

THE LAST TELEPHONE BOOTH

WRITTEN BY SANDRA MAYER

TITLE CARD - 18 MONTHS AGO

INT. RUNDOWN MELBOURNE APARTMENT - MORNING

SOPHIE LACROIX (28), fresh from her shower with her wet hair dripping onto her *TELCANEX* technician work uniform, is yelling at her boyfriend TED. He is wearing rumpled chino's, a dress shirt with lipstick and foundation smeared across the front. He has just come into the apartment after a big night out and has a guilty look on his face.

Sophie is throwing nicknacks and shoes at him and Ted tries to escape the flying objects by either cowering behind the couch or dodging them.

There is a packed suitcase beside the front door.

SOPHIE

Get out! Get out you bastard! I don't want to see you or that bimbo again!

Ted dodges a small framed picture of Sophie and himself while on holidays in Cairns.

TED

Now, Sophie, it was only a one-night thing. It didn't mean anything.

SOPHIE

Bullshit! I've suspected for weeks that you've had someone on the side.

TED

No, I don't...I...It was just one night. It's really your fault.

Sophie interrupts him

SOPHIE

Oh, stop it! I'm sick of your lies.

Ted cajoling.

TED

Now Soph....

SOPHIE

Don't now Soph me.

She throws a high heeled shoe at him. The spiky heel embeds itself into the wall just above Ted's head. Ted dodges it and runs into the sharp corner of the coffee table hitting it with his shin. He limps around holding his leg.

SOPHIE

I've had enough, get out! Leave your fucking key and get out!

Ted limps to the door.

TED

But Sophie, my stuff.

SOPHIE

You can come and get it when I'm good and ready. Get out, I'm going to be late for work.

She picks up a heavy glass vase and threatens to throw it at him. Ted whimpers. He pulls out his keys and tosses them onto the coffee table knocking over a mug of cold coffee.

TED

There's your bloody keys.

He runs for the door as Sophie launches a vase at him. The vase bounces off the door frame and lands with a heavy thump on the floor. The front door slams shut.

Sophie surveys the coffee dripping onto the carpet and the mess of the apartment.

SOPHIE

Shit!

She grabs one of Ted's dress shirts from the top of a pile of ironing and tosses it onto the spilt coffee and steps it on her way out of the apartment.

SOPHIE

You bastard - you're going to pay for cleaning that up as well.

She grabs the handle of her suitcase and drags it behind her as she leaves the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX CARPARK - MORNING

Sophie tosses her suitcase into the back of her Telcanex van.

The van speeds out of the carpark.

EXT. BUSY STREET CORNER IN MELBOURNE CBD - DAY

LETICIA FELLOWS, a reporter for Nine News a Melbourne network, is asking the same question of some of the PEOPLE in the crowd gathered on the sidewalk. She moves along the footpath selecting people from the crowd.

LETICIA

Who would your last phone call be to
and why?

WOMAN (84)

My sister. She lives in Toowoomba; we
haven't spoken in years.

LETICIA

Who would your last phone call be to
and why?

MAN (25)

My mum. Just to let her know that I'm
alright.

Leticia crouches down to be eye to eye with a child waiting
patiently holding her Mother's hand.

LETICIA

Hello. What about you? Who would you
ring?

CHILD (10)

I would ring my Dad and tell him that
I miss him.

Leticia stands up.

LETICIA

Sir? Who would you ring?

MAN (42)

Ha! I'd ring my bookie and place a bet
on the Melbourne Cup.

LETICIA

And you? Who would your last phone

call be to?

WOMAN (39)

Who would I ring? I'd ring that bloody
ex of mine and tell him to start
paying child support, the bastard!

LETICIA

And yourself?

MAN (28)

My girlfriend. I would ask her to
marry me.

(beat)

Look, I have the ring right here.

The man pulls a ring box out of his pocket and flips open the
case.

LETICIA

Do you want to pop the question now,
while you are on camera?

MAN (HESITANT) (28)

Uh! Sure!

The man gets down onto one knee. Some passerby's stop and
look.

MAN (28)

Eva? Eva Robertson? I love you. Would
you do me the honour of becoming my
wife?

The is a scattering of applause from the crowd.

LETICIA

That's wonderful. Hopefully, you'll
have good news soon.

MAN(73)

I would ring my wife and tell her I
love her.

WOMAN (18)

...Tell her I love her.

BOY (16)

...Tell her I love her.

MAN (54)
 ...Tell him I love him.

MAN (39)
 ...love...

WOMAN (42)
 ...love...

INT. GRAND NATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

A television screen located up in the top corner of the public bar of the hotel is broadcasting a news bulletin.

EXT. MELBOURNE CBD STREET - DAY

Leticia and CAMERA CREW are standing alongside a busy Melbourne street with MR MIKE RUBENS the CEO of *Telcanex*, awaiting the go-ahead for an interview to take place.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

In the studio, FELICITY sits behind the anchor desk reading off her cue cards.

FELICITY
 Today telco communications and electrical giant *Telcanex* announced that the company plans to wind back street corner telephone booths around the country. We go to Leticia for confirmation. Leticia?

EXT. MELBOURNE STREET - DAY

At a signal from her producer, Leticia starts her interview with Mr Rubens.

LETICIA
 That's right Felicity. I have the CEO of *Telcanex*, Mike Rubens, here for a comment.
 (beat)
 Mr Rubens, is it true that *Telcanex* is going to decommission all of the telephone booths around the country?

MR RUBENS
 That's correct.
 (beat)
 Due to the increased use of personal

mobile phones we will not be installing any more street-side telephone booths and we are starting the decommissioning of the booths today.

LETICIA

But surely telephone booths are still being used and are needed in our society?

MR RUBENS

Unfortunately no. We have figures that show that over 90 percent of public phones are now being used less than one half of a percent of their usage two years ago. In fact, there are 1289 booth telephones that have not been used at all in the last six months.

LETICIA

So what's being done with these booths and phones?

MR RUBENS

As you can see...

Mr Rubens gestures to an old dirty graffiti-ridden telephone booth.

MR RUBENS

Telephone booths around the country have become eyesores. They are continually being vandalized and regularly destroyed. The costs of maintaining, cleaning and updating these old pieces of equipment greatly outweigh the income that they bring in. We have been asked by local councils to either clean up or regularly maintain these booths but as soon as we do, vandals destroy them again.

(beat)

So, the decision has been made to remove all phone booths from our cities and towns.

LETICIA

Won't that take a long time?

MR RUBENS

We expect that it will take around 18 months to decommission all of the phones and booths.

Mr Rubens nods to Sophie, who stands to one side of him.

MR RUBENS

A team of officers including Communications Officer Sophie Lacroix will begin the decommissioning immediately after this interview.

LETICIA

And what happens to the booth and phone after it is decommissioned?

MR RUBENS

Almost ninety percent of the parts will be recycled, although a few councils have expressed interest in keeping their booths intact for their local museums, so we will oblige them, if possible.

LETICIA

Thank you, Mr Rubens.

(beat)

That's all for now. Felicity?

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

FELICITY

Thank you, Leticia. And now for more breaking news...

TITLE CARD - PRESENT DAY

INT. GRAND NATIONAL HOTEL MC CLARY'S CREEK - DAY

On the television screen hanging from the wall at the side of the bar, Felicity winds up her interview.

FELICITY

Thanks, Mark. And now for some more news. Popular competitor on the hit reality television show *A Farmer Wants a Wife*, Cedric Bolston from Mc Clary's Creek in regional Victoria, walked out of the competition after some controversy...(indistinct talking)

There's a cheer from the locals when Felicity speaks Cedric's name.

Sitting at the bar are ALF (57) and MELINDA (late 40s) being served by the publican, BRETT (45). OONTA (60S) and a few other TOWNSPEOPLE are sitting at tables having refreshments. ABIGAIL is taking orders from customers around the room when CEDRIC appears in the pub's doorway. He walks in.

CEDRIC

Shut that thing up, Brett.

Brett, grabs the television remote off the counter and switches off the set.

BRETT

Hey Cedric. Don't ya want to see what they're going to say about 'cha?

CEDRIC

Humph!

ALF

Couldn't keep up with the competition hey, bud?

Alf nudges Melinda.

MELINDA

What was it like Cedric? Were the ladies nice?

Cedric pulls up a barstool and Brett places a cold schooner of beer in front of him. He takes a sip of the amber liquid and sighs. He places the glass down and shrugs.

CEDRIC

Some of them were, but some of them were right bitches too.

BRETT

So, what's all this about a controversy?

Cedric shrugs.

CEDRIC

It's nothing.

MELINDA

Oh come on, it's got to have be'n

somethin'?

ALF

Must have been something or they
wouldn't bandy on about it on the T.V
so much.

Cedric gets resigned to the fact that they won't stop
pestering him for the facts.

CEDRIC

That's just for publicity. The execs
were complaining that the ratings were
dropping so they wanted some scandal
to boost them up again. So I
volunteered.

MELINDA

You put yourself in the limelight just
ta help the big wigs?

CEDRIC

Yes...no. I just wanted out of there.

BRETT

Why?

CEDRIC

The girls, they just weren't my type.

ALF

What? Bitches?

CEDRIC

No, well...yes, but that just wasn't
all of it. They just...just weren't
who I was looking for. Too much
makeup, too many demands and needs.
Too much me, me, me. There was not one
of them there who wanted the simple
farming life, especially out here.
When the cameras were off they all
just rambled on about how that crappy
show was going to boost their
modelling and acting careers. They
weren't there to find a husband or at
least one that they wouldn't divorce
as soon as the cameras were off.

ALF

So, it was a load of shit?

Cedric drinks another mouthful of beer.

CEDRIC

Yeah, it was shit.

Melinda places a consoling hand on his arm.

MELINDA

Never mind. We've all be'n watchin' and we didn't see anyone who would fit into the Mc Clary's Creek lifestyle. Let alone someone who would've be'n good enough for ya.

BRETT

Yeah, nothing but a room full of dogs.

ALF

I don't know, that exotic one, what was her name? Murbella, Marella...

CEDRIC

Moira?

ALF

Yeah, that's it, Moira. She was a bit of a looker, wasn't she? Just my type.

BRETT

If ya like tarts. She was all over that bloke from Tassie a couple of weeks ago. And anyway Alf, I thought you had the hots for someone else...someone a bit closer to home.

Alf flushes in embarrassment and glances at Oonta sipping her coffee in the corner.

Oonta catches his eye and winks at him.

MELINDA

Never mind Cedric, there are always more fish in the sea.

ALF

Yeah, as long as they're all not dogfish.

They all laugh.

INT. MAYOR RESIDENCE - DAY

Mayor CARTER SCHNEIDER and his wife ZOE, are arguing. Zoe has a bag packed and she is just about to walk out the door.

CARTER

Come on Zoe...don't leave!

Zoe grabs a memento from the sideboard and slips it into her handbag.

ZOE

Carter that's enough. You know why I'm going.

CARTER

We can make it work, I know it. I can change...

ZOE

No, you will never change. You will always be the Mayor. This small town will always be everything to you, everything. The bloody locals at the pub and the ghost in that old homestead mean more to you than I ever will...

CARTER

That's not true...I...

ZOE

Yes, it is, and I've tried to accept it. I've tried to make us work. I've tried to fit into this small-town life and be the wife that you need me to be but I'm...it's just not enough.

CARTER

Enough?

ZOE

I'm going back to Adelaide, Yolanda has a job for me in her realty office. I want a life...

CARTER

But we have a life...

ZOE

No Carter. You have a life running

this place. I have nothing, and it's not enough. I want more...

CARTER

But...

ZOE

But nothing Carter. That's it. It's over.

CARTER

But I love you...

Zoe reaches up and kisses his cheek.

ZOE

I know that you think you do, but you don't, not really. The only thing that you really love is Mc Clary's Creek and the people who live in it.

CARTER

But what about you? Do you love me?

ZOE

I did. Once. A very, very long time ago.

INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH SUBURBIAN MELBOURNE - DAY

Sophie is taking apart the phone that is in the booth when her mobile phone rings.

