

Writing is Rewriting

Defining the purpose of drafts in feature screenplay development in a collaborative, micro-budget environment

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led PhD project consists of the feature-length screenplay *Double Happiness Uranium* and an exegesis that explores a staggered process of screenplay development stages where each draft is given a specific focus. This approach involves a Treatment and four drafts. The Treatment is concerned with the macro-plot structure in the form of acts and turning points, Draft One is concerned with micro-plot structure within scenes, Draft Two focuses on the development of character detail, Draft Three refines tone and the Final Draft concentrates on style.

By giving each draft a specific focus I hope to make a collaborative approach more manageable as feedback can be more specifically directed. The ordering of this approach is based on the value of a thematically-based dramatic premise as a means of establishing a basic plot trajectory, from which other aspects of the film story, such as character traits and stylistic elements, can be created.

The reason why this feedback and engagement are important is based on the fact that, in the micro-budget filmmaking environment, writer, producer and director often act as the core filmmakers who together own the film and, in the absence of financial investors, are ultimately responsible for its completion.

My process is proposed in reference to both the conventions of screenwriting practice as discussed by the likes of Robert McKee and Syd Field and selected components of narrative theory including Roland Barthes and the Russian formalists. As such it may

act as a guide for screenwriting practitioners , creating an interface of ideas that allow theory to inform practice.

My creative work, the screenplay *Double Happiness Uranium*, is the test case for this approach. This dystopian science fiction feature film was written over eighteen months in close consultation with a producer and director and was based on a dramatic premise concerning the delusional effects of hubris. I actively sought to engage with my fellow filmmakers in terms of this theme working it into all considerations of plot structure, character trait, tone and style. In my exegesis I conclude that such a system, although not perfect, provides a tangible pathway for the micro-budget writer trying to negotiate his way through the often perplexing stages of screenplay development.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Matthew Paul Hawkins

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FOREWORD

This exegesis is based on my practice-led research as the screenwriter and assistant producer of the feature film *Double Happiness Uranium*. The final draft of this feature film screenplay is my major assessable creative work. All four drafts, however, have been submitted as part of this package to illustrate the points I make. All these works can be found in the Appendices volume.

The producer of the project was PhD student Tom Young and the Director was Cole Larsen. For the sake of consistency I will refer to these roles, actual and hypothetical, in the masculine.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my practice-led research was related to two separate problems. Firstly, how could I, as a screenwriting lecturer at a university, combine narrative theory with actual screenwriting practice? Secondly, how could I, as a screenwriting practitioner, facilitate collaboration with other filmmakers in the micro-budget environment in order to maximise the chances of a film getting made? The answer to both these questions, I suspected, lay in a more structured understanding of screenplay draft development. A process of development that includes the writing of drafts suggested a staggered and organised approach to the creation of the film story and could be useful to both collaboration (as a filmmaker) and analysis (as a lecturer). This gave rise to my central research question: how does one usefully define the purpose of each particular feature screenplay drafts in a collaborative, micro-budget environment?

As a teacher at a university, I felt I needed to justify theories of screenwriting beyond the assertions and examples posed by the various practitioners turned screenwriting instructors. Popular authors such as Robert McKee (1999), Syd Field (1994, 1999) and Linda Aronson (2001) provide very useful tips for constructing a screenplay. Their ideas reflect practice in many mainstream films and together form a fairly consistent approach to the creation of a unified narrative. Concepts such as McKee's inciting incident (1999, p. 189), Field's definition of the plot (or turning) point (1994, p. 114) and Aronson's recognition of the relationship line (2000, p. 56) all find representation in major funding bodies' guidelines for screenplay development (Screen Australia, 2009. Screen Development Australia, 2010). As important as they are, however, it is still difficult to categorise them into the respective needs of individual drafts. I

therefore postulated that an interface between narrative theory and screenwriting practice might assist in organising relevant principles to be used at specific draft stages.

The extent to which these practice-led approaches share common ground with more academically-based narrative theory is, however, a question which has received little attention in the academic environment. This question is of particular interest to someone in my position, teaching practical screen-writing skills to students also engaged with issues of history and theory. The ideas of Lajos Egri (2004), Murray Smith (1995), Boris Tomashevsky (1965), Roland Barthes (1975) and Northrop Frye (1957) provide a useful way to unpack the concepts espoused by the screen gurus by drawing attention to more fundamental narrative principles such as an active dramatic premise (Egri, 2004, pp. 6-9), that might help practicing filmmakers begin the story construction process and maintain a unified thematic focus and the differentiation of free and bound motifs in order to pinpoint what story elements need to be part of the plot and what can be considered character traits (Tomashevsky, 1965, p. 68).

Combining rules of thumb about a very specific form of narrative writing – the screenplay – with a more wide-ranging understanding of how principles of narrative work, might allow a greater opportunity for problem-solving in the draft development process. This is specifically relevant to the micro-budget environment as most of the screenwriting rules espoused by McKee, Field and Seger apply almost exclusively to a commercially functioning industry with its particular departmentalised mode of production. Narrative theorists often provide an important perspective on a particular narrative issue, such as the question of how to define character engagement, that goes

beyond the notions of the screenwriting gurus who assume the writer hopes to attract a mass audience with generic sensibilities.

Collaboration was a key element of my study. As a screenwriter in the micro-budget environment I found myself in the position of having to collaborate to get films made. This is a common circumstance. Independent film producer Peter Broderick (1992) points out that part of the basic framework of any ultra-low-budget production is a core group possessing “hell and high water commitment” to the project. Recent Australian government programs such as Sp*rk, Indivision and Film Lab have encouraged the team-based approach to filmmaking, usually involving teams made up of a writer, producer and director (Australian Film Commission, 2005, p. 5; South Australian Film Corporation, 2010, 3.11).

My research, therefore, was to test whether narrative theory can inform practice in the writing of a feature film screenplay and, in particular, whether theory combined with the practical rules of thumb of the screenwriting instructors can help determine the specific purpose of each draft, that can be utilised and understood by a production team. The production component of my study was the feature screenplay *Double Happiness Uranium* that I wrote in close consultation with its producer, Tom Young and director, Cole Larsen, both of whom are PhD candidates. I wrote a treatment and four distinct screenplay drafts, drawing upon relevant principles of both the screenwriting teachers and the narrative theorists to construct the screenplay and create a feedback terminology. My hope was that, at the end of this process, I would have the beginnings of a more definable approach to writing feature films in the collaborative, micro-budget environment in which most film school graduates find themselves.

My approach to writing the film was a development process that defined a purpose for each draft. In this way I hoped to keep the core group of filmmakers engaged in specifically directed feedback. I wanted to explore whether this contribution to the draft writing process would enhance a sense of collective ownership of the film. It also seemed useful in enforcing a shared understanding of the dramatic premise, given that this was the principle that provided the film with its unity and that the chain of events in the narrative served this organising principle in the most economical and aesthetically elegant way.

Important to my approach is the idea of a defined starting point for the film story that is a result of negotiation between writer, producer and director. This is opposed to the common practice of an independent writer developing a screenplay first and then trying to find a producer and director to make it into a film. I feel that a producer and director (who were not getting paid) would be more likely to follow through with the idea if they felt they had a major role in its inception.

The starting point I tested was Egri's notion of the dramatic premise (2004, pp. 1-12). Egri's premise posits a character trajectory that demonstrates a particular emotional or thematic quality. In my exegesis, I will argue that although this is not the only way to create a film idea, it is a most effective way of starting the screenplay development process.

After this, I structured the process by giving a defined purpose for each stage of the screenplay's development. The stages were represented by the treatment and four specific screenplay drafts in the following sequence:

1. Synopsis – a story summary based on a dramatic premise
2. Treatment – an extended story synopsis outlining the *macro-plot* structure of turning points and acts
3. Draft One – where the writer constructs the *micro-plot* of the actual scenes using character objective
4. Draft Two – where the writer refines *character* traits
5. Draft Three – where the writer refines *tone*
6. Final Draft – where the writer refines *style*

At each stage, different aspects of narrative theory combined with the principles of screen writing instructors could help define the focus. This focus could then form the parameters of feedback and give the screenwriter a tangible path forward.

The order of this system, starting with dramatic premise, then plot, character, tone and style, is a pragmatic choice and is not based on any form of ontological hierarchy.

Rather it is based on Aristotle's notion that plot determines character function and the effectiveness of a unity of action (*Poetics*, 4.3 and 5.1). I felt it was reasonable to suggest, as Lumet does, that form should follow function if you want to create a more analysable system for a story's development (1996, p. 51). Plot can provide a framework on which to construct and define character function, and character function can in turn inform particular character traits. Toward the beginning of production, tone

and style become increasingly significant as the filmmakers start to plan how the film will appear on screen and therefore, in my model, should be dealt with in later drafts.

In this exegesis I will discuss the practicality of the approach of establishing a dramatic trajectory first and then detailing a plot around it in Draft One and subsequently establishing character detail in Draft Two. I will examine how effectively a tone and style can be refined in response to this in the final two drafts of the screenwriting process. Along the way I will be comparing the observations of narrative theorists to the practical advice given by the screenwriting instructors in a bid to define a terminology for the feedback process that can make sense to both the screenwriter and his fellow filmmakers.

The Treatment and each draft need not represent a single document but rather a specific stage in the screenplay development. There were three rewrites of what was officially Draft Two of *Double Happiness Uranium* but each one aimed to concentrate on the same thing: addressing the issue of selecting appropriate character traits. This approach represented a means for the writer to stagger the screenplay development process and give a clearer trajectory toward the identification and solving of problems. Rewriting, in my approach, serves the purpose of keeping the producer and director actively and formally engaged in the story development process. It allows the writer to take into consideration the specific issues related to the micro-budget environment as he develops the screenplay. I will argue that dealing with these issues at the script development stage saves time and money during production, especially during the later stages when the screenplay becomes not only a blueprint for production but also a recruiting document for potential cast and crew.

In this way, I hope to provide a more focussed methodology for rewriting than that provided by funding bodies and the popular screenwriting instructors. I find that, although both the screenwriting instructors and government bodies like Screen Australia assume that there will be multiple drafts of a screenplay before it is ready for production, neither gives a clear idea of how many drafts should be written or what the actual purpose of each draft should be. The South Australian Film Corporation, for example, offers ‘\$6000 per draft’ for an uncredited writer, but nowhere in any of their publications is there any mention of what discerns a first draft from a second draft or a third draft (Project Development Guidelines, 2009). Even Paul Chitlik’s manual *Rewrite* (2008) does not deal with the difference between individual drafts; there is simply the first one and then a better one after all the problems such as enhancing the key emotional relationship of the protagonist and strengthening the antagonist have been resolved (p. 33, p. 39). Mehring (1990) advocates that with each draft the writer should “strengthen and perfect” each element of “theme, structure, mise-en-scène, filmic time, filmic space, motion, imagery and sound” (p. 268). The purpose of writing another draft, therefore, seems to be fixing *all* the problems of the preceding draft in no particular order over and over again until you get it right. Such an approach may work for the individual screenwriter working on a spec script that they hope to sell to a producer after it has been completed, but in a model that relies on collective ownership of the idea and an understanding of its development, I felt a more staggered, formally structured approach was warranted.

Important to my research is the significance of the micro-budget environment and the specific conditions to which it gives rise. Defining micro-budget film purely in terms

of budget is problematic. Fifty thousand dollars may be micro-budget in Adelaide but in Lagos it may well fall into the high-budget category. Practitioners, however, often define micro-budget film not only in terms of lack of finances but also in the light of a particular methodology that has the advantage of creative independence but the disadvantage of relying on unpaid collaborators. Polish (2005) defines independent, low-budget film as being unattached to the Hollywood financing system and therefore one that relies on concept and creative independence for its success. Stern (2002) suggests that a micro-budget film is where, as owner of the film, the independent filmmaker can “do whatever (they) want” as long as they understand “throwing money at a problem is not going to be allowed”(p. 3). This combination of creative independence and the conditions that arise as a result of lack of finances draws attention to the importance of sharing the creative vision. Creative independence might be liberating for the individual filmmaker but if he is to collaborate, either to compensate for the lack of personal finances or simply share the workload, then creative influence may need to be shared and consequently the purpose of the actual film should be defined.

In our production we were able to raise enough money to compensate people for certain inconveniences but nothing that came close to anything resembling a living wage. Cast and crew were doing it for the love or the learning experience. We, the writer, producer and director, were the core filmmakers who were making the film because we wanted to gain vital feature filmmaking experience and skills that we could then apply both to our practice and our teaching. It is a position in which many recent film school graduates find themselves. The make-it-yourself model as an introduction to a career in filmmaking has been increasing in popularity ever since

Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* (1992) and Kevin Smith's *Clerks* (1994) won the attention of Sundance Film Festival.

In the absence of significant funding, filmmakers often have only the volunteer labour of their friends and associates upon which to rely. Non-paid labour means other forms of motivation are necessary. Using my approach based on a clearly articulated dramatic premise, I was hoping to empower writer, producer and director with the ability to sell the project to the prospective cast and crew in a succinct and unified way.

I will examine how this was useful during pre-production because the crew who did get involved may have had great enthusiasm but usually had limited time or limited skills. With a small crew, the roles of writer, producer and director had to intersect so that we could all act as each other's unpaid but highly motivated assistants. We could therefore seek to rectify the problems in any department that was falling short.

Working across many departments meant constantly communicating the premise, plot, tone and style of the film to a variety of cast and crew at any given moment. The staggered, collaborative screenplay development process helped give us the means and terminology to express a consistent interpretation of the film idea.

This exegesis is structured around my proposed draft development model and at each stage analyses how successful I feel I was at applying theory to practice in a way that solved problems identified by all collaborators. In the next chapter I will examine the Synopsis and Treatment, drawing on Egri's (2004) notion of dramatic premise as the starting point for the activation of the idea and then assessing the use of McKee's

(1999) notion of a controlling idea as a means of defining the turning points between acts. In Chapter 3 I will analyse the focus of Draft One, assessing how successfully the concept of character function, as described by narrative theorists Propp (1968), Tomashevsky (1965) and Barthes (1975) can, when cross-referenced with notions of *story values* as defined by McKee (1999), help define the units of action that make up the micro-plot structure of scenes and sequences. After this I will assess how engaging characters can be refined and detailed in Draft Two using Smith's (1995) concept of a structure of sympathy cross referenced with Field (1998), Seger (1994) and Aronson's (2000) principles of creating character subplot, back-story and establishing a moral point of view.

I will then examine the role of tone at Draft Three stage of the screenplay development as a means of defining the story world in relation to Frye's (1957) concept of the power of action of the central character. I will argue that theorist Frye helps raise the right questions that allow the filmmaking team to arrive at an appropriate tonal consistency in preparation for determining the style of the film. In Chapter 6 I will consider the screenwriter's role in helping to define and describe shooting style in the final draft of the screenplay. Style is usually the domain of the director, but I will consider the fact that it is possible, and, indeed, beneficial, in the micro-budget environment for the screenwriter to be explicitly involved in the creation and refining of style if he is one of the core group of filmmakers.

An important aspect of the practice that is being explored in this exegesis was the fact that all three of us acted not only within our respective disciplines but also, more generally, as filmmakers. It was therefore advantageous for us to be aware of the

bigger picture of the filmmaking process from initial idea to final delivery. It was only by going through this entire process that I was able to assess the impact of a structured approach to screenplay development. I conclude that having a staggered, logical approach to screenplay development can allow the various departments of writing, directing and production to intersect, promoting greater understanding between the leaders of these departments. This situation of sharing the responsibility for getting the film made is one that is advantageous in the micro-budget situation. The pooling of resources might amount to a greater chance of success than the relentless drive of an individual. I will argue that this is not only due to a sharing of the work-load but also due to the fact that the screenwriter has a critical test audience of two right from the beginning of the story's development. This is more beneficial than a third party script editor with limited knowledge of all the other conditions required to get the film made, and even less incentive to see it through to production.

My research process was not only a test case for formalising the draft writing process and facilitating collaboration in the micro-budget environment but also a means of making narrative theory relevant to the practical issues of constructing a viable screenplay. This is highly valuable to me as I attempt to make this information relevant to the needs of local filmmakers and university film students in South Australia. For them, micro-budget productions are the most immediate options for developing feature filmmaking skills; and for micro-budget productions to truly function, they need a higher degree of communication than a more commercial or well-funded environment. Indeed, as more and more artists are arming themselves with affordable cameras and editing programs, micro-budget feature filmmaking is becoming increasingly more important to film culture in general, and educational film

culture in particular. Given there is no pressing need to make a profit, the micro-budget filmmaker is free to make bolder statements and aesthetic decisions. My study does not constitute a complete how-to guide for the development of the micro-budget screenplay but is a significant step toward channelling bold new ideas into a workable development process, creating visions that can be shared from their inception.

2. THE TREATMENT: DRAMATIC PREMISE AND MACRO-PLOT STRUCTURE

Film funding bodies in Australia such as the South Australian Film Corporation and Screen Australia usually require a summary document before they will fund the writing of a feature screenplay. This is called a treatment and, judging by the advice of both the funding bodies and screenwriting practitioners, is primarily a device that tests dramatic unity. According to Screen Australia (2009) the treatment is a 15 to 30-page document that “sets out the dramatic and cinematic way you intend to ‘treat’ the story in terms of style and unfolding narrative” (p. 7). It is the writer’s opportunity to sell the story idea to those who have the money to make it. Jane Scott, the producer of *Shine* (Hicks, 1996) and *Mao’s Last Dancer* (Beresford, 2009), requires a one-page synopsis describing the essence of the story before she will even look at a screenplay (Scott, interview, 02/02/2000) and pitching competitions that involve a succinct one-page summary of the story abound in Australia and overseas (National Pitch Competition: Screen Development Australia, 2011, SPAA Fringe, 2010). The form of this summary usually is one line, followed by one paragraph and then one page. The story, as such, expands from logline, to bare essence, to a more extended description based on the character journey (*National Pitch Competition Guidelines 2001, What is a Treatment*, Screen Australia 2009). Screen Australia describes treatments as ‘selling’ documents designed ‘to convince the reader that there is a cinematic story’ (2009, p. 7) Pitching and treatments, therefore, can be useful in convincing investors of the viability of a project. In the collaborative, micro-budget environment the ultimate investors of time and energy are the producer and director. How, then, should the

writer pitch the story to them, and more importantly, how can the enthusiasm be sustained through the laborious process of screenplay development?

I felt this problem could be addressed by involving the producer and director in the formation of the initial film idea. If this idea could be expressed in terms of a particular character or story trajectory, the team would then have a more tangible reference point for the formation of feedback and criticism of the screenplay. I had been introduced to Lajos Egri's concept of dramatic premise at film school and felt that this might be a means by which we could logically construct this trajectory based on a particular human quality we wanted to explore. In this chapter I will describe how I used the dramatic premise as the basis for the synopsis. I will then assess the use of classic three-act structure and McKee's (1999) concept of the controlling idea to create and justify the major story events of the macro-structure. I felt that by combining these two approaches to formulating a treatment I could create tangible parameters of criticism and feedback that would concentrate on the logic and appeal of the narrative rather than the sometimes indefinable qualities of personal taste. I also wanted to create a system of staggering the screenplay process that was driven by an agreed-upon dramatic idea.

The following schema represents my approach:

1. A listing of *ideas* and a discussion about how these can relate to a particular human quality that the filmmakers are keen to explore
2. The formulation of a *dramatic premise* that can be applied to a short *synopsis*

3. The completion of the *treatment* (in the form of a detailed *scene breakdown*) where the shared *controlling idea* is used to justify and analyse the macro-structure of sequences, acts and turning points.

I hoped this systematic approach would maximise communication and understanding amongst the creative team as well as allow the writer the flexibility to create a short two-page synopsis and then a more detailed 15-page treatment.

I based the ordering of this approach on the Aristotelian notion that a unified line of action should be established before character detail. For Aristotle, the “most important thing is the structure of the events...character is included along with and on account of the actions”(Poetics, 4.3, 1996, p.11). Many film practitioners also subscribe to this view; Screen Australia claims “in drama, choices and actions define character” (*What is a Synopsis*, 2009) and director Sydney Lumet (1995) is a firm believer that in movies “form follows function” (p. 51) suggesting style should cleave itself to the story’s purpose and not the other way round. Aristotle’s notion of unity is invoked as the ultimate path toward successful writing as in Hiltunen’s (2002) *Aristotle in Hollywood*. Whether a unified structure is a ticket to box office success is not the concern of my research. My concern was to find enough common ground amongst the producer, writer and director that might inform a particular approach. A unified line of action that connects each event in a causal structure might provide the key to this. I hoped to initiate this line of action in the form of a thematically-based dramatic premise.

Central to my purpose, therefore, was a clear definition of the form and purpose of a film treatment and the type of dramatic premise we would be using.

Establishing the form and purpose of the treatment

The purpose of treatments is often to establish a unity of plot. Both McKee (1999) and Snyder (2005) emphasise the importance of listing the plot events before embarking on the screenplay. For McKee it is a forty to sixty-part description in prose form of the basic dramatic events, all of which should be constantly reworked in relation to the controlling idea of the film (p. 413). For Snyder (2005) it is a one-page 'beat sheet' that outlines the basics of the plot trajectory based on specific events that fall under such headings as "Theme Stated" and "Catalyst" to see how well the story will work (p. 70). Aronson (2000) advocates a short treatment based on a nine-point plan that hinges on basic story events that, like Snyder, fall under neat headings such as "Normality", "Plan" and "Surprise" (p. 48). In all three of these approaches synopses are used to test a unity of event structure by making each event play a specific role.

Australian funding bodies also recognise the importance of unity of plot. Screen Australia recommends the following stages in the construction of the treatment: *synopsis, drama outline, scene breakdown* and *treatment*. The brief *synopsis* outlines the very basics of the story. It is the "*WHO, WHAT* and *HOW*" of the plot (Screen Australia, 2009, p.4). This synopsis can be as short as one paragraph, and usually should not exceed two pages. After the brief synopsis the writer should complete a *drama outline* defining the "blocks of action". These are the events that make up the causal structure of the story and according to Screen Australia help the writer

eliminate scenes that dilute this unified pattern of action (p. 6). These blocks of action are then translated into a *scene breakdown* that is a more detailed version of the dramatic events in the form of a sequential list of each scene with the major actions of the characters described. Dialogue and specific screen images are usually not included. It is an “essential preparatory internal document” designed to check that if the events constitute a unified and economical pattern of action (p. 6). As Aristotle suggests “the plot, as the imitation of an action, should imitate a single, unified action – and one that is also whole. So the structure of the various sections of events must be such that the transposition or removal of any section dislocates and changes the whole” (*Poetics*, 5.4, 1996, p.15).

Although the WHO, WHAT and HOW of the plot is important information to agree on, of equal importance, and possibly of more tangible use, is the question of WHY SHOULD WE CARE? In other words: how can the audience engage with the key characters or theme in a compelling way? In my experience as a lone script writer this question kept coming back to me from potential producers and funding bodies and was often expressed in these terms: Who is this person (that is, what is the essential quality of the main character?) and why do I care about him? This may not be the most important question in relation to the film but it could, I suspected, be the most significant one in unifying the narrative into a singular purpose. If the purpose was clearly defined then this could be a clear reference point for those who would advise on the script (in my case, the director and producer) at least in its initial stages. Later on other elements such as character engagement, tone and style would become equally important. At the stage of formulating the macro-plot of the story, however, the idea of a premise based on a particular character trajectory leading to some kind of thematic

conclusion might be useful. Lajos Egri's notion of premise provided me with a starting point.

Egri (2004) suggests that the translation of a belief into a story can provide a tangible narrative trajectory based on character quality undergoing change. He calls this the dramatic premise. I wanted to explore whether knowing the character and the nature of the change could provide useful reference points for the filmmaking team as the screen story developed. A shared understanding of a particular human quality, like greed, ambition, compassion, and so on and how this quality could change in a particular situation would be the basis of the story trajectory and the reference framework for feedback. Even if the team were working from a pre-existing story, how this story could be treated dramatically would benefit from defining a trajectory that could form the basis of the plot.

It was possible that a theme based on a human quality once orchestrated into a premise did not need to be a matter of great conviction, but at least great interest, in order to sustain the logic and purpose of the plot. A treatment could be used to test out the narrative strengths of this dramatic idea before the arduous process of writing the screenplay drafts began. From the outset all members of the team could benefit from an awareness of where the story was going and what the ultimate conclusion, or potential conclusion, might be. If the director, for example, was aware that the story will lead in a certain direction and demonstrate a particular point, then he might be able to adjust his particular shooting style accordingly, orchestrating it to evoke the right audience response at the right time. Similarly, the producer could use the premise

to recognise key narrative moments in the film and apportion limited money to their visual enhancement.

Other authors like McKee (1999) and Field (1994) have written about the importance of premise but their definitions of the concept are not as useful in providing a clear trajectory for the entire plot. For McKee a premise is “an open ended question: What would happen if...” It is designed to spark a story but can be readily abandoned should the story “take a left turn” (pp. 112, 113). Field’s concept of the “subject” of a story being made up of action and character is more usable in defining a trajectory because it suggests a protagonist (or group of protagonists) with a clear quality or vice compelled toward a particular activity (pp. 24, 25). Both McKee’s and Field’s definitions are useful in pointing out the importance of a thematic trajectory, but Egri provides a more workable definition as it suggests some type of thematic conclusion. This is a view supported by Williams (2006) as he seeks to define a film’s moral premise. Egri’s premise, he suggests, represents the “dramatic heart of story” and is “what a logician might define as the conclusion of the film’s argument” (p. 5). Such a logical approach is advantageous in a collaborative environment as it can minimise widely varying interpretations of the core material that provides the basis for the collaboration.

For Egri (2004) *premise* contains all the elements of “theme, thesis, root idea, central idea, goal, aim, driving force, subject, purpose, plan, plot (and) basic emotion” (p. 2). It provides not only a goal for the protagonist but also a “motivating force” that makes her act the way she does (p. 9). It is this motivating force that drives the plot of the play. Egri seeks to “eliminate chance and accident” so the writer may travel a road of

certainty when constructing her work (p. 7). It points toward the core conflict of the story and creates an emotional goal for both the protagonist and the audience. Although Egri was referring to stage plays, the same principles of core conflict and emotional goals can be usefully applied to the process of writing screenplays, especially in a collaborative environment where such terms need to be discussed with other people.

Egri uses the example of *Romeo and Juliet* defining the premise as “*Great love defies even death*” (p. 3). The first part of the premise suggests the essence of character: *great love*, the second part suggests the nature of the conflict: *defiance*, and the third part suggests the conclusion: *death* (p. 8). He provides a list of potential premises that range from “bitterness leads to false gaiety” to “craftiness digs its own grave” (p. 8). The play itself is a means to prove the validity of these contentions (p. 9).

Although these premises as simple one-line statements run the risk of being banal, the necessity to define the central character’s core emotional quality that will be the source of the conflict from the beginning can be a very useful way to open the discussion about the particular human qualities the filmmaking team wishes to explore. The film and indeed the treatment would hopefully not be reducible to this simple statement, but the statement would provide a useful starting point for collaboration. The writer could assure the director and producer that the core emotional quality of the central character (or the opposing qualities of multiple characters) would not necessarily determine the entire nature of these characters on screen. It is, rather, a quality (or a vice) that determines the basic structure of the emotional trajectory. Character nuances and traits could be developed later in relation to the physical plot that results after

Draft One. In this way I was hoping to avoid using caricatures or stereotypes and allow space for stylistic and aesthetic considerations later on.

Egri also describes *premise* as being a “conviction of your own”...that you seek to “prove wholeheartedly” (p. 15). What the three filmmakers should attempt to establish, therefore, is a shared conviction that can operate effectively in the film.

I found this to be problematic when collaborating with my producer and director. We had few thematic or stylistic convictions in common, and none that we felt particularly passionate about. Yet we had a strong personal and professional relationship and still wanted to work together.¹ I also felt that this notion of a character quality leading a conclusion could be very useful and was worth exploring. It became clear that although we had different opinions about a human quality such as hubris, we found the exploration of it interesting. The basis of our story, therefore, became more a question of interest than of conviction. In this way the logic of a trajectory like *hubris leads to its own destruction* could form the basis of a plot.

In practice this required a declaration of what the writer, producer and director found interesting enough to explore on screen. It then required a search for the particular emotional truths associated with common concerns that can be demonstrated by a film’s plot, and in particular, what conflict this can lead to. Most usefully it could act as a guide to creating a strong dramatic action, such as revenge, delving into dangerous secrets, risking one’s own sanity, and so on. It goes beyond the conventions of a particular genre by seeking to define the operative thematic core of the action and

¹ In fact, by this stage we had no choice as we’d both embarked on our PhDs. This makes the situation even more relevant to film school students who have to make these sorts of situations work.

then determining the particular conflict or change this core will lead to. As Egri says of the character Nora in Chekov's *The Doll's House*, the establishment of the premise forces her "to choose only one direction – the one that will prove it" (p. 108). He is suggesting that a clear premise provides "the *one way* which will lead you to your goal" (ibid). This may be too idealistic to realise easily in a collaborative environment but the notion of one character that is the essence of a particular emotional reality, be it vice, virtue, hubris, and so on, acting in a way that reveals the nature of this human quality is a useful starting point to establish a strong emotional journey. The filmmaking team can agree on the fact that this film is about a specific *character* (for example an arrogant scientist) performing a specific *action* (possibly defying fate or the normal parameters of nature). This does not rule out multiple protagonists, as each character can represent a different aspect of the defined quality.

The problem remains, however, of how we turn this basic trajectory into the film's plot. Field (1994) provides some insight into an approach when he describes two types of action that make up the subject of the story: *physical* and *emotional*. He defines physical action as the outside plot of the story, the activity that needs to take place in order to achieve the conscious goal of a character. The emotional action is the amount of change that occurs within the character, for example, from cowardice to courage (p. 21). Emotional action is revealed and tested through the physical action that is the actual plot of the film (p. 22). This relates to Egri's (2004) notion of the emotional goal being the force behind the plot of the play. This plot must be constructed in relation to this kind of thematic action (p. 7). This relationship between physical and thematic action can be a useful asset in keeping the film story on a known trajectory. Once the thematic action is clearly defined, it can remain consistent at the early

Treatment stage. The details of the physical plot, from this point forward, can change significantly as long as it continues to have the same effect on the thematic trajectory. Indeed if the thematic action is agreed upon and leads to a satisfying conclusion (or range of conclusions) that appeals the filmmakers it might allow greater flexibility for the physical plot to change in response to the producer's budgeting and marketing concerns or the director's aesthetic or performance considerations. The macro-plot as established in the treatment can centre on thematic-based turning points that can have a variety of physical manifestations in the form of different scenes.

So if Egri's notion of *premise* was to be used to forge our disparate ideas into a tangible and useful dramatic statement, what was the best way to go about it in my collaborative, micro-budget situation?

Using dramatic premise to create a synopsis

In order to enact the notion of the dramatic premise, I called a sequence of meetings that had specific agendas: 1. Ideas and assets, 2. Themes and a dramatic premise, 3. The presentation of a one-page synopsis. As screenwriter, I organised and chaired these meetings.

The first meeting was an examination of inspirations and a tally of assets. In this meeting we looked at ideas we had in relation to (but not necessarily inspired by) the cheap or free locations and cast at our disposal. Micro-budget films are often defined by these assets. Anyone with a camera can make a film, but particular ideas are limited by budget. According to McKoen (2006) in *The Guerrilla Filmmaker's Handbook*

making a historical epic that requires the reproduction of period costume and architecture is well out of the realms of the micro-budget film (p. 103). It is valuable for a team who wants to make a film in this environment first to cross-reference their ideas with available assets. If ideas are thematically based, however, and what is deemed important is the dramatic premise, then the physical manifestation of the story can change to suit budget, with the whole team remaining on a consistent narrative track.

In the development stage of our feature film, our major assets were a university campus filled with laboratories, libraries and offices, a remote station near the Flinders Ranges available for our use, a Sony Z-7 HDV camera, a simple lighting set up capable of presenting an interior scene in basic broadcast quality and a handful of both young and experienced actors who were prepared to work for very little money.

We had many film ideas we wanted to explore but only the ones based on a clear dramatic premise could tangibly be cleaved to any situation. This premise allowed us to discern what generic elements we could afford and what we might exclude. The genre we had chosen was science fiction. Science fiction, like most genres, can be defined by certain key textual features that might include particular narratives, themes, settings or iconographies (Chandler, 1997, p. 14). Two appealing textual features commonly found in science fiction films are outer space, a setting depicted extensively in high budget science fiction films like *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977) and the hubris of an over reliance on technology, a concept explored in films such as *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931) and *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982). The former foregrounds iconography, while the latter concentrates more centrally on a thematic exploration of a recognisable human

quality. Outer space may be expensive to reproduce on screen whereas hubris can be applied to many more cost-effective visual environments. Egri's notion of premise provided us with a character trajectory that could be very flexible in relation to the visual elements at our disposal. A good example of this is the low-budget feature sci-fi *Another Earth* (Cahill, Marling, 2011). This is essentially a story about guilt and atonement. The science fiction effects consist of one superimposed image of a planet in the daytime sky and the doubling of one character on the same screen: two very cheap effects designed to create the particular world where this atonement can take place. We see the atonement in the choices of the characters but we only hear about the interplanetary journey.

The second meeting, therefore, was a discussion of thematic concepts ranging from corporate greed to the dangers of political expediency in an attempt to arrive at a premise. The most important outcome we needed to achieve was an understanding of the type of human emotion that could best demonstrate a point of view relating to one or a combination of these themes. This emotion, which could be greed, ambition, lust or insecurity, for example, could serve as the engine of the drama. Common ground was discovered in the concept of *hubris*. This concept could relate to an idea proposed at the first meeting about a character so enamoured with his own brilliance that he felt he learned from dreams. The narrative range was wide: from the personal (for example, the mad scientist) to the political (to do with issues like an oppressive state or corrupt corporation). The emotional ramifications of excessive pride and how this could possibly drive a story was a premise we were all happy to pursue. At this meeting we proposed premises like *excessive pride leads to its own destruction* and

extreme hubris leads to the destruction of compassion and began to discuss story possibilities based around these dramatic ideas.

Just as importantly, the assets we had could be used effectively within this premise. The exploration of this personal story could be contained within the cloistered environment of the university. We had free access to laboratories, libraries and offices as well as a remote location that could take our protagonist out into the field. My role as the screenwriter was to take these ideas and assets and write a brief synopsis based on our premise.

The first synopsis (*The Lighthouse Keeper*, Appendix A) took the form of a one paragraph and one page summary of the potential plot of the film. It involved a scientist studying in an isolated lighthouse (shot completely inside). He becomes delusional as he continues to hear the voices of his dreams. I hoped to activate the premise *extreme hubris leads to its own destruction* using an obsessed scientist in an oppressive place. This contained environment was conducive to madness and possibly hubris (it also suited our budget) but after extensive discussions we rejected it on the basis that it gave our character little to work with in terms of other characters (therefore I would find it hard to demonstrate his lack of compassion) and the purely interior location would not provide enough visual possibilities for the director. These reasons were not completely to do with not fulfilling the *premise* but having a *premise* made it easier to find a new approach to the story. As long as I could find a character representing a type of extreme pride that led him to making particular decisions that resulted in the loss of his humanity or perhaps a vital aspect of his humanity, like compassion, then I would be keeping the project on track and be able to communicate

in clear thematic terms with the producer and director. The physical details of the story could change, but hopefully the same emotional dynamic would be operating. This might prevent the case of beginning a completely new story over and over again. It would be the plot that best fulfilled the premise that would be accepted in the end. This, at least, was a start. There would still be issues of budget and non-narrative aesthetic considerations to be debated, but keeping the narrative tied to a specific premise gave us a tangible emotional direction.

With this in mind I wrote the second *synopsis* (*The Lighthouse*, Appendix B). This synopsis changed the *location* but not the essential key quality of the protagonist. I made the protagonist (now called Reuben) a geophysicist and changed the setting to a uranium company office in the fictitious Republic of South Australia sometime in the future. Uranium is the new oil and everyone in this state is rich beyond belief. The protagonist is a man who has a theory about geothermal energy that he cannot prove, so he goes out to the desert to find the evidence. He believes he has insights into the nature of the universe that other people simply are not capable of and he is desperate to prove it. Out in the desert he finds no evidence of the amazing ‘hot rocks’ that would undermine the uranium industry (and most importantly to him, prove all his theories right). Rather he witnesses the murderous results of exploiting indigenous workers to mine uranium. Reuben is reluctant to give up his theories and has to accept his own ordinariness in order to do the right thing, give up his fanciful quest, and expose the company. When company head, Gerald, himself goes out to encounter Reuben, he offers him the chance to work for him, to acquiesce to the power of money and become the great scientist he always wanted to be, protected by the company. Reuben agrees.

This synopsis addressed the premise of *extreme hubris leads to the destruction of compassion* in a way that was agreeable to all three members of the core creative team. Rather than an isolated man pursuing his own theories in a relatively unhindered environment, I had proposed a driven character fighting against what he perceives to be mediocrity and complacency but which turns out to be corruption and cruelty. The physical action caused by the conflict provided in the form of the malevolent uranium company could enhance the emotional action of the conflict between arrogance and compassion. In this way the potential plot could serve the premise.

What proved useful in putting Egri's notion of the dramatic into practice in this collaborative situation was the fact that although none of us cared that passionately about hubris, an interest in it led to an analysis of its effects and this provided a logical trajectory. What united us was not the *conviction* that hubris would in every situation led to the destruction of our own humanity, but rather an interest in the process by which this could take place. This process was what we found most interesting about the concept. We still argued about where the story was going but at least we had a framework for our arguments based on a particular character trajectory.

After the synopsis stage, I wanted to write an extended treatment in order to test the premise in the form of a dramatic story. This extended treatment would represent the macro-structure of the story that would be the blueprint for the first draft.

Using three-act structure to create the macro-plot

My idea was that once a thematically-based plot trajectory had been established in the premise, a macro-plot structure could be created that established the components of this trajectory. Connecting plot to theme in this way would allow the filmmaking team to engage with the complexity of the dramatic idea.

The pillars of this structure would be acts and turning points.² Each turning point would be connected to the character trajectory by changing the situation for either the main character or the world of the film amounting to a different revelation, informing us more about the premise.

Often attributed to Aristotle's notion of dramatic action having a beginning, a middle and an end, the three-act structure is seen by contemporary screenplay practitioners as an effective way of organising major segments of action in a causally linked way (see Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1996, 5.1, p. 13 and Field, 1994, p. 8). Seger (1994, p. 19) and Field (1994, p. 9) believe each act serves a different function in relation to a key question that is at the heart of the film. I felt it might be a useful approach to relate the premise to this question. For Seger, Act One sets up the dramatic question, Act Two develops it and Act Three resolves it. Similarly for Field the three acts are divided into set up, confrontation and resolution. Each section aims to increase an audience's understanding of the issue or the goal of the main character. Seger also points out that

²The assumption that a feature length film has at least two major turning points has become almost the standard position in conventional screenwriting practice. McKee (1999, p. 217), Field (1994, pp. 9-17), Vogler (1992, pp. 12-14) and Aronson (2000, pp. 39-50) all acknowledge its importance and the concept of the goal oriented, single protagonist representing some appealing quality is a dominant feature of this theory.

“identifying and focussing on the set-up, the turning points and the resolution” makes the reworking of the script “more manageable” (1994, p. 20). These reference points are also useful in a thematic-based collaboration because the turning points that divide the acts can be judged in relation to how they provide further insight into the issue.

Seeger (1994) emphasises the importance of raising the central question, the answer to which will resolve the story with everything that happens in the story relating to that question (p. 26). For Field (1994) the entire story is driven by the main character’s dramatic need, like *justice* (p. 11). Both the central question and the dramatic need are things the audience should care about. We either want to see it happen or not happen. Interestingly, narrative theorist Propp (1968) also identifies a need or lack as being a key starting element to many folktales. The fulfilment of this lack, once it has been made known, can amount to a key event in the story (p. 34-35). The audience might identify this lack and also want to see it fulfilled. Turning points between acts provide the causal structure as to how this will come about. For example, *will justice be done* might be the first question, *how will justice be done* may be the secondary question. Both of these questions can relate to a central premise that can hinge on an emotional or physical lack experienced by the main character. The premise could be *only great determination can overcome corruption to bring about justice*. Each act develops this question further.

Thompson (1999) also discerns an act structure, although hers is a four-act structure consisting of set up, complicating action, development and climax (p. 28). Similarly Bordwell (1985) identifies six parts of a film: “introduction of setting and character”, “explanation of a state of affairs”, “complicating action”, “ensuing events”, “outcome”

and “ending” (p. 35). Both these models suggest that in a story there is some question that the viewer wants to see answered. This question can be simple or complex, but an audience, we assume, has to care.

A good reason (but by no means not the only one) for the audience to care is that the answer to the question might in some way provide an insight into a particular issue. If that issue is inherent in a particular character (for example, a flawed protagonist suggesting sometimes you have to break the rules to get the job done) then this structure can be connected to the dramatic premise. The macro-plot can be connected to the trajectory of premise and each major turning point can be assessed in relation to both causality and development of theme.

I used this principle in the construction of the macro-plot for *Double Happiness Uranium*. If the basic premise was to be *hubris leads to its own destruction* then each turning point could reveal a different aspect of hubris. If Reuben represented this quality or vice then, as his fortunes and plans changed a new element of the quality could be revealed. For example, part of what we felt would be interesting to demonstrate was that hubris is sustained by self-delusion, that is, falsely assuming one’s purpose is superior to others. A particular turning point in the film, therefore, could be the moment when Reuben discovered the truth about himself: that he was responsible for the weapons program. Where this turning point occurred was determined both by the conventions of traditional three-act structure and the trajectory of the premise. The self-discovery moment would lead to self-destruction, and this would be our final word on the subject as filmmakers in relation to the trajectory we had established at the beginning.

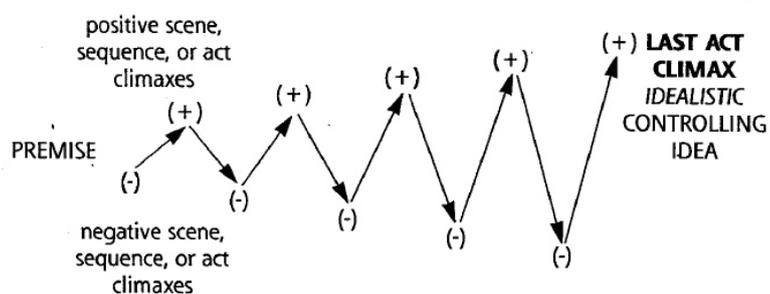
Although this technique was useful in creating the major turning points of the macro-plot, the selection of the individual sequence events that led to these turning points still needed some system of justification. I wanted to work out a system of how I could justify each major event in the macro-plot. What could define whether one event was more effective or engaging than another?

McKee's (1999) notion of the *controlling idea* was a useful structural tool in this respect due to its value in assessing the effectiveness of a given event. Like Egri's (2004) *premise* the controlling idea is meant to guide the writer's "aesthetic choices toward what is appropriate or inappropriate in your story" (McKee, 1999, p. 115). This idea is centred on the writer's perception of truth. "Storytelling", McKee (1999) writes, "is the creative demonstration of truth...the conversion of idea to action" (p. 113). This idea expands the notion of premise by insisting this idea be a system of "Value plus Cause" where the story is structured around whether the characters are closer to or further away from their key emotional objective that ultimately is the value that is being dramatised. Here there is a useful interface between narrative theory represented by Egri and the screenwriting practice prescribed by McKee. The use of a controlling idea helps structure the dramatic premise into definable components that are either positive or negative in relation to the value that is at stake during the story, for example: justice versus injustice.

The writer finds the *controlling idea* by first defining the story's climax and then determining what "value" is brought into the world of the protagonist (p. 117). In other words the moment that best sums up how the writer feels about the world, the 'truth'

with which he wants to leave the audience, becomes the heart of the story. The writer works backwards from there within a system of opposing values. McKee (1999) uses the example of the crime story that, if well constructed, fluctuates between *idea*: ‘crime doesn’t pay’ and *counter-idea*: ‘crime pays’. According to McKee “the positive and negative assertions of the same idea contest back and forth through the film, building in intensity, until at *Crisis* they collide head-on in the last impasse” (p. 119).

If a crisis moment can be agreed upon in principle by the collaborators, the *units of action* leading to this point, the cause, can be constructed and criticised in these terms. Cause is the reason why the “world of the protagonist has turned to its positive or negative value”. Constructing a screen story is about identifying the chief cause “within the character, society, or environment that has bought this value into existence” (p. 116). Each unit of action can be defined in terms of whether it is a negative or positive assertion of the controlling idea. The sequence of these units is causally linked to whether the climax of the scene, sequence or act is a positive or negative as illustrated by the following diagram:



(McKee, 1999, p. 123)

A scene may conclude positively, bringing the protagonist closer to what he wants or needs (justice, for example). The positive assertion is demonstrated. Then in a later scene the hero may do something that takes him even further from what he wants (injustice seems to be winning) and an alternative ‘cause’ is demonstrated. These are

the basic units of action that can be defined at the treatment stage. Major shifts in values would define the turning points between acts.

I used this approach to convert the synopsis based on a broad *premise* into a scene breakdown based on a more specific *controlling idea*. The crisis moment of the First Treatment (Appendix C) comes down to a *choice* between *delusion* and *truth*. Could a *controlling idea* be forged out of this moment that could effectively construct a plot? The moments of Reuben swinging between *delusion* and *truth* as a result of his core quality *hubris* translated into the story of a no-hoper being manipulated into finding evidence of a corporate crime that could then be destroyed. The crisis moment would come when Reuben has to choose between delusion (and a life of ignorant bliss) or truth (where justice would be done, but he would suffer as a result). When Reuben chooses to remain deluded, it amounts to a clear thematic statement: usually we don't have the courage to face the truth.

This statement was in itself useful because it raised the question of *why*. Why don't we have the courage to face the truth? The answer to this question goes back to the dramatic premise. The answer could be: we won't face the truth due to *fear*; or it could be, we won't face the truth due to *greed*. In our discussions after the first treatment we decided the most interesting answer could be *hubris*. In other words pride often blinds us to unsavoury truths.

With this in mind, I eventually rewrote the story to make Reuben more responsible for the original corporate crime. In this way I was hoping to make the delusion stronger and the truth harder. By the Third Treatment (Appendix E) Reuben is now, not just a

part of the corporate crime, but the one personally responsible. The dramatic premise, therefore, could be described as: *hubris prevents us from recognising the moral bankruptcy of profit-driven corporations*. In other words *self-righteousness blinds us to the awful truth of corporate greed*. This placed the climax at the point when the protagonist realised he had been a leading part of the system of greed he despised. The macro-units of the story were defined by his process of enlightenment. In order for the story to hold appropriate dramatic weight this process would have to be at least partially a deliberate act on his behalf. It would be a battle between *delusion* (initially brought about by *pride* and perpetuated by *denial* and *guilt*) and *truth* (*humility* and the *acceptance of personal responsibility*). The protagonist's major dramatic actions could be defined in terms of the movement toward one of these two opposing ideas.

Making the ideas of *delusion* and *truth* more specifically related to my protagonist allowed me to define the basic motivation required to propose the *units of action* in the first scene breakdown and then recognise how these *units of action* could be made stronger in the subsequent scene breakdowns. If our protagonist Reuben was deluded by both his own pride and the antagonist in the form of the uranium company Ucorp, his journey away from the *delusion* would be a process that could be structured to demonstrate the premise we set out to prove: *self-righteousness or hubris blinds us to the truth of corporate greed and our own responsibility*. The counter idea to this that could be periodically presented to the audience is *self-righteousness or hubris is simply acceptable ambition that needs to be respected*.

In this way I was hoping McKee's (1999) notion of a *controlling idea* could allow a more detailed construction of Egri's notion of *premise*. This detailed construction

would take the form of the extended treatment that would be presented before the producer and director for feedback before the First Draft was constructed. In all I wrote three *treatments* in the form of *scene breakdowns* before the three of us were happy that a screenplay draft could progress. After each version of the treatment I called a meeting and tried to get the director and producer to frame their criticism in reference to the dramatic premise. I hoped that by engaging primarily with issues relating to *premise* and *controlling idea* the producer and director could criticise the development of the story in a systematic way.

In our case this did not work in the way I had hoped. Although the director and producer accepted the dramatic premise and were happy to listen to me explain the logic of it, they were more concerned with other elements of the film, like genre and aesthetics. They also could not help drifting into a discussion of appealing character traits that they wanted to see on screen. As much as this frustrated me at the time, in hindsight it makes sense that the producer and director could not easily put these concerns on hold. A producer needs to think about how to market the film and therefore the nature of the genre and tone of the piece needs due consideration at an early stage. Budget, also, was a constant issue that was still being worked out as I wrote. Similarly the director had strong ideas about location and appearance, some of which related to the narrative, while others did not. I found the most effective course of action was to engage immediately with the director and producer's major requirements regarding budget, genre and aesthetics in the context of the premise and controlling idea, presenting them with different options within the same dramatic context. I found this successful as a means of reaching agreement on a version of the

story that could be the blueprint for the First Draft because it gave me a clear road ahead in relation to developing some consistent inner character conflict.

Being able to defend and identify the major turning points in relation to a clear trajectory was also very valuable. It allowed me to tie some of the director's favourite visual elements to specific turning points as a means of signposting them to the audience. An example of this is the turning point into the final act. The director had a particular location in mind, a large monolith on a property near the Flinders. A big rock had to be made to be visually relevant to the moment Reuben finds the first piece of evidence of his own guilt. Contriving the rock to be sacred to local indigenous people helped reinforce the premise of hubris, using the discovery of bones underneath a dramatically imposing rock as a visual representation of this (see Third Treatment: *The Lighthouse*, Appendix E, p. 14). In this way I could use an asset to which we had access in order to accentuate a narrative point.

The construction of an accepted Treatment was a process of balancing assets against their potential impact on the premise. Having a clear trajectory allowed us some definite criteria for choosing appropriate elements. It also provided a clear system of reasoning as I attempted to incorporate appealing visual assets into the story. Without such a system to define a thematic plot trajectory, it would have been possible for ambiguities based on personal tastes to gain the ascendancy. Collaboration would be more workable if we all happened to share the same tastes at the same time, but on the many occasions where we disagreed about style and aesthetics, the existence of the premise allowed us to continue to develop the story.

3. DRAFT ONE: SCENES AND MICRO-PLOT STRUCTURE

After the acts and turning points of the macro-plot structure have been established in the treatment, the screenplay can now describe the micro-plot structure of the actual scenes. As Mehring (1990) points out, with sequences and acts the writer is using “broad strokes” but scenes are a process of “selecting precise images, the juxtaposition of these images, and the amount of time to be devoted to each image,” depicting exactly what the characters say and do (p. 69). The micro-plot structure, therefore, is a system of smaller events that lead us directly to the major events represented by the act turning points. In this chapter I will argue that a highly useful way of regarding this structure is as a moment-by-moment process by which characters are interacting in terms of their larger goals, broadly represented by major units of action such as the story acts. However, this movement also happens from scene to scene, and within scenes. These smaller scale moments can be described as the story beats. The most effective ways of defining these beats are:

1. a moment when a character is advanced further toward or further away from their objective
2. a moment when there has been a shift in thematic emphasis from the positive to the negative. For example, if a story is about justice, then a moment when we are closer to (or further away from) the attainment of justice can be defined as a story beat

The evolution and understanding of the first definition relies on the acceptance of character function as something that should exist before character trait. This provides a

tangible pathway for the definition and understanding of the story beat based on the idea that premise leads to a central character trajectory that requires other characters to function within this trajectory.

For example, if the premise is that hubris leads to the destruction of both you and those you love, and our central character represents this quality of hubris, then other characters can serve the role of either abetting or obstructing him or serving as the victims of the actions that this quality inspires. These characters have specific story objectives that can influence the construction of individual scenes.

The basis for the second definition is McKee's (1999) concept of story value (p. 117). This is useful when applied in conjunction with character objective. His notion that screenplays pivot on opposing world views provides a guide for the potential end point for each scene: things will either be better in terms of the value being raised or worse.

I will explore the theoretical basis of this idea through an analysis of Propp (1968), Tomashevsky (1965) and Barthes (1975). These narrative theorists are useful to my model as they come from the Aristotelian tradition that understands character not in terms of real world psychology, but rather in terms of their place within a pattern of narrative action. Aristotle's suggests "tragedy is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and of life. Well-being and ill-being reside in action" (*Poetics*, 4.3, 1996, p. 11). A character therefore, exists because they perform a certain role and make certain

decisions that drive the story. Their particular traits are do not exist prior to, and independently of, the actions that express them.

The identification of a character function as a means of justifying the selection and definition of the story beats that make up the individual scenes lends itself to a workable feedback terminology. The purpose of a particular scene could be criticised in relation to character objectives. The scene may not be an audio-visual success and the characters may be somewhat two dimensional, but these are more advanced problems that can be addressed in later drafts. For the moment the character and the scene at least will function in the narrative. This would be the purpose of Draft One. Subsequent drafts will then be better placed to refine character traits, tone and style.

I will examine how successful this was in practice in the form of feedback meetings, the labelling of scenes and sequences in terms of character function and the identification of individual story beats within scenes in terms of character action.

Story Beats defined by Character Function

Vladimir Propp (1968) argues that “function is understood as an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” and these functions are “stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled” (p. 21) Even though Propp was not providing advice to

screenwriters but rather analysing folk tales, it is still useful to establish the key functions of the screenplay story in relation to the meaning of the premise and controlling idea. Characters can be defined through the events they make happen or the events to which they are forced to react. This might determine their inclusion in a particular scene and the sorts of things they do. Propp's type of function can help define the essential outcome of a particular scene. For example, Propp identifies the function of "violation" where a character's role is to "cause some form of misfortune, damage or harm" (1968, p. 27). A character can therefore be defined by their role as harm-giver. The nature of that harm, however, need not be defined in purely causal terms, where the harm spurs another character on to some particular physical action, like revenge. It can also be defined in relation to the premise. If the harm-giver represents the opposite quality to the central character then he could function to challenge the strength of this quality, forcing the central character into an action that sheds light on this quality. For the filmmaking team, a pleasing story beat could be identified if the two functions are operating, where the event serves both causality (another thing will happen as a result of it) and premise (the event will lead, in some small way, to the demonstration of the core idea). An event that does neither of these things may fall into another category, such as the type of free motif that Tomashevsky (1965) describes.

Tomashevsky's (1965) definition of free and bound motifs relates to this idea of function and is a useful way of defining essential plot elements from optional ones at the Draft One stage. He describes bound motifs as those events that cannot be omitted without disturbing the "causal-chronological course of events". Free motifs are more flexible elements such as digressions and "incidental" details included so that the "tale

might be told more artistically” (p. 68). Bound motifs are dynamic in so far as they progress the plot in a causal way. Free motifs are usually static. They do not lead to a new state of affairs. Free motifs are contextual and often connected to previous dynamic bound motifs (p. 70). It can be useful therefore to regard character traits and other purely aesthetic elements as free motifs that need to be placed within the context of the bound motifs that our particular story demands.

Barthes (1975) takes this notion further with his distinction between *functions* and *indices*. A function is a form of *action*, whereas an index is functional in terms of *being* (p. 247). Indices refer to personality traits, feelings and atmosphere that do not progress story (p. 249). They are no less important, but in this sense there is a clear divide between character function and character trait. This divide is something the screenwriter can exploit to differentiate drafts. If there is an understanding that a certain event is crucial to the causal pattern of story events then it should be included in Draft One. These functions can then be supported by the “diffuse concepts” of the indicators that might exist in elements of style and more random incidents that make up and important picture of the film world (p. 247). These might be incorporated in Draft Two.

Draft One, therefore, can be principally concerned with bound motifs - those elements of event and character action essential to telling the story. In a thematically-based collaborative environment we can usefully stretch this concept to include premise and therefore engage with the thematic story line. We therefore regard subtext and thematic actions as bound motifs in the demonstration of the premise. These bound

motifs can manifest themselves in the specific objectives of the characters and these objectives can make up the individual units of action. For example, if the premise is: *Courage to remain determined against great opposition leads to success* then some character usually plays the function of *determined person* and another character is likely to play the function of *great opposition*. Key objectives can now be defined. One character's objective is to struggle courageously and the other character's objective is to stand in the way. These objectives can be defined in terms of individual character actions. If the action is to oppose then the character can do this in many ways. The screenwriter has to choose the particular method the character is using at any given moment in a scene and express it in terms of dialogue and screen directions. A story beat, therefore, is when a character pursues an objective using a particular action and is either successful or unsuccessful. These are the essential elements of the scene and can be defended as such.

There are good examples of this in contemporary film. In a scene from *The Hours* (Daldry, 2002) the objectives of Laura and Kitty are defined by their story functions. Laura's function is to represent someone struggling with her sexuality forced to live a lie. This can be seen as the point of the Laura character. Kitty's function is to tempt her into believing there is a ray of hope in the form of understanding and maybe even a sexual relationship. Laura's objective springs from her function. She aims to hide her feelings. Her action is to deny. Kitty's objective also springs from her function. She aims to dominate Laura, even show off to her, making the point of repression even more poignant. But the writer constructs the story events to take Kitty in a different direction. Her domineering is undermined by her fear of surgery. Her admitting this presents Laura with a new objective: to reach out. This is a new story beat, defined by

the changing objectives of both Laura and Kitty. It makes sense in relation to their functions as a character. The next major story beat occurs when the two women kiss. Again Laura is driven by her objective to reach out and has it validated by the kiss. This leads to yet another objective: to get Kitty to admit to the significance of this act. All these different objectives are played out by means of chosen dialogue and actions, all of which, if this were the First Draft of the screenplay in my proposed model, would be judged in terms of how well they function as opposed to how they look or sound stylistically (this would come later).

Using this in practice required the creation of a sequence of developing character objectives. A tally of these individual objectives approximates the number of story beats in the scene. The writer can then judge whether there were too few or too many, or how they can be made stronger. It provides the ability to point to a line of dialogue or character action and define exactly what the character is striving for at that particular moment and in what direction this is advancing the narrative. The problem is, however, defining the outcome of the scene in relation to the premise. When a particular character gets (or fails to get) what she wants this may progress the story but what does it mean in terms of the human quality we are exploring in the dramatic premise? I felt the answer to this question would enhance an understanding of a scene's function engaging not only with causal logic, but also the trajectory of the theme.

For example, in Scene 16 of Draft One (Appendix F), Reuben has a clear objective, to get out of the building (in order to get medication, in order to stay sane, in order to

bring the corporation to account) and the characters of Chris and Ari have an opposing objective: to stop him. Story beats can be defined in terms of who is winning and who is losing and what this leads to – the fact that Reuben is allowed to leave. The overall meaning of the scene, however, might be enhanced if this result represented some kind of expression of value. The scene may demonstrate, for example, that integrity is a small step closer to triumphing, or alternatively that forces of corruption can delude the individual into thinking he is in control.

In a scene such as Scene 64 where Reuben discovers the similarity between his flow patterns and the structure of a corrupted protein chain (that eventually leads to his discovering his own culpability) there are no obvious objectives operating. At the beginning of the scene Reuben is striving toward one thing (in his delusion) but actually gets something completely different at the end (the truth). There is a clear shift in values.

Character Objective combined with Story Value = Story Beat

The idea of the story beat based on a shift in values is one that McKee (1999) champions and relates to his notion of the controlling idea. It is a useful one as it both incorporates the first definition of story beat based on character objective and also makes a logical connection to the dramatic premise. It is a way of looking at the unit of action in terms of character and situational change. The change needs to, in some way, progress us toward the narrative and thematic conclusion of the story, if only

incrementally on a micro-level. This method complements the notion of character function being the basis of the story beat by providing a means of constructing a sequence of story beats that leads to a particular scene outcome.

McKee (1999) agrees that all units great and small of screenplay structure hinge on whether the protagonist is closer to or further away from her objective; but he adds that this objective is always seen in the light of a particular story value. This dichotomy is highly useful in creating a structure for scenes. McKee (1999) defines the scene as “a story in miniature - an action through conflict in a unity or continuity of time and space that turns the value charged condition of the character’s life” (p. 233). This is particularly useful for a collaborative understanding and engagement with the scene if the objective, either conscious or unconscious, emotional or physical, in some way embodies the quality that is the basis of the premise. In each scene a character pursues an objective and in some way encounters an obstacle. The effect of this “is to crack open the gap between expectation and result, turning his outer fortunes, inner life, or both from the positive to the negative or the negative to the positive in terms of values the audience understands are at risk” (p. 234). If the value is agreed upon, the scene can be constructed within the assumed sanction of the whole film creation team. It allows two questions to be asked in relation to the story beat: what is the character doing at this particular moment and why is it important?

The dynamic nature and rising stakes of this process relies on the value changing. If the scene starts positively, it might end negatively, worse than it was before. A good example of this working in practice is a scene from *Sexy Beast* (Glazer, Mellis, Scinto,

2000). The controlling idea is that *atonement does not necessarily lead to redemption*. The value at stake, therefore, is atonement and whether it has effectively occurred. Gal has escaped his former life as a London criminal is now in retirement in an unknown Spanish town. Early scenes suggest he has atoned for his past, demonstrating his physical and emotional contentment. The scene that best demonstrates the use of shift in values is a dinner party sequence that introduces the major problem for the protagonist. The dramatic impact of this scene is constructed around two major turning points and six story beats that take our protagonist closer to, or further away from, his objective. Gal's initial objective is to simply "have a nice evening" (part of his overarching desire to confirm his atonement) but during the course of the scene this is transformed by means of a series of positive and negative story beats that sees this objective change into one of trying to preserve his own freedom, ending on a highly negative and threatening note with the imminent arrival of the thuggish Don Logan. Each beat can be represented by a distinct action. For example, Cal's first action is to flirt with Dede. This confirms the security of the new life he built and, at this point, is a positive confirmation of his atonement. Hence, it is a positive dramatic beat. However, when Aitch and Jackie arrive, po-faced and angry, there is a distinctly negative story beat related to, but not necessarily directly affecting, the central theme of atonement. Cal is momentarily taken further away from his goal of putting his old life behind him. This is an action determined by the story beat.

In Draft One I used this combined definition of the story beat and how it should be structured as benchmark as to whether the scene was working or not.³ An example

³ For the purposes of my thematic based model 'working' can be defined as appropriate to premise and the causally linked structure of the narrative.

from Draft One of *Double Happiness Uranium* illustrates this. When the main character Reuben arrives in Adelaide from Tasmania it can be seen as his first challenge in the face of a powerful company (Draft One, Appendix F, pp. 2-7). It serves to introduce the world and the forces of antagonism this main character has to face. This is the general event that this particular arrival sequence amounted to, one that can be agreed on as important and understood by the film development team. A story beat approach that was based on a shift in values allowed me to determine the dramatic moments within this major event, so that each smaller moment could represent a progressive step along the ladder toward a minor conclusion. This minor conclusion could be either a negative or a positive for our protagonist. Either way, the story would have progressed, and the premise would be incrementally closer to its conclusion.

The value at the beginning of the sequence can be seen as positive in terms of the film's premise of individual integrity versus corporate greed and hubris. The first unit of action involves the hippy-like foreigner Reuben's composure in the face of his luxurious surroundings and his resistance to the gossiping of the flight attendants (Draft One, p. 2). This is the status quo at the beginning of the scene, and the values at stake visually are possibly *environmental care* versus *corporate excess*. A further positive occurs in the second story beat where Rebecca engages with Reuben; the spectator might wonder whether this woman is a potential friend or ally. However, the next beat negates this when Reuben is served a ridiculously luxurious breakfast and Rebecca implies her familiarity with (and possible employment by) the company that represents his antagonist. The spectator has a hint at what our 'hippy hero' might be up against. When Rebecca departs suddenly in response to a text message the gambit

seems now to be over (or perhaps it never existed in the first place) and therefore the danger (whatever it might have been) seems to have abated somewhat. This short scene therefore ends on a slightly positive value in terms of Reuben's objective.

The next story beat draws the value back to a negative: Reuben encounters the dark imaginary beast that has been haunting him, indicating that it is not just the company that Reuben is battling but some form of inner turmoil. Reuben's ingesting of the pills seems momentarily to solve the problem. This is a positive insofar as he does have some means at his disposal in order to combat this obstacle, but also a negative as we suspect that this is probably only a short-term solution.

The sequence continues when Reuben meets the affable Savchenko who seems to be firmly on his side (in spite of the fact he works for Ucorp), consequently throwing us back toward a positive value, that is, perhaps it is possible for corporations to change in the face of honest and intelligent individuals. It ends, however, on a negative note when the full power of Ucorp is revealed when the company driver is allowed to freely abuse the police officer (p. 7).

The microstructure of this arrival sequence, therefore, can be determined by two things: firstly, the oscillation between the different values represented by Reuben and Ucorp and secondly, Reuben either getting closer to, or further away from, his short term objective. Ideally each line of dialogue and major screen direction would be

understood both by its function in the revealing of the plot and also in relation to the core values that are being dealt with.

However, in practice a full understanding and criticism of this structure by producer and director was often difficult to orchestrate. My approach consisted of a feedback checklist designed to guide criticism and allay concerns that character, style and tone were being neglected. This was in the form of a pro-forma sheet that included questions focused on both macro-plot and micro-plot structure. I wanted to make this form as user-friendly as possible and not include specific questions about the identification or success of every story beat in every scene as I felt this would be laborious. The questions were more general. For example, do the scenes work? Is there a clear objective for each scene? Does each scene advance the story? Are the turning points clear? I also included questions relating to budget in order to ascertain, for example, what scenes might be too expensive?

Unfortunately, these were not the questions the producer and director were that interested in answering. The producer was primarily concerned with budget and being able to reproduce viably a particular futuristic world. The director was still predominantly concerned with style. At first I was surprised at how reluctant they were in engaging with this narrative terminology but on further consideration I realised they were out of their areas of expertise. Unlike a treatment, a screenplay describes the actual scenes and dialogue that strongly suggest how the film will play on screen. As such, the reader may be tempted to pre-visualise the final film rather than concentrate on the plot structure. In our case, when it came down to actually

‘seeing’ the film, all considerations of story were seen in the light of budget, genre and aesthetics, not narrative structure and dramatic premise. I realised that asking them to respond to specific questions about how the plot structure was working at the Draft One stage was no way to engage them in the scriptwriting process. As in the process of presenting the Treatment, the fact was they did not want that close an engagement with the screenwriting as such, they just wanted their concerns solved in the screenplay - whatever they were and whenever they arose.

What did help, however, was being able to suggest with confidence scene or sequence changes in response to budget issues and aesthetic tastes. These changes would affect the scene’s appearance or location but not the scene’s purpose. Having gone through the process of considering the purpose of each scene or sequence in terms of story value and also how each scene was constructed in terms of story beat, I could more systematically rearrange and/or strengthen the details. I could then defend these choices to the producer and director. This I found to be a far better approach than giving them a crash course in narrative theory or feature film screenwriting. This led me to testing out new structural elements in the form of Scene Breakdowns 2A, 2B and 2C that I wrote and presented to the producer and director before embarking on Draft Two of the screenplay.

Alternative methods of applying the principle

Two techniques that may have helped me clarify and defend the structure of Draft One are:

1. Labelling actual scenes and sequences in terms of their function
2. Detailing the character objectives in terms of an action for each story beat within the scene

The first technique involves giving each scene a particular role within the sequence. For example, when Reuben first meets Rebecca this can be labelled as ‘the seduction’. By declaring it as such I would be forced to make Rebecca enact a type of seduction and then construct some kind of result later down the track. The scene could be earmarked with this label for reference during discussions with the producer and director. To label the scene on the actual screenplay might break the flow of the reading experience for the other members of the filmmaking team. I might also sometimes label scenes after I had written them, acting on a hunch during the writing process and then acting as editor after the event. Of course, not all scenes would have a specific narrative function. Some may simply exist to paint the picture of the film world, others inserted for pace. By labelling the scenes I might determine approximately which ones drove the story forward and which did not. The proportion of functioning scenes would be significant for tone and style later on. For example, if almost every scene had a high concentration of story beats that required shifting

objectives then I was possibly setting a style more appropriate to an action or thriller genre than a cerebral art house sci-fi.⁴

Looking closely at narrative might allow these questions to be dealt with and the issue of style to be discussed. Style basics could be established at this stage and then refined at a later stage. In any case, at least the scenes could be criticised in relation to their function within the story and the demonstration of the premise.

The second method involves pinning a character objective to each story beat. This could be good way of enacting the notion of character function. If, at the end of the scene, a character is either closer to or further away from their objective leading toward a mini turning point, *how* this happens needs to be defined in terms of action. It is very useful to see the action in terms of a plan. During the scene the character strives toward what he wants by using various techniques, for example: pleading, bullying, beginning, seducing. When one thing fails, the character tries another approach. Each different approach is a type of story beat. The inspiration behind this is Rudolf Laban's definition of eight essential efforts in acting and movement that I have used in scriptwriting classes to help students inject more dramatic action their scenes. These efforts are to dab, to flick, to punch, to glide, to float, to press, to wring and to slash. Each one is a particular combination of light or heavy, direct or indirect, sustained or unsustained. To regard a character objective as a type of movement helps make it more tangible and easier to define by providing a range of different actions.

For Laban (1971) "man moves in order to satisfy a need. He aims by his movement at

⁴At this stage we were actually in between these two genres. This problem of tone and style I hoped to fully address in Drafts Three and Four.

something of value to him. It is easy to perceive the aim of a person's movement if it is directed to some tangible object. Yet there also exist tangible values that inspire movement" (p. 1).

The selection of a particular line of dialogue can be justified by the objective attached to it. It can then be refined by the method or particular action associated with the objective. Rebecca's objective in the second scene of draft one is to get Reuben to trust her. Her method needs to be established. At Draft One stage the method she uses is to flirt. The effort she makes can be interpreted as a "direct and light dab" or a "flexible and light flick" depending on the effect we want on Reuben (Laban, 1971, p. 76). A basic understanding of her method at any given moment will inform the selection of dialogue and screen directions and help refine character objective. An intimate knowledge of Laban is not essential but it is useful to have a basic sense of what a character wants and then the method they are going to use to get it before you write the scene. If the character seems devoid of any purpose in the scene it could be due to the fact that they do not seem to be enacting any kind of movement toward getting what they want.

In this case what Laban might do is offer a starting point for either construction or analysis. The writer can simply write the scene with some notion of where he wants it to end up and then analyse the success of the character action afterwards, perhaps altering it accordingly, or he can be more pedantic and define specific character actions at the beginning. Either way, the character actions might help pinpoint what may be working and what may not be.

In any case, my experience after the writing of the First Draft taught me two things. As the screenwriter, it was beneficial to have some kind of defined plot development process based on logically definable story beats. Secondly, I could not expect the producer to recognise or understand exactly what these were or provide feedback along these lines. The approach, however, did assist collaboration insofar it allowed me to solve problems in such a way that still retained the dramatic premise. The producer and director were prepared to have scenes and story beats justified in these terms but it was always me who had to give the explanation. As for style and tone, it became a process of engaging with the ideas the director had, placing them within the next scene break down to keep the director happy and then cleaving them to the premise and narrative later in Drafts Three and Four. I do not mean to suggest that the director's stylistic ideas were in any way inferior to my narrative ideas or that I was paying them lip service by delaying their integration into the narrative. Having started with an active premise, however, I found filling out the character trajectory in the form of logically constructed story beats creating scenes and sequences the most effective way to construct Draft One. During development and pre-production, definition of the premise greatly assisted communicating the idea of the film to cast and other key crew and the alteration of the screenplay right up until the first day of the shoot was still informed by the active message we were trying to portray.

4. DRAFT TWO: DEVELOPING CHARACTER ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of the next stage of my draft development approach was to devise a way of making characters more engaging. Engaging characters are particularly important in the micro-budget environment because as Brindley (1996) points out “with a low-budget feature, with its likely emphasis on character rather than action sequences and a greater reliance on dialogue, chances are there will be far more burden on performance than with a bigger-budget picture” (Australian Film Commission). Denied expensive spectacle, character is a cheaper way of hooking an audience. Newton and Gaspard (2007) observe that interesting characters an audience cares about are especially important in the low-budget environment as they are an affordable asset the filmmakers can have to attract both a quality cast and an audience (pp. 7-8). Also, as my approach involved collaboration, it was important to be able to articulate clear reasons for *why* the characters were engaging to an audience. I wanted to test a methodical approach to the construction of character traits that could be understood by producer and director in order to avoid a hit-or-miss approach to character detail, subject to clashing personal tastes.

To this end, I felt that the notion of character could be divided into five useful categories that could provide a useful framework for what aspects should be developed at what stage and how they could be communicated and debated amongst the team:

1. Character as *function*
2. Character as *objective*
3. Character as *sub plot*

4. Character as *back-story*
5. Character as *point of view*

By dealing with character in this order I was hoping to create a staggered process that would marry character trait to character function in the best way of serving the premise. This is not an exhaustive list of what conditions define a character, rather it is a useful approach based on the most recognisable elements of what a character should be. To regard character by means of these categories suggested by a range of screen practitioners is, I will argue, to create a more tangible framework for feedback and criticism.

The first two categories: *function* and *objective*, were most relevant to the construction of plot and therefore in my approach, were mainly the concern of Draft One. It was important at this initial draft writing stage to define a character's function that informed the choice of objective that then led to the unit of action. A sequence of events based on the recognised objective of the protagonist would be the first step in developing an audience's interest in the film.

The next step could be to develop the audience's *engagement* and *emotional response* in relation to the characters themselves independent of the main plot line. In this chapter I will discuss the idea that in Draft Two more engaging and detailed characters could be developed in the light of the remaining three categories: *subplot*, *back-story* and *point of view*. I arrived at these three categories by combining three common elements of characterisation as advocated by Aronson (2000) and Field (1994) and Currie (2009) with Smith's (1995) notion of the structure of sympathy. I will also

consider the question of whether this progression from logical causality and function to emotional detail could provide an effective pathway that enhanced constructive feedback and consequently, inform decisions relating to casting, style and budget.

In my approach I felt it would be useful to ascertain firstly a definition of what character complexity and engagement should be and secondly how to go about constructing these character details in Draft Two. For the first task, I will examine how narrative theory can provide some useful ideas for character engagement based on a framework of sympathy as advocated by Smith (1995). This framework can then be applied to three workable notions of character based on the work of screenwriting practitioners: Character as subplot - developing audience understanding and a degree of predictability of behaviour (Chitlik, 2008; Aronson, 2000), Character as back-story - developing audience recognition and understanding (Currie, 2009; Field, 1998), and Character as point of view - developing audience sympathy through judgement and empathy through engaging with a character's moral perspective (Field, 1994). I will describe how the narrative theory combined with these practical screenwriting notions can combine to form a methodology of making character construction more accountable and how successful this was in preparing Draft Two of *Double Happiness Uranium*.

Defining an engaging character

In my positions as university teacher and part of a collaborative team of PhD students in the micro-budget environment I found myself wearing two hats: teacher and theorist. As a theorist I wanted to find the terms for how to account for character engagement, as a teacher (and a practicing screenwriter) I wanted to devise a way for applying the terms to the screenwriting process. I found that screenwriting practitioners like Cowgill (1999) and Snyder (2005) make certain useful observations about character engagement that could be developed further by making use of the terminology of narrative theory. Cowgill and Snyder base their sense of character engagement on the emotional connection an audience might have with them.

Cowgill (1999) points out that “true emotion is the source of our connection to other people” and that an audience identifies with character if they “create emotions viewers can immediately recognise” (p. 61). She goes on to cite “universal emotions” such as hate, jealousy, fear and humiliation. Hollywood analyst Snyder (2005) agrees. “Primal urges” like sex, survival and the protection of loved ones are what maximise audience engagement (p. 54). Becker (2006) suggests “strong drama comes from a strong, specific point of view, which can be anything, including weakness, for instance, as long as it’s specific to the lead and they feel the emotion strongly” (p. 42).

These observations may amount to a good start for a usable definition of audience engagement for the screenwriter looking for pointers, but for the screenwriter who has to justify his decisions on the collaborative environment a more precise structure of audience emotional engagement might be useful.

Theorists Carroll (1990) and Smith (1995) have endeavoured to identify sympathy, rather than identification, as a primary means to engage an audience. The fact that their notion of sympathy is based on an *understanding* of character behaviour provides the key to connecting their theories to a practical approach.

Carroll (1990) rejects the idea that an audience needs to fully assimilate with a character in order for them to be interested in her fate. “Perfect symmetry between the audience and the protagonist” is difficult to achieve and therefore there can be no real character-identification (p. 94). He suggests that rather than identifying with characters we “assimilate their situation” having a “sense of why the protagonist’s response is appropriate or intelligible to the situation” (p. 95). The spectator need not develop a clear sense of identification, just an understanding of why this character is behaving in this particular way. This is a good starting point for a construction of emotional engagement for the writer. If we can construct detail that gradually provides the audience with not only a picture, but also a behavioural process, then they are more likely to understand and therefore sympathise with a character’s plight. In short, it provides the writer with the specific task of describing and demonstrating character detail that leads to the audience understanding their behaviour. Not all characters need to be fully understood or engaged with, but by providing details for some and not for others the writer may be better able to direct audience sympathy. A henchman character such as Jaws in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (Gilbert, 1977), for example, usually fails to reveal any complex motivations that might distract from agent Bond’s particular qualities of duty, determination, charm, humour and even regret. These latter

qualities are those that allow an audience to understand and to a degree anticipate Bond's actions in a given situation.

Something approaching a *method* is described by Smith (1995), who argues that sympathy is a key aspect of creating engaging characters. A highly useful aspect of his analysis is his *structure of sympathy* that divides a sympathetic reaction into the components of recognition, alignment and allegiance. The first of these, recognition, is where the audience relates the actions of a character to those they have observed in the real world (1995, p. 82). This provides them with a basic sense of who the character might be and allows them to process whatever sympathy they might have.

Merely recognising the emotional actions of characters alone does not imply a sustaining of interest. Here is where Smith's concept of alignment, the second part of the structure of sympathy, comes in useful. According to Smith "alignment describes the process by which spectators are placed in relation to characters in terms of access to their actions, and to what they know and feel" (1995, p. 83). This type of subjective access to the inner thoughts and feelings of a character goes beyond simply recognising the type she might be and for the writer it is a useful condition to be considered in Draft Two. By being given access to a character's attitude and inner feelings we are not only more likely to understand their current behaviour but predict what their future behaviour might be. Like unity of plot, this can be a strong component of audience enjoyment of drama. The writer's task is to draw character detail that can be read by an audience and provide them an insight into their specific thoughts and feelings. Again, we may sympathise at this stage or we may not, but

these first two steps are important in reaching the final component of Smith's structure of sympathy: allegiance.

Allegiance is highly useful as it depends on the spectator "having what she takes to be reliable access to the character's state of mind, having understanding of the character's actions, and having morally evaluated the character on the basis of these actions" (1995, p. 84). It relies therefore on a drawing of character that gives us the greatest insight into their behaviour in order to judge them fairly within the context of the story. Each aspect of character that is demonstrated on screen, therefore, might be made not only to serve the plot but also encourage some form of understanding and allegiance.

Elements of empathy also hold a place in Smith's (1995) method of constructing sympathy. He concludes that although empathetic phenomena like emotional simulation (what would I feel like in this situation?) does not require an understanding of the narrative structure it is still a "valid mechanism through which we gain an understanding of the fictional world and the characters who inhabit it" (p. 103). It is by no means the only mechanism, but an important one nevertheless. Giovannelli (2009) concurs, describing the most effective form of sympathy in drama as being "empathy plus concern" (p. 85). His point that we need to "imaginatively represent the experience of characters to ourselves" in order to fully "understand and engage with the situation of our characters" is one that acknowledges the usefulness of empathy without creating a restrictive need to construct full identification (p. 87).

I was able to use this notion of empathy in the drawing of Reuben as an overqualified office worker. In doing so, I assumed many of our audience members might have had a similar experience of under appreciation subject to the whims of mediocre middle management (or at least perceive themselves to have had this experience). This might help them understand one aspect of Reuben's world or indeed provide their personal link with him as a functioning character in order then to be moved by the nature of his tragedy.

Another way this structure of sympathy is useful to the screenwriter seeking to justify his characters' traits is the possibility of it being easily translated into a kind of structure of antipathy creating an equal but opposite type of audience engagement. We may recognise and come to understand the emotional make-up of people we actively do not like and therefore have a degree of interest in seeing them fail. The challenge, therefore, for the screenwriter is to create some sense of emotional interest that is either positive (I want this person to succeed), or negative, (I want this person to fail). This interest is based on a growing understanding of how a character behaves and why, hopefully providing them with some form of emotional insight. An example of this is the charming villain who has an appealing physical presence and rapport with others (a type recognisable to the audience) but uses his rapport to the detriment of someone we might sympathise with more. As we come to understand why this villain uses his charms in a negative manner through the insights that Smith's concept of alignment provides, then we can recognise him possibly as a more substantial threat and therefore a more engaging character. An example of this is the character of Annie Wilkes in *Misery* (Reiner, 1990) with an understanding of her desire to be needed and

loved making her all the scarier as she becomes obsessed with her beloved author to the extent of breaking his legs to prevent him running away.

Ultimately, however, the structure of sympathy as a means of audience engagement was most useful for me in Draft Two because it could be readily applied to three clear techniques of creating character details: Subplot, back-story and moral point of view.

The approach to constructing character detail in Draft Two therefore might be broken down into the following process:

1. Constructing SUBPLOT as a means to develop some form of character *recognition* and *predictability*. This involves giving the spectator a subjective insight into the behaviour of our characters and the types of situations to which this behaviour leads. Again, this stage is designed to enhance spectator sympathy.
2. Developing BACKSTORY in order to develop character detail that leads to character *understanding* or, in Smith's terms, *alignment*.
3. Establishing the character's moral perspective (described by Field (1999) as "point of view") in order to provide a means for judging our characters. This can involve definable elements of *allegiance*.

In the next section I will examine how these three methods of constructing character traits as prescribed by the screenwriting practitioners can interface with the narrative theory to create an approach for the micro-budget screenwriter.

