

Queensland University of Technology

Phoebe Hart

Ordinary pain: pilot script

Abstract:

This creative work - an hour-long television pilot "dramedy" screenplay entitled *Ordinary Pain* – emerges out of a scriptwriting as research project within the academy, and seeks to reposition characters with an intersex variation as 'an everyday social type'. *Ordinary Pain* is the story of Zoe, a hermaphrodite and creative type based in the bohemian suburbs of the Brisbane postcode of 4101. She is a rare blend of both male and female, and, and is overcoming traumatic experiences of growing up. This subject could be perceived as unwieldy and sad. Yet the core character of Zoe is an extraordinary one, trying to live in the ordinary world with the courage to overcome shame and adversity. *Ordinary Pain* explores family, gender, sexuality and place in engaging, inspiring and funny ways, and is informed by reflection on and within screenwriting practice.

Biographical note:

Dr. Phoebe Hart is a writer, director and producer of documentaries, factual content and children's television. Dr Hart is also a lecturer in film, television and digital media at the Queensland University of Technology, and principal of Hartflicker, a video and film production company and is best known for the landmark autobiographical documentary *Orchids: My Intersex Adventure*.

Keywords:

Creative writing – Screenwriting craft – Screenwriting industry – Intersex – Screenwriting as research

Ordinary Pain

LIST OF CHARACTERS

ZOE

Zoe (mid 30s) is a filmmaker and intersex or a hermaphrodite - a blend of both male and female biological aspects. Zoe is attractive, intelligent and "special" but she's lonely and craves unconditional love. Her fear of rejection has seen her make some unfortunate romantic choices, including her unhappy marriage to the over-bearing Stuart.

CHRIS

Chris (early 40s) is an aging punk and journalist. He is idealistic and persistent, but often lacks tact and common sense. There is clearly a spark between him and Zoe but she considers him unsuitable.

HEIDI

Heidi is Zoe's outrageous yet world-weary sister, who is also intersex. Heidi is sworn off relationships and views Zoe's attempts to break back into the dating world dimly.

STUART

Stuart (early 30s) is Zoe's estranged husband - a charming but controlling and volatile man who continues to create havoc in Zoe's life.

RUBY

Ruby (early 30s) is Zoe's vivacious best friend, who enjoys a hedonistic, self-centered lifestyle. She is an enabler of Zoe's sexual Renaissance.

HEATH

Heath (late 20s) is Zoe's mysterious "bad boy" love interest.

XANTHE

Xanthe (5-6 years old) is the adopted child of Zoe and Stuart.

JEN

Jen (late 40s) is Chris' complicated ex who has never really gotten her act together.

FADE UP

1. INT. BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON ZOE'S eyes as she is looking in the mirror.

ZOE

(to self)

You can do this. There's no one quite like you, right? Let's just get out there and give this a go. OK? OK.

IN WIDE SHOT, Zoe stands in front of the mirror of a nondescript public bathroom, leaning in over the Formica vanity to meet eye to eye with her reflection.

Zoe's lips twitch and she leans back slightly. She looks the part of an attractive, confident woman, with an artistic flair.

Zoe flashes a smile at her visage, checks for any food stuck between her sparkly whites and turns on her heel to leave.

2. EXT. STREET - DAY

As Zoe exits the bathroom hurriedly, she stumbles and trips on the doorstep and falls down on her hands and knees.

She's not hurt but she turns her head to catch her reflection in a shop window. Her body looks misshapen and deformed, like a beast.

Zoe drops her eyes and slumps before standing up.

She staggers off, breaking into an ambling jog as she passes a large billboard proclaiming "YOU'RE SPECIAL".

3. INT/ EXT. HOUSE DOORSTEP - DAY

CHRIS - an aging punk who now wears a suit jacket instead of a leather jacket over a Dead Kennedy's band shirt - approaches the door.

It opens before Chris can knock. JEN, Chris' ex, who is mature, sophisticated and fed up, holds the door open.

JEN

We're not quite ready yet.

CHRIS

What's up?

JEN

Bryce needs to finish his assignment.

Jen throws a look into the living room, where Bryce, a teenage boy, is playing a VIDEO GAME.

JEN

(to Bryce)

Come on! Your dad's here.

Bryce, spread out on the couch, barely acknowledges.

BRYCE

Yep.

Chris tries to look in past the doorframe.

CHRIS

(to Bryce)

Come on mate. You need to listen to your mother.

There's no response from within. Jen turns to Chris.

JEN

I need to talk to you about child support. Is there any chance you can pay me early this month?

CHRIS

Huh?

JEN

Haven't been paid for a few big jobs yet. And rent's due on Friday.

Chris shakes his head, but then nods.

JEN (CONT'D)

You could pay me for two months worth. Please.

CHRIS

Jen!

JEN

It won't happen again.

CHRIS

That's what you said last time.

Jen looks down, momentarily embarrassed but then looks back at Chris with her syrupy smile. Chris slumps, defeated.

JEN

Thanks. You're a lifesaver.

(to Bryce)

Bryce! Turn that thing off NOW.

Bryce sneers and throws down the console.

BRYCE

Stop fucken hasslin me!

JEN

(to Chris)

Two hours more?

Jen shuts the door. Chris turns and clicks his CAR KEYS to lock the car. He pockets the keys as he walks off down the street.

4. INT. CINEMA FOYER - DAY

Zoe enters the foyer. There are BANNERS and people milling about for a film festival.

HEIDI, with disheveled hair, vintage dress and biker boots, runs through the crowd and jumps in front of Zoe, surprising her.

HEIDI

There you are!

Heidi kisses Zoe on both cheeks in a theatrical manner.

ZOE

I got held up.

HEIDI

Our session is SOLD OUT.

ZOE

No way?!

HEIDI

Yes way baby. There's only a few seats left, and they're ours.

Heidi brandishes a handful of CINEMA TICKETS.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

What do you want to do with them?

Zoe and Heidi's eyes meeting in unspoken, sisterly agreement.

5. EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Heidi and Zoe stand in the street watching people passing by or cue to enter the festival.

Heidi spots two women walking together down the street hand-in-hand, and steps out, stopping them in their tracks.

HEIDI

You have been selected to come see
a most excellent documentary film.
What say you?

As Heidi pitches to the surprised pedestrians, Zoe scans the crowd for someone to give her remaining complimentary ticket.

At the same time, Chris comes around the corner, deep in thought, not really concentrating on his surroundings.

Zoe swings around suddenly and bumps into Chris.

ZOE

Oh shit!

Chris recovers and catches himself a beat as he sees Zoe for the first time.

CHRIS

No damage done. Sorry.

Zoe takes a good look at Chris. He's kinda cute.

ZOE

Um, how would you like to see a
great documentary?

CHRIS

A documentary? What's it about?

