches what the representation of Australian males in cinema often misses:

Normative definitions allow that different men approach the standards to different degrees. But this soon produces paradoxes (...) Few men actually match the 'blueprint' or display the toughness and independence acted by [John] Wayne, [Humphrey] Bogart or [Clint] Eastwood. This is picked up by film itself, in spoofs such as *Blazing Saddles*, [Mel Brooks, 1974] and *Play it Again, Sam*, [Herbert Ross, 1972] What is normative about a norm hardly anyone meets? (Connell 1995: 70)

Notably, Connell cites comedies including the Woody Allen romantic comedy *Play It Again Sam* as influential in debunking male mythologies. In contrast, the embrace of thrillers and horror like *Wolf Creek*, and more recently 'true crime' films like *Animal Kingdom* (David Michod, 2010) and *Snowtown* (Justin Kurzel, 2011) provide more death, more fear and most discouragingly, despair. In contrast, an Australian romantic comedy involving sport, in which characters transcend the limitations of dysfunctional parenting, may offer audiences a chance to encounter other masculinities and to be reconnected to a wider sense of community.

AUSTRALIAN PROJECTIONS

In his unpublished thesis, *Screened Australianess*, Martin Harbus examines Australian cinema from 1945 to 2007. Harbus' starting point is that Australian cinema is a projection of the Australian populace, just as Siegfried Kracauer in his influential work *From Caligari To Hitler*,

posited that the cinema of 1920s Germany was a projection of a population who were ready to embrace Nazism. Dermody and Jacka dismissed Kracauer's work as 'romantic and fatalistic' (Dermody, Jacka 1988: 16) but the idea still holds considerable sway. Applying Kracauer's principle in the Australian context, Harbus draws on a very small sample of films to outline markers of Australian film culture that have not changed much over the history of Australian cinema. Harbus's key reference point is what he calls the 'representative referential regime'. The five markers of this are:

Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism), gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space), ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeneity), the landscape (including the anxieties of belonging to the place and class (including notions of 'the battler' and 'the Ocker'). (Harbus 2009: 18)

From the post-war work of Charles Chauvel onwards, Harbus makes a strong case for an entrenched Australian conservatism reinforced politically by the mid-1990s election of John Howard. In some respects, the markers are inescapable, but some have greater resonance than others. Ethnicity is not an issue addressed by *Swan Song*, but if the script is ever filmed, it would be a grievous error given the multicultural mix of the real life Sydney Swans not to have some Indigenous players amongst the football team Greg meets.

Given that *Swan Song* is an urban tale, rather than being preoccupied with an 'outback' most Australians have never seen, landscape is also an unlikely issue. However, the magic space concept as represented by *Swan Song* inherently opposes the frequently expressed idea of Australians surviving an inhospitable environment. The magic

space suggests a benevolent landscape, where supernatural forces (the wedding rings, the reappearance of Greg's father as an angel) make things happen and the only true obstacles are the characters themselves. But in acknowledgement of Harbus' emphasis on how landscape affects class, I envisage Greg belonging to a lower middle class family residing in Melbourne's outer suburbs.

The concept of Australian values with its emphasis on egalitarianism, has been extended since Donald Horne addressed it in *The Lucky Country*. (Horne 1976: 32) Harbus argues that mateship is no longer exclusively male or Anglo-Celtic. Instead he says that 'full cultural membership is nevertheless open to all (on a sliding scale of difficulty) if they can learn and take on that 'knowledge' and the power of belonging (to Australia and Australians) that comes with it' (Harbus 2009: 308). No matter what the actual reality, most societies claim a sense of fairness and kinship. Horne stresses that mateship though egalitarian and sometimes naïve, is also essentially pragmatic. Like Greg's enlisting of Brian's help to look after Jill, it can be a short-term marriage-of-convenience developed to survive adversity. In the romantic comedy space that adversity could be nothing more than the problem of being an unattached single person.

THE TREACHEROUS MATE AND ROMANTIC COMEDY'S BEST FRIEND

In a deliberate avoidance of a standard romantic comedy trope where each protagonist has a best friend with whom they consult for lovelorn advice, Greg is cut off from the mateship of masculinity. Greg's business rival Brian, who poses as his 'mate' is *Swan Song's* key example

that not all Australians operate on the 'fair go/mateship' level. Brian ostensibly fits the genre trope of a protagonist's confidante but he is motivated by money, power and sex and doesn't care if his triumphs come at Greg's expense or not. Contrary to romantic comedy's precedents, as a confidante, Brian's advice is not to be trusted. Accustomed to being a loner, Greg is forced - with true love as his guiding star - to find his own way. In contrast, Jill's matching confidante, her AA sponsor, is portrayed as completely trustworthy.

GENDER AS A KEY MARKER OF AUSTRALIAN FILM

In the context of this exegesis and its examination of romantic comedy and sport, the most relevant aspects of Harbus' 'referential representational regime' is gender.

In addressing hyper masculinity in Australian cinema, Harbus considers obvious examples such as *Crocodile Dundee* and *Mad Max*. But he also isolates other less obvious examples, like the malevolent father (Bill Hunter) of *Muriel's Wedding*, who is more an object of barbed satire than a role model. In contrast to this flawed figure, Greg's father Bill, whose imperfections are indicated by his life-threatening association with tobacco and alcohol, is clearly portrayed as both loved and loveable. Similarly Jill, through her alcoholism, re-enacts her own father's pain about his loss of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Greg's character is marbled with an unspoken guilt that he has spiritually 'killed' his father, but Greg doesn't repeat his father's flaws, he reacts to them in an atypical way. For Jill, Greg clearly represents a straight reliable type who can be trusted not to act like the drunken man her father was during her childhood.

Following Kracauer's lead, Harbus mainly discusses films that are unconscious in their addressing of masculinities and affirming of negative role models. However some Australian films have placed Australian masculinity at their centre, without needing to problematise it with defeatist resignation. Connell's concept of multiple masculinities, indicates that men have a choice in regards to their ways of being. Furthermore, Connell writes of any masculinity having the potential for change, and that masculinities (and by extension femininities and gender relations too) are always changing. But Connell also guardedly warns against too much idealism and optimism in regards to those choices.

It is important to recognize that differing masculinities are being produced. But to picture this as a marketplace, a free choice of gender styles would be misleading. These 'choices' are strongly structured by relations of power. (Connell 2000: 137)

Martin Crotty in his study of Australian middle-class masculinities in the latter 19th Century and early 20th Century, explores masculinity choices engineered by society at that time. Crotty examines the way the concept of Australian maleness moved in unison with English norms of masculinity away from spiritual guidance, and intelligence, towards an aggressive nationalism and militarism that suited the times (The Boer War and World War I). In addition to this, Crotty also notes that Australian masculinity was a further reaction and rebellion against English masculinity.

The glorification of the bush was essentially the product of a new generation of artists and writers, almost all Australian born, who rebelled against what they saw as an outdated and stale cultural world which they identified with Europe. They sought to promote a new and vital culture as the 'real' Australia. (Crotty 2001: 20)

Crotty points out that sport, with its pre-requisite need for wide open spaces, was a 'natural' part of Australian life. Prior to 1900, sport represented concepts like 'fair play, loyalty, acceptance of victory, and defeat, fortitude, discipline and obedience'. Crotty adds that sport didn't lose those meanings after 1900, 'but the meanings themselves were more allied to militarism, and sport thus increasingly came to mean preparing for war'. (Crotty 2001: 88).

But what can be structured, can also be unstructured. Despite how overwhelming or formidable it may appear, no power – including masculine hegemony – is eternal or impervious to change. In fact by the very act of presenting an oppositional force – seemingly invincible powers can have their might diminished or their momentum and direction altered.

POSITIVE MALE MASCULINITIES IN AUSTRALIAN FILM

In her article *Negotiating Masculinities: Yolngu Boy*, Leonie Rutherford isolates how the film *Yolngu Boy* presents three differing masculinity paths for the three Aboriginal protagonists in the film. They are a) spiritual and traditional knowledge, b) sporting prowess and possible celebrity, and c) addiction and self-destruction. Rutherford concurs with Connell's concept of diverse and multiple masculinities.

Within the one school, or workplace, or ethnic group, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using a male body. (Connell 2000:10)

As *Yolngu Boy*'s narrative illustrates, not all of the choices are positive ones. The aggressive self-destruction of the character Botj (Sean Mununggurr) is fatal – but the story does insist that there are choices. The aggressive Botj is shown as a leader and a risk-taker. But as life presents challenges, *Yolngu Boy* endorses the more spiritual path of Lorrpu (John Sebastian Pilakui) with his honouring of Aboriginal tradition, as the safer, wiser way to mature manhood. The film is more reserved when it comes to drawing conclusions about the football obsession of Milika (Nathan Daniels). The film is emphatic in its demonstration that the self-destructive path is not just a danger to the male practicing it, but can also be dangerous for anyone nearby, male or female.

Yolngu Boy's narrative allows for the three styles of masculinity to co-exist in friendship, but also clearly depicts the tensions between them. Connell identifies that despite not being the most common form of masculinity, 'a hegemonic form of masculinity [is] the centre of the system of gendered power' (Connell 2000: 216) but that not all males succumb to this hegemonic form willingly.

Large numbers of men and boys have a divided, tense or oppositional relationship to hegemonic masculinity... at the same time, however, the very hierarchy of masculinity may give other groups strong motivation for change. (Connell 2000: 217)

In *Yolngu Boy*, Lorrpu's experience of Botj's destructive behaviour is part of his 'strong motivation for change'. This negative

example of masculinity is partially responsible for pushing Botj toward his embrace of tribal values and the positive outcomes it offers.

A film primarily designed for Indigenous children, *Yolngu Boy* finds its white, adult, inner-city echo in *Men's Group* (Michael Joy, 2006). A portrayal of the type of male encounter group that became fashionable during the early 1990s men's movement, *Men's Group*, presents a gathering of men for whom the dominant hegemonic masculinity has not worked. In times of fear or anger, some of the characters do attempt to use violence or intimidation as a means of restoring the hegemony, but because of the therapeutic environment in which the assertion of power is exercised, this tactic fails. The film – largely improvised by the actors - is interested in what transpires in the psyche of the men it portrays. As each character has his tolerance of difference increased, his willingness to change his own self-destructive behaviours is likewise increased.

This male encounter group concept was recently dramatised in *Mad Bastards* (Brendan Fletcher, 2011). In *Mad Bastards*, Texas (Greg Tait) is an Aboriginal policeman who works on a daily basis with a rural Aboriginal community affected by violence and alcoholism. He creates a group for the town's Aboriginal men to talk about their issues, in the belief that communal talk will offer the psychic relief that violence and drinking do not.

The men's inability to talk frankly is initially portrayed as funny. It becomes a running joke that underlines the solemnity of, and a possible solution to, the film's main drama. Texas' conviction and his, mostly implied, backstory suggests the policeman knows what it is like to change self-destructive choices. This creates an upbeat finale that makes an

optimistic case even for prison recidivists like TJ (Dean Daley-Jones) who was rejected as dangerous by his own family. In some ways TJ's dilemma could have been the grown up story of *Yolngu Boy's* Botj.

Despite the late arrival to the topic of men's groups, which fascinated media outlets a decade-and-a half-earlier, both *Men's Group* and *Mad Bastards* indicate that changes in masculinity, and representation of that change, is possible. The very representation of men exploring their masculinity with a view to change, may suggest that cinematic expression - in admittedly marginal films - of that societal change is already underway.

If men of Australian drama are finding their vulnerable voice, romantic comedy may be closer to the zeitgeist than past history indicates. Romantic comedy is well-known for employing slapstick devices such as people falling over (McDonald 2007: 118) but it is also well-known for its capacity for talk. Characters often talk obsessively to avoid the words 'I love you' or to avoid the emotional space where no words are necessary. Comfortable with words and dialogue, *Swan Song* provides a bridge for on-screen male characters who are edging closer toward expressing their feelings like those in *Men's Group* who aimed to be at ease talking about their emotions.

THE IDEALISED MAN AND ROMANTIC COMEDY REALITY

Swan Song is less pointed than either *Mad Bastards* or *Men's Group* in its rejection of the darker expression of masculinity that Harbus argues has dominated Australian post-war cinema. *Swan Song's* exaggerated depiction of Brian as being motivated by money, power and

sex disqualifies him from being regarded as reliable either as mate or lover. His smooth style may fool Greg and pose a sexual threat to Jill but the script never really allows the possibility that Brian's manipulations will be viewed favourably. Greg and Brian's boss Jennifer – a far superior manipulator - doesn't fall for Brian's act, even if she does enjoy his sexual favours.

In *Swan Song*, the footballers themselves are idealised and the Coach, while depicted with some humour, also has a godly aura as if they all operate in a masculine sphere higher to Greg. They are not regarded as accessible or attractive to Jill, or even Bond's lusty daughter Romy. The Swans players are presented as idealised sportsmen. They are an embodiment of a concept more consistent with the advertising that promotes Australian sport, rather than the murky sports world of tabloid reporting where alcoholic excess and sexual exploitation of women, willing and otherwise, is rife. This idealising of sports figures is consistent with the idealism of romantic comedy. To portray something more realistic would be to poison the magic space and betray the romantic comedy – just as Henderson feared the aggressiveness of sports did with *Semi-Tough*.

In Greg's brief moment of football glory, *en route* to his pursuit of Jill, the grown man is reunited with his childhood dreams of sporting glory and reconnects with the inspiring facet of the athletic myth. Likewise, the first blaze of love can resemble a pleasurable epiphany which takes the lover to dizzying heights, such as the final denouement which takes place in the magic space. But Greg's double epiphany also heralds a return to everyday experience. The very purpose of the spiritual transcendence is to ground the individual for adventures yet to come.

Greg's rebellion against his father is linked to Bill's death and he finds himself in conflict with things his father loved, including The Swans football team, but Greg learns to embrace the team his father loved, and to vicariously embrace the communal manhood it represents. While Greg gets a taste of being a football hero, he has no illusions that he can actually become a football star. It is merely a performance to demonstrate his love for Jill. In an acknowledgement that both the absence of men, and men's issues, can create issues for women, I've portrayed Jill as adversely affected by her father's unresolved grief about the eviction of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

For most of *Swan Song* Greg, is linked in a positive way, to the nurturing of women, particularly his mother. It is the father absence that creates Greg's dilemma in that he is denied – then rejects – opportunities to resolve his issues with his own maleness and his place in his community.

As observed when discussing Crotty's work on late 19th and early 20th Century Australian masculinities, under the right circumstances, masculinity – including its relationship to sport – can change. One requirement of new change in the 21st Century is the cinematic representation of alternative masculinities. If international success for films like *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Strictly Ballroom* or *Wolf Creek* are enough to initiate an imitative cycle of films that sustain a genre for a number of years, then a successful Australian romantic comedy, loaded with a subject of proven interest to men, could prove a boon for different masculinities in Australian cinema and may initiate an imitative cycle of Australian romantic comedies.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this exegesis, I have looked at the rare representations of Australian Rules football and romantic comedy in Australian cinema over the past forty years. Defining these topics as sitting within a cinematic blind spot, I examined reasons why this domestically popular sport, and the romantic comedy film genre have been absent from Australian cinema, despite their wider popularity beyond the Australian film landscape.

I have sought to identify what has prevented Australian romantic comedies from acquiring popularity equal to the American romantic comedies embraced by Australian audiences. Looking at the local attempts at the genre, I examined where previous efforts have been flawed in their approach and subsequently applied this knowledge to enhance my script *Swan Song*.

As identified, Australian cinema has proved difficult terrain for genre film-making of many kinds, despite the established popularity of genre films with the Australian public. By bringing together an odd bedfellow combination of genres never previously produced in Australia, and rarely successfully combined in the American cinema, *Swan Song* has taken a difficult path. Such difficulty is consistent with the desired experiments in film genres that audiences crave. In order to experience the genres as fresh, audiences require new variations within the accepted constraints of already favoured narrative patterns. As the romantic comedy is in itself a hybrid form of the romance and comedy, the genre's very existence is an indicator of audience's agreement to sample new forms.

Few local film-makers have chosen to navigate romantic comedy's tropes, which means there are few local precedents to follow. Australian cinema has demonstrated a general lack of interest in representing the mutual journey of men and woman in a successful romance, and has shown a tendency toward humour that belittles, rather than uplifts, the human spirit. As indicated by McFarlane and others, there are issues of fear-of-intimacy here that pertain to representations of vulnerability. As a result, local cinema has locked itself into limited and limiting representations of Australian maleness.

Men and women have separate issues and it is perfectly acceptable to have films that address those issues separately to satisfy the viewing needs of male and female audiences. However it is the reluctance to look at the intimate interactions of men and woman in a positive light that is a large obstacle for romantic comedy in Australia cinema. Growing out of the discussion about men and women in romantic comedy, the exegesis considered the problematising of maleness in Australian cinema, examining how male stereotypes have presented difficulties for the development of local romantic comedy.

While recent local films have tended to problematise maleness, this exegesis has argued by its presentation of overseas filmic representations of Australian men and the tenuous nudging toward men expressing emotions in films like *Mad Bastards*, that the issue of Australian masculinity need not be a block to the concept of a local romantic comedy. Building on these examples, I believe that *Swan Song* is evidence that a successful romantic comedy is possible. It has been my argument that the odd bedfellows of romantic comedy and football – can

co-exist on Australian film screens. Ultimately, the script's depiction of Australian Rules football, rather than creating further obstacles to box office appeal, may, by portraying something already special to Australians, actually attract a large audience.

Neither the success of the romantic comedy genre nor the popularity of sports in Australia were ever in doubt. Despite this popularity, I have described how local film stories of romantic – or sporting - success have rarely found favour in Australia cinema. I have traced these genre blind spots to the stereotypes of Australian masculinity in Australian cinema. To allow the genre to flourish domestically, the accepted cinematic representations of masculinity need to be challenged. As an anti-hero who does not want to go to the football and does not wish to pursue romance through to its conclusion, Greg goes against the grain of the heroic Australian male of cinema.

