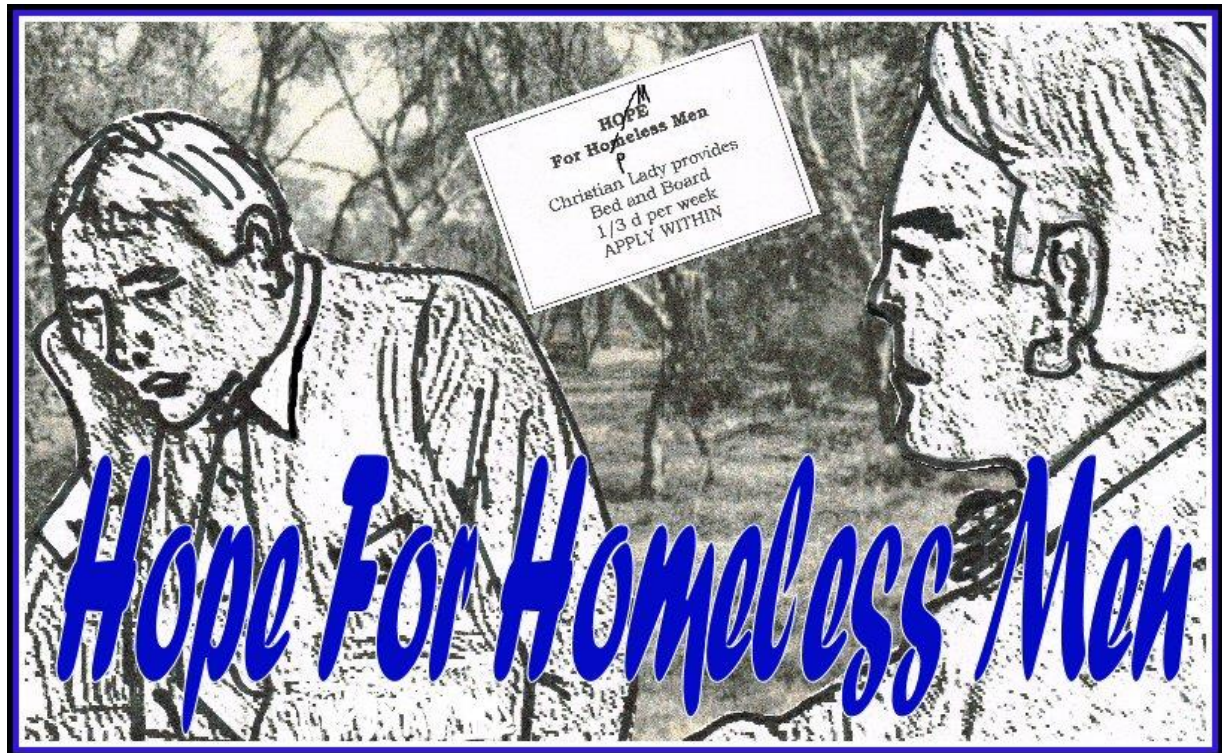




An affluent Christian widow (in Sydney) offers food and shelter (for 1/3d per week)
to homeless men following the Great War.

However, things turn sour when one of the blokes dies from alcoholic poisoning.

This might just be "Home for Hopeless Men" after all!

Here we find a cavalcade of wonderful characters, including a brace of ghosts
and a very spoilt dog ...

**Foreword ...**

The reason that John Black's ghost reappears so unexpectedly in November 1920 is that his mortal remains are disturbed during ploughing. Black was never buried as would be proper for a Christian soul. It is even doubtful if anybody realized that he was murdered. Thus, his killer was never identified.

John Black (bushranger) was shot in 1801 in the environs of LaPerouse (West Sydney) by Gerald "Cutlass" Grimes, a vicious sea-faring rat, who took it in bad part that Black had dishonoured a hefty gambling debt. It being very dark when Black was struck down, he did not know the identity of his murderer.

*Thus, the underlying thread of this story is that John Black wants his mortal remains to be buried in a Christian way, and for **someone** to discover the name of his murderer (from a list of five likely suspects, all of whom have living descendants).*

Then his bitter, twisted soul may be at peace.

ACT I The Dodges At LaPerouse**Title: West Sydney, Summer 1920****Scene i: Banjo's Narration To Introduce The Characters**

The narrator is Barry "Banjo" Gibson. As Banjo speaks in voice-over, the various scenes he

describes are visualized. In all cases, the men smoke "roll-your-own" cigarettes, and never tailor-mades.

Unless otherwise stated in this pictorial introduction, we can barely make out any conversation among the participants.

The mood is laid-back, beaming with sunshine and very attractive.

The westernmost boundary of the LaPerouse demesnes retains some residual bushland on a moderate slope. A couple of sturdy Clydesdales have been harnessed to ploughs. The homeless men (Banjo, Chickie, Danny, Horrie and Mike) are seen to be leading these farm horses up into these sloping strands of bush. The men work at a leisurely pace as they chop back the bush or work the ploughs: smoking, chatting and reminiscing.

Banjo suddenly stoops: he picks up what remains of John Black's skull, which has been unearthed by the ploughing. The men stop work, gather about and are seen to postulate theories. The camera closes-in on the men's faces.

Chickie *puzzled* But if it was a native bloke, wouldn't he be cremated? Or at least stowed-away under rocks?

Danny *shrugs* Dunno, Mate.

Mike Should we ... Should we call on Sergeant Wes, do ya think, and ask him to come and take a look?

Banjo *decisive* Nuh. If this bloke or sheila has been dead for a long time (which is what it looks like to me), then no-one will give a brass razoo about it.

Come on! Back to the Labours of Hercules ...

Banjo chucks the skull to one side, with extreme indifference as the ploughing continues.

[A short version of this opening scene appears in ACT VI during Jocelyn's "exorcism" attempt.]

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Our camera moves back from the clearing and ploughing to take in the sumptuous magnificence of the English-inspired garden at LaPerouse.*

*The camerawork fits-in with Banjo's following voice-over soliloquy, or as advised.*

*Una is dressed to the nines as she gracefully prunes rose bushes, accompanied by her nervous sister Verona, and the general dogsbody Albert Nation (just now dressed as a gardener).*

Banjo *voice-over*                Mrs Una Shorncliffe holds that nobody should be homeless.

*Una looks towards the camera, smiling in an indulgent, superior way.*

Una *smiling to camera*    Why, even the cavemen had homes to call "home".

*The camera sweeps over the beautiful gardens and grounds of LaPerouse, ensuring that we also see the progress of the clearing and ploughing.*

Banjo *voice-over*                Some of us blokes who managed to battle our way through the recent World War are provided with a bed and three meals a day at LaPerouse. That's a mansion not far from Sydney Harbour.

Sure we have to help out sometimes ... Bit of manual labour ... Doesn't hurt now and then ...

The shearing shed sort of fell apart in a storm ... Dunno when ... But the shearers' quarters have stood the test of time and that's where we live.

One and thruppence per week it costs ... Seems alright to me.

*Now we see Nation (dressed as a butler and assisted by the maid Betty Lindrom) serving vegetables from a silver salver in the grand manner to Mrs Shorncliffe and her guests (including the five homeless men). Nation glances at the camera as he serves the vegetables and speaks to camera (whereas the diners are oblivious to Nation's words).*

Nation *prim*                        Most of the tucker comes from our own grounds. Otherwise from neighbouring properties. Mrs Shorncliffe insists on home-grown.

*[Snorts disparagingly]*

Her real married name was Winterbottome, but she's reverted to her maiden name now that she's a widow. The two Shorncliffe girls were "society": she's trying to recapture the glamour of a long-gone age.

*[Snorts again and sneers: ironic]*

Good luck with that!

*The camera tries to enter the garden shed, but the door is slammed in the camera's face. Once again, the camerawork fits-in with Banjo's soliloquy.*

Banjo *voice-over*            We are allowed to smoke in the garden shed, which we've converted to suit our needs. More of that later ...

*The Saturday night card game is the next focus of the camera. In LaPerouse, in the drawing room, where several card tables are laid out, our five returned servicemen (Banjo, Chickie, Danny, Horrie and Mike) play at cards. They are joined by Una, Verona, Charlotte, Ronald, Phillip and Marcus. Once again, the camerawork fits-in with Banjo's soliloquy.*

Banjo *voice-over*            Anyways, on Saturday nights (after dinner), we are invited to stay in the house to play euchre, five hundred and bezique. And the landlady allows us two cold glasses of pale ale each.

*Here follows a variety of scenes: the camerawork fits-in with Banjo's soliloquy.*

Banjo *voice-over*            They take us out for improving lectures and afternoon teas and open-air concerts and brass band recitals and theatricals and poetry readings ...

And community dances.

*[Sighs]*

Yeah, it's all been going real good.

*A quick scene shows the men huddling under the shelter of the verandah as heavy rain teems down.*

Banjo *voice-over*            We have a Church of England service with the Vicar (the Reverend Tristram Gambon, who's under Mrs Shorncliffe's thumb) every Sunday morning. On the verandah if it's wet: otherwise, down in

the garden. And we pray for Mother England and Empire.

Now don't get me wrong ... I was born in England like a lot of Aussies were ... But I'd still much rather pray for me **own** country rather than for the other one. Just something that gets my dander up now and then ...

*On the lawn, Nation solemnly raises the Union Jack up the flagpole, as the men reluctantly salute. We can see the men mouthing the words of "God Save The King" (without any enthusiasm and very poorly, as if they do not know the words), whereas Una and Nation sing out with huge gusto.*

Banjo *voice-over*                      And we muster on Monday mornings to salute the flag and sing "God Save The King".

Not our own Aussie flag, but. No, no, no. The Union Jack if you don't mind. Christ knows why! We are bloody Australians in Australia, for Christ's sake!

(Sorry for the blaspheming. Ha'penny in the poor box).

*We hear the clink of a halfpenny falling into a moneybox. Banjo coughs.*

*Verona steps into view, looking directly into the camera and carrying (in a basket) the roses which her sister had earlier picked.*

Verona *to camera*                      Una inherited our family home: LaPerouse. The Shorncliffes have been here forever.

We married brothers, you know.

Una married Ernest: a very well set-up gentleman of means. It was Ernest's money which permitted Una to do up LaPerouse in the grand manner, like you see it now. Her award-winning garden, for instance ...

And I married his younger brother Ronald. Ron owns Worrilee, which is nowhere near as grand as LaPerouse, but still an impressive edifice.

Ron had previously been married to Gladys, who passed away

when their three children were quite small. We all get along so well, and they call me "Mum" (God bless 'em) ...

*The 16-year-old Torrens (wearing a leather flying jacket and leather flying helmet) kneels in the bush which comprises most of the back yard of Worrilee. He is diligently reading a serious-looking tome with the words "Science" and "Armaments" clearly visible in its title. He throws aside this book, stands and checks that all the connections to his detonating plunger are in order. He pulls goggles over his eyes. Then he counts to "3" and pushes the plunger with all his strength. Torrens looks up at a nearby tree, which is festooned with sticks of dynamite. The boy stands arms akimbo frowning at the tree, and then he scratches his head, kneeling once more and taking up the discarded book for further investigation.*

Verona *voice-over*            And I gave them a younger brother named Torrens who is our utter delight.

*Again, the camera sweeps over the beautiful gardens and grounds of LaPerouse.*

Verona *voice-over*            And so I just totter along in Una's wake as she sails majestically across the Sea of Life (with all its vagaries).

Banjo *voice-over*            Yes ... Peaceful and restful – that's what it is.

*Una's five paying guests are still clearing and ploughing in the bush, smoking lazily, when (nearby) a eucalypt is heard to explode. The men start in surprise and concern as bits of gum tree hurtle through the air.*

Torrens *voice-over,*            Bonza!  
*shouting joyfully*

*The men seem to realize that Torrens Winterbottome is the root cause of the explosion. They laugh and shake their heads and comment on the nature of boys.*

Banjo *voice-over*            So when I call it "peaceful and restful", I mean – that's what it **was** ...

*[Pause]*

Yeah, so it's all going along beautifully, until the Captain defies his Aunt, and Horrie starts to feel crook ...

END OF SCENE

**Scene ii:** The New Flagpole, Horrie's Demise And The Doctor's Daughter:  
Sunday Morning

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| The Erection of the New Flagpole. |
|-----------------------------------|

*Marcus has stripped off his jacket, removed his tie, and rolled-up his shirt sleeves. He is almost ready to raise the new flagpole (its base set in a big tin of concrete, which will then be buried in the earth).*

*Nation, his wife Mrs Gwen and Betty stand on the lawn, beside the existing flagpole. It is about two yards distant from the new flagpole, on which Marcus has been working. The trio appear concerned and anxious. Seeing that Marcus has reached the tipping-point, Nation rushes forward.*

Nation                      Let me help you, Captain.

*Marcus and Nation heave the finished flagpole (the new one, complete with truck, becket and lanyard) into its final position. Then follows some serious spadework. After Marcus checks the angle with a spirit level, the two men attach guy wires to the new flagpole. And then both men stand back to admire their handiwork.*

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| The Reception of the New Flagpole. |
|------------------------------------|

*Una and Verona are dressed to the nines and stand next to the window in the upper storey bedroom (a very beautiful and tasteful room). Una has twitched back the lace curtain, such that she and her sister may more easily watch Marcus's activities.*

Una *tart*                      Can you not control your stepson?

Verona *nervous,*  
*waffles*

I believe that he might be pining for real activity ... Young men become bored without –

He has nothing to do. And so ...

He's passionate about this country. He's always --

Una *very sharp*

Does he **really** wish to **ruin** our Monday ritual (an expression of our undying loyalty to Mother England) by including a salute to the colonial flag?

*With a movement indicating disgust, Una flicks the net curtain free from her clasp. She turns on her sister.*

Una *cross*

Well?

*Verona hesitates.*

Verona *desperate*

It ... The flag ... You know, it **does** have the Union Jack featured prominently in the corner ...

My dear, why do you loathe Australia so much? We were born here ...

*Una clamps shut her lips. There is a pause. Then Una takes a big breath, indicating that she's come to a decision. The sisters leave the bedroom.*

Una *decisive*

Alright.

I shall allow the local flag to fly alongside the Union Jack, as Marcus has so defiantly organized. And the men may salute it, if they so wish. Goodness only knows why they'd want to.

But the service remains and will **always** remain one of glory and honour for England: dear England.

Australia won't be mentioned at all.

|                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| The New Flagpole: Its Place In World History. |
|-----------------------------------------------|

*Una and Verona step into the garden, where the Vicar (the Reverend Tristram Gambon) awaits them in his clerical robes. The Vicar is obsequious and in total agreement with whatever Una suggests.*

Una *crisp*                      Good morning, Reverend Gambon.

Rev Gambon                  Good day to you both, Ladies. What a lovely day!

*Una merely nods in a superior fashion.*

Una *to Verona*              It's not that I despise Australia. Nothing like it.

I am simply filled with dread that we are losing touch with our English traditions, customs and heritage. By "English", of course I mean "British".

It won't do. It just won't do. I shall stand firm. We are British to the core.

*[Takes a big breath. The Vicar nods encouragingly]*

Verona, you'll need to fetch everyone. No -- Nation will see to it. He is assisting your step-son – your **recalcitrant** step-son – with this flag business. Tell him to hop along. I want the service to begin at once. Is Phillip here? We're driving out for luncheon in the hills, you know.

I'd ask Marcus, but of course, we should argue from here to the Black Stump.

*Verona answers at random, leaving the garden with all speed. The Vicar and Una are left to look about at the beauties of the garden.*

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| Events Unfold In The Garden Shed. |
|-----------------------------------|

*The camera is at floor-level. Horrie is sprawled lifeless on the floor, on his back. Chickie and Mike are crouched over Horrie, trying to revive him with slaps and cajoling.*

*Danny marches up, with cigarette clamped between his lips and carrying a metal bucket filled with water.*

Danny *laconic*                      Look out!

*Chickie and Mike back away, as Danny hurls the water over Horrie. There is no response.*

*Chickie and Mike move back into position, joined by Banjo, Danny and Nation.*

Nation *urging*                      The Vicar's here. Missus wants us to get cracking.

Banjo                                  What's happening?

Mike *scared*                      It's Horrie! He's passed out ... Or ... I dunno ...

*Chickie holds Horrie's wrist.*

Chickie *scared*                      Jeez ... I can't find a pulse.

Mike                                  Is he ... is he dead? Or ... ?

Chickie *appalled*                      Yeah ... he's carked it. Stone the crows ...

Banjo *disbelieving*                      Really?

*Banjo moves in, prodding and feeling the inanimate corpse.*

Mike *scared*                      What of?

Nation *laconic*                      Alcoholic poisoning, I'd reckon.

Danny                                  Shit!

*There is a knock at the door, which startles all the men.*

Mrs Gwen *voice-off, yelling*                      Sunday service. They're waiting in the garden. Missus is getting impatient.

*The men freeze, looking towards Banjo and Nation.*

Nation *calling sweetly*                      Righto, Dear. We won't be a sec ...

*As the men scramble into their Sunday best suits and ties, and comb their hair, there is a jumble of conversation (all occurring simultaneously).*

- What d'we do now?
- Is there any way we can keep it from the Missus?
- We're rooted, that's for sure!
- This has white-anted us.
- Poor Horrie! Did he have any family, do we know?
- Should we try to contact his mother?
- Come on! We've gotta flex-up for this flaming church service.
- The Missus'll chuck a wobbly.

|                                          |
|------------------------------------------|
| The Sunday Church Service In the Garden. |
|------------------------------------------|

*In the lovely clearing where the Vicar stands in full voice, Una, Verona and Torrens stand to one side. Ronald, Marcus and his older brother Phillip and cousin Charlotte have joined them. On the other side stand the three servants (Nation, Mrs Gwen and Betty), along with the remaining paying guests (Banjo, Chickie, Mike and Danny).*

*Torrens has a slingshot which he uses surreptitiously on birds until Phillip quietly rebukes him.*

*Vicar in the spotlight*      -- to acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness,  
*and loving it*                which we from time to time most --

*Una interrupting*            Just a moment, Reverend Gambon.

Where is Mr Horace Fitzmaurice? Is he not attending the Sunday service? Is it beneath his notice, perhaps, to learn of God's Holy works and to pray with his brethren?

*There is a taut silence. Marcus frowns as his eyes rake over the men. Banjo licks his lips, trying to find inspiration.*

*Banjo*                            Pardon me, Mrs Shorncliffe. That's why we're a bit late. Horrie was feeling crook.

*Una concerned*                Is he very ill, or just feeling seedy?

*Banjo unsure how to*        He's ... Well, he's ...

*proceed*

Chickie *carefully* I'd say that Horrie's on the wrong side of seedy, Ma'am.

Una Oh, my goodness. That's bad news.

*[Decisive]*

Nation will call for the doctor.

Nation, you may excuse yourself to the Vicar and attend to the matter at once. I am a Christian lady, filled with compassion. The care of the sick and needy is always uppermost in my thoughts. Mr Fitzmaurice deserves our solicitude: never mind the expense.

*With a quick nod to the Vicar, and a sketchy bow to Una, Nation takes himself off.*

Una *sharp* Continue, Vicar. You were up to the "grievously hath committed" part.

And please include a special prayer for Mr Fitzmaurice's safe recovery from whatever it is that ails him.

|                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| The Garden Shed. Young Doctor Maisford Attends Horrie. |
|--------------------------------------------------------|

*Marcus has stripped off his jacket and tie and rolled up his sleeves. He approaches the shed. He pulls up short at the sight of a lady's bicycle (complete with skirt guard and basket) propped against the side of the shed. He frowns. Then he throws open the garden shed door to survey the scene.*

*Dr Sylvia Maisford (with her black doctor's bag beside her) kneels on the floor beside Horrie's body. The other men, including Nation, are gathered about as interested/concerned spectators. They tense and stiffen upon seeing Marcus in silhouette in the doorway.*

Marcus Do you blokes have a shifting spanner in here? Betty seemed to think so.

*Danny recovers his wits quickly, and races over to a bench where many tools are scattered about. He then hands over the tool to Marcus (who responds "Ta".)*

*Meanwhile, and ignoring the ingress of Marcus, Sylvia speaks to Banjo, who is nearest to her.*

Sylvia                      I can see immediately that this man wasn't in the pink, healthwise. Quite out of shape, wasn't he? Perhaps he had already complained of stomach cramps, dizziness and nausea prior to his death?

*As Banjo is about to respond to Sylvia's question, Marcus frowns heavily.*

Marcus *forceful and displeased*              What the **hell** is going on? What's this woman doing here? Come on, Sis: on your way!

*Marcus holds the door open. Sylvia ignores him, continuing to converse with Banjo.*

Sylvia                      I retain the strong impression that this man was in the habit of imbibing large quantities of strong liquor. Are you able to confirm that?

*Again, Banjo begins to answer hesitantly, when Marcus (continuing to hold open the door) once more interrupts. Marcus is very unaccustomed to disobedience.*

Banjo *unsure how to proceed*                      He thought that the grog was doing him some good. When he made it, he always used --

Marcus *now angry*              Did you hear what I said, woman? Out! Out now!

*Sylvia slowly turns her head towards Marcus, with face of thunder to match his.*

Sylvia *trying for control*    I am a doctor. I have been summoned by Mrs Shorncliffe's butler to --

Marcus *appalled*              A doctor?

Sylvia *sarcastic edge*              -- and may I recommend that **you** take an invigorating turn about the garden to assuage your rapidly rising temper. You'll burst a blood-vessel, Old Fellow.

*There is a crisp, discernible silence. No-one ever answers Marcus back, nor gives him orders: not even Una. Apart from Banjo, the men fear Marcus, for he is both a powerful man and an authoritative figure. Banjo looks with sympathy towards Marcus and shrugs his shoulders.*

*Someone must say something: Chickie volunteers.*

Chickie                                This is Dr Sylvia Maisford, Captain.

Marcus *to Sylvia*                    A doctor of what? She could just as well be a Doctor of  
Philosophy, for all I know.

Sylvia *smart-arse*                   And if I were, we might indulge in a dialogue on the relative  
virtues of consequentialism and deontology.

Danny *all at sea*                    Beg yours?

Sylvia *smug*                        "Ends and Means", Mr Grey.

Marcus *accusing*                   You're no more Dr Maisford than I am!

Banjo *quickly*                     Er ... This lady is his daughter, Sylvia. I thought you knew --

Nation *in his role as  
butler*                                When the Missus told me to telephone the doctor, I did so.  
However, he was feeling poorly and sent his daughter in his stead.

Chickie *supportive*                She's fully qualified, Captain. Been to the University in Sydney and  
all.

Banjo *polite, to Sylvia*            And this is Captain Marcus Winterbottom who --

Marcus *annoyed*                   The war's over, Banjo. I'm just plain "Mister" now.  
  
Never mind about my particulars, what are you --

*Sylvia could not be less interested in Marcus. She continues to converse solely with Banjo.*

Sylvia *professional*                I'm inclined to bring the police in here.

*All the men (save for Marcus) are clearly mortified by that prospect. Chickie even shakes his head in  
disbelief.*

Sylvia *continues*                   This is clearly a case of sly grog: what our American chums might  
call "illicit hooch".  
  
I'm putting Mr Fitzmaurice's demise down to extreme alcoholic  
poisoning on the death certificate. Was this man boot-legging?

*Sylvia looks about at her audience. There she meets a wall of dim, horrified silence. Sylvia presses her  
lips tightly together and shakes her head.*

*Nimbly, Sylvia stands and takes her doctor's bag. She goes to the nearest bench, retrieves some forms from her bag and commences to write as she speaks.*

*Sylvia professional*      You gents had best tidy-up these "doings" before the law and order chaps turn up.

Nation, I'll get you to telephone for an ambulance. The mortal remains must be carted off to the morgue for further examination.

And be warned: there'll more than likely be a Coroner's inquest, so get your stories in sync.

*Sylvia nods to the men and then exits by the door, which Marcus (still gripping the shifting spanner) has been propping open. As she passes Marcus, Sylvia flicks a glance up into his face and slightly nods. The man and the woman sizzle. Now that he gets a better look at the doctor, Marcus is clearly hit for six. He can find nothing to say.*

END OF SCENE

### **Scene iii:** Banjo's Narration: The Bother At Home And The Sunday Drive

The Further Adventures Of The New Flagpole.

The Body of Horrie is Carted Off By Ambulance.

*A horse-drawn ambulance is stationed near to the garden shed.*

*Two uniformed officials (using a canvas stretcher) carry off Horrie's remains (covered with a sheet of canvas) to the ambulance. Horrie is heavy: the men struggle.*

*The LaPerouse men (Banjo, Mike, Chickie, Danny and Nation) stand about in shirtsleeves, looking perplexed and lost.*

Banjo *voice-over*            So don't get me wrong: we are going to miss Horrie. He was a nice bloke, if a bit of a glutton.

But the real bother is what to do about **losing** Horrie.

You know ... What to do ...

*Betty trots up, doling out black armbands to the five men. They gloomily secure these over their left upper arms. The camera moves to the lawn, where Marcus (also in shirtsleeves with black armband) is giving the new flagpole a test run with the Australian flag.*

Banjo *voice-over*            I reckon our only problem here will be with Captain Marcus. Everyone else is either squared-up or doesn't care. But the sharp-eyed, quick-brained Marcus Winterbottom is an unknown quantity. We might have to keep an eye on him.

*Marcus stands back (arms akimbo), watching the flag gaily flapping in the breeze. He is pleased.*

Banjo *voice-over*            We'll have to get cracking. Sergeant Wes Morley will no doubt front-up, having been sicked onto us by the young lady doctor.

And the timing couldn't be more perfect: the Missus is off on her Sunday drive. Gone up to the Blue Mountains for a four-course Sunday dinner. There's a place up there that the Missus loves: done-out like an English hunting lodge. Antlers and fox masks on the wall ...

I hear it's quite nice. They drive around a bit ... At this time of year they'll see the rhodies and the azaleas ...

Her and her sister and young Master Torrens and the indigent cousin Charlotte. All driven up there by that milk-sop Phillip. You'd never guess in a million years that he was Marcus's brother. Talk about chalk and cheese ...

Sweeping Views Of The Blue Mountains.

*Una's automobile is a Bentley, complete with small Union Jacks flying on the sides and on the boot.*

*In the majestic, glorious Blue Mountains, Phillip has stopped the car. To one side, there are "to-die-for" views. On the other, banks of huge rhododendrons proliferate. Our camera is in long-view. The occupants of the car (Phillip, Una, Verona, Torrens and Charlotte) are seen to step out onto the road in great wonderment. Torrens charges into the undergrowth in a boyish manner.*

*We hear snatches of "glorious", "perfect day", "should get ourselves a camera", "lovely", "wonderful" and so on.*

*The camera closes in on the group.*

Una                                      What colour is it?

Verona *smug*                        It's more of a fawn than brown. The seamstress thinks it might cut-up for a slim-line suit. I'm seeing her on Monday. Oh! That's tomorrow, isn't it?

Charlotte *pragmatic*            If you're seeing your dressmaker tomorrow, you might beg from her the remnants and scraps. Mrs Gwen and I will be able to fashion some sturdy toys for the poor kiddies: stuffed horses, camels and the like. Fawn-coloured cloth would be ideal.

Verona *pleased*                    Of course. Just the ticket.

Una *dominating the conversation*                      Excellent!  
And my paying guests have been constructing wooden carts, wagons and other toys for the poor. The Bible counsels us to be generous to the less fortunate. I've left the men with some religious tracts to study, in between their banging nails and plying paintbrushes.

Charlotte                            Not on a Sunday, surely?

Una *shrugs*                         They may as well do. Idle hands are the Devil's workers, as you know. And besides: they have Mr Fitzmaurice to oversee, in his condition.

Verona *worried*                    What was the tenor of the tracts, Una? I hope that they weren't

about scarlet women and so on ... ?

Una *snorts*

Hardly! I do my best to keep the men's minds on the job. Today's readings are centred on the advantages of maintaining a sober and industrious lifestyle.

*[Waspish]*

Perhaps your second step-son might join them. A dose of humility might cure Marcus's spiritual malaise.

Phillip *dreamingly*

Let us hope that he profits thereby.

END OF SCENE

#### **Scene iv:** Organizing "The Doings" Following Horrie's Demise

*Una is living in dreamland if she truly imagines that our boys are studying Godly words at this juncture (or indeed at any other juncture!)*

*In the garden shed, the camera focuses on the dressed timber, carpentry tools and paint pots which are supposed to be employed in making toys but are not. Similarly, beside these lie several printed tracts, also ignored.*

*The camera backs away. Seven men (Banjo, Danny, Chickie, Mike, Nation, Police Sergeant Wes Morley and Police Constable Hughie Metcalfe) sit about, variously sniffing and sipping grog from old jars containing liquor. The two policemen are in uniform.*

*The seven men stare into the jars in a learned way. Five earthenware jugs are central to the discussion. One has a large "X" painted on it.*

Banjo *voice-over*

I mentioned before that the real bother is what to do about losing Horrie.

We were forced to come to a decision. All the interested parties held a council of war.

Wes                                So this is from the jug with the cross on it?

Danny                            Yeah.

Wes                                Well, I reckon that one's ridgy-didge.

Chickie                          We can go with that?

Danny                            Yeah.

*Wes shifts about, sculls the contents before putting aside his jar. He smacks his lips.*

Wes                                Christ only knows what'd happen if we fob crook liquor onto the public. I mean with Horrie dying and all ...

Banjo                            Yeah, but it wasn't **what** he drank so much as how **much** he drank.

Mike                              Still and all ... Better to be sure ...

Wes *nods wisely*                "Better to be sure".

                                        Righto! Hughie, take that jug with the cross on it out to the jalopy. And cover it with the blanket.

*Hughie obeys his superior.*

Banjo                            I'm totally sure that the latest one is the green one. That's the one that'll be crook if any of them are. Horrie would've been tasting that one.

Wes                                Alright, let's give that one a whirl.

*The men with liquor remaining in their jars swallow it down. Banjo retrieves the green jug and from it pours a small amount for each man. Again, the men stare into their jars. Hughie returns and joins in.*

Danny *doubtful*                Jeez, I dunno. This looks like horse piss.

*With deliberation, Banjo takes a tiny sip. This he spits out immediately, in extreme disgust.*

Banjo *distasteful*              No! It's off! Don't drink it. Shit!

*Banjo tears outside. We hear him wetting his mouth with water and spitting several times. The other men likewise leave the garden shed to empty and rinse their jars out in the fresh air. Wes squints in the sunshine, looking about.*

Wes                                That Army captain's not about, is he?

Nation                            Gone for a canter on his bay gelding.

Wes                                Someone better go cockatoo. I might have a major seizure if he bursts in on us while we're sorting things out.

Chickie                           Which he has an unfortunate habit of doing.

Banjo                              Aw, he's not such a bad bloke once you get close to him. I'm in the same cricket team as him ...

