

# THE TWO-WHEELED TIME MACHINE

A screenplay for a short film

By David Lowe

December 1992

## 1. Exterior. Main street of Doobiong. Day.

*Doobiong is a tiny Australian country town c.1900. One church, one store, a police station/courthouse, two pubs and a collection of houses and shacks. The main street is dirt. There are no cars, but a few horses standing about.*

TITLE: "THE TWO-WHEELED TIME MACHINE"

*A scruffy, barefoot nine-year-old BOY is running down the street, shouting excitedly as he goes.*

BOY: He's coming! Hoopy's coming!

*Cut to:*

## 2. Exterior. Side street of Doobiong. Day.

*Dogs bark as the BOY vaults across a fence, climbs a tree, and throws a pebble at the back window of a neat whitewashed house.*

CAPTION: "DOOBIONG, 1899"

*The BOY hides out of sight as a mean-looking LADY opens the window and searches for the cause of the disturbance. This was not the result he was hoping for.*

*When she closes the window, the BOY drops out of the tree and goes round to the front of the house. A GIRL of about his age is in the front yard, playing with a wooden yo-yo.*

BOY: Psst. Alice. C'm here.

ALICE: Henry Isaac Howard. Fancy you having the face to show up around here again after last time.

*HENRY is too excited to argue with her.*

HENRY: Never mind that, Ally. Hoopy's coming!

ALICE: Hoopy who?

HENRY: Not Hoopy Who. Hubert Hooperman.

ALICE: Never heard of him.

HENRY: *[dumbfounded]* Never heard of Hubert Hooperman?! The greatest long-distance wheelman on Earth?!!

ALICE: Nup.

HENRY: *[impatiently]* Well come on then. It's time you were educated.

*ALICE isn't sure about this. HENRY rummages in his pockets for something to tempt her. He pulls out a boiled lolly.*

HENRY: Yours if you beat me to the sticky tree!

*ALICE glances over her shoulder to see if her mother is looking, then stares over HENRY's shoulder as if there is something terribly interesting there. HENRY looks to see what it is. The moment he's distracted, ALICE bolts down the street, grinning. HENRY sees the trap too late and takes off after her.*

*Cut to:*

### **3. Exterior. Outskirts of Doobiong. Day.**

*Telephoto shot of the road into Doobiong, shimmering in the heat.*

*HENRY and ALICE squint into the distance, standing beneath a big old tree which is bleeding sap. She has the lolly in her mouth. Both are still panting slightly.*

ALICE: There's nothing there.

HENRY: Yes there is! Look harder.

*Cut back to the telephoto shot. In the distance, a blurry black blob appears.*

HENRY: There. See?

*ALICE squints even harder.*

ALICE: Probably a camel.

HENRY: Camels don't have wheels.

ALICE: Wagon then.

HENRY: Too small.

*Cut back to the telephoto shot. The blob becomes a MAN on a bicycle, pedalling through the heat.*

ALICE: What a silly man. Out on a bicycle in the middle of nowhere. Why doesn't he get a horse?

HENRY: *[shocked]* A horse!? That'd be like Ned Kelly on a pogo stick. You're talking about the great Hooperman, Alice. Leastways you could have a little respect.

Now a group of adults, mostly men, are gathering. Ignoring the children, they block their view as they gesticulate at the distant figure. The CROWD grows.

HENRY: Hey! Hey let us see.

YOUNG MAN: Shut up kid. You sound like a yelping pup.

*The YOUNG MAN's mates snicker.*

HENRY: Well you look like a great ugly dingo crossed with a mule, so there.

*The YOUNG MAN raises his hand to strike HENRY. HENRY darts away. The YOUNG MAN pursues him for a few steps, then leaves it. ALICE stays in the same place.*

*Cut to:*

#### **4. Exterior. Road into Doobiong. Day.**

*Sequence of shots of HOOPERMAN on his bike, pedalling into town. He is dressed in a formal-looking dark suit, with a collared shirt, cap and moustache. HOOPERMAN's face and clothes are wrinkled with a thick layer of sweat and dust, making him look surprisingly old. He rides a curvy-framed "safety" bicycle, much closer to a modern bike than a penny-farthing, with a bag under his seat and another attached to the crossbar.*

NARRATOR [over]: (ALICE as an old lady) I found out later that Hooperman was riding from Perth, in Western Australia, to Rockhampton, in Queensland. Quite a distance, even now. Back then, it seemed an awful long way just to the sea.

