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EXPEDITION

by
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Aboriginal languages will not be translated.

1. EXT. WOODS. MORNING**1.**

A large spider suspended between dead branches sits silhouetted against a blue sky.

The tail of a blue-tongued lizard disappears beneath a log.

A small black bird leaves a branch vibrating.

It is hot and still: The sun slants through a loose tangle of sandalwood and stunted eucalypts making shadows like veins on the gray-brown sandy soil.

In the distance, getting closer, are EYRE (25, English), WYLIE (16, native to the Albany area), and JOEY and YARRY (13 and 9, cousins, native to the Yas area).

Yarry and Joey share a horse, riding bareback, while Eyre and Wylie ride horses with saddles.

Eyre, fine featured, bearded, leads 3 burdened pack horses and a Timor pony; Wylie leads 3 more, their loads creaking and shifting noisily, their hooves churning up bits of bark, twigs, leaves, dirt and sand.

BAXTER thick set, bearded (24, Irish) follows on foot driving 6 scrawny, bleating, bedraggled sheep.

To a man they are sweaty, weary, worn and dirty.

Yarry wears a ragged duck frock, the rest of the party wear dungarees and white shirts, Eyre being the least filthy and best fitted, then Baxter, then Wylie, then Joey who almost swims in his frayed and filthy hand-me-downs.

Eyre stops, everybody stops.

The surrounding bush is quiet for moment.

Eyre dismounts and takes a compass and clock from his saddlebag. He looks at them, then up at the sun, puts it away, gets on his horse and rides.

Baxter approaches Wylie, gestures that Wylie should dismount and tend to the sheep.

Joey and Yarry ride off with Baxter laughing at Wylie stuck with the sheep.

Wylie picks up a stick hits the nearest sheep, then follows. Soon, he too is lost in the brown and green tangle of bush and scrub.

TEXT

In 1840 Edward Eyre received a commission to find a trade route between South Australia and Western Australia. Eyre spent that winter looking for an inland sea, secure in the notion that such a body of water would expedite trade among all the colonies. No such sea exists. In the summer of 1841, in an effort to complete his commission, Eyre, along with Wylie, Joey, Yarry and John Baxter begin a thousand mile journey west, along the Great Australian Bight.

2. EXT. WOODS. DAY

2.

Foam collects around the bit of the lead horse; its haunches quiver as it struggles up then over a ridge kicking dirt and sand.

Eyre, Baxter, Joey and Yarry ride out of the woods down onto a hillside covered in little green succulents.

The ocean, blue and wide is in the distance.

Wylie and the sheep follow.

3. EXT. BEACH. DAY

3.

Joey and Yarry kick sand at each other and splash about at surf's edge. They speak a different language than Wylie.

Wylie watches them play as he drives the flock along the beach, he pulls at the soft curly hair sprouting on his chin.

Eyre has one hand on the reins, the other on the tether of the lead packhorse. He sits upright on his horse, never looks back, always ahead.

Baxter follows with his horses, keeping an eye on what's behind: Wylie, the sheep, Joey and Yarry and the sand churned by hoof and foot now smoothed by waves.

7. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. AFTERNOON**7.**

Black hands dig in the fine, white sand.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry are in a hole several meters wide and almost two meters deep. They argue, gesticulating, they rest then dig some more, Wylie and Joey with shovels, Yarry with his bare hands.

Soon the sand moistens, and a half a meter further down they find water.

From his cupped hand, Joey is the first to drink.

JOEY

Good! Plenty good water,
Mr. Eyre!

Joey offers up a cup, Eyre drinks, smiles, nods and walks away, relieved.

Flies buzz as hands wrestle a sheep to the ground, its throat is slit, the blood drains into the sand.

Baxter stands over the carcass, sweat dripping from his brow, looks down at the dying sheep then out into the world.

Eyre dips a pen in an inkwell nestled in the sand.

He sits atop the coast ridge looking out at the still blue water of the Southern Ocean. He holds a small bound journal to his knees, the pages flap in the breeze.

He looks down at the paper, pen poised above the blank white page.

8. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. NIGHT**8.**

Half a sheep is on the spit. The meat glistens in the flames and the fire hisses and pops at the dripping fat.

Eyre, Baxter, Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit around the fire nestled in the total blackness of night.

Baxter sharpens a knife while he tends to the roasting sheep.

Eyre and Baxter look at the fire; Wylie, Joey and Yarry look everywhere, listening.

Wylie watches as Baxter cuts off some meat, puts it on a plate and hands it to Eyre. Joey is served, then Yarry and finally Baxter hands a plate of meat to Wylie.

Everybody eats with their hands.

Wylie reaches for the mutton Baxter whacks his hand with the dull edge of the knife. Joey and Yarry laugh at Wylie.

EYRE

Let Wylie have the knife.

BAXTER

This one's always eating, sir.

EYRE

We've some difficult days ahead, Mr. Baxter, days best prosecuted on a full stomach.

Baxter cuts some meat off for Wylie and then for Joey and Yarry.

BAXTER

My mother kept us hungry, said it made us keen.

EYRE

And his majesty rewarded your dutiful mother with a free passage to the antipodes for her enterprising son.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Fill your belly, Mr. Baxter.

9. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

9.

Low tide: The wet sand reflecting the light blue sky, Eyre, alone, walks west along the beach.

10. EXT. DUNES. MORNING

10.

The horse noses around, its lips quivering as it brushes over then bites down on the withered tuft of grass.

Wylie watches the horses as they graze.

He climbs a large dune and looks around at the sea of white dunes and the far off ocean. In his own tongue he yells out:

WYLIE
This is Wylie.
I am Mineng.
I come in peace.
Let me pass.
I go home.

He stands patiently, warily, listening; no response is a response.

11. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. DAY

11.

A bore-punch scours the inside of a gun barrel; several firearms lay dismantled, spread out on a tarp. Baxter sweats as he cleans and oils them.

Sheep wander over a dune, first one then another then another, through the camp and towards the water hole.

Swearing, Baxter jumps up and tries to head them off; too late the sheep get into the hole and damage the well.

12. EXT. BEACH. DAY

12.

Joey and Yarry sit in the warm shallow water playing with the sand. Yarry sings a child's song.

Baxter approaches.

BAXTER
Come on, out of there.
Joey, Yarry, come: The
sheep have got out *again*.
You two need to water them
and fix the well. Go on.

Baxter follows Joey and Yarry over the ridge, back to camp.

13. EXT. SCRUB. DAY

13.

A black finger draws lines in the white sand; hills, perhaps a river.

Wylie sits in the shade of some low scrub he rubs out his drawing and turns his attention to the

horses what wander about listlessly in the midday heat.

14. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. DAY

14.

Flies buzz and over the ridge the ocean can be heard scraping away at the beach.

Joey and Yarry doze in the shade of a spread tarp, as does Baxter under separate cover.

15. EXT. BEACH. AFTERNOON

15.

In his hand at his side, a small folded map rustles in the wind. Eyre stands at surf's edge looking out at cliffs 50 meters high stretching west as far as the eye can see.

Behind him barren, white dunes, to his left the Southern Ocean, to his right the Nullarbor Plain.

After some time, he puts the map carefully back into its leather case, turns and walks back down the beach to camp.

16. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. EVENING

16.

The sky is a deepening blue, the first stars are not yet out, there is still some light in the West; Eyre, Baxter, Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit around the fire eating the last of the mutton.

EYRE

Tonight Yarry and I will take the sheep and press on ahead. Spend tomorrow morning watering the horses, then follow.

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

EYRE

From what I can discern, we may not find water for another hundred and ten miles. If we find it at all.

Baxter fiddles with a copper band on his wedding finger and stares at the fire, jaw set.

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

Wylie and Joey steal a glance at Baxter then each other then look away just as quickly; a pall settles over the meal.

17. EXT. DUNES/CAMP. NIGHT

17.

The reflection of the fire dances in the dark eyes of the horse. It stamps and snorts as Eyre secures the pack straps.

Baxter lifts Yarry up onto the saddle of the other horse.

EYRE

God be with you.

BAXTER

Yes, sir. Thank you
and you too, sir.

Eyre, carrying his map case, marshals the sheep, steps out of the light of the fire and into the darkness.

Yarry, on horseback, follows looking over his shoulder at Joey. The night closes in around him and soon he and the horses are gone.

18. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. DAY

18.

The sky is blue, the soil is rust-red and the land is relentlessly flat with dense, ground hugging scrub.

Baxter rides, leading the packhorses.

Wylie and Joey walk.

The horses and men are terribly small in this implacable landscape.

19. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. DAY

19.

Wylie and Joey's broad black feet step around, between and over the low green-gray scrub; Baxter's boots tramp recklessly on soil, plant and rock while the horse's hooves churn up the meager soil and vegetation.

20. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. EVENING**20.**

Baxter tears off then hands out fistfuls of damper, first to Joey then to Wylie.

A gentle wind blows out of the West; Venus appears, just above the horizon.

They squat in the dirt and chew.

Nothing for the horses what stand nearby nosing at the scrub, looking for grass, looking forlorn.

Water trickles out of a small wooden keg into a tin pannikin. Baxter drinks then passes it to Joey who drinks then passes it to Wylie who drains it.

WYLIE

Half-way, boss?

Baxter looks at Wylie, incredulously, then away, west, into the wind.

BAXTER

Yea, half-way....

Baxter takes the horses and starts walking followed by Joey and Wylie.

21. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. NIGHT**21.**

Baxter, Wylie, Joey and the horses walk through the blue-gray night.

22. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. MORNING**22.**

The sun is just above the horizon, the moon is setting, the wind is picking up: A hand shakes a dew-laden bush, water drips into Wylie's other hand, cupped, he brings it to his lips and drinks.

100 meters behind Wylie, Joey rides and Baxter follows, leading the horses.

Heaped beneath several shrubs are accumulations of ghost-white periwinkle shells.

Wylie bends down, grabs a handful, regards then scatters them as he walks.

Wylie finds then follows the tracks of horse hooves in the red earth.

These tracks lead past a large campsite with many footprints, bits of bark and bones; evidence of a large fire, now ash.

Wylie touches the ground around the fire; looks around, sizes it up, keeps walking.

23. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. DAY

23.

Baxter looks forward, jaw set, green eyes grappling with the horizon; his constantly furrowed brow makes him look older than his 24 years would suggest.

Wylie looks down at the ground, watches his step, then over his shoulder, then forward again, eyes darting about like he's reading a book written all around him.