I argue that the locally untapped genre of romantic comedy – with or without sports – is possible in Australian cinema. The genre – as it manifests in any country – expresses the anxiety but also the inevitability of the coupling of the men and women of that society. Whether one believes in the happy endings or not, the climax of a romantic comedy is a wish fulfilled and as such has immense appeal for audiences.

My script *Swan Song* blends romantic comedy and football in a way that I believe will appeal to Australian men and women. The script fulfils genre conventions such as the meet-cute, physical humour, the trusted confidante (as well as the unreliable confidante) and the masquerade. As almost all successful romantic comedies do, *Swan Song* caps this collection of genre tropes with a humbling, public spectacle and

declaration of love as its climax. All of this is achieved with an influx of elements from the sports film: the success of the sporting underdog, the communal spirit but with the added twist that the protagonist is not a sporting hero. The hero's obligation to his community is to support it, but he is not required to embody it.

Swan Song proposes a hybrid of romantic comedy and sports films. Instead of the masculine stereotypes the sports genre often perpetuates, this largely unexplored generic combination provides new possibilities. Here, within the framework of romantic comedy, both protagonists might become team-mates to enjoy success, entertainment and pleasure in a way that affirms the ties of heterosexual romance and the larger communal bonds that link men and women.

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Swan Song

By

Russell Edwards

Russell Edwards

30th November, 2011

1 OVER BLACK

1

This tale begins in Brooklyn,
where anything can happen... And
it usually does.

At 3pm on this particular day,
this was happening...

2 INT. HOSPITAL BROOKLYN (1960) - DAY

2

A group of nurses are trying to restrain ALICE BOURNE a
35-year-old pregnant woman who is sweating, swearing and
writhing beneath the medical staff's efforts.

ALICE
I'll knock your block off!

NURSE ONE
Get some hot water!

Alice punches the nurse.

NURSE TWO
Forget the hot water. Get her
some sedatives!

ALICE
Where's my husband? Where is that
meshugginah moron?

3 INT. A BROOKLYN BAR - DAY

3

In a darkened bar in Brooklyn forty-ish, unshaven MELVIN
BOURNE is dressed in a Dodgers sweatshirt. He sits with
tears in his eyes, staring at a television screen high on
a shelf in a corner of the bar.

The black and white television shows a news report of the
1960 demolition of Ebbets Field baseball stadium.

As per the archive footage of the time, a wrecking ball
painted like a baseball smashes the walls of the outfield.

Melvin is weeping hysterically in between gulps of beer
from a can. Melvin is being consoled by his friend EDDIE.

EDDIE
Melvin, Don't worry! It's the end
of an era, not the end of the
world.

MELVIN
Why did the Dodgers ever leave
Brooklyn? Los Angeles? Wot they
got that we haven't got?

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

Sunshine, palm trees, movie stars.

MELVIN

First Pearl Harbor...and now this!

EDDIE

Don't be like that Marvin. Your wife is having a baby. You don't want your little baby to see daddy bawlin'...

Melvin continues drinking and crying.

4 OVER BLACK

4

Meanwhile on the other side of the world in the more restrained and civilized town of Melbourne...

5 INT. DANCE HALL MELBOURNE-NIGHT

5

BILL, thirty-ish man, working class, but well-dressed walks into a dance hall with his similarly dressed larrikin mates. They stop at a trellis table where entry tickets are sold. As Bill digs into his pockets for a quid, something catches his eye.

BILL

Pardon me, fellas... I think I've just met my wife.

Across the dance hall stands CATHERINE, an attractive, but not startling, twentysomething woman, in a floral print dress. Like Bill she is clearly smitten, but she does not lose her demure and serene nature. Under the glare of the rotating mirror ball, she is like a loving madonna.

Bill approaches Catherine.

BILL

Umm ... ahhhh ... would you ... ummmm ...

CATHERINE

The answer is yes.

BILL

Crikey! You haven't heard the bloody question yet.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

You've got your answer. The question should be easier now.

BILL

Would ya ... would you ...
Would ya like to go to the football tomorrow?

Catherine is visibly disappointed, but undeterred.

CATHERINE

I will, if you dance with me.

Bill smiles relief and with a gentle tug on Catherine's hand he pulls her toward him and they dance to the band.

6 OVER BLACK

6

One football season later.

7 EXT. ALBERT PARK OVAL, MELBOURNE - DAY

7

Catherine and Bill are at the football watching the South Melbourne Swans play at the Albert Park Oval. Both are suitably rugged up for standing outside on a Melbourne winter afternoon at the football.

Bill is wearing a red and white scarf, with a football beanie - complete with matching pom pom. Otherwise, he is dressed in the smart casual men's clothes of the era. Catherine has a red sweater and lipstick to match, but is less obvious in her Swans-related attire.

BILL

This is what it's all about! A day at the footy. A beer in your hand. Your best girl by your side. All the loves of your life. What else could a man ask for?

CATHERINE

Is that in order of priority?
Such a romantic.

On the field, is a short man with an apish build, South Melbourne Captain, BOBBY SKILTON, bearing the number 14. Skilton contests and wins a mark just in front of the goal square.

The happy couple look on as Skilton walks back to take his shot at goal. Bill takes another swig of beer.

BILL

You think I don't care about you?
Look, if Skilton kicks this goal

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILL (cont'd)
I'll marry you. What would you say to that?

CATHERINE
I'd say yes ... on the condition, I don't have to go to any more football matches.

Bill is incredulous.

CATHERINE
Have you ever considered that I'm here to see you and not the football?

BILL
Oh luv, don't make me choose.

CATHERINE
You're not choosing. I am.

BILL
Marriage eh?

Bill contemplates Skilton sizing up the goal for a kick.

BILL
Crikey! He better bloody well kick it then!

Skilton kicks toward the two big sticks and it unerringly goes through the middle. The goal umpire signals with two upright index fingers up that a goal has been scored.

BILL
Okay luv, let's get married.

Bill removes the ringpull from his beer can and ceremoniously places it upon Catherine's ring finger. They passionately kiss to seal the deal.

8 INT. A CHURCH, MELBOURNE - DAY

8

The ring-pull can top is removed from Catherine's hand and replaced with a white gold band with a swan inscribed on it. Catherine's hands place an identical swan-decorated ring on Bill's ring finger. The rings glint magically.

PRIEST
With these rings, I thee wed.

Catherine and Bill in formal wear. She is wearing a bridal gown. He is wearing a wedding tuxedo.

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST

You may kiss the bride.

The happy couple kiss...for a long time.

They unlock their lips.

BILL

Crikey. Looks like we're set to
kick a few goals tonight!

Catherine pulls Bill toward her and kisses him
passionately again.

9 OVER BLACK

9

Meanwhile in Brooklyn...

10 INT. THE BOURNE APARTMENT, BROOKLYN - NIGHT

10

BABY JILL, dummy in mouth, watches on bewildered as a
ruckus goes on around her.

Melvin cowers, as he runs from Alice. From the kitchen
Alice pitches a series of mismatching cups at him. Most of
the projectiles Melvin catches and places on a table or
nearby shelf as he continues running around the apartment.
Eventually he shelters under the dining room table.

ALICE

Whaddya mean you lost you job?

MELVIN

I tol' ya. They caught me
drinkin' on the job.

ALICE

It's a brewery! You ain't the
only crumb bum who's sneakin' a
nip on the side.

MELVIN

It wasn't on the side, it was
round the back.

ALICE

Can't you even go missing
properly?

MELVIN

The boys weren't looking for me
they were lookin' ... ah never
mind.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
He loses his job and he says
never mind!
(pause)
Lookin for what?

Melvin mumbles

ALICE
I can't hear yoooooooooooo!

Melvin emerges from under the table, somewhere between tentative and defiance.

MELVIN
They wuz lookin for a shortstop.

ALICE
You're tryin to tell me you got
fired because you were too drunk
to be shortstop for the Brewery
Boys All-Drunk All-Stars?

MELVIN
Nah, I just didn't wanna play.

ALICE
For the luv of Pete. What are you
six years old? You gotta get over
this baseball thing.

Alice grabs the last cup off the shelf, a large beer stein. Her arms winds around and around as she prepares to hurtle the cup.

Baby Jill calmly takes her dummy out of her mouth.

JILL
Dada.

MELVIN
Baby doll Jill. You said Dada!

The stein hits Melvin square on the forehead and knocks him out.

Baby Jill quickly put the dummy back in her mouth.

ALICE
You're a lousy shortstop anyways.
Didn't nobody tell ya? Never take
your eye off the ball.

11 INT. MATERNITY HOSPITAL, MELBOURNE - DAY

11

Catherine is sitting up in a hospital bed. Beside her is a little crib which she beams at. Catherine looks exhausted, but it doesn't diminish her happiness.

Bill, full of exuberance and possibly three sheets to the wind, enters wearing his Swans colours.

BILL

Where is he? Where is he? Where
is the next football champion?

Catherine beams at the crib.

CATHERINE

Quiet dear. He's sleeping.

BILL

You look kind of tired yourself.

CATHERINE

They don't just give you the
baby, Bill. You've got to work
for it.

Bill gives Catherine a peck on the cheek and a matey tap on the arm.

BILL

You'll be right in no time.
Nothing a few flowers can't fix.

Catherine smiles.

BILL

And for the little man...

Bill unfurls an adult-sized South Melbourne Swans jumper, and makes a blanket of it around the sleeping baby. The baby's head sleeps on undisturbed just above the red V of the jumper.

12 EXT. THE SUBURBS, MELBOURNE (1968) - DUSK

12

...a similarly red V-marked sheet on a Hills Hoist washing line. Suddenly seven-year-old YOUNG GREG charges through the billowing sheet with a football in his arms. Young Greg is wearing a South Melbourne jumper and kicks the football around to himself and across the suburban backyard in that inimitable way that young boys filled with dreams of future glories do.

The sky grows dark as Young Greg continues his game. He kicks the ball up in the air, over and over. Sometimes he marks it cleanly, other times he slightly juggles it from hand to hand until he brings it under control.

13 INT/EXT. THE KITCHEN, SAUNDERS HOUSEHOLD - DUSK 13

A slightly older CATHERINE and BILL watch Young Greg.

CATHERINE

Blow the siren on Greg's game
will you dear.

14 EXT. THE BACKYARD, SAUNDERS HOUSE - DUSK 14

Bill appears at the starkly lit backdoor entryway of the suburban weatherboard home.

BILL

Greg! Come on in mate.

Young Greg pauses, then tucks his football under his arm and walks into the house. He's muddy from his play. The father rubs his son on the head.

BILL

Scrub up a bit mate. The footy
scores will be waiting when
you're nice and clean.

15 INT. GREG'S ROOM - DUSK 15

Young Greg enters his bedroom. The room is adorned with Swans paraphernalia. Eagerly he starts taking off his footy gear, grabs a towel and heads for the bathroom.

16 INT. LOUNGE ROOM, SAUNDERS HOUSE - NIGHT 16

Bill and Catherine sit in armchairs ready to watch the post-match scores on a black and white television set. Young Greg is sitting at their feet on the carpeted floor. He is dressed in red and white South Melbourne pyjamas. A long red and white scarf flows around his neck. Atop his head sits a red and white beanie, complete with pompom. He's holding a red and white Swans pennant cocked at a 90 degree angle.

The black and white television screen presents a four-quarter breakdown of a football game which reveals that South Melbourne have steadily lost all day.

TV ANNOUNCER

...And the Swans were defeated
yet again today by premiership
contenders, Carlton.

Young Greg looks despondent. His Swans pennant is now cocked at about 45 degrees.

CUT TO:

The score breakdown on the television shows a defeat of South Melbourne by Richmond.

TV ANNOUNCER
The South Melbourne Swans were thrashed convincingly by the Richmond Tigers today...

Young Greg is in the same position as before and in the same garb. He looks worse than before. His teeth are clenched hard on the scarf. The pennant's angle has decreased so that it is limply pointing to the floor.

CUT TO:

The TV screen offers up another disappointing score.

TV ANNOUNCER
Despite a convincing performance The Swans were defeated by the more powerful Fitzroy Lions by one point.

Appalled, Young Greg rises from his seated position.

18 EXT. SUBURBAN ROOFTOPS, MELBOURNE - DUSK 18

Silence. Then Young Greg's voice emits a bloodcurdling scream that rings out across the suburban rooftops.

19 INT. LOUNGE ROOM, SAUNDERS HOUSE-NIGHT 19

Young Greg throws down his pennant in disgust.

YOUNG GREG
One Point?! I quit!

Bill is horrified. Catherine is more ambivalent.

YOUNG GREG
The Swans always lose. I don't want to barrack for the Swans anymore. I want to win!

Young Greg removes his red and white beanie and scarf and throws them away.

YOUNG GREG (CONT'D)
I'm quitting the Swans ... forever.

Bill looks at Catherine. Catherine shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

BILL

You've got to have a team, mate.
This is Melbourne. A man without
a footy team is like a man
without a country!

Greg looks defiant.

BILL

You won't have any friends.

YOUNG GREG

I don't care.

CATHERINE

You're just making it worse. I'm
going to do the dishes.

Catherine exits but is still visible in the kitchen.
Despite her remaining within sight Bill looks abandoned.

BILL

I know how you feel, mate. It's
no fun watching your team get
beat. But the Swans are our team.
Be patient, mate. They'll come
good.

YOUNG GREG

When?

BILL

No one knows that mate. That's
the fun of the game.

YOUNG GREG

Fun? They never win. Never, ever.

BILL

They do sometimes.

YOUNG GREG

They never make the finals. They
haven't won a Grand Final since
... since....

BILL

The last time they won a
premiership was 1933. Nobody
knows that better than me mate.

YOUNG GREG

That was in the olden days, Dad.
What's the point in barracking
for a team that never wins?

Bill looks to the dish-washing Catherine for support.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

Don't look at me.

(indicating her ring)

I've barely been to a game since you proposed.

BILL

There's more to the game than premierships, mate. True, the Swans have had more downs than most, but they've had moments of glory too.

YOUNG GREG

Like what?

BILL

Some of the best players ever have put on the red and whites. There was Bobby Skilton. He's a Triple Brownlow medalist mate.

20 ARCHIVAL MONTAGE

20

We see archive footage and stills appropriate to the football heroes that the enthusiastic Bill is describing. Three Brownlow medals bearing the words Fairest and Best. Archive footage of Bob Skilton playing football. Archive photographs of Skilton.

BILL (V/O)

They don't give them to mugs. He was Captain, he was Coach. He got injured more times than any player. Broken noses, black eyes, broken wrists, torn tendons, twisted ankles, bruised ribs ... He had teeth knocked out ... but he never gave up. He was a real battler.

21 INT. LOUNGE ROOM, SAUNDERS HOUSE - NIGHT

21

Young Greg looks up at his Dad in wonder.

YOUNG GREG

How many goals did he kick?

BILL

Oh, I don't know mate. He was a rover, it's not their strong point. But if you want to talk about goal kickers there's been none better than Bob Pratt back in the Thirties.

...BILL in a similar pose, arms high, holding Greg above his head like an imaginary football. Bill puts Greg down as he completes his explanation.

BILL

...He'd pluck the ball out of the air like it was a ripe apple on a tree. I loved hearing my father talk about Cazaly. Cazaly was the best there ever was, son. They were all once in a lifetime champions.

YOUNG GREG

Not my lifetime.

BILL

Mate, I was going to wait until you were older but it's time.

Bill yells to Catherine in the kitchen

BILL

It's time!

CATHERINE

It's time?

BILL

It's time.

CATHERINE

Are you sure now is the time?

YOUNG GREG

Time for what?

Bill goes to the lounge sideboard and pull out an elongated box.

YOUNG GREG

What's that?

BILL

When I was about your age, my father, your grandfather, gave this to me. Now it's time to pass it on to you. This is the guernsey Roy Cazaly wore during his Swans glory years. Your grandfather had Cazaly autograph it, and every time a Swan showed enough mettle, I've had that player add his autograph too.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG GREG

Swans! Swans! Swans! Other teams are tigers and lions. There's nothing tough about Swans!

BILL

They got that name because of the birds on Albert Park Lake. But in grandad's day they were the Blood-Stained Angels. They fought for premiership pennants like they had God as 19th man. Every time you see a player suddenly possessed of vigour beyond his ability, you can bet your old footy boots that he's guided by the spirit of the Blood-Stained Angels.

Mark my words son, they might be just a bunch of weak birds to you now, but one day the Blood-Stained Angels will rise again.

Greg's father presents the box to Young Greg. Young Greg opens the box and parts the aged issue paper and removes a white guernsey with a red sash woven across it. Young Greg stares at it incredulously. It's yellowed with age, smeared with grass-stains and maybe even blood, but it is recognisable as a Swans jumper of yesteryear. It is also decorated with several inky autograph signatures.

YOUNG GREG

It's just an old jumper.

Bill looks toward Catherine for support. She smiles with torn love.

CATHERINE

He'll come round when he's ready. If you push him too hard dear you'll put him off.

BILL

I just want what's good for my boy - and my Swans. A team without supporters is a dead club.

CATHERINE

He's tired. Maybe our little champion will feel different in the morning.

(CONTINUED)

BILL

I won't.

CATHERINE

Oh, I gave up on changing you
long ago.

27

INT. BOURNE APARTMENT, BROOKLYN (1968) - DAY

27

Melvin stares forlornly at a Brooklyn Dodgers pennant on the wall. A pile of empty beer cans suggest Melvin has been sitting there a long time. Alice is watching TV while doing her ironing.

AMERICAN TV ANNOUNCER

After this break, we'll be back
with the results of the Baseball
World Series.

A panic-stricken Alice, drops the iron and hits the remote. The TV screen goes to black.

MELVIN reacts as if coming out of a deep sleep.

MELVIN

What was that?

ALICE

It was nuthin.

MELVIN

I thought I heard someone
mention...

ALICE

No one mentioned nuthin'.
Fergeddaboutit!

Eight-year-old Young Jill enters the apartment gleefully.

YOUNG JILL

Daddy! Daddy! I learned a new
song! Wanna hear it?

Melvin nods with bare comprehension.

