

F O R Y O U R C O N S I D E R A T I O N

Memor of a SNAIL

A film by Adam Elliot



BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

ADAM ELLIOT

IFCFilms

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Memoir of a Snail

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Post Storyboard / Shooting Script
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Black Screen. Orchestral music begins to play by Elena Kats-Chernin (famous Australian classical composer).

Camera slowly pulls out of a black hole to reveal the wrinkled mouth and face of a very old woman, PINKY. She is lying in a bed covered in a snail patterned quilt. Beside her on a chair sits, GRACE, a woman in her late twenties wearing an odd looking handknitted hat with protruding pipecleaner antennas. Pingpong eyeballs are stuck on the ends. She holds Pinky's hand and looks deeply concerned. Pinky's breathing falters as her eyelids begin to close. There is silence. Suddenly her eyes pop open.

PINKY
(delirious)

The Potatoes!

Grace leans in closer and looks confused.

GRACE
Potatoes? ... Pinky ... what do you mean?

Pinky freezes, exhales, turns her head and dies. Grace bows her head as a tear rolls down her cheek.

GRACE
(whispered)
Oh ... Pinky.

Fade to black. Title to film fades on in handwriting :
MEMOIR OF A SNAIL. Fades off.

Cut to Grace sitting on a bench in a lush vegetable garden. She is wearing her handknitted snail hat and some gumboots. Under her arm she is holding an urn containing Pinky's ashes. A gold plaque reads : R.I.P. Pinky - Holding Angels' Hands.

Nearby a handpainted sign stuck in the dirt reads : Pinky's Pitypit. Grace looks at the urn pensively. She takes the lid off and sprinkles Pinky's ashes amongst the vegetables.

GRACE
Farewell Pinky.

Tears roll from her eyes as she picks up a jar of live snails. One of the snails has SYLVIA, painted on its shell. She opens the jar. The snails crawl out and slowly begin to escape.

GRACE

(whispering to the snails)

Be free guys ... be free Sylvia ...

She picks up Sylvia and lets her glide along her finger one last time. She brings her closer to her tear soaked face. Her sobbing subsides. She begins talking to the snail.

GRACE

Don't worry, I'll be ok ... I wasn't always this alone ... (reflects) ... my childhood was full of people.

CUT BACK TO PAST.

Flashback to Grace as a child. Closeup on her face. Her eyes are closed and she has a dreamy smile.

GRACE

Dad used to say that childhood was like being drunk ... everyone remembers what you did ... except you!

Her eyes open and she begins to examine her environment.

GRACE (V.O.)

But my childhood was sobering,
Sylvia ... I remember everything ...
right from the get-go.

The camera widens to reveal Grace is inside her mother's womb next to her twin brother, GILBERT.

GRACE (V.O.)

I'd always liked feeling caged in ...
snug and protected.

Grace seems content, while Gilbert looks eager to escape. Suddenly Grace disappears from the womb with a pop.

GRACE (V.O.)

It was a shock to be born premature ...

Cut to Grace as a new born baby in a crib.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I wasn't fully baked ...

Closeup on her lip. She has a cleft palate between her lip and nose that resembles a rabbit's mouth.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and looked like a baby rabbit.

She looks startled and vulnerable. Her eyes dart looking for her brother and mother. At the top of her crib a label tells her full name : Grace Prudence Pudel (pronounced Puddle). A nurse places Gilbert next to her in the crib. He is slightly bigger and healthier.

GRACE (V.O.)

I was named Grace Prudence Pudel ... my twin ... brother ... Gilbert.

Grace smiles at her brother's arrival. They are wearing matching tiny teeshirts. One says : Double. The other : Trouble. Closeup on their freckles.

GRACE (V.O.)

The nurse said we had two souls but one heart ... I liked that.

Cut to Grace's mother's headstone : RIP Annie Pudel 1950 - 1972.

GRACE (V.O.)

Our birth was very strenuous for mum ... we left her womb ... she entered her tomb.

A snail is sitting atop of the headstone and is wriggling slightly. It suddenly stops, retreats into its shell, dies, and rolls off to the ground below. It leaves behind a pile of eggs.

GRACE (V.O.)

Mother snails did the same after they'd had their babies.

Cut to Grace aged five. Close up on her face. She is pale and wheezing heavily. She is having an asthma attack.

GRACE (V.O.)

As I grew older I suffered a smorgasbord of afflictions ... and was always back in hospital for something.

A hand enters the screen and inserts an asthma pump into her mouth. She looks bewildered. It sprays a burst of gas into her lungs. She inflates slightly.

GRACE (V.O.)

The doctors said I was like a china-doll you could shatter with just a stare.

The camera widens to reveal Grace lying on an operating table. There are multiple surgeons about to perform surgery on her cleft palate.

GRACE (V.O.)

Eventually they needed to fix my floppy lip.

She looks scared as one of the surgeons approaches her face with a scalpel blade. Cut to black.

Cut to an electronic heart rate monitor showing Grace's pulse plummeting. The surgeon looks worried.

GRACE (V.O.)

Things went bad ... I lost so much blood I needed a transfusion.

Cut to Gilbert age five, sitting on a chair outside the surgery. Suddenly he is approached by an anxious looking surgeon.

GRACE (V.O.)

The doctor asked Gilbert if he'd give me his.

He sits quietly as the surgeons explain what he needs to do. Gilbert looks worried, but slowly nods his head. A tear runs down his face.

GRACE (V.O.)
He said yes, even though he thought
he'd have to die to save me.

Cut to Gilbert attached to a tube draining blood from his arm. He looks pale and turns to one of the doctors.

GILBERT
How long before I die?

The doctors and nurses look shocked.

GRACE (V.O.)
They quickly explained he wouldn't
die ... his body would make new blood.

Gilbert looks relieved. The colour in Grace's cheeks returns as the remainder of Gilbert's blood flows into her veins.

GRACE (V.O.)
He became everyone's hero that
night ... especially mine.

Grace looks at her brother and smiles with appreciation and reverence.

Grace's eyes widen as she looks up at her father.

GRACE (V.O.)
To cheer me up, Dad gave me Mum's old
jewellery box ...

She opens the lid. An ornamental snail begins to spin to the tune : Alouette. Inside the box she pulls out a little family of porcelain ornamental snails : a mother, father, and two children. Grace's eyes widen further and a huge smile spreads. She then reaches in and pulls out a large silver ring in the shape of a snail.

GRACE (V.O.)
... inside it had her snail collection
and her ring ... She'd loved snails as
well and had been a malacologist at the
Melbourne Museum ...

She looks at the ring then gives it to Gilbert appreciatively. He puts it on his finger and smiles.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I thought Gilbert should have it.

GILBERT

(Bravely)

I'm gonna wear this till the day I die,
Gracie ...

Fade to black.

Fade up to a wide shot of the city of Melbourne, Australia. Housing commission apartments are silhouetted against a summer horizon as the sun sets. Bent tv antennas clutter the rooftops. On cramped balconies sit dehydrated potplants, dirty airconditioners, and a random birdcage with trapped cockatoo. We gently glide in through the window of one particular apartment.

The camera begins tracking. On the mantelpiece sits an ornate jar filled with black jellybeans. On the walls are dusty glass scientific displays of small insect skeletons, dead butterflies, dried snail shells, and other museum type objects. Scattered throughout the room are piles of old books and various bits of camera and lighting equipment. There is a dented Bolex 16mm film camera, an old wooden tripod and rusty film lights.

The camera keeps tracking to reveal Grace and Gilbert happily sitting and reading on either ends of a tattered couch.

GRACE (V.O.)

Despite my woes, Sylvia ... I believed
in glasses half full and silver
linings.

Their haircuts look homemade and their clothes secondhand. Grace is wearing her knitted snail hat. In the background an old black and white tv is playing : The Two Ronnies. Gilbert reads : Lord of the Flies. Grace reads a science book : The Lifecycle Of The Snail by Thaddeus Williams.

GRACE (V.O.)

Our home was our sanctuary ...
especially my bedroom.

Cut to Grace in her bedroom finishing a glass of milk. She looks innocent and gentle. Her room is neat and organised. She stands and stares dreamily at her shiny porcelain family of snails sitting on a shelf.

GRACE (V.O.)

Right angles brought me enormous
comfort ... as did my snails.

Her porcelain snails are all facing forward and are in perfect right angles to each other. Grace looks pleased with their arrangement.

GRACE (V.O.)

They were tangible memories of a mum I
never met ... They were my friends ...

Camera pulls wider to reveal more ornamental snails. These ones look slightly deformed and are handmade from modelling clay.

GRACE (V.O.)

... so I made more of them ... I knew
they'd never leave me ... hurt me ...
or die.

Cut to Grace looking at a homeless man lying motionless in a rose garden. It is winter and his lips are blue. He looks deceased.

GRACE (V.O.)

I didn't like people dying ...

Suddenly he shifts his weight. Grace looks relieved. She leans down and covers him in an old bedspread.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I wanted to save people ... save
the homeless ... my favourite was
James.

James looks snug and protected under the blanket. He begins to snore contently. She then lays tinsel and Christmas decorations over his shape.

GRACE (V.O.)

One Christmas I covered him in decorations so he could feel some Christmas cheer.

Grace looks happy and proud of herself. She takes some coins and teabags from her pocket and places them next to his drunken head. A whisky bottle can be seen protruding from his coat pocket.

GRACE (V.O.)

He loved tea.

He wakes up and smiles at her in appreciation. As he sits up he quietly mumbles :

JAMES

Bless you.

She blushes.

GRACE (V.O.)

He was once a magistrate ... but was defrocked for masturbating in the docks.

Flashback to James as a magistrate hiding in an empty courtroom at night behind a wooden row of seats. Only the top of his head can be seen. His eyes dart.

GRACE (V.O.)

Back then I thought masturbation meant chewing your food thoroughly ... He once told me that ... *masturbation was the thief of time.*

Cut back to James covered in Christmas decorations. James realises a small snail is crawling on his bald head. He notices Grace is wearing a snail hat. He takes the snail gently off and gives it to her. Her eyes widen with delight.

GRACE (V.O.)

James gave me my first real snail ... your mum, Sylvia.

Cut to a jar containing Grace's pet snail eating a bit of toast smeared with Vegemite.

Cut back to Gilbert on the couch reading : Lord of the Flies. Closeup of his face. He is very handsome but has a black eye.

GRACE (V.O.)

While I was busy trying to save the world, Gilbert was trying to fight it ... he saw people as a threat.

Flashback to a group of boys circling and teasing Grace at school. Tears pour down her face.

GRACE (V.O.)

He became my warrior ... protector defender.

She drops to the ground, rolls in a foetal ball and retreats into her imaginary shell. They begin to taunt.

THUGS

(Chanting)

Rabbitface ... rabbitface ...
rabbitface ...

One of the boys grabs her snail hat and runs into the boys' toilets. He hurls it into the urinals. Gilbert arrives to defend her.

GILBERT

(Angrily)

Hey fuckers!

Gilbert and the boy begin fighting. Gilbert gets punched in the face and his tooth flies out. Gilbert grabs one of the thug's fingers and breaks it backwards. A loud crack is heard. The thug runs off screaming.

GRACE (V.O.)

I wasn't brave like Gilbert ... I retreated into my shell.

Gilbert pants as blood trickles from his mouth, nose and eye. Grace picks up his bloody tooth. Closeup of the tooth in her palm. She gives it back to him. He shoves the tooth back into its socket and smiles at her in appreciation.

Cut to Gilbert standing by himself on their apartment balcony watching the sunset. He looks pensive.

GRACE (V.O.)

Despite his courage he was often sad ... seemed like he had a secret he wanted to tell ... His glass was half empty ... He was like Holden Caulfield, James Dean, and Charlie Brown all rolled into one.

Closeup on Gilbert's beautiful eyes looking at the horizon.

GRACE (V.O.)

He wanted to break free ...

Suddenly a caged cockatoo screeches from the balcony next door. The cage has a nametag, MILDRED. Gilbert's expression turns to anger.

GRACE (V.O.)

... free others ...

He climbs onto the neighbour's balcony and lets the bird out of its cage. It is hesitant at first to escape.

GILBERT

(Frustrated at bird)

Fly! ... FLY DAMN YOU! ... Go!

It suddenly launches from the balcony and flies into the distance screeching with joy.

GRACE (V.O.)

... rescue things.

Cut to Grace standing beside a busy road. She looks anxious as she spots a snail trying to cross. It has made it half way. Gilbert arrives, runs onto the road and rescues the snail. He gives it to her and she sighs in relief.

Cut to Grace and Gilbert putting the rescued snail into her jar with the other snail given by James.

GRACE (V.O.)

Gilbert loved animals as well ... and even became a vegetarian.

The two snails begin to mate. Gilbert and Grace watch with wonder. Closeup on the snail jar. Time lapse as little clumps of snail eggs appear, baby snails hatch out and the family grows.

GRACE (V.O.)

We created our own little families.

Jumpcut to Grace painting Sylvia's name on her shell with a felt-tipped marker pen. The swirl on Sylvia's shell rotates in an opposite direction to the other snails.

GRACE (V.O.)

