

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ENGLISH EXTENSION COURSE 2 MAJOR WORK
IDENTIFICATION TAG**

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Category and Description ScreenPlay

**ATTACH THIS CARD SECURELY TO EACH PART
OF THE PROJECT. DO NOT PIN.**

***DEATH BY DROWNING,
THE EUPHORIA BEGINS***

FINAL DRAFT

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By HSC NO. 11537243

Original Screenplay

EXT. FULCRUM HOUSE – PATIO – LATE MORNING

We're following LANCE as he prepares a large clear washbowl filled with water on a trestle table facing the sea. There are all sorts of food awaiting preparation on the table as well. A beach chair is in the background with LANCE's cat of the fat and patchy variety cheerfully attacking a slice of salmon but somehow she does not seem too gratified. The song 'Suicide is Painless' is playing on the radio in the background.

(T.C) = To Camera (V.O) = Voice Over (O.S) = Off Screen

LANCE (T.C)

I had one of those dreams again. The ones that my mother used to call 'Great Dreams' where there is this magnificent show of lights and fanfare that is meant to tell you a lot about your inner-self. Well, what does being an astronaut who never makes it to the launch pad because your pilot forgot to lock the doors, close the windows and leave food out for the dog say about your life? Empty promises and lost opportunities perhaps? Lousy parenting and scheming friends? Either way it's depressing.

Opens a copy of Medical Observer and reads the headline 'Prior to death, drowning gives wave of euphoria...continued page 89'

BEAT

LANCE (T.C)

Oh did I tell you that I'm a doctor? How rude of me.

LANCE rolls his eyes and begins waving his kitchen knife in the air.

LANCE (T.C)

My name is Lance, Lance Fulcrum or should I say Dr Lance Fulcrum.

LANCE straightens his Hawaiian shirt and tries to look important.

LANCE (T.C)

Uhem, let me tell you a bit about myself since we're going to be stuck with each other for the rest of the day and in all politeness I can't just ask you to leave. Anyways. I'm a 29 year old small framed Caucasian and I'm doing quite well for myself with minimal effort and I'm the type who leaves everything to the last minute. It earned me a reputation as the doctor who has the highest curing rate from the deathbed. Not bad huh?

LANCE takes in a slow, deep breath of moist sea air and exhales in a huff.

LANCE (T.C)

Successful as society might see me, I feel dead. I never really wanted to be a doctor, and I didn't really want to say yes to my bride-to-be Chloe, I just didn't want to sound rude and say no.

LANCE sneezes and wipes his nose with his hand.

LANCE (T.C)

Ah! Damn Cold in the middle of spring. Even my anatomy has a grudge against me.

LANCE places the bowl of water on the ground and flips to page 89 of the Medical Observer and begins reading as well as cutting up strips of meat.

LANCE (T.C)

(Reading)

Moments prior to death through asphyxiation complemented by the presence of water in the lungs which alters blood chemistry, drown victims and near-drown victims have been known to experience a wave of euphoria as the oxygen deprived brain goes into spasms and shuts down...

BEAT

LANCE (T.C)

(Contemplates)

Hmmmm.....

LANCE contemplates and looks at the bowl of water by his feet.

LANCE (T.C)

Maybe I'll half drown myself and see if anything happens.... I'll pull my head out at the last minute. And if I don't, oh well, at least I won't have to face another cold ridden day. I love win win situations...

LANCE places down his kitchen knife and looks around to see if anyone is watching with the aim of ruining his experiment by prancing in on a white horse and saving him from his euphoric bliss.

LANCE

Here we go.

LANCE plunges his head into the cold water and pulls his head back out again in reflex.

LANCE

DAMN THAT'S COLD!

LANCE shakes the water off his head and rubs his eyes.

LANCE

Ok, lets try that again.

LANCE slowly pokes his head back into the water, we can see his face as though we are staring up from the bottom of the bowl. He's trying to hold his breath with his eyes glued shut.

LANCE (V.O)

It's cold! cold! cold! Grrr! Why isn't anything happening yet? It'll really suck if I just passed out and died without the euphoria, it'll be like being gypped out of your last meal on death row...hey, I feel something now.... ah get off me stupid cat!

We can hear a 'meow' as LANCE waves his hand about to shoo off his cat who has decided to take a nap on the back of his head.

LANCE (V.O)

This isn't gonna work. My head is so cold I'm feeling more pain than euphoria.

Pulls his head out of the bowl and dries his head with his shirt.

LANCE

Need to find something warm.

LANCE looks around and spots a fish tank filled with tropical marine life in his lounge. He grins and starts walking toward it.

