



When self-destructive Vivian discovers the cliffside property she's inherited is a known suicide site, she is tasked with becoming its guardian and rescuing lost souls on the verge.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

When we first meet Vivian Cunningham (THOMASIN MCKENZIE) she's about to end it all. She can't pay her bills, likes alcohol more than she likes herself, and she's just incinerated her brother's vegan food truck with a dodgy vape. When she climbs into a bathtub with her hairdryer her mind's made up. And then the phone rings. The grandad she's avoided for years has died in his sleep and left her his house.

When Vivian arrives at the beach house on the edge of Dalton's Crevice she isn't impressed. It's tiny, full of sand, and if you stepped too far into the backyard you might plummet to a very painful death. There doesn't seem to be anything remarkable about the place at all — until she meets Amy (CONTESSA TREFFONE). Amy's just left her husband at the altar and is about to jump off the ledge behind the house. It soon becomes abundantly clear to Vivian that the place she's inherited is a popular suicide site. And her grandfather used to try and save every lost soul that passed through.

Though Vivian wants to turn and run, the overly-familiar Amy insists she must embrace the cause. And when her brothers - John (ROWAN WITT) and Hendrix (BRANDON MCCLELLAND) - express a deep scepticism in their sister's abilities to show human warmth, she's unexpectedly determined. Suddenly, this blunt, angry woman is talking people away from the ledge, and strangely enough, they're responding to her chaotic, nihilistic brand of psychology. With the irritating Amy by her side, Vivian 'saves' a construction worker, a lonely retiree, a victim of domestic violence — and in the process, slowly starts to rebuild her life. To everyone's surprise she sobers up, faces the consequences of incinerating her brother's food truck - even starts a dysfunctional relationship with her uptight neighbour, Dane (DEVON TERRELL). For the first time in a long time, Vivian's hopeful for the future. Then she loses someone on the ledge.

Vivian's first 'loss' at the crevice — a sixteen year old boy — unearths things she's been pushing down. When she was ten years old she was the only survivor in a car accident with her parents. Vivian has always blamed herself for their deaths — and now, there's another one on her hands. She quickly falls into the deepest depression she's ever known, and after days in a drug and alcohol fuelled binge, ends up on the ledge she's been fighting so hard to keep other people away from.

Through the lens of family and legacy, TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE ultimately asks: *How many lives do we have to save, before we'll save ourselves?* 



# **EPISODE ONE:** Welcome to the Crevice **LOGLINE**

When the granddad who raised her dies in his sleep, the self-destructive Vivian inherits his cliffside property and the unexpected responsibility that comes with it.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

Vivian Cunningham (THOMASIN MCKENZIE) is a mess. She drinks like a fish. Parties like Kate Moss. And she's just managed to incinerate her brother's food truck with a vape. When she climbs into the bath with a hair dryer her mind's made up. And then the phone rings. The granddad who raised her has died in his sleep.

A reluctant Vivian dries herself off and heads to a lawyer's office. Though she's relieved to see Hendrix (BRANDON MCCLELLAND) — middle brother, and chilled stay at home dad — things are tense between her and eldest brother John (ROWAN WITT). He's still coming to terms with the fact she was smoking a 'fucking bacon flavoured vape' in his very vegan van — and that she burnt it down. Tensions are only exacerbated when slapdash lawyer Wilkinson (JOHN NOBLE) arrives and reads out their granddad's will. Hendrix will inherit some shitty golf clubs. John will inherit a shitty massage chair. And Vivian gets the beach house with ocean views.

That night Vivian takes possession of the house and has a look around. It's tiny, full of sand, and there's a fuckoff enormous cliff in the yard that seems like a bit of a hazard. She cracks a bottle of wine (or three) and toasts to her unremarkable new home. And then she hears Amy (CONTESSA TREFFONE). Amy has just jumped out of her limo, left her husband at the altar and is going to throw herself off the cliff in the backyard. Though Vivian is repulsed by Amy's tears and tacky tattoos, she has no choice but to talk her down. As she watches the strange woman hijack her bed and dribble on her only pillow, Vivian puts the whole thing down to a weird coincidence.

The next morning, Vivian opens the door to her new neighbours — arrogant psychologist Dane (DEVON TERRELL), and his mother, Anna (BRIGID ZENGENI). The pair congratulate her on the 'big job' she's taken on, and after much confusion, reveal that the place is a suicide site — and Vivian's grandfather tried to rescue every person that came through. A dazed Vivian heads to Walt's funeral where she ends up delivering an angry eulogy to his coffin. How dare you trick me into this? I'm a fucking mess and you just need to accept it. The awkward speech only ends when John chases his sister out of the Church, livid she's stolen the limelight once again.

A drunk Vivian decides to pack up and move out of the shack. There's only one problem. Amy won't let her. She just keeps insisting this is Vivian's calling, and heck, it might be hers too. The two women fight, and Vivian is determined to prove she's nothing like her granddad. Suddenly another lost soul turns up at the ledge, and Amy has to get serious, telling Viv: You think I didn't jump the other night because you were an Angel? Bitch, the other night you were the demon from hell!!! But I looked at you with your bad eyeliner and tired eyes and I just thought, here's a person who gets it. And if she can keep going, so can I. Vivian goes outside and tells the man to come in. For the time being, she'll stay.



# **EPISODE TWO:** The Best Offence is the Fence LOGLINE

After agreeing to take on her grandfather's post, an anxious Vivian calls on Dane to school her in the art of suicide prevention, while John is attempting to keep new boyfriend Alejandro out of his family life.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

Vivian is on ledge watch. She's been on ledge watch for days. She's acutely aware someone could show up at any time and hence, has taken refuge on a deckchair in the yard and is solely relying on energy drinks and potato chips to keep her awake. This is much to the amusement of Louis (MAX CREAN) -Vivian's neighbour — a 50s obsessed teenage boy who has come to the house to console her after Walt's death (or so he makes out for the first five minutes, then proceeds to try and on-sell Walt's subscription on to her). She's about to kick him out when Dane shows up ready to school her and Amy in the fine art of suicide prevention. Vivian struggles under his robotic tutelage and, in the end, a frustrated Dane suggests the girls just call him as soon as they see someone on the ledge, then keep them back as best they can until he gets there. Vivian gets an idea.

Vivian is midway through winding barbed wire around Walt's fence when Hendrix shows up at the house. Walt's ashes have been delivered to his door this morning, and given he's also on a gruelling juice fast, he can't quite cope with the emotional toll it's taking on his body. He convinces Vivian to look after them for him, then attempts to talk her into hosting a 'family ashes ceremony' at the house to try and build a bridge between her and John. Vivian stringently rejects this offer. Until Hendrix lies and tells her it was John's idea, and he'd love to try and move past their turbulent past, too. Vivian reluctantly accepts... then Hendrix runs off, calls John, and tells him the same lie in reverse. John says he'll mull on attending the ceremony.

Despite Amy participating in Dane's training session, Vivian is still adamant she can't move in. There's only one bedroom. And one bed. And she hates the way Amy smiles through most of her day. After being overly-familiar (and slightly flirty) with Hendrix, Vivian attempts to kick her out again, but is interrupted when a car meanders down the drive. It's Amy's parents, desperately wanting to take her back to her fiancé, George. Vivian brings them in for tea and they reveal Amy is a 'jumper' i.e., when life gets too much or too overwhelming she jumps off or out of things. She's scared of commitment, and the night of the wedding was just a pattern of the same behaviour. Amy is insistent that it's her destiny to stay at Walt's house, but Vivian is sceptical. Didn't she say the first night they met that she'd made a huge mistake? That George was perfect? Amy's parents gang up on her, and she has no choice but to go with them.

Vivian waves Amy and her parents off, sighing out in relief. For half a second. She hears a scream and turns to find Beatrice (DEBORAH KENNEDY) - an eightyfive-year-old nursing home escapee - caught in her half-made barbed wire fence. Vivian is left no choice but to untangle her and take her inside, where Beatrice confesses that she wasn't trying to attempt suicide at all...Walt saved her a long time ago, and now every Wednesday she comes back to the house to see him and get high — she sort of came to the house today to suss Vivian out...or test her. Despite being very angry at this, Vivian also really wants weed. The pair get high, and Beatrice gives Vivian some home truths on the real art of suicide prevention. Sure, Dane's steps are important. But not as important as remembering the people you meet on that ledge are human beings. They shouldn't be feared or avoided, but treated as such. Swept up in an emotional conversation, the pair spot Walt's ashes on the table and decide to pour him out over the ledge.

Beatrice leaves and Vivian, still high, finds a manic Amy in the backyard. Her parents did try to take her away, but she jumped out of the car again. Using Beatrice's tips, Vivian kneels down and talks to Amy properly for the first time. She admits she's scared shitless, and though can't quite articulate why, she agrees to *finally* go home. Feeling good about herself, Vivian settles in for the night, then gets a call from John. He's on thin ice with his partner Alejandro (EDGAR VITTORINO) who feels left out of his family life, and he'd like to come around and do an ashes ceremony at the house. Vivian agrees. This would be nice. Fuck!!!



