

***When Granny Went on the Internet:*
The Screenplay and the
Search for Content and Tone
in South African Screenwriting**

**by
Carolyn Burnett**

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ABSTRACT

The development of content and the creation of tone in a screenplay is a challenging task for the screenwriter. This thesis explores, through the writing of an original screenplay, how content is sourced and tone is manipulated in a comic story.

The context of screenwriting in South Africa is established and an account is given of the emerging micro-budget filmmaking movement along with a discussion of issues relating to the broadband streaming of films in South Africa. Such factors, along with declining or stagnating cinema attendance, affect how films will be viewed and distributed in South Africa.

A major case study was conducted on the South African film *Jozi* (2010) by director-screenwriter Craig Freimond. The influences, screenwriting process, sources of content and creation of tone in his film are examined through in-depth interviews and structural, thematic and tonal analysis of his work.

An original feature-length screenplay, *When Granny Went on the Internet* (2013), was written. An account is offered of how the content was derived and tone was manipulated. A reflective report of the screenwriting process offers insight into the development of the multi-layered, tonally complex comic screenplay and suggests that a new form of South African comedy may be emerging.

DECLARATIONS

I, Carolyn Burnett, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain text, data, pictures, graphs or other information obtained from another person or source, unless specifically acknowledged as being so obtained.
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Glossary

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Beat	Each moment in a screenplay that adds to and clarifies plot or character
CB	Carolyn Burnett
Celtx	Software for formatting a screenplay (available free online)
CF	Craig Freimond
Content	The elements in a screenplay which include subject matter, character, plot and action. Content is not the same as plot alone.
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DFM	Durban Film Mart
DFO	Durban Film Office
DIFF	Durban International Film Festival
DOC	Department of Communication
Down beat	A beat that is tonally serious
DSTV	Digital Satellite Television (available in Africa)
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EDU	Economic Development Unit
etv	Free-to-air television channel in South Africa
Filp tone	Inversion of tone by moving rapidly from the established tone in a scene to its opposite.
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
Imdb	Internet movie database (available online)
IFTF	Institute For The Future
Hartiwood	Afrikaans feature films shot in the vicinity of Hartibeessport Dam
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
MNet	A subscription television broadcaster (available in Africa)
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
Nollywood	Nigerian film industry
NRF	National Research Foundation
Plus one	A term used by Craig Freimond to describe the level of comedy in a screenplay, with plus one being subtle humour where the

characters are still rooted in reality and plus five being exaggerated, slap-stick or physical comedy, with more departures from reality

SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
Tone	The mood created and feeling conveyed in the screenplay through the manipulation of factors such as content, subject matter, character, dialogue, action, themes, juxtaposition and inversion, as well as the use of language and expression in the scene descriptions and stage directions. In a film the factors can include casting, performance, art direction, cinematography, editing, music and sound design.
Up beat	A beat that is tonally optimistic or light
WGSA	Writers' Guild of South Africa
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Chapter 1

Introduction

This practice-based Ph.D includes two related parts: a feature-length, original screenplay entitled *When Granny Went on the Internet*, and a theoretical component which reflects on the process of screenwriting in order to arrive at a better understanding of how content is sourced and tone is manipulated to create meaning. I have also contextualized my work in order to locate it within the South African setting in which I am creating and researching.

In a practice-based PhD such as this there is seldom one clearly defined goal for the research. The aims can be multiple and they create a moving target, which shifts and evolves as the research unfolds, as has been the case with my own work. My primary goal was to write a comic screenplay about how an old woman uses new media. In the process of creating the screenplay my central concerns were to create engaging, multi-layered content and to manipulate tone in an attempt to articulate meaning and social relevance. However, a multitude of other questions arose as I went about the research and creative process and this thesis is an attempt to link and make sense of the multi-factorial environment in which my work is situated, whilst still addressing my central questions about content and tone in the screenplay.

The content of my screenplay draws on my interest in new media which stems from my long standing work as a lecturer in video technology and video production, a field that demands knowledge of technology, creativity and the ability to adapt to frequent equipment and software changes. This, combined with my background as a script writer, director and editor of video and television programmes, as well as my current lecturing in these fields, has led me to this creative PhD and a screenplay about what happens when an old woman uses new media.

I was interested in the question of where knowledge about new media resides, how this could be embodied in characters in the screenplay and how such knowledge could be accessed by those who are considered to be outsiders to new media. I wanted to engage with stereotypes about old women and interrogate and challenge such stereotypes through the content and tone of the screenplay. As a starting point, and throughout this dissertation and the screenplay, I use the word 'old' rather than other euphemisms about age. This is a personal choice which was influenced by my readings of the work of feminist writer Barbara McDonald (1984). The protagonist's position as an old, computer-iliterate woman places her as an outsider to the mainstream. Her ultimate battle is to create a new self and to secure her position, both physically and symbolically, despite the way in which others try to define her. Thus, I have tried to play the content on two levels: as entertainment because it is a comedy and as critical engagement because it challenges the status quo of what is considered appropriate for old women.

An important influence on my creative work has been South African director-screenwriter Craig Freimond. I have conducted an in-depth analysis of his film *Jozi* (2010) in order to understand how content and tone have played out in his film and, in addition, I interviewed him over a number of days in order to gain insight into his screenwriting process and method. He also peer-reviewed my screenplay and this interactive process was of central significance in assisting me to craft the screenplay.

It is impossible to ignore the context in which the screenwriter works in South Africa as this will undoubtedly impact the content and tone of the screenplays that are written. To this end I have tried to describe the current context of filmmaking in South Africa by looking at significant contemporary films as well as the emerging micro-budget films that are now proliferating in the industry. Interviews with micro-budget filmmakers have added depth and accuracy to this information.

The methodology employed in both the creative and theoretical sections is wide-ranging and sometimes over-lapping. Through a process of invention, informal observation, data gathering, textual research, interviewing and peer-review I created and shaped the content and tone of the screenplay and developed the theoretical information that accompanies it. In the reflective section I attempt to bring together all the diverse parts of the research whilst considering the process I have undertaken in producing the screenplay. The reflective chapter is thus an attempt to synthesise the creative and the theoretical components of the research and to link them to the contextual parts. In reflecting on my screenwriting process I describe, critique and account for how I have addressed the primary goal of creating multi-layered content and manipulating tone to create meaning in the screenplay. A practice-based approach whereby I engaged with questions whilst I engaged with the creative process seemed the best way to navigate my research process. My research is ultimately both *about* screenwriting and *of* screenwriting.

In South Africa, screenwriting as practice-based research is a new field and my PhD submission may be the first of its kind in this country. One other candidate, Meg Rickards (2007), at the University of Cape Town, appended to her dissertation a screenplay which she had co-written, but her research was not what could be described as purely practice-based, or practice-led. Rickards worked through a department, or discipline, other than Creative Writing, as is the case with my own work. I am registered through the department of Media and Digital Arts at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Pietermaritzburg) which has meant that I have been inspired to draw on aspects of media studies for the content of my screenplay, while at the same time producing practice-based research. This point about the academic and geographic origin and context of a PhD is not insignificant. Foreign practice-based, Creative Writing PhDs such as Batty (2009) and Jaycee (2010) in England, or Media Arts PhDs which rely on screenwriting, such as Steiner (2011) also in England, do not necessarily provide an exact template on which a South African, practice-based screenwriting PhD can be modeled. A major point of departure between the structure of my PhD and that of afore-mentioned PhDs is the emphasis I have

placed on context and the current state of the film and television industry in South Africa, the country in which my creative work is produced. Given the massive social and political changes which South Africa has negotiated in the past two decades which have impacted every field of endeavour, including that of film and television, I felt it necessary to include a perspective on the current state of the industry and the interim phase which I believe we have now entered. This socio-cultural context is relevant to the practice of screenwriting and, indeed, practice can be understood as “a mode informed by individual and cultural circumstance” (Harper and Kroll. 2008:6).

Terms such as ‘practice as research’ and ‘practice-based research’ are “frequently used interchangeably to suggest a relationship of research between theory and practice” (Parip 2006 n.p). Through my research and this combination of theory and practice I am trying to both understand and also to create new knowledge that can be extrapolated in a useful way. My aims are for this process to develop my practice as a screenwriter, whilst at the same time to produce new knowledge in the reflective sections, particularly about how content is sourced and tone is manipulated in screenplays, and that such knowledge will be useful to other practice-based researchers.

Chapter 2

South African Filmmaking: Context, Content and Tone

2.1 Introduction

All screenwriting takes place within a particular context and is constrained and impacted by the particularities of that context. In this section I look at the current context of filmmaking in South Africa and some of the contemporary films that have been made. I describe how selected key issues impact on content and tone in screenplays. In particular, the emergence of micro-budget, or Bubblegum films as they are known in South Africa, is a significant recent development and I consider the implication of this movement for South African screenwriters.

2.2 Background

The South African film industry is one of the oldest in the world (Botha 2006). Films were first screened in the country in 1895 in mobile bioscopes with the earliest permanent cinema being built in 1909 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (Botha 2006. np)). By 2010, little more than a century later, there were between one-hundred-and-fifty and two hundred production companies active in the industry, producing film and television content. Despite the presence of many small, or micro companies, the industry is, however, concentrated in the hands of a few key players with “only about fifteen of these [companies] commanding over 90% of feature films and television production [work]” (NFVF 2010a: 11). As I will show later, new funding initiatives for micro-budget films can be seen as an attempt to broaden access to an industry that could have been perceived as exclusive.

The film industry contributes about R3.5 billion annually to the South African economy with about twenty-five films produced a year, excluding those made for television or released direct to DVD (NFVF 2012; NFVF 2014). However, a ten-year industry survey reports that the film and television industry has only

grown “marginally” since 2001 and that it was substantially impacted by the global economic crisis of 2008 (NFVF 2010a: 71-72). Statements about cinema attendance indicate it is either declining or is static: NFVF reports state that audience numbers decreased consistently over the ten year period until 2010 (NFVF 2010a: 11) whereas Debbie McCrum of Nu Metro, the second largest film distribution and exhibition company in South Africa, states that audience attendance has been “pretty much static” over the ten years to 2012 at between twenty seven and twenty nine million tickets sold a year (Loubser 2012). A contributing factor may be that cinema tickets are expensive. In addition, South African cinema-goers are a relatively small group: of a total population of more than 51 million only 5.5 million are considered cinema-goers and they go to the cinema on average 4.5 times a year (Loubser 2012). Nonetheless, there were nineteen feature films made in 2011 and fourteen feature films made in 2012 in South Africa and, whilst this is not a huge number, it does represent an industry that is alive and producing product.

A challenge for local filmmakers and screenwriters is that at South African cinemas local films are far outnumbered by foreign films. For example: the 2012 first quarter box office analysis shows that of the sixty-five films released in South Africa only four were local (NFVF 2012). Most of the films screened in South African cinemas are American and have far bigger budgets than local films, not only for production but also for marketing, which is important in promoting them to the cinema-going population.

It might be that local films are a growing share of an otherwise static market: in the first quarter of 2012 two very strong local films, *Semi-Soet* by Joshua Rous, an Afrikaans language musical romance, and *Material*, by Craig Freimond accounted for a substantial improvement in local box office earnings (NFVF 2012). Whether this can be seen as an anomaly or the start of an up-tick in improved box office for local films is uncertain. Nu Metro Films claim that although film attendance has been static over the last ten years the local market share has grown from 0.5% to 4.5% (Loubser 2012). It remains to be seen if this growth in market share continues for local films.

The potential audience for my screenplay would be both a local, South African,

inter-generational audience as well as a foreign, English-speaking, inter-generational one. Given that marketing and distribution in foreign territories requires substantial budget and given that cinema audience are either stagnating or falling, it may be that the best option for my film would be flying on television, rather than a theatrical release in a cinema.

2.2 The South African Film

It is beyond the scope of this research to give a comprehensive account of all South African films that have been made. In my assessment there is no genre or list of attributes regarding content and tone that describe a 'typical' South African film. The films that have been made are mostly diverse and varied and situated within the context of the era in which they were made. I have selected a few films in an attempt to illustrate various points about content and tone.

The contribution of director-screenwriter Darrell Roodt is significant. During the Apartheid era he made films that were subversive for the times because they drew attention to important social, political and human rights issues. Roodt's work of this period includes films such *The Stick* (1988) and *A Place of Weeping* (1986), which exposed not only racism but also the South African Defense Force's activities during the 'bush war'. Roodt is a prolific writer-director of both film and television and in post-Apartheid South Africa he has continued to make serious films with content that highlights important social issues and often features strong female characters. An interesting example of content and tone in Roodt's work is *Sarafina* (1992), an adaptation of the musical by Mbongeni Ngema, which drew its content from the events of the 1976 Soweto uprising, but its treatment and the song and dance routines choreographed by Michael Peters, an American choreographer who had famously choreographed Michael Jackson's dances, created a tone which was often up-beat despite the significant socio-political content of the film. Some casting, such as that of Whoopi Goldberg in the role of the teacher, added to the tonal lightness of the film, perhaps because of her association with comedy. In 1992, the year *Sarafina* was released, a new government of power sharing emerged with Nelson Mandela at the centre and the celebratory tone of *Sarafina* mirrored the hope that was felt in the midst of this early move to

democracy.

However, some of Roodt's later films, including *Yesterday* (2004), were once again somber in tone. *Yesterday* (2004) highlighted the experiences of an HIV-positive African woman in a patriarchal and abusive culture, and was the first commercial, feature length film in Zulu to be nominated for an Academy Award in the category Best Foreign Language Film. Once again Roodt homed in on pressing South African issues, namely HIV and Aids and the abuse of women. The result was a tonally dark film which was bereft of a hopeful ending. The audience would have been left acutely aware of the social and familial consequences of HIV and Aids at a time when then-President Thabo Mbeki's rule was shrouded in Aids denialism.

Roodt has continued to choose content that focuses on the big questions in South Africa: in *Faith's Corner* (2005) poverty and unemployment are the focus and child abuse is at the centre of *Little One* (2012). Given the content of several of Roodt's South African films the resulting work is often intense. The examples cited reinforce a feeling that South Africa has many important, pressing social problems and that film is a way to bring this to the public's attention.

Roodt is not the only South African filmmaker to use socio-political issues as either the focus or the background in his films. Just as Roodt directed an adaptation of Athol Fugard's *Cry The Beloved Country* (1995), Gavin Hood adapted and directed another Fugard classic, *Tsotsi* (2005), about the ultimate redemption of an African man living a life of poverty and crime. Made in Zulu, it became the first South African film to win an Academy Award in 2006 for Best Foreign Language Film. *Tsotsi* (2005) is a sober film and despite the novel having been published in 1980 and set in 1956 the content resonated with the lived realities experienced in a newly democratic South Africa which included violent crime. The central character of *Tsotsi* is seen to grow and change and want to 'do the right thing', creating a feeling of hope for the audience that, despite the significant problems South Africa experiences, all is not lost. An important aspect of *Tsotsi* is the depiction of the African male because, even though *Tsotsi* is a criminal, he is represented in a multi-dimensional rather than

stereotypical way, which might then challenge deeply entrenched prejudices about black men. Such elements help layer the sometimes melo-dramatic tone of the film whilst simultaneously adding to the ongoing conversation of South Africa identity explored through film.

In contrast to all of the above is *Skoonheid* (2011) by Oliver Hermanus, a film which shifts away from obvious socio-political concerns to examine character. Here the protagonist is a middle-aged Afrikaans homosexual man. The film is shot in a subjective, point-of-view way and opens with the object of desire in frame with the audience sharing the protagonist's relentless gaze. The protagonist is deceptive and violent and lives a life that is harrowing and disturbing to witness. Hermanus does not try to create a likeable character, as so many Hollywood screenwriters do, but instead leaves the audience to decide how they feel and thus his film adds to the understanding of Afrikaans identity depicted in film. *Skoonheid* not only shows that there is much more content available to South African screenwriters than socio-political issues but has broadened the definition of Afrikaans film as it is very different to most other Afrikaans films released on the local cinema circuits which are generally formulaic and safe in their choice of content.

Afrikaans language filmmaking has a long history in South Africa and was often (but not exclusively) associated with Afrikaner nationalism (Botha 2006). In present day South Africa Afrikaans language films, also known as Hartiwood films because they are often shot in the area around Hartibeespoort dam, appear to be a highly successful niche market and whilst they no longer display the historical nationalism that was often evident in the early films they nonetheless are a celebration of Afrikaans culture, in particular pop culture and song. Fifteen Afrikaans films were made and had theatrical releases in South Africa between 2010 and 2011 with most of these films featuring a popular Afrikaans singer, something which may be the key to their box office success (Meyer 2011). The popularity of films such as these, with an up-beat, feel-good tone and happy ending, signals that Afrikaans South African audiences respond to escapist formulaic content. Other factors cited as accounting for the success of these Afrikaans feature films is that they are made for a local

audience, in their own language and are screened close to where they live (Young 2013). These are factors shared by micro-budget Bubblegum films which I discuss later.

A discussion of Afrikaans films would be incomplete without reference to the films of Leon Schuster, whose films are in both English and Afrikaans. Schuster's films are different to the Afrikaans Hartiwood films mentioned above as they have bigger budgets and have a slapstick quality about them. Schuster is possibly the person most associated with commercial filmmaking success in South Africa and as a screenwriter/ producer/director/actor/comedian/ singer-songwriter the multi-talented Schuster has acted in sixteen films so far, including eleven that he has written, seven that he has produced and four that he has directed (Imdb 2013).

Schuster's unique brand of slapstick comedies attract "massive and very loyal audiences" according to his own publicity, a claim that is borne out by the figures: his most successful films to date were *Mr Bones* (2001) which grossed R33 million at the South African box office (Imdb 2013) and *Mr Bones 2: Back from the Past* (2008) which grossed R35 million (Schuster 2013). These two films, along with two other Schuster films, *Mama Jack* (2005) and *Panic Mechanic* (1996) account for four of the top ten performing films in South Africa (Screen Africa 2010 n.p). In 2011 the box office share of local films dropped to 4.5% having been at 11% the year before, something that was attributed to "the absence of a Leon Schuster film in 2011" (Loubser 2012 n.p), indicating the impact of Schuster's films.

Schuster's lowbrow films are mostly tonally unvaried, escapist in content and feature exaggerated characters, yet his films draw large audiences. Director-screenwriter Freimond argues that Schuster's success is because he is

"someone who completely understands what he is doing. ...He knows the style that he is working in. He knows the tone that he is working in. He knows the characters are all larger than life. He knows that he is looking for one physical set of gags after another. He is not confused

about what he is doing. That is why he is successful. ... and he's very brilliant at that". (Freimond 2012)

In Freimond's view this raises a problem for other screenwriters and filmmakers, especially of comedies, because "people always compare you to Schuster. ... So there is [a] huge perception out there that we have nothing else to offer (Ibid.).

Yet, there are other South African comedies apart from Schuster's films, some of which are successfully attempting to engage with new content. *Spud* (2010) and *Spud 2: The Madness Continues* (2013) by Donovan Marsh, adapted from the novels by John van de Ruit, were both successful at the box-office. *Spud* (2010) is a coming of age story which tells of John Milton and his experiences at boarding school and at home. Tonally, the film is varied and despite it being an overall optimistic, up-beat and funny film there are several times where the film moves into straight drama. These include the scenes around the death of Gecko, Spud's close friend, the scene where Spud is subjected to humiliating treatment by the other boys and the scene where the alcoholic English teacher, played by John Cleese, sees his wife return. These tonal shifts are created by the screenplay, the directing and the performances and result in a more complex and interesting film. Although the film is set in the early 1990s and the release of Nelson Mandela is referenced along with Spud's growing political awareness in contrast to his parents' more entrenched racist behavior, these are treated in a comic way and as secondary to the real story which is Spud and his personal growth.

Indeed, Freimond's own film *Material* (2012) is another, mostly comic, box-office success which evidences shifts in tone. *Material* looks at the choices and consequences a young Muslim man faces when he follows a career path different to the one desired for him by his father. The protagonist, played by Riaad Moosa, a well-known South African stand-up comic, is also an aspiring stand-up comic in the film. There are several funny scenes where the humor is derived from the dialogue and the recognition of cultural practices, but the father's character, played by Vincent Ebrahim, manages, through his

performance, to tap into the serious elements of the screenplay and bring to life what it feels like to have a son who turns his back on everything a parent wishes for his child. These shifts from comedy to serious drama create a tonally layered film.

Amongst other more nuanced contemporary comedy offerings are two films that deal with inter-racial relationships and friendships, namely *White Wedding* (2009) directed by Jann Turner and *Fanie Fourie's Labolo* (2013) directed by Henk Pretorius. On the one hand the comic treatment of inter-racial relationships suggests that South African screenwriters have been able to move away from exclusively serious studies of race and, several years into democracy, are now able to approach such stories with lightness. However, the relevance given to race in these stories and the expression of inter-racial harmony in the content shows that screenwriters, and through them, audiences, are still invested in stories that depict how South Africa has progressed from its racist past.

White Wedding (2009), which has a storyline of a groom and best man on a road trip to the wedding when they befriend a white British doctor, is tonally quite uneven. Despite the light take on inter-cultural transitions there is an uncomfortable representation of die-hard racism in a brief pub scene which is at odds with the racial harmony and inter-cultural tolerance depicted throughout the rest of the film. This may have been an attempt to create a realistic portrayal of race relations in South Africa but in the context of the surrounding scenes it evidenced a disturbing break from the tone of the film. At another moment the characters stand next to their car and break into a dance routine. The resulting shifts in tone are not completely integrated into the film and suggested to me that nuanced comedies such as these which seek to transcend the slapstick of Schuster may not always be entirely successful. Of the two films mentioned above I found *Fanie Fourie's Lobola* (2013) to be the most interesting tonally with an attempt through the writing, direction and performances to create a genuine depiction of a loving couple in the so-called 'new South Africa', despite the generally comic treatment of the content. The scene where the couple shower together and wash off the face paint they had

worn to a sports match is touching and symbolic of a wish to move past superficial concerns of race. This film manages to navigate the terrain of a mostly comic treatment of what by now many South Africans hope to be a common-place reality, namely inter-racial relationships, and deliver the content in a funny, clever, authentic and touching way. Craig Freimond's *Jozi* (2010) also features an inter-racial love story, among other story lines, and I devote a later chapter to the exploration of content and tone in this film.

The discussion so far has dealt with mainstream films in South Africa, in other words, films that have had a theatrical release in cinemas. However, parallel with such mainstream cinema is a burgeoning growth in micro-budget films. Such films are either released direct to DVD and sold in a variety of formal and informal ways, or commissioned by broadcasters and flighted on one of the several satellite channels now devoted to such content. Micro-budget films are not usually released in cinemas in South Africa.

2.2.1 Micro-budget filmmaking

The South African micro-budget film model is similar to the Nigerian, or 'Nollywood', model of filmmaking. According to Chikwendu (2007:20-21), Nollywood "is not a physical place or location [but is rather]...an ideology of filmmaking; dependent on mobile digital equipment, location shooting and a cost effective production system". The typical budget for a Nollywood film in 2010 was about US \$35 000 (about R280 000), money which is usually raised independently, although more expensive films might have some funding from government or broadcasters (Thomas 2010:6). The films are taken direct to DVD and, with each producer aiming to finish a film in fourteen days and to make twenty to twenty-five films a year, Nollywood is a prolific and profitable local film industry (Thomas 2010). This profitability depends on mass production and economies of scale that are achieved when several films are produced within a short time.

South African films made in the Nollywood style are variously called micro-budget films, Kasi films or Bubblegum films. Bubblegum films are defined by South African industry veteran Howard Thomas as low-budget films that are "soothing [and]...relaxing. ... Stories about what happened last week in the

house next door. ...They are domestic, about human love and conflict, nothing really deep or philosophical” (Thomas 2010:26).

Various programmes have been launched to fund such films including the Mzansi Magic Bubblegum film initiative in 2010 and another by the Economic Development Unit (EDU) at Ethekeweni Metro, Durban, in 2014. The budgets associated with such initiatives are miniscule: the Mzansi Magic programme looked to commission fifty-two, one hour films for R 90 000 each and the EDU programme gave five emerging film makers R100 000 each.

Micro-budget director-screenwriter Andile Buwa believes that, despite the opportunity it has afforded, the Mzansi Magic Bubblegum initiative exploited local talent. Buwa says, “Their commissioning strategy exploits the filmmakers and artists because in [a] practical sense you can’t develop a story, shoot, pay actors and make a profit on a R100 000 budget and lose rights of intellectual property and royalties after two years. I could not subject myself to this kind of exploitation hence I never pursued their briefs in this context” (Buwa 2013).

However, Buwa has managed to make a profit from his films by combining DVD sales with licensing deals where he does not lose the rights to his own work. As a filmmaking entrepreneur he has also contributed to the local economy by creating employment opportunities and through such examples filmmaking can be seen as a socio-economic force and a way of lifting people out of poverty. In a country as beset with poverty as South Africa this is an important contribution socially.

Micro-budget funding initiatives such as those offered by the Durban EDU, look set to continue and are being mirrored in other parts of the country, such as Gauteng. The Gauteng Film Commission (GFC), along with the Gauteng Enterprise propeller (GEP), are in the process of developing a grant scheme for micro-budget films. One of the stated objectives of the GFC is to “cultivate diverse and distinctive local work and actively assist previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs) to participate in the film, television and interactive media production industry” (NFVF2010: 48-49). Thus, the aim is not purely economic

but also to develop local work whilst redressing past imbalances experienced by previously disadvantaged individuals during and after Apartheid where African filmmakers were largely excluded from training and funding opportunities and thus from the film and television industries. A skeptic, however, might see the main aim of micro-budget film funding initiatives as simply a quest for cheap, popular content to fill up airtime, especially as filmmakers working in the micro-budget arena are still excluded from mainstream filmmaking in South Africa because they are unlikely to secure NFVF funding and are nowhere near the R2,5 million qualifying spend required to benefit from the government schemes and rebates. Such films will not have theatrical releases and are usually not selected by established film festivals and thus are still situated as outsiders to traditional mainstream film in South Africa. At present the micro-budget movement exists in parallel to, rather than as part of, the traditional mainstream film industry in South Africa.

Screenwriters working in the South African context cannot ignore the fact that all fields of endeavor, the creative arts included, always have a double agenda: on the one hand the advancement and profitability of the particular enterprise and on the other an attempt to redress the immense fallout associated with the country's Apartheid past. This is a uniquely South African dynamic and one which is very obviously found in the field of micro-budget filmmaking. Critics point to the perceived schism between micro-budget African films and mainstream films, the latter of which usually evidence higher production values (WGSA 2013). In general, and by comparison, micro-budget African films might be considered to be structurally and narratively weak and also to lack both the aesthetic values and the technical expertise evidenced in mainstream films. Comparing American films with African films Thomas comments that we now have a "production value divide that is extreme" (2010:5). High production value is not the same thing as quality, however. In my view quality is associated with innovation in content, tone and form. Attempts by writers and filmmakers to interrogate old ways of doing things and to challenge the status quo, whether of screenwriting or production methods, can provide a valuable contribution to the quest for quality. On one level micro-budget films do challenge the status quo in that they are a growing presence in a film

landscape otherwise dominated by mainstream Hollywood fare and the occasional 'well made' local offering. Their presence asserts that it is possible to do things differently and to make films without some elements that are traditionally considered essential. Critics of micro-budget films may dismiss them in general whilst ignoring the nuances that may exist aesthetically and narratively. Additionally, one might dislike the "cinematic colonialism" inherent in such comparisons. A real problem with some of the scripts, however, is that they fail to interrogate stereotypes and perpetuate myths about gender. This is not the result of small budgets but rather the result of uncontested ideology and absence of critical thinking.

There can be no denying that very small budgets will have a substantial impact on the screenwriter. Storylines are constrained by cost factors: all locations must be close to each other, only locations that are quiet can be used as no automatic dialogue replacement (ADR) will be done, only a small cast of characters can be involved, no night scenes which will involve extra lighting equipment, no period pieces that involve special costumes and sets, no aerial shoots or expensive production equipment and few special effects. Referring to Nollywood films, and I believe the same to be largely true of South African micro-budget screenwriters, Thomas says that "the scriptwriters cannot have any pretense to glory; they are simply part of the machine... They must acknowledge all the constraints that are put upon them" (Thomas 2010: 22). Such constraints and the low remuneration associated with these films is unlikely to attract experienced screenwriters with a desire to push the boundaries of the craft.

Thomas has become involved in micro-budget filmmaking after being involved in the television industry for decades and is currently working on micro-budget films with a group of young people in the townships around Johannesburg. When asked about traditional script writing structure and whether this was employed in the scripts Thomas answered, "No we don't bother. There's no time. You just write the script." (Thomas 2013). Thomas says, "these films are not meant to win Oscars. They are meant to make a fast buck for all in the team, beat the pirates and smack it onto DVD, sell and get on with the next

one” (Ibid.). Regarding the theories of the screenwriting ‘gurus’ Thomas says, “I don’t think they would have any applicability in the context in which I work. ... They are at the level of Hollywood movies for America. We are making township movies for the townships. It’s another world we operate in” (Ibid.).

Thomas’ comments represent the position of the group he works with and, as such, they cannot stand for the views of micro-budget filmmakers in general. What they show is that, in his group, being released from expectations about how to structure a screenplay does not mean that time, care, new content or originality of tone will necessarily factor in this mode of filmmaking, let alone the time, care and multiple drafts that are traditionally associated with scriptwriting.

Micro-budget director-screenwriter Andile Buwa, however, is a graduate of a film/television school and as such has been exposed to theories of script writing, including the Hollywood formula and alternative approaches. Of his approach to screenwriting Buwa says,

I obviously rely on the script writing theory I learnt from school for writing my stories and the three-act structure being part of it. I take it as ...the basic formula to any storytelling. ... as a matter of fact I don't know of any structural approach other than this. I think it has now become more natural to me in my writing process to set up the plot and introduce the main characters and the turning point in the beginning, introduce conflict [and] confrontation in the middle and [the] climax and resolution in the end. ... In my opinion [the] hero's journey is a very predictable narrative pattern ... I totally don't like this pattern, it can [be] limiting at times. ...I try to be [as] unconventional as possible [in my writing] so I may not limit myself only to what I learnt. (Buwa 2013)

These comments reveal that, despite working in the domain of micro-budget films, Buwa considers himself to be a somewhat thoughtful screenwriter-filmmaker. It remains to be seen whether Buwa and others who share his sentiments explore alternative formats, structures, narrative methods, new

content and experiments with tone and whether they interrogate stereotypes and gender myths, or perpetuate them, as they continue writing for micro-budget films.

The possibility exists that micro-budget films might eventually swamp the South African market to such an extent that this popular form of entertainment comes to define South African film. With the imminent arrival of Digital Terrestrial Transmission (DTT) in South Africa we will soon have many more channels available and more airtime to fill and, whilst the number of channels will grow, the size of the audience will not. Smaller audiences mean smaller revenues, which will translate into smaller budgets for production. Thomas sums it up by saying, “South Africans will find it hard. ... There will still be good films, but far fewer. The bulk will now have to be Bubblegum” (2010: 27).

The implications of this for screenwriters are substantial given the ‘anyone can have a go’ attitude to creating micro-budget film scripts. Thomas says, “You have to get into a new mindset. This is no longer indulgent film production – this is a factory, and it has to be a finely tuned factory” (2010: 23). If this is the case, such ‘factory films’ and their associated screenplays would be unlikely to evidence innovation in content and tone, as the sheer volume and speed of production would preclude this. Whilst the world of micro-budget filmmaking has embraced and welcomed the outsider into the previously hallowed domain of the screenwriter and filmmaker – something that could be interpreted as evidence of transformation and an emerging democracy in the industry and South Africa as a whole – the price paid may be that the traditional ‘standards’ and quality we have come to associate with well-made films are sacrificed.

Screenwriters need to be aware that the importance placed on a theatrical release and box office takings as a measure of the success of a film is changing in the face of a static traditional market and a developing micro-budget market that is predominantly television and direct-to-DVD based. Along with these factors is the advent of digital media, which also has significant implications for the screenwriter and filmmaker. South Africa is yet to enjoy the benefits of a truly networked environment where factors such as flexibility and choice become increasingly important. The major impediments to achieving

this are our inadequate broadband facility and regulations (Gillwald 2011). Although both cable and wireless broadband are available in South Africa they are very expensive. ADSL is slow and unsuitable for the streaming of films and WiFi only reaches selected areas. These significant problems of lack of speed, lack of access and high cost stand in the way of the streaming of films and television programmes in South Africa. Without cheap, plentiful broadband available it is unlikely that the Internet and cloud-based facilities which host films, such as Netflix and IndieFlicks, will become available in South Africa and affordable for most South Africans.

Allison Gillwald (2011) writes about the problem in response to negative predictions made by world-renowned academic and activist Manuel Castells about South Africa's inability to technologically modernise and become a network society. Castells made these predictions in 2001 and at the time was fiercely challenged by Gillwald and others, who had hoped that South Africa's emerging democracy would herald a new era of technological development. Sadly, Castells' predictions became true as South Africa slipped down the ranks of various global ICT indices (Ibid.). Gillwald attributes this to 'constrained competition' which leads to high prices, the absence of political leadership and "a decade-long period of policy and regulatory paralysis" (2011 n.p).

Ten years after his first visit, Castells returned to South Africa in 2011 and "concluded that there had been no informational development, or the human development on which is depended" and that "it seemed that, in global comparative terms, there was retardation" (ibid.). The implication of this failure is immense and impacts profoundly on South Africa's ability to progress in almost every way, including the film and television industry.

ICT and broadband have a far greater role to play in South Africa than simply an opportunity for the distribution of films, including local films and micro-budget films. Gillwald notes that "there is increasing evidence of links between broadband penetration and economic growth" (2011). In 2011 broadband penetration was around a mere 5% (Ibid.). Until South Africa becomes a

network society local film distribution will continue in a low-tech way, such as micro-budget filmmakers selling DVDs in bulk to taxi-drivers. The broader South African economy, including the film industry, will miss out on the opportunities afforded by a fully networked society.

Another important area in which South Africa has lagged behind is in the migration to digital broadcasting. The International Television Union has set a deadline of June 17, 2015 for the migration to digital and the shutdown of analogue broadcasting by countries in Region 1, which includes South Africa. With the advent of DTT South Africa will enter the multi-channel environment. However, the post of Minister of Communication has been filled by six different incumbents since the ANC came to power in 1994, each of whom have had their own agendas regarding matters around the introduction of digital television transmission (DTT) and there have been delays in its implementation. The significance of DTT is that it will allow for a multitude of high quality channels to be broadcast as each channel will use fewer units of frequency (Department of Communication 2013:6) resulting in a lot of bandwidth being freed up. Bandwidth in the 8000MHz frequency range is likely to be in high demand because of its ability to be transmitted across very long distances and through solid obstacles (Ibid.), meaning that people in remote, or mountainous regions will be able to receive a signal. These factors will likely result in the introduction of new television channels and new content providers, although much of the bandwidth will be taken by mobile cell phone operators and radio. As already noted, existing audiences will be divided up among more channels and smaller audiences will mean less advertising revenue, which in turns means that broadcasters have less budget available to pay for content. This all translates into screenwriters and filmmakers being required to create the same, or more, for less money. In light of this, the micro-budget film movement may well see a groundswell of interest from broadcasters in this new multi-channel environment. In addition, other approaches to scriptwriting, filmmaking and distribution may emerge and find a place in the changed media market place.

In light of all of this the question we can now ask is whether we will continue to see a film environment that supports a variety of definitions of film: from the medium budget, often formulaic films and the low budget Afrikaans musicals screened in traditional cinemas, to the micro-budget Bubblegum films sold to television broadcasters, printed direct to DVD and screened in private homes. The evidence of stagnating cinema attendance points to the possibility of cinemas dying out or being used for purposes other than the screening of feature films, which leaves us with a film environment consisting mostly of television, DVD hire and direct-to-DVD movies for purchase – at least until South Africa has prolific, cheap broadband and cloud-based options easily available to the broader population.

2.3 Conclusion

South African screenwriters and filmmakers are in an interim phase. There is evidence in contemporary local film offerings that we have started to move away from films that focus on socio-political problems which aim to bring awareness to such issues. Recent films, particularly comedies, show that we want to see ourselves in a different way. Some of these newer comedies are multi-layered and tonally varied and add valuably to the range and definition of South African comedy. Yet, just as these developments in the craft of screenwriting are becoming apparent, the micro-budget film movement has started to take off, with its emphasis on quick turn-around and profitable content production providing an answer to lack of access and lack of funding.

The screenwriter does not operate in a vacuum and thus it is important to be aware of the context and issues impacting the industry in which one operates whilst, at the same time, knowing what it is you are trying to achieve. I want to write a screenplay that is true to my creative sensibilities and is authentic to my experience. I want to develop my craft and write a script that is multi-layered, that presents itself as a comedy but has deeper relevance for those who care to look beyond the surface. I enjoy the tonal variations found in some of the contemporary South African comedies and I aim to explore shifts in tone further in my own work. My screenplay is therefore within the realm of traditional, mainstream film, rather than micro-budget films. I believe it to be

important that writers such as myself question, experiment and extend the craft of screenwriting in South Africa. I have found resonance between the work of director-screenwriter Craig Freimond and myself. I have looked closely at his film *Jozi* (2010) and he has consulted with me on my screenplay *When Granny Went on the Internet* (2013). In the next chapters I will show that content and tone in such work expands the definition of contemporary South African comedy and may point to a new multi-layered, tonally complex genre of comedy emerging.

Chapter 3

Jozi: Content, tone and structure

3.1 Introduction

Craig Freimond is a multi-award winning, Emmy nominated, South African director-screenwriter. When I first saw his comedy *Jozi* (2010) on television I was immediately drawn to its narrative style and tone, its quirky characters and its unpretentious aesthetics. I had never seen a South African film that captured a real sense of the angst of middle class lives in the present day the way that *Jozi* did. I interviewed director-screenwriter Craig Freimond over a number of days in Johannesburg in 2012 in order to gain insight into his film. He says “there are a lot of people like me [yet] I have never seen people like me represented on the screen and I guess that’s part of [what my films are] trying to say. ...there are all these other people in South Africa. ...I really do believe people want to see themselves” (Freimond 2012). I chose to examine both the film and screenplay in depth in order to gain a clearer understanding of its content and tone and to see what I could learn and apply in my own screenwriting practice.

Although *Jozi* is a comedy, it is nonetheless a serious look at a life crisis revolving around the search for meaning, both through having relevant work to do and through finding one’s true love. It is this multi-leveled dimension of the film and screenplay that is intriguing: on the one hand it can be viewed superficially as a light-hearted comedy and, on the other hand, it has profound meaning. It is set amidst the everyday perils of life in Johannesburg – hijackings, crime, families that have become fractured through emigration – and yet its title, *Jozi*, a slang reference to Johannesburg, suggests a deep affection for the city and a feeling that everything will be alright in the end. In a way the film is about a love affair with the city and is based on Freimond’s own life experiences. It depicts a protagonist who falls out of love and then back in love with his situation, both geographically, personally and metaphorically.

3.2 Storyline

James, the white protagonist, is a screenwriter who has lost his mojo. He does not feel funny anymore and sees no point in writing terrible sitcoms for television. He is a drug addict and this leads him to lose his job and his girlfriend, Allison, and land himself in rehab, a horrible place called Diepsloot. He escapes, returns to Jozi and tries to get his life back together. The film charts his attempts to do this and the frustrations he faces when, after he finally lands a writing gig, he has to work on yet another bad sitcom. At the same time he is trying to get over his failed relationship while living in an empty house that his parents, who have now emigrated to Australia, are trying to sell. Martin, the druggie he met in rehab, turns up and complicates James' life when he starts to deal again. In the end James falls in love with a new woman, Brenda, falls back in love with Jozi and is able to see his situation in a different light.

3.3 Tone

Stylistically *Jozi* is a quirky, character-based, lightly satirical comedy, rooted in the real world. There is less of the black comedy that was in evidence in *Gums and Noses* (2004), Freimond's first film. No shootings, no blood - yet it is, nonetheless, a somewhat dark comedy. Crime and violence are established as an all-pervasive backdrop to James' story against which his life and inner conflicts play out. Freimond has managed to pull off quite a feat in creating a screenplay that constantly references the harsh realities of South Africa and yet does not leave one feeling depressed or hopeless. This is partially achieved by the use of absurdist moments in the screenplay, for example the scene where Martin makes a sauna out of black refuse bags in the grounds of James' parents' once palatial, now abandoned, home. However, the main way in which Freimond is able to create an uplifting story despite referencing the dangerous side of life in Johannesburg is through the main character James who, despite all his weaknesses, emerges triumphant over his negative circumstances.

Freimond's understanding of comedy is alluded to in the dialogue between James and Martin in scene 119:

119 **EXT. JAMES'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY** 119

James and Martin sit looking at the view.

MARTIN

You know what the origin of laughter is.

James shakes his head.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Relief at passing danger.

JAMES

Hey?

MARTIN

I read this book once, anthropological study. So in like caveman times. Right.

James looks at him.

You're all in your cave, freaked out because a sabre toothed tiger is walking past. And you're all standing as still as possible. One false move and it chows you and your whole family.

JAMES

Ja.

MARTIN

And you get away with it the tiger passes off and the release of that tension is... ho ho ho.. Ha ha hahaha hahaha ha. Laughter.

(Freimond 2010)

This notion of eluding nearby danger is evident throughout the screenplay. James' world is full of "dangers": from drugs, men who try to date his ex-girlfriend, friends who impose on him, producers who want the impossible, his parents who pressure him, and the constant threat of crime around him. We, along with James, hold our breath as he navigates through these threats and the relief we experience when he survives is evident in our laughter.

The style of *Jozi* differs markedly from the physical comedy and slapstick of the Leon Schuster films that dominate South African comic cinema. It is grounded in terms of characters and situation and, because of this, it can get away with some moments of hyperbole and absurdism. However, for the most part, *Jozi* plays as a straight story. In terms of tone it would be what Freimond calls a 'plus one'. He explains his understanding of tone in comedy by saying "...there is neutral, which is real life or...realism, then there is plus one which is leaning towards the lighter side. Sitcoms will be plus five, but *Jozi* is...plus one...the characters are pushed but we try to keep them rooted" (Freimond 2012).

Tone, as a concept, is difficult to describe, but is closely connected to mood. It is the feeling that the audience gets about a film, both as a whole and moment by moment, and is conveyed in adjectives they might use to describe it, such as 'weird', 'heavy', 'odd', 'strange', 'funny', 'lovely', 'optimistic', 'crazy' and so on. Tone is related to genre, for example the term screwball is used to describe both a genre and tone, but it is more than a genre and is impacted by multiple factors including:

- (1) storyline, where tone can be changed when events divert from a predictable course. The type, combination and order of events that make up the plot also impact tone;
- (2) characters, where unlikely characters are put together, or where a character is at odds with his environment. The depth or superficiality of characters and the exploration, or not, of the character's inner world contribute to tone;
- (3) delivery of dialogue/performance, where performances are not concurrent with meaning in the text, for example straight delivery of funny or shocking lines;
- (4) dialogue itself, where words are used to layer meaning, or to create irony or amusement;
- (5) art direction factors, such as wardrobe and set, which might be surreal, exaggerated or suggest a world with inconsistent rules;
- (6) subtext, which suggests to the audience that there are several, sometimes conflicting layers of meaning below the surface;

(7) pace, which is impacted variously by the writing, the performances, the camera treatment, the editing and the soundtrack.

The tone evident in *Jozi* ranges across a variety of indices. A significant influence on Freimond's use of tone is the television series *The Office* (2005-2013) which he describes as the comedy of "excruciation and failure" (Freimond 2012). The 'no gags' writing coupled with the character-based, fly-on-the-wall comedy and the style of performance that was more dramatic than comedic appealed to Freimond's sense of how comedy should play. Freimond says: "*The Office* was amazing because it is barely even plus one. ...It's the most extraordinary style of comedy because it is tragic, actually. ...It is about a tragic character, totally trapped in his own ...uselessness" (Freimond 2012). This style of comedy has influenced the tone of *Jozi*, the character of James, and the directorial guidance given to actors to elicit a particular type of performance which treads a line between the tragic and the comic.

There are some elements of satire in *Jozi*, or what Dancyger and Rush would describe as "soft satire," because the characters are treated with "gentility, even affection" (2007: 145). Although Freimond's opinion and anger at institutions and situations is discernable, his (the writer-director's) voice is expressed through the character of James, resulting in a traditional narrative approach.

