

Staging areas: Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand and therapeutic  
landscapes in black box theatre

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this exegesis is to document my attempt to ride the practice-theory divide in an arts-based research project on therapeutic landscapes and war veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand. Over a period of nine months, a group of Vietnam veterans engaged in photo-elicitation methods to explore the concept of therapeutic landscapes from their unique and subjective experiences as former personnel of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). Of particular interest was to understand how veterans construct narratives of self-hood and wellbeing, as impacted upon by their service in an unpopular war, and their subsequent treatment by the government and public in the years hence. The data produced by the veterans was analysed and transformed into a draft script; then in collaboration with Te Rākau (a Māori community theatre group), the script and its underlying themes were re-worked in the studio using principles and techniques specific to theatre making.

The studio inquiry produced a picture of Vietnam veterans as highly motivated individuals who are politically cognisant, loyal to their cohort, media savvy, self sufficient, and who continue to draw upon their Army training to measure and maintain optimum physical health in their senior years. Key themes that emerged from the data was their belief in taking individual responsibility for one's health, an appreciation of alternative and complementary therapies as part of self-care, and a collective opinion that the current model of government support is inadequate and difficult for veterans to access. These and other findings were disseminated via a live presentation of the work-in-progress, which provided opportunity for further analysis by the veterans, and resulted in the creation of a final play-script, *The Landeaters*. Finally, by sharing excerpts from my production diary, this exegesis explores my input as a student researcher-artist, and, in doing so, brings to light both professional and personal challenges that may occur when practising arts-based inquiry with one's community – and on a topic close to one's heart.

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*“Mā te huruhuru te manu ka rere”*

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*“Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi; engari, he toa takitini”*

And finally to you, my elders from Ngāti Tūmatauenga (you know who you are):

A lifetime ago you trekked through the realm of Whiro-te-tipua, and came home with one hell of a story. Thank you for sharing some of it with me.

*“Tama tū, tama ora; tama noho, tama mate”*



## Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Images	vii
Introduction	1
Part 1: The Research Terrain	3
Vietnam War Veterans from Aotearoa-NZ – and me...	3
Therapeutic landscapes	4
Arts-Based Research	6
Part 2: Methods and Materials	7
Ethnodrama and Ethnotheatre	7
Traversing the practice-theory divide (and in need of a map)	8
Data collection: Photo Elicitation	10
Rendering the Gloom	12
First Impressions (an emerging visual analysis)	14
The Interviews	16
Transcribing	18
Things are starting to get messy...	20
Data Analysis and Transformation	20
Literature Analysis	21
Drafting the Script (turning the data into an ethnodrama)	23
The Landeaters: The Story	24
Characters	24
The Chorus	25
Setting	26
How to structure a plot...	27
Stage Directions and Dialogue	28
Black Box Theatre – Building Something in The Nothing	30
Putting the Production team together...	32
The Workshop	34
The Character of Sound	36

A Question of Ethics	37
The Production Diary	39
Post-Workshop Reflection	42
Part 3: And Then What Happened?	42
Conclusion – The Right to Go Dark	47
Postscript	49
References	50
Appendices	57
Participant Information Sheet	58
Participant Consent Form	61
Media Release Form	62
Interview Schedule	63
The Landeaters	65

## List of Images

1.	Author, <i>Research pathway 1</i> , 2015	9
2.	Author, <i>Research pathway 2</i> , 2015	10
3-4.	Author, <i>View from bedroom &amp; Saturday rugby</i> , digital renderings of original photographs by “Teal”, 2015	13
5-6.	Author, <i>War memorial &amp; Restored car</i> , digital renderings of original photographs by “Roo”, 2015	14
7-8.	Author, <i>Family homestead</i> , digital renderings of original photographs by “Moss”, 2015	15
9-10.	Author, <i>Research pathway 3 &amp; Where the magic (or mess) happens</i> , 2015	20
11-12.	Author, <i>Transcript analysis &amp; Research pathway 4</i> , 2015	20
13-14.	Author, <i>Drafting woes</i> , 2015	27
15-16.	Author, <i>Memory fragments &amp; The view from below</i> , 2015	30
17.	Author, <i>Theatre Lab, Massey University Wellington</i> , 2015	32
18.	Author, <i>Company hui</i> , 2015	33
19-20.	Author, <i>Chorus workshop – Migration patterns &amp; Whiro flurry</i> , 2015	35
21-22.	Author, <i>The Chorus devise the prelude</i> , 2015	35
23-24.	Author, <i>While the actors play, the tech crew become trapped and ration their supplies</i> , black and white copy of original by Lily Ng & Mark Antony Steelsmith	36
25.	Author, <i>Stage manager’s production diary – a.k.a. “The Book”</i> , 2015	40
26.	Author, <i>Mess pile</i> , 2015	40
27.	Author, <i>Helen’s sneaky shot of the Chorus setting up for the show</i> , 2015	44
28.	Author, <i>Then we dimmed the lights and OMG</i> , 2015	44
29.	Lily Ng, <i>The Pūriri guide Harry into the space</i> , screenshot of DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	45
30.	Lily Ng, <i>Little monkey</i> , screenshot of DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	45
31.	Lily Ng, <i>The Huey flies over the Jungle</i> , screenshot of DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	45
32.	Lily Ng, <i>Soldiers on patrol</i> , screenshot of original DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	45

33.	Lily Ng, <i>“Contact Front”</i> , screenshot of original DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	46
34.	Lily Ng, <i>“Game Over”</i> , screenshot of original DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	46
35.	Lily Ng, <i>“Your mates, it’s all about your mates”</i> , screenshot of original DVD recording by Mark Antony Steelsmith, 2015	46
36.	Author, <i>Research pathway (Post-show final)</i> , 2015	49

## Introduction

As a theatre practitioner, I have always been interested in how soldiers use theatre terminology to describe their work; how they *do rehearsals*, assemble at *staging areas*, and carry out their missions *in theatre*. From a performance perspective, *the soldier* is a role assumed by those who have given over their bodies to be rigorously disciplined to act and enact inside a particular performance culture. The soldier is an actor who dons a costume, communicates with genre specific dialogue, executes tasks that require focus and control over their feelings – and all the while performing in an environment that will trigger instinct, awaken the senses and produce heightened emotions. Both soldiers and actors are members of sub-cultures whose performances may attract both admiration and scorn from other sectors of society. They work in tension towards bursts of conflict, and in territories belonging to everyone and no one; and they endure long periods of boredom and inactivity, embodied by the maxim “hurry up and wait”. The obvious difference of course is that a theatre actor has a much better chance of leaving the stage unscathed.

An inside-joke in the entertainment industry is that *Disney On Ice* and *Cirque du Soleil* are where retired Olympic skaters and gymnasts go to die. But seriously, inside these institutions are a regimen and a familiar vernacular that these former high performance athletes may collectively engage in, via an identity that didn't just disappear into the ether on retirement. I believe this type of environment is physically, mentally, and socially enhancing for a cohort who have dedicated years to inhabiting a character that may now be surplus to requirements, but is resonant of a former identity tied to memories of achievement, self-esteem, and an esprit de corps. When thinking about former service personnel, especially war veterans, I wonder what places and spaces are made available for them to access the same benefits?

The original question that set me on this research journey was: How do Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand interact with therapeutic landscapes, and how does this interaction facilitate memories, feeling, and healing? Before embarking, I realise that I must unpack this question and break it down into smaller units for inspection; for in its present whole and, as straight forward as it seems, this question

rests on a set of assumptions that I now understand to be in collusion with my own particular values, and these in turn have established my expectations of the investigative process from the outset – *the results that I intend to uncover*. They are:

- Veterans know what therapeutic landscapes are (and so must everybody else).
- Veterans consciously and willingly interact with therapeutic landscapes.
- This interaction causes psychological phenomena that induce healing, and
- it is important to know about these things (and you should take my word for it).

Already I feel like a fake – not a good place to be for someone who has just received approval from the Ethics Committee. Now what am I going to do?

1. Take a nap
2. Have a coffee
3. Talk to the cat
4. Sit in front of laptop with open document and cursor blinking....

.....*blinking*..

..*blinking*.....

UGH!

5. Identify the parameters of the research and locate yourself in it.

Ok.

## Part 1: The Research Terrain

### Vietnam War Veterans from Aotearoa-NZ – and me...

Synonymous with rock music, hippy culture, and loud helicopters, The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was transmitted nightly into households worldwide, and became known as the first television war (Mandelbaum, 1982). From 1963-1975, over 3,000 New Zealand personnel served in Vietnam, with 37 killed and 187 wounded (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, n.d.). Those who returned home safely did not receive the homecoming that they expected; instead, Vietnam veterans realised that to acknowledge their participation in an unpopular conflict would see them labelled as scapegoats, American puppets, and baby-killers (Hall, 2014; Victor 4 Company, 2011). Some left the Army for the anonymity of Civvy Street, whilst others, including my father and uncles, enjoyed long careers as professional soldiers.

In the decades that followed, veterans and *whānau* (families) like mine got on with life. By living in military camps and going to school with other Army brats, we were insulated from what other New Zealanders thought of our fathers. I learned to recognise the symptoms of (the as yet unnamed) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) before it “came on”; and I addressed it with a combination of normalising, avoidance, humour, and (as a self-obsessed teenager) a growing disdain. At parties I learned to be watchful and silent, and vowed not to become an Army wife. Miscarriages, stillbirths, skin disorders, deformities and cancers *just happened*; when some of my peers developed cancer I was told to accept it as part and parcel of Agent Orange – even if the government would not. I remember my father becoming frustrated from participating in health reviews that came to nought, and how early efforts to publicise the long-term effects of the soldiers’ war service on their health was mostly ignored by officialdom. Watkins, Cole, and Weidemann (2010) believe that this type of treatment ignited in some veterans a “secondary trauma” (p. 355). I reckon if I trawled through my childhood memories, I would find a fair amount of anecdotal support for secondary trauma – but I don’t feel like doing that right now.

Over the years, a mass of local and international research has emerged to connect the compromised health of veterans and whānau to the veterans' exposure to war trauma and herbicides in Vietnam (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, n.d.). Despite the State's recent attempts to make redress, including a government apology, an official homecoming in 2008, and a Memorandum of Understanding, many in the veteran community are still unable to access the support promised to them. For some veterans, government support has arrived too little and –

**HELEN**

So that's what this project's all about – it's what I'm trying to do for you guys.

**TEAL**

It's too late for us. But yeah, send me a camera. I'll do it for you, and for the younger ones coming through.

*Alright then.*

## **Therapeutic Landscapes**

The term *therapeutic landscape* refers to places in the physical and social environment known for their healing potential. The therapeutic landscape is by no means a recent concept, but a modern academic take on a person-environment interaction occurring since ancient times, and which was first described by Gesler (1992) as “a geographic metaphor for aiding in the understanding of how the healing process works itself out in places” (p. 743). Gesler's commentaries on the ancient sites of Bath (1998), Epidaurus (1993), and Lourdes (1996) promoted three factors in particular that constitute a therapeutic landscape:

- the physical environment – this includes both natural (scenery, flora, fauna) and man-made features (buildings, markers, paving etc.),
- the social environment – the human activities that occur at a site, and
- the symbolic environment – inviting communal and private meaning making via the presence of symbols, myths, religion, and faith.



An underlying assumption that our sense of place and identity is implicated in our wellbeing has promoted the therapeutic landscape as one alternative to the biomedical model preferred in mainstream medicine (Curtis, 2004). The concept has been studied across a range of academic disciplines, including: health geography, anthropology, sociology, landscape design, urban planning, architecture, interior design, public health policy, tourism, nursing, and environmental psychology. Furthermore, it has prompted a reassessment of earlier writings that championed the importance of the physical environment, human activity, and symbolism in, for example, the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Anderson, 2011; McDonald, 2012), and in the investigation of psychological phenomena such as identity formation and values (Tuan, 1974), and fear (Tuan, 1979).

By taking an approach that is informed by constructionist, interpretivist, and critical perspectives, researchers have been able to explore therapeutic landscapes in dimensions beyond the ancient sites first proposed by Gesler. Therapeutic landscapes have been reimagined as large tracts of pristine wilderness (Palka, 1999), roadside artworks and stone markers (Einwalter, 2007; Gesler & Kearns, 2002), indigenous community health centres (Kearns, 1998), music festivals (Kearns, 2014), and as war memorials (Watkins, Cole, & Weidemann, 2010). The therapeutic landscape may be invoked in the everyday of one's personal space at home (Curtis, 2004), and in the stillness of the imaginary, private spaces within the mind (Conradson, 2007).

Whether as a geographic region or a psychological concept, the therapeutic landscape lends itself to individual and collective performances of identity formation, enhancement, and liberation. A sense of wellbeing may be experienced through rituals and symbols imbued with personal and exclusive meaning – allowing for a health practice that is unmediated by the medical establishment. Such interactions allow for disadvantaged groups to circumvent those processes and structures that create health inequality, which Curtis (2004, p. 6) refers to as “spaces of risk.” It is this capacity, however, that also locates the therapeutic landscape as a space for resistance against the status quo, and as a contested site of power in the health economy (Curtis, 2004). Taking all of this into account, I am interested in how Vietnam veterans – often

characterised in the literature as an exclusive and excluded group – experience healing through ways that either complement or deviate from the mainstream biomedical models of health.

## **Arts-Based Research**

Arts-based research employs one or more artistic methods to investigate and disseminate knowledge that enriches our understanding of what it is to be human. According to Eisner (2008, p. 8), the power of this mode of inquiry lies in art's ability to allow "us to know something about feeling that cannot be revealed in literal scientific statements." Arts-based research foregrounds and challenges the theoretical tensions between art, which "amplifies and expands" (McNiff, 2008, p. 34), and science, which tends towards research informed by positivist and reductionist principles.

As an act of resistance against science's preference for "technical rationality" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59), arts-based inquiry is an opportunity to conduct research that

- is conscious of the researcher's subjective presence and thus demands reflexivity (Chilton & Leavy, 2014; de Freitas, 2008; Higgs, 2008), and ethical rigour (Denzin, 2003; Mienczakowski, 1995; Sinding, Gray, & Nisker, 2008);
- privileges diversity, context, and different ways of knowing over generalisability and standardisation (Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Stasiulis, 2012; Wainwright & Rapport, 2007);
- interrogates the relationship between researcher-artists and participant-storytellers (Salverson, 1999),
- makes knowledge accessible to audiences outside the academic community (Becker, McCall, Morris, & Meshejian, 1989; Boydell 2011; Cole & Knowles, 2008), and
- promotes community participation in knowledge creation, and provides spaces for subversive acts and dialogue where silenced voices may be heard and oppression may be made visible (Denzin, 2003; Finley, 2008).

With these aims in mind, I have chosen to engage the principles and conventions of theatre making as the specific mode of inquiry for this study.

## **Part 2: Methods and Materials**

### **Ethnodrama and Ethnotheatre**

The use of performance is not uncommon in social science research, and appears to be popular due to theatre's variability of form, e.g. *performance ethnography*, *play-building*, *reader's theatre*, *autobiographical performance* (Chilton & Leavy, 2014), and also for its suitability for investigating social science's concerns with representation, narrative, subjectivity, embodiment and the performative. After much thought (not to mention a truck load of reading on performative genres), I have decided to try Johnny Saldaña's (1998, 1999, 2003, 2008) approach to theatre in research, namely, *ethnodrama* and *ethnotheatre*:

As working definitions, ethnotheatre employs traditional craft and artistic techniques of formal theatre production to mount a live performance event of research participants' experiences and/or researchers' interpretations of data for an audience. An ethnodrama, the script, consists of analyzed and dramatized significant selections from interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, or other written artifacts. (Saldaña, 2003, p. 218)

As a psychology student with a background in the performing arts, I am curious as to how this project may utilise, enhance, as well as challenge my understanding of theatre and the dramaturgical knowledge that I take for granted. I recognise that this project will ask me to question the values and assumptions that underpin my practice, for example, why I might gravitate towards certain perspectives and artistic sensibilities over others in the process. Already I suspect that I've chosen to take Saldaña's approach – not because I agree with the underlying principles – but because the activity of creating an ethnodrama seems to align most clearly with how I like to

devise theatre. Given that this project will test me in other ways, the fact that I've chosen a research method that seems familiar to me (at least, on the surface) is rather comforting.

And I could do with that right now... *for here we go!*

## *Dear Diary....*

*What is wrong with Skype? Couldn't get a decent connection with my supervisors – and what the hell is an exegesis? And how do I make it work for this project? I've read a few from Design/Fine Arts, and English and Media Studies, but I can't find any to do with Psychology. Please don't say there aren't any – OMG, WTF, FMD! To do: 1 – Email KC and VH to confirm word limit; 2 – Try university calendar for definitions on exegesis for MA; 3 – Check out other NZ uni sites for examples; 4 – If I don't get anywhere in a fortnight, panic slightly, then distract self. 5 – Panic some more. But stay on track, stay on track, stay on track! (Reflection Diary, 27/03/15)*

### **Traversing the practice-theory divide (and in need of a good map)**

I'm still a bit unsure about how to go about things. I know questions will arise during the production of the creative work – so I need to consider this exegesis as a catchment for further interrogation of the subject, to allow a *ghost-light* of sorts onto new pathways, with the added risk of ending this study with more questions than answers. I also realise that I have dropped myself smack-bang inside this research – not only as a researcher-dramaturge, but also as the adult child of a Vietnam veteran whose memories and personal myths are being reawakened – some of these may have to be worked through before being put to rest. *I so wanted to avoid that.*

**BUT THAT'S WHAT I'M ASKING OF THE VETERANS, ISN'T IT.**

*Bugger.*

I do not want to do an auto-ethnography. The thought of it is... I don't know... it forces you out of the shadows. There is now a sense of unease that sits and twists in the depths of my *puku* (belly). It sets off a panic, compelling me to search for a research

framework, a flimsy net of interconnecting ideas that I can cling to at the cliff-face. I read, reread, and am bombarded by other people's brilliance (Reading reflection example 1: *I wish I could have come up with that*), and am equally annoyed by others (Reading reflection example 2: *Bollocks. Do not use. Ever.*). And other readings are overwhelming to the point where I feel like I'm drowning in a dark chasm full to the brim with jargon, where to shine a light might open up tunnels to other worlds of possibility, of more questions, of greater depths, and of dead-ends and distractions. I don't have time to deal with it all. It is these readings in particular that feed a gnawing within, which crystallises into a single scratchy thought:

YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE HELL YOU'RE GOING.

