

## Audition pieces/couples & ensembles

### Oriel & Lester: Cloudstreet

#### *SCENE 12 (1944)*

Lester and Oriel have a quiet moment by themselves. Lester is worried about QUICK who seems very sad. He is concerned QUICK blames himself for what happened to Fish. Oriel says she blames them both. Lester wants to take Fish to a doctor. Oriel is not keen – she says that hard work and good food will keep the quacks away and they can do better for Fish on their own.

LESTER *and* ORIEL *are by themselves.*

LESTER: Quick's looking blue.

ORIEL: Well, that's natural enough.

LESTER: Blames himself, thinks we blame him.

ORIEL: Don't we?

LESTER: It wasn't his fault. Why would it be'?

ORIEL: But we blame him. And I blame you. And God.

LESTER: It scares me, hearing you talk like that.

ORIEL: I can't help it. I'm a sinner, Lest.

LESTER: What about Fish? What are we going to do with him?

ORIEL: We'll give him the gentlest life we can. We'll make it the best for him we know how.

LESTER: Orry? You think we should... take him to a doctor?

ORIEL: Not too chuffed about doctors, Lester. Neither are you.

LESTER: I know, but ...

ORIEL: Hard work and good food, that keeps the quacks away. And a bit of care. We'll do our best for Fish, and that's that.

LESTER: Please, Orry. . .

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### Dolly & Sam: On the railroad tracks

#### *SCENE 87 (1961)*

It is a moonless evening and SAM finds DOLLY down by the railway line, addled and frail. She is waiting for Ted's boy who she thinks is coming to see her on the train. Sam is worried about Dolly and wants her way from the tracks. He tries to distract Dolly with the offer of a night out – he's had a win on the Nedland's monster, a bet that the bloke would kill again within a week – to which Dolly responds that Sam is a sick bastard and should be put down. Pleased with that win (pulling Dolly out of her addled thinking), he offers to take her to the pictures. She says she is too old for the pictures and they make their way home – Dolly imagining how she would spoil her grandson rotten if he came to stay.

QUICK *patrols the neighbourhood. SAM finds DOLLY by the railway line, addled and frail.*

SAM: You keep wandering along that track, one of these days the eight-twelve's gonna collect you.

DOLLY: They go somewhere, the bastards. I always wanted to go somewhere.

SAM: Doll, what are you doin' here anyway? Better come home with me. Not safe out here like it used to be, eh?

*He gets her up.*

Hey, I won myself fifteen quid.

DOLLY: What on?

SAM: That mad bastard, the Monster. I bet he'd strike within the month.

DOLLY: You're a sick man.

SAM: It's common-sense. Anyone who kills that many has to like it. I bet he kills again this week.

DOLLY: You should be put down.

SAM: I'll take you to the flicks, eh?

DOLLY: I'm too old for the flicks. I should be drunk.

SAM: I should be rich. Well, come on, let's get home. I'm stranglin' for a cuppa.

DOLLY: I'll give him lollies.

SAM: Who, love?

DOLLY: Ted's boy. I thought he might be coming on the train.

SAM: Not tonight, Doll. Carn old girl, you're walkin' with a winner.

*He leads her off*

DOLLY: I'd spoil him filthy if only he came to see his old grandma.

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**Rose & Dolly:** Dolly's bedroom

*SCENE 83 (1960)*

As ROSE appears, DOLLY is seeing a vision of her lost Ted - he's just heading for the jetty to chuck a few bombies and put jellyfish down Rose's bathers. The vision fades as Rose greets her mother and tells her Sam asked her to come. Dolly asks Rose not to hate her. They talk - but angry words are spoken by both women about trust and betrayal, how love needs to be earned and how favouritism destroys children who just need to be loved. Rose is disgusted and overwhelmed and leaves, running into LESTER outside listening. He asks her to please stay. Rose stands alone a moment, then walks back into Dolly's room. They talk about Ted and his boy - if the mother might bring him for a visit. They talk about sisters - whether Rose yearned for one. Finally, Dolly confesses that she is the product of an incestuous relationship between her father and her elder sister - who hated her from the moment she was born. Rose is stunned - she begs her mother not to cry - but she starts to cry herself first. They weep together.

*The ghost of TED passes as DOLLY thrashes in her bed.*

DOLLY: Teddy? Where are you goin' Teddy?

TED: Down the jetty, Mum, I'm gunna chuck a few bombies, I'm gunna stick a jellyfish down Rose's bathers....

DOLLY: Ted? Teddy? Don't leave me...

*TED's ghost fades as ROSE approaches DOLLY.*

Teddy?

ROSE: No, it's me, Mum. Dad said you wanted to see me.

DOLLY: I'm tired.

ROSE: Well, I'm tired, too, so get on with it.

DOLLY: Don't hate me.

ROSE: Too late for that.

DOLLY: Why?

ROSE: My whole life, Mum, that's why.

DOLLY: What did I do that was so bad?

ROSE: You stole from me. My childhood, my trust, everything. You were a hateful bitch. A drunken slut. I hate you for all the reasons you hate yourself.

DOLLY: You look sick.

ROSE: What is all this anyway? Why the summons?

DOLLY: I was sad.

ROSE: About Ted? Your favourite.

DOLLY: People have them, Rose. You always loved Sam more than me.

ROSE: He earned it.

DOLLY: People don't earn it.

ROSE: They do with me. I'm *going*. This makes me want to vomit.

DOLLY: Everything makes you want to... Please, don't go I want to talk, just to talk.

ROSE: I'm busy.

DOLLY: Please.

ROSE *leaves*.

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**Lester & Fish:** Cloudstreet kitchen

SCENE 44 (1949)

Fish sits in a tin bath while LESTER washes him and tries to explain that Quick has gone away for a while and can't come to see the water/stars in the boat with Fish. Fish wants to go down to the water and Lester tries to distract him with offers of taking him to the river one day or giving him a boat in the back yard. Fish responds with silence and Lester starts the naming game with Fish – what is his name and his proper name, who is his dad, and his brothers and his sisters, and what is his mother's name. FISH enthusiastically names all places and people except for his mother's which he seems not to even hear. When Lester asks where he lives, he shouts "Cloudstreet". The Big House", then whispers that the house is sad, that he hears it, and that it hurts. He insist Lester "do stories". Lester begins ...

LESTER: There was this boy. And he lived on a farm. Actually, this is me, it's the first thing I remember in my life. It was last century. It was night, and my father was carrying me across a flooded creek. I was on his shoulders and could see the swirling

darkness below. I was holding onto his ears and gripping his neck between my knees and-

FISH: Lestaah! Fish. Fish.

LESTER: All right, and there was this boy called Fish.

FISH: Hah!

LESTER: And he lived on a farm with only his brother.

FISH: Quick! Whacko, Lest!

LESTER: Yeah, with Quick. Everyone else was gone on holidays. One night it started to rain, see, and it came down like all of Heaven was tryin' to get in the roof. It rained and rained until the creek bust its banks. Pretty soon there was water in the lounge and water under the beds. So Quick wakes Fish up and tells him they got to go. They have to try and make it into town. Now Quick is bigger than Fish. He helps him into his clothes and holds his hand as they waded out into the water. There's rain peltin' down and it's dark. Quick puts Fish up on his shoulders and he strides into the water. It's a swirling torrent.

FISH: Yeah, the water. They go inside the water. To the big country. Yeah.

LESTER: No, that's not what happens -

FISH: And people there for them, people there.

LESTER: Oh, God.

FISH: I miss Quick, Dad.

