

CYCLONE SANTA

Written by  
Robyn Opie Parnell  
and  
Rob Parnell

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R & R Books Film Music  
PO Box 485  
Morphett Vale SA 5162  
Australia  
Email: [rob@rnrbooksfilmmusic.com.au](mailto:rob@rnrbooksfilmmusic.com.au)

FADE IN:

1 EXT. OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - DAY 1

Kangaroos bounce across the dusty red desert.

A distant sound of an engine SPLUTTERS as a yellow 1944 Tiger Moth comes into view.

Three dusty CAMEL DRIVERS shield their eyes from the hot sun as they watch the noisy plane fly overhead.

2 EXT. TIGER MOTH IN FLIGHT - DAY 2

The front of the Tiger Moth hosts a P.M.G. (Postmaster General's Department) logo.

The open cockpit has taken its toll on BEN AYERS, 30s. A fake white beard flies from around his neck like the silk scarf of a WWI fighter pilot.

Ben's white-knuckle grip and the IRREGULAR SOUNDS of the engine indicate the biplane is in trouble. He frowns, leans over and looks to the ground.

3 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY 3

Ten scantily clothed ABORIGINAL CHILDREN search the sky and watch the biplane head for a makeshift landing strip. They run barefoot to the landing strip.

4 EXT. DARWIN BEACH - DAY 4

A beach -- three wise men, with camels, walk across the sand to Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus in a manger. It appears that we have traveled back over 2000 years, until:

Legend: Darwin, Christmas Eve, 1974

People mill around to enjoy the Christmas festival with fake snow everywhere. A few children enjoy ice cream cones as parents fan themselves to stay cool.

Some children queue to see Santa. MIKEY MITCHELL, 6, sits on Santa's lap and talks animatedly. Mikey's father, JOE, an electrician, 30s, takes a photo of Mikey with Santa.

Other children line up to ride camels. Mikey's sister, AMY, 11, stands nearby and holds her little dog SCRUFFY. She smiles and waves to their mother and nurse, TONI, 30s, who sits on a camel's back. Toni makes a funny face at Amy.

Joe turns the camera to Toni to take a photo. Mikey rushes over and tries to get on the camel too. The camel turns to him and shows its teeth. Mikey looks up at it, wide-eyed, as the camel spits at him.

5 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY

5

The Aboriginal children are taken aback, concerned. They watch the biplane buck and shudder as the wheels touch down. BANG! The engine blows. Silence.

Ben is steady as he lands, roughly. The children smile as he steps out of the plane. His red summer Santa top, with a P.M.G. badge, becomes visible as well as a fur Santa hat that pokes out from a pocket.

CHILDREN

Santa! Santa!

Ben tugs off his flying cap and goggles to reveal an intense expression. The children, their excitement unbridled, run to him.

CHILDREN (CONT'D)

Santa! Santa!

The children swarm around Ben. They rip the Santa hat from his pocket as they tug at him.

BEN

I ain't no Santa Claus.

He snatches his hat back. The children LAUGH.

CHILDREN

Santa! Santa!

Ben, exhausted, tries to untangle himself from the children, without much luck, as they taunt him. He lurches towards them. They jump back.

BEN

Get out of here. Shoo! Scram!

Some of the children HOWL, some still SQUEAL in delight.

CHILDREN

(mocking)

Shoo! Scram! Ha ha ha!

Ben notices an Aboriginal boy, JAM, 12, who watches from a distance, more interested in his soccer ball. He bounces it off his head, then kicks it up, back onto his head.

The children surround Ben as he secures his plane. He reaches into the front and pulls out a red mail sack. The children SCREAM as soon as Ben slings the sack over his shoulder.

BOY

Presents!

CHILDREN

Presents! Presents! Presents!

The excited children reach for the sack and try to take it.

BEN

Cut that out. You can get ten years for pinching mail.

The children grab the sack and rip it from Ben. It drops on the ground. The kids reach in, grab and pull at the mail, which scatters around. Ben tries to stop them.

BEN (CONT'D)

Watch it. Careful. There ain't no presents. Get out of here.

They see how angry he is and run away.

BOY

Grumpy old fella.

Ben frowns, surrounded by a mess of letters and parcels. He steps back and accidentally crushes a small package.

He MUTTERS under his breath, then picks up the package. The liquid contents ooze over the outer wrapping and through his fingers.

BEN

Crap!

He's unable to read the label, which is smeared with liquid. He shakes his head, places the package back in the sack and wipes his hands on his shorts.

Above him, the sun burns hot and bright.

The sun glints and reflects off a mirror that belongs to a motorbike. The rider, ERIC AYERS, 60s, travels along a road that snakes between rainforest on one side, coast on the other.

7 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY 7

Cotton balls are scattered on the ground and the windows are frosted.

8 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY 8

The shop owner, LES, 60s, smirks as he steps back from the window.

Ben enters and approaches the counter.

LES  
G'day, Santa.

BEN  
Give it a rest, Les.

He drops the sack on the counter on top of a small pile of newspapers. He doesn't notice the headline: "Cyclone Tracy to Miss Darwin".

Les places his hands on his stomach.

LES  
Come on, show us what you got. Ho  
ho ho!

Ben ignores him and walks to the rear of the shop.

LES (CONT'D)  
Love the dinkum Christmas cheer.

Ben scowls.

9 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY 9

Amy, with Scruffy in her arms, walks behind a plastic Santa in his sleigh and an inflatable snowman on the front lawn. The plastic Santa smiles.

Amy continues around the side of the house. A chainsaw BUZZES. Joe trims a tree branch that is too close to a window.

Amy moves on, to the backyard. Mikey plays with a selection of toys. Water from a sprinkler shoots into the air. Light catches the water and creates a rainbow -- through which is Toni at the tap.

TONI  
There she blows, Mikey.

Mikey jumps up. Toni and Mikey wave their arms and pretend to erupt like human geysers. Amy watches, smiles at them.

Inside the house, a telephone RINGS.

AMY

I'll get it.

She places Scruffy on the ground and runs towards the back door.

MIKEY

Me, I'll do it.

He picks up a kid's phone from the selection of toys.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

Hello?

10 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUT AS NEEDED)

Ben holds the receiver of a public telephone. Next to the phone is a hand written note: "Amy 08 8555 6138".

11 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUT AS NEEDED) 11

A telephone RINGS. Amy hurries towards it and grabs the receiver.

AMY

Hello?

(beat)

Uncle Ben?

12 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUT AS NEEDED)

Ben doesn't answer. He leans against the pay phone and closes his eyes.

13 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK 13

YOUNG AMY, 4, tinsel around her neck, steps outside and sees Ben. She is visibly upset.

YOUNG AMY

Uncle Ben! Don't go!

14 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY - PRESENT 14

Ben hangs up the phone, annoyed.

15 EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY LOOKOUT - DAY 15

Eric Ayers, the rider, stands next to his motorbike, helmet under one arm. He drinks water from a container and looks out over the ocean.

The sun disappears behind clouds. Wind ruffles Eric's hair. Waves break against rocks, ocean spray rises in the air.

16 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY 16

Mikey runs into the spray from the sprinkler. He slips on the wet grass, falls and CRIES out.

Joe, startled, as he drops tree branches into a bin, cuts a finger on a sharp twig. He turns to see Toni hurry to Mikey.

TONI

Oh baby, are you okay?

Mikey WHIMPERS as Toni gathers him into her arms.

TONI (CONT'D)

Where does it hurt?

Mikey points to his elbow.

TONI (CONT'D)

There?

Mikey nods.

TONI (CONT'D)

Mummy will kiss it better.

Joe cradles his cut finger as he approaches Toni and Mikey.

JOE

Everything alright?

Mikey smiles.

MIKEY

Mummy fixed it.

JOE

Can Mummy fix this?

Joe holds out a bleeding finger. Toni eyes it, unsympathetic.

TONI

You can do it yourself. That's the way you like to do things.

Joe SIGHS. Mikey scrambles out of Toni's arms. There's no evidence of his injury as he plays on the lawn. They see Amy, who walks slowly towards them.

JOE

Who's on the phone?

AMY

They hung up.

(beat)

When's Grandpa getting here?

TONI

The answer hasn't changed since the last time you asked. Later this afternoon.

AMY

(quietly)

And Uncle Ben?

Joe raises his eyebrows.

AMY (CONT'D)

He might come.

JOE

Yeah, he'll catch a lift with Santa on his sleigh.

Mikey jumps up and down.

MIKEY

I wanna fly in Santa's sleigh.

Joe grimaces at the air, then smiles at Mikey.

17

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - DAY

17

Eric rides his motorbike around a bend. He sees a car, surfboards on the roof rack, straddle the lane and veer into his path.

He swerves to miss the car and skids across the road, off the bitumen, towards a guard rail.

There's the sound of a CRASH. Then the sight of the mangled bike with a wheel spinning.

18 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY 18

Les and Jam stand on opposite sides of the counter. Les peers into the sack and pulls out the damaged package. The sight of it causes them concern.

19 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY 19

Ben, wrench in hand, works on the biplane's engine.

BEN

Come on, you bludger. We gotta get going...

He notices Aboriginal children as they walk by with a dog.

He drops the wrench into a toolbox and picks up a rag to wipe his hands. The radio CRACKLES to life.

BOSS (O.S.)

M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner.  
Come in M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner. Over.

Ben hurls the rag at the toolbox.

20 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - DAY 20

A small hospital with a nativity scene by the main entrance. An ambulance, lights flashing, is parked in front of "Emergency".

21 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY 21

Doors fly open. A gurney rolls in, wheeled by hospital staff. DOCTOR ROB, 50s, tends to Eric, who MUMBLES in pain.

22 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY 22

Jam looks at a glucose strip, after checking his blood sugar level.

JAM

My blood sugar's too low.

Les holds up a syringe that is half full of insulin. The damaged package, open to reveal broken bottles, sits on the counter.

LES

That's it, all I can save. It's a  
dog's breakfast.

23 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

23

Eric's gurney continues to roll along the corridor. PEG, 50s,  
Senior Nurse, arrives to assist Doctor Rob.

DOCTOR ROB

(to Peg)

Eric Ayers. Motorbike accident.

Peg grabs Eric's paperwork and looks at it.

PEG

Oh, heaven --

ERIC

(cuts in, with pain)

I ain't ready for the Pearly Gates,  
sister.

PEG

-- you're Toni's father.

24 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - DAY

24

Toni sits at the table. She's dressed in a nurse's uniform, a  
name badge "Toni", decorated with tinsel, pinned to her  
chest. Joe leans against a bench.

TONI

... I can't believe you didn't talk  
to me first. It's a hell of a  
decision to make on your own.

JOE

You weren't there.

TONI

Oh, that makes it alright, does it?

(beat)

Who's going to pay the bills?

JOE

We'll be okay. We always are.

Toni's irritation increases. She gestures angrily.

TONI

Quit, just like that, without a word to your wife. We have a mortgage, rates, and we need a new roof. How do you expect us to pay for them with just my salary? We haven't been able to afford the roof with both of us working.

Joe, agitated, moves away from the bench.

JOE

I've been talking about quitting for a while.

TONI

This is some Christmas present.

Joe turns, hands on the bench, and looks out the window to Amy and Mikey at play in the back yard.

JOE

I'm tired of working for them.

Toni looks incredulous.

TONI

You're tired!

She grabs her handbag from the kitchen table and storms across the room.

JOE

Where are you going? I thought you wanted to talk about this.

TONI

I'm going to work. Someone has to.

The door SLAMS as Toni leaves. Joe THUMPS his fist on the bench.

25 INT. TIGER MOTH COCKPIT - DAY

25

Ben wears his flying cap and goggles. He flicks several switches, then pushes the throttle. He looks around, to scan his surroundings.

BEN

Clear!

He presses the start button. Nothing! Sweat beads on his forehead.

26

INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

26

Ben stands and looks at a painting of the Outback. Across the room, Eric sits in a chair.

ERIC

How's that old bucket of yours?  
Still flying?

Ben stiffens, annoyed. Toni and Joe enter with mugs of coffee. Toni notices the tension and attempts to lighten the mood.

TONI

(too brightly)  
Here's the coffee.

She holds a mug out to Ben. They place the other mugs on the coffee table. Young Amy, 4, runs towards a Christmas tree.

ERIC

Hey, no running in the house.

Young Amy looks at Eric, stumbles and falls. She starts to CRY. Toni rushes to her.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Leave her. She's not hurt.

Toni picks up Young Amy, cuddles and soothes her. Joe hurries to Toni's side.

JOE

She's crying.

ERIC

That's what kids do. And you're  
playing right into her hands.

TONI

She's just a baby. It's a special  
day for her.

BEN

Toni knows what she's doing.

Eric shoots Ben a cold stare.

ERIC

You saying I don't?

Ben takes a deep breath and shakes his head. Eric reaches for the coffee table, ignores the mugs and picks up a beer.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I raised the two of you. If you're such an expert, Ben, where are your kids?

Ben tenses, points a finger at Eric, about to speak.

