

CYCLONE SANTA

Written by  
Robyn Opie Parnell  
and  
Rob Parnell

Registered with  
US Copyright Office: 1-5AKNJF  
Writers' Guild of America: 1411591

R & R Books Film Music  
PO Box 485  
Morphett Vale SA 5162  
Australia  
Phone/Fax: +61 8 8186 5634  
Email: [robyn@robynopie.com](mailto:robyn@robynopie.com)

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - DAY

Kangaroos bounce across the dusty red desert.

A distant sound of an engine SPLUTTERS as a yellow 1939 Tiger Moth comes into view.

Three dusty CAMEL DRIVERS shield their eyes from the hot sun as they watch the noisy plane fly overhead.

EXT. TIGER MOTH IN FLIGHT - DAY

The front of the Tiger Moth hosts a P.M.G. (Postmaster General's Department) logo.

The open cockpit has taken its toll on BEN AYERS, 30's. A fake white beard flies from around his neck like the silk scarf of a WWI fighter pilot.

Ben's white-knuckle grip and the IRREGULAR SOUNDS of the engine indicate the biplane is in trouble. He frowns, leans over and looks to the ground.

EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY

Ten scantily clothed ABORIGINAL CHILDREN search the sky and watch the biplane head for a makeshift landing strip. They run barefoot to the landing strip.

EXT. DARWIN BEACH - DAY

A beach -- THREE WISE MEN, with camels, walk across the sand to MARY, JOSEPH and BABY JESUS in a manger. It appears that we have traveled back over 2000 years, until:

Legend: Darwin, Christmas Eve, 1974

PEOPLE mill around to enjoy the Christmas festival with fake snow everywhere. A few children enjoy ice cream cones as parents fan themselves to stay cool.

Some children queue to see Santa. MIKEY MITCHELL, 6, sits on Santa's lap and talks animatedly. Mikey's father, JOE, an electrician, 30's, takes a photo of Mikey with Santa.

Other children line up to ride camels. Mikey's sister, AMY, 11, stands nearby and holds her little dog SCRUFFY. She smiles and waves to their mother and nurse, TONI, 30's, who sits on a camel's back. Toni makes a funny face at Amy.

Joe turns the camera to Toni to take a photo. Mikey rushes over and tries to get on the camel too. The camel turns to him and shows its teeth. Mikey looks up at it, wide-eyed, as the camel spits at him.

EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY

The Aboriginal children are taken aback, concerned. They watch the biplane buck and shudder as the wheels touch down. BANG! The engine blows. Silence.

Ben is steady as he lands, roughly. The children smile as he steps out of the plane, wearing a summer Santa top with a P.M.G. badge pinned to his chest. A Santa hat pokes out from a pocket of his red shorts.

Ben tugs off his flying cap and goggles to reveal an intense expression. The children, excitement unbridled, run to him.

CHILDREN

Santa! Santa!

The children swarm around Ben. They rip the Santa hat from his pocket as they tug at him.

BEN

Whoa there, I ain't no Santa Claus.

He snatches his hat back. The children LAUGH.

CHILDREN

Santa! Santa!

Ben tries to untangle himself from the children, without much luck. He lurches toward them. They jump back.

BEN

Get out of here. Shoo! Scram!

The children SQUEAL in delight.

CHILDREN

(mocking)

Shoo! Scram! Ha ha ha!

Ben reaches into the front of his plane and pulls out a red mail sack. The children surround him as he slings the sack over his shoulder.

CHILDREN (CONT'D)

Presents! Presents! Presents!

The excited children reach for the sack and try to take it.

BEN

Cut that out. You can get ten years  
for pinching mail.

The children grab the sack and rip it from Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)

Stop that!

The sack drops on the ground.

BEN (CONT'D)

There ain't no presents. Careful!  
Watch it!

The kids reach in, grab and pull at the mail, which scatters  
around. Ben tries to stop them. He steps back and  
accidentally crushes a small package.

BEN (CONT'D)

Crap!

The children run away.

BOY

Grumpy old fella.

Ben, appearing affronted by the comment, shouts back.

BEN

Hey, who you calling old?