Character as subplot: the relationship line

An effective way of creating understanding and sympathy for the major characters could be a regard for how they relate to others. Chitlik (2008) and Aronson (2000), two screenwriting instructors whose work focuses on methods for reaching as wide a mainstream audience as possible, position sympathy firmly in the realms of character relationships. They suggest that characters can be made more complex (and therefore, we might assume, more interesting) by defining the construction of their relationships. This is one means of drawing the audience's attention to the characters that matter in relation to the trajectory of the dramatic premise. Chitlik (2008) claims that creating a central emotional relationship for your character humanises them by "showing his emotional journey as well as his story journey" (p. 32) It is a way of grounding the story "in an emotional reality that everyone can understand" (p.33). Although such emotional realities are difficult to define, this approach is useful insofar as it requires the development of a relationship to demonstrate sympathetic elements. The way a character treats others can define who they are and how we might understand them. It also relates to Smith's idea of recognition that is a very useful category for a character trait, allowing the writer to include details that are specifically designed to allow an audience to make connections between the character on screen and those they have encountered in real life. So how does the writer approach this task in practical terms? Aronson (2000) suggests a construction of the "relationship line". She is careful to point out that the essence of the story in terms of dramatic action must come first: "the action line permits the relationship line to happen" (p.56). The relationship line of a character is a story in itself. As Aronson points out "a good relationship line displays very much the same sort of three act structure as the action line" (2000, p. 59). It can,

therefore, be a sequence of firstly posing a question (for example, will their relationship survive?), secondly, dealing with the question (a presentation of the evidence for and against survival) and thirdly, answering the question (possibly concluding that the relationship not only survives but is made stronger by trial). The action in a relationship is based on conflict but this conflict must be productive in two ways: moving the relationship forward and reflecting changes in the surrounding world provided by the plot events (2000, p. 57). The action line and the relationship line are interconnected. One reflects and relates to the other. This is a useful approach for the screenwriter seeking to make the right choice in the Draft Two and allows for the appropriate development of character in terms of audience alignment and understanding.

I attempted to apply this in the Second Draft of *Double Happiness Uranium* in the construction of the relationship between Reuben and Savchenko. The plot line had provided the circumstances of their relationship: Savchenko functioned as Reuben's puppet master. He had an objective: to extract information, but the fact of him having no defined emotional relationship with Reuben ran the risk of denying him any audience sympathy. Using the Aronson approach I was able to find the central conflict not only in the primary story but also in the story of Reuben and Savchenko's relationship. As Aronson points out, the plot scenario needs to "force the relationship line characters together" and "keeps challenging them individually and incrementally in different ways" (2000, p. 56). The plot forced Savchenko to be Reuben's manipulator. This act of manipulation would be stereotypically evil were it not motivated by some quality of which we could approve. To this end, I created a relationship line where Savchenko was motivated not only by profit and prestige, but

more pointedly by a desire to be Reuben's friend. This affection that Savchenko develops for Reuben does not directly influence the causality of the plot or even the thematic premise, but it does make sense in relation to it. The regret he expresses during the courtroom scenes provides him with a quality that allows us to sympathise with his actions. The insertion of this commentary in Draft Two was, to use Smith's (1995) terminology, a way of *aligning* the audience to Savchenko's state of mind. It allowed Savchenko's personality an influence on the audience but not necessarily on events.

The relationship between a plot line and a relationship line is further refined by Seger (1994). Although she does not specifically define sub-plots as being a refinement of character relationships, in movies she refers to she consistently names subplots in terms of character pairs, for example, the "Michael-Sandy Subplot" in the movie *Tootsie* (p. 54). Seger states that the function of a subplot "is to add dimension to a script" giving the characters time to "smell the flowers", reveal extra dimensions to themselves or "carry important individual themes" (1994, pp. 39, 40). Here there is a useful interface between screenwriting practice and narrative theory. The individual themes could fall into the category of free motifs. Tomashevsky refers to motifs that are used as "devices for characterisation" giving the example of the adulterated burgundy in *The Poor Bride* as an insight into the impoverished situation of the characters (1968, p. 80). Here the motif, that might be constructed in the form of a brief sub-plot is appropriate to the story but does not contribute to the driving of it.

A subplot can also "show us the beat by beat development of a character's identity, self-esteem or confidence...how and why a character changes" (Seger, 1994, p. 40).

The usefulness of this definition for Draft Two lies in the fact that the team can use it to choose what characters are important to the audience. This may or may not have a direct relevance to the plot and certain minor characters may go against convention by being more complex than they need to be. Either way, the filmmaking team can make an informed judgement of whether character details are relevant to the story or simply the individual character. Aronson warns that often writers start a screenplay with the relationship line thought out, mistaking it for the plot line. Such stories, she claims, tend to go round in circles, with the same character actions being repeated over and over again (2000, p. 56) If, however, we regard this relationship line as a subplot, and define it in terms of character, then we have a means of enriching character that can be structured. Seger also points out that sometimes the subplot changes the direction of the main plotline (1994, p. 41). If we attempt to construct a relationship in Draft Two that creates greater understanding and sympathy for characters, it may require the alteration or reordering of the main story.

This would have a significant influence on the formulation of Draft Two. In Draft One of *Double Happiness Uranium* our protagonist was a brooding, yet exotic Reuben attempting to solve a problem in a corrupt but charming corporation represented by Savchenko. We all felt that Reuben personally did not exhibit many qualities that an audience member might relate to either sympathetically or empathetically. By involving him in a romantic relationship, I was able to demonstrate what there could be to like about Reuben. This personalised his crime and consequently provided a point of understanding for the audience. Sympathy could be established through a process of recognition – it is perhaps a reasonable assumption that most members of

the audience have either been in a relationship or observed relationships. The relationship line could therefore be defined as:

1. Reuben meets Samira
2. Samira shares Reuben's obsession with nuclear experimentation
3. Then Samira gets pregnant
4. But she still wants to be part of the experimentation
5. So she doesn't tell Reuben
6. As a result she dies
7. Reuben finds out
8. Reuben goes mad

Even though most of these relationship sub-plot points are revealed indirectly through flashback and ghostly appearances, they inform us about Reuben's character.⁵ By personalising Reuben's victims and making him unaware (yet responsible) for his actions, I hoped to make the audience feel some form of pity. The necessary character details could be defended by plotting the story of the character relationship in a causally linked way. This allowed me to ascertain the essential moments to serve this relationship subplot and defend them to producer and director.

The insertion of the character Samira, as opposed to the generic monstrous figure representing the unknown workers Reuben had killed, allowed the audience a greater insight into who Reuben was. It could be sustained by means of a romantic subplot,

⁵This relationship line, although postulated after the completion of Draft Two was actually inserted in Draft Three. The review process after Draft Two revealed that the relationship between Savchenko and Reuben was not enough to create a strong sense of sympathy for him. Ideally another Draft Two should have been written at this stage, but due to time constraints Draft Three had to serve two purposes of further refining character and refining style and tone. See Chapter 5.

albeit a very loose one as it turned out in *Double Happiness Uranium*. The two major subplots that had to be refined here were (to use Seger's type of naming system) the Savchenko-Reuben subplot and the Samira-Reuben subplot. Again, both of these subplots can be seen as character exposition, revealing not only the thoughts and feelings of these characters but also the structure of their relationship with the protagonist Reuben. By seeing our characters as *functions* with clear objectives in Draft One, we can develop the demonstration of the premise in the form of a complex plot that assumes a function fulfilled by the protagonist. By seeing characters in terms of emotional subplots in Draft Two we stand a better chance of determining why an audience may develop a greater understanding of our antagonist, having been given a better insight into the way he functions, aligning themselves, as Smith would put it, to his emotional make-up. The audience may then more readily engage sympathetically with him.

Character as Back-story

I found the most useful thing about the creation of back-story to be the establishment of motivation. If sympathy in drama involves a degree of understanding then motivation provides a framework for understanding a character's emotional actions. There is still a sense of engagement with this character, as we can recognise and interpret their traits and character actions, even if they do not relate directly to the immediate plot. Currie (2009) argues that an audience wants "a unifying explanation for many instances of motive, and character is just what we use to make coherent sense of a pattern of complex motivation" (p. 64). A character presents an audience with a "sense of expectation...about how events will turn out" (p. 64). Hints of their

motivation will give us an idea of what they might be likely to do. Interest, therefore, is sustained by the puzzle the character presents. In other words, given the underlying subtext of this character's actions, audience members can work out the type of actions they might take in the future, regardless of the main plot line. They gain an insight as to which particular characters are more important than others.

Syd Field (1998) suggests you set up this expectation with the "circle of being". He defines this as a "process that allows you (to) uncover some kind of an incident or event in your character's life that emotionally parallels and impacts the story line" (p. 183). This event usually happens before the plot of the film begins, though the nature of it is hinted at throughout. When a character makes a particular decision, or chooses a particular method, it makes sense in relation to the audience's understanding of this character. As it is emotional, we might assume that the audience will also be able to sympathise with the character. Here is where Smith's concept of understanding leading to allegiance can be applied. If we want a particular character to represent the human quality that is at the core of the premise, then we must reveal appropriate information about him. This information can be structured into a backstory. Certain details of this backstory may be revealed in the plot, or may simply be implied. These details serve to create an understanding and a sense of expectation. Field's suggestion of an emotional scar that needs to be healed, therefore, can be an effective method of constructing a sense of audience expectation (1998, p. 184). The 'need' is the motivation. If we establish a 'scar' that an audience wants (or does not want) to be healed then we can develop an interest in this character's motivation and a sense of expectation as to what they might do or how they may react to certain events. If we ignore the therapeutic assumption and see this structure of a way of establishing a

system of set up and pay off within the story of a singular character then it could provide a useful guide in ascertaining what character detail may need to go where in Draft Two.

Williams (2006) reflects this ‘pay off’ idea in terms of the audience recognising problems and their potential solutions. He would argue *needs* are givens and an audience should be able to readily understand them especially if they are connected to “moral absolutes” (2006, p. 90). *Needs* are those emotional qualities a character must attain in order to solve a defined story problem. These stand in contrast to *wants*, that represent more tangible desires that the character comes to understand as illusory or harmful. Therefore, if we are able to give our character a particular emotional problem with a corresponding emotional solution then an audience, and indeed the production team, can recognise the beats of that development.

A strong back-story may help create the details of motivational signs and this logical structure can be based on the two causal aspects, that is, scar versus healing, or, to look at it another way, problem (behaviour) versus solution (change of behaviour). It is a far more useful approach than a listing of various character traits that we might find novel and then constructing character around it. It can also be used independently of a direct relationship to plot. In this sense I disagree with Field (1998). Character motivation does not necessarily need to impact on the main story line. It can be simply thematically related to it. If an audience recognises the motivational behaviour of a character, like regret or atonement or so on, then they may well have an interest in their individual behaviour and actions. This is especially the case if related to a system of values.

It is not only useful for the audience to recognise motivational behaviour, the actor too benefits from an acute understanding of their character's history so they can construct appropriate behaviour. In order to facilitate this, I applied the principle of character back-story determining character trait in Draft Two by writing a Character Bible (Appendix I) that detailed the back-stories of the characters in a bid to set up their motivations. These motivations would manifest themselves in emotional character traits and help me choose the appropriate dialogue and screen actions. Two examples of this are the characters of Jack and Rebecca.

Jack Langford was originally just part of the big conspiracy. This made him a cog in the machine, his behaviour, therefore, could be that of a mindless henchman simply there as a function of malice. Given a strong back-story, that is, Jack is a failed actor who is forced to participate in this manipulation due to his failed career, the human aspect of betrayal and regret, and so on could be woven into the dialogue and gesture in his scenes, giving the director and the actor something to work with (see Character Bible, p. 9). Jack's anger at himself after Mickey's death, therefore, can be directed at Reuben, thus creating some effective subtext.

In Draft One, Rebecca simply came across as an uptight middle manager. In order to create some kind of sympathy I wrote a back-story describing how, coming from a working class family, she had to work her way up the ranks, and to a large extent reinvent herself in order to attain a position of authority in the company. Her uncouth yet caring working class father was kept at arm's length once she became an adult and started moving in more salubrious circles. Although she missed him and regretted their

parting she actively covers this with denial. Denial therefore became a key ingredient to her behaviour. Even though these details are not revealed to the audience directly they influence her actions on screen and provide the audience with a puzzle as to why her contempt for Reuben and loyalty to the company varies throughout the film.

The detailing of back-story has the potential to greatly assist the micro-budget collaborative filmmaking environment by allowing cast to grasp character earlier and allow the team to select cast according to the traits required. Cast in the micro-budget environment work for next to nothing and therefore might want a character that best demonstrates their skills as actors. Actor interpretation is vital to the success of the film because ultimately they provide the audience's access to the story world. Another purpose the back-story serves is to create an opportunity for engagement with the actors themselves. It can serve as the opening of a discussion of how a character might behave and lead to modifications of the script based on an actor's response.

Engagement through Point of View

Although an understanding of a character's back-story can help an audience engage with a character, and to a certain extent sustain their interest in terms of what they think might happen to them, it still may not be a certain method of sustaining and developing sympathetic or antipathetic engagement. If, however, the concept of motivation is connected to a particular point of view one might create a more sustainable sympathetic relationship. My definition of point of view here is based on Field's (1998) notion of the *moral* perspective a particular character has on their world rather than what they physically see through their eyes. Field argues that four things

make up a good character: “dramatic need, point of view, attitude and change” (1998, p. 175). If a character has a clear moral point of view that leads to conflict then they represent a value that an audience either wants to see triumph or fail. Often their belief system clashes with other characters’ belief systems, ultimately driving the story forward. Interest in the individual character will be determined by what they seem to represent. Truby concurs with this view when he argues that one of four ways characters “connect and define each other” is through opposition (2007, p. 57). Again, we come to understand and judge a character through the belief system they sustain and other characters by how they oppose this system. This does not just apply to the antagonist. Truby advises the screenwriter “try to place each character in conflict, not only with the hero, but also with every other character” in order to give a screenplay both “scope and unity” (2007, pp. 96, 97). Where Field advocates the clash of values be equal in a question of “right versus right” (1998, p. 172) Truby suggests the opponent be provided with a “strong but flawed moral argument” (2007, p. 90). In either case each author is suggesting strong characters are made through logical points of view that may vindicate or challenge the audience’s own perspective. Williams (2006) argues that if the audience identifies with “a character’s moral struggle” they will be more likely to care about them “just as if the movie were an emotional journey in your own life”. (p. 89). It is fair to suggest that certain qualities combined within a character can create controversy and opinion. In this way the audience can engage in the type of allegiance that Smith (1995) is suggesting in his third level of sympathy. The audience will be inclined to judge the character either positively or negatively and therefore have a vested interest in their success or failure.

One very useful technique that Williams suggests is the separation of a character's virtue from the opposite vice. For example if a character's objective is cruelty, make her method one of kindness, and make her character subplot trajectory an emerging of one quality above the other. He suggests you give your hero vices and your villain virtues (2006, p. 110). Giving your hero vices not only promotes their "humanistic qualities" as "no one is perfect" but also provides them with something to work on in the form of a character arc. Applying this to all major characters in the script creates a story within them that can engage an audience. It is also a way of drawing the viewer's attention to the most important characters. The thicker their attributes the more likely the audience is to judge and engage with them. These characters are then more able to guide the viewer toward the conclusions appropriate to the specific dramatic premise.

It is worth noting here that moral perspective is not the only way an audience can judge a character. Other attributes including intelligence, impetuosity and pride, for example, are equally good criteria for judgement. It depends on the nature of the premise and the role played by the particular character. For example, Reuben's actions can be judged on the basis of their intelligence. If the audience believes him to be correct in his evaluation of the leakage threat, as opposed to the other workers' dismissal of it, then they may align themselves with his particular efforts to solve the problem. They would engage with him rather than the other workers who simply want to keep their jobs.

Creating moral development in characters in Draft Two, therefore, can make a strong contribution to a system of constructing sympathy. In the collaborative micro-budget environment this system of construction is very important for the creation of

characters that might suit or challenge the sensibilities of a particular target audience. Whether we decide to challenge their belief systems or vindicate them, it is useful to know what we are doing when and why. If we vindicate them too much we may bore them, if we are doing too much challenging, we may alienate them. The producer, particularly, might have a point of engagement with the screenplay at this point, as finding the audience is a large part of his post-production role. Using this approach, he can assess character traits in relation to the perceived belief systems of the intended audience.

Applying the approach to *Double Happiness Uranium*

In writing Draft Two of *Double Happiness Uranium* this three-pronged approach: sub-plot, back-story and point of view provided me with a sound basis for the decisions I made in relation to character. The narrative theory behind it further reinforced my decisions by defining the elements of sympathy I wanted to evoke. For each scene I could refine action and dialogue in such a way that not only served plot but further enhanced one or all of the following: a recognition of the character type, an understanding of the character motivation and an alignment to (or rejection of) the character's moral or intellectual perspective. Of course this applied to a lesser or greater extent depending on the significance of the character.

Increasing the complexity and interest in the character of Reuben was perhaps the most advantageous outcome of considering character trait from the perspective of a structure of sympathy. Realising that in order for him to be an effective protagonist (the character most likely to represent the premise, receiving the lion's share of the

audience's attention) I needed to have the audience recognise his situation, then understand him and then be able to align themselves with him, provided me with a plan of attack. Hence I was able to justify three important traits, not only in narrative terms, but also in relation to character engagement. Firstly, his lowly position as a Waste Department worker could serve to enhance recognition. The audience may have encountered that type of person in an office who is smart but never gets ahead. Secondly, his relationship with Samira was an engaging subplot, which could give the audience a better insight into his emotional engagement assisting with their alignment to his feelings. Thirdly, I could construct a determined manner and a grim sense of humour that might invite us to judge his moral perspective.

A minor character like Rebecca might undergo two levels of sympathy that might require recognition by means of a small subplot regarding her relationship with Savchenko and then possibly some understanding in relation to elements of her backstory that might manifest themselves in her behaviour.

As it turned out, Ucorp chief executive, Jeri, still operated on one level of antipathy, based on the audience recognising her brazen arrogance. Consequently she became somewhat one-note, but given the fact that I wanted to emphasise the powers of antagonism residing within Reuben's head, this turned out to be fairly appropriate.

A practical approach based on a structure of sympathy was very effective when traits needed to be altered given the particular circumstances of micro-budget productions. For example, when the director came across a Portuguese actor with limited English, he was very keen to have him play Mickey. I had painted Mickey as a highly

intelligent and articulate madman, who tested and teased Reuben in such a way that would make him something like an idiot savant, hoping he would be endearing to an audience as a kind of precocious child. By means of his sub-plot and the backstory of his forced exile into the wilderness by the company suggesting the possibility that he may be harbouring secrets, the audience would hopefully have a sense of anticipation - what might he reveal? How might he help or hurt Reuben? They could also judge his moral or intellectual perspective –was he a mad fool for feeling paranoid about the company or perfectly justified given the company he’s working for? As such, Mickey’s dialogue was full of catty one-liners that I hoped would elicit sympathetic or antipathetic guffaws from my audience. I wondered whether a non-English speaker stumbling over his lines would be capable of creating a performance that could evoke this reaction. Paulo, however, was enthusiastic and available and had a certain presence that we thought would be valuable. I therefore had to strip the dialogue back, get the basic information across, and rely more on Mickey’s physical action to convey the madness and injustice of his situation and therefore provoke audience engagement accordingly. It was a case of informed compromise that is a common feature in environments where no one is paid. In the final film I am not sure how well this character actually works, but in any case, having a clear approach to the construction of character trait was beneficial to communication. Having a sense of why an audience might be engaged or not and a strategy to the construction of this engagement allowed criticism to be more constructive and the team to be more focussed. As the pre-production process became more complex with the tasks of casting, securing locations, raising extra money and recruiting crew this focus became increasingly important.

5. DRAFT THREE: TONE

Although tone is widely considered important, finding a useful definition of tone is problematic. Government bodies, such as Screen Australia, emphasise the importance of tone to screenplay and film development. It features prominently in writer's statements and pitch documents. Screen Australia's feature film development program asks both writer and director to define tone (2010). In order to understand "the creative team's intentions for the project" the Aurora Script Development program asks writers to make a specific definition of "style and tone" as well as the "scope and scale" of the feature film project. In doing so, Screen NSW is "looking for an honest appraisal of the challenges ahead and a sense of what kind of approach will be taken" (Screen NSW, 2011). The British Film Institute suggests "the style and, in particular, the tone of a work is (a) central aspect to address when developing any film" (Parker, 2011).

For my purposes, the most useful components of tone could be categorised in terms of audience affect and dramatic mode. In this chapter I will assess the importance of discussing these elements with the key filmmakers as a means of clarifying the internal dramatic rules of the film, creating the possibility of a step-by-step process of discussing and developing tone in Draft Three. I will elaborate on some benefits and problems with this approach in relation to its practical application to writing the *Double Happiness Uranium* screenplay, in particular the fact that not defining tone at least partially at the beginning led me to drift into a tone we could not afford. I will also examine the extent to which a basic tonal approach should be developed at treatment stage and whether this would be of benefit in the construction of Draft Three.

The advantage of defining the components of tone

For the filmmaker, style is a far easier thing to define than tone. Style can be thought of as the method used to convert the screenplay into a film. Techniques such as mise en scène, performance and editing can be readily organised as the components of style and therefore the filmmaking team has a pre-existing terminology in the discussion of it. Tone, however, is different. In its basic definition it is the general character or attitude of a piece of work. It is tied up with an attitude that is conveyed to an audience by the filmmakers through the work itself. In this sense a discussion of tone is very audience focussed.

In my proposed collaborative model that staggers the components of screenwriting into particular definable drafts, tone can represent the stage when the screenplay moves from literary work to production blueprint. After Drafts One and Two the plot and the characters have been combined into a unified dramatic story. Premise has been fulfilled and a theme demonstrated. A reader can engage with the logic of the plot and the traits and actions of the characters. The tone, however, will determine the actual spectator engagement with the film as a whole, going beyond an understanding of plot and character. Tone would be an important way of defining firstly, the reaction we wanted from our audience, for example: to laugh, to cry, to change their perspective, be moved to action, and so on and secondly, it would set up the type of world we wanted to create, be it satirical, absurd or true to life.

Also, in this approach, the purpose of Draft Three would be for the screenwriter to clarify tone in order to pave the way for the establishment of screen style in the fourth and final draft. I wanted to formulate an agreed-upon description of tone that could be used as a point of reference for the filmmaking team. This would not be a strict definition of the concept, but rather the identification of its most useful components.

Tone as audience affect

When considering the actual spectator experience, a fundamental question a filmmaking team must ask itself in relation to the spectator is: why would an audience like this film? The answer to this lies in what we expect them to gain from the film watching experience. In other words, how will they be affected? It is more useful, at this point, to examine methods of affect in terms of emotion than some form of physical reaction. As Greg Smith (2004) points out “the cinema offers complex and varied experiences; for most people, however, it is a place to feel something. The dependability of movies to provide emotional experiences for diverse audiences lies at the centre of the medium’s appeal and power” (p.2). If the filmmakers can agree that emotional engagement is a key ingredient to the film’s appeal, they can begin asking appropriate questions about audiences’ responses. Will they laugh, cry, be moved to action, be comforted or soothed or just think more about a particular problem? A useful starting point for this discussion is a choice between two traditional dramatic modes: tragedy and comedy. Both modes assume a different affect: fear and pity or laughter. Many other variations of affect are derived from combinations of these two modes, such as relief, sentimentality or schadenfreude.

According to the British Film Institute's Phil Parker (2011) it is the tone of a film that "critically engages with the emotions of the audience". In his analysis of short films he identifies humour as a tonal element that can "offset" the tragedy. Where tragedy is "fear", humour is "relief" (British Film Institute, 2011). The audience will fear for the characters, but this fear will be alleviated by humour. The humour therefore, in some way relieves the spectator by removing them from the drama. This harks back to the Aristotelian concepts of fear and pity. If tragedy, according to Aristotle is designed to evoke fear and pity, then tone is something that must enhance this (*Poetics*, 6.4, 1996, p. 19). It is fair to say that story and character function alone will not necessarily determine the respective levels of feeling of fear and pity. A revenge thriller with the premise that one's evil acts will eventually be the cause of one's own demise can be both comic, as in *Get Shorty* (Sonnenfeld, 1995) or *Kill Bill* (Tarantino, 2003) or dramatic as in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, 2011).

Some basic questions the filmmaking team might then ask are: will the audience like this film because it is funny or because it is sad; will we laugh at our protagonist (possibly feeling superior to him) or will we fear for our protagonist (by being somehow in awe of his suffering)? If the former is the case, a feeling of superiority becomes a predictable audience reaction to either the entire film or predetermined parts of the film. If the latter is the case, then a different set of reactions should be expected. Of course laughing and crying are not the only options and the filmmakers might consider a variety of reactions like horror, disgust or arousal. In every case, knowing what kind of reaction one might want is a crucial consideration in constructing a consistent tone. Just as important is working out the combination of

reactions needed to create a tone that might vary between humour, pathos or romance and so on at different moments in the film.

These questions may have been posed at the very beginning of the writing process.

The team may decide to make a comedy or make a drama. In this case, from Draft One the writer will be concentrating on making the audience laugh or cry. There are, however, very different ways of making an audience laugh or cry depending on the tone of the piece. For example, the comedy could be based on gags, situations, satire, slapstick, romance or parody. Each one of these has a particular affect on the audience. A romantic comedy, for example, can rely on a rueful recognition of the intensity of infatuation, that is, some form of mild melancholy or regret, possibly the willingness to laugh at oneself. Slapstick, on the other hand, can rely on the degradation of a character's status in order to make the viewer feel superior (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004, p. 154).

In each instance the tone is different. It amounts to a kind of understanding between the creators of the drama and the audience. Each one of these categories can also suggest a particular level of both intellectual and emotional engagement. A satire often requires the audience to have a political view on a particular institution or figure of authority. *In The Loop* (Iannucci, 2009) is an example where a judgement of the self-serving nature of politicians is fairly essential to the enjoyment and engagement with the humour. *The Truth About Cats and Dogs* (Lehmann, 1996), like its original *Cyrano de Bergerac*, however, relies on deceptive nature of romantic notions to create amusing situations which we can emotionally engage with and therefore find funny,

either because we have experienced these emotions of infatuation or self-doubt or we like the character who does.

Drama too can be subdivided into categories of audience affect. Sidney Lumet provides an interesting approach that places audience affect in terms of the “primary forms” of story-telling: tragedy, drama, comedy and farce (1995, p. 53). He delineates tragedy from drama in terms of audience affect. If we want the audience to feel awe in relation to the seriousness of the consequences of the story, then we create heroic characters that create the tragic tone. If, however, we are to enter the territory of drama the tone needs to be adjusted so there is more familiarity between audience and character (1995, p. 55). Here we have two clearly delineated audience reactions: awe at the immense consequences we see on screen and pity that we might feel for a character like ourselves living in a world we can readily understand.

It is therefore a useful *starting* point for our definition of tone to try to define the film in terms of the affects we expect from a particular form of drama. Defining our film as either comedy or tragedy determines whether the tone is defined by humour or pathos. Subdividing our film into areas like satire, farce, slapstick and parody, if it is a comedy, or tragedy and melodrama, if it is a drama helps determine the form of the humour or the pathos in terms of the balance of intellect and emotion.

At the beginning of the script development process the team can ask themselves: do we want this film to be a comedy? If the answer is yes, the challenge for the writer is finding different ways to make it funny. The team may then choose to ask themselves: *why* is this film funny? The answer to this question can lie in the defining of a specific

form of comedy: this film is funny because it is, say, a political satire. Another question that can be asked is: when is this film funny and when is it serious and what point is this likely to make? Here tone can tie together the disparate fragments of plot and particular characters that have been dealt with on an individual basis in the previous two drafts.

So why wait for Draft Three before defining tone? My logic for this was based on the primacy of dramatic premise (in relation to my collaborative, micro-budget approach). This approach required that the writing of a film of a given genre, would involve a construction of narrative that, for reasons explored in the previous chapters, created audience engagement and fulfilled the dramatic premise. A sub-genre like satire, therefore, might only be a tonal starting point if the premise and narrative unity is to be the foundation of the collaborative process. It is the particular combination of humour and pathos appropriate to the plot and characters that have been developed in Drafts One and Two that will form the specific tone of the film to be made consistent in Draft Three.

An analysis of the two comedies I mentioned above illustrates this notion that the combination of humour and pathos constructs the distinct tone of a particular film. Neither film relies purely on intellect or emotion. Both films also combine humour with pathos. *In The Loop* not only satirises British foreign policy, but also comments on the flaws of romantic relationships. *The Truth About Cats and Dogs* resides primarily in the emotional realm of the romantic comedy but also makes serious points about partner abuse. Primary story telling forms like satire or romantic comedy,

therefore, might act as a useful starting point, but until the story and characters develop further, the specific tone will be difficult to determine.

In order to refine tone in Draft Three, we may need to ask how can the variations in audience affect, laughing or crying, for example, be made into a definable consistent tone? Indeed, such a consistency of tone (or consistent variation or combination of tone) is particularly necessary for the micro-budget collaborative environment where tone and style need to be fully understood and communicated between writer, producer and director who are collectively the filmmakers. In commercial environments, the writer can conceivably put together a screenplay and the director can then find whatever tone she likes within certain genre boundaries, but there is no collective ownership of the piece itself, nor the necessity for the writer to be a driving force in getting the film made. I hoped, therefore, to create tonal consistency in the screenplay by applying the variations of audience affect to a set of dramatic rules that might determine the film's story world. In this way how the tone was applied in any given scene could be determined by mutually agreed upon conditions. Such an approach could also amount to a map of how tone could change to create an appropriate dynamic range for the film. We could determine the type of behaviour of a character or the nature of the presentation of a particular setting in accordance to the way we wanted the audience to feel at that particular moment. All these variations in tone would be constructed in such a way that built up to the climactic moment that best demonstrated the premise. This moment might be humorous, ironic, tragic or romantic depending on the attitude the filmmakers had toward the theme.

Tone as a dramatic mode

My first step in coming up with a logical framework to determine these story world conditions was the use of Frye's (1957) analysis of fictional modes. Although his discussion is about literature in general and falls short of providing screenwriting guidelines for the construction of tone, it is highly valuable as a means of raising the appropriate questions needed in refining a film's dramatic rules. These questions centre on the power of action of the protagonist. The answers to these questions might serve as a logical basis for defining the appropriate levels of pathos and humour and intellectual and emotional engagement.

Frye classifies fictions by the hero's "power of action" and whether it is "greater than ours, less, or roughly the same" (1957, p. 33). There are five fictional modes that influence the story world's rules. These categories need not be followed strictly by the screenwriter. They are a useful starting point, however, in suggesting the tonal elements of the story world.

The first mode is when the hero is "superior in kind both to other men and the environment of other men". This god-like protagonist can only function within a mythological world where his actions have very few boundaries. If, however, the hero is superior to us in degree but not in kind, then the story becomes a romance "in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended" (1957, p. 33). In this case the hero avails himself of magic powers, yet is still subject to human emotional flaws. This mode suggests the audience willingly engage in a stronger suspension of disbelief than

in Frye's final three modes of fictions: the high mimetic, the low mimetic and the ironic.

The high mimetic mode presents us with a hero superior to us in degree but not superior to his environment. He is "subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature" (1957, p. 34). His superiority to us suggests a tone of high tragedy or an epic. The low mimetic fictional mode is when the hero is one of us: "we respond to a sense of his common humanity and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience" (1957, p. 34). To these four Frye adds the ironic mode where the hero "is inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have a sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration or absurdity" (1957, p. 34). Into this mode can fit many forms of comic styles and tones including the tragi-comic and ironic of many modern films. Indeed Frye points out that European fiction has "steadily moved its centre of gravity down the list" toward this ironic mode (p. 34).

A definition of the protagonist's power of action, therefore, cross referenced with a particular audience affect could be very useful in determining tone in a unified narrative. If we choose to situate our story within the high mimetic mode and our hero is superior in degree either figuratively or literally then the quality he represents (according to the premise) is being represented on a grand scale. If taken utterly seriously with an emphasis on pathos, then we are in the realms of epic tragedy. This suggests a tone that is high in pathos and emotion and relatively low in humour and intellectual engagement. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, for example, shows us a protagonist who suffers on a grand scale, indeed all of Thebes suffers along with him, and we can feel desperately sorry for a man destroyed by his desire to defy fate.

This method of discussing and determining tone can be highly useful in films where the superiority of the protagonist is taken more figuratively and at varying levels of seriousness. Popular action films such as *Die Hard* (McTiernan, 1988) and *Con Air* (West, 1997) are cases in point. The particular tone is determined both by the power of the protagonist and the levels of humour and pathos, emotion and intellect. The character of Cameron Poe in *Con Air*, for example, undergoes a high level of suffering and shows an almost absurd level of ingenuity and strength in order to get home. He is Odysseus-like in his approach balanced, as Frye would say, “midway between godlike heroism and all-too-human irony”. According to Frye this level of strength of the protagonist defines audience engagement. Romance “is characterised by the acceptance of pity and fear, which in ordinary life relate to pain, as forms of pleasure” turning “terror...into the adventurous”, horror into the “marvellous” and angst into a “pensive melancholy” (1957, p. 37). In a modern sense we see someone like the character of Cameron Poe as both human and godlike. His human side, embodied in the fact that he loves his wife and daughter and looks out for his buddy, gives us the point of engagement in the form of pathos; the filmmaker is expecting us to care about loyalty and small children seeing their fathers. The godlike side of both him and the extreme villains balances pathos (the villains are murderers and child molesters) with humour (the entire situation of the world’s worst criminals being transported in the one rickety plane) gives us a point of distance in order to enjoy them. In short, we take him only just seriously enough to care what happens to him and the people he cares about as the story unfolds. We then sit back and enjoy the spectacle. This may be a useful way of identifying a distinctive tone (perhaps one unique to Bruckheimer, or at least typical of his body of work as a producer) and a similar recognition of the

balance between humour and pathos cross referenced with the powers of action may be used to *construct* tone. A sliding scale of pathos and humour, emotional and intellectual engagement is an effective frame of reference for a dialogue between writer, producer and director in order to place the film in a particular tonal zone that best reflects the nature of the premise. The team could discuss the tone not so much as being high mimetic or low mimetic, but in terms of how far we might want to push realism and whether our audience would follow us on this particular tonal trajectory.

The reasoning behind my approach was that Draft Two would have established the nature of audience engagement with the characters based on the level of sympathy and understanding of them as individuals - whether we fear them, pity them, like them or hate them. The *level* of fear or liking or pity would be determined by the particular tone that would be agreed on and made consistent in Draft Three. To create this overarching dramatic consistency might require the adjustment of the level of engagement with each individual character.

This was important in a collaborative, micro-budget environment because a shared agreement on the nature of the tone could be cross-referenced with a potential niche audience. This would allow the producer to start considering marketing and distribution strategies that were achievable within the micro-budget filmmaking team's budget and time frame. It might also allow the director to make the best use of camera and cast assets to construct an appropriate shooting and performance style.

A consideration of a film's basic dramatic rules is important as a way of constructing a tonally consistent Draft Three. As Frye's discussion of fictional modes suggests, each

mode has its particular rules and expectations. Internal dramatic rules make up the final area of discussion around tone that leads to a determination of style.

McKee (1999) suggests “a story must obey its own internal laws of probability” where events are limited to “the possibilities and probabilities within the world (the writer) creates” (p. 70). An audience is prepared to accept any set of rules as long as the rules within the set are consistent. Becker (2006) applies this to the low-budget filmmaking environment referring to the “one-gimme rule” which suggests the audience will “go anywhere with you once” believing in the inexplicable if it remains within a certain set of story principles (p. 34). This, he claims, is the definition of the *suspension of disbelief* for the low budget filmmaker. Indeed going back to the source of this idea, Samuel Coleridge himself advocates the reader transfer from their inner natures “a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (1983, p.6). This raises very useful questions for the filmmakers. What exactly is the human interest in our film? What will constitute the semblance of truth able to sustain it? The answer, in my model, can be found in the premise.

In my approach, the human interest would be the quality we were exploring - hubris in the case of Reuben. The semblance of truth would be how seriously we needed to take it. The actual level of seriousness could be discussed in terms of story-telling form, the power of our protagonist and the way we wanted our audience to feel. All this added up to the dramatic rules of our film and suggested a more specific tone. This approach helped us determine, at Draft Three stage, where the film’s tone was inconsistent with

the premise and hence created an inconsistent story world. The evolution of Reuben's job in *Double Happiness Uranium* illustrates this method.

In Draft One Reuben was an enigmatic scientist from a proposed Anarchist Collective of Tasmania seduced into migrating to the Independent Republic of South Australia by the world's most profitable company Ucorp. In this draft his powers of action verged on the magical and the world was a particularly grand one. A discussion of tone that focussed around audience affect, sub-genre and powers of the protagonist could help us determine whether we had created the dramatic rules and story world we really wanted (or indeed could afford). The affect of specifically labelling our world in political terms might be an intellectual engagement with the environment and as a result, the characters. We were proposing a particular vision of the future through the specific reference to a Republic of South Australia that had a dubious relationship with an Anarchist Collective of Tasmania. The tone, therefore, lent itself to epic, falling into what Frye would describe the high mimetic with its central character taking on massive challenges (1957, p. 33). Of course, we could combine it with satire or parody and create a surreal comedy along the lines of Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985). This would involve selecting the right elements of sub-genre, like satire, farce, and so on and the appropriate levels humour and pathos. Whatever course we decided to pursue, an awareness of the components of tone gave us the starting point for a discussion and a development plan for tone that would ultimately be consolidated in Draft Three. In my approach, plot and character issues were given priority in the first two drafts. A kind of earnest dramatic tone was suggested along the way, but it was in Draft Three where it was to be clearly defined.

This earnest tone, however, led to difficulties in terms of budget, production planning and potential audience as the screenplay developed. The default tone we had fallen into (although none of us really recognised it until we discussed Draft Two) was epic. To use Frye's terminology our hero was *superior in degree* to the normal people who might make up our audience. We were taking Reuben and his world more seriously than we could afford. For an audience to suspend their belief to an appropriate degree that would allow them to be immersed in this grand futuristic world, we would need much higher production values. These we could not afford.

The emergence of the character of Reuben in Drafts One and Two demonstrated how not properly defining tone at the Treatment stage might lead to problems later on. As an enigmatic Tasmanian scientist in Draft One, Reuben did not have the opportunity to drive the action - he was smart, but totally at the mercy of the company. This was a problem of plot. Although it suggested a particular epic tone that we may or may not have wanted, in our unified model it is the plot problems that are dealt with first. Therefore I attempted to solve this problem in Draft Two by making Reuben a UN inspector. He had power and therefore could drive action. However this created problems with character. As a UN inspector he was a little too powerful to sympathise with, being able to command international forces at will. This resulted in a problem of character trait that had to be solved. The UN reference also raised an issue in relation to tone. The idea of Reuben working for the UN suggested an earnest story world with genuine global ramifications. This suggested a level of serious intellectual engagement that we could not afford as it might require a very detailed and expensive rendering of futuristic elements, such as electric cars, multiple nuclear cooling tower stacks, and so

on.⁶ We all recognised this problem of tone. Having explored ideas of audience affect and being able to manipulate tone in terms of altering a protagonist's power of action, I had a tangible approach to fixing this problem. These components of tone provided me with the basis for deciding upon the particular dramatic rules that I would have to make consistent in Draft Three.

To this end, I decided to make Reuben a humble worker in Ucorp's Waste Department. He was smart but in a lowly position. I hoped this would have the effect of inducing pity, making him "one of us" as Frye would put it, possibly placing him in the low mimetic mode where we "respond to a sense of his common humanity" (1957, p. 34). This in itself would not ultimately determine the tone. I still had to consider Frye's "canons of probability" (ibid.). Our futuristic world had to stretch credibility in order to serve our budget and our premise. For this reason a use of the sub genres of satire and parody came in handy and also the levels of audience affect in terms of humour and pathos. The discussion became focussed on the extent to which we wanted the audience to laugh at, or be moved by, Reuben's situation. I argued that the audience could find his situation absurdly humorous, that is, PhD graduate being forced to work as low-grade Waste Officer, resented and largely ignored, and therefore enjoy the film on this level. It was worth accentuating the nature of the company to an absurd level to emphasise these humorous elements. Pathos, however, could be introduced through his relationship with Samira. This would also serve the purpose of creating audience sympathy. Therefore my argument was that this film should involve humour in relation to Reuben's job, but pathos in relation to Reuben's relationship.

The audience would therefore have a point of reference in reading the rules of the

⁶ Budget is not the only reason why tone needs discussion. It just happened to be our reason at that time. Other concerns like marketing, cast and the availability of designers come into play at various levels depending on the nature of the production.

drama. Certain theatricality was acceptable in relation to Reuben's working environment that was not necessarily acceptable in his relationship with Samira. The affects were different in each case and necessary for the premise. Being amused at Reuben's struggle at work allows us to relate to the common humanity we share with him. After this, our horror at his responsibility for his wife's death might give us a specific insight into the nature of hubris: it can happen to anyone, especially those denigrated or frustrated. Of course, whether we eventually would achieve this or not would depend on many factors, but at least we had the basis for a discussion.

The rewrite may have benefitted from a clearer nomination of tone at the Treatment stage, in spite of the fact that this nomination, if adhered to doggedly, may well have had the effect of restricting character and plot complexity. If, for example, we had declared the film to be a satire from the very beginning, then certain basic dramatic rules could be assumed, recognised and then refined in Draft Three (as opposed to being largely created in Draft Three). However, adhering too closely to this satirical tone may have led to stereotypical characters and situations that were included because they fitted the dramatic form rather than serving the complex ramifications of the dramatic premise. This might not necessarily be a bad thing for a film that can fall entirely into one sub-genre. When there is a blend of sub-genres, however, it is useful to know how the tone will change and develop and what the effect might be on the audience. The focus of Draft Three can then be the refining of this tone that is the basis for the actual shooting, performance and design style of the film that will be firmly established in the fourth and final draft of the film.

6. THE FINAL DRAFT: STYLE

Style could represent the final stage of the screenwriting process because it prescribed what the film would actually look like on screen. Bordwell suggests style is a patterned and significant use of the particular techniques of *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing and sound (2001, p. 155). In my approach both assets and the premise would determine the significance and pattern of stylistic elements. The refinement of style, therefore, would be the final application of premise, plot, character and tone. This would be the purpose of Draft Four and would represent the final draft of the screenplay. It would serve as an important reference document for the director, the producer and most significantly at this stage, the designer and the cinematographer.

In my micro-budget approach, the determination of style, like the screenplay, would be the result of collaborative feedback. It would be based on premise, tone and available assets. After we had decided upon our attitude toward the subject matter and the particular levels of humour and pathos, we could start translating this tone and our assets into a specific filmmaking style. The discussion might be led by the director but the screenwriter would need to express it on the page in a way that was both evocative, to inspire the imagination of cinematographer and designer, and prescriptive, to prioritise essential design assets and determine camera style and the number of set ups. This is a major reason why the screenwriter should be concerned with filmmaking style in the micro-budget environment. Another reason, in our case, was the fact that the screenwriter was also effectively an executive producer and was therefore

responsible for the feasibility of the production approach, a large part of which would be determined by style.

In this chapter I will discuss the merits of codified methods of formatting the content of the screenplay draft that can provide both a clear brief and also allow the appropriate level of interpretation by the cinematographer and designer. The three aspects I will deal with will be *mise en scène*, camera angles and editing as I felt at the time of writing Draft Four that these were the most controllable elements of style that could be prescribed in the screenplay.⁷ By comparing a prescriptive approach, exemplified by the continuity screenplays in Hollywood in the 30s and 40s and the more evocative approach advocated by McKee (1999) and Mehring (1990) I will consider what stylistic aspects are important to clarify to whom and how availability, budget and skill level can determine the final format of the screenplay in relation to the style of the film.

The feasible creation of style in the micro-budget environment

In many filmmaking approaches, a restricted budget predetermines elements of style that, in turn, influence choice of story. Such was the case in Lars Von Trier's Dogme school of filmmaking where style and tone are determined by available assets from the beginning. Such an approach aims to subvert the dominance of "sensation" and "cosmetics" in favour of a more naturalistic depiction of stories that take place in the

⁷Sound is another important design element that the screenwriter must consider and in hindsight there were methods of altering the screenplay that might have facilitated recording and editing. At the time of writing the fourth draft of *Double Happiness Uranium*, however, I felt that sound issues could be dealt with at a later time, by somebody else. It was only after reviewing the edit that we realised that much of the dialogue we captured needed to be rerecorded due to location issues. A major way of preventing this problem would be to have insisted only on interior or low noise locations from the start.

“here and now” (Von Trier, 1995, pp. 22, 23). This rejection of those sensational elements that are the hallmark of more expensive films is appealing for the first time micro-budget filmmaker looking to be guided by a determined style. The manifesto of the Dogme school, *The Vow of Chastity*, insists on certain stylistic constraints like the use of available light, hand held camera and contemporary settings in an effort to capture the “truth (at the) cost of any good taste or aesthetic considerations” (Von Trier, 1995, p. 23). Style is almost the raison d’être of the film itself. Low-budget filmmaker and writer Becker similarly suggests the nature of mise-en-scène and camera style be totally determined by budget and this will greatly determine the type of stories you can tell (2006, p. 21).

However, as we started with dramatic premise, subject matter and story would be the factors that kept the filmmaking team on track; not the desire to create a film in a particular style. Tone and style, therefore, would be elements the team arrived at through a collective consideration of premise, plot and character. Only after ensuring that the story best demonstrated our premise would we then begin to refine a specific tone based on story form and audience affect. Style would then be adjusted accordingly based on the assets we had at our disposal. This approach does not contradict other approaches such as Dogme, it simply relegates the consideration of style to a later stage and uses not only budget but also premise as the determining factor in the choice of stylistic elements, attempting to strike a balance between the two.

Chris Kentis’ *Open Water* (2003) is an example of assets and tone determining film style. Kentis wanted to create a horror/thriller story that focussed on the emotional

state of abandoned divers. His theme was focussed not so much on the potential violence of a shark attack but on the emotional reactions of individual people (Pope, 2004). This theme combined with his assets (both he and his producer were experienced divers who had camera skills) allowed him a style based on a personal connection to, and fear for, the characters. This required close ups of the performers using a hand held camera that could shoot both just above and below the surface of the water to give the audience a sense of vulnerability and abandonment. He could achieve this cheaply with his own ability to get in the water with them as the cinematographer.

This balancing of assets with tone to create style, therefore, is a good way to determine what particular manifestation of the identified dramatic form of the film is appropriate and affordable. Parody is a good example. Hutcheon (1985) suggests the nature and style of parody often depends on the nature of the targets that are being parodied (p. xi). If the style of the original is one of high production values then the parody tends to follow suit in order to be most effective. Spoof films such as *Scary Movie* (Wayans, 2000) attempt to create a sense of verisimilitude by imitating precisely scenes from other films, and thereby inviting the audience to judge those specific moments. Here style depends on the reproduction of these expensive production values. However, parody that seeks to address a certain attitude in society, can be more general, allegorical and consequently theatrical. If the available assets include actors from a theatrical background and a designer with an eye for surrealistic detail, then this stylistic option becomes affordable.

One of the methods we used to make this comic tone affordable in *Double Happiness Uranium* was to embrace a theatricality of performance by using a wide angle lens. To

shoot the film using the traditional coverage technique of shot/reverse shot plus a master would require either the reduction of scenes or the inclusion of more shooting days than we could afford. The director, therefore, in conjunction with the cinematographer needed to establish a style of shooting that used a minimum number of set ups. Wide angle lenses exaggerate perspective, emphasising the foreground whilst diminishing the background. They also increase depth of field allowing more elements in the frame to be simultaneously in focus. A wider angle not only gave us the ability to include a greater variety of detail, but also better suited our actors, most of who came from theatre, rather than film or television. Cinematographer Gustavo Mercado (2011) suggests wide framing is ideally suited to allow body language and facial expressions to convey dramatic content (pp. 97, 99). This is a technique used widely by Terry Gilliam in *Brazil* (1985) in order to emphasise the absurdity of an oppressive bureaucracy (see Fig. 1). In this scene the width of the angle allows the filmmaker to depict cluttered, dysfunctional bureaucratic machinery being manipulated successfully by the protagonist in the foreground, while the middle manager character cowers in the background, all in one frame.



Figure 1. *Brazil* (Gilliam, Stoppard, Cassavetti, 1985)

Using a wider angle could be the most effective use of our shooting asset, the high end HD camera, within our limited time. The task now was to turn this particular use of the asset into a style that was appropriate to the tone and to incorporate this into the screenplay. The tone in relation to the corporation was one of humour, the angle was wide and the performers mainly from theatre. All this suited a form of theatrically absurd satire. Scenes could be shot at a wide angle making best use of the actors' gestures and performance capabilities. The scene depicted in Figure 2 represents the virtual world of Reuben's computing environment. The *central processing unit*, represented by the female figure in the foreground, interacts with the *memory*, represented by the male figure at the right of frame, while the protagonist Reuben sits diminished and powerless in the background. In this scene it is staging and performance, rather than editing, which depicts dramatic action and power relationships.



Figure 2. *Double Happiness Uranium* (Hawkins, Larsen, Young, 2012)

Locations could also be used to maximise their theatricality. The boardroom of RiAus for example served our purposes well with its Edwardian style juxtaposed with the sci-fi elements inherent in the costume and props (See Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Double Happiness Uranium* (Hawkins, Larsen, Young, 2012)

How camera angle influenced mise-en-scène

Long takes with a wide angle often rely more on carefully orchestrated mise en scène. What I wanted to emphasise was a world containing both oppressive and absurd elements. As such, in the screen directions I tried to clearly define the relevant and engaging dramatic components, either in the form of performance aspects or appropriate design elements. This provided the benchmark for the set and costume design that in turn had to undergo a form of prioritising based on narrative and tonal impact compared to expense. This design was written into the script in a way that emphasised its most functional components.

The use of the panda motifs in *Double Happiness Uranium* are a good example of this. The panda represented the suppression of the work force by means of trivial distraction. A plethora of stuffed pandas would appear absurd on screen and help enhance the ironic tone. This cheaply available asset was worth including as it acted in sharp contrast to the free asset of the grandiose university building we had at our disposal. It allowed the audience a specific insight into the irony of a profit-driven organisation caring about a sick panda in a zoo. The pandas, therefore, could feature prominently in the screen directions, often being described as the subject of the shot (See Final Draft, p. 2). This would provide a clear cue for the designer as to their significance.

If however, the tone and rules of the drama were different, the choice of this design element would not be so appropriate. Had we, for example, the budget to take the world more seriously, creating a more high mimetic environment like *Gattaca* (Niccol, 1997), then such a satirical dig at the absurdity of corporate politics may have been out of place. What pathos we desired was to be reserved for Samira and therefore design and camera style had to be selected accordingly. The intimacy of a romance is potentially cheaper to shoot than the large-scale danger of a menacing corporation. We knew, therefore, what to spend money on in relation to style and what to alter in relation to budget. Again, this needed to be reflected in the screen directions of the script. The description of Samira's appearances in relation to choice of costume, sound effects and surrounding environment would have to be simply put utilizing freely available assets. Scene 84 in the Final Draft makes best use of a simple white dress and an open space and very simple Geiger counter sound effects. In this nightmare,

Reuben is reminded of his former friend's demise and witnesses her refusal to blame him for it (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Double Happiness Uranium* (Hawkins, Larsen, Young, 2012)

Draft Four as camera and design brief

In our experience in making *Double Happiness Uranium* we found that volunteer workers had a much lower level of commitment than the core group, and therefore tended to employ a relatively low level of initiative when it came to applying, say, design to the principles of the stylistic and narrative whole. In other situations, of course, a team may recruit a designer who becomes so enamoured with the project that he comes on board as one of the principal filmmakers and therefore shares responsibility (in all departments) for the completion of the film. If this is not the case, it is reasonable to assume that, in the micro-budget environment, anyone who acts in

this capacity will either be doing it for the experience (in which case they might have limited skills) or the love (in which case they might have limited time). In either case, the writer needs to construct a draft that will make their input as efficient but also creative as possible. It might be useful, therefore, to make the screenplay a balance between a blueprint for production, as was the case in the continuity screenplays of the Hollywood Studio system of the 20's and 30's and a more evocative selling document formatted in a way advocated by screen gurus such as McKee (see 1999, p.395), and Mehring (1990, p. 240) in order to allow a film to flow through the imagination of the reader in much the same way a movie flows across the screen. Rush and Baughman point out “although *shooting scripts* might be read as denotative blueprints or instructions, *screenplays* can be understood only as a form of writing that communicates much of its meaning through connotative nuances of language” (1997, p.28). Language can guide the production in an evocative way and “if properly interpreted, embodies the nuances of directorial style” (ibid.). In the micro-budget, collaborative environment it is most useful if the final draft is a combination between a shooting script and a screenplay that both prescribes and evokes. To work out in what measure this should occur, it is useful to examine in brief the economic circumstances that led to the evolution of the screenplay itself and identify how certain steps along this historical trajectory relate to the micro-budget collaborative situation.

Before the mid 1910's screenplays existed in the form of a scenario. This consisted of a synopsis, a list of characters and scene-by-scene account of the action (Staiger, 1985, p 177). This scenario was a loosely written document designed mainly to make “visual sense of the narrative” often written in a “cold and professional manner” selecting the right scenes from a novel or play that would work on screen (Brownlow, 1968, p.

272). Around 1915, the continuity script was introduced. This was a much more prescriptive form of screenwriting that included a precise list of shots and camera angles. This script was based on the scenario and was a strict blue print for production allowing the producer to plan the budget in advance around a determined amount of shooting time (Maras, 2009, p. 38). The writer of the continuity script was far more of a technician than the writer of the scenario. Indeed, according to Sidney Howard by 1937 the continuity writer was seen as the fixer of all the problems created by the scenario writer (now known as the screenwriter) (1937, p. 48).

In modern times the screenplay seems to be regarded as both a technical and poetic document (Maras, 2009, p. 124) with the emphasis on the poetic. In the conventional filmmaking environments assumed by McKee (1999) and Mehring (1990) artistry and poetic images are suggested as the best way to ensure the film is made as the screenwriter intended. McKee claims “polished, mature work seals its integrity” as opposed to poorly thought-out screenplays that we can assume are full of over expository dialogue or irrelevant images (1999, p. 7). Mehring insists, “when form and content are truly wed in the screenplay, they cannot readily be torn asunder” (1990, p. 6) suggesting a detailed and poetic description of images will guarantee the integrity of the story. Both writers insist that it is first and foremost the writer’s task to draw our attention to the image and then let the director and designer work out how to construct it. Both Field (1994) and McKee (1999) abhor the inclusion of camera angles in a screenplay. According to Field “the writer’s job is to tell the director *what* to shoot not *how* to shoot it” (1994, p. 181). Field suggests you find the subject of your shot and describe that; the director and cinematographer will work out how to shoot it (p. 186). McKee tells us to eliminate all camera and editing directions because the director will

laugh at you (1999, p. 397). You must not attempt to direct the film on the page. (McKee, however, does suggest other tactics for suggesting a shooting and editing style that I will expand upon in the next section.)

This approach advocated by Mehring, McKee and Field assumes a particular industrial model of filmmaking where there is a clear division of labour and structure of ownership. Given a highly paid (or indeed, even moderately paid) professional director, cast, cinematographer and designer willing to spend time interpreting screen directions this evocative mode of approaching a screenplay may well be the most appropriate. For example, a designer who reads the screen directions “Penny, who has definitely worn something a little too fruity for someone her age, moves off unhappily” from the well-funded *Bridget Jones’s Dairy* (Fielding, Davies, Curtis, 2000) might relish the task of chatting to the director about what exactly constitutes “fruity” and enjoy spending the time and money creating something just right. When concepts need to be communicated quickly, cheaply and to unpaid people with limited time or skills, however, then another more precise approach is needed.

A combination between a prescriptive continuity script and an evocative screenplay may be a good start. The actual format must have the right measure of prescription and suggestion. In the micro-budget environment this depends on the skill level and time availability of the cinematographer and designer. The more experienced, skilled and available the cinematographer, the less detailed the shot suggestion might be.

In the case of *Double Happiness Uranium*, however, time and skill-restricted key crew were the norm. We had a skilled cinematographer who was enthusiastic but still had to

squeeze in brief preproduction meetings between childcare and work. A tight brief outlined by a fairly prescriptive screenplay would have allowed her to spend her limited time in perfecting a concise range of shots rather than speculating about wider visual possibilities. Our designer was an experienced landscape artist with no film experience, yet he seemed to have plenty of time. In this case we might have used him better as an asset had I described vital elements prescriptively yet with some room for interpretation and alteration. Getting this combination of poetry and practicality right is difficult to formulate. A start might be to consider two of the most expensive stylistic elements in the micro-budget environment: visual design (in terms of set construction, props and costume) and camera style. This assumes that the film has been cast and that the sound design is fairly basic. In practical terms visual design is made up of items that either already exist in the locations you have secured or items you need to purchase. It must be made as clear as possible in the screenplay which items are important and why. It also helps if this is reinforced by accompanying documentation that lists and describes each item.

Another useful thing a screenplay could include in the micro-budget environment is an indication of the number of camera set ups based on the chosen camera style. This will allow the director to construct a shot list and the producer to begin scheduling. These activities are essential in order to fit the production into the budget. If there are problematic issues (for example, certain items might be unavailable or totally out of the budget range), the writer can modify the screenplay accordingly in the Final Draft.

To use the 1940's style continuity screenplay as a model might be highly practical but could certainly undermine the creativity of a cinematographer "faced with the task of

shooting image upon image described in terms of mathematical x, y, z co-ordinates” (Maras, 2009, p. 123). Indeed the format of some of these screenplays is often so precise and mathematical as to crush any free interpretation at all. They could, nevertheless, allow a screen production to be planned down to the last shot as is the case with continuity screenplays like *The Lady From Shanghai* (Welles, 1947) that describe the angle and duration of each shot in great detail:

REEL ONE A			"LADY FROM SHANGHAI"		PICTURE CONTINUITY	
ym					PAGE 1	
SCENE	FEET	FRAMES	DESCRIPTION		#1029	24 pp.
1.	12	0	Start and framed leader			
2.	136	10	FADE IN: COLUMBIA (emblem) - DISSOLVE TO: COLUMBIA PICTURES CORPORATION PRESENTS Rita Hayworth - DISSOLVE TO: Orson Wells in - DISSOLVE TO: The Lady from Shanghai - COPYRIGHT MCMXLVII BY COLUMBIA PICTURES CORP. - DISSOLVE TO: additional cast credits - DISSOLVE TO: Technical credits - DISSOLVE TO: additional technical credits MPEDA (emblem) - Western Electric RECORDING - IATSE (emblem) - APPROVED CERTIFICATE NO. 12111 - DISSOLVE TO: Screen Play and Production credit - DISSOLVE TO: LS - Ext. river - New York - night - boat passes under bridge - DISSOLVE TO: LS - Ext. Central Park - night - DISSOLVE TO: MLS - Ext. Central Park - night - Elsa enters bg in hansom cab - cab comes fg down street - CAMERA DOLLIES IN to MS of Elsa			
3.	17	7	MCS	Ext. Central Park - Mike - CAMERA DOLLIES BACK to MLS as he walks down middle of street and enters to Elsa in hansom -		
4.	7	5	MCS	Elsa		
5.	3	13	MLS	Mike standing at cab door, back to camera - Elsa seated in cab - driver bg in seat - Mike holds out package of cigarettes		
6.	3	15	CS	Mike		
7.	2	15	MCS	Elsa		
8.	2	5	CS	Mike		
9.	8	8	MS	Elsa - Mike's hand tipped in fg holding package of cigarettes - Elsa takes cigarette - Mike's hand exits		

In terms of design, however, these screenplays are often far from prescriptive. This was perhaps the result of the large scale industrial model of film production keeping the various departments as separate as possible and having a large enough art department budget for a designer to spend lots of money and time on interpretation (Howard, 1937, p 43). Given the collaborative nature of our particular micro-budget production a more integrated methodology would be useful.

Codifying the screenplay

Such an approach to an integrated screenplay format for the smaller production unit was championed by Sidney Howard when he described the methods of Samuel Goldwyn in the 1930's. In this approach, during script development the art director and director are in constant touch. "The result of this triple collaboration" writes Howard (1937), "is a completely illustrated edition de luxe of the script" containing visual reference material and camera angles keeping the script "a thing to be looked at rather than to be spoken" (p. 43). This approach may be relevant in a micro-budget environment where the cinematographer and designer are fellow collaborators, but in the case of *Double Happiness Uranium* time-poor practitioners performed both these roles. Therefore a more prescriptive format needed to be included in the screenplay; ideally in close consultation with director and producer. This might be realised with a screenplay that is codified into camera angles and includes highlighted design elements that are supported by appendices of detailed, illustrated props, costume and location lists.

McKee suggests an approach to writing that strongly suggests camera angles to give the writer "a strong influence on direction". Rather than citing camera angles a writer can suggest them "by breaking single-spaced paragraphs into units of description with images and language subtly indicating camera distance and composition" (1999, p. 399).

Each paragraph, therefore, can represent a new shot and is written to draw the reader's attention to a particular visual detail. This is what Field would describe as the subject of the shot. The nature of the subject, from an eyebrow to a thronging crowd, would suggest the shot size and angle (Field, 1994, p. 186). By doing this, the writer is effectively creating a suggested approach to directing and editing the film. In this way McKee hopes to provide that balance between readability (putting the film in the reader's head), and practicality. What he is essentially proposing here is a codified way of determining shots and mise en scène off the page. If director and cinematographer choose to read this code the same way, it could be highly useful as a default position that could be applied if the cinematographer had neither the time nor skills to suggest another position.

If a writer works in conjunction with a director then such a code can be agreed on in this draft and save time and money during the shoot. If a wide angle has been decided upon as part of the shooting style, then the writer can format the screenplay with the appropriate number of paragraphs. The producer can then use this number of paragraphs to approximate the number of set ups required. Indeed the budget-minded producer can insist before the final draft is written that there can only be a certain number of set ups and the writer and director need to prioritise certain images accordingly.

Therefore a description of screen directions could look like this:

INT. JERI'S OFFICE - DAY

Reuben enters a large, SUMPTUOUS OFFICE decorated with PALMS and ILLUMINATED PANELS displaying Double Happiness

LOGOS and PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL that includes HAPPY WORKERS.

At the far end he sees JERI seated casually on a SETTEE, reading a slim yellow page DOCUMENT. She is severely made up and wears a red CHINESE DRESS with a high collar.

Reuben clears his throat.

Jeri looks up angrily.

The existence of four paragraphs in the above example suggests four shots and potentially four camera set ups. Shot 1 (Paragraph 1) would be a wide as the whole office is described, Shot 2 (Paragraph 2) suggests a long shot, Shot 3 (Paragraph 3) suggests a reverse mid shot of Reuben and Shot 4 (Paragraph 4) suggests a close up of Jeri. Before the screenplay is completed each one of these set ups would have to be evaluated from a narrative and stylistic perspective by the filmmaking team. For example, could four shots be replaced by two or even one? This might save money but compromise on dramatic impact at this turning point in the screenplay. It might enhance the tone or present the wrong tone for this particular moment. In either case the codified approach allows the filmmaking team the opportunity to properly assess the Final Draft before it is locked off and used as the key reference document for the wider production team.

In terms of design elements it is often suggested that the screenwriter must include only those elements that suggest a bigger world. Martell (2000) suggests the trick is not to bore the reader but give one or two clues that allow the rest of the costume and prop design elements to be filled in by the imagination of the reader (p. 199). The style of these elements, therefore, is determined by the designer. In our model, however, the designer usually has limited time and/or skills and his job is often delegated to

volunteer workers who need very strong and specific direction. The temptation is to include every single prop and costume element required, but this may well break the flow of the story. It is also counterproductive in terms of prioritising stylistic elements. A description of screen directions will be most effective in Draft Four if it includes the most crucial design elements in as specific a form as possible. What is crucial is worked out between writer, producer and director in relation to tone and budget. These three filmmakers can see the big picture in terms of premise, story, aesthetics, style and budget. They need to set the parameters within which the designer works.

The operative design elements in the example above are 1. The large office, 2. The illuminated panels, 3. The Double Happiness promotional materials, 4. The settee, 5. The Chinese dress. All five of these elements serve the story narratively or thematically. All of them, in the case of *Double Happiness Uranium*, were attainable within our limited budget. If we could have nothing else, then the scene would work within the context of the tone and premise. The capitalisation of key props allows the designer to identify immediately the essential elements of the screenplay and work out how they should be manifested in the design.

Similarly the screenwriter can describe screen directions in such a way that strongly suggests the camera angle be kept wide and the unit itself remain stationary. The example below illustrates this:

2. INT. COURTROOM - DAY

2

The unshaven face of a svelte Eastern European man (SAVCHENKO) looms before us. He is glancing about himself nervously, first to the left, then to the right, then above. He ducks down revealing a HARD CHAIR behind him some four or so metres away. The rest of the large room

is empty. Savchenko re emerges and holds up a crumpled CIGARETTE. He looks somewhat comforted. He glances about himself again and then sniffs the cigarette, inhaling deliciously. He places it in his mouth then digs around in his pockets. He finds nothing. He clenches his eyes in frustration. Then a hand slaps down on his shoulder.

Savchenko swings round to see CHRIS, a young security guard, smiling at him with genial familiarity.

(Final Draft, p.1)

This single shot is described in one fairly lengthy paragraph. Savchenko's actions of ducking down and re-emerging suggest the camera not follow him but remain stationary. Savchenko moves in and out of the space, revealing the hard chair behind him (suggesting his interrogation and detainment) and then producing the crumpled cigarette (suggesting his defiance of whatever authority put him there). Each important element: cigarette, chair, Savchenko is described in the context of the one frame (represented by one paragraph).

Given a time-poor cinematographer, you could be even more prescriptive than the screen directions above, and indicate when the camera should move, what it should focus on and how it should be lit. Again, much of this depends on defining the subject of each paragraph and how you connect these subjects in the flow of the reading. It also depends on a cinematographer who is prepared to interpret the screenplay in this way.

The use of design appendices for props and costumes

The following appendices attached to the Final Draft can further illustrate the nature of props:

1. An illustrated list of secured locations
2. A props list broken into *key props* (those props essential to the narrative) and *secondary props* (those props important to the design)
3. A costume list with brief descriptions of each clothing element

These lists might serve as a reference guide for the designer without getting in the way of the reading of the narrative. Items that pre-exist in the locations, like walls and doors, that are appropriate for use in the film, need not be described in the screen directions. Set items that need to be built would appear in the props list and be divided amongst the *key props* section if they are essential for the narrative and the *secondary props* section if they are important for the design. The Props List might be structured in much the same fashion as the Character Bible that provides a clear justification for character motivation and suggests some character behaviour. To justify each prop in this way would allow the writer, director and designer to determine what is important and why. These documents become the precursors for the shooting sequences and breakdown pages that become so important to the production later on (see Brown, 2006, pp. 22 – 70). Indeed, the micro-budget screenwriter is well placed to take on these jobs, ordinarily assigned to the second assistant director, due to his ability to immediately discern what is narratively or stylistically important in the screenplay.

In my case, given the fact that the designer was inexperienced and the cinematographer extremely time poor, the Final Draft might have benefitted by being more prescriptive than evocative. As it turned out, there was a clear emphasis on the stylistic elements of design, but each design element was not described in enough

detail. I did not capitalise crucial design elements as in the previous example. This became a problem on set as our designer was absent and it came down to the producer and I to make clear design calls as the need arose. This problem might have been relieved by a clearer assessment of the available time and skill levels of key crew. Such an assessment, however, is often difficult to make as people tend to over commit. Ultimately flexibility might be the key.

If the style is codified in the screenplay, it is likely that the producer and director have a more feasible way of criticising and suggesting alteration to the script. The code, however, should not represent unbreakable rules. If cinematographer or designer has the time, skills and inclination to add their own ideas to this blue print then they should have the opportunity to do so. In our case, the collaborative nature of the screenplay's development allowed writer, producer and director to assess this contribution in the light of the project as a whole.

7. CONCLUSION

In my practice-led research, my intention was to see if staggering screenplay development in terms of specific concerns for each draft would assist communication in the collaborative micro-budget environment. I also wanted to test whether specific screenwriting principles and narrative theory could be brought into alignment to provide a more tangible path for the screenwriter. At the beginning I had strong faith in the hypothesis that style should fit in to the narrative structure if dramatic premise was to be the starting point. My practice confirmed that this approach provided a clear narrative reference point for the team, although it was probably more useful to me than it was to producer and director, particularly in the latter stages of screenplay development.

My conclusions are these:

1. In the micro-budget environment the core group needs a clear reference point in order to keep the film on a consistent narrative and thematic development trajectory and share ownership of the film story
2. Dramatic premise can provide this initial reference point by generating a clear story trajectory
3. If dramatic premise is to provide this reference point, then a Draft Process based on Plot, Character, Tone and Style is a very useful way of staggering development and better than no defined process at all

4. It is an approach that is perhaps more useful for the screenwriter than it is for the producer and director
5. Dramatic premise and coherence of plot are very useful during production when producer and writer are on set supervising design elements. They can also be vital during post-production if the edit needs to depart from the original sequence of the screenplay.

When working with others in the filmmaking environment, it is important to share a common goal. This is especially the case when each co-creator has equal ownership of the entire project. In this situation it is advantageous for members of the core group to be aware of the type of film they want to own. This could come down to style, genre, format or story among other things. Story and theme is a very common priority amongst film funding bodies such as the South Australian Film Corporation and Screen Australia and therefore it is a worthy uniting point for a filmmaking team. To define the film in terms of both the story and the statement you want to make, most certainly serves one of the key requirements of both public funding and private investment interest. In our case, a team of three including a writer, producer and director, story was our common ground.

For story to be a starting point it was highly useful for it to be activated in the form of a dramatic premise. This premise gave the story somewhere to go and was effective in representing the trajectory of an element of human nature that we found compelling enough to underpin our collaboration for the three and a half years it took to complete the film from concept to final edit. This is not to suggest that we lived and breathed it,

but it was an important reference point we could draw upon when asked to describe the project. The dramatic premise allowed me to communicate continuously the theme of the film in relation to the plot development and filmmaking style. It helped us recruit cast and helped me sustain their interest during rehearsal and production by being able to contextualise their characters in relation to the point the film was trying to make. Again, we might have used the genre as the means to enthuse potential cast members, but the director and I generally found delving into the theme in a way that firmly connected it to the narrative was more engaging for the actors.

As for crew, I was mainly the one who interpreted the character trajectory for the director of photography and designer. The director graciously allowed me to do this, but there is no reason why, in other circumstances, a director could not use the premise as the basis for design decisions. The advantage was that we could all understand particular design decisions within the same thematic frame of reference, and consequently money and time could be spent more wisely.

As for the draft writing process, a major aim of my study was to test the notion that screenplays could be developed in a collaborative environment by staggering their focus. My assumption that the process should follow the sequence of dramatic premise, plot, character, tone and style was useful mainly because it allowed me to control the development of the screenplay and justify the decisions I made in relation to the concerns of the director and producer. Whether a screenplay needs exactly four clearly delineated drafts is not really the point, but at least four distinct stages of screenplay writing based on the four aspects of plot, character, tone and style were useful things to define. The dramatic premise provided the trajectory from which the

plot was constructed, the plot provided the framework within which characters would function and this consequent film story would then be moulded into an appropriate tone that would better define the details of the story world. The film would then be clarified in terms of detailed images and sounds that strongly suggest, or even clearly prescribe, key design elements and camera angles in the final draft.

This process can be relevant to a variety of approaches to film development. Even though a defined style or tone might be the initial rallying point for the filmmaking team (perhaps the team all want to make a farcical parody of a teenage romance but have no particular story in mind), the actual screenplay writing process benefits from considering a dramatic premise first. It provides a logical, coherent trajectory for the plot and a basic description of the key quality of the main character. This is useful even when working with a pre-existing story as it allows for the identification of a trajectory amongst a larger mass of story information. A premise makes clear why a filmmaker is interested in telling this story and consequently, how to go about giving it dramatic emphasis.

The way I orchestrated the division of these drafts, however, was still problematic in terms of feedback and criticism. As much as producer and director understood the idea of developing characters more fully in Draft Two and style in Draft Four, they still were inclined to panic when those elements seemed fairly underdone in Draft One. At least with the creation of a staggered draft development system, I had the means to reassure them and also a tangible long-term plan about how to address these issues.

A means to alleviate this problem might be to set clear draft deadlines with stated outcomes and then a short period after for fixing the problems associated with that draft. For example, if Draft One is to be concerned with refining character function and the micro-plot of the story beats within scenes, it would be useful for the writer to present the draft, have it reviewed and then spend a couple of weeks rewriting a second Draft One before moving on to Draft Two. This might keep the respective concerns of plot, character, tone and style contained within separate stages of draft development. In our case I only half fixed narrative problems in Draft One before moving on to Draft Two. This was partially a result of the panic factor of wanting to assure producer and director as soon as possible that the film would actually work. In any case, I found the system ultimately reassuring as it staggered the immense task of producing a feature film screenplay into definable sections with given points at which to stop, review, revise and then change emphasis to different problems.

Another major benefit of this approach is the fact that it greatly assisted on-the-spot decision making during the production itself. In our case, these decisions were made mainly in relation to design, as the head of our art department, due to understandable work commitments, was not present during the shoot. The producer and I, therefore, had to take over this role, often constructing props and fixing sets on an on-going basis during the shoot. It was fundamental to have at least some thematic basis on which to make a decision. Given the fact that few people are paid in the micro-budget environment, this situation would be common enough to warrant some attention to solving it. The premise combined with the staggered draft development process does not solve it entirely but it does to some degree allow a more informed decision-making process to take place.

Editing was our final challenge and, as is often the case, our coverage could not come together to construct the film as it was depicted on the page.⁸ The three of us had to reconstruct the footage we had and still arrive at the same meaning that we had all agreed on. Having been intimately involved in the script and story development process, the three of us were able to reconstruct the opening sequence in a way that emphasised the trajectory of the protagonist. We could be confident that we had the tools to discuss possibilities in terms of Reuben's character and how it could be affected by certain events.

So in effect what I attempted was a means to clearly define a screenwriting process within the collaborative, micro-budget context. The process was successful in the sense that the screenplay was written and the film was made and writer, producer and director can still sit in the same room after a gruelling three and a half years. It may also act as an approach for any writer in a collaborative situation seeking to engage with other filmmaking personnel who have a strong vested interest in the production.

The final and most interesting conclusion to someone who is both a practitioner and lecturer in screenwriting is the interface I found between narrative theory and screenwriting practice. I found that aspects of narrative theory, in particular Tomashevsky's (1968) concept of free and bound motifs, Smith's (1995) structure of sympathy and Frye's (1957) concept of dramatic mode based on a character's power of action, enhanced an understanding of the principles of screenwriting teachers such as McKee (1999) and Field (1994). The theory allowed me to find some logic behind

⁸Editing was our final challenge in getting the film completed but by no means the final challenge in getting the film marketed or distributed. This, however, would warrant another exegesis entirely.

the advice and therefore apply it more judiciously to a definite approach. In this exegesis I have possibly just scratched the surface, but I feel there is a fertile dialogue to be had between the theory that tries to give a generalised account of practice and screenwriting methods that require practical rules of thumb on which to base story-telling decisions. These decisions are of great importance to the cohesiveness of the micro-budget filmmaking team.

Far from being a general how-to guide on one hand, or an account of a single instance of screenwriting practice on the other, this study hopes to raise salient questions for collaborative filmmakers to pose as they attempt to work together. With the guidance of a strong dramatic premise, these questions can be posed in a spirit of co-operation and a mutual desire to prove the same dramatic point, rather than coming from a sense of insecurity regarding one's role or responsibilities in the filmmaking process. An effective and honest dialogue may be sustained from the genesis of the story idea and continue through the process of script development, preproduction, shooting and post-production. Ultimately it is a way of not only empowering the screenwriter as a filmmaker in his own right, but also uniting the core filmmakers as they strive to present a compelling vision to the audience.

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'DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM'

by

Matt Hawkins

FINAL DRAFT

October 7th, 2010

8.59am

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6 Palmer Ave, Myrtle Bank, SA, 5064
0430 348 411

1 INT. MARALINGA 7/BUNKROOM - NIGHT

1

A 45 year old scientist (REUBEN) wearing a drab beige shirt and trousers draws a large circle on a clear perspex screen.

He then draws small wisps emanating from the circumference, adding more and more detail, like a dedicated artist perfecting his masterwork.

2 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

2

The unshaven face of a svelte Eastern European man (SAVCHENKO) looms before us. He is glancing about himself nervously, first to the left, then to the right, then above. He ducks down revealing a hard chair behind him some four or so metres away. The rest of the large room is empty. Savchenko re-emerges and holds up a smooth, white, filterless, cigarette. He looks somewhat comforted. He glances about himself again and then sniffs the cigarette, inhaling deliciously. He places it in his mouth then digs around in his pockets. He finds nothing. He clenches his eyes in frustration. Then a hand slaps down on his shoulder.

Savchenko swings round to see CHRIS, a young security guard, smiling at him with genial familiarity.

CHRIS

How's it going?

SAVCHENKO

(beat, taken aback)

Good.

CHRIS

(beat)

Shall we?

Chris leads Savchenko back to the chair slowly.

CHRIS

They say she's gonna be OK.

SAVCHENKO

Who?

CHRIS

Mei Mei the panda.

SAVCHENKO

That's a relief.

Once at the chair, Savchenko pauses and looks at it with a sense of dread.

He glances at Chris who gestures toward the chair. Then Savchenko slowly sits down.

Chris waits for Savchenko to settle in the seat then crouches down.

Chris proceeds to chain Savchenko's leg to the chair.

Then he gets up and puts his hands on his hips. He nods at Savchenko.

CHRIS

OK.

Chris then notices a PANDA PIGGY BANK sitting on a small table a few metres away. He wanders over to it and digs around in his pockets. Finding them empty he wanders back to Savchenko.

CHRIS

Got a couple of yuan on you?

Savchenko looks at him incredulously then digs out a couple of gold coins from his pocket. He hands them to Chris.

CHRIS

Thanks, mate.

Chris drops the coins in the piggy bank, then turns to Savchenko.

CHRIS

Every little bit helps.

Savchenko stares back at him blankly.

Chris nods at him and then heads toward the door, exiting then shutting it with a loud BANG.

Savchenko looks back at the piggy bank.

3 EXT. CUL DU SAC - MORNING

3

A hand reaches out and drops a coin into a Panda Piggy Bank.

A WOMAN then pats the panda on the head that rests in a little shrine-like enclave in the side of a wall near her front door.

She then walks over and grabs a yellow recycling bin and starts wheeling it down her drive. She wears a bright blue shirt and black slacks.

Receding into the distance of the orderly street behind her are half a dozen other people (all dressed as she is) doing exactly the same thing, to the music of low rumbling and early birds chirping.

On the front of the bins are the words RECYCLE EVERYTHING written in bold, authoritarian letters.

After the bins have been placed by the curb the people return to their garages waving to their partners (again, dressed the same) who pass them on bicycles.

They ride swiftly down their driveways and, bike bells tinkling, fall into a steady stream of bicycle traffic making it's way out of the cul du sac.

SUPER:

THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

YEAR OF THE SNAKE

The bells chime repeatedly...

Fade into:

4 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - DAY 4

A small wind chime sits on a silver case and tinkles gently in response to a gentle zephyr.

Beside it stands the middle-aged scientist (REUBEN) disguised in a DRAB GREEN PROTECTIVE SUIT that includes a hood with eye goggles built in. He is looking out at the plain below. On the back of his overalls is the symbol of a DOVE with 'PEACE DEPT' printed in bold letters underneath it. He wears a small backpack.

The man takes the binoculars that are draped around his neck and lifts them to his eyes.

5 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DAY 5

Three FIGURES in drab green overalls are setting up some surveying and atmospheric recording equipment.

One of them, SAMIRA an anxious 40-year-old woman, drops a large SILVER CASE on the ground then looks over her shoulder at the distant ridge.

She glances over at ANDREAS, an innocent looking unshaven youth, lifting another SILVER CASE into an upright position. Andreas looks up at her and attempts a smile through the sweat.

Samira turns back and starts unlocking the case.

Setting up a SURVEYING TRIPOD is MICKEY, a grim faced 40 year old with longish grey curly hair.

Andreas finishes positioning his case and sits on it wearily. He takes out a precious cigarette from his pocket. Then he notices the other two working steadily, unpacking, setting up equipment.

ANDREAS

You guys need a hand?

MICKEY

Nope. It's fine.

Andreas shrugs and lights his cigarette. Samira smiles at him nervously.

SAMIRA

Aren't they illegal?

ANDREAS

Only within 50 ks of the city.

(beat)

You mind?

SAMIRA

Go your hardest, cowboy.

Mickey looks sternly at Samira. She goes back to her work, unpacking various GAUGES and pieces of SURVEYING EQUIPMENT from her case. Andreas continues smoking, oblivious.

6 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - DAY

6

The MAN with the hood, Reuben, looks over at the wind chime that is still tinkling gently. Then back through his binoculars at...

The three FIGURES on the plain. Mickey is standing by the tripod. Samira stands next to him with a clipboard and Andreas sits on the metal box smoking.

Reuben focusses on Andreas momentarily.

Then Reuben looks at a digital timer. It reads 2:59:52.

The seconds tick away. He looks back through the binoculars.

At 3:00:00 precisely what looks like a HEAT SHIMMER washes over the three figures.

Reuben notices Andreas coughing violently. He collapses as Samira and Mickey approach him cautiously.

7 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DAY 7

Samira looks closely at Andreas who is trying to control his coughing.

ANDREAS
I'm OK. I'm fine...

Mickey looks at him coldly.

MICKEY
You feel nausea?

Andreas shakes his head, then suddenly heaves forward and throws up violently.

Mickey pulls back Andreas' head to reveal his face is covered in three distinctive welts.