*HOOPERMAN rides past a wooden sign: "Township of Doobiong".*

*Cut to:*

#### **5. Exterior. Main street Doobiong. Day.**

*Angle on ALICE in the small crowd. Her MOTHER (seen earlier in the house) is walking purposefully towards her from the other side of the group, searching for her daughter.*

HENRY [over]: Alice! Quick, up here!

*ALICE looks around and sees HENRY balanced precariously on a branch over her head. Now she sees her MOTHER, who still hasn't spotted her.*

HENRY: Hurry!

*In a few quick movements, ALICE jumps up and hauls herself into the branches of the tree, where she's hidden by the foliage. From this vantage point, we see HOOPERMAN come into town.*

*A cheer goes up from the INHABITANTS of Doobiong as HOOPERMAN arrives.*

VOICES shout things like: "On ya Hoopy", "Where's your horse Hoopy?", "Buy you a beer mate?".

*HOOPERMAN good-naturedly dips his cap at the motley throng, but barely slows his pace. At first the PEOPLE are surprised he doesn't stop, but then a gap opens for him to ride through. PEOPLE run along beside HOOPERMAN. HENRY drops out of the tree to join them.*

SOMEONE shouts out: "Give the man a drink!"

*A bucket of water is thrown over HOOPERMAN, who smiles good-naturedly and wipes his face with his cap. We see that beneath the grime he is young. SOMEONE hands him a splashing flagon of beer which HOOPERMAN drinks as he rides, steering with one hand.*

*Panting PEOPLE begin to peel off from the throng and stop running. HENRY is still with HOOPERMAN.*

*Stay with ALICE's POV as HOOPERMAN heads out of town. One by one, the followers peel away, until only HENRY is left, running after the bike. Still HOOPERMAN pedals.*

NARRATOR [over]: That day was the most important in Henry's life. Not only did he get to meet Hooperman, but the great man gave him something; a secret which he would carry with him from that day on.

*In the distance, HOOPERMAN stops his bike and puts his foot down on the road. He does not dismount. HENRY catches up. Still with ALICE's viewpoint, we can just make out what is going on.*

*HOOPERMAN holds out his hand. HENRY pauses, then holds out his own hand to shake.*

*HOOPERMAN points as he speaks, first the way he is going, then back the way he's come. HENRY looks, forward and then back. HOOPERMAN gets back on to the pedals, dipping his cap. HOOPERMAN rides away.*

*Then HOOPERMAN stops again, a little way on. He fishes for something in his waistcoat pocket, gets it out, throws it back to HENRY.*

*In slow motion, a tiny silver object glints in the sunlight as it arcs through the air. HENRY catches it.*

Cut to:

## **6. Exterior. Road out of Doobiong. Day.**

*Now we are with HENRY, out beyond the town. In big CU, HENRY opens his hand to reveal - a tiny silvery sphere. It is a ball bearing, shiny and new. Entranced, HENRY holds it up to the sun between two fingers. It shines like a small star.*

*HENRY remembers HOOPERMAN at last. He turns to say goodbye, but HOOPERMAN is already some distance away. He does not look back.*

*Now there is a noise like a ghostly growling, slow and low; a spinechilling sound, first a wail and then a roar.*

*HENRY hears it too. He turns his head to the source of the noise.*

*In an OTS shot, we see what HENRY sees; a monstrous shadowy SHAPE, galloping in extreme slow motion across the plain straight towards us. It is a greyhound the size of a mountain, superimposed in mid-dissolve like a ghost on the landscape.*

*HENRY is terrified by this apparition. Its shadow falls across him.*

*The MONSTER stops, sniffs after HOOPERMAN. It has lost the scent. In rage, the CREATURE raises its head to the heavens and makes a final frustrated wail/roar, which hangs in the air after the apparition disappears. This whole sequence has only taken a few seconds.*

*Everything returns to normal; heat, flies, dust. HENRY shakes his head as if he's been hallucinating, and starts trudging back to town.*

*Cut to:*

## **7. Exterior. Mustering yards. Day.**

*A nineteen-year-old YOUNG MAN is working under the direction of an OLDER MAN. Sheep run from pen to pen as the YOUNG MAN closes the gates behind them.*