Joey, too, reads the world, suddenly he looks up, eyes widen, he rushes ahead.

Joey pushes back a wide flat rock covering a hole in a limestone outcropping. He reaches inside as Baxter come up behind him.

Joey pulls his hand out of the hole, his fingers covered in mud; no water.

They move on.

24. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. NIGHT

24.

Wylie and Joey sit on opposite sides of a small fire in the lee of a heap of packs.

They look out at the surrounding darkness, into the fire, down at their own limbs and only rarely, furtively at each other.

Wylie announces, in English:

WYLIE
This is Wylie.
I am Mineng
I come in peace.
I go home.

Wylie gestures west, out into the night, the direction they have been walking.

After a moment, Joey responds.

JOEY
This is Joey.

Pointing east.

JOEY (CONT'D)
I am Theddora
I come in peace.

The wind whistles around them.

They listen to the night.

25. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN. NIGHT 25.

Baxter watches the horses mope about in the darkness; there is not much to graze upon.

The campfire is a feeble light over his shoulder a half-kilometer away.

He kisses his ring, raises his head and looks up at the myriad stars in the night sky.

BAXTER (Murmuring)
Oh, Mary...

26. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. MORNING 26.

50 meters below his bare feet, waves white and turquoise wash over rocks the size of houses.

Wylie, standing at the edge, looks down at the water.

Joey stands 5 meters away, a respectable distance from the edge.

BAXTER (Shouting O/S)
How far is it?
How far down?
Is there a trail?

Wylie turns and looks at Baxter who is 20 meters back standing next to the horses.

WYLIE
If him bird.

BAXTER
What?!

WYLIE

No track. Only rock, water.

BAXTER

Come away from there, both of you.
You blacks can't fly.

Joey joins Baxter.

Wylie lingers at the edge, looking out at the ocean then he closes his eyes, smelling and listening intently to the surf far below.

27. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. DAY 27.

Wylie, Baxter and Joey all walk, leading the horses parallel the edge of the world, the wind in their faces under a white-hot sun.

28. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. NIGHT 28.

Single file, in the moonlight, across the level world, Wylie, Baxter, Joey and the horses walk west.

29. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. DAY 29.

A hand picks small red berries from a squat bush.

Joey eats some of the berries, others he places in a pannikin.

Nearby, Baxter and Wylie unburden the horses: pick-axes, shovels, saddles, empty kegs, buckets, pots and pans, tarps, coats, cloth, leather, horseshoes, hammers, nails, a brace of pistols, rifles.... They make a pile of all this gear - save for one small keg of water and a sack of damper, and cover it with a tarp and then hide the tarp with sticks, dirt and bits of scrub.

Baxter is suspicious of the berries offered to him, he wipes his brow, looks at Joey who nods and smiles then eats a few to show him its O.K.

Baxter eats a few berries. Wylie eats what is left to him.

They drink from the keg, the last of the water, first Baxter, then Joey finally Wylie then they begin walking.

They get smaller and smaller in the wide, flat land.

30. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. AFTERNOON 30.

Five sheep mill about, bleating weakly, looking for food and water.

The sun is several hours from the horizon as Joey and Wylie stand looking at the sheep.

Baxter tears off a large hunk of damper, hands it to Wylie.

BAXTER (To Wylie)
Bring'em along.

Joey, Baxter and the horses walk away. Wylie is left to marshal the sheep.

Wylie is soon left behind as Joey, Baxter and the horses make better time.

31. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. NIGHT 31.

Wylie sleeps curled up on the ground, surrounded by dozing sheep.

32. EXT. NULLARBOR PLAIN/CLIFFS. MORNING 32.

A small brown snake lies coiled in the golden early morning light.

A blue-tongued lizard stalks some ants.

Walking into the sunlight, very small in the distance but getting closer, Eyre with Yarry on horseback.

Joey smiles and waves. Baxter walking next to him looks up, startled.

BAXTER (Stopping)
What? What's that?

Joey (Pointing)
Him Yarry and Mr. Eyre.

BAXTER
Are you sure?

JOEY

That him. On horse.
And Mr. Eyre.

BAXTER

Thank Christ. We're saved.

Yarry waves to his cousin, Joey waves back.

Under a dome of blue sky, the two parties come closer together.

From a distance Eyre shouts.

EYRE

All's well?

BAXTER

Fine, sir.

EYRE

We brought water.
Where's Wylie?

BAXTER

Bringing the sheep along.

Eyre walks around the horses, patting their haunches, stroking their heads.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

We had to abandon the supplies
about 15 miles back.

To himself and the horses:

EYRE

We'll go back for it later.
God's blessed us.

Joey is drinking from a keg of water that hangs from Yarry's saddle.

Baxter drinks.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Let's get the horses to camp,
Yarry, go find Wylie, bring him
water, help him with the sheep.

Yarry, carrying water, rides east as Joey, Baxter, Eyre and the rest of the horses walk west.

33. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. EVENING

33.

The sky is a deep blue and the first stars are out.

Wylie, Yarry, Baxter, Joey and Eyre sit around a large campfire beneath the dark cliffs, a sheep turning on the spit.

Their camp is up from the surf, nestled between two ridges: two piles of supplies provide windbreaks, a water hole is 20 meters off.

EYRE

I'd like to say a prayer.

Eyre and Baxter close their eyes and lower their heads.

Wylie watches as Joey and Yarry stop talking and mimic this pose.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father we thank you
for your care and guidance in
safely bringing together our
party. Most truly do we
feel that it is in your mercy
and protection alone that our
safety and deliverance depends.
Amen.

BAXTER

Amen.

From a distance, the fire is a feeble yellow flicker in the night.

34. EXT. DUNES. NIGHT

34.

Stars fill the night sky.

Eyre watches the horse's sad search for edible grass.

Eyre looks up.

EYRE

To Thee all Angels: to Thee the
heavens and all the Powers therein.
To Thee the Cherubim and Seraphim

EYRE (CONT'D)

cry with unceasing voice:
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Hosts.
The heavens and the earth are full
of the majesty of Thy glory....

35. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. NIGHT 35.

Joey and Yarry, Wylie and Baxter are asleep around the dying campfire.

36. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. MORNING 36.

Hands tear the sole from the last of a worn leather boot.

Baxter is doing a bit of cobbling, sitting on a dune above the camp, flies buzz around his bare ankles, biting him occasionally.

He swats and swears at them.

He looks out at the ocean; behind him, the whinnied complaint of a horse makes him turn his head.

Joey and Yarry are at the well struggling with the horses: They are trying to fill buckets and bring water up to them while the horses want to walk into the well and drink.

Baxter smiles to himself and turns back to his own work.

BAXTER (Singing)

I've traveled all over this world
And now to another I go.
And I know
that good quarters are waiting
To welcome old Rosin the Beau
To welcome old Rosin the Beau
To welcome old Rosin the Beau
And I know
that good quarters are waiting
To welcome old Rosin the Beau.
When I'm dead and laid out
on the counter
A voice you will hear from below
Saying "Send down a hogshead
of whiskey
To drink with old Rosin the Beau
To drink with old Rosin the Beau
To drink with old Rosin the Beau"

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Saying "Send down a hoghead
of whiskey
To drink with old Rosin the Beau".

37. EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE BEACH. DAY 37.

A wallaby crouches next to small bush eating berries.

Wylie stands stock still, 30 meters away, spear at the ready.

Wylie is still for a long time, he waits for the wind: when it blows he moves closer.

The heat is stifling; sweat drips from his brow and down his arms and chest.

Slowly, carefully, Wylie works his way closer and closer, the wallaby turns and bounds off, Wylie gives chase, throws his spear and misses.

Wylie returns to the bush and eats some berries.

38. EXT. DUNES. DAY 38.

Yarry and Joey flush a small lizard from the grass and kill it with a club.

They cut it open and look at the insides.

39. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. AFTERNOON 39.

A hand affixes a tag to a small plant; the plant is then placed carefully in a wooden box with other specimens.

Eyre puts the box down then writes in his journal.

Baxter is nearby, sewing. Wylie watches him sew.

Yarry and Joey mind the horses.

It is cooler, now, the sun well in the West.

To nobody in particular, swatting at a fly:

EYRE

It feels like an English
Summer's day....

Looking at the horses:

EYRE (CONT'D)
I'll take the first watch,
I'm not very tired.

He looks up at the sky then down at his hands:

EYRE (CONT'D)
They are restless, they
need better food.
Perhaps it will rain.

Eyre looks at Baxter:

EYRE (CONT'D)
I've a shirt I'd like you
to mend.

Then out at the still ocean:

EYRE (CONT'D)
We'll stay another two days,
give the horses a chance to
recuperate. And there are
some more specimens
I'd like to collect....

Joey and Yarry bring the horses closer.

BAXTER (To Wylie)
We need more wood.

Wylie looks away, does not move.

BAXTER
Wylie, go: more firewood.

Wylie shifts in the sand, turns away.

EYRE
He won't go.
He's seen the smoke
up on the cliffs.

Eyre points to wisps of smoke rising from the
cliffs in the distance.

EYRE (CONT'D)
Natives.

Baxter stops sewing, turns and looks.

EYRE (CONT'D)
I'm afraid, Mr. Baxter,
that you will have to get
the firewood yourself.

Alarmed and exasperated in equal measure, Baxter
rises and looks about.

BAXTER (To Wylie)
Come on.

Wylie does not look at him.

Baxter walks away, rummages around and returns with
a rifle.

Baxter (To Wylie)
Let's go. Come on.

Slowly, reluctantly, Wylie gets up.

They trudge off into the soft light of the late
afternoon.

40. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. NIGHT 41.

A large fire burns; Yarry sleeps, Joey, Wylie and
Baxter sit up, listening to the night.

41. EXT. DUNES. NIGHT 42.

The horses wander about, chewing on clumps of dried
grass, Eyre watches over them, rifle in hand.

BAXTER (O/S)
Mr. Eyre! Where are you, sir?

EYRE
Here, over here, Mr. Baxter.

Baxter approaches, carrying a torch.

EYRE
Is it the end of the watch already?

BAXTER
No, sir, I couldn't sleep.

Eyre looks at Baxter - seemingly without pity or
care; a clinical stare that collects, records,
files.

EYRE

And the boys, do they sleep?

BAXTER

Only Yarry.

Moments pass, a horse shakes its mane, stamps a foot.

EYRE

You know, John; they are more afraid of us than we are of them.

BAXTER

Tis, a good thing, sir.

