

"LONG WEEKEND"

(circa 2007)

By

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Peter sees an opening in the next lane, pulls out abruptly and attracts an angry toot from the car behind. Peter raises a digital Fuck You, races forward ten meters, then hits the brakes again amid the log-jam. He curses and thumps the dash, anxious to get out of the city. So are a hundred thousand other drivers.

5 INT MARCIA'S BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

5

CAMERA continues to pull away from the "jungle" until the white background is revealed as bathroom tiles, with a recessed soap tray and a chrome tap drizzling water.

Our idyllic "garden" is a cluster of POTTED PLANTS soaking in a partially-filled bathtub.

MARCIA (O.S.)

(approaching from another room)

He's being a real shit. You know what he's like when he digs in.

REVEAL Peter's stylishly attractive wife MARCIA entering the bathroom with her phone. She's dressed fashionably casual and looks a bit worn out after a hectic day. As she bends down to tighten the drizzling tap -

MARCIA

Not talking at the moment. You guys are still going, aren't you? I mean, just because Peter and I aren't coming doesn't mean you...

As she listens, she turns back to the doorway and exits to -

6 INT MARCIA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

6

The kitchen of the city apartment speaks of affluence. MARCIA enters with the phone and goes to the fridge.

MARCIA

Oh some beach up on the north coast with one of his surfer mates and some chick I haven't even met.

As she opens the fridge, a frozen chicken falls to the floor.

MARCIA

Uh...sorry...what was that?

She picks up the frozen chicken, looks at it, then adds it to other groceries in a cardboard box on the table. We NOTICE that the curtains are all drawn, as if the house is being locked up for the weekend.

The couple's dog CRICKET lies on the floor, watching her.

MARCIA

(sarcastic)

Oh yes, Darling, you know how much I love camping.

She responds to the SOUND of Peter's car down-shifting.

CRICKET jumps up and hurries out.

7 **EXT LUXURY CITY APARTMENTS - AFTERNOON**

7

Follow CRICKET as she bounds out of the ground-floor apartment to meet Peter's sports car swinging into the driveway.

PETER parks next to a gleaming upmarket 4X4, its roof racks piled high with two surfboards, a surf-ski and two windsurfers. The back doors are open, revealing a mound of camping equipment and more boxes of groceries.

Peter jumps out of the sports car and grabs the LONG PARCEL to put it with camping gear in the back of the 4X4. Cricket jumps in, anxious to hit the road.

PETER

Aw, not this time, mate. The boss says you're a nuisance. C'mon. Down you go.

Cricket hangs her head and jumps down from the back.

8 **INT MARCIA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

8

MARCIA callously plops three cans of dogfood into a large bowl, wipes her hands on a towel, then takes the bowl and goes to the door.

9 **EXT LUXURY CITY APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS**

9

MARCIA puts the dogfood in the entranceway, next to a bowl of water, then she looks up to see PETER moving the sports car into the garage, jumping out, pulling down the garage door.

PETER

(notices her)

How's it coming? I wanna get away early...it'll be a shit fight on the roads this evening.

He approaches to give her a peck on the cheek. She winces, and he notices.

Cricket is crouched in the shadow of the 4X4, looking at its open rear doors, waiting her chance.

PETER
 (noticing dogfood)
 I thought you were going to ask Mrs Dunlane to
 feed Cricket.

Marcia leans closer, in case Mrs Dunlane is eavesdropping -

MARCIA
 Peter, I don't feel right asking an old woman we
 barely know to baby-sit your dog.

PETER
 Marcia, I just asked...
 (turns away)
 Forget it.

He goes to make sure the roof racks are secure.

MARCIA
 (to his back)
 I don't think she's going to starve. There's three
 whole cans of food and she's getting too fat
 anyway.

Cricket looks over at them, then back at the rear of the 4X4.

PETER
 Mate, you can't just plop down a pile of dogfood
 and expect...

MARCIA
 Yes, it's a miracle the canine species has survived
 a zillion years without...

PETER
 (gives in)
 Okay...yes...sorry...you're right and I'm a
 dickhead. Let's not get off on the wrong foot this
 weekend, okay hon?
 (approaches)
 Huh? Everything cool?

MARCIA
 I'm getting a headache.

PETER
 (kisses her forehead)
 Poor baby.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Wait'll get to Moondah Beach...fresh
air...sunshine...a chance to unwind a bit with Luke
and Sky-Bird....

MARCIA

I'm sharing a tent with someone named Sky-Bird?

PETER

We're not sharing a tent. C'mon, loosen up.

He gives her another peck on the forehead, trying to make up. No response from Marcia.
She turns toward the house -

MARCIA

I'd better finish packing.

PETER

(calls after her)

Make it snappy, I told Luke we'd meet them at
that roadhouse outside Pakenham.

She walks away without answering. Peter slides a NEW SPEAR-GUN from the long parcel and
pretends to blow her away -

PETER

Ka-thunk!

TRANSITION TO:

10 **EXT MAJOR HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

10

It dark and raining as an endless procession of cars, campers and boats on trailers head out
of town. Peter's 4X4 is amid the snail-paced traffic.

11 **INT 4X4 (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS**

11

PETER driving. MARCIA zombied-out in the passenger seat. A VOICE drones from a radio talk
show, the transmission crackling with static -

RADIO VOICE

...with the advent of DNA testing has shown that -
in contrast to previous thinking - the common
domestic cat actually predates the arrival of
Captain Cook and almost certainly arrived - like the
dingo - with the continent's first human
inhabitants.

Peter glances at Marcia (no response), then takes a quick look over his shoulder into the
back, amid the piles of supplies. He returns his attention to the road.

RADIO VOICE**(continuing)**

This would also be in contrast to the commonly held belief that domestic cats are disseminating the indigenous wildlife, and in fact there is no zoological evidence that cats have ever...

CLICK. Peter switches it off.

MARCIA**(eyes closed)**

I was listening to that.

PETER

Losing the signal.

He reaches down and paws through his CD collection.

PETER

I'll put on some music....

Marcia doesn't reply, opens her eyes, stares ahead. Reacts -

MARCIA

Peter!!

A WHITE CAMPER VAN up ahead has braked suddenly, causing Peter to do the same.

MARCIA

Jesus, Peter.

PETER**(defensive)**

I saw'em.

He notices -

12

INSERT THE CAMPER VAN

12

A CUTE LITTLE GIRL with golden hair is peering out the rear window at them, holding her stuffed koala. There is a JESUS LOVES YOU sticker below the window. She looks sad.

13

RESUME PETER & MARCIA

13

To PETER and MARCIA, it's as if the sight of a child makes them both suddenly uneasy.

PETER
 (to make conversation)
 You call Mark and Carol?

MARCIA
 (cool as the night)
 Yes.

She stares ahead at the sweeping windscreen wipers. Peter pulls out to overtake the slow-moving camper van.

PETER
 Told them we couldn't make it?

MARCIA
 Yes.

It's a sore point between them.

PETER
 Well...can they struggle along without us this weekend?

Marcia doesn't dignify it with a reply.

As they overtake the camper van, Peter absently glances across to see a **WOMAN WITH WAVY BLOND HAIR** in the passenger seat. She appears to be locked in argument with the driver. She appears to be crying. Peter accelerates on ahead.

PETER
 They're still going to Portsea then?

MARCIA
 Yes.

Icy silence.

PETER
 So I guess we're fighting again.

Marcia grabs a CD and puts it in the player. **MUSIC.**

PETER
 Look, Darl, I'm not trying to start anything, I just thought we should back off for a while...all four of us. You can lie on the beach and recuperate and I...

MARCIA
 Recuperate? Like I'm recovering from a disease?

PETER

No, it's me too, love. I need a change too...get in some surfing with Luke while...

MARCIA

...while I'm stuck on the beach with Lady-Bird.

PETER

Sky-Bird. Jesus, Marcia. Okay, you don't like camping but we're not exactly roughing it.

MARCIA

Ten-thousand dollars worth of camping gear on the credit cards, I should hope not. For that price we could have flown to Thailand and stayed in a VIP suite.

PETER

(returning the nastiness)

Right. You'd know all about hotel rooms, wouldn't you.

MARCIA

Get fucked.

PETER

Yeah, well, I'd say there's not much chance of that, eh?

Cold war. A great start to the holiday!

14

EXT RURAL ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

14

The 4X4 is stopped at a brightly-lit roadhouse as traffic zooms past. MARCIA sits stationary in the passenger seat.

PETER is outside, loading a 10-litre container of spare fuel into the back, then pacing with his phone, trying to get the best signal as that same WHITE CAMPER ambles past in B.G.

PETER

(phone)

Well how long'll you be?

(glances at watch)

Be midnight at least before we get there...another hour to set up camp and....

(beat)

Hold on, you're breaking up.

(moves position)

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's better.

(beat)

Y'sure, mate?

(beat)

The what? The Eggelston Pub...?

15 **INT 4X4 - CONTINUOUS**

15

As she waits, MARCIA hears a NOISE. She turns down the CD music, listens. A GURGLING GROAN. Eerie. As if coming from the back. She rises up and turns in her seat, peering at the mound of camping stuff. SILENCE amid the shadows.

She's startled as PETER hops in again.

PETER

Luke got stuck in the traffic. Said we should go on ahead... meet'em at the pub just before the turn-off.

Whatever. Marcia says nothing.

16 **EXT RURAL ROADHOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

16

The 4X4 starts up and pulls out onto the highway. A NEON SIGN outside the roadhouse warns: LAST FUEL BEFORE TATHRA.

17 **EXT COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT**

17

An hour later. Traffic has thinned out. The 4X4 zooms past.

18 **INT 4X4 (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS**

18

MARCIA is curled up asleep in the passenger seat.

PETER driving, weary, tapping his finger in time to the CD MUSIC. He looks over at Marcia. He cranks up the CD volume just to provoke her, but she continues to snooze.

Fuck it, thinks Peter as he digs into his shirt pocket and pulls out a joint. He hangs it off his lip and presses the cigarette lighter. He glances at Marcia again.

When he looks back at the road, there's a KANGAROO frozen in the glare of his headlights.

19 **EXT COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

19

Ka-THUMP! The 4X4 hits the ROO with a sickening thud.

PETER

**Better be. I've just driven five hours to get here.
Supposed to be a turn-off about 5k up from here.**

Barman and Old-Timer exchange a look, shrug.

OLD-TIMER

**I fished every patch of sand between here and
Merimbula. Never heard of a...what's it called?**

PETER

**MOON-dah. I was told there's a turn-off just past
the abattoir.**

OLD-TIMER

**More fucking tracks than Flinders Street Station up
that way, but not much traffic since the sand
mining finished in, what...**

(looks to Barman)

...the nineteen seventies?

BARMAN

Seventy-eight.

PETER

(grins)

**Guess we won't have to worry about the crowds
then, eh?**

Nobody else cracks a smile.

The TRUCKIE'S EYES bore into Peter from across the room.

PETER

(to Barman)

**Listen, I'm supposed to meet up here with a mate
in a green van but I can't raise him on the mobile.
Must be out of range.**

So what? No reply from the Barman.

PETER

**They shouldn't be more than half an hour behind
us. When they get here, I wonder if you could tell
them we went on ahead to Moondah.**

BARMAN

This beach that don't exist....

PETER

Well it's a secret surf break. Surfers try and keep it quiet. Maybe it's known by another name.

BARMAN

Must be.

