



fledglings

Five transformative tales

{ Owlery } { Gander } { Tern } { Cygnet } { Gulled }

Fledglings

***Fledglings* is an anthology of five short films, connected by a theme of transformation and situated in the contemporary folk-horror genre.**

The films are set on the edges of the land and the sea. In these peripheral places the people lead peripheral lives, struggling to rise above the beliefs that weigh them down, struggling to become, struggling to *fledge*...

A vicar must become a monster to save her church, a taxi driver feels alive only when she is transporting the dead, a small child finds the Devil while searching for God, an older child finds reality in an imaginary post-apocalypse, a mariner proves that the end is just another kind of beginning.

The films are designed to work, and be shot, individually, before locking together like the barbs of a feather.



About the Writer

Paul began writing after a 15 year career in art and creative direction - designing adverts, music videos, animated features, games and interactive media - a strong visual sense drives his written work.

He now works as a film lecturer at Falmouth University, specialising in film development and production. He has supervised the writing and production of over 200 short films.

Using the vernacular of horror and a wry humour, his films are puzzles set by people who are trapped - in places, in beliefs, and in themselves.



OWLERY

Thorns will overrun her citadels,
nettles and brambles her strongholds.
She will become a haunt for jackals,
a home for owls.

Isaiah 34:13



FOR CHURCH EXPENS



GANDER



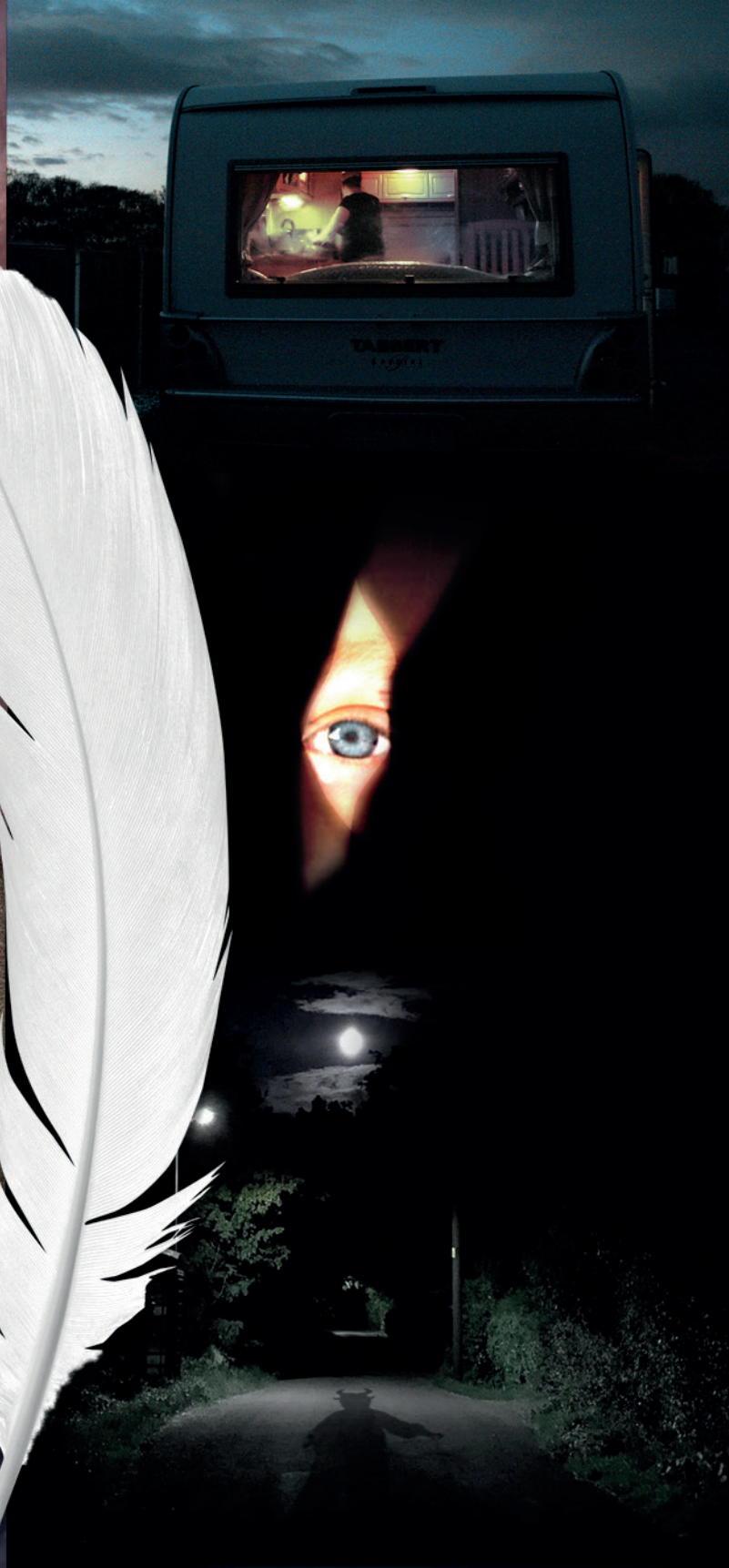
It's all about a healthy work/life balance





TERN

You can't fly to heaven on bingo wings



Cygnets

A young girl with long brown hair is lying on her side in a shallow stream. She is wearing a white, long-sleeved dress that is wet and clinging to her body. Her eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. On her left shoulder, there is a small, red, heart-shaped mark. The stream is surrounded by dark, mossy rocks and green foliage in the background. The overall mood is serene and somewhat melancholic.

The only constant is change



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GULLED



The mire of the modern mariner



1

EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH - EVENING, 1929

B&W 16mm clockwork Bolex footage creates a silent film era aesthetic. Hair and costume place us in the late 1920's. LATIN CHORAL SINGING soundtracks the otherwise silent scene.

We look down upon an old Norman church.

TITLE OVER - OWLERY

A wide graveyard is dug into the thick woodland that falls steeply down to the sea below.

Waves at the shoreline.

A lone gull wheels beneath us and away.

Slowly we descend, and as we draw closer to the bell tower the CHOIR grows louder...

Reaches a CRESCENDO...

And stops.

We look down as a stream of LADS, dressed in choir robes, pours through the church door.

As they rush outside they pull their robes off.

They push, shove, trip each other...

As a pack they break into a run, away toward the church lychgate.

But a pair of boys at the back breaks off, cuts across the graveyard at a dash and into the darkening woods.

2

EXT. MAWNAN WOODS - EVENING, 1929

We follow at a distance as the boys climb down through the woodland.

The way is steep, dangerous, the trees reach upwards from the rocky shore below.

The sun sets.

The boys go carefully, close together, nervously eyeing the woods around them.

One offers his hand, helps the other down a steep section

of the path.

The moon rises as they approach a huge deadfall cedar - the ground so steep that the tree is almost upside down, its roots claw the sky in an unholy mimicry of branches.

The boys push through the brush to a sheltered, secret patch of trampled earth beneath the bole.

They sit down next to each other, shy now.

Their eyes meet.

EDWARD HAMMETT - 15 years old, tall, thin, dark haired - smiles nervously.

There's an awkward pause.

HARRY LAITY - stocky and fair - laughs, punches Edward on the leg, making him wince...

Harry bundles him down roughly.

They roll and wrestle.

Harry pins Edward and leans in.

He plants a rough kiss on Edwards lips.

Stiffly, at first, Edward reciprocates.

He opens his eyes and looks up...

His eyes widen in fear.

He shakes Harry, pushes him off.

Harry turns, follows Edward's gaze...

On the rise above them, silhouetted against the moon, crouches a man.

They both look up, nervous.

The 'man' stands, and as he does he lifts his arms to reveal shaggy, feathered wings - 8 feet from clawed tip to clawed tip - like a dark angel, or an OWLMAN...

The Owlman raises its hideous head to look down on them... tenses to spring.

The boys, terrified, leap to their feet...

5 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH - MORNING, 1929**

The pews are empty, the knitted kneelers are crocheted with animals:

A fox...

A lamb...

A lion...

An eagle.

Reverend Nancarrow runs a hand along the cushioned pew, smooths out the indentations created by his congregation's backsides.

He stops and looks down.

A single feather, large and tawny, lies on the floor.

He bends to pick it up...

Holds the quill between thumb and forefinger and spins it.

He pockets it with a small smile.

6 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH - 1929-1961**

Light pours through the stained glass windows, SWEEPS from east to west in a moment to leave the church in darkness, only to repeat with the coming of day, again...

Edward, older now, sits with his parents in their usual pew.

Harry sits behind them, JOYCE LAITY, his lovely young wife, is snuggled in close at his side.

DARKNESS.

COLOUR, THE ASPECT RATIO HAS EXPANDED TO 4:3.

Edward, 47, a reverend's collar at his throat, looks up, nods and rises, steps into the aisle as the congregation - including Harry, Joyce and their pretty blonde child HAYLEIGH LAITY - stand and applaud.

Rev Nancarrow, old now, climbs down from the pulpit.

Edward reaches up to help him down.

Nancarrow pats him affectionately on the back of the hand.

Edward ascends to the pulpit, opens his mouth to speak...

DARKNESS.

7 **INT. VICARAGE BEDROOM - MORNING, 1976**

Saturated 16mm Kodak Ektachrome footage places us in the 1970s. There is SYNCH SOUND. DISCORDANT PSYCH FOLK MUSIC in a B flat drone builds throughout.

A thick velvet curtain is drawn back with a SCRAPE, light floods in.

Nancarrow lies ancient, eyes closed, slack jawed in a single bed.

Rev Edward Hammett, 62, tall and elegant in his robes, sits down beside him...

He takes the old man's hand and pats it...

There's no response.

He gently shakes the old man...

Still nothing.

He leans over and puts an ear to Nancarrow's lips.

Edward pauses. Frowns...

Leans in a little closer.

With a HELLISH SHRIEK the old man jerks awake, grabs the terrified Edward by the shoulders, stares at him, GASPING, and collapses back on the pillow.

Edward is badly shaken, instinctively he reaches for the cross at his neck.

He breathes deeply, calms himself.

Nancarrow, BREATHING HEAVILY, beckons Edward weakly with a clawlike hand, pulls him close.

Reluctantly, Edward returns his ear to the old man's mouth.

Rev Nancarrow WHISPERS...

And as he does Edward's face hardens...

A WRACKING BREATH...

More WHISPERS...

Edward draws back, starts to tremble with barely contained fury.