INT. LANCE HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - LATE MORNING

We can see LANCE from the surface of the tank's watermark as he removes the lid.

Our POV shifts to his as he stares down into the array of different colourful fishes and live corals. LANCE tests the water with his fingers and grins.

LANCE

Perfect!

LANCE rubs his hands and smoothes his damp hair as though he was about to make a record skydive.

LANCE (T.C)

Oh by the way, if you're wondering why I'm going to half drown myself instead of just popping an ecstasy tablet, the answer's simple, it'll ruin my professional credibility and you know how bad I'm at lying when asked about these things.

LANCE draws a deep breath.

LANCE

Here we go, nice and smooth.

LANCE plunges his head into the water with his eyes and mouth tightly shut. Bubbles start forming out of his nostrils and mouth as he begins to squirm, the fish around him continue swimming past as though he is not there.

BEAT

Suddenly, LANCE's eyes and mouth burst open, gasping for air as he begins swallowing water instead.

BEAT

LANCE's body and facial expression begin to relax, his pupils dilate as we zoom into his eyes.

Fade & Flash

INT. DREAM THEATRE – MIDROW

LANCE is sitting in a medium sized cinema holding a large pack of popcorn and a mega sized cup of coke on the armrest. The house lights are still on and the curtain has yet to be drawn. Two exits marked with 'Life' and 'Death' respectively are situated to the side of the main screen.

LANCE

Um hello? Anybody there?

BEAT

LANCE

C'mon! At least tell me what movie this is going to be. I don't have much time you know as my head at the moment is in a fish tank, so please be considerate.

VOICE

Silence you errant knave!

LANCE

Hey that's my line to pesky patients who never shut up about getting anti-biotics when they have the flu. And who are you anyway?

VOICE

I am you subconscious mind. Yes it's clichéd I know, but whose fault is it? You're the unimaginative one.

LANCE

Subconscious mind? You're not one of those Freudian constructs are you?

VOICE

My god man! I can assure you that I am a 100% Jungian adherent, Freud was nothing more but a sex maniac and I will have nothing to do with him

whatsoever! Although he DID invent the very concept of my being but hey,
who doesn't hate their parents?

(Chuckles)

LANCE

All right, let's cut the pointless banter and get on with what the hell I'm doing here? Shall we? I have an appointment with this thing called euphoria and I'd really like to know how being stuck in a dingey theatre with my screwed up subcon mind...

VOICE

SubconSCIOUS.

LANCE

...whatever! Would allow me to accomplish my desperate although noble goal?

BEAT

LANCE

Your call. Jung guy.

LANCE crosses his arms.

VOICE

(Sigh) You never had much patience did you? Well, you're about to see a film about your life, specifically all that is wrong with it from day one to the present day.

LANCE

And does watching a film more depressing than a Russian ending aid in my quest?

VOICE

Most certainly! Whether or not you feel euphoric by the end of it depends on what you choose to watch.

LANCE

Um, this is a movie at a CIN-E-MA. Not Pay Per View.

VOICE

Silence! You'll see around halfway through, so be patient. I'll be here the whole way just to spite you like I always have.

(Chuckles in an evil manner)

LANCE

(Heavy sarcasm)

Oh bravo!

(Applauds slowly)

LANCE

I mean you should play Count Dracula sometime you know, you really have the talent with that laugh.

VOICE

Oh, but I already have.

LANCE

When?

VOICE

Remember that dream you had in 3rd grade when you were strung up and bled to death by this evil guy? That was me.

LANCE

Argh! Of all the subconscious minds I could have developed, I HAD to get a diabolical one! Just get on with this freak show will you?

VOICE

As you wish, Lance Fulcrum.

House lights dim as the curtains draw. At the same time, the whole theatre warps in shape. It transforms into IMAX format with a large 9-story screen at the front. The two exits are now at the back. The screen flickers as the title 'This is YOUR Life' with the subtitle 'Either Love it or Hate it, YOU Decide By Choosing Which Exit' accompanied by 70's elevator music.

LANCE

(Sarcasm)

Charming.

VOICE

For legal reasons, I must state that the following events you are about to see are not exaggerated nor embellished in anyway. To exaggerate or embellish them would be accomplice to melodrama. Please enjoy the movie.

LANCE

Can I just watch this in peace?

BEAT

LANCE

Thank you.

(Snares)

Your graciousness.

The screen flashes as LANCE is immersed into the film itself though we cannot see him, we are seeing the events unravel through his eyes.

