

When Life Stops in Motion

By Matthew Rowney & Wilson James

EXT. SEASIDE TOWN, NO28 HOUSE -DAY

Annette, a distinguished woman of 50 or so, leads her dog along the stone-walled roads of the town she calls home; passing some flowers on the side of the road "Loving Husband" note attached, she hesitates...A reminder of the funeral of her recently deceased husband. She reaches two houses, one of which is hers. These days however, it doesn't feel much like home.

INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Annette sits at the table, she been crying. Trying to continue with the sorting items that's clearly been started. A voice note plays on an iPhone 4.

ALFRED (V.O)

Not personal enough. I don't think  
I'll get a second chance. Anyway be  
home in five, did you speak to Toby?

She pulls a box from the seat next to her, containing two stop motion figurines. Lifting one of them out, examining it. After a moment, placing it back in the box.

At the kitchen doorway Toby (31) appears. He gently knocks on the frame, half a smile to greet his grieving mother.

ANNETTE

Last voice note I received, about how  
they didn't go for his pitch. Felt  
he'd lost touch with what children  
want.

Toby has avoided eye contact and is now filling the kettle.

ANNETTE

How's the unpacking going then? still  
think it's ridiculous buying a house  
next door.

TOBY

Mum I just thought enough time had  
been lost. You know Lincoln's so  
excited to see you.

ANNETTE

Your father would have loved to have  
known him.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - EVENING

Toby is leaving. He glances at the shelf once more.

TOBY

Still keeping them out then?

On the shelf are four prestigious trophies, behind them is a small 6x4 frame with a baby photo of Toby in. Annette looks over to the shelf and notices Toby's photo frame is broken.

ANNETTE

It only broke recently when I was cleaning... and you know how useless I am with Amazon.

TOBY

It's fine, the trophies fill the space, besides he put a lot of his life into those films. He made thousands of kids very happy.

Awkward beat.

ANNETTE

Anyway, if you've unpacked your cutlery I'll be expecting some dinner tomorrow.

Between the vantage point of the trophies on the shelf, Toby leans in for a kiss.

INT. TOBY'S KITCHEN

Olive, Toby's wife, serves up dinner. Her apprehension gets the better of her as several peas slip onto the floor.

OLIVE

Did you check your Mum eats beef?

TOBY

Always has.

OLIVE

Well things change in time

TOBY

Relax. We moved to avoid stress

OLIVE

I thought we moved to support our

struggling son. Let's not make it about us.

TOBY  
Not this again.

OLIVE  
I worry about him Tobes.

TOBY  
I know you do.

Toby pauses for a moment as Olive exits.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - EVENING

Annette gets ready to head out for dinner, taking a moment to find her keys. Acknowledging her late husband's urn.

ANNETTE  
I've got better at that. Remember when we were late for Toby's first school play because you couldn't find the car keys.

Urn sits frighteningly quiet on the work top.

ANNETTE (CONTINUED)  
A night to remember. We did have a few.

Annette heads out the door, closing it behind her.

INT. TOBY'S HOUSE

The Walters sit around the dinner table. Olive opposite Lincoln who is next to Annette, his Nan. Lincoln (9) is deaf and only communicates with sign. A teddy, Cheeky the monkey, is perched next to Lincoln; he feeds him a chip from his plate. Annette stares at the monkey, soaking in who her grandchild is.

ANNETTE  
You would have liked your grandfather, grandad? Grandfather's new idea was all about monkeys in the jungle.

There's an awkward silence at the table, Lincoln continues to share his portion of chips with his stuffed toy.

TOBY

Lincoln can't actually hear you.  
Sometimes he can lip read, but we  
mainly sign.

OLIVE

It's not very hard to learn actually.  
And he loves that monkey, we call it  
Cheeky. (SIGNED) Don't we? Cheeky like  
you.

Lincoln's attention is pulled from the monkey, he grins at  
his mum and signs back.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)

Cheeky said the chips are very nice!

Toby and Olive laugh. Annette takes it all in, numbed and  
disconnected. Watching her family but feeling like a  
stranger.

ANNETTE

What's he saying?

TOBY

Just a joke.

ANNETTE

Must of been a hard adjustment?

OLIVE

Becomes second nature eventually.

ANNETTE

Reminds me of what your father used to  
say about his stop motion. There was  
this one...

TOBY

I think we were talking about Lincoln.

