

Drifters & Dreamers

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Master of Arts in Writing (Research)

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been 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 thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Drifters and Dreamers is an investigation into the lives of misfits, outsiders and fringe dwellers of contemporary Australian life. My objective was to use the monologue form to contemplate the cause and effect of the marginalized and to examine the existing societal conventions that suppress individuality and freedom.

I developed separate stories around six key characters who were all drifters and dreamers – Rusty, Lily, Crackers, Magda, Juliet and Emilio. Extensive research was also part of my investigation which covered diverse areas such as genocide; the history of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; the British bomb tests at Maralinga; hearing impairment; the nature of depression and homelessness. Finally, a seventh character – Herta - was created as a stylistic device to unify the work and create a through-line to the stories. Herta crosses between each character's landscape and acts as a seer, guide and messenger. The nature of dreaming and dreamers was also explored throughout the film, often through the use of Magic Realism.

Drifters and Dreamers is a screenplay about loss, loneliness, belonging, freedom, love, renewal and redemption. It takes the form of six monologues for television, (approximately 10 minutes each), which exist as separate episodes or alternatively as a one hour drama.

DRIFTERS & DREAMERS

By Bettina Richter

a series of six short monologues
for television

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The disenfranchised, the lost, the outcast, the
drifters and the dreamers.
Join six people on a journey of loneliness, freedom,
and a search for self, in a place where magic really does
happen.

CHARACTERS

RUSTY

A dogger recalls the pain of his childhood in a land that doesn't forget its past.

LILY

A young Khmer Australian woman discovers her father's secrets through the magic of everyday objects.

CRACKERS

Mister Personality connects with his roots.

MAGDA

An overweight housewife becomes a missing person.

JULIET

A deaf Goth is rescued from suburban monotony.

EMILIO

A travelling magician and his journey through grief and loss.

HERTA

An old enigmatic woman who transcends boundaries and is a guide, seer and commentator for all that she meets.

FADE UP

TITLE: "DRIFTERS AND DREAMERS"

FADE TO

1. EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK

The sun sets on an empty highway that stretches through a barren, flat land covered with red dirt.

In the distance a road train appears. Like a massive, mechanical snake it THUNDERS down the road, carriage after carriage.

HERTA, a stately woman in her eighties, with a tiny frame and grey hair stands sagaciously on the side of the road watching the road train RUMBLE past, dust swirling around her. She is wearing a bright floral cotton dress and bare feet and under her arm she cradles a cedar shoe-sized box.

At her feet is a wheel barrow, covered with a black tarpaulin, which has the heads of shovels and picks hanging out.

She squints at a road sign ahead that reads:

Nowhere 90km

Somewhere 150km

Anywhere But 600km.

She lifts the tarpaulin slightly, and places the box carefully in the wheel barrow.

She picks up the wheelbarrow and pushes it down the side of the road.

Herta stops suddenly, and pulls a big brown cardboard SIGN out from under the tarpaulin and places it on the front of the wheelbarrow.

The sign reads: RUSTY.

A dirty, battered four-wheel-drive accelerates past her in a cloud of dust.

2. INT. CAR - DUSK

RUSTY, a lanky, unshaven man in his forties is at the steering wheel of the messy, lived-in interior of his car. Next to him is his kelpie dog, SID.

Rusty turns into a dirt road. A barbed wire fence appears ahead, glistening in the headlights.

He stops at a wire gate. There is a sign on the gate that reads: 'Crown Land. Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted. Enter At Your Own Risk.'

3. INT/EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Rusty gets out of the car and unlocks the gate.

RUSTY

(to camera)
There's something bloody spooky about crown land. You wonder what they do with all that space. Makes you think about the nuke tests at Maralinga, and shit like that.

Rusty gets back into the car and drives through.

RUSTY

(to camera)
Reckon it would be pretty easy to bury secrets like that out here.

He gets out, swings the gate closed and locks it behind him. Through the gate he sees lights in the distance from where he's been.

RUSTY

Out of sight out of mind... if you know what I mean.

He turns around towards the land he's just entered. It is vacant, barren and dark.

4. EXT. FIRESIDE - NIGHT

Rusty is sitting in a clearing with his car parked behind him, stirring a pot of stew on the fire.

RUSTY

(to camera)
They say it's a dying art, being a
dogger. Not everyone has the
stomach to kill dingoes and feral
animals for a living.

He adds some more sticks to the fire. Sid trots up
to Rusty and lies down next to him.

RUSTY

You can go a few months without
talking to anybody. Some blokes
just go stir crazy... some think
it's a fucking romance novel -
Leyland Brothers meets Bush Tucker
Man or something. They don't last
out here very long.

He SLOPS the stew into a metal bowl.

RUSTY

(pensively)
But I like being on my own.

Rusty SLURPS some stew down.

RUSTY

I don't really care for the
company of others to tell you the
truth. No one ever gave a toss
about me, so why should I give a
toss for them?

5. EXT. RIVER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG RUSTY, a ten year-old boy wearing swimming
trunks swings on a rope in slow motion over a river.

On the banks stands RUSTY'S MUM in a sixties-style
knee-length dress, holding a glass drunkenly.

RUSTY'S MUM

Don't get cocky with me Rusty.
There's nothin' special about you.
I got knocked up is all, and you
were the result.
(sarcastically)
Lucky me.

6. EXT. RIVER, UNDERWATER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Rusty slides off the rope into the brown water below. He opens his eyes underwater. Long green weeds move slowly from side to side in the murky water.

A rusty old tricycle lies abandoned on the river floor. It's quiet down here.

7. INT. CAR - DAY

Light is starting to appear in the sky. The car windows are all fogged up.

Rusty is in the back seat of the car stirring from his sleep. He is covered with an old eiderdown and Sid is curled up near his feet.

Rusty opens his eyes and smudges a hole in the window with his hand.

HERTA, wearing a white protective suit and helmet is staring fixedly back at him. He draws back, spooked. She flashes a torch inside the van, as if looking for something.

He rubs his eyes, bewildered. She is gone.

Sid scrambles across him and paws at the door, WHINING.

8. INT. CAR - DAY

Rusty is driving on a dirt track. Brown, flat stony country covered with weeds passes him by.

RUSTY

(to camera)

The pollies thought they could control the dog problem out here with aerial baiting.

Rusty takes a swig from a water bottle.

RUSTY

(cynically)

Probably some stupid official in a nice, cosy little office in Sydney decided that one.

Rusty slows down and pulls to a stop at the side of the road.

9. EXT. TRACK - DAY

Rusty pulls a trap out of the back of the truck. Sid jumps out ahead of him and runs off sniffing down the track.

RUSTY

(to camera)
Anyone who knows dingoes knows they can outsmart you. Thought they knew better until a couple of heads of sheep were attacked. That's when they called me in.

Sid is BARKING in the distance. Rusty slings a rifle over his shoulder.

RUSTY V/O

Reckon I could be out here till the end of winter.

Rusty walks up the track with the trap in one hand, and finds Sid urinating against a gum tree in a clearing.

RUSTY

(to camera)
Just because I kill dogs for a living doesn't mean I don't like 'em. I'd be lost without Sid. He can smell those dingoes a mile off.

He sets a trap near the tree.

RUSTY

(fondly, to camera)
He knows when they're around.

10. INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

Rusty is driving his truck along a dusty, bumpy road.

Sid is sitting in the front seat, catching the cool air.

Rusty puts a tape into the stereo. Midnight Oil "Beds are Burning" BLARES from the speakers. He SINGS tunelessly in time to the song,

RUSTY

(singing)
Holden wrecks and boiling diesels,
steam in forty-five degrees...

RUSTY V/O

I saw Midnight Oil when I was
working the mines in Kalgoorlie.
They played live out in the open
for all the workers... don't know if
I agree with their politics
though.

Rusty turns up the stereo and BEATS his hand in time on the steering wheel.

He drives past a dam. Sheep are dotted in the distance.

RUSTY

(to camera)
Of course you see a lot of shit go
down out here - rednecks,
blackfellas, the drought, the
banks and just plain boredom.

He pulls a cigarette packet off the passenger seat and pulls one out with his mouth. He pushes the car lighter in to ignite it.

RUSTY

(to camera)
But the list could just go on and
on, couldn't it? It's enough to
deal with my own shit let alone
get involved with the problems out
here.

He lights up his cigarette and takes a puff. He looks ahead, and is astonished to see four figures sitting on a patch of ground up ahead.

Herta, now in the bright floral dress, with three ABORIGINAL WOMEN, is sitting cross-legged on the ground staring out across the land towards the horizon.

Rusty slows down, bewildered. Herta pours tea from a flask into cups and hands them to the Aboriginal Women who have their backs to Rusty. He winds down the passenger window.

RUSTY

Are you ladies right?

HERTA

(chattily)

Don't mind us, we've come to watch the mushroom clouds. They say we can get a good view of the explosions from here.

Rusty, as if in a dream, puts the car back into gear and slowly drives away.

He looks in the rear vision mirror. The Aboriginal Women are standing in the middle of the road, their eyes are WHITE with blindness and it seems like they're staring straight through him.

Rusty, shaken, steps quickly on the accelerator, causing the car to skid on the dirt road and hastens down the track, not looking back.

11. EXT. CAR - DAY

Rusty opens the back of the truck and pulls out the last trap. A swag lies on the dirt ground.

Rusty slings a shotgun over one shoulder, and puts a packet of bullets in his pocket.

He shuts the boot.

RUSTY

(to camera)

Well, that'll be the last of it then.

He walks out into the dry paddock carrying all the gear. Sid bounds next to him and then runs ahead.

RUSTY

Nothing to do now but wait.

12. EXT. WATERHOLE - AFTERNOON

The sun is going down and Rusty has set himself up next to a waterhole. He gathers bracken and sticks around the waterhole to start a fire.

He stands up for a moment and looks at the water. In the fading light it appears a thick grey-green, glistening SLUDGE.

13. EXT. RIVER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Rusty - grubby and CRYING - walks along the banks of the river, dragging a bulging bag.

He stops near the rope swing, and steps into the water.

14. EXT. RIVER, UNDERWATER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Rusty dives under, pulling the bag with him.

He sinks down to the depths. He swims past the tricycle, an old tyre and through the swaying fronds floats an old teddy bear.

He unzips the bag and pulls out bottles and bottles of alcohol, letting them roll down the river-bed, until the bag is empty.

15. EXT. WATERHOLE - NIGHT

Night is encroaching. A cold wind is starting to blow. Rusty is huddled near a fire.

RUSTY

(broodingly, to camera)

Why is that you can disown your family but never disown your memories?

A dingo HOWLS in the distance.

Rusty grabs his gun and a piece of rope and slings them over his shoulder. He gives a low WHISTLE to Sid and grabs a torch.

16. EXT. SCRUB - NIGHT

The wind has come up and the gum trees are RUSTLING wildly in the scrub. A gun FIRES in the distance, and a loud HOWL is heard. A torch is seen flashing amongst the trees.

Rusty emerges dragging a DINGO in the dirt behind him, and a trap in the other hand. Sid BARKS excitedly, dancing around the limp figure.

RUSTY

(animatedly, to camera)
The chase is always kind of
invigorating. It's what I live
for out here.

He stops under a gum tree and lassoes a branch above
him with the rope.

RUSTY

Wasn't hard to catch this one
though. Didn't notice till I'd
shot her that the bitch was blind.
Probably why she was so slow on
her feet.

With the other end he ties the dingo's legs together
and hoists it up till it's hanging head first above
him.

RUSTY

(resolutely to the dingo)
Sorry old girl.

He tightens the rope around the tree and checks it
with his torch.