Nancarrow, distraught, gestures weakly to the bedside table...

He claws at the edge of the drawer, his long fingernails SCRATCH at the wood.

Edward pushes his hand away, grabs the handle and opens the drawer.

Inside are pill bottles, a crucifix, a notebook, a small ornate brass key.

Edward picks up the key, inspects it... closes his fingers around it to make a white-knuckled fist.

He rises and exits, leaving Nancarrow alone, gasping silent pleas as the bedroom door SLAMS shut.

8 **EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH GRAVEYARD - EVENING, 1976**

A winged cherub stands stonily over a freshly dug grave.

Edward is presiding, eyes down in prayer, his face set.

He looks up at the small crowd of mourners, nods, closes his bible...

He stoops, picks up a handful of dirt and throws it onto the grave.

9 **INT. VICARAGE ATTIC - EVENING, 1976**

Milky light breaks through a small dusty window.

Oak rafters, covered with cobwebs.

A jumble of boxes, picture frames, books and other attic leavings clutter the space.

The hatch swings open with a BANG.

Edward climbs up and surveys the scene.

He steps forward and starts to rummage...

He moves boxes...

Opens an old walnut chifferobe, a cloud of cloth moths spills out, dusting the air with gold.

He inspects a gilt framed painting of Azrael the Avenging Angel, fearsome black wings outstretched.

He frowns.

He lifts a white sheet to reveal a large leather travellers chest, bends to inspect the lock.

He pulls the small brass key out of his suit pocket.

The brass keyhole matches the markings on the key.

He pushes the key into the lock, turns it with a DRY CLICK.

Swings open the lid, the hinges SCREECH.

He looks down at the contents.

A single bitter LAUGH erupts from his throat.

10 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH, - MORNING, 1976**

Edward stands in prayer in the pulpit.

There is silence bar the gentle PATTERN OF RAIN outside and the steady DRIP, DRIP of a leak in the roof that pools in the nave.

The congregation has thinned, as has Harry's hair.

Joyce is beside him still.

Their daughter Hayleigh - now a lovely blonde 18 year old girl - is at her side.

PETE BISSOE, a surly looking, long haired young man, stands very close to her.

As she prays he snatches a look down her top.

Edward looks down from the pulpit, catches Pete in the act, clenches his jaw.

11 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH VESTRY - AFTERNOON, 1976**

Edward, sleeves rolled up, sits at a table in the vestry.

In front of him is a half built model of the church.

He applies glue to the edge of a piece of balsa, fixes it into place to form the tower roof.

He looks up from his work and gazes absently out of the leaded window.

Hayleigh and Pete traipse across the grave yard.

Pete, smoking, jumps and tramples over the graves.

Edward leans forward, freezes.

He remains perfectly still, watching them intently.

12 **EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH CARPARK - NIGHT, 1976**

A yellow Ford Capri, lit by moonlight.

A window, ajar, leaks smoke and '70s PROG ROCK - AMON DUUL II's ARCHANGEL THUNDERBIRD - into the midsummer night.

In the back seat Hayleigh slouches in her bra, a spliff dangles from the corner of her mouth.

Pete busies himself down below.

HAYLEIGH LAITY

Ouch!

PETE BISSOE

Sorry.

HAYLEIGH LAITY

Clumsy pig.

She lifts his head, raises a foot and shoves him off.

He GRUNTS, snatches the joint from her lips.

He swings open the driver's door and tumbles out.

He SLAMS the door behind him.

His feet CRUNCH on the gravel as he staggers across the car park towards the drystone cemetery wall.

A ZIP followed by a HISS as he pisses up the wall.

He looks up at the yew trees...

Takes a big drag on the spliff and exhales a huge plume of smoke...

The smoke billows around the dark form of a man crouched on top of the the wall above him.

Pete blinks, his jaw falls open, he takes a step back.

With a WHOOSH the 'man' raises its arms high, revealing shaggy feathered wings tipped by ragged claws.

Pete SQUEAKS, scrambles backwards...

The creature crouches and lets out a RASPING SCREECH.

Pete turns and, gravel flying, races back to the car.

He grabs the handle, wrenches open the door and piles into the driver's seat, hits the lock.

He goes to start the car, no keys in the ignition...

Scrabbles in his pockets, no luck...

Turns back to Hayleigh.

PETE BISSOE

Keys. Keys. KEYS.

She looks at him, unimpressed, starts to pull her sweater on over her head.

Panicked, Pete stretches back and rifles the pockets of his leather jacket, finds the keys...

Turns and fumbles the key into the ignition...

The engine sputters to life.

The headlights turn on...

Illuminating a tall, thin, hideous feathered creature that throws a vast winged shadow onto the side of the church.

Hayleigh leans forward from the back seat, frowns, squints dopily:

HAYLEIGH LAITY

Jesus.

Pete throws the car into reverse.

He handbrake turns and races out of the carpark in a shower of gravel.

As the headlights sweep away the Owlman crouches...

It puts its winged elbows on its knees and starts to shake, feathers RATTLING, it emits a MUFFLED SOUND somewhere between a LAUGH and a CRY.

13 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH - MORNING, 1976-2019**

Light pours in as time flows though the church once more.

Water drips into a large puddle in the nave, rippling the stained glass reflection into a kaleidoscopic eden.

Hayleigh, 47 sits alone in the church, a crafty fag dangles from the corner of her mouth.

She uses the handle of a mop to struggle to her feet.

DARKNESS.

HI-DEF WIDESCREEN. Hayleigh, 58 and dressed in black, wipes a tear from the corner of her eye. The pews behind her are dotted with a few elderly parishioners, likewise dressed in their best.

In the pulpit REVEREND SHARON BISSOE, a sporty looking 37, looks at the small congregation and smiles, kindly.

DARKNESS

14 **INT. VICARAGE BEDROOM - EVENING, 2019**

4K footage in a contemporary grade. 5.1 SOUND maximises the impact of the FOLKTRONICA that scores the final act.

Wardrobe doors open with a SQUEAK.

Light floods in and Rev Sharon Bissoe, dressed in yoga pants and a paint splattered T-Shirt, surveys the contents.

She reaches inside and pulls out an elegantly tailored suit.

She carefully folds it and places it in a bulging bin bag.

Hayleigh pokes her head around the bedroom door.

HAYLEIGH LAITY

Do you need anything else today
Reverend?

REV BISSOE

No thank you Hayleigh.

Hayleigh nods, is about to leave, but catches herself.

HAYLEIGH LAITY

I almost forgot, he left this...

Hayleigh rummages in a giant handbag and pulls out a sealed manilla envelope, hands it over.

Rev Bissoe examines it...

"For my successor" is written on the back panel in beautifully inked handwriting.

Hayleigh dawdles, curious.

Rev Bissoe looks up at the old lady.

REV BISSOE

Thank you, Hayleigh.

Reluctantly, Hayleigh turns and leaves.

Rev Bissoe sits on the edge of the bed, carefully tears open the envelope, shakes it out...

A pile of old newspaper clippings spills out onto the bedspread.

She picks up one of the articles.

It's an old front page from the Falmouth Packet...

Printed on it are photos of Mawnan church, a terrified looking hippy couple, a crude drawing of a winged creature.

The headline reads: "CROWDS FLOCK TO MAWNAN CHURCH AFTER OWLMAN SIGHTING."

She LAUGHS, picks up another...

This one is even older, a yellowed clipping from The Morning Post, another drawing of a winged creature, a pair of teenage boys caught in the glare of a flash bulb.

The headline: "MONSTER NO JOKE FOR THOSE WHO SAW IT."

She picks up the envelope again, shakes it...

A small ornate brass key falls into her palm.

She inspects it closely, a look of amused curiosity in her eyes.

She closes her fingers around the key, rises...

She pulls the door shut behind her with a WHOOSH...

The air stirs a gilt framed painting of Azrael the Avenging Angel that hangs on the bedroom wall.

15 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH - MORNING, 2019**

Rev Bissoe stands by the church door.

The 'congregation' - just Hayleigh and two elderly ladies - file out of the church.

Rev Bissoe looks down at the collection bowl in her hands - it contains sixty three pence.

16 **EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH ROOF - AFTERNOON, 2019**

The ocean is silver through the trees below, ominous clouds hang on the horizon.

Rev Bissoe dangles in a harness high above the graveyard.

With a practised flick she locks off the descender rig attached to the rope.

She reaches into a tool belt that hangs at her side, grabs a screwdriver, turns back to the church roof guttering and SIGHS.

She starts to SCRAPE the leaves out of the rotten lead pipe.

A murder of crows ERUPTS from the tree line with a CACOPHONY OF CAWING, startling the Reverend and making her lose her grip on the roof.

She swings on the line, steadies herself.

EXHALES with a nervous LAUGH...

And goes back to work.

A heavy raindrop THUDS as it hits the lead roof.

Followed by another.

The sky opens.

17 **INT. MAWNAN CHURCH - NIGHT, 2019**

The downpour HAMMERS the church roof outside.

Rev Bissoe, soaked to the skin, slides a large bowl under a trickle of water that pours down from the dark bell-tower above.

She rises, pushes the wet hair away from her eyes, runs a hand over her face and SIGHS.

She looks over the edge of the bannister that separates the bell-tower mezzanine from the nave.

The church is full of a wide range of buckets, bowls and pans.

The PLINK, PLINK, PLINK of drips makes strange music.

She looks down.

An old, painted balsa model of the church sits on a table beneath her.

There's a coin slot in the bell tower roof - the model is a collection box.

Still looking down she leans to the left.

Frowns...

Takes a step to the left, looks down again.

From this angle - directly above the model - the nave roof looks like a body, the aisles two wings, the chancel is a tail and the castellated tower - a tall spike on each corner - looks for all the world like an eared head.

The church looks exactly like an owl.

Affixed in the green painted graveyard is a beautifully inked sign that reads: "FOR CHURCH EXPENSES".

She looks up, lost in thought.

MATCH CUT

18 **EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH WOODLAND - EVENING, 2019**

Rev Bissoe gazes ahead into the growing darkness.

She pauses, listening...

BIRDSONG fills the evening air, slowly quieting as the noise of LAUGHTER and SHOUTING moves closer.

She takes a deep breath...

Pulls a dusty feathered mask down over her head.

It is battered and old, apart that is from the eyes - these are shiny and new, seemingly scavenged from sunglass lenses.

She fumbles around at her neck and locates a small button on the end of a wire.

CLICKS it...

The eyes glow red with LED light.