TONI

Please, stop this. It's upsetting Amy.

ERIC

You're spoiling her.

BEN

It's none of your business, Dad. And it's your fault. You made Amy cry.

Joe stands between Eric and Ben.

JOE

Ben --

ERIC

(cuts in)

Yeah, Ben. You want to take on your old man?

Eric SLAMS the beer on to the coffee table.

27

EXT. OUTBACK TIGER MOTH - DAY - PRESENT

27

The ENGINE fires up, then PURRS a healthy rhythm. The biplane slowly rolls forwards.

Les hurries up to the plane, runs alongside and yells over the engine.

LES

Wait up. We need help. Got a crook kid, a young boy.

BEN

I ain't the flying doctor.

Ben taxis along the runway.

Les races after the plane as it gathers speed. He holds up the broken parcel and tries to get Ben's attention, without success.

Ben takes off.

28

INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - DAY

28

Toni walks over to a patient in a bed. He looks up at her. It's Eric.

ERIC

The nurses weren't supposed to tell you.

TONI

Dad, I work here. Most days I manage to find the patients by myself.

She gives him a wry smile. He glances around at the colorful murals, pictures and decorations that brighten the walls. A tree, with presents beneath, stands opposite the ward entrance. He looks out of place amongst the small children.

ERIC

What's this? I feel like I'm in kindergarten.

TONI

You're in here so I can look after you.

ERIC

Bah, I don't need looking after.

Toni's expression tells him otherwise. Doctor Rob approaches the bed.

DOCTOR ROB

How are you feeling, Mr. Ayers?

ERIC

I'd be better if I wasn't here.

DOCTOR ROB

You'll be our guest for a few days. Your ECG revealed you had a minor coronary thrombosis.

Eric has no idea what that means. He looks to Toni.

TONI

A small heart attack.

DOCTOR ROB

We suspect it was brought about by your accident.

Eric frowns.

ERIC  
How's my bike?

Toni brushes his concern aside.

TONI  
No need to worry about that. I had  
them take it to the tip.

ERIC  
You what?

His shocked reaction causes him pain. Toni sits into a chair  
next to his bed.

TONI  
You're going to have to take it  
easy from now on. Besides, the bike  
was in pieces.

Eric looks forlorn.

ERIC  
It could've been fixed.

Doctor Rob leaves them alone. Toni reaches for Eric's hand.

TONI  
You're going on a healthy diet --

ERIC  
(cuts in)  
Darling, I haven't had a drink in  
five long years. Don't go taking  
away my steak, chips and gravy.  
That will kill me.

He squeezes her hand. She looks at him.

29 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

29

The windows are decorated with frosted "festive" shapes.

Amy and Mikey sit near a Christmas tree. Mikey picks up the  
presents and shakes them at his ear. Scruffy sniffs at them  
as he puts each one down.

On a note pad, Joe has written seven business names, six have  
been crossed out. "Mitchell Electrical Maintenance" remains.  
He writes a catchphrase: "a family business". He crosses it  
out and writes "you're in safe hands". He looks up.

JOE  
Wait until tomorrow, Mikey.

MIKEY  
Can't I open one now? Just one?

Joe shakes his head, then writes "no problem too big".

MIKEY (CONT'D)  
(to Amy)  
I asked Santa for a battery  
operated car.

Mikey peels back the wrapping and sneaks a peak at one of the presents. Amy snatches it from him.

AMY  
It's not yours.

MIKEY  
I don't want soap.

AMY  
It's special soap, for shaving.

Mikey screws up his face. Amy smooths the wrapping. The gift tag, in her own handwriting, says "Uncle Ben".

30 EXT. OUTBACK TIGER MOTH IN FLIGHT - DAY 30

The white beard flies from around Ben's neck. He appears more relaxed. The ENGINE HUMS a regular rhythm.

The radio CRACKLES.

BOSS (O.S.)  
M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner.  
Come in M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-  
niner. Over.

Ben tenses. He turns off the radio.

31 INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY 31

Les and Jam stand in front of a table top ham radio.

BOSS (O.S.)  
He isn't answering.

Les grimaces. Jam looks to Les.

JAM  
What we gonna do?

BOSS (O.S.)  
He has one more stop.

LES  
You little beauty! Where?

32 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - DAY

32

Joe hangs up the telephone. He notices Amy, who stands in the doorway.

JOE  
That was Mummy on the phone.  
Grandpa Eric is in hospital.

AMY  
Is he going to die?

JOE  
Of course not.

Mikey moves around Amy, into the kitchen.

MIKEY  
Is he having a baby?

Mikey grins.

JOE  
He had a little accident. He's  
okay.

AMY  
When is he coming here?

JOE  
I don't know.

AMY  
Tomorrow?

JOE  
I'm sorry, sweetie.

Amy appears crestfallen.

33 EXT. OUTBACK HOTEL - DAY

33

A hotel stands in the middle of the dusty desert. A large tin Santa on the roof tries to wave an arm but fails.

Ben walks towards the hotel, the Tiger Moth behind him, in the distance.

34 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - DAY

34

"Step Into Christmas" plays on an ancient jukebox. A TV, the sound down, shows a festive program.

Ben enters with a bundle of mail and heads for the bar.

BUSHIE 1

Looky, if it ain't Santa Claus  
himself.

The crowd CHEER.

Ben sits at the end of the bar, near a miniature Christmas tree decorated with tinsel and snow (cotton wool). A bartender, SUE, 20s, approaches him.

SUE

Ben, your boss left a message for  
you.

BEN

You ain't seen me.

SUE

He said it was urgent --

BEN

(cuts in)  
Just give me a drink. The usual.

Sue holds his gaze. Then she smiles and reaches for a clean glass.

35 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - DUSK

35

Thick, dark clouds move across the sky.

A sudden gust of wind blows through tree branches, buffets the decorations on the lawn and BANGS the windows.

36 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - DUSK

36

The windows RATTLE. Amy lies on the floor, cuddles and strokes Scruffy. The TV is on in the background.

AMY

... You're so beautiful. You don't  
get angry. You don't yell... Maybe  
at cats...

(beat)

Uncle Ben will come. And Grandpa  
Eric too.

Mikey NOISILY runs into the room. Joe follows.

JOE

Keep it down, Mikey.

Mikey flops on to the floor. Joe sits into a chair. A wall clock indicates it's early evening, a few minutes past six.

On the TV, a NEWSCASTER:

NEWSCASTER

At three PM Central Standard Time severe topical cyclone Tracy was centered eighty kilometers west-north-west of Darwin...

Joe and Amy focus on the TV. Then Amy looks at Joe.

AMY

Daddy?

Joe meets Amy's gaze.

JOE

Why don't you get milk and biscuits ready for Santa? I'll be there in a minute.

NEWSCASTER

(under Amy and Joe)

... And moving south east at seven kilometers an hour. The center is expected to be near Grose Island about midnight...

Mikey jumps up and hurries to the kitchen. Amy follows more sedately. She glances back at Joe.

Joe watches the TV news. On screen, a map shows the path of Cyclone Tracy, which moves ever closer to Darwin.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

...Very destructive winds of one hundred and twenty kilometers an hour with gusts to one hundred and fifty kilometers an hour are expected between Darwin and the Perron Islands tonight and tomorrow morning...

The setting sun is hidden behind thick clouds.

A Utility truck races along a dirt track.

38 INT. UTILITY TRUCK - NIGHT 38

Les grips the steering wheel and glances anxiously at Jam in the passenger seat. Jam is suddenly full of energy.

JAM  
Too slow. Hurry up.

LES  
We have to watch out for roos or we could come a gutza.

They pass a sign on the side of the road that warns of Kangaroos next 5 kilometers.

JAM  
We gotta get there fast.

Jam LAUGHS hysterically.

JAM (CONT'D)  
Go in plane, fly like a bird.

LES  
Eat some candy. You're close to hypo.

Jam fumbles in his shorts' pocket. He manages to pull out a candy but accidentally drops it on the floor.

Les takes his eyes off the road and tries to reach the candy. The Utility truck veers to the left. Les sits up, tugs at the wheel and straightens the Ute.

Jam grins and holds up the candy for Les to see.

LES (CONT'D)  
That's Bonzer! Now eat it.

39 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT 39

Ben sits at the bar and stares into a glass of Coke.

40 INT. AYERS LOUNGE ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK 40

YOUNG BEN, 11, holds a model Tiger Moth. He flies the plane through the air as Eric enters.

ERIC  
Where'd you get that?

YOUNG BEN  
Isn't it fantastic.

ERIC  
Answer my question. You steal it?

Ben shakes his head.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Where'd you get it?

YOUNG BEN  
Mum sent it for Christmas.

ERIC  
You don't take nothing from her.  
And you don't mention her in this  
house.

Eric lunges for the plane.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Give it here!

YOUNG BEN  
No! Dad!

Eric grabs Young Ben roughly.

ERIC  
You spoiled brat, give it here.

As Young Ben and Eric struggle over the plane, it snaps in two. Young Ben CRIES and runs from the room.

41 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT - PRESENT 41

Ben drinks the rest of the Coke.

On the TV, a headline appears "Cyclone Tracy Changes Direction -- Heads for Darwin", followed by the map from the Darwin Tropical Cyclone Warning Center.

No one notices the TV.

42 EXT. DARWIN BEACH - NIGHT 42

Heavy raindrops splatter on the sand.

The festival is over. A few people remain behind to pack up. A man leads a camel away. Another person is about to dismantle the nativity scene. He looks up at the sky.

The rain becomes a downpour. The nativity scene is battered by the storm.

43 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT

43

Amy looks out at the rain. Mikey places a glass of milk and a plate of biscuits on the table. He snatches a biscuit and stuffs it in his mouth. Amy turns.

AMY

Hey, they're for Santa.

Mikey SPEAKS through a mouthful of biscuit, nothing is intelligible. Joe enters.

JOE

No more, Mikey.

Joe takes a loaf of bread from the cupboard and drops it on the bench. Amy approaches him.

AMY

Can we go and see Grandpa after dinner?

JOE

Not tonight.

Silence.

AMY

Uncle Ben will come?

JOE

(cuts in angrily)

And we'll have a white Christmas. That's enough, Amy. Go watch TV, play a game, do something away from me.

Amy runs from the room. Joe SIGHS. Mikey has stolen another biscuit but changes his mind and drops it on the plate.

44 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

44

Sue clears away a used dinner plate from the bar. She moves along and grabs Ben's empty Coke glass. Ben glances at his watch.

BUSHIE 1

Hey, Santa Claus, won't your elves be missing you at the North Pole?

BUSHIE 2

And your red-nosed reindeer?

Ben frowns, ignores the bushies as they LAUGH. He stands, turns to the bushies with a dark look, then to Sue.

BEN

See you later, Sue.

Sue smiles. She appears about to say something, but changes her mind. She nods.

An exterior door opens to reveal Les. He carries Jam, slumped, unconscious, in his arms. Ben hesitates, then hurries to Les.

BUSHIE 1

Crikey, they don't look much like Santa Claus's elves.

BUSHIE 2

Maybe they got stuck down a chimney.

The bushies LAUGH in an unfriendly way. Sue gives them a warning look as she moves towards Les.

SUE

Keep it down, you clowns.

BUSHIE 1

She's trying to be a good girl for Santa. Wants him to stuff her stocking.

The bushies LAUGH. Ben reaches Les and takes Jam from him.

BEN

What happened?

LES

I told you he's crook.

Ben carries the unconscious Jam to the bar.

BUSHIE 1

They must have got lost.

BUSHIE 2

Yeah, on the way to a corroboree.

Ben eases Jam on to his empty stool and turns on the bushies.

BEN

What's wrong with you, you drongos?  
Can't you see the kid's in a bad  
way?

He POUNDS the bar with a fist and the miniature Christmas tree suddenly lights up.

Jam wobbles dramatically, then collapses to the floor.

45 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 45

Amy and Mikey lie in front of the TV.

46 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT 46

Joe turns off the radio, then glances at his watch.

47 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 47

Joe enters, heads to the TV and switches it off. Mikey sits up, about to protest. Joe turns to them, jovial despite his worry.

JOE

I've been thinking. You guys up for  
a Christmas adventure?

Mikey frowns.

MIKEY

We can't go. Santa won't find us.

Joe crouches down in front of Amy and Mikey.

JOE

Sure, he will. Santa knows where  
everyone is, even when they're  
away.

MIKEY

How?

JOE

He's Santa. He knows everything,  
even if you're naughty or nice.

AMY

What about Mummy?

JOE  
 She knows if you're naughty or nice  
 too.

Joe smiles, winks at Amy.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 Mummy's coming with us. She'll be  
 home any minute.

AMY  
 Are we going because of the  
 cyclone?

Joe plays it down.

JOE  
 It'll be fun to get away.  
 (beat)  
 We'll be in the car for a while, so  
 you better put Scruffy out to do  
 her business. And pack a bag with  
 clothes... And any favorite things  
 you want to take...

The door RATTLES. They listen to a gust of HOWLING wind. Amy  
 doesn't move.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 Now, Amy!

