













EXTRACT FROM PAGES 25–7

*The thunder of a waterfall. The river disappears into space. The **Boy** and the **Man** stand staring up at the waterfall, eighty feet above, shrouded in grey mist. A colour spectrum is visible rising from the waterfall, like a rainbow – the boy is transfixed, clutching the **Man**'s arm for safety.*

Boy What is it?

*The **Man** looks at the **Boy**, surprised he's talking again.*

Man It's a waterfall.

Boy Look. Colours.

Man There used to be colour everywhere. You don't remember. It was before you were born.

*The **Boy** approaches the water's edge, shallow and clear with gravel and pebbles sparkling at the bottom. He scoops up some water, surprised that it seems clean.*

Boy Look. It's clear.

Man Do you want to go in?

Boy I don't know.

Man Sure you do.

Boy Is it okay?

Man Just don't swallow any.

*The **Man** unzips his parka and slips it to the ground. The **Boy** eyes the **Man**, surprised – then does the same.*

EXT. RIVER /WATERFALL – DAY

*Naked, pale, filthy dirty and shivering with cold, the **Boy** frolics in the spray of the waterfall. The **Man** watches him enjoying himself by the waterfall, clutching his shoulders, hopping up and down. He joins him.*

EXT. RAVINE / ROCKFACE – EVENING

*The **Man** meticulously filters water through a rag into a pan. In the background, the waterfall can be heard rumbling. The **Boy** has painted his face with crayons, drawing a bizarre set of fangs and dripping blood around his mouth. The **Man** studies the **Boy**'s painted face a moment.*

Man Listen. That man back there . . . There's not many good guys left, that's all. We have to watch out for the bad guys. And we have to talk. Always. We have to just . . . you know . . . keep carrying the fire . . .

Boy What fire?

Man The fire inside you.

The Boy is thoughtful a minute, and then:

Boy Are we still the good guys?

Man Yes. We're still the good guys.

Boy And we always will be, no matter what happens?

The Man eyes the Boy uncertainly, unsure if he can promise this.

Man Always will be. Yeah.

The Man goes back to filtering the water.

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INT. TRAILER HOME – EVENING

*Inside a badly damaged trailer home, one wall half fallen off, a pan of water boils on a small fire. The **Boy** sits shivering in blankets as he eats beans from a tin, scraping around for the last one or two. The **Man** opens his knapsack by the fire and produces a packet of cocoa. He fixes a cup of cocoa for the boy. He hands the **Boy** the cup of cocoa and as the **Boy** examines it and drinks, the **Man** surreptitiously pours himself a mug of water and sits blowing on it. The **Boy** realises the **Man** has left him all the cocoa.*

Boy You promised not to do that.

Man What?

Boy You know what, Papa. I have to watch you all the time.

Man I know, I'm sorry.

Boy If you break little promises you'll break big ones. That's what you said.

*The **Man** relents, pouring the hot water back into the pan and taking some of the **Boy**'s cocoa into his own cup. The **Boy** wipes his finger around the inside of the empty bean tin and licks his finger.*

Man Watch your finger.

Boy You always say that.

Man That's because you always do it.

*The **Man** spreads bits of a worn-out road map on the boards and studies them.*

Boy What are you doing?

Man We have to keep moving. We have to go south to the coast.

Boy Why?

Man It'll be better at the coast.

Boy Why?

Man Because we're going to freeze here.

He picks up the map pieces carefully.

THE ROAD PAGE 114 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 2

INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE – NIGHT

*Flashback – now the house is in considerable disrepair, no furniture, the skirting boards falling away, large cracks in the walls, cornices and lamp fittings pulling away from the ceilings, water marks from rain, the windows covered with corrugated iron sheets. The **Man** and the **Woman** are sitting across from each other with a lamp illuminating the dark. Between them lies the revolver seen earlier. The **Woman** picks up the gun and swings open the magazine. There are two bullets in it; she takes them out and places them on the table, one after the other.*

Woman That's all that's left. I should have done it when there were more bullets in the gun.

*The **Man** shuts his eyes, unable to take it. In the corner, the **Boy** is standing in the background, drawing on the walls.*

Sooner or later – no, listen – they will catch up with us and they will kill us. They will rape me –

Man No –

Woman And they will rape him –

Man Please no – just – no –

Woman They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen.

Man Please.

Woman Stop it.

Man I'll do anything.

Woman Such as what?

She picks up the revolver and puts the two bullets into the chamber.

I thought about not even telling you. Just doing it. I'd empty every godamn bullet into my brain and leave you with nothing.

Man Don't say that. Don't talk this way.

Woman There's nothing left to talk about . . . My heart was ripped out of me the night he was born . . .

Man Please don't do this. I won't let anything happen. We'll survive.

Woman I don't want to survive! I'd take him with me if it weren't for you. You know I would. Why can't you face it?

Man Will you listen? You're talking crazy –

Woman It's not crazy and you know it. It's the right thing to do.

*They glance at the **Boy**.*

Other families do it.

*She goes to the **Boy**, strokes his hair, kisses him, makes a reassuring display of being motherly.*

Time for bed, there's a good boy.

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THE ROAD PAGE 114 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 3

EXT. RAVINE / ROCKFACE – EVENING

The Man meticulously filters water through a rag into a pan. In the background, the waterfall can be heard rumbling. The Boy has painted his face with crayons, drawing a bizarre set of fangs and dripping blood around his mouth. The Man studies the Boy's painted face a moment.

Man Listen. That man back there . . . There's not many good guys left, that's all. We have to watch out for the bad guys. And we have to talk. Always. We have to just . . . you know . . . keep carrying the fire . . .

Boy What fire?

Man The fire inside you.

The Boy is thoughtful a minute, and then:

Boy Are we still the good guys?

Man Yes. We're still the good guys.

Boy And we always will be, no matter what happens?

The Man eyes the Boy uncertainly, unsure if he can promise this.

Man Always will be. Yeah.

The Man goes back to filtering the water.

EXT. THE RIVER / VALLEY – MORNING

The Man and the Boy are trudging along, away from the waterfall now.

Man We have to keep moving. Other people might be attracted to the waterfall just like we were. We wouldn't hear them coming.