#### **EPISODE THREE:** Juan De Vacaciones

#### **LOGLINE**

After Walt's ashes ceremony goes horribly wrong, Vivian convinces Hendrix to partake in a well-worn tradition from their teenage years and throw a party at the house. Meanwhile, Amy's charming fiancé George shows up and is roped into the chaos.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

It's the morning Amy is meant to go home. She's packed and waiting for George (JAMES SWEENY) by the door when Caitlin (ZINDZI OKENYO) shows up at the ledge. Caitlin is a powerhouse lawyer and self-professed 'shark'. She's just been beaten badly by her husband and is so ashamed she'd rather take her own life than tarnish her reputation with her colleagues and friends. Vivian springs into action and talks Caitlin down, but Amy freezes for some reason. As she and surprise paramedic Alejandro load her into the ambulance, Vivian confronts her about this but she doesn't have an explanation.

Three hours later, the girls are alerted to a knock at the door. Hendrix and John are waiting outside to attend Walt's ashes ceremony. John is a mess. He's been avoiding letting Alejandro attend a family event for fear of the drama that might follow, and the 'real John' that might follow that. He'd rather maintain the illusion of the carefree man that Alejandro met while they were still on their European holiday. But, to John's surprise, the house seems to be in good shape, and he's weirdly impressed by the job Vivian's taken on. When Alejandro turns up and explains how Vivian saved Caitlin that morning he's even more floored by his sister. In an effort to keep John thinking these good things about her, Vivian decides to press on with the ashes ceremony (despite there being no ashes).

The ceremony is beautiful. Until an emotional John puts his head on top of Walt's urn during his speech. He sniffs the ashes and discovers that his sister has in fact, replaced them with hot chocolate powder. He storms into the house and to make a point pours

milk into the urn and drinks them all in a few gulps in front of his siblings, then announces to Vivian that he's suing her over his food truck. John quickly exits the kitchen and runs smack bang into Alejandro. He's horrified that his new boyfriend has once and for all seen 'Real John' not 'Holiday John', and leaves the house without him. Vivian is understandably upset by her fall from grace in John's eyes. As George shows up to collect Amy, she convinces them all to participate in 'Vendrix' — a tradition from Vivian and Hendrix's teenage years which basically involves partying and drinking themselves into oblivion.

Meanwhile, Alejandro arrives home to confront John, but to his surprise John isn't at the house. All he finds is a pile of his own luggage...John has kicked him out? He searches town until he finds his partner at a horrific kebab shop, stress eating fried meat. John has assumed Alejandro must be leaving him because he's seen his true self. The one who's angry, and neurotic, and drinks ashes. But Alejandro stays. Tells John he loves every part of him. Even the bits that aren't on holiday.

Back at the party and the vibe is definitely awkward. In an effort to quell it Vivian suggests a game of *Never Have I Ever*, that she ropes Dane into as well. It starts to go horribly wrong at the hands of George, who is becoming progressively more unpleasant as the night wears on. He outs Dane as a virgin. Makes fun of Hendrix's weight gain. Talks so much Amy becomes mute. Despite wanting to self-destruct, Vivian feels she has to play damage control. She talks to Hendrix who admits he's been working on his figure because Laura doesn't want to have sex with him anymore. Next, she comforts Dane by solidarity vomiting next to him, when he's afraid to. Then goes inside and confronts George. He's nasty with her and grabs her wrist, revealing himself as an emotional abuser and the reason Amy skipped out on the wedding.

Vivian sends George away and tells Amy she can stay at the house for good. Then goes and puts Dane and Hendrix to bed in the bath. For the first time in her life she is the 'designated friend' and most responsible person at the party. And she doesn't mind it at all.



## **EPISODE FOUR:** Not All Heroes Carry Vape LOGLINE

As John and Vivian go head to head in a mediation over his food truck, Hendrix is pulling out all the stops to save his marriage.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

It's been three weeks since the ashes ceremony, and Vivian is actually doing well. She's sobered up. Let Amy move into the house. Saved fifteen people out by the ledge. Unfortunately, John does not know or care about any of these things. He's out for blood and taking her to formal mediation over his food truck — if Vivian can't convince him to drop the charges, she'll have to sell Walt's house to pay for the damage caused. John elects to have old flame 'Big John' (MATTHEW ALEXANDER) represent him (a life size copy of the worst bits of John), while Vivian has (regrettably) chosen Wilkinson. Meanwhile over at Hendrix's house, he's opted to do some marriage damage control. Taking Vivian's advice, he dresses as a hot plumber and tries to have sex with Laura (MIA MORRISSEY) in his kitchen. They're interrupted by the twins, but surprisingly she's into it. Hendrix offers her a role play of her choice for the evening and she accepts.

Day one of the mediation commences and things naturally do not go well. Excited he's finally back in a courtroom after years on the bench, Wilkinson treats the experience like an episode of *Law & Order*, and accidentally reveals that Vivian was both high and asleep when she started the food truck fire. John is understandably outraged and the event digresses into an all-out argument. Vivian yells at John to drop the charade and 'say what he actually wants to say' but he can't quite...

That night, Hendrix and Laura get down to their role play. Laura has elected to dress her and Hendrix in their school uniforms and pretend they're eighteen again. Hendrix reads the situation as an admission from Laura that she wishes he still looked like he did when he was eighteen. But when he confronts her about it, there's something much darker sitting just below the surface. Laura actually wishes their *lives* were like they were when they were eighteen...without

any children. They're left silently on the edge of the bed. What the hell do they do now?

Over at Vivian's house, after a stressful day of mediation, she finally tells Amy about her parents' car accident and reveals she thinks it was her fault. That's why John's so angry all the time. He blames her too. Vivian decides she's going to sell Walt's house and pay John for the damage to his food truck. Maybe she can finally atone even a little bit for what she's done? Meanwhile over at John's, he similarly debriefing with Alejandro about the day's proceedings. He tells his partner he never blamed Vivian for the accident, just that she robbed him of his childhood and a carefree life ever since. Alejandro tries to convince John to drop the case and talk to Vivian about this, but he's just not sure he can do that.

Day two of the mediation and Vivian offers to pay John out for the truck. He's about to accept when Amy and Caitlin burst into the courtroom. They deliver a heartfelt speech about all the lives Vivian has saved and how much progress she's made in the last few weeks - if John makes her sell that house now it would be a travesty for so many people, including Vivian herself. Despite feeling neglected and like his sister doesn't understand his pain, John agrees to drop the charges, and the Cunninghams (plus Amy and Alejandro) assemble at Walt's house for a schnitzel night to celebrate. While John and Vivian are doing the washing up, they both attempt to talk about the accident and how it's affected their lives but neither has the courage. Instead, Vivian reveals to John that Hendrix is having some trouble inside his marriage.

After dinner Amy leads Vivian outside. She has a present for her. She's finished Walt's pergola and turned it into a beautiful tea room for all the lost souls who pass through. They're interrupted when Dane turns up in a frenzy. When Amy leaves he ends up confessing to Vivian that he's not been able to stop thinking about her since their Vendrix night and to his horror, thinks he might like her. A new and improved Vivian tells Dane to come back tomorrow, and heads to the ledge. She takes a deep breath. The deepest one she's taken in a long time. She enjoys her new life for a short moment. When Louis turns up behind her and lurches for the ledge.



# **EPISODE FIVE:** You're a Sexy Fucking Mess LOGLINE

In the wake of a tragedy at the ledge, Vivian abandons her post and falls back into old habits. Meanwhile, John takes Hendrix on a brothers' golfing trip to try and get to the bottom of his problems with Laura.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

Vivian hasn't moved in days. She's taken refuge in bed, numb, trying to process Louis' death. She's startled when there's a knock at the front door. His brother, James (JOHN ULU), and mother, Nina (ANA CORBETT), have showed up at the house and want to know what happened that night at the ledge. Vivian gently explains that she didn't see it coming. That Louis had told her he was dissatisfied with the world as it was, but she just didn't pick up on the signs. Louis' brother is understanding. Explains his brother had very severe anxiety and depression - there's nothing she could have done. But Louis' mother lashes out. Blames her for what happened. Vivian willingly accepts this blame. It's her fault her parents are dead. It makes sense this is her fault, too. She stumbles out of the house, and in an effort to distract herself from the pain, makes a beeline for Dane's house. She knocks on the door and tells him she wants to have sex. She unknowingly takes his virginity, but when he gets too tender, she lashes out. Pushes past Amy, who's waiting on the street and puts herself into an Uber.

John arrives at Hendrix's house for golf and watches Hendrix and Laura go about their day to day. We can see they're trying too hard. John observes their extremely un-hot and uncomfortable kiss goodbye, and quickly ushers Hendrix to the door. He takes him to the golf course where he assumes a weird, too-masculine big brother energy. He tries to talk to his brother about the problems inside his marriage but Hendrix is tense and avoidant. He ends up hitting John in the face with a club, by accident, but John keeps pushing for info. The whole thing descends into an awkward, sort of shit man fight, smack bang in the middle of the golf course.

