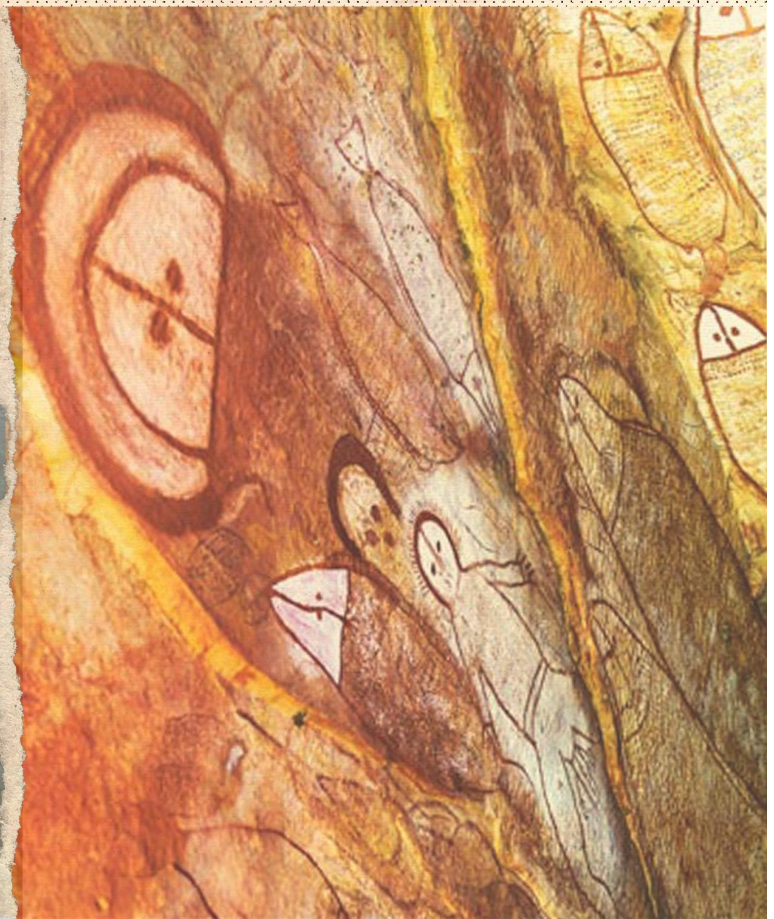


THE MOON WATCHER



THE MOON-WATCHER

Created by Peter Feeney

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THE MOON WATCHER: OVERVIEW

TV Drama

6 x Episodes of TV

'You know, there is a dream dreaming us.'

Stone Age Hunter, quoted by Joseph Campbell

It's planet earth, 1970, and John, helmet haircut, 11 years old going on fifty, finds himself enduring the most uneventful year ever since humankind went biped: flares are in, the Beatles have broken up, it's one year AFTER the moon landing AND he's living in New Zealand, not somewhere cool – like ANYWHERE else. To make matters worse he's in hospital because of a car accident. Nurse Morgan tells him he's lucky to be alive. He doesn't feel lucky. He's lost one eye and wears a pirate patch - which, admittedly, is quite dashing – but he's also barely hanging on to his mangled his left arm. That wouldn't be so bad, except he's left-handed, AND quite likes drawing. Just when you think things couldn't get ANY worse, it turns out the kid's ward is full so John has to sleep in the geriatric ward, surrounded by hypochondria, bitterness and boasting. Oh, and no one's telling him, but it looks a lot like his sister died in the car accident. Which was his fault (did I say that already?)

Stuck with wrinklies who go on for hours about the good old days, wooden villas and iron men, John escapes to explore the hospital and skids in his too long hospital pyjamas through the door of Marama's ward. Marama is Maori, about John's age and like him, a survivor, but facing an even more uncertain future – her parents both died in the house fire that almost took her own life.

An innocent game the two children play turns into a journey back in time to an ancient contest between two leaders of an ice age clan: the Moon-watcher and his Shaman. Both children will become sick with a life-threatening infection that causes reality and dreamtime to fuse. Somewhere in between the past and present, awake and asleep, the hard facts of death wait. If the children can face their fears the prize is the hope of greater, but very different, destinies for each of them.

A TV series about friendship, family, grief, denial and immortality, The Moon-watcher features a trip to the moon, Palaeolithic megafauna, Stukas, bad cardboard ice age sets, Dream Soldiers and bed pans.

The Moon-watcher exists as a complete first draft novelette.

TONE

I want to speak the truth to the hard events that sometimes happen to kids (and which they can survive and rise above). So the subject matter of *The Moon-Watcher* is dramatic and at times dark. The tone however is also often light, personified in the central character of John (11 and any ethnicity) who is cheeky, rebellious, and irreverent at every turn. A good indication of this subversive tone is the ‘voice’ of John from the Novelette extract (see below). In *The Moon-watcher* tragedy is contrasted by the way children deal with serious events in their lives – sometimes with a literal acceptance, at other times with an imaginative response, but often (as here) with a counter intuitive and surprising interpretation that softens the blow of ugly calamity, rendering it into something beautiful.