This soft satire is achieved, in part, by using the comic technique of inversion and cutting directly from the positive to the negative and from James' intentions to his actions. The positive-negative flip creates a light irony and is evident when James has finished his screenplay at the end of scene 147 (positive) and this is juxtaposed with the start of scene 148 (negative):

MARTIN
You're back buddy.

JAMES
I'm so back it's unbelievable.

148 INT. THEMBI'S OFFICE - DAY 148

Thembi sits at her desk stoney faced. James looks at her.

THEMBI
I hate it.

JAMES
What. Why?

THEMBI
It's not funny.

(Freimond 2010)

This contrast between intentions and actions is again evident in scene 156 where James is trying to write and Martin phones him to say his car has broken down and he needs a lift. James refuses and the scene ends with him saying, "I need to stay focused". Scene 157 begins with him driving to pick up Martin. This light irony reinforces James' ineffectiveness and weakness when set against a persuasive character.

Similarly, in scene 160, having found Martin at the side of the road, James realizes that Martin has a large quantity of marijuana that he wants to put in the boot of the car. James refuses and the scene ends with the line, "I'm no mule". Scene 161 starts with James driving Martin and, from their expressions, we know that the drugs are indeed in the boot.

This use of inversion to create irony in contrasting James' intentions with reality is implemented once more in scene 189 when Allison visits him at his parents' home and tries to reconcile with him. She says, "...and you don't have anything to do with drugs anymore" to which James replies, "Absolutely not", a line which is followed by Martin along with several refuse bags full of marijuana falling through the ceiling into the room where they are talking, a moment of "plus four" humour.

Along with the above mentioned scene there is another moment in the story where the tone veers towards farce and this is in the sequence which plays from scene 164 – 167 where James and Martin escape the police by running

into a mielie field. The soundtrack at this point is an Afrikaans song and the duo caper through the mielie field accompanied by this music. This is a definite nod to director-screenwriter Leon Schuster, who is well known for farce and slapstick. The fact that the sequence also relied on the character of a traffic officer is further evidence of this as Schuster is notorious for featuring traffic officers who are usually on the receiving end of his pranks. The tone in *Jozi* quickly returns to plus one after this sequence ends.

A further contribution to tone is Freimond's creation of characters in his film who represent the television industry. His disdain is obvious when he chooses to name one character from the industry 'Dick' who is described as "a mediocre television director" in the screenplay. The character of Thembi, the television producer, is an amalgamation of several people that Freimond had worked with in the television industry, ranging from producers to commissioning editors and was based very much on two particular women that he had worked with closely. He describes producer number one as having no boundaries, relating how she would phone him at home at the most inopportune moments. He says of producer number two that "she had this comedy bible. She would say 'read the comedy bible'" (Freimond 2012). This 'bible' had come from "one of the guys who had come from England or America...to tell us how to do comedy" (Ibid.). The character of Thembi personifies the idea that 'overseas is better' and that comedy can be reduced to a formula.

According to Freimond, producer number one was very concerned about trends and also had a very particular idea of comedy, about what it was and was not. The first time Freimond wrote television comedies it was for her, and he recalls that "I had my own idea of what comedy was. I would write this stuff and then she would phone and say 'but it is not funny'. And I would say 'what do you mean?' and she would say 'there are no jokes ... I don't even know where you would put the laugh track. There is nothing specific here that is funny'" (Ibid.). Freimond says he started writing to please her and because he needed the money. He says of producer number one "she is one of the least

funny people you will meet. ... but she had become the custodian of what is funny" (Ibid.).

This central concern of Freimond's, about what is funny and what is not, is played out in *Jozi* as the protagonist James gets commissioned to write a sitcom only to find that the characters he has created have come to life. His battles with Thembi, the producer, mirror quite closely Freimond's real life struggles with sitcom producers. This storyline in *Jozi* and the tone that results from it can be interpreted as a critique of the typical local humor offerings which have been available on television that are so influenced by American writers of traditional sitcoms. Thembi believes that American sitcom writers have credibility and when she discovers that James has written for the American market she decides to give him a second chance despite his earlier drug-induced atrocious behaviour at Freemouth Media. Earlier, in scene 40, when James is in rehab, this reverence for things American is suggested when Martin is impressed that James has written for American television:

40 INT. DASPOORT REHAB CENTRE DORMITORY- DAY40

Martin and James lie in their beds, adjacent to each other. James looks depressed.

MARTIN

What kind of stuff did you write?

JAMES

Uhh, films..

MARTIN

Shit hey, what kind of films?

JAMES

Comedy, mostly.

MARTIN

Local stuff?

JAMES

Uh, no. American

MARTIN

Wooaah, that's serious, how did that..

JAMES
Total fluke.

MARTIN
Anything I might have seen?

JAMES
Uhh, maybe on DVD.

MARTIN
Like what?

JAMES
Uh, well the first one was Windchimes
2.

MARTIN
No.

JAMES
Umm, Dwayne and Eddie go to Minnesota.

MARTIN
Don't think so. I never really had a DVD
player.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
And these films were funny?

JAMES
They thought so.

MARTIN
What did you think?

JAMES
I thought of the money.

(Freimond 2010)

Freimond is pointing out the tendency of South Africans to have reverence for what is foreign and the fact that writers might choose to compromise because they need to earn a living. This is what Freimond says about the scene:

CF: ...what we were trying to say is that he is also that guy who has written basically shit stuff. And if he has written anything it's been stuff for America, but it has been bad and he's no good because he is not connected to his world.

CB: This is how you have created an empathetic character because he is so self-aware that he knows what he has written is crap and he will actually tell you that. And there is something quite attractive about a person who is not self-deprecating but self-aware. And then this part where James says 'I thought of the money'. Is that how you felt when you were doing the sitcom scripts that got you so depressed?

CF: Ya, it's always about the money I guess.

(Freimond 2012)

In *Jozi* the producer Thembi holds up her star writer, Jules (who is later discovered to have plagiarised 1980s American sitcoms), as an example of a 'good' writer. James battles to write the script and in the following scene the sitcom characters come to life. Waylon, Nadine, Johan and Vusi, one white, one Indian, one black and one coloured (supposedly representing the 'new' South Africa), tell James his script is not working:

149 **INT. SITCOM SET - DAY** 149

The sitcom characters speak to James.

WAYLON

We're not going to say it.

NADINE

I'll say it, we told you so.

JOHAN

If there's one thing we know, it's funny.

VUSI

We don't know anything else.

JOHAN

There's a formula to these things.

VUSI

Don't rock the boat man.

WAYLON

Sail with the wind buddy.

VUSI

Have you read any of Jules' scripts?
Jules is great.

NADINE
Jules is a God!

JOHAN
He is hot. Setup, setup, punch!

WAYLON
He works according to the American standard
of 13 laughs a minute.

JAMES
There's a standard?

WAYLON
A very high standard!

JAMES
Fine, fine, fine. You want formula I'll
give it to you.

WAYLON
That's my man.

JOHAN
Give it to us.

(Freimond 2010)

After the second series of the sitcom on which he worked and which received poor reviews, Freimond says, "It was a real low point in my life. ...[and] then I realised ... if you don't agree with that's what comedy is, then go and write your own comedy" (Freimond 2012). *Gums and Noses*, the play (2001) was the end result. Freimond and Robbie Thorpe, his creative collaborator, were both influenced by the improvisational comedy of *The Office* and by *Seinfeld*. Freimond's television series *Sorted* (2005 – 2007) as well as his films *Gums and Noses* (2004) and *Jozi* (2010) reflect Freimond's true comedic sensibilities.

Freimond acknowledges that he and Thorpe are preoccupied with what is funny and what is not funny. He says this is "really quite an intellectual preoccupation about our craft that I sometimes thought didn't really belong in the film [*Jozi*]" (2012). I would agree with this because I found that both the drug addict/rehab storyline and the sitcom-characters-coming-to-life storyline

are somewhat at odds with each other and the rest of the themes in *Jozi* and could have been turned into separate films of their own. The inclusion of this content contributed to a certain tonal unevenness and lack of cohesion in the film.

Freimond is aware of this and says “the problem with *Jozi* for me is there is just too much in it. There [are] too many story lines, there is too many things, there is the electric fence, then there is this sitcom character, then there’s Martin, then there is the drugs, then there is the rehab. So it lost a central [focus]” (Freimond 2012). This highlights for me that disparate content and storylines may lead to a lack of integration between the various elements in a screenplay and may act as a fracturing force on tone. The challenge for the screenwriter who wishes to utilise varying content is to ensure that the screenplay works tonally, moment by moment *and* as a whole, and that the screenplay is integrated and cohesive, despite, or even because of, such variation.

3.4 Content

“Content” is the term I use to account for the substance of a film and includes subject matter, storyline, events in the plot, characters, themes, setting and the questions the film is posing to the audience. Content is not discrete from tone and the two elements combine to create the total experience of the film. The content of *Jozi* struck me as fresh and compelling and I was interested in how it was derived. To this end I asked Freimond about the inspiration for writing *Jozi*. The following section describes the major influences that lead to the writing of *Jozi* and the construction of its content.

3.4.1 Setting

Freimond had lived in Johannesburg and always loved the city but there was a point where he felt he wanted to escape his life and the city because “nothing [was] funny anymore” (Freimond 2012). This was likely triggered by a defining experience he underwent when the child of his domestic worker died during the time that he was writing sitcoms and he was asked to photograph the deceased baby. Freimond says:

“I remember this very clearly. I was in the middle of writing a sitcom. I think it was a very profound thing that happened to me there. ...On the day of the funeral, in Soweto... I go with her to go to the mortuary, open the little coffin, take out by now the very grey baby and take pictures of her and the baby, go to the funeral and come back and continue writing my sitcom. ... I think it was the genesis for this idea of what happens to a comedy writer when they lose their sense of humour”.

(Freimond 2012)

After this event Freimond felt he wanted to leave South Africa. He had travelled a lot prior to this and finally his travels took him to New Zealand. He says, “I think I had gone as far as I could possibly go. And I actually thought about New Zealand ‘I could live here’. And something changed there. I think maybe because I felt like I had found a place where I could live, it relaxed me” (Freimond 2012). The town of Nelson reminded him of Knysna, where his wife was from, and it occurred to him that maybe they did not need to emigrate and instead could move to Knysna. Knowing that he had options that were less drastic than emigration helped Freimond and he came back to South Africa and says, “I found Joburg again” (Freimond 2012). *Jози* charts this emotional journey of falling out of love with the city and then back in love with it. It is a search for home and belonging and parallels Freimond’s own life experience in this regard. I believe this to be an important thematic line in contemporary South African film and one which surfaces in my own screenplay.

In South Africa it is not uncommon for white middle-class people to question whether they should stay or leave the country. In *Jози* this is reflected through the storyline that sees James’ parents living in Australia. They are always phoning him, telling him how great things are in Australia and trying to get him to leave South Africa. No doubt many members of the audience would identify with these conversations or, if not identify with them, understand them as a familiar South African trope. Freimond based the characters of the parents on the experiences of an actor friend of his whose parents had moved to Dallas and who would phone every time there were problems in South Africa. Freimond relates that “they would say ‘what are you doing, what do you need to

see happen before you understand that this is finished there. It is perfect here; there is no problem here. We leave our doors open, what are you doing?' And it drove him mad" (Freimond 2012).

Freimond expresses a desire to be reconciled with where he is and what he is and says that this is what the film explores. He says,

"For me ultimately the movie [is] about being at peace with where you are. [I am at peace with where I am but] I also find South Africa oppressive sometimes you know. Just with its issues. I find the race issue f..... exhausting. I sometimes want to go and live somewhere where it's not an issue. ...If there is such a place ... that doesn't have the baggage. I find it crippling. But in terms of that thing [the defining incident of being asked to photograph the deceased baby] what I was dealing with [wanting to leave the country] I definitely made peace with it. ... I am also a closet Buddhist and very into those teachings about living in the moment and present and stillness and all those things. And for me that is what the movie is about. Be where you are and it's an interesting thing for me about white South Africans they always want to be somewhere else ... or it's better there as opposed to saying 'I am here'. ... So for me that was what the movie was about. And the whole thing about the writing and the sitcom was a metaphor of a falseness, of trying to create this false world, but that's not who we are".

(Freimond 2012)

I have found parallels between my own writing and Freimond's on the above point: Granny's story, like James', is centrally about the fight to fit in, for a place to belong. Granny already has her physical home and does not want to relinquish it, but her adult son believes she is too old to live alone and that she would be better off elsewhere. My screenplay shows the struggle Granny goes through to hold on to her home and to prove to others that this is where she belongs, just as Freimond's protagonist James goes through dilemmas about where he fits in and where home should be. On a symbolic level home is not merely a physical place, but a space where one rightfully belongs and feels safe. Granny's advancing age, along with her growing expertise with new

media, adds another dimension to the question of where she fits in and where she belongs and those closest to her are unable to allow her a space in this new territory. The parallel themes I see in Freimond's work and my own, of searching for home, re-defining home and claiming home, leads me to believe that such thematic content may resonate with a broader South African audience and may be a significant element of content in contemporary South African films.

Freimond says that the inspiration for most of the events in the plot derived from things that have happened to himself or his friends. This has resulted in a plot filled with a host of recognizable moments for a South African audience. For example, the scene where James is burgled and has to go to pick up the policemen in his own car because they don't have a vehicle available is something that happened to Freimond himself. He says "as it was happening I [thought] 'I have to put this in a movie because no one would believe this'. ... [I] drove them to my house. They got out, they went in, they walked around and then there was this fantastic moment where they sort of stood around and went 'we got to get back now'" (Ibid.). Content like this highlights the sometimes surreal nature of life in South Africa where crime, the breakdown of systems, and daily life flow together. It contributes to the tone of the film by layering a serious event with an absurdist mood.

The scene where James can't concentrate on his writing because of the ticking of the electric fence is taken directly from Freimond's experience with his neighbor who put up an electric fence without first consulting with him. He says, "I have got a hatred of electric fences. For me it is the line in the sand. If I have to live behind an electric fence I must go" (Freimond 2012). This is translated into scene 126 and 127 below:

126 INT. JAMES'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY 126
James walks towards the house. He looks at the sidewall and sees the creeper has been hacked off. He looks up and sees a brand new electric fence on the wall. He turns and walks to the neighbour's gate and rings the buzzer.

MARK

So, what's up boet?

JAMES

Uhh. What's up Mark, is that thing on top of my wall.

MARK

What thing?

JAMES

Uh, the fence with 200 volts of electricity passing through it.

MARK

The electric fence?

JAMES

Yes, the electric fence.

MARK

Sorry I'm not with you.

JAMES

Surely, there's some etiquette to just mentioning to your neighbour that you will be hacking off their creeper and erecting a deadly weapon on their wall.

MARK

Hell, I thought you'd be pleased.

JAMES

I'm not pleased Mark. My mother grew that creeper for 25 years.

MARK

It's my wall too bud. You must have heard about the crime in the area. I've got a right to protect my family.

JAMES

Does it have to be with an electric fence? I hate electric fences.

MARK

Hey, we all need defense boet. Some

creatures run fast, some have got good camouflage. The porcupine has got the quills. We have the electric fence.

JAMES
Well I don't like it.

MARK
Well, I don't care!

(Freimond 2010)

The presence of crime and poverty is threaded throughout the content of the film, from scenes such as the above to background visual references, for example newspaper placards with headlines about crime that adorn the lamp posts as James drives around the city as seen in the following scene which takes place near the beginning of the film:

2 EXT. JOBURG STREETS BEGINNING - MORNING 2

...Sunday newspaper headlines shout at him, misery, doom and gloom. He hasn't slept for days. When he stops at robots he's assailed with merchandise.

(Freimond 2010)

In the film, as opposed to the script, the above scene does not emphasise the headlines of newspaper posters as much as it emphasizes the onslaught of street salesmen on James waiting in his car at robots. When he arrives at his destination, Freemouth Media, James, who at this point is amped up on drugs, rages against crime and its impact on the comic writer in what I consider to be a brilliantly written polemic:

10 INT. DICK'S OFFICE - DAY 10

JAMES
Who can be funny in this town Dick? Who? Who can be funny in Jo-fucking-hannesburg. Who Dick? You tell me. It's impossible. Every time I drive my car I have to look at these horrible newspaper billboards. Crime, crime, and more crime. In my face. Heeeeegh. Horror, horror, horror. If I switch on the radio same thing. Doom, gloom, pessimism, corruption, destruction,

and that's not to mention the absolutely appalling radio advertising, sometimes it's so bad it almost makes me crash my car. And while I'm driving this gauntlet of everyday madness, trying to stay alive, not get raped, hijacked, robbed, smashed and grabbed, ab-fucking-ducted, while I'm doing this, people are trying to sell me things; refuse bags, hangars, baskets, table cloths, maps of the world, huge inflatable animals, feather dusters, feather dusters, endless bloody feather dusters? There are a lot of things I need in my life Dick but a feather duster is not one of them. You tell me, you tell me how it's possible to be funny in this town Dick?

(Freimond 2010)

The joke about the quality of radio advertising thrown into the middle of James' rage against crime and the stress of life in Johannesburg is a good example of how Freimond has managed to make serious content funny and how he has avoided allowing the tone to slide towards the somber. The pervasive feather duster salesman mentioned in James' speech above have been used by Freimond as a symbol of both poverty and daily annoyance. Freimond says, "They are 'beggars with props'. They represent ... poverty and irritation. ... So the feather duster guy was just for me a metaphor of that poverty. Just like the guys at the robots. ... It is like a robot tax. Every time you stop at the robot you must pay the tax" (Freimond 2012). This is a very different take on poverty in South Africa compared to, for example, Darrell Roodt's *Faith's Corner* (2005) and speaks to the multi-layered comic tone that Freimond has chosen to work with.

Freimond has layered the use of the symbolic figure of the feather duster salesman and develops it so that by Act 3 the negative has become a positive. In a scene between Brenda (his love interest) and James on a balcony Freimond endeavors to show, through Brenda, that the feather duster salesman is a thing of beauty when seen from a different perspective. This speaks to Freimond's world view and his Buddhist leanings:

BRENDA

You got to look deeper James.
Everything's there, I promise you,
everything and more, you're just
not seeing it.

He looks and looks and looks. Things take shape in front of him. The elevated position gives him a slightly different perspective. He looks at the city, he sees a young girl running, she runs into the arms of the feather duster guy, he picks her up. This is a meeting place for many feather duster guys because they all return to a central point, laughing, swapping stories about the day. From above the feather dusters create a beautiful pattern which looks like a flower. It opens beautifully. Just as soon as James notices it, the pattern breaks up. James watches commuters climbing into taxis, people living their lives, laughter. A beautiful montage of a crazy, complex city.

(Freimond 2010)

In the film Brenda's dialogue above is replaced with, "I just think you should be getting more into it, not further away from it", followed by the top view of the feather duster salesman. This is more subtle and less 'on the nose' than the original lines. Freimond says:

"That took a helluva lot of working out [the logistics of shooting the scene]. It is just a metaphor about you can look at something as an irritation or you can look at it as something of beauty. ... So for me thematically that was just about what [Brenda] says at the end. You shouldn't be getting further away from it, you should be getting further into it. That's the problem ...you are standing outside of it. And if you start getting into it you might find there is a lot more here going on in terms of comedy and in terms of just life".(Freimond 2012)

Freimond's comment relates once again to the theme of home, fitting in and finding a place to belong. He is trying to show, through the character of Brenda that everything you want and need is where you are. In the end it is a vote for South Africa.

The elevated physical position is a motif in the film and is symbolic of an

attitudinal position and underscores the ultimately hopeful tone of the film. Brenda is the one who is able to see things in a different, more positive way and it is she who is often seen in an elevated position, looking out over the city. When James first meets her she is smoking a cigarette on the balcony of the ad agency and the last time we see her in the film she is once again on a balcony overlooking the city. I asked Freimond if he was conscious of this visual metaphor when he wrote and shot the film and I include our conversation here:

CF: I guess it was conscious. I can't really remember. I know that for the end scene obviously James had to be elevated because of the feather dusters [that he was looking at from above] but I think there was slightly more to it than that. That there is something about it being an actual change of perspective, like there is a guy who is trying to change his perspective.

CB: Exactly. So it is the mental perspective and not the actual physical aspect only.

CF: Ya, ya, I think we were aware of that. ...Ya, it is actually a good point because they also sit up on the hill overlooking the city and that other scene.

(Freimond 2012)

It is quite possible that Freimond was working intuitively and that what seemed 'right' for the shot served to visually amplify character development and storyline. Still referring to the elevated perspective he also said:

CF: It was the only way we can get her (Brenda) into the shot.

CB: But she was always seen overlooking the city.

CF: That's true.

CB: You are doing that intuitively.

CF: Ya.

(Freimond 2012)

There is, however, a reference in scene 131 to a woman smoking a cigarette on a balcony looking 'heroic':

BRENDA

My father was crazy about cricket. I don't actually smoke. I just used to see this woman every morning on my way to work, standing outside on this balcony having a smoke. She always looked so, I dunno, heroic. So I thought I would give it a try.

(Freimond 2010)

Freimond fine-tuned the dialogue in order to create realistic verbal interactions. One of the scenes with Brenda expounding her point of view in dialogue was cut for being too obvious:

CB: When James asks Brenda how she makes it work, she says 'I just pretend it is always the beginning, like we are in love. Everything is there I promise you. Everything and more. You are just not seeing it'.

CF: ... No we cut that scene out. That was a very tough scene ... because it is a bit on the nose. ... A bit obvious.

(Freimond 2012)

Less obvious dialogue and more visual exposition helped to refine the point being made by Brenda's character, the contrast between her and James and what James stood to gain by seeing things her way. Brenda's position, both physical and personal, articulates tone in the film and provides the end point towards which James progresses in his personal journey.

3.4.2 Characters

Inspiration for the characters in *Jozi* derived from Freimond's own life and persona. His believable characters struggle with everyday problems and it is the characters, the performance of them on screen and the resulting tone, which draws me to Freimond's work. The protagonist, James, is an alter-ego of Freimond: a writer who opposes the values of the industry he chooses to serve, who compromises his artistic integrity to earn a living; a South African who is plagued with doubts about his future in his homeland, who has a love-

hate relationship with his city. These are the central issues that James faces. Yet, at the outset of the film it is James' drug habit, which introduces him to the audience: he is on a quest to buy drugs, even if it means interrupting his dealer during a church service. Freimond found it difficult to make his protagonist sympathetic and believes public perception of drug addicts is very negative. He says:

“We set up an unsympathetic character ... I think that people are very judgemental about drugs and people who take drugs. ... I worked quite hard with Karl [the actor who played James] and with everybody to try and make sure that we got to see that he is a nice guy. Not a nasty guy. ... But I think there are a lot of people that go [here is a] story about a druggy and in a way it is dismissive. ... I know so many people who have had issues with drugs. ... For me its like everyman has an issue with drugs. From people I know to people from all walks of life”.

(Freimond 2012)

Despite Freimond's concerns that James is established as unsympathetic I found him to be an interesting and attractive character. Even though it is established at the beginning that he has stolen his girlfriend's television set to trade for drugs he does not read as a bad person. In fact, the audience feels sympathy for him: he has been rejected by his girlfriend, there is a new man who has usurped him, he feels everyone has ganged up against him to send him off to rehab and then, once he gets there, the place is horrible and he has a difficult time. He is an everyman dealing with easily identifiable stresses of life, although in an exaggerated, compressed way. We expect the contraction and intensification of events because we understand that we are watching a film. Despite the comic treatment of the story James is presented as vulnerable, especially when he arrives at rehab. This is an endearing quality and one that draws the audience in and begins to build our empathy. Realism and empathy become tonal elements in this example and help layer the experience of the film.

I asked Freimond about the role of drugs in his own life and he spoke with candour, saying:

“I do have a way of using it [dope/weed] for my work that I feel gives me a bit more scope because I can work if I am a bit stoned in a very different way to when I am not. ... [I'm] just less inhibited. ... For me it's an upper. I get energised by it and I get particularly creative. ... although it is about cocaine in *Gums and Noses* [his previous film]. Actually I once worked on cocaine and it was useful because I had to go through the night and I do remember having some of those experiences... I remember sitting going f.....this is unbelievable. ... I just had so much energy and it wasn't that it was necessarily helping my ideas but it woke me up. ... I found a fantastic [quote] 'write drunk, edit sober'. I think it was Hemingway. ... Even if I write under any other influences its only part of the process. ... I find if you are quite clear about what your idea is and what you are trying to do it is a bit of an unlocker. So I don't drink much. ... Drinking just puts me to sleep”.

(Freimond 2012)

There is no 'message' within the drug storyline and James does not undergo major character growth and development as a result of quitting drugs. He dislikes rehab and desperately wants to leave, not because he has come to terms with his drug problem or has any insight into it but because rehab is a difficult place to be. His initial weakness is his cocaine addiction and after his bout in rehab he appears to have fully recovered. He never battles with temptation or finds it hard to resist drugs: Martin, his friend from rehab, smokes drugs in front of him and Jules, a sitcom writer, offers him cocaine at the launch party, yet he is never tempted. What was a huge problem in his life seems to have completely disappeared and thus I found the treatment of James' drug problem to be unrealistic. I asked Freimond about this aspect of the character:

CB: James has this drug problem and goes to rehab. He comes out, he lives with the guy who is making drugs and selling them and taking

them. He feels no temptation. He goes to this party where he is offered drugs. Again he feels no temptation. He never refers to wanting drugs. He never apparently battles with them. That is pretty unrealistic for somebody who has had a drug problem.

CF: Ya, guilty as charged. I think that is a result of (us wanting) to let go of the drug thing [storyline]. Once it was over [we did not want to be] hanging on to this drug thing. But it was unrealistic. ...I think there probably was in the original script a little bit more suggestion that it was a battle. ...I like to base a lot of stuff in reality. Whether one is able to keep that reality consistent once you enter the story world, is another question.

(Freimond 2012)

Freimond's response illustrates the difficulty he sometimes faced in integrating the diverse elements of the storyline into a cohesive and consistent whole. This challenge of introducing a storyline and then resolving it realistically is something I faced in my own screenwriting.

James, the protagonist, is surrounded by several secondary characters who are based on people in Freimond's life. The character of Martin was based on a friend of his producer, Robbie Thorpe, and was amalgamated with "a very particular friend of mine who is a goofball [and] used to get very goofed and then make things ... he would have made a sauna with black plastic bags" (Freimond 2012). This inspired a scene in the film where Martin has done exactly that and he and James emerge from the make-shift sauna naked, just in time to run into an estate agent who is busy showing his parents' empty house to a client. This is a Schuster-esque moment of physical humour that adds diversity to the tone of the film and creates an up-beat lightness.

Despite the generally realistic portrayal of characters there is one unrealistic stereotypical character - the neighbour who fixes cars from home. Sporting a broad South African accent and small running shorts this character does not ring true for the upmarket neighbourhood where James' parents' house is located. Freimond muses that it was probably the casting that inspired the

character: once the part was cast, the look, costume and delivery of dialogue evolved from there. This highlights that casting is a factor which can affect the tone of a film. Several well-known South African actors were cast in *Jozi* and the possibility exists that such actors' performances will be seen through the lens of their past performances, whether they were in feature films, on television or in commercials. Such associations would enhance or disrupt the desired tone of the present performance.

Freimond has created contrasting female characters and the women in James' life are represented by his two love interests: Brenda and Allison. Allison is calculating, looking out for own interests and wanting to leave Jozi; Brenda, on the other hand, wants to stay in Jozi and seems to be warm and genuine. There is a shift in James, a sense that he is moving on from his relationship with Allison and her negative relationship with the city, to Brenda and her positive relationship with the city. It is this personal shift that we witness rather than substantial growth and change in the protagonist, as is the norm in many Hollywood films. Brenda is presented as strong and wise and the suggestion that James and she have a future together imbues him with some of her positive qualities.

The biggest action James takes is to decide to quit his job as a sitcom writer but this significant decision is tempered by the fact that Thembi, the producer, fires him before he can resign. There is no major learning experience that leads to growth and development in the protagonist. The shift is more subtle, incremental and internal, for example being able to be present in the moment and see things from a different perspective. On the other hand, one could argue that the incremental internal shifts ultimately led to significant choices in James' life, namely the choice to stay in South Africa. This is not a hero's journey in the sense of physical action, but rather a journey inwards towards a different perspective. This is an articulation of character that affects the tone of the film and makes it a thoughtful and complex offering.

Whereas James is clearly the protagonist, the antagonist in *Jozi* is probably best seen as the city of Johannesburg itself. The crime and irritations that

surround and impinge on James are the 'actions' of the city as it impedes his progress through life. Johannesburg is a formidable opponent and almost succeeds in crushing James, but in the end he is victorious. In this way James' journey is heroic, but not in the traditional, or narrow sense envisaged by Joseph Campbell (1968) or Christopher Vogler (1999). James is not a conquering hero returning to his community to share some hard-won prize or reward. Surviving the physical and emotional onslaught of the city is what makes James a hero. Not giving up on his life or career despite the setbacks makes him a heroic everyman. The change in perspective he is able to effect is his personal, hard-won reward for having endured the hardships of the city and being able to open his mind to alternative points of view.

As with the Campbell and Vogler models, *Jozi* exhibits the archetypes of helpers, hinderers and a mentor. The hinderers are Allison, Carl, James' parents, Thembi and, at times, Martin, although the latter is both helper and hinderer. The city itself and the television industry are positioned as major hinderers. The sitcom characters try to help James but in fact they hinder him. The helpers are far out-numbered and there is only one true helper: Brenda. She is both helper and mentor in that she guides James towards a different perspective and teaches him how to understand things in a way that had not been possible before he met her. Without this relationship James would not survive the onslaught of the hinderers. This exaggeration of opposing forces is a characteristic of the comedy genre but in *Jozi* it is not presented as overstatement but as proof that James' life is indeed difficult.

3.4.3 Thematics

The themes that are apparent in *Jozi* can be interpreted as sets of oppositions between James and an outside force. They are: James versus his addiction; James versus Joburg; Joburg versus Australia; James versus his ex-girlfriend Allison and James versus the sitcom script/ the television industry. James versus his addiction is really about James not wanting to live a conventional life. He wants to escape the pressures of conformity and not follow the rules of society. James versus Johannesburg is about James not liking where he is in

his life, both geographically and personally. The city represents constant frustrations and irritations as evidenced in this scene description:

97 **EXT. JOBURG TRAFFIC LOOKING FOR JOB - DAY** 97
James drives through Johannesburg, trying to keep his spirits up. He notices the gauntlet of bad news billboards, he tries to avert his eyes but they assault his eyes. 5 CASH IN TRANSIT HEISTS, CRIME FIGURES UP 25%, ANOTHER MALL ROBBERY, BULLETS FLY IN CITY CENTRE. He's assailed by beggars, Homeless Talk sellers and feather duster salesmen. He pulls off from the robot and sees more depressing newspaper boards. He stops at another robot, he waves away people selling plastic bags, fizzy drinks, inflatable toys. A guy tries to sell him a feather duster. The guy holds it up, he shakes his head again.

(Freimond 2010)

Despite the negatives and irritations he sees around him James is conflicted about how he feels about Johannesburg. Here in scenes 83-86, having escaped rehab, he is clearly happy to back in the city and not just because he has left the wretched institution behind:

83 **INT. PANTECHNIKON - DAY** 83
As they come over a rise, they see the Joburg skyline. James breathes deeply, mixed feelings at the sight.

JAMES

There she is.

85 **EXT. JAMES'S POV ON A GREAT JHB CITY VIEW-DAY**85
Joburg looks like a sparkling emerald.

86 **INT. PANTECHNIKON - DAY** 86
James sits at a stop street looks at his town with a kind of fondness.

JAMES

I have to say it feels kind of good to be back.

(Freimond 2010)

His conflicting feelings are eloquently expressed to Brenda later in scene 132:

132 **EXT. HIGHWAY WITH BRENDA - DAY** 132

James and Brenda whizz along the M1 past the city.

JAMES

I dunno sometimes I feel like I am in this dysfunctional relationship with this city. Sometimes I love. Sometimes I hate her.

BRENDA

How you feeling about her at the moment?

JAMES

Not good. We're actually thinking about breaking up.

BRENDA

No.

JAMES

Ja, maybe it's just been too long.

BRENDA

Hey, long term relationships need a lot of work. Don't you read women's magazines?

JAMES

No.

BRENDA

You should!

(Freimond 2010)

The discussion about the city continues in scene 137:

137 **EXT. TOP STAR DRIVE IN - NIGHT** 137

James car is parked looking at the city. The lights twinkle.

BRENDA

How can you want to break up with that? She's gorgeous.

JAMES

She wears a lot of make up at night. You should see her first thing in the morning.

BRENDA

I do and I still love her, does that make me bisexual?

They admire the city.

JAMES

I think it makes you a metro-sexual.

She smiles.

BRENDA

What's with all the Jobo pessimism Dude?

JAMES

I dunno. Stuff just gets me down.

BRENDA

Stuff like what?

JAMES

Crime. Litter. Taxis. Aggression. Bad advertising. Winging white people. Bouncers. Vendors. Feather duster salesman. Politicians. Greed. Stupidity. Racists. The obsession with race. Potholes. Poverty. Traffic jams. Power cuts. I just want to live in a place where someone doesn't want to kill me. Is that wrong?

BRENDA

Doesn't matter where you live these days someone's always trying to kill you.

James shrugs.

(Freimond 2010)

Johannesburg is the target for a combination of conflicting feelings that James experiences about his life, including his love life and his work situation. He does not like that he is a writer who is constantly compelled to 'sell out' to trends, rules and ideas about what is 'good' and which contrast completely with his own sentiments and values. These feelings are layered on top of his feelings about the city.

James versus Australia reflects the voice of others, in this case the parents, who are trying to tell James what to do with his life. They are the supposed

voice of reason and experience, but James wants to reject their advice, and does. The following dialogue from scene 93 is a phone conversation between James in Johannesburg and his parents, Dudley and Maureen, in Australia:

93 **EXT. JAMES' S PARENTS' HOUSE GARDEN - DAY**

DUDLEY

Tell him we're trying to wrap things up there before the whole place goes up in smoke!

MAUREEN

Why don't you just come here James. The news from South Africa is all terrible. Terrible.

JAMES

I've got things I want to do here Ma.

DUDLEY

Tell him Sydney was voted the most livable city in the world. In the world.

MAUREEN

We're here, your brothers are here. There's a business.

There is a knock at the door.

JAMES

Someone's at the door. I must go.

MAUREEN

Don't just open it, could be anyone.

JAMES

We'll speak later. Bye Ma.

DUDLEY

Tell him we don't even lock our doors!
(Freimond 2010)

This dialogue interchange will resonate strongly with the audience of the film, especially the 'whites who have stayed', who would have likely heard many such warnings and ominous forebodings before.

The voice of the parents is counter-balanced by others, particularly Brenda, but also Martin, James' friend from rehab who arrives unexpectedly and moves into James' parents' empty house with him. This interchange reflects James' feelings of abandonment:

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I don't understand why your parents would want to sell this place...It's beautiful.

JAMES

They're never coming back. They think the country is going to explode. I'm like this poor soldier who got left behind in the D zone.

(Freimond 2010)

Later, in scene 129, Martin is able to be in the moment and appreciate what Joburg has to offer. He watches the sunset, breathes deeply and says:

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You have got to love the climate in Johannesburg. It's world class. Let's go for a walk.

(Freimond 2010)

On the other hand, the voice of the parents is reinforced in scene 121 by Allison, James' ex-girlfriend, with whom he is trying to reconcile while she is becoming involved with Carl. Understandably, this creates a level of emotional conflict for James:

JAMES

Are you telling me you seriously think there's some future in this relationship?

ALLISON

Ja. I do. Carl's thinking of emigrating to Australia. Maybe I'll go with him.

JAMES

You, oooh, I'm feeling nauseous, you want to go to Australia, with Carl. Why?

ALLISON

I feel like the writing's on the wall here.

JAMES

Have you been talking to my father?

ALLISON

No but I'm also starting to think that it's time to move on.

(Freimond 2010)

Allison is referring to moving on from both the country and her relationship with James. Her interest in Australia confuses James because; although he still loves Allison (he thinks) he cannot love anybody who abandons South Africa. Ultimately, James gives up on Allison as she gives up on South Africa.

James versus Allison, his ex-girlfriend, shows how James, despite loving Allison, is actually very different to her. He is much more authentic than she. James is aghast when he realizes that she is involved with Carl as he is his polar opposite. This choice shows another, more conservative, side to Allison. Later, Allison again discusses wanting to go to live in Australia and she perks up when she thinks that James has enough qualifying points to emigrate, because Carl does not. We start to believe that Allison is quite superficial and selfish.

Allison is contrasted with Brenda, who eventually becomes James' love interest. Just as South Africa and Australia are contrasted, so are Brenda and Allison. Brenda is black and Allison is white, and the inter-racial love story of James and Brenda is based on the progressive racial realities that Freimond witnessed around him in Johannesburg. In the character descriptions Brenda is described as a Zulu praise singer and fire thrower which, combined with her occupation in an ad agency, is a way of melding traditional and current depictions of race. Race differences between Brenda and Allison are a way of externalizing the character differences between the two. Brenda is someone who has a different perspective of the city, and life, to Allison and to James. Eventually James is able to see things as Brenda sees them.

James versus the sitcom script/television industry is initiated early in Act 1 when a James high on drugs goes to see Dick, disparagingly described as "a

mediocre television producer” at Freemouth Media, for feedback on his script. When the producer tells him that the Americans think his script is not funny he throws the producer’s laptop out of the window.

Soon after this scene James faces an intervention and finally agrees to go to rehab. Sober in rehab he reveals his true feelings and confesses to the therapist in scene 45:

JAMES

Dick was right. The Americans were right doc, the script wasn't funny, it wasn't funny at all and the terrible part is, I think that deep down I knew it.

(Freimond 2010)

After his stint in rehab James finds himself in a situation where he is desperate for work. He swallows his pride and, against his better judgement, goes back to Freemouth Media and takes a job writing for the sitcom Jozi Jives. In scene 102 he meets the new producer Thembi, a superficial, exuberant show business character:

THEMBI

What do you say? Say yes, say yes!

JAMES

I don't really know the show.

THEMBI

Sis wena. Don't you have a TV? It's hysterical. It's award winning, the AR's are through the roof! It's the number one show in the country. What more can I say?

JAMES

I'd like to give it a try.

THEMBI

Yay. I'll give you one episode to start, if you crack it, sky's the limit. Take some of these scripts, they're by our best writer, Jules, the man's a genius. So excited. Must take this call. Bye.

(Freimond 2010)

Once again, James finds himself in a situation where he has to sell out creatively. He has no inspiration to write the sitcom script and the characters come to life around him, making the writing process even more difficult. The sitcom characters – Waylon, Nadine, Johan and Vusi - personify James' self-doubt and give voice to his inner world:

112 **INT. SITCOM SET - DAY** 112

WAYLON

Hey! What are you doing my man.

NADINE

You need to focus James.

JOHAN

Ignore the phone. Ignore the phone.

VUSI

This guy is a has been.

WAYLON

A golf ball's funnier than him.

(Freimond 2010)

The pressure that television comedy writers experience is conveyed in the interaction between James and the producer, Thembi, in scene 113 and 115:

113 **INT. THEMBI'S HOME GYM - DAY** 113

Thembi walks on a treadmill while she talks to him.

THEMBI

Just phoning to see how you getting on. We're all so excited that you're on board. YAAY!

JAMES

Me too.

THEMBI

Sooo, how is the script going?

JAMES

Uh good. Very good. 5 pages in.

114 **INT. SITCOM SET - DAY** 114
The sitcom characters are appalled.

JOHAN
He's a bullshit artist!

NADINE
He hasn't written a line.

VUSI
He hasn't written a word!

WAYLON
He doesn't have one joke.

JOHAN
He is a joke.

VUSI
Hey, that's not bad.

JOHAN
Thanks.

115 **INT. JAMES'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY** 115
James and Thembi on the phone.

THEMBI
Great. Well, go, go, go! Did you read
Jules's scripts?

JAMES
Uhh, ja, amazing.

THEMBI
He's a genius! Must go, Remember the
three f's. Fast, funny, finished.

She laughs and goes. James looks back at his laptop hopelessly. Martin ambles through in a towel.

(Freimond 2010)

Dialogue such as "go, go,go!" and "fast,funny and finished" create a rhythm and pace that emphasises the pressure under which the writer is placed. This use of language to imply pressure is repeated in scene 130:

THEMBI
How are those scripts coming? Time
marches on darumm, darumm, darumm!
(Freimond 2010)

Other dialogue points up the stark reality of the penalties that television writers face:

JAMES
Could I invoice for work done?

THEMBI
There is no work done. When the
episode is accepted you invoice. Up
until then, sorry for you. Plus you
missed the deadline this morning
which means a thousand rand penalty.
(Freimond 2010)

Later on James talks about his script to Martin over the phone:

JAMES
No, no, no Martin. You don't understand.
It's a page one rewrite and I'm nearly
there. If it's not in on time I get more
penalties. Soon I'll have to pay them for
writing the script.
(Freimond 2010)

The totally unrealistic, silly world of the sitcom that James is forced to create meets the real dangerous world of Johannesburg when the characters come to life and ride around the city with him. Freimond manages to combine references to crime, race and the Apartheid past in some cleverly written dialogue:

179 **INT. JAMES'S CAR - DAY** 179
James drives around Joburg with the sitcom characters
in the car. They watch the world go past them with
big eyes. They read the headlines. James is freaked
out.

WAYLON
Man, the news on these billboards is bad.

JOHAN

I don't get this crime thing. Why don't the police just catch everyone and put them in jail?

JAMES

It's not that simple. The police force had to be transformed, they're short staffed, plus during apartheid, the police were the enemy, and...

WAYLON

What's apartheid?

JAMES

You've got to be joking?

Waylon looks at him. He is not joking.

JAMES (CONT'D)

God, uhh, well, in the old days, uhh black and white people were kept separate and black people...

VUSI

How do you mean black people?

JAMES

Well black, like you're black.

VUSI

I'm black?

(Freimond 2010)

Later, when James is hijacked, the sitcom characters materialize in the boot of the car into which James has been forced:

195 INT. BMW BOOT - DAY 195

James looks perplexed inside the boot. The four sitcom characters are packed around him. They whisper.

WAYLON

James.

JAMES

Ja.

WAYLON
Is this a hijack?

JAMES
It's kind of a mixture between a hijack, a burglary and a sort of hostage thing.

NADINE
Is this like a real Joburg experience?

JAMES
Pretty much, ja.

(Freimond 2010)

The last two extracts are good examples of the style and tone of the screenplay, in which serious subject matter is treated with humour and irony. Weighty subjects are not dismissed but are cushioned by comedy and use of tone. In this way important issues, such as crime and violence in South Africa find a place in the script in a manner that does not alienate the audience but still speaks to the South African situation. A more serious treatment would run the risk of losing the audience by being too close to the bone.

3.5 Structure

Structure embodies both content and tone and in a screenplay can be understood as the organising framework which holds the story together. Much like rhythm in music, or the skeleton in the human body, or the steel girders in a building, it is the 'thing' which gives form to content. In a screenplay the most basic form of structure involves a beginning, a middle and an end, but structure is never these three parts alone. Structure serves as the environment in which narrative devices and content are embedded: rising action, plot points, surprise, reversal and recognition, among other elements. It allows for the story to be told, character to be revealed and plot to be understood by the audience. If used effectively, structure allows the audience to experience the story in the way intended by the writer. Dancyger and Rush explain that "structure is a pattern designed to focus the questions we want the viewer to ask as the story unfolds" (2007:315). This is not to say that the viewer is consciously asking questions whilst engaged in the act of viewing a film, but

rather that the parts of the film fit together, much like a pattern of questions and answers. Structure is thus a powerful, external and internal organising force that functions not only to order but to reassure and comfort the audience.

Despite *Jozi* being a quirky and off-beat comedy, the structure appears to be the traditional, three-act Hollywood formula, played out over one-hundred-and-fifteen pages of screenplay. This is quite interesting to me because it suggests that the form (ie the structure) can be traditional, whilst the content (i.e. the type of comedy found in the storyline) need not be.

Freimond says he consciously tried to apply formula three-act structure. He says “I don’t like to be slavish about it but I do understand it as a concept and the concept is that audiences want to feel like we are moving forward”. However, he has some criticisms of the use of formula structure and believes that:

“It’s been over taught like it’s the answer to your problems. ...and that means you are going to have a great film. And it becomes the dominant thing. ...I would happily take none of that if you just gave me something I want to watch. If all you’re doing is aping American films, then I don’t care. What’s the content of the films? Then you can worry about the structure”.