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**Dolly & Lester:** Cloudstreet Pickle's side

*SCENE 59 (1956)*

When LESTER returns to Cloudstreet, he tells DOLLY he has deposited Sam safely up the coast. Dolly teases him when asking what she should do to get the money – stand on a street corner. Lester is mesmerised as she crosses her legs, visible in the opening of her dressing gown. He fidgets. He tells her if the heavies come, to send them to him. She teases again, that he doesn't seem like a fighting man. Dolly asks how much Sam owes. Lester worries that he and his family will end up in the street if Dolly and Sam sells the house for the debt – Dolly tells him they can't sell for another seven years. Lester thinks of the rent that is paid up for about seven years and imagines the heavies coming knocking at Cloudstreet, intimidating his family, and taking what he owns. He opts for peace of mind and offers to lend Sam the money. Dolly asks if all the recompense he wants is peace of mind. She kisses him and one thing leads to another – Lester says it feels like the Saturday matinee – afterwards he knows full well that it's not. Should he tell Oriel - about any of it – his transgression, Sam's debt he has said he will pay - or go behind her back, to keep his family safe at Cloudstreet? He notices how patched together everything is, everything in the house. He wonders what have they been saving for, anyway and makes his decision?

*Night. LESTER finds DOLLY at Cloudstreet after leaving Sam at the beach shack.*

DOLLY: Where is he?

LESTER: Up the coast a bit.

DOLLY: What am I supposed to do?

LESTER: Sit tight, I reckon. You've got some way of raisin' the money?

DOLLY: I could stand on the corner. That'd bring in enough for a packet of smokes...

*She stares at LESTER. He fidgets.*

What if they come after him?

LESTER: If they do, tell them to see me.

DOLLY: You don't seem the fightin' type, Lester.

LESTER: There won't be any fight.

DOLLY: How much is it, anyway?

LESTER: Two hundred pounds.

DOLLY: You can't have that kind of dough.

LESTER: There's savings we got. We live poor. We never buy anything, except for the shop.

DOLLY: You know it'll be money down the dunny.

*He shrugs, mesmerised as she crosses her legs.*

LESTER: What else am I supposed to do?

DOLLY: What do you mean?

LESTER: If this thing turned into a proper blue, we might find ourselves on the street. What if you had to sell to clear your debts?

DOLLY: We can't. Not for years. It's in the deed.

LESTER: Then these blokes'd come around and take goods to the value of. Guess which end they'll pillage. I reckon it's worth me insurin' against that.

DOLLY: And that's all?

*She kisses LESTER fall on the mouth.*

You sure that's all you're buyin'? A bit of safety?

*They kiss again, deeply.*

LESTER: Like the Saturday Matinee.

DOLLY: What?

LESTER: Saturday Matinee.

DOLLY: Well, listen to the popcorn goin' off between your ears.

*LESTER leaps up. He and DOLLY go to it on the table. In the shack SAM tosses a coin.*

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**Sam & Lester:** The Beach Shack

*SCENE 60 (1956)*

LESTER returns to SAM at the shack and finds SAM tossing a coin. SAM has been bored as hell and is delighted to see Lester back, even more delighted when he tells him he has the money. He is feeling lucky. There is a big two-up game the next day. Lester is horrified and uses every bit of logical reasoning at his disposal to dissuade Sam – but to no avail. Lester eventually relents, thinking maybe he deserves to lose his money.

SAM: About bloody time. Few more days and they'll be chook rafflin' me to the nuthouse. You got the money, then?

LESTER: Said I would.

SAM: Good on you. I'm feelin' lucky.

LESTER: Oh, you look lucky.

SAM: There's a big two-up game tomorrow.

LESTER: Two-up? Don't be stupid!

SAM: You said you had the money.

LESTER: To pay off your debts and keep trouble away from Cloudstreet.

SAM: Well, I'm gunna do that and make us some.

LESTER: Us?

SAM: Well, you're stakin' me. I reckon you're entitled to a dividend.

LESTER: You'll lose it, Sam.

SAM: Don't bloody talk like that. The Shadow's about. I know when I'm gunna win.

LESTER: I can't do it.

SAM: I'll toss you for it.

LESTER: This is no joke, Sam. Tell me who's after you, I'll go and pay them off right now.

SAM: You 're gutless, Lamb. You got Sunday School written all over you. Carn, Lester. I'm gunna win. Me stump's bloody near glowin'.

LESTER: I deserve a horsewhippin'.

SAM: For what?

LESTER: For this... and a lot of other things. Here. Two hundred quid.

SAM: You're in?

LESTER: No, you're in.

*They go.*

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**Sam/Angry Father:** Cloudstreet. Pickles side.

*Sam; Angry Father; Rose; Lester; Dolly*

*SCENE 45 (1949)*

ROSE has dressed up as best she knows how and is hurrying off out, fending off compliments from SAM and slipping past a big hairy MAN as she goes. The big hairy man lifts Sam off his feet by his shirt and slams him to the ground, pushing his face to the floor. He shouts that his daughter is up the duff to Sam's son, Ted. Lifting Sam to his feet, the irate father tells Sam not to play funny buggers and explains that he is not asking but telling him that a marriage between their kids is imminent. Lester hears the confrontation and comes out carrying a bloody meat cleaver he has been using to chop soup bones, Sam proceeds to shrink back from Lester, lifting up his stump of a hand and saying 'He's a mad bastard. Be careful!' Reassessing his position, in light of the cleaver, the man beats a hasty retreat while Sam thanks a very bemused Lester for saving his bacon. A very hung-over DOLLY comes out to find what all the fuss is about, as Sam explains CHUB appears eating a sandwich, and tells his parents that Ted has done a bunk to Adelaide to become a jockey. Dolly tries to take this in - her favourite child has done a runner!

*Morning. ROSE, dressed up as best she knows how, hurries off*

SAM: Where you going, Rosie?

ROSE: None of your business.

SAM: You look grand. Like Ingrid Bergman.

ROSE: Shut up, Dad.

*She goes. A big hairy MAN in a blue singlet approaches.*

SAM: G'day. How can-?

*The MAN knocks him to the ground and pushes his face into the earth.*

MAN: My daughter's up the duff, Pickles, and your boy's gettin' married. All right?

SAM: Which one?

MAN: I've only got one.

SAM: Boy. Which boy are we talkin' about?

*The MAN lifts SAM off the ground.*

MAN: Don't play funny buggers with me, mate. Ted or Todd or whatever his bloody name is, he's going to do the right thing. I'm not askin' and I'm not makin' requests, you get my drift?

*LESTER appears with a bloody meat cleaver in his hand. The MAN backs away from SAM.*

LESTER: What's going on here?

MAN: Shit! Let's go easy in this particular vicinity.

SAM: He's a mad bastard. Be careful!

*He holds up his stump. The MAN's eyes widen.*

Look what he did to me, for Chrissake! You tell me where you live, and I'll be round with my boy. We'll sort it out.

MAN: Whatever you say, mate...

*He slides away.*

LESTER: He a friend of yours, Sam?

SAM: No, but you are, sport. Take a week's free rent from me. *[Calling] Ted! [To LESTER]*  
What would you've done with that cleaver there?

LESTER: I'm choppin' bones for soup. It's cheaper than a bone saw.

SAM: Must be me with the brain damage. *[Calling] Ted! [To LESTER]* Can I borrow that sometime?

LESTER: Course. What you cutting?

SAM: Bit of circum-whatsit.

*(Lester reacts in shocked surprise)*

SAM: Not me, cobber. My eldest. And I tell you, my hand'll be none too steady. He'll be sittin' down to piss. Ted! I tell you, Lester, never have kids.

LESTER: Yeah... what?

*DOLLY appears, hung over, as LESTER goes back inside.*

DOLLY: What's up with you?

SAM: It's your Ted. We're going to have to sort him out.

DOLLY: That'll be the day. Ted's the only one round here with anything goin' for him.

*CHUB comes out, eating.*

CHUB: You're wastin' your breath, Dad, he's shot through.

SAM: What are you talking about?

CHUB: He's upped and gone. Taken all his gear.

DOLLY: What?

CHUB: Look in the bedroom! He's pissed off. Gunna be a jockey.