*Wes turns to the other men (all still outside the shed).*

Wes                                Thing is: I got plenty of orders for this grog. If we find that the other three jars are any good, then that's a bonus. I'll take them off your hands.

                                      But (and this is a big "but"), what happens if I get **more** orders? And we can't supply them? This is big money, gents, and I like the folding stuff just as much as any man. What'll we do?

Nation                            The recipes and instructions are all written out. But brewing the grog takes time and patience. Horrie assured me many times that you have to work it. Not only that but Horrie gathered all his own berries and spices ... It's the time-factor that's the killer here, rather than anything else ...

Wes                                Do any of youse have any spare time, with all the other rorts going on? Mike?

*Wes and all the men turn towards Mike.*

Banjo *voice-over*              During the Great War, Mike was a sailor in the Dardanelles. Never one day sea-sick.

                                      Mike's dodge is to doctor official documents, making them look legal and ... you know ... He writes in perfect copyplate so's you'd never know the difference.

*Mike shrugs.*

Mike *apologetic* I've got that MP's report to doctor up. By Friday, he wants it.  
Sorry.

Wes *nods* What do you have on, Chickie?

*Wes and then the men turn to Chickie.*

Banjo *voice-over* Chickie is an artist who served in the Army during the 1914 to 1918 War, attaining the rank of corporal. His specialty is to turn out fake works of art for gallery owners feeling the pinch.

*Chickie shakes his head.*

Chickie *apologetic* I'd better excuse myself. If I don't hurry up and get that Rembrandt knocked-up, my contact in Melbourne will go elsewhere.  
  
Plus, I've gotta make some toys for the Missus. Make a start anyway.

*Wes nods in an understanding way and then points to Nation.*

Wes You ... I know that you have to be at Mrs Shorncliffe's beck and call, Nation.

*Nation nods. Wes then turns towards Danny.*

Wes *to Danny* What about you, Dan?

Banjo *voice-over* Danny learned about splicing and editing films and photographs during his naval service in the Great War. His talents are much in demand in police and political circles. Removes unwanted people from group photographs. He's pretty good ...

Danny *hesitant* Yeah, I'll give it a go ... If someone guides me to begin with ...

Wes Well ... Alright ... So what's your story, Banjo? Can you give Dan a hand?

Banjo *hard-faced* You know what my story is, you bludger.

Wes *placating* Now! Now! Settle ...

But you don't have anything on at present?

Banjo *keyed-up*

You know I bloody-well don't!

Wes

So you and Dan can work together on resurrecting Horrie's sly-grogger.

Good!

And here's another idea. I'll look out for a replacement for Horrie. A bloke who won't turn out to be a wowser. That's important.

I'll find an ex-serviceman (if possible) who will join in with youse blokes and not give the game away. Somebody's bound to stroll into the cop shop any day soon, wondering if there's cheap, dependable bed-and-board available. Leave it to me.

Mike

Wait a tick! But what about Captain Snoopy-drawers? You have to have a plan on him.

Chickie *alight with ideas*

Hey! Did any of youse see how the Captain was looking at the Doctor? And the way the Doctor looked at the Captain? I think that in romance books they call that "Chemistry".

Well, I reckon that we can get rid of Captain Marcus by sooling him onto the Doctor. If he was to get all lovey-dovey in that direction, then he'd leave us alone and go over to the infirmary so's he could see more of her. What d'you reckon?

Danny *disparaging*

Nah. He isn't interested in girls.

Banjo *thoughtful*

I dunno ... Chickie's right on the money, I reckon. He was looking at the young Doctor in a very funny way.

Chickie *shrugs*

It's worth a try. But how do we get him sick enough to go over there for treatment? He's as fit and well as a Mallee scrub bull.

*The men look from one to the other.*

Hughie *pipes up*

I got a rash once, and Mum was always dragging me off to the quack to try this lotion and that potion. Nothing worked. Got fairly

sick of it.

*All the men stare at Hughie.*

*Wes afire with ideas*      A rash. A rash does the job. Somehow, we gotta give the Captain a red, inflamed, itchy rash.

*Mike dreamily*      Bewdy!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT I



## ACT II The New Arrival At LaPerouse

### Scene i: Banjo Receives The Gen From Horrie

*On the same Sunday night, the men are asleep. We can hear snoring from Danny, Mike and Chickie, as they sleep in the body of what looks to have once been shearers' quarters. At some previous time, Banjo had moved his cot out onto the rickety verandah, and now sleeps under a mosquito net. He snores.*

*The light from the moon, as it shines down on Banjo is obscured by the shadow of Horrie's ghost. Horrie lifts the mosquito net, in order to prod Banjo with a stick.*

*Banjo stirs, looks about and then leaps out of bed, terrified. He wears only a baggy old pair of BVDs. As soon as he starts to expostulate, Horrie quickly attempts to quieten him down.*

Banjo *horrified*                      Jesus bloody Christ! You're supposed to be dead!

Horrie                                      Sh! Sh! Not so loud, or you'll wake the other blokes. Take a couple of big breaths and calm down.

*Banjo masters his emotions, then shakes Horrie's hand warmly.*

Banjo *overwhelmed*                      So, the young Doc made a mistake, did she? Jeez, I'm glad to see you again, Hor. I was going to have to take over the still. Me and Dan, that is.

*Horrie sinks onto the bed, looking worried.*

Horrie *exhausted* But I **am** dead. Sort of. I'm in that Purgatory place. I'm a ghost.  
I'm supposed to act ghost-like –  
*[Here, Horrie raises his arms and makes "Woo-woo" noises as if a ghost]*  
-- but I'm not real good at it.

Banjo *frowns* No! You can't be. How come I could shake your hand if you're a ghost?

Horrie I'm not that far along yet. I'm definitely in Purgatory (an archangel told me that), and it's pretty crook.

*Banjo sits down on the bed beside Horrie. Banjo reaches over to where his tobacco, papers and matches are stowed and begins to work on rolling a cigarette.*

Banjo Purgatory, you say? We're Church of England, and we don't have Purgatory. You must have made a mistake. Or else the angel did.

Horrie *defensive* No, it's true. We got it, just like the micks do.  
You wouldn't be able to write a quick letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and let him know, would you?

Banjo *looks askance at Horrie* Did you wake me up in the middle of the night to discuss C of E doctrinal matters?

*Horrie shakes his head. Banjo offers to roll him a cigarette. Horrie waves it away. Banjo lights up.*

Horrie No thanks. And I don't want a drink, neither.  
Listen, Banjo. You tasted that grog I made, didn't you? The last lot?

Banjo *makes a face* It was total rubbish. Looked and tasted like horse piss.

Horrie *nods* John Black made it all go wrong. And then I tasted it and knew straight away that it was crook. And I was just about to chuck it out, when John Black made it taste alright (somehow he did) and I knocked back a couple of glasses of the swill and then carked it.

*Banjo freezes, staring at Horrie.*

Banjo *appalled*                      John Black? Who he?

Horrie                                      You know, John Black. The bushranger ... Highwayman ...  
Whatever you want to call him.

*Banjo stares at Horrie, then nods slowly as he makes an "Uh" sound, as if attempting to placate a mental home escapee.*

Horrie *urgent*                      That's why I'm here now, telling you all this. Like I say, John Black was a bushranger (you know: "Stand and deliver!"), and he was killed on these grounds ... Oh, about 1800 in the LaPerouse grounds. Somewhere here ... No idea who done it, but ...  
  
He's been in Purgatory ever since until his murder has been avenged.

Banjo                                      I've never heard of --

Horrie                                      That's what I'm doing here. I knicked off from the "Eternal Damnation" lecture to come and tell you that John Black is going to arrive here any minute and start causing all manner of mayhem. He's pretty ticked-off because no-one so far has lifted a finger in trying to solve his murder. He's gonna make trouble for the Missus.

Banjo *sneers*                      Well, he's got my vote there. If anybody or anything can give that woman a kick up the backside, I'd send them a telegram of congratulation.

Horrie *worried*                      But he's a nasty piece of work, Banjo. He's a real villain.  
  
D'ya know what he did to me? He showed me what his life was like back in old Blighty, when he was a bubby.

Aw mate ... That was a shocker, I can tell you. Everyone got mistreated, and so they soaked themselves in gin and took their grievances out on the nippers. Bloody sin and shame, it was!

You gotta **do** something to stop him, Banjo – this John Black cove.

Banjo *reluctant*

Alright ...

Horrie

He's going to come here to live as a replacement for me: one of the homeless men at one-and-thruppence per week. He'll put it about that he's ex-Army, but it's not so. And you'll never be able to catch him out because he's too clever.

Banjo

Have you met him?

Horrie *shakes head*

No. But I happened to hear a couple of angels gossiping about him while they were busy brewing a tornado to send to Kansas in America. Didn't know I was ear-wigging. They reckon he's got everyone in his thrall (whatever that is) on account of his being so good-looking, like a film star in the flicks. Got wavy black hair and gypsy eyes, they say.

Banjo

Bit of a ladies' man, is he?

Horrie

Oh, my word yes (by the sound of it).

*Horrie heaves himself up from the bed.*

Horrie

You'll say some nice words about me at my funeral (won't ya?), and you'd better try and speak out in my favour at the Coroner's Inquest into my death.

But listen to me, Banjo. I reckon that your best bet will be to solve the mystery of this John Black murder and get the guilty party named publicly (even if they're dead).

Now according to my ridgy-didge sources there are five possibles and any one of these ne'er-do-wells could've done it. For God's sake, Mate – find out which one of these damn villains it was!

And no matter how much you dislike the Missus, you have to do everything in your power to stop this bushranger mucking it up for everybody. That's a fact.

Banjo *frowns*                      You'd better give me their names, then. I'll write them down in --

*Horrie dissolves. Banjo (open-mouthed) stares at the impression of Horrie's rump on the bed. He chucks away the stub of his cigarette.*

END OF SCENE

## Scene ii: Mirth In Funeral

*Here follows a collection of quick scenes which capture the events leading up to Horrie's funeral on the following Wednesday at the St Eanswyth church. There is a sense of merriment and pleasure attached to these scenes.*

### **The New Flagpole**

On Monday morning, the inmates of LaProwse gather on the lawn, near the two flagpoles. In his usual role, Nation raises the Union Jack on the existing flagpole. For the first time, Banjo raises the Australian flag on the new flagpole which Marcus erected on the previous day.

Everyone (apart from Una) is quite delighted with the arrangement, and all sing "God Save The King" with real enthusiasm. Una has worn a complicated hat and stands in such a pose that she is able to view only the Union Jack. The men salute both flags with evident pride.

### **Household Duties**

Betty and Mrs Gwen are seen happily pottering around both inside and outside the kitchen. There are hens to feed, and a couple of fat cats laze in the sun. Betty strokes them.

### **"The Doings" #1**

Mike (wearing serious-looking spectacles) is whistling happily as he plies at his copyplate. He is seated at an ancient desk near a window.

### **"The Doings" #2**

Chickie has a large paintbrush clenched between his teeth as he hums, and paints in oils. He is clearly making a very true copy of a famous Rembrandt (The Abduction Of Europa) which stands propped up against a chair.

**Giving Marcus A Rash**

In the grounds of Worrilee (the home of Ronald and Verona Winterbottom and family) there is a long wire clothesline which is propped up in a couple of places with long wooden poles. Being a Monday, the Worrilee maid has pegged out a full load of washing.

The camera takes in the fact that there are pairs of Bombay bloomers flapping in the breeze on one part of the line. On another part of the line, several pairs of more up-to-date BVDs are drying.

Banjo and Dan scamper out from behind some bushes, and quickly lower the nearest pole. They hesitate: the Bombay bloomers or the BVDs?

They opt for the BVDs and rapidly unpeg them from the clothesline. With the underpants in hand, they tear back into the bushes.

**Salon Music**

With a string quartet playing lovely French music in the background, Una, Ronald, Verona and Charlotte enjoy high tea in a popular Sydney salon. This is the gypsy tearoom where Daphne Maisford plays viola. The nobs are dressed up to the nines. The selection of cakes on a three-tiered cake stand looks very inviting. The salon is very swish, with a large clientele of well-dressed swells, and many uniformed waitresses standing about holding silver trays.

END OF SCENE

**Scene iii: Horrie Is Laid To Rest In The Graveyard At St Eanswyth's Church**

*Horrie's funeral has taken place in the little Church of England church (St Eanswyth) which is close to LaPerouse. Our camera is stationed outside the church door. Horrie's casket rests on the shoulders and linked arms of Marcus, Phillip, Banjo, Chickie, Dan and Mike. The pallbearers are grim-faced.*

*Behind the coffin comes poor old Mrs Fitzmaurice and her married daughter. Both ladies weep unrestrainedly. Una and Verona follow, supported by Ronald. Charlotte walks beside Jocelyn (the unmarried sister of Phillip and Marcus). Nation is supporting Mrs Gwen and Betty. All are solemn. Several others follow, including Dr Somerton Maisford and his younger daughter Sylvia.*

*Nation slips aside and walks over to the shrubbery for a cigarette, which he has pre-rolled. As he smokes it, he takes refreshment from a hip flask and speaks to camera.*

Nation *harsh*

The funeral for Mr Horace Fitzmaurice was mooted for half-past one on Wednesday. And here we are: got him dispatched right on time.

We had to give the deceased's mother and sister time to arrive from Bathurst. Poor souls!

My Mrs Gwen and Betty have been whipping-up sandwich points along with scones, jam and cream for the wake. Once he's safely under the sod, we'll all saunter around to the church hall for a nibble and a cuppa and a chin-wag.

Hmph! Funerals, eh?

*Nation watches the congregation troop around to the graveside as they follow Horrie's coffin.*

Nation *even harsher*

The Vicar will be billeting Mrs and Miss Fitzmaurice such that they can stick around for the Coroner's inquest. That's planned for Friday.

*[Sneers in a very nasty fashion]*

You'd think that with all the empty bedrooms up at the manor, the Missus could offer the wretched bereaved women a cot or a palliasse. But that would be pushing Christian charity too far ...

🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊 **Break** 🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊

*Verona has also slipped away for a second or two prior to the burial. We can see the Vicar getting into position at the head of the grave, as the pallbearers lower the coffin on silken ropes. Verona is twitching off cuttings from a bush and stowing them in her handbag.*

Verona *to camera*

But Una and I (and dearest Charlotte, of course) ... We won't let the local theatrical troupe down. The show must go on! We'll all

tread the boards in spite of this shocking disaster which has befallen us, in that Mr Fitzmaurice has so unfortunately and unexpectedly passed on.

*[She reefs a sheet of paper from her handbag]*

No, wait ... I have it written down ...

Here it is. We are presenting "The Royal Line Of Succession". A costume drama in five acts. Una plays Boadicea. And I play ... um ... wait a bit ...

*Verona is torn between rushing over to the burial, which has just begun, and enlightening the audience about her small part in Una's forthcoming theatrical triumph. The former object wins out.*

**Break**

*The Vicar is burying Horrie; his words are in the background. Our camera concentrates on Banjo, who is thinking of the next steps.*

Banjo *voice-over*

And I'm looking out at the funeral for the new chum who wows the ladies: the bloke with the film-star looks. He won't look too bloody good after I've finished with him: what he done to Horrie.

John Black. Bushranger ... I wonder if you can have a stoush with a ghost? If your punches would connect? Dunno ... Prob'ly not.

*The camera backs right away, such that the final scene of the burial is far away.*

END OF SCENE

**Scene iv:** The Coroner's Inquest Into Horrie's Unexpected Demise

*The camera begins by focusing on a very regal sepia photograph (framed) of King George V and his Queen Mary.*

*On moving back, the camera reveals that this scene is taking place in the Coroner's court, Sydney. This room displays a robust and impressive colonial architecture with heavy wood panelling and elaborate decorative plasterwork.*

Bailiff *sonorous*

All rise!

His Honour Sir Edward Farquhar shall preside and officiate in this His Majesty King George The Fifth's duly convened Court of the Coroner in the state of New South Wales. He will be assisted by Mr Lorimer Bentham and staff.

God save the King!

*Sir Edward takes his seat; throughout, he will refer to several important-looking papers. Lorimer stands before him. Apart from Lorimer, everyone sits.*

Sir Edward

I have summoned you good people here today in order to investigate the death of Mr Horace Fitzmaurice, 32 years of age, residing at the time of his death as a lodger at LaPerouse, West Sydney (the residence of Mrs Una Shorncliffe).

Mr Fitzmaurice died quite suddenly and unexpectedly on the morning of Sunday November 7th. A doctor was summoned to treat the deceased upon his falling ill. I shall hear the evidence of the doctor (who advised the necessity for an official inquest), along with that of others who witnessed both the illness and death of Mr Fitzmaurice.

Before I advance these proceedings, I should like everyone present to understand that all witness testimony shall be given under oath, and that the truth must be told at all times. I further charge you all to feel free to come forward with any evidence (even any suspicions) that you might have.

Don't worry. If I think that you're going beyond the pale, I'll soon pull you back into line.

*There is a titter of mild amusement in the room, and a lot of shifting about in the uncomfortable seats.*

Bailiff                      Eustace Simons! Take the stand!

*Chickie struts up, and takes the oath. Then he strides into the witness stand.*

Lorimer                      You are Eustace Simons of LaPerouse, West Sydney?

Chickie                      Yes sir.

Lorimer                      And you are a lodger at LaPerouse, just as was Mr Fitzmaurice?

Chickie                      Yes sir.

Lorimer                      Describe the events of Sunday morning, November 7<sup>th</sup> last.

Chickie *takes a breath*      The Missus (I'm sorry: Mrs Shorncliffe) holds a church service every Sunday morning. At least, the Vicar does. And I got up to clean myself up and so on, ready for the service, when I found Horrie not in his bed.

I needed a couple of things from the garden shed (where we keep some of our washing kit, sir) and there he was, lying on the floor of the garden shed. And he was still dressed. And he didn't look too good, sir.

So I dropped onto my knee and started to try and wake him up. I shook him, lightly slapped his face and pinched his arm. But he was out to it.

Mike was there too. Michael Thomlinson. Another inmate. We couldn't get no response out of Horrie.

Then Danny comes up with a bucket of cold water, which he chucks all over Horrie. Nothing. No response at all.

*[Observes Lorimer's gasp and look of horror]*

We was all in the Great War, sir, and we all knew first-hand what a dead body looks like. He was a goner, for sure.

We got the call to hurry up for the church service, and so we left Horrie where we found him in the shed. Only now he was dripping wet.

*There is an audible murmur amongst the court.*

Lorimer *appalled*            You left the deceased on his back on the floor of a shed, saturated with cold water?

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

There has been a switch. Now Danny is in the stand.

Danny *reasonable* Mrs Shorncliffe is a fine, God-fearing, caring lady, sir. We just couldn't destroy the sanctity of her church service by blurting out that Horrie was dead. So we told her (at least, Chickie did) that Horrie was crook. Missus told Nation to fetch the doctor for Horrie and we all sort of thought that that would be alright, because then he could write out the death certificate.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*There has been a switch. Now Nation is in the stand.*

Nation *assuming his "butler" demeanour*    I hurried to the telephone and rang the exchange. I requested that the young lady connect me with all haste to Dr Maisford's telephone. She did so. However, it was not Dr Somerton Maisford who answered, but his daughter Sylvia (also a licensed medical practitioner).

The case was, sir, that the old doctor was not feeling well enough to visit LaPerouse, and so his daughter came in his stead. Young Dr Maisford cycled over immediately, entered the shed and pronounced that the deceased was ... er ... deceased, sir.

**Break**

*There has been a switch. Now Sylvia is in the stand.*

Lorimer                      Now, Miss Maisford, would you please --

*Sylvia turns towards Sir Edward.*

Sylvia                    I beg your pardon, Your Honour, but I should like to point out that  
I am here in my professional capacity. Would you kindly have me  
addressed as "Doctor" in preference to "Miss"?

*Sir Edward nods, then gives Lorimer a speaking look.*

Lorimer *duly chastened* So sorry ...

Dr Maisford, would you please recount the circumstances of your visit to LaPerouse on Sunday morning last, and relate to the court what you found there.

Sylvia                      Following the telephone call from Nation, and my father's request to me to handle the situation in his place, I bicycled over to LaPerouse at quarter past eleven. The trip took about ten minutes. I noted on my wristwatch that the time was just short of half-past eleven.

I found Mr Fitzmaurice as described: flat on his back, his clothes and surroundings doused with water, and to all appearances dead.

I examined the deceased and retained the opinion that when alive the gentleman had been overweight, unfit, overindulging in food and liquor, and had a bloated appearance with ruddy complexion.

In short, his health was very poor. From the smell in his mouth, I discerned that alcohol had been consumed. This was confirmed by the other inmates. It seems that Mr Fitzmaurice was in the habit of heavy drinking.

In my professional opinion, then, I completed the death certificate with a finding of "Alcoholic poisoning". And I established that he had died during Saturday night, some time after midnight.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

There has been another switch. Now the pathologist is in the stand.

Pathologist ... and at the conclusion of my post-mortem probing, I was able to concur with Dr Maisford's prognosis of "Alcoholic Poisoning". The deceased had drunk a large amount of very poor grade spiritous liquor. Enough to take out a rhino, sir.

Another titter of mirth wafts through the gallery.

Lorimer And this large amount of ... Shall we call it grog? Do you believe the liquor to have been contraband?

Pathologist Oh, most certainly. As I say, it was of a very poor quality. And many glasses of it were consumed. Even a fit, healthy man would have been knocked sideways by such a volume of that filthy stuff.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*There is now no-one in the stand.*

Sir Edward                The distilling and provision of sly grog is a very serious offence.  
*pontificating*            Every day we read of members of the public who have lost their

lives too early and needlessly to the evils of home-brewed hooch.

Before I make my decision in this sad case, is there anyone else who wishes to take the stand? Does anybody have some information, no matter how trivial, which might assist me in coming to my verdict?

*Banjo (as seen from behind) is unsettled. He takes a breath and then stands abruptly.*

Sir Edward *to Banjo*      Yes?

*Banjo, still unsettled, coughs.*

Banjo                      Sir, my name is Barry "Banjo" Gibson; another inmate of LaPerouse.

I have vital information to bring forward in this case.

*A tremor of interest and excitement wafts through the courtroom. Sir Edward nods to the Bailiff, who swears Banjo in. Then Banjo takes the stand.*

Lorimer                      You are Barry Gibson of LaPerouse, West Sydney, I take it. And you were quite familiar with the deceased?

Banjo                      Yes sir.

*Lorimer looks a question. Banjo hesitates: he is looking around the courtroom for anyone resembling John Black.*

Lorimer *impatient*      Well? What is it that you wish to tell us? His Honour is waiting.

Banjo                      I ... I ... I just want to set the record straight, sir.

Horrie was a genius at making beverages. Yes, alcohol was involved; that's for sure. But Horrie knew what he was doing. To him, the beverages were health drinks. He felt better after having a drink, and that equated with him to being healthier. We all know that's not so, but at least Horrie believed it.

Now, he mixed berries, oats, flowers, fruits: you name it. He was careful ... just like a young girl caring for chicks. He cosseted that

brew, and tasted it ... Never got it wrong. Because to him, that was the most important thing.

So, when he died, and it was put down to the grog being crook, I got to thinking. You know, it just sounded phoney.

I worked out (with a bit of help from the boys) which one of the jugs held the homebrew that did him in, and I tasted it.

Pardon me, sir, but there's no possible way to describe that filthy stuff other than the urine of a horse. Sorry to give offence, but that's what it tasted like.

And so, I want to ask you, Your Honour, how it could be possible for anyone to even "sip" that stuff, let alone drink glasses full of it?

*The people in the courtroom sit in stunned silence. Sir Edward stares at Banjo, as does Lorimer.*

Lorimer *accusing*                    Are you trying to tell us --

Sir Edward *interrupting with raised hand*    Just a moment please. I should like to interview this witness myself. Pray continue, Mr Banjo.

Banjo *shrugs*                      It's just that that swill wasn't potable. Not by a long chalk. So, to make it taste alright enough for Horrie to drink glasses of it, someone **else** had to have doctored it.

Sir Edward *slight smile*       And how is it that you know what the urine of a horse tastes like?

Banjo *blushes and shrugs*                            I was a gunnery sergeant in the late war, sir. I got around.

Sir Edward                          Interesting ...

And so, rather than being a self-inflicted binge on a potentially lethal amount of badly-made grog, you (Mr Banjo) wish this court to understand that the deceased was tricked into drinking a deadly combination of well-made hooch laced with poison?

Banjo Yes sir. I'm pretty sure that that's what happened.

Sir Edward Well ... Who might have perpetrated such a plan? Who would have wanted Mr Fitzmaurice dead? Do you have any ideas, Mr Gibson?

Banjo Yes, I do, sir. It's a bushranger called John Black.

[Pause]

His ghost, that is.

END OF SCENE

### **Scene v:** The Suffolk Hills XI Win The Match Followed By A New Arrival

*At midday on Saturday, dressed in his creams, complete with cricket bat, pads and a navy blue cricket cap, Banjo sits on a bench, head deeply bowed in utter desolation. Somebody chucks a newspaper down beside him.*

Dan *voice-over in withering contempt and exasperation* Fair dinkum, Banjo!

What's today's headline, may I ask? "The ghost of a bushranger murdered my mate!"

Sweet Jesus! You bloody galah!

*Banjo shifts about in an agony of embarrassed silence.*

Nation *voice-over of stern disapproval* Here's the Missus bending over backwards to get herself and her dippy sister back into the Society columns and you pull a stunt like that! You're a donkey, Gibson! Fair dinkum! You're hopeless!

Chickie *voice-over laughing derisively* What's this one say? "Drunken Hauntings at LaPerouse". You really are up Shit Creek in a barbed wire canoe now, Banjo.

Mike *voice-over* Yes, and with tennis racquets for paddles.

*amused*

Nation *voice-over nasty* The Missus turned every shade of purple when she read that. She wants to hang you out to dry by your agates, mate.

*With Banjo's dejected frame still in focus, we hear a loud shout of "Howzat?" in the background.*

Male voice Your turn to bat, Banjo. Are you up for it?

*The camera focuses on the empty bench as Banjo quickly and determinedly strides out to the wicket. We hear someone in the crowd call Banjo "Ghostie", to the accompaniment of rude laughter.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Marcus (wearing a similar navy blue cricket cap to Banjo's) has a fine baritone voice, and he sings loudly as he drives along a picturesque road in West Sydney. In 1920, this was part bush and part farm land. Like Banjo, Marcus wears cricketing creams.

We see on the side of the road a distressed young Dr Maisford, losing a battle with her bicycle. Marcus pulls up beside her and quickly steps out of the car, leaving the engine running.

Marcus What's the problem? May I help you?

Unexpectedly, Sylvia gives him a woebegone look and accepts the proffered assistance.

Sylvia Oh, yes please. I'm supposed to be headed for Cooper's Farm to deliver the new baby. And of course, I have a puncture.

Marcus strides around to where the recalcitrant bicycle lies forlornly on the verge. He lifts it and hides it among the roadside shrubbery.

Marcus Hop in the motor, and I'll get you there pronto. We'll just hide the treadingly in the undergrowth for the time being. There we are!

Remember where it is for the return journey, won't you.

Sylvia (along with her black doctor's bag) nimbly establishes herself in the passenger seat. With some dexterity, Marcus manages to turn the car around to face the other direction and off they travel.

Sylvia Gosh! It's really lucky that you came along when you did.

Young Tottie Enright rode up not long since to say that her mother (you might know Gracie: the village midwife) thought that Dulcie Cooper was "getting along" with her labour. It's her fourth, so probably a very quick job.

Marcus *frowns* Cooper's Farm? You weren't seriously going to cycle all that way, were you? Take you a month of Sundays.

Sylvia Yes, I agree. I came to that conclusion as soon as I set out. Rode hell for leather until I landed the ruddy puncture ... Excuse my language, but it's enough to try the patience of a medieval saint.

Marcus Here's a thought. Why not get yourself a motor? Or better still, a motor cycle. They're all the rage in Sydney now. See quite a few of them about these days.

Sylvia *uncertain* But are they difficult to master? How hard is it to ride on one of those contraptions?

Marcus *airily* Money for jam. I'll put you in the way of it ... If for no other reason than to rescue the sickies of West Sydney and Suffolk Hills from the deficiencies of your cantankerous bicycle.

Sylvia Thanks. That's very kind of you.

Marcus *goads* Of course, if you'd been a man, you'd have thought of that for yourself.

Sylvia *rattled* Oh, don't start! I really am sick of it: up to the back teeth.

Marcus *grins* What are you heartily sick of?

Sylvia *miffed* Well, no other ladies whom I know are constantly compared to men. (Is it "to" men or "with" men? I can never remember).

But because I chose what is traditionally a male occupation, I seem to be fair game.

Marcus I don't see that.

Sylvia *scoffing tone* Ha!

For one thing, **you** didn't accept me at face value, did you?

Marcus Now you're accusing me of being a misogynist.

Sylvia Let's revisit the deathbed scene of Mr Fitzmaurice, shall we?

You burst into the shed all uninvited, trying to bot a shifting spanner.

Now, if a **man** had been hovering over the body, and one of the lads had quipped: "Tis the doctor", then **you** would have cheerily greeted him. Yesterday's sunshine. And then continued to ferret about for the spanner.

But a **female** was introduced to you as the doctor, and you went into a complete tizzy over it.

Marcus chuckles happily, unable to resist the goading of his passenger.

Marcus *enjoying himself* You're right, you know, come to think of it.

And yesterday in the Coroner's Court. A male would have been addressed as "Doctor" from the word "Go!" You had to call Mr Lorimer Bentham to order on that head. Fancy referring to your esteemed eminence as "Miss".

And when the "Sir" reprimanded him, I'm sure that there was a twinkle in the eye of the revered KCMC CMG. Outrageous cheek!

Sylvia presses her lips tight together as she glares momentarily at Marcus.

Marcus *on a roll* Not to be snitty about the fact that you aren't a man, but are in fact a young lady of considerable wit, poise and beauty, and that attractive young ladies such as your good self get everything handed to them on a silver platter anyway because everybody and their dog adores pretty girls ... Well, if you'd been a **man** and a passenger in my motor, then we'd have been enjoying a jolly and

convivial chat about today's cricket match. Instead of which, we are sniping at each other about the relevant merits of people with penises versus those without 'em.

Sylvia is nonplussed. In frosty silence, she gazes out of the car window for a second or two and then slaps her palms onto her thighs. Marcus has been whistling in delight, assured that he had scored the better in this verbal encounter.

Sylvia *forcing a smile* How was the cricket game today, Mr Winterbottom? I meant to ask you. I do hope your answer is a short one as we're nearly there.

Marcus Yes! We won! I managed only 11. Dreadful shot: I miscued it absolutely. Caught and bowled. But Banjo Gibson made a cracking 52 and actually hit the winning run. Nice way for him to alleviate the megrims.

Sylvia Ah! Poor Banjo ...
Yes, this is it.