The light illuminates the scene, she is perched high up on the bough of an ancient larch.

With a yank she tests the rope that emerges from behind her.

Locks off the descender rig with a scaly glove and slots her arm into the sleeve of a feathered wing, flexing the claws that emerge from the tawny feathers.

She crosses her wings in front of her...

Crouches down...

Strikes a sinister pose...

The Owlman waits.

The LAUGHTER grows louder, they're close now, two or maybe three lads SWEAR and INSULT each other crudely.

The Owlman tenses.

We hear the lads stop...

LAD 1
The fuck is that up there?

LAD 2
Looks like the Owlman.

They all ROAR WITH LAUGHTER.

Rev Bissoe redoubles her efforts to look terrifying,
raises her wings and lets out an ungodly SHRIEK...

More LAUGHTER.

She leaps out into the darkness and swings to another
bough, sinister, silent in flight...

She misses her hand hold and grabs clumsily at the
branch.

This results in further LAUGHTER and CATCALLS...

LAD 1
Is that a rope?

Rev Bissoe regains her balance, turns and SHRIEKS again,
giving it her all.

A stick flies past her head...

Followed by a pinecone.

She CRIES OUT, but her voice is muffled by the mask.

A rock this time, it glances off her shoulder.

LAD 2
Shot!

A larger rock thuds down on the bough at her feet...

She scrabbles at her neck trying to remove the mask.

The next rock hits her square on the forehead.

She sways backwards with the blow...

The rope CREAKS as it takes the strain...

The descender switch POPS...

And the rope flies through the rig with a HISS.

Reverend Bissoe falls down into darkness.

Her red eyes illuminate the branches as they fly past.

She claws at the descender helplessly...

And hits the steep ground with a terrible THUD.

She slides...

Rolls...

Tumbles and CRASHES downhill, legs and wings akimbo.

Her limp body somersaults over the cliff edge that borders the shoreline...

For a moment she is silhouetted against the rising moon, a terrifying creature glimpsed mid flight.

We hear a TERRIBLE CRUNCH.

Then silence.

The moon rises over the ocean.

Waves LAP at the shoreline.

Rev Bissoe, The Owlman, lies spatchcocked on the rocks.

The red glow of her eyes shines off the blood that slowly pools beneath her feathered head.

The light flickers, the light dies.

She is no more than a dark shadow on the rocks.

The white spume of a breaker CRASHES over her.

The wave draws back...

And all trace of her is gone.

A cloud passes in front of the moon.

We are left in darkness.

19 **EXT. COUNTRY LAY-BY - NIGHT**

Near darkness.

The clouds race by overhead.

The night sky clears.

Treetops are silhouetted against a moonbow.

Leaves RUSTLE in the breeze.

TITLE OVER - GANDER

FIRST PERSON POV

The sound of a speeding CAR ENGINE grows closer.

A set of headlights sweep around a country bend, quickly followed by the car.

The car pulls into the lay-by with a gravelly CRUNCH...

It's a badly dented purple Mark 2 Ford Mondeo.

Peeling vinyl on the side reads TINAS TAXIS TINAS TAXIS TINAS...

The interior light is switched on - the windows are completely steamed up with condensation - the driver is no more than a moving shadow against the foggy glass.

The door is cracked open, a woman's voice, Devon accent:

TINA

Did you order a taxi love.

MAN'S VOICE

I did.

TINA

Hop in then.

The back door is pushed open.

We climb inside.

20 **INT. TINA'S TAXI - NIGHT**

The grey upholstery is manky, covered in fur.

TINA cranes her neck around and smiles - she's in her late 30's, her freckly face is open, friendly, a mess of curls surrounds a pair of leopard-print specs...

The lenses of which are as foggy as the windows - she wipes them clean with a finger, looks down at our lap.

TINA
Clunk click every trip.

MAN'S VOICE
Eh?

TINA
Seat belt silly.

She GIGGLES, turns back to the wheel.

A CLICK.

She reaches over the steering wheel to enlarge the windscreen peephole with a SQUEAKY hand.

She takes a glance in the rear view mirror... nods.

There's a SQUEAL of tyres as she guns it...

She shifts up through the gears like a race car driver.

2nd...

3rd...

4th...

5th...

The engine races.

She picks up the handset:

TINA
Tina to base, I've got him.

TINA
Base to Tina, is he 'andsome?

She takes an appraising look in the rear view.

TINA
Not really.

She CACKLES.

She thumps the steering wheel, replaces the handset, delighted with herself.

The shadows of trees fly by.

A passing car casts a milky light through the glass.

The speedo reads 68...

There's a shovel leaned up against the front passenger seat...

The parcel shelf is missing, the boot is full of bin-liners...

Is it a trick of the light, or did one of them just move?

She cranes her head back to look at us.

TINA

Sorry it's a bit steamy in 'ere
it's all gone a bit Tina Turner
since the air con packed in I
think it's blocked or something.

She beams.

TINA

I hope you don't mind the smell
but everyone needs a hobby don't
they it's all about a healthy
work/life balance if you ask me I
mean you probably just see me as
a taxi driver but there's often
so much more to a person than
people realise isn't there.

She inclines her head quizzically.

She turns back to the road.

A tunnel of trees hurtles towards us through the windscreen's clear spot.

Suddenly she slams on the brakes and turns the wheel.

The car swerves towards the curb with a SCREECH...

There's a loud THUMP and a shadow flies over the windscreen.

She pulls over, spitting gravel.

A beat.

She turns back wearing a reassuring smile.

TINA

Don't worry. I won't be a minute.

She unbuckles...

Grabs the shovel...

Opens the door and climbs out.

Her shadow passes by outside.

The hatchback is thrown open.

She reaches inside, pulls out a bin liner.

Leaving the hatch open she turns and walks back down the road.

The red rear lights illuminate her as she searches the verge and hedgerow.

She stops, stares, then looks up at us.

TINA

I found him!

She steps gingerly into the long grass at the verge, reaches down and carefully lifts up a limp FOX...

She turns, holds it up by the tail for us to see, triumphant.

She places it into the bin bag, ties it off deftly and...

HUMMING happily...

Swinging the bag contentedly...

She returns to the car.

She throws the shovel and bag into the boot with a CLATTER and a SQUELCH, slams the hatchback shut.

Climbs back into the passenger seat, a little out of breath.

She wipes her hands on her jeans and looks into the rear view:

TINA

Where were you going to again
love?

21 **EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT**

The car door slams.

The engine ROARS and gravel flies.

The red rear lights recede into the distance, leaving us alone at the side of the road, gathering darkness.

22 **INT. TINA'S GARAGE - DAWN**

DAWN CHORUS, a crack of light breaks the blackness, widens unevenly as the bin bag in which we lie is opened.

Tina looks down at us and singsongs.

TINA

Hello foxy, oh aren't you just a beauty.

The fox lies ugly, ungainly and broken in the bag.

She reaches in and lifts it out, rigor mortis has set in.

She cradles it in her arms and tickles its tummy, coos:

TINA

You like that don't you foxy boy.

The fox doesn't answer, though it's impossible not to notice the worried look in its eye.

TINA

Come with me we'll get you fixed up something lovely.

She scrunches her nose cutely at the petrified fox.

23 **INT. TINA'S WORKSHOP - MORNING**

An array of implements is spread out in a gory mess on a blood spattered workbench - knives, pliers, hacksaw, jigsaw, drill, chicken wire, a large bag labelled "Super Soft Sawdust - For EXTRA Comfort".

A bloody, rubber gloved hand places a large scalpel next to a rusty table spoon...

The hand pauses...

Picks up the spoon.

The fox's eye reflects a swaying naked bulb...

And Tina, as she leans in close.

There's a REPULSIVE SQUELCHING noise...

The SQUEAK of hinges...

A SPLATTERY THUNK...

The CLANG of a pedal bin lid shutting.

Tina smiles down at the spreadeagled fox.

TINA

That's better isn't it.

The fox doesn't look too sure.

The scalpel enters frame, we track it to the corner of the fox's eye.

TINA

You won't be needing these anymore.

The fox smiles, fixedly.

24 **INT. TINA'S FRONT ROOM - EVENING**

Pink and purple pervades throughout - floral wallpaper, floral carpet, floral sofa.

The walls are lined with badly framed glass cases, skewed wooden display boards, rickety IKEA flatpack furniture - all stuffed full of terribly taxidermied animals...

A goggle eyed white rat climbs a gnarled branch...

A baby deer stands freakish, its legs jointed the wrong way round...

A pair of squirrels in a glass case, one has fallen over and is leaned up against the glass at a drunken angle.

A malformed BADGER and a GOOSE face each other in a solicitous pose

TINA

Excuse me sir, madame.

Tina slides them apart, clears a space.

She places the fox down between them.

Fox's face is fixed with a brilliant wonky smile, his somewhat misshapen forehead is wrinkled by jauntily raised brows, one paw is lifted in a wobbly high five.

Tina takes a step back, places her hands on her hips, smiles as she surveys her handiwork.

TINA

Goosey. Badger. Meet Mr Fox.

The three animals stand in awkward silence.

TINA

Don't be shy sillys. We're all friends here!

She beams at them expectantly.

Nothing.

Tina looks disheartened, then brightens.

TINA

I know what we need! An ice breaker!

She sashays over to a cheap 90s boom box...

Skips to track 9...

Hits play.

A gently plucked gut string guitar - the intro to LISA HANNIGAN'S SAFE TRAVELS DON'T DIE - starts to play.

Tina waltzes, eyes closed, back to the threesome...

123

123

They look up at her uncertainly.

She leans close, winks, chucks the fox under the chin, leans back and, swaying to the beat, starts to sing...

TINA

Please eat your greens
And don't sit close to screens,
Your eyes are a means to an end.

And I would be sorry, if due to
your hurry,
You were hit by a lorry my
friend.

As the verse leads into the chorus the badger and goose
start to sway gently from side to side.

The fox flicks an uncertain glance at his companions...

TINA

Like you always say,
Safe travels, don't die, don't
die,
Safe travels, don't die.

By the time the chorus has ended the fox's little claws
have started to tap on the grass of the diorama beneath
his feet.

The bridge sends Tina into a gentle spin, arms
outstretched she turns.

Her face is beatific, lost in the music.

Her joy is contagious.

The animals around her start to stir, blinking,
stretching, as if awakened from a deep sleep...

TINA

Don't walk on ice, no matter how
nice,
How sturdy, enticing it seems.
Please cross at the lights
And don't start fires or fights
and
Don't dabble in heights on
caffeine.

