

NOW SHOWING

RON ELLIOTT

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Themes: Short Stories, Humour, Crime

Year Levels: Y10, Y11, Y12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Now Showing contains five very different stories adapted from screenplays written by Ron Elliott:

- Zac takes his girlfriend into the desert outside Kalgoorlie and tries to win her heart again with the aid of a rifle.
- Simon picks up some low-rent killers in his taxi, one of whom was his high school nemesis. He tries to save an overweight jockey, the jockey's wife and himself without the aid of firearms.
- In 1991, the internet hatched, but for Adam it fails as an aid to finding the girl of his dreams. Trapped in a block of flats with urban terrorists, a prostitute, a madman and his canary, Adam struggles to be a man.
- Dave is a luckless gambler who takes a case of uncut diamonds across Europe pursued by a burgeoning number of international police, criminals and beautiful women.
- Daniel and Helen have two beautiful children and a thriving business. They also have Amis, a psychopath fixed on destroying every part of Daniel's life.

Each story has been written (in the author's words) to 'amuse, enthrall and excite in equal measure'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Elliott is a scriptwriter, director and academic, and author of the novel *Spinner*. His directorial credits include a feature film, *Justice*, and episodes of ABC programs such as *Dancing Daze*, *Relative Merits* and *Studio 86*. Ron has written for *Home and Away*, *Minty*, *Wild Kat*, *Ship to Shore* and many more children's television series. In 2001 he wrote the AFI nominated telemovie *Southern Cross*. Ron is currently a lecturer in Film and Television at Curtin University.

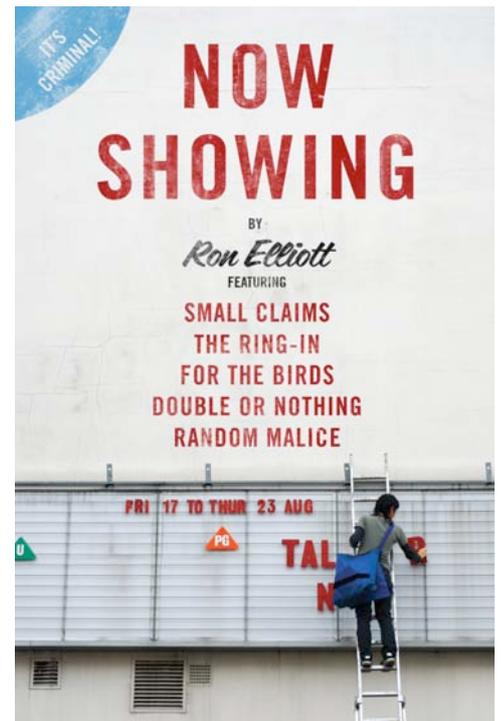
STUDY NOTES

A. Genre

1. From which genre is each of these films adapted? What are the characteristics of each of these genres? Give examples of:
 1. Other movies in each of these genres.
 2. Other stories/novels in each of these genres.
2. Many of the stories of this collection do not fit easily within the crime genre. What crime genre conventions are followed and which ones are not?
3. What freedoms/restrictions does writing within a genre impose upon the writer?
4. What expectations does each of these genres engender in the reader/viewer?

B. Further discussion: about the book

1. What are some of the themes, images and motifs that are common to these stories?
2. One of the precepts for writing is to 'show and not tell'. What does this mean and how is this evidenced in some of the stories more than others?



3. Film scripts have an effaced narrator. What does this statement mean? Which of these stories have an effaced narrator? Which don't? Why do you think the author made this choice?
4. Each story has a different approach to point of view. What are the differences and why do you think the author chose the frame he did?

C. Further discussion: individual stories

Introduction

1. With reference to the book's introduction, discuss the author's journey in his adaptation of his own work from film script to prose. What were some of the similarities and differences he found in the transition between mediums in relation to structure, scene, immediacy and point of view?
2. Is the experience of reading these stories similar to going to a movie? In what ways does the reader experience the residue of the movie experience?

Small Claims

1. In which genre or sub-genre would you place 'Small Claims'?
2. How many movies can you identify in 'Small Claims' that are referred to directly or via different scenes? Why has the author chosen to make this story so referential?
3. What burden does Robin carry?
4. How would you describe the relationship between Robin and Zac?
5. The car is used as a metaphor in both 'Small Claims' and 'The Ring-In'. What does it represent and how does it differ in these stories?

The Ring-In

1. What is the connection between the Proust epigram on p. 67 and the story that follows?
2. To what genre does 'The Ring-In' belong? What are the characteristics of this genre?
3. What real-life echoes and cultural references can you find in this story?
4. Does Simon conform to usual notions of the hero?
5. Is Grace a *femme fatale*?
6. How does the author manage Simon's point of view? How close does the author let us get to Simon? What distancing effects has the author put in place?
7. What kind of a character is Ellis? Have you encountered characters like him in other movies?
8. The author has said that he always thought of Graham Greene when he was writing this book, and the constant questing and failing to find forgiveness in Greene's work. How do these things play out in 'The Ring-In'?