Marcus swings the car through the large gateway and along the drive.

Sylvia Something you said reminded me ... As an aside: how did you get on with my M. and B. potion? I take it that it proved a roaring success?

Marcus *grins* Your "Man and Boy"? Wonderful stuff, Doctor. Can't speak highly enough about –

[Brakes smoothly outside the front door of the farm house]

-- about your expertise. Top notch brew! Probably cures foot-rot in sheep as well ...

Marcus and Sylvia step nimbly out of the car outside the sprawling homestead. There is a flurry of activity outside: dogs, boys playing backyard cricket and men in overalls. From inside can be heard the screams and moans of a woman in the late stages of labour. However, the arrival of such an august personage as Captain Winterbottom (and in his cricket strip!) causes delight amongst all the

males. Sylvia quickly slips inside through the wire door as the men shake hands with Marcus and hear snippets of detail relating to the cricket match.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Marcus wanders along the verandah. The screaming and moaning ceases abruptly. Marcus appears concerned, if not alarmed. And then the welcome sound of a new baby crying out for the first time assails his ears. Marcus grins.*

*Marcus (and thus our camera) can make out Sylvia's form through a flywire screen (due to there being another window on the other side of our view). As the midwife gleefully tells the mother that she has another son, Marcus sees Sylvia (her fingers gripping the baby's ankles) hold the boy up high, with her other hand supporting the infant's back. Every detail of the child is examined by the young doctor. Marcus is enthralled.*

*Sylvia from inside the room*      There you are, Mrs Cooper. A lovely healthy son. I'll give you a tonic to take. One tablespoon three times a day with meals. Can you remember that?

And Gracie: send word to me if either the babe or the mother aren't doing as well as expected. Otherwise, I'll call back on Tuesday to check on the progress.

*Seconds later, Sylvia exits the house via the flywire door, doctor's bag in hand. With a nod of her head, she signals to Marcus that it is time to go.*

*Smiling, Marcus follows Sylvia down the steps towards the car.*

END OF SCENE

**Scene vi:** Jocelyn Winterbottom And Iggy Wiggins Visit LaPerouse

*Una, Verona and Charlotte have trudged off next door for some dahlia corms and to view the newly-arrived piglets.*

*Sylvia has called in at LaPerouse to ensure that Banjo is coping with his infamy. From the garden shed, Marcus has lured Sylvia to the house for a cup of tea.*

*Phillip stands at a LaPerouse upper-storey picture window idly staring out. His sister Jocelyn is seen striding over the acreage, along with a very shaggy, unattractive, nondescript grey terrier.*

Phillip *jovial* Uh-oh ... Here's trouble at mill ... Darling Joss (an enemy to "Free Spirit" and to "Progress-in-General") has found Worrilee abandoned, so has trudged over to visit Auntie Una as a second recourse. And (thoughtful to the last), she's deigned to bring along Iggy Wiggins for our delectation and diversion.

Do we have time to make a run for it, or shall we have to endure half-an-hour of the most tedious rodomontade in Christendom?

Sylvia *all at sea* I'm sorry, Mr Winterbottom ... I didn't quite catch ... ?

Phillip *boyish* Marcus and I share a sister. She is of such a religious bent that she is working feverishly to take the veil: she's set her heart on becoming a Church of England nun, of all things. Saving all our wretched souls.

And her boon companion in this vocation is the canine Iggy Wiggins: Beelzebub himself.

*[Taking a heroic stance, pretending to be very brave]*

Don't worry: I'll protect you.

Marcus I'll lay you a fiver that Dr Sylvia bests the ecumenical designs of sister Joss **without** your assistance.

Phillip You're on! A fiver it is.

*Sylvia is now very much lost, and frowns at the brothers in turn.*

*Jocelyn surges into the room with Iggy Wiggins (a medium-sized terrier with long, lank shaggy grey fur). They are followed immediately by Betty, carrying the laden tea tray. This Betty deposits the tray on a central round table before scooting out of the room.*

Phillip *cordial*                      Just in time for tea, Joss. Can you stay?

*Phillip kisses his sister politely on the cheek, as does Marcus.*

Jocelyn *bustling and busy*                      A quick splash of tea in a saucer will do. My Iggy needs a very, very long walk. I had intended to drag Mum and Charlotte off for a bush ramble, but alas! Only Dad was in residence: Torrens not to be found. Is that all my Father does all day – sleep?

*Jocelyn helps herself to tea (tipping some into the saucer and coping with that), stuffs a lamington into her mouth (whole) and appears to be eyeing Sylvia with curiosity as she eats.*

Jocelyn *thickly*                      And who's this young lady?

Phillip                                  Beg pardon, Sylvia. This is our sister Jocelyn Winterbottom. And Iggy.

Joss, this is Dr Sylvia Maisford (the daughter of the Dr Maisford whom you'd well remember from former ailments suffered).

*A quick handshake between the ladies follows, yet Jocelyn stands staring at Sylvia as if she were a Martian.*

Jocelyn *appalled and affronted*                      You're a doctor?

Sylvia *tired of justifying herself*                      Yes, that's right. I'm a fully qualified medical practitioner.

Jocelyn *patronizing*                      Incredible. I trust that you only treat females in your surgery. Otherwise, your being a doctor would be ludicrous and inappropriate.

The idea that you might be called upon to examine the naked male torso is downright abhorrent.

*Here, Jocelyn scoffs another lamington (whole) and guzzles another saucer full of tea. Iggy, who is a complete pest, begs for food. Without pause, Jocelyn stuffs a handful of scones, jam and cream into Iggy's mouth. She offers unctuous blandishments to the appalling dog.*

Jocelyn *brisk*                      Alright. Enough sissy food for one afternoon. We'll be off on our ramble.

Sylvia *arcs up*                      My patients come to me for help, Miss Winterbottom. They might be of any age, colour, sex or creed. I tend to every one of my clients with equal concern. I am a professional healthcare worker, and there it stands.

*Jocelyn is caught off balance. The brothers smirk as they share a quick look at each other. Marcus steps forward, standing beside Sylvia.*

Marcus                              As a matter of fact, I went along to the clinic myself th'other day.  
  
I was suffering from a particularly nasty rash. Dr Maisford (*young* Dr Maisford here) cured my complaint with a concoction of her own devising. "Man and Boy", she calls it.  
  
Could be marketed with considerable success, in my humble opinion: especially for cattle and sheep.

*Sylvia flicks her head to give Marcus a look of withering contempt. He ignores the look.*

Jocelyn *flippant*                      Oh, well. Good gracious! That's nothing to get into a lather about  
  
...  
  
Simply a rash ... On your arm, perhaps, or --

Marcus *enjoying himself*                      My underwear was infected with a particularly savage vegetative substance, causing hot scratchy prickly itching upon contact with the skin.  
  
I can readily hazard a guess as to whose door to lay this deed ...  
  
Anyway, I toddled along for a consultation, and was asked to strip to the nuddy, the rash being on my nether regions.

Jocelyn *horrified*                    Marcus! You didn't!

Marcus *nods solemnly*            I'm a returned soldier, Joss ... We got used to peeling-off in front of a crowd. Naturally, all the nurses at the Front were female. These things are par for the course.

Jocelyn *outraged*                    How **could** you? What would Mum say, if she knew?

Marcus *delivers the death-blow*                    And furthermore, during the course of the examination, a cold spoon was required. At least twice.

*Phillip gives a shout of laughter (quickly turned to a cough), whereas Sylvia bites her lip. Jocelyn is struck dumb for a few seconds.*

*Then, recovering her equanimity, Jocelyn gathers her things.*

Jocelyn *blushing*                    Where's Iggy? I must take the Wig-boy off for a long leg-stretch in the hinterland.

*[To her two brothers]*

                                                  God bless you both. Give my love to Mum and to Aunt Una. I'll pray for you, Marcus.

*Jocelyn nods briefly towards Sylvia.*

Jocelyn *without warmth*                    It was very fine to meet you, Sylvia. God bless you.

*Jocelyn is about to charge out of the room when she remembers something. She whisks a pamphlet from her basket and marches over to Sylvia, passing the pamphlet to her.*

Jocelyn *urging*                        I believe that I might depend upon you, my dear, to join the Sisterhood and Friends of the Sorority on our pilgrimage against the vile and contumacious sect who hold that we Human Beings are the off-shoots of the monkeys and the apes. Ghastly people!

                                                  I speak of course of the heathen Darwinists, Evolutionists and Scientists whose scandalous and un-Biblical beliefs are eroding our Christian way of life and polluting the ears of the impressionable young people of the land. We march from the Sydney Town Hall

at half-past three on Sunday afternoon next, then we shall gather for prayers at Darling Harbour at six. Tea and sandwiches to follow.

You will join our ranks, won't you? I know how much this means to us all, to stamp out these irreligious --

Sylvia *smooth, silken* I'll have to be excused, I'm afraid.

I'm so terribly sorry to disappoint you, but my Reading Club will be in session at that time. Our subject this week is an appreciation of "The Origin Of The Species". I must pronounce it to be by far my favourite book. I read it all the time. Can't put it down.

*The two women stare at each other with unbridled hostility. Jocelyn snatches back the pamphlet which Sylvia offers to her, glances quickly at her two brothers and then marches swiftly from the room. Iggy bounds after Jocelyn, tail wagging furiously.*

Phillip *jovial* Well done, Dr Maisford! My sister scotched! I never could have believed it!

*Phillip dives for his wallet and extracts a five pound bill from it. This he hands to Marcus.*

Phillip There you are. It was well worth five quid to see the rout.

Sylvia I hope I didn't offend anyone, but I happen to like Darwin's theories the more I read them. They seem to make perfect sense.

Oh! And I'm sorry that your brother is such a liar.

*Phillip looks a question.*

Sylvia *airily* I could never betray patient confidentiality, of course.

But the cold spoon was used only once.

*Phillip stares at Sylvia and is unable to think of a riposte, whereas Marcus grins appreciably.*

END OF SCENE

**Scene vii:** The New Arrival Fronts Up

*Far from looking like a police station, the West Sydney cop shop is in fact a Federation style house: solid, worthy and non-combustible. Reeking of wealth. Some wowser who wished to deny that Sydney town had ever been founded as a repository for convicts bequeathed the establishment to the local constabulary. All that was required was to convert the front parlour into a reception area, put bars on some of the windows and locks on the doors.*

*John Black strolls into this police station. Wes happens to be on duty and looks up. John is an extremely handsome man. As already suggested, he has dark gypsy eyes, wavy black hair and has the physique of a matinee idol.*

Wes                                      Yes?

John                                    Good day, sir. I'm looking about in this particular area for a room to let. Or somewhere to board.

I'm a clean-living returned soldier of the C of E persuasion. Don't mind hard work, but I'm not against enjoying the pleasures of life, either. In moderation, of course.

*Wes takes John's outstretched hand and the two men shake hands. John smiles attractively: his teeth glint.*

Wes                                    You're in luck. I have just the thing. You won't mind bunking with four other men, similar to yourself?

John *smiling*                        Of course not.

Wes                                    Mrs Una Shorncliffe of LaPerouse is a lady of great wealth, piety and charity. She takes in homeless men (who served their country gallantly in the Great War) at one-and-thruppence per week (all meals included). Are you able to afford that?

John                                    Oh, my word yes! That sounds just the go for me.

Wes                                    Bewdy. I'll note down the particulars, and you can call on the good lady yerself on the morrow.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II



## ACT III Things Start To Go Wrong At LaPouse

### Scene i: Banjo And Horrie Reconnoître Again And A Fight Ensues

*It is morning, after breakfast time. Banjo is taking a piss outside in the bushes (near to the garden shed), whistling (without much sound emitting) in a desultory fashion as he watches birds fly overhead.*

Banjo *voice-over very dour* Well, I don't feel like speaking to anybody right now. Not in the mood. Got nothing to say.

So you may as well take that microphone away from my face and shove it right up your fanny. Thank you very much all the same.

Now, leave a bloke alone. Can't you see that I'm taking a leak?

*Horrie's ghost stalks out of the undergrowth, but he is careful not to allow himself to stand in the sunlight. Banjo is not at all pleased to see him. Banjo scowls as he buttons his fly.*

Banjo *nasty to Horrie* Yeah, and you can piss off, too mate.

Horrie *urgent* I gotta talk to you, Banjo, about --

*Banjo turns abruptly and stalks off.*

Banjo *dismissive* Bite yer bum!

Horrie *distressed, urgent* Banjo! For Christ's sake, come back here. I can't waltz out into the bright sunshine: I'll melt. Come back here in the shade where I

can talk to you.

*But Banjo is in a withering rage which has continued since the Saturday morning newspaper headlines made a fool of him. Banjo (really ticked off) strides away.*

Horrie *calling out*

He's here now mate! He's greeting the folks around the front. He caught the bus to Margaret Street and walked down from the ...

*[Voice trails off sadly]*

... from the bus stop. Oh, Jeez! I didn't ask you to flap your gums at the Coroner's inquisition, did I? Not my fault that you're a flaming "tell-it-all" nong.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

Grim-faced, head down, hands in pockets and taking giant strides, Banjo comes upon the "welcoming committee" for John Black (which takes place outside the front door of LaPerouse).

Una is utterly beaming; Verona no less so. Charlotte's face is pink with pleasure. The other three lads (Chickie, Dan and Mike) are shaking hands with John Black, and laughing at something witty that he has just said. Nation, Mrs Gwen and Betty stand aside, enthralled.

Banjo stops, with face of thunder. Suddenly, gripping his fists menacingly, Banjo sprints up to the group and throws a strong right punch at John Black. John Black has heard Banjo's fast approaching footfall, and has turned towards him, just in time to ride the punch. Both men now shape up to each other (in the comical stance of 1920's boxers), to the horror of the onlookers. Banjo and John Black job at each other. There follows a general outcry.

All voices together

Stop it! Stop that right now! Boys! Boys! That's enough. Cut it out, will you? Ladies present. Stop that! Stop it, will you? Come on chaps – that'll do! Gents, that's not how it's done!

As well as telling the pugilists to cease, the men in general take physical steps to separate the combatants. Those restraining John Black (Nation and Mike) release him immediately, such that he may smooth down his suit. The men holding Banjo (Chickie and Dan) have a hard time of it, since

Banjo wants to continue with the fisticuffs and strains unbelievably in their grasp. Mike joins the others as they grit their teeth in an effort to control the savage-faced Banjo, who does everything in his power to escape his confinement.

Banjo *shouts, purple with rage* You slimy maggot! You murdered Horrie! You killed Horrie Fitzmaurice!

John Black *astounded but calm* I'm sorry ... Banjo, is it? ... Well, I'm sorry Banjo but I've never met your friend Horrie.

Banjo *still shouting, still purple* Ya liar! You lying turd! You doctored his drink and he died from it. The doctor and the bloke from the mortuary said so.

John Black (a picture of innocence) looks about him.

John Black I swear that I've never met this --

Banjo makes a superhuman effort to drag his arms free from his captors. They restrain him with brute strength.

Banjo *still shouting, still purple* Horrie's visited me. His ghost. He told me all about you: all the trouble you're gonna cause here. And that started with you knocking off Horrie.

John Black *perplexed* A ghost story, is it?

Banjo *still shouting, still purple* You aren't a normal bloke. You're a dead bushranger. You never served in the Forces in the War because you had already died in 1801. Here, on these grounds at LaPerouse.

The "1801" will be expressed as "eighteen hundred and one". People didn't pronounce zero as "oh" in those far-off times.

Banjo continues to struggle. His captors drag him farther back, away from the ladies and John Black.

Una *in command* I've had quite enough of this evil, irreligious talk and this scandalous behaviour. Take Mr Gibson back to the shed and stick his head in a butt of water.

With a mighty struggle, the men pull Banjo even further back as he yells.

Banjo *shouting and* You're a ghost, and you're going to mess up our lives, you arse.

insistent

Horrie's already put the hard word out about you, Black!

With that, Banjo is finally dragged out of sight. We hear Banjo shout something like "I'll spike your wagon, Black!"

The remaining spectators try to compose themselves. Una is particularly upset: outraged, shaken and red-faced.

Una *discomposed, to*
John Black

I'm so terribly sorry, Mr Black ... Such intemperate language ...
Vile accusations ... I'll have to let him go. That's all there is for it.

John Black
magnanimous

Oh, no. Please don't do that.

It's a great pity that some chaps – many chaps, as it happens –
came back from the Front quite altered (personality-wise).

I'll have a private word with that gent, shall I? That's certainly the
best course of action. Get this all straightened out.

Una *blushes*

That's so very kind of you. Quite a Christian gesture.

John Black is utterly reassuring and comforting, to both ladies. Again, upon smiling, his teeth glint.
John nods to the ladies.

John Black

You leave it to me, Mrs Shorncliffe ... Mrs Winterbottom ... Miss
Imbriss.

I'll sort him out. When he's calmed down.

END OF SCENE

Scene ii: Marcus Supports Banjo And Verona Plans Nuptials

Worrilee (the home of Ronald Winterbottom's family) speaks of solid, stately worth.

Marcus sits at a robust, masculine desk in an attractive sitting room. Heavy cream lace curtains have been artistically gathered back to allow views of a delightful rose garden. Marcus is ensconced therein with a pile of serious-looking leather-bound volumes.

The door stands open. Verona flies into the room, closing the door behind her.

Marcus Leave it open. Let some fresh air in.

Verona *out of breath* I've had air ... Been to see your Auntie ... My word! You've missed a stoush worthy of Rushcutters Stadium.

Marcus shifts about in his seat to face his stepmother and looks a question.

Verona I'll have some tea sent in, shall I? Una completely lost her composure, with the result that I came away from LaPerouse as dry as a --

Marcus What stoush?

Using her index finger, and a pertinacious look, Verona (as she strips off her gloves) signals to Marcus that she will answer his question shortly. Verona nips back to the door, opens it and calls into the hallway.

Verona *calling out* Gantry! Tea for two in the morning room, please.

Verona once again closes the sitting room door, full of business.

Verona *breathless* I'd commit any number of crimes for a cuppa. Such a donnybrook!

Marcus *impatient* Well?

Verona A new homeless chappie turned up to take the place of Mr Fitzmaurice. Quite a charmer! A real heart-breaker!

Verona sinks into an armchair.

Verona Then, what do you think?

That Barry Gibson bloke charged up, full of anger, and set on the new chum without so much as a "How-do-ye-do?" We were all mortified. It took three strong men to hold Gibson down, so violent was his rage.

Marcus *interested* Banjo? That doesn't sound like Banjo. What was it all about?

Verona The same rubbish that he blurted out in the Coroner's court.

Called the new lodger a murderer. Oh, and a bushranger.

Marcus *concerned* That's bizarre ...

Verona I know.

Una wants to throw Gibson out, and not a moment too soon, in my opinion.

There follows a clear pause. Marcus looks at the wall, deep in thought. Verona relaxes back in her chair, fiddling with her clothing. The only sound is the ticking of the clock, and some bird calls out in the garden.

Suddenly, Verona jumps up: impatient, busy.

Verona *annoyed* Oh, where's the tea-tray got to? I'm due to expire from thirst.

Verona stalks off.

The camera concentrates on Marcus and his pensive face. Into this reverie, Verona soon troops back, bearing the tea-tray.

Verona *chatty* Gantry and the old Cumberland range are wrestling: the current scoreboard stands at Gantry nought, the stove one.

We'll just have to tell Dad that it must be replaced. Now that the electricity service (once so unreliable) is now establishing itself, we might try one of those brand new electric models. What do you think?

Verona places a steaming cup of tea before Marcus. He remains in a brown study. However, Verona wishes to converse with her stepson. She eyes him as she regains her position in the armchair, thankfully sipping her tea.

Verona What's that that you're working on? It looks a bit scary.

Marcus continues to stare unseeing at the wall.

Marcus *in his own world* There are certain qualities inherent in rising to the rank of gunnery sergeant. I'm thinking of singularity of purpose, a strong mind, ability to make quick decisions ... Being a good leader of men ...

Verona is confused. The books do not appear to have anything to do with Army life. She stretches forward, more easily to read the spine of one of the tomes. We see her mouth: "The Principles Of Advanced Engineering" and then sit back, looking puzzled.

Marcus still thinking aloud I wasn't all that chummy with Gibson until I joined the cricket team on my return from Europe. He's a reliable team player. Quite a handy batsman.

And whenever he has assisted me with any of my pro-Aussie improvements over at L. P., he's proved to be a sound and sensible bloke. A man's man, you'd call him: dependable and likeable.

Verona waspish And yet he's one of Una's homeless men: a lodger with few chattels.

Do you know, I got all tongue-tied once, and made a spoonerism. Quite unconsciously. But in front of **everybody**, I gushed on the subject of Una's home for hopeless men. They all chuckled, but to my way of thinking, it's all too true. They aren't living in an old shed that once housed roughabout shearers because of their "strong minds" and "singularity of purpose".

Marcus snaps back to reality.

Marcus They're nowhere near hopeless. They've got several profitable rorts going on in that glorified garden shed of theirs. Auntie must be blind not to have twigged.

Verona sighs Do you know, I **had** wondered ... On one occasion, Mr Chickie ushered me away when I chanced to stroll too close to the outhouses ... I thought that they might have been playing two-up or something ...

Marcus chuckles I rather imagine them to be making barrow loads of money on the side. And jolly good luck to them if they are!

Marcus breathes in loudly and then lays a hand on his pile of books.

Verona *voice-off* I'm going to raise Dad. Get him on the job about that dodgy stove of ours. Loosen that lacquer band he has around his wallet.

We hear Verona leave the room. We hear her (somewhere in the bowels of the house) calling "Ron! Ron!". However, our camera remains focused on the very unhappy Marcus, who returns to his books.

END OF SCENE

Scene iii: Banjo And John Black Come To Terms With Each Other

Una's Pageant "The Royal Line of Succession"

Background: The Nature of the Pageant.

We have already learned (courtesy of Verona) of the mooted pageant.

As already advised, Una plays Queen Boadicea. She has many speeches and takes a central focus in the middle of the stage: with large gold shield, helmet, sword and huge Union Jack.

The other characters (with faces caked in cloying makeup) provide a random selection of the major people from British history. There is Henry VIII (played by John Black), the headless Anne Boleyn (a warning against flouting the sanctity of marriage), a couple of Druids, a Scottish warrior, Captain Cook, some Welsh miners, the Duke of Wellington, a pearly king and Queen Victoria (this is Charlotte's triumph). A few other people have joined the pageant on the strength that they possessed theatrical costumes. Which British celebrities they represent is anybody's guess.

Una's Pageant "The Royal Line of Succession"

Background: A Description of the Church Hall.

Activity: The Arrivals of Both Cast Members and Audience.

The hall adjacent to St Eanswyth's Church of England church in West Sydney is built on a real slope, such that the front of the building is one storey lower than the back. The early church elders decided that the kitchen and storeroom would be best located at the back of the hall, with the stage entry coming from the kitchen (stage right) and the storeroom (stage left).

On the lower level stands the piano; all the seating faces the stage. Thus, the folks entering directly into the hall from the road do not have much of a struggle to climb the few shallow steps up into the hall. There is a paddock available next to the church for parking of motor vehicles and tethering of horses. Those who are required to enter via the kitchen at the back of the hall (and this usually meant females bearing steaming casseroles or large trays of scones) are obliged to negotiate the steep dirt track up the slope. In the wet weather, gentlemen are on hand to assist the women and girls. On this occasion, in the dry warmth of Spring, there is no such difficulty.

Una's Pageant "The Royal Line of Succession"

Action: The Bustle in the Church Hall Kitchen

Whereby Una Swans in to Take Charge.

It is hot in the kitchen. The wood fire stove blazes. On the hotplate sit large ponderous urns, heating water in order to later provide coffee and tea. Any offering brought in by the females which demands heating or warming (for instance, small sausage rolls and savoury custard tarts) is permitted into one of the copious ovens under the direction of Mrs Gwen.

There are many women in aprons bustling about in the tiny kitchen when Una enters same. She is a picture of cool elegance. In her wake totter Verona, Charlotte and Betty (all bearing creamed and jammed sponge cakes). Una wafts into the storeroom, which is now doing service as a behind-the-scenes dressing room. Both in the kitchen and in the storeroom, Una's presence is acknowledged with smiles, cheery greetings and nods from all and sundry, as if she were a local bigwig.

Una's Pageant "The Royal Line of Succession"

| |
|---|
| The Patrons Take Their Seats as the Pageant Begins! |
|---|

Our camera shows the locals arriving in droves. They marvel at the immense amount of props, hangings and decorations festooned about in the hall. And there, next to the piano stand the several trestle tables, readily prepared for the upcoming feast.

And in the most prominent position on the stage, on the wall at stage back stands a large portrait of Their Majesties, King George and Queen Mary. Around this prestigious portrait, tasteful decorations have been added.

Mr Cooney rings a bell which was provided by Una for the purpose. Several latecomers dash into the hall. The large crowd gasps as the lights are lowered. Limelight provides the stage with plenty of lighting. Mr Cooney has a couple of lanterns to hand (just in case). And then Mrs Cooney (wearing a very swish new hat) steps quickly through the hall (the aisle is very wide to accommodate the pageant) and up to the piano. The crowd applauds. Mrs Cooney bows. Then she makes herself comfortable at the piano.

Mrs Cooney's brother (Max Blight, who is dressed as a yeoman of the guard) marches in solemn, stately fashion onto the stage. He holds a large megaphone. The audience erupts into very excited clapping.

*Max into the
megaphone*

Ladies and Gentlemen. Girls and boys. The parish of St Eanswyth, under the auspices of Mrs Una Shorndcliffe and Mr Mervyn Cooney, present "The Royal Line of Succession".

Patrons will note that the four courses of supper will be served at several intervals during the performance. Upon the bell being heard, please quickly resume your seats, even if you are still partaking of supper.

Gentlemen, please remove your hats. And now rise for our national anthem.

Mrs Cooney plays some suggestive chords, as the folk ponderously rise to their feet. And then the hall rings with the opening bars of "God Save The King".

The pageant continues as advised.

We shall come and go from it where indicated.

Banjo now provides a voice-over, in order to progress the action and meld the pageant with the on-going John Black story.

The audience sings "God Save The King", and then the cavalcade of colourful characters swanks through the hall (from the front door, up the aisle and then onto the stage). All this occurs as Banjo speaks.

Banjo *voice-over*

A few years ago, the Missus got given a book on Erasmus.

There was a story about Erasmus breaking-up a Biblical discussion into sections and then serving a course of the dinner to the congregation between these sections.

I think that's how it went ...

The mob jawed its way through ten courses, as I recall.

Anyhow, that appealed to Mrs Una. Her brainchild (the "Royal Line Of Succession" pageant) takes place in snippets around tables groaning with food in the St Eanswyth church hall.

So, as you'd expect, Mrs Una is the star turn. The crowd (I reckon everybody in the district has turned up) will enjoy a huge buffet washed down with scalding hot tea and everyone happy. Lots of colour and loads of entertainment. Couldn't want more.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*The scene flips back to LaPerouse, at night.*

*Banjo has just finished rolling a cigarette. He licks the paper, seals the cigarette, and then strikes a match to light it. He is sitting out in the garden on an old deck chair near the garden shed, with a hanging lantern to illuminate him.*

Banjo *to camera*

I'm not invited.

That is, my existing supper ticket has been revoked. Confined to quarters.

And my acting part has been taken by John Black.

Such is life ...

*Banjo appears not to be too upset by this turn of events. He has come to terms with his position as "least favoured" at LaPerouse.*

*John Black (in suit and tie) strolls up with a folded deck chair in hand and a roll-your-own cigarette pressed between his lips. John unfolds the chair, sets it up and plonks himself down in it.*

John Black *nods to camera*

'Evening.

Banjo *frowns*

I thought you were in the glorious pageant!

John Black

Yairs ... got three parts. I'm on stage now, as it happens, giving a Henry V speech in the guise of Henry VIII.

Banjo *fascinated*

How can you --

John Black

I've split myself into two. You're the only one that knows about it, by the way. One John Black is here having a smoke in the garden. Probably getting eating alive by mozzies. And the other J.B. is wowing them in the church hall, wearing your Tudor codpiece as he lustily summons the warriors at Agincourt. Stirring stuff.

How's that, eh?

*Banjo snaps his fingers, and points menacingly at John Black.*

Banjo *accusing*

Ha! You admit that you're a ghost! Finally!

John Black

'Course.

*The men continue to smoke in silence.*

John Black                      I need your help, old mate.

Banjo *unfriendly*              Forget it. You've got Buckley's.

John Black                      Alright. If you're going to be prickly, then I'll allow you to walk a mile in my shoes. And I'll keep on laying my burden upon your broad shoulders until you get my message.

Banjo *suspicious*              What's that?

John Black                      Here! You missed out on the pageant, but you needn't miss out on the show. I'll spirit you back to 1776, when I was a lad of seven years, in London town.

What happy times they were ...

**John Black's Vision #1**

**John Black is Seven Years Old**

*Banjo morphs into a seven year old. He is now in the meanest slum of late 18<sup>th</sup> century London. Banjo is repeatedly thrashed and bashed by other boys (as gangs of wretched, homeless children sweep through the poorer areas of London), and then he is whipped by an ugly, frightful man. Finally, Banjo is thrown bodily into a pigsty.*

END OF VISION #1

*The small boy (covered in pig shit) plonks down on the grass in front of John Black (still seated lazily in the deck chair). The boy morphs into Banjo as a grown man (but still covered in filth).*

Banjo *horrified and appalled*              Christ Almighty! What was that?

John Black                      That, my friend, was a peep show just for you. The wretched, graceless young life of one of London's lost boys: John Black. Not worth a brass razoo. And that wasn't just a random snippet. It

was like that every single day, from sunrise to twilight.

*John Black leans forward. His face is hard, and his voice is menacing.*

John Black                      Do you want to see more?

Banjo *explodes*                      No! 'Course I don't. Hey! I'm covered in pig shit.

I'm gonna have to clean myself up, thanks to you.

*[Nasty tone]*

Thanks for the floor show.

