



But our notebooks give us away, for however dutifully we record what we see around us, the common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable 'I.'

(Joan Didion, 'On Keeping a Notebook,'
Slouching Towards Bethlehem,
1968/2008, p. 136)

Sharing as a means of
forgetting
...

'Therapy' holds us
together and stops the world
falling apart
...

5

REHAB-DIARIES

6

2001

It was treacherous, stupid and demented in every way—but there was no avoiding the stench of twisted humor that hovered around the idea of a gonzo journalist in the grip of a potentially terminal drug episode being invited to cover the National District Attorneys' Conference on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

(Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, 1971/1998, p. 80)



Name: ANDY'S DIARY
Year: _____
School: _____
Subject: _____

DIARY



Exercise Book **192** page



KUITPO COMMUNITY

This is to certify that

ANDREW MILLER

Has completed the introduction stage
of the Kuitpo Community Program

27 / 11 / 2001

S.L. Cruise
Counsellor



Adelaide Central
MISSION

Union Bishop
Team Leader

Kuitpo Diary 2

Weight: (on arrival) a little over 12 stone

Weight: (four weeks later) a little over 13 stone (83 kg)

27/11/2001

Tuesday: *Kate's day*

Today is Kate's birthday and I made her a card. All residents signed it. I'll give it to her at morning meeting in an hour and a half.

Yesterday. Sad day. Quiet, old, mysterious Dave got kicked out. He apparently scored some benzos on Friday and brought them back to Kuitpo. He had two opportunities to reveal the lie but didn't. Kerry told him on Friday that he had to leave but not until Monday, since he had nowhere to go. I hope he copes and doesn't get back on. I think he will—and quick!

Richard [from the workshop] took Lorette and Marty and me up to the kids' community for community projects yesterday morning. From here we walked to the water tank where we sunk our rakes into the spume and attempted to hack out the reeds. It was hopeless. Underfoot was thick with mud. The tank's centre was impossible to reach. And the far end of the tank was well over our heads. I suggested we drain it. Richard went to see about this. It rained and Lorette, Marty and I made a dash across the paddock to the kids' community.

Deserted for years, the kids' community is now an overrun ghost town. We opened and closed doors and peered into old dormitories, kitchens, and recreation areas. Old gumboots lay discarded. Chairs sat in circles. Cows now wandered the porches and paths and shat where they liked. Old swings had rusted still. Grass was overtaking pathways and walls. There would be no more laughter or terror here.

Group from 1.00–2.00 pm. I spoke of feeling awful the last week and being up and down a lot. I said my moods had been erratic, that they swung from one extreme to the other, and that I felt lethargic and flat. Normal, said Kerry. I also said that I

conscientiously shift from first person to third person in my journal and that on reflecting on myself from the third person I actually begin to like myself. Kerry loves this kind of stuff and thought it all rather narcissistic. Could be. For I suddenly felt lucky that the guy in the story—him over there—was me, and that he'd been with me all along—only I hadn't acknowledged him, or else I was trying to murder him and pacify his longing. Interesting group.

Nearly 8 am: must turn on pump and drain tank. And get Lorette to sign Kate's card. Brent's just gone to Kate's to get a birthday kiss. I'm jealous. Why didn't I think to go for a morning coffee? I still could, I guess. Now he's back—good! She was in the shower. Lucky. But what an image: Kate turning and twisting beneath the steaming strings—fingers—of water. Hot enough to leave her shoulders and back pink with heat ... Let's not go there.

11 am

I just finished delivering my Action Plan at morning meeting. I was scared and anxious before and during the delivery, but thankful I did it. It's a weight off my shoulders. Kate wasn't there. I had to give her the card just as she was leaving with Dick. A hug and pat on the back and she, like so many beautiful and alluring things, was gone.

These last few days with Kate have reminded me of many things, good and bad. I'm amazed at my ability to harbour romantic hope even in destitution. It'll probably never happen, but nevertheless... I've lived a new world through dreaming about her, and all within the space of a week. In that week I have almost imagined a relationship—her kiss, her support, her ideas, her life, our partnership, our sharing, and so on. It's incredible but also rather depressing. Here comes the negative. For when it comes out that all of these feelings were in vain, in madness, I'll beat myself up and grind my teeth, etc... Oh, well!

Yesterday, Kate and I went to the computer room while the other residents were up at the workshop. She, to my sheer amazement, was creating a sunset image over which to type—get this—the poem I wrote on the meteor shower. I was touched, amazed, relieved, in love. She'd already written it in her journal, she said, but wanted to create a poster-like copy. What a woman! Basically we just mucked around and played CDs. Kate's favourite flowers include the bird of paradise and tulips. She's a Sagittarius which

has the symbol ⚡. Her surname is Allen (I think – not Allan). She spoke about Nick and the rumours of her ‘affair.’ She said the counsellors had warned her against such intimacies and, I guess, she said no such thing occurred (or did she?). She said they were close because they lived in cabin 5 and were both shy. I’m still jealous...

We also came back here (cabin 1) for coffee and cigarettes. I spoke to her about the ‘survivor’ women in Janette Turner Hospital’s novels, and how they use transience (physical and emotional) as a means of survival. Kate recognises this trait in herself. She’s lived in over 50 places. We spoke of ‘blue wanderers’ [a Queensland butterfly] and how they are permanently set for flight and escape. We spoke of her wish to settle, which I hope we do together. God! To stop and settle with her! The very thought makes me faint. We spoke of a book her mum recommended about someone exploring their mother’s death. I’ll have to read it. But—but—the sheer fact she spoke to her mother about me is astounding. I’m trembling with the implications of this. Don’t hold your breath, Andy, or you’ll die, so DON’T. We spoke of many things and again I think we found that sanctuary she and I have been giving each other. I like it. I’m not used to feeling intimate with others. I doubt she is either. Who knows? I guess she must be with Nick, so I shouldn’t get too hopeful. Nevertheless, I’m glad I’ve touched her in some little way and she me.

Then I asked her to help me create something on the computer. ‘What?’ she asked. Your birthday card, I said. We laughed and went off to do just that. It was great fun and very funny. Shirley thought we were mad, and maybe we are. Who cares? I really laughed yesterday afternoon and so did Kate.

God, how will I exist in her absence? Perhaps I best get used to it. That’s the nature of my life after all.

12.11 pm

I suspect she’ll return from leave and our forays will end. She’ll see much of Nick in the next few days and any interest she had in me will transpire. She’ll return to wherever she and Nick left off. Sadly, this is your life.

ACTION PLAN FOR KUITPO COMMUNITY

Resident: ANDREW MILLER

27/11/01

Why is Kuitpo Community suitable for you?
As a drug & alcohol free facility, Kuitpo provides a safe & supportive environment for personal exploration & growth, something I need to take full advantage of.

What do you want to achieve whilst at Kuitpo Community? (In general?)
address many of the issues, experiences & relationships that have long-since driven my destructive behaviour, & in doing this begin to move away from these memories & that behaviour.

Specific Goal	How will you know this goal has been achieved	Has goal been met		
		Less than	Yes	More than
① <u>To address issues arising from the past that influence the 'now' in a negative & destructive way.</u>	<u>When I identify these issues & respond more positively to them.</u>			
② <u>Create a personal inventory of the harm I have caused myself & others through substance abuse.</u>	<u>When I have a comprehensive inventory that I know is honest & accurate.</u>			
③ <u>Begin to take responsibility for my future.</u>	<u>When I have at least some idea of what I want to do after leaving kuitpo & some sense of where I want to be in the months & years ahead.</u>			

28/11/01

Wednesday

Went to bed early last night, exhausted. Kate's absence and the Action Plan really took it out of me. But now, rested and renewed, I feel good. The most beautiful day greets us. The birds are in chorus outside. The sky is blue and bold. Flowers are opening to the coming sun. Another Kuitpo day has begun...

Marty brought over 'I was only 19' [a song written by Redgum] last night. He's gone through and written out the whole song and the chords. He's a very generous, good natured, funny, and likeable bloke. I doubt whether anyone dislikes him. The rest of us get caught in the Kuitpo crossfire, the politics and brawls, but not Marty.

Lorette is the one most at risk here. Her ability to ensnare herself in community chaos and internal politics is supreme. Brent, for instance, went to the Christmas meeting last night with Lorette and Margo. He returned minutes later, grumpy and angry. When quizzed, he revealed he had offered numerous suggestions, such as streamers, bomb bombs, free salads and drinks for visitors, and so on. Lorette and Margo rejected these ideas and Brent left, outraged. He plans to condemn both Margo and Lorette at meeting today in some sort of public display. Should be interesting.

Made an old English print for OJ for his tattoo: DAMAGED.

29/11/01

Thursday: *Bubby Day*

Shopping day, and thank God! Need tobacco and food.

Look forward to seeing the dog. Whilst I haven't been seeing her I still think about her. It's a great relief that she's at a good home with other dogs, etc, and that I can see her weekly [when we go shopping in Mt Barker].

I think I've buried the pain of not having Bubby with me. Shoved it to the back of my mind. But I see her moo-cow eyes and her stout little body – and I pray she's not having seizures.

Not sleeping well in Kate's absence. Think of her and Nick together and feel sad and

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D A M A G E D

alone. I don't feel any animosity towards Nick, on the contrary, I feel envious. He's a lucky man. Do I wish I hadn't met her? Not at all.

Brent's nearly out of here. He's in arguments with Margo and Lorette over the Christmas party. He's at the end of his tether. He graduates any day but isn't due to leave for three weeks.

Yesterday, I climbed into a huge concrete tank to rake out the slime and reeds. Hideous, stinking task. Marty, Brent, and Richard helped. Mick felt sick and left. It was like standing in a sewer, a black quagmire, waiting for creatures to rise up from the deep. I stunk as a result. And got burnt on the back of my neck.

30/11/01

Friday

Well, today is the day of reckoning. I'll know within seconds the answers to all my dreams and fears; one moment could decide my future. Then again, I guess they always do.

Today is my leave day. It's taken over four weeks to earn this few hours of freedom. Now here it is. Kate will be in the city somewhere, ready to return to us after her leave. If she returns! She may leave me forever and vanish deep into the heart of the world. What a savage blow that would be. What hell. Could I live through it? Kate may have fled with Nick because of the accusations about their affair. She may simply say 'Fuck it' and leave him, me, Kuitpo—everything! Don't think... Just do...