Lincoln is looking at his Nan.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)

It's very nice to have you here.

Olive ignoring the tension between mother and son.

OLIVE

Well, somebody is very excited about  
his Nan being so close. First of many

dinners I think.

Annette greets the comment with an accepting smile.

INT. TOBY'S KITCHEN

Olive and Toby clear the kitchen sides. Annette is a bit of a spare part, checking her watch.

ANNETTE

I had a thought. As I'm clearing out your dad's old belongings, perhaps Lincoln could come and choose some toys and old props?

TOBY

He won't know what they are.

ANNETTE

I'm sure he will, every kid knows your father's characters.

Toby glances over at her. There is a short yet uncomfortable silence.

ANNETTE

He hasn't watched them has he?

TOBY

Mum, all I've ever been is Alfred Walter's Son. I was disconnected from it all, first time I took Lincoln to the cinema I recognised that same look. I don't want that for him.

ANNETTE

It's a family legacy, not to be ashamed of.

TOBY

It's not that deep mum, he didn't know Dad or that he made films and he gets upset when he can't understand what's going on.

OLIVE

Loves playing with his toys. Making up little stories. Guess he's a Walter after all.

Annette forces an appreciative smile. In the hallway Lincoln

signs to his teddy bear.

INT. TOBYS FRONT DOOR

Annette looking down at Lincoln who stares back into her eyes, she instinctively signals I - by pointing to her eye, Love - pressing on her heart, You - pointing at Lincoln. A moment of hesitation from the parents. Lincoln steps forward wrapping his arms around his Nan's waist. Annette is consumed with some relief.

TOBY

He can come over tomorrow after school.

INT. ANNETTE'S LIVING ROOM -EVENING

Annette is stacking old DVDS, she starts to box up items. Looking up at the mantelpiece she fixates on a photo of Alfred with one of his trophies. The Urn is placed next to it.

ANNETTE

He's beautiful you know? He'll know you soon.

INT. ANNETTE'S HOME

Empty and silent. Posters, awards, photos of celebrity filled nights, but no sign of family. The possessions Alfred left behind.

INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Clutching the urn tightly to her chest, rocking as she listens again to the voice note.

ALFRED (V.O)

Having the monkeys dance wasn't enough we've all seen monkeys prance around like...well monkeys. They said I didn't know who I was trying to connect with.

Annette's sorrow is benched in an instant. She pauses the voice note and rather intensely stares at the two stop motion models now sat on the table.

INT/EXT - ANNETTE'S DOORWAY

Toby and Lincoln ring the bell...No answer... They wait. A beat passes. Toby shakes his head, and turns to walkaway. The

door starts to open. Annette is flustered and wired. She greets them with a massive smile, opening her arms to Lincoln who in turn cuddles her. The door flies shut. Toby is left slightly stunned and very confused.

INT. ANNETTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Annette kneels and gestures for Lincoln to join her, he's partially distracted by the boxes to the side. Lifting out a DVD of an old kids movie. Annette waits to see the reaction.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
Did you make this?

Annette unsure what was asked, points at the photo of Alfred and then herself. Lincoln puts two and two together and smiles, a thumbs up for approval.

Annette rather nervously but gently touches Lincoln's arm to get his full attention. Lincoln sits patiently, Annette pulls a parcel from behind her back. Ripping the seam and pulling out a book - Dummies Guide to Sign Language. Pointing at herself then the photo of the dummy. Lincoln laughs and nods.

INT. KITCHEN

The two make sandwiches,

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
Brown bread.

Annette pauses cutting and copies the sign, Lincoln nods.

INT. HALLWAY

Juggling a tray of snacks, she comes to a halt. The sound of the Television rings out.

TV NOISE (EXERT FROM KIDS SHOW)  
Wishes and dreaming.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Standing in the doorway Annette observes Lincoln sat one metre from the TV with an open DVD in front of him. One of Alfred's kids shows on the TV. He looks confused. It hurts to see him not understand. Composing herself, Annette enters and places the food down in front of him subtly turning the TV off.



## EXT. ANNETTE'S GARDEN

Annette taking the bins out freezes. Silhouetted shapes of Olive and Toby standing arguing visible from the window of their kitchen. This has clearly become heated very quickly.

TOBY

He's come home with a DVD in his bag.  
So typical forcing dad's work on him.  
It's exactly what they did to me!

OLIVE

He said he sneaked it into his bag,  
your mother didn't know!

