EMOTION IS DEAD

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WRITING SAMPLE

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1 1

ARCHIVE VIDEO-- A classic 1976 Holden TV commercial-- *"Football, Meat Pies, Kangaroos and Holden Cars"*

The sound of struggle in the background and then a gun shot. A bullet hole smashes into the TV screen. Cut to static.

TITLE: EMOTION IS DEAD

2 **INT. HOSPITAL - DAY** 2

Two sets of legs walk down a long hospital corridor. Shiny black shoes. Neat blue trousers.

THE DISTANT SOUND OF A LOCAL TV NEWS REPORT.

TV NEWS REPORTER (O.S)
They're called in to all kinds of emergencies, but today Police responded to one of their own-- A patrol car in the front bedroom of an Elizabeth South home.

A NURSE points TWO YOUNG POLICE OFFICERS down another long hospital hallway.

3 **INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - DAY** 3

THE TV NEWS plays on a small TV high in the corner of the room. On screen a police vehicle is submerged in the front wall of a suburban home.

The two young Police Officers enter the room. They stand and watch the TV. They share a laugh.

OFFICER NGUYEN (24) turns and kneels at the foot of a hospital bed. He struggles to set up a camcorder and tripod.

OFFICER MCADAM (21) continues watching the TV. (Improvised reaction to the news story).

OFFICER MCADAM
(to Nguyen)
You know how to use that thing right?

OFFICER NGUYEN
You just worry about your shit mate--

Officer Nguyen looks for the 'ON' switch. He can't find it.

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Officer McAdam shakes his head-- Bends down and twists a small knob on the camera-- THE CAMERA TURNS ON.

This is the first time we see BROCK (19). Intelligent. Innocent. EMOTIONLESS.

He's poorly framed in the camera's grainy viewfinder. He sits up on the hospital bed watching the TV. His bed surrounded by flowers and cards.

THE TV NEWS STORY CONTINUES.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)
Police say they'll now look at a number of factors, including how fast the patrol car was traveling and whether its brakes failed in the lead up to the crash--

BROCK
(under his breath)
Sometimes the walls run into you.

OFFICER NGUYEN
What's that now?

Brock lifts the remote control and turns the TV off. The two Police Officers take a seat at the foot of the bed.

OFFICER MCADAM
(to Nguyen)
That thing rolling?

OFFICER NGUYEN
Yeah mate.
Lights-- Camera-- Action!

Officer Nguyen points at Brock like he imagines a Hollywood director would. Officer McAdam scoffs at his partner's ridiculousness.

OFFICER MCADAM
Interview one with Brock Barnes.
Lyell McEwan Hospital. May One.
Twenty twenty two-- It's now--
(looks at watch)
11:05am.

Brock looks directly into the camera. His expression cold, and calculated.

OFFICER NGUYEN (O.S.)
Brock-- Why don't you tell us how it all started mate--

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Brock blinks. He looks at both officers. Left then right. He slowly closes his eyes and thinks where to begin.

PRE-LAP THE SOUND OF SKATEBOARD WHEELS ROLLING DOWNHILL.

4 **EXT. NICE STREET - DAY** 4

BROCK skateboards down a pretty road in a leafy hillside suburb. He admires the houses he rolls past. Happy children bounce on a trampoline. Wealth. Success.

Brock is dressed all in black. Black shirt. Black skinny jeans. Black skate shoes. Black sweat band on his wrist.

He picks up speed and snakes downhill.

5 **EXT. HUGE HOUSE - DAY** 5

Brock hides his skateboard in roadside shrubbery and walks down a long driveway toward a huge house.

He rings the doorbell. No answer.

He looks down at his phone-- Angle on THE GARDN APP open on screen (Uber for gardening). He checks the address. He's at the right place.

Brock reaches for the bell again. He rings the bell just as the door opens. The HOME OWNER (mid-fifties), a born winner, peers out.

HOME OWNER
(confident)
GARDN boy?

BROCK
(meek)
Yes sir.

HOME OWNER
Where's your equipment?

BROCK
(beat)
Ah-- We don't provide equipment--

HOME OWNER
(annoyed)
That's a pretty extortionate rate for a gardener with no gear--

A silent stand off. Long Beat.

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BROCK
Do you have equipment?

The Home Owner steps outside, walks past Brock and heads for the garage.

HOME OWNER
Come on--

Brock peers into the man's house then turns and follows.