For the Birds

1. To what genre does 'For the Birds' belong? What are the characteristics of this genre?
2. Why does the story open with a diagram of the block of flats?
3. Do you sympathise with any of the characters in this story in particular?
4. Does Adam manage to flee from his past, by the end of the story?
5. What kinds of models of contemporary masculinity does this story offer?
6. What difference does the 1990s setting make to the story and the plot?
7. What place does the internet have in the plot and themes?
8. What crimes are committed in this story?
9. The author has said 'For the Birds' is *Delicatessen* meets *Identity*. In what ways do these two films relate to the story?

Double or Nothing

1. In what genre would you place this story?
2. Compare and contrast the prose story of 'Double or Nothing' with the first draft of the screenplay (attached at the end of these teaching notes). Explore the differing approaches to the comedy heist in the two mediums.
3. What kind of character is Dave? Do you think that the reader's sympathies are supposed to lie with Dave?
4. Do we witness any personal development in Dave through the course of the story?
5. In what ways is this a story about storytelling itself? Is Dave a reliable narrator?
6. Discuss the structure of this piece. What narrative difficulties does it present? Could it have been written another way?

7. The author has said this story began as the script for a telemovie but ended up as a pilot for a TV series. How might each approach shape the script?

Random Malice

1. To what genre does the story 'Random Malice' belong?
2. What kind of character is Amis? What kind of a character is Daniel? Have you encountered characters like these in movies you have seen?
3. Amis' sections are written in a different tense to the Daniel sections. Why has the author done this?
4. In some ways 'Random Malice' is a companion piece to 'Small Claims'. Compare and contrast the characters and threat in these stories.
5. The author has said that Amis personifies the myriad economic factors and outside forces that can beset a family struggling to make ends meet. To what extent does the genre enable the author to explore this theme?

D. Activities

1. Choose a scene from 'The Ring-In' that is from the point of view of either Simon or Ellis, and write it from the point of view of Ted. Write it either as prose, or as a screenplay. What effect does changing point of view have on the story, and on the audience?
2. Plot your own movie or story that would fit within this collection.
3. Select a scene from a movie of your choice. Rewrite its opening as if it were a short story. Discuss what decisions you had to make as you shifted mediums.
4. Select a scene from one of the stories in the book and plan how you would stage it for a film. Read it and block it for the camera. How must it be rewritten for dramatic representation?
5. The author first wrote these stories as feature film scripts, then later adapted them into prose stories. Take a short story that you like and adapt it back into a film script.
6. In your opinion, which of these stories would be the most difficult to film in terms of logistics and cost? Which do you think would be the most straightforward?
7. Which of these stories would you like most to make into a movie? Discuss some of the actors you would approach for casting.

Interview with the Author

Is each story still recognisable as its film script version? And do these stories still feel 'like' films?

As I described in the introduction to *Now Showing*, I think there are many parallels between film and prose. I find myself agreeing with Robert Drewe, who contends that prose and film are quite similar. Prose can do anything film can do, especially when, as with Drewe's work, that prose is particularly visual and immediate. However, I found that in adapting these film scripts, residue of the films' structure and mimetic elements remains. I think that in each story there are imprints of the films first imagined – in structure, duration, and in dialogue and characterisation. The strong adherence to genre in each story remains a feature.

'For the Birds' is possibly most like a film in terms of its large cast and cross-cutting of interlocking stories. On the other hand, many novels do this, too. *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Underworld* and *The Corrections* spring to mind. *American Beauty*, *Traffic*, *Any Given Sunday* and lots of Robert Altman's films are cinematic examples. Outside of structure, I have always battled to think of what film 'For the Birds' might be like *Delicatessen* meets *Identity*?

I think 'The Ring-In' is still filmic. It is noir with a bit of the Tarantino *Pulp Fiction* structure thrown in, influenced by *The Grifters* (the film, rather than the Jim Thompson novel). But it is an Oz version, so maybe there's some *Two Hands* in there too. I think the prose genre and the film genre of the thriller are pretty similar. The writers have seen the movies and the directors have read the books so there's a kind of cross-medium genre now. I see 'Random Malice' as a classic thriller.

'Small Claims' has changed the most from its original. As a script, the story was shown from an objective, effaced narrator, Hemingway-style. In the script, we happen to be in the perfect position to see what Robin and Zac do, and to hear what they say, but we are not privy to their unspoken thoughts. But it was, and is, a kind of detective story, and I did not want to know what was in Robin's head when I was turning it into a short story. I liked the mystery of her. So I saw a chance for Zac to tell his side of things. He's a pretty funny guy, kind of confused and yearning, and I thought I'd like to play with the first person character narrator – which isn't something that works particularly well in film. Once I got into Zac's head and found his voice, then his intentions and the things he failed to see became a really strong force within the story.