The wrench she is using slips out of her hand and falls onto her foot.

SOPHIE

SHIT!

(beat)

I'm coming, I'm coming.

She digs the phone out of her trouser pocket. Her boss IAN, appears on the screen.

SOPHIE

Hey boss.

Sophie balances her mobile on top of the old phone.

IAN

Hey, how's the decommissioning going?

Sophie picks up the wrench and tries to lever off a stubborn bolt.

SOPHIE

Not so great. I bet this one hasn't been serviced for fifteen years. It's going to take a hell of an effort to get it off.

IAN

Well, remember we are at the end of the road with this job, just another town to do after that and we're all done.

SOPHIE

So, the other guys are finished?

IAN

Yeah, so I assigned them to roll out more cable. So, when that one's out I need you to go to Mc Clary's Creek.

The wrench slips and Sophie grazes her knuckle.

SOPHIE

Fu...Oops, sorry boss.
(beat)
Where?

IAN

Mc Clary's Creek out whoop whoop back of Victoria.

SOPHIE

Do I have to? Can't you get one of the other blokes to go?

IAN

No Sophie, this one's all for you and there is no rush on this one. You can just take your time, take a couple of days...hell, take a couple of weeks, I'll book you in, and you can experience small-town life.
(beat)
It's *fantastic*.

SOPHIE

Shit! you're lying to me boss aren't you?

IAN

No Sophie, take two weeks, all expenses paid. You have saved us a heap of money by being quick with that job so...my treat.

SOPHIE

Yeah, so when has it ever been your treat?

(beat)

I know, something's going on, you just want me to be out of the way.

IAN

No, I'm just looking out for you girl. You know after that break-up of yours.

SOPHIE

Boss, that was 18 months ago, that's ancient history...I told you not to mention that.

IAN

Is it really? Seems like you're still holding a grudge.

(beat)

Ha, just kidding. Listen, Sophie, just go out there and do the job. Take the break and I'll see you in two weeks. Okay?

SOPHIE

Okay, two weeks, that's it, then I'll be back on your doorstep hounding you.

Ian laughs hollowly. Sophie looks confused at the tone of his laughter.

IAN

I won't look forward to that.

(beat)

Okay, see you in a few.

After Ian hangs up Sophie stares at her phone screen for a moment.

SOPHIE

Giving me an expense-paid two weeks off for nothing, even in some hick town. Hmm, I wonder what's really up.

EXT. MC CLARY'S HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The old homestead is situated alongside Mc Clary's creek. It is very run down, a couple of windows have been smashed, there is graffiti painted on one side and the yard hasn't been tended to for years and has mainly turned into scrub.

There are torch lights bobbing around inside that can be seen through a broken window.

INT. MC CLARY'S HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Four youths, SEB, ULLA, TRAVIS and MARIA (16-17), are inside the house for a dare. The homestead is really run down and spooky with scary shadows and cobwebs hanging all around. The furniture is either in ruins or covered up by old dusty cloths. With every step that the youths make the house creaks and groans. It is supposedly haunted by old Mc Clary himself and there have been rumours of his ghost scaring trespassers in the house and the grounds.

There is a loud bang as Travis knocks over an old wooden box.

TRAVIS

Crap!

Seb swings the torch around to show Travis holding his shin, jumping around in pain.

SEB

What the hell!

ULLA

Be quiet or you'll wake up the ghost.

MARIA

Do you...

She swallows nervously.

MARIA

Do you really think that there is a ghost?

SEB

Maybe. That's why we're here, to prove that it's real.

MARIA

I...I'm scared. I want to go.

ULLA
Yeah, me too. Let's go.

TRAVIS
Don't believe Seb, it's all rubbish,
there are no such things as ghosts.

They wander through the house, their torches picking out the damaged furniture and rodent chewed curtains and upholstery.

SEB
So, you think that the rumours aren't
true?

TRAVIS
I know that they're not true. You're
just stupid to believe that there are
such things as ghosts.

SEB
Well, then why did Oonta tell me that
this place was haunted by the old
owner.

TRAVIS
Cause she's mad, and you are as well
if you believe that crazy old woman's
stories.

There is a creak of a floorboard nearby.

They all swing their torches towards the sound. The lights play across the debris and the cobwebs that litter the room.

MARIA
What's that?

ULLA
Shush!

The youths listen. There is another creak and there is a shuffling sound. They all scream.

SEB
WHAT THE HELL!

MARIA
That's it, I've had enough!

She runs out of the house.

ULLA

Me too!

TRAVIS

Ya on ya own mate.

Travis grabs Ulla's hand and they both run out after Maria.

Seb calls out after them.

SEB

You're all friggin' chicken! It's just
the house creaking.

(beat)

Just the old beams making a racket.

There's a louder creak and a slight scuffle, followed by a
grunting noise.

SEB

OHHHHH SHIIITTTT!

He turns on his heel and runs out after his friends.

EXT. MC CLARY'S HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The youths are standing outside the homestead, their torch
lights playing across its walls. Travis has his arm around
Ulla.

A low stunted shadow emerges from the house and pauses in the
doorway.

Four torch beams narrow in on the figure.

TRAVIS

It's a wombat.

SEB

Shit!

TRAVIS

It's just a dirty old wombat.

The wombat looks around, gives a snort and shuffles back into
the house.

TRAVIS

There's your ghost.

(beat)

What a waste of time.

MARIA
So, Oonta got it wrong?

ULLA
Her and so many others.

TRAVIS
See I told ya, there aren't such
things as ghosts.

Seb is playing his torch beam across the overgrown shrubs and trees that are close to the house when his light picks up a white shadowy GHOST-like figure drifting amongst the trees.

SEB
WHAT THE HELL! WHAT'S THAT?

They swing their light beams to the trees.

Maria screams.

TRAVIS
OH SHIT!

GHOST
LLLLLEEEAAVVVEEE!

ULLA
Let's GO!

GHOST
LLLLLEEEAAVVVEEE!

SEB
SHIT! RUN!

They run as fast as they can through the woods away from the shadowy figure between the trees.

The ghost eerily laughs at the retreating figures.

GHOST (OONTA OOS)
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Schneider and MARGOT FLEMING are having a heated discussion.

MARGOT
Carter, the money's just not there.

CARTER

It must be.

MARGOT

It's not! You blew the budget almost twice over in the last three months alone, now the banks are on my back looking for their payments.

(beat)

I'm telling you it's all gone.

CARTER

How could the refurbishment of the race track and some paint slapped on to some buildings cost so much?

MARGOT

I don't know, but some large withdrawals have been made, most of them over the last ten days. They could have been to pay for...

(beat)

Hey, you know Zoe was in charge of those accounts...

CARTER

Yeah, so?

MARGOT

She wouldn't have...you know...

CARTER

Zoe? No!

MARGOT

Maybe you could ask her tonight?

CARTER

I can't.

(beat)

She walked out.

MARGOT

She's left you?

CARTER

Yeah. Gone back to Adelaide.

MARGOT

So, she left you and took off with the town's money.

(beat)
 She's left you a fool, Carter.

Carter drops his head to his hands.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL - EVENING

Most of the TOWNSFOLK are in attendance. There is indistinct chatter between groups of individuals either standing or sitting in chairs laid out in rows. They face a row of chairs on the stage.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL'S ANTI-CHAMBER - EVENING

The Mayor and Margot are talking in the anti-chamber before the start of the meeting.

MARGOT
 What are you going to tell them?

CARTER
 The truth. If I cannot admit my faults to my friends in this town and ask them for forgiveness, I shouldn't be Mayor. Hopefully, they will give me time to try to get the money back, before lynching me.

MARGOT
 So, you're going after Zoe then?

CARTER
 Sure am. I'm not going to let her get away with it. She's not only screwed me, but she now has screwed with the one thing that's sacred to me; this town. I'm going to get it all back. Even if I have to sic the lawyers on her. She may still be my wife but there's no way that I'm going to let her drain the lifeblood out of this town.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL - EVENING

The Mayor is standing behind a lectern beside the row of chairs on the stage of the small community hall. Council members WONG CHIN, POLICE OFFICER NICK, DOCTOR RICHARDS and Margot are sitting on the chairs.

Mayor Schneider is addressing the townspeople including DAN,

BERYL, Alf, Melinda and Brett. Oonta scurries into the back of the hall.

The townsfolk are chatting with each other while waiting for the meeting to start. (Indistinct talking)

CARTER
Order! ORDER!

He bangs his gavel against the tabletop.

The crowd starts to quieten down and take their seats.

CARTER
Good, that's enough then.
(beat)
Townpeople of Mc Clary's Creek...

Alf leans over to Melinda and loudly whispers.

ALF
Sounds like he's running for office again, don't it?

MELINDA
Oh, shut ya trap, Alf.

CARTER
It would be remiss of me not to mention this at the beginning of the meeting. I just ask you all to keep an open mind and to not shoot the messenger.
(beat)
I've got some...some bad news.
(beat)
Ugh! I don't know how to tell you this. Well...Well...

BRETT
Just spit it out, man.

Carter sighs heavily.

CARTER
Well, it's like this, we're broke. The towns broke.

The other council members turn towards him.

NICK

Broke? What do you mean broke?

MARGOT

You know, broke. No money, skint, strapped for cash, bust, you know, broke.

(beat)

The town's bankrupt. Well, it may be bankrupt very soon if we don't fix this problem and raise some cash.

The townsfolk start to grumble.

BERYL

What problem?

MELINDA

How can the town run out of money? What did you do Carter? Did you flush it all away or somethin'?

BRETT

Yeah, what the hell did you do?

NICK

Steady down folks.

(beat)

Carter, how about you tell us what this is all about.

Carter pulls up a chair and heavily sits down. He sits there for a moment with his head in his hands, gathering his thoughts. After a moment or two, he raises his head. There are tears of embarrassment in his eyes.

CARTER

It's all my fault.

(beat)

Zoe's left me and gone back to Adelaide and...not only did she clear out our bank account she also cleared out the town's as well.

DR RICHARDS

What? She had access to the town's funds?

CARTER

Yes. You all knew that. You all signed off on her being in charge of the

refurbishment of the race track.

(beat)

I know...I know...you didn't sign off
on her taking all of the money.

WONG

Damn, right we didn't!

Carter turns to Nick.

CARTER

Nick, I'll need your help.

(beat)

I'll need your help to track her down.
She told me where she was supposedly
going, but I reckon she lied. She
could be anywhere by now, Adelaide,
Perth, Brisbane, hell knows! She could
even be out of the country.

Carter pulls himself together a bit and stands.

CARTER

I won't let her make a fool out of me,
out of us. I will get it back.

He nods to Nick and Nick nods back.

CARTER

I will track her down and I will get
it all back.

BRETT

Fighting words, man. But she's your
wife?

CARTER

I know...I know. And I've let her have
free reign and now she's stolen from
us. Nick and I will use every method,
use every contact that we can to bring
her in and to get the money
back...but...

Carter turns to Margot.

MARGOT

We still have bills to pay.

CARTER

Yes, there are still the repayments on

loans, wages for council staff, school teachers, the police force and others. We need to find the cash to pay them, quickly, or they will leave town. If they leave, their families will go as well then we will have no way of keeping this town alive.

(beat)

I need your help. We need your help.

Carter despondently sits down again. Councilman Wong stands up.

WONG

Alright, that's bad news but it's done now. We know that Mayor Schneider and Officer Nick will do their best to get the stolen money back but what can we do in the meantime. Any ideas?

The townsfolk are very quiet while they ponder his question.

MELINDA

Does the town have anythin' to sell?

(beat)

I don't know.

(beat)

What do we have of value that we can do without that can be sold quickly?

WONG

Well, not do without, maybe we could bring in some investors to buy some land they can eventually develop.

MELINDA

Yeah, that's it! What do we have that can be sold off quick?

CARTER

I...I don't know. Margot? What does the town own that we could sell?

MARGOT

Well, the town owns all public spaces, so if you want to sell off a few of the parks so that a developer can build something. That might work.