By now the whole room has started to sway in time to the
music.

123

123

As the second chorus comes around the badger and goose
pick up the tune in a deep baritone and complementary
tenor...

TINA, BADGER, GOOSE
Like you always say
Safe travels, don't die, don't
die,
Safe travels, don't die.

The fox looks around at the room, joy and wonder start to fill his little face.

His tail starts to wag and he too starts to sway with the rhythm of the waltz...

123

123

Tina is overjoyed, she picks up the fox, holds him up by his wooden base to admire him...

He averts his gaze, flutters his eyelashes, bashful now.

She leans in and nuzzles his forehead with her nose...

Holds him to her like a dancing partner and proceeds to take the lead in a merry dance around the room.

123

123

As the final verse starts it's crescendo Tina's voice reaches for the heavens...

TINA
Don't swallow bleach
Out on Sandymount beach,
I'm not sure I'd reach you in
time my boy.
Please don't bungee jump
Or ignore a strange lump
And a gasoline pump's not a toy.

The sheer thrill of life and love pours from her as the room spins around...

The white rat shimmies at it's branch like a pole dancer...

The baby deer does the running man...

The squirrels hand jive...

By the time the final chorus comes about the whole room is in motion, swaying and carousing with the rhythm of the song...

TINA, BADGER, GOOSE, FOX ET AL
Like you always say
Safe travels, don't die, don't
die,
Safe travels, don't die.

A heavenly sound fills the room as a hundred voices are raised in unison.

The outro horn section is picked up by a row of trumpeting waterfowl, Tina slows her spinning dance.

She's breathless.

Ecstatic.

She clutches the fox to her and collapses back on an overstuffed 2 seater sofa.

The fox nuzzles in close.

Tina closes her eyes.

Gently smiles.

Her hand strays to the empty seat beside her.

All falls silent and very, very still.

25 **EXT. COUNTRY PUB CAR PARK - NIGHT**

A pub sign reads THE HALFWAY HOUSE, it SQUEAKS as it rocks back and forth in the wind.

The sound of TINA's speeding CAR ENGINE grows louder.

The headlights sweep into the pub car park, quickly followed by the car.

The car brakes quickly and comes to rest in front of the entrance porch...

All is quiet and dark at the pub.

The Mondeo's interior light goes on, a mop of curls shadows the fogged up driver's side window.

A beat.

The door opens and Tina climbs out...

She squints into the darkness of the covered smoking area.

TINA

Hello?

Nothing.

TINA

Is someone there?

Something stirs in the shadows...

TINA

(Nervously)

Did you order a taxi?

There's a low GROAN and more movement...

Tina takes a tentative step forward...

As our eyes grow accustomed to the dark we make out a bench, on it lies a tall, dark, very handsome and very, very HAMMERED MAN.

Tina wipes her glasses with a finger.

She pushes them up on her nose and blinks into the darkness, pupils dilated.

TINA

You poor thing, let's get you home shall we?

She steps forward and hoists the man to his feet.

Supporting his weight she manoeuvres him to the rear door of the car...

She leans him up against the rear panel.

He slumps over the back windscreen, his face mushed up against the glass.

Tina swings open the back door.

The man starts to slide to the ground.

She catches him before he hits the floor.

With an effort she hoists him into the car...

Tucks his legs in with a bit of a struggle.

She eases the back door shut with a CLICK.

She looks up to the heavens...

The moon, pert and round, emerges from behind a flying cloud.

She takes a deep contented BREATH.

26 **INT. TINA'S TAXI - NIGHT**

Tina drives carefully, every gear change an act of love.

She steals a glance in the rear view mirror...

The hammered man is propped upright in the back seat, his head is thrown back, mouth open, catching flies.

She purses her lips, lets out a little sympathetic AWW.

She picks up the handset, whispers:

TINA

Tina to base, I found him.

TINA

Base to Tina, is he 'andsome?

She takes another look in the rear view.

Eyes wide, she nods gently...

TINA

He's beautiful.

She blushes.

Carefully, silently, she replaces the handset.

She reaches over the wheel and clears the windscreen peep hole with a sleeve.

The shadows of trees float by.

Tina starts to HUM gently to herself.

27

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

A fox sits on the hard shoulder at the side of a country lane.

Its eyes reflect a car's approaching headlights.

They glow brighter and brighter as the retinas are flooded with light.

The PURR of the car engine grows louder.

Tina's Taxi glides slowly...

Almost silently...

On by.

The fox watches it pass...

Casually it raises and licks a paw.

The car eases gently around a bend...

The fox stands, stretches.

As the headlights fade it turns and disappears into the hedgerow, and the night.

28

EXT. OUR LADY'S ISLAND, IRELAND - MIDDAY

Dawn breaks on a flat landscape...

Sandy soil.

Arable stubble.

Stunted hedge.

A ruined church tower leans at an unlikely angle in the centre of a neatly mown field...

A window in the shape of the Cross of St. Peter is set deep in its mossy side.

TITLE OVER - TERN

Row upon row of empty plastic chairs - a thousand or more - cover the field in neat rows.

All but one of the chairs are folded shut.

The field slopes gently down to a tarp-covered stage.

A well trodden path leads away towards a thin promontory that juts into a brackish lake, beds of rushes bristle at the shoreline.

Beside the path a tannoy, rusted, is strung from a windswept gorse, it HUMS as it sways in the breeze...

The cable swings down a hedgerow...

Meets another tannoy that hangs in a withered beech...

Yet another dangles from a pole...

Below it stands a marble statue of the Virgin Mary.

29 **EXT. OUR LADY'S STATUE - MIDDAY**

A HIGH PITCHED DRONE emanates from the loudspeaker.

The CRUNCH of feet on gravel and a strung out line of ELDERLY PEOPLE files down the lakeshore...

They are dressed in pastels and Harrington jackets.

They clutch walking sticks, sit in wheelchairs, pushed along by purple faced relatives.

Each stops for a moment at the Virgin...

Makes the sign of the cross...

Then slowly shuffles on.

AILEEN O'DONNELL, in her late 70s, dressed from head to toe in bulging pink polyester - apart from a black armband that pinches a bingo wing - stops and meets the Virgin's gaze.

Pauses.

She pouts and raises a finger to her forehead.

But her sign is cut short by a SHOUT from behind her.

CIARA

Nanna! Come and look!

Aileen turns to see her 6 year old granddaughter - CIARA O'DONNELL - crouched near the shoreline, poking at something with a stick.

Aileen SIGHS, turns and slowly clammers down the slope to the muddy beach below.

Ciara looks up, her eyes are wide with excitement.

CIARA

Look Nanna.

Aileen looks down.

She frowns.

A small pair of wings shine white against the deep green algal bloom at the lakeshore.

A clavicle - picked clean - connects them in the centre.

Ciara leans close, carefully lifts them up with the stick...

The lace hem of her Sunday dress dangles in the mud.

Ciara raises the wings up to her face, squints...

The wings - up against the deep blue sky - are perfectly symmetrical, perfectly white, perfect.

Ciara's eyes - also perfectly white and of the deepest blue - narrow with a question, then widen with the answer.

CIARA

They must have fallen off an angel.

She looks up at her Nana, expectant.

Aileen wrinkles her nose in distaste.

She looks up the rise towards the statue of The Virgin...

An elderly couple look down on them, curious.

AILEEN

Get up from there child.

CIARA

Can I give them to Grandpa?

AILEEN

No you cannot. Get up I said.

CIARA
Please Nanna, he'd love them I
know he would.

AILEEN
Don't be ridiculous. And look at
your dress, it's filthy.

Ciara stands, cradles the wings like a treasure, the hem
of her dress is, indeed, filthy.

AILEEN
Give them to me.

Ciara looks crestfallen.

AILEEN
Do it now.

Ciara passes the wings to Aileen, reverently, her head
bowed, a votive offering.

Her grandmother takes them gingerly, pinching a feather
between thumb and forefinger...

She shakes her other hand at Ciara...

Ciara reluctantly takes it.

She is propelled away, off down the muddy beach, her
little legs peddle the air, struggling to keep up...

Ciara cranes her neck around, peers back to where she
found the wings, longingly.

As she does Aileen surreptitiously flicks the wings into
a thicket by the pathway.

As Aileen and Ciara disappear into the distance the HUM
of the tannoy grows louder...

A crackle of FAINT VOICES is vaguely audible beneath.

30 **EXT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN - EVENING**

Row upon row of static caravans line a crumbling asphalt
road that continues to the vanishing point.

Aileen drags Ciara up the road by the hand.

Each caravan is very much alike - only a small touch here
and there hints at the individuality of the occupant...

A spray of painted butterflies.

A decorative ivy climbs a trellis.

A neat picket fence surrounds a small patch of astroturf.

Neglected geraniums and a concrete crucifix.

31 **INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, LOUNGE - EVENING**

Flock wallpaper.

A sideboard covered in bouquets of flowers in plastic wrappers, dead, dropping petals.

A small wooden shrine hangs neatly on the wall.

Ciara stands in front of the shrine, eyes closed, hands clasped, lips moving in WHISPERED PRAYER.

In the shrine's shelves are a photograph of an elderly gentleman, a set of rosary beads, a rose, a pipe, a bow-tie and cufflinks, a whiskey glass.

An old man's things.

Ciara whispers a quick AMEN...

Her eyes snap open.

She smiles at the photograph...

Holds a finger up to her lips.

SHHH.

She turns on her heel and scampers off, past her grandmother.

Aileen sits perfectly still.

A TV tray on her lap holds a packet of tissues, a doorstep of fruit cake, a pot of tea for two, one cup.

Aileen is tuned to a small Bakelite CRT television...

The television is tuned to Fair City.

Ciara hovers in one of the doorways that lead off the kitchen.

CIARA
I'm off to bed now Nanna.

AILEEN
(Absently) Don't forget to wash
your face.

Ciara ignores her, closes the door to a crack.
Orange light falls on linoleum as the evening sun sets.

DARKNESS FALLS.

32 **INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, CIARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

WHITE NOISE

It's pitch black barring a crack of blue TV light on
shagpile carpet.

We follow the light as it reveals a slice of a little
girl's life:

Clothes...

Toys...

Books...

We climb the folds of a duvet...

A pale blue sheet, white knuckles clasp the hem...

A sliver of pale face...

And a blue eye, wide open.

A SIGH comes from the lounge.

Ciara's eye turns to look into the light.