They stop to look at a lake surrounded by fog down in the valley.

Boy Do you think there could be fish in the lake?

Man No. There's nothing in the lake.

THE ROAD PAGE 114 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 5

Boy What is this place, Papa?

Man It's the house where I grew up.

*They go up to the house – clapboards have been removed for firewood, leaving studs and insulation exposed. The **Boy** stops, reluctant to go further, and the **Man** takes a few more steps, then turns around to check on him.*

You coming?

Boy I don't want to.

Man Don't you want to see where I grew up?

Boy There might be somebody in there.

Man There's nobody there now.

*The **Man** takes the **Boy**'s hand and they approach a basketball hoop by the garage. The **Man** is momentarily overcome with emotion as he recalls the details, but it doesn't mean much to the **Boy**.*

*After a moment the **Man** goes up the steps – frightened, but horribly compelled at the same time. The **Boy** follows nervously.*

Boy I'm scared.

Man We've got to find something to eat or we'll die.

Boy I'm not hungry. I'm not!

*The **Man** takes his revolver from his belt and approaches the front door, warily pushing it open.*

Man Come on.

*He goes through the front door – the **Boy** stays where he is, rigid with fear. The **Boy** notices a stuffed toy dog in the window, staring out at the garden and his curiosity takes over. The **Boy** goes inside carefully.*

INT. DINING ROOM/HOME – DAY

*The pine panelling is stripped from the walls. There is some broken furniture but much has been taken for firewood. They go over to the fireplace and the **Man** examines it. He runs his fingers along the mantel, where there is an old drawing pin still stuck in the wood, nostalgia overcoming his fear.*

Man This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy. We'd hang our stockings right here.

*The **Man** examines the yellow-tiled surround. The **Boy** watches the **Man** as if he's gone mad.*

My mother scrubbed these every day. It's still spotless.

Much of the woodwork and the floorboards have been stripped and taken for firewood – there are gaping holes.

*By the fireplace is a small pile of bones – and in the grid are more burnt bones and the skull from the family cat. The **Man** takes it all in sadly, but the **Boy** is unmoved.*

Boy Papa? I don't think we should do this.

Man You want to wait outside?

*The **Boy** nods vigorously.*

All right.

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THE ROAD PAGE 114 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 6

Boy Where are you?!

The Man comes sprinting up the side of the house and seizes him by the arm.

Man What are you doing? What the hell are you doing?

Boy There's a little boy, Papa, I saw a little boy.

Man There's no little boy. What's the matter with you?

Boy Yes there is! I saw him! A boy just like me.

The Man takes the Boy by the arm and drags him back through the yard, up the side of the house, the Boy resisting, crying and looking back all the way.

Boy Why? Why can't I go and see him?

EXT. HOUSE – DAY

Out the front of the house the Boy digs his heels in and the Man has to drag him, his feet slithering through the dirt.

Boy I need to see him! I need to!

Man Why?

Boy I just do!

The Boy has gone limp, weeping bitterly, resisting being moved. The Man gives up and squats beside the sobbing Boy.

Man Okay, I'm sorry. I understand.

He holds him, wipes his tears from his cheeks.

EXT. TOWN STREET/OVERPASS – EVENING

In the failing light they come across a late model Chevy, abandoned under an overpass.

Boy Papa? Will there be other boys like me at the coast?

Man I hope so.

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THE ROAD PAGE 114 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 7

*Flashback – the **Man** and the pregnant **Woman** alone in the house, just before the **Boy** was born. Some of the furniture has been broken up for firewood – there are broken pieces by the fire and a huge axe propped on the hearth. The **Woman** stands at the piano and tries to play. She plays for a moment and the **Man** cracks a rare smile – the piano is out of tune and she stops. She plays a bit more but soon starts to bang the keys atonally in frustration. The **Man** just lets her get on with it until she’s spent.*

Woman I used to worry what would happen if there was a fire. What would I save? What could I bear to lose? There used to be so many things, so many beautiful things. Things people made. Things nature made. Who knew we would lose it all?

Man I’ll strip the floorboards.

Woman You can’t live without a floor.

Man You can’t live without a piano.

She starts to dismantle the piano, opening the lid, taking it off its hinges; it’s heavy. She hands him the heavy lid and he reluctantly dumps it on the floor.

Woman It’s my piano.

Man I bought it for you.

Woman It needs tuning. Who’s going to tune it? Can you tune it?

*They look at each other sadly. They take the front piece away and dump that. The **Woman** picks up the axe and hands it to the **Man**. He swings it at the frame.*

End of flashback.

THE ROAD PAGE 115 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 8

The Man starts loading cans and packets into a carton. He gathers a couple of large jerry cans of water. The Boy helps.

Boy What are we going to do with all this stuff?

Man We'll just have to take what we can.

Boy I wish we could live here. And we could keep the dog and the dog could catch food for us.

Man Look, there is no dog, okay? I'm sorry, but there just isn't.

Boy Well what is it!

Man I don't know what it is!

Boy Please, Papa.

Man No.

Boy Just say it's going to be all right, Papa. Say it. Just say it, please.

The Man doesn't know what to say, losing patience.

Man Listen, trouble comes when you least expect it. So maybe the thing to do is to just always expect it.

Boy Do you always expect it? Papa?

Man I do, yes.

Boy You always think bad things are going to happen, but we found this place. Maybe we'll find another place like this at the coast.

Man Maybe.

The Man dumps the carton of food on the floor and packs another, organising jerry cans of water.

EXT. LAWN – MORNING

The industrial trolley is loaded up and tied with a grey tarp, a tyre pump leaning against it.

Boy What are you doing?

Man We'll have to cover our tracks from now on.

The Man drags the old mattress back over the entrance to the bunker. He carefully covers the surrounding area with debris.

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THE ROAD PAGE 115 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 9

Man You know where we are?

Boy No.

Man Where do you think?

The Boy points to a place on the map.

Man More.

Boy Here?

Man No. We're closer than you think.

He takes the crayon and points on the map.

Man This is us. This is all sea.

Boy Is it blue?

Man The sea? I don't know. It used to be.

The Man picks up a desiccated pine cone from the ground, and stares at it, hollow-eyed, hungry. He squeezes it and it crumbles to dust. He takes a few steps, sniffing the air.

