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Disappear Here

Adventures in Subconscious Narrative Filmmaking

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ABSTRACT: This contribution consists of an explanatory introduction and extracts from recent fiction works, 'White Tales' (novel) and 'Peep Show' (novel in progress). Both fiction works explore the spiralling tensions between intensity and excess, desire and jouissance, via the structure and methodology pioneered in the author's previous work with 'subconscious narrative' film. The result of this prior work was the 18-minute subconscious narrative film 'The Dangers', which explores an experimental narrative structure and is fascinated by the creation and sustenance of suspense, particularly when created with the notion of the uncanny in mind.

KEYWORDS: fiction; film; suspense; uncanny

DISAPPEAR HERE

Adventures in Subconscious Narrative Filmmaking

Siouxzi Mernagh

It's well known that when people venture into the far reaches of consciousness, they do so at the peril of their sanity, that is, of their humanity. [...] one of the tasks art has assumed is making forays into and taking up positions on the frontiers of consciousness (often very dangerous to the artist as a person) and reporting back what's there.

Susan Sontag, *The Pornographic Imagination*

My aims at this point as a writer and filmmaker are to continue the adventure of exploring consciousness to create narrative and imagery within the structure of a narrative film. This follows on from the completion of the subconscious narrative film *The Dangers*, created via involvement in the core project *Tension/Spannung* of the ICI Berlin. I find inspiration in starting from a theoretical basis, for example within psychoanalytic film theory or Susan Sontag's thoughts on the impact of photography on the subconscious mind. The process generally then flows onto creating a piece of stream-of-consciousness poetry or prose inspired by the academic work and my own dreams/nightmares, and from there comes the creation of filmic images.

Two stills from *The Dangers* are included here.¹ One depicts the protagonist, Alice, towards the beginning of the film, as she considers the atmosphere of the hotel room she and her partner Hugo have just entered. She holds the bottle she received at the reception desk as they arrived at the hotel. It is an enigmatic bottle filled with a green liquid and labelled 'Drink Me', which is of course a Lewis Carroll reference. The image here is intended to convey the tension within Alice: both the fear of the impending danger that their entry to the hotel has instilled in her, and her excitement and anticipation of this danger. Suspense is created in the extreme angle of her gaze as it hints at something beyond

1 A trailer of the film is viewable here: http://www.loptafilm.com/production.php?subnav=the_dangers&minnav=info



Stills from *The Dangers*,
photography by Chris Erlbeck, 2009.

the audience's view, either psychically or in terms of a potential physical threat of danger. There is also suspense created in the sense that Alice is holding herself back from drinking the strange liquid – the audience is intended to desire to know what the bottle contains and what the implications of drinking it will be. Alice's expression hints that she certainly has some intentions in mind. *Something* is about to happen ... and she has the power to make it happen.

The second image is taken from an excessive, climactic moment in *The Dangers*. The scene is seen initially via the hotel room TV being watched by the character of the undead Angus, then via a keyhole that Alice peers through. The scene is intended as an expression of *jouissance* from the character of Little Alice. She is lying atop a lavish dining room table that she and the uncanny spectres of her mother and father had been seated at in previous scenes. The table is now transformed into an opulent, bloody chaos that hints at the state of Little Alice's mind. This chaos (and, presumably, the actions taken to create the chaos), has transformed into expressions of sexual arousal for Little Alice. The audience watches as Little Alice is increasingly aroused to a sense of *jouissance*, thus moving towards a sense of relief from the spiralling of desires intensifying throughout the film.

After completion of *The Dangers*, I am further plumbing the notions of the spiralling tensions between intensity and excess, desire and *jouissance*. Through working within an (albeit experimental) narrative structure, notions of the creation and sustenance of suspense are also of great interest to me, particularly when created with the notion of the uncanny in mind. What I am presenting within this volume are extracts from two of my recent works, *White Tales* (a novel) and *Exit* (a screenplay). Both works also build upon the explorations begun with *The Dangers* around the inner tensions of female identity and the external manifestation of these tensions in the forms of sexual expression and propensity to violence. This tension between sexuality and violence is graphically evident in the opening extract from *White Tales* as the female narrator acts upon desires that are simultaneously violent and sexualized. She is both a tangible (and fatal) presence and reminiscent of an apparition, or a fragment from a dream. There are frequent Messianic and even Madonna-esque connotations around her character, despite her often demonic actions.

