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LOST IN ACTION

First draft of a short single camera drama

by

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(i)

When old Charlie Rogan comes back from the dead, not everyone is pleased to see him. His home town Willa Willa doesn't look the same. People are acting strangely. Was this the way of life that Charlie fought to preserve?

SPEAKING CHARACTERS

CHARLIE ROGAN	75 years old. A World War 2 veteran.
NORMAN ROGAN	55 years old. Son of Charlie, and the Mayor of Willa Willa.
DAVE PEARCE	44 years old. Police Sergeant of Willa Willa.
WILMA PEARCE	41 years old. His wife.
LESTER	60 years old. Runs Willa Willa post office.
THEO	25 years old. One of Norman Rogan's underlings.
FELIX BELL	76 years old. A World War 2 veteran.
RECEPTIONIST	35 years old. Works at Golden Valley Nursing Home.
BARMAN	28 years old. Works at Willa Willa pub.

1.

1. EXT. WHEATFIELDS OUTSIDE WILLA WILLA. PRE-DAWN. 1

The scarecrow-like figure of CHARLIE ROGAN walks through gently swaying wheat fields towards the town of Willa Willa. In the pre-dawn light, wearing his battered hat and ragged suit, he is like a ghost from another age.

2. INT. BEDROOM. PRE-DAWN. 2

A telephone is ringing beside the bed of SERGEANT DAVE PEARCE and his wife WILMA. They are both asleep. After the phone rings several times WILMA answers it (although it's on DAVE's side of the bed).

WILMA

Hello?

VOICE (ON PHONE)

Wilma? Lester here. Get Dave on the line will you. It's an emergency.

WILMA prods DAVE in the ribs.

WILMA

It's for you.

DAVE continues snoring.

WILMA (CONT)

I said it's for you, you noisy bastard!

DAVE wakes up enough to take the phone.

DAVE

Hmmph?

VOICE (ON PHONE)

Listen Dave. You've got to get down here right away. There's some lunatic attacking the War Memorial with a chisel!

DAVE

What?

VOICE (ON PHONE)

Come to the front of the station and see for yourself if you don't believe me.

DAVE

All right, all right. I'm on my way.

2.

3. EXT. WILLA WILLA POLICE STATION. DAWN.

3

DAVE opens the screen door of the small brick police station still doing up the last button of his uniform. There is no one else about on the main street of the little country town. Off-screen, there is the sound of a chisel on marble.

DAVE looks at the police car parked nearby, and then decides against it. He heads up the street towards the source of the noise, walking at first, and then jogging.

4. EXT. WILLA WILLA WAR MEMORIAL. DAWN.

4

CHARLIE ROGAN methodically chips away at the War Memorial with a hammer and chisel. He is removing a name from the World War Two Honour Roll in the Lost in Action section. It is his own name, that of Private Charles Rogan, aged 21.

LESTER watches nervously from a window next to the Post Office, across the street from the Memorial.

Panting for breath, DAVE comes running up the street. He grabs CHARLIE by the collar, spinning him round to face him.

DAVE

What the hell do you think you're doing, mister?

CHARLIE

Just fixing up a bit of a mistake, officer. I'm not dead see.

DAVE

Been on the piss have you?

CHARLIE

No you don't understand. (POINTS TO WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS NAME). Charlie Rogan. That's me.

DAVE grabs CHARLIE's hammer and chisel.

DAVE

Come on. Let's have you in the tank 'til you sober up.

DAVE starts leading CHARLIE away.

3.

DAVE (CONT)

Bloody geriatric vandals now. What's the world coming to?

5. INT. CELL INSIDE POLICE STATION. EARLY MORNING.

5

DAVE roughly shoves CHARLIE into the cell.

CHARLIE

Where's old Sergeant Margetson then?

DAVE

Billy bloody Margetson? Fell under his combine harvester twenty years ago. Everyone in town knows that. Now I don't want to hear another peep out of you until I've had my beauty sleep. Got that? If you behave yourself the missus'll bring you something to eat later on.

DAVE locks the cell.

6. INT. CELL. MORNING.

6

CHARLIE sits in the corner. He watches through a small barred window as the sun creeps higher.

Suddenly his reverie is broken by the arrival of WILMA, in her dressing gown, carrying a tray of food.

WILMA

Dave said you might want something to eat, Mister...

