

"The Cow Hunters of the South Seas"

Master-scene script

Version: Second Draft

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EXT - SECLUDED BEACH - DAY

It is an overcast day. Grey clouds linger above TRUMPET, as he stares out towards the ocean, wind blowing through his silver hair. He is solemn, a man on a mission maybe. Whatever his purpose, he is at home here.

Minimalist piano music waltzes with itself in the background.

TRUMPET
(v.o)
What I do is a natural thing. A sacred contract with God, perhaps.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK:

THE COW HUNTERS OF THE SOUTH SEAS

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

The colours are a little drained, giving a soft dream-like quality to the room.

TRUMPET MCLEOD sits in a chair next to a window that faces the sea. His is about forty-five, a little bald, and wearing a large woollen cardigan. Wise beyond his years, and very humble, he talks to someone sitting in a seat off camera.

TRUMPET
I mean, it was never something I expected to find myself doing. I used to be a commercial fisherman. I caught lobsters for a living. We used to send them to Japan in crates of ice.

CUT TO:

EXT - SECLUDED BEACH - DAY

A YOUNG TRUMPET runs along the shoreline, laughing. The footage is slightly grainy and is in black and white.

TRUMPET
(v.o)
I always loved the ocean. Even as a child, I knew that everything I ever did would involve the sea, and the people of the sea. The sea was my destiny. The sea was my dream.

CUT TO:

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

Drained colours.

TRUMPET
The first time it happened, well...

CUT TO:

EXT - THE SEA - DAY

The sea is full of rich and vibrant colours, the footage flowing with the majesty of the world from this tiny boat in the middle of it.

TRUMPET
(v.o)
...I was out on my own, in the boat, and I was just blown away when, seemingly out of nowhere, there was a cow swimming up to the boat.

We are on Trumpet's boat and we gauge the his reaction...

CUT TO:

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

Drained colours.

TRUMPET is reliving the experience, his eyes wide as he remembers.

TRUMPET
It just looked at me for a moment, went under the hull, came up, took a breath and went on its way.

He looks back at the interviewer off camera.

TRUMPET
(cont'd)
And I came home. A little shocked.

CUT TO:

INT - LOCAL PUB - DAY

Drained colours.

Two old men, the type that have seen everyone come and go in their time, sit and drink their beers. Unlike Trumpet, they address the camera openly. One of them is called ORWELL and the other, BARTON.

ORWELL
By this time we'd all been through similar ordeals as Trumpet but, in fear of being called lunatics, we hadn't said anything. Trumpet opened the floodgates. He was the first.

BARTON
Trumpet really got off lightly in his encounter; there was no damage to the boat, none of his lines

had been messed with.

CUT TO:

EXT - DOCKS - DAY

Black and white.

Some FISHERMEN have found their boats wrecked. They are less angry about it as they are simply disheartened. One of the fisherman just looks at the pile of mess and shakes his head sadly.

ORWELL

(v.o)

Some people had gaping horn holes in their boats, others had pots -- cray pots -- pots that had been tampered with or, simply destroyed all together.

CUT TO:

INT - PUB - DAY

Drained colours.

ORWELL

One moment they were just there. It was like a plague of mice, only in the sea and with cattle. Came out of nowhere.

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

TRUMPET

(v.o)

And just like that, God had opened a door for me. I knew what I had to do.

EXT - THE DOCKS - DAY

Rich colours.

A small boat pulls away from the dock, TRUMPET at it's wheel, wind in his hair, at peace. Sun breaks through the clouds, the waves crash around the boat, the spray. It is a mariner's Heaven, and Trumpet stands in the centre of it.

TRUMPET

(v.o)

They were tough times. They were. We were a group of men and our families trying to make a living, just trying to get by, and suddenly we had to contend with a bizarre natural phenomenon, the likes of which none of us had seen before now. The people needed a hero.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE FIRST COW

Black and white.

We pan along a long line of framed newspaper articles with pictures of Trumpet and his prize, front page headlines regarding the capture of the first cow:

"LOCAL MAN CAPTURES COW"

"SEA COW CAUGHT IN HEROIC GESTURE"

"SALTY BEEF BROUGHT TO JUSTICE"

The music grows slightly darker.