SAM: Ted got some piece up the duff, Doll. That's why he's gone, the chicken-livered little rooster.

DOLLY: Gone?

SAM: I reckon.

*SAM goes inside. CHUB goes off*

DOLLY: Teddy?

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**The Lamb Family:** Margaret River

*Lester; Oriel; Quick; Fish; Red; Elaine; Hattie & baby Lon*

**SCENE 1 (1943)**

THE LAMB family – ORIEL (mother, 40), LESTER (father, 44), HATTIE (eldest twin, 11), ELAINE (HAT'S twin, 11), QUICK (son, 10), FISH/SAMSON (son, 5) & Lon (son, 14 months) are at the Margaret River, prawning. Fish gets caught under the net and drowns. He is revived by Oriel. The family believe it is a miracle, they sing in praise and head off in their truck to the church of Christ. QUICK cradles Fish in his arms – he knows all is not well.

LESTER: Don't grin so much, Fish, you'll frighten the prawns away. Come on, Quick, don't be so slow.

FISH: You're one to talk, Dad.

*They have fanned out across the water. The GIRLS build a fire.*

*HAT sings softly to LON.*

FISH: Oi, Quick, look at Dad. He looks like a statue in a fountain with that light. Someone'll toss a penny in and make a wish.

QUICK: What would they wish for, you reckon?

LESTER: Yeah, what?

FISH: Prolly wish they could get their money back.

LESTER: Cheeky blighter. Okay, start runnin' 'em towards me, boys.

*They start the net towards their father*

RED: Ow! Ow! Ow!

ORIEL: What's the matter, love? You get stung?

RED: No! No! It's a crab bit me! Oh, he's gone! Bugger!

ORIEL: Red! Where'd you learn such language?

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**Lamb Family:** Cloudstreet kitchen

Hat; Red; Elaine; Fish; Quick; Fish; Lester; Oriel

*SCENE 14 (1945)*

Lester and the children are at the table in the Lamb's kitchen spinning the knife to see who will have to do the dishes for a week. Elaine loses. Oriel tells Lester that there are many things they need. Lester tells her not to worry, he has a plan – to open the first shop on their side of the tracks, in their front room. Oriel objects, so they spin and let the knife choose.

*Kitchen: All the LAMBS are there. RED spins the knife while ELAINE & HAT watch.*

HAT: This is for who washes up tonight!

RED: And this week! All this week!

ELAINE: The knife never lies!

FISH: I wanna play! Come on, Lestah! Quick!

LESTER: Slowing down! It's you, Hat.

HAT: Nah, got plenty in it yet. It's you, Dad.

LESTER: Nope. It's gonna be Quick. He's getting out the tea-towel already, aren't you, mate?

Here it comes again.

RED: Elaine!

ELAINE: Wait. Wait!

QUICK: Oh, God!

HAT/ELAINE/RED: Quick! Quick gets the dishes.

LESTER: The knife never tells a fib, but it can make a bib for a squib. Here's one. Who's got a pimple up their dimple?

*Laughter as he spins the knife again.*

Who will it be? Round and round and round it goes, and where it stops...

RED: It's ... it's Elaine. Pimple up your dimple, Ee!

ELAINE: It's not!

HAT: Carn, Ee, fair cop!

QUICK: Yeah, the knife doesn't lie!

LESTER: You kids wash up. I'll just be a tick.

*The KIDS go.*

We're making something here, love, I can feel it.

ORIEL: We need things.

LESTER: Plenty.

ORIEL: Don't smile me down, Lest.

LESTER: There's money left, love. We're not hungry.

ORIEL: We need work.

LESTER: I've been thinking some more.

ORIEL: Thought I smelt burning rubber.

LESTER: Thinking about this place.

ORIEL: Don't bother. It's time we were moving on. We need our own bathroom. We need a stove. The kids need clothes. They go to school like they haven't got a mother. We need to find somewhere permanent.

LESTER: Hang on. I've cottoned onto something. There's no corner shop this side of the railway line.

ORIEL: I know. I've carried the groceries back from Subi.

LESTER: I've brained it out. We could do it.

ORIEL: What are you talking about?

LESTER: A shop. Our shop.

ORIEL: Is this another one of your- ?

LESTER: This is a good one, Orry.

ORIEL: Don't be a fool, Lest. We can't pay rent on a shop.

LESTER: We already are. Right now.

ORIEL: What've you done?

LESTER: I've used my noggin.

ORIEL: Explain.

LESTER: We'll use that front room for a shop.

ORIEL: Across the corridor, they'll chuck all whatsername about it.

LESTER: They're broke, darl. Poor as us. And lazy. Look at them, waiting for the boat to come in.

They need the money. We'll pray about it. We'll take it to the Lord. No, wait on...

*He spins the knife.] The knife never lies.*

If it points to me it's a Yes. To you, it's a No.

*They watch the knife spin. It points to LESTER.*

ORIEL: How do you know it never lies?

*LESTER breaks into a song.*

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**Pickle Family**: Hospital, Geraldton.

*Rose; Sam; Dolly; Ted; Chub*

*SCENE 3 (1943)*

SAM is at the hospital, groggy with painkillers, nursing his heavily bandaged hand. ROSE is with him. DOLLY, TED and CHUB arrive. Rose is suitably concerned for her father; Dolly is concerned about their lost income and Ted & Chub are more interested in going off for a swim.

ROSE: Rose's dad, Sam Pickles, believes in luck, though he never says the word. He calls it the Shifty Shadow of God. And you never know which way it's going to fall. Rose has never felt the shadow the way she did today. She knew something bad was going to happen, something really bad, but she never thought the shadow would make her father lose his fingers working on a barge loaded with birdshit.

*DOLLY, TED and CHUB arrive.*

DOLLY: How is he?

ROSE: Four fingers and the top of his thumb.

DOLLY: The sister told me. His right hand?

ROSE; Yup. He caught it in the winch.

DOLLY: His bloody working hand. A man can hardly pick his nose with a thumb and half a pointer. Well, we're done, kids, we're cactus. Thank you, Lady Luck, you rotten slut. He been awake?

ROSE: No. I just been watching him. Wondering where you were.

TED: Can we go down to the jetty? If he's not gunna wake up ...

ROSE: Supposed to be in school, youse.

TED: We'll be back dreckly. Dad might be awake then, eh, Mum?

ROSE: Don't drown from crying, Ted.

TED: You don't want to come 'cause last time you got a jellyfish up your bathers.

ROSE: No, 'cause someone thought you were my brother.

CHUB: But he is your brother.

TED: Right, Chub. Come on.

TED *runs off*

CHUB: Know what I reckon? I reckon it'll be pretty good having a dad with bits off him.

Everyone'll think he's a war hero.

DOLLY: Chub?

CHUB: Yeah?

DOLLY: Shut up and go to the jetty.

CHUB *runs off* DOLLY *stares after him*.

A war hero? Wounded in the battle for birdshit? You can't get much mileage out of that.

DOLLY *goes*. ROSE *stays by* SAM.

ROSE: Rose watches Sam sleep. She hates him sometimes, he's so useless. She wants to hit him, to pick up a lump of four-by-two and snot him with it. He's a grown man and yet he doesn't have a pinch of sense. But he isn't mean like the old girl. Rose knows something sour is coming into everything, and it's been happening all year. Everything is falling to bits.

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**Rose & Toby:** Toby's flat, Perth

*SCENE 52 (1954)*

ROSE & TOBY return to Toby's Subiaco flat after a dinner out and a new culinary experience for Rose – spaghetti and red wine. Rose is impressed by the view and with all the people who new Toby at the restaurant. She has never met someone with so many friends and is a little daunted being with a middle-class Uni 'smartbum'. Toby reassures her that she can relax – he can keep his hands to himself when he's with a lady. She asks what kind of writer he is. He admits to being a newspaper hack, and a poet on the side. He asks her if she reads. She says she read the entire Geraldton library when she was a kid. Toby reels off a list of famous writers to impress her – they kiss.