(Freimond 2012)

Freimond’s focus was thus more on the content than the form of *Jozi* and he says it “was much more about me and Robbie Thorpe trying to express ourselves about what was going on at the time, what was going on in my life and trying to comment on some things that were happening around us”. Freimond has read theories of structure quite extensively and believes that structure:

“needs to be taught in a context of ‘this is a thing that might be helpful to you’. Not ‘if you follow this you can write a screenplay’, which I think Field did, it started with him. When I first read McKee I remember thinking f.... this is a breath of fresh air because he is much more contextual. He talks about Campbell but he talks about it much more contextually... whereas Field was how to write a screenplay: a hundred

a twenty pages, thirty, sixty, thirty. ...he's the one who started all that shit".

(Freimond 2012).

Freimond believes he has become much more aware of structure since *Jozi* and says *Jozi* was much more "hodge-podge" than his next film *Material* (2012). He refers to the script editor of *Jozi*, Justine Loots, "pushing this line, it used to drive Robbie [Thorpe] mad whereas I always found it quite helpful. She was a bit of a structuralist. She was often asking those questions. I think we were not thinking about it so much at all [at that time]" (Freimond 2012).

In attempting to understand Freimond's work I have completed a structural analysis of the film, beginning with a breakdown of the Acts and narrative beats. A breakdown of the beats is included as Appendix 2. The screenplay breaks down into the following Acts:

Act 1: pages 1 – 34 (33 and one eighth pages, ending after scene 89, at the top of page 34. Approximately 33 minutes)

Act 2: pages 34 – 89 (starting one eighth of the way down page 34, at scene 90, and ending at the top of page 89, after scene 168. Approximately 55 minutes)

Act 3: pages 89 – 115 (starting near the top of page 89 at scene 169. Approximately 25 minutes)

These Act durations, based on one page of screenplay approximating with one minute of screen time, line up closely with formula structure, where Act 1 and Act 3 are each a quarter of the total duration, and Act 2 is half the total duration. However, there was some debate between Freimond and myself about where Act 1 ended.

3.5.1 Act 1 (page 1 – 29 or 34) (scene 1 – 86 or 89)

The Hollywood formula suggests that each act must accomplish specific tasks: Act 1 is the set up. We are introduced to the protagonist and his world is established. The protagonist then either wants or needs something, according

to Field (2003) and McKee (1999), or is called to do something, according to Vogler (1999). If called, the calling is usually heroic in nature in that it does not serve selfish ends but is for the betterment of the larger community. The calling is usually rejected because it is difficult to accomplish, but is repeated in a stronger form and finally accepted by the hero, often reluctantly (according to Vogler). Alternatively, if he wants/needs something, as opposed to being called to do something, then a problem is established which demonstrates that it will not be easy for him to get what he wants/needs.

The protagonist in *Jozi* is not a hero who embarks on a mission or journey to save his tribe or community. Even though James is asked to do something (go to rehab) and he initially refuses and then finally accepts, this is not the Hero's Journey envisaged by Vogler. Rather, James wants something, but he does not know what he wants. Act 1 introduces us to James in this confused state. Usually, in Hollywood films, the want/need is specific and often observable, and therefore filmable but for James it is more a feeling of disquiet and dissatisfaction, which translates into drug abuse and career self-sabotage. The film charts his journey inwards as he defines for himself what he wants and does not want.

When I interviewed Freimond I was surprised that he remembered the end of Act 1 being very late, around page 45. When I explained my interpretation, that Act 1 ended with the resolution of the drug storyline and James' return to Johannesburg on page 29 he argued that Act 1 ended after James goes to see Allison and finds out that Carl is now her boyfriend. This would take the end of Act 1 to the top of page 34. Freimond says it was an "enormous struggle" to get Act 1 to end early enough. We debated the structure:

CF: I would argue that that's the last scene of Act 1 [where James goes to Allison's house and gets rejected by her]. I suppose this is where it becomes debatable. For me [James'] whole thing has been about getting back to Alison. And then he goes back and he realises that it's not happening. For me that is the point that propels you into Act 2. [He] doesn't have a place to stay, doesn't have a girlfriend.

CB: You could see that as the end of Act 1. But also there's his relationship with Jozi. He has come back to Johannesburg after rehab and as they go over the rise we see the billboard for Jozi Jives that foreshadows his work on the sitcom and then there's James' comment about how nice it is to be back.

CF: Yes. That is a very interesting point.

(Freimond 2012)

When I went back to the film and watched it again I found myself agreeing with Freimond after all. Scenes 85 and 86 had been cut along with James' dialogue about it feeling good to be back. The return to Johannesburg is de-emphasised and flows into the next sequence, which is when James goes to visit Allison and discovers that Carl is now her boyfriend. This places the end of Act 1 at the end of scene 89, or the very top of page 34 and the additional plot points would be: James visits Allison and begs to be taken back (p 30); he realizes Carl is her new boyfriend (p 31); he gets sent away (p 33/34).

3.5.2 Act 2 (page 29 or 34 – 89) (scene 87 or 90 – 168)

Act 2 typically functions to develop the storyline and usually proceeds with a series of complications and obstacles that stand between the protagonist and what he wants (McKee 1999; Field 2003). Robert Berman (1988) defines these as a series of 'conflict' and 'confrontation' dynamics, of which there may be several sets in a screenplay. The 'conflict dynamics' are a trifecta consisting of goal-conflict-disaster followed by the 'transition dynamics' of reaction-dilemma-decision. Each decision leads to a new goal and thus the conflict and confrontation dynamics continue through to the end of the story.

Act 2 of *Jozi* fits with the above formula in that it does develop storylines through conflict and obstacles to the protagonist's goals. James wants to get back with Allison, his old girlfriend, but Carl is in the way; he meets Brenda and there is a spark between them suggesting the potential for romance; Martin arrives from rehab and starts taking and dealing drugs raising the question of whether James will fall back into his drug habit; he manages to get more writing work but hates what he is doing and has no inspiration; his mother

keeps phoning him from Australia and wants him to leave South Africa and Johannesburg continues to make his life difficult – he has nowhere permanent to stay, he is surrounded by bad news and an electric fence and he is harassed by street sellers and burglars.

In analyzing the screenplay (rather than the film) I believed that Act 2 and Act 3 both start with James going to Alison's house and that Act 2 and Act 3 both end with James going to Brenda's house. This linking device of returning to the women in James' life, used almost like capital letters and full stops at the beginning and ends of Acts, was not something of which Freimond was aware. However, in the film (as apposed to the screenplay) it plays differently as some scenes have been deleted: Act 1 ends with him leaving Allison's house, as was Freimond's assertion, and Act 2 starts with him in his parents' empty house. This amplifies the theme of searching for home and a place to belong.

3.5.3 Act 3 (page 89 – 115) (scene 169 – 211)

Typically, Act 3 is the finishing off of the story. As comedies tend towards integration all loose ends are tied up and the story is resolved, usually happily. No new characters or storylines are introduced in Act 3. *Jozi* appears to have a traditional third act in that the above points are adhered to and it moves along and has pace.

In Act 3 James confronts and fights with Carl, he has his laptop containing his sitcom script stolen, he quits his job, he seriously considers leaving Jozi when Brenda helps him see his situation in a different way and Allison wants to reconcile but Martin ruins everything by falling through the ceiling with all his dried marijuana at the critical point. James does not seem to mind that Allison has left and to confirm this he is seen smiling. This all turns around when he gets hijacked immediately thereafter. He is dumped near a freeway, befriended by the feather duster salesman, but looks happy as he returns to Jozi and Brenda.

We have the sense that James has finished with his searching and is ready to settle down, drug-free, and start a new life. He is inspired to write again and

there is the possibility of Brenda being his new love interest. In this way *Jozi* finishes in a somewhat open-ended way: the storyline with Brenda is not entirely resolved, but rather suggests and hints at a love relationship developing.

Act 3 both starts with James going to Allison's house and ends with him going to Brenda's house. This visually suggests that he has moved on, he is over Allison, he has chosen a better partner and the future will be different to the past. Allison represents wanting to leave Johannesburg and move to Australia, Brenda represents staying and being happy where you are. By choosing Brenda James is saying that he chooses to stay but in staying he will be 'in a different place' because his attitude is different.

3.5.4 The ending

Freimond remembers that the fact that James and Brenda did not kiss in the final scene often received a reaction from the audience. He says:

"People went mad about that. Particularly black people. ...It always came up. Why didn't they kiss? Well I am not a big fan of the kiss in films myself. ... It was something that I only knew when we were shooting the scene, ... it didn't feel natural that they would kiss. It felt natural that they would hug. ...I just didn't feel it. So I didn't shoot it, but a lot of people said they should have kissed. Black woman particularly. Why didn't he kiss her? I was like, why didn't he kiss her? ...because the director is squeamish".

(Freimond 2012)

In the film itself (rather than the screenplay) there were several false endings. I asked Freimond about this:

CB: I felt that the ending was difficult. Did you?

CF: There is the ending in the taxi and then there is the ending of all the postscripts. ... So the real ending of the movie is he is sitting with clothes that are not his own in the Indian taxi laughing. That's the ending.

(Freimond 2012)

In fact, this is not the ending to the script. After the taxi scene James goes to Brenda's house, he walks down a road strewn with Jacaranda blossoms and the final scenes are a postscript that show what has happened to all the other characters, accompanied by explanatory, comical narration. There is also a dance featuring all members of the cast. I mentioned this to Freimond and he said:

“...endings are so f.....hard. ... I like it because it's a motif, the Jacarandas, there are a few mentions of it through the movie ...at the one point [James says] 'what would I miss if I left? I would miss walking on Jacaranda blossoms. So for me it was a symbol of him being at peace ... and the beauty of the city that he lives in and he was at peace with it and I just like it as a poetic little moment at the end there. ... But the truth is that we didn't know how to end the film. It is quite evident because the fact that I still remember the end of the film being him sitting laughing in the taxi. That is the end of the film. Because the whole thing is about he can't laugh, he can't appreciate where he is”.

(Freimond 2012)

Elsewhere in the interview Freimond says there were five endings to the film. I asked him about this:

CB: What are the other five endings that you are referring to?

CF: [James in the taxi] ...Then he goes to Brenda, so that could be another ending. And then we do the postscript. And the dance which was a satirical version of the end of *Slumdog Millionaire*. So there are four endings.

(Freimond 2012)

It is obvious that the ending was a challenge for Freimond and I believe it was not the strongest aspect of the screenplay and the film. A stronger ending might have been an open-ended one where we see James in the taxi heading back to Johannesburg after his hijacking, conveying the feeling that he is continuing his battle against everything the city can throw at him. The taxi

scene is an up-beat one, so the feeling conveyed would have been one of optimism, hope and resilience, although this would not have resolved the romantic storyline with Brenda, which may have been problematic. Freimond agrees that the taxi scene would have made a better ending:

CB: That would have been a better ending.

CF: It is the right ending.

CB: So why did you feel you had to have him going to Brenda's flat?

CF:... I don't know. It was some sort of sense of closure but in fact ...thinking about it now it should have ended in the bloody taxi. ... Does it really not end in the taxi? It doesn't, but it should have.

(Freimond 2012)

Nonetheless the ending in the film is positive and creates an upbeat, hopeful tone. From the outset we know that James has a love/hate relationship with Jozi. By the end of the film we feel that he will stay in Jozi and there is hope that he may be able to start to deal with the tensions of Jozi life in a different way. The positive feel is emphasised by the shots of Jozi streets covered in Jacaranda flowers, which earlier James had revealed he loved. The ending feels optimistic because he has gone to Brenda's flat and we feel hope that he may start a relationship with her. The final description of action encapsulates this positive feeling in an open-ended way:

202 **EXT. LAVENDER STREET - DAY** 202

A Joburg street has been carpeted by Jacaranda leaves. The street is flanked by purple Jacaranda trees on either side. James walks away along the carpet of leaves, away, away as the music plays. Fade to black.

(Freimond 2010)

I find it interesting that Freimond has chosen to use conventional structure in *Jozi*, considering the content and tone with which he has engaged. The protagonist is disillusioned and demoralized and this could have led to Freimond moving beyond traditional three-act structure to illustrate this point.

In the view of Dancyger and Rush if the writer wants to find “a way to respond to the arbitrariness and indifference of the contemporary world (they) have to look elsewhere”, beyond the restorative three-act structure (2007:37). It could be argued that mainstream structure engages with the audience whereas alternative structure engages with form and, if not used effectively, may actually alienate the audience. In the case of *Jozi* the use of traditional structure has succeeded in keeping the focus on the content and tone of the story. It is an illustration that challenging content can be effectively combined with traditional structure and that traditional structure can serve to moderate the tone of the film and contain it.

3.6 Conclusion and Implications for my screenwriting

For the purposes of my research the discussion with Craig Freimond along with the analysis of his screenplay has been highly beneficial. It has confirmed a number of things for me about content, tone and structure:

- (1) Good content comes out of deeply felt personal experiences and inner conflicts. In addition, the events that shape the plot do not need to be large scale but instead can be small and intimate: “internal” conflict can equate with action and plot. This is something that I have had to remind myself of in my own writing as I found I tended to reach for more obvious ‘events’ to form the plot.
- (2) Good comedy, for me, is off-beat and tonally complex. This kind of comedy comes out of straight situations and straight dialogue, not overtly funny situations and dialogue. I have worked on this aspect in my writing and tried to edit out the deliberate attempts at comedy and ‘tone down’ the screenplay so that it is more of a ‘plus one’ than a ‘plus four’. However, there is, simultaneously, room for moments of tonal variation, especially if the writer wants to create a script that is tonally complex.
- (3) The technique of inversion creates comedic irony and is a useful ingredient in keeping pace going and pace, in turn, contributes to building tone. Each comedic inversion functions as a wake-up nudge to the audience and thereby contributes to pace. My central character

embodies an inversion of expectation for the audience but I have also tried to use inversion in tone and played with a range of tones in my screenplay.

- (4) Schuster's slapstick comedy is a dominating presence in South African film. Deliberately or otherwise, both Freimond and my scripts briefly reference Schuster: Freimond's in the chase through the mieliefields and the falling through the ceiling and mine when the guests enter Granny's house for the pizza party. These are physical, somewhat slapstick sequences that are tonally at odds with much of the surrounding screenplay but, in each instance, seem to work nonetheless. Such moments can contribute to tonal variation and need not set the tone for the film as a whole. In both Freimond's writing and my own these Schusteresque moments are perhaps an unconscious attempt to reach out to South African audiences.
- (5) Formula structure can be employed in screenplays that are tonally complex such as Freimond's. The traditional structures espoused by Field and McKee can quite happily serve to order the material of the screenplay without seeming at odds with attempts to experiment with tone, as is the case in my screenplay.
- (6) The writer needs numerous plot points to keep the action going and to create pace, as is evidenced in the breakdown of the beats in Freimond's screenplay (see Appendix 2). In a comedy there is a sense that the plot points are even more frequent than in a serious story.
- (7) Character types such as the helper, hinderer and mentor are useful in a screenplay and their presence contributes to the content of the screenplay. There is evidence of all of these types in both my and Freimond's work.
- (8) Sometimes the writer is working intuitively and thematic links and illustrations may emerge almost unconsciously in the writing, as was the case with Freimond's use of the elevated position in relation to the character of Brenda. When the writer is invested in the characters and story such moments may arrive spontaneously rather through the deliberate implementation of screenwriting craft.

(9) Although tone emerges organically through the writing and often follows and grows out of content, it can be manipulated through the variety of factors described above. Variable tone serves to layer meaning in the film and add complexity.

Having the opportunity to interview Freimond about the process he employed when writing *Jozi* (2010) has afforded me an excellent opportunity to engage with my key questions regarding how content is sourced and tone is manipulated in a screenplay. I have benefitted from this engagement and have used many of the findings in my own screenwriting. For example, through my consultations with Freimond I have come to realise that in my writing I am pulled towards the overtly comedic and that this was impacting on tone. Freimond's advice was to avoid writing with the *intention* of writing a comedy, to resist the pull towards the comedic, to focus on believability and to build a strong foundation first. The comedy will then arrive unbidden (hopefully). As a result of this advice I edited the screenplay, looking for and deleting several parts that were overtly comic where the tone was more of a 'plus five'. I did not want to excise all obviously comic sections but, rather, I wanted to ensure that the comedy was properly rooted in reality and that the tone developed organically from the content and that it encompassed a range over the duration of the screenplay. In the following chapters I present an in-depth reflection and account of the content and tone in my screenplay as well as the process I experienced in writing the script.

Chapter 4

When Granny Went on the Internet: **Tone, content, structure and process**

4.1 Introduction

When Granny went on the Internet is an original, feature-length comedy aimed at a family audience. Freimond acted as a script consultant on this work and as such his role was to read the screenplay and offer feedback and advice. In this chapter I discuss the content, tone and structure of the screenplay and account for the role that Freimond played in shaping the screenplay.

4.2 Storyline

The story revolves around Granny who, at 75 years of age and after the unexpected death of her husband, suddenly finds herself alone and unable to operate any 21st century technology. She strives to maintain her independence and remain in her little house, despite pressure from her eldest son, Aaron, to move to a retirement home. To prove that she can cope on her own she learns how to go on the Internet. Granny's growing confidence leads her into dangerous waters on the Internet, where her lack of experience gets her into trouble and she accidentally moves a satellite. Military Intelligence become involved and track down the 'Satellite Sleuth' - none other than Granny - and arrest her. Family and friends rally round and muster all their resources to get Granny out of jail. Finally she is a free woman once more. Despite her misadventures Granny survives and even thrives, becoming competent enough to teach other old people how to use the Internet, thus challenging the stereotype that it is only the young who are the repositories of new media expertise. Her life looks positive and her children must accept that, despite a few mistakes along the way, she can cope on her own. At the end she emerges victorious from the confines and expectations of her role as the 'Granny' in society. Thus, a major attribute of the storyline is that it offers a challenge to stereotypes about age and gender.

Much has been written about women and technology and I found Wosk's work *Women and the Machine* (2001) to be a very useful history and elucidation of the link between technology, patriarchy and sexism. Wosk shows how technology has historically been aligned with gender, a point which Siapera reinforces when he asserts that technology is gendered and that it is masculine (2012: 181). Wajcmann agrees with Siapera and adds to the argument, saying that technology is made by and for men (2010: 143 - 152). An argument against Wajcmann's view is that it implies that notions of gender are static over time. Siapera, on the other hand, accurately describes both technology and gender as "moving targets, involved in a fluid relationship in which they co-constitute each other", along with other influencing elements (2012: 181-182). If technology has historically been perceived as gendered and masculine, then I sense that new media such as the Internet provides the opportunity for such an alignment to be re-imagined. Granny's story accounts for one such re-imagining.

4.3 Tone

The issue of tone is fundamentally important in a film and, more than anything else, what I am trying to do in this screenplay is to experiment with tone in order to create a story that, despite its use of a formulaic structure, is complex, fresh and contains a thought-provoking sub-text. I 'flip', or invert, the tone and in parts I follow the upbeat and comic with the downbeat and serious. Other parts are absurd and still others are screwball. The risk of this creative experiment with tone is that the end result can appear uneven or confusing to the audience. I trust that the story and characters are strong enough that the subtle shifts in tone serve to deepen the audience's engagement with the film, which is my intention.

In my interviews with Freimond we discussed the question of tone and the comedy genre in general. Although I admire Freimond's work and am influenced by him, I do not concur with all of his opinions. Freimond is very influenced by the work of Woody Allen and television shows such as *Seinfeld* (1989-1998) and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000), the latter of which has an

explicit 'no jokes' policy. Whilst I appreciate these shows I enjoy a broader range within the comedy genre. Nonetheless, Freimond and I were 'on the same page' often enough to make my choice of him as a consultant on my screenplay a valid one. Our comic sensibilities aligned in other areas; for example, we were both drawn by the use of off-beat tone in *Napolean Dynamite* (Arteta 2004) and by the characters and inter-generational relationships in *Little Miss Sunshine* (Tucker 2006).

The idea of flipping tone and moving between different forms of comedy is something I aimed to investigate through my screenwriting. Such tone flipping mirrors the flip in roles that can often happen when one parent dies and adult children suddenly discover that they are now the 'grown ups' in the family. I flipped the tone early in the script: the first three and three quarter pages of the screenplay, covering the introduction of Granny and Granddad, packing for the cruise and Granny's dream, are upbeat and comic but towards the end of page four Granny realizes Granddad is dead and the tone flips to straight and serious. At this point the audience will be forced to engage with the film and will wonder what is going on, not in the storyline, because that is clear, but with what 'type' of movie they are watching. The initial tone sets up the audience to think they are watching one kind of film but after this scene they will doubt their initial assessment. They will be paying attention.

Another example of tone flipping early in my screenplay is where Granny drives to the shopping mall and has an accident. At first the tone is up beat and victorious: she is out on a big adventure and has got her way over her sons who did not want her to drive. The tone is also comic: her indicator lights are flashing all the while she is driving but she is blissfully unaware of this. An imminent shift in tone is signaled by the whining of her hearing aid. Her efforts to adjust her hearing aid are not funny but are instead actions that will illicit recognition and empathy from old people in the audience. The accident that follows marks a complete change in tone: things are now serious once again.

I had to work on the tone throughout the screenplay in order to achieve what I was after and I am not totally satisfied with the result as, technically, it is

difficult to achieve flips in tone within an integrated, flowing storyline. After Granny realizes Granddad is dead I had put in a cut to the exterior of the house with the sound of Granny screaming over it. Freimond felt this was a cliché and that it upset the tone. I saw his point and deleted the scene. He recognized the pathos and the buy-in for Granny and appreciated the charged dramatic moment of Granddad's death. He advised me to make more of this and so I built it out to be much longer, including the phone call to her son and the scene with the undertaker. Whereas initially I had moved directly from Granddad's death to the wake I ended up creating many more scenes to show Granny's reaction to Granddad's death. These included her dialing the wrong number when she tries to contact her son to tell him of his father's death, and watching the undertakers try to use a gurney that does not work properly. In the context of Granddad's death these moments are darkly comic.

The dream sequences, of which there are three in the screenplay, are an indicator of tone and also act to change the tone from the surrounding scenes. Freimond was ambivalent about whether they were helping the story but did concede that the dream sequences take the audience up before they go down, which he related to McKee's idea of the 'positive charge' and 'negative charge' between which a scene should always be moving. The break from reality achieved through the dream sequences contrasted with the tone that had been created in the surrounding scenes and as such they served to modify, rather than flip, the tone.

Some examples of tone would only be discerned by someone reading the screenplay, but not by the audience watching the film. This included the names I had initially given to my characters and some of the stage directions. For example, I had called characters Man in Black (the detectives), The Pretty Nurse (Sindi) and Nurse Ratchett Type (the woman at one of the retirement homes). This created a tone which was off the mark. Freimond pointed out that such names suggested stereotypes rather than real people. I agreed with his observation and so I changed this in the screenplay. Another example of misjudged tone was in the stage directions in the scene of Granny's accident

where I had referred to her 'wiping out' four pedestrians and a small Dachshund. I changed this to "a car crashes into her. It is quite a big accident". The more we discussed tone the more I was seeing Freimond's point that the screenwriter of a comedy should not "reach for the funny" (2012). This ultimately resulted in me refining and editing scenes, dialogue and stage directions to more accurately reflect the tone I was after. His advice was to rewrite the scenes and "keep it straight as hell" (2012). I could see that he did not respond to the tone I had initially created and, because I admire Freimond's work, I was persuaded by his point of view. I came to agree with him that "reality is your best friend when you are writing. Don't let it go too easily" (2012).

It was only later, however, after reflection, that I came to the conclusion that I did not want the tone of the screenplay to be pitched at one level all the way through, that my initial idea of flipping the tone as I had done in the first few pages of the script was something that I wanted to experiment with in other parts of the screenplay as well. I wanted to flip tone both within and between scenes. For example, in Act two Granny attends Max's concert which unfolds as a scene which contains variable tone: Granny realises that she really is responsible for moving the satellite which creates a serious tone, but at the same time she is noticing the spectacle of Max's costume with its flashing lights, which is a humorous and up-beat image. Later that night she goes online to try to fix her mistake. The rest of the family arrive and gather round trying to help. This is a serious scene but when Jack enters the family raises questions about whether he is Granny's 'boyfriend', and the resulting awkwardness shifts the tone again. Granny's anger and desperation to sort out the problem with the satellite pulls the tone back to serious once again. Granny also swears in this scene, which is shocking to the family but amusing to the audience. The scene ends when the two detectives burst into the house, Granny is arrested and Max starts to cry bringing the tone right down again.

In Act 2 I tried a more hyperbolic, or exaggerated, take on real situations when Granny, Aaron and Max visit a variety of retirement homes. In one scene I wrote the following:

INT.RETIREMENT COMPLEX 2 - DAY

The Sweet Old Lady leads the group down the corridor. She opens a door with a flourish.

SWEET OLD LADY

This is our lounge.

She has opened the door to the toilet and reveals a wizened old man having his butt wiped by a nurse. The group look horrified.

SWEET OLD LADY

My mistake! Let me show you the games room.

They follow her to the next door, which she opens.

SWEET OLD LADY

This is the games room.

The door opens to reveal a steamy, pre-historic looking kitchen, presided over by busy men, women and children. It looks like a sweatshop.

SWEET OLD LADY (CONT.D)

No...no, that's not it. My mistake! Let me show you the bedrooms.

Freimond found this scene “a bit arc”, a term he uses to imply exaggeration.

He did not relate to the lack of subtlety and said:

“This is now in an absurd style ... you’ve got quite a wacky sense of humour. That’s mad, that’s a mad style. It’s eccentric, it is beyond eccentric, it’s crazy. ...I don’t understand it. So I can’t like it”.

(Freimond 2012).

However, he also added, “It can work, there are films like this ... screwball comedy that’s what it is. ... it’s actually quite an interesting genre” (2012).

I, for my part, like the fact that the kitchen looks like a sweatshop. It *is* absurd, but, in my view, so is the entire concept of retirement homes. That old people should be persuaded to live in designated parts of the community simply because they have reached a certain age is absurd. My representation of retirement homes reflects my opinion about them. By flipping tone throughout

the screenplay I wanted to create a world where anything can happen. You can open a door and there is a kitchen that looks like a sweatshop.

I am attracted by the comic/absurd/screwball treatment of otherwise serious subject matter and, as with the above scene, I occasionally venture into this realm in my screenplay. The themes of aloneness in old age and not fitting into the mainstream of society are otherwise too real and depressing to treat in a serious way. Granny's situation is uncomfortable. I wanted to create a tone that not only illustrates this discomfort but ultimately allows the audience to see her story from a new perspective. At moments I wanted poignancy under the laughter, things the audience could recognize as coming from real life, things that are funny and sad at the same time. The scene where the young undertakers with spikey hair arrive to take Granddad's body on equipment that does not work properly is an example of this. That his precious body should be entrusted to them is sad. A result of the manipulation of tone in this scene will be that the audience will experience conflicting emotions: amusement at the comic ineptitude of the undertakers along with pathos and empathy for Granny's grief.

Another indicator of tone is to be found in some of the props and costumes. For example, the metaphor of Granddad's dentures represents the absence of his physical body. Several scenes show Granny alone in her bed, staring at the dentures which sit in a glass of water on the bedside table. There is something about dentures which can be found to be funny, but there is nothing about Granny's aloneness following the death of her husband which is similarly amusing. The use of this prop in the context of Granny's grief following her husband's death creates an edgy tone where the audience will be left with conflicting responses: smiling at the visuals of the dentures but empathising with Granny's awful aloneness at the same time. Similarly, Granny's costumes often provide a counter-point to the action. Her wardrobe is what would be considered inappropriate for her age— too bright, too decorative, too 'young'. So, even when the audience sympathise with her as she grieves at the wake for her husband, they will also smile at her choice of clothing, a combination

which will evoke contrasting emotions in the audience. Thus, even at the level of props and costumes tone can be manipulated and layered.

The big challenge when experimenting with tone, as I have done, is to keep credibility. I found that the credibility was in the small steps the characters took, for example when Granny does not know what to do with Granddad's packed suitcase after he dies and decides to wash all his clothes. There is humanity in the small steps. Once I started taking bigger steps, for example having Granny accidentally move a satellite, I risked losing the pathos derived from focusing on the human condition, of having real characters in the real world. It became a challenging balancing act to experiment with subtle shifts in tone whilst preserving credibility and fostering empathy and recognition and I'm not convinced that I have entirely succeeded with this because it is technically so difficult to do.

Ultimately, the tone of the screenplay revealed itself as I wrote it. I had the idea for flipping the tone before I started writing but how, when and to what extent I did it only came about as I wrote. When I read what I had written the tone would be apparent. I could then assess it in the context of the surrounding scenes and decide to stay with it, adjust it, or change it completely. The tone that first emerged was the starting point for exploring where I could let it take me.

One of the initial things that I had hoped to achieve was that this script could function as a form of advocacy for old people to be included in new media and for the very young generation to be the conduit that allows that to happen. This would be more in the form of consciousness raising, rather than in the form of moralising or overtly teaching, the latter being something I wanted to avoid. But, whatever its objectives, a film still has to work as a film. In a way, I think the experiments with tone might help achieve such consciousness raising because they deflect attention from my voice and focus attention on the content of the story.

4.4 Content

Content is a major contributor of tone in a screenplay. In this section I will attempt to track all the relevant influences that resulted in the content of my screenplay. The readings were done before, during and after the writing: sometimes a reading provided inspiration for content that I would then go on to write; at other times a reading provided credence for something that I had already written.

Usually the advice given to screenwriters is to “write about what you know”. This is valuable advice and is certainly the basis for stories that are authentic. However, in this section I am trying to show that the writer can move between personal experience and academic research when looking for content for a story and that the latter may be an important source of ideas for storylines and plot. Such research helps the screenwriter to build a realistic story.

Finally, it is important for a screenwriter to be factually accurate. I am not an IT expert and as a great deal of the story revolves around computers and the Internet, I wanted to make sure that I did not alienate the audience by including events that would be technologically impossible. To this end I used interviews and literature as a source for fact checking my storyline. Freimond had also reminded me that realism is the basis for good comedy and so I did not want to stray from reality.

My reasons for choosing the subject matter for my screenplay stem mainly from considerations about my mother who, at 87, with a hearing impairment and with Parkinson’s disease, finds herself increasingly isolated from life around her – a plight which, I fear, befalls many an old person. At the same time her independent spirit has lead her to search for ways to become mobile and autonomous, including a desire to learn to drive and to go on the Internet. It seems to me that the Internet, along with Skype, email and social networking sites, holds positive potential for old people to expand their virtual horizons at a time when their real world is shrinking.

The NASA Clickworkers project, described by Yochai Benkler (2006) provides this type of opportunity. In the Clickworkers' project members of the public were invited to volunteer a few minutes or more to map and identify areas on the surface of Mars, meaning that people without scientific knowledge can actually perform this scientific task. These assignments would normally have been performed by salaried scientists but, through the Clickworkers' initiative, NASA demonstrated how ordinary, untrained but motivated people could do the same thing (Benkler 2006:69). Another NASA project is 'Target Asteroids' (2012) through which amateur astronomers are invited to discover and study near-earth objects, ultimately passing their information on to professional astronomers who refine the findings.

It strikes me that Internet based initiatives such as Clickworkers and 'Target Asteroids' provides the ideal opportunity for old, retired or immobile persons to contribute to important projects and, in so doing, to gain a sense of self-worth. This presupposes, however, that the old person has access to a connected device, is reasonably new-media literate, has a support system to help her navigate online problems and possesses a degree of self-confidence, all of which would enable her to participate in such opportunities. Without access, skills, assistance and confidence the old person is an outsider to new media and the prospects it affords. Although I did not specifically include the Clickworkers' project and Target Asteroids in the storyline, these initiatives and the issues they raise sparked my ideas.

News media often report on acts of hacking and it was one such case that became a foundational idea for the screenplay. Some years ago I read a newspaper article about a teenager who hacked into NASA and accidentally moved a satellite. The humour as well as the potential for disaster inherent in this act struck me as very powerful and I used it as the inciting incident in my screenplay, the event which sets the plot in motion. Although I could not trace this article, I found many similar stories of hacking, including several cases of hacking the NASA site. In 2000 an eighteen-year old Mexican boy hacked into NASA, modified files and added accounts. He was charged in 2001, despite denying the charges (Leyden 2001). In 2001 a fifteen year old from Michigan,

USA, was arrested and charged with allegedly breaking into computer systems owned by NASA and defacing their web sites (TheARegister 2001n.p). Other hackers interfered with two US earth observation satellites four times between 2007 and 2008 (BBC 2011a n.p). In the same BBC article an interview with a security expert provided inspiration for dialogue in the screenplay. He said he would blame the incident on negligence by designers or operators and said it had long been basic computer-science textbook knowledge “how to implement cryptographic end-to-end message authentication” (Ibid). I use this line in my screenplay when Professor Wright is interviewed on Carte Blanche after Granny accidentally hacks into NASA, to add credibility to the dialogue.

One might believe that after so many breaches by hackers, NASA would have addressed their online security issues – but they have not. Their security woes are on going and they are a regular target for hackers. There are many more stories of hackers breaking into NASA. In 2010 a hacker going by the name of Iceman hacked into NASA servers and deleted, modified and restricted access to the servers causing about \$500,000 in damage (Wisniewski 2011). In 2011 a Romanian hacker calling himself TinKode hacked into NASA and announced his success via social media sites, comparing his work to “a free security audit’ (Cluley 2011). This is the source for another line I use in my screenplay during the Carte Blanche scene. Again in 2011 hackers gained “full functional control” of key computers when they took over Jet Propulsion Laboratories (JPL) computers (BBC 2012). All of this gives credence to the dialogue spoken by Aaron in the screenplay when he says that, “People are always hacking into NASA. Their security’s bladdy appalling”. (Note, I have used “bladdy” in place of “bloody” to emphasise the South African pronunciation of the word.) The constant onslaught of successful hacks into NASA has potentially very serious implications and I find it remarkable that it is such a frequent occurrence. Having ‘even’ a digital newcomer such as Granny capable of doing it, albeit by accident, serves to highlight the fragile nature of NASA’s security.

One of the on-line comments by ‘Dave in Wasilla’ following Wisniewski’s story about the hacker was, “Thank him for finding security holes and keep making

the systems more secure for the future cyber wars, which will cause people to die and nations to fall” (Wisniewski 2011). One possible inference from this is that hacking, especially of this type, is not viewed as a crime and indeed, might actually have positive spin-offs such as improving security. Thus, in the screenplay, the audience may actually be sympathetic towards Granny when she becomes involved in hacking, albeit unintentionally. On the other hand, there is a distinction between hackers and cyber-criminals, or e-criminals, and the view that the latter get off lightly for their crimes has been expressed (BBC 2011b). Cybercrime is an on-going problem and, to illustrate the point, it is estimated that e-crime costs the UK economy twenty seven billion pounds a year (Ibid.). Misha Glenny, key-note speaker at the eighth annual ITWeb Security Summit, held in Johannesburg in 2013, claims that hacking is a one hundred billion dollar industry (Pampalone 2013). The event also featured hacker Grugq, who brokers six figure (US dollar) deals between government agencies and hackers for “hacking techniques that take advantage of secret vulnerabilities in software, taking a 15% cut” (Pampalone 2013). This illustrates how hackers can become sought-after by big business or government agencies in an attempt to gain the inside knowledge needed to bolster online security. In the screenplay, however, Granny is an inadvertent hacker, neither an expert nor a cyber-criminal and the ethics of hacking are not an issue that I deal with in the screenplay.

For other hackers their online exploits can be construed as a job interview, if you will. George Hotz, an American teenage hacker going by the handle, or hacker name, GeoHot, gained notoriety for hacking the Apple I phone and the Sony Playstation 3 (PS 3), the latter costing the company tens of millions of dollars. Hotz does not seem to have benefitted financially from his exploits as he posted the root keys to the PS3 online so that others could also hack into the games and play them. He was sued by Sony but his exploits provided an audition of sorts as he was subsequently offered a job by FaceBook and went on to be employed by them (Tsukayama 2011). This is not unlike Granny in the screenplay when the attention she gains through her accidental hacking leads to her landing a job teaching old people how to use the Internet.

In my screenplay new media and the Internet, how they are used and the multiple opportunities that they provide, form a foundation for the action and the events of the plot. I wanted to bring these interests to bear on the content of my screenplay and to have it rest on a bed of both realities and possibilities related to new media and the affordances of the Internet, particularly in how these apply to old women.

One of the most difficult aspects of the script was making sure that the technical information was correct and finding a way for Granny to *accidentally* move the satellite. Whilst there are numerous articles and reports about people deliberately hacking into NASA, there were none about how it was possible to do this by mistake. This was an important point as the premise of the story is that Granny's actions in moving the satellite are not deliberate. Her motives are pure, she is not a hacker and besides, she does not have the technical know-how to do such a thing.

As mentioned previously, I came across a news report several years ago, which I have been unable to trace, which told of a teenager who accidentally moved a satellite. If I recall correctly he was deliberately hacking into the NASA site, but not with the intention of moving the satellite. The challenge for me as a screenwriter was to find a feasible way for Granny to accomplish this incredible feat when she had not been hacking into NASA in the first place. To this end I interviewed a subject specialist, Mark Hewson, who is a systems engineer and he offered the following advice: the laptop that Granny uses would had to have been stolen from someone who worked at NASA and who had access to satellite pathways. In addition, he would had to have been logged in when his laptop was stolen and his access would have to not be password protected (Hewson 2012). I devised a way for this to happen "naturally" by using the recent COP 17 conference on global warming that took place in Durban and invented the character of Prof Weinstein, a delegate from NASA who would be presenting on the role of weather satellites in tracking global warming patterns. Directly after his presentation, during which he has used his laptop to access his privileged NASA platform, his laptop is stolen. The culprit is Josh's colleague at the International Convention Centre where he

works as a rigger. Hewson agrees that this would be a credible way of gaining access to a protected site.

I had to preserve audience sympathy for Granny, so it could not be she herself who stole the laptop. It would have to be loaned to her without her knowing that it was stolen. It also could not be Josh who stole the laptop, as this would erode sympathy for him and be out of character as he is positioned as the compassionate son, in counter point to Aaron, the abrasive son. Josh naively accepts the laptop from his colleague to “look after for a while because I’m moving”. None of this is seen, until it is shown as cutaways during the Carte Blanche sequence in Act 3. When Granny is in hospital Josh sees it as the ideal opportunity to lend her a laptop and it is the stolen one that he offers to her.

The risk of losing the audience through implausible plot developments was always a possibility so it was important to develop logical reasons for how circumstances could have contrived to end up as they did. It is a stretch of the imagination and unlikely, but not impossible that this, or something close to it, could happen. The later scenes with Carte Blanche fill in the details for the audience and provide belated exposition whilst the dramatized re-enactment of Granny’s story during the Carte Blanche scene provides humour and layers the tone.

The likelihood of a NASA scientist handing over an unprotected, logged-in device might seem a stretch. Josh and his colleague are technical crew at the convention centre and are charged with connecting each speaker’s laptop for their presentation, thus creating the possibility that Dr Weinstein would have handed his laptop over at some point. But is it credible that such a laptop, with such vulnerability, could be stolen? It seems it is. Martin, NASA’s inspector general, noted among other security breaches that, “Between April 2009 and April 2011, NASA reported the loss or theft of forty eight agency mobile computing devices” and an unencrypted notebook

computer was lost containing details of the algorithms used to control the International Space Station (BBC 2012 n.p). Based on this it is entirely possible that a strategic laptop could be stolen and fall into the wrong hands.

Once I had legitimised how Granny could end up with this strategic, logged in laptop, and once she had accidentally moved the satellite I needed to ensure that the way Granny was tracked by the Military Police rang true. As each computer/device has a unique IP address assigned to it, once the device starts connecting to the Internet it is possible to track the location of the device, not precisely, but within a fairly narrow range. So, once Granny uses the hospital WiFi the location of the laptop can be tracked to the hospital, although not the specific room, leading to the Detectives arriving and taking the hospital superintendent in for questioning.

All of this meant that Granny had to log on to the Internet via the hospital's WiFi and not via 3G as she had done previously when Josh was teaching her at home. Granny would have to have the password for the hospital's wireless network and Josh is the one who gets it from Sindi, the pretty nurse. I had to provide a reason for why she would be willing to divulge it and so I established that she and Josh engage in a flirtation. There is a mutual attraction between them as I could not have Josh simply use Sindi's interest for his own benefit, as this would be out of character.

Once I had introduced the character of Sindi I wanted to avoid her disappearance after she had fulfilled a limited function and so I expanded her role into that of Josh's girlfriend. She is the one who introduces Josh and Granny to her uncle Jack at the 'nice' retirement centre. This ultimately results in Jack being able to supply Granny with a lawyer, in the form of his son, when she is arrested. This is an example of how the need for logic and credibility in the plot intersect and connect with character function and plot points.

Towards the end of Act 3 the stolen laptop, now in the hands of Josh's colleague, is located through theft-tracking software, which had been installed on it and begins sending back video pictures of the culprit as soon as he switches it on, leading to his arrest. A possible gap in logic is why, if the laptop had this software installed on it, the police did not use it to see Granny in the hospital, but I have implied that it would have been too soon for this happen.

Such software has featured in various news stories when thieves have been tracked via it, for example *The Daily News* (2011) carried an article in which they tell of a Johannesburg man whose stolen laptop software sent back pictures of the alleged thief and the article also carries a picture of the alleged thief. Similarly, an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (2011) carried pictures of an alleged thief in California, which were sent back to the owner via theft-tracking software. In 2013 *The Daily News* carried an article which reported the theft of a Samsung tablet that was stolen while logged on to the Internet. In a humorous twist the thief accidentally posted pictures of himself to FaceBook (Pillay 2013). I have exploited this potential for humour when, towards the end of Act 3, the police start receiving video footage of the thief who is seen taking a swig of beer, dancing with a girl and possibly starting to take off his clothes. It is an interesting affordance of connected devices that they can aid law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime. This moment in the script helps lighten the tone after the more serious plot developments of Granny's arrest and imprisonment.

Finally, I chose to use a real television programme, *Carte Blanche*, which is a well-known investigative programme in South Africa, in the screenplay, to add credibility and a real television presenter, Bongani Bingwa, as a character in the screenplay. If Granny's story had happened in real life *Carte Blanche* would certainly run a story on it. Having *Carte Blanche* and Bingwa feature in the story suggests that the events are probable and believable.

The screenplay poses the question that once Granny has access to a connected computer, and the ability to operate it, what difference will it make in her life? Will it only get her into trouble? Throughout the screenplay and at the end we see the affordances of new media in Granny's life. Jenkins (2006) reminds us that once participation is achieved, questions arise about the differential affordances of new media. The term 'media affordances', in its most simple interpretation, poses the question of what the media device can do for the user. I am using the term 'affordances' in a broad and general way to emphasize the plasticity of new media and the high number of affordances they contain. Apart from the obvious affordances of the Internet, e.g. accessing information, some affordances may be incidental to the original purpose of the device. For example, a cell phone might be used as a paper-weight (Van der Hoven 2011). As we shall see, the affordances Granny enjoys are quite unexpected.

Excellent examples of affordances provided by the Internet can be found in real events, in particular what came to be known as 'the Arab Spring' in 2010/2011 in which uprisings spread through Northern Africa and the Middle East. Video footage of the first uprising in the town of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia was posted to FaceBook in late December 2010 and the growing awareness this afforded changed the incident from a national one to a global one. As the violence spread so did reports of it via social networking sites (Norwood-Young 2011). Less than a month later the protests spread to Egypt and Algeria, followed shortly thereafter by unrest in Libya, Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan. The Arab Spring has been called "the first Internet driven revolution of our time" (Ibid). One could argue that the revolution would have happened irrespective of its informal reporting on social networking sites. I would, however, agree with Norwood-Young's view that "the internet surely accelerated the pace of the revolutions dramatically" (2011: 26 – 27). The power of the Internet and social media as a means of rallying support for a cause is evident in my screenplay where the grandson, Max, and his teacher use Facebook to muster support for their 'Free Granny' campaign.

In my screenplay one of the most significant affordances of Granny's Internet usage is that it aids in the construction of a different self as she moves from the stereotypical "old person" position of resisting new technology towards embracing it. In this way she is able to exploit another affordance as Granny's engagement with the computer helps bring the family together as they try to solve the predicament that she gets herself into. What I am trying to do is link the concept of the digital outsider, or the digital stateless, to questions of new media affordances and connect all of this to questions of identity. I am, however, aware of Neil Selwyn's (2004) argument that access should not be conflated with affordances and am careful not to do that.