48 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

48

Jam, unconscious, in a chair. Ben and Les stand over him. Ben  
 shouts to the pub crowd.

BEN  
 Anyone here a doctor?

A few of the crowd shake their heads.

BUSHIE 1  
 (mutters)  
 I'm a brain surgeon.

The bushies smirk, their humor subdued. Ben turns back to Les  
 and Jam.

BEN  
 How'd he get like this?

Sue hurries over with a small block of chocolate.

LES

(to Sue)

That's Bonzer. Stick a piece in his mouth.

Sue, uncertain, pushes a square of chocolate into Jam's mouth. She wrinkles up her nose at the smell of Jam's breath. Les acknowledges her expression.

LES (CONT'D)

He's got diabetes, needs injections every day or he... he gets like this.

BEN

Sue can do the injection.

Sue is taken aback by Ben's suggestion.

SUE

I can't --

LES

(cuts in)

None of us can, not without insulin.

Les pulls out the broken package from his coat pocket. He puts it on the bar.

LES (CONT'D)

Thanks to Aussie Mail, this is how we got it.

Ben can't meet Les' eyes. He shouts to the pub crowd again.

BEN

Anyone here got diabetes? We need insulin.

He receives negative responses all round.

BUSHIE 2

Can't help you, mate.

Ben sits down and looks at Les.

BEN

Where's his parents?

LES

Dad went walkabout years ago. Spirit took his mum.

BEN  
She have diabetes?

Les nods.

49 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT

49

Toni sits beside Eric's bed. On a bedside cupboard is a radio that plays a news report. Eric turns up the VOLUME.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
... Severe tropical cyclone Tracy was centered sixty kilometers West North West of Darwin moving eastward closer to Darwin at about six kilometers an hour...

TONI  
Do you want me to stay, Dad?

Eric LOWERS the radio's VOLUME.

ERIC  
I wouldn't be in this place if I had a choice. You do, so get out of here. Go home. Be with your kids.

TONI  
Are you sure you're alright?

ERIC  
I'm in hospital. I'm fine. Go home.

Toni is undecided.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Or I'll have security toss you out.

Toni half-smiles as she stands.

TONI  
Promise you'll ring me if you need anything.

Eric nods, closes his eyes and pretends to sleep. Toni kisses him on the forehead, then walks off. Eric opens his eyes and turns the radio's VOLUME LOUDER.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
... Very destructive winds...

50 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

50

Toni searches in her handbag for her keys as she walks along the corridor. She finds them and looks up to see LORRAINE, another nurse, 30s, who pushes a sick child in a wheelchair.

LORRAINE

Have a nice night. Merry Christmas.

Toni smiles.

TONI

Merry Christmas.

They see Peg, who rushes towards them.

PEG

Toni!

The relaxed mood is broken, smiles vanish, and Lorraine hurries off with the child. Toni turns to Peg, who stops in front of her.

PEG (CONT'D)

I need you to work tonight.

TONI

I arranged to knock off early. My kids --

PEG

(cuts in)

We need everyone here.

TONI

Like a few weeks ago, when nothing happened?

Peg shoots Toni an irritated look. Toni SIGHS and drops her keys back in her handbag.

TONI (CONT'D)

How long?

PEG

No idea.

51 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

51

Les moves a glass of scotch, back and forth, under Jam's nose. Jam stirs, wakes, coughs -- the chocolate flies out of his mouth and lands in Ben's fake beard.

JAM

That stinks. I ain't drinking it.

Les puts the glass down.

52 INT. AYERS KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

52

Young Ben, 11, sits at a table with Eric. Young Ben holds his grazed knee and winces in pain. Eric dips his fingers into a glass of scotch.

ERIC

This'll do the trick. Fixes everything.

He wipes the scotch over Young Ben's injured knee. Young Ben grimaces.

YOUNG BEN

Ow!

Eric gives him a stern look.

ERIC

No crying, ya hear? Men don't cry.

Eric pushes the glass of scotch across the table towards Young Ben.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Drink up. It'll do you good.

Young Ben looks at the glass but doesn't touch it.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Do it! Or I'll give you something to cry about.

Eric slams the table, right in front of Young Ben's face.

53 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT - PRESENT

53

Ben pushes the glass of scotch out of the way. Sue pulls the chocolate from his beard. She wrinkles her nose again. Les hands Jam another square of chocolate.

BEN

How often do you need insulin?

JAM

Four times, every day.

BEN  
When was your last shot?

JAM  
When you came with busted bottles.  
It wasn't enough. A dog's  
breakfast.

A hint of guilt flickers across Ben's face.

BEN  
And this happens...

Jam nods.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Les will drive you to a doctor.

SUE  
You won't get one out here, not  
tonight.

JAM  
It'll take too long. Spirit come  
for me.

LES  
Ben, you have to fly him to a  
hospital.

They all look at Ben. He stands and walks off, thinking.

SUE  
What are you doing?

BEN  
Questioning my sanity.

54 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT

54

Rain POUNDS the iron roof. Rain BEATS against a window pane.  
A metal gate RATTLES madly.

On the back porch is Scruffy, tail stuck between her legs.  
She looks out at the weather.

AMY (O.S.)  
Go on, do... you know what.

Scruffy doesn't move. She looks at the house and Amy in the  
open doorway. Then she scampers to the door.

55 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT 55

Amy grabs the door and quickly shuts it before Scruffy can get back in. She grimaces with sorrow and guilt.

The phone RINGS. Joe answers it.

A beat. Joe runs a hand through his hair.

JOE

What are we supposed to do? The kids will be disappointed.

56 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT 56

Ben spots the pay phone and a bushie using it. He hurries over.

BEN

Say goodbye and do it quickly.

BUSHIE 3

You off with the fairies?

The bushie looks up. He's surprised to see Ben, whose hand hovers above the phone, ready to disconnect.

BUSHIE 3 (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Santa has to call his elves.

(beat)

I ain't drunk, I tell ya.

57 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL BEDROOM - NIGHT 57

Amy fills a bag with clothes. She packs a second with personal items. Then she picks up a stuffed animal and hugs it.

AMY

It's okay. It's Christmas.

A broken branch BANGS against the window and makes her jump. She packs the stuffed animal and grabs her bags.

58 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 58

Amy drops her bags on the floor. She sees Joe slumped back in a chair, eyes closed.

AMY

What's wrong, Daddy?

Joe opens his eyes and looks at Amy.

JOE

Nothing.

(beat)

Mummy isn't coming home. She has to work.

AMY

Does that mean we're not going away?

JOE

Mummy still wants us to go.

A beat.

AMY

What about the hospital? We can go there.

JOE

They're too busy. We'll get in the way. But you're right. The hospital's a good place for Mummy.

Joe stands, ready for action.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hurry up, you'd better get Scruffy.

Amy rushes away, into the kitchen.

Mikey carries a bundle of presents, almost taller than him, across the room.

JOE (CONT'D)

Mikey, what on earth are you doing?

MIKEY

Have to take the presents with us.

JOE

Yeah, fine, but be careful. You don't want to break anything.

59

INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT

59

Amy opens the back door and struggles with the wind.

AMY

Scruffy!

She looks out. There's no sign of Scruffy.

AMY (CONT'D)  
Scruffy! Scruffy!

She steps outside.

60 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT 60

Toni stands by Eric's bed and fusses with his blankets.

TONI  
I almost made it to the front door.  
Next time, I'll make a run for it.

She raises her eyebrows at him, then shakes her head.

TONI (CONT'D)  
If they need me here I have to  
stay.

Eric isn't impressed. Lorraine approaches Toni.

LORRAINE  
Phone call for you. He says it's  
urgent.

TONI  
Who is it?

Lorraine shrugs.

ERIC  
It's probably Joe and the kids.

TONI  
I'll be right back.

Toni walks off.

61 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT 61

Toni picks up the telephone.

62 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT 62

Ben talks on the pay phone.

BEN  
... I'm not ringing about the old  
man. Listen, there's this sick kid.  
He's got diabetes but no insulin.  
He keeps passing out...

63 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL NURSE'S STATION - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUTS AS NEEDED)

Toni, on the telephone, advises Ben.

TONI

... You have to get him to hospital straight away. Without medical attention, he could lapse into a diabetic coma. He could die, Ben.

BEN

... How long?

TONI

A few hours, maybe more. It's hard to say from here.

BEN

I could fly him to you.

Toni turns abruptly.

TONI

We've got a cyclone coming.

She glances through the glass to Eric in the ward.

TONI (CONT'D)

Maybe you should go to Katherine.

64 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

64

BEN

Won't make it, not on my fuel.

Ben hangs up and looks at the ceiling as if praying. He shakes his head.

65 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

65

On the TV is an image of the weather-battered beach at Darwin.

66 INT. OUTBACK HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

66

Sue stares at the TV. Ben and Les talk a short distance from Jam.

BEN

It'll be better to go on my own, get the insulin --

LES  
 (cuts in)  
 Fair go! You can't leave him here.

BEN  
 I'll be back in a couple of hours.  
 You'll hardly miss me.

Sue looks at Ben and gestures to the TV.

SUE  
 It might not be that easy.

LES  
 I don't like it.

BEN  
 Well I'm thrilled about it.  
 (beat)  
 You got your Ute?

LES  
 There's not enough time.

Ben looks to Jam. The seat is empty. Jam's gone.

BEN  
 Sue, you see where the kid went?

Sue is just as surprised.

SUE  
 He was sitting there.

Ben MUTTERS under his breath. Then he hurries to the door,  
 Les behind him.

67 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT

67

Amy stands in the wind and the rain.

AMY  
 Scruffy!

The wind snatches her voice away.

AMY (CONT'D)  
 Scruffy! Come here, Scruffy!

Amy runs to the back lawn, looks around and yells.

AMY (CONT'D)  
 Scruffffffy!

68 EXT. OUTBACK HOTEL - NIGHT 68

Ben and Les look around. Les yells.

LES  
Jam! Hey, Jam!

BEN  
That's his name, Jam?

Les nods. Ben walks away and Les follows.

69 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 69

A small pile of the family's belongings sit on the floor -- Amy's bags, a large suitcase, the Christmas presents. Joe places a box of personal times next to them.

Mikey struggles with arm-loads of toys.

JOE  
You can't take all your toys. Pick one or two.

MIKEY  
Ten.

JOE  
One or two.

Amy, wet, wind-blown, rushes in.

AMY  
I can't find Scruffy.

70 EXT. OUTBACK HOTEL - NIGHT 70

Ben and Les walk across the car park.

LES  
What if we can't find him?

Ben doesn't answer.

71 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 71

A torch beam cuts through the pelting rain. It focusses on trees and bushes. Joe holds the torch, Amy next to him, as they look for Scruffy.

JOE  
Scruffy!

AMY  
Scruffy!

72 EXT. OUTBACK HOTEL - NIGHT

72

Ben opens the door of Les' Ute. Jam sits in the passenger seat. He shoots Ben a determined look.

JAM  
I'm going with you.

BEN  
It's safer to stay here. They'll look after you until I get back.

Jam remains resolute.

JAM  
I've never been to the city. It's my first time in a plane too.

BEN  
It ain't a joy flight, mate. I don't know what I'm flying into --

JAM  
(cuts in)  
What if you don't come back?

BEN  
You'll get your insulin, I promise.

Jam closes his eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Hey, mate?

A beat. Jam opens his eyes again.

Les grabs Ben's arm and pulls him a few feet from the Ute.

LES  
He's got a point. If you don't make it, he doesn't make it either. Take him with you and you only have to fly one way.

BEN  
It's against company policy to carry passengers.

Les is incredulous.

LES  
Fair dinkum! You're worried about  
losing your job?

Ben gestures in frustration.

BEN  
No! Risking my life is one thing  
but a kid...

LES  
You ain't risking his life, you're  
saving it.

Ben shakes his head and stares up at the night sky.

LES (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
He needs you, Ben.

Ben turns to Les and scowls.

BEN  
Don't you ever give it a rest, old  
man?

73 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT

73

A bald girl, DAISY, 8, sits up in bed and looks across at Eric. He sees her and smiles. She looks down.

Daisy glances at Eric again. He smiles and waves his good hand. She smiles and looks down. She GIGGLES. Then she looks up and gives a small wave.

She gets out of bed and walks over to Eric.

ERIC  
Hi, love. What's your name?

DAISY  
Daisy.

ERIC  
That's a pretty name. Perfect for a  
pretty girl like you.

Daisy smiles, blushes, and looks down at the bed.

DAISY  
What are you doing here? You're not  
a kid like us. You're old.

Eric LAUGHS. Daisy looks shyly up at him.

ERIC

I'm a big kid at heart.

Eric pats her hand.

DAISY

I miss my mum and dad. They went away today. They wanted me to go with them. But I can't. This is the best place for me.

ERIC

Me too.

Daisy's eyes light up.

DAISY

You know what I want Santa to bring me?

Eric shakes his head. Daisy grins.

DAISY (CONT'D)

A pony.

Eric raises his eyebrows.

ERIC

That's a big present. Where are you going to keep a pony?

Daisy GIGGLES.