RUSTY V/O

Dog trees. Some people think it's
a bit primitive. But it's just
practical. There's no way I'm
going to carry all those dead dogs
around in the truck for months on
end.

He walks out of the scrub. The wind comes up again
and makes the tree SHAKE and CREAK with the weight
of the dingo.

The dingo's blood SPLATTERS on the dirt floor.

17. EXT. WATERHOLE - NIGHT

Underneath a full moon the wind is WHISTLING and
blowing dust along the ground.

Rusty is lying next to the fire asleep, covered with
his eiderdown.

In the distance dingoes HOWL. Rusty wakes up with a
start and sees the waterhole rippling. It is
uncanny.

Sid awakes and starts to BARK. HOWLS are heard louder, and closer.

Rusty grabs his gun and runs out toward the scrub, with Sid following close behind.

18. EXT. SCRUB - NIGHT

Rusty is striding through the trees. Sid overtakes him and bounds ahead.

Rusty looks up to his right and sees the moon glittering through the trees, illuminating the scrub with a strange glow.

Rusty walks on anxiously and behind the next tree the DOG TREE materializes, and is now loaded with five other dead DINGOES, and they're swinging in the wind.

On the dirt floor beneath the dogs there are festering pools of blood.

Rusty catches his breath. In the distance Sid is BARKING urgently.

19. EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Rusty runs into a clearing and finds Sid BARKING at Herta, who is in white protective clothing. Her head is bare and her grey hair is untidy and sweaty. There is a big trench in front of her, and she is trying to dig dirt into the hole with a shovel.

HERTA

(worriedly, to Rusty)

I tried to bury it but the dust storms keep on coming back... and who's to say how far the radiation can spread then.

Rusty stands agape at her. Sid moves to his feet, whining.

HERTA

Well, don't just stand there like a fool, help me goddamit!

She hands him a shovel, and he begins to dig.

20. INT. BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sun is filtering through the blinds and on to the face of Young Rusty, asleep in his bed. He begins to wake.

21. INT. HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Rusty pads down the hallway in his pyjamas and bare feet. He opens the bathroom door.

The adult Rusty appears behind him, and follows him into the bathroom.

22. INT. BATHROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The bath is overflowing with rose-coloured water and there are a couple of wine bottles scattered on the tiles.

Young Rusty walks closer, slowly, and finds his mother lying in a bloody bath, dead and fully-clothed, with her wrists cut. Young Rusty lets out a terrified scream and runs out the bathroom door past Rusty.

Rusty backs towards the door shakily, holding back suppressed sobs.

RUSTY

Fuck me... fuck me.

23. EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The sun is rising. The wind has died and there is a stillness in the air, like the calm after a storm.

Rusty is on his knees, sobbing, with his head in his hands.

Herta, now in her floral dress and bare feet, moves softly into the clearing, pushing the wheelbarrow.

HERTA

(comfortingly)

It's just the spirits Rusty. So many bad things have happened out here since the white people came... the spirits like to remind us of the pain.

Rusty looks up at her, wearily and disorientated, wiping his tears away.

HERTA

Some people say that if you face
the sadness you can come through
the other side.

Herta touches his hand lightly.

Rusty opens it and finds a single bright green
FEATHER resting in the palm of his hand.

HERTA

What do you say about a nice
strong cup of tea? I'm told I
make a pretty good brew, and we
can have, what do they call it? A
good old deep and meaningful.

Herta pulls out a picnic rug from the wheelbarrow
and shakes it out onto the ground. She takes out a
vacuum flask and pours Rusty a steaming cup of tea.
He joins her on the rug and takes a sip.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP

24. INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Herta, in thick anorak and slacks, is on a moving
walkway at the airport.

From her pocket she pulls a thick woolly creme scarf
and buries her face in it contentedly. She wraps it
around her neck and breathes deeply, it has
revitalized her.

25. INT. ARRIVALS LOUNGE - DAY

Herta stands amidst a crowd of PEOPLE in the slick
'Arrivals Lounge'. At her side is the wheelbarrow.
She holds a cardboard sign above her head. It
reads: LILY.

26. EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A taxi draws away from Melbourne Airport with LILY -
a bright and attractive Cambodian Australian woman
in her early twenties, wearing jeans and a sweater,
sitting in the back seat.

She unwinds the squeaky window and stares outside at a plane launching off the runway and into the grey sky.

Lily reaches down and picks up a Polaroid camera, leans out of the window and takes a photograph. As it develops she turns to the camera.

LILY

I bought my first camera when I was sixteen, with the money I'd saved from my job at the doughnut shop... my parents have no photographs of my childhood. That's why I went to Cambodia, to find my past.

Rain starts to pitter-patter on the car. A drop of rain falls on the Polaroid photo and the image of a blurry plane in a grey sky begins to emerge.

LILY V/O

I thought I'd know who I was when I knew my family and where they come from. But now I'm back, something just doesn't feel right. Even the light's different.

Lily takes a photo of the road from inside the car. The TAXI DRIVER puts on the windscreen wipers. Lily rolls up her window.

LILY

(to camera)
It's like the whole world's gone out of focus.

The photo has dried - it shows a blurry wet road seen through a dirty windscreen, with the Taxi Driver's silhouette at the side.

27. INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Light filters through the white Venetian blinds of Lily's bedroom. There are art posters on the wall, and a desk in the corner, with a computer and books scattered across it.

Lily stretches like a cat in her bed and has a big sigh. She is still jetlagged. On the floor next to her she spots her suitcase, still waiting to be unpacked.

Lily slips out of bed and goes over to the suitcase, still in her pyjamas. She opens it, and digs underneath the neatly packed clothes, and pulls out three parcels. They are wrapped in weathered Cambodian newspapers.

She opens the bottom drawer of her chest-of-drawers and lays them carefully inside.

28. INT. DARKROOM - MORNING

Lily, now in jeans and top, is hunched over an enlarger. Lit only by the red safety light, she is adjusting the focus on a piece of paper.

LILY V/O

I think photographs are like pieces of evidence. Evidence of people, objects, events.

The enlarger light switches on and exposes the negative of a temple on the paper.

LILY V/O

A kind of evidence of reality, they force you to remember.

She picks up the paper and drops it into the developing solution. An image begins to appear.

LILY V/O

This was taken at midnight at Angkor Wat. I sat in the middle of the pathway staring at the temple in the moonlight and I tried to imagine how the ruins were once a bustling city.

The outline of Angkor Wat looms mysteriously in black and white. Lily takes it out with tongs and puts it in a new tray - the stop-bath - and then moves it into the fixer solution.

LILY

(to camera)

I went to Angkor to find my grandmother, or 'Yiey' as we call it.

She moves the paper into the last tray full of water.

LILY

(to camera)

The day I left she gave me three gifts, wrapped in newspaper. I was to open them when I arrived back here... Yiey told me they would help me to remember.

29. INT. TEMPLE GROUNDS - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

The two brown, gnarled hands of YIEY give a newspaper parcel to Lily's young pale hands. A golden Buddha glows behind them, with smoking incense unfurling in the dim passageway. Yiey speaks in Khmer, and is subtitled, and we don't see Yiey's face.

YIEY O/S

See how the trees twist their roots around the Preah Kahn temple? The roots are like their secrets.

Her feet pad over old stones and she kneels in her white robe beside Lily. She touches her lightly on the knee.

YIEY O/S

Watch out or they will suffocate you with their weight. Till you have no life left.

The two pairs of hands - one young, one old, decorate the shrine with frangipanis.

30. INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Lily is sitting on the end of her bed in tracksuit pants and jumper, drying her head with a towel.

She looks up at the chest-of-drawers in front of her, and pulls out the bottom drawer carefully. She takes out one of the newspaper parcels, and sits on the bed stroking the paper.

31. INT. LOUNGE-ROOM - MORNING

Lily walks into the lounge room carrying the parcel, and curls up on an old couch draped with a throw. She takes off the paper and discovers a rough, black, ceramic tea pot with a silver handle.

In the background the kettle WHISTLES. Lily looks up surprised.

32. INT/EXT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Lily takes the teapot with her to the kitchen. Steam is filling the air. She takes the kettle off the stove, pours water into the teapot and deposits a spoonful of green tea leaves inside.

She stares into the teapot, steam shooting into her eyes.

When Lily looks up, the balcony door SWINGS open and lets a gust of wintry wind in. HERTA is standing at her balcony door wearing a thick anorak and slacks, and a cream woolly scarf and mittens. Her grey hair is blowing in the winter wind.

HERTA

What do you see?

LILY

I see my father.

33. INT. SHABBY ROOM, CAMBODIA - DAY

LILY'S FATHER, a small, lithe Cambodian man, wearing plain black pants and jacket, is seated in a grey, bare room holding a notepad.

A CAMBODIAN WOMAN is seated opposite him, with a long red and white checked krama draped around her neck. She has her hands folded neatly in her lap. She shifts her feet nervously from time to time. They speak in Khmer and are subtitled.

LILY'S FATHER

What is your standpoint concerning revolutionary worldview in relation to love, hatred, and raising of children?

CAMBODIAN WOMAN

I don't understand.

LILY'S FATHER

I think you do. I think you understand more than you are letting on.

CAMBODIAN WOMAN

I don't understand the question.

LILY'S FATHER

(impatiently)

Your children, how do you raise
your children?

The woman breaks down and begins to weep.

CAMBODIAN WOMAN

I don't know.

(whispers)

I don't know.

LILY'S FATHER

(angrily)

You don't know?

CAMBODIAN WOMAN

I don't know where they are. We
were separated when we evacuated
Pnomh Penh.

LILY'S FATHER

What? But you told me you were a
feudalist!

He stands up, and clenches his hands around the back
of his chair.

LILY'S FATHER

Tell me the truth. Who are you
really?

The woman is sobbing and has buried her face in her
krama.

34. INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Lily is still staring into the pot of tea, steam
rising into her eyes. She steps back and closes the
lid. In the distance the balcony door SLAMS - Herta
is no longer there.

A glass falls off the kitchen shelf and SMASHES on
the floor. Lily jumps.

35. INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

Lily is pegging wet photographs on a clothes line in
the darkroom. A dim light is on.

LILY

(to camera)

I don't remember growing up in Cambodia, but I do have dreams... I'm always chased by a stranger and I'm running along these flat lands, covered with muddy rivers and dusty roads.

She turns off the light, and goes to the enlarger.

LILY O/S

It was in Cambodia where I found the flat lands of my dreams.

Lily places a piece of paper under the enlarger. She switches the red light on which exposes the negative of a landscape with tall palm trees.

LILY O/S

I was on the back of a motorbike on my way to the Killing Fields. Suddenly the road widened out and we were surrounded by green rice fields and palm trees that shot up into the sky.

Lily picks up the piece of paper and takes it to the developing solution. A blurry image of fields covered in palm trees appears in front of her.

LILY O/S

There was something beautiful but sinister about the whole thing... and I had the sudden feeling that I'd been there before.

36. INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the steamy bathroom, Lily wraps her bathrobe around her and rubs a window in the foggy mirror.

She looks down to her right and picks up a newspaper-wrapped package off the vanity cabinet.

Lily sits down on the edge of the bath and unwraps a tattered red and white checked krama. She catches her breath.

With shaking hands, she begins to wrap the scarf around her head in the same manner that Cambodian women wear it.

37. EXT. STREET IN CAMBODIA - NIGHT

It's raining. An open truck comes down an alley and flashes its headlights as it comes to a halt.

The weary, sodden feet of MEN and WOMEN are herded through the mud and into the rear of the truck by a gun-carrying GUERILLA.