PETER

(winding it up)

Well...thanks.

The Barman nods. Peter starts out with his plastic bag of rum but stops halfway, looks back.

PETER

His name's Luke...Luke McKay... driving a green van with surfboards on the roof. Just tell'im Peter and Marcia have gone ahead to make camp.

The Barman nods again. Peter turns and exits as the Truckie watches.

26

INT/EXT 4X4 - NIGHT

26

PETER returns to the 4X4 and finds the doors locked. He knocks on the window and **MARCIA** opens up. He puts the bag of rum in back and climbs into the driver's seat. **MARCIA** looks at him -

MARCIA

Where are we?

PETER

Almost there. Just down the road.

He starts the motor.

MARCIA

What about Luke and what's-her-name? Aren't we supposed to...

PETER

I can't reach them here, there's no signal. They can't be that far behind. We'll go ahead and get our camp set up. I left word for them in the pub.

As they start to drive away, Marcia notices that **TRUCK DRIVER** watching from the pub doorway. Something about him gives her the shivers.

He looks down the track again - like a mouth waiting to swallow them. He gets an eerie sensation, then dismisses it and starts back to the idling vehicle.

Drawing closer, he sees - amid moths fluttering around the headlights - a tuft of hair stuck to a glob of coagulated blood on the bullbar, a result of hitting the kangaroo. He bends down to inspect it.

Here, for the first time, we hear a DISTANT, SPOOKY WAILING, SIMILAR TO THE CRYING OF A BABY, but like no baby we've every heard before.

It gives Peter goosebumps.

32

INT 4X4 - NIGHT

32

PETER jumps in, sits there for a moment. MARCIA notices.

MARCIA

What's wrong?

PETER

Nothing.

Pause. Peter still just sitting.

MARCIA

Well is this the place?

PETER

Yeah. S'gotta be.

He puts the vehicle in gear and they lurch off.

33

EXT MAIN TURN-OFF - CONTINUOUS

33

The wheels run over the fallen-down sign. We follow the TAIL-LIGHTS as the 4X4 recedes into the distance, down that woebegone track.

34

EXT SANDY TRACK - NIGHT

34

The 4X4 rattles and jostles as the track becomes more eroded. Thick tea-tree forms a barrier on either side.

35

MONTAGE

35

The vehicle comes to an unmarked fork. PETER takes the track to the right (his perceived direction of the ocean).

There is a MAZE of unmarked tracks. Every 40 or 50 meters the headlights fall upon another junction. They all look alike.

Branches whip against the windscreen as the tracks become progressively narrower and more overgrown.

The WHEELS SPIN in a patch of soft sand.

VARIOUS SHOTS of the 4X4 pushing deeper and deeper into unknown territory.

36

INT 4X4 (MOVING) - NIGHT

36

PETER & MARCIA being jostled, becoming increasingly concerned, although Peter tries to hide it.

MARCIA

You do you know where we are?

PETER

Roughly.

He looks at the GPS, which shows their position on a bare piece of terrain, with no roads marked. He can only see the highway somewhere off to the left, and the ocean just starting to appear on the screen to the right.

PETER

Ocean's just over there...we just gotta find the way through.

But his POV shows that the present track keeps angling left, away from the direction they want to go.

MARCIA

How're Luke and thing-o going to find their way through this?

Peter doesn't know. But his face brightens as he sees something up ahead - another fork, and a dead gum tree with an arrow carved into the trunk, pointing right.

PETER

That looks promising.

37

EXT TREE WITH ARROW - CONTINUOUS

37

The 4X4 takes the right-hand track and jostles off into the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

38

INT/EXT 4X4 (STATIONARY) - SANDY TRACK - NIGHT

38

MARCIA'S FACE, pretending to be asleep. She opens her eyes to the sensation of stillness and **SILENCE**. They've stopped again. **PETER** is back outside, peering off, listening. He pulls out his phone, checks it - still no signal. Damn.

Marcia hears that low growling noise again, as if coming from the back of the vehicle. She looks into the rearview mirror.

Just then, a rear passenger door opens and Peter reaches in for the rum. He removes the two bottles from the sheer blue **PLASTIC BAG**. He discards the bag on the ground, puts one bottle away, then opens the other and has a drink.

He notices Marcia and holds up the bottle. Want a belt?

She looks away, annoyed and fed up.

The growling noise recurs from the back. This time they both hear it. They exchange a look. Then Marcia watches from her seat as Peter moves around to the back, opens the rear doors.

TWO BLACK EYES glisten out at him.

PETER
(breaks into a grin)
Cricket!

The dog is wedged inconspicuously between a guitar and two rolled sleeping bags. She gives a hopeful whine. Peter reaches in to ruffle her coat affectionately.

PETER
How are ya, girl? Huh?
(to Marcia)
We've got a castaway, hon.

MARCIA
(seething)
You knew, didn't you.

Peter looks at her smugly. Then he notices that Cricket is looking upward at the sky. Peter turns to follow the dog's eyeline, and just then -

BOOM! The mother of lightning strikes, just a stone's throw away. The whole area lights up like daytime for a moment, then the thunder rumbles off into the distance. Cricket whines.

PETER
(looking at sky)
Close.

Suddenly, a DRENCHING DOWNPOUR sends Peter hurrying back to the driver's seat. Gets in, slams the door, dripping. He sits there for a moment, a bit rattled by it all.

MARCIA

(quietly)
Peter...?

He looks over at her.

MARCIA

We don't belong here.

Her words confirm his darkest suspicion, but he's not going to show it. He forces a casual grin.

PETER

Just a bit of weather.

MARCIA

That's not what I mean.

PETER

Then what do you mean, Marcia?

She simply stares back at him. His grin fades. As they hold each other's eyes, a sadness floods into his face. Something troubling him. Then, quietly, out of the blue -

PETER

I ran over a kangaroo earlier.

What a strange thing to say! Marcia doesn't know how to react.

Peter takes another belt of rum, places the bottle between his knees, then starts the engine and they push on into the rain.

END on the BLUE PLASTIC BAG as it's swept up off the ground in their wake and carried off into the scrub.

And way off in the distance, a repeat of that awful wailing.

DISSOLVE TO:

39

EXT/INT 4X4 (MOVING) - SANDY TRACK - NIGHT

39

VARIOUS SHOTS of the 4X4 moving along a succession of tracks, so narrow in places that the scrub claws at the sides of the vehicle - then so tilted that it threatens to topple over.

PETER'S POV as the bright headlights illuminate the endless expanse of gloomy scrub. But Peter has new confidence, thanks to the rum and the fact that the rain has stopped. He rolls down his window, sniffs, looks at MARCIA.

PETER

Getting close now, Smell the ocean?

Marcia smells nothing but exhaust fumes.

CRICKET, in back, smells trouble.

OUTSIDE, the 4X4 jostles down a dip then up the other side.

40

INT 4X4 - NIGHT

40

MARCIA'S boredom turns to concern at what she sees up ahead. PETER sees it too and slows to a stop.

CAMERA moves slowly ahead along the headlights beam until it fixes on the DEAD GUM TREE WITH THE CARVED ARROW.

MARCIA

That's the same tree.

PETER

Bullshit. How can it be the same tree?

MARCIA

Because we're going around in circles!

PETER

**We've been on the same track for 30 minutes.
How the hell could we have gone in...(circles?)**

MARCIA

Then where the fuck are we, Peter?

Good question. Peter takes a swill of rum, then checks the GPS for the umpteenth time.

MARCIA

Can I make a suggestion?

Peter fiddles with the GPS, purposely ignoring her.

MARCIA

Let's go back and spend the night at a hotel.

After a moment, Peter switches off the engine.

PETER

We'll sleep here.

MARCIA

What, in the car?

PETER

We can't be far off. We'll find the beach when it gets light.

He's tired and a bit drunk. She is at her wit's end.

MARCIA

Fabulous. You spend a fucking fortune and camping gear and...

PETER

Will you just shut the fuck up, you've done nothing but sulk and whine since we started!

Both of them are a bit surprised by his outburst.

PETER

(throws up his hands)

Okay. You wanna drive back? Be my guest. Take us back, Marcia.

They glare icily at each other. Then Marcia huffs, climbs into the back and starts to clear a space for her sleeping-bag.

Peter remains resolutely in the driver's seat as CRICKET comes forward to sit in front. Peter has another hit of rum, then looks over at Cricket and gives her an affectionate pat.

PETER

What happened to Luke, eh girl?

Marcia rolls out her sleeping-bag, quietly furious.

41

EXT 4X4 (STATIONARY - SANDY TRACK - CONTINUOUS)

41

Looking in through the windscreen at PETER and CRICKET, motionless, staring ahead.

PANNING OFF SLOWLY. A breeze carries that discarded BLUE PLASTIC BAG across FRAME.

WE ELEVATE over the whole scene, looking out over the godforsaken landscape.

A faint recurrence of that **DISTANT, SPOOKY WAILING** - like no creature we've ever heard before.

DISSOLVE TO:

42

EXT SCRUB - EARLY MORNING

42

A SERIES OF SHOTS as a new day dawns....

A WEDGE-TAIL EAGLE glides in a slow arc against a clear morning sky.

A WOMBAT wobbles through the undergrowth.

A COLONY OF ANTS struggle with a dead beetle.

A KOOKABURRA pecks for grubs.

A LYREBIRD spreads its majestic plumage.

A KOALA gazes down drowsily from its perch.

A KANGAROO grooms her young JOEY.

A general feeling of well-being in nature's community.

Then...a distant, echoed **THWACK!** causes the kangaroo and joey to look up suddenly.

43

EXT CAMPSITE - MORNING

43

THWACK! again as a gleaming **AXE HEAD** slams into a tree trunk, then withdraws, then strikes again.

Through the side window of the stationary 4X4, WE SEE **MARCIA** asleep, then slowly waking up as the sun shines into her eyes and a chopping **NOISE** sustains. She raises up on one elbow and peers outside

REVEAL the 4X4 now parked in a pleasant clearing. The tent has been erected, campfire built, folding table set up and several boxes of groceries unpacked, along with the **LONG PARCEL** seen earlier.

PETER is at the edge of the clearing, laying into a tree with the axe, but the wood is too green and all he's managed to do so far is ring-bark it. He looks up when he sees **Marcia** moving about in the back of the 4X4. He pauses, leans on the axe.

PETER
(the outdoorsman)
Morning.

Marcia opens the side window, gazes out.

MARCIA

Where are we?

PETER

(with a flourish)

We're here. And the sun's shining and the birds are chirping...

MARCIA

...and the bacon's burning.

PETER

(notices)

Fuck.

He quickly goes to remove a frying pan from the flames.

PETER

We just missed the mark last night. Another 50 meters and we'd have made it.

MARCIA

(searching back)

Where're my clothes?

She's only wearing her panties.

PETER

Clothes? Who's gonna see us way out here?

She ignores him and paws around in back to find a shirt.

MARCIA

Any sign of your mate Luke?

PETER

(going back to the axe)

Probably slept on the road like we did. I dunno. Should be here soon.

Marcia slips into a shirt, gets out, looks around campsite.

PETER

(sarcastically)

Gee Peter, you did a great job setting up the campsite.

Marcia props for a moment, then decides to start afresh this morning. She manages a smile, though she'd rather be in Portsea.

MARCIA

Clever boy.

Peter grins and raises the axe.

MARCIA

What're you doing to that tree?

PETER

Chopping it down.