INT. LANCE'S KINDERGARTEN - CLASS ROOM – MORNING

LANCE (V.O)

Hey what am I doing here?

We can see the classroom through a high angle shot panning around the room. Sitting at the back is LANCE in toddler form who appears to be following the reading of a storybook with the rest of the class. A disgruntled looking teacher's ASSISTANT is standing cross-armed not too far from him.

LANCE (V.O)

Why am I back in kindergarten? I mean if the thing's meant to begin from day one what am I doing here? Oi Subby! You there?

BEAT

LANCE (V.O)

Guess not. This was the worst year of my life beside primary and secondary school. And if I remember correctly, I'm about to be dragged from my seat

because I'm not reading aloud like I'm supposed to. Talk about school brutality...

HEAD TEACHER

And the frog jumped down the well. It went glump glump glump....

She looks up to see if the children were giving her their undivided attention and above all, reading with her. She spots a young slightly chubby boy at the back whose lips don't seem to match what is supposedly being read.

HEAD TEACHER

Lance Fulcrum! Why aren't you reading along like the rest of us? Don't you know that we must learn TOGETHER?

LANCE ignores her and begins reading for real in a naïve if not desperate attempt to cover his tracks. The HEAD TEACHER looks furious and slams her book on the floor.

HEAD TEACHER

How DARE you ignore me when I am talking to you boy! You dumb or something?

LANCE (V.O)

That woman was a bitch I tell ya. No wonder I lacked self-esteem.

The HEAD TEACHER stomps her way to LANCE's seat.

HEAD TEACHER

All right then Mr. Oh I am too good to be part of the proooooogrammmmm.

Get up and read in front of the whole class!

LANCE begins to look apprehensive and braces his legs against the desk, marking his stand yet still not giving the HEAD TEACHER as much as a look in acknowledgement of her words.

LANCE (V.O)

(Musing)

Definitely brought up as a conformist, but never took too much of that tack onboard.

BEAT

I think.

The HEAD TEACHER grabs the young LANCE by his arm and attempts to dislodge him from his seat but LANCE merely holds on to the girl next to him whilst pretending to read in mockery of the HEAD TEACHER.

HEAD TEACHER

(Flustered and totally irate)

I said GET UP!

She signals the ASSISTANT to help drag LANCE out of his seat. With their combined strength, LANCE falls out of his seat with his feet skidding along the smooth tiled floor and out to the front. The whole class watches on in bewilderment.

LANCE (V.O)

Too bad I didn't tell my parents about the whole thing. They never told my parents either, since they almost dislocated my arm. It's child abuse really. But it was a wise move I guess. I mean what would they say if they learned that I never put in too much of an effort in class and made an arse of myself? The potential loss in the brownie points department was simply too great. I have a rule in life regarding incidents of misconduct at school. I call them 25-year things. You never speak of them to your parents or anyone who may report back to your parents for the next 25 years, because then it would just be an innocent and harmless story told at the dinner table about a cute little mishap 25 years ago that has been cleansed through time and will not equate to 3 months being grounded and 'No new toys for you little boyo.'

Some giggling can be heard in the background as LANCE begins to sob under a barrage of unrepeatable and incomprehensible insults from the HEAD TEACHER with her faithful ASSISTANT standing by, nodding and grinning.

LANCE (V.O)

Humiliated, martyred, torn from the olive tree of youthful innocence and purity of thought by the forced order of the education bureaucracy and its

mandates of conformity above sensitivity based on true intellectual understanding. No wonder kids are screwed up these days.

(Sobs)

LANCE (V.O)

It might interest you to know that I resisted the suppressive and draconian regime not out of some higher cause promoting intellectual freedom and self-determination for children, but really out of sheer laziness at the time. But nevertheless, it is our deeds by which we are judged and not our intentions.

Flash Cut

INT. INDOOR SWIMMING POOL – POOLSIDE – MORNING

LANCE (V.O)

Ok is this my body's way of reminding me that I'm immersed in water at the moment or...

A 4-year-old LANCE walks out of the dressing area with a friend who jumps into the deep end of the pool.

LANCE (V.O)

...is this a tour through the most traumatic moments of my life? I wonder if this counts as Murphy's Law striking for one last time on the event horizon of

death? When's my euphoria gonna wash me away into the abyss of total bliss?
At this rate I'd be long dead floating in a fish tank before I feel good about
anything!

*Young LANCE jumps into the pool after his friend but seems to be struggling in the
water.*

LANCE (V.O)

First brush with death. The first time I went swimming, mum was waiting
outside behind glass watching from the bar sipping her lemonade. Talk about
not being there for your kid when it was a life and death situation.

