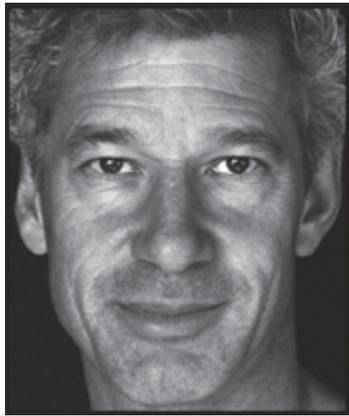




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THE PERFORMING ARTS PUBLISHER

NOTE: This ebook has been formatted using standard play conventions. Changing the font may result in the loss of italics in stage directions, production titles, etc. For optimum viewing, always keep the font 'Original'.



TOM LYCOS was born in Aberystwyth, Wales, to Greek and English parents. Tom spent two years working with renowned Dutch company KISS before returning to Australia to join Sidetrack Theatre as an ensemble member in 1985. In 1988, he played the lead male role in Jane Campion's film *Sweetie*. He was then acrobat/musician/performer with Circus Oz for three years and then actor/musician in two stage musicals, *Buddy* and *Escape from the Forbidden Planet*. He has performed with Melbourne Theatre Company, Arena Theatre, Griffin Theatre, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Back to Back Theatre and Kinetic Energy. In 1994, he was co-deviser/actor in the Burning House production of *That Eye the Sky* with Hugo Weaving and David Wenham, directed by Richard Roxburgh. In 1996, Tom joined Zeal Theatre, co-creating eight original productions with co-collaborator Stefo Nantsou, including *The Stones*, *Burnt* and *Taboo* (which Tom has also directed for TheatreHaus in Frankfurt, Germany, and Teater Grimsborken in Oslo, Norway).

STEFO NANTSOU was born in Newcastle, Australia, to Macedonian parents. Stefo has written, co-created, directed and acted in over 120 theatre productions for companies throughout Australia, Europe, North America, Asia, South Africa and New Zealand in his 30-year career. After co-founding the Ship-O-Fools in 1980, and working as an ensemble actor/writer with Sidetrack Theatre and Freewheels Theatre, he founded Zeal Theatre in 1989. Zeal has created over 40 original productions including *The Stones*, which has been performed over 1,100 times worldwide including seasons at the

National Theatre in London and The Duke Theatre in New York, and translated and performed in over 25 countries worldwide. Stefo has also directed his plays for companies in Germany, Holland, Wales, Hungary, Canada and Denmark. He is currently the resident director at the Sydney Theatre Company, still writing and performing new works with Zeal Theatre, and is guest 'regie' with Australian Macedonian Theatre in Sydney.

Founded in 1989 by actor/writer/director Stefo Nantsou, Zeal Theatre is a touring theatre company which has created over 40 original productions, including works for theatres, schools, outdoor site-specific events and festivals, family shows and a range of international co-productions. Zeal's 'house' style incorporates live music with a range of theatrical styles and a bare-bones, no-frills aesthetic focusing on the skills of the performer. Zeal's work is known worldwide, the company having performed throughout Europe, North America, Asia, South Africa and New Zealand, with many of Zeal's plays now being translated and produced in many countries; including *The Stones*, *Australia v South Africa* and *Taboo* by Tom Lycos and Stefo Nantsou, and *The Apology* and *The Forwards* by Stefo Nantsou. Zeal Theatre received the prestigious ASSITEJ International President's Award for 'excellence in the profession of theatre' in Montreal, Canada in 2005.

Foreword

The work of Zeal has been a vital and steadily increasing part of the identity of Sydney Theatre Company (STC) for ten years or so. Initially it was a kind of umbrella connection, made through *The Stones*, which was an extant show toured into schools all over Sydney and NSW. Commissions followed, with work in schools for the education arm of the company becoming a regular and on-going collaboration between STC and Zeal. This connection became ever-broader with the *Burnt* project as the work reached beyond schools and into communities (specifically rural communities suffering under the burden of drought). For a small company, Zeal Theatre has a massive reach, a broad appeal and a phenomenal output.

The scripts in this book are indicators of that output, but indicators only because every Zeal show is different—and we mean every performance of every Zeal show. This is because more than anything else Zeal is alive. The work is highly theatrical in the time-honoured tradition of travelling players (vagabonds, blackguards and rogues they are)—from Commedia dell’Arte through to AGITPROP—Zeal are keepers of a flame where theatre is connected directly to its audience, fuelled by their concerns and their questions, charged with their well-being and the quandaries that endanger their very hearts and souls on a daily basis. In lesser hands, it would be synopsised and marginalised as ‘issue-based with educational outcomes’, but Zeal is so, so, so much more than that. They are aware of the traditions that their work springs from and aware of the terrible greyness that separates the black from the white in every vexing issue that we face. That we face when we are thirteen, sixteen, thirty-six and sixty-four. That we should face with a shudder and/or a laugh. Zeal produces theatre through and through, 100-proof. Theatre guaranteed to make you so blind that you can truly see Oedipus.

Enjoy the read and remember if you set out to mount these shows yourself or plan on using them as a model for developing your own work: the script really is just the tip of a mighty theatrical iceberg.

Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett

Between 2008 and 2013 Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett were co-Artistic Directors of the Sydney Theatre Company. Andrew Upton remained as sole Artistic Director until 2015.

A Ripping Yarn

In the front bar of the local pub in a small country town a bloke tells a ripping yarn to his mate and the barmaid. The tale is full of adventure, history, opinion, local knowledge, and peppered with jokes and gags galore. He even sheds a tear or two as he recounts a few personal details into the mix. His impersonations of characters and events are hilarious and his mate and the barmaid laugh and cry with recognition. Locust plagues, economic downturns, sub-soil moisture, vicious rumours, family hassles and, of course, the bloody drought.

Burnt was born and bred out of the true stories of people from regional Australia struggling with prolonged dryness, and in particular how the stresses and strains of continued drought impacts on families and young people. The play is inspired by that ‘bush yarn’ quality and the Zeal Theatre style of performance aims to be like that bloke telling a story to his mates in the local bar.

Burnt was originally commissioned by Sydney Theatre Company in 2009, the fourth commission we received after *Gronks*, *Australia v South Africa* and *Taboo*. The commission was made possible through the support of the Girgensohn Foundation and we would like to thank Thomas and Ingeborg Girgensohn for their warmth and enthusiasm for our work. *Burnt* was Zeal Theatre’s forty-first production and celebrated our twentieth year since establishment in 1989.

We would like to thank the wonderful students and staff of Wade High School who helped us enormously with the development of the script, as well as Lindy Sardelic, Elliott Weston and Dean Mason who worked on the original staging of the play. We would also like to thank Peter Kenny from AgForce and Helen Hristofski, Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton at Sydney Theatre Company for sparking this particular project.

Tom Lycos and Stefo Nantsou
December 2010

FIRST PRODUCTION

Burnt premiered at Bega RSL Club, Bega, NSW, on 17 June 2009 with the following cast:

ACTOR 1	Lindy Sardelic
ACTOR 2	Tom Lycos
ACTOR 3	Stefo Nantsou

Directed by Stefo Nantsou with original music by Tom Lycos.

A season followed at Sydney Theatre Company 24 June–3 July 2009.

CHARACTERS

ACTOR 1:

SUZIE PETRO, 42, farmer

CASEY PETRO, Suzie's daughter, Year Ten student

SANDIE MICKELTON, Casey's best friend, Year Ten student

LAURA WILSEN, 55, farmer

VALERIE PURINE, 60, bitter ex-shop owner

WENDY SNODGRASS, 88, pensioner

FRAN WHIPPLE, 35, hairdresser

AMBER WEEKES, Year Three student

CAROL SATTLER, Royal Hotel barmaid

DEBBIE DALLAS, local policewoman

MISS PIERCE, school principal

ACTOR 2:

KYLE PETRO, Casey's twin brother, Year Ten student

TOBY SATAN, two-year-old child from hell

STEWART CAPELAND, hardware-store owner

BRONWYN BOWTELL, Country Women's Association member

MIRIANA GODOLFIS, supermarket check-out girl

FATHER SPANIAL, priest

CAMERON MCKENZIE, Casey's friend, Year Ten student

WARREN BLUFF, real-estate agent

DOUG WATKINS, 45, farmer

ALEX DALEY, Year Three student

WEAZEL LOGAN, 82, retired farmer

BILL CHANG, general-store owner

ACTOR 3:

GEORGE PETRO, 45, farmer

COLIN KALM, Little Munchkins Child Care worker

RANJIT SINGH, new farmer from India

ALFIE SHRAPNEL, old farmer

MAGGIE COLLINGWOOD, Country Women's Association member

MILES WOODCOCK, menswear manager

GRAHAM LANDFILL, 75, Rotary Club member

OSCAR PARKER, Kyle's friend, Year Ten student

MR O'DANIELS, high-school science teacher

CHARLIE SELMAN, auctioneer

BURNT



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From left: Lindy Sardelic as Suzie, Stefo Nantsou as Oscar and Tom Lycos as Kyle in the 2009 Zeal Theatre production of Burnt.

(Photo: Tracy Schramm.)

PROLOGUE

Music starts. As music fades, the actor playing CASEY steps forward.

CASEY: My name's Casey Petro. We live on a farm near a small town called Gilpendry about six hundred and fifty kilometres [*pointing*] that way. Our property's called 'Eureka' and we got heaps of sheep and grow fruit. I live there with my dad ... [*imitating him*] everyone calls him Lee Kernaghan 'cause of his cowboy hat; my mum ... [*imitating her*] she always keeps heaps busy and scurries around like a chook; and my twin brother Kyle ... [*imitating him*] he doesn't say much and plays *Call of Duty 5* all day. I'm twenty-three minutes older than him and it really shows. We're in Year Ten. We go to school in town 'bout fifteen ks outta Gilpendry.

When I was little we used to play hide and seek in amongst the orange trees, now they're barely over our knees. In our backyard we always put up a pool, it was sweet as, so since the drought's gone worse, it started getting smaller, and now we don't have it.

Our lawn's dead.

Everyone's garden's dead.

It happens really fast, you don't really notice it.

This is our story.

ACT ONE: UNHINGED

SCENE ONE: THE FARM (SUNRISE)

Eureka. Early morning. GEORGE and SUZIE are herding livestock through a gate. There are constant sound effects of sheep, dogs, whistling, flies—a hot and humid morning at the start of a long hard day.

SUZIE goes into the barn and gets some saddlery and tools, which she then hands over to GEORGE.

GEORGE: Don't forget to go to Capelands' for that wire. And see if he's got any brass hinges for that lower gate. We need about four sets. Or at least two. Whatever he's got.

SUZIE: I'll see how much they are.

The dog barks.

GEORGE: Benny's still limping.

SUZIE: Yeah ... I'll see if I can get some bandages ... or something. Any-thing else you want while I'm in town?

GEORGE *shakes his head.*

GEORGE: Come on, kids, Kyle, Casey!

SUZIE: Get in the car ... hurry up! [*To GEORGE*] See ya tonight, then.

GEORGE: See ya.

GEORGE leaves, herding the animals. SUZIE looks up at the sky, shading her eyes from the beautiful sunrise. Music starts.

