



ALANA VALENTINE's most recent award nomination is the Nick Enright Prize for Drama (NSW Premier's Literary Awards, 2017) for *Ladies Day*. She is the recipient of two Errols (Tasmanian Theatre Awards, 2017) for *The Tree Widows*, which was awarded Best Writing (Professional Production) and the overall Judges' Award for her 'creative integration of community, culture and heritage'. Alana was also nominated for an Errol for Best Director (Professional Production) for *The Tree Widows*. In 2017 Alana is again working with Bangarra Dance Theatre as dramaturg on *Bennelong*, after successful collaborations on their productions *Patyegarang* and *ID. Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, co-written with Ursula Yovich, will be produced by Belvoir in December 2017. In November 2017, Venus Theatre Company (USA) will world premiere Alana's play *The Ravens*. An extensive national tour of *Letters to Lindy* is planned for 2018. Alana's website is [www.alanavalentine.com](http://www.alanavalentine.com).

**LETTERS TO  
LINDY  
ALANA VALENTINE**



Currency Press, Sydney

## CURRENCY PLAYS

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## Foreword

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People have been coming to me for the last thirty-five years and saying, ‘We really must do something with the letters in the library, they’re fascinating’. And so I’d say, ‘Yes, you can have a look at them and see what you think’.

Once people started reading the collection of letters they would think, ‘Oh, I’ve got to do this’. But then the size and scale of it would overwhelm them and they’d never get any further. They always came back and went, ‘Ugh, that’s such a job. Too big for me.’

The last person who requested access was Alana Valentine, and she didn’t say ‘That’s such a job, I can’t touch that.’ She just kept saying, ‘That’s so interesting, can I look at more of them?’ She did, and then she showed them to me and interviewed me about how they were filed.

I read this play and I went all the way through it and I thought, yeah it’s okay but probably not finished yet. And I think I laughed once and I didn’t cry at all. Not a thing was changed since that first reading but when I saw it on stage I laughed and cried all the way through it. I think Reagan, who saw it with me, did much the same thing.

I don’t know how many of you are aware that there is very little in that play, only one scene I think, which is not actual quotes, either from me or quotes from the letters. The only scene that’s an amalgamation is the librarians’ scene, which gives you more of a feel for what people still think today.

I think Ms Valentine has done a brilliant job. It is probably the most powerful thing that has been done on my story and the most true to the behind-the-scenes of what I lived through.

This was a slice of my life. It will not impact you as it has me, but it will leave its mark all the same. I hope if nothing else you will reflect on the strength and impact that words carry.

*Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton*  
*December 2016*

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## INTRODUCTION

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There are three things that have divided this nation ...  
Conscription, Whitlam and Lindy Chamberlain.

The words are spoken by an unnamed librarian in Alana Valentine's finely-wrought play *Letters to Lindy* as he stacks some of the 20,000 letters that Lindy Chamberlain received during her ordeal of being tried, incarcerated, then exonerated of killing her baby Azaria.

The words, delivered matter-of-factly towards the end of the play, serve as an historical epitaph to an intimate and epic docu-drama spanning more than 30 years, from Azaria's death near Uluru in 1980 to the 2012 coronial ruling that finally ended the legal saga.

The starting point of Valentine's passionate inquiry came in the form of 199 boxes of correspondence at the National Library of Australia; a staggering archive from which the playwright has constructed an intricate, truthful and deeply human account of a case which captured the public's imagination from the moment Lindy Chamberlain uttered the words, 'A dingo's got my baby'. For here was an apparent murder mystery combining potent myths of the Australian outback, Aboriginal folklore, baffling cult-like 'characters' and elements of Greek tragedy. It was a time when the worst excesses of tabloid sensationalism fuelled an unthinking, sometimes brutal, spectator sport. Australia hadn't seen anything like it.

*Letters to Lindy* bears witness to good and evil of varying hues as it astutely juxtaposes the private and public. Thousands of Australians were compelled to write to Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton in the wake of baby Azaria's death. Many were compassionate and consoling; others hostile and threatening. Remarkably, Chamberlain-Creighton kept them all; the cards, letters, poems and prayers—even, perversely, a single black bootie with a red ribbon. (Meryl Streep, who portrayed Lindy in the film *Evil Angels*, received a matching bootie from the same anonymous source.) One of the letters hailed Azaria as a herald of the second coming of Christ. There were also death threats.