ZOE

Me.

CHRIS

You? You must be pretty interesting.

ZOE

I am.

CHRIS

You look normal to me.

ZOE

Looks can be deceiving.

CHRIS

So I've been told.

(beat)

When does it start?

Zoe smiles and hands Chris the ticket. Heidi saunters over.

HEIDI

(to Chris)

What's your name?

CHRIS

Chris. Are you in the film too?

HEIDI

Fleetingly. It's Zoe's baby.

(to Zoe)

But Zoe has to go now.

(to Chris)

It's a masterpiece!

Heidi drags Zoe away. Chris watches them leave before joining the cue entering the theatre.

6. INT. MOVIE THEATRE - EVENING

Chris takes his seat as Zoe and Heidi walk towards the front of the crowded theatre. In the spotlight, the FESTIVAL DIRECTOR holds a microphone.

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Thank you for coming to OUT Queer Film Festival. The film you're about to see has had a great run around the world and I am sure it will enchant you. And we're very lucky to have the filmmakers and stars of the show here tonight, Zoe and Heidi. Please make them feel welcome.

Polite applause. Chris in the audience looks a bit worried.

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

There will be a chance to chat with them after the screening. So without further ado, we're proud to present INTERSEX.

The theatre darkens and the film begins. ON SCREEN, in grainy, super-8 film stock we see a baby being born and presented to her parents. The adults smile and fondly cradle the baby.

ZOE (V.O.)

When I was born, the doctors announced they had a given birth to healthy baby girl. And so it seemed. But a secret lay down deep, below the skin-surface.

CUT TO:

A montage shows the baby meeting bearded hippie family members, then significant milestones; sitting up in a retro HIGHCHAIR eating solid food, first steps, etc.

ZOE (V.O.)

I arrived ready to love.

Again, in super-8, Zoe's mother takes a photo of 5-year old Zoe in pigtails with her little sister.

CUT TO:

A YOUNG ZOE in a doctor's office as she sits fidgeting to one side as the doctor is explaining in detail a complicated diagnosis using a variety of CHARTS detailing the workings of the reproductive systems to her worried parents.

ZOE (V.O.)

Then something was discovered that made me less than desirable.

The doctor turns to Young Zoe.

DOCTOR

You're very special, Zoe

Young Zoe smiles, not really understanding, and gazes at a chart on the consulting room wall. The images on the chart of penis and vagina begin dancing about, one morphing into the other.

CUT TO:

A teen Zoe in her bedroom, as she flips through a typical MANUAL explaining what to expect at puberty - breast development, sex questions and menstrual products.

In the school yard, Zoe is eating lunch with her gaggle of girls. They are all talking boys. She sneaks a peak at a cute boy, who is kicking a BALL with his friends.

The boy stops to pick up the ball, and turns and catches Zoe's gaze and smiles dashingly. Zoe turns away shyly.

ZOE (V.O.)

I knew I was different.
Then came the day when I finally
started to understand what it
actually meant.

Zoe is seated with her mother and father, as they explain something rather difficult to her. She is at once perplexed, amazed and horrified.

Back at school, Zoe is sitting alone. The cute boy approaches to talk to her, but she sees him coming and gets up and moves away.

ZOE (V.O.)

From then on, I didn't expect to be
anything to anyone.

Zoe - as adult - is on the big screen speaking directly to the audience.

ZOE

This is my story. I am a
hermaphrodite.

The audience lets out a little gasp and breaks into spontaneous applause, Chris included.

6. INT. CINEMA FOYER - EVENING

The audience is streaming out of the theatre chatting about the movie and swirling around Zoe and Heidi as they answer questions and accept complements animatedly.

Chris pushes through to speak with Zoe.

ZOE

So, I hope it wasn't a complete waste of time for you.

CHRIS

No. Not at all. It was very - courageous

Zoe smiles shyly. A gaggle of colourful queer kids approach and interrupt.

QUEER KID

Oh. My. God. I just wanted to say how glad I am that intersex people are coming out.

ZOE

Thanks.

QUEER KID

We're so proud of you guys. For just, y'know, sharing.

ZOE

Well, I suppose if it helps change the way society treats us -

QUEER KID

Absolutely! What are you guys doing now?

Heidi leans forward sensing a free drink when Zoe jumps in.

ZOE

Sorry. Early flight to catch.

QUEER KID

That's a shame.

(to Chris)

How about you, handsome?

CHRIS

Huh? Ah, no thanks. I've got to pick up my son. From my ex. Wife.

QUEER KID

An out and proud straight guy? That's original. Well, congrats girls.

The queer kids spin and walk off in unison. Heidi looks peeved.

HEIDI
Thanks. I'll get the taxi.

Zoe nods as Heidi leaves.

ZOE
I'll be out in a sec.
(beat)
Are you a local?

CHRIS
I guess you could say this is home
base. I travel a bit.
(beat)
Journo.

ZOE
Cool.
(beat)
It was nice to meet you.

Zoe smiles and turns to go. Chris looks for something else to say to hold her for a minute longer, but she slips away.

7. INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Heidi is hitting the BOOZE from the mini-bar. But Zoe is lost in thought. Zoe tries to ring STUART, but only gets his voicemail.

8. EXT. AIRPORT - MORNING

Heidi and Zoe struggle with LUGGAGE as Ruby pulls up at the pickup zone. But Ruby has a passenger already.

Ruby jams on the handbrake and without missing a beat launches over onto her passenger, a RUGGED SCANDANAVIAN TYPE. They begin mauling each other with their mouths and hands.

Heidi shoots Zoe a baleful glance and they walk up to the parked car. Ruby releases her prey as Heidi and Zoe approach, and the backpacker hefts himself out of the car.

The backpacker collects his BAG from the backseat, slinging it easily over his shoulder as if it is only stuffed with feathers and saunters off.

Zoe turns to watch this fine specimen pass by, mouth agape.

Heidi slams her bag into the boot, as Ruby smooths her dress out.

HEIDI
What the hell was that?

RUBY
I found him at my yoga class.
Travelling the world on a spiritual
pilgrimage of sorts. He was drawn
to my base chakra.

ZOE
How do you do it?

RUBY
Oh, they can't help it.

HEIDI
Is it serious?

Ruby cackles.

RUBY
Hardly! Now how was Melbourne? Meet
anyone interesting?

Heidi raises an eyebrow as she looks over to Zoe, who pretends to not have heard the question.

9. INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY

Chris and Bryce are sitting on the couch. Bryce is watching TV while Chris is surfing the Internet. He is looking at sites explaining Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome.

A PHOTO of Zoe appears on Wikipedia, which Chris clicks to make larger. He gazes at the photo, lost in thought.

10. INT. CAR, OUTSIDE DAYCARE CENTRE - DAY

Zoe carefully opens door and helps XANTHE into her seat. Xanthe clambers over to hug Heidi.