SCENE TWO: SCHOOL DROP-OFF

SUZIE is driving the twins to school, CASEY beside her and KYLE in the back seat.

SUZIE: Just stop your whining, Kyle, will ya, mate, and put your seatbelt on, we're comin' into town ... the last thing we need is some two-hundred-dollar fine, and Senior Constable Houston or what's-her-name won't take your flimsy excuse that it was your turn to sit in the front. And you, Miss, can stop blowing ya hair out of your face, it's so annoying. We all know if you 'had a GHD you wouldn't be blowing your horrible hair so much', I've heard that one before too, and it don't wash.

She drives past a friend and waves a 'hello'.

I got my meetings today, so I can do the pick-up after school. I'll see Miles about your suit for the formal, Kyle ... he said he'd see if he could get that really nice dark blue one with the buttons, the one we saw in the catalogue ... ? No, no, you are not wearing a light orange retro number, I won't have you sticking out like dogs' balls.

She puts the blinker on, turns a corner, and parks outside the school.

Right, now I gave you the money for the excursion, didn't I? Good. And that envelope with the cheque in it for your school photos ... you got both yours and Kyle's ... don't forget to hand them in please. Okay, see you later, have a nice day.

KYLE and CASEY have gotten out of the car and are walking away.

And Casey? Ask Mr O'Daniels what you have to take on the excursion, what bedding you might need ... Okay, see yas this arvo.

SUZIE has a headache, looks at her watch and realises she's late, goes to drive off but there's the morning traffic jam around the school.

Come on, move it, you old goat ...

SCENE THREE: LITTLE MUNCHKINS CHILD CARE CENTRE

Twelve minutes later, at the Little Munchkins Child Care Centre, SUZIE arrives to see two-year-old TOBY running around the centre screaming 'Running amok, running amok, running amok'. Child care worker COLIN KALM enters, holding a screaming baby.

TOBY: I'm running amok, Colin!

COLIN: You sure are, Toby ... [*To SUZIE*] Yes, can I help you?

SUZIE: Hi, arh, my name's Suzie ...

COLIN: Toby. Calm down, mate. [*To SUZIE*] Sorry ...

SUZIE: Suzie, Suzie Petro, I had a nine o'clock appointment ...

The phone rings.

... with, arh ... Helen ...

COLIN: Sorry ...

COLIN *answers the phone, still holding the crying baby.*

Hello, Little Munchkins Child Care Centre ... Hi, Jane ... Yeah, she's fine ...

The baby screams louder.

Not a peep out of her ... Okay, we'll see you round four ... Thanks, Jane ... 'Bye.

SUZIE: I'm a little late ... I'm sorry ...

TOBY: Running a total muck ...

COLIN: Toby ...

SUZIE: She said she'd see me first thing this morning ...

COLIN: Helen's, arh ... excuse me ... Toby mate ... go into the 'Blue Tongue' room, Gale is about to read a story.

TOBY: No, no, no, I'm running amok, I'm running amok ... I don't like Gale

...

SUZIE: [*trying to keep it together as the baby screams louder*] I wanted to see her about ...

COLIN: I'm sorry, who did you want to see?

SUZIE: Arh, Helen ... Baker? Is it? I wanted to see if—

COLIN: You mean Piper.

SUZIE: Piper, sorry ...

TOBY: I want some warm juice in a bottle, warm juice in a bottle ...

COLIN: Helen's just gone to a meeting ... Toby!

SUZIE: She said I could come in today to see about a part-time job ...

TOBY: [*suddenly crying*] I wet myself! Errrrrrrrrrr ...

The baby that COLIN is holding vomits all down COLIN's back and cries louder.

COLIN: Excuse me ...

COLIN gives SUZIE the screaming baby and goes over to TOBY. SUZIE stands uncomfortably holding the baby which is covered in vomit and has obviously soiled itself.

TOBY: Colin ... I wet myself ...

COLIN: Toby ... Toby, listen ... mate, go to the 'Blue Tongue' room. Gale's got some squishy banana.

TOBY: [*suddenly stopping*] Squishy 'nana?

COLIN: A lot of squishy banana ... go and see.

TOBY: [*instantly overjoyed*] Yay, squishy banana, I'm gonna squash squishy banana in Gale's hair ... I'll run amok with squishy banana ... [*Running off*] Yeah! Gale ... I wet myself.

COLIN: Now ... sorry ... you're here for a part-time job, that is excellent, look, I'll tell Helen you came ... arh, what was your name again?

Small pause. SUZIE thinks twice about this idea.

SUZIE: It's okay.

She holds the baby out to COLIN.

Don't worry about it.

SCENE FOUR: CAPELANDS' HARDWARE

Twenty minutes later, SUZIE waits at Capelands' hardware store while STEWART CAPELAND is serving RANJIT SINGH, a new farmer to the area.

SINGH: I'm trying not to worry about it, I'm trying very, very hard, but I'm also trying to contact the Water Board about it and they tell me that if I

have to buy water, I would be better to buy it locally and save on the freight costs ...

STEWART: Well, that is true, but arh ...

SINGH: I know it's true, I know it for a fact, but why do they keep me waiting on the phone for one whole hour to tell me something I already know? Tell me, why?

STEWART: [*seeing* SUZIE] I'll be with you in a sec, Suzie ...

SUZIE: No worries.

SINGH: To freight it in or buy it locally it will still cost me very, very expensive ...

STEWART: You got room for more tanks on your property ...

SINGH: There's plenty of room ... but not enough water.

STEWART: Why don't you have a look at the tanks then, they're just out there ... I got a few sizes you can pick from ...

SINGH: What is the point of buying more tanks unless they are filled with water?

STEWART: Look, mate, I'll be out there in a minute, I'll just see to this customer ...

SINGH: Yes yes, you ... see to your customer, I have to think about this now ...

SINGH *goes past* SUZIE *and out to see the water tanks.*

STEWART: [*to* SUZIE] You're after that fencing wire, yeah ... ?

SUZIE *nods and smiles.*

ALFIE: [*standing in the doorway of the store as SINGH walks past him*] What is there to think about, mate? If ya ain't got enough water ya gonna go bloody broke. Simple as that.

SUZIE: And how much for a set of brass hinges?

STEWART: The big ones?

SUZIE *nods.* STEWART *goes to have a look.*

ALFIE: [*to* SUZIE] And howsitgoin' with you lot out Gilpendry way? Yous gonna have a decent crop this year?

SUZIE: We're doing it tough, Alfie.

ALFIE: You hear the Walshes are selling up.

SUZIE: No, I didn't know that.

STEWART: I only got three pair left.

SUZIE: I'll take the two.

ALFIE: Well, if ya got some spare water at your place, sell some to Mahatma Gandhi over there.

STEWART: They're eighteen fifty a pair.

ALFIE: At triple the price.

SUZIE: Whatever, Stewart, fine. Who's got spare water, Alfie?

SINGH: [*re-entering*] Do you think the medium size tank would fit in the back of my utility?

STEWART: What sort of ute have you got?

SINGH: [*very proud*] Toyota ... HiLux, one of the new ones.

ALFIE: If you can afford a new HiLux, mate, you can afford to fill that tank full of champagne.

SINGH: I don't like champagne. [*To STEWART*] I'll bring the car around the side.

STEWART: Right-oh, mate.

ALFIE: [*under his breath as SINGH exits past him*] Smartarse.

STEWART: [*to SUZIE*] Cash or credit?

SUZIE: Credit.

ALFIE: What's the bet Chandrasaka here stacks his HiLux on the roofing tiles.

STEWART: 'Pin' and 'OK'.

SUZIE: Haven't got a part-time job going here, have you, Stewart?

STEWART: Got the mother-in-law working here now. Save me a quid or two. There's your receipt. I'll load that wire into the back of the car for you.

SUZIE: Thanks. If something comes up ...

STEWART: Yeah ...

ALFIE: Ha, Stewart, look at this ... he rammed it straight into a pallet full a fertiliser bags. What a dill. That HiLux'll stink of shit till Christmas.

Serves him bloody right too.

SUZIE *looks at her watch, realises she's late.*

[*Calling out to SINGH*] Good on ya, Mr Bollywood, top effort!

SCENE FIVE: COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION MEETING

Twenty-five minutes later, the Country Women's Association ladies are comparing their cakes for the upcoming cake stall fundraiser.

BRONWYN: And good on you, Mrs Collingwood, that's a terrific effort.

MAGGIE: Well, I was up to four a.m. this morning, but honestly, it wasn't the cooking that was the problem this time ... it was Barry ... screaming from the bedroom, 'Come to bed, come to bed', and I said, 'No, this is CWA business and you can do without a bit of slap and tickle for one night, you randy old goat!'

They all laugh.

BRONWYN: Alright, so let's have a look shall we ... that makes ... six pavlovas, five biscuit bakes ... four rocky roads, the assorted cream sponges, and of course, Glenda's fabulous Raspberry Swirl, you've done it again, Glenda ... In fact I am so tempted to just dip my little pinky in there for a quick taste while no-one's looking ... You should have your own TV show, Glenda. 'Glenda's Magic Swirl'.

They all laugh again. SUZIE stands smiling, embarrassed that she hasn't brought anything with her to this meeting.

Suzie?

SUZIE: I'm so sorry I'm late, Bron ...

BRONWYN: Have you made something for the fundraiser?

SUZIE: Arh ... I'm happy to person the stall for a few hours on a Thurs-day afternoon.

BRONWYN: Well, any assistance is greatly appreciated. Alright, girls, let's go sell some cakes.

SUZIE: [*a little nervous*] Arh ... before anyone goes ...

All the ladies stop and stare at SUZIE. Small awkward pause.

BRONWYN: Yes, Suzie?

SUZIE: If anyone knows of arh ... a part-time job going ... or ... arh ...

[*Small pause.*] Just putting it out there ...

The other ladies just stare at her blankly.

SCENE SIX: SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT

Two hours later, SUZIE is at the supermarket check-out. As the check-out girl is bipping all the items through, SUZIE is wondering if she could do that job. There are many bips before the final price is given.

MIRIANA: Eighty-eight dollars seventy-six.

SUZIE *gives her the credit card.*

Credit?

SUZIE *nods.*

FlyBuys?

SUZIE *shakes her head.*

Cash out?

SUZIE *shakes her head.*

‘Pin’ and ‘OK’ please.

SUZIE *types in her pin.* MIRIANA *gives her the receipt.*

Thank you very much, have a happy day.

SUZIE: You ... have a happy day too.

SCENE SEVEN: MENSWEAR

One hour later, SUZIE is at the menswear store. MILES brings on the suit for Kyle’s formal.

MILES: So you're happy with this one?

SUZIE: Very happy, thank you, Miles.

MILES: I think your son will look a million dollars in this one, I really do ... and these buttons match his eyes, don't you think? I remember last time he was in the shop Kyle was talking about wearing some sort of light orange retro number? I don't think so ... I don't think any girl would be caught dead with a boy dressed like that, do you?! I think this one is a lot more appropriate. Has he got a date yet?

SUZIE: I don't think so.

MILES: What about your daughter, what's her name?