In the screenplay I show that the affordances of new media are not always what you would expect. At the end of Act 3 we realise that Granny's access to new media has brought the family together, not through Skype or social media but in real life, and also affords her a fabulous job opportunity, not through finding a position on-line but through the attention she gained through her accidental hacking. This in turn suggests that she can continue to live independently and the major axis of conflict in the screenplay is thus resolved, albeit in an open-ended manner.

When writing a story about the Internet I was aware of the particularities of Internet usage and connectivity in South Africa. Contrary to claims that the Internet has brought about globalisation, Internet usage varies widely around the world and in fact, on average, only about 24,7% of the world's population use the internet (Siapera 2012: 65). The diffusion of the Internet follows patterns of wealth distribution around the world (Ibid.) so there are big differences between, for example, North America where 73.9% of the population use the Internet and Africa, where only 6.7% of the population use the Internet (Ibid.). The *growth* in Internet usage, however, is far greater in countries with lower Internet usage, suggesting a rapid rise in Internet usage in developing regions. Thus, the *spread* of the Internet is "indeed global" (Siapera 2012: 68).

In South Africa most Internet users rely on their cell phones for connectivity (networksociety 2012) and there has been a substantial growth in cell phone usage. In 2010 there were 52.2 million mobile subscribers in South Africa – more than the total population (*Mail and Guardian* 2012). If present growth rates are maintained it is predicted that by 2014 more than half the adults in South Africa will be Internet users (networksociety 2012).

Most Internet users in South Africa are young, black and poor, reflecting the general demographics of the population. Of Internet users, 20% live below the poverty line and 40% live on less than R1500 a month (networksociety 2012). Other findings, however, show that for older people 60% cited expense as the main reason for not using the Internet (Barbeau 2013).

In South Africa, one of the greatest impediments to going online is English language literacy (networksociety 2012). Only 4.8 million people out of a population of more than 51 million are English first language speakers (Mbanjwa 2012), although many people do have some degree of ability in the language. As English is currently the number one language used on the Internet, proficiency in this language would facilitate ease of use for those wishing to go online just as, conversely, English illiteracy might hamper it. It is, however, predicted that Chinese will overtake English in the next few years as the most commonly used language on the Internet (Siapera 2012).

Situating my story in a South African context allows me to reference the above realities. Internet usage is growing, despite the number of poor people in the population, and as such it is an important aspect of change and development in this country. Despite her age, race and gender, Granny personifies the South African who is venturing online for the first time and is an unthreatening figure with whom South African audiences can identify.

A central aspect of the characterization of Granny is that she is a digital outsider. The idea of outsiders and insiders to the Internet and new media has been conceptualised as a 'digital divide' and much has been written about it

(Schiller 1999). The divide is most often seen as a case of “information haves and have-nots” (Siapera 2012:69). In unequal societies such as South Africa it is easy to mistakenly conceive of the digital divide as a fault line between those who are rich and those who are poor. However, it is somewhat simplistic to envision the digital divide as merely a question of financial affordability especially as, as we have seen above, most Internet users in South Africa are, in fact, poor. Furthermore, one cannot assume that once a person owns a connected device they are on the right side of the digital divide.

Neil Selwyn (2004) argues that we cannot say that as soon as people have access to the Internet, equality will follow. Selwyn believes that it is not so much a case of a digital divide as a digital hierarchy. He envisages four stages in this hierarchy: access to new media artifacts; use of new media; engagement with new media; and, finally, participation in society via new media. Selwyn’s concept of degrees of participation is a more useful way of considering online participation than the dichotomous digital divide theory and this is enacted in my screenplay as Granny traverses the digital hierarchy, enjoying increasing participation.

I found that Prensky’s (2001) writings, whilst problematic in several ways, added to my understanding. He originally envisioned the digital divide in relation to birth cohorts and their relationship to computers, a somewhat limited and naïve theory, but he also coined the terms ‘digital native’ and ‘digital immigrant’, which I find useful. For Prensky, those who were born between 1980 and 1994 and have grown up with computers are ‘digital natives’ and those born before 1980 and who later learned how to use computers are ‘digital immigrants’. Digital natives are said to be immersed in new technology and adept at operating it. Much of what Prensky writes deals with challenges in teaching and learning resulting from a generation of digital natives being taught by digital immigrants, but his ideas can be applied beyond educational scenarios.

A critique of Prensky's theory is offered by Bennett, Maton and Kervin (2007) who not only question whether the urgent need for transformation in education called for by Prensky is really necessary but also, and more interesting to me, whether a distinct generation of digital natives exists, based simply on the era in which they were born. Whilst Prensky's earlier writings may overlook important issues and do not include the particularities of developing countries such as South Africa, his later writings (2005), do take cognisance of some of the anomalies raised by his critics. His writings, along with those of his critics, have been useful to me whilst working on the screenplay and constructing characters along the various dimensions of the digital inclusivity spectrum.

DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) move away from talk about a digital divide and refer instead to 'digital inequality' which is manifested across five dimensions. The dimensions that illustrate digital inequality are: technical means (the artifacts), autonomy of use (owning the artifacts), use patterns (how they are used), social supports networks (the extent to which others are able to help the user) and skill (Ibid.) I will return later to the dimension of social support networks and the help that others afford the newcomer to digital technology as this is an important aspect of the plot of the screenplay. The dimension of skill, identified by DiMaggio and Hargittai is important. While there are some groups of young people with high levels of technological adeptness there are others who do not have the high levels of skills suggested by the digital divide theory and also the digital natives theory. Simply owning the technology does not make one an expert, as Granny very quickly discovers.

Downes discusses Friesen's comment that digital natives may *claim* "greater online efficiency and skills" but that this may not be true (Downes 2007). Friesen maintains that 'the vast majority [of the Net Generation] are consumers of content; only a small minority interact with the content, and even fewer create it' (Ibid.). Friesen is pointing out that the attribute of youth and the ownership of connected technology does not automatically endow one with the expertise implied by the term 'digital native'. I like this fact because it highlights that being

young does not automatically make one an expert at new media and suggests that techno know-how can be associated with any age. The screenplay elucidates this by showing that at 75 years of age, Granny, our protagonist, ultimately becomes proficient at using the Internet.

For Friesen, it is class rather than birth cohort which is the most important predictor of online proficiency (2007). However, because of our apartheid history, the 'middle class' in South Africa is not categorised by homogeneity. For example: computer ownership per household is different for black middle class households (45% in 2012) compared to white middle class households (67% in 2013) (Friesen 2007). Therefore, just as we cannot make generalisations about people based on their birth cohort we also cannot make generalisations about them based on their membership of a particular class, or even their ownership of particular items. Ownership of a computer does not necessarily imply computer literacy or enjoyment of the affordances of new media and thus we cannot say that those who belong to the middle classes, or who own computers, are necessarily 'digital natives', or on the right side of the digital divide. My screenplay tries to present factors other than the overly deterministic conditions of age and class that have clouded early discussions about new media access and affordances. I am trying to show that stereotypes about where, how and by whom new media is used are not necessarily accurate. Hopefully this will be recognised by South African audiences through their empathetic relationship with the protagonist. In my screenplay the realistic representation of new media is the ground against which the comedy is played out.

4.4.1 Character Granny, the protagonist, is an English first language speaker and thus is in the minority in South Africa but she has an advantage over non-English, and even English second-language speakers, when it comes to the Internet, given that English is the main language used on the Internet. As a white person she is once again in the minority, as 80% of the South African population are black people. She is in the minority yet again because of her advanced age: only 5% of

the population is over the age of 65 (*Mail and Guardian* 2013 np) while 60% of the population is under the age of 35 according to Census 2011 (Nair 2012 np).

The challenge for me as a screenwriter was to find something that, despite the protagonist's generally minority status regarding her age, race and language, would resonate with a wider audience. Granny's plight as a widower, her conflicts with family members and her predicament as an outsider to digital technology have to be the primary things that resonate with the audience. In addition, her initial reluctance to learn how to use the Internet, perhaps because she fears making a fool of herself, could be an experience with which many digital outsiders identify, irrespective of age, race or class.

Whilst Granny's recent bereavement and her conflicts with family are both key aspects of the story with which I believe a broad audience might empathise, these are not new ideas in film. It is her journey on the Internet that is a novel way of securing audience empathy and allowing identification with her, particularly as increasing numbers of South Africans are going online. It is not uncommon to approach new technology with a degree of resistance and a lack of confidence and it is not uncommon to make mistakes with new technology.

As the story charts Granny's adventures online it suggests that nothing – not age, gender, race, class, financial status or lack of confidence – should stand in the way of a person becoming technologically proficient, that it is possible to cross the so-called digital divide, or traverse the digital hierarchy, and become an insider to new media.

Granny's middle class status is multi-factorial: whilst it is yet another minority category into which she fits, her middle-class experiences will nonetheless be recognisable to a broad audience and may actually be a unifying factor because the middle class in South Africa is growing and becoming more diverse. Being able to afford a holiday on a cruise ship, as we see in the opening scenes, and being able to buy a computer, as we see Granny do later on, are definite possibilities for middle-class South Africans. As the setting is Durban and many

cruises leave from the port of Durban it makes sense that a cruise might be the very thing that Granny and Granddad choose to do.

I wanted to reflect the racial diversity of the middle class and so I envisaged that the characters that surround Granny would come from a variety of racial backgrounds. One character I particularly wanted to avoid because of its connotations of the apartheid past, was a domestic worker. In reality, an old middle-class woman would be likely to employ a domestic worker but I wanted to avoid Granny being associated with the role of the stereotypical white 'madam' who supervises a black person performing menial labour. Neither did I want to create a fantasy around a friendship between an old white woman and a black domestic worker. Dialogue around questions of Granny's changed financial status give credence to her not being in a position to employ domestic help and thus I was able to legitimately avoid the presence of the ubiquitous domestic worker in the story.

I have tried to avoid focusing on race as a descriptor within the stage directions of the screenplay when new characters are introduced, but I realize that it may be helpful to the reader if I offer some clarity: Granny and her immediate family are white; Max (Aaron's adopted son) is mixed-race; Sindi (the nurse), Max's teacher and the detectives are black Africans; Jack is mixed-race; Joan (the neighbor) is either African or mixed-race; the paramedics, party-goers and people signing up for Granny's course are made up of white, Indian, African and mixed-race members. (The character biographies in the appendix contain more details of the main characters). By populating Granny's family and extended world with empowered characters of different races I am trying to avoid stereotypes and reflect the increasing integration of the middle class that is emerging in South Africa, albeit presented in a somewhat idealised way in the screenplay.

My interest in notions of digital insiders and outsiders is reflected in the character of Granny. At the outset of the story she is neither digital native nor

digital immigrant and is not located anywhere on the digital dimension. Initially she is not particularly interested in the Internet and is not bothered by her lack of techno know-how. If it were not for her younger son Josh's insistence she would happily continue with a life lived 'unconnected'. I have extended Prensky's digital native hypothesis and invented the category of the 'digital stateless' to refer to those who are indifferent or unaware of new media and do not belong to either the category of digital native, or digital immigrant. Granny embodies the 'digital stateless' person. Aaron, her elder son, tries to ensure that she remain 'stateless'. Josh, in contrast, believes that Granny has the potential to become an 'immigrant'.

At first, Granny is reluctant to venture online but with encouragement from Josh and particularly after noticing the possibility of on-line shopping, she ultimately embarks on a journey of acquiring expertise and surprises everyone, including herself, with her ability to learn how to use the Internet. She gains confidence and discovers an aptitude she never knew she possessed and starts to refer to herself as 'a natural'. All of this is possible through her grandson Josh's help. He personifies DiMaggio and Hargittai's (2001) dimension of a social support network/system, and without his encouragement it is unlikely that Granny would have continued with her online journey and been able to traverse the digital hierarchy.

Research in England shows that "limits to the help available to older people are creating a digital glass ceiling for many pensioners" (The Blue 2011), with 76% of those surveyed saying they get little or no help with learning new technology and 52% lacking the confidence to get to grips with new technology (Ibid). This finding hooks into DiMaggio and Hargittai's (2001) understanding that social support networks, or lack of them, can contribute to digital inequality (Siapera 2012). Without support and help old people are unlikely to enjoy the maximum affordances of new media.

The above theory intersects with Campbell's idea (1968) of the archetypal characters of helpers, hinderers and mentors. When Granny goes shopping for a computer she is exploited by a young assistant who takes advantage of her

inexperience and sells her unnecessary items. When she is in the hospital the Texting Teenager is clearly disinterested in helping her go online. Both of these characters are hinderers in Granny's journey. Aaron is the ultimate hinderer and through actions and dialogue tries to impede Granny's journey. This is contrasted with the assistance and encouragement Granny gets from Josh and Max, who are both 'helpers'. And finally, at the end of Act 3, Granny has enough techno know-how to offer a course teaching her peers how to use the Internet, which demonstrates that she herself has become a mentor to others.

Helsper suggests that it is life stages, rather than age, that better predicts engagement with, and use of, new media (2010). I have deliberately tried to highlight the protagonist's life stage and the assumptions that might go with it by naming her Granny. The norms and conventions associated with her life stage of advanced age and widowhood are clearly displayed by Aaron when he does a Power Point presentation for Granny after she comes home from the hospital to try to persuade her to move to a retirement centre. He believes she is old, unskilled, should not be trying anything new and needs looking after. Josh, on the other hand, believes that Granny's new life stage of widowhood is as good a time as any for her to try out new things. As such, Josh focuses more on Granny's life stage than her age.

Granny does have a real name: Sylvia Human. Two articles that I read contained the phrase 'silver surfer' in their title. Co-incidentally I had chosen the name Sylvia for Granny, which provides a connection to the phrase being used in the online press. Her second name "Human" is a reasonably common Afrikaans surname but also suggests that she is an 'every woman' and her experiences and feelings reflect those of many other old people. As such, she is a mirror to the human condition.

The decision to refer to the protagonist as old, rather than with a euphemism such as 'senior citizen', or the more innocuous sounding term 'older woman',

was inspired by the work of Barbara McDonald, a lesbian feminist writer whose work *Look Me in the Eye* (1984) is about the identity and difference of old women. Macdonald has been described as a pioneering theorist of ageism and as the first to really draw attention to the fact that old women were ignored, excluded and rendered invisible (Adams 2008). She identified society's view that "old is ugly, old is powerless, old is the end and therefore ... old is what no one could possibly want to be" (McDonald 1984: 91). McDonald's powerful and clear writing encouraged me to deliberately use the word 'old' and to choose that the protagonist of my screenplay challenge the stereotype of the old woman as benign, non-productive and inconsequential. Hopefully, the screenplay will provide a form of advocacy for old woman to experiment with new media and to enjoy its affordances.

McDonald is critical of women who try to 'pass' as younger than they are, believing that this is a denial of self. In the screenplay Granny meets Jack and decides to throw a party before which she elects to colour her hair. The subtext of this is that she is attracted to Jack and wants to look 'nice', in other words 'young'. I played this part of the storyline for humour, having the hair colour turn out to be a bright pink, to add a sub-text critiquing age-modifying attempts by old women. Anne Gerike (1990) states that hair dyeing "represents the attempt of aging people to 'pass' as members of a group with greater power, privilege and prestige than that to which they belong" (Rosenthal 1990:37). That Granny chooses to dye her hair illustrates that she has internalised some of the ageism that permeates our culture.

However, by the end of story, when Granny is released from prison, her hair has returned to its natural grey, suggesting that she is at peace with who she is and is becoming her authentic self. Women should be free to choose if they want to colour their hair or not but because of the association of coloured hair with sexual attractiveness and reproductive potential and conversely, of grey hair with being past one's physical prime, it is not difficult to understand why women would choose to cover grey hair. That Granny finally lets her hair return to its

natural grey is physical proof of her internal growth. She is owning who she is and is proud to be herself.

I chose the title of my screenplay before I read McDonald's comments on how the role of the caring grandmother is one of few positions old women are 'permitted' to occupy in society (McDonald 1984). The title *When Granny went on the Internet* speaks on various levels: first, hailing old women and families as an important target audience through the use of the word 'Granny' (although they are not the only audience); second, positioning the screenplay as a comedy and therefore as non-threatening and, third, as an *agent provocateur* asserting that old women have the right to engage with new media.

McDonald writes that "the safest identity for an old woman is 'Grandmother', whose primary motive for living is to love and nourish the young. Grandmother is at best a third-hand identity." (1984: 58). However, McDonald also says that "age in our society also gives us a second opportunity ...to move out of that safe harbor of acceptability" (1984:2). I intend to trade on the stereotype of the granny and pull the audience in through the use of comedy but ultimately, I invert expectations as my protagonist does indeed move out of that 'safe harbor of acceptability' as she engages with new media and starts to create a new self.

One could argue that McDonald was writing some 29 years ago and that nowadays there are more examples of old women performing powerful roles in society, for example in politics, science and the performing arts, illustrating that power balances have shifted somewhat. In addition, human and gender rights movements are a persuasive force that lobby for change to laws that oppress women and the aged. Whilst some progress may have been made it in no way negates the fact that both gender discrimination and ageism still exist as a daily source of ongoing struggle for women. My screenplay illustrates this fact as sub-text and uses the device of comedy to deliver the statement.

It is interesting to me that the basis of ageism might be the family. Lise Weil writes that McDonald's "analysis of family as the source of ageism is one of her most important contributions to feminist thought" (2007). Granny's eldest son, Aaron, is the one who displays ageism most clearly, having fixed and preconceived ideas about what is appropriate, or not, for a woman of Granny's age. Aaron personifies the conservative, restrictive voice of traditional roles and expectations. As such, he serves to hamper her activities and Granny is always concerned about what he will say. McDonald points out that "the need in an ageist society to rely on children for acceptance ...results in a profoundly unbalanced power relationship, in which the old woman must often bend to her children's definition of herself" (1984:60).

Aaron believes that as Granny is approaching the end of her life she should not be starting anything new or engaging with anything of consequence. Expressing a desire to revive an old skill, in this case driving, is interpreted by Aaron as proof of his mother's lack of judgement. Her wanting to go online is perceived as a threatening combination of old age and new media, to be avoided at all costs.

Some research (Arling 1976 and Bankoff 1983) suggests that in widowhood friends and neighbours become a more important source of contact than children (in Gee and Kimball 1987: 90). Sensing this, and wishing to control Granny, Aaron tells Granny's neighbour, Joan, "don't encourage her" after he finds that she has lent Granny a golf cart as a precursor to her starting to drive a car. Further, he is upset when he sees Granny dancing with Jack at her party and is appalled when he discovers after the concert that Jack is in Granny's house. He is threatened and feels he may be displaced from his assumed role as new patriarch of the family and he senses that Granny's widening circle of friends illustrates that the power of influence may no longer reside with him, or even his brother.

When Granny finally goes online she enters another reality and is free to be who she wants to be, unfettered by Aaron's expectations. The nuances of this

other side, or cyber side, of Granny are revealed to Aaron when he realises not only the havoc she has caused on the NASA site but also that she has been looking at support group sites for the newly widowed. He begins to realise that his mother may be more than he thinks she is, or wishes she were, and that her children, himself included, may no longer be the centre of her universe or able to influence and control her. Granny's changing identity has consequences for Aaron and his perception of himself as being in charge of her life. This is manifested in palpable dialogue between Granny and Josh in the scene where she wakes up from her nightmare after the concert and tries to correct her misadventures on the NASA site:

JOSH

Ma, Aaron says you shouldn't...

GRANNY (INTERRUPTING)

Fuck Aaron.

Aaron reels and Josh practically takes a step back at his mother's use of the 'f' word, something he has never heard from her before.

There can be no doubt that Granny is asserting herself as mistress of her own life and, as such, is carving out a new identity for herself and a new relationship with her adult children. In Granny's case the Internet provides her with the opportunity to act differently to how she performs in real life. Butler's (1993) writings introduce the concept of performativity and the idea that we acquire our gender identities through repeating expected practices. Such gender performances are not limited to the real world and may take place via new media devices and activities, such as going online and entering the cyber world. Granny's experiments with the Internet result in her developing abilities hitherto not related to her concept of self. She begins to see herself in a new way. For example, she starts buying things online. In her life up until this point she could only go shopping if someone, usually Granddad, gave her a lift to the shops and, once there, he would moderate her choices. Her shopping excursions were thus mediated by his needs and presence. Shopping online, however, frees her

from all of this. She ends up shopping when she wants, spending how much she wants and choosing anything she wants. This is played out in the scene in Granny's lounge between herself and Aaron that starts on page forty and culminates in the mid-point of the screenplay:

Granny goes off and quickly returns with a small package, a shoebox and a certificate. Aaron looks on, bracing himself.

GRANNY (CONT.)

Okay. Now, you're not going to believe it but THIS (she holds a mouldy piece of toasted cheese aloft) actually does look like the Virgin Mary.

Gob-smacked, Aaron stares at the piece of mouldy toast that Granny offers in his direction.

AARON

Oh my God. How much did you pay for this?

GRANNY

It doesn't matter. Because THESE (she pulls out the platform shoes with the plastic goldfish swimming in glitter in the soles) were a bargain.

Chuckling to herself, Granny starts to put on the platform shoes. Aaron splutters incoherently. He notices the certificate which Granny has placed on the floor while she changes her shoes. He picks it up and begins to read.

AARON

You now have the 'title' Lady Gloustershire?

GRANNY

It wasn't expensive.

AARON

You bought a title? For God's sake Mom please, you can't do this!

A tense silence descends instantly. Aaron tries his utmost to remain calm. Granny feels assertive.

GRANNY

Why not?

AARON

For one thing, you've got to watch your money.

GRANNY

I can handle my money just fine.

AARON

It's all just too much for me, mom. I can't keep up with you. Driving and accidents and computers and buying crap online.

Granny remains silent as they face off.

AARON (CONT'D)

Why can't you just relax and take it easy?

GRANNY

You want me to just sit at home and do nothing? Just stop everything?

AARON

No. Just the on-line shopping and the bladdy driving. Just stop. Please. We can still find a nice retirement place for you. There's got to be one out there.

GRANNY

I doubt it.

AARON

There must be. That's where you should go. They help you if you want to do anything, drive, shop (A LONG BEAT) go on the Internet (he shudders).

GRANNY

No.

AARON

Mom

GRANNY

No.

This dialogue illustrates that the Internet has provided Granny with a portal to a new self, manifested through her shopping online, on her own terms. Back in the real world Aaron tries to regain control over Granny, but it is too late. Her new independence has provided her with a surplus of self-confidence.

The example of how Granny's online shopping changes her self-perception illustrates Anthony Giddens' (1991) assertion that "self is an ongoing project that we are constantly modifying" (Siapera 2012: 173-174). The screenplay suggests that the modification of self can continue even into old age and, furthermore, that new media provides a means for this modification to occur, the latter point also made by Haraway (Siapera 2012). Granny questions and changes not only who she is, but who she is in relation to new media as she moves from epitomising the digital stateless to being a self-described new media 'natural'.

In this way Granny is an example of a 'resistance identity'. The idea of 'resistance identities' was formulated by Manuel Castell's (2004 [1997]) who describes them as "stigmatised identities that seek recognition - identities that do not enjoy a high material and symbolic status" (Siapera 2012: 173-174). This

is precisely what Granny's experiences elucidate. An old woman online is not taken seriously. An old woman as a teacher of new technologies is oxymoronic and yet this is indeed what Granny becomes by the end of Act 3.

Another of Castell's points is that the characteristics of time and space associated with the network society mean that things move "beyond geographical constraints" (Siapera 2012: 174-175). Thus, personal identity is "no longer limited or determined by the immediate socio-political context of values, requirements and expectations" (Ibid). In the screenplay, Granny experiences immense on-line support for her predicament, made possible by her grandson Max and his teacher setting up a FaceBook support group for her. This online support translates into validation of her new self: she comes to see that it is permissible to be an old woman who enjoys experimenting with new media, even if she has made a few mistakes along the way. The online support mediates and modifies the pressures from members of her immediate family who want her to conform to gender and age expectations. Thus, her reconstructed self is fostered and impacted by her online supporters who are diverse and geographically dispersed.

Main characters are usually established and revealed to the audience in Act 1 and all other characters serve to either further reveal character, or advance the plot, according to the formula approach to screenwriting. I was aware of deliberately writing in things that would help the audience understand the characters of Granny, Aaron and Josh. For example, to reveal that Granny was dependent on Granddad and that she was quite happy with this state of affairs, I showed Granddad taking charge and organizing things in the very first scene. Even after his death he still exerts a certain power: he has set things up at the bank and his sons continue to refer to him.

I consciously created the two brothers, Aaron and Josh, to be opposites of each other to represent the contrasting forces in Granny's life. Aaron is the conservative older brother who wants Granny to go to a retirement home. He is

wary of her trying new things and does not have faith in her ability to drive a car, much less a computer. He does not like the idea of a relationship between her and Jack. Aaron is a personification of Campbell's archetypal hinderer.

Josh, the younger brother, is more easy-going and relaxed in his attitude. He has no problem with Granny continuing to live in her little house, he supports Granny's wish to drive and he is the one who gives her the laptop and tries to teach her how to use it. When things look like they are developing with Jack, Josh is happy for Granny. Josh is the personification of Campbell's archetypal helper. In addition, his relationship with Sindi speaks to the inter-racial relationships that are apparent in post-Apartheid South Africa and helps integrate the plot into ever-larger circles of meaning, showing how overcoming racism may correlate with overcoming sexism and ageism. In a way Aaron and Josh represent two polarized views towards old women that might be found in broader society: on the one hand the view that an old woman is at the end of her life and should not be disturbing the status quo and on the other, that an old woman still has much living to do.

Adding Sindi, the pretty nurse, was fairly easy once I had established that Josh was extremely attractive and I needed a way for Granny to access WiFi in the hospital. Sindi facilitates this access and it made sense that she would help Josh because she was attracted to him and noticed his attraction to her. I connected Sindi to Jack in Act 2 because it provided a logical reason for how Josh would have known about the nice retirement village as well as providing a seamless way for Jack to be introduced into the storyline.

That Sindi would then help Granny with her hair in preparation for the party was believable as I had established that Granny had injured her shoulder in the accident. It also showed Sindi's growing integration with the family. The ideas for the hair products came from noticing the names of real hair products aimed at the youth market: *Through the bush backwards*, *Freeze* and *Stick 'em up* are some. To have Granny choose these products shows her wanting to hold on to the vitality of youth and also suggests an 'inappropriateness': some,

like Aaron, would see this as evidence that she lacks judgement but another view is that Granny is refusing to be bound by societal conventions.

Through advertising and social interaction we are constantly surrounded by messages of what is age appropriate and gender appropriate and the fact that the audience might laugh at Granny experimenting with products aimed at the youth market shows how ingrained these notions are. Other notions of this ilk are 'old people, especially women, should not drive', 'old people should not live alone' and 'old people cannot handle new technology'. I try to invert these popular notions by the end of the script by showing Granny arriving in her own car at the location where the Internet training is to take place and performing a complicated parking maneuver. The fact that she is able to run the Internet course shows that she has acquired a reasonable level of computer proficiency. Her 'age inappropriate' choices remain in terms of her dress sense - proof that Granny is resisting the suffocating, societally imposed prescriptions of image. She is doing it her way, regardless of what 'people' may think.

4.5.2 Structure

I decided that I wanted to employ traditional three-act structure in my screenplay because, as it is so pervasive in contemporary films, using it would also be a way of 'packaging' the content and tone of my work in a seemingly innocuous way and drawing an audience into the work.

I chose not to use alternative structure, which is screenplay structure other than the Hero's Journey or Hollywood formula, or any structure that deliberately seeks to draw attention to itself. This is most often found in independent films that are produced outside of the mainstream funding systems. It may be more accurate to perceive of alternative structure, not in complete contrast to the conventional models, but rather on the other end of a continuum that moves from the traditional to the alternative, allowing for degrees of difference in between (Dancyger and Rush 2007:51). I wanted to occupy a point on the spectrum that was closer to traditional structure.

Dancyger and Rush suggest that in mainstream films narrative voice is minimized or hidden which creates the illusion that it is the character, rather than an outside force, who is driving the story (2007:50), something that I was aiming for in my own screenplay. I did not want structure to draw attention to itself, but I did want it to do the work of holding the audience's attention. I had also seen how, in the film *Adaptation* (2002), traditional structure can be employed to subversive ends when it is combined with provocative content. I therefore saw no need to move away from traditional structure. There are a number of advantages associated with using traditional structure in a screenplay: it provides a recognisable pattern for the audience who are comforted by its familiarity, it is tried and proven, it is unthreatening to potential funders and it can be used in conjunction with subversive or provocative content or experiments in tone.

Whilst writing my screenplay I wanted to see to what extent formula structure would automatically emerge as I wrote, or to what extent I would consciously apply it. My challenge was to use the Hollywood formula to my own ends, by using it as a conduit to tell a comic story with a serious message that ultimately requires the audience to view old women differently.

Dancyger and Rush's (2007) writings about voice have made me aware of how important a part voice plays in alternative screenwriting. At this point my choice is to not foreground my voice, or editorial opinion. My screenplay is intended as a form of serious comedy and aims to reach a wide audience. I do not want to risk alienating either the audience or potential funders by experimenting with structure. I want to explore the possibility that formula structure can be employed to deliver provocative content and that sub-text will be sufficient to challenge the audience to think in a different way about the key issues presented in the story. Thus, I have used a conventional three Act structure, plot points, rising action, archetypes such as helper, hinderer and mentor, needs that are constantly modified and an ending, which whilst it could be described as open, leaves the audience with a feeling of resolution.

I have also attempted to play with genre and tone at various moments in the story. The primary genre of my screenplay is comedy but every now and then I flip the story into what is commonly referred to as 'drama', in other words a serious story. This happens very near the beginning of the screenplay when Granddad dies. Prior to this, from page one to four, the tone is established as comic because Granny is introduced as an old lady packing age-inappropriate clothing for a holiday. The couple are on the eve of a great adventure but they are never allowed to enjoy this because Granddad dies. This cruel inversion of expectation and the jolt from up-beat to down-beat tone will unsettle the audience and leave them wondering what will come next, both in terms of tone and story, but should not alienate a more sophisticated audience who may have been exposed to such tone-flipping in other films.

The choice to stay with formula structure can be seen as a trick I am playing on the audience. I am presenting them with something that looks like one thing but is actually another. Formula structure seems innocuous, almost comforting – much like my protagonist, Granny. Thus there is a parallel between my protagonist and the type of structure I have chosen to use. Both appear to be one thing and turn out to be another. Granny appears at first to be harmless and powerless but by the end of the film she is a force to be reckoned with. Similarly, formula structure is familiar, comforting and non-threatening but ultimately it is being used to deliver a provocative message: do not disregard old people, they *do* have agency, they *can* act in powerful ways.

The way I developed structure was to simply write a section and then go back and try to see if it correlated with models of formula structure. I found that Act 1 did, in fact, largely fit in with the dictates of formula structure as espoused by McKee (1999), Field (2003) and Snyder (2005) in that it set up the story by introducing the protagonist, established their need/ want, established the setting, the theme and the premise, and ended with an inciting incident that provided the impetus to move into Act 2.

At this stage the problem I had was with the duration of Act 1 as it was not a good fit for the formula model: for a one hundred page script, which is what I was aiming for, the formula would have had Act 1 end at twenty five pages. Instead it was about thirty-three pages. I tried to see how I could shift the end of Act 1, but it was difficult to achieve.

I also found that Act 2 was far too short and, based on my readings, it seemed that writing Act 2 was often the most difficult part for screenwriters. Halperin says that the second act “happens to be the most difficult part of a screenplay or story to develop. The second act is the center of the story. It’s the core that provides a sense of gravity firmly holding the screenplay together” (2000: ix).

Having trouble writing the second act was true in my case. Comparing my initial efforts to the conventions of formula structure I found that Act 2 did not really exist initially. Once I had committed all of my ideas to paper I ended up with about sixty-three pages of screenplay in total. I re-worked the script with the aim of adding more depth and complexity to the middle of the story, namely Act 2. I was able to do this by expanding on the storyline involving Granny visiting various retirement facilities. As this connected to the central conflict that she was engaged in – the battle to stay in her own home - it was important to develop it more fully. The script eventually came out at ninety-two pages in length. This was an important technical achievement as if it had been much less than ninety pages it may not have been categorized as ‘feature length’.

When working on Act 2 and developing the storyline of Aaron wanting Granny to go to a retirement home I was building the ‘stakes’ for Granny. Her house represents her autonomy, her independence and her power. If she lost her house she lost everything it represented. In Act 2 I was able to make the battle between Aaron and Granny very clear: he wants her to give up her house, she wants to stay in it. I came to see the power balance between Aaron and Granny as shifting to and fro as the story progressed: sometimes it was in favour of Aaron, other times in favour of Granny, and then it would shift back again. Tone began to emerge around the interaction between the two

characters and contrasted with the tone created when Granny interacted with other characters, especially Josh and Max.

I increased the number of prospective retirement homes that Granny visits with Aaron from one to three. I added in the one that Josh and Sindi take her to see and had her meet Jack at this point. Initially I had conceived of this storyline as involving only one visit with Aaron to a retirement home and having Granny meet Jack at this first home. As I developed this storyline I associated Aaron with the bad retirement homes and Josh with the nice one. The subtext to this is that the contrast between the brothers, as well as the differences in the quality of their relationships with their mother, is highlighted.

A problem that still remains with Act 2, even in the final draft, is that it does not show Granny trying different ways to solve the problem of the satellite. I am considering scrapping the Detectives, or at least not have them burst into Granny's house and arrest her. I need to find other ways for Granny to try to solve her problem. I initially wanted to show a very close relationship between Granny and Max, her grandson, and I think this has been achieved, but I could have taken it further, perhaps by having Granny turn to him for help with sorting out the satellite problem. This would also point up the question of where knowledge about technology resides and suggest that it is not always with adults but may, in fact, be with the very young. If I continue working on the screenplay this may well be a progression that I explore. As Act 2 stands the storyline about Max, his interest in satellites and his participation in the space concert adds logic and connection to the central event of the moving of the satellite. It allows for Granny and Max's relationship to be visualized and positions Max and events that surround him as an essential part of the plot.

Freimond warned me about an overly structural approach but he acknowledged that structure and the proportion of acts to each other is important. He works with index cards on the wall, as I did, because it helps with structural analysis and can be used to quickly identify if there is a problem in length of the acts. Freimond agrees that Act 2 is usually the problem for writers and says "we often don't have enough meat for our second act. It's a

very common problem that you just run out of steam in your second act” (Freimond 2012).

Ultimately, I decided to leave the issue of duration and apportionment of acts until later and concentrated first on trying to tell the story and getting the character of Granny to be credible and consistent. I tried to put characters around the protagonist who would amplify the themes and embody the choices she had before her and I discovered that tone changed depending on who was in a scene.

A primary idea associated with models of structure such as those described by McKee (1999), Field (2003), and Snyder (2005) is that the protagonist should want something or, alternatively, as with Campbell (1968) and Vogler (1999), be asked to do something. In this screenplay Granny wants four things: independence, mobility, love and restoration of order.

Granny wants her independence and she wants to stay in her own, familiar home. This is a strong desire and is asserted in Act 1 in the scene of Granddad’s wake when she rejects Aaron’s idea that she move into a retirement home. It continues in Act 2 when Aaron takes her to see the retirement homes and she rejects them all. We don’t know if she likes the one Josh shows her because the point is obscured by her meeting Jack. The threats to her achieving her goal of staying in her own house are twofold: the traffic accident she has and the problem she creates by accidentally moving the satellite, both of which cause those around her to doubt her ability to look after herself independently. Nonetheless, by the end of Act 3 we see that Granny is still ensconced in her little house. She has not moved to a retirement home so she has managed to achieve what she wanted. For how long though, we, as audience, don’t know.

A second need is for mobility. Granny wants to be mobile again, something that is established in Act 1 when she states that she wants to buy a car. Although her initial attempts backfire and result in an accident which puts her

in hospital, by Act 3 the audience sees that she is in fact driving again and doing so quite well. So, once again, she has achieved what she wanted.

Thirdly, Granny's wants a loving and companionable relationship. This is implied when, after Granddad has died, Max recognizes Granny's sadness at the wake in Act 1 and again during their nighttime picnic in Act 2 when he asks her if she still misses Granddad. Meeting Jack, inviting him to the party and having him offer the services of his lawyer son to help get her out of jail, all in Act 2, are in response to this need. In Act 3 we see that Jack is there to meet her when she gets out of jail. He is also present in the last scene when Granny signs up old people for her training course. This provides an open ending of sorts as we are not sure what will happen in the future between these two, a similarity my screenplay shares with the end of *Jozi*. The ending allows for the audience to will a positive future for Granny and this element adds to the tone associated with comedy and family films in general.

Finally, by wanting to put the satellite back in its place Granny wants to restore order to her world. Granny wants to undo her inadvertent mistake, the precipitating incident which takes place in Act 1, and right her world. This she cannot do and when she tries, her on-line efforts are tracked, her location established and she is arrested. Ultimately it is someone else, probably the powers at NASA, who correct her mistake. Once this happens Granny's goal is achieved, albeit through the efforts of an outside agency. This need connects to her need to be computer proficient, which is established in Act 1. Although she at first 'resists the call' to learn how to use a computer she does eventually give in to Josh's persuasion. Once she learns how to go on-line she discovers she enjoys using the computer. The desire to put right her mistake in moving the satellite is also a desire to prove that she can use technology proficiently and to reclaim the right to use it.

These needs for Granny arose automatically from her character's responses to the events of the plot. Once I had crystalised that the major need was for her to stay in her own home I was then able to articulate the characters of Aaron and

Josh to act either in support of this, or against it, thus bringing her predicament to life.

Granny's needs helped articulate tone in the screenplay. Her need to stay in her own house, her fear of losing her home and the pressure she faces to consider retirement homes leads to her visiting multiple, awful, old age homes. As stated previously, initially I envisaged only one retirement complex where she meets the charming old man, Jack, but when I was developing and extending Act 2 I revisited this storyline and built it into a sequence of visits to three homes, all awful, fulfilling Granny's negative expectations but presented with exaggeration and moments of absurdism. In reality, nothing about retirement homes is funny. If the audience laughs at the depiction of old-age homes, it will be because they recognise the truth under the hyperbole.

Having Granny first visit three awful old-age homes allows for a favourable comparison to the last one, where she meets Jack, and puts the audience on his side because he is associated with a positive environment. Building the retirement home storyline also allowed me to show the developing relationship between Josh and Sindi and her increasing integration into the family. The end of the visit to the final retirement home marks a tuning point that spins the story off in a new direction and is therefore structurally significant:

JOSH

So what do you think?

GRANNY

I think I'm going to have a party!

This declaration from Granny is evidence of her positive outlook and resilience. Despite the threat of losing her home, despite the mostly unpalatable options before her, she is choosing to celebrate life and have a party. It is the ultimate 'glass half-full' outlook. This moment is a good illustration of the connection between content, tone and character development.

Another storyline that developed significantly from its original inception was that of Max and his space project and concert. Max wanting the picture of the satellite and Granny's attempts to copy and paste it provided the inciting incident to set the plot in motion. Originally I did not have all the scenes of Max speaking to his classmates. I went back and added these in and intercut them with the major storyline revolving around Granny. This allowed the audience to hear Aaron's reactions to Granny's exploits via Max's dialogue and also sets up the class's eventual support for Granny via their creation of the Free Granny FaceBook page.

I added texture to the classroom scenes by contrasting Max's satellite costume with other children's costumes, thereby showing Aaron's dedication to his son and also introduced the information, through dialogue, that Aaron was a single parent. Thus the sub-plot about Max's concert allowed for character revelation of Aaron and he begins to be perceived as a more multi-dimensional character. There is some ambiguity around his character in that it is never explained why he is a single father of an adopted child, although adopting children of other races is not uncommon in South Africa.

Later, when Aaron is backstage before the concert, we realize that he is attracted to the Teacher. When the audience eventually sees them together on the steps outside the courthouse when Granny is released we can imagine that a relationship may form between the two.

Expanding the sub-plot of Max's concert thus allowed for a greater character arc for Aaron, and more subtlety and depth to emerge. It also impacted the role of the Teacher and her part grew substantially as this sub-plot developed. Her character arc moves from keen teacher to somewhat stressed teacher as the concert approaches, to noticing Max's dad Aaron, to becoming aware of Granny's plight, to helping Granny via the FaceBook group, to the possibility of romantic involvement with Aaron. None of this existed initially and the Teacher's role grew as I developed the idea of Max regularly talking to his classmates. The device of Max reporting on events in his Granny's life also provided a way of moving between two storylines: what was happening in

Granny's world and the build-up to Max's concert. This inter-cutting added pace to the story and the innocent tone associated with Max's storyline imbued Granny's storyline as well.

Just as I added to texture to the classroom scenes by contrasting Max's costume to those of other children, I added texture to Granny's hospital scenes by including the teenager texting in the background. Initially there was no one else in Granny's ward but the idea of having a teenager there who is never without her cell phone presented itself as a way of showing the negative uses of new media. Even when the teenager's friends are present and gathered around the bed they are all still on their cell phones rather than interacting with each other. The teenager is young and techno-savvy and she could easily offer to help Granny when she battles to use the laptop in the hospital but instead she ignores the opportunity. The sub-text here goes to the notion of age appropriateness: the teenager probably thinks an old lady like Granny should not be 'messing around' with computers, and besides, would not know how to use one even if she was taught. The final scene of Act 3 proves the lie to this when Granny is presented as someone who can teach others how to go online. The teenager avoids a real life opportunity to interact with, and help, another human being and stays immersed in the world afforded by her cell phone. I represented her negative reliance on technology as an emotional breakdown when her cell phone is stolen.

INT: GRANNY'S WARD - DAY

The teenager is hysterical. Nurses surround her and try to calm her down. One rushes in with an injection and tries to administer it. Granny looks on. She is all packed and ready to go home. Just then Josh enters with Sindi in tow. They exchange greetings.

JOSH

Time to go, Ma. Hey, what's happening here?

Josh looks over with concern at the scene happening around the teenager's bed.

GRANNY

Her cell phone got stolen.

I ended up cutting the above scene as it seemed inauthentic and an attempt to get laughs. Once again it was an example of my 'reaching for the funny' and was out of place with the range of tones I was striving for. In addition, I did not want the teenager in the hospital to be unconnected to anything else in the story and so Granny refers back to her in a later scene in Act 2 when she and Max are having a nighttime picnic. She says:

GRANNY

I hope you don't turn into one of those teenagers who are always texting.

The teenager is contrasted to Max, who is always keen to help his Granny and happy to share his knowledge, as evidenced in the scene when he shows her the Star Walk app on the iPhone. Another function of this scene is to advance the storyline: at this point Granny realizes that the satellite has not been 'put back'.

The relationship between Max and Granny holds the hope and the message that the young and the old can share the benefits and affordances of new media and that the young can teach the old. It is a sweet and pure relationship based on love and sincere interest in the other. Max has the potential to be a mentor to Granny and there are moments in the script, such as showing her the Star Walk app, that point to this possibility. The nighttime picnic scene epitomizes the complexity of tone that I have sometimes managed to achieve in the screenplay: slightly sad, very sweet and a little funny with a sub-text of important, serious questions posed to the audience.

4.5 Process

Initially I thought I would write a reflexive account of my screen writing process and I started to do this in May 2011. The extract below reflects the storyline ideas I was experimenting with at the time but subsequently moved away from entirely. I had been reading about life logging and was wondering if and how it could be something that Granny would do. I read several articles about life-logging, such as the one by Wolf (2010) mentioned in my journal extract below and I wondered if Granny should expand her horizons from simply going on the Internet to venture into life logging.