'Double or Nothing' was a comedy heist movie. Dave is one lucky and unlucky bastard. As I wrote it, I was thinking about larrikins like Barry McKenzie, and books by Shane Maloney and Robert G. Barrett. They usually work by contrasting the hero's beliefs against what is actually going on. In the screenplay there were great scenes of surveillance and cross-cut police mishaps outside the barge in Amsterdam and while Dave has to excrete the diamond packages in the grounds of Scone Castle. These worked well in the script, but once I chose to have Dave telling the story to a variety of *gendarmarie*, then clearly there were things he could not know at the time.

'You sure you're not spinning out of control?' Dave's mate Terry asks him. But Dave says he's spinning faster and faster so he's going to take off and fly away from the disasters. That's Dave. Spinning faster and faster.

What was the story that went through the most number of drafts? What changes occurred along the way as you moved from script to fiction?

'The Ring-In' went through the most drafts and for a variety of different reasons.

The first issue was point of view. Film is very fluid in regards to its handling of point of view. It appears to be objective, but actually moves into subjective views from different characters quite often, within a scene or even from shot to shot.

Yet, while film can be omniscient in choosing perspective, it does not go as deeply into consciousness as prose can. All of these things become choices for telling the story. Who sees this? Who is telling this? Who is experiencing this? And, as a consequence, what don't they see? Does the viewer? Does the reader? These are strategic storytelling choices, mind you, not rules.

The script of 'The Ring-In' used a lot of point of view shifts within scenes, sometimes line to line, whereas the journey towards the finished prose piece involved a variety of experiments concerning perspective and how quickly I could shift into another character's point of view while bringing the reader with me. (I'm wrestling with an academic article right now trying to explain why this is in more detail.)

In 'The Ring-In', Grace is the only character who has flashbacks. Her flashbacks are about the three years that have led her and her husband JJ to the events of this long, long day. Some folks who have read the script have had issues with the mix of time lines within the same story. I confess I was influenced by Tarantino when writing this script and loved the playfulness of changing it up. Can I also invoke *Breathless*? *Out of the Past* has a really interesting time structure too.

I had other discussions concerning 'The Ring-In' regarding genre and how that fitted in with Perth. These were conversations with my editor for the stories, and also with readers giving feedback on the drafts. There had been many earlier discussions on this script with producers, directors and script editors – so all this feedback can be tested or rejected or embraced.

Let me go back a step. When I first conceived of 'The Ring-In', I wondered whether the very American noir genre could be transplanted to Perth. Killers for hire seemed to be particularly American, and perhaps also European. I asked myself: what if my hero was not a gunslinger? What if he was more like you and me and not an ex-soldier and not a fist fighter or gun user? Could that person win without being Clint Eastwood (in younger days)?

David Whish-Wilson, Alan Carter and Dave Warner have all worked with crime in Western Australia and Perth. Robert Drewe does too, in *The Shark Net*. But the question of whether the noir could become *Perth suburban* noir, given some notorious events surrounding alleged race fixing, is what made me want to write this story, and it needed lots of tweaking to keep it believable and exciting as Aussie Noir.

Then came the issue of Perth and where the story would occur. I love the beach and the river too. But I didn't grow up there. I grew up as far west as Morley, as far north as Gnangara and Upper Swan, as far east as Mundaring. The centre of my pre-university world was Midland. Midland does not have a lot of sea breezes. It doesn't have a lot of surfies or hippies either. It's urban, industrial and pretty tough. Roe Highway sums up a lot of Australia, not just Perth – big bits of Sydney and Melbourne where their west is our east. And that's where I wanted 'The Ring-In', on what was once the edge of town ... where 'the boardwalk ends' ... and where I went to high school. So, in the course of drafting and revising, the version of Perth I worked with in this story was something I took time with, and of course, the result is a composite, not a documentary.

Reading your novel Spinner, about the cricketing wunderkind David Donald, and now reading these stories, it seems to me that storytelling as an art form is something you really enjoy and something which is central to your practice as a writer. Is this true?

Maybe it is. But *Spinner* needed a frame. The truth and the emergence of who was telling us this tale came late. With these stories, I was confronted with voice because it was more important in prose. Voice disappears in film. Unless it is *Forrest Gump* where someone is narrating, screenwriting rarely has a voice. The storyteller is effaced. Events are happening and we merely report what happens; the drama and characters are the story. And then, if the film is made, the scriptwriter disappears altogether; the film seems to exist in its own right (unless you're Charlie Kaufman!). But in some of this prose, it felt like a great chance to explore who tells the stories and therefore why we tell stories. Again, that became something central for me in *Spinner* – why we need David Donald and why we need stories.

But when it came to turning these five scripts into prose stories, *how to tell them* was in the front of my mind. I think I wanted to tell them differently because, unlike the screenplay form, I felt I had more narrative options in prose as to the different ways I could tell the stories.