*We can see Young LANCE from the bottom of the pool as he mimics freestyle strokes
and breaks the surface, clambering out of the pool.*

LANCE (V.O)

TV saved my life. I saw enough of those swimming championships late at
night to learn a few strokes and managed to swim back to the surface. Not bad
for a 4 year old really. In hindsight though, I'm pretty proud of myself
actually.

*Young LANCE walks gingerly to the glass wall between the pool and the bar and
throws up.*

LANCE (V.O)

Proudest moment of my life so far and I had to screw it up by making a half digested noodle mural on the pool floor. I dunno what wreaked more, the stench of bile or the simmering hate of my own lack of guts. They were probably feeding off each other in some twisted sense of poetic masochistic justice. Well at least I didn't then step in it like so many other kids my age did when they threw up. My dog used to do that too, but he never learned to walk around his own mess. Maybe that's what separates us from animals. We learn to leave our mess in someone else's place and learn not to step on it.

FLASH CUT

DARKNESS

LANCE

Hey it's all dark! Am I dead? If I am, then a recurring theme in my life has been vindicated for one last time. You see, I never ever seem to end up where I want to go or accomplish what I originally set out to do. Nor do I ever get what I wanted to get from the beginning.

BEAT

LANCE

Wait, something's happening.

FLASH CUT

INT. LANCE'S PARENTS' APARTMENT – FRONTDOOR – EVENING

A 12-year-old LANCE twiddles his thumbs as he and his FATHER wait impatiently at the door.

FATHER

Margaret hurry up! We're half an hour late and we're the hosts for Christ's sake!

MARGARET

Well, I am the only one doing all the stuff around here, closing the windows, locking the windows, cleaning the windows and if you don't shut up dear and let me put on my make up in peace after spending all that time cleaning the place up so you don't have to do anything before we go out, I'll start breaking the windows!

FATHER

(Exasperated)

Margaret babe... the place didn't need cleaning, the windows were already closed because you're afraid it'll let the dust in and ruin your lovely lounge suite. And you're just paranoid that you'd embarrass yourself if you invited your friends back here without it being a bloody clean room! That is IF we

ever show up at the dinner because at this rate, we'll be there by 1 in the morning!

LANCE (V.O)

He was right, well half right. We never left the building. After that I had 17 years of dreams along the same lines. Something good comes up, everyone's ready to go and bang, it never materialises. It's sad and it borders on melodrama, but when you're stuck in that rut for more than half your life so far, it's called god's got something chronic against you.

**EXT. LANCE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL – SENIOR'S PLAYGROUND –
AFTERNOON**

LANCE (V.O)

Oh yeah, I stopped believing in religion that same year. What a big mistake that was considering I went to a Catholic school with yet another draconian bent on conformity.

We can see LANCE standing on a bench proclaiming his newfound beliefs to his friends and one by one they walk away after yelling an expletive.

LANCE (V.O)

Let's just say I lost all my friends overnight and was the target of harassment for the remainder of my final year of primary school. What a way to go huh?

BEAT

LANCE (V.O)

This is way too depressing. How long have I been in the fish tank anyway?

Oh euphoria... where art thou?

Screen blackens

INT. DREAM THEATRE – MIDROW

We are transported back again to the theatre, the screen is flashing between black and yellow then turns off. LANCE is immersed in total darkness with the lit signs of 'Life' and 'Death' above the exits at the back of the theatre giving off an eerie glow.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER

(O.S)

We are currently experiencing technical difficulties. Your viewing will hopefully resume shortly. We do NOT apologise for this major inconvenience because it's not our fault. Blame Lance Fulcrum's shocking memory. Complaint cards printed on the side of sickness bags are located underneath your seats. Thank you.

LANCE

Very pleasant place this. Hey Subconscious you there?

VOICE

Miss me ey? I didn't know I made that big an impression.

(Chuckles)

LANCE

No you didn't, just checking if you're holding your end of the bargain and not off somewhere else flirting with that announcer!

VOICE

(Innocently)

I thought you didn't want me. And don't you recognize her VOICE? Think back to 1999. Her name starts with M.

LANCE

What? I have nothing to do with your fantasies!

LANCE crosses his arms.

VOICE

My fantasies are YOUR fantasies.

LANCE

What are you insinuating?

VOICE

Hey calm down big fella, just re-appropriating blame according to guilt. You really don't recognize her do you?

AWKWARD BEAT

VOICE

You don't remember your first crush? And it was mutual too if you really looked back and thought about it. Her name was Mag....