*Banjo, disgusted and angry, stands and then marches over to a bucket of water nearby. Banjo strips off and begins to wash himself from the bucket.*

~~~~~ **Break Una's Big Speech** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **at the Pageant** ~~~~~

*Una is now the centre of all attention, in her Boadicea costume. She dominates the stage. All about her, the other performers gesture towards her as she delivers the final segment of her grand and heroic speech.*

Una *as Boadicea;*  
*towards the end*  
*becoming heroic and*  
*grand*

The British Celts heard tell of Rome: a mighty city of marble and bronze. Rome attracted and terrified folk, even before she had conquered them. The Roman Emperor seemed to men who had never seen him to be a very god upon Earth.

At first, the conquest of the British Celts was cruel. Roman soldiers were without pity. For those who resisted, was only the sword or slavery. But the very great Queen Boudicca led the Britons as they hacked to pieces a complete Roman legion.

She showed them that the British meant business!

Over time, the Romans who loved Britain, and stayed there alongside the now civilized Celts, built the foundations for the dear

Motherland. It was their love, their passion. And that is why Great Britain is strong and mighty to this day!

Rule Britannia! Rule Britannia! Rule Britannia!

*A rousing burst of applause meets this stirring speech of Una's.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **Still at the Church Hall** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **During a Food Break** ~~~~~

In the background, we can hear and see the audience clustering about the food tables, chatting and laughing.

In the foreground, Phillip holds an entree-sized plate containing some of the buffet treats. Daphne is in a similar situation. The two converge on the notice board in the church hall at the same time.

Daphne (wearing a large silken gypsy shawl) finds as they meet that her shawl has become entangled in screws at the back of a chair. She simply allows the shawl to slip from her shoulders (oblivious) and continues eating, scanning the notice board. Phillip notes this "disrobing" and opens his mouth (when he can) to speak.

Daphne points to a garish notice, depicting smart folk playing a card game under the heading "Learn the Tango Criollo".

Daphne *vaguely speaking to Phillip* Gosh! Does the Vicar realize what the Creole tango is? Does he understand it to be a card game, perhaps?

Phillip I was just wondering the same thing. It's a rather fast South American dance step, isn't it?

Daphne ***Fast?*** I'll say!

It's nothing like the dear old waltz. No straight backs and conformation stance. This tango is another species altogether.

[Whispers thrillingly and secretively]

The gent Brilliantines his way across the floor, caressing the femme fatale with his eyes, and holding her so close to him that –

Do you know that I've seen it danced where the chap held a whip, and he dragged the lady to him by catching her in its coils. Fact! Actual fact!

Phillip *amazed*

Goodness!

[Changing the subject]

May I rescue your shawl, Miss --

Daphne

Oh, yes! Ruddy thing. Every female fashion item possesses a drawback.

I'm the doctor's gypsy daughter. Have you met Dr Maisford? He's my beloved father.

Phillip retrieves the shawl, folding it as he evidences pleased surprise.

Phillip

Well! I know both the old and young doctors. You're Sylvia's sister, then.

[Points to his chest]

Phillip Winterbottome.

Phillip and Daphne put down their respective plates to shake hands.

Daphne

Oh, marvellous! I'm Daphne.

I live in Sydney with a group of girls. Quite good fun: we all get along like a house on fire.

Did you say "Winterbottome"?

[Snaps her fingers in a gesture of recall]

Just a tick ... I may have met your sister, Mr Winterbottome.

Something to do with the Cathedral ... And that **terrible** dog.

Oh, gosh! I'm so sorry ... How rude of me! You probably **adore**

Iggy-Wiggins-Woe-To-Man. I do apologize.

Phillip *laughs*
delightedly

No! No! I've been able to train magnificently for the Brewery Sprint Race by running away from Iggy. He's our very own *enfant terrible*.

Daphne *chuckles*

How droll ...

Did you say that you were Marcus W.B.? Sylvia has told me all about you. What a hoot!

Phillip *smiling*

No – his brother. I'm the architect. Phillip.

Daphne *very pleased*

All the better.

I worship Rococo architecture. You'll have to let me read your books on that subject.

Isn't this pageant a load of trash! They could have done with a genuine historical source.

Sorry about my bluntness, it being your Aunt and all. Not that she's a blood relative, I understand.

Mr Cooney rings the bell.

Daphne

Better resume our seats. Lovely to meet you. Now promise to keep in touch. We might sneak off together and learn the Tango criollo.

[Girlish and devilish]

How naughty of me to suggest that ...

Phillip glows as (smiling) he watches Daphne float back to her seat with her shawl trailing behind her.

oooooooooooooooo **Break: Back at LaPerouse** oooooooooooooooooo

John Black has fetched a rough towel for Banjo. The latter uses this to vigorously rub himself down, with a brief "Ta" to John Black.

Watching Banjo with indifference, John Black continues to smoke.

John Black You reckon that you're hard done by, but compared to most, you're a pampered fat cat.

Banjo *derisive* Hmph ... that's not how I see it.

Banjo wraps the towel around his loins.

John Black Surely.

Why, you whinge and carry on like a pork chop because your Pommie-loving landlady makes you sing the national anthem and salute the Pommie flag every Monday morning. Poor boy! What a cruel hand of fate ***that*** is!

Banjo Are you going to entertain me with one of your "peep shows" whenever I start to kick the traces, are you?

John Black No! There's no pleasure in that. What I want is for you to do me a favour. Quite simple.

Banjo *narrows his eyes* If I don't oblige you, you'll have me chucked into a pig-pen on a regular basis. Yeah?

John Black does not answer. John takes one last puff from the miniscule butt, and then scrunches same under foot.

Banjo I see.

[Pause as Banjo kicks objects about]

What's the favour?

oooooooooooooooooooo **Break Back At The** ooooooooooooooooooooo
oooooooooooooooooooooooo **Church Hall** ooooooooooooooooooooo

We can hear a babble of conversation: laughter, shrieks of delight, the sound of people tucking-into a large buffet.

In a dark, secluded area, out of public gaze, Chickie, Danny and Mike are meeting with Wes and Hugh. The latter two men are in their Police Uniforms. The five men appear to be discussing something quite serious. We cannot make out exactly what is said: just the low hum of their voices speaking sotto voce is heard.

Our camera then floats over to one buffet table, to focus on Phillip and Daphne.

During another food break, Phillip and Daphne have met up, and both the man and the woman pile food onto each other's plate. They laugh and chatter, indicating that they are thoroughly enjoying each other's company.

Daphne Yes, there are many, many duets for viola and piano. Most are transcriptions of course and –

[Begins spooning from a dish onto Phillip's plate]

-- do you like this stuff? I'm sure you do.

Phillip Mmmmm! Yum! I thrive on it.

So, you will collect together all your viola/piano duets, and I'll bring to you a stack of Rococo books. Most of them are in German: you won't mind that, I hope.

Daphne *Itch lees ouch Deutsch.*

Phillip *Underbars!*

~~~~~ **Break Back At LaPerouse** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **Where John Black's Request** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **is met with Hostility** ~~~~~

*Banjo (furious) can be seen returning to the sleeping quarters (wearing the towel around his hips) almost at a run. There is one single lit lantern therein: Banjo takes this to his cupboard in order to find clean clothes. Breathing heavily, Banjo is in an unspeakably filthy mood.*

*John Black strolls into the sleeping quarters. When Banjo spots John Black, he reacts with anger, pointing determinedly at John Black.*

Banjo *angry*                      No! No bloody way will I **ever** do that!

John Black *calmly*              Ghosts are unable to --

Banjo *fiery*                      I don't give a rat's arse what ghosts can or can't do ... **I'm** not taking your place like that. It's completely immoral, wrong and illegal.

*John Black shrugs, as if accepting defeat. John Black looks about and sits on the nearest bed.*

John Black                      Fine. That's fine. I understand. It was just going to be a rather *ne plus ultra* little jest of mine ... Still, if you're reluctant, I quite understand ...

Here's what my life was like as a twelve year-old in 1781.

*Banjo is nearly dressed. He shouts "No!" as he morphs into a filthy 12-year-old lad, clad in squalid tatters.*

## **John Black's Vision #2**

### **John Black is Twelve Years Old**

*The 12-year-old boy is chained to a turnstile with other undernourished, unkempt boys. A huge brawny man viciously beats the boys with a whip. Nearby, a furnace roars. A pulley system takes small square iron buckets rattling across, just above the boys. Another man touches up the boys with a white-hot poker. The boys scream in pain and terror as they try to push the turnstile. One boy passes out and slips to the straw-strewn floor. He is immediately trampled under foot.*

*The young Banjo screams "No!"*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

The young John Black (that is, Banjo at twelve) scrabbles about in the corner of a filthy carriage yard for any food which is discarded or falls from the carriages. He is crouching outside the kitchen of a busy inn. If he comes out of his shelter at an inopportune time, he is duly kicked out of the way. With haunted eyes, Banjo stuffs the crusts of bread into his mouth.

| |
|------------------|
| END OF VISION #2 |
|------------------|

END OF SCENE

Scene iv: The Dinner Party To Celebrate Una's Theatrical Triumph

As Banjo speaks in voice-over, the camera is in the dining room. Six gentlemen and four ladies (all dressed in their best formal attire) sit around the large, well-presented dining table. This is a very convivial gathering: merriment with decorum.

The attendees at the dinner are: Una, Verona and Ronald, Charlotte, Phillip and Marcus, Mr and Mrs Cooney, Mr Blight and John Black.

Dressed as a butler, Nation oversees the clearing of the dinner dishes, as Betty (in her best bib and tucker) assists Nation. We are able to hear desultory conversation in the background as Banjo speaks.

Banjo *voice-over* I'm too weary to discuss the shit-house situation we now find ourselves in.

My Mum would have corrected my poor grammar. "In which we now find ourselves", I should have said. And I'd better make a deposit in the poor box for the swear words.

We hear a halfpenny dropping into a coin box.

Banjo *voice-over* Well, you know what? Structuring phrases and clauses in accordance with His Majesty's English language won't make things go any better.

Banjo pauses. Nation (in stately manner) troops off to fetch the wine. The dinner guests (surfeited on scrumptious food) loll about.

Banjo *voice-over*

Raw ... That's what I feel: raw.

The Missus is being fêted by her rellies and friends. Her recent triumph at the church hall must be congratulated.

[Nasty tone]

And look! There's John Black eating with the folks: amusing, witty ... a true bon vivant.

And she doesn't have a fucking clue what a complete arsehole that mongrel is!

Many coins are heard to drop into the coin box.

Banjo *voice-over,*
musling tone

Better empty the pockets out for that one. (I'll be owing money to it next.)

Nation returns, filling the glasses. Quite squiffy, as Nation finishes prior to stepping back out of the way, Mr Blight drags himself unsteadily to his feet for the toast to Una. As Blight waffles on (this is not quite audible for us), Nation speaks to camera, still holding what is left in the bottle. The others are unaware that Nation does this.

Nation *sour, to camera*

This is the quiet before the storm. I feel it in my waters.

Captain Marcus is in a dark mood, for all his company manners.

Mr Phillip is more than unusually jovial (always a bad sign), and the Missus is clearly infatuated with Black.

I don't want to sound like a spoilsport, but this current state of play stinks like a pannikin full of stale yabbies, to my way of thinking.

The toast has come to the sticking-point. All rise (apart from Una) and glasses are held aloft. "To Una" we hear from all at the table (other than Una, of course).

The diners sit down again and Una rises elegantly in order to respond.

Una *in the limelight* Max, that was lovely. Thank you for your kind words.

But without Mr Black's wonderful acting, and without Mrs Cooney's superb mastery of the piano-forte, and without Charlotte's divine interpretation of Her Majesty Queen Victoria – why, without all of your hard work, my cavalcade would have been in vain.

This speech is met with applause and raised glasses.

Una And my special thanks must go to all those –

[Fading into background]

The camera pans over to Verona, who will now speak to camera (the others being oblivious to this).

Verona *coy, to camera* Can't say a word in front of my sister, but my choice was "The Importance Of Being Earnest". Such a nice story and plenty of laughs. I had envisaged Una playing Lady Bracknell.

However, she had heard some very off things about him ... about the playwright, I mean. Yes, and the Irish connection displeased her ...

Verona makes her mouth prim as she returns her attention to Una.

Una has finished her speech. She sits, to warm applause, especially from Verona. Everybody shifts about, and conversation begins once more.

Phillip *to Verona* I managed to steal away and learn the tango à la Maisford.

Verona is as pleased as punch at what she supposes indicates that her match-making skills have not been at fault.

Verona *thrilled* Ah! Were you suitably amorous? I believe that the tango is known as "the dance of love".

Phillip *nods* I had "It", Mum, and can now whistle a passable rendition of "L'Amour Triste".

Phillip comically raises and lowers his eyebrows several times. Verona leans very close to her stepson.

Verona *whispers* Not too "*triste*", though, I hope.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Phillip and Marcus are standing aside from the table, both enjoying a snifter of brandy. Phillip raises his glass towards his brother.*

Phillip *friendly*                      I looks at you.

*Marcus responds and the glasses clink together.*

Marcus *smiling a little*        I catches your eye.

*The brothers drink, savouring the burnished aroma of the top-grade brandy.*

Phillip                                By the by, that lovely lady doctor was asking me today if your offer to help her secure some type of motorized vehicle was still open.

*Marcus watches the other members of the party. He is picking his words in his mind.*

Marcus *carefully*                Why don't **you** help her. You two seem to be getting along like nippers in a cake shop.

Phillip *grinning*                She's an absolute corker and any man would crawl over broken glass if it would effect a decent outcome. But I know less about motors than the butcher probably does.

Marcus                                Tommy rot! You're always chauffeuring Mum and Auntie around. Just look out for something you'd buy for yourself that she can well afford.

Phillip *inveigling*                You could come along to give advice.

Marcus *dour*                        No possible hope! I don't want to be the unwanted third party.

*Phillip glances at his brother, a thoughtful expression on his face. It appears that a peculiar and interesting thought has arrested Phillip. He looks about at the fellow diners, who are moving about.*

Phillip *evenly*                      Rightio. She'll be disappointed, but I'll take on the mantle of treasured elder brother. I'm sure to find a chariot of some kind or

another ...

*Marcus nods to his brother, slapping him affectionately on the upper arm, and seems to be about to leave the room (still holding his brandy balloon).*

Phillip                      Before you buzz off, do you happen to know if she has a sister?

Marcus *puzzled*              I'm sorry ... Who?

Phillip                      The young doctor.

Marcus *surprised at the question*      Oh ... A sister? Er ... yes, I did hear of a sister. Name of a flower ... Daphne, I think her name is. Some sort of musician. Violin? No, viola. Gypsy tea room. Sounds like a Bohemian type to me. Not my type at all.

*Marcus shrugs, smiles slightly, and then walks off.*

*The camera focuses on Phillip, who wears the most contented, happy smile.*

Phillip *to himself*              Splendid!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT III



## ACT IV Things Now REALLY Go Wrong At LaPerouse

### Scene i: John Black And "The Doings"

*In the garden shed, Torrens (humming merrily to himself) is going through the toys which the men have fabricated in wood in aid of the poor children (as per Charlotte's strictures). Mike drags himself into the shed and evidences no surprise at seeing Torrens there.*

Torrens *excited*                      Can I have this?

*Torrens holds up a very nice-looking aeroplane, complete with propellers.*

Mike *flatly*                          No. It's for the poor kiddies.

Torrens *disappointed*           Bugger!

*Mike reaches over for the swear jar and hands it wordlessly towards Torrens, who grins widely.*

*Torrens dives into his pockets, pulling out a variety of weird and wonderful impedimenta. Then the boy deposits a penny into the jar, prior to putting back the junk into his pockets.*

Torrens *revived*                    Hey! You know what? I could be your tester ... You know, to make sure that the toys are safe and reliable for the poor kiddies. I could be the splinter-tester.

Mike *indifferent*                 Righto. But just don't break them.

Torrens *pleased*                   Bewdy! Oh, and I brought you the paper from yesterday. They've all finished with it. Mrs Gwen wants it back when you've read it, but. And any other old papers you've got. She's lining cupboards

and shelves.

*Mike grunts. Torrens tears about, holding up the toy plane, and making suitably annoying noises.*

*Mike winces.*

*Torrens has dropped yesterday's newspaper (obviously well-thumbed and well-read) onto a bench.*

*Our camera focuses on it, moving around it at all angles. The headline reads: "Minister For Trade Speaks Out".*

*Mike's hand appears as he picks up the paper. As he reads (with open mouth), we hear a very posh ABC announcer enunciate the words as Mike reads them.*

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disembodied posh<br>male voice | Mr Eric Mullion (who holds the government portfolio for Trade and Customs) has delivered a stinging rebuke to the parties responsible for issuing to the Press a photograph purporting to depict the Minister attending a secret meeting of disaffected party men last Wednesday. |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*Mike, wide-eyed, mouths part of the article.*

|                                    |                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Mike reading,<br/>perplexed</i> | ... disaffected party men ... |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disembodied posh<br>male voice | Mr Mullion has spoken to the Press outside his Woollara home, stating that it would have been impossible for him to have been present at this or any other meeting on that particular day as he was selling his prize-winning ram Marinolo Greystakes III at the Cunninook sheep sales at that time. |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                    |                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Mike reading, makes a<br/>joke with himself</i> | A ram ... Selling a ram ... |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

|                                |                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disembodied posh<br>male voice | Reading from a prepared statement, Mr Mullion asserted that this could be verified by any number of men who were present at the sale. |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

"This is felonious trickery, pure and simple. Clearly, the photograph appearing in yesterday's newspapers was artistically

enhanced by an expert in the field," he said.

"I am confident that the Prime Minister and his staff will ferret-out those people responsible for this heinous slight on my reputation as a faithful party supporter, who will be loyal to the PM until Hell freezes over."

*Very affected by the story, Mike lays down the newspaper where he found it.*

Mike *to himself* ... until Hell freezes over ... Cripes!

*Just as Danny strolls in (yawning and dishevelled), Mike calls loudly to him. Torrens can be heard acting-out a little game (requiring some disembodied officer to give orders in a loud voice).*

Danny *annoyed* Jeez! Don't shout at a man! Just woken up. Can someone put a sock in that boy's mouth?

Mike Oh, there you are! Hey! Read this, will ya?

*Danny scans the banner on the newspaper. He pushes it away.*

Danny *scathing* Aw, that's yesterday's rag.

*Mike is insistent. He stabs his finger at the offending article.*

Mike *forceful* For Christ's sake, read it! It's all about your fancywork. But at least they called you "an expert".

*Danny, frowning, quickly reads the newspaper article. He blanches, clearly horrified.*

Danny *perplexed* But ... I didn't dolly-up any photograph of Eric Mullion.  
Here –

*Danny quickly strides to his work area to grab the evidence. He breathes fast owing to his feeling of distress.*

Danny *very anxious* -- here's my instructions from Charlie Deane. And here's the original negative. Charlie said I was to insert Len Muir in the background. And that's what I done: Len Muir, a party hack. Not the flaming Minister for Trade and Customs.

*The two men stare at each other in confusion. Banjo strolls in, similarly sleepy and utterly dishevelled.*

Banjo G'day chaps. What's going on?

Mike *to Banjo* Where did you nick off to last night?

Banjo *blushing* Had some business to attend to.

Mike *persists* I come over to bot some baccy of you and you'd cleared off.

*Banjo does not wish to talk about his nocturnal wanderings. He simply shrugs.*

Danny *to Banjo* That photo I done for Charlie ... Well, something's gone screwy. It looks like I've done it wrong, but I'm sure I did it right.

*Danny hands over some doctored negatives for Banjo's perusal. Banjo holds them to the light, and nods absently.*

Banjo *musling* Yes, that's Len Muir's nob, alright. You'd never know (once you've touched it up with the paintbrush) that he was never there.

*Mike points to the newspaper.*

Mike That was the negative Dan finally used to make the print. Charlie come and collected the finished article. I seen him. But according to the scribes, Dan got mixed up. It doesn't make no sense.

*Banjo reads the article, makes a face and then looks about him.*

Banjo Let's have a look at the photograph as it appeared in the paper. We want the one from the day before yest'day.

*The three men scramble about (moving and flinging items as they find them), and then Danny triumphantly yells "Got it!"*

*The three men gather around, obviously becoming more perplexed as they stare at page three of the newspaper.*

Mike *horrified* Jeez ...

Banjo *confounded* That's your style alright ... But I don't understand ...

Danny *white-faced* That's not what I done. I swear I got it right. You saw the --

Banjo *alert, to Mike* What about **your** official papers? Did they get off alright to your

contact?

Mike *proudly* Yairs. No worries.

Banjo Chickie's painting?

*The trio now races over to Chickie's work area, just as Chickie himself walks in, scratching and yawning.*

*Banjo, Mike and Danny relax, laughing with relief, as Banjo hauls off the hessian cover from the Rembrandt copy. The picture is unsullied.*

Chickie *worried* What are youse doing?

Danny My photo was mucked up. We were worried about your masterpiece.

Chickie That's my copy, not the original.

Mike It's pretty good.

*[Squinting]*

"The ... Abduction ... Of ... Europe".

Chickie *pleased* "Europa".

Yeah. Thanks. Sergeant Wes and his tack-on are dropping by this morning for that. And the original, of course.

Banjo *looking about* Which would be ... ?

Mike *points* It's here, mate.

*The authentic Rembrandt has been trussed-up securely in hessian and many ropes.*

Chickie *proudly* I tied it up meself a couple of days ago. No-one can have got through all my clever knot-work.

*Banjo stares at the well-bound flat package. After a couple of seconds, he shakes his head determinedly.*

Banjo *firm* Nup. This is no amateur job. We're up against an expert.

Undo those ropes and let's have a squiz at the masterpiece, just to

be sure.

*Torrens comes flying past with a small toy wagon in tow. He stops, interested in the goings-on.*

Chickie *argumentative*     How can anyone untie them knots, Banjo? No, it'll be alright. It'll be sweet.

Banjo *frowning, firmer*     Untie it! I want to give it the once-over.

Chickie *frustrated*         Look! I'm telling you! There's no possible way --

Banjo *in his best sergeant's voice*         Cut the ropes and let me see for myself that the Rembrandt is unharmed.

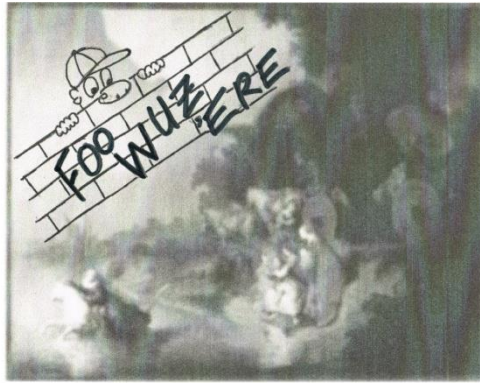
*Torrens (unafraid by the authoritative tone) reaches into his back pocket and abstracts a pocket knife. He flicks this open quickly, holding it out to the men.*

*Mike, Danny and Chickie have not heard that voice before and they jump, looking alarmed. The noise of the "flick" (as Torrens opens the knife) also causes them to jump. Banjo (face of thunder) nods to Mike, who borrows Torrens's knife and quickly drops to his knees to cut through the thick ropes with it. Chickie walks a few paces towards the back of the shed, muttering unpleasantly. Torrens takes back his knife and stows it.*

*Danny and Mike pull back the hessian coverings and then the newspaper. Danny, Mike and Banjo stand back, horrified. Torrens emits a loud crack of laughter.*

Torrens *shouting, delighted*         "Foo wuz 'ere" ... That's bonza!

*The original painting of "The Abduction Of Europa" has been sabotaged. The sky has been expanded at the expense of the tree-line, and the usual graffiti (courtesy of the ubiquitous Foo) has been daubed over the sky area in Indian ink.*



*Frightened, Chickie creeps forward, craning his neck. When he sees the damage, he screams.*

*Banjo thinks hard while the other three men bleat and blather. Torrens, now bored, races off again, playing with the toys.*

*Banjo through gritted teeth*      John Black! It's gotta be him.

*Chickie confused*      Eh?

*Banjo frowning heavily*      John Black ... He's stuffed up your artwork, he's messed-up  
Danny's photo ... I gotta sleep with --

*Banjo breaks off in acute embarrassment.*

*Danny*      Sleep with what?

*Banjo extemporizing*      Er ... With the dog ...

*Just as the men wonder aloud "What dog?" the sound of a police car arriving is heard. Car doors slamming can also be heard.*

*Chickie faint*      Oh, no! Here's Sergeant Morley and Hercules.

*Evidently, Torrens has assailed the two policemen outside (pretending to shoot at them with a toy gun), but they are not in the mood to sport with him. Wes is heard to warn Torrens off dismissively.*

*Wes voice-off*      Not now, son. You go off and play like a good boy.

*From just outside, we hear Wes: loud and aggressive as he verbally lays into Mike.*

Wes *voice-off* Hey, Thomlinson! I've got a bone to pick with you.

*Mike blenches. He looks around at the others.*

Mike *in dread* Shit! Not my beautiful copy-plate ... ?

*Wes erupts as he enters the shed, with Hugh close at heel.*

Wes *loud and angry* Your beautiful copy-plate!

*[Mocking]*

And it looked a treat, didn't it? So much so that it was received with great relief and thanks by the MP ...

Until (that is) he flicked through it and found all those erotic Greek drawings that you put in amongst the words. Half of your fancy writing turns out to be scrawled over with pictures of naked men being disgusting with even nuder women! Bloody filth! What'd you think you're doing, you bastard!

*Mike is bereft. He is utterly white with horror. Banjo ignores Wes and all the other men, and heads in a purposeful fashion straight for the other shed. He mounts the steps quickly, and marches directly to John Black's bed, where the occupant seems to be enjoying a comfortable sleep.*

Banjo *dour* Rise and shine, mate. The Law's here.

*John Black rolls onto his back, stretching artistically. He then scratches his chest in a kind of naughty triumph.*

John Black *very thickly* Good morning, Banjo. And how goes it with you?

*Banjo does not answer, preferring to look savage. The others troop in, all talking at once about what has gone wrong and how hateful is their situation. John Black rises up onto one elbow.*

John Black *very calmly* Gents, gents ... I hope you're not laying all this kerfuffle at my door ... Because if so ...

*John Black casts an insouciant look in Banjo's direction. Banjo's face hardens even more.*

Banjo *menacing* No, mate. This all stops now.

*John Black grins. He looks at Wes.*

John Black                      Did you realize, Sergeant Morley, that in 1788 I was all of 19 years  
*conversational*                of age?

**John Black's Vision #3**

**John Black is 19 Years Old**

*This third vision affects all the men: Wes, Hugh, Banjo, Chickie, Danny and Mike. It will take the form of a series of scenes (moving quickly along and non-speaking) depicting: degradation, filth, cruelty, despair, longing, immorality and hopelessness.*

- In the very grim environs of the last 18<sup>th</sup> century legal establishment of London, the men as named (all filthy, unkempt and dressed in tatters) are dragged in leg-chains before the judge. All the legal men are grim-faced and appear to despise the prisoners. The judge sits at a much higher level than the convicts and summarily finds them guilty.
- The men shuffle off. They are housed in horrible conditions in one of the many rat-infested hulks on the River Thames.
- The men are loaded into the barred hold of a rickety sailing ship.
- The voyage to Australia is perilous and vile. The men fight each other for what little food is chucked at them. They are subjected to repeated whipping and other degrading, cruel acts.
- The men are unloaded with the cattle and other goods at the old wharf at The Rocks in Sydney. Flies annoy them, the heat is intolerable and the bustle on the wharf is bewildering.

END OF VISION #3

*The men return to 1920 lying about on the floor of the old shearing shed. John Black has disappeared. Hugh rises from the floor, sitting up with tears streaming down his young face. The other men (apart from Wes) get to their feet with many moans and groans.*

END OF SCENE

**Scene ii:** The Young Doctor's Motorcar

*Phillip is driving an old model car (even for 1920) through the streets of Sydney with Sylvia as his front-seat passenger and Torrens in the back seat. The traffic is mostly of the horse-drawn variety: there are very few automobiles about. Phillip pulls over to the side of the road, leaving the car running.*

Phillip                      This is what I think. The first car that we tested was a lot faster than this one, but seemed very fiddly to drive. And I recently read in letters to the newspaper editor that several people are disappointed and frustrated by the difficulty of obtaining spare parts for that line of motor car. Unlike the humble horse, the horseless motor eats up parts instead of oats. One needs bottomless pockets, I fear.

Sylvia *at sea*              Gosh! That's a low point.

Torrens *eager*              I **really** liked the other motor.

Phillip                      **But**, on the other side of the coin, **this** specimen is (was!) a very popular one and spare parts are easily come by. And not only that, but it's a doddle to drive. So I'm for this one.

What do you think?

Sylvia                      Sounds like a very sound plan. And I can afford this model, too.

Torrens *inveigling*        You can afford the first auto just as well. Can we take the first motor out for another spin? Will you let me have a drive while we're at it?

*Phillip and Sylvia exchange glances.*

Phillip                      Torrens, do you have your wristwatch with you?

Torrens                      Of course.

Phillip                      Good! There are some boys playing a game of rugby over there in that park. I can see them through the trees. Rush over and join them, will you? Stretch your legs. I'll collect you again in one hour.

And you may drive part of the way home.

*Torrens leaps out of the car and hares off, shouting "Bewdy!" in his wake.*

*Both Phillip and Sylvia smile and sigh.*

*Phillip looks ahead, the engine still running.*

Phillip                      I think that we're agreed.

Done! We'll return to the showroom and plonk your money on the counter. Good work!

I hope that you don't mind my promising my half-brother a small drive in your new Vauxhall motor. He's a very competent driver.

*[Pause]*

Sylvia, are you at all interested in myself as a life partner?

*The suddenness of the attack floors Sylvia. She is unable to speak.*

Phillip                      I'm not actually proposing to you, you understand: just trying to gauge the lie of the land. So to speak.

*Sylvia really tries to speak, but cannot utter anything other than random sounds.*

Phillip                      Because my feelings are that you and I are destined to be friends: **only** friends. I'm not awfully certain that I'd make a pattern-card husband for a busy doctor. Bit squeamish.

*Sylvia still cannot speak. But there is a sense that she is relieved. Phillip reaches over to pat her hand.*

Phillip *kindly*              Hope that I've let you down gently. Not used to making flowery speeches. Architects express their thoughts in balustrades and gargoyles.

Look! I think that you're a marvellous girl, and so on, but I've realized that my natural bent is for musical types. Perhaps a gypsy girl ... My dream would be to wed a lovely girl (just like you) who is involved in playing ... Oh, I don't know ... A stringed instrument in a gypsy orchestra, perhaps?

*Sylvia's eyes narrow. She senses that there is a hidden agenda here.*

Sylvia I've never received a serious proposal before. Or was it serious?

*Phillip puts the car into gear and pulls out into the road, when clear of all the horse-drawn vehicles.*

Phillip *evenly* Utterly heartfelt. I'm riven.

Sylvia *chuckles* And architect or not, you've just as much "gift of the gab" as your sister has.

Phillip You're too kind.  
  
Now, be prepared for a dust-up back at the auto shop. They may have issues with trading with a female. I may have to step forward and purchase the motor for you. Sorry, but old-fashioned prejudice ...

Sylvia But that's archaic!

Phillip And once the folding-stuff has been passed over (whatever shifts we must resort to), we'll collect Torrens and adjourn to an atmospheric Sydney teashop for a refresher. My shout.

*Sylvia suppresses a laugh. Her eyes sparkle with merriment.*

Sylvia *blithely* You might care for the Gypsy Teashop, then. And there you may meet my sister, Daphne. She plays viola in the string quartet which performs there. If it's your shout, that is ...

Phillip *feigning surprise and delight* A viola player ... How serendipitous!