In 'Small Claims', limiting the point of view to Zac preserved Robin's mystery but increased Zac's emotional depth. Using only Zac, I had to lose some bits of the screen story, but the emotional gains made up for this. Having Dave narrate his own story in 'Double or Nothing' brought out his humour and opened up a playfulness that the reader can be part of – 'Who? Who's he talking to now?' On the other hand, a restricted point of view would not have worked at all in 'For the Birds' because I needed the ironic outside stance and the interplay of lots of characters – like the internet.

This brings me back to the divergent time lines that I mentioned regarding the rewrites of 'The Ring-In'.

There's a very strong power in a story proceeding over a very short time frame with the clock ticking. I was intrigued by who Grace was and who she could become, and so I also used her flashbacks. Flashbacks are supposed to be suspense killers. We wait around till people have finished showing the past so we can get back on the exciting train of the present. Anyway, I felt the prose story should have the robustness to carry Grace's backstory and the present story. Who she had become could not be contained within one night. On the other hand a lot of Simon and Ellis's past is conveyed in their dialogue. In 'The Ring-In', there's three stories all heading towards the crash site.

Where do your ideas come from?

Everywhere. At any time. I write them down on scraps of paper and put them in piles of possibly related material. For instance, I once wrote a drama for the WA Academy of Performing Arts based on the hypothermia experiments at Dachau. It was an exploration of evil called 'Good'. It came from a single photograph I saw on an ABC documentary discussing the ethics of using the findings of 'tainted experiments'. The black and white photo was of a man dressed as a pilot suspended over a tank of water. Right then, I wanted to write about that man. And so I researched and wrote the drama, which we recorded at Channel 10 in Perth. But usually, it isn't as clear or as strong as that.

'Random Malice' came from the scene in the Christmas store. I was there with my two girls and this kid was being very annoying around a racing car display, and was reaching in and disrupting things. Finally a random father tried to stop him and out of nowhere came this aggressive man – the father of the annoying kid. 'Don't you touch my kid. Don't you ever touch my kid.' It was quite scary. There were Christmas carols playing in the background. I ushered my girls away rather than stand up to him, as my character Daniel did ... and I had a neighbour who had a business and there was a recession on ... and I have been renovating houses (mine) for years and then I thought, what if this guy from the Christmas store just fixed on you, like a curse, like a recession?

'The Ring-In' had lots of influences. I was intrigued by a news story I had read about this jockey and his girlfriend who'd been sent on holiday for two years to keep them from testifying on a gambling trick called a horse ring-in. I think it was the Fine Cotton Affair. None of the existing story has any basis in real events, I should add. Anyway, I couldn't leave the idea alone. What if the girlfriend read books while they were away? What if she gave herself an education and came back changed? At the same time, I'd been thinking about all the American crime stuff I liked to read and thought – what if your hero didn't shoot? What if he was an anti-Clint? I have trouble with the notion that 'might' wears the 'white hat'. In addition, there was a guy who wanted to beat me up in high school. And then there was the idea of Midland, its portrayal, and the rural edges of Perth where I grew up. So, there were a few ideas meshing and sparking. (By the way, I'd written three drafts of the script before the Tom Cruise film *Collateral* came out, which killed off producer interest in making 'The Ring-In' for a while, but was not an influence on my story.)

Are you particularly drawn to stories or films about crime?

I like crime books. I go through periods where I devour them. I've had other periods during which I read a lot of science fiction. And I love literary fiction too.

I have a long list of crime. In Oz, there's Peter Corris, Peter Temple, Gabrielle Lord, Alan Carter, David Wish-Wilson and Dave Warner. But I've always been drawn to American noir – Jim Thompson, David Goodis and Cornell Woolrich. I've read Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, of course, and I love Michael Connelly and Elmore Leonard, as well as James Lee Burke and Ross MacDonald. Not so keen on Ellroy. Then there's the more police procedural stuff like Patricia Cornwell and Martin Cruz Smith. And spies. I love everything John le Carré writes. Everything. Grit. I like a lot of grit. I don't like drawing room, village stuff. Not a fan of Miss Marple or Poirot. I loved Malla Nunn's first novel, *A Beautiful Place to Die*.

I also like film noir. *Out of the Past*. Oh, and both versions of *Cape Fear*. I also really like newer films such as *Body Heat*, *Chinatown* and *The Grifters*, oh and *Red Rock West* and *The Last Seduction*. Some folks have started suggesting *Raging Bull* is noir, but it's not. It might tick some boxes, but noir is criminal. *Seven* and *Miller's Crossing*, maybe. *Blade Runner*, sure. *The Third Man* is noir. My favourite is *Double Indemnity*. Noir is petty as well as greedy.

How do considerations of genre affect your prose?