Why 1970? Isn’t period stuff an expensive pain to shoot?! Well, yes, and if need be the show can be adapted to be contemporary. But the 1970’s gives us so much more than just bad haircuts to play with. First, our *characters* are working class people who are not emotionally expressive to start with (sentimentality being the prerogative of the rich). But their buttoned-down feeling is also helpfully magnified by the social mores of the time. Their feelings can be revealed by behaviour, not words, making them both more heroic and intriguing. A second plus is that kids in the 1970’s were left in hospital without adult supervision. They were pretty much allowed to do what they wanted (I know – I was one of them). John is like a modern ‘latch-key’ kid let loose in a hospital. And I’m confident a kid like John wouldn’t be plonked into a Geriatric ward today – but that kind of carry on was pretty de rigueur in 1970.

The higher period cost is mitigated by filming mostly in this single location – a hospital – relieved visually by the play and dream sequences of Marama’s and John’s ice age game. Luckily, because this ancient earth landscape of their game exists (almost entirely) in their imaginations, it can be played out in ‘nasty,’ cardboard, *cheap sets*. Think the very first series of *Dr Who* (released in 1964), where egg cartons adorned the sides of Daleks; and -

- The recent D-grade comedy ‘This Giant Paper Mache Boulder is Actually Really Heavy’ – (trailer [HERE](#))
- The low rent version *Flash Gordon* of the 1930’s serials - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B707Ava4wrY>

THE MYTHOLOGY OF DREAM SOLDIERS & THE KAPOVA CAVE PAINTINGS (SIBERIA) VS THE KIMBERLEY ROCK ART (AUSTRALIA)

The original inspirations for the parallel Moon-watcher/ Shaman world of the children's imaginative game are: the ice age era drawings of the Kapova Cave paintings, the story of the Moon-Watcher (which my mother told me around the time of the original moon landings), and Joseph Campbell's writings on the role of Shaman in traditional societies.

Shaman's, when encountered by Anthropologists, appeared at first glance to be the low status/ crazy people of their clans. But they were in fact revered. Whenever anyone was emotionally, mentally or otherwise sick, the Shaman would go into a trance and venture into the dream world of the patient, fighting and vanquishing the demons that haunted their psyche's. But this came at a cost. The Shaman ended up carrying the sins/ illnesses/ craziness of the entire group.

The story in the ice age clan of our world is that this Shaman, resentful of carrying this burden, decides to make the Moon-Watcher spiritually sick (by making his dreams come true, then revealing the emptiness of them) so he can fight him and take over this body. Except the Moon-Watcher upsets this plan, defeating the Shaman and taking over *his* body. Having figured out this handy knack for immortality, 15,000 years later, The Moon-Watcher is now inhabiting the body of Arnie.

In the present (of 1970) John, through the power of play, his grief, and illness, manages to tip his dreams into lucidity, astral and dream travelling (inhabiting other's dreams), without even knowing it. He trips over into the perilous world of Dream Soldiers, and despite the warning of Arnie/ the Moon-Watcher at the end of the series, we get the sense he's going to have a crack at immortality himself.

The world of Dream Soldiers bears a superficial resemblance to the 'dreaming,' held by the traditional people of Australia. One attraction of the Kimberley Cave Art is their ghostly depiction of what look like (to me) to be Dream Soldiers. There needs to be an awareness though that cave art is still a very much alive in Aboriginal culture. There is a world of living culture to negotiate and collaborate with. If the Shaman is shown at the end of our series painting, then the role of Arnie would of course be played by an indigenous Australian, as would the 'actual' Arnie.

FRANCHISE POTENTIAL

The Moon-Watcher is the first in an envisaged series of three TV series (or films).

Part II is called 'Dream Soldiers,' and follows the journey of the troubled young Grace as she is encouraged by a mysterious dream figure, Duncan, into exploring the world of her dreams. Posing as her mentor, Duncan actually wants to possess Grace's body, but first has to school her potential to a higher level. As her awareness grows, Grace uncovers horrific past crimes, perpetrated by her Uncle, and recalls her own repressed childhood abuse. When her attempt to achieve justice in the 'real' world fails, she turns to the dream realm and becomes a dream soldier so she can wreck revenge that way. As her awareness and confidence as a Dream Soldier grows she reclaims the power she has lost in her life. Surprised and betrayed by Duncan she loses her eventual combat with Duncan, but manages to possess the body of another Dream Soldier, John.

A possible third series follows John's story, the character whose body Grace takes over at the end of 'Dream Soldiers.' He of course is John from our original story, and the series follows his journey through several bodies and lives, as he loses his spiritual way and, in the end, consents to Grace taking his body.

LINKS

The 'Dreaming'

<https://www.aboriginal-art-australia.com/aboriginal-art-library/understanding-aboriginal-dreaming-and-the-dreamtime/>

Kimberley Rock Art: An overview

<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/kimberley-rock-art-overview/>

The Kapova Cave Paintings

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapova_Cave

Lucid dreaming and Astral Travelling (referencing the TV show and book 'Behind her eyes')

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tv/14163133/netflix-behind-her-eyes-lucid-dreaming-astral-projection/>

GENRE/ AUDIENCE

The subject matter this show traverses can be depicted more honestly if The Moon-Watcher is not put in the box of 'Children's TV.' So, in terms of audience, The Moon-Watcher is more like the Italian/ Netflix show *My Brilliant Friend*, a show for anyone who is or who has ever been a child, from teenagers to retirees. Like the CBC production *Anne with an E*, I believe that this is a show adults will discover and watch – and kids too.