THWACK!

MARCIA

Why?

PETER

Why not?

(THWACK!)

Firewood.

Marcia notices the LONG PARCEL on the table.

MARCIA

What's this?

Peter approaches, gives her a good morning smooch on the cheek, then goes to open the parcel.

PETER

Got it in town....

He takes out the new SPEAR GUN, starts fooling with it. Marcia clearly disapproves.

MARCIA

What're you going to do with that?

PETER

(aiming off)

I dunno. Shoot a fish.

MARCIA

Careful where you point it. You know how I hate guns.

PETER

S'not a gun.

Marcia shakes her head - too early to argue. Peter puts the spear gun down and goes to lead Marcia to a path.

PETER

C'mon...show you something....

As they disappear, CRICKET jumps out of the 4X4 and follows.

44

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - MORNING

44

As PETER leads MARCIA by the hand to the edge of a bluff -CRICKET following - CAMERA ELEVATES TO REVEAL a breathtaking ocean panorama...an unblemished white beach...a gentle surf breaking in crystal clear water. Everything Peter had hoped for. He spreads his arms, fanfare fashion -

PETER

Da-dahhh! What'd'y'reckon?

MARCIA

(scanning)

Where're the toilets?

PETER

(looks down at dog)

Toilets. She wants toilets.

MARCIA

So I'm not the outdoors type.

PETER

(grandly)

So we'll live off the land and pay her with our precious guano.

As if on cue, Cricket has wandered into the high grass to have a shit.

Marcia can't maintain her sulking this morning as Peter turns and puts his arms around her.

PETER

Know what?

MARCIA

What?

PETER

I think I still love you...

(beat)

...even though you're a grumpy old sour-puss.

MARCIA
 (warming, smiles)
 Do you?

They kiss. Then he holds her out at arm's length.

PETER
 Know what else?

MARCIA
 Hmm?

PETER
 (mock concern)
 In your hair. AH!

MARCIA
 AH!!!

She begins to frantically bat at her hair, then sees Peter grinning like an idiot.

MARCIA
 You prick!

He laughs, then he tackles her over the edge of the bluff and they roll down the sandy bank, laughing like children.

Cricket finishes her business and comes romping down after them, barking at the sudden burst of activity.

At the bottom of the bluff, on the beach, Peter rolls on top of Marcia and pins her down. Her shirt has come open in the front, and both are caked in sand.

Cricket prances at the sidelines.

PETER
 What'd you call me?

MARCIA
 A prick.

PETER
 A what?

MARCIA
 Nuthin'.

PETER
 Eh?

MARCIA
I dunno. A good boy.

PETER
How good?

MARCIA
I dunno...get off or I'll piss myself!

PETER
(dives for cover)
Ah! Look out, Cricket!

She sits up, spitting sand, brushing more off her chest.

MARCIA
Bully.

He slides up next to her.

PETER
Love me?

MARCIA
Maybe.

He nibbles affectionately at her neck. She responds. He slides his hand into her shirt and they kiss more passionately.

Cricket watches, then looks off.

A WAVE breaks in the shallows and becomes WHITE FOAM.

MATCH CUT TO:

45

EXT CAMPSITE - MORNING

45

WHITE FOAM parts to reveal a dirty frying pan.

WIDEN ON MARCIA, doing the breakfast dishes. The RADIO is on -

RADIO VOICE
...while it's uncommon for wildlife diseases to lead directly to population extinction in the absence of other severe threats, the Tasmanian devil facial cancer is a new, unusual disease and there is no hard evidence for population or individual resistance or recovery.
(MORE)

RADIO VOICE (CONT'D)

There is also a concern that if the population is diminished, while numbers of the introduced fox increase, it may be difficult for them ever to recover.

The frequency is changed to another station as PETER, in the 4X4, finds the surf report -

NEW RADIO VOICE

...with a light ground-swell and variable sea breezes in the south-west district. Winds should become increasingly on-shore in the afternoon, with choppy conditions persisting from...

PETER

(low)

Fuck.

Peter switches off the radio, gets out, bored.

As Marcia continues to clean up (as usual!), Peter goes over to toy with the speargun.

MARCIA

Just be careful with that thing, okay?

He aims it at CRICKET, who is napping near the tent.

PETER

Ka-thunk.

Cricket looks up, licks herself, goes back to sleep.

Peter lays the speargun across a folding chair and looks for something else to do. Restless, he picks up the axe and takes a couple of half-hearted belts at the ring-barked tree.

HIGH IN THE TREE, a large SPECKLED EGG jiggles precariously in its nest.

Marcia dries the last of the dishes with a paper towel, wads it up and discards it on the ground. The campsite is already starting to look cluttered. She picks up the tub of dishwater and carries it a short way down the track to empty it.

Peter, meanwhile, loses interest in his chopping and wanders over to poke at the campfire.

Marcia dumps out the dishwater and takes a moment to scan the area - miles of undulating scrub. She turns and sees -

THE TREE WITH THE CARVED ARROW.

On Marcia. That's odd.

Peter is still squatting at the fire when Marcia returns.

MARCIA

Peter...that tree with the arrow ...it's just over there.

PETER

(poking coals)

Yeah, if we'd gone another...

MARCIA

No, what I mean is, the track ends here. How could we have gone around in circles?

PETER

Obviously we didn't.

MARCIA

But...

PETER

Christ, I don't know, we're here now so what's the difference?

End of discussion.

A deadly BROWN SNAKE slithers past the arrow tree.

46

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY

46

CRICKET has found a dead seabird lying amid flotsam along the shoreline. She sniffs, then rolls in it.

MARCIA sits quietly on the beach, watching as -

PETER cools off in the shallows, doing somersaults and headstands and generally showing off.

Marcia rises, goes over to Cricket, who continues to roll.

MARCIA

Get out've it, Cricket.

Cricket backs off, then gets excited as Marcia picks up a stick. She pokes at the dead bird, wrinkles her nose.

47

UNDERWATER

47

Looking up at PETER from below as he frolics in the surf.

Peter hears her and raises up. A small wave smacks him in the face. Like the CAMERA, he's too low to see around, but he spots MARCIA at the shoreline, frantically waving him in.

A surge of panic engulfs Peter as he tries to see what may be lurking beneath him. The wavelets keep smacking him in the face. Marcia's cries grow ever more urgent -

MARCIA

PETER!!!

52

UNDERWATER

52

OUR POV looking upward, homing in on PETER'S LEGS. "Jaws".

53

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - CONTINUOUS

53

PETER is now scrambling to shore, convinced that Marcia can see something that he can't. A larger wave comes up behind him, breaking over him in a small explosion of foam.

From the shoreline, MARCIA loses sight of him. An eternity passes. CRICKET continues to yap at the water.

Then Peter's head bursts up through the foam. He finds his feet and wades ashore, sputtering and wiping back his hair.

PETER

(bewildered)

What's wrong?

Marcia continues to stare at the water.

Cricket continues to bark.

PETER

Cricket, shuddap!

The dog stops barking but continues to fret.

Peter turns to Marcia.

PETER

Marcia, what is it?

MARCIA

Something...in the water.

PETER

(looks off)

What?

MARCIA

I don't know.

Peter looks out at the water again, then back at her.

PETER

(grins sceptically)

Chris, hon, you scared the shit out've me.

MARCIA

Cricket saw it too. She wouldn't go in the water.

As if to spite her, Cricket now lunges into the shallows to fetch the stick.

MARCIA

(weakly)

Well it could've been a shark or something.

She feels foolish now for raising a false alarm.

Peter grins back at her, then looks an arm around her shoulder and they walk out of FRAME. A moment later, Cricket emerges from the shallows with the stick and takes off after them.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO HOLD as another wave crests and breaks.

54

EXT CAMPSITE - DAY

54

MARCIA is at a small fridge in the back of the 4X4.

MARCIA

What do you want tonight, steak or chicken?

PETER is at the table, fooling around with a WHAMO SLINGSHOT, testing its strength.

PETER

What's wrong with some fresh fish?

MARCIA

Nothing...except we don't have any.

PETER

I'll catch some

MARCIA

Well I might defrost something, just in case.

She takes out the FROZEN CHICKEN and puts it on the table to thaw. She notices ANTS on the ground around the table.

MARCIA
Shit. Where's the insecticide?

PETER
(playing with slingshot)
In the tent.

Marcia goes into the tent to get it as Peter rises, grabs a backpack, puts in the slingshot, binoculars and a couple bottles a beer.

MARCIA
(from the tent)
What do you think that noise was last night.

PETER
(absently)
What noise?

Marcia comes out of the tent with the insecticide spray.

MARCIA
The one that sounded like a baby crying.

CLOSE ON PETER, as if the subject is somehow painful.

MARCIA
You're not going to tell me it was a tom cat. Not out here.

PETER
(dismissive)
I dunno...I'm not sure I heard anything at all.

She knows he's lying. She goes to the table, squats down and begins to spray the ants.

CLOSE AT MICRO LEVEL as death rains down, throwing the insects into a melee of confusion and terror.

Marcia rises casually with the spray can, noticing Peter.

MARCIA
You going somewhere?

PETER
Just for a look up the beach. What about you?

MARCIA
(ruffles her sandy hair)
I might organize a shower.

Peter slips into the backpack as Marcia crosses back toward the tent. At that moment -

SNAP! AS PETER'S SPEARGUN FIRES BY ITSELF. The shaft misses Marcia by a hair and twangs into the ring-barked tree.

MARCIA

Fuck!

PETER

Jesus!

He rushes over to her.

PETER

You okay?

Badly shaken, Marcia manages a slight nod, then just stands with her eyes closed, recovering.

Peter picks up the speargun, examines it.

PETER

Safety's still on.

He knows how weak it sounds. Marcia says nothing.

PETER

(completely baffled)

Jez, I'm sorry, love, but it shouldn't've fired with...

He trails off. She just shakes her head; his lame excuse is meaningless. Peter goes to recover the spear shaft, but it's stuck fast. He grabs it in both hands and wrenches, but it won't budge - as if it's buried in concrete.

Marcia hasn't moved. Her eyes roll downward to -

THE ANT DISASTER beneath the table - a miniature battle field - ants lying dead or twitching, accompanied by the distant echo of that hideous WAILING NOISE.

FADE TO BLACK

55

EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH END) - DAY

55

CRICKET sprints up the beach to retrieve a stick.

PETER is Mister Bushman, free and invincible today as he trudges with his backpack along an endless crescent of magnificent beach.

Then the camp-shower runs dry, leaving her covered in suds.

MARCIA

Shit!

Her exclamation breaks the spell and we RETURN TO NORMAL SOUNDS. Muttering and dripping, Marcia crosses to the jerry-can to fill a saucepan with cold water and rinse her hair.

The LITTLE BIRD swoops down to the puddle beneath the shower. It pecks tentatively, then flies away.

As Marcia dries herself, she begins to feel uneasy for reasons that are unclear. To her city-dweller eyes, the scrub around the campsite is dotted with watchful EYES, making her feel uncomfortably naked.

She quickly finishes drying and slips into a cheese-cloth cover-up. She wraps her hair in the towel, turban fashion, then hugs her shoulders as a strange chill courses through her body.

Her eyes watchful, and seemingly watched.

Then, dismissing such silliness, Marcia sits down, props a mirror on the table and begins to apply her make-up.

A SCORPION ambles past her bare foot, unnoticed.