**HELEN**

(Stares at laptop)

You're wasting time trying to work out which font to use.  
Do something constructive.

(She starts colour coordinating her pens)

In the end, I go back to *te timatanga* (the beginning), which for me is Michael Crotty's *The Foundations of Social Research* (1998). On a blank page I mind-dump the beginnings of a research pathway:

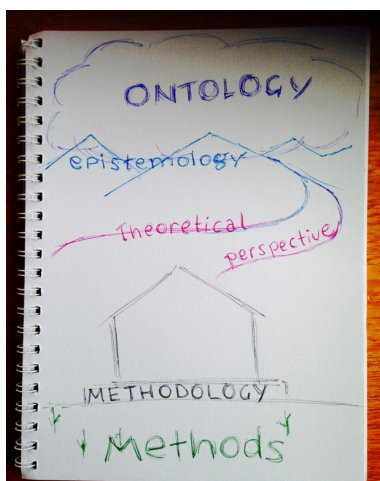


Fig. 1- Research pathway 1

It's bare, but it's a start. And my uncertainty is lessened somewhat, because at least I've done something. As my reading increases over the weeks, I find this mind-dump useful as a terminology net on which I can climb, weave other ideas, pin reminders, and hurl my frustrations. I return to it again and again – the first time being a week later:

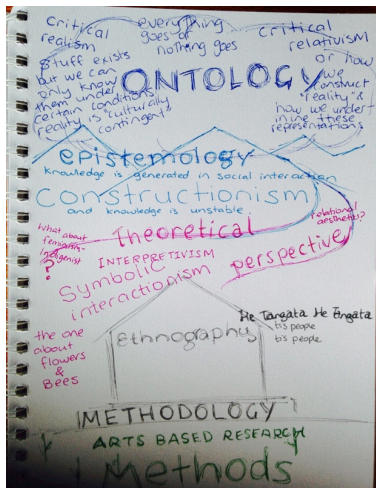


Fig. 2 - Research pathway 2

By this time I have settled on the certainty that there will be a play in all of this. Given the speed with which veterans reply to my request to participate in this project, it seems the one person who most needed convincing of this was yours truly. I source some cheap disposable cameras, and, along with an instruction manual and writing materials, post them to addresses throughout Aotearoa-NZ.

## Data Collection: Photo-Elicitation

### GILLIAN ROSE

Photo-elicitation research projects must be one of the last remaining markets for disposable cameras. (2013, p. 26)

*Yes, research projects... and weddings.*

Photo-elicitation is a data collection strategy where information is generated and presented in both text (interview transcripts, field notes) and pictorial form (photographs). According to Harper (2002), photo-elicitation requires us to use different parts of the brain when we process written texts and images, leading to us to respond in various ways – and from a deeper level of our consciousness.

My choice to use photo-elicitation is probably the quickest decision I make throughout the whole project, and comes about after considering the following:

1. I established this project on the notion that I do not know what or how Vietnam veterans think of therapeutic landscapes as a concept. Based on my experience as an Army brat, however, I do have some unconfirmed suspicions, and therefore need to account for these assumptions. Although I understand that the information I provide about the study could impose my interpretation of therapeutic landscapes upon the group (e.g. the instruction manual for operating the camera includes photos of my local beach and the view of a sunrise from my house), at every opportunity I try to impress upon the veterans that there is no right or wrong answer – just what is right for them.
2. Having visual cues (photographs) will help me tailor the interview schedule to suit each veteran. This allows our interaction to be not so much of an interview, but a friendly chat with signposts. For me this seems a more genuine approach, and is in keeping with our connections that were established prior to this project. We can both tease out certain details in the image and/or in the story of its production, and thus utilise the image as a site for us to co-construct meaning (this also reminds me to be attentive to issues of power).
3. Two veterans live in geographically isolated areas containing stunning natural features that they consider health enhancing. From the outset I know I will not be able to visit them to carry out a *kōrero-a-kanohi* (face to face conversation) and neither will I experience their therapeutic landscapes in person. By at least having access to photographs – or their “visual representations of experience” (Riessman, 2008, p. 142), I may be able to better appreciate the veterans’ accounts of the subjective, sensory encounter that occurs for them in their respective home territories.

4. This method presents an opportunity for the veterans to create visual art works and ideas that could feature in the play, whether as a designated location in the script, or realised on-stage in the set design, scenery, and as specific props.

Of the twelve veterans that I approached, eight offer to take part in the project; the number drops to seven as I run out of time and funds to travel to meet with one volunteer and his whānau. Those who decline nevertheless pass on messages of support for the study; I feel a greater weight of responsibility to the participants who are coming on the journey and are now (it seems) also doing this *on behalf of*.

Over six months, I receive four disposable cameras in the mail, but when I take them in to be developed I realise why they were so affordable in the first place; the photos turn out to be of very dubious quality. One camera produces what can only be described as twenty-seven glossy rectangles of gloom – I can barely make out basic shapes, the faces are grainy and colours non-existent. My idea to reimagine some of the photos in sketches and acrylics as part of my reflection diary has been torpedoed. *What to do.... what to do....*

DRIVE CAR THROUGH FRONT WINDOW OF CAMERA SUPPLIERS -  
OR MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

### **Rendering the Gloom**

I load the images onto my laptop, but after a few days realise that I possess neither the skills nor the software to digitally restore them. I call Teal, whose images are the most compromised. During our conversation he articulates each photograph as both a documentary recording of his everyday and as an artistic response to the concept of therapeutic landscapes. His account includes a layperson's approach to ordering, composition, and distance – our phone call has become a visual analysis of sorts. *If he can work with the gloom then perhaps I can.*



I download some very reasonable (i.e. cheap or free) apps from the Internet and begin playing with filters, texturing and cropping etc. Some of the results I believe enhance Teal's descriptions of being married to someone with dementia, of enduring a fuzzy liminality and waiting for short-lived glimpses of clarity and recognition. Other images show Teal's delight in watching rugby on a cold and blue Saturday afternoon, and these are reworked too in order to provide balance and context to his narrative.



*Figs. 3 & 4 - Teal: View from bedroom & Saturday rugby*

Next I talk with Roo, whose images contain distinct features that will easily identify him. In contrast to Teal's, I use the same apps to render Roo's distinct pictures into misty, watercolour paintings.



*Figs. 5 & 6 - Roo: War memorial & Restored car*

Other veterans bypass the compromised cameras altogether, and my email inbox starts filling up with images taken with digital cameras and smart phones. According to Riessman (2008), photographs “have a material existence before the investigator encounters them” (p. 22). Consciously or not, the veterans have made editorial decisions in the visual reproduction of their therapeutic landscapes, and these have determined how I as their intended audience may interact with them, interpret, and transform them. In my steadily growing collection are pictures of flowers, hoar frost, hospital grounds, spiky natives (as in trees), telephones, prescription medicines, mountains, pigeons, well-kept backyards and motorway traffic. For me, the images tell a story of a group of *kaumātua* (elders) working out the present world, and trying to live an active, health enhancing, meaningful, and largely unassuming life inside of it.

### **First Impressions (an emerging visual analysis)**

I suspect the photographs are indicative of a self-hood that is bound up in collective nostalgia and memory, and is actively subverting a master narrative that usually bestows the roles of mad-bad-sad veteran and vulnerable elderly citizen. I want the play to respectfully capture and celebrate this resistance – but how? I decide to edit some of these photos into an AV sequence and project it onto gauze during the show,

but doing so will identify the veterans. Despite obtaining their permission to include the photos, I am sensitive to protecting their right to anonymity.

By combining the apps, and a light transition feature in a power-point programme, I try to create a camera flash effect whereby a photographic image may be shown onscreen for a split second, then transformed into a painting or pencil sketch that slowly dissolves into black. This transition is to be timed with the distinctive whining sound of a camera flash warming up. I hope that in the live performance this feature will illustrate the sense I get from the photos – of their representation of a shared history, of fading memories and feelings that long to be reignited, of echoes in places that aren't quite the same anymore. A desperate effort to digitally salvage compromised images has now become an opportunity to interrogate them further, and draw out any latent meanings using stagecraft.



*Figs. 7 & 8 - Moss: Family homestead (original photo & digital pencil sketch).  
These were the first images to be used in the AV to denote the setting for the play,  
and to set up the convention for the flash transition effect.*

During the drafting process of the ethnodrama, I decide to include some spare disposable cameras as set props. I write stage directions that describe the main character taking photographs when he feels anxiety or rising anger. This action is meant to appear as if it causes the appearance and flash transition of a photograph on

the gauze screens. During rehearsals however, time constraints and difficulties synchronising the sound effect and AV cues with the live action forces me to abandon the cameras. Instead, the photographs are carefully edited and sequenced to either juxtapose or highlight the themes that underpin certain points in the story, or to visually inform the audience of the rising tension between the two main characters. In performance, the independence of the AV sequence from the main character's stage directions now permits the actor to choose (on behalf of the character) whether or not to engage with a certain photograph.

### **The Interviews**

The photos serve as an inspiration well for twelve hours of recorded conversations, semi-structured interviews that encourage the veterans to talk about therapeutic landscapes from the perspectives of auto-ethnographer, artist-photographer, and community advocate. They share stories of the war – both heart breaking and side splitting. It is a privilege to bear witness, but I start loading up with their stories and the only place I can store them is in my body.

UH-OH, I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING...

I need to stay on point in these interviews, to keep us both safe; it's difficult because we're on the phone. I can't see their facial expressions and their body language, and I notice myself straining to take note of every pause, and of changes in breathing patterns and vocal intonation. The experience reveals to me how much I depend on visual cues when I am listening to people. When I hang up the phone it takes ages to *come down*; one time I have to lock my kids out of the room because I'm shaking with sweat and tears. My back seizes up on me, and I stop sleeping. At work I get annoyed with people moaning about things that don't really matter. I know I'm weighted down with the stories and have to do something about it before I snap. I can't talk to anyone because no one understands except the veterans – and I'm not going to bother them.

So I go online and read threads by Vietnam veterans' kids in the U.S. who are about the same age as me; some of them are still whirling around in confusion and anger, and others are active in raising money and educating an apathetic public about birth defects and lymphoma. Some have gone to Vietnam to work with sick abandoned children and to make amends (I think). Others are searching for their fathers who are still AWOL.

## YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE, DON'T YOU.

*Well, it's not like that anymore. I wouldn't know what to say anyway.*

Someone in Australia wrote a dissertation on two Vietnam themed plays – one of them is mine that I'd written for Tribute '08 (NZ veterans' homecoming). I'd totally forgotten about that. I download the dissertation and read it; apart from feeling fascinated and a little weird about having my work taken apart and analysed from a critical, feminist standpoint, I am reminded of what I'm supposed to be doing.

I have my spine clicked and throw myself into three hot yoga classes a week. When I lie in corpse pose and stare at the ceiling it's as if I can feel the *paru* (dirt) and *mamae* (pain) leeching out of every pore and into the mat. Every morning I throw scraps to a flock of *tarāpunga* (native seagulls). A couple of them start feeding from my hand. Then some sparrows turn up and demand food as well. I'm not sure who's trained whom. I catch myself talking to them – a lot. I start to recognise some of the gulls as regulars, and worry on days when they don't turn up. It reminds me of Moss' transcript, when he talks about the birds that call around his place every afternoon for a meal.

## MOSS

I've got a little mouse. I feed the seagulls, the Indian mynahs, all the little sparrows, and the pigeons. I get a lot of joy out of all the animals here.

*Me too.*

### Transcribing

Each transcript is colour coded to a veteran and their pseudonym, so that when I start drafting the script, this simple visual key will enable me to keep track of the dialogue and its original source, and to maintain a balance between everyone's voices – including mine. As an active participant in the interviews, who later constructs and *cleans up* the transcripts (Riessman, 2008), I am conscious of my input in the subjective formation of the veterans' identities, and of theirs in mine.

### *Dear Diary....*

*This whole transcribing ordeal is leading me back to read more about Butler's take on performativity (Brady & Schirato, 2011), and also McAdam's (1993) concept of personal myth making – that we create and revise our selves through storytelling. From a dialogic-performance perspective, the interview is collaboration, a pas de deux, a give-and-take exercise; it leads us to construct, inhabit, and perform identities (Riessman, 2008, p. 137). Looking at this through a dramaturgical lens, our conversation is an improv performed by two actors - each with their own motivation, actions, and objectives (usually) unknown by the other, and which may be complementary, jarring at times, or in direct conflict. When I check the transcript, I can "read" us reinventing ourselves in the conversation and supporting each other to do so – like we're working against breaching because we both want the conversation to work. (Reflection Diary: Tawa's transcript, 01/10/15)*

The interviews do more than produce rich data, they seem to add propulsion to the project; in the weeks following the interviews some of the veterans start sending old photos from previous reunions, and from their time in the Army. Accompanying the photos are field notes ranging from sparse captions noting date, place, and activity, to chunky paragraphs that reveal a deep respect for life that I think can only be learned from knowing death. Two sets of field notes give up an account of loneliness and wondering about the meaning of life that flutters inside my ribs; instinctively I know that they will end up in the latter section of the play, and form part of the main character's *epiphany*:

**HARRY**

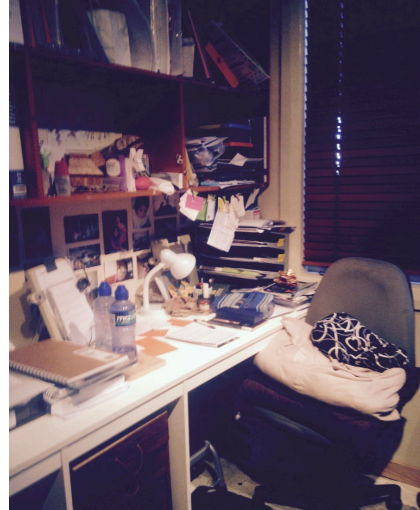
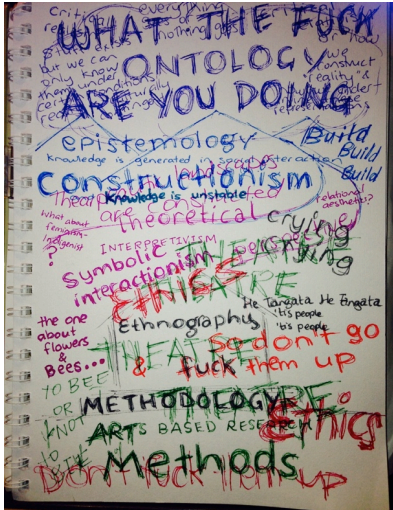
When you're afraid you say and do all sorts, but that's not what kills you in the end. Being lonely – now that's deadly. And I'm lonely. Just lonely. I miss, I miss my mates, you know? I think about them all the time. I lie awake at night and reminisce about them all and I think: Why them and not me? What did we do right? What did we do wrong? I don't know what I did.

*Dear Diary....*

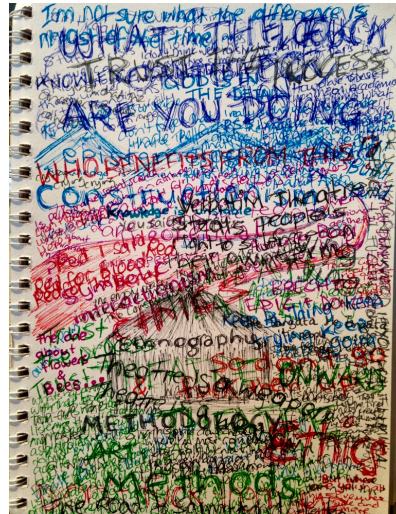
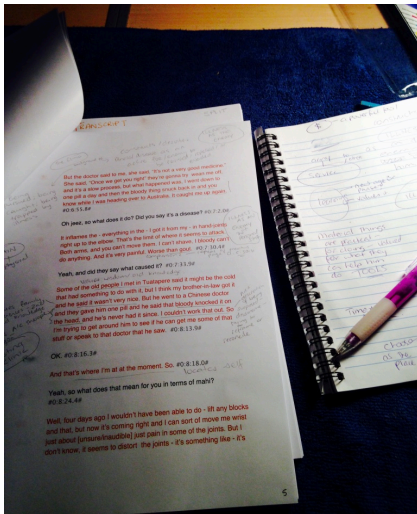
*It's like we are a paepae (bench) of creatives doing a photo-assignment in our home towns, and my part in this is to curate their works and tie them together – first through a language based analysis, then via a rearrangement into dramatic form. I have to do this constant reframing of them and myself, of locating our relationship as collaborators, over and over again during the analysis of the transcripts and their field notes – to stop me remembering who they really are to me. Because when I think of them as the strong, fearless grown-ups I looked up to – the giants in my life – and then I think about what's happened to them – I can't stop crying – and then what bloody use am I to them? Kore rawa, koretake. No bloody use at all. (Reflection Diary, 10/7/15, 0300 hrs.)*



## THINGS ARE STARTING TO GET MESSY...



Figs. 9 & 10 - Research pathway 3 & Where the magic (or mess) happens....



Figs. 11 & 12 - Transcript analysis & Research pathway 4

## Data Analysis and Transformation

Although my intention is to write an ethnodrama and present a piece of ethnotheatre, when it comes to data analysis, I decide to deviate from Saldaña's suggested pathway and not use in-vivo coding. This is an arts-based research project and as such, I want to



align all stages of the project with arts informed activities that are connected by similar theoretical perspectives and a lingua franca. This is not to privilege arts over science, but rather to use an approach that I am familiar with to ground this part of the research. Actually, I don't really see a major disparity between the taken for granted assumptions and theoretical concerns that drive a literature analysis, and the narrative based approaches preferred by McAdams (1993), Murray (1999), and Riessman (2008). The final published article privileges the written word, and the thematic choices made by the analyst are never value free. We are all driving towards the same research destination, a coda or denouement – but on the drama journey, you're allowed artistic licence; you can pretty up the scenery, add in a sub-plot or two, and kill-off some of the characters in your vehicle.

### **Literature Analysis**

I treat the raw data as a collection of first drafts and artistic offerings: pieces of literature, visual texts, and speeches that will contribute to a final creative work. From this perspective I may do a type of thematic analysis that is informed by literary theory:

- **Visual Texts (photographs):** Internal or external setting; subjects: people, animals, or environment, or inanimate objects; textures, colours, light, shapes; ordering, composition, positioning and viewpoint; language features and symbols e.g. signs, pictures in background, carvings, artworks; timeliness and intention: documentary, action, opportunistic, by chance or staged. What messages could be perceived from the images regarding the artist's view of therapeutic landscapes, their self in their world, and their personal health narrative? How might these messages be altered when digitally rendered? Can the images be used in the theatre to realise fictional characters and physical settings in the play, and can they be displayed to juxtapose against the action occurring onstage? If so, how might this compromise the original artist's intent?