Back at the house, Amy is worried about Vivian. She has no idea where the bloody hell she is...they were meant to go and pick up her bed from George's today, so she texts him and tells him they aren't coming. George takes Vivian's absence as a win and heads over to the house, love bombs Amy, and brings her a brand new bed in a box. A vulnerable Amy is glad for the company and invites him inside to help her build it, unbeknownst to Vivian, who stumbles into a warehouse party on a mission to self-destruct. She takes a dangerous concoction of drugs and starts to hallucinate, seeing her mother, and then Louis. It only

ends when she has an all-out, violent panic attack and falls to the ground.

Back on the golf course, Hendrix and John's shit man fight ends. But their conversation doesn't. John apologises to Hendrix for pushing him today. But his grief response has always been to try and rebuild this perfect family. He gets it. He lost his last one. But he cannot ignore what's going on inside it, because he's afraid of losing this one too. This makes Hendrix laugh. Well, at least he grieved! Since their parents died, John latched onto Vivian, and now Hendrix's problems to avoid processing anything. They both leave the golf course in a huff. But with some home truths to think about.

Amy and George finish building her new bed. After a day working together, any tension between them has dissipated and they're only focusing on the good memories now. Amy even feels comfortable enough telling George about Louis, and how upset she was over his death. She proceeds to detail Vivian's outburst from the morning, and how she was left alone at the house. George sees an opportunity and goes all in on Viv. Amy finds the courage to stick up for her friend and send George away. She hands back her wedding ring once and for all and falls asleep, only to be woken again by a strange noise in the backyard. A very drug-fucked Vivian and old flame Ritchie have come home and destroyed her peace garden. Amy tries to reprimand them and send Ritchie away, but an upset Vivian lashes out. It gets nasty, and Amy leaves. She walks out onto the pavement and straight into George's car, waiting for her on the street.

Vivian is at rock bottom. She tries to have sex with Ritchie and participate in their usual ritual — him monologuing on top of her and fetishising how much of a mess she is — but she can't quite do it tonight. It turns out that no matter how bad she feels about herself, she's made too much progress to go back. She sends Ritchie away and goes to Dane's for some companionship, but he rejects her at the front door. Tells her she took his virginity that morning, but didn't even notice it. He thinks she's used her trauma and mental illness as an excuse for the way she behaves, but maybe underneath it all she's just a bad person?

That night, Hendrix arrives home and observes Laura with the kids properly for the first time ever, and sees how much she's struggling. John lets himself into his house and Alejandro is down on one knee, ready to propose, but he just can't accept it. And Vivian walks away from Dane's house and falls to her knees on the street. Who the fuck am 1?

#### **EPISODE SIX:** Totally Completely Fine

#### LOGLINE

After her self-destructive spiral, Vivian is determined to turn over a new leaf at her nieces' birthday party, but things don't go to plan. Meanwhile, Amy's gone MIA, but will anyone step in to stop her, before she makes a huge mistake?

#### **SYNOPSIS**

Vivian has taken Dane's words from Episode Five to heart. She wakes up outside, in a pile of bottles and cigarette butts from her bender the night before, determined to prove to herself that she is in fact a good person at her core. She hauls herself up and cleans Walt's house. Tries to make contact with Amy, but it goes straight to message bank. Even wraps a gift for the twins for their *Inspiring Women from History* birthday party and goes inside to get ready.

Meanwhile over at John's, he and Alejandro are recovering from John's proposal rejection the evening before. John arrives home from his run to find Alejandro in their lounge room, crying very openly. Alejandro explains that this is part of his process. Even though he is ultimately very proud of John for taking the time to work on himself, he needs to process the rejection now or it will weigh him down. John is intrigued by Alejandro's approach to his emotions and declares he wants to give this a try. The two of them head to John's parents' grave where he attempts to finally 'grieve them'. Despite doing his best to shake and moan some tears out, it just doesn't happen. Alejandro reassures him that it will. Just maybe not today.

John, Alejandro and Vivian meet outside Hendrix's house and move to knock on the door. A new and improved Vivian hands her gifts to the twins (two novelty-sized 'boss bitch' dummies), but Hendrix is behaving weirdly, and very sweaty, and way too happy to be at a three year old's themed birthday. When Vivian and John are put on taco prep for the adults, baby Dot reveals that Laura is going to a hotel for the weekend. While John insists that this is normal and a lot of couples go to hotels for a break, Vivian is worried.

During a game of musical chairs, Vivian attempts to talk to Laura. She offers her help with babysitting the twins, then launches into a monologue about how challenging they are to look after. Laura bursts into tears. She has made her mind up in the moment and breaks up with Hendrix while telling him she isn't a mum. A distraught Hendrix doesn't know what to do. He turns to Vivian and rips into her about how she ruins things. Essentially intimates that their parents' accident was all her fault. John tries to stick up for his sister, but Alejandro suddenly brings the cake

out, trips, and rams it into the birthday banner. The backyard goes up in flames and Vivian disappears.

Vivian makes a beeline for Walt's ledge. She rips off her party costume, steps right up to the edge and wails out into the wind...but as hard as she tries to make herself jump, she just can't do it. As she steps back again, she hears something behind. Someone running through the bushes. John. He crash-tackles his sister to the ground, horrified and crying at the top of his lungs. For the first time all season, the two of them actually talk. Vivian reveals she sees their parent's accident every day and thinks everyone believes it's her fault. John is horrified. He had no idea his sister was nursing so much pain. He admits that he is angry at her, but never, ever blamed her for the accident. The two of them agree they need to move on. Never from their parents, but from that day, and they need to start living properly for the first time. Then they smell weed.

John and Vivian stumble into Walt's kitchen where Beatrice is getting high. She's been waiting for Vivian for four hours — and during that time George showed up to pick up Amy's wedding dress. Beatrice reveals that Amy has gone to the registry office to get married properly. A panicked Vivian and John make a mad dash there where Vivian finally tells Amy she loves her, too. That she's amazing. That she needs to start living properly for the first time in her life, and needs Amy to teach her how to do that. So pick mel But Amy says no.

A deflated Vivian and John head out of the registry office when suddenly they see a white blur pass behind them. Amy in her wedding dress. She tells Vivian she listened to her speech and understood everything that she had to say. But for the first time in her life, she needed to pick herself. Vivian asks if Amy will move back into Walt's house and she agrees — on a few conditions including fixing her tattered pergola.

That night Vivian and Amy reclaim the Crevice as their home and mourn their friend Louis together. John accepts Alejandro's proposal and cooks him dinner naked. Hendrix takes solace in his children as Laura packs a bag for good. And Dane hits the town, a free agent. Ready to take a risk for the first time in his life.



## THE MAKING OF TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE

#### **DEVELOPMENT**

GRETEL VELLA, the writer, creator, and executive producer of TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE, was working in television internationally and in Australia when she finally embraced her long-held ambition to one day conceptualise and run her own show.

Vella had studied Media at the University of Technology, Sydney, before being accepted into the Masters in Writing for Performance at The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). It was at NIDA that she met screenwriter TONY MCNAMARA, who read some of Vella's work and became her early champion. Since then, Vella has written on two of McNamara's shows — Doctor Doctor, in Australia, and three seasons of The Great in the UK for Hulu, as well as Christmas Ransom for Stan and Class of O7 for Amazon Studios.

Then Covid hit, and Vella found herself drawn to a story about the mental health crisis.

"During the first lockdown in Sydney, it felt like the universe was speaking to me," recalls Vella. "In the space of one week, I was tragically witness to two suicide attempts, close together. It was during the second that my Uber driver pulled over and said to me; 'Every night I take this same route, and every night there's a different person here trying to do the same thing.' It struck me in that moment, although the realisation had been growing for some time, that we are in a crisis. It seems a terribly painful and anxiety-inducing period to be alive."

Having lived with depression, anxiety and disordered eating since her teens, Vella decided she wanted to write directly about it.

"Mental health has always been something that's in my writing, but I wanted to write about it properly. I began to research the places that people would go to, to attempt to take their lives, and I became very interested in the guardians of those places. I started to imagine a guardian who is a bit of an anti-hero and who is also depressive. What kind of superpowers would that person have, with that extra layer of empathy and personal experience?"

Over three days, the character of Vivian Cunningham fully formed in Vella's imagination. She wrote the pilot quickly, and took the script to NAT LINDWALL at Fremantle, who Vella had recently met, and who would become one of the producers of TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE.



"I believe most stories worth pursuing, are daunting," Nat reflects, "and that's how I felt when Gretel pitched me Vivian's journey and the world of TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE. When I came across Gretel's voice, I encouraged her to trust me with her passion project. When she shared her vision for this series, I was immediately struck by the exciting tonal approach and care for the delicate subject matter which underpinned the premise. I want to be involved in series that have a greater purpose beyond an initial watch; everything Gretel and I have done together has been in service of this intention. My great hope for this show is that it finds the people who need it."

Vella sees Vivian as 'perhaps the worst parts of all of us.'

