STRUCTURING THE THRILL IN THE TRUE CRIME STORY:

An analysis of how the substructures of the classic screenplay operate in the Thriller film.

An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Declaration of original authorship

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- The work contained in this thesis has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award.
- The content of this thesis is the result of the work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.
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Abstract

The research for this exegesis analyses the substructures contained in the classic screenplay and evaluates how they operate in the Thriller film. The findings have been applied to the construction of the project; an original feature length screenplay entitled *Magnetic Fields*.

The substructures explored in this exegesis are those identified by screen theorist Dr Lisa Dethridge\(^1\) as being essential to the screenplay form, irrespective of genre. They are the premise, protagonist, dramatic problem and plot. The research identifies and defines each of these elements and examines how they operate in the classic Thriller screenplay. Screen theorist and Thriller genre expert Neill D Hicks\(^2\) provides the theoretical structure for the classic Thriller. A case study, *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) written by Fran Walsh and Peter Jackson, illustrates the discussion of these substructures.

The research compares the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to discover the techniques that a writer can employ to create a well-structured Thriller screenplay. The usefulness of these techniques is discussed in relation to the project, *Magnetic Fields*. Operating within the conventions of the classic Thriller enables the writer to address the requirements of both industry and audience. Film industry standards for the screenplay include format, length and the organisation of content. Audience expectations arise from genre identification. If a film is labelled a Thriller, the audience expects the story to provoke suspense and fear; they expect to be thrilled. This research investigates how this thrill can be achieved through an understanding of how the substructures of the screenplay operate within the Thriller genre.

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2 Hicks, Neill D. (2002) *Writing the Thriller Film* Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City CA.
EXEGESIS
**Introduction**

The screenplay is the document used by every member of the film industry in the creation of the final on-screen experience. As screen theorist Dr Lisa Dethridge\(^3\) notes, the screenplay can be described as an instruction manual with a specific technical function to fulfil. To effect this function successfully there are numerous conventions that the screenwriter can employ to ensure their screenplay meets both industry and audience needs.

This exegesis aims to address the technical issues of marrying the basic structural criteria of the classical screenplay with the conventions of the Thriller genre\(^4\). To do this, the structure of the Thriller will be examined via the basic elements of the classic screenplay.

The creative project that will form half of the requirements of this Masters Degree is a feature length screenplay entitled *Magnetic Fields*. The story is based on a true crime, a horrific murder that occurred in Brisbane in 1989. *Magnetic Fields* is loosely based on the events that led to this murder and explores what happens when a naïve young girl is seduced into the subterranean world of a coterie of Satan worshipping lesbians who believe their ‘leader’ needs to feed on human blood.

**Project Synopsis: Magnetic Fields**

*It’s the end of school and 18-year old CHRISTINE plans to visit her estranged father in London on the promise that he will send her money for the airfare. But when Christine’s brother discovers she is having a relationship with the same girl he likes, Christine is forced from the family home and their small country town. Alone in the city with no resources, Christine falls in with a gang of street kids and is arrested for vagrancy. That night in the watch house, Christine meets TRACEY (24) and accepts her offer of a place to stay until her father’s money arrives. But this means sharing with Tracey’s manipulative ex girlfriend, KIM and the strange LISA. Christine is seduced by Tracey’s generosity and kindness, but soon discovers that Tracey is not all she seems. She also discovers that her*

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\(^3\) Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 43.

\(^4\) Genres are particular types of stories structured in a way so as to meet audience expectation.
father is not all he seems either when she learns he is in prison for murder. Betrayed, angry and questioning her own demons, Christine dives headfirst into Tracey’s bed and the exciting world of drugs and the occult. But excitement turns to terror when Christine finds out that Tracey and her acolytes Kim and Lisa are planning a ritual human sacrifice to satiate Tracey’s hunger for blood. When Christine confronts Tracey and Kim about this she is attacked, physically bound and unable to escape. Fearing for her life and believing Kim is the puppet master in this plan, Christine is prepared to risk her own life to save another’s. Lured to a quiet park, Tracey’s victim has no idea what is in store for him. And neither does Tracey. Desperate to stop the senseless killing, Christine goes into battle with Tracey, but despite her efforts the man is killed and Christine is brutally stabbed. With the last of her energy Christine manages to plant vital evidence at the scene that leads to the capture of Tracey and saves her own life. Later, a more mature but scarred Christine finally takes the flight to London to confront her father.

**Literature review**

Having undertaken an extensive review of literature in the screenwriting field, two principal theorists will form the basis of this research, Dr Lisa Dethridge and Neill D Hicks.

Dr Lisa Dethridge is the author of *Writing Your Screenplay*. Her theories on the classical screenplay have been informed by Jungian psychology and the work of anthropologist Joseph Campbell\(^5\) as explored by screenwriting theorist Christopher Vogler\(^6\).

Research into the field has revealed there is an abundance of texts on the market that analyse the classic screenplay form, from the structure-focussed theorists such as Christopher Vogler, Robert McKee\(^7\), Linda Seger\(^8\), and Syd Field\(^9\) to anti-structure

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theorists such as Andrew Horton\textsuperscript{10}, who shift the emphasis of the screenplay to character. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for texts that analyse the structure of the classic Thriller film. There is a paucity of resources for the screenwriter seeking practical structural advice as opposed to genre theory. However one text was located that thoroughly explores the nature of the Thriller film. Writing the Thriller Film: The Terror Within by theorist Neill D. Hicks\textsuperscript{11} provides a detailed analysis of the Thriller structure and will be the primary text for the study of this genre.

In addition to the work of Hicks, the theories of British script development expert Stephen Cleary\textsuperscript{12} will augment the overall understanding of the conventions of the Thriller, through the official paper from Cleary’s Arista development lecture on the Thriller Genre.

Reference will also be made to screen theorist Robert McKee, an internationally recognised expert on the principals of story. McKee has been lecturing on the subject for more than fifteen years and his tome Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting delves deeply into classical structure.

\textsuperscript{10} Horton, Andrew (1994) Writing the Character Centered Screenplay, University of California Press, Berkley.
\textsuperscript{11} Hicks is a screenwriter of Thriller and Action Adventure films, including Dead Reckoning and Don’t Talk to Strangers and lectures in screenwriting at a number of universities in the United States including UCLA. In this text, Hicks refers to numerous case studies to identify the expectations of the genre, the narrative trajectory, the bounded world and timescape peculiar to the Thriller, including character ethos and the ‘cosmos of credibility’. These structural elements will be explored in this exegesis to ensure the demands of the genre are met.
\textsuperscript{12} Cleary created Arista Development in 1996 while holding the position as Head of Development at British Screen. It was here that Cleary identified the need to provide script development skills for Development Executives in the film industry. Since then, Stephen Cleary has delivered his script and story development workshops to film industry professionals throughout the world. He has been invited to Australia twice in recent years by state film agency Film Victoria. Amongst the workshops that Cleary delivers is a lecture series on genre, with a focus on the Thriller.
Methodology

Six major research questions have been formulated to investigate how classic screenplay substructures operate in the Thriller film. These questions will be explored through the theories of Dethridge and Hicks and then applied to a case study and to the project. The questions are based on Dethridge’s\(^\text{13}\) theory of the ‘Four Ps’ (the four interlocking substructures of premise, protagonist, dramatic problem and plot). By comparing the theories of Dethridge and Hicks the exegesis aims to highlight the most useful elements to employ in the construction of the project.

The central research questions are as follows:

1. How may we define the classic structure of the Thriller?
   - *How useful is the classic structure of the Thriller to the construction of Magnetic Fields?*

2. How does the Premise operate in the Thriller genre?
   - *How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Premise in Magnetic Fields?*

3. How does the Protagonist operate in the Thriller genre?
   - *How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Protagonist in Magnetic Fields?*

4. How does the Antagonist operate in the Thriller genre?
   - *How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Antagonist in Magnetic Fields?*

5. How does the Dramatic Problem operate in the Thriller genre?
   - *How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Dramatic Problem in Magnetic Fields?*

6. How does the Plot operate in the Thriller genre?
   - *How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the plot in Magnetic Fields?*

\(^{13}\) Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 47.
The screenplay selected for the case study is *Heavenly Creatures*\(^{14}\) written by Fran Walsh and Peter Jackson. *Heavenly Creatures* is based on the true story of the Hulme-Parker murder that occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1954. The screenplay was nominated for an Academy Award in 1995 for *Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen*\(^{15}\), and in the same year it was also nominated for the Writer’s Guild of America Award for *Best Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen*\(^{16}\). The film itself also received numerous awards and continues to maintain its status as an important cinematic work\(^{17}\).

**Rationale**

In recent years, box office figures show that the Australian film industry has suffered from a lack of audience support. In 2004 Australian films captured only 1.3 per cent of the market, which is the lowest share since this data has been collected.\(^ {18}\) With much concern about the future of the local industry many film professionals and commentators have offered reasons as to why this is the case. Chief amongst these is the charge Australian scripts are structurally underdeveloped compared with their American counterparts and that Australian audiences prefer the ‘safer’ bet of a Hollywood film.

If Australian films are currently seen to be suffering from structural underdevelopment then it can be argued that the analysis and application of the theory of screenplay structure is both timely and necessary if faith is to be regained in Australian films by both industry and audience.

Whilst the recent box office figures for Australian films are alarming it would be simplistic to assume that in all cases poor box office is due to poorly structured scripts, however

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\(^{14}\) *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) Dir: Peter Jackson; written by Fran Walsh and Peter Jackson.


\(^{17}\) In a program compiled by British film experts including Sir David Puttnam in 2006, entitled *50 Films to See Before You Die*, *Heavenly Creatures* ranked at number 22. The 50 films were selected as a paragon of a particular style or genre. ([www.imdb.com/title/tt0795328/movieconnections](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0795328/movieconnections)) Website was viewed on 20/11/2006.

prominent filmmaker Peter Sainsbury\textsuperscript{19} believes that a lack of understanding of how scripts operate at a structural level is the major problem facing the Australian film industry.\textsuperscript{20}

Engaging audiences is the name of the game in the international film industry. Audiences enter the darkened space of the cinema with the minimal expectation of being entertained. The highest form of entertainment is a transformative experience. For this to occur, the writer must capture the experience on the page, or there is little chance of it appearing on the screen. As Dethridge\textsuperscript{21} attests:

\begin{quote}
To connect with an audience and their dreams, the writer needs to develop material within a specific genre that actually has something definite to say to a specific audience. To check whether the writer has thought about this, producers may ask three key questions of the nervous writer at their first meeting:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Who cares?
  \item So what?
  \item What is your story really about?
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

For \textit{Magnetic Fields} to successfully engage the reader/audience it is vital to ground the screenplay in a solid structure. Considering the nature of the subject matter, this foundation will ensure that whilst the content may be unfamiliar and challenging, the journey will not;

\textsuperscript{19} Sainsbury has more than twenty years experience in the British, Australian and New Zealand film industries and his producing credits include the \textit{A Zed and Two Noughts} (1985) and \textit{The Draftsman’s Contract} (1982) by cult British auteur Peter Greenaway. Sainsbury has based himself in Australia since the early 1990’s. (Source:<\url{www.imdb.com/name/nm0756610}> viewed on 5/3/2006.)

\textsuperscript{20} In his open letter to Australian film funding bodies in 2004 entitled \textit{The Fear and Loathing of Risk: and the Underdevelopment of Script Development} (\textit{Metro Magazine}; Issue 142) Sainsbury asserts that there is a fundamental lack of understanding of the basic structures of the screenplay form. In referring to a recent (unnamed) Australian film he noted:

\begin{quote}
Holes in the plot wrecked the suspension of disbelief. A constant switching in and out of genre proved fatally disconcerting. It was as though the writer had provided signs for the audience to follow but had scrambled the co-ordinates of the journey, leaving us at first vexed and, then indifferent. In short, the script was written, and edited, without an understanding of how to engage audiences.
\end{quote}

it will allow the audience to focus on the story itself and not be distracted by where they are in it. As Dethridge points out\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Good screenplays are written around invisible, inner structures that help the audience to navigate their way through the story.}

As a literary genre, interest in True Crime stories is at an all time high\textsuperscript{23}. A recent article in \textit{The Australian} reported a 65\% increase in sales of True Crime stories in 2006. From this information it is feasible to argue that a screenplay based on a true crime may generate interest from a producer/developer, but as this exegesis aims to prove, ultimately it is the merits of the story and how well it is structured that matters.

\textbf{How may we define the Classical Structure of the Thriller?}

The basic principles of classic screenplay structure have developed from thousands of years of accumulated storytelling and can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, as Dethridge notes:\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Aristotle’s wisdom about portraying drama within a narrow, manageable time frame is still observed as the key to dramatic action and suspense genres tend to work within a highly coherent, linear chronological style where the writer observes Aristotle’s unity of space and time.}

According to Dethridge\textsuperscript{25} all classical stories contain a beginning, middle and end, and for the screenplay, this is represented as a linear narrative of three acts that follow the journey of the protagonist, or the main character. On the surface, the concept that each act in a classical screenplay represents the beginning, middle and end, seems simple however the reality is far more complex. Modern audiences are sophisticated in their understanding of story, and to engage an audience on a deep level, the screenwriter must have a profound understanding of how stories operate.

\textsuperscript{24} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 87.
Understanding how the classic three-act structure operates is essential for the screenwriter regardless of the type of story they wish to tell, as Dethridge\textsuperscript{26} notes:

\textit{These three acts represent the largest structure of the screenplay; the basic outline of the main plot. Within this outline, you can organise the chronology or time frame of the plot.}

Dethridge\textsuperscript{27} deconstructs the three acts of the traditionally structured screenplay as follows:

- The first act establishes the normal world of the protagonist and then introduces a disturbance that creates a problem for the protagonist to overcome in order to achieve their goal.
- The second act deepens the conflict as more complications are thrown in the path of the protagonist.
- The final act requires the writer to build upon the tension created earlier to reach the climax of the film, where the protagonist actually or metaphorically goes into battle with the supporting character/s. The final result of the climax is that the protagonist must resolve the central problem, before providing a sense of their future to the audience.

Each of these three acts needs to blend seamlessly with the support of invisible interconnecting substructures to create a satisfying read that might result in a satisfying cinematic experience. These substructures are what Dethridge refers to as the ‘nuts and bolts’\textsuperscript{28} of screenwriting: the protagonist, dramatic problem, plot and premise. Without these elements there would be no story.

It is useful to note that the industry rule of thumb equates one screenplay page to one minute of screen time, and thus screenplays should be between 90 and 120 pages to create the standard feature length film.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{26} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p129.
\item\textsuperscript{27} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 59.
\item\textsuperscript{28} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 47.
\item\textsuperscript{29} Interestingly both the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences, \texttt{<www.oscars.com>}, the American Film Institute, \texttt{<www.afi.com>} and the British Film Institute \texttt{<www.bfi.org.uk>}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The classic three-act structure that has been described by Dethridge mirrors the classic Thriller structure that Hicks$^{30}$ refers to as the Narrative Trajectory. The Narrative Trajectory is in fact the story arc from beginning to middle to end. Hicks uses the analogy of an arrow to describe the story arc:

> Like the arched flight of an arrow, the audience’s anticipation rises from the angle of release at the beginning, bending to the apex of complications, through the promise of final resolution that draws the story arrow to ground.

Hicks goes on to elaborate how each of the three acts in the classic Thriller should create a designed effect on the audience$^{31}$:

- Act One: Attraction
- Act Two: Anticipation
- Act Three: Satisfaction

In the first act, Hicks$^{32}$ describes the ‘attraction’ the audience must feel for the protagonist’s predicament, when their dramatic problem first emerges. In the second act, the continual building of tension creates ‘anticipation’ as the protagonist grapples with the dramatic problem, but their actions do not produce the expected result. The final act sees the protagonist confront the antagonist head on, resulting in a satisfactory resolution.

The element common to all Thrillers is crime. According to screen theorist Robert McKee$^{33}$, the origins of the classically structured Thriller lie in the meta-genre of the Crime film. All subgenres of the Crime film must, by definition, contain a crime, however McKee states that it is the point of view from which the crime is regarded that distinguished the

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$^{33}$ McKee, Robert (1999) p 82.
subgenres. In the case of the Thriller the story is told from the victim’s point of view and thus the protagonist of the Thriller is also the victim. This important structural point will be explored in greater detail when examining the role of the Thriller protagonist.

*Heavenly Creatures* is a Thriller that employs many of the classic conventions of the form and it is useful to analyse how the writers of this award-winning screenplay have integrated these conventions into this true crime story.

**Synopsis of Case Study Heavenly Creatures**

*Based on a true story that shocked a nation, Heavenly Creatures paints a vivid portrait of two teenage schoolgirls whose obsessive friendship leads to an unspeakable crime. This critically acclaimed, hypnotic thriller chronicles the story of Juliet Hulme and Pauline Parker from the moment they meet in 1950’s New Zealand. Unhappy with their lives, the girls withdraw deep into a bizarre fantasy world of their joint creation. But when faced with a devastating separation, the now notorious pair plot a horrifying and violent solution to stay together.*

In the first act the reader/audience is introduced to the protagonist, Pauline Parker. Her ordinary world is the quiet town of Christchurch in New Zealand. Disruption to Pauline’s world occurs when Juliet Hulme enters Pauline’s life and we see the beginnings of obsession. As Hicks notes the first act is about ‘attracting’ the audience; making them want to know what the story is about.

In the second act, the relationship between Pauline and Juliet becomes more intense as their families place obstacles in the path of the girls and the girls retreat into a fantasy world of their own creation. Hicks tells us that the second act should engender a strong sense of anticipation. As *Heavenly Creatures* is based on a true event, the reader/audience may already be aware of the direction the story is heading, however it is the way in which the plot unfolds that creates the suspense and provokes the required edge-of-your-seat anticipation for which Thrillers are renowned.

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34 McKee, Robert (1999) p 82.
In the third act, the dramatic problem creates conflict and tension that leads to the climax of the film, the confrontation between the protagonist (Pauline) and antagonist (her mother). This is the shocking moment when Pauline and Juliet murder Pauline’s mother. The element of satisfaction only arrives when Pauline and Juliet are punished for their crime and the balance of order in the universe is restored.

As we can see, the classic three-act structure described by Dethridge also forms the framework for the classic Thriller. Hicks refers to this structure as the Narrative Trajectory and focuses on how each of the three acts can guide the audience’s involvement with the story to produce a satisfying experience.

**How useful is the classic structure of the Thriller to the construction of *Magnetic Fields***?

The three-act structure provides a vital framework for the construction of *Magnetic Fields*. Aside from the fact that this structure provides a guide for the writer to follow in plotting the journey of the protagonist, employing this structure also assists in meeting audience expectations. The additional benefit that Hicks provides in his theory of the Narrative Trajectory challenges the writer to continually think about how the story is affecting the audience.

In the first act of *Magnetic Fields* the world of protagonist Christine is established. She lives with her mother and brother in a small farming community. Tension and conflict arises early in the story and aims to create anticipation for the audience as they wonder what will happen. Christine is forced from her family home and flees to the city where her path intersects with the antagonist, Tracey.

In the second act the level of anticipation felt by the reader/audience should increase as Tracey seduces Christine and leads her deeper into a netherworld of drugs and Satanism, away from everything that is familiar.

In the final act, when Christine knows that Tracey is planning a human sacrifice, she must draw on her inner reserves of strength to go into battle with this powerful antagonist.
Satisfaction for the reader/audience arrives when Christine uses her nous to lead the police to Tracey. Her actions save her life and result in Tracey’s arrest and thus the removal of any future threat that Tracey could pose to society at large.

**How does the Premise operate in the Thriller genre?**

As the premise is one of the first concepts the screenwriter must pin down before commencing the writing process, it will be the first of the four substructures of the Thriller to be explored.