XANTHE
Heidi!

RUBY
Don't forget about me.

XANTHE

Hello Rudy.

RUBY

Ruby.

XANTHE

Mum says you're a Rude-y.

Ruby gasps as Zoe jumps into the car.

HEIDI

(to Xanthe)

What did you learn about today?

XANTHE

Controlling our im-pul-siv-ity.

HEIDI

At least someone here is picking up something useful.

ZOE

Did you miss mummy?

XANTHE

Yes. Luka and me played.

RUBY

Is Luka your boyfriend?

XANTHE

No. Boyfriends and girlfriends get married. And we're just kids.

HEIDI

Not all boyfriends and girlfriends get married.

XANTHE

Are you married Heidi?

HEIDI

NO. Love sucks.

RUBY

(to Heidi)

What about that guy who was sniffing around - the one who makes the sculptures with deer antlers?

HEIDI

Talk about issues.

ZOE

You're setting the bar high.

HEIDI

With good reason.

Xanthe blinks at the adults with child-like innocence.

11. INT. FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Zoe finishes putting Xanthe to bed - the child is asleep and perfect, surrounded by SOFT TOYS and bathed in the warm glow of the bedside lamp.

Zoe gingerly closes her daughter's bedroom door. Outside in the main living area it is a different story. Harsh overhead light reveals the room is messy; mountains of unfolded LAUNDRY and the kitchen sink piled high with UNWASHED DISHES.

Zoe groans overwhelmed, staggering into the kitchen to make a start on putting the dinner items away. PHOTOS of better times - Zoe looking fabulous - adorn the fridge. There are some AWARDS for her films too, poking out from between some dirty socks. Heidi is lounging nearby on a DAYBED.

Zoe picks up a BOWL of half-eaten melted ice-cream from the kitchen table and plonks in back down. Instead, Zoe clears a spot at the table and sits down to rest her head on it.

ZOE

I'm fucked. I feel like my life is just a series of maintenance jobs. Maintaining the house, maintaining the child, maintaining my life..

HEIDI

What about Stuart? Um, he's your husband. He should at least make an effort.

At that moment, the key in the lock turns. Zoe raises her weary head.

ZOE

Speak of the devil.

Stuart enters the house. He dumps his BRIEFCASE next to the door.

He pushes the door back forcefully, slamming it. Zoe freezes waiting for Xanthe to call out. Stuart realises what he has done.

STUART
Is Xanthe in bed?

ZOE
Yeah.

STUART
What the - ? Is that yogurt on the floor?

ZOE
I'm about to clean it up.

Stuart looks pissed off and stalks to the fridge, grabbing a BEER.

He turns as if he's about to have a go at Zoe, but then notices Heidi for the first time and recovers.

STUART
Oh, hello Heidi. I didn't see you there.

HEIDI
Just blending into the background.

ZOE
Heidi's been helping out.

Heidi twinkles her fingers at Stuart.

HEIDI
Helping hand when you need it.

Stuart scowls as Heidi gets up off the couch.

STUART
Zoe's lucky to have your support.
So how was Melbourne?

HEIDI
A tour de force.
(to Zoe)
Well, I best be going.

They move toward the door somewhat out of earshot from Stuart.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
Let me know how it goes with
bugalugs. Don't let him bully you.

Zoe casts a quick glance over her shoulder. Stuart is lurking nearby.

HEIDI (CONT'D)
(loudly, so Stuart can
hear)
You were great. You're so special!

Zoe nods with a plastic smile as she bundles Heidi out of the door before she can make any more waves. Zoe returns to the kitchen.

STUART
Is this what you do with your time?
Sit around gas-bagging with your
sister?

ZOE
We were just playing with Xanthe.
It makes it easier when there's two
of us.

STUART
You could at least have got this
place cleaned up more before I got
home.

ZOE
I've only just got back from -

STUART
Yes. Melbourne. The film.

ZOE
It's not for much longer.

STUART
It has to stop. Now.

ZOE
It's important. For me. For others.

STUART

And what about Xanthe? What about our family? Did you go over your notes for tomorrow?

ZOE

I'll do that now.

STUART

I'm serious. I don't want Xanthe to be an only child.

Zoe says nothing, but looks hopeless and gets up to start cleaning some more.

Zoe leans over to wipe up the yogurt, her arse in the air.

Stuart gets a Cheshire Cat expression, and snatches at Zoe, yanking her into his lap.

STUART (CONT'D)

That's better. Now where's my welcome back sex?

Stuart starts ripping at Zoe's clothes. Zoe squirms and shifts in his lap.

Stuart ropes his arm around her belly and squeezes, tight. Zoe instantly lets out a loud FART.

Zoe gasps and Stuart release Zoe and pushes her off his leg.

STUART (CONT'D)

That's disgusting. You need to see a doctor. I'm taking a shower.

Stuart slams down his beer bottle amongst the crap on the kitchen table and storms out of the room.

Zoe sinks down on the chair again, dismayed.

12. INT. KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

A middle-aged SOCIAL WORKER sits between Zoe and Stuart at the table, with documents spread out all over. Stuart is leaning in attentive while Zoe looks spaced out and sad.

SOCIAL WORKER

... And once the file has been approved then you can expect you will be moved on the list which matches children to prospective adoptive parents.

STUART

We are doing a great job with Xanthe, and I know she would love a little brother or sister. What did she say to you last week, Zoe?

ZOE

Um, something about wanting someone she can boss around.

Stuart laughs but his eyes are throwing daggers at Zoe.

SOCIAL WORKER

So, Zoe, I can see in your family profile that you can't have biological offspring due to your intersex condition. That must have been quite challenging for you.

ZOE

It was. Is. But I think it makes me more accepting and understanding of others.

The Social Worker absorbs this for a moment.

SOCIAL WORKER

How old were you when you found out?

ZOE

11. But I only knew a few bits and pieces. I didn't find out the whole truth until I was 17.

The Social Worker nods carefully while Stuart's face remains a mask of conviviality.

SOCIAL WORKER

And it says here you have had a few episodes of depression over the last decade. And were on medication last year.

ZOE

I was experiencing low level anxiety. I'm better now.

SOCIAL WORKER

Of course. We all have our low periods. But how do you think you'll go if your approved and the new baby arrives?

ZOE

I -

Zoe stalls, and looks to Stuart who is glaring at Zoe.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I - think I'll be OK.

The Social Worker considers Zoe for a moment then looks down to make a note in her pad.

Zoe looks over at Stuart, who shakes his head curtly at her, his anger bubbling just below the surface.

13. INT. FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Zoe and Stuart are ARGUING. Zoe is huddled on a stool at the kitchen table while Stuart paces on the other side like an angry bear. Stuart has a beer in his hand and occasionally slugs back on the bottle.