"Vivian is angry, abrasive, sarcastic and self-loathing," Vella explains. "But when it becomes abundantly clear that she hasn't only inherited a house, but a popular suicide spot, and that her dead grandfather is tasking her with becoming its keeper, Vivian takes on the job. Surprisingly, she's pretty good at it. The people who come to the ledge respond to her chaotic, nihilistic brand of psychology, and in saving these people she slowly starts to save herself."

With Fremantle on board, development happened quickly. Two other writers joined Vella in the writer's room - KEIR WILKINS, who had worked on Netflix's

Surviving Summer, and playwright EMME HOY, who had studied with Vella at NIDA.

"I wanted a small room," continues Vella, "which also included my brother ELLIOT VELLA as the writer's assistant. He also contributed to the scripts, and was amazing. I wanted people who had various levels of lived experience that aligned with our characters. We had several rounds of rooms, several rounds of drafting, and a lot of consultation with mental health experts. We laughed and we cried. It was an incredible process."

The development of the series stretched out over several writers rooms and evolved in ways which took the creative team by surprise. Whilst the seed of the idea emerged from these real guardians assisting strangers in moments of crisis, what Vella quickly came to realise is this selfless heroism can feel unreachable for the ordinary person. Vivian needed to be the most unlikely angel - a character being messy and self-destructive, who has experienced the depths of despair herself and knows how to relate to that loss of hope. More than that, rather than this story simply being about a woman rescuing people on the verge, Vella wrapped around Vivian an ensemble of family and friends who were also burying their own wounds. Suddenly this was a much bigger story. An every-family story. One where all of the show's characters were imploding in their own ways which is so often the truth of our lives. One we desperately try to hide.



In later episodes, Vivian sobers up, makes amends with her brothers, and starts a strange romance with Dane. Things seem to be going well until Louis, a paperboy Vivian gets to know while living at Walt's house, dies. It's in this loss that we discover the truth about Vivian's trauma. Can she forgive herself for what happened to her parents, or will she be consumed by it?

For Vella, TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is above all a redemption story.

"The show examines how she learns to forgive herself, but it's also a family story and that's where a lot of the comedy comes from. Vivian's two brothers feel like they've dealt with this trauma, but we realise they haven't dealt with it at all."

While TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is a show about anxiety and depression, it's ultimately one of great hope. Vivian will choose to forgive herself, to choose life, and also choose to let in the people she's been pushing away for most of her life.

While the show has a happy ending, Vella likes to call it an 'anti-perfection series'.

"So often we see stories about mental health and trauma tied up neatly in a bow, with the characters 'fixed' — this will not happen for Vivian. While she will choose life, it won't be the perfect cookiecutter version we're often sold on our screens and Instagram feeds, it'll be the messy one — but what sounts is that she's still here."

As soon as the team started to develop the series, they contacted MIND FRAME, the leading consultation body for depicting mental ill health and suicidal ideation in mass media.

"We did a training session with them and they read the pilot script," says Vella. "Then as we moved forward, we invited people to join us in the writer's room who had lived experience of suicidal ideation, as well psychologists, and people who worked in the domestic violence sector. They read the scripts and we took all that feedback on board."

Once the scripts were at a more developed stage, all development team members had training in suicide prevention from LIVING WORKS.

"Living Works really helped us with things like the training montage in Episode Two," adds Vella, "getting specific about what Dane would say to Vivian when he was teaching her about making contact with someone with very active suicidal ideation. If you were showing CPR on screen, you would research CPR, you wouldn't depict it incorrectly to the audience. In the same way, we wanted to show the Living Works intervention process authentically. We had a rigorous consultation process, and I think every step of the way it made the scripts stronger."

During development, setup director LUCY GAFFY (Here Out West, Amazing Grace) became part of the team.



"I read one page of the pilot script, rang my agent and said; 'I want to do this.'" recalls Gaffy. "When I read the story of Viv and the Cunningham family and the mess of it all, I felt seen. I saw an elevated Australian drama that I'd been yearning for, not just as a filmmaker, but as a viewer. It spoke to the world I knew, but in a fresh way, in a deep way. It was very funny and it made me cry. That's the kind of show that as a creator I'm really drawn to."

Gretel Vella adds: "From the moment we first spoke to Lucy, we knew she was our person. She said something that was so incredible, which was that we should value Vivian for her best days, not her worst. No one else had spoken about her in such a loving and beautiful way."

For Gaffy, the suicide prevention training was key to connecting to the material and to its real life implications.

"The training helped me to know to ask; 'Are you thinking about suicide?'" says Gaffy. "I thought that that would be way too much to ask somebody, but it's the sentence you have to say. That was a life changing thing to learn. I realised that if that one sentence wobbles out into the universe after our show, then that's a truly great thing."

While TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE tackles heavy themes and ideas, Vella and her collaborators were excited by the way it slowly morphed into a family story during development.

"Much of the darkness is countered by the interactions between Vivian and her brothers John and Hendrix," explains Vella. "At the beginning of the series we believe it's only Vivian who hasn't processed her parents' deaths, but we slowly learn that her brothers are just as dysfunctional and avoidant."

John and Hendrix were initially Vivian's sisters when the pilot was written, but during development the characters were gender flipped, with very little else changed about them.

"I'm truly excited to see male characters like these on our screens," Vella adds. "As an Australian writer, I'm often encouraged to 'move to the US' to staff and eventually make the kind of content I want. While that's sometimes tempting, my passion has always been to make the kind of content I want in Australia for a global stage. I often wonder why we don't have shows that sit alongside Fleabag and I May Destroy You and I Hate Suzie — this was my wish for TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE - for Australian writers and directors to craft something truly

clever, challenging and resonant for local and global audiences."

During development, Vella and her collaborators kept in mind a quote from English creator and actress Phoebe Waller-Bridge: 'Disarm the audience with comedy, then punch them in the gut with drama when they least expect it.'

"We've used comedy a lot to talk about something really tough," explains Vella. "I had hard and fast rules for this show. I think certain things are not funny. We had to pick our moments for the comedy and a lot of that comes from the family story. We use comedy so that it feels safe to talk about complex, painful things. People are going to sit down and watch TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE and feel safe to enter a world in which tough things are confronted."

Lucy Gaffy adds: "I think it's particularly true for Australians. We bury, we hide, we mask, we deny, and through it all we use humour a lot to manage, to heal, and compensate ourselves."

"TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is like an Irish funeral. It's a bunch of people getting together in difficult circumstances, and using laughter to heal. Ultimately we're trying to declare with the show that we believe in people. We believe there is joy that can be found in the minutiae, in the smile of a friend, in how crazy your siblings can be, in your experience with nature, in a connection with a stranger. That's the stuff of life. Everything else is white noise. If we can remember to connect to that, we can manage anything."

Vella found working with Fremantle as well as with partners STAN and SUNDANCE NOW rewarding, and supportive of her unique vision for the show.

"Nat Lindwall completely supported the project from the very beginning. It was such a joyous collaboration. Nat, associate producer ELLIE MADRICH and I were a tight producer threesome. And I felt completely supported by Stan and Sundance from the very beginning - it's been an incredible journey with both of them."

TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is a show that hopes to not only dispel the taboos around anxiety and depression, but to make audiences laugh.

"It will remind you that the pains we think are ours alone, are often carried by many others," Vella adds. "In the midst of what has been a very tough few years, I think that's something the world needs right now."

#### **CHARACTERS**

"TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE has an ensemble of incredible Australian actors. Working with them was joyous. When the cameras stopped rolling, we would still be laughing with each other, then eating dinner together. It sounds a little bit daggy, but we found a chosen family in each other and I think that energy can be felt on screen." Lucy Gaffy.

### VIVIAN CUNNINGHAM portrayed by Thomasin McKenzie

Vivian Cunningham was the kind of girl in high school who drank straight vodka at parties. You weren't sure if she was having fun or wanted to wipe herself out, but damn, she was a good time. The death of Vivian's parents when she was ten has tainted the way she lives her life. An ex-high achiever, she was on the way to an awards ceremony when the family car ran off the road and crashed. As the only survivor, Vivian walks around in a cloud of guilt and shame. She lives her life with a reckless abandon, sharp wit and set of walls that seem almost impermeable.

After the death of her parents, Vivian was raised by her grandfather, Walt — a sixty-something with a heart of gold. He waited patiently while she partied hard and eventually checked into rehab. At 25, Vivian is dependent on drugs, alcohol, toxic boyfriends, and bad TV. She's also just set her brother's food truck on fire, falling asleep next to an unattended vape. When we meet her at the beginning of our series she's exhausted in every way you can imagine. And then that phone rings.

At first, Vivian takes on the 'Angel' gig out of obligation to her grandfather but perhaps, more importantly, to prove her siblings wrong — though as she learns to embrace the role and 'saves' a couple of people in distress, it slowly becomes so much more than that. For the first time in Vivian's life she feels like she might actually become the person she was meant to be. Maybe this is her chance for redemption?