**CAPTION: "TEN YEARS LATER".**

*Suddenly the YOUNG MAN loses his footing and falls into the pen full of sheep, releasing a gate by accident in the process. Sheep run over the YOUNG MAN and escape.*

**OLDER MAN:** Not again Henry! Christ, what do you think you're doing lad?!

*Cut to:*

## **8. Interior. Doobiong church. Day.**

*HENRY is balanced precariously on a ladder, polishing the church bell. He is distracted by something outside; a group of young MEN dressed up in their best clothes, riding bicycles as young WOMEN flutter their eyelashes at them. Suddenly HENRY becomes aware of the MINISTER down below him, frowning at him for not working. HENRY smiles apologetically.*

*Cut to:*

## **9. Exterior. Doobiong main street. Day.**

*HENRY is carrying a side of beef down the street, grimacing under the weight.*

*He tries to smile at ALICE, now a young woman, as she sees him through the window of the whitewashed house. She waves back. ALICE's MOTHER frowns at him from the kitchen.*

*Cut to:*

# **10. Exterior. Doobiong bicycle shop. Day.**

*HENRY is up on a stepladder with a tin of paint over one arm. He has almost finished painting a new sign, which reads: "WERNER'S BICYCLE EMPORIUM - WHEELS FOR ALL VARIETIES OF LADIES & GENTLEMEN".*

NARRATOR [over scenes 7-10]: For the next few years, Henry did nothing but work. Almost everyone in town hired him at one time or another, and Henry saved and saved. The only problem was that his mind was always on other things. Particularly things with two wheels. Naturally, when Werner's Bicycle Shop opened, Henry was the first in line. When he actually got a job at Werner's, it was like swimming in honey all day long.

*Up on the ladder, HENRY has been distracted by something in the front window of the shop. It is a beautiful red bicycle, just like HOOPERMAN's. HENRY is so entranced that he doesn't even notice when paint dribbles off the end of his brush and down his front.*

*Cut to:*

# **11. Exterior. Alice's house. Night.**

*HENRY sneaks through ALICE's back garden and knocks on her window.*

HENRY: Ally. Ally, it's me, Henry.

*ALICE opens the window, wiping sleep from her eyes blearily.*

ALICE: What time is it Henry?

HENRY: Don't worry about that. I've got the money!

ALICE: *[also excited now]* Already?

HENRY: Werner's giving me a discount. I'm picking it up tomorrow.

ALICE: Oh... does that mean you'll be...

*HENRY takes her hand in his.*

HENRY: Come with me Alice.

ALICE: Come with you where?

HENRY: Does it matter? Away from here. We'll see the world together.

ALICE: But you know I can't go Henry. I need to look after my mother. This is my home.

HENRY: What are you saying? You can't stay here forever. This place will choke you to death. I'll show you mountains, beaches, electric trams, whales... don't you want to see those things?

ALICE: Of course Henry, but... I can't. Sorry.

*HENRY is getting desperate. He pulls her closer to him. The window gets in the way. His eyes plead with her. ALICE seems about to change her mind when there is a noise behind her. They break their embrace as ALICE's MOTHER enters, carrying a candle.*

MOTHER: Whatever are you doing out of bed child?

*Then she sees HENRY. Her face hardens. This time HENRY does not run. His eyes stay on ALICE's face. The MOTHER walks over to the window and blocks his view.*

MOTHER: Go.

*HENRY doesn't move. She glares at him.*

MOTHER: Go. GO!

*HENRY stumbles back a couple of steps. The MOTHER closes the windows and draws the curtains.*

HENRY *[almost to himself]*: Wait for me Alice. Wait.

*He turns and walks away into the darkness.*

*Cut to:*

## **12. Exterior. Werner's Bicycle Shop. Early morning.**

*WERNER, a friendly-looking German man in a greasy smock, is wheeling THE bike out into the street. HENRY is behind him, overcome with emotion at this moment.*

*Like a priest handling holy relics, HENRY clips his bags under the seat and crossbar.*

*HENRY hands a wad of notes across to WERNER. WERNER peels a few off and hands them back to HENRY. HENRY doesn't know what to say. They embrace warmly.*

WERNER: Good luck Henry.