STUART

What the fuck is up with you?

ZOE

I'm sorry.

STUART

Sorry? That was sabotage.

ZOE

I'm just really tired.

STUART

None of my friends' wives seem to complain as much as you.

ZOE

What the -?

STUART

You don't want to be a mother, really.

ZOE

It's harder than you think.

STUART

Maybe you should admit you weren't born to do this. It's just your masculine side coming through.

ZOE

Are you serious? I'm working my arse off to make this work!

STUART

If you don't want to have another kid, then release me so I can find a real woman who will have more children.

This hits Zoe like a punch in the gut.

ZOE

Wow. If you want a "real woman" I suggest you go out and find one.

STUART

Maybe I will.

ZOE

Fuck you.

STUART

Fuck me? If only. I'm bringing money in, paying for the house. Do you even know how much the monthly repayments are?

ZOE

I think -

STUART

- That's what I thought. The fact is I've been carrying you for years.

ZOE

I'm trying the best that I can.

STUART

And still it's not good enough.

ZOE

Is that what you really think?

(beat)

Fine. I'm getting out of here.

Zoe stands up and grabs her PILLOW out of the master bedroom. Stuart follows her barking down her neck all the way to Xanthe's room.

STUART

Go! I've heard it all before. Where would you go? No one else will have you -

Zoe slams the door in Stuart's face. Xanthe whimpers from within.

Inside the room, Zoe gets on the bed with Xanthe, who is rolling around under the covers, eyelids fluttering.

STUART (O.S.)

You'll have nothing!

Zoe comforts Xanthe, frozen against the child's body in the bed like a possum playing dead.

14. EXT. FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Zoe deposits Xanthe into the car with an overnight bag.

Stuart watches from the house window as they drive off.

15. EXT. HEIDI'S HOUSE - LATER

The car pulls up. Heidi is sitting on the front stairs with a COFFEE and CIGARETTE. Zoe helps Xanthe out of the car.

HEIDI

Finally happened.

Zoe struggles past Heidi with Xanthe into the house; Heidi rises and follows.

16. INT. HEIDI'S HOUSE - MORNING

The house is full of WEIRD ART OBJECTS. Heidi indicates towards a room off the hall.

HEIDI

You're welcome here, as long as you like.

XANTHE

Are we sleeping over?

ZOE

Yeah, for a bit.

Zoe looks up at Heidi, lip trembling. Wordlessly, Heidi embraces Zoe. Xanthe pats her mum on the leg.

HEIDI

So, what now?

ZOE

I don't know. All I know is it has to end. Or I have to start again. Fuck!

XANTHE

Mummy, don't swear!

Heidi and Zoe start laughing.

17. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE - LATER

Zoe is working on her LAPTOP but looks stressed and unhappy. A text message arrives from Stuart on her MOBILE PHONE. "I want Xanthe with me this weekend".

Zoe grimaces and tosses phone away further. Just as she does, it starts ringing. Fumbling, she picks up the phone - it's a number she does not recognise - and answers.

ZOE

Hello?

18. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris is at his desk in his busy open plan office.

CHRIS

Hey, I hope you might remember me.
Chris Davies. We met at your
screening in Melbourne on the
weekend? You gave me a ticket on
the street...

19. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Zoe sits up straight.

ZOE

Oh. Yes. What can I do for you?

CHRIS (O.S.)

Well, I wanted to talk to you about
doing a feature article. For my
publication.

ZOE

Oh? That's nice. But I'm not sure
if it's a good time for something
like that.

20. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris leans forward.

CHRIS

I told my editor all about your
film and she loves it. I think it
would be a really powerful story in
print too.

ZOE (O.S.)

I don't know.

CHRIS

I promise you - it would be very
tasteful.

21. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Zoe brushes a hand over her hair.

ZOE

And you'd be writing it?

CHRIS (O.S.)

Yes.

ZOE

So, you'd come to Brisbane?

CHRIS (O.S.)

You'd rather we brought you down here?

ZOE

No. Um, Ok.

22. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris leans back in his chair.

CHRIS

Brilliant. How's next Thursday?

ZOE (O.S.)

Sure.

23. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE - DAY

CHRIS (O.S.)

It'll be nice to get to know you better. And meet your family.

ZOE

What do you mean?

CHRIS (O.S.)

I need to interview everyone for the story - you, your sister, your husband...

ZOE

Yeah, about that. I don't think Stuart would want to be involved. He's burnt out with all the publicity from the movie.

24. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris taps his pen on the edge of the desk.

CHRIS

It's important.

ZOE (O.S.)

OK. I'll ask. No guarantees.

CHRIS

Thanks. I'll send you an email with the details. See you next week.

ZOE (O.S.)

Bye.

Chris hangs up.

25. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Zoe puts down her phone, a little weirded out.

As soon as she returns her attention to the computer screen, another text message appears from Stuart. "We need to talk".

Zoe bugs out completely and tosses the phone away, out of sight behind an armchair.

26. EXT. FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

Zoe is dropping Xanthe to Stuart for the weekend. Stuart meets them at the front gate, giving Xanthe a big hug. Zoe stands by, awkward.

STUART

How's my little buttercup?

XANTHE

Can I watch TV, daddy?

STUART

Go on inside.

ZOE

Bye darling.

Xanthe runs inside. Zoe turns to go.

STUART

I wanted to ask you something. How long is this going to go on?

ZOE

What do you mean?

STUART

Us living apart. It's not right.

ZOE

There's a lot of things that aren't right. We need some space.

STUART

I can't go on not knowing if this relationship is going to survive.

Zoe narrows her eyes and turns to go.

STUART (CON'T'D)

Oh, and there's a few people coming over tonight, for a few drinks. I'm only telling you in case you hear it from someone else.

Zoe tries to remain impassive, but can't help but show some hurt. She walks out to her CAR.

27. INT. ALTERNATIVE PUB - NIGHT

Ruby and Zoe enter. It's dark, bustling and sweaty and the music from the live band is pumping.

Guys are ogling Ruby who is dressed vampishly. Ruby seems oblivious to the attention, but Zoe, whose attire is much more conservative, notices them noticing.

RUBY

Right. Ready for some fun?

ZOE

Sort of.

Ruby glares at Zoe with mock disapproval and takes out a small PLASTIC CONTAINER from her bag. Small chunks of chocolate-looking fudge are inside. Ruby opens up the container and extras two squares.

RUBY

Here, eat this.

Zoe looks at Ruby questioningly.

ZOE

Are they strong?

Ruby shrugs and starts eating her fudge. Ruby starts eating hers.

28. INT. ALTERNATIVE PUB - LATER

Zoe and Ruby are laughing wildly, staggering about. They lurch up against the band's MERCH TABLE, which has been left unattended.