These last few days have been torture. I find it hard to think through thinking about Kate, hard to sleep through thinking about Kate: I'm a man possessed... Thousands of potentialities seem to coexist in my imagination, as if I'm exploring like a chess player every move of my life to come, particularly those imaginings involving Kate. Those not involving Kate are dull and bleak.

Owen cooked for Brent and me last night, which is something of a miracle. Having completed 1½ years of a cooking apprenticeship, he managed a very damn good schnitzel burger, salad and chips. He's an odd one: painful, irritating, perverted, and yet full of life, chaos, and other excitingly erratic things. He's funny and idiotic all at once

– likeable and hateable both! Still, he means well most of the time, and appears now to have his sordid little mind set on Lorette, who he visits every other moment, where they do god only knows what!

Brent damaged one of the Kuitpo vans yesterday. He swiped the driver's door against a 'Children Playing' sign. All children in the region would have died if present. Staff said they'd deal with Brent today... Hmm.

Blanchetown plays on my mind [the family block]. I have murderous thoughts about that John scoundrel. I hope something awful happens to him and the river flushes him downstream like the shit he is. May God have mercy on my angry and vicious soul.

Almost finished *Portrait*. Very good read. Metaphysical struggle, etc. Will read *Ulysses* next!

So, off to city today. Should ring Rebecca Goldie and see if she wants to meet for coffee. Too stressful. Later. Rob... what's his number? Should find out from Lex and meet both in city.

Third and deciding Test starts today. Kiwis lucky to draw last two. God only knows what I'll do for so many hours today... Fret I bet...

Saturday
1st of December
Summer

We haven't yet had a convincing spring, but nonetheless summer is here!

Yesterday was a disaster! Strangely, I feel it was lucky I survived the night. My extreme loathing and contempt for self and others was at a unique high late yesterday. Nothing seemed important anymore. Every future hope turned to dust...

Oh Kate, where did you go?

Town yesterday:

Brent, Mark, and I went to two guitar shops, to the Salvos and Towards Independence, a camping shop, and Brent and me to the markets for lunch.

After lunch I wandered aimlessly about in search of the afternoon and Kate. Rang Lex and got Rob's number and met him coincidentally on Rundle Street. He's looking thinner, but I recognised his eyes. He has that earnest, astounded look. He looked as if he expected me to be happier. Instead, I was a sullen, self-interested goon with a chip on his shoulders. I was so depressed it came through.

Rob and Lex, I learned, are about to move out together to the Bay [Glenelg, on the coast]. I guess I did tell Lex to ask Rob if he could get in before me. And he did. Oh well, one hope dashed for the day! Such is life and then they fucking hang ya! Should ring Rebecca...

Eventually said goodbye to Rob and went back to the Adelaide Central Mission for the bus to Kuitpo. *Then. Saw. Kate.* Kate and Nick and a trolley of groceries and a domestic situation. Damned fool. I hate myself. What a mess. I've now returned to the mental anguish of three years ago, six years ago, back to when I was four-years-old and Mum had just leapt from a cliff. *Back to the start.*

The riptide has swung me back to the shallows of my abandonment, my fears. And there are so many of them. So many. Too many to battle and overcome. Where to begin? How to begin? Where to turn? There is nothing and non-one... Sinking.

Last night, in the absence and rejection from Kate, I found the true essence of my being—nothingness. *Emptiness. Despair. Death.* These things now define my being, my foreboding silences that push others away, that drain the last vestiges of resolve from my body. I need medication. Must see doctor on Tuesday. This is intolerable. I can't go on. Anymore.

Oddly, it's the most gorgeous of days outside. Summer dawns upon the ever-darkening soul, like fire. One Kate left Kuitpo and another returned; one that looks away from me, not towards me; one that snuggles into Nick and away from me. It's startling. It's painful. It's...

FTW.

Rob is coming up later. Must spare him this tide of woe. He doesn't need it. He's just arrived on these shores again [from Scotland and elsewhere] and doesn't need me to sweep him into the abyss. Must try. For his sake, I must pretend.

I should flog myself like John the Savage in *Brave New World*, hang myself, and

fucking be done with it. My life is a chain of empty moments. I am becoming invisible to the world. Perhaps this is why I work out: so I can expand and occupy space before my transparency and irrelevance takes hold. If I become any more invisible I simply won't exist. Weighed down with woe, I'll simply crumble into dust and be no more.

The 1st of the 12th of another fucked up year.

I'm on the verge of crying every other second. Perhaps I should let the tears flow, the tide swell ... but who will stop it? Verity Ashkenazy comes to mind [from Janette Turner Hospital's *Charades*]. But she went mad.

2/12/01

Sunday

Huge thunderstorm overnight. I glanced out my bedroom window and saw four bolts of lightning strike the hills, followed shortly after by deafening thunderclaps. It was an awesome experience. Then the rain came and I returned to sleep.

10.05 am, Sunday. I've slept in for me. I dreamed of Kate. Why? I can't imagine. Probably to punish myself. I do feel a little better than yesterday morning.

Rob and Lex came up at about 4.30 pm, well after the lunch they promised. Bubby was with them. She looked great. I showed my guests the cabin and then took them around the property, introducing them to Tye, Carol, and Margo on the way. Bubby loved it. She was panting vigorously and not as groggy as when I saw her the other day. We also walked to the dam and back.

Rob provided olives, cheese, breads, twiggy sticks, sundried tomatoes, and artichokes. We ate at my place and chatted. I unleashed on them a damning account of my experiences here, of my chances of staying dry, my chances of completing the programme, and so on. I doubt they were impressed. Still, I have nowhere to go. I obviously can't move in with Rob: Lex has already slotted in there! It's fucked. I know he wanted out and all, but it's not as if he didn't have somewhere to go. After all, he's got his own fucking pad at his mum's. Now he's taken my chance at a share-house. Sucks. Then again, maybe Rob didn't want to share with me anymore. Whatever, fuck

the fucking useless world! It's lucky I'm not a wrathful God or I would spread pain and misery across the world so all humanity felt my pain, and then I would dangle hope after hope before their pathetic, despairing faces and then just as quickly wrench them away. Huh...

After eating, I heard Kate's laughter on the breeze, so I grabbed Bubby and went to it. Kate loved Bubby and we joked around for a good fifteen minutes. Lex and Rob strolled over and met Kate. Nick retreated inside. It was nice. Still, there's that hideous gap between us now that wasn't there last week, that gap that is the blight on my future hopes. Cruel fate. *Crass causality obstructs the sun and rain and dicing time for gladness casts a moan, these purblind doomsters could have easily strewn blisses about my pilgrimage as pain* ['Hap,' by Thomas Hardy].

Yes, Hardy was right!

What on earth will this frightful day bring? Will I hurt myself more? Will I bumble over to Kate's like a wretched, love-struck Romeo? Yes, I think I might... But later. Must try and remain friends with her. I can't afford to lose her totally. She's too remarkable to let vanish.

After all, it's taken 31 years to have the conversations I had with Kate, and no-one can take them away...

3/12/01

Monday

The drizzling gloom outside reflects the winter of my soul. Leaden clouds have sunk to the ground, rain falls sideways, and saturated branches nod in the breeze.

Sunday was horrible. No Kate. She and Nick glimpsed together here and there. People knocking at their door received no reply, and then a furtive, half-dressed Nick appeared to speak on the phone to his girlfriend. The fiend, a girlfriend outside and Kate in here! I hate the world. There is no decency, no consistency bar that associated with horror, depression, and me. I watched the cricket all day yesterday and, like the four-year-old me, sat yearning for a woman. A woman that would never come. The torn soul has been

bludgeoned again. It responds with desperate cries to God, to silence. And so the torture continues and the derangement intensifies.

Also tried calling Rebecca yesterday. No luck. She was at work. Told her mum I'd try again later this week.

Just the thought of another week in this nightmare seems impossible. How will I survive? Only been here 4½ weeks and yet it feels much longer. Feels like I've known Kate for years and yet, get real, you've only just met her! So, fuck her... Got to get real about these things and get on with your life. Would like to know what happened to the Kate that left here last week, and who returned in her place. Amazing how someone can change so quickly. I wonder if I can do that.

This week I must make a start on my Action Plan inventory: the harm list. Should be fun. May see doctor tomorrow re anti-depressants. Don't know. Brent's trying to leave this week but Vivian [his counsellor] is making it hard. Why would she do this? Perhaps she doesn't think Brent's ready? Perhaps Brent isn't ready. It'll be very odd around here without Brent, that's for sure. Gonna miss the big fella!

Margo has up and fled in the night, to God only knows where. No doubt with that guy who kept visiting every night. Bad scene. She has little hope of reuniting with her three sons now. They'll stay in foster care and she'll return to a drunken rage. I hope she survives this chaos and finds some reason to sober up.

Brent leaves tomorrow. Strange times. The two people I met on arrival, who took me in and made me feel at home, will be gone. Such is the nature of this place. Shifting realities and transient connections. Puff, and it's all gone!!

12.10 pm

4/12/01

Tuesday

Again it rains outside. A sodden ground and sky reflects the grey of my inner world. Brent leaves today. He's been a good friend to me in here: supportive, loyal, generous,

funny, and many more things beside. We will miss his tall beaming figure and infectious laugh. He's a good man who deserves a break.

I made a card for Brent yesterday and had all staff and residents sign it. Yesterday: Miserable. I sat in meeting with my eyes on the floor, bewildered. If I glanced at Kate it was to see if she really existed, and perhaps she does, although the Kate I met has most certainly gone. In her place sits someone I don't recognise. Kate no longer returns my glances. Capricious? Evil? Forgetful? Duplicitous? Whatever...

Rained all morning. In the computer room I sat attempting to speak to Kate. She spoke but I didn't recognise her. She was typing up 'The Invitation,' a poem by Oriah Mountain Dreamer. Not bad. Sort of thing Kate just loves. She got the book—wait for it—from Nick's mum last week! Explains a lot. She's been seeking her inspiration from the family of her future world. I am a ghost in the background. In fact, when Kate first saw me yesterday morning on entering the computer room, she said:

'Oh! It's *you*.'

Later, after lunch, she said:

'Just don't come near me!'

Nice stuff. Now she loathes and fears me. Does she know she hurts me? She must. Clearly she wants me to know that last week's intimacies were aberrant exchanges. Nasty stuff. She's hoping I don't recognise her betrayal and disloyalty: that she is doing to me the very things she accuses others of doing to her!