DAISY

Not a real one, silly. A toy pony with a long shiny mane and tail.

(beat)

What do you want for Christmas?

ERIC

I don't think Santa's going to bring me anything.

Daisy frowns, serious.

DAISY

Have you been naughty?

Eric smiles.

ERIC

Not for a while, love. I mean I'm a bit old.

Daisy nods.

74 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT

74

Amy and Joe stand in the back yard. Joe holds Amy close as he tries to protect her from the weather, without much success.

JOE  
Scruffy! Here, girl.

The torch makes a sweeping arc.

AMY  
Scruffy!

75 EXT. OUTBACK TIGER MOTH - NIGHT

75

Jam sits in the front cockpit. Ben fastens Jam's seat belt. Jam looks in front of him, into the night, as he puts on a flying cap.

JAM  
I'm flying the plane. That's bonzer.

BEN  
In your dreams, mate. I'll be doing the flying from back there.

He indicates the rear cockpit. Then he secures Jam's flying cap. Jam points to the controls.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Don't touch them... any of them.

Ben fits the radio headgear over Jam's flying cap.

JAM  
What's this?

BEN  
A radio microphone. Press here to talk to me.

Ben points out a switch under Jam's chin and Jam touches it.

JAM  
Press here?

Ben nods and Jam presses the switch.

JAM (CONT'D)  
G'day, Santa.

Ben frowns.

BEN

Not now, when we're flying.

76 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 76

Joe's torch plays over the shed. Amy opens the door and enters.

77 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL GARDEN SHED - NIGHT 77

Amy and Joe search inside the shed, to no avail.

AMY

Where is she?

JOE

I wish I knew. Anyone would think she was deaf or stupid.

AMY

No, Daddy, she's just scared.

78 EXT. OUTBACK TIGER MOTH - NIGHT 78

The Tiger Moth speeds along the ground. In the rear cockpit, Ben concentrates on take off. Jam grins and spreads his arms wide as they rise into the air.

Les stands on the ground and watches with a worried expression.

79 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT 79

Toni tends to a small boy in the bed next to Eric's. Eric has a pack of cards in his good hand. Daisy stands close to him and holds a single card.

ERIC

Now hold the card against your forehead. I'm going to use my mind to tell you what card you picked.

Daisy GIGGLES and presses the card against her forehead.

ERIC (CONT'D)

That's the girl.

The small boy watches. Toni is curious too, as Eric closes his eyes, frowns and appears to think hard.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Is it... Is it... the ten of  
diamonds?

Daisy shakes her head. Eric frowns again.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Wait, I got it! It's the three of  
hearts.

Daisy GIGGLES and shakes her head.

DAISY  
I can tell you.

ERIC  
Give me a sec. I bet it's the six  
of spades.

Daisy jumps up and down on the spot.

DAISY  
No!

Eric smiles and winks at her.

ERIC  
Okay, I can feel it now. It's  
coming in loud and strong. It's...  
the... jack of spades.

Daisy lowers her card and with excitement shows it to Eric.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I told you.

Eric fans the cards to reveal his "magic". Every card is a  
jack of spades.

Daisy runs off to show the trick to other children. Toni  
moves closer to Eric.

TONI  
Looks like you made a friend, Dad.  
When did you start doing card  
tricks?

ERIC  
It's something I picked up while  
traveling. Helps break the ice with  
strangers and passes the time.

Feelings of regret cross Eric's face. Toni smiles with a look  
of reassurance.

Jam grins as he looks around and enjoys the flight. The weather is calm. No sign of the cyclone yet. Ben speaks into the radio microphone.

BEN

You okay, mate?

JAM

You little beauty! This is fun.

BEN

(mutters to himself)

I thought I left Les behind.

(to Jam)

We'll have you working as a mailman soon.

He makes communication with the Darwin Control Tower.

BEN (CONT'D)

M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner  
requesting permission to fly  
through Darwin airspace. Confirm.

Pause, then the Control Tower crackles back with a response.

CONTROL TOWER (O.S.)

M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner,  
this is Control Tower One, your  
request to fly through Darwin  
airspace is denied. Do not, repeat,  
do not continue your path. Confirm.

BEN

This is an emergency, Control Tower  
One. Request permission to land at  
Darwin airport. Confirm.

CONTROL TOWER (O.S.)

M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner,  
you must return to your point of  
origin. Do not, repeat, do not  
attempt to continue your flight  
path.

BEN

No choice, mate. Got to get to  
Darwin Hospital tonight.

CONTROL TOWER (O.S.)  
 Just get out of the sky, will ya!  
 No one is flying tonight. Not even  
 Santa Claus.

Ben ends communication with the Control Tower. A gauge shows the plane is low on fuel, near empty.

81 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT 81

Scruffy hides under a car.

The inflatable snowman rolls and flies down the street.

82 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 82

Santa in his sleigh lies flat on the lawn, saturated by rain.

Amy and Joe shelter at the side of the house, under the eaves.

JOE  
 We need to get back inside.

AMY  
 But we haven't found Scruffy.

JOE  
 We've spent ages looking. We gotta go.

AMY  
 I'm not going without her!

JOE  
 I know you love Scruffy. So do I. I love you and Mikey too, and I have to make sure you're safe.

Tears roll down Amy's cheeks. Joe puts an arm around her and leads her towards the back door. Amy pulls away and SOBS.

AMY  
 We can't go. We can't leave her behind.

A piece of sheet metal flies through the air, towards Amy. Joe pulls Amy to safety as the metal SMASHES into the house. They stare, in shock.

The piece of metal becomes airborne again and disappears into the dark.

83

EXT. SKY OUTSIDE OF DARWIN - NIGHT

83

Ben focusses on flying the plane. Jam frowns and looks around the overcast sky.

JAM

We ain't going back?

BEN

We're going to Darwin. Don't worry about what he said. I know what I'm doing. We fly through storms all the time. It's part of the job.

Jam relaxes, smiles.

JAM

Fair dinkum?

Ben raises his eyebrows.

BEN

Yeah, fair dinkum.

A beat.

JAM

You tell me about Santa Claus fella.

BEN

I'm kind of busy here, mate.

JAM

Story will keep me awake.

Ben is uncomfortable.

BEN

I might not be the best person to tell you.

Jam shrugs.

JAM

You're the only fella here.

BEN

Right... Well...

Ben takes a deep breath.

BEN (CONT'D)

... Santa Claus lives at the North Pole... with Mrs. Claus and lots of elves --

JAM

(cuts in)

What are elves?

BEN

They're... little people with pointy ears. You want to hear about Santa?

Jam nods and feels his ears. Ben SIGHS. He can't believe he's telling this story.

BEN (CONT'D)

So... On Christmas Eve, Santa fills his sleigh with presents, hitches his reindeer to the front and flies around the world...

In the night sky, Jam sees a smiling Santa in a reindeer-drawn sleigh. He blinks, rubs his eyes. Then he reaches into his pocket for the chocolate and eats a piece.

Jam looks out at the sky again and Santa is gone.

JAM

(mumbles)

White fellas go crazy over Christmas.

84 INT. AYERS LOUNGE ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

84

Young Ben, 10, and YOUNG TONI, 6, stand at the door. The room is bare of Christmas decorations. Eric is passed out on a couch.

YOUNG BEN

That's weird. The Christmas tree's gone.

YOUNG TONI

Where are the presents?

YOUNG BEN

I don't know. We probably have to wait until Mum and Dad wake up.

Young Toni runs over to Eric.

YOUNG TONI  
Daddy, it's Christmas.

She shakes his arm and he wakes, bleary-eyed.

ERIC  
(mumbles)  
Oh, it's you... Honey.

YOUNG TONI  
Can we open our presents?

Eric sits up and runs a hand over his face.

ERIC  
Your mum left. She's not coming  
back.

Young Toni looks uncertainly at Young Ben, who's worried and confused.

YOUNG BEN  
She'll be back later, won't she?

Eric shakes his head.

ERIC  
Go and play.

Young Toni stares, white-faced, then starts to CRY. Young Ben puts his arm around her and comforts her.

85

EXT. SKY OUTSIDE OF DARWIN - NIGHT - PRESENT

85

Ben looks ahead, alarmed.

LIGHTNING FLASHES. Rapid bolts of lightning illuminate the massive cyclone up ahead.

Jam gapes. Ben studies the controls. He taps the altimeter, the dial spins fast -- back and forth from 17,000 meters to 15,000 meters. He frowns.

BEN  
I'm going to take her down a bit.  
Air pressure's shot up here.

Jam, concerned, points in front.

JAM  
What about that?

Ben sees the high mountain range that comes into view.

BEN

We'll go through the gorge.

Jam is unsure, as they head into a deep ravine. Below, a river flows fast. On each side, the ravine looms high as Ben navigates through the twists and turns in the gorge.

Up ahead, in their flight path, is a massive waterfall.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hold on, mate.

Jam grips the sides of the plane. Ben pulls the controls back hard and the plane climbs over the crest of the waterfall. They fly over trees, then clear the mountain range.

The sky ahead is dark and ominous, the full majesty of the cyclone builds -- the tiny plane is dwarfed as it disappears towards the mammoth storm.

86

INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT

86

A rain-soaked Amy SOBS while Joe tries to console her.

JOE

I don't like leaving Scruffy either. But we have to go. If we don't leave soon it'll be too late.

MIKEY

I'll find Scruffy.

Amy stops crying, wipes her face and glares at Mikey. She rushes to the back door.

JOE

Amy, come here.

Amy opens the door for Mikey, to reveal the raging weather.

AMY

Dare you.

JOE

No, Mikey.

Mikey stares, frightened, then scurries back to hide behind Joe. Amy rolls her eyes.

87 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 87

Rain lashes and wind buffets the Tiger Moth. Ben's eyes are fierce as he holds tight to the control stick. Jam hangs on for dear life.

BEN

Still think this is fun?

JAM

No!

The Tiger Moth swoops upwards then down, then from side to side. Jam is thrown about, his face a grimace of fear. Ben tries to compensate, to keep them steady.

Below, through sheets of dark rain, are the lights of a city.

88 EXT. DARWIN CITY - NIGHT 88

Street lights above a row of cars backed up as people attempt to leave the city.

89 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 89

On the footpath, a tall tree leans precariously against power and telephone lines. The tree teeters as the roots pull and come loose from the wet earth.

Rain POUNDS against the front windows. The frosted "festive" shapes run, blur, as they start to wash away.

90 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 90

Joe, Amy and Mikey stand near their belongings. The lights flicker, dim, as the power cuts in and out.

JOE

Put the TV on, Amy, see if there's any news. I'll take this stuff out to the car. Then we're leaving.

Joe looks at the belongings then turns to Mikey.

JOE (CONT'D)

Where are your clothes?

Mikey looks confused.

MIKEY

I'm wearing them?

Joe SIGHS.

JOE  
Stay with Amy.

Joe disappears in the direction of the bedrooms.

91 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT

91

Toni stands with Peg.

TONI  
I need a tea break.

PEG  
You haven't had one yet?

Doctor Rob rushes through with a child on a gurney. The child struggles for breath.

DOCTOR ROB  
I need assistance.

Toni hurries to help.

DOCTOR ROB (CONT'D)  
Asthma attack. His heart rate's  
through the roof.

PEG  
He'll need oxygen.

TONI  
Then get it ready for us.

92 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT

92

Ben scans the ground. Jam has his hands over his eyes. The ENGINE struggles, cuts out, dies. Jam peeks through his fingers.

JAM  
You want plane to do that?

Ben is tense, worried, as the biplane free-falls and they drop forty meters. Jam SCREAMS, panic-stricken. Ben tackles the controls.

BEN  
She's right. Just taking a bit of a  
breather.

The ENGINE fires up again and Ben breathes a SIGH of relief. Jam holds tight, white-knuckled. His face shows shock.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Don't worry... She's strong... War horse... Been through worse than this.

JAM  
How much longer?

BEN  
We're getting there. You'll be right.

93 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

93

The power is off. The room is dark, silent. The only sounds come from the STORM outside. Then Amy and Mikey are heard as they talk quietly.

MIKEY  
Amy?

AMY  
I'm here. Where are you?

MIKEY  
I can't see.

There's a BUMP.

MIKEY (CONT'D)  
Ow!

Then the power comes on. All at once, there's bright light. Mikey rubs his leg as he squats near the coffee table. The TV blasts. On the radio, Cyclone SIREN warnings blare.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
The cyclone is imminent.

Amy hurries to turn down the VOLUME of the TV and radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)(CONT'D)  
We present this advice from the Darwin Weather Bureau and the Northern Territory Emergency Services Organization as a community service for Top End listeners...

Amy rushes to the window and looks out. She notices the car. Underneath it, something appears to move. She gasps, then runs to the front door.

94 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 94

In the wind and the rain, Amy struggles to get to the car. She drops to the ground to peer beneath it.

AMY  
Scruffy?

Beneath the car, she is disappointed to see an empty trash bag that flutters in the wind.

95 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 95

Visibility is poor as the Tiger Moth flies low over Darwin. Turbulence rocks the plane.