ROSE: You've got a view.

TOBY: Not what I'd call a real view. Did you enjoy yourself?

ROSE: I've never met someone with so many friends.

TOBY: They're not exactly friends.

ROSE: Well ... all those people in the restaurant.

TOBY: I know who they are, and they know who I am. I suppose I'm clubbish. It's my last concession to a bourgeois past. Would you like a drink? I've got some brandy.

ROSE: The wine was enough. I've never had wine before. Or spaghetti. It was nice.

TOBY: Are you okay? Don't be nervous. I'm quite safe. Not respectable, but I am able to restrain myself with a lady.

ROSE: Look at the lights on the river. They're nice.

TOBY: Nice? This is one of the world's strangest towns.

ROSE: I wouldn't know.

TOBY: Perth is the most isolated country town in the world trying to be a city. Desert on one side, sea on the other. There's something nesting here, something horrible waiting. Ambition, Rose. It squeezes us into corners and turns out ugly shapes.

*(Rose looks thoughtful)*

What are you thinking now?

ROSE: I'm a switchgirl *(beat)* and you're a writer and you've been to uni.

TOBY: And...

*He moves closer.*

ROSE: What do you write?

TOBY: If you could call it writing. I'm a journalist on the *Daily*. A hack. I scribble a bit of poetry in my own time. Do you read?

ROSE: Yes, I read.

TOBY: Thank God, she reads. See, we're not so different. Tell me who you read.

ROSE: Oh, God.

TOBY: Don't be shy.

ROSE: I read the whole Geraldton library end-to-end when I was a kid.

TOBY: Name some names.

ROSE: You name some.

TOBY: Hammett, Steinbeck, Hemingway, James Jones, Mailer, D. H. Lawrence, Xavier Herbert, Sillitoe, Camus...

*He gets closer. They kiss.*

ROSE: I like talking about books. It's nice.

TOBY: Nice is a terrible, bourgeois word.

ROSE: Oh. Sorry.

TOBY: Don't be sorry for anything.

*TOBY leans in*

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### **Rose & Quick: Quick & Rose's caravan**

#### *SCENE 86 (1961)*

QUICK hurries back to ROSE in the caravan with a proposition. There is a murderer on the loose and Rose is alone in the van. While Quick is out trying to run the monster down. He cannot be there to protect her, so the logical solution is that they move back to Cloudstreet— just until the house is finished and the murderer is caught. Rose is adamant that she wants a clean new house with a car in front and the lawns mown – that only they and their baby will live in. Quick jumps at the word 'baby' – asking if she is sure. Rose confirms she is sure, which to Quick is all the more reason to opt for the safety of Cloudstreet. Rose protests that Fish will want to sleep in their bed, Oriel will boss her around and Dolly will want to be her new best friend. She says she and the baby are staying where they are.

QUICK: I've had an idea.

ROSE: Watch yourself.

QUICK: More of a proposition really.

ROSE: Out with it.

QUICK: You haven't been sleeping well.

ROSE: I'm all right.

QUICK: And I'm working patrol most nights now.

ROSE: Yeah, that's what you wanted.

QUICK: And there's a murderer out there. If we go back to Cloudstreet-

ROSE: Quick-

QUICK: Just for a little while, till the house is finished. At least till we catch this bloke.

ROSE: No.

QUICK: Rose-

ROSE: No!

QUICK: Rosie, I'm worried about you here with no one to look out for you.

ROSE: No, I want a clean, neat, new house that only we live in. I want a car out front and a mowed lawn-

QUICK: But just for-

ROSE: Clean and new, that's what I want for us and our baby.

QUICK: A couple of months till- What? What did you say?

ROSE: Don't faint on me, Casanova. You've done your job. I think I'm pregnant. I wasn't going to tell you till I felt pretty certain this one would stick.

QUICK: Rosie, are you sure?

ROSE: Yeah.

QUICK: Well, this is all the more reason to-

ROSE: No, listen to me. What'll happen if we go back to Cloudstreet? I'll tell you. Oriel will order me around and Dolly will want to be my best friend. I've made my peace with her, but I don't want to live with her again. And Fish will want to sleep with us.

QUICK: No, he won't.

ROSE: Every night. I lived in the same house with you all your life, don't forget. I know what goes on, on your side, mate. You can go back there if you want. Me and the baby are staying here.

QUICK: There's no telling you anything.

QUICK *heads out.*

---

**Quick & Fish:** In the boat

*Quick; Fish; Black Man;*

*SCENE 27 (1946)*

FISH and QUICK are on the epic rowing journey back home with the boat. Fish is loving every minute of being on the water. QUICK has realised just how far they have to go and is nervous he doesn't have the strength. The Black Man observes and comments on their progress. Naming all the places they are passing. Fish asks if he can row with QUICK, then getting tired, curls up at QUICK's feet. QUICK is knackered, Fish wakes and stands up with outstretched arms welcoming the stars and the water, tilting his 'wings' seemingly steering the boat. It seems as though the stars are in the water and they are in the sky. Fish and boat fly through the water and the stars.

*FISH & QUICK start their journey. QUICK keeps rowing. FISH loves it all.*

QUICK: All right?

FISH: The river's big.

QUICK: My oath. I'm nearly pooping myself.

*FISH laughs. QUICK rows on.*

Cracker boat, eh?

FISH: Yeah.

QUICK: It's ours, Fish.

FISH: Whacko!

*QUICK continues to row. The BLACK MAN watches them.*

BLACK MAN: It doesn't feel so bad to have sore hands when you know that you've left Fremantle behind and passed Rocky Bay with all its puking foundries and limestone cliffs, for the long stretch through Melville and the sugar factory. But Quick starts to wonder if the old man is the full quid. He's not sure if even a full-grown man could do this trip.

FISH: It's a long way. Is it a long way, Quick?

QUICK: Yeah, mate, it's a fair whack, orright.

FISH: Can I do?

QUICK: Do what?

FISH: Do the sticks. The rowers.

QUICK: All right, we'll share. Then we'll go faster, eh?

*FISH climbs towards the oars. The boat totters.*

Don't roll us, Fish! Don't roll us.

*FISH starts to row with QUICK.*

BLACK MAN: It's lucky they're headed in the long-bellied arc around the Mosman spit because that's the only direction they're likely to go in, the way Fish is rowing. Quick hopes Fish will get bored by the time they need a straight run, though he figures it'll

be dark by then anyway.

FISH, *tired of rowing, curls up at QUICK's feet.*

Out past Claremont, out past somewhere, Quick doesn't know anymore, he stops. He sits back and ships the oars and gives it away.

FISH: I can hear the water.

QUICK: We're on the water you dill.

FISH: I can hear it.

QUICK: Yeah. You cold?

FISH: No.

QUICK: I'm knackered.

FISH *stands and spreads his arms wide. The boat flies through the sky*

BLACK MAN: Fish laughs like he's just found a mullet in his shorts and stands, with his arms out like he's a bird in an up draught. The sky, packed with stars, rests just above his head, and when Quick looks over the side he sees the river is full of sky as well. There's stars and swirl and space down there, and it's not water anymore. It doesn't even feel wet. There's no lights ashore now. There's no shore at all. The boat's vibrating and the anchor's rattling and Fish tilts his wings in the bow. Quick could swear Fish is steering them. He feels fatigue coming to claim him and he strains to stay awake, to see, to see.

QUICK: Are we in the sky, Fish?

FISH: Yes! the water. I fly.

---

## **Quick and Black Man**

### *SCENE 53 (1955)*

Lucy thinks she has her ticket out of town but Quick has other ideas. So, he packs up the Dodge and heads off. He sees the Black Man in a pin-striped suit, carrying a Gladstone bag and drives past him. After several miles Quick is puzzled when he sees the Black Man again beside the road. He stops this time and offers him a lift. They share food and beer. They talk about where home is and drive through the night. Fish appears above them and asks who the Black Man is. Quick slows the truck to let the Black Man out and realizes that they are on the corner of Cloud Street. He rejects the idea of going home and drives off leaving Fish saying, come home brother boy, come home.