Group yesterday was on stress management, goal setting, and assertive action. Jenny took it. Present: Jenny, Kate, me, Wayne, Bearded Steve, Steve W, Mick, Tye, and Carol.

Still raining yesterday afternoon. The drizzle of Kuitpo continues.

Margo bobbed up last night to retrieve her stuff. She came with Mitch. She's okay. She was slightly pissed. I think she knows the situation with her kids can't improve now. I hope she survives.

Tye and Carol brought over a cake for Brent last night. Good of them. I spent the afternoon and evening gathering signatures for Brent's card. Everyone signed it. Margo refused.

Also wrote a piece yesterday: 'Today, Tomorrow and the next day'.

Lorette snuck me aside last night to ask if Brent had it in for her. I said I didn't know.

Today, Tomorrow and the Next Day...

Today the drizzle falls languidly; with it rains the sorrow of my soul, the many moments that rain through my consciousness and remind me of times long ago. The ever-encroaching past and its multiple meanings, its multiple readings, and for what? To condemn and confuse me, to wrench me from the path of my future and lead me astray? Do I know where these falling reminders will take me?

Tomorrow lingers as a foggy dawn, with the potential for sunshine or a voracious storm. I imagine joy-filled days: I fill such days with multiple outcomes and infinite verdicts. But will they arrive simply because I have imagined them? Will they sustain me just because I can taste them? Those grappling joys, one over and around the next, a ball of reaching arms and legs, sighs towards the soft plains of future longing. Or will the storm of future-riot tear the virgin fears in twain and lay to ruin the dream of salvation? Is it enough to fortify the resolve against the advancing black, to determine a future against the pounding heart of panic? Can I fend off the assault of fear and chaos that threatens all, me included?

A darkling, amorphous scape ahead: the Next Day, beyond the winters or summers of future dread. What lingers here in this shadowy plain? My body, bent and buckled and future scored? Eyes pitted against a foe at its back? Forever marooned on some time ago in hell? Or some other creature of future sprite? A keen figure of infant joy, strong in body and in mind, standing before the 'long ago' that recedes and recoils the sunny dawn? Perhaps here stands my saving Self, beyond the reaches of Past's restless grip, the child made sick by shame and abandonment, at an outpost in the sunny vales of many many morrows more.

And at his back lies his foetal other, and he can hear its cries but not echo back its sighs.

4/12/01

2.30—3.15 pm

Counselling with Jenny: She asked why I spoke of the past as terrifying, horrifying, and traumatic, etc.

I spoke about:

- Mum's death/suicide when I was 4 (Why? Never will know.)
- Me being catatonic as a result
- Dad having to raise two boys by himself
- Scotty finding Dad dead [in 1993]
- Scotty's alcoholism, heroin addiction, and eventual death [overdose]
- Me being alone: always!
- Mum's suicide the cause, in my opinion, of all these catastrophic events (Dad's isolation and heart attack; Scott abandoned and bewildered; me a lonely, wretched, angry drunk!)
- I talked about Dad being abandoned as a child by Nanna after WWII, after his dad died [of Yellow Fever]
- Nanna as selfish for abandoning and deserting him! Dad in orphanage. Horrifying.
- Dad left to sit on bloodstained soil with two dogs [Sandy and Twiggy], beanie, alcohol, and camp fire... Why would he do this for 25 years?
- I discovered that a lot of my pain is about the horror women have caused the two most important men in my life: Dad and Scotty. Both suffered as a result of Mum's death and Dad as a result of his mother's desertion. A lot of my pain centres on the foggy feeling I have buried within me about my Dad's horrifying life—HOW THE FUCK DID HE SURVIVE?

Quite a heavy session, but useful.

I must take risks, Jenny said, and learn to trust women again, and not sabotage these encounters through a learned fear and anxiety. Wow! Hard stuff to deal with!

Must distance myself from horror and trauma of past...

11.01 pm

What have I done to make Kate change so radically?

5/12/01

Wednesday

Yesterday: Meeting. Heard Kate and Lorette's Graduate Action Plans. Both very detailed and busy. Kate: Working with animals; ease back into fulltime work; Housing Trust; some study re working with animals.

Brent's departure. I gave Brent his card at the meeting and said how he was a dear old soul and well respected. He thanked me. Then Bearded Steve said Brent was a nasty and awful man and didn't wish him well. Everyone stunned. Somehow Brent didn't snap. He looked bewildered. We all did. Marlene saved the day by quickly continuing, and thankfully all the farewells were comforting and positive. Steve looked ruined, as if so nervous about his public tirade that he might bust and go AWOL.

Hope Brent is okay.

Anyway, said my goodbyes to Brent yesterday, but promised to see him Friday week in town. Look forward to it. Now he and Margo have left I feel even more alone.

Also watched video yesterday for seminar about gambling addiction and how it, like alcoholism, really fucks people up. Must see the link between all addictions and the misery they cause.

Study group. Went to computer room with Kate and Lorette. Excellent. Kate apologised. Said she had been in a foul mood yesterday and acted like a cow: *a mad cow!* Also spoke to her re Bearded Steve's outburst. Amazed by it, we both hoped Brent would be okay. Showed Kate 'Today, Tomorrow, and the Next Day' and she liked it—said I wrote well. Oh, only to kiss her! Still, whilst I saw a glimmer of the old Kate there, she did have her arms crossed the whole time we spoke!

Finished Joyce's *Portrait*, and started *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. Have read before.

Oddly, in computer room, Kate asked Lorette for copies of photos of Nick, herself,

and me. At least she wants one of me.

Helped Lorette last night with her portfolio for various visual arts programmes offered at uni and Tafe. She gave me photos of Brent, herself, Kate, and me. I said I'd help her with her project on 'Past, Present, Future' and help her type up everyone's work.

House very quiet without Brent and Margo. Reminds me of my squat in Glenelg. Owen goes up to Lorette's to escape me, which suits me. We may get a new person in here today now that we have only two in our house. Cabin 6 only has two too.

Still working out.

Australia drew with New Zealand yesterday to save the series. Next we take on South Africa. Should be good.

What will today bring...?

In study group the teacher asked if the scene I was working on for *The Ridiculous Madman* was mine. 'Was it copied?' she asked. No, I said, it's all mine. She asked if I've always written like this. Yes, I said.

New Guy, Scott, arrived last week. Lives in 5 with Kate and Nick. Says they're like a married couple. Good God!!!

Five weeks today!

11.05 am

Antidepressants may delay ejaculation, doctor says.

Just been to see the doctor. She has given me a script for antidepressants as requested and hopes it will help in the short-term.

She says that Mum's suicide would have seriously troubled a four-year-old boy and hypnosis may help. She says that at four-years-old a child is very egocentric and that catastrophic events are taken personally. She says that my self-hatred naturally follows on from this, because in some way I blame myself for her death.

I have been vaguely aware of this, but perhaps not as openly as I am now.

I have focused my anger inward, she suggests, to punish myself. Remarkable how such moments define us—and for so fucking long. Haunted by long ago moments and

snagged in pockets of time.
 Look forward to hypnosis!
 The mysterious interior beckons!!!

6/12/01

Thursday: *Bubby Day*

7.30 am and it rains grimly outside. The pebbles of the path are floating in water and mud. A thin fog sweeps slowly through the ravine. And yet it isn't cold. I sit here with my coffee in a t-shirt. The heavy burden of misery in this place lives itself out in nature, in a steady drizzle, in a constant stream, accentuated at times by the most foreboding fork-lightning I have ever seen. And so the days come and go, and here we live and breathe and attempt to heal our wounded souls. Spring and summer threaten, yet winter lingers like an irascible old man...

Thursday: Bubby Day. Good, can't wait to see her. Might get wet walking to her. Also need to get antidepressants whilst out shopping (Zolof).

Yesterday: doctor in morning and first hint of hypnotherapy. After this worked on scene from *Madman* until lunch. Community projects after lunch, which meant I was back to spraying weeds. Not bad, saw Kate often enough bouncing around like a wild butterfly. Then had 12 Steps with Dick in my house (cabin 1). Attendance: me, Dick, Mark, Lorette, Bearded Steve, and Dick's son. Not bad session. Talked about making amends to people we've harmed. I said I couldn't apologise to Lisa or Claire... Dick said, yes, you are prepared to make amends, but you haven't yet got the strength to pull it off. I agreed. In other words: be prepared to apologise but only to those you won't hurt in the process. Could write to some people if you think they won't give you a fair hearing, etc.

Carol came over after tea. She had a review yesterday and did well. Told she was a little blunt and insensitive. I agreed. I told her to get the picture of herself from Lorette and look at it from time to time. 'Why?' she asked. So you know *who* you're saving here. I said to look at how sad she looked in the picture, and to save that girl and get to know her. I think she'll try. She said we are the seniors now. All a little rattled by the

traffic flow in and out of this place. Last night she said she may only stay for sixteen weeks, then leave. Time will tell.

Just broke a guitar string trying to play 'Patience' by Guns and Roses. I'm getting good playing upside-down. Since the others play guitar right-handed, I have to play left-handed and upside-down. Annoying, but true. I should re-string the guitar so I can hold my cords properly, but no-one else thinks this a good idea. Need to buy my own guitar. Now that a string has broken it'd be easy to re-string it and get away with it.

Fucking Kate, eh! Scarcely talks to me now, or if she does it's about pointless stuff. She no longer looks at me, but through or around me. I've become uninteresting to her, physically and mentally. She no longer visits or hangs around. People say she and Nick look so tired every morning because they've been FUCKING all night.

What a torturous world!!

1.40 pm

A day of despair and sorrow. This morning at meeting, no warning, abruptly, with almost bizarre matter-of-factness, they announced that Dave, dear old soul, died yesterday. To think, he was just here, on the fringe of something more profound and meaningful. Now it's dashed. A life lost at the very pinnacle of its battle to survive, to look again with pride into the faces he so dearly wished to impress and love. I still remember his startling and wise contributions in group, his despair and hope, his attempts to grow into the man he so dearly longed to be.

They say he choked! My God, what a horrifying end. And yet they announced it as if a cat had died. I sat in trembling bewilderment. Kate, lost and pale, fell into her palms and was gone to us. Lorette, by her side, looked sick. Others carried on as if nothing had happened. We were to go shopping now. The emptiness of these moments overwhelms me. I stumble back through them. Why no talk of talk, of grief, of us coming together to say something about him? What about the funeral? Can we say our farewells? His keen intellect and keen, thoughtful eyes, a man of silent contemplation and wisdom, analysing, unravelling, attempting to make sense of the madness. And his last words to me, so alive and insightful. I mentioned that many of his comments in group amazed me,

and couldn't help but laugh at their accuracy. He smiles, leans closer, our eyes meet, and says: 'If you can't laugh you'd cry.' And he is right: we must view our horror through humour lest the horror consume and destroy us.