The premise is the rationale behind the story and must impact on every level of the script. Dethridge\(^{36}\) views the premise as the “heart and soul” of the story, stating that:

\[
This \text{ central concept often comes out of the moral, philosophical, spiritual or intellectual idea that drives the writer to write in the first place.}\]

\(^{37}\)

As Dethridge suggests, it is important that the writer connects with the premise, as it must permeate all levels of the story. As the overarching theme of the story, the premise is also the source from which all other themes emerge. As Dethridge notes\(^{38}\), the premise can assist the writer to answer the “Who Cares” question of the reader/producer/audience. It also provides a way to limit the endless possibilities that are open to the screenwriter, by ensuring that the plot, characters and dramatic problem remain within the boundaries of this governing concept.

According to Hicks, all Thriller films can be characterised as operating on the premise of the extra-ordinary overtaking the ordinary, creating a climate of unease and fear. He believes that at their core all Thrillers are about\(^{39}\):

\(^{37}\) *ibid.*, p 50.
\(^{38}\) *ibid.*, p 53.
(...) ordinary people who are unprepared for the life-threatening situation that envelops them.

To this extent the generic Thriller premise asks ‘what would happen if an ordinary person was thrust into a situation where their life is at risk and nothing is what it seems?’ The idea that an ordinary person can find themselves in an extraordinary situation is one that holds strong appeal for an audience, as it prompts the audience to think: ‘what if this happened to me’. As Hicks notes\(^{40}\):

*Thrillers should be disturbing. They should rupture your accepted reality. Put you on guard. Make you aware.*

As has been suggested by Dethridge, the premise often comes from the initial idea that drives the writer. In the case of the Thriller, this may be the evil that exists in modern society or the deep-rooted, ancient fears imbedded in the human psyche. Whatever the source the dangers of a ‘ruptured reality’ must be at the root of the story and reflected in the premise.

Hicks tells us it is also important to base the Thriller premise within the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’\(^{41}\) and to maintain the reality of this world throughout the story.

*If the consistency is broken, if the Cosmos of Credibility is ruptured, the audience loses not only it’s belief in the special reality of the movie, but its trust in the storyteller as well.*

In essence the term ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ the onscreen world that requires the audience’s suspension of disbelief. For the Thriller film, there is a particular need to ensure that no matter how ‘out there’ the premise may be, it must be conveyed in a credible way. In fact Hicks believes that the Thriller requires a greater level of credibility than other genres\(^{42}\).

\(^{40}\) Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p xvi.
Whereas an Action-Adventure or the various styles of Comedy allow for a good deal of latitude in the audience’s willing suspension of disbelief, the success of a Thriller depends almost entirely on the filmmaker’s ability to confidently assure the audience that they are watching near-documentary authenticity, while simultaneously hoodwinking them into giving up their dependence on the real world altogether.

This concept bears a great significance for the writer developing a Thriller, and it further underlies Dethridge’s point of the importance for the writer to be passionate about the topic, to use this passion to guide the research and development of the story, to achieve this ‘near-documentary authenticity’ that Hicks believes is vital. It is equally important for the writer to utilise techniques that will assist them to achieve this credibility.

The premise of Magnetic Fields evolved from research into a sensationalised crime. On October 20, 1989, Tracey Wigginton and three female friends abducted a drunken council worker in order to sacrifice him so that Tracey could ‘feed’ from his blood. The women believed Tracey was a vampire. Senseless acts of violence such as this are disturbing and provoke the question - what could possibly make someone commit such a crime? This question led to the governing idea for Magnetic Fields:

Is evil something you are, or something you do?

This is a metaphysical question of whether morality exists independently of humans. For Plato, morals are unchangeable; they are absolute. However there are those, like Nietzsche who believe that morals are a human invention and that the individual creates their own moral standards, which may change depending upon time, culture and society.

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43 Essay on Metaethics viewed online at the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: 20/3/06 www.iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.
44 Essay on Metaethics viewed online at the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: 20/3/06 www.iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.
The protagonist of *Magnetic Fields* discovers that her father is a murderer; does this mean she too has ‘bad blood’? The antagonist believes in the philosophy of Satanism and the right of the individual to do exactly as they please. This Satanic belief system condones evil acts such as human sacrifice; is she evil by nature? or capable of evil acts? Is there a difference?

The nature of evil also evident in the premise of *Heavenly Creatures*:

*Not all angels are innocent.*

The writers of *Heavenly Creatures* manage to both maintain and subvert Hicks’ ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ by borrowing from the fantasy genre and injecting scenes of whimsy and imagination amongst the credible scenes of 1950’s New Zealand. These fantasy sequences represent the inner world of the protagonists. The use of animation in these sequences subverts the need for ‘near-documentary authenticity’ as Hicks has described, and yet it manages to take the audience deeper into the psychology of the protagonists, allowing the audience time to learn about the imaginative side of their natures whilst simultaneously lending weight to their later actions.

The premise for *Heavenly Creatures* becomes evident as we delve further into the psyche of Pauline Parker to discover how an obsessive adolescent relationship can lead to murder. The ‘unspeakable’ crime committed by the girls is matricide, a rare offence that occurs in less than 1% of all homicides.\(^{45}\) Matricide is a universal taboo that has been explored in ancient mythology. Myths are an essential component of human development over time, as Dethridge notes:\(^{46}\)

> *Myths are the stories we tells ourselves to explain the mysteries of nature and society, of human behaviour and history.*

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The subject matter of matricide is both disturbing and intriguing. By suggesting that young girls are capable of evil acts Heavenly Creatures successfully creates a world out of balance where a disturbance to the ‘natural order’ challenges the moral fibre of a whole country. With use of voice over diary entries and ensuring the actions of the girls remain credible within the world that has been created, the screenplay never completely leaves the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ that Hicks believes is essential to the Thriller form.

How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Premise in Magnetic Fields?

The ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ was a touchstone during the development of Magnetic Fields, and it is directly related to the ‘who cares’ question that Dethridge urges the screenwriter to consider. A disturbing premise can capture the interest of the reader/audience, but to maintain this interest Hicks says the screenwriter must ensure that the Thriller protagonist behaves in a way that the ordinary person would. The writer must ‘keep it real’.

Hicks\(^{47}\) tells us that the Thriller premise demands the reader/audience to ask ‘What if?’ To position themselves in the shoes of the protagonist. If the premise of Magnetic Fields were to be phrased as:

\[
\text{What would happen if a naïve girl fell in love with a Satan worshipping lesbian planning a human sacrifice?}
\]

A response of ‘this could never happen to me’ may arise. Yet aside from the intrigue the world of satanic lesbians provides, one could argue that the broader answer to this ‘who cares’ question is: \textit{Anyone who has ever made the mistake of falling in with the wrong crowd}. As Dethridge\(^{48}\) tells us, it is important to recognise how a universal theme can benefit the overall appeal of the story, and that the writer should:

(... consider universal themes that can work across different cultures and age groups. By ‘universal’, we mean images and ideas that will appeal to all people at all time, regardless of their race, class or religion.

Evil permeates our world. The concept of evil is also deeply connected to religion. If there is evil in the world then how can god exist? Evil creates fear and fear can lead to evil. Aristotle⁴⁹ says that:

Fear is pain arising from the anticipation of evil.

However just because Magnetic Fields explores the universal idea of what can happen if you fall in with a bad crowd, this does not mean the story will ‘appeal to all people at all time’ as Dethridge suggests. In fact the subject matter of this project is confronting and taboo. It plays with negative stereotypes that, despite being based on reality, are no longer a desirable image of the contemporary lesbian. However it can be argued that there will always be an audience for a story that explores the darker elements of the human psyche and that pushes moral boundaries.

In her online paper Human Fascination with Evil/ the Grotesque⁵⁰, Dr Donna Freitas (Assistant Professor of spirituality and religion at St. Michaels College in Colchester, Vermont) asserts:

Storytellers, writers, artists, and in this century filmmakers and tv-producers have always found the theme of the grotesque as a favorite subject to explore through their work. One explanation for these individuals taking up this topic might be the fact that a piece, be it novel, film, or what have you, involving evil/the grotesque almost surely will find an eager audience. Humans are thrilled by this subject matter. We seek it out, we are repulsed by it, yet we can’t seem to pull ourselves away from it. Evil/the grotesque draws us in and in a powerful way.

The question is evil something you are or something you do? permeates each of the three acts of *Magnetic Fields*. In the first act Christine shows she is capable of ‘evil’ actions when she impulsively stabs her brother in the leg. This action shows Christine to possess a temper and to lack self-control. In addition Christine’s homosexuality is something that her Christian mother believes to be ‘sinful’.

In the second act Christine discovers that her father is a murderer, and this creates an intense internal struggle for Christine. She feels betrayed by her father, scared of what he has done and on a deeper level scared that she too may possess the genetic makeup that would make it possible for her to commit murder. To prove to herself that this is not the case, Christine places her own life in danger to prevent an evil event occurring. This action poses the universal question, and another theme emerging from the premise of this story - is it our responsibility to prevent someone from doing something morally wrong? Rather than flee the situation, Christine feels morally obliged to act.

Dethridge\(^5\) points out that isolating the premise can be a difficult venture, and it may in fact, not become clear until the first draft of the screenplay is completed.

> *The premise is often the most obscure or elusive story element to identify among the other themes, ideas and images that can jostle for attention in the writer’s busy mind. The sooner the writer identifies their premise, the stronger the work will be.*

The task, as suggested by Dethridge is to use the premise as a touchstone throughout the writing process. By vigilanty ensuring that the premise permeates all elements of the screenplay, the story will ultimately benefit. It is also important to ensure that the premise is built deep within the structure of the story to ensure that the audience has a sense of it without being made acutely aware of it. These instructions have been of great use in the development of *Magnetic Fields*.

By amalgamating the theories of Dethridge and Hicks, we can learn how to ensure the premise of the classic Thriller is one that creates a climate of unease and fear that builds from the first act and continues unrelentingly through to the end of the story.

**How does the Protagonist operate in the Thriller genre?**

The protagonist, often referred to as the main character or Hero, is at the centre of the classical drama. In mythical terms the Hero is an archetype, a character that occurs throughout history in myths and fairytales and who fulfils a particular function in the story.\(^{52}\)

Dethridge\(^{53}\) discusses the importance of creating a protagonist that the audience cares about, so that they may engage with the story as though the protagonists’ pressures and dilemmas are their own:

*During the course of the plot, the audience needs to like – preferably even ‘love’ – the protagonist in order to relate to their problem and thus stay committed to the story.*

However to empathise with the protagonist does not necessarily mean the protagonist must be heroic.\(^{54}\) Empathy can apply to a flawed character on the wrong side of the law/societal mores if this character is well developed.

Like the classic drama, the classically structured Thriller also features a single protagonist, and as Hicks\(^{55}\) confirms, the Thriller protagonist must be a well developed character that operates within the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’:

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52 Vogler, Christopher (1992) p 35.
54 A cursory examination of popular Australian heroes over the past decade suggests that the Australian public loves an underdog on screen as much as on the sports field. From the Kerrigan family in *The Castle* (1997, Dir.Rob Sitch; written by Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner, Jane Kennedy, Rob Sitch) to animated loser *Harvie Krumpet* (2003, Dir: Adam Elliot; written by Adam Elliot) the appeal of the underdog lies in the fact that their very flaws make them more human, more likeable.
One-dimensional characters are particularly toxic in Thrillers. It is not especially
difficult to set up a Thriller hook that poses the ‘What’s going to happen?’ question
to the audience. Far more complex is the issue of why something is happening, and
the answer to that question is found in the protagonist.

According to Hicks the classic Thriller protagonist is an everyman thrust into an extreme
situation. He believes it is their willingness to stay alive that should help the audience to
identify with their dramatic problem. The will to live is the strongest desire of all and it is
universal to human kind. Yet Hicks tells us that the Thriller protagonist has no special
powers to assist them in their struggle. The Thriller protagonist is not a super-hero, just an
ordinary person who must find the strength to accomplish extraordinary things in order to
survive.

As was discovered in the exploration of the Thriller premise, the traditionalThriller
requires the audience to believe that ‘this could happen to me’ and thus the Thriller
protagonist must act in absentia for the audience.

Thriller characters must consistently behave in ways that ordinary people believe
they, themselves, would react in the same circumstances if pushed to extremes. If the
audience ever has reason to ask the characters, “Why don’t you just....,” then the
illusion of reality is broken.56

The protagonist of Heavenly Creatures is presented as a fundamentally flawed and complex
character. The writer’s have successfully created an interesting history for this character
that gives resonance to Pauline Parker’s darkness. Early in the first act we discover that she
suffered from polio as a child. Now as a teenager she is unable to participate in team sport
and is often withdrawn and alone, until she meets Juliet Hulme. Pauline’s past sickness and
isolation help the audience to empathise with her. This is further developed through the
technique of diary entries that are narrated by the protagonist, enabling the audience to ‘get
into the head’ of Pauline Parker.

To achieve empathy Dethridge⁵⁷ asks the writer to establish the protagonist’s values, attitudes, beliefs, desires, needs, goals, fears, vanities, delusions and foibles, and in doing so, find ways to show these onscreen through dialogue⁵⁸ and action. Memorable characters become so through the choices they make, so the screenwriter must flesh out a fully developed character before commencing the screenplay itself. A complete understanding of the character from their emotional depths to their superficial tastes will ensure that the choices the character makes ring true. Without thought to the intricacies of the protagonist’s psychology, the character may become caricature making them unworthy of the audience’s empathy. This is not an acceptable option for any screenplay, but as Hicks has noted, it is anathema to the Thriller. Creating a rich history or ‘backstory’ for the protagonist that permeates the story may also assist with the plot, as Dethridge notes⁵⁹

*In many instances, a character’s backstory will emerge directly in the narrative. Important details about a character’s past will also drive the plot by providing clues about the action.*

Script development expert Stephen Cleary⁶⁰ identifies key ‘sympathy’ concepts that should be contained within the Thriller screenplay in order to assist the audience to identify with the protagonist. These concepts are also integral to the dramatic problem and the development of the plot.

The first identification link is that of ‘Concerned Sympathy’ where at any given moment the audience may know more than the protagonist – thus putting them on the edge of their seat. The second identification link is that of ‘Curious Sympathy’ whereby the audience knows less than the protagonist and is gripped by wanting to know what will happen next.

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⁵⁷ Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 66
⁵⁸ The screenwriter’s tools for articulating character are dialogue and the visual description of action. Whilst dialogue must be naturalistic and imbued with relevance to the character’s personality, ethnicity, social position etc, Dethridge (p 165)reminds us that screenplay dialogue is one step removed from reality, due to the need for characters to convey complex meaning in condensed time. Within the finite timeframe of the screenplay, there simply is not the time for dialogue to meander. Brevity is the operating principle in creating gripping dialogue.
⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp 6 – 7.
The third identification link that Cleary notes is that of ‘High Sympathy’ which places the audience directly into the protagonist’s shoes so that they too feel the imminent danger. Since the audience at different times knows more, less or the same as the protagonist, the audience has more information than the protagonist.⁶¹

_The protagonist in a thriller is trying to find out the true meaning behind what’s happening in the story. The audience is trying to understand the true meaning of the story too, so the protagonist is the audience’s only ally in the story._

In _Heavenly Creatures_, the protagonist Pauline is unaware that Juliet’s father is the person who wishes to separate Pauline from his daughter. Pauline is convinced her mother is behind the conspiracy. As this information is revealed to the audience but not to the protagonist, the fact that Pauline takes her wrath out on her innocent mother, and not on the real ‘culprit’ deepens the tragedy.

Hicks⁶² also recognises the unique relationship that the Thriller shares with the audience:

_Thrillers (...) have a special conspiratorial relationship with the audience, often providing backstory information that the characters themselves do not possess. The information passed secretly to the audience may be about an insufficiency in the main character’s life, or even about the antagonist’s secret intentions._

Hicks believes it is important to show the protagonist as somehow incomplete; lacking an essential commitment to life, or ability to meet life head on, so that when they are thrust into an extreme situation, (a situation that as both Hicks and Cleary have mentioned, the audience may have more knowledge of than the protagonist) this inadequacy is tested and they are forced to confront and deal with their fears and in doing so they grow.

The conflicts, obstacles and challenges faced by the protagonist should ideally result in a fundamental change in their character. If there is no change the audience may feel the

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journey has been wasted, asking ‘so what’ at the end of the film. Dethridge\textsuperscript{63} confirms the need for the protagonist to be placed under intense pressure in order for the audience to identify with their journey.

\textit{Just as we often don’t really know our friends until we see them under pressure, the protagonist reveals their true self when dealing with challenging tasks and problems.}

Christine, the young protagonist of \textit{Magnetic Fields} is established early in the first act as someone who has spirit and is not afraid to stand up to the authority of her family and society. Yet she yearns to reconnect with her father. As the film is set in a small country town in the late 1980’s, her act of defiance is particularly brave, a quality often equated with the ‘Australian character.’ By revealing Christine’s inner strength and moral fortitude early in the story, it is hoped that the audience will care about her when she finds herself in danger in the second act.

As the protagonist embarks on their journey, each scene must advance the plot and incrementally shed light onto their inner and outer worlds. It is important to keep in mind that the stakes must be high in order for the audience to truly care about the choices the protagonist makes under pressure; choices that reflect the premise and the values of the protagonist. In the classic Thriller, keeping the stakes high is a vital convention of the genre.

The main objective or goal of the Thriller protagonist is to stay alive and defeat the antagonist. Hicks comments that the importance of this ‘Narrative Trajectory’ cannot be over estimated\textsuperscript{64}

\textit{If the audience cares about anything, they care about how the protagonist is going to stay alive. Any diversion from the Narrative Trajectory of escaping death tries the patience of the audience and ultimately stretches their fundamental suspension of disbelief.}

\textsuperscript{64}Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 103.
Suspense is created through continually building tension, as the actions taken by the protagonist do not produce expected results. It is important for the audience to be asking *how is the main character going to get out of this mess?* Both Hicks and Dethridge agree that the Protagonist must find the strength within to achieve their goal, as Dethridge comments\textsuperscript{65}:

*In classic drama, the protagonist must be the primary, proactive agent for change. In the course of their trials, problems and challenges, they cannot be saved by someone else or let off the hook by some magical solution without first having proved their grit and their humanity to the audience.*

As we have seen in the classic screenplay structure it is the protagonist who drives the story, however this is not necessarily the case in the traditional Thriller as we will discover in an investigation of the role of the antagonist.

**How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Protagonist in *Magnetic Fields*?**

As both Hicks and Dethridge recommend, *Magnetic Fields* features a single wilful protagonist who has a problem to solve. Both theorists also agree that the protagonist must engender empathy in the audience, so that they experience the protagonist’s problems as though they are their own. As Hicks has described, the protagonist of the classic Thriller is an ordinary person who is thrust into a state of confusion and isolation and who may not know how to deal with this.

Christine is an ordinary girl who comes under the spell of a stronger personality and finds herself in a strange and unknown world where her life is put at stake. In structuring Christine’s responses to the obstacles that block her, it has been important to consider the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ and to make sure the protagonist always behaves in a believable manner.

\textsuperscript{65} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 60.
Part of Christine’s appeal and also her flaw is her naivety. Due to the life threatening situations she is placed in, Christine is forced to lose her innocence, grow up quickly and face the ugly truth that ‘good’ people can do bad things. It has not been without extensive consideration that a young lesbian character was chosen as the protagonist of this dark tale. Criticism aimed at the structure of Australian feature films has also been levelled at the choice of protagonists that populate them\(^\text{66}\). It is hoped that Christine’s will to do the right thing may overcome any concerns that she lacks appeal.