Jam takes the chocolate from his pocket. The plane suddenly bucks and throws Jam off balance. He drops the chocolate and watches it disappear over the side of the plane.

Ben straightens and concentrates on flying lower, over the shops and houses of Darwin. The ENGINE stalls, a constant problem now. Ben battles to maintain control.

BEN  
Come on, you bludger. Hang on... A  
bit longer... Almost there...

Jam looks over the side in alarm.

JAM  
We gonna make it down?

BEN  
There's one thing I'm sure of,  
mate, down ain't the problem.

The biplane dives and comes in low over a group of houses. The ENGINE makes horrible, abnormal sounds.

96 EXT. DARWIN STREET - NIGHT 96

The wheels of the biplane touch the road surface. Ben pulls back on the joystick hard.

BEN  
Too much. It's no good.

Jam grits his teeth and hangs on as the plane jostles him about.

JAM  
Slow down!

BEN  
Thanks for the tip, mate.

Jam SCREAMS as the plane rises. G-forces register on their faces.

97 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 97

The radio plays the cyclone warning as Joe enters, with Mikey in his arms.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
... On your property that could be  
a windborne missile, including  
rubbish tins, outdoor furniture,  
dead branches...

He looks around but can't see Amy. He hurries to the kitchen.

JOE  
Amy!

98 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 98

As the weather intensifies, Amy cowers in front of the car.

Joe appears, picks her up and carries her back towards the house. Amy clings to him.

JOE  
For Pete's sake, no more looking  
for Scruffy.

99 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 99

Ben manages to raise the Tiger Moth and steady it. He sees a row of lights -- the airfield.

BEN  
We're going to make it, mate. Hang  
on, this could get a bit rough.

Jam hangs on and stares at the runway. The biplane lurches.

JAM

What's it been so far?

(beat)

We're gonna die!

100 EXT. DARWIN AIRPORT - NIGHT 100

A power line rips from its moorings amid sparks. It falls, wires whip madly in the heavy rain.

101 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 101

Ben heads for the lit runway. As he nears it, the lights go out, in sequence.

102 EXT. DARWIN AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT 102

EMPLOYEES appear in the window, shocked to see the biplane approach the runway.

103 EXT. DARWIN AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT 103

Ben flies blind as the runway looms closer. He struggles to stay on course and navigate the beginning of the tarmac. Jam looks down and around frantically.

104 INT. DARWIN AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT 104

The employees watch in horror as the Tiger Moth lifts and floats like a kite in an updraft of air.

EMPLOYEE 1

She won't make it. We better get  
Emergency Services.

The employee grabs a phone. His eyes, intense, never leave the biplane.

EMPLOYEE 2

Right now we'd have more luck  
praying.

105 EXT. DARWIN AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT 105

The elements lash a small aircraft parked near the runway.

The Tiger Moth is close to touch down when the small aircraft spins, slides into their path, then flips over.

It tumbles down the tarmac, shatters and bounces into the path of the Tiger Moth.

Jam watches, wide-eyed.

JAM

Look out!

The aircraft spins towards them. It gets within inches. Jam turns away, covers his head with his arms. The aircraft flashes past them, as Ben pulls up at the last second.

The Tiger Moth climbs left and into the sky, then flies over the Control Tower roof. They miss it by inches.

106 INT. DARWIN AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - NIGHT 106

The employees duck as the plane flies over their heads. The employee drops the phone.

107 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 107

The close call registers on Ben's face. Jam trembles in his seat.

BEN

You alright, mate?

JAM

(mumbles)

Alright, mate... Stomach a bit crook.

Ben sees an empty road that leads to a bridge and flies in low.

BEN

Looks good. Hold on.

Meters of road disappear beneath them. They race towards a construction barrier that blocks their path. Jam fearfully shakes his head.

JAM

Stop!

BEN

That's one alternative. Plan B -- get down low, cover your head, brace yourself.

Jam obeys, seconds before they crash through the barrier. The wheels hit the rough tarmac. Stones and gravel fly outwards as the tire rubber shreds.

The metal wheel rims scrape the road, sparks radiate, as they careen along. They ascend the bridge, horrified to see it end in mid air.

Jam SCREAMS as they catapult into the sky. The back of the plane hits the road, the tail wheel and part of the rudder snap off.

108 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 108

Smoke billows from the fuselage. Fire threatens to take hold of what's left of the tail. Ben struggles to keep the plane airborne over buildings.

Ben tries to hold it together, as the ENGINE cuts out, the propeller stops, the plane glides. The fuel gauge sits on empty. Jam is speechless.

109 EXT. DARWIN AIRSPACE - NIGHT 109

The plane heads towards a suburban street. Ben tries to pilot but they're out of control. Jam sinks down in his seat and covers his head.

BEN

Hold on tight!

They hit the road and hurtle forwards, between two old trees that rip the wings off. They leave the road and plow through gardens, fences, rubbish bins. Debris flies overhead.

The plane yanks sideways and hits a mailbox that bursts open, to shower letters and fliers into the air. The plane finally stops. Ben and Jam, slumped over, don't move.

Above them, the branches of a tree thrash violently.

110 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 110

The tall tree leans against the power and telephone lines. It CREAKS as the roots pull away from the saturated ground. The power and telephone lines strain under the tree's weight.

111 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT 111

Amy enters in a change of clothes. She approaches Mikey, who sits at the table and fiddles with a torch. Joe is back on the phone.

JOE  
 (into the phone)  
 Hello? Darwin hospital?  
 (beat)  
 Hello?

112 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT 112

On the TV, the newscaster reads the cyclone safety advice from the Darwin Weather Bureau.

TV NEWSCASTER  
 ... Outdoor furniture, dead  
 branches, toys and tools, should be  
 anchored or taken inside. Store  
 drinking water in bath tubs and  
 bottles...

113 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 113

A loud CRACK and the tree begins to fall. Branches drag at power and telephone lines, then the wires snap, sparks fly.

114 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 114

The room is plunged into darkness. The picture on the TV disappears. The screen is black.

115 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT 115

The phone dies in Joe's hand.

JOE  
 (into the phone)  
 Hello?

Mikey shines the torch around the room, then points it at Joe.

MIKEY  
 Hello Daddy?

116 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - NIGHT 116

A section of iron roof lifts and flaps in the wind and the rain.

117 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL NURSES' STATION - NIGHT 117

Toni puts down the telephone. Lorraine enters and Toni turns to her, worried.

TONI

The phones are out.

118 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT 118

The main lights are off so the children can sleep. Near Eric's bed, a thin stream of water runs down a wall -- unbeknown to Toni, staff and patients.

119 EXT. DARWIN SUBURBS TIGER MOTH - NIGHT 119

In the front cockpit, a semi-conscious Jam forces himself around. At first, he isn't sure where he is or what has happened.

Then he undoes his seat belt and climbs on to his seat to look behind him. He sees Ben, still, lifeless. He shakes Ben.

JAM

Wake up.

Ben doesn't respond. Jam's efforts to wake him become more urgent.

JAM (CONT'D)

Wake up, Ben fella! You can't sleep. Not now.

(beat)

Ben!

Ben stirs, finds focus gradually. Jam grins.

JAM (CONT'D)

Spirit didn't take us.

BEN

That's good to hear.

Ben grabs a letter from his chest and tosses it aside. He undoes his seat belt and winces as he moves. He ignores the pain and glances towards the front of the plane. Despite the heavy rain, fire laps at the engine.

BEN (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here.

Ben lifts Jam from the cockpit.

JAM

You're hurt. I should carry you.

Ben winces as he puts Jam down and they assist each other as they stumble along the wing. Ben almost collapses when he jumps to the ground.

Jam gets down with Ben's help. Ben steadies against the side of the plane, looks around and sees a house in darkness.

Ben and Jam support each other as they cross the road to the house. They stagger around debris: scattered vegetation and overturned bins. Behind them, Jam catches a glimpse of the Tiger Moth.

JAM (CONT'D)

Plane pranged up real bad.

Ben's mouth tenses. He frowns and pushes forwards.

120

INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT

120

Amy looks anxious as she gazes out the window, her hands pressed against the glass. Mikey holds the torch under his chin and makes a spooky face. Joe, worried, moves towards Amy.

JOE

Amy, get away from the window.

Amy turns to see Joe urgently gesture her away. She gives the window a lingering look, then follows Joe's instruction.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's too dangerous to drive. We'll have to stay here, find ourselves a safe place --

AMY

(cuts in)

The smallest room. The bathroom or toilet.

Mikey screws up his nose.

MIKEY

The toilet?

Amy nods.

AMY

We learnt about cyclones at school.  
And we have to put big crosses on  
the windows with masking tape to  
make them stronger. And we have to  
get water and food.

Joe smiles and reaches out to touch Amy's hair.

JOE

You're a smart girl. I'm lucky to  
have you helping me.

He claps his hands together to mobilize them into action.

JOE (CONT'D)

Let's get cracking. You two grab  
the water and food. I'll sort out  
the windows.

Joe exits to the lounge room. Mikey stands still, not sure  
what to do. Amy grabs his arm and pulls him towards the  
cupboards.

121 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - NIGHT 121

The iron roof continues to lift and flap. A large section is  
loose as the damage increases.

122 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT 122

Eric watches Toni as she replaces his IV.

ERIC

Heard anything from Ben?

Toni's fingers hesitate on the IV. She doesn't get a chance  
to answer, before Eric shakes his head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Don't know why I expect me being  
here to make a difference. Forget I  
asked.

Toni turns and touches his arm.

TONI

Dad...

Eric pats her hand. Toni smiles.

TONI (CONT'D)

Get some rest.

As Toni moves away, she slips in an unseen pool of water on the floor. Eric looks at her, worried.

ERIC

Toni?

Toni has pulled a muscle in her side but bravely attempts to cover up the pain.

TONI

I'm okay. I'm the nurse. Just get some rest.

Toni crouches and feels the floor. She frowns, then looks up, alarmed to see water run down the wall. She rushes from the ward.

123 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT 123

Toni stops and stares ahead in surprise.

TONI

Oh my...

In front of her, in the reception area, is a small crowd. Peg, Doctor Rob and Lorraine attempt to deal with the influx of rain-soaked patients.

Toni squares her shoulders and hurries to help.

124 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT 124

Toni enters reception.

TONI

Who's next?

There's a stampede, as a herd of new patients rush to her.

TONI (CONT'D)

One at a time.

125 EXT. DARWIN SUBURBS EMPTY HOUSE - NIGHT 125

Jam sits on the porch and leans against a wall, partially protected from the elements. Ben tries to enter the house through the front door, but soon realizes it's locked.

JAM

What are you doing?

BEN

We need a phone or a vehicle.

(beat)

Wait here. I'll be back in a minute.

JAM

Where are you going?

BEN

To look around the back.

He hurries away, along the front porch. He disappears round a corner. His back to the wall, he edges down the side of the house.

At the rear of the house, Ben tries to open the door but it's also locked. He looks up to see Jam stumble around the corner. Jam hugs the wall, puffs and pants.

BEN (CONT'D)

I told you to wait.

JAM

Stay with you.

BEN

Okay, stay with me, but do it from here. I'm going to check the garage.

He indicates the garage across the yard, at the end of the driveway.

126 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

126

Joe has stuck a large masking tape cross over one window. He stands in front of another window and tears off a long strip of masking tape. The window frame RATTLES and BANGS. He looks at the rain that streams down the exterior of the glass.

127 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL BATHROOM - NIGHT

127

The tap over the bath is on -- water pours into the tub. Mikey stands nearby. He places a rubber duck in the bath.

Inside the shower alcove are Amy's bags, two suitcases, the Christmas presents and the box of personal times.

128 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT

128

Amy stows items behind the toilet: blankets, candles, a torch, two water containers, a box of food. Mikey comes to help her.

MIKEY

Where's Mummy?

AMY

She's at work.

MIKEY

Is she coming home?

Amy pauses over a bag of dry dog food. She considers removing it but leaves it in the toilet next to the cistern.

AMY

Not tonight.

MIKEY

But Santa's still coming?

AMY

Yeah, Mikey, you can open your presents soon.

Amy reaches out and hugs him.

129 INT. DARWIN SUBURBS EMPTY HOUSE GARAGE - NIGHT

129

Ben carries Jam inside and lowers him to stand on the floor, between a Utility truck and a work bench. Jam stumbles, almost falls. Ben is quick to catch him.

BEN

Where's that chocky of yours? I think you need some more.

JAM

The wind took it.

The iron roof BANGS and SCRAPES. Ben glances up and frowns. He opens the driver's door of the Utility truck. He checks the ignition for the keys, then behind the visor.

BEN

Crap!

Jam points to a push bike.

BEN (CONT'D)

Won't get far on that, mate.

Ben continues to search, checks the glove compartment. Jam leans into the truck and lifts the driver's mat, to reveal the hidden keys. He shows the keys to Ben, who LAUGHS.

130 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - NIGHT 130

The iron roof lifts and flaps. A large section tears off and catapults NOISILY into the night.

