

THE ESCAPE DOWN UNDER

A TREATMENT FOR A FEATURE FILM SCREENPLAY

by
KOSTA PANTAZIS

The Present.

Melbourne city.

Swan Street.

Night.

Dave Young, A scruffy homeless-looking man, drags his son (EVAN,12) on by the hand, scattering across the street into the service building.

They both quietly and swiftly scout the service shop looking for anything they can find. Dave finds propaganda pamphlets headlined ' ONE WAY OUT' and pulls his one out in suppressed celebration. The pamphlet reads ' BLOODY OATH! OUR FINAL CHANCE IS HERE! GET TO THE CITY ON THE 3RD OF JANUARY FOR AN ESCAPE FROM THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE. ON THIS DAY WE WILL FINALLY BE FREE!' Dave whispers to himself switching from anger, laughter, and joy on repeat. Evan looks on in fright.

Evan continues to scout the place searching the back room. His attention is drawn to a funny celebration card. It's titled 'Wish You Were Here' and has a naked man from behind standing on the edge of a cliff with a cool sun wearing glasses. He opens the card and begins to read.

Evan smiling for the first time, reads the card.'UGH HURRY UP ALREADY. I NEED YO-.' Before Evan can finish reading he feels a hand cover his mouth and nose. The other hand holds a knife that presses against Evans's cheeks. These hands don't belong to Dave and belong to an unknown man. A grotty desperate scavenger whose eyes disgustingly light up at a young easy target. Evan tries his hardest to escape his hold and yells to his dad but no luck. The scavenger slowly makes little cuts onto Evans's face.

Dave storms into the backroom and freezes at the sight. He begs the man to let Evan go but isn't successful. Dave slowly walks forward but is met every step equally by a corresponding cut to Evan's face. Dave again freezes.

The scavenger's attention shifts more from Evan to Dave. The hand covering Evans's mouth loosens and Evan pleads for his life. Dave and the scavenger yell at one another. The scavenger points his knife toward Dave and Dave uses this opportunity to charge head-on and tackles the scavenger.

Evan manages to crawl away looking on in horror as the two fight back and forth. They trade blows back and forth trying to gain control of the knife. Dave glances at Evan knowing what he has to do but doesn't want to do it in front of his already scarred son.

The scavenger sits on top of Dave and strangles him. Dave's hand rapidly searches for the knife. His life flashes from his eyes. The scavenger's intense hold to Dave's surprise releases and he falls onto Dave. Dave looks up to see that Evan grabbed the knife and stabbed it into the back of the scavenger's head. Evan shakes in horror. Dave acts quickly and tells Evan to RUN.

Both of them flee the scene before more scavengers arrive. Right before they leave the building they get caught in a bear trap. Dave gets both his legs caught and Evan only one. Both of them scream in agony and harshly remove the trap. They both try to run but can't. Severe injuries leave them like a fish out of water.

They crawl out of the building and enter Swanson Street. Young Evan can't handle the pain and wants to lie still. Dave wants to push on. Dave acts quickly and gets Evan to lie on top of him so Dave can do all the work. They gruesomely continue their escape.

Other scavengers are closing in on them but stop. They stop at the sound of rumbling and distant chanting. The Scavengers run away in fear. Dave and Evan helplessly look on into the distant noise approaching.

From either side of them, thousands of people are marching towards each other. From either end of Swan Street, people marched towards each other, with Dave and Evan in the middle.

Dave hears the chant 'ONE WAY OUT' and clicks, it's a final stand—the fight of heaven and hell. A fight between opposing views and the last remaining forces in Melbourne. A battle to dictate the future. The last resort.

Both parties stop 100 meters from each other and say what they have to say to their enemy. Dave pleads sorry to Evan for doing this to him. Evan is still crying his eyes out from the pain. Dave musters all the strength he can and takes Evan to the side of the street. He has to act quickly cause at any moment the parties will charge head-first at each other, trampling them.