CHARLIE

Rogan, Charlie Rogan. Thank you. I haven't had a decent meal for days.

WILMA passes the food through to CHARLIE, who begins eating.

WILMA

So what did you do to get locked up then Mr Rogan? Dave didn't say.

CHARLIE

A simple misunderstanding, madam, nothing more.

WILMA

Oh. I see.

4.

CHARLIE

Your husband doesn't believe anything I say. I've been away, you see. I need your help to prove my identity.

WILMA

My help?

CHARLIE

I had... have, a son. Norman Rogan. Perhaps he still lives here.

WILMA (VERY SURPRISED)

You don't mean Mayor Rogan, do you?

CHARLIE

I don't know. It's been a long time.

7. INT. LIVING ROOM. MORNING.

7

WILMA is on the phone. Her husband is snoring from the next room. WILMA is anxious not to wake him.

WILMA

... I know it's Sunday morning, Polly, and it's probably nothing, but he's such a nice old man. Perhaps Norman could just drop by the station on his way to the meeting? Just to make sure.

8. EXT. POLICE STATION. MORNING.

8

A well-fed 55 year old man, Mayor NORMAN ROGAN, steps out of a large, expensive car and walks up to the door of the police station. Before he can ring the bell, WILMA has already opened it. She looks over her shoulder anxiously.

WILMA

Norman. So good of you to come.

9. INT. POLICE STATION. MORNING.

9

WILMA ushers NORMAN towards the cell. NORMAN is eating scones.

NORMAN

What's this all about, Wilma? You know I'll always stop by for one of your scones, but I've got an important meeting this morning.

5.

WILMA

It won't take a minute. Honestly.

They have reached the cell. CHARLIE stands up.

WILMA (CONT)

It's probably crazy, but this old man says
he's your father.

NORMAN looks coldly at CHARLIE.

NORMAN

Everyone knows my father's dead. Died in
the war.

CHARLIE

Norman? Is it you?

NORMAN ignores him. He turns on WILMA.

NORMAN

I can't believe you got me down here to
have some crazy old drunk waste my time.
Does Dave know about this?

Suddenly DAVE appears, tucking in his shirt.

DAVE

Mayor Rogan! What a pleasant surprise.

NORMAN

Is this your idea of a joke, Dave?

DAVE

What do you mean? What's Wilma been telling
you?

WILMA (CLOSE TO TEARS)

I just wanted to make sure, that's all.

CHARLIE

I can prove it, you know.

Everyone turns to look at him.

CHARLIE (CONT)

If you are my son Norman, then you've got a
birthmark that looks like a walnut on your
left buttock.

NORMAN (TO DAVE AND WILMA)

Can you leave us alone for a moment?

6.

DAVE and WILMA leave the room, shocked.

NORMAN (CONT)

How did you know about that?

CHARLIE

Your mother, Eleanor, showed it to me when you were born. It was one day before they shipped us out. September the 20th, 1940.

NORMAN goes in close to the bars, studying the old man's face.

NORMAN (STILL SUSPICIOUS)

They told me you were dead.

CHARLIE

Not dead. Lost. I forgot who I was and where I was from. When I remembered I came home. How's Eleanor?

NORMAN

Eleanor?

CHARLIE

Your mother.

NORMAN

Oh yes. Of course. Mum's still alive, I think. I haven't seen her for a while. She got married again you know. Then he died as well. She's in a nursing home now. Golden Valley, out past the drive-in.

CHARLIE

Drive in where?

NORMAN

Movies. You know, films. Well not any more. In fact that's one of the sites they're considering for the new waste incinerator. Oh Christ! I almost forgot. Dave?

DAVE appears.

DAVE

Everything okay Norman?

NORMAN

Let him out.

DAVE

But what about-

7.

NORMAN

I'll ring the council and get them to send a car with a driver. (TO CHARLIE). Have a look round. Go wherever you want. I'll see you for lunch. Here's some money. Buy yourself some decent clothes.

NORMAN is on his way to the door. DAVE tries to stop him.

NORMAN (CONT)

No time to talk now. I've got a meeting with Mitsui Waste.

10. EXT. POLICE STATION. MORNING.

10

A big Willa Willa Council car is waiting outside the police station. Traffic is building up in the streets.

DAVE

You can have your hammer and chisel back when you pay for the damage to the Memorial.