FEET SHUFFLE, the CLUNK of the TV as it is switched off.

Darkness.

The SQUEAK of slippers crossing lino flooring...

The WHOOSH and BUMP of a door pushed shut against too
thick carpet.

Our eyes slowly grow accustomed to the dark as a faint
moonlight creeps through Ciara's thin curtains.

Ciara's bed is now empty.

The room is a pigsty, littered with clothes and toys...

The bedroom door stands wide open.

33 **INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Moonlight now falls on the linoleum.

A sliver of bright yellow light escapes another doorway.

Ciara kneels outside it, her eye pressed to the crack.

Still.

Silent.

34 **INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, AILEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

CIARA'S POV

Aileen sits on the edge of her bed, her back to us.

A reading lamp shines bright on pink polyester.

She reaches for the mourning band that grips her left arm, she works her fingers under it, pulls it off and places it on the bedside table.

She reaches behind her head, hauls her top off.

The mourning band has left an impression on her upper arm.

GRUMBLING slightly she reaches behind her back to unhook her bra.

It pops open with an elastic THWACK.

Ciara's eye widens at the gap.

Aileen's bra strap has left a deep red indentation, just below the shoulder blades, exactly where a set of wings might grow.

Ciara raises a hand to her mouth to stop her breath from escaping.

Aileen shucks her kecks...

Her knickers next...

Naked she reaches for a jar of pills on the bedside table, shakes a couple out into her hand.

She swaps the jar for a glass of water, necks them.

Ciara leans in, her eyes narrow in curiosity.

Aileen swings her legs up onto the bed, it CREAKS bravely as her body sinks into the soft mattress.

She lets out a SIGH and rolls over to face the doorway.

Ciara pulls back from the light and freezes.

The reading lamp SNAPS off.

Darkness again.

35 **INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Ciara slowly stands in the moonlit kitchen.

She quietly turns...

She looks over at her grandfather's shrine...

She looks at the caravan door...

And at the keys that dangle in the lock.

36 **EXT. OUR LADY'S LAKE - MIDNIGHT**

SILENCE.

The heavens hang bright above the flatness of the landscape and the stillness of the water.

The stars reflect almost flawlessly in the lake's depths.

Almost flawlessly.

There's a SPLASH and a single ripple spreads slowly from the deeps to scatter the stars.

37 **EXT. COUNTRY LANE - MIDNIGHT**

A narrow lane, hedge on either side.

Grass and moss grow thick in the centre.

The moss is flowering, uncurled in a thin lunar photosynthesis.

The grass seems to stretch, pushing up into the night sky.

The lane slopes down to the water's edge.

A tall, HORNED SHADOW falls across it.

The shadow pauses for a second...

Then, tail swishing behind, it moves forwards.

As the shadow brushes the mossy growth the plants retract.

They pull back their tendrils.

Like a barnacle's tentacles.

The horned shadow walks clumsily down the lane towards the water's edge...

Followed by Ciara.

She is dressed in a Friesian cow print onesie, a wire sprung tail sways behind her, a pair of foam horns protrude from the hood.

38 **EXT. OUR LADY'S LAKE - MIDNIGHT**

Ciara stops at the lake shore, looks down to see her own reflection warp as the wavelet washes up.

Ciara's reflection looks up at the girl...

Above her - no, *beneath* her - the night sky falls, vertiginous.

She pulls the horned hood down.

Her thin hair starts to drift upwards...

It seems for a second that she is floating.

She looks down - or up - at her feet, it's getting hard to tell.

Slowly her tiny Converse sneakers unweight, and leave the sand...

Her feet squirm, try to dig in, looking for purchase.

Panicked, she looks down, her eyes searching...

Her legs start to peddle the air...

A stone, around the size of a small child's head, lies on the beach beside her.

Carefully she bends, works her little fingers underneath it.

She picks it up and holds it to her chest...

As she does so her feet sink down into the wet sand.

Thus weighted she steadies herself, tests her footing, it's good.

She squats and, placing the stone in her lap, she pulls her horned hood up and tucks her hair in.

She stands, nods, back in control.

She looks up.

On the other side of the lake lies the broken church tower.

The seats.

The stage.

The string of speakers glints, marking the pilgrimage route.

The Virgin glows white in the moonlight at the head of the promontory.

Ciara clutches the stone tightly against herself.

She takes a DEEP BREATH.

She picks her way along the lakeshore...

Heading in the direction of the Island.

As she goes her feet leave deep imprints in the sandy mud.

The tall horned shadow - surefooted now - slides quickly over the beach as it leads the way.

Its tail whips back and forth with agitation.

Or excitement.

39

INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, AILEEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MORNING CHORUS.

A breeze, thin curtains billow.

In bed, Aileen stirs.

In the distance there is a SQUEAL OF FEEDBACK.

Aileen GROANS, and rolls.

A MUFFLED CLEARING OF THROAT and a TINNY, ECHOING VOICE floats across the morning air...

ECHOING VOICE

Angel of God, my Guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me
here...

Aileen pulls the pillow over her ears.

ECHOING VOICE

Ever this day be at my side, to
light and guard, to rule and
guide...

As the voice goes on Aileen GRUMBLES ANGRILY.

She throws back the cover and rolls herself into a sitting position.

She sits naked in the morning light.

She is as white as marble, of a statuesque solidity.

She looks ageless, beautiful.

The red marks on her back have faded, her bingo wing smooth and plump and pale.

She reaches for the door hook, and her dressing gown.

40

INT. AILEEN'S STATIC CARAVAN, KITCHEN - MORNING

The door to Aileen's room opens and she emerges yawning, pulling the robe's chord tight around her waist.

The kitchen is bright, she rubs her eyes sleepily.

It's VERY QUIET.

She pauses, knuckle to socket.

It's TOO QUIET...

The refrigerator condenser fan WHINES UP.

She opens her eyes, squints.

The kitchen is too bright.

She frowns.

Almost unwillingly, she turns.

The door to Ciara's room stands open, light floods in.

The bed is empty.

AILEEN

Ciara?

Nothing.

She turns to the lounge.

AILEEN

Where are you child?

Still no reply.

She turns to the kitchen.

Scans it.

Last nights' crocks are in the sink.

The bin is overflowing.

The keys are missing from the front door lock.

She hurries over to the door and tries the handle.

The door is locked.

She rattles it...

Wrenches the handle...

No use.

Aileen stares at the door for a moment...

Then turns, walks hurriedly over to the telephone and

picks up the receiver.

A trembling finger hovers over the number 9.

The DIAL TONE buzzes loudly in her ear.

41 **EXT. OUR LADY'S STATUE - MORNING**

The rusted speaker dangles from the pole.

Through it comes a LOW PITCHED DRONE, A FAINT KNOCKING and BACKGROUND CHATTER.

The marble statue of the Virgin Mary looks down kindly beneath it.

Aileen looks up and meets the statue's benevolent look with a steady glare.

She looks thinner, drawn, bags under her eyes attest to sleepless nights.

She slowly raises a finger to her forehead.

FEMALE VOICES drift into - and then out of - audibility beneath the SPEAKER FUZZ.

Aileen pauses for a moment, listening...

FEMALE VOICE 1
...no trace seen of her since
then...

HISS drowns out the voices.

FEMALE VOICE 2
...about her grandmother?

Aileen balls a black cuffed hand against her forehead...

Tries to compose herself...

FEMALE VOICE 1
...suspicion this whole time...

Aileen looks around anxiously.

She turns away from the statue to follow the path back towards the land.

Hurrying, dressed from head to toe in black, she looks strange among the slow moving line of pilgrims in pastels

and Harrington jackets.

FEMALE VOICE 2

...not even a true believer...

The CRUNCH of Aileen's hurried footsteps on gravel.

Suddenly she stops.

Something catches her eye.

She looks down towards the water's edge.

Over by the rushes lies a stone - around the size of a small child's head.

A white feather is stuck on the stone's surface...

Surrounded by a dark stain.

Aileen frowns.

She looks around, self conscious for a moment...

Then quickly starts to scramble down the slope...

Behind her the pilgrims gape to see an old lady in widow's weeds raise her black skirts to cross the mud.

42

EXT. OUR LADY'S LAKE, SHORELINE - MORNING

Aileen picks her way across the beach and reaches the stone.

Breathing heavily she stops and looks down.

The stone is bloodstained.

The feather stuck to its side is one of many that lead away, in a blood speckled trail, towards the rushes.

Aileen frowns...

Leans in closer.

Beside the trail of feathers there is a trail of footprints.

They are small...

Child sized.

A SOB escapes from Aileen's throat.

Forgetting her skirts she takes a lurching step forward.

The mud gets deeper as she follows the trail of footprints and feathers toward the rushes.

She starts to struggle...

Thick mud cakes her black hem.

She's five feet from the reed bed when she loses a shoe - and her balance.

43 **EXT. OUR LADY'S STATUE - MORNING**

The pilgrims watch Aileen flail and almost fall...

She plunges her hands deep into the mud to save herself.

Disoriented, shaking the clag from her hands, she stands.

44 **EXT. OUR LADY'S LAKE, SHORELINE - MORNING**

She looks down again to find the trail of footprints.

Pauses.

It's strange...

Though her own prints get deeper as they approach the reed bed and the thicker mud...

The child's footprints get shallower, and shallower...

Until, just up ahead, they disappear completely.

Aileen frowns.

She frees her feet and in a surge reaches the final pair of footprints.

A perfect shallow mould of the sole of a child's Converse All Star, surrounded by feathers.

Spinning round she tries to find the trail.

There are no more footprints.

And there is nowhere that the child could have gone.

She looks up at the sky, searching, imploring.

Then she bends and starts to dig.

Her fingers claw deep into the mud under the print.

Nothing.

Sobbing, confused, she looks to where the trail of feathers disappear into the reeds.

She lunges forward...

Bends...

Tentatively she pushes the stalks apart.

Lying in a bare patch of mud between the reeds is a Tern.

Its eye is black and glassy, its white plumage dotted with blood.

Aileen bends and gingerly picks up the bird.

There's something odd about it.

She turns it over.

The bird's back is covered with blood...

There is a ragged hole where its wings should be.

Aileen's mouth opens in horror.

She sits back into the mud.

She drops the dead bird in her lap.

She rakes at her face, her hands leave streaks of dirt on her cheeks.

She starts to WAIL.

45 **EXT. OUR LADY'S ISLAND - MORNING**

As they look down on the widow in the lake the pilgrims MUTTER amongst themselves and shift uncomfortably.