\(^\text{66}\) In an article entitled *Junkies, thieves, idiots and depressives.* (June 6 2006) *Sydney Morning Herald* screen critic David Dale suggests that Australian writers are drawn to ‘low life’ characters, characters that audiences are not interested in spending time with. And it would appear there are international critics in agreement with him as this review of Australian film *Suburban Mayhem* attests (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 25 May 2006)

*Bottom Line: Amoral female runs amok without a compelling reason for anyone to watch her destructive behaviour.*

To explore the reasons why Australian films are believed to feature heroes that are (as mentioned in the title of the article) junkies, thieves, idiots and depressives, David Dale interviews American screen theorist Christopher Vogler. Vogler suggests that the answer lies in mythology.

Australians have their heroes, of course, but they tend to be unassuming and self-effacing, and will remain reluctant for much longer than heroes in other cultures. In Australian culture it’s unseemly to seek out leadership or the limelight, and anyone who does is a ‘tall poppy’, quickly cut down. The most admirable hero is one who denies his heroic role as long as possible and who, like Mad Max, avoids accepting responsibility for anyone but himself.

Despite Dale’s contention that ‘low life’ characters lack audience appeal, there are numerous films that contradict his assertion. From the numerous awards bestowed upon *Heavenly Creatures*\(^\text{66}\) (a film that features mother-killing lesbian teenagers, to the Oscar award winning performance by Charlize Theron (portraying serial killer lesbian prostitute Aileen Wuornos) in *Monster* (2003, Dir: Patty Jenkins, written by Patty Jenkins) and Hilary Swank’s performance as a transgendered teen in *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999 Dir: Kimberley Peirce, written by Kimberley Peirce and Andy Bienen). These examples suggest that audiences will not only accept but even embrace what may appear to be ‘undesirable’ or ‘underdog’ protagonists, so long as the audience can engage. As Vogler notes (1992, p 45) the underdog or anti-hero protagonist is

a specialized kind of Hero, one who may be an outlaw or villain from the point of view of society, but with whom the audience is basically in sympathy.

Again, the emphasis for a successful protagonist lies in the fact that they must engender empathy as has been agreed by all screen theorists referenced in this exegesis.
The theories offered by both Dethridge and Hicks on the role of the protagonist have been extremely useful for the construction of *Magnetic Fields*. Dethridge stresses the importance of creating an empathetic protagonist and Hicks emphasises the need for the protagonist to be an ‘everyman’ who acts in absentia for the audience. It is hoped that the character of Christine is a likeable ‘ordinary’ person who is caught up in an extraordinary situation.

**How does the Antagonist operate in the Thriller genre?**

When considering the Thriller protagonist it is essential to include a discussion of the Thriller antagonist, as they are in dramatic opposition to the protagonist and create the conflict that drives the story.

Hicks\(^{67}\) describes the Thriller antagonist as ‘morally different’ from the ‘everyman’ protagonist; a powerful character who is so single-minded in the pursuit of their goals that they will destroy anyone or anything that interferes with them attaining that goal. In essence it is the antagonist’s pursuit of their goal that drives the Thriller, and the protagonist’s attempts to stop the antagonist that creates the drama and the climate of fear. The antagonist presents not only a threat to the protagonist, but ultimately to society\(^{68}\).

*The antagonist’s moral code permits the destruction of anyone who interferes with the goal. For the main character, killing is an act that, however much it may be in self-defence, must seem to the audience to be morally justified on the part of the protagonist. The antagonist, on the other hand, has no such strictures.*

Cleary\(^{69}\) also positions the antagonist as the driving force of the classic Thriller, stating that:

*In the thriller it is the Antagonist who decides the depths the protagonist is going to have to explore inside themselves if they are going to come through. It is the antagonist who sets the test; it is the protagonist who sits it.*

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\(^{68}\) Hicks, Neill D (2002) p 107.

The powerful antagonist as the driving force of the story is a convention specific to the Thriller genre. In the classic screenplay it is the dramatic problem facing the protagonist that drives the plot\textsuperscript{70}.

\textit{The central dramatic problem drives the plot by providing complications and obstacles for the protagonist to deal with.}

Dethridge\textsuperscript{71} suggests that the antagonist is useful in applying pressure to the protagonist, but does not suggest that the antagonist is necessarily the source of the central dramatic problem:

\textit{If there is an antagonist in your screenplay, use this support character in act two to put more heat or pressure on the protagonist. They will provide barriers to success and set-ups in suspense that will be paid off later.}

Because the Thriller antagonist drives the action, the audience is placed in an unsettling position. As Dethridge has noted, the traditional screenplay convention is to place the protagonist in this powerful position. Cleary explains\textsuperscript{72}:

\textit{The thriller pulls us in different directions. We want to follow the protagonist as they struggle through danger to understand the situation they are in and the best way to get out of it. But we are pulled too towards the antagonist who pulls the strings of the story much harder than we are used to in other kinds of film story (...) Most of the time the antagonist drives the story and because of that comes across much more powerfully than in most genres.}

Hicks supports this statement in his discussion of how the battle between the antagonist and the protagonist is at the heart of the Thriller film\textsuperscript{73}.

\textsuperscript{70} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 49.
\textsuperscript{71} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 208.
\textsuperscript{72} Cleary, Stephen (2005) p 11.
\textsuperscript{73} Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 108.
The antagonist drives the Thriller forward by the relentless pursuit of a goal. The interference of the protagonist, then, becomes more than a mere annoyance, but the potential destruction of the antagonist. The antagonist must permanently prohibit the main character from obstructing the goal.

The antagonist of Magnetic Fields is planning to ritually sacrifice a human being to feed her need for blood. Tracey’s friends, Kim and Lisa support this plan and believe that Tracey is a vampire. Whilst Tracey’s goal is not divulged to Christine this information is revealed to the audience, helping to create Concerned Sympathy for the protagonist. Yet in fearing for Christine’s life, Cleary asserts that the audience is by proxy fearing for their own life, should the threat that Tracey poses be unleashed on society.\(^{74}\)

\[\text{As much as they may identify with the predicament of the main character, it is the extension of the threat into the “real” world that is truly frightening.}\]

In the struggle against this mighty antagonist, Hicks\(^{75}\) also suggests the need to see the protagonist bring forth and defeat their personal demons:

\[\text{Because the antagonist is stronger than the main character, the hero must overcome internal fears as well as external obstacles. Only through character growth is the audience’s anticipation satisfied by a complete story that, unlike the chaos of normal life, makes sense out of capricious reality.}\]

For Christine her internal fears are directly linked to her feelings for her father, a figure that Christine had idolised and now must recognise as significantly flawed.

Surrounding the protagonist and the antagonist in the classic Thriller is a small coterie of characters. Cleary\(^{76}\) points out that the majority of Thrillers are structured to feature less than five characters in total. The compressed world of the Thriller means that there is less

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\(^{74}\) Cleary, Stephen (2005) p103.
\(^{75}\) Hicks, Neill D (2003) p 32.
\(^{76}\) Cleary, Stephen (2005) p 5.
time to introduce and establish characters and Cleary suggests that the writer should make use of type when constructing the supporting characters:

_The quickest way to establish character in the audience’s mind is to resort to type, and although a good thriller doesn’t fall into cliché, characters usually function as types, in that they are defined by their function in the story and very little else._

On the surface this point would appear to be in conflict with Dethridge’s belief in the importance of backstory and the avoidance of stereotypes, and it also appears to contradict Hicks’ need for the protagonist to be a complex three dimensional character. However Cleary does not suggest that there should be no character development, but that within the confines of the Thriller plot, there is less time than a drama would offer to explore character intricacies.

Cleary believes that relying on established archetypes can assist the screenwriter to create instant identification. Lazy stereotyping however will only aid in isolating the audience from engaging with the story. Dethridge\(^\text{77}\) discusses the importance that archetypes have in personifying human qualities and how these archetypes have entered our mythology with psychologists and anthropologists such as Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell and Claude Levi-Strauss exploring the meaning of these archetypes in their valuable work.

**How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Antagonist in Magnetic Fields?**

Because the Thriller antagonist must fulfil a specific role in the narrative, the theories of Hicks and Cleary have been of most use in the construction of the antagonist in *Magnetic Fields*.

The antagonist in *Magnetic Fields* is a powerful, seductive and charismatic woman, who also happens to be a psychopath. Tracey uses her relative sophistication to seduce the more naïve Christine. Tracey’s motive is to mould Christine into her ideal acolyte. With two

other supporting characters in this world, Kim and Lisa, the total number of characters on screen at any one time in *Magnetic Fields* is no more than five as Cleary has suggested.

Tracey is physically, economically, socially and emotionally more powerful than Christine. Tracey has her own place, a car, motorbike and cash and is respected and feared by those around her. When Christine must inevitably go into battle with Tracey, the only way she can defeat her is to use her head. Tracey’s weakness is her psychological state. When she is overcome by the stronger personality that wrestles inside her psyche, Tracey cannot focus on anything other than the violence she is inflicting on another. This gives Christine the opportunity to plant Tracey’s keycard into the victim’s shoe.

The effect this experience has on Christine is huge. Tracey has changed Christine forever. Hicks\(^78\) discusses how the Thriller antagonist forces the protagonist to confront the frightening reality of the evil that inhabits the world:

\[(...) it is only through the absolute destruction of their relatively naïve realities that the characters are forced to confront themselves and thereby gain the strength to engage in the evil of the antagonist. In other words, they must give up their innocence and come to grips with the brutal world that they have been thrust into in order to save their lives.\]

Whilst Dethridge notes that the antagonist is a source of tension and pressure for the protagonist of the classic drama, the Thriller requires much more from this role and therefore the conventions offered by Hicks and Cleary are the most useful in creating a powerful, ‘morally different’ fear-inducing antagonist who will drive the story.

\(^{78}\) Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 118.
How does the Dramatic Problem operate in the Thriller genre?

In the classically structured screenplay, the central dramatic problem is the driving force of the plot, and this problem must belong primarily to the protagonist as the focal point of the story.

*The central dramatic problem usually sets the agenda for action in the feature film. This problem keeps the protagonist active and on their toes, moving forward to face the challenges that confront them.*

As the story builds the protagonist must face various obstacles that create conflict. As the essence of drama, conflict creates tension and suspense by placing the protagonist under pressure and forcing them to act. Conflict can stem from supporting character’s beliefs and goals being in opposition to those of the protagonist, from physical obstacles that hinder the protagonist’s journey or from the inner world of the protagonist – when they are in conflict with themselves over a moral issue.

In the classic Thriller, the dramatic problem presents in the form of the powerful antagonist, who entraps the protagonist in a world where nothing is as it seems and actions do not produce the desired result. The quintessential dramatic problem for the Thriller protagonist is how can they stay alive and defeat the antagonist?

In the first act of the screenplay, Hicks and Dethridge tell us to establish the protagonist in their normal world, a zone that is typically free of conflict until the dramatic problem is introduced. In the Thriller, Hicks\(^{80}\) tells us that this conflict should force the protagonist to flee their familiar surroundings.

*Thrillers creep up from routine life to snatch characters by the throat and yank them down into a netherworld where common sense is superfluous. The Thriller screenwriter inexorably cuts away the reassurance of the protagonist’s familiar surroundings. The character is driven out of a controllable setting into the maw of an inexplicable maze where the environment is unwieldy and out of phase.*

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Thriller conventions dictate that the protagonist is isolated both physically and psychologically from the normal world by the overpowering force of the antagonist. At first the protagonist may not know what’s happening, but in the process of discovering the truth, the dramatic problem escalates. The protagonist may be the only character who believes in the threat that the antagonist poses to society. The dramatic problem for the protagonist is how to stay alive in the face of escalating threat, when all the usual channels that exist in their familiar world are no longer available.

In *Heavenly Creatures* it is interesting to note how the writers have turned the dramatic problem on its head. The protagonist Pauline becomes isolated from the ordinary world of her family when she enters into a fantasy world with Juliet Hulme. The power this world has over Pauline is of great concern for her mother, who fears the dramatic changes she sees in her daughter. As Pauline’s mother tries to separate her daughter from Juliet, the empathy the writers have established with the protagonist asks us to view Pauline’s mother as the antagonist, threatening Pauline’s very life. Without Juliet, Pauline does not want to live. Yet the writers include scenes that engender empathy for Pauline’s mother who believes she is doing the right thing for her family. Pauline develops a plan to put an end to the threat her mother poses to her relationship with Juliet, by murdering her. The protagonist has become the antagonist and the audience’s alliance shifts from Pauline to her mother. In this instance, the writers have ignored traditional Thriller conventions, yet the result is no less powerful.

The Narrative Trajectory of *Magnetic Fields* closely follows the conventions of the classic Thriller. The initial set up shows protagonist Christine in the bucolic surrounds of a small country town where nothing much happens. The world is ordered if dull. There is tension between Christine and her brother however life is relatively ordinary until Clancy discovers his sister in the arms of Leah, the girl he wants. Family life is thrown into disorder by this discovery. The conflict this creates forces Christine to flee the family home and the town. Christine’s dramatic problem is where will she go with no money or resources? How will she survive?

This question is complicated when Christine meets Tracey. The intersection of the paths of the protagonist and antagonist is the essential catalyst for dramatic tension in the Thriller:
As soon as the protagonist interrupts the antagonist’s story, the Thriller takes on the cadence of fear.

In Magnetic Fields, we discover that Tracey’s goal is to feed on human blood. Christine’s goal is to reconnect with her father. When their paths cross, disorder reigns as Christine is enveloped in Tracey’s world. The story takes on the cadence of fear as it becomes clear that Christine is completely out of her depth and her life may be in danger. The tension increases when Christine’s dream about re-uniting with her father is shattered. She throws herself deeper into the abyss that Tracey represents until she is shocked into the realisation that Tracey is planning a murder. She feels morally obliged to act, but how will she be able to defeat such a powerful antagonist without being killed in the process?

As we can see, the dramatic problem in the Thriller is the driving force of the plot, as Dethridge has suggested and as Hicks and Cleary have explained, the antagonist is the source of the central dramatic problem.

**How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the Dramatic Problem in Magnetic Fields?**

Dethridge has shown us that the dramatic problem drives the plot, and that it must create conflict and tension for the protagonist, constantly keeping them on guard. In the high stakes genre that is the Thriller, we have seen that the antagonist creates the central dramatic problem which not just keeps the protagonist on their toes, it keeps them fearing for their life.

Due to the life or death stakes of the Thriller, it has been useful to apply the theories of Hicks in creating a terrifying antagonist who creates fear for the audience and protagonist. It is also useful to be reminded of the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’ that Hicks says is vital to the Thriller form so that the ‘ordinary’ protagonist responds to the dramatic problem in a believable way. Most importantly for the Thriller genre, Hicks shows us that the dramatic problem leads to a life or death moment, and that in reaching this moment the level of fear must continually rise for the protagonist and the audience.
Stephen Cleary’s theory of ‘Concerned Sympathy’ is also a very useful technique as it places the audience one step ahead of the protagonist and thus makes them more attuned to the scale of the dramatic problem than the protagonist.

Another important technique that Hicks suggests is that the protagonist must be deeply changed from their battle against the antagonist. When the dramatic problem is overcome and order in re-imposed, the protagonist cannot emerge unscathed, but must view the world differently. Hicks\textsuperscript{81} makes the implication that the audience will also emerge from the cinema more on guard and alert to the dangers of the world.

**How does the Plot operate in the Thriller genre?**

Dethridge\textsuperscript{82} has observed that in the classic drama, the dramatic problem drives the plot.

\begin{quote}
The plot usually follows the protagonist’s attempts to solve the complications arising from the central dramatic problem.
\end{quote}

We know through the exploration of the dramatic problem in the Thriller that these complications must induce suspense and fear in the audience. In essence, this is what creates the ‘thrill’ in the Thriller. The manner in which the suspense and fear escalate depends upon how the sequence of events is organised within the story chronology.

Dethridge\textsuperscript{83} refers to the organisation of the plot as operating within two timeframes. The first is the “time of the tale” or how long the timeframe for the story is, and the second is the “time of the telling” meaning how the story is structured within the 90 to 120 minutes of screen time. Dethridge states that the writer must balance these two timeframes to manipulate the audience’s perception of time and create the “dreamlike” experience of which good cinema is capable. Specific film genres have their own established patterns that govern the use of time on screen, from the epic, which may follow an entire life of a heroic figure, to the condensed timeframe of the Thriller.

\textsuperscript{81} Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 31.
\textsuperscript{82} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 49.
\textsuperscript{83} Dethridge, Lisa (2003) p 79.
As has already been described in the examination of the dramatic problem in the Thriller, the Narrative Trajectory follows a protagonist whose normal world is disrupted and who is thrown into a netherworld that is unfamiliar, isolating and filled with menace. Their goal is to defeat this menace, to restore order and to stay alive. Although it may appear that this would require a lengthy ‘time of the telling’, in fact Hicks\textsuperscript{84} informs us that the Thriller plot must unfold within a short but intense timeframe.

\textit{Thrillers, by their nature, exist in a highly compressed time. The audience has a sense of Reality Time just as they have of real-world space, that cannot be stretched beyond a limit of credibility.}

There are four elements that Hicks\textsuperscript{85} identifies as essential to the Thriller plot and all of these elements exist within the ‘Cosmos of Credibility’. These elements are:

- Narrative trajectory
- Bounded world
- Timescape
- Character Ethos.

Just as the four substructures that Dethridge identifies as vital to the classic drama interconnect, so too do the four elements that Hicks asserts are essential components of the Thriller plot.

The Bounded World of the Thriller is one of both physical and psychological isolation. As we have discovered through the manifestation of the dramatic problem, when the paths of the protagonist and the antagonist intersect, the protagonist is thrust into a netherworld of isolation and disorder, away from everything that is familiar.

The Timescape for the Thriller has two elements. Just as Dethridge outlines the differences between the ‘time of the tale’ and the ‘time of the telling’, so too Hicks\textsuperscript{86} distinguishes

\textsuperscript{84} Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 83.
between the short but intense timeframe in which the story must operate (the ‘time of the tale’) compared with Potential Time of the protagonist’s rational perceptions. Potential Time is ‘the time of the telling’ which may become elongated as the protagonist’s rational mind is overtaken by fear.

In Magnetic Fields the entire story occurs within the period of one week, yet for the protagonist, so much happens within this short period of time that the Potential Time, or ‘time of the telling’ seems longer.

Character ethos in the Thriller is the ordinary character who is drawn into a larger menace and who must rely on their inner strength to stay alive and defeat this menace before it can attack the community at large. Hicks\textsuperscript{87} tells us that it is only acceptable for the protagonist to commit murder if they obey the laws of the real world and are defending their life, or the life of another. If this appears to be overly simplistic, Cleary explains the reason for this:\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{quote}
It is not the plots in thrillers that are complicated, it’s the way those plots unfold, which is a very different thing.
\end{quote}

The thriller plot unfolds by placing the protagonist in danger early in the story, then continuing to increase this danger and the intensity it imparts on the audience all the way through to the climax of the story.

In Heavenly Creatures it is the protagonist’s desperate need to keep safe her relationship with Juliet that creates the dramatic problem that drives the plot. The Bounded World is the fantasy Pauline and Juliet create that isolates them from their families. The Timescape for this story is intense and short in the ’time of the telling’, but not in the ‘time of the tale’. Unlike the traditional Thriller, the story of Heavenly Creatures happens over a period of months in order to allow for circumstances such as Juliet’s illness. These events however are greatly condensed in the ‘time of the telling’ to increase the tension and suspense of the story. The Character Ethos in Heavenly Creatures remains within the realm of credibility.