HENRY: You too Werner.

*HENRY swings his leg over the crossbar and puts his foot on to the pedal. WERNER holds one finger up as if to say "One moment". Kneeling down on the ground, he pulls one of HENRY's socks over the end of his pants-leg to protect it from the greasy chain. HENRY smiles.*



*Again they embrace. At last HENRY pedals off, unsteadily at first, out of town. There is no-one else about. WERNER wipes a tear away from his cheek as HENRY and the bike get further away.*

*Cut to:*

### **13. Interior/Exterior. Alice's house. Early morning.**

*ALICE watches sadly through a break in the curtains as HENRY pedals away.*

*Fade to black.*

*Fade into:*

### **14. Exterior. Bank of stream. Afternoon.**

*A little older, ALICE is walking beside the little stream, picking flowers.*

CAPTION: "FIVE YEARS LATER"

*Suddenly the peacefulness is broken by a HORSE and RIDER, crashing across the stream, scattering the ducks. The RIDER looks about 30. He is handsome in a cruel sort of way. When he sees ALICE, he pulls the horse up.*

RIDER: *[delighted to see her]* Miss Medwin!

ALICE: *[long-suffering tone]* Mr Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG: And what are you doing out walking so far from home?

ALICE: Why shouldn't I walk on such a delightful spring day?

ARMSTRONG: Because you could be riding, that's why.

*She kicks and giggles as he scoops her up with a strong arm and deposits her on the back of the horse.*

ARMSTRONG: Hmm?

*They canter off.*

*Cut to:*

### **15. Interior. House. Day.**

*ALICE is being prepared for her wedding. Various WOMEN carefully help her with her dress.*

*Cut to:*

## 16. Interior. Pub. Day.

*ARMSTRONG is being prepared for his wedding. He drinks two jugs of beer at once as his FRIENDS urge him on.*

NARRATOR [over scenes 15 & 16]: When Henry didn't come back, Alice got to thinking that maybe something had happened to him. Naturally other men soon started hanging around, and times being what they were, sooner or later she had to make a decision.

*Cut to:*

## 17. Exterior. Doobiong church. Day.

*ALICE and ARMSTRONG are coming down the church steps, after the wedding. The bell is ringing. PEOPLE shower them with confetti as they make their way to a waiting motor car. ALICE's MOTHER is there also, looking very happy.*

*Suddenly ALICE notices HENRY, still looking 20, beyond the edge of the crowd. He is sitting astride his bike, and looks like he's just arrived.*

*Their eyes meet. ALICE opens her mouth to call out to him, but ARMSTRONG (who has not noticed anything), picks her up and bundles her into the back of the Model T. He closes the door and goes round to the driving seat, pulling on a pair of driving goggles. SOMEONE winds the car up at the front and sets it going. The CROWD jump as it bursts into life with a bang and a puff of smoke.*

*ALICE's POV through the small back window as the car drives away from the waving CROWD. She stares at HENRY, out on his own, as he stares back expressionlessly. ALICE is terribly upset. The CROWD mistake her tears for happiness.*

*The last thing we see is HENRY climbing back on to his pedals and riding away in the opposite direction, obscured by smoke from the car's exhaust.*

*Fade to black.*

*Fade into:*

## 18. Exterior. Armstrong farm. Afternoon.

*A bicycle wheel, spinning along the road. Crane up to reveal the rider is HENRY HOWARD, still looking about twenty. He rides towards a lonely farmhouse.*

CAPTION: "TEN YEARS LATER"

NARRATOR: Alice had almost forgotten about Henry next time he showed up. By then her old life hardly seemed hers at all. It was an alien thing, like someone else's memory. Until Henry reminded her.

*HENRY parks his bike beneath a peach tree, empty of fruit now. Carefully, he selects an old peach stone from the ground and lobs it towards the house. It strikes a window.*

*ALICE opens the window. A 35 year-old woman, she looks older than last time we saw her. She sees the figure beneath the tree.*

ALICE: *[scared]* Who is it?

*HENRY steps out of the shadows. ALICE draws in her breath.*

ALICE: Henry Howard? Is that you?

HENRY: Where's your husband, Ally?

ALICE: He's out working on the roads. Henry... you look so young.