These are very important in film. There are rules and conventions. I like the bending part of it. The genre stuff then goes elsewhere and questions the tropes that it employs. It should never be a formula, but you do need to study the genre before you write in it because the audience has expectations – these can then be extended. I fell in love with genre through westerns; I saw how there were cycles in a genre, parodies, and the intertextuality of films talking to each other. *Rio Bravo* and *High Plains Drifter* were two different answers to *High Noon*. *Little Big Man* and *The Searchers* answered more basic earlier dichotomies. And then *Deadwood* came along and redefined civilisation and morality again. I love westerns. *The Proposition* pushes these conventions into the Australian past. *Bad Day at Black Rock* is a great western. Knowing and using genre conventions allows you to throw up certain kinds of sparks against the rules.

I believe that all the stories in *Now Showing* play with genre expectations and awareness. 'Random Malice' plays it straight, but 'The Ring-In' hopefully keeps you guessing with characters, expectations and events, while all the time you are wondering if Simon is going to crack. I hope 'Small Claims' plays with the yearnings that life is like a movie, when it's not. It's messy and we don't get to shoot our way to happiness. I think that Crime is a broad enough church to allow my stories to sit amongst the congregation – maybe near the back or behind the baby window.

What are some of your important cinematic influences?

My cinematic influences are too many and too varied to mention. Cinema of the fifties and seventies? The growth of Hollywood independents. The second wave of Australian directors such as Weir, Armstrong, Beresford and Schepisi. World cinema. Wong Kar-wai. Zhang Yimou. Ang Lee. Ingmar Bergman. Ridley Scott. Kieslowski. Mike Leigh. Herzog, Fassbinder and Wim Wenders. Scorsese. Francis Ford Coppola. I love *Bringing Up Baby*, *Groundhog Day* and also *There's Something about Mary*. I don't like David Lynch. I'm not very partial to all the special effects, gadgets and *Avengers* stuff, but like *Iron Man* and *Captain America*. I like Arnold Schwarzenegger movies and Atom Egoyan.

Ron's top ten films: *Blade Runner*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *The Godfather*, *Three Colours: Blue*, *Wild Strawberries*, *In the Mood for Love*, *The Conformist*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Misfits*. Oh, okay, then ... and *Doctor Zhivago*, *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter*, *The General*, *Pulp Fiction*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, lots of Kurosawa films and *Alien*. Oh, and all the films that Paul Newman was in. There. My top ten (or so).

Double or Nothing
(aka Crossed Lines)

by

Ron Elliott

First Draft
Sept 1998

**Developed with the assistance of ScreenWest,
Channel 7 and Scottish Television Enterprises**

September 98.

Excerpt I: how the script began

1. EXT. DESERT - DAY

An impossibly white burning sun.

A wide, flat, brown land. The Australian desert, somewhere between Newman and Marble Bar.

And in the middle of this no-where is a telecom van, parked next to a bullet holed telephone box. And on top of the phone box, fixing a solar panel is DAVE KELLY. Thirty something, not bad looking and sweating. Flies litter his back and fight to get at the moisture round his mouth. They've long since left the withered remains of a dead kangaroo nearby. Dave's not a happy camper, but then, he's not supposed to be.

The radio from his van is plaintive in the emptiness. We should probably expect something in the Country and Western field, like *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, but it's not. It the *Doors* doing *The End*.

Excerpt II: in Amsterdam

35 INT. BARGE - NIGHT

Dave is dripping in his towel, looking from Margret, who he thought would, well... To Campbell and Kurishi, who are in the way, and not pleased.

CAMPBELL
(REPEATS THE QUESTION)
What's going on here?

DAVE
You guys didn't show, so ...

MARGRET
Well, whatever was going to happen won't now.
If you'll excuse me, gentlemen.

Margret makes a step to leave, and Campbell suddenly grabs Margret's handbag.

DAVE
Hey.

CAMPBELL
I don't like surprises. Let's see who we've...
Ah. Deary deary me.

Campbell pulls a sandwich bag full of uncut diamonds out of Margret's handbag.

Dave is stunned and hurt. Margret looks chastened at Campbell, but then turns to Dave.

MARGRET
Sorry Angus. They looked valuable, and well,
I did tell you I was a liar, but I'm also a thief.
Nothing personal.

DAVE
Evidently not.

CAMPBELL

What you got going here Angus. Little double cross?

DAVE

Why would I travel all this way before I did it, if that's what I was going to do?

MARGRET

Look, I don't know what you've all got going here, and I'd really rather not.

CAMPBELL

It's not up to you to "rather" anything.

MARGRET

I'm hardly in a position to say anything to anyone.

CAMPBELL

(MAKES A DECISION)

Naw. I think you'll no be in any position to do that.

Ah. Things have stepped up a little suddenly in the dimly lit cabin. Dave looks towards Margret in alarm. She's not too keen either.

DAVE

Alls well that ends well. You've got the stones.

Campbell hands the package to Kurishi, who heads for the table.

CAMPBELL

We'll see.

And Kurishi opens his case and sets about pulling out testing equipment.

36 EXT.

BARGE

- NIGHT

The barge sits in the Amstel river, a bare glimmer of light peeking between mostly drawn curtains. Up across the street there's a barest glimmer of movement in an unlit third story window.