After the death of the teenage boy on the ledge Vivian spirals out of control. If she thought she had seen darkness before — it's nothing like this. For the second time in her life she feels she is responsible for the death of another person. She pushes her support system away, and ends up on the ledge she fought so hard to help others avoid. Ultimately, Vivian will have to let go of the false narrative she's created which holds her responsible for her parents' death. She'll also have to choose life. But not the cliched, perfect version we're all aimlessly chasing. She'll have to choose the messy one.

Gretel Vella says that she sees 'too much' of herself in Vivian. "A lot of myself went into writing her, and although she's at the extreme end of the spectrum of anxiety and depression, I think a lot of people will relate to her," says Vella. "She stuffs up over and over again, but has the best of intentions, and is working out who she is. I think that's very relatable to a lot of people."



Thomasin McKenzie recently wrapped John Crowley and Bash Doran's limited series *Life After Life*, for the BBC. She also recently wrapped William Oldroyd's *Eileen* in which she starred opposite Anne Hathaway and Shea Whigham. In 2021, Thomasin starred in Edgar Wright's film *Last Night in Soho*, opposite Anya Taylor-Joy and Matt Smith, which premiered at the Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals; and in Jane Campion's *The Power of the Dog*, opposite Benedict Cumberbatch and Kirsten Dunst, which premiered at the Venice and Telluride Film Festivals. She can also be seen in M Night Shyamalan's *Old*.

Thomasin starred in Taika Waititi's film Jojo Rabbit, opposite Scarlett Johansson and Sam Rockwell for Fox Searchlight; and in Justin Kurzel's *The True History of the Kelly Gang*, opposite George Mackay. Other films include Liz Garbus' Lost Girls, opposite Amy Ryan; David Michod's *The King*, opposite Timothee Chalamet, Joel Edgerton and Robert Pattinson; and Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit - Battle of the Five Armies*.

Thomasin is one of the most exciting and versatile young actresses in Hollywood. Originally from New Zealand, she broke out as the star in Debra Granik's critically acclaimed Sundance film *Leave No Trace*, opposite Ben Foster, for which she was nominated for a Critic's Choice Award and won the National Board of Review Award for Breakthrough Performance.

### AMY MATTHEWS portrayed by Contessa Treffone

A self-proclaimed 'textbook Aquarius', Amy wears her heart on her sleeve. She's the kind of woman who actually enjoys traffic so she can roll down her window and make a new friend. Sensitive and sentimental, Amy feels her emotions more intensely than most people, and uses these feelings — rather than logic — to make her decisions. Amy grew up in a toxic household. With a painfully absent father and mother with impossible expectations, she truly believes she can be hard to love, and yet, it hasn't stopped her from searching for it.

Amy meets Vivian on her wedding day. She was on her way to the Church when she army rolled out of her limo and ran off into the bushes. Eventually she found herself at the edge of the Crevice. Amy instantly feels a connection to Vivian that is most definitely not reciprocated. Vivian finds Amy vapid and is enraged by her fondness for saying 'I love you' to people prematurely.

We will discover that Amy is keeping a secret from us. She's not just hiding from an ex-fiancé who wants to win her back — she's hiding from an emotionally abusive one. Vivian will develop a newfound respect for Amy and be slightly envious of her ability to love — even when the world has hurt her. The pair will forge an unlikely friendship, and Vivian will let Amy move into the beach house. Suddenly, Amy will have purpose saving those on the ledge, and begin to understand she's worth more and can do more than the people in her life have let her believe.

After graduating from NIDA in 2012, **Contessa Treffone** has had an extensive career in theatre.



Her theatre credits include *Triple X, Death Of A Salesman, Deep Blue Sea, Lord Of The Flies, The Harp In The South: Part One & Part Two, Top Girls, Three Sisters* and *All My Sons,* all for Sydney Theatre Company; *Anatomy Of A Suicide* and *There Will Be A Climax* for Redline Productions; *The Kitchen Sink* for Ensemble Theatre; *The Mystery Of Love* And *Sex* for Darlinghurst Theatre; *Minusonesiter* for Griffin Theatre; and many more.

For her performance in *The Harp In The South: Part One & Part Two*, Contessa was nominated for Best Female Actor in a Mainstage Production in the Sydney Theatre Awards. Contessa's television credits include *The PM's Daughter* and *Doctor Doctor Season 5*. Her film credits include *Here Out West, June Again* and *Powder Train*.

### DANE MEADOWS portrayed by Devon Terrell

Dane Meadows has his life together in the most irritating ways you can imagine. He journals. Does one grocery shop a week. Wears a Fitbit not to show off, but because he actually uses it. Dane is a psychologist who lives across the road from Vivian. He will try to teach the girls how to handle distressed people on the ledge — but will accidentally become a part of their motley crew of two.

As a man who makes plans, Dane is initially irritated by Vivian's chaos. He will try and change her, 'save her', while she's ironically trying to corrupt him. After Vivian gets Dane drunk one night and he vomits on her lawn, she will make herself vomit too. It's this disgusting act of solidarity that means his feelings suddenly change. He's not sure who this woman is, or what she's doing to his life, but he definitely wants her in it.

Dane will end up making a Darcy-esque proclamation of love to Vivian that both parties squirm their way through. In her darkest hour, Vivian will come to Dane for sex and expose his most embarrassing secret. He's still a virgin. His compulsive box-ticking and need for control means he's never gotten around to it. Vivian's selfishness will mean Dane's first time is ruined, and the pair's fledgling relationship may lie in tatters, too. Ultimately this is the story of two people who aren't quite ready for each other yet.

**Devon Terrell** was seen last year in *Rap Shit* for HBO Max and executive producer Issa Rae. He also starred as the male lead in the Netflix series *Cursed*, opposite Katherine Langford. Other recent credits also include Wayne Roberts' *The Professor*, opposite Johnny Depp; and *Ophelia* with Daisy Ridley, Naomi Watts and Clive Owen.

Prior to *Cursed*, Devon was most known for playing the title role in the Black Bear Pictures' Barack Obama biopic *Barry*, which opened at TIFF to rave reviews. The film was listed by Variety as one of the top 10 films at the festival and has since debuted on Netflix. Prior to that, Devon was cast in the lead role of acclaimed director Steve McQueen's HBO project *Codes of Conduct*, which was Devon's first professional role after graduating from Australia's prestigious National Institute of Dramatic Art.



### HENDRIX CUNNINGHAM portrayed by Brandon McClelland

Hendrix Cunningham belongs to 26 parenting Facebook pages and 3.5 mothers groups (he goes to the fourth one when they have cronuts). A sensitive soul with a fondness for fun t-shirts, his twin baby girls are his world. Hendrix married his high school sweetheart Laura when he was 20 years old. The hottest dude with the best hair in his grade — all he longed for was a family. When Laura went back to work after having their twins he decided to raise his babies — man bag and tool belt in-tow.

Growing up, Hendrix and Vivian were best mates. While Vivian dealt with her parents' death through partying, Hendrix did much the same thing. Clumsy, with a habit for spontaneous crying, Hendrix took up a lot of his grandfather's time. With Vivian taking up the rest, older brother John was often left to fend for himself. In adulthood, the siblings have maintained much the same dynamic. Vivian and Hendrix party, and John scolds them from the sidelines.

Hendrix and Vivian have a healthy relationship, and can talk to each other about anything — though there's something Hendrix is finding hard to get out. He's worried his wife isn't attracted to him anymore and fears she may be sleeping with someone else. He's balding, with a dad bod, and wonders if he's sacrificed his looks in an effort to raise his babies. Hendrix will try desperately hard to hold onto the family unit he lost as a little boy. But maybe all he needs to do is let go of Laura? Maybe Vivian will accidentally make him?

**Brandon McClelland** graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2012.

Brandon's theatre credits include: The Deep Blue Sea, A Cheery Soul, Saint Joan, Three Sisters, The Present (Broadway Season), A Midsummers Night's Dream, The Golden Age, The Present, Suddenly Last Summer, and M.Rock, all with Sydney Theatre Company; Packer & Sons with Belvoir; Girl in the Machine and Flight Paths with National Theatre of Parramatta; Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? with Ensemble; Little Borders with Old 505; Fracture with New Ghosts Theatre Company; and A Town Named Warboy with ATYP.

Brandon's film credits include Jennifer Kent's *The Nightingale*, Roger Pulvers' Star Sand, James Vanderbilt's *Truth*, and Darby Deck's short films *Waking Moon* and *Walk Right In*. His television credits include *Doctor Doctor, The Other Guy, Black Comedy, Operation: Buffalo, Here Come the Habibs!, Love Child, Anzac Girls* and *Devil's Playground*. He is also a founding member and performer with comedy troupe 'The United States of Kensington'.

Brandon was twice-nominated for Best Supporting Actor in a Mainstage Production from the Sydney Theatre Awards for *Packer & Sons* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* He also received a 2015 Logie Award nomination for Most Outstanding Newcomer, was shortlisted for the 2015 Heath Ledger scholarship, and won The Equity Award for an Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series, both for Anzac Girls.