ORWELL

(v.o)

He just emerged out of the fog one morning, came into the pub and ushered us all outside. There was a dead dairy cow on the back of his trailer, drenched in blood and salt water. Everyone was just...they were just silent. It was a moment of divine clarity.

CUT TO:

INT - PUB - DAY

Drained colours.

ORWELL

Suddenly, here was a man who was the solution to our problems.

BARTON

Mind you, at the same time we all began to think Trumpet was probably a bit fucked in the head as well.

CUT TO:

INT - PUB - NIGHT

Black and white.

TRUMPET is in the middle of a group of men who are all drinking beers and hitting him on the back.

TRUMPET

(v.o)

I became a bit of a local hero really. I never let it run to my head, though, no. It wasn't like that.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

Drained colours.

FADE IN:

TRUMPET

The cows were spreading. I started getting calls from councils all along the South Coast asking if I could come and clean up the cattle populations that were steadily formulating in their waters. It was a chance to help.

CUT TO:

INT - LOCAL PUB - DAY

Drained colours.

BARTON

And just like that, he didn't have the time of day for us anymore. He was always off on business. Helping fishing villages, helping corporate shipping companies.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE PRESS JUNKET

We see shots from a varied amount of television and radio interviews photos with politicians, opening a McDonalds, photos flashing, flash, flash, flash!

TRUMPET

(v.o)

People in town were getting bitter. It hurt me. I took the blows pretty hard. Everything I was doing. I was doing it for them. And they were still bitter. And then of course, the Government got involved.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT - GOVERNMENT RALLY - DAY

Black and white.

FADE IN:

The camerawork is shaky and handheld. A tall, loud, authoritarian Independent MP -- RORY MCEWEN -- stands in front of a crowd of onlookers. He speaks loudly into a microphone.

RORY

Trumpet McLeod is a menace!!

The crowd cheers.

CUT TO:

INT - PUB - DAY

Drained colours.

BARTON

We were in the middle of an election year and of course when it came to conservation, Trumpet McLeod was the question on everyone's lips.

CUT TO:

INT - RORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Rory sits and addresses an interviewer off camera.

RORY

It's a question. Of animal rights. Of conservation. Of protection of animal species. Of ethics! You need not go any further in finding a less decent human being than Trumpet McLeod.

CUT TO:

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

Trumpet is close to tears.

TRUMPET

Now. Rory.

(pause)

Rory just...Rory just doesn't understand. This isn't about cattle, it's about people...!

He composes himself.

TRUMPET

I have a feeling this all going to be over very soon.

CUT TO:

INT - RORY MCEWEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Drained colours.

RORY

It's no longer about senseless bovine massacre. It's about right and wrong. Trumpet McLeod is the epitome of everything that is, or ever has been wrong!

He becomes more sinister.

RORY (CONT'D)

I will find you Trumpet McLeod, and when I do, I will bring you down to Chinatown.

CUT TO:

EXT - TRUMPET'S PROPERTY - DAY

Black and white.

A SWAT team surrounds the house. A hand-held and wobbly camera accompanies them, the words: 'Allison Carribine Reporting' appear on screen with the logo of a news channel. The SWAT team manoeuvre carefully towards the back of the house. The SWAT team make their move on TRUMPET, who is standing the backyard with the boat, spraying it with a hose. They violently throw him to the ground and aim their guns at him and hand-cuff him and begin to move him out.

ORWELL

(v.o)

The SWAT team didn't have a reason for arresting Trumpet. They didn't need a reason. They had Rory.

INT - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

Black and white.

RORY, smiling and happy stands at a podium in front of many people who are taking photos and chanting his first name out again and again and again. He silences them with his hands. The crowd wait in anticipation.

RORY

We have won the election again!

MONTAGE - TRUMPET'S DEATH

A collection of images pass by, news reports, newspaper articles, radio presenters, people leaving flowers out by Trumpet's front gate, a mass funeral, his grave, the whole works.