SUZIE: Casey.

MILES: Casey, right, what's she wearing on the big night?

SUZIE: Yeah, she can't make up her mind, as usual ... She just wants what's most expensive. They might be twins but they're certainly not identical.

MILES: Well, I'll keep Kyle's suit here, and you can pick it up anytime after one o'clock on the day of the formal.

SUZIE: Okay. [*Small pause.*] Miles ... You run this shop on your own ... Doesn't it ever get very busy ... ?

MILES: Busy? In this town? I don't think so. Luckily this building's been in the family for generations, otherwise I honestly wouldn't make enough to pay the rent. Now, would you like to put a deposit on that?

She hands him her credit card.

Thank you. Savings or credit?

SUZIE: Arh ... credit.

MILES: 'Pin' and 'OK'.

She types the numbers and presses 'OK'. Pause. It is not approved.

SUZIE stands very embarrassed.

Let's try it again.

MILES swipes the card and repeats the process.

'Pin' and 'OK'.

SUZIE *types in her pin again and once again the pause is ex-cruciating and uncomfortable as she waits for the approval. SUZIE's face shows the result.*

Perhaps you're over your limit today?

MILES *hands back her credit card.*

Might be worth a trip to the bank?

SUZIE *smiles meekly.*

SCENE EIGHT: ROTARY CLUB MEETING

Twenty minutes later, SUZIE is at the Rotary Club meeting listening to FATHER SPANIAL who is wrapping up his presentation to the members.

SPANIAL: ... and that's my trip to Belgium.

The Rotarians clap FATHER SPANIAL's presentation.

GRAHAM: Thank you, Father Spanial, I had no idea they called it Antwer-pen, I thought it was called Antwerp. Fancy that ... eh?

SPANIAL: And, I'd like to put in a special request if I may, Graham, I think it would be nice if we displayed the Antwerpen Rotary Club's banner next to the ones we've already got from Stamsund in Norway and Hellevetislous from the Netherlands, and keep all the European ones together.

GRAHAM: That's a wonderful idea, Father, all the European banners in the corner there ... All those in favour? Against? I declare it carried. How about another round of applause for Father Spanial and his Belgian report.

The members clap FATHER SPANIAL as he sits down next to SUZIE.

You're our very own Billy Connolly you are, Father, you've certainly travelled all over the shop ... you should grow your hair long and one of them goaties and paint it purple like he does ... [*He laughs at his own joke.*] Okay, everyone, settle down ... We have one last agenda item before we break for afternoon tea kindly donated by Stevie Magann and

the Gun Club, thanks Stevie, the Gunners have been big supporters for the Rotary Club over the years, good to see you out of hospital, and, arh, your leg is lookin' a lot better, mate. Now, this is a very unusual request from a Rotary exchange student from the United Arab Emirates. We've never had anyone come out from there before ... I'm sure that'll raise a few eyebrows in the community ... Mind you, it does say on the request form that the lad is Christian, not Muslim, I didn't know there were any Christians in the Middle East ...

SPANIAL: [*whispering to SUZIE*] Are you alright, Suzie?

SUZIE: Yes, Father ... everything's fine. [*Small pause.*] Father, do you have someone who comes in and ... arh ... cleans the church or ... does the odd job around the, the ... you know ... ?

SPANIAL: One of the parishioners comes in once a week, Wendy Snodgrass, you know Wendy? She gives it a bit of a vacuum and a dust over.

SUZIE: Right ... I was just ... in case you needed a hand ...

SPANIAL: Oh, Wendy's a pain in the proverbial, but she's actually very good. Thanks for offering.

SUZIE: [*looking at her watch*] No worries ... I have to go ... Pick-up time.

SUZIE stands to leave.

GRAHAM: What about you, Suzie?

SUZIE stops and stares at GRAHAM like a rabbit at an oncoming truck.

You want a nice Arab boy on your property for the next two years?

SUZIE: [*smiling meekly*] I'll give it some thought, Graham.

SCENE NINE: SCHOOL PICK-UP

After school, KYLE and his friend, OSCAR, are sitting waiting in the car. SUZIE arrives.

SUZIE: Sorry I'm late.

KYLE: Can we give Oscar a lift home, Mum?

SUZIE: No worries. Hi, Oscar.

OSCAR: Hey, Mrs Petro. S'up?

SUZIE: Where's your sister?

KYLE: Formal committee meeting. She's going to Sandie's place and getting a lift home later. Did you order mi suit?

SUZIE: [*knowing she hasn't*] Arh ... yeah.

OSCAR: What sort of suit ya gettin'?

KYLE: This posh, dark blue one, straight as.

OSCAR: I'm wearing this light orange retro suit mi dad wore to his formal ... he's even got the pink shirt with the frills here and the green velvet bow tie, looks awesome. I'm not allowed to wear it to the afterparty but, Mum reckons I'll spew all over it, she's probably right, I told 'em they should insure it against damages, be worth over nine hundred dollars, but I don't reckon you can insure something against your own son, eh, anyway, at least I know what I'm wearin'. Totes sorted.

SUZIE: That sounds really good, Oscar.

KYLE: [*knowing his mum is being sarcastic*] Yeah right.

Small pause. OSCAR sees someone out the car window.

OSCAR: [*yelling*] Hey, Cameron, get a life, ya tool. [*He turns to KYLE*] Kelly's gonna drop him, she told me at lunchtime, eh, sweet, I'll move in on her on the rebound.

KYLE: Yeah right.

Small pause.

SUZIE: Hey, Oscar, does your mum still do the cleaning at the school?

OSCAR: Nar ... she barred it ... Once she had to clean the boys toilets that was enough for her ... She reckons you gotta get paid ten thousand bucks just to walk into the boys toilets and then double that to get down on your hands and knees with a toilet brush.

KYLE: Oooooo.

OSCAR: I agreed with her. Dad called her weak. Harsh.

Small pause.

SUZIE: So ... who does that job now?

OSCAR: I dunno ... some Pakistani woman ... [To KYLE] Where she's from ...
?

KYLE: I dunno.

Another small pause.

SUZIE: So ... what's your mum do now?

OSCAR: Nothin'. Helps Dad with his septic tank business. Hey, just drop me on the corner, Mrs Petro. I'll walk from here. Thanks for the lift. Later, dude.

KYLE: Later.

*SUZIE pulls over, OSCAR jumps out of the car, they drive off again.
Small pause.*

What's for dinner?

SUZIE: [*exasperated*] I don't know, Kyle, I haven't thought that far ahead. I'm sure when we get home and I unpack all the bags I'll be able to cobble together something that I'm sure even you might find edible, and if it isn't good enough for you then you can start cooking for yourself, how does that sound? [*Pause.*] Probably spaghetti. That good enough for you?

KYLE: Only asking.

SCENE TEN: HOME

They arrive home. KYLE leaps out of the car leaving SUZIE to get all the shopping bags herself.

SUZIE: Kyle?!

He doesn't respond and exits. SUZIE brings all the shopping into the kitchen and starts putting things away in the refrigerator and the cupboards. GEORGE enters and starts washing his hands. By now SUZIE is fuming.

GEORGE: Did you get the hinges?

SUZIE: Spaghetti.

GEORGE: What?

SUZIE: I put a packet of Tim Tams back on the shelf because I thought it was too extravagant. I couldn't pay the rent on Kyle's suit either. Do you know how embarrassing it is when it comes up 'Transaction Denied', and I didn't have a cent in my purse and I know the petrol gauge is just about on 'Empty'? And I couldn't give a hoot how you pronounce Antwerp, I know I can't make a raspberry swirl as good as Glenda Golfbuggy or whatever her name is, and I don't want squishy banana smeared through my hair. And I ain't getting down on my hands and knees and scrubbing out the boys' toilets at school, it's bad enough I have to scrub out our own toilet every second day, but I can't do that. I can put up with a lot, but I can't do that. [*She slams the hinges down on the table.*] The hinges were eighteen fifty a pair, I only got the two. [*Small pause.*] I think I'm the one who needs them. [*Suddenly realising*] Oh ... and I didn't get the bandage for Benny's leg either ... I just forgot ...

GEORGE: I ripped up an old shirt for Benny's leg. It's fine. It's all gonna be just fine. [*Small pause.*] The near-side crop's doin' okay. Far-side's a bit iffy, but we only need a drop or two of rain and that might be okay too. Could get not a bad harvest if we're lucky. Fingers crossed. Fingers and toes. So just relax.

SUZIE: [*loudly*] Yes ... I'm very relaxed, George ... I'm totally and utterly relaxed.

GEORGE: [*snapping loudly*] Alright, you don't have to get squishy banana through your hair if you don't want to, okay, forget it, just sit home all day and watch the tele, don't worry about it. [*Small tense pause.*] Tim Tams are overrated. [*He grabs the hinges.*] I'll put these hinges on the back gate before it gets too dark. Forget about dinner for me, I'm not hungry now.

GEORGE *leaves.* SUZIE *stands in the kitchen very depressed.*

SCENE ELEVEN: LOCUST PLAGUE

GEORGE *goes into the shed, grabs some tools and prepares to fix the gate.*

GEORGE: Benny ... outta there ... get out.

GEORGE *starts to fix the gate with the new hinges.*

The mood gets suddenly very dark.

There is a locust plague on the horizon, and without warning, suddenly swarms through the property.

Suzie! Get the tarp ... we'll do the tractor first ...

The noise is shockingly loud and irritating. SUZIE comes out of the house and they both unravel a huge tarpaulin and cover up the tractor.

Get the windows on the car ... and in the house, hurry up ...

SUZIE dashes for the car and exits into the house in a panic to get everything closed from the locusts. GEORGE tries to cover things up but is overcome by the numbers of locusts swarming all over him. Everything goes into slow motion as the noise of the locusts gets louder and louder ... until fading as CASEY steps forward.

CASEY: [*narrating*] When the swarm of locust comes over, millions of them, it's like a big black cloud coming over the horizon and you think, here we go again ... Wasn't the first time. But this time it was right on picking time ... Wiped out the crop ... They ate everything. Everything gone. There won't be a harvest this season.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO: RESPECT

SCENE ONE: SCHOOL

The next day, OSCAR and KYLE are at school.

OSCAR: Dude, Dad wouldn't pull over, he just kept on driving, had the wipers goin' full blast and everything, flicking all these locusts off, couldn't hardly see the road, we nearly died about twelve times, it was awesome.

KYLE: Least I won't have to help with the harvest this year.

CASEY: [*entering*] Where were youse in History?

KYLE: We had to ... arh ...

OSCAR: Miss Freiling asked us to help her out in the multi-purpose centre, we had to set up chairs for some stupid drama thing from Sydney.

CASEY: That is so lame, Oscar.

OSCAR: It's true, I swear to God. Go ask her.

KYLE: Did O'Daniels chuck a fit?

CASEY: We got our marks back for the White Australia Policy report.

OSCAR: Oh yeah, how'd ya go?

CASEY: Eighteen out of twenty.

OSCAR: Oooo, rocket scientist.

CASEY: You got ten out of twenty.

OSCAR: Ten? Neither a pass nor a fail, that's pure borderline, dude, awesome!

CASEY: [*handing KYLE his report*] Here's yours.