White Tales explores, in particular, imagery of fluidity accompanied by an underlying hint at impending violence. There is a tension



Stills from *Exit*, photography by Chris Erlbeck, 2010.

there in the dichotomy between visual metaphors related to fluidity in a natural and bodily sense which imply creation and the ever increasing threat of violence, implying destruction. This tension is developed further in *Exit*, a film about the simultaneous self-discovery of two female hitchhikers and their escapist driver. As with most 'road movies', *Exit* follows a journey structure, that is, three characters journeying towards something and escaping from something at the same time. The imagery of fluidity is present within any instances in the film that deal with creation (most notably the impending sexual experience between the two female characters). They appear as if drowned at night on the road (juxtaposing fluidity and violence in the one image), lying together drenched and muddy by the river (again as if drowned but they are then revealed to be just sleeping) and they are seen moving around each other as if in dance underwater, sensual and very much alive.

White Tales is a novel written largely via a stream-of-consciousness method. The tales begin from the warped perspective of a mystery narrator in a remote location – a roadside murder and kidnapping takes place whereby the protagonist savagely kills two travellers and takes their unborn child as her own. Cut to Sydney, Australia where an emerging filmmaker, Isobel, is cutting her ties with the job she hates to pursue research for her first feature film. She has been researching 'true' horror tales around the world in search of the most bloody and chilling tale that she can use as a basis for her film *White Tale*. After striking gold with an obscure novelist in Reykjavik, Iceland, who knows a 'true' local tale to still her heart, Isobel also cuts ties with everyone she loves and unexpectedly takes off north. Once there, her obsessions with the tale begin to take hold of her, and as she journeys across Iceland in pursuit of the 'survivors' of the tale, happenings begin to chill her existence. To complicate things, her parents back home begin to lose their grip, and try to keep in touch with their daughter by way of increasingly confronting and desperate emails. In the thick of things in Iceland, Isobel grows to realize that her past was not what it seemed.

The intention with the first extract is to indicate notions of suspense around the narrator's intensifying desire. She has been anticipating, planning and mentally repeating this moment of release for three years. The extract catches the narrator at the peak of intensity of her long-awaited desires, with the sense that if the *jouissance* she craved had not eventuated in the way she had anticipated, she may not have physically survived beyond this moment. After the narrator acts upon

her desires, there is a sense that this release of tension merely spirals towards a climax of a different energy or tension. Certainly the spiral continues throughout the larger narrative in the form of these desires being transferred to the narrator's surrogate daughter. These desires I refer to are clearly sources of pleasure for the narrator: sources of pleasure to relieve the build-up of psychic and bodily tension within her. Most, however, would perceive these sources of pleasure as precisely sources of tension or displeasure (forced sex resulting in extreme violence). Immediately this contrast to conventional desires posits the narrator as an anti-heroine.

The second extract from *White Tales* explores another moment of climax. The setting is a cocoon-like car on a craggy Icelandic mountainside, a storm raging outside. Here, the imagery is liquid, fluid, bodily, accompanied by an underlying hint of impending violence. Narratively, it marks a key moment in the novel. Towards the conclusion of the story, it is revealed that the adventures following this moment in the story might have only been experienced in a coma-state, not in 'reality'. In this way, this moment therefore fissures most of the remaining narrative into a transgression of time and space. The characters experience a car accident, and all remaining uncanny events remain ambiguous as to whether or not they were experienced beyond the coma state.

Following on from the extract from my novel *White Tales*, I have included an extract from the screenplay *Exit*, a subconscious narrative photography installation that visually and thematically builds upon my previous films *The Dangers*, *Third Eye Open*, *Two White Lines* and *Jet Black*. I am working towards narrative image-making in photography, edited together rhythmically and accompanied by a soundtrack.

