



FULL SYNOPSIS

ACT I The Dodges At LaPouse

While ploughing on the perimeter of LaPouse, the homeless men disturb the remains of John Black, bushranger. They are unaware of the identity of the body (whose bones they have disturbed) and decide to do nothing further.

Then follows an overview of the life of the homeless men under the aegis of Mrs Una Shorncliffe (widow).

Una is childless but acts as a matriarch. She is a devout Christian and devoted Anglophile.

In addition to the flagpole flying the Union Jack, Una's nephew erects a second flagpole bearing the Australian flag. He is an engineer, lately a captain during the Great War: Marcus.

Una has enacted that Sunday morning be devoted to a religious service on the grounds of LaPouse, followed by a salute to the flag on Monday morning. This is followed by a rousing rendition of "God Save The King".

On the Sunday following the ploughing, Horrie is found to be dead: on his back in the garden shed. The upshot is that the doctor's daughter Sylvia (also a fully qualified doctor) attends Horrie and pronounces death to have occurred due to alcoholic poisoning. An inquest into his death is advised. It is then that Marcus (who is au fait with the "doings" in the garden shed) bursts in upon Sylvia and misunderstands her presence at the scene.

During a Sunday drive involving “the nobs”, the homeless men and the crooked policeman Wes sort out how Horrie died and if they can foist his last batch of sly grog onto the public. We learn more about the rorts practised by the men.

Further, Wes and the homeless men strike on a plan to get Marcus out of the way: by giving him a rash such that he requires a visit to the doctor’s surgery.

ACT II The New Arrival At LaPouse

Horrie’s ghost cannot rest until John Black’s murderer is named and Black receives a Christian burial. To progress this, Horrie’s ghost appears to Banjo, whereby he explains to Banjo that Black killed him by tricking him into drinking dodgy grog. Horrie describes his killer as having film-star good looks.

Horrie is duly buried. We learn that Una is staging a theatrical extravaganza: a pageant in which she will take the leading rôle.

The Coroner’s inquest rocks along smoothly until Banjo blurts out that Horrie was murdered by the ghost of a bushranger. This leads to general ridicule of Banjo, who plays cricket on the same team as Marcus. It is while Marcus returns from the cricket that he picks up Doctor Sylvia, whose bike has suffered a puncture on her way to deliver a baby. Marcus takes her to the distant farmhouse in time for the delivery. He is already more than half in love with the doctor.

There is a comical teatime when Marcus and Phillip’s sister Jocelyn turns up with her outrageous dog Iggy Wiggins. And then John Black himself wanders into the police station, asking after accommodation. Wes is thrilled: this good sort of bloke can take over Horrie’s place at LaPouse and advance “the doings”.

ACT III Things Start To Go Wrong At LaPouse

Humiliated, angry and forlorn, Banjo does not want a bar of anybody. When John Black arrives as the new inmate, such is Banjo’s ire that it takes three strong men to hold him back, as he tries to punch Black. In a delightful interlude, Marcus defends Banjo to his step-mother and fields pressure that he

marry. Here is the first inkling that Verona is scheming to pair Marcus's brother Phillip up with Doctor Sylvia (as Verona has not yet twigged that Marcus yearns for the young female doctor).

Black has taken Banjo's place in the much-vaunted historical pageant, since Una wants nothing more to do with Banjo. Black torments Banjo by putting him through a horrific version of Black's own ghastly childhood as a London pauper.

We flick back and forth between the pageant and LaPerouse, where Black continues to torture Banjo. However, on a lighter note, Phillip meets Doctor Sylvia's sister, Daphne (an eccentric musician).

After the pageant, Una is clearly infatuated with Black. Although we (the audience) know that Phillip is falling in love with Daphne, Marcus misunderstands and construes Phillip's love-interest as being Sylvia. The upshot is that it will be Phillip and not Marcus who will accompany the young doctor to the city to purchase a motor car (in order to make her visits to patients more convenient).

ACT IV Things Now REALLY Go Wrong At LaPerouse

With Torrens buzzing about in order to test-pilot the new toys which the men have made for the poor kiddies, our homeless men find that first Danny's photo-shopping has been kyboshed, and then Chickie's art forgery has been massacred, and finally Mike's beautiful copy-plate has been over-dubbed with pornographic drawings. Banjo furiously brings this home to Black, who answers by sending all the men (including Wes and his side-kick) off to transportation to Botany Bay. Wes suffers a heart-attack from this shocking treatment and he eventually dies.

Phillip, Torrens and Sylvia catch a bus to the city where Sylvia is to purchase a motor car. While Torrens plays at football with some other boys, Phillip bares his soul to Sylvia. He is not in love with her, and could not be her husband: he would much rather find a musician with a gypsy spirit to wife. Sylvia gets it: her erstwhile suitor is referring to her sister Daphne, whom he met at Una's extravaganza.