The truck drives on through a large puddle.

A dirty red and white checked krama lies in a puddle, peppered with falling rain.

38. INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A DROP of water lands on the bathroom tiles. Lily looks down and another DROP falls on her bare foot.

Lily looks into the mirror at the krama tied around her head. She pulls it off quickly. It is SOAKING.

More drops SPLATTER frenetically on the floor.

Lily steps away from the mirror fearfully - she doesn't know what's going on.

39. INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Lily is sitting on the floor with photos all around her and a scrapbook and pens. She picks up a black and white photo of a young Cambodian man standing in front of the S21 museum in Pnomh Penh at dusk.

LILY

(to camera)

When we got to S21 it was almost dark. My moto driver told me that when they first re-opened the prison, no one went in there. He said there was blood everywhere and it smelt of death.

Lily sticks the photo into her scrapbook.

LILY

It made me sick to see the mugshots of all those innocent people stuck on the walls... to see the torture instruments. I got to a point where I couldn't see anymore. I couldn't stand it.

Lily holds up a black and white photo of a Khmer Rouge guerilla grinning at the camera.

LILY O/S

I don't know what's going on. I don't know why I'm having these... hallucinations about my father.

She picks up a photo of herself, standing distractedly in front of a wall of black and white mug shots.

LILY O/S

Why is it that my father can never talk to me properly.. I'm his daughter for god's sake. I've tried to call him, to speak to him.

(pause)

All I want to know is the truth.

She places a third photo down - a black and white portrait of a terrified woman with a baby.

40. INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

The light flashes on to expose a piece of paper. Lily is lit up by the light, standing next to the enlarger.

She takes the paper over to the developing solution.

An image of paddocks filled with large grassy mounds appears.

Lily moves it into the next solution bath.

The door suddenly OPENS and a newspaper-wrapped object ROLLS in.

Lily turns around startled. Slowly she goes and picks up the object, her hands shaking. She unwraps it and discovers an un-labelled, clear glass bottle full of water. She studies the bottle under the glow of the safety light.

Lily moves over to her photograph lying in the bath. Decisively, she unscrews the bottle lid and pours the water over the picture.

The door SLAMS. She turns around, Herta is standing in her winter woollens at the door.

HERTA

(whispers)
What do you see?

The photo begins to change. Under the grassy mounds BONES appear, piles and piles of human bones.

41. INT. BARE FLOOR IN SHACK, CAMBODIA - NIGHT

Lily's Father gently shakes a human-shaped mound on a bare mattress on the floor. The blanket moves - YOUNG LILY is hidden beneath it. They speak in Khmer and are subtitled.

LILY'S FATHER

(whispering)
Lily, it's time to leave.

YOUNG LILY

(disagreeably)
My name's not Lily.

LILY'S FATHER

It is from now on.

Young Lily sticks her head out of the blanket enquiringly.

YOUNG LILY

Why?

LILY'S FATHER

(gently)
Because we're going to a nice new place where everybody has new names.

He lifts her off the bed and pulls a jacket around her.

LILY'S FATHER

We'll have to be very, very silent until we get to the nice place. I don't want you talking to any villagers or soldiers, even if they ask you a question.

He holds her hand, and they creep out the door.

42. INT. DARK-ROOM - NIGHT

Herta is standing next to Lily, at the sink. Herta puts her hand in the water and strokes the photo of bones.

HERTA

(softly)

All those un-named bodies... a revolution that was supposed to bring freedom.

LILY

But my father, how can I live with this? How can he?

HERTA

(gently)

Look at the photograph again.

Lily pegs the image on the clothes line.

The bones and mounds are disappearing, and an image APPEARS of Lily's Father and herself as a young girl. They are happy and laughing, building a sandcastle on the beach.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP

43. EXT. GEORGE STREET - DAY

HERTA has fallen asleep on a footpath on George Street and looks thin and withdrawn. She has her back slumped against a wall and her wheelbarrow sits beside her. She is wearing a tattered brown cardigan and patch-covered slacks and her hair is untidy.

Her hand clutches a faded, black and white photograph of FRITZ, a young man in nineteenth century clothes and sporting a moustache, who is pulling a boat onto the sand. He smiles cheerfully into the lens. It is inscribed with 'To my darling Herta, Yours, Fritz.'

On her lap rests a cardboard sign that reads: CRACKERS.

BUSINESSMEN and WOMEN in corporate suits walk past in a hurry.

A MAN drops a silver coin into the wheelbarrow.

Herta wakes up suddenly, sees the silver coin, and pockets it thoughtfully. She pulls a white handkerchief out of her pocket and hastily wraps up the photo and puts it in her cardigan pocket.

44. INT. PUB - NIGHT

A group of BLOKES in their early thirties are sitting at the bar of a dark, shabby pub in the Rocks. CRACKERS, a good-looking confident man is telling a funny story and in one hand holds a schooner of beer. They are all LAUGHING.

CRACKERS

Well I was twelve and I'd spent all my piggy bank on Firecracker Night - roman candles, tom thumbs, ball shooters, sky rockets. You name it.

Crackers takes a sip from his beer, enjoying his enthralled audience.

CRACKERS

So, I emptied all the gunpowder into a copper pipe and when it got dark, I went down to Manly Oval and left it in one of the bins.

BLOKE

Yeah, so what happened?

Crackers gestures the impact of a big explosion.

CRACKERS

(shouts)

Boom! Well, did it go off! I created that big an explosion that it blew up the whole bin and set fire to the grass. They called in the fire engines and even the bomb squad! Left a mark on the grass that's still there to this day.

The blokes shake their heads in admiration and disbelief.

CRACKERS

True. And that's why they call me Crackers.

45. EXT. PUB - NIGHT

A few of the blokes spill out drunkenly on the pavement outside the pub. Two of them grab a taxi, Crackers waves them off and hurtles down the road.

He walks across the road to a park.

46. EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Crackers sits down on a park bench dopily and pulls out a half-full schooner from inside his jacket and drinks from it.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

They say I'm a party boy. I'm the one they ask when they want to liven up a night, have a bucks to remember.

He finishes the schooner off. He looks above him at the Sydney Harbour Bridge. There are swarms of WHITE BIRDS flying high above the bridge.

47. INT. PIGEON LOFT - DAY

Herta is standing in a pigeon loft with cooing PIGEONS all around her and wearing the brown cardigan and patch-covered slacks. She picks up a FANTAIL pigeon and walks out into the backyard.

48. EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Herta stands with the fantail pigeon in her hands. She looks up at the sky above her and lets out a shrill WHISTLE.

She holds the fantail by its feet and it BEATS its wings in the air.

49. EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Crackers stands up to get a better look at the birds circling above the bridge, but finds himself wobbly on his feet.

CRACKERS

Woah...

He holds onto the park bench, and throws up on the grass beside it. He wipes his mouth on the back of his shirt sleeve.

CRACKERS

To them I'm the wild-one, the risk-taker, the storyteller... but they don't know the half of it.

50. INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Crackers is lying on the top of his still-made bed, wearing no shirt and only jeans and one shoe is off.

The phone RINGS. He groans and covers his head with the pillow. The answering machine clicks on.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello, this is a message for Sam Phillipson. Could he please ring the Department of Community Services on 9291 3358 as soon as he gets this call. It's about your son. It's urgent.

Crackers pulls the pillow off his head, opens his eyes and looks at the flaking ceiling above.

CRACKERS

Oh Jesus!

He looks at his watch. It is 9am.

CRACKERS

(emphatically)
Oh Jesus!

He hops off the bed and pulls his other shoe on and grabs a shirt from the cupboard. He picks up his back-pack from the floor and races out the door.

51. EXT. BRIDGE LADDER - DAY

Crackers is standing in front of a ladder at the base of the Sydney Harbour Bridge clad in overalls and harness. Above him the BRIDGE WORKERS are dotted like ants along the scaffolding of the bridge.

He climbs the ladder.

52. EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Crackers is up high on the bridge, standing on a crosswalk, fixing a rope and pulley to a plank. He is attached to the scaffolding with a harness and clip. He does a catcall and signals to the PAINTER down below.

CRACKERS

Are you ready sexy!

They laugh. He lowers the platform.

He looks out beyond the bridge and onto the harbour and the Opera House. Boats as small as peas float about.

Down beneath him the cars are like matchbox toys zipping too and fro.

He holds onto the railing and sits down.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

I've only had this job a month. I thought I'd be really into it... but when I'm up here on my own I get all blubbery. I just feel fucking sad.

(pause)

Alone.

He hears a whistle from below. A WORKER gestures for him to come down.

53. INT. WORKER'S EATING AREA - DAY

A group of bridge workers are gathered at a table in the worker's kitchen eating lunch and drinking tea.

Crackers is in the midst of another story and also halfway through eating a steak sandwich. The workers are all ears.

CRACKERS

So anyway, after the dinner we head over to the Bourbon and Beefsteak. Well I don't know what happened on the way there, but I'd had a few and I also popped a pill on our way out.

Crackers' mobile phone rings. He grimaces an apology to his mates and answers the phone.

CRACKERS

Hello... er, no I didn't get your message. What? Billy? Oh, how 'bout I call you back, I'm in the middle of a meeting.

He hangs up the mobile and puts it in his pocket, and takes a bite of his sandwich.

CRACKERS

Anyway, as I was saying, I had absolutely no idea what happened between leaving the restaurant and getting to the pub.

The workers are on the edge of their seats, waiting for the punch line.

CRACKERS

All I know is that I found myself naked in a car park without any money.

Crackers finishes off his sandwich.

WORKER

So what did you do?

CRACKERS

Well what else could you do in that situation? I walked home in a dress, courtesy of a clothing bin.

The workers LAUGH in disbelief.

54. INT. FLAT BALCONY - NIGHT

Crackers walks out onto the balcony of his flat carrying a tinnie and collapses on the chair exhausted. He looks out at the harbour in the distance and takes a sip of his beer.

CRACKERS

(to camera)
Last time I saw Billy he was only one. I left Stef a week later, and she moved out west to be with her Mum.

Crackers takes another sip.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

We just lost contact I s'pose.
But that's life isn't it? No use
having regrets... I guess that would
make him five years old. (pause)

(brightly)

Every decision's a good one,
that's what I always say.

His phone rings.

CRACKERS

Hey there... yeah, sure I haven't
forgotten. I'll be there in
fifteen.

Crackers hangs up the phone and downs the rest of
his beer.

CRACKERS

(sarcastically)

Jeez, it wouldn't be a party
without good old Crackers would
it?

55. INT. PUB - NIGHT

Crackers is leaning against the bar, beer in one
hand with a MATE next to him. The pub is filled
with inebriated BLOKES nodding their heads in time
to the loud ROCK BAND that plays in front of them.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

Most nights you're more likely to
find me down here at the local
than back at the flat. But Stef
always hated it here. Said there
were too many bullshitters.
Always spinning stories. But
that's women for you.

Another MATE comes in. They shake hands and laugh,
slapping each other on the back.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

I should have kept my cock in my
pants. It's always the same, in
the beginning they're all for
keepin' it casual, then before you
know it they're talkin' (MORE)

CRACKERS (cont)
marriage, kids, mortgages. Fuck
that! I'm too young for that
shit.

56. INT. PUB TOILET - NIGHT

Crackers pushes the swinging door of a grimy men's room open. He opens the door to a cubicle and is surprised to find a PIGEON sitting on top of the window ledge above.

CRACKERS
Shoo! Hey Shoo!

He tries to wave the pigeon away. It flaps around his head and all around the men's room, bumping into the mirror.

Crackers opens a window, hoping it will fly out.