Having 20,000 letters on hand provided Valentine a fertile resource, but making sense of it all and creating a work for the stage that is lucid, thoughtful and absorbing has enormous challenges. Crucially, it requires the trust of its protagonist, leaps of faith, playfulness and purpose. It is here where the authenticity of private reveries about struggle and sacrifice make *Letters to Lindy* a memorable and precious work.

The play opens in the present with Chamberlain-Creighton sifting through archive boxes with a sure and steady hand, a device enabling a variety of stories to flow and flashbacks to be re-enacted. It is akin to the opening of a cold case and, even though we know how it ends, the directness and hard truths of *Letters to Lindy* feel as though information is being unearthed for the first time.

From the archive, or what Valentine calls ‘a community’, there emerge telling insights into the attitudes of Australian society, the nature of celebrity, a prevailing sense of judgement versus justice, and the grief of a woman who did not conform to expectation. As memories are stirred of the fateful night at the Uluru campsite when Lindy Chamberlain discovered that a dingo had taken her baby, Valentine fills the stage with figures and voices befitting a Greek chorus; an assemblage of first-hand witnesses and second-guessing armchair critics who salivate at the prospect of Chamberlain’s demise. Says a figure in the play: ‘You’re so bloody hard no tears have ever come out of your eyes.’

The audience hears the voices of admirers, sympathisers and haters—the ‘nasty ones’ as Chamberlain-Creighton lightly condemns them—the majority of whom are ordinary people with no stake in the case. There are, however, notable exceptions, including the British forensic expert James Cameron and the *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Malcolm Brown, who reported on the case from the outset and formed a close relationship with the Chamberlains. Indeed, Brown became a voice of reason and reassurance amid the melodrama and lynch-mob hysterics.

FOR MANY YEARS Alana Valentine has proved herself to be a rigorous, open-minded, keenly-observant chronicler of Australian society. In a number of instances, the playwright is not merely a detached observer but a champion of the underdog; of people deemed outsiders or outcasts. As evidenced in her plays *Parramatta Girls*, *Run Rabbit Run* and *Ladies Day*, Valentine has the skills of a journalist, the linguistic

flair of a dramatist and the instincts and conviction of a social crusader. There is also a lightness of touch, irony and a quick wit.

Authenticity, directness and truth are the hallmarks of her craft and although she can rightly be described as a proponent of verbatim or documentary theatre, the term is limiting given the way Valentine shapes and exploits first-hand interviews and the wealth of material at her disposal.

Like the prolific and prodigious British playwright David Hare (*Stuff Happens*, *The Permanent Way*, *Via Dolorosa*, *The Power of Yes*, to name a few), Valentine is perhaps best described as a truth-teller of the modern stage. She, too, keenly embraces verbatim storytelling shrewdly mixed with fiction and persuasive argument. The writer may appear to vanish to the edges of the page but her voice is there in the shape and order of things, and the way light is shed amid chaos, darkness and strife.

At the height of her powers, Valentine stirs, agitates, cajoles and makes the audience an active participant in the ‘community’, which is invariably an environment of conflict, struggle, pain and hope. We are invited to wrestle with our conscience and to look beyond black and white. *Letters to Lindy* has the capacity to tear at belief systems. It is testimony to Alana Valentine’s craft that she presses disparate facts and confronting realities into service like a conductor of an orchestra; assuredly drawing out rhythms, colours and moods, judiciously using repetition to amplify themes, and turning up the dramatic heat to make the spectator sit up and take notice when it most counts.

An example of this comes in Act One of *Letters to Lindy* as Valentine explores the impact of language and its power to invest the mundane with mythic power. From the moment Lindy Chamberlain uttered the words ‘A dingo’s got my baby’, it was as if her fate was sealed.

LINDY: I thought of the baby not myself  
 I didn’t get emotional or hysterical  
 because I wasn’t thinking of myself  
 I was thinking there might still be a chance  
 so I give the news as clearly and precisely as I can,  
 ‘A dingo’s got my baby’.  
 So that they don’t have to waste time on  
 ‘What is it? What’s happened? What’s wrong?’



I just screwed it all up into what's happened  
 and how and the race to fix it.  
 Because you're in it  
 it's happening  
 and she's gone  
 and you can't undo it  
 and you can't unlose her  
 and you can't for a moment  
 indulge your feelings  
 so you yell,  
 'The dingo's got my baby!'  
 And that's where it begins.