TOBY

Oh if you believe that?!

OLIVE

He said he wanted to understand. She  
signed 'be good and you can come play  
again tomorrow' to him when she  
dropped him off.

TOBY

So?

OLIVE

We moved in like two weeks ago! She's  
trying to learn his way of doing  
things to connect with him. It's not  
so hard to believe he might be trying  
to do the same.

TOBY

'The power of film' my dad used to say  
, She'll do exactly the same forcing  
it on him and I can't be angry at her  
can I cause she's still here and  
grieving. So i'm the bad guy

## EXT. ANNETTE'S GARDEN

Annette stands with her hand extended to the dog to communicate to be silent. She's listening. Slightly dejected by the last comment but she looks more determined than ever.

## INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Annette sits at the table working on her signing, but also has the two stop motion puppets in front of her, she's

twisting their hands into different shapes. The urn is opposite her

ANNETTE

It was all for him, I just want him to see...but he has a point for film makers we have been rubbish at getting our point across

Smiling slightly and extended her hand to the Urn.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - MORNING

Annette helps Lincoln take his bag and coat off in the porch and then gestures to follow her into the house.

INT. ANNETTE'S GARAGE

Lincoln kneels, now eye level to the jungle setting. From his new perspective, the two monkeys look life-size, Focusing in on their hands in posed sign positions. In his mind, the two models animate and sign at one another. A back light to the mini set is turned on by Annette, Lincoln flinches, breaking the illusion - which fascinates him.

ANNETTE (SIGNED)

Would you like to help me make a movie?

Lincolns face fills with glee and wonder.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - DAYTIME

From within a drawer, Annette pulls several vintage lenses out and stacks them on top of a box Lincoln is holding,

ANNETTE (SIGNED)

Helps us see more view points

He nods and smiles with excitement.

INT. ANNETTE'S GARAGE

Lincoln stands over the mini set posing the hand of one of the dolls, Annette closely behind him; watches him, satisfied for the first time that they are bonding.

INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lincoln tucks into his lunch, while Annette reads the script, peering over her glasses she signs.

ANNETTE (SIGNED)  
Your granddad wrote this script but I  
think we can make it more fun.

They giggle with one another.

INT. ANNETTE'S GARAGE

The two model monkeys dance within the set, pulling back to show them on the camera screen, and back again to reveal Lincoln and Annette reviewing the shot. right thing, then swiftly exiting to rejoin her grandson.

INT. ANNETTE'S GARAGE

Lincoln pops the side of the camera open and retrieves the SD card, holding it up to his eye line and then passing to his Nan.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
How long till I can see it?

Annette chuckles.

ANNETTE (SIGNED)  
We will have to have a grand opening.  
Now you go get your bag. We are 5  
minutes late.

She starts to tickle chase him as Lincoln runs screaming out the door.

INT. TOBY'S HOUSE

Everyone is back at Toby's dining table, passing a pasta bowl around the table.

TOBY (SIGNED)  
What did you do today?

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
Just spent some time with Nan at her  
house.

Toby looks up at his Mum, she's sweetly smiling, he's curious about what they did.

ANNETTE (SIGNED)  
He did a little more than help me. We  
make quite the team.

OLIVE (SIGNED)  
How much more do you think you'll  
clear out?

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
We weren't clearing out Grandad's  
things.

Curiosity is killing Toby.

TOBY  
So what did you do with him Mum?

Lincoln looks a bit puzzled. No signs to accompany Toby's  
last remarks. Annette aware not to cut Lincoln out of the  
dialogue

ANNETTE (SIGNED)  
Well...

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
Nan introduced me to the possibilities  
of film, it was awesome!

Lincoln doesn't like the tension. Annette smiles content that  
Lincoln enjoyed himself. Olive extends her hand to Toby to  
calm him. He's slightly rattled.

TOBY  
I thought I said I didn't want him  
watching Dad's films? (towards Olive)  
Did I not say that love?

ANNETTE  
We didn't...

TOBY  
If you can't respect what I want...

ANNETTE  
What about what Lincoln wants? I'll  
have you know today I saw a bright,  
intelligent little man blossom...

TOBY (SIGNED)  
I think Lincoln it's time for bed, say  
goodnight to your Nan.

Lincoln reluctantly looks at his Nan, slightly guilty that  
she may be in trouble because of him. He looks to his Dad.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
I really enjoyed today and I wanted to  
show you what we did.