The goal of life logging is described as “to record and archive all information in one’s life. This includes all text, all visual information, all audio, all media activity, as well as all biological data from sensors on one’s body. The information would be archived for the benefit of the life-logger, and shared with others in various degrees as controlled by him/her” (The Technium in *Lifelogging* 2007). This already happens to an extent, thanks to the use of cell phones that come with photographic and video camera capabilities, and the tendency to share information and images via social media, but life logging takes it further than that. I could imagine Granny becoming intrigued with the idea of life logging

On 13th May 2011 I wrote the following:

*Today marks the start of more creative writing for my screenplay, after a very long break. Should I be concerned that today is Friday 13th? Today I wrote 3 pages of my screenplay, the part about Granny wanting a ‘data-driven’ life. This is pretty much based on my readings about life logging and self-quantification. The article by Gary Wolf, *The Data-Driven Life* (2010), provided the information about the laptop harness (which I find a very funny image) and the other forms of quantification such as the wearable tracking devices like blood-pressure cuffs, pulse-oximeters and accelerometers. The idea for the camera strapped to the head came from something I read about a researcher at MIT who wore a device like this for years so that he could log his life. This was before the small, digital cameras were available.*

I find the whole idea of life logging quite fascinating. There are people who take it way too far, like a guy in Wolf's article who actually records every idea he has ever had. He now has more than a million ideas recorded in a searchable database. This would probably qualify him as a 'geek'. One has to ask what the point is of all the data collection. Examples of people using self-quantification to cut down on drinking, or caffeine consumption are obviously goal orientated uses of it, something to aid behaviour modification. Wolf mentions Bo Adler, the guy with the computer on a harness, who was trying to get data so he could better understand and treat his sleep apnea. Wolf says "Adler's idea that we can - and should – defend ourselves against the imposed generalities of official knowledge is typical of pioneering self-trackers, and it shows how closely the dream of a quantified self resembles therapeutic ideas of self-actualisation, even as its methods are startlingly different" (Wolf 2010). This is pretty interesting. The psychological concept of self-actualisation is being equated with having a huge data bank about yourself. The first point is maybe more critical – that your own knowledge bank can be used as evidence to resist a 'one size fits all' approach.

Inspired by life logging, I wrote the following scene but ultimately decided to exclude it from the screenplay:

INT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Granny opens the door to Aaron. She is wearing a laptop suspended on a harness, an accelerometer, blood-pressure cuff, pulse oximeter and a video camera duct-taped to a swimming cap on her head. Aaron is dumbfounded.

AARON

No, man.

GRANNY

I want a data-driven life.

AARON

What?

GRANNY

I want a data-driven life.

AARON

What the hell is that?

GRANNY

It's where you collect information about yourself.

AARON

And...?

GRANNY

You collect information. Like, how many steps you take and how much you eat and how much you sleep and...

AARON (interrupting)

What the hell for?!

GRANNY

It's very important to have data.

AARON (interrupting)

It's very important to have a life.

They exchange looks.

AARON (cont.d)

I think you're taking this whole computer thing too far. You can't walk around like that. It's ridiculous. Nobody does that.

GRANNY

Actually they did it at MIT.

AARON

MIT?

GRANNY

That's a very famous university. Don't you know?

AARON

Ja, but you're not at MUT. You're not a bladdy scientist. People will think you're crazy. You're an old lady.

Granny looks hurt. Aaron realises what he's said.

AARON (cont.d)

I just don't want people to think you're crazy. I mean computers are fine and everything but Ma, this is... a little bit too much. I think there's a problem.

GRANNY

The problem is I don't have wireless broadband, that's what the problem is!

She turns on her heel and marches out of the room,
the laptop swiveling around her waist, banging into
the doorway as she passes.

GRANNY (cont.d)

Whoopsie.

I ultimately decided to exclude the scene from the final screenplay for a number of reasons, one being that I had not developed a storyline about Granny learning technology apart from the Internet so the scene had no connection to anything else in the plot. I also felt that the scene played as very over-the-top with Granny turning into a caricature of a real person. It illustrates the way I am pulled towards the funny, something I have come to realize I need to resist in my writing. The tone is wrong, more of a 'plus four' than the 'plus one' I was aiming for.

The idea of Granny using life logging is not altogether bad and I came to recognise that a powerful link existed between Granny and early users of life logging: they both shared the status of outsiders. Granny is an outsider to digital technology and if she became involved in life-logging she would still be an outsider from the mainstream because such people, especially those using large and conspicuous equipment, might be considered weird. If I created a protagonist who was interested in life-logging and using technology in this way I ran the risk of her becoming an irredeemable outsider, something I wanted to avoid.

If life logging becomes popularised in the future then I would consider writing a sequel in which Granny could experiment with it to show her increasing engagement with new media. The challenge will be to not play it for laughs but to find a way of Granny having a legitimate reason to explore life logging and for her to benefit from it via an increase in social and cultural capital. As with the present screenplay I would want any development of the storyline to endorse Selwyn's final stage of engagement with new media, namely 'participation in society'. I would want such a sequel to provide evidence that

all of DiMaggio and Hargattai's digital inequalities could be overcome and that Granny has become a skilled user of new media.

At that point, back in 2011, I thought it might be possible to create an on-going reflexive journal of my screenwriting process. However, I moved away from this idea because it felt like too much emphasis on writing: I was *writing* the screenplay and then *writing about writing*. I abandoned the idea of keeping an on-going journal and decided to write only occasional reflections.

By Monday 4th September 2012, sixteen months later, I had completed the first proper draft of the screenplay and wrote the following:

On reading through what I wrote above, some 16 months prior, I realize that the scenes of the 'data-driven' life that I had worked on never made it into the script. There is no reference to Granny experimenting with technology beyond the computer. Coming in at 92 pages it is a bit short and I wonder now if I should work in some of these ideas into the script. My agreement with my supervisor is to write 100 pages. A typical screenplay is 90 to 120 pages (90 minutes – 120 minutes screen time), so 100 pages fits into that model. I need to re-visit the script to improve it and I will look at the length at the same time as well as themes that could be more fully explored.

After this I stopped journaling altogether and decided instead to concentrate on the imminent interviews with Craig Freimond, which would form the basis of my case study of *Jozi*, as well as on the consultation with him for his feedback on my screenplay. I completed these interviews and consultations in late September 2012.

It was not easy to write and structure this screenplay. Combining formula structure with content that brought to life theories about new media whilst simultaneously trying to adhere to three acts and a particular duration was complicated. I found that I would write something based on an inspiration I had for a character or a storyline, or because my imagination had been sparked by

something I had read, rather than because it fitted in with some element of formula structure or new media theories.

In what follows I will try to explain how I wrote the screenplay. Not only was the screenplay difficult to write, but it is difficult to write about how I wrote it. Often I am trying to make a point about plot and I end up talking about character, or vice versa. As I attempted to order the information I found the categories somewhat 'slippery'.

I have already explained the various sources of inspiration for the storyline. Once I had the basic story idea, namely that an old woman who does not know how to use the Internet somehow manages to move a satellite, I started by drafting a story outline. Compared to what the story is now, this outline contained far less detail, was much shorter and much less complex. However, all the characters, except for Jack, were conceptualized right at the beginning.

As I added complexity I revised the story outline. I made up index cards for each sequence and stuck them up on the wall so that I could see the flow of the story and the apportionment of the acts. I got to a point where I started writing the screenplay, using screenplay format and the free online software *Celtx*. The revisions I made to the storyline were done directly to the script without going back to the outline and revising it first, although I did revise the synopsis (see Appendix 3) some time after completing the final script.

The consultation process with Freimond was extremely important and valuable to me as a screenwriter and I would highly recommend such a process to other screenwriters. During the consultation process Freimond suggested various revisions and advised that I go back to the story outline stage and re-do that first, before changing the script. His final suggestions were substantial and would have involved a total re-write. I did, in fact, begin such a revision, including new characters, starting at story outline and character biography stage once again but did not complete it as, after receiving feedback from another writer whose opinion I valued, I eventually decided to stick with my original story.

Freimond also advised that I write character biographies for the characters in the original, un-revised screenplay, which I then did, (see Appendix 4). I am not convinced about the value of writing character biographies after the characters have been conceptualized, except as a tool for communicating with prospective funders as, combined with a strong outline, it is a good way of conveying a sense of what the film will be like. However, the biographies I wrote are very detailed and, if written with the intention of selling the idea to funders, they would have been much shorter. I found that writing biographies for the new characters in the revised screenplay led me to add more detail to the characters, so there was value in the exercise.

When I made changes to the story I preferred to engage with the screenplay itself. I would think about it, work it out in my head and perhaps write a few rough notes on paper and then go straight back to the screenplay itself.

Freimond might argue that any such changes should entail returning to the outline stage. His more formal approach to writing a screenplay corresponds with much of the advice given in the mainstream books on structure and could be summarized as follows:

Start with biographies of the key characters, follow this with a broad one pager to indicate content and style, then work the beats making sure the story world is solid. Ask about the characters in the situation, what their relationships are, what their interrelationships are, what they want from the protagonist and what the protagonist ultimately wants for herself. Then move on to structure, thinking about the first act, second act and third act and the balance between them, all the while asking about the on-going relationships in the story, whether the steps between plot points are too big and whether logic is preserved.

This last point about whether the steps between plot points are too big is a matter of choice and reflects the style of the screenwriter. It is possible to write a cohesive screenplay that has big jumps in time and big ellipses between plot points. When I was first writing the screenplay I found that I tended towards big jumps between plot points. What I learned from Freimond is that having more

plot points/beats and having smaller moves between plot points was better at creating empathy and buy-in for the protagonist. Whereas the ellipses helped with pace and also reflected the flips in tone that I was after, an unintended consequence was that the emphasis shifted to plot and away from character. Ultimately I was persuaded that more plot points/beats that were placed closer together was preferable and I spent time revising the screenplay to achieve this. An analysis of the beats in *Jozi* (see Appendix 2) shows how many incremental beats Freimond used in his screenplay.

Freimond also suggested that I go back and work the beats before I engaged with the script itself, but again I preferred to work with the screenplay directly, reshaping it by deleting, adding and adjusting scenes. It was a more organic and less formal way of working and I found that the action of engaging directly with the screenplay sometimes led to inspiration and that tone emerged and could be experimented with in the process of organizing the content.

In between writing I was also thinking about the script problems and how to solve them and bringing those ideas to the next writing session. In the process of writing I was re-investigating the story, the plot, the tone, the characters and the structure. At times I felt like it was never going to get to a point where all the script problems were resolved.

In February 2013 I returned to the screenplay after not having engaged with it for about two months. I printed it out and reading it on paper was a different experience compared to reading it on the computer. It was obvious to me that there were big ellipses and not enough 'small steps' in the beginning. I became enthusiastic about working on the script again and did substantial revision to it over the next few days. Firstly, I distributed the dialogue from the first scene over three scenes, including new scenes that I wrote, so that there was more pace and only one beat per scene. I wrote quite a few extra scenes in Act 1 to show Granny's reaction to the death of her spouse, to build empathy for her and to introduce the motif of the false teeth in the glass of water, which represented Granddad's absence. I introduced the idea that the brothers had different perspectives on Granny's future, which would provide conflict

between the two of them. I added in the scene with the bank manager giving her a debit card which provided logic for how she would find herself at the ATM later and fall prey to the Friendly Thief and also for how she would be able to buy goods online. After the scene where she gets robbed I broke up the dialogue between Josh and Granny and dispersed it among different scenes so that each scene would have only one beat. I also had Josh offer to teach Granny how to use the computer to bank online and play crosswords, which introduced this much earlier in the plot. Thus, I was able to remove this scene from the hospital sequence where I had previously situated it and reduce the number of scenes set in the hospital. Josh teaching Granny to go online now happens at Granny's house instead of in the hospital.

In the wake scene I added dialogue for Aaron to show that he lacks sensitivity. He introduces the retirement home idea to Granny, which leads to Josh intervening in the conversation. The difference in attitude and sensitivity between the sons is highlighted.

I changed the way Granny starts to drive: instead of buying a new car she drives Granddad's old Mazda. I also introduced the idea that Aaron wanted control over the car and, indirectly, control over Granny. I had already changed the golf cart scene to add in logic and make it clear that the golf cart came from Joan, the neighbour. Now I added in dialogue to show that Granny's motivation to drive it was because she considered it a way of 'finding her driving legs' again. I had Aaron arrive in the Mazda and, by the end of the scene, reluctantly hand the car keys over to Granny.

After the accident scene I made Josh unaware of Sindi and start to notice her only once he knows that Granny is okay. This aligned more with his sensitive nature and his concern that Granny might have been seriously injured in the accident. I toned down the scene between Josh and Sindi in the Superintendent's office so that it played in a more innocent way. Overall the hospital sequence ran shorter as I had moved the scene of teaching Granny the computer to earlier in the plot. I also took out the scene where the teenager has her phone stolen as I felt the tone was mis-judged. I wrote some new

dialogue between Granny and Max to reveal that she quite likes the computer and believes she is a 'natural' at it. This helped provide logic for the later scenes where it is revealed that she has been shopping online.

I spent some time going through all the action and removing 'is' and 'are' from the descriptions. This is a useful technique as it made me consider what exactly the characters were doing and select words that identified it, as well as helping the action descriptions read better.

After Granny buys her own computer Aaron is installing the software on it and discovers that Granny has been shopping online, using the laptop that Josh had loaned her. Granny then reads the newspaper article about the Satellite Sleuth, which leads to Aaron believing that Granny is the culprit. I extended the dialogue here to show that Granny does not believe she could have moved the satellite. This sets up the next scene with Max and Granny having a nighttime picnic in the garden. I could then reveal a change in mood from Granny where she is described as 'somber' and Max says "Talk, Granny". This suggests that she is mulling over the possibility that she might, in fact, be the one who moved the satellite. When Aaron comes to pick up Max later on and finds that Granny has been looking at bereavement support groups online he feels more compassionate towards Granny. At Max's concert this softer side to Aaron is revealed when we see him as a doting father and also witness his attraction to the teacher.

The morning after Max's sleepover Josh and Sindi arrive and I added in dialogue from Josh to show that Granny had told him about the argument with Aaron and that he did not believe Granny was involved. He says to Aaron: "Seriously dude? You think she moved a satellite? Come on". Aaron seems a bit less certain of his accusation at this point, which provides credibility to the plot.

The party sequence was a bit of a challenge because by that stage the tone of the script was a plus four: Granny's hair colour, the dress, the pizza order, the breaking down the door, the child injuring an arm were all considerably over

the top. I worked on this sequence and got the tone down to about a plus three. I decided that it was appropriate to leave it like this and let it play as a screwball sequence: it contrasted tonally with Act 1 and showed the effect that meeting Jack and hearing his “it’s your life” advice, has had on her. It also sets us up for the reversal later on when, at Max’s concert, she finally realises that there is a real possibility she was the one who hacked the NASA site. It is at the concert that Granny’s doubts about her online activity reach a peak and are followed by her dream about putting back the satellite. This provides logic and momentum for her to then try to go back into the NASA site to ‘fix’ the problem. Once she and the family are accessing the NASA site the Military intelligence burst in and arrest Granny, which is how I had originally structured this scene. Thus Granny’s emotional arc across this part of Act 2 is:

1. Aaron accuses her of moving the satellite and says it’s time for her to go to the retirement home: she does not buy his accusation but is upset by the argument.

2. Granny and Max have a nighttime picnic: Granny is mulling over the argument and the possibility that she moved the satellite. She loses confidence in her computer skills and tells Max she will watch him go online and not go online herself. However, after he falls asleep she does go online, off script, but only to search for bereavement groups.

3. Off script she tells Josh about the argument and Aaron’s accusation and decides to go with him and Sindi to see one more retirement home. Aaron is put on the back foot by this development and also starts to have doubts about his accusation when Josh clearly does not believe it.

4. Granny meets Jack: her mood lifts considerably thanks to Jack’s attention and wise words. She decides to have a party.

5. Granny prepares for her party: her mood is at a peak, illustrated by the hair dying scene, the dressing scene and the dancing. The party is a success.

6. Granny watches the weatherman disintegrate on screen the morning after the party. Once again she begins to doubt herself.

7. The family go to Max’s concert: Granny’s doubts reach a peak and precipitate her dream which lead to her believing that she is indeed

responsible for the satellite move, in turn leading to her going online again to try to fix the problem.

Granny's emotional arc, described above, corresponds to changes in tone. Aaron's anger suggests a heavier tone, but Granny resists his chiding, standing up to him and asserting herself, thus lifting the tone. She is pleased with her online purchases and doesn't believe she could be the satellite sleuth. She comforts herself with the idea that the problem has been resolved. However, during the nighttime picnic with Max she has had time to reflect, she starts to doubt herself and to miss Granddad and so the tone becomes pensive and poignant. At the retirement home Granny is emotional and sheds a tear but Jack's presence lifts her up and the scene ends on an optimistic tone. We feel we have turned a corner. Granny's preparation for the party is upbeat and the introduction to the party itself is slapstick, lifting the tone. The introduction of Josh's colleague at the party creates a section of heavier tone because he is presented as a somewhat unsavory character who leers at Sindi. Overall though, the party is up-beat and happy and is contrasted with the morning after scene where Granny watches the weather man on television and realizes that the problem with the satellite still exists, thus disrupting the tone and reflecting this part of the character arc with a more serious tone.

I was fairly happy with most of Act 3, particularly with the pace, as it moved along quite briskly. One problem I ran into was that I had originally envisaged Nelson Mandela watching Carte Blanche and seeing Granny's story, phoning someone and asking for a favour. With Mandela's advanced age and poor health I decided it would be better to replace him with another character and chose Archbishop Desmond Tutu instead. Eventually I cut this section altogether and just showed the detectives using the 'find my Apple' app to watch the thief on screen and log the co-ordinates of the stolen laptop before setting off to arrest him.

I toned down Granny driving to the hall and showed that she could drive quite well, contrary to how she had driven in Act 1. Once at the church I initially had

her accidentally hit Aaron in the crotch with the car door as she went to get out, again an example of misplaced tone but I replaced this with a 'near miss'. Having Granny dressed in white and the dialogue "are you sure you want to do this" implies that Granny and Jack are going to get married, especially as their destination is a church. Hopefully, it will be a surprise for the audience when they realise that Granny is using the church hall as a venue to teach old people how to use the Internet, providing a twist to the ending.

My initial ending was very much a 'plus four' tone: I had ended the story with a hall full of old people learning how to use computers and Granny on Heelies (sneakers with wheels) cruising up and down the aisles helping people. I had concluded the script with a power failure and Granny saying "Eish, Eskom!" a reference to the frequent power failures in South Africa and the dislike for Eskom, the suppliers of electricity, a moment which suggested that life was going on with its usual challenges. Reflecting on this scene later it was glaringly obvious that it was far too over the top, almost Shusteresque. Having Granny skating around on Heelies seemed ridiculous and the reference to Eskom came out of nowhere. I replaced this with Granny signing up old people for a course on learning how to use the Internet with Max at her side and Jack and others in the background. I wanted to avoid focusing on the possible relationship between Jack and Granny at the end as this might have suggested that things were okay because Granny had a man in her life, which was not the intended message. Granny busy signing up people along with the sign 'all proceeds to the Nelson Mandela children's fund' in the background provided a sense of a positive present and future for Granny. The association with Nelson Mandela reflects positively on Granny and reinforces the idea that her choices and actions are valid. Most importantly for the scene, I added in the final dialogue between Aaron and Josh:

JOSH

She's going to be okay, you know.

AARON

I know.

This suggests that Granny has won her battle for independence and will continue to stay on in her house and that Aaron finally accepts this fact. It is an open ending and suggests that Granny has options for her future, is in control of her life and has a valuable contribution to make. It proposes that we must *live* until we die. Tonally, it strikes the right note as it comes down from the humour to settle in a more realistic place.

Halperin states that “the screenplay doesn’t represent the totality of [the character’s] existence. Once “The End” appears on screen the audience should feel the characters have completed only one part of their journey. It’s up to us as writers to provide enough information so they can imagine what the future holds” (2000:16). In a similar vein, I want the audience to believe that Granny is at the beginning of an exciting new part of her life, that she has something to offer and that she is valued for who she is. Hopefully, the ending suggests all of this and Granny’s personal journey is recognised by broad family audiences.

4.6 Conclusion

Many of the readings that I have cited to support my development of character and content were done after the initial creative writing. I believe it would have been more difficult if I had approached it the other way around, that is, engaged with new media theory first and then tried to work it into a story. I suspect this would not have been an effective way to approach an essentially creative task and would have placed obstacles in the path of the process. Working this way round – inventing characters and finding content first, then starting the creative writing and developing plot and structure, then realizing that the characters and plot articulated important points about the so-called digital divide or digital spectrum, then reading new media theory whilst continuing with the creative work, seems to have been the right way of going about it, at least for me. The theory so often corresponded with what I created in the story, what I sensed to be true and what I intuitively knew was accurate that it served as endorsement for the screenplay. As such, the theory has validated the storyline and the experiences of the characters.

The theories of screenplay structure, by Vogler (1999), McKee (1999), Field (2003) and others, are useful to know but do not provide answers when the writer runs out of ideas. A blueprint for the essential creative work that lies at the heart of screenplay construction – that of inventing an original, credible story, peopled with believable characters – is not to be found in such theories. What they do provide however, is the structure on which to hang a story and it is a formulaic, familiar structure that is perceived as non-threatening and comfortable. I have found it useful to employ the three-act structure but add a twist to it by playing with tone through expression of content, character, dialogue, plot events and the use of juxtaposition and inversion. This has been something of an experiment and only if and when my screenplay is turned into a film will I be able to assess the ultimate success, or otherwise, of my screenplay. I have worked with tone not only in order to distinguish my screenplay from other formulaically structured work, but to add layers of meaning to the story. On the one hand the screenplay could be read in a superficial way, a funny story about what happens when an old woman goes on the Internet, but on the other hand, the deeper levels of meaning are there for those who are alerted to them through the use of tone. I believe it is easier to work with tone when the subject matter is serious and it is much more challenging to attempt to do this when writing in the genre of comedy.

I have benefitted from the script consultation process and I would highly recommend it to other screenwriters as it allows for a sounding board against which ideas can be tested. One caveat, however, is that the consultant chosen shares the sensibilities of the screenwriter. Despite his many criticisms and critiques of my work, Freimond also offered substantial encouragement to me and said, “The more I think about it, the more I think it is wonderful and relevant and also actually commercial, if you get it right. ... From the first moment you mentioned the title I thought, “this is really good”. ...“It’s an idea that’s really got legs. ...Not only that, I think it’s also got an audience if you did it right. ...There are people all around the world facing this exact issue” (Freimond 2012). In the lonely, frustrating and arduous process of screenwriting such encouragement goes a long way in providing the motivation required to continue.

The parallels that exist between Freimond's film and screenplay *Jozi* and my own screenplay, particularly with regard to the use of tone and the central theme of searching for home and a place to belong, suggests to me that these elements may be identifiers of an emerging form of South African comedy. Such comedy might at first glance appear to be lightweight but at closer inspection reveals itself to be tonally complex, to have multi-layered meanings and to rest on a bed of serious questions that are being posed to the audience. As such, they expand the rather narrow existing understanding of South African comedy.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

My research has led me to consider the context within which my own personal creative practice exists in South Africa. To this end I have examined the phenomenon of micro-budget Bubblegum films and their increasingly assertive presence and considered what this means for screenplay writing and film production in South Africa. At the moment micro-budget films exist alongside mainstream films in South Africa, but I have suggested that there is a possibility that they may come to define the South African film industry. The screenwriting and production methods employed by micro-budget filmmakers are at odds with traditional models and more research needs to be done to examine if and how such methods impact and contribute to creative practice in South Africa. My own screenwriting practice is at odds with those currently found in the micro-budget model.

I have pointed out that South Africa is on the cusp of migration to Digital Terrestrial Transmission (DTT) and that once this occurs the new multi-channel environment will emerge leading to fragmented audiences and a need for high volumes of low-cost content, a factor which may stimulate the growth of the micro-budget film sector. At the same time South Africa's lack of prolific, affordable broadband means that Internet connectivity is not easily available to all citizens. The impact of this for screenwriters and filmmakers is that online options afforded for the distribution of films - whether mainstream or micro-budget - is greatly reduced. Traditional cinema attendance is stagnating and there is a need to expand the formats in which films are distributed and viewed but insufficient Internet penetration, high costs and the slow rate at which films download in South Africa are all impediments to this. However, I believe that it is important that scriptwriters such as myself continue to question, experiment and extend the craft of screenwriting and continue to write scripts that are authentic to their unique experiences.

My central creative research task – that of writing a screenplay – occurred against the backdrop of the above mentioned factors and I felt the need to account for it in this dissertation in order to provide a substantial context in which my creative work could be situated.

An anticipated outcome of this dissertation is that my exploration and account of the screenwriting process, accompanied by my contextual writings of the South African filmmaking and screenwriting environment, may provide other screenwriters with the information and insight necessary to hone their craft within the South African context. This would include practicing and aspiring screenwriters as well as those who teach screenwriting at institutions of higher learning.

The accounts of my experiments with tone may encourage other screenwriters to experiment with tone or other aspects of screenplay form and give insight to filmmakers and academics who strive for a deeper understanding of screenplays. The question of tone is a complex and difficult one with which to engage and my attempts to negotiate around issues of tone will serve to highlight its centrality and importance for the screenwriter, in particular the screenwriter wishing to write a comedy.

My engagement with the craft of screenwriting and my reflection on the process have, I believe, served to hone my craft and to make me a more skilled practitioner. This experience and the lessons that I have learned in undertaking this process will inform the content of my teaching and deepen my understanding of the difficulties student screenwriters face. One such problem is the sourcing of content that is fresh. My detailed account of how I sourced and researched the content of my screenplay will provide a template of sorts for new writers who are at a loss for where or how to find ideas for a story. I tracked the relationship between my initial ideas for content and the later research I undertook and this description should be useful to other creative practitioners. I believe this is an important contribution of my research as very little, if anything, has been written along similar lines in the South African context. Similarly, my account of the process of writing the screenplay, which

includes my reasoning for the changes I made along the way, is a unique contribution to local knowledge in this area.

At the outset of my research I had several technical questions about screenwriting which included questions about the best structure for a screenplay in the context in which I was working and the extent to which the traditional Hollywood models applied, whether alternative models were more suitable, or whether I could use formula structure to convey provocative content. What I found was that I needed to experiment less with form and more with tone to achieve the goals of the screenplay and that I could, in fact, employ a formula structure and combine it with flips in tone to create a fresh, engaging and compelling screenplay which, in its most successful incarnation, will act as an entertaining form of consciousness raising for the audience around the questions of the role of old women and their relationship to new media.

My encounters with Freimond, who acted as a script consultant to me, have provided me with a model for my future engagement with other screenwriters, either as a script consultant myself, as a teacher during tutorials, or even informally when I interact with my peers. A consultation process with a screenwriter whose work you admire is an invaluable aid to the screenwriting process, provided that there is an artistic alignment between the two parties.

An important realisation I arrived at is that a structural and thematic analysis of a screenplay that is similar in tone to the one you hope to write is a very useful step in the screenwriting process. In my case it was Freimond's screenplay and film *Jozi* (2010), combined with the in-depth interviews I conducted with him, that gave me a much deeper insight into the screenwriting process and highlighted the central importance of tone in a screenplay. As it may not always be possible or appropriate to interview the screenwriter an in-depth analysis of a tonally similar screenplay may be the major way of becoming aware of how structure, thematics and tone can be used. To this end the chapter on *Jozi* provides a framework that can be applied to the analysis of other screenplays.

And finally...

The best outcome for my screenplay is that it be recognized, optioned, funded and turned into a film, if not for theatrical release then for screening on a broadcast television channel. Given that mainstream filmmaking is such an expensive business and that my screenplay is unsuitable for the micro-budget filmmaking model, having my screenplay turned into a film is by no means guaranteed. However, there may be other uses for it, apart from realisation as a feature film. It occurs to me that this screenplay may provide an excellent vehicle for the introduction and teaching of new media theory, possibly at high school level, where concepts such as the digital divide and digital spectrum could be introduced along with an exploration of media affordances.

Additionally, notions of gender and age appropriateness could be critiqued as a result of reading the screenplay. This aim, of proposing the screenplay as a set work at high school level, is one which I wish to pursue and may prove to be a major means for distributing my creative work. If the screenplay proves to be popular among scholars this fact might attract investors and funders to the project.

The writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "The beginning and end of all literary activity is the reproduction of the world that surrounds me, by means of the world that is within me, all things being grasped, related, recreated, moulded and reconstructed in a personal form and an original manner" (Lensch 2013). Goethe was writing about literature, but I believe his point applies to screenwriting, which is a particular kind of literary activity in that the screenplay is written with the intention that it undergoes translation from the page to the screen. My screenplay – its storyline, its characters, its form and tone – is an expression of my personal inner and outer worlds. My aim throughout the process of writing the screenplay has been to externalize and translate these worlds into a form that will move the audience towards a recognition of the realities that I see, experience and negotiate. Humour and manipulation of tone have been my companions and have provided the conduit for me to access my inner worlds and externalise them for others.

As more practice-based research is (hopefully) undertaken by other academics in South Africa, the body of information pertaining to screenwriting practices will become more available to emerging and professional screenwriters. There is no local work that is similar to my dissertation available and thus there is a space for research that seeks to combine theory and practice into praxis in order to contribute to a body of knowledge about South African screenwriting. This sharing of knowledge is important both academically and professionally. An accumulation of such research would lead to insight into both the processes and products of South African screenwriters and may enable researchers to identify common constituents in such screenplays, or even the presence of a South African voice, if such a thing exists. In my particular screenplay I have sought to create a viable cross-cultural, inter-generational, inter-racial South African family story and the accompanying dissertation has contributed to analyzing and foregrounding the relevance of such a story and the processes by which it has been created. Finally, the similarities I have found, thematically and tonally, between my own writing and that of Freimond raise the intriguing question of whether a new form of comedy can emerge in South African film. Such a form of comedy is multi-layered and tonally complex and expands the existing definition of South African comedy.

Chapter 6

Original Screenplay:

When Granny Went on the Internet

I have chosen to include the screenplay as a chapter in this thesis, rather than as an appendix, to indicate its centrality to my work.

When Granny Went on the Internet

By

Cary Burnett

FADE IN

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An array of travel related items lie strewn on a bed: passports, a glossy brochure of a sea cruise and an empty suitcase. A bright swimming costume drops into the suitcase, a frilly skirt, a pair of high-heeled sparkly shoes - we tilt up, expecting to see a young girl and instead we see GRANNY: plump, grey-haired and 75. In the background GRANDAD, 75, busies himself packing the other bags.

GRANNY

It's going to be just like the Titanic!

GRANDAD

I certainly hope not. That didn't end too well.

GRANNY

No, man. Not the way it ended. When they stood at the front and she went like this...

Granny assumes a Titanic pose, arms outstretched, head back. Grandad laughs. He moves to stand behind her, copying her pose.

GRANDAD

I'm king of the world!

Tilting his head back proves to be too much and he loses his balance. Granny and Grandad clutch each other and totter around for a moment.

GRANNY

Woopsie.

GRANDAD

Mustn't do any damage before the holiday starts.

Granny goes to a cupboard and removes a large jar of coins, crosses to the suitcase and begins to put it in.

GRANDAD

Are you really going to take that?

GRANNY

Of course. I've been saving this for a long time and I'm going to buy something for each of the Grand kids.

(CONTINUED)

GRANDAD

At least there isn't a weight limit on the ship like here is on planes. That thing must weigh a ton.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Granny has two mugs set out and makes tea. She is wearing large sunglasses. Grandad enters holding a travel wallet card.

GRANDAD (CONTIN.)

You know you don't actually have to take cash? You can just pay with a travel wallet like this.

He shows her a debit card for foreign travel.

GRANNY

Didn't you organize all the traveller's cheques?

GRANDAD

It's better to just take one of these.

He indicates the travel wallet card again.

GRANNY

I don't like all of that modern stuff. I prefer real money.

GRANDAD

This is just as good. Actually it's safer. You really don't have to take the actual money. Why are you wearing sunglasses?

GRANNY

I want to break them in before the trip.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny and Grandad get into bed. Grandad settles down immediately while Granny spends some time arranging the blankets and pillows.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Did you renew the passports?

GRANDAD

Done. I told you already.

GRANNY

Did you book the taxi to collect us tomorrow?

GRANDAD

Done.

Granny looks lovingly at Grandad. She moves closer and wraps her chubby arms around him.

GRANNY

It's going to be a wonderful holiday. And a wonderful anniversary.

They kiss.

GRANDAD

Goodnight, my woman. Only twelve hours to go.

GRANNY

Goodnightmy man. Only eleven hours, fifty nine minutes and twenty seconds to go.

They chuckle.

GRANDAD

Sweet dreams.

Grandad turns over and takes out his teeth. He pops them into a glass of water. Granny takes off her hearing aid. Grandad switches off the bedside light. Granny's face is illuminated dimly as she lies in the dark, eyes open, too excited to sleep. Eventually her eyelids droop. The sound of the sea takes us to:

EXT. CRUISE LINER POOL DECK - DAY

Granny dreams: She lounges on the pool deck of the cruise liner. Over-weight and undeterred, she wears a bright swimming costume, her head encased in a plastic, flower-encrusted swimming cap, her lips wrapped around a straw that rests in an exotic cocktail. She stands up and joins Grandad who shimmies by doing the Conga, bringing up the rear of a long snake of other passengers. She and Grandad battle to keep up with the younger revelers. Finally, they reach the bow, the theme song from Titanic swells and they stand, arms outstretched, hair blowing in the wind. Grandad's wig comes off and the Titanic theme song abruptly grinds to a halt.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

The harsh sound of an alarm clock heralds the start of the big day. Granny's eyes snap open. She switches on the light and puts on her hearing aid. She tries to jump out of bed, but ends up rocking back and forth on the edge before she can finally stand. She is chatting ten to the dozen.

GRANNY

Ho-kay! Let's get the show on the road. Today is the day! Can you believe it! I want you to tell me which outfit is better for the ship...

She opens her cupboard and starts taking out one vividly bright outfit after the next, tossing them behind her onto the bed.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

What do you think, this one OR... this one?

Grandad lies silently. Granny pauses and turns, holding another colourful outfit in her hands. She faces the bed and Grandad.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Sweetheart?

Granny's expression changes as she realizes that something is not quite right. She goes over and shakes Grandad. No response. She shakes him harder. He lies motionless. Granny drops to her knees next to the bed. She places her hand on Grandad's chest but there is no breathing. She grabs for the phone next to the bed and dials furiously. It rings for a long time before someone answers.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Aaron!

The person on the other end can be heard faintly. They sound foreign.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Wrong number.

She puts the phone down and tries to regain her composure. She dials again, this time slowly and carefully because her hands are shaking.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Aaron. It's Mom. I need you to come over right away. Call Josh.

Granny's kneels next to Grandad's lifeless body, overwhelmed with fear, pain and confusion.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Grandad, in the same position, now lies inside a black body bag. The loud and aggressive sound of the zip being pulled up on the body bag breaks the silence. Granny, AARON (40, over-worked older son) and JOSH (37, very good-looking younger son) stand silently around the bed. Two young UNDERTAKERS with inappropriately spikey hair styles and cheap, ill-fitting suits are going through their paces.

UNDERTAKER 1

Can you stand back please, mam.
We're going to put your husband on the gurney now.

Undertaker 2 wheels the gurney forward alongside the bed and tries unsuccessfully to get it to fold out. After several attempts Undertaker 1 joins in the effort and finally, with a swift kick to the side of the contraption, manages to get it to unfold. They attempt to adjust the height of the gurney to align with the bed. First it soars up too high, then it collapses down to the floor. Finally they get it to the right height and slide Grandad's body across on to it. Undertaker 1 mops his brow. Granny, Aaron and Josh remain frozen and speechless throughout.

UNDERTAKER 1

Thank you. We'll take your husband now.

They wheel the body out, knocking against the bedside table which holds the glass containing Grandad's teeth. The water slops out.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The water settles in the glass containing Grandad's teeth, the light changes on it as time moves forward from day to night. Granny lies on her side of the bed, eyes open, staring through the silence at Grandad's teeth in the glass. His side of the bed stretches out, vast and empty.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

The sun's early rays creep onto Grandad's side of the bed. Granny lies in the same position as before, her eyes open, still staring at the false teeth in the glass of water on the bedside table. She gets up slowly and with difficulty and takes a few steps to her slippers which sit juxtaposed next to Grandad's large ones. She takes a moment to slide her feet into the slippers and then shuffles off to the bathroom.

INT. GRANNY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Granny, finishes cleaning her teeth and drops her red toothbrush into the cup next to Grandad's blue one. For a moment the two toothbrushes rattle companionably together.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Granny, now dressed in one of her overly bright outfits, surveys the suitcases which stand grouped together in the corner of the bedroom. With great effort she lugs one across the carpet and tries to lift it onto the bed. Josh enters as she is doing this.

JOSH

Ma, wait. Let me help you with this. It's too heavy for you.

GRANNY

It's fine, Josh. I can manage.

JOSH

Let me help you, ma, please.

Granny relinquishes the suitcase and Josh places it carefully on the bed. He looks at Granny wondering what to do next.

JOSH (CONT'D)

What do you want to do with this?

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

I don't know, actually.

Josh decides to unzip the suitcase and open it. Grandad's clothes are revealed all neatly packed inside. They both stare at the contents for a long minute.

INT. GRANNY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Granny sits alone at a sunny breakfast table sipping a cup of tea. Next to her a boiled egg and a piece of toast remain untouched. The sound of the washing machine can be heard in the background. She stares out of the window at Grandad's clothes fluttering on the washing line. Josh watches Aaron fixing a window latch, his tools spread out all around him. Aaron finishes and indicates to Josh to follow him out of the kitchen. Soon their voices can be heard very faintly from the passageway.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Josh and Aaron whisper to one another, afraid that Granny will overhear their conversation.

JOSH

This is not the time to be talking about what she's going to do. Just give her a chance. She's just lost her husband.

AARON

Well, we've got to talk about it sooner or later. It's already been three days. What's she going to do with this place? It's going to be too much for her to look after.

JOSH

She's not going to want to move. She's happy here. Just let her be.

AARON

This place is falling apart. Check.

He reaches over and turns a cupboard handle. It comes off in his hand.

AARON (CONT'D)

Who's gonna do all the maintenance and stuff? I'll tell you who. It'll be me.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
No it won't.

AARON
Yes, it will.

JOSH
No, it won't.

AARON
It will.

JOSH
It won't, man!

AARON
Listen with Dad's pension money she could maybe afford to go to one of those retirement places where they really look after you. They'll take care of her.

JOSH
She can take care of herself. She knows how to do things.

Just then the sound of dishes clattering to the floor and breaking is heard from the kitchen.

GRANNY O.S
Woopsie.

Aaron casts a skeptical look at Josh.

JOSH
(calling out) You okay, ma?

GRANNY O.S
I'm fine. No problem!

JOSH
Just give her a chance to catch her breath. A retirement place is not the answer. They won't look after her the way Dad did.

AARON
Well he's gone now, isn't he? And where does that leave us?

Granny enters carrying a dustpan of broken crockery.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Nothing serious. Just an old plate. Or two. What are you boys talking about?

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - DAY

Granny tips the broken plates into the dustbin. As she straightens up her eyes focus on the garage. The door is open and the tail end of an old Mazda is visible. She contemplates it for a moment.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Granny enters the garage clutching car keys and a remote control. She surveys the old car uncertainly. She tries the car door. It is locked. She points the remote at the car and presses a button. The garage door starts to close behind her.

GRANNY

Woopsie.

She quickly presses the remote again and the garage door rises. She presses the remote and tries to open the car door again, but this time she triggers the car alarm which begins to wail and screech. Josh and Aaron appear in the background. Josh rushes in looking worried whilst Aaron stays in the driveway, covering his ears.

JOSH

(shouting) Ma, what's happening?

Granny looks somewhat bewildered as he takes the keys and remote from her and stops the alarm. She composes herself and after a moment she puts out her hand for the keys. Josh hands them over hesitantly.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Do you need to go somewhere, ma?
I'll take you.

GRANNY

I'm just wondering what to do. I'm going to need to start driving again.

Josh processes this information and tries to choose his words carefully.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Ma, do you really think that's the best thing?

GRANNY

Why not? I've had my license for 40 years.

JOSH

Ya, but you haven't driven for 25 of those.

GRANNY

And so?

JOSH

Aaron won't like it.

GRANNY

Oh, Aaron. He worries too much. One or two little accidents and he thinks I can't cope.

Aaron enters.

AARON

What's going on?

EXT. SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY

The Mazda pulls up outside the shopping centre. Granny gets out of the passenger side and walks round to the driver's side revealing that it is Aaron who is driving.

AARON

Are you sure you'll be okay, mom?

GRANNY

Of course, I told you I've just got to do a few things.

AARON

Are you sure you don't want a lift home?

GRANNY

Oh, Aaron. Stop worrying. I don't know how long I'll be. I'll make my own way home.

Granny toddles off into the shopping centre while Aaron reluctantly drives away.

INT. BANK - DAY

Granny and the BANK MANAGER sit on opposite sides of a desk. Between them lies Grandad's death certificate and on top of that the Bank Manager places a brand new debit card.

BANK MANAGER

Fortunately, you'll have access to some funds straight away, thanks to the fact that your husband had the foresight to set up an account in your name. He was a wise man. Now, you'll find it much more convenient to use this card rather than coming into the bank every time you want to draw money. It's also a debit card so you can use it to pay for things.

Granny stares blankly at the ATM card.

BANK MANAGER (CONT'D)

My assistant will show you.

EXT. ATM - DAY

Granny and the young BANK ASSISTANT are standing at the ATM going through the steps involved in using the card.

BANK ASSISTANT

And that's all there is to it. Just remember to keep your PIN number in a safe place and don't tell it to anyone.

GRANNY

Oh, I wouldn't do that.

BANK ASSISTANT

Great! Well, I'll leave you to it then. Have a nice day!

The bank assistant strides off in her short skirt and high heels leaving Granny alone to make her withdrawal.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The new ATM card lies on the bedside table as Granny readies herself for bed. Grandad's suitcase, now half empty, is still on the bed where Josh left it days before. Granny pulls back the covers as far as she can with the suitcase in

(CONTINUED)

the way, gets into bed and switches off the bedside light. She stares past the shadow of the suitcase to Grandad's teeth that still rest in the glass next to his side of the bed. Finally she closes her eyes. The sound of people talking in the background takes us to:

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - DAY

The wake. Several vases of flowers and condolence cards stand next to framed pictures of Grandad. The lounge overflows with people who have come to Granny's house after the funeral including Aaron, Josh, little MAX (Aaron's adopted son, 9, mixed race, bright), FAMILY MEMBERS and JOAN, the neighbour. People bustle around making tea, offering sandwiches and chatting. Despite the crowd Granny sits alone in an island of grief.

FAMILY MEMBER 1

What a shock, it was so sudden. He was always so fit for his age.

JOAN

I know, totally unexpected. Shame.

Little Max approaches Granny who is sitting huddled on the couch. He climbs up next to her holding a toy space craft and hugs her.

MAX

I love you Granny.

GRANNY

I know you do, sweetheart.

MAX

You can keep my space craft if you want. It's my favourite one.

Max holds out the toy space craft. Granny begins to cry. Max looks worried. Aaron joins them on the couch.

AARON

(to Max) Why don't you see if Auntie has got Granny's tea ready? That's a good boy.

Aaron puts his arm awkwardly around Granny's shoulders. They sit in silence. Joan From Next Door approaches.

JOAN

I'm going to bring you a nice dinner tonight, Sylvia.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Thank you, Joan

JOAN

And you know if there's anything you need, I'm here to help.

GRANNY

Thank you.

One of the Aunties arrives with a cup of tea and hands it to Granny. She takes it and sips it quietly. Aaron looks as if he wants to say something. Eventually he comes out with:

AARON

Mom, I know there's no right time to talk about this but we need to discuss a few things.

Granny continues drinking her tea.

AARON (CONT'D)

Like, what are you going to do, mom? You can't carry on staying here.

Josh, who stands in the background talking to friends, becomes aware of what Aaron is saying. He can't believe that his brother has chosen this moment to broach the subject of Granny's future.

AARON (CONT'D)

There are some really nice retirement places out there, you know. Maybe it's time to consider where you want to live.

GRANNY

I think I'll just carry on living here.

AARON

You've got to keep your options open, mom. This place needs a lot of upkeep and now that dad's not around...well, you've got to keep your options open.

Josh can't take any more of his brother's insensitivity and goes over to them.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
How're you doing, Mom?

AARON
I was just suggesting to Ma that maybe she should be thinking about going into a retirement place.

GRANNY
I don't want to go. I'm staying here.

JOSH
Relax, Ma. You don't have to go anywhere.

Josh gives Aaron a look.

JOSH (CON'T)
We don't have to talk about this now. And we're here, Ma. We'll help you.

GRANNY (INTERRUPTS)
I don't really need any help. I'm fine. I can do everything.

JOSH (CON'T)
I know, Ma. Don't worry.

AARON
I need something to drink.

Aaron exists, leaving Granny and Josh alone on the couch.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Granny, in the shopping centre again, wobbles under the weight of several shopping bags. She goes to draw money at the ATM and approaches the machine with great uncertainty. Her lack of techno know-how is apparent to a who is loitering nearby. Unbeknown to her a device has been placed in the card slot and once she inserts her card the ATM won't work. She starts knocking on it and calling out.