WONG

What does this town have going for it

that would bring a developer in? Isn't unemployment rising? Margot? Didn't you tell us last month that that big company, what was it called? Um...can't remember. Anyway, they pulled the pin, didn't they, on redoing the old Marshall building in town.

BERYL

And, don't we need the parks?

MELINDA

Yeah, where are the kids goin' to play?

BERYL

Isn't there anything else we can do?

ALF

Hey! We could open the track and have some of the folks from the other towns bring their nags and have races. Wouldn't that help?

WONG

Yes, that would bring some income to the town and would filter into the town's coffers in taxes, but that is not a quick fix.

DR RICHARDS

Tourists.

CARTER

Tourists?

DR RICHARDS

Yes, the shops need more income that comes not from us locals but from outside sources. We need tourists, new visitors. People who can come and stay at Beryl's motel. People who can spend money in the pub, at the local restaurant and at the cafe. Sales would go up so taxes from the increased earnings would increase and the town would be getting more money in.

CARTER

But we have to invest in the town to bring in the tourists. It's a vicious circle.

NICK

What's going to get tourists to come? This is just a one-horse town way out in the sticks. No-one's even heard of us.

CARTER

You're right. So, how do we get people to come out here? Any suggestions?

BRETT

What Alf said; finish the track so we can run races and bring in the punters.

MARGOT

No money!

WONG

Put it online.

CARTER

Put what online, Wong?

WONG

Put pictures of the town online. Take heaps of pictures showing the beauty of the bush and the character of the town's buildings. We can advertise the page on city T.V. That may get the tourists here.

MARGOT

Money! We just don't have enough money.

MELINDA

What about a festival like the other towns do?

CARTER

A festival? Of what?

MELINDA

I don't know.

BRETT

Most of the towns have festivals showcasing what they are famous for, like wine or bananas.

MARGOT

Bananas?

BRETT

Yeah, like what's that place? Has that big banana on the side of the highway?

MARGOT

Like a mascot?

BRETT

Yeah, a mascot.

MARGOT

No cash for that, anyway, what are we famous for?

CARTER

Wheat.

(beat)

Yeah, that's what we have a lot of around here, wheat.

CEDRIC

A wheat festival?

CARTER

No, not a wheat festival, a baking festival? Have a festival that features the wheat industry that shows tourists the progression from the wheat growing in the fields to the plate. Try to get all the country's best bakers here. Maybe we could get some big money sponsors from the flour millers or one of the commercial bread companies. We know we have the best wheat in the country. Why not show it off?

(beat)

We could hold competitions for the best loaves of bread, cakes and pies.

Carter turns to Dan.

CARTER

How about it Dan? Do you think that would be a go? Do you think that a bread festival could work?

Dan rubs his chin.

DAN

I suppose so, but it's going to be a lot of work. Who'd be the judges?

CARTER

Not sure, someone local I suppose and then if we can swing it, some hobnobs from the city.

The crowd grumbles at his suggestion.

CARTER

Well, we've got to do something or we are not going to be just broke, we're going to be bankrupt.

The townsfolk murmur their disquiet.

Oonta slips out of the back door.

INT. SOPHIE'S VAN - MORNING

Sophie is driving with one hand trying to find a radio station that works. All she gets is static.

SOPHIE

Shit!

She hits her hand against the steering wheel. Then fiddles with the radio again. She encounters static again.

SOPHIE

Bugger!

She pulls her van over to the side of the road and plugs in her mobile phone into the radio's docking port. She selects an upbeat tune. She pulls back out onto the highway.

Sophie sings along as she drives down the highway until she is interrupted by a call from her ex-boyfriend, Ted.

SOPHIE

Oh, Christ!

Sophie answers the phone.

SOPHIE

What the hell do you want Ted?

TED(OS)

Well, good morning to you too Sophie.

SOPHIE

Cut the crap, Ted. What do you want?

TED(OS)

I want to come home, Sophie. I miss you.

SOPHIE

You don't miss me you asshole! You miss the free meals and the large flat screen. What? Can't that bimbo who you shackled up with provide you with all the comforts that you were used to?

TED(OS)

No Sophie, you've got it all wrong. I love you. I know I was an idiot, but I really do. It's all over with Tiffany. I swear.

SOPHIE

Well, that's too bad. 'Cause you're not coming back to my place and if you aren't staying with her it's either back to your mother's or you will have to find yourself another chippee pretty damn quick.

TED(OS)

Oh, come on Sophie? Give me a break? Work's been tough and Tiff just threw me out...

SOPHIE

You...you bastard, you don't want to come back to me 'cause you miss me or claim to love me, it's just because she wised up to your ways; which I must admit was a hell of a lot quicker than I did, and you don't want to go to your mother's.

TED(OS)

No...no, that's not tr....

SOPHIE

Oh, shove it, Ted. I've had enough of your whining over the years. We are never getting back together, you are never moving back in, so that's it...

TED(OS)

But Sophie...

SOPHIE

No, Ted, that's it, piss off. And don't come around to my place either 'cause I'm not there and I won't be there for a good long while.

TED(OS)

Can't you, please?

SOPHIE

No, Ted. I can't. Now don't call back and by the way?

TED(OS)

Yes?

SOPHIE

Lose my bloody number.

Sophie punches the off button, hurting her finger in the process. She shakes her hurt hand.

SOPHIE

Bugger!

INT. OONTA'S ART STUDIO - DAY

Oonta in her painting smock is standing at her easel contemplating the half-finished painting depicting a story of her ancestors. Around her studio is an array of different mediums of work from sculpture to beading, wood carving to watercolour paintings.

She puts down her palette and shuffles over to a storage rack hidden in the corner of the room. She flips off a dusty sheet to reveal a number of finished canvasses. She flips through them one-by-one.

OONTA

This ones good....no, not that one.
 Hmm...maybe...this one's okay...and
 this one...and this one.

She lets the paintings fall back into place and she settles down into a recliner. Sipping her cup of coffee she thinks out loud.

OONTA

It's about time old woman that you helped out. What good are your ancestor's stories if you aren't willing to share them. Just getting dusty here. Stop letting your insecurities get in the way. Sell them and donate the money, your town needs it, your people need it.

She picks up her mobile phone and dials.

OONTA

Carter? Carter? Is that you? Yes, it's me.

(beat)

I want to help out. I've got some sculptures and paintings to sell...

(pause)

yes, yes...for the town...

(pause)

good, good...you'll set it up?

(pause)

Okay, tell me when and I'll be glad to show them to him...

(pause)

soon then?

(pause)

Okay, okay. Bye.

INT. GRAND NATIONAL HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Brett is behind the bar. Alf, Melinda and Beryl are sitting at the bar talking over a few beers.

ALF

How did Carter allow his wife to take off with the town's cash like that?

BERYL

Not all men are clever where their wives are concerned.

MELINDA

Yep, some are pretty darned stupid.

BRETT

Even so. She's left the town in a hell of a pickle.

ALF

Have you got any ideas?

Melinda and Beryl shake their heads.

BRETT

Nope. You?

ALF

Maybe...

(beat)

You know that rodeos are making a comeback right?

MELINDA

They will never make a comeback! Those animal-protection groups squashed them about ten years ago I reckon.

ALF

Well, not all of them. They're back...saw a flyer just the other week...maybe we could get a rodeo happenin' here at the same time as the races.

BRETT

Sure. That could be a goer. But they normally want pretty big prize money.

Alf deflates at this news.

ALF

Yeah, that could be a problem. Don't think Margot would go for spending money on prizes.

BERYL

It's not a bad idea though.

Melinda pats Alf on the arm.

MELINDA

Keep coming up with ideas like that one, hair-brained or not, surely somethin' good could come out of it.

BRETT

Yeah, let's keep our thinking caps on, there's got to be a way...

ALF

Somethin'...somethin'...

EXT. CEDRIC'S BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Cedric and his faithful dog ROSIE, are sitting on the back porch watching the fields of wheat swaying in the cool breeze.

CEDRIC

What a beautiful night, Rosie.

Rosie turns to him and licks him on the chin.

CEDRIC

Ease up there old girl. Enough with the kisses.

Cedric ruffles the hair on the back of her head.

CEDRIC

Wish there was someone else with us here right now. Hey Rosie? Someone who we could share all this with.

Rosie licks him again. Cedric pushes her muzzle away from his face.

CEDRIC

Enough, enough. I know I like kisses but your breath smells. Did you find a stinkin' bone to dig up, you old dog?
(beat)

No, it's someone else's attention I want right now. Attention from a female human, not a female dog.

Rosie barks.

ROSIE

Yip!

CEDRIC

Don't be jealous old girl. She won't be staying unless she loves you too.

ROSIE

Yip!

CEDRIC

Glad you agree.

(beat)

But it sure is lonely out here, maybe I should have stuck it out on that crap show.

Rosie lays down with her paws over her eyes.

CEDRIC

That's enough. No, I won't be going back.

Rosie sits up and places her paw on his lap.

CEDRIC

Yeah, I know. We just have to be patient, don't we? The right girl will come along, you'll see.

INT. BERYL'S MOTEL - NIGHT

Beryl checks the time. It is 10.30 pm and she locks the screen door and then the wooden door of her office. She is about to turn off the light when she sees the beam of headlights reflect through the office window.

BERYL

Who the hell's that?

EXT. BERYL'S MOTEL - NIGHT

Sophie's van pulls into the motel's forecourt. She crunches to a stop on the gravel and climbs out of the van and stretches.

Beryl opens up the office door.

SOPHIE

Hey.

BERYL

Hey. Are you wanting to book in?

SOPHIE

Yeah. You should have a reservation for me. Name's Sophie Lacroix.

BERYL

Well Sophie, come in and let's get you sorted out, okay?

The ladies go into the office.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sophie tosses her bag onto the old fashioned bed. She sits down into an overstuffed uncomfortable armchair and flips on the television. She flicks through the channels.

SOPHIE

Shit! No cable out here.

She stops on a channel that shows her *Telcanex* boss, Mike Rubens, being interviewed by Leticia.

LETICIA

Mr Rubens? There are been some startling reports coming out of your office in the last ten hours about staff cutbacks. Do you have any comments?

MR RUBENS

Yes Leticia, unfortunately, we have had to make some drastic cuts in personnel over the last few days. With the economic downturn, we will have to reassign some of our technicians and even have to let some of them go.

LETICIA

How many Mr Rubens?

MR RUBENS

We are downsizing our workforce by twenty percent. Almost all of these workers will be offered redundancies as per their employment contracts.

LETICIA

Why so many?

MR RUBENS

With the increased use of mobiles compared to land-lines and phone booths we just do not have the same amount of work for on-site technicians, so that's why we have to reduce our workforce.

LETICIA

Thank you, Mr Rubens.

(beat)

Well, that's it, folks. Another large corporation downsizing their workforce due to an upturn in technology. And with the last phone booth being reportedly decommissioned this coming week it looks like those workers who have slaved away far from home won't have a job to return to.

(beat)

Back to you Felicity.

Sophie slumps back into the chair.

SOPHIE

Ian, you bloody bastard!

INT. CAFE - MORNING

The café is crowded and noisy when Sophie, bleary-eyed from worry and lack of sleep shuffles in.

STEVIE, the cafe owner sees her pull up a chair at the coffee bar.

STEVIE

Be right with you love. Just a coffee for now, hey? Flat black alright with you?

Sophie nods.

STEVIE

Great.

(beat)

Look, here's a menu, we serve an all-day brekkie combo that's the talk of the town.

Stevie calls through Sophie's coffee order to the BARISTA.

STEVIE

One flat black for the new gal!

Sophie takes the menu with a nod. She glances around at the other PATRONS.

Stevie has picked up fully laden plates of sausages, bacon, eggs and toast and is serving them to Dr Richards and Nick. Alf is already tucking into a huge pile of pancakes and Oonta sits in the corner sipping a foul coloured smoothie quietly observing the people occupying the other tables.

There is the jangle of the door chime and the Mayor walks in.

STEVIE

Hi Mayor. Same as usual?