LANCE

(Surprised and extremely defensive)

MAGGIE? Maggie Hunt? I got over her ages ago!

VOICE

Wait a minute, you met her when you were 15 and you got over her when? 5 years ago and you're how old? 29. I say that's pretty pathetic by any standard.

LANCE

(With desperation)

Why did she HAVE to live in Adelaide? I mean why? We would have been great together, but no, long distance relationships just don't work. *Sigh*

VOICE

Actually what's more pathetic and ultimately far more disturbing was the fact you dated a string of Maggie look-alikes for the next 10 years.

LANCE

My friend once said, if you can't get the girl of your dreams, there's always a look-alike. Was he so wrong?

VOICE

It's still pathetic. And it's definitely tough on her.

LANCE

What should I have done then?

VOICE

Move to Adelaide.

LANCE

Move to Adelaide? Are you serious? That place is a hole!

VOICE

A very nice hole with Maggie in it, the damsel in distress down a dark dark well...

LANCE

What is it with you and theatrics?

VOICE

Ha! Don't try to change the subject dear Hamlet err I mean Lance! I can read your thoughts you know.

LANCE

Oh shut up! When's my life story going to be back on? I mean how long does it take to do whatever they need to do?

VOICE

It's ready to go anytime you want. You just need to think of something and it'll play it.

LANCE

Is that the key to me choosing my own path through the journey of my life? But I didn't want to see my kindergarten days or being paid out and left with no friends in primary school. So please explain.

VOICE

Those early ones you saw were what your subconscious mind queued up as a kind of reflex action because of your negative self-image. In other words it was my doing.

LANCE

Remind me to take psychology classes when this is over, I'm going to reign you in.

VOICE

Ah! But it's poor psychological practice to suppress one's psyche.

LANCE

Excuse me, but you're only a PART of my psyche, I make up the other half.

VOICE

But who's in control?

BEAT

VOICE

Aha, got you there didn't I?

LANCE

No I was just thinking. Let's get on with this.

FLASH CUT

INT. HIGH SCHOOL – CLASSROOM – MORNING

It is casuals day and students wearing an assortment of clothes begin piling into the room. LANCE follows a short haired blond of medium height wearing tight jeans and a stretched top into the room, his eyes transfixed on her slim body.

LANCE (V.O)

Did I want to see this?

VOICE

No but I did, Maggie's got one helluva bod doesn't she?

LANCE (V.O)

What are you doing here? Aren't you meant to be absent from my actual flashbacks?

VOICE

No I went out for popcorn and drinks for the last couple, how can I miss this?

LANCE (V.O)

You scheming son of a bitch.

VOICE

Don't talk about your mother like that young man. Besides, can't you see the irony?

LANCE (V.O)

Bah! And what ever happened to me having control over what I see here?

VOICE

Um, you see there's this minor technicality that applies to our relationship that is best summarised by 'My wish is YOUR command'. That and I had to shut you up somehow.

LANCE (V.O)

In other words...

VOICE

I lied.

LANCE (V.O)

You know what? You're convoluted and basically full of it! Was I ever like you in real life? 'Cause I would've been a total pain.

VOICE

How do you think you managed to persuade your parents to buy you that BMW for your 18th? My persuasive talents of course.

LANCE (V.O)

Well at least you're useful to a limited degree.

VOICE

Can we watch this Lance? I really want to see how you managed to screw everything up by getting cold feet.

STUDENT LANCE sits on the opposite side of the room to MAGGIE as the teacher instructs the class to split up into groups of 3 for a game on social classes. STUDENT LANCE hesitates as he eyes MAGGIE several times. She walks over to him and joins the circle of seats formed by 5 other students sitting right in front of STUDENT LANCE and smiles.

STUDENT LANCE

Hi, I'm err I'm Lance, and you are?

MAGGIE

I'm Maggie, nice meeting ya.

She leans closer and keeping her warm seductive smile.

STUDENT LANCE

You new here? Haven't seen you around before.

MAGGIE

Yeah, I'm just joining this class for a couple days then I'm going back to Adelaide, just visiting some relatives and quite frankly they bore me to death.

The only way I could get out of it was to go to school. Parents can be so annoying sometimes!

STUDENT LANCE

Yeah, talk about it. You do anything other than school?

MAGGIE gives STUDENT LANCE a weird quizzical look and there's an awkward beat.

STUDENT LANCE

Umm I mean what things do you like doing outside of school?

STUDENT LANCE looks relieved and somewhat proud of himself. MAGGIE relaxes and smiles.