ZOE

Hey, let's be merch girls!

RUBY

Great. What I've always wanted. I bet I can sell more than you.

ZOE

Challenge accepted.

Zoe wriggles into a BAND TEE while Ruby grins and scans the crowd.

RUBY

(to Hot Gig-goer)

Hey! Do you wanna buy a t-shirt?

Ruby holds a SHIRT up to show it off, draping it alluringly over her breasts. The tall handsome man takes once glance at Ruby and gives her his full attention.

HOT GIG-GOER

Hmm. How much?

ZOE

(to Ruby)

Ten dollars?

RUBY

Ten dollars. It's gonna look real sexy on you.

Zoe giggles.

HOT GIG-GOER

What else do I get for my ten dollars?

Ruby sizes the punter up and down.

RUBY

How about some love?

Zoe laughs hysterically.

HOT GIG-GOER

Sold.

Hot Gig-goer hands Zoe a TEN DOLLAR NOTE, which she stuffs into her bra.

She then leans over the table and gives him a chaste kiss, which develops into a full-on French kiss.

ZOE

Oh, my fucking god!

Another punter, HEATH, saunters over. He smiles sexily at Zoe.

HEATH

Looks like a great deal.

Zoe melts for an instant but then panics. She begins arranging the table.

ZOE

Oh, I'm just selling shirts. And stickers. And I'm really stoned. Want a sticker?

HEATH

Not really.

Heath leans over the table to speak directly to Zoe.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Your friend looks busy. Can I get you a drink?

Zoe is speechless. Heath just smiles and walks away. The merchandise girl walks up.

MERCH GIRL

Get the fuck out of here.

Zoe, Ruby and Hot Gig-goer scuttle away.

28. INT. ALTERNATIVE PUB - NIGHT

Ruby and her new friend are in a corner making out. Zoe is wandering through the crowd looking lost and distressed.

All around her she can see the thrust and grind of a secret sexual language she only vaguely recognizes.

Turning to get away, she runs smack bang into a mountain of a man with a shaggy beard wearing a torn and DIRTY TANK TOP and GYM PANTS, dancing spasmodically. He is the Acid Bogan.

ACID BOGAN

What are you?

ZOE

Zoe.

ACID BOGAN

I'm tripping balls right now. What did you say?

Zoe carefully assesses the Acid Bogan.

ZOE

Are you OK?

ACID BOGAN

What are you doing here?

ZOE

I came with my friend.

Zoe looks around for Ruby, only to see her leaving the pub with the guy she kissed.

ACID BOGAN

I like this music. You're hot!

ZOE

Thanks. I just broke up with my husband.

ACID BOGAN

I'm a phoenix.

Acid Bogan mawkishly screeches and flaps his wings, spinning around and off onto the dancefloor. Out of the darkness,

Heath emerges with a GLASS OF WATER.

HEATH

Here. I thought you might need this.

Zoe happily accepts the water.

ZOE

So, I'm Zoe.

HEATH

Heath.

ZOE

Nice name. Like a bush. Do you like bush?

(beat)

Oh fuck.

HEATH

Yes. I like bush.

ZOE

Perfect. I mean, of course you do. I mean, it would be fine if you liked sausage too.

Heath smiles mysteriously.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck. Are you having fun?

HEATH

Sure. How about you?

Zoe grimaces. Heath stares at her intensely.

ZOE

Did you see that guy? He's on acid.

Heath casually glances at the Acid Bogan who is freaking out on the dancefloor then returns his laser focus to Zoe.

HEATH

Maybe we should hang out sometime?

ZOE

Hang out? Like hang out hang out or..?

Heath frowns slightly.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Zoe looks as though she's about to burst into tears. Heath smiles and takes out a SHARPIE PEN from his pocket. He writes his phone number on Zoe's arm.

HEATH

Call me.

Heath caps the pen and walks off. Zoe stands staring in distress, disbelief and finally delight. She fingers the scrawl on her arm as if it were a new tattoo.

Dazed, Zoe looks around the crowd. The Acid Bogan grins insanely and waves at her. Zoe meekly waves back, turns on her heel and hightails it out of the club.

29. INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Zoe is making coffee in her PAJAMAS. Noise of MORNING CARTOONS on the TV in the living room next door filters through.

Zoe's MOBILE PHONE rings - it's Ruby - and she answers it straight away.

ZOE

Where the fuck did you go last night?

30. INT. RUBY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Ruby's house has a distinctly hippy-ish vibe. She is stretching out on a YOGA MAT.

RUBY

Oh, I saw you were having fun. Did you get a number for that guy?

31. INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Zoe looks at her arm. The number is still there.

ZOE

Yes. But there's no way I'm ringing him.

32. INT. RUBY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Ruby assumes a new pose.

RUBY

Why not?

ZOE (O.S.)

Because I'm married. And besides,
I'm sure all he felt was pity for
me. I was a jibbering mess.

Ruby blinks.

RUBY

Not true. And you broke up with
Stuart.

33. INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Zoe wraps her arm over her face.

ZOE

Look, I can't just yet.

RUBY (O.S.)

Might do you a world of good.

ZOE

I'll think about it.

The COFFEE PERCULATOR begins to puff with steam.

34. INT. RUBY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The Hot Gig-goer walks by Ruby pulling his shirt and waves
goodbye as he leaves. Ruby gives him a big grin as she
continues chatting to Zoe on the phone.

RUBY

Well, you might wanna jump on that
train before it leaves the station.

ZOE (O.S.)

Choo choo!

35. INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

RUBY (O.S.)

Don't tell me you haven't thought
about it.

ZOE

I haven't thought about it. Much.

RUBY (O.S.)

If you thought it, he definitely thought it. I saw you last night. You wanted it. Bad.

ZOE

Is sex all you think about?

RUBY (O.S.)

Who needs to think when you can fuck?

Zoe starts laughing and the coffee pot begins to scream.

ZOE

Whatever. Talk to you later.

Zoe hangs up and tosses the phone aside, taking the piping hot percolator off the stove top.

After a beat, she grabs her phone and dials Heath's number.

She wavers over the "Call" button and instead saves the number for later.

36. INT. ZOE'S OFFICE. DAY.

Zoe is lying on the couch playing with her phone. She composes a text message to Heath: "HEY, WANNA CATCH UP?". There is a KNOCK at the door. Zoe sits up and looks at her phone, finger hovering over the SEND button.

Another KNOCK.

Zoe shuts her eyes and presses. The message sends. SWOSH! She opens her eyes and exhales a long breath.

Zoe turns the phone to silent mode, and shoves it in her pocket. She jumps up, looking around. The place looks a bit unkempt. She plumps the CUSHIONS.

Another KNOCK and Zoe hurries to answer it.

As Zoe opens the door, Chris stands beaming at Zoe with his coat and bag in hand. A TAXI drives off in the background.

