



MILK AND HONEY

By
Victoria Taylor Roberts

Drama Series: 6 x 60 minutes

'Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.'
Lucius Annaeus Seneca



Through the eyes of a young girl, Milk and Honey charts a dysfunctional family's migration to Australia in an attempt to escape the north of England's industrial death in the early eighties. A true story.

"Born and bred in Yorkshire, blossomed in New South Wales. No roots, me, you see."

It is 1981; whilst Liverpool's streets run red with rioters' blood, Spandau Ballet joins the Specials on Top of the Pops and the nation's press explores the contours of a young Lady Di. For **11 year-old Louise Hapshaw** the world is just starting to take shape - and it is through her eyes we watch it do so.

Life on the council estate is tough but Mum, Sara (33), does her best to keep food in the pantry and money in the gas meter. She's been dating boorish building company boss, Derek Weal (40), for several years but refused to move in with him - until now. Interspersed flashbacks seen from Louise's perspective (a featured device within the series) show us why. We meet a collectively resigned mum, Louise and Rob just as they leave their flat for the last time and travel to Derek's house. They are not to be there long: with the north's economy falling apart, Derek is adamant that their future lies somewhere else - namely Australia. With an unplanned baby on the way, mum sees this as a new start; the children see it only as a broken promise. Louise absorbs the news gingerly; not so her brother Robert (15) who, outraged, rebels at every opportunity.

Migration plans afoot, they head to Manchester, but first, Derek must officially adopt the children. A judge asks Louise and Robert if they are happy to give up their surnames; both do what is expected, silently and sadly. On the same day Louise encounters her first acrid taste of the female experience: a sexual assault at the hands of the doctor conducting her medical examination. She endures and says nothing; this is a big day for the Weals and she has been told to behave. Migrant visas issued and possessions now whittled down to a single suitcase each, Louise and Robert must say goodbye to all that they've known and loved - including their dad. Louise never gets the chance. John Hapshaw (48) takes Rob for a final meal, sending back only a scribbled note for his daughter. Sitting in her Aunt's house on the eve of their departure, Louise watches her stepfather count the small piles of cash that are now the sum total of their worth. In a motorway service station on the way to the airport, she buys a Bucks Fizz single from the revolving rack, wondering if they will ever own a record player again on which to play it.

Via a stopover in Hong Kong, a previously untravelled Louise absorbs with wonder the chaotic sights and sounds, prefacing the disappointment when the Weals arrive at last in Sydney. Far from the sleek beachside abode they'd dared imagine, their first home is a converted petrol station. From that point, nothing goes to plan as the children learn that new schools don't mean new friends and that Britain's innovative youth culture hasn't stretched the width of the globe with Oz still a land of seventies rock. Derek's twin sons from his first marriage arrive to join the troubled alliance, screwed up from being dumped by their own mum. The dream that pushed them to the end of the planet crumbles; as it does a frantic Derek wrestles for control. Finally, less than a year into their 'new life', the twins have wreaked havoc, Rob has run away and now Louise and her mum are left to defend themselves against a destroyed man determined to be their keeper.

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