MAGGIE

I belly dance and I make jewellery at my uncle's shop. Wanna see?

MAGGIE gets up on her chair and gives STUDENT LANCE a demonstration of belly dancing while holding her hands out adorned with silver and bronze rings she made. STUDENT LANCE is awestruck by MAGGIE's flexibility and once again becomes transfixed.

STUDENT LANCE

Wow, they're really nice rings. Where'd you get them?

FLASH CUT

INT. DREAM THEATRE – MIDROW

VOICE

Ouch, what a stupid question to ask a girl who is practically dancing in your lap! If I were her, I wouldn't give you the time of day.

LANCE

Subby, is it my fault that I was born with 'Foot in Mouth Syndrome'? My father had it, my grandfather had it and my great grandfather AND his brother had it.

VOICE

Yes it's a shame isn't it? Mildly attractive but once you open your mouth you give the game away.

LANCE

Kind of like that teacher I had at school, that Dr Whittingham? He looks Australian but he's really South African. You can't tell he's not Australian until he says something.

VOICE

Well there's an age-old mantra, it's better to be thought of as a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

LANCE

What does that have to do with anything?

VOICE

It's a catchy slogan.

FLASH CUT

INT. HIGH SCHOOL – CLASSROOM – MORNING (Continuing from previous scene)

MAGGIE steps down from her seat and sits down.

MAGGIE

I made them.

(She grins)

MAGGIE

You like?

STUDENT LANCE

Oh yeah they're awesome, I really like this one.

He points to a ring on her right middle finger with a curvy pattern of flowing silver.

MAGGIE

Hey that's my favourite one. I made it last year when I got bored. You've got taste ya know.

(She winks)

STUDENT LANCE

Well so do you.

STUDENT LANCE smiles gingerly as the teacher walks toward the group to begin the game.

TEACHER

All right. The point of the game is that you must trade your cards with the other 2 groups representing the stratas in society thus either maintaining your status or moving up a rank. Lower Class, Middle Class and Upper Class.

STUDENT LANCE puts his hand up.

TEACHER

(Annoyed)

Yes Lance?

STUDENT LANCE

What class are we?

TEACHER

Since Ms Hunt here was busy dancing on the tabletop...

STUDENT LANCE

It was her seat.

TEACHER

That is inconsequential. Your group will be the Lower Class.

The TEACHER passes the group a rules of the game pamphlet and a stack of cards.

MAGGIE looks at STUDENT LANCE with a look of bemusement but STUDENT

LANCE is busy reading the pamphlet. MAGGIE taps him on his thigh.

MAGGIE

So how do we play?

STUDENT LANCE

Well whoever breaks the poverty line and into middle income through trading goes to group 2 over there.

MAGGIE

I know, we'll give our cards to the other people and then we'll be the only ones left!

STUDENT LANCE

That'll work just fine.

STUDENT LANCE smiles and the game begins. The groups move around the room trading until the bell rings and there's only STUDENT LANCE and MAGGIE left in the Lower Strata.

TEACHER

Well I see that we all did pretty well except for you two.

He looks condescendingly at both STUDENT LANCE and MAGGIE who look somewhat amused.

TEACHER

What happened you two?

STUDENT LANCE begins but MAGGIE cuts him off.

MAGGIE

We're happy the way we are and since the others weren't, we gave them our trade profits and got them upgraded.

STUDENT LANCE nods quickly in agreement.

TEACHER

Ok then, *(To the whole class)* but in the real world ladies and gentlemen, Good Samaritanism never got anyone anywhere except the welfare queues. Off to lunch everyone!

The students eagerly rush out of the room, STUDENT LANCE follows them ignoring MAGGIE who's the last to leave the room.

INT. DREAM THEATRE – MIDROW

VOICE

You moron! Why didn't you ask her to lunch or something?

LANCE

Like I said, cold feet.

VOICE

Wimp.

LANCE

You know you're pretty juvenile.

VOICE

Look, your cat has it better off than you probably.

The theatre screen flashes a few times and still pictures of LANCE's cat flow on in a montage, showing how much fun she's having eating fresh salmon, playing with other cats and lazing about.

LANCE

You know what? I think I've had enough of this. The more you talk the more I feel proud of myself because come to think about it, I'm a pretty damn good doctor with a BMW, a beach house and a fiancée who may be a dumb blond but hey, she's great in more ways than one. And I can't let my cat have more fun out of life than I do can I?

VOICE

What are you talking about?

