

Radio Silence

Final Draft

Ben Warburton

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

University of Salford  
fao David Hanson  
Orange Tower, MCK

[info@benwarbsmedia.co.uk](mailto:info@benwarbsmedia.co.uk)

Sydney. August 6th 1945. Office chatter. Telephones ringing.

A Social Worker is fiddling with the radio dials. Excerpts from different broadcasts:

1 - (Reporter): "Further bombings in the Northern Territories. Prime Minister Ben Chifley--"

2 - (Harold Truman): "a rain of ruin from the ai--"

3 - (Music): Ozzie Nelson: *Dream a Little Dream of Me*

4 - (Reporter 2): "Admiral Robertson has passed away in his Sydney home to--"

5 - (Music): Ella Fitzgerald: *The Starlit Hour*

Cut to Charita Gupta, at her desk. A mother (Ms Wilson, late 20's, but haggard from the war) and son (infant, starving) sit opposite her.

CHARITA

I'm afraid there's nothing I can do Miss Wilson. I understand your situation, but the regulation is half a pound of butter every fortnight per adult.

MS WILSON

But there must be something you can do!

CHARITA

I'm sorry. As I said, I understand but the rules are the rules.

The mother's face sours, she picks her son up and stands.

MS WILSON

Fucking darkie, you're all the same you lot. I hope Stanley's Lads come for you.

Charita opens her desk drawer, and casually slides an extra few coupons to the mother.

CHARITA

(winking)

Miss Wilson, please, there's no need for that.

Ms Wilson staggers, snatches the coupons, and storms out nonetheless.

Charita sighs deeply and goes back to her paperwork, when suddenly:

SOCIAL WORKER

Oh my God!

The Social Worker turns the radio up:

RADIO

It has been announced that the United States have bombed the city of Hiroshima at 10:15am today. Specifics are still unknown, but the blast is thought to have had drastic consequences...

The office comes to a standstill, people begin gathering around the radio.

The radio crackles, and Charita feels a sensation in her forehead. She's rubs the area absent-mindedly. As she turns to listen, her telephone rings. She picks up the receiver.

CHARITA

Department for Social Services, how can I help?

Silence, crackling.

CHARITA

Hello?

CUT TO:

2 INT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, KITCHEN, 1014

2

Stefan van de Ruud (30's, ex-P.O.W., stoic) is on the other line. His face is cut off by the camera.

VAN DE RUUD

Hello. I need assistance.

CHARITA

(over the phone)

Ok, can I get your name and situation?

CUT TO:

3 INT DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, PYRMONT, SYDNEY 1014 3

VAN DE RUUD  
(over the phone)  
Stefan van de Ruud, my leg is  
infected.

CHARITA  
You should go to Hospital for that,  
Mr. van de Ruud.

As she speaks, she scrawls the information down.

VAN DE RUUD  
(over the phone)  
I can't.

CHARITA  
Why not?

CUT TO:

4 INT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, KITCHEN, 1014 4

Pan down to van de Ruud's leg. Amputated.

VAN DE RUUD  
86 Saint Alban's Street. Come as soon  
as you can. I'll be waiting.

CUT TO:

5 INT DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, PYRMONT, SYDNEY 1014 5

The line distorts, and then goes dead. Dial tone. Charita returns the receiver. The radio crackles aside as the chatter of the office returns. Charita rubs her aching head, and turns to the crowd.

CHARITA  
There's a queue forming, you know(!)

SOCIAL WORKER  
Shut up, curry muncher. You deal with  
them!

Charita stands up, in both the senses.

CHARITA  
I can't. I'm on a home call.

And with that, she grabs her summer coat and pushes past the queue of starving mothers, aching elders, and wailing babies.

SMASH CUT TO:

6 EXT PYRMONT, SYDNEY, 1025

6

Charita walks through working-class Pyrmont, the suburb (and city) is at a complete standstill, Wentworth Park now more deserted than ever. A mother is clutching one of her two daughters to her, the other playing in the street.

MOTHER #1

If the Japs come for us, I'll kill my girls myself before I let them get their dirty hands on them. I tell you...