37 INT.

AMSTEL STRAAT OFFICE

- NIGHT

The well dressed Dutchman, who we saw Mal and Bruce talking to at the airport, stands looking through binoculars and talking into a walkie talkie.

VAN SHOOTEN

(IN DUTCH)

Can you see?

DIVER (WALKIE TALKIE VO)

(IN DUTCH)

Not yet.

38 EXT. AMSTEL RIVER - NIGHT

A scuba diver, resplendent in night scope binoculars, water proof clip on communications and pen light torch is easing up onto a garden barge a few houseboats down from Dave's.

39 INT. AMSTEL STREET OFFICE - NIGHT

Van Shooten is still watching, a couple of more Dutch police with him. Bruce is there too.

BRUCE

What a shimozzle.

Van Shooten tightens.

VAN SHOOTEN

It's under control now.

BRUCE

I hope Mal's alright.

Van Shooten, still tight, takes a breath.

VAN SHOOTEN

I have more than enough to concern me, don't you think, without also looking for lost Australian policemen.

Bruce could say more. A lot more. But he holds his tongue.

DIVER (WALKI TALKI VO)

I have a line of sight. The stones are here.

Bruce looks about him. How'd they manage to stay with the diamonds? He knows. Because of him, that's how.

and it's back to Bruce's recent past.

40 INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - DAY

Bruce and Mal sit in the back of an unmarked police car, following Dave's taxi. Van Shooten and a driver are in the front.

MAL

The contact has a Scottish accent, but whether he's a middle man or where the diamonds are headed, Ken couldn't say.

VAN SHOOTEN

So your plan was to follow the courier.

BRUCE

Canals. You really do have canals.

MAL

We can't be sure it's not the tip of a major diamond smuggling operation.

BRUCE

Sure a lot of bikes.

VAN SHOOTEN

Yes, well our co-operation will be complete.

The utmost. The control of the flow of diamonds has the highest priority.

41 EXT.

AMSTEL STRAAT

- DAY

Dave's taxi pulls up opposite his future barge, and the unmarked police car slides in back up the street.

42 EXT/INT.

UNMARKED POLICE CAR

- DAY

Bruce looks across the river and nudges Mal. Across the river from Dave's barge is a famous Amsterdam diamond cutting house: Amstel Diamonds.

MAL

At this stage we're not sure whether the diamonds are bound for one of your diamond cutting houses, or whether they're being moved on.

VAN SHOOTEN

Gentlemen, leave it to me.

Bruce opens his mouth to complain, but Mal silences him with a look.

DRIVER

(IN DUTCH)

And see how it's done properly.

43 EXT.

RED LIGHT DISTRICT

- TWILIGHT

The unmarked police car sits across the canal from where Dave can be seen talking to the French youths outside the African brothel.

Van Shooten talks into the car radio handset.

VAN SHOOTEN

(IN DUTCH)

Anything.

UNDERCOVER (RADIO VO)

(IN DUTCH)

It might be a code word.

(IN DUTCH)

Jack It.

Bruce is looking at the various windows filled with brazen prostitutes with his eyes popping.

BRUCE

No wonder they've got so many guys to do

this surveillance. Nothing is illegal in this town.

VAN SHOOTEN

This could be the hand over. They're heading in!

UNDERCOVER (RADIO VO)
(IN DUTCH)

They know me in there!

Van Shooten turns to the Australians in the back. He considers Bruce for the barest fraction of a second, before talking urgently to Mal.

VAN SHOOTEN

Does your Ken know you?

MAL

Not by sight, but he's ours.

VAN SHOOTEN

I need someone not known to go in.

Mal nods.

They all start to get out of the car.

VAN SHOOTEN
(TO BRUCE)

You stay.

Bruce is grumpy, as he watches.

44 EXT.

RED LIGHT DISTRICT -TWILIGHT

Mal hurries across a footbridge and into the African brothel, every second person in the street clearly some form of under cover policeman as they clear his way.

45 EXT.

VAN/RED LIGHT DISTRICT - TWILIGHT

Bruce, feeling left out gets out of the car and looks a little up the street. He goes there as the back of a van opens and the American tourists and the Moroccan dope peddler Dave had talked to are being let out and handed packs.

YANK 1

This is outrageous. Our consulate will hear about this.

COP

Oh, then we must charge you with these drug offences, perhaps.

Bruce turns to see the entire police force descending on the Frenchmen. Wow. It's going down.

But then he turns to see Dave, now dressed in totally different clothes talking to a woman. He looks after them, then back towards the brothel.

and we leap back to the present.

46 INT. AMSTEL STRAAT OFFICE - NIGHT

Bruce sits in the upstairs office, sure he's saved the whole operation, and worried about Mal's whereabouts.

Van Shooten turns to him.

VAN SHOOTEN

Are you sure this Ken of yours is working with you?