You became my favourite, Sylvia ...
your swirl went opposite to the
others ...

Cut to a closeup of a book : The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath.

GRACE (V.O.)

Gilbert named you after Mum's favourite
author.

Cut to Gilbert gazing at one of the candles on his birthday cake. Closeup on the flame.

GRACE (V.O.)

But the thing that made Gilbert really
unique ... was his love of fire ... he
wanted to eat it!

He is mesmerised. Suddenly he lurches forward and eats the flame.

Cut to Gilbert playing alone in his bedroom. On his desk he has lined a row of matches like dominoes that leads to a small firecracker.

GRACE (V.O.)

He'd spend hours playing with it ...
inventing tricks ...

He lights the first match and the chain reaction begins.
Cut to black and the sound of an explosion.

GRACE (V.O.)

... he always smelt like burnt matches.

Cut back to Gilbert post-explosion. His face is sooty and there is smoke all around. He turns to the audience and smiles.

Cut to Gilbert by himself in the playground on a bench reading : Catcher in the Rye. Girls nearby stare at him adoringly.

GRACE (V.O.)

At school the girls swooned ... He was the flame ... they were the moths ...

Gilbert pays them no attention.

GRACE (V.O.)

... but he was more interested in his magic ... I think he just wanted to disappear ...

Cut to Gilbert inside Bert's Magic Shop. It is dingy and decrepit.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and spend all his pocketmoney at Berts's.

Bert sits behind the cash register smoking a cigarette. He is wearing a stained singlet with ash spilling down his front. Gilbert walks over to the counter to purchase a large packet of sparklers.

GRACE (V.O.)

Bert was the type of person parents told you to avoid ... someone who might offer you boiled lollies.

Cut to a shelf in the back room of Bert's shop. It is full of various bongos and smoking paraphernalia. Cut to a wide shot of Bert's Magic Shop at night.

GRACE (V.O.)

Bert's seemed anything *but* magical.

Flash forward twenty years to a fantasy scene of Gilbert as a handsome bohemian adult. He is a street performer in Paris and is breathing fire. A handpainted sign near his feet says : The Amazing Gilbert Pudel

GRACE (V.O.)
 Gilbert's dream was to be a street
 performer in Paris.

Crowds applaud. Match dissolve back to Gilbert as a child. He is in the same fire breathing pose. He grips all the sparklers he bought from Bert's. In his other hand he ignites a cigarette lighter. Grace watches him nervously from the sidelines. His face and arms are covered in bandaids.

GRACE (V.O.)
 He was always practising ... and often
 burnt himself ...

He puts the lighter to the heads of the sparklers. They burst into a massive ball of flames and singe his hair and eyelashes.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... but pain didn't bother him ... nor
 fear.

Sparks fly everywhere. Grace screams. Gilbert and Grace get covered in the burning embers that rain down on them.

Jumpcut to a closeup of Gilbert and Grace's scars on their forearms.

GRACE (V.O.)
 We got little scars and when we put our
 arms together

They align their arms. The scars form a smiley face.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... they formed a face.

They look at their arms and giggle.

GRACE (V.O.)
 It felt great when we did this. Our
 feelings aligned ...

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Grace sitting in Pinky's Pitypit telling her life story to Sylvia the snail.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... A lot of twins say this Sylvia, and
 it's true. I felt his emotions ... his
 happiness ...

CUT BACK TO PAST.

Flashback to her childhood and a closeup of a framed photo
 sitting on a little table under the glow of a lamp. It is
 of a beautiful happy woman, their mother.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... and his sadness ... which seemed to
 be the fourth member of our family.

Their mother has freckles and raven black hair like her
 children. On the photo is written : Annie xo.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Mum's death had left a hole.

The camera focus shifts to their father in a wheelchair
 sitting nearby. He is overweight and snoring deeply.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Dad had tried to fill the void ...

Closeup on his withered bent legs.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... but he had his own problems.

He holds the novel : Of Mice and Men. As he snores his
 mouth gapes. A dead cigarette hangs from his lips.

Cut to a clip of an old 16mm scratched black and white
 animated film of a plasticine character walking along a
 street made out of cardboard.

GRACE (V.O.)
 He was French and had once been a
 street performer and an animator in
 Paris ... he made stopmotion films with
 an old Bolex camera ... He showed them
 to us sometimes.

The shot widens to show Percy and his children watching the film projected onto a white bed sheet pinned to their lounge room wall. An old noisy 16mm projector whirrs behind them. They giggle at the animated character.

Flashback to their father as a street performer on a Parisian sidewalk. The Eiffel tower can be seen on the horizon. A little sign perched against the wall reads : The Amazing Percy Pudel. He juggles six pingpong balls with his mouth in-between puffs from his cigarette.

GRACE (V.O.)

Mum met him on a holiday she'd won in
the Woman's Weekly Magazine.

Grace's mother stands nearby watching in awe. She is dressed like a tourist with a Box-Brownie camera hanging around her neck. She has printed snails all over her dress. She takes a photo of him. Percy spots her and winks, then draws on his cigarette and blows her a smoke ring in the shape of a heart. He looks at her snail decorated dress, smiles and then mutters to her in French.

PERCY

Bonjour petite dame d'escargot.
(Subtitles - Hello little snail lady)

She blushes.

GRACE (V.O.)

They fell in love and he followed her
back to Australia.

The scene morphs to him juggling outside the Flinders Street Train Station (or Luna Park) in Melbourne. A small crowd watches and applauds. Suddenly the screech of a car's breaks are heard. The crowd disperses. Percy still juggles with his head pointed upwards. He does not see the car hurtling towards him.

GRACE (V.O.)

But his career was soon ended by a
drunkdriver.

The screen goes black as the sound of the car hitting Percy's body is heard.

GRACE (V.O.)
He never juggled again ... and became a
paraplegic ...

Cut to Percy in his wheelchair looking out their lounge room
window at birds flying in the distance.

GRACE (V.O.)
... then slowly ... an alcoholic ...

Empty bottles of Bailey's Irish Cream Liqueur slowly
dissolve in around the base of his wheelchair.

GRACE (V.O.)
... just like the guy who'd hit him.

Closeup of Percy's bloodshot eyes as he looks at the framed
photo of his wife. Tears well.

GRACE (V.O.)
He was never an angry drunk ... just a
sad one ... Money had always been a
problem ... much worse since his
accident.

Closeup of the battery that powers his wheelchair.

GRACE (V.O.)
His pension barely paid for his
batteries ... Winning scratchies was
the only thing that brought him
hope ...

Cut to a screwed up scratchie stuck into the soil of a pot-
plant.

GRACE (V.O.)
... we found them everywhere.

Cut back to Percy at home asleep in his wheelchair snoring
loudly.

GRACE (V.O.)
To make matters worse, he slowly
developed sleep apnoea.

Suddenly he stops breathing. Gilbert and Grace stop reading
their books and look alarmed. They quickly start clapping

their hands loudly. He wakes up and looks startled. They look relieved and go back to their reading. Fade to black.

Fade up to Percy, Grace, and Gilbert out on the street attempting to jumpstart the battery on Percy's wheelchair. Gilbert is crouched beside a nearby car he has secretly attached very long jumper-leads to.

GRACE (V.O.)

Despite our hardships our little family unit was strong ...

Gilbert yells out.

GILBERT (Off camera)

Ready!

Percy pushes the starter button on his wheelchair and it bursts into life. Gilbert and Grace jump onto the back of the wheelchair as it zooms off down the street.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and there was plenty of joy.

Cut to the giant face at the entrance to The Luna Park rollercoaster and amusement centre.

GRACE (V.O.)

Our happiest day was when we went on The Big Dipper.

Cut to Gilbert, Grace, and Percy, slowly ascending The Big Dipper rollercoaster. They are sitting in the back carriage which rattles and shakes.

GRACE (V.O.)

It was scary ... scary because it was a hundred years old and might collapse.

The train pauses then plummets down the slope. They scream happily.

GRACE (V.O.)

Dad felt alive ... escaped his body.

Jumpcut to the three of them on the ground looking back at the rollercoaster silhouetted against the horizon. Closeup on Percy's face. He looks content.

GRACE (V.O.)

When he died, he said he wanted his
ashes sprinkled off The Big Dipper.

Jumpcut to Percy in a bubble-bath later that night. Gilbert and Grace are scrubbing him with big sponges. Percy smokes a cigarette while scratching a pile of scratchies.

GRACE (V.O.)

The day got even better on the way home
when Gilbert found a scratchie on the
ground ... We won twenty dollars ... so
Dad bought twenty more.

Percy scratches the final scratchie and then sighs. Closeup of the twenty losing scratchy tickets on the bathroom floor. He looks slightly humiliated as his children continue to scrub him.

GRACE (V.O.)

He hated we had to look after him ...

Cut to Percy after his bath wearing striped pyjamas while drinking Baileys in his wheelchair. He is looking out their lounge room window at birds flying freely in the distance as the sun sets. He looks pensive.

GRACE (V.O.)

... his body was his cage ... his glass
wasn't full or empty ... just a glass.

Percy stops looking out the window. His mood changes and he wheels himself over to an ornate jar of black Aniseed jellybeans. He smiles as he pops a jellybean into his mouth and then begins knitting a scarf.

GRACE (V.O.)

Knitting and black jellybeans were his
other addictions ... We didn't like
them but he loved them ... *an acquired
taste*, he'd say.

Cut to Grace watching her father knit. She is still wearing her snail hat.

GRACE (V.O.)

He'd knitted my snail hat ... and made
the eyeballs out of his old juggling
balls.

Cut to Percy asleep in his wheelchair. His tongue is
hanging out and is all black from the jellybeans. Gilbert
and Grace smell his breath.

GRACE (V.O.)

The jellybeans made his tongue all
black ... his breath aniseedy.

They start placing jellybeans on his bald head while he is
asleep. They form various shapes : a love-heart, a flower,
and a pair of boobs. A wry smile creeps across Percy's
face.

GRACE (V.O.)

We arranged them on his head while he
pretended to be asleep ... He let us do
stuff like that ... never told us off.

Cut to Gilbert and Grace taking turns at licking a nine
volt battery and getting zapped. Cut to Gilbert supergluing
monopoly pieces to his face.

GRACE (V.O.)

We were free to do what we wanted ...
He said childhood was *life's best*
season ... it never lasts but everyone
deserves one.

Cut to Gilbert tightrope-walking in his underpants across
the lounge room on a wire attached from the door-knob to
Percy's wheelchair. Percy looks on proudly.

GRACE (V.O.)

He was proud Gilbert wanted to be a
performer ... follow in his footsteps.

Closeup of the snail jewellery box. Percy's hand opens it
and the little mechanical snail begins to spin to :
Alouette.

GRACE (V.O.)

That night we got out Mum's jewellery box and sang our heads off. Dad got really drunk.

Gilbert, Grace, and Percy sing along loudly. Percy is happily drunk.

GILBERT GRACE PERCY

(out of tune)

Alouette, gentile Alouette, Alouette Je te plumerai la tête, Je te plumerai la tête ...

Cut to Gilbert, Grace, and Percy making a stopmotion animated film on their kitchen table. The old Bolex camera sits on a wooden tripod. They are animating Grace's clay snails frame by frame.

GRACE (V.O.)

Later Dad got out his Bolex and taught me more tips on how to animate ... I wanted to become an animator just like him.

Cut to all three of them quietly reading with new hairstyles.

GRACE (V.O.)

To top the night off we had a competition to see who could create the worst hairdo ...

Gilbert's hair is tied up in a man-bun, Percy's comb-over has been plastered into the shape of a snail swirl, and Grace's hair is shaped like Princess Leia's.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I won.

Gilbert is reading : Kafka's The Hunger Artist. Percy reads : The Grapes of Wrath. Grace reads : Memoir of a Geisha.

GRACE (V.O.)

Before bed we wound down by reading. I liked memoirs ... stories that weren't pretend.

Grace looks directly at the audience and then turns back to her book. As Percy reads he leans over and takes another jellybean from the jar. It clinks.

GRACE (V.O.)
 I remember the stillness that night ...
 the wonderful memories of that day ...
 fresh in our heads ...

Wideshot of all three reading. In the background the tv plays : The Two Ronnies.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... a day so precious ...

Long fade to black.

GRACE (V.O.)
 (sadly)
 ... but fleeting.

There is a long pause of black silence.

Cut to an abrupt extreme closeup of Grace's face. She looks frantic and distressed. Loud clapping sounds can be heard. Cut to Percy in his wheelchair. He is motionless, mouth wide open. Gilbert and Grace stand next to him clapping vigorously. They look extremely worried as Percy is not waking up as he usually does.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Despite our clapping ... this time dad
 never woke.

Percy is still clutching : The Grapes of Wrath. Tears roll down Gilbert and Grace's faces. Fade to black and silence.

Fade up to Grace in her bedroom packing a small suitcase of her belongings.

GRACE (V.O.)
 We couldn't afford a proper funeral, so
 Dad was cremated by the government ...
 his ashes given to us in a cardboard
 box.

Flashback to Grace pouring her father's ashes from the cardboard box into the empty jellybean jar with a funnel.