CARTER

Good morning Stevie, yes thanks. Good morning folks.

A few of the patrons answer him back.

ALF

Mornin' Mayor.

NICK

Morning.

DR RICHARDS

Morning.

STEVIE

Hey Mayor, looks like we've got a visitor.

Stevie nods her head towards Sophie.

CARTER

So we have. So we have.

He pulls up the chair beside Sophie. Sophie tries to bury her face in the menu.

CARTER

Mayor Carter Schneider.

He holds out his hand for Sophie to shake it. She reluctantly puts down her menu and shakes his hand.

SOPHIE
Sophie Lacroix.

CARTER
So what brings you to our town,
Sophie?
(beat)
Thanks, Stevie.

Stevie puts Sophie's coffee in front of her.

SOPHIE
I work, but soon to be made redundant,
for *Telcanex*. I'm here to decommission
your phone booth.

CARTER
That's right, heard about that on the
news. Are we the last town?

SOPHIE
Yep.
(beat)
And it seems that when it's done I'm
out of a job.

CARTER
Well, that's too bad.
(beat)
How long are you staying?

SOPHIE
Two weeks.

CARTER
Well, that seems a long time to just
dismantle an old phone. What else are
you doing?

Sophie takes a sip of her coffee and shrugs.

SOPHIE
Not sure, my stay is paid for and now
that there is no job to go back home
to, I'm in no rush.

CARTER
Great. Look, plenty of things to see
around here.

He glances at his watch.

CARTER

Stevie, I'll have to take mine to go.

(beat)

Nice to have met you, and don't rush
on that phone booth.

SOPHIE

Okay.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Seb, Ulla, Travis and Maria are sitting at a table having
their lunch.

ULLA

Did you hear the bad news about the
town?

TRAVIS

Yeah, my mum said that the town's
broke.

MARIA

Broke?

TRAVIS

Yeah, and if the town can't raise
enough money mum says that we'll have
to move.

SEB

Move? What? Where?

ULLA

Away?

TRAVIS

Uh-huh. If the town doesn't have any
cash it can't pay the council workers
and as my mum works in the library she
is paid by the council, so...

(beat)

She says that if there is no work for
her here we'll have to go to the city
to find some.

ULLA

Oh no!

SEB

That's bad mate.

TRAVIS

It's not only my mum who'll be affected, but there's also all of the other council workers too like the principal and the teachers, the cops and the nurses who work at the council clinic. Lots of people could be out of a job.

MARIA

So, lots of families could be affected?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

ULLA

I heard that the Mayor wants everyone to come up with ideas on how the town can raise some money.

MARIA

Is there anything that we can do?

SEB

Don't know.

(beat)

Does anyone have any ideas?

They all shrug.

ULLA

At the council meeting, the Doc said that if the town could bring in more tourists that would help.

TRAVIS

Why would tourists want to visit here?

(beat)

All we have is a dusty main street, a half-finished race track and thousands of acres of wheat. Not really a big tourist attraction.

They all ponder Seb's comments for a while.

SEB

Hey!

The other three teens look at him expectantly.

SEB

How about Mc Clary's homestead?

MARIA

No way I'm not going back there again.

SEB

You don't have to...listen. What if word got out about the ghost, wouldn't some...like...I don't know...ghost hunters want to come and see it.

ULLA

You mean there are people crazy enough to want to come and see the ghost.

TRAVIS

Hey, that's a great idea, look!

Travis flips open his mobile phone and brings up a paranormal ghost hunting website.

TRAVIS

Look, see? There are plenty of people who'd want to come and investigate Mc Clary's ghost.

He brings up a blog.

TRAVIS

Check this out.

A message in the blog reads.

GHOST SEEKER 666

Seeking new apparitions or any ghostly encounters. Contact me with the scary details.

Travis looks at Seb.

TRAVIS

What do you think?

SEB

I reckon we should contact this bloke and see what he says. He may be interested in coming out here to have a look.

TRAVIS

And if he comes maybe others will too.

ULLA

Could we set up a website with photos and stuff and give directions to the homestead and maybe even places to stay in town?

SEB

Travis, what do you think?

TRAVIS

I think it could be a goer. What do you all think?

ULLA

I think it could work. Maria?

MARIA

Yes, I'm pretty sure that some people would be interested but let's start with this Ghost Seeker 666 first and see whether he wants to come out. But...

ULLA

But what?

MARIA

I'm not the one who's going to give him the guided tour. There is no way I'm going back to that scary place again.

SEB

Listen. Let's just find out whether he wants to come first if he does then maybe Travis and I can take him out and show him around.

ULLA

You'd better make sure that the wombat is gone before you take anyone there. You wouldn't want to seem like a fool if your ghost is just another wombat or something.

TRAVIS

Listen Seb, let's get together after school and contact this dude and see

what he says.

The school bell rings and the teens get up.

SEB

Sure. See you then.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

Alf, Brett and Dan are standing at the race track.

ALF

You know, there's really not much left to be done.

BRETT

Just a bit of paint and a few stables to be fixed up and I'd reckon that it would be done.

(beat)

What do you think Dan?

Dan shrugs.

DAN

Don't know.

(beat)

Are we thinking of holding the races or something else here?

ALF

A rodeo to start, then maybe races soon after.

BRETT

I reckon that it would just take about ten blokes one weekend and it would be all finished.

DAN

What about wood, paint and stuff?

ALF

Look.

The men walk towards a large pile of wood, paint and supplies covered by an old tarp.

Alf flicks off the tarp.

ALF
See it's all here. All we need is
manpower.

Brett inspects the wood.

BRETT
Seems as though it is in good nick, so
all it would take is a day or two.

DAN
No cash?

BRETT
No, looks like all we need is here.

ALF
Great, let's get on the horn and see
whether everyone can help out this
weekend.

He pulls out his mobile.

ALF
Are you blokes in?

Brett and Dan look at each other.

DAN
Sure.

BRETT
Me too.

ALF
Great, that makes three.

Alf dials a number.

ALF
Hey Mayor, we've got a plan. We just
need your help...

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Sophie is inside the phone booth, which has been artfully painted with indigenous images by Oonta, Sophie stands mesmerized by the beautiful painting and the phone's perfect condition. She jumps startled when Cedric loudly raps on the glass.

CEDRIC

Hey.

Sophie opens the glass door.

SOPHIE

Sorry, do you want to use the phone?

CEDRIC

Nope.

He fishes his mobile phone from his jacket pocket.

CEDRIC

All good.

(beat)

Are you the technician who's going to remove this phone?

SOPHIE

Yep, that's me.

Cedric holds out his hand for Sophie to shake.

CEDRIC

I'm Cedric.

They shake hands.

SOPHIE

Sophie.

CEDRIC

So Sophie, are you going to rob our town of this piece of indigenous artwork?

SOPHIE

It is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. None of the other booths that I have removed looked like this. Most of them were hideously marked with graffiti.

CEDRIC

Oonta, our local artist, painted it last year. Says that the pictures tell the story of how the Aboriginals communicated to each other through the signs of the bush.

SOPHIE

It would be a shame to take it down,
but...it's my job and this is the last
one.

CEDRIC

Listen, it doesn't have to come down
today, does it?

SOPHIE

No, I have a couple of weeks, but it
will have to be removed eventually.

CEDRIC

Well since you don't have to do it
today how about I buy you a cuppa then
show you around Mc Clary's Creek.

Sophie hollowly laughs.

SOPHIE

You're a smooth one aren't ya?

Cedric looks puzzled.

CEDRIC

What?

SOPHIE

Chatting up the new girl, you got some
nerve...

CEDRIC

Huh? What?

(beat)

Oh, well, never mind...just that the
Mayor said that you were new in town
and may want a local to show you
around but...

Cedric shrugs and goes to move away.

CEDRIC

If you don't, no worries, you can find
your way around yourself.

Cedric turns and takes a step when Sophie catches his arm.

SOPHIE

Hey. Sorry, didn't mean to be rude.
I'm just not used to people being

friendly.

Cedric turns back.

CEDRIC
And why's that?

SOPHIE
I'm a city girl and you just don't get
friendly in the city. You just get
creepy.

Sophie shrugs.

SOPHIE
You just get hit on then lied to.

CEDRIC
Sounds crappy.

SOPHIE
Yeah.

CEDRIC
So, how about my offer? I promise that
I won't lie to you.
(beat)
And I promise that I won't hit on you.

Cedric gives her his winning smile.

CEDRIC
Well not in the next few hours anyway,
how's about it?

Cedric holds out his arm and Sophie smiles and takes it.

SOPHIE
Sounds great.

As they start to walk towards the café, Sophie subtly checks
out Cedric's profile.

SOPHIE
You know, you look kinda familiar?
Have you been on T.V?

Cedric sighs.

INT. SEB'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Travis and Seb are on the computer talking to GHOST SEEKER 666 by Skype.

GHOST SEEKER 666

Those videos and shots you sent look great. I'd love to come out and see the place in person. So, does the house belong to one of your families?

Travis and Seb look at each other and shrug.

TRAVIS

I don't think that anyone knows who the homestead belongs to now.

GHOST SEEKER 666

Well normally, to enter the property, we would need permission from the owner or the local council if the owner wasn't alive...

SEB

We can find out for sure and get right back to you.

TRAVIS

Yeah, that won't be a problem.

GHOST SEEKER 666

Good. Get back to me A.S.A.P and I'll come out and take a look. If the site is promising I'll post the info in my blog and I'm sure that other Paranormal Investigators will want to see it.

SEB

Fantastic.

TRAVIS

We'll get back to you as soon as we can.

GHOST SEEKER 666

Good, look forward to it.

Ghost Seeker 666 signs off. Travis and Seb look at each other.

SEB

Hey, do you think that the records
would be kept in the library?

TRAVIS

Yeah, or maybe who is a descendant of
old man Mc Clary.

(beat)

Let's get the girls and go after
school tomorrow.

INT. OONTA'S ART STUDIO - DAY

Alf knocks on Oonta's studio door then pushes the door open
and sticks his head into the room.

ALF

Hey Oonta?

(beat)

Oonta, are you here?

Oonta comes out of the backroom wiping her hands on her
painting smock.

OONTA

Hi Alf, what can I do for you?

Alf enters the room and starts glancing around at the artwork
scattered around the studio.

ALF

You know how the Mayor wants us to
come up with ideas for the town to
raise some cash?

OONTA

Uh-huh.

ALF

Well I was thinking that we should
host a rodeo but we don't have any
money for prizes, so...

Alf sheepishly looks at her.

ALF

I was wondering whether you had
anything that we could offer as a
prize for the winner?

Alf rushes over to a carving of a rearing horse.

ALF
Like this maybe? This is bloody
fantastic.

Alf picks up the carving.

ALF
Say you'll help Oonta. We can't have a
rodeo without a first prize.

Oonta appreciates Alf's excitement and his commitment to helping out the town. She cheekily asks him.

OONTA
What's in it for me?

Alf swallows.

ALF
I don't know. Recognition, maybe?

OONTA
I want something else.

ALF
I don't have any cash.

OONTA
No, not cash. I want you to take me as
your date to the rodeo if it comes to
town.

ALF
My date?

OONTA
Yeah, as your date.

Alf happily grins.

ALF
It would be my honour.

OONTA
Good. It's yours then.

Alf puts down the carving and grabs Oonta and swings her around. Oonta squeals. Alf kisses her on the cheek.

ALF
Fantastic, we'll have the best first

prize and I'll have the best girl on my arm.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Schneider is sitting behind his desk when Margot knocks on his door. Bankers SIMON SMITHE and DONALD RANCIT are waiting in the foyer.

CARTER

Yes?

Margot opens the door and sticks her head in.

MARGOT

Smithe and some other bloke from the bank are here. They want to see you.

CARTER

Can't you put them off?

Margot gives him a 'you're kidding' look.

Mayor Schneider sighs.

CARTER

Okay Margot, let them in.

Margot nods and turns back to the waiting room.

MARGOT

This way gentlemen.

The Mayor rises and shakes Smithe's hand.