Finding Marcus and Sylvia together in the bush, Banjo unloads his terrible secret to them. John Black is unable to physically make love to Una, and has set up some kind of "ghostly magic" such that

Banjo can (and must!) double for him in the cot with Una (who hates Banjo). Banjo admits to Marcus and Sylvia to fighting against such an unlawful act, which is tantamount to rape.

Appalled, Marcus and Sylvia work through the problem with Banjo. Neither offers him a concrete workaround: he must leave LaPerouse, and hope that Black does not follow him.

Banjo now squares up to Black, unafraid of him (since his liaison with Una has given him courage).

In a telling interlude, Black remembers vividly his earlier life in Colonial New South Wales such that we (the audience) can understand all of the five potential killers and their reasons for wanting Black dead.

Betty reveals to Mrs Gwen and Nation that she saw Banjo going up to the house during the night.

ACT V Things Cannot Get Much Worse At LaPerouse

Banjo turns the tables on the two ghosts (Horrie and Wes) who have come to harry him over his ungodly affair with Una. Banjo strongly advises them to remember what harm has been done to them and their families by Black's actions.

As expected, Daphne and Phillip make a match of it.

Marcus hears that Phillip is engaged, jumps to the wrong conclusion and that provides a bit of drama/hissy-fit. But then all turns out alright and the ex-Captain is seen by Dr Sylvia's patients in a passionate embrace with the lovely doctor.

But the best proposal of all comes when Nation discloses to Una that it is Banjo (not Black) who has been her secret lover. Una becomes frenzied with outrage and swears that she will not allow Banjo to stay at her sanctuary another moment. Talked into at least farewelling Banjo (by Marcus), Una and Banjo meet "for-the-last-time" ... and this is one of my favourite EVER proposals! It is a gem!

Phillip's idea of getting the John Black situation to the sticking point is to practise boxing with Gantry.

Marcus has a different plan: Torrens studied John Black (bushranger) for a school project. In a wonderful scene reminiscent of a foray into equatorial Africa, Marcus cons Torrens into handing over the notes. These form the basis for some serious investigation by Sylvia, Daphne and Marcus.

Now that Marcus knows the identity of the five suspects in Black's murder (as suggested by Horrie's ghost) he can warn Mrs Gwen and Charlotte. Sylvia will warn the Vicar.

Meanwhile, Jocelyn threatens all kinds of vengeance if Auntie Una has the gall to marry one of those dreadful homeless men.

ACT VI Miss Winterbottome Puts All To Rights

The solution to the puzzle of John Black's activities is revealed by Marcus based on Torrens's work.

In brief, the remaining people at risk of Black's vengeful ire are: the Rev. Tristram, Charlotte and Mrs Gwen. Marcus takes care that Charlotte and Mrs Gwen stay out of sight. The Vicar however is already wandering over to LaPerouse.

The ruination of Una's garden (another of Black's evil deeds) leads to Jocelyn descending upon LaPerouse in shock. Joss (along with her vile dog Iggy) flings open the door to Una's bedroom, surprising Banjo and Una who are amorously disposed. This causes a hilarious situation: Iggy takes over the bed and Banjo (stark naked) is tossed out of it, causing Joss to faint.

During all the upset that follows, Jocelyn chooses to hit the bottle BIG TIME.

In her "interesting" mood, Jocelyn decides that an exorcism is required. She drags the Vicar off for that reason.

Banjo is storming about the property looking to finish off Black, as is Phillip (who has been honing his boxing skills). On meeting Black, Phillip throws a punch which was meant for Black, but lands instead on the Vicar, knocking him out completely. The upshot is that Jocelyn (who believes herself to have attained a high-enough religious calling) takes over as minister and begins to drag several "good bits" out of the Book of Common Prayer in her attempts at exorcism.

Between them, Marcus and Banjo hit upon the root cause of Black's temporal existence: that he was never buried.

This is an emotion-charged scene whereby John Black is released from his corporeal existence and soars heavenward. This desirable outcome results from Jocelyn's funeral service (or at least the "good bits" therefrom).

A peacefulness settles over the group, broken only by Mrs Gwen offering timely refreshments. And Torrens knocks the nail on the head: John Black the bushranger was staggering about in the bush (having five would-be killers on the loose) when he accidentally shot himself (owing to the dodgy firearm in his possession).

Finale

The lovely Australian wilderness garden is to stay at LaPerouse. Una has married Banjo and the homeless men have been moved into the house, as part of the new extended family. And these men (Chickie, Mike and Danny) have begun romances with Charlotte, Betty and Tottie respectively.

Marcus and his new bride enjoy one of their caustic conversations whilst Sylvia learns to drive her car, and Phillip and his Daphne are still overseas on their honeymoon.

At the end of the film, we find that Torrens has cast aside his fervent admiration for a career as a jungle health worker, and wants instead to become a vet. Thus, covered in gore, the last we see of Torrens is his dubious operation on Iggy.

[It is mooted that Torrens will have his own film: "Torres Strait". Likewise, the children of Phillip/Daphne and Marcus/Sylvia will have a film.]

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