She has taped a handwritten label to the jar that reads :
R.I.P. Percy Pudel, an ace Dad.

Cut back to Grace packing her suitcase. She looks forlorn as she carefully puts her father's jellybean jar inside the suitcase next to his Bolex camera. She crams as many snails in as she can. The last thing she puts in is her mother's porcelain snails wrapped in tissues. As she exits her bedroom she looks back for one final look.

Jumpcut to Grace and Gilbert being escorted out of their home by a government child services officer. They get into an elevator.

GRACE (V.O.)

We were sent to foster homes ... in
separate states.

Grace and Gilbert's heads hang low as the elevator doors slam shut.

Cut to Grace and Gilbert standing near the door of an old Greyhound bus. Nearby stands the government official.

GRACE (V.O.)

We had no relatives, and no one wanted
to adopt twins ... especially weird
ones like us.

Grace is wearing her snail hat. From her suitcase she produces her mother's jewellery box and gives it to Gilbert. He looks at it and hugs her lovingly. Her head is nestled in the crevice of his neck.

GRACE (V.O.)

That was last time I saw my brother ...
the last time I smelt his scent of
burnt matches.

Gilbert climbs aboard and sits in the back seat. He looks out the window at Grace while holding the jewellery box. He waves goodbye as a tear rolls down his cheek. On his finger is their mother's snail ring. The bus chugs off over the horizon. Gentle thunder rumbles. Grace waves sadly.

GRACE (V.O.)

We never got to sprinkle Dad off The
Big Dipper.

Slow fade to black.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Adult Grace is still sitting on the ground in Pinky's Pitypit talking to Sylvia who is now sliding towards some vegetables. There are smaller painted signs scattered in the garden indicating various vegetables : pumpkins, carrots, etc. Grace sighs as her thoughts are brought back to the present. She looks over to Sylvia.

GRACE

Our lives were turned upside down and
back to front, Sylvia.

Close up of Sylvia slowly moving forward.

GRACE

We had no choice but to move
onwards ... upwards ... sideways.

CUT BACK TO THE PAST.

Cut to a bland sign on the side of a road next to a dried field. It reads : Welcome to Canberra - Australia's Safest City. Camera zooms in on small text at the bottom of the sign : Caution - This Sign Has Sharp Edges.

GRACE (V.O.)

I was sent to live with a childless
couple in Canberra ... which had won
safest city three years in a row ...

Cut to a generic family driving a Volvo car. They are all wearing bike helmets.

GRACE (V.O.)

... Some people even wore helmets
driving ... Back then Canberra wasn't
the exciting place it is today ...

Cut to the Canberra Times newspaper. Headline reads :
Potato Chip Found in Shape of Elvis.

Wideshot of Grace's new home in the drought stricken suburbs of Canberra. It is a dull 50's cream brick detached house with a tacky water-feature in the front yard

containing a concrete kangaroo. Flat generic suburbs stretch for miles. Crickets chirp, a cockatoo squawks in the distance. Nearby an old, one-eyed, bored Labrador is staring at its penis. It yawns. Closeup on Grace looking out her bedroom window. She notices a koala snoring in a tree.

GRACE (V.O.)

I suppose, *settled*, is the wrong word.
Traumatised was more accurate ...

Cut to Grace standing inside her new bedroom gazing at her snail collection. She seems unsettled. The Bolex camera sits next to her jar of live snails and Percy's urn of ashes.

GRACE (V.O.)

... Loss grief and the separation from
Gilbert made me anxious ...

Closeup of the snail jar.

GRACE (V.O.)

... but you and your siblings brought
me some comfort, Sylvia.

Cut to Grace sitting at a kitchen table with her new foster parents.

GRACE (V.O.)

My new foster parents, Ian and Narelle,
were pleasant enough.

They are eating eggs and bacon in the shape of smiley faces and drinking glasses of milk. Ian and Narelle are dressed in cream coloured tracksuits. Narelle has frizzy ponytails while Ian is bald with a thick groomed moustache and beard. They have toothy smiles, generic looking and quite pollyanna. They watch Grace staring at her food. Grace forces an appreciative smile.

GRACE (V.O.)

They were accountants for a company
that made traffic lights.

Cut to Ian and Narelle at work in a bland office. Their fake wood desks sit side by side. They are wearing matching

outfits and tap at large calculators. They are still smiling.

Cut to Grace sitting in her bedroom reading a self help book : Feel Better Fast. Her foster parents enter the room and look at her sympathetically. They hand her a certificate they have made : Award for Bravest Girl - Grace Pudel.

GRACE (V.O.)

They were well meaning and addicted to self help books. They believed a good dose of self esteem cured everything.

Grace tries to look appreciative. Cut to more certificates plastered all over her bedroom wall : Award for Trying, Award for Biggest Smile, Award for Participating.

GRACE (V.O.)

Every week they'd make me a new certificate.

Cut to Grace inside a large gymnasium sitting on the sidelines reading her self help book whilst her foster parents play netball.

GRACE (V.O.)

On the weekends they'd play netball.

Jumpcut to Grace dressed in netball attire. She looks embarrassed and awkward. Off camera someone throws a netball through the air. It hits Grace on the side of the head.

GRACE (V.O.)

They tried to get me to play as well.

Jumpcut to Grace lying on her back. She is struggling to breathe and grasps her throat.

GRACE (V.O.)

So I faked asthma attacks ... I felt bad telling lies ... but sport was one of my allergies.

Wideshot of Ian and Narelle's cream brick home at night. In the driveway is a cream Datsun Sunny car. Cut to their

cream indoor carpet, cream walls, and a plate of cream biscuits.

GRACE (V.O.)

Their favourite colour was cream.

Cut to Grace sitting on their cream coloured couch reading : The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams. Three cream coloured guinea pigs are sitting next to her with nametags : Rosemary, Pepper, Ginger.

GRACE (V.O.)

They even had guinea pigs that were cream.

Grace waves goodbye as her foster parents leave from the front door into the night. They are wearing matching skivvies and leather slacks. Narelle is wearing blue eyeshadow and Ian has waxed his moustache.

GRACE (V.O.)

On Saturdays they went to key-parties and did something called swinging.

Cut to Ian and Narelle at a swingers party. Couples sit in orgy attire sipping elaborate cocktails on white couches. Eyes dart salaciously.

Cut to Grace at school sitting in a classroom looking out the window to the playground and a giant tyre swing.

GRACE (V.O.)

Back then I thought swinging meant something else.

Suddenly she is shaken out of her daydream.

TEACHER

(Angrily)

GRACE PUDDLE!

She smiles apologetically. She is smaller than the other kids.

GRACE (V.O.)

My new school was predictably bad ... I tried to make friends.

A little girl sitting next to Grace places a drawing mocking her cleft palate on her desk : a cartoon of Grace with rabbit ears. Underneath is scrawled : Rabbit-face. Grace winces.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Gilbert wasn't there to break their
 fingers ... so I absorbed the abuse ...

Closeup of a full moon. Cut to Grace at home in bed looking at her ornamental snails sitting on her bedside table.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... came home and played with my clay
 friends.

She begins reading one of Gilbert's letters.

GRACE (V.O.)
 I missed Gilbert like crazy ...

It is written on a piece of paper with a logo at the top that reads : Garden of Eden Apple Orchards. Match dissolve the apple logo to a real apple sitting in a fruit bowl on a table in a bland looking room in Gilbert's new home.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... we wrote each other letters and I
 saved every cent I could to go see him.

The room is minimal except for a few religious icons attached to the walls.

GRACE (V.O.)
 He'd been sent to live with a family of
 fruit farmers in Perth.

On the wall is a framed plaque : The Baby Jesus is Watching. Underneath is a picture of Jesus in the manger.

GRACE (V.O.)
 I definitely got the better family ...
 he hated his.

The family have their heads bowed and eyes closed. They begin praying in tongues (nonsensical prayer language). There are four brothers all dressed in similar drab buttoned-up starched grey shirts. They have crewcuts and

nametags : Dwayne, Shane, Wayne, Ben. Gilbert is wearing a black David Bowie teeshirt and looks anomalous.

GILBERT (V.O.)

Dear Gracie, my new parents Ruth and Owen are strange and do a weird sort of praying.

Closeup of his foster parents. They look bland and humourless. Ruth has a bulbous nose and a single tight braid of hair down her side. Owen has a white manicured beard but no moustache. Closeup of Owen's mouth speaking in tongues. Gilbert stares at him, bewildered by his gibberish.

GILBERT (V.O.)

They make me pray four times a day. They said the more I pray the more the pain of Dad's death will disappear ... (pauses then angrily) ... You never get a mention!

Aerial shot of the large dining table. An array of bland foods all seem to incorporate apples.

GILBERT (V.O.)

They're really old-fashioned and don't even have a phone.

Closeup on one of Gilbert's arms. A little magnet is taped to his wrist.

GILBERT (V.O.)

We all have to have magnets taped to us ... they reckon it keeps our auras balanced ... protects us from the devil.

Cut to a large outside aviary full of budgerigars. They look trapped and frustrated.

GILBERT (V.O.)

Ruth is obsessed with her poor budgies. I reckon she loves them more than her own kids.

Gilbert looks out the kitchen window at the budgies. He looks over towards a small ramshackle wooden church and makeshift classroom.

GILBERT (V.O.)
They've built their own church and
school ... Owen is the Minister.

Jumpcut to inside the church-classroom. Gilbert and the family are sitting in a single long pew. It is sparse except for a large wooden cross nailed to the wall. Under the cross is a plaque : Sinners Make the Baby Jesus Weep.

Owen is at the altar giving the sermon in tongues. Every now and then he stops to pop an antacid tablet from a little jar on the lectern.

GILBERT (V.O.)
He's got stomach ulcers ... which he
blames on the devil.

The brothers sit in a line from the tallest to the shortest. Gilbert sits at the end.

GILBERT (V.O.)
My new brothers are all dickheads.

He turns his head to find one of the brothers gazing at him. The brother's shirtpocket nametag reads : Ben.

GILBERT (V.O.)
(annoyed)
One of them is always staring.

Gilbert glares back. Ben blushes and looks away.

Jumpcut to a large wooden sign : Garden of Eden Apple Orchard - God's Fruit.

GILBERT (V.O.)
I have to work in the orchard after
school.

Wideshot of Gilbert below the sign in a large barn behind a conveyer belt of apples. As they pass he attaches a tiny Garden of Eden sticker.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 The brothers get the better jobs ...
 Ruth said if I'm gonna be a good
 Orchardman I'd have to start at the
 bottom and work my way up.

Gilbert looks sullen.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 (Angrily)
 I'd rather eat glass ... (calming down)
 Anyway, they can all get stuffed, coz
 as soon as I'm old enough and got money
 I'm comin to get you.

Cut to a map of Australia with green around the edges and yellow in the middle representing the desert. Little footprints animate from Perth on the west coast to Canberra on the east coast via The Great Nullarbor Desert.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 (Determined)
 I'll walk across that big burning
 desert ...

Repeat the fantasy of Gilbert as an adult fire-eater in front of Notre Dame. Crowds applaud.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 (Getting excited)
 ... we'll escape to Paris. I'll become
 a fire-eater ...

Cut to his fantasy of Grace as an adult animating snails with her father's camera. Cut to the front cover of the famous French Cinema magazine, Cahiers Du Cinema. Grace is on the front cover.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... and you'll become an amazing
 animator.

Closeup of Gilbert's sparkler scar on his arm that forms two little eyes. Match dissolve to Grace's forearm scar in the shape of a mouth. Camera pulls out to reveal Grace in bed reading the remainder of Gilbert's letter.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... it'll be *great!*

She smiles as a tear rolls down her cheek and falls onto the page. Fade to black.

Fade up to a wide shot of the Canberra Municipal Library. Cut to Grace sitting at a table. She is wearing some shiny snail decorated shoes.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Gilbert gave me hope so I tried to get on with life ... squashing my sorrows down into my shoes as the months dragged ...

On the table she is erasing graffitied drawings from human anatomy books with a large rubber eraser.

GRACE (V.O.)
 To pass time I began volunteering at the local library. One of my jobs was to erase lewd drawings made by juvenile delinquents.

She rubs on an erect penis. Her cheeks blush.

Cut to Grace outside the library. She is watching a very short elderly woman putting books into a large plastic rubbish bin leaning up against the wall near the library entrance.

GRACE (V.O.)
 That's when I first met Pinky ... I saw her returning her books into a bin ... She thought it was the return chute and had been doing it for months.

Grace walks over to Pinky and points to the correct return chute.

GRACE
 (politely)
 Excuse me.

GRACE (V.O.)
 She was mortified when I explained ...

Pinky looks shocked by her own actions.

PINKY
(embarrassed)

Oh poo ...

GRACE
Don't worry, I won't turn you in.

Pinky sighs in relief and then smiles.

PINKY
Thankyou Dear. Bless your cotton
socks ... What's your name?

GRACE
Grace Pudel.

PINKY
I'm Pinky ... just Pinky ... like Cher
or Liberace. People call me Pinky coz
of this.

Pinky holds up her right hand. She is missing her pinky
finger.