KYLE grabs it but doesn't read the result.

OSCAR: What d'you get?

OSCAR goes to grab it but KYLE doesn't let him.

CASEY: He got two.

OSCAR: Two?

CASEY: Yep. Two.

OSCAR: Two out of twenty? Dude, that's an all-time low. Congratulations.

KYLE *reads his report.*

CASEY: And Mr O'Daniels said he got that much because he at least spelt his name right.

OSCAR *laughs at the gag.*

O'Daniels told me to tell ya you better start showing up to class again. You're heading for your second N Award. Three strikes and you don't get your School Certificate.

KYLE: So what?

CASEY: So what, I'm just being the messenger.

OSCAR: In ancient Greece they used to cut off the head of the messenger who brought bad news.

CASEY: Well, text me when you want to cut off my head, Oscar, ya tool. And you should get some chewing gum or Soothers or something. You both stink of pot.

She walks away.

KYLE: Hey, Sis.

CASEY: What?

KYLE *raises the finger. She repeats the gesture back and leaves.*

OSCAR: Hey, what if I asked your sister to the formal?

KYLE: First, I'd glass ya in the face, then I'd cut your eyes out with a compass, slash your dick and balls off and feed 'em to a dog, pour petrol over what's left of ya and then set you on fire. And then I'd kill ya.

OSCAR: So that's a no go. [*Small pause.*] Who you gonna ask, dude?

SANDIE MICKLETON *enters.*

SANDIE: Hey.

KYLE: Hey.

OSCAR: Hey, it's the Sandie! S'up?

SANDIE: [*to KYLE*] Seen ya sister?

OSCAR: [*answering for KYLE*] Yeah, she was just here, you goin' to touch footy later?

SANDIE: Youse'd get thrashed without me.

OSCAR: [*starting to shadow box with her*] Gonna start another punch up, are ya, Sandie the thugster? Get an all-in goin'.

SANDIE: [*punching back*] I might.

KYLE: Who's goin' to Pinton Park after?

SANDIE *grabs OSCAR around the neck in a headlock.*

SANDIE: Everyone.

OSCAR: Ow ...

SANDIE: You?

KYLE: Probs.

SANDIE: Had enough, Oscar?

OSCAR: Yes.

SANDIE *lets him go.*

Man ... you gonna need a good lawyer. That hurts now.

SANDIE: You need some chewy or a Soother or something.

OSCAR: Yeah, right.

MR O'DANIELS *enters.*

O'DANIELS: Where were you two last period?

OSCAR: Arh ... Mr O'Daniels, we were helping Miss Freiling put out the chairs in the multi-purpose hall for some drama thing, sir. Hey ... we told Miss Freiling we didn't want to miss your History lesson class, didn't we, we told her straight, but she was very insistent, sir. She can be very persuasive, sir, that Miss Freiling.

O'DANIELS: Well, that is very interesting, Oscar, given that Miss Frieling is away today. And what about you, Kyle? What's your excuse this time?

KYLE: Don't have one.

O'DANIELS: Well, that's short and sweet, a lot like your report ... at least it's a little more honest. Sandie here could probably tell me more about the

White Australia Policy than you could and she doesn't even do History.
Isn't that right, Sandie?

SANDIE: Don't think so, sir. Never heard of it.

O'DANIELS: Pity. And a pity you can't join us on the excursion next month.

SANDIE: I go to Sydney heaps, sir.

O'DANIELS: Is that a fact? Experienced the Parliament House tour? Been around the Rocks? Gone to the Powerhouse Museum?

SANDIE: No, we go every year to watch the Swans play.

O'DANIELS: Fair enough. Well, the Swannies'll need to lift their game if they're to have any hope this year. Much like you, Kyle.

KYLE: I don't like the Swans.

O'DANIELS: Why can't you be more like your sister? Eh? It's not too late to get your head out of your ar ... to show some improvement.

Small pause, no response.

OSCAR: You nearly said 'arse', sir ...

O'DANIELS: Oscar, you stink. Go get some chewing gum ... or a Soother or something, you both smell like you've been up the oval bonging on all morning. [*Small pause.*] Don't get too close to this pair, Sandie, you're likely to catch some exotic disease.

SANDIE: Yes, sir.

O'DANIELS: [*noticing a few boys on the other side of the oval*] Hey, you lot, stop stuffing garbage down that boy's shirt, cut it out ...

O'DANIELS *leaves.*

KYLE: Prick.

SANDIE: Tool.

OSCAR: Man, I should sue him for defamation of character, how dare he insinuate we been smoking pot all morning. Was only a half hour. Youse got two bucks, I'll go get some chewy.

KYLE: No.

SANDIE: Go ask Cameron, he's usually got some.

OSCAR: Good idea. Later, dudes. Hey, Cameron, S'up ... ?

OSCAR *leaves. Small pause.*

SANDIE: Youse get much damage at your place?

OSCAR: Yeah.

Tiny pause.

SANDIE: Hear Madison's oldies are movin'?

KYLE: Na.

SANDIE: Might be goin' to Melbourne.

KYLE: Melbourne?

SANDIE: She's devo, should see her. When we moved here I thought this town was huge, but Melbourne, Geez. [*Small pause.*] Got your suit for the formal?

KYLE: Yeah.

Small pause. There is an obvious tension between them.

It's blue.

Another pause.

SANDIE: So ... I'll see you this arvo at touch footy?

KYLE: Yeah.

SANDIE *smiles and leaves. Pause.*

KYLE *reads his report and then rips it to pieces.*

Music starts.

SCENE TWO: TOUCH FOOTY

KYLE *simulates a game of touch football, tenaciously going for his opponents.*

OSCAR *and SANDIE are on the sideline cheering their team on.*

Then OSCAR runs on and joins in the game. OSCAR is slower and more sluggish.

Then SANDIE joins them. She is very good at the game.

The game builds in intensity. This sequence ends with a slow motion intercept try by SANDIE which wins them the game. The whole team then lift her up in triumph.

SCENE THREE: PINTOON PARK

Later that night in Pinton Park it is pitch black. KYLE is using the light on his mobile phone to see where he is going.

KYLE: Hey, Oscar? Cameron? Where are yas?

VOICES: Piss off ... Get lost, Petro, ya wanker ... Turn ya phone off, ya jerk!

KYLE: Yeah yeah, youse all piss off, get out of it!

OSCAR: Hey, Kyle, we're over here.

The lights slowly come up on OSCAR who is sitting drinking beer with a few mates.

What d'ya get?

KYLE: [*holding up a bottle*] Vodka.

OSCAR: Stolichnaya! Russian *wodka*! Top shelf variety, dude, where d'you get it from?

KYLE hands OSCAR the bottle and he has a big drink.

KYLE: Royal bottlo ... that barmaid chick was in the front bar ... didn't see me come through the carpark.

OSCAR: Stealth ... Well, while you were gone me and Douglas the Cutlass and Angus the Mighty Burger ... we are polishing off a slab, eh boys!

KYLE: [*also drinking straight from the bottle*] Where's Sandie?

OSCAR: She's gone.

KYLE: What?

OSCAR: Hey, what was all that crap with O'Daniels today, he's a total ... like ...

They keep drinking the vodka.

KYLE: He's got it in for me is what he is ...

OSCAR: What you need to do is treat him like ... he sends you a message ...
and you ignore him ...

KYLE: I do ignore him.

OSCAR: ... and then you block him ...

KYLE: I do block him.

OSCAR: ... and then you de-friend him ...

KYLE: He's not my friend. I hate him. I want to punch the guy in the face.

*The sound of a train going past is heard. It's a regular sight every
Wednesday night.*

The nine forty-five. Right on time.

OSCAR: Man, we should be on that train. Where's it go?

KYLE: You want to be on a train and you don't know where it goes?

OSCAR: Well, it's going east ... so that's either to Sydney or the Coast or
somewhere good.

KYLE: That's west, ya tool.

OSCAR: No it ain't.

KYLE: Yes it is.

OSCAR: Well, whatever, I like trains. They stay on the rails. My mum says I
can do whatever as long as I stay on the rails, and I tell her I'll drive
trains.

OSCAR laughs at his lame gag.

KYLE: Where's Sandie?

OSCAR: She got picked up by someone, you just missed her.

KYLE: Who?

OSCAR: I dunno, someone came and she went off with them.

KYLE: Who was it?

OSCAR: Dunno. Didn't see who it was, she just saw the light, knew who it
was and took off. Said she'll see ya tomorrow at school, if you go, that is.

KYLE: What sort of car did they have?

OSCAR: I don't know what sort of car ... it was definitely a car with two
working headlights, so that should narrow it down ... But whoever it was

is, like, totally in love with Sandie, and I could tell by the look on her, how excited she looked ... And now you're just standing there like some jealous prick because someone has obviously stolen your sweet Sandie ... and you shoulda asked Sandie to the formal quicker, man, while you had the chance, before the mysterious car dude moved in on her ... Probably some guy from Year Twelve, or whatshisname, that buff ranger dude ...

KYLE: [*exploding*] Why don't you just shut your stupid donut hole right up, Oscar, eh!

KYLE grabs the bottle and goes. Pause as OSCAR recovers from KYLE's outburst.

OSCAR: Ooooo ... stepped on a cornea ... Hey ... Angus ... any more of that slab left?

CASEY enters with her mobile phone light on.

CASEY: Hey, Kyle ... you there? Kyle?

A VOICE: Get lost, Petro!

CASEY: Oooo, sorry. Kyle!

OSCAR: Casey, Casey ... yeah, over here through the bushes ... S'up?

CASEY: That you, Oscar ... Where's Kyle?

OSCAR: You, he was, your brother was just here a second ago, you're always, people are always missing each other ...

CASEY: Where'd he go ... ? Sandie's dad's here, we're getting a lift home in his car.

OSCAR: Sandie's dad's car?

CASEY: Yes, Sandie's dad's car ... we been waitin' for Kyle ... where is he?

OSCAR: [*realising*] Oh, I've given the wrong, Angus gave your brother the wrong disinformation, see ... your brother, he's got the hots for ... oops ... shtum ... not a word. I dunno nothin' in life. Shut up, Angus, that's a secret.

CASEY: If you see him, tell him I've gone home and he should get him-self there too, it's late ... Dad's spewin'.

OSCAR: Your dad, Mr Lee Kernaghan with the, the hat ... I'll tell him, I'll be the ancient Greek messenger of bad news and he can cut off my head and feed my balls to a dog ...

CASEY: See ya, Oscar.

CASEY *leaves.*

OSCAR: Oooooo ... it's Sandie's father's car ... not the ... the mystery ... oooooo ... chub chub chub chub ... [*He becomes more and more incoherent until he vomits everywhere.*] ... Hey, Angus ... that looks like you. [*He then falls in his own vomit.*] Ohhh ... Mum'll clean it.

SCENE FOUR: TRASHING THE ENGLISH-HISTORY STAFFROOM

Twenty-five minutes later, KYLE breaks into the English-History faculty staffroom and starts trashing the place. He then gathers some papers in a pile and goes to start a fire.

A torch shines on his face. He looks up and freezes. It's SENIOR CONSTABLE DEBBIE DALLAS.