*HENRY has reached her now. Without a word, she clasps him between her breasts.*

*Dissolve to:*

## **19. Interior. Bedroom. Late afternoon.**

*ALICE and HENRY are naked and sweaty, sprawling over each other in post-coital bliss.*

HENRY: Do you have children?

ALICE: No. No, we can't.

*There is a pause.*

ALICE: Oh Henry. Where have you been?

HENRY: All over Australia, America, Germany, Spain... Borneo.

*Suddenly HENRY hears something outside. It is the MONSTER from Scene 6, getting louder. ALICE doesn't hear the noise.*

ALICE: All on your bicycle?

*HENRY nods absent-mindedly, worried about the approaching noise outside.*

HENRY: *[urgently]* Come with me Ally. It's not too late.

ALICE: But how can I Henry? How would we survive? I'm married now. This is my place.

*HENRY is getting dressed now, frequently glancing outside.*

ALICE: What are you worried about for goodness' sake? My husband won't be home for hours.

HENRY: *[deadly serious]* I'm not worried about your husband.

ALICE: Well what is it then?

*The noise of the approaching BEAST is getting louder.*

HENRY: There's no time to explain. *[Holding the sides of her face]* You must come, NOW.

*ALICE looks at him uncomprehendingly. HENRY runs to the opposite side of the house, looks out the window.*

*As before, we see the huge ghostly MONSTER loping towards us across the plain.*

*HENRY runs back into the bedroom. Desperately anxious to leave now, he pulls his sock over his trouser leg and then runs for the window. The sound of the MONSTER is overpowering, like a storm. ALICE still hears nothing.*

HENRY: *[running for his bike, yelling over his shoulder]* Wait for me Ally! Wait!

*He jumps on his bike and pedals furiously away, not looking back. The sound of the MONSTER recedes and disappears.*

*ALICE is standing at the window, confused and concerned. She reacts with fear to the final frustrated howl of the BEAST - at last she has heard it.*

*Fade to black.*

*Fade into:*

## **20. Exterior. Park. Day.**

*A 14 year-old BOY is playing cricket with his FATHER, a grey-haired man with a paunch who looks like an old version of ARMSTRONG. The FATHER is batting.*

CAPTION: "FIFTEEN YEARS LATER"

*Cut to:*

## **21. Exterior. Doobiong outskirts. Day.**

*A group of MEN dressed in army fatigues are marching out of town, led by a SERGEANT-MAJOR. They look like recent recruits, carrying their guns the wrong way and marching out of step. A CYCLIST is approaching, riding the other way.*

*As the YOUNG MAN on the bike draws nearer, the SERGEANT-MAJOR begins haranguing him.*

SERGEANT-MAJOR: What are you doing out of uniform, son? Fit young man like you ought to have signed up long ago. Hey! You listening? You're an embarrassment to your country boy. You know that?!

*We can now see that the YOUNG MAN is HENRY HOWARD, still not looking a day over twenty. HENRY ignores the SERGEANT-MAJOR.*

*Cut to:*

## **22. Exterior. Doobiong main street. Day.**

*The town is bigger than it used to be. The road is sealed now, and quite a few cars are driving up and down. There are posters advertising war bonds on billboards. HENRY pulls up outside Werner's Bicycle Shop. Sadly, he notices that it is boarded up and closed. "FOR SALE" says the sign.*

*Cut to:*

## **23. Exterior. Park. Day.**

*The FATHER, showing off, hits the cricket ball as hard as he can, sending the BOY running after it.*

*The ball goes up and up, then down and down, bouncing... it comes to a stop in front of HENRY, who is riding down the street. HENRY stops his bike and picks up the ball.*

*Suddenly the BOY runs round the corner, panting. HENRY holds up the ball as if to say "This yours?"*

*Their eyes meet for a moment, then HENRY tosses the ball to the BOY.*

BOY: Thanks mister. Hey, that looks like the sort of bike old Hooperman used to ride.

*HENRY nods. The BOY smiles and runs back to the park.*

*Cut to:*

## **24. Exterior. Armstrong farmhouse. Day.**

*There are other houses all around the Armstrongs' house, now a suburb of Doobiong. ALICE is unpegging washing at the side of the house. She is fifty now, and looks it.*

*She unpegs a sheet to find HENRY standing behind it.*

ALICE: Who-

*She touches his unlined face in amazement.*

ALICE: *[incredulously]* Henry?