PINKY
Lost it dancing in Barcelona.

Flashback to Pinky as a young woman dancing drunk on a
Spanish bar : Els Quatre Gats. She accidentally puts her
hand up into an overhead fan which slices off her pinky
finger. The finger flies across the room and lands in
somebody's sangria. Cut back to the present.

Pinky looks curiously at Grace's knitted snail hat.

PINKY
Why are you dressed like an ant?

Grace looks confused.

GRACE
Oh um ... no I'm a snail.

Grace looks embarrassed by her own reply. Pinky notices
Grace's awkwardness and tries to alleviate it.

PINKY

Ha ... kooky ... I used to think I was
a pigeon.

Pinky starts to imitate a pigeon. Her head juts forward and
back. There is an awkward pause.

GRACE (V.O.)

She was a true eccentric and smelt like
ginger and op-shops.

The camera slowly tracks down Pinky's body and eclectic
clothing. Her face is incredibly wrinkled and
weatherbeaten. She has teabags as earrings and has thin
grey hair that looks like it has been slightly electrified.
She has enormous round glasses. She is smoking a cuban
cigar and is wearing a man's brown corduroy jacket with
leather elbowpads. Her ankle high trousers are made of
corduroy as well. She has stripey socks and wears black
tapshoes.

GRACE (V.O.)

She clothed herself in corduroy and her
face had more wrinkles than her
pants ... It was hard to know where the
fabric ended and her skin began ... She
seemed so tactile ... a blind person
would've loved to touch her ... she
became my first Canberra friend ... my
only Canberra friend.

Cut to a montage of Pinky's life.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd lived an amazing life ... I
thought one day I might make a film
about her.

It begins with Pinky watching the northern lights from atop
a mountain in Norway, then floating on her back in the Dead
Sea while smoking a cigar, dancing topless in a schnitzel
bar called : Schnitz-N-Tits, wearing a beard of live bees
at a beekeepers' conference, bathing with some snow monkeys
in Japan, making love with John Denver in a helicopter, and
finally, playing pingpong with Fidel Castro.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd seen the northern lights ...
floated in the dead sea ... been an
exotic dancer in a schnitzel bar ...
won a bee beard contest ... bathed with
snow monkeys ... made love to John
Denver ... and once played pingpong
with Fidel Castro.

Cut to a large can of International Roast instant coffee
sitting on Pinky's kitchen bench.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd never been sick ... her secret to
longevity were coffee enemas ...

Camera keeps tracking along to a bottle of green ginger
wine and a small shot-glass shaped like a skull.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and a daily shot of green ginger
wine.

Camera keeps tracking to reveal Pinky as a younger woman.
She looks very relaxed as she smokes a cigar while watching
her husband stack the dishwasher. She is wearing a very
large diamond wedding ring.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd outlived two husbands ...

He is walking towards her with a pile of dirty dishes.

GRACE (V.O.)

... the first had died just a week
after they'd got married ...

As he gives Pinky a sexy wink, he loses his balance and
lands chest first into the open dishwasher door, impaling
himself on a large upturned bread knife. Pinky is
horrified. Cut to Pinky beside the tombstone of her first
husband. The epitaph reads : RIP Hector Santamaria - A Life
Cut Short. Cut to Pinky at her letterbox looking at her
mail.

GRACE (V.O.)

Her second husband, Bill, had been a
postman ... who wrote love notes on her
mail.

Closeup of Bill's love note on the back of some mail.

BILLY

(Romantic Voiceover)

Roses are red, Violets are camp,
I'll be yer letter, you be me stamp,
You are the clouds, I am the skies,
Let me shipwreck meself, between your
thighs.

Pinky smiles. Cut to Pinky posing for a photo beside a
caravan which sits beside a flowing river in the bush.

GRACE (V.O.)

They'd just begun a trek across
Australia ...

Bill is wearing tourist attire and adjusts the knobs on his
camera attentively. He prepares to take Pinky's photo.

BILL

Smile!

Pinky looks horrified as a giant crocodile emerges from the
river behind him. It lunges and drags him into the river
where he is eaten.

GRACE (V.O.)

... when nature struck.

Cut to Pinky beside the tombstone of her second husband.
His tomb is next to her first husband's. The epitaph : RIP
Bill Clarke - Posted to Heaven (or, A Life Consumed).

Cut to Pinky as a Lollypop-Lady at a crossing in front of a
primary school.

GRACE (V.O.)

She was a survivor and had many jobs.

A sign nearby : Caution Children Crossing. Kindergarten
kids walk past and wave at her. She gives them a smile as

they pass. An over-protective parent watches anxiously nearby.

GRACE (V.O.)
But they never lasted long.

A hooligan in a sports car speeds past nearly knocking the children over. Pinky shakes her fist angrily at the driver and swears.

PINKY
(Bleeped Out)
FUC ... ER!

The kindergarten kids all smile at Pinky and then mimic her, also shaking their fists.

CHILDREN
(In unison and bleeped)
FUC ... ER!

The nearby mother looks horrified and cups her ears. Pinky realises what she has said and blushes. Cut to Pinky in the Headmaster's office being fired. She looks ashamed.

HEADMASTER (V.O.)
(Stern)
Fired!

Cut to Pinky dressed up as a giant pineapple handing out pineapple chunks on toothpicks in the aisle of a supermarket. Behind her is a huge display of tinned pineapple chunks.

GRACE (V.O.)
On her eightieth birthday, she got a
job promoting pineapple chunks.

While no one is watching she nibbles on a chunk, then looks directly at the audience and winks.

GRACE (V.O.)
... she had a great sense of humour.

Cut to Pinky behind the wheel of her dead husband's old postal truck. Grace sits beside her and looks concerned at how fast and badly she is driving.

GRACE (V.O.)
 She drove her dead husband's postal
 truck ...

She can barely be seen behind the steering wheel and veers
 left and right. Cars toot.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... and once told me she wanted to die
 peacefully in her sleep like her cousin
 who was a bus driver ... not screaming
 in horror like his passengers.

Grace looks shocked.

GRACE (V.O.)
 I'm not sure whether she was joking ...
 it was hard to know with her.

Cut to an exterior wide shot of Pinky's home : an eclectic
 mishmash of styles and aesthetics. There are overgrown
 plants everywhere. Her letterbox is an old toaster and the
 tv aerial is made out of coathangers. Cut to inside the
 home. Grace is looking every which way trying to absorb all
 its unusual contents.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Her house was fabulous ... it smelt
 like popcorn and mothballs.

Cut to a large cabinet full of trophies.

GRACE (V.O.)
 She had an enormous trophy cabinet ...
 which I soon discovered were other
 people's trophies she'd found at op-
 shops.

Closeup of one of the trophies : 1968 Canberra Pole-Vault
 Champion - Bernie Clifford.

Cut to yellow post-it notes stuck all over her fridge, tv,
 mirrors, doors etc. One of the notes says : Buy More Post-
 it Notes.

GRACE (V.O.)
 There were post-it notes everywhere ...
 she had a dreadful memory.

Cut to Pinky tapdancing on top of her kitchen table to the song : The Shim Sham Shimmy. She spins and claps her hands in time to the music.

GRACE (V.O.)

She was terrified of Alzheimers and had taken up tapdancing ... she'd read it staved off dementia.

Closeup of an old biscuit tin.

GRACE (V.O.)

She didn't believe in banks and put her savings in an old tin ... She said she kept her secrets in there as well ...

Grace and Pinky are sitting at her kitchen table eating gingerbread men. Pinky sips green ginger wine from her shot glass.

PINKY

You know Gracie, biscuit tins rarely contain biscuits ... (she winks).

Grace looks puzzled.

GRACE (V.O.)

I'd never seen her mysterious tin ... she was always hiding it in different places ...

Cut to Pinky's biscuit tin hidden in various places : under her mattress, up in a palm tree, and in a toilet cistern.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and often couldn't remember where.

Cut to an array of milk cartons cut in half. They each contain a plant seedling.

GRACE (V.O.)

Her home was also full of seedlings ... which she later confessed were marijuana.

Cut to a baking tray of gingerbread men.

GRACE (V.O.)

She loved to bake gingerhashmen ... She said they relieved her arthritis.

Cut to Pinky working in her garden. She is wearing an enormous sombrero and smoking her cigar. Her garden is full of vegetables, palms, exotic plants, and flowers.

GRACE (V.O.)

She also enjoyed gardening ... especially when she felt a bit blue.

Closeup of the Pinky's Pitypit sign stuck in the ground.

GRACE (V.O.)

She called it her pitypit ...

PINKY

Gardening fixes everything!

GRACE (V.O.)

... she'd say. She wanted her ashes sprinkled in her pitypit ... be returned to nature ... fertilise her veggies.

Cut to Grace and Pinky playing on a homemade minigolf course Pinky has built in her backyard.

GRACE (V.O.)

She also enjoyed minigolf ... and had built her own course.

Pinky takes a wild swing and hits the golfball into a tree trunk. It bounces and ricochets off various objects : a watering can, birdbox, bucket, clothesline, Pinky's forehead, etc. It finally lands in an old toilet bowl Pinky has painted red.

PINKY

(Excited)

Hole in one!

GRACE (V.O.)

She was brilliant.

Exterior wide shot of a nursing home. Out the front a sign : Pleasant Paddocks - Home for the Elderly and Bewildered.

GRACE (V.O.)

But the thing that made Pinky truly remarkable ... was what she did every Monday.

Cut to inside the home. Pinky is sitting beside a very old and frail woman. She holds her hand silently. The frail woman smiles appreciatively.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd visit the lonely and hold their hands ... she said the thing the elderly craved most ... was human touch ... They were often treated as if they had a disease ...

Close up of their hands.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd sit with them calmly in silence ... something so simple ... yet so comforting.

Pinky looks left then right to see if anyone is watching. She slides her hand into her handbag and pulls out a gingerhashmen. The old woman's eyes light up and she smiles cheekily. Pinky breaks off a leg and feeds it to her.

GRACE (V.O.)

An occasional gingerhashman helped as well.

Cut back to Pinky and Grace playing minigolf in her backyard. Close up of Pinky's frail and wrinkled hands holding a putter.

GRACE (V.O.)

Pinky told me she'd never got to hold her own parent's hands ... she never said why ... her childhood was off limits.

Pinky pauses, turns her head and looks Grace straight in the eyes.

PINKY
(Wisely)

Life isn't about looking backwards,
Gracie, it's about living forwards.

Pinky is wearing colourful clothing whilst Grace is wearing black and grey. Pinky takes another wild swing and successfully putts the golfball into a miniature castle made out of old toilet roll tubes.

GRACE (V.O.)

She was the jewel in the Canberra
junkheap ... she had crammed so much
into her life ...

The camera slowly cranes up over the top of Pinky's eccentric backyard. The wind gently whistles through the foliage. Grace attempts to putt the golfball into the gumboot but fails.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I had crammed so little.

Closeup of the burn mark on Grace's arm in the shape of a mouth.

GRACE (V.O.)

Pinky's friendship helped ease my
sadness, my feelings of loss ... She
was the medicine I needed ... a vitamin
for hope.

Slow fade to black as Grace putts the golfball. It misses the hole and knocks the castle over. The sound of the wind fades to silence. Long interlude of silent black.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Grace is still reflecting on her life to Sylvia the snail. She now seems less upset. Sylvia is still gliding away from Grace further into the vegetable patch.

GRACE (V.O.)

The years fluttered past, Sylvia ... as
I tried to stay positive ...

CUT BACK TO PAST.

Closeup of young Grace's face. She is silent and has a wide fake smile.

GRACE (V.O.)
... and better myself.

Camera widens to reveal Grace is at a self help seminar at the local community hall. A banner hangs on the wall : Canberra Laughter Club - Finding Your Inner Sunshine. She is now sixteen and midway through puberty. She is standing in a circle holding hands with other lost individuals.

GRACE (V.O.)
Ian and Narelle still obsessed about my mental health and sent me to self help classes ...

They each have a yellow smiley face sticker stuck to their chests. Grace has accidentally stuck hers upside down.

GRACE (V.O.)
... which were supposed to raise my endorphins, free my radicals, balance my chakra and cleanse my third eye.

A handsome male instructor stands in the middle of the group on a stool. Grace smiles up at him admiringly. He is wearing a badge : I'm Craig - Your Heart Healer. On a table nearby sit a pile of self help books for sale titled : You Are Your Own Hero. A pretty girl standing next to Grace looks up at Craig lovingly as well. She flutters her eyelashes at him. Craig winks back.

CRAIG
(enthusiastically)
Ready ... set ... go!

Everyone begins to force loud fake laughs.

EVERYONE
Ha ha ... ha ... ha ...

Jumpcut to Craig and the pretty girl kissing heavily in the carpark after class. Grace watches them sadly from behind a tree.

GRACE (V.O.)
Part of me died in those classes ...

Jumpcut to Grace sitting on a bench out the front of a Fish-n-chips shop eating a Chicko-roll. She looks deflated.

GRACE (V.O.)

Self help was just a shallow quick fix.
None of it worked ... I felt wounded
and betrayed ... wanted to divorce
myself from society ...