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Phillip parks the car at the place where Torrens was dropped off and steps out onto the footpath.

Phillip looks about, checks his watch and then emits a shrill, piercing whistle. He waves and then returns to the car.

Torrens sprints up, leaping easily into the back seat. He is very dirty and dishevelled, and completely out of breath. Sylvia (never having had brothers) is appalled.

Torrens *breathless* That was fun. I was by far the best player. One silly cow went home crying to his mother after I tackled him too hard. Sissy-woo.

[Wise guy]

 So, you went for this model after all.

 Vauxhall. Bad move, I'd say.

Before Sylvia is able to answer, Phillip forestalls her.

Phillip Listen, old man. We're off to a swanky tearoom for early lunch or late morning tea (whichever comes first). And you may plonk tomato sauce on whatever you wish, Mum not being here to mind. Would you like that?

Torrens *very happy* Grouse!

END OF SCENE

Scene iii: Banjo Fesses Up

Out in the bush, Marcus strides along, carrying a well-maintained axe. Judging by his face, Marcus is browned-off.

Marcus stops in a clearing where a medium-sized tree has fallen. He is seen to mentally judge the size of the log. Then he mentally readies himself and steps up onto the log. Marcus calls out, as if to a gang of competing axemen.

Marcus Axemen! Face your logs! One – two – three!

Marcus swings the axe in a very rhythmic, practised style. He cuts a "V" formation on one side of the log, moving his left hand up and down the smooth shaft of the axe handle as he swings it. Then Marcus swings his body around to cut a "V" in the other side of the log. He is nearly through when

Sylvia rides up on her bicycle. Standing aside her bicycle, Sylvia watches the final few strokes, which complete the chop. Marcus jumps off the log, looks at Sylvia, and then nods to her.

Marcus No motorcar yet?

Sylvia Yes! A Vauxhall, I think it's called. But I am not able to drive it yet.
So still on the treadly.

Marcus nods. He wipes the sweat off his brow.

Sylvia Your brother is to teach me.

Marcus does not respond. He turns away, ostensibly to clean his axe with a rag he has in his pocket. Sylvia chews her lip.

Sylvia offering more information I should say your half-brother. Torrens has kindly offered.

Marcus *unimpressed* Well, you'll know how to drive too fast, that's certain.

Marcus turns. He studies her.

Marcus What's different about you?

Sylvia My hair. I usually wind the plait around my head, but today it's just flopping behind like a horse's tail.

Marcus frowns. He moves such that he can look behind Sylvia. Unthinkingly, he reaches out to touch her plait, and then draws back, self-conscious.

Marcus *red-faced* Sorry ... I shouldn't have ...

Sylvia *smiling* That's alright. No harm done.

Marcus *sheepish* It's very long, your hair.

Sylvia Yes, when it's out, I can sit on it.

Marcus *smiling* I'd like to see that.

Without embarrassment or false modesty, Sylvia pulls the rubber band from her plait and puts it for safekeeping around her wrist, shakes out her hair, and then sits on the log. She looks unbelievably beautiful. Marcus stares at her, open-mouthed.

Sylvia Now is as good a time as any. I need to speak to you, Marcus.

Marcus *interested* Yes?

Banjo appears from the scrub, breathless and discomfited. He carries a canvas-covered travel bottle.

Marcus sighs, chucks away the axe and the rag, and sits beside Sylvia on the log.

Marcus *deflated* G'day, Banjo. How goes it?

Banjo No good. That's why I came to find you. I heard you chopping wood.

Banjo looks from one to the other. Marcus shuffles away from Sylvia and pats the log.

Marcus That's what I do when I need to think. Park your carcass. Join the party: a good time is being had by all.

Banjo does so. He nods to Sylvia.

Sylvia Shall I leave you gents alone? Do you need to be private?

Banjo *quickly* No! No! Doctor. No ...

Banjo has run out of steam (as far as the conversation goes).

Banjo I have some sweet tea in this covered bottle. Not very hot but ...

Marcus puts out his hand, and Banjo passes him the bottle of tea. Marcus takes a long swig (not wiping the mouth of the bottle). Banjo likewise drinks a long swig (not wiping). Sylvia shakes her head.

Banjo This John Black thing is getting so weighty that I'm in danger of being crushed to death. Wes Morley (the policeman) ... Well, he's been carted off to hospital in an ambulance. They think it's his heart.

Sylvia starts.

Banjo It's alright, Doctor. Your father happened to be at Worrilee at the time of the ... after the ... um ... after the incident. So they fetched him over. He worked on Wes until the ambulance arrived. They don't know if ...

Look! I'm messing around ... I need to talk to you so that you can ... To **both** of you.

Sylvia *confused*

What's this about, Banjo?

Marcus

Is my Aunt Una giving you a hard time, is she?

Banjo

It's about Mrs Una ... But not what you think.

Marcus *equably*

Spill your guts, then.

Banjo

You'll have to listen to the whole story. Please.

Sylvia

Alright, then. Fire away. I'll listen without interruption.

Banjo takes a big breath.

Banjo

That rubbish I twiddled at the Coroner's thingumabob was quite true. I had no intention of saying it out loud, but it was fair dinkum either way.

Horrie's ghost came and told me (plain as day) that he'd been knocked off by John Black's ghost. That's where all the problems lie, apparently.

You see, it's this way. Horrie is floating about in Purgatory until his murderer rests. That's Black. But Black can't be still until **his** murderer is found (or named, actually).

That's where I'm stuck. John Black is going to continue to cause all manner of mayhem until we find out who took his life in 1801. Well, at least Horrie whittled down the list to five (not that he knew who they were).

Sylvia

And you want **us** to help you to find the bushranger's killer: one of these five suspects?

Banjo *eager*

Yes. And the quicker the better.

Marcus

Well, that means research in the library and the personal collections of --

Marcus enjoys a "Eureka!" moment.

Marcus *alert, keen* Hang on! Torrens wrote a project piece about a local bushranger not long ago for his school. I wouldn't mind betting that it was all about Black. That would save us heaps of time if Torrens has already performed the ground work.

Marcus stands seeming to be about to head off to interview his young half-brother.

Banjo Just a tick! You haven't heard the worst, about Mrs Una.

Marcus *curious* My aunt? What's her rôle in this?

Banjo tries to speak but is unable to. He sinks his head into his hands, shaken with despair.

Banjo *head bowed* I think I've committed a capital crime there ...

Marcus and Sylvia look at each other, somewhat shocked. They both make sounds like "What?"

Banjo It's like this. Black has ingratiated himself so much that the Missus is very taken with him. He promised her all sorts of ...

He said that he'd come to her bedroom at night, even. And she's so starry-eyed with him that she was looking forward to it.

Marcus *portentous* Oh, my God ...

Banjo *reading Marcus's thoughts* No, it's worse than that. **Much** worse!

Banjo looks from Sylvia to Marcus and back. Sylvia seems to prompt him.

Banjo See ... He ... Black ...

[Gulps]

He can't ... He can't ... Oh, God! ... Um ...

Sylvia *impatient* What can't he do, Banjo?

Banjo *rushes* He can't prepare himself physically for an encounter with a woman.

Very lamely, Banjo uses his fist and forearm to indicate an erection. Marcus and Sylvia blink, then glance at each other.

Sylvia *to Banjo* He's impotent ... Is that what you mean?

Banjo *gloomy* That'd be it. It's one of those things that no-one told you about ghosts. All that guff about Medieval nuns being raped by ghosts is just so much rocking-horse poop. Or so Black tells it.

There is a silence. Neither Sylvia nor Marcus can think of anything to respond to that revelation.

Taking heart from what he hopes is their support, Banjo ploughs on with his confidences.

Banjo So he told me that I had to do it in his place.

There is a gasp of shocked surprise from Banjo's audience.

Marcus frowns. Sylvia opens her eyes wide. Banjo not only wants to make a clean breast of it: he also wants their wise counsel.

Banjo *rattling on* I said that that was out of the question: that Missus hated my guts.

He reckoned that I'd be disguised as him: that she'd never know the difference.

But I said that that was rape and that I didn't want any part of it. I mean, tricking a woman into thinking you're someone else and then having a naughty with her is considered to be "rape", isn't it? That's what I thought, anyhow ...

Marcus and Sylvia remain silent.

Banjo *sullen* Well ... It's just wrong ...

[Shivers]

But I got punished in a big way for saying "No".

[Becoming animated, desperate for his audience to support him]

He sent me back to his childhood in England. Let me tell youse: whatever you've heard of how those poor bastards lived ...

I was there for about ten minutes (that's what it seemed like), but it was horrific!

So I did what he told me to do.

I mean, he had my cock on the block. Pardon me, Doctor Sylvia.

Marcus appears dazed. Sylvia is unbelieving and shocked.

Sylvia *appalled* You had sexual relations with Mrs Shorncliffe in her bed?

Banjo nods, bereft.

Banjo *whispers* Last night.

Marcus laughs. Sylvia remains shocked.

Marcus *grinning* Oh, come on! She must have noticed the difference. You look and sound nothing like Black.

Banjo *lamely* It was dark.

Marcus *puzzled* She actually believed you to be John Black?

Banjo *nods eagerly* Yairs ... I thought that she'd recognize me: I didn't think that Black (ghost or not) could pull it off (the switch, I mean).

I spoke to her. I asked her if she was sure. Black's magic worked and to all intents and purposes, she thought that I was him.

[Shudders]

She was like a ripe plum falling without effort into my outstretched hands ...

Sylvia has put her hand over her mouth, her eyes bulging. Marcus tries to hide a smirk.

Banjo *pleading to Sylvia* You know me, Doctor: I'm just an ordinary bloke. You put me into bed with a lady who's wearing a soft, silky nightie and nothing else ... I tried not to ... not to do anything ... I really did! But she smelt so nice ...

Marcus *chuckles* So I take it that you were able to do the deed, old mate?

Sylvia *aghast* Marcus! This isn't "wink-wink, nudge-nudge" at the local pub!

Banjo And not just last night. I'm going to have to go back and do it

again and again and again ...

God! She **hates** me ... Loves John ... If it wasn't for his "condition", **he'd** be making love to her, not me.

Sylvia *nasty, sarcastic* How utterly hateful for you, Banjo!

Marcus takes Banjo's side.

Marcus Be fair! He was forced into it.

Perhaps the Ministry for the Army might bring in a new performance standard for the men. They could be given the onerous task of romancing a hardened woman with a view to --

Sylvia *angry* Stop it! That's enough!

A lady of virtue (a widow) has been violated in what can only be described as a --

Banjo *earnest* I'm telling you that I **was** forced. Yes! Absolutely!

[Like a man deeply in love]

But it was wonderful. Wonderful! I was in Heaven!

Sylvia makes a disapproving "Hmph!" noise.

Marcus *still chuckling* So why come to us? Did you want to vaunt your prowess? Not very gallant of you, old son.

Banjo *loudly* I want you to give me advice, that's what.

I fair dinkum don't know what to do.

It's wrong. Doctor! Captain! It's so totally wrong.

I mean, apart from everything else, how will she react when she finds out that the despised Barry Gibson was rooting her instead of her lover boy? (Pardon me, Doctor).

Sylvia *wisely* The answer to your dilemma is quite simple, Barry. Move out of LaPouse.

Banjo is too shaken to continue with the conversation. He hangs his head low. Marcus makes a decision, slapping Banjo on the knee in a friendly manner.

Marcus *bracingly*

Alright!

I'll put by my Engineering tomes and pick up the topic at hand: to wit, discover the killer of one John Black, highwayman in eighteen hundred and one. I'll start with my brother's project (as I said) and we'll go from there.

And of course I'll warn my Aunt that she must send John Black about his business, and quick smart!

Marcus stands abruptly.

Marcus *decisive*

No time like the present ... Good-day to you both!

With a nod to Sylvia (Banjo still has his head bowed) Marcus collects his axe and strides off into the bush. He whistles in a jaunty fashion.

Sylvia pats Banjo kindly on the shoulder. Banjo does not move.

Sylvia

I'd better head back to the surgery. Give Father a hand. He might well be tired by now ...

Banjo is unresponsive. Sylvia re-plaits her hair, ties it again with the rubber band and then retrieves her bicycle. As she readies herself to pedal off, she says goodbye to Banjo (who again is unresponsive).

Sylvia *gently*

I can't give you any more advice, Banjo. This is an entirely unknown area for me ... With ghosts and what have you ...

She waits for the response that does not come.

Sylvia

You must do whatever seems right ... Goodbye Banjo.

Sylvia cycles off, leaving Banjo exactly as before: head bowed in utter dejection.

MORPH DIRECTLY INTO NEXT SCENE

Scene iv: John Black Recalls His Early Days In New South Wales

We are still in the bush, as was the case at the end of the previous scene.

Banjo raises his head, sniffing the air. The well-dressed John Black stands before him, smoking a cigar with aplomb. Banjo looks John Black up and down: there is no fear nor apprehension in Banjo's demeanour. Banjo reveals to the audience that his relationship with John Black has evolved to a higher level, and that John Black can no longer harm him through the memories.

Banjo *nasty* You've progressed to chokers now? Are you moving up in the world, Mate?

John Black *charming, urbane* Real Cuban cigar. I have obtained a smart-looking wooden case filled with top-class Cuban cigars. Perhaps my Una might welcome such a commodious box for the storing of her worsted hose and so forth. (When I'm finished with it).

Of course, I should be partaking of a snifter of brandy along with my estimable gasper to really savour its aroma.

With easy grace, John Black lowers himself onto the log, alongside Banjo.

Banjo Captain Winterbottome and his brother are on the verge of discovering the name of your killer. That'll no doubt make you happy.

John Black *musings* Ah! My killer ... He (or she, for that matter!) who left my dying carcase a-lying in the virgin bush for the dingoes to tear apart and for the birds to peck? Mmmm ... ?

Banjo *surprised* She?

John Black *casual* Or even a lowly ploughman (carving out the virgin bush in order to extend an already glorious garden) might have disturbed my last mortal remains ...

Banjo *persistent* But you said "She" – You think that a **woman** might have murdered you?

John Black *shrugs* Who knows? Could have been anybody ...

Banjo *quickly* There were five suspects. The Captain will name them. And then we'll all --

John Black *sing song and full of sarcasm* You'll all put on your thinking caps and name my murderer. One steps forward and four step back.

Bonza!

Banjo *frustrated* That'll give you what you're after surely: eternal rest. Your tortured soul at peace. *Requiescat in pace*. And then the sad ghosts of poor Horrie and Wes can rest, too.

John Black *smirking* And you will no longer have to suffer the indignity of rooting the Missus.

Banjo gives a self-conscious laugh.

Banjo Oh, no! I'm not gonna stop. I'll keep that little rort going for as long as I possibly can.

Suddenly, Banjo stands and faces John Black squarely.

Banjo You're little demon joke on Mrs Shorncliffe and me has gone horribly wrong, you clot. Without ever wanting to, I've fallen in love with the lady, which can't have been how you wanted it to turn out.

You thought I'd be revolted (didn't you?) ...

No, mate. Not even close ...

So, as far as I can see, your mischief-making is over. One or other of us (the Captain or me) will come to you and name your killer. And that'll be the end of it. You'll join the angels in Heaven. Peace, tranquillity and eternal bliss will be yours.

John Black eyes Banjo as the former lazily smokes his cigar. John Black's eyes are filled with venom.

Banjo remains unmoved: he is no longer afraid of the bushranger's ghost.

Banjo Look, Black! I'm as sorry as I can be for the terrible life you led in the late 18th century. I really am sorry. But none of it can have anything to do with me. None of my folks could possibly be your killer.

I was born in northern England and only left Pommiland when I was a nipper. I don't remember much about old England, but I definitely came from there. My parents – in fact none of my family can have had anything remotely to do with your death. I'm sorry about how you died, but I'm not on your list of suspects. Fair enough?

John Black remains silent, looking at the bush and smoking.

Banjo Now I'm going back to the shack. And I don't want you "showing" me any more grisly remembrances from any time in your past.

[With grave finality]

Like I said: that's over.

Banjo marches off out of sight, leaving John Black alone on the log.

John Black *whispers* Not half as sorry as I been, Gibson ...

The camera closes-in on John Black's face (as he is filled with bitter memories).

Interlude: John Black's Review Of Those Who Wanted Him Dead

*Now follows a medley of memories which involve John Black and the five suspects in his murder. [The list is expanded in the **Dramatis Personae**.]*

| |
|--|
| Joseph Cardwell (grandfather of Horace Fitzmaurice). |
|--|

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| | 29 years of age in 1801. |
|--|--------------------------|

A gang of five convicts shambles into view on the shores of Sydney Harbour (which is still a wilderness). The men are kept together by virtue of a heavy chain attached to their left legs. They wear filthy jersey uniforms. Joseph Cardwell is adjacent to John Black, and whispers to John Black as the men shuffle along under the watchful eye of a mounted trooper.

Joseph *urgent whisper* I'll do anyfink I can to 'elp ya, Blackie. You know vat. Just get vat letter off to Miss Fanny Feldon of York Park. Vat's a fancy 'ouse in --

A whip cracks very near to the chained convicts, causing the men to flinch and cower.

Trooper *voice-off* Shake it up! Shake it up! We don't intend to be still here at Christmas ... Get a move on, you filthy scum!

The convicts jog.

John Black *quiet* Give me the letter and I'll do what I can.

Joseph It ain't writ yet ... I dunno 'ow ... I only been a poor shepherd, like, and --

John Black What do you want the letter to say?

Joseph Just the usual ... Vat I love 'er and want 'er to come out 'ere to New South Wales at 'er earliest pleasure ... and so on and so on ... You know the --

Again, the whip cracks very close to the men, with accompanying shouts for the men to pay attention and not gawp about.

There is a long, long shot of what was Sydney Harbour with the chain-gang toiling to build a stone wall.

| | |
|--|--|
| | Samuel Morley (great grandfather of Wes Morley). |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| | 25 years of age in 1801. |
|--|--------------------------|

The scene is a blacksmith's forge. Samuel (the smith) is banging away at the iron leg-tether attached to John Black's left leg. He stops to confront John Black (their heads very close together as he does so).

Samuel *aggressive* You'd better get the three silver bits to me by Friday.

John Black *dismissive* Aye! You'll have them long 'ere that.

Samuel *threatening* 'Cause I don't do nothin' for free.

John Black *fired-up* Alright, Mate! Don't lose your knickers! I'll get the silver to you.
There's no earthly reason why I won't or can't do that.

Samuel *threatening* I'd better do. Last man as cheated me out of me rightful earnings
is decorating the prow of a nice little fishing smack out there on
the Harbour. Shark bait ...

Samuel resumes his work. John Black can be seen to grimace with pain, as well as feel the urgency of the situation. Both men talk quickly and at the same time.

- Without the leg irons off, I can't move freely about; and without being able to move, I can't get hold of the brass to pay ya.
- I never make warnings lightly, Black. Be warned.
- It's the deadly embrace of the Lord: one's not free to be free.
- Never mind flash words – just bring me the three silver pieces that ya owe me.
- I'll do it! I told ya – I'll do it.

James Honeybean (great great grandfather of Rev. Tristram Gambon).

32 years of age in 1801.

The lately-slaughtered trooper who had overseen John Black's chain gang is lying in the bush, with a multitude of flies buzzing about the corpse. We see rough male hands frisk the body for valuables: and as these are found (for instance, wallet, cache of papers), they are chucked to a second man

(James Honeybeam) standing close by. James wears a suit and hat and has the appearance of a man of business.

John Black is now a bushranger: free from the leg irons, he has escaped from the penal colony and is making do as best he can in the bush. We see him now in his habitual bushranger outfit. He stands.

John Black There! Is that all that you require from this poultice?

James *nods* Aye. Many thanks.

John Black I'll have his nag. And his piece. They ought to keep me going for a while.

John Black holds the firearm in his hand, turning it over and over as he thoroughly inspects the piece. Then he pushes the muzzle of the firearm into his belt.

James *nasty* And don't you fret, Johnnie: I won't lose one wink of sleep over this arsewipe.

James kicks at the trooper's body. John Black spits on the carcase in disgust.

John Black *urgent* Me neither.

And you'll get that letter to dear old England?

James *sneers* Much good will it do you.

John Black grabs the lapels of James's suit.

John Black *forceful* That's my only way out of this raw deal. And if I profit by it, trust me to share it out with you.

James is not a man to be roughed-up. He grabs at John Black's wrists, snarling angrily.

James *very aggressive* ***Trust you?!***

Why, do you think me as big a poltroon as this flogger of men who now lies dead at our feet?

Unhand me, Black – Or face the consequences.

In vicious anger, John Black unhands James, steps back and hoicks the ancient pistol out of his trouser belt and cocks it as he points the weapon at James (who stands completely unafraid).

James *whispers* Go ahead ... Pull it ... Pull the trig ... And you'll add another victim to your growing list. **He** could not and would not aid you; but I can and will.

John Black is outsmarted. He stands as before, breathing heavily.

James You might be able to swindle the English authorities with your tale of grand relations, but --

John Black *fires up* It's true! I am the son of an English Lord who --

James Can you have **any** conception of the many times I've heard such pathetic tales of woe? Can you?

James laughs in a nasty, unfriendly way.

John Black You conceited pettifogger ... I murdered this cow, and by it we both profit. Get my particulars to the authorities in England and we'll both profit again, so help me.

James *shrugs* Sure.

Sure.

If you need to contact me, find the alehouse of the Wiggins woman ... Ada Wiggins, her name might be ... Something like that ... and leave your marker with Mine Host. Just pen a brief notelet ... "Be in touch JB" ... I'll know.

John Black Good work!

James I'll be seeing you around the traps, then.

[Points to the trooper's pistol]

And mind you keep that piece dry ... Don't piss on it in your sleep.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo **Break** ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

In pouring rain, deep in the bush, John Black (desperately hungry) tries to shoot at a wallaby. The pistol seizes and is consequently chucked away.

Fanny Feldon (great great grandmother of Charlotte Imbriss).

19 years of age in 1801.

[We shall hear more of Fanny's story later in Act V]

The scene takes place on a dirt road of what was later to become the CBD of the city of Sydney. With her small carry-case, Fanny is trying to step up into a ramshackle trap, driven by one of the Shorncliffe lads (a young man with the look of belonging to a middle-class family).

John Black is attempting to persuade Fanny Feldon to desist in her determination to leave him in order to take up a position as a serving wench with the Shorncliffe family. As John Black touches Fanny, she angrily shrugs him off. Throughout, she attempts valiantly to take her place in the trap.

John Black *pleading* Fanny! My love! You must not take this drastic step. You will be lost to me if --

Fanny *furious* Leave me be, you dastard! Let me be! I am nothing to you, nor you are nothing to me. I came to this God-forsaken dump to wed Mr Cardwell, not you.

Leave go of me, you brute!

John Black physically restrains Fanny, who screams and shrieks. As John Black attempts to argue with Fanny, the Shorncliffe lad stands in the trap, in order to slash at John Black with a heavy whip. The fracas causes a small crowd to gather, and also causes the Shorncliffe pony (harnessed to the trap) to become fractious. John Black manages to take hold of the whip, and in so doing, tries to pull the young driver out of the trap. Fanny uses her heavy case to strike John Black in the ribs with all her might. This causes John Black to fall back in pain. The Shorncliffe lad manages to get in one last slash with the whip, which lands squarely across John Black's cheek, causing a large bleeding gash.

Fanny *screaming* Drive! Drive! Get me away from that heathen devil!

With that, the breathless, enraged young Shorncliffe scion taps the whip lightly on the pony's back. The pony-drawn trap and its two occupants disappear from John Black's view in a pall of white dust, as he watches in real despair. The little crowd look askance at John Black as they scatter from his presence.

Gerald "Cutlass" Grimes (great grandfather of Mrs Gwen Nation).

37 years of age in 1801.

The scene opens at night in a tiny dark and dingy room, where several knockabout men (including John Black) huddle before a fire burning in a fireplace, in an attempt to warm themselves. They pass a jug of grog about, each taking a slug and smacking their lips. A heavy footfall is heard, and the men huddle even closer.

Man #1 *desperate* Will this be McKillop?
whisper

Man #2 *confident* Aye! It had better be. My stomach can hold out no longer.

The door of the room swings open loudly. We hear a couple of the huddling men whisper "Cutlass" or "Grimes".

"Cutlass" Grimes scans the faces of the men with obvious vicious intent. This causes the men to cower. And the cowering draws more threatening body language from "Cutlass". When he speaks, "Cutlass" has a voice which is a combination of roaring lion with deep grating growl.

"Cutlass" Does thee have one J. Black cringing in your *con-vo-ca-tion*, then:
his knees a-shaking as would a lamb's tongue jelly? His eyes a-
bulgin' out of their very sockets?

The men murmur a deep denial.

Man #2 There's no cove called "Black" in this room. I can vouch for that.

There is a rumble of agreement and several nods from the men.

"Cutlass" Because (if there should be such a cove in this vicinity), he'll deep

regret that his *a-bom-in-ation* of a mother ever groaned in the pain of giving him birth.

Man #2 *forceful* And I told you there's not.

We can just make out John Black's eyes flashing as he cowers among the men.

"Cutlass" If you do see that same bloke, would you tell him, please, **for me** that I'll be collectin' the vast debt which he has *ac-cum-u-lated* at my expense at the gamin' table. To wit: 15 silver pieces. I'd be 'bliged if you'd warn the fella that I don't like coves owin' me such a formidable sum. Don't like it one bit. And my hand is fairly **itchin'** to show that cove just how I earned my *sou-bri-quet* of "Cutlass".

With a violent slam of the door, the men are left cringing in the tiny, fire-lit room.

Man #3 I do feel sorry (so I do!) for that gent called John Black. Common name, it is, but I hear that he's not a common man. He won't last much longer, I do fear.

There is a mumble of agreement from the men, except for John Black.

🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪 **Break Returning to 1920** 🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪🔪

Back in 1920, John Black, smoking another cigar in an agitated way, has returned to LaPerouse, to the garden. He sees Charlotte tottering about, humming to herself as she looks lovingly at the bushes and flowers. A slow, mean smile touches John Black's lips. He scrunches the cigar under foot, and adjusts his collar, tie and suit jacket. He pats at his hair with his hands.

Then the ghost of the bushranger approaches Charlotte. She appears pleased and grateful for his company.

John Black *charming* Dear Miss Imbriss ... Or may I not call you by your name?
"Charlotte" must be my very favourite name for a lovely lady. That or "Fanny". Will you please give me leave to call you "Charlotte"?

Charlotte *blushing* Yes, of course, Mr Black. Such kind words!

John Black I've been smoking a cigar. I do hope that the scent of my sins does not pollute the air too much for you?

Charlotte *haltingly* Oh, Mr Black! So thoughtful ... I am very fond of the smell of cigars, as it happens. Gentlemen must be permitted to ... Such a civilized habit for those of the masculine persuasion.

John Black *smiles* Quite right.

John Black takes Charlotte's hand and links it to his arm. They stroll along together in a leisurely fashion.

John Black *pretending contemplation* Miss Imbriss. I happen to know (through my historical investigations, you understand) that your Mother was a dear lady named Helen.

Charlotte *pink with pleasure* Oh, yes! Yes! Mummy was Helen Shorncliffe before her marriage to my dear Father. That's where my relationship to Una and Verona arises: through my lovely Mother.

John Black *gently, sweetly* And Helen's great grandmother was a beauty named Fanny Feldon. Would you believe that? "Fanny" being one of my favourite names for ladies?

Charlotte *pleased* But how interesting!

John Black *ultra-alluring* I should love for you to have met your great great grandmother. I wonder if it could be possible to--

There is a loud interruption. Chickie rushes up, calling loudly and urgently.

Chickie *calling, breathless* Miss Imbriss! Ah, there you are! You're wanted up at the house, Miss Imbriss. There's a bit of a to-do.

Charlotte *surprised and worried* Oh, Mr Simons – is there anything wrong?

Chickie Yes, there is, Miss. Our Police Sergeant Wes Morley has passed

away in hospital. His heart, it was.

Charlotte is horrified by this news. John Black raises his eyebrow: he feigns surprise but is in fact very displeased at Chickie's eruption into the tête-à-tête. Chickie glances at John Black but speaks only to Charlotte.

Chickie The Missus wondered if you wouldn't mind being a comfort for the widow. Everyone's in shock ... Perhaps ... ?

Charlotte recovers her equilibrium. She excuses herself in broken sentences to John Black and then scurries off with Chickie.

John Black watches the pair depart, frowning.

END OF SCENE

Scene v: Mrs Gwen Summons Her Other Half

On the following morning, in the library, Betty is on her hands and knees, rooting around in a large, low cupboard.

We hear Mrs Gwen calling for Betty.

Betty *from the cupboard* I'm in here, Mrs Gwen!

Mrs Gwen stomps into the library, looking harassed.

Mrs Gwen I've been calling you for five minutes. What are you doing there?

Betty abstracts herself from the cupboard, sitting back on her heels with relief.

Betty *somewhat breathless* Whew! That's better. Oh, I'm looking to see if anything might have been shook, Mrs Gwen. I saw a red-hot thief at work last night.

Mrs Gwen is thunder-struck. She plonks herself down in the nearest chair.

Mrs Gwen *appalled*

What's that?

Betty

Well, you know how I have so much trouble down below with my waterworks? Well, I visited the dunny a few times during last night. On the first visit, I saw someone walking across from the big shed to the house. And I thought it was Mr Black and I got all thrilled about that.

Mrs Gwen *confused*

Why is Mr Black exciting to you? You're not having impure thoughts or that, are you?

[Becomes more assertive]

Don't get no ideas about that one, girl. He's aiming for higher than a housemaid.

Betty

It's alright, because it turned out not to be Mr Black at all, but Banjo Gibson. I saw him coming **back** from the house on my second visit.

Mrs Gwen *aghast*

But --

Betty

I know! He's not allowed within a stone's throw of the house, so what was he doing here? He wasn't after any of us women because you and I and the Missus would know about that. And so he's either a sneak thief or he's snooping for something.

Mrs Gwen *appalled*

Love a duck! I'd better get Albert onto it.

Betty *darkly warning*

Don't forget ...

[Pulls out a flintlock pistol bound in an old cloth]

Mr Nation stows this old ancient pistol in the back of this cupboard, and what if that Gibson cur was coming to get it and --

Mrs Gwen *scoffs*

Oh! Put that back, Betty. That old thing don't work no more. Besides, it's **my** pistol, not Albert's. Belonged to one of my none-too-savoury rellies. So let's set the record straight.

Besides, Gibson would know soon as he saw it that it don't work.

Betty *persistent*

Still and all ... Gibson was lurking about in the house ...

Mrs Gwen *sighs*

Alright, I'll call for my Nation and he can sort it out.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Nation has been run to ground in the rose garden, wielding an antiquated sprayer. Hands on hips, he is now quizzing Betty, while Mrs Gwen stands beside her, nodding seriously in agreement with whatever Betty says.*

Nation

And when was this?