CRACKERS
Come on! Get the hell out!

It continues madly flapping around the men's room.

57. INT. FLAT STAIRS - MORNING

Crackers is coming down the stairs of his flat, heading towards the door.

He stops at the mail boxes to his right, pulls out a key from his pocket and opens the mail box door.

There is one letter in there. It is addressed to Sam Phillipson. He looks at the back quickly - it is stamped with "DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES".

He puts it in his pocket and walks out the door.

58. EXT. FOOTPATH UNDER BRIDGE - DAY

Crackers is standing on a footpath, leaning his head against an iron railing next to the harbour. The ROAR of a train on the bridge is heard above him.

An opened letter is in his hand. He looks out towards Kirribilli.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

They said that Stef's in hospital with a nervous breakdown. It all got too much for her... that Billy needs me. That now's the time he needs me most.

He lets the paper fall out of his hands. It falls down into the water.

CRACKERS

(to camera)

But I don't know the first thing about being a Dad. What if I fuck up? I wouldn't want to disappoint him.

Water washes over the letter.

The ink begins to blur.

It sinks.

FADE TO BLACK

59. EXT. PUB - DAY

Crackers teeters, slightly tipsy, out of the pub and walks down the street towards the bridge, still in his work clothes.

60. EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Crackers is on the bridge, attached to the scaffolding with a clip and harness. He looks down towards the cars. They move surreally from side to side.

CRACKERS

(drunkenly, to camera)

You know what? Sometimes when I'm up here I think about jumping. Doing myself in once and for all.

He unclips his harness.

CRACKERS

I wonder how it would feel to fall that far. At what moment does the brain shut down?

(pause) (MORE)

CRACKERS (cont)

Maybe I don't want to be Mister
Personality anymore... maybe it's
time to let go of all the lies.

61. EXT. HERTA'S BACKYARD - DAY

Herta lets out a shrill WHISTLE and shakes a metal
tin with rice in it.

Above her swarms of pigeons are FLAPPING.

62. EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Crackers is standing on a beam, holding with one arm
to the scaffolding above.

His foot slips off the beam.

CRACKERS

Shit!

He steadies himself with two hands but feels
something unusual on top of the beam. He feels
gingerly around with one hand and pulls down an
intricately constructed BIRDS NEST, full of tiny
white, silky FEATHERS.

He sits down, surprised and awed at this little
gift. Crackers cradles the nest in his hands, and
touches the feathers one by one for some time.

His mobile phone rings and he answers it.

CRACKERS

Hello... yes, this is Sam.. I got the
letter...

Crackers clips himself back onto the scaffolding.

CRACKERS

(tentatively)
Well I suppose I can look after
him for a while...
(taken back)
Tomorrow?

Crackers picks up one of the feathers and strokes it
meditatively against his cheek.

CRACKERS

Sure, sure, I can do that...
alright, see you then.

63. INT/EXT. OFFICE - DAY

A bland, government office. A WOMAN in a corporate suit and skirt sits behind a desk. There are pictures done by children hanging in frames around her room. Crackers is sitting nervously in a chair opposite her, dressed neatly in a shirt, tie and pants.

On the floor, BILLY, a five year-old boy is playing with a jigsaw.

Crackers stands up and shakes the Woman's hand. They go towards the door.

BILLY

(obstinately)
Where are we going?

CRACKERS

(awkwardly)
Well mate, we're going to hang out together for a while at my place, while your Mum gets better... d'you think you'll be okay with that?

Billy looks suspiciously up at Crackers, who grins affably.

Billy smiles shyly and grabs hold of Crackers' hand and they walk towards the door.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP

64. EXT. SUNFLOWER FIELD - DAY

Herta's wheelbarrow is perched alone on the edge of a country road. On the black tarpaulin a cardboard sign rests. It reads: MAGDA.

Behind the wheelbarrow is a field full of bright yellow sunflowers.

Herta stands stationary in the middle of the field, her hands holding the cedar box, outstretched as if an offering to the gods.

She turns around, clutching the box to her body. Her face aches with sorrow.

HERTA

(to camera)
They all said it was a tragedy,
but really, I was paralysed.

65. EXT. EXPRESSWAY - DAY

It is pouring on a busy expressway. MAGDA, an overweight 40 year old woman with dark sunglasses, shoulder-length greasy hair, and wearing a faded duffle coat and shabby slippers, is standing on the side of the road, trying to hitch a ride.

She takes a drag of her cigarette. Her hands are shaking.

MAGDA

(darkly, to camera)
Once upon a time I had a house, a
husband, two kids.

Cars stream past. Magda pulls her duffle coat closer around her and shivers.

MAGDA

(to camera)
But I had to leave... there was no
other choice. It was just better
that way, for everybody involved.

A big truck heads towards her and starts to slow down.

Magda picks up a sign next to her and holds it up in front of her. In large handwritten lettering it reads: NORTH.

Magda pulls her hood over her head and runs across the road in the pouring rain. Just as she's nearing the truck, it pulls away from her and down the highway.

She stands despondently on the road, wet, cold and alone.

66. INT. KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Magda is hunched over a kitchen sink, washing up. She has a neater, more kept appearance and is wearing make-up. On her hands are pink rubber gloves, and she is wearing a polyester floral shirt and slacks, with her hair pulled tightly back from

her face. Plate after plate disappears onto the rack, many still with scraps of food stuck on them.

She stares listlessly at the overgrown garden outside the window. HERTA, clad in gardening overalls and gloves is pulling out weeds in the corner of the garden, and depositing them in a wheel barrow next to her.

Magda rubs her eyes surprised, and gets foam in them from the dish-water.

She looks into the garden again, but Herta is no longer there, but her children are. JENNIFER, a chubby 6 year-old girl and JOSHUA, an eight-year old boy play serenely in the backyard inside a cubby house made of blankets and chairs.

Joshua stands up and aggressively pulls the blanket off their shelter and kicks the chairs in.

Magda bangs her frothy hand on the glass.

MAGDA

Oi! No more fighting. If you don't like each other, don't play together! It's as simple as that.

The children look up for a second and then ignore their mother. Joshua continues his wrecking spree. A chair falls onto Jennifer who begins to scream hysterically.

67. INT. KITCHEN/LAVATORY - DAY

Magda sighs resignedly, turns away from the sink and takes off her gloves which reveal wrists covered with chunky gold charm bracelets and stubby fingers with bitten-down nails.

She checks that no one is looking, and then opens a cupboard filled with saucepans and carefully removes a paper bag from the back corner.

Magda opens the bag daintily and lifts out a rich-looking chocolate éclair.

She puts it on a plate and takes it into the lavatory and closes the door.

68. INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Magda is sitting at the dining table with a few PORCELAIN DOLLS spread out in front of her. She is dressed in a dressing gown and shabby slippers and the dolls are wearing eighteenth century frocks and wigs.

MAGDA

(to camera)

Some people are into game fishing
or collecting Elvis memorabilia.
Well my hobby's dolls.

(proudly)

I've been collecting since I was a
little girl.

Magda lifts up a female doll with a brown wig and a burgundy frilly dress and a male doll in a frock coat and boater.

MAGDA

Introducing Miss Elizabeth and
Mister Darcy... Pride and Prejudice
is just so romantic... I cry every
time I watch that video.

Magda picks up a pretty blonde doll and strokes her hair lovingly.

MAGDA

And this is my favourite, the
beautiful Miss Helena. She won
best-in-show at Central Coast last
year. But she's now officially
retired, living the high life...
she's got her own room and
everything.

Magda picks up a cloth and dusts Helena's limbs down.

69. INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Magda is seated at the kitchen table, busy undoing miniature curlers from a doll's hair, and still in dressing gown and slippers.

Joshua and Jennifer run in dressed in pyjamas.

JENNIFER
Mummy, Mummy, what's for
breakfast?

MAGDA
(irritably)
There's cereal on the table!

JENNIFER
But I don't want cereal, I want
toast.

MAGDA
Joshua, help your sister get some
toast.

Joshua is nowhere to be seen, but Magda doesn't notice as she's already focused her attention on her dolls. She unwinds the last curler and combs the doll's hair with a tiny doll comb.

70. INT. KITCHEN, MINUTES LATER - MORNING

The toaster is smoking.

Jennifer goes to the toaster and picks up a knife and tries to rescue the blackened bread to no avail.

She sticks her fingers into the toaster, and BURNS her fingers. Jennifer lets out a YELP and starts to cry.

Magda looks up from the kitchen table.

MAGDA
Can't you do anything right? You
know I've got the show on today!

JENNIFER
It hurts Mummy, it hurts!

MAGDA
(unsympathetically)
I told you to get your brother to
help you.

Jennifer sobs miserably, cradling her hand.

MAGDA
Go and find Daddy, he'll make your
hand better.

Jennifer runs crying to her room.

MAGDA

Bloody hell, can't their father
help out for once in his life?

Magda grimaces but takes a big deep breath in and turns her attention back to her beloved dolls. She sprays some hairspray over a doll's hair and smiles proudly.

MAGDA

Win, win win Magda! You just have
to visualize it.

71. INT. CAR - DAY

Magda is driving a shiny silver sedan, and looks sensational. Her hair is all buffed up, she is wearing a pink silky shirt, and has lots of make-up on. Her dolls are lined up in the back seat.

MAGDA

(to camera)

Today's the day we wait for all
year. The nationals. People from
all over the country come and the
judging is really strict.

She changes down a gear, pressing the clutch with a slippered foot, in which her big toe is poking out.

MAGDA

Last year me and my girls won best
in our section - eighteenth
century. Got a trophy and
everything. Weren't we the talk
of the town, eh ladies?

She looks at the dolls through the rear vision mirror.

MAGDA

(enthusiastically to dolls)
Remember girls, you've got to
"work it"! Let's show Newcastle
what Woy Woy's made of.

FADE TO BLACK

72. EXT. CARPARK - DAY

Middle-aged WOMEN are walking out of a big hall in the city of Newcastle, carrying their dolls and GOSSIPING to each other.

Magda is packing up the car boot dejectedly in the carpark. She rearranges a suitcase full of dolls clothes and accessories.

MAGDA

(maliciously to camera)
What has that woman got that I haven't got? She thinks she's better than everyone else, waltzing around in a short leather skirt and fake tan.

She snaps the suitcase shut and closes the boot.

MAGDA

(scoffs)
Whoever heard of porcelain dolls being dressed up as Charlie's Angels?

Magda seats the dolls one-by-one in the back seat of the car.

MAGDA

(comfortingly, to dolls)
Never mind Miss Elizabeth. It's not always about winning or losing. Keep your chin up, and don't let them know how you really feel inside.

She kisses the doll and pats her on the head.

MAGDA

(cheerily)
I tell you what everybody, how 'bout we stop for a burger and fries on the way home... my treat.

She buckles the last doll in and hops in the front seat and starts the car.

73. EXT. FRONT GARDEN - DAY

The red-brick house in Woy-Woy sits quietly in the shades of the afternoon. Jennifer and Joshua are sitting in the front garden playing serenely with their toys.

Herta is perched on a ladder shaping leaves on an ornamental tree with hedge clippers.

74. EXT. DRIVEWAY- DAY

Magda pulls up in her car. Jennifer runs up to the car holding a doll in one hand.

JENNIFER

Look Mummy look!

MAGDA

(sharply)

I haven't got time for this.

Magda gets out of the car, and lifts the suitcase out of the boot.

JENNIFER

But Mummy look. Look how pretty
Helena looks now.

Jennifer is holding out Helena the porcelain doll proudly. Her hair has been painted bright red and there is lipstick and eyeshadow smudged all over the face.