CARTER

Smithe, nice of you to come out from behind your desk at the bank and visit me again.

The Mayor turns to the other gentleman and shakes his hand.

SMITHE

Carter, this is my colleague from Melbourne Head Office, Donald Rancit.

CARTER

Rancit you say, well welcome to Mc Clary's Creek. Please take a seat.

The men sit down and Margot also sits down on a chair in the

corner, notebook and pen in hand.

CARTER

Why do you do us the honour of coming all this way out to Mc Clary's Creek?

SMITHE

Come now Carter, you know why we are here.

CARTER

Do I?

SMITHE

You know very well that your town's behind on its overdraft payments.

CARTER

Are we?

SMITHE

Yes, you are.

RANCIT

And if you don't come up with the payment of the amount in arrears by this time next month the bank will have to sell off the town piece by piece to get its money back.

Mayor Schneider is livid. He stands up and slams his hands down on his desk. Margot is startled and drops her pen on the floor.

CARTER

Hey, here now, there is no need to get nasty.

Rancit stands up and stares him down.

RANCIT

Maybe we haven't been nasty enough. You've been dodging the bank's calls and the only way that we can get any time with you is having to travel all the way to this godforsaken town and...

Mayor Schneider shoves his chair back and walks around the desk, his manner is threatening.

CARTER

Shut your mouth. There is no reason to sully my town's good name.

Rancit stands his ground. They stand toe-to-toe.

RANCIT

Isn't there.

CARTER

No.

(beat)

If you can't say nice things about my town then don't say anything at all.

RANCIT

I can say whatever I please.

CARTER

No, you cannot, not about my town, not in my office...

SMITHE

Gentlemen, gentlemen, please, sit down.

Both Mayor Schneider and Rancit reluctantly sit down.

SMITHE

This is not getting us anywhere.

(beat)

Carter, the bank's hands are tied. We need to have the money to honour your town's overdraft commitment. There is no way out. You've been given a lot of chances to fix things but the payments have not yet been brought back into line.

CARTER

But...

SMITHE

You've had enough time.

CARTER

There must be something that the bank can do? Extend our overdraft a bit more, give us more time?

RANCIT

There is no way that I'm going to authorize that.

Mayor Schneider starts to bristle again.

SMITHE

Sorry, Carter but you have used up both of those options. There is no other way.

Both Smithe and Rancit stand.

SMITHE

You have until this time next month Carter or the bank will send in an administrator to manage the town's affairs.

CARTER

But...

SMITHE

That's the way it is Carter.

Rancit opens up his briefcase and takes out a formal notice. He hands it to the Mayor who glances at it, blanches, then drops it onto the table.

Rancit turns on his heel and marches from the room.

Smithe turns to Margot.

SMITHE

Lovely to see you again, Margot.

Margot nods.

Smithe turns back to the Mayor.

SMITHE

Carter.

The Mayor does not acknowledge Smithe as he exits the room.

Once the men are gone the Mayor slumps down and holds his head in his hands.

CARTER

Oh my God, what are we going to do?

EXT. WHEAT SILO - DUSK

Sophie and Cedric are sitting up on the platform at the top of the wheat silo overlooking the town. Cedric is pointing out the sights to Sophie.

CEDRIC

That tree line over there, that is Mc Clary's creek. It runs straight past the town's centre and eventually ends up in the Murray River.

(beat)

Can you see that rooftop?

Sophie looks to where his finger is pointing.

SOPHIE

It's kinda grey?

CEDRIC

Yeah, that's the Old Mc Clary's homestead. No one lives there now, it's just home to mice and bats.

(beat)

There are only a few people who live in town, the rest have their properties scattered all over.

SOPHIE

Whereabouts do you live?

Cedric grins.

CEDRIC

Why? Are you hankering to get to check out my home and maybe get to know me a bit better?

Sophie blushes.

SOPHIE

Yes. No. I was just wondering...you know... whether you lived in town or out on a property?

Cedric grins cheekily at her. He reaches over her to point to a farmhouse in the distance.

CEDRIC

That's mine, over there.

SOPHIE

Do you live on a wheat farm?

CEDRIC

I own it. It's about one thousand hectares of wheat crop. Everything that you see over there is mine.

SOPHIE

Gee, that's a hell of a lot of wheat.

(beat)

And your girlfriend, she lives in town?

CEDRIC

No, she lives with me. Her name is Rosie and she's going to give me a whole lot of crap if I don't get home to her soon and feed her.

SOPHIE

Feed her? That's a funny way of saying that you are cooking dinner for your girlfriend.

Cedric laughs.

CEDRIC

Oh, she doesn't mind. She's a collie and if I don't get home to her soon and take her for a walk she'll probably eat my second best boots.

Sophie laughs nervously.

SOPHIE

Your collie?

CEDRIC

Yeah.

Cedric gets up and holds out his hand to help Sophie up.

They stand on the platform looking at the town's lights as they flicker on one-by-one.

SOPHIE

It really is beautiful out here.

CEDRIC

Yeah, it is.

He grabs her hand and moves towards the ladder.

CEDRIC

Time to go. I'll drop you back at
Beryl's is that okay?

Sophie nods.

She takes one more look at the lights in the growing
darkness. She sighs.

CEDRIC

Look I have to get home to Rosie
tonight but would you like to come out
and have dinner at my place tomorrow
night? You can meet Rosie.

Sophie stares at Cedric for a moment as if trying to work out
whether his intentions are innocent or not. Deciding that she
has nothing to lose she smiles.

SOPHIE

I'd love to.

They smile at each other then turn to admire the sunset.

INT. MAYOR RESIDENCE - DAY

Mayor Schneider is sitting behind his desk and Nick, in his
police uniform is standing in front of it.

CARTER

Any news?

NICK

No. I've checked some of my buddies in
Adelaide and a bloke I know in the
force in the Melbourne CBD and no-
one's seen Zoe.

CARTER

I won't give up Nick, I won't. I want
every penny back that she's taken. Is
there anyone else who can help?

NICK

I'm still waiting back on information
on Brisbane and Sydney but you realize
that she could be anywhere right?

(beat)

She could have even gone overseas.

CARTER

You don't have any passenger list information yet though, do you?

NICK

No, that's really tricky to get unless you have the right paperwork. But I know someone who may be able to help, I get onto that this morning.

CARTER

You do that.

(beat)

Nick, I really appreciate all that you are doing on this. I wish it was different.

NICK

It's alright mate. Could have happened to anyone.

CARTER

Yeah, suppose so.

NICK

Don't worry, we'll find her and the town'll be okay. You'll see, she'll pop up in one of the cities soon enough and then we'll have her.

CARTER

I hope so, I really really hope so. And quick too.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Sophie sits on a bench looking at the decorated phone booth that she's meant to decommission. Oonta sits down beside her.

OONTA

Do you like it?

Sophie turns to look at her.

SOPHIE

Yes, it's beautiful and it's fascinating, it would be a shame to have to take it down. Do you think that the Mayor would like to keep the booth and display it somewhere in the town?

OONTA

I'm not sure.

SOPHIE

Do you know who painted it?

OONTA

It was me.

SOPHIE

It's wonderful.

(beat)

Can you tell me about it?

OONTA

It's a story that my grandmother told me about how my ancestors communicated. She said that it was the trees and the wind that told the stories across the land.

(beat)

The wind and the trees whispered to the land's people and it was the people who told their stories to their children and their children's children. Across the generations and across the land, time after time, year after year.

(beat)

Now we use these phones...

Oonta gestures to the phone booth. She then takes out her mobile phone from her pocket.

OONTA

to tell stories. But these stories do not come from the wind, they do not come from the trees, they are not the old way.

SOPHIE

And now, even the old new ways are dying. I have to remove this last phone booth soon.

(beat)

It's sad really.

OONTA

Yes, not only have the wind and tree's messages been ignored and seemingly silenced, but even that machine will

be forever quiet.

(beat)

But you cannot silence the wind, you
cannot ever stop the trees from
whispering.

SOPHIE

Maybe we shouldn't silence this
either.

INT. GRAND NATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

Alf, Melinda, Nick are sitting at the bar. Brett is pulling a
beer for Alf which he puts in front of him.

BRETT

One for you, Nick?

NICK

No thanks Brett, I'm still on duty.

MELINDA

Hey Nick, what are you going to do if
the town runs out of money? You won't
get paid will ya?

NICK

I'll still get some pay, but I'll have
to take a big cut as the town pays for
a percentage of my wages. That was the
deal with the Mayor and the Police
Commissioner. See, this town's not
really big enough to warrant its own
officer on duty. Normally they would
call on the bigger towns to provide
assistance when required but that may
take hours, even days, for one of them
to respond, if at all. So the Mayor
said that he would help with my wage
to keep someone in town.

ALF

So, without the town paying for ya you
would have to leave?

NICK

Yeah. I wouldn't be able to afford my
rent or even buy groceries on the
amount that the Commission is paying
me.

BRETT
Shit Nick, that's tough luck.

NICK
You know it'll affect everyone in this town. If people leave, there won't be any money coming into the shops or even your pub.
(beat)
The town will die.

They all ponder his comment.

ALF
So are you coming tomorrow, to help fix up the track? You too Mel, are you coming?

NICK
Yeah, I'm in.
(beat)
Melinda?

MELINDA
Yeah, I'll whip up the girls and we'll be there.

ALF
Great, with all of you guys helping it will take no time to get things fixed.

INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

Travis's mother, JUSTINE OAKS, is standing at the counter of the library assisting Oonta when Travis, Seb, Ulla and Maria walk up. Oonta walks off when the teens approach.

JUSTINE
Well hello, guys. Travis, I wasn't sure whether you knew where the library was.

TRAVIS
Ha, ha Mum.

JUSTINE
So, how can I help you guys?

ULLA
Mrs Oaks, we need to find out who owns the old Mc Clary Homestead.

JUSTINE

Why?

SEB

Well, you know how it's supposed to be haunted?

JUSTINE

Yes, but that's just a myth, right?

TRAVIS

No Mum, we saw something out there.

JUSTINE

What, you went to that old dump?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

MARIA

And we saw the ghost.

SEB

And now real-life ghost hunters want to see the ghost too.

TRAVIS

But we have to get permission so that it's all good.

SEB

Yeah, they won't come unless we have the owner's permission. So, do you know how we can find out who is the owner?

TRAVIS

Isn't there a record of that stuff here in the library?

JUSTINE

No, it's not kept here. Record of ownership would be in the council offices but I can tell you who is the owner.

MARIA

Who?

JUSTINE

Oonta.

ULLA

Oonta?

TRAVIS

She was just here.

The teens scatter through the library looking for Oonta. They find her reading under a tree in the courtyard.

EXT. LIBRARY COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

The teens rush to Oonta.

SEB

Oonta.

ULLA

Oonta, there you are.

TRAVIS

Do you own the old Mc Clary homestead?

OONTA

Hello, children. Yes, Mc Clary was my great great grandfather. Why?

SEB

Well, we have some guys who are interested to visit the homestead to try to see the ghost.

TRAVIS

Yeah, these guys are really interested, they are real-life ghost hunters and...

OONTA

The ghost isn't real.

MARIA

But it is, we've seen it.

ULLA

Yeah. It was really scary.

OONTA

Really?

SEB

We were wondering if you would give us permission to have these guys come

here and visit the homestead.

TRAVIS

Yeah, they would pay money and stuff
and we could donate this to the town
to help pay the town's debts.

ULLA

It could be a way that we can help the
town.

SEB

But we can't get these guys out unless
we get your permission.

TRAVIS

So, can we?

MARIA

Oonta, please?

OONTA

Well, I don't go there much anymore
and the place is falling down...

SEB

We'll take care of it. Promise.

OONTA

Well okay then. Just let me know when
there is someone around, okay.

TRAVIS

Whoo-hoo!

ULLA

Thanks, Oonta.

MARIA

Yeah, thanks.

SEB

Let's go guys and Skype Ghost Seeker
666.

The teens rush off.

Oonta smiles to herself.

OONTA

I'll make sure that my granddaddy's

ghost is there when these ghost
hunters arrive.