NEWS REPORTER #1

(o.s)

Today in a failed prison escape, legendary cow hunter Trumpet McLeod was killed..

NEWS REPORTER #2

(o.s)

Trumpet McLeod is dead.

RORY

(o.s)

And I will *safeguard* democracy...

NEWS REPORTER #3

(o.s)

The guards said they had never witnessed such desperation, like a man possessed...

RORY

(o.s)

...our *ethical* way of life...

NEWS REPORTER #1
(o.s)
...shot twenty-seven times in the back...

BARTON
(o.s)
He had only tried to help.

NEWS REPORTER #2
...and the world mourns.

CUT TO:

INT - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

Black and white.

The crowd cheers. RORY too, is ecstatic.

RORY
...because you voted one, Rory McEwen!!

The crowd erupts.

FADE OUT:

INT - TRUMPET'S HOME - DAY

Drained colours.

FADE IN:

TRUMPET sits where he did earlier and addresses the camera.

TRUMPET
I would say I've led a blessed life, yes. I've done what I had to do, and I've done it proudly and with honour. I've been the best that I can be.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE SEA - DAY

Rich colours.

TRUMPET is at sea. He is pointing at something off screen. *Ave Maria* is playing lightly in the background. It is a cow. Trumpet goes into overload. He has found a target, he is at his prime. As he passes the camera:

TRUMPET
Don't rock the boat, they can sense fear...

BARTON
(v.o)
At first we thought that what he was doing was ridiculous. We laughed at him constantly behind his

back.

ORWELL

(v.o)

But then he made something of himself that none of us ever did. He didn't kill cattle; he found the heart in a wintry society fuelled by politics, money and fame and he made he made it beat again. He took on the world.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE DOCKS - DAY

Drained colours

A man stands, holding a fishing rod and the hand of his six-year-old daughter. He has just been asked a question and he answers it to the camera.

MAN

Trumpet McLeod? Sure, I know of Trumpet McLeod.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE SEA - DAY

Rich colours

Trumpet is pulling ropes, leaping around. Then, in slow motion, he moves to the front of the boat, he is home. He is passionate.

MAN

(v.o)

The man's a legend, doused in folklore. There's not a tourist who doesn't come along the south coast without every night hearing tales told in pubs about the great cow hunter of the south seas. There's no one who represents the south coast more than Trumpet McLeod.

CUT TO:

EXT - SECLUDED BEACH - DAY

A YOUNG TRUMPET runs along the shoreline, laughing. The footage is slightly grainy, however is now in rich and glorious colour.

TRUMPET

(v.o)

I don't hate cows. I don't cull the numbers of cow in the bays along the south coast because I'm macabre. I don't do it for the fame or for the money. I do it because I love to help. I do it because I love to make a difference. I do it because I love my town. And I do it because I love the sea.

CUT TO:

EXT - SECLUDED BEACH - DAY

It is an overcast day, but beautifully rich and colourful, the hint of blue in the sky flowing majestically into the grey clouds that linger above TRUMPET, as he stares out towards the ocean, wind blowing through his silver hair. He is solemn, a man on a mission maybe. Whatever his purpose, he is at home here.

TRUMPET

(v.o)

What I do is a natural thing. A sacred contract with God, perhaps.

The minimalist music begins again, swelling as Trumpet stares out into the ocean before turning away, and leaving nothing but sky.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE CARD ON BLACK:

OVER THE PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH RORY MCEWEN FOCUSED HIS CAMPAIGN OFFENSIVE ON TRUMPET, SEVEN RARE SPECIES OF POSSUM BECAME EXTINT IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA. THEIR PLIGHT WENT UNNOTICED.

TRUMPET MCLEOD WAS CREMATED, HIS ASHES SPREAD AT SEA. HE LIVES ON IN OLD SEA TALES, IN PUBS AND IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS. HIS LEGEND SHALL NEVER DIE.

AND TO THIS DAY, HERDS OF SWIMMING CATTLE ARE STILL A PROBLEM ALONG AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH COAST.

THE END