Genre references include the books *Angela's Ashes*, *The 10pm Question* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, all of which have a strong point of view/ central voice of a child, that have nevertheless found both an adult and a young adult audience.

SEASON SYNOPSIS

In three acts

ACT I

'JOHN'

Episodes 1 & 2

Picture an Ice-age cave – all gritty realism, of a kind we won't see again in this world until the end of the series...

BANG: the Shaman wakes from his trance, a wild look in his eye. Nearby another cave woman opens her eyes, looking serene. Friends help her up, and when she speaks (or grunts?) dance in exultation: the Shaman's dream medicine has worked again! But the Shaman is far from happy – he's looks ravaged. Resentfully he gazes out of the cave at the Moon-Watcher, who is sitting on a ledge reaching out with his hand, trying to catch the moon in the palm of this hand – and failing of course. Watching him, the Shaman gets an idea, and his face lights up in hope.

John wakes in a hospital bed – was that his dream? John's 11 or 12 years old, wears an eye patch, and has his left arm in a big cast that covers his fingers. On the other side of the ward Septic Sid has a drip in his arm and a stopped-tube-coming out of his throat; nearby, Ritual man lies there silently combing his (thinning) hair and staring up at the ceiling: John watches in disgust as his bed pan fills up as his bladder empties. John sits up and picks up a sketch pad. Making sure that no one is looking he turns to a pencil picture - the start of his 'Mega death and destruction' picture, depicting a (his) car accident. There's lots of blood, crashed cars and dead civilians. He draws clumsily with his right hand, and it's not the best image. As he tries to draw H (Hypochondria) man comes up, and John quickly hides his Mega death picture with another innocuous one, equally badly drawn, of the ward. H man (a young man but somehow not out of place here) shares in disgusting detail all his various ailments, showing off his many scars. Nurse Kathy Morgan arrives, shooing him away. Emptying Sid's tube she comments that John's picture looks great. John disagrees, telling her that because he only has one eye he can't perspective so his pictures look really bad, and he can only do stick figures, because he's left handed, and it's in the cast. Kathy tells him what he's doing is cool, like those old cave drawings of hunters and woolly mammoths, from years and years and years ago, before the Flintstones. John asks if a bed is free in pediatric so he can check out of this death trap. Kathy tells him no - and gives him a kiss goodnight as a consolation prize.

John escapes after lights out to explore the hospital, leaving his eye patch up to 'air' his 'no-eye.' He takes a big skid on his over long PJ's, ending up in a ward with just one patient - Marama. She's badly burnt and largely suspended by wires and leather straps, her hair all stretched out. But she's asleep and John, fascinated by her burnt, ancient looking monkey

hands, goes in for a closer look at them. Marama wakes and screams – and won't stop – until a nurse runs in and snaps John's eye patch back over his 'no-eye.'

The next day John is in the TV room with the wrinklies. They sit, waiting for the Apollo 13 launch. But it's aborted. Again. Septic Sid stands and holds the rabbit ears because of the bad reception. It's handy him standing there though, because a Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan movie comes on and the picture randomly starts rolling. Only Sid's swift sharp bangs on the top of the TV stops it. Unfortunately, right then a nurse arrives to take John to apologise for scaring Marama.

In Marama's ward, knowing he wants to see them, she shows John her monkey hands. In return John lifts his eye patch to show her his empty stitched up eye, all pulsing veins and half-eaten pork. Marama shows him her skodey old rag doll, badly singed - presumably by the house fire. She tells John she lost her parents in the fire that burnt her. In return John tells Marama about his sister, who died in his car crash. Marama makes him promise to come back.

Nurse Kathy Morgan presents John with a book on the Kimberley rock art cave-drawings she's got out from the library. Gazing at the pictures John starts to feel better about his one-armed one-eyed stick figure pictures, because the cave drawings are pretty good – full of life and action. He draws some more of his secret 'Mega death and destruction' picture, adding a stick figure representing Marama, with fire shooting out of her hands at a burning house...

Flashback: Mags (14) and John – in short short shorts - sit in the back of the family car, a Humber. They look at each other, then to their mother, who's driving. She's upset and quietly crying to herself. Meanwhile a big red wine flagon rolls around the floor on the front passenger side, clinking on the hand brake. John starts to creep forward to stop the flagon banging. His sister hisses at him to stop but he ignores her (of course). He creeps stealthily forward, reaching out to the flagon. His sister tries to pull him back by his pants as the children's mother turns, sees John, opens her mouth – just as the car hits a bump. The steering wheel spins like a roulette wheel. John looks up. Something has gone wrong: outside the windscreen it has gone all blurry: the world outside has sped up and is tearing past at hundreds of miles an hour. At the same time, to make up for it, everything in the car has gone very slow. John has time to look around and see Mags with her mouth open, and no sound was coming out. This is because we are now hearing the sound of a loooong skid. Then there's a crash and it goes black. And then there's nothing.