The sound of AILEEN'S SORROW carries on the morning air across the sandy soil.

Across the arable stubble...

And the stunted hedge...

Past the rows of empty folded chairs that cover the lawn - two of the chairs now stand open...

Towards the ruined church tower that leans at an unlikely angle...

And into the window in the shape of the Cross of St. Peter - an upside down crucifix - that is set deep and dark in its mossy side.

The TANNOY STATIC rises to a KEENING WAIL...

HEAVILY DISTORTED WOE.

The NOTE INTENSIFIES, moving up swiftly through the frequency range until it becomes a SHRILL WHISTLE.

An AMUSED VOICE grows louder beneath.

FEMALE VOICE 1

The reverend's left the
microphone on again...

The tannoy gives a final PAINFUL SHRIEK...

FEMALE VOICE 2

You'd better switch it...

A LOUD POP...

SILENCE

46 **EXT. FOREST CREEK - DAY**

The SILENCE is broken by the DRONE of a mayfly.

TITLE OVER - CYGNET

A drift of swans is reflected in the green water of a forest creek.

One of the swans reaches back to preen a wing, its beak CLACKS gently.

A shadow passes over the bird's plumage. It looks up.

A SPLASH and a sudden chaos of wings and feet.

The swans scatter, water foaming...

Leaving one of their number trapped in a frayed, much mended net.

The captive swan rolls and thrashes...

Further entangles itself.

Finally it gives up and floats exhausted on the surface.

47 **EXT. FOREST CREEK - EVENING**

Sunset, sparks float up to the forest canopy.

Smoke filled light rays push through the gaps in the leaves.

In the centre of a wide creek, surrounded by flotsam, floats a metal hulk - a small foot ferry once, perhaps.

The boat looks uninhabitable, let alone seaworthy.

It's so patched and worn that the hull is more rust than metal.

The fading nameplate on its side - GRACE - is barely visible...

It's deck is piled high with barrels and rope, tarps and worm raddled wood, nets, corrugated iron and fibreglass.

The smoke drifts from behind this barricade of junk.

48 **EXT. DECK OF 'GRACE' - EVENING**

Fire burns in a brazier, a huge bird roasts on a spit.

The handle is turned by a thin, bedraggled MAN, his long hair a mat of salt encrusted knots the colour of seaweed, his clothes patched, torn, patched again.

He reaches forward, tears a leg off of the bird.

He leans around the fire and proffers the huge drumstick to a GIRL, around 10 years old, sat opposite.

She ignores him, lower lip jutting...

MAN

Take it.

Her small filthy hands hesitate, fumble in the folds of a ragged gingham school dress, several sizes too small.

MAN

We've been through this...

Reluctantly she takes the leg, it's so large that she needs two hands to hold it.

She takes a tiny bite, swallows.

Satisfied the man pulls out a hunting knife and saws off a slab of breast.

He wolfs it down.

Wipes his mouth with a filthy shirt sleeve...

Takes a long swig from a plastic milk bottle containing a cloudy yellow liquid.

A breeze stokes the fire, it catches the plucked feathers of the swan, sends them whirling through the flames...

Filling the air with burning snow.

49 **EXT. DECK OF 'GRACE' - NIGHT**

Bright moonlight, long shadows cut across the deck.

Man and girl lie close beneath a mildewed blanket, a tarp stretched over them.

The girl's eyes are huge and bright as she gazes up...

Through the leaves to the fragments of starry sky above.

Somewhere in the forest a fox WAILS.

She pulls the blanket up under her chin.

A star moves slowly across the sky.

Suddenly a white light flicks across the forest canopy.

The silence is split by a CRACK.

ROUGH VOICES and COARSE LAUGHTER leak from the forest, getting closer.

The girl sits up, the tarp CRACKLES, impossibly loud.

GIRL

Dad...

The man's hand goes quickly to cover her mouth.

He pulls her back through a hatch into the shadows of the small cockpit.

Torch light sweeps the deck...

Finds the tarp...

MUFFLED VOICES from near the shoreline.

The light finds the cabin...

The walls of which are covered in children's drawings: monstrous men, vicious dogs, the dark menacing forest.

Man and girl are locked together in shadow...

The torchlight pauses.

A WHISTLE shrills, high in the woods above.

The light falters, held by an uncertain hand, then moves on, leaving them once again in darkness.

Man and girl stay frozen for a moment.

Slowly he takes his hand away from her mouth, she GULPS down the night air.

He slides from behind her and, stooping low, slips across the deck.

He hunkers, peers through a gap in the junk.

His eyes scan the woods above as the torchlight recedes.

Behind him in the doorway the girl crouches, thin and white in the full moonlight.

50 **EXT. DECK OF 'GRACE' - EVENING**

SILENCE, the swan's carcass lies wrecked on a corrugated iron sheet.

The man and girl sit together on the deck.

The man tears off a strip of pale meat, chews it slowly.

MAN

Another day and she'll have
turned rotten.

GIRL

Good.

MAN

We can't live on seaweed.

GIRL

I could find some berries...if
you'd let me go to shore.

He chews slowly.

Doesn't answer.

GIRL

What's wrong with fish then?

MAN

Nothing wrong with them as long
as you can catch them.

GIRL

So why don't you teach me.

MAN

Wrong season for fish.

GIRL

But it's the right season for
swan?

MAN

(SIGHS) All right smart arse,
first thing in the morning.

The girl nods, satisfied.

She holds her nose, lifts a morsel of meat to her mouth,
bites, chews once, swallows...

She RETCHES ostentatiously...

Grabs a crumpled water bottle and GULPS noisily.

She GASPS...

GAGS again.

The man CHUCKLES quietly, takes a GULP of cider.

MAN

What a performance.

She sticks her tongue out at him.

He CUFFS her clumsily upside the head, making her bite her tongue.

In pain, quick as a flash she lands a SLAP on his cheek.

He's taken aback, angry.

A dangerous pause follows.

Suddenly he LAUGHS...

He grabs her awkwardly in a headlock, they wrestle as she GROWLS and squirms to get free.

The boat turns gently midstream.

The SOUND OF PLAY fills the evening air.

51 **EXT. BOW OF 'GRACE' - MID-AFTERNOON**

Legs dangling over the rusty bow of the boat she fishes.

A mirrored mackerel lure flashes through the water.

He busies himself in the cockpit, inspecting a row of polypins and 5 litre milk bottles containing cider.

He looks up to check her progress through the cracked windscreen.

The hook snags a clump of weed.

Frustrated, she pulls and yanks at the handle of the rod.

MUTTERING angrily she works the hook free, winds furiously...

Trails the rest of the weed back to the boat.

He swings the front window open and pokes his head out.

MAN

What you caught there girl?

She ignores him, winds in, reaches out to free the weed.

As the tension leaves the line it suddenly unspools, tangles around the rod and reel.

She GROANS.

She pulls the rod in to untangle the line but this makes matters even worse.

She tugs at the knot and gets the hook caught in the hem of her dress.

She throws the rod down onto the deck and balls her fists in her eyes.

Her body is wracked by silent sobs.

The man climbs out of the cockpit and along the gunwale...

He sits down next to her...

Places a hand awkwardly on her shoulder.

She ignores him.

Gently, he shakes her.

She shrugs him off.

He opens his mouth to speak but thinks better of it, instead he reaches down and starts to work the hook free from her dress.

She looks up at him, her cheeks washed clean by tears.

With a small RIP he pulls the hook free.

She gets up and quietly returns to the deck.

He watches her leave.

He turns, picks up the rod, starts to slowly, clumsily, untangle the mess of line.

52 **EXT. DECK OF 'GRACE' - DAWN**

He steps quietly out of the cabin, a paddle in one hand, the swan net bundled in the other.

He retrieves a battered fibre glass coracle from amongst the junk and gently lowers it over the side...

Climbs overboard and pushes off.

The girl opens an eye.

Slides from under the tarp and, staying low, scoots to the side.

She peers out after him.

He rows silently, following the channel out into the main flow of the river.

Patiently she watches...

The coracle disappears around the bend.

53 **EXT. FOREST CREEK - DAWN**

A large empty milk carton SPLASHES into the river.

Nervously the girl eases herself overboard into the still green water.

GASPING she holds onto the side, acclimatising.

She lets go...

Immediately sinks...

Bubbles break the surface.

She scrambles and splashes back to the air...

Turns and flails and reaches for the floating bottle.

She grabs the handle and trusts it with her weight.

A deep BREATH, a SPLASH and she pushes off.

She swims clumsily...

One hand gripping the bottle...

Making painfully slow progress.

A patch of seaweed snags her legs, freaking her out and making her pick up the pace.

She hauls out on a grassy clump, drops the carton, crouches shivering in her soaking school dress.

She looks up the creek...

There's no sign of the man.

She sets off quickly, follows a barely visible track away from the riverbank, up into the woods.

54 **EXT. FOREST - MORNING**

Dew drips from a bluebell leaf.

The girl creeps, land-legged, through the morning light.

Steam rises from her skin, goose-bumped in the chilly air.

Her eyes hungrily scan the canopy, the trees, the floor.

She bends to pick a wild garlic flower...

She sniffs it, nibbles the bulb and wrinkles her nose...

Throws it away in disgust.

She creeps on, skirts a nettle patch...

Pushes through a rhododendron and startles a pigeon...

It takes noisy flight and she leaps hungrily after it...

She lands, empty handed.

She picks up a stick and swats absent-mindedly at the bracken as she walks on.

Carelessly.

Upright now, her eyes downcast.

55 **EXT. FOREST CLEARING - MIDDAY**

She comes to a halt at a fern filled clearing.

Sunlight floods in and warms the air, a bee BUZZES lazily on by.

She yawns, stretches.

A dog BARKS, very loud and far too close.

She stands frozen for a moment, then quickly ducks behind a beech tree.

She presses herself against its bark.

Leaves RUSTLE... PANTING.

Slowly, terrified, she peers out from behind the trunk.

A group of men step through the tree line on the other

side of the clearing.

TWO GROWN BOYS, filthy and camouflaged. A BEARDED MAN follows, gap-toothed, capped and huge, dressed in dirty denim.

Sticks and chains are gripped in their hands.

Horror fills her face as she sees...

The dog, huge head and barrel body, drooling as it roots and sniffs amongst the ferns...

It stops.

Points.

BARKS attention.

BEARDED MAN

What is it boy?

She presses herself against the tree, screws up her eyes.

And runs.