\textsuperscript{86} Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 84.
\textsuperscript{87} Hicks, Neill D. (2002) p 98.
\textsuperscript{88} Cleary, Stephen (2005) p 4.
only when viewed from the protagonist’s point of view. In the traditional Thriller, Hicks has stated that the protagonist can only kill if their own life, or the life of another is threatened. Pauline kills her mother with Juliet’s help because in the logic of her world, her life is at threat. She cannot imagine life without Juliet.

In the opening scenes of Heavenly Creatures, the writers use a flash forward, literally placing the last scene at the beginning. The protagonist, Pauline and her friend Juliet are seen running, covered in blood and in a state of panic. This immediately creates a sense of danger and intensity, especially considering that we do not know who has been hurt. The plot unfolds from this point to inevitably lead back to the moment before this opening scene. As the audience knows something horrific has taken place, the tension and anticipation continues to grows throughout the story as we want to find out how it happened.

In Magnetic Fields Christine’s Bounded World is the zone that Tracey inhabits. She is trapped and under the control of the antagonist, first becoming infatuated and then frightened of this powerful figure. Christine is both psychologically and then physically entrapped by Tracey and her world. This entrapment and isolation places the protagonist in jeopardy and creates physical and emotional obstacles for the protagonist to confront.

Due to the overwhelming number of stimuli that Christine is exposed to (drugs, sex, the occult, clubs) her rational mind is toyed with and thus although the ‘time of the tale’ is short but intense, the time of the telling seems longer than it is. Christine is forced to mature quickly in the face of the horrors she endures.

Christine’s Character Ethos stays firmly within the bounds of the Cosmos of Credibility. She will only hurt Tracey to save the life of another. Yet because Christine is not Tracey’s physical equal, she resorts to using her head after she is unsuccessful in physical combat.
How useful are the theories of Dethridge and Hicks to the construction of the plot in *Magnetic Fields*?

Both Dethridge and Hicks discuss the different forms of time at play in the plot or story chronology. Dethridge refers to the ‘the time of the tale’ and the ‘time of the telling’, while Hicks states that the Thriller must occur within a short but intense period of time. The other Timeframe that Hicks introduces is the convention of Potential Time, which is how long events appear to take from the perspective of the protagonist.

Hicks provides a very useful set of tools within his Narrative Trajectory. The Bounded World, Timeframe and Character Ethos each offer the screenwriter important conventions to employ when plotting the story.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this research has been to explore how basic screenplay substructures operate within the Thriller film and to evaluate their usefulness in the creation of an original Thriller screenplay. The research has highlighted the fact that each of the four substructures of premise, protagonist, dramatic problem and plot are inextricably linked to form the framework of the story.

An analysis of the structure of the Thriller demonstrated that the Narrative Trajectory of the Thriller mirrors the classic three-act structure. It is been interesting to note the importance that Hicks places upon the effect each act has on the audience, of attraction, anticipation and satisfaction. In short the Thriller must create suspense and keep the audience of the edge of their seats.

An evaluation of how the premise operates in the Thriller has shown that the genre requires the overarching theme to create unease and fear in the audience by asking them to consider the ‘what if this happened to me?’ question. As Dethridge has suggested there should only be one central premise in a screenplay, from which all other themes emerge.
Dethridge has discussed how in the classic screenplay it is the protagonist who drives the story and is the most powerful character in the film. Hicks has shown us that in the Thriller genre the protagonist is an ordinary person who is not prepared for the threat that the strong antagonist poses. The protagonist must operate within what Hicks calls the Cosmos of Credibility, acting in absentia for the audience and maintaining a sense of almost ‘documentary-like’ authenticity.

Dethridge mentions that the antagonist of the classic drama, if present at all, should be a source of tension for the protagonist in the second act. Hicks and Cleary have described how the antagonist is the driving force of the Thriller and how this convention assists in creating unease in the audience, as it works against traditional dramatic structure of a dominant protagonist.

Both Dethridge and Hicks agree that the dramatic problem drives the plot; that it must create conflict and tension for the protagonist, constantly keeping them on guard. Hicks has explained that in the Thriller, the antagonist creates the central dramatic problem and places the protagonist in a life or death situation. Although they eventually overcome this problem by defeating the antagonist, the protagonist has lost their innocence and is fundamentally changed.

In the classic drama, Dethridge presents the two different forms of time at play, that can be altered according to genre needs. As Hicks explained, the Thriller requires that the plot unfold within a very brief but intense period of time that appears to be longer than it actually is due to the protagonist’s state of fear. Hicks further outlines how the plot unfolds through the use of the Bounded World of the protagonist, and their Character Ethos, which determines actions they can and cannot take.

It is clear from this investigation that the substructures that operate within the classic drama also apply to the Thriller genre and that a deep understanding of these elements and conventions enables the writer to have a far greater chance of creating a satisfying story.
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Magnetic Fields

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Chinchilla is a small Western Queensland outpost. The town centre features a couple of shops on each side of the wide road and the ubiquitous Commercial Hotel. Two mangy dogs fight in the gutter as a tractor creeps along the street.

EXT. MACHINERY SHED - DAY

“Centerfold” by the J Geils band blares from the stereo of a utility parked with its doors open at the side of the machinery shed.

CHRISTINE, eighteen and restless, sits in the cab with her bare feet on the dashboard. A thick well thumbed journal is on the seat next to her. She sings along as she lights a cigarette.

CHRISTINE
(singing)
She was pure like snowflakes
No one could ever stain
The memory of my angel
Could never cause me pain.

Christine flicks the lighter against the fine blonde hairs of her bare thigh. Her hand is scarred with ‘smiley’ burn marks. Christine opens her journal to a drawing of a beautiful face. With the cigarette jammed into the corner of her mouth she adjusts the rearview mirror and sees LEAH walking towards her. Leah is the drawing come to life.

CHRISTINE
(singing)
My blood runs cold
My memory has just been sold
My angel is a centerfold
Angel is a centerfold.

Leah is eighteen and part aboriginal. She’s squeezed into a zip fronted pale blue supermarket uniform. Christine jumps out of the Ute and walks towards her.

CHRISTINE
Leah!

LEAH
Hey.

Leah grabs Christine’s cigarette and their eyes lock as she takes a drag.

CLANCY
Bloody mongrel!
In the paddock, Christine's brother CLANCY crutches sheep. Leah sees blood spurt from the tail end of a sheep.

LEAH
That'd hurt.

CHRISTINE
He's a brute.

CLANCY
(shouting and waving the shears)
Hey Leah! Need your crutch attended to?

LEAH
(ignoring Clancy)
What time are you picking me up?

CHRISTINE
Not going.

LEAH
You bloody are.

CHRISTINE
Rather stay home. Why don't you come over?

LEAH
No way, I'm going.

CHRISTINE
With him?

LEAH
Can't just turn up with you can I?

CHRISTINE
Why not?

CLANCY
Chrissy! Get over here I need a hand.

CHRISTINE
Use your right one it's abnormally strong.

CLANCY
Now!
Clancy wrestles with a large sheep. Christine jumps over the fence into the paddock and expertly holds the sheep’s head as Clancy crutches the fly blown wool from the sheep’s rear. He cuts too close again and bright red blood spurts onto the dirt.

CHRISTINE
Jesus Clancy!

CLANCY
(chucking the shears at Christine)
You do it then smartarse.

Christine picks the shears up from the dirt and thrusts the blade at Clancy’s leg.

CLANCY
Shit!

CHRISTINE
Hurts doesn’t it.

INT. CHRISTINE’S BEDROOM—EVENING

Christine stands in front of a chipped full length mirror in a hideous taffeta formal dress and dirty riding boots. Her face says it all.

On the wall above her bed are photographs of a MAN in various iconic locations; the Eifel Tower, Times Square, riding a camel in front of the Sphinx.

Christine adjusts the puffed sleeves and scowls at herself. She glances at the photos.

CHRISTINE
You’d never make me wear this.

Christine opens the wardrobe and pulls a tin from deep within. She opens it and takes out a ten dollar note.

Clancy pushes the door open and Christine hastily jams the tin back in it’s hiding place. Clancy’s hair is parted and slicked. He wears an ill fitting brown suit.

CLANCY
Woo Hoo, look at you all prettied up. Didn’t recognise ya!

CHRISTINE
Piss off Clancy.

CLANCY
(mimicking)
Piss off Clancy!
Clancy grabs at his sister’s breasts.

**CHRISTINE**

PISS OFF!

Christine pushes Clancy and he falls back onto his squeaky single bed. It’s separated from his sister’s by a flimsy bedside table.

**CLANCY**

What you gunna do? Stab me again? You got a temper on you girl, it’s gunna get you in trouble one day.

**CHRISTINE**

Need a temper to survive in this shithole.

Clancy pushes Christine away from the mirror and fixes his mussed hair.

**CLANCY**

I’m getting a root tonight.

**CHRISTINE**

Dream on. Who’d want you.

**CLANCY**

Who’d ya reckon?

**CHRISTINE**

Leah hates you.

**CLANCY**

She wants me.

**CHRISTINE**

Bullshit!

Christine and Clancy’s MOTHER calls out from the kitchen.

**MOTHER O.S**

Christine! Language!

Christine ducks out of the room. Mother calls from the kitchen.

**MOTHER O.S**

Come and show us a look.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Christine steps into the kitchen. MOTHER’s eyes light up. She’s in her early forties, but looks tired and defeated.
There's a gold crucifix around her neck. Her smile drops as her eyes reach the boots.

MOTHER
Oh Chrissy, you're not wearing those dirty old boots go and put the court shoes on love.

CHRISTINE
I can't walk in them. Anyway the paddock'll be full of mud.

Clancy enters the kitchen and takes a beer from the fridge.

MOTHER
The dance is in the hall, what makes you think you'll be out in the paddock? Go and get your good shoes on and Clancy? I want you to keep an eye on your sister, she's not to leave the hall. Only sluts go off into the paddock, and she's not one of them. I don't want the town to talk, do you hear me?

CLANCY
(smirking)
Slut.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christine storms into her room and pulls the boots off. She shoves them into her bag and jams her feet into the hated court shoes.

The SOUND of a CAR HORN.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Clancy burps and puts the empty bottle down as Christine walks into the room, with the bag.

CLANCY
That's Shayne.

Mother hurries into the lounge room with a camera.

MOTHER
Hang on! Stand together.

Christine and Clancy grudgingly stand next to each other for the photo.

The CLICK of the Instamatic burns the image into the emulsion.
MOTHER
You look beautiful Chrissy.

Mother removes the fine gold chain with the crucifix from around her neck and puts it on Christine.

MOTHER
This is an important night. The end of your schooling.

CLANCY
Come on!

CHRISTINE
Bye Mum.

MOTHER
Clancy! Don’t let Shayne drive home drunk!

The screen door bangs behind Clancy as he leaves.

Mother quietly mutters.

MOTHER
Lord keep them safe.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

A Holden utility travels fast down a country highway towards the setting sun. The headlights flick on.

INT. UTE - EVENING

Christine, Clancy and Leah are squashed across the bench seat next to the driver, SHAYNE. Shayne is nineteen with sunburned good looks and huge rough hands. Cold Chisel blares on the stereo. Christine turns the music down. Shayne turns it back up. Christine winds the window down and sticks her head out. The wind whips her hair away from her face.

SHAYNE
(to Clancy)
Pass me baccy. In the console.

Clancy digs in the console and finds the Champion Ruby tobacco. He hands it to Shayne who expertly rolls a fag with one hand and steers with the other.

SHAYNE
Jesus Clancy who did your hair?

LEAH
Roo!
Shayne breaks heavily and swings the wheel.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

BANG. The roo hits the side of the vehicle and the Ute spins into the gully in a cloud of red dust. Silence for a moment as the dust clears.

INT. UTE - EVENING

The four passengers, thrown together from the impact, separate.

SHAYNE

Fuck!

CHRISTINE

(wiping blood from
Leah’s head)

You okay?

Leah nods slightly but she looks shocked.

EXT. UTE - EVENING

Shayne assesses the damage - a smashed headlight and a dented front fender. Christine and Leah get out of the car.

Leah bolts to the side of the road and vomits. Christine follows her.

CHRISTINE

(to Leah)

Okay?

CLANCY

Look at the size of the bastard!

Christine looks at the roo twitching in the middle of the road. She walks slowly towards the animal as the lingering orange light in the sky fades. The trees and the birds in the sky seem to have a surreal vibrancy. They hum. Leah joins her next to the dying animal.

The car horn BLASTS and the Ute roars up next to Christine. Music blares again from the stereo as Shayne leans out the window.

SHAYNE

Get in.

CHRISTINE

We should move it. It’s dangerous to leave it here.
SHAYNE
You serious?

Christine grabs the roo by the tail and starts to drag it from the road. It's heavy and she struggles determinedly.

INT. UTE - EVENING

Shayne and Clancy watch Christine struggle to shift the dead roo. Leah tries to help.

SHAYNE
Your sister is fucken bent.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

The car tears along the highway, one headlight shines in the darkness.

EXT. HALL - NIGHT

Cars line the road on either side of the hall. Clancy, Shayne, Christine and Leah approach the hall and enter under a sign:

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 1989.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Inside it's wall to wall bad dresses and cheap suits. They're immediately shepherded to a photographer by a bossy FAT GIRL with a name tag (DAWN) on her lemon dress.

Leah and Clancy are shoved in front of a Chinchilla High backdrop. SNAP. The moment is recorded and Leah frees herself from Clancy's clammy grasp.

DAWN
Never seen you in a dress before Christine.

CHRISTINE
Yeah well take a good look.

LEAH
See you guys later.

DAWN
Christine! You forgot your photo!

But Christine and Leah are gone. Clancy starts to follow the girls but Shayne stops him.
SHAYNE

Leave it.

EXT. HALL - NIGHT

Christine and Leah make their way through the carpark at
the back of the hall. The groans of people having sex are
muffled under the swags in the Ute trays.

CHRISTINE

Listen to the sheep. A whole
flock of them shagging in the
paddock.

Leah pulls a condom from her purse.

LEAH

Mum gave me this.

Christine laughs and Leah chucks it into the back of one of
the Utes.

LEAH

Baa! Baa!

EXT. CRICKET FIELD - NIGHT

The music from the hall echoes through the clear night as
Christine and Leah lie together in the darkness of the
field. They kiss passionately. A twig snaps and Leah
flinches.

LEAH

Shh.

CHRISTINE

It's nothing.

LEAH

(getting up)
I heard something.

CHRISTINE

(pulling her back down)
Come here.

They kiss. Suddenly Christine pulls away.

CHRISTINE

It's just hit me. We're free!
We're finally free!
LEAH
You might be, but I start full
time at the supermarket on
Monday.

CHRISTINE
Come to London with me.

LEAH
That's a dream Christine. Anyway
it took three years of Saturdays
to get that job.

CHRISTINE
There's plenty of supermarkets in
London if you're that keen on
them.

LEAH
Reckon your Dad'll pay for my
airfare too?

CHRISTINE
I could ask him.

LEAH
Yeah that'd happen. Anyway how
come he's sending you money all
of a sudden when he never even
visits?

CHRISTINE
He promised me. Soon as I
finished school. Come on Leah,
come with me.

Christine kisses Leah.

SUDDENLY a SPOTLIGHT is on the girls. They're blinded. Leah
scrambles to her feet.

VOICES
"Dykes! Fucking lesos!"

LEAH
Shit!

A HORN BLARES. Christine shields her eyes against the glare
as the engine revs and the vehicle heads directly towards
them. Leah bolts across the cricket ground.

LEAH
Run Christine!

But Christine just stands.
The Ute skids to a stop inches from her. Two boys jump from the tray and chase after Leah. She screams as they start to catch her.

CHristine

Leah!

Christine runs towards the screams, but the Ute blocks her, knocking her to the ground. Clancy jumps from the vehicle and runs to Christine as she gets to her feet.

Clancy

I knew it. I fucking knew it.

Christine

What’s wrong? Jealous?

Clancy slaps Christine hard across the face. She cries out but stands her ground.

Clancy

You’re a disgrace.

Christine

And what about you. I’m your sister for godsake!

Shayne

Let's get the bitch!

The ute engine revs again. Christine runs.

Clancy

Let her go.

Ext. Cricket Field - Night.

Christine runs into the two boys who chased Leah.

Christine

Where is she!

Boy #1

She's quite a goer for a black.

Christine kicks the boy in the balls and he drops like a stone.

Christine

Bastards!

She keeps running and finds Leah a few metres away pulling her skirt back on.

Christine

What did they do to you?
LEAH
Just forget it.

CHRISTINE
You’re bleeding!

LEAH
I said forget it!

CHRISTINE
We have to go to the police.

LEAH
No. Just leave me will you! This is your fault!

Leah pushes Christine away and runs off into the night.

EXT. CHRISTINE’S HOUSE – LATER THAT NIGHT

The lights are on in the house as Christine walks towards the front door.

INT. CHRISTINE’S HOUSE – NIGHT

Christine enters. She looks a mess. The taffeta dress is torn and dirty and her face is red. Her mother sits white faced and grim at the table next to Clancy.

MOTHER
Your brother’s saying terrible things Chrissy, he’s not making sense.

CLANCY
She’s a filthy dyke.

MOTHER
DON’T YOU SAY THAT WORD!

CHRISTINE
He’s right.

MOTHER
It’s not true.

CLANCY
Everyone saw her. The whole fucking town’ll know by morning.

MOTHER
Clancy!
CHRISTINE
So what! Bunch of red necks. All
of you! I hate this place!

MOTHER
You sit down!

CHRISTINE
No!

MOTHER
Come back here!

Christine storms to her bedroom. Her mother follows close behind.

INT. CHRISTINE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christine tears off the hated dress and pulls her jeans on. She grabs a bag and randomly stuffs clothes into it. Mother grasps at Christine who shakes her off.

MOTHER
It’s that Leah, she’s bad news,
she’s wrong in the head, I’ve
always known that.

CHRISTINE
I love her.

MOTHER
It’s not normal! It’s sinful!

CHRISTINE
Dad would understand.

MOTHER
And aren’t you just like him. A
filthy degenerate bound for hell.

CHRISTINE
He’s not!

MOTHER
You know nothing! You haven’t
seen him since you were eight and
do you want to know why?

CHRISTINE
Yes! It’s because of you!

Christine shoves her journal in the bag and takes the tin from the wardrobe. She opens it and finds it empty.

CHRISTINE
Clancy!
INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Christine runs into the lounge room and grabs Clancy by the collar. They wrestle on the floor. Mother runs in, distraught.

    CHRISTINE
    Give me my money!

    CLANCY
    What money?

    MOTHER
    Christine! Stop it!

Christine grabs a bunch of money from Clancy’s pocket and runs to the front door.

    CLANCY
    Don’t you ever come back here!
    You’re an embarrassment!

    MOTHER
    Christine!

The door bangs shut behind Christine. Her mother slumps into a chair, sobbing.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Christine strides along the road. The night hums with cicadas. As she approaches the outskirts of the main street she breaks into a run and jumps the low fence of a small darkened house. Christine taps on the side window.

    CHRISTINE
    Leah!

A moment later the window opens and Leah leans out. Her face is bloated from crying.

    LEAH
    Shhh!

    CHRISTINE
    Get your things, we’re going. Now.

    LEAH’S MOTHER O.S
    Leah?

    CHRISTINE
    Come on! You can’t stay here. It’s not safe.
LEAH
I have to stay here! This is where I belong!

CHRISTINE
You belong with me.

LEAH
No.

LEAH’S MOTHER O.S
Leah!

LEAH
I hate you. Just go!

Leah pulls the window shut. Christine is gutted. She picks up a rock from the garden and smashes the window before running into the night.

EXT. SERVICE STATION – NIGHT

A desolate roadhouse on the outskirts of town.

