

Somewhere Near Nowhere

Creative Piece

This hell hole was almost too much to bear. Scavengers and birds of prey circled, ready to pick at my eyeballs the moment I stopped moving. My skin draped over my bones like a dried up rag. At night I dreamt of my body being picked apart and my decaying, bitten nails oozing poison into my bloodstream. I was the leftovers—the dregs of this prison. A remnant of myself, blistered and burned—scorched like this desolate earth. I hadn't been able to establish contact with Hardings for over a month and there was barely any food left—just noodles and cheese—I would die here.

Teddy sat by the radio all fucking day, twisting its grimy little knob between his thumb and forefinger. I told him once, that if he kept at it like that, it'd drop off. The little horndog should've just gone to the dog boxes. That's why they'd put me here with them—wasn't it? I couldn't last out here for months without—

Men have needs.

Anyway, Teddy thought it was bad karma or some bullshit... fuck for all I know, maybe it was. At night he whined about his diving trip. He went on and on about how things were meant to be. He was only meant to be here for a month or so. He just needed a bit of extra cash. He should've been washing salt out of his dreadlocks by now—*yeah give it up mate*—he was worse than *them!*

The scavengers and birds of prey circled a little lower every day. It was as if they were willing me to cark it so they could enjoy their feast. I don't blame them, it's slim pickings out here for a good bit of fresh meat. What I wouldn't do for bit of barbequed buzzard—I bet they taste like chicken. *Oh god I miss chicken!* Last night I dreamt that I was being hunted by

a dingo. It gnashed it's teeth at me and I tripped over something I couldn't see as I tried to back away. I shuffled further as best I could, but my arms withered before my eyes, becoming weak and thin. I placed a hand firmly on the object that tripped me and as I lifted myself over it, my hand fell through its decaying flesh—it was Hetty's grey and swollen corpse. The bones of her ribcage tightened around my hand and locked me in place. I woke when the dingo leapt at my throat.

I didn't go to the dog boxes this morning. I *had* to contact Hardings. I sent messages out on every channel—static. The sun had risen high overhead, but the day was still cool. This didn't even feel like Australia! My feet crunched against the gravel, and with every step I was reminded of my dream. The sickening sound of Hetty's bones cracking—trapping me. I would beat her for that: she was making my dreams an inhospitable nightmare. The crunching gravel and snapping bones filled my mind, getting louder with every step. Closer and closer to the dog boxes they carried me, louder and louder the snap, pop, crunch. Eventually my feet slowed and came to a complete stop. In the silence, the noises of the compound and the surrounding bush swelled. The wings of the scavengers that flew high over the fence sounded like my ceiling fan from home. I used to watch the blades as they spun around and around, playing tricks with my eyes. Sometimes they would spin forwards and I could focus on each blade in it's rotation and then without warning, they would appear to be spinning backwards and I couldn't make them out. Routine: that's what I needed. Something to expect, something to fuck... something to eat.

A Cockatoo's screech resonated across the dry-brown-earth. It must've been perched somewhere high in the branches. *I wonder if cockatoo tastes like chicken*, I thought. *I wonder if that Cockatoo would pick at my eyeballs*. I took two more steps towards the dog boxes and

Hetty's swollen grey corpse flashed in my mind. A sour, putrid bile rose in my throat and as I lurched forwards my knees struck the earth, grating hard against the gravel. My vomit came thick and hot and with every retch the dog box keys chinked against my pocket. I pressed my face to the scorched earth, filthy, bleeding and lying beside the hot puddle of sick.

Hardings wasn't coming.

I would die here—we all would.

I wouldn't go to the dog boxes—not today.