QUICK: Lucy is beside herself with happiness. She's got her ticket out of town. She begins negotiations with her father for a flower shop. But Quick can't hang around. It's not that he doesn't like her. He never minded wrestling around with her and having her grabbers in his shorts. But he's never thought about her much. So, he packs up the Dodge and heads off.

QUICK *drives the truck alone. A BLACK MAN in a pinstriped suit with a Gladstone bag, holds his thumb out. QUICK doesn't stop. Magically the BLACK MAN reappears. QUICK pulls over and opens the door.*

BLACK MAN: Ta.

*He climbs into the ute.*

QUICK: Weren't you just... back there?

BLACK MAN: No.

QUICK *looks at him for a moment and drives on.*

QUICK: Wanna smoke?

BLACK MAN: Yeah. Ta. Hungry?

QUICK: Yeah, I could do with a bite.

*From his bag, the BLACK MAN pulls out bread and a bottle.*

[QUICK *speaks to the audience.*] They drive all night. And the fuel gauge never goes down. Something drags Quick on, drags him forward, but he doesn't know what. He's been going along without any feeling for so long, without caring either way, he doesn't know what to feel now. So Quick keeps driving. [To the BLACK MAN] How we doing for time?

BLACK MAN: Well as can be expected.

QUICK: Where you from, mate?

BLACK MAN: All over.

QUICK: I mean, where's your family?

BLACK MAN: All over.

QUICK: That's a nice suit. You must have a bit of a job.

BLACK MAN: Bit of a job.

QUICK: Family business?

BLACK MAN: Always family business.

QUICK: Headin' for the city?

*The BLACK MAN nods. And QUICK smiles to himself.*

Family business...

*FISH appears above them again.*

FISH: Who's the man, Quick? Who's the man?

QUICK *slows the truck and looks at the BLACK MAN.*

QUICK: Where can I drop you?

BLACK MAN: Just follow the railway line a bit further.

QUICK: Any place in particular?

*As he slows the ute, BLACK MAN points.*

BLACK MAN: Just up there a bit. Corner of Cloud Street, mate.

QUICK: No... I... I'll drop you here.

*The BLACK MAN gets out, looks back at QUICK.*

BLACK MAN: Comin'?

QUICK: No.

*QUICK throws the truck into gear, leaving the BLACK MAN behind*

FISH: Come home, brother boy. Come home.

---

**Dolly & Gerry Clay:** Railway tracks

*SCENE 33 (1946)*

Dolly is following the train tracks alone recalling her childhood and how she needs to be full as a goog to live with the mess of life, when Gerry Clay joins her. He flatters her shamelessly and they kiss.

DOLLY: Dolly follows the rails most nights, remembers those hot, buckling rails up there where childhood lived, remembers riding the rails with her father, remembers her sisters, and the big sister that hated her, remembers the poison in her heart. Here the moon lights up the steel so it looks deadly cool, and now and then she gets the feeling that she could just lie down there and go to sleep and the whole world, the whole fucking mess would evaporate. It's all too complicated, unless Dolly's as full as a goog, then it's simple. And if she is full, some nights she doesn't walk the tracks alone.

GERRY CLAY *approaches.*

Of all the men she's met since Sam dragged her down from Geraldton, the one that sticks, is Gerry Clay. There's something exciting about him. He's got muscle on him, and besides, he's a Catholic, and dead scared of going to Hell.

GERRY: You're a bottler, Doll. Bet your old man's a millionaire, the way you look.

DOLLY: Him? He hasn't got a pot to piss in. Give us a kiss, love.

GERRY: He give you a good knock, now and then?

DOLLY: If he did, I wouldn't be here. You've got a foul mouth, sport.

*She kisses him*

---

**Quick & Cousin Fred:** Margaret River

*SCENE 54 (1955)*

*Margaret River. COUSIN FRED at work sees QUICK approaching.*

QUICK: Fred Blunt. I'm your cousin.

COUSIN FRED: One of Lester's boys. Mason.

QUICK: They call me Quick. You still doin' haulage?

COUSIN FRED *nods.*

I need a bed and a job.

COUSIN FRED: You're in luck. I need another driver.

QUICK: I'm on.

COUSIN FRED: How's the family?

QUICK: I wouldn't know. When do I start?

COUSIN FRED: Now. Come on.

---

**Oriel, Gerry & Mrs Clay:**

*SCENE 34 (1946)*

Oriel reflects on the Clay's opening their shop on the main road and their shameless promoting of Gerry Clay's war service. She visits the shop to challenge them about that, asking where he fought. He tells her and Mrs Clay chimes in with his rank, asking about Oriel's husband's war service. She scoffs when Oriel tells her Lester was at Gallipoli as a cook. Oriel declares war on the Clays declaring that Lester's cakes and pies will be their greatest weapon. She has the brilliant thought that summer is coming and adds ice-cream to their arsenal.

ORIEL: No one takes much notice of Mr and Mrs Clay when they open their shop on the main road. But walking past one day, Oriel sees the rival business with its big gaudy sign. 'G.M. Clay. Ex 2nd AIF. Buy here.' Buy here? Because he served his country in wartime? That's dirty...

ORIEL *visits the CLAYS' shop.*

GERRY: G'day, madam. What can I get you?

ORIEL: Oh. A dozen eggs, please.

GERRY: Righto. (*He serves her*) That'll be sixpence ha'penny, thanks. Anything else?

ORIEL: No thank you. Mr Clay, where did you serve? The sign outside your shop says 'G. Clay. Ex 2nd AIF. Buy Here'.

GERRY: You'd be Mrs Lamb.

ORIEL: Where did you fight?

MRS CLAY: What's it to you, Mrs Lamb?

ORIEL: Well, if you're going to use it for advertising ...

MRS CLAY: He was in New Guinea. On the Kokoda Trail.

ORIEL: Infantry?

GERRY: Signalman and runner, Mrs Lamb.

ORIEL: Oh. Fair enough.

*She's going. MRS CLAY stops her.*

MRS CLAY: Did your husband serve, Mrs Lamb?

ORIEL: Not this time. In the First World War. The 10th Light Horse. He was at Gallipoli. But we'd never skite about that.

MRS CLAY: What was his rank?

ORIEL: Well.... private. He was a cook.

MRS CLAY *giggles.*

MRS CLAY: A cook? Well, you wouldn't skite about that, would you?

ORIEL *returns to Cloudstreet.*

ORIEL: If they want war, they've got war.

LESTER: We're doing all right, Orry. There's room for both shops.

ORIEL: Your cakes, Lester. That's our secret weapon. Cakes and pies and- oh, my Lord, I never thought of it! Summer's coming on....

---

**Ted & Mary** Pelican Point

*SCENE 40 (1945)*

TED is chatting up an older girl, MARY, attempting to convince her that she should let him feel her breasts. She runs away playfully. He chases her and caught her. Mary says he is too young but relents anyway.

MARY: Get out of it.

TED: Come on, Mary.

MARY: You're too young for me, Teddy.

TED: I'm sixteen.

*She laughs with scorn.*

Fifteen.

*She looks at him steadily.*

I'll be fifteen.

MARY: That's way too young. *(she sighs)* Oh, Jesus... Go on.

*She lets him touch her breasts.*

TED: Holy shit...

*They laugh and run off*

---

**Mrs Clay & Sam:** The street

*SCENE 36 (1946)*

MRS CLAY intercepts SAM on the street on his way home to accosts him about Dolly's affair with her husband. She tells him to keep his wayward wife under control – she has a family to protect. Sam tells her to mind her own business.

MRS CLAY: Mr Pickles? Are you Sam Pickles?