Rest in peace, Dave! And God bless!

I hope this doesn't knock Kate off track. God bless us all!

7/12/01

Friday

Drizzling outside and the morning is dull with endless cloud.

Infuriated all night. Kept thinking of Kate's duplicitous behaviour and remoteness. Fucking OJ gets on better with her now than me! No real conversations have passed between us for a full week, when before we must have had about six long and intimate conversations. One Kate left and another returned. I know this is true, so can't blame it on neurosis. Fucking bitch...

Shopping yesterday: overwhelmed by thoughts of Dave and death. Walking to Wil and Gret's place to see Bubby I felt empty and irrelevant. But when I got there I saw Bubby and had a chat with Wil about Kuitpo and death. Wil and Gret seem well and have a life I can only envy. Remarkable to think that I will never be happy like them, never own a house or have a family.

'The horror! The horror!' Kurtz had said.

Finished *Heart of Darkness* last night and may borrow more Conrad.

Had little money for shopping yesterday but should survive the week—just! The drizzle has turned to rain, a glassy grey film over the world we see from our prison windows. We see so little from here. I heard a cow roaring last night. It was so loud I had to shut my window. Insolent thing. Dreamed I got caught pissing in a pub last night. Nearly the weekend again. Must ring Rebecca and see where she's at in her mental bewilderment. I suspect she's back with Troy, the thug, then again she may have learned more about the world during her years abroad. Hope so, but doubt she'll resist the brutal appeal of the thug. Perhaps she wants to crucify herself, like Tory Amos.



Now it's pouring outside and the day tires of its own waking. No birds sing. The dark cloud over our rehabilitation refuses to budge. The never-ending winter reflects our collective sorrow.

Apparently T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* was to have the epigraph 'The horror! The horror!' but Ezra Pound suggested otherwise. Interesting.

Newspaper: 'Good cowgirls keep their calves together.'

Ankh: eternal life

Scott left at 10.30 am this morning. I saw him sitting on the stairs, headphones on, cigarette in hand, sheltered from the slanting rain, bags ready for the journey. I spoke to him briefly. He wasn't coping, he said. He'd come from six years in jail and found he was simply doing time here and not engaging in the programme. Nice guy. He said people often mistake his quiet demeanour for something abnormal. I told him not to worry—they just fear the silent and watchful type. I think he appreciated this. He also said jail had taught him not to get too attached to people and places, etc. I said I agreed. People aren't trustworthy, etc, and if you expose yourself they'll greedily destroy you. He agreed. We shook hands and wished each other well, and that was that. He left, hoping to get a bus to Victoria, and not the pub. Good luck!

He said I looked familiar to him. Perhaps he recognised the solitary hermit in me...

Nick leaves next Tuesday. Wonder if Kate becomes accessible then? Probably not. If anything, I imagine, she'll be more remote. Darned luck. I do feel like having it out with her about the barrier she's erected. Is this too invasive? Too intimate? You can bet she'll deny it and say it's all in my head. She'll blame my 'paranoia' and 'neurosis.' Whatever.

Gotta be strong.

Gotta be alone.

Gotta deny all hurtful potentialities.

Just exist.

The Blackwood Christmas pageant is on tonight. I used to be in this parade: as a cub scout, as a Blackwood Recreation Centre gymnast, and as a local kid on a bike!

8/12/01

Saturday

Slept in to 8.40 am. Drew blinds and a mild, sunny morning greeted me. The rain had stopped.

New guy came this week, on Wednesday, called Paul. He's coincidentally one of the fathers of Kirsty's kids—Reece, I think. He was writing to her on the computer yesterday and I gave him a hand.

Steve W returned yesterday from leave. He and I have to do some serious weeding in the veggie patch today. He freaked-out when I told him about Dave's death.

Kate and Nick came back from day leave. No word from Kate. She seems to be receding from me at an incredible speed, almost as if utterly repulsed by me. I wonder why? I listened to her and offered empathy and advice. I revealed myself. I felt touched by her. How could it all vanish so quickly? Why is it always me to look upon the love of others from afar, like a frightened child watching a kite soaring through the sky, fingers outstretched and reaching?

I should ring Dave O'Reilly, Laura, Simon, Troy R and Hippy, Sue and James, John Brown, and Rebecca.

The elusive Kate. How often does she reveal herself? Infrequently, I imagine. In public she's coarse, brazen, aggressive, loud, often child-like, usually detached, and often silly. She follows Nick, something I envy—the devotion and loyalty and attraction. This is all terribly foolish: my dramatic interest, my extreme mood-swings, my brooding silences that can last days, my baulking others in horror.

Read about Joseph Conrad last night—his Congo experiences and alienation. Also read about Joyce—his artistic exile from Dublin and bouts of heavy drinking abroad.

Look forward to next Friday and a walk through town. Should hook up with Rob or Rebecca or someone. Funny how tentative I am about such meetings nowadays. Perhaps it's *me* who's retreating into the abyss, moving away from humanity and into silent bestial despair. Like Caliban.

1.05 pm

Of course the most soul-destroying of coincidences played itself out this morning. Not only was the gym equipment broken, but deciding after a brief gym session to go up to the veggie patch and weed, to get in touch with the sunny morning and pleasant day, and I am struck-dumb by the racket coming from Kate and Nick's place—the *screaming* and *groaning* of a *triumphant* and *orgasmic* Kate!

Suddenly the tiny weeds I was plucking from the earth were like enemies of the soul. I tore them from their lives with the mirth of a sadist and threw them with contempt into the world of death. How fucking awful. No wonder she sees through me now. I'm about as relevant to her as a cow in the neighbouring paddock, a docile creature ruminating over a tuft of weed and earth, a slab of dead meat on a hillside, in short, nothing much at all! What a fickle and capricious world. The emptiness lingers and the restless soul squirms, fighting for an impossible breath within the flames of hell. May God save this wretched soul? Something—some small thing—must exist out there, but have I the strength to find it? Do I have the fortitude to struggle over another hill, to slide down the opposing bank, and then climb again into the impossible reaches?

God help me ... Please!!

9/12/01

Sunday

Christmas draws nearer. Another lonely year nears its end. Unlike the other years, drunk and depressed and unconscious by noon, I'll have to endure the whole damn day sober. No rain today, but cloudy.

Little boy Cain just came to the door and I gave him a hug. It's 9.10 am. He's off to church with his mum and Lorette and sister Tiyanna. He's a cool little boy and I play with him almost daily. I've also taught him to yell 'D'OH!' like Homer Simpson. He loves it. He loves flying too!

Yesterday: After shocking morning I re-strung the guitar and had Marty tune it. Great! I finally have a left-handed guitar. Beats the hell out of playing upside-down! Been

trying to remember lead routines and stuff. Great fun, but frustrating.

George Harrison died earlier this week. They're playing a lot of Beatles. Playing 'Love is all you need' on the tele right now.

Next Friday I get another day in town. Must ring Rebecca.

Wayne and Lorette came over yesterday morning. Told Wayne about Rebecca working at RSL again (where he and I used to drink). He said he once had to fight thug-Troy. Said Troy used to beat her. I hope she's not with him now. Must find out. Lorette said she feels very insane, so much so she thought of fucking one of the cows in the paddock. Wayne loved this. Wayne also mentioned he and his mate are about to open up a brothel (a 'rub and tug,' he calls it) in Glenelg! Un-fucking-believable! At least then Wayne will get his sex for free, or half price. So far on every leave day he's gone and paid \$80 for a rub, tug, poke, and head job. Sick fuck! It's a pity he has to tell everyone in graphic detail how she touched him and how he touched her. Even the counsellors get detailed accounts of his sordid sex life. It's awful. He forgets that everyone working here is Christian.

May go for a walk today.

10/12/01

Monday: *Human Rights Day*

Still bitterly resentful towards Kate, the bloody two-faced bitch.

Gorgeous morning outside. Still a little dew on the grass. Otherwise blue and clear and fresh.

Yesterday, rather dull day of sleep and television. Played guitar. Vacuumed floors. Read 'Mariana' from Alfred Lord Tennyson last night. Love that poem. So pathetic and sentimental. Ms Havisham would love it.

Otherwise, not much yesterday. Boredom. Frustration. Anger. Depression. Loneliness. Helplessness. Despair... etc

Must put in leave form for Friday this morning.

Things to do:

- Make new gym programme
- Read *The Ridiculous Madman*, plus Laura's comments and suggestions
- Read my notes and ideas
- Must get back to work on *Madman* and finish it. Needs another 10,000 words, unless something extraordinary happens to propel the story into any real length, which I can't see. Besides, hard to sustain a discontinuous narrative like this for long. Need to read Frank Moorhouse, Cervantes, and more 18th century satire—perhaps Swift and Pope. Must look up Tolkien at library on Tuesday.
- Dido: committed suicide after her lover's betrayal. When they met again in hell, Dido turned sternly away from him. Quite right!

Monday 'core' group with Jenny. We had Frank, an Indigenous social worker from Port Augusta, sit in with us. He's hoping to set up a programme in Port Augusta.

We read out our responses to the handouts [Personal Identity sheet]. Basically we are tweaking our self-concepts—seeing ourselves in more positive ways, etc.

Interesting, when asked what my most positive attribute was, I said 'self reliance' and 'personal fortitude.' Jenny asked others to add their views. Oddly, people suggested that I was wise, old, and thoughtful; a good listener; a good friend (Carol); and a decent, all-round nice guy.

I was amazed. I didn't think I would get positive feedback. It's a good feeling.

They later said I was like a dictionary. I was a good communicator. That I was intelligent. That I held assertive and thought-provoking views.

This is great...

Saw Kate today but didn't say anything. I know she feels our expanding gap. I don't know what to do. She must be feeling a little vulnerable with Nick leaving tomorrow. I guess she's seeking to re-establish bonds with the wider community, including me. I once said that she makes me want to be a better man—now's my chance. Should swallow my pride and give her the support she needs. Damn it, be that better man, Andy! Don't just dream it...

Bearded Steve just made me coffee. He's a good guy who's really coming out of his shell. He's more positive now, he laughs and interacts, and seems genuinely happy and at

PERSONAL IDENTITY

U

What were your previous self thoughts / self picture?