59

EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH END) - DAY

59

As he continues his walk, PETER has taken out the Whamo Slingshot and is firing pebbles at any target he can find.

CRICKET continues to hang back, as if uneasy about it all.

Peter tilts his head back to drain the beer bottle, then he flings the bottle out into the surf. He collects a few pebbles and fires them at the floating bottle.

On the third try he smashes it and it sinks out of sight.

Cricket watches dubiously.

60

UNDERWATER

60

The broken bottle and shards of glass alight on the seafloor.

61 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY****61**

Freshly showered and preened, **MARCIA** comes down the path from the campsite wearing sunglasses, the diaphanous cover-up and carrying a shoulder bag.

She stops to look up and down the beach, but there's no sign of Peter. She spreads out her towel on the sand, takes a good look around to make sure she's alone, then pulls off the cover-up and sits down in the sun.

She puts on sun block then takes out a book.

62 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH END) - DAY****62**

CRICKET picks up a scent and sprints forward to examine something washed up by the tide.

PETER notices, approaches and picks up the object.

It's an **OLD DOLL**, with one arm missing and its head twisted back to front. But more notably, the flesh-colored plastic is pocked and disfigured with a sickly blue-green, foul-smelling **MOULD**.

Peter quickly flings it away, smells his hands then wipes them on his shirt.

Cricket sniffs once at the discarded doll, winces and backs away, wanting nothing to do with it.

Peter gazes inland at a low bluff, lined by dense foliage.

PETER

Let's see what's up there, eh girl?

He moves in that direction.

Cricket follows, giving the doll a wide berth.

63 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY****63**

MARCIA is stretched out on her towel, reading. The sun is making her sleepy.

She puts the book aside and starts to dose.

64 **EXT LAKE MONTON - DAY****64**

PETER & CRICKET come over the bluff to be confronted by a glorious freshwater lake, teeming with wildlife and vegetation. Pleased with his discovery, he sits down in the shade and takes out the second bottle of beer.

He slaps a mosquito as Cricket goes down the bank for a drink.

A BLACK SWAN gracefully takes flight.

A MOTHER DUCK pulls her train of DUCKLINGS.

Peter has a long swill of beer, then takes out the slingshot. In a rush of boyish exuberance, he springs to his feet with the slingshot drawn back to fire.

PETER
(the action hero)
Okay, dirtbag, make my day.

He fires out over the water, aiming at nothing in particular. He finishes off the beer and throws the bottle outward -

The DUCKS scatter as the bottle splashes down.

Peter fires several pebbles at it but misses each time.

He swats at a WASP, then another. Suddenly he's in a SWARM OF WASPS.

Cursing and slapping, he grabs his backpack and retreats back in the direction of the beach.

CRICKET remains at the water's edge for a moment, looking out.

65

EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH END) - DAY

65

PETER stands at the top of the bluff, peering off to the north. Something catches his eye - something that couldn't be seen at beach-level.

About a kilometer up the beach is a LARGE WHITE SHAPE at the highwater mark.

Peter takes out his binoculars to get a better view.

BINOCULAR POV: Shimmering in the heat-haze, the white shape becomes recognizable as a CAMPER VAN, exactly like the one seen earlier with the JESUS LOVES YOU sticker in the rear window. No sign of people or movement.

Peter resents this intrusion on "his" beach. He raises an imaginary grenade-launcher.

PETER
Ka-FOOM!

CRICKET watches doubtfully.

66

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY

66

MARCIA is sound asleep on her towel. A **SHADOW** snakes slowly over the ripples in the sand and falls across her.

A **DROPLET OF WATER** splashes against her bare tummy, causing her to awaken with a start.

The **SILHOUETTE** of a man stands over her. She gasps and instinctive reaches for her cover-up.

PETER steps out of the sun's glare, smiling down at her.

MARCIA

Funny.

CRICKET comes bounding up, shaking sand and water.

MARCIA

Cricket!

She sits up and begins to put on the cover-up, but Peter has other ideas. He sinks down beside her and begins to fondle and caress. Marcia isn't in the mood but tries to be compliant.

Then she suddenly rolls away from him and pulls the cover-up around her shoulders, staring off vacantly. Peter sits up beside her. A few moments of embarrassed silence, then -

MARCIA

Sorry.

PETER

S'all right. (It isn't)

MARCIA

Doctor Hargreaves said it could take a couple of weeks.

PETER

It's been two months.

MARCIA

Has it? Well I'm sorry but I can't just turn it on and off like you.

PETER

(trying to understand)
Well...is it painful? Or is it more of a chemistry thing or what?

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

I mean, I'm just a man, Marcia...I have to have these things explained in a little more detail.

She rises to collect her things. Doesn't want to discuss it.

MARCIA

I'm sure it's only temporary

She walks off.

Peter watches resentfully. Then he looks out at the ocean.

THE SURF has come up.

67

EXT CAMPSITE - DAY

67

MARCIA digs in the glovebox for two Aspirin.

Outside, PETER zips up his wet-suit and starts removing a surfboard from the roof racks.

PETER

Why don't you come out for a splash with me?

MARCIA

(swallows Aspirin)

That sun gave me a splitting headache.

PETER

The surf'll clear it up. C'mon, you're always saying you wanna give it a try.

MARCIA

No, you're always saying I should give it a try.

(looks out at him)

And what's happened to Luke and his friend?

PETER

(shrugs)

Dunno.

MARCIA

Well...shouldn't we at least go back and look for them, or....

PETER

Love, they could be anywhere between here and Pakenham. Knowing Luke, he probably got stoned and went to the wrong beach.

MARCIA

I just thought it's odd they haven't shown up, don't you? Or maybe we've come to the wrong beach.

Peter doesn't reply as he stands there with his surfboard, looking toward the north.

PETER

Saw another car down the beach.

Marcia doesn't reply as she gets out and goes to hang her towel on the clothesline.

PETER

Thought we had the place to ourselves.

MARCIA

You could shoot them with your speargun.

PETER

(ready to have it out)
Look, what's shitting you anyway?

MARCIA

I told you, I've got a splitting...

PETER

No, what's really shitting you?

MARCIA

I'm bored, okay?

PETER

Well Christ, get off your arse and do something besides lying around whining.

MARCIA

(turns on him)
I wanted to go to Portsea, remember?!

PETER

(gestures to 4X4)
Then go. Piss off.

Marcia sighs and rubs her forehead. Peter can be such a baby.

MARCIA

Look...Peter...I'm just not the type for shitting in the sunshine and getting drunk every...

PETER

The sun's too hot, the water's too cold....

MARCIA

You've got your surfing and all your toys! What'm I supposed to do?

PETER

I dunno. Go fuck yourself, Marcia.

Peter grabs his board and takes off toward the water.

Marcia watches him disappear.

68 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY**

68

PETER comes down to the water's edge with his board. He gazes out at the water. He's not that keen to go out there alone.

But the surf is pumping and the water looks inviting today.

He swallows his fear, wades into the shallows and begins to paddle out.

69 **EXT CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS**

69

MARCIA sprays the inside of the tent with a generous dose of fly spray, then she comes outside to let the air clear.

She notices **CRICKET** nudging at something in the grass beneath the tree Peter was chopping.

She goes to the table and discovers that the frozen chicken is completely thawed, which puzzles her.

She returns it to the fridge, then glances over at Cricket again. She walks over to investigate.

It's a large **SPECKLED EGG**.

She picks it up, examines it, then looks up high into the tree from which it has presumably fallen.

70 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY**

70

SURF ACTION as **PETER** catches a wave, rides it in. As a surfer, he's neither an expert or an amateur.

83

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - DAY

83

As **MARCIA** crests the sandy bluff overlooking the beach, **WE NOTICE** that the weather has changed.

Clouds now mask the afternoon sun, and an on-shore breeze has turned the water dark and choppy.

Marcia covers her ears as the awful **WAILING** persists. Her eyes roam over the water.

THERE IS NO SIGN OF PETER!

Her eyes dart to the shoreline, where **PETER'S SURFBOARD** lies abandoned, as if washed in by a wave.

Verging on panic now, Marcia looks back at the ocean, half expecting to find Peter's body floating on the surface.

MARCIA
(calls into the wind)
Peter!!

That's when she sees - or thinks she sees - a **LARGE DARK SHAPE** moving lazily just off shore.

MARCIA
(screams)
PETER!!!

Her scream brings an abrupt end to the eerie **WAILING**, leaving only the normal **SOUND** of surf and wind.

But no Peter.

She goes tearing down to the beach, runs up to his board.

MARCIA
PETER!!!

Full alarm now. Until she looks askance and sees **SOMEONE** squatting at the highwater mark, about 50 meters away.

MARCIA
PETER!!!

PETER turns and sees her. He rises as Marcia sprints over to him and throws her arms around him.

MARCIA

Oh Jesus God...

PETER

(bewildered)

What is it, love?

She looks up at him and can barely speak.

MARCIA

I thought...I couldn't see...I-I thought you'd...

PETER

(holds her)

Hey hey hey...it's okay.

MARCIA

I-I thought I saw something out in the water....

PETER

(soothing)

Shhh....

CRICKET comes belting past them, barking.

Then, looking over his shoulder, Marcia sees something behind him on the sand. Cricket propped over it, barking madly.

MARCIA

What's that?

Peter turns to look. The thing on the sand is blue and black.

PETER

Cricket, shut up!

The dog stops barking but continues to fret over the object. Peter and Marcia approach it, stand staring down.

MARCIA

What is it?

Peter squats down and pokes it with a stick. As it turns over, we see that it's some sort of sea creature, about the size of a small dog, with a tail similar to a seal. Its head and the upper half of its body are hopelessly tangled in a **BLUE PLASTIC BAG**, exactly like the one Peter discarded last night when he got out the rum.

MARCIA

(sickened)

God. What is it?

PETER
Dunno. Looks like a baby seal or something.

Whatever it is, it's dead.

MARCIA
I heard that noise again. Did you hear it?
Like...something crying.

Peter doesn't reply. He hooks a corner of the plastic bag with a stick and flings the dead creature further up onto the dry sand, away from the water.

MARCIA
I thought I saw something out there in the water.

This gets Peter's attention.

PETER
Like what?

MARCIA
I don't know...just a dark shape.

Peter rises again, puts his arms around her, and for a moment they are closer than they've been in a long time...or will ever be again.

MARCIA
Peter...do we have to stay here?

He looks down at her with a half-grin.

PETER
You're joking.

Her mood instantly darkens. She turns to go back to the campsite. Peter, a little bemused, follows her, leaving Cricket sniffing at the dead creature.

PETER (O.S.)
Cricket!

Cricket turns and darts after them, leaving us with just the dead thing, tangled in the plastic bag. HOLD, then -

84

EXT SKY - DAY

84

The EAGLE glides slowly overhead.

85 **INT TENT - CONTINUOUS**

85

The **LARGE SPECKLED EGG** lies abandoned beside the paperback in the tent. **HOLD**, then -

FADE TO BLACK

86 **EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT**

86

The flickering campfire as seen from a **POV** within the scrub.

PETER is wrapping potatoes in foil and putting them on the coals as **MARCIA** sits moodily by the fire. A new porta-gas lantern hangs over the work area.

Peter glances at Marcia.

PETER

How's the headache?

MARCIA

I wasn't joking before. Do we have to stay here another night?

PETER

We just got here.

MARCIA

We could be home by midnight.