DAVE slams the screen door in CHARLIE's face.

A young driver, THEO, jumps out of the council car and opens the back door for CHARLIE.

THEO

Mr Rogan? Step right in and I'll show you the sights of Willa Willa.

11. INT/EXT. COUNCIL CAR. MORNING.

11

THEO is giving CHARLIE a running commentary as they drive along. There is lots of traffic.

CHARLIE

So many cars!

THEO

And there's the Harold Smees swimming pool complex. No one swimming at the moment, as you can see. Some problem with the chemicals. But that'll soon be sorted out.

CHARLIE looks out the window at a small patch of park with a large khaki cannon in it. Some ABORIGINES are sitting in the park.

8.

A white KID wearing American basketball gear is spraying "PEARL JAM RULES" on the side of the gun when he sees the car and runs off.

THEO (CONT)

Get out of it! Sorry sir. On our right, the Memorial Park.

CHARLIE

It's not as big as I remember it.

THEO

We trimmed off a bit at the sides a few years back. Halved the lawnmowing expenses. And on our left you can see the Council Chambers. Good-looking bit of architecture don't you think so sir?

CHARLIE looks at an ugly modern-looking three storey building with an Australian flag flying outside. "Willa Willa Municipal Council", says the sign.

CHARLIE

It seems very big.

THEO

Biggest local council building in the state! That's Mayor Rogan's office at the top there.

CHARLIE does not share the DRIVER's enthusiasm.

THEO

It's Sunday isn't it, young man?

THEO

That's right sir.

CHARLIE

Well would it be possible for you to take me to church?

THEO

No problem at all sir. Which church did you have in mind?

CHARLIE

St Anthony's please. That's where I got married.

THEO

I'm not sure I know that one, sir.

9.

CHARLIE

But you must know it.

THEO

Can't say I do.

CHARLIE

All right then. I'll direct you.

12. INT/EXT. CAR. MORNING.

12

CHARLIE

And left.

THEO follows CHARLIE's directions. Other DRIVERS honk and yell abuse as the council car changes lanes erratically.

CHARLIE (CONT)

And right just here. It's about halfway along the street.

13. INT/EXT. CAR. MORNING.

13

CHARLIE

I don't believe it.

The car comes to a stop outside an old church which has been converted into a video store called "Faithful Videos". Posters advertise the latest movies.

THEO

There is a new church nearby you might be interested in.

14. INT/EXT. CAR. MORNING.

14

The car stops outside an old cinema which has been converted into an evangelical Revival Centre.

CHARLIE

Oh no!

THEO

Something wrong sir?

CHARLIE

It's the old Astor Cinema! What have they done with it?

10.

THEO

"Willa Willa Council equals progress". That's what the Mayor says. "If it don't pay, it don't stay". Which reminds me. Time for your lunch appointment with the big man.

15. INT. CAFE. DAY.

15

CHARLIE is looking inside his foccacia sandwich doubtfully. THEO sits opposite him talking on a mobile phone. CHARLIE tastes his drink and grimaces. THEO folds up his phone.

THEO

That was the Mayor. He's been delayed. The negotiations are still continuing apparently.

CHARLIE

What exactly is Norman trying to negotiate?

THEO

Oh he's got plans. Big plans.

CHARLIE

What sort of plans?

THEO leans forward conspiratorially.

THEO

Mitsui Waste want to build a toxic waste dump and incinerator somewhere in Australia. A town in Queensland thought they had the contract sewn up, but they didn't count on old Mayor Rogan!

CHARLIE

You mean he actually wants it built here in Willa Willa?

THEO

Absolutely! Jobs. Overseas investment. Progress! You can make things out of the by-products too, you know. There's this plasticky sort of sludge for making toys and stuff. You can even make things like this.

THEO pulls out a little plastic Australian flag and waves it happily. CHARLIE is sickened by all this.

11.

CHARLIE

I'm afraid I don't feel hungry, young man.

THEO

Okay then. I'll get the bill.

THEO goes to the counter and pays. When he returns to the table CHARLIE has gone.

16. INT. SECOND HAND SHOP. DAY.

16

CHARLIE is blowing an old second-hand bugle.

CHARLIE

I'll take it.

The WOMAN behind the counter puts the bugle in a plastic bag. CHARLIE is paying when THEO bursts through the door.