6 **INT. HUGE HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY** 6

The Home Owner leads Brock into the garage as the garage door lifts automatically. They stand in front of a selection of shiny new garden tools-- A lawn mower, Whipper snipper, Hedge trimmers-- The lot.

HOME OWNER
(walking)
You can start by mowing the lawns, trim the hedges nice and square-- Rake the leaves, spray the weeds, aerate the grass, prune the fruit trees, clean the pool and scatter some mulch on the garden beds front and back-- There's some mulch just out there--

The Home Owner points out the garage door toward a trailer full of mulch.

BROCK
(nervous)
You only booked me for three hours--

HOME OWNER
Yeah?

Brock takes a deep breath and looks down at his feet.

BROCK
Well-- That's a lot--

HOME OWNER
How about I just pay for however long it takes.

BROCK
(looking at feet)
Yeah cool-- It's just I've got stuff to do tonight--

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The Home Owner looks at Brock with contempt.

HOME OWNER
(referring to the app)
Must be hard to keep five stars on here--

Brock doesn't react.

HOME OWNER (CONT'D)
Look, if you get it all done I'll give you a nice tip-- Fair?

The Home Owner extends his hand. Beat. Brock reluctantly shakes it. Negotiation over.

HOME OWNER (CONT'D)
(walking out)
--And be generous with that mulch. Eight to ten centimeters the whole way round. Too thin and it's useless--

Brock looks back at the huge pile of mulch. Defeated.

7 **EXT. HUGE HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY** 7

Brock selects a playlist on his phone-- EMO BANGERS.

SOMETHING LIKE 'AFI, MISS MURDER' PLAYS.

Brock yanks the lawnmower's starting chord with his skinny arm. He yanks to the beat. It starts on the third pull.

MUSIC BUILDS as Brock mows the lawn. He synchronizes his steps and nods his head to the beat.

Brock trims hedges and rakes leaves. He moves more and more to the music.

8 **EXT. HUGE HOUSE - POOL - DAY** 8

Music builds as Brock cleans leaves out of the pool with a pool scoop. He dances, subtle at first but quickly evolving into a FULL-ON WEIRD-ASS EMO DANCE.

9 **INT. HUGE HOUSE - SUNROOM - DAY** 9

The Home Owner's CONSERVATIVE WIFE watches Brock dance and sing beside the pool from inside the house-- 'What a freak'.

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10 **EXT. HUGE HOUSE - POOL - DAY** 10

Brock uses the pool scoop as a microphone. In his mind he's singing on a stage to thousands of adoring fans.

11 **MONTAGE:** ARCHIVE IMAGES OF 90's & EARLY 00's EMO SINGERS ROCKING OUT ON STAGE-- 11

CUT BACK TO:

The Home Owner stands behind Brock. CUT THE BACKGROUND MUSIC.

BROCK
(full volume scream)
THEY WON'T EVER LET US BLOW OUR FILTHY HANDS APART--
AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!

Without the backing track Brock sounds like a dying animal.

The Home Owner taps him on the shoulder. Brock removes his headphones. The rock star fades-- The unemotional meek boy returns.

HOME OWNER
You alright mate?

Brock mumbles an awkward apology and looks down at his feet.

HOME OWNER (CONT'D)
We're heading off for the weekend--
Think you can put the gear away and shut the garage when you're done?

Brock looks up at the garage, then over to the Home Owner's Wife sitting in the passenger seat of a fancy car.

HOME OWNER (CONT'D)
There's a button just inside the door--

The Home Owner walks to the car. He shrugs his shoulders to his wife. She's clearly not happy.

Brock watches the car drive away towing the boat behind it. He offers a feeble wave.

12 **INT. HUGE HOUSE - VARIOUS - DAY** 12

THE SOUND OF SOMEONE PICKING A LOCK.

The front door opens. Brock steps inside. He moves straight for the liquor cabinet and makes himself a cocktail. He takes a sip. It burns.

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He explores the house sipping his cocktail. He casually picks up items then placed them back down.

He tries on a hats from a coat rack. He takes a tote bag off the rack.

Brock pokes his head into a large room. He moves toward a record player. He flips through the records and comes across 'THE BEACH BOYS-- PET SOUNDS'. He picks it up with reverence. He slides the record out the sleeve.

He places the record on the player - SOMETHING LIKE BEACH BOYS - WOULDN'T IT BE NICE plays.

Brock opens the fridge and helps himself to a square of chocolate.

He continues moving around the house, placing random objects into the bag-- A papier-mâché skull from Mexico. A miniature Eiffel Tower--

13 **INT. HUGE HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - DAY** 13

Brock enters a home office sipping his cocktail. The tote bag full of stolen trinkets hangs over his shoulder.