GRANNY
(to the ATM) Hello? Hellooo?
Helloo-oo?!

The Friendly Thief has been watching Granny and now he approaches her at the ATM.

(CONTINUED)

FRIENDLY THIEF

It looks like you're having some problems with the machine. Can I give you a hand?

Granny is embarrassed, but grateful for the assistance. The Friendly Thief exudes charm.

GRANNY

Oh, thank you so much. My card went in but now it won't do anything.

FRIENDLY THIEF

Just try entering your PIN code again. Don't worry, I won't look.

He half turns away, but still watches what Granny is doing. She enters her PIN again, getting more and more flustered.

GRANNY

It's not doing anything. Something must be wrong with the machine.

The Friendly Thief gives the ATM a few taps. He turns to Granny shaking his head.

FRIENDLY THIEF

No, nothing. It's definitely not working. You need to go inside the bank and report it.

GRANNY

Inside the bank?

FRIENDLY THIEF

Yes, to report it. Then they'll send someone to fix it.

The Friendly Thief starts to walk away.

GRANNY

Thanks for your help.

FRIENDLY THIEF

You're welcome.

Granny toddles off towards the entrance to the bank. She goes inside and waits in the queue. Behind her, through the glass frontage of the bank, the Friendly Thief can be seen back at the ATM pulling out a device from the card slot. He extracts Granny's card from the device and quickly inserts it into the ATM, punches in her code, withdraws a wad of cash, stashes it in his pocket and rushes off. The bank

(CONTINUED)

guard notices what's going on and shouts out at him. Granny turns around just in time to see the rapidly departing figure of the Friendly Thief.

EXT. BUS STOP OUTSIDE SHOPPING MALL - DAY (RAINING)

Granny cuts a pathetic figure, walking towards the bus stop in the pouring rain. The bank manager is standing with her, holding an umbrella over her head.

BANK MANAGER

You have to be so careful these days, Mrs Human. You can't trust anyone to help you at the ATM, you know.

GRANNY

Well, I've learned my lesson now.

BANK MANAGER

They're so brazen, doing it right in front of the bank. I'm so sorry, Mrs Human.

The Bank Manager leaves with his umbrella. Granny sits dejected under the shelter with her plastic shopping bags around her feet. There is no bus in sight. Reluctantly she gathers up her bags and starts to walk in the rain.

EXT. CAR SHOWROOM - DAY (RAINING)

Granny walks past a car showroom. She stops to rest and puts down all her bags turning to look at all the bright new cars through the window. Behind her a STREET CHILD is helping himself to her shopping. She turns around too late to realize what has happened. The street child runs down the road with all her parcels while she stands dumb struck. Dazed, she continues walking home in the pouring rain. The sound of thunder takes us to:

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - DAY

The front door slamming as Josh arrives. He calls out to Granny.

JOSH (OS)

It's me.

He enters the lounge to find Granny in a dressing gown, drying her hair with a towel, sitting disconsolately on the couch. He slides in beside her.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Why didn't you phone me from the mall? I would have picked you up.

GRANNY

I know you're busy getting the convention centre ready for the climate conference.

JOSH

My mate could have covered for me. I would have picked you up, Ma, you know that. Eish, you look a wreck.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Josh and Granny sit at the kitchen table having a cup of tea, the rain visible through the window behind them.

GRANNY

I feel bad about the money. Don't tell Aaron.

JOSH

Ma, you have to be careful at ATMs. You can't trust anyone to help you. Don't give your card to anyone.

GRANNY

I didn't.

JOSH

Don't tell anyone your pin number.

GRANNY

I didn't!

GRANNY (CONT'D)

He just looked so helpful. And I wasn't really sure how to use the stupid machine. That woman showed me so quickly. Boom, boom, boom just like that. It's easier to go into the bank. Your father always used to go into the bank. (Granny starts to cry)

Josh moves to comfort Granny. He puts his arm around her tenderly.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
It's OK, Ma. I'll show you. We'll go
over it step by step.

Josh sits in silence for moment, thinking.

JOSH (CON'T)
Actually, Ma, there is a way of
avoiding the ATM altogether.
On-line banking. With the computer.

GRANNY
That'll be even worse. You know I
can't use that thing.

JOSH
But I can show you. It's much safer
and it's easy. You can do your
banking and everything. You can
even order stuff on-line. Do
shopping.

GRANNY
Shopping?

JOSH
Ya, and crosswords.

INT. GRANNY'S STUDY - DAY

The camera follows a cable up to a laptop which rests on a
desk in front of Granny and Josh.

JOSH
OK. Now I've connected the mouse. I
think it'll be easier than using the
track pad.

GRANNY
Maybe this is a mistake.

JOSH
Just trust me. You'll like it once
you know how. It's easy, I promise.

Granny looks sceptical.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Okay. You switch it on at the side
here.

The familiar sound of a computer booting up is heard.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH (CONT'D)

I'll use 3G because you haven't got the Internet yet.

He puts a dongle into the side of the laptop.

GRANNY

Whose computer is this? Is it yours?

JOSH

It's not mine. Well, actually it is "mine" (he makes quotation marks in the air) for the time being. A guy I work with asked me to look after it for a few days. He's busy moving or something, I don't know. Anyway it's perfect Ma 'cause it's spare and you can use it.

He points to an Internet icon on the desktop.

JOSH (CONT'D)

That is for the Internet. You just double left click on it and

GRANNY (INTERRUPTING)

I don't want to try to do this thing right now, Josh. It's too much. And I'm tired. And I don't understand it.

JOSH

That's the beauty of it, Ma. You don't have to understand it. You just do it. You just click.

They face off for a long moment.

JOSH

Just click.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Just click, man. Please.

Granny clicks her fingers and laughs at her own joke.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Come on, Ma, please man. Just click.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Oh, for heaven's sake! Okay, here.

She takes the mouse and clicks.

JOSH

No, on the left button.

Granny tries again.

JOSH (CONT'D)

No, actually double click.

Granny gives him a withering look. She clicks twice, slowly.

JOSH (CONT'D)

No, fast like this (he takes the mouse) click click, fast.

Granny folds her arms, looking stubborn.

GRANNY

At my age I don't do anything fast.

JOSH

Ma, I know you can do this.

GRANNY

Make me.

JOSH

Now you're just being silly.

Granny sits with folded arms and raised eyebrows.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Okay. Well, you know what, I'll just demonstrate and you watch. Then if you feel like it later you can try on your own. Okay, so you double click, fast, on this 'I' which stands for Internet. Then you type the word 'crossword' here and then you double click here, and there you go!

A crossword puzzle fills the screen. Granny perks up a bit and leans forward, trying to disguise her interest. Josh looks pleased with himself.

INT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Granny is seeing Josh off at the front door. The rain is still pouring down.

JOSH

Bye, Ma. Have fun on the Internet. And next time please phone me to pick you up, okay?

GRANNY

That's another thing, Josh. I want to start driving again.

JOSH

(slowly)Ma, let's not get ahead of ourselves here.

GRANNY

Driving is just like riding a bicycle, you don't forget. And I need to be independent. I don't want to be asking for lifts.

JOSH

You could catch a taxi.

GRANNY

No, it's too expensive.

JOSH

But the car will be even more. There's licenses and maintenance and petrol.

GRANNY

I can afford it.

JOSH

(exasperated)Well then just pay for the taxi!

GRANNY

It's not the same! I like to have my own transport. I want to drive.

They face each other. Josh senses Granny's resolve. He backs down, as she knew he would, which is why she loves Josh so much. She always gets her own way with him.

JOSH

Well OK then.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

That's my boy. But don't worry, I won't start driving straight away. I'll build up to it. I've got some ideas.

JOSH

That's what I was afraid of.

EXT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

JOAN the neighbour stands with Granny next to a beautiful golf cart. She starts to show Granny how to use it.

JOAN

This will help you get back into the swing of it. It's really easy to drive. All you have to do is push that pedal to go and that one to stop. And turn the steering wheel when you want to turn.

GRANNY

OK, then! Let's give this baby a spin.

Granny climbs in, presses the pedal immediately and lurches off.

JOAN

Be careful.

Joan watches with a pinched face as Granny speeds off along the pavement. In the distance she can see a PEDESTRIAN running out of the way as Granny approaches.

JOAN

(shouting) Be careful!

Granny speeds along the pavement until she encounters an obstacle. Undeterred, she bumps down into the road, skirts around the obstacle and bumps back up onto the pavement. A GROUP OF MAIDS sitting on the edge of the pavement have to jostle out of the way as Granny squeezes past them. No sooner is she past them than she does a 180, bounces off the pavement, past them again and back up onto the pavement. Once again the maids scramble out of the way.

GROUP OF MAIDS

Hai, suga wena!

They click their tongues and make gestures indicating Granny is crazy.

(CONTINUED)

At exactly this moment Aaron pulls up in the old Mazda outside Granny's house. Stunned at what he sees he gets out of the car, followed by Max, and tries to flag Granny down. Granny screeches to a halt in front of him. Aaron is beside himself with concern and anger.

AARON

Are you bladdy mad?

Granny gets out of the golf cart panting.

AARON

I said are you bladdy MAD??!

Granny is blinking with the effort of it all, tottering unsteadily in front of Aaron. Max watches nervously. Joan From Next Door retrieves her golf cart somewhat sheepishly.

AARON

And Joan, don't encourage her, please.

JOAN

I was only trying to help. She just wanted to find her driving legs again.

AARON

What the hell for?

JOAN FROM NEXT DOOR

She said she wants to start driving again.

AARON

What?

Aaron and Granny lock stares. Joan gets into the golf cart and carefully drives off, taking it back to the house next door.

AARON (CONT'D)

Mom, what the hell is the matter with you? You can't drive... on the bladdy pavement! That's where people walk. Or sit.

The group of maids can be seen in the background regaining their composure. Some dust themselves off, others shake their heads and walk away, happy to have survived the unexpected encounter with Granny and the golf cart.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

I need to start driving again. I wanted to start slowly. It seemed sensible to try this first, just to get back into it.

AARON

Sensible? Sensible? You know what, if you want to drive so badly then just drive dad's car. It's got to be better than that (he gestures towards the golf cart which is now in Joan's driveway) that bladdy, that what, that bladdy thing there. Here!

He hands Granny the keys to the Mazda and covers his head with his hands. Granny looks pleased with herself. She gives Max a thumbs up and he offers one in return.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny lies in bed staring at Grandad's teeth in the glass. Her expression changes, she gets out of bed, picks up the glass with the false teeth and walks towards the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Granny empties the water out and rinses the false teeth. She carefully dries the false teeth, opens the medicine cupboard and places them inside. As the door of the medicine cupboard closes the mirror on the front of it reveals Granny's face, tears streaming down it. Granny sobs, giving vent to her grief. Eventually she composes herself.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny gets back into bed. She rolls the other way, her eyes coming to rest on the bedside table next to her side of the bed and the laptop and car keys that sit victoriously on top of it.

INT. GRANNY'S GARAGE - DAY

A garage door is raised letting the light fall onto the old Mazda. Granny stands holding her empty shopping bags, surveying the symbol of her independence, feeling a mixture of euphoria and outright fear.

EXT. ROAD TO MALL - DAY

Granny drives uncertainly down the road in the old Mazda, hazard lights flashing.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO PARKING MALL - DAY

Granny arrives at the entrance to the mall parking. She cranes forward in her seat trying to see a gap in the traffic and her hearing aid begins to whine. She tries to adjust the hearing aid and takes one hand off the steering wheel. Cars hoot behind her. She stalls the Mazda. Other cars join in the hooting. Flustered, she manages to re-start the car and, without checking that the way is clear, turns into the face of on-coming traffic. A car crashes into her. It is quite a big accident.

INT. CONVENTION CENTRE - DAY

Josh and his COLLEAGUE rig for the International Climate Change Convention. Josh installs cables whilst his Colleague checks lights and microphones at the podium. Josh's phone rings. Aaron's voice can be heard agitatedly on the other end of the line.

JOSH

Hello. (A BEAT). Oh God. Is she ok?
What hospital?

The Colleague has heard Josh's side of the conversation and makes his way over.

COLLEAGUE

What happened?

JOSH

It's my mom. She's been in an accident. I really need to go and see if she's okay.

COLLEAGUE

Go, dude. I'll finish off here, don't worry.

Josh hurries off whilst his colleague continues with the rig.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Josh rushes into the hospital looking for Granny. He creates quite a stir among THE NURSES who are gathered around the nurses' station because he is great looking. SINDI (30, pretty, nurse) approaches him.

SINDI
Hello. Can I help you?

JOSH
Yes, please. I'm looking for my Mother. She was brought in just now. From a car crash. It's Mrs Human.

SINDI
Oh, yes. Follow me. I'll show you to her ward.

JOSH
Thank you.

Josh follows Sindi who walks in front of him, swaying her hips suggestively, smiling encouragingly at him over her shoulder. Josh appears not to notice. As they reach the ward she turns to him.

SINDI
Here we are.

JOSH
Thanks.

INT. GRANNY'S WARD - DAY

Josh enters Granny's ward and finds her subdued after the accident. Her shoulder is bandaged and she is pale but otherwise she looks none the worse for the accident. Sindi hangs around, casting interested signals in Josh's direction but he is focused on Granny. The TEENAGE GIRL in the next bed is texting on her cell phone.

JOSH
Ma. I was so worried. Are you OK?
What happened?

GRANNY
I'm alright, but the car is a write off. Your Dad loved that car.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Don't worry about the car. That's the least of our worries. Are you sure you're alright. Are you in pain.

GRANNY

I'll be fine, apparently. They said I was very lucky. It's just my shoulder and my collar bone. And at least nobody died.

Sindi begins to leave, with lingering eye contact aimed at Josh. He notices for the first time that she is quite attractive.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

They said I can't go home. I have to stay. Aaron's going to be cross about the car.

JOSH

It wasn't his car, even though he wanted it to be. Don't worry about the car. We've just got to get you better.

Josh spots a You magazine among a pile of magazines nearby. Patricia Lewis is on the cover. Josh passes it to Granny and her eyes light up.

JOSH

Hey, check! Your favourite.

GRANNY

Oh, I love Patricia! You see her hair? I had hair like that when I was a bit younger. But it wouldn't suit me now.

Granny opens the magazine and flips through it.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

They always have nice crosswords in here.

JOSH

Well, why don't I bring the laptop for you?

The teenage girl in the next bed glances up from her texting and throws a disbelieving look Josh's way.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

What for?

JOSH

For the crosswords, remember?
You'll have thousands to choose
from.

GRANNY

No, leave it.

JOSH

I'll bring it, Ma. What else have
you got to do?

GRANNY

No, Josh. Really.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I'll bring it tonight. OK, I'm
going now. I'm so glad you're
alright, Ma.

He kisses her affectionately on the cheek. Josh leaves and
Granny watches him go. The teenage girl has not stopped
texting.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Aaron has just arrived and is charging down the corridor. He
and Josh almost collide.

AARON

Is she okay?

JOSH

She's fine, thank God.

Aaron's immense relief quickly turns to anger.

AARON

I knew it was a bladdy stupid idea
for her to drive.

Aaron turns abruptly and exits the corridor for Granny's
ward. Sindi is loitering, waiting for Josh to leave.

SINDI

So how come you're here in the
middle of the day? Don't you work? Or
did you bunk?

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

No, I didn't bunk. I'm in charge of my own time. I'm down at the International Convention Centre at the moment.

SINDI

Oh?

JOSH

We're rigging for the Global Warming conference.

SINDI

Oh, yes. I've heard about it. Lots of overseas people are here for it. You're rigging?

JOSH

Putting in all the equipment they need. Fibre optic cables for broadband.

SINDI

Sounds tiring.

JOSH

Nah, I'm big and strong.

SINDI

I can see that.

Josh smiles and turns to leave. Sindi watches him go.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Max is standing in front of his Grade 3 class mates giving his news of the day. Posters and information about space adorn the classroom walls behind him.

MAX

Then the ambulance came and took my Granny to hospital. She had a broken clavical and dislocated shoulder. My father said she was fucking lucky she didn't kill anyone.

The class mates gasp. Some giggle. The teacher quickly interjects.

(CONTINUED)

TEACHER

Thank you, Max. That was very interesting. I hope your Granny gets better soon.

MAX

My dad said it's a miracle she didn't hit even more cars.

TEACHER

Thank you, Max. You may sit down.

MAX

My dad said she might need brain surgery because her head's not right and

TEACHER (INTERRUPTING)

Sit down now, Max.

Max returns to his seat while the teacher continues.

TEACHER (CONTIN.)

Now class let's talk about your costumes for the space play next week. Who's mom made rocket costumes?

Two kids put up their hands. One, whose mother is clearly an over-achiever, holds an elaborate rocket costume; the other, who probably has a working mom who likes to unwind with a few drinks after work, holds a crazy, half-assed attempt that starts to fall apart even as he puts his hand up.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Josh arrives holding the laptop. Sindi is just about to go off duty. They exchange greetings.

SINDI

Your mom seems much better.

JOSH

Thanks for looking after her. I'm just bringing this laptop for her. She needs something to keep her busy.

SINDI

Your mom knows how to use a computer? That's pretty impressive for someone her age.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
She's just started. I'm still
teaching her.

SINDI
Maybe you could teach me sometime
too.

They exchange flirtatious looks.

JOSH
I would love to teach you.

They smile at each other. The chemistry between them is
clear.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Is there wireless in the hospital?

SINDI
There is (hesitantly) but it's only
for admin staff. Patients are not
supposed to use it...

Sindi realises that Josh is wanting to use the wireless
connection and she wrestles internally with the idea of
breaching hospital protocol.

SINDI (CONT'D)
... but I could give you the
password.

JOSH
You'd do that for me? You're sweet.

SINDI
I can't remember the password. We're
logged on the whole time. I'll have
to get it. I know where it's
written down. It's in there. (she
looks towards the Superintendent's
office. Josh follows her gaze).

JOSH
Maybe we can get it now?

SINDI
Okay.

Sindi looks around to make sure the coast is clear. She and
Josh walk towards the Superintendent's office and enter.

INT. SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

The light is turned off and it is dim inside as Josh and Sindi enter. They are close together. Sindi crosses to a board on the wall, which is jammed full of bits and pieces. She lifts up a notice, displaying a list of phone numbers underneath.

SINDI

It's here. At the bottom of the list.(she points at the password)

Josh takes out his cell phone and quickly enters the password.He is standing very close to Sindi.

JOSH

Got it. Thanks a million. Promise I won't go into the hospital's accounts and give my mom a nil balance.

SINDI

(laughing)You better not! I'd be in big trouble.

JOSH

Maybe I can get your number too?

SINDI

Maybe you can.

EXT. SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Josh and Sindi exit the Superintendent's office.

JOSH

Bye now. See you later.

SINDI

See you later.

Josh walks down the corridor, looks over his shoulder and sees Sindi still standing watching him leave. She waves.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aaron and Max are seated on the floor in Max's bedroom, surrounded by cardboard, tin foil, sissors and glue. We see a different side of Aaron - warm, fatherly and attentive - as he and Max construct the satellite costume. Max's bedroom

(CONTINUED)

is a fantasy of space decoration, from duvet cover, to curtains, to posters to toys. Max uses his Dad's phone to speak to Granny.

MAX

I'm busy making my satellite costume. It's very big. Daddy's helping me. Will you still be able to come to the play?(A BEAT). Yay! Bye Granny. I love you too.

Max ends the call and puts the phone down.

MAX (CON'T)

She said she wouldn't miss the play for the whole of space.

INT. GRANNY'S WARD - NIGHT

Granny ends the call and puts the phone down on her bedside table next to the lap top. She switches off the light. The lights of Durban are visible through the window. Everything is quiet except for the sound of texting coming from the dimly seen figure of the teenager in the bed next to her.

GRANNY

Don't you ever stop with that thing?

The teenager sighs heavily and continues texting. Granny glances towards the lap top and hesitantly reaches out towards it. She places it on her lap and opens it gingerly. A piece of paper containing instructions has been placed inside by Josh. Granny opens it and reads it.

ANGLE ON THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH READ 'HOW TO USE THE INTERNET'

GRANNY

How to use the Internet. One. Double click on the 'I'. Now where's the 'I'?

Granny doesn't realise that the laptop is not switched on yet. Nothing happens, the screen remains dead.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Now I've broken it. No, wait. Oh yes, switch it on first.

Granny looks all over for the on button, including the plug at the wall. Eventually she finds it and switches the laptop on. The glow of the desktop is reflected in her glasses.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY (CONT'D)
'I' for Internet. There it is. Now
DOUBLE click, fast.

Granny tries repeatedly to double click with sufficient speed to launch the Internet application.

GRANNY (CONT'D)
Click, click fast. No? Click,
click. No? How fast are you
supposed to do this thing?

She looks over at the teenager and catches her eye, hopefully. The teenager sighs melodramatically and rolls over facing away from Granny, without interrupting her texting. Eventually Granny succeeds. She rubs her aching arm and does a few shoulder and neck rotations to loosen up.

GRANNY
Finally.

She refers again to the instructions.

GRANNY (CONT'D)
Two. Click on the space next to
search and type 'crossword'. Press
enter.

Granny spends a long time looking around the screen trying to find 'search'.

GRANNY (CONT'D)
Oh, there it is.

She types in the word 'crossword'. A crossword fills the screen. Granny looks more than pleased. She starts to read the clue, but her eyes drift over to the side bar where colorful adverts demand her attention.

GRANNY
Hmmm.

A montage follows: Granny abandons the crossword and spends the rest of the night looking at all the weird and wonderful things for sale on the Internet: a piece of toasted cheese resembling the Virgin Mary, a pair of shoes with massive platforms that contain plastic goldfish swimming in a sea of glitter and a certificate endowing her with the 'title' Lady Gloucestershire. Eventually Granny falls asleep over the laptop as the sun's early morning rays creep through the window.

INT. GRANNY'S WARD - NIGHT

Sindi clears away Granny's dinner plates. Aaron and Max enter Granny's ward. The lap top is discreetly out of sight. Sindi exits. The teenager's friends visit and surrounded her bed, all busy texting on their phones. Granny looks up as Aaron and Max enter. They exchange greetings.

AARON
Hey, you look so much better.

MAX
Look what I got.

Max holds up a new toy satellite and shows it proudly to Granny.

GRANNY
That's a very nice satellite. I've never seen one quite like that.

MAX
Is it the best one you've ever seen?

GRANNY
Most definitely, it is the best one I've ever seen.

AARON
I'm just going to go and get some coffee. Can I leave Max here?

GRANNY
Of course.

AARON
Do you want anything?

GRANNY
No, I'm okay.

AARON (TO MAX)
Be good. See you just now.

Aaron exits in search of coffee.

GRANNY
So big boy, tell Granny everything you've been doing at school.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

We've been learning all about space. We're doing a project and we're going to do a concert. I'm going to be a satellite in the concert.

GRANNY

Wonderful! I think you'll make a very good satellite.

MAX

And for the project on space I have to do research on the Internet.

GRANNY

Really? Do they do all of that in Grade 3? (A BEAT) Well, you know what?

MAX

What?

GRANNY

I think I can help you with that.

Granny gets out of bed, opens the bed side table and takes out the laptop. She gets back into bed, confidently puts it in front of her and opens it.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Did you know that Granny is surprisingly good at computers?

Max looks excited. Granny, meanwhile, chuckles to herself and powers up the device.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

I even know how to go in line. I'm a natural.

The desktop comes to life and there, boldly on the screen, among the other icons, is a NASA icon. Max notices it straight away.

MAX

That's for NASA!

GRANNY

What is?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

There, that's for NASA!

Granny squints at the screen.

GRANNY

Point to it.

Max points to the icon on the desktop. Granny adjusts her glasses and takes a closer look.

GRANNY

So it is.

MAX

Click on it!

Granny tries several times to position the pointer correctly and to open the link. Eventually she succeeds and sighs with relief. A graphic interface of the sky appears with all the celestial bodies and satellites in orbit. It looks beautiful.

MAX

Wow! Awesome!

At just that moment Aaron returns with his coffee. He looks confused to see Granny with a laptop. Granny assumes an air of confidence.

AARON

What are you doing Mom?

GRANNY

Josh showed me how to go on the Internet. I'm going to help Max with his project. We're going in line.

Aaron flinches at the 'in-line' reference. He looks skeptical.

AARON

Okay, well just be careful.

GRANNY

Oh, don't worry. You always worry about everything. What could go wrong? It's only the Internet.

She tries to impress Aaron by doing lots of double clicks, each followed by a flourish.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Double click. And...double click.

MAX

I like that one and that one (he points to various satellites the screen).

Granny double clicks up a storm. Aaron looks uncertain but decides not to interfere.

MAX

That's a nice satellite. Copy and paste it for me for my project, Granny.

Not sure what to do, but not wanting to lose face in front of Aaron, Granny executes a few random clicks, enters a few letters and clicks a bit more. This goes on for a while.

AARON

Let me do it.

He starts to move closer, wanting to check what Granny is actually doing with her great flourish of activity. Granny holds out her good arm to ward him off. The typing and double clicking goes on for some time. Eventually Aaron turns to look out the window at the view of Durban. He can see Granny's reflection in the window as she continues clicking and typing away. He looks at his watch.

GRANNY

Copy and paste. All done.

She shuts the laptop. Max looks a little confused. She pats his head.

INT. HOSPITAL FOYER - DAY

A trail of nurses pretend to be seeing off Granny, who has been discharged, when in fact they are just checking out Josh, giggling all the way. Josh carries Granny's bags and the laptop.

GRANNY

The nurses are so friendly and helpful nowadays. I don't know why so many people complain about them. They're wonderful.

They pass two Agents who are walking swiftly towards the lift.

EXT. HOSPITAL CAR PARK - DAY

The giggling nurses, Granny and Josh arrive at the car. Josh opens the door and the nurses, especially Sindi who has pushed her way to the front of the group, start to help Granny get in.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The Agents march down the hospital corridor and arrive at the superintendent's office.

EXT. HOSPITAL CARPARK - DAY

The nurses settle Granny in the car and Josh gets in and starts the car. They say their goodbyes to the group through the window. Sindi mimes 'call me' to Josh. They drive off, leaving the nurses sadly waving after them.

INT. JOSH'S CAR - DAY

GRANNY
Absolutely amazing service at that
hospital. Quite incredible.

INT. SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE DOOR -DAY

The Agents enter and shut the door behind them. A moment later the door opens. One man carries a computer and the other marches the confused looking SUPERINTENDANT out of his office.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The Agents escort the Superintendent down the corridor, past all the nurses who are returning from seeing off Granny and Josh. The nurses look concerned, especially Sindi who turns to watch her boss being whisked away.

INT. JOSH'S CAR - DAY

Josh drives Granny home from the hospital. Granny looks happy to be on her way home.

JOSH
Aaron's waiting for you at home. He
says he needs to talk to you.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

I don't like the sound of that.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - DAY

Aaron, Granny and Josh sit in lounge in front of Aaron's laptop. Max plays in the background. Aaron has made a Power Point outlining the reasons why Granny should not continue to stay on her own.

AARON

All I'm saying is that the time has come for you to move on, mom. You should be considering your options. Looking at a retirement centre. One of those nice places where they do everything for you. They take you shopping. You won't have to drive. You'll be safe. You won't have to worry about anything.

GRANNY

You mean YOU won't have to worry about anything.

AARON

Mom, it's the best thing for you. At your age you shouldn't be living on your own, doing everything. Look what happened when you tried to drive. You're lucky the accident wasn't worse. Please just watch this presentation. It'll explain it all to you.

Aaron launches the Power Point and a cheesy presentation begins, complete with what he thinks are humorous graphics to lighten the blow. The presentation can be summed up as: You're old, You're not exactly rich, You can't drive, You can't hear, You're not safe, You don't know how to do anything - therefore you should be in a retirement home.

The Power Point ends and Granny sits silently, her hearing aid whining softly, her face a mixture of conflicting emotions. Josh is appalled and speechless. Granny manages to get the hearing aid to stop whining and eventually responds.

GRANNY

Okay then.

Aaron does his best to hide his delight and surprise.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Yes! Well let's do it!

GRANNY
When?

AARON
Right now! Let's choose a
retirement home.

JOSH
Ma, you really don't have to do
this.

GRANNY
I'll just have a look. I can decide
later.

INT. AARON'S CAR - DAY

Aaron drives Max and Granny in the his car. They approach the gates of an average looking, suburban retirement centre. Granny looks non-plused. Aaron tries to project confidence and positivity.

AARON
I've heard they're very
professional here.

EXT. RETIREMENT CENTRE 1 - DAY

Granny, Aaron and Max stand at the front door. Aaron rings the bell in a confident manner, smiling all the while. The door opens to reveal NURSE 1, large-and-in-charge, who glares down them.

NURSE 1
Ah, I've been waiting for you.
You're late. Why is that?

The smile fades from Aaron's face, Max hides behind his dad and Granny looks horrified.

INT. AARON'S CAR - DAY

They drive hastily away from the first retirement centre.

AARON
It looked very different on the
website.

EXT. RETIREMENT CENTRE 2 -DAY

Aaron's car pulls up outside a pretty, cottagey place. They all get out the car and Granny surveys the scene. Aaron looks hopeful.

AARON

This looks better! Come on.

They make their way up to the front door and ring the bell. It is soon answered by the MANAGERESS, a sweet old lady. Aaron's face is a picture of relief.

MANAGERESS

You must be the Humans. Welcome, welcome! Let me take you on a tour of our lovely centre.

Aaron smiles encouragingly at Granny as they follow the Manageress into the complex.

INT. RETIREMENT COMPLEX 2 - DAY

The Sweet Old Lady leads the group down the corridor. She opens a door with a flourish.

MANAGERESS

This is our lounge.

She has opened the door to the toilet and reveals a wizened old man having his butt wiped by a nurse. The group look horrified.

MANAGERESS

My mistake! Let me show you the games room.

They follow her to the next door, which she opens.

MANAGERESS

This is the games room.

The door opens to reveal a steamy, pre-historic looking kitchen, presided over by busy men and women. It looks like a sweat shop.

MANAGERESS

No...no, that's not it. My mistake!
Let me show you the bedrooms.

EXT. RETIREMENT CENTRE 2 - DAY

Aaron, Max and Granny walk swiftly away from the retirement centre. The Manageress stands in the doorway, looking apologetic.

EXT. RETIREMENT CENTRE 3 - DAY

The doorbell rings as Aaron, Max and Granny stand outside the next retirement centre. The door is opened by NURSE 2, an attractive young woman in a revealing uniform. Aaron perks up, predictably. Granny remains unconvinced.

INT. RETIREMENT CENTRE 3 - DAY

Nurse 2 leads the group into a long room with very, very, very old people dotted about in wheelchairs. They all look like they are on death's doorstep.

NURSE 2

This is the activity room.

An old man pathetically tries to bat away a fly.

INT. AARON'S CAR - DAY

Aaron drives away, a beaten man. Granny looks smug. Max tries to be helpful.

MAX

Why doesn't Granny just stay in her own house?

GRANNY

Good question.

AARON

Not now, Max.

GRANNY

I think we've all had enough for one day. Just take me home, please. I need to go shopping but don't worry, I won't be driving. I'll get a taxi.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Granny leaves Pick 'n Pay carrying several plastic shopping bags. Walking through the shopping centre she suddenly notices a computer shop: Incredible Connection. Her face registers an idea. Granny confidently approaches the shop. She looks in the window and at the signs that announce the latest and best gadgets and computers. With growing optimism she enters the store, intent on buying a computer.

INT. INCREDIBLE CONNECTION - DAY

An eager salesman, clearly working on a commission basis, approaches Granny.

SALESMAN

Can I help you?

GRANNY

Yes, I want an Internet. I mean,
I can go in the internet already.
I know how to do it. Now I want to
buy my own computer. Please.

The salesman's eyes light up. Granny is his dream come true.

EXT. INCREDIBLE CONNECTION - DAY

Granny stumbles out of the store with a trolley piled high with boxes and packets. The weary salesman follows her and waves goodbye. He has sold her every gizmo and skuzzy drive available.

SALESMAN

You take care now!

INT. MAX'S GRADE 3 CLASSROOM - DAY

Max stands in front of the Grade 3 class, giving his news. The teacher looks wary.

MAX

Then we took my Granny to a
retirement centre and we saw an old
man's butt and

The class erupts in laughter. The teacher, primed to respond, quickly interrupts Max.

(CONTINUED)

TEACHER

Thank you, Max. Always so much
colourful detail in your news.

Max makes his way back to his seat.

TEACHER (CONTIN.)

Right, now let's see what progress
the moms have made on the costumes.

MAX

And dads.

TEACHER

Of course. Let's see what progress
the mom's AND dad's have made on
the costumes. Who is a satellite?

Max and another boy raise their hands and bring out their costumes. Josh's costume is a stunning contraption with lights and everything. The other boy just has a picture of a satellite crudely cut out and stuck on some grubby cardboard to hang around his neck.

SATELLITE BOY

My mom has a letter for you.

TEACHER

I'm sure she does.

He hands the teacher a note.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - DAY

Aaron busies himself installing the new computer. While he sorts through cables and connections Granny takes a break.

GRANNY

My feet are killing me. I've got to
sit for a bit.

AARON

This guy saw you coming, Ma. You
don't need half this crap. Why
don't you just keep using the
laptop Josh lent you?

GRANNY

Because it isn't Josh's laptop. He
has to give it back soon. And I
want my own.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

What are you actually going to do with a computer anyway, Ma. I mean at your age and everything?

GRANNY

I'll have you know that I'm a quite good at the computer. I've been using it for shopping and I need it now.

AARON

What shopping? Haven't you just been to the centre?

GRANNY

Not groceries. Other things. I'll show you. It was delivered yesterday.

Granny goes off and quickly returns with a small package, a shoe box and a certificate. Aaron looks on, bracing himself.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, you're not going to believe it but THIS (she holds a mouldy piece of toasted cheese aloft) actually does look like the Virgin Mary.

Gob-smacked, Aaron stares at the piece of mouldy toast that Granny offers in his direction.

AARON

Oh my God. How much did you pay for this?

GRANNY

It doesn't matter. Because THESE (she pulls out the platform shoes with the plastic goldfish swimming in glitter in the soles) were a bargain.

Chuckling to herself, Granny starts to put on the platform shoes. Aaron splutters incoherently. He notices the certificate which Granny has placed on the floor while she changes her shoes. He picks it up and begins to read.

AARON

You now have the 'title' Lady Gloucestershire?

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

It wasn't expensive.

AARON

You bought a title? This can't be real. For God's sake Mom please, you can't do this!

A tense silence descends instantly. Aaron tries his utmost to remain calm. Granny feels assertive.

GRANNY

Why not? It makes me feel better.

AARON

For one thing, you've got to watch your money.

GRANNY

It wasn't expensive. And I can handle my money just fine.

AARON

It's all just too much for me, mom. I can't keep up with you. Driving and accidents and computers and buying crap online.

Granny remains silent as they face off.

AARON (CONT'D)

Why can't you just relax and take it easy?

GRANNY

You want me to just sit at home and do nothing? Just stop everything?

AARON

No. Just the on-line shopping and the bladdy driving. Just stop. Please. We can still find a nice retirement place for you. There's got to be one out there.

GRANNY

I doubt it.

AARON

There must be. That's where you should go. They help you if you want to do anything, drive, shop (A LONG BEAT) go on the internet (he shudders).

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

No.

AARON

Mom

GRANNY

No.

Granny clicks her tongue and ignores Aaron. She picks up the newspaper. The front page article is something about a 'Satellite Sleuth'. She sits for a moment contemplating the picture and headline. Aaron reluctantly returns to installing the computer, aggressively and noisily moving things around. Granny looks up.

GRANNY

This picture in the paper is just like the one I saw when I went inline. You know when I was helping Max with his project? I copied and pasted this exact picture for him. That's a coincidence, hey?

Aaron abandons the cables and connectors and goes over to Granny. He takes the newspaper from her.

AARON

Let's have a look. (He reads from the newspaper) "NASA system engineers believe they are up against a hacking genius. NASA confirmed today that the orbital path of the DAS 5 weather satellite was altered from a remote source. Authorities are baffled as to how their system, which features state of the art security protocols, could have been breached. The hacker..." (A BEAT)

AARON (CONT'D)

Hacker?

Granny and Aaron drift in a long moment of silence as Aaron puts two and two together.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) CONTINUOUS

A speeded up flasback of the hospital scene shows Granny and Max working on the laptop, the NASA logo visible among the satellites on the screen.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

We screech back to real time as Aaron's face registers the full spectrum of emotions and expressions as the penny drops. He finally bursts out with

AARON

Oh my God! You're the one who moved this thing!

GRANNY

No I didn't.

AARON

No, I think you bladdy did!

GRANNY

Surely not. How is it possible?

AARON

If you go on the Internet, no, if YOU go on the Internet, anything's bladdy possible! Besides people are always hacking into NASA. Their security's bladdy appalling.

Granny looks scared. She eventually answers.

GRANNY

It says here they managed to put it back.

Aaron collapses into a chair and puts his head in his hands.

AARON

Fuck.

GRANNY

I didn't do it.

AARON

I strongly suspect you did.

Aaron gets up and crosses to the boxes. He starts packing the computer away aggressively.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

All this crap is going back. You moved a bladdy satellite. What the hell's next??? You can't have this. You mustn't go on line anymore. And it's ON line, not bladdy IN line. You don't know what you're doing. You're dangerous. It's got to stop now before we get into big trouble.

GRANNY

No. I want the computer. I like it. I'm a natural.

Aaron kicks the boxes out of the way. Granny flinches. He grabs his car keys.

AARON

A natural? A natural?

AARON (CONT'D)

I'm going. I can't take this anymore. I have to process all of this. My mother moved a fucking satellite.

He storms out.

GRANNY

(to herself) It's not like they couldn't put it back.

Aaron is out of shot, already at the front door. He screams back at her:

AARON. OS

And Max has to stay here tonight, I'm working late and there's no one to look after him.

He slams the door with an almighty bang. Granny flinches.

EXT. GRANNY'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Max and Granny have a little picnic under the night sky. They have a blanket spread out and a basket with snacks and hot chocolate. Max looks up at the clear night sky in awe. Granny sits somberly.

(CONTINUED)

MAX
Talk, Granny.

GRANNY
I just feel like being a bit quiet
tonight, my boy.

They sit in easy silence for a while.

MAX
I love space. I totally love space.
It's so big and awesome.

Eventually Granny warms to the conversation.

GRANNY
Do you know where the Southern
Cross is, Max? Let me show you.

Granny starts to point towards the Southern Cross and
notices Max fiddling with a cell phone.

GRANNY
Oh, no. Don't tell me you've got a
cell phone. Please don't turn into
one of those kids who just texts non-
stop all the time.

MAX
No, it's one of Dad's phones. He
lent it to me. It's got the most
awesome app on it called Star Walk.
Look, I'll show you.

Max holds up the cell phone to the night sky. Granny leans
in closer to look at the screen. She puts on her glasses. All
the stars in that section of the heavens appear on the
screen, complete with identifying labels. Max moves the cell
phone until the Southern Cross is identified.

MAX
There it is! The Southern Cross!

GRANNY
I could have shown you where it
was.

MAX
But this gives you all the
information, Granny. It shows you
where everything is. Check, even the
satellites.

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

Uh oh.

MAX

There's lots of satellites. When it's a clear night you can see them with your eyes naked.

Granny considers for a moment.

GRANNY

Have they got a list there of all the satellites?

MAX

Ya.

Max expertly scrolls, swipes and pinches on the screen until he has a list of the satellites. He shows it to Granny.

MAX

That's all of them.

GRANNY

Can you find the one called (she hesitates) DAS 5.

Max quickly finds DAS 5 and taps it. A message appears on the screen: Not Available.

MAX

It's not available.

Granny remains silent, her face serious.

MAX (CONT'D)

There must be something wrong with it.

GRANNY

I think they're busy fixing it.

Granny changes the subject quickly.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Do you want some hot chocolate.

She pours the hot chocolate for them both. Max snuggles into his Granny.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Grandad used to like hot chocolate too.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Are you still sad that Grandad died?

GRANNY

I am very sad, my boy. Very sad. About lots of things. But I've still got you.

MAX

And you've got a new computer. Don't forget that.

GRANNY

Quite right, I have got a computer. Why don't we go back inside, you can plug it in and I'll watch you go in line. On line. ON line.

MAX

Good idea, Granny. And you can also have a turn.

GRANNY

No, I think I'll take a little break from the computer for now.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Max has settled down on the couch, worn out from playing on the computer. Granny sits beside him and strokes his head. Granny's new computer screen glows dimly in the background. Max's gaze is directed towards the window and the night sky.

GRANNY

I had a nice time tonight. You're very clever, you know?

MAX

(Innocently) I know.

Granny chuckles.

GRANNY

Sleeping time now. Close your eyes.

Max closes his eyes. Granny sits with him a while longer and then quietly crosses to the computer and sits down. She googles 'loss of a partner' and finds a bereavement group. The colourful home page fills the screen.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny sleeps. The sound of Aaron's car can be heard as he pulls up outside.

EXT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aaron switches off his car. He looks towards Granny's house and sees that all the lights are off. He gets out of his car and makes his way towards the house. As he crosses the road he notices a mysterious vehicle parked nearby: it is a panel van with tinted windows. A light glows dimly from inside. Aaron hesitates momentarily before making his way to the front door and silently letting himself in.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Aaron walks quietly into the darkened room. Max lies asleep on the couch under a blanket. Aaron's eyes are drawn over to the new computer which is still switched on. Surprised and annoyed that it has been connected he goes over and moves the mouse and the screen comes to life. He sits down and looks at the page displayed: it is all about coping with the loss of your partner and on-line support groups for the newly bereaved. His face softens. He stretches out in the chair gazing at the ceiling, deep in thought. Finally he sleeps.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - AARON'S DREAM SEQUENCE

Aaron's dreams of Granny working furiously at a computer. She turns to Aaron, but instead of Granny's sweet face a monstrous face is revealed. He wakes from his troubled sleep screaming:

AARON

Are you bladdy mad?!

Granny leans over him, wearing her night clothes.

GRANNY

All I asked is if you want a cup of tea. You don't have to shout. Did you sleep here?

AARON

(gathering his wits) Sorry, Mom.
Thanks, tea would be nice.

He follows her through to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Granny busies herself making tea while Aaron looks on. He is awkward after his outburst the day before.

AARON
 Sorry about all of that yesterday,
 Mom.

GRANNY
 Oh, don't worry about it.

GRANNY (CONT'D)
 So, why did you sleep here?

AARON
 I don't know. It was just too late
 when I came to get Max and he
 looked so peaceful, I didn't want to
 disturb him.

The sound of the front door opening is followed by Josh's voice:

JOSH OS
 Hello, Ma. We're here.

AARON
 Who's here?

GRANNY
 Josh.

AARON
 And?

Just then Josh enters with Sindi. Surprised at seeing Sindi again, Granny and Aaron look a little taken aback.

JOSH
 Mom, you remember Sindi? Aaron,
 this is Sindi.

GRANNY
 Of course I do. You were so
 attentive to me in the hospital.
 There wasn't a moment that you
 weren't around.

Josh and Sindi exchange meaningful looks and smile at each other. Granny and Aaron quickly realise that they are an item.

(CONTINUED)

SINDI

How's your shoulder coming along,
Mrs Human. Have you been doing the
exercises?

GRANNY

It's improving every day.

SINDI

That's good to hear.

JOSH

So mom, why don't you get ready and we
can go.

AARON

Where are you all off to then?

Granny looks awkward. Josh and Granny exchange a look.

JOSH

Sindi knows of a nice senior living
facility. Her uncle stays there and
he's going to show us all around.

Aaron's position as older brother has been usurped. It is the
first he is hearing of this new development and he feels
miffed and a bit hurt.

AARON

And when was this all decided?

GRANNY

Yesterday. I phoned him after you
left because you were a
bit...upset, and that's when he
told me about this place and you
know, no time like the present, so
we're going to have a look today.

Aaron does his best to hide his surprise. He feels a bit
conflicted: happy that Granny is considering the retirement
home option after all, but pissed off that Josh is the one to
be taking her to view the place.

AARON

Jolly good then.

Granny busies herself making tea. Josh leans closer to Aaron and
whispers:

(CONTINUED)

JOSH
 Seriously, dude? You really think
 Ma moved a satellite? Come on!

Aaron looks a bit embarrassed. Josh chuckles to himself.