The parties say their final lines to each other, and so does Dave to Evan. Dave crawls to the side of the street towards a big silver metal bin. He opens the bin from the back, shoves Evan in, and closes it. Evan in horror questions what's happening. Dave wraps around to the front of the bin so Evan can see him. Both weep.

Both forces begin to close in, going from a walk to a fast jog and finally, a yelling sprint towards each other. Dave and Evan share the final gut-wrenching goodbye. Both parties close in and start to fight. The sight of Dave and Evan is lost as this massive battle fills it all. Just peaking through the bin, Evan's bloodshot soaking eyes look through in terror and pain.

A voiceover. **"We couldn't afford another world war, but it happened anyway. Who's left? No clue. Australia? It's hell. After a few silent years, everything collapsed. Food, water, oil, and electricity are gone. States turned on each other. And before you knew it we were in civil war. Now, the goal.. survive"** Flinders Street Station from the church across the street—a bright, sunny day. People walk, laugh, take photos—it's a perfect day. Suddenly, the same location transforms into a nightmare. It looks like hell on earth. People scream and run in terror. Helicopters fill the sky as mayhem unfolds. Buildings burn, crumbling into fiery rubble. Bodies lie across the street, and the air is thick with smoke and the sound of chaos. Blood stains the pavement, and cries for help echo through the devastation.

8 YEARS LATER

Evan, now in his twenties, navigates the remains of RMIT University. He looks roughened up and tired. The face scars have slowly healed but are still there. His lower left leg appears to be prosthetic. He moves with stealth scavenging anything he can.

He halted when he encountered a shadowy figure. He sneaks behind and puts a knife to the man's throat. The figure begs innocence and rapidly reaches into his pocket. Without hesitation in reaction to this, Evan reacts and kills the man.

The figure crumples to the ground, and Evan cautiously inspects the body, discovering a note tightly gripped in its hand. The message is simple but profound: "There is a way out. Boat leaving from Cape Schank Lighthouse. Please make it Dada'

Those words trigger a flood of memories—of Evan's father, of their shared struggle to survive. "A way out" reverberates in Evan's mind, a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness.

He uncomfortably sits hunched over staring at the body. His leg twitches rapidly as he nervously moves his hands, alternating between rubbing his face and running them through his hair. Driven by the child who has just lost a dad and the optimism of a way out he battles his demons and decides to go on the journey.

Evan double-checks his backpack and pockets, ready to leave. He scans his mellways to know where he must go and heads off. He sneaks through the city to its outskirts and escapes the city unseen.

Evan stares stone-cold in front of him. He stands at the base of the West Gate Bridge. After a long pause of looking at it, he pulls out binoculars to scout any activity on the bridge and sees none.

Evans walks over the bridge using the cars to hide when he can. The bridge was a rusted, crumbling structure with weeds sprouting through the cracked pavement, littered with abandoned cars and human debris. He's on the decline of the bridge and almost off.

Evan looks forward and freezes. He freezes at a woman 100 meters away covering the exit. She yells out to him. He says nothing. She tries again. Nothing. He slowly walks towards her and she yells again. He replies that he is just passing through and means no trouble.

He gets close enough for them both not to yell. Before any dialogue can unfold she briskly pulls out a small knife. Evan goes for his pocket but is stopped by 4 people who have snuck up behind him. It's an ambush. They hold him back by the neck and arms, leaving him defenseless. They take his things. The woman with the knife creeps towards him pointing the knife at his face. She tells him he made a mistake. Past the bridge is Hell on Earth and she doing him a favor.

She gets close enough and Evan kicks the side of her knee with his prosthetic leg as hard as he can, breaking her leg and dropping her instantly. The woman screams and the 4 people rush to their mother to see if she ok.

Evan gets his breath back from the headlock. The 4 idiotic brothers check on Mum and turn back to Evan. In a blind collective rage, they all attack Evan and he fends 2 off before being hit. He stands back on his feet the 4 makes a wall and inches forwards him.