Chris' evenly spiked hair is entirely flattened on one side of his head like he's been sleeping against the window during his flight.

Zoe can't help a visible body shock when she sees him again

- partly out of attraction and partly out of pity - but she hides it well.

CHRIS
Zoe, "life" itself.

ZOE
Huh?

CHRIS
It's Greek, your name? Means life.

ZOE
O-kay.

CHRIS
I prefer the Japanese translation though - "uniquely different".

ZOE
You did your research.
Zoe makes a sweeping 'enter' gesture and Chris comes in, loudly wiping his shoes and taking in the decor. Zoe acts a bit like a game show girl, ushering the way inside.

CHRIS
So, I guess you didn't think you'd see me again?

ZOE
No. Would you like something to drink?

CHRIS
No thanks. I've had my caffeine fix.
(beat)
Shall we get started?

Zoe nods and they both sit in unison. Chris takes out a SMALL RECORDING DEVICE from his case.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Do you mind?

Zoe shakes her head then smooths her hair.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
So, I just wanted to say again, your movie is very moving.

ZOE

Thank you.

CHRIS

When did you think you'd, "let's make a film about my life", Zoe?

ZOE

I don't know. I just wanted to make sure no one went through what I went through. As a teenager.

CHRIS

Yes, it must have been difficult. Not knowing but sensing you were different..?

ZOE

Yes. It was. I mean, I didn't even know if I'd ever, you know, get a boyfriend.

CHRIS

Because of your genitalia?

ZOE

What?

CHRIS

Er, maybe your genitalia look... unusual?

ZOE

No. Not really.

Zoe rolls her eyes.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I look completely female from the outside. I've just got male chromosomes, and - stuff.

Chris shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

CHRIS

Oh. Well, I read online -

ZOE

- there's lots of different types. Of intersex.

CHRIS

Right.

Chris checks his notes.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

How do you think this film will help?

Zoe looks at Chris hard before answering.

ZOE

I suppose if one other intersex kid says "that's my story - I'm not alone" then I think I've done my job.

CHRIS

And... Your husband? James? What does he think about the film.

ZOE

Oh, well, he supports it, I suppose.

(beat)

Truth be told, we're on a break. But I don't want that to be part of the story.

Chris sits back in his chair, mouth slightly agape but quickly regains his composure.

CHRIS

Was it the film? Has the - exposure - been too much?

Zoe looks down at her hands folded neatly her lap for a moment.

ZOE

It's probably a lot of things. It's not easy. Being with someone like me.

CHRIS

Are you kidding?

Zoe looks at Chris quizzically before allowing a tiny smile.

Chris again is a bit lost, but only for a beat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You needn't worry. I won't write about this, if you don't want it. Do you think there's a chance you'll get back together?

Zoe shrugs.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I've been through it. It's not easy. My ex still drives me crazy.

ZOE

Really?

CHRIS

Yep. Is your daughter with you most of the time?

ZOE

For the moment. Stuart seems to be going through a phase. Partying a bit.

CHRIS

And how about you? Have you had a chance to take a break?

ZOE

A little. Too much to take care of to go too crazy.

CHRIS

Sometimes you need to go a bit crazy.

Zoe smiles sadly.

ZOE

Do you find that helps?

CHRIS

I can't say. Been trying to get sane most of my life.

Zoe shifts a little in her seat. Chris catches her discomfort and pulls himself up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Shall we continue?

Zoe nods and smiles.

37. EXT. FRONT DOOR. LATER.

Zoe sees Chris out the door, moving slowly and talking like they wish the interview didn't have to stop. Chris turns to her.

CHRIS

I think the article will come together really well. Work will organise a photographer to come soon.

ZOE

Fine. Just -

CHRIS

What?

ZOE

Nothing. Just don't make me look like a dickhead.

CHRIS

Yeah, a dickhead is not as good as a dick and vagina at the same time, huh?

Zoe is shocked but then bursts out laughing.

ZOE

Holy shit. You're a weirdo.

CHRIS

Takes one to know one.

Chris turns to leave. Zoe shakes her head. She reaches into her pocket and gets out her phone.

A text message has arrived: "WHAT R U DOING TONIGHT? HEATH". Zoe beams and bites her lip.

Chris opens the taxi door and turns back to wave goodbye to Zoe. But Zoe's attention is focused on her reply to Heath.

Distracted, Zoe misses Chris' crestfallen smile.

38. INT. HIPSTER BAR. NIGHT.

Zoe enters the bar, a little more glamorous looking than her last nocturnal outing. She searches around looking for Heath but doesn't see him. She sits at the bar to wait.

The BARTENDER approaches.

ZOE

What do you drink when you're waiting for a hot date?

The bartender smiles condescendingly and starts fixing Zoe a drink.

39. INT. HIPSTER BAR. LATER.

Zoe slurps the dregs of her FANCY LONG-GLASS COCKTAIL with SILLY GARNISHES and smiles, flushed. She checks her PHONE. Nothing.

Zoe looks around. No Heath. She goes to stand up, swaying a little, and catches the bartender's attention.

ZOE

How much do I owe you?

HEATH (O.S.)

Going somewhere?

Heath appears out of nowhere and sidles up beside Zoe. He gives Zoe a mischievous smile. Zoe melts.

ZOE

Oh. Hey. Nice to see you again.

Zoe goes to shake his hand, which Heath ignores as he goes in for an embrace. Stunned Zoe responds in kind.

They unlink and Heath slides his hands down Zoe's arms, catching her hands. With a little tug, Heath pulls her off the bar stool and to her feet.

HEATH

(to the bartender)

Two more of whatever those are.

The bartender's arches an eyebrow as Heath draws Zoe away from the bar, over to a pile of low cushions and tables, where pretty people are lounging.

He drops her hands and plops down and takes out pouch tobacco and a tiny SNAPLOCK BAGGIE of DOPE. He starts to roll a spliff.

Zoe stands waiting for an invitation to sit, but when none is forthcoming she awkwardly sinks down next to Heath.

ZOE

So. Do you come here often?

Heath scoffs as he licks the rolling paper closed around the double.

HEATH

Yeah. Those liquid leg spreaders you were drinking are amazing here. Speaking of which.

The bartender plonks down two more of the ridiculous cocktails and stalks off.

Heath eyes the drinks neutrally then looks at Zoe, smiling wolfishly. Zoe adjusts her hair, and draws one drink over to take a timid sip.

Without any further preamble, Heath finishes assembling and lights up the joint. He draws in deeply and purple plumes of smoke drift over his face.

Heath holds in the smoke in his lungs and exhales towards Zoe as he hands the special cigarette over to her. Zoe hesitates before taking the joint and puffs warily.

HEATH (CONT'D)

So, Zoe. What do you do?