131 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - NIGHT 131

Wild rain and ferocious wind rush inside, cause mayhem and terrify children. Daisy CRIES as she crouches at the side of her bed.

DAISY

Mummy! I want Mummy.

Toni and Lorraine hurry to the children's aid to push their beds out of harm's way.

Attached to the IV and heart monitor, Eric struggles from his bed. As pain hits him, he bends over, winces and clutches his ribs. Toni sees him.

TONI

Get back in bed.

ERIC

You need help.

Eric stumbles a few feet.

TONI

Can you fix a roof in a cyclone?

Eric stops and stares at Toni. She's busy with three men who accompanied patients to the hospital and now pitch in to help move the kids. Peg rushes in and ushers Eric back into bed.

The Christmas tree lights FIZZLE, spark and go out. Presents beneath are saturated. The electricity fails. Darkness falls, to CRIES, YELLS and children's SCREAMS.

The emergency generator clicks in and lightens the scene. Toni rushes to Daisy and picks her up.

TONI (CONT'D)

It's alright. Everything's going to be alright.

Toni's words reassure, but she's agitated and concerned. She carries a terrified Daisy and hurries to the ward entrance. The lights flicker.

132 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT 132

Joe and Mikey stand outside the toilet.

JOE  
Where's Amy?

Mikey shakes his head, apparently having no idea. Joe turns and hurries off to find Amy.

133 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL BEDROOM - NIGHT 133

Amy reaches under her bed and pulls out a present. Mikey's name is visible, in Amy's hand writing, on the gift tag. She turns, runs to the door, and almost crashes into Joe.

An unknown object bangs into the side of the house, near Amy's window.

JOE  
To the toilet, now!

They hurry away.

134 INT. DARWIN UTILITY TRUCK - NIGHT 134

Windscreen wipers rush back and forth. Ben peers ahead, focused on the road -- or what he can see of it through the rain. Jam is slumped against the side window, drowsy.

Ben takes his eyes off the road for a moment to glance at Jam.

BEN  
Sounds like you spend a lot of time  
with Les. Does he look after you?

Jam blinks, as he tries to stay awake. He speaks with effort.

JAM  
Him and other people. I look after  
me too.

BEN  
Must be tough, with the diabetes.

JAM

Alright most of the time.

(beat)

You got a family? Kids like me?

BEN

Nah, mate. My sister has kids, a girl and a boy.

(beat)

My mum went walkabout like your dad. I was about your age.

JAM

You miss her?

An awkward beat. Ben takes a deep breath, his hands tense on the steering wheel.

BEN

Don't like to think about it.

JAM

Me too. I forget a lot anyway.

The Ute hits a large pool of water that covers the road. Ben struggles to maintain control. Jam tries to grab hold of something: the roof, the dash.

They careen off the road and over a pavement. Tree branches and plants flash past the windows, until they stop, hard. The impact jerks them in their seats.

135

INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT

135

Amy and Mikey sit on the floor, small and anxious. Mikey clutches the torch and Amy's present -- a picture book she made for him. Joe places a candle in a corner, out of the way. Amy watches.

AMY

We have to turn off the electricity.

Joe is annoyed with himself.

JOE

I should have done that before. Damn, I'll have to go back out there.

MIKEY

I wanna come too.

Joe points a finger at them.

JOE  
Stay here. Right, Amy? I'll be back  
in a tick.

Amy nods. Joe closes the door.

Amy and Mikey listen to the violent NOISES from outside. Amy reaches for Mikey's hand and holds it as they cling to each other.

A loud CRASH comes from inside the house and makes them jump. Amy scrambles to her feet. She stares at the closed door. Mikey huddles on the floor and WHIMPERS.

AMY  
Daddy?

She listens to the sounds of the CYCLONE.

136 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT 136

The Utility truck sits in a garden bed outside a row of shops. Up against Ben's door is a large bush. A sign reads: "Keep Off the Garden".

137 INT. UTILITY TRUCK - NIGHT 137

Ben turns the key in the ignition, once, twice, to no avail. Jam, slumped in his seat, looks out the rain-splattered windscreen.

JAM  
We ain't gonna make it to the  
hospital.

BEN  
We'll get there, one way or  
another.

Ben tries to ease open the driver's door, but the large bush stops it from opening more than an inch. He pushes the door harder. The bush pushes back, thwarting his success. He slams the door shut and undoes his seat belt.

BEN (CONT'D)  
We'll have to get out your side.

Jam looks out his side window and slowly shakes his head.

JAM  
There's a wall in the way.

Ben is frustrated. He balls a fist and THUMPS the steering wheel.

138 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT

138

Amy reaches for the doorknob. The door opens and Joe appears. Amy nearly jumps out of her skin, then recovers.

AMY

Daddy!

Amy throws herself into his arms. He cuddles her. Mikey jumps up and hugs Joe's legs.

JOE

It's alright.

They sit on the floor, huddled together. Mikey crawls on to Joe's lap. Joe uses his free hand to fiddle with the radio and search for something other than STATIC.

JOE (CONT'D)

Everyone must be on holiday.

Through the STATIC comes the faint sound of MUSIC, an ORCHESTRA. Joe leaves the radio on the station.

The house CREAKS and GROANS. Then it shudders and lurches. Amy GASPS, Mikey WHIMPERS.

JOE (CONT'D)

When this is all over, I think we'll go on a holiday. That will be nice, won't it?

AMY

Can we go to Sea World?

JOE

We can go anywhere you like.

MIKEY

Can we have ice creams on the beach?

JOE

Double cones.

Joe gives them both a loving squeeze.

Something HITS the roof, hard. Startled, they flinch and look up. The roof CREAKS, another CREAK, and the roof lifts a crack. Mikey CRIES.

MIKEY

The house is falling down.

JOE

Not a chance, Mikey. Hey, Santa hasn't been yet.

MIKEY

How will Santa make it through this, Daddy?

JOE

He'll make it, Mikey.

139 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

139

The corridor is crowded with beds -- a real "traffic" jam. Toni tries to reassure the upset children. Peg stares at the damaged ward.

The small boy, red-eyed from crying, tugs at Peg's uniform. She turns to see him point to the floor and a fallen teddy bear. She picks up the bear and holds it to her chest.

TONI

Peg, let's move the beds.

Peg turns to stare at Toni. Toni gestures towards reception. Peg frowns.

PEG

I'm in charge.

TONI

What do you suggest?

PEG

Move the beds.

Peg gestures towards reception.

TONI

(mutters)

Why didn't I think of that?

She pushes Eric's bed forwards.

ERIC

It's a good thing Joe and the kids left. And Ben had more sense than to come here.

Toni hesitates, then moves on again. She looks at him, worried -- and guilty.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Ben?

TONI

Dad... I spoke to him earlier. He's flying a sick boy here, to the hospital, tonight.

Eric can hardly believe his ears.

ERIC

What does he think he's doing?

140 INT. UTILITY TRUCK - NIGHT 140

Jam looks across at Ben, who searches around under the driver's seat. Ben finds a jack and smiles. Jam starts to LAUGH hysterically. Ben is concerned.

141 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT 141

Joe nervously watches the roof as it CREAKS and lifts. He comforts Amy and Mikey, who are too frightened to look.

142 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT 142

The corridor is still crowded with beds, though they have moved closer to reception. Peg, flustered, tries to sort out the mess with a calmer Toni.

PEG

We can't leave them here.

TONI

We can use the basement, clear some space down there.

PEG

It's not suitable. It isn't sterile.

TONI

It has a roof.

143 INT. UTILITY TRUCK - NIGHT 143

Ben tries to push Jam under the dash. Jam resists, GIGGLES almost out of control. Ben frowns, takes off his flying jacket and drapes it over the manic Jam.

BEN

Stay down.

Jam suddenly stills, slips into semi-unconsciousness. Ben is alarmed.

Ben covers his eyes and HITS the rear windscreen with a jack. The glass cracks, frosts, then shatters. He punches out the rest of the window.

144 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT 144

With one great GROAN, the roof rises and blows away. Joe pulls Amy and Mikey in close as they SCREAM.

Wind and rain rush in. The candles go out, the radio dies.

145 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL KITCHEN - NIGHT 145

The plate of cookies and glass of milk left out for Santa tumble and SMASH to the floor.

146 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT 146

Wind tears at a large Christmas tree in the center of the shopping district. The base moves an inch, two inches, then three, rises and drops.

The massive tree lifts into the air and flies down the street. It hits shop windows and smashes them in its path.

147 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT 147

Elevator doors open. A bed rolls out into the basement -- Eric with Toni pushing him.

ERIC

You should have told me. Maybe I could have stopped him. He'll never make it.

They pass a closed metal door with a sign: "GENERATOR". Toni maneuvers Eric towards the children's beds already in the basement.

TONI

He probably changed his mind.  
That's why I didn't tell you. Oh...  
and you had a heart attack. You  
need to rest.

ERIC

That's working well.

Toni smiles. She eases the bed next to Daisy, who lies curled up and sucks her thumb. Eric looks at Daisy sympathetically.

Toni hurries to the elevator. As she presses the "up" button, she glances back to see Eric beside Daisy's bed, holding her.

148 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT

148

An exhausted, dishevelled Ben carries Jam, who barely moves. Ben hugs the buildings and, near a toy shop with a smashed front window, he pauses to rest. For a moment, he appears lost and hopeless.

Then he harnesses the last of his strength, determined to make a final effort.

BEN

We're almost there.

JAM

(murmurs)  
Spirit come for me...

BEN

No way. You're doing great, Jam. It won't be long and you'll have your insulin.

Behind them, the large Christmas tree hurtles along the street.

Ben turns, horrified, to see the tree as it bears down on them. He quickly glances around, in urgent need of a safe haven to protect himself and Jam.

He sees a bench at a bus stop that is concreted into the ground. He carefully slides Jam under the bench. Jam MURMURS.

Ben sees the Christmas tree almost on top of them. He throws himself to the ground, just in time, as the tree soars past them. He lies there, catches his breath, then looks up to make sure Jam is alright.

He can't believe his eyes. The space under the bench is empty. Jam is gone.

149 EXT. DARWIN CITY TOY SHOP - NIGHT

149

Ben is on his feet. He looks around, desperate to find Jam. He can't understand or believe what has happened.

BEN

Jam!

(beat)

Jam!

He peers under a car. No Jam. He pulls at a pile of debris. No Jam. He rushes to the broken toy shop window.

BEN (CONT'D)

Jam!

He is close to breaking point.

A hand touches Ben's shoulder. Totally unexpected, it startles him.

150 INT. DARWIN CITY TOY SHOP - NIGHT

150

Part of the shop is set up to look like "Santa's Magic Cave". Jam lies on a pile of fake snow. He MURMURS, opens his eyes wide when he sees an OLD MAN with white hair, beard and moustache.

OLD MAN

You're safe now.

Ben stands nearby, bewildered but relieved.

BEN

Who are you?

The old man stretches his arms out to encompass the toy store. Some of the toys sit on shelves. Near a Christmas tree is a pile of gift-wrapped presents.

OLD MAN

This is my place, my toys.

(beat)

You go to the hospital, get the medicine he needs. I'll look after him until you return.

JAM  
 (mumbles)  
 Stay together.

Ben kneels down in front of Jam.

BEN  
 It's too dangerous. I'll be back, I  
 promise.

He stands up and looks at Jam with concern.

OLD MAN  
 He'll be fine, Ben.

Ben turns to the old man and frowns.

BEN  
 What did you say?

OLD MAN  
 He'll be fine.

The old man smiles. Ben stares at him, puzzled, then heads to the door.

151 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT

151

Toni carries a young girl who is clearly in pain. Next to them, a worried mother hurries to keep up.

TONI  
 (to the mother)  
 It could be appendicitis. Take a  
 seat in the waiting area.

The mother moves away, heads in the direction of the waiting room. Toni continues on and meets Lorraine, who is with an older boy, a deep gash on his arm. They hurry along.

LORRAINE  
 I thought it would be quiet.  
 Everyone at home enjoying  
 Christmas.

TONI  
 With their families.  
 (beat)  
 At least I don't have to worry  
 about Joe and the kids.

152 INT. DARWIN MITCHELL TOILET - NIGHT

152

Joe, Amy and Mikey huddle together under a wet blanket. Rain beats down on them. They hear a CLATTER above.

They peer out and look up, to see a piece of wood fly over the top of the wall and, like a missile, head towards them.

With a CRY, Amy jumps out of the way. Joe raises his arm to protect him and Mikey. He EXCLAIMS as the wood hits him before it drops to the floor.

AMY

Daddy!

Joe reaches for the torch and turns it on. The beam reveals a large gash on his arm.

AMY (CONT'D)

Your arm is bleeding.

JOE

It's just a scratch.

AMY

It looks nasty, Daddy.

Joe glances down at Mikey.

JOE

Are you okay, Mikey?

No answer. Mikey is out cold, blood on his face.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh God, Mikey!

153 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT

153

Ben makes his way precariously along the storm inundated street. He runs in short bursts, sometimes blown back, sometimes moving forwards.

Up ahead, he sees the hospital.