Mickey and Samira look at each other.

MICKEY
That's strange.

8 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - DAY 8

The wind chime suddenly stops tinkling.

Reuben drops his binoculars and watches it stop moving. e sets off across the plain.

9 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DAY 9

Andreas convulses violently as Mickey holds him in his arms.

Samira tries to take a blood sample but reels back when Andreas coughs blood all over her.

Then with a final gasp Andreas falls silent and still.

Samira herself starts coughing as Mickey feels for a pulse on Andreas neck. He looks up at Samira.

MICKEY
You OK?

Reuben is now running toward them. Mickey sees him and calls out.

MICKEY
What's happening?

Samira suddenly collapses just as Reuben reaches her.

Mickey drops Andreas' body and fumbles a medical kit out of his bag.

Reuben bends over Samira and lifts her face up. She has identical welts to Andreas. She opens her eyes and stares at Reuben in panic. Then the breath leaves her and she faints.

Reuben lets her fall to the ground.

Mickey pushes Reuben out of the way and thrusts a syringe into Samira's arm as Reuben staggers away.

Mickey turns to him.

MICKEY (O.S.)
Where you going? Fuck...!

10 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - DUSK

10

Reuben sits in the dirt, his head turned away from us. The hood with the in built goggles sits beside him. He is scrawling figures down the page of what looks like a hard cover sketch book.

REUBEN
Five parts metaprotein, three
extended proteolosis links...at a
rate of 10,780 per second...

He pauses, rips another page out and lets the breeze take it. Then he starts frantically writing again.

REUBEN
At a rate of 11,570 per second,
with seven parts...

He stops then tears off the sheet again. The page blows toward us and gets caught on a small bush. It clearly shows the flow patterns from the opening scene.

11 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

11

Savchenko sits alone with the unlit cigarette in his mouth. He sighs with despair then looks down and notices something on the floor.

A single match about 2 metres away.

He slinks down onto the ground and is just able to reach it.

Triumphantly he pulls himself back onto the chair and attempts to strike the match with his thumbnail.

MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

No smoking.

Savchenko looks around angrily.

SAVCHENKO

Oh, for the love of god...

MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

It's the law...

Savchenko sighs as the wall directly in front of him lights up with a projection showing:

The looming face and shoulders of the chief MAGISTRATE. He wears a PLAIN BLACK ROBE. The faces of FOUR OTHER MAGISTRATES appear in split screen, two on either side of the larger square in the middle. These magistrates gaze down at Savchenko as if examining a rat in a treadmill.

MAGISTRATE

The committee would like to thank
Dr Savchenko for taking part in
this enquiry...

Savchenko looks at him incredulously.

SAVCHENKO

My pleasure. Truly.

(beat)

Nice to have a choice...

MAGISTRATE

You're a foreigner who's lucky to
be here.

SAVCHENKO

Lucky? Lucky to be in this
backwater interrogated by
provincial bureaucrats?

MAGISTRATES

We're your only friends, Dr
Savchenko. Double Happiness won't
help you.

SAVCHENKO

So it seems...

MAGISTRATE

Why are you protecting a war
criminal?

SAVCHENKO

He's only a war criminal because
he wasn't working for you.

MAGISTRATE

Revealing his location would be
of great benefit to your case.

Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO

He could be anywhere. Or anyone.

12 EXT. CONCRETE BUS STOP SHELTER - MORNING

12

REUBEN, wearing a BEIGE SHIRT sits on a bench seat next to another man (JASON), also wearing a beige shirt, whose face is obscured by a copy of the DOUBLE HAPPINESS CHRONICLE with the headlines: MEI MEI CONDITION CRITICAL.

TWO OTHER WORKERS also in beige shirts and sensible slacks, sit on the bench beside Jason, also reading the paper.

Reuben stares into the middle distance looking vaguely confused. He looks down at the digital tablet (iPad) on his lap.

He opens a file that fills the whole screen. It is a picture of interconnected circles of differing sizes. With his finger he starts drawing figures down the side.

JASON (O.S.)

What's that?

Reuben looks up to see Jason staring at his work suspiciously.

REUBEN

Nothing. Just a little homework.

JASON

Homework? Who gave us homework?

REUBEN

(turning back to the
drawing)

Relax. It's my own project.

JASON

Is that allowed?

SFX: Announcement sting in the form of staccato Chinese strings.

From an old fashioned speaker stuck to the shelter above the bus stop issues forth a woman's kindly voice. Reuben and Jason sit up, as if the voice can actually see them.

JERI (O.S.)
 Happy New Year to all Waste
 Management employees from
 Division 129. Your efforts have
 made Double Happiness Uranium the
 international leader in safe,
 renewable nuclear energy. Be
 proud of your Division, it's an
 essential part of the Double
 Happiness Uranium family!

Suddenly four cyclists in shiny blue shirts (from the opening scene) fly past. Jason stands up and watches them recede into the distance.

JASON
 When I'm promoted to Energy I'm
 getting a 27 Speed Avanti. No
 more freakin' slow ass electric
 bus.

REUBEN
 What makes you think that's going
 to happen? They never take anyone
 from Division 129.

JASON
 I got an interview for Safety
 Liaison.

REUBEN
 (suppressing his envy)
 Safety Liaison. Well, that's not
 Energy, is it?

JASON
 It's the first step.

REUBEN
 Not necessarily.

JASON
 Then why did you apply?

REUBEN
 How did you know?

Jason smirks like a smart arse school boy.

JASON
 I didn't. You just told me,
 Reuben!

Reuben gives him a withering look.

13 EXT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM WASTE BUILDING - DAY 13

Waste workers stream into the steel and glass facade of Double Happiness Uranium, Division 129.

There is a large Double Happiness Uranium logo sculpture at the front of the building.

14 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM WASTE BUILDING/FOYER - DAY 14

Reuben follows a group of employees in beige shirts toward a large security gate.

Above it is a sign that reads:

'WASTE DEPARTMENT'

Above this sign are three Chinese revolutionary style PORTRAITS: Jeri, THE CHINESE PREMIER and AN OLD MAN who looks like a cross between Trotsky and Freud.

Above the portraits is the slogan:

DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM

POWER - PEACE - PROGRESS

Reuben and Jason stand in line in as they wait for a friendly security guard, CHRIS, to run a handheld body scanner over them.

After each person his scanned there is a sharp BLING and a kindly voice says as if from the heavens:

GIL (O.S.)
Hi Kylie, have a good weekend?
Welcome back to work. (etc)

Reuben looks up at the Monitor Screen showing the image of a burning oil well with the caption:

CHINA STRIKES SIBERIAN OIL FIELDS. RUSSIAN FORCES CRIPPLED.

Loudspeakers are playing bright, Chinese inspired music.

Reuben steps up to Chris who smiles at him as he passes the scanner over his body.

There is a sharp BLING and the kindly woman's voice issues forth:

GIL (O.S.)
Reuben. Great to see you.

Reuben looks up, frowns and proceeds.

15 INT. WASTE OFFICE - MORNING

15

Reuben sits at his small partitioned desk with his digital tablet in front of him.

On his desk is a small box of:

DOUBLE HAPPINESS MULTI VITAMINS

He looks around at another WORKER who is passively stuffing a couple in her mouth and swallowing them down, then watches as every worker does the same thing.

He takes out one and swallows it as he...

Looks across the off-white desks at the other WORKERS. They sit earnestly wearing VIRTUAL REALITY GOGGLES quietly mouthing words to themselves.

All except REBECCA, an uptight (but desperately trying to hide it) middle manager in her late thirties, who is standing and talking to JASON and another young employee, MITCH. JASON tells a story with much gesticulation as Rebecca laughs indulgently. Jason looks over at Reuben and winks.

Rebecca follows Jason's look and sees Reuben. The smile fades from her face.

Reuben turns back to his desk and takes the VR goggles out of his drawer.

He slowly places them on.

16 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

16

The office is now completely empty and the colour is bleached out.

Standing in the middle of the room is a fit, neat young woman, CPU. She wears a tidy suit of a neutral colour (straight from the default view of Windows XP). She has her hands clasped comfortably in front of her body and she smiles gently.

CPU

Hi Reuben.

A fit young man (MEMORY) wearing the same type of outfit, sits at a desk arranging blocks of differing shades of grey in a pattern. He looks like a clever child working out a puzzle.

REUBEN

Maralinga 7 stress reports.

CPU
Certainly.

She turns to Memory who immediately completes his block pattern. Then he lounges back on his chair and pops his feet on the desk.

MEMORY
Hey buddy...I'm just grabbing them for ya now. So you heard the one about the two Russians in a bath full of custard...

REUBEN
Switch Memory back to default personality...

CPU
Of course, Reuben.

Memory suddenly sits up straight.

REUBEN
Has Jason been wearing this unit?

CPU
No.

Reuben looks at CPU suspiciously.

REUBEN
(very quickly)
Run command code 329.555709. Now abort. Recode to default. Repeat. Abort. Enter.

During the above dialogue CPU stares ahead passively and blinks her eyes at a freakishly constant rate.

REUBEN
Has Jason been wearing this unit?

CPU
Yes.

REUBEN
Isn't that an offence under employee regulation 471B?

CPU
Would you like to put in a recommendation for immediate dismissal?

Reuben opens his mouth, then closes it. He looks at CPU and sighs slightly.

REUBEN

No. Just get me the figures.

Memory flips up a pristine condition LITTLE RED BOOK holding it aloft like a Maoist peasant. The heading is MARALINGA 7 STRESS REPORTS.

CPU

It's all in here.

Reuben takes it and reads a few of the pages. He shakes his head and smiles.

REUBEN

I knew it.

CPU

A problem?

REUBEN

(slowly, studying the
figures)

Not for me.

He hears the sound of gentle coughing that breaks through the silence.

He looks over at one of the partitions and sees the side of a woman's face peeking over the top of one of them. Her face is turned so he cannot recognise her.

He looks back at CPU.

REUBEN

What's that?

CPU

What's what?

Reuben looks back at the woman who turns to him and smiles. It is Samira.

REUBEN

Samira?

She melts down behind the partition.

Reuben goes over to find it empty. He turns back to CPU who is looking at him dispassionately.

REUBEN

Run a virus check.

Reuben takes off the VR goggles. The room transforms to...

17 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

17

Reuben is now looking directly back at...

Rebecca, Jason and Mitch as they continue to chat away.

He opens his digital tablet. The front page now displays the MARALINGA 7 STRESS REPORTS.

He hits 'SAVE' and turns toward Rebecca but instead sees...

Yuri SAVCHENKO. He wears the same beige outfit as everyone else but has an old jacket on and looks a little lost as he clutches a stack of books underneath his arm.

SAVCHENKO

Good morning.

Savchenko dumps his books on Reuben's desk. Reuben is about to run off but hesitates.

REUBEN

What are you doing?

SAVCHENKO

I was told this is my desk.

REUBEN

It's not...

SAVCHENKO

(holding out is hand)

I'm new. Yuri Savchenko. From St Petersburg.

Reuben grimaces at him and then pushes past.

REUBEN

St Petersburg. Great...

Rebecca sees him, dismisses Jason and Mitch quickly with a wave and strides quickly away.

REUBEN

Rebecca!

Caught, Rebecca stops and spins around with an artificial smile.

REBECCA

Hey, Reuben.

REUBEN

The containers are decaying at twice the rate we predicted.

REBECCA

Good work.

REUBEN

(holding up slab)

CPU confirmed it. There's been a decrease in structural integrity from 0.42% to 0.76%...

REBECCA

So that would mean?

REUBEN

A substantial increase in risk...

REBECCA

Yeah, yeah... within the next possible 200 years somewhere in the Maralinga 7 region 750 kilometres North of Adelaide with a population of one sad technician and no one really cares what happens to him.

REUBEN

That's not the point.

REBECCA

OK, nice work, Reuben. I'll put it to the Safety Head.

Rebecca turns and strides off.

REUBEN

And what's the Russian refugee doing at my desk?

REBECCA

(Still walking)

Desk share. We're downsizing.

Reuben shakes his head and turns to Savchenko who has heard everything. He slinks back to his desk.

REUBEN

No offense.

SAVCHENKO

(shrugging)

None taken. I'm half Ukrainian.

(beat)

You're Dr Henschke.

Reuben busies himself by typing in statistics into his digital tablet.

REUBEN
No one calls me that.

SAVCHENKO
I read your paper. In St Petersburg. It was very insightful.

Reuben turns to him slowly.

REUBEN
I was published in Russia?

SAVCHENKO
Departmentally. In a kind of newsletter. But still...it inspired the whole tutorial.

Reuben goes back to his work.

REUBEN
How gratifying.

SAVCHENKO
I'm a physicist too.

REUBEN
Oh yeah.
(glancing back up at Savchenko)
Welcome to Waste.

There is a martial music sting. Gil's face appears on the screen.

GIL
Motivational Leisure Time. Play hard, work hard...

Reuben smirks and looks at Savchenko.

Jason springs out of his chair and heads toward the door with the others.

Savchenko looks at Reuben confused. Reuben shakes his head and struggles to his feet.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS WASTE STAIRWELL - DAY

18

A group of Waste employees stream down the stairwell. Reuben and Savchenko are amongst them.

They get to the bottom and all the employees stream off to one side. Reuben points to the direction they are heading.

REUBEN
It's that way.

SAVCHENKO
Where are you going?

REUBEN
Never mind.

Reuben heads off in the opposite direction. Savchenko watches him go, smiles, then slowly turns and joins the other employees.

19 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

19

Savchenko sits before the looming face of the chief MAGISTRATE. Some hours have passed and he looks more dishevelled and sleep deprived. There is a band aid on his left cheek and one on his forehead.

SAVCHENKO
You have inspired me to sing like a canary.

MAGISTRATE
Just answer the question.

SAVCHENKO
You know, in zoos they don't just hurl fish at the polar bears. They encase the food in ice. They make them work for it.

The Magistrate looks at him disdainfully.

SAVCHENKO
Otherwise they get lazy. And nobody wants a lazy polar bear. Not very entertaining for the children.

(beat)
Before I tell you anything you have to understand that Reuben wanted what we wanted. He just didn't know it, yet.

Savchenko looks up at the frowning magistrate.

SAVCHENKO
Ethics are so over rated. They make you think research is something other than a rather complex game.

20 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - DAY

20

Reuben sits down in front of JACK, a venerable old man with a glimmer in his eye. He's dressed in grey pants, a white shirt, a woolen tie and a sleeveless jumper. He has a long scar across his cheek. He smiles at Reuben as he arranges pieces on a chess board.

In the background there is a samovar, a coffee machine and a handful of OLD RUSSIAN EMIGRES sitting around playing chess, drinking tea, reading old newspapers in Russian.

JACK
Shouldn't you be at Motivational
Leisure Time?

REUBEN
I don't find frisbee golf
particularly motivating.

JACK
You're in a cheery mood today.

REUBEN
They've lumbered me with a
Russian refugee. I think they're
trying to tell me something.

JACK
They won't sack you. You're a
genius.

REUBEN
I can't be sacked if I get into
Energy.

JACK
You can if you keep sneaking off
to illegal bars to play chess
with old has-beens.

Reuben looks up and frowns at him.

REUBEN
What *did* you do at Double
Happiness?

Jack shakes his head and looks up.

JACK
(evasively)
I was involved in establishing
various bits and pieces, rules
and regulations, etc.

REUBEN
Legal department?

JACK
Yeah, something like that. You
gonna move?

Reuben check mates him.

REUBEN
Check mate.

JACK
(frowning)
27 times in a row.

REUBEN
You shouldn't keep track. Only
make you depressed.

JACK
(smiling)
Thanks for the tip, Dr Henschke.

20A EXT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON 20A

Reuben walks toward the front of his very modest apartment.

21 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - DUSK 21

Reuben stands naked in the shower cubicle enduring the high pitched sound of a sonic shower.

The sound increases in volume till it splutters out in an abrupt static crash.

He looks at his body and rubs his arms to see if anything is any cleaner. Then he sniffs his armpit.

He tries pressing a button but only hears an ineffectual crunching of gears.

22 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 22

Reuben walks into the kitchen/living room, a very basic set up with island bench, fridge, etc. There is a modest TV screen in the corner. Gil is in the middle of an announcement. Behind her is a STARS AND STRIPES FLAG with a STARVING MOTHER AND CHILD in front of it.

GIL

Double Happiness Uranium and The People's Republic of China are pleased to announce a ten billion yuan donation to the Feed America Foundation...

Reuben switches the screen off and sits down at the table.

He turns on his digital tablet and looks at an archived article of the Double Happiness Chronicle.

It shows a picture of a smiling Samira wearing a WASTE uniform with the caption:

TOP SCIENTIST'S TRAGIC SUICIDE

And underneath the by line:

DOUBLE HAPPINESS LEADS DEPRESSION RESEARCH.

He rubs his eyes and brings up a drawing of the flow patterns, he starts to add to it, whispering the calculations as he does so...

REUBEN

The igneous rock dissolves at two grams per hour...the contaminated water keeps moving.

Suddenly he stops whispering and sits up.

Behind him, against the wall stands Samira. She wears a simple white dress and appears pale as she stares at Reuben looking kind and gentle.

Reuben senses her presence and stiffens.

REUBEN

I know you're there. I can hear you breathing.

SAMIRA

You remember the patterns.

REUBEN

Of course.

SAMIRA

Best work we ever did.

(beat - suddenly
emphatic)

You have to make them listen.

REUBEN

I'm doing my best.

SAMIRA
 (teasing)
 Persistence equals progress.

REUBEN
 (smirking)
 Power equals peace.

Reuben quickly turns around but she is gone.

23 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - NIGHT 23

Reuben throws open a medicine cabinet and digs out a puffer from behind 'Double Happiness' brand shaving cream cannisters and old shampoo bottles.

The puffer has a different coloured label: PERPHENAZINE

He gives himself a few blasts and braces himself. He looks at himself in the mirror. He is relieved to hear nothing.

24 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM WASTE BUILDING FOYER - DAY 24

A sleep deprived Reuben stands in line waiting to be scanned as Chris runs the device over a female Waste employee.

GIL (O.S.):
 Hi Mandy, you're looking fit...

Suddenly Jeri's face appears on the big TV screen.

JERI
 I'd like to assure all employees that the rumours of a cease fire between Russia and China are absolutely false.

Reuben stops and looks up at the screen, shocked. As do the handful of other employees, including Jason.

JERI
 Our friends in the People's Republic still need our help to stay free, to stay democratic and most importantly...to stay powered.

Jason sidles up to Reuben.

JASON
 They reckon the Russians have the neutron bomb. Incredible weapon. No sound. No collateral damage. Lots of bodies. Shwoosh!

REUBEN
 (dismissive)
 Pure fantasy.

JASON
 Yeah, well, China is shit scared.
 There could be peace! Get ready
 for retrenchments.

Reuben shakes his head and makes a bee line for the Waste entrance.

25 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

25

Reuben stands in the middle of the bleached out VR environment. CPU sits calmly in front of him while Memory is busy placing blocks on various shelves in a constant state of data defragmenting and collection.

REUBEN
 Given the current rate of decay
 then there looks like a 17.8%
 chance of encasement rupture
 within 15 years.

CPU
 That's correct.

REUBEN
 So why hasn't anything been done?

CPU
 The granite environment was
 considered an appropriate safety
 net according to Safety Committee
 Report #59897.

REUBEN
 But the rock isn't sound.

CPU
 I have no evidence to that
 effect.

Reuben smiles.

REUBEN
 But I do.

Reuben holds up his FLOW PATTERN diagram. CPU just shrugs. Then he reacts to a pain in his shoulder.

26 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

26

Reuben pulls off his VR goggles and sees a worried Savchenko poking him.

SAVCHENKO
Have you heard the rumours?

REUBEN
Yes.

SAVCHENKO
I'll lose my refugee status if
the war ends.

REUBEN
There's not much I can do...

Savchenko puts his hand on Reuben's shoulder. Reuben reacts uncomfortably.

SAVCHENKO
But you're a real scientist, like
me. We have to help each other.

Reuben scrutinises Savchenko with some degree of sympathy then sees Rebecca walking through the partitioned desks. She is in an incredibly bad mood.

REUBEN
Look, I'm really sorry. Excuse
me...

Reuben extricates himself from Savchenko and runs after Rebecca.

REBECCA
Not now, Reuben.

REUBEN
I have to get onto the Safety
Liaison Committee.

REBECCA
I know, so does everyone else.

REUBEN
No. This is important. I have
evidence. I've worked it out.

Rebecca stops and spins around. She takes a deep breath and tries to calm herself.

REUBEN
Did you tell the Safety Head?

REBECCA

No, I haven't told the Safety Head. I'm not *going* to tell the Safety Head. Its a problem in the middle of nowhere no one wants to know about.

REUBEN

Rebecca...

REBECCA

And we're subcontracting Maralinga 7 anyway; to Xiao Green Waste Corp.

REUBEN

Xiao Green?

REBECCA

From Shanghai. Part of the friendship agreement.

REUBEN

Then let me talk to them...they need to understand the potential risk.

REBECCA

(smirking)

See, those sort of words: 'Potential', possible', likelihood' etc, mean we can keep this one on ice for a bit. No one wants any extra gloom. Especially now.

Rebecca walks away leaving Reuben steaming. Savchenko sidles up behind him.

SAVCHENKO

How about a drink?

Reuben looks at him darkly.

27 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - NIGHT

27

Reuben and Savchenko sit perched at the bar. The old chess players have been replaced by a band: a DOUBLE BASS PLAYER, a balalaika PLAYER and a tired looking SINGER.

They are coming to the end of a sad Russian dirge.

Reuben, Savchenko and two other SAD LOOKING EMIGRES perched down the other end of the bar clap languidly at the conclusion of the song.

Reuben takes a slug on his cloudy beer. Savchenko picks up a pickled cucumber from a saucer on the bar.

SAVCHENKO

Why are creating all this trouble? You have a good job. Regular wage. After the oil crash we had nothing but frostbite.

Savchenko takes a bite from the pickle.

REUBEN

I have a PhD in Geophysics and Jason has a graduate diploma in applied science from the Double Happiness Institute for Privileged Drop Outs. Where's the justice in that?

Savchenko smiles at him suspiciously.

SAVCHENKO

Ambition? Is that it?

REUBEN

I owe it to a friend of mine. She helped me discover the leakage pattern. But she's dead now.

SAVCHENKO

I'm sorry to hear that.

REUBEN

You know how it is. One life is not so important when you have to power the world.

SAVCHENKO

You think Double Happiness killed her?

REUBEN

I think the radiation leaks killed her. But who cares what I think?

SAVCHENKO

(smirking slightly)

Its hard to wash down such vitriol with this soupy beer. Rudi!

Savchenko holds up two fingers. RUDI nods languidly and fetches a bottle of Stolychnaya from below the counter.

He places two shot glasses down and fills them.

REUBEN
Isn't that illegal?

SAVCHENKO
Drinking Chinese vodka is a crime
against humanity. Nostrovya!

Savchenko downs his glass.

SAVCHENKO
I can trust you, can't I?

Reuben picks up the glass and downs it. He grimaces at the
burning liquid.

REUBEN
Of course not.

SAVCHENKO
That's it.
(slapping him on the
back)
Actions speak louder than words.

Savchenko gestures for Rudi to refill the glasses.

SAVCHENKO
You and I have a problem. I want
to stay in the country. You want
promotion. We are both probably
the smartest people in the
republic, surely we should be
able to work something out.

REUBEN
I have worked something out, but
they won't listen.

SAVCHENKO
You've only worked out the
problem. They want a solution.

REUBEN
Replace the containers...

SAVCHENKO
At a cost of trillions of
yuan...don't be a fool. Drink up.

They down their vodkas.

REUBEN
You calling me a fool?

SAVCHENKO
So stupid you make my teeth numb.

REUBEN
(resignedly)
Is that so?

SAVCHENKO
But, in spite of that I like you.
We are brother scientists.
(beat)
Ever heard of a guy called Mickey
Mendoza?

Reuben shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
He wrote a paper about the very
containers you're talking about.
He postulated the leakage problem
and came up with a solution.

REUBEN
And what was that?

SAVCHENKO
Plastic shopping bags. We thought
he was mad.

Reuben downs another vodka despondently.

SAVCHENKO
Then we tried it.

Reuben looks at him steadily.

REUBEN
It worked?

SAVCHENKO
Polyurethane combined with a lead
oxide, poured in like cement.
Spreads to the sides and seals
all the gaps. Effective and
cheap.

REUBEN
You know how to make it?

Savchenko shrugs.

SAVCHENKO
Possibly. It means getting in
touch with Russia for more
details...which is against the
law.

REUBEN
So is this vodka. They're both
victimless crimes.

Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO
The only victim will be me.

REUBEN
Not if we identify the problem
AND the solution.

Reuben gets out of his bar chair and staggers toward the door.

SAVCHENKO
Where you going?

REUBEN
Home. Got work to do.

SAVCHENKO
Not like that.

Savchenko leads him over to a dark corner, looks around and pulls out a small bottle from his jacket and hands it to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Here is another gift from Russia.
Oborshik - the purifier. One shot
and it wipes all traces of any
drug from your system. You'll be
sober in seconds.

Reuben takes a pull and immediately shakes his head as the drug hits.

REUBEN
I can't help but feel a little
cheated.

Reuben hands him the bottle but Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
No thanks. I work better this
way.

CUT TO:

28 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

28

Savchenko sits staring into the middle distance. He still has the band aids on but is looking more tired. He focusses on a cockroach making it's way across the room.

SAVCHENKO
Hey, comrade.

Suddenly the wall is re-illuminated. He squints at the looming faces of the Magistrates.

SAVCHENKO
I'd kill for a drink.

MAGISTRATE
We're trying to ascertain your personal culpability.

SAVCHENKO
For what happened to him?
(beat)
There's no question. I am fully responsible. No one else had the vision to even contemplate what I did. I had to do something. Peasant families in Xinjiang were being blown apart by Russian tanks.

MAGISTRATE
And this was your solution?

SAVCHENKO
It was a solution.
(beat)
What was *your* solution? A fucking mining tax?
(beat)
My solution was good for China, good for the company and most of all good for Reuben. I *cared* about him.

The chief magistrate looks at him dubiously.

MAGISTRATE
YOU cared about HIM?

Savchenko drops his eyes.

SAVCHENKO
(quietly)
A lot of people cared about him.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. CONCRETE BUS STOP SHELTER - DAWN

29

Reuben sits alone at the bus stop. He stares at his plastic cup and the vitamins in his hand.

He tosses the vitamins in his mouth and is about to take a mouthful of water to wash them down when...

SAMIRA (O.S.)
Don't do it.

Reuben turns to see Samira sitting beside him in a white dress. He stares at her as he lifts the cup to his mouth and swallows.

SAMIRA
Limited nutritional value.

REUBEN
You didn't kill yourself. Who would believe that?

SAMIRA
(affectionately)
Can't fool you, Reuben.

Reuben slowly lifts the puffer to his mouth and gives himself a blast.

He looks over to see the other side of the bench is empty.

30 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

30

At his desk, Reuben looks down at his digital tablet. The page has a header: ARTICLE ARCHIVES - DOUBLE HAPPINESS GAZETTE. Below is the headline: RESEARCH GRADUATE GETS TOP JOB.

Underneath is a picture of a smiling Samira shaking Jeri's hand.

He hears footsteps and shuts it quickly.

REBECCA (O.S.)
You seen Yuri Savchenko this morning?

Reuben turns his head to see Rebecca staring down at him.

REUBEN
I'm sure he's around.

REBECCA
Not a good look.

They are interrupted by the MARTIAL MUSIC STING. They both turn to look at...

Gil's kindly face appearing on the monitor screens.

GIL

Due to the current economic adjustment brought about by the potential cease fire we're asking for volunteers to enrol in its Employment Intermission programme.

Reuben looks terrified.

Then he notices Savchenko beckoning him through the glass partition.

Gil continues her address over images of what looks like a pristine retirement village.

GIL

Staff on Employment Intermission will enjoy all the benefits of Paradise Village while they wait for better economic times...

There is a shriek from Mitch who is wearing his VR goggles. He starts blubbering like a baby.

Rebecca looks very worried.

REUBEN

They don't waste time.

Jason who has been over in the far corner of the room goes over to comfort his friend, but as he does so he sees other staff members gravitating away from him as if he has some sort of virus. So eventually he just pats him on the shoulder and slinks off.

Reuben walks quickly over to Savchenko.

REUBEN

Did you work it out?

SAVCHENKO

It was more difficult than I thought.

REUBEN

(lowering his voice)

What did your Russian friends say?

SAVCHENKO

I could only get through for a few minutes...and they said initial tests were positive, but they didn't know how long the seal would last.

(MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

There's apparently an additive that Mendoza refused to tell them about.

REUBEN

Why?

SAVCHENKO

He wanted certain assurances. It turns out he was scared of his employers.

Savchenko gestures toward the monitor.

REUBEN

Double Happiness?

SAVCHENKO

That's who he worked for, before he disappeared.

(beat)

Now suddenly this morning I get a call from immigration. They want to question me about my 'associates' back home.

REUBEN

Could be a coincidence.

Savchenko looks at him dubiously. Then he grimaces.

SAVCHENKO

Unlikely.

(beat)

Look, maybe this Mendoza is still around. We could track him down. The company would take the three of us seriously.

REUBEN

It's not that easy.

SAVCHENKO

You have to try. I'm in enough trouble already.

(beat, he sighs)

They're waiting for me in the leisure room.

Reuben nods as Savchenko walks off.

As Reuben heads back to his desk he notices Chris escorting Mitch from the room, as the other employees sit at their desks, taking surreptitious glances at him from above their VR goggles.

Reuben sits down and puts on his own VR goggles.

31 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

31

Reuben stands before CPU and Memory in the VR world. CPU is wearing a slinky crimson evening dress and high heels.

REUBEN
Any emails?

CPU
Only dirty ones.

REUBEN
Default personality please...

CPU instantly changes back to the way she was before.

REUBEN
And I'd like to change my
password.

CPU
Sure, Reuben. What to?

REUBEN
'FOEMJAGH488T03NJFUR7598699DNF3'.

CPU
You going to remember that?

REUBEN
I want you to look up the files
of a Double Happiness employee,
Mickey Mendoza.

MEMORY
There is no record.

REUBEN
Former employee.

CPU
That's a forbidden command.

REUBEN
Relog the command, repeat, login.
Abort. Command again.

CPU
OK, I can do it.
(beat)
If you want.

Reuben pauses and looks at her closely.

REUBEN
What do you mean?

CPU

But I'd have to send a report to
the mainframe.

REUBEN

OK.

CPU

I also have to send a report that
I'm thinking about sending a
report in precisely five seconds.
Four. Three. Two...

CUT TO:

32 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY 32

Reuben quickly takes off his VR goggles and switches them
off.

Then he looks over at Savchenko's VR goggles sitting on his
desk.

He looks around furtively and puts them on.

33 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY 33

Reuben stands before CPU. She is dressed in a jeans, boots,
a fur coat and a fur hat and is perched on a high stool.

CPU

(smiling)

Good morning, Dr Savchenko.

Reuben looks at her steadily.

REUBEN

I want information on a former
employee: Mickey Mendoza.

34 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 34

Savchenko smiles at the group of magistrates staring down
at him.

SAVCHENKO

It hurt to be betrayed, but
gratifying to know the
conditioning was working. After
all, it wasn't all about me. Any
chance of that drink?

MAGISTRATE

What if he woke up?

SAVCHENKO

See that was the beauty of it. The more he woke up, the more his ambition kicked in. His growing messiah complex would quash any doubts. We all get messages from our consciences every day.

(looking at each
Magistrate in turn)

'Stop this', 'Its wrong' 'You're a fool'. But we ignore them. Why? Because god is dead and we are the supermen. We're going to save the world.

CUT TO:

35 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

35

Reuben walks up to Savchenko who is nervously dunking a tea bag in hot water at his desk.

REUBEN

How was it?

SAVCHENKO

They wanted to know about this neutron bomb, whether Russia has the potential, etc. I told them I knew nothing, I studied conductors and battery systems. They were very polite about it.

(beat)

What have you found out?

Reuben leans closer to Savchenko.

REUBEN

Mickey Mendoza did my job and they got rid of him. There seems to be some sort of secret agenda...

SAVCHENKO

That sounds a bit paranoid.

REUBEN

Don't you think it's a little strange that I'm more qualified than anyone else in the company and yet I'm still in Waste?

SAVCHENKO

Not at all. Mediocrity rises. Where is Mendoza?

REUBEN
He's on Employment Intermission.

SAVCHENKO
Paradise Village.

Suddenly the screens burst into life with the CHINESE MUSIC STING. Gil appears smiling down at them with images of Pandas behind her.

GIL
This week's Double Happiness
charity ride is for Mei Mei the
Panda. So register for bike hire
now...

Reuben looks at Savchenko and nods.

36 EXT. WASTE LANDS - MORNING 36

Over a slight rise in the middle of a LIGHT INDUSTRIAL AREA two bicycles emerge. Reuben rides on laboriously, but with grim determination. Savchenko barely puffs.

They pass some clean looking buildings...

Then skirt a vacant lot, showing signs of neglect and decay...

A sickly wind rises blowing paper and plastic bags across the road as Reuben and Savchenko struggle forward.

37 EXT. SALT PILES - MORNING 37

Reuben and Savchenko ride past long rows of salt piles.

A pale orange sun rises behind them through a filthy haze.

38 EXT. PARADISE VILLAGE - MORNING 38

Reuben and Savchenko pull up their bikes outside a clean looking collection of neat cabins painted in bold primary colours.

There is no gate, only a yellow line painted across the entrance.

Reuben and Savchenko wheel their bikes toward it.

Reuben stops just before the line when he sees a sign reading:

PARADISE VILLAGE - NO UNAUTHORISED ENTRY OR EXIT

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Is this it?

Suddenly a frisbee flies out of nowhere and falls at Reuben's feet.

A man in a beige Waste uniform covered in dirt and bruises comes running up to them but stops dead just before the line.

The man is MITCH. He looks at Reuben and Savchenko with no hint of recognition. He is focussed on the frisbee that is lying on the ground.

REUBEN
Mitch?

MITCH
(glancing up at them)
Hi.
(beat)
Can I have my frisbee back?

REUBEN
Are you OK?

MITCH
I'm fantastic. Can I have my
frisbee back?

Reuben bends down slowly and picks up the frisbee. He holds it a metre away from Mitch's face. Mitch tries to grab it but won't stretch his hand across the line.

REUBEN
Do you know Mickey Mendoza?

Mitch looks at them nervously.

MITCH
Yeah, yeah, I know Mickey
Mendoza.

Reuben hands him the frisbee.

REUBEN
Where is he?

MITCH
Dunno.

Mitch hurls the frisbee back toward the cabins and runs off after it, picking it up and disappearing around a corner.

Reuben frowns and steps over the line. Savchenko follows.

39 EXT. PARADISE VILLAGE - DAY 39

Reuben and Savchenko walk beside a row of brightly coloured cabins.

They see a curtain fly across a window.

They hear someone lustily singing in strangled tones from deep within one of the vans:

SINGER (O.S.)
 Uranium, Uranium the mighty spark
 of freedom..!

Then there is the sound of someone laughing loudly in the distance. The laughter ends in uncontrolled coughing.

They both shudder and move forward.

40 EXT. PARADISE VILLAGE - A LITTLE LATER 40

Turning around a corner they see the frisbee lying on the ground broken cleanly in two.

Reuben bends down to pick it up...

MICKEY (O.S.)
 Don't touch it!

He stands up to see MICKEY standing in the open door frame of a cabin, waving his arms in the air. Mickey wears a ragged beige uniform but his hair and beard are longer.

MICKEY
 Get away from it. I'm serious.
 (then he looks closer at
 their uniform)
 Hey you're Double Happy guys!
 Come over here.

Reuben and Savchenko approach cautiously.

REUBEN
 Mickey Mendoza?

MICKEY
 Fuck yeah! That's me. Come on in.

Mickey disappears into the cabin.

41 INT. MICKEY'S CABIN - DAY 41

Reuben and Savchenko enter a cabin full of paper stacked up to the ceiling.

The walls are covered with Double Happiness propoganda and slogans, pictures of Gil and Jeri, tourist campaign ads for South Australia...

Mickey pulls a suitcase down and starts packing.

MICKEY

I am so glad to see you guys. I knew if I kept writing someone would listen...

REUBEN

There's something we need to know.

MICKEY

(continuing to pack)
Sure. Anything, I'll tell you anything.

REUBEN

You found leaks...

Mickey stops packing and glares at them both suspiciously.

MICKEY

(calmly)
No. There were no leaks. Everything's fine. I told you in the letters.

SAVCHENKO

Its OK. You can tell us.

Mickey stops suddenly and looks at them closely. He smiles nervously as he goes over to his bag and draws out a lead box. He slams it down on the kitchenette table.

MICKEY

OK, here is the last of them. The one I found in Mookra Gorge. I should have destroyed it with the others...and I'm sorry. But look...

Mickey opens the box and takes out a rock the size of a grapefruit. It is smooth on one side and rough on the other. He holds it in awe.

MICKEY

I'm not scared of it. It won't hurt me. I believe you.

Mickey shuts his eyes, lifts the rock to his lips and kisses it. Then he puts it back inside and shuts the lid.

MICKEY

Here take it. It's yours.

REUBEN
 (beat, guiltily)
 We're not here to take you back.
 But we might be able to help you
 if you give us the formula for
 the polymer.

MICKEY
 Wait a sec... I'm right?

Reuben nods.

MICKEY
 Shit, man. I kissed the rock!

REUBEN
 Just give me the calculations.

MICKEY
 Don't you remember? I burnt them,
 man. You made me.

SAVCHENKO
 You don't have them backed up?

MICKEY
 No. Who the fuck are you guys,
 anyway?

Mickey stands up and sweeps all the papers off the table.

MICKEY
 You're fucking with my head
 again!

Mickey picks up his half packed suitcase and throws all the
 contents over the floor. He turns back to them.

MICKEY
 (slowly, quietly)
 You enjoy this, don't you? You
 fuckers?

REUBEN
 We'd better get back to work.

Reuben grabs the rock and flies out of the cabin, leaving
 Savchenko sitting still staring at Mickey. Mickey's
 intensity wanes but he still breathes heavily. Savchenko
 slowly gets up and walks out.

Reuben sits before CPU. She is smiling at him kindly. The
 'rock' sits in front of them.

REUBEN
Nothing?

CPU
I didn't say that. 12 milligrays.
That's not nothing.

REUBEN
Are you set to empathy mode?

CPU nods calmly, sweetly.

CPU
I thought it would be best. You
seemed stressed.

REUBEN
12 milligrays is not enough.
They'll laugh at me.

CPU
Oh, I'm sure they won't laugh at
you. Everything is going to be
OK.

Reuben shakes his head and removes his VR goggles.

CUT TO:

43 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

43

Reuben looks across the room and is surprised to see
Savchenko talking to Rebecca and glancing across at him.

There is the sound of an announcement from the monitor.
Gil's kindly face appears on the screens.

GIL
In the interests of community
health Double Happiness is
pleased to announce a free,
thorough medical examination for
all of its staff in Waste...

Reuben inhales his breath deeply as Jason shuffles past
him.

JASON
You look a little pale, Reuben.

Reuben looks back at Savchenko and sees both he and Rebecca
are looking at him. Savchenko then walks back toward
Reuben.

REUBEN
What did she want?

SAVCHENKO

She wants to know my visa status.
She doesn't like immigration
officials hanging around. It's
bad for morale.

(beat)

Any radiation from that rock?

REUBEN

A little. Look...

(drawing Savchenko
aside)

I need some of those clenzers.

SAVCHENKO

You drunk?

REUBEN

No. Its these health checks. I
take some medication to help me
with nerves...

Savchenko continues to stare at him.

REUBEN

I sometimes have problems with my
perception of reality.

SAVCHENKO

You see things?

REUBEN

Something like that. Can you get
them?

SAVCHENKO

Sure. I'll have to sneak off. It
may take an hour or so.

REUBEN

I can cover for you.

Savchenko looks at Reuben suspiciously and sneaks off.

44 INT. MEDICAL CENTRE - DAY

44

Reuben approaches Chris who stands outside the door of the
medical centre.

Standing before him is a woman (LUCY) crying her eyes out,
her face covered in her hands.

CHRIS

Come on, Lucy. Stop crying.

(to Reuben)

Hey, Rube...

Reuben nods nervously.

CHRIS
 (gesturing hopelessly
 toward the woman)
 Depression. She tried to hide it.
 (he shakes his head)
 You shouldn't have done that,
 Lucy.

Reuben walks past Chris.

CHRIS
 Yeah, just go right in.

45 INT. DOCTOR'S ROOM - DAY

45

Reuben sits at one side of a clean white table in the middle of a sterile hospital ward with a line of beds in the background. At the other side of the table sits the DOCTOR who is looking at Reuben's test results.

He glances up at Reuben.

DOCTOR
 You're in great shape.
 (beat)
 According to this.

REUBEN
 (coughing)
 Thank you.

DOCTOR
 (maintaining his gaze)
 Especially seeing as you don't
 take your vitamins.

REUBEN
 But I do...

DOCTOR
 There's no trace of them.

REUBEN
 I must have forgotten.

DOCTOR
 I can report this, you know. Do
 you have problems remembering
 things?

At this point Samira sits up in the bed furthest away from them. Reuben notices but tries not to react.

REUBEN

No.

DOCTOR

Maybe I'll order a full catscan,
check your neuro impulses.

REUBEN

I don't think you have to do
that.

DOCTOR

YOU don't think I have to do
that? Are you a doctor?

REUBEN

No. I'm just saying...I've been
pretty busy on a very important
project and I might have
forgotten my vitamins now and
again...

The Doctor glares at Reuben momentarily, sighs, picks up a
big rubber stamp and slams it down on the paper:

'PASSED'

Then he flicks it over to Reuben.

DOCTOR

Get out.

Reuben gets up awkwardly and goes.

46 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - NIGHT

46

Reuben and Savchenko sit at the bar drinking shot glasses
of icy Russian vodka. The usual clientele of Russian
emigres are present.

REUBEN

He had me. I was as good as
exiled.

SAVCHENKO

Someone up there likes you.

REUBEN

He seemed extremely agitated.

SAVCHENKO

Can't be pleasant, binning people
all day.

(beat)

So what exactly is this condition
of yours?

REUBEN

(beat)

I see ghosts. A ghost. Samira. We were close. Worked on the same project as post graduates. Both started at Double Happiness at the same time. She was sent to Maralinga 7.

SAVCHENKO

How did she die?

REUBEN

Suicide is the official line. But I think it had something to do with the leaks.

SAVCHENKO

Or it's your subconscious telling you what you want to believe.

Savchenko shakes his head and hurls a slab of paper on the desk wrapped in a thick envelope.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe this will help. It took me all night, and many illegal link ups to St Petersburg, but I think I worked it out.

REUBEN

The polymer?

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO

I'm rather proud of it.

Reuben looks at him sadly.

REUBEN

There's still only 12 milligrays of radiation.

SAVCHENKO

(shrugging)

Its better than nothing. Maybe we have to trust Jeri.

Savchenko picks up a newspaper and shows the front page to Reuben.

Underneath the headline: DOUBLE HAPPINESS FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN there is a picture of Jeri handing over a one million euro cheque to a crippled child.

SAVCHENKO
 She does seem to love crippled
 children...

CUT TO:

47 INT. WASTE OFFICE - MORNING 47

Reuben sits at his desk passing a hand held scanner over the documents Savchenko gave him.

He looks up to see another EMPLOYEE weeping with their VR goggles on. He looks over at Savchenko who is pretending to be engrossed in some paper work. Savchenko shakes his head. Their eyes meet. Savchenko nods ever so slightly.

Reuben finishes the last page of the scan and puts on his VR goggles...

48 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY 48

CPU is standing before Reuben smiling. Reuben has a larger than life, old fashioned envelope in his hand. He hands it to her.

REUBEN
 Take this to Jeri.

CPU nods and walks out of the room. Reuben is about to take off the VR goggles when he hears the gentle tinkling music of a child's toy.

He looks across the room at the empty partitioned desks but sees nothing.

He slowly makes his way past each desk until eventually he sees...

Samira sitting behind the last one, leaning forward, her head resting on her hands, contemplating a stuffed panda bear: the source of the sound.

She looks up and smiles at Reuben.

SAMIRA
 Cute, isn't he?

REUBEN
 I don't see the appeal,
 personally.

SAMIRA
 No. I guess you wouldn't.

REUBEN
What did they do to you?

SAMIRA
(with a slight guffaw)
You think they're doing it to
you?

REUBEN
What?

SAMIRA
Wake up. It's bigger than you
think.

She reaches up and pulls the VR goggles from his face...

49 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY 49

Reuben is standing back in the office at the far end of the
room looking directly at Rebecca.

REBECCA
Apparently Jeri wants to see you.

REUBEN
OK.

REBECCA
Any idea why?

Reuben just shakes his head and walks off slowly.

49A EXT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM EPICENTRE. 49A

Reuben walks slowly up the intimidating exterior ramp of
the barrel shaped building.

50 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM EPICENTRE/RAMP - DAY 50

Reuben walks slowly up the long ramp leading toward Jeri's
office.

He looks up at three long red banners hanging from the
ceiling with the Double Happiness logo on them.

As he passes the monitor on the landing Gil appears on the
screen in front of scenes of Chinese Mountains.

GIL

The mountains in Xinjiang province may LOOK peaceful but rest assured literally thousands of Russian troops are ready to strike in spite of the alleged withdrawals...

Reuben nervously continues.

51 INT. JERI'S OFFICE - DAY

51

Reuben looks down the room at Jeri, who sits raised up in the middle of an illuminated corral of panels, very much like a nightclub bar.

Behind her is are five monitor screens all showing stock figures and/or DHU promotional material.

She smiles as Reuben makes the long journey toward her.

JERI

You're Reuben Henschke, waste technician from Division 129.

Reuben stops about five metres from her. He looks around and he notices there isn't another chair.

REUBEN

Yes.

JERI

I don't usually get emails from waste technicians telling me about serious problems. Why didn't you go though your supervisor?

REUBEN

I felt she was unwilling to see the scale of the problem.

JERI

Unwilling? That doesn't sound like a Double Happiness Waste supervisor. I've always found them very thorough.

REUBEN

Well, she didn't want to bother you. Anyway, the point is I have a solution.

JERI

Using plastic bags.

REUBEN

Yes.

JERI

And you thought that one up all
by yourself?

REUBEN

Yes. Test it. In the long run it
will save you a fortune.

Jeri glares at him.

JERI

Double Happiness Uranium isn't
just about making money at any
cost. Its about family.

REUBEN

I know.

JERI

Families are based on trust. And
maybe if you don't trust us, you
shouldn't be part of the family.

REUBEN

(getting agitated)

You have to do this, it will save
lives.

JERI

Now, Reuben. Don't you think
that's a little deluded? Maybe
you should have another medical,
with a more thorough doctor. Gil
will arrange an appointment.

REUBEN

But...

JERI

I think that concludes our
meeting.

Jeri continues to smile fixedly at Reuben until he turns
around and heads for the door.

52 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM EPICENTRE FOYER - DAY

52

As Reuben leaves he sees Rebecca sitting alone on the couch
watching him. She smirks at him as the martial music
heralds corporate leisure time.

REBECCA
Don't forget corporate leisure
time.

Reuben continues to walk past her.

REUBEN
Will that save me?

REBECCA
(smirking)
I don't think so.

Reuben walks away.

53 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - DAY

53

Jack stands at the counter looking at a jar of pickles. He holds up two fingers. Rudi draws out two pickles and places them on a plate. Jack looks at them despondently as Russians play chess in the background.

Reuben appears behind him.

REUBEN
She's going to exile me.

JACK
(beat, surprise then
recovers)
Let's sit down.

REUBEN
You said you used to work in
Legal...

Jack leads Reuben to a table. They both sit down.

JACK
Sort of...

REUBEN
Can Jeri sack me for failing to
follow a chain of command
procedure?

JACK
Jeri can sack you for sneezing.
But aren't you going to solve all
their problems?

REUBEN
No, Xiao Green Waste Disposal
from Shanghai is going to solve
the problems.

Suddenly Jack looks up.

JACK

A subcontractor? They can't do that. It's in the Charter. Even Jeri can't go against the charter. It's the law.

REUBEN

Where is this Charter?

Jack smirks at him.

JACK

Its widely available. I'm surprised you haven't stumbled across it already.

Reuben looks at him confused.

54 INT. LIBRARY - DAY.

54

Reuben wanders down the plain shelves of a vast library. He is looking at the spines of the dusty tomes and cross referencing it with a slip of paper in his hand.

Eventually he finds the most obscure aisle and makes his way down it.

Squashed between two other books is a slim volume that he pulls out, with great difficulty.

It's a ring bound file with a plastic cover. He blows off the dust, glances from side to side, then starts flipping through it.

55 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

55

Reuben slides the charter on to Savchenko's desk.

Savchenko picks it up and starts flipping through it.

REUBEN

No subcontracting. It's clearly stated in Chapter 217, subsection C, Clause 48. The penalty is nationalisation. We can get Rebecca on this.

SAVCHENKO

Would Jeri care?

REUBEN

Not even Jeri can go against the charter.

(MORE)

REUBEN(cont'd)

The board would have her sacked.
Just have to get to her before
Rebecca does.

Suddenly the Chinese martial music sounds and Gil's face appears on the screens.

GIL

I am pleased to announce this
month's recipient of the Double
Happiness exclusive retraining
scheme is Reuben Henschke...

Reuben drops his jaw in terror. He looks over at Jason who is smirking at him.

Reuben looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN

Retraining. Well, that's that.

He swallows hard and moves off.

56 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM EPICENTRE/RAMP - DAY 56

Reuben makes his up the massive ramp. He sees the doctor up on the distant ramp watching the TV monitor that is mounted there.

Then Samira wearing her pale green dress swings into step beside him. Reuben glances at her then faces straight ahead. He doesn't miss a step.

SAMIRA

That's it. A brave face.

REUBEN

Its all over now.

SAMIRA

They can't sack you. You're too
bloody clever.

REUBEN

They can silence me.

SAMIRA

Silence can be deadly. You taught
me that.

Reuben stops walking and stares at her as she disappears around a corner.

As Reuben makes his way to the first landing he hears the MARTIAL MUSIC STING and looks up at the smiling face of Gil on a monitor propped up on a table. Behind her is a caricature of a VICIOUS RUSSIAN SOLDIER COVERED IN BLOOD.

GIL
 Imperialist Russia has callously
 violated the cease fire agreement
 as the People's army bravely
 fights back...

The doctor laughs manically and turns to face him.

DOCTOR
 (triumphantly)
 Brilliant.

Reuben turns away and continues up the ramp.

57 INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

57

Reuben makes his way toward Jeri, who is standing up straight with her arms behind her back like an angry headmistress. She is now in front of the illuminated corral. In front of her is Rebecca. Rebecca has her back to Reuben, but glances over her shoulder at him as he approaches.

Chris is standing to attention by the wall. He looks at Reuben and shakes his head grimly.

Reuben eventually stops beside the smirking Rebecca.

JERI
 Needless to say I'm not
 impressed.

Reuben bows his head, preparing for the blow.

JERI
 It's about family, it's about
 loyalty...how many times do I
 have to keep saying that?

Rebecca nods smugly. Jeri turns to her.

JERI
 So why are you subcontracting to
 Shanghai?

Rebecca is dumbfounded.

REBECCA
 They were the lowest bidder.

JERI
 The lowest bidder?

REBECCA
 I just thought given the economic
 crisis...

JERI
It's not an economic crisis,
Rebecca. Its an adjustment.

REBECCA
I'm sorry.

JERI
You also ignored Dr Henschke's
warning about the potential
leakage situation.

REBECCA
I didn't think...

JERI
That's right, you didn't think.
You didn't liaise, you didn't
interface, you didn't engage. And
what sort of a manager does that
make you?

Rebecca looks desperately at Reuben who shrugs.

JERI
I'm giving you one chance to
redeem yourself.

Rebecca breathes a sigh of relief until Jeri says...

JERI
Maralinga 7.

Rebecca looks shocked.

JERI
That's right. If you can't deal
with people, then you can start
dealing with leaks.

Jeri nods at Chris who marches up and places a hand on
Rebecca's shoulder.

CHRIS
Come on, Becky.

Chris leads her away.

Jeri smiles at Reuben.

JERI
I have something special planned
for you.

Reuben looks scared as she offers him her arm.

57A EXT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM ENERGY BUILDING - DAY 57A

Reuben and Jeri walk arm in arm into the magnificent Energy building. Jeri nods cheerfully at TWO ENERGY WORKERS exiting who wave or nod back at her.

JERI
Hi Jonathan. Hi Adriana.

57B INT. DOUUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM ENERGY BUILDING/LIFT - DAY 57B

Reuben and Jeri stand in the lift as the Chinese inspired musak washes over them. Jeri stares straight ahead smiling serenely. Reuben looks worried.

58 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY 58

Jeri and Reuben stand in the door frame of a beautifully appointed individual office. It's a chic, modern design with Asian overtones.

JERI
Welcome to Energy.

In the corner is a clothing rack with a spanking BRIGHT BLUE ENERGY SHIRT and STRIKING BLACK SLACKS hanging from it. Reuben walks over to it slowly and caresses the fabric.

JERI
You're in the big league now.

She smiles and exits.

Some minutes later he is sitting at his desk in his new outfit.

He looks down at a SIMPLE BLUE BOX sitting on the desk it has the letters 'ORIENTATION PACK' written on the lid.

Reuben taps his fingers on the lid thoughtfully...

Then he opens it to find a blue pair of VR goggles. He puts them on.

59 INT. VR PROMO WORLD - DAY 59

A series of still pictures: a great open mine, happy miners, laughing children, serious scientists, appear and fade as the following commentary ensues:

GIL (V.O.)
From the Sun to the Soil. Uranium
equals Energy.
(MORE)

GIL(cont'd)

And now you're a part of it. A part of history. From the moment the Honourable Jack Langford Junior turned the soil at what is now known as Maralinga 3...

The sequence ends with a picture of a young Jack Langford looking sternly at the camera. He wears the tell tale scar. The picture freezes, with a pause symbol over the top of it.

60 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY 60

Reuben takes off the goggles. Then he sees CPU smiling at him from the door frame. She waves at him. Then walks away.

61 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - DAY 61

Reuben enters and sees Jack sitting at the bar drinking a small glass of sherry.

Other emigres sit miserably in the background, drinking tea and reading obscure newspapers.

REUBEN

A little early, isn't it?

JACK

(shrugging)

When you're retired...

REUBEN

You never told me what you retired from.

JACK

I didn't want it to influence our relationship.

Reuben sits down beside him and the barman pours him a shot glass.

REUBEN

It seems to have influenced Jeri.

JACK

I just put in a word. They still listen occasionally.

Reuben lifts his glass.

REUBEN

Thanks.

The two down their drinks.

REUBEN

Now I can actually change things.

Jack laughs bitterly and looks at Reuben.

REUBEN

What?

JACK

You think they put you in Energy to make the great Republic of South Australia safer?

(off Reuben's blank look)

They want you to pump it out, Reuben. Maximum product, maximum profit.

REUBEN

No profit if we're all dead.

JACK

They won't die. They'll just go somewhere else. As long as China keeps buying who cares how much we poison the landscape?

(beat)

I started the company to power the world, not destroy it.

REUBEN

You can still do that. I can make them act.

Beat as Jack looks at him paternally.

JACK

Maybe, as long as you don't let them distract you.

Jack looks over at the chess board set up in the corner.

JACK

Game?

REUBEN

No. I'd better get back.

JACK

Next time then.

REUBEN

Sure.

Reuben slinks off.

62 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

62

Reuben walks into his apartment and sees a LARGE PLASMA TV SCREEN, SEVERAL BOTTLES OF GRANGE HERMITAGE, and a SHINY NEW CAPPUCCINO MACHINE.

There is also a basket full of luxuries: CAVIAR, TRUFFLES, CONFIT DU CANARD TINS, YO YO BISCUITS, ETC.

Reuben pulls off the attached card and reads:

'Energy Welcome Pack'.

Reuben picks up a tin of caviar then he jumps to the sound of..

The automatic cappuccino machine making him a short black.

He walks over to it, picks up the cup and sniffs it. He is impressed.

Then he turns around to see Samira sitting at the table.

She is wearing the green Peace Dept overalls. She has the welts on her face, they seem redder, more pronounced. She smiles at Reuben benignly.

REUBEN
I've made it, Samira.

SAMIRA
You're not even close.

Samira starts coughing and blood droplets splatter all over the table. She spits out quite a gob of blood and draws the flow pattern on the table.

SAMIRA
It's perfect.

Reuben sees the Flow Pattern. She looks up at him.

SAMIRA
Don't forget that.

Reuben stares down at the bloody red flow pattern. Samira has disappeared.

63 EXT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM WASTE BUILDING - DAY

63

Reuben pulls up on a bike and enters the building...

64 INT. DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM WASTE BUILDING/FOYER - DAY 64

Reuben strides up to Chris who greets him happily.

CHRIS

Hi Reuben. Heard about the promotion. Congrats, man.

REUBEN

(awkwardly)

Thanks. I just wanted to see Savchenko.

CHRIS

(grimacing)

He's, er, had a little reshuffle. They've put him in archives.

REUBEN

Archives?

CHRIS

Yeah, they got a lot of books and shit. Good work for a refo. I think he'll like it. You know where it is?

Reuben nods dismissively and shuffles off.

65 INT. LIBRARY - DAY

65

Savchenko sits on a little stool, putting red stickers on page 101 of a book. He is now wearing the drab grey of an administrative dog's body. There is a stack of them beside him.

Reuben approaches him slowly.

Savchenko glances over at him and nods slightly.

Reuben awkwardly places the can of caviar on a stack of papers.

REUBEN

It's beluga.

(beat)

They moved you.

SAVCHENKO

Archive manager. They say it's because I'm good with paper. I have to put a red sticker on page 101 of all these books. I have no idea why. And I have a post doctorate award in geophysics.

REUBEN
They promoted me.

SAVCHENKO
(pausing and turning
around)
So I heard.

Reuben smiles at him.

REUBEN
Let's go.

SAVCHENKO
Where?

REUBEN
Mickey Mendoza.

Savchenko holds his gaze for a beat then shuts his book with a gentle slam.

SAVCHENKO
I hope he's feeling more
receptive.

66 INT. MICKEY'S CABIN - DAY

66

Reuben and Savchenko sit at the kitchenette table as Mickey stands before them in a thin dressing gown holding a mug of herbal tea.

MICKEY
(calmly)
I'm so very, very sorry. You sure
you won't take some chamomile?

Reuben shakes his head and looks at him steadily.

REUBEN
Just tell us more about the
rocks.

MICKEY
There were all over the place.

REUBEN
You recorded where you found
them?

MICKEY
I got a map, yeah. You gonna get
my job back?

REUBEN
Absolutely.

MICKEY

I guess you're this hot shot
Energy guy now. Do anything you
want.

REUBEN

Within reason. Can I please have
the map.

Mickey goes over to a pile of rubbish in the corner.

REUBEN

Was there anyone else out there?

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

MICKEY

I worked alone. Just me and a
bunch of refos.

REUBEN

Sudanese?

MICKEY

(with rising chagrin)

I don't fucking know. They don't
care who gets sent out there.
It's a question of chewing them
up and spitting them out. That's
right, isn't it? Fuck em when
they're down!

Savchenko glares at Mickey.

SAVCHENKO

And yet you still want to work
for them.

Mickey holds Savchenko's gaze.

MICKEY

Who else is there to work for?

CUT TO:

67 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

67

Savchenko and Reuben sit in his apartment, at his kitchen
table. Reuben has Mickey's map sitting before them.

SAVCHENKO

You think this map will prove
anything?

Reuben glances at him and smiles.

REUBEN
Watch this.

Reuben connects the crosses on the map with straight lines to form a pattern. He then puts a copy of his Flow Pattern beside it. The patterns are almost exactly the same.

SAVCHENKO
That's...unusual.

REUBEN
Mickey and I are part of the same sort of experiment.

SAVCHENKO
Experiment?

REUBEN
Maybe they did the same thing to Samira.

SAVCHENKO
Who exactly are they?

Reuben looks at him defensively.

REUBEN
I don't know. But the pattern has a meaning.

SAVCHENKO
Then you better work this meaning out, my friend. Because I'm in an empty library processing meaningless books, I'm a refugee and now, thanks to you I've been AWOL for the last 24 hours. If you don't fix this, I'm dead.

Reuben looks somewhat abashed.

CUT TO:

68 INT. JERI'S OFFICE - DAY

68

Jeri stands in the middle of the boardroom wearing a sporty tennis outfit swinging a racquet. She also wears a pair of VR goggles.

JERI
(serving)
Arghh!

Reuben clears his throat. Jeri looks around confused, then takes off her goggles.

JERI
(puffed)
Oh, Reuben. I was hoping you'd drop by. There's been a development on the leakage issue.

REUBEN
(surprised)
What sort of development?

JERI
Rebecca has found some small cracks in the waste containers. You were absolutely right. Amazing stuff.

REUBEN
I have evidence of where it could spread...

JERI
Brilliant.

Jeri bounds over to Reuben and whips the papers out of his hand.

JERI
Thanks a bundle.

She starts flipping through them happily.

JERI
Great stuff. I'm going to fast track this Reuben. Straight through to the budget committee.

REUBEN
It needs to happen now. I thought I could go up there...

Jeri laughs and slaps him on the back.

JERI
To Maralinga 7? Oh no. We need you here. You're much too valuable. Let me show you something.

Jeri walks over to the illuminated table and picks up a remote control. She points it at the monitors and they all transform to different versions of the flow pattern. Each is in the form of an engineer's drawing of a prototype engine.

Reuben is astounded. Jeri notices.

JERI
 Amazing isn't it? Finally we
 might have a way of storing all
 this energy.

Amazed, Reuben takes a closer look, Jeri joins him. Reuben reads the words 'Hydro Supercapacitors' on one of the screens.

JERI
 We can use it whenever we want. A
 ship can sail right in there and
 connect to the grid. No more
 wires going through Indonesia.

REUBEN
 Where did you get this?

JERI
 (pointedly)
 Samira.

Reuben looks at her, trying to hide his shock. Jeri smiles awkwardly.

JERI
 She was brilliant, but the
 pressure was too high. I should
 have seen the signs. And I'll
 regret that for the rest of my
 life.
 (looking affectionately
 at the diagrams)
 But no one could stop her working
 herself to an untimely demise.
 Not even you.

Jeri looks at him challengingly.

JERI
 But you can finish the job.

Reuben looks back at the screens.

She hands Reuben a large envelope marked 'Highly Confidential'.

Reuben takes the envelope cautiously.

Reuben tears open the envelope and takes out a 10 page document that clearly shows the Energy Cell pattern. He switches on his digital tablet that is sitting right beside it on the desk. The flow pattern appears. The two patterns are almost identical.

He is interrupted by CPU entering the office wearing her neat suit, only looking more made up. She carries a tray of sushi that she places on his desk.

CPU

Thought you'd better eat at your desk. You've a lot of work to do.

REUBEN

Who are you?

CPU

Your PC.

(off Reuben's confused look)

It's the Ana Digi VR interface. Unique to Energy division. You want to check your email?

REUBEN

OK.

CPU

No mail.

REUBEN

Fine. I need all the heat conducting charts of the energy cells...

CPU

Sure.

CPU slams down about 5 reams of paper on the desk.

He looks up at CPU.

REUBEN

How many readings were done?

CPU

Three thousand, two hundred and seventy six.

Reuben looks slightly surprised then steels himself.

REUBEN

Good. That's good.

CPU slams down another 5 reams of paper and smiles at him.

70 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - NIGHT.

70

From the edge of the door frame Jeri watches Reuben working away at his desk almost encased in a wall of paper reams. CPU and Memory are neatly stacking more around him.

71 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

71

Savchenko sits in the bunker and looks despondently at a small glass full of clear liquid that is sitting on the small table near him.

Then he looks at the face of the MAGISTRATE who is staring down at him.

SAVCHENKO

What's that?

MAGISTRATE

We want you to tell us about the patterns.

Savchenko picks it up and sniffs it. Then he takes a sip. He smacks his lips.

SAVCHENKO

Chinese, is it?

He pours it gently on the floor.

SAVCHENKO

Perhaps if it were Ukrainian or even Polish...

MAGISTRATE

Think carefully about what you're doing, Dr Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO

The patterns were the fingerprints of a difficult solution.

(disgustedly)

But you're not interested in difficult truths. You're not scientists. You're bureaucrats.

Savchenko blows across the lip of the glass making a breathy sound.

SAVCHENKO

(whispering)

Whoosh.

CUT TO:

72 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAWN

72

Reuben is on page 157 of the plans for the nuclear energy cells. He is ploughing through all the tiny bits of text.

But down the very bottom there is a hand written footnote in Russian.

Then he brings up another page that is a detailed technical document all in Russian. There are several others behind it.

He looks up thoughtfully.

73 INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

73

Jeri and TWO DIPLOMATS in GREY SUITS stand around a ridiculously large map of Australia. They're all sipping red wine from dainty glasses.

Reuben enters abruptly.

JERI

Reuben. We're celebrating. Join us.

The two executives nod and murmur and start wandering to either side of the room. Their eyes fixed on Reuben.

JERI

Dr Henschke's been putting in some incredible hours.

REUBEN

I want you do something for me.

Jeri approaches him.

JERI

Anything.

REUBEN

I want you to transfer Yuri Savchenko to Energy.

JERI

Savchenko?

One of the executives leans over and whispers something in the ear of the other executive. Jeri frowns and grimaces awkwardly.

JERI

Unfortunately we can't do that. It turns out he was a spy. We thought he was a bona fide refugee but he was selling us out all along. You know anything about emails to Russia or accessing restricted files?

Reuben shakes his head slowly.

Jeri winces sympathetically.

JERI

And I suspect his friendship with you was all part of the game. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Have a frog cake.

She gestures to a plate laden with bright green frog cakes.

REUBEN

No. I want to get back to work.

JERI

Good for you.

Reuben glances at her thoughtfully, then exits.

74 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

74

Reuben enters his office to see CPU lounging on his chair with her feet on the desk. She is wearing a Russian fur hat, jeans and boots.

There is a bottle of Stolychnaya and two shot glasses sitting by her heels.

REUBEN

Email from Savchenko?

CPU nods and sits up. She pours a shot of vodka.

CPU

He wants you to drink this first.

She hands him the shot glass and pours herself one.

CPU

Nostrovya!

They down their drinks.

CPU

Mickey Mendoza is dead.

Reuben looks at CPU for a second then goes to the desk and picks up his digital tablet.

He walks toward the door but just before he leaves he stops and turns back to CPU.

REUBEN

I don't know how long I'll be.

CPU
 (smiling)
 No problem.

75 EXT. PARADISE VILLAGE - DAY 75

Reuben walks through the lines of cabins looking around nervously. There is hardly a sound.

Around a corner he sees Mitch tossing a broken frisbee around. It is stuck together with sticky tape and doesn't fly very well.

Suddenly Mitch notices Reuben and slinks away.

76 INT. MICKEY'S CABIN - DAY 76

Reuben enters to see Jack sitting in the kitchenette. The van is now completely empty, except for a small box that lies on the kitchenette table. Jack is stroking it sadly.

JACK
 You missed the ceremony. It was a lovely affair. Blokes in white suits and gas masks cramming everything into plastic bags. It's what Mickey would have wanted.

REUBEN
 What are you doing here?

JACK
 He was one of the good guys. A good employee.

REUBEN
 He was mad.

JACK
 If he was mad then what does that make you? You followed his advice when it was convenient. And now what are you doing?

REUBEN
 I'm working on the batteries. Samira's project...

Jack laughs bitterly.

JACK
 Nuclear Supercapacitors? Jeri tell you that? Its a smokescreen, Reuben. She's keeping you on ice.
 (MORE)

JACK(cont'd)

What happened to the real research?

REUBEN

I was planning on getting established...

JACK

They got to you. They always do.

Jack gets up and grabs his hat. He pushes his way past Reuben.

77 EXT. MICKEY'S CABIN - DAY

77

Jack storms off into the middle of the lawn area and pours the ashes out.

JACK

You think Jeri's done anything about those leaks?

Reuben watches the ashes get taken by the wind as Jack digs into his pocket and retrieves some car keys.

JACK

Here.
(he tosses them to
Reuben who looks at
them confused)
They're car keys.

REUBEN

A car?

JACK

A 6 litre diesel powered four wheel drive. It's yours. Go out to the field. Find the proof and solve the problem. It's what scientists do.

Jack pours the last few particles out.

JACK

If you don't want to do it for Mickey, then do it for Samira.

Then he walks away in disgust.

78 INT. RUSSIAN CAFE/BAR - DAY

78

Reuben enters to see Savchenko sitting alone at the bar with a bottle of Stolichnaya in front of him.

He sits beside him. Savchenko pours himself another shot.

REUBEN
I see they haven't caught you
yet.

SAVCHENKO
They know I can't escape. I have
nowhere to go.

Reuben tosses the keys on the counter.

REUBEN
Now you do.

Savchenko looks at him slowly. Then pours him a drink. They
both smile and down them.

CUT TO:

79 EXT. FREEWAY - DAY. 79

A 4 x 4 roars along a freeway...

REUBEN (O.S.)
So where did you learn to drive?

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
In St Petersburg these beasts are
still legal. Only good thing
about the place.

79A EXT. TUNNEL - DAY 79A

The 4 x 4 bursts out of a tunnel through the Adelaide Hills
(?).

79B EXT. SEALED ROAD BESIDE A PIPELINE - DAY 79B

The 4 x 4 skirts a large pipeline. Nuclear stacks appear on
the horizon.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
If I'm sent back there they'll
kill me.

REUBEN (O.S.)
They won't send you back.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
What if you don't find any leaks
and all this has been the ravings
of a madman?

REUBEN (O.S.)
Trust me. I know what I'm doing.

79C EXT. COUNTRY TRACK - DAY 79C

The 4 x 4 hits a dirt road and starts kicking up lots of dust.

80 EXT./INT. COUNTRY TRACK - DAY 80

Savchenko drives along squinting at the barren landscape. Reuben looks out the passenger window.

He sees Samira in a flowing white dress some distance away. She disappears behind a shrub as the car moves along. Reuben rubs his eyes.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
So where are we headed?

Reuben breaks out of his reverie and looks back at the road.

REUBEN
Rebecca.

Reuben tries to smile but can only dredge up a grimace.

81 EXT. MARALINGA 7 - DUSK 81

In the distance is a small building in the middle of a barren, rocky plain.

As the 4 x 4 pulls up beside it Reuben notices a Chinese facade flanked by lion statues. It has a single door and an intercom system.

Reuben and Savchenko, hop out of the car and approach the building cautiously. There is an offering of flowers and incense burning in a small bowl by the door.

SAVCHENKO
To keep the evil spirits away.

REUBEN
It didn't work.

Reuben places his face close to the intercom speaker just by the door. He presses a button that makes a sickly buzz.

REUBEN
Hello?
(beat)
Hello?

REBECCA (O.S.)
Who is it?

REUBEN
It's Reuben Henschke.

REBECCA (O.S.)
(beat)
Hi.
(beat)
Door's open.

Reuben looks at Savchenko suspiciously. Savchenko shrugs.
Reuben pushes the door and it swings open.

81A INT. CONCRETE STAIRWELL - DAY 81A

Reuben and Savchenko make their way down the stairs of a bare concrete shaft

82 INT. MARALINGA 7/COMMON ROOM - DAY 82

Reuben and Savchenko sit at a modest table in front of Rebecca who is wearing a pair of pink, stripy pyjamas.

The space looks like a miner's recreation room, with an old pool table and modest couches. There's an old but well looked after fridge in the corner. The walls are filled with posters of nature scenes. There is one monitor screen with information constantly streaming down it.

Rebecca is perched on the chair, chewing her nails nervously. She's not quite mad but has extreme cabin fever.

REBECCA
It is so good to see you, Reuben.

REUBEN
Thanks. It's good to see you too.

REBECCA
No, I mean it. We've had our differences in the past but honestly, you've opened my eyes. Dangers need to be addressed.

REUBEN
Exactly. You've done some good work.

Rebecca pauses and stares at the two of them maniacally.

REBECCA
I forgot. I got cake. Real cake.

She leaps out of her chair and bounds over to an OLD FRIDGE. She extracts a Christmas CAKE and places it carefully on the table.

She digs out a plastic HOLLY LEAF from amongst the crap on the desk and places it just so.

REBECCA
Beautiful, isn't it.

SAVCHENKO
You heard from Jeri lately?

Rebecca holds up a severed cable.

REBECCA
(laughs)
No.

REUBEN
Who did that?

REBECCA
Dunno. Just happened. It was just after I sent the leakage reports.
(beat, whispering confidentially)
She was really upset when I told her about the leaks. Not happy at all. I think maybe SHE made it happen.

SAVCHENKO
She broke the cord. How?

REBECCA
(knowingly)
Satellites.
(beat)
What are you guys doing here?

Savchenko and Reuben exchange glances.

REUBEN
(beat)
We're here to take you back.

Rebecca shakes her head. She gets up and walks over to the drawer and pulls out a knife.

REBECCA
No, no, no, no, no. I got work to do. I need to make amends.

REUBEN
That's right. We need to measure all those leaks you reported. And then...you're forgiven.

Rebecca sits down, wielding the knife.

REBECCA

Do you want some cake? It's real
cake!

She plunges the knife into the heart of the cake.

83 INT. MARALINGA 7/COMMON ROOM - NIGHT 83

Rebecca sleeps on a fold out cot holding a stuffed panda bear.

Reuben and Savchenko watch her.

REUBEN

She's not coping too well.

SAVCHENKO

Wait til she finds out we're
AWOL.

REUBEN

She won't have to. I'll have some
results for us by then.

Savchenko looks at Reuben dubiously.

84 EXT. ROCKY RIDGE - MORNING 84

Reuben stands on the ridge looking out at the plain below. He holds up a Geiger Counter toward the plain. There is a slow chirping sound. He looks down at the counter and suddenly it starts increasing in pace and volume.

He looks up and sees Samira approaching him slowly in her white dress.

As she walks right up to him the counter goes ballistic. Eventually it is touching her chest and making a high pitched squeal. Samira smiles. Suddenly the counter stops dead. Samira exhales gently, in the gentlest of sighs.

85 INT. MARALINGA 7/BUNKROOM - DAWN 85

Reuben awakes with a start. He looks up at Savchenko who is grinning like a Cheshire cat. He holds up a bottle of Stolychnaya.

SAVCHENKO

Breakfast?

Reuben frowns at him as he tries to focus on the bottle.

SAVCHENKO
I found a case of them in the
store room. Along with this.

He tosses a can of Beluga caviar on Reuben's makeshift bed.
Then he looks over at Rebecca who is standing in the door
frame.

REBECCA
It's not mine!

SAVCHENKO
Then whose is it?

Reuben struggles to his feet.

REUBEN
We better get going.

86 EXT. MARALINGA 7 - MORNING

86

Reuben and Savchenko are loading some CASES and GEIGER
COUNTERS into the back of the 4 x 4, when Savchenko
notices...

Rebecca walking up to them still in her pyjamas, but now
wearing an old dressing gown.

SAVCHENKO
What happened to your uniform?

REBECCA
It just didn't really do it for
me. Not out here.

Savchenko looks at her pyjamas critically, then bends down
and grabs another bag.

SAVCHENKO
So you've opted for the evening
casual look...

REUBEN
You look fine.

Rebecca half smiles at Reuben.

86A EXT. COUNTRY TRACK - MORNING

86A

The 4 x 4 makes it's way across the barren landscape.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Jeri's gonna be happy. Isn't she?

REUBEN (O.S.)
You'll be promoted.

REBECCA (O.S.)
We'll all be promoted. Together.
Like old times.

REUBEN (O.S.)
Sure. Like old times.

87 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DAY

87

Reuben lies prostrate on the ground running a Geiger counter over a small section of earth. The ticking is slow and weak.

Reuben frowns. He looks up. Savchenko is standing a couple of metres away with another Geiger counter. He shakes his head.

Reuben struggles to his feet.

Reuben passes the counter over a middle sized shrub. But the ticking is still slow and weak.

Savchenko wanders over.

SAVCHENKO
That's not enough radiation to
save our jobs.

Reuben puts the counter down and picks up a shovel.

He starts digging a hole nearby. Savchenko watches him despondently.

SAVCHENKO
What are you doing?

REUBEN
I'm looking for lead traces.
These counters may have been
tampered with.

SAVCHENKO
By who?

Reuben ignores him and continues to shovel soil into a metal container.

Savchenko looks at Rebecca who is eyeing them suspiciously from a distance as she swigs tea from a thermos.

88 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - AFTERNOON

88

Reuben sits on the top of a small ridge holding up a test tube full of clear liquid against the dwindling light.

Savchenko stands ten metres away staring out at the horizon.

Rebecca is making her way slowly up the rise. Savchenko turns to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

This is pointless.

REUBEN

There's still a few more locations.

Rebecca strides up to them with a picnic basket.

REBECCA

You guys want a sandwich?

She pulls out a bottle of wine.

REBECCA

I got a Chenin Blanc. Barossa Valley.

Cut to...later. The three of them are eating sandwiches up on the ridge as the sun begins to lower in the sky. Savchenko picks up the bottle and reads the back of the label.

SAVCHENKO

You may be a somewhat slovenly dresser, Rebecca but you have a discerning taste in wine. 2010 was a pretty good year.

He looks at Reuben awkwardly. Rebecca looks at him too.

REBECCA

I have seen something that might help us. Or it might screw us completely.

Reuben and Savchenko stop chewing and look at her closely.

REUBEN

OK.

REBECCA
 (carefully)
 It may freak you out.

CUT TO:

89 EXT/INT. COUNTRY TRACK/4 X 4 - LATE AFTERNOON 89

The car rumbles along with Rebecca in the front and Reuben in the back.

Reuben looks out the window and sees Samira in the distance.

REUBEN
 They're over there. To the left
 beside that boulder. (*depends on
 actual location*)

Rebecca turns around and looks at him.

REBECCA
 How did you know?

Savchenko brings the car to a stop.

90 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DUSK 90

Reuben walks toward the distant Samira with Rebecca one pace behind him. Savchenko follows some metres away.

REBECCA
 They've been here for awhile.
 But, really, they're not actually
 causing any trouble...

Reuben looks back toward Samira but she is gone.

He walks forward a few metres and sees...

Two bodies lying in the dirt, dark grey covered in twisted, molten flesh.

They wear PEACE DEPT overalls

REBECCA
 You think I should have told Jeri
 about this?

REUBEN
 Best you didn't.

She nods her head.

REBECCA
Yeah, that's what I thought.

91 INT. MARALINGA 7/BUNKROOM - AFTERNOON 91

Reuben sits at the desk and carefully scrapes off a piece of bone and places it in a petri dish.

Rebecca appears behind him.

REBECCA
You right there?

REUBEN
(engrossed)
I'm fine.

Rebecca exchanges a look with Savchenko who is sipping Stoly and flipping through a magazine.

Then she exits...

Reuben carefully adds saline solution.

Then he places the dish in the drawer of a small grey box and puts a pair of VR goggles on.

92 INT. VR/MICROSCOPE - AFTERNOON 92

The image of a bone zooms in to become...

The image of a collection of cells

To the image of a single cell

To the image of the surface of a cell

To the image of a PROTEIN MARKER - the same shape as the flow pattern.

93 INT. MARALINGA 7/BUNKROOM - AFTERNOON 93

Reuben looks up suddenly and takes the glasses off. Savchenko notices him from the corner of the room.

SAVCHENKO
Anything?

REUBEN
Possibly.

Later...

Reuben stands before a large sheet of clear perspex drawing the flow pattern.

Savchenko sleeps on the couch behind him. Rebecca wanders up to him yawning and stretching.

REBECCA
You been up all night?

Reuben turns and looks at her slowly.

REUBEN
Is it morning?

REBECCA
Ten o'clock.
(beat)
What do you call that?

REUBEN
Progress.

Reuben goes back to his drawing and adds more detail.

Later...

The three sit around the table looking at a single, grey bone. Rebecca and Savchenko have coffee mugs.

REUBEN
The subject received a massive dose of radiation all at once.

REBECCA
The leaks?

REUBEN
I don't think so.

REBECCA
It has to be, it matches the spot on the map. There's nothing else that could kill like this.

REUBEN
There's a neutron bomb.

Savchenko looks at him dubiously. Rebecca is incredulous.

REBECCA
Are you kidding me? But it's all about the leaks. That's what you said.

REUBEN
Things are worse than I thought.

REBECCA

Double Happiness is developing bombs? So where's the blast radius? Where's the collateral damage?

REUBEN

In theory there doesn't have to be any. If these patterns are right. Its all about cellular damage. Its a smart bomb. The smartest bomb ever conceived of.

REBECCA

Again with these fucking patterns. What are you? Some kind of demented prophet of doom.

Rebecca gets up and storms out.

REBECCA

All I wanted was my fucking job back.

Reuben looks at Savchenko who is staring at him, trying to figure him out.

REUBEN

What?

Savchenko shakes his head. Reuben exits.

REUBEN

I have research to do.

94 EXT. ROCKY RIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

94

Reuben stands on top of the rise scanning the horizon.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

Do you have any idea of what you're doing?

Savchenko stands over his shoulder swigging a bottle of Stolychnaya. He has one of Reuben's drawing in his other hand. He slumps against a rock.

SAVCHENKO

You and your patterns.

REUBEN

You're drunk.

SAVCHENKO

(looking at the drawing)
They're very pretty patterns.

REUBEN

There's a reason why they killed Mickey and Samira. They're making weapons.

SAVCHENKO

Theoretical weapons that don't even work on paper. You know as well as I do the neutron bomb is just a fantasy.

(beat)

Mickey died from being a fool.

(beat)

I don't know what Samira died of.

Savchenko gets up and staggers back toward the entrance of Maralinga 7. He leaves the vodka beside Reuben. Reuben looks at it despondently.

94A EXT. ROCKY RIDGE - DUSK

94A

Reuben walks slowly across the ridge and stops abruptly. He shivers, then looks out to the horizon.