- **Speeches (interviews):** I listen to the recordings and, along with the transcripts, check for rhetorical devices. Least noted: hyperbole, alliteration, opposites, and gestures (one exception was Moss, whose interviews were recorded via Facetime). Commonly used: euphemism, irony, similes, and metaphors. The language features most evidenced: repetition, onomatopoeia, silences, personification (of animals and illness), imagery, and emotive language (especially, but not surprisingly, swear words). I notice that the veterans often switch between using the first person “I” and second person “you”. From a dialogic-performance view, Riessman (2008) believes that the use of “you” in this sense is a generalised other who appears in narratives that are perceived or assumed by the teller to be a general, shared, universal experience. When I read the transcripts, however, I don’t get the same feeling. I think the veterans may use “you” as a type of protective buffer, to distance the self from unpleasant memories, and to bring to mind and mobilise a collective defence of peers upon whom they can share the psychological burden of what happened. It’s only a thought, but something I will mull over.
- **Written Texts (field notes, transcripts, emails, letters, notes):** Subject: What is the text about? Content: What language features are used to create meaning? Purpose: What is the text designed to do, e.g. inform, educate, discuss, argue, describe etc., or a combination? Emphasis: How has font type and size, bolding, colour, italicising (if typed), capital letters, punctuation marks etc. been applied, and why? Tone: What is the tone of the piece and how might this influence (and is influenced by) the relationship between the author (veteran) and the reader (me)? Structure: Are the sentences broken up into separate ideas or does each sentence flow as one continuous thought? How do the sentences and ideas connect?
- **Material culture and context:** How are concerns with history, power, society and politics contextualised in the themes of the texts? How are these same concerns implicated in the production of the texts? How is text production influenced by the artists, and by the particular characteristics of their

community and culture? How could my written instructions have impacted on how the artists responded and generated their texts? In this particular data set, is one genre more effective at conveying themes and messages than the others, and if so, why?

- Thematic analysis exercise – a.k.a. “Pin the tail on the serial killer”: I draw a set of mind maps with the themes explicated from each veteran’s texts, add links to show relationships (that are coloured matched to a particular veteran), then colour and resize each theme to check for convergence and divergence – almost like a hand drawn tag cloud. I also insert verbatim statements and references to particular texts that *ping* – or resonate with me during the read, and may be the most effective at conveying a shared message. When I show one of the veterans his diagram, we have a good laugh and refer to it as a serial killer map or *crazy wall*. With more time I would have sourced a computer app that could do the same, as I found the exercise very useful; it produced a lot of material on which I could build the main character, a veteran named Harry. During the drafting process, I often referred back to it to consolidate themes and work out potential plot points.

### **Drafting the Script (turning the data into an ethnodrama)**

My analysis is not tidy with a designated endpoint, but a process that unfolds throughout the research. From this point onwards, however, it takes on a dramaturgical concern; I am now focused on applying theatrical conventions and devices to transforming the data into a dramatic form, and presenting it in the most meaningful and evocative way that I can to an audience. This requires me to be open to ongoing inquiry at various stages (drafting, workshop, rehearsal, performance, post-performance debrief, redrafting), and responsive to feedback from different sources, e.g. actors, audience, participant-artists. I remain mindful of the given conditions (including my aesthetic values and assumptions based on my training and experience, also available funds, collaborators, and resources) that will bear influence on how I craft the script and performance – and thus decide which themes, voices, images, and

actions are foregrounded, and which ones are kept back in the shadows. Playwriting is neither an innocent nor independent process, but an art form bound to a system that can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks – which is just as well, because I really dig chorus work.

### ***The Landeaters: The Story***

*“Fear of losing your mates – fear of getting caught – fear of getting lost – fear of not getting back. My mates, it’s all about your mates. Hey, I volunteered – we knew where we were going. I don’t want to be a crying soldier. I can pull me self out of it, yeah!”*

For property developer Wayne Tinkerman, this day could not have started any sweeter. After months of wrangling with red-tape and a disgruntled community, he has finally landed his prize – the right to develop land on the Wellington South Coast. All that stands in his way now is an ancient willow tree – should be simple enough to remove with a digger – not so, as Wayne finds out that former landowner Harry Kenning has taken up residence beneath the tree. And unfortunately for Wayne, getting rid of a giant tree is nothing compared to what he’ll have to do to dig out an old soldier like Harry. And there is no way Harry’s going to come out – not without a fight.

Concerned with memory, isolation, healing and resistance, *The Landeaters* is a creative arts research collaboration undertaken by writer Helen Pearse-Otene (Te Rākau Theatre) and a group of Vietnam veterans. (Original synopsis for advertising copy)

### **Characters**

The analyses, especially the speech analysis and crazy wall exercise, establish the foundation for the *protagonist*, a Vietnam veteran named Harry. He is a *composite* character – whose actions, mannerisms, dialogue patterns, and memories are drawn from each veteran. A question that keeps swirling around in my mind is, “how do Vietnam veterans perform their assumed role in a therapeutic landscape, and how do they subvert or breach these stereotypes?” When I start building Harry from the data, I wonder if the characteristics and values that he imbues and are shared by the veterans (such as self-sufficiency, camaraderie, privacy, endurance, loyalty, and pride) are

enacted by the veterans in performances that aim to preserve self-hood, and resist the stigma of the Vietnam War. At the same time, I also wonder if these same characteristics are also factors that stop them from accessing their welfare entitlements (a post-show debrief with three of the veterans suggests yes).

Harry's *antagonist* is Wayne, a property developer who has torn down Harry's house. Wayne also acts as a *foil*, a character whose actions, dialogue and values serve to contrast against and thus enhance Harry's. Other characters are *stock*, or representative of health professionals, family members, friends, associates, and adversaries in the veterans' worlds, and are played by a chorus. These characters also perform a *theatrical function*; they provide key information that either contextualises the world of the play (*exposition*) for the audience or *forwards* the action.

As a means to include the veterans as characters (in reality, their voices in raw interview form), I build in a haunted transistor radio as a staging device. It switches on by itself, tunes between stations and, in the framework of a talkback radio show, plays excerpts from the veterans' interviews. This entry point offers the veterans a presence that I hope will simultaneously support and trouble the reality of the world established in the play script, and remind the audience of the real people who have invested their beings into co-creating this work of fiction.

### **The Chorus**

The chorus is an integral part of the ethnodrama, and uses movement techniques, speech and singing to help realise the artistic objectives of the story. They:

- perform incidental characters,
- provide information,
- draw focus to certain points of action,
- contribute to rising dramatic tension and highlight underlying themes,
- provide comic relief,
- help or hinder another character,

- change scenes,
- connect the spiritual realm with the corporeal one, and
- ground the audience in the reality of the play.

With a chorus I am able to break with the dramatic convention of Aristotle's three unities (of place, time, and action); although the present action is compelled forward towards a climax and resolution (of sorts), I am able to segue to scenes set in the past and in other locations. Having a shape-shifting chorus enables me to write stage directions for animals, trees, moths (spirits of the dead), soldiers, nurses and other auxiliary characters whose presence and actions contribute to the play, but whose journey does not require a full character arc.

### Setting

The major action is set in a small underground bunker marked by a willow tree and where Harry has taken refuge after the demolition of his home. Three of the veterans gave anecdotes of colleagues made homeless and "going bush". The setting is fantastic, and opens up a liminal site of possibility where, as the playwright, I can choose to:

- close the scene off from external distractions to concentrate on the relationship between the two main characters,
- invoke and realise the veterans' descriptions of their ideal therapeutic landscapes – even if only temporary,
- provide a stage for Harry (on behalf of the veterans) to inhabit and trouble the assumed master narrative of the Vietnam veteran, though performances that rupture or acquiesce;
- create an alternative where the status quo is turned on its head, as Harry is in charge and not Wayne. This same setting is a place to realise the veterans' notions of safety, cover, silence and peace – although for Wayne, this is a place of imprisonment and danger: his landscape of fear (Tuan, 1979);

- close the scene down, to create a sense of claustrophobia for the characters who are in conflict over a contested territory, and are now required to interact with the other;
- take advantage of the bareness of the black box space, by including a minimal amount of set pieces and props (their isolation in the space thus allows for an enhancement of their materiality and their symbolic meaning to the main character); and
- open portals to other realms, i.e. the past and the supernatural.

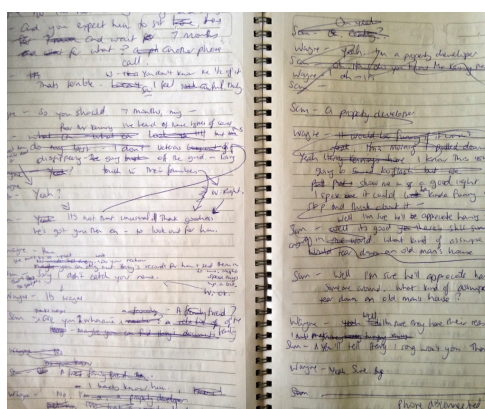
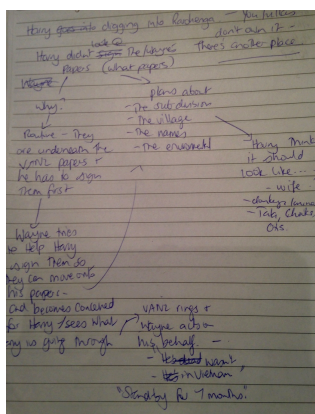
### HOW TO STRUCTURE A PLOT FOR AN 80-90 MINUTE NARRATIVE BASED DRAMA (NO INTERVAL):

1. Choose a format like Aristotle's Three Unities or Freytag's Pyramid.
2. Start writing.
3. Keep writing until you hit the following snags, either a) issues with suspension of disbelief: moths who turn into soldiers, talking monkeys, possessed household appliances; or b) a deus ex machina, such as a grumpy god.
4. Break with tradition and keep going, or take a break and start all over again.

### PHIL MANN

Write your draft on unlined paper. Lines are so linear. (Personal communication, 1994)

WELL, LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY WASN'T LISTENING...



Figs. 13 & 14 - Drafting woes....

## Stage Directions and Dialogue

I try to keep stage directions to a minimum, and only include those that establish the world of the play, describe scenes, forward the action, and set up character habits and actions that come from the veterans' self descriptions *and* are important for the audience to know. I think a play-script that contains too many stage directions restricts the actors from full exploration of the script in the workshop – which is no fun for a performer.

In writing this play, however, I do not have full control over the dialogue. This is a collaborative effort where the veterans have provided an abundant but finite source of words, and it is my job to craft them into a single character's voice. Returning to the speech analysis and crazy wall, I search out the common themes in the transcripts, then cut and reorder into dialogue. I notice how certain words or phrases take on new meanings inside the context of play dialogue, and, although this was not unexpected, I need to ensure that the data is not overly manipulated to take on a new meaning that deviates wildly from its original use. At the same time I appreciate that, in a few cases, the new ordering of the dialogue may actually intensify the intended meaning.

## *Dear Diary....*

*I've never liked Verbatim plays – they always seem to go on about the playwright being so clever to pull it together, when really the playwright should be thanking the people whose words they appropriated – stole, even. I would feel differently about it if the writer or director acknowledged the original creator/s, but I haven't read that in the programmes for any of the plays I've seen. And I get easily bored when the script is performed as talking head theatre. Auē. Well here I am in the middle of putting together an ethnodrama-verbatim script and I feel like an IP pirate. The only thing I've got going for me is my safety process:*

- a. Keep referring back to the original transcript and the context in which it was said.*
- b. Develop a "hierarchy of sacredness" – arrange the transcript data into groups that share certain properties:
  - i. Definitive/clear meaning = lift verbatim – most likely if the sentence structure (syntax) in the transcript is consistent with that of the dialogue of the play;**



- ii. *Requires some editing to fit in with surrounding dialogue – e.g. adjust tense, redact or change identifying features (e.g. names), condense to improve flow and drive (e.g. cut out pause, or lift and shape/hone to fit into the script by changing tense etc.).*
- iii. *Can be inserted into script to suggest something else – the transcript material should not be data driven, but is to be considered as a source of available language to: drive along or weave the action together, or to develop character habits and nuances, such as verbal tics, oft repeated phrases (e.g. “Hel-lo!” – Paraone, “Righto” – Teal, “That was quite interesting/Mea!” – Cam, “Too right, mate!” – Roo, etc.).*
- c. *Maintain the original colours in the script and for particular pieces of dialogue, include page number of original transcript so I can refer back to it during rehearsals.*
- d. *Keep the veterans informed about which parts of their texts are being included. And don’t assume permission has been automatically granted – keep checking in. (Reflection Diary, 13/10/15)*

When tacking together Harry’s dialogue I notice how the different tones and conversation styles of the veterans equip Harry with a style of delivery that is brittle and staccato; I think this will work with Harry’s responses, his journey and overall character arc:

**HARRY**

No, no, no. Red, I said. Red. You’re not listening.  
Bugger me.

At other times the script calls for a speech to be woven from transcript excerpts concerned with a particular theme. This creates dialogue that has more flow:

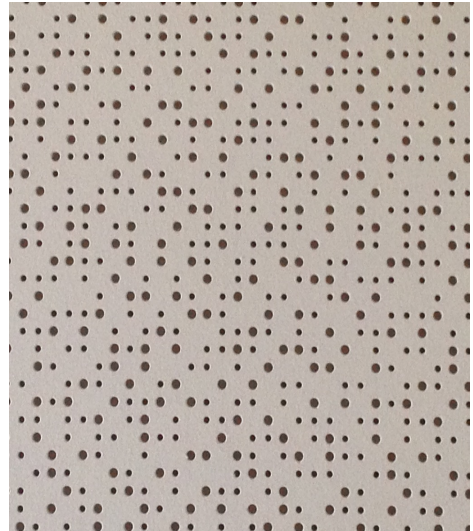
**HARRY**

Fear with constant attention. It keeps you on your toes, you know. When I feel it my hands go tight, real tight on the gun, you know? And in the chopper, just as we lift up and go over the wire, the guts feel awful like “ugh” – I don’t know – like you’re going off to play an important game of football.

## Black Box Theatre - Building Something in The Nothing

Sometimes when I get tired of looking at the computer screen, I look away – usually upwards, and towards nothing in particular. Sometimes memories drop in from that Nothing and explode:

LIKE  
A  
GARDEN  
OF  
FRAG MENTS ;  
FRAG  
MENT  
A  
TION  
GRENADE.



Figs. 15 & 16 - Memory fragments & The view from below (a.k.a: dit-dit-dit; dah- dah-dah; dit-dit-dit)

### HELEN (aged 8)

Dad, what does "Frag Jane Fonda" mean?

I remember asking that in 1980.

*It's late in the afternoon and he's sitting in a big brown chair. My little brother and I help him take off his heavy black boots. They smell of warmth and Kiwi shoe polish. We tug at his boots and then - **FOOP!** We fall back onto the carpet, giggling. I don't remember what he said when I asked him. But he wasn't angry – he shook his head and smiled. The rest of the memory is gone – it blurs and is swallowed by The Nothing.*

The Nothing – *Te Kore*: the emptiness, a place of void and of limitless potential. I totally *get* this Empty Space – and not only from the perspective of Māori cosmology; it's the title of a book by Peter Brook that was required reading at drama school, and its opening lines are now both a classic quote and challenge for debate on what constitutes *Theatre*:

**PETER BROOK**

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space while someone else is watching, and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.

- *The Empty Space* (1968, p. 11)

**MIKE ALFREDS**

An empty space is the starting place for telling a story.

- *Then What Happens?* (2013, p. 31)

After nearly two decades of collaborating in community theatre projects in various spaces around the country, I am still taken by the notion of the Empty Space and the unseen potentials that dwell in the Nothing. It is an appreciation that draws me towards working with the model of Black box theatre, a theatre so named for its simplicity of shape (box-like) and colour (black) that set the parameters for nothing – and thus the potential for something. Such a paradox empowers the practitioner to maintain or break with traditional conventions, as well as control for technical variables in the creation, development, and performance of theatre. It is a space that Alfreds (2013) refers to as “*the visual equivalent for ‘Once upon a time’*” (p. 36 italics as in the original). Black box theatre thus lends itself as a philosophical model and physical site for artistic inquiry that aspires to be pure, rigorous, and experimental. It is a laboratory by any other name, and therefore, for the purpose of this project, I believe it is the best space in which to interpret and develop the play-script. With the support of the University’s Expressive Arts Programme, I am able to gain access to the studio on the Wellington Campus – joy of joys!



Fig. 17 - Theatre lab, Massey University Wellington

### **AUGUSTO BOAL**

The theater is a weapon. A very efficient weapon. For this reason one must fight for it.

- *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979)

It's also a good place to bring people together.

### **Putting the production team together....**

*...Nb: And no, it's not one of those loud soundtrack supported scenes where I travel the world and pick up a rag-tag group of individuals who are expert in their particular field and have one word names.*

At various times in a theatrical collaboration, one voice or another becomes most audible because of the task at hand and the company's expectations on that person as the expert-for-hire. I get it, but from my experience of the "bottleneck", i.e. a week out from opening a show – there are always heightened tensions, frayed nerves, and over-worked bodies ready to "down tools" at the slightest sniff of someone's personal *mana* (authority) being trampled on.

To maintain a sense of control on this part of the project and to keep within my allocated budget, I decide to create the work in collaboration with Te Rākau, a

kaupapa Māori community theatre group that I've been working with since 1999. This arrangement allows me to gain access to *pūtea* (funding) and resources that this project would otherwise be ineligible for. I also contract the services of the smallest creative team that I can get away with and take on any shortfall myself. In the end, only the lighting designer, director, set builder, lead actors, and sound designer are paid professionals. The rest of the company is made up of whānau members, two *kaihaka* (kapa haka performers), three students, and a woman who turned up to visit her friend for lunch one day and decided to stay. It is not lost on me that I am now not only accountable to the veteran group, but am also now responsible for the safety and wellbeing of a group of people who have little or no experience in theatre, and for whatever reason have chosen to come with us on this journey.