EYRE

Perhaps...

Eyre hands the rifle to Baxter.

EYRE

I'll see you tomorrow morning.

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

Eyre walks back to camp; Baxter keeps watch on the horses.

43. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. MORNING

43.

Black hands in a bucket churn a mixture of flour and water.

Yarry and Baxter are making damper.

Baxter tends the fire, keeping an eye on the loaves.

Yarry shapes a big wad of dough into a loaf. Baxter indicates where around the fire he is to place it.

Yarry does so then chews some dough off his fingers.

Baxter raises his hand as if to strike Yarry.

BAXTER (Playfully)

You thieving black bastard!
You want the rest of us to go hungry? Stop it or I'll tell

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Mr. Eyre. He'll leave you out here for those Blacks to eat you.

Yarry looks to the cliffs where they had seen the smoke. There is no smoke now.

Yarry

Maybe them eat you.

BAXTER

You can't eat a ghost.

Baxter grabs Yarry's upper arm, pinches his bicep. Yarry, laughing, squirms away.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Too skinny, no meat.

Yarry

Them eat you!

Yarry goes back to eating the dough off his hands.

Baxter grabs at Yarry's hands, trying to get some of the dough.

BAXTER

I'll eat you!

Yarry, laughing, scampers away.

44. EXT. DUNES. DAY

44.

The horses and sheep nose about looking for grass.

Joey walks around the loose edges of the mixed herd, keeping them together.

Wylie is on a dune, nearby, rifle in hand, keeping a lookout.

Joey approaches Wylie, his hand out, looking at the rifle.

JOEY

Mr. Eyre say we trade.

WYLIE

Mr. Eyre not here.

Joey looks intently at the rifle, at Wylie, Wylie glances at Joey, they both look away.

Arm outstretched, Joey waits, palm open.

Wylie looks around, relents, hands Joey the rifle then goes down to the herd.

WYLIE

It safe now.

Joey, rifle in hand, stands watch.

45. EXT. CLIFFS. AFTERNOON 45.

Eyre, carrying a small satchel scrambles up a steep slope covered in scrub and loose rock.

He comes to the end of the vegetation, the end of the slope, where the cliff face is vertical and rises 30 meters more into the blue sky.

He sits in the shade of the cliffs, catches his breath; a gentle breeze cools him. Below, the surf pounds at the large rocks stuck in the sand.

Carefully, he makes his way along the foot of the cliffs; he stops, removes a hammer and chisel from the satchel and methodically, deliberately, chips away at the face of the cliff.

Sitting, he examines the rock specimens: Small shells embedded in limestone; he makes notes in his journal, tags them and places them in his bag.

46. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. NIGHT 46.

Wylie stirs the embers of the dying campfire, he, Joey and Yarry watch glowing points of light swirl up into the night.

Across from them, Eyre sleeps, turned away.

Smiling broadly, Joey rises and creeps away, followed by Wylie, then Yarry.

47. EXT. DUNES. NIGHT 47.

Baxter, rifle in hand, watches the horses wander about grazing listlessly.

Behind him noises, whispering, a bush shakes: Baxter spins round, takes aim.

BAXTER

Who's there?
Show yourself or I'll shoot.

A stick hits the back of his head.

He turns and fires.

The horses scatter.

BAXTER

I'll kill ya, ya bastards!

The night is big and dark, he is alone, scared.

48. EXT. DUNES. NIGHT 48.

Laughing, Joey, Wylie and Yarry run back to camp.

From a distance, Eyre watches them.

49. EXT. DUNES. NIGHT 49.

Baxter is running around trying to calm the horses.

EYRE (O/S)

Baxter! Mr. Baxter, Where
are you?

BAXTER

Here, sir!

Eyre approaches.

EYRE

Are the horses all right?
Why did you fire?

BAXTER

Natives, sir, they tried to
steal them.

EYRE

Indeed.
I think you'll find the boys
are having a little fun at
your expense.

Baxter relaxes; fear leaves his face, is replaced
by shame then anger.

Eyre watches this.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Help me with the sheep then
go back to camp, get some
sleep.

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

They spread out, looking for the sheep.

50. EXT. SALT PLAIN. MORNING 50.

Sunlight skims across the vast plain, gilding the red-green salt-scrub.

Eyre and Baxter ride bringing the packhorses along while Wylie, Joey and Yarry walk with the sheep, now 3 in number.

Baxter's brow is pinched with worry while Eyre is fascinated and determined.

Yarry watches as Wylie and Joey bend and shape several long sticks. They compare and occasionally, playfully, trade blows.

51. EXT. SALT PLAIN. DAY 51.

Baxter and his horses follow Eyre and his, Yarry rides; the sky is blue and the sun is high, it is hot; they are a line of man and animals walking west through the low scrub of a salt plain.

Joey and Wylie are tired, there is no play, they bring up the rear.

Joey catches up to Yarry and, after some cajoling, Joey gets to ride and Yarry must walk.

52 EXT. SALT PLAIN. NIGHT 52.

Yarry and Joey are asleep in their saddles, rocked back and forth by the horse's gait.

Wylie, Eyre and Baxter walk through the night.

53. EXT. SALT PLAIN/BUSH. MID-DAY 53.

Heat shimmers off the plain; Baxter dispenses handfuls of damper and drinks of water then he, Wylie, Joey and Yarry rest in the scant shade of several scattered sandalwood trees.

The horses and sheep mill about looking for food and shade, they find little of either.

Eyre scrambles up a large, sandy ridge. He looks out over a sea of dense scrub to the ocean.

Soon he turns and walks back to the others.

54. EXT. SALT PLAIN. AFTERNOON

54.

Up over a ridge, the party descends into a white, wet salt swamp.

Everybody walks save for Yarry.

Eyer and Baxter sink up to their ankles in the warm, white mush.

Eyre bends down and tastes it, spits. Wylie and Joey also taste it, also spit, laughing.

Yarry jumps down and stomps around in the warm, white mud.

Eyre and Baxter keep walking, leading the horses, Joey, Yarry and Wylie follow with the sheep.

55. EXT. BUSH/BEACH. EVENING

55.

The bush is dense and head high, tearing at clothes and scraping skin, only Yarry and the sheep wind their way through it without great difficulty.

The heavily laden packhorses complain terribly, stumbling in the steep, soft sand; up over a ridge and down onto the beach at low tide.

The wet sand reflects the deep blue of the evening sky.

Yarry runs ahead to Eyre who lifts him onto a horse, everybody else walks; the party plods along the beach.

56. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

56.

The beach, a dirty strip of sand and seaweed edged by scrub and sea, snakes it's way west.

Eyre walks, his face is scratched, dirty, his beard matted, eyes hungry.

Yarry and Joey ride, bodies swaying, heads hanging, tired and mute.

Baxter chews on his beard, brooding; he brings his horses along watching the ground, stepping next to Eyre's tracks in the sand.

Wylie pokes and prods at the sheep with his spear; he is careful not to get too far behind.

57. EXT. BEACH. DAY

57.

The beach is getting more and more clogged with accumulations of seaweed.

Joey and Yarry lead the sheep up onto a small ridge around the back of a wagon-sized mound of dried seaweed while Baxter, Wylie and Eyre coax the horses around through the surf.

58. EXT. LIMESTONE PLAIN. EVENING

58.

They are spread out, about ten meters apart, looking at the ground, walking slowly.

Yarry rushes ahead a few steps and bends down, he puts his hand in a hole - a natural bowl in the exposed limestone -: He feels around in the hole, it is dry.

Wylie, then Baxter, then Eyre: they all find holes... they are all dry.

59. EXT. BUSH. DAY

59.

They make their way through thickets, over and around sandy ridges harassing and dangerous to the horses and finally to a clearing.

Eyre stops, they unburden the horses; exhausted, the party finds shade and rest.

The sheep and horses nose about for food, water and shade.

It is very becalming out of the wind in the shelter of the high scrub under a hot sun, for a moment, nothing moves: Eyre, Wylie, Baxter, Joey, Yarry are all still, lying on the ground, eyes closed, breathing; asleep.

60. EXT. BUSH. AFTERNOON

60.

Eyre wakes, he is eye level with a line of small brown ants making its way over the sand and up the trunk of the stunted tree under which Eyre rests.

He watches the ants then he pushes at the sand deforming the line; the ants panic, move in circles, soon regroup and continue their march.

Eyre sits up, looks at his sleeping charges, at the sun now well in the west then down at the lengthening shadows and the packs of supplies.

He rises, goes to the packs and begins unpacking them: Food, water, a few shirts, boots, pants, rifles, a shovel in one pile and saddles, horseshoes, medicines, ammunition, side arms extra buckets and kegs in another.

Baxter wakes, props himself up on an elbow, watches.

Eyre puts his specimen boxes and his journals in one pile; he places several books in another.

Eyre takes a closer look a particular book: 'Captain Charles Sturt's Expeditions Into the Interior.' Eyre opens the book to the title page, reads the inscription: 'To My Friend Edward John Eyre, Godspeed and Good luck, Captain Charles Sturt.' He closes the book and tenderly puts it in the discard pile.

EYRE

We must divest ourselves of
the inessential, Mr. Baxter.
I've saved our food, a few
articles of clothing, the rifles,
a bucket, several tarps, a shovel....

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

Baxter rises, walks over and stands next to the kneeling Eyre.

EYRE (Looking up at Baxter)

By my calculations, we have come
seventy-two miles.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

We are about halfway.

Baxter sees in Eyre's upturned face hope, and recognizes its double, fear. Baxter looks away, walks to the other side of the discard pile, kneels, looks through what's to be discarded.

EYRE (CONT'D)

We are all more than a bit tired.
What do you say to some mutton?

BAXTER

Aye.

Eyre continues to sort and re-pack.

Baxter grabs a knife and goes in search of a sheep.

61. EXT. BEACH/BUSH. MORNING

61.

The party thrashes and threads it's way over sandy ridges and through high, harassing brush onto the beach.

They walk along the firm sand of the seaweed strewn beach.

62. EXT. BEACH/BUSH. DAY

62.

High tide and a large accumulation of seaweed again block their path.

With some effort, Eyre is the first onto the little ridge separating the beach from the inland bush; he stops: 20 men, women and children yell and scatter before him.

They had been eating berries off several scattered bushes.

EYRE

Hello!

They do not move; they wait.

Eyre waits, too.

Eyre turns round.

EYRE

Wylie! Come here. The rest of
you, wait.