154 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT

154

Doctor Rob, Toni and Lorraine tend to injured people. Peg moves others away, further into the hospital.

PEG

Please go to the waiting room. We need to keep this area clear.

Ben, battered and bruised, stumbles through the hospital doors, then collapses to the floor. His Santa hat pokes out of his pocket.

Toni, Lorraine and Doctor Rob rush to attend to him.

TONI

Oh God!

Doctor Rob checks Ben's vital signs. Toni leans close to Ben.

TONI (CONT'D)

Ben, can you hear me?

He doesn't respond. Toni grimaces, upset.

DOCTOR ROB

Twenty years, thought I'd seen it all.

Doctor Rob finishes a check of Ben's vitals and injuries.

DOCTOR ROB (CONT'D)

He's stable, nothing broken. Good.

Ben opens his eyes and attempts to rise. Toni stops him.

TONI

Keep still. You could have a concussion.

Ben tries to rise again, this time with more success.

BEN

Need insulin.

DOCTOR ROB

You have diabetes?

BEN

Not me, sick boy. Left him in a shop down the street. Got to get back.

TONI

Don't worry, we'll send someone to him as soon as we can.

Ben struggles to his feet. Toni, Lorraine and Doctor Rob stand too.

BEN

The kid can't wait. He's in bad shape, might not last much longer.

Doctor Rob waves a hand at the front door and the cyclone.

DOCTOR ROB  
No one can go anywhere right now.

Ben shakes his head, gestures angrily.

BEN  
I nearly killed us both getting him here. I ain't leaving him!

155 INT. DARWIN TOY SHOP - NIGHT

155

Jam lies on the fake snow. The old man sits beside him and pats his forehead with a damp cloth.

OLD MAN  
Try to stay awake.

Jam holds his eyes open. They droop closed.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Perhaps our little friend can help you.

A dog, that looks remarkably like Scruffy, licks Jam's face. He opens his eyes and tries to pat Scruffy but it's too much effort.

His eyes become heavier, his blinks shorter, as he struggles to stay awake. The old man uses the damp cloth to moisten Jam's lips. Scruffy sits down beside them.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
You're doing well. It's been quite a journey for you. Everything is going to be fine now. You'll be back playing soccer soon.

Jam nods weakly. The old man smiles.

156 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

156

Doctor Rob and Toni stand in the corridor, which is busy with hospital staff and patients.

DOCTOR ROB  
You're needed here. We have a lot to deal with...

Toni stares at him.

DOCTOR ROB (CONT'D)  
Make it quick.

157 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT 157

Ben and Toni hurry towards the hospital doors. Toni sees Ben flinch and rub his side.

TONI  
You should stay here. I'll go for the boy.

BEN  
No, I need to take you to him.

Ben shoots her an impatient look. Toni gestures at him.

TONI  
Look at yourself. You could stay with Dad --

Ben LAUGHS derisively, which hurts.

TONI (CONT'D)  
I told him what you did for the boy. He's concerned. He's not the same --

Ben walks out of the hospital. Toni rushes after him.

158 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 158

The storm suddenly stops. The world is quiet, unnaturally calm. It's the eye of the cyclone.

Debris litters the street and lawn in front of the house.

159 EXT. DARWIN MITCHELL HOUSE - NIGHT 159

Joe cradles an unconscious Mikey as he steps outside. Amy is behind him, the torch in her hand. She stops in the doorway, stunned, frozen to the spot.

Joe seems unaware of the debris strewn across the front yard as he hurries to the driveway. He clutches Mikey and attempts to remove rubbish from around the car.

JOE  
Amy, come here and help.

Amy doesn't react, as if Joe's instructions fell on deaf ears.

Joe begins to remove the rubbish and, without looking up, he calls to Amy again.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hurry up!

This time, Amy moves. She steps outside and stares at their roofless house. She appears shocked by the damage.

Joe, alone, clears away debris from around the car. He opens the back door and carefully places Mikey on the rear seat. Then he closes the back door, ready to jump in the driver's seat, and looks at Amy.

JOE (CONT'D)

Amy, get in the car.

Amy fails to respond.

Joe goes to get her, picks her up and heads back to the car.

AMY

(mumbles)

Daddy, we have to fix our house.

As they reach the vehicle, an exterior wall of the house collapses inwards. Joe glances over his shoulder.

160 INT. MITCHELL CAR - NIGHT

160

Tears stream down Amy's face as she gets in the back seat next to Mikey. Joe jumps in the driver's seat and starts the engine. The radio comes on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

... Stay away from trees. Do not attempt to drive. Keep off the roads...

Joe snaps off the radio.

161 EXT. MITCHELL CAR - NIGHT

161

The car reverses out the driveway and swings into the street. Amy's sad face looks out the side window.

162 EXT. DARWIN STREET - NIGHT

162

In the calm of the storm's eye, Ben and Toni carry torches from the hospital and pick their way, as fast as they can, through rubbish, fallen masonry and broken glass.

Toni looks at Ben and sees that he struggles to walk. He holds out a hand to help her over a pile of rubble.

TONI

Thank you.

She has a huge smile.

BEN

What?

TONI

Nothing.

Toni stares at him with curiosity as she shines the torch on him.

TONI (CONT'D)

I'm amazed at what you've done.

She shines the light on his legs.

TONI (CONT'D)

You can hardly walk.

Ben is focused on getting to the toy store.

BEN

I'll be fine.

163 INT. MITCHELL CAR - NIGHT

163

Joe drives slowly. Mikey lies on the back seat. His head rests on Amy's lap. Amy touches his face.

AMY

Wake up, Sleepyhead.

Joe sees an obstruction in front that forces him to stop. He opens the door and leaps out of the car. Amy looks up.

AMY (CONT'D)

Are we there yet, Daddy?

164 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT

164

The road is blocked by twisted pylons, timber and concrete. Joe stands in front of the debris and gestures angrily. Amy comes to stand beside him.

JOE

We'll have to walk.

Joe opens the back door and gathers up Mikey into his arms.  
As they climb over the obstruction, Amy stumbles and falls.

JOE (CONT'D)

Amy!

Unhurt, she regains her balance.

JOE (CONT'D)

Be careful.

They set off to find the hospital. They walk over the front page of a saturated newspaper, plastered to the footpath. The headline "Cyclone Tracy to Miss Darwin" is visible.

165 INT. DARWIN TOY SHOP - NIGHT

165

The old man gives Jam's hand a gentle squeeze, then lets go. Jam closes his eyes in a long blink. He opens his eyes. The old man and Scruffy are gone.

Ben and Toni hurry into the shop. Ben rushes to Jam. Toni, right on his heels, crouches down and feels for Jam's pulse. Jam appears unconscious.

BEN

Is he okay?

Toni nods. Jam stirs, MURMURS, as she checks his blood sugar level with a pinprick test and then administers insulin with a syringe.

BEN (CONT'D)

Is that enough?

TONI

For now. It'll take effect in five, ten minutes. We'll give him a thorough check at the hospital.

Ben SIGHS. Then he frowns and glances around.

BEN

Where's the old man?

Toni is puzzled.

TONI

What old man?

Jam's eyes flutter open.

BEN

Did he take care of you?

Jam nods.

TONI

What are you talking about?

Ben and Jam share a look. Ben shakes his head.

166 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT

166

Joe carries Mikey, Amy walks a short distance ahead, as they hurry along the pavement. Amy looks back at Joe.

AMY

Is it Christmas yet, Daddy?

JOE

I guess so.

Amy pauses near a pile of rubbish. She reaches down, pulls out a piece of tinsel and wraps it around her neck.

AMY

Is it too late to wish for a Christmas present?

Joe smiles.

JOE

It's the perfect time.

Mikey stirs to Joe's relief.

MIKEY

(mumbles)

Mummy...?

Joe looks down at Mikey.

JOE

Hi Mikey. We'll see Mummy soon.

167 EXT. DARWIN CITY STREET - NIGHT

167

Ben carries Jam, Toni holds a torch, as they head back to the hospital. She shines the beam at Ben.

TONI

You're dead on your feet. Let me take him.

Ben is about to refuse. Toni waves a dismissive hand.

TONI (CONT'D)  
I know. You're fine.

Jam, more alert as he recovers, glances at Toni.

BEN  
This is my sister Toni. She's a nurse at the hospital.

They're a few metres from the hospital when Toni reacts to people who come towards them from the opposite direction. She's taken aback to see Amy and Joe with Mikey in his arms.

TONI  
Joe!  
(beat)  
What's wrong with Mikey?

Toni runs towards her family. Joe and Amy hurry towards her.

AMY  
Mummy!

The eye of the cyclone is over. Wind starts to blow again and heavy rain begins to fall.

168

INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - NIGHT

168

The doors open. Rain explodes inwards. In stumble Ben with Jam, and Toni, Amy and Joe who carries Mikey. Lorraine and Doctor Rob hurry to their aid.

TONI  
Mikey needs help.

Doctor Rob takes Mikey from Joe and whisks the child away. Toni follows them. Amy rushes to Ben.

AMY  
Uncle Ben!

Ben smiles at Amy.

BEN  
Hi there, Amy.

She hugs his legs, while he holds Jam. He cuddles her with his free hand. Joe approaches them. Lorraine rolls up a wheelchair.

LORRAINE

Is he the diabetes patient? Let's  
get him into this.

Ben lowers Jam into the wheelchair. Joe and Amy watch. Amy looks up at Joe.

AMY

Who's the boy, Daddy?

Joe has no idea, but he doesn't get a chance to answer, as Peg appears in front of them.

PEG

Are you alright?

JOE

Can you take a look at Amy?

Peg nods and leads Amy away. Joe hesitates, glances back at Ben.

In the wheelchair, Jam looks up at Ben.

JAM

You coming with me?

BEN

I got you here, like I promised.

He gestures to Lorraine.

BEN (CONT'D)

They'll look after you now.

Jam looks stubbornly at Ben.

JAM

We stay together.

Ben holds Jam's gaze. Joe watches.

JAM (CONT'D)

Where you gonna go in a big storm?

A beat. Then Ben slowly smiles.

BEN

Come on, let's go.

Joe walks off. Ben, Jam and Lorraine are the last to move away, in the direction of the basement. As they disappear around the corner, the front windows EXPLODE -- glass sprays inwards. The storm is back.

169 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT - NIGHT

169

Next to Eric's bed, Joe sits in a chair, Amy on his lap. Eric is concerned. He looks to Joe for reassurance.

ERIC

Ben made it? He's alright?

Joe nods. Amy glances up at him.

AMY

Everyone's here, Daddy...

Joe strokes Amy's head as he looks at Eric.

JOE

I'll drag him over by the scruff of the neck, if you like.

Eric smiles. Joe lifts Amy off his lap and begins to rise. Eric waves him back to his seat.

ERIC

Leave him be. He's here. He probably needs time.

JOE

He was going to leave. He still might.

Eric looks like he doesn't believe a word of it. Lorraine stops to check on him. He smiles at her, then reacts with surprise. He leans forwards and reaches for her ear.

ERIC

What's this?

From across the room, by Jam's bed, Ben watches Eric. Jam appears to be asleep.

Eric's hand moves behind Lorraine's ear and he magically retrieves a coin.

Ben looks away. Toni appears at his side.

TONI

You could speak to him. He doesn't bite. Well, not any more.

Ben doesn't answer. Jam peeks out through a half open eye. Ben and Toni don't notice.

TONI (CONT'D)

Ben, he had a heart attack. It was  
minor, this time.

Muscles in Ben's jaw tense.

BEN

I don't want to talk about it.

Toni stares at him in disbelief.

170 EXT. DARWIN - NIGHT 170

Cyclone Tracy is ferocious. Trees blow and bend. The rain is  
thick, constant. It's destructive, full of nature's violence.

171 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT GENERATOR ROOM - NIGHT 171

The generator CHUGS. A broken joist, in the storm-damaged  
ceiling, points to the generator like an arrow. The joist  
moves, slides another inch, then stops.

172 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT - NIGHT 172

Toni walks off, annoyed with Ben. As he watches her, he takes  
a deep breath and rubs his face. Jam opens his eyes and looks  
up at Ben, then across to Eric.

JAM

Is he your dad?

Ben looks at Jam and raises his eyebrows.

BEN

I thought you were asleep.

Jam frowns, curious.

JAM

You don't like him?

Ben gestures with one hand.

BEN

It's not that... It's...  
complicated.

JAM

Spirit come for him?

Ben shakes his head.

A beat, as Jam sizes Ben up.

Ben places a hand on Jam's shoulder.

BEN  
Get some sleep.

JAM  
You gonna be here when I wake...  
mate?

Ben nods.

BEN  
Yeah, mate.

Jam closes his eyes.

Doctor Rob hands Mikey to Joe. Mikey touches his bandaged head as he proudly shows it to Joe.

MIKEY  
Look, Daddy, I got stitches.

Doctor Rob smiles.

DOCTOR ROB  
He's okay, just needs some rest.

Mikey leans back against Joe.

173 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT 173

Ben crouches, his back against the wall. Eyes closed, he looks worn out. There's a hint of a crack in his defences. He hears a soft voice and opens his eyes.