Can you smell that?

Boy It smells different.

Man Everything is going to be different.

EXT. DUNES – DAY

The landscape has changed, dead salt bush and sand at the side of the road and finally, as they come around a bend in the road, dead sea grass sloping up to sand dunes up ahead. They look at each other and head for the dunes excitedly. The Man hides the trolley discreetly, so the Boy doesn't see his concern. He takes their bags, tarps and blankets with them as they head off for the dunes.

EXT. TOP OF SAND DUNE – DAY

Boy's point of view – grey beach, lead-grey sea and waves rolling in slowly with a distant roar. On the beach a tidemark of wet grey ashy sludge and a skirt of glistening bones, fish skeletons bleached white on the sand.

They take their parka hoods down and just stand there staring at the beach, the wind howling around them, dozens of bleached whale and fish bones and skeletons of humans who have made it this far only to die. The Man looks at the Boy and sees the intense disappointment.

Man I'm sorry it's not blue.

EXT. DUNES / BEACH – DAY

*They sit on the beach wrapped in blankets staring out at a surreal wall of impenetrable smog not far beyond where the waves are breaking. The **Man** eyes the silent **Boy**, buffeted by wind, wrapped in a blanket, staring at the empty ocean . . .*

*There is nothing and nobody there. They keep staring out to sea, filled with disappointment. The **Boy** impassively surveys the wall of smog which is like an iron curtain.*

Boy What's on the other side?

Man Nothing.

Boy There must be something.

Man Maybe there's a father and his little boy and they're sitting on the beach too.

Boy And they could be carrying the fire too?

Man They could be, yes.

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THE ROAD PAGE 115 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 10

Man Don't get comfortable. You need to keep going. You don't know what might be down the road.

Boy No.

Man We were always lucky. You'll be lucky again. You'll see. Just go.

Boy No. I can't.

Man It's all right. This has been a long time coming. Just keep going south. Do everything the way we did it.

Boy No. You're going to be okay, Papa. You have to.

Man Keep the gun with you at all times. Don't let anyone take it from you. You need to find the good guys, but you can't take any chances. Do you hear me?

Boy I want to be with you.

Man I want to be with you too, but I can't.

Boy Please.

Man You have to go off on your own now. You have to carry the fire.

Boy I don't know how to.

Man Yes, you do. You know everything about it.

Boy Is it real? The fire? Papa?

Man Yes, it is.

Boy Where is it? I don't know where it is.

Man Yes, you do.

Boy Where?

Man It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it.

The Boy stares at him, not sure what to believe.

Man You have to let me go.

Boy Just take me with you, please. Please, Papa! What should I do?

Man Just hold my hand.

The Boy grips the Man's hand, bouncing up and down, agitated.

Boy You said you wouldn't ever leave me.

Man I know. I'm sorry.

The Boy falls on the Man, hugging him tight, face pressed to his chest, sobbing.

Man My boy. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see.

Boy How will I hear you?

Man You just will.

Boy How do you know?

Man You just have to practise. Just don't give up, okay? You'll be okay. You're going to be lucky. I know you are.

The Man closes his eyes and takes deep, rattling breaths.

Boy It's okay, Papa. You don't have to talk any more.

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THE ROAD PAGE 115 – ACTIVITY 4, EXTRACT 11

*The **Man** and the **Woman** snooze in the car – an ordinary young couple nestled together in the early-morning sunlight. The **Man** wakes and looks at his sleeping wife, smooths her hair tenderly, very much in love, as she sleeps.*

His hand on her wakes her, she looks at him surprised and pleased, smiles.

Woman Hello . . .

She kisses him and they look at the blue ocean and the white sand and green sea grass and she puts an arm around him.

Man (voice-over) If I were God I would have made the world just so and no different . . . And so I have you . . . I have you.

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THE ROAD PAGE 119 – EXTRACT FOR ACTIVITY 6

Boy You said you wouldn't ever leave me.

Man I know. I'm sorry.

The Boy falls on the Man, hugging him tight, face pressed to his chest, sobbing.

Man My boy. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see.

Boy How will I hear you?

Man You just will.

Boy How do you know?

Man You just have to practise. Just don't give up, okay?

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THE ROAD PAGE 120 – EXTRACT FOR ACTIVITY 7

*They come up behind an **Old Man**, hunched over, withered, silent, as he hobbles ahead. He wears layers of torn clothing and his feet are wrapped in rags and cardboard tied with green twine. They slowly approach and the **Old Man** stops, turns and watches them suspiciously as they draw level.*

Old Man I don't have anything for you. You can look if you want. I got nothing.

Man We're not robbers.

*The **Old Man** leans an ear forward, deaf.*

Old Man What?

Man I said we're not robbers.

Old Man What are you?

Man We're just like you.

Old Man What are you following me for?

Man We're not following you.

Boy We've got food we could give him.

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THE ROAD PAGE 122 – EXTRACT FOR ACTIVITY 7

*The **Old Man** looks away, avoiding their eyes.*

Boy He's scared, Papa.

Man Everybody's scared.

Boy Please, Papa.

Man All right!

*The **Man** eyes the road to the left and right, then draws his revolver.*

If this is an ambush, he goes first.

*He goes out to the trolley and rummages in it while the **Boy** and the **Old Man** stare at each other.*

*The **Man** comes back with a tin of fruit cocktail and a can-opener and opens it and hands it to the **Boy**. The **Boy** places the tin of fruit on the road in front of the **Old Man**.*

Boy Take it. Here.

*The **Old Man** doesn't move.*

What about a spoon?

Man He's not getting a spoon.

*The **Boy** urges him on, miming with his hands, as if feeding a raccoon.*

Boy Eat it. It's good.

*The **Old Man** picks up the tin and his filthy long nails clatter on the tin as he tips it to his mouth, the juice running down his chin, his head jerking as he swallows.*

Boy Look, Papa. He's hungry.

Man I see it. And I know what you're going to ask me. And the answer is no.

Boy What's the question?

Man We can't keep him.

*They watch him eating painfully slowly. The **Old Man** finishes and sits down in the road holding the tin, staring at it, as if it might refill.*

Man When did you last eat?