The next morning Arnie, a grizzled war veteran, now homeless person, arrives to take up the bed opposite John. We may recognise him as the Shaman who started the series – he looks just as ravaged now, although cleaner. H-Man talks to Arnie about his recent Vietnam tour, which messed up his health, and Arnie fascinates John when he overhears Arnie talking about being dive bombed by Stukas (German war planes) in Rotterdam in 1940, and again, as an added bonus, running Arctic convoys in 1943. John tells Arnie it's a shame the

Germans lost the war because their uniforms were so much smarter. Arnie gets very dark on that, going into a passionate anti-war, anti-Nazi rant.

John's Dad visits. He's a bit distracted but John's still immensely proud to walk around the hospital with him. John shows his Dad his sketch book (though not the ultra-secret mega death picture) and tells him about his big idea of starting a new school of painting, 'wrong-arm' drawing, where all his apprentices can draw with their wrong arms, learning from the master, John. But John's Dad is unimpressed. Why wouldn't they just use their 'good' arms? John overhears a Doctor telling this Dad that it's 'touch and go' about his arm. When he's about to leave his dad asks John if he can remember how the crash happened? But John can't answer him. He just freezes.

A little later from his window John sees a little man in the car park walking along but stopping and suddenly bursting into tears. With a surprise John realises this is his dad. So that puts a bit of a dampener on things. While he's watching John has left his secret Mega death picture of his car accident open on his bed and Arnie catches a glimpse of it, enough to call John out as a 'survivor,' just like him. John hides the picture but asks Arnie if he got the Stukas right – he's added a clutch of them dropping bombs, adding to the general confusion. Arnie gives him some tips – crooked wings and crooked swastikas– and while John makes the corrections Arnie reads the book about the Kimberley cave drawings. He tells John how the painters of those times, tens of thousands of years ago, would show off their work in the dark caves, holding up flaming torches to one picture after another, telling a story like a slide show, walking around different parts of the cave, making sense of the pictures, telling a story. John asks Arnie how he knows that. Arnie says it's in the book. No it's not, John tells him – he's read the whole book. Arnie tells him he must have missed it.

John has his 'Failure' dream. He's back at the scene of his car accident, but now he's lying on the side of the road, looking up at a sea of upside-down adult faces, all worry and double chins. He is hoisted up and carried on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance. Before the doors close, he catches a glimpse of an animal like carcass, *just for a moment*, before it's hidden by a sheet. It's so quick he can't even tell if it was human, or even if he saw it. The ambulance takes off, but then after a while stops at a red light and – unexpectedly - his Mum gets in; phew, she's alive! She's wearing a distinctive jumper – we'll come back to that. She also, rather disconcertingly, is wet with blood. When John mentions this she's surprised, but then slowly, deliberately, licks her fingers. And laughs. It's not blood, she tells John – it's the red wine from the flagon. John asks her to tell him the story of the Moon-watcher. He closes his eyes as she starts to tell the story of an old cave man, who lived a hard life in the last ice age, who found comfort staring at the moon, trying to reach out and touch it with his hand...

John wakes to see his sister Mags (a few years older than him) standing at the end of his bed, staring at him angrily.

He wakes up (for real this time) and when he looks up – there's no sister there.

John tracks down Marama again, during the day this time. As always she is holding her rag-doll like her life depended on it. She shows him her 'monkey' hands, he shows off his eye patch. John tells her his Mum's story of the Moon-watcher. It's about this cave man and his son who would go out every night and reaches up to touch the moon. But the 'Moon-watcher' can't quite reach it. Even so, every night he comes out and tries. It's because of him, his Mum says, that man made it to the moon.

Ta-da!

Marama isn't quite sure how the Moon-Watcher trying to touch the moon thousands of years ago was supposed to lead to the Apollo space program, and John can't really explain. But because Marama feels sorry for the old Moon-watcher, who never got to go to the moon, she asks John if they can start a game where they get to play the Moon-watcher's kids (even though John insists that the Moon-watcher only has a son, not a daughter) to help the moon-watcher to the moon. In the ice age...

Cue: a really bad 'B' movie kids imagination ice age set... Marama and John, playing the Moon-watcher's kids, decide to build a viewing platform out of rocks on the knoll above the clan's cave, to make the Moon-watcher taller, so he can touch the moon. It's slow work, but one day, when they drag up a few more rocks, they find a bunch of shiny metal cylinders lying around. The scary Shaman – the clan's healer/ witch-doctor – turns up (he looks a lot like Arnie). The Shaman confesses he's helped things along with a bit of magic, and makes the children promise not to tell their Dad what he's done. When he goes the children put the pieces together, like a puzzle, to make a super tall cool Moon-viewing platform. They agree to show the Moon-watcher the rocket that night...

John visits Marama again and shares with her his great theory, that his sister isn't really dead. That his Mum told him this story in the ambulance, as a clue – that his sister is really on the moon. He elaborates on this theory – about the man on the moon, about how in the old days spirits would be sent there, how it's probably some government agency conspiracy – until Marama bursts out laughing. John, deeply upset, runs out. He swears to himself he'll never visit old monkey hands ever again.