LANCE

I'm saying that life is a muddy river with the occasional sugar coated island. If we look hard enough, we can catch a passing bite of it, and it makes it all worthwhile. I mean if we're going to float down this river toward the inevitable waterfall of death, we might as well have gotten something sweet and sensual out of it. And in a perfect world, without you.

LANCE rises out of his seat.

LANCE

To hell with you Subby, I feel great and I won't take your crap anymore in my life! I'll be like my cat who's content and happy.

VOICE

I'm not too sure about your cat being all that content.

LANCE

Well I'll make her happy and I'll be happy all the way with her! All just to spite you! Now where's the exit?

LANCE accidentally knocks his untouched coke on the floor, the sticky liquid spreading through the carpet. The theatre begins to flood toward LANCE.

LANCE

What is this?

VOICE

Oh it's just your body's way of telling you you're fast running out of breath.

Come again and ta ta!

The lights on the signs above the two exits cut out as random lights in the theatre explode. LANCE makes for the nearest exit. As he bursts through the door, we can see the sign above it flicker back to life and it reads 'Death'. We can now see LANCE run along a dark corridor until suddenly he drops into a muddy river that is fast flowing toward a waterfall. LANCE is struggling to find a branch or a rock to hold on to.

LANCE: Help! What's happening? No! Please not after I've gone this far! Nooooooooooooo...

We have a bird's eye view of LANCE plunging down the waterfall screaming creating a giant splash at the bottom. The screen fills with bubbles as we re-emerge into the real world. We can see LANCE's face in the fish tank, eyes wide in shock with the thousand-yard stare. LANCE's cat can be seen pawing at the fish while standing on the back of LANCE's floating head, finally looking content with her catch. We zoom towards the cat's head as she winks. The song 'What a Wonderful World' by Louis Armstrong starts playing on the radio as we move into the blue iris of LANCE's cat and into the clouds.

CREDITS ROLL

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ENGLISH EXTENSION COURSE 2 MAJOR WORK
IDENTIFICATION TAG**

Student No.: 11537243

School No.: 11593 C30

Number of Pieces: 3/7

Category and Description: Screen Play

**ATTACH THIS CARD SECURELY TO EACH PART
OF THE INDIVIDUAL PROJECT. DO NOT PEEL.**

REFLECTION STATEMENT

on

'Death by Drowning, the Euphoria Begins'

HSC NUMBER 11537243

CENTER NUMBER 33

I began my major work with the intention of creating a piece of literature that encompassed a snapshot of the state of my mind and its workings at the time of writing as psychology was and still is a topic of great interest to me that has been somewhat exacerbated by an untimely diagnosis of depression. The prospect of self-psychoanalysis and an attempt to better understand my psyche intrigued me and thus the seeds of a journey of self-discovery were sown.

I have always toyed with the idea of writing a screenplay since my creative process often centered on the marriage of continuous imagery and ambient music culminating in the creation of 'mental' films. Naturally, a screenplay would be the easiest of the genres available for me to implement and express my ideas. However, as I developed my initial idea that involved the use of an allegorical mindscape as the main setting for my film, I came to the unfortunate realisation that the play time limit of 20-30 minutes would be grossly inadequate when the length of the general plotline and the level of detail that I wish to incorporate into the film were taken into account.

It was at this point in my research and plot development that I decided to switch from a screenplay to a short story due to the fact that time could be compressed far more convincingly and with more impact in the short story form than in a short film. This major change in direction was only the first of a series of direction changes that would take place as the process of composition progressed. The consequence of this change from screenplay to short story was that my investment in a six week long screen writing class offered at the University of Sydney was wasted, but most importantly, six weeks of crucial initial research time was made defunct literally overnight.

At this point of the process, I was struggling to find a cohesive plotline that embodied my original intents in such a way that could be plausibly and convincingly written in the space of 6000 words. I left the development of the plot to ferment silently in my cerebral whilst I attended to the research of the subject matter that would form the thrust of my musings and arguments in the story. This in itself offered several problems with regards to the sources of research. An introspective story such as one on the psyche required an extensive amount of ‘soul searching’ that often amounted to more questions than answers. Therefore I enlisted the aid of a psychiatrist to discuss issues pertaining to my current mindset and possible solutions to lift me out of this proverbial rut, hoping to gain fresh inspiration for my major work.

Unfortunately, the sessions proved ultimately fruitless, it did, however, aid in my understanding of the causes of my depression as well as new philosophical understandings. This sparked yet another directional focus in my work from one of a true mindscape to a much simplified one focusing on the human condition. Coincidentally, the idea of the human condition was being explored in my study of Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead as part of my 2 Unit English literature studies, which in turn played a crucial role in my understanding of the topic.