Jill sits down at the knocked about family upright piano and begins to play "Take Me Out to the Ball Game".

Melvin starts crying. Near hysterical Alice leaps up and confiscates the sheet music before vigorously tearing it up.

ALICE

Jill! Are you out of your
meshugginah mind? The last time

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALICE (cont'd)
your father heard that song he
was drunk for months! Go play
with your dolls!

28 INT. JILL'S BEDROOM - DAY

28

Jill enters her small bedroom which only just has enough room for a bed and a miniature tea set table.

Jill sits down at the table. A male doll, a Barbie doll and a larger Angel doll are already at the table. Jill primps them and speaks voices for them.

JILL
Do you want coffee Malibu Barbie?

ALICE (O/S)
I keep telling you: She's not
from Malibu she's from Flatbush!

Jill swings the door so it gently closes.

JILL
(hushed tones)
Barbie voice: I'll have a beer.

But it's only 10am!

Barbie voice: Beer calms my
nerves and stops me thinking
about the Dodgers going to
California.

Ok, I'll have beer too.

Jill grabs one of her father's empty beer cans and mimes pouring a drink for herself and "Flatbush" Barbie.

JILL (CONT'D)
Angel voice: Oh this is
embarrassing. I'm leaving.

Jill picks up the Angel Doll from it's chair and plays as if the angel is flying away from the scene.

JILL
(male doll voice)
SIT DOWN!

Jill emphatically forces the angel doll back in the chair at the tea table.

Jill picks up a empty beer can and puts it to the male doll's lips.

(CONTINUED)

JILL (CONT'D)

Here, have a beer. And another.
And another.

Then Jill puts the male doll face down on the table.

JILL (CONT'D)

Oh Daddy's tired now.
(Barbie doll voice)
Never marry a sports fan, Jill.
They'll break your heart.

Jill nods sagely.

29

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ALBERT PARK OVAL - DAY

29

A Church has a sign which reads:

What would you do if Christ came to South Melbourne?

A graffiti addendum reads: Make Bobby Skilton
Vice-Captain!

Bill and a reluctant nine-year-old Young Greg walk past
the church toward Albert Park Lake oval.

The crowd around them are decked out in Swans colours or
the opposing team. Bill has a beanie and scarf. Young Greg
however is in casual clothes and shows no sign of
supporting any team.

BILL

Reckon the Swans will win today
Greg?

YOUNG GREG

The Swans never win.

BILL

We'll see mate, but there's more
to winning than being afraid of
losing.

30

EXT. ALBERT PARK OVAL - DAY

30

Several men and a woman or two are standing watching the
game from up on the hill. Young Greg being much shorter
than the adults cannot see the game at all.

Young Greg, bored, paces up and down, kicks beer cans,
sometimes strains on tiptoes to get a view.

Young Greg tugs on his father's trouser leg as Bill
watches the game.

(CONTINUED)

BILL
Go Swans! Give 'em hell Swans!

YOUNG GREG
Dad? Dad!

BILL
Yeah, Greg what is it?

YOUNG GREG
Can I have a "Cazaly" Dad? I
can't see the footy.

BILL
Sure mate, sure. Hang on a tick.

Bill prepares to comply with his son's request, putting out his cigarette and swapping his beer can to his other hand. He then scoops the boy up, cradling the boy in his free arm.

A POV shot for Young Greg as he is lifted into view by the "Cazaly" and the football crowd's roar coincides with the movement. Young Greg is silent, watching.

Action on the field shows a Swans player losing possession of the ball and the opposing team using the opportunity to kick a goal.

The scorebaord reveals an extra 6 points allocated to the opposing side while the Swans maintain a low score.

A familiar dissatisfaction comes across Young Greg's face.

YOUNG GREG
Carn the Demons.

Beat.

Young Greg smiles meanly.

YOUNG GREG
CARN THE DEMONS!

Bill suddenly turns pale and his knees buckle as he eases the boy down. Young Greg's toes touch the ground but Bill descends further. He groans in agony. He is collapsing with a stroke. Blood trickles from Bill's ear onto Young Greg.

Young Greg finds himself standing over the man who seconds before had held him high above the crowd.

Young Greg pushes his father vainly trying to revive him.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG GREG

Dad? Dad?

A man, FIRST SUPPORTER aids in the attempt to revive Bill.

FIRST SUPPORTER

Someone get this kid away. He
shouldn't have to see this.

A SECOND SUPPORTER whisks Young Greg away.

SECOND SUPPORTER

C'mon boy.

Greg struggles and strains to emerge from the Second Supporter's embrace to return to his father but to no avail.

YOUNG GREG

Dad? Dad?

The view withdraws up to the heavens like the father's soul.

Young Greg and his dead father, the crowd and then the stadium, diminishes before dark clouds eclipse the view.

FADE TO BLACK.

31 INT. GREG'S ROOM (1969) - NIGHT 31

Nine-year-old Young Greg sitting at a desk, reading a primary school maths textbook. Greg's room is now devoid of football decorations.

Catherine approaches Greg from behind, places a glass of milk and a white bread sandwich to the side of his desk. Catherine leans in and gives him a hug as Greg tries to concentrate on his textbook.

FADE TO BLACK.

32 INT. BROOKLYN SCHOOL, CLASSROOM (1976) - DAY 32

TEENAGE JILL in high school. The black board says in big letters: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT BROOKLYN?

A TEACHER talks up the front of the classroom. Jill sits up the back drinking via a straw from a whisky hip flask hidden behind her book.

Jill looks a little glazed,

The teacher spins around and points at Jill.

(CONTINUED)

TEACHER

Jill Bourne! What is the total
area of Brooklyn?

Jill comes back into focus and keeping her bottle obscured
raises her head to answer.

JILL

71 square miles?

The teacher, nods yes, but looks dissatisfied, before
moving on.

Jill looks relieved. She takes another sip from her straw
and gets the gurgle sound of an empty vessel. Panicked,
she pulls out from her desk a full bottle of whiskey and
delicately pours more whiskey into her hip flask. Jill
takes a vigorous swig from the bottle, before returning it
to her desk.

33 MONTAGE, GRADUATION BOOKS 33

A leather-bound book cover with the title CLASS OF '78

The book opens up of its own accord to reveal a picture of
smiling Jill with the caption LITTLE MISS CHEERFUL.

A leather-bound book cover with the title CLASS OF '79

The book opens up to reveal a picture of a still smiling,
if a little glazed, Jill with the caption PARTY GIRL.

A leather-bound book cover with the title CLASS OF '80

The book opens up of its own accord to reveal a picture of
a zonked-out Jill with the caption REHAB or BUST.

34 BLACK SCREEN 34

A newspaper spins towards the screen: Headline screams THE
SWANS ARE BROKE!

35 INT. GREG'S ROOM (LATE 1980S) - DAY 35

Now in his early twenties, GREG reads a university-level
accountancy textbook. He lacks the physicality of his
father, but he's grown up to be quite handsome. As per the
previous shot Catherine appears this time with a cup of
tea rather than milk. She has aged, her hair has greyed,
but her beauty and serenity have not withered. Greg turns
to accept the tea with a charming smile.

48

INT. BOURNE APARTMENT, BROOKLYN - DAY

48

The Bourne family are sitting watching television. Completely passive, Mel drinks from beer can after beer can. Alice controls the remote.

Jill moves distractedly between the TV, a book entitled "Crystals and YOUR Recovery", a handful of crystals she examines by holding up to the light and the same large Angel doll Young Jill had at her tea table.

On the television there is a documentary about Angel imagery featuring Raphael's two famous cherubs.

TV VOICEOVER

The imagery of Angels dominated art of the middle ages and has continued into modern times.

...and moving to a black and white scene from Frank Capra's "It's A Wonderful Life"

ON SCREEN

A little girl in James Stewart's arms points to a bell on a Christmas tree.

ZASU

Look Daddy! Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings!

TV VOICEOVER

So should we believe in angels?

Alice picks up the television's remote control.

ALICE

Haw! Listen to this baloney.

Alice looks across at Jill nurturing the Angel doll.

ALICE CONT'D

Ain't you getting a little old to be playing with dolls?

JILL

It ain't a doll. It's a "transitional love object".

ALICE

What?

JILL

It helped me survive while you two were busy arguing.

Alice surfs the channels.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
You complaining? We fed you
didn't we? We sent you to school
didn't we? We protected you from
the evils of "you know what".

JILL
What?

ALICE
(whisper)
Baseball.

The channel surfing stops on a baseball game. MELVIN
starts to blubber.

MELVIN
Baseball. (louder) Baseball. Oh
why did the Dodgers ever leave
Brooklyn?

ALICE
See what you done?

Alice surfs the channels again and lands on a documentary
about Australia. A Kangaroo bounces across the screen.

ALICE
That ought to be safe. Ain't no
"you know what" in Africa.

TV VOICEOVER
It's a land where everything that
didn't belong ended up in one
place.

ALICE
You sure rehab cured you?

JILL
I told you. It ain't a cure. It's
a daily reprieve.

ALICE
What she talkin' about?

Mel continues drinking beer.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You're either cured or you're a
useless crumb bum like your
father. Why don't you do
something with your life instead
of goin' to those meetings all
the time?

JILL
I'm thinking of studying
Metaphysical Accountancy...

ALICE
Meta-what?

JILL
...in California. At the Esoteric
Institute for...

MELVIN
You can't go to California!

JILL
Why not?

MELVIN
The Dodgers went to California!

JILL
So?

MELVIN
They never came back. You can't
go to California.

JILL
Then I'll go to... I'll go to...

In desperation Jill looks at the TV where amongst all the
bickering the documentary about Australia has gone
unnoticed.

...Australia.

Beat as Jill sees whether her threat has had an impact.

MELVIN
We protected you...

JILL
Dad, I just got outta rehab after
ten years of running wild. Half
the time you didn't know I was
gone.

ALICE
We just got to Brooklyn 60 years
ago and now you want to go to
Australia? We're not happy here?

JILL
Who's happy? You and dad argue
all the time.

ALICE

That don't mean we're not happy!
Why would you wanna go anywhere
when you got New York City?

JILL

Mom! You ain't been further than
Brooklyn Heights for 10 years.

ALICE

That ain't no reason to leave.

JILL

That's every reason to leave.

49

INT. OLD CHURCH HALL, MELBOURNE - DAY

49

On old church hall. A fifty-ish man with a weather-beaten face sits at a tressle table. When he speaks he has a broad Australian accent.

There are some small signs on the table. "First things first." "One Day At A Time." Suspended across the front of the table is a banner with the common Serenity Prayer on it.

CHAIRMAN

We got any visitors today from
out of town? Interstate?
Overseas? Other planets?

Mild laughter.

Jill is sitting in the fourth row of a series of people in plastic moulded chairs. Surrounding her are gothic girls, construction workers, and suited up corporate types of both sexes as well as people dressed in casual clothes. Some are miserable and look stricken with anxiety. Others are beaming with happiness. The room is full.

Amongst them is KYLIE. Kylie is thin, mid-forties, grey-haired and of short stature, but with a quiet serene authority.

Jill puts her hand up.

JILL

Yeah, I'm Jill, I'm an alcoholic
from Brooklyn.

Everyone in the room applauds.

CHAIRMAN

Would you like to share?

Jill rises from her chair and walks to stand behind a plastic chair besides the chairman's table.

(CONTINUED)

The chairman offers a handshake and Jill awkwardly reciprocates. Jill turns to face the room.

JILL
Like I said my name's Jill and
I'm an alcoholic.

ALCOHOLIC AUDIENCE
Hi Jill!

JILL
Thanks for that welcome. I just
moved to Melbourne a couple of
days ago. My sobriety date is
April 9, last year. I've got 10
months, three weeks and two
days. My sponsor back in
Brooklyn says I shouldn't even be
here. But I don't always do what
my sponsor says.

Some of the audience of alcoholics laugh. Others, mostly the older, ones keep a straight face.

JILL (CONT'D)
My father was an alcoholic and
from an early age, I maintained
the family tradition. There I
go... always blaming someone else
for what happened. Dad blamed his
drinking on the Brooklyn Dodgers.

You guys don't have any baseball
here right?

Anyway, my drinking accelerated
and by my mid-20s the cracks were
showing. I was smart enough to
stay out of real trouble... oh
there was that one time... but
largely, I just drank a lot. With
anyone who'd buy me a drink.

One night I met some people at
Hanratty's over in Bed-stuy.

50 INT. HANRATTY'S BAR. BROOKLYN (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 50

Hanratty's bar. Jill is throwing back drinks with five
oddball types - one other woman, four men - who look like
characters in a Charles Bukowski story.

JILL (V/O)
Hanratty's closes at three a.m.
For religious reasons Hanratty
claims.

(CONTINUED)

(laughs)

Anyway, when normal people might think about going home, this guy says, "I know a place in Williamsburg."

One unshaven guy gesticulates to the others as if to suggest they all leave. Each of them raises their hand as if they are kids in school who urgently need to go to the toilet.

JILL (V/O) CONT'D

Miles away mind you - but I'm ready. It was January. We were celebrating New Year or Groundhog Day or somethin'. Anyway it was damn cold.

The unshaven guy leads the way and as he opens the bar door for the merry band. Flurries of snow blow in to the bar through the open doorway. The group are undeterred and venture out into the obviously cold night.

51 INT. OLD CHURCH HALL. MELBOURNE - DAY 51

Jill stands at the front of the room. Some of the AA members look on intently, nodding. Some distracted, some just dazed.

JILL CONT'D

As we were walking to the next bar - didn't want to spend drinking money on a cab - I fell over in the snow.

52 EXT. BROOKLYN STREET (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 52

Jill is smashed and it shows. She's lying like a helpless baby in a ploughed up, dirty snowpile on the sidewalk.

JILL V/O CONT'D

I was lying there - almost passed out - and I could see the others walking away. Left me to freeze to death. Did they know I was missing? Did they care? Either way I started to get an idea about the type of people I was drinking with.

53 INT. OLD CHURCH HALL, MELBOURNE - DAY

53

Jill looks lost in memory as she stands out the front of the room. She comes back into focus, as if suddenly realizing she's no longer on the snowbank.

JILL

That would be enough for most people. But me? Noooooooooooooo way. Next day, I resolved that I'd only drink at home from then on. No guys trying to pick me up. No getting lost in the middle of the night. Mom had always brought home dad's beer - so she just started buying my booze too.

Sometimes it's the small things that get you sober. My mother would climb five flights of stairs carrying bagloads of our booze.

54 INT. STAIRWELL IN BOURNE APARTMENT BLOCK, (FLASHBACK) - DAY

54

Alice is carrying multiple bags as she wearily ascends a set of stairs. One beer can falls out of the top of one bag. She watches it as it bounces down each of the risers.

The can hits the next landing and then erupts into a geyser of foam.

Alice looks at it as if to say 'tchh'. She's got enough to carry - and is obviously straining - as it is.

JILL V/O

Kvetching and bitching every moment, but she'd do it every day.

55 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE BOURNE APARTMENT (FLASHBACK) - DAY55

With no hands free, Alice kicks at the door.

JILL V/O

One day Mom couldn't open the door - lost her keys or somethin'.

56 INT. INSIDE THE BOURNE APARTMENT (FLASHBACK) - DAY 56

Jill stands looking at the door as it buckles slightly from the impact of Alice kicking it on the other side.

JILL V/O

So if I wanted my morning six pack I had to open the door for her.

Jill opens the door and Alice looks set to collapse under the weight of her load.

JILL V/O

So I opened the door and she was standin' there weighed down with all this booze and I thought:
"The least I can do is give up drinkin' so my mother don't die of a hernia."

57 INT. OLD CHURCH HALL, MELBOURNE - DAY 57

Jill 's got that far away look again. She suddenly breaks into a smile.

JILL

And I did.

There was a meeting at the church on the nearest corner. Must have passed it a million times, but it was there when I wanted it. Got sober. When I wanted it.

My sponsor said don't make any big decisions in your first year of sobriety. But she didn't have to live with my parents. It's a new country, so I'll get a new sponsor. I'll need one if I'm gonna stay in Melbourne. Not sure how that's gonna happen, but if the angels want me to be here, I'll be able to meet the challenges. Thanks.

Jill sits down to rapturous applause.

58 INT. SUPERMARKET AISLE, MELBOURNE - DAY 58

Jill, walks down a supermarket shopping aisle with a basket on her arm. She is wearing a windcheater emblazoned with the word BROOKLYN. Her attention is split between the groceries and a New Age book (Title: NEW AGE BELIEFS

(CONTINUED)

FOR ADVANCED SOULS). In between, reading its pages, she picks up items from the shelf, including Vegemite, Tim Tams, sometimes absent-mindedly putting items back on the shelf.

Elsewhere in the same supermarket, Greg is also shopping. Armed with a neatly typed shopping list, he moves around the aisles with a sense of purpose.

Greg stops in horror as he sees an end of aisle of promotion for cereal. The cereal boxes form a pyramid and are flanked by cardboard cut-outs of football players. Above the pyramid is a sign in the shape of a big red cardboard Australian football sitting on one end. The football sign reads: "The Cereal for Football Champions".

Quickly Greg does an about face and ducks back into the next aisle...

With her nose still in her book, Jill is straining to reach a tomato sauce bottle on a top shelf...

Greg runs smack dab into Jill and sends her reeling. The sauce bottle is toppled from the shelf.

The bottle spins up through the air almost defying gravity.

Echoing the movements of his child self playing football, Greg leaps towards the bottle. Greg's hands intercept the bottle in mid-flight, but he doesn't quite catch it. He initially fumbles, but finally Greg grasps the sauce bottle firmly. He holds the sauce bottle above his head in triumph.

Greg passes the sauce bottle to Jill as if presenting a bouquet. He's smiling. Jill glows as she smiles back.

59

INT/EXT SAUNDERS LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

59

Catherine and Jill sitting in two armchairs. Between them is a small rosewood table upon which sits an elegant jewelry box, a petite china swan and space for a framed picture. A black and white picture of Bill encased in an elaborate frame is held by Jill.

JILL
He's never spoken to me about his
father's death.