SAM: Yeah, that's me.

MRS CLAY: You don't know me, and I really don't know you, and I've got nothing against you or anything, but I think you should try to control your wife.

SAM: And I think you should mind your own bloody business, lady.

MRS CLAY: It is my business! It's my marriage I'm talking about. I've got young'uns to look after and she's got no right. If you were any kind of a man, you'd put a stop to it. It's a mortal sin!

*MRS CLAY storms off SAM raises his stump to the sky.*

SAM: What am I going to do? Stump the bastard to death?

---

**Quick & Lucy:** Out on the road

*Quick; Lucy; Black Man; Fish*

*SCENE 51 (1954)*

The BLACK MAN observes something strange is happening for Quick. He has had a reputation as a crack shot, the best shooter in the district, but has barely shot a week's worth in a month. Every time Quick takes aim at a roo, he sees a shirtless man in his cross hairs, running through the grass just as he is about to fire. As he shines his roo light across the wheat fields the figure freezes in the spotlight and then runs away. Quick imagines he can hear Fish asking, "who is the man, Quick?" Quick realises that the man is himself, which scares the skin off him. He takes a drive with Lucy, who talks about their relationship and how good they could be together. She wants to be more than a conquest, she says – she wants him to join her in her dreams of a buying a 'floristry' shop in the city. His fate is sealed when Lucy hops out of the car and drops her clothes just as the headlights of an oncoming vehicle catch her naked form. "You may kiss the bride" she says, triumphant.

BLACK MAN: One night as Quick waits for the roos, he hears familiar bashing in the wheat and raises the rifle and hits the spotlight to get a look at the bugger. He sees a man running raw and shirtless in the light - it's him - right there in the crosshairs of his Lee-Enfield.

QUICK *shines the roo light across the wheat. A figure freezes in the spotlight, then runs away.*

His finger itches for first pressure on the trigger. He sees himself running. He sits back, rolls a smoke and thinks; thank God I didn't shoot.

FISH: Who's the man, Quick?

QUICK: Every few nights, it happens again. He'll hit the light and sees himself tearing out into the open, right in the sights. It scares the skin off him.

*QUICK and LUCY drive in QUICK's ute.*

LUCY: What's up with you tonight?

QUICK: Nothin'.

LUCY: Make a killin' this week, did you?

QUICK: No I didn' t.

LUCY: Must be losin' your eye. Quick Lamb. Crack shot.

QUICK: I haven't shot a week's worth this whole month.

LUCY: Crack shot. Make you think of anything?

QUICK: You don 't have to talk like that.

LUCY: Oh. I forgot you went to church.

QUICK: You shouldn't push me, Luce. I take a lot of crap from you.

LUCY: You get a lot of other things, too. What other girls you got in town like me?

QUICK: What others are there, full stop?

LUCY: You think I'm a... a conquest?

QUICK: No. I never went after you.

LUCY: You come by every Saturday night, mate. Isn't that comin' after me?

QUICK: You asked me to, once.

LUCY: Oh, you've just been obedient these last six months?

QUICK: Reckon I have been.

LUCY: You bloody bastard! You thought your dick was for cleanin' your rifle before I took you in.

QUICK: Did you take me in?

LUCY: I reckon we could make a go of it, you and me. Don't you reckon?

QUICK: I don't see myself stayin' out here, Lucy.

LUCY: Me neither. I see myself in the city. In my flower shop.

*QUICK stops the ute and gets out.*

Hey, Quick, you're not... are you?

QUICK: What?

LUCY: Leavin' me here? I thought you were gonna leave me out here

*She climbs out.*

QUICK: I want some air, and while I'm out here I reckon I'll take a piss, all right?

*He starts trying to pee.*

LUCY: Quick, we shouldn't fight. I'm good for you, mate. I got big plans.

QUICK: For your flower shop?

LUCY: That's right. And more. Without me you're a duck, Quick. Just a sittin' duck. You're dumber than a post.

QUICK: Leave off, will you? Lucy, I just don't see the two of us... You know what I'm sayin'?

LUCY: I reckon ...

*They hear the sound of a distant car. LUCY strips off her skirt. She's naked, except for her bobby socks.*

QUICK: Lucy?! What are you doing?! Get your gear back on!

*The headlights find them.*

LUCY: Now you may kiss the bride.

---

### **Switch board operators** Baird's Department Store

#### *SCENE 49*

Two years on in her employment, ROSE (now 18) is proficient and confident at the switchboard when she receives a call from TOBY, wanting to track down his order of Earl Grey Tea. They spar for a time with word play around Earl Grey until she cuts him off. He rings back, they spar some more, and she cuts him off again as ALMA, MERLE & DARLEEN return from a long lunch. Rose chides them for lateness, assuming, correctly that they have linked up with some sailors and had a fine time. The girls lark about for a while before getting back to work. Toby rings back and they agree to go to lunch together.

ROSE: Baird's, good morning.

TOBY'S VOICE: Hmm. Baird's.

ROSE: Can I help you, sir?

TOBY'S VOICE: It's about Earl Grey.

ROSE: Does he work here, sir? The name's not familiar.

TOBY'S VOICE: It's tea, love.

ROSE: Mr T. Earl Gray, is it?

TOBY' S VOICE: Oh, a card, are you?

ROSE: Sir?

TOBY'S VOICE: I'm expecting some tea from you people and it's weeks overdue.

ROSE: I'll give you to Mail Order, then, sir. Gladly.

*She unplugs TOBY.*

Good morning, Baird's. Connecting you now, ma'am. Earl flamin' Grey, my bum!

Good morning-

TOBY' S VOICE: I heard that. I should report you, girlie.

ROSE: The firing squad in haberdashery or death by moron on the switch, it's all the same to me, mate.

TOBY'S VOICE: Now, listen here!

ROSE: There's a ladder in your stockings, sir. I'll give you Haberdashery and Hosiery.

TOBY'S VOICE: No, no-

*She unplugs him.*

ROSE: Good morning, Baird's. Manchester? One moment. *[She answers another call.]*

Good morning, Baird's.

TOBY' S VOICE: It's me again.

ROSE: You don't say. Any luck with Earl?

TOBY' S VOICE: They haven't found him yet.

ROSE: Dear, dear. Want me to put you through to the Governor- General?

TOBY' S VOICE: You're a cheeky bugger.

ROSE: Thanks a dozen, but I've got to get back to work. There's a lot of buggerizing to be done.

TOBY'S VOICE: Well, I'm going to keep after this tea.

ROSE: Good luck, Earl.

*DARLEEN, MERLE and ALMA arrive late. ROSE unplugs TOBY. They go to work.*

Baird's, good morning... Putting you through ... I had the Charge of the Light Brigade on my hands here. Where the hell have youse been?

DARLEEN: Oh, a meetin' of minds in William Street.

ROSE: Sailors, I suppose.

DARLEEN: How'd you guess?

ROSE: Who else is gonna go you three in a group at nine o'clock in the morning? Baird's, good morning.

ALMA: Merle's sailor's a dwarf. Baird's, good morning.

MERLE: Good morning, Baird's... You' re a liar, she's lyin'.

ALMA: Putting you through. He's shorter than Mum 's pastry!

DARLEEN: Short ones have got fat thingies. Good morning, Baird's.

ALMA: Well, she's hardly the eye of the needle. One moment, Madam.

ROSE: Youse sheilas are gettin' fouler every day. Baird's, good morning.

TOBY'S VOICE: Hello. Listen, why don't we meet somewhere? You sound like a smart girl.

ROSE: Only meet smart ones, do you?

TOBY'S VOICE: What about lunch?

ROSE: Let's meet at the GPO. First column on the left as you go up the stairs. Twelve o'clock. Bring your teapot.