Destitute. Starving. Rogue.
 Homeless. Dying. Hopeless.
 Self loathing. Vulnerable.

What did you think other peoples concepts of you were?

Delirious. Lost. Bewildered.
 Dying. Sad. Poor. Always
 broke. Scavenger.

What are your current self thoughts / self picture?

Improving. More positive. More
 productive. Clarity of mind.
 Sleep better.

Why have your self thoughts / self picture changed

Not drunk or on drugs. Have
some where to live. Given more
thought to life, the past, & so on.

What is the positive picture you are working towards?

Independence. Safe & secure
dwelling. Good career.
Financial security, happier state
of mind. Physically
stronger.

peace. He also gave me a can of coffee (I've run out). Good to see his growth.

Kate: I do find it hard to forgive, I've noticed. Should I give her what she wants when she flagrantly disregards me? Am I just a selfish and vindictive and spiteful brat? Must think about this.

Supposed to be using computers now. Decided to play guitar instead, write journal, and read Wordsworth.

11/12/01

Tuesday

Nick leaves today. Library today. The drizzle falls outside and still the birds sing.

Yesterday, for community projects, I sprayed the grey-area for future landscaping. I also did the paths in the veggie patch. We all had to give urine tests. I was last as nobody told me at morning meeting.

After lunch, I played guitar and relaxed. Carol came over to watch the nightly movie (*Grumpy Old Men*). She's a sweet thing when you get to know her, far sweeter than her tough-girl, hard-faced attitude would have you believe. Yet she is very tender, mature, caring, and witty. She openly discusses her eating disorder and her weight. I told her she looks more like a girl than a woman. She said others have said as much, and didn't find this offensive—quite the contrary! She has the darkest eyes, like Claire's in some ways, which really draw men in. Besides, she looks eternally sad and desperate. Carol has everyone eating out of the palm of her hand because she knows how to make people feel special. All the guys fall for this, all harbouring faint hopes of hearing her sigh for them. Damned fools! I repeatedly tell her to eat more. I even confessed she'd look far sexier with rounder features and more weight. She loves this stuff, but still starves herself. She also likes watching others eat, as all anorexics do, whilst abstaining herself. She gaunt, slightly starved look is what captivates men. Those sad eyes beaming out from her frail and famished face. She only eats salad, she says. Yet she knows her problem and says she'll work on it. I hope she does.

Tomorrow will be six weeks. It seems so much longer, a miniature eternity, and I feel I've known everyone here—Tye, Carol, Lorette, Mark, Mick, Steve W, Bearded Steve,

Wayne, and Marty—for years. That's a good and bad thing. The absence of these people later is sure to hurt. Nevertheless, that's life, and it has been wonderful to meet them all. Tye came over last night and we discussed our plans to canvass the staff for gym equipment. I've drafted a letter outlining our needs and why we think it is so important for a balanced rehab programme. Richard did ask me yesterday morning to get prices for equipment to give to Trevor [the boss] who is looking for acquisitions over \$500 for Kuitpo development. Can do!

Get to see Brent on Friday. Carol wants us to go to Myer Centre for lunch. So I guess we will...

12/12/01

Wednesday

Grey morning but chirpy. Last evening I woke up and felt I had slept for years, when it had only been 20 minutes. I staggered down the dusty driveway to the front gate, stared at the leaden sky, stared at the hills and trees, stared at the solitary cow in the distance, and felt odd. Odd! Displaced. Where the hell was I? In whose life had I awoken? How more bizarre could a landscape be? I wanted to walk, but to where? Follow the dusty road until the approaching night set in? Then, penniless, curl up and die in the encroaching wilderness? It was a disturbing time, made better and worse once I got back. There I stood, alone and disillusioned, while OJ lay on the couch tapping a toe to the heavy metal he had playing in his earphones. Kate walked by, her hood drawn over her head. I opened the door and yelled to her in the twilight. She was beyond view but I could hear her. I know she isn't returning. I almost plead for her to. She does, appearing with caution and then relief when she sees me there defenceless. We spoke of her impending departure (3 weeks time), her drug-triggers, her future plans, and so on, and yet we didn't speak as we once did, in the beginning, when we were strangers, when I held no expectations. And then she went and I returned to the languor of my life.

Went to the library yesterday. I borrowed: Albert Camus, *The Rebel*; Kate Grenville, *Joan Makes History*; Evelyn Waugh, *Scoop*; Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (read before).

Had counselling yesterday. Elaborated on my feelings of loss and abandonment. Spoke of my possible need for psychiatric help beyond the surface-scratching offered by Kuitpo. She said they'd be looking towards me to be a role-model and leader in the weeks and months ahead. You must, she said, lay the past to rest. Also, four people discussed in staff meeting as appearing visibly depressed. I was one. OJ was another. Don't know about the other two.

Nick left yesterday. I shook his hand and wished him well. His mother, when introduced to me, began speaking of personal heartache. She said her late husband had died four years ago the day, and now here she was picking up her son from rehab (after 5 months). Even more oddly, she said she too almost turned to alcohol. Alarm bells began ringing. She knew of *my* problems in particular. Then, even more alarming, she contextualised *me*—she knew my history of tragedy and loss. Funny how tragedy spreads its poison.

Lorette and Mark both left yesterday for mid-week leave, Lorette with her sister and Mark with his fishing rod for the coast.

Our teacher left for paid work. We had tea and cake and a hearty chat.

I wrote a letter (draft) for the staff regarding our need for gym equipment, etc. I finally re-read *The Ridiculous Madman*. Excellent work to date. I was very surprised at how concise and poignant the first ten or so scenes were. I really enjoyed it. It was like looking at my former mind. Later scenes need work, but I can do that. Some very incongruous and funny stuff. Loved the bit about the woman approaching Jack and saying he disgusts her. Loved the dog biting Jack too. Loved the woman in the cage smiling at Jack, then screaming. Loved the grey pavement and bus ride. Excellent. Don't lose sight of how funny you found all this after such a layoff. This distance has given you a rare insight into your own work. *And you liked it.*

Don't meddle with the opening scenes—they work. Must get back into that frame of mind to complete this exotic and desolate tale of mental delusion and breakdown. That's what it is: the author gives birth to an alter ego, which burgeons into life and steals away into the murky depths of the subconscious. Love it.

May get a new resident in our place today. Hope not, but we do have room. So does cabin 6, which only has two people too. And cabin 5 (Kate's house) which only has one. Since it's a non-smoking house, Kate will probably be spared.

Bubby day tomorrow! Must ring Rebecca! And Rob!

13/12/01

Thursday

We're not going to Mt Barker today, so little Bubby will have to wait to see me next week (and me her). Instead, we're going to Colonnades Shopping Centre in Noarlunga. Something different, I guess.

Yesterday I handed in my discussion paper on 'Body and Mind' and asked Shirley to hand it around to staff. Be interesting to see how it goes.

Also rang Rebecca. She sounded good, older, wiser, and more confident. She has that cynical streak I just love. At first I was nervous and asked fumbled questions, but we soon got onto more humorous and silly stuff as we have in the past. She plans, she says, to stay in Adelaide over Christmas and then look for work on a luxury cruise ship next year. Wish I could go with her.

She says she's been cleaning her room for a month since returning and not going out much. God I hope she's not seeing that Troy thug, but what's the bet? Such mongrels always win the women for some strange reason. Must be his murderous, rapacious streak.

At first Rebecca wasn't real keen on meeting me on Friday (tomorrow) because, quite rightly, she didn't want to go to the city and see all those people. Gotta love her. She asked for my number to organise something later, but I said I didn't have a number and so she only had one chance. She decided to take it. I'll see her in the markets tomorrow. She'll bring pictures of her adventures overseas, which is sure to raise my envy levels and hopefully motivate me to travel again. I just can't wait to see if she's changed. She sounded as alluring as ever.

New resident arrived yesterday. We got one of them—Stuart, a young bloke, also from Blackwood. He's here for alcohol. The other guy's from Mt Gambier. He's here for dope.

Saw Kate yesterday and had a delirious chat about everything. She's aloof now and yet mildly interested. I think she was warning me off actually, even though I wasn't

making any suggestive remarks or gestures.

Also walked half way up Mt Magnificent last evening. Nice walk. Very dense and scraggly scrub. Ran into Bearded Steve in a clearing by a fire pit. I thought I'd walked into Frederick McCubbin's *Down on his luck* [1889]. I unleashed on him a tirade about my past drinking bouts and he told me a little about his excesses. Steve loved all drugs equally. Strangely, his brother's a private detective. I told him about my drinking bouts in Malaysia, Scotland, and Adelaide. Rather lavishly, I'm afraid. Still, it was a nice chat in the heart of the darkling scrub and a good laugh. He's a very likeable guy, old Steve—very nervous, but intriguing all the same.

Carol and Tye came over last night for a chat. Tye and I both independently solved the newspaper word puzzle—SACCHARIN. I wonder if Tye and Carol will stay together when they leave. They look as thick as thieves. Carol should be here any minute (it's 8.05 am) for coffee... She has the most remarkable sad and sensitive eyes for a girl who swears and shouts and bosses people around.

Another day...

14/12/01

Friday: *Day Leave*

Six weeks and two days have elapsed, enough time to earn a second day in the city. Test match starts in Adelaide today. Go, Aussie, go!

Meeting Brent this morning and Rebecca at 11.45 am outside the Central Markets. Can't wait. What will she look like? How will she think? More or less cynical? Hmm!

Yesterday, went to Colonnades Shopping Centre. Marty, Bearded Steve, Owen, and I looked at jewellery. I bought a ✪ ring for \$20, and Marty bought me a bracelet. He wanted to give me money at first. Someone mysteriously deposited money in his account, probably because of his ultra-altruistic tendencies. Perhaps the whole family is mad with generosity.

Had a good chat with Mick last night. For a shy guy he comes out of his shell. He's a good, funny guy, far wittier than I ever gave him credit. He spoke about heroin, weightlifting, sluts, drinking, and holding onto lost scraps of hope. He's a lonely guy—

aren't many of us—simply hoping to start again and find a good woman.

Relaxation yesterday. Our guru spoke to Frank about the prophets and auras and energies and healing light. He said his people see auras and the like. A good session. Wayne was disruptive, as usual. He's the only 44-year-old I know who acts like a perverted delinquent.