*The **Old Man** just stares.*

Man Do you want to eat with us?

Old Man I don't know. What do I have to do?

Man Tell us where the world went.

Old Man What?

Man You don't have to do anything. Can you walk okay?

*They help the **Old Man** off the road and hand him his cane but he pushes it away.*

Old Man I can walk.

They walk off the road towards the dead, blackened woods.

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THE ROAD PAGE 127 – EXTRACT OF SCREENPLAY FOR ACTIVITIES 8 & 9

EXT. BEND/THE ROAD – DAY

*As they round a bend in the road they see a hunched **Figure** walking ahead of them. The **Man** stops abruptly, gets out the binoculars and watches.*

Man's point of view – a distant, hunched **Figure** hobbling away from them.

EXT. ROAD – DAY

*They come up behind an **Old Man**, hunched over, withered, silent, as he hobbles ahead. He wears layers of torn clothing and his feet are wrapped in rags and cardboard tied with green twine. They slowly approach and the **Old Man** stops, turns and watches them suspiciously as they draw level.*

Old Man I don't have anything for you. You can look if you want. I got nothing.

Man We're not robbers.

*The **Old Man** leans an ear forward, deaf.*

Old Man What?

Man I said we're not robbers.

Old Man What are you?

Man We're just like you.

Old Man What are you following me for?

Man We're not following you.

Boy We've got food we could give him.

Man He's not getting any food.

*The **Old Man** looks away, avoiding their eyes.*

Boy He's scared, Papa.

Man Everybody's scared.

Boy Please, Papa.

Man All right!

*The **Man** eyes the road to the left and right, then draws his revolver.*

If this is an ambush, he goes first.

*He goes out to the trolley and rummages in it while the **Boy** and the **Old Man** stare at each other.*

*The **Man** comes back with a tin of fruit cocktail and a can-opener and opens it and hands it to the **Boy**. The **Boy** places the tin of fruit on the road in front of the **Old Man**.*

Boy Take it. Here.

*The **Old Man** doesn't move.*

What about a spoon?

Man He's not getting a spoon.

*The **Boy** urges him on, miming with his hands, as if feeding a raccoon.*

Boy Eat it. It's good.

*The **Old Man** picks up the tin and his filthy long nails clatter on the tin as he tips it to his mouth, the juice running down his chin, his head jerking as he swallows.*

Boy Look, Papa. He's hungry.

Man I see it. And I know what you're going to ask me. And the answer is no.

Boy What's the question?

Man We can't keep him.

*They watch him eating painfully slowly. The **Old Man** finishes and sits down in the road holding the tin, staring at it, as if it might refill.*

Man When did you last eat?

*The **Old Man** just stares.*

Man Do you want to eat with us?

Old Man I don't know. What do I have to do?

Man Tell us where the world went.

Old Man What?

Man You don't have to do anything. Can you walk okay?

*They help the **Old Man** off the road and hand him his cane but he pushes it away.*

Old Man I can walk.

They walk off the road towards the dead, blackened woods.

EXT. WOODS – DAY

*As they leave the road the **Old Man** studies the **Boy**. The **Boy** goes to take his hand.*

Man (to **Boy**) Don't hold his hand.

Boy He can't see.

Man Don't.

The trio walk into the woods.

How old are you?

Old Man I'm ninety.

Man Ninety my ass. Is that what you tell people? So they don't hurt you?

Old Man Uh-huh.

Man Does it work?

Old Man Nope.

Man What's your name?

Old Man Ely.

Man Just 'Ely'?

Old Man What's wrong with 'Ely'?

EXT. CLEARING/WOODS – EVENING

*There's a camp fire now. The **Old Man** sits wrapped in a quilt, eating with a spoon and licking his plate clean. In the far distance, the faint glow of fires. The orange light bounces into the night sky eerily.*

Man How come you're still alive? What do you eat?

Old Man I don't know. People give you things.

Man No they don't.

Old Man You did.

Man I didn't. He did.

*The **Old Man** eyes the **Boy**, closely, half blind.*

Old Man Are you a little boy?

Man What does he look like?

Old Man I don't know. I can't see real good.

Man Is that right? Can you see me?

Old Man No. But I can tell somebody's there.

Man (to **Boy**) Okay. You need to sleep. Come on.

*He gathers up the **Boy** and takes him a few feet away, settles him down in blankets while the **Old Man** stares into the fire.*

*When the **Man** returns he has his gun, which he surreptitiously places on the ground in full view of the **Old Man**.*

Man You can see that, right? Okay. Tell me now. You're not a shill for a pack of road agents?

Old Man I'm not anything. I'll go if you want me to. I can find the road.

*The **Man** stares at the **Old Man** cynically, but the **Old Man** just stares back blankly.*

I live like an animal. You don't want to know the things I've had to eat. When I saw that boy I thought I'd died and he was an angel. I never thought I'd see a child again. I never thought that would happen to me.

Man He is an angel. To me he's a god.

Old Man Well, I hope that's not true. To be on the road with the last surviving god would be a pretty frightening experience.

Man Why do you say that?

Old Man Where men can't live, gods can't either. The road gangs would tear you limb from limb, both of you.

The low rumble in the earth is heard again, an earthquake, this time in the distance. They listen a moment.

I knew this was coming. This or something like it. There were warnings. People thought it was a con – I always believed in it.

Man Did you try to get ready for it?

Old Man No. What would you do? Even if you knew what to do, you wouldn't know what to do. Suppose you were the last man left alive?

Man How would you know if you were the last man alive?

Old Man I don't guess you would know it. You'd just be it.

Man Maybe God would know.

Old Man If there is a God up there he would have turned his back on us by now. Whoever made humanity will find no humanity here.

*The **Man** pours hot water into mugs to make coffee, hands one to the **Old Man**. They drink.*

Man Do you ever wish you would die?

Old Man No. It's foolish to ask for luxuries in times like these.

Man Don't you want to end it all?

Old Man Nope.

Man Why not?

Old Man I'm stubborn.

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THE ROAD PAGE 130 – EXTRACT FOR ACTIVITY 11

*The **Man** covers the **Boy** in more blankets and constructs a makeshift tent with the tarp as the rain falls all around.*

Man It's okay. You're going to be okay. It'll pass.