Marcia approaches him with a sexy smile and laces her hands around his neck -

MARCIA

I'll make it worth your while, gorgeous.

PETER

Home is where I leave my dirty socks.

MARCIA

(still playful)

You should have married your mother.

PETER

You've got better tit.

MARCIA

(smile vanishes)

I'm serious, love.

PETER
About marrying my mother?

MARCIA
Peter! (Be serious!)

PETER
What, you really wanna just pack up and leave the first night?

She looks at him deeply for a long moment, then she turns to walk back to the tent.

MARCIA
Forget it.

She disappears into the tent.

Peter shrugs and goes back to his cooking.

PETER
Mars...what'd you do with the chicken?

87

INT TENT - CONTINUOUS

87

MARCIA is laying out their sleeping bags.

MARCIA
I put it back in the fridge.

She notices the LARGE SPECKLED EGG, picks it up, studies it as WE HEAR the distant flapping of wings.

PETER (O.S.)
Love...?

She's oddly preoccupied with the egg.

PETER (O.S.)
Mars...?

MARCIA
Hmm?

88

EXT CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

88

PETER is by the fridge at the back of the 4X4, holding the packaged chicken.

PETER

This chook's gone off.

MARCIA emerges from the tent and absently lays the speckled egg on the table before approaching Peter.

MARCIA

It couldn't have.

PETER

Well it has. In fact it's gone bloody rotten. You must've left it out too long.

MARCIA

That's impossible.

PETER

Ugh! Look at it, it's gone mouldy.

MARCIA

(takes it)

Here, let me see.

She holds it beneath the lantern. The chicken is covered in that same slimy blue-green mould that Peter saw earlier on the old doll.

MARCIA

Ugh!

She drops it into a rubbish bag.

PETER

I'll have to defrost the steak or...

MARCIA

(turns to him suddenly)

Peter, we don't belong here!

PETER

(not this again!)

Aw c'mon, Mars...a little mould on the chook and...

MARCIA

(explodes)

I'm not talking about the fucking chicken!

The outburst leaves Peter a bit speechless.

Cricket retreats to the tent.

MARCIA
That...that thing in the surf...

PETER
Probably just a dolphin.

MARCIA
It wasn't a fucking dolphin.

PETER
Well what was it then?

He's smiling now. She turns away in anger.

A beat.

Then Peter notices the speckled egg and sees the chance to change the subject -

PETER
What's this? Looks like an eagle egg.
(beat)
I wonder if you can eat eagle eggs.

Disgusted with him, Marcia retreats to the tent again.

WE HEAR that same distant flapping of wings as Peter puts the egg back on the table and goes to get the steaks.

MARCIA (O.S.)
(from inside tent)
Get out've it!

Cricket comes scampering from the tent.

Peter just shakes his head. Women!

He doesn't notice a dull ORANGE GLOW above the treetops, inland to the west. (That carelessly discarded cigarette?)

DISSOLVE TO:

89

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - NIGHT

89

Moonlight sparkles off the water. WE HEAR the soft strumming of a guitar.

MARCIA
My God, are you alright?

PETER
(can't believe it)
I just got attacked by an eagle. Eagles don't attack people.

MARCIA
Spear-guns don't go off with the safety on!
Peter, don't you see what's happening?

Peter stares at her searchingly. He wants to understand, but male logic dominates -

PETER
He...he was probably after the chook. You can smell it for...

MARCIA
(with curious conviction)
He was a she and she's wants her fucking egg!!

PETER
You didn't even see it.

Such are Marcia's demons that she grabs the egg and hurls it into the tree, where it smashes.

IT'S AS IF THE WORLD STOPS. SILENCE.

PETER
(utterly bewildered)
Why the fuck did you do that?

MARCIA
(losing it)
It's just a fucking eggs. It's just a fucking foetus!

PETER
You didn't have to smash it. Why're you so full of hate?

She's unable to reply. Peter already knows what's wrong. He's been living with it for months. He takes her face softly in his hands, turns her head toward his and speaks softly -

PETER
Can't you see what it's doing to you?

A beat, then she slaps his hand away and strides off to the 4X4.

PETER
What're you doing?

MARCIA
Leaving.

She turns determinedly toward the 4X4.

PETER
Mars...

MARCIA
**No! That's it! You stay here and play with the
 wildlife. I'll be at the hotel.**

She climbs into the driver's seat, slams the door but doesn't immediately start the engine.

Peter suspects she's bluffing.

MARCIA
(through the window)
Are you coming or not?

Not. He remains motionless, confident for some reason that Marcia won't leave without him.

He falter only slightly when she turns over the ignition, but the engine won't start (and he knows why).

Marcia pumps the accelerator and keeps trying. The starter and battery sound healthy but the engine just won't fire.

Peter can scarcely contain a triumphant grin as he casually leans over to speak through the window.

PETER
Decided to stay?

MARCIA
What's wrong with it?

PETER
**I switched it to the alternate battery to run the
 fridge.**

MARCIA
Switch it back.

PETER
You switch it back.

The edges of the campsite are now sprinkled with more wildlife: BANDICOOTS, WOMBATS, WALLABIES, RABBITS, FOXES, their eyes all fixed upon the fiery glow of the tent and the lyrical ballad from within. Until...

104 **INT TENT - CONTINUOUS** 104

TWANG! PETER breaks a string.

PETER

Fuck....

105 **EXT CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS** 105

Almost instantly, all the gathered CREATURES turn and vanish into the night.

Except for the SNAKE on the table. It alerts to the sudden SILENCE, but it likes those grapes too much. It goes back to its nibbling, but keeps an eye on the tent.

106 **INT TENT - CONTINUOUS** 106

CRICKET continues her low growl.

PETER puts the guitar aside and sucks the last of the joint.

107 **EXT CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS** 107

As he nibbles, the SNAKE accidentally knocks over the can of insect spray.

108 **INT TENT - CONTINUOUS** 108

PETER hears the noise, freezes.

CRICKET gives a whine and buries her head in a sleeping bag.

109 **EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT** 109

PETER comes out of the tent in BG, holding the lantern.

He sees the colander NOW LYING UPSIDE DOWN on the table (no sign of the snake).

He pads quietly over to the 4X4, holds up the lantern and looks in to see MARCIA asleep in the back.

Peter, a bit unsure on his feet after the rum and the joint, thinks he sees the COLANDER MOVE SLIGHTLY.

He moves closer.

The colander remains motionless. Peter notices the bunch of grapes now lying on the ground.

Peter absently lifts the colander to turn it upright again.

SSSSS! IN A BLUR OF FANGS, THE SNAKE SPRINGS UP LIKE A JACK-IN-THE-BOX AND LUNGES AT PETER'S FACE!

Peter lurches backward just in time to avoid the fangs but loses his balance and falls to the ground, banging his forehead against a gas cylinder. He thrashes to his feet again and looks to the table.

The snake is GONE. It could be anywhere.

Peter, badly rattled, takes a moment to regain his breath and collect his wits. He's bleeding slightly from a cut on his forehead. Suddenly the warm feeling from the dope and booze has vanished.

PETER

**(low)
Jesus Christ....**

The night is not longer friendly. The darkness seems to hide a thousand demons as his eyes dart around the site. He swings around as if sensing something to his rear.

It's CRICKET, standing in the tent entrance.

PETER

Where the fuck were you?

Cricket cocks her head quizzically.

Holding his shoulders, shivering, Peter is beset with an awful panic (where did that damned snake go?). He bolts at the 4X4 and pounds on the window.

PETER

Marcia! MARCIA!!

MARCIA raises up on one elbow and looks out groggily.

PETER

Open up, for fuck's sake!!

She can see from his appearance that something is very wrong. She quickly reaches to unlock the door.

MARCIA
(as she pack)
Thought we could get an early start.

Peter - in the light of day - is having second thoughts.

Marcia moves past him as she goes back for more gear to pack.

MARCIA
(hedging)
Thought we might even be able to go back via
Portsea.

He realizes what she's getting at.

PETER
Yeah right, it's only 250 kilometers out of the
way.

MARCIA
No sense wasting the rest of the long weekend.
(beat, looks at him)
Well?

He doesn't reply.

CRICKET, by the 4X4, follows the dialogue like a Ping Pong match -

MARCIA
(moves off)
I'll help get the tent down.

PETER
I'll do that.

MARCIA
(turns)
Then I'll start packing the...

PETER
(looks down at table)
Aw Jesus, Mars, you've spilt sugar all down the...

MARCIA
Sorry, I'm just trying to...

PETER
Look, if you wanna help then go for a bloody walk
or something! Lemme do the packing.

PETER
You're right. It's a bunyip.

Marcia looks at him, in no mood for jokes.

PETER
That's what the blackfellas thought. It's a dugong...a "sea cow".

He squats down beside it, wincing at the smell.

PETER
Used to be thousands of'em all up and down the coast until they were killed off for their oil. Poor old bugger. Wonder what happened.

MARCIA
(it hit her)
She was after her baby! That was her baby we found!

She looks halfway up the beach at the small blue-plastic bundle where it was discarded in the sand. Indeed, the dead dugong seems to have been headed in that direction.

PETER
That'd explain those noises you've been hearing. They reckon the pups sound just like a human baby crying.

This hits Marcia like a hammer. Tears well in her eyes and she swings away to go back.

Peter rises, brushes the sand from his hands, and gives the dugong a half-hearted kick with his boot.

PETER
Poor bugger.

Turning to go back, he sees CRICKET trying to roll on top of the plastic-strangled PUP.

PETER
Cricket! Get out've it!

Cricket backs off. As Peter walks past, he snatches up the lifeless Pup by the plastic and flings it off into the foreshore scrub.

WE PAN SLOWLY back to the DEAD EYES of its mother.

117

EXT CAMPSITE - DAY

117

HIGH ANGLE of the site. **PETER & MARCIA** are down on their hands and knees, rolling up the tent. Nearly everything else has been piled into the 4X4, ready to pull out. The couple appears to be talking but we can't hear what they're saying.

CLOSER as Marcia looks up angrily at something Peter just said.

PETER

I'm just saying it's a pity to rush off, that's all.

MARCIA

You promised.

PETER

Yeah, no, look, I'm not saying I wanna spend another night here, I'm just saying we've got all days to...

MARCIA

You promised.

PETER

Jesus, what's the difference if we leave now or wait till...

MARCIA

You promised, you bastard!

PETER

(biting back)

Look, fuck your promise, I just wanna drive down the beach and talk to those people camped at the other end.

Marcia glares at him.

PETER

We'll be out've here by noon at the latest.

MARCIA

(cold as ice)

Is that a promise, Peter?

PETER

It won't take half an hour!

MARCIA
 (clutching at straw)
 They're not there. They've gone.

PETER
 Not everyone's scared of mother nature, hon.

She's too livid to respond.

118 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH) - DAY** 118

The 4X4 is driving north up a long stretch of beach. Accompanied by the SOUND of Peter playing his guitar and singing -

PETER
*If you go down to the woods today You're sure of
 a big surprise/If you go down to the woods today
 You'd better go in disguise...*

119 **INT 4X4 (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS** 119

MARCIA driving. PETER in the passenger seat with his guitar, smirking and self-satisfied as he sings, tauntingly -

PETER
 (singing cont'd)
*For ev'ry bear that ever there was/Will gather
 there for certain, because/Today's the day the
 teddy bears have their picnic.*

Marcia keeps her eyes ahead, ignoring him.