EXT. JACK'S RETIREMENT VILLAGE - DAY

Josh, Sindi and Granny drive into a very nice retirement village and pull to a halt. Rolling green lawns and pretty flower beds surround quaint cottages. Old women potter around, taking in the sunshine. A rather charming, grey-haired man approaches the car. He is Sindi's 'uncle', JACK. He peers into Granny's window.

JACK
 Good morning young lady. And how
 may I be of assistance to you?

INT. JOSH'S CAR - DAY

Granny looks pleasantly surprised and greets Jack at the window. Sindi pipes up from the back.

SINDI
 Uncle Jack, stop messing around.
 You've only just met her.

They bundle out of the car.

EXT. JACK'S RETIREMENT VILLAGE (AT CAR) - DAY

Sindi does the introductions.

SINDI
 This is Josh and this is his mom,
 Sylvia Human. And this is my uncle
 Jack.

JACK
 Ah, yes, Sylvia. So pleased to meet
 you. I'll be showing you around.

He locks eyes with Granny, giving her a charming look. Granny giggles like a school girl.

JACK
 May I?

(CONTINUED)

He takes Granny's hand, and begins to walk with her up the pathway. Granny is blushing and patting her hair, being sure to hide her hearing aid. Arm in arm with Jack she walks off for a tour of the place. Josh leans against the car with a satisfied smile. Sindi smiles with delight.

Granny and Jack walk past two other OLD LADIES. Once out of earshot the ladies turn to each other.

OLDER LADY

I bet she doesn't know he's the only man in here.

EXT. PICTURESQUE SPOT, JACK'S RETIREMENT VILLAGE - DAY

Granny and Jack arrive at a picturesque, elevated spot from where they can see the whole retirement village.

GRANNY

It looks pretty

JACK

It is nice here. It's definitely one of the better places. We have lots of independence.

Granny considers Jack, standing alongside her. He is in pretty good shape for an older man.

GRANNY

You look too young to be in this place.

JACK

Thank you! But you know, you don't have to be old and decrepit to live here.

They sit down on a bench. Granny has become pensive. Jack waits for her to speak.

GRANNY

This whole getting older business...it's not much fun.

Jack listens sympathetically.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

My kids are always telling me what to do. Especially my oldest son, he doesn't want me to do anything. Mustn't drive. Mustn't go on the computer.

(CONTINUED)

Granny looks like she regrets that she mentioned computers, but Jack looks impressed.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

Mustn't buy anything. Mustn't live on my own.

Jack sits in sympathetic silence with Granny. Eventually he puts his hand on her knee.

JACK

It's horrible when the other one goes, isn't it.

Tears are glistening in Granny's eyes.

JACK (CONT'D)

And sometimes our kids are trying to help but they're not helping at all. Don't stop trying new things, Sylvia. That's what will keep you interesting. Like they say nowadays, you've got to 'go for it'.

He stands up and offers Granny his hand. She takes it and stands up next to him. They start to make their way around the retirement village.

GRANNY

To tell you the truth I only agreed to come here today to make my older son not so angry with me.

JACK (CONT'D)

This is your life, Sylvia. You can't make a decision just to please your children. Giving up your home is a big step. If you're not ready, you're not ready.

Granny looks comforted as she and Jack continue their tour.

EXT. JOSH'S CAR - DAY

Josh and Sindi hang out at the car, kissing and cuddling. Granny and Jack return from their tour. Granny looks perky and happy.

JOSH

So, what did you think?

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY

I think I'm going to throw a party!
I've invited Jack and he's coming. Do
you want to come too?

INT. GRANNY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Granny and Sindi are in the bathroom, doing Granny's hair.
Sindi is mixing box colour for Granny's grey locks.

GRANNY

I don't know why I stopped doing
this. I mustn't let myself
go. Thanks so much for helping me. My
shoulder's still a bit stiff
sometimes.

SINDI

Oh, it's no problem at all. It's
important for a girl to look good
for a party. We gotta do what we
gotta do.

She is mixing paste and notices it is turning a peculiar
colour.

SINDI (CONT'D)

What colour is this?

She eyes the box suspiciously, reading the name of the
colour.

SINDI (CONT'D)

Ruby Red? Is that the one you
wanted?

Granny takes the box and reads the label.

GRANNY

Woopsie! I should wear my glasses
when I go shopping. Ah, well, too
late now. I've got to cover the
grey.

Sindi reluctantly starts to apply the colour to Granny's
hair. Josh puts his head around the bathroom door. He does a
double take at the colour, but covers his alarm.

JOSH (TO SINDI)

Hey, you.

(CONTINUED)

SINDI (TO JOSH)

Hey, you.

JOSH

Time to go, gotta get ready for the party.

SINDI

Nearly finished.

GRANNY

It's going to be good, I can feel it. No need to just curl up and die now, is there? I've invited the neighbours, too.

JOSH

Good for you, Ma. You're getting back to your old self.

GRANNY

Not old. Young! Oh, and I mustn't forget to phone the pizza place.

INT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Granny lets Josh and Sindi out the front door.

GRANNY

See you just now. Dress fancy!

She turns to the phone which is near the front door, finds the number for the pizza place and dials. Her hair is encased in cling wrap while Rose Red works its magic and her hearing aid is pushed at an awkward angle against her ear. It emits a whining noise. She can hardly hear a thing.

GRANNY

Hello? I'd like to order some pizza.

PIZZA MAN V.O

Can I tell you about our specials? If you order two supersize pizzas you get a third one free.

GRANNY

I want Margarita, Chicken Tikka and Haiwaaian.

(CONTINUED)

PIZZA MAN V.O

Do you want two supersize of each
and a third one free?

Granny's hearing aid is whining. She fiddles with it, unable to hear properly. She only catches the word 'free'.

GRANNY

Free? Yes.

PIZZA MAN V.O

And if you order crammed crust you
get 50% off on a second crammed
crust.

GRANNY

(She only catches a few words) 50%
off?

PIZZA MAN V.O

If you do the three for the price of
two, the supersize and the
crammed crust it's 50% off.

GRANNY

(her hearing aid is whining) I'll
have the 50% off. I'm having a
party.

PIZZA MAN V.O

A party! Why didn't you say! I've
got lots of special offers for
that..

Granny is adjusting her hearing aid when it slips off and drops onto the floor. She puts the phone down on the table while she bends to retrieve her hearing aid. The Pizza Man's voice can be heard listing reams of party specials. Eventually Granny finds her hearing aid, tries to put it on but fails because of the cling wrap on her head. She picks up the telephone again, just catching the last words "50% off"

PIZZA MAN V.O

...brings it to R1575, with the 50%
off.

GRANNY

50% off, perfect. Thank you.

She ends the call and hurries off to her bedroom. En route she catches a glimpse of the TV which is on in the lounge.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Granny enters the lounge and stands watching the weather report. The weatherman predicts snow for the first time in Durban. Granny is fanning herself with a Chinese fan. She looks on in disbelief.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The sound of a shower can be heard in the background. Granny's party dress is laid out on the bed. An array of make-up, perfume, hair products specifically aimed at the teen market and Granny's hearing aid lie on the dressing table. The sound of the shower stops. Granny enters her room and begins drying her hair. The hairdryer makes a loud noise, blocking out the sound of the doorbell. She turns to face the mirror and for the first time the full impact of her hair colour, a vivid fuschia, is revealed. Unperturbed she selects 'Through the Bush Backwards' by L'Oreal and starts to zoosh her hair.

EXT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joan and another neighbour have arrived for the party. Joan holds a bottle of wine and the other neighbour holds a bunch of flowers. They ring the doorbell.

INT: GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny applies her make-up.

EXT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The pizza delivery service arrives. They park near the panel van with the tinted windows. The result of Granny's phone call is a massive order of party-sized pizzas with everything on top. A troop of delivery men approach the front door and ring the bell. They join the Joan and the other neighbor waiting at the front door.

INT: GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny puts the finishing touches to her make-up and sprays on some perfume.

EXT. GRANNY'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

More guests have arrived for Granny's party and join the delivery men around the front door. The knocking and doorbell ringing go unanswered.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny slides into her party outfit - an elaborate, sparkly number, complete with feathers around the hem line.

EXT. GRANNY'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The crowd of neighbours has grown. Jack has arrived. They are concerned about Granny's lack of response to the doorbell and their knocking.

JOAN

Maybe she's had a heart attack and she's lying unconscious on the floor?

NEIGHBOUR 1

I think we should phone Emergency Rescue Services instead of wasting time. She could be dying! Who's got a phone?

None of the elderly neighbours has a cell phone.

PIZZA DELIVERY MAN1

(checking his phone)

Sorry, my battery's dead.

PIZZA DELIVERY MAN2 I

haven't got air time.

JOAN

Maybe that man in the panel van over there has a phone. Let's try him.

NEIGHBOUR 1

We'll keep trying to rouse her.

Some guests continue knocking and calling while another group turns to look at the panel van with the tinted windows parked across the road. A light glows dimly from inside.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

NEIGHBOUR 2 approaches the nearby panel van and knocks on the tinted windows. There is no response. He knocks again, harder. The window is rolled down by Agent1.

AGENT1

Yes?

NEIGHBOUR 2

Sorry, we've got an emergency, have you got a phone we could use please?

The neighbour peers into the car. There seem to be an awful lot of cell phones, wires, monitors and laptops in the car. The serious man is unsympathetic to the request. In fact, he's downright rude.

AGENT1

No.

He quickly rolls up the window. Undeterred, the neighbour spots a passing runner and intercepts him.

NEIGHBOUR 2

Sorry, please, can I use your cell phone? We've got an emergency.

By now all the neighbours, Jack and the Pizza delivery men have congregated around the runner. He produces a cell phone from the front of his sweaty shorts.

SWEATY RUNNER

Sure. What's the problem?

The neighbour phones Emergency Rescue as the rest gather round in growing concern.

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Granny, oblivious to the distant sounds at her front door, gives herself one last appraising look in the mirror. She has managed to make her hair stand upright in a trendy spikey style suitable for a teen. Finally she picks up her hearing aid and puts it on. She hears the knocking and doorbell ringing for the first time.

GRANNY

Ah, they're here! That's good timing!

She leaves the room to make her way to the front door.

EXT. GRANNY'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

A troop of burly Emergency Rescue workers are busy trying to break down Granny's front door. The neighbours, Joan, the Pizza delivery men, Jack and the Sweaty Runner watch alongside.

INT. GRANNY'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The Emergency Workers and the rest of the group finally explode into the little house, at exactly the point that Granny arrives at the front door with hair like a reddish pink sucked mango. The shock of this sight causes Joan to stagger back into the child from next door, sending them both to the floor.

GRANNY
What's happening? Is something wrong?

RESCUE WORKER 1
Are you alright, lady?

GRANNY
I'm fine. Why did you break the door?

RESCUE WORKER 1
There was no reply to your door, mam. People were trying to raise you for a long time. We thought you might have collapsed.

GRANNY
Not me, but she has.

Granny points to the heap in front of her which consists of the Joan lying on top of the child from next door. Joan groans. The child groans louder. The Rescue Workers quickly turn their attention to these two and hoist Joan off the child. The child screams louder. A Rescue Worker examines the child's arm.

RESCUE WORKER 1
This needs attention.

Granny looks concerned but her attention is quickly diverted by the Pizza Delivery Man.

PIZZA DELIVERY MAN1 (TO GRANNY)
Where would you like these?

(CONTINUED)

Granny does a double take at the many boxes of Pizza which are brought in by the delivery men. She indicates towards the lounge.

GRANNY

Through there.

The guests start flooding in, the Rescue Workers continue ministering to the child and at this point Josh and Sindi arrive along with Josh's Colleague and his girlfriend. Josh notices Granny's hair and can't help but gasp. He controls himself and surveys the scene.

JOSH

What happened?

GRANNY (TO JOSH)

I'm not sure. Don't tell Aaron.

JOSH

But what happened?

GRANNY

Apparently I didn't answer the door fast enough and they thought I was dead and called those men who went and broke in!

Jack, who has been on the periphery during all the commotion steps forward.

JACK

Well, at least you're all right. That's the main thing. Good to see you again, Sylvia. You look beautiful. I like your hair.

GRANNY

Thank you. Never stop trying new things. Isn't that what you said?

JACK

Indeed! Now I believe we're here to have a party, so let's get it started.

The group moves through to the lounge where the neighbors have already laid out the pizzas on every available surface and busily help themselves to mounds of it. The pizza man hands Granny the bill. Jack takes it from her.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

I'll see to that.

He glances at the bill and does a double take, which he quickly hides. He pays the man with his credit card and sees them out. Meanwhile Josh has got some music going and the strains of the Zulu version of 'Staying Alive' fill the air. In the background people begin to dance. Granny gestures to Jack to join in. They hold hands and dance together. Josh and Sindi look on. Aaron arrives and reels back at the sight of Granny's hair, shining like a beacon through the crowd.

AARON

What the fuck has she done to her hair?

SINDI

I think it looks quite nice, actually. Very trendy.

Aaron notices Granny and Jack dancing. Sindi follows his gaze.

SINDI

That's my Uncle Jack.

AARON

It seems a bit soon for her to get a... boyfriend. I can hardly say the word.

SINDI

They look good together. No one wants to be on their own.

AARON

Ya, but it's so soon. Is he really your uncle?

SINDI

Any older man from my neighbourhood is my uncle. He's a nice man. And he did pay for the pizza.

JOSH

That wasn't cheap (he laughs).

Josh notices his colleague standing at Granny's desk in the corner of the room, admiring her new computer. He makes his way over.

(CONTINUED)

COLLEAGUE

Nice. Your mom's got good taste.

JOSH

Or the salesman say her coming.
Hey, I must give you back your
laptop. Thanks for the loan.

The Colleague laughs. Josh looks at him quizzically.

COLLEAGUE

It's not my laptop, dude. It's...

At that moment Sindi begins to approach from across the room. She is out of ear-shot. The colleague openly gives her the once-over.

COLLEAGUE

Nice. You've also got good taste!
Or is this just a shag and release?

JOSH

No, man. It's not like that.

Sindi joins them and kisses Josh on the cheek.

SINDI

Come, let's dance.

Sindi begins to lead Josh towards the others who are dancing. The Colleague's girlfriend approaches and stands next to him whilst he continues to leer after Sindi. He starts to look a bit sleazy.

The party continues way into the night. Granny dances with Max who breaks into a solo and impresses the crowd with his moves. Granny applauds the loudest. She is his biggest fan.

People leave and bid farewell. Josh hands the laptop to the Colleague and waves him off at the door. He is one of the last to leave and picks up the last few slices of pizza on his way out.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - MORNING

Early morning light streams into the lounge. Granny walks into the lounge and surveys the debris from the night before. An Emergency Rescue worker emerges from under a pile of empty pizza boxes. He reaches out and finds Joan's hand. They sheepishly bid Granny goodbye and leave, hand in hand. Granny finds a piece of pizza and settles down on the couch. She switches on the TV. The weather report fills the screen. The SABC weatherman's appearance is in disarray.

(CONTINUED)

WEATHER MAN (ON THE TV)
 Moving up to the East coast, Durban
 with a maximum of five and a
 minimum of zero. (A LONG BEAT) And a
 strong possibility of snow.

Granny glances towards the window - bright blue skies. She frowns in disbelief. The weatherman suddenly lurches close to the camera lens, his features distorted in big close up.

WEATHER MAN (ON THE TV)
 This is not my fault! I just read
 the report! It keeps on saying snow
 in Durban. And is there snow? No,
 of course there isn't snow. Ever
 since that satellite was moved my
 information totally sucks. Don't
 ask me why the SABC can't use
 another weather satellite! They
 want to make me look like some
 crazy fool!

Granny drops the pizza and sits up and pays attention. It dawns on her that the satellite has not been 'put back' and that there is still a problem. She watches in horror as the SABC weatherman is lead off the set and the scene abruptly cuts to a commercial. She sits there in disbelief.

GRANNY
 I thought they put it back.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The night of Max's concert has arrived and all the kids are gathered backstage in their costumes. Max's costume is by far the biggest and most elaborate. Aaron, the sole father present in a sea of mothers fussing over their kids, notices the teacher looking totally harassed, almost on the point of a breakdown. He also notices that she is rather pretty. He approaches her, his manner completely different to how he is with Granny.

AARON
 I bet you'll be glad when this is
 all over.

TEACHER
 You have no idea. You put a lot of
 work into Max's costume. Thank you.

Aaron is slightly embarrassed, but pleased.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

He's so keen for this concert, he just loves all of this.

They look over at Max. He is in his element, pretending to be a satellite.

TEACHER

He tries so hard and he's a very sweet boy. Well, it's time to do this. Let's start.

She starts to usher the kids towards the door.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT

Max's teacher walks onto the stage. There is a sprinkle of polite applause. Aaron takes his seat alongside Granny, Jack, Josh and the Sindi. Granny looks serious.

TEACHER

Welcome to our Grade 3 concert 'a night in space'. Without any further ado let us begin.

The sound of the Beatles 'All across the Universe' fills the auditorium as the kids file onto the stage. Max's satellite costume is a huge contraption in which he can hardly move. It is covered almost entirely in tin foil and is adorned with flashing Christmas lights. The audience gasp as he appears.

AARON (WHISPERING)

Do you know how long it took to make that costume? About a month! But it looks bladdy good.

Max occupies centre stage and begins to recite his speech, enunciating each word carefully.

MAX

Satellites float above the earth. Their primary function is to send information back to earth. They send signals for TV and cell phones. They collect information about the weather and send it back to earth and that's what is used for the weather report. They are very, very important for life on earth to run smoothly.

(CONTINUED)

The lights dim on stage and lighting effects create the impression of signals shooting out of Max's satellite costume. The audience bursts into applause. Aaron is beaming with pride. Granny looks almost paralysed with processing the information from Max's speech so soon after witnessing the weatherman's breakdown.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE) CONTINUOUS

Suddenly Granny joins Max on stage. In slo-mo she approaches Max/the satellite. She reaches out and tries to push Max/the satellite back into place, but her efforts are futile and the satellite keeps slipping away from her. She tries to throw a lasso around the satellite, but the rope floats off into space. The audience is chanting...

AUDIENCE

Put it back! Put it back! Put it
back! Put it back! Put it back!

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Granny and Jack sleep on the couch, tea cups on the table in front of them. Granny's eyes snap open and she lands on her feet in an instant.

She rushes over to the corner where the computer is and plops down in front of it. The light of the screen illuminates her plump little fingers tapping away as she sets out into the dangerous waters of the Internet, desperately retracing her on-line footsteps trying to get back into the NASA site.

Granny's hearing aid whines. The door bell ringing and repeated knocking in the background remain unanswered by Granny, who is oblivious to it all, and Jack, who remains fast asleep on the couch. The crashing sounds of a shoulder-first entry are followed by Josh, Sindi, Aaron and Max suddenly appearing behind her. Granny screams.

JOSH

Ma! We were worried! I told you to
phone us when you got home from the
concert. I thought you'd been
hijacked or something. Can you hear
me?

Sindi quickly helps Granny adjust her hearing ad. The whining stops.

(CONTINUED)

SINDI

There we go.

GRANNY

I've got a problem here and I need to sort it out. It's the satellite I moved.

JOSH

You couldn't possibly have moved a satellite. You don't know how to hack into NASA.

GRANNY

Maybe I do.

AARON

Maybe she does.

MAX

Maybe she does.

AARON

Max, not now.

Jack has woken up and chooses this moment to sleepily stagger forward, yawning. Aaron clutches on to the furniture for support.

AARON

Oh dear God.

JACK

Hello everybody.

They exchange greetings. There is a lengthy, awkward silence.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll just go and make some tea then.

Jack exits in the direction of the kitchen.

AARON

Mom, what the hell are you doing.

JOSH

It's OK, bro.

AARON

No, it's not OK. My dad has been gone how long and now my mom has got a

(CONTINUED)

(he practically splutters over
the word)
lover!

SINDI
It's okay.

GRANNY
He is not my lover! He is a
friend. (A BEAT) He came in for some
tea.

Aaron is confused and upset, battling with what he should say
or not say.

MAX
Is he your lover, Granny?

AARON
Not NOW, Max!

Granny turns back to the computer and starts working away.
Josh stands perplexed.

JOSH
Ma, Aaron says you shouldn't...

GRANNY (INTERRUPTING)
Fuck Aaron.

Aaron reels and Josh practically takes a step back at his
mother's use of the 'f' word, something he has never heard
from her before.

GRANNY (CONT'D)
If you really care about me just
help me sort out this mess.

She turns back to the computer. Aaron composes himself and
sits next to her, trying to be helpful. The others gather
round. Before they can catch their breath they hear the sound
of people entering the house.

INT. GRANNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The two Agents burst into the lounge and point their torch
lights into the horrified faces of the group around the
computer. The light illuminates Granny's unbrushed hair
which is now standing up in all directions. Max starts
crying. The men flash their SA Military Intelligence IDs.

(CONTINUED)

AGENT1

SA Military Intelligence. You are under arrest, Mam.

MAX

No!

AARON

Hold on!

The Agents begin to lift Granny to her feet.

JOSH

Where's your warrant of arrest?

Agent 2 hands Josh a piece of paper which he begins to scrutinise. They continue getting Granny to her feet. Max starts howling.

AARON

Why are you arresting her?

AGENT1

I don't have to go through that now. She will be charged at the station.

SINDI

Wait! Let me at least get her some clothes, she's in her night dress, you can't take her like that.

AGENT2

You'll have to bring it to the station, mam.

They start to escort Granny out. At this point Jack enters.

JACK

Who would like a nice cup of tea?

He watches in bewilderment as Granny is hustled out the room by the Detectives, followed by Josh, Sindi, Aaron and Max. Jack quickly puts the tea down and follows also.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE GRANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sindi has found a dressing gown and she rushes after Granny and the men. She throws it around Granny's shoulders. They all watch helplessly as Granny is bundled into the car with the tinted windows. It drives off into the night. Jack appears behind them.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

We should all go to the station.

JACK

I'll phone my son.

JOSH

Why?

JACK

He's a lawyer. He'll know what to do.

INT. PRISON HOLDING CELLS - NIGHT

Alone and forlorn, Granny cuts a pathetic figure as she is led to the holding cell. The steel gate clangs shut behind her. With some relief she recognizes the prisoner in the holding cell opposite hers, but this quickly turns to anger as she realizes that it is none other than the Friendly Thief who ripped her off at the ATM.

GRANNY

I know who you are! And I don't like you. You stole my money!

FRIENDLY THIEF

Yeah, well, sorry 'bout that but I've got to feed my family.

Granny dissolves into tears and her sobs echo down the corridor. The Friendly Thief takes pity on her.

FRIENDLY THIEF

You look cold. Here, take my jacket.

Through a complicated system of calls and taps he manages to summon a guard who takes the jacket from him and hands it to Granny. It is a magnificent rapper style piece of couture. Granny eyes it suspiciously but puts it on anyway. She is shivering with cold and fear.

GRANNY

Thank you.

FRIENDLY THIEF

It's the least I could do. So what happened to you? Why you here? This must be a mistake.

Granny begins to cry.

INT. MAX'S GRADE 3 CLASSROOM - DAY

Max is standing in front of the class giving his news of the day. The class is riveted. The teacher looks upset at what she is hearing.

MAX

Then they pulled out their badges and said they were from SA Military Intelligence and they arrested my Granny and took her away.

TEACHER

Oh my word Max. This is too terrible. Just too terrible. And all because your Granny was trying to help you with your project. That's just not fair.

MAX

I know! It's not fair!

Several of the kids in the class say "It's not fair!"

TEACHER

We've got to do something to help Max's Granny, right class?

The kids agree.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

The first thing we can do is start a Facebook petition and if other people think Granny has been unfairly arrested they can support us and we can use the petition to help get her out of jail.

Max starts to look a little hopeful. The Teacher comes and takes his hand.

TEACHER

Let's go to the computer lab and do it right now.

The kids are all excited at the prospect of helping and follow the teacher and Max as they exit the classroom.

INT. POLICE STATION HOLDING CELL - DAY

Jack's son, the LAWYER, is being led by a police man through doors and down corridors.

INT. POLICE STATION HOLDING CELL - DAY

The lawyer and guards arrive. Granny looks immensely relieved. It is clear she has been crying. She composes herself.

LAWYER

Hello, Mrs Human. I'm Jack's son. I'm a lawyer and I'm going to help you out of this mess.

GRANNY

Oh you sweet man. Thank you, thank you.

Granny tries to smooth her hair and straighten her rapper jacket.

LAWYER

Let's just be happy that you're in a holding cell at a police station and not in prison. That would be even worse. Now, start at the beginning and tell me everything.

Granny begins to tell her story.

GRANNY

It all started after my husband died. I wanted to do things for myself and just try to be independent, you know. So I got a car and started to drive again.

The lawyer looks impressed.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

But then I had an accident, thank God nobody died, but I hurt my shoulder and ended up in hospital. Then Josh, he's my son, brought me a computer, a laptop, while I was in the hospital and taught me how to go in-line, on line, ON line! to give me something to do. But then

Granny is distressed. The Lawyer pats her arm.

(CONTINUED)

LAWYER

It's okay, Mrs Human, take your time.

Granny composes herself.

GRANNY

I was trying to help my grandson Max, (A BEAT) I was trying to impress him actually. Ridiculous, isn't it? He's nine years old and here I am at seventy five trying to impress him. But Aaron was in the room too and he's so critical and I wanted to show him. So I tried to copy and paste a satellite from the NASA website but I think I may have accidentally moved it instead.

LAWYER

Can you remember what else you did?

GRANNY

Not really. I was typing quite a lot.

LAWYER

And how long would you estimate it took you to 'copy and paste' the satellite?

GRANNY

Well, Aaron finished the coffee he was drinking and I would say, probably, maybe ten minutes.

LAWYER

Ten minutes?

GRANNY

It could have been fifteen.

The lawyer makes notes during all of this.

LAWYER

And what happened after that?

GRANNY

Later on I read the paper and I realised that something terrible had happened. And Aaron blamed me and at first I thought it couldn't be. Then I saw how upset the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRANNY (cont'd)

weatherman was and I realised it probably was me, that I was actually this person they were calling the Satellite Sleuth. I was trying to sort it out on the same site when those men arrested me.

LAWYER

Ah.

The Friendly Thief is hanging on to the gate of his cell, following every word of Granny's story.

FRIENDLY THIEF

No way, man! There is no way you are the Satellite Sleuth. You hacked into NASA man! Way to go, Granny!

He laughs uproarously. Granny casts a withering look in his direction.

LAWYER

I've got enough to start with here. I'm going to go now and get the ball rolling to get you out of this place.

GRANNY

Thank you so much.

The lawyer is at the cell gate. The policeman on the other side unlocks the gate and opens it. The lawyer pauses and turns to Granny.

LAWYER

And it was Josh's laptop you say?

GRANNY

Actually it wasn't Josh's. It was his friend's. Someone he works with. He just wanted Josh to keep it for a while, so he lent it to me.

LAWYER

I see.

He mulls over the information.

(CONTINUED)

LAWYER (CONT'D)

By the way, my Dad sends his love.

GRANNY

And give him my love. Thank you.
Thank you very much.

The lawyer leaves. Granny cell gate is locked. The lawyer's footsteps can be heard receding down the corridor. The Friendly Thief starts to laugh again.

FRIENDLY THIEF

No friggin' way, man! Granny is the
Satellite Sleuth!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Sindi and her fellow nurses are gathered round the TV set in the ward. The SABC news reports the arrest of the 'Satellite Sleuth'. A shot of Granny in her night dress, face mosaiced out but with her spiked, red hair clearly visible, fills the screen. The nurses gasp.

SINDI

We've got to do something with that
hair of hers.

INT. AARON'S LOUNGE - DAY

Aaron watches the news and sees interviews from Lawyers for Human Rights, pleading Granny's case.

EXT. BUSY INTERSECTION - DAY

A newspaper boy sells his papers next to a placard stating "Set Her Free".

INT. GRADE 3 COMPUTER LAB - DAY

The teacher, Max and the Grade 3 class are gathered around a computer which is open to Granny's Facebook petition.

TEACHER

Let's see how many supporters we've
got so far.

She reads the number of likes. It is 5 000.

(CONTINUED)

TEACHER

That's good! The more people who know about Granny the more support we can get for her. We've got to get all our Facebook friends to support her.

MAX

Especially cause she didn't mean to do it. It was all a mistake. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes.

The group around him nod in agreement, some repeating "everyone makes mistakes".

INT. POLICE STATION HOLDING CELLS CORRIDOR - DAY

The SABC weatherman arrives to visit Granny, accompanied by an entourage of reporters with note books and cameras. He is flamboyant and acts like a rock star. The policemen have let him in because he is something of a celebrity.

INTERIOR. PRISON VISITORS ROOM - DAY

The SABC weatherman takes a seat opposite Granny. Cameras are rolling as the meeting takes place.

GRANNY

You look thinner than on TV.

SABC WEATHERMAN

Oh, thank you.

GRANNY

You're quite handsome.

He waves off her flattery.

GRANNY (CONT'D)

I want you to know how sorry I am for all the stress and problems I caused you. All those phone calls you got at the SABC because the weather report was always wrong.

SABC WEATHERMAN

And I'm very seldom wrong. I knew something was up when it kept on saying snow in Durban. I mean, have you ever?

Granny giggles. The SABC Weatherman smiles along with her.

(CONTINUED)

SABC WEATHERMAN (CONT'D) I
 forgive you.

Cameras capture the moment as he hugs Granny and air kisses next to her face. He turns his best side to the cameras and poses. Flashes go off, the picture freezes and we see a

CLOSE UP OF GRANNY AND THE WEATHERMAN IN BLACK AND WHITE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF A NEWSPAPER.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

We pull back to see the same picture on the front cover of a newspaper which is in the hands of a vendor selling papers at a busy intersection. The headlines proclaims 'Weatherman forgives Granny'.

MONTAGE OF FACEBOOK POSTS

A montage of Facebook posts follows. Posts say "the weatherman forgives her, why can't we?", "she didn't mean to do it", "she was only trying to use a computer", "everybody hacks sometimes", "we love Granny". The 'likes' number counter turns over and the figure soars into the hundreds of thousands.

MONTAGE OF TWEETS

A close up shows a tablet open to Twitter. We read 'Now trending on Twitter'. Fingers type in a tweet "Free Granny!" We see the message re-tweeted again and again, with "Free Granny!" becoming larger and larger on the screen.

INT. JOSH'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The TV is tuned to MNet and the familiar sounds of the Carte Blanche opening sequence fill the air. Josh is on the couch waiting in anticipation.

JOSH
 Hurry up, it's gonna start!

Sindi rushes into the room and takes her place on the couch next to Josh. On the TV screen Bongani Bingwa introduces the show.

BONGANI BINGWA (ON THE TV)
 Tonight on Carte Blanche, a special investigation into the case of the
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BONGANI BINGWA (ON THE TV) (cont'd)
 Satellite Sleuth. Just who is Mrs
 Human and how is it possible that a
 seventy five year old grand mother
 could hack into NASA, of all
 places? Carte Blanche investigates.

A dramatised sequence follows with the part of Granny played by
 a soap star and Josh played by a pop star. Voice over
 recounts Granny's early life.

JOSH
 She looks nothing like Ma.
 Especially the hair.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

The nurses are gathered around the TV in the ward watching
 Carte Blanche. They are glued to the re-enactment of the
 accident and they cheer when they see the hospital and the
 actor playing Granny being brought to the ER. Sindi is
 played by the lead actress from Generations. Some nurses
 applaud and others cast jealous looks in Sindi's direction.
 The scene where Granny tries out the laptop follows,
 accompanied by dramatic music and slo-mo footage.

INT. CARTE BLANCHE STUDIO - NIGHT

We pull back from the floor monitor showing the re-enactment of
 Max at Granny's hospital bedside, to find Max and Aaron waiting
 off to the side of the Carte Blanche set. The floor manager
 stands next to them.

FLOOR MANAGER (WHISPERING)
 As soon as the commercials start
 I'll show you where to sit.

BONGANI BINGWA
 Absolutely fascinating. We'll be
 back right after this commercial
 break with an interview with a
 family member - nine year old Max
 Human.

Aaron turns to Max.

AARON
 Are you nervous?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

No.

AARON

That's my boy. Just be yourself and
you'll be fine.

The floor manager leads Max on to the set. He and Bongani Bingwa exchange greetings. The sound man quickly attaches a lapel mic to his shirt and hurries off the set. Music signals that the commercials are over and we are back to the programme. Bongani addresses the camera.

BONGANI BINGWA

Welcome back. In the studio with us tonight we have Max Human, the nine year old grandson of the alleged Satellite Sleuth.

He turns to Max.

BONGANI BINGWA (CONT'D)

Max, this must seem crazy to you that your granny might be the Satellite Sleuth. Now, we've heard that it all started when she was trying to help you with a project on space. Do you want to tell us about that?

MAX

I do.

BONGANI BINGWA

Okay, then go ahead and tell us how it all happened.

Aaron is standing to the side of the set, looking on with a mixture of pride and anxiety.

MAX

I had to do a project on space. I like satellites the best so I wanted a picture of a satellite. My Uncle Josh lent Granny his laptop...

INT. JOSH'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Josh and Sindi are still watching Carte Blanche. At the mention of his name Josh looks at Sindi who smiles back at him.

MAX (ON THE TV)

and she was getting quite good at using it and she said she would get me a picture of a satellite. I showed her the one I liked and she said she would copy and paste it for me.

INT. CARTE BLANCHE STUDIO - NIGHT

BONGANI BINGWA

Copy and paste it for you.

MAX

Well that's what she was trying to do.

Aaron is watching tensely, waiting to see what Max says next.

MAX (CONT'D)

But I think she made a mistake. Granny always told me that it's okay to make mistakes because everybody makes mistakes sometimes.

BONGANI BINGWA

I think she probably did make a mistake. And what do you wish for your granny now?

MAX

I want her to be let out of jail.

BONGANI BINGWA

Let's hope for the best then. Now let's hear from an expert on the subject of hacking, Professor Wright. Good evening Professor.

Professor Wright is the ultimate computer nerd.

PROFESSOR WRIGHT

Good evening Bongani, thanks for having me here.

(CONTINUED)

BONGANI BINGWA

Now Prof you have a theory about how this could have happened. After all, Mrs Human was barely computer literate and hacking is a complicated business.

PROFESSOR WRIGHT

True. The issue here is that she was given a stolen laptop.

INT. JOSH'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Josh and Sindi are still watching Carte Blanche. Josh looks horrified.

JOSH

Fuck. I should have known.

INT. CARTE BLANCHE STUDIO - NIGHT

PROFESSOR WRIGHT

The COP 17 climate conference was happening at that time and one of the guest speakers was Dr Wainstein who did a presentation on the role of weather satellites in monitoring climate change.

MAX (INTERRUPTING)

My Uncle Josh worked at that conference!

PROFESSOR WRIGHT (CONT'D)

It seems his laptop was stolen. I believe that was the laptop Mrs Human was given.

INT. JOSH'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Josh and Sindi are paralysed by the new information.

JOSH

Oh, fuck. This implicates me. I was the one who got the laptop. I gave it to her. I received stolen goods!

INT. CARTE BLANCHE STUDIO - NIGHT

Aaron is still standing to the side of the set. He whispers to the Floor Manager.

AARON

There must be some mistake. My brother would never steal a laptop.

BONGANI BINGWA

Still, even with a stolen laptop I don't understand how Mrs Human would have been able to hack into NASA.

PROFESSOR WRIGHT

Well you see she didn't have to hack in.

Professor Wright's voice continues over the cut to:

INT. CONVENTION CENTRE - DAY (FLASHBACK) CONTINUOUS

Dr Weinstein stands at the podium delivering his address in front of a large audience at the climate conference. In front of him is his laptop. Behind him on a large screen is a beautiful graphic of the sky with all the weather satellites in position. He finishes his speech and the audience applaud. He leave the podium. Josh's Colleague comes forward, tidies up a few cables, picks up the laptop and quickly leaves.

PROFESSOR WRIGHT VO (CONT'D)

The laptop was stolen right after the presentation during which Dr Wainstein showed the delegates his work on plotting satellite paths. He was still logged in.

INT. CARTE BLANCHE STUDIO - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The interview continues.

BONGANI BINGWA

If it's that easy shouldn't NASA be asking some questions about their online security?

PROFESSOR WRIGHT

Exactly right. And they should thank Mrs Human. She's basically
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR WRIGHT (cont'd)
given them a free security
audit. This is not Mrs Human's
fault. It is the fault of the
system designers. We know how to
implement cryptographic end-to-end
message authentication, which is a
very effective way to stop
unauthorised parties executing
commands on remote devices. They
should have had that in place and
then this wouldn't have happened.

Bongani Bingwa is nodding in agreement. He turns to the
cameras.

BONGANI BINGWA
Fascinating stuff. We'll be
following up next week on the case of
the Super Sleuth. Till then,
this is Carte Blanche wishing you a
good night.

A message comes up on the floor monitor asking for support
for Granny's Facebook group. As the credits roll Max leaves
the set and approaches Aaron, who has a tear in his eye.

AARON
You did great my boy. I'm proud of
you.

MAX
What's going to happen next, dad?

AARON
They've got to find the guy who
stole the laptop.

INT. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The two Agents are sitting in a high tech area with several
monitors in front of them. One of the computer screens
switches to the icon for 'Find My Apple'.

AGENT 1
Here we go! I wondered how long it
would be before this guy couldn't
resist switching it on.

A video image fills the screen: it is a close up of a man
sitting in front of a laptop, taken from the laptop's
camera.

(CONTINUED)

AGENT 1 (CON'T.)

There he is.

AGENT 2

Bingo.

The man on the screen is Josh's Colleague. He takes a swig of beer and gets up to go over to his girlfriend in the background. They starts dancing to music playing from the laptop.

AGENT 1

Log the co-ordinates.

AGENT 2

Done. Let's go get him.

They hastily exit the room, leaving the streaming video of the man and the woman dancing awkwardly.

EXT. COURT HOUSE STEPS - DAY

Granny stands on the steps of the court house, a free woman. Her hair is now nicely cut and is a muted medium grey. Cameramen swarm around her and reporters ask her about her plans for the future. Granny pushes them aside as she rushes towards her family and friends - Aaron, Josh, Sindi, Max, Jack, the Teacher, the entire Grade 3 class, all the nurses, the texting teenager, Joan and a bevy of people from the pizza party including the child with the injured arm and the paramedic. She hugs her family and is on the point of tears.

EXT. GRANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Granny comes out of her front door and locks it behind her. She looks beautiful in a pretty, frilly white dress. Jack is waiting for her next to her car, smartly dressed in a suit.

JACK

You look beautiful.

GRANNY

You don't look too bad yourself.

JACK

Are you sure you want to do this?

GRANNY

I'm sure.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Well, let's go and do it then. I
assume you'll drive?

GRANNY

Of course.

They get into a new Smart car with Granny behind the wheel. She starts the car confidently and pulls out into the road, driving carefully and slowly.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Granny and Jack pull up in her car. There is only one parking space and it is in a difficult spot, right between a Merc and a BMW. Granny assesses her chances and confidently begins to parallel park.

Aaron, Max, Josh, Sindi, the Teacher and a group of grade 3 kids all watch from the pavement. Aaron literally holds his breath. They can see Jack in the passenger seat actually close his eyes.

In one swift, unbelievable movement Granny manages to parallel park perfectly at the first attempt. Aaron exhales. Jack opens one eye. Granny moves to get out of the car and Aaron rushes forward to open her door, arriving there just as she starts to open it. He jumps back and narrowly avoids the door hitting his crotch.

AARON

Bladdy hell, mom!

GRANNY

Woopsie. Come on let's go, we don't
want to be late.

The group make off down the road.

EXT. CHURCH HALL - DAY

A long line of very old people wait in a queue. Granny and her entourage arrive and move past the oldies with their Zimmer frames and walking sticks, until they get to the front of the queue where she and Max take their seats at a long table below a sign declaring "You're never too old to learn to surf". Granny is here to sign up old people for a course on how to use the Internet. Another sign at the table reads "All profits to the Nelson Mandela Children's fund". Granny and Max organise themselves. Granny looks up confidently at the line of eager, old folk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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GRANNY

Right, now
who's first
to learn
how to go
on the
Internet?

An old person shuffles forward and sits in front of Granny who smiles encouragingly at her. Family and friends help with the queue. Josh and Aaron stand in the background watching, both in admiration of this incredible woman who is their mother.

JOSH

She's going to be okay, you know.

AARON

I know.

The camera pulls back to reveal a long line of people waiting to enrol for Granny's course. A news reporter and her crew cover the event, interviewing people waiting in line. Granny and Max are hard at work filling in the forms and signing up people.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

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Appendix 1

Craig Freimond biography

Introduction

Craig Freimond is a South African born, multi-award winning, Emmy nominated screenwriter-director whose work has influenced me. His theatre credits include *Edmond*, *The Chalky White Show*, *the Great Gatsby*, *Jump*, *Pygmalion*, *Macbeth*, *Sweet Phoebe*, *Talk Radio*, *Gums and Noses*, *The King of laughter* and *Death of a Colonialist*. His television credits include *Not Quite Friday Night*, *Soul Buddyz*, *Scoop Schoombie*, *Gazlam* and *Sorted*. His feature film credits include *Gums and Noses*, *Jozi* and *Material*. The following information is gleaned from several interviews I conducted with him in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2012 and some correspondence in 2013, covering his career and major influences.

The class clown

Born in 1967 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Craig Freimond grew up in the North of the city and attended Bryanston High which he describes as “rough (and) terribly hard”. He came to realise that he was the class clown but it was only when he was persuaded to act in a school play that he saw significance in this attribute. He remembers the audience laughing and this positive feedback became a formative experience for him: it “felt really good, it felt like something had happened”. An influential teacher at the school he attended introduced him to the idea of drama as a career option, something he describes as “totally foreign to me”.

A passing phase

After finishing matric. In 1984, and possibly influenced by his experience in the school play and his teacher’s encouragement, he auditioned for Wits. University drama school and was accepted. His father, a patent attorney, struggled with his son’s choice and was bemused and “horrified by the idea”. Years later Freimond discovered that his father was simply relieved that his son had been accepted at University at all and thought that his son’s interest in drama was a passing phase.

At this early stage Freimond's ambition was to be an actor but he quickly realised that he "wasn't very good... I was too cerebral, not in a clever way, but just that I was in my head rather than instinctive, as I think good actors need to be".

Lecturer Malcolm Purkey had a big influence on Freimond during his time in the drama department at Wits. Early on in his drama training he switched his emphasis to directing and felt very at home with it. He describes the change as, "...quite a relief in some ways because I was bit worried about this acting thing. So I felt like I had found a home, but at the same time it was a very conflicted time for me, the whole University thing, because I loved it, but I also found it totally perplexing at times. There were many times that I thought this is not for me".

Conscription, call-ups and conflict

The conflicts in Freimond's life at that time included the then apartheid government's conscription policy which meant that he was subject to being called up to serve in the army. Freimond did not want to go to the army and by being a registered university student he managed to avoid being conscripted for four years. However, once his drama degree was completed in 1988, the possibility of conscription reared its head again and, in an effort to escape it, he registered for an LLB degree, something he never pursued with any commitment.

Morbid symptoms

At the same time he had been offered a job with Junction Theatre Avenue Company in Johannesburg to act in a new workshop production of the play *Tooth and Nail*, to be directed by former lecturer Malcom Purkey. Many great young SA actors were in the cast including Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler from the now internationally famous Handspring Puppet Company. Freimond recalls that the play was based on a Gramsci quote about morbid symptoms emerging in times of change, which he felt was rather apt for the end of the apartheid era. Soon after, in 1989, he directed his first professional production, David Mamet's *Edmond*, which played at the Black Sun. The production was

critically very well received which pleased Freimond but he also felt stressed by the social and political turmoil in South Africa at that time.

A terrible decision

The army still plagued Freimond and eventually he decided he, "...couldn't escape it anymore and I don't know why but I got myself into a funk about the fact that I was not doing anything and... in a moment of sheer madness I decided to go to the army for a year. Which was, a terrible decision...". He then spent what he describes as a "really horrific year in 1990 in the army". The ANC had been unbanned and Nelson Mandela had been released from prison and "everyone was in a state of total confusion... It was the beginning of the end (of apartheid), quite a weird time to be in there".

Perhaps due to his drama training Freimond found himself in the television unit at Kolet, the South African Defense Force (SADF) college for education and training in Pretoria and it was there that he learned video editing and worked on a Betacam edit suite (a broadcast quality suite at that time) whilst making training videos, a skill that would later prove to be useful in the television industry. During this time he lived in Yeoville, Johannesburg and commuted to Kolet every day. He describes this fraught time as a "rather schizophrenic existence because my other life was quite alternative and bohemian...I have blocked out most of that year because it was all a bit odd".