But back in the old farts ward, starting up at the moon, it hits John that his sister really must be dead... he crawls into his bed and before lights out adds her dead body carefully to the mega death picture.

ACT II

'MARAMA'

Episodes 3 & 4

That night, John has his regular 'Failure' dream/ accident recollection again only THIS time, weirdly, Arnie turns up. He's standing in the background, and John spots him from his stretcher as he's being carried to the ambulance. Then a strange thing happens. The dream pauses as everything freezes. John calmly gets down and walks over to Arnie – as if he hasn't been in a terrible car accident at all. He stops in front of Arnie, who is looking a bit shocked, and tells him to get out of his dream.

Back in the ward Arnie wakes up. He goes and looks at John, puzzled. John's eyes are moving rapidly in REM sleep. Arnie looks perplexed...

John's Dad visits. John proudly shares some of his new friend Arnie's war stories, but his Dad deflates him by saying it's unlikely, if not impossible, that Arnie could have got bombed in Rotterdam and been able to escape to fight later in the war. On the plus side Kathy turns up with a book and promises to read it to John: 'The Emperor and the Nightingale.'

Marama lies in bed, asleep. She dreams of her house fire, of her Dad carrying her out of the fire, wrapped in damp steaming towels, then running straight back in to get her mother, and she, waiting, delirious, worried, in pain, but *fascinated* by the flames consuming the house.

But John then wakes, and we're left wondering, was Marama dreaming that dream, or John?

Nurse Morgan tells John that Marama is missing him and doesn't have any friends. So John, under duress, does a pity visit. Marama apologises and tells John she's been thinking about it and it's probably true that his sister is on the moon. No, counters John. She probably died in the car crash. He hasn't seen her since. Marama tells him she feels guilty about her house fire because she's always loved fire, watching and even setting fires sometimes – though she didn't set this one. Bridges mended, they carry on with their Moon-watcher game:

The Moon-watcher's kids take their Dad up to see the... well... rocket (because at first they started to make it out of rocks). The Moon-watcher looks a lot like John's Dad. The three climb up a ladder to the top of the rocket to touch the moon. But even then the Moon-watcher can't reach, not even when his son, John, sits on his shoulders. When the children mention that the Shaman will be disappointed the Moon-watcher panics and starts to climb down. Too late! At the bottom of the rocket the mad old Shaman/ Arnie capers gleefully. He presses a button and the rocket starts to rise up to the heavens.

John's ward: Nurse Morgan is disappointed and cross with him, only we don't know why. A nurse comes in and asks him about his 'accident' with Marama. John shows her the bump on his head to prove he got hurt too. But to no avail. He's in the naughty box. When she

comes to read him the story book 'The Emperor and the Nightingale', John asks Nurse Morgan if they can visit Marama and see how she is, but she refuses. In a pique he doesn't let her read him the story book.

With John being side-lined a young Doctor is able to order that John's cast and stitches be removed and replaced with a bandage. John wants to be able to draw with this good left hand, but he has trouble holding a pencil, and his arm hurts a bit too. Nurse Kathy Morgan is surprised to see the cast removed, and when she looks under the bandage her suspicion is confirmed: it's been taken off too early. She makes a note on John's chart for the wound to be looked at the next day.

John remembers his earlier visit to Marama...

As their rocket speeds toward the moon, the Moon-watcher tells his children about the rivalry between him and the Shaman, how the Shaman couldn't hunt as he had a limp (ever since that woolly elephant trod on him) and had become old in his body and ancient in his mind because of his struggles on behalf of the tribe in dreamtime, and how it had changed him; twisted him. When they land on the moon the Moon-watcher has a moment of fear, that he will have nothing to live for when all his dreams come true – but he takes the leap anyhow. The three explore the moon happily until suddenly the Moon-watcher's daughter announces it's time to go back to the rocket, because (says Marama) the Moon-watcher wants to teach that naughty old Shaman a lesson back on earth. BUT...

... John wants to stay longer on the moon. A fight ensues that spills out of the game into the reality of the ward. Marama starts a countdown to take off, and John tries to pull her off the rocket. But she pulls back. Finally, he yells at her that there is a fire on the rocket – she screams, and then comes hurtling off the bed as she immediately stops resisting John. She falls onto the ground beside John, dragging all her wires and weights with her and lies there, screaming FIRE and banging her arms and feet on the lino... nurses run in and John is shoved aside, whacking his head against a table. He bursts into tears and runs from the room.

John is awakened by Nurse Kathy Morgan. It's dark and her shift is over. He tells her his arm hurts. She tells him they can sort that in the morning. For now she takes him, along with the 'Emperor and the Nightingale' story book, to visit Marama.