Zoe takes another baby drag and giggles.

ZOE

You mean apart from liquid leg spreaders?

Heath smiles appreciatively, and nods.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I'm a filmmaker. And a mum.

HEATH

Interesting.

ZOE

Yes, it is. I mean, I always knew I'd do something like this. You know, telling stories and stuff because, it's in my DNA or something like that. And being a mum was always like a big dream. I'm so glad I got the chance -

Heath begins to look a bit bored. Zoe changes tactic.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Um, and how about you? What do you do?

HEATH

This and that. Surf.

Chris drags deeply on the joint before passing it back to Zoe, who is visibly reeling.

HEATH (CONT'D)

I'm involved in helping develop the capacity of those living below the poverty line. Shelter, clean water, education.

Zoe swoons, doe-eyed.

ZOE

Really? That would be so - fulfilling.

HEATH

Well, I'm thinking about changing into something new. Like being a paramedic. Or a deep-sea diver. Or something.

ZOE

Uh hum.

HEATH

And if you could do anything in the world?

ZOE

I don't know anymore.

HEATH

(beat)

What's say we get out of here? I've got some more weed at home.

ZOE

Your place? Now? Um, OK. I guess.

Heath jumps up, energised and bounds out of the bar. Zoe struggles to catch up.

The bartender coughs as Zoe is about to leave, and Zoe looks to Heath, who is already streaking away.

Zoe hurriedly grabs her purse out of her bag, casting several notes in the bartender's general direction.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Keep the change.

Zoe runs after Heath. The bartender shakes her head. She's seen it all before a thousand times.

40. INT. HEATH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Heath and Zoe enter the apartment, Heath throwing the KEYS casually on the crappy old sofa partly covered with a Mexican throw.

The apartment is sparsely furnished, apart from a few SURFBOARDS stored in their covers by the door and a large FRAMED POSTER of "The Clockwork Orange" on the wall.

Zoe eyes the poster, confused, and opens her mouth to make a comment when Heath grabs her by the face and starts kissing her wildly.

Zoe almost recoils but after an instant submits, returning the kiss.

Heath pushes her down onto the sofa and begins at once fumbling at her button up jeans.

Zoe meanwhile tentatively begins to feel his arms and back - and likes what she finds. Heath is well toned.

Zoe lets her hands begin roaming more adventurously, responding to Heath's animal instincts. Heath pulls up from Zoe and looks down on her, smiling to himself.

In one swift move, he pulls off his T-SHIRT. Zoe gasps and grins like an idiot. She hasn't seen abs like this in quite some time.

ZOE

Wow!

Heath chuckles as he unzips Zoe's pants and slips them off, taking her UNDERWEAR off at the same time.

Zoe instinctively covers her privates, but Heath is having none of that.

He rips her hands away and dives into her pussy. Zoe gasps again and then after a beat, lets out a low moan.

Heath chomps away, and Zoe groans even louder, eyes closed. Before too long, she's convulsing in orgasm.

As Zoe pants and sighs, Heath finishes up then draws himself up, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

HEATH

That was quick.

He looks down on Zoe and notices the scar across her abdomen. He runs his forefinger along it, breaking Zoe's bliss and making her squirm.

HEATH (CONT'D)

What's this?

ZOE

(beat)

A scar.

HEATH

How'd you get it?

ZOE

C-section?

Heath looks back at the scar, frowning.

Zoe takes evasive action, sitting up abruptly and pushing Heath backwards onto the couch. Heath's lips draw into a thin line but he goes with it.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Your turn.

Zoe tugs off Heath's pants and jocks and then sits up, cocking her head to the side looking down at his manhood.

ZOE (CONT'D)

You're... soft.

HEATH

Why don't you fix that?

Zoe grins at Heath's dare and goes down, slurping. Heath settles back with his hands behind his head, eyes looking up at the ceiling.

Zoe labours with her tongue for a time. Then she sits up and switches to using her hand.

Zoe works on Heath with her hand. The strokes go from vigorous to haphazard, then slowly and finally halting.

Zoe cocks her head again, looking down to where there ought to be a healthy erection and then looks up to Heath's face quizzically.

Heath looks down casually then back the ceiling.

HEATH

That happens sometimes. With some girls.

ZOE

Oh.

An awkward silent beat ensues before Heath sits up, propping himself on his elbows.

HEATH

I think I'll hit the hay.

Heath turns away indicating Zoe is not welcome to sleepover. Zoe stares at Heath for a beat then nods and reaches down for her jeans lying crumpled on the floor.

41. EXT. HEATH'S APARTMENT DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Zoe exits the apartment and turns to Heath who is ushering her out the door.

ZOE

See you later?

HEATH

'Night.

Heath closes the door, cutting off the interior light and leaving Zoe in near darkness in the hall.

42. INT. HIPSTER BAR. LATER.

Zoe sits alone, back at the bar, nursing another silly COCKTAIL. She is looking the worse for wear.

All around her, loved-up couples are enjoying themselves and each other as the evening draws to a close.

Zoe gulps the rest of the drink down in one shot, and falls off the BAR STOOL. The bartender groans and calls over the bouncers.

43. INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Zoe sleeps unmoving under a pile of coverings. A distant THUMPING AT THE DOOR wakes her. She peeks out from under the blanket, bleary-eyed.

44. INT. HEIDI'S HOUSE - MORNING

Zoe shuffles to the door and opens it a crack to peer outside. Stuart pushes the door open forcefully, sweeping Zoe and aside.

ZOE

What the...?

In the hall Stuart spins on his heel to face Zoe in confrontation-mode. Zoe squares up as her adrenaline spikes.

STUART

Where were you last night?

ZOE

I -

STUART

Don't lie. I know that you had Heidi look after Xanthe.

ZOE

I went... out.

STUART

(beat)

Did you fuck someone?

ZOE

Excuse me?

STUART

Did. You. Fuck. Someone?

ZOE

What does it matter?

Stuart takes a sharp inhale like he's going to let Zoe really have it but catches himself. Instead he lets out his breath slowly and looks Zoe in the eye.

STUART

I've got something to say.

Zoe tenses.

STUART (CONT'D)

I've met someone.

Zoe gasps.

ZOE

It's only been a month.

STUART

You should know that I'm not good on my own.

ZOE

Who is she?

STUART

Sarah's amazing. She adores children. Xanthe loves her.

ZOE

You've introduced her to Xanthe?

STUART

It just happened.

ZOE

I thought - perhaps -

STUART
- it's over.

Stuart simply finishes and flounces by Zoe to exit via the front door.

Zoe stands stock still in shock.

Stuart suddenly sticks his head in the door again.

STUART (CONT'D)
Hey, is there any chance you can
take Xanthe this weekend? Brett's
throwing a party...

Zoe's shock devolves into a scowl so angry that Stuart backs away and closes the door with him. Now is not the time!