Essay:

The Natural Way of Things (TNWoT) by Charlotte Wood represents Boncer as a vile character, lacking in empathy and viciously beating the girls whenever he desires (Wood, 2015). Although this is an accurate representation at the beginning of the novel, it quickly becomes clear that Wood was not intending to develop Boncer's character much further. This lack of character development assisted me in my creative process and I found that the lack of intentionality behind Boncer's character gave me the freedom of choice when rewriting this scene. My creative piece is based on the first chapter of "Part Two: Autumn," where Boncer is mostly missing from the action (Wood, 2015). In this scene, the girls have been left in their dog boxes until Nancy lets them out at midday. There are a lot of unanswered questions surrounding Boncer's whereabouts, and we only find out later, that he was attempting to contact Hardings. The novel doesn't explicitly state why Boncer was contacting Hardings on this day in particular, or whether he was successful in his attempts, which piqued my interest in Boncer's actions and motives during this time.

In TNWoT, there is only one scene—in chapter five—that alludes to Boncer being a more complex character. Yolanda states of Boncer, "Before he could stop it, a cloud of relief, of gratitude passed across him. His eyes watered, pitiful. Pitiful." (Wood, 2015). This enabled me to represent Boncer as a more fear driven character that was struggling with life within the compound just as the main protagonists were. It is my understanding that every character in the novel undergoes personal change. I have attempted to maintain Boncer's vicious personality by including phrases like "that little horndog should've gone to the dog boxes" implying that Boncer was suggesting that Teddy raped the girls for his own sexual pleasure, and that Boncer already had. Although Boncer wasn't already with Hetty, it is something that

is brought up continuously throughout the novel, and is clearly something that he thinks about. I have attempted to acknowledge that he may also be struggling with his own mortality, abandonment and most likely fear of his surroundings through the pattern (Pope, 2012) of Boncer's recurring nightmares about his and the other's deaths. It was important that Boncer's fears were brought about as an unconscious process because TNWoT had very little indication of Boncer's emotions beyond anger and desire. By allowing the reader to imply meaning from Boncer's recurring nightmares, the piece is immersive and captivating for all readers, as each reader can bring their own knowledge and interpretation to the piece (Pope, 2012).

The most prominent narrative element I have used to represent Boncer, is the use of first person point of view (Burroway, 2007). I have chosen to write in first person point of view because I wanted the reader to feel very close to the action and Boncer's struggle. As Wood's novel is written in third person and Boncer is the antagonist, the reader is quite separated from him and his thoughts. This first person perspective will allow the reader to feel uncomfortably close to his character and the reader will hopefully experience cognitive dissonance as Boncer is represented as just another human in a survival situation. Having said this, I have written using mostly personal pronouns, to maintain Boncer's self-absorbed and uncaring nature.

Although this piece is not strictly a monologue, it does not include any dialogue and is unusually introspective for Boncer's character, both of which are elements of monologue (Pickering, 2005). In TNWoT, Wood (2015) writes, "His eyes are red. He sits there, a thumbnail between his teeth, staring sadly out through the spotted flyscreen, across the land." In this scene, Boncer is clearly shaken, and in emotional distress. He has removed his weapon, separates himself from the group and doesn't speak. This unusual behaviour is most

likely due to the fact that he has recently discovered that Hardings is not coming to rescue them, and is coming to terms with his new reality. I have chosen to write this piece as a monologue with heavy use of descriptive language and imagery because it provides a unique understanding of Boncer's thoughts, feelings and reactions to his environment and dreams.

Lastly, I challenged myself to write a piece that represented the humdrum or the rhythm of the compound without explicitly stating it. I have done this by repeating the structure of each paragraph (Pope, 2012). For instance, each segment of my creative piece begins with a description of the scavengers, followed by a dream/nightmare, then contacting Hardings and lastly thoughts about life outside the compound. The third repetition of this pattern is broken as this is the moment that Boncer undergoes the biggest change. Finally, as he accepts that Hardings isn't coming and that they would most likely all die there, he falls to the earth and the pattern is broken.

Wood's novel, TNWoT is beautifully written and served as a great source for inspiration. I have attempted to do justice to her characters and plot, and delve a little deeper into the world she has envisioned. The piece that I have written should be uncomfortable to any reader that has read TNWoT as it will force them to reexamine their initial interpretations of Boncer, and potentially develop a strange sense of sympathy for an all round, unlikable character.

References

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