INT. SERVICE STATION – NIGHT

Christine sits at a table with a cup of tea and counts her money. The place is deserted except for KERRY the attendant. A TRUCK pulls into the roadhouse. The DRIVER (JIM) jumps down from the cab and enters the roadhouse. He approaches the bain marie.

JIM
You look good enough to eat.

KERRY
Prawns’r off. Got a veal’ncheese or a nice bit of Kabana.

JIM
Already got a nice Kabana! Better make it the V&C. Got any of that chicken salt?

Kerry plates the veal’ncheese from the hotbox with a liberal dose of salt and hands it over with a bottle of tomato sauce.

KERRY
One heart attack on a plate.

Jim takes it and heads to Christine’s table.

JIM
Mind if I join ya?
Christine shrugs. Jim sits down and eats, one eye on Christine.

JIM
Someone forget you?

Christine ignores him and takes a loud slurp of her tea.

JIM

KERRY
I'll give your compliments to the deep fry.

Jim finished his meal and stands. He looks down at Christine.

JIM
Where ya goin?

Christine shrugs.

JIM
You mute or just rude?

CHRISTINE
Brisbane.

Jim slowly wipes his face with a serviette and burps.

JIM
(to Kerry)
See ya Friday.

As he heads for the door, Jim pauses.

JIM
Brisbane. Come on then.

Christine looks up at Jim's heavily tattooed arms and blue singlet, then she looks to Kerry.

JIM
Oh I see. Hey Kerry! Am I a rapist?

KERRY
Nuh. Just a dud root.

JIM
Take it or leave it.

Jim leaves the roadhouse, climbs into the truck and starts the engine. Christine looks through the glass at the gleaming truck. She grabs her bag and runs.
INT. TRUCK - MORNING

Christine sleeps with her head against the window. Jim takes a sniff of speed and turns the radio on. The familiar trumpet call of the ABC news wakes Christine. She rubs her face groggily.

JIM
Some company you turned out to be.

CHRISTINE
Where are we?

JIM
Darra.

Christine looks blankly at him.

JIM
About twenty minutes from town. Where you headed?

CHRISTINE
Fortitude Valley.

JIM
The Valley? What's a nice girl like you want with the Valley? It's full of bloody pooftas and junkies.

CHRISTINE
Yeah? Well I happen to be a bloody poofta.

Jim lifts his reflector sunglasses onto his head and bursts out laughing so hard that the truck swerves on the road.

CHRISTINE
What? What's so funny?

JIM
(suddenly serious)
Look at you. You're gonna get eaten alive.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Christine climbs down from the truck. She pauses as Jim leans out of the window.

JIM
Hey poofta, word of advice. Stay away from the Valley.

(MORE)
JIM (cont'd)
There's a YWCA in Spring Hill, me
sister works there. It's cheap
and clean.

Jim hands Christine a card with a phone number on it.
Christine takes the card.

CHRISTINE
Thanks.

The truck pulls away. Christine is left alone in the car
park of the Darra train station. It's a desolate place. A
dog barks menacingly in a nearby yard.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY.

Christine chucks the card Jim gave her onto the railway
tracks. She finds a graffiti covered railway map on the
station wall and traces along the route to Central Station.
The sound of a train whistle BLASTS and Christine watches
the train pull in. She jumps on.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

Christine sketches in her journal. Her bag is at her feet.
An Asian woman with a baby sits opposite Christine. A few
seats away two young thugs tag the back of a seat. The
train enters a tunnel.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - LATER

Christine is asleep. The young Asian woman shakes her.

ASIAN WOMAN
Last stop.

Christine looks around and reaches for her bag. It's gone.

ASIAN WOMAN
Them boys took it. You gotta hang
on to your things or you gonna
lose them.

CHRISTINE
My journal!

Christine jumps up and her journal falls from her lap. She
picks it up and a photo slips from it onto the ground. It's
a Polaroid of Christine as an eight year old on the
shoulders of her father.

Christine carefully puts the photo back into the journal
and jumps off the train.
EXT. QUEEN STREET – DAY

Christine walks out of the station and into the busy street in the middle of Brisbane city. A MAN in a business suit knocks her as he hurries past. Christine steps out of the congestion into the doorway of a cake shop.

EXT. QUEEN STREET MALL – DAY

Christine walks through the mall eating a cream bun. She looks like a bumpkin in her flared jeans and T-shirt. A bunch of Goths hang in the Rotunda, heavy white makeup drips from their faces in the sweltering heat. Christine stares at them and sits down to finish her bun. One of the Goths (CHERRY) an overweight girl in tight black lace and slashed denim jeans, growls at her like an animal.

CHERRY
Who said you can sit there?

Christine licks the cream from the corner of her mouth and looks at Cherry’s slashed jeans. Another of the Goths, a skinny boy with thick white face makeup, black lips and a sibilant lisp (SPIKE) joins his friend.

SPIKE
Geez would you get a load of the flares on it? Where’d you get those? Fletcher Jones?

CHRISTINE
(holding out her hand)
I’m Christine.

SPIKE
(shrieking and hiding behind Cherry)
It wants to touch me!

CHERRY
Grow up Spike.

CHERRY
Where’d you land from?
Boganville?

CHRISTINE
Chinchilla.

CHERRY
No shit.

Two hardcore punks walk into the rotunda. Spike bounces up to them on his Doc Martins.
SPIKE
Holding or chasing?

PUNK #1
Fuck off faggot.

The punk grabs Spike in a head lock while the other kicks him in the guts. It's all show.

CHERRY
Let him go.

The punks drop Spike and he falls in a heap, but drags himself up.

SPIKE
Always a pleasure.

Christine has never seen a punk in her life. She stares at the one with a fluorescent green mohawk. He brings his face within inches of hers and stares right back, menacingly.

CHRISTINE
Nice hair.

PUNK #1
(mimicking her)
Nice hair.

The Punk pulls a knife and flicks the blade open. He lets the sunlight glint off the blade, then runs it over his tongue.

CHRISTINE
Can I borrow that?

Her look is a challenge and the punk grudgingly hands it to her. Christine lowers the blade to her leg. Cherry and Spike watch as she makes a cut in the jeans on each side at mid thigh level and hands the knife back.

CHRISTINE
Thanks.

Christine tears her jeans into cut offs. Cherry slow claps as she watches and Spike grabs the unwanted pieces of denim.

SPIKE
Die flares, DIE!

He sparks the denim alight with his lighter and holds it up as it burns. Christine looks at Cherry to see a flicker of respect.
EXT. QUEEN STREET MALL - EVENING

Christine emerges from McDonalds with packets of fries and hands them to Spike and Cherry. They wander along the street, eating.

CHERRY
Where you staying?

CHRISTINE
(shrugging)
That was the last of my money.

Cherry and Spike exchange a glance. Cherry stuffs a bunch of chips into her black lipped mouth.

INT. CITY SQUAT - NIGHT

Candles light a squalid room in a derelict city building. Christine enters the space with Spike and Cherry. STREET PEOPLE lie about in the darkened corners. The walls are covered in graffiti.

SPIKE
Homey isn’t it!

CHERRY
You can crash here tonight.

Christine looks around, unsure. Cherry watches her.

CHERRY
Got somewhere better to go?

Christine shakes her head. The three of them sit down and Cherry pulls a large black candle from her bag and lights it. She also pulls out a bottle of cheap Port and Spike grabs it. Cherry slaps him.

CHERRY
Settle.

Cherry takes a big swig of the Port and passes it to Christine, who takes a slug and hands it to Spike.

CHERRY
Right then. Let’s see what’s happening.

Cherry takes a pack of tarot cards covered in a silk scarf from her bag. She ceremoniously removes them from the scarf and fans them out face down in front of her. Spike runs his hand back and forth over the candle flame.
CHRISTINE
What are they?

CHERRY
These tell the truth. Pick one.

Christine selects a card and Cherry places it face up. The process is repeated seven times until the pattern is complete.

CHERRY
The Knight of Swords. The Hanged Man. Death.

CHRISTINE
Sounds awful.

CHERRY
They can mean all kinds of things. Depends on their position.

SPIKE
Do mine!

CHERRY
Shut up! I’m concentrating. See, the Knight of Swords here. When it’s upright it symbolizes a warrior, someone who’s courageous. But when it’s reversed the Knight of Swords is a deceitful character.

CHRISTINE
Is it upright or reversed?

CHERRY
Upright. But it’s next to the Hanged Man. He means sacrifice. Not so great.

CHRISTINE
What about the Death card.

CHERRY
Yeah. Death. No one likes this card.

The POUNDING of footsteps can be heard.

SPIKE
Pigs!

Spike is on his feet before Christine even knows what’s going on. Cherry sweeps the cards into her bag.
CHERRY

Run.

Cherry sprints to the door and escapes as TWO COPS enter with torches. One grabs Christine.

POLICEMAN #1
Gotcha you little rat.

CHRISTINE
Let me go!

The other cop grabs a nodding JUNKIE by the mullet. Christine struggles against the cop.

CHRISTINE
I haven’t done anything!

POLICEMAN #1
Wrong place wrong time then girlie.

INT. WATCH HOUSE - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER leads Christine into a crowded cell. In the corner a WOMAN watches Christine with interest. This is TRACEY. She’s 6 foot tall and fit with short black hair, compelling dark eyes and an attractive brooding face. Christine struggles with tears as she slumps against the wall. Tracey takes in Christine’s long legs and tear stained face. She moves closer and holds out a tissue. There’s a tattoo of a pentagram on the back of her hand.

TRACEY
It’s clean.

Christine looks at it unsure.

TRACEY
(smiling)
Promise.

Tracey’s teeth are perfectly straight and white. Christine takes the tissue then bursts into tears again. Tracey crouches down next to her.

TRACEY
I’m Tracey.

CHRISTINE
Christine.

There’s a ruckus as a DRUNK WOMAN is led into the cell.
TRACEY
(quietly)
Christine.

INT. WATCH HOUSE - MORNING

It’s early morning and Christine has fallen asleep next to Tracey. Tracey is wide awake. A POLICE OFFICER unlocks the cell. Christine wakes and is disoriented for a moment.

POLICE OFFICER
Righto you lot, wakey wakey.

TRACEY
We’re getting out now.

INT. WATCH HOUSE - MORNING.

Christine stands at the counter as a FEMALE POLICE OFFICER places a tray of her belongings in front of her. The police officer pulls Christine’s journal from the bag.

POLICE OFFICER
This yours?

CHRISTINE
(grabbing it)
Yes.

POLICE OFFICER
Got any money? Anywhere to stay?

CHRISTINE
I’m going to London. My dad’s sending the fare as soon as I can contact him.

POLICE OFFICER
(scribbling an address on a card)
This is the address of a women’s shelter in West End. They can help you.

CHRISTINE
I don’t need help.

POLICE OFFICER
(thrusting the card at Christine)
Do me a favour and take it.

Christine puts the card in her pocket.
The Police Officer looks over Christine's shoulder and sees Tracey waiting near the door.

POLICE OFFICER
And stay away from unsavory types
or you'll end up back here for
more than a night.

Tracey disappears out the door. Christine turns and leaves hastily.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Christine emerges into the bright sunshine to find Tracey astride a gleaming motorbike with the engine running.

TRACEY
Where you headed?

CHRISTINE
(looking at the card)
West End Women's refuge.

TRACEY
That place is awful. Full of unsavory types.

CHRISTINE
What were you in for?

TRACEY
Someone messed with my friend, so I messed with him. I don't like people messing with my friends.

CHRISTINE
Nice bike.

TRACEY
Yeah. She's my baby.

Tracey revs the engine and grins. Christine smiles back, the tension broken.

TRACEY
Wanna come for a ride?

CHRISTINE
Where?

TRACEY
To the top of the world.

Tracey holds a helmet out to her. Christine hesitates for a moment then grabs it and climbs on the back of the bike.
EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Music rises.

Christine holds tight to Tracey’s leather jacket as they speed down a narrow street. Tracey lets go of the handle bars and Christine screams.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY.

The motorbike zooms along the freeway, overtaking a truck. Christine clings on, exhilarated.

EXT. STREET LIGHTS - DAY.

Stopped at a red light Christine catches a reflection of herself in the gleam of a new car. She looks cool on the bike, holding on to Tracey’s leather jacket. The light changes to green and Christine shrieks as Tracey steers the bike around a tight corner at high speed.

EXT. TOOWONG CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Tracey turns into the Toowong cemetery and they ride through the gravestones until they reach the top of the hill. Tracey cuts the engine and jumps from the bike.

Christine climbs off and looks at the city skyline stretched out below. The late afternoon light is golden.

TRACEY
Beautiful isn’t it.

CHRISTINE
It’s like a different planet.

Tracey leads Christine towards a sandstone mausoleum. Christine sprawls out on the grass next to it, tired.

CHRISTINE
I could fall asleep right here.

Tracey watches her in silence for a moment.

TRACEY
(gently)
Have you run away from something?

CHRISTINE
(sitting up)
No. I’m on my way to London.
TRACEY
London, really?

CHRISTINE
Yeah. My dad lives there.

TRACEY
So when are you off?

CHRISTINE
Soon as he sends the cheque.

TRACEY
I see. Where’s he going to send it to?

CHRISTINE
(realising she hasn’t thought of this)
I don’t know yet.

TRACEY
You can stay at mine for a bit if you like.

CHRISTINE
Really?

TRACEY
I think you and I are going to be friends.

CHRISTINE
How do you know?

TRACEY
I’m psychic.

CHRISTINE
Yeah, right!

TRACEY
(chucking the helmet at Christine)
Let’s go. Boneyards make me hungry!

EXT. TRACEY’S FLAT - EVENING.

Tracey guides the motorbike to a rumbling halt at the front of a large Queenslander house that has been subdivided into flats.

TRACEY
My humble abode.
CHRISTINE
It's huge.

TRACEY
It's not all mine. Come on, I'll show you.

Christine follows Tracey up the stairs and into the latticed verandah. Tracey unlocks the front door.

INT. TRACEY'S FLAT - AFTERNOON.

It's dark inside the flat.

KIM
Look what the cat dragged in.
Where have you been?

TRACEY
You know where I've been.

Tracey turns on the light and a small woman in her early twenties dressed completely in black blinks at the light. She sits cross legged on the floor next to a low coffee table.

KIM
Who the fuck is that?

TRACEY
This is Christine. Christine, this is Kim, my flatmate.

CHRISTINE
Hi.

KIM
Is that what I am today?

TRACEY
(peeling off her jacket)
Leave it alone Kimmy. Christine's going to stay for a bit.

KIM
(checking out Christine)
Training up a baby Dyke, Trace?

TRACEY
Don't listen to her Christine, she's just hung over. I'll show you the spare room.
Christine takes in the bizarre surroundings. Every conceivable space has gothic artworks, occult charcoal sketches, photos of gravestones, even a real gravestone is in the corner. On the mantelpiece is a statue of Mary covered in graffiti and surrounded by an assortment of animal skulls. Two cats sleep on the couch.

INT. SUNROOM - EVENING.

Tracey leads Christine to a louvered sunroom with a wooden floor and a daybed.

CHRISTINE
You sure this is okay?

TRACEY
It’s my place. Don’t worry about Kim, her bark is worse than her bite.

CHRISTINE
Is she...is Kim your girlfriend?

TRACEY
Nuh. Just a mate.

CHRISTINE
Oh, I didn’t mean -

TRACEY
I don’t have a girlfriend at the moment. What about you Christine?

CHRISTINE
Not anymore.

TRACEY
(crouching in front of Christine)
You must have broken her heart.

KIM
(barging in and interrupting a moment)
Hey baby dyke. Got any tattoos? No? Want to see mine?

Christine shrugs and Kim lifts her top to reveal the word TRACEY tattooed on her breast in a love heart with a knife through it.

TRACEY
Put them away Kim, Christine doesn’t want to see your tits.
KIM
The pain was exquisite.

CHRISTINE
Um, where's the bathroom?

Christine is so embarrassed she doesn't know where to look.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING.

Tracey opens a door to the bathroom and Christine steps inside. Tracey brushes a stray hair from Christine's face.

TRACEY
There's a towel in the cupboard. I'll find you something clean to wear.

Tracey leaves her in the bathroom. Christine looks at the purple walls and the pentacle painted above the mirror. She washes her face in the sink.

The bathroom door opens and Tracey hands her a pair of jeans and a black T-shirt.

TRACEY
These should fit. Have a shower and I'll be back soon with some takeaway.

CHRISTINE
Thanks Tracey.

Tracey closes the door behind her. Christine sits down on the toilet. She looks at the lacy black bras and pants that hang over the shower rod. Christine pulls her T-shirt off and steps out of her cut-off jeans. She looks at herself in the mirror and traces a heart on her breast with her finger in the same place that Kim had her tattoo. She turns and gets into the shower.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - EVENING.

Kim has bailed Tracey up at the front door.

KIM
How dare you bring another woman into this flat! What the fuck are you thinking?

TRACEY
I want her here.

KIM
She won't last five minutes.
TRACEY
(opening the door)
Just try to be nice. She’s had a 
rough time.

Tracey heads down the stairs. Kim slams the door closed.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Christine closes her eyes and lets the warm water run over 
er her face. The shower curtain parts and the long blade of a 
hunting knife enters the shower. Christine continues to let 
the water rush over her, blissfully unaware until the point 
of the blade is at her throat. Her eyes snap open and she 
sees Kim in front of her.

KIM
If you’re planning to play with 
the big girls you’d better be on 
your toes or they’ll get cut off.

CHRISTINE
Get out.

Kim smiles and leaves. Christine turns the tap off. She’s 
shaking.

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Christine emerges from the bathroom in the clean clothes. 
Kim sits on the couch with a cat on her lap, a glass of red 
wine in one hand, a cigarette in the other, her eyes glued 
to a video of "The Hunger".

CHRISTINE
I’m not afraid of you.

KIM
Really? You looked pretty scared 
a minute ago.

CHRISTINE
I know how to use a knife too.

KIM
Whoopie shit. S’pose Tracey told 
you I’m not her girlfriend did 
she? We’ve got something stronger than 
sex anyway, so don’t go getting 
any ideas.

CHRISTINE
I only met her last night.
KIM
Yeah well Tracey's got a thing
for birds with broken wings, but
she gets bored pretty quick so
don't go getting comfortable.

CHRISTINE
I won't I'm going to London.

KIM
Really? Got a passport? Got
$3,000? They don't let you into
England without 3 grand in the
bank, did you know that?

CHRISTINE
Yeah of course.

Kim cuts up a line of speed on the table and takes a long
snort. She sees Christine's eyes boggle.

KIM
(challenging)
Want a line?

Christine takes the rolled up note from Kim. She bends down
and snorts half a line and it burns the virgin membranes of
her nostril.

CHRISTINE
Shit!

KIM
(laughing)
You really are a baby dyke.

Christine wipes her nose and sits on the couch.

CHRISTINE
What are you watching?

KIM
The Hunger. Best film ever made.
See this?

Kim shows Christine a strange pendant.

KIM
It's an Ankh. It's Egyptian. Same
as what they wear in the film.
Tracey's got one too.

Kim pulls the scabbard from the end of the Ankh revealing a
blade. Her eyes never leave the screen.
KIM
Got them made especially. Gold
plated. Cost a fortune.

CHRISTINE
What are they for?

KIM
Watch.

On the screen, Catherine Deneuve slashes at her victim’s
throat with the blade of the Ankh then drinks the blood
pumping from their neck.

Christine jumps as Tracey enters the room with plastic
takeaway bags.

TRACEY
You still watching that crap Kim?

KIM
Shut up.

TRACEY
I’ve got Vietnamese, you hungry?

KIM
Starving.