### JOHN CUNNINGHAM portrayed by Rowan Witt

John Cunningham is an anxious vegan with a twenty-piece-strong suit collection. His idea of a good time is a Meryl Streep marathon or a nice trip to Cork and Chroma. Two years ago, John *Eat-Pray-Love*'d his way around Europe and met his partner Alejandro. Though Alejandro seemed more laid back and was definitely a 10 to John's 6, the pair clicked and moved in together. Inspired by his trip around the world, John has recently quit his job as a literary agent to run a fleet of vegan food trucks in Sydney.

John was 17 when his parents died, and although still a child, he grew up pretty quickly so his grandfather could have more time for his siblings. He's always had a good relationship with Vivian and Hendrix, though tires of being branded 'the uptight one' when really he's lots of fun. John doesn't understand why Vivian can't pull herself out of her grief hole, when he managed to climb so quickly out of his. He doesn't blame her for what happened to their parents—just that she's stolen the limelight ever since.

John spends a lot of time attempting to school Vivian in life and how to live it. When she accidentally burns down his food truck, he will sue her on principle to 'teach her a lesson about repercussions'. But when John sees Vivian trying to rebuild her life, he'll be quietly impressed. And when she falls into a second deep depression, he'll be surprisingly sympathetic. Maybe, just maybe, he'll start to understand the mental illness that has plagued his sister for two decades. He'll eventually discover he never needed to change Vivian — just let her know he was there.

**Rowan Witt** is one of Australia's most versatile actors with a career spanning theatre, film and television.

A multi award-winning actor, his theatre credits include playing 'Elder McKinley' in the Australian premiere of The Book of Mormon for which he received a Helpmann Award nomination and a Sydney Theatre Award win. He was nominated again for playing 'Dean' in the Sydney premiere Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins' play Gloria (Outhouse Productions), and for his critically acclaimed role as 'Georg Nowack' in *She Loves Me* (Hayes Theatre Co). On screen, Rowan starred opposite Katherine Parkinson in the Paramount+ TV series Spreadsheet. Other film and television credits include roles in Home & Away, Underbelly, The Escape Of The Artful Dodger, The Matrix, Somewhere In The Darkness, Adoration, X: Night of Vengeance, Little Blue and Trunk. Rowan's training includes a degree from The Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where he majored in Classical Voice. He is a member of Equity.



### ALEJANDRO USED portrayed by Edgar Vittorino

Alejandro Used is the type of person you look at and make a noise. He's so totally good-looking it's hard not to ogle once you've caught a glimpse. Though exceptionally modest about his appearance, Alejandro experiences the world in a different way. People just seem to give him free shit and laugh at his jokes. Alejandro met John in Spain while John was *Eat-Pray-Lov*ing his way around Europe. Though the pair were completely the opposite (John highly, highly neurotic and Alejandro cool and collected) he fell in love and moved to Sydney to be with John.

Alejandro spends his days working as a paramedic. In his time on the streets he has truly seen the worst of humankind, yet chooses to believe in the good of people. That's why he has so much faith in Vivian and her new role at the Crevice. He longs for John to see these same positive attributes in his sister, and work through the issues surrounding the loss of his parents. He misses the tanned, care-free man he met in Spain. But will John learn to let his walls down and process his loss before their relationship implodes for good?





### GEORGE DELICH portrayed by James Sweeny

George Delich is Amy's fiancé. Well, he was her fiancé. On the way to their wedding, Amy rolled out of the limo and off into a bush. George and Amy met when George's company opened across the road from the clothing store she worked at. Everyday he'd buy a shirt and very quickly the pair fell in love, got engaged and started a business together (a health app for men).

George is attractive, successful, and exceptionally charming. So charming that sometimes it's hard to see how controlling he can be. He likes Amy, but doesn't really like all of her at once, and tries to dull her shine when he can. In the months preceding the wedding, George's emotional manipulation whittled Amy down to a shell of her former self. Now, he's scrambling to get her back. Underneath it all he's afraid, and angry, but on the surface he's as charming and cool as ever.



### LOUIS ALATINI portrayed by Max Crean

Louis Alatini was Walt's paperboy when he was still alive. Now Vivian's inherited him. A bright spark with a fanatic love of all things 50s, Vivian is initially irritated, then charmed by the eccentric young man who brings her the paper every morning. In Episode Four, Louis will die by suicide at Dalton's Crevice. It's only once he's gone that we learn he's been masking very severe anxiety and depression. His love of the 50s is a form of escapism and a means to simplify an overcomplicated world. Louis' death will blindside Vivian and send her on a drug and alcohol-fuelled binge.

### ANNA MEADOWS portrayed by Brigid Zengeni

Anna Meadows is a retired romance novelist with very few personal boundaries. A local at Dalton's Crevice, she spends her free time running the newsletter, going to Zumba and salsa dancing at the RSL. Anna is Dane's mother, and has recently let him move back home so he can save for a house. Dane is the product of a one-night stand from Anna's wild youth and she has chosen to raise him solo. While Anna wholeheartedly embraces the chaos and excitement that life has to offer, her son has rebelled and gone in the very opposite direction.

When Vivian moves to The Crevice, Anna is excited by the possibilities it offers Dane. She worries her son spends too much time in isolation, and is missing out on the fun and frivolity of his youth. She will gently nudge him in Vivian's direction and start to see Dane come out of his shell.



#### **PRODUCTION**

As it was during the development phase, the depiction of the central themes of TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE were first in mind for the creative team as they prepared for production.

"As a director, I'm enormously conscious of the images that I put out into the world," says Lucy Gaffy. "It was a real balance to find a way to tell the story, to engage with the drama, with the danger and the truth of what we're talking about, and yet to create images that we felt wouldn't disturb or trigger people. At the end of the day, it wasn't as difficult as I thought. TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is a show about family, connection, and the journey to be your best self. That's the most universal thing there is."

As for the development team, the producers insisted that actors and crew complete suicide prevention training.

"If you know someone who is behaving in ways that are concerning to you, that you think might be signs of suicidal ideation, you can be cautious of acknowledging that to that person," says Thomasin McKenzie (VIVIAN). "We don't want to 'put' the idea of suicide in their minds. But there have been studies which show that's not the case. If people are going to think about it, they probably already have. By asking them directly, it can open up a conversation so that you can help."

The show's dedicated mental health consultant, JULIA SHARP, says: "Many cast and crew members spoke to me about how insightful the training was for them, and how they then reflected on their friends, family and people in their communities. A couple of people said they actually spoke up and asked people they were concerned about, where before there was fear around asking."

Contessa Treffone (AMY) adds: "Learning about not only the prevention side, but what we can do as a community to make people feel supported and seen through those dark moments, to not feel judged, was incredible. I'll treasure that and take that away from the experience of making this show."

The emotional tone of the show was very particular in Vella's imagination and on the page, and would be a tightrope walk to capture on screen.

"I believe there are loads of emotions in the world which are combinations of known emotions, and emotions that we don't have names for," says Rowan Witt (JOHN). "The only way we can identify them is by telling a very specific story and getting people to feel those emotions at specific moments. The show is a weird blend tonally where you're laughing one second, crying the next. You really love a character, then they do something problematic and you're suddenly questioning how you feel about them."

Vella and Gaffy had extensive discussions with production designer SCOTT BIRD and location manager VIRGINIA HOOKHAM about choosing and creating locations that felt unique and intimate, but cinematic at the same time.

"The most important place in the series is the house that Vivian inherits, and Scott Bird did such a stunning job of imbuing it with so many beautiful details which I hope the audience see and appreciate as well," says Vella. "He found tiny teacups and smashed them, then glued them back together, because Walt is a person who glues people back together. Little things like that give the house so much character."

It was vital for the team that in selecting the cliffside location, it wasn't an identifiable place.

"We very deliberately chose to make the house and the ledge separate places that we stitched together in post-production," says Gaffy. "The house and its setting is in a sense a 'made up world' that we created."

The Costume and Hair & Makeup departments focused similarly on layers and detail, to define and enrich every character.



"CAITLIN MURRAY, our brilliant costume designer, came up with the concept that John is trying to dress older than he is," explains Rowan Witt. "He's come from the corporate sector, so he has to 'dress up' but he's not quite nailing it. Caitlin also had the idea of a self-imposed 'uniform'. John has a colour palette that's almost exclusively blue."

John's blue mood stands in contrast to other characters, such as Amy's multi-coloured sensibility.

"Caitlin and her team gave me the most colourful palette I've ever experienced as an actor," says Treffone. "We wanted Amy to be as vibrant on the outside as she is on the inside. When we meet her, she's worried that she's too much. Sometimes if you're a bright star in this world, you can mute your vibrancy. We didn't shy away from allowing Amy to grow through the season, to become more colourful as her sense of self grew."

"The level of detail is also mind blowing in terms of the production design," adds Witt, "there's a huge wine rack in Walt's house with little tags dangling off the bottles. Every single tag is from someone whose family member Walt helped, and there's 50 of them. The level of care that went into creating the characters and the production is really, really beautiful."