He blows a gentle sigh from his lips.

Then he sees a vague heat shimmer. His eyes open wider.

SAMIRA (O.S.)

I knew you'd work it out.

Reuben turns to see Samira standing beside him.

REUBEN

It's the marked cells. Was that what you were really working on?

Samira keeps smiling at him. Then she looks out to the horizon.

REUBEN

Why did you do it?

SAMIRA

Me? I hardly did anything.

She approaches him closer, revealing emerging bruises and the facial welts.

REUBEN

Then what happened to you?

She reaches out and holds his cheeks.

He see blood trickle from her nose. The marks on her face are incredibly prominent.

SAMIRA

It wasn't your fault. I knew the risks.

Reuben looks shocked, as if something incredible is dawning on him.

SAMIRA

They gave me a PhD. Posthumously. Rather pointless really as they wouldn't tell anyone. Especially not you.

Reuben looks desperately at Samira.

REUBEN

What have I done?

SAMIRA

Sleep no more.

She creeps incredibly close to Reuben. Her lips are almost touching his.

SAMIRA

(whispering)

Reuben hath murdered sleep...

She kisses him gently and slowly, then her face leaves the frame. He keeps his eyes shut - his face pure pain.

95 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

95

Savchenko laughs ruefully.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe I could have devised some crueller plan to extract the data from his mind. But I respected him. He was my friend. So I took the risk. I didn't know how fast he was waking up...

96 INT. MARALINGA 7/BUNKROOM - DAWN

96

Reuben sits at the table fully dressed. He looks at the uncapped bottle of vodka standing before him. Slowly, deliberately he replaces the cap. Grabs the bottle, slings a bag over his shoulder and goes over to the sleeping Savchenko.

Reuben shakes Savchenko awake. Savchenko squints at him sleepily.

SAVCHENKO

What's up?

Reuben throws a shirt at him and hands him the bottle of vodka.

REUBEN

We have some field work to do.

Savchenko nods, takes a swig, offers the bottle to Reuben. Reuben shakes his head.

CUT TO:

97 EXT/INT. COUNTRY TRACK/4 X 4 - EARLY MORNING 97

Savchenko and Reuben trundle along. Reuben has the wheel. Savchenko is stealing glances at Reuben. Reuben stares straight ahead.

SAVCHENKO

So where did you learn to drive?

REUBEN

(looking across at him)
I don't know. Maybe it was the Ukraine.

SAVCHENKO

You're a man of hidden talents.

REUBEN

Hidden everything...

Beat. Savchenko's eyes start to grow heavy. He shakes himself awake. Then his head lolls backwards and his eyes close. His head falls on Reuben's shoulder. Reuben gently hugs him.

98 EXT. COUNTRY TRACK - DAWN 98

The sun rises over the receding 4 x 4.

99 EXT. BARREN RIDGE - MORNING 99

Savchenko's eyes slowly open.

He sees a half drunk bottle of vodka wedged against a rock inches from his nose.

Then he struggles into a sitting position. Looking around he sees a satellite phone a few metres away from him, also half buried in the sand. Gentle, intermittent static comes from it.

Savchenko gets to his feet and walks stiffly over to the phone. He picks it up and looks out over the horizon.

He is in the middle of nowhere.

SAVCHENKO

Hello, Reuben.

REUBEN (O.S.)

You're in the middle of nowhere,
it has to be 45 degrees by now.

SAVCHENKO

Actually I find it rather
refreshing. You left me the
vodka. That was kind of you.

REUBEN (O.S.)

But I'm not a kind man, am I
Yuri?

SAVCHENKO

That depends entirely on your
perspective.

100 EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DAY

100

Reuben is standing at the foot of a ridge with the satellite phone to his ear.

REUBEN

I want you to tell me who you're
working for.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

I'm working for you, Reuben.

REUBEN

Then who am I working for?

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

The good of humanity.

(beat)

Look behind you.

Reuben turns around and sees a WOMAN (Jeri) standing at the crest of the ridge beside a surveying tripod. The woman wears green overalls and has a protective hood on. She holds another hood in her hand.

Reuben is wearing the green overalls with the dove peace symbol on the back as in Scene One.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

You're the messiah.

Reuben drops the phone to his side and walks up toward the crest of the ridge.

At the top he notices the woman in green overalls is Jeri.

Jeri smiles at him and hands him the hood with the tinted goggles.

Reuben passively puts the hood on and notices the pair of binoculars he has hanging over his shoulders.

Jeri points toward the plain.

Reuben holds his binoculars to his eyes and sees...

POV Reuben:

Three FIGURES on the plain setting up equipment all wearing Peace Department overalls. Mickey is setting up the tripod. Samira stands next to him and Andreas sits on the ground smoking.

Then he looks down at a digital watch. It reads 2:59:52.

REUBEN

No...

Reuben throws down the binoculars and runs down the ridge as the HEAT SHIMMER washes across the plain.

101 EXT. ROCKY PLAIN - DAY

101

Reuben runs up to the dying Samira and holds her face in his arms.

In the background Mickey is fumbling about with the medical kit.

Reuben lifts Samira's face up revealing the three welts he has seen so many times before.

Mickey stands over his shoulder.

MICKEY

What the fuck is happening?

REUBEN

It was the wrong protein.

Samira looks up at him and smiles.

SAMIRA

It's OK.

REUBEN

You were conditioned.

SAMIRA
You couldn't know.

REUBEN
I ran the tests over and over
again...

SAMIRA
I know you did.

Samira shuts her eyes and goes limp.

REUBEN
Sam?

He scrutinises Samira's face, trying to will the life back
into it.

CUT TO:

102 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 102

Savchenko gazes into the middle distance.

SAVCHENKO
I'm not sure who she loved more:
Reuben or the bomb. He had her
spellbound. And he knew it. That
was his crime...

103 EXT. COUNTRY TRACK - DAY 103

Reuben staggers down the track as he tears off the hood
with the goggles.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
He'd worked out a way of
protecting the cells from
radiation. A type of conditioning
that threw up various protein
signals on the surface of the
cell. Patterns that told the
immune system to kill or let
live...

Eventually he falls on his face and starts choking on the
dust.

104 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 104

SAVCHENKO
Mickey and Samira were
conditioned exactly the same way.
Only Samira was pregnant.
(MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

This altered her metabolism somewhat. She didn't know, nor did he, until the autopsy. That's what drove him mad.

MAGISTRATE

Before he could tell you how to recognise the right protein.

SAVCHENKO

Yeah. The flow pattern. We couldn't work it out.

(beat)

I always suspected it was a mistake letting him work with his wife.

105 EXT. COUNTRY TRACK - DAY

105

Reuben struggles to his feet, but is unsure of which way to go.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

So we brought him back, a new man, with new memories, but the same brilliant mind...

Reuben looks down one end of the road, it leads to a crest. He turns the other way. It leads to an equally nondescript crest.

106 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

106

Savchenko looks around at all the projected Magistrates.

SAVCHENKO

We brought him back for the good of humanity. To control a brutal, bloody conflict. It really was about peace.

The chief magistrate sighs deeply and cuts him off.

MAGISTRATE

That's enough, Dr Savchenko.

Savchenko looks at him nervously.

SAVCHENKO

What? Is that it.

He looks around at the magistrates all of whom seem to be writing something down off screen.

SAVCHENKO

Don't you want to know where he is?

MAGISTRATE

The committee recommends Double Happiness Uranium be nationalised and Dr Savchenko... be exiled.

Savchenko is shocked.

Chris the security guy approaches Savchenko unlocks his chains, takes him by the arm and stands him up.

SAVCHENKO

What about Jeri? She was in control. For the love of God....

MAGISTRATE

God is dead, Dr Savchenko.

Chris pushes a Hessian sack over Savchenko's head and starts leading him from the room.

107 EXT. BOARDROOM - DAY

107

Chris leads Savchenko through the dark passage area that introduces the boardroom.

Then he tears the sack off his head. Savchenko sees...

Jeri and Rebecca, flanked by Mickey and Jack. They all wear dark grey business suits with striped ties. Jeri smiles at Savchenko sweetly.

JERI

Hi Yuri. Sorry about all that.

SAVCHENKO

I thought you were exiled?

JERI

I was. But then I got a job with Xiao Green Corp, who, as it turns out have generously agreed to buy Double Happiness from the government at a very reasonable price. So, ironically, I'm back.

Savchenko nods, but still looks very confused.

JERI

And I'd like to offer you a job.

SAVCHENKO

But I'm exiled.

JERI
 (laughing)
 Yuri Savchenko may be exiled. But
 not Tony Gillard.

She shows him an I.D. Card from the SA Parks and Rangers Association. His face appears on it, clearly identified as Dr. Tony Gillard.

Savchenko looks at it thoughtfully. Then up at Jeri.

JERI
 Ready to get him back?

Savchenko slowly smiles.

SAVCHENKO
 Sure.
 (beat)
 I miss him.

108 EXT. COUNTRY TRACK/BITUMEN ROAD - DAY 108

Reuben sits at the junction of a dirt track and a sealed road. He is wearing old jeans and a long sleeved khaki shirt and now has quite a facial growth. Beside him lies an ragged old broad brimmed hat.

He slowly draws the flow pattern on the sand, connecting each circle with a gently line. The sound of a distant car engine makes him look up.

He stands up and gazes into the distance, then he starts waving.

A 4 x 4 pulls up beside him and Reuben opens the passenger door. Inside is Savchenko. He wears the khaki uniform of a park ranger.

SAVCHENKO
 You're one lucky bastard.

109 EXT/INT. DESERT HIGHWAY/4 X 4 - DAY 109

The car speeds along with Savchenko at the wheel. Reuben is looking slightly confused.

SAVCHENKO
 What were you doing out here?

REUBEN
 I'm studying birds.

Savchenko looks at him confused.

REUBEN
Ever heard of the Sturt Desert
Wren?

SAVCHENKO
I thought they were extinct.

REUBEN
(shaking his head)
They have a very interesting
defence mechanism. It's in their
cells.
(beat)
But you wouldn't be interested in
that.

Savchenko shrugs.

SAVCHENKO
We have a long drive.

He rummages down in between his seat and the car door and
pulls out a bottle of Stolychnaya.

SAVCHENKO
You like Vodka?

Savchenko smiles at him.

Cut to black.

The end.

APPENDICES

Writing is Rewriting

**Defining the purpose of drafts in feature screenplay development in a
collaborative, micro-budget environment**

By Matthew Paul Hawkins B.A. (Hons), Grad. Dip. Ed, M.A.

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APPENDIX A

‘THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER’ – Synopsis # 1

September 12th 2008

Jim is a man who lives alone in a lighthouse on a small island off the West Australian coast. His lighthouse is the final point of communication before ships make their way from Australia to South Africa or the Red Sea, eventually ending up in Europe. Jim spends his time alone broadcasting weather and shipping reports that are vital information to the ships that pass by his station (the light of the light house itself is somewhat superfluous in this modern age of GPS satellite positioning, etc. but all the same Jim lights it at 6pm every evening as a kind of tradition).

Every day Jim communicates via satellite phone with Judy who works for the CSIRO. He has never met Judy but a relationship has developed over time and it seems that Judy is Jim’s only real friend, for amongst the meteorological data are innuendos of affection and intimacy. Judy even sends Jim the odd care package.

Jim is also studying for his PhD in physics that involves predicting weather patterns and possible something to do with global warming. Every night he pours over figures and reads heavy old textbooks about the weather. He is concentrating on some old theories of heat shifts in the oceans and thinks he can reconcile some modern ideas with it.

One day Jim notices a pattern in the tides that indicate an increase in global warming. He also witnesses bizarre acts by whales and gannets. It seems that nature has been turned upside down and Jim is positive he has stumbled across a means of predicting a steep curve in global warming and is determined to find a means to prevent it. Some of the old texts he’s been studying seem to affirm this view. He’s convinced he’s stumbled upon something incredible that involves the future of the entire world (or perhaps not something as melodramatic as that, but you get the idea)

Consequently the weather starts disintegrating and Jim has the feeling that he is not alone, that someone has made their way on to his remote island and is up to no good. He’s also getting strange messages from the ships that are passing by on the horizon. The only person he really has to confide in is Judy. He starts telling her about his discoveries and his fears that he is not alone and she says there’s not much she can do from Canberra.

Things get weirder, eg. the light keeps going out, the messages he gets over his radio get stranger and stranger. But Jim finally discovers a fool proof method of solving whatever meteorological issue he discovered. But the presence that he felt has now materialised in the form of an old man who claims to have been fishing off the coast and washed up on the island. There is some kind of the dispute and the old man accidentally (or deliberately, we’re not sure) hurts Jim somehow and he is knocked unconscious.

Jim wakes up in a hospital in Adelaide surrounded by people who tell him he lives in a caravan at Glenelg and has never been on a lighthouse. He's a pensioner with a history of drug problems. But Jim is not convinced. He tries to discover a way of getting back to the lighthouse...

It turns out he is something in between a madman and a clairvoyant. The truth is tremendously complicated and he ends up dying without ever finding out what his purpose was supposed to be.

APPENDIX B

'THE LIGHTHOUSE' – Synopsis# 2

October 10th 2008

Rueben is a brilliant scientist working for Ucorp, a huge mining company that virtually controls the quasi independent state of South Australia. He is sent to the 'Light House' which is a mining outpost in the middle of a desert and very close to where he used to live.

Rueben is sent out there by Gerald Mason, the head of the corporation. Rueben has been doing research into more efficient forms of energy development, gradually replacing the use of Uranium. Gerald has sent him out there with a massive grant to get rid of him. He's in a luxurious research lab, a kind of prison, listening for Geothermal activity below the surface, convinced he can tap an endless resource.

Gerald is a ruthless entrepreneur. He is also a fundamentalist Christian. He represents the necessity to bulldoze over humanity for the rampant pursuit of profit and everyone in the state has bought into it. SA has become the 'smart' state full of the world's top physicists. There is the Institute – an incredible university that only the most intelligent people attend and teach at.

Every day is over 45 degrees. Rueben has been granted the ultimate scholarship. Gerald is happy to bestow it upon him. Rueben has just broken up with his wife and his son has run away from home.

Gerald and Rueben are from the same small town. They both made good. Gerald killed children because they were evidence of the harmful effects of ground mining. He left shortly after their death. He did it for the greater glory of the uranium industry and now he is a virtual god. He has the premier in his pocket, sneers at the PM and indeed the president. The US is a minor power and all their experts are now working in Australia. An Aussie visa is worth millions of dollars. All thanks to Gerald.

UCORP is the name of the company and it dominates everybody's life. There is lots of propaganda about how it has made everyone's life so much better.

Rueben has just graduated with his PhD. On the surface everyone thinks he's a wunderkind - some kind of genius. But his life is in ruins and he's been having torturous dreams of a truth that he just can't grasp. Something is driving him crazy – an answer that won't form properly in his head. It has something to do with the sustainable thermo dynamic of igneous rock that can be found in the desert...

As Rueben goes out to the lighthouse to investigate (maybe the light house is by Lake Eyre??) He continues to dream about this geothermal question...but then seems to get insights into something more cosmic. The laws of thermodynamics somehow relate to the origins of the universe. He suspects he will not only unlock the power to ultimate renewable energy but the origins of life itself. He starts to believe he is some kind of god. Then he starts to see the children. Dreams of kids keep emerging and he thinks they're leading him to some magical rock compound that's going to be the ultimate raw material for energy generation.

He also strikes up a radio friendship with park ranger, Janice. An indigenous woman put in charge of looking after the ravished, depleted trust lands. Janice feels she has betrayed her people taking up this job (the National Park is funded by UCORP) but she has a couple of kids and wants to support them. She sends them to private schools in the city and barely sees them.

Everyday Reuben gets closer to some discovery and the ghostly kids he keeps encountering give him some clues as to where these 'rocks' might be. When he eventually finds them he sees just bones. He goes with Janice. She tells him he has to investigate, call the police, find out how these kids died. But Reuben is convinced he exists for a higher purpose. He refuses to do anything about it. Digging about frantically for the magic rocks...he finds nothing.

He is forced to confront the fact that these bones are the only revelation he's going to get. He picks them up and takes them back to the lighthouse. He calls in to say he has some radioactive children's bones.

The next day Gerald himself is there. He tells Reuben his findings are incredible. He's close to the answer. He can head the entire speculative research department. 'Just hand over the bones'. Janice turns up and warns Reuben not to do it. But Reuben is tempted. Gerald has Janice shot and tells Reuben he can have the same thing done to him.

He tells Reuben, yes, he had the children killed. They were evidence of the nuclear contamination that the whole new mining system will bring about. But only for those who can't afford protection.

He tells Reuben now he wants him to really believe that this is a good thing, he wants him to make himself believe it. Truth is relative after all. Reuben makes a rational decision.

Cut to congregation. Reuben is singing and dancing along with the rest of them. He has betrayed the scientific truth and now passionately believes in the convenient lie.

STORY BEAT BREAKDOWN (How this might play out)

- Reuben prays in the church. He says he's now accepted the truth. He has helped create the truth along with the risen lord, etc. A whole lotta dumb dogma that no one in their right mind would believe. We then go back to...
- Reuben graduates from his PhD. He is being honoured for his research into super-nuclear conducting that he claims can be forced from special compounds found in meteorites. He has evidence of a new element existing in outback Australia at an ancient meteor site. He is awarded the highest honour the Institute has ever bestowed. Big Ucorp promotion video demonstrating how the company has helped the lives of ordinary south Australians (as long as they're citizens). But after the ceremony we see Reuben's life is a mess...

- Gerald tells Reuben he is going to grant him an incredible amount of money to go forth and research geothermal energy. It's the future. We're moving away from Nuclear...it's too dangerous...He says that the two of them are the wise ones. We have a responsibility to protect the innocent.
- Reuben leaves Adelaide and sees the state of the world in the nuclear age.
- Reuben starts his research. He gets nowhere. None of the figures he's been dreaming about seem to add up.
- Reuben meets Janice over the radio waves. They start a kind of confessional thing, exchanging thoughts on their wasted lives.
- Reuben starts hearing the voices at night. Children's voices. He investigates the area but finds nothing. He keeps feeding his info back to head office and gets lots of encouragement. He starts feeling the rock move. There is a geo physicist called Savchenko who tells him his discoveries are ground breaking, etc. Reuben becomes more obsessed.
- His relationship with Janice grows. She has a problem that relates to the energy waves??
- Insert more beats here regarding the growing relationship between Janice and Reuben. Her spiritual, indigenous knowledge versus his scientific arrogance.
- Eventually Reuben finds the bones...he is lead there by the mysterious ghost children. Janice identifies them as being children, possibly those who disappeared years ago when Uranium was first mined in the area.
- Reuben just wants to leave them where they are. He has bigger fish to fry – he's looking for the magic rocks, that ones that hold all the energy, that are the very essence of life. Janice tells him he's chasing dreams: that stuff doesn't exist. Reuben tells her he has a PhD and that the eminent scientist Savchenko has so far validated all his findings. Janice asks him whether he's ever met this Savchenko, or really even knows who he is, whether he exists, etc.
- Reuben goes back to his research but starts going mad as figures just don't add up. He gets on the phone to Savchenko who tells him SOMETHING THAT CONFIRMS HE IS NOT REAL.
- Reuben then informs the authorities about the bodies – he wants to tell Ucorp – but Janice convinces him otherwise.
- The next day Gerald arrives with goons. Tells him truth is what you make of it. Shoots Janice, then offers Reuben a deal he can't refuse.
- Reuben acquiesces, effectively selling his soul.

APPENDIX C

THE LIGHTHOUSE - TREATMENT #1

Matt Hawkins

Presented: November 10th 2008

1. Open on scene from corporate video promoting UCORP and The National Energy Institute. It's a video of the sun in space, with solar flares (is it possible to get this footage, Tom?), profound music plays in the background, this is serious stuff. A voice over talks about the Sun, primeval source of all energy. Cut to scene in the outback, a dry and barren land. V/O refers to the earth, forming slowly and trapping the sun's energy within it in the form of PETROLEUM, WIND, COAL and URANIUM. These are the sources, says the voice, that bring life and progress to mankind. These are the gifts of the universe. Ucorp, with its patented clean cold fusion extraction and energy tapping technique (need a lot of research here!) has made the greatest use of natural energy since man discovered fire. And the National Energy Institute is at the forefront of ensuring that this energy stays in South Australia, providing wealth and security for all its citizens...cut to...
2. REUBEN HENCSCHE watching the show with a crowd of graduands in cap and gown. Its graduation day at The Institute. He looks up at YURI SAVCHENKO, a kindly looking man of about 40 sitting on the podium. Savchenko looks down at him and smiles, then he rolls his eyes slightly and Reuben smiles back. These guys seem to have an understanding. Then GERRY ANDERSON mounts the podium. A diminutive man who looks like the blandest of all high school teachers. This is the man who has changed the world. There is a reverent hush over the audience and even Reuben bows his head respectfully. Gerry tells the crowd that he is pleased to announce the recipient of the Southern Cross Award for Energy Research: Reuben Hencske.

3. Reuben sits at his desk at the institute looking down at the medal he's just received. Suddenly he writhes in pain and grapples for a pill bottle. He slugs down a couple of tabs and tries to control his panicked breath. He hears a knock at the door and pulls himself together. Savchenko enters and tells him he's missing the party. Everyone out there wants to talk to him. Reuben says he can't believe he's come this far, from a small town in outback SA to a Post Doctorate Scientist (is there a better name for this?). Savchenko tells him he's one in a million and the company is lucky to have him – refugee physicists from the Ukraine are a dime a dozen here, he jokes. Reuben tells him he is the best teacher he ever had and that he wouldn't be anything without him. Savchenko changes the subject and whips out the vodka and a couple of glasses. He tells Reuben its time to celebrate – he's been given the funding. He's going out to the Lighthouse with the new Mega Particle Accelerator (need a much better name than this!) recently constructed by the company – it isn't lent out to just anyone. Nastrovya! And down the vodka goes.

4. At the reception Reuben wanders around slightly drunk, people are smiling at him, Savchenko is by his side, making rude comments about everyone, as if they were two naughty schoolboys who've crashed a party. Then Reuben runs into his ex-wife JAIN, a glamorous looking woman in her early 30s. Jain says 'so, you're going into the desert. You should be happy, its what you've always wanted' Reuben thanks her for coming, asks her if she's still seeing the interior decorator. 'Installation artist', Jain corrects him. 'He must be making an immense contribution to society' he quips 'No, just to me' ripostes Jain, etc. It's an icy exchange during which we discover Reuben has basically nothing left in the world, he is totally alone. Then Reuben is invited into Gerry's personal office.

5. In Gerry's personal office (this as to look impressive) Reuben is told to be careful with the company's equipment but they have every confidence in him to achieve something incredible. Here Reuben explains his project – he believes the solution to boundless energy lies in an element contained in a meteorite that struck earth thousands of years ago. Once you have even a few kilos of this element, you have the energy for thousands of years. Gerry is sponsoring this because even Uranium is a finite resource, and the Russians have too much of it. Gerry says they've done

well for two boys from Morgan Creek. So...welcome to the company. He is now officially employed. Of course all this depends on the medical. Reuben tries to suppress his terror. (or we simply see a flinch – of course we don't know why yet).

6. Back at home that night Reuben goes through all his medication: they are all anti-psychotic drugs. He hears a tapping at the door, glances over but then continues to ignore it. The tapping gets louder and becomes a knocking. Reuben gets up and goes to the door. He opens it to discover MICKEY, a dishevelled looking young man wearing jeans and what seems to be a pyjama top. He has a packet of cigarettes in his top pocket. Mickey asks him if he has any ciggies, Reuben points out he has a pack in his top pocket. Mickey pulls them out surprised. Reuben then stresses they're actually illegal. Mickey says he knows and calls blessings upon those East Timorese refos and their leaky boats full of tobacco. Reuben says he has work to do, so Mickey has to go away. Mickey just laughs and enters.
7. At the table Reuben starts pouring meds out and sorting through them. Mickey tells him he can't hide his condition. They'll find out, there's no escape. Be proud of being a Skitzo! Reuben says he'll be sacked if there's the slightest doubt about his sanity. Besides he thinks he's worked out the right drug combination to block any trace of anti-psychotics. Then he looks steadily at Mickey and says 'bye', he drops a couple of meds and Mickey disappears. Reuben mumbles to himself: I wish my hallucinations weren't so obnoxious.
8. At the medical the next day Reuben is sweating nervously but the DOCTOR fails to detect any anti-psychotics, just asks him to check his cholesterol and give up smoking. Reuben says he doesn't smoke, never touched cigarettes in his life, even if they were legal. The Doctor assures him he's not going to dob him in to the authorities, but there are clear traces of nicotine in his blood. Quite high levels in fact. His medical condition is rated as satisfactory.
9. Reuben takes his certificate to an office where they hand him an i.d. badge, and the keys to a vehicle. He is told to report to the Company store room.

10. Reuben rides his bike to the company store rooms. He listens to the radio through an earpiece – it is another beautiful day, as determined by the Weather Authority. Need to reveal somehow that Ucorp now has the power to control the weather, all carbon emissions have been banned, the environment is now cleaner than it was 500 years ago. It seems everyone is living in paradise. Etc. Reuben rides past the Evangelical Church of God and hears all the happy clapping. People are really giving it up for the Lord! Then another bike with Mickey on it swings into step with his. Mickey bellows out a cheery good morning and congratulates him on passing the medical. He tells Reuben he's just been worshipping the sweet lord Jesus Christ and that if Reuben wants any kinda promotion he should get his arse in that church and do the same – Big Gerry takes note of these things, evil fuck that he is, he might even forgive Reuben for being a skitzo. Reuben says he has it all under control, and he's not after a promotion. He just wants to find the rocks. 'Ahh, the magic rocks' laughs Mickey. Reuben asks Mickey what he might possibly have achieved in his life, Mickey tells him he's done stuff. Had a job in a library for a month once, earned 1435.00 dollars. Bought this bike, that's an achievement, man. Reuben shakes his head and keeps riding.
11. When Reuben arrives at the company lock up he is presented with an amazing, shiny, gas guzzling 4x4. The MECHANIC drools over it, no one is permitted to drive these things anymore, Reuben is a lucky bastard. Reuben starts it up and the mechanic whoops in ecstasy, breathing in the fumes greedily. Reuben hooks up the equipment trailer and off he goes.
12. The landscape goes from green farms and idyllic country to dry harsh desert. Reuben stops by the side of the road and breathes in the tranquillity. Then his head starts to throb and he feels sick. He throws down some pills and tries to recover. He turns on the radio. Christian FM tells him everything is fine. Yeah, right...he mumbles as he drives off.
13. Eventually Reuben makes it to the outskirts of Morgan Creek, his hometown. He steps out of the 4x4 and sighs, wanders over to the abandoned Caravan park, there amongst all the wrecked vans is one in good condition with a little garden surrounding it. Its like a strange vision. He notices a woman watering her plants

at the front...he recognises her as JUDY, his old primary school teacher. She talks about water and how she gets it from a secret spring that nobody else has ever known about. Its as if the spring exists just for her, because it produces only enough water for one person to live alone. Reuben asks if she recognises him, she nods and says she does. He asks her if she remembers Gerry and she claims to have no knowledge of any such person. He tells her he's now quite successful and she should be quite proud of him. She changes the subject, tells him to be careful out in the desert. There are no springs out there. She hands him a litre of water, and tells him to use it wisely. Assuming she's gone demented Reuben leaves her with his best wishes.

14. On his way back to the car he encounters REBECCA an indigenous woman in a National Park uniform. She stands before his 4x4 eyeing it suspiciously, she asks him if he has permission to be in this area, and did he realise it was illegal to be driving a petroleum fuelled vehicle. Reuben hands over his papers. He tells her he's an employee of UCORP and has special permission. Rebecca scrutinises all the paper work and then shrugs. 'Seems like you can do whatever you damn well please', she concludes. She introduces herself as the Northern Parks Ranger. Only indigenous people are permitted in the area ordinarily. Where are they all? Asks Reuben. They've all gone, working for the mining company. Reuben says then there's just you? Yeah, replies Rebecca, just me and the wildlife. 'What about Judy?' he asks. 'Oh, she's just part of the landscape, doing no harm, she doesn't bother anyone so I don't bother her'. She asks him what he's doing out here. Reuben says its top secret, but then tells her about it anyway. Rebecca warns him about the area. The company may think they control it but its really blackfella country – full of spirits who don't want to be disturbed. She says most people who go in there come out insane, unless they're already mad to begin with. Reuben tries to change the subject. He asks her what she's doing out there. She says she needs the money, she is supporting a couple of kids, but its not easy, they're already getting into trouble living in the outback. They bond slightly over their mutual dependency on UCORP. Reuben notices a pendant around her neck, it has as asymmetrical star like image on it. Only half in jest she tells him it's the only thing protecting her from this cursed place. Then Reuben goes on his way,

but not before Rebecca has promised to drop in on him from time to time, to see if he's OK.

15. Then Reuben sets off for the Lighthouse. As he gets closer the landscape get stranger (making best use of our mining country) and the temperature starts to climb. He sees strange cloud formations in the sky and on the horizons see bizarre flashing lights (insert other weird phenomena here). Eventually he arrives at the long tower and starts to establish himself. He sees evidence of the previous scientist who was stationed there, as Rebecca says he seems to have gone mad – there are signs of a insanity, mad scribblings, a strange collection of pebbles arranged in the form of a celtic cross (or something more bizarre). He looks at some of the conclusions of written on some graph paper: in the first few pages there are neatly drawn figures and calculations but toward the end of the document there are more mad scribblings, outlandish figures, hideous drawings and finally the words 'we all die' scrawled in conclusion. (*maybe this is too obvious – perhaps the environment could be perfectly clean and orderly and Reuben just chances upon the 'scientific paper'*.)
16. Reuben gets on the satellite phone and calls Savchenko. He asks him what happened to the previous scientist who came out here. Savchenko tells him not to worry, the guy was unstable, no one suspected til he actually got out there. Reuben asks him why he was not informed. Savchenko says he didn't want to freak him out and he knows Reuben is made of sterner stuff, there's no chance of him going bonkers. Reuben looks over at Mickey who is playing knuckle jacks with the pebbles on the floor, Mickey smiles and shakes his head. Reuben turns away and tells Savchenko fine, but from now on can he be kept in the loop. Savchenko says of course – now just relax. He's packed something special for him, its in the boot of the 4x4. Reuben goes out to the boot and finds a bottle of vodka. He smiles and takes it inside.
17. That night Reuben cleans up the lighthouse and then goes through some calculations at the small work desk, he hears the distant sounds of insects and the cry of some night bird. He takes out the small bottle of vodka and is about to open it when he notices a tiny rough rock suspended in the liquid. He holds it up to the

light and it refracts into a spectrum through the rock which becomes translucent (or some other more achievable effect). He smiles and says ‘Good old Savchenko, where the hell did you get this?’ He puts the bottle down and says ‘Welcome to Earth’. Then he carefully extracts the rock and puts it in his mass spectrometer - he prints out the pattern and sticks it on the wall. This is what he’s looking for.

18. A little later he stands outside and looks up at the stars (Night shoot, low light??) through a pair of binoculars. There is the glow of a cigarette in the background as Mickey looks on. ‘That’s where the true energy is – and it falls down to earth free, in the form of rocks’. (or something far less expositional) Mickey coughs in the background. Reuben tells him those things will kill him.
19. The next day Reuben drives to the CRATER (OK, if we can use something impressive that already exists in SA that would be great. There’s Wolfe Creek crater in WA that is amazing – but that’s a long way away) or some other visually impressive place and starts collecting samples happily. Checking them with his Geiger counter, not a peep. He does some core drilling and extracts pieces of rock, etc. Placing them neatly in trays and then storing them in the 4x4.
20. He returns to the Lighthouse that evening and tests the rock in the spectrometer – the patterns are nothing like his space rock.
21. The next day he digs deeper, going further down, into the earth, really pushing his corer (again – potential budget issue – have to find some credible piece of equipment) as far as it will go. Eventually the machine breaks down. It seems to have hit some iron deposit or something. Reuben calls up for another one, but it will take months, they’re all being used on the uranium mines – Reuben’s task is of a low priority.
22. So Reuben searches old survey maps and finds some disused mine shafts. But when he drives over to them he sees warning signs, strictly no entry, holes unstable. But Reuben goes down anyway. He goes down as deep as he dares, and then a little further. Some of the rocks he digs out look like they have potential (ie. there are a few beeps on the Geiger counter, etc). Then he hears a strange

sound, like a child shrieking way off down the tunnel. He goes to investigate only to have the tunnel collapse and to be buried in dirt.

23. He wakes up to find himself trapped in the passage, he tries to dig himself out. But it is a slow and laborious task. Eventually he digs his way close enough to the surface to hear a voice calling his name: Rebecca. He hears digging and eventually light breaks through.
24. Rebecca drags him out of the shaft and lies him down on the surface. He has a sprained ankle but apart from that he's pretty well OK. Rebecca takes him back to the lighthouse where she tells him the spirits must be angry with him – this is no place for a whitefella. He's not going to find any space rocks. She tells him the story of 2 kids who went wandering through this place just after they shut the copper mines down. They never came back, but late at night you can see them glowing on the horizon and hear their cries in the distance. This place was part of a dreaming myth (research!), where time stands still. She tells him to give what he's doing and go home. He says he can't. What he has discovered will benefit everyone. She says he'll come to no good. That his kind of science cannot possibly explain what happens out here. She tells him she has in fact heard about the glowing rocks – as an indigenous legend. But the rocks were the souls of bad men, looking for a home. If you dug one of them out then the bad men would possess you and you would lose your own soul. Reuben says that's just superstition. Rebecca argues that physics is just superstition too, superstition that happens to work, sometimes. But the Dreaming used to work before whitefellas came, and then look what happened. She leaves him angrily.
25. In the meantime, Reuben recovers and tries to make sense of what Rebecca has told him. Could it be true that Central Desert tribes had stumbled on these rocks years before any whitefellas research? He calls Savchenko and he says it's highly possible. Reuben starts to try to work out where they might be based on geological maps, he tries to discern a kind of crash pattern. He goes to sleep and starts dreaming about geological shapes. Eventually he comes up with the exact same asymmetrical star like pattern that appears on Rebecca's pendant. He wakes

up and applies the pattern to the area but can't work out what orientation to place it to get the right result.

26. Reuben calls Rebecca and invites her round...for dinner, not to talk about rocks, to talk about her. He fusses about trying to make the Light House respectable and rustles together a pathetic attempt at a dinner party. She comes round and the conversation winds round to Ucorp and what they've been doing for the state. Rebecca reveals that they used to operate around this area, that the local elders weren't too happy about it. He tells her he wants to know more about the legend and she talks about the Yowie men who stalked the earth and ate the souls of the tribe, but when they died these rocks evolved. Reuben says he wants to go there – for the good of everyone. If these rocks can do what he thinks they can do then everyone will benefit, including the local community. He personally guarantees it. On his life. Rebecca admits she's heard rumours from her childhood about where they might possibly be, but she's never dared go out there. If the benefits are as substantial as Reuben promises, then she's prepared to take the risk. But he better not be bullshitting her.
27. The next morning they pack the 4x4 and set off into the dessert. It's a long journey and Rebecca starts to probe Reuben about his motivations. What does he really want to get out of all of this? He talks about wanting to succeed in spite of his handicap, which he admits is schizophrenia. He sees things. On cue he looks into the rear vision mirror and sees Mickey sitting in the back seat shaking his head. 'What the hell are you doing, man', says Mickey 'The lady warned you not to do this and you're cruising straight into it'. Rebecca says he seems pretty normal to her. Reuben says he's learnt to hide it with anti-psychotics pretty well, the company will never find out. At that moment Mickey leans over and whispers in his ear that he should just turn back, he's never gonna make it, he has to wake up, Wake Up, Reuben! Reuben starts to feel the pain and pull over. He tells Rebecca she has to drive. He takes a handful of pills and lies in the back, zonked.
28. He wakes up at the 4x4 pulls up before a cliff face. They get out and make their way toward the caves. There is an eerie atmosphere and the clouds are starting the return. Rebecca doesn't like it and Reuben's headaches are getting

worse, but they press on regardless. Just before the mouth of the cave Reuben notices Mickey leaning against the rock face smoking away. ‘Don’t do it man’, says Mickey, ‘You gotta wake up’. Reuben grits his teeth and ignores him and the two of them go into the cave. As they stumble through their torches illuminate ancient paintings on the wall of stars falling to earth and giant men. Reuben is greatly encouraged by this but Rebecca is incredibly freaked. And then begins the cries of the children again. Reuben ignores it thinking its just another hallucination, but Rebecca hears it too and says they have to leave. But then in the distant gloom Reuben discerns a glow. He makes his way toward the light and round a corner comes across a cavern full of children’s bones – at least a dozen kids, but then he notices the walls are luminescent. He chips off some of the rock and holds it in his hands. He calls out to Rebecca who makes her way into the space and is horrified by the bones. She identifies them as kids bones, and not that old. So what, says Reuben, some ancient burial place, nothing to be scared of. Not that ancient, points out Rebecca. Reuben says he has to call Savchenko and give him the location. In the background Mickey tells him not to. He says he should pay attention to Rebecca, get out now! The distant sound of kids screaming gets louder as Rebecca flees the tunnel. Reuben calls through the co-ordinates to Company HQ and then everything goes blank.

29. Reuben wakes up in an Adelaide hospital ward. Savchenko is smiling at him benignly. He tells him everything is OK, they found the location. He’d passed out, there must have been a gas pocket in there or something. Thank god he’d got the location to them in time. Reuben asks Savchenko if they’d found the rocks, Savchenko says yes, and they have plenty of samples to analyse. And the moment he’s recovered he’ll be back to work. Reuben asks about Rebecca. Is she OK? Savchenko has no idea who she is. There was no one in the cave when they found him. Reuben tells him she’s the ranger at Morgan Creek National Park. Savchenko tells him there is no such national park. Perhaps the gasses made him hallucinate.
30. The orderlies wheel Reuben back to a ward where a bunch of patients are sitting around in a kind of recreation room. He sees Mickey skulking about in the corner and sighs. More hallucinations, and he doesn’t have his anti-psychotics!

Mickey comes over to him and congratulates him on being alive but tells him it was a big mistake calling in those co-ordinates. BIG MISTAKE. Can he see that now? Has he finally opened his eyes? Reuben tells him to disappear, but Mickey tells him he can't do that. Its not up to him. Then a nurse, GILLIAN, approaches and to Reuben's great surprise tells Mickey to get the hell back to his room and stop bothering Mr Henske. Mickey acquiesces and tells Reuben he'll see him later. Then the nurse hands Reuben a packet of illegal Indonesian cigarettes and winks. She tells him to smoke them out the back and not tell anyone where he got them. She says its nice to have him back.

31. In a discrete corner of the compound of the hospital Reuben sits on a bench smoking a cigarette. He is surprised at how much he enjoys smoking. He looks around at all the other patients milling about. They seem vacuous.
32. He goes to the bathroom and looks at his face in the mirror. He looks different, somewhat older and haggard. He's in really bad shape. He looks around for some kind of doctor or orderly but can't find anyone. Eventually he goes to his room and sits on the pristine bed. There is a jar of pills on the bedside table. They are exactly the same size and shape as the anti-psychotics he's been taking. There is a prescription telling him to take two each evening. He does so.
33. The next day he calls National Parks and Wildlife but can find no ranger by the name of Rebecca. He doesn't even know her last name.
34. A finally finds an office where Gillian is sitting checking her Facebook account or doing something equally useless. He asks her how long he'll be here and whether he can speak to Dr Savchenko. She tells him he won't be here long, and he should rest, otherwise he'll never recover. You must have gone through some terrible trauma in that cave.
35. So Reuben sits around the recreation room for a few days, whiling away the time playing chess with the other patients who he discovers have all suffered some kind of trauma, they all seem to be highly qualified scientists, who are just here to recover.

36. He tries to find Mickey to see if he can get some answers but whenever he comes close Gillian seems to come between them whisking Mickey away for further treatment. Mickey seems terrified of Gillian and will do whatever she says.
37. Eventually Reuben finds a chance to catch Mickey alone. In the brief time they have Mickey tells him Reuben has never suffered from Schizophrenia, that's just what they wanted him to think. Those blue pills he's been taking are not-antipsychotics, they're the pills they want him to take. He's being experimented on. Reuben says that's ridiculous. Who is experimenting on him? Mickey says, Dr Savchenko and the main man, Gerry. It's a Ucorp conspiracy, man. Reuben asks Mickey what he's doing in the hospital then. 'Me?' replies Mickey. 'Oh I suffer from schizophrenia.' Reuben asks him why he should listen to a crazy man. Mickey says at least he is sane some of the time. Then Gillian turns up and again finds an excuse to separate them.
38. That night Reuben looks at the pills closely. He decides to flush them down the toilet.
39. The next day when he wakes up, he finds the hospital has changed. It is now clearly a mental hospital, the patients seem more disturbed, and those who seemed quite sane previously are now clearly mentally ill. In the corridor he runs into Savchenko who takes him back to his room and tells him to get dressed. He's fully recovered and now its time to start work.
40. While Reuben is trying to put his clothes on and pack he suddenly suffers extreme pain. He doubles over and has a coughing fit. Savchenko asks him whether he's been taking his pills. Reuben assures him he has.
41. He takes him to a lab where there is a display of the rocks he found in the cave. Savchenko enthuses over them and tells Reuben that they are close to finding the answers to actually tapping this power. But now Reuben has his doubts. He looks at the figures and grills Savchenko about the entire theory. How

is it possible for this radiation to be usable? What sort of elements can exist in these rocks and why haven't they been discovered or observed before? Savchenko answers the questions as best he can. He asks Reuben whether he is now doubting his own PhD research? Does he not remember spending 6 years working on this. Reuben hesitates before answering yes. Savchenko produces another bottle of blue pills. He suggests Reuben take some, right now. Reuben does so – he has no choice.

42. After Savchenko leaves Reuben looks over the figures and suddenly they are all making sense again, but Reuben has to resist these conclusions. He knows there is something wrong. He gets a phone call, its from Gerry himself. He says he's very proud of Reuben. He has a great future in the company. Reuben is actually trying to fight the euphoria. He runs to the bathroom and looks at himself in the mirror. He is looking ten years younger. There is something seriously wrong. He looks at the clock on the wall. It says 4:50pm. He leaves the lab and goes down the corridor. At the end of the passage way he sees a small office with a scientist in it, going over figures. Its Gillian. Reuben asks if they've met before. Gillian shakes her head. Says she's better go home now. Reuben sighs and says he'd better do the same.

43. The next moment Reuben is back at the lab. Staring at the clock. Its reads 9:15 am. Then he looks down at the bottle of blue pills. He asks himself: 'I went home, I slept, but I have no idea where or how'. He then looks over the figures, none of them make sense again.

44. Rueben goes back to the hospital, tricks his way in and finds Mickey. He tells Mickey that ever since he stopped taking the blue pills he has no recollection whatsoever of doing any research or ever having attended the institute. Mickey says the company likes to experiment on people and that Reuben may not be who he thinks he is. Then who am I? asks Reuben. Mickey says he has no idea. He just knows him as a guy he used to share a ward with. Then Reuben doubles over with pain again. He goes back to the lab.

45. At the lab he sees Savchenko waiting for him. Savchenko holds up a bottle of blue pills. He says he really should be taking these. Reuben says he doesn't need them. Savchenko tells him he does. He's known for quite some time that Reuben is a schizophrenic and has been trying to hide it. Savchenko has been giving him anti-psychotics for the last few years to help him discretely. He should try not to listen to fantasy figure like Mickey. But Mickey is real, says Reuben. Savchenko says all patients say that. But what about the bones, asks Reuben. That cavern was full of children's bones. Reuben says all that was part of the trauma he suffered when he hit the gas pocket. Its all in his mind. Now take the blue pills, calm down and get on with the research. Reuben takes the jar and downs a couple of pills. He opens his mouth to prove to Savchenko that he's swallowed them. All the while hiding them under his tongue.
46. The moment Savchenko has gone, Reuben hot foots it down to the Institute. He asks about his academic record. No one there has ever heard of him. He has never been enrolled.
47. He goes to the state library and looks up his name in the phone book. He isn't listed.
48. He takes a bus out to the edge of town and then hitches a ride (or steals a car, or something) and makes his way back to the Lighthouse. But on the outskirts of Morgan Creek he is stopped and told the entire area is condemned and no one is to enter. There's been a massive gas explosion. Some kind of volcanic pocket, apparently. There is no indication that this was ever Aboriginal national Park. All the while Reuben is getting sicker and sicker.
49. Reuben heads into the ghost town of Morgan Creek and find the van that Judy used to live in. He finds her inside lying in bed dying. Judy tells him not to trust the company. All wealth is built on lies. Then Reuben sees Rebecca enter the van. She is looking incredibly ill. Rebecca tells Reuben that the cave was bombed just after these guys in asbestos suits took him away. In the meantime she's gone to see a doctor. Her entire body is riddled with cancer. She suggests he go and see an independent doctor too, but she can tell just by looking at him that he has what

she has. She tells Reuben that the bones belonged to a aboriginal mission kids who used to live in the area. After they'd discovered the Uranium processing method the company had used them as guinea pigs down the shafts. After discovering they were highly radioactive they wanted to have them killed, but all the kids escaped en masse, back to their traditional lands. But they all died and there bodies were put in the cave. The bones were the only evidence of Ucorp's crimes.

50. Reuben returns to Adelaide and confronts Savchenko. Savchenko tells him he has been manipulated. He was a drug addict living in a van with delusions of grandeur. They plucked him from a mental home and started experimenting with his mind. The company needed someone to go into this highly radioactive area and find the evidence of the radioactive human remains. Once they could pinpoint where they lay they could destroy it remotely, but they needed the co-ordinates. Savchenko tells him that the experiment has been an incredible success and in fact Reuben is no longer the loser he used to be. He is genuinely a different person. Savchenko gives Reuben the choice: go back to being a crazy person in a van, or be the genius he thinks he is. Choose your reality.

51. Reuben worships at the church of South Australia. He sees Mickey in the congregation and looks at him blankly. He takes the host and makes the sign of the cross...

APPENDIX D

THE LIGHTHOUSE - TREATMENT #2

Matt Hawkins

Presented: 18 December 2008

1. A dishevelled looking man (Reuben) wanders across burning hot sand, between ancient boulders and thorny scrub. He is walking through hell. He stops and leans against a rock and spits on the sand. He watches as an ant emerges from a hole and starts consuming the spit. He grimaces and looks up at the blazing sun.
2. It is some time later. Evening. Reuben sits alone on the sand and stares into the middle distance. He mumbles to himself. The sun sets behind him. He stares at the dying rays and holds his hand out as if to catch them. (it would be really good to improvise this with the actor involved – the actions of extreme regret – a madness brought about by an inhuman crime).
3. The next day Reuben is lying on the sand where he fell down the night before. He looks over at an insect crawling over his hand. He smiles at it and murmurs the word 'live'. The insect crawls away.
4. Later, Reuben is lying on the sand with his eyes closed. His breathing is slowing down and eventually stops. The light fades.
5. Two violent jolts wake Reuben suddenly. He is in the back of a van (or open backed truck) he stares up at the clouds flying and two masked paramedics with resuscitation equipment. He sees a crow flying by. His eyes slowly close again. We hear the words: 'We're losing him' and then the sound of another jolt that becomes...

6. An alarm clock in REUBEN'S BEDROOM, Reuben wakes up with a start. He looks at the clock. Its 5am. He rubs his eyes and sighs deeply.
7. KITCHEN Reuben sits before a five star breakfast (something ridiculous like smoked salmon, coffee, champagne, a rose, etc...) He picks up a note beside it that reads: 'your last supper, hun'. A sighs and says 'She really earns her 400 bucks an hour'. He takes a mouthful and chews thoughtfully.
8. Reuben gets in a lift. He is dressed in rough, outdoors type clothing, possibly khaki. He also carries a large canvas bag and a hard metal case. He sees another resident. He/she is white and very well dressed. The resident sighs at him as he gets in the lift. 'Another 50 degree day', says the resident. 'Cooled down, huh?' replies Reuben...etc. Reuben looks up at the air conditioning vent in the lift, the cool breeze stirs the dust gently. He shuts his eyes and breathes it in.
9. LOBBY of the Apartment block. Reuben makes past a bank of monitors that are all playing a kind of Ucorp promotion: smiling white couples, clear blue skies, beaches and deep splashing water, etc...a bit like an extreme SA Great Ad, just much more sophisticated. He glances up at the screens and sees a happy, smiling Sudanese mine worker beaming at the camera. As he does so we hear the sounds of a riot going on outside.
10. A security officer (heavily armed if possible) smiles at Reuben and hands him a plastic bottle of cold water. He says: 'Have a great trip, Dr Isaacson'. Reuben nods at him. 'Car arrived yet?' he asks, glancing toward the large glass doors nervously. 'I think its somewhere out there', the security guy replies. Reuben gestures toward the door 'couldn't you...(kinda come with me?)' Security guy shrugs and tells him he's too busy handing out water. Reuben shakes his head.
11. EXT. Reuben sets out into the gated grounds of the exclusive apartment block. He approaches the gate and sees a dusty riot taking place. A crowd of Sudanese are lining up for vegetables and water and things are getting out of

control. Through the crowd Reuben can see a 4 x 4 parked on the other side of the street. Standing beside it is FORTUNE KATUSABE a tall second generation Ugandan. He smiles and waves, calling out ‘Dr Isaacson! Over here.’ Reuben sheepishly makes his way through the gate and into the rioting crowd. He stares fearfully at the Sudanese faces as he weaves through the protestors. He bumps into a woman and knocks the water bucket off her head spilling water all over the dusty street. The crowd is stilled. The Sudanese woman stares at him angrily and says in an Afro/Australian accent. ‘You bloody fool!’ (this accent could be similar to the west Sydney accent that every second generation has adopted by the Lebanese, African, Vietnamese, etc). Reuben replies ‘I’m sorry’ meekly in response. Katusabe grabs him and drags him toward the 4 x 4 apologising profusely. They get in the car and drive away.

12. On the road Katusabe explains that he is Reuben’s driver and assistant. He tells him not to be bothered with those dirty ‘Sudos’ they are uncivilised desert dwellers. He tells him his family was from Uganda, much more civilised place. He loves Ucorp and appreciates his opportunity. He has a picture of ‘the big man’ Gerry, like a talisman hanging from the rear vision mirror. Reuben is visibly upset that he has to spend the entire expedition with an African. And clams up, claiming he has to do some research.
13. At a road stop ghost town Reuben patches into communication with Savchenko. Whats going on? He asks. Who is this guy? He was supposed to get an undergraduate assistant with at least some knowledge of geology. Savchenko appears on screen and tells him Katusabe is a good guy, for a Sudo. He’ll probably be more use to him than some pasty undergraduate. Savchenko tells him there’s a lot riding on this particular expedition – it could change the whole future of the energy industry. (maybe in more subtle terms).
14. Back in the car Reuben attempts to get along with Katusabe who he clearly finds annoying. Reuben is clearly defensive about the role of Ucorp and the government in looking after the population of East African ‘serfs’. They should be grateful they’ve been let into the country. To his surprise Katusabe

agrees with him. He says South Australia is the new shining light of civilisation that will change the world. Katusabe asks him about the work. Reuben explains his theory of 'energy rocks' that fell in comets from space millions of years ago. He says the Wollomi Crater is an impact zone for these rocks and he's been studying scatter patterns for the last three years. It's what he got his doctorate in. On impact the rocks are energised and then land somewhere else. He's checking out some that may be deep within an old copper mine. They stop for a break and in the desert sands, Reuben sketches out his theory. He draws a design, like a big distorted human palm with the fingers stretched out. He says this is exactly what the pattern looks like. He's calculated it mathematically. He could draw this design with his eyes closed. It's burned into his brain after the years of study he's spent conceiving of it.

15. As they drive along Reuben surreptitiously takes out some blue pills and downs them. He tells Katusabe he needs to sleep now. The car continues on as the sun sets.
16. Reuben is awoken by the sound of the car throttling down in the middle of the night. Katusabe explains he has to stop and sleep for a bit himself. Other wise they could have a fatal accident. He tells him not to worry; they're perfectly safe. No Sudanese this far out in the desert.
17. Nevertheless Reuben cannot sleep. He stares out the window of the 4x4 while Katusabe snoozes. He hears the distant sounds of bloodcurdling screams and takes a few more blue pills. He exits the car and takes a walk. The stars illuminate the plains like a flood light. In the distance Reuben sees a figure approaching. It turns out to be Savchenko in a tuxedo. He tells Reuben not to worry. No one is going to know he's a schizophrenic. But don't trust the Sudo. Reuben tells him he's only an hallucination. The real Savchenko is in Adelaide, watching his back. Savchenko laughs and tells him, sure he is, whatever you want to believe...(all this is pretty obvious stuff, but you get the idea).

18. The next day they head off for the old ‘copper mine’. The landscape gets drier and drier (insert relationship development here). They then run into a roadblock that is guarded by Rachel, an aboriginal woman who works as an indigenous officer at Ucorp. Rachel recognises Reuben but doesn’t say anything (she knows him from before he went mad). Reuben shows her all his paperwork (his very impressive paper work). She says she can let him through, but he has to be aware of what conditions are like out there. The desert is dangerous and old mines can be fatal. Reuben brushes her off. He has studied this place for years. Yeah, replies Rachel but have you ever been here? You can’t describe this world in books, mate. She tells them she’ll keep an eye on them. They need to keep in daily contact so she knows whether she has to go haul them out. There are record temperatures out there and they’re increasing all the time. You can be fried alive. In the meantime Katusabe tries to chat her up with his Ugandan charm. She doesn’t buy a bit of it. They move on...
19. In the car Katusabe tells Reuben that Rachel is obviously in lust with him, she tries to resist his charms, but all black women do that. Reuben says there’s not the slightest connection between Aboriginal and African people. Pigment means nothing. Katusabe laughs and tells him pigment means everything. Higher tolerance to the sun’s radiation for a start. We black people are going to survive while you white guys fry. Yeah, yeah...murmurs Reuben as the drive deeper into the heat.
20. They get to the ‘Lighthouse’, which is the HQ building of the old copper mine. At first inspection looks like what it purports to be: an abandoned mine office from the late 1800s. Reuben and Katusabe clean it up. Reuben explains they mined this place for copper, but there was very little down there. They were fooled by the colour of the rocks on the surface. A bunch of hopefuls came out here in the 1890s and eventually went mad when they realised there was nothing here, after all that effort. Reuben finds a journal or company ledger with dates and yields written into it. The pages are so worn its impossible to work out what the actual dates were, he then detects some scrawl that is carved into the page in deep ink: ‘Christ forgive me...’ or ‘All is

hell' or something like that. 'Poor bastards...' he says. Katusabe gets on with the cleaning up. Reuben tells him he's going down the mine tomorrow after a few tests on the surface. Katusabe is to stay there. Katusabe protests but Reuben insists. He'll be more productive on his own.

21. The next day Reuben goes out into the surface around the mine. He picks up rock samples from around the shafts. He seems to be deliberating somewhat. He looks around at the desert landscape. He starts to see figure emerging from the heat haze. He takes more pills and tries to bring himself under control. He is shocked by someone tapping on his shoulder. Its Katusabe. He has brought some rehydration pills and an ice jacket for him. He says he's sorry he had to leave the lighthouse but Reuben forgot these very important things. He doesn't want him to die, is all. Reube thanks him and hands over the samples.
22. Back at the Lighthouse that night they go through all the minerals but there is no trace of the 'cosmic element' Reuben is looking for. He goes over his scatter patterns to see if they really are in the right place. Katusabe asks him why he hasn't gone down the shaft. Reuben says he will, tomorrow.
23. That night Reuben calls Savchenko who tells him the company has great plans for him. If he can master this one then the sky is the limit for his career. He tells him these rocks are important, they'll revolutionise the energy industry. A great alternative to Uranium and much safer. Reuben agrees. Then Savchenko appears in the room itself, done up all swell-like. Reuben takes more pills as Katusabe enters with beers. Savchenko disappears. Reuben tells Katusabe he doesn't drink. Fair enough says katusabe as he cracks a Coopers. Reuben tries to sleep.
24. The next day Reuben gets up and makes his way to the mine shaft. Slowly he goes down and flashes his torch around. The tunnels are labyrinthine and he goes deeper. He is terrified and skittish. He starts hearing voices and cries in the distance. He freaks out and struggles toward the surface, but a minor tunnel collapses on him.

25. He wakes up with Rachel staring down at him. She says she dug him out of the shaft, that he shouldn't have gone down there, its madness. Reuben says it was fine, he just took a wrong turn. He has a company map of the mine and all the other shafts are perfectly in tact. He only has minor injuries and picks out one of the rocks he found. He tells Katusabe to examine it. In the meantime he explains what he is doing to Rachel. She tells him he's a mad fool. He replies that she's the mad one, guarding the desert for ghosts. She tells him there are people out there. Real people. Her people. They had a gutful with the whole system and now they live in the desert. Yeah, replies Reuben, you keep telling yourself that. Rachel leaves him, pissed off.
26. Katusabe comes running in with some results. There are clear traces of the cosmic element in the rocks he brought back. But the readings are unclear. It seems like he needs to get more rock. Which means going back down there.
27. That night Reuben is getting ready for bed when he gets a visit from Savchenko who tells him he's getting very close. Reuben tells the phantom he doesn't know whether he's real or not. Savchenko tells him of course he's real, very real. Then Katusabe interrupts just as Reuben is downing his pills. He tells Reuben he's been watching him. He can't understand how someone who needs so much medication can be employed by Ucorp – company policy is you have to be in perfect health. Reuben is worried, but then Katusabe smiles and tells him not to worry. He can trust him. They are both good company men.
28. The next day Reuben goes down the pit, slowly picking his way through the tunnels he knows are sound, following the map all the way. There are all sorts of spooky sounds and cries but Reuben ignores them, thinking its just his Schizophrenia kicking in. He grits his teeth and goes further down the tunnel than ever before. Suddenly he comes across a door, some kind of modern glass and metal door. The glass is so filthy he can't see through it. He tries to prise the door open but to no avail.

29. Back at the Lighthouse Reuben calls Savchenko and asks him about whether any other scientists have been sent out there before him. Savchenko asks him why he would think that. Reuben talks about the door, the modern glass and metal door he found. Savchenko asks him if he's sure that's what he saw? Could he not have imagined it. Then Reuben gets paranoid about his condition and suspects Savchenko might know. He tells him, he's probably right, maybe it was his imagination. Its pretty hot down there.
30. Around the compound Reuben starts exploring the buildings, he finds evidence of a more modern presence – perhaps some modern digging equipment, maybe even an oil barrel. Katusabe catches him at it. He tells him he should rest, what was he looking for? There is nothing to find around here. The good news is there is stronger 'cosmic radiation' emanating from the rocks he found. Come on, lets go back to the lab and analyse them together.
31. Reuben looks at the test results Katusabe has printed for him. He tells him he thought he was unqualified. Katusabe says Savchenko taught him how to operate the machine, he wouldn't know what the exact results should be but he notices that that the figures have changed. What do you think, boss? Reuben admits that he has made a good observation. Says that perhaps he's not such a fool after all. They bond slightly. Katusabe says maybe Reuben is not the racist bastard he thought he was, either.
32. That evening Reuben gets a call over the radio/satellite phone. She asks him if he's still in pain. Reuben says no and then she says that's a shame. Reuben apologises for his behaviour and thanks her for saving him. Then he asks her over for dinner. She says she'd rather not. That place gives her the creeps and as long as they are both alive she's done her duty.
33. Over dinner Reuben and Katusabe discuss politics and beautifully written expositional scene that gives us more background into the state of play in SA and the power of Ucorp.

34. Early the next morning Reuben sneaks outside again and amongst the rubbish pile he finds a series of half burnt diagrams, all of them are depictions of the scatter patterns he'd been working on for years. He freaks out and gets in the vehicle. But not knowing how to drive he finds it difficult to get started, eventually he works it out and heads off.
35. Reuben goes out to Rachel's van which she has parked on the edge of the desert. He tells her that mine has been in use recently and wants to know who has been there and why. Rachel pleads ignorance. But what about the metal door down the shaft? Who put that there? Reuben tells her he thinks she knows a lot more than what she's saying. Rachel admits that she knows Reuben, she's see him before, out here. Reuben tells her that's impossible, he's never been out here before. Then she backs off and says maybe it was someone who just looked like him. 'All you Wadjellas look the same to me anyway'. 'A bloke came with a bunch of workers African blackfellas, he passed through and that was all. He was a mean looking bloke. Kinda highly strung. A bit like you...' She asks him what he's looking for. 'Cosmic rocks'? Sounds a bit far fetched to me. Reuben says so did space travel til they worked out how to do it. It was a dream and then became a reality because people worked hard and overcame odds etc. She says he seems to her like a deeply troubled man and he has to sort out his own shit before he can like himself. What does he get out of working for Ucorp anyway. You think you're making the world a better place? I know I am, he retorts, I have to be.
36. When Reuben gets back Katusabe is angry. He has no authority to drive the 4x4 and he doesn't even have a driver's licence. Reuben tries to brush him off but Katusabe is forceful and menacing, nothing like the obsequious underling he'd been playing at before. He tells Reuben he knows he has a mental condition, so does Savchenko, and that he is only holding on to his job by a thread at the moment. The company is about to sack him unless he comes up with results – NOW. The only indication so far is research he, Katusabe has done. If Reuben wants to hold on to his privileged lifestyle, his beautiful climate controlled apartment, his high class hookers, etc, then he'd better get back down that fucking pit and dig up some magic rocks. Reuben is completey

taken aback – the carpet of his assumptions has been swept from underneath him.

37. He goes back to the lighthouse and tries to get Savchenko on the line but there is nothing. Katusabe tells him all communications are down, some fault in the atmosphere.
38. Reuben gets kitted out and goes to head back down the mine shaft. Before he does so Katusabe says, you forgot your blue pills. He hands him some and Reuben swallows them down.
39. Reuben goes down the shaft and heads deeper and deeper down. As he does so he notices someone is walking behind him. Its Savchenko. Reuben tries to ignore him as best he can but Savchenko continues to describe what a great thing Reuben is doing and the moment these rocks are discovered he's going to be lauded as the greatest scientist that ever lived, etc.
40. Reuben finds the door again and this time it is wide open. Amazed he walks through and comes to an open cavern. There he finds human bones lying all around. He picks one of them up and places them in his bag, he picks his way through the cavern horrified and then comes to a glass door on the other side. On this glass door are bloody hand prints (now turned brown) that are exactly the shape of Reuben's scatter patterns that he's been 'working on'.
41. Freaking out Reuben escapes the hole and runs across the surface to the light house. He goes through all his papers and sees all the scatter patterns, he looks at all the figures again and recalculates. None of them make any sense whatsoever. All this has been a lie.
42. Enter Katusabe fully kitted out in anti radiation gear. He tells Reuben everything is going to be all right, he looks in Reuben's bag and takes out the bone. He thanks him and says he has to go now but he'll be back. Reuben is feeling dizzy so Katusabe gives him some pills and tells him to rest.

43. After Katusabe has left Reuben tries to call Rachel but the radio still isn't working. He goes back to the rubbish pile and starts ploughing through the papers (or maybe some other obscure place he's discovered). He finds papers relating to nuclear waste disposal, they are so old they look like they're from the 1800s and they literally turn to dust in his hands. Then Reuben suddenly notices his skin, its covered in welts and bruises.
44. Somehow he gets to Rachel (or she gets to him). She admits that she has seen him before. He'd come in with a bunch of workers ten years ago lugging a whole heap of radioactive waste. But he never came out again. That's why she thought he was a ghost.
45. Then it all comes back to him in a flashback – a younger Reuben is giving the orders for the workers to go into the shaft. He shuts the door. He burns all the evidence...
46. A company truck with Katusabe and thugs turns up. The thugs shoot Rachel immediately (or she escapes)??? Reuben tells Katusabe he now know what he's done. Katusabe said he served the community in his own way...people died, but they had to. Now Ucorp needs the bones. We needed YOU to go back, you alone knew exactly where the workers were entombed alive. We need the bones to work out exactly how long we all have to live. But personally, says Katusabe, I'm glad it was you who went down and experienced the horror of what you forced on my brothers. But I am not a vindictive man. I'm giving you the choice to keep taking all the blue pills I've been giving you and enjoy what time you have left or, well, die.
47. Reuben chooses to die. He wanders out to the desert and finds Rachel. The two of them realise the earth will survive all of this...somehow.

APPENDIX E

THE LIGHTHOUSE - TREATMENT # 3

Matt Hawkins

March 13, 2009

1. Reuben sits on a ridge in the desert, looking out over the vast, arid plain. He is well dressed, in a very neat suit and tie (or the 2027 equivalent) and seems quite relaxed. There is a distant rumbling and Reuben turns slightly and looks toward the horizon. A slight wisp of smoke can be seen. A vague ringing sound, like breeze through wires can be heard in the air. Reuben smiles and whispers the words 'clean'.
2. In the distance he sees three workers drilling a hole. They are dressed very neatly in overalls and hard hats and seem to be working with due diligence except for one who lounges on the ground smoking a cigarette. Reuben laughs a little, then takes up a pair of binoculars for a closer look. Suddenly the workers who were standing stagger to the ground, one of them throws up, a heat wave seems to shimmer around them. Reuben talks into a radio 'Its happening'.
3. Reuben, still in suit and tie, sits in the middle of remote tarmac road. He smokes deeply and stares into the middle distance, thinking deeply. There is a breeze blowing parallel to his face and he watches the smoke from his lips drift in a particular direction. Suddenly the breeze drops and the smoke lingers in front of his face. He looks up at a wisp of cloud perfectly stationary above him. Slowly he gets to his feet and crosses the road.
4. Reuben walks across sand and scrub, he comes across a bloodied leg and a mutilated body. Then he looks down at his own hands, they are wizened and leprous.

5. Reuben wakes up on a light aircraft, flying across the desert (almost everything outside the Adelaide metro area is desert). He is wearing completely different clothes, has longer hair and possibly a beard. The pilots inform him they are about to land in Adelaide. It's a beautiful day and the temperature has dropped down to 45 degrees so he'll actually be able to go outside. Reuben looks around at the three other passengers. They are all wearing suits and seem to be ignoring him completely, apart from one attractive dark haired woman who smiles at him from across the aisle as he glances at her, then goes back to her magazine. He surreptitiously takes out a grey plastic container and pours a couple of blue pills into his hand. He glances up to see the woman still reading her mag then quickly swallows them. A stewardess hands him a glass of wine. The woman across the aisle tells him it's a Barossa Shiraz, best in the world, 'bet you don't get that in Tasmania'. He smiles at her awkwardly. Then she tells him 'we're all very excited about you joining the company. Ucorp is a great employer'. She also points out the company never recruited from interstate but given Reuben's reputation they thought they'd make an exception.' She introduces herself as Rebecca, indigenous affairs officer for Ucorp. She hopes they're paths will cross again soon.
6. When the plane arrives at the airstrip (or helicopter lands on the top of the building) Reuben is greeted by an enthusiastic bookish man who introduces himself as Yuri Savchenko, his assistant. He is studying his PhD in Geothermal technology and is incredibly honoured to be assisting such an esteemed scientist as professor Reuben Hargraves.
7. From the window of the limo Reuben observes the street life of the Adelaide suburbs. There are crowds of Sudanese lining up for a jerry can of water, no trees in the street and a high para-military presence (The Ucorp Security Company), but apart from that things seem relatively peaceful. Savchenko points out that now the East African population (or the 'Sudos') outnumber the 'citizens' four to one. He speculates as to whether they might have been better off starving in the Sudan. Reuben tells him any life is better than none at

all. Savchenko says he'll love living in SA once he gets used to it. Just be careful of the Sudos. He says Ucorp have recruited Reuben because he's the best in his field, really a genius. Reuben tells him he's not that smart, otherwise he would have figured out how to escape Tasmania years ago.

8. Then the car turns into the inner city area, suddenly the streets are clean and the shop windows sparkle. White people are hanging out in cafes and there is even the odd tree and real shrub. Reuben tells Savchenko they don't have many cafes in Hobart. Since 'defederation' no one can afford coffee there, now there's a peasant economy. Savchenko smiles and presses a button on one of the side panels, a thermos appears full of coffee. Reuben raises an eyebrow. Savchenko assures him its real, '400 dollar a kilo Arabica beans, brought in from Ethiopia'.
9. Eventually the car pulls into the foyer of Ucorp building. There is a bank of reporters, cameras flash away and news crews jostle for position as Reuben gets out of the car. He is surprised at the attention and Rebecca pushes him through the crowd and then into the foyer. There a cheer goes up and Reuben is greeted by Gerry Winstone the head of Ucorp himself.
10. Gerry leads Reuben away toward the board room explaining how pleased he is that Reuben has decided to take up this position with the corporation. Once there they sit down and a lunch of lobster and French champagne is served. Gerry asks Reuben what he knows of Ucorp. Reuben says he knows that ever since Gerry's father developed the 'Tip Fission' method of nuclear power generation following the discovery of the largest vein of high grade uranium 235 in the world directly underneath the Flinders Ranges Ucorp has been the richest company in the world exporting cheap power to almost a quarter of the world's population. These two discoveries lead to the secession of South Australia from the Commonwealth which objected to the virtual destruction of the Flinders Ranges in search of uranium. Since then Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria formed the Republic of East Australia and WA became 'Westralia'. Tasmania was left on its own and has since plunged into virtual third world conditions relying almost totally on the tourist dollar to keep it afloat. 'The only place you'd ever see a lunch like this would be in the tourist

resorts, which Tasmanian citizens are banned from entering'. (The Republic of Tasmania is run by the Green Party, who rule with an iron fist, backed up by wealthy tourism companies – (got to weave this info in somehow)). Gerry asks Reuben if he finds it surprising that a Uranium mining and processing company might want a geothermal expert. Reuben says he did think it odd. Gerry explains that Ucorp are committed to alternative energies. Uranium can't last forever and according to what he knows of Reuben's research there could be a LOT of geothermal energy down there. Reuben's fissure theory is quite inspiring. Gerry is glad he managed to seduce Reuben before Westralia Energy Company did. So...welcome to Ucorp and South Australia, Gerry concludes.

11. Down in admin Savchenko tells Reuben he has to have a medical examination. Reuben says he sees no reason why he should do a medical. Savchenko says that all Ucorp employees must have a clean bill of health both physical and mental before the company can employ them – but I'm sure you have nothing to worry about.
12. That night in his plush hotel room Reuben looks at his pills as horrific flashes keep passing before his eyes. He shakes his head and takes the pills.
13. As he leaves his apartment he is greeted by two Ucorp security men. They ask him where he's going. He tells them he has a headache and needs some pain killers. They tell him there's a chemist around the corner and that they're happy to escort him. He tells them he's fine, he doesn't need a chaperone. They let him go reluctantly.
14. Reuben walks into a late night chemist and passes across a prescription note. The chemist looks at the slip suspiciously. 'This is from a Tasmanian doctor?' he asks. Reuben nods. The chemist tells him he can't honour this prescription here, especially for this stuff. Reuben tells him he's a Ucorp executive, about to take up a high level position, as he slides over a 500 dollar bill. The chemist takes the cash and mumbles 'well, I guess you're not an Olympic swimmer so I suppose its OK'. He takes the prescription.

15. The next morning after the medical the doctor calls him into his office. He looks at Reuben after perusing the test results. He tells him he has some very obvious drug blockers in his system. You've mixed a couple of common pharmaceuticals together to bamboozle us. Well, shrugs Reuben, I'm from Tasmania. Meaning? Asks the doctor. We like to indulge in some marijuana occasionally. The doctor frowns and says he'll have to quit that if he's going to work for Ucorp. Reuben says he'll try. The doctor says he won't report it, but advises he attend a drug rehabilitation workshop.
16. On the way back to his hotel room Reuben witnesses a group of Sudanese stealing food from a gourmet deli. They are chased by Ucorp security who simply shoot them dead. Reuben is unnerved and not sure if what he just saw was some kind of hallucination or reality.
17. HOTEL ROOM. Reuben sits in a robe in his hotel room. Its beautiful, absolutely luxurious. Reuben strokes the clean surfaces. He looks up at the air conditioner. He opens a notebook and looks at the pages of his theories...the scatter pattern. There is a knock on the door. Its Savchenko. He asks Reuben how his medical went. Reuben tells him he passed with flying colours. He asks Savchenko how he came to work for Ucorp. Savchenko says he was kicked out of Uzbekistan who nationalised their uranium industry and threw all the Russian companies out. He didn't want to go back to Russia as its now run by mafia bosses, so South Australia was the only answer. And he likes wine. He changes the subject: 'are you ready for the gala?' He hands Reuben a brand new dinner suit and some Italian patent leather shoes. 'Compliments of the company' he says.
18. EXTERIOR UCORP BUILDING – a big banner reads 2027 Alternative Energy Conference, major Sponsor: Ucorp. There are reporters and a small crowd of anti nuclear protestors. Reuben's car pulls up in front. Reuben and Savchenko get out. Reuben looks around at the protest and sees MICKEY, a hairy hippy type staring at him directly. Savchenko quickly pushes him inside.

19. In the foyer Reuben is met by Gerry, who is surrounded by minders and secretaries, and looks very statesmen-like. Behind him is diminutive woman, Jennifer Fox, the Premiere of the Independent Republic of South Australia. Gerry greets Reuben, introducing him to Premier Fox who tells him she is honoured to meet him and is very much looking forward to supporting his research here in SA. Reuben mentions the incident he witnessed in the street the previous night. He says it seemed like a heavy handed reaction and how did a private security company have the right to shoot to kill? Who is actually in control here? Jennifer looks embarrassed. Gerry tells Reuben, of course the State government is in control, they've just subcontracted some of the policing to Ucorp Security Company. Reuben says he doesn't like their methods. Gerry says he will not tolerate thugs in his company. He says he'll get a description from Reuben later and weed these guys out. Jennifer tells him he should understand that these Sudanese would suffer far worse in East Africa. They should be grateful. Reuben is unimpressed.
20. LARGE BOARDROOM. Reuben approaches a microphone. He looks out at a large room of Ucorp employees all wearing evening wear (or the most fashionable colour of 2047). There is a bank of reporters down the back. All the employees smile at him graciously. Reuben talks about the hot rocks...describes his plan to tap this new energy. 'I know this is probably the last thing you want to hear...but uranium is not the only source of energy....' He describes the rocks that struck the earth millions of years ago, creating fissures down to clearly accessible geothermal energy. He tells them he knows nuclear energy is efficient – he studied it, but geothermal energy is, in environmental terms, completely free, no side effects, and the meteors happen to have provided us a key. Suddenly out the back a protestor starts shouting slogans. Its Mickey. He tells Gerry to stop hiding the truth. Radiation is killing people. We're all going to die thanks to Ucorp profiteers! He is immediately nabbed by Ucorp heavies who drag him out.
21. Later that night a gala dinner is served in the boardroom. Reuben is delighted to find out he is seated next to Rebecca. She tells him she was impressed by his speech, and she's glad there's a good guy in the company. She asks him

about Tasmania, he says it's a cool place, full of trees and nature, but no jobs. Rebecca says she can see he's someone who aspires to something more than that. She tells him about her life in Mookra, she has virtual independence up there, even the company can't enter her territory without her permission. Reuben says that's very respectful of a corporation, surely if there were uranium up there they'd throw that policy out the window. She tells him the Mookra lands have the advantage of being totally uranium free, which has been our salvation. Then she says that scatter pattern is remarkably similar to an indigenous legend about ancestors flying down to earth from the heavens. Perhaps the original inhabitants of SA have always known about this energy. Then they are interrupted by a security guard who tells Reuben Gerry wants to see him in his office.

22. GERRY'S PRIVATE OFFICE. In Gerry's private office we see Mickey seated before a table. There is a meal and a bottle of wine before him. Behind him stand the two goons who threw him out before. Gerry sighs as he entered: 'Still haven't touched your dinner, what a shame, its lobster and foie gras at 7,000 dollars a kilo...' Gerry tells Reuben he has no problem with protestors. He invites Mickey to tell them all what's wrong with Ucorp. Mickey raves on about the company poisoning the population with radiation – he sounds like a crazy person. 'And yet', replies Gerry, 'there is not a single shred of evidence'. Mickey babbles on about conspiracy theories but is unable to produce any real proof. Gerry says he can go. He asks one of the thugs to put Mickey's meal into a take away container. Mickey leaves. Reuben is impressed with Gerry who again assures him Ucorp is a human company. Mickey used to be a top scientist but developed a mental disorder – there was no way Ucorp could employ him in that state – so he's probably just jealous and resentful. But he has to understand: you have to be of a sound mind to work for this company.

23. When Reuben gets back to his table he notices Rebecca is gone, her chair is occupied by Savchenko who orders a bottle of vodka and pours a few out for Reuben. He says Rebecca had to go home, she has an early flight in the morning. But she gave you this. He hands him a business card with her details

on it 'Jameson Station, Mookra'. Then Savchenko smiles and says he reckons Reuben might have a good chance with her. She's one of the 'good guys'. They toast to working together.

24. Reuben shows up at the lab the next day to see Savchenko there bright and early. He asks Savchenko whether he has the outback soil samples. Savchenko happily takes him down to the basement, or presents them in a beautiful case. He tells Reuben he's spent some time preparing them. Reuben is excited. He tells Savchenko in these mineral samples are the keys to the origins of the world. Geologists unlock all these mysteries, like time travellers. Reuben shows Savchenko his scatter pattern theory. Then they start placing the minerals on a map.
25. That night Reuben gets home to find a message left for him by Rebecca. She says she's sorry she had to run off but he's always welcome to visit her in Mookra. Reuben tries to concentrate on some work, but begins having flashbacks. He takes more blue pills and then looks at the phone number on the card. He calls it and gets a message: 'The person you are calling is in a restricted area'. He looks out the window and sees the empty streets. He goes outside and tells security he wants to go out and get something to eat. They tell him he can have whatever he wants sent up to his room, no need to go out. He tells them he'd rather like to. They say it wouldn't be a good idea. Not tonight, maybe later on in the week. Reuben asks them what the trouble is and they tell him its just best he stay in. Reuben calls Savchenko and explains the situation to him. Savchenko says he'll sort it out.
26. An hour later Savchenko turns up and tells the guards to stop being arseholes and let the guy go out. They eventually acquiesce and Savchenko takes Reuben to a night club. Reuben elaborates on what he hopes to find in the minerals, the source of some kind of extraterrestrial matter – this will be the indication that they're on the right track. Savchenko is keen, but seems to be more concerned with the cute bar staff. He slams down lots of vodkas as Reuben realises that everyone in this bar looks the same, they all seem to be very clean cut and wearing the beige outfits he sees around Ucorp. Savchenko is forced to admit that this is a Ucorp bar, for Ucorp staff. The security guys

only let him go because he told them that's where they were going. Reuben is concerned that perhaps they're being a little hamstrung by all this control. Savchenko drunkenly says 'Absolutely not, Ucorp are just concerned about their staff's safety...perhaps they are a just a little paranoid. You are after all a valuable commodity.' Reuben tells Savchenko they better go. They have a big day tomorrow. Savchenko orders a couple of 'Soberers', blue liquid in a shot glass. Down one and you're completely sober!

27. The next day Reuben turns up at the lab to see a rather depressed looking Savchenko. He asks him what's wrong but Savchenko is evasive. He then asks Savchenko to get him the other samples from north of the state. Savchenko says he can't. They've been requisitioned. Reuben is astounded. Savchenko says this sort of thing happens to the research department all the time. He should see security if he has a problem.
28. Reuben goes up to the head of security who tells him the mineral samples have been taken to protect corporate security. Reuben argues that he has a vital job and he needs those mineral samples and a lot more that seem to be restricted. The head of security shrugs and says there's nothing he can do about it.
29. So Reuben goes to see Gerry, but his secretary tells him he's gone on holiday, to Tasmania...
30. Back at the lab Reuben asks Savchenko what they hell they are supposed to do. If they don't examine the crystals first then looking for the fissures is going to be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Savchenko tells him the same thing happened to Mickey, he was a research scientist too, but couldn't handle the restrictions the company kept putting him under, so he went mad. Or maybe he was a little mad to begin with. Reuben asks Savchenko where Mickey is now. Savchenko tells him rumour has it that he runs an illegal drug business down in Colonel Light Gardens. Reuben says he wants to go there tonight. Savchenko says no way, its too dangerous, don't be fooled by the name, its full of low lifes who'll knife you for a pack of cigarettes. Besides

security won't let us. Reuben: just tell them we're off to the Ucorp club.
Savchenko reluctantly agrees.

31. That night they turn up at Mickey's place – a den which is a cross between a nightclub and a drug supermarket displaying marijuana, amphetamines, cigarettes (which are now illegal) and all sorts of other exotic drugs. They find Mickey out the back cutting up cocaine. Reuben makes him sit down and tell him about Ucorp. Mickey says it's a corrupt company with lots of shit to hide and has killed lots of people. 'They made me undergo this 'therapy' or that was what they called it and after it my mind just wouldn't work properly and I kept seeing this image in my head.' He shows Reuben a drawing that looks exactly like the scatter pattern. He tells him he doesn't think there's much chance of the company letting them go out there. He feels Ucorp are simply keeping them on ice so Westralia doesn't get to use him. But Mickey says he has a plan: once he makes enough money to buy a visa he's heading straight over to Western Australia to work for Westralia Energy. They'll protect him from those Ucorp bastards. Then he gives Reuben a rock he says came from the Mookra region, beyond the Horseshoe Ranges. He says the answer lies within it.
32. On the way back to the lab Savchenko tells Reuben he shouldn't believe the ravings of a madman. Mickey is clearly unstable and has a grudge against the company that tried to help him. You can't trust a skitzo. Reuben tells him not to be so sure.
33. Back in the lab Reuben analyses the sample and realises it contains a clear Widmanstätten pattern. This is a very heavy meteorite fragment exactly like the type of object that he postulates struck SA millions of years ago. Reuben tells Savchenko this is it – clear evidence I'm on the right track. And now we have a location. We have to go. Once we get there Rebecca can help us: 'She's one of the good guys, after all'. If we find these fissures then I'm sure they'll radiate across the border. If I can prove that then Westralia will protect us. Savchenko tells him he's mad. Ucorp will never let them go. And what's so important about these damn rocks anyway? Who says Westralia will look after them? The best thing to do would be to just keep our heads down, kick back

and relax in the lab and then Ucorp will keep paying us and we can live a life of luxury and even get a Nobel Prize if we want one. Reuben says: 'But that would be a lie'. So what, says Savchenko, its better to live a comfortable lie than die trying to find out the truth. 'You don't know how bad these guys can be, once you sign that contract, they own you'. Reuben tells him nobody owns him and that he's going with or without Savchenko.