120 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH) - DAY** 120

The 4X4 drives past. A moment later, TWO SEABIRDS alight between the wheel tracks, watching the vehicle.

PETER (V.O.)
 (singing cont'd)
*If you go down to the woods today You'd better
 not go alone/It's lovely down in the woods today
 But safer to stay at home...*

A WALLABY and a WOMBAT watch from a foreshore bluff as the 4X4 passes on the beach below.

PETER (V.O.)
 (singing cont'd)
*Beneath the trees where nobody sees/They'll
 hide and seek as long as they please...*

121

INT 4X4 (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

121

Resume PETER & MARCIA -

PETER
 (singing cont'd)
*Cause that's the way the teddy bears have their
 picnic.*

He finishes and watches Marcia.

She ignores him.

He sighs, puts the guitar in back, then looks at her again.

PETER
 Well isn't this fun, love? A little quality time
 together?

MARCIA
 (eyes ahead)
 You wanted to drive up the beach, we're driving
 up the beach.

Peter gestures, Oooo, testy! He keeps at her -

PETER
 I feel as if you're feeding off me, Marcia. Like,
 everything that comes near you gets a little closer
 to death.

Marcia glowers, holds her tongue, drives.

PETER
 I'm not sure how I'm scoring on nature's little
 snap exam but I don't reckon the old Earth
 Mother's too pleased with you.

Marcia could murder him but she keeps driving in silence.

PETER
 I think I can see the world with more clarity than
 you can, hon. Must be a male thing. Different
 chemicals.

MARCIA

(rolls eyes)

Christ.

Sensing that he's got a bite, Peter leans closer.

PETER

Is that it, hon? The reason you despise me so much? Is it those pesky female chemicals? Huh?

MARCIA

You self-centered prick. You drag me along to this awful place, then you stick your head out of your \$10,000 shell like a tortoise and call it nature? Reality? Reality is Punt Road at peak-hour and schmoozing the right people and making a whole shitload of money, and those are your own words, damn you.

PETER

(looks off callously)

That's it, let it all out, hon. That's what holidays are for.

She doesn't respond. He looks over at her.

PETER

Is reality fucking Mark and murdering the unborn?

That's it! Marcia comes to an abrupt stop and turns her full attention to the battle -

MARCIA

You're unbelievable. You were so damned hot for Freda you pushed Mark and me together then you bellow like a gutshot pig when it all turns to shit!

PETER

So if it wasn't murder why didn't you tell me? Did you just assume I'd agree to destroy it?

MARCIA

(to convince herself)

Nothing...was destroyed.

PETER

And it's been eating away at you ever since, hasn't it.

MARCIA

Fuck you!

PETER

Yes, get it all out, hon. Lay it all on me, that's what I'm here for.

MARCIA

(sobbing)

You said you couldn't handle having a baby!

PETER

(all innocents)

Me? Me...I love kids. A little son to take surfing and...

MARCIA

God I despise you!

PETER

What? You're saying it was some grotesque mistake? You knew it wasn't mine, you panicked and attacked...just like you smashed that eagle's egg.

MARCIA

I've had enough, Peter. I can't take this.

PETER

I told you, we'll go as soon as...

MARCIA

I'm talking about you and me, Peter.

There's a finality in it. It's been building for a long time.

PETER

This week it's a divorce, next week it's new drapes and a facial at Pepe's.

Marcia glares at him, exhausted. No feelings left. She wrenches the vehicle into gear and lurches off again.

PETER

Oh how we relish the taste of human flesh. The neo-cannibals.

MARCIA

(driving)

Estranged cannibals, filing on Monday.

PETER

(blithe)

Long weekend, sugar. You'll have to miss tennis and do it Tuesday.

122 EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH) - CONTINUOUS 122

The 4X4 wheels run over the OLD DOLL with the missing arm that Peter saw earlier during his hike up the beach.

A WOMBAT, watching from the foreshore, turns away.

123 EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH) - DAY 123

MINUTES LATER. The 4X4 slows down and stop in the stretch of beach where Peter saw the white camper van.

124 INT 4X4 (STATIONARY) - CONTINUOUS 124

MARCIA sets the handbrake and shuts off the engine.

MARCIA

So where are they?

PETER

(looking)

They were right here yesterday.

A beat, then he opens the door to get out. That's when he notices something out in the surf - like a large white rock, or some such, just beneath the surface. Waves break over it.

MARCIA

What is it?

PETER

(staring out)

Looks like a camper van. Looks as if somebody didn't plan on the incoming tide.

With that, Peter jumps out of the vehicle and begins stripping down, alarming Marcia.

MARCIA

What're you doing?

PETER
Just going out for a look.

MARCIA
Peter!

He ignores her and starts toward the water in his briefs.

125 EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH)/INT 4X4 (STATIONARY) - DAY 125

Thirty seconds later. PETER has waded out chest deep. He dives under a wave and swims the remaining 10 meters to the camper's roof, awash with foam.

INTERCUT MARCIA IN THE 4X4, watching fretfully.

Peter takes a deep breath and dives down....

126 UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS 126

PETER descends a few feet below the surface to the van.

A sticker on the van's front bumper reads: SAVE THE TREES, BULLDOZE A GREENIE.

Peter swims to a side window and peers in. The driver and passenger seats are empty. In the back, items of camping equipment, clothing and toys hang weightless in a liquid collage.

Peter runs out of breath and heads for the surface,

127 EXT SURF - /INT 4X4 (STATIONARY) - CONTINUOUS 127

MARCIA is becoming concerned until she sees PETER'S head break the surface.

IN THE SURF, PETER gulps another big breath and goes under again.

128 UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS 128

This time, PETER swims around to the rear of the van, where he NOTICES the JESUS LOVES YOU sticker in the rear window. He cups his hands to his eyes and looks in through the window.

At first he only sees the swirling chaos of clothing, etc. Then, through the glass, just inches from his eyes, the FACE OF A LITTLE GIRL with long blond hair is suddenly looking out at him! Her hair whirls like Medusa. Her eyes fixed, dead.

Air explodes from Peter as he scratches madly for the surface.

129

EXT MOONDAH BEACH (NORTH) - DAY

129

PETER is coughing and catching his breath beside the 4X4 as a concerned MARCIA stands over him.

MARCIA
We'll have to notify the police.

PETER
(recovering)
Yeah...of course....

He is slipping back into his shorts and T-shirt.

MARCIA
How could it have happened?

PETER
Dunno...she must've been trapped inside...tide came in...God!

MARCIA
And you're sure it's the same camper we passed the other night?

He doesn't reply. He's looking inland.

MARCIA
Peter...?

PETER
Hold on...I just wanna have a look up there....

MARCIA
Peter! Dammit!

PETER
The parents must be around somewhere.
(starting off)
I won't be long.

He's already striding toward the foreshore scrub.

MARCIA
(calls after him)
Five minutes, Peter! Then, swear to God, I'll go without you!

He keeps walking away.

Marcia silently seethes. She looks out at that sunken camper, then inland as Peter disappears over a sandy bluff.

130 EXT FORESHORE BLUFF - DAY

130

PETER huffs and puffs to the top of the foreshore bluff and scans the area, which is much the same as their own camping spot to the south, except the scrub is higher and denser.

He looks down at the 4X4 on the beach, then out at the sunken camper as waves break over it.

Peter turns and heads into the thick tea-tree scrub.

131 INT 4X4 (STATIONARY) - DAY

131

MARCIA waiting in the 4X4. She has slid her wedding ring off her finger and is absently turning it over and over.

She accidentally drops it between the seats.

She feels around and discovers how the center console opens to reveal the SWITCH for the alternate battery.

That WHITE CAMPER ROOF out in the surf is just visible through Marcia's window, in BG.

132 EXT NIGHTMARE CAMPSITE - DAY

132

PETER fights his way through a barrier of twisted vines, wondering, no doubt, why anyone would chose to make camp here. The terrain and vegetation are strangely hostile and ugly.

He approaches a small clearing - the campsite - and walks into a ghastly fever dream.

The site is overrun with thick flora. Strangle vines and creepers seem to have poured out of the scrub, over or through anything in their path, to form a dense blanket of biota.

Protruding up through the tangle of vines is the back part of a tent...a badminton net...a child's blow-up water toy.

It's as if nature has been caught red-handed in the midst of covering up a crime.

Peter stand at the edge of the site, wondering what the hell has happened here. The site is so massively overgrown that one could believe it has been lying abandoned for years, yet the camping gear all looks relatively new.

That's when Peter hears a strange noise, just beneath the SOUND of the distant surf. It's a SLOW CREAKING NOISE that draws his eyes to another corner of the campsite.

A MAN IS HANGING BY HIS NECK FROM A TREE! His body is lazily scything on the end of a rope, as if his suicide has only just occurred. The front of his trousers is wet with urine, which has collected in a small puddle below him. A **SICKLY MOULD** has appeared on exposed areas of his flesh.

Peter jumps back with a gasp. A nightmare from which he cannot awake. For a moment he is frozen, unable to move.

The **CREAKING PERSISTS** as the man's corpse continues to swing.

Peter is about to turn and flee when something else catches his eye. There is a thick black **STREAM OF ANTS** coursing through the campsite and into the tent.

Peter follows it, squats down beside the tent flaps, clears away vines and looks inside.

There, lying on a sleeping bag, is a **WRITHING MASS OF BLACK**, with distinctively wavy blond hair. It's the mother of the drowned child, beneath a blanket of hungry ants. Wife of the hanged man. The *Jesus Loves You* family.

CRASH CUT TO:

133

INT 4X4 (MOVING) - DAY

133

PETER is driving as they race back down the beach. He's badly rattled, and **MARCIA** is teetering on panic.

MARCIA

Can't we go any faster?

PETER

Last thing we need's a broken axle.

MARCIA

What happened back there?

PETER

(shaking his head)

Must've been...I dunno...a double-suicide.

(utterly baffled)

It's like it just happened..but the campsite looked as if it'd been abandoned for years.

MARCIA

There's something not right about this place, Peter...like...like it doesn't want us here.

PETER

Why would a man take his family out to a place like this and...

MARCIA
Peter, are you listening to me?

PETER
...and leave his little daughter to die like
that...Jesus Christ.

MARCIA
It got into their heads, Peter! The same way it's
affecting us.

PETER
(absently)
What is?

MARCIA
I don't know! Something that doesn't bloody want
us here!

PETER
(a nervous grin)
That's...that's a bit rich, isn't it?

MARCIA
Then what the fuck do you call it, Peter?!

Peter has no answer as they speed on.

134 **EXT MOONDAH BEACH - AFTERNOON**

134

The 4X4 arrives back from the north end of the beach and drives pass the carcass of the DUGONG lying near the highwater mark. Is it our imagination, or has it somehow moved another 10 meters up the beach?

PETER doesn't notice as he swings the 4X4 inland toward their campsite.

135 **EXT CAMPSITE - AFTERNOON**

135

PETER & MARCIA are throwing gear into the back of the 4X4.

Then Peter suddenly stops as something occurs to him. He scans around the site.

PETER
(whistled)
Cricket! Here girl!

No response. Peter & Marcia exchange a look.

PETER

Was she with us when we drove up the beach?

MARCIA

I don't know.

PETER

Cricket!!

No sign of the dog.

PETER

When's the last time you saw her?

MARCIA

I dunno...not since this morning.

PETER

(as if it's her fault)

Christ....

MARCIA

She's your fucking dog, Peter! You're the one who let her come!