To the brother's surprise, Evan runs away. He runs sideways towards the edge of the bridge and is chased by the 4 of them. The brothers close in and without hesitation Evan jumps off the bridge into the Yarra.

Evans is dragged down the river and narrowly manages to escape it, clinging to a house's backyard loading dock. He climbs up and again gets his breath back. He shakes but it's not from the cold it's from anger. He repeatedly punches the wooden decking columns. He has lost all his belongings. Evan turns at the noise of a screaming woman from inside the house.

In the house, Olympia (22) is being toyed with by 3 ravaged 'Sydney Strong' members. They are playing a twisted version of hide and seek as she runs and hides for her life from these psychos. She manages to get herself a bit of distance and sets a little trap up at the front door before running out of it.

The moment she goes to run out the door they spot her and chase after her. Two Sydney Strong run into this trap and have some sort of spray, spray directly into their eyes, stopping them in agony. The other runs after her.

She stops and turns around knowing she can't outrun him. It's an even one vs one fight now. He runs right at her but she counters perfectly and gets on his back. She climbs onto him and from behind puts him in a headlock. They both fall to the floor but she doesn't let go, the man wriggles like a worm trying to escape.

Now closing in on her is one of the sprayed victims whose eyes burn a bright red. He gets close but before he can stop the rear neck choke he is tackled at lightning speed by Evan in full power. Evan still appears angry. He punches the tackled man a ridiculous amount of times. Olympia's enemy is knocked out cold and she looks on in interest.

Evan stops and glances at Olympia. She asks if he's ok and thanks him for saving her. She continues talking happily giving Evan her whole life story in probably a minute. She isn't phased by the violence that occurred.

The third Sydney Strong member returns with reinforcements. They overpower both of them, taking them to one of the Sydney Stronghold outposts.

The Sydney Stronghold compound has high walls and watchtowers. Sydney residents in dark uniforms patrolled the area, while tagged Melbournians labored as slaves, hauling supplies and pushing carts. Makeshift stages with performers in tattered costumes make it feel like a weird nightmare. At the center, was a crazed leader, whose commands blared through loudspeakers, creating a chaotic blend of military order and twisted entertainment.

Inside the stronghold, they endure days of suffering with no food, water, or sleep, forced into heavy labor and bizarre entertainment. During this time, Olympia tells Evan about the Melbourne resistance and her plan to escape to Cape Schank.

They share a moment when she shows him her hidden iPod with downloaded music, and he hears music for the first time in his life. She dances to the music while he watches, wide-eyed, experiencing his first feelings of attraction, something entirely new to him. Against all odds they are saved when the Melbourne resistance targets the compound and overthrow it. Freeing all those inside.

The resistance confirms the rumor: the lighthouse boat is real. Freed Melbournians argue about whether to stay with the resistance. Some claim it's a death trap built on false hope, while others prefer to rebuild and live at the compound. Ultimately, only a few, including Evan and Olympia, choose to continue.

Days of travel and careful planning leave them ready to move. They must sneak through a small town, the only path forward due to a blocked highway and impassable mountains.

As they approach the town, tension mounts. The streets are eerily quiet, and shadows loom ominously from abandoned buildings. The Resistance is in front acting as a human barrier for the Melbournians. Every little noise makes them flinch. Evan and Olympia move cautiously, sticking close behind. Every creak and distant noise setting their nerves on edge. The wind blows strong.

Suddenly, they are stopped by an unexpected ambush. The enemy, from Perth and Central Australia, had anticipated their plan and set a trap. They appear out of nowhere and circle the enemy. Evan gets Olympia to stand behind him. It's a tense standoff; two enemy soldiers wield guns, weapons thought to be extinct. The two groups engage in a dangerous game of bluff, each side trying to gauge the other's next move.

To everyone's shock, the guns go off. Chaos erupts as bullets fly, and a massacre unfolds on the spot. Bodies drop instantly, blood pooling on the ground. In the aftermath, a pile of dead bodies forms, with Evan and Olympia at the bottom, appearing lifeless. Eventually, the bodies are loaded onto a train, Evan and Olympia among them.

