



Playlist for What Was Lost

Some of these songs are featured in the book, some remind me of certain characters and others provided some kind of inspiration.

1. Glen Campbell - Wichita Lineman

Kurt is listening to this on the radio the first night we meet him. Jimmy Webb's lyrics capture the prosaic nature and loneliness of the lineman's work together with an aching sense of longing and loss. What else could Kurt be listening to?

2. Althea and Donna – Uptown Top Ranking

This track is playing somewhere in the background as Teresa and Kate walk across the estate. The song would have been an old one by that time (it was a UK number 1 in 1978) but it's one that will forever echo from open windows on hot, still afternoons. I think this song more than any other evokes memories for me of being a child, playing out in the streets and some intangible sense of excitement and mystery in the air. It's one of those perfect songs that never seem to grow stale.

3. Echo and the Bunnymen – The Cutter

The young Lisa is a big fan of the Bunnymen and mentions Ian McCulloch in her brief lecture on hairstyles to a mystified Kate. No one, not even Morrissey, did more for the sales of old men's second hand overcoats and hair gel in the 1980s.

4. The Specials – Ghost Town

The desolate landscape described by the Specials here in 1981 forms the backdrop to Kurt's childhood – the abandoned factories and industrial wastelands of Thatcher's Britain become his playgrounds. The song works equally well as a portrait of the local High Street some years later with its boarded up shops and failing businesses feeling the full force of the Green Oaks effect. The Specials were the first band that were all mine and not a hand me down from someone else in my family. I was 9 when I saw them perform 'Gangsters' on Top of the Pops, and that was the end of any uncertainty over what to spend my pocket money on for the next few years.

5. Ella Fitzgerald – The Lady is a Tramp

This is one of Kate's dad's records. Kate is listening to it as she plots the results of their pear drop survey. I think the lyrics of songs are particularly puzzling when you're a child. I remember I used to absorb the music of my parents and siblings and I'd become completely wrapped up in the lyrics and develop hypotheses as to what they meant. I once asked my sister what a David Bowie lyric meant and she told me that she had no idea. That was a revelation – up until that point I'd assumed grown-ups knew and the idea that they didn't was quite distressing to me. The lyrics to 'The Lady is a Tramp' are not so impenetrable for adults, but I remember finding this a very confusing song as a child. A tramp just meant a vagrant to me, so I had a clear mental image of this in my head, and then each line seemed to throw up even more puzzles and incongruous images.

6. One Creed – The Ladder

The nameless HR trainer talks to Lisa about the imagery of a ladder. I love the idea of this track creeping into Lisa's head as she listens to his inane babble. The song is some dark exploration of Vietnam and insanity. I've always assumed a connection to Adrian Lyne's film 'Jacob's Ladder', but there's also a recurring sample of Martin Sheen in Apocalypse Now speaking of Kurtz: 'They told me he had gone totally insane'. I think Lisa would find something both relevant and comforting in that line as she endures the bizarre motivational lecture.

7. The Inkspots – Don't Get Around Much Anymore

This is the song that sends Steve over the edge. The conversation between Steve and the customer right up until the point at which the customer won't part with the money is one I had when working as an Easy Listening buyer. The rest of the conversation as reported in the book is my fantasy of what I wish had happened. It's a crime to make 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore' a cause of conflict as it's such a beautiful song. I love the combination of Duke Ellington's sweet melody with Bob Russell's understated depiction of hurt and withdrawal.

8. Mike Post and Pete Carpenter – The Rockford Files

Kate watches The Rockford Files while her Dad prepares her fish fingers to perfection. Clearly there has to be a detective theme tune in here somewhere and none can beat this freewheeling classic.

9. Brian Eno – The Golden Hours

This is a song I've loved for years - a delicate, restrained study of uncertainty, inertia and time slipping by. Almost every line seems relevant to Lisa and Kurt as they watch their lives slide past, their brains slowly turning to sand. There are even some lines buried behind the main vocal at the end of the track that seem to suggest the hovering presence of Kate:

'Who would believe what a poor set of eyes can show you
Who would believe what an innocent voice could do
Never a silence always a face at the door'

10. Connie Francis - Tennessee Waltz

Kurt Sr dances 'stiffly but accurately' to this at the local working men's club Country night each week. There are so many different versions of this song, but this is the version I grew up hearing every Sunday evening when my Dad played records in the living room. There's an echo on the vocals that make it sound as if the singer is still there in a now empty dance hall and it makes this already sad song even more tear-jerking. It's about loss of course.

11. David Bowie – Joe the Lion

I feel a little bad for Lisa's line 'the exact point at which David Bowie became shit forever.' For me David stopped being perfect in 1983, and whilst he's never quite recaptured the magic since then, he has at least made some interesting attempts. As small compensation I pay homage to the greatness that was Dave in his heyday by placing some of his words, quite incongruously into the mouth of Kurt's mom, who describes her son ironically as 'Joe the Lion, made of iron'. This isn't an entirely random association. The line 'You get up and sleep' is repeated throughout the song and seems to capture something of Kurt's torpor. The song also boasts a most invigorating start.

12. The Beach Boys – In my room

Kate never builds an enormous sandpit in the middle of her bedroom, but like Brian Wilson her room is her sanctuary and the centre of her world.

13. The Fall – Couldn't Get Ahead

This is the song to accompany Dan's lunchtime rant to Lisa. It would be a foolish person who tried to impose their own interpretation on Mark E Smith's lyrics, but the combination of frustration and humour in this song seems to me to be the perfect soundtrack for the kind of eye wateringly bad day that Dan seems prone to.

14. Kraftwerk – Autobahn

Lisa waits for her brother to turn up at the Wimpy restaurant and take her to see Kraftwerk. She can't believe that she will see them 'in the flesh, or circuitry or whatever they were'. I share her sense of incredulity. I never got to see Kraftwerk live, and sadly neither does Lisa.

15. Handsome Family – All the time in airports

Just as the ghostly memory of Kate hovers constantly at Teresa's shoulder and in the malls of Green Oaks, so the spectre here inhabits the sterile surroundings of an airport – remaining always just a hundred feet away.

16. Smog – Let's move to the country

Lisa listens to Smog as she looks around Gavin's Green Oaks 21st Birthday exhibition. Although I refer to Bill Callahan's 'bitter despair' going well with the bleak images, this is in fact one of his less dark songs. It's a song that suggests fresh starts and new beginnings and that's appropriate for Lisa at this point, having left Your Music and met Kurt. Of course even at his most optimistic Callahan remains circumspect and never quite brings himself to finish the sentences: 'Let's start a...', and 'Let's have a...', but I think Lisa has more faith in the future.

17. Talking Heads – (Nothing But) Flowers

During the time span covered in *What Was Lost* the landscape changes in the typical post industrial fashion – from industry, to wasteland, to retail and leisure use. I grew up largely in the wasteland phase and I have a perverse fondness and nostalgia for that forsaken landscape, so I can relate to the similarly twisted yearning in this song. David Byrne imagines a world where the shopping malls and highways have been replaced with fields and trees, but instead of celebrating this return to nature the narrator hates it and laments the loss of the discount stores and 7-11s and a world reduced to nothing but flowers.