Jill passes the photograph to Catherine.

Behind the table is a window through which Greg can be seen in overalls. His head is in the bonnet of the car he gave to his mother. As the women talk metallic clanging can be heard, punctuated by the car motor failing to start.

60 EXT. SAUNDERS DRIVEWAY - DAY 60

Greg throws tools on the ground impatiently.

61 INT/EXT. SAUNDERS LOUNGE ROOM - DAY 61

The women are oblivious to Greg's activities outside.

CATHERINE

Greg hasn't had a bar of football since. I've tried not to over-indulge him, but... It's difficult to honour the wishes of the living and the dead.

Jill reaches across and puts her hand on the arm of the older woman.

JILL

Reminds me of my parents, God rest their souls.

CATHERINE

I didn't know your parents had died.

JILL

Nah, they're still in Brooklyn. But God knows their souls still need restin'.

62 EXT. SAUNDERS DRIVEWAY - DAY 62

Greg, grease-smearred, is leaning into the open bonnet of the car. A small radio sits on the hip of the fender. Greg looks frustrated. The song which has been playing finishes.

RADIO VOICEOVER

That was the LaDeDas singing "Gonna See My Baby Tonight". You're on the greater 3UZ and here's the latest in football news...

Greg takes the wrench in his hand and angrily swings it to smash the radio from its place. The damaged radio on the ground is still working.

RADIO VOICEOVER

(speaker distorted)
and for those of you not interested in football, here's some more music ...

The music is the Beatles "You're Going To Lose That Girl".

(CONTINUED)

Greg looks at what he has done.

GREG
SHIT!

Greg uses the wrench as a weapon again and hits the car engine in exclamation. Metal against metal sends sparks flying and causes a small fire in the bonnet.

Greg grabs a small fire extinguisher from the car and quickly puts out the fire.

GREG
Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!

63 INT. SAUNDERS LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

63

Jill and Catherine continue talking obliviously.

CATHERINE
Where's Greg taking you for your anniversary tonight?

JILL
I was going to ask you!

They laugh.

JILL
I don't care where he takes me. I have a feeling tonight might be 'the night'.

The mother stops smiling.

CATHERINE
You mean marriage?

Jill nods enthusiastically.

CATHERINE
You're an old-fashioned girl in many ways, Jill. I like that. But Greg's not the right man.

Jill attempts to interject.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Don't misunderstand. There's nothing wrong with you. He's not the right man for anyone yet. He needs time.

JILL
We've been going out two years!

(CONTINUED)

Catherine is set to say something, but is interrupted by the appearance of Greg in the doorway. Still in greasy overalls, Greg's hands are all black and he has a smudge on his nose.

GREG

I quit.

CATHERINE

Oh?

GREG

I should never have bought you that little shitbox. The bloody thing is unfixable.

CATHERINE

Nonsense dear. You can do it if you put your mind to it.

GREG

Mum, you know nothing...

CATHERINE

About cars maybe, but I've got faith in you. Besides we girls are talking.

Greg is immobilised.

CATHERINE

Off you go.

Jill half-smiles at uncomprehending Greg before he returns outside.

CATHERINE

Some men need more time than others. Greg needs more time than most.

Catherine lets the information sink in.

CATHERINE

Nothing would please me more than to have you as my daughter-in-law Jill. In all but one way you already are.

JILL

The most important way.

CATHERINE

Jill I know what it's like to play the waiting game. I love you too much to ask you to wait for my son to be ready.

JILL
Tonight will be the night. I'm
sure of it.

Jill unscrolls a rainbow-coloured chart that looks like a Zodiac.

JILL (CONT'D)
My Guardian Angel chart...

Jill pulls out another chart

JILL (CONT'D)
...and my Horoscope both indicate
a big change. Gotta be marriage.

Catherine looks at Jill with a loving indulgence.

CATHERINE
I don't know about angels and I
can't guarantee what that son of
mine will do, but if you want a
ring...

Catherine removes a ring from the jewellery box that sits on the table alongside the replaced framed photograph of Bill. It is the father's wedding ring with the inscribed swan.

A close-up of the ring gives it a SPARKLE, suggesting magical qualities. Catherine places the ring in the palm of Jill's hand.

JILL
It's beautiful.

CATHERINE
This will be our secret. If you
keep this, Greg will come to you.
I can't promise when... but if
you're willing to wait...

On the soundtrack the car engine chugs into action, followed by the car horn beeping. The women move to the window to see.

Greg is in the car's driver seat. Looking at the house, Greg notices Catherine and Jill looking at him and enthusiastically beeps the horn like a child with a new toy. He smiles, gives the thumbs up and waves. Catherine opens the window and calls down to him.

CATHERINE

You promised this girl a good time tonight. Why don't you start getting cleaned up and make good on your promise?

Greg's wave changes from recognition to "alright, alright".

65 INT. JILL'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

65

Jill's apartment is awash with New Age nicnacs. Some hefty looking crystals sit on her white dressing table, alongside an incense burner with a lit incense stick. There is also a frame photo of Greg and Jill together, and a pile of self-help books like *Women Who Love Too Much*, etc.

On the walls, there are zodiac posters and pictures of angels.

Jill is standing in front of a full-length mirror in a glamorous sparkling gown. Greg, dressed in a tuxedo, approaches her from behind, smiling with a beguiling charm and the satisfaction of a man in love.

GREG

Sorry I've kept you waiting.

Jill murmurs ambiguously.

GREG

I promise tonight will be a night you'll never forget.

Greg kisses her on the neck. The kiss sees Jill warm up. She meets Greg's smile with a loving smile that reveals her equal love for him.

GREG

And to ensure that the romantic surprise is a surprise...

Greg produces a silky blindfold and places it over Jill's eyes.

66 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

66

In a snazzier car than his mother's, Greg pulls up out the front of a driveway. At the driveway's crest, a rusted, locked cyclone fence gate obstructs a large archway entrance. What lies beyond the entrance is not visible, but lost in darkness.

Greg exits the car and jogs around to the passenger side to guide the still blindfolded Jill out of the car.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
We have arrived madame. This is
it.

JILL
This is what?

GREG
Your surprise.

Greg fiddles with some keys and the gate's padlock.

GREG
A client who owed me a favour
gave me special access.

Greg opens the gate and guides Jill inside adroitly
removing the blindfold as he does so.

Jill is surrounded by inky darkness.

JILL
Is this safe?

He continues to fiddle with the lock and key, closing it
behind them. A dim shimmering flickers in the far reaches
of the darkness.

GREG
Just walk toward that light.

Jill walks towards the light, her sparkling dress
reflecting and glittering.

GREG
Keep going. Keep going...

Jill continues on in the darkness. Elsewhere in the
darkness, Greg stands at a board of antiquated electrical
mainswitches. He wrenches the switches down. Some sparks
fly.

Jill pivots around. Colourful lights illuminate around her
and an amusement park is revealed. The tableaux includes a
WAITER standing by a silver service tray and a dining
table complete with candelabra. Delighted, Jill kisses
Greg.

JILL
Oh Greg!

The waiter takes a photograph capturing the couple's
joyful moment. He puts his flash camera in his pocket and
then pulls out matches to light the candelabra as Greg and
Jill look at each other in a reverie of affection.

67 AMUSEMENT PARK MONTAGE

67

The couple dining, chatting. The waiter offers Jill wine. She shakes her head in refusal and points to a soft drink bottle.

The happy couple walk around the empty amusement park eating ice cream cones and fairy floss.

They alone enjoy the various rides at the nighttime wonderland, including the roller coaster and slippery dips, posing in front of crazy mirrors. Culminating in ...

68 EXT. MERRY-GO-ROUND - NIGHT

68

The pair are seated, Jill side-saddle, on the same wooden horse on the merry-go-round. The horse slowly pumps up and down. Also visible are some huge artificial swans as more stable corrals on the merry-go-round.

GREG

Are you happy?

Jill has trouble maintaining her facade but still nods affirmatively.

GREG

Good, because I love you, you know.

JILL

I'm glad, but ...

GREG

But?

JILL

Everything's... it's... I just hoped you'd take tonight as an opportunity.

GREG

Opportunity?

JILL

For us! To move on to the next stage. Marriage? Kids?

Greg looks blank

JILL

Greg, there's more to a relationship than winning someone's heart.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

But we have everything. We're young. We can do anything we want. I have my home. You have yours. The world is our fun park!

JILL

Greg, it's been two years now.

GREG

It's been a good two years hasn't it?

JILL

Yes, but we're not going anywhere.

GREG

Where do you want to go? We could go on a holiday...

JILL

I don't want to go anywhere. I want to stay.

Jill pulls out an official looking form from her evening bag.

JILL

This is from the Australian Department of Immigration. It is called an A475P. If I'm going to live in Australia, I need you to sponsor my stay here, as my husband...

(Greg flinches)

...defacto or otherwise.

GREG

Marriage is a big step.

JILL

It's the next step. I'm sick of being an illegal immigrant, spending my savings and feeling like an outsider. I need a real home, a real place to belong to. And if you ain't man enough to provide it, I'll go elsewhere.

GREG

Can I have time to think about it?

JILL

Don't think too long. I may be gone by the time you decide.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Does it have to be marriage?

JILL

You said you loved me. Here's a chance to prove it. Or were they just empty words?

GREG

But Jill... my romantic surprise...

JILL

Well, you were surprised weren't you?

69

INT. JILL'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

69

GREG is asleep, alone in a bed with a cupid-patterned doona.

Jill is against the wall, standing on her head. She is wearing purple tights and a "Who Killed Laura Palmer?" T-shirt.

Greg opens his eyes.

JILL

Ah, Mr Sleepy Head is awake.

GREG

How are you feeling?

JILL

I've got another day at the dead-end call centre, my boyfriend won't marry me, and I could be jailed as an illegal immigrant but other than that I'm all right.

GREG

Are we going to start on that first thing in the morning?

Jill rolls down easily and gracefully into a seated position before rising.

JILL

No I'm not going to "start". I'm off to gym before work. You haven't even showered.

Jill grabs a gym bag as if she is going to leave immediately.

(CONTINUED)

JILL
Are you coming to yoga at
lunchtime?

GREG
I said I would didn't I?

JILL
There's been a lot of things that
we were going to do together -
and haven't.

Jill starts for the door and then grabs a knitted hat from a hat rack. Studying herself - and Greg - in the mirror, Jill tilts the hat forwards and then pulls a mock frown. She pushes the hat to one side of her head and she pulls a funny face going cross-eyed. Jill pulls the hat back, and smiles openly.

Greg, through the mirror, returns the smile.

There is forgiveness in their meeting gaze.

Jill moves from the mirror by the door and back to Greg and gives him a fleeting, but affectionate kiss goodbye.

JILL
I'll see you at yoga.

Perturbed look on Greg's face, as he sits on the bed, in this woman's world, by himself.

70

INT. SUBURBAN TRAIN, PEAK HOUR - MORNING

70

Greg sits amongst a row of commuters on a Melbourne train. Open tabloids and broadsheets reveal that Melbourne is a football mad town. Headlines like FOOTY CRISIS! FOOTBALL BOUNCES BACK! OUT OF BOUNDS! and UMPIRES CLEARED OF CORRUPTION! with colourful and spectacular pictures are on every reading commuter's paper. Front pages and back pages have identical stories.

Greg is reading a book on accounting. Suffice to say, he is out of step.

The commuter to Greg's left is reading a broadsheet and opens it wide infringing on Greg's personal space. Greg is ruffled, but leans to his right to retrieve some personal space. Immediately, before Greg can look comfortable, the commuter to Greg's right opens their broadsheet wide eclipsing our view of Greg's entirely.

The Headline reads: FOOTY'S MID-SEASON CRISIS

Incensed, Greg shoves the newspaper aside.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Get that bloody newspaper out of my face!

COMMUTER

Sorry mate. I was just looking at last night's scores.

GREG

Well, I don't want to read about it. Not everyone's interested in football you know.

The entire carriage of commuters simultaneously put their newspapers down. All eyes are upon Greg as they draw a collective gasp.

71 INT. VICRAIL PARLIAMENT STATION - MORNING

71

Greg gets off the train at Melbourne's Parliament station and irritably weaves his way up the climbing escalator. All the other commuters are content to stay on their escalator step and read their newspapers.

Headlines read: FINALS: READY OR NOT! FOOTY'S MID-SEASON CRISIS! ARE OUR BALLS THE WRONG SHAPE?

72 EXT. CAFE - DAY

72

Kylie who was present at Jill's first Australian AA meeting is sitting with Jill at an outdoor table for two at a cafe. On the table between them is a thick book with its title "Alcoholics Anonymous" on the spine.

KYLIE

There's one thing I didn't get when you were sharing.

JILL

What's that?

KYLIE

Why the rush to get married?

JILL

What rush? it's been...

KYLIE

I know, I know. It's been two years. I mean why not get a visa by yourself? It would take pressure off the relationship.

Jill reflects on this.

73 INT. CAR, BROOKLYN STREET, (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 73

A twenty-something Jill at the driver's wheel of a speeding car filled with revellers. One of the revellers is mooning non-existent passerbys. Bottles of booze are plainly evident. Jill has a wild look in her eye heretofore unseen.

PASSENGER ONE
Take the next left for
Burger-matic.

JILL
It's OK, I know a short cut.

PASSENGER TWO
The Hell you do!

JILL
You guys are too polluted to know
shit from Shinola.

PASSENGER ONE
I drank less than you!

JILL
I've only had a couple of drinks.

She takes another nip from a bottle.

JILL (CONT'D)
I know where I'm going!

74 EXT. CAR WASH (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 74

The car speeds into a 24 hour 'Bikini' car wash. Bikini clad women disperse as the car approaches.

75 INT. JILL'S CAR, CAR WASH, (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 75

The windshield is awash with soap. Because the windows are down, soap and water is also spurting into the car. A police siren can be heard - increasing in volume.

JILL
Hey whaddya know? A free car wash
with every order!

76 EXT. CAFE - DAY 76

Kylie, unfazed by the story looks at Jill.

(CONTINUED)

JILL
I didn't mention the drink
driving charge - or the week in
jail - when I applied for my
tourist visa.

KYLIE
Uh-uh.

JILL
I've already overstayed my
tourist visa. If I apply myself,
I'll get busted for lyin'. But if
Greg sponsors me - I'll be OK.

KYLIE
You're here now. Too late to
worry about immigration. When
were you going to tell Greg about
this little episode?

JILL
Right after the wedding of
course.

KYLIE
Greg knows you're in the program
right?

JILL
God no! It's anonymous!

KYLIE
Maybe you need to go over the
honesty thing once again.

JILL
He'll be fine about it. Anybody
can see he's calm, settled,
normal.

77 INT. PECK ACCOUNTING RECEPTION - MORNING

77

Greg enters through the main doors of the accounting firm
he works for. JULIE, a well-groomed receptionist sits at
the front desk.

GREG
(grumpy)
Morning Julie.

JULIE
(disproportionately
cheerful)
Morning Greg!

As Greg moves to his office, Julie shouts after him.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

Can you help me with my tax forms
today?

Greg walks down the corridor, his hand up in a "sure, sure" fashion, clearly not thinking about Julie's request.

Julie sits down unsure whether Greg has agreed or not. She picks up her newspaper which, naturally, also has a front page headline about football.

78

INT. GREG'S OFFICE - MORNING

78

Greg throws his briefcase at the side of his desk and removes his suit jacket to hang on the back of his chair. Behind the chair is a suspended bird cage housing a canary. Greg looks at his organised desk. Things seem in place. He runs his finger along the day's entry of his business diary.

1PM Yoga with Jill.

Greg, half-smiles. He runs through the rest of the diary entries. A worried look crosses Greg's face.

4 P.M.: Meeting with Peck. MUST READ NEW PROPOSAL!

Greg fossicks through his clearly marked in-tray and finds a document. He places the document to one side and then opens a lower drawer of his desk to remove a packet of bird seed.

He pours birdseed into his hand. He opens the large birdcage door and inserts his hand so the bird can peck directly from his palm.

GREG

There you go boyo!

Hand still extended into the bird cage, Greg matter-of-factly picks up the document and begins reading.

Greg's expression begins to change. Something is wrong. The bird seed gently falls from his palm onto the floor of the cage. Greg withdraws his hand, always remaining focused on the contents of the document. Once his hand is fully withdrawn from the cage, he starts slowly turning the pages. His rage visibly increases with each new page.

When Greg reaches the last page he throws the document up in the air in outrage, causing the document's many sheets to cascade everywhere.

The canary flutters within its cage.

Greg exits with the papers still cascading in his wake.

79 INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - DAY

79

GREG moves through the corridors of the office.

GREG
(mutterering)
I've warned them about this. They
know how I feel.

Ahead of Greg are a group of office workers. One, THE
JOKESTER is clearly telling a joke.

JOKESTER
So he says to St Peter: "What are
my choices?"

St Peter says, "You can empty the
Pacific Ocean with a bucket or
you can coach the Sydney Swans to
a premiership."

The other workers chortle.

JOKESTER
So the guy says: Give me the
bucket.

Just as the joke finishes and the workers are laughing,
Greg rushes by. The Jokester drops his jovial facade and
rushes to catch up with Greg. He talks quickly, walking
alongside, not understanding that Greg is angry.

COLLEAGUE
How're you doing Greg? Could you
help me out with a provisional
tax problem this afternoon?

GREG
I'm quitting!

Greg keeps moving and muttering. The colleague stops dead
in his tracks.

COLLEAGUE
Would before lunch be better?

As Greg continues marching down the corridor. A second
colleague pops out of a door and then belatedly pursues
Greg down the corridor.

SECOND COLLEAGUE
Greg. Greg! I'm in trouble with
the Brennan account. Can you help
me out? I need that Saunders'
magic. I can make it worth your
while. I've got members' seats
for Saturday's big game at the
MCG.

(CONTINUED)

Greg shoves him aside and moves on.

GREG
Precisely what I'm going to talk
to Peck about.

SECOND COLLEAGUE
Don't take this account from me
Greg. You can't have them all!

GREG
I don't want any of them!