MAGDA

(furiously)

What have you done to Miss Helena?
How dare you!

Magda SLAPS Jennifer sharply.

Helena falls out of Jennifer's hands onto the ground, and SMASHES into pieces.

Jennifer, shocked, starts to sob and clutches her stinging face.

Magda falls to the ground, and tries to pick up the broken pieces of porcelain.

MAGDA

(to Helena)

Now look what they've done to you.
Don't you worry, Mummy will fix
you up.

She picks up the head and rocks it back and forth.

MAGDA

(soothingly)

Shhh. There, there Miss Helena.
There, there.

Herta appears next to her with a wheel barrow.

HERTA

Here, let me take her.

MAGDA

But she's hurt, she needs her
mummy.

HERTA

Yes, Magda, she does.

Magda turns from the broken doll, to see Jennifer cowering in the corner of the garden CRYING hysterically. Her face is red and her nose is bleeding furiously.

MAGDA

(concerned)

Jenny? Jenny? Who did that to
you.

Magda starts to move towards Jennifer, but she shrinks into the corner holding her face.

Magda turns to Herta, who is walking away, down the driveway, pushing the wheel barrow, which is full of porcelain dolls.

MAGDA

Where are you taking them? Where
are you going?

HERTA

I'm taking them to the doll
hospital, but I'm not sure if they
can be fixed. The damage might be
irreversible.

Herta disappears out of sight. Magda stands motionless and distraught.

75. EXT. WALKWAY BRIDGE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

The sun is shining in a bright blue sky. Magda is unkempt and dirty, standing on a walkway bridge over a freeway, holding her suitcase and watching the speeding cars underneath.

She opens the suitcase and lets all the doll clothes fly out. Knickerbockers, dresses, jackets and shoes hurl through the air and down into the cars below.

Her hand uncurls and she watches her suitcase fly away from her into the distance.

MAGDA V/O

I wanted to forget who I was. I
wanted to disappear.

She grins gleefully as she sees a wig stuck on a
car's windscreen beneath her.

She closes her eyes and takes a big breath of
relief.

76. EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AFTERNOON

The sun is going down on a hilly country road
surrounded in lush paddocks, dotted with sheep.

Magda, in a duffle coat, with greasy hair and bags
under her eyes, is sitting on a milk crate with her
thumb out waiting for someone to pick her up.

MAGDA

(to camera)

Nobody knows where I am. I could
be lost, or murdered for all they
know. But the thing is... out here,
I can be whoever I want to be.

77. INT/EXT. CAR - AFTERNOON

On the side of the country road, Magda jumps into
the passenger side of a beaten-up old car driven by
a HIPPIE WOMAN. The dashboard is filled with stones
and dried flowers, and a crystal hangs from the rear
vision mirror.

MAGDA

(to camera)

The trouble is the longer I'm
away, the harder it is to go back.

She does up her seatbelt. The Hippie Woman smiles
warmly at her, and puts it into gear.

MAGDA

(to camera)

And sometimes my old life doesn't
feel real at all.

78. INT. CAR - NIGHT

It is now night and rain is falling heavily outside the car. The windscreen wipers are moving frantically across the windshield.

MAGDA V/O

Every now and then I think I'd be better off back there... maybe it'd be different?

(pause)

But what if I did something I really regretted? I don't know if I could trust myself not to.

The Indigo Girls are playing on the radio and there is a cosiness to this little car journey. Magda sneaks a curious look at the Hippy Woman driving, then winds down her window and looks out into the night.

MAGDA

I just think there are too many 'what ifs' to make any proper decision.

79. EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

A green leafy orchard is brimming with round, red peaches and bright green leaves. SPARROWS flutter out of the trees.

Down on the ground PEOPLE of many different ages, nationalities and clothes are moving around with buckets, picking fruit, and some are on ladders.

MALE VOICE O/S

Smoko! Smoko!

Everyone comes down from their various posts and draw together in a big group.

Magda walks over in overalls and a bright coloured singlet. Her hair is glossy and growing long down her back and she has lost weight. Her skin glows with sweat from the work, and her eyes are bright. She LAUGHS and CHATS to people around her. People smile at her and the Hippy Driver brings her a cup of tea from a nearby urn. They chat amiably.

80. EXT. COUNTRY LANE - AFTERNOON

The sun is setting - great pink clouds streak across a dark blue sky. Magda walks through the gate of the orchard and onto a country lane, carrying a backpack.

81. EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Magda turns around the corner and sees a school. Out the front Herta, dressed in garden overalls and gloves, is perched on a ladder, putting the last magnetic letters on a sign. It reads, 'You'll find your way when you're ready for it'.

Herta steps off the ladder, folds it up and walks around to the back of the schoolyard.

Magda stops, smiles thoughtfully and continues walking down the lane and into the distance.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP

82. EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

Herta stands at the edge of a vacant paddock in a red buttoned-up knee-length coat, and red hat. She rests her wheelbarrow on the ground.

She scrabbles around in the cart and pulls out a silver coin. She looks into the paddock, smiling secretly, and FLIPS the coin into the air.

It SPINS through the air slowly and lands on the ground with a loud PING.

A fun- fair materializes in the paddock in front of her eyes. A ferris wheel spins slowly around, there are tents and a roller coaster with screaming CHILDREN.

At the entrance of the fairground is a MAN playing a hurdy-gurdy on his knee. At his feet is a hat and a sign propped above it which reads: JULIET.

83. EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

Juliet, a 19 year old with black dreadlocks and piercings, is wearing a long black velvet coat over

black clothes. She is sitting on a tatty old couch at the junction of many train tracks. Behind her are rusty wire fences and graffiti covers the walls of nearby buildings.

She watches a rickety train THUNDER past - empty and dark inside.

Juliet takes the HEARING AIDS out from behind her ears, and the sound disappears.

Another train comes slowly and silently from the opposite direction, each little window lit up in the carriages and PEOPLE are dotted throughout.

The train disappears.

JULIET

(to camera)

I often come here when I want to escape.

Juliet picks up her bag from the ground and gets out some rollie papers and a few buds of marijuana. She starts to roll a joint.

JULIET

I think about the accident all the time. But I can lie here, and feel all the vibrations running through my veins.

She lights up and takes a big drag, blowing the smoke slowly out. She stretches out on the couch and looks up at the sky.

JULIET

And I feel safe.

Another train escalates past, and then three come from different directions. Juliet closes her eyes contentedly and takes another puff.

84. EXT. STREET - DAY

It's early morning on a street full of the identical beige houses of a new estate in Castle Hill.

A fountain is perched triumphantly in the middle of the grass of a beige two-story house with an extremely manicured lawn.

Juliet creeps up the driveway and walks softly down the side of the house.

85. EXT/INT. HOUSE - DAY

Juliet opens up the window sash and climbs inside her bedroom, which is full of posters of bands such as Jane's Addiction and Marilyn Manson. A black silk shawl hangs over her wardrobe and there is a chest of drawers covered with make-up.

She gets under her duvet and closes her eyes.

86. EXT. FIELD - DAY

A set of hooves GALLOP through mud.

A cloud moves over the sun.

87. INT/EXT. BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

JANETTE, Juliet's Mother, is seated at the breakfast table creating a quaint folk art welcome sign. Janette has greying, permed hair and is wearing coloured jeans and a mohair jumper. She is listening to JOHN LAWS on the radio and is quite engrossed in a debate about refugees in detention.

Juliet walks in, wearing fluffy slippers and a black silky dressing gown. She has bags under her eyes, accentuated by the smudged eyeliner.

She sits down, and glances crankily at the pre-prepared breakfast. A bowl, a spoon and a mini pack of cornflakes is set out for her. The milk sits next to the spoon in a little jug that Janette has obviously painted. There is a glass of orange juice and a banana sits in front of it.

Juliet pours some milk into her bowl and takes a mouthful begrudgingly. She stares at the cereal, swallows and pushes it away from her. Janette looks straight at Juliet when she speaks to her.

JANETTE

In case you've forgotten, the Deaf Foundation has their annual fete today.

John Laws continues to bang on in the background. Juliet gets up crankily, walks into the open kitchen. She takes her hearing aids out and puts them in her dressing gown pocket. Janette is clearly talking but no dialogue is heard.

Juliet rolls her eyes and looks out the window.

JULIET'S P.O.V.

Out the back, BOB, Juliet's Father, floats serenely on a blow-up, fluorescent, plastic armchair in a pool with rock and waterfall features. He is wearing seventies-style swimming shorts under his oversized hairy tummy, and very thick, brown sunglasses and is reading a book.

Juliet puts her hearing aids back behind her ears, and switches them on. She turns to Janette.

JULIET

(indignantly)
I don't know what made you think I was coming.

JANETTE

Now come on Juliet, don't be childish, I need your help today.

JULIET

I told you I'm not coming! But you always have to keep pushing don't you.

Janette looks surprised at this angry outburst. Juliet stomps out of the kitchen.

88. EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Juliet is standing on the stairs above a train station looking at the thin crescent moon in the distance, which sits surreally above the Sydney skyline in the distance.

JULIET

(to camera)
My mother found her reason for living after I lost my hearing. Her social calendar never looked this good.

A train is heard THUNDERING towards the station. Juliet puts her hands on the stair rail and feels the vibrations. She looks down and sees train lights in the distance.

JULIET

And when she's not at some stupid function or fete or conference, she hassles me about finding a career. But I don't know what I want to do... all I know is that there's got to be something better than living in this hole.

The train stops at the station and PASSENGERS embark.

The STATION MASTER blows his whistle.

JULIET O/S

Sometimes I wish I could just get on a train and be transported to another country... even a different city would do.

The train begins to pull out from the station.

Juliet reaches into her pocket and pulls out a ten cent coin. She tosses it into the air, and it SPINS down, onto the train below.

89. EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Black horses' hooves GALLOP on a bitumen city street.

Amidst a FLASH of red neon lights, the horse TOSSES its mane.

Skyscrapers LOOM monstrously against the sky.

90. INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Juliet boards an old red rattler train and finds a seat in a corner of the carriage. She takes her hearing aids out and puts them in her pocket. The train goes SILENT.

JULIET V/O

Mum and Dad used to make me go to the deaf functions when I was at school, but I always hated it. I never really felt like I fitted in.

A group of young men herd silently into the carriage. They collapse drunkenly in the seats on

the other side and pass glances at Juliet. Juliet retreats into the corner of her seat.

JULIET V/O

I wasn't deaf from birth, I don't speak sign language. It was like I was a half-breed.

Juliet looks out through the window at McDonalddtown Station. It is dark and empty and all the station lights have been smashed.

TRAIN ANNOUNCEMENT

This train will stop all stations to Hornsby. First stop Redfern, doors closing.

JULIET V/O

Mum thought she'd help out by coming into school and explaining what happened... but the last thing I needed was their pity.

The train continues on into the night.

91. INT/EXT. TRAIN, LATER - NIGHT

The train is empty and has stopped. Juliet is asleep with her head leaning on the window.

She wakes up with a start. It is pitch black outside, except for a couple of street lights.

Juliet walks down the stairs and tries to pull a door open to no avail.

She goes out the door between the carriages and jumps down between them onto the track.

Scores of trains sit empty and stationary all around her. In the distance she sees a light glowing from a small station.

92. EXT/INT. STATION - NIGHT

Juliet pulls herself up on the platform of an old-fashioned, run-down station, without signs and in dire need of a paint job.

She walks towards the glowing light inside.

Juliet finds herself in a waiting area full of umbrellas. There are all sorts of shapes and sizes

and colours - spotted leopard print, baby duck umbrellas, parasols, umbrellas for two people, corporate golf umbrellas.