BRUCE

No. His fingers were caught in the till, so...

VAN SHOOTEN

Till?

BRUCE

Mal, where-ever he is, said it's a deal. He's co-operating rather than do jail time.

VAN SHOOTEN

So he may have been trying to throw us off the scent.

BRUCE

That, or it was a stuff up.

Van Shooten glares at him, before turning back with the binoculars.

47 INT BARGE - NIGHT

Kurishi puts down an eye glass, still holding one of the stones, as Margret, Dave and Campbell wait with varying degrees of bated breath.

When Kurishi finally speaks, he's got a thick London accent.

KURISHI

Mostly shit.

DAVE

That's what I ... I haven't changed them.

KURISHI

But geologically it's what the guv wanted.

It's clear Kurishi is slightly perplexed, but not disappointed.

KURISHI (CONT.)

This one's gem quality. The rest are industrial.
And no pinks as requested.

CAMPBELL

Speak fuckin English.

KURISHI
(HURT)

These are them. A lot of Fuck'n fuss for not too much.

CAMPBELL

Ours not to reason why. Now, on to less tasty business.

He looks at Margret. So does Dave.

48 EXT.

AMSTEL RIVER

- NIGHT

The scuba diver is crouched amongst the potted plants with his binoculars trained through the windows of the barge.

DIVER
(IN DUTCH)

They've examined the stones, but something is up.

A light suddenly comes on, illuminating the garden barge. A Dutch woman in her sixties opens the back door of her house boat.

WOMAN
(IN DUTCH)

What are you doing in my garden.

The diver dives into the river.

49 INT.

BARGE

- NIGHT

Campbell turns at the noise outside.

WOMAN (OFF)
(DUTCH)

What are you doing in my garden?

I will call the police.

Margret continues to be full of surprises. In spite of her skirt, she manages a very acceptable looking karate kick into Campbell's knee.

With an ooph, he falls, and Margret steps around and up the first step, before Campbell manages to grab her ankle.

Dave steps forward and leaps, landing on Campbell, breaking his grasp.

Margret runs up the steps, but turns at the door.

MARGRET

I owe you one Angus.

And she's gone.

Dave doesn't get time to reply, because Kurishi hits him over the head with a cosh.

and leap forward to Scotland.

Excerpt III: in Scotland

66 INT. BIRNHAM INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dave winces at the memory, touching his abdomen gingerly. There might actually still be one little package hiding inside him somewhere. Out of the frying pan.

DAVE

You couldn't tell them I suppose about me rescuing you guys in the forest.

ROWNTREE

As far as I'm concerned you're a criminal. And what you did in that cemetery is the most disgusting thing I've ever seen.

Dave looks at her. She saw that?

And Rowntree glares at him, as she thinks back...

67 EXT. SCONE CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

Bruce Roberts and Robyn Rowntree head along the far wall of the cemetery, Rowntree extracting a camera from her back pack.

BRUCE

(WHISPERS INTO A WALKIE TALKIE)

We're approaching the wall. Breaking radio contact.

68 EXT. CEMETERY WALL - DAY

Rowntree moves up with the camera, to look through a small hole in the wall. She recoils, and quickly comes down and whispers to Roberts.

ROWNTREE

You know how to use a camera?

Bruce nods. Takes over and looks through the view finder. He blinks, and shoots a look to Rowntree. Yuk. She nods agreement. She just might be sick.

back to the present.

69 INT. BIRNHAM POLICE STATION - DAY

Colley, Van Shooten and Bruce are deciding what to do.

VAN SHOOTEN

We should go with the diamonds.

COLLEY

(IGNORING VAN SHOOTEN)

Do you believe him?

BRUCE

It doesn't really matter does it? He's passed on the diamonds.

COLLEY

Yes. My people are following our Mr Dewer, but...

VAN SHOOTEN

Then why are we wasting time here?

COLLEY

We've still not arrested innocent people here. We've still not lost policemen here. Perhaps you might leave it in my hands, Brigadier.

Van Shooten glowers.

It's Van Shooten's turn to remember and summarise his grievances.

70 INT. GLASGOW AIRPORT CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

IAIN COLLEY, an Edinburgh policeman is welcoming Van Shooten and Bruce to Scotland.

COLLEY

Gentleman, welcome to Scotland. We weren't expecting you Mr Van Shooten...

VAN SHOOTEN

Brigadier.

COLLEY

Quite. So we'll do our best to accommodate our hands across the ocean and our united Europe operations.

It's clear there's a little bit of play going on here, and in a very unAustralian polite way, Van Shooten's being told to shut up and enjoy the ride.

VAN SHOOTEN

As we would you.

Colley lays out some photos of Kurishi and Campbell, with a faintly admonishing grimace.