Exit is essentially a road movie in three interwoven tales. Set on remote roads in outback Australia, it is about the simultaneous self-discovery of two female hitchhikers and their escapist driver. The piece explores coincidence and repetition, and the slippery and ambiguous nature of time, identity and love. It seeks to expose the contemporary sense of dislocation, disorientation and dissatisfaction with urban life through three Gen-Y characters. The complex structure of the piece echoes these themes, as the three stories are interwoven with increasing rapidity as the piece climaxes. The three characters are each escapists with fractured, ambiguous identities. Coincidence brings them together and makes them question their pasts and their futures. They are con-

fronted with both a complex and non-linear experience of time and are led to question the slippery notion of love.

Similar to my previous novel and films, *Exit* creates a sense of the uncanny. Its characters are uncanny doubles of each other, doppelgängers: they are at once tangible protagonists situated in time and space, and at a same time a fragment of the other characters' unconscious minds. This may be taken to be indicative of identity in general: that each of us is simultaneously the result of our conscious and unconscious self-perception (within dreams for example), the conscious and unconscious perception of others (which could often be rooted in fantasy and assumption), and, eventually, a fading memory. Each character is able to look more deeply, beyond the here and now, particularly the 'heres' and 'nows' of identity. The doppelgänger appears in the story as a manifestation of both great horror and great beauty.

Exit will be screened as an installation piece at the Australian Centre for Photography. It follows on from recent group shows, *Kiez: Homely/Unheimliche* at the Horus & Deloris Gallery, Sydney, and the Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne. Once *Exit* is completed, my intentions are to continue undertaking the research components I had begun over the course of my fellowship with the ICI Berlin, to aid the development and writing of a subconscious narrative feature screenplay. *Peep Show* (a working title) is intended as a 90 minute subconscious narrative feature film inspired by Georges Bataille's erotic novella *The Story of the Eye*. It will be the first feature film made via the experimental methodology my previous works have begun to develop, attempting to reject the binary idea of either/or and creating an audience perspective that eschews traditionally ascribed linear narratives and traditionally prescribed perceptions of time and identity, particularly female sexual identity. The goal is to create a gap, a zone, in which possibilities are allowed to emerge.

EXTRACT ONE

The buzz.

You lick the salt (almost dry already in the heat) from more salty palms. Fresh salt, stale salt. Melded in afterbirth fluidity. The sweat sticks scathing particles of scabby road in stigmata lines down your face. Filth in place of martyr blood. But you can change that. It's what you're here for.

The buzzing takes form. Impossible distance has become startlingly intimate. The backwards dragon breath parts knowingly from its creator: a squat brown Fiat. So puny on this excrement road that you know most villagers would have laughed in half (only half) pity as it passed. Hotly, you consider laughing – but that can come later.

You take your ears off the Fiat for as long as you can muster, to time things right with the sheltering sky. Accidents can happen in the rain. You curse any Little People lurking in the hills and their Valhalla-esque nobility that it isn't 4 am. The accident hour. The coldest hour. Your choice of timing only has sunset going for it. The hour of last chances before dark. But the drone intensifies as the Fiat nears, so this will have to do.

You begin to feel a little snake-charmed by the Fiat. Your stigmatized eyes become all cobra and you sort of perk up, all erect for the ensuing meeting. It scares you, only a little, as you feel your eyes mist over. Twisted severed limbs splayed woodenly on your hillside from long-dead trees join you in your shape-shifting; brown textured cobras without eyes. Surely this is too far north for cobras?

The musty Fiat is fast losing its charm. Your ears tune back to the drone, almost with an audible click. Great-Aunt's wireless comes to mind, all boxy in the corner. Clicky formica knobs clicking frequencies. Warm on the heirloom rug and scattered with glass sculptured monkeys from the son without prospects. The tree-branch cobras might have heard that satisfying click. Or the Little People lurking around. You're switched on.

The drone is now the perceptible mechanical formula of diff hits gear turns spoke or however the hell the thing works. It ends with

blazing fuel and burning tire, though, and this is what you smell now. Brown and squat and noisy and blistering through your nostrils.

You're warmer now, if that would be possible. In fact, you're hoping anticipation will equal more sweat, as the road scabs, the volcanic dust and dried bugs which your face is sporting now, may strike them as just a little too Pierrot. This is not Cambodia, this is not Cambodia.