80 INT. MORGAN PECK'S OFFICE - DAY

80

A male hand picks up a plastic snowstorm globe containing a miniature Sydney skyline complete with Opera House and Harbour Bridge amongst an identical group of the lined up tourist souvenirs.

MORGAN PECK is on the phone. He is agitated. He scowls. He picks up another snowglobe and examines it.

MORGAN PECK
No Jennifer. You can't poach one
of my star players.

While he talks Morgan Peck looks at a picture on the back of his office door. The picture is of a woman with a bob cut and glasses. The picture has concentric target circles, and her face is partially obscured by devil horns and van dyke graffiti.

Morgan Peck tosses the snowglobe at the picture. The snowglobe smashes on impact leaving a soggy, speckled mess on the target.

81 INT. JENNIFER JAMIESON'S OFFICE - DAY

81

JENNIFER JAMIESON is the picture on the target made flesh. She's an attractive, consummate professional woman in her late thirties. Her fringe is so straight you could balance a spirit level on it. Stylish but rectangular glasses accentuate the harshness she carries in her face. She radiates a commanding presence.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
London says...

INTERCUT

MORGAN PECK
I wish this company was never
bought by London.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER JAMIESON
I was disappointed when I found out about Santa Claus, but I got over that. You'll have to get over this. Sydney is the company's Southern Hemisphere hub! You want the Australian offices to succeed don't you?

MORGAN PECK
I run the Melbourne office and I want the Melbourne office to succeed.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Melbourne people. You're so parochial. You know the score Morgan. Send me your top player!

In a silent rage, Morgan picks up another plastic Sydney snowglobe.

The office door swings open to reveal rageful Greg, just as Morgan tosses the snowglobe at the target.

GREG
Morgan! We need to talk!

The globe hits Greg square in the forehead and knocks him out.

MORGAN PECK
I'll call you back Jennifer. I think I've hit on something.

82 INT. MORGAN PECK'S OFFICE - DAY

82

Peck is hovering over a slowly reviving Greg.

MORGAN PECK
My dear boy. I wasn't expecting you until this afternoon. Can I get you anything?

GREG
I don't want you to get me anything! Just take this football stuff away!

MORGAN PECK
That again.

GREG
The last time you said...

(CONTINUED)

MORGAN

That I'd never let it happen again? I lied. I thought you'd get over it.

As they talk Peck helps Greg up

GREG

I'm over it all right.

MORGAN

Football is Melbourne's primary contribution to Australian culture. It's only natural that a few of our clients are involved in the industry.

GREG

A few? The Umpire's Association. The Women's Football League. Half the teams in the bloody ladder have an account with this firm.

Greg collapses into a plush leather chair.

GREG

There's too much football in this town. It absolutely killed my father...

MORGAN PECK

Have you considered a hobby to take your mind off it?

GREG

I've tried hobbies. Lots of hobbies. CB Radio, car mechanics, cricket, knitting, yoga...

A flash runs across Greg's face. He checks his watch.

GREG (CONT'D)

Nothing seems to work. This football mad city is completely crazy!

MORGAN PECK

All of Melbourne is crazy except you?

GREG

YES!

MORGAN PECK

You'd do anything to get away from football wouldn't you Greg?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

So you appreciate where I'm coming from.

MORGAN PECK

It's not where you are coming from it's where you are going.

Greg looks puzzled.

MORGAN PECK

You're one of my best accountants Greg. The Sydney office is clamoring for staff of your caliber. How'd you like to work up there for six months? Clear your head. None of that football rubbish for you. It's a cultural place. Very pretty. The harbour and umm the harbour. I believe they even have an opera house.

Think of it as a working holiday. Come back in the summer when the football season is over and you'll feel like a new man.

GREG

I can't leave Melbourne.

MORGAN PECK

Doesn't sound like you want to stay.

GREG

My girlfriend will have a fit if I suddenly go to Sydney.

MORGAN PECK

Perhaps she'd like it if you were unemployed.

83 INT. YOGA CLASS - DAY

83

A yoga class - mid-lesson. The women are mainly in leotards, or tights. The few men, are in t-shirts and shorts. Each student is standing on a sticky mat. The room is Spartan but zenfully peaceful. Greg rushes in to take his place alongside Jill.

Arms outstretched, Greg and Jill stand alongside each other. Both feet on the floor, they are sinking into one thigh, with the other leg stretched out straight behind them. Jill is concentrating on what she is doing but something else gives her expression extra fire.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
(whispers)
I've got something to tell you.

JILL
I don't want to hear it.

GREG
Are you still angry with me?

JILL
You gotta ask?

The YOGA TEACHER glides through the room evaluating his charges.

YOGA TEACHER
Concentrate...

Strengthen the thigh muscle. You
have to commit to the pose to
succeed.

Everyone is doing as the instructor asks, but Greg is clearly having problems. His straight leg buckles, his face is hard and strained.

YOGA TEACHER
Now place your hands behind your
back in a prayer position.

They all have their hands clasped in a prayer position behind their backs - except Greg who is frantically trying to move to do so. His hands keep missing each other and straining. Greg's puzzled face indicates that he cannot visualise what he has to do with his hands.

JUDY, standing across the room from Jill, makes an enquiring expression and motions the placing of a ring upon a ring finger.

Jill wearily shakes her head. Judy gives a disappointed and distasteful twitch to her mouth.

YOGA TEACHER
Now I want you to twist to your
left hand side. Slowly. Don't
force it. Now hold it.

Greg is in danger of unravelling completely.

YOGA TEACHER
Three more breaths.

Greg's struggle is piquing - he is physically vibrating from the effort.

YOGA TEACHER

Release.

All the yoga students go to a stand easy position while Greg unravels onto the floor, like the contents of a tomato sauce bottle that has finally become unblocked.

YOGA TEACHER

I sense that some of you are getting tired. Perhaps it is best to do our meditation now.

The yoga students all lie on the floor, palms outstretched, eyes closed, feet together. The yoga teacher walks by passing the clock as he does so.

YOGA TEACHER

Let go of all thoughts. Keep the eyes soft. Be like a bird effortlessly gliding on the wind...

Greg's face falls into repose.

FADE TO BLACK

84 EXT. SWANS IN FLIGHT - DAY

84

SPFX As tranquil music begins to play, a wedge of swans ascend into flight from a lake.

As they fly through clouded skies, the Melbourne skyline can be seen receding into the distance.

Suddenly the flying swans are flying through blue skies.

At the pointed edge of the wedge of swans, the Sydney skyline, complete with Opera House and Harbour Bridge are visible.

85 INT. YOGA CLASS - DAY

85

The clock on the wall indicates that more time has passed than actual screen time.

YOGA TEACHER

...and slowly turn over.

Everyone rolls to their right - except Greg who rolls to his left, bringing him face to face with Jill. Greg's face is dreamy, beatific.

YOGA TEACHER

(voiceover)

Gently open your eyes.

(CONTINUED)

Greg and Jill open their eyes and are so confronted by the suddenness of their physical closeness that they both emit a noise of surprise and recoil in horror.

GREG AND JILL

Hooo!

86 INT. GREG'S ROOM - NIGHT

86

A tight close-up on Jill's disbelieving, horrified face.

JILL

Sydney!

Reveal Greg, Catherine and Jill all in Greg's bedroom. On the bed, which is covered by a bedspread which only a mother would choose for her son, are two open suitcases.

Greg and Catherine are taking clothes from a wardrobe old enough to have belonged to Greg's grandfather. They are both placing the clothes in one of the two suitcases. Jill looks on.

GREG

I thought you'd be pleased.

JILL

Pleased?

GREG

You were the one who said we weren't going anywhere.

Jill splutters.

GREG

Come up and visit. You might like it. We could even move there, if we ever get married.

JILL

Married!! And when was that going to happen?

Greg is at the suitcase depositing a garment when he pulls out the Swans guernsey his father had given him. He looks puzzled and regards it with absent-minded distaste. He tosses it to one side.

GREG

Someday. You know... You were the one who wanted to get married.

JILL

I do. But you'll be in Sydney and I'll be in Melbourne.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Why has it always got to be me
who comes up with the plan? Why
have I got to be the clever one?
When you come up with something
spectacular that'll be the day I
marry you!

Jill is dumbstruck.

During the silence, Greg's mother can be seen, but not obviously, to be placing the football guernsey in the suitcase once more.

GREG

You wanted me to do something
different and now that I'm doing
it you don't like it!

Greg is at the suitcase once more placing another garment when he again pulls out the Swans guernsey. He looks doubly puzzled and again distastefully and slightly more forcefully tosses it to aside.

GREG

Besides, what was I going to do?
Quit?

We've been together two years,
what harm will six months do?

JILL

Six months!

Catherine places her hand (with the Swan ring in plain view) on Jill's shoulder in an attempt to calm Jill down. It doesn't succeed entirely, but the gesture brings Jill back from the edge.

87 INT. TULLAMARINE AIRPORT - NIGHT

87

Jill, with Catherine's hand still visible on her shoulder. It creates the illusion that we are still in the previous scene. Jill has tears in her eyes.

JILL

I can't believe you're going to
Sydney.

Greg steps so close it is intimate.

GREG

It's not such a big deal.

Greg kisses Jill.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

You'll be up next weekend.

Reveal that the trio are no longer in Greg's room but are now at Tullamarine airport.

Jill is wearing the woollen hat seen earlier as she left her apartment. Now it is Greg who is trying to make Jill smile. He pulls the hat down over her forehead and a reaction shot reveals Greg pulling a mock frown.

Greg then pushes the hat to one side of her head and the reaction shot shows Greg pulling a funny face going cross-eyed. Jill laughs a little and then pulls the hat back, and smiles warmly.

CATHERINE

Can I have a moment with my son before he goes?

Jill nods and wiping her tears, moves away.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Greg, don't worry about us. But look after your self. And don't forget where you came from.

GREG

Mum...

Catherine removes her swan-engraved gold band from her finger.

CATHERINE

I want you to take this as an assurance that you'll be coming back.

GREG

Mum this is your wedding ring!

CATHERINE

I've put your father's ring in a safe place. The two rings will be reunited soon enough, I'm sure. Search inside your heart and you'll find what's right for you.

Catherine and Greg hug. Catherine whispers in Greg's ear.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Trouble is, it's always the last place you look.

AIRLINE V/O

Last call for passengers for flight A109 for Sydney. All

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AIRLINE V/O (cont'd)
passengers are requested to make
their way to Gate 14.

GREG

I have to go.

Catherine hugs her son, and Greg breaks away to give Jill one more embrace, before moving on to show his boarding pass to an AIR STEWARD and disappearing into the gangway.

88 INT. JENNIFER JAMIESON'S OFFICE - DAY 88

Fancy office with an Opera House view. Jennifer Jamieson is on the phone.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

The eagle has landed Morgan. I'm about to introduce him to my people. It wasn't so hard to give up your star employee was it?

JENNIFER'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT knocks on the door before being waved in by Jennifer. Jennifer hangs up the phone.

JENNIFER'S PA

The staff are ready Ms Jamieson.

89 INT. SYDNEY BOARD ROOM - DAY 89

A group of power dressed people (young, old, male, female) are gathered (some sitting, some standing) around a long board room table. Prominently amongst them is Greg.

Visibly in charge is Jennifer who stands at the head of the table. Amongst those sitting closest to Jennifer is BRIAN. Slick and handsome Brian gives a tangible air of confidence which extends to an "ends-justifies-the-means" demeanour. The Board room is dominated by a large video projector TV screen typically seen in 1980s pubs which at this stage is turned off.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Final item is the introduction of Greg Saunders. I've managed to temporarily poach Greg from Melbourne - no jokes please. Greg has shown himself to be a top performer down there. We only have him for six months, so we'll make the most of him by setting him on to the Sturges account.

Brian looks put out.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER JAMIESON

As per company policy, an orientation person has been allocated to Greg and that is Brian.

Brian adjusts his reaction because everyone is suddenly looking at him.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

So Brian will initiate Greg. So, if Greg doesn't know anything we can all blame Brian.

BRIAN

As usual.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Ah, Brian, you were our best until Greg came along - but that's enough sympathy from me: I know you enjoy it too much - If there aren't any additional items, I'll close the meeting.

The meeting is over and a few colleagues shake Greg's hand, welcoming him to the company. Brian puts his hand on Greg's shoulder.

BRIAN

I'll grab a couple of coffees. See you in your office in five?

GREG

Sure.

90 INT. JENNIFER JAMIESON'S OFFICE - DAY

90

Jennifer is sitting at her desk. Brian stands on the other side.

BRIAN

Why do I have to be the one to baby-sit this bugger from Melbourne?

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Someone's got to.

BRIAN

And why does he get to handle the Sturges account instead of me?

JENNIFER JAMIESON

I got word that your extra-curricular activities

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER JAMIESON (cont'd)
almost lost us our chance at the
Morrison account.

BRIAN
You told me to show the Morrisons
a good time.

Jennifer rises from her desk and walks back and forth
around Brian.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Yes... but I believe that you
showed Mrs Morrison a somewhat
better time than Mr. Morrison.

BRIAN
I got the account didn't I?

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Yes and if Mr Morrison finds out
you'll lose it too.

Jennifer stops walking and stands between Brian and the
desk. They are so close it reinforces the already
suggested intimacy between them. Jennifer seductively
strokes Brian's cheek and chin.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
So your punishment is to look
after Greg. Besides I know I
can't trust you with another
woman... I'm hoping I can trust
you with a man.

Brian's ambiguous smile coincides with Jennifer's
increasingly sexualised stroking. Jennifer grabs Brian's
chin fiercely.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
But if I find out that you've
been with any more women...

Brian puts his hands on her hips in a way that confirms
the sexual liaisons that so far have just been suggested.

BRIAN
You won't fuck me any more?

Jennifer matches Brian's sexual aggressiveness by grabbing
his crotch in a way that could lead to either violence or
sex.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Worse than that. You won't be
able to fuck anyone anymore.

Brian is not intimidated. He gently pushes her back on to her desk so she is sitting on it. He spreads her knees with his hands. She meanwhile begins to rub his chest.

BRIAN

Oh I don't think you'd like that.

They kiss and begin fumbling with each other's clothing as they both lean fully on to Jennifer's desk.

91

INT. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

91

Greg's office has all the trappings of a successful young man. Wood panelling and a tell-tale view of the Harbour bridge and Opera House. Greg is looking at some documents as Brian enters. Brian is still adjusting his tie which is astray as a result of his liaison with Jennifer. He is empty-handed.

BRIAN

Sorry I took so long. The coffee shop was packed.

GREG

Where's the coffee?

BRIAN

Jennifer saw me in the corridor and thought I'd bought a coffee for her. So I had to give her one. (coughs)

GREG

So where's yours?

BRIAN

Oh, I, err, drank it in the lift. Look in regards to the stuff Jennifer said this morning. She talks big, but believe me, you can go from peacock to featherduster in a very short time around here.

GREG

Well it's not a holiday. I'm here to work.

BRIAN

What brought you to Sydney anyway? Money? Glory? A girl?

GREG

(laughing)

No, I have a girlfriend in Melbourne.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

Come here to get away?

GREG

No, in fact she's coming up in next weekend. Look, I've got her picture.

Greg presents his wallet and presents the photograph of he and Jill taken at the amusement park.

BRIAN

Give us a squiz.

Brian studies the photo. He has a positive reaction, yet masks his enthusiasm.

BRIAN

What's her name?

GREG

Jill.

BRIAN

Looks pretty ... of course photos can be deceptive.

Brian's reaction shows that the cogs are turning inside his head already.

92

INT. MONEY TALK CALL CENTRE, MELBOURNE - EVENING

92

The Money Talk call centre is cubicle after cubicle of men and women sitting at computer terminals. Their logo is mounted on the wall. Each cubicle attendant is in their own little world. Like her anonymous comrades, Jill is sitting at an office desk with a telephone headset upon her head, facing a bulky 1980s computer with a black and white screen.

Like her home dressing table there are nic-nacs including crystals on her desk. Handbills with pictures of angels and horoscope charts abound. Amongst them, next to the phone, there is a small merry-go-round, that Jill spins around as she talks. Jill is talking to Joanne the foul-mouthed and bitter yoga classmate.

JILL

Either way Joanne, I have to go to Sydney.

93 INT. JOANNE'S APARTMENT. MELBOURNE - NIGHT 93

Joanne has the TV on and channel surfs with barely time for any individual image to register recognition. She's not really with the TV and only just present with Jill on the phone.

JOANNE

Well make up your mind, because time's proven he can't make up his.

Jill is doubtful.

JOANNE

You've waited long enough. Dump him.

94 INT. MONEY TALK CALL CENTRE. MELBOURNE - EVENING 94

A RINGING BUZZ can be heard indicating that another call is coming through on Jill's call waiting system.

JILL

Hang on, I've got a call coming through. Money Talk Customer Service. Jill speaking.

95 INT/EXT. GREG'S LUXURY SUITE - EVENING 95

GREG is pacing around with an early 1990s mobile in a hotel room with a balcony looking on to a Sydney harbour view.

GREG

Jill!

JILL

Greg!

GREG

Jill, You're not going to believe this. I'm being spoilt rotten. Everything is laid on, the hotel's got great views, - it's got the lot! There's so much to do and see. You're going to love it up here.

CUT TO:

JILL

Greg?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Yes?

SFX: A ringing buzz can be heard indicating that yet another call is coming through on Jill's call waiting system.

JILL

I've got a call on the other line. Hang on a sec.

Jill pushes two buttons on her phone console to swap between the phone lines.

JILL CONT'D

Money Talk customer service. Jill speaking.

96

INT. OFFICE, LIBERTY INVESTMENT, MELBOURNE - EVENING

96

Aman, TREVOR, is sitting at a desk, sorting through a large pile of computer print-outs with sprocket holes on each side. The black and white computer screen on his bulky 80s computer has a screen full of information on his computer that has clearly bamboozled him. TREVOR, is looking ruffled, but is amiable. He is in a fix and while he is confused he appears confident that the call centre will sort him out.