Oonta makes the same ghostly laugh that the 'ghost' did while
the teens were at the homestead.

OONTA (GHOSTLY LAUGH)
Ha, ha, ha, ha.

She chuckles to herself and goes back to her reading.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

Alf, Brett, Melinda, Abigail, Cedric, Dan, Nick, Carter and
all of the other townsfolk are at the race track sawing wood,
hammering nails and painting the newly constructed fences.

Carter waves to Beryl, Stevie and Sophie when they pull up in
Stevie's ute.

CARTER
Here come the girls.

Cedric puts down the piece of wood that he is carrying and
mops his brow. He grins at Sophie.

Sophie tentatively smiles back. Stevie notices and gives
Beryl a nudge.

STEVIE
Guess who's caught Cedric's eye?

Beryl giggles.

CARTER
Girls, come and pick up a paintbrush.

Stevie and Beryl start unloading eskys of food and drink from
the back of the ute.

BERYL
No can do. We brought you lot some
grub for lunch.
(beat)
Sophie grab that fold up table will
ya?

Sophie starts to slide the table off of the ute's tray when
Cedric rushes up to help her.

CEDRIC
Here, let me help you.

Stevie needles him.

STEVIE
Never known you to be so helpful
Cedric.

Beryl playfully punched him in the arm.

BERYL
Yeah, what's made you so helpful all
of a sudden? Oops, I mean who?

Sophie blushes. Cedric sighs and folds open the table.

CEDRIC
Stop giving me crap and just tell me
where you want the table.

BERYL
There'll do.

Beryl starts unpacking the food esky onto the table.

BERYL
So how's it all going? Looks good?

CEDRIC
Yeah, Alf says that we are on track
and should finish it off today.

SOPHIE
There's a lot of people helping out.

CEDRIC
Yeah, it's great isn't it.

Alf calls to Cedric.

ALF
Cedric! Stop chin waggin' and help me
with this plank.

CEDRIC
Coming Alf.

Cedric smiles at Sophie.

CEDRIC
Duty calls.

SOPHIE
Is there something that I can do?

CEDRIC
Yeah, I'm sure there is, come over and see if Alf has a job for you.

They walk over to Alf.

CEDRIC
Hey Alf, this is Sophie, she's visiting for a while and I hear that she's handy with tools.

ALF
Is that right?

CEDRIC
You got something that she could do?

Alf scratches his chin.

ALF
Sure, hey could you both help build this part of the fence?

SOPHIE
Sure can.

ALF
Great.

He hands her a wrench. Cedric and Alf lift the plank into place while Sophie fixes the bolt into place.

Just as they finish Beryl calls them to lunch.

BERYL
Hey guys! Chow's on.

Everyone puts down their tools and goes over to the table that is piled high with food and drink.

EXT. RACE TRACK - LATER

The townsfolk are sitting around on planks of wood, picnic blankets or the hard ground eating their lunch.

CARTER
Wonderful spread ladies.

NICK
Yeah, thanks for the grub.

WONG
Alf? The track should be finished
today?

ALF
Yeah. Everyone pitchin' in has worked
wonders.

WONG
How soon can we hold the races?

ALF
Depends on the Mayor.

They turn to look at Carter.

CARTER
Whenever we can get some punters here
I suppose.

ALF
I've already asked around to my mates
in other towns and there is a weekend
free on the sixth. Could we hold it
then?

CARTER
Sure. You right to organize it?

ALF
Yep, Brett and I are already plannin'
it.

CARTER
Suits me.

BRETT
Would having the meet on the sixth be
in time to help out the town?

Carter glances at Margot with a worried look. He quickly
hides his thoughts.

CARTER
It sure will.

ALF
That's great.

The group go back to chatting indistinctly and eating. While Carter mumbles under his breath.

CARTER
If only we had more time...

EXT. BERYL'S MOTEL - NIGHT

Cedric pulls up in front of Sophie's motel room. He climbs out of his truck and knocks on her door. Beryl peeps out of the office window. When she sees Cedric she smiles.

Sophie opens up the door.

SOPHIE
Hi.

CEDRIC
Hi.
(beat)
You look great, are you ready to go?

SOPHIE
Sure.

She steps out and closes the door behind her. Cedric holds out his arm and Sophie slightly flustered at his small-town manners, gingerly takes it. Cedric helps her into the truck.

EXT. CEDRIC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cedric's truck pulls up. Rosie, with her tail wagging, is standing on the front porch. She yips happily when Cedric climbs out, but her ears and tail drop when he helps Sophie out of the vehicle.

Cedric calls out to her.

CEDRIC
Rosie, here.

Rosie stands still on the porch watching Sophie as she gets out of the truck.

CEDRIC
Rosie! Here!

Sophie walks a few steps towards the porch. Rosie lets out a

low growl.

CEDRIC
Sorry, she's a bit protective.

SOPHIE
That's all right. Here let me.

Sophie hunches down and calls out to the dog.

SOPHIE
Rosie, here love.
(beat)
Rosie, come here.

Rosie stops growling and takes a tentative step towards Sophie.

Sophie holds out her hand.

SOPHIE
You're a good dog, aren't you?

Sophie pats her thigh.

SOPHIE
Good girl.

Rosie takes another step forward.

Sophie reaches into her pocket and takes out a *Gingernut* biscuit.

SOPHIE
Here girl.

Rosie sniffs the air and walks down the porch steps.

Sophie tosses the biscuit to the dog.

SOPHIE
Here you go, girl.

Rosie sniffs the biscuit then eats it.

Sophie takes another out of her pocket and holds it out.

SOPHIE
Here girl. That's nice, isn't it?
(beat)
Here's another.

Rosie sniffs the air and wags her tail. She shuffles towards Sophie and takes the *Gingernut* out of her hand.

Sophie strokes Rosie's head and neck.

SOPHIE

You're a lovely girl, aren't you?

Rosie sniffs at Sophie's pocket and Sophie laughs when Rosie tries to put her nose into her pocket to score another biscuit.

SOPHIE

You're a clever girl, you found the biscuit.

Cedric looks on in wonder as Sophie feeds another treat to his dog then wraps her arms around the collie and gives her a big hug.

Rosie sits down at Sophie's feet as she stands up.

CEDRIC

That was clever of you to bring some treats.

Sophie reaches down and ruffles Rosie's hair.

SOPHIE

My aunt had a dog who didn't take kindly to strangers, or anyone else for that matter. You always had to come prepared with *Gingernut* biscuits or you wouldn't be able to get into the house.

CEDRIC

Smart...the dog and the guest.

SOPHIE

Yeah.

CEDRIC

Come inside.

EXT. CEDRIC'S BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Cedric and Sophie are enjoying a drink on the porch. Rosie is content, lying with her head on Sophie's feet.

SOPHIE
That was a lovely dinner, thank you.

CEDRIC
Thank you for accepting my invitation.

Cedric glances at Rosie.

CEDRIC
Rosie, leave Sophie alone.

Rosie places her paws over her ears. Sophie laughs.

SOPHIE
She doesn't want to listen to you.

CEDRIC
She can be stubborn.
(beat)
She's really taken with you.

SOPHIE
Could have been the snacks that I was
feeding her under the table.

CEDRIC
You weren't?

Sophie nods.

CEDRIC
Well, you've done it, she'll never
leave you alone now.

Sophie leans down to stroke Rosie's ears.

SOPHIE
She's a lovely dog.

Cedric takes another sip of his beer.

CEDRIC
So, what's happening after you finish
dismantling our telephone booth. Are
you going back home?

Sophie shrugs.

SOPHIE
Not sure. I've just found out that
I've been made redundant so I will

have to look for another job when this one's done.

CEDRIC
Back in the city?

Sophie shrugs.

SOPHIE
Not much back there in Melbourne for me at the moment but I suppose so. That's where the jobs are.

CEDRIC
What about your place? Where you live?

SOPHIE
Just a lonely two-room apartment that is probably being stalked by my ex round about now.

Cedric raises his eyebrow.

CEDRIC
Bad break up?

SOPHIE
You could say that but it was a long time ago.
(beat)
I'm kind of liking Mc Clary's Creek. It's a sweet town and the people are nice.

CEDRIC
(hopefully)
Do you think you might stay?

Rosie looks hopefully up at Sophie.

SOPHIE
Nothing to stay here for if the town goes bust.

CEDRIC
That won't happen, the Mayor and the townsfolk will never abandon the town.

SOPHIE
Are you sure?

CEDRIC
Yep, I'm sure.

Sophie gets up and walks to the railing. Cedric and Rosie follow her.

SOPHIE
So all of this is yours.

She gestures at the wheat fields.

SOPHIE
Must take a lot of work.

CEDRIC
It takes enough to keep me out of trouble.

SOPHIE
Hmmm.

They stand watching the wheat sway in the warm breeze until they both start to speak at the same time.

SOPHIE
Anyway.

CEDRIC
Anyway?

Both nervously laugh. They both take a large sip of their drinks.

CEDRIC
You go first.

SOPHIE
Well, anyway, thanks for dinner but I really should be going.

Rosie sighs and lays down at Sophie's feet, her head on top of Sophie's shoe.

Cedric looks at Rosie.

CEDRIC
I don't think that she wants you to go.

He steps one step closer to her. Sophie looks up into his eyes.

CEDRIC

And I don't think I want you to go
either.

There is a pregnant pause then very slowly Cedric leans down
and kisses her.

Rosie lifts her head and her ears perk up.

Sophie sighs after the kiss.

SOPHIE

I don't think that I want to go
either.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Schneider is at his desk when his phone rings.

MARGOT (OS)

The developer who you were after is on
line two.

CARTER

Thanks Margot.

He picks up the line.

CARTER

Mayor Schneider.

(pause)

You've arrived then?

(pause)

Excellent.

(pause)

I'll be right there.

He gets up from his chair and puts on his suit jacket then
walks from his office into Margot's.

INT. MARGOT'S OFFICE - DAY

Margot looks up from her computer.

MARGOT

You are meeting with him now?

CARTER

Uh-huh. Keep your fingers crossed that
they want to invest, and quickly.

MARGOT
I will. Good luck.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Mayor Schneider and Developer JIM BONES are standing on the street outside an old run-down building.

CARTER
So Jim, what will you do with the site?

BONES
It's far enough out of Melbourne that we could build a manufacturing plant.

CARTER
I thought that you may have wanted it for offices?
(beat)
Don't you manufacture machinery that requires the use of heavy metals?

BONES
Yes. So?

CARTER
Didn't I hear that they were dangerous and that's why you couldn't build in the city?

BONES
They are not as dangerous as people make them out to be. Here.

Bones hands Carter a document.

BONES
I have the safety report for you to go through. It's all here in black and white.

CARTER
But they are still dangerous thou...

BONES
Listen, I heard that you were desperate for an influx of capital into your out-of-the-way town, and my company is willing to provide it.

Carter flicks through the document until he comes to a page that makes his eyes widen.

CARTER

But?

BONES

But you may have to relax your codes a bit.

CARTER

This says that this manufacturing puts pollutants into the air that may cause diseases in people's lungs.

BONES

Only a tiny percentage, well within the Australian Standards.

CARTER

But still, it can?

BONES

All kinds of manufacturing can put pollutants in the air. Even your wheat harvesting plant blows out particles and dust.

CARTER

Yes but that is natural. This is...poison...

BONES

Every type of manufacturing has its risks.

(beat)

Do you want our money or not?

Mayor Schneider pauses. He looks around at the town and sees families and children walking down the main street. He sees Beryl talking to a TOURIST in the forecourt of her motel and Ulla, Maria, Seb and Travis sitting down outside the cafe while Stevie serves them drinks. His gaze eventually falls on Oonta and Alf removing some of her artwork from the back of Alf's ute.

The Mayor turns back to Mr Bones.

CARTER

I say not. I am not that desperate to risk the health of the people of this

town just to bring in a few bucks.

BONES

It's more than a few, we are willing to invest millions.

Bones hands a cash cheque written for \$150 000 to the Mayor.