ROSE *hangs up*

---

**Rose & Mrs Tisborne & the Switch Operators:** Baird's store, Perth. MRS TISBORNE's office.

*SCENE 46 (1950)*

ROSE (now aged 15) arrives for her interview with MRS TISBORNE, at Baird's Department Store in Perth. Her intelligence and humour get her the job and she is introduced to her fellow switchboard operators, ALMA, DARLEEN & MERLE, who show her the ropes. They demonstrate with speed and tongue often firmly in cheek.

MRS TISBORNE: No previous employment?

ROSE: None that paid, Mrs Tisborne.

MRS TISBORNE: What makes you want to work for us?

ROSE: You want a straight answer, or one that might get me the job?

MRS TISBORNE: The latter.

ROSE: Baird's is a great Perth institution and it would be a real honour for a girl to work in such gracious surroundings.

MRS TISBORNE: Charming. Now the straight answer.

ROSE: I hate being stuck at home. I want to meet some people. I mean people I'm not related to. I want to live a bit and-

MRS TISBORNE: That's enough.

ROSE *starts to leave.*

You should start as an office girl and work your way up. But you can talk, and you can think, and I'm prepared to try you out on the switchboard.

ROSE: Thank you very much, Mrs Tisborne.

MRS TISBORNE: Don't be grateful and don't be late. You can start tomorrow morning.

You're dreadfully thin. Don't they feed you at home?

ROSE: I feed myself

MRS TISBORNE: Then do it more regularly.

---

**Lon & Pansy & Quick: talking about the killer**

*Lester; Lon; Pansy; Quick;*

*SCENE 91 (1962)*

LESTER watches Pansy and Rose swell to the finish line. He is looking forward to children in the house again. He feels in his element with children – they understand him, and he makes them laugh. He can't make QUICK laugh – Quick is dog-tired with the burden of worry at their failure to catch the Nedland's killer. The sadness is on him again. When he comes home from patrol LON and PANSY are in the kitchen discussing the killer's latest victim – a sixteen-year-old baby-sitter. The child she was minding asleep in its cot nearby. Lon demands to know why Quick hasn't caught the bloke – it's his job after all – does the guy have to leave his name and address! Quick bolts out of the house.

LESTER: As summer turns to autumn, Lester watches Pansy and Rose swell to the finish line, racing each other to see who'll drop first. Lester looks forward to it. He misses having kids around. Kids to fool with and muck about with. Lester is somebody with kids. They believe in him. He makes them laugh. He can't make Quick laugh. Quick's falling back to the boy he was. He feels the sadness coming on him again. He's getting helpless, like the Quick Lamb of old. When the murderer kills again, Quick feels he's responsible. He's dog-tired and doing double patrols. Still, there's something out there doing evil and he can't stop it.

*Cloudstreet kitchen. QUICK comes in from patrol. LON and heavily pregnant PANSY don't notice him at first.*

LON: When they got there, her body was still on the sofa. Hole right between the eyes.

PANSY: No.

LON: Just five streets from here. She was a babysitter. The kiddie was still asleep when the parents got home.

PANSY: Thank God for that.

LON: They reckon he raped her.

PANSY: Oh, no!

LON: That's right, isn't it, Quick? Nightie up around her chin.

PANSY: No.

LON: Yeah. Just sixteen. *[To QUICK]* You bludgers ever going to find him?

QUICK: What?

PANSY: Isn't it meant to be your job, catchin' criminals?

LESTER: Pansy, Lon ...

LON: Well, this one's laughin', mate. What are you goin' to do? Wait till he leaves his address and phone number?

*QUICK bolts out of the house.*

---

## **Monologues/Soliloquys and Narration**

**Black Man:** *Dusk out in the bush. A truck spotlight scans wheat fields.*

### *SCENE 47 (1951)*

Out in the bush where QUICK is culling kangaroos, the BLACK MAN observes Quick as he dazzles the roos with his spotlight, takes aim with his Lee-Enfield and shoots, again and again. He observes as Quick registers the gagging sound of a wounded Roo out in the grass; watches as the roo bounds into Quick sending him crashing to the ground; watches as Quick bleeds and the battery runs down in his ute and the spotlight peters out; watches as Quick dreams of being under water with Fish, Fish trying to take him home with him to the Big Country.

BLACK MAN: Quick lets the roos come into the clearing before he turns the spot on them. They go rigid and open their eyes to him. Quick works them left to right without haste. Shoot, load, aim, shoot. The roos stand there, unable to tear themselves away. Shoot, load, aim, shoot... Shoot, load, aim, shoot.... Then Quick hears a noise, a gasping noise from the wheat. 'I missed one', he thinks. 'Poor bugger's out there chokin'.

*QUICK is knocked over by a wounded roo.*

Quick hears the sound of blood marching across him, establishing a beachhead on his chest. He watches the spotlight on the ute fade as the battery juices out. He sees the Southern Cross melt into the darkness. If he can't walk, he'll die out here. In a moment he'll have to try. No use putting it off. Bound to be able to walk. Light comes across the sky, a great Saint Elmo's fire of a thing, turning and twisting, till it fishtails towards the earth and is gone.

---

**Oriel: Withdrawal speech** Oriel's tent in the garden

### *SCENE 63 (1956)*

ORIEL: Oriel wakes, remembering her own bare running feet on the dirt of the home paddock when the world was a place given by God for the pleasures of children, when all that was good was unbroken. Then she remembers how all that was broken. She knows that one day soon Hat will be married, leaving another hole in the company. Another loss. If Oriel thinks about everything that's been taken from her over the years... The mother who died and left her to bring up a family, the brother shot by a Turkish bullet, and now her own sons... Lord, it's like the longest subtraction sum invented.

She can't help it, the feeling is on her, and she's furious. It's a sickness, self-pity, it'll eat the day and worm into your labour and weaken you.

Sometimes she wakes dreaming of hell. She's six years old, and alone in the dark, the only one left. She comes out of the tent and runs to the house and goes from room to room checking that all of them are still there, that it's not only her left again. All of them breathing in their beds, helpless and sweet in sleep. She sits on Quick's empty bed while Fish snores. She looks in on Lester. There's no malice in the man, you have to give him that, and she still loves him.

Yes, there's a hell, there are hells abounding, and if there's not a heaven, there's this, the sleeping, the helpless, those that are your own. She's a sinner, she knows, and proud, and angry at God to the point of hatred, but she knows she's made a fortress for her own and for whoever seeks shelter there, and it's good, worthy and priceless.

Lester asks why she stays in this tent, as though she knew the answer herself. What is it? The sound of Middle C ringing in her ears? The boy that doesn't know her? That big, old house that fights her? Or the voice of that house that sometimes whispers to her: wait, wait.

*She goes into the tent. Her shadow is visible.*

---

### **Quick: Coming of age piece/Rose: Coming of age piece**

#### *SCENE 41 (1947)*

At Cloudstreet QUICK (now 16) and ROSE (now 13) reflect on their changing lives while FISH plays the piano in the background. Quick thinks about the war, his obsession with the images, and the destruction of Hiroshima and the aftermath of that act. Rose is reading a school book, she pauses to watch Fish and wonders about what it would be like to touch, or even kiss, him. She knows he is a 'slo-bo' and a tenant, but he is beautiful, and she fantasizes about stealing away with him. She is envious of the social life the Lamb girls have and feels grateful for, at least, having school & books. Dolly finds her reading and tells her it is pointless to always have her head in a book because they are broke, and she won't be staying at school anyway –she should get a herself a job. Rose pleads, then lashes out in anger and contempt for her mother and father's selfish ways, she has only her anger to keep her going now.

QUICK: Quick's sixteen now, and bigger than his father. He tries to forget the pictures stuck on his wall. He thinks they're stupid now. At school he never speaks. He has to do an essay about the war. He writes about the atom bomb, says the Japs had it coming. It was either us or them, writes Quick. Us or them. His teacher tells him Japanese people are more than just combustible material - gives him a magazine with a long story about Hiroshima. Quick stares at photographs of burnt logs. When he looks close he sees the features of people. He takes the magazine home, but he's won't read it...