TREVOR

Evening, Jill. Trevor from Liberty Investments. I need your advice. We're trying to organise our holdings with the Swallow Corporation, but I've just lost the debit side of the whole transaction and I don't know how to offset the loss.

JILL

It sounds pretty straightforward, Trevor. Give me a minute to check your established assets against your previous losses and I'm sure we can get some clarity around what we need to offset the loss.

Jill pushes two button on her phone console to swap between the phone lines. Jill says to Joanne.

JILL

Greg's on the line.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

JOANNE

Perfect! Just tell him you're sick of waiting on the end of a string and it's all off.

CUT TO:

JILL

I can't end a two year relationship over the phone. I'll tell him when I get to Sydney.

JOANNE

So he's in Sydney. Big deal! All he's done is make the string longer. Dump him now, before you lose your nerve.

JILL

I'm not sure that's what I want.

JOANNE

You're hopeless. It'll be easier on both of you if you do it over the phone. In person, it'll be one last date, and one last kiss and one last fuck.

JILL

I can't keep him waiting much longer.

JOANNE

Keep him waiting?

JILL

Hang on.

Jill pushes two button on her phone console to swap between the phone lines.

JILL (CONT'D)

Greg?

CUT TO:

GREG continues pacing around the hotel room including the balcony with a mobile phone.

GREG

Jill, you're going to love it up here. You'll have the time of your life!

JILL

Greg I'm not coming to see Sydney - I'm coming to see you.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

And you will. I'll pick you up from the airport. We won't be separated from the time you get here to the time you leave.

JILL

Hang on I have to go back to the other line.

Jill pushes two button on her phone console to swap between the phone lines.

JILL (CONT'D)

Trevor did you say that this is for the current quarter or for the previous quarter?

CUT TO:

Trevor peers at his computer screen.

TREVOR

Does it make a difference?

JILL

Of course.

TREVOR

oh.

JILL

Current or previous?

TREVOR

Current.

CUT TO:

JILL

Please hold, while I check.

Jill pushes two button on her phone console to swap between the phone lines.

JILL CONT'D

I'm still angry about you going up there in the first place.

CUT TO:

As Greg listens to Jill, there's a knock at his apartment door.

GREG

Hang on a moment, my pizza's arrived.

JILL

No, I'm sick of hanging on. Talk to me now.

SFX: A ringing buzz can be heard indicating that an increasing number of calls are coming through on Jill's call waiting system.

The lights on Jill's phone consol representing different lines are flashing.

Greg moves to the door and opens it. He and the PIZZA GUY do a pizza delivery exchange while Greg talks to Jill. The pizza delivery guy is blandly bemused as Greg talks.

GREG

Look, you'll feel differently about it once you're here Jill.

JILL

Sure, sure, promise me everything. Then I end up twiddling my thumbs while your life gets in the way.

GREG

Let's not argue on the phone.

PIZZA GUY

That's the stuff buddy.

GREG

Jill on our first night here what type of restaurant do you want to go to? I can reserve a table at Centrepoint Tower's revolving restaurant or we can go to a fabulous rooftop Japanese place. What do you say?

CUT TO:

The SFX buzzing of the phone has been gaining in momentum on the soundtrack. In a tizz Jill is emphatically pushing the switch buttons. Each misplaced reply prompts a suitably perplexed expression on the face of the receiver.

JILL

(to Trevor)

I don't care what you say. I'm going up to Sydney.

(CONTINUED)

(to Joanne)
Miso gives me a rash, so let's go
to Centrepoint Tower.

(to Greg)
That should reduce your
liabilities by about seven and a
half per cent in the next
quarter.

102 INT. GREG'S LUXURY SUITE - EVENING 102

Jill has hung up on GREG and the PIZZA GUY knows it.

GREG
(to the phone.)
Ummm, I love you too.
(to the pizza guy)
I've just moved up here from
Melbourne.

PIZZA GUY
Don't let it throw you buddy.

103 INT. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY 103

Greg is working diligently at his desk when Jennifer Jamieson enters. She carries a pen and filofax. She is accompanied by MR Sturges an affable man smartly dressed in a dark conservative suit. Mr. Sturges is in his late 50s/early 60s. Standing alongside Sturges is his highly attractive, buxom, young enough to be his daughter, personal assistant, ROMY.

Greg looks up at Jennifer, Mr Sturges and Romy - in that order. Romy is dressed in a low-cut dress with a high hemline. In addition she wears knee-high boots. She oozes sexuality, that creates an unspoken rift between the older and younger women. What Jennifer keeps behind her office door, Romy wears like a badge of honour. Romy clearly likes what she sees when she looks at Greg. Her attention locks Greg into a lingering gaze.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Greg. Can I speak with you for a
moment?

Greg's attention snaps back to Jennifer. He nods but it is clear that Jennifer is just exercising a formality. She will speak to him regardless of whether he thinks he has the time or not.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
I'd like you to meet Mr. Dennis
Sturges.

Greg rises to shake Sturges's hand.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Of Sturges Plastics?

MR STURGES

The very same. This is my
personal assistant, Romy.

Coquettishly, Romy offers her hand in a way that suggests
that she wishes him to kiss it (and more later on).

MR STURGES

Romy, this is a business meeting,
not your debutante ball.

ROMY

Oh Dad, really.

Visible relief on Greg face when he realise the true
nature of the relationship between the client and the
young woman.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Greg, we've been courting Mr.
Sturges's business for quite a
while but

(with a light laugh)

we can't get him to commit to us.
So since he's a dedicated Sydney
Swans fan and you being from
Melbourne understanding the
intricacies of Australian Rules
football...

Greg stops his nodding.

JENNIFER JAMIESON (CONT'D)

...it's been decided that you
should accompany him to the Swans
match -- this Friday night.

Jennifer pauses to let that sink in with Greg before
continuing. Greg has a twinge of fear.

GREG

But I don't have a ticket.

MR STURGES

You won't need one, I have an
exclusive box.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

So it's all arranged. You can
meet Mr Sturges at his house on
Friday evening.

Mr Sturges passes a business card to Greg.

(CONTINUED)

MR STURGES

My home address is on the back.
Meet me around 6.30. I'm just at
Centennial Park, near the SCG.
We'll just stroll over before the
first bounce.

Greg is trapped and he knows it. There's no room for a
tantrum. Panic rather than rage is the dominant feeling.

MR STURGES

Romy, when are we due at our next
appointment?

Romy opens a filofax and flips through the pages back and
forth. Her lack of success finding the next appointment
time suggests she not only doesn't know what she's doing,
but that she wouldn't get a job with anyone but her
father.

ROMY

Soon, Dad.

MR STURGES

How soon?

ROMY

Very soon?

MR STURGES

Well, it seems we must hurry.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Let me escort you to the lift.

MR STURGES

You people, you never stop trying
to close a sale. It's all right,
we'll see ourselves out.

I look forward to seeing you and
the Sydney Swans on Friday night.

Romy gives a coquettish wave goodbye to Greg complete with
a wink.

Sturges and Romy are waiting for a lift. Brian passes
through the corridor and sees Sturges. Brian has a
financial newspaper in his hand, which has a photo of
Sturges at a corporate meeting. He looks down at the photo
and back up at Sturges, and then he sees Romy. He is
agape. The pair disappear into a descending lift.

105 INT. GREG'S SYDNEY OFFICE - DAY

105

Jennifer still stands in Greg's office. She's obviously satisfied. Greg, sitting in his desk chair, looks anxious.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

That went rather well.

GREG

Except for...

JENNIFER JAMIESON

My, aren't you the perfectionist?
Greg, the Sturges' Plastics
account has been eluding me for
months. If you win this there
will be appropriate rewards. And
there's nothing like returning
home a winner don't you think?

Jennifer pivots to exit and then suddenly pivots back.

JENNIFER JAMIESON (CONT'D)

Oh and pick up a gift for
Sturges. Something special, to
curry his favour.

GREG

I'm not ...

JENNIFER JAMIESON

You'll think of something I'm
sure.

She exits.

106 EXT. CAFE - DAY

106

Kylie and Jill are at the same cafe that they met at previously.

KYLIE

Do you really want to go to
Sydney this weekend?

JILL

My mind is made up.

KYLIE

Why not give yourself time to
miss him?

JILL

What if he meets someone else?

(CONTINUED)

KYLIE

What if you do?

JILL

No, this is what I want.

KYLIE

I thought you wanted a visa.

JILL

I can't just wish for things right? I've got to work for things right? This is an investment.

KYLIE

If you must. Try to squeeze in a couple of meetings while you're there.

JILL

I'll be fine. Greg never pressures me to drink.

KYLIE

You still haven't told him? What is it about honesty, openness and willingness that you don't understand?

JILL

I said I'll be fine.

KYLIE

Well you know how it works. One drink and you'll be back where you started from.

JILL

Brooklyn?

KYLIE

That's not quite what I meant.

107 INT. JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY

107

Jennifer and Brian are coupled on Jennifer's desk. She, seated on the desk with her legs wrapped around him. He has his pants around his ankles, and is gently thrusting into Jennifer.

JENNIFER JAMIESON

Oh don't stop. Don't stop.

Brian stops.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER JAMIESON (CONT'D)
You've stopped.

BRIAN
I want the Sturges account.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
Too late. It took me ages to find
someone palatable to Sturges.
There's too much money riding on
the deal to screw it up by
switching it around to suit you.

BRIAN
I could do a much better job than
this twerp from Melbourne.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
I said no.

He thrusts his hips forcefully.

BRIAN
Say yes.

Jennifer's eyes reel and then she comes back into steely
focus.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
No.

BRIAN
(his voice escalating
slightly)
Yes.

JENNIFER JAMIESON
(her voice escalating
slightly to match his and
her excitement)
No.

108 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY

108

The corridor outside Jennifer's Office.

The yes/no confrontation is getting louder.

JENNIFER JAMIESON (OFF-SCREEN)
No. No. No. No.

BRIAN (OFF-SCREEN)
Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER JAMIESON (OFF-SCREEN)
No. No. No. No.

BRIAN (OFF-SCREEN)
Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

JENNIFER JAMIESON (OFF-SCREEN)
(a spectacular moaning)
YES!

BRIAN (OFF-SCREEN)
(a descendent moaning)
Noooooooooooo.

109 INT. JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY 109

On Jennifer's desk, BRIAN is limply slumped over JENNIFER. He looks completely spent. She taps him on the shoulder.

BRIAN
Was that a yes?

JENNIFER JAMIESON
That was too quick for a yes. If that's all you gave Mrs Morrison, I'm surprised we got the Morrison account at all.

110 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY 110

Brian emerges from Jennifer's office, closing the door behind him. He is somewhere between despondent and angry. He looks around suspiciously, making some final, yet unnecessary, adjustments to his clothing, tie adjustment, checking his belt.

Greg grabs him from behind.

GREG
Just who I've been looking for.
Quick in here.
(indicating Boardroom)
I've got to talk to you about something.

111 INT. THE SYDNEY OFFICE. BOARDROOM - DAY 111

Brian is sitting at the boardroom table idly playing with the remote control for the large television that dominates the boardroom. A news broadcast silently plays behind them.

Greg is pacing up and down like a madman and ranting. From their posture, Greg has clearly been going on about his dilemma for quite some time.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

I can't believe that they've done this to me! Just because I'm from Melbourne! It's a Sydney conspiracy!

BRIAN

It happens all the time. The company makes all kinds of assumptions. The Chinese get the Chinatown accounts. The feminists get all the women and...

GREG

I came here to get away from this! Sydney people make fun of the weather but that's not what's make Melbourne gloomy. It's the football! People born in the wrong area are eternally shackled to the misfortunes of a football team...

An image of a sports news report comes up on the television screen. It shows highlights of a rugby game.

BRIAN

It's the same with Rugby League...

GREG

Have you ever taken a sickie because your Rugby team lost a game?

BRIAN

I've taken a couple when they've won.

GREG

You've got no idea.

BRIAN

Sydney people like the Swans. They reckon they might win the Grand Final this year.

The television now shows an image of the Sydney Swans in training. A close up presents the COACH being interviewed on screen. He is identified at the bottom of the TV screen as such.

Brian activates the volume.

COACH

This is an important game for the Swans. We're in good shape. It's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COACH (cont'd)
a long way to the premiership,
but we'll be there and this
Friday night we'll prove it.

GREG
You just wait until they start
losing. Then you'll all be sorry.

BRIAN
Don't you want to hear this?

GREG
No! Turn that shit off.

Brian turns off TV.

BRIAN
Really? I thought all Melbourne
people were football mad?

GREG
They're mad all right! Stick with
a football team through the
misery years and you'll know more
about living in Melbourne than
ten years of catching a tram to
work will ever teach you.

BRIAN
Never happen. If the Swans start
losing, Sydney will just forget
them and take up something
else... like ice hockey.

GREG
Ice hockey!

BRIAN
It's only a game. No one up here
takes it seriously and neither
should you.

GREG
Sturges takes it seriously.

BRIAN
Yeah, but he's as nutty as you
are.

GREG
Huh?

BRIAN
Everyone in the company has had a
go at getting Sturges's business
and everyone's failed. I was next

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN (cont'd)
cab off the rank until you -
thank Christ - came on the scene.
Sturges's unreachable. He doesn't
even seem to care about his
business. He just wants a mate to
watch his beloved football with.
So stop worrying. You only have
to stick it out for this one
Friday night.

GREG
This Friday? ... Shit. Jill's
going to kill me.

BRIAN
Who?

GREG
This is the weekend that my
girlfriend is coming up from
Melbourne.

BRIAN
So?

GREG
I promised her we'd spend time
together...

BRIAN
She'll wait for you.

GREG
She'll go berserk is what she'll
do. This was supposed to be "our
time" together...

BRIAN
Time a woman appreciates.

GREG
...Now I've got to spend Friday
night watching grown men chase a
red leather ball like a bunch of
greyhounds after a mechanical
rabbit.

Brian looks like he's getting an idea.

BRIAN
Not if you throw the account.

GREG
What?

BRIAN

What's more important to you:
work or your girlfriend?

GREG

(hesitant)

Wha?

BRIAN

Stick with me on this, will you?
What's more important?

GREG

My girlfriend of course. But what
will Jennifer say?

BRIAN

You won't have to worry about
Jennifer if you go about it
right.

GREG

Go about what?

BRIAN

What's most important to Sturges?

GREG

Money?

BRIAN

No he's got money. The company is
trying to get his money. But we
keep failing.

No, Sturges is obsessed with
football. Just, park Jill with me
for a couple of hours and do
something to make him chuck a
wobbly.

Greg looks puzzled.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Can't you see? Get under his
skin, he'll tell you to rack off
and you'll be reunited with your
lady love before half-time.

You'll be off the hook. It's
win/win.

GREG

I can't throw the account...

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

Listen to the golden boy from Melbourne. We've failed to secure the account ten times. So we fail to secure the account eleven times. Big deal! No one will hold it against you if you stuff up.

Greg is doubtful but hopeful.

BRIAN CONT'D

Just ruffle the feathers of this Swans guy. You can't win them all, so stop trying.

Greg pensively considers the virtue of deliberate failure.

112

INT. ARRIVAL GATE SYDNEY AIRPORT - DAY

112

Greg and Brian are already with Jill at Sydney airport. Jill is holding a bunch of flowers in one hand and a large carry-on bag in the other. Greg is in the midst of explaining what the altered arrangements are to the increasingly disgruntled Jill.

GREG

So Brian will look after you until I can get away from the game.

Jill gives a slow burn then hits Greg with the flowers that she has been given.

BRIAN

Is this your first time in Sydney?

GREG

I'll see you after the game. Promise!

Greg leans forward and in an effort to placate the angry Jill by adjusting her hat in the intimate fashion that has been used in previous scenes. Jill recoils leaving Greg holding the woollen hat in his hands.

JILL

You touch me and I'll kill you!

Brian takes fuming Jill by the arm, and leads her away toward the taxi rank.

BRIAN

(shouting back)
Don't worry about her mate. She's in good hands.

They continue walking off leaving Greg with Jill's hat in his hands.

113 EXT. TAXI RANK, AIRPORT - NIGHT 113

Jill opens a cab door and throws her large carry-on bag in the back. A TAXI DRIVER looks set to protest.

BRIAN
Wouldn't risk it mate. Just drive.

114 INT. TAXI - NIGHT 114

Brian is in the front passenger seat of the moving cab. The driver seems to have learned his lesson and is butting out. Brian leans back looking towards Jill who is going through the contents of her carry-on bag.

Jill tears up one of her New Age books and throws the pages out the car window.

JILL
"You Can Control Your Life". What a joke.

Jill picks up another book.
"Angels Know The Angles" Angels.
Schmangels.

Jill rips the book in half right down the spine. She throws the debris out the window. Jill picks up another.
"Serenity the Crystals Way". What crap!

BRIAN
What are you doing?

JILL
Simplifying my life.

Brian looks on as Jill keeps tearing books and throwing the pages away. She scoops up a handful of crystals.

JILL (CONT'D)
Can you believe I thought these rocks were going to help me get married? I must've had rocks in my head!

Jill picks up her ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Book. She tries tearing it in half, but the hard-bound tome won't give way. She tosses the whole thing out the window.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

Don't you need any of that stuff?

JILL

There's only one thing I need...
You know any good places to
drink?

BRIAN

Never thought you'd ask.

115 EXT. A MANSION, CENTENNIAL PARK - NIGHT

115

A rented car pulls up outside the mansion. Greg sits in the car, looks at his watch. It is 6.45p.m. Greg gets out of the car.

From the car boot he removes a large flat rectangular package in a new white cardboard box and places it under his arm.

Greg walks to the imposing front gate and buzzes the intercom and waits with some awkwardness, for a reply. Instead, causing Greg to recoil slightly, Mr Sturges, still smartly dressed, still affable, emerges alone from the prestigious facade.

Sturges's only sign of being a Sydney Swans supporter is a red tie with the Swans logo prominently featured upon it.

MR STURGES

Good to see you again Greg.

GREG

Mr. Sturges.

They firmly shake hands and Sturges nonchalantly shifts his glance toward the package.