THEO

That money was supposed to be for clothes Mr Rogan.

CHARLIE

I don't need any new clothes, young man. Anyway, I'm leaving.

THEO

You can't leave! The Mayor told me to look after you.

CHARLIE

All right then. I want to look up an old mate.

THEO looks at his watch.

17. INT/EXT. HIGHWAY OUTSIDE WILLA WILLA. AFTERNOON.

17

THEO and CHARLIE are driving out of town.

THEO

So who is he, then, this mate of yours?

CHARLIE

We fought together in Malaya. He had blackfella blood in him.

12.

CHARLIE (CONT)

Never stopped talking about how he couldn't wait to get back home to his God-forsaken rocky paddock. His name was Felix Bell.

The car tops the hill to reveal a huge sign: "BELL'S SPEEDWAY".

CHARLIE is astonished.

18. EXT. BELL'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

18

THEO stays in the car as CHARLIE knocks on the door of an old house. The sound of cars and motorcycles training on the speedway nearby is deafening. An old man, FELIX BELL, answers the door and motions CHARLIE in.

19. EXT. BELL'S LIVING ROOM. AFTERNOON.

19

CHARLIE and FELIX are having tea. They can only just hear each other above the noise of the speedway.

FELIX

... Brian died a few years back. His widow's still alive. I heard Rowan moved to the city. He might still be hanging on. So I guess there's a few of us left.

CHARLIE

But what's all this, Felix? Selling off the farm to make a racing track? I never thought you could do such a mad fool thing.

FELIX

Oh that happened years ago. I had a string of bad seasons, and the opportunity was there, so I took it. Hardly even notice the noise myself now, though I reckon that's what killed the missus.

A pause.

FELIX (CONT)

It pays the bills. And what about your young fella? Mayor and all eh. Who would have thought it?

CHARLIE

If you ask me, Felix, the boy's a bastard in more ways than one.

13.

CHARLIE sees THEO at the window, tapping at his watch anxiously. He drains his cup.

CHARLIE (CONT)

Nice to find a decent cup of tea, Felix.

20. INT/EXT. HIGHWAY. AFTERNOON.

20

THEO is driving back into town, fast. Suddenly CHARLIE sees the Golden Valley Nursing Home approaching on the left.

CHARLIE

Steady on young fella. Let me off here for a minute.

THEO

We've got to get back Mr Rogan. The Mayor's expecting you.

CHARLIE

He's been waiting fifty years, son, I expect he can wait a little longer. Stop here. I want to see my wife.

21. EXT. GOLDEN VALLEY NURSING HOME. AFTERNOON.

21

THEO stays in the car as CHARLIE gets out.

THEO

Ten minutes. Okay?

CHARLIE nods.

22. INT. GOLDEN VALLEY NURSING HOME. AFTERNOON.

22

CHARLIE

I would like to see one of your patients, please. Her name is Eleanor.

RECEPTIONIST

Surname?

CHARLIE

It used to be Rogan. I understand it's changed now.

14.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh yes. That would be Eleanor Sorenson.
I'll see if she's available.

CHARLIE sits and waits. He picks up a magazine called "Twilight Life" and flicks through it before putting it down in disgust. The RECEPTIONIST returns.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry sir, but Mrs Sorenson says she can't see you at the moment.

CHARLIE

Did she say why?

RECEPTIONIST

She's watching television.

CHARLIE

Perhaps you could tell her that Charlie Rogan is here to see her.

The RECEPTIONIST withdraws, and then returns.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry sir, but she said she doesn't care if you're Charlie Chaplin, she still won't see you. She said to come back after "Baywatch".

CHARLIE

But I'm her husband for God's sake! Used to be anyway.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry sir. You'll just have to wait.

CHARLIE goes to leave. He sees THEO waiting out the front and leaves via a side entrance.

23. EXT. WASTELAND. LATE AFTERNOON.

23

CHARLIE tramps across the fields playing something mournful on his bugle.

24. INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS. AFTERNOON.

24

NORMAN is entertaining two JAPANESE GENTLEMEN. Trying to hide his anxiety from his guests, he speaks on the telephone to THEO.

15.

NORMAN

I thought I told you to keep an eye on him?

THEO (ON PHONE)

He just vanished, sir. There was nothing I could do.