The two agree not to play their moon landing game anymore, although Marama worries about what's going to happen to the Moon-watcher, stranded up there with his burnt rocket. Kathy reads them the story: the Emperor of China so loves the song of a nightingale that visits him that he has him put in a cage. The bird promptly stops singing. Luckily, the Emperor of Japan gifts him a wind up one. The Emperor lets the real nightingale out of the cage and shoos it away when it hangs around. He doesn't need it now – he has his mechanical one. Which then, of course, stops working, and the Emperor becomes sad, and

wishes he hadn't been mean to the nightingale and shooed him away, because while his scientists are able to fix the mechanical nightingale it's only able to sing once a year...

Marama starts to nod off and Kathy finishes before they get to the end of the story. Marama asks Kathy about being a nurse, and it emerges that she is married – crack! (that's John's tiny heartbreak) – and also that she can't have children. Maybe never anyway. Kathy involuntarily sheds a tear, which Marama interprets as a happy tear – and Kathy agrees, while wondering why that would be. Marama and Kathy hug goodbye while John stands by, the story book under his arm, his other arm hurting, feeling a bit jealous.

Back at the ward Kathy tucks John in and kisses him goodnight. John thanks her for taking him to see Marama. Kathy thanks him: she's very pleased he did.

When she goes, Ritual man speaks to him for the first time, telling him that his Mum was sent away when he was a kid – because he didn't comb his hair properly.

Dawn fills Marama's room with a strange red light. Kathy Morgan is sitting next to Marama, watching her sleep. She kisses her finger and runs it along the ridge of Marama's nose.

John is having his failure dream again... watching the red wine flagon clinking on the hand brake he crawls forward. His sister Mags calls out – stop! – and he ignores her. Of course. Then his Mum turns, opens her mouth - and he's in the big slo-mo skid. All outside the car is blurry. He looks back to the back seat – and Mags isn't there. There's no one there. Then, bang, he's being carried on the stretcher to the ambulance. He looks around but there's no sign of Arnie. The doors close on the ambulance, and there's that half-second disconcerting glimpse of a body being covered by a sheet. Again, we don't know who it is, but we may notice, this time, the body is wearing a distinctive jumper... John waits. Sure enough. The ambulance stops at the red light. But... no one gets in. The ambulance starts up again. And suddenly, in the way of dreams (?) Arnie is sitting next to John. That's how it really happened; Arnie tells John. John looks back to the doors, and when he looks back: Arnie is gone.

Back in the ward: night. John wakes up. Arnie wakes up, then rolls over, stealing a quick look at John. John stares at the ceiling.

Dawn. John wakes. He feels red-eyed, hot and dizzy. His arm really hurts. He looks under the bandage and it really smells. He looks across at Ritual man, who is still. John gets up and looks at him: he's died in the night. Quietly John reaches under his pillow, pulls out his comb, takes it – then hits the nurse's call button on Ritual man's bed. He puts the comb carefully under his pillow – then faints, falling on the hard lino.

A golden staph infection is declared in John's ward, which is quarantined... John is put on an antibiotic drip, as are several of the old farts... his bandage is replaced by a cast again, lots of shaking of heads and tut tutting by the doctors who do it – touch and go and so on...

Marama lies on her bed, her eyes moving in REM. She is dreaming...

The Moon-watcher sits on the moon, watching planet Earth floating in the sky above him, the still smoking rocket in the background. There's no point trying to touch the earth – he now knows it is too far. But he stretches out his arm anyway, closes his eyes, lies down - and falls asleep.

The Moon-watcher wakes. He is outside the clan's cave. Next to him is the Shaman. They chat, and then the Moon-watcher looks behind him into the back of the cave. He sees himself, lying still, but alive - just. His wife/ mate is crying over this body. Some distance off lies the Shaman in a trance, with his helpers dancing around him. When the Moon-watcher turns back to him the Shaman (Arnie) is smoking a rollie. That's weird... The Shaman tells him: yes, they are dreaming. This dream is the one where they fight – to the death. Then there's a longing collective sigh, a rustling, and the Moon-watcher senses an audience somehow surrounding him and the Shaman, pressing somehow on the membrane of their dream, eager to witness their fight. The figures remain hazy, but here and there the Moon-watcher catches little glimpses of them. They look rather like figures from the Kimberley cave drawings (we'll see these ghostly images again, at the end of the series). Anyhow, as the Moon-watcher looks around, increasingly getting the creeps, suddenly the Shaman lunges at him and -

Marama lies her bed, but now she's sweating, hot, sick, restless, her eyes darting around - still dreaming.

John wakes to find he is in isolation. He thinks he sees Marama in a similar ward, also in isolation. It's from a high angle, a weird, out of body type viewpoint, so he's not sure if he's dreaming. As he watches her Marama's body flashes and looks for a moment like the carcass John glimpsed earlier in his dream about his accident. So *that's* not a great sign...

Arnie appears by John's bed. He's watching the machine that goes 'beep!' and has John's heartbeat in a wave pattern. It changes to a video of the Apollo 13 launch, then the moon landing – the iconic images we know. Then the picture starts rolling, and Arnie gets up and bangs the top of the machine to stop the rolling. It goes back to playing black and white footage, this time of the Apollo 13 troubles following their on-board explosion. Arnie sits back on the bed and starts rolling a cigarette as he keeps watching.