But your face sweat's not cooperating in its cleansing properties, and in one instance where panicking will actually improve the situation, you feel yourself free-falling into impossible bliss. With the Fiat's buzz replaced by formulae and rhyme (and the almost perceptible scent of placenta), you feel your visage smoothing. A wind moves about you as if you transformed yourself into a corpse (it wasn't just your imagination this time).

You sigh your first sweet and dreamy sigh for the day. It's coupled with the wet rush that comes with the onset of the echoing storm. The road gapes before you and the Fiat rocks itself to sleep towards you.

You want it now. You do away with all paranoia of the sheer dirtiness of you that refuses to be hidden, and as a blessing from something inside you to the voice in the sky (and the Little People might have dropped in a penny or two), the great shelter above releases a great hammam on you, the road and the squat Fiat.

Your formica knob clicks satisfyingly again as the headlights ping on, and the car pulls over to the side of the road. You run, flutter, tumble down through the twisted wooden cobras towards the Fiat. You flail wetly, your feet beginning to bleed sufficiently. Your eyes are instantly the unequalled messianic epitome of hope and hopelessness (feeling the world's pain in the outpourings of your blood, endlessly and effortlessly, etc et al amen).

You hit your mark, ensure you are correctly framed and correctly lit, and we're rolling. The conspiracy upstairs hurls more rain and groin-deep rumbles of thunder that you know means the powerlines go down and the street's a summer blackout and the house swims with darkness, kerosene, takeaway pizza and chlorinated feet (a night-time swim or two). The rumble is deep and summer-time strange for this far north. The scabby road is now fermented and verdant with near-edible ozone.

Lightning now, (the conspiracy: nature in reverse to help your cause), and fleetingly your dripping beauty is jack-rabbit through the Fiat's windows. Another flash and you jack-rabbit again. Have they

seen you yet? Your eyes penetrate their car (someone in the back, someone in the front), and their four saucer-y eyes penetrate back.

Threat?

You messianically stumble (for the first time) in the next fluorescent lightning flash.

Not threat.

They chortle closer to the windows and their saucer eyes gleam – so scripted – through glass and rain.

Need help?

You stumble for the second time as thunder shudders Wooden Cobra Hill.

Help me. I need you.

You can almost taste the honey sweetness of the squat little bumblebee Fiat as the Samaritan feelings of its occupants grow warmer.

You stumble for a third time and a cock probably crows somewhere. The rain's not slowing but happy brown bumblebee is. The mechanical drone of the Fiat begins idling quietly, giving way to the silence of hills and the relentless raindrops.

You wipe feathered dark strands of hair from rabbit eyes (mimicking theirs: an anthropological law of the jungle), and stain yourself (cross-bearing) from the bottom of the hill onto the road.

The driver's door opens.

He's honey insipid – dripping manners and all the gentility of every lost country boy that ever sung lonesome to the moon. He softly reaches back inside his car and draws out a three-spoked umbrella. The shred of black fabric smells of bats' wings and seems to enjoy actively directing the downpour at you as he gingerly extends it over you. Its uselessness works a charm: the smacking raindrops further redden your rabbit eyes. Saline tears give way to gushing cloud water. You're a sobbing, sodden mess.

You feel your lips trying to murmur something in competition with the grumbles and declarations from above. You're not quite sure if anything (the road, the Fiat, or the endless bubonic landscape) wouldn't have predicted what you're trying to say. The road in particular (the dirty flying carpet wheezing you from stoned hill to the dead-eyed valley to the utterly catatonic plain) had heard all this before: every last spit of rain, every fluttering martyred eyelash.

'I need a ride.'

You almost explode with the sheer needlessness of these words. But they had to be said, and would be said again on many a wet, darkened

roadside. You can tell before his cherry lips (full to bursting point of arterial blood ... it does cross your mind that you've flagged down a couple of just-fed vampires, that you almost orgasm at the thought of those lips before you enveloping a naked throat and taking their deep, hot fill ...) part to speak, how his accent will sound: he'll clip all the ends off in laid-back-ness, but lovingly keep all the T's and P's to perfection, so as not to betray any impoliteness. He'll swirl the S's with an unaware sensuality, and hush his sh's so as not to disturb the neighbours.