NORMAN

Yeah, well just make sure you find the old man before he pops up again. Whether he's my father or not, we can't afford to have him rolling around town like a loose cannon.

25. INT. PUB. LATE AFTERNOON.

25

CHARLIE sits down at a stool in the pub. It is full of young STRANGERS. He sees a poster on the wall of an Anzac bloke sitting in a trench drinking a brand of beer called "Lite Brigade". The BARMAN approaches.

BARMAN

Yes sir?

CHARLIE (POINTS AT THE POSTER)

One of those please.

26. INT. PUB. NIGHT.

26

CHARLIE has ten empty bottles of Lite Brigade in front of him. He motions the BARMAN over.

CHARLIE

There's something wrong with your beer.

BARMAN

What was that, mate?

CHARLIE

I said there's something wrong with your beer.

BARMAN

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

No matter how much of this stuff I drink, I can't get drunk.

16.

BARMAN

This is a light beer, sir.

CHARLIE

Sorry?

BARMAN

It's not supposed to get you drunk. That's the point.

CHARLIE looks at the BARMAN like he's out of his mind.

BARMAN (CONT)

Look, would you mind moving over there? It's just that we're about to set up the sumo ring, and you're going to be in the way.

CHARLIE gets out of the way as a couple of people dressed in blow-up sumo wrestler suits set up a brightly coloured wrestling ring in the middle of the pub.

No one else in the pub seems to regard this as being the least bit odd. CHARLIE finds this very disturbing. He pays for his drinks and leaves.

27. EXT. MEMORIAL PARK. NIGHT.

27

CHARLIE is sitting on the old cannon in the park. He takes out his bugle and stands up. A couple of ABORIGINES are watching him from under a tree.

With an air of ceremony, CHARLIE begins playing "The Last Post". A couple of DRUNKS, propping each other up as they walk up the street, begin to clap. The ABORIGINES look at CHARLIE like he's mad.

Lights start going on outside shops and houses. PEOPLE begin spilling out towards the park.

In his third floor Mayor's office, NORMAN hears the sound of the bugle. Suddenly his phone rings again. NORMAN excuses himself from his two Japanese GUESTS, and makes his way over to the phone, from where he can plainly see CHARLIE down in the park below.

NORMAN

Theo?

17.

THEO (ON PHONE)

I'm looking, I'm looking. He isn't anywhere!

NORMAN

Never mind that, Theo. He's here! The old bugger's down in the park.

NORMAN's Japanese GUESTS have also heard the sound of the bugle. They have stood up and are looking out the window curiously.

28. EXT. PARK. NIGHT.

28

A crowd of curious spectators have gathered to watch CHARLIE play. Looking straight ahead, he continues with "The Last Post".

DAVE the policeman is approaching him from one side. THEO pulls up in his car and approaches from the other side. Like men hunting a rare and flighty animal, they come closer and closer, arms outstretched.

29. INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS. NIGHT.

29

NORMAN's Japanese GUESTS are making their way down the stairs to see what's going on, despite NORMAN's protestations.

NORMAN

There's nothing to see. Really. Nothing at all.

NORMAN trails them down the stairs helplessly.

30. EXT. PARK. NIGHT.

30

CHARLIE continues playing "The Last Post". He stands very still and erect. The Japanese MEN and NORMAN emerge from the building across the street. All the other bystanders, apart from DAVE and THEO, are standing very still.

CHARLIE approaches the end of the tune. Long, mournful notes are played loud and true. DAVE and THEO are almost there, when CHARLIE finishes playing.

The two men dive on CHARLIE. Suddenly there is a huge bang. The cannon rocks back on its wheels and is enveloped in thick smoke. PEOPLE scream and run for cover.

When the smoke has cleared, DAVE and THEO are surprised to find that they are holding each other. CHARLIE has disappeared. Across the street, the top floor of the council building has been demolished by the blast from the cannon.

A fire engine is heard in the distance. NORMAN picks himself up to find the Japanese MEN staring balefully at him with blackened faces. Wordlessly, one of them pulls a contract from his pocket and tears it to shreds.

31. EXT. WHEATFIELDS OUTSIDE WILLA WILLA. NIGHT.

31

CHARLIE walks away from the town. Behind him is a distant hubbub of voices and sirens. The wheat fields sway gently in the night breeze.