Betty

Well, I saw him going to the house not long after ten o'clock. And then later, I saw him returning to the shed. That would have been about a quarter past eleven.

Nation

And you're absolutely certain that it was Gibson?

Betty

On the way back, he was really happy. He was walking so that you could tell he was very happy.

Oh, and he was breath-whistling so that no-one could hear him. He's the only man I know who does that.

*Nation considers his best course of action.*

Nation *worried*

He's a strong coot. I wouldn't want to take him on.

*[Pause]*

This is what I'll do. I'll go down to the outhouse at about ten o'clock tonight and look out for Gibson. And then, after I've seen him myself, when I'm sure that it's definitely him who's invading the sanctity of the house, I'll tell the Missus and she can get rid of him.

Mrs Gwen *nods*

And not a moment too soon!

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

We see the nocturnal visit as described (which is visible by starlight and moonlight): Nation hides near the outhouse and Banjo strides up the grass from the old shearers' shed to the house. Then, Nation cautiously follows Banjo. He is in the house when he catches sight of Banjo mounting the steps of the great staircase two at a time. Nation does not hear nor see Banjo lightly tapping at the bedroom door. But he does see Banjo slipping into the bedroom via the solid door.

Nation looks utterly shocked. He leans back against the wall (hand on heart) with wide eyes.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Nation stomps through the garden in the moonlight, around the back of the large house to the backyard quarters he shares with Mrs Gwen. He speaks grimly to camera.*

Nation *laconic, to camera*

That's that, then!

I'll have to be the bearer of these bad tidings to the Missus. I'll get young Master Marcus to help me throw the blighter out into the street. Better than what he deserves. Ought to give him a kick up the bum to go on with ... Wish I had the strength ...

*[Shakes head: very bitter and put-out]*

And on a Sunday, too!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT IV



## **ACT V Things Cannot Get Much Worse At LaProuse**

### **Scene i:** The Ghosts Of Wes Morley And Horrie Fitzmaurice Visit Banjo

*As in ACT II, Scene i, Banjo sleeps in his cot on the verandah, under a mosquito net.*

*Banjo lies on his back, smoking, having an ashtray resting on his stomach and one hand hooked under his head. He looks beatifically pleased.*

Banjo *voice-over*                Yeah, I know what you're all thinking: that I'm the ultimate scumbag and I oughta be flogged. Or squashed like a flea on a dog's belly.

*Banjo sighs long and low, a weary smile on his face.*

Banjo *voice-over*                I should've done what the young lady Doctor advised. I shoulda packed me bags and shot through. But that doesn't mean old Johnnie Black wouldn't still come after me anyway ...

No ... There's only one thing to do. And whoever would have thought that that uptight, starched matron could've turned out to be so soft and sweet with breasts that --

*Banjo starts. The ghosts of Wes and Horrie are watching him. Wes stands arms akimbo; Horrie smokes. In his fright, Banjo has upset the ashtray. He now scrambles out of bed to set things to rights.*

Wes *admonishing* I cannot **believe** that you've been rooting your landlady.

Horrie *disgusted* And that you have the front to blame Black for it.

*Banjo scurries about, removing the stray ash and butts from his bed.*

Banjo *flustered* Aw! You know what he's like. He forced my hand.

Horrie *jeering* Your "hand", was it? I thought it was your dick.

Wes *further admonishing* And on the Lord's day and all! You'll burn in Hell, you will.

*Banjo arcs-up at the unfairness of it all.*

Banjo *explosive* Turn it up!

And anyway: I'm C. of E. We don't "do" Hell.

*Horrie sadly shakes his head.*

Horrie I'm afraid that it's all fire and brimstone for you, old mate. Hell-fire and Eternal Damnation and --

Wes *authoritative* Come on, Gibson. Turn yerself in. You'll get a fair trial.

*Banjo drags his hand through his hair. He is lost: he is unable to recover his poise.*

Horrie *very sadly* Beelzebub's thumbprint is on your forehead.

*Banjo ignores Horrie. He has regained somewhat of his wits.*

Banjo *to Wes* Are you dead, too?

Wes *somewhat proudly* As dead as a cold maggot.

Banjo *grim* Ah! Black's work again!

*Wes blusters in defence of John Black. Horrie sadly chimes-in.*

Horrie Sergeant Wes suffered what is called in the trade a "coronary episode".

Banjo *aggressive* Caused by?

Wes *argumentative* The medical fraternity couldn't come to a unified decision. I was

overweight and under great stress in my job. And there was a history of heart problems in my family. So I could've done the big dirt-dive at any tick of the clock.

Banjo *very soft,  
suggestive voice*

And we'd all just had the fright of our lives back in old England, being whipped at the cart's tailgate. Followed by the most wretched journey in a foul, rat-infested sailing ship that any men ever suffered. What fine specimens! Hardened convicts, we were ... Newly-arrived in the Colony of Sydney Town ...

*Realization washes over Wes. He trembles, his lips moving soundlessly. Banjo comes right up close to Wes, nose to nose.*

Wes *whispers*

No ... We were ... We were

Banjo *whispers,  
malevolent*

And who else but John Black could have **possibly** brought us to those shifts?

*Banjo makes an impatient sound as he paces about in utter frustration.*

Banjo *thoroughly  
cheesed-off*

Jeez! Why are you sticking-up for that bastard?

Where's your good lady wife? And your three nippers?

They're all bawling their eyes out (aren't they?) because they've lost their Daddy, their breadwinner.

How long is a deceased police sergeant's pay-out gonna last with your family? A month? Two months?

What'll they do then, Wes?

That elder lad of yours: Tommy, is he? They'll take him out of his school and put him to work in a coal mine, or down at the docks, carting wheat bags.

*Wes's lips tremble: he begins to sob. Gustily, Wes lowers himself onto Banjo's cot.*

Banjo *utterly nasty*

John Black did that to your family, Wes.

*[Turning to Horrie]*

John Black killed you, Horrie: absolutely on purpose. Without an ounce of regret. For no apparent reason, too.

*Horrie slumps onto Banjo's bed (beside Wes) and sobs. Banjo watches the two ghosts with a very nasty snarl on his face.*

Banjo                      Tell you what we're gonna do, boys. Captain Marcus is gonna look up the possible murderers of John Black, bushranger. Meanwhile, I want youse two to go back to Purgatory and do some very slick investigative work. See what you can dig up. Ask any angels you happen to bump into.

Let's get some elbow-grease into this conundrum!

END OF SCENE

## **Scene ii:** The First Proposal: Winterbottom and Maisford

*Here we are reminded of the vintage ad for Tabu perfume. ["Things don't happen the way they used to. But they still happen."] Except that here, the stringed instrument is played by the female and the pianist is the male.*

*It is Sunday evening.*

*In her Sydney flat (which she shares with several other girls), Daphne has organized that she will play her viola to a piano accompaniment provided by Phillip. They seem to be rattling along with their music, when all of a sudden, Phillip stops playing and stands. Daphne (surprised) also ceases to play. And then, without any word of warning, Phillip takes Daphne in his arms to kiss her hungrily and thoroughly.*



END OF SCENE

### Scene iii: The Calm Before The Storm

It is Monday morning.

*Nation raises the Union Jack up the main flagpole as Chickie raises the Australian flag up Marcus's flagpole.*

*Una, Verona, Ronald, Phillip, John Black and Charlotte gather about the main flagpole. Una smiles girlishly at John and is oblivious to all else. Nation and Mrs Gwen hover nearby.*

*Marcus and the four remaining paying guests gather near to Marcus's flagpole. At the last second, Torrens leaps athletically over a hedge. He runs at full pelt to where Danny and Mike are standing side-by-side. He pushes between them in the manner of a boyish jest.*

*As the voices rise in their rendition of "God Save The King", all eyes are on Una. Torrens tries to outdo John in singing with gusto. Una can do aught else but look adoringly at John.*

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|                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|
| Ronald announces that his son has an announcement. |
|----------------------------------------------------|

*As the last strains of the Anthem are heard, Ronald clears his throat.*

Ronald                      Would you all be so good as to stay here for a little minute,  
please? I have something to tell you.

That is, my son has something to tell you.

*Torrens starts in fright.*

Torrens *alarmed*              What? Me?

Ronald *jovial*                  No, no. I mean your brother, Phillip.

*Apart from Ronald and Phillip everybody is gob-smacked. It is so unlike Phillip to have any news to communicate that they are all taken aback.*

Phillip *brave*                  Thank you, Father. Well, you must all wish me joy!

*Beaming with pleasure, Phillip looks about at the assembled crowd. His gaze stops with Marcus.*

Phillip                      I've popped the question last night. I was pretty sure of the  
answer. We'd already discussed it, in a manner of speaking.  
  
But ... Down on bended knee. Offered the lady a simple solitaire  
diamond set in gold. Made it official.

*[Gives a nervous laugh]*

And ... I was duly accepted. So there you are! I'm to become a  
married man.

*There follows a burst of applause, congratulations and questions are fired from all sides as the assembled company converge on the smiling bridegroom-to-be. We hear "Who's the lady?" and "But who is she?" as the folk mill around. Phillip wishes to speak to Marcus but is waylaid. Marcus, with face drained of colour, turns on his heel and marches off.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Our camera keeps in step with Marcus as he strides quickly towards the stables at Worrilee. He is both angry and distressed: to his way of thinking, his whole world has crashed down about him.

Marcus strides manfully into the stable, strips off his jacket and tie, and rolls up his shirt sleeves. His horse (Wink) seems to sense the mood: tossing its head about and snorting.

END OF SCENE

Scene iv: The Second Proposal: Winterbottome and Maisford

Marcus has ridden to the home of Doctor Somerton Maisford. Once there, outside the front gate, he seems uncertain of his next action. However, Sylvia has seen Marcus, and leaves the house to trot down the shallow steps and approach him. Sylvia is very bright even though she is just about to leave for the surgery.

Sylvia *sunny* Have you heard the news, then? Isn't it marvellous! I couldn't be happier.

[To the horse]

Hello, Wink. Are you behaving yourself?

Sylvia opens the front gate. She strokes the horse's head, smiling and cooing engagingly.

Marcus sets his lips tight. He dismounts, holding the reins. It takes him a couple of seconds to master his emotions.

Marcus *tight-voiced* Please accept my warmest congratulations and best wishes.

[With bitter emphasis]

Up until this morning, my life was dragging itself to a new low; but this latest hiccup has plummeted me even further downhill.

Sylvia looks very puzzled.

Sylvia *carefully* Alright ... I'll pass on your best wishes to Daphne. If you would be so good as to give my congratulations to Phillip, I'd be --

Marcus seems suddenly arrested. His eyes blaze. He unconsciously grabs Sylvia's arm.

Marcus *anxious* Who the Hell is Daphne?

Sylvia *laughs* My sister, of course. You met her at Mrs Shorncliffe's pageant. She's your brother's fiancée.

Marcus is dazed. He stumbles over his words.

Marcus *amazed and awkward* But then ... How did ... Who ... What ...

Sylvia tries to escape from Marcus's grip. She cannot.

Sylvia *smiling* Did you honestly think that it was all about **me**? How awfully funny!

No ... They met (Daph and Phillip) at the pageant and both fell hopelessly in love whilst reading an invitation to learn to dance the Tango. Needless to say, they'll be performing that exotic dance during their wedding festivities. (Or so Daphne claims).

[Her voice becomes gentle]

Marcus, will you let me return to the house so that I may fetch my black bag? I'm just heading off to the surgery.

[Encouraging]

You and Wink could walk with me, if you like.

Marcus (stricken and shaken to the core) merely nods, unclasping his grip from the girl's arm. Sylvia moves rapidly inside the house.

Marcus looks about him, shaking his head as if he has made a complete fool of himself.

Shortly, Sylvia rushes back with her black bag, somewhat breathless.

The pair walk along together, with Marcus leading his horse.

Marcus *confessing* I can't tell you how gutted I've been, thinking that you and Phillip were lovers. It's been tearing my heart out of my ribcage.

Sylvia If it's any consolation, I wasn't one bit in love with your brother. He much prefers bohemian viola players, apparently.

Marcus Yes, of course.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*They are now outside the doctor's surgery. Marcus has regained his composure.*

*Sylvia extends her hand such that she is able to shake Marcus's hand. He keeps hold of her hand.*

Marcus I'm holding onto my horse, so it's a bit of a struggle to get down on bended knee to ask you to marry me. And I don't have a sparkling diamond ring at the ready to offer to you.

But ... Here goes nothing! Will you marry me, Sylvia? Say "Yes" and make me the happiest of men.

Sylvia *impish* Brothers marrying sisters? It seems to be all the rage in your family.

Marcus *laughing self-consciously* Oh ... I hadn't thought of that.

So, is that a "Yes"?

Sylvia *supremely happy* Absolutely!

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Inside the Doctor's waiting room, two elderly ladies and a middle-aged gentleman hover at the window. They can see (as our camera also can see) a very noble horse which is partially shielding a young man and woman who are locked in a very passionate embrace.

Elderly Lady #1 Whose horse is that?

Elderly Lady #2 I wouldn't have a clue. But that's the young Doctor's head: I recognize the plait wound around and around.

Man Oh, isn't that the Captain's gelding Wink? And that looks like his head (what I can see of it).

Elderly Lady #2
chuckling Well, we can expect an announcement in that direction quite soon, I suppose ...

END OF SCENE

Scene v: The Storm Gathers Momentum With A Third Proposal

Phillip wanders about in the front garden of Worrilee. He is on the look-out for the return of his brother.

Our camera picks up Marcus trotting up the road. On seeing Phillip, Marcus smiles and raises a hand in a half salute. Marcus dismounts, and both men shake hands amidst happy laughter. Then Marcus grabs Phillip in a crushing hug.

Marcus *overjoyed* Congratulations, Pip! And now you may return the favour.

Phillip cocks an eyebrow.

Phillip Ah! Are the Winterbottome brothers to marry the Maisford sisters, then?

Marcus nods and smirks as he eyes his brother.

Marcus *quizzical* You had me going! I thought it was Sylvia whom you were chasing.

Phillip roars with laughter.

Phillip *very amused* I had to think of something drastic to shake you out of your

apparent misogynistic frame of mind.

Marcus Well, it worked anyway.

Phillip Come inside and tell Mum and Dad.

Marcus *decidedly* No, you tell them. I have some very important business to take care of with Aunt Una.

Marcus gives Phillip a friendly pat on the upper arm and remounts his gelding. Phillip watches Marcus canter off up the road. Phillip looks extremely thoughtful.

~~~~~ **Break: Marcus Invades** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **the Morning Room** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **at LaPerouse** ~~~~~

*Una is taking late morning tea as she reads the latest newspaper. Marcus strides into the morning room, uninvited.*

Marcus Good morning again, Auntie Una. I have to have an urgent chat with you.

*Marcus gives his surprised aunt a quick kiss on the cheek.*

Marcus May I help myself to a coffee and some of this hearty fruitcake?

*Marcus does so before his aunt is able to respond. He takes a large slab of cake, causing his aunt to blink in surprise.*

Una Why, yes. Of course. Whatever is so urgent that you have to --

Marcus *firmly* I want you to cut all ties with John Black, Auntie. He's a very bad man. He's bringing trouble – more than trouble – to LaPerouse and its inmates. Do you know, I don't think he's even a "man" at all. He's some sort of malevolent spirit: a demon sent from Hell to ruin our lives.

*Una gapes, eyes wide open at her nephew.*

*As she attempts to expostulate, Nation enters the room in his butler guise and bows.*

Nation                      Pardon me, Madame, but I thought you were alone. Good morning, Captain Winterbottom.

*Marcus nods, but continues to caution his aunt.*

Marcus                      I mean it, utterly and absolutely. Send him packing with all speed.

*[Turns to Nation]*

Well?

Nation *thin-lipped*        I shall need to have a private word with you as soon as possible, Madame. It's quite urgent.

Marcus *taking command*        Well, now's as good a time as any. Shoot.

Nation *discomfited*        I meant, Sir, to speak with Mrs Shorncliffe alone. It's rather private, I'm afraid.

Marcus *roundly*            There's too much at stake now to hold "private enclaves". If matters affect my aunt, then by logical extension they include me, too (or will do in due course).

Una *affronted*              Goodness Marcus! You can't ride roughshod over everyone. Your wartime Army commission has long been ended.

Marcus *ignores his aunt*                      Nation, you have the floor. We are all attention.

Nation *in the spotlight*    I was alerted to the fact that one of the lodgers has been making nocturnal visits to the house for what seems to be nefarious objectives. I wanted to verify the facts (to be fair and just), so I hid in the bushes last night and watched the man. I followed him to the house. He ... He came to your bedroom, Madame and --

Marcus *indifferent*        Oh, yes. I know all about that. That's Banjo Gibson.

Nation *shocked that*        Why, yes. It **was** Gibson. Barry Gibson was the very cove.

*Marcus already knows*

*Una gasps, before Marcus is able to answer Nation.*

*Una appalled*                    Are you intimating that that rascal Gibson came to my room? I think that you're both very much mistaken.

*Nation upright*                Madame, I believe that Gibson has presumed upon you. No doubt he's used trickery and malfeasance to ingratiate himself into --

*Marcus frustrated*            Don't blame Barry Gibson. He's the stooge of Black. It's Black who's running all these shenanigans. He plays just about everybody on a string.

*Nation makes to expostulate, but Marcus forestalls him.*

*Marcus to Nation*            Am I honestly the only person here (other than Gibson) who can see that from the second when Horrie Fitzmaurice died, there's been a constant procession of weird situations affecting the inmates of LaPerouse?

*Una to Nation*                Never mind that, Nation: just let me understand why you took it upon yourself to spy on my visitors? I'm very displeased.

*Nation on his dignity*        I'm truly sorry, Madame, and had it been Mr Black I would have whisked myself off immediately and not interfered. However, I am adamant that the man I saw entering your bedroom was Gibson.

*Una outraged*                How **dare** you (a lowly servant) presume that I am in need of your being on self-imposed sentry duty at my door?

*Marcus intervening*        Unless Phillip or my father or myself is here, then Nation stands as the only man on the premises. And as such, he has every right to try to protect you. It is his rightful and natural duty so to do.

*Nation whispers,  
moved almost to tears*        Thank you, Sir.

*Una unable to  
comprehend*                I am a widow, and as such I think that I'm entitled to invite a very personable gentleman to --

Marcus *sighing* You're not listening, Aunt. John Black is not in any way, shape or form attempting to visit you. He sends Gibson in his place, by force if you must know. Black's idea of a joke!

Una *angry* It is **not** that vile Gibson fellow. It is John Black. Do you think that I don't know who it is who holds me in his arms and whispers words of love to me at night?

Nation *blushing* Pardon me, Madame, but I have seen with my own eyes that it is Gibson. He has somehow tricked you and insinuated himself into your affections.

Marcus The trickery is all with Black.

*Una is overcome. She rises abruptly, hands over her mouth in a gesture of extreme shock. She walks quickly to the window, trying to master her emotions.*

Una *tearful* But he sounded so like ...

Marcus, hanky.

*Marcus quickly obliges his aunt. He puts his arm around her shoulders, allowing Una to weep onto his chest.*

Marcus *to Nation* Nation, go and fetch Gibson. Get him to clean himself up thoroughly and then take him to the sitting room.

Una *weeping* I'll call the police.

Marcus No you won't.

Una *upset* I'll tell him to leave the property. I'll offer him a farewell gift of ten quid.

Marcus No you won't.

Una *clutching at straws* Gibson's nothing more than a filthy cad.

Marcus *reasonably* He's the finest man you know (apart from myself, that is).

When you look back, you'll realize that you only began to dislike him when he stood up in the Coroner's Court and said what we

now know to have been the truth.

And trying to belt up Black when he first arrived was the act of an honest, loyal friend attempting to take revenge on his mate's killer.

And he fought hard and long at considerable physical cost to avoid what he believed would be a violation of you, Aunt Una. But in the end, as I have already told you, Black orchestrated that.

Banjo's a good, sound, fine man. You could not want for better.

### ~~~~~ Break The Third Proposal ~~~~~

*In the sitting room, Una sits in a straight-backed chair. She is looking at the pattern of the carpet. Before her stands Banjo, dressed in his suit and tie, and clean-shaven. He looks handsome and dependable.*

Una *tight-lipped*

I can hardly bring myself to speak to you, Mr Gibson. It was my wish that the police be summoned to bring you to book, but my sister's adopted offspring argued vehemently against it. So you may thank him for your deliverance from a jail cell.

I've placed a ten-pound note in the fruit bowl (in an envelope). That's my contribution to your future life. Please accept this gift in the manner in which it is given.

And good luck with the rest of your life. Good day.

Banjo *low-voiced*

Thank you. And I'm sorry for ...

*Banjo fidgets about. He nods to the frosty widow and makes to take himself out of the room. His fingers touch the envelope in the fruit bowl. And then he drops his hand, leaving the envelope in the bowl. He takes a long breath, and then turns back towards Una (who remains inviolable).*

Banjo *more confident*

No, I take that back. I'm not sorry at all.

Pardon me, but you may not want to speak to me, Mrs Shorncliffe, but I'm dead keen to have my say. If that's alright.

Una *glacial*

No words might excuse what you've done, Mr Gibson, but I hope that I'm gracious enough to allow you a farewell speech.

Banjo *taking courage*

Fair enough. So this is what I want to say, and believe me – this is straight from the heart.

You're not a pretty young girl that a man might get into a tizzy over only to lose interest when the gloss wears off. You're an attractive, mature woman with your Christian heart in the right place. A keeper.

Now, I got forced (as you may have heard) into doubling for John Black in the sack with you. And I was dead-set against it. Trust me! It was wrong – I knew it – I fought bloody (I mean "jolly") hard not to do it.

But --

*Banjo looks about the room. He spots a padded footstool in another part of the room. He strolls over, picks up the stool, and brings it back to where Una sits in stiff silence. Banjo lowers himself onto the stool, reaching straight for Una's hand. She pulls away. Undeterred, Banjo takes her hand again and holds it between both of his. This time, Una does not flinch.*

Banjo *almost  
whispering, very low-  
voiced*

But after the first time with you, no force was given: no force was required.

I fell in love with you, Una. Just holding you in my arms and making love to you was like Heaven for me. I dragged myself through every day until the sun went down, and then I could be with you again. I almost ran to you: rushing up the stairs like a love-sick boy.

*Banjo tenderly kisses the back of Una's hand. We see that her lips tremble.*

Banjo

Funny when yer think of it ...

If it hadn't been for John Black, I never would have known about the warmth and love in you that no-one else has ever felt.

*[Softly]*

So, I'm not one bit sorry that I done what I done. Not sorry a bit ...

*Once again, Banjo kisses Una's hand, and then stands so that he can lean over to kiss her cheek.*

*Banjo pats Una's hand, then turns to go. He ignores the money in the fruit bowl.*

*Banjo gets as far as opening the door. He stops, with his back to Una.*

Una *calls after Banjo*      Mr Gibson! ... Barry ...

The footstool ...

*Banjo closes the door then slowly turns back to face Una. Una however is looking away, as coy as a young maiden.*

Banjo *slightly amused*      Do you want me to put it back where I found it?

Una *shy*      No ... I want you to resume your seat thereon.

*Banjo grins and obeys. Una offers him both her hands, which he takes in his, chafing them lovingly.*

Una *very shy and girlish*      You were candid with me, so I intend to return the favour.  
  
John Black seemed insouciant and overweening when I was in his company in public. However, I'm not naive. I'm no twit wearing rose-coloured spectacles, Barry. Not a silly young girl (as you rightly observed).

He did not fool me for a second. He was charming in a way, and yet I felt that I could not really approach him closely.

But I was lonely ... It's no easier to be a widow than it is for a single man, I should imagine. One has needs falling under the category of "carnal" in the Bible ... God did not fashion us as cold fish ...

And so, I permitted this man to visit my bed. He (the man I

thought of as John Black) seemed lover-like and romantic, not at all the superficial schemer I thought Black to be. Each night, I waited with heart pounding for his welcome footfall on the stair ...

However, it was ***you***, Barry! You swept me off my feet. Not him. Not him at all. It was ***you!***

*Banjo, smiling lovingly, rises up from the stool to kiss Una on the lips. Una smiles shyly. Banjo sits again, gathering her hands to his chest.*

Una                      I would prefer that you move out of the shearers' shed and into more proper quarters. My sister and nephew can easily billet you at Worrilee. So, I'll let my sister know that whenever that crowd comes over to dine or what have you, they're to bring you with them. And you may stay over, if you wish.

That way, we shall be able to avoid the threat of wagging tongues.

Banjo                    And to make it even easier, you could become Mrs Gibson. Then we'd be able to sleep in the same bed without worrying about Betty catching us out on her various nocturnal trips to the dunny.

*Una begins to laugh and cry at the same time. Our camera backs away as we see Banjo reaching up from his footstool to kiss Una again.*

END OF SCENE

## **Scene vi: Phillip Takes A Stand**

*As Marcus rides Wink at a walking pace back to Worrilee from LaPerouse, he smokes. He is on the lookout for John Black, and in scanning his surroundings, the camera takes in the loveliness of the location.*

*As he approaches Worrilee on horseback, Marcus sees (on the front lawn) the butler Gantry wearing punching mitts and a navy apron. Practising his boxing technique with Gantry is Phillip: he is dressed in correct tennis attire along with boxing gloves and a padded leather boxing helmet. Phillip gives voice to many grunts and shouts, as does Gantry (who grunts encouragement).*

*Marcus is seen to smile broadly in wry surprise. As he approaches the pair, he calls out with laughter in his voice.*

Marcus *amused*                      What on Earth is **this** in aid of? Are you on the undercard at Rushcutter's Stadium?

*Phillip is not to be distracted. He and Gantry continue with the vigorous punching practice throughout the following dialogue. Likewise, Marcus continues to be mounted upon Wink's back.*

Phillip *breathless*                      Understand that that bodgy who played King Henry in Auntie's pageant thingummy is in fact no less than a scallywag horse-trader who is heavily into the bushranger game.

I'm taking up the cudgels against this same highwayman chappie. Made up m' mind. Plan to darken his lights. Bit of claret may flow, of course ... Bound to be a drop of sauce or two ...

Marcus                                      The popular consensus is that he's untouchable. Gibson gave him a very determined try-out but was unable to land even a single punch (or so I'm told). And Banjo Gibson has always been very handy with his fives.

Phillip *breathless but firm*                                      Well, the bushranger won't be a match for me. I have incredible speed (thanks to being chased about so often by Iggy Wiggy) and lightning reflexes. It'll be a shoo-in mate.

*Marcus laughs, shaking his head. He now addresses Gantry.*

Marcus *to Gantry*                                      And how is my dear brother progressing, Gantry? Does he show promise, do you think? Should he vie for an Empire middleweight belt?

Gantry *exhausted*                                      Mister Phillip shows great promise, Mister Marcus. He's not near as belligerent as you are yourself: you're a lot bigger, stronger and

more practised. But he's very fit (if I may say so) and should give quite a good account of himself.

Phillip *gasping for breath* I'll job him with a straight right. He'll hit the deck with eyes rolling.

Marcus You hope!

Alright, I'm off to tackle our younger brother.

Phillip *still gasping for breath* Not fisticuffs? God, he's nowhere near your weight.

Marcus *laughs* I plan to wrestle him. That's allowed, isn't it?

*Marcus nudges his heels into Wink's flanks, and they head back to the stables at a leisurely pace.*

Phillip *shouts* No worries! But take a map of Central Africa with you, Cuss.  
And a machete.

*Marcus waves negligently as he walks Wink towards the stables.*

END OF SCENE

## **Scene vii:** Torrens Drags Out His School Project

*From the first storey window of Verona's sitting room, the camera looks down into the back yard of Worrilee. Our camera finds Marcus and Wink moving at their casual gait in the direction of the stables. Verona leans against the window ledge, lazily watching her stepson.*

Verona *dreamily to herself* Dearest Marcus ...

*Verona sighs and then she returns to her seat at the table.*

*Verona sips tea as she plays Patience with an old, battered deck of cards. She speaks to camera and plays her card game at the same time.*

Verona *to camera*

Of course, I'm deliriously happy for **both** of my stepsons. Just totally over the moon! What fond mother would not be ...

But ...

What **ever** am I going to do with **my** boy? With Torrens?

He is home from school at the moment, supposedly studying hard (I've heard it called "swatting" nowadays!) for some up-coming examinations. But I don't believe that he's doing any such thing.

His latest craze is for Equatorial Africa. Ronald purchased a pith helmet for him, and the poor Vicar's wife spends all her time potting-up indoor palms for the ungrateful boy.

Gantry has washed his hands of the whole thing (more's the pity) because the long and the short of it is that our charwoman simply **refuses** to enter the boy's room (on account of all the tropical vines hanging from the ceiling and swinging over the doorway).

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

The scene now changes to an external view of Worrilee, taking in the converted verandah which had been refurbished (some years ago) into a bedroom-cum-study for Torrens.

Verona *voice-over*

Ronald converted part of the back verandah into suitable quarters for Torrens. However, the lad's turned what was once an attractive room (with a sort of bungalow feel to it) into something of which Dr Livingstone and H. M. Stanley would have been justly proud.

Such a shame ... I can't recall Phillip nor Marcus behaving in this thankless way ...

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Inside Worrilee, Marcus knocks on the door of Torrens's room. Marcus has a small swing top bottle of home-made ginger beer in his hand as a peace offering for his half-brother.*

Torrens *disembodied voice*      No entry!  
I'm dealing with an outbreak of malaria.

*Marcus grins, looking thoughtfully at the bottle of pop.*

Marcus *cajoling*      We received your telegram, Sir, and I've brought the quinine as instructed.

*There is a moment's pause. Marcus listens intently as bits of furniture and lumber are moved about in the room.*

Torrens *disembodied voice, reluctant*      Oh ... Alright ...

*After more banging and shuffling, the bedroom door opens a fraction.*

*Torrens (wearing a fake monocle and his pith helmet) peers at Marcus.*

Torrens *brisk*      Name?

Marcus *solemn*      Lord Montmerency Harberry at your service, Sir.

Torrens *severe*      I'll need to see your identification papers, please, Lord Harberry.

*Marcus pulls his wallet from his back pocket. He opens the wallet, then solemnly pushes same through the miniscule crack of the open door.*

*There is a pause during which grunts and clicks are heard. Then Torrens flings open the bedroom door as he hands back the wallet to Marcus.*

*A curtain of vines of various types greets Marcus's astounded gaze.*

Marcus *amused*      How on Earth do you normally get in and out of here?

*Marcus and our camera take in the lay-out of this junk-filled room, shrouded as it is in all manner of foliage and props inspired by tropical Africa. Torrens uses his thumb to indicate an open window at the back of the room.*

Torrens *casual* By the window.

*Torrens spies the bottle.*

Torrens *scornful* That's not quinine! It's ginger beer, you duffer.

Marcus *quick-witted* We had to smuggle the medicine to you in this disguise.

*[Conspiratorial whisper]*

The German and Belgian spies were confiscating all of our supplies, except for soft drinks.

*Torrens rolls his eyes but takes the ginger beer anyway and after flipping the top open, begins to drink.*

Torrens *begrudgingly* Come in, then. But you can only stay a few minutes. As you can see, the casualties are mounting by the hour.

Marcus *equably* If I were you, I'd call in reinforcements from the Red Cross.

All I want, young man, is that paper you did for school on the bushranger John Black. Or if not that, then at least your rough notes.

Give me the gen, and then I promise that I'll leave you in peace.

Torrens *curious and challenging* Why do you want the notes?

Marcus *ad-libbing* I'm not at liberty to tell you that, Sir. Explosive situation. Possible crisis looming.

Torrens *frowning* It'll cost ya.

*Marcus nods. He had already anticipated this. Marcus pulls a paper twist of lollies and a £2 note from his top pocket. Silently, Marcus places them on a small table which is already covered in junk. Torrens grabs the loot, extracts a musk lolly from the paper twist, puts the lolly into his mouth and then pockets the remaining loot. Then he again screws his fake monocle into his left eye.*

Torrens *cloak-and-dagger* This is a very serious matter, Lord Harberry. Should these papers get into the wrong hands, then Europe might implode. Any slip-up

and it could be war!

Marcus *plays along* Yes, I'm well aware ... I'll guard the State papers with my life, Sir: depend upon that.

*Torrens studies his half-brother's face through the monocle and then nods solemnly.*

Torrens *decisive* Very well. You've an honest face: I believe that I can trust you. I'll get them for you.

*Torrens moves first this box and then that box, running the school project to ground in a battered old satchel. He hands the complete satchel to Marcus (who is desperately trying to hide a smile).*

Torrens Now go! I have to return to the sick patients. God only hope that your medicine arrived in time!

*The brothers shake hands solemnly, and Marcus makes to leave by the bedroom door.*

Torrens *urgent* Someone might be watching ... You'd better leave by the back exit. You only have to climb out of the window and shinny down using the bushes as a step ladder.

Marcus No. I think that I'll take my chances and exit via the door like any civilized man.

*Marcus mocks Torrens by bowing. As he reaches the door, Marcus turns back to speak to Torrens.*

Marcus Oh, and by the way. I'm providing you with another sister, in addition to Daphne. I'm all set to marry her sister: the young Doctor.

Torrens *unimpressed* Well, that's nothing to brag about. The silly sheila bought a Vauxhall. Can you believe that?

*Marcus laughs out loud, and waves goodbye to his half-brother. We hear the door slam shut, and we hear a series of locks applied from inside the room. Smiling fondly, Marcus shakes his head as he strolls away.*

END OF SCENE

**Scene viii:** Jocelyn Lays Down Her Challenge

*The scene opens at night in a very austere, antiquated passageway at Jocelyn's digs.*

*Verona has telephoned to Jocelyn in her boarding house. Thus, Jocelyn is speaking on an old-fashioned telephone. Jocelyn looks very put-out.*

Jocelyn *into the phone*, No, Mum! It simply won't do.

*irate*

I was Head Prefect at St Hellen's (don't forget) and my aunt **cannot** – I repeat, **cannot!** – become affianced to one of those ghastly homeless men. They're little better than swaggies and beggars. It's not to be thought of!

*Jocelyn listens in mounting rage. A group of serious-looking young women walk by behind Jocelyn. They evidence extreme shock at the tenor of her next words.*

Jocelyn *into the phone*, Look, Mum, I don't care if they fought against the ruddy Trojans!  
*vexed and furious* They are evil, ungodly, bug-ridden, heathen, warped pond-scum, and I won't stand by and watch Auntie fall under their spell.

*On hearing the gasp from her casual audience, Jocelyn presses the mouthpiece against her chest and glares at the red-faced young ladies, who now scurry away (shocked and outraged).*

Jocelyn *into the phone*, Never mind!

*decisive*

Iggy Wiggins and I shall get ourselves to the railway station and catch a train.

*[Pause]*

No! I mean **now, tonight, on the instant.**

And then I'll march over to LaPerouse in the early A.M. to bring Auntie out of this hypnotic spell she seems to be under. Slap her back to her senses.

And I'll do it, come what may!

*Jocelyn slams the mouthpiece into the cradle and bangs the telephone down on the small hall table. She looks very determined, nodding firmly at the phone.*

END OF SCENE

### **Scene ix:** The Five Suspects In The Murder Of John Black Are Uncovered

*Late at night, Daphne, Sylvia and Marcus are slouched over piles of antiquated manuscripts and folios in an out-of-the-way corner of the State Library of New South Wales. There are papers lying about over the surface of three desks.*

*A uniformed guard approaches.*

Guard *apologetic*            I know that His Honour Sir Edward Farquhar organized special permission for you good people to wrestle with these gazettes for an extended time this evening, but I'm afraid to have to tell you that your time's up. We really do have to close-up for the night ...

*Marcus nods, and stands such that he is able to quickly collect all of the pieces of paper.*

Marcus                        Look, I'm awfully sorry to have kept you back in this way, but --

Guard                         Oh, no! I had plenty of work to do, Sir: it's just that I really must close-up shop now.

Marcus *nods*                Quite understood!

I think we might have all the dope we need ...

*Marcus shoves the papers into a hessian satchel, which he slings over his shoulder. He looks first at Daphne and then at Sylvia as both young women stretch. Marcus queries them with a raised eyebrow.*

Daphne *confident*           I'm pretty certain that we've covered all bases. Not much more to add, really ...

Sylvia *sighs*

It's such a miserable, sordid tale. A rogue's gallery of sad souls was laid out before us here, most of whom arrived under the aegis of a King who was only too glad to get rid of them. And on coming to Terra Australis, they faced the most desperate, cruel conditions. That they survived at all was a –

*[Seeing that the library guard is keen to get moving]*

Oh, yes! You want to get home to your hearth and home. I'll save my prognostications for later ...

*Marcus nods, and then he swiftly marches off towards the exit. The sisters glance at each other and then tear off after Marcus.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

The party of three now march at a quick pace towards the camera along a robust and grand corridor in the library.

Sylvia

What will you do now?

Marcus

Get back as quickly as we can and try to protect the other three. My cousin Charlotte will be fine. I'll insist that she stays in her room out of sight. And I can organize for Mrs Gwen to hide herself away, likewise.

But, as for the Vicar ... ? Any ideas?

Sylvia firm

The Vicar ... Leave him to me. Leave him to me.

Marcus *pleased*

Yes, good! You alert the Vicar to the danger, and I'll alert cousin Charlotte.

The couple are eye-locked, so in love are they. Daphne (more of a realist) coughs slightly.

Daphne

Shall I return to West Sydney with you and leap into action regarding Mrs Gwen?

Marcus blushes at being caught staring at his love.

Marcus Yes! Yes! Fine!

Well, that takes care of everyone.

It will be too late to do much tonight but ... We'll do what we can.

END OF SCENE

Interlude: John Black Faces His Past Alone As (At The Same Time) The Remaining Descendants Are Warned

John Black (homeless man) sleeps soundly as a paying guest in the converted shearers' quarters at LaPerouse. And watching him is John Black, bushranger.

The latter walks slowly, painfully towards the tacky door, which squeaks unremittingly as the bushranger hauls it open.

Even in the dim moonlight, we can see that John Black descends the steps into thick bushland. He mutters to himself – darkly menacing Banjo.

John You may think you've outsmarted me, Gibson, but I'm nowhere near the dumb-cluck you think me.