The Hair & Makeup team, led by LEAH TAYLOR, bleached parts of Thomasin McKenzie's hair, and leant into a heavy, camouflaging approach for her makeup.

"That really helped me find Vivian," says McKenzie. "The amount to which Vivian covers herself up is another kind of armour she puts on. We didn't use concealer at all, so you can clearly see her undereye bags, which accentuates how exhausted Vivian is."

Brandon McClelland says he didn't have to prepare to achieve Hendrix's 'dad bod'.

"I've been working on the dad bod for six years," he explains, "but we decided that as Hendrix is such a ball of stress, his hair has started to fall out. I am lucky enough to have a fairly thick head of hair, so they shaved in a recoding hairling and thinged it out the ten."

"Those conversations helped, because I like to work from the outside in. If I find the physicality of a character, the look of a character, it unlocks something. We also didn't hide my 'regular human body.' He's a dad of two threeyear-old twins. It was a great thing because it's helped me love being in my own body a little bit more as well."

A significant cameo in the series is WALT THE BROLGA, who appeared for her closeup on one day only.

"Walt is a female brolga in real life, I believe," says McKenzie. "She was very expensive, so we could only have her for one day and she was very elegant. She did her job extremely well. There was no messing about, she made a very strange call, ate worms and had a good old time."

Of the experience of the shoot, the cast and crew acknowledge the sure handed but collaborative approach of Gretel Vella, Lucy Gaffy and director of Episode Four, ADRIAN CHIARELLA.

"An important part of why I wanted to be a part of this story was because it was led by female creatives," explains McKenzie. "My first impression of Lucy was that she's incredibly maternal and gentle. I was excited knowing that we would be led by someone who is so caring, and she was incredibly supportive to me throughout this journey. I relied on her to guide me through the show, which she did very generously."

"Gretel is a superstar," adds McKenzie. "Her writing is fantastic. Thinking about how messy each character is, I really admire how fully formed they all are. Everyone's storyline isn't just skimming the surface. You really feel like you know that person by the end of it."

Brandon McClelland adds: "There's not a wasted word on those pages. And then you meet Gretel and she's incredibly lovely and supportive and constantly available to talk about character, about a scene. She's thought of everything and if she doesn't have an answer, she will think about it carefully, and come back and talk it through. I can't praise her highly enough."



For McClelland, Gaffy as a director is not 'one size fits all.'

"A note from her unlocks five other things," he adds. "From that one note, she knows the flow on effect that will happen. Lucy has a brilliant eye for the entirety of the series. We weren't just shooting a scene, we were shooting a moment that affects this other moment here. It's all thought out."

For Witt: "Lucy knows how to talk to actors. Everything's incredibly planned out, yet she's incredibly collaborative and helps actors do the best possible work. Not only does she have a vast catalogue of film references, not only is she incredibly prepared, not only is she warm, not only does she know how to talk to actors, but she's come from an editing background as well. So, she understands what she needs coverage wise. I enjoyed every second working with her."

Emerging director Adrian Chiarella took the reins for Episode 4. Says Gaffy, "It was my great pleasure to work alongside my friend and colleague Adrian Chiarella for his episodic directorial debut. Adrian had such a beautiful vision for his episode and executed it perfectly. I cannot wait to see where his career takes him."

For Thomasin McKenzie, TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE was one of the best productions she'd been a part of because of the care taken for mental health on set.

"We had an on-set mental health consultant, Julia Sharp, who we could schedule our own sessions with," McKenzie explains. "I felt supported by her, and I'd never experienced that on a set before, which is mind blowing because we are playing with emotions in this industry, sometimes very heavy things, and we need to be able to process that somehow."

Sharp, a social worker doing a masters in narrative therapy and community work, had provided care for clients in child protection, victims of sexual and domestic violence, as well as those with mental health issues, but working with film and television practitioners was a novel experience.

"I think having my role on set validated that mental health is just as important as physical health," states Sharp. "There's always a nurse on set for physical health, and so I really appreciated how this production acknowledged that a mental health carer needs to be present as well. This was a new industry for me and I felt really blessed to be brought on board."

The sense of what the team were creating was so significant that Devon Terrell (DANE) didn't want to be away from his collaborators on his days off.

"I wanted to be on set all the time because we were making an amazing story," he says. "I can't wait for audiences to see TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE, because as an actor I recognised how incredible the cast was, how I was part of something incredible. I never needed to overcompensate on set because I deeply trusted the person across from me. It was a really incredible working environment."

For Lucy Gaffy, TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE is a unique show because of Vella's initial concept and the scripts that flowed on from it.

"I think this show is something really elevated," she says. "We were able to cast in a way that I hadn't been able to do before. We tried so hard in every department to bring innovation and elevation. The cinematography of my longtime friend and collaborator JAMES L BROWN is extraordinary. It has an international feel and outlook. That was the intent from the beginning. From the production design to the music, we aimed to make a show that feels cohesive, beautiful and true, all the time."

WHAT TO EXPECT



#### WHAT TO EXPECT

Gretel Vella: "I think audiences are going to be surprised by the different things this show is. It's a really fun, family story, but it also tackles some really tricky and important issues in a sensitive way. Vivian is a character whose mental illness is also a superpower. All of her difficult experiences make her a superhero and give her the empathy to really help other people. I think it's a perfect mix of different things and people are going to really enjoy that."

Lucy Gaffy: "I've been Vivian, my sister has been Vivian, my best friend has been Vivian. There's a component of her in all of us, and in TOTALLY COMPLETELY FINE we see her emerge through fear into her true self. I believe that for people. I don't think it's always neat, and I don't think our show's neat. It doesn't wrap itself up in a bow, but I think what we try and speak to is that the effort of trying is triumph."

Brandon McClelland: "We all know Thomasin's a brilliant actor, but she has really gone there with this. She is incredibly funny, and if she doesn't work in comedy for the rest of her life, that's an absolute tragedy. Audiences are going to fall in love with Gretel's writing, with James Brown's cinematography, with Lucy Gaffy and Adrian Chiarella's direction. We haven't seen a show like this in Australia. We just haven't."

Contessa Treffone: "I think what makes this show unique is that it's not afraid to show the ugliness of being human. We see people trying to work out what their lives are. When we tell stories in a way that doesn't have limitations, that's when people feel represented. Audiences will see these beautifully messy human beings, grappling with very real issues, and feel like maybe they're not that far from their own lives. The more we embrace the mess, the better we are as humans..."



### **GRETEL VELLA**Writer, creator, and executive producer

Her television credits include three seasons of *The Great*, starring Elle Fanning and Nicholas Hoult for Hulu, for which she also served as co-producer; *Class of 07* for Amazon Studios; the TV movie *A Sunburnt Christmas* for Stan; Season 3 & 4 of *Doctor Doctor* for Easy Tiger and Channel Nine and its spin-off web series, *Welcome to Whyhope*.

Her telemovie *Christmas Ransom* premiered on Stan in December 2022.

Gretel's playwriting credits include *A Period Piece* for The Old 505 Theatre, *Carking It* for NIDA's 2018 season of student productions, *The Blood on Bloody Blood Ladder* for ATYP at Griffin Theatre, and *Shandy's Corner* for New Ghosts Theatre Company at King Cross Theatre. She was awarded the 2019 ATYP Co-commission for her play *Bathory Begins* which had a season at The Joan, and was selected for ATYP's National Studio and Fresh Ink Mentoring programs for 2017. Gretel was also one of the 2020 recipients of the Phillip Parsons Fellowship for Emerging Playwrights for which she developed a new play for Belvoir Theatre.

Along with her fellow writers on *The Great*, Gretel was nominated for the Writers Guild of America's Award for Best New Series and Best Comedy Series for 2021. She has also been nominated for two AWGIEs and one AACTA award for her work on *The Great* and *A Sunburnt Christmas*. Gretel currently has projects in development with Fremantle Australia, Jungle Entertainment and Century City Entertainment.

#### LUCY GAFFY Set-up Director

Lucy Gaffy is an award-winning filmmaker who, over the last decade, has worked across a range of productions and media, including short films, documentaries, episodic television, narrative podcasts and most recently, feature films.

Most recently, Lucy directed the opening story "We the Spiders" for the anthology feature film *Here Out West* (Co-Curious/ ABC, 2021) alongside directors Ana Kokkinos, Leah Purcell, Julie Kalceff and Fadia Abboud. The film had its World Premiere at the 2021 Sydney Film festival and was met with unwavering acclaim, and has been nominated for a 2022 AACTA Award for Best Film. Lucy's recent television credits include episodes 4 - 8 of *Irreverent* for Netflix, Peacock and Matchbox Pictures, the drama series Amazing Grace for Playmaker and the Nine Network; three episodes of the ABC/Netflix series *The Unlisted* (Aquarius Films, 2019) and prior to this, multiple episodes across seasons 3 - 4 of the enormously successful Nine Network series *Doctor Doctor* (Easy Tiger, 2017-18).

