

Review by David Nerlich

My thoughts after a quick read:

This draft is simpler and easier to read and understand but I miss some things from the previous draft.

Teicher seems very diminished. In the last draft he had a definite character and role to play in opposition to and dicey alliance with Dowd and the whole thing with the personal air supply made him eerie, mysterious, eccentric and powerful, easily the most, possibly the only intriguing, larger than life character. He seems to now be just one of the crowd who can dispense some science when required.

Some specifics.

p5 - A choice has been made to introduce the storm in a way that it's confused with China invading Taiwan and some possible act of war upon Sydney.

p9 - This confusion is quickly disposed of with the appearance of a definitely supernatural being (phones etc prior to this were only mysterious/ambiguous) so the possibility that this is some Chinese bio-war invasion is short lived. If there's an intent to keep this unclear for some reason I'd maybe lose the first constellation-alien and just go with the zombie-ish nurse in that scene - ie leave us in the dark a bit longer. I'm not clear why the whole China thing is there at all though. It doesn't continue into the story once the storm arrives unless I've missed something. Except there was a Chinese mine - but I don't know why there was a Chinese mine.

Clarity on interactions - What are Symes and her constellation companion doing while Dowd approaches and touches it? Apparently just standing there. I guess that's okay. They're both "freshly hatched". Slow moving.

sc 5 p14 - shoe lodge odd - a crowbar is the solution? And yeah just untie the shoe!

"You've got to be shitting me!" - This is the right line but it struck me as too much a cliché line

sc22 p18 vaporising storm eye. That's new. Yeah why did only they survive? They ask that themselves so maybe there's a point to that yet to be revealed.

sc26 A blackened figure, Freisler, what??? I guess the blackened figure is Freisler. Where is she?

I'm confused by the action outside the bunker. What happened to Frank - as Teicher asks "what's wrong with him?"

sc27 This football talk seems out of place. Is it just a warm up to the reveal Amiri wants to be a Clearance diver? **Brick shithouse is familiar value-laden critique of a female physique. You mean it a bit differently here but I think its nevertheless going to offend. A character who's supposed to be likeable shouldn't say it.**

That's all I have for now!

Response to Author's Qs

These are reference points. You can answer, any or all of the Qs.

1. Does the reader get a clear visual picture of what is going on in the script from the action descriptions? If there are grey areas, let me know. Ref the page and scene number.

Mostly. I mention some lack of clarity with action outside the bunker in previous email.

2. **The inciting incident of the Chinese flashpoint which features in Teaser Act is not right.**

The Chinese would never be so blatant.

I am looking to design a flashpoint between China and the US.

My theory is that it will be based on a provocative act taken by the US President that embarrasses the Chinese Premier, forcing his hand and leading to a flashpoint or some act of revenge.

This is more about the Chinese Premier showing his own people; he is not weak, rather than addressing the US President's challenge.

Can you think of something the US President might do or an act that might provoke the Chinese to act in a reckless or decisive way that leads to war?

It must culminate in the Chinese taking a stand, perhaps moving on a piece of land under the banner of unification and as a pre-emptive they lay mines in US base and Australian Navy base harbours.

You should have a look at the first ep of future-fiction "Years and Years" currently on SBS catchup. Trump nukes one of Chinas artificial islands.

The mines bring our lead character into play.

3. I have made the Commodore a woman. I believe that choice completely changed the dynamic of the work and the adversarial

relationship between Dowd and Freisler. Did you have that experience of character? Do you have any comment re Commodore Kathryn Freisler?
Works fine. I didn't realise the change at first but on screen it'll make it more interesting.

4. The transition between the Teaser Act and Act One features Dowd descending (into the deep) then a sharp contrast of him rising, after being shock-woken. Does the abrupt reversal/ cut work for you the reader?

That's fine

5. I coped some criticism re Scenes 8 and 9 when Dowd calls out for help. It was seen as weak. What do you think of this? Dowd has just shock-woken in a recompression chamber and had that recompression interrupted. He is in a pretty bad way. Do you feel it makes him appear weak to call out for help?

No that's fine. Just common sense. A hero that doesn't go hero until they have to is better.

6. Scene 11 – First contact with the alien life form. Does this scene engage you? Can you see it as have a strong visual impact?

As mentioned last email, what is it doing when Dowd approaches? I thought it may be too soon to see one.

7. Scene 14, Dowd states his clear objective. 'It took our people. I'm getting them back.' Are you the reader, sold on that as a valid objective for this character and story?

A fine motivation but It didn't stay with me after that. It all just feels like emergency and survival and working out what's happening.

8. Act Two introduces Able Seaman Che Amiri. This character begins an arc in the pilot, on the way to joining Dowd as a Navy Clearance Diver. What do you think of this character? Are you engaged by her? I am particularly keen to hear female readers POV on this character.

She's working.

9. The work is laden with action scenes. Front to back. I'll be frank, readers didn't like my character work, so I sought to sex up the work with more action. Did you find this a more enjoyable read than Draft Two?

Pros and cons. Teicher was the best character for me, Now he's no one special. Easier to read but not sure its overall better or more enjoyable. It's hard to know when what's happening is to find meaning in later episodes.

10. Scene 25 The infamous bunker scene. Loved and equally hated. I have simplified it, but it still employs the same structure. This is a juggling performance syncopated by the hammering of the shoe on the door. Read it and let me know if you get it or if you still hate it.

Simpler is better

11. Scene 32 we reference Dowd's indigenous heritage. Dowd is Wiradjuri, from the West of NSW. There is an exchange between Dowd and Hunt. They are permanently, playfully aggressive with one another. Hunt makes fun of his mob and references Dowd's handle in the team, Wudji. Dowd points out that, his mob is Wiradjuri and pays it off to Hunt by calling him an 'ignorant white bastard.' There is no hate between these two. It's just play, but I am very concerned that given the level of political correctness that dominates current thinking, that people will not be able to relax and enjoy that exchange. Question; upon reading it, are you uncomfortable with the exchange between the men?

Not a problem. Maybe the choice of words will read harsh as the first example we see. Maybe Dowd could have a counter name that he calls Hunt. Gubba-something.

12. Scene 38, the last, we reintroduce characters that featured in Draft Two, Heidi, Sammy and Rebecca Kaye. In Draft Two, introducing those three characters confused a lot of readers. They stated that, it was just too many characters to cope with. My objective is to set them up for the first ep after the Pilot. Question; Did it confuse you or take away from the ending? What was your experience?

By that's stage it's a relief to see some new faces