You have to lip-read, this time, though as Valhalla conspires again with thunder. You want to read his lips over and over ... dog ear them at the steamy parts and coil them warmly in a coat pocket to leaf and flick and pore over, night after night. So much blood.

He wants to know where you're going. (Another needless line in this script which grows more sodden by the second under this bat-winged umbrella). The Fiat's idling slows suddenly to complete silence. Not even a sputter to mark its impending death. This Fiat has obviously never read Shakespeare.

This turn of events awakens all of us – you and the pseudo vampire now exchange casserole dish sized rabbit eyes (round, wide, smooth and coated in cheese). The back door of the Fiat opens slightly – the storm muffling the shallow, tinny click.

You see her left hand fingers first – straining on the lame door-frame, slippery with raindrops. She's married – probably only in her first few days of it, judging by the sheen of that ring. That or she's an obsessive polisher. Two thin bands of gold wrapping her finger. No diamond. Her fingers are swollen to a pudginess her rings weren't ready for. Her face strays out of the car into the rain ... then you lose interest. There's not much more to speak of. Long, unbrushed, undyed hair.

You force yourself to recall that 'Sixteenth tip for successful business meetings' you found so amusing in that reading room one day: 'Double over the index finger to form a sharp knuckle. Place this knuckle subtly but firmly in the crook between the jaw bone and the neck – careful not to cause harm to the gland – this should effectively avert the impending embarrassment caused by the onset of a yawn.' And you thought you hadn't had a particularly fruitful day that day in the reading room – you'd memorized a few choice meeting strategies to mouth off in case anyone thought to ask you how you were. Worked a treat.

And right now too – you do indeed effectively avert the big-mouthed yawn coming your way at the sight of this pie-faced girl. She gets out into the rain. She’s pregnant: hugely, heavily, ready to go. Again, you can almost smell the placenta. You’ve never felt more inspired.

She droops onto the open car door and gazes at her husband. Her voice is lissom; so locally accurate you could’ve thrown a paper aeroplane on her breath and it would’ve landed faithfully back inside her family’s picket fence. Every syllable, every vibration of it spells home on the farm.

‘What can we do? I’ve not quite got an hour.’

She stargazes at me.

‘Do you know mechanics at all? We don’t. We’ll take you somewhere if you can fix it.’ The cherubs turn their eyes to you. Four of them, bright as a springtime sky.

You know what you have to do. You’ve known for a year of waiting in these hills. Watching in these hills.

You usher her back into the car and encourage him over with you to the bonnet, stumbling a little in the rain on your broken feet. You both open it, and he peers into the acrid gloom.

Never before have you known so badly what you have to do. Your wants housed for years behind the chaos theory of various shades of white wall paint. Speculating on speculative values of a numbers market with more people in one room buying and selling than the entire population of this country. Years of constipated thought leading to the infantile necessity to seek out self-sufficiency. It made perfect sense. You could lead by example, by evolution and causality, and your line of thought would survive and prosper. It was all so cute. You could almost see the rest of your life handed to you wrapped in shiny paper coloured with shooting stars, eyes closed purely for the delight of seeing it all happen before you, all over again. This couple and their Fiat were so gloriously pink and white and baby blue, which only gives weight to your cause ... the faithful droning Fiat. You can see its shell here in five years – rained on, iced, skeletally silhouetted against aching black lava fields and singing glaciers. An eyesore to make you homesick.

The only thing you’re not sure of for the rest of your life is why you want him so badly here and now. Looking at you, anyone would have expected that a year on the rocky lava fields would have dealt with loneliness, but the truth is that you’ve had more sex out here than

all the warm dreams of everyone back home put together. It must have been the sweltering incomprehensibility of the glacier, or the steamy callousness of the rising mountains that became part of the game. You don't ever want to do the sums, but many a hiker, road worker, and cowherd liked your stretch of road (and counted on it, drew it close and steaming, paid for it). It was a slippery sort of lifestyle, but you realize now that it hasn't quashed you.

You know your cause so intimately but he's bending you – reaching into your stream and pushing little stones this way and that. The course has diverted towards him and you're not one to stop it.