COLLEY

Now we have identified the contacts as Rafi Kurishi: armed robber, fence and burglar. Not surprisingly, his area of expertise is gems. Some drugs. This chap is Greame Campbell. What we know in Scotland as a "hard man". Muscle for hire whose been into everything. He's your basic sociopath. We're still hunting through the list of known associates. So, two bad eggs, who could be hired by anyone. We're following your Ken now. Any news of your missing colleague Sergeant Roberts?

Bruce shakes no, and looks to Van Shooten, who glowers at this cheap shot.

71 INT. POLICE COMMUNICATION VAN - DAY

Colley, Van Shooten and Bruce are crowded in the back of a hi-tech police van listening in as some Glasgow police techs monitor the room call Campbell had made. It comes over on a little speaker.

DEWER (V.O.)

Noo matter. The woman in Holland bothers me.
Bring him to Perth. I'll meet you at Scone Castle.

CAMPBELL (VO)

Scone castle!

DEWER (V.O.)

Aye. I wan you to take the train up. Look to see
if yurr being followed.

The line goes dead.

COLLEY

Trace that Alan. Let's get moving to Perth.

He turns to look at Bruce.

COLLEY

Sergeant I wonder if you'd mind posing as an Australian
tourist. I have a visiting English P.C. that might make
that part of the train trip work.

Bruce nods.

VAN SHOOTEN

And I?

COLLEY

(SWEETLY)

Am welcome along for the ride.

Van Shooten seems to be developing an angry tick at his jaw line.

72 INT/EXT. VAN/CASTLE CAR PARK - DAY

A delivery van sits near a tourist bus in the car park at Scone Castle. A peacock squawks.

Van Shooten and Colley watch a number of video screens. One shows the Church on Moot Hill, and another a close up of Campbell and Dewer talking. The wider shot pans off to show Dave and Kurishi heading for the cemetery.

COLLEY

Get me an ident on this fellow. (HE POINTS TO DEWER)
Eagle, go with Ken. Ferrit stay on the hill. Get me close ups.

VAN SHOOTEN
(ARCHLY)

What wonderfully evocative code names.

It's Colley's turn to glare.

But they both turn back to the screens with a kind of hypnotised horror.

COLLEY
Oh.

VAN SHOOTEN
Perhaps you might rescind your order for
close ups Inspector.

and back to Van Shooten in the warm glow of the present.

73 INT. BIRNHAM POLICE STATION - DAY

Van Shooten smiles at the memory, then tunes into Colley on the phone.

COLLEY
James Dewer's heading home? Damn. Alright.
Stay there, but don't move.

74 INT. FERRY BOAT INN (ULLAPOOL) - DAY

A bevy of undercover police look out of a window at the ferry boat in.

COP
(TO RADIO)
Right you are sir.

He buttons off and looks through his binoculars.

75 EXT. ULLAPOOL FERRY JETTY - DAY

The green jaguar is joining a line of cars driving onto the huge boat that will take them to the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland.

A lovely looking tourist rides in on a bike. It's Margret. She smiles, and heads for the ferry.

76 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dave and Rowntree's silence is broken as the policemen return with a new plan.

COLLEY
Let us suppose for a moment that you aren't Ken,
and you didn't steal the original diamonds. Let us,
therefore, consider the more recent charges.

DAVE
More recent?

VAN SHOOTEN

Diamond smuggling into Holland.

BRUCE

Diamond theft. And smuggling out of Australia.
Interference at the scene of an accident.

COLLEY

Fraud. Perverting the course of justice. The assault on poor old Campbell.

ROWNTREE

Desecration of a national shrine.
They turn to her.

ROWNTREE

The cemetery.

COLLEY

Yes, we don't take kindly to illegal immigrants
relieving themselves on our heritage.

VAN SHOOTEN

Littering and exposure at the very least.

BRUCE

You're in the shit Ken.

DAVE

Dave.

BRUCE

Yeah. Ken had immunity while he helped us.
You on the other hand don't even have that.

COLLEY

That's all a lot of jail time in whichever country
you might choose.

Dave looks at them. They obviously have plans for him. And he obviously doesn't have a very good hand. He takes a breath, trying a smile that really isn't interested. Well, it looks like it's time for another bet on Dave's future. Another roll of the dice.

we tumble forward like those dice to see if Dave's number's up.

77 EXT.

LEWIS ROAD

- DAY

The island of Lewis contains a number of different geo-physical features. Mostly it's shite. Rolling gentle hills of bog and rock, with no trees and lots of water. A cyclist in a bright red and blue coat is battling through the rain and sheep up a more than gentle rise.

The hills have started. So have the lochs. Four or five modern houses sit next to ruined stone Crofts and constitute a village. Black faced sheep wander the road. The rain gets heavier, and Dave stops peddling and starts to wheel his bike up a hill. He's very nearly exhausted.

A sheep turns to look at him.

DAVE
I know.

The sheep nods and turns away.

Dave looks about him. It's a desert. A totally wet desert. Dave's travelled from the arse hole of the world in Australia, only to find another arse hole of the world.

How he wonders, not for the first time, how he got himself...

End of script excerpts.