John sleeps, and when he wakes, Arnie is there still. John asks him if he is going to die. Arnie leans in conspiratorially and tells him that he knows all about the Moon-watcher and the Shaman. John asks: what does he know? But just then a nurse comes in and chases Arnie off. As he's dragged off Arnie tells John: if John lives he'll tell him ALL about it.

Flashback/ Dream: Marama is in her back yard, burning the weekly family paper and cardboard in an incinerator. She takes a bit of burning newspaper and sets her rag doll on fire. She watches it burn, smiling, loving watching it. Then the flames hurt her hand – she drops the doll and stomps the fire out. Her singed skodey old rag doll lies on the ground. Marama looks sorry, and picks it up. Then she senses someone there – she turns – and we see John is standing, watching, much as Arnie did in his dream. She stares at him.

ACT III

'ARNIE'

Episodes 5 & 6

John wakes.

He's back in his ward. Across from him Arnie's bed is freshly made. John's feeling better. Nurse Kathy Morgan checks on him and tells him he's alright. He asks her if he can visit Marama. Sadly, Kathy tells him she's sick with the same infection he's had. He'll have to wait. When John looks over to Arnie's bed she reassures him – Arnie didn't die. He checked out. She tells him to rest. He does, and when he opens his eyes...

... Mags, his sister, is sitting at the end of the bed. John is (strangely?) unsurprised. Mags explains she's just got back from school camp and is sorry she hasn't come sooner. She tells John that she's just heard about Mum, and asks him: how did the accident happen? Before John can tell her John's Dad joins them, looking mousey, suburban, and not like a heroic Moon-watcher-explorer at all. He tells John it's time to come home – they are going to come and get him in the next few days.

They go. John gets out his Mega destruction picture and adds Ritual man to the general death mayhem. Then he sees that next to his bed Nurse Morgan has left the book 'The Emperor and the Nightingale.' He reads and nears the end of the story: the Emperor gets sick, and asks for the old mechanical nightingale. But it breaks, for good, and the Emperor gets sicker, pining away for his old friend the nightingale. The kingdom prepares for his death. But then...

John wakes. It's dark. He must have nodded off. There, lying on his lap is the book, open at the second to last page of the story book. The illustration shows death sitting on the Emperor's bed, right on his chest, reaching out his arm to claim the Emperor's life. John picks up and reads the end of the story: just in time the Emperor's old friend the nightingale turns up and sings. The next morning an attendant comes in, expecting to find the Emperor at death's door. Instead he's sitting up in bed, and says brightly: 'Hello!' John gets out of bed

and takes off. On his bed lies the Mega death picture: with Marama, shooting little flames out of her hands.

John stands in Marama's ward. Her bed is freshly made. Empty.

John wanders the darkened wards of the hospital, hiding from the odd nurse. Finally he finds an isolation ward sees a solitary Marama in there - just as he remembered. There's lines and drips - and that little machine that goes 'beep' in the corner of her room. There's no moon footage on it now, just a heartbeat wave. A nurse is checking on Marama and when she leaves John slips in without anyone noticing. He gets into bed with her, staring at her, thinking how pretty she is. He kisses her on the cheek. She opens her eyes. Marama tells John her secret: that her doll didn't get burnt in the fire. She burnt it. She's always loved burning things. She feels bad that while she watched her Dad running back into her burning house she was thinking – when they find the doll, burnt, they'll think it was the fire, not me that did it. John asks: did she start the fire that burnt down the house? Marama denies this, and John believes her.

John wakes, still in bed with Marama. The machine is still going beep, it's reassuring wave of a heartbeat going. John reaches down and takes one of Marama's monkey hands in his. She's asleep as he tells her that he knew about her doll; he saw that in a dream. He wonders if that was her dream, and he was visiting. These are strange days indeed. He looks at her again: her eyes are still closed, but he tells her anyway: he thinks his Mum died in the accident. Not his sister. And -

Abruptly Marama opens her eyes, stares at John, and the 'beep' - actually heartbeat - machine flatlines. She continues to stare at him, all life gone from her eyes. John shakes her, yells at her to wake up: she's unresponsive. He gets out of bed and yells for help. He runs out into the corridor and screams. No one comes. Crying with desperation he returns to find the machine still flatlining. He strides over to it and, just like Septic Sid did with the TV, and Arnie earlier, he starts banging on the machine, hitting it on the lid. But it still flatlines. A nurse runs in, followed by a doctor. They start CPR on Marama. John keeps banging on the machine. A male nurse comes in and pulls John away. He goes back. They thump Marama's little chest; John thumps the machine. The nurse pulls him away – he pulls away and manages to get one last big BANG on the machine - and it beeps. The nurse drags John away, but he can see – the heart beep on the monitor has started up again.

John's Dad collects him from the ward. They drive home, in a new car with a new car smell. When they get home John finds that his Dad has set up his room with lots of drawings/ pencils, paints and an easel – all new. John volunteers to Dad how the accident happened – including that his Mum was crying. How it was all his fault. He cries and his Dad hugs him, reassuring him that it was no one's fault. It was an accident.

