The Crying Man

Marc Rosenberg

I was young, maybe nine or ten, when my mother dropped me off at the cinema. There were matinees on Saturday and my mother had some errands to do in town. The only screening that fitted the time slot my mother allowed was "South Pacific," a musical celebrating war's happy moments. It was enjoying a second life. Seeing a movie on my own was the fun part, more than what I saw.

"When the movie finishes come straight out," she told me, after she'd bought my ticket. "I'll be waiting in the car. No wandering around."

"Can I get some popcorn or a drink?" I asked, already knowing the answer.

"You're just here to see the picture, that's all. We're not made of money," my mother reminded me.

The theater was almost empty, it being an afternoon screening of a movie that had already been out for a couple of years. I chose a seat in the middle, the best seat in the house. Once the lights dimmed, the credits rolled and the movie began, an adult man came and sat next to me. He had a large carton of popcorn. Even with all the empty seats, he wanted to sit next to me. I knew not everybody liked to see movies on their own, or maybe he was after the second-best seat.

He had a friendly smile. "You don't have any popcorn."

"Nope, we're not made of money."

This made him chuckle. "Would you like to share mine. I bought too much."

I really didn't like people talking to me while I was watching a movie, but I didn't want to be rude either. The smell of his popcorn was melting my resistance. "If you don't mind," I told him.

He put the popcorn between us. "Help yourself." He seemed a bit jittery, looking from the screen then to me. I returned his smile.

We may have been mid-way through the movie, the popcorn was almost gone, when he put his hand on my thigh. His eyes were on the movie, but his other hand was buried in his pants. I hadn't noticed him loosening his belt. The man groaned, looked at me and started crying, which didn't make sense since the actors were singing "Happy Talk."

"I'm sorry," he told me, before he got up and walked out. He left his popcorn.

My mother was waiting in our car, and I got in.

"Did you like the movie?" she asked, starting the car's engine.

"Happy talkin', talkin', happy talk, talk about things you like to do..." The lyrics weren't that hard to remember and there were two hands talking to each other. I was demonstrating when my mother noticed some popcorn on my sweater.

"There're crumbs on your clothes. Did you eat something?" she wanted to know.

"It must have been on the seat," I told her. I didn't want to explain something she wouldn't understand. My mother wouldn't believe I could make friends so easily.



Marc Rosenberg grew up in the U.S. but has lived half his adult life in Australia. At the University of Texas, he started a literary and art magazine, *Advent*, before setting off to work in London as an estate agent. He then travelled through Europe and Asia. Once in Sydney, he was accepted as a 'Writer-in-Residence' at the National Australian Film and TV School (AFTVS). It was here he began his screenwriting career.

Rosenberg has written seven feature films, producing three. He's worked with Miles Davis, Daniel Radcliffe and Jeremy Irons. An award-winning screenwriter, he's taught in India, China, the U.S., as well as Australia.

Always a writer, avid reader, and adventurer, writing novels has become a new passion. Rosenberg's debut novel, *Kyd's Game*, was published in September 2024.