

SORRY BUSINESS

*Penni wanted excitement,
she wanted risk. She
wanted to live an entire
life in three months.*

KRISTEN



PENNI P.

Who is Penelope Palmer?

Penni is a wild one. Beautiful and smart. Penni is from Brisbane. Penni is an anthropologist at the ANU, and spends a lot of time going bush to the Northern Territory. When I met her, Penni had just separated from Li Jen, her partner of four years.

Penni has just burned through three months of my life like a raging bushfire. Passionate impulsive, pushing every boundary and breaking every taboo, trying to bundle up an entire lifetime in twelve wild weeks. I'd finally met my match. And now Penni is missing.

Penni was pretty quiet when she wasn't raging. I could sense her original, calm personality. She was always emotional, up and down and up again. Not in a sick way, just... untethered. She cried a lot, went for walks, dropped plans.

I fell under her spell. Our first meeting was an academic hook up. Penni—Dr Palmer—was interested in Aboriginal creation myth and mortuary art, and I was curating an exhibition on media and emotion, with lots of Victorian spirit photography on display. A strange matching. We talked a lot about the unseen, about things present yet non-present.

We talked and talked and talked, went to dinner, and talked some more. The woman was on fire, entirely consumed by intellectual issues I could barely fathom. She was trying to move beyond her rationalist scepticism.

Penni stayed the night. And for the next twelve weeks—every weekend, some whole weeks—she kept on staying the night.

Penni was consumed by something big happening up north. She never did say much about it. Penni held her many secrets close, but I know that she was more than a little afraid.

And Penni never said goodbye. She left her work in Canberra suddenly and hopped a flight north to Arnhem Land, and now the police are looking for her. Seems her family are concerned.

I hope that Penni knows how much I loved her company. I hope I didn't encourage her too much in her wildness. I hope I listened deeply enough. I hope I eased some of her pain.

And I hope that Penni is alive. I hope our time together was healing. I hope she comes back from her wilderness of ghosts and spirits.

I have her flat key. Tonight I will drive to Canberra and try to find her myself.



Kristin Krychek, *Pretty Penni P.*, 2013, From the collection of the NSWAG.

KRISTEN: THE WOUND, THE SCAR, THE LIE

Kristen's Wound: Emptiness

Kristen is empty inside, and so often detached from a sense of responsibility to others, acting impulsively on desires, whims, or inclination. She fills the inner void with frantic action.

Possible Causes

A desire to live in the moment and without boundaries, growing up in a home with rigid rules and expectations, selfishness, having a near-death experience that emphasizes one's mortality, Irresponsibility

Kristen's Scar: Impulsive

Acting in response to one's emotions, seeing something that one wants and immediately going after it, spontaneity—not planning (artistic method), chafing under too many rules or restrictions, excitability, impatience, transparency; not filtering one's words or acting a certain way to project a desired image, unpredictability, curiosity, fearlessness, acting on intuition, trusting people too quickly

Kristen's Lie: Filling the Void

I live in the moment, for the moment, by the moment. Friends and lovers come and go, but I never look back. Someday I'll feel something deep. Someday I'll connect. With someone real. With myself. One day, but not now. When I stop, everything is quiet and dark. So I keep moving.

Associated Emotions

Curiosity, desire, eagerness, elation, excitement, impatience, frustration, regret

Positive Aspects

Impulsive characters make life interesting and are often catalysts for change and conflict. Their ability to easily do and say what they please can be viewed by others as the ultimate freedom. If the impulsive character is also loyal to a friend, family member, or cause, there is no limit to what they would do in a time of need.

Negative Aspects

Kristen seldom thinks about those around her, though her photography feeds this otherwise shadowed aspect

of her character. She can create problems for those who try to keep up or clean up. She often changes plans on short notice, causing considerable friction in friendships. She can take a situation from bad to worse. Kristen is often volatile, ruled by emotion, and prone to addiction She has trouble applying the brakes, and the scars from this are mounting.

Healing: Overcoming Emptiness as a Major Flaw

Kristen needs to recognize that immediately acting on impulse will often lead to unpleasant consequences—for her and for others. If she fears for Penni, she will question her role. She must learn to slow down, care for others, and base decisions on thought rather than emotion. She needs to find a reality for her life, and to decide what is important to her.