He sits down on the office chair and turns the computer on. He scrolls the recent search history. He clicks a link.

Graphic porn pops up on screen--

BROCK
What the fuck--

Brock minimized the porn window but THE SOUND CONTINUES.

Brock spots a document on screen-- 'PASSWORDS'. Beat. He clicks it.

He scrolls down a long spreadsheet of INTERNET PASSWORDS, BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS and all sorts of secret data.

He spots a USB stick on the desk. Beat.

He reaches for the USB stick and plugs it into the computer.

He drags the 'PASSWORDS' file onto the USB.

THE SOUND OF PORN BUILDS TO A CLIMAX. YES. YES. YES.

Brock removes the USB from the computer and holds it in front of his eyes. EMOTIONLESS.

THE SOUND OF AN ORGASM.

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14 **EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY** 14

MONTAGE: The University in full swing-- A young couple kiss on the University lawns. Diverse students chat, play and study together--- Hippies, Geeks, Yuppies, Muslims, Jocks, Preppies, Goths.

15 **EXT. UNIVERSITY CAFE AREA - DAY** 15

Brock sits alone in the uni cafe reading a book.

HUNTER (19) a preppy kid with foppish hair creeps up behind him and SHOUTS IN HIS EAR.

HUNTER
HEY!

BROCK
(unfazed)
Hey man.

Hunter sits down. He talks with a street swagger that doesn't quite match his privileged white-boy aesthetic.

HUNTER
You're one cold-ass mother fucker dude--

Brock removes his earphones.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
(referring to the book)
You never fucking stop do ya bro?

Hunters reaches for the book.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
(reading poorly)
NOMAD CAPITALIST-- HOW TO RECLAIM YOUR FREEDOM WITH OFFSHORE BANK ACCOUNTS--
(beat)
That's not on the reading list.

BROCK
I finished the reading list--

HUNTER
(mocking)
I finished the reading list--
(serious)
You're a fucking nerd--
You know that right?

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Brock dog-ears the page and puts the book down.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
How was ya weekend?

BROCK
Not bad-- Yours?

Hunter only asked so he could answer.

HUNTER
Ah man-- Fucking nuts!
Dad took us out on the boat.
I was wake surfing for like--
forever. Here, sus--

Hunter shoves his phone under Brock's nose. A video is pre-loaded on screen. THE SOUND OF KIDS CHEERING FOR HUNTER AS HE WAKE SURFS.

BROCK
Cool.

HUNTER
How bout you?

BROCK
Ah--
(thinking quick)
Just hung out by the pool--
(Hunter's not impressed)
Had a few drinks-- Listened to some
music-- Pretty standard.

Hunter looks down at his fancy watch.

HUNTER
(interrupting)
Shit man-- Economics.

Brock grabs his book. They rush off together.

16 **INT. UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY** 16

STUDENTS find their seats in a busy lecture hall. A BEARDED LECTURER stands up front. A simple line graph is projected behind him.

LECTURER
Alright guys, take your seats.
Phones off--
(the students obey)
Can anyone tell me what this is?

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Silence. A skinny arm with a black sweatband slowly raises. The lecturer points.

LECTURER (CONT'D)
Brock?

BROCK
A supply and demand curve.

LECTURER
Very good-- And what's this point here?

The lecturer points his laser to where the two curves meet.

BROCK
Equilibrium.

LECTURER
(impressed)
Someone's done the reading.

HUNTER
(under his breath)
Nerd.

LECTURER
And why is this important?

The Lecturer roves the lecture hall searching for a different student to answer. Beat. He looks back toward Brock.

LECTURER (CONT'D)
Help us out Brock--

BROCK
It's the point where supply meets demand, which is how we determine the market value of any product or service in a free market economy--

The Lecturer smiles. He's impressed. He continues the lesson.

Brock notices a beautiful blonde girl (LAUREN) looking back at him with admiration. He quickly looks away-- Bashful.

17 **EXT. RIVER TORRENS WIER - DAY** 17

Hunter and Brock walk across a weir.

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HUNTER
(mocking)
Equilibrium is the exact point where I get on my knees and suck your bearded cock--

BROCK
You really don't care about learning that stuff?

HUNTER
Dude-- There's two types of people in this world. Workers and Masters.
(beat)
The workers do and the masters own and I ain't interesting in the doing.

BROCK
How are ya gonna manage that?