*Letters to Lindy* is replete with speeches like these. They are unmistakably Australian, forthright, wry, exasperated. Forcefully and poetically the play peels back layers of distortion, accusation and lies to reveal Chamberlain-Creighton's warmth, stoicism, courage and, moreover, her forgiving nature.

Some of the most moving and harrowing scenes involve Lindy's sons and their attempts to reach out for help when all seems lost. Their desperation and concern for their torn-apart mother is conveyed in a letter they have written to the Prime Minister, Prince Charles and Princess Diana. That they write to such well-known figures on the world stage heightens the feeling that they have nowhere else to turn in a battle where enemies, at least on the face of it, outnumber allies.

5th December 1985.

Avondale College, Cooranbong.

Dear Mr Tuxworth, Mr Hawke, Prince Charles and Princess  
 Diana,

I can still remember the dingo walking on my chest.

I loved my bubby Azaria and so did Mommy

We need Mummy at home so does Kahlia need a mommy Can  
 you make them let my mum come home to me

From Reagan

The climactic Act One scene amplifies the desolation and loss. Lindy receives a phone call about her son, Reagan, and instinct tells her that the news cannot be good.

GUARD: Chamberlain, you've got a phone call.

LINDY: Me?

GUARD: Yes, you.

LINDY: I knew it had to be bad because you weren't allowed calls.

So I knew it had to be bad. My son, Reagan, had been standing watching a neighbour's bonfire when a glass bottle that had been thrown into the fire exploded. The shards of glass cut through the right side of his face, slicing his cornea and right eye.

REAGAN: Mummy.

LINDY: He'd been asking for me since it happened.

REAGAN: Mummy.

LINDY: And Reagan is not a child to ask. He's like me, he hides his feelings, but he doesn't understand why he can't be comforted by his mother. They won't let me go down to Mulawa, they won't let me go down to see him, and if he comes to see me, the taking off and landing of getting on a plane is only going to put more pressure on his damaged eye.

REAGAN: Mummy!

LINDY: That was ... that was really hard. That was ... I went down low that time. Lower than I'd been. Low. The next time the family came to visit, Reagan walked in the gate with an eye patch on, and then at the end of the visit when I went to say goodbye to him, he couldn't be found ...

As in Valentine's drawn-from-life drama *Parramatta Girls*, the personal becomes political. The act of rekindling the past is not simple or straightforward. The benefit of hindsight sees that words and deeds accrue any number of ironies and, in some instances, assume a chilling tone.

*Letters to Lindy* is a story of sacrifice and human resilience. Tests of endurance cumulate into an unyielding rhythm and dramatic intensity through which shines Lindy's unwavering faith and a value system that refuses to succumb to hate in the face of adversity and injustice.

The significance of Valentine's work lies not only in its exploration of an enthralling chapter in Australian history, but in its humanity. The truthful, witty and moving play is arguably more immediate and insightful than the opera (*Lindy*, 2002) or the film (*Evil Angels*,

1988). It succeeds because of the direct and affecting way it reveals the devastating personal cost and burden of a quintessentially Australian woman who, when you think about it, is no different to a relative, friend or neighbour.

*Bryce Hallett*  
*March 2017*

Bryce Hallett is a former arts editor and chief theatre critic at the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He is the writer of the musical bio-drama *Freeway—The Chet Baker Journey* and the rock drama *Rolling Thunder Vietnam*.

*Letters to Lindy* was first produced by Merrigong Theatre Company in association with Canberra Theatre Centre at Illawarra Performing Arts Centre, Wollongong, on 26 July 2016, with the following cast:

LINDY	Jeanette Cronin
ENSEMBLE [FIGURE 3]	Glenn Hazeldine
ENSEMBLE [FIGURE 2]	Phillip Hinton
ENSEMBLE [FIGURE 1]	Jane Phegan

Director, Darren Yap

Designer, James Browne

Lighting Designer, Toby Knyvett

Composers and Sound Designers, Max Lambert and Roger Lock

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Seeking permission to use these letters has been a remarkable journey in itself. Having sent out hundreds of permission requests to addresses which are often more than thirty years old, I have been assisted by those who have generously forwarded the letters on to former occupants, by postal services that have returned the envelopes unopened, and by relatives of letter-writers who are deceased.