HENRY: Are you alone?

ALICE: Er... yes. Yes I think so. Nathan and Henry are playing cricket at the park.

HENRY: Henry?

ALICE: My son. He's... fourteen now.

*She looks at HENRY in amazement, fascinated by his youth.*

HENRY: I think it's time I explained. Can we go inside?

*Cut to:*

## **25. Interior. House. Day.**

*HENRY and ALICE sit at the kitchen table. Afternoon light comes through the window.*

*HENRY is carefully balancing a spoon on the blade of a breadknife.*

HENRY: You go too slow, and time catches up with you. Go too fast, and you catch up with it. Gotta strike a balance - like riding on two wheels.

*On this, HENRY drops HOOPERMAN's ball bearing on to the spoon. For a moment, the whole thing wavers precariously, then it slows and balances. HENRY removes his hands.*

ALICE: You mean, the bicycle keeps you young?

*HENRY nods.*

HENRY: Not just me. You too, if you come with me.

*His hand closes over hers. ALICE's head is whirling. She doesn't know what to do, holds her hands over her eyes.*

HENRY [over]: Decide Ally. Decide before it's too late.

*Suddenly the door opens. The spoon and knife clatter to the table. MR ARMSTRONG stands in the doorway.*

ARMSTRONG: Who was that?

*ALICE opens her eyes and looks across the table. HENRY is gone. She races to the window, sees him pedalling away into the distance. Her SON stands in the yard holding the cricket bat, looking after him.*

*ALICE surreptitiously picks up the ball bearing from the table and drops it into her apron pocket, before answering her husband.*

ALICE: I don't know.

*Fade to black.*

*Fade into:*

**26. Exterior. Train track. Day.**

*The trainline is gated and unused-looking.*

CAPTION: "SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER"

*Cut to:*

**27. Exterior. Doobiong main street. Day.**

*Neon lights advertise takeaways and department stores. Buildings stretch in all directions. Angry people honk at one another.*

*Cut to:*

**28. Exterior. Nursing Home. Day.**

*A sign says "SUNNYVALE NURSING HOME AND HOSPITAL FOR THE ELDERLY".*

*Track through the door with a young DOCTOR. He says hello to nursing STAFF and old PEOPLE as he walks briskly down corridors. He walks into a neon-lit room full of sick OLD PEOPLE in beds and stops at the foot of one, checking the name on the clipboard.*

DOCTOR: And how are you... Alice?

*ALICE, propped up in bed, is asleep until the DOCTOR wakes her with his question. She is now 67, and her hair is white.*

*Cut to:*

**29. Exterior. Highway into Doobiong. Day.**

*Cut on the blare of a semi-trailer as it overtakes a MAN on a bicycle.*

*HENRY, still young, rides his old red bike alongside streams of traffic.*

*Hold on a sign by the side of the road as HENRY pedals past: "DOOBIONG, Population 20,000". Spraypaint graffiti obliterates part of the sign.*

*Cut to:*

**30. Exterior. Armstrong house. Afternoon.**

*HENRY knocks on the door, asks the OCCUPANT something. (We are too far away to hear). The OCCUPANT shrugs her shoulders and closes the door.*

*Cut to:*

**31. Interior. Corner store. Afternoon.**

*Similar scene played out between HENRY and Italian SHOP-KEEPER.*

*Cut to:*

**32. Exterior. Police station. Afternoon.**

*HENRY's bicycle is propped up outside. A POLICEMAN comes out. HENRY follows him. Again we are too far away to hear what is being said, but the POLICEMAN points up the street at something.*

*HENRY gets back on his bike.*

NARRATOR [over scenes 30-32]: Next time Henry showed up, Mr Armstrong had died and Alice's only son had moved away to Sydney. He paid her nursing fees every month, and sent a cake at Christmas time. Her life, once so full of opportunities, seemed to have contracted to a narrow tunnel. Henry was nothing but a distant fantasy, a warm dream to hold tightly in the night, between waves of pain.

*Cut to:*

**33. Interior. Nursing home. Night.**

*HENRY is at the reception desk, speaking to a suspicious NURSE.*

NURSE: How do you know Mrs Armstrong?