TRACEY
Wasn’t asking you.

Tracey walks into the kitchen and Christine follows her in.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

The kitchen walls are covered with black and white
photographs of grave stones. Christine rubs at her nose as
she looks at the photos. Tracey watches her.

TRACEY
Kim give you some Mexican
marching powder did she?

Christine nods and Tracey sighs.

TRACEY
Guess you’re not hungry then?

CHRISTINE
I’m starving.

TRACEY
Good. I hate to see food wasted.

Tracey piles food onto a plate and hands it to Christine.
INT. SUNROOM - NIGHT

Christine lies on the day bed. The blue light of the television seeps into the room, as do the sounds of the movie soundtrack from "The Hunger". Tracey enters and lights a mosquito coil.

TRACEY
Blood suckers are shocking this time of year.

Tracey notices Christine’s necklace and touches it.

TRACEY
You’re wearing a crucifix.

CHRISTINE
(subconsciously stroking it)
It’s my mums.

TRACEY
Sleep tight.

She kisses Christine on the cheek and gently pulls the french doors closed behind her as she leaves the sun room.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Tracey joins Kim on the couch. She immediately takes a long snort of speed.

KIM
(quietly)
You love it don’t you. Getting to play the knight in shining leather. How long can you keep that up for?

TRACEY
Long as I want.

KIM
You need to feed soon, you’re getting weak.

TRACEY
Jealousy makes you ugly Kim.

Tracey leaves the room.
INT. SUNROOM - NIGHT

Christine opens her journal and the pages fall open to the drawing of Leah. Christine hesitates then she rips it out and puts the page to the burning mosquito coil. The thin paper goes up in flames. Christine carefully tears out another clean page and starts to write:

Brisbane 18 October 1989.

Dear Dad,

Just a quick note to give you this address. I've left home, but I'll tell you about that when I see you. Please send the airfare here as soon as you can. I can't wait to see you finally.

Love Christine.

INT. SUNROOM - MORNING

The bright sunlight wakes Christine. She sits up, hot and sweaty and in a panic. She climbs out of bed and opens the french doors to the lounge room. Tracey calls out from the kitchen.

TRACEY
Finally she rises!

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

Christine enters the kitchen. Tracey wears a pristine white T-shirt and black leather pants. She looks handsome.

CHRISTINE
What time is it?

TRACEY
Time to go shopping.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Music rises: *Shoplifters of the World Unite* by The Smiths.

Christine clings to Tracey as they zoom through the streets on Tracey's bike.

EXT. ELIZABETH STREET ARCADE - DAY.

Tracey parks the bike and they climb off.
INT. ARCADE - DAY

Tracey and Christine wander through the middle of an arcade filled with interesting boutiques. Tracey shows off, dancing along the slippery concrete floor.

She dashes towards a rack of sunglasses, puts a pair on and strikes a pose.

TRACEY
Do you think I’m sexy?

CHRISTINE
(putting a pair on too)
These are cool.

Tracey grabs a floral hat and places it on Christine’s head. Christine grabs a leather flat cap and puts it on Tracey’s head.

SHOPKEEPER
You going to buy those?

Christine and Tracey look at each other for a moment and then both RUN! The shopkeeper chases after them, but they’re fast.

SHOPKEEPER
Stop! Shoplifters!

Tracey and Christine scream and bolt past dazed shoppers.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY.

Tracey and Christine duck into a graffiti covered alleyway and stop to catch their breath, panting hard. They look at each other still wearing the hats and glasses and crack up.

INT. SCARAB BOUTIQUE - DAY.

Tracey leads Christine down a flight of stairs into a subterranean hippie shop. The air is thick with nag champa incense. Christine wanders through the aisles of crystals and books on Witchcraft. Tracey looks at the pentacle belt buckles and rings. The shopkeeper is a huge woman with long curly red hair. She’s stoned.

TRACEY
Hey Christine, come here.

Christine joins Tracey near the counter and Tracey puts a pentacle ring on Christine’s finger. It’s the same design as the tattoo on the back of Tracey’s hand.
TRACEY
Like it?

CHRISTINE
(whispering)
Are we going to steal it?

TRACEY
Not from here.

Tracey takes a black silky shirt from a rack and hands it to Christine.

TRACEY
This would look great on you. Go on. Try it.

Christine looks at the top - it’s beautiful. She takes it to the dressing room and pulls the curtain across.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY.

As Christine pulls her T-shirt off Tracey enters the changing room. Christine is startled at first, but Tracey slips the black silky shirt over Christine’s head.

Together they look into the full length mirror. Tracey lifts Christine’s long hair up.

TRACEY
You’re beautiful.

Christine is suddenly shy. Tracey lets her hair cascade back down and leaves the dressing room.

INT. SCARAB BOUTIQUE - DAY.

Tracey waits for Christine at the counter.

STONED SHOPKEEPER
Got that book you wanted.

The stoned shopkeeper pulls “The Book of the Law” by Aleister Crowley from under the counter and hands it Tracey. Tracey opens it with veneration.

TRACEY
This is good.

Christine joins Tracey at the counter and Tracey takes the shirt from her and peels some notes from her wallet.

TRACEY
I’ll take this as well. And the ring.
STONED SHOPKEEPER
Always good to see you Tracey.
Come back soon.

Christine takes the bag and climbs up the stairs

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Christine admires the ring on her finger.

CHRISTINE
What’s that book about?

TRACEY
It’s by Aleister Crowley, ever heard of him?

Christine shakes her head and Tracey hands it to her.

TRACEY
He’s a Satanist.

CHRISTINE
You mean like a devil worshipper?

TRACEY
It’s a bit more sophisticated than that. There’s a whole philosophy that’s really interesting.

CHRISTINE
Are you a Satanist?

TRACEY
Would that worry you?

CHRISTINE
I just don’t know much about it.

TRACEY
“I can teach you.

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Music rises. Under the spreading branches of a large Moreton Bay Fig Christine lies with her head in Tracey’s lap, reading The Book of The Law. Tracey strokes Christine’s head and answers her questions patiently.

INT. TRACEY’S FLAT - EVENING

Tracey and Christine burst into the flat carrying their purchases.
Kim is on the couch under a cloud of pot smoke with a GOTHIC FRIEND (LISA) watching "The Hunger". A set of tarot cards are scattered on the floor.

KIM
Shhh.

TRACEY
Out of the hospital already?

LISA
Yeah. Fuckers didn’t believe me about the special pocket I’ve got in my stomach.

TRACEY
This is Christine. That’s Lisa.

LISA
Heard you had a new friend.

CHRISTINE
Hi.

LISA
Watch this.

Lisa takes a razor blade from her pocket shows it to Christine, then puts it into her mouth and swallows.

KIM
For godsake Lisa how many times!

Kim hits Lisa on the back until she regurgitates the blade onto her palm in a glob of saliva and blood.

LISA
Ta da!

TRACEY
Yeah really impressive. Come on Christine.

Tracey leads Christine into her bedroom and closes the door.

INT TRACEY’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

TRACEY
Lisa’s sweet, but she’s a bit batty.

CHRISTINE
Does she live here too?
TRACEY
Nope, but it feels like it sometimes. She's got her own key.

Tracey grabs all the shopping bags from Christine and empties them onto the bed in a pile.

TRACEY
I love spending money!

CHRISTINE
Are you loaded or something?

TRACEY
Didn't your mother tell you it's rude to talk about money?

CHRISTINE
No one in our town had any so it never came up.

TRACEY
My grandmother left everything to me.

Tracey is suddenly reverent. She takes a photo in an antique silver frame from her bedside table and hands it to Christine. Christine looks at the picture of a stern elderly woman.

TRACEY
That's her. My real mother was a drunk.

CHRISTINE
When did she die?

TRACEY
Two years ago. I freaked out when it happened. Burned the house down.

CHRISTINE
Why?

TRACEY
Don't remember doing it. The neighbours found me with a can of petrol.

Tracey takes the photo and puts it back on the bedside table, then sits closely next to Christine.

TRACEY
You're lucky your family are still alive.
CHRISTINE
I s'pose.

Tracey takes a pipe and some pot from her bedside table and sparks it up. She takes a deep drag and hands it to Christine.

CHRISTINE
No. Thanks.

TRACEY
Really? Why not?

CHRISTINE
I dunno.

TRACEY
Go on. It'll relax you.

Christine takes the pipe and has a puff.

TRACEY
See. Not so bad is it?

They lie back on the bed.

TRACEY
What about your family?

CHRISTINE
Mum's a god botherer. She really got into it after Dad left. My brother pretends to be into it too, but he's full of shit. Even when we're really little he'd touch me and stuff. These days if he tries it I just belt him. He's a coward.

TRACEY
Do they know you're a lesbian?

CHRISTINE
(nodding)
Mum thinks it's 'sinful'.

TRACEY
That's the problem with Christianity. Normal human instincts are 'sinful'. That's why Satanism makes sense. Any kind of sexuality, is fine so long as no one gets hurt. Unless they want to be.

Tracey pinches Christine playfully.
CHRISTINE

Ouch!

TRACEY

And your dad?

CHRISTINE

Left when I was eight. He's English. Don't know what they saw in each other. Mum was the one who insisted they live in the country. They ended up hating each other and one day he wasn't here anymore. He'd moved back to London. Mum won't talk about him except when I've done something wrong she'll say "You're just like your father." He had a bit of a temper, like me, but that's because he didn't want to spend his life waiting for rain and waving at trains like all the other in-breds. He writes to me all the time, but Mum censors it. It's like she wants to rub him out of existence.

TRACEY

But you want to see him.

CHRISTINE

Yeah of course. He's my Dad. And he wants me to come. He reckons I could study in London at one of the art schools.

TRACEY

That sounds exciting.

CHRISTINE

(glowing)

Yeah.

Tracey's hand gently strokes Christine's neck and moves under the Christine's T-shirt.

TRACEY

Your heart is beating fast.

CHRISTINE

(closing her eyes)

I know.

TRACEY

(whispering into her ear)

I want you to be my lover.
Tracey's hand moves slowly down Christine's body and strokes the inside of Christine's thigh. Tracey watches Christine's face intently. She kisses her mouth and neck then she pulls Christine's T-shirt up and kisses her breasts.

TRACEY
Do you want me?

CHRISTINE
Yes.

EXT. TOOWONG CEMETERY - DAY.

Music rises. At the top of the hill, Tracey, Christine, Kim and Lisa sit on a blanket amongst the graves with a picnic spread before them. There's a roast chicken, salads and a huge iced cake. A joint is passed around. Christine smokes it like a professional.

Kim picks up the five litre cask of red wine and pours a glass.

KIM
This cask holds the same amount of blood as the whole human body.

LISA
Really? That's not much.

KIM
(looking at Christine)
You lose one litre and you're dead.

LISA
I lost a litre once.

TRACEY
Bullshit.

LISA
It's true!

KIM
You're nuts.

LISA
(overreacting in a nutty way)
I am not nuts!

CHRISTINE
Can we eat the cake?
TRACEY
Yeah, good idea.

Tracey pulls a large hunting knife from a concealed leg scabbard and hands it to Christine.

CHRISTINE
Pretty serious cake knife! Okay, I suppose I should make a wish. Um, what are we celebrating anyway?

TRACEY
Finding you. Before you cut it there's something I want to do. Everyone, on your knees.

Christine puts the knife down and they all kneel in a circle as Tracey takes four black candles from her bag. She places them in a circle around them. As she light the first candle she mutters:

TRACEY
(a low chant)
In the name of Satan, the Ruler of the earth, the King of the world, I present this new acolyte to you.

Tracey faces the West and draws an inverted pentagram in the air in front of her. She rotates counter-clockwise to the South and lights the second candle.

TRACEY
In your name Satan, ruler of the South we call you forth.

Tracey moves counter clockwise to the third candle.

TRACEY
To Lucifer of the East, we offer ourselves as your servants.

And finally Tracey turns to the North and lights the fourth candle.

TRACEY
Belial of the North, you are our master and we four are at your command.

TRACEY
Hail Satan!

KIM AND LISA
Hail Satan!
Tracey looks at Christine.

CHRISTINE
Hail Satan.

TRACEY
Let's eat!

Christine plunges the knife into the cake.

EXT. TOOWONG CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Kim and Lisa lie on the blanket, drinking red wine and smoking pot. They could be in a lounge room, not a cemetery. Christine lies with her head in Tracey's lap, reading The Satanic Bible by Anton Lavey. She traces her finger over one of the illustrations - a unicursal hexagram. Christine yawns and gets up.

CHRISTINE
I might go for a walk.

TRACEY
Okay my love.

KIM
(sarcastically)
Don’t get lost or anything.

Christine moves away from the group though the old gravestones. There's a rustle in the long grass and Christine jumps as a startled hare leaps away.

Christine walks on, down the hill.

EXT. TOOWONG CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Christine finds herself in a new part of the cemetery where a funeral is taking place. She stops some metres away from the ceremony and watches as the coffin is lowered into the ground. The FAMILY standing around the grave start to weep. A WOMAN crouches and throws a handful of dirt into the grave. Christine subconsciously strokes the crucifix around her neck. The PRIEST looks over and sees Christine. His face darkens. Christine hurries away.

EXT. TOOWONG CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Christine picks her way through the long grass as she heads up the hill. She sees Kim attacking an angel headstone with the hunting knife. Tracey and Lisa stand by watching her.

Christine hurries towards them.
CHRISTINE
What are you doing?

Kim levers the knife into a crack at the base of the angel.

KIM
Just a souvenir.

CHRISTINE
(grabbing the knife)
No you can’t, it’s not right.

TRACEY
(putting her arm around Christine)
Hey, it’s okay. It was about to fall off anyway.

CHRISTINE
But what about the family?

TRACEY
No one’s visited this grave for a very long time. Maybe a hundred years. They won’t miss it.

KIM
(pulling the angel down)
Yeah and it’ll look great in the lounge room.

CHRISTINE
That’s wrong.

TRACEY
(noticing Christine’s horrified face)
Are you okay?

CHRISTINE
We shouldn’t be here like this.

TRACEY
I think the pot’s made you a bit paranoid.

CHRISTINE
Can we go? Please?

TRACEY
(slightly pissed off)
Okay.
INT. TRACEY’S FLAT - EVENING

Loud music blares. Kim and Lisa snort lines of speed and dance around the lounge room.

INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - EVENING

Tracey pulls a pile of clothes from the wardrobe. Christine lies back on the bed.

TRACEY
What should I wear tonight?

Christine points to the leather pants.

CHRISTINE
Those. (pause) Sorry about before. I didn’t mean to freak out.

TRACEY
Probably your mother’s influence. Christianity brain washes people to live in fear. Did you read The Book of Lucifer?

CHRISTINE
Yes.

TRACEY
And it made sense?

CHRISTINE
Yeah I suppose.

TRACEY
Just remember to believe in your natural instincts, not the lies freaky Christians tell you. They think everything is a sin.

CHRISTINE
I copied some stuff from the book into my journal.

Christine opens her journal and sees an envelope poking out.

CHRISTINE
Damn. Damn it. Forgot to post this.

Tracey takes the envelope from Christine’s hand. The address is:

James Joseph Nichols

(MORE)
CHRISTINE (cont'd)
C/O Wandsworth
Heathfield Road
London
SW18 3HS

TRACEY
(concern on her face)
Is this for your father?

CHRISTINE
Yeah. Is it okay to stay here
until the cheque arrives?

TRACEY
(turning to face
Christine, with a look
of pity)
Your father's in prison
Christine.

CHRISTINE
What are you talking about?

TRACEY
This address. It's Wandsworth
Prison.

CHRISTINE
No, you're lying.

TRACEY
I know about jails Christine.
This one's the biggest in the UK.

CHRISTINE
(grabbing the envelope
from Tracey)
No, it's a mistake!

TRACEY
(pulling Christine into
her strong embrace)
It's okay.

CHRISTINE
(sobbing)
It's not true! Mum would have
told me -

TRACEY
(holding her tight)
She was trying to protect you
that's all. They both were.

CHRISTINE
Liars!
TRACEY
Now you know the truth. Come on, you're a big girl now.

Christine pulls away from Tracey and tears the letter to shreds.

CHRISTINE
I hate him!

She runs from the room.

INT. SUNROOM - NIGHT.

Christine lies on the bed in the sunroom, the photo of her father torn in pieces on the floor next to her. Tracey knocks gently then enters and sits on the edge of the bed.

TRACEY
Come on. We'll get spastically drunk and then you won't care about any of this.

Tracey gestures to the torn photo, takes Christine's hands and levers her up from the bed.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Music blares. Christine is in the front passenger seat. She wears the new clothes, her long hair is tied up and she has makeup on. Tracey drives. She wears full leathers, the stolen leather cap and reflector aviators. Kim and Lisa are in the backseat, both in full gothic regalia.

EXT. PINEAPPLE HOTEL - NIGHT

The green cortina slows down outside a grotty pub.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

The car stops. Kim lights a cigarette.

CHRISTINE
Is this where we're going?

Kim laughs sarcastically.

TRACEY
No. I'm just checking on someone.

KIM
What time is it.
TRACEY

11.

A MIDDLE AGED MAN stumbles out of the pub in council workers clothes and takes a piss against the side of the building. Tracey watches the man.

TRACEY
Like clockwork.

KIM
Filthy pig.

CHRISTINE
Do you know that man?

TRACEY
Kind of.

The man stumbles away along the street. Tracey looks into the backseat at Kim.

KIM
Good. Now lets get a drink I’m parched.

Tracey puts her foot on the accelerator and they speed off.

EXT. FORTITUDE VALLEY STREETS - NIGHT

A blinking neon sign above a girly bar flashes the TIT in 'Fortitude Valley'. The Valley is a sleazy collection of gay bars, gambling dens, Chinese restaurants and brothels. Drunks and queers are everywhere.

The green cortina pulls over and Kim, Lisa, Tracey and Christine pile out in a mass of black. Tracey leads the four women up the street towards the club. Two drunk business men stumble aside into the gutter to let them pass.

DRUNK MAN
What the fuck was that?

EXT. LEWMORS - NIGHT.

Lewmors is a lesbian bar. There’s no sign just a darkened doorway with a pale faced door bitch at the front. Tracey swaggers up. Kim and Lisa dash inside as the door bitch smiles seductively at Tracey.

DOOR BITCH
Bobby! How are you?
TRACY
Good sweetheart. Busy tonight?

DOOR BITCH
Yeah, real busy. I’m finished
here soon, want a drink?

Nah.

Tracey’s voice, the way she moves and her attitude has
altered. She’s tougher. Harder. Christine looks at her, but
only sees her own reflection in the sunglasses. Tracey
takes Christine’s arm and leads her into the club.

The door bitch calls after them.

DOOR BITCH
Only fucking virgins these days
Bobby?

INT. LEWMORES - NIGHT.

Christine is visibly shocked. Tracey ignores this and
guides Christine into the darkened cavern like environment
of the club. A Siouxsie and the Banshees song blares.
Christine’s eyes pop out of her head. There are women
everywhere. Butch women, femme women, gothics and leathers.
They all turn to look at Tracey. The dance floor is packed,
the purple lighting makes the whites of eyes and teeth
glow.

They approach the bar.

The BARTENDER is a skinny gay boy with big hair.

BARTENDER
Hey Bobby, what’ll it be?

TRACEY
Two tequila shots and two rum and
cokes.

The bartender pours the drinks.

BARTENDER
Enjoy.

Tracey grabs Christine hand and licks it then sprinkles
salt on it and does the same to her own.

TRACEY
You lick the salt, skoll the
drink then suck the lemon. Okay?
Go!
Christine gasps as the tequila hits.

TRACEY
Now this one.

Tracey hands Christine the rum and coke. They clinks glasses.