GREG

Oh, Mr Sturges this is a gift
from the company and myself. We
thought as a Swans fan you'd
appreciate it.

Greg presents the package as a gift to Sturges with both hands. Sturges accepts it with confidence - not greed - and immediately opens it.

The package is revealed to contain the autographed antique guernsey Greg's father Bill gave to him as a child.

Pleased, Sturges holds up the jumper at arm's length as he tries to get a good look at it. He notices something.

(CONTINUED)

MR. STURGES

My God. This has got to be the genuine article. What's this?

Sturges reads the signatures along the sleeves and stomach of the guernsey.

MR. STURGES

Skilton. Pratt and ... I don't believe it Cazaly! This is absolutely amazing. Where did you get this?

GREG

My grandfather was a Swans supporter back in the old days. He got Cazaly to autograph the guernsey for my father. Later on Dad got Pratt and Skilton too.

MR. STURGES

Your father? Look, I couldn't possibly accept this.

GREG

Please accept it with the company's and my compliments.

Sturges looks askance at Greg, but holds back from any further protest.

MR. STURGES

Shall we move on? It's getting rather close to game time.

116 EXT. GATEWAY TO SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND (SCG) - NIGHT 116

The pair walk to the SCG from Centennial Park. Sturges carries the package.

MR. STURGES

So if your grandfather was a Swans supporter he probably lived in South Melbourne. Would I be right?

GREG

Born and raised.

MR. STURGES

So your Swans bloodline goes all the way back to the glory days. There's not many who can claim their family has supported the same football team over three generations and two cities.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

I'm not really what you would call a supporter.

MR. STURGES

(not listening)

I was raised in South Melbourne myself. Moved to Sydney back in the seventies. Thought I was going to make a killing in real estate and ended up in plastics.

GREG

Now Mr. Sturges would you mind if I left the game early...

MR. STURGES

In those days, Sydneysiders wouldn't have any truck with Aussie Rules at all. Back then, watching "aerial ping-pong" was a secret vice. More like being in another country rather than living in another state.

GREG

(mutters)

Must have been tough.

MR STURGES

Of course you didn't have to follow the game week by week to know that the Swans had a losing streak a mile wide in those days. But I never gave them away. And though it was a sorry day for many, it was the grandest day of my life when the Swans moved to Sydney.

You know, they've got men playing for them now who are just as courageous as the men who signed this jumper...

Sturges taps the box

MR STURGES

...In fact, why don't you see whether you can get Captain Paul Kelly to sign the guernsey at half-time? Yes!...

Greg is discomfited by this suggestion.

(CONTINUED)

MR STURGES
...That would be splendid.
Complete the dynasty of
signatures, so to speak.

The two men reach the gate entrance of the SCG. Mr. Sturges needs to get his ticket from his billfold wallet. Carrying the box at the same time is cumbersome for him.

MR. STURGES
Here, hold this.

Mr. Sturges passes the package to Greg who dutifully accepts it.

Sturges takes his pass out of his wallet and nods to the security guard who is obviously familiar with Mr. Sturges. They move through the gate. Greg tries to pass the package back to Mr. Sturges, but the client keeps walking.

MR. STURGES
This is excellent. So pleased to
meet you Greg. One doesn't often
get the chance to meet a true
blue Swans fan...

Sturges's lyrical waxing about the Swans continuing into a fade-out.

117 INT. SCG MEMBERS GRANDSTAND - NIGHT

117

Fade in and Mr Sturges's lyrical waxing about the Swans still continues as he and Greg enter the Members Grandstand area making their way across to Sturges's private box.

MR. STURGES
You're probably too young to have
seen Skilton in his heyday.

GREG
But I'm not really a fan.

Sturges gives a cursory nod as an usher escorts them into Sturges's box. As they are about to step in Greg looks shocked.

STURGES
You remember my daughter Romy,
don't you?

Romy is sexily languishing in a chair, with two vacant chairs to her left. Again she is dressed to kill. She waves coquetteishly at Greg, her eyes hungry.

118 INT. FANCY RESTAURANT/BAR - NIGHT

118

Brian and Jill are sitting in the bar of the restaurant nursing a Bloody Mary each when a MAITRE' D approaches them.

MAITRE' D

Your table will be another ten minutes sir. Would you and madame care for another pre-dinner drink?

BRIAN

No, I'll sit on this.

Jill throws down the remainder of her glass. When she speaks it is apparent it is not the first drink she has disposed of in such a fashion.

JILL

I'll have another Bloody Mary. In fact gimme two.

MAITRE' D

Of course.

JILL

Two years I've wasted on that prick! Now I follow him to Sydney and he's not even here!

The Maitre'd arrives with two more drinks and Jill quickly downs the first.

BRIAN

You better slow down or you'll be shit-faced by the time Greg is here.

JILL

I hope I am!

BRIAN

Well if that's what you want but...

Brian slides the remaining glass toward Jill with a lecherously manipulative smile on his face.

...there are other ways of expressing your dissatisfaction.

Brian stares at a football game on the TV mounted behind the bar.

119 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 119

As Greg, Mr Sturges and Romy view the Sydney Swans game the sequence is interspersed with game clips to supplement the action, primarily of the Swans executing glorious acts in the pursuit of victory.

The guts, skill and determination possessed by these athletes should be undeniable even to those watching who have never seen a game of Aussie Rules before.

On the soundtrack is the roar of an enthusiastic crowd to be expected at any Aussie Rules game.

Greg is doing his utmost to avoid engaging with the game in front of him - and Romy!

120 EXT. THE SCG PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT 120

A Swans player leaps in front for a mark and kicks a goal.

121 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 121

Sturges is completely immersed in his enthusiasm and the game in front of him. However Greg is revealed not to be watching the game at all but to be reading an accounting textbook.

Mr Sturges notices but shows no discernible reaction.

Romy however shows greater interest in Greg's textbook than is humanly possibly and appears to share Greg's lack of interest in the game. She tantalisingly, obviously, sexually, sticks her index finger in her mouth, sucks on it/wets it and reaches across to turn the page of the textbook. Greg is aghast and sees that he clearly needs to try something else.

122 EXT. ON THE SCG PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT 122

A series of players relentlessly pursue the ball and successfully emerging to triumph via a rapid series of handballs, is complimented by...

123 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 123

Mr Sturges is enthusiastically barracking for the Swans. The crowd soundtrack drops down low enough to have the tinny annoying sound of too much treble on a walkman emerge. At the same time as it is revealed Greg is now avoiding engagement with the game by listening to music.

(CONTINUED)

Romy removes the earplug of the walkman from the ear of Greg's closest to her and brings it over to her ear most distant from Greg, so that their intimacy is comically increased by the sudden tug of the wires bringing their heads closer together.

The volume of the music increases when the plug is unplugged from Greg's ear and returns to the previous levels when Romy places the plug in her own ear.

Smiling, Romy puts her hand on Greg's chin and turns his face fully toward her. Romy speaks loudly over the sound of the music which now can barely be heard.

ROMY

Oh I just love Air Supply!

124 EXT. THE SCG PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT 124

A clip of a spectacularly dynamic recovery of the ball by a Swans opponent from an awkward bounce with the Swans in pursuit.

125 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 125

An enthusiastic Mr Sturges and ... Greg, who is leaning toward Sturges in his effort to escape Romy who is like predator moving in for the kill.

MR STURGES

Exciting, isn't it?

GREG

A little too exciting.

ROMY

(stroking Greg's leg)

Don't get too excited or the game might be over before you know it.

ROMY sees Jill's hat poking out of Greg's jacket pocket.

She reaches for it, then places it on her head.

ROMY

What a cute hat!

Greg looks momentarily horrified as he snatches Jill's hat from Romy's head and stuffs it back into his pocket.

GREG

I'm feeling a little warm. Should I get us something to drink?

(CONTINUED)

MR STURGES

Yes, Yes, but hurry, you don't want to miss a minute of this.

GREG

Romy would you like a drink?

ROMY

Does jelly wriggle when you touch it?

MR STURGES

What a game!

126 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BRIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 126

Brian and Jill are standing outside Brian's apartment. The apartment is numbered no 69. Jill is draped over him as he unlocks the door.

BRIAN

You'll be safe here until Greg gets away from the football.

127 INT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 127

Brian opens the door and turns on the light. The interior of the apartment is revealed to be the full swingers bachelor pad, complete with fully-stocked bar, soft lighting, matching zebra skin couch and rug, etc.

We see a CD player whirr into action. It plays the romantically lulling theme from the Claude LeLouch film "A Man And A Woman". La La La La La. Laa Laa la La La La La. etc.

An ice bucket on a mechanical trolley moves to the room's centre. A fire place instantly ignites making it all impossibly cosy.

Brian's bulky mobile phone rings. He juggles Jill and the phone as he manoeuvres her over to the couch and drops his keys and wallet.

BRIAN

Oh fuck!

A drawer flips open with an array of condoms. One sachet is launched into the air and into Brian's hand. While Jill is doing a double take, he conceals the condom in his pocket.

A bed complete with zebra skin bedspread slides horizontally out of the wall from behind a bookcase. Before Jill can see, Brian activates a portable remote

(CONTINUED)

control and the bed slides back. The phone is still ringing. Brian, having taken care of all his problems, finally answers his hefty mobile phone.

BRIAN

Yessss?

128

EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT

128

Greg is standing at the rear of the Executive Box while Sturges looks on at the game. From time to time Romy looks back flirtatiously as Greg talks into his bulky mobile phone.

GREG

Brian! This isn't working at all.

INTERCUT

BRIAN

(looking at Jill.)

I think it's working out rather well.

Greg talks into his bulky mobile phone.

GREG

The guy's unflappable. I'll never get away. Not only that he's brought his bloody horny niece with him.

BRIAN

Yeah, Fancy being stuck with her. Suffer, baby, suffer.

Greg considers Brian's words while looking at Romy give a too-doo-loo wave.

BRIAN

How's Jill? Can I speak to her?

BRIAN

No, I wouldn't recommend that. She's still a little heated. Just concentrate on Sturges or you'll be completely rooted.

Hangs up.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

And so will I be mate.

Brian sits close to Jill on the couch.

(CONTINUED)

JILL
Was that Greg?

BRIAN
Sure was.

Brian reaches toward Jill and gently, tentatively cradles a few locks of her hair in his fingertips.

BRIAN
You've got the most lovely hair.

Jill starts to snuggle into Brian.

JILL
I love Greg so much.

Jill kisses Brian.

JILL (CONT'D)
What's rooted?

BRIAN
Caught. In a mess. Fuck-

The drawer with the array of condom flips open again. One sachet is launched into the air and into Brian's hand. While Jill stirs from her nuzzling state. Brian conceals the second condom in his pocket.

JILL
What was that?

Once more the zebra-skinned bed slides horizontally out of the wall from behind a bookcase. Before Jill can see, Brian uses the remote control again to make the bed slide back. He places the remote on the couch.

BRIAN
Oh... nothing. Greg may be late. Some complications with the client. Might take a while to sort things out. We might as well get comfortable. Fancy another Bloody Mary?

Not waiting for a reply, Brian goes to the bar fridge and retrieves a bottle of tomato juice.

JILL
What about Greg?

BRIAN
I'd think he'd be drinking beer at the football. Forget him. Relax. Turn on the TV while I fix some drinks.

(CONTINUED)

Jill picks up the two remotes. She points one at the TV but it doesn't seem to work. Behind her the zebra-kinned bed slides in and out of view.

Jill tries the other remote and the television comes on. She does a channel surf before finding a broadcast of the Swans game.

JILL

Is this the Swans game?

BRIAN

Hope not. Never understood the game's attraction.

While Brian is talking he arrogantly throws the bottle of tomato juice up in the air. The full bottle spins upwards.

Suddenly on the TV there is a close-up of Greg sitting next to the alluring Romy. Mr Sturges remains off-screen so it looks to Jill that Greg has ditched her for Romy.

Brian sees it too and so misses out on catching the tomato juice bottle as it descends. The bottle smashes to the floor splattering blood-red tomato juice everywhere.

BRIAN

(looking at the mess)

Oh fuck.

On the word "fuck" a condom is launched into Jill's hand and the bed slides out in Jill's full view. Brian lunges over the couch towards the OTHER remote - but too late - his game is exposed. Jill is shocked into a kind of sobriety. She looks at the bed, the condom and Brian and finally puts it together.

JILL

Did you think I was going to sleep with you to get back at Greg?

BRIAN

Well... yeah.

Flabbergasted, Jill stands up, and slaps Brian's face.

BRIAN

Don't blame me. While you're here with me, your boyfriend is trying to get it on with the client's daughter to win the account.

JILL

He wouldn't!

BRIAN

Who do you think that was with
him on the TV?

Infuriated and flabbergasted, Jill slaps Brian again.

JILL

I won't let him.

Jill slaps Brian one more - very boisterous - time.

BRIAN

Fuck!

Jill walks out as a condom sachet hits Brian in the head.
Brian, palm against his stinging cheek, sits on the sofa
cursing.

BRIAN

fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck

An endless shower of condom sachets suddenly swamps Brian.

133

EXT. INNER CITY STREET, SYDNEY - NIGHT

133

Jill drunkenly walks out into the street and hails a taxi
which she almost falls into. It's the same Taxi driver
that drove Jill and Brian from the airport.

TAXI DRIVER

Not you again.

JILL

I ain't never seen you before.

TAXI DRIVER

I'm sure I picked you up at the
airport this afternoon. Where are
you from?

JILL

Palookaville. What's it to ya?
Just take me to the Swans game.

TAXI DRIVER

But the game's half over -
besides they're losing.

JILL

I don't care. I urgently need to
go to the football!

TAXI DRIVER

You must be from Melbourne.

The taxi speeds off.

134 EXT. SCG PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT 134

A Swans player takes another spectacular mark.

135 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 135

Greg returns with the three beers, and passes one to Romy and the second to the football-obsessed Mr Sturges.

MR STURGES

How long till the half-time
siren?

Greg gets a devilish look and checks his watch. In the process, Greg "accidentally on purpose" spills the amber liquid on the sleeve of Mr Sturges's jacket. Romy doubles up in laughter. She doesn't understand what Greg is trying to do, but she is amused and finds it endearing.

GREG

(false)
Oh, I'm awfully sorry.

None of this upsets Sturges at all. He is clearly enthralled by the game. Brushing his sleeve with a red and white handkerchief.

MR STURGES

Don't worry about it. Who can be
bothered with all this excitement
going on?

Greg can't believe that he can't seem to upset Sturges or disrupt his concentration on the football.

GREG

What we need are some hot chips.
Can't go to the football without
having chips!

Sturges with an 'if you must' shrug, barely bats an eye.

ROMY

I'm always up for something hot!

GREG

(in barely concealed panic)
OK, I'm off for the chips.

Romy leans forward hungrily.

GREG

Off for the chips... alone.

136 INT. SCG STAIRWELLS & PASSAGEWAYS - NIGHT 136

Greg has an exasperated look as he goes in search of chips.

GREG

She doesn't need hot chips... she needs a cold shower!

137 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 137

Greg returns to the box with his arms laden with several buckets of chips.

Neither Romy or Sturges notice him standing behind them. He is hesitant. He suddenly throws the chips in the air so that they land all over Sturges.

GREG

Oops!

Romy still doesn't understand what Greg is up to but she's amused by it.

Sturges brushes the chips off, unwilling or unable to be distracted from the game.

GREG

Don't suppose you want any tomato sauce?

138 EXT. THE SCG SCOREBOARD - NIGHT 138

The scoreboard reveals the Swans are only one point ahead of their opponents, the Demons.

139 EXT. THE SCG PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT 139

A football clip shows a Demons full-forward marking the ball and lining up for a kick at goal.

140 EXT. EXECUTIVE VIEWING BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 140

MR STURGES

If he kicks this the Swannies will be down five points at half time.

CUT TO:

The scoreboard reveals the Swans are only one point ahead of their opponents, the Demons.

CUT TO:

Sturges and Romy look at the game as GREG rolls his eyes in boredom.

CUT TO:

Devastatingly, the opponent does kick the goal as the game siren blows over the soundtrack.

CUT TO:

A goal is added to the Demons score. The scoreboard reveals that the Demons are now ahead of the Swans by five points.

CUT TO:

Greg gives a sidewise glance to Mr Sturges who is obviously disappointed by the turn of events.

GREG
Carn the Demons!

All the surrounding sound drops away.

ROMY
Oh. You've done it now.

Sturges's expression moves from disappointment to staggering disbelief then to fully enraged.

MR STURGES
What?!

Greg has the terrified look of a roo in the spotlight.

MR STURGES
Are you having a go at me?

GREG
err ... Yes ... errr. no. Oh
shit.

MR STURGES
What are you on about? ...
Barracking for the opposing team.
You're showing disrespect not
just for me but for everything
every Swan supporter has to
learn: patience, loyalty,
patience, dignity, patience.
You're not loyal to the Swans, to
your company and the ugly thing

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR STURGES (cont'd)
is that you're not even loyal to
yourself! Your father would be
ashamed of you.

Greg winces.

MR STURGES (CONT'D)
Don't give me that wounded look.

Sturges grabs the box which has been sitting between their
two chairs and speaking with wounded passion thrusts the
box with the guernsey into Greg's chest

MR STURGES (CONT'D)
Take this down to the Swans
clubrooms and have this signed by
Captain Kelly ... Get a look at a
man of dedication!

Greg looks terrified of what he has unleashed and how
irreparable it seems.

MR STURGES (CONT'D)
... and if you don't, I'll make
sure that you'll not only lose my
account, but your job... you
won't get another job anywhere.
I'll make sure that in a one
horse town they'd rather shoot
the horse than employ you.

Greg still cowers

MR STURGES (CONT'D)
Do it! Now!

Greg runs out of the executive box carrying the boxed
jumper.

144 EXT. SCG STAIRWELLS & PASSAGEWAYS - NIGHT

144

Intimidated, Greg with the package under his arm, moves
through the half-time football crowd. The people
surrounding Greg are enjoying themselves. Everyone is
excited and passionate, Bacchanalian rather than decadent.
Greg however acts as if he is about to be thrust into
Dante's Inferno, on the verge of losing everything he has.