Wylie clambers up the embankment, stands next to
Eyre.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Do you recognize them?

Wylie looks and listens.

EYRE

Speak, man; ask them where
they're from.

WYLIE (In his own tongue.)

This is Wylie.
I am Mineng
I come in peace.
Let me pass.
I go home.

Nobody says a word, nobody moves.

Impatient with this impasse, Eyre gives Wylie the
reins to his horse and steps down off the ridge
toward the group.

En mass, they back away from him.

He waits, then takes several more steps toward
them, again, they retreat.

Eyre stops, waits, tries again, again they retreat.

Eyre looks up at the sun, back at the terrified
people, shakes his head, turns and walks back to
Wylie.

Eyre, Wylie, the horses, Baxter, Joey, Yarry and
the two sheep make their way along the ridge,
around the mound of seaweed then back down onto the
beach; they keep walking west.

63. EXT. BEACH. LATE AFTERNOON

63.

The sun is low on the horizon and again the party
find their progress halted by high tide and large
mounds of seaweed.

Eyre, standing on the ridge, looks west, north and east.

EYRE

Mr. Baxter, lets make camp here.
We'll continue as the tide permits.

BAXTER

Yes, sir.

On the beach, in the lee of the mound of seaweed, camp is made: horses are unburdened and packs and supplies are arranged.

EYRE

Mr. Baxter, would you mind
taking first watch?
I'm dreadfully tired.

BAXTER

Not at all, sir.

EYRE

Thank you.

Eyre lies down, near his rifle. He watches as Baxter dispenses damper and water to Wylie, Joey and Yarry.

Eyre closes his eyes, sleeps.

64. EXT. BEACH. NIGHT

64.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry sleep curled up around the campfire as Baxter, standing on the coast ridge, keeps watch.

65. EXT. BUSH. MORNING

65.

Eyre watches as Wylie and Joey wander about looking at trees.

They select a healthy looking gum-scrub and, a meter from the trunk, dig out, chop off and pull up several 6-8 meter long, lengths of root.

Wylie breaks these roots into 150cm segments and then Joey shows Eyre how to peel the skin off and suck water out of the segments.

EYRE

Very good! I've heard of
this....

Wylie shakes a root at Joey, showering him with
water; Joey laughs and does the same to Wylie.

66. EXT. BEACH. DAY 66.

Man and animal, small against the blue-gray expanse
of ocean, walk west along the winding road of sand.

67. EXT. BEACH. AFTERNOON 67.

The sky is gray and lowering and there is a strong,
steady headwind as they make their way along the
beach.

Without any prodding, the sheep now follow the
horses.

Yarry, Joey and Wylie walk along in the surf,
spears poised, looking for stingray and fish.

The Timor pony slows and finally stops.

Eyre tries to coax it along patting it, talking to
it, offering it a bit of sugar but it won't move.

Baxter, the horses, Wylie, Joey, Yarry and the
sheep, they all stop and watch.

It is untethered and left behind.

Eyre hides his sadness with concern.

Behind them the pony collapses into the sand.

68. EXT. BEACH. NIGHT 68.

A small fire burns. They are camped on the ocean
side of the coast ridge.

Wylie, Joey, Yarry and Baxter sleep, while not far
off, Eyre watches the horses.

Eyre brings the horses closer nudges Baxter who
wakes with a start.

EYRE

It's your watch, John

BAXTER

I was dreaming of Ireland, sir.

Pause.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

It was raining.

Both men share a wistful laugh as Baxter takes charge of the horses and Eyre beds down.

69. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

69.

Eyre, Wylie, Joey and Yarry splash about in the ocean as Baxter digs a hole.

Baxter sets aside two rifles, a box of ammo, a tarp, rope, blankets, flour, a bucket and several kegs. The rest he buries as Eyre, Wylie, Joey and Yarry get dressed.

9 horses, 5 people - loaded and dressed - start walking west along the beach with their back to the morning sun.

70. EXT. BEACH. DAY

70.

Baxter's face is a knot of worry. He watches a horse's faltering gait, pulls on the tether, pats it...still, it knocks-up, stops; won't move.

BAXTER

Sir! Sir?

Ahead, Eyre stops, turns around.

Baxter is removing the packs of the jaded horse.

Eyre walks back to Baxter; Wylie, Joey and Yarry continue ahead, combing the surf

BAXTER

She's had it, sir.

EYRE

Let's see what she does without a load.

Now unburdened, she takes a few steps, stops and lies down.

Eyre and Baxter grimace then turn and resume their march, side by side.

They do not go more than 50 meters when another horse stops and lies down in the sand.

Wordlessly they unburden that horse and redistribute the load.

Still, it won't rise.

Eyre and Baxter turn and walk away.

BAXTER

It's a sad, sorry sight...

EYRE

It is indeed, Mr. Baxter.

After some time:

BAXTER

What do we do when we've lost all the horses?

EYRE

Let's cross that bridge when we come to it. *If* we come to it.

BAXTER

They can't all last much longer.

EYRE

No, they probably won't.

After some time:

BAXTER

And these sand hills... where we're supposed to find water -

EYRE

They are marked *clearly* on Flinders' maps. This I firmly believe, Mr. Baxter: we will find water there.

BAXTER (Sullenly)

Aye, sir.

Pause.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

But we do *know* where water is.

EYRE

Where is that?

BAXTER

Behind us, where we come from -
and all our supplies back at
Fowler's Bay.

Pause.

EYRE

Yes. But there's water ahead, too.

Baxter grinds his teeth, says nothing; they keep walking.

71. EXT. BEACH. EVENING

71.

Smashed thwarts, broken spars and bits of rope poke up from the sand.

On the ridge, an oar has been planted sticking straight up, like a flagpole. Joey, Yarry and Baxter circle the oar, trying to conjure sense out of its placing.

Eyre, Wylie, the horses and sheep keep walking.

72. EXT. BEACH. DAY

72.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry caper about the water's edge spears poised.

Several fins break the surface; a pod of dolphins feed in the shallows.

The boys watch, running along, pretending to stalk the dolphins.

50 meters ahead, Eyre and Baxter lead the horses.

Soon, another horse stops. Wordlessly, Baxter and Eyre try to get it to move but it won't budge.

They tie it to a bush some 20 meters away, then keep walking, Baxter slightly behind Eyre.

BAXTER

That was our strongest horse.

EYRE
Evidently not.

Pause.

BAXTER
I still think that once we
make water our best hope is
to go back.

Eyre stops, turns and faces Baxter.

EYRE
Mr. Baxter, I understand
how you may feel; I do not
enjoy in the least watching
these animals suffer,
but this is the only way,

EYRE (CONT'D)
our surest means of survival.
Soon we will reach water.

Eyre's steady gaze is too much for Baxter, he
lowers his eyes; they continue walking.

73. EXT. BEACH. EVENING

73.

The sun has sunk below the horizon and the wind has
died down: The sky is pale in the West, a soft
cool light settles on the bush.

On the beach side of the coast ridge, Yarry stands
holding a spear on which a small fish is stuck.

Joey is trying to start a fire; he bends down,
blows life into the flames; Yarry, impatient, urges
him on.

74. EXT. BUSH. EVENING

74.

Wylie walks through the bush looking for a
particular eucalypt. He finds one and begins to
dig; he pulls several roots up from the base of the
tree, peels the bark off. Once he has several
lengths, each a half-meter long, he walks back
toward the beach.

75. EXT. BUSH. EVENING

75.

Eyre keeps an eye on the wandering horses and
sheep.

Nearby, Baxter digs for water; he is about 2 meters down.

Eyre approaches Baxter who has stopped digging.

EYRE
Any luck, Mr. Baxter?

BAXTER
Not a bit.

Eyre hands Baxter a pannikin of water and a large hunk of damper.

EYRE
For your efforts.

BAXTER
Thank you, sir.

In the gloaming, they eat in silence.

76. EXT. BEACH. LATE EVENING/NIGHT

76.

Wylie, Yarry and Joey sit around the fire.

Joey and Yarry quibble about the fish cooking in the fire. Joey deems it ready and with two sticks pulls it from the fire.

Wylie tends to the bark roasting in the coals. He pulls some out, shakes off the dust then crushes it between two rocks.

Wylie offers as trade some roast bark for fish. Yarry and Joey agree.

The sky grows darker; they share a pannikin of water, bits of fish and roast bark.

77. EXT. BEACH. DAWN

77.

A black hand shakes the dew from the leaves of a stunted gum, the water drops into a long, cupped strip of bark.

Wylie, Joey, Yarry and Eyre collect water from the dew-laden scrub.

78. EXT. BEACH. DAWN

78.

The eastern sky is a pale blue, the sun not yet above the horizon.

Baxter stands near the horses, getting them ready to go. Eyre approaches, hands him a cup of tea and some damper.

BAXTER

Thank you, sir.

EYRE

It was wet work. And done mainly by the boys.

Eyre goes back to the fire; Baxter drinks, looks at Wylie, Joey and Yarry warming themselves, eating and drinking tea by the meager morning fire. Eyre kneels down near Wylie.

EYRE

Wylie, I want you to go back to the horse we tied up. See if you can bring it along.

Wylie looks at Eyre, then back at the fire.

WYLIE

O.K., boss.

Wylie drinks the last of his tea, gets up, collects his spear and spear thrower and walks east into the rising sun.

79. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

79.

The hoof-prints and footprints have been smoothed out - filled in - by the rising tide.

Wylie walks quickly, head held high, alert, determined; he is proud to be charged with this task.

Wylie walks off the beach over the coast ridge and into the bush.

80. EXT. BUSH. MORNING

80.

Two wallabies nibble at a stunted eucalypt, the early morning light gilding their fur.

A blue-tongued lizard warms itself on a rock.

Several large black ants with blue abdomens struggle across the brown sandy soil.

A gray wisp of smoke rises from the bush many kilometers away.

Wylie stands, looking at and listening to the world around him.

The wind shifts coaxing a whisper from the bush, Wylie turns his face to meet it.

81. EXT. BEACH. EARLY AFTERNOON

81.

Flies ring the dark, dull eyes of the dying horse; it lies on its side, breathing its last.

Wylie stands at a distance watching it.

He approaches, brushes the flies away, strokes its head, pats its flanks and waits, carefully watching, listening.

The horse's breathing is laboured and shallow; the sun beats down on its broad black chest slowly rising and falling.

Wylie's hand slides over the peaks and troughs of ribs and skin.

Resigned, Wylie turns and walks west, back to Eyre, Baxter, Joey and Yarry.