Boy Don't leave me here, don't go away, Papa. Not even for a minute.

Man I won't go away. I'm right here.

*He sits holding the **Boy** tightly. He feels for the **Boy**'s heart. He drops droplets of sugar water from a bowl into the **Boy**'s mouth. As the **Boy** shuts his eyes and dozes he checks the pulse at his neck and wipes his mouth with the blanket.*

EXT. SAND DUNES – NIGHT

*The **Boy** is sleeping fitfully across the **Man**'s lap. The **Man** is still awake, staring in horror as the **Boy** sweats and shakes in his sleep. He wipes the **Boy**'s brow, looks up to the heavens.*

Man Oh no. No no. Not this. Jesus Christ, what have you done to us? What have you done?

EXT. SAND DUNES – MORNING

*The **Boy** is fast asleep, motionless but for stertorous breathing through his mouth. The **Man** lies beside him, just staring at him, watching him sleep. The **Boy** opens his eyes and focuses weakly.*

Boy Hi, Papa.

Man I'm right here.

Boy I know.

*The **Boy** shuts his eyes and goes back to sleep. The **Man** strokes the **Boy**'s hair tenderly, takes the pistol from his belt and carefully hides it under the blanket by the **Boy**'s side. He stands, takes one last look and walks away . . .*

EXT. SPIT/WATER – DAY

*The **Man** is alone now, staring at the hull of the wrecked boat keeled over in ten feet of grey water a few yards out from the spit – a sixty footer, twin masts. Closer to shore, in the shallows between the boat and the sand, is a grey, lifeless form. The man steps closer and sees:*

***Man**'s point of view – bobbing about in the tide, the bloated, rotting cadaver of a giant squid, eyes like dinner plates, translucent grey skin like an old light bulb.*

*The **Man** eyes it uneasily, then starts stripping off his clothes. He stares anxiously into the darkly roiling water near the boat. He looks back along the beach to the distant figure of the **Boy**, sitting up wrapped in his blankets, looking around, confused and scared, enough to make the **Man** wince. He collects himself and wades cautiously into the grey soupy water. He takes a breath and starts swimming to the boat.*

EXT. SAND DUNE – DAY

*The **Boy** is confused as he watches:*

***Boy's** point of view – the **Man** swimming away.*

Fade to:

EXT. SAND DUNES – DAY

*Mystery point of view – over the shoulder of a mystery third person, camera pushes in slightly on the **Boy** sleeping.*

EXT. SAND DUNES – DAY

*A **Figure's** feet enter the scene behind the boy, carefully walk in close around the boy. The **Figure's** long knife drops into the scene, held at the figure's side.*

*The **Boy** senses the **Figure** and wakes up to see:*

***Boy's** point of view – a dark, hunched **Figure** standing over him. The **Boy** looks up at the face and, whatever it is, he's terrified.*

*The **Boy** shrieks, terrified, scrambling away, tripping over pots and pans by the fire. He gets to his feet and runs.*

EXT. SHORELINE – DAY

*The **Man** struggles from the water and scans the beach, no sign of the **Boy**. He dumps a medical kit and flare pistol he's found on the boat and heads for the sand dunes.*

EXT. SAND DUNES – DAY

*The **Man** runs over the sand and reaches the spot where he left the **Boy**, the grey tarp blowing away across the beach, the campsite and campfire disturbed. He runs up the dunes.*

EXT. BEACH – DAY

Boy's point of view – as he looks back he glimpses ragged feet rushing through the sand after him, a pair of hands reaching out . . .

Man's point of view – he catches up with the **Boy**, grabs his shoulder with one hand and the gun with the other.

Reverse angle – the **Boy** sees it's the **Man** and stops, stares, still frightened, feverish, wild-eyed, confused.

Man It's okay –

Boy A man! There was a man! I saw a man.

Man It's okay, he's gone now, it's just me.

*The **Boy** collapses, exhausted, into the **Man's** arms.*

EXT. SAND DUNES – EVENING

*The **Man** and the **Boy** return to examine the disturbed campsite.*

Man Oh Christ. You stupid ass! You stupid ass!

Boy What happened?

Man He stole our shoes. He stole everything.

*The **Boy** goes quiet, forlorn, staring around at the desolation in despair.*

Man What's wrong?

Boy I don't know what we're doing.

Man Come here.

Boy I don't know why we're doing this.

Man Look, there are . . . *(He trails off, lost for words.)* There are people . . . there are other people and we'll find them. You'll see.

*The **Boy** just shuts his eyes and slumps on to the sand in despair. The **Man** eyes him anxiously.*

*The **Man** opens the first-aid kit he took from the boat, takes out several pills.*

Man The important thing is that you are getting better now.

He gently pushes them into the boy's mouth.

Man Please. Listen to me. Don't lose heart.

The Man seizes the flare gun, takes it from its case hurriedly, loads it with shells – the Boy now watches, wide-eyed.

*The **Man** rushes a few paces up the dune and looks over to where the trolley was hidden – he fires a flare into the air. The flare arcs up into the murk with a long whoosh and breaks in a cloud of light, hanging there, hot tendrils of magnesium drifting down to the sand. The **Boy** watches, curious despite his despair.*

*The **Man** strains his eyes to see: the dunes bathed in pink light from the flare and the sand pockmarked with the footprints of the **Strange Man** in a trail leading to the spot where the trolley marks trail off into the distance.*

EXT. NEAR BEACH – NIGHT

*Mystery point of view from a distance – a third party is watching the **Man** and **Boy** bathed in the light of the flare.*

Camera pushes in on the face watching them – bearded and scarred, with a wandering eye and a crushed cheekbone, a veteran of many skirmishes.

EXT. SAND DUNES – NIGHT

*The **Man** and the **Boy** stand in their bare feet.*

Man Come on. We have to get our shoes back.

Boy (*frightened, reluctant*) We don't need them!

Man We won't get far without them.

They set off hurriedly, in their bare feet.