You bend into the car's greasy gloom with him and run the knife delicately up his spine. He arches, catlike, and doesn't panic. His eyes are as unfazed as the moon.

'Do you know what you're doing here?' he opens this cap and that, twists things, gets fingernails oily.

'I don't have a clue.'

He finally lolls his eyes towards me. He almost spikes himself on the dead car as he finally spots the knife. You bring it closer than comfort to your throat.

'Do you want me to die?' You say it plaintively. This part is unrehearsed.

He rustles his head – frozen in place. His springtime eyes remarkably betray no fear for his or his wife's well-being. His eyes worry about you.

'If you don't want me to die, I want you to fuck me.' You choose your words slowly, mesmerizingly, so he can't possibly make any mistakes. You want him, and you can't help it.

You draw the knife down your throat – its slipperiness in the rain feels nice. You repeat this a few times (you get the feeling in your fingertips of being nine and playing hairdresser to yourself – cutting what you shouldn't over and over again. It feels so nice you can't stop). His cherry lips almost burst their million capillaries. His eyes feign innocence – his lips want blood.

'I'll kill myself right here and now.'

He can barely hear you over the rain, but the large chunk of obedience in his nature speaks volumes for him and suddenly his pants are out of sight and he's ready to go. He glances once around the lifted bonnet. She can't see a thing.

The knife is turning you both on, so you keep it in full view. You relax into the notion that this was all planned; this is how it's meant to be. Your skirt is whispered away by the wind, and finally you feel him. He's more homely to you and otherworldly than anyone else in your history.

You feel almost homesick when you realize how quickly it all happens – you got to the last page, wept on it a little, then had to close it. His cherry lips press muddy into the fortunate road.

She bleeds a lot more than he did. Must have been something symbolic to do with motherhood. You find it apocalyptic (but physically predictable you have to admit) that her blood nestled so preciously in her navel, with just one thick trail to link it with her throat – like a lovingly crafted ladle placed against flesh.

The timing, the timing – it couldn't feel this right, could it? You're holding her, now yours, tiny baby fingers, rabbit eyes, nestling her on the second day. You know she probably loves the mountains even more than you do. But on her third day of life, and beyond, she sees them only from the fourth storey window.

EXTRACT TWO

The storm howls outside. Lightning illuminates the tears streaming down Snorri's face.

'This is too much', he repeats over and over. He hums something Nick Cave-ish momentarily.

Isobel hugs his wet head to her chest, trying desperately to shake the image of his bloodied face, his hacked throat. She swallows the tears threatening to break.

'I'm sorry', he's saying, 'I'm sorry.'

Their skin is soft against each other. They're tasting each other, over and over. She's sucking on his tongue, squeezing it between her lips, lingering with it. He's trembling with sobs – at the quelled, exhausted end of things. His body simply shakes with the going-through-the-motions of sobbing. The tears are all used up. Isobel embraces all of him: arms, legs, mouth, wrapped up in hers, absorbing his tremors. Her head is thrown over the backseat, long hair splayed out. Snorri is pressed hot against her, head sideways alongside hers on the backseat. He's breathing on her, and her action of breathing in his exhalations connects her to

him like an umbilical cord – a feathery, wavering piece of ether between them. Some kind of life force. Everything outside them rages and is a distant memory. The possibility of falling debris is a distant nightmare.

They're waking up to each other with each movement of fingertip-slipsbreath. Isobel slides a thigh around Snorri's and he sighs into her. Strange light and dewy sweat takes over and he takes her head in his slippery hands. His sobbing is over with and he grins as he presses their foreheads together. His veins are noon-blue and pulsating, full. Isobel's fingernails flex into his wanting, unknowing flesh. He takes her, takes hold of her and the ether between them is pierced open like atmosphere. With his force and his speed inside her, her fingertips are fuelled and flicker sharper and harder down his spine. He thrusts and she thrusts her head forward, mouth to his combustible neck. In a hot instant, teeth want flesh, tongue wants blood. Nails want expiration: his spent cock, his slit throat. So beautiful. Then gone again – hot instant violence gone to nowhere. Murmuring underneath her surface. She shakes herself free of his grasp to slip her eyes into his. His close, at peace, and his features are luminous constellations. Isobel whimpers a little at tiny memories of her violent thoughts. She licks at his saltiness for a little, then coquettishly pulls him into herself, utterly. He takes her heart into his hand in the form of her moist left breast. He kisses it like a kitten and she drinks more of him. He changes tune and is now torrential rain, harmonizing with the netherland outside. He pours down on her monsoonally and she basks in the downpour. She's breathing him, heavy and deep, now a river taking twists and turns and writhing. His hands are her thighs, her breaths, her quick wet lips, his lips are her warm ears, her throat. Her hands are his cock now – he's exhaled and she tickles him extreme. He's screaming hurricanes as his flavour colours her, action-paints her, slippery. His fingers are now her knowing cunt, and soon they are drinking her own flavour, sighs and moanings.