Traits in Other Characters that may cause Conflict

Analytical, cautious, disciplined, mature, patient, responsible, unselfish, violent

KRISTIN



Kristin Krychek, Lake Mungo, 2009, artist's collection. Kristin Krychek is a Sydney photographer and curator, working mainly in expressionist portraiture and landscape. With her portraits, she captures her subjects spontaneously, *en plein air*, at work and play, in ecstasy and despair. With special lenses, she captures the hidden energies of emotion. Her more abstract landscape vistas capture Australia's brutal sunlight and stark, encompassing darkness. Most recently she has curated *Machineries of Grief—Media and Emotion* at the Powerhouse Museum. The exhibition explores the art of death and dying, including nineteenth century lantern slides from seances, spirit photos, and audio and visual ghost recordings.

I think something's wrong with me, something that's really hard to change. I think something's glued down wrong. It gets me into a lot of trouble.

I find it difficult to connect to people.

I'm not sure who I am, or what I want. I'm not a feminist, not a doormat, not a dyke, not a bi, not an artist and certainly not an elite. I'm something else, something my tiny mind can't wrap itself around. I'm looking for who I am. I get paid to be a media curator, but that's because I can't be bothered to get a real job clubbing baby koalas. I can be condescending. I *like* being condescending. I hurt people, bad. And often I don't even realise it.

Penni Palmer burned through my life like a surgical laser. I still get a thrill touching the scars. It was like she was cramming an entire lifetime into three months. I guess I miss her.

I dreamed of Penni last night. The police called yesterday, asked a few questions about her visits. Apparently, she's been listed as missing after flying north: her family think she's gone off the radar a bit too long. That's sad.

Anyway, I dreamed of Penni, all vague and blurry and slow like being underwater. You know, *those* sorts of dreams. I woke up with bruises all over my body. *I ache*. It's a bewildering and painful mystery.

This is bad. We were bad, *are* bad, for each other. Friends in the bondage community actually warned me; Penni was heading right off the rails. No sense of boundaries or limits.

Petrol, meet match.

Our time together was filled with passion and risk taking. It was also full of dark insights, long talks, drugs, drinking, tears, euphoria and depression.

And like, high strangeness.

One day Penni took me looking for a wedding dress, and no, she wasn't hinting at an actual wedding. We wasted the whole bloody day fitting her in white, and then she drank herself senseless before dinner.

In early January Penni skipped a day at Coogee to go and see some wog psychic. Wouldn't tell me what they discussed, but she came back sobbing her eyes out. That night we hit Oxford Street and broke every commandment we could remember. There are way more than ten.

You go girl. Don't let anyone see that you're bleeding.

Penni had depths. I'm thinking about her a lot. I feel sad I didn't try to help her more. She may be dead: she was driving full speed into a wall. She had a lot and she threw it away senselessly, then took consolation in me. I think of her and of the partner she'd abandoned, Jen she called her. I kinda feel sorry for Jen. I feel guilty.

The closest I get to most people is from behind a camera lens. I'm a photographer. I photograph things to drive them from my mind. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes. My portraits show a lot of sympathy towards people, but I don't. My landscapes are images of things that fill me with terror. I use special lens and prismatic effects to capture what's hidden about people. Maybe what I capture is real, maybe it just should be real. It's a truth.

We're all just atoms and molecules, spinning down to heat death. Ya gotta have fun before you go.

Just don't let anyone see that you're bleeding.

I need to find out what's important, before I self-destruct as well.



LI JEN

Penni's former partner of five years. Originally from Hong Kong, Jen is a textile artist and teacher in Canberra.



BETH

Penni's older sister. A Brisbane businesswoman, Beth raised Penni and Pia when their mother disappeared.



PIA

Penni's youngest sister, unmotivated and unsettled. Pia lives in Melbourne, and has a trendy inner city sensibility.



GERDE

A curator at Maningrida Arts & Crafts, and a former linguistics Master student under Penni at ANU. Gerde has local knowledge of the area.