BONES

Including this percentage on top for you to invest as you wish.

Carter stares at the cheque, tempted to pull his town out of trouble.

He shakes his head and hands the cheque back.

CARTER

No. I will never risk this town or the lives of the people who live in it. You'll need to find another sucker who will take your bribe money. I'm not going to.

BONES

You're making a big mistake.

CARTER

No, you are. Now get back into your car and get out of my town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Oonta and Alf are taking some of her artwork from his ute.

Alf takes out a beautifully sculptured over-sized didgeridoo.

ALF

Oonta, this one's fantastic. Where do ya want it?

OONTA

Just put it over here.

Alf places the sculpture on a stand beside a native tree. He looks around at all of the artwork attractively displayed around the park.

ALF

It's startin' to come together, hey?

OONTA

Yes, I am pleased with it all. Just hope that it attracts buyers. I just want to help the town out in my small way.

(beat)

Alf, lift up that blanket in the back there.

ALF

This one?

OONTA

Yes.

Alf lifts away the blanket to uncover the horse carving that he admired in her studio.

OONTA

That one's for you to give away as first prize for your rodeo.

ALF

Oh Oonta, it's fantastic. It's even more stunnin' than I remembered. Are ya sure? It must be worth a lot.

OONTA

Yes, I'm sure. It's just been gathering dust for years; about time it came out to see the light.

ALF

It's beautiful.

Alf reaches out and grabs Oonta in his arms and swings her around.

ALF

Almost as beautiful as you.

He puts her down and she playfully hits him on the arm while blushing.

OONTA

Oh, you.

Travis, Maria, Ulla and Seb walk up to Alf and Oonta.

SEB

Hey Oonta? Are these all yours?

MARIA

They're great.

ULLA

What's happening with all of your artwork?

OONTA

Yes, they're mine. I'm selling them and donating the money to the town.

TRAVIS

That's cool.

(beat)

Hey Seb, maybe we can set up one of those free web pages for the town and have Oonta's sculptures featured, that may bring in buyers.

MARIA

That's a great idea.

SEB

What do you reckon Alf?

ALF

I reckon it's a goer.

TRAVIS

Fantastic.

OONTA

So, how did you go with the ghost?

SEB

Oh yeah. That guy we were in contact with is really interested. In fact, he said that he was booking a room at Beryl's this weekend so that we could take him out for a look. Is that okay?

OONTA

Sure. Just check with me when he's here, alright?

SEB

Sure Oonta. Sure.

Mayor Schneider walks up to the group.

ALF
Hey Mayor.

CARTER
Hello everyone.

Alf nodded towards the departing developer.

ALF
Was that a developer interested in our town?

CARTER
Yeah but no. It didn't work out.
Oonta, your work is really wonderful
and did I hear someone talking about
advertising?

TRAVIS
Yeah, we're going to set up a website
for the town featuring Oonta's artwork
and ghost hunting at Mc Clary's old
homestead.

CARTER
I am so proud of the town and
especially you kids coming up with
ideas.

He slaps Alf on the back.

CARTER
With Alf's enthusiasm, the race track
is finished. Now Oonta's artwork is
out on display...

SEB
And we have a Paranormal Investigator
coming to look at the old Mc Clary's
homestead.

Seb nods to Oonta.

SEB
With Oonta's permission.

TRAVIS
And now we can get these ideas out
there with the website we're building.

ALF

It all seems to be comin' together.

CARTER

Yes, it does. Doesn't it? Well, well-done everybody, well done.

INT. MARGOT'S OFFICE - DAY

Margot looks at the Mayor expectantly when he walks in. She is a bit agitated.

MARGOT

So, how did it go? Did we get the development?

She sees the crestfallen look on the Mayor's face.

MARGOT

We didn't?

CARTER

We did, but it wasn't worth the price to the town.

Margot looks at him expectantly.

CARTER

They were going to pump poisons into our air, Margot. That's why they wanted to come here. They thought we wouldn't notice or wouldn't care that our town would get sick. They were only willing to come here because they couldn't go anywhere else.

Mayor sighs heavily. He notices that Margot is very upset.

CARTER

Margot, what's wrong?

Margot can't look him in the eye.

MARGOT

While you were out, I had a phone call from that Donald Rancit from the bank. He's not going to give us any more time. He's calling it in at the end of the week. We only have three days...

CARTER

Oh no!

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Schneider trudges into his office with Margot following him.

He sits down heavily at his desk. He digs around in one of his desk drawers and pulls out a bottle of scotch and two glasses. He indicates to Margot to sit and pours them both a shot. They pick up the glasses and drink back the scorching liquid.

After a moment the Mayor pours another shot into the glasses.

MARGOT

What are we going to do?

The Mayor swigs back his second shot and grimaces. He sets down his glass, pulls at his necktie to loosen it and then shakes his head.

CARTER

I don't know.

(beat)

Can we sell something, quickly? We don't have a lot of time left and I'm desperate.

(beat)

I don't know what to do.

He stares down at the desk with his head in his hands.

Margot sips at her drink.

MARGOT

I've had an offer on the main park in town. *Telcanex* wants to install a new substation there.

CARTER

Right in the middle of town?

Margot nods.

MARGOT

In the centre of the park.

CARTER

One of those electrical power

substations? Those great big grey disgusting looking boxes right in the middle of our beautiful park?

MARGOT

Yeah. But they will pay for the land up-front. It will hold back the bankers for a week, maybe more.

CARTER

And that's the only offer we've had?

MARGOT

Unfortunately yes.

The Mayor pours himself another drink and throws it down.

MARGOT

Carter?

CARTER

Okay. Okay. If that's all we've got to give us some more time it'll have to do.

Margot rises from her chair.

CARTER

But Margot? Tell them that if it has to be in the park it must be able to be painted by one of our local artists. I'm not having a disgusting grey box just thrown into the middle of our park. I want it at least to try to look attractive. I won't accept anything else. Okay?

Margot nods.

MARGOT

Okay, boss.

Margot starts to leave the room but pauses at the doorway. She turns back to him.

MARGOT

We will get through this. You know that don't you?

CARTER

Will we? I'm not sure anymore.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Alf, Melinda and Wong are holding bundles of flyers advertising Mc Clary Creek's first race meet. Wong is hammering copies of the flyers to telephone poles. Alf and Melinda are handing flyers out to the townsfolk who are walking down the main street.

Alf stops at the Cafe where Seb, Travis, Maria and Ulla are sitting.

MARIA

What have you got there Alf?

ALF

Flyers for the race day.

(beat)

Here.

He hands a flyer to all of them.

MARIA

So, the rodeo's off then?

ALF

For the moment, yeah.

SEB

Hey, these are great. Can we help you hand them out?

TRAVIS

Yeah. Give us some. We want to help.

Travis takes most of Alf's flyers and divides them between the four youths.

TRAVIS

Here. Here. There's some for you Ulla.

ALF

That's wonderful. Brett will be really pleased. He and I spent all night printin' these off.

(beat)

You'll be there, won't ya?

ULLA

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

TRAVIS

Hey, I'm going to go and see mum at the library maybe she'll let me put some up on the noticeboard.

ALF

Great idea.

Travis and Ulla start walking towards the library handing out flyers to passersby.

SEB

Come on Maria let's hit the next street over.

Alf smiles at the enthusiasm of the youths then hands a flyer to an OLD LADY.

ALF

There you go. Don't miss the best races this town's ever seen.

EXT. CAFE - MORNING

Seb hands a flyer to Cedric and Sophie who are enjoying a cup of coffee. They are holding hands.

SEB

Here you go.

They glance at the flyer.

CEDRIC

Looks like the races are going ahead.

SEB

Yeah, and it'll be fun.

Seb walks off handing flyers out as he goes.

CEDRIC

Do you think that you'll still be here for the races?

Sophie glances at the flyer.

SOPHIE

That'll be my last day in town, I should have the phone booth down by then.

CEDRIC

Does it really have to go?

(beat)

You know, it could be a tourist attraction...the country's only working phone booth or something.

SOPHIE

Hmm.

(beat)

You know, Oonta and I were talking about it the other day. How the old ways of communicating have disappeared and it does seem a shame that such a beautiful piece of indigenous art has to be destroyed.

CEDRIC

Does it?

SOPHIE

You know, that at the end of the week I'm unemployed?

CEDRIC

Yeah?

SOPHIE

And I reckon that my boss owes me a favour.

CEDRIC

He would allow the phone booth to stay?

Sophie fishes her mobile phone from her pocket and selects Ian's number.

SOPHIE

Yeah, after not telling me that I have lost my job I reckon that he owes me big time and...

(Sophie winks)

because the booth been recognized as a...

Sophie makes quotation marks with her fingers at the word 'significant'.

SOPHIE

a significant piece of indigenous art,

the Mayor and local council have forbidden its removal. This white lie may stop me from having to remove the phone and the booth.

Cedric and Sophie grin.

Sophie dials Ian's number.

SOPHIE
 Let's get it done.
 (pause)
 Ian, it's Sophie. I have some bad news.....

INT. MAYOR RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Mayor Schneider is sitting at his dining room table with a glass of liquor in front of him. He is talking on his mobile phone. He looks frustrated.

CARTER
 So, Nick, any word on Zoe yet?
 (pause)
 You're kidding, not a word. Even in Brisbane?
 (pause)

He sighs heavily.

CARTER
 Okay, okay. I know that you've tried. But...keep the word out...okay, she must be somewhere. She just can't have fallen off the face of the earth.
 (pause)
 Thanks for trying Nick.

He hangs up and drops his phone onto the table. He runs his hands through his hair and picks up his glass and drinks it down in one go.

CARTER
 God damn it, Zoe. Where are you?

INT. CEDRIC'S BEDROOM - LATE AT NIGHT

Cedric and Sophie are in bed after making love. Sophie is lying in Cedric's arms.

She abruptly sits up.

SOPHIE

Hey!

CEDRIC

What?

SOPHIE

Got an idea. What if I take some photos of the booth, Oonta's artwork and the town and send it to someone at a television network in Melbourne...

Sophie reaches over to grab her mobile phone.. She starts swiping through her contacts.

SOPHIE

Uh...here it is.

She pulls up Leticia's contact details.

SOPHIE

I got a reporter's details a while ago and I reckon that she would go for a story about the last telephone booth and the town's financial troubles.

CEDRIC

Do you think so?

SOPHIE

If I send some photos of the booth, Oonta's artwork, the race track and the town to her and pitch how the town is banding together to save the booth and the town I reckon they would go for it. Who doesn't love a hardship story and it may also sway my bosses to keep the phone booth in town running.

CEDRIC

What a great idea.

(beat)

But not right now.

He takes her phone and tosses it onto the bed covers. He then grabs her and swings her over so that she is lying under him. Sophie squeals.

CEDRIC

And I think that you are fantastic to
find ideas to save our town.

He smooths her hair.

CEDRIC

You are beautiful, you know.

(beat)

Do you have to leave at the end of the
week?

Sophie looks deeply into his eyes.

SOPHIE

Maybe not.

EXT. MAYOR RESIDENCE- EARLY MORNING

Mayor Schneider opens up his front door and looks up and down
the street. The early morning sunlight gives the town a
cheery glow.

He straightens his back, touches his tie, picks up his
briefcase and with a forced smile on his face, sets off for
his walk to work.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Mayor Schneider sees Cedric and Sophie at the phone booth.
Sophie is snapping pictures of the booth, the park, Oonta's
artwork and the main street of the town.

CARTER

Hello Sophie, Cedric. What are you
doing Sophie?

CEDRIC

Good Morning Mayor, Sophie came up
with a great idea in bed last night.

Sophie blushes as the Mayor raises his eyebrow.

CEDRIC

Ugh...

(coughs)

she thought that if she could send
some pictures of the town and Oonta's
artwork through to the press in
Melbourne some pressure could be put
on her bosses to allow the phone booth

to stay in commission. If the networks catch onto the story, Sophie thinks if the phone booth remains operational the publicity could draw tourists to the town to use it.

The Mayor ponders the idea. A smile lights up his face.