When she gets back from school John's sister Mags visits his room. They watch their Dad smoking a cigarette in the back yard. Mags tells him – the accident wasn't his fault. Mum was upset because of something else, not him. That's why she crashed. When pressed, she admits – Mum had told her she was going to leave Dad. She'd just come from telling him. John volunteers, shouldn't Dad be happy then? Mags opines that their Dad is upset because now he can never win her back again.

John's Dad takes him to the hospital to have his cast removed and a bandage put back on. John is able to flex his fingers fully, and his Dad tells him – now he can draw with his proper, left arm. But now that he actually can John seems a bit doubtful about this now. The two visit Marama: she's sitting up, minus ropes and straps, and looking pretty good. Now she wears gloves, and there's more clutter in her room, toys and clothes... John's Dad leaves and watches from a distance as John hands Marama a new rag doll. She tells him that she dreamt about him; it was a dream where she was burning her old doll, and he was there. John doesn't let on that he already knows this.

That night John dreams that he is standing back in his old ward. The old farts are there, sleeping. He walks around, and calls out: whose dream am I dreaming? There's no answer.

John closes his eyes, then opens them.

John's surround by snow. But he's not cold. He turns to see a big bonfire. He watches as the flames lick over the body of the Moon-watcher – he's being cremated. Then he sees the clan, dancing around the bonfire, chanting. But now they're not dressed like B grade extras. They're filthy with paint on their faces and are wearing dirty furs – this looks more like the real thing. Next, John takes in the Moon-watcher's mate - crying, wailing, being held back from throwing herself in the fire. And, finally, there's the Shaman/ Arnie, looking relieved, watching the Moon-watcher's woman with compassion. And sadness. And love.

John closes his eyes.

John opens his eyes and he is standing next to Marama in her room at the hospital. Her eyes are moving under their closed lids – and then suddenly open. She stares directly at him.

John wakes in his room in the dark. It's freezing – he's kicked off his blankets. Half-asleep he calls out for his father. A figure enters, we assume John's Dad, who tucks him in, and sits on the end of the bed. The figure asks him: who does John think won the fight in dreamtime – was it the Moon-watcher, or the Shaman? And then we know the figure is not John's Dad, even before the clouds clear and in the light of the moon we see it is Arnie sitting there. The Shaman won, obviously, says John. No! Beep! The Moon-watcher won, says Arnie. So he got the prize, the Shaman's old body. Which is pretty stink, says John. Next Arnie asks John – who was dreaming his dream, about the bonfire? He (John) was – obviously – says John. But again he's wrong. It was Marama's dream. He was just visiting. Marama is a dreamer, he tells John – but John has the talent for dream travelling. He's really got the hang of it. But

Arnie cautions John that it's dangerous. There are lots of people like him and Arnie out there: Dream Soldiers. Only they're not as nice as him and Arnie. His advice is: don't go there. Unless he wants to die in his sleep. John asks him: how could Arnie have been in Rotterdam in 1940, and on a ship in the Arctic in 1943? John's Dad told him he couldn't have got out of Rotterdam after they bombed it. Arnie smiles: in 1943 he was in a new body. Same soul though...

While John digests this Arnie asks him – whose dream is he in now? – then -

John wakes. He's freezing. The blankets are half off his bed. But he doesn't call for his Dad. He pulls the blankets up over himself and thinks.

Marama is walking unsteadily down a path to a house. She's looking better. On each side of her: Kathy Morgan and her husband. They swing her as they approach their front door. Marama laughs.

Standing up at his new easel John finishes a picture with his left hand – his 'good' hand. He looks at it. It's a cheerful 'happy family' picture: him, Dad, Mags, a smiling Mum up in heaven. He's got the perspective and sizes right. The figures are fleshed out, in proportion. Then he lifts up another picture. We get a long glimpse: this one's of the 'wrong-arm' school, like from the hospital, but in water colour. With stick-like figures, objects outsize, random things happening, it's on the borderline of outsider art and an old cave drawing. The picture tells the story of the Shaman and the Moon-watcher complete with a rocket, the moon, a combat in dreamscape, a bonfire - but the interesting stuff is what happens after. The Shaman living on, assuming different forms, walking the earth through pestilence, bounty, war, crusades, Stukas, warships at sea – then lying in a hospital bed in a ward full of old geriatrics. Under the last drawing is written a caption: 'The Dream Soldier.' And then, on the opposite bed of the ward is a young boy with one eye. Under the boy John has written: 'Immortality?' John takes the 'good' picture and places it carefully over the 'immortality' picture, hiding it – and his own cunning plan for eternal life.

Lastly, John gets out another, almost complete picture, and carries on drawing it, using his 'wrong' right arm. It's off strange, almost alien looking, hooded or hatted figures, different sizes, all standing together. They look somewhat like the creatures/ people that the Moon-watcher sensed, just before his combat in dreamtime.

John writes 'Dream Soldiers' underneath the picture, then stares at it. He smiles, then heads off out of the room. We stay on the drawing. It starts to come to life and morph into (though not changing too much, because it already looks a lot like)...

this...



... some Kimberley Rock Cave Art, circa 15,000 BC...

And, toiling away, drawing the picture... 15,000 years ago is... Arnie/ The Shaman.