DAUGHTER #1

Mum! Mum! Are you watching?

Mum, lighting a cigarette and paying no mind to her daughter, replies:

MOTHER #1

Yes sweetheart, you look great(!)

DAUGHTER #1

Look what I can do!

The daughter tried to do a handstand, and gloriously fails. She lands on her knees, grazing them. She begins to well up.

Charita runs over to the daughter.

CHARITA

Hey! It's ok, don't cry. You did amazing.

DAUGHTER #1

You think so?

CHARITA

I know so. You could be an acrobat one day.

DAUGHTER #1

I want to work with daddy.

CHARITA

What does he do?

DAUGHTER #1  
He fights the Japs.

Charita, taken aback by the ingrained racial slur, lets out a soft sigh. She then rummages through her bag.

CHARITA  
Do you want a mint? Here. They're good.

DAUGHTER #1  
Thank you, miss.

The mother notices what's going on, passes her other daughter to the other mother, and storms over.

MOTHER #1  
Hey. HEY. What do you think you're doing darkie?

CHARITA  
Wha-? Oh, she fell. I was just trying to--

MOTHER #1  
I know what you were trying to do you, rock spider. Get away from her before I call the police!

DAUGHTER #1  
Mom, it's ok.

CHARITA  
I- I'm sorry miss.

MOTHER #2  
(shouting over)  
Fucking nonce!

Charita hurries away, shaken by the prejudice. She pauses, and looks at the daughters being rushed in to the home by the mother. She readjusts herself, and carries on her journey.

CUT TO:

7 EXT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, 1040

7

Charita walks up to the van de Ruud residence, a derelict end-terrace at the nicer end of Pymont, ostentatiously out of place compared to its surroundings.

Charita knocks, no answer. Again. Nothing.

CHARITA

Mr van de Ruud? Are you there? I'm from social services - you called about your leg? I'm here to help - could you let me in please?

Charita knocks again, this time more loudly.

CHARITA

Mr van de Ruud? Mr van de Ruud. Can you hear me?

Nothing. She decides to give the rotten door a push. It moves.

CHARITA

Mr van de Ruud, I'm getting concerned. I'm coming in now, alright?

CUT TO:

8 INT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, HALLWAY, 1041

8

Charita enters. The radio is blaring: Glenn Miller's *That Old Black Magic*. Charita's forehead stings. She winces and rubs the area again. Stacks of yellowing newspapers, letters, and postcards of American landmarks blockade the door. She manages to push through, squashing a few in the process.

CHARITA

Mr van de Ruud? It's Miss Gupta, you rang for assistance?

Something flies past Charita's head, making her shriek and cower against the wall. A newspaper. We see through the door the paperboy cycling away. Charita gathers herself and looks at the new paper. A postcard of the Statue of Liberty sits next to it and takes her eye. She picks it up, and flips it over. She reads the signature partially covered by her thumb: Oppe. Stefan van de Ruud squeaks into the room. She drops the postcard.

CHARITA

Mr van de Ruud! Miss Gupta. You rang us?

No reply. No acknowledgement.

CHARITA  
Mr van de Ruud?

No reply.

CHARITA  
Begrijp je me, Stefan?

No reply. van de Ruud just stares at Charita blankly.

CHARITA  
Ok, Stefan, ¿puedes entenderme ahora?  
No? Et maintenant?

No reply. Charita fumbles with her hands to create some crude sign language. To this, Stefan opens his mouth widely to reveal he has no tongue. Charita grimaces, not only because of the image, but the pain in her forehead is returning.

CHARITA  
What? But we spoke over th-- (loudly)  
Can you understand me? Blink twice for  
yes.

Two blinks.

CHARITA  
Great. I'm just going to take a look  
at your leg. Is that okay?

Stefan takes the break off his wheelchair, awkwardly gestures with his head to follow, and enters the kitchen. The radio switches: Mills Brothers, *Paper Doll*. Charita's forehead burns. She gasps and is now aware of the pain.