TRACEY
Bottoms up.

And the rum goes down.

TRACEY
Come on.

Tracey grabs Christine’s hand and leads her through the crowded dance floor to a table in the far corner of the club. Women make way for her wherever she goes and this reverence doesn’t escape Christine.

CHRISTINE
Why’s everyone calling you Bobby?

TRACEY
I am Bobby.

Tracey pushes Christine against the wall by the throat and kisses her deeply. She continues to kiss her as she takes a small foil from her pocket and opens it. Tracey places the pill onto the tip of her tongue then forces it into Christine’s mouth. Christine struggles against this.

CHRISTINE
No!

TRACEY
It’s okay.

Christine pushes Tracey away and bolts down a narrow corridor that leads to the toilets.

TRACEY
Christine!

INT. TOILETS - NIGHT.

Christine bursts into one of the stalls and bolts the door.

TRACEY O.S
(banging on the door)
Christine!

CHRISTINE
What did you give me?
TRACEY
Ecstasy.

CHRISTINE
What is it.

TRACEY
It makes you feel good. You need it.

CHRISTINE
You should have asked me first.

Christine opens the door and Tracey slides in.

TRACEY
Trust me.

CHRISTINE
Who are you?

TRACEY
I'm yours.

Tracey holds Christine's face in her hands and looks deeply into her eyes.

The music from the club filters in as a bunch of LAUGHING WOMEN enter.

Christine holds eye contact with Tracey for a long moment, and then she slowly closes her eyes as the ecstasy comes on. Tracey watches as a smile curls on Christine's mouth.

TRACEY
You can feel it.

CHRISTINE
It's like tiny bubbles are rising in my stomach.

TRACEY
I made you feel that.

CHRISTINE
It feels good.

TRACEY
Let's dance.

Tracey drags Christine from the toilet.

INT. LEWMORES DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT.

Tracey pulls a dazed Christine onto the dancefloor as the song "Christine" by Siouxsie and the Banshees blares.
SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
Christine. The Strawberry girl,
Christine. Banana split lady -

Tracey pulls Christine close and they whirl around. Christine throws her head back as she spins, the lights, the faces become a blur of ecstasy, spinning and spinning. Christine's face glows with joy.

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
Christine sees their faces unfurl.

The night is a blur.

EXT. FORTITUDE VALLEY STREETS - EARLY MORNING.

Tracey, Christine, Kim and Lisa stride along the darkened early morning streets towards their car. Christine is floating on air. As they approach the green Cortina, Tracey's face darkens. A PROSTITUTE is performing oral sex on a huge BIKIE. The bikini sits on the bonnet of Tracey's car. Tracey strides forward, her voice deep and threatening.

TRACEY
Get the fuck off my car.

The prostitute pulls away and the bikini slaps her face. Tracey is there in a heartbeat. She grabs the bikini by the neck and king hits him. He's knocked to the ground. Tracey lays a boot into his ribs. The bones crunch loudly. Christine screams.

CHRISTINE
Tracey! Stop it!

As Tracey lays her boot into the man's face. Blood spurts. Lisa watches calmly and lights a cigarette. Kim smiles, enjoying it. Christine tries to grab Tracey as she continues to kick the man.

CHRISTINE
Leave him! Tracey!

KIM
Bobby!

Tracey turns and looks at Kim as though it's the only voice she's heard.

KIM
Good. Enough now. Lets go.

Tracey is white faced. She looks confused. Kim unlocks the car and the women pile in.
INT. BACKSEAT OF KIM’S CAR - NIGHT.

Kim drives and Lisa sits in the front seat. Christine and Tracey are in the back. Christine stares out the window as the darkened streets spin past. Tracey touches Christine’s shoulder.

CHRISTINE
You scared me.

TRACEY
I’d never hurt you.

Kim watches this in the rearview mirror, a smirk curls her lip.

INT. TRACEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracey leads Christine into the bedroom. It’s dark and she lights a candle on the bedside table, and takes a pipe from the drawer. Christine sits on the edge of the bed as Tracey packs the pipe with dope and lights it. She takes a puff and hands it to Christine who does the same and coughs.

CHRISTINE
My head’s spinning.

TRACEY
Lie back.

Tracey gets to her knees and slides her hands up the inside of Christine’s thighs and pulls the skirt and pants from Christine’s hips. Tracey pulls her own clothes off as she climbs onto the bed and starts to unbutton Christine’s shirt revealing her aroused breasts. She gently bites Christine’s nipples. Christine arches her neck and Tracey licks the crucifix and continues up Christine’s throat.

Tracey straddles Christine and takes a knife from the bedside table. Christine’s eyes widen.

CHRISTINE
No!

TRACEY
Trust me.

Tracey places the tip of the knife against her palm and makes a small incision. She takes Christine’s palm and does the same, then she holds their hands together. Blood trickles through their fingers.

TRACEY
You belong to me now.
As Tracey fucks Christine, her hands move over Christine's body leaving a trail of blood on her breasts and face. Tracey licks the blood and sucks it from Christine's palm.

INT. TRACEY'S ROOM - DAY.

Christine wakes up and rolls over to find herself alone on bloodied sheets. She looks at the cut on her hand and rubs it as she gets out of bed and opens the door.

CHRISTINE

Tracey?

Christine walks out into the lounge room, but there's no sign of Tracey or Kim.

INT. TRACEY'S FLAT - DAY.

Christine walks into the lounge room. The flat is empty.

CHRISTINE

Kim?

Christine checks the flat then walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY.

Christine sees traces of blood on her neck and scrubs them away. The cut on her palm opens again and blood trickles into the basin. She grabs a towel and holds it against the wound. She looks at herself in the mirror for a long moment. There are dark smudges under her eyes.

CHRISTINE

Who are you?

She heads into the lounge room.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY.

Christine picks up the phone and dials. The phone rings and rings, and finally a voice answers.

MOTHER V.O

Hello?

CHRISTINE

Dad's in jail isn't he.

Silence.

CHRISTINE

Isn't he!
MOTHER
He’s out of our lives, I didn’t think there was any need to -

CHRISTINE
Does Clancy know?

MOTHER
No.

CHRISTINE
Why didn’t you say something?

MOTHER
I wanted to save you from having to know -

CHRISTINE
What did he do!

MOTHER
Your father is a murderer.

Christine puts the phone down in shock.

EXT. BACK STAIRS - AFTERNOON.

Christine smokes a cigarette on the back stairs. She watches an ELDERLY ITALIAN WOMAN hang washing on the line. Christine wanders down.

CHRISTINE
Hello.

ELDERLY ITALIAN WOMAN
Where you live?

CHRISTINE
I’m staying there. With Tracey.

Christine points to Tracey’s window and for a moment she glimpses someone looking out at her through the louvres.

The elderly woman looks scared and grabs her washing basket.

ELDERLY ITALIAN WOMAN
Malo, maledetti!

CHRISTINE
What?

The woman hurries back into her flat. Christine looks back at the window but the louvres are shut.
INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Christine opens the fridge and grabs a cask of wine. She tries to squeeze a glass of it, but it's empty. In the back of the fridge she sees a glass decanter in the back of the fridge filled with a dark liquid. She takes it out and sniffs it, then puts her finger in and tastes a bit. Her face registers distaste.

She shoves the decanter back into the fridge and runs to the sink, where she washes her mouth out with water.

INT. KIM'S BEDROOM - DAY.

Christine tentatively enters Kim's room and turns on the light. The room is dominated by a four poster bed with a mosquito net around it. A leather whip, ropes, bondage collar and wrist restraints hang from a rack next to the bed head. Christine moves to the dressing table where an altar is set up. A painting of Tracey is above it on the wall. The painting shows Tracey's black eyes, and blood dripping from the corner of her mouth. Christine sees a vial on the altar and she picks it up. It's filled with blood. She puts it back.

LISA
You shouldn't be in here.

CHRISTINE
(jumping)
Shit! When did you get here.

LISA
Kim'd skin you alive if she found out.

CHRISTINE
Kim's a freak.

LISA
(climbing onto Kim's bed)
Maybe I'll tell her.

CHRISTINE
Why? Do you hate me too?

LISA
No. But it might be fun.

CHRISTINE
You shouldn't let her control you.
LISA
She looks after me.

CHRISTINE
You can look after yourself.

LISA
(shaking her head)
You know Wolston Park? It's the nut house. My mum put me in there. Kim got me out.

CHRISTINE
Why were you in there?

LISA
(rolling up her sleeve)
Cut myself.

CHRISTINE
You don't need Kim telling you what to do Lisa. She's the one not right in the head.

LISA
She'll hear you.

CHRISTINE
She's not here.

LISA
Doesn't matter.

CHRISTINE
I don't know why Tracey puts up with her either.

LISA
(laughing)
Tracey wouldn't know what to do without Kim. They're totally codependent.

CHRISTINE
What do you mean?

LISA
Kim's the only one who can get through to Tracey when she's in one of her rages. You saw Bobby the other night.

The sound of a key in the door.

LISA
Shit, quick!
They run from Kim’s room, pulling the door closed behind them.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY.

Tracey and Kim enter the flat, there’s blood on Tracey’s face. She appears to be in a daze. She ignores Christine and heads straight for her bedroom and closes the door. Christine follows her in.

CHRISTINE
Tracey? What happened?

INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - EVENING

Tracey curls up on the bed in a foetal position, a pillow case clutched to her chest. Christine shakes her gently.

CHRISTINE
Tracey!

Kim enters the room.

KIM
Get out.

CHRISTINE
No, she needs me.

KIM
I said get the fuck out of here!

CHRISTINE
Get off me!

Kim grabs Christine by the collar of her shirt. Tracey whimper and rocks back and forth.

Kim pushes Christine out of the room and slams the door in Christine’s face.

EXT. TRACEY’S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Christine kicks the door in frustration.

CHRISTINE
Tracey!

LISA
There’s nothing you can do.

Kim locks Tracey’s door and puts the key in her pocket.
CHRISTINE
Give me that key.

KIM
(pushing her away)
Piss off.

CHRISTINE
I said give it to me!

Kim grabs Christine by the throat. She is incredibly powerful for someone so slight. Christine gags.

KIM
You silly little cunt. You think you have any control over Tracey? She does what I say. You don’t know the first thing about her.

Christine is thrust onto the floor.

CHRISTINE
You’re crazy.

As Christine tries to stand Kim kicks her back down. Christine grabs Kim’s leg and they wrestle but although Christine is strong, Kim overpowers her.

KIM
Lisa! Get the rope!

Lisa sighs and rises from the couch. Christine screams, and Kim shoves her scarf into Christine’s mouth. Lisa throws the rope to Kim who lashes Christine’s wrists and ankles together.

KIM
You have no fucking idea what you’ve got yourself involved in.

Kim rolls Christine over with her foot. Christine’s eyes are wide with fear.

INT. SUNROOM - MORNING

Christine lies on the bed bound and gagged and covered in sweat. Tracey enters and pulls the scarf from Christine’s mouth.

CHRISTINE
Get these fucking ropes off me!

TRACEY
(untying the ropes and holding Christine)
Ssh, you’re okay now. Kim!
Kim enters the room.

CHRISTINE
Get her away from me. She's mental!

TRACEY
Apologise to Christine.

KIM
Get fucked.

CHRISTINE
(pulling away from Tracey)
Let me go!

TRACEY
(holding Christine)
I said apologise.

KIM
Just a joke baby dyke no need to wig out.

CHRISTINE
You're evil!

TRACEY
Christine is part of us now. You must treat her with respect.

CHRISTINE
I'm not part of her!

TRACEY
Get out of here Kim.

Kim leaves with a smirk. Tracey takes Christine in her arms.

TRACEY
Kim had no right to do this. I'll tell her to move out, I'll do anything you want.

CHRISTINE
You don't even know what you're doing! What happened yesterday? You had blood on your face. You didn't even recognise me!

TRACEY
We had a ritual that's all. A sacrifice.
CHRISTINE
What was it.

TRACEY
A chicken. Bet you've killed a few in your time. There's nothing to be afraid of Christine. I'd never let any harm come to you.

CHRISTINE
I found a bottle of blood in the fridge.

TRACEY
(very calmly)
It's pig's blood. I crave it sometimes, so I get it from the butcher. I'm not hiding anything Christine, ask me whatever you want.

CHRISTINE
Who's Bobby? Why do you suddenly change like the other night?

TRACEY
(shaking her head)
Sometimes I get these black outs. Bobby's really strong. But it's under control.

CHRISTINE
I want to go now, please.

TRACEY
I love you Christine.

CHRISTINE
You don't even know me.

TRACEY
But I do. And I think you're afraid of yourself. Afraid of what you're capable of.

CHRISTINE
No.

TRACEY
(blocking the door)
You loved it last night. You tasted my blood and I tasted yours.

CHRISTINE
(struggling against Tracey)
(MORE)
CHRISTINE (cont'd)
Let me out of here. You're crazy too.

TRACEY
Who taught you to handle a knife? Your dad?

Christine pushes past Tracey and heads into the lounge room.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - MORNING

In a few steps Tracey has reached the front door before Christine. Kim hovers nearby.

KIM
You should have listened to me.

TRACEY
I can't let you leave Christine. Not now.

CHRISTINE
Please I want to go home.

TRACEY
(stroking her hair)
It doesn't need to be this way.

KIM
Want me to tie her up?

CHRISTINE
No!

KIM
She can't be trusted.

TRACEY
I'd like to trust you Christine. I think we're good together.

CHRISTINE
You can trust me Tracey. I'm sorry. I didn't get any sleep, the ropes cut my wrists. Please don't let her tie me up again. I'll do whatever you want.

TRACEY
I know you will.

Tracey strokes Christine's face. Christine smiles at her convincingly.
INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

Tracey, Christine, Kim and Lisa sit around the coffee table. Lisa cuts lines of speed and takes a long snort.

LISA
It’ll be like killing a goat.

KIM
No. No way.

LISA
People are just animals.

KIM
Not in His eyes. Human blood contains the sacred life force. You can’t compare the blood of a lowly creature with human blood, it’s infinitely more powerful. Right Tracey?

TRACEY
(snorting a line)
Yes.

KIM
(gesturing to Christine)
We should just use her. No one even knows she’s here.

Christine looks terrified.

TRACEY
(stroking Christine’s throat)
Don’t talk shit Kim. You know who we’ve chosen. We need to stick to the plan. It has to run like clock work.

EXT. PINEAPPLE HOTEL - NIGHT.

The green cortina is parked opposite the pub.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT

Christine is in the backseat with Lisa. Kim is in the front with Tracey. They watch the entrance of the pub as the DRUNK COUNCIL WORKER stumbles out.

TRACEY
There he is. Right on time.
KIM
(getting out of the car)
Come on.

Tracey gets out too.

EXT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Tracey and Kim sit on the bonnet of the car watching the man make his drunken way along the darkened street.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT

Lisa hums tunelessly to herself.

CHRISTINE
(whispering)
Lisa, you don’t want to go back to the nut house do you?

Lisa shakes her head and continues to hum.

CHRISTINE
(whispering)
Do you trust me?

Kim opens the door and climbs in. Tracey gets in and starts the car.

TRACEY
All okay in the back?

Christine smiles and nods. Lisa continues to hum, lost in her own world.

INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - NIGHT.

Christine lies on the bed, pretending to be asleep. Tracey lies with her arm protectively across Christine. Christine very gently lifts Tracey’s arm off her and slides from the bed. She tip toes to the bedroom door and very gently turns the handle. The door is locked. Christine looks back at Tracey, but she’s fast asleep. Christine returns to the bed and climbs in, she lies there wide awake.

INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - MORNING.

Christine wakes up alone in the bed. She runs to the door and it’s unlocked so she opens it.

CHRISTINE

Tracey?
TRACEY V.O
In the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING
Christine looks into the bathroom and sees Tracey in front of the mirror with a set of clippers buzzing in her hand.

TRACEY
Can you do the back?

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING
Lisa sits at the kitchen table making small nicks up her arm with the blade of a razor sharp knife and humming tunelessly. Christine enters and heads for the back door. It’s locked. She sits at the table with Lisa.

CHRISTINE
(whispering)
Lisa, listen to me.

Lisa continues to hum.

CHRISTINE
Listen!

Christine grabs the knife away from Lisa.

LISA
Fuck. What?

CHRISTINE
You can’t pretend this isn’t happening.

LISA
I’m not. Tracey needs to feed. It’s all worked out.

CHRISTINE
Tracey needs help. She’s sick and Kim’s feeding her delusions.

LISA
(shaking her head)
Don’t mess with Kim.

CHRISTINE
I know you’re as scared as me.

Lisa looks into Christine’s eyes. She looks scared. A packet of hair dye lands with a SLAP on the table. Lisa and Christine jump.
KIM
Time to dye.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Kim hands the clippers to Christine. Lisa’s head is already shaved. She looks pitiful.

CHRISTINE
Sure you trust me with these?

KIM
If you cut me I’ll kill you. Make sure it’s even.

Christine runs the clippers over Kim’s head and hair falls to the ground in clumps. Christine is skilled with the clippers, it’s like shearing sheep.

CHRISTINE
Done.

Kim rubs her head vigorously then pulls a hunting knife from her jeans and brandishes it, looking at herself in the mirror.

KIM
Do I look mean?

Lisa nods.

KIM
(grabbing Christine’s ponytail)
Your turn.

CHRISTINE
I thought I’d just dye it black.

KIM
Oh no. You’re getting the full treatment too.

CHRISTINE
(struggling)
No Kim!

KIM
(sawing at the ponytail)
Lets see how sharp this is.

Christine screams. Tracey enters the bathroom and grabs Kim.

TRACEY
Get off her!
A large chunk of Christine's hair falls to the ground.

KIM
Not so pretty now are you.

Kim leaves the bathroom and Tracey follows her out. Christine looks at her hair in the mirror. It's a mess.

LISA
I'll fix it.

EXT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON.

Tracey holds Kim by the throat.

TRACEY
I don't want you hurting her.

KIM
Easy. If she's going to be part of this, she's got to do everything we do.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON.

Lisa gently removes the fastener from what's left of Christine's ponytail and picks up a pair of scissors. Christine looks away as Lisa evens up her hair.

LISA
See, it's not so bad. It's fine, really.

CHRISTINE
(grabbing Lisa's hand and holding it tight)
No, it's not. They are going to kill that man Lisa. For his blood. And unless you help me, you'll go down with them.

Lisa cracks.

LISA
Kim!

CHRISTINE
Shut up!

LISA
Kim, come here. Now!

Kim enters the bathroom.
KIM

Problem?

Christine holds her breath and eye contact with Lisa.

LISA

Christine said I’m going to the nut house if I help you kill that man.

KIM

(enormous justification
all over her face)

Did she?

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT.

Tracey methodically sharpens her hunting knife. She’s dressed entirely in black. She tests the blade on her thumb and draws blood, then she slides the knife into her leg scabbard.

INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - DAY.

Christine lies on Tracey’s bed. There is a bondage collar around her neck which is chained to the bed head. Her hands also have bondage restraints on them. Tracey sits on the edge of the bed stroking Christine’s throat.

TRACEY

Are you comfortable? These are much kinder than the ropes.

CHRISTINE

Please Tracey, let me come with you.

TRACEY

You shouldn’t have said that stuff to Lisa. Kim’s thinks you’re up to something. She reckons you want to turn Lisa against us.

CHRISTINE

(violently shaking her head)

No. Don’t listen to Kim, please Tracey, let me come. I want to be part of it. Please.
TRACEY
(looking longingly at Christine's angelic face)
You have to do everything I say.

CHRISTINE
I will. I promise.

Tracey unlocks the chain from the bedhead. Kim enters.

KIM
Don't be stupid!