82. EXT. BEACH/DUNES. AFTERNOON

82.

Wylie leaves the beach, follows a lone set of tracks up a large white dune.

From the top he looks out at a vast scape of immense white dunes under a bright blue sky rolling west as far as the eye can see.

Wylie descends, walks away getting smaller and smaller and is finally lost in the sea of sand.

83. EXT. BEACH/CAMP. AFTERNOON

83.

Hands, black and white scrape desperately at the white sand.

Joey and Eyre are digging in a hole 3 meters in diameter and almost 2 meters deep when Yarry, Baxter and the animals arrive.

Eyre looks up and sees Baxter standing above him; Eyre straightens, stretches; Baxter offers his hand and helps Eyre out of the hole. Eyre stands there panting; Baxter gets a spade, jumps in, starts digging.

Yarry spells Joey.

Between exertions:

BAXTER

I think...we're...in luck,
sir.

Baxter stops, offers up a handful of wet sand.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

The sand, sir, t'is wet.

Eyre tastes it, spits.

EYRE

It's good, keep digging.

BAXTER

Aye.

Baxter and Yarry continue to dig.

Eyre turns, sees Wylie come over the coast ridge.

Wylie approaches, shakes his head, 'no'. Eyre winces, looks back into the well.

Baxter and Yarry have stopped digging.

BAXTER

Oh, thank Christ, would you
look at that!

Yarry has a handful of water and is drinking it, smiling.

Eyre hands a pannikin to Baxter who dips it into the brown water at the bottom of the well. Baxter hands it back, Eyre drinks then bows his head, holding the pannikin slightly aloft.

Baxter bows his head.

Yarry and Joey look on, they bow their heads, then look up then put them down again, giggling.

Wylie watches, bemused.

EYRE

'I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of valleys.... I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.'
Amen.

BAXTER

Amen.

84. EXT. CAMP. EVENING

84.

The sun is going down, the wind and flies abating, camp has been established amid a clearing in the scrub just over the coast ridge, about 30 meters west of the well: several blankets, some stores surrounding a fire.

Yarry crouches by the fire tending to half a sheep roasting in the coals; he sings to himself.

The animals are desperate for water; they crowd around the well.

Wylie and Joey are in the well, digging out and handing up water to Baxter and Eyre who wrestle with the animals and administer the water.

Wylie stops digging, straitens up, stands still.

30 meters east, standing on the coast ridge, is a man in his early 30's, carrying several spears and a thrower, a young woman and a 7 year-old child. They wait.

Soon, Eyre, Joey and Baxter see the family.

Eyre climbs the coast ridge, looks around, looks at the family, bids them approach.

The family approach the well, the man gestures; makes it apparent that he and his family would like a drink.

Wylie and Joey climb out of the well and the man, his wife and child climb in; they drink.

EYRE (Patting his chest.)
My name is Edward Eyre.

The man looks at Eyre and, patting his own chest, says his name.

EYRE (To Wylie.)
Ask him where he is from and where he is going.

In his own tongue:

WYLIE
This is Wylie.
I am Mineng
I come in peace.
I go home.

The man looks at Wylie, uncomprehending.

Wylie looks at Eyre; Eyre looks at the man, frustrated.

Soon, having slaked their thirst, the man points at the well, points west, indicates that there is another well that way and that he and his family are going there. They leave.

Eyre, Wylie, Baxter and Joey watch them leave.

85. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. DAY

85.

Eyre, carrying a rifle, walks through the scrub over the dunes.

He finds another well with bits of bone and ash, evidence of another camp. The ash is cold. He keeps reconnoitering.

He spies a wallaby and shoots it.

He carries it back to camp.

86. EXT. SCRUB/BEACH. EVENING

86.

Wylie, Yarry and Joey struggle to get water to the 6 horses and remaining sheep: The well has been considerably enlarged and damaged and it is proving difficult to get water out.

Wylie and Joey try to bully Yarry into doing most of the work: Digging, filling the buckets and bringing them to the horses. Yarry sits down in protest.

Eyre and Baxter sit by the fire some 30 meters away, eating the last of the mutton.

EYRE

Tomorrow, weigh out and cook the last of the flour. When the horses have recovered, I want you and Joey to go back for the supplies we buried.

BAXTER

Aye, sir.

EYRE

You'll take extra rations of damper and tea. You may also take the wallaby I shot.

BAXTER

Thank you, sir.

EYRE

We'll need to move camp soon, as the water from that well is becoming brackish.

Pause.

EYRE

I think that native and his family have moved on.

Pause.

BAXTER

It's springtime back home.

Pause.

EYRE

What compels a man to bring his family on such a journey?

They keep to their thoughts, alone, in front of the fire.

86. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. DAY 86.

Yarry follows Wylie and Joey around as they dig for roots. They fill a canvas bag.

87. EXT. BEACH. DAY 87.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry stalk the surf; Joey spears a stingray; Yarry helps him get it ashore.

88. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. EVENING 88.

Baxter watches the sheep and horses graze.

89. EXT. CAMP. EVENING 89.

Eyre, Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit around the campfire eating roots and stingray.

WYLIE (Looking around.)
Where is damper?

Joey and Yarry nod in agreement.

EYRE
I am saving it.
Tomorrow Joey and Mr. Baxter
Will go back for the buried
supplies, they will need the
damper.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry are nonplussed by this explanation.

Eyre, Wylie, Joey and Yarry finish their dinner in silence.

90. EXT. BEACH. MORNING 90.

Baxter, Joey and 3 horses - one with the dead wallaby - are about 50 meters down the beach, walking away.

91. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. DAY 91.

Wylie watches the remaining 3 horses and lone sheep; he practices throwing his spear at a bush.

92. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. DAY 92.

Eyre and Yarry carry blankets, buckets, rifles and tarps - supplies - through the scrub and over the

soft white sand. It is hot and they stop many times for a rest.

They arrange their supplies near the cold ashes and refuse of previous sojourners, 20 meters from another well.

93. EXT. CAMP. EVE

93.

The horses are hobbled nearby, the sheep is tied up; Wylie, Yarry and Eyre sit around the meager campfire eating damper.

The damper is eaten quickly.

WYLIE

Wylie still hungry.

YARRY

Yarry want more sugar.

Eyre looks at them.

Eyre gets up and goes to a nearby pack.

EYRE

I understand you were too busy to dig roots or fish; I am sorry. This is the last of the damper until Mr. Baxter arrives with the rest of the supplies.

Eyre splits a loaf of damper and gives half to Yarry and half to Wylie.

EYRE (CONT'D)

You must prepare yourself for future privation: We are miles from King George's Sound;

EYRE (CONT'D)

We may run out of flour and sugar.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Will you come begging then?

The boys eat.

Eyre gets up and walks off with the horses.

94. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. MORNING 94.

Wylie carries a rifle; Yarry follows close behind through the scrub, over hills of sand. It is hot and away from the beach, the air is still.

Wylie stops, takes aim, shoots, then gives chase; Yarry follows.

95. EXT. DUNES/SCRUB. DAY 95.

Eyre walks through the scrub looking for some grass for the horses what trail behind him.

Finding some he sits in the shade of a bush, swats at a fly; writes in his journal.

96. EXT. CAMP. EVE 96.

Wylie and Yarry sit around the fire roasting roots and several small lizards.

The sheep is tied to a bush and the horses stand hobbled nearby.

97. EXT. BEACH. EVE 97.

Eyre sits atop the coast ridge looking east. He walks down to the edge of the surf hoping for a better view; still, no one approaches.

He walks back to the ridge.

98. EXT. BEACH. DAY 98.

Wylie and Yarry wade in the shallow surf, spears at the ready, looking for fish.

Yarry stops, looks east down the beach, expectantly, hoping to see Joey.

Joey and Baxter do not appear and Yarry soon gets back to the task at hand, hunting in the shallows.

99. EXT. BEACH. EVE 99.

Again, Eyre sits atop the coast ridge, he carries a stick with a bit of red cloth tied to it; he looks east, doing his best to conjure Baxter and Joey from the dying light.

It gets darker.

Eyre plants the stick in the sand above the high water line and walks back to camp.

100. EXT. CAMP. DAWN

100.

The sun is not yet above the horizon, there is a chill in the air; Eyre, Wylie and Yarry huddle around the campfire making tea.

They hear a noise, they stand and look; Baxter, Joey and 2 horses make their way to camp.

Eyre notices that they are without the buried supplies and minus 1 horse; his smile fades, worry clouds his face.

Wylie and Yarry are happy to see Joey, they clasp him on the arm, give him tea.

EYRE

Wylie, see to the horses.

Wylie does and is soon followed by Joey and Yarry.

Eyre brings Baxter to the fire, hands him a cup of tea.

Baxter is relieved to be back but frustrated and contrite. Baxter stares at the pale fire.

BAXTER

I'm sorry, sir: 1 horse died, another, the mare, has gone blind.

Pause.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

We come only to within 20 miles or so of camp before we had to bury the supplies.

Pause.

EYRE

You did your best.

BAXTER

We dug for water 6 times. Twice nothing, four times salt.

There is a long silence; Wylie, Joey and Yarry are off dealing with the horses; Baxter concentrates hard corralling his thoughts.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
 With all due respect, sir,
 I think we should turn back.
 This country is cursed.

Pause.

EYRE (Gently.)
 To go back is madness. As you
 yourself have observed there
 is no water and the horses won't
 make it. We have come halfway.
 The next stretch is no worse
 than the last.

BAXTER
 It is getting worse, we must
 go back.

EYRE (Stiffening.)
 We will go back only so far as
 to recover the supplies.
 Please, Mr. Baxter, let the
 matter rest.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)
 And do not broach the subject
 again: We don't want to poison
 the boy's minds.

101. EXT. BEACH. MORNING 101.

A keg of water is placed in a hole.

Eyre, Wylie, Yarry and a horse stand on the beach
 burying the keg of water.

Yarry and the horse walk back to camp; Wylie and
 Eyre walk into the morning sun.

102. EXT. CAMP. EVENING 102.

A large flat bit of gray-black flesh roasts in the
 coals.

Yarry, Baxter and Joey sit around the campfire eating stingray.

The sheep is tied up nearby and the horses are hobbled.

JOEY

Joey hungry. Want damper.

BAXTER

This is what the Good Lord has provided for the day. Perhaps you'll remember this feeling when you're playing instead of hunting or digging roots.

Yarry and Joey look away from Baxter.