CUT TO:

9 INT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, KITCHEN, 1044

9

Enter the horrendous kitchen. Mould, maggots, decay. Stefan is seated in his wheelchair and looks pointedly at his leg. Charita reaches into her pocket and takes out a pair of gloves. She takes his leg in her gloved hands, it is covered in pus. Shes tries not to baulk at the smell, and swallows obviously, blinking hard.

CHARITA  
I'm just going to clean it now, is  
that ok Mr van de Ruud?

Stefan blinks twice. She begins to clean, Stefan flinches. The radio distorts. Charita's forehead stabs. She gasps and presses the outside of her gloved wrist to her forehead. She gives herself a little shake and continues.

CHARITA

I know, it hurts. Try to take your mind off it Mr van de Ruud.

The radio crackles on to an open line. A garbled voice starts to become audible. As this happens, Charita gasps as her vision whites out, and she tumbles back onto her behind as the pain in her head overwhelms her.

RADIO

Please, call me Stefan.

Charita looks in confusion and shock to the radio, and then back to Stefan. She is still clutching her forehead as it pulses with blistering pain. It forces her backwards, clutching her skull, mouth wide in pain, mirroring van de Ruud's tongueless mouth.

RADIO

I know, it hurts. Try to take your mind off it, Ms Gupta.

Charita is writhing in pain, lying on her side on the floor in a foetal position.

RADIO

I'm sorry to have to do this to you Ms Gupta, but I needed someone to test this on. It isn't personal, and I certainly didn't expect them to send me a woman.

Tell me though, have you heard of a man called Oppenheimer?

Jump cut back to the postcard, Charita's thumb moves: Oppenheimer.

Charita's eyes widen at the mention of the name.

RADIO

Yes, I saw you with the postcard, and I see you know who I mean. He's a sick man, Ms Gupta, but he's a brilliant man. One of the best times of my life

was working alongside him at Los Alamos. We were working on wave functions you see, as well as other... technologies. But, I began to have some concerns you see...

Charita lets out a frail gasp, staring into the eyes of Stefan, she whispers

CHARITA

No...

RADIO

He's a genius Ms Gupta, and one who likes to keep tabs on his... experiments shall we say? Just to make sure that they aren't misbehaving.

CHARITA

They...he...tortured you?

RADIO

Oh yes. One shouldn't question such a mind as his. he cut out my tongue for good measure too... he wouldn't want anyone to 'misunderstand' my perspectives on things. But, genius as he is, he did make one mistake.

Charita looks at him, unable to take her eyes off his immobile face. She crawls slowly towards him.

RADIO

He let me go. You see, it's the REAL winners that create history. People like Oppenheimer think they are the winners, but they forget about their mistakes. They think they can take all the glory. Well, it's time for compensation, don't you think Ms Gupta?

Charita has frozen. She is on her knees, clutching van de Ruud's whole leg, eyes wide, mouth gaping.

CHARITA

It...it was YOU?

## RADIO

That bomb this morning? Well, I did create it...by association. Before the Manhattan's realised the fission could decimate cities, they thought it could work... closer to home. Now they need to feel my pain, the Allies, the World, and you. After all, you'll hardly be missed now will you?

Charita is writhing in pain, but manages to fumble into her pocket nonetheless. She stabs a pen in to Stefan's septic leg. He screams, Charita's head boils, the radio cracking and feeding back in a crescendo of horror and sound.

Cut to black. Radio switches off.

CUT TO:

10 INT DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES - TWO WEEKS LATER 10

People are flying around the room, rushing to coordinate in the wake of the end of the war: soldier's returning, some not. Charita's desk is empty.

Suddenly, Ms Gupta sits, adjusts herself. The radio is blaring Ella Fitzgerald.

She turns to the radio, a high pitch tone is heard, and it suddenly switches to *Dream a Little Dream of Me*.

CUT TO:

11 INT VAN DE RUUD RESIDENCE, KITCHEN, 1044 11

Stefan's body lays motionless in the wheelchair, eyes rolled back, mouth gaping.

CUT TO:

12 INT DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, PYRMONT, SYDNEY 1044 12

The social worker from earlier is laughing with her colleagues, ignoring the return of Charita. Suddenly, she feels a deep pain in her forehead, and turns around. Charita is staring right at her.

END.