I wrote to three different Marilyn Nolans in three different states (thank you to the electoral rolls held at the NLA) to get permission to use her incredibly moving letter about meeting Lindy in the Mount Isa maternity ward. I wrote to Lance and Merle Puckeridge at the Mission to Seafarers in Wollongong. It never reached them but they came to see the play at Merrigong and made themselves known to me. Lance told me that Lindy's father was a great man who never said a bad word against anyone. Lance said that even when asked about the devil, Lindy's father said, 'Well, he's very hardworking'. I told this story to Lindy before we went onstage for a forum at the NLA and she laughed, delighted at this memory of her beloved father.

In Nowra, Lindy asked me to invite the Hatchmans to see the play at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre. In 1980 they lived next door to Lindy's parents, who did not have a telephone of their own, so it was on their phone that Lindy's parents received the call telling them that Azaria had been taken. I wrote to an old address from the files and was delighted when they replied that they would like to attend the show.

Kath Fisher, whose charming and very funny letters and poems were very gratefully received by Lindy during her time in jail, became a continuing source of amusement between Lindy and myself. The letters I wrote seeking her permission to use her poems came back 'return to sender' so I called every Kath Fisher I could find in the Yellow Pages. Then Rick Creighton, Lindy's husband, rang and said that Kath had written to Lindy via her website and left an email address ... only the email bounced back when they tried to contact her. I tried as well but, alas, no luck. Then we did a story for *New Idea* around the time of the production of the play and, luckily, the journalist misspelt Kath's name

(I heard Lindy give it correctly). Kath again got in contact with Lindy and then with me. She generously gave full permission to use the letters and poems in this play—one of which Max Lambert expertly set to music for the beginning of Act Two.

The hardest email I have received during the research for this book and play was just days after we opened in Wollongong. John Kimber, the son of Gloria Kimber who wrote the wonderful ‘Lullaby for Azaria’, with which I end the play, wrote to tell me of his mother’s death, only weeks before.

‘It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that we lost our dear Mum, Gloria, on Monday 25th July at the age of 98 years. I am Gloria’s eldest son, John. For the past 7 years I have been living in the family home as Mum’s carer. I brought Mum home from hospital on Thursday and I am sorry to say that she slipped away before I was able to read her your letter (inviting her to the opening of the play). Mum would have been delighted with your news. She had not forgotten. From time to time she used to wonder how your play was progressing. Mum started writing plays, poems and short stories in her youth. She used to bring her troupe from her home town, Murray Bridge, to Adelaide to put on her plays. During the war she was Possum in the Childrens Pages of the *Sunday Mail*. Later she was editor of the Women’s Pages. My two brothers, Robert and James, and I are lucky to have had such a loving mother of whom we can be so proud.’

I found a community in the 199 boxes of Mrs Chamberlain-Creighton’s collection in the NLA and that that community is as diverse and contradictory and complex as any I have ever tried to understand. I would like to thank every person who took the trouble to sign my copyright clearance document and return it to me. If your letter is here and you have not heard from me, please write to me via the Harold White Fellows Room, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600.

I would like to acknowledge the staff at the National Library of Australia who awarded me a Harold White Fellowship in 2013—Margy Burn, Robyn Holmes, Catriona Anderson, Kylie Scroope and many others—you are the esteemed custodians of this precious bounty.

Thank you to Wesley Enoch and Bec Allen who were my referees for the successful NLA Fellowship Application. I have used only letters written to Mrs Chamberlain-Creighton though the collection contains many letters sent jointly to the Chamberlains and the rest of the family. I acknowledge their continuing pain and loss, which is largely outside the scope of my research. I thank Simon Hinton, Leland Kean and Merrigong Theatre Company who commissioned and produced *Letters to Lindy* and Darren Yap, Max Lambert, James Brown, Toby Knyvett, Sophie Fairweather and other production staff, and most of all the profoundly gifted cast—Jeanette Cronin, Glenn Hazeldine, Phillip Hinton and Jane Phegan. Thank you also to my agent Sharne McGee and to Vicki Gordon. Rick Creighton, thank you for your patient diligence, and Mrs Chamberlain-Creighton, Lindy, thank you for trusting me with your words, your precious collection and your generous wisdom.

On the night of the Wollongong opening, after the play, Lindy made a speech, much of which is reproduced in her foreword. When she finished she walked over to where I was standing, crying, and said: ‘See, I got you back for all the crying in the play!’ And then she embraced me.