~~~~~ **Break 1801** ~~~~~

*This interlude is very dramatic. Through dense Australian bush, John Black rides his shaggy horse. Deftly, the animal clears fallen logs and crashes through the thick undergrowth. Riding hell-for-leather, the bushranger sools his mount over the trickiest, most dangerous terrain.*

~~~~~ **Break (still in 1801)** ~~~~~

In a clearing in what became known as West Sydney, stands the early rustic version of the homestead which became LaPerouse. It is a very small, rough stone and timber cottage, with various lean-tos and sheds attached.

Around the homestead, many daggy sheep graze, such that what passes for "lawn" is kept passably short. A rundown old codger (Ben Griffard) is supposed to be watching over the sheep: he sleeps peacefully in the sunshine.

Between the homestead and the bush stands a very large vegetable garden. An unattractive, slovenly girl (Maude Kintyre) works in a lazy way, gathering spinach, silver beet and Brussels sprouts.

John Black (the bushranger) gives a slight whistle, then throws a stone which lands near to the girl.

The slattern peers about, and then spots John Black. A toothless smile does nothing to make her look more engaging.

Maude It's safe and sound. They gone to the market in the dray.

John And Fanny with them?

Maude *snorts* Nar, she's 'ere. You'll 'ear her Ladyship screamin' orders at me, like she be some sort of tin god.

John Black signals to Maude that she should join him in the bush. After a moment's hesitation and a quick look around, Maude waddles towards John Black.

Quickly and deftly, John Black brings the girl to ground under his body and has loud, rough sex with her. We can hear the grunts and heavy breathing of the pair. During this quick session of fornication, Maude takes every chance to taunt John Black. The bushranger responds by treating her even more roughly.

Maude I dunno why you bother with Miss Fanny Feldon. She thinks you're no better than you are.

John I'm better born than Fanny. My Ma was a nobleman's daughter, she was.

Maude *nasty laugh* Yairs, and that's why you come out 'ere to this land o' misery at 'Is

Majesty's pleasure, then?

John And what else does she say? Fanny ...

Maude Ow! Be gentle with me!

She wants to murder you on account of you might be spoilin' 'er chances with one of the lads 'ere.

Fanny comes into the fresh air from the wash house and stands frowning, arms akimbo.

Fanny *calling* Maude! I'm waiting for the greens. Where in Heavens name have you got to?

John Black and Maude stop their sexual activity. John Black seems pleased to hear Fanny's voice. Maude looks wary and tense.

Maude *calls* Just havin' a sprinkle, Fan. Be there in a trice.

~~~~~ Break (1920) ~~~~~

Very late at night, we see Daphne as she knocks tentatively on the door of the Nations's rooms among the out houses of LaPerouse. We see Nation (looking surprised and worried, with a coat wrapped over his nightshirt) opening the door and standing in the doorway. From a distance, we hear Daphne's salutation.

Daphne *far-off* Sorry for the late hour, Nation. It's Daphne Maisford. How are you?

Sorry to disturb. It's a bit important that I give you a message. For Mrs Nation, that is. For your good lady (hoping that she's fit and well otherwise of course).

There is a slight pause during which Nation makes some indistinguishable sounds.

Daphne *far-off* She's in bed? Jolly good!

The thing is ...

Marcus Winterbottom, my brother-in-law-to-be ...

Listen! Would you please tell Mrs Nation that she must under **no** circumstances allow herself to be in close proximity to John Black. Even if she locks herself in the cellar.

Nation appears to be completely flummoxed by the news. And deeply mumbles something which is hard for us (the audience) to understand.

Daphne *far-off* Alright-ee ... Keep safe, now! This Black character sounds like a thoroughly bad lot ... Avoid him like the plague, I'd say ...

🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵 **Break (1801)** 🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵

Fanny and Maude are busy in the tiny corner of the homestead which passes for a kitchen. John Black enters, ignoring Maude completely as all his attention is focused upon Fanny.

Fanny *annoyed* Get out of here, you! Go on! Sling your hook and take your leave. You're not to step inside here. Go on!

John Black, grinning in true delight and affection, approaches Fanny. He takes her in his arms and kisses her face. However, the girl resists valiantly.

John *inveigling* Come away with me, my toffee-haired beauty. Ride with me over the hills and into the gullies. Come and gladden my heart, girl.

Fanny belts John Black with whatever implement she can find: pan, wooden spoon, tablespoon.

Fanny *aggressive* Help! Stop! Maude, you cow, get him off me! I'll call Ben!

John Black is fired with lust and longing. He tries to smother the girl's cries with kisses.

John *cooing* Ben? That old coot? I could break Ben in half with one hand.

You know that I'd make you happy. And when I get some gelt in me pockets instead of stale breadcrumbs, we could buy up some acreage and raise up a family of strong boys and lovely daughters.

Fanny fights on, with Maude cowering in the background.

Fanny *really serious, shouting* I'll slaughter you where you stand. I swear I shall. You've been warned off here before. I'm going to open my trap to the Master and Missus about what you've done and there'll be such a hue and cry for your sad, bad body. Strung up on a tree branch – that's what will happen to you!

John *infatuated* Ride at my side, girl, with the wind tearing into your hair. With your wild eyes flaring and your --

Fanny *desperate* Handsome is as handsome does. Your pretty-boy looks don't count for a thing with me. Get out! Get out! Leave me **alone!**

Fanny at last grasps the item from the rough-hewn table which will do the most harm: a carving knife. This she plunges into John Black's shoulder. Then she withdraws the knife, to stab him a second time. John Black jumps back out of harm's way, unable to believe that his beloved Fanny would attempt to kill him.

John *aghast* Fanny! My love ... Why would you do this to your own swain?
Why, love, why?

Fanny (her face filled with contempt and anger) stands poised to strike. Ben Griffard clumsily enters the kitchen area.

Ben *bemused* What's this, eh?

John Black, realizing that blood is welling up from the knife wound, shrugs off his coat and grabs a couple of huckaback cloths from the back of a chair to dab on the wound.

Fanny *furious, passionate* Get me the Master's musket, Ben. Load it for me and prime it. I'm going to shoot this mangy dog where he stands. And thus put him and us out of our misery.

John Black grabs his coat and promptly leaves the cottage. As he passes Ben, he rudely pushes the old man in the chest with great force. Ben topples over, smashing his old head on an iron implement to the horror of Maude and Fanny.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Miss Imbriss Receives  
an Unwelcome Visitor

*Marcus has moved on quickly to Worrilee, where he heads for a bedroom: that of Verona's cousin, Charlotte Imbriss. Marcus gives a couple of sharp knocks on the door, and then enters. Charlotte (in frilly nightgown and mob cap) is very surprised. She holds the sheet and blanket up around her neck.*

Charlotte *aghast*                      Marcus! Whatever --

*Marcus quickly checks that the window is securely closed as Charlotte appears almost frightened. He does not mince his words.*

Marcus                                  Do not leave this bedroom. Alright?

*Charlotte's eyes bulge and her lips work soundlessly.*

Marcus                                  Your great-great grandmother was Fanny Feldon. She was a serving girl in the old Shorncliffe household over at LaPerouse. She married one of the younger sons in that family not long after Black died. But prior to her marriage, she was stepping-out with John Black. She was his girlfriend (or so he thought her).

And as such, Black may consider her to have been a possible suspect in his murder. It's unlikely, I know, but we can't fathom what Black's thinking.

Charlotte *faint*                      I'm related to John Black?

Marcus *reassuring*                      No, you're not. But you **are** related to a woman that Black might consider to have been his possible murderer.

So, if John Black materializes in this room, you must be very confident and look him in the eye and tell him in no uncertain terms that your ancestor (Fanny Feldon) was a very good girl and that she was earnestly in love with him. Say that her later marriage to William Shorncliffe happened on the rebound, and that she never ever loved her husband.

*Charlotte is evidently appalled by the possibility that she might receive such an unwelcome visitor.*

Marcus *kindly*                    I'm not trying to frighten you, Charlie. I just want you to be prepared.

                                         You stay put in this room until we sort this out. Alright?

                                         The likelihood is that Black will be busy elsewhere, and you won't even see him.

                                         I'll ask Gantry to bring you a tray with --some tea and a round of toast and marmalade. Your favourite.

*Marcus nods in a kindly way to the frightened woman, and then quickly goes to leave the room.*

Charlotte *calls after*            He walked with me yesterday, Marcus. Took my arm in his.

Marcus

Marcus *alarmed*                Black?

Charlotte                        Yes, yes!

                                         He spoke of my Mother ... and of that Fanny woman that you mentioned. He was keen to show me how she might have lived.

*Marcus (clearly appalled) groans loudly.*

Marcus *aghast*                 But ... Did he manage to --

Charlotte *eager*                 He held my hand in his (such a fine, compassionate gesture!) and was about to expound on Miss Fanny's life when Mr Eustace rushed up on account of Sergeant Morley's untimely demise.

*Marcus indicates that he is overjoyed and thankful.*

Marcus                          Heap blessings on Chickie Simons! It might be said that he saved your life, Charlie.

                                         And be absolutely sure: there is nothing gentlemanly, kind, compassionate nor humane about John Black. He is a murderer and a fiend, Cousin.

*Marcus exits promptly. Charlotte (her lips quivering) hides herself under the bed coverings.*

**Break (1801)**

*In evident pain, John Black rides. He is in the Suffolk Hills area, near the outer boundary of the old Shorncliffe holdings. His demise will take place in the exact location where Una's paying guests were ploughing the bushland with the Clydesdales (ACT I, scene i).*

*At twilight, two swaggies march along a dirt track in the bush. They chat and laugh. John Black (on horseback) moves forward from the cover of the bushes. He cocks his antique pistol and aims it at the men.*

John                      Stand and deliver!

*The swaggies are alarmed.*

Swaggie #1      We got nothin', yer honour.

*Painfully, John Black dismounts.*

John *pleasantly* We'll just see that, now. Anything of gold or silver on your shabby persons?

*The men are flummoxed. They slap at their sides as if to evidence a lack of trinkets worthy of a bushranger's interest.*

*As John Black approaches the men, he trips and falls to the ground, at which time his pistol explodes, badly wounding him. His hand is completely shattered. John Black screams in real pain.*

*The two swaggies are horrified. They stare in disbelief at the maimed bushranger. John Black groans horribly and then drags his eyes open.*

John Black *faint and raspy*      Who killed me ...? Who was it ...? Give me his name ... For God's sake ...

*John Black passes out. The swaggies are just about to rifle John Black's garments, when they hear and see "Cutlass" Grimes riding down the sloping terrain, shouting at them to stand fast.*

## The Final Moments of John Black's Sad Life.

*Terrified, the two men scamper off. Grimes pulls up his rugged mountain pony, dismounts and then rifles through John Black's various pockets. Grimes approaches the bushranger's pony, calms it by cooing softly and then leads it back to John Black. Grimes nabs the antique pistol.*

"Cutlass"                      John Black! Now this be a for-tun-ate meeting, by Our Lord's grace.

Sorry that it wasn't my bullet as killed yer ...

But now mayhap that be not true ... Hmmm ...

Oi'll jest be sure of it. How would that be, then?

*Without emotion, "Cutlass" fires his pistol into John Black. John emits a gagging howl, his body convulsing. The picture fades as John Black dies. He hears a few final words from "Cutlass" Grimes, and then nothing.*

"Cutlass"                      You got a fancy piece, there. Pity as you didn't know as how to use it ... And the nag will come in handy, I suppose ...

*The screen is now black. We hear the sounds of a large man, a horse and pony treading on bracken. We hear the "grmph" of a large man hauling his weight into the saddle. And then we hear the "Tclck! Tclck!" of a rider encouraging his mount and led horse to move on.*

END OF SCENE

## **Scene x:** John Black Creates Further Mayhem At LaPerouse

|                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Most Unexpectedly, The Garden At LaPerouse Has Been Transformed. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|

*Very early on the next morning (as dawn breaks), Jocelyn is chatting with Iggy Wiggins as they walk briskly from Worrilee to LaPerouse. The dog is unleashed and obviously relishing the exercise.*

Jocelyn to Iggy      ... and you must let me do all the talking, Iggy. I shall certainly bring this affair to rights without your assistance. You'll just sit majestically, eying the world with your customary hauteur.

*With her face set mulishly, Jocelyn marches on. Iggy Wiggins roves about, snuffling the ground in an ecstasy of delight.*

Jocelyn                      Not far now, dear boy. Just a few paces more (as the crow flies).

*[Pause: reasonable]*

Of course, we ain't crows ...

In by the side gate, and straight up to Auntie's bedroom.

I tell you, Ig-boy – I'm fairly spoiling for a fight!

*The dog and owner round a bend in the road. We see Jocelyn stop, staring in complete disbelief.*

*It is Jocelyn who first sees the drastic change in her Aunt's garden, as everyone else is still asleep.*

*Gone are all the European trees and bushes. The garden is lovely in the sense that it is now a very attractive Australian bush setting, filled with glorious flowering plants and bushes.*

*Jocelyn is gobsmacked and manages to emit only a few disjointed words.*

Jocelyn *aghast*                      Auntie ... Your beautiful garden ... I ... Oh, my sweet Lord!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

Nation and Betty have entered the kitchen, sketchily dressed in housework clothing, as they begin the daily routine. They are shocked to find Jocelyn and Iggy Wiggins bursting in on them.

Jocelyn does not speak, but she glances at the servants in a withering way and merely marches purposefully towards the large flight of stairs. Awestruck, Nation deftly follows Jocelyn. As the young lady prepares to mount the stairs, the horrified butler realizes her intent.

Nation *shocked* Miss Jocelyn! The Missus can't be disturbed!

Ignoring Nation, Jocelyn storms up the stairs (with Iggy Wiggins at her heels), with Nation protesting vehemently in the rear.

Nation *outraged* No, Miss Joss! Missus left strict instructions!

Jocelyn reaches Una's bedroom door and flings it open. Una and Banjo are snuggled up in bed together. Iggy Wiggins (agog with canine thrill) hurls himself up onto the bed to urgently lick the faces of the two occupants. The dog's tail wags unremittingly.

Meanwhile, Jocelyn yells at Banjo, Una and Nation about the garden and the Una/Banjo tryst.

Jocelyn *horrified* Auntie! How on Earth is it possible for you to be *in flagrante* with this clod-hopper?

And where is your precious garden? Who converted the lovely English layout, with its tranquil paths and cool fountains into a Terra Australis woodland?

Now follows a complete pandemonium.

Una and Banjo protest loudly at Iggy's disgusting attentions. Jocelyn repeats her plaint.

Jocelyn Auntie Una! I was never more shocked! All your beautiful English treasures ... Your garden over which you slaved for so many years ... And all the money you spent on it! Everything has been transformed in a snap into a meaningless wilderness.

Una races to the window, throws open the curtains and then shrieks upon taking in the floral carnage in her garden.

Iggy Wiggins forces Banjo (laughing delightedly at Iggy's capers) to roll out of the bed and onto the floor. Banjo is naked as he rolls out of bed to escape from Iggy. The sight of Banjo which is so indecorously presented to Jocelyn causes her to squeal in intense shock and then to faint heavily to the floor. The dog appears to be indifferent to his mistress's sufferings, and barks heroically from his vantage point on the bed.

Banjo promptly covers his dignity with one of Una's garments, and sprints to the bedroom door, as Una appears also to be on the point of passing out. Banjo leans over the balustrade and calls down to Betty.

Banjo *loudly* Betty! Betty! Are you there?

Betty (looking bewildered) appears at the foot of the stairs.

Betty *calls up to Banjo* Yes, I'm here, Banjo. Whatever is going on up there?

Banjo *in command* Bring up the smelling salts, will you? I don't have a clue where they are. Miss Winterbottom is having some kind of fainting fit.

Banjo returns quickly to Una, who stands at the window staring in complete disbelief, both hands over her mouth. Iggy Wiggins continues to prance about on the bed, barking ecstatically.

Banjo *nasty to Iggy* Shut up, you crazy mongrel!

Banjo swings an arm about Una's shoulders, to comfort her. Una whimpers in distressed disbelief.

Banjo *dour* This is John Black's work ... What a major drongo that bloke is!

[Banjo's lips form a thin line; he frowns deeply]

This is the final straw.

The camera goes into close-up of Banjo. His face is very grim.

Banjo *frowning, dour* The final straw!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT V



ACT VI Miss Winterbottome Puts All To Rights

Scene i: Catching Up With All Of Our Characters

Catching Up With John Black.

The sun rises. We see the utter beauty and sumptuous depth of what had been Una Shorncliffe's stylish European garden. The transformation of the garden into a superb Australian wilderness is breathtaking. We view insects, native birds and some small wallabies moving about. There are glorious Grevilleas and other native blossoms on show.

John Black wanders about in this (his creation), whistling softly. The usual manky-looking nag with shaggy coat and sway back moves out of the bush towards John Black. The horse has neither saddle nor bridle. Standing on a log, and with lazy ease, John Black throws his leg over the horse's back, entwining his fingers in the horse's mane. Kicking the nag's flanks, John Black (now dressed in his normal clothing of 1801 and continuing to whistle) rides the horse deeper into the bush.

Catching Up With Those Folk at The Maisford Residence.

Old Doctor Maisford wears a dressing gown. He taps on Sylvia's bedroom door and then opens the door a fraction. We see the elderly doctor start in real surprise. He opens the bedroom door, stepping haltingly into the room.

Sitting on her old couch (which is covered in various items of clothing) sits Sylvia. Although she is dressed, her hair is unbrushed. She is pulling on stockings.

Daphne and Sylvia have slept the night end-to-end in Sylvia's bed (with Sylvia sleeping in the correct position). Daphne slowly opens one eye to stare at her father, who is beaming in welcome. Sylvia continues to put on her stockings.

Somerton *whispers* Hello, Daph. What are you doing here?
loudly

The young woman stretches. Old Doctor Maisford bends down with difficulty to hug and kiss his elder daughter, who returns the embrace. Standing again, Somerton smiles as he nods towards Sylvia.

Somerton *smiling* My two little blossoms together ...

Will Sylvie be up to taking surgery this morning, or must I put in an appearance?

Daphne's voice is thick and raspy.

Daphne You've drawn the short straw, Pa. Sorry to be the bearer, et cetera **but** ...

[Yawns prodigiously]

We had a very, very late night with Marcus Winterbottom, at the State Library (of all places).

Sylvia And I really had to deliver an urgent message to the Vicar, but he was absent from the district on business for poor Sergeant Morley's kinfolk.

I left a note. However, he may well have missed it. I must make another push to alert him of the danger.

Somerton *confused* The Vicar is in danger?

Daphne Very much so. And *that's* why my Sis is about to charge off into the early morning air and *that's* why you will be doing a locum at the surgery this bright, fine day, Pa.

Somerton That's alright. I suppose I'll have to get back in the saddle once Sylvie marries, anyway.

Daphne remains on her back, swathed in the ends of Sylvia's bed coverings. Sylvia is on her hands and knees as she seeks out a pair of shoes from her untidy wardrobe.

Daphne You ought to get a young bloke in, Pa, and train him up. I've got the very man. Brother of one of my flatmates. He's on the lookout for just such a sinecure, and I'm sure that you'll like him.

Somerton *brighter* Fine! Send him to the surgery and I'll have a chinwag with him.

Sylvia *smothered voice* There's no rush.

My fiancé is quite content with my soldiering on with the healing of the sick and wounded until such time as I start breeding.

Old Doctor Maisford looks taken aback.

Somerton Well, you make it sound quite bovine. Perhaps the nicer term to use might be "reproducing".

Daphne Or "bringing forth issue".

Sylvia *matter of fact* It's still the same thing for cows and women alike: squirting out young.

Somerton grunts his disapproval. Sylvia grins brightly.

Daphne *airily* Darling Phillip and I are planning to be sophisticated and thoroughly Gallic about the whole conception thing. Of course, we've already lain together in sin. I found it utterly marvellous. My husband-to-be is quite a surprise package.

Sylvia *very quickly* Me too! (I mean, with Marcus not Phillip, obviously). "Heavenly" just isn't a strong enough description of my rapture!

Somerton *appalled*

Daphne Maisford! Dr Sylvia! That's enough!

Is this what modern females discuss, is it? Since the War you've all decided to be brazen, *avant garde* and somewhat shameless.

Whatever happened to polite conversation? Once upon a time, one discussed "trysts" and "romance" and even (to put things bluntly) "making an assignation".

Sylvia *quizzical*

No matter what fancy name you give to it, Dad: it's still rutting.

With a shaken "Oh!", old Doctor Maisford shuffles off.

| |
|--|
| Catching Up With Phillip Who Bounces Out of Bed at Worrilee. |
|--|

Apparently, the effects of his love-life have catapulted Phillip Winterbottom into a lather of activity. He leaps out of bed, peeling off his nightshirt and hauls on his tennis outfit (as he had worn on the previous day). Whistling shrilly, Phillip rescues his boxing gloves and leaves his bedroom at a run, calling loudly to Gantry, whom Phillip expects to assist him into the cumbersome gloves.

Phillip *urgently calling out*

Gantry! Help me to get into these flaming gloves, will you? Intend to bring things to a head.

Gantry!

Phillip sprints out of camera view.

| |
|---|
| Catching Up With The Reverend (Strolling About His Parish). |
|---|

The Reverend Tristram Gambon (wearing a battered old lounge suit, shirt and woollen tie) strolls along, aided by a walking stick, on his morning walk. His one love is to gaze over his parish, congratulating himself on the apparent well-being of his flock. The vicar continues his stroll (smiling in a self-satisfied way) as many native birds seem to parade before him.

Further on, the vicar pulls up short: on his face is a look of undisguised horror: he has seen the transformation of the garden at LaPerouse.

| |
|---|
| Catching Up With Poor Jocelyn at LaPerouse. |
|---|

The first person we see by the roaring kitchen fire in the LaPerouse kitchen is the Shorncliffe's gardener (Clem), who is standing guard over Mrs Gwen (by standing out of the way beside the fire). Clem is equipped with a garden fork and a shotgun. But his focus is on the various bits and pieces of breakfast which are negligently passed to him by the personnel found to be bustling about in the kitchen on that morning.

And there is indeed a great bustle. The presence of a well-presented tray seems to indicate that Mrs Una will be taking her morning repast in bed (in company with her amour).

The kettle boils merrily and a pot of porridge bubbles along as Nation, Betty and Mrs Gwen give voice to differing opinions on the conflicting restorative benefits of whiskey versus brandy. Jocelyn (after the shock of seeing the ravages reeked on Auntie's garden, followed by the sight of Banjo's naughty bits) is slumped in a chair, lolling over the table. But her needs must come second to the exigencies of preparing a hearty breakfast for the LaPerouse household. So the argument rolls on as they work diligently (eating as they do so), and the drinks passed to Jocelyn are delivered quickly and without any frills.

Nation It's always been brandy.

Nation slaps a thick everyday glass down in front of Jocelyn. In it, brandy slops about. Jocelyn takes the glass and downs the contents.

Mrs Gwen During the war, when there were fainting fits among the nurses, the remedy was ***always*** brandy. That's a fact, and you can't dodge it.

Jocelyn groans as she slurs in gibberish.

Betty *mulish* My Uncle Len swore by whiskey. He got the shakes every morning and nothing would fix it but a small jam jar full of whiskey.

A small jar is plonked down in front of Jocelyn. Drops of whiskey splash about onto Jocelyn's hands. Jocelyn stares owlshly at the jar.

Betty *kindly* There you are, Miss Jocelyn. You'll be as right as rain in a tick.