EXT. COAST ROAD, BLACKENED LANDSCAPE – NIGHT

*On the road in the middle of a desolate landscape, the strange lattice of lightning flickering across the dim morning sky, the **Man** and the **Boy** are barefoot on the tarmac.*

Man's point of view – way up ahead is the hunched figure seen earlier – the **Thief**, his back to us, trundling the loaded trolley along the road.

Man Come on.

*They take off after the **Thief**, bare feet thudding on the tarmac, the **Man** in front, the **Boy** trailing, trying to catch up. The **Thief** looks back at them and speeds up, head bent down over the handle running for his life. When he looks back again the **Man** has drawn his pistol and is aiming it directly at him.*

*The **Thief** stops the trolley, pulls a carving knife from his belt, and turns to face them, standing behind the trolley. His face is emaciated and twitchy, a mouth like a bombed graveyard – not the face of the man watching them in the sand dunes. The **Man** trains his gun on him, stock still, holding the **Boy**'s hand.*

Man Get away from the cart and put the knife down.

*The **Man** spits and brandishes the knife desperately, he's scrawny, sullen, bearded and filthy.*

If you don't put down the carving knife and get away from the goddamn cart I'm going to blow your brains out.

Boy Papa?

Man Be quiet.

*The **Man** cocks the pistol and there's two loud clicks.*

Man God damn you.

Boy Papa, please don't kill the man.

Thief Come on, man, I done what you said, listen to the boy.

*The **Boy** starts crying – the **Thief** looks at the **Boy** and then the angry **Man**; this seems to be sobering. He puts the knife in the trolley and steps away, hands in the air, his thumbs are missing.*

Man How long have you been following us?

Thief I wasn't following you. I saw the cart on the sand an' I just took it.

Boy Please, Papa.

Man Take your clothes off. Take them off, every goddamn stitch.

Thief Come on, man, don't do this.

Man I'll kill you where you stand.

Thief Don't do this, man.

Man I won't tell you again.

Thief All right, all right, just take it easy.

*The **Thief** looks at the **Boy**, who is now covering his ears and the **Man** takes an intimidating step closer with the gun.*

*The **Thief** starts stripping and piling his rags in the road.*

Man The shoes.

Thief Come on, man.

Man The shoes.

The Thief sits naked in the road and unlaces the rotting shoes.

Put them in the cart.

The Thief stands and drops the shoes in the trolley.

Put the clothes in.

The Man drops the clothes in and stands there covering himself, shivering.

Thief Don't do this to me, man.

Man You didn't mind doing it to us.

Thief I'm begging you.

Boy Papa.

Thief Come on, listen to the kid.

Man You tried to kill us.

Thief I'm starving, man. You'd have done the same.

Man You took everything.

Thief I'll die out here.

Man I'm going to leave you the way you left us.

The Man grabs the trolley by the handle, pulls it around, puts the pistol on top and holds his hand out for the Boy.

Man Let's go.

The Boy doesn't take his hand but they set off along the blacktop, the Boy snivelling and crying, leaving the Thief shivering and whimpering.

Boy Oh Papa.

Man Stop it.

Boy I can't stop it.

Man What do you think would have happened to him if we hadn't caught him? You've got to learn.

Boy I don't want to learn!

Man I won't be here for ever. Sooner or later you'll have to look after yourself.

The Boy just looks at him – and keeps crying.

EXT. ROAD/COAST, BLACKENED LANDSCAPE – NIGHT

*Some distance away the **Boy** looks back at the **Thief**, still crying.*

Man You have to stop crying.

Boy I can't.

*The **Boy** looks back one last time as the **Thief** disappears from view – still just standing there, utterly lost.*

*The **Man** stops and puts his shoes on. He walks back up the road to the bend but the **Thief** has gone.*

Man He's gone. Come on.

Boy He's not gone. He's not.

*The **Man** looks helplessly at the tearful **Boy** as he fits his shoes on for him, the tears streaking the soot on his face.*

Man What do you want to do?

Boy Just help him, Papa. Just help him.

*The **Man** looks back down the road, weighing it up.*

Boy He was just hungry, Papa. He's going to die.

Man He's going to die anyway.

Boy He's so scared.

Man I'm scared. Do you understand? I'm scared.

*The **Man** tries to look the **Boy** in the eye but he keeps his head bowed, sobbing.*

Man You're not the one who has to worry about everything.

*The **Boy** mumbles, tearful and snotty.*

Man What? What did you say?

Boy Yes I am. I am the one.

*The **Man** stops and faces the innocent **Boy** angrily, stares, then, relenting, summons all his strength, turns the trolley around and starts wheeling it back the way they came.*

Man All right. Help me.

*The **Man** takes the **Boy**'s hand and puts it on the trolley handle.*

EXT. ROAD/COAST, BLACKENED LANDSCAPE – NIGHT

*As the light fades to darkness, they look for the **Thief** to give him his clothes back and call out 'Hello!' etc. After a moment they stop.*

Boy He's afraid to answer.

Man Is this where we stopped?

Boy I don't know. I think so.

*They keep walking, hands cupped to mouths, hallooing mindlessly. The **Man** stops to rest and watches the **Boy** a moment; he has stopped crying as he calls out for the **Thief**.*

*Finally the **Man** piles the **Thief**'s shoes and clothes in the road. He puts a rock on top of them.*

Man Come on. We have to go.

*The **Boy** eyes the clothes sadly, silent now.*

Excerpted from the screenplay *The Road* by Joe Penhall. Copyright © 2010 by 2929 Productions LLC.
First published by Methuen Drama in 2010.

THE ROAD PAGE 132 – EXTRACT FOR ACTIVITY 12

Thief Come on, man, don't do this.

Man I'll kill you where you stand.

Thief Don't do this, man.

Man I won't tell you again.

Thief All right, all right, just take it easy.

*The **Thief** looks at the **Boy**, who is now covering his ears and the **Man** takes an intimidating step closer with the gun.*

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Read the comments by Joe Penhall, the screenwriter, about this scene. As a class, discuss whether the position of the screenwriter now changes? Why?