Soon Yarry and Joey start talking to each other in their own tongue. They talk about leaving, going home.

Baxter watches the conversation; he listens intently, tries to read their faces; he doesn't understand and grows frustrated.

BAXTER

What're ya saying? What does '_____' mean?

Yarry and Joey fall silent, sullen.

Baxter gets up and takes the horses and sheep to look for grass.

103. EXT. BEACH. DAY

103.

Yarry walks/dances along the edge of the surf, spear in hand, hunting/playing.

104. EXT. CAMP. DAY

104.

In the stillness of the mid-day heat, Baxter lies curled-up, asleep in the shade of a bush.

He looks like he might be dead.

Joey pokes him awake.

BAXTER

What?! What?

JOEY

Come.

Joey walks off; Baxter rises and follows him out of camp.

105. EXT. SCRUB. DAY

105.

A horse is lying on its side in the sand.

The 4 remaining horses and sheep nose about nearby eating the withered grass.

Baxter and Joey look at the stricken horse.

JOEY

Him lie down, won't get up.

Baxter tries to get it to rise but it won't. He stands and looks at it.

BAXTER

Gather some grass for her,
feed her.
I'll bring some water.

Baxter leaves and Joey collects grass, tries to feed the horse.

106. EXT. SCRUB. EVENING

106.

A bunch of dead branches dragging through the scrub leave parallel lines in the sand.

Joey and Baxter build a windbreak and light a fire for the stricken horse.

Joey goes back to camp; Baxter stays on patting her, trying to get her to eat or drink water.

107. EXT. BEACH. DAY

107.

Hands, black and white, scoop away the sand from around a buried keg.

Wylie and Eyre unearth the keg and drink, they are greatly fatigued; several packs of supplies lie nearby in the sand.

In the distance, Yarry approaches leading a horse.

Eyre and Wylie watch Yarry and the horse approach, too tired to smile or wave; they sit in the sand and blink and breathe.

108. EXT. SCRUB. EVENING

108.

The horse lies on its side, gaunt and still; nearby a small fire burns.

Eyre strokes her head, pats her haunch.

Baxter stands nearby, watching.

EYRE

We have spent too long here.

Turning from the horse, to Baxter.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow, you and Joey will reconnoiter the cliffs west of here: Dig for water and find us a safe ascent.

BAXTER

Aye, sir.

EYRE

Let's hope she recovers....

Baxter walks back to camp; Eyre soon follows.

109. EXT. BEACH. DAY

109.

The sky is leaden, it's a cool, blustery day; down the beach, cliffs high and foreboding rise out of a crashing sea.

Baxter marches toward the cliffs care worn, determined; he carries a small pack, a shovel and a rifle.

Behind him, Joey walks along in the shallows; spear in hand, hunting.

110. EXT. BUSH. DAY

110.

Joey hunts lizards in the bush; collects roots.

Baxter digs for water, hits rock.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Go! Go away; get away from me. I'll not have it on my conscience....

Baxter sinks to the ground, holding his head.
Joey stands some 10 meters away, watching, worried.

114. EXT. CAMP. EVE

114.

The pointed end of a stick rotates over the flames of a fire.

Wylie is making a spear. Several dead fish lay in the sand next to him.

Yarry sits nearby, he is also fashioning a spear.

Wylie looks up, sees Joey coming over the ridge, into camp; Baxter is close behind.

Wylie stands; he and Joey greet each other by putting an arm each on the other's shoulder.

BAXTER

Where's Mr. Eyre?

WYLIE (Pointing.)

Him with horse.

Baxter walks in the direction indicated; Joey sits down with Wylie and Yarry.

115. EXT. SCRUB. EVENING

115.

Eyre is trying to get the sick horse to eat; he rubs its neck; a small fire burns nearby.

Baxter watches Eyre comforting the horse.

Baxter steps into the clearing.

BAXTER

Still sick, is she?

EYRE

Yes. Frankly, I'm surprised she's still alive.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

How went it with you?

BAXTER

The cliffs begin again in about 16 miles. They stretch west as far as the eye can see. We dug for water 3 times, twice we struck rock, once salt.

Eyre turns back toward the horse.

EYRE

Is there a track leading up?

BAXTER

Aye, difficult but passable.

EYRE

Good man.
Have you eaten?
Yarry found some fish.

BAXTER

Sir, I fear for our lives. This land is cursed; it gets worse with every step to the West.

Eyre looks at Baxter and stiffens; Baxter at Eyre: The men stand 5 meters apart, the fire between them.

BAXTER

With all due respect, sir, I think we should return to Fowler's Bay. We have supplies -

EYRE

We're not going back. I pray to God that I could disabuse you of this fantasy.

Pause.

EYRE (CON'T)

We can't go back-: not without the horses. We'd never make it. Please understand: Without the horses to carry water and supplies we have no hope

EYRE (CON'T)
of re-crossing the country we have
thus far traversed. It would be
madness.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)
Not only is it madness to go back
but it would be a dereliction of
duty. We are commissioned to
find a trade route to the
settlement at King George's Sound
and that is what we must do.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)
We must go to King George's Sound.

They look at each other. Baxter says nothing;
turns away, angry, frustrated.

EYRE (CONT'D)
John, it is of the utmost
importance that you are sympathetic
to both the gravity of our
present situation and the
primacy of our mission: our
survival depends on it.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)
After this next stretch it will
get easier, I assure you.

Pause.

Baxter
Aye.

EYRE
Good man.

116. EXT. CAMP. NIGHT

116.

Eyre, Baxter, Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit around the
campfire eating blackened fish and roasted roots.

Nobody speaks; they look at the fire and when he
has wiped his fingers in the dirt, Eyre gets up.

EYRE

I will take the first
watch then I will come and
wake Wylie for the second
watch. Tomorrow it will
be Joey's turn. Its time you
boys started helping
Mr. Baxter and me with the
horses; you are old enough.

Eyre removes the hobbles from the horses, unties
the sheep and walks into the bush.

117. EXT. CAMP/BEACH. MORNING

117.

The sky is leaden, the day windy and grim.

The beach is deserted; Baxter rolls over and dry-
heaves into the sand.

He lies on his back, wipes his mouth, looks up at
the sky.

With great effort he rises and stumbles over the
ridge into camp.

Yarry, Joey and Wylie are huddled together under a
blanket by the fire shivering.

Eyre is curled up by the fire, holding his guts, he
and Baxter exchange glances.

Baxter lies down.

118. EXT. CAMP. DAY

118.

Wylie opens his eyes, blinks.

The sky is blue.

The clouds have burnt off, the sun is out; it is
still: only the sound of flies and the gentle wash
of the surf in the distance.

He sits up and looks at Yarry and Joey sleeping and
further away Eyre and Baxter also asleep.

The sheep is tied-up under a bush and the horses,
still hobbled, are wandering over the dunes looking
for grass.

Wylie lies back down, closes his eyes.

119. **EXT. CAMP. NIGHT**

119.

Wylie, Joey, Yarry and Eyre sit around the fire, eating damper.

Yarry makes a farting sound then groans; he and Joey look at Wylie and laugh.

EYRE

I see you are feeling better.

Yarry makes a really big farting sound and mimics Baxter's voice:

YARRY

'Ahh...me arse is on fire.'

The boys fall around, laughing.

EYRE

That's enough.
Joey, you'll be taking the watch
tonight from Mr. Baxter.

The boys calm down.

JOEY

Mr. Eyre, this damper
not enough. Joey hungry.

WYLIE

Yes, sir: Wylie hungry.

EYRE

I'm sorry but we must conserve
our stores. Tomorrow you will
be better. You'll have time to
dig for roots or catch fish.

Joey and Wylie sulk by the fire.

120. **EXT. SCRUB. MORNING**

120.

Eyre stands a few meters away looking at the stricken horse, wincing; he nods:

Baxter shoulders the rifle and fires.

The sound fades quickly; Eyre turns and walks away.

121. EXT. SCRUB/BEACH. MORNING

121.

Baxter's hands and forearms are red with blood as he cuts strips off the horse's haunch, puts the flesh in a bucket, hauls it through the scrub, over the ridge and washes it in the ocean.

Baxter shouts at Wylie, Yarry and Joey who are down the beach hunting in the surf. They don't hear him, or pretend not to.

Baxter finishes washing the meat then hauls it back into the scrub and drapes the strips of flesh over several bushes to dry.

122. EXT. SCRUB. NIGHT

122.

A large fire burns near the dead horse. Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit nearby slicing, roasting and feasting.

123. EXT. SCRUB. DAY

123.

The meat-hung bushes are a-swarm with flies.

Baxter almost retches: the meat is maggoty and putrid.

He walks back to the dead horse; Wylie, Yarry and Joey are still there, feasting.

BAXTER

I need some help. Wylie, Joey,
come with me.

Neither Wylie nor Joey will look at Baxter; Yarry giggles uncomfortably: they keep eating.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Didn't you hear me? Have you
blacks gone deaf?

Wylie, Joey and Yarry are now still, sullen; they don't respond.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Either you help me or go spell
Mr. Eyre with the horses.
What'll it be?

Wylie, Joey and Yarry look into the fire or down at the ground, anywhere but at Baxter who stands, waiting getting angry.

Baxter storms off.

124. EXT. CAMP. DAY

124.

Strips of gray-green meat boil in a small saucepan.

Baxter squats beside the fire tending to the saucepan of boiling horseflesh.

Once the meat has been boiled, he hangs it from a line strung over the fire.

Baxter has only a wooden bucket and a small saucepan to cure 20 kilos of flyblown horseflesh: it is a lonely, onerous task collecting the meat from the bush, washing the maggots off in the ocean, boiling the meat in the small saucepan, then hanging it over the fire.

125. EXT. SCRUB. NIGHT

125.

With the dead horse nearby, Wylie, Joey and Yarry lounge around a large fire in a post-prandial reverie.

From the cover of darkness, Eyre watches them: Joey and Yarry watch enthralled as Wylie demonstrates how his uncle caught and landed a shark.

Eyre looms into the light of their fire.

EYRE

Joey, Wylie, I have
come to tell you: You must
do your part. Mr. Baxter
and I are still not feeling
our best; I would like you
two to watch the horses
tonight.

Joey, Wylie and Yarry watch Eyre speak; they look at the fire, they look at the dead horse.

EYRE (CONT'D)

I must also ask you to refrain
from eating too much: we must
cure what meat we can and save it

EYRE (CONT'D)
for the next leg of our journey.