56 **EXT. FOREST - MIDDAY**

She tears through the woods without a backwards look...

BEARDED MAN

Hey!

She ducks a bough...

CRASHES through the undergrowth...

The dog BARKS, it's close behind.

She turns to look, trips, rolls into a patch of bracken.

A SHRILL WHISTLE, she looks back as the head of the dog appears, bouncing above the undergrowth, seeking her out.

She scrambles to her knees, keeping low she pushes on and out of the bracken...

Races through the rhododendron stand, the branches WHIP her face and catch her clothes...

Heavy FOOTSTEPS CRASH through the woods behind.

She tears through the nettle patch, running full tilt.

57 **EXT. RIVERBANK - MIDDAY**

She breaks cover at the bank, tries to stop, pinwheels her arms...

Loses balance and half falls, half slides down the muddy slope.

She lands painfully in a heap, wincing she rises...

More BARKING behind, she ploughs through the mud...

Thrashes out into the creek...

She kicks and splashes for the boat, aiming for the bowline.

Desperate, losing air and momentum she reaches out for the rope...

She falls short, her hand closes on air, she goes under.

58 **EXT. RIVER, UNDERWATER - MIDDAY**

She sinks into green.

The rusty hull of the boat is tauntingly close.

She reaches out hopelessly as bubbles escape her nostrils.

Suddenly a dirty hand shoots down and grabs her by the wrist, hoists her up...

59 **EXT. BOW OF 'GRACE' - MIDDAY**

The man lifts her clear of the water, swings her aboard and pushes her roughly down behind the cockpit.

He puts a finger to his lips, gestures: stay down.

He slowly lifts his head above the cockpit roof, his eyes scan the riverbank.

60 **EXT. RIVERBANK - MIDDAY**

The bearded man appears from the forest, his dog at heel.

His eyes follow the footprints in the mud...

Out to the rusting hulk.

He pauses for a moment, raises a hand to his forehead and

squints into the sun, trying to see if anyone's on board.

He gives up, turns back into the woods.

The dog lingers for a second before a SHRILL WHISTLE calls it back to heel.

61 **EXT. BOW OF 'GRACE' - AFTERNOON**

Man and girl sit on the bow, lean against the windscreen.

She's out of breath.

He sits, quiet and perfectly still, except for his violently trembling hands.

He clenches a fist, knuckles white, smashes it down on the metal deck with a THUD.

GIRL
(Quickly) I'm sorry.

He gets up.

Climbs around the running board and disappears.

She looks down at her scratched and nettle stung legs.

He pokes his head through the front window:

MAN
Pack up your things. We leave at
first light.

She closes her eyes, bangs her head back against the glass with a DONK.

62 **EXT. DECK OF 'GRACE' - NIGHT**

Shards of moonlight cut jagged through the torn metal and wood-rot, faintly illuminating the deck...

Two waxed canvas bags tied tight with old rope slump in a corner by the stretched out tarp.

Man and girl lie lumpen beneath their blankets.

The girl's eyelids flutter as she dreams.

A LOW RUMBLE disturbs the silence.

The girl's eyes snap open.

The RUMBLE grows louder, it's the sound of an outboard motor.

The man rolls over to face her, his eyes filled with fear, his expression alone tells her to stay still.

He sweeps the blanket over her head, there's a CRACKLE of tarp and his FOOTSTEPS recede.

She lies very still, the thin weave of the blanket makes an impressionist painting of the moonlit deck.

The MOTOR CUTS OUT, there's a gentle BUMP and Grace lists slightly.

Under the blanket, she bites a hand to smother the noise of her breathing.

A stranger's voice, male, WHISPERS:

INTRUDER
It looks deserted.

A gentle THUD as someone lands on deck, the boat leans.

She lies still.

GENTLE FOOTSTEPS and the boat rocks slightly.

She waits.

It's so quiet...

She can't stand it.

Slowly, furtively she pulls the blanket down from her eyes and looks up...

The intruder stands over her, looking down.

She draws breath to scream.

He raises his hands placatingly, smiles, reassuring.

She pauses, confused, this is not what she expected...

A loud THWACK and the intruder's head jerks forward.

A look of dazed confusion passes across his face.

Another THWACK and he falls, sprawls over her.

She looks up...

The man stands in the intruder's place, a crazed look in his eye.

A two by four, gnarly with blood and barnacles, slips from his hand to the deck.

She tries to wriggle out from under the weight of the unconscious intruder.

The man reaches down a hand to help her...

But as she reaches up for him a second black clad ATTACKER leaps from the darkness and SLAMS into the man...

Drives him chest first into the junk piled high at the boat's stern, winding him, the attacker adjusts his grip, locking the man in a bear hug, raising him up.

The man butts his head backward staggering the attacker, he flails against the clinch with a fierce desperation.

He squirms around and raises a knee to the attacker's groin.

The attacker bends double and the man pushes the attacker back, the two of them crash against the gunwale and their momentum carries them overboard with a SPLASH.

The girl squirms to free herself of the weight of the intruder, a dull THUMP and a GRUNT come from the water.

She thrashes, GROWLING, the sound of water CHURNING, a desperate GROAN, GURGLING...

In a final surge, she frees herself and runs to the gunwale.

The man floats on his back, breathing heavily, his face a shock of blood and bruises.

The attacker lies face down in the water, a motionless black shape silhouetted in the silver moonlit ripples.

The girl slides to the deck.

At her feet lies a pile of swan feathers, glowing faintly in the light.

She picks one up, and frowns.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAWN

Daybreak and Grace drifts skewed and silent down creek, riding the tide out towards the open water.

A matt black rubber dinghy is pulled along behind her, two black clad men sprawled motionless on its deck.

The man climbs, broken, soaked and shivering up the riverbank.

He reaches the top and sits down painfully.

He raises his head and watches the boat as it floats away.

The girl stands, canvas sack slung over her shoulder.

Four large swan tail feathers are stuck in her hair, Indian Brave style.

GIRL
(Gently) Dad?

He looks up at her, red eyed, as though seeing her for the first time.

He blinks, tries a reassuring smile, rises gingerly and limps past her.

The girl turns to see the man disappear into the undergrowth.

She takes one last look at the river.

She pauses...

Thinking...

Then quickly she reaches behind her head, stoops, places something down on the muddy bank...

She rises, turns and disappears into the forest.

The ferns close perfectly around, leaving no evidence of their passing.

But a white feather, quill stuck fast in the dirt, shines out in the gloom.

Like a white flag.

Or a signpost.

64 **EXT. FOREST - MORNING**

He limps.

She runs, tries to keep up, lags behind...

Uphill. The forest grows thicker around them.

They break cover on the bank of a rocky stream.

Panting they lie and LAP at the clear water.

Two white feathers are stuck in her hair.

65 **EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON**

They crash on upstream, they wade deep, bags held high...

They cross, and recross, the water.

Cut left and on uphill, into the darkening woods.

At the riverbank another white feather betrays their passing.

66 **INT. DERELICT COTTAGE - EVENING**

Granite walls, caked in moss.

Dusty shelves, ivy trailed, a framed photo of a couple - the man, but much younger, a smiling woman - lies amidst the decay.

A grimy glass window, a sapling grows inside, reaching for the faint sun.

A flaked green door, misfit and leaking light...

A THUD and the door quivers, the light shimmers.

Another THUD and the room is flooded.

Two thin silhouettes stand outside.

67 **INT. DERELICT COTTAGE - MORNING**

He shakes her awake.

She sits up slowly, scratches her head and YAWNS, adjusts the single white feather still pinned in her ponytail.

He sweeps a hand over the filthy kitchen counter...
Ransacks the cupboard, manic, his anger rising...
The CRASH and BANG of pans makes her wince.
He sits back on his haunches.

MAN

Nothing.

68 **EXT. FOREST - MORNING**

Bucket and bag in hand she sets out.
He watches her head into the woods through the window.
She gathers acorns...
Looks up at a plump squirrel that stands angry guard over
its stash.
She throws a nut at it.
It CHITTERS angrily down at her.
She gathers water from the stream...
Bends low to swill the dirty bucket clean...
The last feather has gone from her hair.
She fills the bucket and rises...
Trudges uphill, the rusty bucket clutched in her hand.
Suddenly she stops.
The man stands like a statue in the middle of the path,
head down, shoulders hunched.
He looks up at her, he shakes his head.
He stoops...
And rises...
Cradling a swan feather in his hands.
She steps forwards, opens her mouth to speak.
BARKING breaks out in the woods below them.

The man starts.

He leaps toward her, sweeps her up.

Scanning the trees he hobbles slowly uphill towards the cottage, turning in fits and bursts as he goes, eyes on the woods, the girl held tightly in his arms.

He backs into the door and barges it open.

69 **INT. DERELICT COTTAGE - MORNING**

They SLAM through the door and into the darkness inside.

He lets her slip to the floor...

HEAVES the door shut.

He slides down the wall and puts his head in his hands.

He looks up at her...

She looks down at him.

A LOUD HAILER, electric and crackling, crashes through the woods outside.

 LOUD HAILER

 Come on out of there MICHAEL.

 There's no sense in dragging this
 out any longer.

The girl, confused, searches his face.

He smiles sadly up at her.

He rises...

He pulls her close, kisses the top of her head, his eyes screwed shut.

He holds her at arm's length, looks down at her and nods.

 MICHAEL

 Stay close to me.

He turns her around and, holding her in front of him, he pushes the door open.

Daylight floods in.

EXT. DERELICT COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

MICHAEL and the girl stand together, squint in the light.

Shadows move, almost indistinguishable against the gloom of the forest.

She raises a hand to shade her eyes.

Silently, in close formation, the shadows break cover - black clad, assault rifles raised in a firing position.

The circle of men tightens, guns trained on Michael.

Michael turns the girl toward him, she buries her head in his chest.

One of the men steps forward, the word POLICE is stencilled on his helmet in small white letters...

He swings his rifle butt hard at Michael's head...

Michael and the girl go down in the leaf mould.

Stunned by the blow Michael stares wide eyed at the sky.

The girl lets out a CRY and clings tightly to his neck.

The officer bends, tries to pry the girl away from Michael.

She clings on.

OFFICER

(Gently) It's alright, I'm not going to hurt you.

She squeezes tight.

OFFICER

(Kind, insistent) It's alright.

Slowly he separates her from Michael.

She is lifted and bundled, fighting weakly the whole time.

Two of the men cuff and lift Michael to his feet.

He staggers and struggles weakly as they push him away towards the woods.