Zoe leans against the door and groans. Zoe whirls around the BACK DOOR OPENS, as Heidi enters with Xanthe, wrangling a small SCOOTER.

Heidi looks up and is startled by Zoe standing in the hall.

HEIDI
What's happening?

Zoe blinks.

45. INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY

Chris is working at his LAPTOP, while Bryce is playing a violent VIDEO GAME in the living room.

Chris types up his story, reading over the notes.

Chris clicks "PLAY" on the audio file from the interview with Zoe.

ZOE (O.S.)
It's not easy. Being with someone
like me.

Chris rubs his chin, deep in thought.

46. INT. / EXT. MONTAGE - DAY / NIGHT

Zoe dealing with Xanthe having a complete meltdown as she is dropping her off at daycare.

At her home OFFICE COMPUTER, receiving an email rejecting the film from a festival.

Fighting with Stuart over which furniture each of them is going to keep.

Getting a PARKING TICKET. Zoe screams out loud in the street.

At a networking event, surrounded by people schmoozing but Zoe is only half engaged.

Crying into her pillow at night. Heidi opens the door a crack with TWO CUPS.

47. INT. HEIDI'S HOUSE - AFTER MIDNIGHT.

At the kitchen table, Zoe and Heidi cradle their hot drinks.

ZOE

In the middle of the night, my mind races. I think of all the shitty stuff that happened. The lies. The secrets. And I can't escape it.

HEIDI

I know. I was there too. You just need to make room for it. Xanthe needs you.

ZOE

I'm afraid I'm going to ruin her childhood as well.

HEIDI

Don't be so hard on yourself. She's strong. What are you going to do?

ZOE

I don't know. Why is life so difficult? It's like I'm clinging to a slippery rock and I can't get out of the water. Everyone else can do it. Stuart just moved on. Found someone else. I can't.

HEIDI

You just need to deal with the issues one step at a time. First deal with the separation.

ZOE

We sign the Consent Orders
tomorrow.

Zoe visibly sags.

HEIDI

It'll be fine. I love you. We love
you. And you're better off now
without a controlling asshole.

Zoe finds the ability to smile a little at her situation.
Heidi puts down her mug and picks up a MAGAZINE.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

Hey, I liked the interview that guy
you told me about did.

CLOSE ON the magazine as Heidi flips through to the page of
the article which Chris has written. A large flattering
photo of Zoe features with a title "The Power of Telling".

Zoe stares into her own eyes printed on the page.

48. INT. CITY PARK BENCH - DAY

Stuart and Zoe sit at opposite ends, passing DOCUMENTS from
one to the other to sign like robots. Both appear as though
this is the worse day of their lives.

Zoe signs the last document underneath where Stuart has
already signed and gives it to him.

ZOE

That's it. We're separated now.

Zoe turns her head away and begins to put her documents back
in her bag in order to leave.

Stuart looks down, then directs his gaze at Zoe.

STUART

There's one more thing.

ZOE

Stuart -

STUART

- hear me out.

Stuart turns his body towards Zoe on the bench.

STUART (CONT'D)

It was never my intention to humiliate you. I realise that's exactly what I've done. You were the person that was always willing to work with me on a solution but that's gone now. I'm sorry.

Stuart jumps up and trots away, leaving Zoe alone on the bench.

ZOE

(whispering)

Thank you.

Zoe sits a while longer and looks up at the perfect blue sky and the world around her. The breeze tussles the leaves in the trees and skims the water on the lake. Everything has a surreal beauty.

Zoe's PHONE rings and she looks at the screen. It's Chris. She answers the phone.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Hello?

49. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris leans forward in his chair as Zoe answers.

CHRIS

Hey, I was just ringing to see what you thought of the article.

ZOE (O.S.)

Great. You did a good job.

CHRIS

I also wanted to talk to you some more.

50. EXT. CITY PARK BENCH - DAY

Zoe pushes her fringe back over the top of her head.

ZOE

Yes?

CHRIS (O.S.)

I wanted to let you know how
inspiring you are.

ZOE

Sure. I'm a hermaphro-mum,
recently divorced, living at my
sister's. No idea where I'm going.

CHRIS (O.S.)

It must be frustrating feeling like
you don't have stability. I think
you've got a lot more than you
realise.

Zoe colours up.

ZOE

OK... Well, I'd better -

51. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris swaps his phone over to his left hand so he can use
his right hand to speedily manipulate his computer's mouse.

He begins searching the Internet for a Brisbane events
calendar and hits "Zombie Walk".

CHRIS (CONT'D)

- I notice there's the zombie walk
coming up in Brisbane.

ZOE (O.S.)

Yeah?

CHRIS

I've always wanted to come to
Brisbane to check it out.

52. EXT. CITY PARK BENCH - DAY

Zoe stifles a giggle.

ZOE

Really?

CHRIS (O.S.)

How about it?

ZOE

(beat)

What are you saying?

53. INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

Chris leans back and swallows.

CHRIS

I want to see you again.

Chris' fingers tap the side of his phone, awaiting Zoe's response.

54. EXT. CITY PARK BENCH - DAY

Zoe's eyes widen and she opens and closes her mouth a few Times, speechless. Finally -

ZOE

OK.

Zoe continues chatting as the camera PULLS OUT to show the park in all its glory. It's a beautiful day and hope is on the horizon.

FADE TO BLACK.

Research Statement

Research Background

The writing of unsubtle intersex characters and narrative arcs for the screen are arguably the by-product of the problematic cultural-industrial mechanisms of production. Even writing groups with a diverse membership often default to developing characters of gender, race, class and cultural difference that ‘mimic the dominant group because there is little acceptance of actual difference’ (Henderson 2011: 152). In this work, then, I test out new representations of intersex characters with a view to normalising the intersex experience.

Research Contribution

This television screenplay repositions characters with an intersex variation in the sphere of the ordinary, and is informed by scriptwriting as a research practice in which the text adopts a ‘stronger critical research focus and often reflects the distinct vision of a single writer-researcher’ (Baker 2013: 4). The work subverts fetishist, mythological and medicalised histories of people with intersex variations, as well as contemporary slippage towards sensationalism, through careful characterisation, narrative arcs and dialogue that avoids mawkishness and melodrama. It also provides a foundation for a new practice, one in which non-intersex writers are asked to willingly and openly collaborate with members of the intersex community.

Research Significance

This work is an example of the need for screenwriters ‘to find a pathway for potential audience engagement’ via personal processes, experiences, convictions and attitudes (Pullen 2014: 284) in regard to the representation of intersex characters. Its significance lies not only in its subject matter, but also its mode of development through research. The script is a wholly original creative work, and has been double-blind peer-reviewed for *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, a peak journal in the creative writing discipline.

Works cited

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