34. The next morning Reuben is packing his bush gear into a sports back (but carefully dressed in his work suit) when he hears Savchenko's voice outside his door talking to the security guards. He looks through the spy hole to see Savchenko whispering something to them. He turns and holds his breath, certain the game is up. Then the door opens and Savchenko enters. He says goodbye to the guards as he does so. Then he asks Savchenko how the hell he thought he'd get past these two gorillas? He's managed to forge some reassignment papers for them, but they're bound to wake up to it soon. They have to go now.
35. Savchenko takes him to a Ucorp garage where they requisition the last of the gas guzzling 4x4s and head off out of Adelaide.
36. On the way, as they pass the real South Australia, ie. lines of immigrants waiting for food and water hand outs, dead trees, riots in the streets (all this within the budget, of course) Savchenko tells Reuben he was right. He's damn sick of Ucorp too, but has never had the guts to leave them. This way he'll finally make some difference in his life, as long as they can name the fissure after him. Reuben laughs and says he'll name the whole method after him if he likes.
37. So they go out toward Mookra where the Rebecca runs the indigenous reserve lands. Along the way they see hell, a dry land ravished by years of drought, etc. Savchenko asks Reuben if he's sure any energy can come out of a dead place. Reuben says they must have thought the same thing about the gas fields in Siberia. Well, shrugs Savchenko, that didn't last.

38. They eventually make it to the outpost gates. There is a long electric fence with security cameras. There is an intercom system where they call Rebecca. She answers and is very surprised to hear from Reuben. He asks her if they can enter. She reluctantly opens the gate (by remote) and gives them GPS coordinates where they can wait for her. In they go.
39. They arrive at the location she specified to see nothing but desert in all directions. Then a manhole type cover opens and Rebecca appears. She invites them into her 'office'. As they go down she apologises for the mess. She's been working alone for some time. 'Where is everybody else?' asks Reuben. All the men left to work on the Ucorp mines a long time ago and the rest live way out in the desert. Reuben asks how often she sees them? She changes the subject, asking them what they're doing out here. Reuben explains the situation.
40. But she is quite reluctant to let them on the land, firstly because she's sick of whities digging up aboriginal lands for their own selfish purposes and secondly because she is a little nervous about how Ucorp will retaliate.
41. Reuben tries to convince her to take the risk – he says this is important, once we get the information to Westralia, they'll protected all of us. We can go across the border to WA. But Rebecca says this is her home, her country, her people. 'What people?' asks Reuben. 'There is no one here'. Rebecca says he wouldn't understand. Westralia can't be trusted either. They'll just ravage the land in exactly the same way. So Reuben swears he will not allow that to happen. Rebecca eventually trusts him, but she has her doubts.
42. Reuben shows her the location on the map, where he thinks the rock might have come from. Reuben asks her if she knows where the place on the map is. She says yes, but it's a place for men, women are not to go there. Reuben asks her if she's serious? She says yes, she can take them to the base of the rock, but go no further. Besides, that place gives her the creeps. Do you know what's there? Asks Reuben, have any men gone up there recently? All the men around here have disappeared long ago, she replies, all gone, all dead.

43. She takes them out to the Big Rock Reuben has the feeling they are being followed. But Rebecca says she'd know if anyone was coming in or out of the area. Savchenko says don't be so sure.
44. When they get to the Big Rock, Rebecca stays on the perimeter. Savchenko and Reuben make their way up to the top. Savchenko again starts to have doubts. So what if you do find this rich vein of geothermal energy? How are we going to get out of here alive? And what are Westralia gonna do, probably sign some sort of deal with Ucorp and then have the lot of us killed. Reuben rounds on him and tells him they have an obligation to undermine this corporation, we need to find what they've been hiding out here. Then they stumble across the bones. This thing is bigger than they thought. Savchenko identifies them as being recently deceased, the flesh has melted off them.
45. No business of ours, says Reuben. We have to find these rocks. Savchenko is amazed, he tells Reuben we can't just walk away from this and go on our merry way, like its nothing. We have to get the hell out of here. What? Retorts Reuben, just run across the desert? Once we find the rock pattern then Westralia will give us the protection we need. Savchenko grumbles that he's never heard of any fucking company called Westralia...how do you know you can trust them? Or is this really about your ego? Savchenko breaks down, tells him he doesn't want to die. Reuben comforts him, tells him to hang in there, everything is going to be OK.
46. But they can't breathe a word of this to Rebecca. She's highly political and probably emotional and might want them to pursue the truth about the bones instead of continuing to find the thermal energy.
47. They take the readings and find strong evidence of geothermal heat (they use a core driller and get very positive readings). Then they leave the mountain and find Rebecca on the two way radio talking to someone. Rebecca gets off the line quickly, tells them she had a call from Ucorp. They want her to keep an eye out for Reuben and Savchenko. She told them she hadn't seen them.

Reuben thanks her. She asks what he discovered up on the hill. Reuben mumbles that its 'secret men's business'

48. That night, back at the ranch Reuben goes through the scatter pattern of the rocks, he tells Rebecca this was a fissure pattern from millions of years ago, each providing a portal through to hot magma energy. This is an endless source of clean energy that Ucorp have been denying the world. And it just happens to look exactly like an aboriginal symbol, comments Rebecca cynically. Reuben says its not so outlandish, perhaps people settled near warmer spots and drew a kind of map. But Reuben admits to having this image in his head for as long as he can remember. Ahh, says Rebecca, so you're a kind of Messiah...you have visions. They have a few drinks and go to bed.
49. The next morning Reuben wakes up in the middle of the desert (tied up). His head throbbing. Rebecca throws a bone in his face. She screams at him 'You knew about this and planned to do nothing? Do you think all blackfellas are expendable in your little experiment!' She tells him how many years ago all the men were forced to work for Ucorp, mining uranium and one day they just disappeared. Some said they were poisoned, or went mad and ran off into the desert. She wants to get down to the truth of this. Reuben tells her its OK, if he can get the key to the thermal energy patterns Westralia will help them. 'Westralia?' who the fuck are they. 'There was a guy, his name was Mickey, he was an agent for this company...' 'Oh really?', replies Rebecca. 'Couldn't have anything to do with the fact that you've been popping these?' She holds up the bottle of blue pills. 'So you're taking anti-psychotics and you expect me to believe your tales of some benevolent mining company that's going to solve all our problems.' Reuben begs her to untie him and take him to one of the other scatter pattern 'fingers' then he'll show her the evidence of the geothermal energy that will save them all. And why the need for all this violence? Rebecca tells him that when his mate Savchenko pissed off she got suspicious. Reuben can't believe Savchenko has run away. The two of them head to the other location.

50. When they get there they find no evidence of geothermal energy, nothing. Rebecca says she knew it, now lets go back to the original site to investigate.
51. They do so and realise that all these guys died suddenly from the same cause. Reuben can find very little traces of radiation. He takes a sample of the bone and tissue and goes back to the lab.
52. Reuben looks over all his scatter pattern data and realises its all been a waste of time. There can be no evidence whatsoever of any form of thermo nuclear energy. He gets the feeling he's been set up, the company have deliberately led him out there. He gets suspicious of Savchenko. Says he must be a company stooge. 'Of course, they aren't that stupid to just let me escape, they're hiding something else much greater'. Rebecca asks him whether he's able to work out what that is. Reuben says he's going to try.
53. The next day he works out that the tissue as degraded rapidly and contains strange protein structures, we see him flip around the samples under the microscope, and see strange shapes that are beginning to resemble the scatter patterns...then some of the nightmare images come back... this time they are more intense, he sees images of bloody and boil covered people, all dying horribly.
54. There is a knock at the door. Reuben says it could be Ucorp security, but Rebecca replies she saw nothing on the security monitors. Rueben goes to hide but then they see its Savchenko, looking dishevelled and half dead. He says he tried to escape but didn't get very far. The desert is harsh and he's sorry. Savchenko has a breakdown, weeping like a baby. Reuben calms him down. Savchenko tells Reuben he came across something horrible, a mass grave with dozens of bodies, and then he found some kind of office. Reuben tells him he doesn't trust him but Savchenko convinces him otherwise. He says his life has changed since he met Reuben and that he can't be expected to be as strong as him.

55. At dawn they go out to investigate (Reuben's whole world has been thrown out of balance, he doesn't trust anyone or anything anymore) and find an office full of abandoned research, scraps of paper and odd figures. Then Reuben stumbles across his symbol scrawled out over and over again, it is even scratched on rocks and shrubs outside, like signposts leading out to the wilderness.
56. He goes down a shallow mine shaft (or into a cave or some other place) and starts to see evidence of horror, scratches on the walls, etc. Then he sees a massive pile of bones, all in the same state of degradation as the others. He has another flash of horror, turns and goes back to the temporary lab.
57. There he gobbles down a whole swag of blue pills and manages to calm down. He looks at the large symbol scrawled on the wall and realises it is a human protein.
58. He grabs a sheet of paper and draws the human protein in as much detail as he can. He recognises the links, he tells Savchenko this is a particular protein subject to radiation. Its presence in the human body actually enhances the effects of radiation.
59. He goes back to the lab (or has a sample with him) and sees remnants of the protein in the dead tissue from some of the other bodies. He doesn't recognise the actual protein but then realises it's a derivative from lactose (or something). Rebecca asks him how he knows all of this stuff. Reuben says he remembers studying the effects of the neutron bomb. It has a small explosion but a massive release of radiation that can kill people but leave buildings intact. There was an idea that it can be used to pinpoint certain types of people if their bodies had been 'prepped' in a certain way. Rebecca asks him who had this idea, Reuben replies that he doesn't know, he can't remember. He must have studied it as an undergrad. 'What? At the University of Tasmania? That's pretty unlikely', says Rebecca. Then Reuben feels incredible pain in his head, he goes grappling for the pills, but can't find them. He collapses on the ground as horrific images flash before him. Rebecca gets down on the floor and holds

him. She tells him he doesn't need these pills anymore. You have to face the truth. Then slowly Savchenko stretches out his hand and presents Reuben with a handful of blue pills. 'Go on, take them', he says. Then he looks at Rebecca ruefully 'Believe me, its easier, and far more merciful this way', he tells her. He tells Reuben he thinks they should go for a walk. As they make their way up the stairs Rebecca tells Reuben he can deal with this. 'You can really change. You don't have to be this way'. Savchenko shakes his head as they leave. 'Yes he does', he mumbles.

60. The two of them make their way up to a magnificent ridge at sunset. All the while Reuben is talking about how Ucorp must have been testing some kind of Neutron bomb that only targets people who have certain proteins contained within them. Then right at the top of the hill, it all comes back to him...
61. He remembers watching this very same wilderness shimmering with a silent blast of radiation...he remembers the thrill of it as the perfect weapon destroys the lives of the people below. He remembers the effects on their actual bodies and then he remembers going mad (a follow on from the scenes at the opening of the film: he staggers across the desert. He draws the scatter pattern all over the ground, etc)
62. Reuben tells Savchenko 'It was me, wasn't it? I did it'. Savchenko just smiles and says 'Yes, sir' and suggests they sit down. He takes out a packet of cigarettes and offers him one. 'But I don't smoke', says Reuben, 'Yes, you do' Savchenko tells him. Then a small convoy of vehicles can be seen tearing toward them in the distance. Savchenko says it always happens like this. He hates to see Reuben go through it, but it was Reuben himself who insisted on it. Reuben tells him he's not like that anymore, he's changed. Savchenko tells him 'That's what you always say'. Reuben flicks the cigarette away as if to prove him wrong and Savchenko smiles: 'and that's what you always do'
63. Cut to ANOTHER LAB (it could be anywhere). Bright lights, stark room, Reuben sits on a chair in the middle of it. Gerry smiles down at him, explains the important research he's been doing, explains the fact that Reuben is indeed

a brilliant scientist, but his specialty is not in geothermal energy, but the development of the perfect neutron bomb. He was responsible for the initial experimentation but then went mad when he saw the results on real human flesh and therefore Gerry had his personality reprogrammed. Using the psychiatrist Savchenko and his special drugs, they made him reinvent himself as a caring scientist from Tasmania, a fish out of water, a kind of messiah who would come to evil South Australia and save the world. ‘Without this personality and the obstacles we threw in front of you’ says Gerry, ‘you would never have been able to unlock the final answer that was hidden in your head – that the ‘scatter pattern’ was actually a type of protein. Had you simply come back with this knowledge you would never have shared it with us, you might have changed into someone too moral. So we gave you back your ego, your hubris and added a ridiculous, crusading sense of justice. This was the only way we knew you’d give us the answer.’

64. ‘But you don’t have the answer!’ retorts Reuben. ‘Even I have no idea what actual protein it is and how to manufacture it’. Savchenko tells him that his research indicates certain personalities are more suitable to discovering certain things. This latest personality is only one step in the process; they are now going to wipe his memory and start all over again. The answer is definitely inside you somewhere. We just need to encourage you to draw it out. He then says he really has a lot of respect for Reuben and doesn’t blame him for going crazy, but the development of the neutron bomb is where the future lies for Ucorp. Russia and Western Europe are about to go head to head, the US is desperate to have a crack at China. If they use conventional nuclear weapons we’ll all die. All the uranium in the world isn’t going to save us from a nuclear holocaust. The neutron bomb is the only ‘moral’ weapon. And Reuben should feel proud that he played a crucial role in developing it. So a few indigenous people had to die, they would have drunk themselves to death anyway. ‘What about Rebecca?’ Asks Reuben just as Savchenko is inserting a large syringe into his arm. ‘Don’t worry about her’, says Savchenko. ‘She’s actually Pakistani.’

65. Reuben wakes up on the side of the road. It is the same road as the start of the film. A car pulls up and Rebecca gets out. She grabs Reuben by the arms and hauls him into the car.
66. As the car drives along he thanks her for picking him up. She asks him what his name is. He tells her his name is Richard Hester. 'What were you doing out here all alone', she asks He tells her he's an ornithologist, researching the Sturt Dessert Wren. Rebecca nods her head sadly. They're dying out, he goes on to explain. Something to do with a protein.

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' UCORP '

DRAFT ONE

By

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REUBEN (40), a slim, clean shaven, calm man, sits on a ridge overlooking a vast scrubby plain. He wears grey trousers, a white shirt and a thin blue tie.

He looks up at three wisps of cloud in the pale blue sky. The clouds run parallel to each other and curl slightly at each end.

Reuben smiles and shuts his eyes listening to a vague distant whistling sound, like wind through high tension wires. This is followed by a distant rumbling, like a gentle thunder. Its a beautiful sound, like ocean waves.

Reuben deftly rises to his feet and walks over to a field surveying device, that contains a kind of telescope.

He looks through it at THREE WORKERS, all non Anglo. They are dressed in bright orange overalls and white hard hats.

One of them stands holding a measuring stick, another digs a hole and the third lounges on rock smoking a cigarette.

Reuben frowns slightly.

He then looks down at at his slim touch phone where a timer is running. About 3 minutes and ten seconds have passed.

He looks back through the scope at the three men.

Suddenly the guy digging the hole starts to throw up and the guy smoking gets up and goes over to help him.

The worker holding the measuring stick sits down suddenly.

What looks like a heat wave streams across them.

Reuben looks back at his touch phone and presses stop. The figure is 27.56 seconds. He nods his head and looks back out over to the plain without the aid of the telescope. The sky seems to have darkened slightly.

Still dressed as he was before, but slightly dishevelled. There is a look of vague concern on his face, something like repressed shock possibly.

He smokes slowly and watches the smoke from his lips drift to the left of his face.

Then looks up at a wind sock fluttering.

He continues to smoke and draws a shape on the tarmac using a chalky rock. It looks like an elongated flower, or a meteorite with multiple tails. Then he looks up to see...

The wind sock sags.

Reuben laboriously gets up and walks across the road.

3 EXT. DESERT SCRUB - DAY

3

Reuben paces carefully through the scrub, looking down at the ground. The spinifex and grasses are dead still. They seem peaceful.

He picks a strand and examines it.

Then he looks over at a body convulsing.

One of the WORKERS covered in boils, is choking and coughing up blood.

Reuben looks at him blankly for a second then bends down and takes a saliva sample from the worker's mouth with a cotton bud.

The worker looks at him desperately and holds out his hand.

Reuben looks at the blood stained cotton bud, turning it slowly in his hand.

Then back at the worker.

4 INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - DAY

4

Reuben slowly opens his eyes in a plush exclusive airport lounge. He has a neat beard and his hair is longer. He's been resting with his head against the armrest of a deep leather sofa. He wears a natural fabric shirt that looks like its home made and jeans that look like they're fifty years old.

In the background two flight attendants look at him and whisper to each other.

There is a woman REBECCA (30) opposite who smiles at him directly. She wears a dark business twin set and has dark curly hair and dark skin.

Reuben notices and tries to sit up properly, grimacing as he does so. He gives her a brief nod as if wondering whether he should know her or not.

REBECCA

5am flights are a bitch, aren't they?

Reuben nods again and smiles awkwardly as a tray appears before him, delivered to him by one of the flight attendants. It contains scrambled eggs, smoked salmon and a glass of white wine.

REBECCA

Its a botrytis riesling. Best thing for early in the morning.

Reuben takes a sip.

REUBEN

Its sweet...

REBECCA

The noble rot; its a fungus that strangles the grapes. Eats away at them til you're only left with the essence.

Reuben shrugs.

REUBEN

That's nature for you.

Then Reuben notices the flight attendants gossiping about him in the background. Rebecca glances at them and back at Reuben.

REBECCA

They're all very excited. Especially the company.

Reuben nods. Cocks an eyebrow.

REUBEN

Ah, the company.

Rebecca's phone beeps. She picks it up and reads the message. Then she smiles at Reuben.

REBECCA

I have to go.
(beat)
Enjoy your breakfast.

She gets up and walks over to the conveyor belt. Reuben watches her.

5

INT. AIRPORT/TOILET - DAY

5

Reuben stands at the wash basin and looks up at the camera mounted on the wall.

He hears the sound of wind on wires and a vague and distant gurgling. He shuts his eyes tight.

When he opens them he sees a dark FIGURE sitting in one of the cubicles. This figure is a hefty man, completely covered in rags. His skin is blackened and flaky, like its been burnt. He has his hands covering his face and is breathing with difficulty.

Reuben quickly goes into a cubicle and takes out three semi irregular shaped blue pills. He swallows them quickly and slowly leans his face against the wall of the cubicle that adjoins the one where the figure is sitting.

Then he leaves. The other cubicle is empty.

6 INT. AIRPORT - DAY

6

Reuben stands on the conveyor belt with one small bag. He looks out the window.

The tarmac bakes in the scorching early morning sun. Guys in silver sun reflector suits unload the planes.

Reuben passes a large sign that reads:

UCORP - SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE.

Underneath is a picture of a smiling dad with a two year old on his shoulders out in the desert with a slag heap behind them.

Then Reuben looks up to see...

A lithe man in his early forties, Yuri SAVCHENKO standing at the end of the conveyor belt. He smiles and waves at Reuben. He is wearing the same a white shirt and thin blue tie, similar to the one Reuben was wearing in the opening scene.

SAVCHENKO

I am so sorry...

Savchenko grabs his bag.

SAVCHENKO

There were garbage trucks on Bradman drive involved in some ridiculous parade. Like its garbage man day, or something. Do you have any other stuff?

Reuben shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO

Good, that's great. So we'll fly through customs. How was Hobart? Wet I bet, lotsa rain.

(MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

We'd kill for it. You lucky bastards. Have you had breakfast?

Savchenko paces forward with the bag.

7 INT. AIRPORT/CUSTOMS - DAY

7

Savchenko leads Reuben through a special gate called 'UCORP EMPLOYEES'.

SAVCHENKO

Its 48 degrees out there. Been a bit of a cool change. You can actually stand outside for up to 4 minutes.

As they pass by the customs officer booth Savchenko holds up Reuben's small bag and waves it around bossily.

SAVCHENKO

(to officer)

This is all he's got.

The OFFICER nods and waves them through.

SAVCHENKO

(smiling triumphantly)

And that, my friend, is it. Welcome to the Republic of South Australia!

Reuben looks back at the Customs officer who smiles and gives him the thumbs up.

8 EXT. /INT. CAR/ADELAIDE STREETS - DAY

8

Reuben sits in the back of a fairly plush vehicle, driving through the outer suburbs of Adelaide. Savchenko sits beside him. He takes out a plastic package and offers it to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

Go on, take one. Fruchocs. Don't get them in Tassie.

Reuben chews on the sweet thoughtfully and stares at Savchenko who suddenly laughs.

SAVCHENKO

I am such an idiot. Yuri Savchenko.

Savchenko holds out his hand and Reuben shakes it.

SAVCHENKO

In a month's time I'll be Doctor Savchenko; I just have to pull my finger out and finish the bloody thesis. But who cares, heh? I'm working for you now!

Reuben nods.

REUBEN

Just you?

Savchenko looks at him, instantly trying to hide his embarrassment.

SAVCHENKO

To begin with. I mean its really important what you're doing. The company knows that. We're just a little under resourced at the moment. Look, you're gonna love it. Don't worry about a thing. There's a big thing planned for tomorrow night. Big, big thing. You're the only Easterner they've ever employed.

REUBEN

I'm Tasmanian.

SAVCHENKO

Well, you know what I mean.

There is a noise out the window as the car slows down.

The DRIVER in the front seat grumbles.

DRIVER

Freakin' Sudos...

Reuben sees a large CROWD of SUDANESE lining up in front of a tap. The line is very big and people are trying to push in. A fight breaks out and a large SUDANESE man is thrown across the bonnet of the car. The Driver presses the horn angrily.

DRIVER

Get off the freakin' car!

A COP walks over to the driver's window.

COP

You'll have to go back, I'm sorry.

The driver holds up an I.D.

DRIVER
Ucorp, dick head!

The COP is horrified at his own mistake.

COP
Sorry, man. I couldn't
recognise...look just a wait a
sec...

The cop turns around and fires his gun into the air repeatedly. The crowd disperses suddenly.

The car moves on.

Savchenko sighs and rolls his eyes to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Sorry about that. We have a
problem here with dumb cops. Must
of them are like...twelve.
(smiling)
But of course, you don't have
cops at all in Tassie.

REUBEN
Not as such.

SAVCHENKO
Don't worry, we'll be in town
soon.
(to driver)
Don't take Bradman Drive!

DRIVER
Yeah, yeah...

9 EXT./INT. CAR/ADELAIDE STREETS - DAY

9

The car now makes its way up to a barrier, a UCORP SECURITY GUARD takes a brief glance at the front plate and waves the car through.

Once through the gate the scene is completely different.

Reuben looks out at beautifully clean streets inhabited by no one except garbage collectors in silver sun protection suits.

He gazes up at the shiny buildings.

REUBEN
Where are all the people?

SAVCHENKO

Working.
 (beat)
 Look, there's a tree!

The car passes a single green tree being kept alive by water spray and a refrigeration unit.

Underneath is a sign saying: 'DONATED BY UCORP to the PEOPLE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA'

SAVCHENKO

Its an elm tree, imported from the Ukraine...very expensive. But trees are one thing you do have...

Savchenko smiles at his own observation and looks out the window.

SAVCHENKO

Here we go...

10 EXT. UCORP HQ - DAY

10

Outside a group of REPORTERS shielding themselves from the sun under large silver reflector boards.

The car pulls up out the front and Savchenko emerges amongst flashes and questions.

REPORTER #1

Hey Reuben! Happy to be in SA?

REPORTER #2

What are your comments on the allegations that the job is purely tokenistic?

SAVCHENKO

(smiling)
 No comment.
 (to Reuben)
 I always wanted to say that
 (still smiling, to the reporters)
 NO COMMENT! Get away from us, you parasites.

Savchenko laughs as he drags Reuben toward the glass doors. He is able to go through when he stops and turns to the small crowd. He raises one arm to silence the crowd and drapes the other over Reuben's shoulder.

SAVCHENKO

OK. One comment. This man will
change the very notion of
renewable energy!

REPORTER #1

(almost jeering)
That's a big call, Yuri.

SAVCHENKO

We'll issue a press release this
afternoon...

He turns and pushes Reuben through the glass doors to
see...

11 INT. UCORP HQ/FOYER - DAY

11

A group of UCORP EMPLOYEES stand in gauntlet formation
applauding. Reuben makes his way slowly down the aisle
toward a neat, diminutive man at the end: GERRY HANCOCK.

Gerry shakes Reuben's hand with a fixed smile and says
nothing while the applause dies away.

There is an awkward silence. Savchenko looks around
uncomfortably.

Reuben fixes Gerry with a wary gaze.

REUBEN

Gerry Hancock.

GERRY

Lets have coffee. You like
coffee?

12 INT. UCORP/BOARDROOM - DAY

12

Gerry and Reuben sit on a plush sofa in the middle of a
vast, light filled room.

Gerry pours coffee from a pure white pot into delicate
glasses. Reuben watches, trying to suppress his curiosity.

GERRY

Remember this, Reuben?

REUBEN

Vaguely.

GERRY

I went to Tasmania once.
Beautiful place. Outstanding
resort I stayed in.

(MORE)

GERRY(cont'd)

But no coffee. You can smoke as much weed as you like but not a drop of coffee. What do you make of that?

REUBEN

Its considered politically unsound...

Gerry nods like a benevolent father.

GERRY

Of course, the Green Coalition. They like to keep you in slavery. Bet you're glad you escaped?

REUBEN

I'm not entirely opposed to all their ideas.

GERRY

But they don't have geothermal fissures in Tasmania and we do.

Gerry passes a coffee cup to Reuben and then one to Savchenko who sips it enthusiastically.

GERRY

And they don't have money for exploration there. And we do.

Gerry smiles at Reuben and glances down at his rather threadbare outfit.

GERRY

You're here because you want to succeed in your field. You're the best. I can relate to that.

Reuben fixes him with a steely glare.

REUBEN

I'm here because I know how to tap an alternative safe and renewable energy. Uranium is going to kill us all.

Gerry chuckles slightly and glances at Savchenko.

GERRY

Our messiah. I like that. Perfect.

(to Savchenko)

Hand over those Fruchocs.

Savchenko does so as Gerry pops a few in his mouth and sips the coffee.

GERRY

These are contraband. If my wife catches me she'll kill me. Supposed to be on this Atkins diet. God bless her.

(beat)

You see, its just evolution, Reuben. My father had the will to process uranium, not just ship it to Japan. He made the State rich, the Commonwealth tried to take it, so we became an independent nation. We evolved. The eastern republics are floundering and dying. They failed to evolve.

REUBEN

Survival of the fittest.

GERRY

Exactly like your eco-nazis are doing in Tasmania only far more humane. Now Ucorp is in a position to bring about your dream, Reuben. Renewable geothermal energy. But only because we invested in Uranium first. People need to have jobs before they can save the planet. They need pretty bloody good jobs, like the one I'm giving you!

Savchenko laughs and goes to take back his packet of Fruchocs.

GERRY

Leave them there.

Savchenko gently places them back. Gerry suddenly leaps up.

GERRY

No, fuck it, take em. You get fat.

(to Reuben)

Reuben, its an absolute honour having you work for us. So glad you didn't go to Westralia - the bastards.

He shakes Reuben's hand warmly.

GERRY

I like your attitude. Don't ever agree with me and we can save the planet together! See you at the Gala.

Gerry quickly makes his way toward the door. Savchenko watches him go.

REUBEN

So that's the great Gerry Hancock.

SAVCHENKO

Yeah. You sure made an impression.

Reuben shrugs slightly.

13

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

13

Savchenko and Reuben are striding down the corridor. Savchenko is handing Reuben lots of sheets of paper.

SAVCHENKO

You need to sign these forms...and, er, open a local bank account and decide whether you want to be paid in Euros or Pacific Yen. I suggest Euros...

They turn a corner as Reuben tries to keep track of all the paper that's been handed to him.

SAVCHENKO

Coz we're gonna put a shit load of money in your account. In the meantime, this should keep you going.

He hands Reuben an envelope containing a wad of 100 Euro notes. Then he passes Reuben a red form.

SAVCHENKO

And this is for your medical.

Reuben stops suddenly and looks at the form.

REUBEN

Medical? Why do I have to take that?

SAVCHENKO

Oh don't worry, its standard. Its mainly a screening for mental disorders. Unless you're crazy you have nothing to worry about - and your willingness to leave Tasmania automatically rules that out.

Reuben lingers.

SAVCHENKO

Come on. You're gonna love your
new place.

CUT TO:

14 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

14

Reuben sits on his bed in a bathrobe and casts his eyes around the luxurious environment. There are new clothes draped on a rack by the wardrobe.

Then he looks down at the blue pills in his hands.

He turns to see the dark FIGURE bent over the coffee table, slurping from a cup, his back to Reuben. Reuben registers no surprise.

Reuben looks away.

REUBEN

So, you want to be one of them.

The figure continues to slurp greedily, and now seems to be eating something.

REUBEN

They'll know. You can't hide
forever.

The figure pauses momentarily, and seems to be staring into the middle distance.

FIGURE

That's up to you.

Reuben grimaces and rubs his eyes.

REUBEN

I know.

Reuben takes the blue pills.

CUT TO:

15 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

15

Reuben stands in front of the mirror now dressed in his new clothes. He is shaven and has put his hair in some sort of order. He looks good.

CUT TO:

16 INT. HYATT HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

16

Reuben walks down the corridor toward the lift where he sees two UCORP SECURITY GUARDS, CHRIS and ARI. Chris is a friendly good looking young guy in his early twenties, Ari is the same age, but has a constant look of earnest worry. They wear grey jeans with converse sneakers and red button up body shirts.

When Chris sees Reuben he smiles.

CHRIS
(gushy, but trying not
to be)
Hey. How you doing?

Ari just nods. Reuben smiles and nods and stands in front of them.

REUBEN
I'd like to use the lift.

CHRIS
(nodding)
Sure, sure. No problem.

Chris doesn't move, but Ari walks across to block the path to the lift door.

CHRIS
But if you need anything, you can
just let us know.

Reuben looks at him inquisitively.

CHRIS
Chris and Ari. At your service,
Reuben.

REUBEN
OK, great.

Chris and Ari don't budge.

REUBEN
I'd really like to get in the
lift.

Ari looks at Chris who shakes his head slightly.

CHRIS
Which floor?

REUBEN
Ground.

CHRIS
No problem.

Chris hits the button and the doors open immediately. Ari stands aside as Reuben enters, then follows him into the lift.

17 INT. HYATT HOTEL/LIFT - NIGHT 17

Reuben and Ari stand in the lift awkwardly.

ARI
Where you going?

REUBEN
To see Adelaide.

Ari hands him a phone.

ARI
If you get in trouble, just hit any button.

REUBEN
Sure. Thanks.

The lift doors open and Reuben exits.

ARI
Have a good time.

18 INT. CHEMIST - NIGHT 18

Reuben stands at the counter watching a CHEMIST prepare his prescription behind the window.

He looks over at the FIGURE who is perusing the prophylactic section of the store. His head is bowed and he seems to be groaning softly.

Reuben turns back to the counter as the chemist approaches with a small paper box.

CHEMIST
You know we're not supposed to sell these.

Reuben slides a 100 Euro bill across the counter.

REUBEN
Then why do you have them?

The chemist looks at him for a beat, then shrugs.

CHEMIST

You don't look like an athlete,
so i guess it's OK.

He takes the cash then gives him the box.

19 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 19

A blackened hand drops pharmaceuticals into a coffee cup
and grinds them with a small glass liquor bottle as a
pestle.

In the background, Reuben lies on the bed watching.

20 INT. HYATT HOTEL/BREAKFAST BUFFET - DAY 20

Savchenko and Reuben sit at a breakfast table drinking
coffee. They are both wearing beautiful suits and look very
much the Ucorp employees.

Savchenko looks at Reuben awkwardly.

SAVCHENKO

Look, that crack about being
crazy in Tasmania. It was pretty
cheap, and I'm sorry.

REUBEN

I assume your referring to the
pulp mill poisoning.
(beat)
That was an SA company.

SAVCHENKO

Not something we're proud of. But
you can understand, we can't have
mentally unstable people here.
The stakes are too high.

REUBEN

How would you even know?
Schizophrenia is controllable.

SAVCHENKO

Not here, it isn't.
(beat)
Look I'm sorry. I just want you
to know I'm not an arse hole.

Reuben looks at him closely.

REUBEN

Why do you care what I think of
you?

SAVCHENKO
 (innocently)
 Cause you're my hero, man.

Reuben smiles.

REUBEN
 You're full of it.

Savchenko nods and looks at the menu.

SAVCHENKO
 Wow. Bacon.

21 INT. UCORP/CLINIC - DAY

21

Reuben sits on a sofa while a DOCTOR peruses his medical results, looking over his glasses periodically and somewhat suspiciously at the man before him.

DOCTOR
 Did you bring any substances with
 you from Tasmania?

REUBEN
 Substances?

DOCTOR
 There are blockers in your
 system...a high level of
 (ketamine).

REUBEN
 You think I'm on drugs?

DOCTOR
 Well, you seem to be hiding
 something. And not very well, I
 might add.

Reuben smiles.

REUBEN
 I'm from Tasmania.

DOCTOR
 I know.

REUBEN
 We have different attitudes
 toward that which grows in the
 ground.

DOCTOR
 Cannabis? Is that what you're
 hiding?

Reuben nods.

REUBEN
I'm sorry. I didn't want to put
you in an embarrassing position.
I didn't think you'd find it that
easily.

DOCTOR
You think they'll employ you? No
matter what?

Reuben stares at him intensely.

REUBEN
Won't they?

The Doctor gets up and shakes his head. He slowly leaves
the room.

Reuben sits alone for a second. Then a NURSE enters and
hands him a form.

Reuben reads it:

'MEDICAL PASSED'

22 INT. UCORP LAB - DAY

22

Through a glass door we see Savchenko sitting at his desk
sipping coffee, reading the newspaper.

He looks up to see Reuben approaching.

Reuben holds up his staff card smiling and runs it over the
magnetic security device. The door opens.

SAVCHENKO
Welcome to the team.

REUBEN
Thanks.

SAVCHENKO
Bureaucracy, huh.
(beat)
So, let me show you what we got
here.

Savchenko puts down his coffee and opens a cabinet full of
shining minerals.

Reuben is impressed by the array of samples and smiles at
them like old friends.

SAVCHENKO
You like 'em?

REUBEN
You have them all mapped and
categorised?

SAVCHENKO
Of course.

Reuben looks at Savchenko seriously.

REUBEN
And their history is fully
recorded with GPS mapping.

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO
You think its somewhere in there?
Your cosmic dust?

Reuben smiles, trying to hide his surprise.

REUBEN
I never published that paper
here.

Savchenko goes over to the white board and draws the
scatter pattern in red.

SAVCHENKO
A meteorite made up predominately
of super hard feldspar
conglomerates strikes the earth
at such an impact that is creates
fissures in the bedrock.

The pattern spreads across the board. Savchenko starts
reproducing Reuben's calculations.

SAVCHENKO
These fissures go all the way
down to the hot core of the earth
thus creating accessible
energy...

He turns to Reuben and smiles wickedly.

SAVCHENKO
For all eternity.

REUBEN
I sent Ucorp the information
about the fissures, but I never
said where I thought they came
from.

SAVCHENKO

I know, I have my sources. I think its beautiful. A gift from heaven. And who really cares where they came from anyway?

REUBEN

I do. And I suspect you do too.

SAVCHENKO

When a feldspar suffers a massive impact it metamorphises...

REUBEN

Into an iron rich igneous X95

SAVCHENKO

And what makes you think one fell down on us?

REUBEN

I have little real evidence yet...

SAVCHENKO

I heard it came to you in your sleep. It was a 'vision'. Which is why they kicked you out of the University of Tasmania.

Reuben continues to smile, trying to conceal the shock.

REUBEN

Your sources were misinformed. It was a political issue.

Savchenko shrugs and sits down, taking up his coffee.

SAVCHENKO

Yes. People do gossip.

He sips the coffee nonchallant. Reuben continues to stare at him. Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO

Its OK. Gerry doesn't know. And if he does he doesn't care.

REUBEN

Westralia didn't have a problem with my research techniques.

SAVCHENKO

And neither do we. Honestly. You see Ucorp has faith. We believe the gods are on our side.

Savchenko suddenly laughs loudly.

SAVCHENKO

My friend, don't worry about it.
Please, we're the scientists
here, let the businessmen and
academics think what they like.

Reuben smiles, slightly reassured.

SAVCHENKO

You're still my hero.

Out on Reuben looking dubious.

23 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

23

Reuben sits on his bed in a new evening suit. He has his
head in his hands

The Figure sits on the bed drinking the mini bar dry and
laughing, or sniffing, its hard to tell.

Reuben raises his head.

REUBEN

Shut up.

Reuben opens his hand to reveal three blue pills. He
swallows them down and then goes over to the window.

He looks down into the city street below.

It is empty except for a Sudanese man sprinting down the
alley way pursued by security guys. They stop and shoot him
down.

The door bell chimes gently.

Reuben goes over and opens the door to reveal Savchenko
standing in a similar formal suit.

SAVCHENKO

You ready, boss?

Reuben nods.

24 INT. HYATT HOTEL/LIFT - NIGHT

24

Savchenko and Reuben stand in the lift, saying little.
Reuben seems a little nervous. Savchenko turns to him
smiling.

SAVCHENKO
 You look sharp, my man.
 (beat)
 No one would ever suspect you're
 from Tasmania.

Reuben looks at him dubiously.

25 INT. HYATT/CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

25

Savchenko and Reuben enter the hall to see a crowd of people in evening wear who all turn around simultaneously and start applauding.

Reuben walks through the crowd toward a stage where Gerry is standing by a podium gesturing for him to come over.

GERRY
 Here he is ladies and gentlemen!

REUBEN
 (to Savchenko)
 You didn't tell me I'd have to
 make a speech.

SAVCHENKO
 You don't have to. You can just
 stand there and say nothing if
 you want.

REUBEN
 Yeah, right.

Then Reuben notices Rebecca standing in the crowd. She is looking stunning and smiles at him sweetly as she applauds.

Gerry takes Reuben by the arm and leads him to the podium.

Reuben notices there is a bank of reporters and cameras flashing at the back of the hall.

He looks down at Rebecca who smirks at him.

REUBEN
 This is overwhelming...

There is more applause.

REUBEN
 And somewhat surprising. When I
 was asked to head Ucorp's
 alternative energy department,
 thought it might be some kind of
 joke.

Gerry laughs indulgently.

GERRY

Uranium companies don't have a sense of humour.

The crowd laugh too.

REUBEN

But make no mistake...I intend to make cheap, clean, renewable geothermal energy a full and viable alternative to nuclear...

MICKEY (O.S.)

Traitor!

Reuben sees a man with a beard and glasses (MICKEY) at the back of the crowd. He wears a cheap suit and is bellowing through a megaphone.

MICKEY

You're a prisoner here, Tasmanian. Go home!

Two security guards leap on Mickey and drag him away as he continues to bellow through the megaphone.

MICKEY

You're a show pony...have some guts and leave. They'll never give you what you want...!

The doors shut as Gerry gets up to the microphone. He looks perturbed but is trying to gain control of the situation.

GERRY

OK, so, er, any other comments or questions?

The crowd laughs nervously.

GERRY

Then lets have some cocktails.

Gerry gets down from the stage and quickly hastens away. Reuben looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN

Who was that?

Savchenko rolls his eyes.

SAVCHENKO

You don't want to know.

26 INT. HYATT/CONFERENCE HALL - LATER

26

Reuben is milling around with the guests making small talk. He looks over at Rebecca who is trying to extricate herself from some old bore and make her way toward Reuben.

Eventually Reuben conveys his apologies to the small group he is talking to and makes his way directly to Rebecca and the BORE.

Rebecca smiles at him and extends her hand.

REBECCA

Reuben, it is such an honour to
have you work for us...

The bore, flushed with wine, misses the irony of her comment.

BORE

Absolutely!

Rebecca turns to the Bore.

REBECCA

You wouldn't be able to get me a
small glass of riesling would
you, Oscar?

The Bore nods and staggers off.

REBECCA

We don't have much time. Quickly.

She takes Reuben by the hand and the two of them glide through the crowd to the balcony. There drifts over to the balcony, turns and faces Reuben.

REBECCA

I'm hoping he'll forget about us
if we hide in the jungle long
enough.

Reuben smiles.

REUBEN

You call this a jungle?

REBECCA

Its a real tree. That's not bad
for SA.

(beat)

You enjoying yourself?

Reuben grimaces.

REUBEN

Not really...

Rebecca smiles.

REBECCA

Yes you are. You're the hero. You must like that.

REUBEN

I'm just trying to do a job.

REBECCA

Tell me about water.

REUBEN

What do you mean?

REBECCA

I've always been interested in what an actual river looks like. I've never seen one.

Reuben laughs and looks back into the room at all the glamorous drinkers.

REUBEN

A river...well, its just wet.

He looks at Rebecca.

REBECCA

And it flows, creating life in its wake...

REUBEN

Like uranium. A generator of life. Like the sun.

Rebecca shrugs.

REBECCA

All the uranium in the world ain't gonna make the grass grow.

Reuben takes a sip of his wine.

REUBEN

That's profound. You still manage to distill a good drop.

REBECCA

That wine was made twenty years ago. When we had water.

REUBEN
If we don't go back inside you're
gonna get thirsty.

REBECCA
I'm happy out here.
(beat)
He was right, you know.

REUBEN
The crazy guy.

REBECCA
His name is Michael Sullivan. He
used to have your job.

Reuben tries to hide his concern.

REUBEN
You think that's going to happen
to me?

REBECCA
Its up to you.

She approaches Reuben closely.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
How much bullshit can you
swallow?

They are interrupted by Gerry who brings Rebecca a glass of
riesling.

GERRY
Watch out for this one Reuben.
She's a fox.
(to Rebecca)
Here's your riesling. Oscar was
very distraught.

REBECCA
He'll get over it.

GERRY
Come with me, Reuben. There's
someone I want you to meet.

Gerry leads Reuben away. Reuben glances back at Rebecca.

GERRY
She's not going anywhere.

Rebecca turns away.

27 INT. HYATT/VIP ROOM - NIGHT

27

Gerry leads Reuben into a plush looking office cum VIP room.

Seated at a table between the two security guards is Mickey.

Before him is a sumptuous meal of lobster and champagne.

He is dishevelled and looks like he has been roughed up somewhat.

Mickey looks up at Reuben angrily as he enters.

MICKEY

Here he is.

Gerry wanders over to the centre of the room, glaring down at Mickey.

GERRY

You haven't touched your dinner.
That lobster's 600 euros a kilo.

MICKEY

Shove it up your arse.

GERRY

No thanks.

MICKEY

(looking at Reuben)
I hope you choke on yours.

GERRY

That's not very nice, Mickey.
(to Reuben)
Mickey is a South Australian
treasure. We put up with him
because he's part of the
landscape. He thinks we're
poisoning everyone...

Mickey squirms about on his seat rolling his eyes.

MICKEY

Blah, blah, blah...

GERRY

(speaking over Mickey's
rising voice)
(MORE)

GERRY(cont'd)

He thinks Ucorp has the sole aim
of making the entire state
radioactive and then, I don't
know, flying to the moon, or
something...

Mickey takes out a cigarette and attempts to light it. One
of the security guards whips it from his mouth.

Gerry smiles.

GERRY

Now Mickey, don't make things
worse. Smoking is illegal in this
republic. It carries a hefty
fine...

MICKEY

I'm scared as a monkey...

Gerry shakes his head and looks at Mickey with something
that resembles compassion.

GERRY

You used to be so sharp.

REUBEN

He used to work for you...

GERRY

And now he's jealous that you've
taken his job.

MICKEY

I don't give a shit....

GERRY

I'm sorry I had to let you
go...but Mickey, you can't keep
doing this.

Gerry looks at Reuben and smiles.

GERRY

What do you think I should do?
Beat him up?
(to the security guys)
Give him a doggie bag.

One of the security guards reluctantly takes the plate away
from in front of Mickey who just stares nervously at Gerry.

GERRY

See ya later, Mickey. Take care
now.

Mickey gets up and creeps toward Gerry, getting really
close.

MICKEY
 (slowly)
 No. YOU take care.

Mickey creeps from the room, eyeballing Reuben as he does so.

Gerry sits down and reaches for a glass of wine, he swills it with thirstily. Reuben remains standing.

REUBEN
 What was all that about?

Gerry looks down at the table.

GERRY
 I just want you to know that its a difficult job you're doing here, Reuben. I wanted to be up front about the fact that...your department is in a bit of a mess.

REUBEN
 What happened to him?

GERRY
 (looking at Reuben directly)
 He cared a little too much.
 (beat)
 Its only a job, Reuben.

Reuben keeps staring at him.

REUBEN
 Not for me.

Gerry nods solemnly.

GERRY
 No. I thought not.
 (beat)
 Oh well. Back to the party.

28 EXT. HYATT/CONFERENCE HALL/BALCONY - NIGHT

28

Reuben wanders out looking for Rebecca. He notices Savchenko leaning against the balustrade staring at the twinkling lights of Adelaide.

SAVCHENKO
 (without turning around)
 These twinkling lights, like stars. It only happens in two places in the world.
 (MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

Adelaide and LA. Something to do with the heat rising from the plain.

REUBEN

Is Rebecca out here?

SAVCHENKO

Or maybe its all that geothermal energy.

Savchenko hands Reuben a card.

SAVCHENKO

Rebecca had to go, she has an early flight. But she wanted me to give you this.

Reuben looks at the card.

SAVCHENKO

She lives out in the desert. Looking after our precious indigenes.

REUBEN

Why does she work for Ucorp?

Savchenko laughs and slaps Reuben on the shoulder.

SAVCHENKO

Who else is there to work for?! Come on, lets drink properly.

29

INT. HYATT/CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

29

Savchenko and Reuben lean against the bar. Savchenko has three vodkas lined up in front of him.

SAVCHENKO

In the Ukraine, you must always drink in threes. Otherwise its terrible luck.

Reuben looks at him closely.

SAVCHENKO

So we have to invent for ourselves an imaginary friend.

As Savchenko downs his vodka Reuben notices the Figure staring at him from across the room.

He slowly pulls out some pills from his pocket.

He looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN

You really want to work for me,
even though I pulled my main
theory from a dream?

Savchenko smiles without looking at Reuben, and downs
another vodka.

SAVCHENKO

Of course. I like that. Books and
facts are over rated.

REUBEN

What if I also had schizophrenia?

Savchenko looks at him closely. Reuben shows him the pills
as surreptitiously as possible.

SAVCHENKO

How do you know?

REUBEN

I see things...and hear things.

Savchenko nods and picks up the third glass.

SAVCHENKO

So, we'll save this for your
imaginary friend then?

He smiles. Reuben takes the glass from him.

REUBEN

To energy from the underworld.

He downs the vodka.

SAVCHENKO

Energy from hell.

He slams another glass down and gestures to the barman to
line more up.

30 INT. UCORP LAB - DAY

30

Reuben and Savchenko stand before a big chart on the wall.
They are dwarfed by the scatter pattern that has been drawn
upon it - over a map of the Simpson Desert. There are pins
representing various minerals stuck to the scatter pattern,
but they don't quite fit.

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

What do you think?

REUBEN

Its a start. That's all of them?

Savchenko nods.

(beat)

We need to go through more samples.

Savchenko nods solemnly.

31 INT. UCORP STORAGE - DAY

31

Savchenko lifts the door to reveal a massive warehouse full of containers (or whatever we can find for free).

SAVCHENKO

There they are.

He looks at Reuben who braces himself.

REUBEN

Good. I like samples.

Reuben phone beeps (or whatever sound phones make in the future). He picks it up and reads the message)

REUBEN

Shit.

SAVCHENKO

What is it?

REUBEN

Another bloody meeting. I'd forgotten.

SAVCHENKO

They love meetings.

REUBEN

(looking at his phone)

I have to go...

SAVCHENKO

I'll make a start...

Reuben looks at him.

REUBEN

Start with the Simpson samples.

SAVCHENKO

Sure, I know.

32 INT. UCORP/BOARDROOM - DAY

32

A small group of EXECUTIVES including Gerry sit around sipping coffee. Reuben sits at the table amongst them, very agitated, looking at his watch periodically.

GERRY

If Hawthorne want to join the SA Super League then they're just gonna have to cough up the 30 million euros...like everyone else. No charity just because they're Victorian.

There is a smattering of laughter around the table. Reuben looks out the window.

GERRY

Oh and a reminder...I want all of you at the golf night. I've sent you all new clubs so no excuses...

Reuben watches the heat rise and the barren Adelaide hills.

Cut to many hours later and the sun has set...

Gerry is still droning on about profit margins.

GERRY

Our yearly projections indicate we should be able to make a bid on Lloyds in early September...

Reuben looks at his watch. Its 9:30. He starts to see the door to the boardroom creek open to reveal the dark Figure peeping at him from behind it.

He fingers the pill container in his pocket and sweats. He stares at the figure and grits his teeth.

GERRY

Anyway, the rest you know, so I guess that just about wraps it up. The next meeting is on Thursday. And bring something for the Christmas hamper, you stingy bastards.

The executives make their way out of the boardroom. They all seem quite chipper and surprisingly refreshed.

Reuben gets out of his chair quickly and calmly makes his way to the door.

GERRY

Reuben, you got a minute?

Reuben turns to Gerry.

REUBEN

I'm pretty keen to get back to the lab, Gerry.

Gerry cocks an eyebrow.

GERRY

The rocks are going nowhere, my friend. Take a seat.

Reuben reluctantly sits back down. He glances over at the door and sees the Figure standing there.

GERRY

How are things progressing?

Reuben tries to ignore the Figure that breathes heavily behind the door.

Gerry senses something and turns toward the door.

REUBEN

Very well. Could do with a little more lab time.

Gerry sees nothing behind the door and turns back to Reuben smiling.

GERRY

Yeah, meetings suck.

(beat)

So, you'd say you were close to finding where these actual fissures are?

REUBEN

With more sample analysis. It'll take time, but we're well on the way.

Gerry continues to stare at Reuben for some time as Reuben sweats.

GERRY

Good.

Reuben is not sure what Gerry wants him to do. He gets up and picks up his papers.

REUBEN

I better get going, I suppose.

GERRY
Steering committee, tomorrow
morning.

REUBEN
I didn't think I was on that...

Gerry gets up with an abrupt guffaw.

GERRY
Ha, yeah. There'll be croissants.
Good ones, from Marguerite's...
See ya at 8.

Gerry strides out leaving Reuben alone with the beast. He takes out the pills and throws them down.

33 INT. UCORP LAB - DAY

33

Reuben enters looking very tired. He sees Savchenko sitting at his desk sorting through rock samples.

Reuben puts his stuff down and walks over to Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO
More meetings?

REUBEN
They're killing me.

Reuben looks over Savchenko's shoulder at the small variety of samples.

REUBEN
I was expecting to find the room
stacked to the roof.

Savchenko doesn't look around. He continues to fuss through the samples.

SAVCHENKO
You know, there's enough here to
get started.

REUBEN
Its nothing...

Reuben looks over the table.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
OK, I'll help you cart them all
here. Don't they have goons who
do that stuff for us anyway?

Savchenko looks at Reuben awkwardly.

REUBEN
You couldn't find them?

SAVCHENKO
It was not that I couldn't find
them, the room is full of them.
They're just not releasing any.

REUBEN
Why not?

SAVCHENKO
Security.

REUBEN
Security?

Savchenko shrugs.

SAVCHENKO
Maybe you'll have better luck.

Reuben looks steadily at Savchenko.

REUBEN
Why would they deny us the
samples?

He picks up the phone and presses a button.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Can I speak with Security please.

CUT TO:

34 INT. UCORP STORAGE - DAY

34

Reuben stands before the vast door and looks at Security
guard Chris, who is lounging on a fold out chair.

CHRIS
It happens, Dr Henscke. Sometimes
they just lock things down.

REUBEN
Lock things down?

CHRIS
They just like to keep things
tidy for awhile, so they can do
an inventory. Don't ask me why.

REUBEN
Who ordered this inventory and
how long will it last?

Chris gets up and goes over to the small kitchenette/sink.

CHRIS
You want a coffee?

REUBEN
No, thank you.

CHRIS
I got a good machine. They look after me here.

REUBEN
I want to know who ordered this inventory.

CHRIS
They look after you, Dr Henscke?

REUBEN
Evidently not. Otherwise I'd have access to my samples.

Chris pours himself a fresh cup and sits down on his very comfortable chair.

CHRIS
Nice coffee. I even have a TV with Pacific Sports Network. Twenty 20 final is on tonight. I can sit here and watch it. No problem.

REUBEN
Who is your superior?

Chris chuckles to himself.

CHRIS
I wouldn't recommend that. We're all friends here at Ucorp.

REUBEN
Are you refusing to tell me?

CHRIS
Just let them look after you, OK? Life is too short.

Reuben looks deep into the storeroom. Chris follows his gaze.

CHRIS
It will all be yours soon, mate.

Chris gets up and slowly rolls the door down.

CHRIS
Don't torture yourself.

Reuben walks away.

35 INT. UCORP LAB - DAY

35

Reuben and Savchenko sit opposite each other, staring into the middle distance.

SAVCHENKO
(awkwardly)
Coffee?

REUBEN
No.
(beat)
I think we're getting paid to just sit around.

SAVCHENKO
Its not that bad. All companies do stock take.

REUBEN
You believe that crap?

Reuben looks at him closely.

REUBEN
I want to talk to Mickey.

Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
There's no way they'll let you.

REUBEN
Where is he?

SAVCHENKO
He's mad.

REUBEN
So they tell me. But perhaps if we know how he went mad, it might help me work out if there's any point staying here.
(beat)
So where is he?

Savchenko sighs deeply.

CUT TO:

36 INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

36

Savchenko and Reuben walk through a dark club full of extremely HAPPY PEOPLE and deep music that is so full of bass its almost subsonic. Savchenko turns around and yells in Reuben's ear.

SAVCHENKO

Avoid eye contact.

REUBEN

What? They're dangerous?

SAVCHENKO

No, just extremely boring.
They're on VK.

Reuben looks around at the vacant stares of the happy people and shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO

They're all the kids of upper management. Usually the younger siblings who dropped out of the institute.

REUBEN

The company looks after everyone.

SAVCHENKO

No. Mickey looks after them.

They arrive at a booth where Mickey is sitting down with an array of beautifully presented drugs laid out before him in neat rows.

Mickey is on the phone to a client.

MICKEY

You can have them for free. I'm serious. They're all yours...cause I love ya...

He looks up and notices Reuben and Savchenko. He waves for them to sit down.

MICKEY

OK, gotta go.

He hangs up and smiles, lounging back in the booth.

MICKEY

They've done it to you too.

REUBEN

Done what?

MICKEY
Shut you down.

SAVCHENKO
Not quite.

MICKEY
Don't talk, monkey.

SAVCHENKO
I'm not a monkey.

MICKEY
Go eat a banana.

SAVCHENKO
He's ridiculous. A waste of time.
I told you.

Savchenko gets up.

REUBEN
(without taking his eyes
from Mickey)
Sit down, Yuri.
(to Mickey)
Why am I being shut down?

MICKEY
Let me guess. You're going to
lots of meetings? They've stopped
the sample supply?

Reuben nods.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
They only employed you so
Westralia couldn't get their
hands on you. They want to keep
the rocks buried, man.

As Mickey talks he starts spreading the powder across the
table slowly revealing the 'scatter pattern'.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
After the breakdown they put me
into therapy. Just hooked me up
to a steady trickle of opiates,
to shut me up. But I could see
clearly in my dreams.

Reuben looks down at the now clearly formed scatter
pattern.

REUBEN
What is that?

MICKEY

Its the answer. It came to me in a dream. But it didn't start in my head. Its a dreaming symbol. The Mookra people use it.

REUBEN

Where are these people?

MICKEY

Simpson desert...but really, like way back in time. They knew the rocks...they respected them. Go to Johnson Ridge...I tried to make it there...

(looking at Savchenko)

The fuckers stopped me.

Savchenko laughs and looks around for a waiter.

SAVCHENKO

Can I get a vodka from someone. And none of that Smirnoff rubbish.

Mickey shakes his head and starts pouring powder in the perfect pattern on the table.

MICKEY

No drinking here.

SAVCHENKO

Holy Christ...

Mickey defines the scatter pattern naturally on the table.

MICKEY

You see these patterns came from god to provide us with all the energy we need. Ucorp want to control everything. Deny us our right.

SAVCHENKO

And now you sell drugs. So liberating...

REUBEN

Yuri...enough.

(to Mickey)

You have evidence?

Mickey smiles and nods.

MICKEY

5000 euros.

REUBEN
Only 5000 euros. To save
humanity.

MICKEY
I'm a generous man.

Mickey reaches into his pocket and throws a card down on the table. It has a phone number on it.

MICKEY
I'm so generous I'll also throw
in this. His name is Julian
Creswell. He's our man in
Westralia.

Reuben picks up the card.

MICKEY
When you know the answer you call
him. Cause no one else is gonna
protect you.

Reuben and Savchenko look at him suspiciously.

SAVCHENKO
Where's the rock?

Mickey smiles.

CUT TO:

37 INT. UCORP LAB - NIGHT

37

Savchenko and Reuben stare at a dirty rock about the size of a grapefruit that sits on the bench.

Savchenko sighs heavily.

SAVCHENKO
A bargain.

REUBEN
Lets chop it up.

Cut to later...

Savchenko and Reuben sit before a slide projector. Images flash across the screen.

SAVCHENKO
It could have come from anywhere.

REUBEN
Why would he bother?

SAVCHENKO
Because he's crazy.

Reuben pauses on a slide.

REUBEN
Look, there's another one.

The image is of streaks of white incursion crisscrossed with ochre lines.

SAVCHENKO
Widmanstätten patterns...

REUBEN
Yep.

SAVCHENKO
So we're talking 30,000 years.

REUBEN
Approximately. That's when the fissures first formed.

Savchenko turns to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
I think you have something.
(beat)
But they don't want us to have something.

REUBEN
But we got it. For the bargain price of 4000 euros.

SAVCHENKO
There goes my golf clubs.

Reuben gets up and turns on the light.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
We can't do it.

REUBEN
We have to.

SAVCHENKO
I don't see why. What do you want? A Nobel Prize? You can have it. Ucorp will arrange it.

Reuben shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
You can have any damn thing you want.

REUBEN

Rebecca can help us. That's her country.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe she would...but even if we do get up there and find the hot rocks...you think they're just going to forgive us?

REUBEN

We have the Westralia contact. They can help us. They wouldn't do it for nothing, but this is big.

Savchenko switches the projector off and walks over to the air vent. He watches two little strips of coloured paper blowing in the draught.

SAVCHENKO

You feel this? Cool air, drifting from the vents.

Reuben nods.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

This is Ucorp air. Clean. Beautiful. Out there in the desert the air is straight from hell. 65 degree hell. It will kill you, my friend.

(beat)

I want to live.

Reuben looks at him with a degree of understanding.

REUBEN

Then live.

Reuben starts gathering various bits of scientific equipment.

SAVCHENKO

You can't do it on your own.

REUBEN

I'll have to.

SAVCHENKO

What? You're gonna catch a Firefly coach?

REUBEN

Let me worry about that. You have a life to live.

He turns to Savchenko.

REUBEN
And its a pretty good life, Yuri.
I know that. I don't resent you.

Reuben grabs his bag and leaves the room. Savchenko watches him go.

SAVCHENKO
They own you, you know. We own you.

38 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM - DAY 38

Reuben has all his gear packed and is sitting on the edge of the bed looking at it.

He hears voices arguing outside.

He looks up at the door as he downs some blue pills.

Over at the door, he peaks through the keyhole to see...

39 EXT. HYATT HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY 39

Savchenko talking to Chris and Ari in low tones. He seems to be negotiating something with them.

40 INT. HYATT HOTEL ROOM - DAY 40

Reuben turns and slides down into a sitting position leaning against the door.

He looks over at The Figure sitting on his bed.

REUBEN
They've won.

The Figure growls.

Then there is a gentle knock on the door.

Reuben opens it to reveal Savchenko smiling.

SAVCHENKO
You thought you could get away
with it. How did you think you'd
even get past the goons?

Reuben looks behind his shoulder to see Chris and Ari have disappeared.

SAVCHENKO
 I reassigned them.
 (beat)
 Lets go.

41 INT. GARAGE - DAY

41

Savchenko unrolls a huge door to reveal a shining well-restored chunky Toyota 4x4.

Even Reuben is impressed.

REUBEN
 I've read about these.

Savchenko picks up a can of petrol and offers it to Reuben. Reuben sniffs it.

SAVCHENKO
 Bring you back?

REUBEN
 Smells like another world. You know how to drive this thing?

SAVCHENKO
 I had one in the Ukraine. I left my wife behind, that was easy. But the 4x4...it broke my heart.

REUBEN
 I thought you were an environmentalist?

SAVCHENKO
 I am...most of the time.

Suddenly sound can be heard outside of people approaching.

REUBEN
 We'd better go.

42 EXT./INT. HIGHWAY/CAR - DAY

42

Reuben and Savchenko drive along. On either side of the vehicle is a barren wasteland.

Savchenko is driving and continuously glances at the instruments in a professional manner.

SAVCHENKO
 It has a top speed of 180. Incredible. You feel the torque?

Reuben nods and looks at Savchenko guiltily.

REUBEN

I'm sorry I've ruined your life.

Savchenko shrugs and adjusts something on the dashboard.

SAVCHENKO

It wasn't much of a life really.

Pause. Reuben nods.

SAVCHENKO

Just a luxury apartment, fine wine, perfect working conditions, and a truly, truly overrated supply of eastern European prostitutes.

(beat, he looks at Reuben)

Who would actually laugh at my jokes, you know. Something you've never done.

REUBEN

I've laughed at your jokes.

SAVCHENKO

Yeah, yeah...

Savchenko gazes down the highway.

They pass some road kill.

SAVCHENKO

Its a lovely place. Must get out here more often.

REUBEN

There's life out here.

SAVCHENKO

Global warming's fried most of it.

REUBEN

So they're still pushing that theory.

(beat)

Global warming is their way of keeping the world dependent on Uranium and everyone in the cities within their control.

SAVCHENKO

(flatly)

Spooky.

REUBEN
You must admit I have a point.

SAVCHENKO
You have lots of points. A real
hedge hog.

REUBEN
Echidna.

SAVCHENKO
What does it matter? Both of them
are extinct.
(beat)
So you think Westralia will look
after us?

Reuben nods.

SAVCHENKO
After we find the fissures, how
will you contact them?

REUBEN
I have a number. And we have a
Sat phone.

SAVCHENKO
Ucorp control the line. They can
pinpoint us.

REUBEN
Then we better be quick.

43 EXT. DESERT - DUSK 43

The sun sets as the 4x4 buckets down the road.

A couple of stray Sudanese walk across the desert in the
foreground. They smile and wave at the car.

Reuben looks at them thoughtfully and slowly lifts his hand
to wave but the car is well past.

44 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT 44

Savchenko and Reuben sit by a fire and drink vodka.

SAVCHENKO
Will she help us?

REUBEN
I think so.

SAVCHENKO

Why?

REUBEN

She's one of the good guys.

SAVCHENKO

Like us?

REUBEN

Yes.

SAVCHENKO

What makes you so certain we are good?

REUBEN

We want to share something that's clean. Something renewable.

Savchenko takes another swig of vodka.

SAVCHENKO

But that doesn't make us good. It just makes us different.

REUBEN

Maybe.

Savchenko looks at Reuben closely.

SAVCHENKO

But you, Reuben, you truly are a good man. I trust you.

(beat)

But what makes you trust me?

REUBEN

I can tell. Just by looking.

Savchenko chuckles.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe...you just want me to be good. It fits into your plan.

REUBEN

I'm not that stupid.

Savchenko looks at him closely.

SAVCHENKO

No. I suppose you're not.

Reuben looks into the fire.

REUBEN

I know what I'm doing.

Savchenko looks at him steadily.

45

EXT/INT. CAR/BARRIER GATE DESERT - DAY

45

Reuben and Savchenko sit in their 4 x 4 looking at the barrier gate. The temperature gauge reads 59 degrees centigrade.

The two of them look at it.

SAVCHENKO

Its just on 9. In fifteen minutes the temperature will climb to over 70. With the suit you can last 4 minutes before your brain starts to fry.

Reuben looks at the gate. Slowly he starts putting on a suit made of reflective material.

Reuben slowly extricates himself from the car and makes his way toward the gate. All the way he sucks water through a tube.

He approaches one of the gates that has an intercom. He presses on old button. He hears nothing.

Back in the car Savchenko watches the temperature gauge climb to 62, 63.

REUBEN

(holding down the buzzer again)

Rebecca. It's Reuben.

He releases the buzzer and hears nothing but a distant crackle.

He looks beyond the fence and sees just a BARREN DEVASTATED LAND (a marked difference from the previous land).

He presses the buzzer again. Nothing.

The temperature gauge is climbing toward 70.

SAVCHENKO

(into a mic)

Reuben, you better get inside.

REUBEN (O.S.)

Just a minute.

SAVCHENKO
You don't have a minute.

Reuben hits the buzzer again.

REUBEN
Rebecca. Answer me.

Reuben listens carefully to the static. Small creaks and pops can be heard. As well as a barely perceptible breathing sound.

Reuben waits. The sun beats down. Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
She's not there.

REUBEN
She has to be.

There is a vague voice at the other end of the line.

REBECCA (O.S.)
(barely audible)
Reuben?

REUBEN
Yes.

REBECCA (O.S.)
What are you doing here?

REUBEN
Open the gate.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Do you have authorisation?

REUBEN
Its pretty hot out here.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Then get back in the car.

Reuben looks up at a security camera.

REBECCA (O.S.)
And go home.

REUBEN
I can't do that. There is no home.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Your problem.

There is a click as the line goes dead.

Reuben collapses.

Savchenko breathes a deep sigh and looks at the temperature gauge again.

SAVCHENKO
Scheiser!

Savchenko jumps out of the car and runs over to Reuben in the searing heat.

He laboriously drags him back to the 4 x 4. Then faints himself.

46 INT. CAR/DESERT - DAY 46

Cool air drifts from the dashboard vent moving little particles of dust.

Reuben slowly wakes up and breathes it in like cool water.

He sees Savchenko lying beside him and stirs him.

Savchenko opens his eyes and looks at Reuben with disdain.

SAVCHENKO
You're alive. Shit.

Reuben looks over toward the gate. It's wide open. Savchenko sees it.

SAVCHENKO
You must be a very charming man.

He leans over and starts the car.

47 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAY 47

The 4 x 4 makes its way across A MOON LIKE LANDSCAPE (depends on what we can find) There are signs of scorching and devastation - could be bush fires (ditto).

48 INT. CAR/DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAY 48

Savchenko drives along. The temperature is climbing.

SAVCHENKO
We should stop. If we keep driving the tyres will burst with the heat. And then we're really fucked.

REUBEN

We don't have the time. It can't be much further.

SAVCHENKO

I'm serious. We have to get under a tree.

REUBEN

There are no trees. What the hell happened here?

SAVCHENKO

Global warming.

REUBEN

(shaking his head)

Its more than that.

Smoke starts billowing from the bonnet. Savchenko pulls over to the side of the road.

He checks the air conditioning. Its stopped working.

SAVCHENKO

Shit.

REUBEN

The HQ can't be far.

SAVCHENKO

What? You want to walk?

REUBEN

You want to wait? We have 8 more hours of daylight to get through. And this car's gonna turn into an oven.

Savchenko looks out at the dirt road.

The heat waves rise malevolently.

CUT TO:

49

EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAY

49

Reuben and Savchenko walk along in their silver suits. They breathe heavily as they trudge forward.

SAVCHENKO

How do we know when we're there?

REUBEN

There's only one road.

SAVCHENKO

So what are we looking for? A nice chateaux, a farmhouse? She'll be out the front with cocktails?

REUBEN

Yeah, something like that.

They reach a slight rise in the road only to find it peter out into dusty rubble.

SAVCHENKO

End of the road.

(beat)

Got any fluid left.

REUBEN

No.

The two stand facing each other.

REUBEN

Four hours til sunset.

Savchenko looks earnestly at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

No hope.

Savchenko sits down on the ground. Reuben looks to the horizon and sees the Figure shimmering in the heat wave.

REUBEN

It has to be here somewhere. We have to solve this thing. Why would she let us in only to see us die?

SAVCHENKO

Because the company wants us to die.

REUBEN

She's not one of them.

SAVCHENKO

Sit down.

Reuben does so. The two sit in silence.

Time passes. They pass out.

50 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DUSK

50

Same location. Reuben and Savchenko lies in the dust. Reuben half opens his eyes and sees the Figure standing over him. This time the Figure is revealed as being covered in burns and exposed bloody flesh. Its teeth are exposed.

He bends down and strokes Reuben's hair.

THE FIGURE

Its not your fault.

REUBEN

I tried.

THE FIGURE

You were brilliant.

Reuben slowly shuts his eyes. When he opens them again Rebecca is staring down at him. She looks away momentarily and then bends down to pick him up.

CUT TO:

51 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/SHOWER - NIGHT

51

Reuben stands in a shower. The water cascades down his naked body. He breathes deeply.

Rebecca enters with a towel.

Reuben looks at her self-consciously as she smirks at him.

REBECCA

You white fellas got a death wish?

Rebecca nods at a large plastic container full of blue liquid.

REBECCA

Keep drinking that.

She hangs the towel and exits.

52 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

52

Reuben sits opposite Rebecca in his towel. Rebecca stares at Reuben steadily.

REUBEN

Thanks.

Rebecca shrugs.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Why?

REBECCA

You ask a lot of people.
Savchenko's in a bad way.

REUBEN

He had a choice.

REBECCA

You under-estimate your
persuasive powers.

(she leans forward)

They're diabolical.

Reuben leans back on his chair and looks around the room. There are no windows. The white walls have several monitors some playing various international TV stations, some of from CC camera. Reuben sees the gate in the darkness through one.

REUBEN

Why didn't you let us in when I
asked?

REBECCA

They wouldn't like it. And that
worried me.

REUBEN

It doesn't worry you any more?

REBECCA

Now it worries me more than ever.

(beat)

You seriously think they'll let
you find them?

REUBEN

How will they stop me? They don't
know we're here. And they can't
enter these lands without your
permission.

REBECCA

Well, they haven't asked...yet.
At least you asked.

(beat)

But you never asked me to let you
dig up my land searching for some
cosmic rocks. You just assumed.

REUBEN

Its for everyone's benefit.

Rebecca cocks her eyebrow.

REBECCA
 That's what Ucorp says.
 (beat)
 But of course, you're right.
 You're better than them.

REUBEN
 You know I am.

REBECCA
 How? I have no evidence? Just all
 your scientific theories.

REUBEN
 I'll guarantee your people
 benefit from this. Once Westralia
 enter I'll make it a condition
 that the local community take
 half the profits.

Rebecca laughs and walks over to the monitors.

REBECCA
 My job is to watch all these
 screens. These cameras are my
 eyes sweeping across my land.
 Take a look.

Reuben gets up and goes over to the bank of monitors.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
 What do you see?

Reuben grimaces, trying not to offend.

REUBEN
 I see sand.

Rebecca looks at him critically.

REBECCA
 I know. You know what I see? I
 see ghosts. There used to be
 people here, but they've all
 gone. I am queen of the land of
 the ghosts.

REUBEN
 Where did they go?

Rebecca shrugs and watches the flickering monitors.

REBECCA
 A few years ago all the men went
 to work in the mines.
 (MORE)

REBECCA(cont'd)

They set up a whole bank of computers for us so we could communicate with them.

Rebecca flicks a switch and the bank of monitors displays the same image: 'Ucorp Communications - Happymail!'

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Happy mail. That's what they called it. They sent us pictures of their work. They seemed to be having a great time.

Rebecca clicks on a keyboard and brings up images of happy Aboriginal workers in hard hats and overalls (exactly like the ones in the opening sequence). They are wrestling each other, leaning on spades, laughing, etc.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Then the messages changed. They started speaking in different voices...

Flashes of text appears on the screen: 'Hey, babe, I miss u'. 'Be comin' home soon.' 'You my angel'

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Like someone had lifted some jivey nigger talk from a rap song and put it in the mouths of our blokes. They never talked like that. And then the communications stopped altogether.

Rebecca clicks a button an one particular pic of three happy indigenous workers appears on the whole screen. The workers from the first scene.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

The satellite had gone down, apparently. Shot down by the Pacific Alliance. And that was that.

REUBEN

Didn't you try to find them?

REBECCA

Some women did. They wandered off into the desert and never came back. The rest were sent to work in Adelaide. I was given an offer I couldn't refuse.

(beat)

They are more persuasive than you.

(beat)

Which is why I need you to go.

Reuben looks at the picture of the happy indigenous workers.

REUBEN
And you're happy living like this?

REBECCA
I'm just happy to be living.

REUBEN
That's not the impression I got in Adelaide. That's not the impression I get now.

REBECCA
Maybe you're not so perceptive as you think.
(beat)
I'll lend you and Savchenko some suits. You'll have plenty of water to get you back to the car.

CUT TO:

53 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/BEDROOM - DAY

53

Reuben wakes up on a hard bed. He is sweating and breathing heavily.

He walks over to the closed door and hears voices on the other side. They could be Rebecca and Savchenko but its hard to tell.

There is an abrupt laugh and a kind of growl, then a distant scream. All the voices echo and resonate around him and seem to pierce his ears.

He runs over to his trousers and withdraws the little box of blue pills. He takes a couple and sits on the bed trying to calm down.

Then the voice subside.

He takes a deep breath and goes over to the door. He is just about to open it when he hears the voices of Savchenko and Rebecca more clearly.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
I'm sorry you feel that way.

REBECCA (O.S.)
I can't. I just can't.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
They won't make it easy for you.

Pause.

REBECCA (O.S.)
I think he's awake.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
Not yet.

Reuben then opens the door and enters to LIVING AREA.

Savchenko and Rebecca are sitting at the bench. A bag is fully packed and two silver sun suits are laid out.

Savchenko smiles at him.

SAVCHENKO
It seems we have overstayed our welcome.

Rebecca looks at Reuben ruefully.

REBECCA
I hope you get back OK. They'll be consequences. But I'm sure they'll forgive you. You're still valuable to them.

SAVCHENKO
Its 5:30. We'd better go.

Rebecca walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN

54

Savchenko and Reuben walk along the dirt track toward the 4x4.

SAVCHENKO
She was right, you know. She's saved our arses.

REUBEN
I'm not going back.

Reuben looks down at a small map then stops and looks over at the horizon. He sees a small PYRAMID OF ROCK (or whatever striking object we can find in the desert).

REUBEN
I'm going over there.

Savchenko looks at the object.

SAVCHENKO
Is that your tombstone?

Reuben nods, and keeps gazing at the distant object.

REUBEN
Possibly. But its also where
Mickey's rock came from.

Savchenko sighs heavily.

SAVCHENKO
You don't like second chances, do
you?

REUBEN
This is our only chance.

SAVCHENKO
No. It's your only chance to
prove how arrogant and stupid and
mad you really are.

Reuben turns on Savchenko.

REUBEN
Ucorp will not look after us. We
were good for show for awhile but
we don't have enough knowledge.
We get that and they can't touch
us.

Reuben continues to walk down the road. Savchenko
reluctantly follows him.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN 55

The 4 x 4 tears along the dirt road leading toward the
pinnacle of rock.

The sun starts to rise threateningly.

56 INT. CAR/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN 56

Savchenko drives along. Eyes fixed steadily on the road.

SAVCHENKO
She'll know we haven't left.

REUBEN
I don't think she'll call them.

SAVCHENKO

She has to.

REUBEN

But she won't.

SAVCHENKO

Then you've killed her.

REUBEN

Not if we find these fissures.

SAVCHENKO

You better be right, Reuben.

REUBEN

I am. I know I am.

SAVCHENKO

Because it all came to you in a dream.

He glances at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe we're all part of your dream. Your big wet dream.

Reuben looks at him closely.

REUBEN

If that's the case then it really doesn't matter what we do.

SAVCHENKO

We should turn around and go home. Beg Gerry to forgive us. He will, he likes us. He gave you golf clubs.

REUBEN

Keep driving.

57

EXT. DESERT PINNACLE - DAY

57

The two men make their way up to the pile of rock. Reuben bends down and examines the ground while Savchenko checks out the surface of the boulder.

Reuben picks up some small rocks.

He watches the crystal faces shine in the sun.

REUBEN

Same material.

Reuben takes out a FUTURISTIC DRILLING DEVICE that looks like a small metal stake.

He place it in the ground and presses a button. On the tip a display starts showing figures, including a temperature gauge.

Savchenko looks over his shoulder.

SAVCHENKO

Hot enough?

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN

Not yet.

SAVCHENKO

Some strange formations down there. A lot of organic material. A high calcium reading.

REUBEN

Its pretty close to the surface. Animal bones.

SAVCHENKO

Animals? That's a lot of roos to produce all that calcium.

Savchenko walks back to the truck and takes out a shovel from the back.

SAVCHENKO

Time to use a little old school equipment.

REUBEN

Save your energy.

Savchenko walks up to the place Reuben is drilling and strikes the shovel against the earth surface.

SAVCHENKO

(with an edge of
madness)

I want to be part of the dream.
Do my bit, you know.

Reuben stands back and watches him.

REUBEN

Yuri, this is a waste of time.
They're too deep.

SAVCHENKO

I have time, Reuben.

Savchenko keeps plunging the shovel into the earth.

SAVCHENKO

I have all the time in the
world... sometimes you have to
get your hands dirty...

Then the shovel hits something that makes a higher pitched
crack.

Reuben and Savchenko bend down to see a human skull cleft
in twain.

Reuben scratches through the dirt to find some other bones.
Savchenko thrusts the shovel in again to find there are
more bones than earth.

SAVCHENKO

They're not kangaroos.

Reuben looks at him. He looks angry.

REUBEN

We'll try around the other side.

SAVCHENKO

Try for what?

REUBEN

Better readings.

Savchenko grabs him.

SAVCHENKO

You've just discovered a mass
grave.

REUBEN

Its irrelevant.

SAVCHENKO

You don't care?

REUBEN

Whether I cared or not it won't
bring them back to life. Whoever
they are.

Reuben breaks from his grasp and makes his way toward the
other side of the large rock.

SAVCHENKO

You know who they are.

REUBEN

Do I?

SAVCHENKO
They're Rebecca's people.

Reuben starts setting up his equipment.

REUBEN
So...

SAVCHENKO
You can't walk away from this.
You have to care, Reuben.

Reuben stands up and glares at Savchenko angrily.

REUBEN
I care, Yuri. So I'm doing what I
can do. Find these fissures to
undermine that fucking company.

SAVCHENKO
You have to bring her in on this.
They're her people.

REUBEN
What makes you so concerned?

SAVCHENKO
I know what its like to be
dispossessed. You think I like
living in this burning hell hole?
I can never go home. Nor can
she..til she finds out the truth.

Reuben looks down at the equipment.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
Come on, Reuben. You're a good
man. Let me be one too. If I'm
going to die, let it be worth
something.

Reuben stares at Savchenko and shakes his head.

58

INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - DAY

58

Savchenko, Reuben and Rebecca sit at the bench looking at a
collection of human bones.

Rebecca stares at them as if trying to comprehend.

REBECCA
We call that rock (aboriginal
term for 'light tower') the
Lighthouse.

REUBEN
You've never been there?

REBECCA
Its men's business.

Reuben slides a filthy metal ID tag over. They are dog tags with an inscription 'US Infantry' on them.

REUBEN
We found this too.

Rebecca's eyes start to water.

REBECCA
He loved this military shit.

REUBEN
Who did?

REBECCA
Jim.

REUBEN
These belonged to him?

Rebecca gets up and goes over to the bank of monitors.

REBECCA
They could have belonged to anyone.
(beat)
How did they die?

REUBEN
They've been subject to a very high level of radiation.

He looks at Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO
We geigered them and the machine went ballistic.

REUBEN
And the radiation is pretty even throughout. They all died at the same time. As if there was some kind of neutron bomb let off. Very little collateral damage, LOTS of radiation.

REBECCA
You think Ucorp did that?

Reuben walks over to the monitors as Rebecca brings up the picture of her three smiling friends.

REBECCA

They would do that to their own workers? Gerry is capable of that?

REUBEN

We need to find the fissures and get Westralia in.

REBECCA

To do what? Force an inquiry while they rape the land?

SAVCHENKO

How do you know Westralia didn't do it?

REUBEN

I don't. But its not likely.

Rebecca turns and faces Reuben squarely.

REBECCA

I want you to be certain. Find out exactly how these men died and who did it and then we have something that can't be ignored. Then you can go find your hot rocks.

REUBEN

I don't think I can.

REBECCA

You're our messiah. Find the answer. Or surely there's nothing to stop them killing everyone.

CUT TO:

59

EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DUSK

59

Savchenko and Reuben sit on a small rise while Rebecca sits some distance away before a small fire and wails in grief.

REUBEN

She can let go now.

SAVCHENKO

She can start. It won't really be over for her until she finds out the truth. Which *you* need to do.

REUBEN

Why me?

SAVCHENKO

You're the smartest guy on the planet. Everyone knows that.

REUBEN

You really think the company killed those men?

SAVCHENKO

There's going to be a war. China is itching to have a go at the US. They need weapons. Weapons are profitable.

REUBEN

But not if they destroy your future markets.

SAVCHENKO

Exactly.

REUBEN

The clean bomb.

SAVCHENKO

I never thought Ucorp made that much money out of exporting energy.