On the train, Evan and Olympia emerge from the pile of death. Both of them are still alive. She hugs him in celebration and shock. She can't believe the play-dead plan worked. They devise a new plan. Sneak through the carriages to the front of the train and get control.

In the next carriage, three enemies clad in hazmat suits work swiftly. They label boxes and sanitize the area, prepping to raid the dead bodies. The labels - 'shoes,' 'watches,' 'jackets' - hint at their ruthless intent. They're gearing up for action, ready to strip the fallen of anything of value.

They open the door and to their surprise can hear music. From the unplugged iPod resting gracefully on top of the dead bodies plays INXS 'Devil Inside'. The three carefully walk closer and closer.

From behind the pile appears Olympia. She greets with a smile from ear to ear and waves wielding a wrench. They back up but stop at Evan's presence. He holds a small metal soccer trophy. Both weapons were taken from the pile of the dead. Matching the beat and flow of the music the 5 of them fight. Using their weapons they come out victorious. Grusomly winning.

Olympia again celebrates dancing to the music. She tells Evan the song is about them. The lyrics 'Here comes the woman. with the look in her eyes is her' is her. Correspondingly 'here comes the man, with the look in his eyes' is him. Furthermore, the lines ' look at them go, look at them kick' and 'future uncertain, but certainly slight' is all about them.

Olympias passion and realization break Evan's guard as he cracks a smile. Olympia pounces on this and forces his hand to dance. Evan first rejects it with a smile but she's adamant. He slowly gets into the music and both of them dance jumping around, swinging like wild animals.

Out of nowhere, people come in charging and yelling. Evan is tackled to the ground but before any severe damage, Olympia pleads they are on the same side. Evan is tackled by resistance members. She questions how they are on the train. Some realize the massacred bodies behind them and weep. The mood changes drastically.

Evan and Olympia learn that the resistance they were with pledged their lives to die to be a distraction. The sacrifice made by a suicide squad to enable their escape. Evan and Olympia absorb the weight of the revelation and straighten up.

The resistance tells them how things will proceed. They will have someone sneak through the carriages to the front of the train and in 3 days at 1.30 am they will HALT the train. The train will stop in front of a dense forest which they are to run into. On the other side Cape Shank lighthouse. Until then they are to wait here. Warnings are given out that there are close enemies on this train and some could have guns.

The message is loud and clear. When the train stops you run and you don't look back.

On the end of the second day of travel, amidst the tension and anticipation of their impending escape, Evan and Olympia find a moment of downtime. They sit close together, their shoulders touching as they engage in a heartfelt conversation about life and their hopes for the future.

Evan's gaze holds on Olympia's face, his expression softening as he listens intently to her words. Olympia's eyes sparkle with a mixture of warmth and vulnerability as she opens up to him, her gestures small and tentative yet filled with a quiet strength. As they speak, there's a subtle undercurrent of attraction between them, evident in the way their eyes meet and the occasional shy smile that tugs at the corners of their lips. She gives him her iPod and headphones to keep, saying she made him a playlist to listen to.

Meanwhile, throughout the train, members of the resistance move in and out of the carriages, their movements swift and purposeful as they make preparations for what's ahead. They exchange whispered words and nods of understanding, their faces set in determined expressions as they ready themselves for what is to come. Each member's body language speaks volumes, conveying a sense of unity and resolve in the face of adversity.

On the third day, as Evan moves through the carriage, he unexpectedly encounters the family of the man he killed back on Swan Street. He recognizes the family by the stickers on the child's clothes, which match those on the note, and by the child's utterance of "dada" echoing the words from the note.

His heart pounds in his chest as he approaches them, his steps hesitant. The weight of guilt hangs heavy on his shoulders, evident in the slight tremor in his hands. As he kneels to speak to the young boy, his voice is gentle yet filled with emotion, his eyes reflecting a mixture of regret and voice cracking. Evan echoes the words Dave said to

him in the goodbye. He also tells the young girl he knew his dad and he would always talk about her.