Jumpcut to Grace standing next to Ian and Narelle's backyard incinerator which is smouldering. She is staring at the self help book from Craig's class. She throws it into the flames, then throws the other self help books and certificates Ian and Narelle had given her.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I wanted the earth to stop so I
could get off.

Cut to Grace gazing at herself in a large mirror while she nibbles on another Chicko-roll. Three pimples are on her chin.

GRACE (V.O.)

Puberty arrived and brought its
gifts ... I'd have loved a
boyfriend ...

She fantasises herself morphing into a giant snail. Antennas begin to grow out her head.

GRACE (V.O.)

... but my self esteem shrivelled
away ...

Her bottom morphs into a giant snail shell.

GRACE (V.O.)

... as my bottom bloomed.

Cut to Grace and Pinky at the hairdressers with their heads under giant metal hairdryers.

GRACE (V.O.)

I didn't help matters when Pinky
convinced me to get a perm ...

The dryers are stopped and then raised to reveal their perms. Grace's hair is frizzy and orb like. The hairdresser and Pinky look thrilled by their new hair-dooos. Grace looks uncertain.

Jumpcut to Grace and Pinky sitting on the bench out the front of the Fish-n-Chip shop eating Chicko-rolls to celebrate their new hairstyles. Pinky looks very pleased with her new hairstyle, whilst Grace stills looks undecided. Suddenly a young man driving past in a VW beetle hot-rod, stops, winds down his window and wolf whistles sarcastically at them. He laughs and then zooms off. Pinky yells at him angrily and gives him the finger.

PINKY
(yells)

Yer Fucker!

Grace bursts into tears. Pinky turns to console her.

PINKY
There-there ... ignore him ... I think
we look fabulous.

GRACE (V.O.)
Thank god for Pinky ... she became my
real foster parent, especially as Ian
and Narelle weren't around much
anymore.

Cut to a wide shot of a cruise ship floating on the ocean.
Painted on the side : Fairstar The Funship.

GRACE (V.O.)
They'd discovered nude cruises and were
gone for weeks at a time.

Cut to a montage of Ian and Narelle engaged in various
nudist activities : playing chess, rollerskating, etc.

Camera slowly tracks along the contents of Grace's bedroom.
It reveals a vast assortment of snail themed items : a wall
clock, a potplant, jigsaw puzzle, snail decorated band-
aids, wooden puzzle, pencils, bedspread, shoes, etc.

GRACE (V.O.)
I still grieved the loss of my family
and continued filling the void with

more and more snails ... If I saw something snail-ey, it had to be mine ... Collecting brought me solace ... my snails were something for me to care about ... a distraction from my boring life ... they gave comfort ...

Keep tracking along to Grace in bed nibbling on another Chicko-roll.

GRACE (V.O.)
... as did food.

Camera widens to reveal Grace eating in bed while reading one of Gilbert's letters. She is wearing her snail hat. She looks imprisoned amongst her snails perfectly positioned and organised.

GRACE (V.O.)
My obsession had blossomed ... my room had become a snail shrine ... I'd become a snail hoarder.

Closeup of a framed photo of Gilbert and herself as children sitting on her bedside table. The moon shines through the window.

GRACE (V.O.)
Apart from Pinky, letters from Gilbert were the only things that confirmed I existed ...

Grace pauses, then looks out the window to the moon.

GRACE (V.O.)
I desperately wanted to fly and see him more than ever.

She looks around at her engulfing hoard. She seems ashamed.

GRACE (V.O.)
... but my compulsions kept me poor.

Match dissolve of the framed photo to a copy of the same photo being held by Gilbert.

GRACE (V.O.)

His letters still gave me hope ... but
he began to worry me ... I felt he
wasn't telling me everything.

Camera widens to reveal Gilbert in the barn where he is supposed to be attaching stickers to apples on the conveyer belt. Instead he is staring at the photo he has attached to a wooden post. He has grown taller and more handsome and is now in his mid teens. He looks melancholic as he continues to gaze at the photo.

GILBERT (V.O.)

Dear Gracie ... life at the Garden of
Eden ... is certainly no Garden of
Eden.

Nearby Ruth is watching his every move. She grows increasingly angry that he is not doing his job attaching the stickers to the apples.

RUTH
(Angrily)

GILBERT!

Gilbert shakes from his daydream and begins to attach the stickers.

GILBERT (V.O.)

Ruth seems to have it in for me ... but
I don't give a stuff.

GILBERT
(softly)

Sorry *Ruth*.

Ruth winces.

GILBERT (V.O.)

She hates I call her Ruth instead of
Mum ... hates I won't let Owen shave my
head ...

Cut to Ruth, Owen, and the family sitting around the dinner table reading bibles. From under the table Gilbert proudly produces his mother's musical jewellery box. He opens the lid and the little snail begins to spin as the music plays. He smiles and hopes they will all enjoy its quirkiness and

kitsch value. The family look indifferent and some of them wander off. Gilbert loses his smile and becomes deflated.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... I try to be friendly ... but their
 weirdo religion has brainwashed
 them ... caged up their heads.

One of the older brothers, Dwayne, looks at Gilbert coldly and then mutters.

BROTHER
 (Viciously)
 Poof.

Gilbert pretends not to hear.

Cut to Ruth sharpening a large butcher's knife near a pig pen. A happy mother pig is suckling three small piglets.

Cut to black and the scream of a baby pig being slaughtered.

Cut to the family having dinner. A roasted piglet sits on a platter in the middle of the table. Gilbert looks sadly at the meat on his plate.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 Ruth forces me to eat meat ...

Closeup of a drawer containing Gilbert's confiscated lighters and matches. Ruth's hand slams the drawer shut.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... and has barred me from playing with
 fire and magic ... She's nuts and
 reckons magic is the Devil's vice ...

Cut to a poster pinned to the wall inside their church : a picture of Satan surrounded by flames in hell holding a pitch fork. Underneath is written : Beware Lucifer's Lure.

Closeup of a wooden cross atop the church steeple. Camera pans down to reveal Gilbert and Ben hiding behind the church. Gilbert is standing on an apple crate and has taken his shirt off.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... Ruth's always trying to stick more
 and more magnets on me to fix my
 aura ...

Cut to a closeup of Gilbert's arms taped with little magnets. He begins to rip them off and flings them up onto the tin roof of the church. Gilbert then grabs a jerrycan of lawnmower fuel and pours some into his mouth. Ben is sitting on another apple crate watching him in awe.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 But I don't care ... I've found places
 to practise my stuff ...

Gilbert then lights the end of a stick and spits the fuel at it. It bursts into a ball of flames. Ben's eyes bulge in wonder. They smile at each other. Ruth is watching and hiding behind a nearby tree. She looks angry.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 Ruth reckons Lucifer is tryin to invade
 my soul ...

Cut to the family standing around a small pond. Owen is dressed in religious robes.

GILBERT (V.O.)
 ... They tried to baptise me.

Two of the older brothers tightly grip Gilbert in the middle of the pond. They look eager to dunk him and have taped magnets all over his face and arms. Owen begins speaking in tongues, looks heavenwards and then instructs the brothers to dunk Gilbert under the water.

OWEN
 (passionately)
 Dunk thou and cleanse thy demons!

GILBERT (V.O.)
 I pretended I was possessed ... I hid
 some of Owen's antacid tablets in my
 pockets ... it was hilarious.

Suddenly white thick frothy bubbles from the tablets emerge from Gilbert's body while he is still under the water.

Everyone shrieks and thinks Gilbert is possessed. Ben giggles knowingly. Ruth looks suspicious and angry.

Cut to Ruth putting Gilbert's mother's jewellery box on top of a round stone barbecue. The whole family stands around watching in silence.

She opens the jewellery box's lid and the snail begins to spin as the tune begins to play. She pours lawnmower fuel onto it. She forces Gilbert to light the fuel.

RUTH
(sternly)

Do it.

He does so reluctantly as tears flow down his cheeks. It bursts into flames. Gilbert's face grows redder with horror and anger. Ben looks at Gilbert with concern. The spinning snail melts away as the jewellery box continues to burn. The happy tune grows distorted and slowly dies.

Jumpcut to Gilbert releasing all the pigs and piglets from their pen. They race off to freedom. He then releases all of Ruth's budgies from their aviary. Ruth runs out of the church and shrieks in horror. A smile spreads across Gilbert's face.

Cut to Ruth in her kitchen making her children lunch. She secretly puts some St John's Wort tablets (sedatives) into Gilbert's sandwich. She hands him the sandwich on a plate. While her back is turned he takes the tablets out and puts them in his pocket.

Cut to Gilbert sitting on the couch. Ruth walks into the room. Gilbert quickly pretends to be partially drugged. His mouth gapes and his eyelids are half shut. Ruth looks pleased. Jumpcut to Gilbert flushing the tablets down the toilet.

Cut to Gilbert sitting on his bed opening his weekly pay cheque. A few meagre coins fall out. He looks disappointed.

Cut to Gilbert at church as the offering tray passes in front of him. Ruth glares at him. He reluctantly reaches into his pocket and pulls out his coins and puts them on the tray.

Owen watches from the lectern and looks pleased. Jumpcut to Owen secretly buying a bottle of whiskey from a bottle-shop. Jumpcut to him secretly drinking it behind the church. Gilbert is spying on him from behind a nearby tree. Gilbert sighs.

Jumpcut to Gilbert in his bedroom looking at his photo of Grace and he as children. He looks gloomy. Closeup of Gilbert's beautiful face and sad eyes. Cut to an empty jam jar with one single coin inside it under his bed. On the jar is a taped-on label : Savings.

GILBERT (V.O.)

Anyway, I better go ... I'm saving like crazy and will be escaping soon and crossin that desert to come and get you ...

Gilbert looks down at his forearm and the two little round burn marks that look like eyes.

GILBERT (V.O.)

... Hang in there Gracie ...

Gilbert takes out a fruit knife from his pocket and begins to self harm. He cuts a smiley mouth under the eyes. It begins to bleed as he clenches his teeth. Tears form.

GILBERT (V.O.)

... everything is fine ...

He turns and looks out his bedroom window to Ruth's empty budgie cage. The sun slowly sets.

GILBERT (V.O.)

See you soon ...

Match dissolve to Grace staring out of her bedroom window into the gloom of Canberra.

GILBERT (V.O.)

... love Gilbert.

She smiles as a tear rolls down her cheek.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Adult Grace is still amongst the vegetables talking to Sylvia.

GRACE

Puberty finally finished its cruelty,
Sylvia ...

The sun is slowly heading towards the horizon. Sylvia has now made it to the edge of one of the wooden handpainted signs stuck into the dirt labelling vegetables. She begins to slide up it. Grace looks at Sylvia and sighs.

GRACE

... the season of our teens ended ...
and we ripened into adults.

CUT BACK TO THE PAST.

Flashback to Ian and Narelle in a hot tub with a group of elderly Swedish nudists drinking champagne.

GRACE (V.O.)

Life got even lonelier when Ian and
Narelle retired to a nudist colony in
Sweden.

NUDISTS

(in unison)

Skal! (subtitles - Cheers)

A sign behind the hot tub reads : Prickly Springs Nudist Colony.

GRACE (V.O.)

We'd never really connected and what
flimsy family unit we'd had, was now
gone ...

Cut to Grace working at the library pushing a trolley of books she is returning to the shelves. People are sitting with their heads buried behind books, their faces hidden. The camera tracks along the books : Mission to Mars, Climbing Everest, Memoir of a Sex Maniac, Macrame for Beginners, and Medieval Folk Dancing.

GRACE (V.O.)

There were intriguing people at the
library ... but they lived vicariously.

Wideshot of Grace staring at the people behind their books. Grace's body begins to become transparent and her surroundings slowly desaturate.

GRACE (V.O.)

(Bored)

I felt invisible ... began to fade ...
as did my ambitions to become an
animator ... I'd fallen into a rut.

Suddenly there is colour and movement : Pinky behind the wheel of her postal truck. Grace is sitting beside her. Pinky is smoking her cigar and her face has aged further.

GRACE (V.O.)

(Slightly upbeat)

Pinky was the only colour in my
life ... still effervescent ... her
hand holding idea had become a fully
fledged charity.

On the side of her truck is a handpainted logo : Granny Hands.

GRACE (V.O.)

She'd even engaged the longterm
unemployed to help out.

In the back of the truck sit a bedraggled group of longterm unemployed. Cut to a montage of Grace, Pinky, and the longterm unemployed, holding hands with various patients in nursing homes.

GRACE (V.O.)

We went from home to home ... hand to
hand.

Jumpcut to Grace and Pinky holding an old woman's hand. She smiles at them appreciatively through cracked and toothless lips.

Cut to Grace on her couch reading a trashy romance novel : The Ginger Chested Pirate.

GRACE (V.O.)

My loneliness, self pity, and
melancholy fed each other.

The guinea pigs are sitting next to her.

GRACE (V.O.)

Over time the loss of my family had somehow frozen me ... I couldn't tolerate any more pain ... ambition was too risky ... I thought it safer to stay in my shell and live in a pretend world ...

Closeup of another romance novel on her coffee table : Once Upon A Pirate.