A door behind her flings open, banging against the wall, and lets a big gust of cold wind in with it. Juliet HEARS the door and turns around surprised, pulling her coat closer to her body.

Tin bells on the door JINGLE and HERTA hobbles in. wearing a red hat, red coat and fake leopard fur slippers and carrying a wicker basket. A strand of Herta's hair blows gently against her face in the wind.

HERTA

Can I help you?

Juliet stares at her mesmerized.

JULIET

Where are we?

Herta doesn't answer, but walks amongst the umbrellas, tying tags on them with labels such as 'Abandoned Ipswich 9.9.93'; 'Forgotten somewhere between Central and Lidcombe 8.7.65'; 'Mistaken Identity Carlton 2.5.03'.

HERTA

At the end of the line.

JULIET

Who are you?

HERTA

That depends on what you're after.

She ties a tag onto a yellow banana umbrella, and looks at Juliet surreptitiously.

HERTA

I look after the lost umbrellas.
The officials call this place a holding port...
(affectionately)
But I prefer to see it as a kind-of foster home.

JULIET

What happens when people don't collect them? Do you get rid of them?

HERTA

Of course not! That would mean
I'd lost hope.

Juliet sits down on a bench in the waiting room and
takes it all in.

HERTA

Have you come here to collect an
umbrella?

JULIET

(unsure)
I don't think so.

HERTA

(thoughtfully)
Mmm. Come to think of it, I'm
sure these would suit you better -
you never know when they'll come
in handy.

She pulls out an old pair of black gumboots.

93. EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

Juliet finds herself sitting on the shabby couch at
the train tracks once again. She looks around her,
startled and confused and notices the gumboots
resting on the ground next to her.

She puts her hand into her pocket and retrieves her
rollie papers, and is surprised to find her hearing
aids.

A train SCREAMS along the tracks in front of her.
She stands up exhilarated, closes her eyes and
stretches her arms out to the sky.

JULIET

(shouting)
And we jumped! Off the cliff into
the blowhole. Whoo, through the
air. I hit the water, and then I
hit a rock. Hit it so hard that
it perforated my ear drums.

Juliet opens her eyes, she has tears rolling down
her face. Her arms fall limply to her side.

JULIET

(to camera)
And now there's no going back, not
ever.

94. EXT. BRIDGE - DAWN

The sun is rising. Pink and grey clouds blend against the blue sky.

A black horse's tail BRISTLES against the backdrop of overhead wires of a bridge.

Its head is decorated with a colourful, ornate headdress covered in bells which sits over its ears.

The horse SNORTS.

95. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Janette is beavering away at the last finishing touches of a batch of cupcakes she has just baked. With a knife she covers each one in bright pink icing.

Juliet, wearing her hair in a ponytail, and her hearing aids clearly visible, storms into the kitchen.

JULIET

What did you think you were doing going through my things?

JANETTE

That's no way to talk to me young lady!

JULIET

Well, were you?

JANETTE

I was looking for dirty washing if you must know!

JULIET

For fuck's sake Mum. Just because I'm deaf doesn't mean I'm incapable of looking after myself!

Juliet walks out pissed off. Janette is ruffled, but pulls herself up proudly. She puts two smarties as eyes on a cupcake, and adds a snake in the shape of the smile.

96. EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHTS - DAY

A set of traffic lights turn red.

The horse STAMPS its feet impatiently.

The walk sign clicks on green and BEEPS.

The horse CANTERS down the street.

97. INT. JULIET'S BEDROOM - DAY

Juliet is lying on her bed reading a magazine. A hand taps her on the shoulder, she turns around. It is Herta in her red coat, red hat and carrying a wicker basket. Juliet sits up.

HERTA

Well, are you ready?

JULIET

What are you doing here?

HERTA

You're quite an inquisitive creature really, underneath that tough veneer.

Juliet scowls, but is still intrigued despite herself.

HERTA

Well, get those gumboots on. You know what they say. A change is as good as a holiday.

JULIET

Where are we going?

HERTA

Your number's come up. You are on your way to Siberia via China.

JULIET

What?

HERTA

Oh, and I almost forgot, this belongs to you.

She hands Juliet a ten cent coin. It glints and sparkles in Juliet's hand.

98. EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Juliet, dressed in a black, fur lined anorak and gum boots, walks out of the front door and stands dubiously on the porch. GALLOPING is heard in the distance, slowly getting louder and louder. In the distance a horse WHINNIES.

99. EXT. STREET - DAY

Around the corner of the street GALLOPS a beautiful black horse.

Juliet walks down the front steps, stunned.

The horse TROTS up the driveway, comes to a standstill on the manicured lawn, and DRINKS thirstily from the fountain.

Juliet walks over to the horse, and mounts it - still stunned, but ecstatic. The horse rears jubilantly.

The horse and Juliet CANTER off down the street.

Juliet's parents walk out the door, and are agape at seeing their daughter ride away into the distance.

They walk to the end of the driveway in shock. In the other direction they see the silhouette of Herta, a little old lady carrying a wicker basket and an umbrella over one arm.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP

100. EXT. BEACH - DAY

HERTA is kneeling at the edge of a deserted beach, with the cedar box resting in her lap. She is wearing a yellow anorak, waterproof pants and gumboots. Her wheelbarrow is parked next to her.

She opens the box. It is filled with sand. She strokes it tenderly.

HERTA

I know Fritz. But it's all I have left of you.

Herta walks to the water and closes her eyes. She turns the box over and scatters the sand into the water.

A gust of wind suddenly comes up and a brown cardboard sign falls out of the wheelbarrow that reads: EMILIO.

The wind blows it up into the air and out to sea.

Herta opens her eyes aghast, and wades into the water, but the sign has disappeared.

101. EXT. CARPARK - DAY

It's a bright, sunny day in an empty carpark on the edge of a beach. EMILIO, a 70 year-old man with a greying ponytail, wearing baggy, colourful pants and tie-dyed top is hunched in front of his Bedford van over a tin of purple paint.

With big purple curly letters he paints an 'O' along the side of the van. He steps back and reads it.

The side of the van reads 'Emilio'. Emilio turns around and poses next to the revamped van proudly, as if for a photo.

EMILIO

(to camera)

Ta da! Well, after six months on the road it's finally official.

He reaches inside the van and pulls out a bottle of champagne.

EMILIO

(to camera)

Let's hear it for Emilio, the magician!

He shakes it, opens the wrapping and uncorks the bottle. Streamers EXPLODE everywhere, over him and the van. He laughs heartily.

MEIN SCHATZ PIAF, a pink-coloured poodle jumps out of the van, BARKING excitedly.

Emilio grabs a plastic wine glass and sparkling pink champagne MATERIALISES from the bottle into his glass.

EMILIO

(to camera)

I almost forgot to introduce you.
This is Mein Schatz Piaf -
dazzling assistant, and friend for
life.

She jumps onto his lap and he kisses her and strokes her coat affectionately.

EMILIO

Edith Piaf. What a woman I say.
That's who I named this old girl
after. Lived a thousand lives and
never regretted anything.
Something to aim for eh? Cheers
big ears! To life on the road!

He downs the champagne quickly, licks his lips and pours another glass.

102. INT. VAN - DAY

Emilio is driving his van out of the car park. The interior is a fantastic mish-mash of colour - boxes of clothes, tricks, hats and cages of rabbits.

He stops at the entrance of the car park, to give way to oncoming traffic.

Around the corner appears HERTA, in yellow anorak, waterproof pants and gumboots. Her hair is matted and she has feathers sticking out of her ponytail. She has the look of a fishwife and is carrying a bucket and a fishing rod.

Their eyes connect for a minute, and then Emilio drives out onto the road.

A brown FEATHER flies into the window and sets down on Emilio's lap.

103. INT. VAN - AFTERNOON

The sun is setting. On the front of Emilio's dashboard a small toy dog sways back and forth. Mein Schatz is lying on the passenger seat asleep while Emilio drives.

Lights flash green, a town whirs by.

EMILIO

(proudly, to camera)
If Rosie could see me now... she
wouldn't believe her eyes. She
always wanted me to go and make
something of myself. Said there
was more to me than being a bank
clerk for the rest of my life.

The van crosses over railway tracks, and along a
steep coastline.

EMILIO

Most of the towns who have booked
my shows are along the coast.
Rosie would've liked that. The
sea was always a special place for
her and me.

He stops at a pedestrian and PEOPLE walk through.

EMILIO

When I told the kids they thought
I'd gone stark raving mad. Said I
was either going through a late
mid-life crisis or going senile.

Emilio continues driving along the waterfront.

EMILIO

I didn't expect them to
understand. They're too caught up
with their careers and mortgages
and overseas holidays.

104. INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Emilio is sitting at a dressing table mirror with
light bulbs etched around it with a painted happy
clown face on and wearing a t-shirt and jeans. His
cages of rabbits, clothes, boxes, and tricks are all
arranged in an ordered manner around the room.

EMILIO

(to camera)
I am a bit of an amateur, I admit
that. I suppose the shows have
been successful because I'm not
only a good businessman, but I
also understand the importance of
the right combinations.

He checks his theatrical face paint. With eyeliner, he draws on a curly moustache.

EMILIO

Mix a little bit of magic with a touch of truth. Line it with music. Fold in some beauty. Take the mind of a child, and let the extraordinary happen!

Emilio gets out of the chair, swings around and is TRANSFORMED into a dashing showman with top hat, glittering cape, white shirt, flashing bowtie and black pants.

A mirror ball TWINKLES lights around the room, and it begins to snow.

EMILIO

All you hear about these days is terrorism, car bombs, torture... People don't even say hello to each other anymore... that's why I'm doing this... to remind people that magic really does happen.

105. INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Emilio is standing on a stage in an old church hall, with one arm curled above his head and the other holding a piece of red silk, mock bullfighter. He is wearing a bright pink cowboy hat and in front of him an AUDIENCE is seated on old fold-up chairs.

Spanish flamenco music SURGES up from the wings. Mein Schatz Piaf TROTS in with a little hat attached to her head and a silver saddle on her back. She stops opposite Emilio. Emilio begins to mock a bull fight with her.

She dances in and out of the red silk, barking.

The audience cheer and clap their hands in time to the music.

The music crescendos to a final climax, Emilio takes the silk away and reveals a bunch of roses. He bows to Mein Schatz Piaf ceremoniously, who takes the flowers in her mouth.

106. INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Emilio and Mein Schatz clamber through the door into the dressing room.

Emilio looks at himself in the mirror. He looks garish and ridiculous out of the spotlight in his curly moustache and cowboy hat.

EMILIO

Well, Mein Schatz... I think the show went down well all-in-all. What do you think?

But Mein Schatz has disappeared and he finds himself alone in the dim, shabby, dressing room.

Emilio sits down in front of the mirror and sees the brown feather from his van sitting on the dressing table in front of him. He picks it up and rubs it along the side of his cheek pensively. He sticks the feather in his pocket.

Emilio is slowly taking off his face paint with a wet washer. In circles he rubs the thick white paint off, until he is left with nothing but his own tired, wrinkled skin and a big purple mouth.

Behind him appears HERTA, in her fishwife gear. She is carrying a crab trap and a basket of shells. He turns around, there is no woman behind him.

He turns back to the mirror. Herta is still reflected there.

HERTA

(to camera)
Where is your magic Emilio?

EMILIO

I'm sorry?

HERTA

When you lose everything, it's hard to see what's left.

Emilio stands up angrily and turns around. Herta is not behind him and has disappeared from the mirror.

He steadies himself on the dressing table and slowly sits down, shaken. Emilio removes his wig. His hair is sweaty and thin underneath and his cheekbones are white and hollow.

107. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Emilio is sitting by a hospital bed. He is clean-shaven and wearing conservative clothes with a short, cropped hair cut. ROSIE, with greying hair, pale face and wearing a hospital gown, is lying in the bed with her eyes closed, hooked up to drips. Behind them a window looks out to the sea.

A male DOCTOR enters the room authoritatively. Emilio stands and they move to the side of the room and talk in hushed tones.

EMILIO V/O

He asked me for permission to increase the morphine. Said it would help you go easier like, make the journey more peaceful.

Emilio looks at the doctor and then looks at Rosie lying there semi-unconscious. Emilio shakes his head decisively.

The doctor exits.

Emilio goes over to Rosie, and holds her hand.

EMILIO V/O

But I couldn't do it Rosie. After all those years of showering your soft, forlorn body, careful to shield you from the bruises. After all that I couldn't make safe your last passage.

Emilio looks out the window to the ocean, and watches the waves crash against the rocks.

108. INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Emilio is sitting in the chair wiping off the last of his make-up. He sits in front of the mirror staring at the lonely figure before him.

He reaches into his make-up bag and pulls out a silver hip flask. He takes a mouthful, grabs a towel and dries his face, patting it down briskly. He takes another swig, screws the lid back on and wipes his mouth.

109. INT/EXT. VAN - NIGHT

Emilio is chomping contentedly on a kebab as he drives through the night. He takes a good swig from his hip flask. Bits of lettuce and sauce are splattered down his front. Mein Schatz is in the passenger seat with her head stuck out the window, enjoying the fresh air.

In the background police sirens WAIL. Emilio looks in the mirror and sees a police car behind him, FLASHING its lights.

He slows down and comes to a stop at the side of the road. He peers into his foggy rear vision mirror.

OFFICER JEAN BROWN is getting out of the police car. She is in her late fifties, formidable and a little overweight. She walks over to Emilio's van.

Officer Jean takes out a plastic tube and passes it to him.

OFFICER JEAN BROWN

(officially)

Evening sir... would you mind breathing into this?

Emilio unwraps the tube and sticks it in the breathalysing machine and breathes in and out. Jean reads the machine.

JEAN

I'm sorry mate, but I'm going to have to arrest you for driving under the influence.

EMILIO

Oh come on officer, I'd only had a couple.

JEAN

(sternly)

A couple too many I'm afraid. You'll have to come with me to the station.

EMILIO

But what about my van?

JEAN

You'll just have to leave it here. You're in no condition to drive.

EMILIO

But it's my home...

Jean looks curiously into the van and sees all the piles of clothes and boxes inside. She smiles at him sympathetically.

JEAN

Well... tell you what. I might be able to sort something out for you later. Move it to the street outside the station or something.

Emilio climbs out of the van and Mein Schatz jumps out after him. He looks back at the van with regret.

110. INT. POLICE ROOM - NIGHT

Jean is sitting in a room with Emilio, a pen and pad on her knee.

JEAN

(formally)
Well that's the end of the official business.

EMILIO

When will I be able to drive again?

JEAN

That's for the courts to decide.

Emilio sighs frustratingly and puts his head in his hands.

JEAN

(kindly)
Is there somebody you'd like to call to come and pick you up?

Emilio says nothing.

JEAN

Emilio?

EMILIO

Sure, sure there is.

111. EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Emilio sits himself on a bench outside the police station, as if to wait for somebody. Mein Schatz Piaf bounds up to him. He bends down tiredly and scratches her behind the ears fondly, and seats her on his lap.

112. EXT. POLICE STATION, LATER - NIGHT

Emilio has fallen asleep on the bench. Officer Jean walks out of the station and puts a rug around him. Mein Schatz wakes up and whines. Jean goes back inside.

She returns with a bowl of water. She sets it down on the pavement and Mein Schatz slurps it down happily.

Emilio opens his eyes sleepily, and pulls the rug closer to his body.

113. EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A clean-cut Emilio leads Rosie over to a park bench looking out at the sea. He puts his hands under her arms, so as to lift her into the chair, but instead she puts her arms around his neck, holding him tightly.

ROSIE

What's going to happen to us?

EMILIO

Nothing's going to happen to us my dear.

He helps her to sit down and tucks a thick, cosy rug around her frail form.

ROSIE

But what if I don't get better?

EMILIO

(positively)
We'll get through. You know that.

She looks at him without saying anything, not wanting to curb his positiveness.

114. EXT. BEACH - DAY

Emilio sits on the sand of an isolated beach. Next to him lies Mein Schatz. He is unshaven and dishevelled and stares at the wild surf rolling into the shore, while sand blows harshly along the beach.

EMILIO

(to camera)

What do you say to your dying wife when she asks you the meaning of life? Do any of us really know?

He licks his dry chapped lips. Sand blows onto him and covers his pants and his hair with a fine coat. He doesn't move.

EMILIO

I wasn't man enough to contemplate what death holds. All I wanted was to soothe it all over like a nice strong nip of whisky.

Mein Schatz gets up and shakes her coat. Another whirl of wind hits Emilio with a bucket-load of sand so that his feet and hands are covered with a layer.

EMILIO

I could hold her but I couldn't take her to the other side.

He stands up and starts to walk towards the sea. A wave CRASHES and slides up to the beach towards him, rushing over his sandshoes.

115. EXT. SAND-BAR - DAY

Herta APPEARS in the distance, standing waist-deep in water, on a sand bar. Seagulls circle above her SCREECHING.

Emilio walks mesmerized towards her through the waist-deep water.

She turns around to him.

HERTA

Don't let the grief destroy you Emilio.

Emilio moves past her and further into the sea.

Herta opens her hand. She looks in wonder at a bright green FEATHER sitting in her palm.

A wave crashes against Emilio and he goes under.

Herta holds her nose and plunges underwater.

116. EXT. BEACH CAR-PARK - DAY

Above the isolated beach a police car pulls up. Jean gets out of the car, carrying a newspaper under one arm and a towel in the other.

Mein Schatz runs up to her and WHINES miserably and then rushes down to the beach.

Jean peers at the sea intuitively, and notices Herta's wheelbarrow parked at the edge of the shoreline.

117. EXT. BEACH - DAY

Jean walks along the sand and sees a towel on the beach, but no one is in sight.

Emilio emerges GASPING out of the water, clutching his chest. Mein Schatz runs towards him.

Jean picks up his towel, and walks towards him and wraps it around his shivering body.

They move onto the dry sand and she helps him sit down.

JEAN

I had a feeling you might be here.
Don't know why I'd worry about an
old useless codger like yourself.

He looks at this new found friend with silent gratitude.

JEAN

The old fishwife visited me once
too, the day my daughter died.

Mein Schatz shakes out her coat, SPLASHING water all over them. They laugh.

JEAN

Tell you what, how bout I shout
you a coffee, and we can have a
good old D and M.

118. EXT. SAND-BAR - DAY

At the sand-bar, FRITZ, an old man with a grey moustache, in a woollen jumper, cap, waterproof pants, creme woollen scarf and gumboots is peering over the side of an old rowing boat.

He leans over and pulls a bedraggled Herta aboard who is coughing. She looks at him stunned, and sobs in happiness. He embraces her.

Around the embracing couple countless brown cardboard signs bob in the waves. They read: ALEX, JOCELYN, FRANCES, WILLIAM, ANTOINELLA, DEIDRE, LINGH, SIOBHAN, ROSS, HANNAH, SYLVIA, PEDRO, WILMA, STAN ETC.

THE END

DRIFTERS & DREAMERS
EXEGESIS

ORIGINS

Drifters and Dreamers is a meditation on those who live on the peripheries – the outsiders, the escapees, the disenfranchised, and the lost. Set in contemporary Australia, this series of monologues for television is about six people who choose to live outside conventional society. *Drifters and Dreamers* catches them in transition, either departing the everyday world, or returning to the mainstream. It is a story of loss, loneliness, belonging, freedom, love, renewal and redemption.

Drifters and Dreamers is a screenplay about escaping civilization and going ‘back to basics’. This departure from predictable urban life, could even be identified as a *SeaChange* (1998+). In *The Big Shift*, Bernard Salt describes the *SeaChange* as ‘...stepping back, repartnering, getting away from the rat race’ (Salt 1998, p.156). The characters in my screenplay – Rusty, Lily, Juliet, Crackers, Magda and Emilio - are all on a journey of self-exploration away from the rat race. Within this period of exile some find revelation, others uncertainty, and for many the process is lengthy and debilitating.

The idea for *Drifters and Dreamers* began after watching *Making the Misfits* (2001). This documentary commented that *The Misfits* portrayed the classic ‘drifters and dreamers’ of middle America. The phrase leapt out at me, and I began to wonder who the drifters and dreamers of contemporary Australia were, and what it meant to drift and dream today. This investigation also led me to contemplate humanity’s methods of dissent against society’s conventions.

We have long been drawn to those that live on the outskirts of civilization. In classic theatre texts such as Tennessee Williams’ *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1986) and *Baby Doll* (1957), the drifter is pictured as the rebel, the risk-taker and the law-breaker. The

female equivalent is pictured as dreamy, naive and sexually promiscuous. This portrayal is exemplified in the film version of *The Shipping News* (2002), whereby the character Petal, played by Cate Blanchett, is openly licentious, excessive, selfish and exploitative. Drifters are also represented through Quoye and his aunt Agnes, who leave the horror and desperation of urban life and return home, where, for some time, they are misfits in their own homeland.

Another drifting theme is tenderly created in Penelope Lively's young adult book, *The Driftway*. This novel features an imaginary highway on which characters from the past appear. These 'spirits' help a boy and his little sister accept the separation of their parents – 'That's what the Driftway is: a place where people have left messages for one another' (Lively 1985, p.32). In *Drifters and Dreamers* characters drift and dream along roads, thoroughfares, freeways and oceans. My driftways are representative of humankind's journey from birth to death. The enigmatic Herta commands these zones and uses them as transit links into other characters' lives.

Whilst developing the characters for my film, I particularly set out not to depict the obvious and clichéd drifters and dreamers. I didn't want to represent negative stereotypes of 'itinerants', 'bums', 'dropouts' and 'no-hopers' in a didactic or moral tone; instead I tried to explore the more invisible methods and reasons behind drifting and dreaming. Crackers appears as the charismatic joker, but actually he is lacking confidence and direction as well as fleeing responsibility. Emilio is hiding his grief behind the mask of a showman and uses his travelling show as a means of escaping himself. Herta is the universal drifter and lives out a thousand emotions drifting through the landscape and the characters' lives.

THE MONOLOGUE

My theatre background initially led me to the idea of working with monologues. In the beginning I imagined that my screenplay would follow a traditional monologue format with one character speaking all dialogue. Alan Bennett's successful BBC series *Talking Heads* (1988) and Hugo Blick's *Up in Town* (2002) - which starred Joanna Lumley in six ten-minute pieces - are prime examples of a conventional monologue format on television. However, once I began my film treatment I felt restricted by having only one character in each monologue, as I wanted them to interact and respond to others. I also found the use of one location limiting, as in *Talking Heads*, where the characters sit motionless in front of a camera. Instead, particular elements of the monologue structure have been adapted and developed in *Drifters and Dreamers*. Most of the dialogue is spoken by the protagonist in each film, and the film solely follows their journey. My monologue form also travels with the central characters across the varied terrain of their worlds.