*FISH plays the piano. ROSE watches him.*

ROSE: He's big now, Fish. Fourteen and growing like a man. Rose listens to him playing and wants only to touch him, to be friendly, and, if she's honest, to get a kiss. It's ridiculous. She's too old for him, and he's a slowbo and a tenant, and a Lamb, for God's sake, but he's the grousest looking boy, and his hot, blue eyes make her go racy inside. She'd like to steal him and run away with him.

*(Rose goes to her room)*

Rose has her periods now and hates her body. She watches those Lamb girls next door. Hattie going out to dances. Boys come to pick her up and off she goes. Elaine gets headaches so she stays home. Red looks like she'd deck a boy if he came near her. Rose doesn't know any boys. Still, she's always got school.

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### **Quick, Rose, Fish, the Black Man & the Spirits**

#### *SCENE 100 (1964)*

The BLACK MAN tracks their journey inland beyond the rivers, Fish asleep on the seat. They drive on until nightfall when Fish announces the need for a poo. Quick doesn't realise the urgency of his request until the smell hits then and they realise Fish has soiled himself. Fish is trembling with shame and Quick sees how Fish physically changed, how they both have changed. He cleans Fish down, throws away his underwear and changes his shorts for him. In the quiet of the night with Fish clean again and Harry asleep – Rose tells Quick a secret that she doesn't think he will believe - she can't bear the thought of them leaving Cloudstreet. They belong to it. She doesn't want their new house alone, she wants to battle it out, to live with people, to keep the life she has. She wants to stay. Are you disappointed, she asks? No, he says, I am putrid with happiness. The Black Man observes the small family sleeping side by side in the truck. Quick awakes with Fish's hand on his face, he sees that the moonlight is not on Fish, but emanating from him. He sees a line of children rising from the ground, moving between the trees. THE SPIRITS watch on as sleep takes them once more and the tide of naked children swirls around them taking all night to pass.

BLACK MAN: They head out through bald, silent wheat towns... Cunderdin, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Bodallin, inland beyond rivers, beyond rain and pleasure, out to where they're homeless, where they've never belonged. Fish is asleep on the back seat. Dust and pollen settle on the upholstery. They drive on till nightfall.

ROSE, QUICK, FISH *and Harry on the road*

FISH: I need a poo.

QUICK: Just wait a little while, mate.

FISH: Quick.

QUICK: Hang on, we're lookin' for a place to camp.

FISH *moans*.

QUICK: What's that bloody smell?

FISH: I told you, Quick. But I told!

QUICK: Oh, fuck a duck, he's shat himself. Now what?

ROSE: Now you hop out and clean him up.

QUICK: Come on, Fish. Stop blubberin'. Hop out.

THE SPIRITS: Quick kneels to take down Fish's trousers - it's not a body he recognises. / Fish turns his head aside in shame as Quick slides the shorts off. He gags and slings them into the ditch, glad his mother isn't there to see the wanton waste. /The size of Fish, the thought of how they've come to this threatens to break something in Quick's throat. / Against the back fender, Fish's whole putty body is jerking, as the wheat bends a moment to the breeze that has sprung out of the very earth itself.

QUICK *has changed* FISH. FISH *and Harry go to sleep*.

ROSE: Tell you a secret. You won't believe this.

QUICK: Try me.

ROSE: I can't bear to think of any of us leaving Cloudstreet. We belong to it, Quick, and I want to stay.

QUICK: You're havin' me on.

ROSE: Must be Sam's old Shifty Shadow. I spend years trying to escape, and end up married to a Lamb, back in the thick of it.

QUICK: But what about our place? After all that trouble? Our own place!

ROSE: I don't know about our own place. I like the old place, the crowds and the noise. And, well... I suppose I like the idea, it's like getting another childhood, another go at things. I'm back in the old house with the boy next door and his baby, and I'm not miserable or starving or frightened. I'm right in the middle of it all.

QUICK: But you hate family stuff.

ROSE: But it's two families, it's a new tribe.

QUICK: Don't you want to be independent?

ROSE: I don't know what that means anymore. If it means being alone, I don't want it. If I was gonna be independent, do you think I'd need a husband? And a kid? And a mother and father, and in-laws and friends and neighbours? When I want to be independent, I go skinny and puke. I begin to disappear. But I want to live. I want to be with people, Quick. I want to battle it out. I don't want our new house. I want the life I have. Don't be disappointed.

QUICK: Disappointed? Love, I'm putrid with... with happiness. I've been wantin' to say that for mouths.

ROSE: You big drongo! Why did they call you Quick? I never knew.

QUICK: Come on. I told you plenty of times.

ROSE: No, you never did.

QUICK: They called me Quick... 'cause I'm the slowest bastard that ever lived.

*She laughs. They kiss, then sleep.*

BLACK MAN: Quick curls into Fish on one side and Rose with Wax Harry settles in on the other. Above them the black sky looks crisp with stars. Dots as worlds, and milky smears as worlds of worlds. In the deep night, Quick wakes with the moon white on his face. Fish is awake beside him, kissing him on the cheek. The moon is all over his face, or it seems to be until Quick sees the light is coming off Fish himself.

The GHOSTS/SPIRITS: There's a long steady rustling in the wheat, rhythmic as the sound of sleep. / Quick thinks of a herd of roos grazing, but it comes closer, and is too musical to ignore. / He sees a line of figures moving between the trees. He shakes Rose awake and sees the black widen in her eyes. / They see children, naked children, rising from the ground like a mineral spring, faces, arms, eyes and legs travelling in eddies, passing them with the lapping sound of feet. / Nobody speaks not even Wax Harry. The tide of naked children swirls around them until the stars are low enough to touch their eyes heavy, and the great adventure of sleep takes them back while the children part the wheat like the wind itself and take all night to pass.

### **Spirit 3: narration**

#### *SCENE 80 (1960)*

A new menace de-stabilises post-war Perth. The GHOSTS swirl about Cloudstreet. The COMPANY crosses the stage accompanying three screams: DOLLY; ROSE; and a VICTIM murdered by the NEDLANDS MONSTER who is seen in shadow as he kills. Dolly has lost her favourite son -Teddy has been felled by a heart attack in Adelaide - and Rose is on her knees as she miscarries her baby; and in the streets of Perth, a man discovers what rape and murder mean as he reaches for the cord of the bed light to strangle his first victim. Fish cries because the Ghosts won't let him play.

DOLLY: Teddy! He was the one I loved. He was the one! You can all go and fuckin' die because I want him back! He was the one!

*ROSE is on her hands and knees, clutching her stomach.*

ROSE: Call someone! Call someone, Quick! I'm losing the baby!

*The NEDLANDS MONSTER can still be seen in shadow. FISH bangs on the piano in the windowless room.*

SPIRIT 3: There's evil in the air. Ted Pickles dies of a heart attack in Adelaide. Rose miscarries her baby at four months. And in the streets of Perth, a little man discovers what rape and murder mean. A woman. Young. Her nightie rucked up in the heat. The little man finds the cord from the bedlight. It's so easy. The whole city starts to quake in fear at the thought of him.

*The MONSTER vanishes.*

FISH: No... No... No! I hate youse, you stupids! This is my house!

*SAM finds FISH moaning. The GHOSTS dance.*

They won't let me play!

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**Fish: final soliloquy:** By the Swan River

SCENE 102 (1964)

FISH: I know my story - for just long enough to see how we've come, how we've all battled in the same corridor that time makes for us, and I'm Fish Lamb for those seconds it takes to die, as long as it takes to drink the river, as long as it took to tell you all this, and then my walls are tipping and I burst into the moon, sun and stars of who I truly am. Being Fish Lamb. Perfectly. Always. Everyplace. Me.

*He's gone into the water. QUICK lets him go*