Fig. 18 - Company hui

### **PHIL JONES**

A playful state is encouraged in a space that is therapeutically safe, and where creative risk taking can occur. – *The arts therapies: A revolution in healthcare* (2005, p. 158)

## The Workshop

Under the concept of *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), we establish and regulate a rehearsal *kawa* (protocol) that attends to the company's collective and individual *hauora* (wellbeing). Practices that are consistent with *Te Whare Tapawhā* (Durie, 1994) and the *Meihana Model* (Pitama et al., 2007) are brought into the room to stabilise the group inside a creative process sign-posted by daily *mihi* (greetings and acknowledgements), warm-up routines, reflection rounds, and *karakia* (invocations). The newer members of the ensemble take to this culture, and are able to air those concerns which are pressing for them in order to get on with the day – but the director and I (as leaders and facilitators of the process) cannot. To me, this is an understandable constraint, but a constraint nonetheless which does affect me (and which I will write about later).

### **BERTOLT BRECHT**

So our playing must be quick, light, strong.  
- (5 August 1956)

In order to interrogate the script and get it *stood up* to performance standard, we sample from the theatre techniques and principles followed by different ensemble members to see if they are complementary with the ethnodrama, and fit well inside the physical space: narrative theatre, *ngā mahi a Rēhia* (traditional Māori performing arts), chorus and physical theatre, theatre of the oppressed (Boal), epic theatre (Brecht), poor theatre (Gratowski), theatre of cruelty (Artaud). And all this in sixteen days...

TRUST THE PROCESS – BUT DO GET ON WITH IT...





*Figs. 19 & 20 - Chorus workshop: Migration patterns & Whiro flurry.*

The Chorus engages in an intensive two-day workshop, and learns a movement vocabulary that will carry them through the remainder of the rehearsal period. With a collective vocab on board, they explore, create and inhabit the roles of ghosts, moths, trees, and soldiers on patrol. In the show the chorus are ever present and always moving. Their main job is to invoke and reinforce the world of the play. A constant challenge is for them to assist the audience to maintain suspension of disbelief throughout the performance.



*Figs. 21 & 22 - The Chorus devise the prelude*

One of the symbols the Chorus investigates is that of the Pūriri (Ghost Moth). The Pūriri is a symbol of those who have passed on, and lives in Whiro's domain. The performers take on the symbol of the Pūriri as their main character and develop a rest position based on the traditional staging of a tūpāpaku (corpse).



*Figs. 23 & 24 - While the actors play, the tech crew become trapped, and ration their supplies.*

While the actors are onstage working on a blank canvas, the lighting operator, sound designer, and AV operator are crammed into a kitchenette. I draw the short straw and get the violet stool and no desk. We are hidden from view behind gauze – meaning that sometimes our view of the action is compromised, and if the actors aren't sticking to their script, then it makes for some interesting cue changes.

### **ANTONIN ARTAUD**

**In Europe no one knows how to scream anymore.**

*- The theatre and its double (2013, p. 107)*

### **The Character of Sound**

Given the sparse physical space, the minimalist set, and the omnipresent, ever moving chorus, sound becomes one of the most important devices in this piece. Sound triggers instinct, memory, and emotion, connecting the body with the surrounding environment (Denora, 2003). From a theatrical viewpoint, a soundscape can be used to stir, terrify, bombard, and reassure an audience; it can subliminally drive a scene, and guide the audience towards empathising with certain themes and characters. A good soundscape can construct, frame, and deconstruct reality; by this last point I refer to one particular scene I have written which is based on the veterans' memories of being transported by Iroquois helicopters into the jungle, and becoming caught in a *contact* (fire-fight with the enemy). The sound cues for this scene are evocative of the



environment and the era, and are purposefully *mixed down* to reverberate in the stage floor to create an intense sensory effect. To remind the audience that this is, after all, a memory, we use a distancing device; as the contact plays out, we warm up the lighting states and thin out the sound to reconfigure the scene into a video game that Harry plays for relaxation (and which is data drawn from Roo's narrative).

Recordings of the veterans' voices are interspersed throughout the play; a subliminal Morse code message for the veterans is triggered to play underneath the title music (a solo cello piece composed by the sound designer after he watched the chorus workshop). The unmistakable sound of a *Huey thump* (the heavy sound made by Iroquois helicopter blades) supports the choreographed patrol memory, and occurs again in pitch black as the last sound cue of the show. The sound designer (who is also a veteran's child) has a field day sourcing and editing sounds for scenes set in the jungles of Vietnam and Borneo. He creates a dynamic soundtrack consisting of orangutans, gibbons, cicadas, frogs, radio chatter from the Battle of Long Tan, 1960s rock music, and the distinctive voice of North Vietnam propaganda radio, Hanoi Hannah. He also *pulls apart* and combines a Huey thump and M-60 round with a metal wobble board to create the play's deus-ex-machina, Whiro (The Māori deity of Evil and traditional patron of war veterans).

### **A Question of Ethics...**

*... i.e. where can I be most effective, take artistic risks, and not F-up too many people?*

As we steam on ahead into a fortnight of intensive rehearsals, people start to feel the weight of an opening night looming. As the days pass, the long hours, aching limbs, and the wanting for a completed draft are all playing on the cast and crew. Some people get tired, ratty, and *hangry* (hungry + angry) – and I'm one of them – although I don't show it at work ("not in front of the kids"). I'm not carrying anything in my body as such, and am nowhere near as overwhelmed as I was earlier in the project.

However, my energy and focus are being steered towards meeting an opening night *no*

*matter what*, and, in taking on the roles of dramaturge, assistant director, and stage manager (as well as technical crew during the show), I become driven – to say the least. I phase out when people talk about problems that are external to the play, and become directorial because I want the problem solved *now* – even if it means scratching lines (non-data) or removing people from certain choreography because they’re not quite nailing it. Once home I find myself thinking ruthless thoughts about rehearsal.

**WHAKATAUKĪ/MĀORI PROVERB**

He tao rākau, e taea te karo; he tao kī, e kore e taea te karo. (The spear can be parried, but not deadly words)

**GEN. DOUGLAS MACARTHUR**

Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword obviously never encountered automatic weapons.

PUT UP OR SHUT UP.

*That’s right.*

I know what’s going on. I am in the bottleneck of something that means more to me than the average paid gig. I am personally invested in this, and furthermore have convinced a group of my elders to invest in it as well. I don’t want to let them down – and I am frustrated that I can’t control for the slow rate at which some of us are traveling towards opening night. I know it’s not their issue but mine, and the final responsibility lies with me.

I need to secure away this part of me that becomes impatient with others if I am to engage in qualitative research that pursues a social justice focus and claims critical engagement and reflexivity. These ideals are not lofty but doable, and are characteristic of a research ethic that invites – no – *demand*s that I locate myself, as an

embodied, political being, who knowingly inhabits, performs, participates (Pelias, 2008), and therefore affects. So whether centre-stage or offstage and behind the scenes, as a unified whole or in remnants (my actions, my thoughts, my political leanings, my voice), I am an active and activating presence throughout; I affect and am, in turn, affected inside a “network of power” (Gregson and Rose, 2000, p. 438).

When preparing for an acting gig, I used to keep a visual diary in which I would score my script, write blocking notes, and record my process of discovering and then inhabiting the character. Although I haven’t done this for some time, it seems practical for me to keep one for this project too.

### **The Production Diary**

I set up a production diary as I remember it, then after a few days I realise that it’s not going to look quite as I’d hoped. I find myself wasting hours on writing and redacting, and then straight out deleting to a blank screen – and all in the act of trying to create and perform a fictional character: the beneficent and non-judgmental researcher. My diary is an artifice – designed to deceive only me. At this rate I will have nothing to show for my work. I need to get some courage up me and not be afraid to allow the light to spill on me, and show me up as the imperfect and biased person that I am. I am enmeshed in this research every step of the way.

I reset my diary into two separate parts, one that will serve as the official stage manager’s book, and the other that will manage my reflective process.

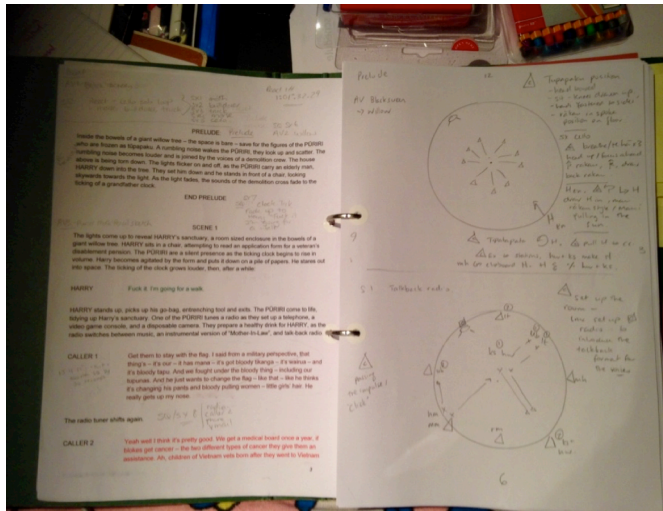


Fig. 25 - Stage manager's production diary – a.k.a. “The Book”

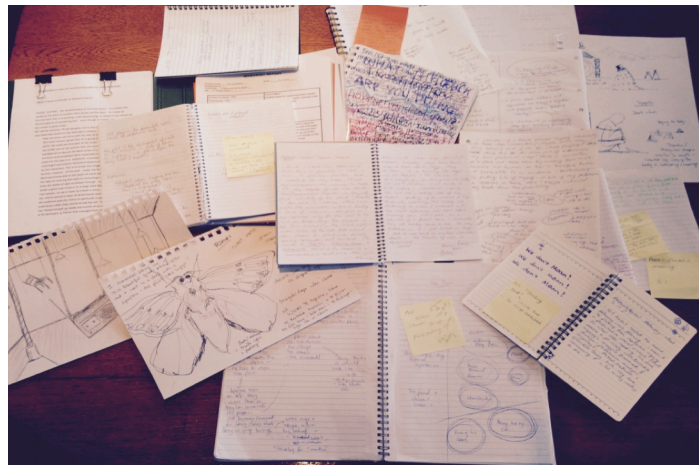


Fig. 26 - Mess pile (actually, a sample of the more tidy bits)

It is this second journal that becomes a holding paddock for: the dangerous, the suspect, the shiny-yet-done-before, and the “right-in-front-of-me-but-I-don’t-know-what-they-are-and-what-I’m-supposed-to-do-with-them” things – that is, those phenomena and experiences that I am yet too under-read and ill prepared to engage with. Consequently, as an acknowledgement of my fallibility, and as an activity to attend to my own *hauora* (wellbeing), I also utilise this diary as a mind-dump for my mistakes, my unformed thoughts, my destructive thoughts, my thoughts borne of bias, stress, fear, and my memories that may be triggered during this process. So, it’s not a

pretty, well-constructed diary – indeed, it ends up looking like a midden: a mess-pile laden with moans and expletives, broken-Māori, and spelling mistakes. My electronic note keeper that I downloaded from the Internet is well maintained, but I don't always have my laptop with me and I don't yet trust security in The Cloud. Result: my desk is strewn with half-filled notebooks, chicken scratchings on yellow post-it-notes, out-of-focus photos of moments lost forever, doodles, bad haiku, and midnight eureka (those scribbly notes I make when half asleep, and which don't look so great the next day). *Āe mārika* (yes indeed), by the end of rehearsals, things are starting to get a bit ugly – namely me:

*Dear Diary....*

*The directive to always be ethical has been on my shoulder but I have never felt it prick at me so much as it did today in rehearsal. I felt like chucking my water bottle at him for mucking up my play – my play?! E kāo – tō pōhēhē, girl, but it's not your play, is it? Come on Hel, don't become a tyrant. But I am so bloody tired. Why can't people just say their effing lines like I ask? (Reflection Diary, production week)*

### **THE PROPHET**

Call nothing ugly, my friend, save the fear of a soul in the presence of its own memories.

- Khalil Gibran, *In The Garden of The Prophet* (1933)

Fair enough, Mr. Gibran; I won't call it ugly – but *troubling*. My diary has become a way to let off steam and to de-power whatever has irked me. And it works – once it's written down it no longer bothers me – I can see where the issues are – for example when the breakdown was due to an anomaly in my initial reaction to an incident, or my not understanding a reading, or if I was overtired, dehydrated, hungry or worried about what the veterans will think. The performance of venting on paper works to flush out the bullshit and helps me land – back into the right frame to work again. And it's cheaper than a gym membership. But once thoughts I no longer think are realised on paper, they take on a life of their own, an external realness that I cannot control,

and a power to harm that is still attributable to me as author. I might have to consider an embargo when this is done. I don't want to suppress this work – but I don't want to hurt someone else's feelings through a method that helps me sort through my own.

### **Post-Workshop Reflection**

The short, intense nature of the workshop and rehearsal process has given me a greater awareness of my resilience levels, and how to identify (and either avoid or minimise) factors that promote stress. It has gifted me with ideas on how to improve my future practice in community theatre projects – especially when working in a company consisting of amateur/untrained performers who are looking to me for guidance, and trained professionals who adhere to paradigms that differ wildly from the ones I follow. As anxious as I was at first, I do not regret my decision to write honestly about my challenges in the unofficial mind-dump diary; they are remnants of thoughts that mean nothing to me now – and at the end of the project I am going to destroy it as part of my letting go.

## **Part 3: And Then What Happened?**

### **WHAKATAUKĪ/MĀORI PROVERB**

He taonga tonu te wareware. (Forgetfulness is an enduring gift)

I so wish I could write about a performance that successfully broke the fourth wall and punched a hole through oppression reinforced by apathy, or of a theatre space that for ninety minutes made a therapeutic landscape possible for those in attendance. I wish I could paint a picture of an ecstatic cast rightfully pleased with their efforts, and affirmed by audience feedback that was appreciative of their hard work, of a community supportive of the veterans, and enlightened by the themes and issues revealed in the performance. I want to describe veterans who went home with feelings

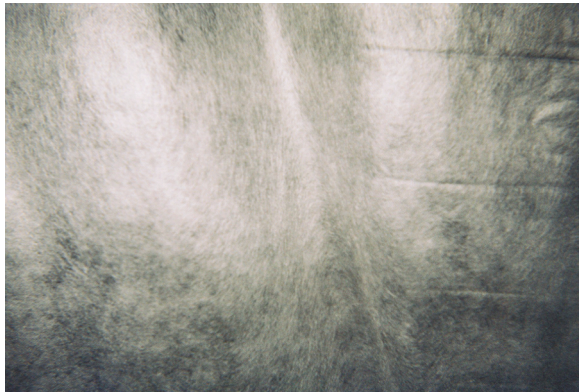
of happiness, healing, and a sense of having contributed to something worthwhile; I want to write a report that cleverly ties the events of the evening all the way back to my original research question, and to do so with flourish. I want to start a legend and set it in stone inside this thesis. I want to create a self-serving myth – a lie. *But I won't.*

After all these months of work: phone-calls, visits, reading till 3 am, trembling fingers, aching wrists and a sore spine from hours of transcribing, tears, frustrations over nothing, panic over lost drafts and dropped AV cues, worry over not being able to get the veterans to the show.... after all of that, the show does indeed go on – and perhaps the things I described above: the healing, the audience appreciation, the enlightened community moved to action – perhaps it all happened – just as I described it – but I wouldn't know, because I missed it. Not because I wasn't there – I was. I just don't remember much of it; I was too busy *performing* – working around the sides, trying to be responsive, trouble shooting potential risk, and stage-managing the atmosphere that we had all created and were inhabiting – right up till our guests-of-honour went back to their hotel and we swept the theatre floor for the night. I was in such a heightened state of awareness and tension and couldn't relax till I got a text from the veterans to say they were all OK. Even looking at some of the photos does little to jog my memory, because I operated behind the gauze and could barely see the action anyway (so I based my cue transitions on dialogue – which was a right bugger when the actors dropped their lines).

SO, THIS IS MY VIEW FROM THE TECH DESK BEHIND THE GAUZE:



*Fig. 27 - Helen's sneaky shot of the Chorus setting up for the show*



*Fig. 28 - Then we dimmed the house lights and OMG!*



AND HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED ON THE OTHER SIDE:



*Fig. 29 - The Pūriri guide Harry into the space.*



*Fig. 30 - Little monkey.*



*Fig. 31 - The Huey flies over the jungle (cue awesome soundtrack)*



*Fig. 32 - Soldiers on patrol*



*Fig. 33: - "Contact front": The soldiers engage in a firefight*



*Fig. 34 - "Game Over": Harry loses the video game*



*Fig. 35 - "Your mates, it's all about your mates": The soldiers reminisce.*

## *Dear Diary....*

*It is a blur. Still coming down. I can't quite work out what was happening around me. So busy trying to keep things safe, trying to keep up – what – appearances? Yes. Did I just spend tonight as the first diagnosed case of performative anxiety? I hope not – really? Cool things that I remember: caught up with BD who I haven't seen since I was 16, so relieved that KC & VH could make it. Got some nice feedback from ED from VANZ. Dad stood up to mihi to Mum. She told me that she feels settled now. I remember hugs and cupcakes. The cello and Morse code soundscape is still stuck in my ear – at least that's one thing I won't forget – but what about the rest of it? Can one be in a therapeutic landscape and not feel it? (Reflection Diary, 30/11/15, 2400 hrs.)*

STOP WORRYING ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT IT'S A GOOD PLAY – YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH. YOUR JOB NOW IS TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE OK WITH IT ALL...

### **Conclusion – The Right to Go Dark**

The next day I head out to the airport to debrief with three of the veterans before they catch their flights – the others have already left. I am nervous. We have coffee and they ask me to pass on their gratitude to the company for giving them a very special evening – not only for the performance, but also for the opportunity for them to be together again – and for a reason other than a *tangi* (funeral). When they'd returned to the hotel, the staff had kept the bar open for them; so they sat up for most of the night over a few drinks, and talked about the play and their part in it. I show the veterans my (official) production book and a sample of the pre-draft analysis. They are attentive to my explanation of the drafting process, and curious about my blocking notes, diagrams and symbols in the book. Their feedback is generous, constructive, and encouraging. Their offers start with “Now, I'm no expert in theatre but...” and,

“I’m not a theatre director, but...” – I laugh and tell them what they’re saying is gorgeous and bollocks – *because they know very well about being In Theatre*. They share some very doable and well thought out blocking notes, and then talk about how the play made a few of them think about getting a place for old soldiers like them – somewhere with a hospital and near the unit, so the young ones can visit. *Just need to get hold of some money first*. I start to offer my services, “If there’s anything I can do...”