Other stylistic features of the monologue I have used include dialogue delivered directly to camera and the use of voice-over. These monologue techniques are utilized successfully in the cult films *High Fidelity* (2000) and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), which combine single character narration by the protagonist, plus dialogue between characters. The monologues were used to tell the story and add insightful asides into the characters' thought processes. In *Drifters and Dreamers* I endeavoured to limit dialogue between characters as much as possible.

MAGIC REALISM

Magic Realism has been an important part of *Drifters and Dreamers* since inception. In my screenplay I interpreted this style as a synthesis of magic and the supernatural world, into reality. ‘Magic realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction’ (Zamora & Faris 1995, p.5-6). Aside from being a recurring, connecting force throughout each film, Herta brings a supernatural and spiritual component to the film. Similar to otherworldly figures in literature she is able to transgress the boundaries of place and time without question, and bring dreamlike revelations to the characters. She plays the roles of shaman, healer, omnipresent guide, messenger and seer. Herta represents our higher selves and is the dream-weaver, drifting through the characters’ lives, unveiling the meaning of their past so they can forge new futures. Herta herself is also a blend of realism and magic, as, despite her metaphysical role, she is also revealed to be a very ‘real’ person with needs, desires and a painful past.

Magic Realism is a language where transformations happen, where people can undergo metamorphosis and where miracles are possible (Zamora & Faris 1995). Similarly *Drifters and Dreamers* presents a landscape of haunting spirits, magical animals and transformative dreams. The elements of magic bring hope and redemption to the drab, everyday world of drifters and dreamers.

Some might say that Magic Realism is a kitsch commodity (Margolis 2002, para.16), but I believe the form works best when the magical world is used as a metaphor for a wider reality. Celebrated fiction writers of the form include Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie and Isabella Allende. In film there are the classic adaptations

of *The English Patient* (1996) and *Like Water for Chocolate* (1991). In *Truly Madly Deeply* (1991) the plot may seem a little far-fetched with the storyline centering around a woman's lover returning from the dead. Yet the supernatural is comedic and full of pathos, and through metaphysical events universal truths about mourning and regeneration are explored. Another example is in *Angels in America* (2003), an unusual, yet moving TV miniseries. Through a poetic and hilarious fusion of magic and realism, the series deals with serious issues such as HIV-AIDS, sexuality, mortality and the meaning of love.

As humans we long for hope, miracles, and to believe in the extraordinary. This was apparent in 2003, when hordes of people queued up to witness the miracle of the Virgin Mary on a fence post above Coogee Beach in Sydney. Similarly Lourdes in France attracts thousands of believers and non-believers annually, hoping to be healed by its holy waters. The elements of magic and the supernatural in life and art can indeed be uplifting, and I hope that it has played this role in my work.

ESCAPING THE STATUS QUO

Reflecting on the misfits of humanity led me to contemplate society's structures and boundaries. Conventions such as being married, owning a home, and having children exist alongside the pressures of being financially stable, secure, and having regular employment. Agnes Varda's award-winning documentary *The Gleaners* (2000) depicts many real drifters and dreamers. Of these principles she says,

We have been so much in this civilization of being beautiful, being young, being seen, being this, being that, being rich, and consuming. And the film is totally on the other side. What is the left of consuming, but tenderness and peace with people.
<http://www.abc.net.au/arts/film/stories/s424327.htm> (2004).

In *Drifters and Dreamers* Magda is a mother and wife and resentful of both roles.

McMurphy et al write about the woman's role in 19th Century Australia as characterizing an utmost devotion to the idea of the family and 'the wifely duty of servicing husband and family' (1983, p.8). Certainly in our culture today it is expected that every woman should want to be a mother, and love her children unconditionally. Even in the open dialogue of Australian culture, post-natal depression is still somewhat of a taboo subject.

In societies where motherhood is held up as the ideal of womanhood and having a baby a matter of unbounded joy, women literally cannot speak about any distress they may feel following the birth of a baby. If they do speak, they are admitting to being less than a 'good' mother. If they do speak, there is the risk of having their baby taken from them. If they do speak, few will want to listen. (Brown, et al 1994, p.173).

Magda also feels trapped and does what no 'good' mother should ever do - abandons her children.

The fractured child/parent relationship is a common theme within my film. We are brought up to love and respect our parents without question, yet all the characters in the film have damaged relations with their parents or with their children. In Rusty's case, his attraction to isolation can be traced back to his mother's neglect of him as a child. He thinks by becoming a recluse he can stop the cycle of violence, albeit his current employment as a dogger is intrinsically violent.

Many of the characters are also departing from convention in their interpretation of home. Hugh Mackay writes that we have an obsession with village life and '...a deep-seated desire to belong to social networks that nurture and help us define ourselves' (Mackay 1999, p.264). We are identified by our neighbourhoods and feel a strong sense of security and stability there. The characters in *Drifters and Dreamers* have re-defined

the meaning of home – Emilio lives in his van, Rusty sleeps under the stars and Magda becomes homeless. Juliet has an ambiguous relationship with her home because although it's her sanctuary, it is also a place where she doesn't feel accepted or respected. Crackers spends little time in his flat because being alone makes him depressed and pensive. All the characters are retreating from the safe, supportive and communal environment that many people crave.

This loner mentality is not seen as healthy within our society. To be alone, lonely and craving isolation from the rest of the world is not encouraged, and certainly not for long periods of time. In *Turning Point*, Hugh Mackay writes,

Humans are herd animals, and we cut ourselves off from the herd at our psychological peril. We belong in small groups. We are social creatures. Our best defence against fragmentation and alienation lies in our natural urge to stick together (Mackay 1999, p.xxxiii).

Yet this fragmentation and alienation is the reality of many of the characters in *Drifters and Dreamers* and, apart from Emilio, love and interconnectedness is not apparent in any of their lives.

My drifters and dreamers are also escaping the status quo in their interpretation of freedom. Although liberty and freedom are seen as pillars of our community, the reality is that our vision is somewhat restrictive. This interpretation of freedom might be confined to the freedom of religion, sexual preference or speech. The characters of my film see freedom as an abandonment of responsibility, commitment, materialism and even love. The film *Vagabond* explores the notions of what it means to be free through a young female drifter who lives a nomadic life, drifting from various jobs to casual relationships throughout small towns in France. One character in the film tells the drifter,

‘You chose total freedom but you got total loneliness. The time comes when if you go on, you destroy yourself...If you want to live, you stop’ (1985).

In *Drifters and Dreamers* Rusty perceives freedom as a life free from people’s expectations of him. Juliet’s freedom arrives when she escapes on horseback, away from suburban monotony into the unknown.

THE VOID & THE UNKNOWN

In various forms, many of the characters of *Drifters and Dreamers* exist in a void, a nothingness, and an in-between place. This void is not necessarily a negative condition, it is more a journey into the unknown and into a land of possibility. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, C.S. Lewis called this the ‘wood between the worlds’ (Lewis 1980, p.37). The wood is a quiet, dreamy place full of deep ponds, which can transport a person into different universes. In my screenplay the void as an empty place can be seen on physical, emotional, mental and social levels. In Magda’s story, the void is the oblivion that she enters when she abandons her family to become missing. The open road becomes a metaphor for the hell or insanity that she has entered. In this new life she simply exists and can be whoever she pleases. This state of oblivion is also a theme within Alkinos Tsilimidos’ *Tom White* (2004), where Colin Friel’s Tom remarks that he wants to not want anything for a while. The philosophy to have no desires or goals and to live only in the present is to exist in a void.

This state of ‘void’ can be viewed as a kind of invisibility. In a program on homelessness on ABC Radio National, Robyn, a homeless woman states ‘The worst thing is you feel invisible, not part of the mainstream...an outsider’ (Davis, 2004). In *Drifters*

and Dreamers Juliet feels like an invisible voyeur of society, but in contrast, Crackers is invisible as he has hidden his true self.

The blank, nameless landscapes in my screenplay are metaphors for a sense of nothingness - the desolate scrub of Rusty's world to the solitary cocoon of Lily's darkroom and the anonymous freeways of Magda. The spaces are often empty and cold environments where the characters are detached and lost within an unsympathetic world.

In *Drifters and Dreamers* the unknown is lastly a state of deep meditation and revelation. Similarly Christ and other prophets went into the desert to fast and meet God. They re-entered civilization with a deeper understanding and perspective of the world and its infinite possibilities. For Lily, the darkroom is like a surreal portal into the past and future, where truth is revealed through photographs. It is in this void in which Herta materializes, that Lily learns of her father's iniquities and discovers her essence.

RESEARCH

Research has been the backbone of many of the character's stories and has been undertaken in order to ensure accuracy and seamlessness in the films. For Lily's story I read personal accounts, non-fiction books, and reference articles on the Internet about the Pol Pot regime and the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. A key interrogation scene in *Drifters and Dreamers* uses a question that was sourced directly from a biography questionnaire that the Khmer Rouge enforced on its members.

<http://www.yale.edu/cgp/questionnaire.html> (2004).

(Scene 33, p.63)

LILY'S FATHER

What is your standpoint concerning
revolutionary worldview in relation to
love, hatred, and raising of children?

WOMAN

I don't understand.

Research into genocide in Australia's history also came into play in Rusty's film. I did a lot of research into the British nuclear bomb tests out at Maralinga, which has influenced the writing both directly and indirectly. One influential journal article from *The Advertiser* described how Woomera residents would drive to picnic spots to watch mushroom clouds from nuclear detonations at Maralinga (James & Starick 2003). This scene is translated into my screenplay when Rusty discovers Herta and three Aboriginal women sitting on a picnic rug in the dust, waiting to see the mushroom explosions. In another article Debelle writes, 'The traditional owners of the Maralinga lands in South Australia's far-west say they are home to bad spirits, or mumoo....the bad spirits still haunt both white and black' (Debelle 2003, para.1). Much of my research uncovered the irreparable damage inflicted upon the Aboriginal tribes, and also highlighted the effects of the bomb blasts on white employees and residents. I interpreted this in my film by using the dingoes as a metaphor for the innocent deaths of Aboriginal and white people on the land. The conclusion of the fictional film, *Ground Zero* (1998) - showing a classified hospital ward full of Aboriginal corpses, their eyes white with blindness - moved and saddened me. The horror of the physical effects that survivors claim as a direct result of the tests – blindness, cancer, and miscarriages - made quite an impact on me, and has been incorporated into *Drifters and Dreamers*.

The character Juliet was researched in some depth. To create an accurate picture of a young deaf woman I utilized books and the Internet, and also obtained feedback through hearing-impaired writer, Jessica White. White gave me insight into issues she felt were unclear in my film, such as the need to explain how Juliet lost her hearing, and also the technical aspects of hearing aids (2004, pers.comm., June & July).

CONCLUSION

We are drawn to the drifters and dreamers in society and even aspire to their far-fetched dreams and uncomplicated lives. This is certainly true for writer Daniel Keene:

Who are the characters in my plays? They are mostly people without privilege, who have no 'position', who have no power. They are all trying to carry light in a basket, they are all trying to fit an infinity of pain into a thimble (Müh & Bouvier 2000, para.15).

Drifters and dreamers are diverse and varied, and this screenplay is a mere snapshot of their worlds, imagined by me. From the streets and cafes of my little universe I watch, transfixed, the old lady covered in scarves driving her chariot along the leafy streets of Annandale, and the shuffling woman oblivious to traffic on Parramatta Road, with her floral umbrella and plastic bags. I wonder about their journey and what led them to this state, and am curious about how they view themselves and their choices. It is these voiceless, marginalized people who are brave enough to live differently; to challenge humanity's expectations and to follow their dreams, however foolish. We as 'the other' can, and must, empathize with their world as at some point we've all been misfits, and have all experienced the same loneliness, sadness and joy in our search to find a meaning to our lives.

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