Distant light tickles their evidence of each other, tainting it angelically. Breasts, tummy, pussy, fingers all spilt and spent. They slide an embrace and taste newly pleased mouths. Nerves are humoured, veins are gushing. Arteries are well impressed. Flesh hums a little together – string section vibrato.

Snorri sends her oxygen through his smile – she sends him a little sodium by way of sweated cheek against lips.

'You're crying?' he stammers softly as if words are invaders.

SCENE 1. INT, REMOTE ROAD, EARLY MORNING

1.

A sweaty pair of female hands attempts to re-grip the handle of a battered red suitcase.

The hands are shaking with the strain.

ANNA V/O

Sheltering under the sky - the night we intruded through dust and woke the huddling stars - we shivered and the mist rose higher.

The fingers are eased open and closed. One hand massages the wrist of the other, then reverse.

The short fingernails are painted an eerie green - chipped and soiled by the surrounding arid landscape.

ANNA V/O

We cursed the clarity of the moon. Piercing us with unflinching cold.

There is a red glass ring on the thumb of her right hand and a smattering of imitation Indian bracelets on her right wrist.

The bangles jingle as she shakes her hands again.

A thin, almost inaudible strain of guitar music creeps through the air.

A flock of cockatoos screeches overhead overwhelms it.

Then, for a few moments, the buzz of endless, shimmering heat is all that can be heard.

Slowly, the sound of a car approaching becomes audible, droning along dry stony ground.

The hands move up to run through long sweat-soaked hair.

ANNA is flushed and breathing hard. Her singlet clings to her sweaty, slightly sunburned skin. She brushes hair from her intense eyes.

As the car becomes visible, she re-grips the suitcase once more and picks it up, expectantly.

She leans into the road, squinting at the sleek black city car rapidly approaching.

Anna waves at the car with her free hand. Her body visibly tenses as the car nears.

The car is moving along at top speed, dust in its wake. Anna's shoulders rise higher, her fingers grip the case more tightly.

Just as the car reaches her, it almost screeches to a halt. It misses its mark and finally stops a few metres beyond Anna.

She breathes, a smile spreading across her face, and she runs, suitcase in tow, to meet the car.

The back door is opened for her and the driver's window is powered down.

Anna opens her mouth to speak.

A cigarette is flicked out of the window towards her and a hand indicates for her to get in the car.

Anna sighs and forces a smile. Her eyes search the straight barren road ahead and the impossible blue of the morning sky.

She picks up her suitcase, half buried in the dust beside the car and walks around to the passenger side. She notices, as she walks, crude boot prints in the dust. She throws the suitcase in the back, then slides herself into the front and slams the car door.

They drive.

FADE TO WHITE

CUT TO TITLES "EXIT"

The car continues its drone as they proceed through the dark.

ADAM raises the window electronically, smoking, his cigarette almost done. He takes off his Ray Bans and looks across at Anna, eyes glassy.

Anna meets his gaze, eyes travelling from him to the manicured, bronzed hands on the wheel, to the shimmering watch, to the meticulously placed tattoo just peeking below a rolled sleeve of his well-pressed checked shirt, to chiselled cheekbones and a smattering of powder making itself seen beneath his nose, white against pre-summer tanned skin. He flares his nostrils and hits her with a plume of smoke. His eyes don't leave hers.

They take a few sharp turns until finally they turn into a stretch of unsealed desolate road.