*Well, actually...*

They tell me the play was healing for them, and the story needs to be told again – but it’s a story for all soldiers, not just their lot.

*So they ask for the right to Go Dark.*

I was expecting that: for them to want to go to ground again, to take cover, where it’s safe and quiet. To allay their concerns that their request might sabotage the project, I tell them about generalisation; then I promise to black out the script, give each one of them a new pseudonym, and remove any references to do with their beloved unit. Oh the irony – after wrestling open a space for them to be noticed and have their stories heard – after all that, they want to go back into the shadows again. *No worries, Matua – can do.*

## Postscript



*Fig. 36 - Research pathway (post-show final).  
I've decided to hang on to this piece as a memento  
of my journey in this project.*

For anyone wondering what was the last note I dumped onto my Research Pathway, here 'tis – although of course I don't mean it anymore:

DEAR JUDITH,  
SOMETIMES I WISH YOU'D KEPT PERFORMATIVITY TO YOURSELF.  
I WANT TO BE A HUMAN BEING  
- NOT A HUMAN DOING.  
YOU SUCK (ADJ. NOT VERB).  
LOVE, HELEN X

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## **Appendices**

## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Printed on Massey University Letterhead Paper)

### **Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand and therapeutic landscapes**

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

*E ngā mana,  
E ngā reo,  
E ngā karangaranga maha o te motu,  
Tēnā koutou katoa.*

*Ko tēnei taku karanga ki ngā tama o Ngāti Tūmatauenga, arā, ki ngā Ika-a-Whiro i haere atu ki te pakanga o Wetenama. Tēnei te mihi aroha, te mihi miharo ki a koutou.*

Kia ora, my name is Helen Pearse-Otene, I am the child of a Vietnam veteran and a Master's student in Psychology at Massey University. I am embarking on my thesis and will study therapeutic landscapes and how they might promote health and wellbeing for combat veterans. This document provides an outline of my research and a formal invitation for Viet Nam veterans to participate in this project.

#### **Project Description**

- *What are therapeutic landscapes?* Ancient cultures around the world had sacred places designated for celebration, prayer, cleansing from battle, childbirth, and healing; but these days the term therapeutic landscapes can also be used to describe gardens, clinics, marae, national parks, the family home - any special place in the environment where people feel a sense of healing, peace and comfort. Recent research from the US suggests that therapeutic landscapes might be helpful for combat veterans (whether currently serving or retired), and I would like to know what that might mean for veterans here in Aotearoa. What does a therapeutic landscape look like to our veteran community – is it a memorial, a veterans' hospital, a rugby paddock, is it a residential home/kaumātua accommodation for retired servicemen and women?
- *The project:* This project aims to gain an understanding of how Vietnam veterans perceive therapeutic landscapes, but will also work to make this knowledge accessible to the wider community. The study will employ creative arts tools – namely photography and theatre – and the information we collect will result in the creation and public presentation of a play. If you are considering becoming involved, below is a breakdown of how the project will be carried out and an estimation of your time that will be required:

## **Project Procedures**

- *The procedures in which you will be involved and how much time is required:*  
You will participate in a process called “photo-elicitation”. You will be given a disposable camera and a set of questions about therapeutic landscapes. An example of these questions might be “Which places in your neighbourhood bring you a sense of comfort?” You will then take photographs in response to these questions. This can be done in your own time and at your leisure. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer, but only what feels right to you. When the films have been developed, I will visit you and we will record a conversation/interview about your photos. This should take about 90 minutes but can be shorter if you wish. Over the next 3 months I will consult with you as I develop a play-script based on our conversations and the photographic images; overall this consultation process should take no more than 6-8 hours of your time and will be a mix of phone-calls, emails and Skype (if available). Then, for approximately 3 weeks the play will be work-shopped and performed in public by professional actors. However, you are more than welcome to join in and perform in the workshop and play if you wish, *and* after we have discussed how this may impact on your right to anonymity and privacy. After the show the cast and crew will engage in a facilitated hui with the audience. This is an opportunity for us to talk about the research, and to answer questions about the show and any common themes that are seen as important to Vietnam veterans and their families. Please talk to me if you want to take an active role in this phase of the process. *I would be more than happy to work with you and support you in this capacity.*

## **Participant’s Rights**

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. Oral consent will be sought from you at each stage of this research project and you do not have to participate in any part of it that you do not want to. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:*

- *Decline to talk about any particular issue;*
- *Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during your interview;*
- *Withdraw from the study up until 3 weeks before the public presentation;*
- *Approve or decline the use of your photographs up until 3 weeks before the public presentation;*
- *Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher (an alias will suffice);*
- *Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

## **Project Contacts**

*If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please feel free to contact my supervisors or me, as detailed overleaf:*

- *Researcher:* Helen Pearse-Otene: [h.pearseotene@gmail.com](mailto:h.pearseotene@gmail.com)
- *Supervisors:*
  - Ms. Veronica Hopner: [V.Hopner@massey.ac.nz](mailto:V.Hopner@massey.ac.nz)
  - Prof. Kerry Chamberlain: [K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz)

*I look forward to hearing from you. Nō reira, e koro mā, he mihi aroha nei ki a koutou me ō koutou whānau - kai te mihi, kai te mihi.*

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#### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 15/003. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr. Andrew Chrystall, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).



## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(Printed on Massey University Letterhead Paper)

### **Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand and therapeutic landscapes**

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

As detailed in the Information Sheet, I understand that each phase of the project includes on-going oral consent for my continued participation in this project.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study up until 3 weeks before the public presentation of this project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: MEDIA RELEASE FORM



### Te Rākau Theatre Trust

terakau@xtra.co.nz

+64-04-383-6855

www.terakau.org

### AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC MEDIA

I confirm that I have consented to participate as a photographer in a research project titled: “Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-NZ and therapeutic landscapes”.

I agree that the researcher, Helen Pearse-Otene, may use the photographs I approve for such lawful and educative purposes as reports, educational presentations, and publications arising from the research.

I also agree that the photographs I approve may also be rendered for inclusion in the creation of a theatre work and art exhibit called, *The Landeaters*.

I hereby give to Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu Trust, its nominees, partners and assigns, unlimited permission to copyright and use the nominated photographs only for the creation and presentation of the arts project titled, *The Landeaters*.

I do not waive my moral rights, including rights to attribution, and rights to approve copy for future projects other than *The Landeaters*.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name (print):** ..... **Ph:** .....

**Witnessed by (signature):** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name (print):** ..... **Ph:** .....

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### **Vietnam veterans from Aotearoa-New Zealand and therapeutic landscapes**

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- **Part 1: Opening-Introduction-Mihi.** The use of mihi, whakawhanaungatanga before reintroducing the project, the estimated time required for the interview, reminding the participant of their right to terminate the interview at any stage, and their right to receive a copy of the transcript, and then requesting permission to record.
- **Part 2: Body-Interview-Kōrero.** Being aware of comfort levels and signs of distress – terminating the interview on request or if I feel it necessary (\*Nb: check with family or spouse for cues or “no-go” areas prior to interview). Being present in the moment, so that I follow the lead of the participant, and adjust, transition between questions, extend upon or discard a question based on their responses. As this is a semi-structured interview, questions might include:
  - Tell me about your photographs –What is it about these places that bring you comfort or healing?
  - What feelings or thoughts came to you when you were taking these photographs?
  - How do you know when you are not feeling well?
  - What things do you find helpful in making you feel better or to heal?
  - What are the things, places or activities in your surroundings that remind you of your time as a soldier in Viet Nam?
  - What are the things in your environment that you would like to change or make better?
  - What is the extent of your involvement with Veterans Affairs and the veteran community? Do you go to the reunions – if so, what happens for you?
  - How do you feel about Anzac Day – how do you commemorate it and what happens for you?
  - How has the Memorandum of Understanding affected you? Are there some things you are unsure about, or don’t agree with?
  - What kind of support or changes do you think would improve the lives of Viet Nam veterans who are not doing so well?
  - Is there anything else that you would like to talk about regarding your experience in Viet Nam and now as a retired soldier?
- **Part 3: Closing-Poroporoaki-Whakakapi.** Make sure to mihi/thank the participant at the end of the interview, turn off the recorder, gauge their comfort levels again, and ask for any feedback that might improve my practice (follow up a few days later). Offer to end with karakia if requested by participant. Make sure to leave my contact details and that of my supervisors.

## APPENDIX E: THE PLAY

## THE LANDEATERS

*To the giants of my childhood*

## **CHARACTERS**

HARRY KENNING: A Māori Vietnam War veteran.

WAYNE TINKERMAN: A Pākehā property developer from Wellington.

PŪRIRI: A Chorus of Ghost Moths.

SAM: A caseworker.

LOU: A therapist.

PIRI: HARRY'S niece.

FOREMAN: A demolition worker.

WHIRO: The Māori deity of Evil and patron of war veterans.

## **SETTING**

Ōwhiro Bay, on the South East Coast of Wellington, inside a makeshift bunker in the bowels of a giant willow tree. The tree dwarfs a derelict house, its branches punch through the windows and its roots push against the floorboards.

## **TIME**

The Present – because there's no time like it.

## PRELUDE

Underneath a giant willow tree – the space is dimly lit and bare – save for the figures of the PŪRIRI who are frozen as tūpāpaku. The rumble of heavy machinery, creaking timber and muffled voices of a work crew above rouse the PŪRIRI, who scatter. The house above is being torn down. The lights flicker on and off, as the PŪRIRI carry an elderly man, HARRY down into the tree. They set him down and he stands in front of a chair, looking skywards towards the light. As the light fades, the sounds of the demolition cross fade to the ticking of a grandfather clock.

## END PRELUDE

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## SCENE 1

The lights come up to reveal HARRY's sanctuary, a room sized enclosure in the bowels of a giant willow tree. HARRY sits in a chair, attempting to read an application form for a veteran's disablement pension. The PŪRIRI are a silent presence as the ticking clock begins to rise in volume. Harry becomes agitated by the form and puts it down on a pile of papers. He stares out into space. The ticking of the clock grows louder, then, after a while:

**HARRY**                      Fuck it. I'm going for a walk.

HARRY stands up, picks up his go-bag and entrenching tool, and then exits. The PŪRIRI come to life, tidying up Harry's sanctuary and salvaging materials from the house, including: a transistor radio, a telephone, a butterfly ornament, an old journal, an antique tomahawk, a camera, and a video game console. One of the PŪRIRI tunes a radio; it switches between music, an instrumental version of "One Night in Gay Paree", and talkback radio.

**CALLER 1**                      Get them to stay with the flag. I said from a military perspective, that thing's – it's our – it has mana – it's got bloody tikanga – it's wairua – and it's bloody tapu. And we fought under the bloody thing – including our tūpunas. And he



just wants to change the flag – like that – like he thinks it’s changing his pants and bloody pulling women – little girl’s hair. He really gets up my nose.

The radio tuner shifts again.

**CALLER 2** Yeah, well I think it’s pretty good. We get a medical board once a year, if blokes get cancer – the two different types of cancer – they give them an assistance. Ah, children of Vietnam vets born after they went to Vietnam can register – which our kids have done for the doctor. One useless thing, they gave us another medal – that was ridiculous, but anyway. Na, it was stupid. What the hell – we got two, what do you want another one for?

**RADIO HOST** So they can shine – they can gleam in the sunshine when you’re marching down the road.

**CALLER 2** Na, that’s like patting you on the head and saying, “Good boy, good boy. Sit.” You know? “Oh we’ll shut them up. Bloody soldiers, we’ll just give them a medal, they’ll shut up then – won’t they?”

The telephone rings, and the PŪRIRI turn the radio off to listen as the phone switches to HARRY’S voicemail. On the wall, a photograph of an old homestead appears, but during the following dialogue, a flash occurs, and a scratchy pencil sketch replaces the photograph.

**VOICEMAIL** Hi. You missed me, because I’m not here. Leave a message.

**WAYNE** Kia ora Mr. Kenning, ah, hi Harry, this is Wayne – Wayne Tinkerman from Kopahou Property Developers. You probably won’t remember me but we met a few months ago at the public meeting for the new subdivision and, um, I imagine you must be very upset with what’s happened to your house, but I can assure you our team are very professional and took great care to ensure the safe removal of your chattels prior to demolition. Ah,

I'm sure you'll appreciate that we'd really like to move forward on this process, so if you could arrange for a truck to pick up your furniture that would be much appreciated. Look ah Harry, I know the deadline's passed but, if you'd like to reconsider taking up one of the smaller units we have on offer, I'm in the area for the rest of the day, and happy to meet at the site and talk over some of your options. Yeah, so my number is – what? Can it wait, I'm on a call to the old boy...the willow tree – yeah, what about it? ...Well just dig it out – I don't know, it's just an old tree...No, I don't know how far the roots go down – you're the experts, get some shovels or something...Then get a digger! Now, where was I?

The PŪRIRI make tsk-tsk noises.

**WAYNE** Oh yes – hello? Harry – is someone there?

A PŪRIRI hangs up the phone as Harry returns to the sanctuary. He does a few press-ups, then stands up and does some tai chi.

**HARRY** Wow, that was good. When I think I'm not well, I, I, I do something about it. Yeah. That's what I feel like when I'm in the gym, mate, pumping up those – pumping up those weights. More agile, and feel good, look forward to it, yeah. Keep the chubby at bay. [He pats his stomach] I think it's not a 6-pack, I think it's a crate. Or maybe a half-gallon jar – might be. I think I'm doing very well. I gotta be grateful I'm still alive. I guess if I have too much down time...yeah it catches up on you. I gotta be grateful I'm still alive. [He pulls a flask out of his go-bag and takes a swig from it – then grimaces] Yeah, it's not a taste that you would, "Oh yeah I'll have some more of that." Just knowing what it's capable of doing I think is enough.

The telephone rings and he looks at it for a while, then ignores it. The telephone switches to voicemail.

**VOICEMAIL** Hi. You missed me, because I'm not here. Leave a message.

**SAM** Hello Mr. Kenning this is Sam, I'm just following up on your application for your veteran's pension and I've noticed that your case notes here say that you're dead.

**HARRY** No, no, no. Red I said. Red. [He gets up to make his way to the phone] You're not listening. Bugger me.

**SAM** If you're not a deceased person could you please call us on 0800 650 656, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm to speak to one of our staff, so we can proceed to the next stage of your application. Please have your proof of ID and other supporting documents ready. Thank you.

**HARRY** [picking up receiver] Oh, kia ora. Kia ora –

The phone line is disconnected. HARRY hangs up the receiver.

**HARRY** Bastards. Yeah, well tomorrow's another day.

HARRY makes his way to the chair, and the phone rings again. He answers it.

**HARRY** Aren't you listening? They asked me for my favourite colour and red I said. Red.

**LOU** Good morning Harry, it's Lou –

**HARRY** Eh? I can't hear.

**LOU** Oh sorry, can you hear me now?

**HARRY** Na.

**LOU** It's Lou, the psychotherapist. I've been trying to catch up with you.

**HARRY** Hi. How are ya?

**LOU** You missed our appointment yesterday.

**HARRY** Yeah, before I get onto that –

**LOU** I rang you a couple of times – you didn't respond, so I'm just checking in –

**HARRY** I apologise for –

**LOU** No, you don't have to apologise –

**HARRY** I know how valuable and important what you're doing is, but um man – I've been bloody active up here. It's unbelievable with ah, what's happening.

**LOU** Yeah? Sounds interesting.

**HARRY** Yep...Yep.

**LOU** So how are you, Harry? Are you keeping OK?

**HARRY** Yeah, yeah. Good mate. Yeah.

**LOU** Good. I'm just checking to see when you want to come in again – what's your dance card like?

**HARRY** Yeah, ah I'll have to check my what-do-you-call-it-diary to see what my appointments are.

**LOU** That's OK, I'll wait.

HARRY crosses to the pile of papers and shuffles them around, making a loud rustling noise. He returns to the phone.

**HARRY** You there?

**LOU** I'm still here.

**HARRY** Oh. Hang on. [Puts receiver down and is about to walk away]

**LOU** Harry is this an OK time to talk? I can call you back. Harry.

**HARRY** [Picks up receiver again] I think that – I don't think people understand the fighting vet – the Vietnam War was different I mean. I think wives in particular need support from other wives when they feel that they've been made unhappy by their domestic situations, and the children need an understanding of why their father's yelling at them sometimes or wants them to be quiet. I mean I know of cases where people would get up in the middle of the night and walk around on their properties as if they were back on patrol again – because they can't help it.

**LOU** Is that what you do?

**HARRY** And I know of others that have fled into the bush and stayed there – you know – until somebody comes to rescue them or they've come out. And the best person to help veterans is another veteran, and veterans will refuse to talk to people who weren't veterans. And that's where I am at the moment. So.

**LOU** I'm not a veteran, but you talked to me.

**HARRY** Yeah, it was good, for a short time.

**LOU** Harry –

**HARRY** No. I took a stab at it, but – I took a stab at it. That's it.

HARRY hangs up the phone and walks away. He picks up the camera and takes a photo. An image of a pretty flower appears.

**PŪRIRI** You did the right thing. It was making you angry.

**HARRY** I'd had enough of going there and being recorded and so on. I just wanted to finish.

**PŪRIRI** It didn't even help you with any of your problems with the Vietnam War –

**HARRY** Yeah, yeah. All it was focused on was my behaviour to the Asians.

**PŪRIRI** Yes. And we know how to fix that, don't we.

The telephone rings, HARRY looks at it then ignores it.

**VOICEMAIL** Hi. You missed me, because I'm not here. Leave a message.

**PIRI** Oh, damn. Kia ora Matua, it's Piri here.

**HARRY** Oh Mea – Piri – taihoa, taihoa.

HARRY makes his way to the telephone.

**PIRI** I was driving by your old house and saw all the machinery outside, and I thought, well, I'd better give you a call to see –

**HARRY** [Picks up the receiver] Hello! Piri!

**PIRI** Kia ora, is that you Matua?

**HARRY** Yeah, how you doing?

**PIRI** Oh I'm good, Uncle Harry, I'm good. Sorry to hear about the house. Are you OK?

**HARRY** Yeah, yeah. Good as gold.

**PIRI** Yeah? How's Aunty? Is she still in the home or –

**HARRY** Yeah. Yeah, she's there full-time. She's gotta be assisted when she walks, she's gotta be fed. Sometimes she may understand what you're saying, but really she's just in her own little world most of the time. She's – you know – as well as can be, Piri. Hmmm.