*Alana Valentine*  
*December 2016*

## **SETTING**

The primary setting is an abstract re-creation of Lindy's home, her study or a spare bedroom, in which she is sorting through and filing all the 20,000 letters, photos, bookmarks and textcards she received from the public during her 35-year ordeal for deposit in the National Library of Australia. Some letters are filed, others are spilling out from boxes.

## **COSTUME**

Because Lindy is both a qualified seamstress and a terrifically stylish person (and was exhaustively criticised for this), costume is extremely important to the central role. It is my hope that the character of Lindy will transform from her 1980s self to the woman who is finishing the filing in 2016. I imagine that clever costume changes can be effected with wigs and some of Lindy's iconic clothes. Differentiation between the letter-readers should be done carefully and entertainingly with costumes and props.

## **ENTRANCES & EXITS**

Entrances and exits of the ensemble members are at the discretion of the director. The three ensemble cast members play letter-writers, other characters, and the chorus. In most cases there is time for the actors to go offstage and re-enter as a different character, though it is equally valid for them to remain continuously onstage and effect the change to another character either vocally or physically in view of the audience. Entrances and exits for Lindy are indicated in the stage directions but also may be adjusted by the director.

## **MUSIC**

In the original Merrigong production, Kath Fisher's 'My Washing Isn't Omo Bright' was performed as an acapella chorus and set to music by Max Lambert, as was Gloria Kimber's 'Lullaby', which ends the play. I would urge producers to use Lambert's glorious music where possible, or to set these two works to music in any case. If you wish to use Lambert's music, contact Currency Press for details.



## **GRAMMAR & SPELLING**

The letter extracts in the play are reproduced as faithfully as possible, including the particular grammar and spelling of the originals. My aim in doing so is to give readers, including potential theatre-makers, and our audiences, as authentic an experience of this historical archive as possible and indicates no judgement or comment on the letter-writers.

## **COURT TRANSCRIPT**

The court scene on pages 12–15 is transcript from the original trial of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain in 1982, on the public record.

## **HISTORICAL NAMES**

The Central Australian monolith, Uluru, was commonly referred to as Ayers Rock in the early 1980s.

## **COPYRIGHT NOTE**

Where possible, permission has been sought by the author from these copyright holders for clearance to use these letters in this play. In most cases permission has been obtained but, due to the age of some letters, in some cases the original letter writer has been uncontactable due to the address being out of date, anonymity or other reasons why the letter has become an ‘orphan work’ under the Copyright Act. Any letter-writer whom I have not been able to contact can write to me via the Harold White Fellows Room, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600.

## **DIGITAL IMAGES**

Digital images of some of these letters (and many others from the collection) appear in Alana Valentine’s *Dear Lindy*, published by the National Library of Australia in 2017. A useful timeline of events associated with the Chamberlains’ ordeal also appears in that publication.

## **CHARACTERS**

LINDY CHAMBERLAIN-CREIGHTON

FIGURE 1, female, any age; doubles as: ANONYMOUS (letter-writer), NOLAN, ROFF, PHILLIPS, VALERIE THOMSON, MAY, CHRISTINE GEORGE, ROSLYN, INMATE, LILY, GUARD, KATH FISHER, MAVIS, JENNY, GREG, GORDON, SUSAN, GAYLE HANNAH, BARBARA, ELIZABETH MORRIS.

FIGURE 2, male, any age; doubles as: ANONYMOUS (letter-writer), JUDY, BARRITT, CAMERON, SCOTT, JAMES THOMSON, RONALD, MAN, GUARD, GLENDON, AIDAN, MALCOLM BROWN, NEIL, LIBRARIAN, GLORIA KIMBER.

FIGURE 3, male, any age; doubles as: ANONYMOUS (letter-writer), GOODWIN, BROWN, SCOTT, BARKER, PAULA, JAMES DRAM, SECURITY, MAN, REAGAN, MIKE, HELEN, LIBRARIAN.

## ACT ONE

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2016. LINDY enters, carrying a box of letters.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: Hello, murderers.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: I am sending you a photo, I thought you would like to see and frame and keep on your dressing table to remind you of the days of murdering the baby you always say you didn't.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: What a pack of lies.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: Read this out to your kids and let them know what people thought of you.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Don't think it has all died down, far from it.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: Are you still borrowing clothes from other people?