Something suddenly catches their gaze. They both sharply swivel round in their seats to peer out the rear window.

A fleeting, shadowy glimpse of movement is seen by the side of the road. Adam sees in the rearview mirror that it's a man in a dark suit.

They peer at each other questioning. Adam shrugs and fumbles with something in his pocket.

They reach a clearing by the side of the road. Adam pulls over and rubs his tired eyes. They peer back into the gloom behind them.

Their eyes strain in the dark. They sit in silence. Adam lights up a cigarette.

There is suddenly a rustling in the foliage. They both sit upright - eyes straining to see.

There's nothing out there now, just a strip of desolate landscape illuminated in the headlights. Then blackness.

There's a noise outside the car from the road.

They swivel around to see where it is coming from.

The noise is getting louder, gaining speed.

Approaching footsteps gain momentum until they are crunching just metres behind the car.

Adam's breathing becomes panicked and he shifts the car into gear.

Anna leans out the window into the darkness to see the stranger.

The figure runs faster towards them, into the light.

Adam shrinks down in his seat, shaking his head 'no' at Anna.

The figure has a guitar case in her hand and she is wearing a summer dress coated in dust. She waves.

Anna leans further out the window and beckons her.

FINN comes running towards the car, struggling a little with the guitar case. Her skin is glistening with sweat.

Adam slinks further into his seat and rolls his eyes.

Finn runs smiling through the headlights, guitar bouncing and opens the back passenger door.

SCENE THREE, INT, CAR, LATE NIGHT

3.

Adam has his ipod on, his head slumped against his window, eyes struggling open as he drives. He moves his head slightly, in a rhythm. Could be the car's movements, could be the dull beats of music transmitted to his head.

Finn half-smiles at Anna's reflection in the mirror. They sit in silence for a while as the rain pelts down around them. The road has been flat and straight for a long time now.

Finn is tuning her guitar and gently strumming it. Anna watches her face, fascinated, in the rearview mirror.

FINN (MURMURING SOFTLY)

Once I went to the edge of the river, the edge of the dark water. Below the dark water, tangling my hair.

The moonlight has begun to penetrate the sodden roadside trees. Beyond that is endless barren land.

Adam rolls his eyes at the fields, wipes sweat from his palms on his pants. He falteringly checks his mobile and looks up pleadingly at the sky.

The road stretches on endlessly ahead: moonlight and rain.

ANNA (WHISPERING)

We keep on running ...

A flicker of movement from the side of the road captures everyone's attention. Adam slows slightly and they peer at the side of the road.

A man in a dark suit flickers just in sight at the side of the road. Then just as quickly, he disappears into the black.

Adam is hunched over the wheel, eyes struggling to stay open. He's chewing violently and occasionally running his fingers along his gums. His knuckles are white on the steering wheel.

Suddenly Anna grasps Adam's shoulder, snapping Adam from his stupor. The car slightly swerves with his shock -

Before them on the road is the slumped silhouette of the man in the suit.

Adam swerves the car to just miss him.

All three of them turn in their seats to see the man, but the road is deserted once more.

Their breathing slows momentarily and Adam accelerates once more, panicked at top speed.

Anna's eyes dart from the man to Finn to the speedo to the road.

Adam puts his foot down even harder and the car shudders with too much speed, surging across the road. It starts slipping - the wheels start skidding out of control.

Anna's gaze darts from the speedo to the road to the man to Finn.

She double takes - the man on the road is clearly Adam. His eyes stare back at her, accusingly.

She swings around to Adam and then Finn, then back to Adam. Adam has seen himself too.

Anna glances back to Finn then to Adam again. In his place in the driver's seat is the Adam wearing the suit - sitting upright, motionless, gazing back at her knowingly.

Anna cowers in her seat then looks back to the man on the road. Adam stands there in the suit, holding Finn and Anna by their hair, both dripping wet. They are both wearing old-fashioned nightdresses.

Adam takes his hands from the wheel and loses control of the car - it skids violently across the road, then starts spinning ...

SCENE FOUR, EXT., UNDERWATER, LATE NIGHT

4.

Anna and Finn are flung lifelessly around and over each other, crashing together, colliding and tumbling underwater.