Reuben looks over at Rebecca who is staring into the fire.

REUBEN

So the Mookra Nation is a nuclear test site.

SAVCHENKO

We have some work to do.

The sun sets.

60

INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

60

Reuben stares into a microscope and checks results on a laptop.

Rebecca stares at him from her bank of monitors across the room.

REBECCA

Am I going to die too?

Reuben keeps his eye in the microscope.

REUBEN

The radiation dissipates quickly. If it was a neutron bomb blast.

REBECCA

We signed the non-proliferation treaty.

REUBEN

You know what treaties are worth.

Reuben continues to click through the keyboards.

REBECCA

Thanks. I know how much this geothermal stuff means to you.

Reuben looks up at Rebecca and attempts a smile.

REUBEN

They've been there for millions of years. They'll wait for me.

Rebecca smiles.

REBECCA

You really do think they're waiting for you, don't you? Your special rocks.

Rebecca looks at the scatter pattern diagrams that Reuben had laid out.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Your special symbol.

She holds her hand over it.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Like a hand. Savchenko says it came to you in a dream.

REUBEN

Your people used that symbol too. Maybe its part of the universal unconscious.

Rebecca shakes her head.

REBECCA

Nah, whitefellas have different dreams. They dream about money.

REUBEN

Not this whitefella.

REBECCA

I forgot. You're special.

(beat)

So what do you dream about?

Reuben goes back to his microscope.

REUBEN
I try not to.

61 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN

61

Reuben stands in the middle of a field, he drops a probe into the soil, drawing out a core sample.

He pours the earth on the ground and sifts through it. He finds some small pieces of bone and rock,

He looks at the readings and frowns.

Savchenko appears behind him and looks at the bones.

SAVCHENKO
More victims.

REUBEN
Kangaroos. Same age as the other bones. Not a trace of radiation.

SAVCHENKO
Maybe they hopped in after the event.

REUBEN
Maybe.

He looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN
What have you found.

SAVCHENKO
A hole.

REUBEN
That could be interesting.

CUT TO:

62 INT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN

62

Some meters away, Savchenko and Reuben stand before a wombat hole.

SAVCHENKO
Rabbits?

REUBEN
Wombat.

SAVCHENKO

No way.

Reuben bends down and picks up some fresh droppings.

REUBEN

A live wombat.

SAVCHENKO

How long do wombats live for?

REUBEN

This one would be at least ten years old.

Reuben looks up.

The lighthouse is only a few metres away.

REUBEN

A living wombat only metres from a pile of dead men.

Suddenly there is the sound of a jet aircraft over head. Savchenko and Reuben look up.

SAVCHENKO

Sounds like an XE20.

REUBEN

Company plane?

SAVCHENKO

Chinese. Burns lots of hydrocarbons.

REUBEN

Ucorp.

(beat)

Looking for us.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe.

REUBEN

You think they're scared of us.

SAVCHENKO

I hope so.

REUBEN

Should we hide in the hole?

SAVCHENKO

I wouldn't bother. It probably has heat trackers.

Reuben drops his head down.

REUBEN
Then its only a matter of time, I
guess.

SAVCHENKO
I think you should call
Westralia.

REUBEN
We have nothing to offer them.

SAVCHENKO
Not yet.

CUT TO:

63 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/BEDROOM - NIGHT

63

Reuben, Savchenko and Rebecca sit before a table that
contains a variety of rehydrated food.

REBECCA
It's not lobster.

REUBEN
I don't need lobster.

There is a pause while Rebecca picks at her food.

REBECCA
So, you close?

REUBEN
There seems to be some kind of
selection going on. The people
died but the animals survived.
I've never heard of that before.

REBECCA
Maybe it was some kind of virus.
Chemical warfare.

REUBEN
There are no traces. But I'll
keep looking.

Rebecca looks at Savchenko.

REBECCA
(to Reuben)
When are you calling Westralia?

REUBEN
Soon.

REBECCA

The phone's just by the monitors.
You can call anywhere. Feel free
to use it.

Savchenko looks at Rebecca suspiciously.

SAVCHENKO

Ucorp will be listening.

REBECCA

Then you better tell them to come
quickly, hey.

CUT TO:

64 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

64

An hour or so later Reuben sits at the microscope going
through samples.

He takes them off and scans them.

He inserts discs into a kind of projector and starts going
through them on the wall.

He looks at the magnified PROTEIN STRUCTURES.

A consistent shape begins to emerge.

Reuben selects another file and projects up the SCATTER
PATTERN.

The shapes are exactly the same.

Reuben goes to a BIOLOGY DATA FILE on the computer and
flips through the information on PROTEINS.

A comes across a section on PROTEIN CORRUPTION and a
subsection on effects of radiation.

We see the words:

DECAY OF HYDROGEN BONDS BROUGHT ABOUT BY IODINE DEFICIENCY.

Suddenly there is a high pitched ringing sound and Reuben
collapses in pain.

He sees flashes of heat waves and Figures like the one who
has been accompanying him all this time standing still in
the desert.

He crawls over to his jacket and pulls out the blue pills.
Suddenly there is another powerful ringing in his ears.

The blue pills fly out of his hands and spread across the floor.

65 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAWN 65

Reuben is running desperately across the sand to toward the rise where the light house stands.

He falls to the ground and looks out over the plain.

The sun begins to rise and fry the land.

He sees images of burned bodies in the distance staring back at him, the light flashing from their eyes.

There is an incredible ringing in his ears.

He looks up and sees the vague wisps of clouds curled in exactly the same way they were in the first scene.

REUBEN
The air is moving.

He looks around in panic.

REUBEN
I've been here before.

Reuben focusses on the sand that starts melting before his eyes.

He digs dirt out with his hand and comes across more human bones.

He pulls out half a skull and examines it. There is a bullet hole in the side.

Then he looks at his hand and notices its turning red as the light strikes it.

Suddenly he is wrenched from the ground.

Savchenko, dressed in a sliver anti sun suite, drags him toward the 4 x 4.

SAVCHENKO
Its OK...I've got your pills.

He opens the back door and hoists Reuben inside...

66 INT. CAR/DESERT - DAY 66

Savchenko grabs some blue pills and pours them down Reuben's throat. Reuben swallows them and then passes out.

67 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - DAY

67

Savchenko sits before Reuben who is wrapped in a wet blanket. Reuben looks calmer.

SAVCHENKO

You could have died. It was hitting 70.

(beat)

What were you doing out there?

Reuben looks at him steadily.

REUBEN

Its a protein. The scatter pattern is a the structure of a protein. One with particular deficiencies. The peptide bonds are irregular.

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO

You found this out last night?

REUBEN

I think so.

SAVCHENKO

How?

REUBEN

I don't remember.

Rebecca appears at the edge of the kitchen division (or bedroom door). She sees Savchenko and he sees her, but she doesn't make herself known to Reuben.

REUBEN

I cross referenced it with some diagrams. I looked them up.

SAVCHENKO

What made you do that?

Reuben looks at Savchenko steadily.

REUBEN

Maybe I dreamt it.

Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO

It wouldn't be the first time.

Reuben goes over to the slide and brings up the PROTEIN STRUCTURE.

REUBEN

The fingers are the peptide bonds.

He brings up the scatter pattern.

REUBEN

But these ones are slightly different. They've been modified somehow. Maybe to make them more susceptible to radiation.

SAVCHENKO

How?

Reuben again looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN

I don't know. How would I know?

SAVCHENKO

You were a biology major. Among other things.

REUBEN

Undergrad bio is not enough to work this out. Its complex.

Rebecca finally moves into the room.

REBECCA

But you weren't just an ordinary undergrad.

Reuben looks at her.

REUBEN

I barely remember it. It was so long ago.

REBECCA

But you know you can do it.
(beat)
This could shut them down.

Reuben sighs and looks down at the bench.

REUBEN

I ran out into the desert because I suffer from delusions.

Savchenko looks at Rebecca.

SAVCHENKO
You don't have to share this...

REUBEN
I want to. Its best she knows.

He looks at Rebecca.

REUBEN
I have schizophrenia. I see things. I am constantly followed by hallucinations.

REBECCA
What kind of hallucinations?

REUBEN
It doesn't matter. They don't do any harm. I'm only telling you because maybe you can't really trust what I come up with. Maybe its all a lie.

Rebecca approaches him and looks at him closely.

REBECCA
I trust you.

REUBEN
Yeah. I know.

Savchenko looks at them both.

SAVCHENKO
Would it help if I locked the door?

REUBEN
You could put me in a straight jacket.

SAVCHENKO
I don't think that would be necessary.

CUT TO:

68 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

68

Reuben is working away. Looking down the microscope, getting results.

He starts to feel the pain of a headache.

He takes out the cannister of blue pills and pours a few in his hands. He looks down at them.

Looks up at Savchenko.

Then slips them into his pocket.

He goes back to the microscope, but then notices the Figure standing by the door.

Suddenly Savchenko's voice interrupts him.

SAVCHENKO
Everything OK?

Reuben looks up to see Savchenko scrutinising him (but trying to hide it).

REUBEN
I'm fine.

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO
Can I get you anything?

REUBEN
Some of them were shot.

SAVCHENKO
OK.

REUBEN
They didn't have the protein.
(beat)
Why protect them then kill them?

SAVCHENKO
A control group.

REUBEN
But they could have been in on it.

SAVCHENKO
Have you isolated the nature of the hydrogen bonds?

REUBEN
They irradiated some and shot the others. The blast would have only been a whisper. They wouldn't have seen it coming.

Savchenko gets out of his chair and wanders over to Reuben.

Reuben looks like he's about to have an epiphany.

REUBEN
I've seen this before. It melts
their flesh.

SAVCHENKO
How? In Tasmania?

REUBEN
No.

Reuben grimaces in pain and holds his head.

SAVCHENKO
Did you take your anti-
psychotics.

REUBEN
They don't work.

SAVCHENKO
That's what all the crazy people
say.

REUBEN
I've been here before.

SAVCHENKO
No, you haven't.

REUBEN
Their eyes burst, their fingers
are blackened.

Savchenko goes over and grabs him.

SAVCHENKO
I think we better take a break.

Reuben forces his way out of his grasp.

REUBEN
No!

He collapses on the floor. Savchenko very methodically goes
over to a case and takes out a needle.

SAVCHENKO
You're very tired and very weak.
And there is so much more for you
to do, Reuben.

Savchenko sighs deeply as he turns around and walks toward
Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Just rest. Everything will be
better then.

Savchenko slams the needle in Reuben's arm. He tries to resist but he quickly weakens and passes out.

69 EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE - DAY 69

Reuben sits out on the road dressed in the shirt and tie he wore in the opening scene.

He looks up at the sky and sees the cloud.

He looks down and sees he is wearing no shoes and his feet are a bloodied mess.

He gets up and walks toward the desert.

70 EXT. DESERT - DAY 70

Reuben sees a MAN standing in the distance. He is looking down at two blackened mounds on the ground. The man is JIMMY from the first scene and the photos.

As Reuben approaches he sees the mounds are bodies, hideously mangled by disease.

Jimmy looks absolutely horrified. He turns to Reuben.

JIMMY

What happened, boss?

Reuben just nods and holds out his arms.

JIMMY

I don't understand. They just melted.

Completely distraught Jimmy sinks into Reuben's arms.

Reuben hugs him tightly.

REUBEN

Its OK. Its OK.

JIMMY

Oh, Jesus, boss.

REUBEN

I know, I know...

Jimmy's legs give way and he sinks to the ground. Reuben lowers him down, until he lies in the dirt like a baby.

Then Reuben lowers a gun to his head.

REUBEN
Its OK...

CUT TO:

71 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/BEDROOM - DAY 71

Reuben lies on the bed and slowly opens his eyes to see...
Savchenko looking down at him.

SAVCHENKO
Bad dream?

Reuben remains still, keeps staring Savchenko in the eye.

REUBEN
No. No dreams at all.

SAVCHENKO
That's a pity. I thought you
might have dreamed up the answer.

REUBEN
And its all down to me.

SAVCHENKO
I'm doing my best.

Reuben slowly gets up. Sits on the bed.

REUBEN
What if I can't find the answer?
We can still go to Westralia.

SAVCHENKO
We need the details.

REUBEN
Why?

SAVCHENKO
Otherwise they won't believe us.
You know that.

Reuben nods.

REUBEN
They won't believe us. Westralia.
But you don't believe in them?

SAVCHENKO
Of course I do.

REUBEN
Of course you do. Everybody does.

SAVCHENKO
Feel like some breakfast?

REUBEN
I'd like to sleep.

SAVCHENKO
You've slept for 14 hours. Come on.

CUT TO:

72 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - DAY

72

Reuben staggers out and looks at all the notes and results laid out on the table.

SAVCHENKO
Its all as you left it.

Reuben nods slowly.

REUBEN
We need more samples.

SAVCHENKO
There's enough.

REUBEN
How would you know?

Savchenko looks at him steadily, trying to work him out.

SAVCHENKO
I wouldn't.

REUBEN
Just a few more bones, from another place. We need a control.

SAVCHENKO
OK

REUBEN
You'll come with me?

SAVCHENKO
Of course.

REUBEN
How many hours do we have?

Savchenko looks at his watch.

SAVCHENKO
45 minutes.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAY 73

The 4 x 4 pulls up at a salt lake (or some other flat piece of terrain).

Reuben and Savchenko get out of the car.

SAVCHENKO
We should put on the suits.

REUBEN
This won't take long.

Reuben sets off across the lake. Savchenko watches him with concern. Then scurries along after him.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. SALT LAKE - DAY 74

Reuben walks purposefully in a straight line. Savchenko tries to keep up.

SAVCHENKO
What do you expect to find out here?

REUBEN
More death.

SAVCHENKO
Where?

REUBEN
In the middle of this flat piece of nothing.

Savchenko pauses and looks around. Then continues to follow Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
I like it when you're cryptic.
Its very eastern European...

Reuben doesn't turn round. He continues to stride forward.

REUBEN
That's what this is, isn't it?
Some kind of puzzle.

SAVCHENKO
If you like.

REUBEN
You're testing me.

SAVCHENKO
I don't need to. I know you'll
win.

REUBEN
Yeah, you figured that out
already.

Reuben suddenly stops and turns around facing Savchenko.

REUBEN
You were my friend.

SAVCHENKO
I still am. This is the paranoia,
Reuben...

REUBEN
You're waiting for me to discover
something.

SAVCHENKO
Of course.

REUBEN
I've been here before. I was part
of this.

SAVCHENKO
Who told you that?

Reuben takes out the bottle of blue pills.

REUBEN
I don't remember ever being
prescribed these.

SAVCHENKO
Yet you've been taking them
pretty religiously.

REUBEN
Not anymore.

Reuben throws the bottle as far away as he can. Then he
turns around and keeps walking toward the bleak horizon
line.

SAVCHENKO

OK. This makes sense. How can you expect to think clearly if you don't take your medication?

REUBEN

You were my friend. I don't remember ever having a friend.

SAVCHENKO

You have plenty of friends. The disease stops you from seeing that.

Savchenko watches Reuben stride off. He looks back at the 4 x 4. It is now some distance away.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Reuben, we have to go back. The sun will be up in ten minutes.

Reuben keeps going.

SAVCHENKO

Reuben!

Reuben stops and turns around.

REUBEN

Is that as far as you're going?

SAVCHENKO

I'm going back.

Reuben nods and takes out a gun. He shoots Savchenko. Savchenko falls to the ground clutching his arm.

SAVCHENKO

Shit! Oh my god...

Reuben walks up to him steadily.

REUBEN

I'm not a good shot. Maybe I'm not one of them.

SAVCHENKO

What are you doing?

REUBEN

I was aiming for your leg.

SAVCHENKO

Why? Shit...

Savchenko tries to crawl away.

REUBEN

I'm going to walk away and you're going to die. Unless you tell me the truth. What do you want from me?

SAVCHENKO

Oh Christ, Reuben. Take your medication.

REUBEN

Show me the prescription.

SAVCHENKO

I can't! You know I can't.

REUBEN

Then we have a problem.

Savchenko looks up at him, bleeding profusely.

SAVCHENKO

Fuck. This wasn't supposed to happen.

Reuben looks up at the rising sun steadily.

REUBEN

Why did you bother developing the neutron bomb? The perfect weapon is just about to rise.

He looks down at Savchenko and laughs.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

It will kill us all.

Savchenko looks at Reuben in awe.

SAVCHENKO

Shit. Its almost completely gone.

REUBEN

I was part of it. And I forgot.

SAVCHENKO

You weren't just part of it.
(beat)
You created it.

REUBEN

That's impossible.

SAVCHENKO

Get me back to the truck. For Christ's sake.

Savchenko takes his hand away from his arm and examines the wound. Then he looks at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
You would shoot me. Through the
head like a goat.

REUBEN
(surprised)
Yes.

SAVCHENKO
Fuck. I don't want to do this. I
almost thought we could have got
away with it.

REUBEN
Do what?

Savchenko rips a flare from his trousers and slams it into the ground.

The flare fires and shoots into the sky.

SAVCHENKO
Now you can shoot me.

Reuben watches the flare burn across the sky.

Savchenko struggles into a sitting position. He takes out a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and lights one.

Reuben stares down at him. Savchenko offers him the packet.

REUBEN
I don't smoke.

SAVCHENKO
Yes, you do. Have a cigarette
before you execute me.

Reuben takes one and lights it. Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO
You always do that.

REUBEN
They're coming?

SAVCHENKO
They're already here.

Reuben looks at the horizon. He sees dust being kicked up in the distance by moving vehicles.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Reuben turns and runs back toward the 4 x 4.

He desperately sprints across the sand as the sound of a jet is heard screaming overhead.

He is running with uncharacteristic speed and agility.

He makes it to the car and fires up the engine. The machine lurches into life. Reuben is surprised he can operate the thing as it moves forward.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. DESERT/MOOKRA COUNTRY - DAY 75

Reuben drives along the road in the vehicle, looking up all the while.

He sees nothing.

He takes out the card Mickey gave him with the Westralia contact number on it. He dials.

GERRY (O.S.)
Reuben?

REUBEN
Who is this?

GERRY (O.S.)
I think you know.

REUBEN
Gerry?

GERRY (O.S.)
Just stop the car, Reuben.

Reuben throws the phone out of the car window.

76 INT. INDIGENOUS HQ/LIVING SPACE - DAY 76

Reuben bursts into the room and starts desperately going through his notes.

REUBEN
Rebecca!

He starts cramming the sheets into a bag and gathering the odd piece of equipment.

REUBEN
We have to go!

Rebecca enters with a pick axe.

REBECCA

Why?

REUBEN

They're coming. Ucorp.

REBECCA

What about Westralia?

REUBEN

I don't think there is a
Westralia.

REBECCA

So you've done all this for
nothing?

REUBEN

I don't know.

REBECCA

A complete waste of time.

REUBEN

Not if we get out of here.

REBECCA

And go where?

REUBEN

Western Australia.

REBECCA

Yeah, its just a short drive. No
worries.

(beat)

What have you got? You gotta at
least have an answer.

REUBEN

The proteins have hydrogen bonds
that have been manipulated
somehow. There are two bonds
layered on top of each other.

REBECCA

How did they make them?

REUBEN

It doesn't matter....we have to
go.

Rebecca shoves the pick axe into his throat.

REBECCA

Yes, it does matter! They're
going to kill my kids.

REUBEN

What?

REBECCA

Ucorp have my two girls and they will kill them unless I get this information from you.

REUBEN

You're working for them too?

REBECCA

Not willingly.

REUBEN

I have an idea. But I can't tell you. Your kids will have to die.

Rebecca whacks him with the handle. Reuben is hurt but recovers quickly.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Its for the greater good.

REBECCA

That's what you said when you developed it.

REUBEN

I didn't develop it.

Reuben gets up and grabs his bag.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Its not possible.

REBECCA

That's just the remnants of your personality talking. One of your personalities...

Reuben makes his way toward the door.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Jesus, Reuben. You have to help me.

Reuben turns and looks at her ruefully.

REUBEN

How do I even know if you're real?

Reuben climbs up the stairs and opens the hatch.

A blinding light strikes him, but he pushes his way through it...

CUT TO:

77 EXT. BUILDING ROOF TOP - DAY

77

Reuben emerges onto the flat concrete surface of a sky scraper roof.

He staggers forward and looks around him. He is wearing yellow hospital pyjamas

All he can see is roof and blue sky.

He looks back at the trap door from which he emerged and approaches it again.

He opens it and finds only an empty stair well. No room. No Rebecca.

From behind an air conditioning vent emerges Gerry. He smiles at him.

GERRY

Hi Reuben. How you feeling?

Reuben stares at him in panic. Gerry approaches closely.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I love it up here. Can see the whole city.

(beat)

You been sleep walking again?

Behind Reuben the trap door bangs.

He turns around to see Mickey emerging from it. Mickey is dressed in an orderly's uniform. He looks very sheepish.

GERRY (CONT'D)

(to Mickey)

Becoming a regular occurrence, Mickey.

MICKEY

Sorry.

(to Reuben)

G'day, buddy.

Reuben looks at him blankly.

MICKEY

(to Gerry)

Which one is he?

GERRY
 (patronising)
 He's Reuben.

MICKEY
 Yeah, I know that. But which
 Reuben?

Gerry rolls his eyes and shakes his head. He looks at Reuben.

GERRY
 (to Mickey)
 There is only one Reuben.

MICKEY
 (taking the hint)
 OK. Sure.

Mickey goes over and takes Reuben by the arm.

MICKEY
 C'mon, bro. Lunchtime. We got
 sausages and chips.

Reuben tries to break away but his legs collapse from underneath him.

GERRY
 Get the wheel chair.

Mickey nods.

CUT TO:

78 INT. REFECTORY - DAY

78

Reuben sits with a few other PATIENTS. Before him is a plate of sausages with chips.

He looks around at the other patients chewing with intense concentration.

In the corner is Chris, the security guard. He sees Reuben and smiles.

Reuben turns back to his plate.

Suddenly Mickey sits down opposite him with his own tray containing his own lunch plus a squeezey sauce bottle.

He winks at Reuben and draws a smiley face with sauce across Reuben's sausages and chips.

MICKEY
 Nothin' like a bit of smiley
 sauce, hey. They say it has real
 tomato in it, but tastes like
 choko to me...

He lustily sprays his own dish with sauce. Then glances up
 at Reuben sheepishly.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
 Sorry about before, bro. That
 Gerry's an arse hole. My dad had
 more money than his dad, man.
 Fuck!

Mickey looks around at all the other patients.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
 I coulda been head of Ucorp, bro.
 I'm fucking tellin' ya.

Reuben looks at.

REUBEN
 What am I doing here?

MICKEY
 Exactly. They have no fucking
 right.
 (beat. Mickey leans in
 close)
 I'm gonna bust you out, man.

Chris looks up and frowns.

CHRIS
 Shut up, Mickey. Eat your lunch
 and go home.

MICKEY
 Sorry.
 (mumbling)
 Fuckwit.

CHRIS
 What was that?

MICKEY
 Nothin'.

Mickey sorrowfully plants a few chips in his mouth.

Then Savchenko enters the room. He is dressed in pants,
 shirt and tie. He has a plastic ID badge hanging from his
 neck.

He nods at Chris, then looks over at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Hey, Reuben.

CUT TO:

79 INT. BARE ROOM - DAY

79

Reuben sits in his wheelchair in the middle of a very bare room.

There is a metal trolley on wheels, with various syringes and vials on it.

Savchenko stands beside it.

REUBEN
Did you get it?

SAVCHENKO
What?

REUBEN
That vital piece of information
you sent me in for?

SAVCHENKO
Some of it.

Savchenko starts preparing some syringes.

REUBEN
I came up with the idea?

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO
It was your great Post Doctorate
thesis. The perfect weapon. A
neutron bomb that barely made a
sound and only killed the people
you wanted it to.

REUBEN
The people with the protein.

Savchenko raises his eyes.

SAVCHENKO
So we discovered.
(beat)
You were so clever. You kept the
whole thing secret from the
Company. That was your condition.
You wanted to make sure you got
all your money.

The door opens and Gerry enters. Savchenko doesn't look up.

SAVCHENKO
He didn't trust us, Gerry.

GERRY
That's very hurtful.

SAVCHENKO
You probably wanted more once you perfected it. But the results made you mad. All that guilt over a few abos.

Gerry approaches and inspects the syringe doses.

GERRY
Jesus, you'll kill him.

Savchenko rolls up Reuben's sleeve.

SAVCHENKO
His ego will kill him, not me.
(to Reuben)
You see I can construct a personality, but I need a starting point. With you, its always pride.

He administers the first injection.

SAVCHENKO
For Mickey its envy. We can't escape our sins, Reuben.

He withdraws the needle and rubs to little bubble of blood with a cotton bud.

REUBEN
I won't do it.

Savchenko laughs and looks at Gerry.

SAVCHENKO
Yes you will. Your core desire to be right will make you.

GERRY
You're a good man, Reuben. But I wish you'd trusted us.

Savchenko starts administering another needle.

SAVCHENKO
But then I wouldn't have a chance to get my Ph.D.
(MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)
Schizophrenia sufferers
everywhere will thank you.

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
But I was your friend. I still
am. Don't forget that.

Reuben's vision slowly blurs as he begins to pass out.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
I'm a good man too.

Fade to black.

80

EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE - DAY

80

Reuben lies on the side of the road. He has a bruise on the side of his head. He is wearing khaki camping type gear.

He slowly opens his eyes and looks up at a whisp of cloud.

REUBEN
So clean.

He struggles to a sitting position and dusts himself off.

He sees an old car sitting by the side of the road. The radiator is gently steaming.

Then he sees a car heading toward him.

He stands up and waves.

The car stops and the door flies open. Reuben jogs up to the door and looks inside.

He sees Rebecca but fails to recognise her. She sits at the driver's wheel wearing jeans and a t-shirt.

REUBEN
Hi.

REBECCA
Need a ride?

Reuben nods.

CUT TO:

81

INT/EXT. CAR/DESERT - DAY

81

Rebecca drives along, glancing at Reuben occasionally.

REBECCA
 You're lucky I was passing. I
 only make this trip once a week.
 I'm a nurse at the Mookra
 Mission. Jenny.

REUBEN
 I'm Jason. Jason Palmer.

REBECCA
 What you doing out here?

REUBEN
 I was studying birds.

REBECCA
 Birds?

REUBEN
 The Sturt Desert Wren.

He looks at her and grimaces.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
 You don't want to know. Its
 boring.

REBECCA
 We got 300 kilometers to kill.

Reuben smiles and settles into the seat.

REUBEN
 You see, they have this
 particular protein...

She glances at him and smiles.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
 Its quite a special protein.

Cut to...

82 EXT. DESERT - DAY

82

The car flies off into the distance.

Fade to black.

The End.

' UCORP '

DRAFT TWO

By

Matt Hawkins

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The thin scrub of the South Australian desert rolls by a hundred or so feet below us. There is red sand, rocks and small tufts of bush.

SUPER:

INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA - 2048

NOT RECOGNISED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

HOME OF 78% OF THE WORLD'S ACCESSIBLE URANIUM

HOME OF WORLD'S RICHEST COMPANY:

UCORP

Eventually we arrive at a ridge where...

REUBEN (40), a slim, clean shaven, calm man, sits on the rise overlooking a the vast plain. He wears grey trousers, a white shirt and a thin blue tie.

He looks up at three wisps of cloud in the pale blue sky. The clouds run parallel to each other and curl slightly at each end.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

It was a simple idea. But it required a certain personality to pull it off...

Reuben shuts his eyes listening to a vague distant whistling sound, like wind through high tension wires. This is followed by a distant rumbling, like a gentle thunder. Its a beautiful sound, like ocean waves.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

Someone with the ability to consider the ramifications, measure the greater good and then act...

Reuben deftly rises to his feet and walks over to a field surveying device, that contains a kind of telescope.

He looks through it at THREE WORKERS, all non Anglo. They are dressed in bright orange overalls and white hard hats.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

Intelligently, decisively and ruthlessly.

One of them stands holding a measuring stick, another digs a hole and the third lounges on a rock smoking a cigarette.

Reuben frowns slightly.

He then looks down at his slim touch phone where a timer is running. About 3 minutes and ten seconds have passed.

He looks back through the scope at the three men.

Suddenly the man digging the hole starts to throw up. The smoking man gets up and goes over to help him.

The worker holding the measuring stick sits down suddenly.

The air in front of them shimmers.

REUBEN

Christ...

Reuben drops the scope and walks toward the workers.

Reuben paces carefully through the scrub, looking down at the ground. The spinifex and grasses are still. They seem peaceful.

He picks a strand and examines it.

Then he looks over at a body convulsing.

One of the WORKERS covered in boils, is choking and coughing up blood.

Reuben looks at him in shock for a second then bends down and takes the workers head in his arms, trying to comfort him as best he can.

REUBEN

Its OK...

Reuben looks around desperately and places the man back on the ground. He stands up and looks around at the plain. He is completely alone. Then suddenly he dry retches.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

Reuben Henshcke was 95% that man.

Reuben looks back at the three dying men.

2

INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

2

SAVCHENKO, a 45 year old scientist of Eastern European extraction, sits on a plastic chair in the middle of a large room. He wears a dressing gown and has a bottle of vodka and a packet of filterless cigarettes beside him.

There is a bank of five monitors before him. On each monitor there is the head and shoulders of a MAGISTRATE, three WOMEN and two MEN. The Magistrates are of various nationalities and four of them wear head phones.

They are all looking down at Savchenko from on high, with professionally stern expressions.

Savchenko picks up the packet of cigarettes. Takes one out.

He looks at it and turns it around in his fingers.

SAVCHENKO
(not looking up)
Mind if I smoke?

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
Suit yourself. Its the only
packet we're giving you.

Savchenko smiles and looks up at...

The bank of monitors. He can see every face.

SAVCHENKO
What? For twenty years? That's
one cigarette a year.

None of the faces talk. The CHIEF MAGISTRATE is evidently not one of them these people.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
We don't imagine the proceedings
will take that long.

Savchenko laughs briefly and lights his cigarette.

SAVCHENKO
Ah. It's like that...

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
The idea was to bring him back as
he was.

Savchenko blows out smoke and squints at the screen.

SAVCHENKO
No. That was not their intention.
They just wanted information.

3 EXT. DESERT - DAY

3

Reuben is dragging a dying worker across the sand and over rocks. He is completely exhausted, and collapses.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
I wanted to bring him back and
give him that extra 5%.

Reuben groans and gets back up. He picks up the worker and staggers forward.

Eventually Reuben collapses again. He sees the man has stopped breathing.

He administers mouth to mouth and CPR desperately.

REUBEN
Come on, man. Live! Jesus.

After several attempts he gives up and drops his head in his hands.

4 INT. UCORP LOBBY - DAY

4

Reuben sits perched at the far left side of a huge couch that sits in a cavernous waiting area. He is wearing a heavy linen suit, shirt and no tie. His hair is slightly longer than in the first scenes.

There are vast glass windows that reveal the silent Adelaide skyline outside. There is the sound of ambient world musak playing gently from unseen speakers.

Reuben looks up at a large corporate sign:

UCORP - POWERING THE FUTURE

Beneath the sign is the picture of a FATHER and SON striding across a beach at sunset. The boy perches on his father's shoulders and grins confidently.

Reuben looks over at GILL, a young secretary who smiles at him sweetly then answers a call on her headset.

GIL
Ucorp. Hi Barry. Of course. One moment. Ucorp. Janice, what gives? Yeh, defs. No probs.

Reuben shuffles impatiently in his seat. He takes out a brief case that has been leaning against his legs. He opens it and pulls out a rag which he wipes over his face.

He looks up at a monitor that is streaming the news:

EURO PROTESTS AS CHINESE TROOPS GATHERS IN XINJIANG PROVINCE...

He sighs and approaches Gil at the counter. She notices him and looks up smiling.

REUBEN
I've been sitting here for 45 minutes.

GIL
They'll be ready for you soon,
Mr. Henschke.

Reuben gives her a withering stare.

GIL
Just take a seat.

REUBEN
Can you call them?

GIL
It will only be a few minutes.

Reuben returns to the seat. He takes his brief case out and pulls out some statistics.

There is a document entitled UN INSPECTION REPORT. He starts underlining certain sentences:

UNSAFE RADIOACTIVE PROCESSING

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S APPLICATION FOR NATION STATUS.

Then he looks up at the monitor.

There is a tourist ad and we see an aerial shot of the Flinders Ranges (if we can get this from Screen Australia).

His pen drifts to the bottom of the page. He starts scrawling out the FLOW PATTERN. Like a piece of seaweed, nodes connected by threads.

He is broken from his reverie by a gentle voice with an Eastern European lilt.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
Mr. Henschke...

Reuben looks up to see...

Yuri Savchenko, a diminutive man in his early 40s. He looks earnestly at Reuben as he sits down beside him. Reuben shuts his brief case.

SAVCHENKO
I'm Yuri Savchenko. I've been assigned to help you.
(beat)
Gerry is very busy. Running behind schedule as usual. They're looking after you?

REUBEN
I suppose.

Savchenko nods and smiles.

SAVCHENKO

Ucorp is very keen to do the right thing in this matter. In spite of what you may have heard we really do have the greatest of respect for UN mandates.

REUBEN

And yet you are under no obligation to follow them. You must find that liberating.

Savchenko looks at him closely. Then he turns his head to Gill who nods.

SAVCHENKO

I think we can go in now.

They stand up and look over to the far end of the room. A large door opens to reveal REBECCA - a handsome woman in her thirties wearing a grey suit. Her eyes rest on Reuben for a second, then she beckons them forward.

5

INT. UCORP BOARDROOM - DAY

5

Rebecca leads Savchenko and Reuben into a large room, tastefully decorated in the minimalist style. In the middle of the room is a lounge suite and coffee table. Sitting on the lounge is GERRY, an avuncular 50 year old. He stands as Reuben approaches.

GERRY

Reuben, isn't it?

REUBEN

Reuben Henschke.

GERRY

Great to meet you.

Gerry shakes Reuben's hand warmly.

GERRY

Please. Sit right down.

Reuben does so, awkwardly.

GERRY

I'm Gerry, CEO and this is Rebecca Trigenza, head of waste management. And you've met Yuri. He's our PR man, he's also a physicist.

SAVCHENKO
Jack of all trades.

GERRY
Coffee?

Gerry leans forward and picks up a silver coffee pot, he pours some into a clean white cup. Reuben watches the fumes rise.

GERRY
You Tasmanians ran out what...15 years ago? I was in a conference in Wine Glass Bay - beautiful place. Outstanding resort. But no coffee. You can smoke as much weed as you like, but not a drop of coffee.

Gerry hands him the cup, Reuben takes it calmly.

REUBEN
Our government considers the current trade unethical.

GERRY
Right. Well, lets hope it doesn't stop you enjoying this then.

He places it on the coffee table in front of Reuben. Reuben ignores it.

Gerry pours another cup for Rebecca.

GERRY
So...you've found a leak.

REUBEN
Yes.

GERRY
And our sovereignty depends on cleaning it up.

REUBEN
Its not as simple as that. Its made its way into the water table.

GERRY
How do you know that?

REUBEN
Our satellites have detected patterns. Radioactive traces that follow the flow of the water tables.

Reuben takes out a diagram of the 'flow pattern' and slides it across the table

Gerry nods.

GERRY

Very nice. Very colourful.

REUBEN

And then there's Mickey Vered.

REBECCA

He was sacked for incompetence.

REUBEN

He has incurable bowel cancer after working on that site for 2 years.

REBECCA

So he claims. That is before he disappeared.

REUBEN

We don't actually require his testimony.

GERRY

So what do you want from us?

REUBEN

What do I want, Gerry?

GERRY

We'll do anything we can.

Reuben looks at Gerry steadily.

REUBEN

I want you to liquefy.

Gerry guffaws.

GERRY

I don't think we can do that, Reuben.

REUBEN

Uranium kills, Gerry. Or at least the way you process it does. If there's a leak and it's in the water table Ucorp has committed gross negligence. You have the government in your back pocket, but not the UN.

GERRY

Come on, Reuben. What is this really about? We wouldn't accept your application to the Institute?

REUBEN

This is about saving lives, Gerry.

Reuben gets up and packs up his things.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

I want access to all your maintenance reports for the last 10 years and then I'm going up north.

REBECCA

You won't find anything.

Reuben walks toward the door. Savchenko follows him.

6 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

6

Savchenko leads Reuben into a very modest motel room.

Reuben puts his bag down on the bed. Savchenko stands about awkwardly.

SAVCHENKO

You know we can put you up in the Hyatt if you want.

REUBEN

I'll be fine.

Reuben sits down on the bed looks at the TV screen. Savchenko notices.

SAVCHENKO

I think it's purely for cosmetic purposes.

(beat)

That was quite a speech you gave Gerry.

Reuben nods. Savchenko shuffles toward the door.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

He wanted me to tell you that they'd probably reconsider you at the Institute.

Reuben looks at him and narrows his gaze.

REUBEN
I intend to do my job first.

SAVCHENKO
Oh, I know. I just think you
might ask yourself what job does
the UN really want you to do?

Reuben holds his gaze.

REUBEN
I'm looking for contamination.

Beat.

SAVCHENKO
What if you don't find it?

REUBEN
It will be found. Its only a
matter of time.

Savchenko smiles and leaves.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
He was ruthless. I knew he
wouldn't stop. It was that
quality that made me want the
whole man back. A gift to the
world.

7 INT. HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

7

Reuben stands in the shower. There is the sound of a sonic cleaning system, he looks around at his body, unsure of whether he's getting any cleaner. The tone ceases suddenly and Reuben reaches for a torn up towel but is unsure of what to do with it.

Reuben stands in a towel by the mirror. He looks at his now clean shaven face and examines the lines beneath his eyes.

He notices a DARK FIGURE in the mirror. He's sitting on his bed with his back toward him. He wears a pair of dirty, burnt overalls and has a shaven head with red marks all over it in the form of the 'flow pattern' Reuben was drawing earlier.

Reuben takes out a puffer from his bag and takes a big inhalation. He shuts his eyes and looks over at the bed. The Figure has disappeared.

8 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 8

Reuben wanders over to the window and stares out at the twinkling lights of Adelaide.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
But they wanted him manipulated,
toyed with. They wanted to
squeeze him like an orange.

9 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY 9

Savchenko's eyes glare ironically at the Magistrates.

SAVCHENKO
Bastards.

10 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY 10

Reuben sits before a vast map of The Republic of South Australia that hangs from a blank wall in a large but sparsely furnished office.

Reuben puts on his VR goggles - slick looking sunglasses that give him access to the internet and Ucorp data base.

When he puts them on the room is the same only Gil is sitting at a reception style desk incongruously in the middle of the space. She smiles at Reuben.

GIL
Welcome to the Ucorp VR
Environment. Please enter your 7
digit code.

REUBEN
A 4 U 7 K 8 1.

GIL
(smiling even more
sweetly)
I'm sorry, that code seems to be
invalid. Please try again.

REUBEN
A 4 U 7 K 8 1.

GIL
(exactly the same)
I'm sorry, that code seems to be
invalid. Please try again.

REUBEN
 (louder)
 A 4 U 7 K 8 1.

GIL
 (ruefully)
 I'm sorry, that is your third
 failed attempt.

Gil disappears and Reuben's glasses go completely black. He takes them off angrily as Savchenko enters.

REUBEN
 They've given me the wrong code.

Savchenko frowns as he dumps his case.

SAVCHENKO
 What is it?

REUBEN
 A 4 U...

SAVCHENKO
 A or I?

REUBEN
 A.

SAVCHENKO
 You see that sounds like 'I' to a
 South Australian. Say it again
 like a free settler, not some
 stinking convict.

He winks at Reuben.

Reuben puts the glasses on again. Gil appears.

GIL
 Hi there.

REUBEN
 (posher)
 A 4 U 7 K 8 1.

GIL
 Hi Reuben. I'm Gil. Just let me
 know what you want and I'll get
 it for you.

Savchenko approaches behind Reuben's shoulder. Neither of them appear to be wearing glasses while they're in the VR world.

GIL
(in Russian)
Hey, Yuri. Kayct dzevedriach...

SAVCHENKO
I'm Ukrainian, you fucking idiot.

Gil laughs coquettishly.

GIL
Oh, Yuri, stop it...

Savchenko turns to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
See what I have to put up with.

Reuben sighs.

REUBEN
I want a complete map of all
Ucorp controlled zones.

Gil just smiles at him blankly.

REUBEN
Please...Gil.

GIL
No problem, Reuben.

The map on the wall now reveals great patches of green
labelled Ucorp territory. (*Is this cheap/easy to do?*)

REUBEN
Show me Maralinga Downs please,
Gil.

A point on the map starts to throb. Its in the middle of
the Maralinga area.

REUBEN
(to Savchenko)
That's where Mickey came from.
That's the source of the
contamination.

SAVCHENKO
Nobody lives out there.

REUBEN
Not since the British blew them
up in the 1950s.

SAVCHENKO
Then why don't you go to the UK?
Give them a hard time.

REUBEN
Its ancient history.

SAVCHENKO
So you think Ucorp is
contaminating an area nobody goes
and nobody cares about.

REUBEN
Except Mickey.

SAVCHENKO
Who disappeared. Probably
searching for his dealer.
(off Reuben's look)
Come on, there are plenty of
lunatics who want to have a go at
the Uranium industry. Every
skitzo is paranoid about it. It
used to be devils, now its
contamination.

REUBEN
I'm going out there.

Savchenko smiles...jump cut effect (wow!) to him removing
his VR glasses.

SAVCHENKO
Not until you've read the
official Ucorp safety report.

Savchenko goes over to the large case he'd brought in
earlier as Reuben takes off his VR glasses. He pulls out a
very thick document and slams it on the table.

SAVCHENKO
UN procedure requires officers to
inspect the self regulatory
documentation BEFORE they proceed
with any action. This inspection
requires a full written report.
(beat)
You'd better get cracking, my
friend.

Reuben looks at him resentfully.

REUBEN
You know a lot about UN
regulations.

Savchenko just smirks.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
The truth is...I really wanted
him to win. I hated Ucorp too.

11 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 11

Reuben sits at the desk and pours over the massive UCORP SAFETY REPORT.

He looks at a section SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE.

He reads: BUNKERS TO BE REVIEWED EVERY 5 YEARS.

He reads: MINOR CRACKS, REINFORCED, RERENDERED, 12/03/17

He sees the same instruction several times:

MINOR CRACKS, REINFORCED RERENDERED, 16/03/22

MINOR CRACKS, SURFACE ABRASIONS, REINFORCED, RERENDERED, 15/03/27

He looks slightly concerned, then shuts his eyes.

Flashes of desert sands and burnt bodies flash across his vision.

When he opens his eyes The Figure is standing behind him shadowed in darkness.

REUBEN

You're not real.

The Figure gives no response. He remains silently standing.

Reuben takes out his puffer and inhales deeply.

12 INT. UCORP RESTAURANT - DAY 12

Reuben sits at a restaurant table beside a window that overlooks the Adelaide skyline.

Savchenko enters, flustered. He sits down energetically, fussing with his white napkin.

SAVCHENKO

Sorry...everything is behind today. You had a productive morning?

REUBEN

I finished reading the report.

Savchenko raises his eyebrows and blows out air.

SAVCHENKO

Well done. I don't think anyone's actually read it.

A WAITER delivers Savchenko a plate of Lobster Thermidor. Savchenko rubs his hands together with glee.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
I love lobster Thursday. It really motivates me to work harder for Ucorp. You eaten?

REUBEN
I'm not hungry.

The WAITER walks off. Savchenko looks up at the TV monitor.

SAVCHENKO
Congratulations by the way.

Reuben turns round to see...

A news report on the monitor: an ANCHORWOMAN speaks in front of a picture of rich green forests.

ANCHORWOMAN
The Co-operative Republic of Tasmania was last night officially recognised as a sovereign nation by the UN. It is the first nation governed by a coalition of environmentalist parties and the third Australian state to be granted nation status since the break up of the Commonwealth fifteen years ago.

Reuben turns back to see Savchenko tucking into his lobster and downing a glass of wine.

SAVCHENKO
It must be comforting to know you don't live in a renegade state like ours. I find it quite disconcerting to be a citizen of a country that doesn't officially exist.

Beat. Reuben looks at Savchenko closely.

REUBEN
So why are you here, then? The lobster?

Savchenko takes a mouthful and smiles.

SAVCHENKO
If the truth be known, I really didn't have a choice.

He leans forward conspiratorially.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

I sold some nuclear research secrets to the Russians, I was kicked out of the Ukraine.

REUBEN

You're a traitor?

Savchenko stops chewing and puts his fork down.

SAVCHENKO

I hadn't been paid for 6 months, I had sick kids.

He resumes eating.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

They're still there. Grown ups now.

REUBEN

So you fled to South Australia?

SAVCHENKO

Yes, sunny SA. Its OK, but it has nothing on Europe. People here are troglodytes. Seriously, they've completely overcooked the lobster.

Reuben smiles slightly.

SAVCHENKO

So, the report measures up?

REUBEN

(mysteriously)
I need to see Rebecca.

Savchenko nods. He seems vaguely impressed.

13 EXT. UCORP BALCONY - DAY

13

Reuben opens a glass door to see Rebecca leaning against the railing of a large balcony that overlooks a perfectly manicured garden.

She is on the phone speaking in fluent Mandarin. She senses Reuben's presence and holds out her hand in a 'be with you in a sec' gesture.

Reuben looks around at the glass and steel Ucorp building and the garden as Rebecca signs off. She seems extraordinarily pleased about something. She smiles at Reuben.

REBECCA
What's on your mind?

REUBEN
I read the report.

REBECCA
OK.

REUBEN
Its in perfect order. Scheduled
maintenance performed to the
letter.

REBECCA
Good.

REUBEN
Various minor structural wear and
tear incidents occurring almost
exactly every five years as
predicted by unbiased Ucorp
structural engineers.

Rebecca looks at him closely and shrugs.

REBECCA
They are experts in their field.

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN
It's too perfect. Every piece of
damage you postulated occured at
almost exactly the predicted time
and was rectified on schedule.
Things don't happen like that.
The earth moves in unpredictable
ways.

REBECCA
Like water underground.

REUBEN
Yes.

Rebecca laughs and waves her hands about, fingers splayed.

REBECCA
Like your flow pattern.
(beat)
You know, it really is incredibly
egotistical to construct your
investigation around a highly
flawed theory that failed to get
you into the Institute.

REUBEN

You think this is about my ego?

REBECCA

Its about politics. So write your report, Reuben. Describe how we constructed a plan of imaginary problems based on what? A hunch? A too consistent report?

REUBEN

I'm also going out there. Unless you plan to stop me.

Rebecca laughs out of the blue.

REBECCA

No. I wouldn't dream of it. In fact I think you should give it a go.

Her phone rings again.

REBECCA

Excuse me. Let me know if there's anything else you need.

Rebecca strides off leaving Reuben on the balcony alone.

14 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY

14

Reuben and Savchenko sit facing each other. Savchenko seems somewhat embarrassed.

SAVCHENKO

You know where she comes from, don't you?

REUBEN

Venus?

SAVCHENKO

Tasmania.

Reuben looks at him confused.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Her family ran a paper mill in Launceston. The hippies tortured them relentlessly. Eventually they not only went broke but were imprisoned for environmental crimes by the Eco-Fascists that run your country.

REUBEN

So it would be fair to call her an advocate of free enterprise.

SAVCHENKO

Like me, Ucorp took her in. Gave her a home. And lots and lots of money.

Savchenko sighs deeply.

SAVCHENKO

You really want to go up there?

REUBEN

Yes.

SAVCHENKO

Look. Why don't you go home? Or even better, write a nice bland report, slapping us on the wrist and let all this anger go? We both know the radiation leaks are negligible.

REUBEN

You poison the water, you poison everything.

SAVCHENKO

But the water doesn't go anywhere.

REUBEN

Let me show you something.

Reuben picks up his VR glasses and puts them on...

The two men enter the VR environment. Gil is there smiling at them.

REUBEN

Regional map, Gil.

The South Australian map appears and the Ucorp Waste Management facility appears.

REUBEN

If we follow the creek line from Sanders Gully, the contamination could be carried by underground water all the way to Adelaide. There's 2 million people who might not be too happy about that.

Savchenko whips off his glasses as he shakes his head. Reuben does the same. He sits down at the table and draws a crude map of SA, he scrawls a flow pattern over the area of Maralinga.

REUBEN

There are definite points we can try.

SAVCHENKO

So this whole investigation is simply a way for you to prove you were right? That meteorites came from the sky and made these underground lakes connected by channels that no one has ever seen or detected before.

REUBEN

I don't need to prove anything. The UN believes me.

Savchenko looks down at the scatter pattern scrawled on the paper (* or this can be done in the VR world).

SAVCHENKO

Well, its a very pretty design.

Reuben smirks.

REUBEN

Thank you.

Beat. Savchenko nods resignedly.

SAVCHENKO

OK, OK.

(beat)

What time is it? I think I need a drink.

CUT TO:

15 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - EVENING

15

Savchenko and Reuben are perched on the desk drinking vodka.

SAVCHENKO

They won't let you win.

REUBEN

They can't stop me.

SAVCHENKO

There's a lot of money at stake.
A LOT of money. And when profits
are on the line people's lives
aren't worth much.

REUBEN

You think they'd kill me?

SAVCHENKO

Of course not.

REUBEN

Is that your job, Savchenko?

SAVCHENKO

I'm here to help

Savchenko sighs and finishes his drink.

He jumps from the desk and takes up some forms.

SAVCHENKO

There's a heap of forms you have
to plough through before you can
go up there.

Reuben nods, suppressing a little joy.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Starting with this one.

Reuben picks up the form and examines it. His expression
changes.

REUBEN

Why do I have to do a medical?

SAVCHENKO

Everyone in the field has to do
it. You have to be of sound body
and mind to work for Ucorp. I
assume the same goes for the UN?

Savchenko looks at Reuben curiously.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Its just a few blood tests.

Reuben avoids his gaze.

16

EXT. CHEMIST - NIGHT

16

Reuben stands at the counter watching...

CHEMIST#1 talk in low tones to CHEMIST#2 behind a glass window. They glance up at him occasionally, with suspicious eyes.

Reuben looks over at what could be The FIGURE, the strange man in burnt overalls. He has his back to Reuben and seems to perusing the prophylactic section.

Reuben turns back to the counter as the chemist approaches with a small paper box.

CHEMIST#1
You know we're not supposed to
sell these.

Reuben slides a 100 Euro bill across the counter.

REUBEN
Then why do you have them?

The chemist looks at him for a beat then shrugs.

CHEMIST#1
You don't look like an athlete,
so I guess it's OK.

He takes the cash then gives him the box.

17 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY 17

A blackened hand drops pharmaceuticals into a coffee cup and grinds them with a small glass liquor bottle as a pestle.

In the background, Reuben lies on the bed watching.

18 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY 18

Reuben enters to see Savchenko looking at the large map of SA. He has it rolled out over a table.

Savchenko looks up at him.

SAVCHENKO
Where did you say this creek was?

Reuben pauses slightly then goes over to the map. He draws an x with a pencil.

Savchenko turns back to the map.

SAVCHENKO
So the water flows underground?

REUBEN
In big channels.

Reuben sketches out the pattern.

REUBEN
Collecting in various locations.
Like lakes.

SAVCHENKO
Can it be used?

Reuben looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN
Its already being used by the
entire ecosystem.

SAVCHENKO
What ecosystem? Its a wasteland.

REUBEN
The desert is full of life,
dependant on that underground
water system. Its a balance. If
we mess with it, then we can kill
everything.

SAVCHENKO
So the water has to stay there.
Untouched. That's what you wanted
the Institute to know.

REUBEN
They only see Uranium.

He stands up and looks steadily at Savchenko.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
I see life.

Savchenko laughs.

SAVCHENKO
Little lizards and birds.

REUBEN
Its a system. They're part of it,
we're part of it.

Savchenko sips his coffee and winces slightly.

SAVCHENKO
It tastes a little bitter today.

Reuben shrugs.

REUBEN

So why the analogue version? Had enough of Gil in the VR environment?

SAVCHENKO

I woke up this morning feeling a little old school.

(beat)

How'd your medical go?

REUBEN

I'm on my way to find out.

19 INT. UCORP MEDICAL CLINIC - DAY

19

Reuben sits on a sofa while a DOCTOR peruses his medical results, looking over his glasses periodically and somewhat suspiciously at the man before him.

DOCTOR

Did you bring any substances with you from Tasmania?

REUBEN

Substances?

DOCTOR

There are blockers in your system.

REUBEN

You think I'm on drugs?

DOCTOR

You seem to be hiding something. And not very well. I remember this stuff from medical school.

REUBEN

I'm from Tasmania.

DOCTOR

I know. Still use pharmaceuticals over there do you?

REUBEN

Cannabis. I'm trying to block cannabis.

DOCTOR

That stuff can make you crazy, you know.

REUBEN

Yeah, tell me about it. But we use it for cancer patients in Tasmania.

The Doctor shakes his head.

DOCTOR

Yes. I guess you would resist radiation therapy. One little nuclear blast and cancer can disappear.

The doctor looks over at a large catscan type device.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Its clean and effective. But that kind of logic doesn't sink into ideologues' heads.

REUBEN

Be that as it may. Cannabis is legal in my country.

The doctor looks at him with contempt.

DOCTOR

You think you can get away with anything because you work for the UN?

Reuben shrugs. Then he looks at the doctor closely.

REUBEN

You look very familiar to me.

DOCTOR

All doctors look the same. Its the white coat.

REUBEN

Maybe.

(beat)

So, have I passed?

20 INT. UCORP RESTAURANT - DAY

20

Reuben sits at the restaurant looking at the medical report.

It has a red stamp on it: 'MEDICAL PASSED'

Savchenko turns up with some paper work. He smiles as he dumps it on the table.

SAVCHENKO

I have managed to get all these forms in order and contacted the appropriate authorities. It took several hours, but now all I need is about a dozen signatures and we're ready to go.

Reuben looks at him and smiles.

REUBEN

Thanks.

SAVCHENKO

Its my job.

REUBEN

No, its not. Your job is to stop me.

Savchenko looks out the window at the perfect skyline.

SAVCHENKO

You notice how everything here is so clean, so well contained.

Reuben nods.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

In Kiev it is not like this at all; its very, very dirty and quite disorganised.

(beat)

I love it.

(semi-beat)

I miss it. Its real. You really should see it one day.

REUBEN

I will.

SAVCHENKO

(he sighs)

I know you will.

Gerry suddenly appears at the table.

GERRY

How's the quail?

Reuben looks up surprised.

SAVCHENKO

Its a little dry.

GERRY

You haven't even tasted it.

SAVCHENKO
 (quietly)
 Its always dry.

GERRY
 They're free range.

Savchenko rolls his eyes almost imperceptibly.

GERRY
 (to Reuben)
 Can I have a word, mate.

REUBEN
 All right.

21 INT. UCORP CORRIDOR - DAY

21

Gerry strides along as Reuben keeps pace.

GERRY
 I just wanted you to know that
 we're prepared to settle with the
 UN.

REUBEN
 What do you mean?

GERRY
 We're looking at a figure of 40
 million Euros, straight into your
 scientific development fund.

REUBEN
 That won't clean up the
 contamination.

GERRY
 You haven't found any yet.

REUBEN
 I'm heading up North next week.

GERRY
 You sure you know where to start?

REUBEN
 I think I do.

GERRY
 That's great. I admire your guts.
 Its a good thing. Companies need
 to be held to account.

Suddenly Gerry stops and puts his hand on Reuben's
 shoulder.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Look about the Institute, I think I can persuade the Vice Chancellor to accept your enrolment. There's a new one now, one more receptive to your special skills. You think outside the box. We need that.

Reuben is somewhat taken aback but keeps it together.

REUBEN

What makes you think I still want to go?

GERRY

Because you're the best. What are you going to do in Tasmania? The flow patterns are here. The money is here.

(off Reuben's look)

We'll support you, Reuben. Just think about it.

Gerry's phone beeps, he checks the screen.

GERRY

Oh, before you go, I want you to see Rebecca. There's a few things you need to clear up.

Gerry bounds off leaving Reuben standing still.

22

INT. UCORP CORRIDOR - DAY

22

Reuben is walking back to the office when he is joined by Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO

Our great leader try to scare you?

REUBEN

No. He tried to bribe me. I think we're off North.

SAVCHENKO

We?

REUBEN

I need someone to help me. You'd be bored here, chewing on dried quail.

Reuben opens the door to the Temp Office and sees Rebecca standing in there waiting for him. Savchenko sees her too.

SAVCHENKO
I'll chase up a vehicle
requisition form for you.

He exits.

23 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY

23

Reuben walks slowly into the office. Rebecca is perched on the desk looking at the map of SA.

REBECCA
Maybe we started off on the wrong
foot.

REUBEN
I didn't know you were Tasmanian.

REBECCA
Would that have made a
difference?

REUBEN
Launceston?

REBECCA
Burnie.

REUBEN
Its a beautiful part of the
world.

REBECCA
Yeah. If you're into trees and
Greenies.

Reuben smiles and sits down on a chair opposite her. She remains perched on the edge of the desk.

REBECCA
You know my family cut down trees
for a living.

REUBEN
Left the Greenies standing?

REBECCA
Reluctantly.
(beat)
The trees around Burnie, the
swamp gums, they were all
diseased. We chopped them down
and turned them into pulp. The
same pulp that went into making
this map, I guess. They had a
fungus that was killing them.
(MORE)

REBECCA(cont'd)

The hippies didn't know this,
they didn't want to know.

Reuben nods his head.

REUBEN

And you think I'm one of them?

REBECCA

I have nothing against
environmentalism. I just don't
get blinded by ideology. Its
money that drives the world not
ideas.

REUBEN

The dictatorship of the consumer.

REBECCA

And maybe there is a little
contamination. But believe me up
there that's the least of their
problems.

REUBEN

I find it hard to believe Ucorp
is in any way concerned with
welfare.

Rebecca nods her head and laughs.

REBECCA

Go out there and witness for
yourself what is really
destroying them. Of course you
need permission, from the
indigenous authorities.

REUBEN

Why?

Rebecca holds up the map and indicates the X that Reuben
has pencilled in.

REBECCA

We have a deal. We can operate in
their area. Sanders Gully is
smack bang in the middle of the
Indigenous lands. No one goes
there without permission from the
Chief Indigenous Officer. Not
even the UN.

REUBEN

I'll get that then.

REBECCA

OK. I'll get you to fill out the forms and we'll send them up north and if on the odd chance they get seen by one of these wizened old men high on petrol fumes it might get signed and possibly sent back to us within maybe 12 months or so.

Reuben looks at her somewhat deflated. Rebecca smirks.

REBECCA

Or you can just write your report this afternoon. It should take a couple of hours. Then take a holiday. Go wine tasting. And then, when you've sobered up and stopped beating yourself up, Gerry is sure to look after you.

Rebecca's expression softens.

REBECCA

Go on, Reuben. You really don't have a choice.

She wanders out of the room leaving Reuben gazing at the map.

24 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

24

Savchenko sits on the toilet reading a copy of Pravda, he chuckles occasionally.

The five MAGISTRATES are looking down on him.

Savchenko glances up at them.

SAVCHENKO

Do you enjoy this?

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

Let us know when you're done.

SAVCHENKO

I might be some time. Its this stodgy food you keep giving me. Besides there's a very interesting article on potatoes. You know they make paper out of them now?

He looks up at the monitors.

SAVCHENKO

Not enough trees, apparently.

Savchenko eases himself off the toilet and pulls up his trousers.

SAVCHENKO

I think I might give up for now.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

It was a mistake to sack your lawyer.

SAVCHENKO

That obnoxious teenager from legal aid did not have the capacity to understand what I was really doing.

(he sits up)

But you do. And yet you refuse to recognise it.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

You were making bombs, Dr Savchenko.

Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO

I was saving lives. Compassion should be governed by intelligence, not destroyed by it. That was all I was trying to do.

(beat, quietly)

That was all we were trying to do.

25 INT. UCORP RESTAURANT/BAR - EVENING

25

Reuben sits at the bar with a glass of wine and a bottle.

He sips the wine and shakes his head.

Savchenko appears behind him. He regards the bottle.

SAVCHENKO

Barossa Shiraz.

REUBEN

Did you know about the indigenous lands, how long it would take me to get permission?

SAVCHENKO
I suspected it might be
difficult.

REUBEN
I can't wait that long.

SAVCHENKO
You gonna jump the fence?

REUBEN
Its possible.

SAVCHENKO
That would invalidate every
discovery you made.

REUBEN
Not if I get the right
information.

SAVCHENKO
By the time you got close to any
radioactive spot they'd get you.

Savchenko calmly pours himself a glass of wine.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
The only way it would be worth it
is if you knew exactly where to
start.

Reuben looks at him closely.

SAVCHENKO
I got a call this morning. From
Mickey. He's risen from the dead.

REUBEN
Where is he?

Savchenko says nothing. He downs his large glass of red.

SAVCHENKO
In purgatory.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. CARAVAN PARK - DAY

26

Savchenko and Reuben sit in a taxi looking out the front
window with concern. The TAXI DRIVER looks disgusted.

TAXI DRIVER
I'm not waiting for you.

Savchenko passes a 100 Euro note over his shoulder.

SAVCHENKO

Yes, you are.

(off Driver's look)

Just lock the doors and look mean.

(to Reuben)

Come on.

Reuben and Savchenko get out of the car and pause to look at...

A dishevelled Caravan Park - every van is covered in rags and some are even half made of mad. Dust and rubbish flies everywhere.

REUBEN

Who lives here?

SAVCHENKO

The non-citizens. Refugees from East Africa, Indonesia and even from Melbourne. They aren't allowed to live within 40 kilometers of Adelaide.

Reuben looks over at a filthy CHILD, peeking at him through a rag bedecked window. He smiles. The kid smiles back. Savchenko sees this and laughs.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Its just like Darfur, only Darfur has tourists now. Does the UN know about this?

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN

I don't think so.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe they will one day.

He looks at Reuben challengingly. Reuben looks over at another van.

He sees the Figure leaning against it - the same filthy blackened overalls, the same look of despair. He rubs his eyes and opens them again, but the Figure is still there.

SAVCHENKO

You OK?

REUBEN
 I'm fine.
 (beat)
 How do we find Mickey?

SAVCHENKO
 He'll probably find us.

Reuben sees the Figure start to walk away.

REUBEN
 (to Savchenko)
 This way.

Reuben follows the Figure through the maze of wrecked caravans.

Savchenko tags along looking confused.

SAVCHENKO
 You have any idea where you're going?

REUBEN
 A little.

The Figure disappears around a corner.

When Reuben and Savchenko reach the edge they see a 30 year old man with a wild mane of hair perched on the steps of a van. This is MICKEY. He wears glasses and a hyper colour T shirt, long shorts and thongs.

He stares at them resentfully as he gets up.

MICKEY
 Come on in.

He turns and enters the cabin.

27 INT. MICKEY'S VAN - DAY

27

Reuben and Savchenko enter to see...

Mickey sitting inside a van bedecked in pictures from old magazines. Most of them are concerned with Nuclear proliferation, some headlines about Ucorp and the break up of the Australian Commonwealth, they are arranged in crazy patterns.

He rolls himself a cigarette as he watches them enter.

MICKEY
 You want coffee, I got plenty of coffee.

Reuben sits down opposite him.

REUBEN

Sure.

Mickey gestures to the tiny kitchen sink.

MICKEY

(to Savchenko)

Mate, get that tin from the cupboard behind you.

Savchenko rummages around in the cupboard.

REUBEN

You're Michael Vered?

MICKEY

Yeah...I guess I am. You smoke?

REUBEN

No. It's illegal.

MICKEY

Like I care.

Savchenko produces a tin of some horrible instant coffee with Indonesian writing on it.

MICKEY

Pass it over.

Mickey takes the coffee and starts spooning it into a mug in front of him. Savchenko looks on with disgust.

REUBEN

You ran away.

MICKEY

I had to, man. They were gonna kill me.

REUBEN

Why?

MICKEY

Disgruntled employee with company secrets. That's me.

SAVCHENKO

What secrets?

Mickey stops spooning the coffee into the mug.

MICKEY

Fuck. Me, man. My body and the way it fucking glows in the fucking dark, mate. Glows like a fucking lantern.

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

REUBEN

(quietly)

Radiation poisoning doesn't make you glow in the dark.

Mickey points his cigarette at Reuben.

MICKEY

Toe the company line, man.

Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO

Jesus, I risked my job for this.

MICKEY

Me too, buddy.

REUBEN

Do you have any other evidence of your condition?

Mickey nods and plunges his hands into a pile of papers on the shelf behind him. He picks one out. Its a covered in lines and figures.

Reuben takes it.

REUBEN

What is this?

MICKEY

Medical report.

Savchenko takes a look.

SAVCHENKO

What hospital is this from?

MICKEY

Its from a doctor friend of mine.

Savchenko gets up, disgusted.

SAVCHENKO

This is a complete waste of time.

REUBEN

Just wait...

MICKEY

Go on. Run away, monkey man!

Savchenko turns to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

If we're going into Indigenous territory we need a really good reason. Something other than the ravings of a madman.

MICKEY

Indigenous territory? That's not where I found it.

REUBEN

What?

MICKEY

This, man.

Mickey produces a lead box from underneath the table.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

This is what really made me sick.

SAVCHENKO

A box?

MICKEY

There's a rock inside it. So radioactive it gave me cancer, killed my libido.

SAVCHENKO

Let's go.

MICKEY

I found it on Chanson Hill.

(beat)

That's right. 10 ks out of the zone.

REUBEN

What were you doing there?

MICKEY

I like to just walk out into the desert every now and again.

REUBEN

(to Savchenko)

We don't need any permission at all to go there.

MICKEY

This rock is perfectly smooth on one side - you can see ripple patterns on it, like it's been washed up on the beach. What's a giant pebble doing all the way out in the desert, huh?

Savchenko sighs and exits the van.

MICKEY

Go eat a banana, monkey man!

Mickey turns to Reuben and thrusts the box toward him.

MICKEY

Check it out, man. I'm begging you.

Reuben takes it slowly.

MICKEY

Its the key.

Mickey nods his head slowly and looks at the box fearfully.

28

INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY

28

Reuben and Savchenko sit looking at the box.

SAVCHENKO

You going to open it?

REUBEN

If its as radioactive as he says it is it might kill us.

SAVCHENKO

I suspect it contains one of his turds...or maybe a dead cat.

REUBEN

He must have had something for it to be reported to me.

SAVCHENKO

The Greenies always find a way of fabricating evidence. I say we throw the box away.

Reuben goes over to a draw and takes out a geiger counter: a slick looking black reading device the size of a remote control. He brings it over to the box. It makes a vague hissing sound.

REUBEN

Nothing.

SAVCHENKO

Surprise.

Reuben flips off the latch and opens the lid slightly. The Geiger counter lets out a very loud rattling sound.

REUBEN

(looking at the reading)

Its about 2.5 Sieverts. That's pretty high.

SAVCHENKO

High enough to kill you?

REUBEN

Not quite. But high enough to know we're on the right track.

Her looks at Savchenko, then opens the box and takes out a large rock about the size of a grapefruit that is smoothly rippled on one side and studded with rough quartzite on the other.

SAVCHENKO

That's not exactly a pebble.

Reuben examines the quartzite incursions.

REUBEN

That quartz is typical of central Australian igneous shelves. And this side is limestone.

Savchenko nods.

SAVCHENKO

How did it get a thousand kilometres south and become highly radioactive along the way?

Reuben looks at Savchenko triumphantly.

REUBEN

Water.

29

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

29

Reuben carries the rock into the boardroom where he sees Gerry who is on the phone in a conference call to half a dozen people. He wears VR glasses and sits quietly on a chair in the middle of the room talking quietly.

GERRY

Hang on, Gil, I'll just be a sec.

He takes off his VR glasses and smiles at Reuben.

Reuben drops the rock down on the table.

GERRY

Is that for me?

REUBEN

I'm going North, tomorrow.

Gerry flinches, slightly surprised.

GERRY

Because you found a rock.

REUBEN

It's enough to make the UN
curious.

GERRY

Curious enough to turn down 40
million Euros?

Reuben sighs and glances out the window.

REUBEN

I'll need a car and equipment.

Gerry rubs his eyes and grimaces.

GERRY

Can't really do that, mate.

REUBEN

You have to.

GERRY

No I don't. Its a UN
investigation...

REUBEN

You asked me if there was
anything I needed...

Gerry gets up and goes over to a liquor cabinet.

GERRY

Maybe we should have a drink.
Talk about this properly.

REUBEN

You knew she'd throw the
indigenous thing at me, didn't
you?

Gerry pours himself a drink and one for Reuben, he passes him the glass.

GERRY
I really don't think you need to
go up there.

Reuben shakes his head.

Gerry shrugs, puts the glass down.

GERRY
If you do, you may not come back.

Reuben smirks.

REUBEN
You're scared.

Gerry smiles at him awkwardly.

GERRY
I think you can go now. We have
offered every reasonable
assistance to your investigation.
Now you're on your own.

REUBEN
(incredulously)
You're throwing me out?

Gerry smiles.

GERRY
You know, you really are a stupid
bastard. I offered you
everything. And you slap me in
the face.
(beat, beside himself)
That really pisses me off.

Reuben looks at him steadily.

REUBEN
Everything. Its not yours to
give.

Reuben turns and walks out, leaving Gerry downing his glass
of red.

30 INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE - DAY

30

Reuben is quickly gathering together some equipment,
including the Geiger counter, etc.

Savchenko enters, stops and watches him.

SAVCHENKO
I'm supposed to make sure you
leave the building.

REUBEN
I'm on my way.

SAVCHENKO
And I really should stop you
doing that.

REUBEN
But you're not going to, are you?

Savchenko sighs and shakes his head. Reuben throws all the
stuff into a bag.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'm done.
(beat)
I could use a hand up there.

SAVCHENKO
You have to be joking.

REUBEN
Together we can do it. And then
you don't have to worry about
Ucorp anymore. You can do the
right thing, for once.

SAVCHENKO
I can't do that.

REUBEN
You won't do that. You're too
addicted to Lobster Thursdays.

Reuben exits the room, leaving Savchenko standing still.

31 INT. HOTEL ROOM/CORRIDOR - DAY

31

Reuben drags his back toward the door and tries to open it
with a card.

It beeps and the red light comes on.

He tries again. Same deal.

He presses the button on an intercom by the door.

REUBEN
Hi, its Reuben Henschke from Room
219.

VOICE
I know who you are.

REUBEN
OK. Well, I can't get into my
room.

VOICE
I know.

Reuben waits for more. None comes.

REUBEN
Can you help me?

VOICE
Sorry, I can't.

REUBEN
You can't help me?

VOICE
I cannot help you, sir.

Reuben listens to the silence for awhile, then hitches his
bag and goes.

32 EXT. PARK - DAY

32

Reuben sits on a bench, dialling a number on his mobile
phone.

He frowns and looks down at his phone. It reads:

ACCOUNT INVALID IN THIS AREA.

He hugs himself against the cold and looks around.

He takes out his wallet and counts out a few Euros and some
Aussie dollars.

33 EXT. STREET ATM - DAY

33

Reuben tries his Global Credit Union card in the ATM.

The screen reads:

CARD NOT SUPPORTED.

And the card is spat out.

He inserts the card again and now the screen reads:

CARD CAPTURED FOR SECURITY REASONS.

He sighs and looks away.

34 INT. YMCA - NIGHT 34

Reuben sits in a bare room on a simple bed. A single tungsten globe illuminates the depressing scene.

Distant domestic violence can be heard through the threadbare curtains of the window.

35 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY 35

Savchenko sits on the modest seat smoking an unfiltered cigarette.

All the monitors are blank behind him.

SAVCHENKO

I was his guardian angel leading
him to glory.

(beat)

I was the only one who actually
cared about the man.

36 INT. YMCA - NIGHT 36

Reuben lies in bed, freezing. He is wide awake.

He looks out the window at the Figure staring back at him.

The sounds of violence outside are louder, more surreal.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

I knew how much he was suffering.
He deserved to be more than just
a pawn.

Reuben shuts his eyes against the noise and the dark.

37 INT. YMCA - DAY 37

Savchenko, dressed in canvas trousers and khaki shirt enters the room and sits at the edge of Reuben's bed.

Reuben wakes up slowly and looks at him.

REUBEN

Hey...

Savchenko offers him a takeaway coffee and a croissant.
Reuben sits up and takes them gratefully.

SAVCHENKO
Croissant Tuesday.

Reuben smirks and takes a sip of the coffee.

REUBEN
It might take off.

Savchenko shrugs.

SAVCHENKO
After I left the Ukraine I always
thought one day my wife might
escape too.

(beat)
But its clear she really doesn't
want to. She has her child and a
life of sorts. She has HER life.
All the money Ucorp can give me
won't bring that to me.

Reuben scrutinises him and bites the pastry. Savchenko
laughs.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
I'll still be in South Australia.
The edge of the known world. Too
far from MY world.

(beat)
Get me back to the Ukraine,
Reuben.

Reuben nods slowly.

REUBEN
You got 15 euros? Pay the room
bill and I'll see what I can do.

CUT TO:

38 INT. UCORP GARAGE - DAY

38

Savchenko and Reuben enter a garage containing VINTAGE
CARS. Reuben looks at them curiously, but he seems somewhat
distracted. Savchenko is quite excited.

SAVCHENKO
All these petrol guzzlers were
banned years ago, but Ucorp have
a special licence. Electric cars
are useless in the desert.

Savchenko goes up to a big chunky Toyota 4x4. He caresses
it lovingly.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

You remember the smell of diesel?

REUBEN

You're just going to steal it?

SAVCHENKO

I'm still a Ucorp employee.

REUBEN

Not for very long if you're seen with me.

SAVCHENKO

Then let's make hay while the sun shines.

CUT TO:

39 INT/EXT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - DUSK

39

Reuben looks out at the ochre landscape as it streams past the car.

Savchenko is at the wheel.

REUBEN

You think your wife will be pleased to see you.

Savchenko shrugs and fumbles in his pocket.

SAVCHENKO

Probably not.

Savchenko lights a cigarette.

REUBEN

Where did you get that from?

SAVCHENKO

I know a man...who knows a man.

Savchenko inhales deeply and then blows out the smoke.

SAVCHENKO

At least a man can smoke in the Ukraine. It kills the taste of the inferior wine.

Reuben turns to the window.

REUBEN

I called the UN.

SAVCHENKO

Oh really? When are they sending
in the cavalry?

REUBEN

There was no answer.

SAVCHENKO

Bad reception. They sometimes
block outside numbers.

REUBEN

(calmly)

Yeah, that must be it.

SAVCHENKO

They will admire your initiative.

REUBEN

Might even get a promotion.

He looks directly at Savchenko, who can;t work out his
expression. Savchenko hands him the packet of cigarettes.

Reuben frowns slightly and shakes his head. Savchenko puts
the packet down.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

I don't know when he started
suspecting something was wrong.
But I know he never blamed me.
Our friendship was real. That's
why I didn't stop the doubts. I
wanted him to know the truth.

40 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

40

Reuben and Savchenko sit by a camp fire, drinking from
mugs.

REUBEN

We still need Rebecca's help.

SAVCHENKO

How are you going to achieve
that? She's a company girl.

REUBEN

She's smart enough to know Ucorp
is more than Gerry. He's the one
that will fall, the company will
simply be nationalised.

SAVCHENKO

Under UN supervision?

REUBEN

That's the idea. It's a small price to pay for nationhood. And Gerry knows it. That's why he got so pissed off with me.

Savchenko laughs.

SAVCHENKO

You really are the messiah. A corporate giant killing messiah from the Tasmanian jungle.

(beat)

Well, if anyone can crack Rebecca, you can, my friend. I think she has a mild crush on you.

REUBEN

Fuck off.

SAVCHENKO

That's an eloquent rebuttal.

Reuben laughs and looks out into the black night. Then he looks into Savchenko's eyes.

REUBEN

Its only fair that you know.

(beat)

I suffer from schizophrenia.

Savchenko nods.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

I have delusions. There's this strange man I keep seeing, who stares at me like I'm the devil himself.

(beat, he laughs)

I know it isn't real.

SAVCHENKO

We all have our delusions. I thought I could live a cosmopolitan lifestyle in a glorified miner's town.

REUBEN

Mine are serious.

SAVCHENKO

How do you deal with it?

REUBEN

I talk try to ignore it. I have some antipsychotics I smuggled in.

SAVCHENKO

So, at any given moment you may descend into a blithering mess?

REUBEN

No. I have it under control.
(beat)
Do you trust me?

SAVCHENKO

No choice now.

Savchenko lights another cigarette.

41 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

41

Savchenko is seated quite formally in front of the bank of monitors. He is wearing his prison overalls. They faces stare down at him.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

How can you justify manipulating his memory if he was such a friend?

SAVCHENKO

Don't you ever tell people what they want to hear? I didn't have the power to change memory, only put a filter on it, maybe place a few mirrors here and there at different angles.

42 EXT. DESERT - DAWN

42

Reuben wakes up beside the 4x4. He opens one eye and looks across the desert plains.

He sees the Figure in the distance smoking a cigarette and staring at him.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

I tried to steer away most of the pain, but there is always a little thorn in your side that never goes away. It was a small price to pay to get your genius back.

43 EXT. DESERT - MORNING

43

The 4x4 speeds across a barren desert road. It pulls up at a wire fence.

Reuben and Savchenko get out and walk toward the high gate.

Looking through they can see a large square shaped building on the horizon (or something equally incongruous).

SAVCHENKO

There's your girlfriend.

Savchenko turns around and looks toward the other horizon.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

And over there is where Mickey found the rock. You sure you want her involved? She can't do anything to you but she might have me detained.

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN

She won't. Besides, we have to get diesel and water from somewhere.

Reuben turns and heads back to the car. Savchenko reluctantly joins him.

44 EXT. UCORP WASTE DISPOSAL PLANT - DAY

44

The 4x4 pulls up beside a large plant shooting out of the desert.

Reuben and Savchenko get out.

A couple of WORKERS in yellow overalls walk across the balcony. They look down at the 4x4 with mild curiosity and then get back to work.

Reuben looks up at them closely, as if he might know who they were.

REUBEN

Where's the security?

SAVCHENKO

No need. The desert does a pretty good job of keeping people away. Unless they're people like you.

Then they see Rebecca, dressed in the same yellow overalls walk slowly out to the landing. She looks down at the two of them. She smirks and beckons them up.

45 INT. REBECCA'S OFFICE - DAY

45

Reuben and Savchenko sit at a table inside a control centre style room. It contains walls and walls of indicators and a few monitors. There is the gentle hum of lots of computer equipment.

Rebecca sits at the other end of the table. She glances at Savchenko.

REBECCA
You're in lots of trouble.

SAVCHENKO
I know.

REBECCA
You're also a fool.

SAVCHENKO
We all have to retire sometime.

Rebecca turns to Reuben.

REBECCA
So. You found a rock?

REUBEN
Its not on your land.

REBECCA
Then why are you here?

REUBEN
We need supplies.

REBECCA
And you think the company is just going to hand them over.

REUBEN
No. I'm asking you to give us a small amount of diesel and water.

REBECCA
Me?

REUBEN
Yes.

REBECCA
Why? Because I'm nice?

REUBEN

Because you might just be able to see the writing on the wall.

(beat)

The UN would look favourably on any assistance you provide.

Rebecca guffaws incredulously.

REBECCA

You're incredible.

REUBEN

You know its more than just a rock.

REBECCA

I'm not supposed to help you.

(to Savchenko)

And Gerry really wants to talk to you NOW.

SAVCHENKO

I don't think there's much I can say to him.

Rebecca gets up and walks to the door.

REBECCA

You'll die out there and it will have nothing to do with Ucorp.

REUBEN

You can stop that happening. Who's going to know?

Rebecca shakes her head sighs.

REBECCA

You can take some diesel and as much water as you want. I suggest you take as much as you can carry.

She shakes her head and leaves.

Savchenko lets the air slowly escape from his lips.

SAVCHENKO

I hope you know what you're doing.

He looks at Reuben who stares back at him steadily.

46 INT/EXT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - DAY

46

Savchenko drives along keeping his eyes on the road.

Reuben glances at him.

REUBEN

At least you weren't detained.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe that would have been easier. In a cell you don't have to make decisions. And there's a chance they might forgive you.

Savchenko glances up to the sky.

SAVCHENKO

They're not going to let us just go on a picnic out here, you realise.

REUBEN

We're still protected by the UN.

SAVCHENKO

You tried calling them again?

Reuben looks at him steadily.

REUBEN

No.

(beat)

I think I have everything under control. What do you think?

SAVCHENKO

We'll see.

47 EXT. DESERT MONOLITH - DAY

47

The Four x Four pulls up at a large finger of rock that points at the sky.

The two men get out. Savchenko remains watching the rock while Reuben goes round to the back of the truck and drags out some equipment.

He brings it over to Savchenko.

REUBEN

This is the spot.

SAVCHENKO

What was Mickey doing all the way out here, you think?

REUBEN

I don't know.

SAVCHENKO

Maybe he was sent by god. Like John the Baptist, finding the sign of the coming messiah.

Reuben takes a long cylindrical instrument with a small panel on the top and inserts it at the base of the monolith.

He looks at the panel. There is a meter that measures radiation levels. It is made of two dozen parallel bars. Only the bottom one shows signs of illumination.

Savchenko wanders over and looks over his shoulder at the reading.

SAVCHENKO

Hardly enough radiation to bring down a company.

Reuben pulls up the cylinder and walks to a spot about ten metres away.

Savchenko watches him as he inserts the piece of equipment into the ground.

SAVCHENKO

You sure this is the right spot?

REUBEN

It has to be.

Reuben takes the piece of equipment to another spot.

Savchenko takes a reader and goes over to the monolith. He gets no radiation readings to speak of.

SAVCHENKO

The rock is clean.

He looks over at Reuben who is busily making readings. He shakes his head.

Some time later...

Reuben and Savchenko are sitting against the monolith staring out over the plain.

Savchenko turns to Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Talk to me, Reuben.

48 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY 48

Savchenko eats a bowl of weetbix while the faces in the monitors stare down from behind him.