He MUTTERS under his breath, then bends over to pick up the  
package. A clear liquid seeps from inside, over the wrapping,  
label, and through his fingers.

He returns the package to the sack and wipes his hands on his  
shorts. He looks up and notices an Aboriginal boy, JAM, 12,  
sitting on the ground some distance away, reading a book.  
Behind him, the other children play in the sunshine.

Above them, the sun burns hot and bright.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The sun glints and reflects off a mirror belonging to a  
motorbike. The rider, ERIC AYERS, 60's, travels along a road  
that snakes between rainforest on one side, coast on the  
other.

EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

Cotton balls are scattered on the ground and the windows are frosted.

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

The shop owner, LES, 60's, smirks as he steps back from the window.

Ben enters and approaches the counter. He drops the sack on top of a small pile of newspapers. He doesn't notice the headline: "Cyclone Tracy No Major Threat".

LES

They're excited, that's all.

BEN

Lot of fuss about nothing.

LES

Bet you were the same when you were a kid.

BEN

Nope. Had more sense.

EXT. MITCHELL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A street of fibro or weather board clad houses with galvanized iron roofs. Each house is built on steel stilts with stairs leading to front and back porches.

EXT. MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY

Amy, with Scruffy in her arms, walks behind a plastic Santa in his sleigh and an inflatable snowman on the front lawn. The plastic Santa smiles.

Amy continues around the side of the house. A chainsaw BUZZES. Joe trims a tree branch that is too close to a window.

Amy moves on to the backyard. Mikey looks up from playing with a selection of toys as water from a sprinkler shoots into the air. Light catches the water and creates a rainbow -- through which is Toni at the tap.

TONI

There she blows, Mikey.

Mikey jumps up. Toni and Mikey wave their arms and pretend to erupt like human geysers. Amy watches, smiles at them.

Inside the house, a telephone RINGS.

AMY

I'll get it.

She places Scruffy on the ground and runs toward the back door.

MIKEY

Me, I'll do it.

He picks up a kid's phone from the selection of toys.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

Ben stands at a public telephone, holding the receiver. Next to the phone is a hand written note: "Toni 08 8555 6138".

INT. MITCHELL HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

A 1960's kitchen, comfortable and lived in. Above the sink is a row of louver windows. A wall-mounted telephone RINGS. Amy hurries to the phone and grabs the receiver.

AMY

Hello?

No answer.

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

Ben leans against the pay phone and closes his eyes.

EXT. MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG AMY, 5, tinsel draped around her neck, runs after Ben. She is visibly upset.

YOUNG AMY

Don't go. Uncle Ben. Please.

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY - PRESENT

Ben hangs up the phone.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY LOOKOUT - DAY

Eric stands next to his motorbike, helmet under one arm. He drinks water from a container and looks out over the ocean.

The sun disappears behind clouds. Wind ruffles Eric's hair. Waves break against rocks, ocean spray rises in the air.

EXT. MITCHELL HOUSE - DAY

Mikey runs into the spray from the sprinkler. He slips on the wet grass, falls and CRIES out.

Startled, Joe cuts a finger on a sharp twig as he drops a tree branch into a bin. He turns to see Toni hurry to Mikey.

TONI

Oh baby, are you okay?

Mikey WHIMPERS as Toni gathers him into her arms.

TONI (CONT'D)

Where does it hurt?

Mikey points to his elbow.

TONI (CONT'D)

There?

Mikey nods.

TONI (CONT'D)

Mommy will kiss it better.

Joe cradles his cut finger as he approaches Toni and Mikey.

JOE

Everything alright?

Mikey smiles.

MIKEY

Mommy fixed it.

JOE

Can Mommy fix this?

Joe holds out a bleeding finger. Toni eyes it, unsympathetic.

TONI

Do it yourself. That's how you like to do things, isn't it?

Joe SIGHS. Mikey scrambles out of Toni's arms. There's no evidence of his injury as he plays on the lawn. They see Amy, who walks slowly toward them.

JOE  
Who's on the phone?

AMY  
They hung up. When's Grandpa getting here?

TONI  
The answer hasn't changed since the last time you asked.

AMY  
And Uncle Ben?

Joe raises his eyebrows.