DALLAS: Hello ... is that Casey? Is your mother or father home, Casey? It's Senior Constable Dallas from the police station in town ... could I speak with your ... Thank you. [*Small pause.*] Hello, George ... it's Debbie Dallas here, um, sorry to ring you at this hour, I figured I'd make the call first before I made the trek out there ... Arh ... I've got your son down here at the station ... No, he's fine, he's had a bit too much to drink by the look of him, by his appearance ... Arh, I caught him at the school, the high school, he was involved in a break and enter situation, and arh, as well as completely trashing the English-History staffroom, he seemed, arh, a little intent on burning the place down if I hadn't've shown up when I did.

I'm gonna have to charge him with the break-in and the malicious damage ... If you could come down to the station to pick him up ... or I could come and drop him off at yours ... whatever's easiest for you ...

Pause. The scene starts to shift in slow motion.

No, he was on his own by the look of him ... He's not saying very much as you'd expect ... not a big talker your lad ... coulda been worse ... a lot worse of course. [*Small pause.*] No, I don't know what he was thinking.

SCENE FIVE: HOME WAR

The lights come up at the Petro house some two hours later, GEORGE having picked KYLE up and brought him home where he sits in the lounge room, his parents standing looking at him in disgust and disbelief.

SUZIE: What were you thinking? What, you were gonna burn the whole school down? Because you failed a ... an essay or something? Because you failed an exam? You want to be expelled? You'll get at least a temporary ... what do they call it ... expulsion.

KYLE is silent and brooding.

Eh? Tell us. We're your parents, Kyle, we have a right to know.

Pause. SUZIE looks at GEORGE who is too disgusted to talk.

So, now you're charged, you have to appear in the Children's Court, I suppose we have to arrange legal aid or a solicitor ... not to mention the cost of the damages ... Jesus Christ, Kyle, aren't things bad enough! [*Pause.*] Well, you're grounded. Forget the excursion, forget the formal, forget the afterparty, touch footy. Forget your pocket money. School and home, school and home, and that's it.

KYLE: Well, that'll save yas some money, won't it?

GEORGE loses his temper and grabs KYLE to shake him out of his petulance. KYLE fights back and raises a fist to his father. This is a very ugly exchange which shocks everyone.

GEORGE: Well, go on, mate, what are you waiting for, go me, come on ...

SUZIE: Stop it. Stop it ...

SUZIE eventually gets in the way of the two fighting and cops an elbow in the mouth which makes both men stop and stare at her. GEORGE moves

towards her, but she holds her arm up in the air as if meaning 'don't come near me'.

KYLE runs off.

Kyle!

She looks at GEORGE and expects him to go after their son.

George.

SCENE SIX: THE TORCH

Twenty minutes later, out in the back paddock of the property, GEORGE is looking for KYLE with a torch.

GEORGE: Come on, Kyle. You can't stay out here all night. Where are ya? Kyle? [*He stands exasperated in the dark. Pause.*] We copped ya mum a beauty in the face. [*To himself*] Now everyone'll think I've been beating her. [*Calling out to KYLE*] Come on, mate.

He eventually shines the torch on KYLE who is huddled up in a corner of the property around some old rusted machinery.

KYLE is crying hard and hides his face from the torchlight. GEORGE comes over towards him and KYLE flinches away from him, curling up further in a tighter ball. GEORGE stands away from him. He calms down.

Long pause.

Come on, mate, let's go inside ... it's getting cold.

SCENE SEVEN: SCHOOL PART 2

The school principal, MISS PIERCE, is meeting with GEORGE and KYLE in her office.

MISS PIERCE: Look, I understand this is out of character for you, Kyle, you are normally a quiet lad, but he has been absent from a number of classes this

term. I'll take it under advisement your thoughts on Mr O'Daniels and I will have a word with him, but that's no excuse for such an extreme act of vandalism, is it? You are so lucky that no great damage was done to the premises and you'd do well to light a candle for Constable Dallas the next time you go to church because she has literally saved your skin. Ten more minutes would have seen you in much deeper trouble and you'd now be hanging over an abyss from which I could not save you.

Now ... I won't be pressing any charges. I believe in the power of redemption. Of course you won't be allowed to go on the excursion next week. You'll be suspended from school for twenty days starting today and after that you'll be on thin ice if you want to complete your course requirements for your School Certificate. One more transgression and I can assure you you'll get the wrath of Khan coming down on you. Is that understood, Kyle?

KYLE *nods his head.*

It's a pity your wife couldn't come down to the school, Mr Petro ... I understand things are a little tough at home recently with the property ... arh ... the way things are ... nobody's finding it easy these days, are they?
GEORGE: Like you say, Miss Pierce ... this'll be, this is just a one-off thing ... thanks so much for that.

The meeting with MISS PIERCE is over and she ushers them to the door.

MISS PIERCE: Alright.

She shakes hands with GEORGE.

Think about your future, Kyle.

KYLE *nods his head as they are led out into the foyer of the school.*

MISS PIERCE *exits.* GEORGE *and* KYLE *stand in the foyer silently.* GEORGE *sees a photo on the wall.*

GEORGE: You seen this photo?

KYLE *begrudgingly looks at it.*

That's me there. With the beard and the mullet. [*He looks at the trophies.*] Thrashed Jindagil by eight goals. Lost the state final to ... arh ... some

school in Albury ... Scotch College or something.

KYLE: [*unimpressed with this trip down memory lane*] Losers.

GEORGE: You in any of these photos?

KYLE: No.

GEORGE: Why don't you show some respect?

KYLE: What for?

GEORGE walks past him in disgust.

The scene shifts. SANDIE approaches KYLE, where he was sitting at the start of the chapter.

SANDIE: You right?

KYLE: Na.

SANDIE: Can't ya come to touch footy no more?

No answer.

I can come to your place and hang out if ya want.

No response.

I'm on the formal committee with Casey, we can have the meetings at your house.

Still no response.

See ya.

She leaves. KYLE sits bitter and angry with himself and holds his head in his hands.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE: SILENCE

SCENE ONE: THE FARM

Eureka. Late afternoon. GEORGE is herding his livestock through a gate on the family property and feeding them water. KYLE watches, not helping. GEORGE asks him to fill a tank with water. KYLE ignores him and leaves.

GEORGE works harder and faster, knowing he has to go into town soon. SUZIE calls out to him.

SUZIE: [*offstage*] George, don't forget to pick up the mail!

SCENE TWO: DRIVE TO TOWN

Music starts. GEORGE drives into town. LAURA is on the side of the road. GEORGE pulls over and picks her up.

LAURA: Thanks, George ... one of these days we'll get the second car but 'not at the moment' says Wayne in his usual style. Two years ago we got four hundred dollars per tonne, now they're paying a hundred and fifty. Wayne's had enough. 'I'm pullin' all my grapes out, I'm sick of it,' he says. His father'd turn in his grave if he heard Wayne talkin'. You remember ol' Geoffrey. Big bull of a man. Wayne was never good enough for him. [*Small pause.*] You hear it's flooding in Queensland?

GEORGE pulls over and LAURA gets out of the car.

Say hi to Suzie for me. See ya.

SCENE THREE: THE POST OFFICE

GEORGE goes to his post office box checking his mail.

VALERIE walks past. They exchange a quick glance, GEORGE smiles but VALERIE snarls and walks on.

GEORGE *opens one letter and reads it. It's the electricity bill.*

STEWART, *the local hardware store owner walks past.*

STEWART: Hey, George. That fencing wire work alright? I'll get some more of those hinges if ya want ... they're more expensive now.

GEORGE *smiles and gives the thumbs up as STEWART walks away.*

GEORGE *opens another letter and it's an insurance bill. WENDY, an elderly pensioner, walks past.*

WENDY: More bills? That's all I get in the mail now. They won't get me internet banking, but. They won't get me using that BPAY, either. BPAY, my foot! BPAY, no way!

She walks off as WARREN BLUFF walks past. The local hairdresser, FRAN, walks past.

FRAN: Hi, George.

GEORGE *smiles another limp hello.*

Pickin' Casey up, are ya? Saw her at the shop, she's a good kid, that girl.

GEORGE *smiles and nods.*

And tell that lovely missus of yours I haven't seen her in too long, that lovely auburn would have faded by now, must be time for a touch-up.

GEORGE *nods again as FRAN leaves. He opens another letter and stands reading it as DOUG, another farmer, walks past in a hurry.*

DOUG: Hey, Lee Kernaghan, that tractor you sold me? It ain't startin', can ya come over and take a look at her? Give us a ring, you got mi number.

GEORGE *nods, sinks with despair, shakes his head and goes back to reading his mail, this letter really grabbing his attention. FATHER SPANIAL walks past and waves.*

SPANIAL: Hello, George.

He leaves. AMBER and ALEX enter in school uniform.

AMBER/ALEX: Hello, Mr Petro. We're selling raffle tickets to raise money for King Ciaphas Christian College's new multi-purpose centre.

AMBER: First prize is ...

ALEX: ... a whipper-snipper.

AMBER: Second prize is ...

ALEX: ... a set of beach towels.

AMBER: And third prize is ...

ALEX: ... a trip for six to Broken Hill.

AMBER: Only one dollar a ticket ...

ALEX: ... or three dollars for five.

AMBER/ALEX: Would you like to help our school?

GEORGE *shakes his head and goes back to reading his mail.*

Thanks, Mr Petro ...

They leave.

... for nothing ...

GEORGE *returns to reading his mail as WARREN BLUFF comes out of his office which is next door to the post office.*

WARREN: Lee Kernaghan ... saw ya at the post office a little earlier, rude of me not to say g'day ... Warren Bluff ... from Warren Bluff Real Estate ... You're not in the market for a row of shops in Jindagil, are ya? That's them there. Nice frontage, room galore, parkin' out the back. They been vacant for nearly three years. Owner's'd practically give 'em away, they're so desperate. Mind you, who'd live in Jindagil, eh? More's the point, who'd bloody shop there?

WARREN *laughs at his own joke and leaves.* GEORGE *stares stunned at the mystery letter.*

SCENE FOUR: THE PUB

Twenty minutes later in the Royal Hotel, GEORGE is standing on his own having a beer away from the bar, still reading the same letter. WEAZEL LOGAN

is talking to CAROL the barmaid while she is looking up at 'Wheel of Fortune' on the TV.

WEAZEL: 'Sale Due To No Work'. That's what it said, what he put on the bottom of the, the, pamphlety thing he'd stuck on the door and on the noticeboard out there, under the list of stuff he had goin'. 'No Work'. No work alright. And I'll tell ya why—

CAROL: [*responding to the TV*] Top dollar, top dollar ... Ooooooh, 'Bankrupt'.

WEAZEL: ... Asians! That's right. Asians, comin' here in their boatloads and sampans and whatnots, takin' all the jobs, they're takin' 'em, Australian jobs for Australians, no, gone, and what jobs are left are takin' by them Indians and the Afghanis and them other Polynesiani types, trucked over here with their fifteen kids each, big-arse families they got, no wonder Walshy's sellin' up, mate. No wonder. Eh?

CAROL: Yeah, yeah, geez you're a grumpy bum.