Dazed, Michael cranes his neck to steal a look back at the girl.

Their eyes meet and she fights weakly against the hold of her captor, twists a hand free and reaches out.

Her hand is taken and drawn back to her thin chest, she writhes, thrashes to free herself, is only held tighter.

When she looks up again, Michael is gone.

She lets out a CRY and folds into her captor's arms.

A FEMALE OFFICER steps forward, wraps a blanket around the girl's shoulders...

She wipes the dirt from the girl's cheeks and smiles sadly.

FEMALE OFFICER

Come on Grace, let's get you something warm to eat.

The girl looks up and frowns as the name stirs a memory buried long ago and deep in the mud.

71 **EXT. WOODEN VESSEL - DAYBREAK**

B&W 16mm clockwork Bolex footage creates a silent film era aesthetic. Hair and costume place us in the late 1920's.

The CRY OF A GULL and a stab of dawn splits the darkness.

TITLE OVER - GULLED

From up high we see the sun rise above the ocean.

Light shafts cut through a thick mist to reveal white sails filled with wind...

An old two masted wooden vessel, 90 foot long, knifes the sea as it makes good speed.

From our vantage in the air we see that all is activity on board, a scattering of men perch in the rigging, more at the mast trim the sails.

Wind tossed, erratically, we descend.

The deck is all activity, men scrub, patch sails, mend nets.

And as we drop closer...

A SHANTY starts to fill the air:

CREW

The ship drove fast, loud roared
the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

We land on the ship's gunwale...

Beside a man...

72 **EXT. DECK OF WOODEN VESSEL - DAYBREAK**

A hooded man with shining eyes, the YOUNG MARINER, leans against the ship's side.

5 days beard growth darkens a weak chin, his thin lips breathe out smoke and vapour.

He squints sidelong into the spray.

A large herring gull perches on the wooden ledge at his side, it's head twitches, reptilian.

His ratty fingerless gloved hand flicks away a stingy rollup.

He swipes a hand in the gull's direction - it darts back, out of reach.

The mariner takes out a hunk of bread, opens a pocketknife, saws off a chunk, lifts it to his teeth, chews pensively.

The gull's claws scratch the wood as it fights its hunger...

It darts forward, retreats, tries to restrain itself.

The mariner chews, considers...

Tosses a crumb over the side.

The gull dives after it, catches it mid air, wheels away on the breeze.

The man hawks up a gob of spit and flobs it overboard.

He pulls his coat tight against the cold and disappears below deck.

73

EXT. DECK OF WOODEN VESSEL - EVENING

The SHIFT BELL TOLLS, the evening is grey, a slice of light marks the horizon line.

The young mariner once again stands in place at the gunwale, intent on rolling a cigarette...

A crumpled cigarette paper holds a pauper's portion of tobacco.

He licks the gum, rolls it tight, sparks it.

A thin line of smoke carries into the sky...

The gull, wings braking, lands on the gunwale with a clatter and lets out a greedy cry.

The young mariner eyes it.

He reaches into his pocket...

Breaks off a chunk of bread...

Places it down at arms length by his side...

The gull darts forward nervously, darts back, daring not to get too close.

The man takes a small step back.

The gull lunges in, grabs the bread and clatters overboard, dropping into the spray and away over the waves.

The young mariner watches as it skims away into the darkening sky...

A thin smile on thin lips.

74

EXT. DECK OF WOODEN VESSEL - DAYBREAK

A cold red dawn, the ship floats becalmed in an oily sea.

All is still on deck.

The NIGHT HELMSMAN yawns, checks his pocket watch, checks the sky.

The aft doors swing open and the young mariner clambers out...

He stretches...

Scratches...

Spits...

Gives the helmsman a surly nod and makes his way once more to the rail.

He pulls out his breakfast from a ratty pocket, a ship's biscuit gone to weevil.

He takes a bite.

As he chews a shadow crosses his face, his eyes track and his head turns to follow it.

The gull lands at his side.

He chews, pensive...

Places a chunk of biscuit down at arms length...

Slowly withdraws his hand...

Waits.

The gull is torn between greed and caution, its eyes dart from him to the crumb, back again.

Suddenly it lunges forward...

The young mariner lunges also...

He grabs the gull by the neck...

It thrashes in his grip, its claws rake at his oilskin, its wings thrash the air helplessly.

The young mariner raises his other hand to the gull's head...

And snaps its neck.

The bird thrashes, spasms...

Twitches...

And is still.

The mariner holds it up to meet its eye.

He smiles his thin smile.

Tosses the bird over the side.

75 **EXT. OCEAN - DAY**

It lands with a splash and floats on the surface.

A gust of wind ruffles the bird's feathers...

Fills the sails of the ship...

The ship leaps into motion, and as it pulls away its wake
tosses the lifeless body of the floating bird.

The bird drifts...

Through rain...

Through darkness...

Towards the land.

76 **EXT. MAWNAN CHURCH WOODLAND - DAYBREAK, 1929**

A gentle rolling swell washes the gull up on a rocky
shoreline.

The wave recedes and the bird is left, crumpled on the
rocks, sodden and stiff, its beak open and tongue
lolling.

The shadow of a man falls over it.

Hovers for a moment.

REVEREND JOHN NANCARROW, 45, dressed in vicar's robes,
looks down at the gull.

His look is calm, appraising.

He bends to inspect the bird, turns it over.

He runs a finger through the dark grey feathers of its
wings, the feathers gently RATTLE as they snap back into
position.

Gingerly he lifts it by the wingtips, holds it high.

The bird's shadow falls on the rock at his feet.

A small frown flickers across his brow and he pauses,
lost in a reverie.

He swings a canvas sack from behind his back...

Stuffs the dead bird inside.

Cinching it tight he turns and clambers away from the
shoreline...

With a few surefooted leaps he climbs up the low
tumbledown cliff.

He reaches the top and hauls himself up.

He stops for a moment to take in the view, a silver
morning, a gentle sea mist clinging to the shoreline.

He turns and disappears into the trees.

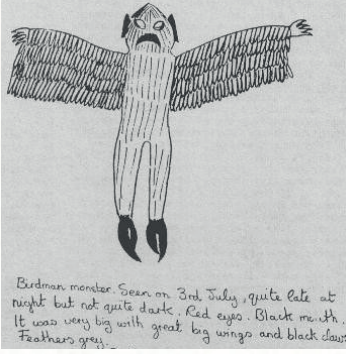
Soon he becomes no more than a dark shadow as he climbs
through the woodland that reaches up, precipitously.

A church tower - solid, castellated, an ear of stone on
each corner - rises above the canopy of trees.

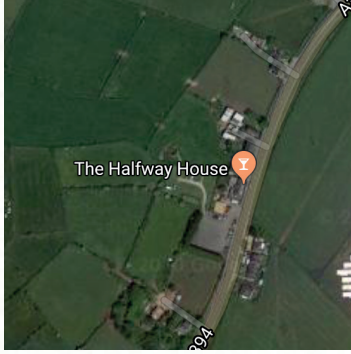
It is the only sign of man between the tangle of nature
below and the vast, empty sky above.



Owlery



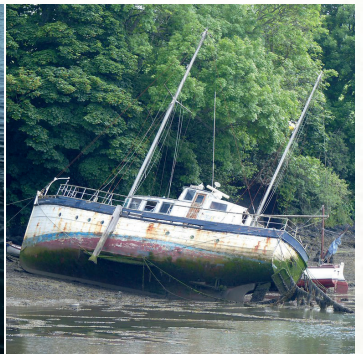
Gander



Tern



Cygnets



Gulled



Mawnan is a very real place, and the myth of the Owlman is a well known legend about a creature that haunts the local woods and church.

Many of the items described in the film are also drawn from life, the timeline is based on the dates of actual Owlman sightings.

All of the cameras through which the story is told are held in the Falmouth University stores, and available to loan.

The country locations, and The Halfway House pub, are all easily accessible.

The steamed up glass of Tina's Taxi is a concept that allows for all of the car interior scenes to be shot in the studio.

Adelle Morse, a taxidermist, performer and puppeteer, is first choice for casting. A combination of puppetry and CGI is planned for the dance sequence.

Our Ladies Island is a pilgrimage route in County Wexford. The severed wings of Common Terns can be found dotting it's shoreline.

The Cross of St. Peter is a Christian symbol, it is often mistaken for a Satanic cross - this misunderstanding drives the story.

The static caravan park is nearby, the sound of the pilgrimage speakers carries over the morning air with an eery sound.

A tidal creek up the Fal River is the setting for this tale, an idyllic spot to live, at the end of the world. There is a cottage in the woods above.

Drifts of swans, easy access to the water and boats, expertise filming in marine environments - all add feasibility to this ambitious production.

With good contacts in the Cornish pirate community, vessels with a close resemblance to Grace can be easily procured.

The seas in Falmouth Bay are calm in the summer months, over 180 degrees of open water horizon can be filmed less than a mile offshore.

The tall ship Phoenix is moored in Falmouth Harbour, and available at mate's rates.

The ship is fully rigged for sailing and shooting, having featured in The Heart of the Sea and Hornblower its crew are experts in ocean filming.

production plans - people, places, props and kit



Owlery

“Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls.”

Isaiah 34:13

Three generations are terrorised by a winged creature that haunts the village churchyard. With the building falling into disrepair and the congregation dwindling, the new vicar hatches a plot to gain publicity and save the church.



Gander

It's all about a healthy work/life balance

The owner of a small taxi service lives a fulfilled, self-sufficient life; her job is made exciting by her hobby - taxidermy - while her hobby is made possible by her job. Everything seems perfect, until one night she picks up a handsome passenger who makes her realise just what she's been missing.



Tern

You can't fly to heaven on bingo wings

A recently widowed grandmother is losing faith and losing control, meanwhile her young granddaughter has developed a religious zeal bordering on the hallucinatory. When the girl goes in search of an angelic offering for her dead grandfather her Nana's reality is turned upside down.



Cygnet

The only constant is change

A man and girl eek out a meagre existence aboard a listing hulk in a hidden forest creek, bound tightly together by a deep-seated fear of the land. But as the girl's hunger and curiosity grows she sneaks ashore, triggering an encounter that will lead her to a grim realisation and a heart-breaking choice.



Gulled

The Mire of the Modern Mariner

A fisherman befriends a seagull, every day he feeds and cares for the creature and every day its trust in him grows stronger until we feel our heart may burst from happiness. A joyful tale of the relationship between man and nature in the modern era.