[Stronger tone, to the Nations]

Good, strong, fiery malt whiskey made my Uncle Joe better in a flash every time he was crook.

Jocelyn drains the jar. Mrs Gwen clucks in a scolding way as she replaces the unsightly jar with a dainty glass.

Nation *grimly* Brandy's a comforter. It's medically sound.

But the way your family guzzled the hard stuff sounds like the DTs to me.

As the squabble continues, the breakfast preparations near completion and Betty whisks off with a laden tray to run it upstairs to the discomfited widow and her swain.

Betty stops half-way to find Banjo (now shaved and fully dressed) rushing down the stairs. Banjo's face is hard and uncompromising. He is set on finding John Black. Banjo sweeps past Betty as she speaks to him.

Betty Breakfast, Banjo. I got you some --

Banjo *dour* No thanks, Darl. Put it in the cool safe for me when I get back.

Banjo strides towards the door. He turns back to call to Betty who is still watching him, mouth agape.

Banjo *meaningful* **If** I come back!

Betty looks frightened and discomposed.

END OF SCENE

Scene ii: Phillip's Right Hook And Jocelyn's Fervour

The characters are about to congregate for the final show down. The camera gives us a very quick reprise of these characters:

- Una is in bed, trying to eat her breakfast through her tears.
- Banjo is storming about over the grounds of LaPerouse, looking for (and calling out for) John Black.
- Charlotte is hiding under her bedcovers in a lather of fear.
- Mrs Gwen, Nation and Betty are all stationed in the kitchen under the watchful eye of Clem: they all breakfast heartily. They are still locked in the brandy-versus-whiskey disagreement.
- Jocelyn is with the aforementioned four servants, eating prodigiously and knocking-back various spiritous liquors.
- Marcus (riding Wink) is trying to find John Black.
- The Reverend Tristram Gambon is approaching the front door of LaPerouse, as he stares unbelieving about him (at the transformed garden).
- Phillip (in his tennis whites and wearing boxing gloves) dances about in the garden, shadow-boxing with a luxuriant native bush.

The four servants in the LaPerouse kitchen evidence displeasure on hearing that there is a loud knock at the front door.

Nation nods to Betty, who stands.

Nation *warning* Better take Clem with you.

Nation then nods to Clem. The gardener (grim-faced) takes up his weapons as if he was a warrior.

Nation *stern* And under no circumstances allow John Black to enter!

The front door swings open. We see the Vicar being beset upon by a very vigorous and over-friendly Iggy-Wiggins. The Vicar appears to be very put out. Betty rushes to his rescue.

Betty Down, Iggy! Down at once! Come in, Vicar. But not the dog.

The Vicar is evidently very out of sorts due to the dog's attentions.

Rev Gambon Oh ... Oh ... My goodness me!

The garden! What has become of Mrs Shorncliffe's sumptuous

landscape? I am quite overcome.

Soothing, Betty shepherds the Vicar into the kitchen. As he toddles along, the Reverend Gambon eyes the heavily-armed Clem askance.

Betty *soothing*

I know, Vicar. All our Christmases have come at once.

But I'll get you a steaming cup of strong tea, and you won't know yourself.

The Vicar is muttering in half-sentences as he is led to a chair. He spots Jocelyn and halts in his dotty meanderings.

Rev Gambon

Miss Jocelyn! How do you do? I hope that your duties at the Cathedral are not proving too arduous? And how is His Eminence, the Archbishop? Still keeping chipper, is he?

Betty plonks a steaming cup of tea on a saucer in front of the Vicar and pushes a plate of scones towards him.

Jocelyn *owlish*

The Bishop of the Arch variety? Oh ... Um ... He's drinking too much, for a start (gouty), and not getting nearly enough exercise. Puffy guts. And he suffers from profound flatulence, if you must know.

Not just the Vicar (whose piece of scone hovers near his open mouth), but all the other occupants of the LaPerouse kitchen are nonplussed by this brutally honest outburst. They freeze in horror.

Jocelyn *frowning*

Are you here, Sir, as a consequence of the heinous destruction of my Aunt's lovely garden?

Rev Gambon *stammers*

Well, yes I --

Jocelyn *brightening*

Because I've just had a jolly marvellous thought.

If you come with me to the back yard, you could perform an excommunication on the garden and return it to its former grand state.

There follows a heavy silence in which all stare at Jocelyn. Nation breaks the silence carefully.

Nation "Excommunication", Miss Winterbottom?

Jocelyn downs another short drink.

Jocelyn *slurring* Excipient ... Exhilaration ... No! Exfoliation ... er ...

The occupants of the kitchen look one to the other and wince.

Jocelyn *trawling* Exhortation ...

Clem grunts.

Clem *dour* Does she mean an "exorcism"?

Jocelyn *overjoyed* That's it. "Exorcism". Thank you, my man.

You will be the hero of the hour, Reverend Gambon, and clear the garden of all malevolent ghosts, spirits, demons, devils, imps, brownies and bunyips. At a stroke!

The Reverend Gambon appears totally appalled and floored. He is utterly reluctant but knows only too well where his best interest lies.

Reverend Gambon Only too pleased. I'll have to return to the church for my
small voice vestments.

Jocelyn *firm* Goodoh! We'll cut across the garden.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*From Una's window on the first storey, we see Jocelyn marching along, arm-in-arm with the dodderly Vicar, who pushes himself along (keeping pace with the young woman) by dint of his walking stick. Iggy-Wiggins capers about in the bush. The church is seen in the distance.*

Nation *voice-over*      That young niece of yours has put away a quantity of the hard stuff, and it's not even nine o'clock. Such is the extent of her shock.

Una *voice-over*, teary      And to what locale is my niece dragging the Vicar?

Nation *voice-over* To the church so that he can slip into his ecumenical robes,  
Ma'am. In order to expel the ghosts.

Una *voice-over,*  
*alarmed* Goats, did you say? Are we now being invaded by goats?

Nation *voice-over,*  
*calming* No, Ma'am. Ghosts – ethereal, other-world spirits. An exorcism.  
Should the Vicar succeed, we shall all be able to walk free again:  
even my poor Mrs Gwen, Ma'am.

*Una is heard to sigh gustily.*

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

*The Vicar (now fully robed) and Jocelyn emerge from the side of the church and walk with stately grace and solemnity back towards the bush which was once the garden of LaPerouse. They walk as if in a religious procession. Of Iggy-Wiggins there is no sign.*

*Torrens leaps out of the bush, startling his half-sister and the Vicar. Torrens carries a large cloth-covered bundle.*

Torrens Vicar! I saw you and Joss wandering about aimlessly and thought you'd like to do a bit of burying. It's a nice day for it.

*Jocelyn is thoroughly annoyed by her younger half-brother's request.*

Jocelyn *tart* You are the most worrisome boy, Torrens. The Vicar and I are not "wandering about aimlessly" at all. We are in fact --

*Suddenly, as if from thin air, John Black appears. Smiling and nodding, he dismounts. Then John Black slaps the rump of his pony (such that it trots off), stepping forward quickly, seeming solicitous and kind.*

John *urbane, charming* My dear Vicar! How serendipitous to meet you in this floral setting!  
And the charming Miss Winterbottom. I am thoroughly delighted.  
Ah! The ever-resourceful Master Winterbottom. I believe that you

wrote a charming narrative related to my time on Earth, Torry. Perhaps I can give you (all three of you of course) a first-hand glimpse of what my poor wretched life was *really* like.

*Torrens scowls, looking daggers at John Black.*

*John Black touches the Vicar's arm and seems to be about to take them on another one of his fatal journeys.*

*Unexpectedly, Phillip charges up (still wearing the boxing gloves) to the unalloyed surprise of all.*

Phillip *roars*                      Got you, you slimy rogue! Here's a bunch of fives to go on with!

*With a great deal of dexterity, Phillip puts himself into the correct orthodox boxing stance, and launches with a massive punch, aimed at John Black's chin.*

*However, John Black dodges the punch. Unfortunately, the punch lands on the jaw of the Vicar, and the Reverend Tristram Gambon is knocked-out cold. Silently, he sinks to the ground. There follows a shocked silence broken only by an ecstatic shout from Torrens who jumps about in extreme delight.*

Torrens *thrilled*                      Bewdy! A right hook! When we find Gantry you'll have to show him what --

*Jocelyn is now furious with her brother Phillip.*

Jocelyn *enraged*                      Phillip! You prime ass! You've dropped the Vicar! How are we to exorcise the spirits of the dead now?

*Whilst Phillip can only stare in horror at the unconscious Vicar and tremble (lips quivering and eyes agog), John Black snarls in a nasty way.*

John *snarling*                      An exorcism, is it to be? That'll be merry!

Jocelyn *tight-lipped*                      I'll take complete charge of this extremely parlous situation in which we now find ourselves, thanks to *you* (Mr Black) and to my inane brother here. Torrens! Go away immediately!

*Undeterred, Jocelyn gives Black a withering and contemptuous look. She dives into her handbag and reefs out her battered Book of Common Prayer. Flipping open the first few pages, Jocelyn peruses the Table of Contents.*

Jocelyn *mumbling as she reads* ... the "Order for the Visitation of the Sick" ... the "Order for the Burial of the Dead" ... "Thanksgiving of Women After Childbirth" ...

*John Black strolls about, smoking. He is waiting for his chance to create more trouble.*

*Meanwhile, Phillip has knelt down to try and revive the Vicar, which is next to impossible when wearing boxing gloves. Realization returns to Phillip.*

Phillip *haltingly* Jossie ... You're not thinking of running this shipwreck by yourself, are you?

Jocelyn *irate* Of course!

What **else** do I have left now that you've floored the Vicar?  
Anyhow, I'm **that** close to being a lay preacher that it's not funny.

*[Proud]*

The first female to be so ordained in the Colonies. Besides, the Archbishop of Canterbury corresponds with me on a regular basis. And I have a perpetual invite at the Palace for afternoon teasies with the Arch of Sydney. All told, I'm as good as "in".

*John Black snorts, shaking his head. In his view, Jocelyn is crazy rather than a danger to his plans.*

Phillip *genuinely worried* But, dear ... It's ... It's blasphemous, isn't it? If you take on the mantle of a frocked Holy man ... ?

Jocelyn *determined* I won't be lectured to by a gent wearing boxing gloves.  
  
There are some very stirring lines in the Psalter, and I shall deliver 'em with gusto! Old Rev Tristram will be quite proud of me.

*Torrens finds this boring. While Jocelyn is rummaging through her Prayer Book, Torrens drops his cloth-bound parcel and assists Phillip out of the boxing gloves. Phillip is shaking. Torrens pats him kindly on the shoulder.*

Jocelyn *approving* Yes, Torrens. Good boy. Now run off and see if you can find Iggy. He needs a good run.

*As Torrens ignores her, Jocelyn returns to her perusal of the Table of Contents in her prayer book. Suddenly, her eyes light up.*

Jocelyn *excited* Oh, forget the Psalter. Let's have this one instead. It'll work a treat.

*Jocelyn breathes in deeply. The ghosts of Horrie and Wes materialize in the heavy shade of a large bush.*

Jocelyn *holding forth as she reads* "A Commination, or denouncing of God's anger and judgements against Sinners".

"Dearly Beloved – "

*Jocelyn quickly scans the pages, muttering and frowning.*

Torrens Go back to the bit about burial, Joss. I've brought a whole herd of dead bones over for the Vicar to bury. But now that darling old Phillip has put him out of commission, you can do the trick yourself from your Prayer Book.

Phillip *concerned* Bones, Torry? Where did you find bones?

Jocelyn *ignoring Torrens and Phillip* Well, some of this is not very savoury. So, I shall simply pick-out the good bits.

"Cursed is he that perverteth the judgement of the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.

Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly."

And this bit is from the Book of Psalms. Utterly appropriate, in my view.

Torrens Auntie Una's homeless blokes were ploughing and they accidentally dug up a whole lot of bones. And I asked if I could have them and Danny said "Yeah sure". And so I've been playing with them as part of my jungle --

Jocelyn *ignoring Torrens and Phillip* "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me."

Phillip! Torrens! Mr Black! I trust that you are all benefiting from my spiritual counsel.

*Marcus (on Wink's back) trots up just as Banjo arrives on the scene, sprinting towards the group.*

*Marcus dismounts and stands by Banjo's side. Jocelyn ignores the interruption and continues to deliver the Commination (which will from now on be in the background as Marcus or others speak).*

Jocelyn speaks the following or as much of it as fits into the scene (with interruptions as advised) in the background as Marcus or others speak:--

"Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness: and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts: and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Turn thy face away from my sins: and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy Spirit from me.

O give me the comfort of thy help again: and stablish me with thy free Spirit.

Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked: and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou that art the God of my health: and my tongue shall sing of thy righteousness.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall shew thy praise.

For thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee: but thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.

O be favourable and gracious unto Sion : build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations: then shall they offer young bullocks upon thine altar.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost ..."

Marcus *breathless, to*

*John Black*

John Black! Your search for your assassin is over.

You took out poor Horrie Fitz on account of his great great grandfather: one Joseph Cardwell. Joseph was a lag just as you were. He helped you to escape, then refused to join you on the road, and became an honest farm labourer instead.

You killed Horrie unjustly: Joseph would never have harmed you.

In fact, he prayed for you constantly. And you stole from him the

one love of his life.

*John Black begins to sway. His face is pallid. His eyes dart about but he seems powerless to act.*

Jocelyn *aggrieved*            Marcus! I'm trying to hold a religious ceremony here, and --

*Marcus sees that John Black is struggling. Marcus firmly interrupts Jocelyn.*

Marcus *authoritative*        Keep going, Joss. You're doing well. Just keep on with the reading and don't stop to chastise me. Don't stop for anything ...

*Jocelyn sniffs. She continues in a sing-song voice with the Commination. Marcus steps closer to John Black.*

Marcus *menacing, to John Black*            And the police sergeant had to be taken care of because his great grandfather was the blacksmith Samuel Morley. That swine had had it in for you ever since he'd loosed your chains. Oh yes! He was most definitely a candidate for your murder: you owed him three measly silver bits. But he was innocent of your slaughter. He was innocent.

And next on your rogue's list was the Vicar. James Honeybeam (his great great) had been a lawyer's clerk and sometime forger. And he'd done you out of quite a bit of loot, as well as whispering to the authorities of your whereabouts. But James Honeybeam did not pull the trigger. He did not kill you, John Black.

*John Black seems to be trying desperately to get at Marcus. His dark eyes are wild.*

Marcus                        Although Fanny Feldon (Miss Imbriss's great great) wanted most of all to finish you off, sanity prevailed in the end. She knifed you yes – but she did not kill you.

So who **did** kill you Black? Your killer claimed for the rest of his life that his greatest and Godliest deed was to put you out of your misery after you had maimed yourself in a shooting accident.

"Cutlass" Grimes (Mrs Gwen's great grandfather) killed you. But it was a kindly act. A Christian act of charity.

*Jocelyn snorts. To her mind that was no act of Christian charity.*

Jocelyn *waspish*

Marcus! What a crock of old horse dung!

No self-respecting bushranger could possibly swallow **that!**

*Jocelyn returns to her background monologue. Banjo stares at the ghosts of Horrie and Wes. He frowns at John Black's appearing inability to act. Suddenly, Banjo becomes alert.*

In a **SHORT FLASHBACK**, we revisit the very first scene in the film, whereby the horse-drawn ploughs unsettle John Black's bones. We watch again as Banjo chucks aside the skull.

Banjo *excited*

Captain! It's just occurred to me.

His bones! We were ploughing just before Horrie was killed, and we turned-up some bones ...

Perhaps the real issue here is that Black was never buried. His body lay in the bush here at LaPerouse until we disturbed it, and it was never committed to consecrated ground.

*All eyes are on John Black, who seems now to float centimetres above the ground, his eyes unseeing and his body slowly swinging from side to side. Marcus is astounded by Banjo's idea. He blinks, obviously trying to come to terms with the new suggestion.*

Phillip *urgent*

We have 'em right here, Banjo. Torrens apparently collected them. By a brilliant quirk of fate they are right here.

Banjo *thinking fast*

Goodoh! All he wants is to be decently buried. Perhaps if your sister were to ...

*Banjo turns to Torrens, face alight with excitement.*

Banjo *to Torrens*

You're a fast runner, Torrens. Faster than a wallaby, I reckon. Do you think that you could whip back to the shed and grab a couple of spades? Bring them back here as fast as you can. There's a good man!

*Torrens is all too eager to help and to impress his elders. He tears off at speed. Marcus snaps into action, understanding what Banjo is suggesting.*

Marcus *shouting*

Joss! Turn to the burial service. Quickly now: turn to the burial service. While we wait for Torry. Give it all you've got, Old Girl!

And the deceased's name is "John Black".

*With a frustrated "Hurrumph!", Jocelyn flips over some pages, and then reads sonorously into the mystical, ethereal atmosphere. Not only has John Black gone into a trance, but the two ghosts (Horrie and Wes) seem to float about as well.*

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Jocelyn's Finest Hour |
|-----------------------|

Jocelyn *resonating*

"As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen."

Now, you want the Burial Service, do you? That's fine by me!

*[Reads in such a way as to pick out the "good bits".]*

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

In the midst of life we are in death.

Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.

I am the resurrection and the life.

*Torrens dashes into view carrying a load of all manner of gardening equipment. Banjo, Phillip, Marcus and Torrens begin to dig a makeshift grave. Phillip solemnly places the cloth-covered package into the grave just as the Vicar stirs. Then the four gravediggers quickly replace the soil.*

*The small audience is amazed. John Black is now hovering at least a metre above the ground, his body glowing in a halo of light. Likewise, the ghosts of Horrie and Wes have become angelic and glow beatifically. As Jocelyn speaks, the three ghosts rise higher and higher, as they turn into angels, and are absorbed into the blue sky.*

Jocelyn *well-modulated and less theatrical*

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother John Black here departed: we therefore commit his body to the ground;

earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Amen."

*The Vicar has been helped to his feet. He dusts off his vestments as he and the other spectators stare skyward. They are transfixed by the emotion of the scene. Even Jocelyn is silent. The Vicar breathes "Amen".*

*Nation, Chickie, Danny and Mike rush up, followed closely by Charlotte. Behind them, Mrs Gwen rushes up, wearing her apron and puffing prodigiously. Behind Mrs Gwen, Clem (still bearing weapons) trots along in extreme pain and discomfort.*

Mrs Gwen *breathless*      Oh! Have we missed anything?

*Mrs Gwen is puffing and panting and is blind to the fact that no-one is speaking or answering her.*

Mrs Gwen *pleasant*      There's a cup of tea or coffee up at the house, for those that can't go another step without one. And a nice bit of butterscotch apple cake. Trying a new recipe that the Vicar's wife wrote out for me. "Very moreish", she said of it.

*Mrs Gwen smiles at all the sad, drained faces of those around John Black's grave. She neither knows nor cares that she has barged-in on a very ethereal scene.*

Mrs Gwen      It's got brown sugar sprinkled over the top, see.

Good way to use up spare apples, I reckon.

*Marcus (thinking of what might have happened had John Black succeeded with his devilish plans) smiles sadly as he stares at Mrs Gwen. He moves forward and takes Mrs Gwen in his arms in a copious hug. Mrs Gwen is uncertain as to what has occurred to cause this development. She pats Marcus on the back. Marcus rocks her, as if he is trying to comfort himself.*

Mrs Gwen *puzzled*      Now, whatever is this, then, Master Marcus? What's the matter?

Marcus *shaken voice*      There's nothing the matter. You are safe.

And thanks to my clumsy brother, the Vicar is safe. And thanks to Chickie, my cousin Charlotte is safe. Not forgetting Torrens who was marvellous as always.

*[Charlotte and Chickie smile radiantly at each other. Torrens glows with pride]*

And heaps of thanks to my wonderful sister. Due to her single-mindedness we are all safe now in that John Black has gone to his eternal rest and will worry us no longer.

*The camera backs far back, such that we can watch the group of witnesses to John Black's ascension up to Heaven. They shake hands firmly: and Jocelyn is the centre of attention.*

Charlotte *voice-over*      So who **did** finally murder the bushranger we knew as John Black?

Torrens *voice-over*      Well, for what it's worth: I always thought that the silly twat shot himself by accident. Bloody idiot!

Charlotte *voice-over, shocked*      Torrens Winterbottome! Such language! Oaths and swearing ...  
Whatever would your Mum say?

Poor box: that'll cost you a florin.

*We hear the sounds of Torrens grumbling as he fishes the coin out of one of his money over-filled pockets.*

Torrens *voice-over, grumbling*      A whole florin! That's several weeks' worth of pocket money (not counting what Marcus gave me). I wanted to put that towards a stethoscope thingy.

Charlotte *voice-over*      Ask old Dr Maisford if he has an old one which you might borrow.  
And ask him **nicely**, Torrens.

FADE OUT

### Scene iii: Banjo's Narration To Say Farewell

*The narrator is Banjo. As he speaks in voice-over, the various scenes he describes are visualized.*

*Chickie, Danny and Mike stroll along happily.*

*Behind them, Banjo and Una (who is dressed to the nines as always) walk along arm-in-arm.*

*The couple stop to admire some glorious Grevillea blossoms. Banjo uses his little finger to extract some nectar, which he feeds to his wife.*

Banjo *voice-over*      Ah, yes! ... Mrs Una Gibson still holds that nobody should be homeless.

*Una snuggles into Banjo's arm and looks up at him lovingly. Then, a trifle shyly, Una speaks to the camera, whilst Banjo smiles at her fondly.*

Una *smiling to camera* We've opened LaPerouse to our friends: Eustace, Daniel and Michael. They have comfortable rooms in the house. I suppose you might say that they are our family.

*The camera sweeps over the natural bushland which now makes up the grounds of LaPerouse. The members of the extended family mentioned in the monologue (Chickie, Danny and Mike) are now seen sauntering about in the mulga bush, in company with Tottie Enright, cousin Charlotte and Betty Lindrom. They are all unbelievably happy. The camerawork fits-in with Banjo's soliloquy.*

Banjo *voice-over* Chickie won Miss Imbriss over with his lovely artwork. And now they're walking out together.

Danny wanted to start a slap-and-tickle with Betty Lindrom, but she wouldn't have any of it. She was more interested in Mike, so they're stepping out together.

Young Tottie Enright is up for anything, and besides, she likes Danny's funny sense of humour. So now they are seeing each other a bit more than usual. So everyone's happy.

Break

*Now we see Nation (dressed as a butler, assisted by the maid Betty Lindrom) serving vegetables from a silver salver in the grand manner to Mr and Mrs Gibson and their guests (including those formerly being homeless men). Nation glances at the camera as he serves the vegetables and speaks to camera (whereas the diners are oblivious to Nation's words).*

**Nation *grins*** A new bloke is starting on Monday morning to learn the butlering trade. Nice chap, he is. Mrs Gwen is winding down too, after all the starts and frights of those few weeks when the bushranger held sway.

Yes ... A new chum will take up the reins ... And I'll settle back with Mrs Gwen and do some fishing. And perhaps a spot of gardening ...

*The camera enters the garden shed with no resistance. Banjo, Mike, Danny and Chickie are still involved in "the doings". Constable Hugh Metcalfe and the new Police Sergeant are sorting out upcoming rorts.*

**Banjo *voice-over*** The garden shed remains the nerve centre for "the doings". My Una probably knows about the shifty business that's going on ... But she turns a deaf ear and a blind eye. And it makes us happy to have useful rôles in life ...

Except for yours truly.

You wanna know what my special skill was, do ya? What I was famous for ...

**Una *voice-over*** I'd rather that you were remembered as being a top-notch gunnery sergeant, Dear, rather than as a procurer of attractive "naice" girls to be "attractive and naice" for the pie nights of politicians.

*Banjo (off-screen) chuckles and we hear the smack of a kiss.*

*The Saturday night card game is the next focus of the camera. In LaPerouse, in the drawing room, where several card tables are laid out, our four returned servicemen (Banjo, Chickie, Danny and Mike) play at cards. They are joined by Una, Verona, Charlotte, Ronald, Sylvia and Marcus.*

Banjo *voice-over*                      Anyways, on Saturday nights (after dinner), we all play euchre, five hundred and bezique. And drink as much pale ale as we feel like. My shout.

*Here follows a variety of scenes: the camerawork fits-in with Banjo's soliloquy.*

Banjo *voice-over*                      There's improving lectures and afternoon teas and open-air concerts and brass band recitals and theatricals and poetry readings ...

And community dances. For them as wants 'em. No-one is forced to attend.

*A quick scene shows the men standing solemnly in the lounge room as heavy rain teems down outside. There are chairs for them to sit on when required.*

Banjo *voice-over*                      We have a Church of England service with the Reverend Gambon every Sunday morning. Inside, on proper chairs. Wet or dry.

*The next quick scene is set on the lawn, where Danny raises one Australian flag up one flagpole, as Torrens raises another Australian flag up the other flagpole. We can see the ladies and men earnestly singing "God Save The King".*

Banjo *voice-over*                      And we muster on Monday mornings (just as we always did) but now we salute the Aussie flags and sing "God Save The King" for Australia.

*Everyone is now seen to be gathering in the sitting room about Una, who reads from a postcard, sent by Phillip and Daphne (still on their honeymoon).*

Banjo *voice-over*                      Don't see much of Mr Phillip these days ... He's still on his honeymoon with his very talented bride. But I meet up with the Captain on a regular basis. And the young doctor, of course. Suppose they'll be starting a family soon ...

END OF SCENE

### **Scene iv:** Learning to Drive the Vauxhall

*Marcus is sitting in the passenger seat of the Vauxhall.*

*Sylvia drives. He is on the alert and Sylvia concentrates deeply.*

Marcus                      Just relax and ease into your gear change. Don't be so staccato.  
Be smooth. Every action in the motor must be smooth.

Sylvia                        Oh ... I do try to ... You know, I'd much rather be riding Wink.

Marcus                        You'll get used to it. You just need to keep practising.

Sylvia *taunting*            Torrens changes gears as if --

Marcus *interrupting*      If you model your driving technique on that of my young brother,  
*without apology*            you'll wind up front-end-first into a ditch.

Sylvia                        My father rode a lovely grey gelding to every outlying call ... until  
his health gave out ...

Marcus                        This is the machine age. We'll soon find that the horse is only  
used for racing and gymkhanas.

Sylvia *nostalgic*            No more horse-drawn ploughs? What a shame!

Marcus                        You took that corner too fast. Relax.

Sylvia                        I'm sorry, Dear.

Marcus *pontificating*      This is 1921. What suited old Doctor Maisford will not suit young  
Doctor Maisford.

*[Pause]*

And I'd much prefer **not** to find sachets of lavender in my cricket

bag, if it's all the same to you.

Sylvia It stank. Something chronic.

Marcus It's a cricket bag ... It's supposed to stink. Next you'll be rinsing out my jockstrap in Velvet soap or something like that.

*Sylvia is guilty as charged: she smothers a laugh. Marcus senses it.*

Marcus *wised-up* You've already done that, haven't you?

Sylvia *pretending to be* Sorry, Darling.

*contrite* Well, I'm a bride. Brides are supposed to fuss over their husbands.

Marcus *very firmly* But **not** his cricket bag! The contents of the cricket bag are sacred.

Banjo Gibson was chatting to me in the dressing room and he smelt the delightful aroma of fields of lavender wafting about. He gave me a look that spoke volumes.

Sylvia *disparaging* Oh, Banjo! He's knows that you're a man's man.

Marcus Nevertheless.

I was forced to dump the offending articles into the pockets of the umpire's white coat which happened to be hanging on a peg.

Sylvia Did he notice?

Marcus Yes. Well, in a way he did. Just before the lunch break, he dragged out one of the sachets and blew his nose on it, without ever discovering that it wasn't his hankie after all.

*Sylvia chuckles brightly.*

Marcus *firm* Three things, woman. You listen and listen well. No touchy the cricket bag, no touchy the tool shed and **definitely** no touchy the beer supply. If you can remember those points, Mrs Winterbottom, we'll get on like a house on fire.

Sylvia *laughs* And no more lavender bags?

*delightedly*

Marcus *jovial*

Tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a baby and then you can fuss over it to your heart's content with rose water, lavender and potpourri. As much as you like. You can swim in it.

Sylvia *airy and somewhat naughty*

A baby? Goodness ... Ends and means ...

Hmmm ... Sounds like we're going to be very busy when we get home.

*Marcus grins. The car disappears around a bend.*

END OF SCENE

## **Scene v:** The Further Adventures of Master Torrens

*The camera takes in the beauties of the Australian wilderness spread over the grounds of LaPerouse.*

Banjo *voice-over*

Captain Marcus and Mister Phillip have left Worrilee. And Miss Jocelyn continues to float in and out when her religious duties allow her. And yes, that mongrel dog visits us in her company and gallops about like a bull in a china shop. So my sister-in-law Verona only has young Torrens at home with her now.

*Verona plays at Patience with a battered deck of cards. She is in Una's sitting room. Banjo and Una sit to one side, chatting quietly. Ronald leans back in an armchair, reading a newspaper.*

Verona *to camera*

You may be wondering why all these potted palms have popped-up in my sister's sitting room.

They were situated in my son's shrine to the Congo (if you recall) over at Worrilee. But that little obsession has passed now, and Una snaffled the palms. Well, I didn't want them ...

The clinging vines should have been turfed into the creek, only that Ronald fretted for the ducks getting tangled in them. I think that Marcus may have burned them in the end.

So Torrens has turned his thoughts to Veterinary Science, and has taken over the shearers' shed lately vacated by the paying guests (who are paying no longer). He is performing life-saving operations on frogs, birds and snakes.

Look! It keeps him busy and out of mischief and it forces him to concentrate on his studies. Therefore I personally vote it a step in the right direction.

*A door bangs. Jocelyn storms into the sitting room. Everyone looks up, questioningly.*

*Jocelyn to the general company*      Has anyone seen the Wig-boy?

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

It is night.

We can clearly hear a dog howling in pain from inside the shearers' shed. The door of the shed opens and Jocelyn peeks in.

Torrens is dressed in a blood-stained hospital gown. Iggy Wiggins lies on his side, on a blanket, on a narrow bench. As Iggy Wiggins howls pitifully, Torrens is discovered to have bloody hands filled with dripping guts. He looks at his half-sister in red-faced silence. Jocelyn appears about to faint.

Jocelyn faint-voiced What have you done to my best friend, Torry?

Torrens unhappy and guilt-ridden Um ... Oops ...

Torrens manages a weak, forced smile.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT VI

END OF FILM

End Credits

Merry music accompanies a gallery of sepia photographs of the film's characters, as they go about their lives. Iggy Wiggins (unfortunately for all) survived Torrens's surgical efforts.

FINIS

Torrens Winterbottome bobs up again as the keynote character in "Torres Strait". He has changed his surname to "Winter" and has become a veterinary surgeon. However, his work visiting the many islands dotted about in Torres Strait produces some very surprising outcomes.

This drama is now available for download.