WEAZEL: Eh, Carol, you know I'm right, eh. You know I'm right, eh, aren't I? Aren't I?

CAROL: What you are, Weazel, is right ugly, now put your teeth back in, you're puttin' people off their food.

WEAZEL: What people? No-one comes in here no more, this place used to be packed to the rafters on meal time, always, not now, no, where are they? All home watchin' 'Wheel of Fortune' like you are here, waiting for the luck to fall. Or like Walshy, pullin' up stumps and gettin' out. And not just Walshy either. How many other 'For Sale' signs are out there? All up and down the main drag here, how many? Count them.

GEORGE *finishes his beer, waves to CAROL.*

CAROL: See ya, George.

WEAZEL: Mate ... this town is dying.

GEORGE *hesitates, thinks, and leaves.*

CAROL: [*to WEAZEL*] Why don't you just shut up?

SCENE FIVE: THE CORNER SHOP

CASEY *is behind the counter talking to a school friend, CAMERON, who is in school uniform.*

CASEY: That new girl, right, I said to Sandie that she's either a nerd, a geek, an emo, a slut, a wannabe, a sporty, smoker, popular, non-popular, a reject, conformist, non-conformist, muso, dramatic, druggo, wog, Lebo, Abo, or a religious freak. But whatever she is, she'd better hurry up and make up her mind or she'll be a nothing and there ain't no such thing.

CAMERON: Yeah, right.

CASEY *notices GEORGE come in.*

CASEY: Hi, Dad, with ya in a minute ...

CAMERON: Hey, Mr Petro.

GEORGE *nods a hello at CAMERON.*

CASEY: Cameron's girlfriend Kelly dropped him. She reckons his sixpack ain't as good as it could be. That's what she said.

CAMERON: Yeah, sucks to be me, eh.

CASEY: Anyways, dude, I gotta go ...

CAMERON: Yeah, right. See ya.

CAMERON *leaves.*

CASEY: [*to GEORGE*] I'll just get my bag. Car out the front?

GEORGE *nods as CASEY goes and gets her bag. MR CHANG comes out from the back of the shop.*

Mr Chang, my dad's here. See ya next week.

CHANG: Okay, Casey, see you next week. Hello, Mr Petro.

GEORGE *nods another hello.*

Music starts.

SCENE SIX: DRIVE HOME

GEORGE *is driving his daughter CASEY home.*

CASEY: Mrs Walsh came in the shop today, heard her talking to Mr Chang, she was saying how their place has already been on the market for ages but no-one'll buy it. Her dad's real old and sick, they gotta go look after him. I was listening on accident. Like, Madison's already been to three high schools already and now they're gonna move to somewhere again, that'll be her fourth school, she's so upset. It's sad seeing people goin' really broke. [*Pause.*] What's for dinner? Hope we're not having mince again.

SCENE SEVEN: HOME

KYLE *is playing a video game in the lounge room as GEORGE and CASEY enter.*

CASEY: Hi, Mum, what's for dinner? ... Oh, excellent ... rissoles.

CASEY *whacks KYLE with her bag as she walks past. They exchange abuse. CASEY exits to her room.*

SUZIE: Don't dump your bags there, Casey! Clean up your room please.

GEORGE *stands looking at what KYLE is playing with a vexed expression. KYLE looks almost hypnotised. The sounds are very violent. SUZIE goes past GEORGE into the kitchen.*

Oh, here he is, the master has returned. Benny got out again. Third time this week. Got his hoof stuck in the driveway grille this time, nearly twisted it right off, poor thing. Stupid. Almost called you to get some medicine for him, then I saw you didn't take your phone. I just put some Dettol on it. Should be right. And, real good news ... I heard it on the radio, this area is being put on Level Six water restrictions.

GEORGE *gives her the mail.*

Anything good? [*At the first bill*] Electricity. That's good. [*At the second bill*] Insurance. That's very good.

She stops at the mystery letter and stands reading it, giving GEORGE the occasional knowing glance.

Oh, that's great. That's just terrific. Excellent. What else? [*She folds the letters up.*] You counted how many bales we got left? Go have a count.

You're good at Maths. Count 'em.

She stands in the kitchen putting the dinner together. She is almost in a state of shock.

Kyle, get ready for dinner, please, go wash your hands. D'you hear me, Kyle? Kyle!

KYLE doesn't answer. The game he is playing gets louder.

Casey? Come on. Casey!

CASEY is in her room talking on her mobile.

CASEY: [*calling*] Yes, Mum, I'm coming, I'm just talking to Sandie! Be a minute!

She goes back to her rave to Sandie as KYLE's game gets louder.

Yeah, we're having rissoles again ... Yeah, more mince. Mince, mince and more mince. That's all we eat now, can't afford any real, like, meat, like, the only meat we eat is mince, I'm sick of it, if I eat any more mince I'll explode. Can I come over to your place to eat ... ? Mince, mince and more mince. Mince, mince and more mince. Mince, mince and more mince. Mince, mince, mince!

By the end of this sequence, the sounds have come to a deafening crescendo.

GEORGE can't handle it anymore. He leaves the room and goes out to sit in the car.

SCENE EIGHT: THE LOWEST EBB

GEORGE is alone. It is very quiet, only the sounds of night, crickets.

He gets out of the car, takes his rifle from the cabinet, and sits staring at it. Very long pause.

CASEY: [*calling from inside the house*] Dad! ... 'The Footy Show' is on!

GEORGE stops his thoughts, thinks twice again, then puts the gun away. He goes back inside the house.

SCENE NINE: HOME AGAIN

SUZIE is in the kitchen reading a magazine as GEORGE re-enters the house.

SUZIE: You want a cuppa?

Pause.

GEORGE: Great Grandad bought this place back in 1898. He made that Eureka sign out the front. Now I'm such a useless bastard, I gotta sell it. Can't even feed mi own wife and kids, not like my dad and those before him ... Even Grandma kept the farm goin' when Pop fought in the war. 'There's no room for failure,' that's what my dad used to say.

He starts crying. SUZIE comes over and wipes away his tears. She shakes her head and cries too.

SUZIE: Is that a no or a yes to a cuppa?

Music starts. They wipe away each other's tears. Eventually SUZIE leaves, GEORGE standing alone looking around at the memorabilia on the walls.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR: BURNT

CASEY: We haven't been on a proper holiday since I was four. My parents have never really travelled. It's harvest time at Christmas, so, like, we can't go anywhere. I remember once when Grandpa was really sick, we were on holidays for a week and then we had to come home and help him out. So my only times away are on school excursions.

SCENE ONE: THE SCHOOL EXCURSION

Students are getting on the bus for the school excursion to Sydney. MR O'DANIELS is herding everyone on like cattle.

O'DANIELS: Alright, everyone, on the bus!

SUZIE *is seeing off* CASEY.

CASEY: But we're staying in a hotel, Mum, I won't need the sleeping bag.

SUZIE: Take it just in case, you never know. I've put in a few extra pairs of undies too.

CASEY: We're only going for two days, Mum.

SUZIE: You can never have enough undies, Casey. And I want you to keep warm, watch what you drink, don't eat anything that doesn't smell right, and ring me when you get there, don't use all your credit on useless calls ... and be responsible and don't stray from the group and don't talk to any strangers, if you see any of those bikies, look away, don't look anyone in the eyes, don't you dare go anywhere near Kings Cross ...

GEORGE *and* KYLE *enter*.

GEORGE: See ya, Case.

CASEY: See ya, Dad.

KYLE: Say g'day to the big smoke for me, Sis.

CASEY: See ya later, Wyle D. Kyle-dee.

KYLE: Yeah.

CASEY: Don't bug the hell outta Mum and Dad, and help out a bit, will ya?

KYLE: Yeah.

O'DANIELS: Alright, final call, everyone on ... Hello, Kyle, pity you're not coming with us, you'll be sorely missed, mate ... I was looking forward to our witty repartee and wily banter.

KYLE: Yeah, I'll miss you too, sir.

O'DANIELS: Alright, everyone on the bus ... Come on, Cameron ... you can do without your mum for two days.

CAMERON: Sorry, sir ...

CAMERON *gets on the bus.*

O'DANIELS: Move it along there, Oscar, or we'll leave without you ...

OSCAR: You wouldn't dare leave without the Os, sir, would ya, plus you need a fall guy in case something goes horribly wrong. Hey, Kyle, s'up? I'll go to one of them strip clubs up the Cross for ya ... Stay on line I'll send ya some pics of all those gorgeous girls ...

OSCAR *wags his tongue*, KYLE *gives him the finger.*

OSCAR, CAMERON *and* CASEY *are all waving goodbye from inside the bus.*

ALL: See yas!

SCENE TWO: CHURCH AND REAL ESTATE

SUZIE *visits* FATHER SPANIAL *in the church while* GEORGE *goes to Warren Bluff Real Estate.*

SUZIE: Excuse me, Father Spanial ... I was wondering if I could just have a word ...

SPANIAL: Hello, Suzie, nice to see you, come in, come in ...

GEORGE: Excuse me, Warren, if I could just have a quick word ...

WARREN: Look, it's Lee Kernaghan. Come in, matey, what can I do you for?

GEORGE/SUZIE: I won't take up too much of your time.

WARREN: Not a problem.

SUZIE: I just need to have a word, arh ...

SPANIAL: Sure, sure ... come and sit down.

WARREN: You're not here for those bloody Jindagil shops, are ya?

GEORGE: [*smiling*] No ...

SPANIAL: Would you like a cup of tea?

SUZIE: No ...

WARREN: You want a cuppa or something, bit early for a schooner, isn't it?

GEORGE: No ... I'm right ...

SUZIE: ... thanks anyway ...

WARREN: Well come in, matey, come into my humble office ...

GEORGE/SUZIE: I hope I'm not interrupting you ...

WARREN: No.

SPANIAL: Of course not.

WARREN: Come in, and take a load off. Watch out for them storage boxes, looks like I'm getting audited, but, actually all this crap is finally goin' to the Pintoo pit. How's the family?

GEORGE: Fine.

GEORGE exits the stage as if entering Warren's office.

SPANIAL: How's the family?

SUZIE: Fine ... the kids are both fine ...

SPANIAL: I heard about Kyle ...

SUZIE: Yes ...

SPANIAL: Kids will be kids ... at least nothing ...

SUZIE: ... was ... too badly damaged, yes ...

SPANIAL: Yes.

Pause.

SUZIE: Um ... no, arh ... the kids are fine, they do what they do, they don't help that much, sure they help a little, that's why God created the cattle prod ... but they care more for arh ... it's iPods and mobiles and computer games and ghds and ... arh ... it's all ...

Small pause as SUZIE tries to control herself.

SPANIAL: Sorry, what's a ghd?

SUZIE: A ... a sort of ... whiz-bang hair straightener thing.

SPANIAL: Sure. Sorry. Continue.

SUZIE: George ... After the twins were born I wasn't well enough to drive, so I was totally reliant on George. He couldn't stop farming just to ferry me around the countryside. Now, I'm racing around, here and there ... arh ...

SPANIAL's mobile phone rings. He rises out of his chair to answer it and leaves SUZIE hanging in mid-thought.