SAVCHENKO
When you give Polar bears an easy life in a zoo: fresh fish on demand, lots of straw to lie down on...they actually go insane. They need to have their pilchards frozen in blocks of ice, they have to work for it. Through suffering comes reward. Otherwise they're not polar bears...
(looking despondently at the soggy weetbix)
They're teddy bears.

49 INT/EXT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - EVENING 49

Savchenko is driving along, trying to suppress his anger.

SAVCHENKO
So basically we have nothing.

REUBEN
There are traces. There also seems to be some kind of pattern. I'll have to go over the figures.

SAVCHENKO
75 milligrays? That's not enough to warm an ant.

REUBEN
Its more than should be out there.

SAVCHENKO
But its not enough.
(under his breath)
Shit.

Reuben is desperately scrawling the scatter pattern across the map.

He looks down at a GPS indicator in his hand and checks the co-ordinates on the map.

REUBEN
The rocks might have shifted down
the water channels.

SAVCHENKO
Or been abducted by aliens.

REUBEN
Stop the car.

SAVCHENKO
We need to get back.

REUBEN
Stop the car!

Savchenko reluctantly does so and Reuben jumps out. He looks at the map and then out into the distance.

He sees The Figure staring at him from about 200 metres away.

REUBEN
To hell with it.

Reuben sets out toward the Figure.

SAVCHENKO
Where are you going?

REUBEN
There's another spot, this is
where the pattern should lead.

Savchenko gets more equipment out.

Reuben makes his way directly to the Figure.

REUBEN
OK, you fucker. What do you want?
Hey?

The Figure starts walking away.

REUBEN
Talk to me!

Savchenko starts running after Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Reuben!

Reuben turns around and looks at Savchenko running up to him.

When he turns back the Figure has disappeared.

Savchenko catches up with him.

SAVCHENKO
What's the matter with you?

REUBEN
Nothing, I'm fine.

SAVCHENKO
You're guardian angel?

REUBEN
Yeah.

Reuben looks at the map.

REUBEN
Directly under here there should
be an alluvial pool. The
radiation might have concentrated
in limestone deposits.

SAVCHENKO
Christ...

Reuben looks over to see...

Three skeletons lying in the ground before him. There are
also small rock piles scattered around.

Reuben bends down and holds the counter near one of the
bones. The counter increases slightly in speed and volume.

He turns and looks at Savchenko.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. DESERT - EVENING

50

Reuben and Savchenko sit in a makeshift camp site. Reuben
is scanning one of the bones.

SAVCHENKO
How do you think they died?
Radiation poisoning?

REUBEN
The DNA is shattered. It seems
like a massive dose. All at the
same time.

SAVCHENKO
How could that happen? Waste
doesn't do that.

Reuben gets up and starts photographing the skeletons on the ground with his mobile phone.

REUBEN

Maybe they were evidence. Someone got rid of them. Mickey was the one who escaped?

SAVCHENKO

And left the bodies out here?

REUBEN

Protected by the desert. As you said, who would ever go out here?

Savchenko looks at the bones dubiously.

SAVCHENKO

But we still haven't found the leak.

REUBEN

Maybe we can force their hand.

SAVCHENKO

Rebecca?

Reuben nods.

51 INT. REBECCA'S OFFICE - DAY

51

Rebecca sits at the table with Reuben sitting at the other end. One of the bones is in the middle in a plastic zip lock bag.

REBECCA

(trying to convince herself)

It wasn't found on Ucorp land. It isn't our problem.

REUBEN

Its a pretty big coincidence.

REBECCA

Yes. It is. Three bodies all neatly lined up emitting radiation. How do think they got poisoned? Where is the leak?

REUBEN

I haven't found it yet. But this gives me a good reason to keep looking. I've sent the pictures to the UN.

Savchenko glances at him.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
So, as I see it, now you have an
opportunity for redemption.

Rebecca sighs deeply.

REBECCA
I keep this facility in perfect
order. I've done nothing wrong.

REUBEN
I believe you. But do you
personally check every reading,
every detail? The company is
under a lot of pressure to keep
producing energy which creates
very high level waste and maybe
they're sending you stuff that
can cut straight through your
lead containers.

Rebecca looks at him dubiously.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
This is not about you. This is
about Gerry and all the other
'Gerrys' destroying the world.

He stares steadily at Rebecca.

REBECCA
What am I going to do? Work for
the bloody government? They'll
just privatise it in a few years
and I'll be out of a job.
Corporations don't like disloyal
employees.

REUBEN
There's always the UN.

Rebecca shakes her head.

REBECCA
Yeah, right.

52 INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

52

Reuben sits at a small desk going over his photographs and
the data he collected from the bodies. There are two single
beds in the room. Savchenko enters and leans against the
door frame.

SAVCHENKO

So you finally got on to the UN?

Reuben glances up then goes back to the photos.

REUBEN

No.

SAVCHENKO

We need a Satphone. There has to be one around here we can steal.

Reuben turns around and looks at Savchenko steadily.

REUBEN

I'm beginning to doubt they're interested.

SAVCHENKO

They have to be. Otherwise you've destroyed my career for nothing.

REUBEN

I came out here with an agenda...I can't even remember where I got it from. I can't even picture some guy handing me a job.

SAVCHENKO

You're tired.

Reuben nods and turns back to the photos.

REUBEN

Yeah.

Savchenko hands him the drug puffer.

SAVCHENKO

I found this in the car. You're getting careless.

Reuben looks at the device and slowly takes it from him.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

You'll find it. Get some sleep.

Savchenko leaves. Reuben watches him go, then turns back to the pictures.

He looks at the radiation figures.

REUBEN

Three bodies all neatly laid out. All killed at the same time.

(MORE)

REUBEN(cont'd)

No evidence of physical trauma.
No abrasions.

He looks at the map and marks where the monolith was and where the bodies were.

He draws a line between them.

He then looks at his scatter pattern of alluvial streams.

He lines up the pattern against the map and sees the points line up with the Monolith, the body site, a billabong, a hill and another rock formation. Then he draws circles emanating from where he found the bodies.

He writes down the readings from the monolith site on the map (75 milligrays) and then the reading from the bodies (85 milligrays) on the different circles.

REUBEN

The epicentre.

He circles the billabong.

53 EXT. DESERT - DAWN 53

Reuben treks across the desert dragging equipment behind him. He has poles in his hand that he plants into the ground at certain points. At each point he takes a reading.

He looks at the map again, and checks where the billabong is supposed to be.

He treks off toward the horizon.

54 EXT. DESERT BILLABONG - DAY 54

Reuben comes across a small crater about the size of a house. (it could even be smaller). He takes a reading on the Geiger counter and nods.

He looks back at the map. He puts an X in the middle of a pattern of circles branching out from the billabong.

He sighs deeply and rubs his eyes.

Then he hears the sound of the Four x Four behind him.

He looks around to see...

The Four x Four pull up with Savchenko and Rebecca inside. They both look at him like doctors would look at a mental patient and slowly get out of the car.

SAVCHENKO

You've been busy.

REUBEN
 Its was a neutron bomb. That's
 what killed them.

Savchenko looks at Rebecca.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
 (to Rebecca)
 You were right. The facility is
 sound. They've been testing
 bombs.

REBECCA
 Ucorp?

REUBEN
 Here is the epicentre. The
 radiation has mostly diminished,
 but there are enough traces to
 prove a pattern.

REBECCA
 Where's the blast damage?

REUBEN
 That's it. That hole.

Rebecca walks up to the hole and looks over the edge.

REBECCA
 That?

REUBEN
 It must have been some controlled
 explosion. Lots of radiation,
 very little blast impact.

Rebecca nods her head slowly, then looks at Reuben and
 sighs.

REBECCA
 You got a phone call.

She holds out a Satphone. Reuben looks at Savchenko who
 shrugs slightly.

REUBEN
 From who?

REBECCA
 The UN.

Reuben takes the phone and looks at the number on the
 screen.

REBECCA
 That the number?

Reuben nods. He presses redial.

He turns away from the other two and listens carefully at the static coming over the lines. He hears a distorted voice.

VOICE

Reuben?

REUBEN

Yes.

VOICE

We're pulling out.

REUBEN

What was that?

VOICE

We're putting things on hold for awhile. There's a flight on Sunday.

Reuben continues to listen to the static.

REUBEN

Did you get the photos?

VOICE

Yes.

Pause. Reuben looks around.

VOICE (CONT'D)

We'll talk about that when you get back.

REUBEN

I haven't finished here.

VOICE

I know. But we'll talk about that. The flight's at 8am. All the details will be at the airport. We'll see you soon.

The phone goes dead.

Rebecca regards him with a degree of sympathy.

REBECCA

I'm sorry, Reuben.

Reuben looks at her.

REUBEN

I'm taking the bones.

REBECCA
 They'll be quarantined.
 (beat)
 Its over.

Reuben looks toward Savchenko who averts his eyes, looking down toward the desert sand.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
 Genius takes over when there is no other option.

55 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

55

Savchenko now sits on his plain chair before the monitors in a neat, grey suit, with a collar and tie.

SAVCHENKO
 All discovery is driven by emotion.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
 So Dr Henske was determined to prove a point? And you manipulated him into this situation. Why didn't you just tell him what he needed to know?

SAVCHENKO
 Because we didn't know what he needed to know. And even if we did, he wouldn't tell us. He had principles

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
 And what are your principles, Dr Savchenko?

SAVCHENKO
 My only principle is the preservation of human life.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
 And yet you helped create a bomb that destroys it.

SAVCHENKO
 A bomb that would quickly and efficiently end a war. Thus saving lives.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
 Yet it didn't.

SAVCHENKO
 No. Something went wrong.

56 INT. REBECCA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

56

Reuben and Savchenko sit at the table. Reuben still has his facts and figures, photos and equipment on the table before him.

SAVCHENKO

I guess I should be pretty angry with you.

REUBEN

Something is not right.

SAVCHENKO

They were never interested. Its like I told you before, it was a token investigation. They were wasting your time.

REUBEN

Why me?

SAVCHENKO

They needed someone with credibility. But they didn't realise quite how big a chip you had on your shoulder.

REUBEN

Is that what you think this is about?

Savchenko sighs and drops his head into his hands.

SAVCHENKO

I don't know. You tell me what its about.

REUBEN

I have the ability to solve this. They knew that. Or if not the UN, then somebody knew that. I am working for some one who wants to know the truth.

SAVCHENKO

The truth? That Ucorp are developing a neutron bomb. So what? Its pretty well known technology. Why would they bother?

Reuben takes out his map again.

REUBEN

Cause this bomb is different. Its more precise. There's virtually no blast damage.

SAVCHENKO

And they tested it on humans? Why would they do that?

REUBEN

Non citizens. Who's going to care?

SAVCHENKO

But why not use animals?

Reuben looks at the readings and his map covered by the scatter pattern.

REUBEN

I don't know.

Savchenko goes over to his bag and draws out a bottle of vodka.

SAVCHENKO

Anyway, it doesn't matter. They'll be blown away by the wind of international hypocrisy pretty soon.

He slams the bottle on the table.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Drink?

REUBEN

No.

SAVCHENKO

I hope you don't mind if I do.

Savchenko pours himself a big one.

SAVCHENKO

So who do you think they were?

REUBEN

Probably Sudanese. Guest workers maybe.

SAVCHENKO

Better a quick death here than some horrible African disease. I guess they were given the ultimate radiation therapy.

REUBEN
Americium pellets would be no
good to Sudanese.

Savchenko looks at Reuben closely.

SAVCHENKO
Why not?

REUBEN
Iodine deficiency. It alters
their proteins and therefore the
cell structure would absorb...

Reuben stops dead. He is looking at the scatter pattern.
Savchenko is watching him closely.

SAVCHENKO
Go on.

Reuben looks at Savchenko and grimaces.

REUBEN
They wouldn't be able to afford
it, anyway. Not at 10,000 Euros a
seed.

Savchenko downs his vodka.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Maybe I will have that drink.

Savchenko shrugs and pours him one. Reuben downs it in one.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
You really want to go back to
Kiev?

SAVCHENKO
I have no choice now. Its Kiev or
Tasmania.

REUBEN
You wouldn't last 5 minutes in
the forest.

SAVCHENKO
I would with you looking after
me. You'd look after me, wouldn't
you?

REUBEN
(beat)
Of course. The way you've been
looking after me.

Reuben holds out his glass, Savchenko pours another shot.

CUT TO:

57 INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

57

Reuben sits at the edge of his bed. He holds the puffer in his hand. He looks over at...

The Figure lying on the other bed, staring up at the ceiling.

REUBEN
You're one of them.

The Figure continues to breathe heavily and look upwards.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
What am I supposed to do?

THE FIGURE
We were injected with it.

Reuben is startled.

REUBEN
With what?

THE FIGURE
The protein.

Reuben looks down at his scatter pattern, he has now drawn it for what it really is - a protein structure.

REUBEN
It killed you faster.

The Figure shuts his eyes.

REUBEN
Who did it?

He watches the silent figure for some time. Then he turns away. The Figure has disappeared.

58 INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS 2 - NIGHT

58

A light is turned on to reveal Savchenko asleep.

Reuben shakes him violently.

REUBEN
Come on, Yuri. Get up.

Savchenko sakes the sleep out of his eyes.

SAVCHENKO

What is it?

REUBEN

I want to check something out.

SAVCHENKO

There's no point.

REUBEN

I think I know what's going on.

Savchenko stares at him. Reuben tosses him the keys to the car.

REUBEN (CONT'D)

Come on.

59 INT/EXT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - DAWN

59

The car rattles along the road. A very tired Savchenko is at the wheel squinting at the darkness.

SAVCHENKO

Where are we heading?

REUBEN

We'll take a turn in about 10 Ks.

Reuben hands Savchenko the bottle of vodka, half finished.

SAVCHENKO

What's this?

REUBEN

Breakfast.

Savchenko shrugs and takes a swig.

SAVCHENKO

So, you going to tell me what we're looking for?

REUBEN

I know how they died.

Reuben keeps looking at Savchenko steadily.

SAVCHENKO

Is it enough to bring the company down?

REUBEN

I don't know. Maybe.

Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO
But its not a leak.

REUBEN
No.

Savchenko takes another swig from the bottle.

SAVCHENKO
I shouldn't really drink and
drive.

He struggles to keep his eyes open.

REUBEN
No, you shouldn't.

Savchenko starts to faint. Reuben calmly reaches over and
takes control of the wheel as Savchenko collapses onto the
seat.

The car eventually grinds to a halt and stalls.

60 EXT. DESERT - DAY

60

Savchenko wakes up lying in the dirt, squinting at the
bright sunlight.

He is in the middle of a salt pan (or vast empty space).

He is completely alone.

Beside him sits a walky talky.

He rises to a sitting position and rubs his head. Then he
hears static coming from the walky talky.

He picks it up.

REUBEN (O.S.)
I know how to drive. Why is that?

SAVCHENKO
(beat)
Because you're a genius.

REUBEN (O.S.)
And the doctor at Ucorp. He knew
me.

SAVCHENKO
Where are you, Reuben?

CUT TO:

61 EXT. DESERT BILLABONG - DAY

61

Reuben stands before the Four x Four. He speaks into a walky talky. He looks out at the horizon.

REUBEN

I'm a long way away. And you're completely alone.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

Was it something I said?

REUBEN

It's the things you haven't said.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

What do you want to know?

REUBEN

Who I am.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

You know who you are. You're our saviour.

REUBEN

I will leave you out here to die.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. DESERT - DAY

62

Savchenko sits down in the dirt. He smiles.

SAVCHENKO

Yes, Reuben. I believe you would.
(beat)
OK. I'll tell you what you are.
You're deluded. I've been sent
out here to look after you.

REUBEN (O.S.)

Why?

SAVCHENKO

We need answers. I work for the UN. The answers are inside your head, but you need help.

REUBEN (O.S.)

Why didn't you tell me this before?

Savchenko gets to his feet.

SAVCHENKO

Your mind wouldn't have been able to handle it. I want to help you Reuben. Bring the car back.

REUBEN (O.S.)

No.

SAVCHENKO

You won't last out there. You need your treatment.

REUBEN (O.S.)

I'm fine without it.

Savchenko pauses and sighs.

SAVCHENKO

Then look behind you.

CUT TO:

63 EXT. DESERT BILLABONG - DAY

63

Reuben turns to see The Figure standing before him. The Figure is looking directly at him.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)

This nightmare will get worse unless you get the right treatment. Just walk away from it and come back.

Reuben switches off the walky talky and drops it on the ground.

REUBEN

That protein I've been seeing in my head, its a surface marker. It brings on apoptosis. The death flag.

The Figure continues to stare at him.

REUBEN

You were conditioned. Some kind of methylation. So the radiation would melt your cells and leave others alive.

(beat)

So what is so special about you?

THE FIGURE

Xinjiang.

REUBEN
 (beat)
 China.

THE FIGURE
 Xinjiang.

The figure turns and walks away.

64 EXT. DESERT - DAY 64

Savchenko has his eyes closed and is shaking his head.
 Behind him stands Gerry and another vehicle.

Savchenko turns to Gerry.

GERRY
 You fucking idiot.

Gerry turns around and walks toward the car.

Savchenko sighs and follows him.

65 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY 65

Savchenko dressed in his good suit looks at the bank of
 monitors.

SAVCHENKO
 It was the company that treated
 him like an object - just some
 source of information. He was
 supposed to figure out the answer
 before he figured out something
 was wrong, that he wasn't the man
 he thought he was. But I wanted
 him to know. I wanted him back.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
 So the two of you could hold the
 world to ransom.

SAVCHENKO
 (quietly)
 So we could finish the job.

66 EXT/INT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - DAY 66

Reuben is belting along in the car. He dials the UN number
 on the satphone. He gets nothing.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)
 He'd discovered how to turn human
 cells on and off.
 (MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

Once he could recognise the right surface markers he'd know he'd have the right methylation process.

67 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

67

Savchenko is in front of the bank of monitors as before.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
Methylation?

SAVCHENKO

Cell conditioning. There was a localised famine in Xinjian Province of China, they had to import genetically modified corn from Bulgaria and eat it for 6 months. Reuben discovered that this lead to the methylation process that made them more susceptible to moderate dosages of radiation. The people had a genetic makeup that could be manipulated by giving them a diet of GM corn instead of rice.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. DESERT - DAY

68

Reuben speeds along in the vehicle.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

Through methylation he could recognise and manipulate certain peoples to be killed by an enhanced radiation weapon. While others would survive. He was like a god. I had to turn him back on to save all of us.

Reuben tosses the phone out the window.

69 INT. REBECCA'S OFFICE - DAY

69

Reuben bursts in as Rebecca is cleaning up.

REUBEN

I need you to talk to me.

REBECCA

Of course.

REUBEN

Who am I?

REBECCA

I don't know. They won't tell me.

REUBEN

Who?

REBECCA

Ucorp. Gerry.

REUBEN

Does Savchenko work for the UN?

Rebecca shakes her head.

REBECCA

What have you found out?

REUBEN

Ucorp is making weapons. They've been testing them here.

Rebecca nods slowly.

REUBEN

Now you believe me?

REBECCA

I've been thinking about it.

REUBEN

OK.

REBECCA

I have noticed some strange stuff happening.

REUBEN

Like what?

REBECCA

You look exhausted. Sit down I'll get you some water.

REUBEN

I'm fine. Tell me about the strange stuff?

REBECCA

They've been people coming here, from head office. Telling me they're doing safety reports.

REUBEN

How long ago?

Rebecca starts to move toward him.

REBECCA
 You look like you're about to
 collapse. Where have you been?
 Where's Savchenko?

REUBEN
 He's out in the desert.

REBECCA
 Tell me what you know.

REUBEN
 Suddenly you're interested.

Reuben goes faint and sits down.

REBECCA
 I'll get you some water.

She starts to move toward the door.

REUBEN
 It was me.

Rebecca stops dead.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
 I was there. I saw it happen.

REBECCA
 Where?

REUBEN
 The detonation.

REBECCA
 You were in Tasmania.

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN
 Tasmania? What is that? Green
 trees, rivers. The pictures are
 in my head...but it doesn't mean
 anything to me.

REBECCA
 I know about your condition.

REUBEN
 The doctor knew me. He looked at
 me and he knew me.
 (beat)
 And I think you know me too.

Rebecca nods.

REBECCA
You're right. I do know you. And
you can trust me. Tell me what
you know.

REUBEN
And you'll call the UN?

REBECCA
Yes. I'll call the UN.

Reuben shakes his head and looks over at a map on the wall.
He notices the border of WA is only 10 kms away.

REUBEN
Don't bother.

He gets up and walks toward the door.

REBECCA
Don't.

Reuben stops and looks at her. She has quite a different
expression on her face: one of despair.

REBECCA
They'll get you. They always do.

Reuben looks at her with something approaching sympathy.

REUBEN
But they don't know what I know.

He turns and leaves. She watches him go ruefully.

70 INT/EXT. FOUR X FOUR/DESERT - DUSK

70

Reuben speeds along in the vehicle. He looks at the map.

He passes a sign saying:

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BORDER 5KM. ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO WA
PROHIBITED.

Reuben looks ahead and sees a flag flying in the distance -
the flag of Westralia.

But then the engine starts to conk out and smoke pours out
of the engine. The four x four grinds to a halt.

Reuben gets out of the car and starts walking across the
desert toward the flag.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

He kept the final pattern secret from everyone. He had it locked in his head because I don't think he ever wanted the bomb to be used. He didn't know those workers were out there. Or maybe he did.

In the distance he can see black Figures.

He tries to ignore them and keeps pushing toward the flag on the border although his legs are giving way and he's starting to black out.

He falls to the ground and looks up at the sky.

He sees a thin wisp of cloud, curling at the edges.

Fade to WHITE.

Reuben opens his eyes to see two MEN IN WHITE SUITS and gas masks staring down at him. They consult each other silently. Then pick him up.

Reuben looks up at the sky to see nothing but bright blue.

REUBEN

The clouds have disappeared.

The two men look at him momentarily and then continue to carry him along.

71 EXT. BUILDING TOP - DAY

71

Reuben sits on a concrete block wearing plain pyjamas. He has a paper cup of coffee in his hands. He sips it and winces.

Then he looks out at the Adelaide hills and sighs.

There is the sound of a metal door behind him. He looks around to see...

Savchenko emerging from the stairwell shaft. He is wearing black pants and a tie and an ID badge.

Savchenko walks over to Reuben and sits beside him. Reuben continues to sip his coffee.

REUBEN

So. They gave you your job back.

SAVCHENKO

Not really. Not the same job.

REUBEN

You betrayed me. For what?

SAVCHENKO

I never betrayed you. I couldn't betray you.

REUBEN

Why not?

SAVCHENKO

Because you work for them. You always have.

REUBEN

That is not true.

SAVCHENKO

Flow patterns, protein structures, why is all that stuff magically in your head?

REUBEN

Because you put it there.

SAVCHENKO

Why would I bother? If they wanted that information I would have just given it to them. You needed to reprocess it.

REUBEN

So I could perfect the bomb.

SAVCHENKO

Its not just any bomb. Its a very valuable bomb.

Reuben crushes the cup.

REUBEN

This coffee is disgusting.

SAVCHENKO

You were in charge, you know. You kept the key elements secret.

REUBEN

People were killed.

SAVCHENKO

That wasn't your fault. They were only supposed to have minor tissue damage. You didn't realise how effective the beast was you unleashed.

REUBEN

So you brought me back from
insanity. I'd be better off out
of my mind.

Savchenko shakes his head firmly.

SAVCHENKO

You, maybe. But not the world. If
you don't perfect this bomb
they'll try to do it themselves
and they will definitely fuck it
up. And many, many people will
die as a result.

(he looks directly at
Reuben)

There's going to be a war one way
or the other.

REUBEN

You want me to give Gerry the
answer. You want to know what the
flow pattern means and how to
apply it.

Savchenko looks around at all the other buildings.

SAVCHENKO

Don't give it to Gerry. Give it
to me.

REUBEN

Which side are you on?

SAVCHENKO

I'm on yours.

Reuben laughs.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)

Trust me. I want you empowered.
Then we can hand the technology
over to whoever will win this
thing fastest and fund whatever
research we want. We'll have
unlimited money to make what's
left of the world better than any
world we could have imagined.

Reuben shakes his head.

REUBEN

That's an interesting argument.

Reuben gets up and sighs.

REUBEN

But, I think the best thing for
the world is if I jump of the
edge of this building.

Savchenko stares at him.

SAVCHENKO

You're wrong.

Reuben looks at Savchenko briefly.

REUBEN

I...liked working with you,
Yuri... or whoever you are.

SAVCHENKO

Then keep working with me.

REUBEN

No.

Reuben turns and walks quickly to the edge of the building.
Savchenko looks around.

There is the distorted sound of panicked voices through
radios.

Savchenko stands up but he doesn't pursue Reuben.

Reuben gets to the edge, keeps his eyes on the sky and
steps off.

CUT TO:

72 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

72

Savchenko in his suit sits in front of the bank of
monitors. The room is devoid of all furniture.

SAVCHENKO

He should have trusted me.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)

So you kept trying?

SAVCHENKO

(beat)

Yes.

73 EXT. STREET - DAY

73

Reuben falls onto an awning that cushions his weight
effortlessly.

He shuts his eyes as he slides down to safety.

74 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

74

A slightly bruised Reuben lies in bed.

Savchenko administers a series of injections as Gerry watches behind him.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

We put him under. Again and again. We invented different scenarios, different characters, all aimed at conditioning him into giving Ucorp the answer.

Reuben looks at Savchenko sternly. Savchenko avoids his eye.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. DESERT ROAD SIDE - DAY

75

A bloodied and bruised Reuben lies by the side of the road. Beside him is a broken down four x four.

Reuben wears khaki camping gear.

He awakes slowly and rises to a seated position. He rubs his head and looks around.

He struggles to his feet and limps over to the car, that seems to have swerved off the road.

Inside is a jumble of camping gear, notebooks and books on birds. Reuben picks up one book in particular:

BIRDS OF THE WESTERN DESERT.

He flips it open on a random page revealing...

THE STURT DESERT WREN.

Beside a picture of a small brown bird there are notes scrawled with the heading: Cellular structure.

Then suddenly he hears the sound of another vehicle approaching in the distance.

He walks out to the side of the road and looks into the distance.

A car approaches. He waves his hands frantically.

The car, a modest sedan, pulls over and the door swings open.

Reuben looks inside to see SAVCHENKO dressed in filthy jeans and a singlet.

Savchenko smiles at him.

SAVCHENKO
Car trouble, mate?

CUT TO:

76 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

76

Savchenko is seated as before. The magistrates look down on him.

SAVCHENKO
But we never succeeded. He kept waking up too soon. There was something in him that had been changed.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
So you made the bomb anyway?

SAVCHENKO
I had nothing to do with it.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
That is not what the evidence suggests.

Savchenko gets up, angry.

SAVCHENKO
Evidence?! From who? Paid informants who'd tell you anything to save themselves. I gave them a little genetic information...but nothing they really could have used. I wanted them to give up - but they created a device so flawed they may as well been dropping H bombs.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
Sit down, Dr Savchenko.

Savchenko sighs and looks at the monitors.

SAVCHENKO
I am not guilty of genocide. The
only thing I'm guilty of is a
mistake in judgement.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
You misunderstood him.

SAVCHENKO
No. I misunderstood myself. I
thought I was...worthy of him.

There is a beat, then Savchenko slowly sits down and puts
his head in his hands.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
Together we were going to stop
the nuclear holocaust with a bomb
that could be as precise as a
surgeon. No structural damage. No
fallout. No sound.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE (O.S.)
But you failed.

Savchenko nods his head. Then he looks up.

SAVCHENKO
I'd like to change my plea.

CUT TO:

77 INT/EXT. SAVCHENKO'S CAR/DESERT - DAY

77

Savchenko drives along as Reuben sits beside him looking
vaguely confused.

SAVCHENKO
I'm heading to the mines. You
know, Silver Creek.

Reuben nods.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
It's a good thing I came along.
Not much traffic on this road.
What were you doing out here?

REUBEN
I'm an ornithologist.

SAVCHENKO
Birds, heh?

Savchenko looks out the window as he drives along.

SAVCHENKO (CONT'D)
Not many birds out here.

REUBEN
You just can't see them.

Savchenko smiles.

SAVCHENKO
I guess I've never looked.
(beat)
So what's so interesting about
these desert birds?

Reuben continues to stare out at the road through the
windscreen.

REUBEN
They all have cancer.

SAVCHENKO
Really?

REUBEN
What do you do?

SAVCHENKO
I drive a truck.

REUBEN
Is that all?

SAVCHENKO
At 5000 Euros a week, its enough.

Reuben nods and is silent for a beat or two. Savchenko
steals a glance at him.

REUBEN
These birds have a particular
form of bone cancer. The bad
cells won't die, they continue to
reproduce and form tumors.

SAVCHENKO
That's a real tragedy. The
Greenies will be mad.

REUBEN
Yes. They will be mad.

Savchenko looks at Reuben again.

SAVCHENKO
So what are you going to do about
it?

REUBEN
I'm going to save them.

SAVCHENKO
How?

REUBEN
When a cell comes to the end of its natural life it flies a flag asking the immune system to come and kill it. I think I know a way of doing this to cancer cells.

Savchenko slowly pulls the vehicle over to the side of the road.

SAVCHENKO
You know the shape of the flag?

Reuben looks very closely at Savchenko.

REUBEN
Yes. I know the shape of the flag. I can save the birds.

SAVCHENKO
That's good.

Reuben turns and looks out at the desert.

REUBEN
I feel very tired.

SAVCHENKO
I'm not surprised.

REUBEN
(beat)
How many times has it been?

Savchenko looks at him closely.

REUBEN
I've been here before.

SAVCHENKO
Yes.

REUBEN
How many times?

SAVCHENKO
Five.

REUBEN
You any closer to finding out whatever it is you want to know?

SAVCHENKO

A little.

Reuben nods and then turns back to Savchenko.

REUBEN

You like vodka, don't you?
Ukrainian vodka, not the Russian
crap.

Savchenko nods and turns to the back seat where he retrieves a bottle. He opens it and hands it to Reuben who takes a long slug. He hands the bottle back to Savchenko who does the same.

REUBEN

You're a good man.

SAVCHENKO

I'm not.

REUBEN

I want you to do me a favour.

SAVCHENKO

What?

REUBEN

Kill me.

Savchenko takes another long, weary slug and hands the bottle back.

REUBEN

Its never going to work. There is
too much in my head.
(beat)
You can tell them I killed
myself.

78 INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

78

Savchenko now sits in the corner of the empty room.

His jacket and tie are gone. He simply wears a shirt and trousers. No shoes.

He opens his packet of cigarettes. There is one left.

Behind him all the monitors are blank except for one line of text that sits in the middle of each screen:

VERDICT: GUILTY.

Savchenko takes out the cigarette and puts it in his mouth. He opens the matchbox but all the matches are dead.

SAVCHENKO

Jesus.

He looks up to see coloured gas coming through the air vents.

The sound of a gunshot is heard. Savchenko flinches slightly.

CUT TO:

79

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

79

Savchenko sits on the ground, smoking and watching the sun set.

Behind him is the car.

Reuben's bloodied head leans against the window frame.

The sun sets slowly.

Savchenko notices a thin wisp of cloud that curls at the edges.

Fade to black.

The end.

'UCORP'

by

Matt Hawkins

DRAFT THREE

October 29, 2009

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6 Palmer Ave, Myrtle Bank, SA, 5064
0430 348 411

Three FIGURES in white overalls trudge through the sparse salt bush.

One of them, MICKEY, a slim, greying, 35 year old man in glasses, carries a surveying instrument and a large tripod.

Another, an anxious 30 year old woman, SAMANTHA, carries a laptop computer case.

And the third, ANDREAS (25) wanders along behind them carrying nothing at all.

Mickey stops at a random spot and starts splaying the legs of the tripod.

Samantha stops and lets the breath out of her mouth nervously. She glances at Andreas and then starts unpacking the computer.

Andreas stands there with his hands in his pockets and looks around.

SAMANTHA

Its warming up.

Mickey glances at her and then at Andreas.

MICKEY

Yep.

Mickey busies himself with the equipment while Andreas plants himself on the ground.

ANDREAS

You guys need a hand?

MICKEY

We're fine. It'll take 5 minutes...

Andres shrugs and takes out a packet of cigarettes. Samantha smiles at him nervously.

SAMANTHA

Aren't they illegal?

ANDREAS

Next month. Until then...

Andreas whips out a cigarette and lights it.

ANDREAS

I'll be in flavour country...

(beat)

You don't mind?

SAMANTHA
Go your hardest, Cowboy.

Mickey looks sternly at Samantha. She goes back to her computer. Andreas continues smoking, oblivious.

2 EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DAY

2

A MAN in a white protective suit stands on the crest of a gentle rise. He wears a hood with in-built tinted goggles. He stands beside a surveying tripod.

He raises a pair of binoculars to his eyes and looks out at...

The three FIGURES on the plain. Mickey is standing by the tripod. Samantha stands next to him with the computer and Andreas sits on the ground smoking.

The man focusses on Andreas momentarily.

Then the man looks at a digital watch. It reads 2:59:52.

The seconds tick away and he looks back through the binoculars.

At 3:00:00 precisely what looks like a wave of heat washes over the figures.

The man notices Andreas coughing violently. Samantha and Mickey go over to him.

3 EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

3

Samantha looks closely at Andreas who is heaving up his lungs in violent coughs.

MICKEY
I told you those things would
kill you.

Samantha shoots him a dirty look and then Andreas throws up all over his boots.

SAMANTHA
Its OK...you're OK.

MICKEY
Its too soon.

Then Andreas sits up to reveal his skin has gone whitish grey and on his left cheek are three oval welts, smooth and well formed, like beach pebbles.

MICKEY

Jesus.

4 EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DAY 4

The MAN looks up and sees three wisps of cloud gently hanging in the sky.

He holds up a small red rag. It hangs limply. No hint of breeze.

He throws the rag away and sets off across the plain.

5 EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY 5

Now Andreas is convulsing violently as Samantha holds him in her arms.

Mickey grabs his wrist and tries to take a blood sample.

SAMANTHA

Not now.

MICKEY

(ignoring her)

He'll live.

Andreas suddenly jerks more violently than before. The syringe is broken and Mickey is splattered with blood.

Then with a final gasp Andreas falls silent and still.

Samantha feels for a pulse on his neck as the MAN approaches.

SAMANTHA

There's nothing.

Mickey stands up horrified.

The MAN stops about ten metres away. He breathes quicker as he sees Mickey turn to face him.

MICKEY

This is wrong.

Samantha also tries to stand but suddenly collapses. The MAN runs toward her.

Samantha is on her hands and knees on the ground coughing violently.

She looks up at the MAN to reveal the same three welts on her face. Then she shuts her eyes and collapses.

Mickey takes out another syringe and slams it into her chest as the MAN stands back watching.

There is no reaction from Samantha.

Then the MAN turns and starts walking away at a steady pace. Mickey turns around.

MICKEY
Where are you going?
(beat)
Help us.

The MAN continues to walk, steadily.

6 EXT. DESERT SALT PAN - DUSK 6

The MAN sits in the dirt, his head turned away from us. The hood of his protective mask sits beside him.

In the sand he is drawing a pattern: Three circles connected by lines.

He does this slowly, methodically.

He murmurs calculations as he does so.

REUBEN
(barely audible)
Five parts metaprotein, three
extended proteolysis links...at a
rate of 10,780 per second...

He stops and stares down at the sand.

The wind picks up and blows half his calculations away.

7 INT. FORMAL MEETING ROOM - DAY 7

A 45 year old Eastern European man, SAVCHENKO, sits on a stiff backed chair in the middle of a large, grey room.

In front of him is a long table with SIX GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS perched behind it. They all wear CRIMSON bomber suits, with four pockets on the jacket. They are a mix of men and women, Caucasian and Chinese aged between 50 and 65. The board is lead by a particularly venerable woman, KERRIE, who looks grimly at Savchenko.

KERRIE
The board would first like to
thank Dr Savchenko for his
attendance at this inquiry.

SAVCHENKO

I thought it was a trial.

KERRIE

We have no authority to convict anyone.

SAVCHENKO

Only to recommend certain punitive measures...

There is an awkward silence. Kerrie rubs her eyes.

KERRIE

That will be decided soon.

SAVCHENKO

Come on. It's been decided already.

Savchenko looks around at the faces on the board. They maintain a stony indifference.

He sighs and looks slightly unnerved.

SAVCHENKO

You don't understand what was really going on. It was about saving lives.

KERRIE

What about his life?

SAVCHENKO

Well, in reality, he didn't really have a life...

Savchenko smirks mildly.

8

INT. BUS - DAY

8

A handsome 40 year old face (GERRY) on a large screen that hangs between the driver and the passenger door, beams down on the quiet commuters. Gerry wears a red bomber jacket suit with two pockets at the front.

GERRY

Good morning, guys. Its June 30th and almost time for Yulefest. So...er, Merry Christmas...

Gerry is being watched despondently by a bus load of workers all wearing BLUE OVERALLS with one pocket in the front. They all look fairly tired, watching the screen with varying levels of concentration and enthusiasm.

Amongst them is 40 year old REUBEN. He looks particularly fed up and contemptuous.

GERRY (CONT'D)

And its as good a time as any to remind you all of how very special you are.

Reuben sighs deeply.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Waste management is the backbone of our industry and you guys are the vertebra that hold it all together.

REUBEN

(under his breath)

Vertebrae...

GERRY

I want you to have a FANTASTIC day.

The screen fades to blank and a UCORP LOGO emerges - proudly filling the screen space.

Reuben sighs and looks out the window at...

9 EXT. STREET - DAY 9

A couple of employees in bright RED overalls riding bicycles and having an energetic, vibrant conversation.

They have two pockets on their chests.

10 INT. BUS - DAY 10

Reuben sighs and turns back to the monitor.

There is a montage of South Australian Scenes with the heading:

SOUTH AUSTRALIA and UCORP. A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK!

Images include a male model and his son striding across a beach, a picnic by the Torrens, a huge slag pile with three happy workers smiling in front of it.

Reuben looks down at his PC TABLET - this resembles a smooth rectangular piece of semi opaque glass.

He brings up a file (design? Budget?) - a document full of figures and starts doodling a pattern on it:

This pattern is a series of circles joined by threads. The same pattern the Man drew in the desert sand. Reuben starts writing out figures beside it.

A MAN in blue overalls sitting beside him leans over to take a look. Reuben notices him and switches the machine off. He turns his gaze back to the monitor at the front of the bus. Above the monitor is a small, shiny bubble of black plastic.

POV security cam. It zeros in on Reuben who is staring directly at it.

11 EXT. STREET - DAY 11

The Bus pulls up at a cross street in the middle of the city. About a hundred bicycles wait at the lights.

The people on these bikes wear red overalls and all wear small earphones.

Through the earphones of one particular employee we hear vague propaganda bleeding...

GERRY (O.S.)

'The energy you help create is
the lifeblood of our community.
You guys are Ucorp's elite
technicians...'

The lights change and the bicycles all take off in unison. There is the peaceful sound of tinkling bells.

12 INT. UCORP BUILDING FOYER - DAY 12

Reuben follows a group of employees in Blue overalls toward large double doors. Above the entrance is a sign that reads:

WASTE DIVISION

The group forms a line in front of the security scanner where they have their cards scanned.

There is a security desk with one guard CHRIS behind it. He lounges back reading the Advertiser. The headlines are:

CHINA STRIKES UKRAINE OIL FIELDS. RUSSIAN FORCES CRIPPLED.

Loudspeakers bring forth stirring martial Chinese music. There are red flags hanging everywhere with the Ucorp Logo on them.

Reuben scans his card and a face appears on a small screen above it.

It is the face of GIL, a handsome woman of around 40 who smiles out of the screen.

GIL

Hi Reuben. Come on in.

Reuben sighs and enters.

13

INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

13

Reuben sits at his small partitioned desk, with his Tablet in front of him. The desk is a mild pastel colour and is completely empty apart from the Tablet and small pull out drawer.

Reuben opens the drawer and pulls out a pair of what looks like white framed sunglasses (the VR goggles). They have a small aerial device on one of the arms of the frame.

Then he hears the sound of female laughter from across the room.

He looks over at...

REBECCA a well presented woman in her late thirties talking to two employees JASON and MITCH, sporty looking guys in their mid twenties. Jason tells a story with much gesticulation as Rebecca laughs indulgently.

REBECCA

Jason, stop it...

He watches them across an office of pastel coloured partitioned desks. It is decorated by MOTIVATIONAL POSTERS declaring the importance of Waste Management and the walls contain MONITOR SCREENS, sticky taped BIRTHDAY CARDS, SOCIAL EVENT announcements, etc.

Then Rebecca's gaze lands on his desk and the smile fades from her face.

Reuben turns back to his desk and puts on his VR goggles.

He turns and looks back in the direction of Rebecca.

POV Reuben:

The office is now completely empty and pure white (or another neutral colour).

Standing in the middle of the room is a fit young woman, CPU. She wears a neat suit of a colour which is ideally the same as the room only slightly darker. She has her hands clasped comfortably in front of her body and she smiles gently.

CPU
Good morning, Reuben.

A fit young man, MEMORY, wearing the same type of suit, sits at a desk and arranging blocks of differing shades of grey in a pattern. He looks like a clever child working out a puzzle.

REUBEN
I want the latest Maralinga 7 readings.

CPU
No problem.

She turns to Memory who immediately completes his block pattern. He then leans back on his chair and places his hands behind his head.

MEMORY
Hey, buddy...I'm just grabbing them for ya now. So what's the deal with vinyl records, huh?

Reuben shakes his head vigorously.

REUBEN
CPU, can you switch him back to the default personality please.

CPU
Of course, Reuben.

Memory suddenly sits up straight.

REUBEN
Has Jason been wearing this unit?

CPU
I am not authorised to give that information, Reuben.

Reuben sighs deeply. Memory stands up and delivers his report.

MEMORY
Structural integrity of L475
Waste Containers. Corrosion
levels over time period 8,500
hours percentage change: 0.083%.

REUBEN
What were the results of previous
test dated 24-05-27.

MEMORY
Percentage change: 0.042%

REUBEN

Its doubled.

CPU

Incorrect, its an increase of
97.81%.

Reuben gives CPU a withering glance. Then he sees a woman in a white dress (Samantha) walk past the door frame at the end of the room.

He walks over to the frame and sees the figure recede down a dark corridor.

He turns to CPU.

REUBEN

Can you check the fire wall. And
transfer the data to my Tablet.

CPU

My pleasure.

Reuben takes off his VR goggles and the plain room is immediately replaced by the regular office.

Standing in front of him in the spot previously occupied by CPU is Yuri SAVCHENKO. He wears the same blue overalls as a regular Waste technician. Reuben is slightly startled, but recovers into being vaguely annoyed.

REUBEN

Excuse me. You're standing in
front of my desk.

SAVCHENKO

Oh, they said it was mine.

REUBEN

You're probably on the other
side.

SAVCHENKO

I'm Yuri Savchenko.

REUBEN

That's great. Excuse me.

Reuben pushes past him reaches for the Tablet on his desk. He looks down at the figures with concern.

SAVCHENKO

It's my first day.

REUBEN

OK.

Reuben looks up at Rebecca who is still talking to Jason. He walks away while Savchenko is in mid sentence.

SAVCHENKO
You're Dr Henschke.

Reuben glances back briefly then continues toward Rebecca.

She sees him and dismisses the two other employees with a 'well-I-better-get-on-with-it' wave. Then strides quickly to the far end of the room where a separate glass framed office awaits her.

REUBEN
Rebecca.

She ignores him and keeps walking.

REUBEN
Rebecca!

She stops, braces herself and turns around wearing an artificial smile.

REBECCA
Hey, Reuben.

REUBEN
I was right.

REBECCA
OK.

REUBEN
There is a degree of random decay that is twice the amount predicted.

REBECCA
On the container walls.

REUBEN
Maralinga 7.

REBECCA
Yes. At Maralinga 7. That's the one 850 kilometres North West of Hawker. Its very remote.

Reuben looks at her confused.

REUBEN
Yes. I know. But the point is we didn't predict the rise from 0.042% to 0.082% in under two years.

REBECCA

OK. Well, now we know. Thank you.

She turns to go.

REUBEN

So what are you going to do about it?

She pauses and sighs deeply.

REBECCA

What do you think we should do?

REUBEN

Twice the inspections.

REBECCA

That'll cost twice as much.

REUBEN

I know.

Rebecca smiles at him.

REBECCA

I'll put it to the budget committee.

REUBEN

Its not a budget issue.

REBECCA

We're a corporation, Reuben. Everything is a budget issue. I have to...er...you know.

She turns and hurries off.

REUBEN

I'll email the figures.

REBECCA

Great.

Reuben sighs deeply.

Back at his desk Reuben sees Savchenko setting himself up at the partitioned space beside him.

Savchenko places three slim volumes on his desk. The titles are in Russian.

Reuben sits down and glances at the volumes.

REUBEN

You're Russian.

SAVCHENKO
Don't hold it against me. I'm a
refugee.

REUBEN
Books. Wow. Retro.

SAVCHENKO
I don't trust computers. They're
full of bugs.

Reuben frowns slightly and shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
You're Dr Henschke.

Reuben sits down and tries to start up his tablet.

REUBEN
So you keep saying...

SAVCHENKO
I read your paper. Brilliant.

There is no response from the piece of glass.

REUBEN
Shit. Piece of crap.
(beat)
What paper?

SAVCHENKO
The flow patterns...

REUBEN
That was never published.

SAVCHENKO
It was in Kiev.

Reuben stops and looks at him.

REUBEN
You studied at Kiev.

SAVCHENKO
Dr. Kemeniak.

REUBEN
I never heard back.

SAVCHENKO
He published it.
(beat)
Locally.
(beat)
In a newsletter.

Reuben goes back to his machine.

REUBEN

That's great. I guess I made an
impact in the Ukraine.

There is the sound of ethereal Chinese stringed music and
Gil's face appears on the monitors.

GIL

Hi everyone. Are you ready for
MLT?

REUBEN

Oh god...

SAVCHENKO

What's that?

REUBEN

Motivational leisure time.

(beat, Reuben checks
himself)

Oh, its really good. I think this
month its Frisby Golf...and they
show an interesting video.

Jason and Mitch stride past them, slapping each other
about.

JASON

I'm gonna kick your arse, Mitchy!

Reuben gets up and glances around furtively.

REUBEN

I'll, er, see you later...

Reuben darts away quickly, leaving Savchenko confused.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

He was a genius. Unlike no other
employee...

14 INT. UCORP BUILDING FOYER - DAY

14

Reuben makes his way furtively passed the Chris the
Security Guard who is still reading the paper.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

That's why we had to bring him
back. Regardless of the costs.

Reuben looks up at the proud face of Gil on the monitor.

GIL
 Ucorp and The People's Republic
 of China is pleased to announce a
 ten million euro donation to the
 Make a Wish Foundation...

He hurries out through the glass doors.

15

INT. CAFE - DAY

15

A relatively old fashioned cafe, ie. Circa 2010. It has framed photos of late 20th Century hatchbacks plastered all over the walls. An old cappuccino machine is steaming in the background.

An old man, JACK, wearing trousers, sleeveless V neck jumper, tie and tweed coat sits at a table in front of a chess board. He has a long scar on his cheek. The pieces are arranged mid game. There is a timer sitting beside the board.

He looks up and smiles as Reuben as he hurries in and sits down in front of him.

Reuben immediately directs his attention to the board.

JACK
 Shouldn't you be at Motivational
 Leisure Time?

REUBEN
 Its your move.

Jack smirks and looks down at the board.

JACK
 You're not the most enthusiastic
 employee, are you?

Jack moves his knight and hits the timer button.

Reuben continues to stare at the board.

JACK
 Maybe you should find another
 job.

REUBEN
 There are no other jobs. As a PhD
 they wouldn't even take me as a
 cleaner. I'd be exiled.
 (beat)
 You know what its like. How long
 did you work there?

JACK

A while.

Reuben grunts and moves a pawn. Jack looks at the board with consternation. He knows he's messed up.

JACK

Damn it.

Reuben smirks.

16 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - DUSK 16

Reuben walks into his apartment - a very modest bachelor flat, only spotlessly clean.

He dumps his slab down on the desk and flicks on the TV - a large screen that is hanging from the wall.

A period soap opera appears on screen: a conversation between a rugged man YOUNG JACK in moleskins and Akubra and an effeminate BANKER in a suit. They are in an 'office' but we only see them in Bold and the Beautiful-esque close up.

BANKER

I've told you for the last time,
we won't fund you. Its crazy!

YOUNG JACK

There's Uranium in that desert.
And I'm gonna find it. I don't
need your stinking money...

Reuben groans and switches it off.

17 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - DUSK 17

Reuben stands naked in the shower cubicle. He stares blankly into the middle distance while he endures a high pitched sound, that increases in volume till it sputters out in a languid static crash.

He looks at his body and rubs his arm to see if anything is any cleaner. Then he sniffs underneath his armpit.

He tries pressing a button but only hears an ineffectual crunching of gears.

18 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 18

Reuben sits at the kitchen table with his tablet in front of him. He pushes it aside and takes out a large piece of blank paper.

He digs through a draw and finds a pencil. He flicks it around in his fingers with satisfaction.

Then he starts drawing the flow pattern on the paper...

Carefully, sensuously like an artist who loves his subject.

He sketches the figures by the side of it, whispering the calculations as he does so...

REUBEN

The igneous rock dissolves at a rate of 2 grams per hour, over time of 50 years a multiplicity of small interconnecting pools...

(beat)

The contaminated water keeps moving underground...

He stops whispering and drawing and sits up.

Behind him, against the wall stands SAMANTHA. She wears a simple white dress. She looks very pale as she stares at Reuben with a wan, vaguely confused expression on her face.

Reuben holds his breath.

REUBEN

I know you're there. I can hear you breathing.

Reuben quickly turns around but she is gone. Reuben stares at the empty space sadly.

19 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - NIGHT 19

Reuben stands before an open medicine cabinet. He carefully moves aside shaving cream cannisters and shampoo bottles to reveal an asthma-like puffer hidden behind them.

The puffer has the label:

RISPERIDONE. USE STRICTLY AS DIRECTED.

He gives himself a few blasts. Shuts his eyes, closes the cabinet then looks at himself in the mirror.

20 INT. BUS - DAY 20

Reuben wanders onto the bus and notices all the employees in a state of agitation, rather than dutifully looking at the screen or staring out to space as they did in the previous scene.

He wanders down the aisle and notices the only empty seat is next to Jason who is gossiping to the pair of employees in front of him.

JASON

I'm telling you its bad; worse than they thought.

Reuben sits down next to him reluctantly.

JASON

Hey, Prof. Have you heard? Its a disaster.

REUBEN

What?

JASON

There's going to be a cease fire. Some humanitarian bullshit.

REUBEN

That can't be good.

JASON

The war's gonna end, man. We'll all be retrenched.

REUBEN

I'm sure it won't come to that.

They are interrupted by the short Ucorp musical grab. Gerry's reassuring face appears on screen.

GERRY

Hey, guys. I'm sure you've heard the rumours of a cease fire between the democratic People's Republic of China and the despotic Russian expansionists. Let me assure you there's a lot of work yet to be done in this conflict and China still needs Ucorp's help to stay democratic, to stay free and most importantly...to stay powered.

Jason nods enthusiastically.

GERRY

This war will not end soon. It may not end at all.

The people on the bus break out into applause.

GERRY

Now, you have yourselves a hell
of a day...

The screen goes blank and the smiles slip from the
passengers' faces.

Jason turns to Reuben.

JASON

We are so fucked, man.

21 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

21

Reuben is in the clean VR world. CPU sits calmly in front
of him while Memory is busy placing blocks on various
shelves in a constant state of data reorganisation and
collection.

REUBEN

Predicted outcomes.

CPU

There is a 17.8% chance of
rupture in 7 years.

REUBEN

From when.

CPU

2022.

REUBEN

That's 8 years ago. So it could
already be leaking.

CPU

But the bedrock will prevent
further spread.

REUBEN

The bedrock isn't sound.

CPU

I have no evidence to that
effect.

REUBEN

(angrily)

That's because they wouldn't
listen to me.

CPU just blinks passively with her plastic smile. Reuben
reacts to a pain in his shoulder.

He pulls off his VR goggles and sees Savchenko crouched before him with a worried look.

SAVCHENKO
Have you heard the rumours?

REUBEN
Yes.

SAVCHENKO
I'll lose my refugee status if the war ends. They'll send me back.

REUBEN
If the war ends we'll all lose our jobs and be exiled. At least you have a country that might take you. All we have is the desert.

Savchenko shrugs.

SAVCHENKO
Snow, desert. What's the difference?

Reuben sees Rebecca walking through the partitioned desks. She is in an incredibly bad mood.

He jumps and starts following her.

REBECCA
Not now, Reuben.

REUBEN
I have new information.

REBECCA
I'm really busy.

REUBEN
Have you told the committee?

Rebecca stops and spins around. She takes a deep breath and tries to calm herself.

REBECCA
No, I haven't told the committee. I'm not going to tell the committee. Its Maralinga 7, its in the middle of nowhere and nobody cares. Especially now with These freakin peace talks.

REUBEN
But Rebecca...

REBECCA

We're going to subcontract it to East Waste. Its no longer our concern.

REUBEN

East Waste?

REBECCA

They're firm from Shanghai. Its part of our friendship agreement with the Chinese government.

REUBEN

Then let me talk to them.

Rebecca approaches him closely.

REBECCA

There really is no need, Reuben. We need you here.

REUBEN

Doing what? This is what I do. I need to talk to these people.

REBECCA

I am very impressed with your determination but given the current climate I think you should just keep a low profile on this. OK?

Reuben's lips move up and down, he is struggling for the words.

REUBEN

You don't understand the potential harm...

Rebecca smiles.

REBECCA

See its those sort of words: 'Potential', 'possible' 'likelihood' etc, that mean we can keep this one on ice for a bit. No one wants any extra gloom. Not now. Even if it is from a 'doctor'.

Rebecca walks away.

Reuben looks after her, steaming.

Savchenko wanders up behind him.

SAVCHENKO
Tonight, I think we should drink.

Reuben turns and looks at him as if he were mad. Savchenko shrugs innocently.

SAVCHENKO
It couldn't hurt.

22 INT. VODKA BAR - NIGHT

22

Reuben and Savchenko sit perched at a very run down bar. There is one despondent looking BARMAN leaning against the fridge polishing glasses.

They have two very cloudy beers in front of them.

REUBEN
A Ph.D. in geophysics from ANU takes five years of dedication and diligence. On the other hand, a graduate diploma of applied science from the Ucorp Institute for Privileged Dropouts may set you back a hundred thousand euros but it does guarantee promotion.

Reuben takes a weary slug of his beer.

SAVCHENKO
Its hard to wash down vitriol with beer. Rudi!

Savchenko hold ups two fingers and RUDI nods languidly and fetches a Russian Vodka bottle from below the counter.

He places to shot glasses down and pours two drinks.

REUBEN
Isn't that illegal?

SAVCHENKO
Drinking Chinese Vodka is a crime against humanity. Nostrovya!

Savchenko downs his glass. After a slight pause Reuben does the same.

SAVCHENKO
So, you want to get into Energy. The untouchables.

REUBEN
Unfortunately I don't have the right dad.

SAVCHENKO

But you do have a very important piece of information.

REUBEN

More doom and gloom. That's going to get me sacked.

SAVCHENKO

What if we could fix it? Prevent something potentially disastrous.

REUBEN

The company is not going to spend a cent on something that is merely 'potentially' disastrous.

SAVCHENKO

But the flow patterns. If this stuff gets into the artesian channels.

Reuben smiles at him.

REUBEN

You really read that paper?

Savchenko gets off his stool.

SAVCHENKO

Come on. We have work to do.

REUBEN

I'm too drunk.

Savchenko laughs. He looks over at Rudi.

SAVCHENKO

Rudi, this man is drunk!

Rudi smiles and takes out a blue bottle from below the bar and fills the shot glasses with blue fluid.

SAVCHENKO

Here is another gift from Russia. 'Oborshik', The purifier. One shot and it wipes all traces of any drug from your system. You'll be sober in seconds.

Reuben looks at the blue liquid.

REUBEN

You Russians are full of surprises.

SAVCHENKO

But like you, we are also barred from promotion. Unless we prove ourselves useful.

Reuben downs the liquid and looks around with new awareness, Savchenko does the same.

SAVCHENKO

So lets make ourselves very useful.

CUT TO:

23 INT. WASTE OFFICE - NIGHT

23

Reuben and Savchenko sit at a desk with a large map of the Republic of South Australia on it.

Reuben is very enthusiastically drawing the flow pattern over it.

REUBEN

Maralinga 7 is here. If there was a leak it would leach into the rock and might be harmless if it didn't then get concentrated in these underground lakes. It all sinks to the bottom, gathers and continues all the way to the Adelaide water supply.

SAVCHENKO

But there's no leak.

REUBEN

There is a 2% chance there will be one on the next 50 years.

SAVCHENKO

But if it does happen...

REUBEN

We're all dead. Everyone in Adelaide.

SAVCHENKO

That's worth spending a few euros on.

REUBEN

It would take 40 million. At least.

SAVCHENKO

I could do it cheaper.

REUBEN

How?

SAVCHENKO

In Russia we used poly urethane compound that would form another layer around the edge. You just poured it in. Do it every 2 years. Would cost a few thousand.

REUBEN

You know how to make this stuff?

Savchenko shrugs, looking ambivalent.

SAVCHENKO

Of course.

Reuben looks at him closely.

REUBEN

You sure?

SAVCHENKO

I haven't actually been involved in making it, but I could work it out in a couple of months.

(beat)

Or maybe a year...possibly...

Reuben shakes his head and sighs.

REUBEN

Possibly. Not much of a bargaining chip.

SAVCHENKO

But if there was a clear danger. A real danger...

REUBEN

But there isn't.

Savchenko sighs, gets up and strides over to the window.

SAVCHENKO

There was this South Australian scientist, called Mickey O'Brien. He used to send us so many letters and emails claiming Ucorp were deliberately poisoning the environment.

REUBEN

Why send them to you?

SAVCHENKO

He wanted to defect. So he says.

REUBEN

To Russia? He must have been insane.

SAVCHENKO

He also said he was a Ucorp employee. Maybe he's still around.

REUBEN

Yeah. Maybe he's the managing director.

SAVCHENKO

There's no need to be sarcastic. I should never have given you those clenizers. I liked you better when you were drunk.

Reuben nods sadly.

REUBEN

I liked me better too.
(beat)
I'm going home.

24

INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

24

Reuben stands at a small urn and makes himself a cup of Ucorp Brand Instant Coffee Blend with Ucorp brand whitener, there seems to be no sugar left.

He despondently stirs the cup, takes a sip and winces in disgust.

He looks over at Rebecca who is again flirting with Jason. Neither of them seem interested in doing their job.

He absent mindedly draws the 'flow pattern' in the spilled sugar on the counter.

Then there is the sound of Chinese martial music that portends an announcement. Suddenly everyone stiffens and tries to look like they're actually working.

Gil's kindly face appears on the screen and Reuben instinctively ducks behind the counter.

GIL

Hi there. I hope you're all having a fantastic Yule Fest.
(MORE)

GIL(cont'd)

Unfortunately due to the small economic crisis brought about by a potential cease fire between our friends China and the fascist regime of the Russian Republic there may have to be certain voluntary suspensions of staff or VSS...

Reuben looks terrified.

REUBEN

Shit...

He looks over at Savchenko who is looking equally frightened.

GIL

Staff members on the VSS program will be entitled to all the comforts of Paradise Village...

Images of a retirement home like complex appear on the screen...happy people playing bowls, doing tai chi, etc.

GIL

Where you can sit back, relax and wait for better economic times. All staff on VSS will be notified by email in the next 7 seconds. Now don't forget to take your vitamins...

The screen returns to the Ucorp Screen Saver with a flourish.

Jason comes up to Reuben and hands him a semi-opaque box containing three red pills.

JASON

Here you go, professor.

Reuben takes them with little enthusiasm.

REUBEN

You think Paradise Village actually exists?

JASON

Yeah, but it doesn't look like that. And once you're there you never leave.

Suddenly there is a shriek from the other jock, Mitch. He has just put on his VR goggles and is blubbering like a baby.

REUBEN
He got the email.

JASON
Shit.

Jason goes over to comfort his friend, but as he does so he sees the other STAFF MEMBERS gravitating away from him as if he has some sort of virus. So eventually he just awkwardly pats him on the shoulder and runs off toward Rebecca's office.

Reuben looks over at Savchenko who is shaking his head.

25 INT. CAFE - DAY

25

Reuben and Jack sit playing chess. The coffee machine steams away in the background. The WAITER brings them two espressos. Reuben fumbles for his wallet but Jack nods at the waiter and he nods back and walks away.

Reuben looks at Jack with a grimace.

REUBEN
One day you'll have to let me pay
for coffee.

JACK
Its my pleasure. Check.

Reuben looks down at the board.

REUBEN
I saw that coming.

JACK
No you didn't. You can admit it.
Why do you physicist always have
to be in control? Takes all the
fun out of life.

REUBEN
You think there'll be peace?

JACK
But I doubt it. There's too much
money at stake.

Reuben breathes a sigh of relief.

JACK (CONT'D)
And that, my friend, is all they
care about.

REUBEN
Well, I care about my job. I
can't make them money in Waste.

JACK
But you can save them money.

REUBEN
Yeah, by doing nothing.

JACK
Check again. Or maybe by doing
something remarkable.

Reuben looks at him closely, then looks down at the chess
board and takes Jack's queen.

JACK
You bastard.

Reuben smirks, then gazes out the window looking worried.

26 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

26

Reuben sits at a table with CPU. He looks slightly
embarrassed.

REUBEN
I need to access staff
information.

CPU leans toward him with a smouldering look.

CPU
You know, you and I should just
slip into the board room and get
down and dirty...

Reuben sighs and rubs his eyes.

REUBEN
Default personality please. And
I'd like to reset my
password...again.

CPU sobers up.

REUBEN
Set it to...SAMANTHA.
(beat)
OK. Can you look up an employee
called Mickey O'Brien. Or any
variation of that name.

MEMORY appears behind Reuben, giving him a bit of a start.

MEMORY

There is no record.

REUBEN

Payroll number for Mickey
O'Brien.

MEMORY

There is no record.

REUBEN

(beat)

Anyone in the republic called
Mickey O'Brien.

MEMORY

There is no record.

Reuben stops to think.

REUBEN

Check the VSS program.

MEMORY

Dr Mickey O'Brien. Started
programme 2028, finished program
2029. Dismissed for medical
reasons - mental.

REUBEN

Specifically?

MEMORY

Schizophrenia.

Reuben exhales gently.

REUBEN

Citizen status?

MEMORY

Non-citizen.

REUBEN

Former department?

MEMORY

Waste.

REUBEN

(beat)

Former division?

MEMORY

7.

REUBEN
Former work station?

MEMORY
(with a barely
perceptible smirk)
K.

Reuben takes off the VR goggles and is now standing in the Waste office. He looks at the label of his cubicle: K. He looks up at the wall: DIVISION 7.

27 INT. WASTE OFFICE/SINK - DAY

27

Reuben walks up to Savchenko who is staring despondently at a Ucorp Standard Tea Bag.

He grabs himself a mug and starts shovelling instant coffee into it. Savchenko looks at this act with a mixture of sympathy and disgust.

SAVCHENKO
Heavy morning?

REUBEN
He sat at my desk.

SAVCHENKO
Who?

REUBEN
Mickey O'Brien. He did my job and they got rid of him.

SAVCHENKO
So what are you going to do?

REUBEN
I have to find him. If I have his evidence, my ability to predict the extent of the damage and your plan to solve it then they'll have to listen to me.

Reuben pours hot water into the mug half full of instant coffee. He takes a sip.

REUBEN
Jesus!

SAVCHENKO
(smiling)
In Energy Department they have espresso.

REUBEN

He's an exile, so he'll be down
in Feral Town.

Suddenly the screens burst into life with a wave of martial Chinese music. Gil appears smiling down at them. They both stiffen.

GIL

Hi. This week's corporate charity
is Mei Mei the Panda.

Pic of Panda appears on screen.

GIL

Adelaide zoo needs your help...so
come on the charity walk this
Saturday...

Reuben leans closer to Savchenko.

REUBEN

We'll go out tomorrow morning.
Before work. Security doesn't
start til 7am. I'll get us a
couple of bikes...

Reuben stops and looks up at the screen. Gil has stopped talking and she seems to be looking directly at him and Savchenko.

The two of them slowly part and return to their work stations as the rest of the room watches them.

28 INT. CHEMIST - NIGHT

28

Reuben walks down the prophylactic aisle. He pretends to peruse the merchandise as he eyes the OLD CHEMIST carefully.

He watches as the OLD CHEMIST walks away and is replaced by a YOUNG CHEMIST, who glances up at him.

Reuben then walks up to the counter.

He slides across a slip of paper that looks like some kind of prescription. It has 'RISPERIDONE - 40mg' written on it.

Young chemist picks it up and raises his eye brows.

YOUNG CHEMIST

I'll need to see some I.D.

Reuben slides across a one hundred euro note. The Young Chemist examines it.

YOUNG CHEMIST

This will be fine.

He disappears behind the counter to make up the prescription as Reuben looks around nervously.

Reuben sees a woman staring at him: Samantha.

He turns around to see Young Chemist return with a small box. He grabs the box quickly and grunts, then turns back to look at the window and sees Samantha receding into the darkness.

Reuben runs out the door.

29

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

29

In the street Reuben sees the figure of Samantha pause at the edge of a narrow alley.

She looks directly at him with haunting eyes. He notices a mark on her cheek three small ovals. Then she disappears down the alley.

He runs up to the edge, hesitates a moment, then plunges down.

He sees a shadowy female figure at the very end of the lane. He approaches slowly.

REUBEN

What do you want from me?

WOMAN

150 euros.

REUBEN

Money?

WOMAN

Best blow job in the republic.

A shaft of light reveals the 'woman' is not Samantha. In fact she's not a woman at all. She's a transexual prostitute.

REUBEN

I'm sorry...I made a mistake.

WOMAN

So did I. That's why I'm here.

The Tranny sighs and walks away. Reuben leans against the wall panting. Then he whips the puffer out of the box and inhales deeply. Then he looks at the receding figure of the tranny.

REUBEN
You work for Ucorp, too?

WOMAN
Everybody works for Ucorp, honey.

She disappears around the corner.

30

EXT. DIRT TRACK - DAWN

30

Reuben and Savchenko ride along a remote country track on very rickety bicycles. Reuben wears a helmet, Savchenko does not. Reuben appears to be struggling.

SAVCHENKO
You OK?

REUBEN
Didn't get a lot of sleep.

SAVCHENKO
Don't worry. They won't sack you.
After we get this information
we'll be utterly invaluable.

REUBEN
Or sacked. And then we'll have to
live out here.

Savchenko stops and holds the handles of Reuben's bike bringing it to a halt.

SAVCHENKO
My friend, you need to have more
faith. We are smart guys. You are
smarter than anyone in the
southern hemisphere. I'm relying
on you.

Reuben nods slowly, then looks over Savchenko's shoulder.

REUBEN
There it is.

Savchenko turns to see...

A rustic looking ECO VILLAGE type compound across a dry field.

SAVCHENKO
How do they live here?

REUBEN
Vegetables. They grow them in the
ground.

SAVCHENKO
Like savages.

REUBEN
Yep.

The two ride off toward the village.

31 EXT. ECO VILLAGE CABIN - MORNING

31

Reuben and Savchenko pull up in front of a straw bail construction.

SAVCHENKO
How the hell will we find him?

REUBEN
I have no idea.

MICKEY (O.S.)
Hey! Ucorp guys! Hey, over here!

Reuben and Savchenko turn to see a skinny 40 year old with a shock of grey/black hair and a beard waving at them frantically from a shack some 20 metres away (depending on location).

MICKEY
Hey, you guys from Ucorp?
Finally! Come in, come in...

Mickey beckons them over and they approach cautiously.

MICKEY
I just put the kettle on. You
like peppermint tea?

Mickey disappears inside. Savchenko and Reuben look at each other.

32 INT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - DAY

32

The two men sit at a small kitchen table in a very messy space containing lots of pot plants with herbs growing inside them.

There are Ucorp propaganda posters everywhere, and also hand written slogans that are a variation of Ucorp philosophies.

MICKEY
You guys work in waste?

REUBEN
Yeah.

MICKEY

Wow, that's great. Now, I thought
I had a couple of mugs here
somewhere....

The kettle on the gas stove top starts whistling as Mickey
clatters about.

MICKEY

So how are the guys? Is old Jerry
the grump still there?

REUBEN

I don't think so...

MICKEY

Fuck, man. Crazy days...we had
some laughs.

REUBEN

Are you Mickey O'Brien?

Mickey starts laughing hysterically.

MICKEY

Yeah. Of course.

REUBEN

(beat)

Who do you think we are?

MICKEY

You've come to take me back.

(beat)

Haven't you?

REUBEN

We want to know about the leaks.
The leaks you reported.

Mickey shakes his head violently.

MICKEY

No, that's all forgotten. I was
totally wrong. There were no
leaks.

SAVCHENKO

Its OK, Mickey. We know you're
right. We're here to help you.

MICKEY

Can you get my job back?

Savchenko looks at Reuben.

REUBEN

Maybe. If you can give us some evidence we can go to upper management and sort it out.

Mickey suddenly changes his mood. He smiles and nods, then looks at Reuben suspiciously...

MICKEY

You sure?

Reuben looks at Savchenko and takes a deep breath.

REUBEN

Yes.

MICKEY

Fitzzy still working there?

REUBEN

I...don't know.

Mickey nods his head enthusiastically and starts rummaging inside a cupboard.

MICKEY

He was a...great guy...a really good guy.

Mickey pulls out a box and dumps it on the table.

MICKEY

Here.

The two men look at it quizzically.

MICKEY

I found that in a soak, 150 ks north of the Adelaide plains.

SAVCHENKO

An old box?

MICKEY

The rock man! This highly fucking radioactive rock. Its in the box to protect your delicate little organs.

REUBEN

What makes you think it has anything to do with Ucorp?

Mickey smiles and nods his head vigorously.

MICKEY

Rocks are little history books. They reveal everything. If you know how to read them. This little chapter is smooth on one side a kinda rippled pattern like its been under the sea. Its made up of red granite with a little vein of quartzite, typical of the Maralinga bedrock. So how did it make its way a thousand kilometers to Adelaide?

REUBEN

Maybe you brought it?

MICKEY

That's what they said. But there is shit happening underground, my friend. There are tremors and quakes that we don't even feel, that crack the bedrock, that let all the evil fucking vapours out and they flow inevitably, irreversibly toward us. Water flowing underground. The highway that will bring the four horseman of the apocalypse.

Savchenko looks at him closely.

SAVCHENKO

You're fucking mad. Excuse me.

Then he gets up and walks out of the shack.

Reuben gets up and follows him.

MICKEY

What? What did I say?

33 EXT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - MORNING

33

Reuben grabs Savchenko by the shoulder and forces him to stop.

SAVCHENKO

We go to management with this and they'll definitely exile us.

REUBEN

Not if we can prove it. What he's saying sounds mad but I think its true. There are underground channels, I can prove that.

(MORE)

REUBEN(cont'd)

And if that rock proves there's some kind of leak, and you know how to fix it..then we have a gift for Ucorp they won't turn down.

SAVCHENKO

And we get promoted?

REUBEN

Energy. Think about it. We'll finally get what we deserve.

SAVCHENKO

You're pretty confident.

Reuben sighs and shakes his head. The door opens behind them. Its Mickey looking confused.

MICKEY

You going to take this rock, or what?

Reuben takes it from him and crams it in a backpack.

REUBEN

We'll be in touch.

MICKEY

What about your tea?

Savchenko shakes his head and gets on his bike.

REUBEN

Perhaps another time.

MICKEY

Shit. Sure. Fuck.

He watches them cycle off.

34 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

34

Reuben sits before CPU. She is smiling at him kindly. The 'rock' sits in front of them.

REUBEN

Nothing?

CPU

I didn't say that. 12 nanograys.

REUBEN

That's nothing.

CPU

Its not nothing.

REUBEN

Are you set to empathy mode?

CPU nods calmly, sweetly.

CPU

I thought it would be best. You seem rather stressed.

REUBEN

12 nanograys is not enough. They'll laugh at me.

CPU

I'm sure they won't laugh at you.

REUBEN

And what evidence do you have that they will NOT laugh at me, or sack me and then exile me?

CPU

(smiling)

Oh, I just have this feeling.

Reuben sighs deeply and takes off his VR goggles. The room returns to normal. There is the announcement sound and Gil kindly face appears on the monitor screen above his cubicle.

GIL

Hi there. For everyone's happiness and well being Ucorp is pleased to announce a free, thorough medical examination for all staff in Waste this afternoon. This examination is compulsory.

Reuben goes white and looks over at Jason.

JASON

Hope you've been taking your pills, professor.

Reuben smiles sourly at him.

REUBEN

Every day, Jason.

Then he runs off.

35 INT. UCORP WASTE LUNCH ROOM - DAY

35

Savchenko sits before a plain, grey TV dinner style tray with varying bits of different shades of muck. He looks very depressed.

Reuben comes up behind him. He is very nervous.

REUBEN

Hi.

SAVCHENKO

This is inhumane. Have you tested the rock yet?

REUBEN

No. Look, I need some of those clenzers.

Savchenko looks around and scrutinises him.

SAVCHENKO

You drunk?

REUBEN

No, its just there's this health check.

SAVCHENKO

You on drugs?

REUBEN

I take some stuff, to help me with my nerves.

Savchenko continues to stare at him.

SAVCHENKO

That shouldn't really...

REUBEN

It's Risperidone.

SAVCHENKO

(beat)

You have schizophrenia?

REUBEN

Can you give me the clenzers or not?

SAVCHENKO

Sure, sure. Just give me a second. I'll get them now.

Reuben nods as Savchenko gets up.

REUBEN
Thanks. I'm sorry. Thanks.

SAVCHENKO
(calmly)
No problem.

36 INT. MEDICAL CENTRE - DAY

36

Reuben sits at a table in the middle of a vast, clinical room. At the other side of the table is a DOCTOR. The doctor looks at a piece of paper containing Reuben's test results. He glances over the top periodically at Reuben.

DOCTOR
How old are you?

REUBEN
40.

DOCTOR
You are in incredible shape.
(beat)
According to this.

REUBEN
Thank you.

DOCTOR
Especially for someone who
doesn't take his vitamins.

REUBEN
I take my vitamins.

DOCTOR
These vitamins are very expensive
and the company provides them to
its employees free of charge. I
suggest you take them.

REUBEN
But I do take them.

The doctor holds up the piece of paper and frowns.

DOCTOR
NO. You don't.

REUBEN
OK, then. I will.

The doctor shakes his head.

DOCTOR
Get back to work.

Reuben gets up and hurries out the door.

37

INT. VODKA BAR - NIGHT

37

Reuben and Savchenko sit at the bar drinking shot glasses of icy Russian vodka.

SAVCHENKO

So. You have imaginary friends.

REUBEN

I have one...visitor.

SAVCHENKO

And how long has this been happening?

REUBEN

I don't know. A year. Maybe two. I also get these head aches. Like my skull is caving in. And then there's the panic attacks.

(beat, he smirks ruefully)

Not the ideal employee.

SAVCHENKO

Then I guess its pretty important you make yourself indispensable.

REUBEN

That rock isn't going to do it.

(beat)

I did an analysis. Only 120 nanograys of radiation.

Savchenko takes out a thick envelope and hurls it on the bar.

SAVCHENKO

This might help. Its the formula for the polymer. I was up all night trying to figure it out...but I got there.

Reuben picks it up and takes out the sheets.

REUBEN

Thanks.

SAVCHENKO

The way I see it, you really have no choice. They will get you.

They look up at a TV screen that shows Gerry opening a children's hospital (in the tightest of all shots of course). He kisses a crippled child on the head and smiles beneficently at the camera.

SAVCHENKO

Send it to Gerry. Directly.

REUBEN

He does seem to love crippled children.

38 INT. WASTE OFFICE - MORNING

38

Reuben sits at his cubicle passing a scanner over the documents Savchenko gave him.

He looks up to see another EMPLOYEE weeping with their VR goggles on. He looks over at Savchenko who is making himself tea. Savchenko shakes his head and sighs. Their eyes meet. Savchenko nods ever so slightly.

Reuben finishes the scan and then puts on the VR goggles.

The office transforms into the VR world and CPU is standing before him.

He looks down at a old fashioned envelope in his hand. He hands it to CPU.

REUBEN

Take this to Gerry.

CPU nods and walks out of the room.

Then Reuben sees the figure of Samantha flash past the open door.

He quickly but cautiously approaches the frame and peers down the 'corridor'. He sees Samantha standing half lit down the end.

He pursues her into the darkness.

She ducks into one narrow passage after another...

Until she eventually leads Reuben into a small room, where the door slams shut behind him. Complete darkness.

REUBEN

What do you want? Talk to me...

Then he hears a whisper.

SAMANTHA

You did it. Its your fault.

REUBEN

What?

SAMANTHA

You're worse than dirt for what you did.

REUBEN

You're not real.

Beat. For a few seconds there is only the sound of Reuben's heavy breathing and then...

SAMANTHA

Neither are you.

CUT TO:

39 INT. WASTE OFFICE - MORNING 39

Jason looks closely at Reuben who is sitting on a chair, his body limp, but his face twitching.

Jason reaches out and pokes him.

JASON

You OK, professor?

Reuben does not respond.

CUT TO:

40 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - MORNING 40

Reuben is still in total darkness. There is only the sound of heavy breathing.

Then suddenly his face is illuminated as a door flies open.

CPU stands in the door frame looking down at him.

CPU

Gerry wants to see you.

Reuben nods humbly.

REUBEN

OK.

41 INT. BOARD ROOM FOYER - DAY 41

Reuben sits on a low slung couch in a cavernous, silent space, filled with light.

He looks up at three red banners hanging from the ceiling. They each have the Ucorp Logo on them.

He looks at the TV monitor that shows scenes of Chinese Mountains....

VOICE ON TV

All seems quiet on the western border of Xinjiang province as Russian troops stand down...there are also rumours of withdrawals...

Reuben sighs and shakes his head.

VOICE ON TV

In the meantime Ucorp's share price continues to fall...

Then the large door to the boardroom swings open by itself.

Reuben gets up nervously and walks toward it.

42 INT. UCORP BOARDROOM - DAY

42

Reuben looks down the room at Gerry, who sits comfortably on an arm chair with his legs crossed. He smiles as Reuben makes the long journey toward him.

GERRY

Reuben Henschke.

REUBEN

Yes.

GERRY

I got your email.

Reuben gets close to Gerry and notices there are no other chairs, so he just stands before him uncomfortably.

REUBEN

Then you know about this problem.

GERRY

I don't usually get emails from Waste telling me about problems.

REUBEN

This is a serious problem. There is a leak, I have evidence, and a good chance it will make its way to the Adelaide reservoirs.

Gerry nods and seems to be milling this over. Then he is completely still.

GERRY

Why didn't you go through
Rebecca?

REUBEN

I thought this was too important.

GERRY

YOU thought. And who are you?

REUBEN

I studied these flow patterns, I
know how the contamination moves
underground...

GERRY

And you couldn't trust Rebecca
with this information?

REUBEN

(weakly)

I don't think she likes me.

GERRY

Why not?

REUBEN

I don't know.

GERRY

Maybe its because you aren't a
team player.

REUBEN

That's not true.

GERRY

You don't go to corporate leisure
time. And I also hear you don't
take your Ucorp vitamins.

REUBEN

I must have forgotten.

GERRY

I don't really care for snitches,
Reuben or employees who just
don't take our corporate
structure seriously.

Reuben takes a deep breath, tries to gather his moral
strength.

REUBEN

But Gerry, this is more important
than that.

GERRY
Nothing is more important than
loyalty, Reuben.

REUBEN
I disagree.

Gerry smiles.

GERRY
Maybe that's why you're still in
Waste and I run the company.
(beat)
I'm a busy man.

At first Reuben fails to take the cue, then it dawns on
him.

REUBEN
Oh yes. OK.

Reuben turns around sadly and starts walking toward the
door.

43 INT. BOARD ROOM FOYER - DAY

43

As Reuben leaves he sees Rebecca sitting alone on the couch
watching him. She smirks at him, as the martial music
heralds corporate leisure time.

REBECCA
Don't forget Corporate Leisure
Time.

Reuben stops and sighs at her.

REUBEN
Will that save me?

REBECCA
(smiling)
I don't think so.

Reuben walks away.

44 INT. CAFE - MORNING

44

Reuben sits in front of Jack who takes his bishop.

JACK
There's your bishop gone. You're
not even trying.

REUBEN
They just don't care.

JACK
What exactly is the problem?

REUBEN
The containers are leaking.

JACK
They won't fix them?

REUBEN
They don't know how. They've subcontracted it anyway to some company from Shanghai.

Jack looks at him suddenly.

JACK
They can't do that.

REUBEN
They can do anything.

JACK
No they can't. There's a charter. It says the company have to deal with their own waste. Otherwise the company will be dissolved.

REUBEN
Are you sure?

JACK
Yeah, look it up. Its in the library.

REUBEN
Library?

JACK
Yeah. Its a strange place, full of paper stacks that are bound together. They call them 'books'.

Reuben gives him a withering look.

REUBEN
I know what a book is.

JACK
Ever read one?

REUBEN
I can read.

JACK
Then read the charter. Then even Gerry'll have to listen to you.
(MORE)

JACK(cont'd)

Check mate. You really suck today.

Reuben gets up from the table.

REUBEN

Thanks, Jack.

45 INT. LIBRARY - DAY 45

Reuben sits before an old fashioned computer and very slowly, very awkwardly taps on the key board.

He taps out the words: COMPANY CHARTER

Then he clicks on 'SEARCH'.

A stream of entries roll down, at the very bottom is UCORP COMPANY CHARTER. 2015.

Reuben sees 'Call # C.489'. He looks around, confused.