Toby is dismissive.

TOBY (SIGNED)  
Bed.

Lincoln gets down from the table, pausing as he passes  
Annette.

LINCOLN (SIGNED)  
I really did enjoy today.

INT. TOBY'S FRONT DOOR

Olive holds some leftovers in a tub, while Annette puts her  
shoes on.

OLIVE  
I wouldn't presume to tell you how to  
deal with your own son, but I can tell  
you whatever you did, my son loved it.  
Toby will come round.

ANNETTE  
I know you never met him, but Alfred  
was so tunnel visioned. The passion he  
had, it was infectious. But  
infuriating too. I think he forgot to  
tell Toby that everything he created  
and did was with him in mind. I just  
hope Toby doesn't make the same  
mistake.

OLIVE  
For Lincoln's sake, me too.

The two embrace in a hug to conclude the night.

EXT. HOUSES STREET VIEW - MORNING

A seagull, hovering. Vertical swish - Pan down from the bird  
to the houses.

INT. LINCOLN'S BEDROOM

Toby creeps open the door to Lincoln's room. It's a small  
room, sparsely decorated with classic posters and toys.  
Lincoln's out. He picks up a drawn picture of two monkeys its

as if he's seen an old family photo.

TOBY

They kept it?

Toby's attention is stolen at the sight of his mother and son in the garden running back and forth with camera equipment. He takes a deep breath. Olive enters from behind. Outside Annette waves one of the models at Lincoln who bursts out laughing. Toby closing his eyes. Olive wraps her arms around him from behind.

TOBY

I...

Olive stops Toby from talking.

OLIVE (SIGNED)

Go make it right

Looking down at the picture he faintly smiles.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - MORNING

Annette picks up the mail; an envelope labelled NAN in crayon, she opens it up revealing the words 'Neighbourhood Premiere of Lincoln and Annette Walters masterpiece 'Signs of Friendship'. Her attention is pulled up to the frosty glass panels on the front door. A blurred shape of a man the other side.

INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Sitting at the kitchen table sipping their teas, with both stop motion models between them. In front of the models is a very aged drawing of two similar looking characters. Lincoln sits on the floor playing

ANNETTE

Remember the old fridge, open the door too fast and a million magnets fell off and all your drawings went everywhere

TOBY

Vaguely remember a dinosaur magnet that was too heavy to hold anything.

ANNETTE

Your dad championed your artwork. I think he could see you expressing

yourself through it. Like he did with film.

A moment of silence. Toby picks up the drawing.

TOBY  
Lincoln really loves all this?

ANNETTE  
Fathers know their sons. I don't think you came over here to find out if he genuinely was enjoying our little project.

They smile at each other.

TOBY  
I'm sorry Mum.

Annette squeezes Toby's hand tighter. Toby looks at the table and spots Lincoln's Premiere invitation.

TOBY  
So, when's the big Premiere?

INT. KITCHEN

Popcorn popping. Coke pouring. Sweets filling cups. Cheese melting on nachos. It's like a "There's still time to grab..." advert before a movie. The family shift around the kitchen prepping the snacks. Olive enters with arms full of blankets.

EXT. ANNETTE'S GARDEN

Huddled up under several blankets the four family members sit facing forward

Above and behind them, the projector beam's colors cross. The beam's colours blend and merge into...

The first real visuals of the stop motion animation - the two ape figures communicate with each other using sign language with subtitles. Lincoln looks at his Nan with an appreciation and pride. As the first showing finishes they all clap with delight.

Annette stands with the popcorn bowl.

ANNETTE  
Refill before a second viewing?

Lincoln holds his hand out to wait. Standing up into the projection. Both Nan and grandson lit by the colours of the animation. Lincoln pulls out a small trophy from his jumper. WORLD'S BEST NAN, a gift shop Oscar. Annette smiles and holds it close to her chest,

ANNETTE (SIGNED)  
I love you... all

They embrace warmly.

INT. ANNETTE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Photo of Alfred behind through the window we can see the blurry image of Annette sitting down with a new bowl of popcorn, the rest of family momentarily welcoming her back then continuing to watch the film.

INT. ANNETTE'S CORRIDOR - EVENING

Inside on the shelf the three trophies are now accompanied by Annette's new trophy, and small photo frame of Lincolns drawing and re-framed Toby as a kid photo.