

# Offhand

—Han Liang Gan

Late afternoon and still no news of this elusive scientist. All the local TV stations have stopped broadcasting, and it's only Sam's satellite that's kept you abreast of what was occurring around Australia. None of it is particularly pleasant. Unless this scientist comes forward with information, soon there won't be much left to save.

Sam sits slumped in his chair, refusing to get up, as if the life has been sucked out of him. Something about that studio yesterday had snapped his spirit, his bravado and jingoism washed away by a relentless surge of Americana. What had he said about himself, Rusty Crowe and Cate Blanchett being the trifecta, the big shots of the Australian entertainment industry? Would either of them have been so easily overwhelmed? Would Rusty have let things get the better of him? No, Rusty would be reaching for the nearest phone...

But Sam hadn't been wrong about being famous—after all, the crowds had parted for him at the studio. And just then, watching some international satellite news channel, you get an idea. Sam Kekovich—lone Aussie, battling to save his race from extinction. Sam Kekovich—the man, the myth, the legend. Sam Kekovich—appearing tonight on CNN. It was perfect. The world loved slightly madcap Australians, and with their attention focused on Australia, Sam could even go prime time!

You race to Sam's computer, hurriedly scanning a website for the email address you're after. As you send off the email, offering an exclusive interview, merchandising rights, and rights to any feature film, you start having some doubts about the success of this plan. But sure enough, a reply comes through in barely a minute.

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