The moon has risen, there is a little bit of a breeze that makes the fire crackle and the flames twist skyward.

EYRE (CONT'D)
Yarry, you may do as you wish,
Joey, Wylie, please come with me.

First Wylie, then Joey then Yarry follow away from the fire and Eyre into the night.

126. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

126.

Two hands rest in the wet sand, a small wave washes over and around the spread fingers then is pulled back to sea.

Baxter stands, wipes his hands on his pants and buckles his belt.

At the horizon an overcast sky meets a green blue ocean, calm, indifferent.

Baxter turns and walks over the coast ridge toward camp.

127. EXT. CAMP. MORNING

127.

Eyre is counting the strips of horsemeat hanging over the fire when Baxter walks into camp.

EYRE
Mr. Baxter, did you have any of
this meat while I slept?

BAXTER
No, sir, the very thought of it
makes me guts swim.

Eyre looks vexed.

Just then Wylie, Yarry and Joey bring the horses into camp for water.

EYRE
Joey, Yarry, Wylie, please
come here.

Wylie and Joey, stealing glances at each other, take their time approaching; Yarry mimics their behavior.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Did you take any of this meat?

Wylie and Joey look at the ground. Yarry looks furtively between Eyre and Wylie and Joey.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Did either of you take any of this meat? Answer me.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Last night I counted the meat before I retired and this morning, upon rising, I find some missing.

Joey and Wylie are steeling themselves; moving from obdurate to indignant.

EYRE (CONT'D)

This is unacceptable behavior.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)

I need to be able to trust you. The success of this expedition depends on obedience and forbearance.

JOEY (Gesturing west)

Joey, Yarry, Wylie go.

EYRE

What?

JOEY

Him, Yarry, Joey go today.

EYRE

Go where?!
This is madness! Do you know where you are? It's at least 120 miles to the next water. How do you propose to survive?

JOEY

We want meat and damper.
We go.

Eyre, his hands on his hips, looks at the ground and shakes his head.

EYRE

You may have your allotment of
the flour, tea and sugar and
meat - less what you stole.

Joey looks at Eyre, at Wylie, then out into the bush.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Mr. Baxter, give them stores
for two.

Baxter goes to the packs and removes several loaves of damper. He hands them to Joey.

Eyre takes some meat off the line, hands it to Wylie.

Joey and Wylie pick-up their spears, Yarry follows but is grabbed by Eyre.

EYRE

I can't let you destroy yourself.

Yarry screams and fights.

Joey hesitates then turns and he and Wylie walk away over the coast ridge.

Baxter helps Eyre restrain Yarry.

128. EXT. BEACH. DAY

128.

The sun is out and Wylie and Joey walk along the beach, each carrying several spears and their stores.

Their strides are purposeful, steady. Still, several times both Joey and Wylie turn around and look to see if they are being followed.

129. EXT. BUSH. EVENING

129.

Wylie and Joey sit on the ground in the lee of some bushes and suck at some roots and eat cold damper and horseflesh.

130. EXT. BUSH. DAY

130.

A wallaby nibbles at the leaves of a bush.

Joey stands stock-still; he carries his spear, spear thrower and a large branch with leaves as concealment.

When the wind blows, he moves; when it stops, he stops.

The wind is up, he drops his blind, runs at the wallaby, it bounds away, he throws his spear, misses.

131. EXT. BUSH. EVENING

131.

Wylie struggles to get a fire going. After much effort he succeeds in nurturing a little flame and with Joey's help soon they have a warming fire.

WYLIE

Wylie soon home; kangaroo,
turtles, fish, cooya,
paaluck: much food.
My people happy for me.

Joey listens, becomes saddened then concerned.

JOEY (Pointing east.)

Joey go home.

Now Wylie is concerned; he glances at Joey who sulks.

WYLIE

That pretty long walk. No food.
End of Pournner, too cold, no
water.

Joey pulls his knees up to his chest, looks at the fire.

JOEY

Joey go home.

WYLIE (Pointing west.)
Come Mineng, good season.
Close.

Joey turns his back on Wylie.

The sun has gone down, the night closes in.

Wylie looks at Joey who is huddled, afraid.

Wylie is at a loss he shakes his head in disappointment.

132. EXT. SCRUB/CAMP. AFTERNOON

132.

Eyre walks through the scrub; finds Baxter who is watching the horses and sheep.

The sun is well in the west; shadows stretch across the ground to the east.

The horses wander about nibbling at clumps of dried grass; the lone sheep is on a long lead.

BAXTER
They are rested, but they've not put on any weight.

EYRE
No. Still, they're our only hope.

Pause.

EYRE (CONT'D)
Joey and Wylie should be well away by now.

BAXTER
Aye.

Pause.

EYRE
Let's put that sheep out of our misery, shall we? We'll have our fill of mutton and tomorrow be on our way.

BAXTER
Aye, sir.

Eyre stays with the horses and Baxter takes the sheep and leaves for camp.

133. **EXT. CAMP. NIGHT**

133.

Yarry eats some mutton; he seems smaller than ever sitting around the campfire on the ground between Eyre and Baxter.

Save for the wind in the bush and the crackle of the fire, it is very quiet.

Out of the night, Wylie appears at the edge of the campfire's light, head down, smiling a crooked smile of contrition; waiting.

EYRE

Well, well...come, sit.

Wylie approaches the campfire, sits.

Yarry is at first excited but when Joey fails to materialize, he soon grows worried.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Where is Joey?

Why have you returned?

Wylie looks into the fire, glances around at Baxter, Yarry and Eyre.

WYLIE

Me, Wylie, took meat.

EYRE

So you did take it. And you are sorry?

WYLIE

Yes.

Baxter watches, incredulous.

Eyre nods, his lips pursed.

Yarry jumps up and runs to his cousin, Joey, who has just come into camp.

EYRE

Joey! Welcome.

Joey embraces Yarry, both remain standing some distance from the fire.

EYRE (CONT'D)

Joey, Wylie here as admitted stealing meat. What have you got to say for yourself?

Joey refuses to look at Eyre or to answer him.

Baxter looks on bemused; Wylie looks at the mutton and glances about, hungrily.

Yarry and Joey keep their distance from the campfire.

EYRE

I am genuinely pleased to have both of you back. If you behave well you will be treated in every respect as before. Now, please, join us.

Baxter serves Wylie and they and Eyre eat.

Soon, Joey sulks his way to the fire and he and Yarry complete the circle.

134. EXT. CLIFFS. DAWN

134.

The sun is at their back as Yarry and Joey, Baxter, Eyre, Wylie and the 4 horses all walk along the cliffs.

The wind is constant and cooling, forcing the gray-green scrub to hug the ground on this wide, flat, rocky plain.

135. EXT. BUSH. DAY

135.

The bush is thick and tall, the dirt rust red; there is no wind and it is hot: The party is inland somewhat, threading its way west.

136. EXT. BUSH. EVE

136.

While walking, Eyre tears off a handful of damper and passes the remainder to Baxter who does the same and hands it to Wylie who does the same and passes it back to Joey and Yarry who are both wrapped in blankets.

A plump yellow moon hangs in a darkening sky; the last of the day's heat drains from the land.

137. EXT. BUSH. DAWN

137.

Wylie cradles a rifle, moves silently through the bush, looking, stopping, listening; his eyes dart about warily, hungrily.

The sun is not yet up; a soft lavender light blankets the land.

Wylie spies his prey he shoulders the rifle and fires.

138. EXT. BUSH. DAWN

138.

Baxter is startled out of his sleep by the distant report of the rifle.

Yarry and Joey are wrapped in a blanket close to the campfire, drinking tea; Eyre is organizing the horses.

Baxter rises and goes to help Eyre.

EYRE

Morning, Mr. Baxter.

BAXTER

Morning, sir.

EYRE

Have you had your tea?

BAXTER

No, sir.

Baxter joins Joey and Yarry around the campfire.

Eyre and the horses walk into the bush. The sun creeps above the horizon as Baxter, Joey and Yarry sit in silence and drink their tea.

139. EXT. BUSH. DAY

139.

Baxter and Eyre walk abreast, each leading several horses.

The sun is high, it is hot; there are a few bare patches of red soil, low scrub and many dense

stands of bushes and trees; theirs is an arduous, circuitous slog.

A dead wallaby is strapped to the back of one of the horses.

Wylie, Joey and Yarry bring up the rear.

BAXTER

With all due respect, sir, why do we not follow the cliff's edge? It is easier to navigate as the scrub is smaller and it is both cooler in the day and warmer at night.

EYRE

You forget, Mr. Baxter, that this is a scientific as well as commercial venture: There is still much to be learned about this land.

BAXTER (Apprehensively)

Aye, sir.

Baxter glances at Eyre, furtively, suspiciously.

140. EXT. BUSH. AFTERNOON

140.

Joey has Yarry by the hand and is pulling him along; Joey is tired but determined, Yarry is exhausted and has gone all floppy.

The shadows are lengthening, stretching east over the red-brown ground.

Wylie, Baxter Eyre and the horses are well ahead; Joey and Yarry are alone.

Yarry stops, Joey takes a few more steps then stops.

(In their own tongue.)

YARRY

I want to rest.

JOEY

Go ahead and rest.

Joey turns and starts walking.

YARRY

Wait for me.

JOEY

No.

YARRY

Joey, Please.

Joey stops.

YARRY

Will you carry me?

JOEY

No.

Joey turns to walk.

YARRY

Please!

Joey stops, takes a deep breath, bends down; Yarry runs up to him and climbs on his back.

YARRY

Thank you!

Yarry smiles, bouncing along on Joey's back.

Joey carries him for 25 meters or so then puts him down.

JOEY

Enough. You are a big boy.

YARRY

Thank you.

Together they walk through the bush.

142. EXT. BUSH. EVENING

141.

The horses are hobbled they nose at the withered clumps of grass.

Eyre and Baxter sit around a fire eating the last of the mutton as Wylie guts the wallaby, sings it hair off and places it in the fire.

The sun is just above the horizon and fading; small birds flit about feeding on insects.

Joey and Yarry walk into camp.

EYRE
You'll have a feast tonight.

Joey and Yarry settle near the fire.

EYRE (To Baxter.)
I'm feeling restless,
I'll take the first watch.

Eyre rises and walks away with the horses.

Baxter, Wylie, Joey and Yarry sit around the fire and watch the wallaby cook: the tail curls and the tendons in the leg muscles contract seemingly re-animating the roasting wallaby.

142. EXT. BUSH. NIGHT

142.