**PIRI** It's good to know she's being looked after – but what about you, Uncle?

The PŪRIRI morph into animals and start calling for HARRY to feed them.

**HARRY** I think I'm doing very well. I just get up in the morning, and feed the bloody animals – I've got a little mouse, I feed the seagulls, the Indian mynahs, all the little sparrows, and the pigeons – they take most of the time. I get a lot of joy out of all the animals around here. But I do other things. I just finished running 4 kilometres.

**PIRI** You liar – not!

**HARRY** I was up at half past 6. I do regular exercises, sit-ups and weights in the gym Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays. I get out there, go walkabout. Do a bit of tai chi at the end for about 40 minutes and that's me. Probably relax tomorrow.

**PIRI** Wow, I feel tired just listening to you.

**HARRY** You got to get into some sort of routine otherwise you just let yourself slip. And I have slipped a lot.

**PIRI** You put me to shame Uncle. I'm just sitting here in my car eating chocolate, watching these clowns take your old house apart.

**HARRY** Is that right?

**PIRI** Where are you staying? I'll bring you a coffee.

**HARRY** Na, I've just had one. I'm right.

**PIRI** Well, what about all your gear? I can bring it over for you if you want.

**HARRY** Oh, I don't want to bother anyone.

**PIRI** You're not bothering anyone. The workmen – they just chucked it all out on the kerb.

**HARRY** Yeah?

**PIRI** And there's a Pākehā fulla in a suit. I'm looking at them right now. Hey! Careful with that bike – that's a family heirloom you know! Jee Uncle, I didn't know you have a motorbike. Is that how you get your adrenalin rush these days?



**HARRY** Yeah – Buell 1200 – ride it up to Whāngarei – right up north – going round the Brynderwyns – oh – leaning into those corners. Sure brings back a lot of memories – where has it all gone?

**PIRI** OK, um, I think they just stopped for smoko. Yep, here come the pies – they’re taking a break now. Oh, I don’t think the Pākehā fulla’s too happy about it. Yeah, he’s having a rave at the crew.

**HARRY** What’s he saying?

**PIRI** I don’t know, but they’re not paying any attention to him. He’s flapping his arms around and pointing at the willow tree.

**HARRY** Is he?

**PIRI** Oh I see, he wants them to dig it out – but they’re not moving. Fool! Doesn’t he know anything about willows? Hey mate, that tree’s nearly two hundred years old! There’s no way you’ll get it out without a digger.

**HARRY** Yeah, too right.

**PŪRIRI** Too right, mate.

In the background, the muffled sound of shouting and thumping can be heard.

**PIRI** Oh, you should see this Uncle – now he’s having a right spaz – he’s kicking it – he’s kicking the tree.

**HARRY** Go away –

**PIRI** Na, true – ooh – he’s hurt himself. Good job, what a dick.

**HARRY** Yeah well he is a dick. Coming in to take over – buying it all – there’s definitely no equality here. It’s all about [mimes the word ‘money’] Money.

The thumping sound grows louder.

**PIRI** But he’s still going for it – he’s just throwing himself at the tree. Hey, can’t you take a hint? That tree’s going nowhere – just give up and go home, you fool! Oh Matua, this guy’s going nuts. I wish you were here to see this.

**HARRY** I am.

**PIRI** Pardon? Whereabouts?

**HARRY** It’s a peaceful environment here, but then again, I know at some stage I have to leave here.

**PIRI** But I can’t see you – Matua – Uncle Harry – where are you?

**HARRY** Oh, just down the end of the –

There is a crash as WAYNE tumbles down onto the floor in front of HARRY, and starts moaning.

**HARRY** Hel-lo!

**PIRI** Oh my god – Uncle Harry! He just fell down a hole! The ground swallowed him up. Hey Matua –

**HARRY** I got a little visitor. You look after yourself. Hooray.

He hangs up the receiver. Unseen by HARRY, the PŪRIRI come forward to support him.

**WAYNE**                      What the – where am I?

**HARRY**                      Kia ora, cowboy. Welcome to our house.

As the light dims, the last image WAYNE sees before he passes out is that of the PŪRIRI approaching him to investigate.

## **END SCENE 1**

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## **SCENE 2**

The grandfather clock ticks as HARRY sits in a chair, attempting to read an application form for a veteran's disablement pension. WAYNE pretends to be unconscious while observing HARRY. The PŪRIRI are a silent presence as the ticking clock begins to rise in volume. A series of images appear that show HARRY working to realign himself as he reads the form.

**HARRY**                      Fear of losing your mates. Fear of getting caught. Fear of getting lost. Fear of not getting back. My mates, it's all about your mates. Hey, I volunteered – we knew where we were going. And all these crybabies – blah-blah-blah – they just go overboard – they want everything for nothing – they ruin it for other people the way they go on and bleed the bloody system. I don't want to be a crying soldier. I can pull meself out of it, yeah.

HARRY becomes agitated by the form and puts it down on the pile of papers. He stares out into space. The clock ticks louder then:

**HARRY**                      Fuck it. I'll go, I'll go, I'll go for a walk.

HARRY picks up his go-bag and entrenching tool, and then exits. WAYNE stands up; his head, lower back and foot are sore. He carefully makes his way around the space – checks that HARRY has gone, then starts searching for a way out.

**WAYNE**                   Where the hell am I? Hello! Hello! Can anyone hear me out there? Can anybody hear me? Hello! Christ!

The PŪRIRI make tsk-tsk noises and WAYNE stops for a moment. He finds his mobile phone and tries to place a call. It starts to ring and is connected.

**FOREMAN**               Redrock Demolition, can I help you?

**WAYNE**                   It's Wayne, it's Wayne here. Look –

**FOREMAN**               Wayne who?

**WAYNE**                   It's Wayne Tinkerman, the guy who pays your wage –

**FOREMAN**               Oh Wayne! Yep, gotcha, me and the boys were just talking about you, wondering where on earth did ol' Wayne Tinkerman get to? Last time we saw you, you were abusing a tree, and then you dropped into a hole somewhere –

**WAYNE**                   Yes, yes –

**FOREMAN**               I couldn't believe me eyes! A heap of dirt and bark and then all these moths came flying out, eh – then the whole thing just closed up behind you. Like you'd been eaten for breakfast. A magic, man eating tree. Bloody good disappearing act if you ask me –

**WAYNE**                   What?

**FOREMAN**               I hope you're not going to do that when we send out our invoice, if you know what I mean.

**WAYNE** No, I don't know what you mean. I'll have you know that Kopahou Property Developers is a very reputable company.

**FOREMAN** That's not what I heard. You see, Wayne, Wellington's a small town and some of the boys were telling me about a few jobs they'd already been on with you lot. Made me very reluctant. Very reluctant.

**WAYNE** Yes, yes, I'm more than happy to talk about payment when you get me out of here. But first things first –

**FOREMAN** You're cutting out on me.

**WAYNE** What – no, I – no! You need to get me out of here!

**FOREMAN** Yeah, we'd like to, but we're a bit worried about cave-ins and things like that. Health and Safety are sending someone over. So we're just having another cuppa.

**WAYNE** You don't understand – there is a madman down here – a madman!

**FOREMAN** I wouldn't say that, Wayne, you're sounding pretty calm to me. Not a bad attitude to have under the circumstances, eh. Look, you just sit tight and we'll have you out in a jiffy. Is that banana muffin for me? Cheers, Shelly, you're a beaut.

The line is disconnected.

**WAYNE** Hello? No, don't leave me! Arggh! Bastard! [He throws the phone onto the floor, breaking it] Oh no – no, no, no! [He picks up the phone, dusts it off and plays with the buttons] Oh god, bloody stupid – Wayne, what are ya?

The PŪRIRI make tsk tsk noises.

**PŪRIRI** Kaitahae-whenua.

**WAYNE** What was that?

**PŪRIRI** Landeater.

**WAYNE** Hello – is somebody there?

A PŪRIRI turns on the radio and begins to tune it – the radio wavers between music, a recording of the radio chatter at Long-Tan, and talkback radio:

**CALLER 3** She always told me I'd be looked after by a white veil. A white thing. You know? And that's what I saw in Vietnam – we were being chased. And we were being chased all day, all night and it was about 2 o'clock in the morning we could ah – we were surrounded more or less, you know? We thought we were surrounded – it was either side – and ah anyway, that night he said, "We gotta rest here. We'll try and make calls through to get choppers in.

**WAYNE** [Turning off radio, then walking away] Stupid bloody thing.

The radio switches back on.

**WAYNE** What the – who's there? I said, who's there?

The lights dim until WAYNE is isolated in a spot.

**CALLER 4** "Nā wai tērā?" and of course – listening to Mum and them about all the kehuas around the place – don't go there, there's kehuas there, don't go there – bloody – I was half the time walking around with bloody eyes in the back of me head.

The lights come up to reveal the PŪRIRI – WAYNE can see them, and they begin to advance as the light starts to fade down to black.

**WAYNE** Oh God – get – get away from me! Help – help!

**CALLER 3** You know I just lay back there – all I saw was this white thing in front of me, white, white as white. And all I felt was my eyebrows – eyelids – going heavy you know? And before I knew it I was being woken up.

**WAYNE** Get away from me! Help! Someone please help me! No get away! Aah!

The lights come up to reveal HARRY in the room – he has WAYNE in a chokehold. The PŪRIRI have gone.

**HARRY** Get away – no, help me – no, get away – make up your mind.

WAYNE gestures to let HARRY release him and he does. WAYNE slumps down, coughing.

**HARRY** Unbelievable. You alright, you fucker?

**WAYNE** Pardon?

**HARRY** You should look where you're going.

**WAYNE** Mr. Kenning – Harry – I'm Wayne, Wayne Tinkerman.

**HARRY** Oh yeah. Good on you.

**WAYNE** How on earth did you get down here?

**HARRY** Same as you – but quieter.

**WAYNE** But I didn't know – no one knew you were down here.

**HARRY** Well that's the point, isn't it?

**WAYNE** The others – that were here a minute ago – where'd they go?

**HARRY** Don't know what you're on about. It's just you and me down here.

**WAYNE** But there was a group of them – I saw them – they were playing with the radio. You don't believe me.

**HARRY** Na, I'd say you're still a bit low on the oxygen – sorry about that chokehold back there – old habits die hard.

**WAYNE** Harry –

**HARRY** I should've decked you instead.

**WAYNE** Listen – we've got to get out of here before they come back.

**HARRY** Sit down mate, you're away with the bloody fairies.

**WAYNE** But they weren't fairies –

**HARRY** You must be one of them stressed out executive types. You've gotta get off that drug medication. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Nuts.

**WAYNE** What?



He pulls the flask out of his go-bag and hands it to WAYNE.

**HARRY** Nuts – Brazil nut, walnut. It’s getting away from all the food that’s got preservatives, additives you know – the fried stuff – and going back to our tūpuna days and eating fresh fruit and vegies. Like it?

WAYNE takes a swig. It is awful and he splutters.

**WAYNE** Yes.

**HARRY** Each to his own. I think it’s got a bland taste myself. There’s about 4 grapes in it – red grapes, and blueberries, asparagus, ginger, garlic. And some mint and stinging nettle.

**WAYNE** Sorry, did you say “stinging nettle”?

**HARRY** Yeah, whizz that up. And then what I normally do is put it in a glass bottle and leave it in the fridge and just drink it now and again.

**WAYNE** Stinging nettle [offers the bottle back].

**HARRY** Look it up – they reckon there’s multi-benefits for it, but you gotta be able to take the sting when you pick it. No, you have it – seeing as you like it so much.

**WAYNE** Thanks. I’ll um, ration it.

**HARRY** No sweat mate. Few more swigs of that drink then you’ll be feeling better in no time. Then you can bugger off and I can get back to work.

**WAYNE** What work?

**HARRY** I do enjoy visitors so long as they don't overstay their welcome.

**WAYNE** So it's a secret then. Doesn't matter anyway, you'll be coming with me.

**HARRY** Says who?

**WAYNE** Says me. There's a crew above us working out how to get us out. And I ordered a digger. Should be hearing it soon enough.

**HARRY** I prefer down here where it's peaceful. Quiet. To me this place is a fortress and I'm comfortable. You go to it.

**WAYNE** OK Harry, I think you've made your point now –

**HARRY** No, no, no. I'm staying put.

**WAYNE** You're coming out –

**HARRY** Yeah? S'pose you're gonna make me – you and whose Army?

**WAYNE** Where shall I start? The City Council, The Environment Court, The High Court, The Waitangi Tribunal – every place you and your little residents' committee went to and lost. Even your neighbours saw sense, Harry.

**HARRY** No. They ran out of money to fight you and your permits and bureaucracy – browned me off, getting knocked back like that. What's happened to our democracy and bloody freedom? This country's only for the rich now.

**WAYNE** Rubbish. New Zealand's for people who are willing to take risks and work hard for the opportunities –

**HARRY** And step over everyone else while you do it. Trying to cull the bloody population –

**WAYNE** You're the one who's nuts –

**HARRY** And letting in all these foreigners with a heap of money but no idea about tātou-tātou. Tell me, who's coming over and who's buying all the land? Who's sneaking over here? Well, I'll have a bloody good go at them – I'll make my commitment.

**WAYNE** Too late Harry, it's game over – time to leave the field. This whole area's being cleared for my subdivision, and you holing up in this tree like a feral rabbit is not going to change it.

**HARRY** We'll see about that.

The telephone rings. WAYNE answers it as HARRY takes a photo. Another image appears of a desolate winter landscape.

**WAYNE** Hello? Hello – are you there – can you hear me – can you hear me?

**PIRI** Well yeah – if you just be quiet enough for me to get a word in, yeah I can hear you.

**WAYNE** Oh thank God – look it's Wayne Tinkerman here, I want –

**PIRI** Hi Wayne, this is Piri. Can I speak to Harry please?

**WAYNE** What?

**PIRI** Is Harry there? I'd like to speak with him.

**WAYNE** I don't think you understand –

**PIRI** Actually, Wayne, I think do. I wanted to talk to Mr. Harry Kenning so I dialed his phone number and – is this Harry Kenning's phone?

**WAYNE** Yes –

**PIRI** Cool. Then put him on. Chop-chop.

**WAYNE** [To HARRY] It's for you.

**HARRY** [Takes receiver and stares at WAYNE till he moves out of earshot] Hello.

**PIRI** Kia ora Matua.

**HARRY** Are you there Piri?

**PIRI** Āe. How are you going Uncle Harry?

**HARRY** Not bad, you're a bit, you're a bit quiet.

**PIRI** Oh am I?

**HARRY** Yeah.

**PIRI** Oh. [Raises voice a little] Is that a bit better?

**HARRY** Yeah, that's better.

**WAYNE** Ask her how long they're going to be.

HARRY eyeballs WAYNE and he steps away.

**PIRI** Are you there, Matua? Can you hear me?

**HARRY** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Kei te pai. Just had some interference.

**PIRI** OK. Hey how are you?

**HARRY** Oh, yeah I'm good. I'm still trying to get over that bloody horrible disease I caught, that polymyalgia rheumatica.

**PIRI** Poly-what? You didn't tell me about that.

WAYNE is growing impatient and gestures to HARRY. HARRY ignores him.

**HARRY** Polymyalgia rheumatica. Don't ever get that mate – pai kare. It's one of the worst things I've ever – it's worse than the gout. When it starts the only time you sleep is when you got no energy left, and you sort of nod off but it's still there. The doc put me on that medication, that prednisone.

**PIRI** Yuck, I don't like that medicine.

**WAYNE** [under his breath] Come on, this is wasting time.

**HARRY** Yeah, was gonna try and wean me off but the bloody thing snuck back in – it caught me up again. It inflames everything in my hand joints right up to the elbow. That's the limit of where it attacks. Both arms, and can't move them. Can't shave, I can't bloody do anything. And it's very painful, worse than gout.

**PIRI** Oh Matua, ka aroha.

**HARRY** Well I figure I can sit around and accept my fate and wait to fall over the cliff – but man, all these tablets clog you up. I feel clogged up. So I'm taking some of those natural health products. But I can't tell the doctors – I know they won't like the idea.

**PIRI** It's your body, Uncle.

**HARRY** Yeah that's right, but they're the professionals aren't they? Anyway, for a while there, I sorta let myself go for a bit, I was weighing in at 110 kgs. Now I'm down to 97, you know and – apart from this thing in me arms, the skin rashes, the gout, and my breathing, yeah – I feel good about it. If it wasn't for me taking responsibility and self-care I wouldn't be here today – I really mean that.

WAYNE tries to snatch the receiver from HARRY.

**WAYNE** I've had it – give me that!

**HARRY** Get out of it you bloody –

**WAYNE** Give it!

HARRY wrestles the receiver off WAYNE and puts him in a wristlock, then guides him to a corner.

**WAYNE** Ow, ow, ow!

**HARRY** You stupid prick, bloody making all that noise.

**WAYNE** Let go of me – you're bloody mental!

**HARRY** I've been called worse. Now stay there, and be quiet. [Into receiver] Piri, you still there, mate?

**PIRI** Āe. Jeez your secretary's not very well trained is he?

**HARRY** You mean Tinkerman? Well, if he gets on me nerves, I'll knock the bastard out.

**PIRI** Careful, Uncle. You don't want to get arrested.

**HARRY** When he wakes up I'll tell him he fell over.

**PIRI** I hope it doesn't come to that 'cause it looks like you're going to be down there for a while. They're not very organised around here. There's a work-crew, an ambulance, and a coffee cart – hey, are you two hungry?

**HARRY** [To WAYNE] She wants to know if we're hungry.

**WAYNE** Yes –

**HARRY** [To PIRI] No, we're good.

**PIRI** OK then – oh, here's some action – looks like someone from the Council's turned up.

**HARRY** [To WAYNE] She says the Council's here.

**WAYNE** Finally. [Loudly so PIRI can hear] Tell them we're both under the tree.

**PIRI** Yeah I heard that. What do I tell them?

**HARRY** Nothing. Can you go round to the home and visit your Aunty? Just sit with her – tell her I won't be in today – she might not understand – most of the time she doesn't recognise other people – but – can you do that, please?

**PIRI** No worries, I'll go now.

**HARRY** Righto. See ya.

HARRY hangs up the phone. He finds the camera and takes a photo. A series of images appear behind him, including, a watercolour of a woman in a wheelchair, the outside of a nursing home, a grainy image of the view from a darkened room.