I carried out further research on various related topics such as religion and morality, the problem of free will and whether or not power over one’s self is an illusion through discussion with family members as well as friends who were willing to tolerate my endless tirade of philosophical jargon laced with the occasional semi-profound realisation on life. These valuable discussions spilled over onto the internet

as I sought out new prey on my hunt for fresh perspectives from which I could write, thus lending my work at least a veneer of objectivity.

The discussions were extremely time consuming as I often had to extract myself from frequent verbal altercations sprung from an extreme difference of opinion fueled by a certain religious fervour on both sides. Utterly frustrated and dogged with the worst bout of procrastination I have yet to experience, the idea for the major work as it stands today sprang from out of the blue and I was saved from damnation.

It entailed a return to the screenplay genre due to the looming major work submission deadline and the fact that the idea of a comic tragedy based on certain embellished events in my life could best be savoured on screen, such was their visual comic value.

‘Death by Drowning, the Euphoria Begins’ was the result of a joke I told to my friends as we were preparing for our trial exams. I suggested that a movie of that title should be made for the sheer stupidity of it and consequently I was challenged to be the author to pen such a screenplay. I happily obliged and began work on a plot using knowledge gained from my prior research and the many sessions with the psychiatrist.

It was at this point that the pace of work on the composition took off. The aim of this new composition was to create a powerful and thought-provoking comic tragedy that seeks to entertain a reasonably educated audience by toying with their emotions and systems of thought through certain outrageous yet surprisingly common values embedded within the dialogue of the screenplay.

I realised at this point that my collection of life experiences so far was my greatest asset in the formulation of a highly original piece of work. The fact that the screenplay was based partially in true events gave me the needed conviction with which to write each scene and finally pushed me over the finish line barely within the due date.

The central character of the screenplay is Lance Fulcrum, a person whom I see myself as in roughly twelve years' time if I had continued unabated on my current path in life. His characterisation mirrors that of my own neutralistic drive in life, thus his propensity to just flow along the river of life not caring too much yet feeling somewhat inadequate.

His fatalistic motivations behind his placing of his head inside a fish tank draws a direct parallel with my own sense of fatalism in regards to my ability to submit my major work on time and that in itself became a thematic driving force within the unraveling of the plotline and the choice of real life events to advance Lance Fulcrum's journey of discovery and his eventual epiphany, transforming his fatalism into a reason for hope of future chances of gaining and experiencing euphoria in the world of the living.

It is essentially an autobiographical account of my life that has been heavily embellished for the purposes of creating emotional overtones, which in turn cast judgment over the events that took place. The inclusion of the Lance's subconscious mind was pivotal in the exploration and execution of this new level of contextualisation.

Lance's eventual demise acted not merely as a humorously tragic element that formed the backbone of the central conceit in the screenplay, but on a personal level, acted as a reflection on the realities of life and its ultimate unfriendliness to those who wait too long and act too late.

The above are really only the major intended meanings to my screenplay that dealt with many more issues than those discussed, however, I have always preferred the reader to interpret the text for themselves as all texts are made infinitely richer through different readings from differing perspectives based on the reader's own experiences and subsequent values and priorities. For example, a doctor may find the text to be a good parallel of their own regrets of their choice of career path. A mother with young children may see the text as a good textbook on what not to do in the rearing of their offspring. The average twenty 'something' would probably get a laugh and a tear from empathising with the absurdity of Lance's life and his attitudes toward it. The combinations are endless and as long as they accommodate the main intended thrust of the text, they are all valid interpretations.

This surfaced as an unintended accomplishment, an adaptive text that opens an array of possible interpretations thus appealing to a much wider audience than a closed ended narrative. This is a fact that I am especially proud of and I'm pleasantly surprised.

The structure is introspective, reflecting the nature of my major work's intentions which is to delve and comprehend. Dialogue was designed to be punchy to lighten the reader's mood thus lowering their conscious defenses before pounding the heart

wrenching points of Lance's life home creating maximum impact. I have adhered mostly to accepted conventions in the formatting of a screenplay, however, I encountered numerous conflicting conventions in my research process. Hopefully this has not affected the impact of my work in the eyes of the reader.

In closing, the composition of the major work has been one of many trepidations and minor triumphs, however, with modesty aside, I am extremely proud with the end product that has managed to combine the majority of my original intentions in such a way that can engage the audience fully and give them a tantalising taste of what an emotional and spiritual cocktail that a comic tragedy hinged on small, painful and fully experienced real life truths is capable of delivering.

As well as putting my good friend's challenge to rest.