AMY (CONT'D)  
He might come this year.

JOE  
(teasing)  
Yeah, he'll catch a lift with Santa on his sleigh.

Mikey jumps up and down.

MIKEY  
I wanna fly in Santa's sleigh.

Joe grimaces at the air, then smiles at Mikey.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Eric rides his motorbike around a bend in the highway. He sees a car, surfboards on the roof rack, straddle the lane and veer into his path.

He swerves to miss the car and skids across the road, off the bitumen, toward a guard rail.

O/S there's the sound of a CRASH. Then the sight of the mangled bike with a wheel spinning.

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

Les and Jam stand on opposite sides of the counter. Les holds the damaged package. The sight of it causes them concern.



EXT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY - DAY

Ben, wrench in hand, works on the biplane's engine.

BEN  
Come on, you bludger. We gotta get  
going...

He notices Aboriginal children as they walk by with a dog.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Gotta get back to the North Pole.

He LAUGHS, drops the wrench into a toolbox and picks up a rag to wipe his hands. The radio CRACKLES to life.

BOSS (O.S.)  
M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-niner.  
Come in M-Mike-a-Yankee-zero-five-  
niner. Over.

Ben hurls the rag at the toolbox.

EXT. DARWIN HOSPITAL - DAY

A modest two-story white-washed building with an old corrugated iron roof. The original hospital is being renovated and extended. There are many temporary prefabricated wards.

INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL/CORRIDOR - GROUND FLOOR - DAY

Doors fly open. A gurney rolls in, wheeled by HOSPITAL STAFF. DOCTOR ROB, 50's, tends to Eric, who MUMBLES in pain.

INT. OUTBACK ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SHOP - DAY

Jam and Les look at a glucose strip that reveals Jam's blood sugar level.

LES  
Too high.

Les holds up a syringe half full of insulin. The damaged package, open to reveal broken bottles, sits on the counter.

LES (CONT'D)  
That's it, all I can save.

They both know it's not nearly enough.

INT. DARWIN HOSPITAL/CORRIDOR - GROUND FLOOR - DAY

Eric's gurney continues to roll along the corridor. PEG, 50's, Senior Nurse, arrives to assist Doctor Rob.

DOCTOR ROB

(to Peg)

Eric Ayers. Motorbike accident.

Peg grabs Eric's paperwork and looks at it.

PEG

Oh, heavens--

ERIC

(cuts in, with pain)

I ain't ready for the Pearly Gates, sister.

PEG

--you're Toni's father.

INT. MITCHELL HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Toni sits at the table. She's dressed in a nurse's uniform, a name badge "Toni", decorated with tinsel, pinned to her chest. Joe leans against a bench. They are in mid-argument. The atmosphere is as frosty as the snowman.

JOE

I told you about the over-charging.  
How they're skimming--

TONI

Who cares! Everyone does it.

JOE

What was I supposed to do? Turn a  
blind eye?

TONI

Yes! There's corruption everywhere.

JOE

And why is that? Because everyone  
keeps turning a blind eye.

TONI

Because they don't want to lose  
their jobs. You were sacked, Joe.  
The corruption continues.

(MORE)

TONI (CONT'D)  
You changed nothing with your  
selfish ideals, except now we can't  
pay our bills.

Joe turns, hands on the bench, and looks out the louver  
windows to Amy and Mikey at play in the back yard.

JOE  
I wasn't being selfish.

Toni looks incredulous.

TONI  
Really? You got sacked for us, is  
that it?

Joe SIGHS.

TONI (CONT'D)  
And what about the new roof? We  
couldn't afford it when we were  
both working.  
(beat)  
This is some Christmas present.

She grabs her handbag from the kitchen table and storms  
across the room. Joe turns to face her retreating figure.

JOE  
Where are you going? I thought you  
wanted to talk about this.

TONI  
I'm going to work. Someone has to.

The door SLAMS as Toni leaves. Joe THUMPS his fist on the  
bench.

INT. TIGER MOTH COCKPIT - DAY

Ben wears his flying cap and goggles. He flicks several  
switches and pushes the throttle.

The engine FIRES UP, then PURRS a healthy rhythm. He looks  
around to scan his surroundings.