HUNTER
The family business--
Passive income for life baby.

BROCK
Don't you think it's important to understand simple economics if you wanna run the family business?

Hunter stops in the middle of the weir. The shining city of Adelaide stands proudly in front of him.

HUNTER
I thought you where smart dude?

Brock stops.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Dad owns like 30 properties--
Each one earns more per year just sitting there than the average worker does working forty hours a week, fifty weeks a year--

THE SOUNDS OF SKATEBOARDS APPROACHING IN THE DISTANCE.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
And the profits we make on em, we buy more properties-- and on-- and on-- and on--

Both start walking again.

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BROCK
That doesn't sound right--

HUNTER
It is right-- Haven't you ever played monopoly? It's perfect-- If you're in the master class that is-- and anyone can join, you just need one thing--

BROCK
What's that?

HUNTER
A million bucks.

THE SOUND OF SKATEBOARDS ROLL CLOSER as Hunter and Brock reach the other side of the weir.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
(referring to the skaters)
I didn't know goth chicks came in cute.

Brock looks up to see FOUR SKATEBOARDERS rolling toward him along the pretty riverside path.

In the middle of the pack is KYLIE (19). She's dressed all in black, with ripped fishnet stockings and a bum-bag slung over her shoulder. She's laughing.

Brock hides his face as the skaters pass.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
(to Kylie)
Do a kick flip.

Kylie skids to a stop. Her laugh snaps into a scowl.

KYLIE
What did you say?

HUNTER
Do a trick--
Show us what ya got--

Kylie kicks her board up and walks at Hunter.

KYLIE
Show us what you've got mother fucker!

She throws her skateboard at Hunter's shins. Her face is fierce-- Avril Levine meets Harley Quinn.

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Hunter's cocky smile starts to fade as Kylie comes face to face with him.

Suddenly Kylie's scowl snaps into the sweetest, brightest smile you ever saw.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Brock! What the fuck man?

Kylie runs past Hunter and jumps on Brock, wrapping her lithe limbs around him like an emo octopus.

Hunter turns.

BROCK
(suffocated)
Kylie-- Hunter.
Hunter-- Kylie.

Awkward beat.

HUNTER
So how do you guys know each other?

Kylie waits for Brock to answer. He doesn't.

KYLIE
We're high school sweethearts.

HUNTER
Brock you dirty dog-- You never said you had a girlfriend--

KYLIE
(interrupting)
He doesn't-- He dumped me.

Brock looks at Kylie-- "Please stop".

Kylie scrunches her nose at him. Their eyes meet and stay locked. There's still some feelings between them.

HUNTER
(flirting)
So what do you do Kylie?

Kylie unlatches herself from Brock and reluctantly turns to Hunter.

KYLIE
I cut people.

Hunter looks confused. Kylie unzips her bumbag and pulls out a shiny metal object.

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KYLIE (CONT'D)
I'd like to cut you--
(she moves toward him)
Whoever's doing it now should be shot.

Kylie snips her hairdressing scissors close to Hunter's hair--
He flinches.

HUNTER
(Awkward laugh)
OK Sure-- Yeah-- Haha
Sign me up--
Where's the salon?

Kylie turns back to Brock.

KYLIE
Elizabeth Downs Shops--
Best fade north of Grand Junction.

Hunter laughs.

HUNTER
I thought there was nothing worth anything north of Grand Junction--

KYLIE
(to Brock)
Who the fuck is this guy?

Brock looks down at his feet, his typical conflict-avoidance technique.

Hunter suddenly notices how perfectly matched Kylie and Brock are. Their monochrome wardrobe and serious expressions. He looks back at the skateboard crew. They match too. He's the odd one out.

He looks down at his fancy watch.

HUNTER
Shit man. Gotta go--

He turns to leave, heading back over the weir.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
(turning back)
Oh Brock-- Dad and I are having a boat party this weekend-- You should come-- Bring ya old man!

Kylie gives Brock a strange look.

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HUNTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Kylie you're very welcome too.

KYLIE
Do I look like boat people to you?

HUNTER
(awkward laugh)
I guess not--

Hunter turns and rushes off. He waves to Kylie's skate crew as he passes. They watch him without reaction. A bigger "Fuck You" than actually saying it.

KYLIE
(to Brock)
So-- Watchya doing?

BROCK
Heading home I guess.

KYLIE
Cool-- Let's go.

Kylie waves goodbye to her skate friends and leads Brock away. He has no choice in the matter. A train passes behind them as they walk off--

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