AMY (O.S.)  
Uncle Ben?

The crack disappears as he looks down and sees Amy hurry to him.

AMY (CONT'D)  
I miss you.

He smiles, stands and picks her up. She places her arms around his neck. He glances past her, to Eric, who staggers over, the IV tucked under one arm. Ben's expression becomes serious as he puts Amy down.

BEN  
You better go back to your dad.

Amy glances at them as she walks away.

Ben is cool, guarded, as he looks at Eric. Eric steps closer and pokes a finger at him.

ERIC

There's something I want to say,  
and you're going to listen.

Ben frowns.

BEN

What makes you think I'll listen?

Ben looks away and sees Jam, young and alone, near the door to the makeshift ward. Eric, unaware of Jam, jabs the finger at his own chest.

ERIC

I'm your father, you got no choice.

Ben rolls his eyes, but he stays, which gives Eric hope. Eric makes a pleading gesture with his hands.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Let go of the past.

Ben pokes his finger at Eric. Then he drops his hand and shakes his head. Jam shakes his head and Ben LAUGHS at Jam.

An awkward beat, as Eric and Ben stare at each other.

ERIC (CONT'D)

We were never really a family and  
that's my fault. But we're here  
now.

Ben glances to the door, but there's no sign of Jam. Ben walks towards the center of the corridor.

174 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT GENERATOR ROOM - NIGHT 174

The ceiling joist SNAPS off -- falls, towards the generator, HITS the top and jams the turbine. Gears SCREECH.

175 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT 175

Ben turns to look at Eric, who stands in front of the generator room.

An EXPLOSION. The heavy metal door bursts outwards, straight for Eric and knocks him down. He CRIES OUT in shock and pain. The lights go out. Ben reaches towards Eric.

176 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT - NIGHT

176

In the darkness, Daisy SCREAMS and Mikey CRIES OUT.

MIKEY

Daddy!

A flashlight comes on. Toni holds the torch near Daisy.

TONI

It's okay.

She smiles nervously and pats Daisy's arm. Mikey clings to Joe as they arrive at Daisy's bed.

177 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - NIGHT

177

The asthma child on a respirator -- the equipment dead. Doctor Rob uses a hand pump to keep the patient breathing.

DOCTOR ROB

Get some electricity in here!

178 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

178

Ben is unable to see in the pitch black.

BEN

Dad?

He doesn't hear an answer. Behind him, a flashlight strobes the darkness and Joe appears with Toni.

Ben looks concerned.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's Dad. He's...

Joe shines the torch around to reveal Eric, on the floor, the heavy metal door on top of him. They rush to him. Toni crouches at his side.

TONI

Dad?

She shines the torch at him. He winces in the bright light.

ERIC

I'm fine. The kids? They okay?

Toni nods. Ben and Joe lift the door off Eric, and prop it against the wall. Toni tries to check Eric for injuries but he stoically conceals his pain as he struggles to his feet.

Ben turns, frowns at him.

BEN  
Let Toni help you, Dad.

Any hint of pain disappears as Eric looks at Ben and smiles.

Ben holds his gaze, then shrugs. Toni puts her arm around Eric and hands Joe the torch.

TONI  
I'll take care of Dad, you get some light in here.

Joe raises his eyebrows.

JOE  
How am I supposed to do that?

Toni gestures to him with her free hand.

TONI  
You're the electrician.

They share a look of understanding, then she helps Eric back to the basement.

179 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT GENERATOR ROOM - NIGHT 179

In the darkness, the damaged generator sparks and WHIRS. Joe holds the torch as he and Ben inspect the ceiling joist jammed into the generator turbine.

JOE  
The fuse would've blown. We can fix it, if that's the only problem.

Ben looks doubtful.

JOE (CONT'D)  
But we have to get rid of that.

Joe points to the joist. Ben immediately climbs on top of the generator and pulls at the joist but it doesn't budge.

Peg hurries inside, two maintenance men behind her. The men carry toolboxes, which they place on the floor.

PEG  
What happened?

JOE  
The generator stalled.

Peg looks worried.

PEG  
Can you get it going?

Joe nods as he looks at the electrical components. Ben tugs at the joist and eases it out. The maintenance men pick up the heavy safety cover, that blew off in the explosion, and re-attach it to the generator.

180 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT - NIGHT 180

Mikey grips a torch and sits with Daisy on her bed. They look scared.

Toni settles Eric into bed. Lorraine does rounds, to check on the children.

The lights come on. Everyone looks up. They CHEER.

181 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT 181

Joe and Ben hear the CHEER as they leave the generator room. Ben slaps Joe on the back. Amy runs up and wraps her arms around them.

Joe picks Amy up. Frightened, she cuddles him. Ben hesitates, concerned. Then he walks away, to return to Jam.

AMY  
I'm scared, Daddy.

For a moment, Joe's expression reveals that they all are. But he shakes the mood, kisses the top of Amy's head and reassures her.

JOE  
It'll be over soon.

He appears to be reassuring himself too. Amy hugs him tightly.

182 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL BASEMENT - NIGHT 182

Ben stands beside Jam and watches him sleep.

Eric sits next to Daisy and holds her hand.

Mikey lies in bed, with Amy curled up at his feet. Joe sits in a chair. He stands as Toni arrives and gives her his seat.

183 EXT. DARWIN - MORNING

183

Cyclone Tracy is over. The sun is up. The sky is blue, though full of thick clouds, some dark and threatening.

Two lone dogs walk and sniff around in a silent street.

Buildings show signs of storm damage. Most appear beyond repair.

Visible in a pile of ravaged belongings are a child's toy, half a dozen colored baubles from a Christmas tree and a copy of Bing Crosby's LP "Merry Christmas".

184 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - MORNING

184

Toni, Joe, Amy, Ben and Jam enter the reception area, which is under inches of water. They wade through the water to get to the front doors.

185 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - MORNING

185

They emerge and stare in stunned silence at the devastation.

Amy holds Toni's hand and huddles between her parents.

TONI

What will we do now?

Joe puts his arm around Toni and hugs her.

TONI (CONT'D)

How's the house?

Joe stares ahead, expressionless.

JOE

We definitely need that new roof.

Amy looks up at them, urgency in her face.

AMY

We need to go home.

Joe shakes his head.

JOE

I don't think --

Amy's eyes are large, desperate.

AMY  
 (cuts in)  
 We have to find Scruffy.

She runs off. Toni and Joe go after her.

TONI  
 Amy!

Ben and Jam stand together. Jam gazes up at the sky.

JAM  
 I like your plane. I like to fly  
 too.

He lowers his gaze to the ground.

JAM (CONT'D)  
 I think I'll keep my feet on the  
 ground of my ancestors.

Ben smiles and ruffles Jam's hair.

A beat. Jam looks at Ben.

JAM (CONT'D)  
 We go to the toy shop now. Thank  
 the old man for helping me.

Ben is surprised. Jam tugs at Ben's arm, pulls, as Ben  
 PROTESTS.

186 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - MORNING 186

Toni and Joe crouch in front of Amy. Toni holds Amy's arms  
 gently and appeals to her. Amy frowns, unhappy.

TONI  
 You can't go running off. You could  
 get hurt.

AMY  
 Uncle Ben's gone.

Toni and Joe are taken aback. Toni SIGHS.

187 EXT. DARWIN CITY TOY SHOP - MORNING 187

Ben and Jam arrive at the toy shop. They go inside.

188 INT. DARWIN CITY TOY SHOP - MORNING

188

They look around, stunned to discover that the shop is empty of toys. They spot something on the counter.

JAM

What's this?

They hurry over to the counter to see a Santa suit and two red sacks. Ben reaches for a hand-written note on one of the sacks and reads it -- "Ben, For the children at the hospital."

He opens the sack to reveal gift-wrapped presents. He's confused and bewildered. Jam grins.

A dog barks, and startles Ben and Jam. They turn to see Scruffy, a red ribbon and bow tied around her neck, near "Santa's Magic Cave". Jam hurries over to the dog, Ben follows.

JAM (CONT'D)

The old man left his dog.

Jam bends down to pat Scruffy. Ben squats and reaches for the gold tag that hangs from Scruffy's collar. He reads: "Scruffy Mitchell 08 8555 6138". He can't believe his eyes.

189 EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - MORNING

189

An Emergency Services vehicle is parked near an exterior wall of the hospital.

Above, on the roof, Emergency Service personnel erect tarpaulin sheets over the many gaps.

190 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - MORNING

190

Peg, Lorraine, Doctor Rob and other staff, busy with injured people, hear a loud voice.

BEN (O.S.)

(sings)

Ya better watch out, Ya better not  
cry,

Everyone notices the awful sound. They look to see Ben, dressed in the Santa suit, and Jam who wears Ben's old Santa hat. They each carry a bulging sack. Scruffy follows. Ben sings, aware that he has no talent as a singer.

BEN (CONT'D)

(sings)

Ya better be good, I'm telling ya  
why,

Jam covers his ears and smiles as they make their way towards the oncology ward, where some repairs have been done and children have been gathered again.

BEN (CONT'D)

(sings)

Santa Claus is coming to  
towwwwwwwwn.

He reaches for the sky, palms up in the air, intentionally corny.

191 INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY - MORNING 191

Ben stops and grins.

BEN

Merry Christmas everyone!

Toni, surprised, stares at Ben. The children CHEER and SQUEAL in delight. Those not confined to beds run to him. Eric watches.

CHILDREN

Santa! Santa!

Ben is surrounded by happy, eager children, but this time he doesn't mind. Amy is excited when she sees Scruffy. The little dog runs into Amy's arms. Amy holds Scruffy tightly.

AMY

Scruffy! Thank you, thank you,  
thank you. Uncle Ben, thank you.

She hugs and kisses her beloved pet. Ben smiles.

Eric is out of bed and stops near Toni. His eyes water as he struggles to hold back tears. They share a smile.

Daisy approaches Eric and shows him her present -- a pony with a long mane and tail.

DAISY

Look what Santa gave me.

Eric smiles and inspects the toy.

ERIC  
Just what you wanted.

She nods.

Next to Mikey's bed, Joe and Toni make a fuss of Amy and Scruffy. Ben and Jam arrive with the presents. Ben reaches into the sack then hands a gift to Mikey.

Mikey tears off the wrapping paper to reveal a battery operated car. A huge grin appears on his face.

MIKEY  
Wow, Santa got me the one I want.  
See!

He holds it up for everyone to see. Joe smiles.

JOE  
I told you Santa would make it.

Toni puts her arm around Joe and looks up at him.

TONI  
After this, you're going to be very  
busy with your new business, Joe.

They share a loving look and he gives her a squeeze.

Ben reaches into the sack for another present. This one has his own name on it. He looks at it, surprised and curious.

JAM  
It's for you. Open it.

Ben unwraps the present. He's stunned, can't believe his eyes. It's a toy Tiger Moth. Ben considers the toy for a moment, then hands it to Jam.

BEN  
I want you to have it.

Ben nods to reassure Jam. Jam grins and moves away as he flies the plane through the air. Ben and Eric watch him.

Eric looks at Ben and puts a hand on Ben's shoulder.

Across the room, Ben and Toni catch each other's eyes. They smile. Toni mouths "Merry Christmas". Ben winks at her.

The three camel drivers slow to a halt and gaze in disbelief at the flattened city.

Then they turn the camels around and walk back the way they came -- into the Outback.

FADE TO BLACK

193 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY 193

A Tiger Moth flies through the air. The plane swoops, dips, as a hand holds it. Jam plays with the toy. He looks up, to the sky.

A distant sound of an ENGINE as an aircraft comes into view.

194 EXT. AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT - DAY 194

The front of a brand new Cessna hosts a P.M.G. logo.

Ben sits in the cockpit, relaxed, happy. He leans over and looks to the ground.

195 EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY 195

The Cessna rolls to a stop. Jam runs towards it.

The ENGINE cuts off. Ben opens the door and hops out. He sees Jam and smiles.

BEN

Jam, I got something for you.

Ben leans into the plane and lifts out a toolbox. He puts the toolbox on the ground. Jam gathers around, curious. Ben opens the toolbox to reveal the contents -- several small parcels.

BEN (CONT'D)

This way, they can't get broken.

Ben picks up Jam and hugs him. Jam glances over Ben's shoulder to the Cessna.

JAM

New plane. It looks great.

Ben turns towards the plane to admire it.

BEN

She's a beauty.

JAM

Can we go for a ride?

Ben looks surprised. Jam grins at him.

JAM (CONT'D)  
You can teach me to fly your new  
plane.

Ben LAUGHS.

196 INT. CESSNA - DAY 196

Jam's hands are on the controls as he flies. He smiles from ear to ear.

Ben sits next to Jam. Ben leans back, hands off the controls, and nods to Jam.

197 EXT. CESSNA IN FLIGHT - DAY 197

The plane flies away, gets smaller and smaller as it soars over the Outback.

198 EXT. OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - DAY 198

Three dusty camel drivers shield their eyes from the hot sun as they watch the plane fly overhead.

FADE OUT