**WAYNE** Your wife.

**HARRY** I'm not talking about her.

**WAYNE** Which nursing home is she in?

**HARRY** None of your business – they're all the same aren't they.

**WAYNE** I don't think so.

**HARRY** Oh yeah, well the home she's in has flower gardens and soft cushions, the care staff are all from the Philippines, and the whole joint smells like tissues, disinfectant, and flaking skin.

**WAYNE** They don't all have to be like that.

**HARRY** So now you're an expert on the elderly are you?

**WAYNE** Well no, it's just that I'm building a retirement village with nursing facilities, right here. That's what this whole thing's about.



The PŪRIRI begin to shiver and become agitated as they listen.

**HARRY**                      Come again.

**WAYNE**                      I said, I'm building retirement homes – didn't you see the plans? I'm sure we sent them out. What – what's wrong?

**HARRY**                      So you're telling me that you've been tearing down houses and making a bunch of old timers like me homeless, just so you can build one of them gated communities for another lot of rich pensioners –

**WAYNE**                      You make it sound worse than it is –

**HARRY**                      And I s'pose these other old farts – these BMW types buying up the forestry – they're not even from here, are they? What are they then – Chinese?

**WAYNE**                      Actually most of them are Canadian.

**HARRY**                      Bloody hell! How many of those high-falutin' fuckers got a Range Rover parked up in the garage, and are still making use of the gold cards – I see them on the buses and they think they own the bloody thing – talking in their high pitched blah-blah-blah. They're a bloody nuisance.

**WAYNE**                      It's not against the law for a foreigner to have a gold card –

**HARRY**                      I went to war and paid my taxes, and watched some good blokes die – and I haven't got a gold card.

**WAYNE**                      Then go apply for one!

**HARRY** Just like that eh? You think it's that simple. You must be one of those suckers that still think New Zealand's clean and green and it's the best place to raise children.

**WAYNE** So what if I do – what's wrong with believing in your country?

**HARRY** You bloody dreamer – just like this government – those blokes live in a world of their own – they don't know what the hell's going on. They collect their hundred and fifty – two hundred grand a year and blimmin' talk crap. None of you. No fucken idea.

HARRY stops for a moment, raises his hands to either side of his head, and then draws them down. He looks out. An image forms of a solitary bird flying in a wispy sky.

**HARRY** You bastards.

**WAYNE** Harry, Harry what's wrong?

**HARRY** How many of you fuckers were hiding behind that bush, sitting there with that rifle and now you're over here. I'm thinking – I'm thinking mad.

HARRY picks up his entrenching tool, go-bag and then starts to exit.

**WAYNE** Harry, what are you doing?

**HARRY** I'm going walkabout.

HARRY exits. WAYNE looks around the room, and then his eyes rest on Harry's pile of papers. He crosses over to them and picks up Harry's application, sits down and begins to read. The light begins to dim as the PŪRIRI slowly walk around the space, then sink to the floor, creating a pile of corpses. The radio starts to tune by itself.

## END SCENE 2

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### SCENE 3

As the radio tunes between different stations, HARRY enters and, using his entrenching tool, starts to dig a pathway through the pile of corpses. The work is physically and spiritually taxing.

**CALLER 5** Without a doubt. They knock us back and – when I ring them up I think they know that I’m on the phone when I ring VANZ, and they say, “Oh here he is again” and I say, “Well put a picture of me on the wall.” And none of them want to answer my case manager and put me through.

**CALLER 6** And yet help is there. I believe help is there. But they just gotta get off their butts and go – took me, took me over 5 years to swallow my pride and apply for the disability pension.

**CALLER 5** And if you really look at our veterans, they don’t like getting stuffed around and they get pissed off trying to get them to understand. And in the end they just pull the plug and don’t bother going back to them. And that’s exactly what they want, yeah.

**CALLER 6** And the way they question – some of those – they phrase those questions – make you look as if you’re begging, like you’re in a dole queue asking for a handout. And it took me a long time to swallow my pride and say: hey, we’re entitled to this. You know you’ve done something different to earn this.

HARRY exits. The telephone rings. The light comes up on WAYNE.

**WAYNE** [Picks up the receiver] Hello.

**SAM** Hello, Mr. Kenning?

**WAYNE** Sorry, he's not in at the moment. Can I take a message?

**SAM** Yes please, can you tell him that Sam called about his application for a veterans pension and – sorry for the delay – but now we've confirmed that he's not deceased and –

**WAYNE** What?

**SAM** Harry's alive.

**WAYNE** I think he knows that already.

**SAM** Yes, so would you mind telling Harry to stand by while we check his service record, and we'll be in contact again.

**WAYNE** [writing on a piece of paper] "Stand by while they check service record." Sure. And is there an estimated waiting time?

**SAM** I'd say about 7, 8 months.

**WAYNE** He's gotta wait 8 months?

**SAM** Maybe 7. Look, it's a very thorough process.

**WAYNE** Sounds like a stupid process to me. You rang him up to tell him he's alive, and now he has to wait another 7 months for you to work out if he's been to war or not before you ring back.

**SAM** It's not ideal but we do need to check our information with a number of agencies, so we know what we're dealing with.

**WAYNE** I can tell you what you're dealing with –

**SAM** And you are...

**WAYNE** Wayne, Wayne Tinkerman.

**SAM** OK Wayne, and are you a whānau member or a friend of the family?

**WAYNE** No, I barely know the guy but –

**SAM** Really – well then I don't think it's appropriate for us to be having this conversation.

**WAYNE** Hang on, hang on – this might sound a bit old fashioned, but have you guys thought about – I don't know – paying him a visit?

**SAM** Are you trying to tell me how to do my job?

**WAYNE** No, no – I mean – but if you take a look at him and see how he's doing and – you know he's living inside a willow tree, don't you?

**SAM** You're joking –

**WAYNE** No I'm not. His house was demolished this morning and he's gone and buried himself in a hole underneath this bloody tree. I've got no idea how I'm going to get him out.

**SAM** That's awful –

**WAYNE** You don't know the half of it.

**SAM** Is he alright?

**WAYNE** I'm no expert in these sorts of things, but, no, I'd say he's a bloody nutter actually. You need to send someone in. I don't know how long this dirt will hold before it caves in –

**SAM** Poor Harry. I feel terrible.

**WAYNE** So you should.

**SAM** I mean, I've heard of these types of cases before, but it's the first time I've had to deal with one myself.

**WAYNE** Yeah?

**SAM** It's not that unusual, unfortunately. You hear of veterans just dropping everything and falling off the radar – going bush for a while – for years, even. And their poor families have no idea where to look for them. Look, Wayne, I can't promise anything, but I'll do my best to speed things up at this end.

**WAYNE** Good.

**SAM** Poor Harry – he must be so upset. Thank goodness he's got you then, eh, to look out for him.

**WAYNE** Like I said, I barely know him.

**SAM** Well I'm sure he'll appreciate having you around to support him. Excuse my language, but what kind of ass-wipe would tear

down an old man's house and force him to live in a tree?  
Heartless buggers.

**WAYNE** They must have their reasons.

**SAM** I doubt it. You'll tell Harry I rang, won't you? Thanks Wayne.

**WAYNE** Sure. Bye.

WAYNE puts down the phone, and exits, taking HARRY'S forms with him.

### END SCENE 3

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### SCENE 4

The radio tunes itself to a Vietnam era song, "8 Miles High", and the image of a car painted in psychedelic glow appears. From their still positions on the floor, the bodies of the PŪRIRI jerk in time to the music, and they stand upright. They morph into a group of joyful, young adults dancing in a club. The sound of a Huey thump punctuates the rhythm of the song, and, as it grows louder, the PŪRIRI create a chopper flying over the jungle. An image of an Iroquois helicopter replaces that of the car. As the chopper makes its landing, the music dies, and the PŪRIRI exit, transforming into a team of soldiers. They begin a deliberate, silent patrol through the jungle. The radio shifts again to the sounds of the jungle, to radio chatter, and then to the unmistakable sound of Northern Vietnam's propaganda radio.

**HANOI HANNAH** How are you, GI. Joe? It seems to me that most of you are poorly informed about the going of the war, to say nothing about a correct explanation of your presence over here. Nothing is more confused than to be ordered into a war to die,

or to be maimed for life, without the faintest idea of what's going on. Isn't it clear that the war makers are gambling with your lives, while pocketing huge profits?

**CALLER 7** I can believe some of the things that go on – this cloak and dagger stuff – we just don't – we're so sheltered from that sort of thing here in New Zealand.

**CALLER 8** I think – you've got to have good people fighting for you that know what they're talking about, and I think the trouble with today, a lot – a lot of the government don't really know what it's like to be a soldier. You know it's that old – there's the story out that you're not wanted when everything's right, but you're the first one to turn to when something turns bad.

A burst of machine gunfire sets off a contact between the PŪRIRI and an unseen enemy. HARRY makes his way through the firefight to the front and picks up the game console. He starts playing a violent war game. In the background the PŪRIRI act out what he is seeing on his TV screen. WAYNE enters and watches HARRY immersed in and excited by the game. HARRY'S avatar is shot and HARRY jumps up and falls over, then gets up, laughing. In slow motion, HARRY'S avatar dies a heroic and tragic death, while his patrol colleagues freeze in tableaux of mourning.

**PŪRIRI** Game over. [They retreat]

**HARRY** No, no! Ah, mea - bloody thing!

**WAYNE** Careful Harry you don't want to have a heart attack.

**HARRY** If I did, that'd make things pretty convenient for you, wouldn't it?

**WAYNE** I'm just thinking about your health.

**HARRY** OK Nurse Tinkerman, I'll take an extra pill.



**WAYNE** I didn't know you liked video games.

**HARRY** Oh, yeah, well – what else you gonna do, mate?

**WAYNE** You just don't fit the gamer type, that's all. So which games do you play?

**HARRY** Mostly war. Black Ops, Elite Sniper, Metal Gear Solid. You don't play?

**WAYNE** No, not really my thing I suppose. I think they're too graphic for me – the blood splattering around like that.

**HARRY** But you know it's just a game. It's just a fun thing.

**WAYNE** Actually, they reckon that people who play these types of games are violent in real life.

**HARRY** Oh yeah? That's quite interesting. But it's not reality. There's no risk at all.

**WAYNE** So it doesn't make you think of anything strange – or make you want to do something?

**HARRY** Eh? Oh, you mean, does it give me the urge to get out my secret cache of automatic weapons and go on a shooting rampage in town? Not really.

**WAYNE** What about flashbacks, memories?

Unbeknownst to HARRY, WAYNE starts to jot down some notes.

**HARRY** You've been watching too much American TV – those American movies – glamourising the war, you know, with their cannabis

things on their helmets. Bloody unprofessional. Mind you, you got to remember those kids were only 19 – conscripts. That was sad, that was sad.

**WAYNE** Right. “Sad”.

**HARRY** Yeah.

**WAYNE** But the games don’t make you sad.

**HARRY** No, I’m hyped up. I mean it gets into my head and I can get a bit carried away. I just need to sit down, have a coffee before I go to bed or I’ll be dreaming about it – I’m bad enough anyway when I sleep.

**WAYNE** [scribbling furiously] “Dreams. Bad sleep”. Oh yeah.

**HARRY** My feet are kicking and I’m blimmin’ jumping around in bed – even without the game – but it’s not reality for me. Real life, real combat – that’s different.

**WAYNE** How?

As HARRY talks, images that bring back memories of his time as a soldier appear.

**HARRY** Well it’s a job, isn’t it? We just went over there, done the job, come home. Yeah, and that’s how it’s s’posed to be.

**WAYNE** You sound like you liked it.

**HARRY** I loved it. Loved it. Shouldn’t’ve left actually when I did. But however I did, so no use crying about it. I just felt at that time the Army wanted people around that were Yes Men – and that wasn’t for me. But, na, I loved it, mate, and it was really good

to me – not so much good for my family – but we always had food and we got some awesome trips. So I can't growl.

**WAYNE** [still writing] "He growls".

**HARRY** No, I said I can't growl. [He looks at WAYNE] Hel-lo, what are you writing –

**WAYNE** [stepping back] Nothing.

HARRY snatches the forms from WAYNE.

**HARRY** What the hell! This is mine!

**WAYNE** And I'm filling it in for you. See? Go on – look at it.

**HARRY** I know your game – you think if you help me get my pension then I'll move on from here.

**WAYNE** To be honest – yes, that's my plan.

**HARRY** It'll take more than that – much, much more – and I haven't found it yet.

**WAYNE** Harry, you can't stay here. It's dangerous. What if the ceiling caves in on you?

**HARRY** You didn't worry about that when you were tearing down my house.

**WAYNE** I didn't think you'd still be here –

**HARRY** This is my home – where else would I be?

**WAYNE** I don't know. Where's your family?

The telephone rings and HARRY answers it.

**WAYNE** Harry –

**HARRY** [into phone] Kia ora. Harry Kenning here.

**FOREMAN** G'day, Harry – you won't remember me –

**HARRY** If you weren't in the Army then, na mate, I probably won't.

**FOREMAN** Yeah, I thought so. We helped fit out the RSA last year. And then you read The Ode at my Dad's funeral in May.

**HARRY** Oh, Mea! How you doin'?

**FOREMAN** We're good. Mum really appreciated what you did at the funeral.

**HARRY** Oh well, if I can give back, you know, and do something small to acknowledge an ex-soldier's service. And we need to show our gratitude and respect for the wahine – you know while we're away fighting for our freedom and democracy, women like your mum are left at home, taking responsibility. Anyway, might be a bit of a selfish way of looking at it, but hey, it makes me feel good that I'm going down there and helping out.

WAYNE coughs to get HARRY'S attention but HARRY ignores him.

**FOREMAN** How's the RSA looking anyway?

**HARRY** Struggling, struggling mate. Numbers have really dropped off.

**FOREMAN** I did what you said and got me and the boys a membership.

**HARRY** You civilian members are better than we are. You go in there and play your darts and snooker and join in very well. I blame us veterans. We join the RSA but we don't support the RSA. I don't know why. Mind you, I don't want to drive in or catch the buses. And in the winter nights you think, "Oh bugger – it's too cold, I'll stay home."

**FOREMAN** The meals are good value.

**HARRY** Yeah they are, but of course I don't drink anything like I used to so I s'pose that's the biggest reason why I don't go as much as I should.

WAYNE stands next to HARRY and coughs louder.

**HARRY** Excuse me. [To WAYNE] Hello what's wrong with you now?

**WAYNE** Nothing.

**HARRY** You should go to the quack and get that cough seen to.

**WAYNE** Eh? What do you mean?

**HARRY** Sounds like cancer.

**WAYNE** Really?

**HARRY** Na. Now piss off.

**FOREMAN** Harry, mate, do you want to know what's going on up here?

**HARRY** Yeah I better hear it.

**FOREMAN** Well, the guys from the Fire Service suggested a trench rescue. We're still working out the logistics but I reckon we can get you two out by morning, just in time for a cuppa tea and a front row seat to watch the bulldozers roll in.

**HARRY** Yeah, yeah.

**FOREMAN** Unless we dig up a dinosaur or two – that'd throw a spanner in the works – if you don't mind the pun.

**HARRY** What did you say?

**FOREMAN** It's a heritage thing. If we dig up a fossil – or you know – signs of an old settlement like stone tools and whatnot, we've gotta stop work and inform the authorities. Could take months, years even before they sort it out.

**HARRY** That's quite interesting. There used to be a small kāinga here when the settlers came in. Te Miti they called it.

**FOREMAN** I'd say that's why we've got some official looking blokes here now with a load of survey maps and old records – they're standing around pointing all over the place and getting excited about your willow tree.

**HARRY** Is that right? I see. Beep-beep-beep. Oh – got another call. Can I just answer this?

HARRY hangs up the receiver and starts leafing through the forms. He finds a paper that he doesn't recognise.

**WAYNE** Well, what did he say?

**HARRY** They're going to do a trench rescue.

**WAYNE** Trench rescue. Is it dangerous?

**HARRY** Yeah.

**WAYNE** Oh no.

**HARRY** So we better be prepared for her.

**WAYNE** What if something goes wrong? What if we die?

**HARRY** Yeah – oh there's a wee bit of hope there – as long as you do what you're told.

WAYNE is crestfallen and HARRY pats him on the back.

**HARRY** You'll be right, keep your mind on the job, then you won't have time to think about the danger as such.

**WAYNE** Right.

**HARRY** What's this paper then?

**WAYNE** It's a narrative. It'll give them more details about your service and your life since you left the Army.

**HARRY** And you think it'll help with my disablement pension.

**WAYNE** It'll show them why you deserve it.

**HARRY** Right. We've got a mission to do. [He hands the forms back to WAYNE] Borneo.

**WAYNE** Eh?

**HARRY** I went to Borneo first and then Vietnam. Borneo's where I got shrapnel in my eye and it's still floating around somewhere in there. And in Vietnam I was on the big gun and I broke my wrist when we were being chased down by Charlie. Then there's the breathing stuff. Keep up, Tinkerbelle.

HARRY picks up his go-bag and entrenching tool and starts to exit. WAYNE follows him, writing notes.

**HARRY** In Borneo I was in a patrol and I caught – mea – the scrub typhus – then when I got better, they put me on the train, but I got drunk and fell off the blimmin' thing. Bleeding all down my face. Got lost in the sticks there for a while. Took the Army ages to find me.

**WAYNE** What happened when you got back to them?

**HARRY** They gave me bloody assholes. As you do.

They exit.

**END SCENE 4**

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## SCENE 5

The PŪRIRI bring the sounds and shapes of jungle creatures and plants to life. A small monkey sits and observes HARRY and WAYNE entering – HARRY is going walkabout, while WAYNE trails behind taking notes.

**WAYNE** Harry, Harry wait up. Where are we going?

HARRY signals for WAYNE to be quiet.

**WAYNE** But I can't hear anything.

**HARRY** That's the jungle isn't it? Cover. It's quiet. Safe. Just you and your team, and all the wildlife. You know, the people I enjoy talking to – besides the people down below –

**WAYNE** What people down below?

**HARRY** Are the animals. Yep, the animals. Watch your step. Oh – too late.

WAYNE has been grabbed by some wait-a-while, and has to slowly untangle himself from it while talking to HARRY.

**WAYNE** What is this bloody thing?

**HARRY** It's called wait-a-while. You get used to it. Then you either avoid it, or you wait a while.

**WAYNE** What's it like in the jungle?

**HARRY** Well, for more than 6 months of the year it's as dry as a wooden god, you know. There is absolutely no rain, no water.