CARTER

What a fantastic idea.

(beat)

Do you really think that they would take up the story?

SOPHIE

Don't see why not.

CARTER

Do you really think that people would come?

Both Cedric and Sophie enthusiastically nod.

CARTER

That's absolutely fantastic.

He pumps Cedric's hand then kisses Sophie on the cheek.

CARTER

Great work. Great work. Well done. Let me know if there is anything that I can do?

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - MORNING

A car drives along next to a wheat field. A cigarette butt is thrown from the window. It lands onto some dry tinder and it starts to smoke.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - DAY

Melinda pulls up beside the burning field. The smoke is thick and heavy. The fire rages. There is no way that she could put it out by herself.

MELINDA

Shit! The whole bloody thing's goin' to burn.

She pulls out her mobile and dials.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Cedric's mobile phone rings. He pulls it from his pocket sees it's Melinda calling and answers.

CEDRIC

Hi Melinda.

(pause)

What? Oh no. I'll be right there.

With concerned looks, Sophie and the Mayor stare at Cedric.

CARTER

What's wrong?

CEDRIC

My...my crop's on fire.

SOPHIE

Oh no.

Cedric hesitates as he looks at Sophie.

CARTER

Go, Son. I'll look after her.

The Mayor takes out his phone.

CARTER

I'll notify the rural fire brigade.

CEDRIC

I'm sorry. I have to go.

(beat)

Thanks, Carter.

Cedric briefly squeezes Sophie's hand and he rushes off.

CARTER

Bugger, another bloody setback.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - AFTERNOON

Cedric and the rural fire brigade battle the fire. There's a loud barking and Rosie darts out from beside the burning field. Cedric hunches down and Rosie jumps into his arms.

CEDRIC

Rosie! Rosie! You're safe. Thank God!

He pats her dirty soot covered fur.

CEDRIC

It'll be okay girl. It'll be okay.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Cedric (covered in soot), Sophie, Nick and other townsfolk view the burnt fields. A helicopter buzzed overhead. They look up at the helicopter which sports a Nine News network logo on its tail.

SOPHIE

Oh Cedric, your crop.

CEDRIC

I suppose I'm lucky that we stopped it in time before it got to the house.

SOPHIE

Have you lost a lot?

CEDRIC

Uh! Most of the crop.
(beat)
It's bad. Really bad.

NICK

Some dumb luck though. You could have lost the house and everything.

Cedric looks over his smouldering fields. Sophie takes his hand in hers and tries to comfort him.

CEDRIC

No, not everything.

He looks hopefully at Sophie.

CEDRIC

Not yet anyway.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The Mayor is talking to Dr Richards next to the park when they hear the loud whirring of a helicopter coming into land.

When it lands Leticia and crew step out. The Mayor rushes over.

CARTER

You can't land here.

LETICIA

I'm sorry but we didn't know where to land. I'm looking for Mayor Schneider, I'm Leticia Fellows from Nine News.

CARTER

You're looking at him.

LETICIA

Excellent. I received an email from Sophie Lacroix about your town's troubles and we flew over the burnt fields yesterday. I want to do an interview with you. Is that good?

He is a bit flustered but quickly pulls himself together.

CARTER

Yeah, sure.

Leticia looks around and sees the phone booth.

LETICIA

Can we go over there and do a live coverage from beside the phone booth. That's the one they are planning on removing, isn't it?

CARTER

Yes. That is the one, but we are hoping that we can keep it.

LETICIA

Excellent.

Leticia turns to her CAMERAMAN and CREW.

LETICIA

Okay, boys. We'll set up over there.
(beat)
All good. Mayor?

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

The Mayor and Leticia are standing beside the booth with the camera trained on them.

LETICIA

Ready?

The cameraman nods. Leticia turns to the Mayor.

LETICIA

Mayor?

Mayor Schneider nods.

LETICIA

Okay.

The cameraman counts down from three with his fingers.

LETICIA

Thanks, Felicity. I am standing here with Mayor Schneider from the town of Mc Clary's Creek. Mayor, we've just seen some devastating footage of a fire that has ripped through the town's wheat crops and I understand that you've had some bad news from the banks this week.

CARTER

Yes, Leticia. Unfortunately, the town's finances have dropped dramatically and the bank is putting pressure on us to try to come up with payments months earlier than was expected.

LETICIA

And now with the town's largest supply of ready income, the wheat fields going up in flames...

CARTER

We are at a loss. We are bankrupt and will have to close down most of the town.

LETICIA

What do you mean?

CARTER

With Cedric's crop going up in flames and businesses losing out there is no money coming into the town. With no income there are no taxes so there's no money to pay the council workers, teachers, police or even myself let enough the bank's mortgage. The town will have to declare bankruptcy and we'll all have to leave to find work

somewhere else. This beautiful town
will become a ghost town.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Zoe sits in a small hotel room watching the interview on the
television.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Leticia continues the interview.

LETICIA

But I hear that the town's people are
rallying together to try and raise
capital to keep the banks at bay.

CARTER

I am very thankful for the good people
of Mc Clary's Creek. Our local artist
Oonta, who decorated this phone booth,
donated numerous artworks around town,
which are for sale. All proceeds are
going towards the town's debts. Some
of our young people have organized
paranormal tours of our local haunted
homestead which supposedly harbours
the ghost of old Mc Clary, the
namesake of our town.

(beat)

Alf one of our locals and Brett our
publican pulled together a working bee
that finished our new race track.

LETICIA

When are you holding your first meet?

CARTER

Next weekend.

LETICIA

And what about this phone booth here?
It is beautifully painted. What can
you tell me about it?

CARTER

Oonta, painted it. She is a very
skilled indigenous artist. We are
lucky to have her. We have petitioned
the telephone company to allow the
phone booth to stay as the last

telephone booth in the country. We are hoping that people, locals and tourists alike, will come to Mc Clary's Creek to use the phone and stay for a while and enjoy what our town and district offer.

LETICIA

Well, that sounds like a fine idea. Hopefully *Telcanex* will allow the phone and booth to stay but if not, now's the last chance to use the last telephone booth in the country.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Zoe clicks off the television. She wipes tears of regret from her eyes.

ZOE

Oh Carter. Thanks for not telling the world about what I did.

She pulls her suitcase out from under the bed and starts throwing her clothes into it.

INT. SOPHIE'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Sophie is just finishing getting dressed when her mobile rings. She looks at her screen to see that the caller is Ian.

SOPHIE

Gee, thanks for letting me know that I'm out of a job. Is that why you sent me all the way out here?

IAN (OS)

Sophie, calm down girl. You are not out of a job. Just got word that they are building a new substation right where you are at Mc Clary's Creek and after it is built they need a maintenance worker to stay on in the area.

Sophie falls down into the chair.

SOPHIE

You're kidding, aren't you?

IAN (OS)

No. Just got the work order in. Parts will be shipped early next week. It's good to go. Are you in? Do you want the job and stay in Mc Clary's Creek?

SOPHIE

Yeah. I'm in.

(beat)

And thanks boss, for everything.

INT. MARGOT'S OFFICE - EVENING

Margot is at her desk looking at the town's bank account. She is startled to see that there is a large deposit from *Telcanex* for the substation.

She jumps up from her chair in joy.

MARGOT

Yippee!

She looks around to check that no one saw or heard her. Then she picks up the phone and calls the Mayor.

MARGOT

Mayor? The deposit just went in....

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Alf and Brett storm through the Mayor's door. The Mayor is sitting at his desk.

BRETT

Mayor, you wouldn't believe it?

ALF

It's fantastic.

CARTER

What?

BRETT

Come outside. You have to see it, you wouldn't believe me if I told you.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The Mayor, Alf and Brett burst out onto the main street to see Leticia interviewing a long line of PEOPLE waiting to use the public phone. A chartered bus pulls up and a large group

of TOURISTS disembark and happily join the line.

CARTER

I don't believe it.

BRETT

It's bloody fantastic, isn't it?

They watch as Beryl helps people in the line exchange their notes for loose coins and Stevie sells coffees and muffins to those waiting.

ALF

I'm off. I'm gettin' some flyers for the race meet.

Brett and the Mayor watch as the line for the phone moves slowly forward.

They shake hands.

CARTER

You know, this might just do it.

BRETT

Yep, it just might.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

An excited Sophie sees Cedric through the crowd and rushes to him.

SOPHIE

Cedric! CEDRIC!

CEDRIC

Sophie.

He smiles at her obvious joy.

CEDRIC

What is it?

SOPHIE

I'm staying. I have a new job here. Isn't that great?

Cedric picks her up and swings her around.

CEDRIC

That's fantastic. So you're staying?

For good?

Sophie kisses him.

SOPHIE

If you want me to?

CEDRIC

I do. I do.

He swings her around a bit more. When he finally puts her down she looks at him and grins.

SOPHIE

Now I remember where I recognized you from. You were on that dating show, *A Farmer Wants A Wife*. That's right, isn't it?

Cedric blushes. Then he scoops her up and holds her close.

CEDRIC

I don't have to go on a T.V show anymore to find a girl to marry. I have one right here. What do you say?

SOPHIE

What do I say? Ummm, I say yes.

Sophie kisses him.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A car pulls up beside the Mayor and Brett. Donald Rancit steps out.

CARTER

What are you doing here?

RANCIT

The bank has pulled forward the time frame for you to voluntary handover the council's finances to an administrator.

BRETT

You mean involuntary.

CARTER

But that's not happening for another week. We'll have the money by then.

RANCIT

Too bad. It's happening now. I will be in your office tomorrow to start the proceedings.

CARTER

But.

RANCIT

If you don't voluntarily hand over the town's accounts and financials we will have to file for your arrest.

BRETT

Arrest?

RANCIT

Yes for obstruction.

Another car pulls up unnoticed behind the men. Zoe hops out.

ZOE

That won't be necessary.

The three men turn to her.

CARTER

Zoe?

RANCIT

And why's that?

Zoe reaches into her handbag and pulls out a bulging envelope.

ZOE

Because I have the cash. All the money that the town needs to erase the overdraft and make it solvent is in here.

CARTER

Zoe? Is that true?

ZOE

Yes Carter. I shouldn't have taken it. It's all here.

(beat)

So, let's get inside gentlemen and we can clear up this whole mess.

Carter grabs ahold of Zoe's arm and pulls her into his embrace. He kisses her.

CARTER

I love you.

ZOE

I know you do and I love you too.

They all go inside.

EXT RACE TRACK - DAY

All of the town has turned out at Mc Clary's Creek's first race meet. Alf is escorting Oonta. Cedric and Sophie are holding hands and talking to Ulla and Travis. Seb and Maria are talking to Ghost Seeker 666. Stevie, Melinda and Beryl are manning a coffee and cake stall. Brett and Nick stand at the makeshift bar serving out beers.

The Mayor and Zoe are presenting Oonta's horse carving to the major race winner. Margot turns around hoisting the carving high in the air and smiling for the crowd.

INT. GRAND NATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

The bar is empty of patrons but the television is turned on to the news broadcast. On the screen is Leticia interviewing people standing in line to use the last telephone booth.

LETICIA

And who are you going to ring from
Australia's last telephone booth?

CHILD (6)

My grandma.

LETICIA

And what do you want to say to her?

CHILD (6)

I just want to say hi.

LETICIA

And you sir?

MAN (32)

Want to ring my girlfriend and ask her
to marry me.

MAN (68)

I want to ring my daughter and ask her
about my new grandchild.

WOMAN (25)

I'm going to order a pizza. Hey, do
you think they'll deliver to Mc
Clary's Creek?

MAN (59)

Ring my mother. I haven't spoken to
her in 30 years.

WOMAN (84)

Ring my son overseas he's in the Army.

MAN (26)

To tell her I miss her.

WOMAN (43)

To tell him I love him.

GIRL (15)

...love her...

MAN (59)

...love him...

Man (32) gives a yell and drops the phone handset. He turns
and gives Leticia a huge hug.

MAN (32)

SHE SAID YES!

The crowd whoops and cheers.

FADE OUT