GRACE (V.O.)

Dad would have been disappointed I'd resorted to trashy novels ... It was now just me ... some sexy pirates ...

Grace is covered in guinea pig hair that glistens from the sun streaming through the window.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and a few frisky guinea pigs ...

Two of the guinea pigs start mating in front of Grace on the couch.

GRACE (V.O.)

... who mocked my chastity.

Slowly baby guinea pigs dissolve in around her. Closeup of the guinea pig hair all over Grace's clothing.

GRACE (V.O.)

The stereotype was now complete ... I'd become a lonesome virgin ... and the guinea pig hair that coated me, a lonely person's glitter.

Cut to Grace inside a Two-dollar Shop looking at a novelty snail shaped soap-on-a-rope.

GRACE (V.O.)

As my boredom worsened ... I found myself having new urges.

Grace looks left and right, then grabs the soap while no one is looking.

GRACE (V.O.)

I added kleptomania, and shame, to my list of hobbies ... buying, hoarding, and now stealing, became a cheap thrill and distraction from my mundane world ...

Cut to Grace on her couch holding the soap. She looks bewildered and ashamed at what she has done.

GRACE (V.O.)

... which slowly began to collapse.

She sighs. Some of the guinea pigs are sleeping on the rug in front of her. There is a creaking sound. Suddenly one of her overloaded shelves full of snails collapses and crushes three of the baby guinea pigs. They scream in pain as they get crushed.

GRACE (V.O.)

I lost three guinea pigs that night.

Grace looks mortified. Cut to Grace standing by the backyard incinerator which is smoking furiously.

GRACE (V.O.)

I cremated them in the backyard ...

Cut to three little jars of ashes with labels taped on : Cinnamon, Parsley, Basil. They sit on her kitchen windowsill.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and put their ashes in little jars ... it looked like I was starting a guinea pig spicerack.

Jumpcut to Grace in bed reading : The Fiddling Scotsman. The moon shines through the window.

GRACE (V.O.)

My life had become truly pathetic ... and things had gotten out of control ...

She holds her own hand.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I held my own hand patiently ...
waiting for Gilbert to come and rescue
me ...

Camera tracks backwards to reveal Grace's hoard has grown.
Camera glides out the window to reveal the whole house.
Grace's face can be seen amongst her snail hoard through
the window emphasising her entrapment.

GRACE (V.O.)

... while I continued to withdraw into
the safety of my snail fortress ...

Through other windows we see her snail collection has
spilled and invaded the entire house.

GRACE (V.O.)

... lonely ... loveless ... and
imprisoned.

Exterior of house transitions from night to morning.

Cut to Grace still asleep in bed. Beside her sits another
romance novel : Beyond The Heaving Bosoms. The room is dark
and gloomy.

GRACE (V.O.)

But just as I was getting used to my
destiny and was considering joining a
nunnery ...

The silence is suddenly broken by the sound of a loud
leafblower. Closeup of the end of the leafblower blowing
leaves along a footpath. It is a bright sunny morning.

Grace suddenly wakes and parts the curtains to see what the
noise is. Glaring sunlight spills in. She winces and peeks
out through the window to try and locate the annoying
sound.

GRACE (V.O.)

... from the mess of my life came one
of those silver linings.

Cut to a man controlling the leafblower across the road from Grace's home. Grace looks at him with curiosity. A smile spreads across her face as she blushes.

GRACE (V.O.)
Love finally arrived ... at number
ninety-six.

The man spots Grace spying on him.

GRACE (V.O.)
His name was Ken ... and he was
obsessed with his leafblower.

He stops leaf-blowing, waves at her, then crosses the road to say hello. She slides open her bedroom window to greet him. He stands quietly for a moment, then smiles.

GRACE (V.O.)
There he stood ... more delicious than
a Chicko-roll.

Closeup of the leafblower then up to Ken's handsome face. He is immaculately dressed in a beige suit. His shirt is starched and immaculately ironed. His skin is flawless and his haircut sculpted into an Elvis Presley style quiff. He tilts his head.

GRACE (V.O.)
He wanted to know if he could blow my
leaves. His presence gave me hot
flushes ... and sweaty knickers.

Grace blushes even more.

GRACE (V.O.)
It was love at first sight ... He was a
Canberra adonis ... a *Cadonis*.

Grace giggles. Fade to black.

Cut to Ken sitting opposite Grace at her kitchen table.

GRACE (V.O.)
He was a Microwave oven repairman and
told me he was extremely shallow and
one-dimensional ...

Grace stares at him in adoration. She imagines his head as a giant onion.

GRACE (V.O.)

... He said if he was an onion and you peeled back the layers ... you'd just find more onion.

Cut to a wall display of small ornate kintsugi bowls held together with gold glue.

GRACE (V.O.)

He had hobbies like me and enjoyed repairing broken bowls. It was a Japanese artform called kintsugi based on the philosophy that, just like the soul, all things can be repaired and our cracks celebrated.

Ken imagines Grace's head as a kintsugi bowl with golden cracks all over her face.

GRACE (V.O.)

Ken said I was a broken bowl and that he'd help repair my wounds ... fill up my cracks.

Closeup of a pair of binoculars. Camera zooms out to reveal Ken looking through the binoculars and dressed as a lifeguard at the local swimming pool. He is sitting on a tall lifeguard stand wearing striped swimming trunks.

GRACE (V.O.)

He was so thoughtful and community minded ... he volunteered as a lifeguard at the local pool.

Ken is checking on people with his binoculars. He spots Grace sitting on a towel in her bathing suit covered in decorative snails. He zooms in on her bottom and smiles.

GRACE (V.O.)

He adored me ... and even built a ...

Cut to Grace's kitchen and a large milkshake station. On the bench is an industrial sized blender : The Grinder

2000. Along a ledge are various syrup pumps : blueberry heaven, lime splice, eggflip, chocberry, orange jaffa, honeycomb, bananasplit, toffeewhip, cookiedough, licoriceblast, etc.

GRACE (V.O.)
... milkshake station in my kitchen.

The lights are dim, candles are lit, and romantic music plays in the background. Ken and Grace are sitting at the kitchen table eating cocktail frankfurts on the end of toothpicks. The remaining guinea pigs watch curiously.

GRACE (V.O.)
We dated for a month ...

Ken squeezes tomato sauce from a plastic squeeze-bottle and begins writing something onto his plate. He finishes and passes it to her. Closeup of the plate : Will You Marry Me?

GRACE (V.O.)
... and then he proposed.

Grace looks surprised and delighted. Ken hands her one of the cocktail frankfurts on the end of a toothpick. Around the middle is an engagement ring. Grace screams with joy.

Ken slides the ring onto her finger. He begins to hand feed her more frankfurts.

GRACE (V.O.)
He said he really did love me ... loved my quirks ... we celebrated with milkshakes ... he said he'd make me something special ...

Jumpcut to Ken making a milkshake. Ken reaches for one of Grace's jars containing dead guinea pig ashes from the windowsill. He grabs the one labelled, Cinnamon, thinking it is real Cinnamon. He goes to sprinkle it into the milkshake. Grace looks over and shrieks in horror.

GRACE
Nooooooooo!

Ken looks bewildered by her reaction. Grace quickly explains. Ken registers, then laughs at the absurdity of the situation.

GRACE (V.O.)

A normal person would have thought I was bonkers keeping those guinea pig's ashes and run a mile ... but he didn't.

Grace blushes.

GRACE (V.O.)

He loved all of me ...

Jumpcut to Grace sitting on the edge of her bed in sexy underwear. She is sipping on another milkshake. Ken is wearing starched underpants and is eagerly taking photos of her from various angles. He takes a photo of her leg. She looks blissful.

GRACE (V.O.)

... even my bum and wobbly bits ... He moved in and I finally lost my virginity.

Cut to an X-ray of Ken's testicles.

GRACE (V.O.)

We were desperate to get pregnant ... but Ken was declared sterile from all those microwave ovens he'd repaired.

Cut to Grace and Ken in the lounge room sitting on the couch holding hands.

GRACE (V.O.)

But I wasn't too disappointed ...

They have set up a camera on a tripod to take a self portrait. They are surrounded by guinea pigs and Grace's hoard. They put on cheesy smiles as the camera flashes and whites out the screen briefly.

GRACE (V.O.)

... I had more than I could ever wish for.

Dissolve to the photo of them all in a snail shaped picture frame. Zoom in on Ken.

GRACE (V.O.)
I had a Cadonis ...

Zoom to the guinea pigs.

GRACE (V.O.)
... a herd of guinea pigs ...

Zoom to Grace's hoard behind them.

GRACE (V.O.)
... and a hoard of snails.

Cut to Gilbert as an adult in the apple barn reading Grace's letter. He has stopped attaching stickers to the apples.

GRACE (V.O.)
We set a wedding date ... and sent
Gilbert the good news.

It is a hot Summer's day and he is wearing overalls but no shirt. He is now fully grown, tall, thin, and even more handsome. He still has magnets taped to his biceps.

GRACE (V.O.)
Ken gave him money for an airfare to
Canberra.

Gilbert pulls out a wad of cash from an envelope. His eyes widen.

GRACE (V.O.)
I asked Gilbert to walk me down the
aisle ...

Gilbert looks relieved and overjoyed by Grace's letter. He puts the letter down and spots Ben working at the other end of the barn. Ben has grown more handsome as well. They smile at each other.

Cut to a fantasy shot of Pinky dressed as a flowergirl.

GRACE (V.O.)
Pinky would be the flowergirl.

Her dress is covered in daisies and she is wearing a tiara encrusted with tiny snails.

GRACE (V.O.)
 We'd finally be a family again ...
 finally sprinkle Dad's ashes ...

Cut to Grace's lounge room mantelpiece. On it sits Percy's ashes jar and the three guinea-pig ashes jars. Grace is sitting on the couch smiling contently.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... my glass was now brimming ... and
 there were silver linings galore.

Jumpcut to Grace removing a little sign from Narelle and Ian's bedroom door : Narelle and Ian's Love-nest. She replaces it with one of her own : Gilbert's Room.

GRACE (V.O.)
 The holes in my life had begun to
 shrink ... Gilbert would live with
 us ...

Closeup of a calendar marking the days until Gilbert arrives.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... He'd be here in three days.

Cut back to Grace sitting on the couch. She looks pleased with herself. She picks up a pamphlet : Canberra Film School.

GRACE (V.O.)
 I'd never felt so happy ... so
 optimistic ... I even considered
 finally going to film school ...
 becoming an animator.

Fade to black.

Cut to Grace standing on her coffee table in a half made wedding dress. Pinky is busy hovering around Grace's legs sewing the hem of the dress. Grace is whistling : Alouette. Ken is feeding Grace cocktail frankfurts and milkshakes which she drinks eagerly.

There is a knock at the front door. Ken goes to answer it and receives a box from a courier boy. He returns to the

lounge, opens the box and pulls out a letter addressed to Grace. He hands it to her.

She continues to stand on the coffee table as she realises the letter is postmarked from Perth. She quickly opens it. A huge smile spreads across her face. She begins to read.

RUTH (V.O.)

Dear Grace. This is Ruth, Gilbert's foster mother.

Grace's smile begins to fade. There is a long pause.

RUTH (V.O.)

It saddens me to tell you that Gilbert has died in a horrific fire ... Our church burnt down and he was unable to escape the flames.

Grace's expression turns to horror.

RUTH (V.O.)

Last week I found Gilbert and my son Ben ... *fornicating*.

Flashback to Gilbert and Ben kissing behind the church. Ruth is spying on them from behind a nearby tree. She is horrified and screams.

RUTH

LUCIFER!

Gilbert and Ben look startled.

RUTH (V.O.)

I'm sure you will agree ... the only course of action was to purge and correct their sickness in the correct fashion as instructed by the Lord our Saviour.

Cut to Ruth, Owen, and all the brothers inside the apple orchard barn at night. Ben and Gilbert have been roped to a large wooden pole, their arms and legs strapped down. On a ramshackle trolley a large lawnmower battery has multiple curly wires leading to magnets taped to Gilbert and Ben's arms and faces.

Owen stands near them in ceremonial robes and begins speaking in tongues. His eyes are shut, his head turned heavenward.

RUTH (V.O.)

This was not a simple task ... we could not just pray-the-gay-away ... and saw the only recourse being a dual expulsion to cast the demons out ...

Gilbert and Ben look terrified. All the other brothers look eager for the ceremony to begin. Ruth has a determined look on her face.

RUTH (V.O.)

... eject the devil from their souls and correct their auras ...

The rest of the family begin speaking in tongues as well.

FAMILY

(In unison and getting louder)

Sfthre kduw psksjdhhdh fsgejrj adprhtb
kjdd ... AND PURGE THEIR SOULS!

Owen turns the battery on. He adjusts the current with a knob and begins to electrocute them both. Ben and Gilbert shake and twitch in pain, their teeth clenched. They are covered in sweat and look disturbed. Owen turns the knob further and increases the current. Ben starts to shriek and cry uncontrollably. Owen stops the treatment.

RUTH (V.O.)

I am glad to say for my son ... this was a success ...