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: Why didn't you put this lovely photo of you on this lovely book you have written and let you see what you looked like at that time instead of the stuck-up-looking bitch you are now?

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Fancy coming on TV and saying what you do, you ought to hang your head in shame.

ALL: Yours truly.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: Actress Lindy, if you are so poor, why have you got so many clothes?

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Killing Azaria made you a millionaire.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: You're so bloody hard, no tears have ever come out of your eyes.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: But the eldest boy probably made the first nick into poor little Azaria's throat and you had to do the rest, don't you think you have enough of Australian taxpayers' money? And by the reading you reckon another kid is going to die by a dingo, are you going to do that job too?

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Judge Morling didn't find you innocent did he, he left the case opened. I hope one day you'll be punished and that husband of yours.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: I would not walk across the road to see the film because it shows us what a bad-tempered bitch you are, no wonder

Australia hates the movie where did the blood come from poor little Azaria I could not kill a kitten but your murder was premeditated because you studied the life of dingoes fancy describing seven different dingoes in your trials.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: You're a cunning bitch and will always be one get out of Australia when your [sic] rich and famous.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Imelda Marcos eat your heart out.

ALL: Disgusted.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: Lindy, for the sake of the poor wee mite, if you both know her resting place show where it is, don't leave her to lie in the wilderness. Please I offer a plea from Azaria.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: I gazed with an infant's smiling trust,

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: that was changed to shocked surprise.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 1]: And as death glazed my dying eyes I cried—

ALL: Why? Why must I die!

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 2]: Still my restless spirit cries from my unmarked grave, Sighing—  
Why ... oh why?!

ALL: From an annoyed decent person.

ANONYMOUS [FIGURE 3]: You murdered Azaria and your husband knew you planned the murder because you made a black dress to bury her. You both should be ashamed of yourselves. Some witnesses of yours should be charged with telling lies.

No dog or dingo was involved. Just you too [sic]. God will punish you both. The welfare should take all your kids away from you as your sons will hate you both in years to come they won't trust you as they know you are liars.

Thou shalt not kill. Dozen dingoes were also shot for your lies. Azaria won't rest in peace because her mother was too weak to tell the truth.

You made a lot of money from your baby's death and now you are using your new baby to get out of prison. You both belong to Satan.

You are not Christians. You are both weak. Stop using young babies to get your own way. Better people are still in prison not using the public for money also the media for money. You both should grow up and work for your living.

LINDY: I thought we'd start with the comic relief. Yeah. That's what I used to call the nasty letters. Because I must have received, oh, at least twenty thousand letters just up to the point of when I got out of jail, and then more afterwards and then all the emails of course. I'm still getting about one thousand emails a year. Two out of three are apologies. But the nasty ones were always just a bit different. Some of them even gave me the giggles, I got the giggles with Meryl Streep over one of them because there was a woman who wrote and told me she wouldn't spend any time on me and wouldn't be supporting me. Meryl got an identical letter and in both of them she sent a black bootie with red ribbons. So Meryl asked me if I would like hers to have a pair and I said sure. This woman who said she wouldn't spend any time on me actually provided me with a lovely pair of black booties. So.

*LINDY is now holding a lovely pair of black booties, with red trim.*

MARILYN NOLAN [FIGURE 1]: 17th February 1986.

Dear Lindy,

My thoughts have been with you for many years now and I do apologise for not writing to you before this. I have always felt a special bond with you from the first day I met you—in the Mount Isa Maternity Ward—in the private bathroom—on the 12th June 1980. Azaria and Elisha were both born the day before. I cannot forget your kindness to me whilst I was in hospital and both my mother (Di Collins who has also recently written to you) and I have never forgotten your intense joy in your daughter Azaria.

I have also never forgotten your very true and intense grief at the memorial in Mount Isa for Azaria. You were trying to be fairly composed when you were greeting all the people leaving the church after the memorial and then you saw me and we both broke down and hugged each other.

Lindy, I don't think you know that I was a Detective in the Mount Isa CI Branch prior to having Elisha and over the years I had personally dealt with Child Abusers and the like and also murderers.

I always had a special knack of knowing whether or not a person was guilty of what they were accused of (whether they confessed to it or not) and in all cases I dealt with I was proved right.

And that is why, since the 17th August 1980, I have always (I have never once wavered in my thinking) said, to as many people who would listen, that there was no way in the world that you murdered your daughter.