Then sees a square pad of paper and a pencil. He awkwardly draws the number on a piece of paper.

CUT TO:

46 INT. LIBRARY/BOOK SHELVES - DAY 46

Reuben finds a large, old dusty book at the very end of the row of shelves.

He pulls it out and blows the dust off the cover to reveal the title:

The Official Charter of the United Uranium Corporation of South Australia (Ucorp).

He sits down on the floor and turns to the first page.

He reads the introduction, we see various key phrases:

'Corporate responsibility...'

'Duty of care to the people of South Australia...'

'Clean responsible power...'

Down the bottom he sees the name and signature of the company president:

Jack Langford.

Reuben is interrupted by the sound of frantic coughing and a strangled cry. He leaps up and peers through the gaps between the books. But he sees nothing.

Then he quickly flips through the pages until he reaches the Waste Disposal clause.

He zeros in on the phrase:

'The corporation will take sole responsibility for the safe and perpetual disposal of its waste products...'

'...no subcontracting of waste...'

'Failure to do so will result in dissolution or nationalisation...'

Reuben quickly scans the page with his mobile scanner.

He hears the distant coughing again, then shuts the book and puts it back on the shelves.

47

INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY

47

Reuben hurls a slab of printed paper on Savchenko's desk. On the front cover is the title:

The Official Charter of the United Uranium Corporation of South Australia (Ucorp).

Savchenko picks it up.

SAVCHENKO

What's this?

REUBEN

Its paper. I couldn't risk showing you in VR, its full of viruses.

SAVCHENKO

Corporate Charter.

REUBEN

No subcontracting. Its clearly stated in Chapter 217, subsection C, Clause 48. We can get Rebecca on this. Its a violation of the code.

SAVCHENKO

Will Gerry listen?

REUBEN

He'll have to. I can take this further. We just have to get to him first.

SAVCHENKO

Where did you find this?

REUBEN
 (big smile of victory)
 In a library!

SAVCHENKO
 You're incredible.

REUBEN
 We're home free, my friend.

Suddenly the Chinese martial music is heard and Gil's face appears on the office monitors.

GIL
 Hi. The Waste Management employee of the month for July is Reuben Henschke. Please make your way to Gerry's office immediately.

Reuben groans and shakes his head.

REUBEN
 Shit.

SAVCHENKO
 That isn't good?

REUBEN
 Employee of the month wins a free trip to Paradise Village.
 (beat)
 I'm sorry, Savchenko. Just keep your head down, OK.

Reuben looks around the office and begins to make his way toward the door. Jason and TWO other EMPLOYEES look at him and shake their heads.

JASON
 Bad luck, Prof. Never thought they'd get you.

Reuben grimaces and looks at Jason with a slight degree of respect.

REUBEN
 Thanks, Jason.

Just before he exits the door Reuben turns and looks at Savchenko who raises a hand in a sad half wave.

48 INT. BOARD ROOM FOYER - DAY

48

Reuben makes his way across the cavernous room. He sees the doctor sitting on one of the lounge chairs. The doctor looks at him, scowls and shakes his head.

Then he looks up at the monitor and there is Gil looking down at him. She also sighs and frowns at him.

Then he sees Samantha standing in a dark corner of the room, gazing at him sadly. Slowly he approaches her. She doesn't run away.

REUBEN

Its all over. You won.

There is another blast of music announcing a corporate message.

Reuben turns to see Gil smiling down from the monitor. Superimposed behind her on the screen is a photo of a nasty Russian soldier, growling, his face covered with blood.

GIL

Imperialist Russian forces have deliberately and callously violated the cease fire agreement with the People's Republic of China. The People's army has fought back bravely destroying a number of Russian tank positions.

Reuben sighs deeply and deflates even further.

REUBEN

Terrific.

He turns back to see Samantha has disappeared.

49

INT. UCORP BOARDROOM - DAY

49

Reuben makes his way toward Gerry, who is standing up straight with his arms folded in front of him like an angry headmaster.

In front of him is Rebecca. She is on the phone talking in Chinese. Nevertheless she has time to turn around and smirk at Reuben as he stops a few metres away from her.

Gerry glares at Reuben angrily.

GERRY

Would you mind getting off the phone, Rebecca?

Rebecca finishes a few words in Chinese then turns her phone off.

REBECCA

(with a residual smirk)
Sorry, Gerry.

Now Rebecca and Reuben are standing together facing Gerry.

GERRY
Needless to say I'm not
impressed.

Reuben bows his head as if preparing for the blow.

GERRY
Cooperation and communication is
what keeps this company alive.

Rebecca nods smugly. Gerry turns to her.

GERRY
So why the hell didn't you tell
me you'd subcontracted to
Shanghai?

Rebecca is dumfounded.

GERRY
And also ignored Dr Henschke's
warnings about the potential
leakage situation.

REBECCA
Gerry, I...didn't know...

GERRY
That's right, you didn't know.
You didn't liaise, you didn't
interface, you didn't engage.
What sort of manager does that
make you? Huh?

Gerry shakes his head and sighs.

REBECCA
I'm sorry.

She glances across at Reuben with a look of death.

GERRY
So, I'm giving you a chance to
redeem yourself.

Rebecca flips her head back to Gerry, a look of hope on her
face.

REBECCA
OK, sure, anything.

GERRY
I'm posting you to Maralinga 7.
You're going to sort this shit
out personally.

Rebecca looks devastated.

REBECCA
(whimpering)
Maralinga 7...

Gerry turns to Reuben, who braces himself, still unsure how all this is going to play out.

GERRY
And as for you, Dr Henschke. I
have something special planned...

CUT TO:

50 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

50

Gerry and Reuben stand in the door frame of a beautifully appointed individual office. Its a chic, modern design with Asian overtones.

GERRY
Welcome to Energy.

Reuben wanders toward the window (depending on location) casting his eyes around at all the splendid fittings.

GERRY
We need people like you. Guys not
afraid to face off with the head
honcho.

REUBEN
This is all mine?

Gerry smiles.

GERRY
Come on, lets get you kitted out.

51 INT. TAILOR'S ROOM - DAY

51

Reuben stands on a pedestal wearing RED OVERALLS with two breast pockets as two doting TAILORS check the measurements.

Gerry watches him grinning. He holds up Reuben's old pair of blue overalls and his Waste Department ID card.

GERRY
You won't be needing these
anymore.

Reuben watches Gerry toss them in a bin.

This bin is immediately swooped up by one of the tailors and emptied down a shoot (ideally burned in a furnace or something else visually compelling!!).

Reuben looks slightly concerned.

52 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

52

Reuben sits at his desk in his spanking new red overalls and stares at a new Tablet.

He presses the screen and an ENERGY DEPARTMENT logo appears.

He creases his brow.

On the monitor in front of him Gil appears smiling at him.

GIL

You look worried, Dr Henschke.

REUBEN

Gil, hi. You're talking to me.

GIL

Energy employees get interactive TV.

REUBEN

Wow.

(beat)

Look, I was just wondering if I could have my old tablet.

GIL

You won't be needing that.

REUBEN

I know. There's just some information I want from it and then you can recycle it.

GIL

You won't be needing that.

REUBEN

(beat)

But I want it.

Gil's smile remains steady and firm.

GIL

Its not about what you want, Dr Henschke.

REUBEN

No, I suppose not.

He picks up a remote and tries to turn the screen off. He has to press it three times and endure a smirk from Gil before it eventually goes blank.

53

INT. UCORP BUILDING FOYER - DAY

53

Reuben approaches the Security checkpoint, Waste entry wearing his bright red overalls. People with blue overalls are looking at him enviously.

Chris the security guard sees him and smirks.

CHRIS

Hey, Reuben. Heard about the promotion. Congratulations.

Reuben smiles awkwardly.

REUBEN

Thanks.

Reuben goes to swipe his card but it causes an ear piercing squeal.

CHRIS

Sorry, mate. You not a Waste man anymore.

REUBEN

I just want to get in, collect some stuff. Maybe say good bye...to the guys.

Chris laughs.

CHRIS

Those losers! You got to be kidding me. No seriously, buddy, I can get you in but I'll have to get you a temp card. Come back in a couple of days.

REUBEN

A couple of days?

CHRIS

Maybe a week. Admin are lazy bastards. Sorry, mate.

Reuben looks at the door ruefully. Then walks back in the direction he came.

54 INT. PROJECTOR ROOM - DAY

54

Reuben sits in a darkened projector room watching the flickering lights of a movie. Someone hands him a large tub of popcorn and a soft drink.

On the screen are various images of the SA outback. Gil's sultry comforting voice provides the commentary.

GIL

Clean pure natural energy... A gift from the wilderness...

Reuben sees images of desert plains, salt lakes, kangaroos...

GIL

First recognised by the pioneering Jack Langford...

There is the image of a rugged looking man wearing an akubra and moleskins striding across the crusty surface of a salt lake.

In a close up we see a younger version of old Jack with the unmistakable scar on his cheek.

REUBEN

Jack?

On the screen on top of a hill, young Jack hurls a spade into the earth and starts digging laboriously. Then he pauses and looks up at the burning sun.

CUT TO:

55 INT. GLASS HOUSE - DAY

55

Reuben picks his way through tropical ferns and orchids. He sees Jack over at a bench gently separating herb seedlings and placing them on wet kitchen paper.

REUBEN

Hey.

Jack continues to plant his herbs.

JACK

Basil season.

REUBEN

Its the middle of winter.

Jack turns around and smiles.

JACK
Doesn't matter. Controlled
environment.

Reuben nods and looks around.

REUBEN
The cafe guy said you'd be down
here. You work here now?

JACK
I live here.

Reuben looks surprised then it dawns on him. He points
toward the exit.

REUBEN
You live at Bonython House.
(beat)
You own Bonython House. You never
told me you started Ucorp.

JACK
You never asked. I told you I
worked for the company.

Jack pauses and looks at Reuben.

JACK
Actually, I still do. Sort of.
They keep me on the board, for
old time's sake.

REUBEN
Did you get me into Energy?

JACK
I just reminded Gerry about the
charter. Said you might have read
it. Probably the only employee
who has. Never underestimate the
power of knowledge, my friend.
Here.

He hands Reuben a handful of seedlings.

JACK
I want you to place these in that
patch of ground 5 centimeters
apart.

Reuben takes them and bends down awkwardly. He starts
planting the seedlings.

REUBEN
Can I trust Gerry?

JACK
Of course not. All he cares about
is selling cheap fuel to China.

REUBEN
So what do I do?

JACK
Keep digging. You find the
evidence, I can support you. No
evidence and I'm just a demented
old bloke.

(beat)
But don't let him distract you
with shiny new things.

CUT TO:

56 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - DAY 56

Reuben walks into his apartment that is now resplendent
with new KITCHEN APPLIANCES, FLAT SCREEN TV, SPEAKER SYSTEM
ETC (what ever we can lay our hands on).

He opens his closet and sees a whole rack of shiny red
overalls.

He then hears a strange noise coming from the kitchen: a
gurgling, steamy sound.

He creeps in there to find an automatic espresso machine
has just made him a cappucinno.

He sits at the kitchen table and drinks it.

Then his eyes rest on...

Two spanking new red bicycles.

57 INT. UCORP BUILDING FOYER - DAY 57

Reuben strides up to Chris the security guard who, before
Reuben can say anything, smiles happily and waves Reuben
through enthusiastically.

Reuben holds up his security ID but Chris declines to look
at it cheerfully.

CHRIS
In ya go, tiger.

Reuben enters cautiously.

58 INT. WASTE OFFICE - DAY 58

Savchenko is struggling with some figures on his slab when Reuben sidles up to him.

REUBEN
Hey.

SAVCHENKO
I thought they'd exiled you.

REUBEN
Got promoted.

SAVCHENKO
So I see.

REUBEN
Lets go for a little ride.

SAVCHENKO
Now?

Reuben nods his head and drags Savchenko out of his chair.

59 INT. UCORP BUILDING FOYER - DAY 59

Savchenko and Reuben stride past Chris the security guard who winks at them.

CHRIS
Whoops. Here's trouble!

Chris goes back to his cross word, Savchenko is amazed.

60 EXT. ECO VILLAGE CABIN - DAY 60

Savchenko and Reuben pull up on his new bicycles.

SAVCHENKO
So...you want some more rocks? Is that going to force Gerry's hand?

REUBEN
No. I want co-ordinates.

61 INT. ECO VILLAGE CABIN - DAY 61

Mickey stands before them in a thin dressing gown holding a mug of peppermint tea.

MICKEY

Co-ordinates? Yeah, I got heaps of co-ordinates. I was the chief field engineer for those bastards. They let me go anywhere. Til I started finding leaks. Here.

Mickey hands over a map with x's all over it.

MICKEY

These were the hot spots.

REUBEN

And you told no one else about them?

MICKEY

Not at first. I used to be a company man.

REUBEN

What about other employees? Anyone else get sick?

MICKEY

No. Just me. My insides are mush, buddy.

REUBEN

Was there a woman out there. Another engineer maybe?

Mickey glances at Savchenko.

MICKEY

No, only me and a bunch of Sudo refugees. They were just workers. Knew nothing. Company probably put em back on a boat with holes in it once they were done with them. Fuckers.

Reuben looks at Mickey closely.

REUBEN

And this is the company you want to work for?

MICKEY

Shit yeah. I'm a fucking citizen. They have no right to treat me like this.

SAVCHENKO

Lets go.

Mickey's anger increases he glares at Savchenko.

MICKEY
Yeah. You go. Don't worry about
me.

Reuben gets up awkwardly and heads toward the door.

REUBEN
I'll get your job back.

Mickey turns away from him and sits down, staring out the
small window petulantly.

MICKEY
Doesn't really matter.

SAVCHENKO
(to Reuben)
Come on.

62 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

62

Savchenko and Reuben sit at his kitchen table. Reuben has
Mickey's map sitting before them.

SAVCHENKO
You think this map will prove
anything?

Reuben glances at him and smiles.

REUBEN
Watch this.

Reuben places a drawing of the flow patterns on thin
transparent paper over the map of SA.

Mickey's markings and the outer reaches of the flow pattern
match up perfectly.

SAVCHENKO
Wow.

REUBEN
I was hoping that would happen.

SAVCHENKO
Now Gerry has to fix it up.

REUBEN
But he's not going to.
(beat)
Somebody died out there. There
was a woman.

SAVCHENKO
How do you know?

REUBEN
Its the same one who visits me.

SAVCHENKO
Your imaginary friend?

Suddenly the Cappuccino machine bursts into life making Savchenko jump.

REUBEN
Its just a cappuccino.

SAVCHENKO
Reuben, you have schizophrenia.

REUBEN
That's never been officially diagnosed.

SAVCHENKO
How do you know she was a victim?

REUBEN
I just know. She wants me to find out the truth. The company is hiding something bigger. I think...if maybe I find out what happened out there, she'll leave me alone.

SAVCHENKO
Have you been taking your medication?

REUBEN
Not recently.

SAVCHENKO
Then take your medication and take this to Gerry. Let him sort it out. And if he doesn't then both of us will go out there.

Reuben looks at him dubiously.

CUT TO:

63 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - NIGHT 63

Reuben stands naked in the sickening grind of the sonic shower looking at the drug puffer.

He looks over at Samantha who's face appears reflected in the corner of the mirror.

REUBEN
I'm sorry.

He takes a deep puff and shuts his eyes.

When he opens them he notices she is still there.

REUBEN
OK.

64 INT. UCORP BOARDROOM - DAY

64

Gerry stands in the middle of the boardroom wearing white flannels, a sleeveless jumper, gloves, pads and a baggy green cap. He wears a pair of VR goggles. In his hands he wields a cricket bat which he employs to strike virtual boundaries.

GERRY
He spansks that one for four!
Sweet.

Reuben clears his throat. Gerry takes off his goggles.

GERRY
Reuben. I was hoping you'd drop by. There's been a development on the leakage issue. Take a seat.

REUBEN
(surprised)
What sort of development?

GERRY
Our field officer has found some small cracks in the waste containers. You were absolutely right. You're amazing.

REUBEN
Has the radiation spread. Because I have further evidence...

GERRY
Brilliant.

Gerry leaps out of his seat and bounds over to Reuben.

GERRY
Thanks a bundle.

He grabs the sheets out of Reuben's hands and starts flipping through them.

GERRY

This is all great stuff.

(beat)

Look, I'm sorry we got off on the wrong foot. We're going to jump on this, I promise you. In the meantime, I'd like you to take on the deputy head position.

REUBEN

Deputy head of Energy?

Gerry nods.

GERRY

We need ya, Rube. No one else has a PhD like yours.

REUBEN

But I've only just started.

GERRY

Then you'd better get on with it!

Gerry issues forth a hearty guffaw as he puts his VR goggles back on.

GERRY

Knock em for six, buddy.

Gerry sends another one to the boundary.

65

INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

65

Reuben enters to find his desk has a stack of computer slabs piled up on it.

He sits down wearily and picks one up. He touches the screen and there appears a whole page of complicated formulae.

It is arranged in a list that has the beginning of the task and at the head of each task is the tag URGENT.

He scrolls through the list and notices there are 347 items.

He opens one of the items:

EFFICIENCY REPORT ON CELLS 4, 4A, 4D and 8 IN REACTOR 311.

Underneath this heading is a long slab of written information with highly technical diagrams.

Reuben sighs as the screen powers up and Gil appears in front of a Soviet Realism style picture of Reuben himself.

He is smiling and holding a stylised hydrogen atom in his hand.

GIL

Ucorp is pleased to announce a new Deputy Head of its Energy Department: Dr Reuben Henschke. Dr Henschke graduated from the prestigious Ucorp Institute of Technology...

REUBEN

No, I didn't...

There is a knock at the door.

REUBEN

Come in.

A woman in red overalls enters bearing a tray. She looks exactly like CPU. She places the tray in front of Reuben and smiles.

CPU

Thought you'd better have dinner at your desk. Got a lot of work there.

Reuben looks at her curiously and then looks down at the tray to see:

A beautiful arrangement of sushi, caviar, oysters and mini truffle fritatas.

CUT TO:

66 INT. UCORP WASTE LUNCH ROOM - DAY 66

Savchenko stares down at a tray of different coloured piles of slops - arranged exactly like the tray in the previous shot.

Savchenko sighs and pushes the plate away.

67 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - NIGHT 67

Reuben sits before one of the slabs, typing in figures. He sighs deeply and rubs his temples.

He picks up the one remaining piece of sushi from the tray and chews on it thoughtfully.

Immediately CPU enters and picks up the tray.

REUBEN

Hi. Er...

CPU
How was dinner?

REUBEN
Good. Um, I'm trying to send an email but can't find the VR specs.

CPU stands before him with the tray.

CPU
No problem. You don't need them in Energy.

REUBEN
OK, so how do I...

CPU
Just tell me and I'll take it to whoever.

REUBEN
You'll deliver the email?

CPU
Its the Anadigi VR interface system.

REUBEN
(very confused)
OK. I want to send a message to Yuri Savchenko in Waste.

CPU
Subject?

REUBEN
Er... 'Hi'.

CPU
Got it.

REUBEN
And the body is...I'm still on task...and I... actually, just, you know, email me back and we'll talk.

CPU nods and frowns.

CPU
You want me to clean up the grammar on that one?

REUBEN
No. Its OK.

CPU smiles then exits.

68 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT/SONIC SHOWER/BATHROOM - NIGHT 68

Reuben shaves in front of the mirror. He has deep shadows under his eyes. He looks in the corner of the mirror where Samantha usually appears, but she is not there.

He sighs and continues to shave.

69 INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 69

Reuben sits at the kitchen table. He looks around at his empty flat.

The gurgle of the coffee maker can be heard.

He takes a sip from the cup and winces. Too bitter.

70 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY 70

Reuben enters his office to find twice as many glass tablets piled up on his desk.

CPU enters the room and hands him a coffee and a croissant.

CPU

A little breakfast?

REUBEN

(nodding toward the desk)

What are those?

CPU

This week's agenda. There's a big order come in. The People's Republic of China has just reopened 12 munitions factories.

REUBEN

No cease fire?

CPU

(joyfully)

No cease fire!

REUBEN

Any emails from Savchenko?

CPU

No.

Reuben nods his head, goes to his desk and sits down. He picks up a slab and looks at it for a second.

Then he sips his coffee and stares out the window.

71 INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - NIGHT 71

Reuben is working on the slabs as the CLEANER vacuums the office.

72 INT. UCORP BOARDROOM - DAY 72

Gerry and TWO EXECUTIVES in red overalls sit around a table eating chocolate muffins and sipping from dainty coffee cups.

Reuben watches them, he is struggling to stay awake.

GERRY

But we really have to give it up
for Dr Henschke here.

The other two executives smile and clap sycophantically.

EXECUTIVE#1

Woohoo!

GERRY

He's been putting in some serious
hours over the last three weeks
getting all these details nailed.
You're a legend, Rube. I really
appreciate it.

REUBEN

Actually I was wondering if you
could do something for me.

GERRY

Anything.

REUBEN

I want you to transfer Yuri
Savchenko to Energy.

GERRY

Savchenko?

One of the executives whispers something in his ear. Gerry frowns and grimaces awkwardly.

GERRY

Can't do that, mate.

REUBEN

Why not?

GERRY

Turns out he was a spy. We thought he was a refo. Showed him kindness, acceptance. Offered him a second chance. But that dirty Russian bastard was selling us out all along.

REUBEN

Yuri?

Gerry nods sadly.

GERRY

And I suspect his friendship with you was all part of the game. Sorry to be the one to tell you.

REUBEN

Where is he?

GERRY

He disappeared. Ran away. Just like the Russian army!

Gerry looks around at the two executives and starts guffawing stupidly. They join in and the virile laughter rises to the ceiling.

Reuben gets up and starts walking out.

GERRY

Of course that's when they're not drunk, ha, ha, ha...!

Reuben grits his teeth and leaves the room.

73

INT. REUBEN'S ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

73

Reuben goes straight to his desk and sits down. He puts his head in his hands. Then he opens a drawer and takes out a half bottle of illegal Russian vodka. He starts to pour himself a shot when CPU enters. He quickly whisks it away.

CPU

Hi, Reuben. You have an email.

REUBEN

(flustered)

So what? I get millions of emails.

CPU
Its from Yuri Savchenko.

Suddenly Reuben stops trying to hide his drinking accoutrement.

REUBEN
What does he say?

CPU
Mickey is dead.

Reuben nods solemnly.

REUBEN
That all?

CPU nods as Reuben leaps up and grabs his umbrella (or something that indicates he's leaving).

CPU
Where are you going?

Reuben looks at her curiously.

REUBEN
Out.

CPU
When will you be back?

REUBEN
Later.
(beat)
You going to dob on me?

CPU
Of course.

REUBEN
I hate you.

CPU
I'm just an operating system.

Reuben pushes his way past her.

REUBEN
That's no excuse.

CPU looks somewhat offended.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. ECO VILLAGE CABIN - DAY

74

Reuben pulls up on his shiny red bicycle to see a small gathering by the vege patch.

He gets off his bike and approaches cautiously.

As he gets closer he can make out TWO FERALS, A SHAMAN and an old man in a three piece suit...who turns to him to reveal he is JACK.

The Shaman is dressed in a mumu and has flowers and twigs in his hair. He is reading out the words of a poem.

SHAMAN

From mother earth we came and to
mother earth we return...

Reuben sees him sprinkling ashes from an old yoghurt container onto the ground.

He stands beside Jack who avoids his eye.

SHAMAN

Live peacefully in the earth,
brother Mickey...

Then Reuben sees one of the FERALS staring at him. She looks exactly like SAMANTHA.

Reuben is shocked.

REUBEN

You...its you!

The Shaman gives him a dirty look.

SHAMAN

Do you mind? In the middle of a
rebirthing ceremony here.

REUBEN

I'm sorry.

Samantha turns and starts walking away. Reuben goes to follow her but Jack grabs his arm in a vice like grip.

JACK

Stay here, you bastard. Its the
least you can do.

Reuben looks at him surprised.

The Shaman is starting to get really pissed off with all these interruptions.

SHAMAN

And we wait with joy for the day
we join you. Gentle Gaia hear us.

OTHER FERAL

Gently Gaia, hear us...

Reuben watches SAMANTHA disappear into the forest (or bushes, depending on location) as Jack hands over 100 euros to the shaman, who nods with appreciation.

Then Jack grabs Reuben's arm again and leads him away.

REUBEN

What are you doing here?

JACK

Paying my respects. Mickey was a good employee.

REUBEN

I thought he was mad.

JACK

Was that your excuse?

Reuben looks at him in confusion.

JACK

To do nothing. To let that fucker Gerry butter you up.

REUBEN

I was planning to get established and then...

JACK

You were planning your career as an arse hole. And I thought you were a scientist.

REUBEN

I am a scientist.

JACK

You're a sushi sucking desk jockey. Weak as piss. You think Gerry's done anything about those leaks?

Reuben looks away guiltily, then back at Jack.

REUBEN

No.

Jack throws him some good old fashioned car keys.

JACK

Here.

(off Reuben's confused
look)

They're car keys.

REUBEN

A car?

JACK

A 6 litre Diesel powered four
wheel drive. Its yours. Go to the
desert, Reuben. Go out to the
field. Be a scientist.

Jack walks away in disgust. Reuben watches him then looks
over to the forest.

75 EXT. FOREST - DAY

75

Reuben wanders through the thickets looking carefully for
any sign of the mysterious woman.

He sees a shadowy figure dart behind a tree and crunches
off through the undergrowth in pursuit.

The figure disappears behind another big tree. Reuben
approaches it slowly.

REUBEN

I know who you are.

He stops and then sees...

Savchenko emerging from behind the trunk.

SAVCHENKO

I wish I could say the same about
you.

(beat)

You know your friend Gerry killed
him. And he's going to kill me.

Reuben looks at the car keys in his hand and sighs.

REUBEN

Then we better get started.

He holds up the keys and jingles them. Savchenko looks
confused.

76 INT. GARAGE - DAY

76

A large roller door goes up revealing Savchenko and Reuben
standing outside.

SAVCHENKO
You know you'll lose your job for
this.

REUBEN
Not if we're right.

Savchenko pauses and looks at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO
Thanks.

REUBEN
Come on.

The two approach a large Toyota 4 x 4 cautiously.

SAVCHENKO
What's up?

REUBEN
I have no idea how to drive a
car. I've only ever seen one on
the internet.

Savchenko laughs and holds out his hand.

SAVCHENKO
They were all we had in the
Ukraine.

Reuben tosses him the keys.

77

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

77

Savchenko drives along squinting at the barren landscape.
Reuben looks out the passenger window.

SAVCHENKO
You been out here before?

REUBEN
No.

SAVCHENKO
What about your research?

REUBEN
I used the geological surveys
conducted before Ucorp took over
the state.

SAVCHENKO
Blessed are those who have not
seen and yet still believe.

REUBEN

You have to have a bit of faith
sometimes.

SAVCHENKO

But now you'll find out for sure.

REUBEN

I hope so.

SAVCHENKO

So we can both resurrect our
careers.

Reuben sees a figure in the distance: Samantha. She stands
in the desert scrub gazing at him.

Then she is gone.

SAVCHENKO

Where are we headed?

REUBEN

Waste disposal HQ. We need some
stuff.

SAVCHENKO

Oh, she'll be overjoyed to see
us.

Reuben looks back out the window at the space where
Samantha was.

78

EXT. UCORP WASTE DISPOSAL HQ - DUSK

78

The 4 x 4 pulls up outside a very modest corrugated iron
construction (depending on found location).

The two men lumber out of the car.

SAVCHENKO

Not very impressive.

REUBEN

It all happens underground. They
say it's very nice inside. Very
tasteful. For a staff of one.

Savchenko smirks.

A moment later...

Reuben puts his face close to an intercom speaker just by
the door. He presses a button that makes a sickly buzz.

REUBEN
Hello?

REBECCA (O.S.)
Who is it?

REUBEN
Its Reuben Henschke.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Fuck.
(beat, completely
different tone)
Hi. How are you?

REUBEN
(beat)
I'm good.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Great.

Long pause, Reuben can hear mad, frantic curses through the crackling speaker.

REBECCA (O.S.)
That's really super.

REUBEN
I need some help.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Of course. That's why I'm here.
The door's open.

Reuben looks at Savchenko suspiciously. Savchenko shrugs. Reuben pushes the door and it swings open.

79 INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - DAY

79

Reuben and Savchenko sit at a modest table in front of Rebecca who looks stressed, dirty and dishevelled.

The space is a room full of banks of flashing lights, with maps hung up everywhere.

Reuben and Savchenko hold white mugs with the Ucorp logo on them, underneath is the phrase: WASTE DISPOSAL: BECAUSE WE'RE WORTH IT

Savchenko sips his mug and winces.

REBECCA
Its instant. Sorry about that.

Savchenko tries to swallow it.

SAVCHENKO

No problem.

Rebecca glances nervously at Reuben.

REBECCA

How's Gerry?

REUBEN

He's all right.

Rebecca nods vigorously.

REBECCA

That's great. Really good. You tell him I said hi.

(beat, the repressed mania starts to leak through)

And that everything is under control. All the tanks are sound. And you were right, Reuben, absolutely right. Even though they were very, very little leaks, some might even say miniscule...

REUBEN

(cutting her off)

I need some survey and drilling equipment.

REBECCA

But I told you.

REUBEN

It's not about the tanks. We're doing some research.

REBECCA

Out here? But aren't you in Energy now?

SAVCHENKO

Its a very complicated story.

Rebecca turns and looks at him.

REBECCA

I don't believe we've met.

Then she looks at him closely.

REBECCA

Hang on. You're that Russian guy. Savchenko.

REUBEN
He's been promoted.

Suddenly Rebecca's mood changes as it dawns on her.

REBECCA
No he hasn't. He's a spy
She looks at them both with a growing sense of suspicion.

REBECCA
Excuse me.

Rebecca reaches for a satellite phone.

REUBEN
Rebecca, don't make that call.

Savchenko grabs the phone from her and puts it down. There is a growing expression of triumph on her face.

REBECCA
You guys are in soooo much
trouble.

REUBEN
You can't trust Gerry.

REBECCA
Oh, really?

He's finished. Come out to the
field and I'll show you.

REBECCA
You'll show ME will you? What?
Your little flow patterns? I've
never liked you, Henschke.

REUBEN
It doesn't matter whether you
like me or not. I'm going to save
your job. Give me 24 hours.

Rebecca looks at him dubiously.

REUBEN
Its either me or Gerry. And
what's Gerry done for you lately?

Rebecca shakes her head and sighs.

REBECCA
OK, but...you better have some
lunch first.

(MORE)

REBECCA(cont'd)

We'll all have lunch. Together.
OK? Otherwise the deal is totally
off.

Reuben looks at Savchenko then back at Rebecca.

REBECCA

With wine. We have to have wine.
There's a Pinot Gris I've been
saving.

REUBEN

OK.

Savchenko shuffles about awkwardly.

CUT TO:

80

INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - LATER

80

The three of them sit around the table eating pasta from plastic trays. There is an almost empty bottle of Pinot Gris on the table. They listen to a country and western station on the radio. Rebecca looks up at Reuben as she pours herself the rest of the wine.

REBECCA

I made the sauce myself.

REUBEN

Its...nice.

REBECCA

(sadly)

Just a can of tomatoes and some
olive paste. Its nothing.

(then hopefully)

But this is nice, isn't it?

SAVCHENKO

Sure. Very nice...

Pause. Quiet chewing.

CUT TO:

81

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

81

The 4 x 4 is parked on the side of the highway. Reuben has the map with the coordinates marked on it spread across the bonnet (or the ground).

He points to place where two lines intersect.

REUBEN
Here's where the first fissure
would occur and that should be...

He turns around and looks out to the salt bush plain. He points to a dead tree.

REUBEN
Just over there...

Savchenko nods.

82

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

82

A large metal spike strikes the earth and is hammered in about a foot.

Reuben and Savchenko look at a small square panel on the side of the jack hammer like device.

The reading is 120.567 Ngy.

Reuben frowns. He looks up.

REUBEN
Try over there.

Cut to...

The spike hits the ground again.

The panel reads 121.871 Ngy

Savchenko looks at it steadily.

SAVCHENKO
That's hardly enough radiation to
sink a company.

Reuben grabs a shovel and starts digging a whole near by. Savchenko watches him despondently.

SAVCHENKO
What are you doing?

REUBEN
A chemical soil analysis. These
drill spikes may have been
tampered with.

SAVCHENKO
By who?

Reuben ignores him and continues to shovel soil into a metal container.

CUT TO:

83

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DUSK

83

Reuben and Savchenko sit in a different part of the desert. Reuben holds up a test tube full of clear liquid.

Savchenko sits a few metres away from him staring at the horizon.

He sighs with disappointment and his brow crinkles with concern.

SAVCHENKO

Its getting late.

REUBEN

There's still a few more locations.

SAVCHENKO

Leave it.

Reuben stares out to the setting sun.

REUBEN

One more place.

SAVCHENKO

No.

Beat.

REUBEN

Trust me.

SAVCHENKO

This theory. When exactly did you come up with it?

REUBEN

One more location.

84

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

84

The car speeds along with Savchenko at the wheel. He is looking dead ahead, his lips tight.

Reuben glances at him nervously.

REUBEN

I can solve this.

SAVCHENKO
You know how cold Siberia is this
time of year? 20 below.

REUBEN
You won't be exiled.

SAVCHENKO
Blessed are those who believe...

Reuben looks out the window and sees the distant figure of
Samantha.

REUBEN
Stop the car.

SAVCHENKO
We're nowhere near it.

REUBEN
Stop the car!

Savchenko slams on the breaks.

Reuben leaps out and starts walking toward the phantom. She
remains where she is.

He gets to within a few metres of her and stops. Savchenko
is about 15 metres behind him.

REUBEN
What! What is it?!

Slowly Samantha raises her hand and points. Reuben looks in
this direction and sees what looks like a pile of clothes
on the ground.

SAVCHENKO
Who are you talking to?

Reuben walks over to the pile and sees two human skeletons
lying in the dirt.

REUBEN
Jesus.

He turns around but Samantha has disappeared.

CUT TO:

85

INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - NIGHT

85

Reuben, Savchenko and Rebecca sit around the table and
stare down at a blackened bone.

Rebecca looks up.

REBECCA
Is it radioactive?

REUBEN
No. But the DNA is shattered.

REBECCA
So it once had a massive dose of radiation.

REUBEN
SHE once had a massive dose of radiation.

REBECCA
How do you know its a woman?

Savchenko rolls his eyes and sighs. Reuben shoots him a dirty look.

SAVCHENKO
Her ghost lead him to it.

REBECCA
Her ghost?

REUBEN
It doesn't matter how I found it.
It was there.

REBECCA
But if it was one huge singular dose, then it can't be a leak.

REUBEN
But it must have something to do with Ucorp.

REBECCA
The British tested here...

REUBEN
That was a century ago.

REBECCA
So what are you saying?

SAVCHENKO
He believes Ucorp are testing nuclear weapons.

Rebecca is dumbfounded.

SAVCHENKO
Is it possible that you may have been woken up by any sort of...
(MORE)

SAVCHENKO(cont'd)

(grimacing)

...nuclear explosion?

REBECCA

I don't think so.

REUBEN

Not now. Five years ago. Maybe.
That's when they died.

REBECCA

Then there has to be some kind of
crater. And this building has
been here over 20 years and its
still intact.

REUBEN

Not if it were a neutron bomb.
Kills within a limited radius.
Very little collateral damage.

SAVCHENKO

There'd still have to be some
evidence of a blast radius.

REUBEN

Then lets go find it.

SAVCHENKO

Its midnight.

REUBEN

You got a torch?

Savchenko sighs and gets a bottle of Russian vodka out of
his rucksack.

SAVCHENKO

I'm going to bed...with my best
friend here.

Savchenko goes over to the couch and throws himself on it.

Reuben looks at Rebecca who is shaking her head.

REUBEN

It has to be Ucorp.

REBECCA

Its not on Ucorp territory.

REUBEN

It doesn't matter. They have the
capabilities.

Rebecca looks at him steadily.

REBECCA
 Tomorrow morning we'll go out
 there but if there's nothing,
 then I'm making that phone call.

Reuben nods. Rebecca gestures toward a large pile of papers.

REBECCA
 You can sleep on the statistics.

Reuben looks at them and sighs.

CUT TO:

86

INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - NIGHT

86

Reuben is woken up by a woman's hand. He is surprised to see...

Samantha wearing a taffeta party dress.

SAMANTHA
 You stood me up.

REUBEN
 Huh?

SAMANTHA
 I was waiting in the foyer for 45
 minutes.

REUBEN
 I don't know what...I didn't
 know...

SAMANTHA
 (with an affectionate
 sigh)
 Ah, Dr Henschke, you're so absent
 minded.

She reaches out and strokes his face then closes her hand over his nose and mouth and starts pressing down hard. Reuben starts to suffocate. He tries to cry for help.

Then he wakes up with a start. He is all alone.

He looks over at the couch where Savchenko was sleeping but finds it empty.

Then he sees a light streaming through the half closed door and he hears voices: Savchenko and Rebecca.

He gets up and walks toward the sound and then notices they are both talking in Russian.

Savchenko murmurs in low pessimistic tones, Rebecca seems more upset.

Reuben steps on a piece of plastic that makes a sharp sound.

The voices stop and Reuben hurries back to his makeshift bed.

He pretends to sleep at Savchenko and Rebecca appear in the door frame watching him.

87 EXT./INT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY 87

Savchenko drives along with Rebecca in the front seat.

Reuben sits in the back eyeing them both suspiciously.

Then he stares out at the barren plain flashing by.

88 EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY 88

Reuben is running his hands along a large rock. He looks at marks and divots.

He stands up and looks across the plain and sees undisturbed patch of salt bush after completely undisturbed patch of salt bush.

Savchenko walks up behind him.

SAVCHENKO

It goes on forever like that. A fucking wasteland.

REUBEN

There's life. You just can't see it.

SAVCHENKO

You'd need VR goggles to see any life out here.

Savchenko sighs and looks furtively at Reuben.

SAVCHENKO

There's no blast radius.

REUBEN

I know.

SAVCHENKO

She's going to call.

Reuben nods.

REUBEN
What are you going to do?

SAVCHENKO
Wait for you to save me. You're
the genius.

Reuben looks at him suspiciously.

SAVCHENKO
You have to find some kind of
answer.

89 INT. DESERT HIGHWAY/4 X 4 - DUSK

89

Savchenko drives back with Rebecca in the front again.
Reuben is slumped in the back.

REBECCA
What were you thinking. Coming
out here like some kind of
cowboy...

Reuben shuts his eyes.

REBECCA
And now I'm implicated.

REUBEN
I need more time.

REBECCA
I can't imagine what for. Its a
complete disaster.

Rebecca looks at him. He's looking very sickly indeed.

REBECCA
I'll give you until tomorrow.
Some hard evidence.
(beat)
I just want to get back to
Adelaide. That's not too much to
ask.

90 INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - NIGHT

90

Reuben looks at projected pictures of cells. He rolls
through them one after the other.

Then he looks down at a map of the area, where he has drawn
the Mickey's markings and superimposed his own scatter
pattern.

He draws a small circle in one spot and then tries to work out a blast radius.

Then he hears the sound of Savchenko snoring. He looks over at him lying on the couch.

He sees a pair of VR goggles lying on one of the desks.

He creeps over and puts them on.

91 INT. WASTE OFFICE/VR WORLD - DAY

91

Reuben finds himself back in his VR world. CPU is standing before him. She is wearing her default white outfit.

CPU
Welcome back, Reuben.

REUBEN
Do they know where I am?

CPU
Who are they?

REUBEN
Gerry.

CPU
No.

REUBEN
But you know where I am?

CPU
Of course. You're here.

Reuben looks confused.

REUBEN
Exactly. I want to send a message to Jack Langford. Is he still in the system?

CPU
Actually he's online.

Reuben turns to see Jack Langford standing by one of the empty desks. He's wearing pyjamas and a dressing gown.

REUBEN
Jack!

JACK
I'm proud of you, Reuben.

REUBEN
Jack, I'm lost. I have no idea
what I'm doing.

Jack smiles paternally and pats Reuben on the shoulder.

JACK
That's because you're barking up
the wrong tree, mate.

REUBEN
Tree? What tree?

JACK
What are you good at Reuben?

REUBEN
I don't know. Chess?

JACK
Patterns. Are you looking at the
patterns?

REUBEN
I'm looking for evidence.

JACK
In geophysics. That's not who you
are.

Reuben looks confused.

JACK
Underground streams. Some
allusive inaccessible idea. Is
that what you think its about?

REUBEN
I don't know.

Jack pokes Reuben in the chest.

JACK
The answer is in here, son. In
biology.

REUBEN
I'm not a biologist.

JACK
Yes you are. You're a brilliant
biologist. Just look at the
patterns.

Reuben looks at Jack plaintively. He sees CPU, she is
nodding her head and he notices a little tear forming in
the corner of her eye.

CPU
The patterns, Reuben.

Reuben frowns at her.

92 INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - NIGHT 92

Reuben is again running through the slides. He looks carefully at the cellular structures.

He increases the size of the pictures, getting closer to the surface of the cells.

He sees small patterns and zeros in on one...

Until it fills the screen.

Then he looks down at the map. The shape is exactly the same as the flow patterns.

REUBEN
Its a protein.

CUT TO:

93 INT. REBECCA'S WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICE - DAWN 93

Reuben shakes Savchenko awake. Savchenko squints at him sleepily.

SAVCHENKO
What's up?

Reuben throws a shirt at him and hands him the bottle of vodka.

REUBEN
Come on. We have some field work to do.

Savchenko takes a swig. He offers it to Reuben.

REUBEN
I've had breakfast.

CUT TO:

94 INT. DESERT HIGHWAY/4 X 4 - DAWN 94

Savchenko and Reuben speed along. Savchenko is stealing glances at Reuben. Reuben stares straight ahead.

SAVCHENKO
So, where are we going?

REUBEN
Its not far. Another 10 ks or so.

SAVCHENKO
Is this going to save us?

Reuben looks at Savchenko.

REUBEN
One way or the other.

Beat. Savchenko's eyes start to grow heavy. He shakes himself awake. Then his head lolls backwards and his eyes close. Reuben calmly reaches over and takes the wheel. He stretches his foot across and applies the break. The vehicle gradually comes to a stand still.

Reuben sighs deeply.

CUT TO:

95

EXT. DESERT SALT PAN - DAY

95

Savchenko's eyes slowly open.

He sees a half drunk bottle of vodka wedged in the sand inches from his nose.

He hears a distorted voice in the distance.

REUBEN (O.S.)
Yuri.

Then he struggles to a sitting position, he looks around and sees a Satellite Phone a few metres away from him, propped up in the encrusted salt.

REUBEN (O.S.)
Pick up the phone.

Savchenko gets to his feet and walks stiffly over to the phone. He picks it up and looks out at the horizon.

He is in the middle of nowhere.

SAVCHENKO
Hello, Reuben.

REUBEN (O.S.)
Its more than 10 ks.

SAVCHENKO
So I see.

REUBEN (O.S.)
 You have no water and you've been
 out there for three hours. It has
 to be 40 degrees by now.

SAVCHENKO
 Actually I'm finding it rather
 scenic. And you left me the
 vodka. That was nice.

REUBEN (O.S.)
 I'm a nice guy, Savchenko, when
 I'm told the truth.

Savchenko smirks.

SAVCHENKO
 Truth. That entirely depends on
 your perspective.

CUT TO:

96 EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DAY

96

Reuben is standing at the foot of a ridge. We see his face
 in CU, the satellite phone close to his ear.

REUBEN
 Enlighten me, Savchenko. Suddenly
 I know how to drive, how did that
 happen?

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
 This isn't you, Reuben. Its
 really not your style at all.

REUBEN
 How would you know what my style
 is?

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
 (beat)
 You're very sick. You need help.
 I'm your doctor. They pay me to
 look after you.

REUBEN
 They?

CUT TO:

97 EXT. DESERT SALT PAN - DAY.

97

Savchenko sighs deeply and rubs his eyes.

SAVCHENKO
Ucorp. Who else.

REUBEN (O.S.)
That's garbage. Why would they do
that?

SAVCHENKO
Look behind you.

CUT TO:

98

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - DAY

98

Reuben turns around and sees a MAN standing on the ridge beside a surveying tripod. The man wears white overalls and has a protective hood on. He holds another one in his hand.

Reuben is wearing the white overalls he had in scene one.

He drops the phone to his side and walks toward up to the crest of the ridge.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
This is who you are, Reuben.

As Reuben approaches the crest he notices the man in the white overalls is Gerry.

Gerry smiles at him and hands him the hood with tinted goggles.

GERRY
You better put this on, mate.

Reuben takes the hood.

GERRY
We're all really excited.

Reuben passively puts the hood on and then notices the pair of binoculars he has hanging over his shoulders.

Gerry points out toward the plain.

Reuben holds the binoculars to his eyes and sees...

POV Reuben:

The three FIGURES on the plain. MICKEY is standing by the tripod. SAMANTHA stands next to him with a field computer and ANDREAS sits on the ground smoking.

Reuben focusses on ANDREAS momentarily.

Then he looks down at a digital watch. It reads 2:59:52.

The seconds tick away and he looks back through the binoculars.

At 3:00:00 precisely what looks like a wave of heat washes over the figures.

Reuben sees Andreas coughing violently. Samantha and Mickey go over to him.

CUT TO:

99

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - DAY

99

Reuben walks slowly toward the dying Samantha. Mickey holds her in his arms as she coughs and chokes.

Mickey looks up at him.

MICKEY

What the fuck is happening?

REUBEN

She should be protected.

MICKEY

What?

REUBEN

It's the protein.

Reuben kneels down and takes Samantha in his arms.

REUBEN

Sam. You're all right. You're protected.

MICKEY

She's fucking dying.

Samantha looks Reuben in the eye and breathes heavily.

REUBEN

She'll be all right.

Reuben gently lays her head down and gets up.

MICKEY

She won't be all right.

Reuben starts walking away.

REUBEN

She'll be all right.

MICKEY

Reuben!

Reuben keeps walking.

CUT TO:

100 INT. FORMAL MEETING ROOM - DAY 100

Savchenko looks ruefully at the government committee members.

SAVCHENKO

The problem was he was too good at what he was doing.

KERRIE

The bomb?

SAVCHENKO

It was perfect. It killed silently, precisely. Samantha just didn't have the right proteins in her body. Mickey did. She was only supposed to get sick.

CUT TO:

101 EXT./INT. DESERT HIGHWAY/4 X 4 - DAY 101

Reuben drives along frantically. The hood with the goggles sits beside him on the seat.

SAVCHENKO (V.O.)

He worked out a way of protecting the cells from radiation. A type of conditioning that threw up various protein signals on the surface of the cell. Patterns that told the immune system to kill or let live. It was all about the patterns. That's what made the bomb work.

Tears are streaming down Reuben's face. He dials a number on the Satellite phone.

REUBEN

Hello? Jack?

JACK (O.S.)

I'm right here, Reuben.

Reuben turns around to see Jack sitting on the back seat. He slams on the breaks and brings the car to a stop.

When Reuben turns back to the back seat Jack has gone.

KERRIE (O.S.)
But he kept it a secret.

SAVCHENKO (O.S.)
Yes. He didn't trust us. Can you believe that?

CUT TO:

102 INT. FORMAL MEETING ROOM - DAY

102

Kerrie is staring down at Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO
And then he went mad. Lost his mind completely... So we had to bring him back...

KERRIE
So you could sell bombs to China.

SAVCHENKO
No, so we could sell bombs to Russia. Don't you see?

Kerrie looks at him confused.

SAVCHENKO
Energy to China. Bombs to Russia. Equilibrium.

KERRIE
To keep the war going?

Savchenko shakes his head.

SAVCHENKO
To keep the market alive! The problem with you bureaucrats is you have no vision.

KERRIE
And did Reuben know who was going to buy the bombs?

Savchenko shakes his head.

CUT TO:

103 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

103

Reuben staggers out of the 4 x 4 and start walking down the highway.

SAVCHENKO

He was an idealist. Maybe he
still is.

Reuben then collapses.

CUT TO:

104 INT. FORMAL MEETING ROOM - DAY

104

Kerrie shakes her head and sighs theatrically.

KERRIE

The government is utterly
appalled by this clandestine
weapons development program and
particularly your role in
manipulating an innocent
scientist.

SAVCHENKO

Innocent?! He knew what he was
doing.

KERRIE

Evidently not, Dr Savchenko. I am
going to recommend the company be
nationalised
(beat)
and you be exiled. Immediately.

Chris the security approaches Savchenko and takes him by
the arm.

Kerrie busies herself with shuffling her papers on the
desk.

KERRIE

This enquiry is concluded.

Chris drags a baffled Savchenko toward a door at the end of
the room. He opens the door and shoves Savchenko out...

CUT TO:

105 EXT. ROOF TOP - DAY

105

Savchenko finds himself thrust out of a stairwell shaft
onto the top of a tall building.

He staggers and blinks at the blinding light and then makes
out...

Gerry and another MAN. They both wear purple overalls with
four pockets on the front.

Gerry smiles at Savchenko.

SAVCHENKO

Gerry?

GERRY

Hi Yuri. I'm sorry about all that crap.

SAVCHENKO

I thought you were exiled.

GERRY

Yeah, to Perth. But then I got a job with Westcorp. And they've generously agreed to buy Ucorp. from the SA government at a very reasonable price. So, ironically, I'm back! LOL!

Savchenko nods, but still looks very confused.

GERRY

We'd like to offer you a job.

SAVCHENKO

But I'm exiled.

Gerry laughs.

GERRY

Yeah, don't worry about that.

Savchenko looks down thoughtfully, then out at the Adelaide Hills. Then back at Gerry.

SAVCHENKO

You still have sushi?

GERRY

Absolutely.

(beat)

Ready to get him back?

Savchenko shrugs then slowly smiles.

SAVCHENKO

Sure.

(beat)

I miss him.

Reuben sits by the side of the road, he is wearing white overalls and now has quite a facial growth

He slowly draws the flow pattern on the sand, connecting each circle with a gentle line.

There is the sound of a distant car engine.

He stands up and looks into the distance, then he starts waving.

A 4 x 4 pulls up beside him and Reuben opens the passenger door.

Inside is Savchenko. He wears the khaki uniform of a park ranger.

SAVCHENKO
You're one lucky bastard.

CUT TO:

107

EXT./INT. DESERT HIGHWAY/4 X 4 - DAY

107

The car speeds along with Savchenko at the wheel. Reuben is looking slightly confused.

SAVCHENKO
I hardly ever go down this road
and I know no one else does. What
were you doing out there?

REUBEN
Birds. I was looking at birds.

SAVCHENKO
Oh yeah.

REUBEN
You ever heard of the Sturt
Desert Wren?

SAVCHENKO
I thought the were extinct.

REUBEN
(shaking his head)
They have a very interesting
defence mechanism. Its their
cells...

Suddenly Reuben stops and looks at Savchenko suspiciously.

REUBEN
But you wouldn't be interested in
that.

Savchenko glances at him.

SAVCHENKO
We got a long drive.
(beat)
My name's Ian. Park Ranger.

REUBEN
Dr Richard Harrison.
Ornithologist.

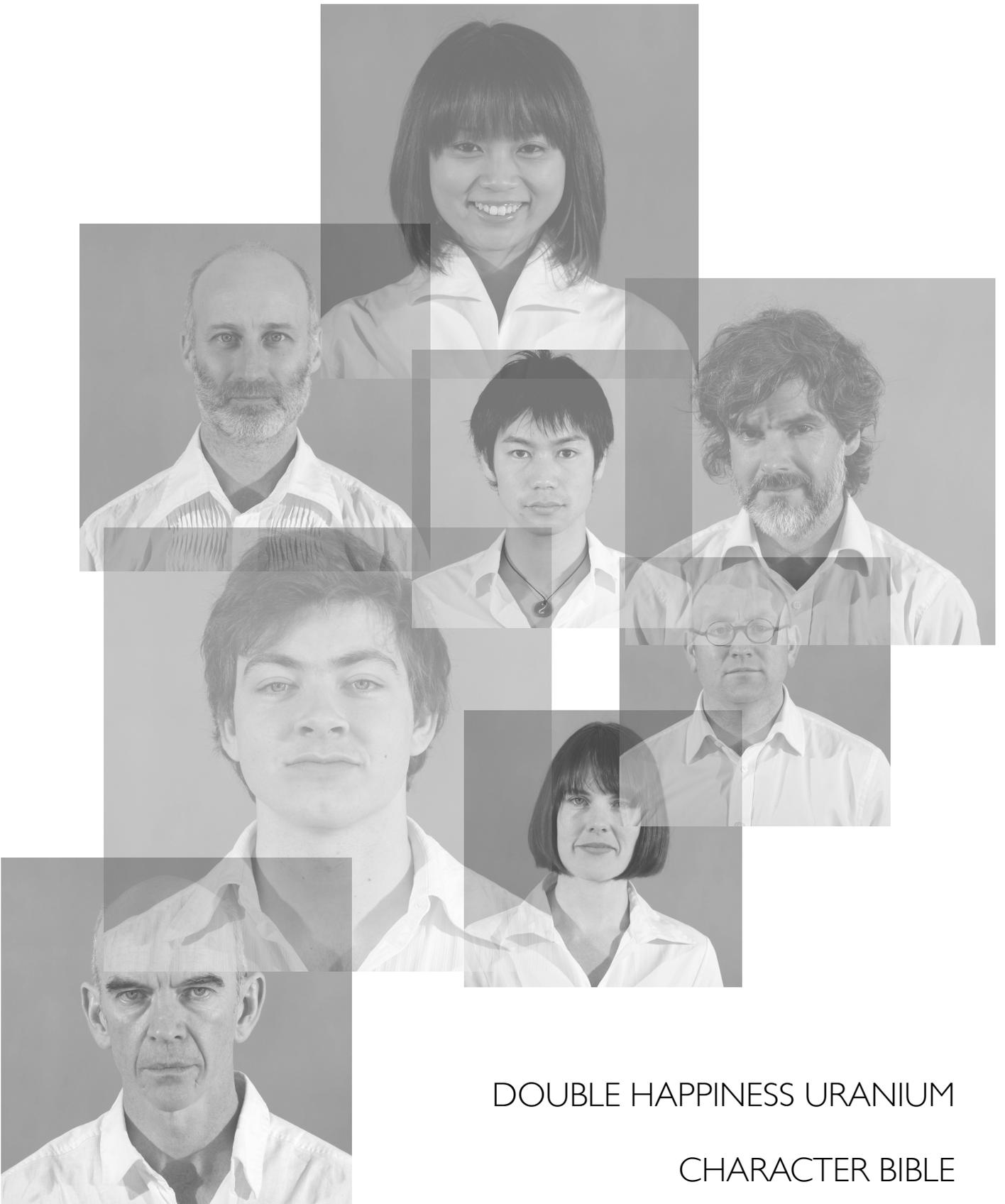
The two shake hands.

SAVCHENKO
You like vodka?

Savchenko smiles at him.

Cut to black.

The end.



DOUBLE HAPPINESS URANIUM

CHARACTER BIBLE

Matt Hawkins

INTRODUCTION

The following document aims to provide a background for the cast to get to know their characters and have some grounds for interpretation. I have included both character history as well as some suggestions for emotional and physical actions that can be played throughout the film. As may be clear to you I rely heavily on the Laban system of movement for physicalising emotional action (see Appendix 1). I also have tried to suggest various psychological actions that may occur at certain times (for a great list of these see Appendix 2).

Ultimately this document is intended to open up a dialogue between cast, writer, director and producer so we all end up on the same page. Whatever resonates with you as you read these pages should be discussed and workshopped. Whatever doesn't resonate should be clarified. Whatever thoughts and ideas these words inspire should be shared and built upon.

It is recommended that you read as much of the document as you can (highlighting your own character, of course!) as there is valuable information in all character descriptions that crosses over.

The most detailed document that describes the *world* of Double Happiness Uranium is the website. I recommend you read this first: www.doublehappinessuranium.com

Another good reference is Sam Cohen, the father of the neutron bomb, seeking to justify his actions in this documentary trailer:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_QFXGxw6Tk&feature=fvw

REUBEN HENSCHKE

Reuben has spent his entire life seeking to recreate a single moment from his childhood:

When he was four years old he and his mother stood on the beach in the early evening winter sun. The cool water washed over his toes as his mother explained that his father had left forever. From now on, it was only the two of them. He had to look after her now. They were going to survive and they were going to have fun.

After that the two of them sat down on the sand and watched the sun set. She pointed out that just as the sun hit the water you could look directly at it. The sun was a big warm friendly ball. The centre of the solar system. The centre of his universe. Like his mother.

One year later she died of breast cancer. Reuben was raised by his aunt and uncle who were caring enough, but older and somewhat tired. Reuben never had much fun.

Reuben would holiday at the beach every year for one week as his uncle went off fishing and his aunt read magazines. He spent most of his time alone beach combing, examining microscopic grains of sand and sea life. Every evening he'd stare at the sun remembering his mother's words. He felt that if he could understand this ball of fire, he'd know where his mother had gone. He could in some way bring her back.

Later on he learnt about the process of nuclear fusion that was the source of the sun's power. He threw himself into the world of nuclear physics. He explored the potential of the atom and came to love the purity of the power contained within it.

When he left school he received a scholarship to UTS in Sydney and studied physics and biology, achieving a doctorate in both subjects. He wanted to stay in the eastern states but when the secession occurred he was lured back to the newly independent Republic of South Australia by Double Happiness Uranium's unlimited research budget.

Reuben started off on a program designed to explore the potential of a fusion reactor but once the company realised his incredible capacities as both a physicist and a biologist he was recruited into the Peace Department. This department remained a clandestine wing of Double Happiness Uranium and was set up to develop very expensive weapons that might keep the rest of the world fighting while the Republic of South Australia reaped the profits. For Reuben, however, it was a chance to toy with immortality. The methylation process he developed had the potential to protect human cells from radiation. Perhaps one day it could protect them from dying from anything.

His research led him into darker philosophies about utilitarian necessities. Following in the footsteps of Sam Cohen, the father of the neutron bomb, Reuben began to believe that you could fight a moral, winnable, nuclear war. He was egotistical enough to believe that he could determine the fate of the planet. Double Happiness Uranium allowed him any budget he wanted to develop this weapon and he was treated like a rock star god who could get away with murder.

Then Reuben met Samira. She was a fellow researcher who matched his drive to change the world. Like him she loved the power caught within the nucleus and he was able to convince her that their crusade was a moral and necessary one. Not since his mother had he ever loved someone so much.

Samira brought the humanity out of Reuben and helped create a passionate, caring individual constantly at odds with his extreme scientific ambitions. She had such incredible faith in him that she put herself in the firing line to help prove his methylation theories correct.

He never felt completely at ease with this and deep down there were misgivings about whether he was doing the right thing in even having her involved.

He also didn't know she was pregnant with his child.

But had he thought about it; had he *really* thought about it then he would have considered the possibility of pregnancy (something he would avoid discussing) and had Samira become pregnant then her metabolism could change to such an extent to make the methylation process that was meant to protect her ineffective.

But he did not think about it to this extent. He had other things on his mind. He did promise himself that after this experiment, Samira would have no further role as a voluntary guinea pig. He would have enough evidence. Together they would perfect the bomb and save the world. And then, maybe, a home and a child...

When Samira died Reuben realised that he had lost the 'sun'. The answers he had craved for lay dead within the woman he loved. A woman he was responsible for destroying. Grief and guilt wiped his memory and he became an empty shell.

The company then reinvented him as a talented but thwarted genius. The people around him were charged with pushing the right buttons so his frustrations would squeeze the technical information out in a form that would not remind him of who he was. Hence the obscure and misinterpreted 'flow patterns'. These patterns haunt him and push him further toward discovery.

Reuben's predominant dramatic action is one of EXCAVATING, PROBING and PRESSING. Desperately digging around in the dark recesses of bureaucracy and other people's folly to find irrefutable proof of what he believes are patterns that determine the spread of underground radiation. But emotionally these patterns represent much more. The patterns are evidence that he is justified in his ambitions, that he can help others (specifically Samira and his mother) by getting ahead and proving the other incompetent bastards wrong. Subconsciously he is desperate to prove that the weapons development program was worth it.

His deeper psychological objective is 'to ATONE'. He is driven by a deep sense of guilt and loss; believing that these patterns, once proven valid, will somehow make things better (for humanity, for the world, for Samira...).

YURI SAVCHENKO

Dr Yuri Savchenko is a psychiatrist of great natural intelligence, who is driven by romantic notions even though on the surface he is the most cynical man on earth. He cannot abide mediocrity and has spent his life seeking those people with the courage to excel.

Savchenko believes that drive, honesty and ruthlessness are far better qualities than hard work for achieving the seemingly impossible.

Savchenko is an orphan whose alcoholic parents died in the frozen fields of a particularly cruel Russian winter. He was fortunate enough to be rescued from an under-funded orphanage by an Orthodox religious brother, who, having found great potential in the boy, personally paid for him to attend a half decent boarding school in St Petersburg. Savchenko was very grateful but wondered why this monk would have very little personally to do with him. He was also shocked to hear, just as he was about to graduate as dux of the school, that the monk had committed suicide. By then his outstanding academic abilities had been recognised by the St Petersburg Medical Institute and he was granted a full scholarship.

After graduating he studied psychiatry, and found steady, but relatively uninteresting work in St Petersburg. He found both his patients and colleagues dull and narrow minded. So he plodded along, with his mild discontent simmering away. Then the war broke out.

When Russia declared war on China it was an act of madness brought about by the false belief that China could be forced into buying Russian gas, and thus restore the economy. China had reneged on a contract with Russia, choosing instead to buy cheap nuclear energy from the newly formed Republic of South Australia. By now the United States had collapsed and the bankrupt European Union was utterly dependent on loans from China and therefore owed their allegiance to the Asian giant. Russia closed all its borders with Western Europe and immediately made a deal with the oil rich Middle East and Caucasian republics in a last ditch effort to save petroleum as the instrument of power.

Savchenko was happy to escape this madness when he was offered a job at Double Happiness Uranium in their psychological health program. He outwitted drunken border guards by pretending to be a mad Belarus peasant who'd lost his goats and made his way into Poland and then to Paris. Here spent a year here waiting for his visa to be finalised and in that time he came close to living the life he wanted.

A genteel, bon vivant, he was somewhat disappointed by the lack of cultural stimulus when he moved to Adelaide. Nevertheless he made do, and exploited the place for all the luxuries it could provide. After awhile he began to feel quite lonely and began drinking a little more than he should. He even risked hanging out at illegal Russian bars, just to get a taste of the old country. He found the nanny state that Double Happiness in

conjunction with the SA Government had constructed only of value to mindless idiots who had to be told what to think and aspire to.

Although his job was to develop 're-education' programs like Voluntary Employment Suspension, after awhile he started to experiment with various forms of indoctrination and mind control; after all, if you're going to do a job, you may as well do it properly. The company allowed him to do it, even though they didn't officially sanction it.

Eventually a special case came Savchenko's way. A particular scientist, Reuben Henschke had lost almost all of his memory during a clandestine program run by the company. They asked Savchenko if he could bring Reuben back to a point where he could give him the missing pieces of his research before he realised who he was. Excited by this challenge, Savchenko set about his work in earnest. But during the initial stages of therapy, Savchenko realised that Reuben had lost his memory but none of his intelligence. After discovering the brilliance of Reuben's early work into the methylation process, Savchenko fell in love with him. If ever he had a soul mate, this was it.

Consequently, Savchenko invented a scenario where he would become Reuben's best friend and confidante. Where the two of them would be out in the wilderness on some kind of adventure, bonding and discovering amazing scientific truths. It was almost as if Savchenko was constructing his ideal/fantasy partner.

During the playing out of the film Savchenko is genuinely in love with Reuben. He is also enjoying himself. It's as if for the first time in his life he has a special friend. He knows what the company is doing. He knows what the company wants. But he thinks he can get this out of Reuben and still restore him to full psychological health (albeit with a false identity) and the two of them can continue being buddies. In fact, had Savchenko not been so in love with Reuben, he may well have tried a harsher approach, figuratively (or perhaps even literally) cleaving his head in twain to get the secrets out.

Savchenko's action is TO SEDUCE and TO ENDEAR, sometimes he also GOADS, CHALLENGES and TEMPTS. In the courtroom scenes he is SLASHING away at the magistrates, spitting venom at the hypocrisy and WRINGING the pain out of his own broken heart.

REBECCA MORRIS

Rebecca was raised by struggling lower middle class parents in one of Adelaide's more salubrious suburbs. Her parents could barely afford the house she lived in or the school she attended and throughout her teenage years she never felt quite up to scratch compared to the privileged people around her. But Rebecca was smart and knew how to fake her social credentials by picking the right boyfriends, clothes and career path. But always at the back of her mind was the fear that somebody would discover that most of her clothes were bought on sale and that her dad was a tradesman who drove a ute and barracked for Port Power. Worst of all, he was born in Melbourne, making him a non-citizen. Most of the time the government overlooked this, but employers like Double Happiness Uranium rarely accepted non-citizens for senior positions.

Rebecca made it into the Double Happiness Institute and started studying chemistry and physics. Two subjects she simply wasn't suited to but worked hard and managed to get solid grades. She entered the management course and used her advanced ability to sum up people's weaknesses and strengths to reach the top of her class.

During her time in this course she got to know Amal, a 'refo' from Eritrea. At first she enjoyed being able to condescend to someone whose English was not the best but eventually formed quite a strong relationship with her when Amal started challenging some of her attitudes with a few home truths. Amal also had a past she'd

rather not talk about and one that she thought might impede her progress toward a steady job at the company. After awhile Rebecca opened up to her and admitted for the first time that she regretted having to keep her dad hidden from all her friends at school and maybe she should be a little more honest with people after all.

Then Amal was called into immigration and exported for reasons of national security. It was felt she had the wrong attitude and might be susceptible to recruitment from terrorist cells bent on undermining the uranium industry. Rebecca was devastated. And then she got frightened. There were suddenly lots of forms she had to fill out asking for family background and personal information. Some of the figures about family income she'd fudged in the past revealed inconsistencies and she received an official reprimand and a fine from the National Department of Security. When they threatened to make her file available to her employers Rebecca agreed to act as an informant for anyone else who might be acting suspiciously. Soon she realised that anything the government knew Double Happiness Uranium knew and wondered why she hadn't been sacked.

When she was asked to participate in Dr Reuben Henshcke's retraining she knew the answer. Her role was to push his insecure buttons, provide him with an enemy to struggle against, and then turn into someone vulnerable, an ally who needed convincing. To play this part needed little training. It was basically herself. The consequences for failure were high. It was never actually stated, but she knew that if she failed Double Happiness would have no problem exiling her or having her placed permanently on Voluntary Employment Suspension.

Rebecca's dominant emotional methodology is TO FLICK and DEFLECT. She actively PATRONISES and BELITTLES in an attempt to negate the threats that she sees all around her. Not since Amal has she had any real, constructive relationship that might allow her to relax and let anyone in. After she is exiled to Maralinga 7 her action is TO ENDEAR herself to Reuben and DEFEND her own actions. Underneath this is the fear of failure and ultimately the guilt of knowing she is deceiving and betraying an innocent man.

JERI HAMILTON-SMITH

Jeri is the mastermind behind Double Happiness Uranium's ascendancy to one of the most powerful corporations on the globe.

The only child of extremely wealthy parents, Jeri is precocious yet charming. Although she's not exactly a self-made success, she exudes a Richard Bransonesque confidence and can adopt the common touch when she needs to. She insists that all members of middle and senior management address her by her first name and places great importance on sporty activities that might act as 'levellers' amongst her peers and employees. She, of course, orchestrates every situation in her favour, so that when she does succeed she would have to opportunity to explain to everyone else how it's done.

In spite of her outward chumminess when crossed Jeri will turn like a tiger and let you know exactly whose boss. She's the sort of person who knows the power of leaving a gap at the end of someone else's sentence so they are unsure of what you're actually thinking. She is master of the quite, smirking stare that makes others feel uneasy.

In every interchange she is forceful and chipper, demonstrating extreme confidence. Her verbal actions are to BOMBARD and DEMOLISH and her emotional actions are to ENDEAR, BEFRIEND but also CAUTION and INTIMIDATE.

MICKEY MENDOZA

Mickey Mendoza fled the economic collapse of Argentina and arrived in South Australia hoping for a better life. It was probably a life he didn't deserve having fudged some of his marks at the somewhat corrupt University of Buenos Aires and also leaving his wife and four children behind.

Mickey talked his way into a job at Double Happiness Uranium using his dodgy qualifications. Of course the company was on to him from the beginning and immediately employed him as guinea pig in the Peace Department. They lied to him about how dangerous it could be.

When Mickey met Reuben he liked him immediately. He felt safe with Reuben being head of the programme because he saw him as a moral guy who wouldn't let any of his employees come to harm. In fact, Mickey even began to change for the better through his work with Reuben. He stopped bitching so much and blaming everyone else for his own problems and actually took on some responsibility and developed something resembling a work ethic.

After the final experiment went wrong things changed profoundly. Mickey wanted out but the company would have none of it. He was forced to play a role manipulating Reuben into thinking he needed saving. Mickey resented this role bitterly, but the more he resented it, the more he suited it.

His dominant action is to SLASH, to ACCUSE and sometimes to GUSH and DEFLECT. He's somewhat insecure and often lashes out at others because of it.

His deadly sin is ENVY.

SAMIRA

Samira is an extremely talented and driven scientist whose fatal flaw is too much compassion. In spite of her analytical nature she has spent much of her time looking for a soul mate. She is highly particular in the work she does and the partners she chooses. She is quite the control freak in her own way making sure that she considers every single possibility before making a decision.

Samira completely dominated her three younger brothers as she grew up and at school obliterated any academic competition in the subjects she actually cared about.

She went to uni and received a PhD in biology. Along the way she was involved in half a dozen clubs activities from Drama to squash. She excelled at them all. She could also drink any student under the table and come up smiling the next day.

When she met Reuben she knew she'd found the right man for her. She saw through his cold exterior and brought out the humanity in him.

They had an extremely easy relationship based on friendship, humour and respect. It became love very quickly, something Samira had never before experienced. It surprised her. It distracted her. It led to oversights, inconsistencies, mistakes...

She didn't know she was pregnant when she received the fatal blast of radiation; but it's the sort of thing she should have known.

The Samira that appears in the film is both a ghost and a construction of Reuben's mind. In spite of this, of all the characters she is the most real.

Samira's dominant action is REGRET. She doesn't blame Reuben. She blames herself; but she can't help but be angry with him. In her chipper exchanges there is often a note of sadness, possibly even resentment. She's happy to see him again, and appreciates the opportunity to hang out with him, but in a way she wants him to figure out for himself what he has done. She wants him to KNOW and to REGRET the way she does. But she's not going to make it easy for him. Her dramatic methodology is to DAB, to CAJOLE, to INTRIGUE, sometimes to SLAP.

CHRIS DEBBS

Chris is a chipper security guard who wants to be everyone's friend. He regards himself as a big brother figure, stern but fair, who is there to keep the staff on the straight and narrow.

He is fiercely loyal to Double Happiness Uranium and is proud to be captain of the Security Staff indoor cricket team. They've won the company championship three years in a row.

Chris would always be the first guy to shout a round of beers and would never think to remind you when it's your turn to buy. On the other hand he is brutally honest and will happily tell you where he thinks you're going wrong in your job, your life, your personal relationships, etc.

Chris's dramatic action is to ENDEAR, to CHARM and sometimes to BLUDGEON and BULLY in a friendly kind of way.

JASON CRESWELL

Jason is the cocky son of Victor Creswell, the head of personnel. He went to PAC college and was average at football, maintaining his position at forward pocket in the first XVIII for most of the season. When he gained possession at any stage of the game he would always go for goal regardless of how loudly the lone forward standing in the goal square was screaming. He rarely got it through the posts.

Jason went to the Double Happiness Institute of Technology and passed with a major in Industrial Management. He went straight into the Waste Department and has been languishing there for sometime. He is a little resentful about being passed over for promotion. It would never enter his head that he is less qualified than most other people in the department.

Due to his naïve confidence Jason is quite successful with the ladies – to a degree. When they eventually get wise to him after a few days he is inevitably dumped. He always thinks it's their problem.

His dramatic actions are to DEGRADE, to BRAG, to GLOAT, to TRICK, to SNEAR at various times.

CPU (CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT)

CPU is a construct of the computing environment that is networked throughout Double Happiness Uranium. She is quietly confident, endeavouring to solve every problem quickly and efficiently with a friendly smile and a reassuring comment. She's a little like the AAMI girl from the TV advertisements whose beatific smile inspires confidence in a handsome insurance payout.

Even though CPU's personality can be tweaked by the individual user it's pretty well just variations on a theme: she's the flawless face of Double Happiness who knows what you want better than you do.

Her dramatic actions are to REASSURE, to COMFORT, to SEDUCE and to CONDESCEND

JACK LANGFORD

Jack is a semi-professional actor whose career has gone down the toilet. Reduced to doing arthritis medication commercials he's about to sign up for the newly introduced voluntary euthanasia program when he is offered the role of his life: playing the fictitious founder of Double Happiness Uranium. 50,000 Yuan to appear in a 2 minute promotional video and pretend to be the friend of the recently reprogrammed Reuben Henschke.

As Jack goes through the motions of playing chess with Reuben he actually develops a genuine love for the guy and feels guilty as hell that he is simply playing a role. He suspects the company means Reuben harms and that once he's given them whatever they're after they will dispose of him somehow. This gives him genuine emotional pain.

Jack's actions are to CHARM and SEDUCE Reuben by playing the friendly, eccentric, intellectually engaging but somewhat harmless old man.

All bitterness and regret that comes out in his performance (eg. When he laments the death of Mickey and challenges Reuben to head out to the desert) is absolutely genuine and aimed squarely at himself. He really hates Jeri and hates himself for what he is doing.

GIL

Gil is the public face of Double Happiness Uranium. She is a matronly declaimer of propaganda with a slight edge to her voice that tells you you'd better behave. She is the definition of passive aggression with a fixed, triumphant smile on her face every time she DECLAIMS a good news story.

Her actions are to LECTURE, DECLAIM, INFLAME and INTIMIDATE

MITCH

Is a weak-minded simpleton who also went to PAC. His dad is not as influential as Jason's. He'd like to think he's Jason's best buddy, but Jason only hangs out with him if there is no one better around. Mitch thinks Jason is a very witty, cool guy.

Mitch is dead keen on Frisbee and puts in a lot of hours perfecting the art both at Motivational Leisure Time and beyond. He is devastated when he is selected for Voluntary Employment Suspension and can't understand what he might have done wrong.

When he encounters Reuben and Savchenko later on he is highly resentful and suspicious of them. He just wants his Frisbee back, his only true friend.

His actions are to FLATTER, MIMIC and ENDEAR.

MEMORY

Memory is a construct of the Double Happiness Uranium computing environment. He is a clean cut young man who takes great pleasure in retrieving data. He does it all quickly and carefully and is at the beck and call of CPU.

THE DOCTOR

The Doctor tries to be autonomous within a very oppressive environment. And he greatly resents this. Had he studied a little harder he may have been a specialist, but thanks to his affinity for drinking and gambling he has wound up a medical officer with state of the art facilities that pretty well lie useless. He can only diagnose what the company wants him to diagnose.

Yet he tries to maintain a façade of dignity and control. Resentment and bitterness is just below the surface. He takes great pleasure in other people's misfortunes.

Apart from single malt whiskeys and the horses his hobbies include constructing dioramas of historic battle scenes and sudoku.

His predominant dramatic action is to ANTAGONISE and INTIMIDATE. He greatly relishes the opportunity to unnerve a character like Reuben, but knows he has to pass him anyway.

THE MAGISTRATE

The Magistrate is seeking to intimidate Savchenko in an effort to prove that foreigners have no place in the Republic. He's a judge who has seen the power of the courts steadily eroded over the years. He doesn't like it, but is now getting too weary to make a real attempt at reforming the system. Deep down he knows that the corporation controls the government and the law courts and there is little he can do. Still, he'll try to get a boot in when he can.

His predominant action is to BULLY and TRAP, to DENIGRATE and MOCK.

APPENDIX 1

LABAN SYSTEM OF MOVEMENT

To PUNCH	DIRECT	HEAVY	UNSUSTAINED
To SLASH	INDIRECT	HEAVY	UNSUSTAINED
To DAB	DIRECT	LIGHT	UNSUSTAINED
To FLOAT	INDIRECT	LIGHT	SUSTAINED
To PRESS	DIRECT	HEAVY	SUSTAINED
To WRING	INDIRECT	HEAVY	SUSTAINED
To FLICK	INDIRECT	LIGHT	UNSUSTAINED
To GLIDE	DIRECT	LIGHT 353	SUSTAINED

APPENDIX 2

PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIONS

PSYCHOLOGICAL / VERBAL ACTIONS

To Abandon	To Abolish	To Absolve
To Accuse	To Acknowledge	To Acquaint
To Act	To Address	To Admire
To Admit	To Advise	To Affirm
To Advance	To Alarm	To Alert
To Agree	To Altercate with	To Amuse
To Allege	To Annihilate	To Annoy
To Alter	To Ape	To Appraise
To Antagonise	To Appease	To Appeal
To Appraise	To Argue	To Arouse
To Badger	To Batter	To Beat
To Befriend	To Befuddle	To Beg
To Beguile	To Belittle	To Bemuse
To Bend	To Berate	To Besiege
To Betray	To Blast	To Blame
To Blitz	To Blow Up	To Bluff
To Bolster	To Bombard	To Boss
To Bother	To Brace	To Brand
To Break	To Bruise	To Brush
To Burn	To Burst	To Bury
To Bustle	To Bypass	
To Cajole	To Call	To Calm
To Captivate	To Capture	To Caress
To Carry	To Cast Off	To Cast Out
To Castigate	To Catch	To Caution
To Censure	To Challenge	To Champion
To Change	To Charge	To Charm
To Chastise	To Check	To Cheer
To Cherish	To Chew Up	To Chide
To Circumvent	To Claim	To Climb
To Cling	To Coddle	To Cool
To Comfort	To Commandeer	To Command
To Commission	To Commiserate	To Compete
To Compromise	To Compliment	To Con
To Condemn	To Conceal	To Concede
To Congratulate	To Confess	To Confront
To Console	To Connect	To Conquer
To Consult	To Conspire	To Constrain
To Contaminate	To Consume	To Contain
To Contest	To Contradict	To Contend
To Corrupt	To Counsel	To Control
To Complete	To Cover	To Counter
To Countermand	To Create	To Crack
To Crave	To Crucify	To Criticise
To Cross	To Curse	To Crush
To Cuddle		To Cut

To Damn
To Decimate
To Defeat
To Deflect
To Delve Into
To Demolish
To Denounce
To Desert

To Detach
To Devastate
To Digress
To Discourage
To Discuss
To Disgust
To Dismiss
To Dissuade
To Divert
To Dominate
To Dump On

To Educate
To Encourage
To Enforce
To Entertain
To Entreat
To Escape
To Eradicate
To Excite
To Explain
To Express

To Faint
To Flatten
To Fool
To Frighten

To Goad
To Guard

To Halt
To Harass
To Hinder
To Honour
To Humiliate
To Hurt

To Incite
To Indulge
To Instruct
To Interrogate
To Introduce
To Imitate
To Irritate

To Dampen
To Declare
To Defend
To Degrade
To Demand
To Demoralise
To Deny
To Destroy

To Deter
To Devour
To Direct
To Discover
To Disdain
To Disintegrate
To Disparage
To Distract
To Divide
To Draw Out

To Elude to
To Enchant
To Engage
To Enthrall
To Envelope
To Evade
To Examine
To Exhilarate
To Exploit
To Extend

To Familiarise
To Flatter
To Force

To Greet

To Hamper
To Hasten
To Hint
To Horrify
To Humour
To Hustle

To Incriminate
To Inflamm
To Insult
To Intimidate
To Investigate
To Impregnate
To Isolate

To Deceive
To Decry
To Deflate
To Delay
To Demean
To Denigrate
To Derail
To Detain

To Dethrone
To Dictate
To Disarm
To Discredit
To Disenchant
To Dislike
To Dissolve
To Dive Into
To Dodge
To Drill

To Embrace
To Endure
To Enlighten
To Entice
To Estrange
To Evoke
To Excuse
To Expel
To Explore
To Exterminate

To Fix
To Focus
To Forgive

To Gratify

To Harang
To Help
To Hit
To Hound
To Hurry

To Indoctrinate
To Ignore
To Interest
To Intrigue
To Involve
To Intoxicate

To Jeer To Jolt To Knock	To Jest	To Jog
To Lecture	To Lie	To Laugh At/With
To Malign To Mobilise To Monopolise	To Mar To Mock To Move	To Menace To Milk To Mimic
To Needle To Nurse	To Niggle To Nurture	To Nourish
To Oppose To Outrage	To Order To Outsmart	To Ostracise
To Pacify To Patronise To Pester To Praise To Pressure To Probe To Prosecute To Pump To Push	To Pamper To Persecute To Placate To Prepare To Prevent To Prod To Protect To Punish	To Parry To Pervert To Please To Press To Prime To Promise To Provoke To Pursue
To Quell To Quieten	To Query To Quiz	To Question
To Rattle To Recognise To Rehabilitate To Remove To Reproach To Resist To Rewind	To Reassure To Recreate To Reject To Repel To Repulse To Restrain To Ridicule	To Rebuff To Reduce To Release To Reprimand To Request To Reveal To Roast
To Satisfy To Scrutinise To Sever To Slate To Shock To Sober To Stimulate To Subjugate To Sway	To Scare To Seduce To Serve To Shame To Show To Soothe To Stop To Suppress	To Scold To Sentence To Silence To Share To Smother To Spoil To Stir To Support
To Tame To Tempt To Thrash To Tip To Trap	To Tantalise To Terrify To Threaten To Touch To Trash	To Teach To Test To Throw To Transform
To Unbalance To Unnerve	To Uncover To Upbraid	To Unmask To Upset
To Wail To Warn To Weary To Whither	To Wake To Warp To Weep To Woo	To Warn To Wash To Welcome