PETER

Look, I'll finish packing. Go have a look down the beach.

MARCIA

It'll be dark soon. We're not gonna make it out of here before sunset if we don't...

PETER

You'd better be quick then.

Marcia sighs angrily and goes off to look for the dog.

Peter drags the folded tent over to the back of the 4X4, leaves it, then goes to pick up his spear gun and the folded camp table.

That's when he notices the spear gun SHAFT still struck in the tree trunk.

He approaches to try, again, to wrench it loose. This time, however, the shaft comes away easily. He notices that the tree has become crumbly, rotten. He's contemplating this new mystery when -

MARCIA (O.S.)

(distant scream)

Peter!!!

136

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

136

PETER & MARCIA are standing together on the beach, looking down in utter astonishment.

The DUGONG - rotting and mutilated - HAS MOVED ANOTHER 20 METERS UP THE BEACH!

MARCIA

It's still alive.

PETER

It's fucking dead, Marcia! Look at it!

MARCIA

Then how does it keep moving, Peter?!

PETER

(grasping)

It's...the tide...makes it look as if it...

MARCIA

Bullshit! It was after her baby! Now it's after us!!

PETER

Aw c'mon, Marcia....

MARCIA

(turns to go back)

Fuck you! Fuck you, Peter!

PETER

Wait, what about Cricket?

Marcia keeps going.

PETER

(whistles)

Cricket! Here girl!

Nothing. Peter looks down at the dugong once more, then hurries after Marcia.

HOLD on the hideous creature's face.

137

EXT CAMPSITE - LATE AFTERNOON

137

MARCIA is now in a state of semi-hysteria as she strains to lift the folded tent into the 4X4 by herself.

PETER comes up behind her -

PETER
Jesus, we can't just leave her.

Marcia ignores him as she struggles with the tent.

PETER
Look, it won't take long to...

Marcia gives up on the tent and walks toward the front.

MARCIA
I'll send someone to get you.

PETER
(catches her arm)
Marcia...

She swings around and punches him full in the face.

As he recoils, stunned, Marcia slides into the driver's seat and reaches for the ignition.

Peter, outraged, grabs her and hurls her out onto the ground.

PETER
We're not going without Cricket!

MARCIA
She's dead!

Stunned silence.

PETER
You're lying.

MARCIA
I found her in the bushes.

PETER
Where?

MARCIA
I buried her.

PETER
Fucking liar!

She gets to her feet and tries to push past him. He flings her to the ground again.

While she's distracted, Peter quickly reaches into the 4X4, lifts the console and switches to the alternate battery.

When he turns back, Marcia is getting to her feet, holding the spear gun like a bat. She takes a swipe at him but misses. He grabs the spear gun and wrenches it from her hands.

She brings her knee up into his groin. He doubles over in agony.

Marcia lunges into the 4X4, slams the door and locks it. She turns the ignition but, on alternate, there's no charge. She stops, then just stare out at Peter.

Recovering, Peter gives a self-satisfied smirk. He's in control again as he rises and walks casually to the 4X4.

PETER
(looks at sky, taunting)
Be dark soon.

Marcia continues to stare out at him, expressionless.

FADE UP the familiar sound of distant **BARKING**.

Peter turns toward the beach.

PETER
Well well.

He leaves Marcia and heads toward the beach pathway.

Marcia looks down at the center console.

138

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

138

The sun is beginning to set as **PETER** comes over the bluff and pauses to scan the beach.

CRICKET is down on the sand, barking madly and dancing around the **DUGONG** carcass, which appears to have **MOVED** another 10 meters toward the campsite!

Fear creases Peter's face. By no stretching of the imagination could the tides have moved the carcass this far inland.

PETER
Cricket!!

Cricket keeps barking.

Then, the **SOUND** of the 4X4 engine starting!

PETER
(releasing)
Bitch!

139 **EXT CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS**

139

MARCIA grinds the gears into first, and the 4X4 lurches off just as PETER dashes back into the campsite.

PETER

Marcia!!

She keeps going.

Peter runs after her, banging on the back of the vehicle until it accelerates away.

PETER

MARCIA!!

CRICKET comes up beside Peter and sits panting, watching, as the SOUND of the 4X4 fades into the distance. Peter reaches down to scratch her neck.

PETER

S'okay, girl...she'll be back.

But he's not so sure as the distant engine fades to silence.

FADE TO BLACK

140 **EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT**

140

The campsite is now the loneliest spot in Christendom. The flora seems to be moving in to reclaim the clearing.

PETER has dragged the folded tent over to the fire, where he sits leaning against it. CRICKET sits at his side. A breeze moves through the trees as Peter's eyes roam the darkness.

A branch creaks mournfully high in the trees.

Peter starts to a MOVING SHAPE, but it's only his wet-suit hanging on a coathanger, moving in the breeze.

He settles back with Cricket for a long, nervous night.

141 **INT 4X4/EXT SANDY TRACKS - NIGHT**

141

The 4X4 is hammering down a narrow track, bouncing and scraping.

Inside, MARCIA drives hell-for-leather. She appears confused, lost. A CREATURE crashes against the windshield, cracking it.

Now something is scratching on the roof, just above her head.

The RADIO drones incongruously -

RADIO VOICE

...that rising temperatures are responsible for pushing dozens of frog species over the brink of extinction in the past three decades....

A hard bump causes the vehicle to buck, which in turn causes the sun visor to flap down.

SEVERAL HUNTSMAN SPIDERS drop into her lap.

Marcia screams, insane with terror as she hits the brakes, throws open the door and drops out before the vehicle has fully stopped.

The 4X4 rolls into a ditch.

Marcia leaps to her feet, brushing her clothes madly, not thinking clearly as she sets out running, down the sandy track and into the darkness.

RADIO VOICE

(fading)

And this bulletin just in from the traffic bureau...the road between Merimbula and Tathra has been temporarily closed this evening due to a bushfire burning out of control in the Durrant District. Fire authorities believe the blaze may have been started by a cigarette being dropped by a careless motorist and they have advised that all traffic be diverted inland via the...

142

EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT

142

PETER & CRICKET sit by the fire as before, Peter with the loaded spear gun close at his side. He HEARS the distant flapping of wing, grabs the spear gun, listens, then feels embarrassed with himself for being so jumpy.

He glances at his watch: 8.30.

PETER

(to convince himself)

She should be at the pub by now. Won't be long now, girl.

Cricket isn't so sure.

PETER

Please God....

Please what? He covers his ears to block out the barking.

PETER

Fuck.

He rises and grabs a firebrand.

146

EXT MOONDAH BEACH - NIGHT

146

PETER appears at the top of the bluff with the spear gun in one hand and the firebrand in the other. The barking is much closer but Peter can't see anything down there in the dark.

PETER

Cricket!!

The barking stops for a beat, then continues. Peter draws back the firebrand and flings it out into the darkness. It topples through the air in a fiery spiral, and -

PLOP! It lands in the sand and lights up **CRICKET**, barking insanely at the dead little dugong **PUP** with the blue plastic wrapped around it.

PETER

Cricket! Get away from it!

Cricket doesn't respond.

PETER

Cricket!!

Cricket misreads the command. She snatches up the dead pup in her teeth and starts toward Peter like a good retriever.

PETER

(horrified)

Cricket, leave it!! Cricket!!

But the dog dutifully brings the pup up and lays it at Peter's feet. Repulsed, Peter grabs it and flings it as far as he can into the bush.

As it crashes down somewhere out there in the scrub, there comes a frightening recurrence of that awful **WAILING**.

Peter has just about reached the end of his tether.

147

EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT

147

PETER dashes back into the campsite, stumbles and goes sprawling into the dirt. The baby-like **WAILING** continues to ring in his ears as he clutches his head in both hands.

A sudden noise behind him. He swings around with the spear gun and almost shoots before recognizing **CRICKET** returning from the beach. The dog begins to lick and nuzzle him until Peter smells the awful stench of decayed flesh and pushes her away.

Peter gets hold of himself and gathers up some broken branches to feed the fire. The rotten wood only makes the fire smoulder. When Peter bends down to blow on it, **IT ERUPTS IN HIS FACE**, singeing his hair and sending him backwards into the dirt again.

A **FLAPPING** overhead causes Peter to snatch up the spear gun again and aim it at the sky. There is a **PLOP** beside him as something falls out of the darkness.

It's one of **MARCIA'S SHOES**, dropped from the sky!

Horrified, Peter uses the end of the spear gun to flip it into the fire, where it crackles and burns.

Barely a beat passes before Cricket begins to emit a low rumbling in her throat.

Peter's attention immediately turns in the direction of the beach, but this time there is a **RUSTLING NOISE** coming from the track that leads into the campsite.

Peter turns the spear gun in that direction, panting with fear. Cricket is looking in the same direction as she continues to growl.

PETER

(whispers)

What is it, girl? What is it?

RAWK! Something streaks through the clearing so quickly that we can't see what it is.

Peter flinches and nearly fires the spear gun.

RAWK! as that same creature swoops through from the opposite direction.

Peter swings the gun but holds fire.

THAT SOUND of something moving along the track gets closer. Cricket's growl develops into a yap.

Peter doesn't know where to aim now. He feels surrounded by unseen phantoms.

More **FLAPPING**. Another **RAWK!**

150

EXT SANDY TRACK - DAY

150

PETER splashes barefoot through puddles as he sprints along a sandy track. He runs without direction, other than to simply get away from this hell hole - to keep moving as an affirmation that he is not dead.

CRICKET ambles along 20 meters behind him.

Peter passes the tree marked with the arrow.

A **CROW** watches quietly from a high branch as he passes below.

Peter runs until he's forced to stop and catch his breath. Beneath the sound of his own breathing is a **DISTANT VOICE**, speaking calmly. As Cricket comes up beside him and waits, Peter holds his breath and listens. He can't make out the words, but he begins to follow the sound, homing in.

RADIO VOICE

...and the area covered by sea ice in the Arctic has shrunk for a fourth consecutive year, according to new data released by US scientists...

The first thing Peter sees through the trees as he jogs down the track is his quiver of surfboards, lashed to the roof racks of the 4X4.

RADIO VOICE

(cont'd, getting louder)

...They say that this month sees the lowest extent of ice cover for more than a century. The Arctic climate varies naturally, but the researchers conclude that human-induced global warming is at least partially responsible...

Peter - with Cricket at the rear - jogs right up to the bogged 4X4, with its cracked windshield and the driver's side door hanging open.

Cricket runs up and jumps straight into the vehicle, as Peter looks for evidence of Marcia, realizing that she never made in back to the highway.

RADIO VOICE

(cont'd)

...They warn the shrinkage could lead to even faster melting in coming years. "This year set a new record minimum in the amount of Arctic sea ice cover," said a spokesman for the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colorado.

PETER
 (calls into surrounding bush)
Marcia!

RADIO VOICE
 (cont'd)
 ..."It's the least sea ice we've seen in the satellite record, and continues a pattern of extreme low extents of sea ice which we've now seen for the last four..."

Peter reaches in and turns off the radio so that he can hear more clearly.

PETER
Mar-ci-a!!

No reply. Peter, still panting, jumps into the vehicle, tries the ignition and has no problem starting the engine.

He tries to reverse out of the ditch but the wheels spin.

Peter shifts gears into ultra-low and tries again. This time he's able to back out onto firmer ground.