Azaria and yourself are never far from my thoughts—each birthday for Elisha is both a happy and sad occasion for me, because Elisha is a constant reminder of Azaria.

Kindest regards,  
Marilyn Nolan.

LINDY: She came round and saw me soon after we got back, soon after it happened, after she was taken. And that's why she sort of 'fessed up all those years later. She came round with the baby and beforehand they asked me and they were thinking they should leave it behind and I said no, bring her. They were born on exactly the same day, so her little Elisha was exactly the same size as Azaria would have been. Still only very small.

JUDY [FIGURE 2]: 3 Oct, 1980.

Please forgive me for not writing to you before this. I have tried to ring you but no answer—I'm afraid we are so isolated that until we heard the TV news last night we had imagined that the forensic report findings had closed the case of Azaria's death, and we had no idea of what you must be undergoing.

LINDY *exits*.

We had never spoken to anyone (the police or the media) about the night of Azaria's death since it had always seemed so totally and irrevocably true that she was taken by a dingo, and the possibility that it could be questioned—however remotely—simply didn't arise. Anything we could have contributed would have been unnecessary. However, after hearing the latest news and reading the *Woman's Day* I realised how appalling gossip and innuendo can be, so I am writing to say that if there is anything we can do or say to help we will do so with all our heart.

And perhaps telling you why we were so utterly convinced that the

dingo had taken the baby will help. Being camped within feet of your tent and with the night so still and clear meant that Bill, Catherine and I were aware of what was happening maybe more than most people around.

First I must say that both Bill and I heard the dingo growl. We've a labrador dog at home who gives the same kind of growl and we both heard it (and noted it for the same reason) without commenting at the time. I don't remember hearing the baby crying—I guess because it would be a sort of ordinary sound that I wouldn't bother to register.

*1980. LINDY enters in a sundress.*

The next thing I was aware of was you, Lindy, crying something like, 'O God, the dingo's got my baby'. And I simply couldn't believe my ears—in fact the whole idea seemed so completely incredible that we were stunned. Almost literally. And then everyone started moving with torches. Bill moved the car to shine the lights into the sandhills and then he and Catherine drove down to tell the police. Please let us know if there is anything that we could possibly do to help in any way. With love,  
Judy and Bill and Catherine.

LINDY: Judy and Bill were key witnesses in the trial of course. They were in the tent next door. They never wavered, they never flinched from insisting that the dingo took Azaria. Never. Nobody who was actually there ever did.

So let's start at the beginning then:

I'd put Azaria down in the tent to sleep

returned to the barbeque area

when Michael and the others with us, heard the baby cry out.

So when I went to check on her I saw a dingo,

a wild dog, coming out of the tent with something in its mouth and

I called out,

'The dingo's got my baby'.

It's a statement of fact.

And it's very clear.

I know now that it's considered too clear.

Apparently it would have been more believable if I had choked, hysterical,

'In the tent ... a ... a ... get out ...'  
 Oh, I know what they would have liked,  
 'Get away from her,  
 Get away, you,  
 Get away from my baby'.  
 They wouldn't have made fun of that.  
 'Oh God, Oh God, Oh God!'  
 Or just a blood-curdling scream  
 and instant tears.  
 But that's not what I do  
 that's not going to help  
 I thought of the baby not myself  
 I didn't get emotional or hysterical  
 because I wasn't thinking of myself  
 I was thinking there might still be a chance  
 so I give the news as clearly and precisely as I can,  
 'A dingo's got my baby'.  
 So that they don't have to waste time on  
 'What is it? What's happened? What's wrong?'  
 I just screwed it all up into what's happened  
 and how and the race to fix it.  
 Because you're in it  
 it's happening  
 and she's gone  
 and you can't undo it  
 and you can't unlose her  
 and you can't for a moment  
 indulge your feelings  
 so you yell,  
 'The dingo's got my baby!'  
 And that's where it begins.

FIGURE 2: Statement of Wallace Victor Goodwin:

GOODWIN [FIGURE 3]: About the 16th August, 1980, in company with my wife, two children and mother in law, we set out on a camping holiday to Ayers Rock and Alice Springs via the Flinders Ranges.

On Thursday, the 21st August, 1980, we arrived at Ayers Rock, around twelve midday. We set up two tents, a twelve by nine and nine