Baxter sleeps curled up on his side facing the fire.

Outside the fire's orange light a full moon casts a sepulchral blue-gray pall across the still land.

Wylie lies very still opposite Baxter: He watches Joey and Yarry, some 10 meters away, plunder the stores.

Joey has a rifle, and Yarry a sack of damper and some blankets.

Joey approaches Wylie, bends down and whispers:

JOEY
We go. Come.

Wylie sits up, points west.

WYLIE
Wylie go to Mineng.

Joey is anxious; he looks at Yarry waiting then back down to Wylie.

JOEY
Same, same. We go to Mineng.

As Wylie rises, Baxter wakes up, looks at Joey and Wylie then over his shoulder at Yarry.

BAXTER

What's going on?
What're you doing?

Baxter gets to his feet, Wylie moves away from Joey; Yarry doesn't move.

Baxter looks around again, steadies, focuses on Joey and the rifle:

BAXTER

Give me the gun.

Joey looks from Baxter to Wylie then back to Baxter.

Baxter puts his hand out:

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Joey, give me the gun.

Joey lowers his eyes, tenses his jaw and adjusts his grip on the rifle.

Baxter grows impatient, frustrated, angry:

BAXTER

Damn it, boy, give me the gun!

Baxter steps around the fire reaching for the rifle, Joey steps back, Baxter grabs the barrel there is a flash and a bang, Baxter staggers back clutching his chest and falls to the ground.

Baxter lies face up, blood pumping out of a hole in his chest through his fingers down his forearm and into the dirt.

Joey stands frozen holding the rifle staring at Baxter.

Wylie backs away then runs into the bush.

JOEY

Wylie!

Wylie doesn't stop and is gone.

Yarry walks over to Joey; they stare at Baxter, lying in the dirt.

YARRY

Is he dead?

JOEY

I don't know.

Baxter stares up into the night, blinks; his breath is shallow, he cannot move. Joey and Yarry run past him carrying guns, blankets, damper and a keg of water.

The night is still and quiet, the fire crackles gently, softly; smoke curls skyward: Baxter, alone, slowly, silently, dies.

143. EXT. BUSH. NIGHT

143.

A blur of grey and green, branches and leaves tear past, feet pound the ground: Wylie runs through the bush, Eyre behind him.

Wylie slows, stops; Eyre rushes past, into camp.

Eyre runs to Baxter, kneels and raises him up; he cradles the lifeless Baxter in his lap.

Wylie stands about 15 meters away, watching, listening.

144. EXT. BUSH/CAMP. DAWN

144.

The sky is gray and close; it is cold, a few birds herald the coming day.

Wylie loads the packs onto the horses and secures them.

A spade, an axe, a saddle, rope, tarps and some cloth lie in a pile near the remains of the campfire.

Eyre, a rifle at his side, kneels beside Baxter's blanket wrapped body, praying.

Wylie waits with the horses.

Soon Eyre rises, gestures at Wylie with the barrel of the gun and the two set out: Wylie in front leading the horses and Eyre a safe distance behind, rifle at the ready.

145. EXT. BUSH. MORNING

145.

The morning clouds have burnt off; the sun is high, warming.

Eyre walks behind Wylie and the horses carrying a rifle; he is watchful, nervous and tired.

Wylie pulls the horses along; wary of Eyre, tired and scared.

They pass tracks in the dirt and several small heaps of ash and burnt wood.

Wylie looks at the camp remains and worriedly scans the horizon.

Eyre pokes at ash and burnt wood with his boot, he too, worriedly scans the horizon.

146. EXT. BUSH. DAY

146.

It is hot, a faint breeze rustles the drooping eucalypts.

The horses are tied up near some dried grass and Eyre and Wylie, 10 meters apart, sit in the shade, eating damper.

Eyre, a rifle across his lap is constantly looking about, jumpy.

Wylie stiffens, points, Eyre looks: about 100 meters away, two small figures.

Hiding behind trees, moving from bush to bush, Joey and Yarry, carrying rifles, move closer.

Eyre gets up and goes to a nearby horse and gets another rifle, he checks both, looks around, waits; he is resolute.

Joey and Yarry are about 50 meters away when Eyre begins walking toward them.

They stop.

Eyre continues to advance; they retreat.

Eyre stops, waits.

JOEY (Shouting)
Massa, we don't want you,
we want Wylie.

Eyre turns to Wylie.

Wylie is standing, the horses are behind him, he doesn't move.

Eyre looks back to Joey and Yarry.

JOEY
Wylie! We want Wylie!

Eyre begins walking toward Joey and Yarry. They retreat.

Eyre runs at them, they run away.

Eyre stops, shoulders his rifle, takes aim and fires, he throws that one down, aims with the other and fires again.

The smoke clears, Eyre stands stock still, looking into the bush; the rifle still at his shoulder.

He waits, watches, turns; picks-up the discarded rifle and walks back to Wylie and the horses.

Wylie, Eyre and the horses walk west into the afternoon sun.

Moving parallel, hiding behind bushes and trees, Joey and Yarry keep their distance, crying, yelling for Wylie, for help.

Seemingly driven by their desperate wailing, Eyre keeps up a steady pace followed by Wylie and the horses.

147. EXT. BUSH/CLIFFS. EVENING

147.

The last of the day is a faint strip of light across the western sky.

With grim determination, Wylie and Eyre move out of the bush over a slight rise onto the level ground above the cliffs; the plaintive cries of Joey and Yarry growing more distant with each step.

As night falls their pleas fall away; Wylie and Eyre continue walking, the only sounds are the howling wind and the crashing surf far below.

148. EXT. CLIFFS. NIGHT 148.

The moon is out and the level land is a blue-gray smudge beneath a black sky.

Wylie, Eyre and the horses stumble through the darkness.

149. EXT. CLIFFS. DAWN 149.

Eyre wakes with a start, gets to his feet, nudges Wylie awake with his foot: They have been sleeping in the lee of a large, squat bush.

It is still very dark; a bruised blue light seeps out of the east.

Wylie watches Eyre gather the horses and begin walking.

Wylie rolls to his feet and follows.

150. EXT. CLIFFS. DAY 150.

A mound of ashes and charcoal, some bones, stones, bits of bark and fur: a hand hovers above the gray and black mess gauging the heat.

Eyre stands, looks around.

Wylie too senses company but sees none.

They keep walking.

The sky is blue; the sun bears down, they get smaller and smaller winding their way west along the cliffs hundreds of feet above the Southern Ocean.

151. EXT. CLIFFS. LATE EVENING 151.

Eyre empties the last of a little keg into a pannikin and sets it in the fire.

The night is close, Eyre and Wylie don't speak; they collect themselves, rest.

Wylie pours the water into two cups.

They drink their tea and eat their damper.

Soon, Eyre rises.

EYRE

I'll take the first watch.

He walks inland, the horses follow; the night is quiet.

Wylie lies down, stares into the fire. Soon his eyes close; he sleeps.

152. EXT. CLIFFS. DAWN

152.

The sun is on the horizon, climbing; Wylie, Eyre and the horses are already walking.

Wylie's eyes have lost their spark, they are a dull brown and heavy lidded; seeing is an added burden.

Eyre, too, looks no further than his next step; in a soft raspy voice, he prays as he walks.

The horses are sway-backed and their heads hang as they stumble along.

With much effort, Eyre and Wylie take them over a sandy ridge, inland, away from the cliffs and into the bush.

153. EXT. BUSH. DAY

153.

It is quiet and hot, the tall trees and thick bush filter out the cooling wind.

Tufts of dried gray grass poke through the rust red soil; Eyre slows to let the horses eat.

They come to a limestone outcropping; there are numerous holes that would/could collect water.

A large, flat rock covers a hole; Wylie pushes it away, puts his hand deep in the hole, he brings up a handful of mud.

He slings it to the side, gets up; they push on, stumbling, exhausted.

154. **EXT. BUSH. DAY**

154.

Eyre opens his eyes, he is lying on his side on the ground under a stunted sandalwood tree, he sees the horses, nearby, hobbled; Wylie is gone.

The sun is at its zenith, the air is still the heat is stifling.

Eyre rolls over and looks at the sun through the branches of the tree; a fly crawls across his cracked lips, he is too tired to brush it away, he closes his eyes.

Eyre listens to the stillness, the impending silence.

Eyre opens his eyes; Wylie is standing over him holding a bough with several large yellow conical flowers.

Wylie is smiling, pointing at the flower and patting his chest.

WYLIE

Pira! Soon Mineng...Pira!

Wylie sits down next to Eyre.

Eyre looks at Wylie, at the flower.

EYRE (Smiling)

Banksia...yes...from King George's Sound.

Several large drops of nectar nestled in the petals sparkle in the sun.

WYLIE

Pira! Soon Mineng...Pira!

Eyre, rolls over, gets to his feet; they gather the horses and set off again.

155. **EXT. CLIFFS. AFTERNOON**

155.

With the sun in their eyes and the wind in their faces, high above the crash and tumble of the Southern Ocean, they stumble west, leading the jaded horses over jagged rocks and twisted scrub.

The cliffs get smaller, the ocean closer.

Below, a beach develops with dunes and vegetation.
 Eyre and Wylie stop and survey this possible oasis.
 After a moment they turn and continue west.

156. EXT. CLIFFS/DUNES. AFTERNOON

156.

The wind has abated and the sky is a deepening
 vault of blue

Eyre has stopped and is watching a score of red
 tufted swifts dart about feed on insects.

Wylie, 30 meters ahead, yells and snapping Eyre out
 of his reverie.

Wylie smiles, he has found a track leading through
 the scrub off the cliffs down a cleft and into the
 rising dunes.

EYRE (Smiling.)

Good work.

Carefully, slowly, Wylie and Eyre lead the horses
 down the steep sandy slope to the dunes below the
 cliffs.

They follow the track through the dunes to a well;
 Wylie and Eyre immediately set to digging.

The sand is moist and they soon find water.

They drink from cupped hands the dirty brown water
 soothes their cracked lips.

A soft breeze blows off the surf.
 Eyre closes his eyes, bows his head and silently
 prays.

Wylie watches then turns his attention to the sea
 and the gentle surf rolling onto the beach.

The sun is on the horizon, falling; the sky is a
 deep blue, Venus is just visible.

They set to watering the horses.

157. EXT. BEACH. MORNING

157.

With The sun at their back, Wylie, Eyre and the horses walk along the beach; their tracks are filled in, erased by the rising tide.

END