Terrible sitcoms

When Freimond left the army he emerged with a desire to work in the television industry. He found a job as an on-line editor for a production company where he edited "lots of terrible sitcoms" as well as MNet's Carte Blanche, an investigative journalism show. This was useful in helping him understand how television worked and, in particular, how editing worked. However, by the end of the year he realised that editing was not for him and he resigned.

Mysterious process

Freimond returned to work in theatre as a director for the next ten to fifteen years (1991-2002), doing productions through the Performing Arts Council of Transvaal (PACT), the Market Theatre, at festivals and also in the newly emerging field of corporate theatre. During this time he still maintained some connection to the world of television by writing some television shows, including *Soul Buddies*, *Soul City* and *Gazlam*, but he maintains that his first love was theatre. He asserts that he has "...always loved theatre and always thought that possibly one of my greatest skills is working with actors. [I have] a very intuitive sense of working with actors that I think has really helped me in the film world because a lot of people in the film world come from a different side altogether. It is a mysterious process dealing with actors but when you're working in theatre it's what you do...I love working with actors. [It's] my favourite part of the whole thing." However, he finds substantial difference between the theatrical and the television/film experiences: "The film making process for me is quite frustrating. Your way of working with actors is so prescribed because essentially we don't have nearly as much exploration".

The confidence to write

Around 1993 Freimond began to work in corporate/industrial theatre which helped him develop his writing skills because, as he says, "Most of it was really badly written and eventually I started saying "listen, this is terrible, can't I just write it?"" He began to realise that he had a talent for writing, particularly comedy. He worked extensively in corporate theatre, mostly through Blue Moon, a Johannesburg company who were primary instigators of the industrial theatre genre at that time, completing at least fifty productions for clients such as Sasol, SA Breweries and Nampak. He credits this experience with giving him the confidence to write. At that time he was also working with a group of improvisers at the Market theatre and this was a second major influence on his growing confidence and ability to write.

Improvising is writing

Freimond says of the group at the Market Theatre that, "Probably most of us are good writers today because improvising is writing. ...Writing is improvising

by yourself and all the aspects that make improvisation good or bad...are very similar things to certain aspects of writing". He began to use improvisation as a directing technique and says it is "something that I still use to this day all the time when I am working with actors".

It was at the Market Theatre that he met Rosalind, an actor and his future wife. Freimond says they "both got to writing through improvising". Rosalind is also a film, television and theatre writer and Freimond says, "She has helped me hugely because she's able to say things that others don't. We always read each other's stuff and give honest feedback".

Mad as a hatter

A chance to utilise his comedic and improvisational skills emerged when he began work on a new TV series, *Not Quite Friday Night* (1995-) which was based on the American sketch show *Saturday Night Live*. This "excessively low budget" production was commissioned by one of the new SABC channels at that time and, according to Freimond, it "slipped under the radar and we did about three series of this show, which was mad as a hatter". Freimond worked with Chris Du Plessis and Nick Warren to write and direct the show, each episode of which included about ten minutes of satirical sketches. The *Not Quite Friday Night* group was influenced by the idea of writing about what made them angry. "Without knowing it at the time that is what we used to do. We used to get together...three or four of us, and talk about what was going on and what was pissing us off...and let the sketches come out of that".

This series provided a very good training ground for Freimond because he could write a script and then direct it, which gave him the opportunity to see what really worked. He is proud of this series and says that *Not Quite Friday Night* and *Sorted* were "the only two times I ever felt like I had cracked something in terms of comedy". This writing-directing role, satire and improvisation is what he returned to later in his films such as *Gums and Noses* (2004) and *Jozi* (2010).

At this point Freimond was straddling the worlds of both theatre and television with writing jobs on SABC's *Soul Buddies* (1992/3) (the television youth version of *Soul City*), along with writing-directing *Not Quite Friday Night*, whilst still doing theatre work including a regular Sunday night improv gig at the Market Theatre (1993-1996).

Sausage Factory

Aspirations of working in film were starting to emerge, although Freimond describes it as "a bit of a pipe dream". In 2000/1 he accepted an opportunity to work with a production company in Cape Town, writing and shadowing the director on what would be a locally produced sitcom, *Scoop Schoombie*. He took the job because he wanted to try multi-camera directing and for him it felt like a natural progression from his other comedy work. Producer number one had secured a deal with etv to produce the sitcoms on a very tight budget and suddenly Freimond found himself in a "sausage factory".

I lost my way

The concept and characters for *Scoop Schoombie* were the producer's. The writers came up with the synopsis, broke down the scenes and wrote the dialogue, all subject to approval from the producer. This lack of authorial control coupled with the speed of production and eventual poor reviews led to a crisis for Freimond. "I just felt like I totally lost my way. I wasn't writing anything of my own. I wasn't getting any closer to writing film. I was also doing all this corporate stuff which was driving me mad and I had done this quite bad sitcom."

It felt like it was working

Freimond says the experience of shooting the sitcom was very different to viewing the finished product, "When we were working on the [studio] floor it felt like it was working and then when you watched it on TV it was just crap... Something about sitcoms in South Africa and English, for me, it never worked. I just don't think it suits our style. ... You are working in a [genre] that is shooting you in the head. Sitcom is a dated [genre] and it's never really worked

in South Africa in English. So you are trying your best but then you see it on TV and you realise, shit, sorry.”

Watershed

Ultimately, the experience was a watershed for Freimond. Recollecting the poor reviews he says, “Everyone is telling you this is shit. ... When you’re busy working on something, you’re trying your best so you tend to look at it in a different way. I thought the first series was weak. But I had not really had a chance to imprint myself on it. I thought the second series was much better. ...But did we always get it right? No. I still maintain when we got episodes right it wasn’t bad at all.”

Devastating loss

A significant personal experience at this time led him to further question his career choice of writing and directing sitcoms. The woman whom he employed as a domestic worker suffered a devastating loss when her baby died and she asked Freimond’s wife to take a photograph of the deceased baby. The photograph was over-exposed and she asked Freimond if he would take another one, even though by this stage the baby’s body was in the morgue. He agreed and accompanied the woman to the morgue. Once there, the coffin was opened and the mother held her discoloured baby in her arms whilst Freimond photographed them. The portrait held particular significance for the mother and she displayed it on her fridge door.

For Freimond, however, the experience was deeply disturbing and unsettling. He questioned what he was doing writing sitcoms whilst others were suffering and dying. Freimond says, “I had a real sense of ‘what are you doing? What are you doing?’” He decided to leave the production company. He says ‘I knew that I couldn’t do it. I knew that there was just no ways. After that she (producer number one) offered me other stuff. I was just like absolutely no ways”.

Massive shift

After leaving the production company Freimond decided to return to Wits University where he registered for an MA in Drama in 2001. He describes this

as “a massive shift for me because I started writing *Gums and Noses*, the play”. For years he had been trying to write a script about an ad agency ‘coke head’ who was trying to come up with a creative idea for the next day. Returning to university ultimately provided him with the space to craft the play, although initially it started life as a screenplay.

Theories of structure and screenplay writing had started to interest Freimond and he read the works of Syd Field who had written extensively about the Hollywood formula approach to screenwriting. Freimond tried to write a screenplay of his story but could not get it right “...until one day I thought what if it were a play? As soon as I had that thought it opened up a different level... my way of writing was much more ironic and it was almost like a monologue and that just broke something open in it”.

Freed from trying to meet the constraints of the formula screenplay structure he began to turn his story into a play. The result was a very pacy play which employed the device of having two actors play a variety of roles. Freimond describes it as “totally mad and very contemporary and very energetic” and he was happy that when it was staged in 2001/2002 it was very successful and well received. He believed that because it had worked as a play it would not be difficult to adapt it for the screen.

For Freimond *Gums and Noses* (2001) and *Death of a Colonialist* (2011) were “my favourite pieces of theatre that I have done”. (*Death of a Colonialist* won three Naledi awards: best production, best actor and best director). Ultimately, it was the positive experience and success of the stage version of *Gums and Noses* that swung Freimond’s career back towards the screen.

A new direction

Around this time MNet launched an initiative called *New Directions* which involved the production of eight locally made films. Spurred on by the potential opportunity to have his stage play turned into a film Freimond quickly adapted the *Gums and Noses* script into a screenplay and pitched the idea to MNet. He put in a heartfelt performance and says, “I was shaking. ...I (said) I promise

you I can make this thing work. ...If you have any doubt just tell me now and let me dispel (it) ... I remember it so clearly because it was one of the few times in my life where I had to say ... this is now potentially life changing". The pitch was successful and Freimond was awarded a budget of R1.3 million which, at that stage, was the biggest budget he had ever had.

Having had the experience of directing *Gums and Noses* for the stage and by keeping the same actors Freimond entered the film shoot with a great deal of confidence for a first-time film director. The film was shot in eighteen days with another month spent in post-production, during which time he was very 'hands-on'.

Egoless

This venture also saw the start of his now on-going collaboration with Robbie Thorpe, an experienced editor-producer and long-time friend, who became the producer of *Gums and Noses*. Other producers had turned Freimond down because the fee was insufficient but Thorpe agreed to do it. Freimond admired Thorpe because "he was very creative, he always had an excellent story sense as well as a great knowledge of film". The two have worked together ever since and "have a great understanding and are able to work together in quite an egoless way". Freimond says, "I trust him and feel very grounded when he's around, like there's someone who knows what he's talking about who's watching over me".

The film was well received by MNet who were "very happy" with it, although they refused a theatrical release for the film. In some ways Freimond considers this a good thing and jokes that "it never went through the ignominy of collapsing at the box office". MNet also kept the rights to the film but he says "we didn't care about that in those days". Freimond earned a meager R40, 000 (approximately) for the script for *Gums and Noses* and says, "I can't remember how much for everything else but probably [about] fifty grand".

A good year

The success of the *Gums and Noses* film (2004) played a significant role in launching Freimond's career as a film, rather than stage, writer/director and won the Apollo Film Festival award for best feature film that year. It was good year for Freimond as his play *The King of Laughter* won three Naledi Awards that year - best new play, best director and best supporting actor. He says, "I think people thought I knew how to write a film after that. I really didn't because I had just adapted my play. So I got a couple of film writing jobs out of it. Not 'jobs', because you never get value [well paying] film writing jobs in this country, but we went and did an adaptation of *A Place Called Vatmaar* by E M H Scholtz, funded by the NFVF in 2005/2006".

Theoretical understanding

Perhaps evidence of his lack of confidence in writing and directing film beyond this first venture can be found in his need to delve more into screenplay theory. He began reading the works of Robert McKee whom he found "very hard to get your head around". He had previously attempted Joseph Campbell's *Hero With A Thousand Faces* and found it "quite dense" but, in contrast, found Syd Field's writing on structure "a bit like paint by numbers". Ultimately, it was Robert McKee who was "the person at that time who was bringing these different ideas together". Freimond was beginning to develop a theoretical understanding of screenplay structure.

Major influences

Freimond continued his collaboration with Robbie Thorpe and the two of them shared an appreciation for the films of Woody Allen which was a major influence on their work. They were also admirers of *In the Thick of It*, a heavily improvised British political satire and *The Daily Show with John Stewart*, an American satirical show. Freimond expresses his admiration for John Stewart by saying, "It's...more than satire. ...He pulls it back to reality in a way that I think is genius. ...The way they use video editing of past stuff to show the hypocrisy of politicians is incredible. ...it is quite multi-layered."

Possibly the biggest influence on both Freimond and Thorpe around 2005/2006 was the Home Box Office (HBO) television series *Curb Your*

Enthusiasm (2000 -2012), co-created by Larry David, which stars himself as a fictionalised version of himself. The plots and storylines are worked out by Davids with the dialogue being improvised by the actors.

The rules of middle-class society

Thorpe had seen and liked *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and showed it to Feimond who thought, “This is exactly what we should be doing”. They began to research and analyse this show along with the prior Larry Davids television co-creation *Seinfeld* (1989 – 1998) which Davids created with Jerry Seinfeld. The alternative humor on display in the shows appealed to Fremond and contrasted with the South African sitcoms which repelled him. The use of improvisation in both shows held tremendous appeal for him and Thorpe. They were attracted to the comedy of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Seinfeld* which were about the rules of middle-class society and focused on the minute details of every-day life. This all led to a collaboration with Thorpe on the television series *Sorted* (2005-2007).

Win-win

The idea for *Sorted* was pitched to the SABC 3, who then commissioned it. “It was a real push...we had shot this pilot which was totally insane and very low budget. ...All these SABC people were horrified ...they saw themselves as very ...glamorous.” Fortunately, there was a woman, P, at SABC’s Content Hub who Freimond describes as “an out-of-the-box thinker”, who may have had a positive influence on the outcome of the pitch. The commission turned out to be a win-win for both parties as the show received good ratings which resulted in good advertising revenue for the broadcaster.

Freimond and Thorpe reveled in the freedom of going into an episode with nothing more than a three-page outline and no dialogue and then improvising with the actors to create the show. He describes his writing/directing/creating approach as “...I would just go into a scene with actors, OK this is what the scene is about ...and we would work it and work it and after each take I would say ‘mmm, don’t do this, don’t do that’. ...Let’s go, and we would shoot three or four takes and then we created (it) in the edit”. This method clearly shows the

influence of both *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Seinfeld*, as it is similar to the approach taken by Larry Davids in creating these shows. Freimond believes that the improvised dialogue allowed *Sorted* to be much more actor/ character driven and therefore more dense and interesting.

Emmy award

The SABC commissioned two, thirteen episode series of *Sorted*. Difficulties in dealing with the broadcaster led to Freimond leaving after the sixth episode of the second series. He felt a lack of support from them, particularly around budget issues. Despite the fact that the show was very successful for the SABC and that the first series was nominated for an international Emmy award, the budget was still “a pittance”. He says of the corporation that “...fighting with the SABC was ...starting to drive everyone mad. ...I think it was the beginning of that era where everything collapsed [at the SABC].” Despite this he feels he learned a lot about acting while working on *Sorted*: “...the actors were relaxed because they weren’t acting. They would just improvise and so they took their mannerisms with them, they took their voices with them. It was quite extraordinary. The actors were just fantastic”.

Based on my life

With one well-received film and an Emmy nominated series under his belt Freimond attracted the attention of South African producer Anant Singh of Video Vision who approached him to write a film for his company. Together with Thorpe he came up with a story based on the experiences of a friend who destroyed his life through drugs and had to apologise to those he had hurt. They proposed the idea and Video Vision was interested but coincidentally the television series *My Name is Earl* was being screened and it had a very similar premise, leading to the duo re-working their story.

Freimond and Thorpe had to come up with another idea. This time the story was based on Freimond’s life and his experiences of being a comedy writer who has lost his sense of humour whilst living in and negotiating, the chaotic world of Johannesburg. The character was also influenced by the Larry Davids’ character in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, who is a semi-retired television writer. The

eventual storyline of *Jozi* was a melding of the two ideas and this led to some problems with the film later on because the story seems to deal with one subject [a drug addict] and turns out to deal with another [a writer searching for meaning].

Within a year and half shooting had begun on *Jozi*. For Freimond this was too short a time, “Sometimes ...the more time you have, the better. ...You just have more time to think about things”. He chose to work with the same actors thereby bringing the working history of *Sorted* to his second film.

Shift

Freimond had also shifted his focus in his other work, away from commercials and corporates and towards soap opera. From about 2008 the television industry in South Africa went through difficult times and Freimond describes the industry as ‘closing down’. There was less work available, including in corporates and commercials in which he had been quite heavily involved, directing McDonalds, Mrs Balls’ and Marmite ads amongst many others. Despite the commercials field being extremely well paying he decided to leave it behind, saying of the people he encountered, “They are just full of arrogance and bullshit. It is annoying and ... it wasn’t going forward.” In addition he found the intermittent nature of the work to be highly disruptive, saying “you have to drop everything when you do a commercial. ...It is always last minute. So you drop everything for 3 weeks. It causes chaos in your life....you don’t know when it is going to happen. And sometimes it will happen at a very inopportune moment. I just found I started feeling like a performing bear.” Directing commercials became more and more distasteful to him until he eventually he chose to withdraw from this type of work.

Freimond found a better fit working on the soap opera *Rhythm City*. He was attracted by its dramatic genre because the story world was intact with no commercial imperative caught up in it. Despite the daily nature of the show and the budget constraints under which they work he says, “There is an integrity to the process. ...We are writing characters, we are involved in the world of plot and characters and millions of people are watching every night”.

Why not?

Freimond's next film after *Jozi* (2010) was *Material* (2012). He was asked in 2003 by entrepreneur and producer Ronnie Apteker to start developing a film about Riaad Moosa, the comedian. Freimond said, "Why not?" He says Apteker "always had a way to finance it" and probably would have made it years before but "I was never convinced it was ready to shoot, until it was". The film is based on Moosa's life and deals with a young Indian-South African man who dreams of being a stand-up comedian despite his father's aspirations for him to take over the family business, a little retail fabric outlet. It is very different tonally from *Gums and Noses* and *Jozi* and does not have the same anti-heroic protagonist. The dialogue feels more formal as the spontaneous quality that grows out of improvisation, which was evident in his previous work, is missing.

Material did extremely well in its theatrical release in South Africa and won five SAFTAs in 2013: best actor, best supporting actor, best director, best sound design. The film received international exposure and played to good reception in Korea at the Busan film festival (2012) and had good reviews at the London Film Festival. However, I see it as a departure in style and tone for Freimond and I find that I am more drawn to his earlier work such as *Sorted*, *Gums and Noses* and *Jozi*.

Freimond has been able to negotiate a retainer deal with Apteker whereby he is paid to work on new scripts, something he manages to do while working full-time on *Rhythm City*. Currently he has several screenplays in development, all for films which will be produced by Apteker.

Appendix 2

Jozi: the beats

By analyzing the screenplay *Jozi* the beats in Act 1 can be summarized as follows:

James is introduced as a drug addict (p 1). He exchanges a TV set for cocaine (p 2).

He goes to Freemouth Media (p 2) (introduction of Bubbles, the secretary, and Dick, the producer), gets told his script is not funny (p 3), reacts by throwing Dick's laptop out of window (p 3).

An intervention is staged (p 5 – 7) (introduction of Allison, his girlfriend and Carl, her friend) and James finally agrees to go to rehab (p 8).

Carl drives James to rehab (p 8)

James enters rehab (p 9) (introduction of Martin, Tony, Jao, Vermeulen and Dr van Blerk); becomes friends with Martin (p 12); establishes that Martin is a dealer (p 14); talks to Martin about screen writing (p 16-17); in therapy session with Van Blerk James acknowledges that his script was not funny (p 19); asks Vermeulen if he can go and is declined (p 20-21); Martin introduces the idea of escaping (p 22); Martin helps him escape (p 24); James is chased (p 25)

James is picked up by a truck (p 26); on the ride back to Joburg, talks to driver about Allison (p 27); sings 'let it be' (p 28) and sees a billboard which advertises the *Jozi Jives* sitcom as he arrives in Johannesburg (p 28).

The beats in Act 2 can be summarized as follows:

James moves to his parents' empty house (p 34) (introduction of Barbara, the estate agent), talks to mother on phone (p 34) (establishes that his parents are in Australia); Australia is presented as a better option than South Africa (p 35) Martin arrives unexpectedly (p 36) and James allows him to move in for a 'couple of days' (p 37) they discuss Johannesburg and the possibility of leaving (p 38); Martin makes a joint and James reacts (p 39).

James drives through Johannesburg surrounded by negative newspaper poster headlines (p 39); James looks for a job; goes back to Freemouth (p 40); apologises to Bubbles, the secretary (p 41); meets Thembi, the new producer (p 43), Thembi gives him work on *Jozi Jives* sitcom; things are looking up

(p 44) meets Brenda, an attractive girl who works in the same building, on his way out;

James tries to write sitcom; is introduced to Jules' sitcom script (p 44-47); sitcom characters come to life and start interacting with James (p 47); James is on the phone to Thembi who tells him to "remember the three fs. Fast, funny, finished" (p 49); gets into Martin's home made sauna with him, is surprised by Barbara, the estate agent; James and Martin discuss origins of laughter and refer to it as "relief at passing danger" (p 51); Martin asks what Allison liked about him. James says he could make her laugh.

James goes to Allison's house to try to win her back by making her laugh by putting shoes on his knees; his attempts backfire because a minister is there for Carl's grandmother's passing; Allison is a bit amused by James; seems like there is a little park; tells James about Timmy's (her son's) party (mid-point, p 56);

Gets call from mother in Australia who is always trying to persuade him to leave South Africa; is in car and has minor accident with threatening looking car load of Africans, number plate falls off; James buys blow-up giraffe at robot for Timmy; goes back home and spots electric fence, meets neighbour (Mark) and discusses the electric fence; Sees Martin selling dope from the house (p 61); Martin glues number plate back on.

Goes to an event to launch new sitcom series, meets Jules (Thembi's favourite writer) and discuss writing (p 64 – 65), meets Brenda again and they leave together (p 69); Explore Johannesburg and discuss the city. Takes her home but declines going in for tea (p 72);

James tries to write, the electric fence keeps him awake, he tries to stop it and talks to neighbour over fence. Tries to write, sitcom comes to life, characters don't understand references to crime (p74 – 76); James finishes writing an episode (p 76);

Thembi hates the script, wants a page one re-write and gives him a penalty (p 77); sitcom characters say 'I told you so' (p 78); James tries to write again (p79 – 81);

Martin phones to say he has broken down and asks James to pick him up (p 81); Goes to pick up Martin who puts large black bags of dope in the boot. James is horrified. Meanwhile number plate falls off. James tells Martin he

wants him out of his life (p 84). En route back they get stopped by police; James is terrified they will discover the dope in the boot. James and Martin run away through a meliefield. They manage to lose the policeman and get back in the car and drive back to Johannesburg.

The beats in Act 3 can be summarized as follows:

James and Martin arrive at Allison's house for Timmy's party. He suddenly realises he should not open the boot because all the bags of dope are on top of Timmy's present. Gets into a fight with Carl and Allison calls them both pathetic;

James tells Martin he has to leave the house. Realises they have been robbed and laptop with all his work on it is gone (pg 92); rails against Johannesburg(p 93); has to pick up police and bring them to the house; talks to mother on phone, she tells him about emigration seminar; he interacts with Mark, his neighbor, about the burglary;

The sitcom characters are in the house with James and discuss crime (p 95 – 97); James drives through Johannesburg with sitcom characters in the car (p 97 – 99); goes to Freemouth Media, Thembi fires him/he quits; as he leaves he sees Brenda (p 101) he says "maybe it's time to move on. Maybe I could be funny in Australia" (p 102), asks her how she makes it work, she says "I just pretend it's always the beginning, like we're in love" (p102)...Everything's there. I promise you. Everything and more. You're just not seeing it" (p 103). James sees the feather dusters from above, they make the shape of flowers and look beautiful (p 103); He goes to the emigration seminar but sits outside in his car and does not go in (p 103).

Back home Martin returns the jersey James had loaned him and says he has to get something from the attic; Allison arrives, asks about points for Australia and if he qualifies. Carl does not qualify. Allison wants to reconcile. Martin falls through ceiling with all the dope that he has secretly been drying in the roof (p 107), Barbara, the estate agent, arrives with a client in the middle of this and runs away screaming (p 108);

James gets into his car but it will not start (p 108); Goes to his neighbour Mark's house for help and interrupts a hijacking (p 108); James gets put in the boot and the sitcom characters appear in boot as well. They ask "is this like a

real Johannesburg experience” to which James replies “pretty much, ja” (p109);

James gets left at side of road in underpants and meets feather duster salesman (p 111). Feather duster salesman teaches him taxi signals (p112) and he is able to get a taxi back to Johannesburg (p 113); Passengers give him clothes to wear (p 113)

Back in Johannesburg he goes to Brenda’s flat (p 113); James walks down street on carpet of Jacaranda flowers; VO lets us know what became of all the other characters; ends with James writing and Brenda having a cigarette on the rooftop (p 115).

Appendix 3

Synopsis:

When Granny Went on the Internet

This quirky comedy revolves around Granny, a 75 year old, middle class grandmother, who discovers what life is really like when you're suddenly on your own after a lifetime in a co-dependent marriage. When Grandad dies she is faced with the challenges of daily life and diminished financial resources and she finds it increasingly difficult to carry on as before. Her husband used to take care of everything and now she battles to do the basics. Things are made even more difficult by the fact that she is a bit deaf, can't drive and can't operate any 21st century technology. Her adult sons, Aaron (stressed and controlling) and Josh (very good-looking and kind-hearted), are worried about her. Aaron wants her to go into a retirement home where "they do it all for you". Granny will not hear of it. She wants to stay in her little house with her pretty garden that she has worked so hard to create. She resolves to become self-sufficient and prove to her children that she can handle her own life. Her grandson Max, who is Aaron's mixed-race, adopted son, is her biggest supporter. He and Granny share a special bond and he believes in and trusts his Granny despite his father resisting all of Granny's efforts to be independent.

When Granny gets ripped off at the ATM with her newly acquired bank card it confirms for Aaron that Granny needs looking after. Josh, on the other hand, thinks it will be a good time to show his mom how to bank on-line. He brings her a laptop that has been loaned from a colleague. At first Granny is intimidated by the computer and resists Josh's efforts to teach her, but gradually she comes to realize that she can actually do it and delights in the attractions of the internet – especially on-line shopping. Her confidence grows and she starts to call herself 'a natural'. Granny becomes a force to be reckoned with, proving that age is no impediment to learning new technology

and that technology can be quite useful in helping you get what you want. And what Granny wants is to stay in her little house. She just needs to convince her concerned family, especially Aaron, that she can cope alone.

Her next challenge is to start driving again after twenty years. Each attempt at independence is met with “Are you bladdy mad?” from Aaron. “Are you bladdy mad?” is Aaron’s standard retort and seems to be all he ever says. Despite his objections Granny does indeed drive Grandad’s old Mazda but she gets confused at the intersection to the shopping mall, causes an accident, fractures her collar-bone and gets taken to hospital.

When Josh visits his mom in the hospital his good looks cause quite a stir among the nurses. One nurse, Sindi, is particularly taken by Josh and offers to give him the password to the hospital’s staff WIFI when she sees that he has brought a laptop on which Granny can do crossword puzzles. Aaron is both angry and concerned at what Granny has done but when he visits the hospital with little Max, all ready to lecture his mom, he is confused to find Granny using a laptop. It is the first time he realizes his mom can use a computer and it makes him wonder if she is more capable than he gives her credit for. They talk about Max’s up-coming concert and schoolwork and Granny shows off by offering to help Max find information about space for his grade one project. She attempts to copy and paste a picture of a satellite but, astonishingly, manages to achieve what even the most sophisticated hacker would battle to pull off: she gets into NASA and moves a satellite. Neither Granny nor Max realize what she has done and Aaron is drinking coffee when this happens so he, too, is none the wiser. Granny is discharged from hospital 48 hours later, just before the SA Military Intelligence arrive on the scene, having traced the signal to the hospital. The hospital Superintendent is arrested and taken off for questioning.

Back at home Granny is treated to a cheesy power point by Aaron which outlines all his reasons why she should not continue to stay alone in her little house. He persuades her to visit some retirement homes that he has been researching. Granny, embarrassed by the accident she caused, agrees. The

retirement homes are all dismal and depressing and as they return home Max asks, “Why can’t Granny just stay in her own house?” to which Aaron has no reply.

Granny goes shopping and decides to buy a computer of her own, knowing that she will soon have to return the one loaned from Josh’s colleague. Aaron arrives to set it up for her and while he is busy Granny shows him all her on-line purchases which makes him feel concerned about what she is doing on the internet. Granny reads the newspaper and finds a report about a ‘Satellite Sleuth’ who has moved a weather satellite. She points to the picture next to the article and comments to Aaron how it is the same as the one she tried to copy and paste for Max. There is a long moment of silence as Aaron puts two and two together. His face registers the full spectrum of emotions and expressions as he considers the possibility that his mother is the so-called ‘Satellite Sleuth’. He finally bursts out with “Are you bladdy mad????” Granny eventually answers with “It says here they managed to put it back”. Aaron is unconvinced and begs her to re-consider the retirement village, where she will be safe from the world (and the world will be safe from her). But Granny is unconvinced that it is she who has moved the satellite and resolute about staying in her home. Aaron storms out, but not before shouting that Granny will have to look after Max that night as he is working late.

Granny is upset and pensive as she and Max sit under the night sky having a picnic. The special bond between them is clear. His love of space and his extensive knowledge is surprising for one so young. Max tries to comfort Granny when he realizes that she misses Grandad. He invites her to play on the computer but she declines, un-nerved by Aaron’s accusations. Back in the house she does not touch the computer and rather watches Max playing online instead. When Aaron returns to the sleeping house he notices a car with tinted windows parked nearby. He is suspicious but can’t see any activity around it. He lets himself in to Granny’s house and, attracted by the glow of the computer, decides to re-trace Granny’s on-line footsteps. He finds nothing about satellites or NASA, but does find sites for bereavement groups. His face

softens as he realizes how much his mother misses her husband. He lets Max sleep and sits at the computer, eventually dozing off.

The next morning Josh and Sindi, the nurse who Josh is now dating, arrive to take Granny to see a retirement home where Sindi's 'uncle' Jack stays. Aaron is taken aback and conflicted. This is what he's been wanting her to do and now she's going with Josh. He is pleased that Granny is considering retirement homes but he is upset that his self-assumed position as head of the household has been usurped. They have tea and then Granny, Josh and Sindi leave for the retirement home.

The retirement home is pretty and peaceful and Sindi's 'uncle' Jack is charming and attentive. He and Granny connect immediately and he empathises with her loss and her issues with her children. He tells her "you can't make a decision just to please your children. Giving up your home is a big step. If you're not ready, you're not ready". Comforted and emboldened by his words Granny decides to stop looking at retirement homes. She wants to celebrate her life and her little house and decides to throw a party and invite Jack, her family, friends and neighbours.

Granny gets ready for the party and tries to order pizza over the phone. She is busy colouring her hair at the same time and her hearing aid is badly adjusted meaning she can hardly hear a thing. She copes by saying 'yes' every time there is silence on the other end of the line, not knowing that this will result in a massive, up-sized order of pizzas with everything on top. Determined to look her best she spends quite some time getting ready and doing her hair which means taking off her hearing aid, with the result that when the guests knock on the door and ring the bell Granny is oblivious to it all. The crowd swells outside Granny's little house. "Could Granny have had a heart attack and be lying unconscious on the floor?" asks one concerned neighbour. Fearing the worst, the anxious party people decide to phone Emergency Rescue. Nobody has a phone so one enterprising guest approaches a nearby parked car with tinted windows and asks the two gentlemen inside if he can use their phone. There seem to be an awful lot of cell phones and wires in the car and yet the driver is

unsympathetic to the request. In fact, he's downright rude. Undeterred, the guest begs a phone off a passing runner, who produces one from the front of his sweaty shorts, and before long a troop of burly Emergency Rescue men are breaking down Granny's front door. The party people and emergency workers finally explode into the little house, at which point Granny emerges from her bedroom in a feather-hemmed sequined dress and with bright red hair. The shock of this sight causes the overweight lady from across the road to pass out, on top of the child from next door, so it's not a wasted night for the rescue workers after all, as they happily set about the business of resuscitating and bandaging various party goers. Nonetheless the party is a success. Everyone has a good time but when Aaron sees Granny dancing with Jack he fears that she has already found a new boyfriend to replace his father.

As the party proceeds Josh notices his colleague from work looking at Granny's new computer. Josh realizes that now that Granny has her own computer he should return the laptop he loaned from his colleague. When the party ends Josh's colleague is one of the last to leave and he takes the laptop with him. We get the impression that he is a bit sleazy.

The next morning Granny sits amidst the party debris watching television. The weather report begins and, along with it, the psychological disintegration of the SABC weather man. He grows increasingly hostile and sarcastic and openly blames the 'Satellite Sleuth' who moved the weather satellite for messing with his information. It dawns on Granny that the satellite has not been 'put back' and that there is still a problem. She watches in horror as the SABC weatherman is led off the set.

The night of Max's long-awaited concert arrives. Granny sits in the audience and beams as Max plays the part of a satellite. He is encased in a huge contraption covered in tin foil and flashing lights and speaks his lines perfectly, giving concise information about satellite technology. Granny is almost paralysed with processing the information from Max's speech so soon after Aaron's accusation about her being the Satellite Sleuth and also witnessing the

weatherman's breakdown. Granny starts to suspect that Aaron may be right. Maybe she did move the satellite after all.

Late that night, the light of her computer illuminating her plump little fingers, Granny sets out into the dangerous waters of the internet, in a desperate bid to retrace her on-line footsteps. She must get back into the NASA site and sort out this whole mess. As Granny tries and retries all her options she is startled when Josh, Sindi, Aaron and Max suddenly appear behind her (not having heard them without her hearing aid). She confesses her fears to them and they all gather round the computer, trying to help. Jack wakes up on the couch and joins the group. Suddenly the front door falls in and, on top of it, the two men from the car with the tinted windows. As Aaron and Josh gather their wits it dawns on them that Granny is under arrest – the men are from SA Military Intelligence and they have finally succeeded in confirming that Granny, who has been under observation ever since she left hospital, is the one messing with the NASA site. Aaron's face is a mask of shock as Granny is lead away and bundled into the car. Jack offers to call his son, who is a lawyer.

Alone and forlorn Granny cuts a pathetic figure in her police cell. With some relief she recognizes the prisoner in the holding cell opposite hers, but this quickly turns to anger as she realizes that it is none other than the 'friendly' man who ripped her off at the ATM. Granny dissolves into tears and her sobs echo down the corridor. The friendly man takes pity on her and offers her his rapper-style jacket to keep her warm.

The next day at school Max tells his classmates and teacher about Granny's arrest. They decide to start a Facebook petition in support of Granny. Before long they have thousands of likes. Meanwhile Granny tells her story to Jack's son, the lawyer. The media get hold of the story and Granny's picture is splashed across the front page, along with the headline "Satellite Sleuth Says Sorry". TV channels feature her story and newspaper placards plead Granny's innocence. Regular updates are trending on Twitter and Max's Save Granny Facebook page receives more than a million likes. Even the stressed

weatherman, having made a partial recovery thanks to substantial doses of Prozac, visits Granny and says he forgives her.

Granny still languishes in prison, awaiting trial on the grounds of espionage and terrorism. Little Max is interviewed by Carte Blanche, who also feature a dramatized re-enactment of Granny's accident, hospitalization and internet odyssey in a one hour special of the story. The role of Granny is played by a leading actress from Generations and Josh is played by pop star Danny K. During the interview Max reveals that Granny was working on a borrowed computer. Watching at home Josh realizes for the first time that the computer he leant his mom is connected to all this drama. The penny drops that his colleague stole the computer during the recent climate conference where he and Josh were working. An expert in the studio explains how if a strategic computer is left logged in and is stolen, anything is possible. Max finishes his interview by telling Bongani Bingwa that his Granny made a mistake and that everybody makes mistakes sometimes. In another location the two Military Intelligence agents are sitting in front of a bank of screens. One screen flickers to life with the 'Find my Apple' icon, revealing the scene captured by a laptop camera - Josh's colleague dancing and drinking. The two agents plot the location and head off to arrest the culprit.

We next see Granny on the steps of the courthouse, a free woman. Cameramen swarm around her and reporters ask her about her plans for the future. Granny pushes them aside as she rushes to embrace her family and friends – Aaron, Josh, Sindi, Max, Jack, Joan from next door, all the nurses, the entire grade 3 class and a bevy of neighbours from the pizza party. The mood is celebratory.

Outside Granny's little house a brand new Smart Car stands ready and waiting. Granny and Jack emerge from the little house. Granny is dressed in a frilly white dress and Jack looks smart in a suit. Granny gets into the driver's seat, Jack gets into the passenger seat, the car starts up and Granny pulls off smoothly from the curb. They arrive at a church, outside of which the family is gathered on the pavement. Accompanied by the family, Granny and Jack

make their way round the side of the church to the church hall where a long line of old people are waiting with Zimmer frames and walking sticks. Granny takes a seat at a table below a sign declaring, “You’re never too old to learn to surf” and happily begins signing up old people for a course on how to use the Internet. Max helps by taking in wads of cash from the willing masses putting the proceeds in a box below another sign that reads “All profits to the Nelson Mandela Children’s fund”. A news crew covers the event, reporting on Granny’s story and the new chapter in her life. Josh and Aaron exchange the final lines:

JOSH

She’s going to be okay, you know.

AARON

I know.

Granny has won her battle for independence. We know she will remain in the little house she loves so much. Despite her age and her misadventures on-line she still has a lot to give and she is a force to be reckoned with.

Appendix 4

Character Biographies

3.1 Sylvia Human aka Granny

Granny is 75 years old. She was born in 1937 in South Africa to immigrant parents. She grew up with a father who was absent both physically and emotionally, either away fighting in the Second World War, or back home suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The food rationing that existed during the war years continued long after it was over and she watched her mother being resourceful and frugal, something she learned and applied to her own life. It was not until years later, when she finally had a bit of money, that she allowed herself to splash out on special treats for herself and her family, delighting in being able to buy her grandchildren 'sweeties'. She made it to high school despite financial pressures brought on by an unemployable father and, at a time when education for girls was considered a waste she went quite far, even passing standard eight. Her first job was a clerical one at the post office checking the entries in the phone book. So outstanding was her eye for errors and so adept did she become at catching mistakes that her first year at the post office was the first year they did not have to print an addendum of corrections to the phone book. Her boss thought she could go quite far for a woman and was considering promoting her and for a while Granny had a vision of herself as a successful, independent woman. But then she met Grandad and they began courting and she fell in love. They did not get married for a while because they had to save the money for the wedding and honeymoon. Grandad was everything her father was not – he was emotionally present, reliable, highly organized and made Granny feel very secure. He welcomed his role as patriarch and provider to his family. He was the man, he was in charge. The fact that he loved her beyond anything else made it easy for Granny to let him take charge. Grandad wanted to wait before they had children. He was a practical, careful man and wanted to be financially secure before they started a family. This did not work so well because when he was finally ready Granny had problems conceiving. They were both delighted when,

at 30, Granny finally fell pregnant and Aaron was born in 1967. She considered herself very old to be having her first child and resigned herself to having only one child. It was a surprise then when she fell pregnant again. Josh was born at daybreak on Granny's thirty fifth birthday. The struggle to conceive made Granny treasure her role as mother. She had a special bond with children, a real gift for connecting to them, something that was evidenced in her relationship with her grandchildren also.

Throughout her married life Granny was a stay-at-home mom. Things worked well that way as she embraced her traditional role. She saw to everything to do with the home and the children and Grandad saw to everything else. When he died Granny felt overwhelmed at the prospect of having to cope with 'everything else', especially the bills and the financial side of things, because Grandad had been doing it for so long. For the first time in her adult life she had to be responsible for all the aspects of her world. Grandad's death was forcing her out of her comfort zone into what had been his territory. On top of it all, Grandad's pension was halved on his death and suddenly she had to confront the possibility of 'down scaling' which meant losing the little house that she had worked so hard to make pretty, that linked her to all her treasured memories. And here were her own children trying to make her sell up and move into a retirement home. She would have to show them that she could cope just fine on her own. Granny likes sitting on the front stoep of her little house, while drinking tea, eating sweeties and looking at her flourishing roses.

3.2 James Human aka Grandad

Like Granny, Grandad was also born in 1937 just before the Second World War broke out. His father went off to fight in the war and never came back, leaving James and his two younger siblings alone with his mother. Things were very tough and Jack, as the eldest boy, became the head of the household, assuming the role of father. It was he who had to make a plan to find money for food, something he achieved by collecting empty bottles and returning them to the store for the deposit and then buying bruised fruit and vegetables at the Indian market for a reduced price. It was he who had to get his siblings to school safely, help them with their homework and offer guidance. The problem

was that his mother “liked the bottle too much”, as the neighbors put it. But Jack was resilient. He learnt from his mother how not to be. He became inventive and resourceful and he could always make a plan to solve a problem. Having a mother who was unable to fulfill her primary role as caretaker of her own children made Jack determined to always be self-sufficient. He did not need help from anyone. He could do it all, he was in control.

When he finished school he got a job at a men’s outfitters and took great pride in his appearance. He was a good looking man and stood 6 feet tall. When he first saw Granny he knew she was the one for him, so pretty as she left the post office for her lunch break, so kind when she stopped to engage with a child who looked unsure about where to go. He knew she would be a good mother, a good wife. He wasted no time in meeting her and the attraction seemed mutual. It was natural that they would get married. Even though Granny seemed frustrated at waiting so long to have children he knew it was the right decision. There was no way he could bring a child into the world without a house and some reserves in the bank, no matter how long it took. He had to admit he was relieved when Aaron was born. He had worried that they had waited too long. And then Josh came along and their family was complete. Even though Granny did complain about having a ‘small’ family he was happy. There was nothing more he wanted from life. He worked his way up to sales rep for a line of men’s suits. But, as the economy tightened and fashions changed there was less call for his expensive range. In the years before his retirement his earnings weren’t too great and the collapse of the stock market, in which his pension was invested, meant that he and Granny faced a retirement with only just enough funds, provided they were careful.

3.3 Aaron Human (elder son)

Aaron is 45. He had a good childhood and was blessed with parents who loved their children and each other. He did okay at school but realized by high school that he was not the smartest guy in the class and if he wanted to come in the top three, which he aspired to do, he would have to study really, really hard. So he did just that. The same went for sports. He was an average athlete but he wanted to be in at least one sports team. He decided to focus on swimming

and started to train really, really hard until his times improved enough for him to be chosen for the team. Aaron realized that if you want something you have to be totally disciplined and extremely hard working in order to achieve it. He was a serious, focused boy who became a serious, 'Type A personality' adult.

Aaron chose to study something sensible at University, like accounting or business science and, because he worked really, really hard he passed everything and graduated with reasonable marks. He got himself a good job and became an intense and stressed young man. He does not understand why people do not take life more seriously because so many problems could be avoided that way. He is intolerant of what he considers to be carelessness and frivolousness and often says, "are you bladdy mad?". He worries about his mom, now that his dad has passed away. He does not think she'll have enough money to stay on in her little house and dad used to take care of everything – how will she cope? He does not want to get called on to fix every little thing that goes wrong and he just knows that's what will happen. She will have to move to a nice retirement place, that is all there is to it.

3.4 Josh (younger son)

Josh is extremely good looking and sexy, something he achieves effortlessly. He's in good shape and usually wears jeans and T-shirts even when he's at work. He is a 'techie' and often works at the International Convention Centre, rigging all the technology required for high-level conferences. Of the two brothers he is the better looking, brighter and more athletic. He seemed to have won the toss in every category, something that did not go unnoticed by his older brother, Aaron, as they were growing up. Despite his good looks Josh is genuinely humble and naturally charming. His is an easy-going, laid-back personality. He does not take things too seriously and he has faith that 'everything will be okay in the end'.

3.5 Max Human (grandchild, Aaron's adopted son)

Max is an incredible child. Far brighter than average and the most caring, affectionate, emotionally intelligent 9 year old you could ever hope to meet. He loves his Granny passionately and is really worried about her when Grandad

dies. He makes it is his mission to do whatever he can to make her happy again. He is fully into technology and is a whizz on the computer. He is the positive face of “being into technology”. He will probably grow up to invent some crazy, life-changing computer-based thing, he is that smart. There is not a trace of big-headedness about him, although he is clever enough to know he is clever. He has lots of friends and the teachers all love him. He has so much knowledge and he can’t wait to share it with his beloved Granny. There is a special bond that transcends age. Max likes ballroom dancing and he often tries out new steps to the 60’s music that Granny likes to play because it reminds her of when Grandad was courting her. She has to play it very loud now that her hearing is starting to go.

3.6 Sindisiwe

Very pretty and also very efficient at her job as a nurse. The minute she first saw Josh she was totally smitten by him and made sure she was always around when he came to see his mom in the hospital. There was definitely a spark between them and, after she helped Josh by giving him the password to the hospital WIFI, she knew she would soon be dating him. It is she who tells Josh about the ‘nice’ retirement centre and suggests they take Granny there to see it, and it is here that Granny meets her ‘uncle’ Jack.

3.7 Jack (Sindisiwe’s ‘uncle’)

Charming resident of a ‘nice’ retirement centre. He is a wise and compassionate person and realizes Granny’s distress at the prospect of leaving her home. He befriends her, lifts her spirits and becomes her companion. It is his son, who is a lawyer, who is enlisted to help get Granny out of prison.