The resistance tells everyone to prepare. It's 1.25 am. Everyone gathers close and listens to the final speech. The leader, tearing up wishes everyone the best. As his voice breaks and tears flow he says the final goodbye and inspires everyone for what's to come.

The train comes to a screeching halt.

The carriage doors open to complete darkness. The lighthouse light illuminates sections of the forest at a time otherwise it is complete darkness. The leader cries for all to run. The Melbournians jump down sinking into the mud and sprinting into the black forest.

The screeching halt signals to all the enemies on the train that something is up. They all get off the train to talk and see the Melbournians running for their lives. Acting quickly they all yell at each other, grabbing their stuff and chasing.

Evan and Olympia quickly jump down and sprint into the unknown. Olympia says she can't see anything and Evan tells her to follow the lighthouse light pattern.

Resistance members stand guard blocking the entrance. Evan tells Olympia he doesn't think they have guns. The resistance is horrifically killed by an exotic thought-to-be-forgotten item. The grenade.

The Melbournians run even faster now. The panic causes many to fall, trip, and hit things because they can't see. The enemy starts to close in. They throw grenades and two of them have guns.

It becomes a giant game of cat and mouse. The grenades, gunfire, and lighthouse light are the only sources of light for both the enemy and the Melbourne. Evan and Olympia stay close together using any source of light to continue toward the lighthouse.

Both push forward, their breath loud and heavy as they navigate the treacherous terrain. The darkness seems to swallow them whole, every step a gamble in the deadly game of survival.

Emerging from the dense forest, Evan and Olympia find themselves being chased by nearly a hundred enemy soldiers. The resistance, having anticipated their arrival, has strategically positioned themselves throughout Cape Shank, ready to defend the path to

safety at all costs. With limited ammunition, they know they must use their bullets sparingly.

Evan and Olympia sprint down the pathway towards the lighthouse, the enemy closes in, engaging in battle with the resistance fighters who stand their ground, determined to protect their allies. Gunfire erupts, echoing through the air as the two sides clash in a desperate struggle for control.

Despite the chaos raging around them, Evan and Olympia press on, With each step, they draw closer to the lighthouse, its silhouette towering above them against the darkening sky.

As they reach the base of the lighthouse, they pause for a moment, catching their breath as they take in the scene unfolding around them. The sound of gunfire and shouting fills the air, but they know they must keep moving forward if they are to reach safety.

Evan and Olympia sprint towards the shore, they can see the boat slowly pulling away, its silhouette growing smaller against the horizon. Desperation fills the air as people on the boat shout for them to hurry. They explain that Cape Shank has bombs planted and is going to blow they need to be quick . Just as they're about to reach the water's edge, Evan is suddenly brought to a halt by an unexpected obstacle.

Evan crashes to the ground, pain flashing across his face. He fights to free himself, but the boat is getting farther away. At that moment, he accepts he can't catch up. His eyes show resignation as he watches Olympia, knowing he has to let her go. He releases the sand, his fingers limp. Alone on the shore, he watches the boat vanish

Seeing Evan's, Olympia jumps back off the boat, her eyes wide with concern. She insists that she won't leave him behind and that they'll find another way to escape together. Evan calls for someone to come take her. Before she can act, a man from the boat steps forward, grabbing Olympia by the arm and pulling her towards the boat.

Panicked, Olympia tries to break free, reaching out desperately towards Evan, but he stops her with a firm shake of his head. He knows that she needs to go, that she can't risk her safety for him. With a heavy heart, he reaches down removes his prosthetic foot, and throws it to Olympia to keep.

Tears stream down Olympia's face, and with a silent nod, she turns and allows herself to be pulled onto the boat. Amidst the hail of enemy gunfire, Evan and Olympia exchange

one final, heartfelt gaze, their eyes meeting in a silent farewell as the world erupts in chaos around them. And then boom. The bombs go off.

The film ends with Evan back in the city with now 2 prosthetic legs. He listens to the playlist she made for him and dances into the distance.