**PŪRIRI** The leaves on the ground are like walking on cornflakes, if you can imagine that, and you had to slow down and be quiet and careful, and try and conserve the moisture you got in you. Vietnam was reasonably flat – there’s only about 3 hills in the whole province. So it was quite easy patrolling – it wasn’t as if you were flogging a dead horse up a hill or anything.

**HARRY** The trees are all scruffy, scraggy-legged looking things. [Spies the small monkey] Ha! Hel-lo – You.

**PŪRIRI** Me.

**HARRY** Can you see me?

**PŪRIRI** Absolutely. Can you see me?

**HARRY** Yep. [Advancing] I remember you – you’re the monkey that stole JJ’s teeth – his top plate! You cheeky bugger, give ‘em back!

The PŪRIRI transform into a group of soldiers and nurses in a bar in Vung Tau. They softly sing the song “Green, green grass of Home”. Wayne watches as Harry begins to dance and sing along with the PŪRIRI.

**HARRY** Songs like this always remind me of my mates, back in the day, just being together ‘cause we were a really tight group.

**PŪRIRI** We had that little circle around us. Inbetween ops we’d go to Vung Tau. Booze up on Friday night, swim around in the pool and see all the Red Cross nurses. Get back on the booze on Saturday – and try not to end up in jail.

**HARRY** At the end of the day when the red light goes on, who do you want in that circle? Who?

**WAYNE** Your family?

**HARRY** Your mates, Wayne, your real mates.

**WAYNE** Why not your family? What about Piri?

As HARRY speaks, more images appear that speak of HARRY'S past. The PŪRIRI have transformed into a group of veterans.

**HARRY** Good girl, she's a good girl. But na, she's not mine, one of my best mates was her grandfather – he's long gone now.

**PŪRIRI** That's the thing – you go through these experiences with these other guys and I could trust them, with just about anything. The bonds you felt in the Army – that was stronger than what I experienced in my own home. And when I came home, I couldn't wait to go back to camp. I have a lot of aroha for my family but it's not the same. Our mates – we might not see each other for years but there's this special bond, that if something happens, we're there for each other – and a lot of people don't understand that. And there's some things my family still don't know about me and what I did in the war. Even today, I think they're not that interested.

The PŪRIRI morph back into the jungle scene. HARRY spies the small monkey.

**HARRY** You! Do you know how much those things cost? Now you get down from there, monkey – right now! Don't make me come after you!

HARRY advances on the small monkey, but then stops and winces as his gout in his foot plays up.

**WAYNE** Harry –

**HARRY** Blimmin' gout. It's from being dehydrated all the time. Feels like having glass in your toe. But I'm not going to let that slow me down – bloody monkey! Come on, Tinkerbelle, let's get the bugger – what?

The PŪRIRI have morphed into a tree. HARRY recognises his old dog tags dangling from a branch.

**HARRY** Oh. I see. [Takes hold of them] Thought I'd never see these again. I buried them such a long time ago – was trying to lose 'em, I guess. [He puts them on and reacquaints himself to the feeling] That was quite interesting. All those years ago when I took these off, but I didn't completely break away. I was still in uniform. I never really left. Hel-lo. I'm sure there was something else – something that I buried. But where is it?

He looks around but the PŪRIRI have gone.

**WAYNE** Never mind that – where are we? I think – Harry we're going the wrong way.

**HARRY** I know what I need to do now. There's something I need to find, to bring up to the light.

**WAYNE** What is it?

**HARRY** Funny thing is, I don't remember. But when I see it, I'll know it, and then – and only then – will I leave this place.

**WAYNE** Do you promise?

**HARRY** Only if you promise not to chop down the willow tree.

**WAYNE** That thing is a noxious weed.



an old tomahawk, and recognises it as a pātītī, a weapon from his ancestors. He holds it close for a few seconds, and then with a flourish, raises it above his head. He stares at WAYNE, who shrinks.

**WAYNE** Harry... now Harry.

HARRY chuckles at WAYNE'S discomfort. He offers the pātītī to WAYNE, who studies it.

**WAYNE** This must be ancient.

**HARRY** It's from the Land Wars.

**WAYNE** Is this what you're looking for?

**HARRY** No. The thing we're after is a lot more recent.

**WAYNE** Still, we should hold onto it. I mean you can't leave it buried down here, can you? A collector would pay quite a bit for this. [He spies a blue butterfly ornament] Look, Harry. What about that?

HARRY picks up the ornament and holds it close.

**HARRY** Hel-lo. E rere, pūrerehua. This belonged to my grandmother. It's beautiful, just beautiful. But the thing I want is not.

**WAYNE** We should take it anyway. [He takes the butterfly ornament] You don't want it to break – must be worth a small fortune. I wonder what else is down here.

**HARRY** Secrets and memories.

HARRY hears a whistle "Over Here", and signals WAYNE to be quiet. The whistle pricks the air again, causing the PŪRIRI to dismantle the grotto, and quickly exit.

**WAYNE** Did you hear that? I think someone's whistling.

**HARRY** Ssh.

The whistle grows louder.

**WAYNE** It is! I knew it! [He calls out] Hey, we're down here!

**HARRY** No!

HARRY ducks down and pulls WAYNE with him.

**WAYNE** What are you doing?

**HARRY** Do you want him to find us?

**WAYNE** Who?

**HARRY** I told you. The old man downstairs.

**WAYNE** Eh?

**HARRY** The Devil.

**WAYNE** The Devil? Don't be so bloody –

A monster's cry echoes from below, causing a swarm of PŪRIRI to flurry around HARRY and WAYNE.

**WAYNE** Oh shit – oh shit!

HARRY gazes in wonder at the PŪRIRI as they disappear, while WAYNE recovers.

**HARRY** That's beautiful to me, that's beautiful – survival. Like a fly-past. Humans do it. Nature does it. Why? Why do they do that when they attack?

**WAYNE** Oh my God – what was that sound? Harry!

**HARRY** I told you, it's the Devil. But the old people who used to live here called him Whiro.

**WAYNE** Whiro.

**HARRY** The Eater of Souls. Yep. And your planned subdivision is going smack right on top of his whare. All your yelling and the machinery carrying on upstairs probably woke the bastard up. We'll have to tread easy. I'm not ready to talk to him yet.

HARRY takes his flask from the go-bag and has a drink.

**WAYNE** What do you mean, "yet?" I don't want to talk to him ever. We need to find this thing of yours – and fast.

**HARRY** You been to Penrith? It's a big area, man, you should see the housing projects there, thousands of thousands and thousands of new houses going up all through Australia. Huge buildings, flyovers, miles and miles of it – it makes you look like you're only playing with little toys.

HARRY passes the flask to WAYNE who takes a swig.

**WAYNE** Well I'm not building a city – just a retirement village. You might like it. Most of the units are north facing – plenty of sun.



**HARRY** I couldn't stay in a place where you sunbathe around, you know? And I want to go walkabout with no sense of suspicion and all that. These days you can't go for a walk down the road without bumping into a madman or a crazy looking person – even a pit-bull, you know?

**WAYNE** I know security is an important issue for you folk, so we designed the village as a gated community.

**HARRY** So it's a prison.

**WAYNE** No – I said it's a gated community to keep out the, ah, the....

WAYNE falters.

**HARRY** The what? Go on, say it: The Maoris, eh.

**WAYNE** I am not a racist!

**HARRY** The Gooks then.

**WAYNE** Don't put words in my mouth!

**HARRY** Hey, I'm with you and Winston Peters on this one. Bloody immigration. Come in here, bring their culture in here and don't bother to learn ours – even you blimmin' Poms don't bother to understand us either.

**WAYNE** I'm not a blimmin' Pom.

**HARRY** What are you then? [He looks at WAYNE sideways] I hope you're not ISIS. I'll be straight up with you, Wayne, I'm very worried about them.

**WAYNE** Well what if I was ISIS?

**HARRY** I'd have to kill you then, wouldn't I?

**WAYNE** But I'm a Kiwi.

**HARRY** Bet your handler told you to say that.

**WAYNE** You crazy old goat – look at me – I'm a Kiwi!

**HARRY** Kiwis are short, brown and endangered. You and your lot are nothing like that! You're not the Kiwis we knew once – but another classic example of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer!

**WAYNE** You just won't let up will you?

**HARRY** Blah-blah-blah, doesn't matter, I don't fit into your so-called client base anyway.

**WAYNE** You might not, but your wife will.

HARRY eyeballs WAYNE.

**HARRY** What are you going on about?

**WAYNE** I'm building a centre for dementia care.

**HARRY** You slimy bastard, you've been snooping on me!

HARRY grabs him and gets ready to deliver a punch.

**WAYNE** No –

**HARRY** You better not have! 'Cause God help me I will –

**WAYNE** No, Harry – I didn't! I didn't. Promise.

HARRY releases him and backs away. WAYNE says nothing but watches as HARRY finds an old journal, holds it to his chest and closes his eyes for a moment. He opens his eyes and gives the book to WAYNE, who opens it and reads.

**WAYNE** Oh my. It's a journal from 1840 – when the first ships arrived. One of my ancestors came over on that trip.

**HARRY** Mine too.

**WAYNE** Harry, is this what you're looking for?

**HARRY** No. But there's a pretty good story in there, about the people who lived here first. Some parts are happy, others are sad – but mostly it's about hope. And it belonged to someone very special.

**WAYNE** [reads the first page] It was a child.

**HARRY** He was a chief. No, the thing I'm after belonged to someone very ordinary – just an ordinary bloke. Keep looking.

**WAYNE** I used to wonder what it must've been like for my ancestor when he came here – a foreign land, no family, no money, and you can't understand what the natives are saying – they might be courteous and welcoming at first, but as you begin to make yourself at home, you know they don't want you there – not really.

**HARRY** I know that feeling.

**WAYNE** I love this country and I worked hard for the life I've got. I'm not going to let anyone take it away.

**HARRY** "We had to destroy the village so we could save it."

**WAYNE** I'm not destroying. I'm making things better.

**HARRY** You actually believe that, don't you?

**WAYNE** Yeah I do.

**HARRY** Unbelievable.

**WAYNE** So what is it?

**HARRY** Eh?

**WAYNE** I mean, what has your wife got? Alzheimer's, Vascular, or is it Dementia with Lewy Bodies?

**HARRY** None of your bloody business.

**WAYNE** It's exactly my business. You see, Harry, my plan is to shamelessly sell over-priced sections and units to those – what did you call them – rich high falutin' fuckers, so I can build the best dementia care facility in the country.

**HARRY** Oh yeah. S'pose you're going put your name in big gold letters on the front of the building too.

**WAYNE** No. It'll be my mother's.

HARRY watches WAYNE for a moment as the PŪRIRI start to quietly sing “Help me make it through the night”. A dark, grainy image of a family birthday party forms, and then slowly dissolves into black.

**HARRY** A memorial.

**WAYNE** Well, it was either give her name to the hospital I didn’t build in time to help her, or to a racehorse.

**HARRY** I see.

**WAYNE** Of course, now I’ve got this feeling that if she were still alive she’d prefer the racehorse.

**HARRY** I think – I know my wife would prefer to be home. Like the other day I went in and her eyes lit up and she says, “I never want you to leave me.” You know, she remembers me. And then...

**WAYNE** Harry, you can’t look after her by yourself. You do understand that, don’t you?

**HARRY** At times. But do I accept it? Not really. Life. What’s it all about? How does it work? You think of where you’ve been, the situations you’ve been in and returned safely from. In lots of cases you were in control and made the right decisions, but this – now I’m in another situation where I’m not in control and can do nothing about it, and the outcome won’t be favourable.

**WAYNE** But for a while we could make it comfortable – for her and for you.

**HARRY** What I wouldn’t mind is a Vietnam rest centre....

As the PŪRIRI speak, they start building a home, and HARRY takes WAYNE on a guided tour through hallways that continuously morph and dissolve into other rooms. A sequence of images appears, depicting animals, gardens, wide-open spaces, the sea, hills, blossoms and native bush. The sequence ends on a picture of a war memorial, and then fades into black.

**PŪRIRI**

...A big complex with your own dining rooms and a hospital, that can test your wife and your kids to see if that Agent Orange got into them too. I don't know how many generations till that thing's gone. Bastards. But a place like what the Americans and the Australians do. And your wife can live there too. And the whānau can come and have dinner, spend the night, then go the next day. And you can have pets – or an animal that's been abandoned. Like a French bulldog, or a donkey, or a little mouse – you know? It would be a place of rest and peace and quietness, and with a wee flagpole so you can line up the flag everyday if you want to. And we can do our own Anzac Day for the guys who can't make it to the Dawn service. Our own memorial. The guys can be together and stay connected – because that's where the healing is – you gotta stay connected. To me, being by the sea is my thing, when there's nobody else around, and there's nothing between me and the sky. So, not in the city – that's a space less thing. But not too far from the base you know? So the young guys can visit sometimes and we have that connection – just a brief visit – see how we're getting on. I think that'd do a world of good. And maybe the young ones will feel, "Oh maybe one day I'll end up like this, and what better place to come to than this".

**WAYNE**

Yeah, but don't they have veterans' homes already?

The PŪRIRI react to the sounds of digging, scraping and muffled voices. They begin to withdraw.

**HARRY**

Not like the one in here [he taps the side of his head]. Or I'd be there already.

**WAYNE**

I could build one like that.

**HARRY** Well you'd better hurry up 'cause we're on our way – we're on our way out. But that'd be neat alright. Neat. [He raises his fist] Stop.

**WAYNE** Stop what?

HARRY places a finger to his lips, then looks upwards and points: there is a rescue team coming. WAYNE realises what HARRY means and nods. HARRY signs a plan for getting out: WAYNE is taller than HARRY, so HARRY will climb on top of WAYNE'S shoulders to be lifted out. Then he and the crew will pull WAYNE out. WAYNE agrees with the plan. HARRY signs for him to put down the items, but WAYNE doesn't want to. HARRY insists.

**HARRY** [lowered voice] Put them down, Tinkerman. You need to keep your hands free.

**WAYNE** [lowered voice] Are you crazy? These things are worth a fortune. We'll take them to a dealer. You can make money.

**HARRY** [begins to raise voice] Money means nothing if the roof caves in. Now put them down.

**WAYNE** [raises voice] I'm holding history in my hands.

**HARRY** You think I don't know that?

**WAYNE** It's the story of your people. And mine too.

**HARRY** Put them down!

**WAYNE** No!

A rumbling sound starts, which triggers a loud roar, scattering the PŪRIRI. The lights flicker then reduce to a dim spot above HARRY and WAYNE. Muffled voices call from above as bits of dirt and rock give way from the ceiling.

**WAYNE**                      We're here! We're down here!

**HARRY**                      No Wayne!

From beyond, WHIRO roars, and a faint red light signals his approach.

**WAYNE**                      Whiro. He knows we're here. He's out there somewhere, isn't he?

**HARRY**                      Yep. He is. Stay calm. Try not to focus too hard. Look through, not at.

**WAYNE**                      "Through, not at." I can't, I can't see him, can you?

In the dim light, the shapes of the PŪRIRI return, this time as young soldiers forming a guard around one of their fallen comrades.

**HARRY**                      I can see the shadows on the wall – things, shapes that I can't quite make out. Moving, merging –

**PŪRIRI**                      And shifting. It takes me back to the night when one of our guys was killed. And it was too late to clear a chopper pad for them to take him out. So the chopper hovers above and they lower a stretcher and I'm in the perimeter with the medic, guarding the body. And they shine a light right down on top of us, bright as bright, blinding white. And I look out into the tree line, looking for Charlie, but it's all black and if anyone wants to shoot me – get back at me for – I don't know – they could, you know. I've never felt so exposed and so lonely.



**HARRY** And that's when this thought comes to me, "What the hell am I doing here?"

**WAYNE** Oh my God. I think I'm afraid.

**PŪRIRI** Fear with constant attention. It keeps you on your toes, you know? When I feel it my hands go tight, real tight on the gun, you know? And in the chopper, just as we lift up and go over the wire, the guts feel awful, like "uggh" – I don't know, like you're going off to play an important game of football.

**WAYNE** This isn't football. This is that time when I start praying to God or somebody and I promise that if I get out I'll be a better person.

**HARRY** Why do you fullas have to be at the brink before you start talking like that?

**WAYNE** These things that I'm holding – this book – if the authorities see these, I know they'll stop the subdivision – all my plans will go out the door. I could take them and hide them all. Or I could give them up – give up everything. You don't believe me, do you?

**HARRY** Don't take it personally, Wayne. Blokes like me have been kept in the dark for years. You'll get out of here and do what you think is best.

**WAYNE** You don't believe me.

Images of retired veterans and reunions appear for a moment and then with a flash, they transform into watercolour images, and then fade into nothing.

**HARRY** When you're afraid, you say and do all sorts, but that's not what kills you in the end. Being lonely – now that's deadly. And I'm lonely. Just lonely. I miss, I miss my mates, you know? I

think about them all the time. I lie awake at night and reminisce about them all and I think, “Why them and not me? What did we do right?” What did we do wrong? I don’t know what I did.

**WAYNE** I will do it. I will do it, Harry. I hope I can.

**PŪRIRI** Well, I hope that everyone can get along together, I hope their health can be looked after – and I hope – particularly for the children of the world there’s something that can be done so they grow up and make it. I’d like to see that. I’d like to see people respect each other and help each other. Those are the biggest things. Yeah.

The light above begins to grow brighter, matched by the faint sound of an approaching Huey. The PŪRIRI gather and standby for HARRY.

**HARRY** Here comes the cavalry. You get ready to go now.

**WAYNE** Harry...You’re not coming with me are you?

**HARRY** No, I don’t think so. I’m still looking for something. It’s a memory I buried a long, long time ago, and I’ve gotta get it out into the light. And then, there’s Whiro – we’re due for a long chat. [He sees the PŪRIRI] There. See? They’re all ready.

WAYNE gives the blue butterfly to HARRY.

**WAYNE** Good-bye Harry. You’ve been a real pain in the arse.

**HARRY** Righto. See ya. [He starts walking towards the red light] Come on old fulla, here I come. Got a bone to pick with you.

HARRY and the PŪRIRI exit. WAYNE is left alone in the space, cradling the treasured objects and HARRY’s pension forms. The rescue team break through the surface and a bright light beams down onto WAYNE. As he looks up towards the light, he can hear

the sounds of a Huey. Black out. The opening chords of Blind Faith's "Can't Find My Way Home" fills the space.

**KUA MUTU**