HENRY: I'm her... grandson.

NURSE: Well you're not on the visitors' list. Can I take something to her for you?

*HENRY just stands there, looking mournful and sexy.*

NURSE: Oh all right. She's down the hall, [*pointing*] fourth on the right, second on the left, near the window.

*HENRY smiles at her warmly. The NURSE blushes slightly.*

*Cut to:*



**34. Interior. Alice's room. Night.**

*ALICE wakes to find HENRY holding her hand tightly. All the other OCCUPANTS remain asleep.*

ALICE: Henry? Is it really you?

*After a long pause, he begins speaking.*

HENRY: I've been all over the world, five times. I've broken three thousand and ninety-six spokes. I've gone through thirteen hundred and fifty sets of tyres. I've worn out 97 chains. And I haven't been able to find anyone, anywhere, to replace you.

*ALICE is weeping.*

HENRY: If you won't come with me this time, I'll stay here and grow old with you. I don't care anymore.

*His head is on her chest.*

ALICE: I... didn't think you would come back.

HENRY: I'm here. *[softly]* I'm here.

*The sound of the BEAST, in the distance.*

ALICE: What's that?

HENRY: *[surprised]* You can hear it?

ALICE: Of course I can hear it. I'm not deaf, you know.

HENRY: I believe you, it's just that no one but me has heard it before.

*The BEAST is getting closer. ALICE shivers.*

ALICE: You've heard that... thing... before?

HENRY: Oh yes. Many times. It follows me.

ALICE: Follows you?

HENRY: You too. Everyone's got one. Only most people never notice it, 'cos it's always there in the room with them.

*The BEAST roars with the smell of victory, getting closer.*

ALICE: What are you going to do?! It's coming closer.

HENRY: Let it come. I'm not afraid anymore.

*He seems terribly tired, becoming limper as ALICE becomes more animated.*

ALICE: But you can't just give up! You're still young... you've got everything.

HENRY: I have you, that's all that counts. I won't leave you again.

ALICE: *[quietly]* I'll come with you.

HENRY: What did you say?

ALICE: I said I'll come with you.

HENRY: *[overjoyed]* Really!? Really?

*A couple of other PEOPLE in the ward start waking up. HENRY doesn't care. He kisses ALICE on the lips, hard. She responds.*

*Cut to:*

### **35. Exterior. Nursing home. Night.**

*HENRY is helping ALICE through the open window. He lifts the frail old woman easily. They are grinning like eloping young lovers. We can no longer hear the BEAST.*

*ALICE, wrapped in a blanket, sits across HENRY's handlebars. Back in the nursing home, lights are going on and PEOPLE are shouting.*

*Balancing with difficulty at first, ALICE and HENRY pedal off down the dark street.*

*Cut to:*

### **36. Exterior. Doobiong main road. Night.**

*Towering huge and ghostly above the town, the MONSTER dog is turning its head one way and then the other, confused, as though it has lost the scent. It howls with frustration.*

*HENRY and ALICE join the main road out of town. Fast cars zip past them. They grin happily at each other. The BEAST's sounds fade behind them.*

*Suddenly a truck comes very close to the bike, horn blaring. The wind knocks the bike sideways. HENRY and ALICE lose their balance, and crash.*

*The MONSTER lifts up its head, sniffing the air. It begins to lope towards them. HENRY and ALICE are terrified.*

*Quickly, they get back on to the bike. HENRY begins to pedal. The BEAST is almost on top of them, deafening them with its noise.*

*ALICE reaches into her dressing gown pocket and pulls out the ball bearing. Hold on it in CU for a moment. With all her strength, she throws it into the air.*

*The ball bearing flies through the window of a truck and bounces into an ash tray. In big CU, the DRIVER stubs out his cigarette next to it.*

HENRY: Hold on!

*Suddenly he turns sharply to the left, down a quiet dirt road. The BEAST falls for the trick, running after the truck in slo-mo like a dog after a stick.*

*Cut to:*

### **37. Exterior. Dirt road. Night.**

*The road is brightly moonlit and quiet. HENRY and ALICE leave the noise of the road and the BEAST behind them.*

*ALICE already looks younger.*

*Precariously, they kiss once more as HENRY pedals along.*

*Fade out. Credits to end.*

*David Lowe, December 1992*