Comments from Joe Penhall

I think it's probably a necessary convention of film that the subtext and the overriding thematic concerns be hammered at incessantly. By this point we felt that we needed to show the boy's maturity – the boy is more mature than the father here – and hence the point of the whole journey: the boy becoming a man, if you will. So I made the scene about that, and less about simply getting their shoes back. McCarthy emphasises this too, but in a film you have to hammer it home in order for it to feel climactic, you can't vaguely conceal it and hope smart people pick up on it. The climax of the film can't be 'And then they got their shoes back, but something else is going on here too.' It has to be 'In that moment, the boy becomes a man, the man becomes a boy, the man knows the boy has grown up and yet he is also cowed by it, conflicted, no longer the hero: there is a new hero.' The shoes aren't even the point – the boy shows us what really matters and why we've stuck with them for the entire, miserable, 85 preceding minutes. The exorbitantly priced popcorn we bought and munched through was not in vain after all . . . (Joe Penhall)

1. In what ways was the inclusion of various symbols/imagery (the piano, fire, water, the pile of clothes) throughout the script an important part of the adaptation process? Are there any particular devices or structures that were used to present/explore these?

They weren't symbols to me – only to the characters. To me they were brilliant images which I knew would look good on film. One thing I liked about the book was the accumulation of detail and the telling of a story using detail. Fire, water and pianos are all things we interact with to make them work – so on screen you see a character interacting, being a protagonist . . . in short, **doing** things – always good on film. There were no devices, but seeing, for example, the piano in various different states, tells a story. First it's an idea, when you see the Man at a concert with his wife; then you see him practising with his wife; then you see him alone and bereft, with an abandoned piano loaded with memories and symbolism. It was shorthand for everything emotional and metaphysical he had lost.

2. 'I try to dream the dreams of a child's imagining.' What significance did you give to this phrase when writing the film script, and how did you develop this idea throughout?

It's a very powerful idea: he [the Man] was so lost in the darkness, so mired in nightmare, chaos and despair, that the only thing left was to try and dream as if he were a child again. But it has a secondary meaning, which is that to relate to the Boy he has to try and imagine what's inside his head. And what's inside the Boy's head is completely different. The virtually unbridgeable chasm between the two is vertiginous. So it's a huge part of the story because it hints at their inner lives and how he tries to control them . . . as opposed to the endless struggle with the physical and elemental.

3. Why was the use of voice-overs developed throughout the film, and how do they relate to the role of a narrator – or the more traditional role of a 'chorus' – within a script?

How is a sense of 'voice' developed throughout? Directors are usually wary of voice-overs and [John] Hillcoat was in this case. But I like them sometimes, to express ideas which may sound grandiloquent and clumsy as dialogue. With a writer like McCarthy the only way to convey the richness of his authorial voice is to hear it in voice-over – you can't have the characters speaking anything other than his dialogue, which has totally different syntax. So the script initially had no voice over. Then the producers wanted one – to explain things they didn't understand – for example, that cannibalism was rife. So I wrote one and, of all people, Nick Cave emailed me and said he thought it was good. After that I had the confidence to continue. Oddly, when we showed the film to Cormac, one of the first things he said was that he liked the voice over and thought it was very successful. I didn't develop the voice throughout, I thought about it all very carefully before I started and decided the voice had to be McCarthy's. I had to write the script as if McCarthy were writing it.

4. The Man's language seems to suggest more uncertainty through his use of 'maybe' etc. compared to the Boy's language use – 'definite'. How did you make specific language choices to convey particular characters or ideas within the script?

The Man says 'maybe' a lot because he doesn't want to be too blunt with his little boy. The Boy is more definite because children are. The Man is almost never playful, whereas I thought the Boy often was. He is, after all, only very young he's still discovering the world, even as it dies. There's a wonderful passage in the book about the way words are disappearing as the objects they describe die. They talk about crows and the boy has to

imagine what they are. ‘Can they fly to the moon?’ It’s incredibly imaginative and yet real. For me, language is the foundation on which everything is built. It conveys context and character and situation all at once . . . as well as emotion. The Boy cries quite a lot, but it’s what he says that’s most moving. ‘Will I see you again? When will I see you again?’ he asks as his father contemplates suicide... intensely moving and frightening.

5. The structure and narrative order differs between the novel and film script, and between the film script and the actual edited film. Can you explain where you feel this has worked effectively and where you feel particular editing or changes to the structure are less effective? (It might be useful here to talk about the piano scenes and why, such powerful imagery – smashing up the piano etc. and the links with it later on – do not appear to the same extent in the final film.)

Very little changed from book to script to film. A lot of the foraging and walking was excised from the script because it got boring; film doesn’t like that kind of thing much. John Hillcoat tried to re-order scenes in the cut and I resisted this. I wrote and we shot a scene of Viggo chopping up the piano for firewood, but it was cut because the director and producers felt it jarred with the Man’s moving breakdown when he sees the piano. For me, the danger was that it would seem comic. For my money, it was a little ‘on the nose’ and literal. He says it, we believe him – that should be enough. A lesson here is that a good story has to be shot the way it’s written. You’re on a journey, you have to go to all the stations of the journey and you have to go to them in the right order, otherwise the journey won’t be the same and won’t be as effective. The ending needs to pay off, and every single one of the scenes which precede it and the order they arrive in are carefully calibrated set-ups. So you can’t monkey with that kind of precision.

6. Many aspects of the film script seem to develop both personal and universal ideas at the same time by focusing on the particular person, event or idea and, through this, a general theme or concept. Were you conscious of this aim when developing the script, and what techniques did you use, or do you feel Cormac McCarthy used, to achieve this?

A great writer, or maybe just a lucky one, happens upon a character in a context with a premise which somehow explodes into life when all the constituent parts are put together. It’s dramatic, resonant, meaningful, etc., all at once. It’s both intimate and universal, it bares endless analysis, but could be understood by a child. It requires complex construction and the right ingredients. Sometimes they arrive in the night on a beam of cosmic inspiration and sometimes they require years of honing. Fortunately Cormac did all the work in this case. I just corralled it into a script. But loosely, I think he wanted to write about his son, John, and the wonder and fears of having a child very late in life . . . the creeping fear of mortality coexisting with the joys of fatherhood . . . but shrewdly he realised he could simultaneously address his other major concern, the death of humanity . . . and give it a gripping, suspenseful spine. He said to me that his other masterpiece, *Blood Meridian*, was about humanity at its worst. The two main characters in *The Road* represent humanity at its best. One is about killing, the other is about surviving.