Lucy has received numerous awards and scholarships throughout her career. In 2009, she was the recipient of the European Union Travel Scholarship to travel to the DocPoint Festival in Helsinki to show her documentary *Century Witness* and in 2010 was nominated for an Australian Directors Guild award and received an AFI nomination for her film *The Love Song of Iskra Prufrock* which subsequently screened at over 60 International Festivals. Lucy was a recipient of the 2012 Screen NSW Emerging Filmmakers Fund with which she made her award-winning short *The Gift*. Lucy received her second Directors Guild nomination for her short film *The Fence* which subsequently premiered at the prestigious Busan International Film Festival in South Korea.





### ADRIAN CHIARELLA Director

Director Adrian Chiarella grew up in Sydney and is a graduate of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

His career began editing previsualisation for Baz Luhrmann on the feature film Australia. Following this, Adrian worked as an editor, cutting Craig Boreham's feature film *Teenage Kicks* and winning an Australian Screen Editors Award for Lucy Gaffy's acclaimed short film *The Love Song of Iskra Prufrock*. Adrian directed and edited numerous promotional campaigns for Foxtel's original Australian drama series including *Wentworth*, *The Devil's Playground* and *The Kettering Incident*.

His first short film as writer-director, *Touch*, earned Adrian an Australian Directors Guild nomination after screening at numerous festivals around the world. His second short film, Black Lips, was funded by Create NSW and SBS and has screened at Palm Springs International Shortfest, Rhode Island Film Festival, St Kilda Film Festival, BFI Flare, Outfest Fusion and Melbourne Queer Film Festival where it won best short film. His most recent short film, *Dwarf Planet*, was funded through the Australian Directors' Guild and premiered in competition at Clermont-Ferrand before playing as a finalist in the Dendy Awards at Sydney Film Festival and being nominated for an AACTA for best short drama.

### NAT LINDWALL Producer

Producer Nat Lindwall is passionate about telling thought-provoking and boundary pushing stories for international audiences.

Following graduation with distinction from the Queensland University of Technology's creative industries post-graduate programme, Nat embarked on a career in production, storylining on a US Fremantle drama series. At the beginning of 2007, she moved to Europe for a three-year production stint on the USD\$27M Warner Bros feature, *The Secret of Moonacre*.

Nat returned to her first passion, development, with a role at Screen Queensland as development manager across all formats; advising, investing and script editing approximately 60 feature films, TV drama and factual concepts each year. Whilst at Screen Queensland, she had the privilege of being mentored by industry titan Jock Blair, working alongside him in such varied projects including *The Railway Man, The Straits, The Strange Calls, Predestination, Secrets & Lies* and *Once Upon A Time In Cabramatta*. Currently with Fremantle Australia, Nat is executive producing a slate of series in development with international streamers.



#### EMME HOY Writer

Writer Emme Hoy completed her Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Performance at NIDA.

During 2022, Emme's play *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* premiered at Sydney Theatre Company's Roslyn Packer Theatre, and her play *Monsters* opened at Malthouse's Merlyn Theatre. Her other works include *Salem* (NIDA), *St Joan* (STC), *La Finta Giardiniera* (Queensland Conservatorium), *Extinction of the Learned Response* (Belvoir St Theatre 25A), and *Bathory Begins* (ATYP/Q Theatre).

Emme was shortlisted for the 2019 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting, the recipient of Belvoir St Theatre's 2017 Philip Parsons Fellowship, the 2020 STC/NIDA Pathways Commission, MTC's Writer in Residence Program, and is the 2022 Patrick White Fellow for Sydney Theatre Company. In 2017, Emme's play Extinction of the Learned Response was shortlisted for the Patrick White Playwrights Award, and the Griffin Award. Her co-written play Bathory Begins was awarded the 2019 ATYP co-commission, whilst her original play Cry Havoc won the 2020 ATYP Foundation Commission.

Emme has original television shows in development with Disney+ and Clerkenwell Films; Moonriver TV; Firebird Films, Val TV, Dancing Ledge and Jungle. Emme has also written for *The Ballad of Renegade Nell* and *Nautilus* for Disney+.

### KEIR WILKINS Executive Producer

Writer Keir Wilkins is currently script-producing and writing on a major series for Netflix ANZ, as well as developing original projects with Fremantle, Werner Film Productions and Curio Pictures. Prior to that, Keir was a writer on the Netflix series Surviving Summer, for Werner Film Productions, and co-creator and writer on the upcoming ABC ME series The Disposables for Photoplay and Dragonet Films. He has also script edited television pilots for Easy Tiger and Mad Ones Films, and has been part of early development on series for Matchbox Pictures, Guesswork Television, Paramount Television, Lingo Pictures, and See-Saw Films. He has also written and been a storyliner for the Channel 5/ Network Ten series, Neighbours.

Keir previously spent two years as part of Fremantle Australia's development team where he worked across a diverse slate of dramas and was the Assistant Script Editor on the Foxtel/Amazon miniseries *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, and has served as a Development Consultant for Curio Pictures and Jungle Entertainment.

### JAMES BROWN Cinematographer

Award-winning cinematographer James Brown is actively working across television drama, feature films, music videos and commercials. He is a graduate of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS).

James was recently Accredited by the Australian Cinematography Society (ACS) Acknowledging his vast body of work. James' feature film *Matar a Jesús (Killing Jesus)* with director Laura Mora had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), before screening at the San Sebastian Film Festival, winning the "Erski Youth Award" and at the Chicago International Film Festival, winning the Roger Ebert Award.

Other credits include the feature *Savage*, directed by Sam Kelly; the five-part web series *Deadlock*, directed by Billie Pleffer; and the documentary *Watan*, based on Syrian refugees in Jordan. James' bold and distinctive visual style is exhibited in a number of short films, including the award-winning *Black Lips*, for which James received the Gold ACS Award for Best Cinematography; as well as *The Reluctant Shanty*, a short film for the UNHCR, directed by Kyra Bartley, which has won multiple awards.

### SCOTT BIRD Production Designer

AACTA and APDG Award nominated for *ANZAC Girls* and recipient of an Emmy Award in 2010 for his work as an art director on the multi award winning miniseries *The Pacific*, production designer Scott Bird is one of Australia's most experienced designers and art directors.

In 2022, he won AACTA and APDG awards for Production Design in Television for his work as designer on *The Tourist*. Scott's credits as designer include the film *Nim's Island II* (US) and for television *Chosen, Tomorrow When the War Began, House of Bond, ANZAC Girls, Winter, Janet King, Tricky Business, Supernova* (UK), *Neighbours, Blue Heelers* and *All Saints*. As Art Director, the film *Subterano*, the miniseries *On The Beach, The Incredible Journey of Mary Bryant (UK), The Mystery of Natalie Wood* (US), three series of *Underbelly* and the worldwide cult hit sci-fi series *Farscape* (US) (Seasons 3 and 4.)

### CAITLIN MURRAY Costume Designer

Sydney based costume designer Caitlin Murray relishes the chance to bring characters to life through clothing. Caitlin enjoys working in all genres of screen storytelling, and most recently designed Tristam Baumber's TV Series *The PM's Daughter*, and Kelsey Munro and Claudia Karvan's third series of *Bump*. Caitlin's other film credits include *The Moogai*, which was awarded 'Best Short Film' at the International Melbourne Film Festival, and *On Hold, A Musical*, which took out the top prize at Flickerfest.

### LEAH TAYLOR Hair and Makeup Artist

Hair and makeup artist Leah Taylor began her career as a hairdresser, before moving into film and television after graduating from the Australian College of Make-Up and Special Effects. After graduating, Leah spent a number of years designing hair and makeup for theatre productions and short films, notably *Dream Baby* (2016), winner of the AACTA Award for Best Short Film. Leah has designed hair and makeup for independent films including *The Little Death* (2014), *Hearts and Bones* (2019), and television series *Kiki and Kitty* (2017) and *Wrong Kind of Black* (2018) Recently Leah has been working on several television series for Fremantle, SBS and Stan, including *Significant Others* and *Appetite*.





Stan is Australia's leading local streaming service and unrivalled home of original productions.

Stan's original production slate includes hit thriller series BLACK SNOW starring Travis Fimmel; TRANSFUSION starring Sam Worthington and Matt Nable; the Stan Original Dating series LOVE TRIANGLE, a modern take on the struggle for love; BUMP, a modern parenthood drama starring Claudia Karvan; RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE DOWN UNDER, hosted by RuPaul, Michelle Visage and Rhys Nicholson; GOLD, a taut thriller film starring Zac Efron in his first Australian production; BAD BEHAVIOUR, set in the unforgiving world of an exclusive girls boarding school; WOLF LIKE ME, a genre-bending drama series starring Isla Fisher and Josh Gad; and countless other acclaimed original series and films.

Stan's studio partnerships include NBCUniversal, Starz, Lionsgate, Showtime, Paramount, Sony, Warner Bros, Disney, all3media, BBC and more. Through these partnerships, Stan offers Australians unlimited access to thousands of hours of premium entertainment – with an outstanding lineup of blockbuster movies and exclusive premieres.

For more information, visit stan.com.au.

For more information, contact stan.publicity@stan.com.au