SPANIAL: Excuse me I have to answer this ... Hello?

WARREN and GEORGE re-enter, WARREN is on his mobile phone.

WARREN: Hello, Charlie? Matey, it's Warren Bluff, listen I got another auction for ya, out near Gilpendry, property called Eureka, we got an auction date in four weeks' time, the fifteenth ... are you available is the big question? [*To GEORGE*] He's the best. Checking his diary. Mate, Kenny Walsh has been trying to sell his farm for ages but no-one'll buy a farm that ain't maintained and operating. Yours is. Ya miles ahead ... [*Back to the phone*] Yes, mate. We're on? ... Excellent ... Alrighty, I'll send ya through all the details ... You too, mate, yes ... No worries. [*He hangs up.*] Sorted. How 'bout I come over this arvo, give it a once over and we'll see what we can do for ya. Yeah?

GEORGE: Yeah.

They shake hands.

WARREN: [*trying to make GEORGE feel better*] Mate, a lot of blokes are finding it tough ... When all's said and done, there's only so much a man can bash his head against a brick wall, eh? And who wants to sit around on the front porch and wait for the food parcel to arrive? No, I think you're doin' the right thing. You wait and see, in a month's time you'll have a big load off your mind. Yeah?

GEORGE: Yeah.

WARREN *moves away from* GEORGE *as if back into the agency*. GEORGE *stands a little shell-shocked*, FATHER SPANIAL *re-enters with* SUZIE.

SPANIAL: Well, that's a load off my mind, that's the Rotary board confirming the lad from the United Arab Emirates. Graham Landfill's checked his diary and he's keen to take him in, so that's sorted. What a time? I'm so sorry, Suzie, you were saying?

SUZIE: [*after a pause, smiling but frosty*] I'm not sure what I was saying Father, I just know that the future doesn't look very ... happy ... and ... if ever there was a time when the clouds above would part and the Good Lord would smile down upon us and shower us with a few weeks of rain, it's right now.

SCENE THREE: POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

Up high on the top level of the Sydney Powerhouse Museum, MR O'DANIELS is taking his Year Ten excursion group on a guided tour.

O'DANIELS: And from up on this level one feels like the Good Lord himself up in the clouds, looking down on some of the most amazing advancements in travel over the past one hundred years, from the steam engine, to the Apollo spaceship suspended from the ceiling ... absolutely amazing ... Alright, move it along there, Angus, don't break the exhibits, son.

CAMERON *and* CASEY *drift into the O'DANIELS zone and start looking down on the people at the museum.*

CAMERON: Look, there's some posh rich Sydney School, check them out. Look at what that girl's wearing, my God.

CASEY: She thinks she's so hot, but actually, she's so not. Oooooo.

O'DANIELS: Impressed with the view, Casey?

CASEY: Very impressed, sir, this place is insanely awesome.

O'DANIELS: And what have you enjoyed so far, Cameron?

CAMERON: Everything, sir, it's all great, especially all those gorgeous girls down there. I think I'll accidentally miss the bus home so I can stay here and live in Sydney if that's okay with you.

O'DANIELS: I think that's fine, Cameron, I might give Oscar the same option, Oscar?

OSCAR *comes on.*

OSCAR: Hey sir, when are we goin' up the Cross? [*Seeing the Sydney girls that CAMERON is looking at*] Hey, check out those sexy Sydney girls in the purple uniforms ... [*He calls out to them.*] G'day, darlin', my name's Oscar, Oscar the Horse, come up here and I'll show ya why. [*Exiting*] Hey, Dougy ... I think I'm in love ...

CAMERON: I can see myself living in Sydney.

CASEY: Yeah?

CAMERON: Yeah. I reckon. Go to uni. Get a job in one of those highrise buildings. Marry one of those hotties. Live in a penthouse apartment. Drive a Porsche. Sweet as. You?

CASEY: Nar. Too noisy. Too crowded. I dunno. It's a big change.

CAMERON: Yeah, huge. That's my whole point.

Small pause.

CASEY: S'pose I could get used to it.

SCENE FOUR: CHANGE

A range of characters across town discuss change. ALFIE SHRAPNEL and MRS SNODGRASS are shopping in Capelands' Hardware.

ALFIE: All they know is how to swan around in their highrise buildings and penthouse apartments and drive their Porsches and meanwhile the wool industry carks it and the Yanks buy out GrainCorp, and we're fed crap about 'fossil fuel rejuvenation', like that bloke who sold Walshy the idea of growing rice a few years ago, I told him, 'Leave the rice to the Chinese,' but did he listen to me?

STEWART CAPELAND *enters carrying a bag of fertiliser.*

STEWART: I don't think anyone listens to you, Alfie.

ALFIE: That's my whole point. You ask any of us old-timers round here, me—
Weazel Logan, the Snodgrasses—does anyone in the cities really think
twice about where their milk and butter and bread and sausages come
from? They bloody well will when they wake up tomorrow and find it
costs them double.

STEWART: But they won't 'cause it's already being imported from China or
Romania or somewhere else at half the cost?

ALFIE: Well, I can't get used to that.

*Meanwhile, at the hairdresser's, FRAN WHIPPLE enters with hair dye.
She is doing BRONWYN BOWTELL's hair.*

FRAN: Yes, it is a big change, Bronwyn, but I think that's the whole point, I
think you'll find people will get used to it very quickly.

BRONWYN: I have seen a lot of changes in my time, Fran, but if I can't water
my garden every morning and every afternoon then the govern-ment can
make the Murray River flow backwards for all I care ... I want my
garden back!

*At the police station, RANJIT SINGH is talking to SENIOR CONSTABLE
DALLAS.*

SINGH: But that is entirely my point, Constable Dallas, if I can afford to offer
some of the local farmers here a job at a reasonable cost then why should
I be branded some kind of opportunist. Tell me, why?

DALLAS: Yeah, but do you know who threw the egg at you, Mr Singh?

SINGH: The egg is not the issue, it is the principle, the world is changing and
people will have to get used to that.

*Back at the hairdresser's, BRONWYN is talking to MAGGIE
COLLINGWOOD.*

BRONWYN: It's very hard to get used to it.

MAGGIE: I don't like it one bit either but what can I do? I'm comfortable
staying the woman that I am. And Barry doesn't complain ... I know how
to keep a marriage together ... three times a week.

They all laugh out loud.

FRAN: Well, I don't know if you've heard yet, girls, but the big news, you are not going to believe it—

BRONWYN: I've heard about that Indian fellow being egged, and it wasn't me.

The girls giggle.

FRAN: No, no, no ... the big news is ... the Petros are selling Eureka.

BRONWYN/MAGGIE: What?!

FRAN: Yep. The Petros are selling up.

SCENE FIVE: FAMILY BUSINESS

The bus for the excursion arrives back at the school. It's early evening. GEORGE waits. CAMERON gets off the bus. He's very sick and tired.

CAMERON: Hey, Mr Petro. Casey's on her way, she's just getting her bag. I think I ate too many Twisties. See ya. Hey, Mum ...

CAMERON moves away as CASEY gets off the bus.

CASEY: Hey, Dad. See ya, Cameron.

CAMERON: Yeah ...

CASEY: [*to GEORGE*] Where's Mum?

GEORGE: Home. How was it?

CASEY: Oh yeah, it was so awesome ... I didn't sleep one bit, I mean, at all ... everyone was so excited the whole time we were there ... the hotel was so nice ... no-one could like shut up, I swear to God I could sleep for five whole days ... the museum, my God, they had all these, like, exhibitions and that, like, and we saw the chick from 'McLeod's Daughters', I thought that program was shot in Adelaide somewhere but she lives in Sydney, some girls went over to talk to her but I was too shy ... and the Powerhouse Museum, like ...

The scene shifts to home.

GEORGE: We're home.

CASEY: Hi, Mum.

SUZIE: Hello, Casey ... welcome home ... you hungry? You want some-thing to eat? I'll bet you're tired ...

CASEY: No, yeah, sorta, we ate at this truckstop, I'm full ... I swear to God I could sleep for five whole days, but, Mum, shoulda seen it, it was awesome ... the museum, my God, they had all these, like, exhibitions and that, like, and we saw the chick from 'McLeod's Daughters', I thought that program was shot in Adelaide somewhere but she lives in Sydney, some girls went over to talk to her but I was too shy ... and her hair was super straight!

GEORGE: Kyle?

KYLE: Yeah?

GEORGE: Come here.

KYLE: Hey, Case. How's the big smoke?

CASEY: Awesome, we saw the chick from 'McLeod's Daughters', I thought that program was shot in Adelaide somewhere but she lives in Sydney ...

GEORGE: We thought we'd wait till you got back from your trip to tell yas both what's goin' on.

Small pause. KYLE *starts to play his video game.* CASEY *'s mobile goes off.*

CASEY: That'll be Sandie, just a sec.

GEORGE: [*very loud*] Turn it off!

CASEY *turns her phone off.* KYLE *turns off his game.* They both stare at GEORGE.

We're sellin' the farm. [*Pause.*] Every year when that big cheque arrives for the crop your mother and me spend it straight away to make sure we get next year's crop. This year, there won't be one. I borrowed too much and ... now the bank ... [*Small pause.*] Auction's in four weeks' time. [*Smaller pause.*] Sell the place, go somewhere where I can get a job. Ya mother too. Youse'll finish Year Ten, and do Years Eleven and Twelve at another school.

KYLE *and* CASEY *are shocked by the news.* KYLE *gets up and leaves.*

Kyle?

A very uncomfortable pause.

CASEY: Where'll we go?

Small pause.

GEORGE: I don't know.

Pause. CASEY goes to her room. The two parents stand looking at each other.

SCENE SIX: FOR SALE

Flies are buzzing and the occasional sheep sounds are heard. WARREN BLUFF brings on a very large 'For Sale' sign and puts it out the front of the Eureka property. CHARLIE SELMAN enters with two large animal skulls.

CHARLIE: My old mate, Warren Bluff!

WARREN: G'day, Charlie ... brought a few friends, did ya?

CHARLIE: I found stacks of these all along the back fence, not a good look, smells of death around here.

WARREN: Not as big as Walshy's either.

Benny barks at CHARLIE.

CHARLIE: Piss off, ya mangy lookin' mongrel bitch ...

SUZIE enters.

SUZIE: Benny! Down, boy.

WARREN: Here she is, the lady of the house, *Introducing* Suzie Petro, Charlie Selman. Charlie, Suzie.

CHARLIE: Lovely to meet you, Suzie. Nice dog. Benny, is it?

WARREN: Charlie'll be running the show next Saturday ...

CHARLIE: I found a whole heap of these up the back paddock ... I remember I did a sale out near Scone once and this fella from Canberra showed up and bought a half dozen of these at fifty dollars a pop ... So you never know what things are worth ...

SUZIE: They scare off the crows.

CHARLIE: I'll bet they do.

WARREN: Charlie can sell sand to the Arabs.