Frank came into the gym yesterday and said, sorry, gotta use the dunny. Can't have the women in the office hearing me fart and that, he said. I said, no worries, and continued working out.

Did \$50 of shopping yesterday. Not much.

Bizarre dream last night. Fell immediately in love with a woman who turned out to be Brenna McKenzie's younger sister [my childhood sweetheart]. She told me, on leaving, to take a chance, etc. So I called her back (as I did Carrie in Penang that time) and asked for her number. When I rang her later, her father interrupted. He thought I was a weirdo. I gave him a serve, was very forceful and dignified, and eventually I realised that every word I said was being amplified through a microphone to a massive audience, who were impressed. As it happens, he was giving a conference when he interrupted our phone call and suddenly, I ended up with her, with his blessing, but she was no longer herself but a blushing mermaid. I still loved her but was a little peeved by the loss of her genitals. I had a sense in the dream that she would change back to a woman from time to time, so it would be okay.

Funny how Brenna McKenzie still haunts me, even if through her sister. Brenna was the first girl I ever loved, way back in primary school. She hated me at first, but after a year she relented to my earnest advances. She was so beautiful; I can still see her. I see her often. Where is she? Is she married? Does she ever think about me? I hope I haunt her as she does me! Some people never really leave you. They get under your fingernails and skin, circulating in blood and memory... *Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive and to be young was very heaven!* [Wordsworth, I think.]

15/12/01
Saturday

Quite a strange day yesterday.

Mark was kicked out for producing a 'diluted' urine test. This is absurd. He was the one who called for the whole community to be tested because he suspected someone was using. The potential for a 'dilute' has everyone worried: who will be next? Remember: I gave a urine test yesterday! Lorette very upset by Mark's departure. Thankfully he does have accommodation at Towards Independence and Christmas back in Mt Gambier.

Saw Brent yesterday and he was fine. He had nearly used a couple of times but resisted. He and I walked Carol and the kids from the markets to the train station. Saw Lorette there and heard about Mark.

Met Rebecca at markets at 11.45. Gave her a pat on the back and took her to a café for latte. Slow start. She seemed nervous and inaccessible. Hard to make eye-contact. I was struggling to make conversation. Plan? I took her for a walk down King William Street, through the war memorial, and then along the river [Torrens] and past the university [Adelaide]. We sat in the uni courtyard and had milk drinks and chatted. She showed me her photos. She spoke more freely then and directed the conversation. She wants to return to the seas in the New Year, which is about right. She also got up on the wall as we walked past Government House and skipped. Quite a sight! She whistled and chirped, flapped her arms, and sang. Good to see.

She spoke of snow, monkeys, casinos, mosques, churches, shades of grey, boyfriends, and other things from her travels.

Later we walked past the Art Gallery. I asked if she wanted to see the Victorian exhibition. She said yes.

Rebecca was impressed by a street actor in Rundle Mall. He was perfectly still with a 'money talks' sign before him. When she dropped a coin in, it nodded mechanically forward, over, up, down, swung sideways, extended an arm, and beckoned her to approach. Beck ran, embarrassed. I followed. It was odd. I walked her back to her car via a tobacconist. She liked the exotic tobacco despite lecturing me about smoking. It was 2.25 pm when we got to her car. Here, just before climbing in, she asked me where exactly I was living. I said in a funny place deep in the hills. She looked puzzled. 'A

place for drug addicts and alcoholics,' I said. She looked stunned, but recovered enough to say that I didn't need drugs, etc, and that life could be wonderful. Then she left.

While with Beck I did run into Carmel (Paul and Dave O'Reilly's mum), who insisted I come to her place on Christmas day—as usual. I said I'd try, knowing full well I'd be in here! Paul, she said, is arriving in Adelaide next Monday. I'll have to see him on weekend leave.

Back at the Adelaide Central Mission, I stood with the other drug addicts and alcoholics, waiting for the bus, smoking. When, astonishingly, my cousin David, dressed lavishly in a shiny suit, appears before me, hand extended. I shook it and mumbled something about scraps of work over the year, but not enough. He asked me to come to Christmas at his house. I said I'd keep it in mind but likely be a million miles away in the hills. I was only there, I said, to get some food! He looked ill at ease with this, obviously thinking I was at the Mission begging for food! Thankfully he was double-parked and had to leave. What are the fucking odds of him driving past and seeing me in a crowd of derelicts!!!??? Earlier I had darted past the cousins' shop with Rebecca when I spied my aunty in the doorway. What a day of odd coincidences in a city bustling with Christmas shoppers.

Came back here and watched show on Mars exploration and possible settlement. Went to bed, feeling depressed, lonely, alienated, insane, and on verge of breakdown. Slept badly. Arose but horror of life hasn't gone. Don't know what to make of my day with Beck.

Gave urine yesterday afternoon.

16/12/01

Sunday

I tossed and turned in anger last night. I awoke despite myself in furious anger. That's why I attack and condemn Owen and Stuart all the time. They annoy me and are incredibly lazy, but I'm equally hostile back. These two in particular press my buttons with their insensitive and puerile ways.

Then again, others easily anger me too. When I rang Rob on Friday night and

discovered he wasn't in the mood for a chat, I became resentful. He wanted to hang up and play D&D with his mates. He couldn't talk to me for a while, he said. Weak. I did ask if I could stay with him for the weekend but now I'm not so sure. If I stay with him and Lex I'm only going to be more resentful. After all, if I'd had my way, I'd be moving in with Rob after finishing my stint here. Now that Lex has got in before me I'm literally out in the cold. This pisses me off!

Yesterday I listened to the cricket on the radio. Australia was all out for 439(?) and South African is 2 for about 100 in reply. The Adelaide Oval was looking good on the TV in the evening session. Pity I can't be there watching it live.

Feeling very odd. Very uptight. Very singular. Very irrelevant. And very hopeless. How do I turn this around? It's intolerable...

1.10 pm

If I was feeling odd earlier, I most certainly feel flabbergasted now. What a morning!

First, I saw Trevor and Jenny arrive. Staff presence on the weekend can only mean one thing. Trouble!

Then I hear Paul yell and abuse staff, crying he didn't 'rape' anyone. Then I discover that Trevor has been here all night, at Kate's, watching over Julie-Anne and Kate after an alleged attack by Paul on Julie-Anne.

The police have been here for an hour, taking statements.

Earlier, Wayne walked Julie-Anne down to her house so she could get dressed, having stayed at Kate's. Paul has ambushed them and struck Wayne in the head with car keys and punctured his temple. Wayne has hit back. Both were bloody and shaken and angry. Trevor has wrestled Paul to the ground. Paul has Hep C and is bleeding from the face. Wayne has stormed off home, followed by Jenny.

Now Wayne faces expulsion for defending himself. Paul faces expulsion too.

The story gets more dramatic. Julie-Anne has accused Paul of breaking into her house while she slept and forcing himself on her. That started it.

The story now: that Julie-Anne and Paul have been fucking from day one and shooting up speed. It's alleged that Steve W and Mick have been fucking her too. The police and staff are trying to piece together the puzzle. There could be mass expulsions

as a result of this chaos.

Lorette and Kate want to leave tomorrow, feeling threatened and depressed. Both feel their mental states are getting worse here, not better. It's a sad day for Kuitpo Community. Right now I hear the kids playing cricket outside and laughing. Some of the adults have joined in.

I also heard that Mick had rung from weekend leave to say that he'd seen recently-expelled Mark drunk and delirious around town. It is a very sad day. Chaos ensues and despair flourishes.

17/12/01

Monday

Wayne avoided expulsion. Instead, he must undergo anger management. Trevor handled everything well over the weekend and debriefed us all yesterday afternoon. Paul was expelled but only after arrangements could be made so that his baby wouldn't suffer. Drug tests were taken on a few people to determine the validity of Paul's counter-claims. Hmm.

Bright morning outside. Should be warm. Australia goes in today 65 runs ahead after first innings. Two days to go. Come on, Aussie!

Still feel miserable. So little for me to go to out there. I know I should feel grateful and exhilarated and thankful for another chance, but I don't. I really think my brain is permanently scarred and broken. Carol, Mick, and Tye return from leave today.

18/12/01

Tuesday

11.00 am. Been in bed all morning. Very sad. Overwhelmed. My sweetest, dearest, little Bubby died yesterday and I'm all alone. The last seizure killed the poor little girl.

I was sitting with Kate at her place when Lex's head appeared in the door. He looked sad.

‘She’s gone,’ he said. Then Wil, Gret, and Rob appeared. Rob hugged me. I was dumb-struck. She’d probably had a brain tumour, the vet told Wil. God fucking damn it. They had brought her up in Rob’s old car, where Rastas [my last dog] also once lay dead. The boot of dog death. And there was Bubby in the boot-light, covered in an old fawn blanket. I unpeeled it, mortified, and found her stiff body—all muscle, all fabulous, her coat still shiny. I stroked her muscles, her hard saliva-streaked face, her unfurled lips, her mighty chest with a star of white.

My dear, dear Bubby, I’m going to miss you more than you’ll ever know. Life without my epileptic little spark, my life, my very hope and reason for being, snatched away from me like all those I have loved. But Bubby! Cruel, brutal blow, when I’m improving, when I’m trying to reclaim my life so we could live together again, just her and me. Her total innocence and loyalty, forever gone. Her large eyes, her damp nose—but I still have her rotten tooth, so recently lost when she was up here with Lex and Rob.

I hugged my visitors and into the night went the hearse, speeding my little angel away. Wil is to bury her in his back yard, which is nice, so I’ll go and visit her grave on Thursday.

I crossed myself seven times last night. And cried. And cried. The tears and the bolus of grief and sorrow seemed about to choke the life out of me.

This is un-fucking-bearable. I love her.

RIP sweet little Bubby. I love you. On speedy little legs gallop to the skies beyond...

Bubby died: **17/12/01 Monday**

And I know it must also be about the anniversary of Scotty’s death. God save me.

19/12/01

Wednesday

Julie-Anne tested positive and was kicked out yesterday, leaving a lot of people wondering about her allegations against Paul. Bad scene. Kate, Lorette, and Wayne feel used and cheated.

I stayed in bed and listened to the cricket and slept. Bubby was like a ghost on my



mind, bounding around innocently with joy. Dear, dear creature.

New person went to cabin 4 yesterday with Marty and Mick. Young bloke. Going to Hahndorf Mill today for lunch. Only a handful of us going—but should be fun. Cost: \$11.