7. The Mother appears to have a more significant role in the film than in the novel. Why is this? Do you feel she is presented in a more positive or negative light than in the original text? Or – are there techniques you have used to ensure that an analysis of her motivations/character is the responsibility of the reader/viewer not the writers? She appears to have a ‘presence’ throughout the script, even in scenes where she is not

present. Was this a deliberate aim and, if so, what techniques did you use to achieve this?

I just wanted to see more of her. I was very moved by that part of the story and the way he was haunted by her death. I've been haunted by peoples' deaths myself and it doesn't go away in a hurry. So I wanted to show more, I wanted to show persistent misery . . . Also, in the novel she's quite hard and flinty, partly because by now she's on the brink. I wanted her to be a little softer and more forgiving, to make it even harder to see her go. I should add that my experience of a lot of the women in my life is that they're a little bit more nurturing and less self-absorbed than the Woman in this. So you write what you know . . . But no, there were no real techniques. And yes, I wanted her presence to haunt as much of the film as possible. I wanted it to be viscerally upsetting when he dreams of her, shortly before he dies.

8. When producing an adapted script, do you believe the director needs to read the original novel in order to develop the script effectively, or that the film or play script stand on its own?

Everybody always needs to know as much as they can. Gather all the evidence that you can. I don't have much truck with directors who are scared of novels, or think they're some kind of genius who will inevitably transcend the novel so entirely that we forget about it. A lot of directors are vaguely illiterate or just hubristic and my response is, 'Fuck you. You signed up to do the novel and took the money; so read it. If you don't want to read it, write your own damned story . . .' That said, Hillcoat was exceptionally respectful of the novel and, like me, adored it and was wholly reverential. Sometimes it doesn't do to be too reverential. A lot of the crappiest novels make great films after they've been kicked about a bit. But in this case, I think we got it right.

9. The scenes between Man, Boy and Old Man are, we feel, central to an understanding of the text. What were your aims when writing these scenes?

I loved that scene but it made me nervous. It did seem to be exhuming the subtext of the novel. Interestingly, on film, it's one of my favourite scenes – although probably because of Duvall and the emotional heft he brings to it. But I believe you should be allowed to do that. Not every film needs to completely strangle the deeply felt meaning behind the script in favour of images. You are actually allowed to say something complex and thoughtful with dialogue, as long as you know how to do it. (So how do you do it? Keep it under four pages and cast well.)

10. In the scene with the Thief, when the Man confronts him and 'the Thief looks at the Boy' – compared with the novel at this point, do you feel you present the scene from a different perspective or emphasise different aspects/issues than the novelist? Would the empathy you develop or the perspective that you create for the viewer at this point be different than that given to the reader by the author? Why?

I think it's probably a necessary convention of film that the subtext and the overriding thematic concerns be hammered at incessantly. By this point we felt that we needed to show the Boy's maturity – the Boy is more mature than the father here – and hence the point of the whole journey: the boy becoming a man, if you will. So I made the scene about that, and less about simply getting their shoes back. McCarthy emphasises this too, but in a film you have to hammer it home in order for it to feel climactic, you can't vaguely conceal it and hope smart people pick up on it. The climax of the film can't be 'And then they got their shoes back, but something else is going on here too.' It has to be 'In that moment, the Boy

becomes a man, the Man becomes a boy, the Man knows the Boy has grown up and yet he is also cowed by it, conflicted, no longer the hero: there is a new hero.' The shoes aren't even the point – the Boy shows us what really matters and why we've stuck with them for the entire, miserable, 85 preceding minutes. The exorbitantly priced popcorn we bought and munched through was not in vain after all . . .

11. If when the Man dies, the Boy finds a letter from his mum (written for the Boy) in his father's pocket, what would the first few lines of the letter say? How have you suggested or presented these thoughts/ideas (of the mother's) in other scenes you have written?

Hmmn. Fruity question, but good for students. I can't tell you the answer to this. I expect a very tender, careful suicide note, justifying her decision. We know so little of how she spoke to the Boy. (I'd be more interested in a letter from her after her death. What would she say at the end, as the Man joins her in the afterlife? Consider what her reaction would be to the Man's death, to the Boy surviving him, to the Boy surviving her . . . I'd say she'd be fairly surprised they got so far . . . enough to regret her decision? Or reinforce it? Would she see the Boy's death as all the more imminent now?) Imagine her terrible conflict . . . how would it feel to desert your child? How would you explain that in a letter? Who on this earth could do that? It's a brave and savage truth I think, that real people – in reality, not in fiction – are forced to do this, and can. We're seeing people facing all manner of atrocity all over the world right now . . . the Congo, Afghanistan, Chechnya . . . it's valuable to remember, as you get inside the Woman's head, that perfectly ordinary people are making the decision she made, every day. The people who hanged themselves in the barn near the start are Mr and Mrs Average . . . the cannibals who live in the big house on the hill were probably pillars of the community.

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EXT. BOAT LAUNCH/ROAD – DAY

*As the **Boy** walks out of the dunes holding the gun, a **Motherly Woman** who is standing with the **Veteran** comes towards him.*

Motherly Woman Oh. I am so glad to see you.

*The **Boy** just stares at her, bemused.*

*A short distance away stands the rest of the family – another **Boy** his own age and a **Girl**. The **Boy** stares at the **Other Boy** and recognises him; it's the same **Boy** he chased earlier.*

*Then the **Boy** notices a threadbare mongrel of a dog, waiting with them.*

*The **Motherly Woman** goes over and puts her arms around him.*

Motherly Woman We've been following you. Did you know that? We saw you with your papa and we tried to catch up but you were too quick for us.

Veteran There was some discussion about whether to even come after you at all.

*As she's chatting, the **Motherly Woman** gently takes the gun from the **Boy** and hands it to the **Veteran**.*

Motherly Woman We're so lucky. We were so worried about you. And now we don't have to worry about a thing.

*She kisses the **Boy** on the forehead and holds him at arm's length and looks at him.*

Motherly Woman How does that sound? Is that okay?

*The **Boy** stares but says nothing.*

Closing credits.