He puts the gears in neutral and gets out, scanning, trying to decide what to do next. He gets an idea when he notices Cricket sitting in the front passenger seat.

PETER
Cricket...here, girl....

Cricket (who was expecting a relaxing drive home) reluctantly gets out to join Peter.

PETER
Where's Marcia, girl? Huh? Where's Marcia?

Cricket seems to understand as she frets and looks back in the direction they came from.

PETER
Where's she, girl? Huh? Huh?

Cricket lets out a single bark, then begins to lumber back along the sandy track.

Peter quickly slides back into the 4X4 and follows.

151

INT 4X4 (MOVING)/EXT SANDY TRACK - DAY

151

PETER driving slowly as CRICKET - 30 meters up ahead - leads the way. When the dog stops and looks back, Peter leans out the window and urges her on -

PETER
Where's she, girl? Huh? Where's Marcia?

A duty calls look from Cricket as she leads on.

Peter again drives past the arrow tree, puzzled that Marcia's scent seems to be leading them back to the campsite.

152

EXT CAMPSITE - DAY

152

CRICKET prances into the campsite and goes straight over to the decaying **DUGONG**.

As **PETER** drives in, this is the last place in the world he wants to return to.

He stops, gets out, scans.

PETER
(calls)
Mar-ci-a!!

Answered by an ungodly **SILENCE**. The atmosphere remains heavy, oppressive. Strangle vines and blue-grey mould have begun to infest the site.

PETER
Cricket, where's Marcia? Huh?

Cricket hangs her head, reluctant.

PETER
Where's she, girl? Huh? Huh?

Cricket seems loath to continue. Hesitantly, she makes her way across the campsite and into a section of scrub.

Peter follows, until Cricket stops and looks back at him.

It takes a moment for Peter to register what it is he sees on the ground before him.

MARCIA LIES PROPPED AGAINST A TREE WITH THE SPEAR GUN SHAFT PROTRUDING FROM HER THROAT! Her hair is matted, her clothes torn and her face scratched from her dash through the bush last night. Blue-grey **MOULD** is beginning to make its way over her exposed flesh. Her eyes, fixed open in the rictus of sudden death, seem to be staring hatefully back at Peter.

Peter, realizing he accidentally killed his wife last night, throws back his head in a silent scream of anguish.

CRASH CUT TO:

153 **INT 4X4 (MOVING)/EXT SANDY TRACK - DAY****153**

The 4X4 smashes through scrub and bounces over potholes.

PETER drives like a man who doesn't give a damn any more. No regard for safety as he plows through and over any obstacle in his path, such is his compulsion to get back to the highway, that road back to civilization and sanity.

CRICKET sits fretfully in the passenger seat.

WILDLIFE watches motionlessly from the trees...the bush...the edges of the sandy track.

At one point, the vehicle bounces critically and almost rolls over. Peter brings it to a stop.

He takes a moment to collect himself, as if realizing that he mustn't panic...must slow down and stop driving like an idiot.

He checks the fuel gauge: near empty.

He gets out and fetches the RED 10-litre fuel can from the back. Cricket is content to remain inside as Peter goes to empty the spare fuel into his tank. He is half-mad with confusion, fear, guilt.

He discards the empty fuel can on the ground and goes back to the driver's seat.

He turns on the GPS.

It shows him situated in that same blank, roadless space between the highway and the ocean. It at least indicates the direction of the highway.

He drives off in that direction as a fat WOMBAT watches.

154 **EXT TEA-TREE FEVER DREAM - DAY****154**

The 4X4 drives down an eerie "tunnel" of dense tea-tree. It's as if we've entered some ethereal dimension - a fever dream of decaying vegetation and spiders - where every shadow hides some new nightmare.

Branches claw at the sides of the vehicle as if to impede its progress and pull Peter back.

155 **INT 4X4 (MOVING)/EXT FEVER DREAM/SANDY TRACK - DAY****155**

PETER keeps one eye on the GPS, sensing safety and civilization up ahead.

CRICKET sits with her nose protruding out the passenger window, enjoying the wind in her face.

Then Peter is distracted by a WASP that has come in through a window. Then another.

He quickly hits a button to roll up the windows, and Cricket has to pull her head in as her window closes.

Peter's excitement builds as the 4X4 emerges from the tea-tree tunnel and out onto an open heath of bracket fern. But up ahead, as he rounds a turn, he sees -

The empty RED FUEL CAN lying on the ground where he left it!

He slams on the brakes, leans forward and pounds on the steering wheel -

**PETER
FUCK!! FUCK FUCK FUCK!!!**

Cricket tilts her head at him quizzically.

Peter checks the GPS and sees that he's now headed north, while the highway lies to the east.

He guns the engine, turns the wheel sharply and begins to plow straight through the low scrub, taking the shortest direct line to the highway.

156

VARIOUS SHOTS

156

as the vehicle smashes through everything that gets in the way...

...flattening saplings...

...mowing down ferns...

...destroying nests and burrows.

157

INT 4X4/EXT THICK SCRUB - DAY

157

PETER is delusional, determined, teeth clenched, eyes fixed on the way ahead.

CRICKET seems frightened by his behavior.

As Peter blasts through a section of dense scrub and comes out on the other side, he reacts to -

THE WHITE CAMPER VAN with the Jesus sticker, stationary, with the LITTLE BLOND GIRL staring out the back!

Peter has no chance of stopping in time. He smashes into the back of the camper.

But when he leaps out to investigate, it's not a camper he's hit, it's the arrow tree. Steam pours from his radiator.

Peter tries to clear his head. He gets back into the 4X4 and tries the engine but it's damaged beyond repair. He pounds the wheel again, almost sobbing in terror.

PETER

FUUUCCCCCKKKK!!

He jumps out, slams the door and takes off on foot.

Cricket is left behind, whining out the window as her master disappears through the foliage. She hops down, looks left and right, then ambles off in a NEW DIRECTION.

158

EXT GHASTLY SWAMP - DAY

158

PETER can no longer distinguish dream from reality as he thrashes through the foliage, sustaining cuts & scratches.

He comes to a clearing where there's a light forest in one direction and a ghastly SWAMP in the other.

He starts toward the forest but a DEADLY SNAKE moves into his path, coiled to strike.

He turns and enters the swamp.

He sloshes through knee-deep water and muck.

He stumbles, falls to his knees.

As he peers down into the brackish water, instead of seeing his own reflection he sees MARCIA FACE, dead, staring up at him accusingly.

He sobs and claws his way forward.

TWO FROGS watch as he passes.

He crawls to the bank, exhausted. He notices a SHADOW on the ground next to him, and a familiar CREAKING.

It's the SHADOW OF THE HANGED MAN, scything in the breeze!

But when Peter looks up at it, it's only an ugly tangle of knotted vines hanging from a branch.

Looking back at the swamp, he sees dozens of half-sunken dead trees, each with a HANGED MAN dangling from a limb. Dozens of hanged men with urine-soaked trousers! All looking at him.

A HANGED MAN
Father, forgive me...

A BIRD swoops down and pecks Peter.

Then another.

A VICIOUS TASMANIAN DEVIL hisses at his shoulder!

Nature refuses to let him rest.

He struggles to his feet and staggers on.

159

EXT FOREST FROM HELL - DAY

159

PETER running, clawing, sobbing, hallucinating.

PETER'S VOICE
You're feeding off me, Marcia.

Vines seem to **REACH OUT** at him.

PETER'S VOICE
Must be a male thing, hon. Different chemicals.

His head spinning. His face bleeding. **CREATURES FROM HELL** seem to loom out at him, forcing him onward, channeling him in a particular direction.

PETER'S VOICE
Me? I love kids I love kids I love kids I-love-kids-kids-kids....

A KANGAROO with teeth like a Rottweiler!

A KOALA with eyes like bloodshot ping-pong balls!

A TASMANIAN DEVIL, its face misshapen with cancers!

A triangular cluster of DUGONG PUPS, all garroted by blue plastic bags. They fall like 10-pins as Peter kicks through them.

A HUMAN SHAPE with wavy blond hair, blanketed in **BLACK ANTS**, kneeling in prayer!

PRAYING WOMAN
Deliver us from evil...

All these images swirl and race and swoop and taunt. Each time Peter takes the wrong direction, some phantom presents itself to redirect him.

PETER'S VOICE

*Let's not get off on the wrong foot this weekend,
okay hon?*

The imagery becomes increasingly bizarre -

A HILLS HOIST with a dozen dead DUGONG PUPS hanging from it like some grotesque Christmas tree.

PETER'S VOICE

*...some grotesque mistake hon-stake-hon-stake-
hon-stake-hon?*

THE DEAD DUGONG COW, but when we look again it's a gigantic HUMAN FOETUS, emitting that ghastly WAILING.

MARCIA'S VOICE

Just an egg...just a foetus...

Peter falls to the ground with a THUMP. He can't go on. He lies in the tall grass, motionless except for his labored breathing. A sudden SILENCE has overtaken him.

A gathering of animals sit as if waiting for him to play. Among them is CRICKET!

PETER

Cricket?

Cricket growls and bares her teeth at him like a hound from hell!

The world stops. Peter feels trapped in a nightmare.

Then, gradually, Cricket's growl morphs into the growl of a distant diesel engine.

Peter's eyes dart about as he becomes aware of the sound. It grows louder and louder. As Peter's eyes focus, his head clears and he discovers that all the animals have vanished.

He isn't lying in tall grass but on BLACK ASPHALT.

WIDER to reveal that he's now in the middle of the HIGHWAY. He laughs to himself as he gets to his feet.

He fails to notice as SEMI-TRAILER RIG approaching behind him.

160

INT CABIN OF MAC TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

160

The TRUCKER, whom we recognize from the Egelston Pub, is suddenly distracted as a BIRD flies in the window and flaps around his face.

He fails to see the man standing on the centerlines up ahead.

161

EXT HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

161

Still smiling in relieve, PETER turns, and the last thing he sees is the Mac Truck grill insignia rocketing straight into his face.

Screech-THUMP!

HIGH ANGLE as the truck skids to a stop. The TRUCKER drops down from the cab and looks back at the long smear of blood leading back to PETER'S BODY in the middle of the road. He starts hurrying back to the body.

WE DRIFT AWAY...

...An eagle circles gracefully overhead...

...We soar above the trees and see the area in its entirety, with the sea sparkling in the background...

...We laze onward toward the beach...

...WE SEE THE CAMPSITE CLEARING BELOW. It looks to be barely 500 meters from the highway.

162

EXT CAMPSITE - DAY

162

Ground level. Drifting over the remains of the campsite...

...the charred and decomposing DUGONG CARCASS...

...the crumbled dead tree...

...the abandoned folded tent...

THE FOLIAGE IS ALREADY ENCROACHING ON EVERYTHING AS IF TO HIDE ALL EVIDENCE. SOON THERE WILL BE NO TRACE OF THE CAMPSITE.

As if the cancer is gone. As if nature has triumphed.

WE GLIDE ONWARD to the edge of the site and beyond, into the scrub. There, at the base of a tree, we MOVE IN on a GREENISH LUMP, with a steel shaft protruding from it.

It's the remains of MARCIA. Foliage has sprouted from the carcass in a rich festival of verdure.

WE KEEP MOVING IN until the tableau looks like the floor of a jungle. The SCREEN is filled with rich new plantlife, exactly as in the beginning of our story.

The SOUND of chirping birds and the drizzling of water add to the semblance of an idyllic little Garden of Eden.

THE END