Christine sits up and hugs Tracey.

TRACEY
She's coming with us.

Christine smiles at Kim. Kim is livid.

CHRISTINE
(holding out her wrists)
Can you take these off?

But instead of removing the collar and wrist restraints, Tracey chains them together. Christine can't believe it. She's shackled like a lamb to the slaughter.

TRACEY
Just in case.

Kim grins broadly.

EXT. LEWMORS - NIGHT

Music rises: Spellbound by Siouxsie and The Banshees.

The four women approach the club. They look frightening. Christine wears the shackle of the collar and chain attached to the wrist restraints. The door bitch steps aside to let them enter.

DOOR BITCH
Holy shit.

INT. LEWMORS - NIGHT.

The club is busy and the presence of the women makes a big impact. Women whisper to each other and move away from Tracey and her entourage as they walk through the club. Two cute young girls literally run as she approaches the bar. The bartender is nonplussed.
BARTENDER
Nice hair. Did youse get a bulk discount?

KIM
Very funny. Bottle of champagne, we're celebrating.

The bartender places a bottle of cheap bubbles on the counter and Tracey pulls her credit card from her top pocket.

KIM
And three glasses.

TRACEY
Four glasses.

BARTENDER
Letting the little slave have a glass? Very kind of you.

TRACEY
Shut up.

INT. LEWMORS - NIGHT.

At their regular table Kim pops the cork from the champagne bottle.

KIM
Tonight's the most important night of the year. By the Julien calendar at midnight it will be Halloween. And on this most auspicious night, we will help Tracey to feed.

Kim pours. Christine holds the glass with both shackled hands.

KIM
To Tracey!

CHRISTINE
To Tracey.

They all drink.

LISA
What time is it now?

TRACEY
Still early. Relax.
LISA
Just going to the loo.

Tracey and Kim watch her leave. Tracey’s eyes and teeth glow in the fluorescent lighting of the dim club. Tracey leans in close to Christine and whispers.

TRACEY
Not long now my love. We’ll share the ultimate connection that two people can make.

Tracey kisses Christine.

EXT. PINEAPPLE HOTEL - NIGHT.

The green cortina is parked across the street from the pub.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Tracey smokes a cigarette and watches the entrance like a hawk. Kim is restless in the front seat. The clock shows 11.15pm. In the back, Christine’s restraints are padlocked to the panic handle. Lisa hums quietly to herself.

KIM
Where is he?

TRACEY
He’ll be here.

KIM
No. He’s always on time. Like clockwork. Something’s happened.

TRACEY
Just a few more minutes.

KIM
No, it’s getting late, we need to find someone else before midnight.

TRACEY
Damn him.

Tracey flicks her cigarette out the window and starts the engine.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

They cruise slowly through the city streets. Kim looks intently out the window.
EXT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Christine looks at the people on the street. They're all potential victims. An OLD WOMAN digs in a rubbish bin. She catches Christine's eye for a moment, then she's gone. Two YOUNG GIRLS in short skirts, clatter and chatter along the street. A BUSINESS MAN crosses the road in front of their car.

KIM
It's a smorgasbord.

A young street kid of about fifteen walks alone along the city street.

KIM
Him. He's perfect.

Tracey slows the car down and cruises alongside the boy. He stops to look at them. Kim winds down her window. Christine is directly behind her in the back seat.

KIM
Hey. Want a ride?

The boy looks into the car and sees Christine shake her head vigorously. He sees her collar and leash. Christine whispers the word "RUN".

KIM
Cat got your tongue?

The boy bolts.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT

KIM
Fuck!

TRACEY
Forget it.

Tracey looks at Christine in the rear view mirror. Christine looks out the window, her face gives nothing away.

TRACEY
You're quiet in the back. Everything alright?

CHRISTINE
Yeah. Just a bit nervous I suppose.
TRACEY
That's excitement.

A police car cruises past their car slowly.

LISA
I don't like it here. There's too many witnesses.

TRACEY
We'll go back to the pub.

She does a U-turn and puts her foot on the accelerator.

EXT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

The car cruises towards the Pineapple Hotel as the drunken Council worker stumbles along the street.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Tracey grins as she sees the man.

TRACEY
(to Kim)
I knew he'd be here. Look at the clock.

The clock on the dashboard shows it’s exactly midnight.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT.

The man grabs at a lamppost to steady himself and remains there for a moment.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Tracey cruises slowly alongside the man, stalking her prey.

TRACEY
That's it, keep walking. Just a bit further.

The man stumbles away from the lighted area, lost in his own inebriated world.

EXT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT

Tracey and Kim get out of the car and approach the man. He's slumped against a fence but straightens himself up.
INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Lisa watches through the window.

LISA
It's happening. She's really going to do it.

CHRISTINE
Of course she is you fucking gimp.

EXT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

The man walks towards the car with Tracey and Kim supporting him on either side. He adjusts his trousers that droop under his pot belly. Tracey opens the back door.

TRACEY
Lisa. You drive.

Lisa gets out of the back and Tracey and the man climb in.

TRACEY
(quietly to Christine)
He's dead.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT.

The car travels alongside the river.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Lisa drives nervously, constantly looking into the rearview mirror. Kim lights a cigarette. In the backseat, Tracey watches the man as his head nods and jerks up.

MAN
Where we going ladies?

TRACEY
Somewhere private.

The man chuckles. Tracey looks away with distaste.

EXT. ORLEIGH PARK - NIGHT.

The doors to the car open. Tracey helps the man out.

CHRISTINE
Tracey, can you unlock me? I'd like to join you.
MAN
More the merrier!

KIM
No she can manage on her own.

CHRISTINE
Please Tracey.

MAN
Hurry up girly. Don’t have all night.

TRACEY
I’ll manage.

Tracey takes the man by the arm and leads him away into the darkened park.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT.

Tracey leads the man towards a sheltered spot by a boat shed. The city lights across the river glitter in the water.

The man grabs at Tracey’s breasts and she struggles for a moment to push him off. In the struggle her credit card falls from her pocket.

TRACEY
Slow down!

MAN
Whaddaya mean? You want it fast. You lot always do.

He lunges at her again and Tracey holds him at arms length.

TRACEY
Just wait. I need to get something. I’ll only be a second. Take your clothes off and get ready for the time of your life.

MAN
Be quick I’m raring to go!

As Tracey leaves, the man undresses, carefully folding his trousers and shirt and removing his shoes.

EXT. ORLEIGH PARK - NIGHT.

Lisa and Kim lean against the car. Christine remains padlocked inside the car.
KIM
What’s going on?

TRACEY
He’s too strong. I need some help.

KIM
(panicking)
But that’s not the plan.

LISA
(flipping out)
I can’t do it, I can’t do it!

Tracey slaps Lisa hard across the face.

TRACEY
Get in the car!

Tracey opens the back door. She sees Christine.

CHRISTINE
I’ll help you. I know how to use a knife, even you said that.

Tracey looks to Kim and Kim turns away.

TRACEY
No. Kim, I need you.

Kim shakes her head and kicks at the car door.

TRACEY
You’re fucked.

Kim gets into the car and locks the door. She’s crying. Tracey unlocks Christine’s restraints.

TRACEY
Just do exactly what I tell you.

Christine leaves with Tracey.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - NIGHT.

Tracey leads Christine to the playground area, some metres away from the man.

TRACEY
(quietly)
You’ll need to give him head.
Just for a minute. Then I’ll come from behind and cut his throat.
CHRISTINE
(nodding)
Where's the knife?

Tracey pulls it from her leg scabbard and suddenly
Christine kicks the knife from Tracey's hand.

TRACEY
Fucking bitch!

Christine runs towards the man, screaming.

CHRISTINE
Run! She's got a knife!

Tracey has recovered the knife and runs after Christine.
The man, drunk and uncomprehending grabs at his clothes.
Christine pushes him.

CHRISTINE
Just run for Christsake!

Tracey is upon them. Christine blocks the man with her
body. The man whimpers as he tries to pull his pants on.

CHRISTINE
Stop Tracey! You don't have to do
this!

Tracey grabs Christine and throws her to the ground,
exposing the man. He tries to stumble away, one leg in his
pair of pants.

MAN
Jesus, no!

Christine is up and she runs at Tracey who has kicked the
man in the back of the knees. He slumps as Tracey raises
her knife.

TRACEY
(raising the knife to
strike)
You want this too. Deep down. You
want it Christine!

MAN
Jesus please, no!

CHRISTINE
No!

Christine dives in front of the man and Tracey plunges the
knife into her stomach. Christine gasps and falls to the
ground. The man tries to run but Tracey is on top of him
and starts to stab him furiously in the neck.
Christine watches from the ground, unable to do anything. She sees Tracey’s credit card a few metres away and struggles to reach it. As Tracey stabs at the dead man, she shoves the card into one of the man’s shoes, then collapses.

Kim and Lisa run towards the scene. Lisa sees Christine and crouches down to feel her pulse.

**KIM**

What the fuck happened!

Tracey wipes her face on her sleeve.

**TRACEY**

It’s done. Let’s go.

**LISA**

But Christine! We can’t leave her. She’s still alive!

EXT / INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

Lisa helps Christine into the backseat. Kim opens the boot, chucks the bloodied knife in and grabs a towel. She throws it into the backseat.

**KIM**

Don’t get blood everywhere!

Tracey sits in the front passenger seat, subdued and pale. Kim gets into the car and wipes the remaining blood from Tracey’s face with a tissue.

**KIM**

What a mess you made.

In the back seat Lisa holds Christine as she struggles to remain calm and conscious.

**LISA**

(whispering)

It’s okay, it’s okay.

**KIM**

Shut up!

Kim starts the engine. Music blares from the stereo and Kim angrily ejects the tape.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT.

They drive away from the park through the darkened city streets.
INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT.

It’s quiet in the car, but in the back seat, Lisa hums to herself as she strokes Christine’s arm methodically. Christine goes in and out of consciousness.

Up ahead Kim sees flashing lights.

KIM

Cops!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT.

A POLICE OFFICER stands in the middle of the road and signals for the car to pull over.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - NIGHT

Tracey checks her face in the mirror. She licks away a fleck of blood.

KIM

(leaning into the back)
Cover her up for Christake!

Lisa grabs a blanket from the back and throws it over Christine.

Kim rolls down the window as the police officer approaches.

POLICE OFFICER

Good evening. We’re conducting a random breath test, have you had anything to drink tonight madam?

KIM

No, um, yes. A glass of champagne. Earlier.

The Police Officer holds a bag towards her with a straw attached.

POLICE OFFICER

Blow into the bag in one continuous breath.

Kim puts the straw to her mouth and blows. Tracey watches like a hawk. The officer takes the bag away for a moment. The crystals don’t turn green.

POLICE OFFICER

You’re free to go.
The relief on Kim’s face is palpable as the police officer steps away from the car. Suddenly Christine gasps loudly. Lisa quickly covers her mouth as the police officer turns back towards the car.

    KIM  
    (whispering)  
    Jesus fucking Christ keep the  
    bitch quiet.

The police officer shines his torch in the back seat.

    POLICE OFFICER  
    Everything alright in there?

He sees Christine covered by a blanket and curled in a foetal position, with her face in Lisa’s lap. Lisa holds a scarf against Christine’s mouth. Christine struggles with the last of her strength.

    KIM  
    She’s just had too much to drink  
    officer, so we’re taking her  
    home.

The police officer buys this. He nods and steps away from the car, waving them on. Kim winds her window up and steps on the accelerator. She shakes like a leaf.

INT. TRACEY’S FLAT – EARLY MORNING.

Kim, Lisa and Tracey sit around the kitchen table. Tracey’s wallet is open on the table in front of them.

    KIM  
    Are you sure it’s not in the car?

    TRACEY  
    (shaking her head)  
    We have to go back.

    LISA  
    We can’t!

    KIM  
    Shut up!

    TRACEY  
    Come on.

    KIM  
    Don’t be fucking crazy there’ll  
    be cops everywhere by now.
TRACEY
If we see cops, we’ll keep driving.

LISA
I’ll stay here.

KIM
No you won’t, you’re coming with us.

LISA
What about Christine?

INT. TRACEY’S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING.
Christine lies unconscious on Tracey’s bed with a bloodied towel covering the wound on her stomach. Her wrists are in the restraints and chained to the bed head.

INT. GREEN CORTINA - EARLY MORNING.
Tracey drives. Kim sits nervously beside her in the front. In the backseat Lisa hums to herself tunelessly as she looks out the window. It’s still dark.

EXT. ORLEIGH PARK - EARLY MORNING.
The park is deserted. Tracey and Kim search along the river bank near the body of the man.

KIM
It’s not here. You could have lost it anywhere.

Kim looks around nervously. It’s getting lighter.

KIM
Come on, let’s go. I don’t want to leave Lisa by herself for long. She might get ideas.

TRACEY
Fuck it!

Tracey kicks at a bush and gives up. The shoe is only a metre away.

They head back to the car.
INT. GREEN CORTINA - EARLY MORNING.

Kim and Tracey get into the car. Tracey starts the engine and they pull away from the curb. In the backseat Lisa looks extremely ill.

LISA
I want to go home. To my place. Can you take me there?

KIM
We have to stay together. Just for a couple of days.

LISA
(starting to cry)
But I want to go home now. Please.

KIM
Listen to me Lisa you need to keep it together okay? You’re just tired. We’ll go home, take a valium or something and rest. You’ll be fine, right Tracey?

TRACEY
Right. Or we could take you to the nut house. Would you like that?

LISA
(sobbing)
No!

EXT. BRISBANE RIVER - EARLY MORNING

A team of SCHOOL GIRL ROWERS speed their way through the brown water of the Brisbane river.

EXT. ORLEIGH PARK - EARLY MORNING

A JOGGER sings along loudly to the song on his Walkman as his feet pound along the pavement towards the playground.

EXT. BRISBANE RIVER - EARLY MORNING

The cox spots something on the river bank and her expression changes from puzzlement to horror. She screams.
EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - EARLY MORNING

The jogger spots the naked bloodied figure of an overweight man lying face down by the edge of the path. The loud music and the pounding of his feet blocks the sound of the young girl’s scream. As he approaches, the jogger pulls the headphones from his ears and stops, gasping for breath. Flies buzz loudly in the early morning heat.

JOGGER
Jesus Christ.

INT. TRACEY’S FLAT - MORNING

Tracey, Kim and Lisa sit around the kitchen table, silent.

EXT. ORLEIGH PARK - MORNING

Detective Senior Sergeant SAMIOS (40), a nuggety watchful man, steps away from the corpse and inspects the dead man’s clothes. He lifts one of the shoes and looks at the sole. A credit card falls out at his feet.

EXT. FLATS - MORNING

A police car pulls up outside Tracey’s flat. Samios gets out and walks up the front stairs. He knocks and a moment later Tracey opens it.

SAMIOS
Tracey Avril Wigginton?

TRACEY
That’s me.

Tracey smiles at Samios. She’s freshly showered and dressed in an immaculately clean white t.shirt.

INT. TRACEY’S FLAT - MORNING

Tracey leads Samios into the kitchen. Lisa and Kim are nowhere to be seen.

TRACEY
Sorry about the mess.

SAMIOS
Anyone else live here?

TRACEY
Kim. She’s at work. So, what do you want to speak to me about?
SAMIOS
Your credit card. It was found this morning.

TRACEY
Didn't know it was missing. Cup of tea?

SAMIOS
Do you have any idea where you might have lost it?

Tracey fills the kettle with water and switches it on. Her movements are slow, precise. She pauses to think.

TRACEY
Must have been last night. At West End. A couple of us went down to the park for a walk.

SAMIOS
Where in West End?

TRACEY
Orleigh park. By the river. We mucked about on the swings. It must have fallen from my pocket.

SAMIOS
You mucked about?

TRACEY
Yeah.

She makes a lunge towards Samios and he nearly grabs for his gun. Tracey laughs.

TRACEY
You know, just tackling each other and stuff. Mucking around.

SAMIOS
Seems a bit rough.

TRACEY
We're rough kind of girls.

Samios lights a cigarette and holds Tracey's steady gaze. Her eyes are an impenetrable black.

The kettle starts to squeal and Tracey switches it off.

SAMIOS
What vehicle did you drive to the park?
TRACEY
My car. Green Cortina.

SAMIOS
The one outside?

TRACEY
Yep.

SAMIOS
Do you mind if I take a look at it?

TRACEY
(shrugging)
Go for it.

She takes a set of keys from a bowl on the table and chucks them to Samios who immediately heads out of the flat.

EXT. TRACEY’S FLAT - MORNING

Outside the flat Samios pulls on gloves and opens the drivers door. He looks inside at the surfaces of the seats and the steering wheel. He sees a dark stain on the back seat. Samios then moves around to the boot and unlocks it. Inside, pushed up into the far corner of the boot is a crumpled brown towel. He pulls it out and looks at it. It’s stiff with a dark brown substance.

Samios looks up at the flat.

INT. TRACEY’S FLAT - MORNING

Samios re-enters the flat and walks into the kitchen where Tracey pours a cup of tea.

TRACEY
Sugar?

SAMIOS
I’d like you to accompany me to the station so we can ask you some more questions -

The sound of a muffled CRY stops Samios. Tracey starts to run, but Samios pulls his gun.

SAMIOS
Don’t move!

Tracey puts her hands above her head. Samios points the gun at her and gestures for her to move. Another muffled cry from the bedroom and Samios kicks the door open, his gun still trained on Tracey.
INT. TRACEY’S ROOM - MORNING.

Christine is a bloody mess chained to the bed and Kim and Lisa cower in the corner.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY.

A Doctor squeezes a pouch of blood and it runs through the tube and into the IV in Christine's arm. Two POLICE OFFICERS stand by.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY.

Kim and Lisa are escorted by a POLICE OFFICER into a cell.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

Samios sits opposite Tracey at a table. He smokes steadily as he looks at Tracey. She seems a million miles away. Cool and calm.

SAMIOS
Are you sure you don’t want a lawyer present?

Tracey stares straight ahead. Her face is a mask.

SAMIOS
Kim and Lisa have confessed Tracey. We’d like to hear your side of the story.

Tracey’s face doesn’t alter.

SAMIOS
Do you believe yourself to be a vampire Tracey?

Tracey smirks.

SAMIOS
We found your credit card in Edward Baldock’s shoe. His head was nearly severed from his body. There were bloody finger prints all around his neck.

Tracey licks her lips.

SAMIOS
What about Christine? Did you stab her too?

(MORE)
SAMIOS (cont'd)
She probably won't live you know. I bet she's already dead.

TRACEY
No!

SAMIOS
Tell me what happened!

Tracey looks at Samios, and then directly into the camera lens. Her face grows hard.

TRACEY
Is that thing on?

Samios looks at the video camera set up on a tripod at the end of the room.

SAMIOS
Yes.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Christine lies unconscious on the bed connected to an IV for blood transfusions. An oxygen mask covers her face. Footsteps approach. It's Christine's mother. She sits stony faces in the chair next to the bed unable to look at Christine. After a moment she looks at her daughter and sees the crucifix still around Christine's neck. Mother breaks into a sob and takes Christine's hand.

MOTHER
I'm sorry Christine.

INT. ROOM - DAY.

A young woman steps through a metal detector. We only see her back. Her hair is short. A security guard runs a hand held detector along her body. Nothing beeps. The woman takes her bag from the security check and walks ahead. The sound of a flight being called. We pull back to discover this is an airport, not a jail. A more mature Christine walking towards a gate at the international airport.

ANNOUNCEMENT
Flight 333 to London is now boarding.

Christine strides towards the gate and hands her passport and boarding pass to the steward who looks at the picture.

STEWARD
Enjoy your trip Christine.

CHRISTINE
Thank you. I will.