Gilbert looks stoic and slowly becomes more and more enraged. He looks at Ruth with intense hatred.

RUTH (V.O.)

... but for your brother ... the devil would not vacate.

Gilbert's face grows redder. Suddenly he breaks free and springs into the air and launches at Ruth.

RUTH (V.O.)
 ... and being so full of Satan ... well
 he ... *assaulted* me.

Ruth looks shocked and scared as Gilbert flies towards her.
 She screams.

RUTH
 (in horror)
 Satan!

Ruth ducks as Gilbert flies over her and smashes into an
 apple-crate. The brothers surround Gilbert and clench their
 fists. He looks terrified as they advance on him. Still
 tied to the post, Ben suddenly yells out.

BEN
 (pretending)
 Look! An angel!

The family all stop advancing on Gilbert and look to see
 where the angel is. While they are distracted, Gilbert gets
 to his feet and runs from the barn. On his way out he spots
 a jerrycan of lawnmower fuel and grabs it.

Cut to Gilbert running to the church as tears stream down
 his cheeks. He runs inside and slams the door shut behind
 him.

RUTH (V.O.)
 He then raced to our church ...

He splashes the fuel all over the altar, pews, walls and
 floor.

RUTH (V.O.)
 ... set it alight ...

He unknowingly splashes petrol on his arm. He throws a
 match and the altar erupts into flames. The flames seem
 much greater than he anticipated and the fire spreads
 rapidly. Gilbert looks horrified as the flames surround him
 and suddenly leap onto his arms. He screams.

GILBERT
 (in pain)
 Aaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh

RUTH (V.O.)
 ... and sacrificed himself ... as
 penance for his sins ...

Ruth and the rest of the family arrive to see the church now fully ablaze. Gilbert's horrific screams can be heard from inside. Ben watches in dismay. Ruth is indifferent and relieved. They seem reluctant to rescue Gilbert from the inferno.

RUTH (V.O.)
 We tried to rescue him ... but the
 inferno was too intense ... the good
 Lord took his soul ... and Lucifer lost
 the battle.

Jumpcut to the family having a memorial for Gilbert amongst the apple trees during the day. Ruth is apathetic and expressionless. Owen reads from a bible and is speaking in tongues.

OWEN
 Ahdjhfj jffjrjr ngdbr ... now cleansed
 and with the baby Jesus ... Amen.

Ben looks heartbroken. Nearby the church is just a pile of ashes.

RUTH (V.O.)
 We had a memorial for him ... and are
 confident he is in a happier place with
 God and the Baby Jesus.

Cut back to Grace finishing reading Ruth's letter while still standing on the coffee table in her wedding dress. Her face is pale and lifeless.

RUTH (V.O.)
 Please find enclosed a vessel of your
 brother's ashes ... I think it best you
 have them.

Cut to Ken taking the urn of ashes out of the box Ruth has sent. He looks at it curiously, not knowing what it is.

RUTH (V.O.)

Once again ... I am sorry to be the
bearer of such tragic news ... Gilbert
was a good soul ... who sadly fell to
repugnant persuasions.

Extreme closeup of Grace's eyes. Tears slowly form as the camera gently tracks outward to reveal her entire shocked face.

RUTH (V.O.)

We will always pray for him ... as well
as you ... Our deepest sympathies ...
Ruth and Owen Appleby.

Wideshot of Grace. Pinky and Ken look at her curiously not knowing what Grace has just read and discovered. Ruth's letter slips from Grace's hand and gently floats to the floor like a leaf.

Closeup of Gilbert's urn of ashes. There is a little magnet taped to the side. The plaque on the front reads : RIP Gilbert Appleby - Now Cleansed and With the Baby Jesus.

Long fade to black and complete silence.

Slow fade up to a wideshot of Grace's home at night amongst the bland sprawl of suburbia. It is a full moon. In the distance the sound of lonely dogs and other caged animals, bark, howl, and cry.

GRACE (V.O.)

Losing a twin is like losing an eye,
Sylvia ... you never see the world
quite the same ... I didn't feel
pain ... just empty and hollow ...
Grief is a nothingness ... leaves a
metallic taste in your mouth ... places
stones in your stomach.

Dissolve to inside Grace's darkened bedroom. The camera slowly tracks around and analyses her enormous hoard. Every corner of her home is now crammed and brimming with snails organised neatly.

GRACE (V.O.)

I no longer believed in silver linings
or glasses half full ... my glass was
shattered ... I'd lost my mother,
father, brother ... the world outside
was cruel ... all I had left were my
snails ... real ones hoarded together
when threatened ... survival in
numbers.

The camera tracks to her jar of real snails all clumped
together asleep.

GRACE (V.O.)

I was their protector and they were
mine ... they sheltered me from the
real world ...

The camera tracks over to Grace sitting upright in her bed.
She is motionless and stares into the dark. She seems
almost camouflaged amongst her hoard.

GRACE (V.O.)

I blended into them ... they
camouflaged me ... made me
invisible ... Grief is strange ...
tears don't flow ... they're too scared
... luckily I had Pinky and Ken ... his
spoonfulls of love kept me going ...

Ken enters the room, sits beside her and begins feeding her
cocktail frankfurts and sips from an enormous milkshake.
Closeup of Grace's dry, lifeless, and bloodshot eyes.

The camera continues to track around the room analysing her
hoard as her monologue continues.

GRACE (V.O.)

... but weirdly my snails seemed like
my real family ... I had an emotional
attachment to every one of them ...
they loved me when no one else
would ... they were loyal and I was
loyal back ... and for this I suffered
the consequences ... my hoarding was a
destructive cycle without logic ...
that was both its beauty and lunacy ...

hoarding relieved my anxiety but it also fed it ... but I couldn't throw any of them away ... couldn't abandon them ... deciding what to keep or lose was just too confusing and painful ... I feared making the wrong decisions ... so chose not to make any ... hoarding was a coping mechanism to placate pain ... each new snail was another brick for my fortress, bar for my cage ... I kept buying, adding ...

Cut to Grace inside a stationery store stealing a small snail pencil sharpener. She slips it into her bra.

GRACE (V.O.)
... and stealing.

A security-guard approaches from behind and taps Grace on the shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD
Excuse me Madam.

She turns around. She realises she has been caught and her body stoops in shame and resignation.

GRACE (V.O.)
(Guilt ridden)
Eventually I got caught ... the shame was crushing ...

Cut to Grace sitting in bed. Ken enters the room and hands her an envelope. She opens it and starts reading. Aerial shot of the letter : Summons - Canberra Magistrates Court. She sighs.

GRACE (V.O.)
... and there was fallout.

Ken looks at her sadly and leaves the room.

GRACE (V.O.)
And then things got even worse ... Love can be blind ... it can hide darkness ...

Through the darkness Grace spots one of the guinea pigs chewing something on top of her wardrobe. She squints and looks curious.

Jumpcut to Grace in her nightgown out of bed near the wardrobe. She is standing on a tiny wooden stool that looks like it is about to collapse under her. The guinea pig is chewing on a large scrapbook. She reaches for the scrapbook and begins looking through it. She starts to look shocked.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and horror.

Closeup of the pages in the scrapbook as she flicks through it. We see a chart tracking Grace's weight, then various photos taken of her asleep that show her gradual weight gains. Another page has various weight gain recipes.

GRACE (V.O.)

It seemed Ken's onion did have layers ... he didn't love me ... he loved my fat ... he had some sort of feeder fetish ... his plan was to fatten me up for his own delights. He didn't want to fix my bowl ... he wanted to fill it and fill it and fill it ... with lard.

Flashback to Ken making Grace a milkshake. Into a glass blender full of icecream and milk he drops lumps of duck fat and then blends them altogether. He smiles with satisfaction.

GRACE (V.O.)

It was one thing for me to create a cage for myself, it was another for someone else to imprison me ... I knew he admired my chunkiness ... but this was something more ... he wanted to immobilise me ... make me dependent ... exploit my vulnerabilities for his own sick pleasure ... he said he'd love me more the bigger I got ... and I stupidly believed him ... what an idiot I was ...

Cut back to Grace on the stool with Ken's secret scrapbook. Tears flow down her cheeks as she becomes angry and slams the book shut.

GRACE (V.O.)
... but not for much longer ... I'd had
enough blows to the head ...

The guinea pig looks down sadly at her.

Cut to Ken outside Grace's house on the footpath with his packed suitcases. Grace looks at him angrily from her bedroom window. He looks back at her and bows his head in shame. She slides open her window and angrily throws his glass blender at him. It smashes all over the ground. She throws his Kintsugi bowls as well. They shatter into thousands of golden pieces. Grace slams the window shut, closes the curtains and then bursts into tears.

GRACE (V.O.)
I don't remember much after that ... I
was punchdrunk.

Cut back to Ken walking in shame down the street. He suddenly stops and pulls out from inside his suit jacket a small passport sized photo of just Grace's head. Close up her smiling and innocent face. He looks full of remorse as a tear rolls down his cheek. Slow fade to black and complete silence.

Fade up. Grace is asleep. Cut to Grace's point of view. Her eyes open to find Pinky sitting beside her bed holding her hand.

GRACE (V.O.)
Pinky moved in and tended to my
wounds ...

Jumpcut to Grace asleep at night.

GRACE (V.O.)
... I'd read that snails hibernate when
they needed to repair themselves ...
I slept for a week ... and wrestled my
demons.

She seems to be having a nightmare. Cut to Grace's nightmare. She is covered by her live snails who are slowly eating her. She screams and wakes from the dream.

GRACE

Aaaaaaahhhhhhhh!

She realises it was just a dream and sighs. She turns her head and looks at her photo of Gilbert and her as children.

GRACE (V.O.)

I loathed myself ... was full of shame and regret ... My hoarding had caused this ... I loved my snails, but the money I'd wasted could have bought a dozen plane tickets to see Gilbert ... Now he was dead ... and I hated myself.

Fade to black.

Grace's P.O.V. Her eyes open to find Pinky with a tray holding a small glass of prune juice and an apple. The sun begins to shine through the window. Grace looks at Pinky and smiles at her in appreciation. Pinky holds her hand.

GRACE (V.O.)

Pinky put me on a strict diet. Life became slightly bearable as the days flowed and I slowly emerged from my darkness.

Grace looks at Pinky's very wrinkled hand which is trembling from arthritis. She then looks at Pinky's face.

GRACE (V.O.)

I began to notice how much Pinky had aged while my life had been in turmoil.

Jumpcut to Pinky sitting in Grace's kitchen looking at cornflakes spread all over her kitchen table.

GRACE (V.O.)

I'll never forget the day I discovered she had the beginnings of dementia ...

She thinks they are a jigsaw-puzzle and looks perplexed as she tries to join the flakes together.

GRACE (V.O.)
 ... when I found her attempting what
 she thought was a jigsaw of a
 rooster ... that was just a few months
 ago, Sylvia.

Cut to Pinky standing in the middle of Grace's ornamental
 water feature in her front yard. She is wearing scuba-
 diving gear for no apparent reason.

GRACE (V.O.)
 She was diagnosed with Alzheimers and
 deteriorated quickly.

Grace is observing Pinky from her bedroom window. She
 slides it open.

GRACE
 Pinky! ... What are you doing?

PINKY
 I'm looking for something!

GRACE
 What?

PINKY
 (mutters to self sadly)
 I dunno ...

Jumpcut to Pinky sitting in Grace's bed looking slightly
 confused. Grace enters the room with a tray holding a
 gingerhashman and a glass of green ginger wine.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Roles reversed ... it was my turn to
 care for her.

Pinky smiles at Grace cheekily.

PINKY
 Ahh ... my medicine.

Fade to black.

Cut to Pinky in Grace's bed. She is now looking even more
 bewildered and frail.

GRACE (V.O.)

One day she decided to not get out of bed ... she became grumpier and more frustrated.

Grace sits beside her with concern. Pinky turns to Grace looking frustrated.

PINKY

Did I tell you that thing I can't remember? That thing I was looking for but don't know what it is? ... Stupid brain! ... Stupid disease! ... What's the name of that German guy whose disease I got? ... Guggeinheimers?

Grace holds her hand tightly and tries to calm her.

GRACE

Relax Pinky ... it doesn't matter.

Pinky relaxes and then smiles.

PINKY

Ah Gracie, such a great friend.

Grace holds her hand and smiles. Pinky's breathing is uneven and shallow. Nearly all of her hair has fallen out.

Classical music begins play. Pinky suddenly starts coughing more violently. Grace holds her hand more securely. Pinky acknowledges her kindness. The sun shines through the window onto her wrinkled face cushioned on the pillow. Grace looks concerned. Pinky's breathing begins to falter. She looks towards Grace and gently squeezes her hand tighter. Her eyelids begin to close. There is silence. Suddenly her eyes pop open. Pinky finally remembers what she needs to tell Grace.

PINKY

The Potatoes !

Grace leans in closer and looks confused.

GRACE

Potatoes? ... Pinky ... what do you mean?

Pinky freezes, exhales, turns her head and dies. Grace bows her head as a tear rolls down her cheek.

GRACE
(whispered)

Oh ... Pinky.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Grace in the Pitypit. She picks up Pinky's empty urn of ashes. Sylvia the snail has almost crawled to the top of the garden stake sign.