CHARLIE: I saw your good husband, he's doin' a bit of tractor work down the back paddock there, and he told me to come and ask you the same question I asked him ... Now there's a few ways we can go about this: we can sell the lot all in one big go, lock, stock and barrel, highest bidder wins, no questions asked, it can be all over in a matter of seconds; or, you can sell it in chunks, the property, the house, the livestock, the machinery, or each individual item ... the mower, the shovel, the spade, the crockery, the spoons. In fact, Warren and I we did a place in Gindigil not that long ago and the owner was well pleased with the result, he had no idea how much he could make for that junky old china of his ... plus, there's always those second-hand vultures from Sydney or Melbourne who come snoopin' round for a bargain, the idea is to rip them off before they rip off the punters from Toorak or Rose Bay. So, what's it to be ... the lot ... chunks ... or bits and pieces?

SCENE SEVEN: THE AUCTION

Eureka is open for inspection before the auction. STEWART enters and approaches SUZIE.

STEWART: G'day, Suzie. Howzitgoin', eh?

SUZIE: G'day, Stewart.

GRAHAM *enters*.

GRAHAM: Suzie, anything the Rotarians can do, you let me know!

SUZIE: Thanks, Graham.

BRONWYN *enters*.

BRONWYN: Suzie love. Don't worry about the fundraiser, we've got it covered.

SUZIE: Thanks, Bronwyn.

MILES *enters*.

MILES: Oh, Suzie, I had to see this to believe it.

DOUG *enters*.

DOUG: It's come to this, has it?

ALFIE *enters*.

ALFIE: It's a crying shame is what it is.

MR CHANG *enters*.

CHANG: Hello, Mrs Petro. I'm so sorry. You know Casey can still keep her job, whatever happens.

SUZIE: Thanks, Mr Chang.

COLIN KALM *enters with baby*.

COLIN: Has it started yet?

WEAZEL *enters*.

WEAZEL: Suzie ... what can I say? Jesus. [*He moves over to GEORGE.*] George, Jesus, mate ... what can I say?

LAURA *enters*.

LAURA: Wayne couldn't make it, said to say g'day.

FATHER SPANIAL *enters*.

SPANIAL: I don't think we've been formally introduced, George, I'm Father Spanial, and if there's anything I can do to help, please don't hesitate to drop by.

FRAN *enters*.

FRAN: Hello, George, how you keeping up, mate? Hello, Father.

SPANIAL: Hello, Fran.

FRAN: What a crowd? Hello, Suzie.

WARREN *enters*.

WARREN: [*to GEORGE*] Chin up, mate, we're about ready to start.

WENDY *enters*.

WENDY: George, if you need anything, something for the kids ...

GEORGE: Thanks, Mrs Snodgrass.

WENDY: Don't be too proud to ask.

KYLE comes up close to his dad and looks at all the people.

GEORGE: Well, you got what you wanted, didn't ya?

GEORGE moves away. CASEY enters and talks to her brother.

CASEY: Heaps a people.

KYLE: Vultures.

SINGH enters.

SINGH: Excuse me, I am looking for Mr George Petro, can you tell me where I can find him please?

CASEY: The one in the hat. Over there.

SINGH: He looks like Lee Kernaghan. Thank you. [*Exiting*] Excuse me, Mr Petro, my name is Ranjit Singh ...

SINGH exits. KYLE leaves. CAMERON enters.

CAMERON: Hey, Casey.

CASEY: Hi, Cameron. Did ya mum give you a lift out?

CAMERON: Nar, I walked.

CASEY: From your place?

CAMERON: Yeah. Hope youse don't sell the farm. Then youse can stay.

CHARLIE SELMAN enters quickly.

CHARLIE: Alrighty, let's get this turkey gobbling. [*To CAMERON*] You, mate, piss off.

CAMERON leaves.

Sound effects begin and the mood suddenly gets very strange.

[*To CASEY*] You ... you can stay, and watch your worst nightmare ...

CASEY reels in horror as CHARLIE SELMAN takes the stand, holding up the two large animal skulls, using them as pointers.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. This property, you all know it well, it's going for a bargain, that's right, Eureka ... all twelve hundred and fifty hectares, complete with homestead, shed, garage, livestock and orchard. This is a potential goldmine for anyone who wants to turn a graveyard into a garden!

Starting price: nine hundred. Who wants to give me nine hundred? Nine hundred over there. Eight hundred and fifty? That's lower, but I'll take it, eight hundred and fifty it is, eight fifty, eight hundred. Six ninety-five. Ooo, that's a sharp plummet, six ninety-five, six twenty. Five twenty. Four hundred. It's going down down down faster faster faster, four hundred is the bid, we have four hundred, who'll do better than four hundred? Four hundred ... three hundred. Three hundred now the bid, do I hear anything below three hundred? Two twenty. That's more like it. Two twenty. One twenty. One ten—that's about as long as this family has been here—one ten, sixty-five! Only sixty-five. Sixty-five the bid, anything lower than sixty-five? Twenty-five? Twenty-five, only twenty-five ... two. Two is the bid. I'll take two. Two dollars the bid. Two dollars for this slice of farming failure. Two dollars. Two dollars. Two dollars for the house, the shed, the property, the livestock and the whole family history! Two dollars the bid. Going once at two dollars for Eureka. Ten cents. Ten cents. That's all it's worth. That's what this family has toiled its heart out for over a hundred years. Ten cents, ladies and gentlemen ... going once, going twice ...

CASEY: Stop! Stop it ...

All stop. Silence.

CHARLIE SELMAN *leaps off his podium and stands behind CASEY holding the animal skulls between her head. He looks up menacingly at the crowd, highlighting CASEY's nightmare image.*

CHARLIE: No sale!

He leaves, taking the 'For Sale' sign with him.

SCENE EIGHT: SECOND THOUGHTS

Outside school at the end of the day. CASEY and KYLE stand waiting for their lift home.

CASEY: Where do ya reckon we'll go?

KYLE: Last night I thought about running away. Was gonna hitch a ride with some truckie dude.

CASEY: Where would ya go?

KYLE: Broome.

CASEY: Why Broome?

KYLE: 'Cause it's the furthest away from here.

CASEY: Is that 'cause ya got a crush on Sandie and you haven't asked her to the formal yet?

KYLE: Who told ya that?

CASEY: Derrr. [*Small pause.*] Here she is.

KYLE: Bags the front.

SUZIE arrives in the car to pick them up.

SUZIE: Sorry I'm late. Just had to see the Principal for a minute.

KYLE: What'd I do now?

SUZIE: Oh, we had a good chat about you, Kyle.

KYLE: I'll bet ya did.

SUZIE: And you too, Casey?

KYLE: Where's Dad?

SUZIE: We're pickin' him up from in town. [*Small pause.*] The big question I have for you, mister ... when are you gonna ask Sandie to the formal?

KYLE: What?

SUZIE: There he is.

GEORGE is waiting on the side of the road. The car pulls over.

GEORGE: [*to KYLE, pointing to the back seat*] In the back.

KYLE begrudgingly gets out and gets in the back and sits next to CASEY. GEORGE sits in the front passenger seat.

SUZIE: How'd you go?

GEORGE: How'd you go?

SUZIE: I asked you first.

GEORGE: Ladies first.

SUZIE: No way, I'm driving.

GEORGE: No, no ... come on ... you're the pretty one, you have to answer first.

SUZIE: No way.

KYLE: What are yas talking about?

GEORGE: Have you asked Sandie to the formal yet?

KYLE: What's all this crap about Sandie, thought we weren't goin'. I'm grounded anyway. Good one, Sis. What are yas on about?

SUZIE: So you got it?

GEORGE: Looks like it. You?

KYLE: Got what? What's goin' on?

GEORGE: I offered my services to Mr Ranjit Singh to help him out on his property, plus ... I sold him half our stock.

SUZIE: [*very surprised, slamming on the brakes*] What?

GEORGE: He's gonna give us a big, fat, up-front fee plus pay me by the hour to run his farm.

SUZIE: For how long?

GEORGE: Just for this next harvest and then see what happens.

SUZIE: Will that cover ... ?

GEORGE: No ... won't cover all the debts ... but ... arh ... it's enough. Enough to tell Warren Bluff to shove it.

SUZIE: [*slightly overwhelmed*] Oh ... that's ...

They are both out of words. Pause.

GEORGE: And you? What'd Miss Pierce say?

SUZIE: As of next week I start working part-time at the school.

GEORGE: In the office?

SUZIE: Not exactly. [*She sees the supermarket.*] I've just got to go in there for a second.

GEORGE: You gonna be long?

SUZIE: Ten minutes. Fifteen.

GEORGE: I'll duck in for a quick schooner. You kids wait here.

SUZIE *and* GEORGE *leave the car.* KYLE *and* CASEY *sit waiting.*

KYLE: Who's been talking about Sandie, you traitor?

CASEY: You're a dickhead.

The scene shifts to the supermarket check-out with MIRIANA beeping through RANJIT SINGH's groceries. SUZIE waits in line behind him.

MIRIANA: That's fifty-four twenty-five, thank you.

SINGH: Fifty ... ?

MIRIANA: Fifty-four twenty-five. Cash or credit?

SINGH: Yes, cash, thank you very, very much.

MIRIANA: FlyBuys?

SINGH: No thank you.

MIRIANA: Thank you very much. Have a nice day.

SINGH: And you have a glorious day, my girl.

He leaves. SUZIE *comes up to* MIRIANA.

SUZIE: Just the Tim Tams thanks.

MIRIANA *beeps it through.*

SCENE NINE: BURNT

The Royal Hotel. GEORGE *is drinking a beer with* WEAZEL. CAROL *is behind the bar.*

WEAZEL: It rained in '83. I think Bob Hawke made it rain, didn't he? We all celebrated, but the months leading into the summer of '85 were alarmingly dry. We were all nervous, we had no stock because of the drought, there was feed everywhere as high as the fence, fit to burn. There

were fires around the whole state. We got burnt out on Australia Day, 1985. Twenty-five farms were affected. We lost about a third of our place, six hundred sheep. There were other places that were totally burnt out. It was hellish ... Your father found it particularly hard, but you didn't know that, did ya?

GEORGE *remembers the fire.*

Fires, they're quick, deadly, devastating, tragic ... good news footage. But drought's different. It's slow, painful and seemingly endless. Death is all around you. Closes in on ya like the slow-motion jaws of an animal trap.

CAROL: Oh, would ya listen to the bush poet ... Mr Weazel Logan, ladies and gentlemen, Gilpendry's own Henry Lawson?

WEAZEL: Go ahead, Carol, take the piss, but there'll be hard times ahead. You wait and see. [*He finishes his schooner and goes to leave.*] See yas later.

GEORGE: Yeah, I guess you will.

Music starts.

EPILOGUE

Eureka. GEORGE and CASEY are feeding the animals.

CASEY: It's been to leave or not to leave, this past year now.

We got no more food, for the ... no bales, like, I've grown up on the farm, so's mi Mum and Dad, that's what we do, we have to get the fruit picked, the sheep shorn, my dad doesn't have a trade up his sleeve, so he'll just, like, work for whoever, keep our place goin' ... we'll just keep goin' till we can't.

Dad was doing his will the other day, he asked me what to leave us in their will, and we said don't leave us the farm.

Dad said, 'Promise me you'll never sell Eureka'.

I promised.

GEORGE *stands looking up at the sky, hoping for rain.*

Music ends.

THE END

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