20/12/01

Thursday

Lorette upset yesterday. Her mid-week leave has been knocked back over Christmas despite her rent being up to date. Lorette crying at my place. Kate enraged by staff and threatening departure.

Went to Hahndorf Mill yesterday with all the staff for lunch. Carol, Tye, OJ, Lorette, and new guy stayed back. The rest of us went. Past residents also present in force, including Brent and Kirsty. It was good: \$12 (which I owe Marty, who paid for me). I ate four enormous plate-loads and felt sick, and didn't eat dinner last night because I still felt bloated ten hours after eating. I ate: two serves of cream potato, one serve of fries, one piece of pizza, one piece of lasagne, two thick slices of turkey, two thick slices of roast beef, fifteen calamari rings, slices of ham, salami, and chicken loaf, and one glass of Coke...

Today I go to Mt Barker and see Bubby's grave. Who wants to do that?

Dick told me yesterday that he knew a guy who didn't bust over the death of two wives, but did bust over the death of a dog. This doesn't surprise me.

Mick and I went for a 10 km walk last night. To fjord and back.

21/12/01

Friday

10.30 am: On the train now from Adelaide to Blackwood. Weekend leave ahead. Had coffee with Kate, Brent, Lorette, Nick, and OJ at markets. Had dinner at Lorette's last night with Lorette, Kate, and Tye.

Shopping yesterday. Very touched and indebted to Wil and Grette for creating a beautiful grave for Bubby. I'm overwhelmed. She was a very well loved little dog and I'm only just beginning to confront the idea of life without her. Wil put up a cross: BUB.
RIP little Bubby! xxoo

25/12/01

Tuesday

Christmas Day. I'm back at Kuitpo after a weekend with Rob and Lex in Glenelg. Not many of us here today: OJ, Stuart, Steve W, Bearded Steve (at church now), Allan, Gary, Marty, and me. I'm about to put a chicken in the oven for lunch, when we will congregate in cabin 6 for a feast. I'm going to the gym first (10.30 am).

26/12/01

Wednesday: *Boxing Day*

Not a bad day yesterday. Everyone contributed and we made the most of things. Allan made salads and set up tables. Steve W prepared the chickens and pork. And the rest of us ate. Those present: Steve W, Bearded Steve, Allan, Marty, Stuart, Gary, and me.

Owen stayed in our house by himself. He doesn't celebrate Christmas.

Those on leave: Lorette, Kate, Tye, Mick, Carol, and Wayne.

I'm very worried about giving a 'dirty' urine. Whilst at Rob and Lex's I ate Noble Rise Soy and Linseed bread, and have no idea if it contains poppy seeds. If it does I'll test positive and be kicked out on Thursday or Friday. When I got home I ate cracker biscuits and was horrified to read on the ingredients that they too contain poppy seeds. I can't eat anymore or else I'll produce a dirty urine on Thursday. Hopefully the 'opium' is out of my system now. Who knows?! If tested yesterday I would have registered. It's scary stuff!

Can't really tell if the Zolof tablets are working. I've only had them for a week, and they usually take two weeks to work. Time will tell.

The second Test starts today and I'll be watching. Go Aussies!
 Rob bought a Porsche 911 on Monday for \$52,000.

27/12/01

Thursday

Things get back to semi-normal today. Someone will come and take us shopping.

Kerry mysteriously appeared yesterday morning to get urines from everybody. I was worried and told her about the biscuits I'd been eating—and the poppy seeds! She said I should be okay if I didn't eat any after Monday night. Time will tell! If I test positive I'll have to leave regardless of what caused the opiates to appear.

Aussies played okay on the first day and have the South Africans 3 for about 90 after rain-interruptions.

Played guitar most of yesterday. Trying to remember 'Only 19' by Redgum. Fairly easy song to learn.

My medication is still preventing me from sleeping, so I toss and turn for hours before drifting into exhaustion. Feel it today: delirious.

Reading: *The Scent of Dried Roses*. Good book.

Friday

28/12/01

Delirious this morning. Those drugs keep me up late and then I'm dazed and confused on waking.

Yesterday we went to Colonnades for a few hours. Bit boring. I did my shopping and bought a small reading lamp. Watched cricket all afternoon. Aussies doing well. Langer and Hayden still in.

Wayne came back yesterday afternoon. He had a good time with family, friends, and even a prostitute, who he paid \$30 for a head job. Apparently, he bartered her down to \$30, and she did it without a condom! Amazing! Disgusting!

Watched a film about a gigolo last night with Marty and Wayne. Not bad. Bit silly.
Went to bed about 10.30 pm but couldn't sleep. These drugs better be worth it!
Today we might be going to the beach or movies. We'll have to vote on it.

29/12/01

Saturday

Beautiful morning. Yesterday we went to Glenelg. It was 28°C, which was more than enough to burn me.

I took Marty to Rob and Lex's and watched cricket. Rob gave me cigars and shoes, God bless him. Volley ball on the beach, crowds, women, and sand.

Tye and Carol didn't come back from leave. Both busted. Weak. I wish them well. He's a very decent man and she's a very tantalising woman. I'll miss them both, particularly little Cain, who, I guess, I'll never see again. Bizarre thought.

Message from Laura yesterday to call her or Dave O'Reilly. Curious! I haven't felt like contacting anyone, but then again it might be an emergency.

Also saw my mates Troy R and Lisa in Glenelg. Lisa very friendly; Troy drunk and withdrawn. They say they'll visit me soon. We'll see!

Saw Kate last night. Glad she returned. Saw Mick also. Just saw Lorette then. Gave her a hug and a kiss. Cricket just started.

My mind races when I see Kate. She looks and sounds fantastic. Unfortunately she is moving out with Nick. She leaves on Monday. Imagine the world without her in it. Awful thought. Ghastly...

30/12/01

Sunday

Australia won the cricket yesterday. I watched and played guitar. No sign of Kate, worse luck.

Walked to Mt Magnificent with Mick and Bearded Steve last evening. Good walk in the twilight. Many roos. The last 100 metres terrible. Thought I was having a heart attack. The view from the top was worth it. Unreal.

Kate leaves tomorrow and then I'll be sad. Then again, it might be good not to have her so terrifyingly close all the time. Still, I'm going to miss her.

I've done 8½ weeks now, I think, so I'm over half way through. Thank God! I'll apply for midweek leave in a week or so.

31/12/01

Monday

Well, bizarre, the year again is almost over. In all, a bad year. Too much heartache and emptiness. Kate leaves today, which is oddly fitting given that I associate her with betrayal and the year gone by. Gonna miss her though. Nick's a very lucky bastard.

Had Kate over for dinner last night and cooked her pasta. We watched TV and chatted. Lorette came over and we all talked. It was nice. Feel very close to Kate and yet she's leaving. Love to kiss that girl!

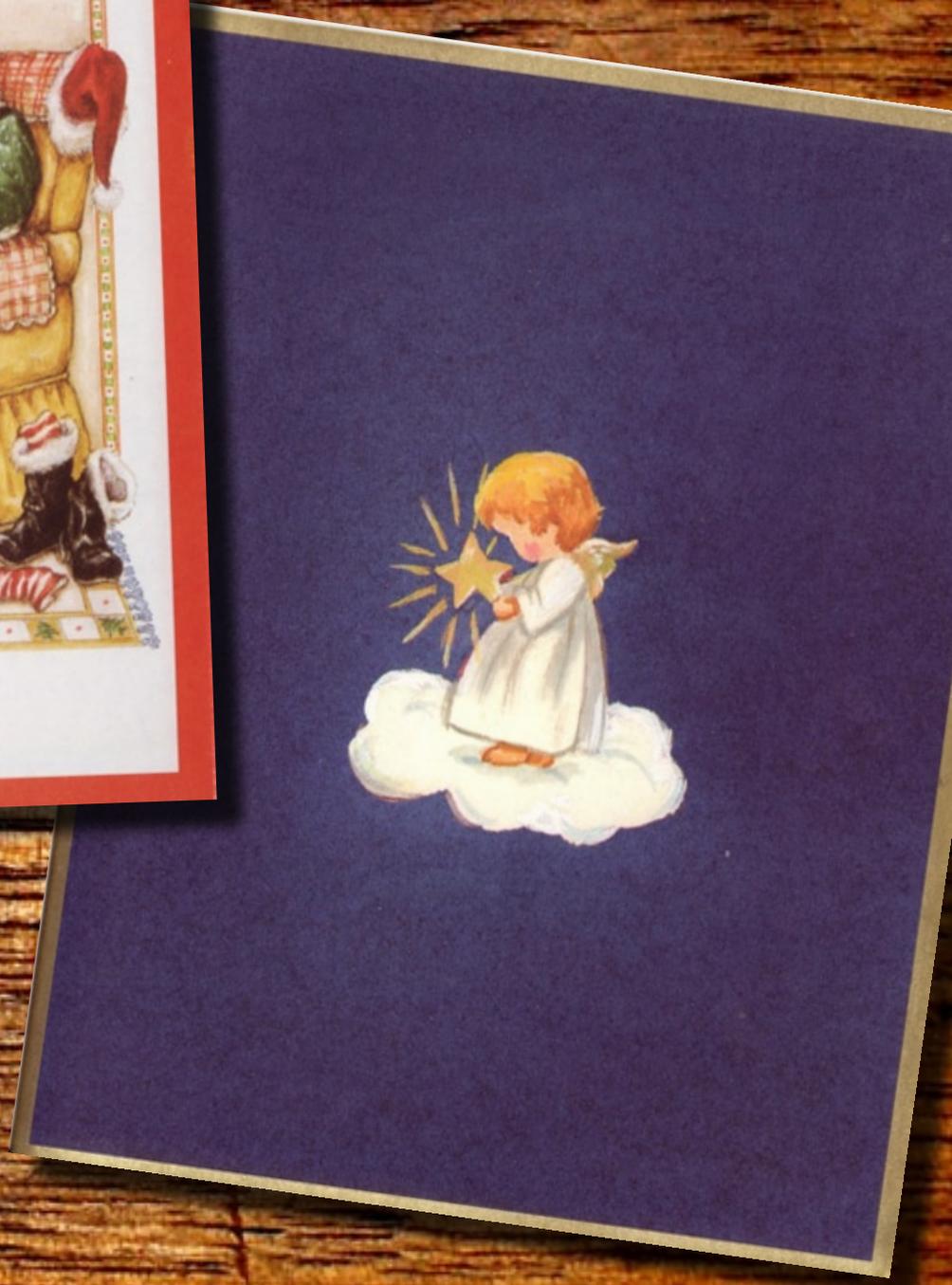
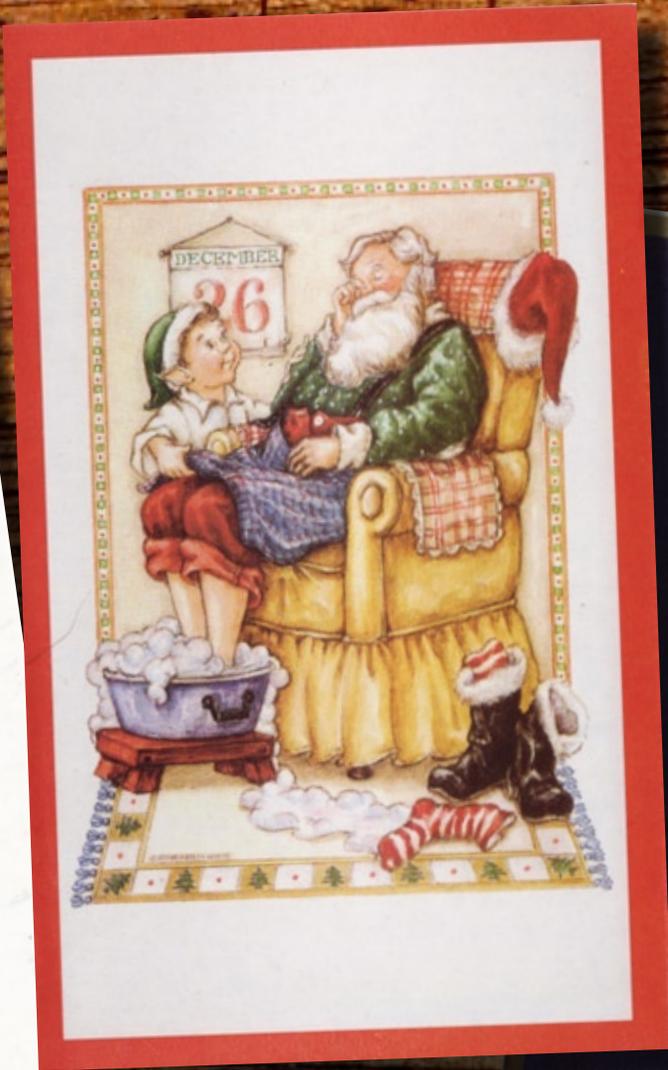
New Year's Eve!