GRACE
(resigned)

Potatoes? Sylvia ... Potatoes? ...
Maybe that's what she wanted her last
meal to be? ... god damn life such
a stupid puzzle ...

Grace sits silent for a few moments. All is still. Suddenly we hear her heartbeat. It is slow but gets louder and faster. Tiny sweat beads begin to appear on Grace's forehead. Grace starts to get angry with herself.

GRACE

DAMN IT!

The camera zooms in on her forehead and into her brain as a flashback montage of her life's struggles and misfortunes begins : Ken, Gilbert, her father, her mother, her hoard. Dozens of disturbing images flash, blur, and accelerate into each other. It goes into a rapid cycle, faster and faster, more and more disturbing. It suddenly reaches a climax and stops. Grace screams into the air.

GRACE
(exasperated)

Ahhhhhhhhhh ...

Grace sobs heavily into her hands. Long pause.

GRACE
(blubbering and snotty)
So alone ... so so alone ...

Grace pauses and looks down into her basket beside her feet. She leans down and takes out a box of poisoned snail

pellets called : Defender Snail Poison. She stares at the box for a moment then pours a handful of the poisoned pellets into her hand. She suddenly looks determined.

She pauses, then puts the pellets into her mouth. There is silence as her swollen cheeks begin to redden and sweat. Tears roll from her eyes. Her face grows redder and redder as she stares at Sylvia who has now finally reached the top of the sign which is revealed to the audience for the first time : POTATOES.

Grace's cheeks go pale, her eyes begin to roll as her heart stops beating. She begins to die. Sylvia stops moving and then sadly turns her antenna-eyes back towards Grace as if trying to tell Grace something. Grace's eyes suddenly widen in realisation. We hear Pinky's final words.

PINKY (V.O.)
(ghostly echo)

The Potatoes.

Grace violently spits out the pellets and splutters.

GRACE
Potatoes ... The POTATOES!

Grace starts digging furiously into the soil with her hands. One by one she pulls potatoes from the dirt. She digs deeper and deeper. A metal clunk is heard. She pulls out Pinky's biscuit tin. Grace looks shocked and unsure.

Fade to black.

Grace stares at the biscuit tin for quite a while. She looks anxious. She gathers herself, takes a big breath and then opens it. Inside are rolls of cash, old black and white photos, and a large envelope labelled : To Grace. She opens it and starts reading. We hear Pinky's ghostly voice :

PINKY (V.O.)
Dear Grace ... if you're reading this,
then I'm as dead as a doughnut and
you've found my biscuit tin ... and my
secrets.

Grace's eyes widen.

PINKY (V.O.)

You've been asleep for days and I need to tell you important stuff before my brain fully rots ... Old age is such a bastard ... creeps up without you knowing ... one day you sink your teeth into an apple, and they stay ...

Flashback to Pinky taking a bite from an apple. Her false teeth stay embedded.

PINKY (V.O.)

... you go to straighten the wrinkles in your pantyhose ... and then realise you're not wearing any.

Flashback to Pinky trying to straighten the wrinkles on her legs. Cut back to the present, Grace continues reading Pinky's letter.

PINKY (V.O.)

Anyway, I digress ... My secrets ... Firstly, I'm an orphan ... and was raised in an orphanage after the Great War. It was a terrible place where I was kept alone, day and night ...

Flashback to inside a squalid orphanage. Rows of rusty steel cots line the walls containing babies and neglected children. Closeup on Pinky as a small child in one of the cots.

PINKY (V.O.)

... never held or hugged ...

Camera widens to reveal a little boy in the cot next to hers. He is sobbing. She stretches and reaches her malnourished arm through the bars of her cot and takes hold of his hand to comfort him.

PINKY (V.O.)

... the only contact, the little boy next to me.

Cut back to present. Grace looks stunned.

PINKY (V.O.)

I won't tell you the horrors I
remember, but do want to tell you what
it's like to feel imprisoned ...
caged ... it was dreadful.

Jumpcut to Grace standing in the middle of her hoard.

PINKY (V.O.)

But in the years since, I've learnt
that the worst cages are the ones we
create for ourselves ...

The camera revolves around Grace as she ponders Pinky's
words.

PINKY (V.O.)

... you have created a cage for
yourself Gracie ...

A semi transparent and superimposed veil of thousands of
Grace's snails slowly fade on between her face and the
audience.

PINKY (V.O.)

... and the only way to escape is by
overcoming your fears. Your cage has
never been locked ... but your fears
have kept you trapped. Get rid of those
snails ... unshackle your mind forged
manacles ... set yourself free.

The superimposed veil of snails slowly fade off to leave
Grace by herself.

PINKY (V.O.)

There'll be pain ... but that's
life ... you have to face it head
on ... be brave.

Closeup on Grace's face. For the first time she looks
determined, steely and prepped.

PINKY (V.O.)

A bit of self pity is ok ... but it's
time to move on ... you got rid of
that creepy Ken ... now seize life
while you're young.

Grace starts to look even more enlightened and determined.

PINKY (V.O.)

Life is about striving for
simplicity ... but it's hard to
achieve ... it's a long process of
distillation ... trial and error. It's
time for you to shed your shell ...
purge your hoard ... start anew ...
those snails you think are protecting
you, are stopping you ... they're a
bandaid for your pain.

Cut to Grace standing in Ian and Narelle's backyard staring
at her enormous hoard of snails piled metres high. She
starts shovelling them into the smouldering incinerator.
Flames begin to emerge from the top.

PINKY (V.O.)

Snails are considered lucky in many
cultures ... they have brought you
joy ... but in your case ... no luck.

She then throws Ken's feeder fetish scrapbook into the
flames. She then takes off her snail beanie and considers
throwing it into the flames as well. She changes her mind
and puts it back on her head. The burning ashes float
upwards into the Canberra sky. Grace looks into the sky and
smiles.

GRACE

(whispered to self)

Be free.

Classical music is playing in the background. Transition to
Grace standing in her now empty bedroom devoid of snails
and clutter, the walls and shelves bare. She looks at peace
with the world. She is holding a recent photo of Pinky
looking very old and wrinkled.

PINKY (V.O.)

Anyway, I want to thank you Gracie ...
You've been terrific ... Not long now
til my number's up ... time to close my
curtains ... For the first time in my
life I feel older than I look ... and I
look like a testicle.

Grace continues to smile as we hear the remainder of Pinky's letter.

PINKY (V.O.)
Life's a beautiful tapestry that needs
to be experienced ... its small
pleasures savoured ...

Flashback to Pinky smoking a cigar in the rain.

PINKY (V.O.)
... like smoking a cigar in the
rain ...

Flashback to Pinky putting on a jumper which has come straight from her tumbledryer.

PINKY (V.O.)
... or wearing clothes straight from
the dryer ... enough rambling, time for
both of us to let go ... Like I've
said, life can only be understood
backwards, but we have to live it
forwards ... snails never go back over
their trails ... always moving
forward ...

Cut back to Grace standing in the middle of her bedroom. She goes over to her window and opens the curtains.

PINKY (V.O.)
... time for you to leave some
glittering snail trails all over the
world ...

Grace looks out at the setting sun.

PINKY (V.O.)
... and remember ... never ... never go
back.

Slow fade to black.

Fade up to Grace sitting in the docks of a court awaiting her verdict for shoplifting.

She looks nervous. The Magistrate walks into the courtroom and takes his seat. Grace looks up towards the bench. The magistrate is old and well groomed.

MAGISTRATE

(Loud and stern)

Ms Pudel!

Grace looks startled. The Magistrate looks at Grace without emotion. He looks at notes in front of him in relation to the case. The Magistrate looks serious as he ponders Grace's case.

MAGISTRATE

Your crime is serious ... theft is theft, whether it be a diamond or a cucumber ... and if you forgive the fox for stealing your chickens, then he'll steal your sheep. However ...

His tone changes.

MAGISTRATE

... I can tell from your face you're full of shame and regret ... and true regret is punishment enough ... you're a kind person ... Many years ago, a little girl showed me kindness when I was at my lowest ebb ...

Quick flashback to a shot of the Homeless Man Grace assists at the beginning of the film.

MAGISTRATE

... that little girl gave me hope and courage ... to start again and escape my vices.

Grace suddenly realises it is James the Homeless Man she gave money to as a child.

JAMES

(Smiling)

You may have wandering hands Ms Pudel, but I know you have a heart of gold and have done many good deeds ... I therefore release you from your charges ... case dismissed!

A smile spreads across his face as he bangs his gavel.

Cut to Grace meeting with James outside the court. He holds her hand and then embraces her.

Slow fade to black and complete silence.

Handwritten text fades on : A Year Later. Fades off.

Fade up to a sign : Canberra Film School. In brackets underneath : Caution - This Sign Has Sharp Edges.

Cut to Grace in a stopmotion animation studio moving a little plasticine puppet of herself frame at a time. Her puppets and sets are poorly made yet endearing.

GRACE (V.O.)

Life had bashed me around a bit ... but the roses smelt better. I liked nature, despite what it had done to me ... and I finally started to become the person I'd always wanted.

Cut to a handpainted sign stuck above the entrance to a run down Scout Hall : Canberra International Film Festival.

GRACE (V.O.)

I made a film about my life.

Jumpcut to inside the hall and the final scene of her film. A plasticine Grace punches a plasticine Ken. The animation is amateurish and clunky. The credit roll begins : Written, Directed and Animated by Grace Pudel, Narrated by Edna Everage.

GRACE (V.O.)

It wasn't very good, but a few people came and I even had a question and answer session afterwards.

Grace is standing on stage as the credits to her film finish rolling. The lights come up and she is holding a microphone.

GRACE

(shyly)

Any questions?

Cut to a shot of the audience. There are only handful of people. They look indifferent. Crickets chirp. Grace looks slightly disappointed and shrugs her shoulders.

GRACE

(shyly)

Ah well ... thanks for coming.

She turns to exit the stage. Suddenly a voice is heard.

VOICE

(Calm, dry, gruff)

I've got one.

Grace stops and peers into the darkened auditorium. She sees a dishevelled man's hand slowly rise. The man looks sunburnt and his clothes shabby. He has a thick black beard and looks exhausted. He is smiling.

VOICE

Do you believe in Magic?

Grace looks confused by the question. The voice continues :

VOICE

Did you ever wonder if your brother could have escaped those flames?

Closeup of the man's hand. On his finger is a snail shaped ring. Grace goes pale.

GRACE

(softly)

Gilbert?

He nods his head gently.

GILBERT

Yes ... I walked across that desert.

Gilbert walks onto the stage and hugs his sister. The little scars on their arms align to form the smiley face. They embrace in silence. An anonymous lady in the second row claps with delight.

Long fade to black.

Fade up to an exterior shot of Grace's home. It has been cleaned up and looks refreshed. Cut to inside where Grace and Gilbert are sitting on either ends of the couch. They are both quietly reading. Gilbert is now clean shaven. The thick burn marks on his arm from the church fire are more visible. Grace reads : The Diary of Anne Frank. Gilbert reads : The Ginger Chested Pirate. Grace stops for a moment and turns to stare at Gilbert, still shocked by his arrival.

GRACE (V.O.)

It took me a while to believe Gilbert
was alive ... how he'd escaped the
fire ...

Flashback to Gilbert in the burning church. He climbs out the tiny window at the back of the church and escapes into the dark.

GRACE (V.O.)

... and how his ashes were nothing
more, than ashes ...

Cut back to them on the couch. Grace leans over to Gilbert's urn of ashes which has been converted into a container to hold black jellybeans. She takes one and begins eating it.

Cut to Pinky's Pitypit and the potatoes sign Sylvia had alerted Grace to. On top of the sign is a small clump of snail eggs. Cut to the soil below. Sylvia's empty shell lies on its side.

GRACE (V.O.)

We were finally free of our cages ...
and even though our family had shrunk a
little ...

Cut to Grace's mantelpiece. The jar which once contained Sylvia and all the other snails has now been converted in a flower vase.

GRACE (V.O.)

... we were together again ...

Camera keeps tracking along the mantelpiece to reveal the other collection of urns : the Guinea pigs', Pinky's, and Percy's.

GRACE (V.O.)
... with only one thing left to
release.

Zoom in on Percy's urn.

Wideshot of Luna Park and The Big Dipper Rollercoaster silhouetted against the setting sun. The train slowly climbs the first slope.

Closeup of the last carriage. Grace and Gilbert sit huddled together. Gilbert holds Grace's hand. Grace is holding Percy's urn of ashes. The train reaches the peak of the slope, hesitates, and then plummets downwards. Grace releases Percy's ashes into the air. They form a swirl.

Cut back to the wideshot of the rollercoaster silhouetted against the horizon.

GRACE (V.O.)
Gilbert still smelt like burnt
matches ... The setting sun tingled our
skin ...

Camera tilts upwards into the darkening sky as the sun finally sets.

GRACE (V.O.)
... our two souls and single heart.

Twinkly stars begin to appear. Slow fade to black.
Orchestral music begins : A robust version of, Alouette begins to play. Credits Roll. THE END.