145 EXT. SWANS TRAINING ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

145

Greg continues making his way through the crowd and
reaches a doorway where a TRAINER for the Sydney Swans is
standing guard in front of a huge closed door. He's an
older guy who looks as if he has history with the club

(CONTINUED)

predating the Sydney era. He is wiry and despite his age looks more than capable of going the biff if someone tries to pass through the door he is guarding.

GREG

Hi there.

The trainer remains stony-faced.

GREG

I've an urgent delivery for the team.

TRAINER

No one's allowed in during the half-time strategy conference.

GREG

It's a matter of life and death.

TRAINER

That all? Football's more important than that.

Juggling the boxed jumper from under one arm to the other enables Greg to get out his wallet. Greg removes a \$50 note.

GREG

Take this. Be a sport. Let me in. It's really urgent.

TRAINER

No.

GREG

Take another fifty. Please.

TRAINER

Look mate. There's 30,000 people here. If I let you in then they'll all want to come in. I don't care if you're Mike Willesee. My hands are tied. Save your money and save your breath.

GREG

Look it's like this. I've got to have this Swans jumper autographed by Paul Kelly or I'm going to lose my job and probably my girlfriend ... You've got to help me.

The club doors burst open, a team of trainers shepherd the Swans players through. The trainer physically moves Greg to one side, arm across his chest and up against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

TRAINER

Back off mate, they're coming through.

The Swans players run on to the ground. At the end of the line, the Coach walks to the team bench at the boundary line. A second trainer follows him out and sits next to the coach.

SECOND TRAINER

Think they can do it Coach?

COACH

It's going to be tighter than the skin on a footy frankfurt! I don't know what it will take to motivate these blokes tonight.

Greg reappears at the coach's bench

GREG

Coach?

COACH

Who in the world are you?

GREG

I need you to help me.

COACH

Well I don't need you. Piss off, I'm trying to win a game.

GREG

I need the Captain to sign this jumper. (taps the box)

COACH

Is this a joke? Get this nitwit away from me.

The second trainer and a collection of reserve players and trainers scoop Greg up and away from the coach and toss Greg over the side of the fence. Then they throw the box.

146

EXT. SCG STAIRWELLS & PASSAGEWAYS - NIGHT

146

Greg rolls down the ramp, stopping halfway down in a tangled heap. The box has come open and falls beside Greg. The antique jumper has come free from the box and loosely falls on top of Greg, masking his face.

GREG

Shit.

Deflated, Greg dusts himself off, gets up and makes his way to one of the numerous bars that line the SCG walkways.

147 EXT. A BAR UNDER THE SCG STANDS - NIGHT

147

Greg leans over as the bartender approaches.

GREG
Beer thanks.

BARMAN
Whaddya want?

GREG
Huh?

BARMAN
What type of beer do you want?

The CUSTOMER behind Greg looks impatient.

CUSTOMER
Hurry up mate. We're missing the game! We're missing the game!

GREG
I'm in no hurry. You go first.

The customer standing behind Greg pushes in and places his order.

CUSTOMER
Two VBs mate. Keep the change, I'm in a rush.

GREG
Bloody football fans.

BARMAN
You've got to expect that if you're at the footy.

GREG
Yeah, suppose I do. One Fosters.

Greg pays for the beer and walks away looking like he's unsure of his future. He leans up against a wall looking forlorn.

Greg puts his drink on a nearby table. He reaches for his bulky mobile phone and punches in a number.
Jill's not going to like this.

Greg calls Brian again.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

C'mon. C'mon. Pick up the phone.

GREG

Brian, it's Greg.

148 INT. BRIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

148

Brian is sitting on his couch with an icepack on his still stinging cheek.

BRIAN

Oh!! Mate, how's it going?

149 EXT. SCG STAIRWELLS & PASSAGEWAYS - NIGHT

149

Greg starts yelling into the phone as if he needs to communicate by sheer lung power.

GREG

Awful. I did what you suggested and the guy's gone completely berserk! He's threatened to have me sacked.

INTERCUT

BRIAN

We've all got our problems mate.

GREG

This is all your fault. You and your bright ideas about throwing the account.

BRIAN

Whoa, whoa, whoa... don't pin this on me. I told you to cut your losses -- instead you've doubled them.

There must be something you can do.

Greg looks at the box he is holding.

GREG

I suppose there is one thing I can do.

BRIAN

Well do it!

(CONTINUED)

GREG

It's going to take awhile. Put Jill on the phone. I might as well explain everything.

Brian sits on his couch sporting a ice pack on his cheek.

BRIAN

She's not here mate. She got as drunk as a skunk and shot through.

GREG

What do you mean drunk? She never touches a drink. And how can she be "gone"? She's never been to Sydney before. Where could she possibly go?

A roar of the crowd surges. Suddenly Greg realises that there is some kind of hoohah - something other than the game - happening on the field. Mindlessly switching off his mobile, Greg is drawn back to the field.

Greg turns back towards the concrete passageway which leads to the brightly lit football field.

The passageway rises up and then down to the ground. With the aid of the lights used to illuminate night football games, this should look something like the blinding flash that Saul copped on his way to Damascus. There is a roar of the crowd but there's something else too. Someone is calling Greg's name. It should be stretched out, distorted, drunk in fact - it's Jill.

JILL (O/S)

Ggggggggggggrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr-
reeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeegggggggggggggg-
uhhhhhhh!

Greg moves through the passageway closer to the blinding light.

JILL (O/S)

Ggggggggggggrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrre
eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeegggggggggggggg-
uhhhhhhh!

Greg reaches the peak of the passageway. He is bathed in light, silhouetted by the whiteness. Blinded by the white light, Greg is having trouble focussing. Suddenly he knows what he is looking at.

GREG

Oh shit.

154 EXT.THE CENTRE OF THE SCG - NIGHT 154

Jill is staggering across the middle of the SCG in her evening wear and high heels. The game flies right past her.

JILL

Greg! Don't do it Greg!

155 EXT. SCG STAIRWELLS & PASSAGEWAYS - NIGHT 155

Greg stands staring out at the field with a "What am I going to do now?" expression on his face and the package still under his arm.

156 EXT. COACH'S BOX SCG BOUNDARY - NIGHT 156

In order to get a look at Jill, all the trainers leave their station to stand next to the coach, leaving the previously blocked changing room unguarded from Greg's entry.

COACH

What's going on? Can't anybody get that bloody woman off the ground?

Still carrying the boxed jumper, GREG sneaks behind the gathering of coach, trainers and reserve players who are watching the on-field Jill, to enter the change room entrance.

157 EXT. THE SCG GROUND - NIGHT 157

Police start running on to the football field.

158 EXT. COACH'S BOX SCG BOUNDARY - NIGHT 158

Coach, trainers and reserve players continue watching Jill in the distance. Suddenly Greg dressed in a pair of red Swans shorts and THE football guernsey quickly runs out on to the field in the opposite direction to where everyone else is looking.

159 EXT.THE CENTRE OF THE SCG GROUND - NIGHT 159

Greg is running on the field, dressed in full footy gear. Most obvious amongst Greg's garb is the prized heirloom jumper of the Blood-Stained Angels with the number 34 on his back.

Greg's POV. The game is running toward him. Greg is terrified but he keeps running in the direction of Jill.

As the players ran past Greg the ball is speedily hand-passed to him from a Swans player. Greg is shocked to receive it, but he keeps running, never losing his pace or determination to reach Jill.

Greg skilfully hand passes the ball to another Swans player enabling them to move goal-ward.

160 EXT. COACH'S BOX SCG BOUNDARY - NIGHT 160

The coach looks at his clipbaord.

COACH
Who's number 34?

TRAINER
We don't have a number 34.

COACH
We don't? Then who's that guy?

TRAINER
I don't know but he's not wearing a Sydney jumper.

161 INT/EXT. EXECUTIVE BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 161

In the executive box, Sturges, with a condescending look, turns to address Romy.

MR STURGES
If that young man you're so interested in would concentrate on the game, he'd see some champagne football!

ROMY
Don't look now Dad, but I think you may have pushed that "young man" a little too hard.

MR STURGES
What makes you say that Romy?

(CONTINUED)

Romy points to a scoreboard close-up of Greg on the scoreboard's TV panel.

MR STURGES (CONT'D)

Oh dear.

162 EXT. SCG GROUND - NIGHT

162

Greg running toward Jill with success and determination in his eyes.

A group of five police have Jill surrounded in the middle of the ground. But they are not sure how to proceed.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Lady, we'd like you to accompany us off the field.

JUNIOR POLICE OFFICER

Why don't we just go up and handcuff her?

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

If you think I'm going to throw a woman in evening wear down to the ground in the middle of the SCG in front of 30,000 witnesses on national television you've got another think coming.

(to Jill)

Lady, please you're disrupting the game.

JILL

I'm here for Greg.

Greg dashes through the circle of police and embraces Jill.

GREG

Jill? What in the world are you doing?

She embraces him.

JILL

Don't leave me, Greg.

GREG

Leave you?

JILL

What can I do to make you notice me?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Jill everyone at this football field is looking at you!

JILL

But are you looking at me? Is it enough?

GREG

Jill, ... it's spectacular.

Greg kisses her. Both Jill and Greg have their hands on each other's cheeks, revealing the twin Swan wedding rings on each of their fingers. There's a glint on the rings as they kiss. The SCG crowd roars its approval. Now that Jill and Greg are in an embrace the police move in.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

All right you two. Party's over.

The two police officers escort the couple from the ground.

When they reach the boundary, Jill and Greg are near the Swans Coach's box. Television reporters and cameras are closing in.

NEWS REPORTER

What have you got to say for yourself?

GREG

We're going to get married.

Jill kisses him once more.

163 INT. MELBOURNE SUBURBAN LOUNGE - NIGHT 163

Catherine Saunders is sitting in front of the television with a cup of tea and the photo of her husband visible in the shot. She applauds Greg's on-camera declaration.

164 EXT. COACH'S BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 164

The Swans coach steps in and stops the officers and the reporters.

COACH

I don't know who you people are but winning a game of football is no love match.

GREG

Coach, if you'd just let me get this jumper signed by the Captain... none of this would have happened.

(CONTINUED)

(Greg looks at Jill.)
Well maybe some of it.

COACH
You've disrupted my game, that's
all I care about.

Sturges and ROMY have reached the boundary line behind the coach's box where the police are trying to keep media at bay.

MR STURGES
Look Coach, I'll take
responsibility for this.

COACH
Sturges! You and your money might
pull weight in the boardroom, but
on the field I'm the man in
charge.

MR STURGES
I have no argument with that. But
I ordered him to add signatures
to the jumper alongside
Skilton's, Pratt's and Cazaly's.

The coach's eyes go wide at the mention of the names. He really looks at the guernsey for the first time.

MR STURGES
So if there is anything I can
do...

COACH
You already have.
(turning to the policemen)
Let them go officers.

SENIOR OFFICER
The crowd aren't allowed on the
ground. You know that.

COACH
I'll take all responsibility.
Just sit them on the bench.

GREG
(sheepish)
Mr. Sturges, I'd like you to meet
my fiancée.

165 EXT. SCG GAME - NIGHT 165

An umpire bounces the ball and the game resumes. The Swans are contested by the opposing side and being bested. A kick for goal results in the ball hitting the post.

The goal umpire gives the one finger up to indicate a single point has been scored. The siren blows.

The scoreboard indicates that the Swans are now three goals (and one point down)

166 EXT. COACH'S BOX AT THE SCG - NIGHT 166

The coach gets up from the bench, where Greg and Jill are also sitting in between trainers and interchange Swans players.

COACH

OK it's three quarter time. You
(indicating Romy and
Sturges)
stay here. You two
(indicating Greg and Jill)
come with me.

167 EXT. THE MIDDLE OF THE SCG - NIGHT 167

The teams gather in individual camps on the SCG ground. Greg and Jill are led by the Coach to where the Swans stand - a circle of warriors trying to regather their strength for a final battle. There are also trainers present and in a wide ring around the team gatherings police officers stand guard.

When Greg and Jill are among them, the couple look like elves amongst Greek gods. They are tumbled and bruised and in some cases even bloodied but they are gods nevertheless.

COACH

Listen you blokes, you had this
game by the bloody balls and you
let the bastards get on top of
you!

As the Coach continues his speech we see the Swans players as they listen intently. The Coach hugs Greg around the shoulders, but it is like Greg does not exist. It is the jumper that is the Coach's concern, not Greg.

COACH

Do you see this? This is a South
Melbourne jumper. They were the
Swans before any of you mugs had

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COACH (cont'd)
heard of football. They had
champions back in those days.

The coach's indicate the signatures.

COACH (CONT'D).
Skilton, Pratt, and... Cazaly.
You've all heard the bloody song.
Cazaly played for this team and
he made this game his own. And
that's what I want you blokes to
do. These blokes got their names
on this guernsey because they
were champions and if you drongos
want to add your signature then
you've got to play like champions
too.

The players silently understand what is being asked of
them.

COACH
No prizes for coming second.
You've got to do it for the glory
of the guernsey and the love of
the supporters, like this bloke
who've stuck by this club. He
loves this club like he loves his
woman: through good and bad. The
supporters turn up week after
week, year in, year out.
Supporters don't front up to see
their team get beaten. They come
to see their team win. You've
been good, but you've got to be
better. You've got to earn the
right to sign this jumper.

The siren blows breaking his train of thought and
indicating that it's time for the Sydney Swans to start
anew with increased vigour.

COACH
I want you to go out there and
shit on 'em. What are you going
to do Swans?

THE SWANS
We're going to shit on 'em!

COACH
Now get out there and win because
if you don't, neither me or this
jumper will be sitting here
waiting for you!

(CONTINUED)

The Swans players are now visibly instilled with sufficient verve to go out and convincingly defeat their opponents. As each of the players disperse they, gingerly shake Jill's and more vigorously Greg's hand in congratulations, before running to their position.

Towering over him, the final player to reach Greg is Swans Captain PAUL KELLY. Kelly's nose has obviously been bloodied in the first-half of the game. Outdoing his co-players, Kelly goes one better and hugs Greg and Jill together.

PAUL KELLY

Loyal supporters like you are the
lifeblood of the club.

As Kelly says this, a drop of blood from Kelly's bleeding nose, splashes on Greg's guernsey echoing the moment years before when Greg's father had a stroke while watching the South Melbourne Swans. Kelly then follows his team out onto the arena. The coach begins to escort Greg and Jill back out to the boundary.

COACH

Thanks mate. I can scream and
yell and rearrange the players
until I'm blue in the face, but
they're the only ones who can
kick the goals. It's up to them
now.

Greg and Jill are led back to the boundary line. A series of trainers and the reserve players give Greg a slap on the back and a few goodonysers.

Romy gives Greg a look and kisses the previously seen Junior Police Officer on the cheek. Greg is approached by Sturges.

MR STURGES

(to Greg)

This is what football is all
about. You can almost feel the
spirit of the Blood Stained
Angels in the air.

A familiar arm extends towards Greg and he is pulled toward his father BILL who has merged into the congratulatory throng looking exactly as he did when he had his stroke at the beginning of the film and in real time 20 years before: same clothes, including his South Melbourne Swans coloured scarf and hat, a beer in one hand, blood-stained face. The only difference is that he is now sporting a magnificent pair of angelic wings.

Everyone, with the exception of Greg is oblivious to this phenomena, whether it be because of their utter jubilation

(CONTINUED)

or because it is happening in Greg's heart it is impossible to say. Fleeting as the moment is, it should look completely naturalistic as Greg's winged father embraces his grown-up son.

BILL

Welcome back to the team son.

In the angel's embrace, Greg looks happy, thrilled and at peace, relieved of the anxiety that has silently dogged him throughout the film.

JILL

Greg?

Greg turns from the angel's embrace to face the still drunk but now firmly appreciative Jill. Jill reaches for Greg and he takes a step away from the angel as he steps toward her.

A mighty WHOOSH is heard as the angelic Bill vertically soars up out of view.

168

EXT/INT. THE COACH'S BOX SCG BOUNDARY - NIGHT

168

Football action punctuated by shots of Greg and Jill on the privileged position of the boundary line coach box, supporting their football team, the Sydney Swans.

The clips show that the game is neck and neck. Each time we return to Greg he is not only barracking for the Swans but is doing so with incremental fervor: A film clip shows the Swans fiercely contesting for the ball culminating in a successful run for the goal.

GREG

Go Swans.

CUT TO:

The Swans are successful in getting the ball down to their end of the ground and into their attacking area.

CUT TO:

GREG

Go Swans!

INTERCUT

The ball in the possession of the opposition and the Swans are in hot pursuit.

GREG
GO SWANS!

A Swans player kicks a goal.

GREG
GO SWANS!!

Another Swans player marks the ball in the goal area. The siren blows and it is clear by a cut to:

CUT TO:

The scoreboard indicates that the scores are level, and that if the Swans player kicks the ball straight, victory will belong to the Sydney Swans.

CUT TO:

Long shot. The Swans player kicks it through the middle, sealing the match for the Swans.

CUT TO:

Everyone is cheering. The sound of the crowd is cacophonous.

JILL
It's a home run!

The sound drops to zero and the jubilation of the crowd freezes in disbelief.

Greg leans in to gently give Jill a kiss.

GREG
Jill, has anyone ever told you to
stay away from alcohol?

Before Jill can reply, the end of game siren goes off. Greg, Jill and everyone at the ground leaps to their feet!

GREG
We won!

Greg and Jill dance up and down in each other's arms. The Swans theme song plays as the scoreboard reveals that the Swans have emerged triumphant. The Swans take the jumper from Greg and sign it, carrying Greg and Jill around the field.

The Swans theme song plays as the credits roll.

178 ARCHIVAL MONTAGE 178

Concurrent with the credits is archival footage of Swans games from the early Melbourne days to the Sydney years and culminating in footage from the 2005 AFL Grand Final.

179 OVER BLACK 179

In 2005, the Sydney Swans won the Australian Football League Grand Final. The Swans' first premiership since 1933, ended a losing streak of 72 years.

END/