Saw the blue moon last night rise over the hills.

Beautiful.

Enormous.

[So ends the second Kuitpo Diary...]



Dear Andrew, Owen +
Stuart

With Best Wishes
and Greetings
for
Christmas
and the
New Year.

Merry Christmas
from
All the Kuitpo Staff
X X X

Andie,

Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year
Keep liftin'

from

Rory & Tye

Dear G, Stuart + Andy,

May your Christmas be filled
with love and light!

Have a great Xmas Day +
I hope you all have a
super 2002

Lots of Love

Love
Loree Xmas

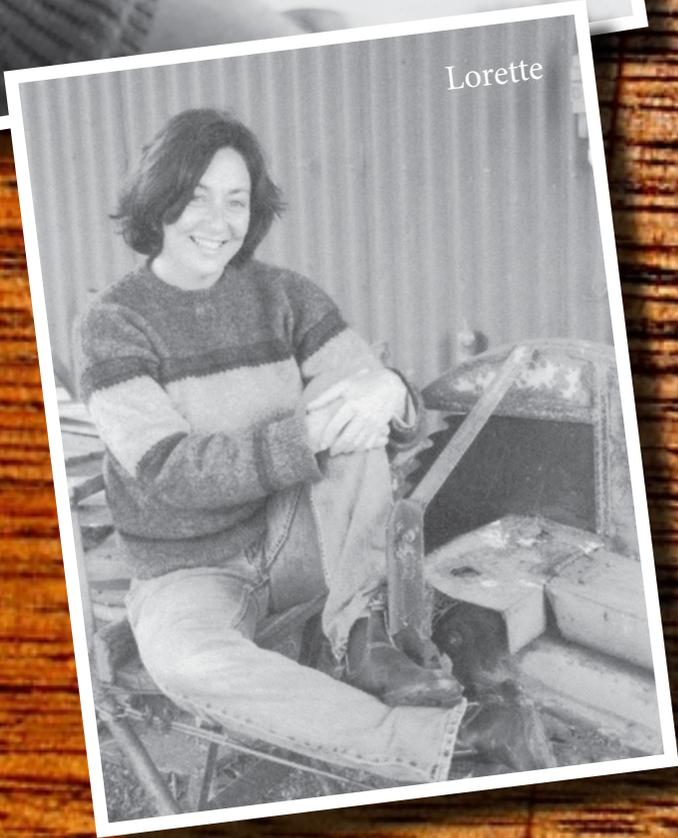
Brenton



Kate



Lorette



Me



09/09/09

10.05 pm

Wednesday: *An anything can happen day*

Afterword:

Andrew left Kuitpo Community on the 19th of February 2002 and picked up another drink almost as soon as he hit the city streets. One day some months later he staggered into the rooms of an anonymous 12 Step fellowship and started again.

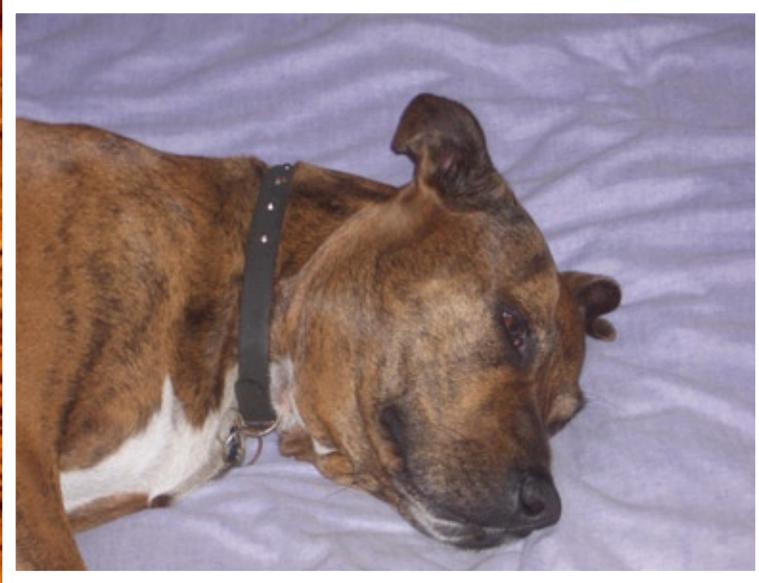
In two weeks, that will have been 7 years ago. I haven't picked up a drink or drug since. For the sake of the young kid I visited through hypnotherapy, I hope never to pick up again. But that, as they say, is another story, and hopefully a long one.

Maybe Richard Flanagan was only half right when he said that 'Man lives on the ability to forget.' Perhaps, in the end, humans live on the ability to *hope*—to hope even when there's nothing much to hope *for* or *with*—but to hope all the same. For I did, and my hope led me back from the brink—back from the cliff—back from despair—and to the edge of salvation and the heart of life. The cry of the damned led to the cry of the saved, a cry to the possibility of renewal, one foot after the other, one breath after the next, one day at a time...

So help me God.

I never did see Kate again. I hope she's still alive.

To the numerous Kuitpo residents that fell while I was there and shortly after, I salute you. RIP.



WRITING SICKNESS



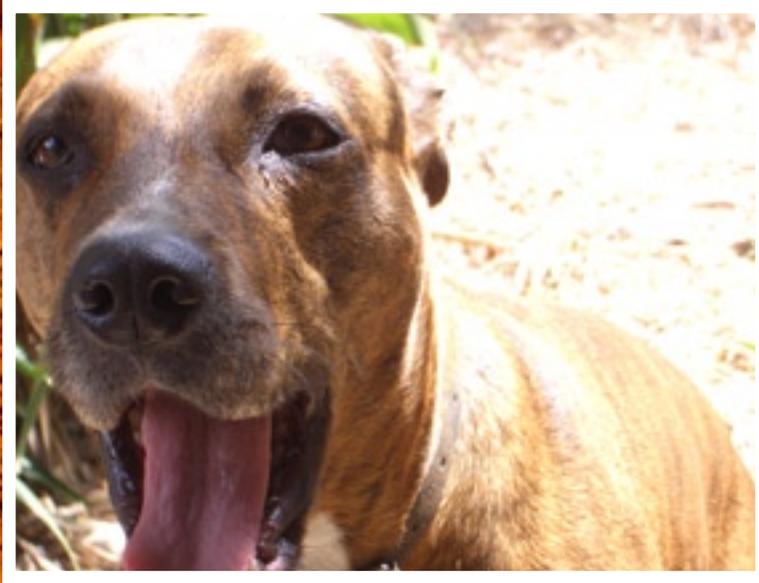
The past. How to make amends to the past? The undertow, underflow, memory. Dream. No freeing yourself. No way out, but in.

(Beverley Farmer, *A Body of Water*, 1990, p. 149)

THE KUITPO DIARIES have been edited for the sake of reproduction here. The events and details portrayed are otherwise as they appeared in the original three diaries (the third diary has been left out). There has been no embellishment to satisfy the whims of posterity or plot. I have decided to allow my sick and sullen self to speak for himself and to be as he was at that stage of his life. The cringe factor is high—but so too is the respect.

Bless him for getting me here. It looked doubtful

¹ An American hobo symbol from the 1920s and '30s. Translation: 'Here you'll get whatever you want.'



Shine on you crazy
diamond.

Pink Floyd

for a while, but he came through in the end: both for the older him, who now pays homage, and the younger him, who just needed to know *it would be alright*. And today might just be one of those days. And I thank him for that.

11.55 pm
30/9/2009

The past is not sealed, not immutable, and it does not belong to anyone. It is an impression left by the telling of stories. ... It is what we all do incessantly in an effort to find a personal truth (that glint of gold) to make sense of ourselves and of history—to keep the past open.

(Robyn Davidson, Adelaide Writers' Week,
2 March 2008)

62



63



We are built from
layers of text, meaning,
& experience
...

I am what I am now. I lived here once, true, but that was then, and this is now. That's all. That's all there is and ever will be. I am my dreams of tomorrow.

(Richard Flanagan,
The Sound of One Hand Clapping,
1998, p. 23)

