

## **Scene Synopsis & Storyline**

### **1943**

Scene 1: 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.

Scene 2: SAM Pickles (father, 43) is working on a guano barge in Geraldton. He catches his hand in a winch and loses all but his index finger and part of his thumb. ROSE (daughter, 7) rushes off in panic to find her mother, DOLLY (31), passing her brothers, TED (11) & CHUB (9) on the way. Dolly is engaged in an amorous encounter with an American pilot at a local hotel. Rose pleads with her mother (on the other side of the door) to come with her – Dolly ignores her and continues her assignation with the pilot.

Scene 3: 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.

Scene 4: The Lambs are packing up their truck to leave Margaret River. The children don't want to leave. Lester tells them they are going off to see the world. They are farewelled with an ironic aside from Cousin Fred (43) as they roll out of sight.

Scene 5: Sam is preparing to leave the hospital having mastered the ever-so-important skill of rolling tobacco. He shows his preserved fingers which he has been given in a jar. Rose and Dolly are disgusted.

Scene 6: The Pickles are sitting in the lawyer's office as he reads the will of Sam's Uncle Morris Bloom. Uncle Morris has left Sam two thousand pounds and the house in Cloudstreet, Perth – on the condition that it not be sold for 20 years (Morris knows Sam is an inveterate gambler). Morris has left his pub to the Geraldton turf club.

Scene 7: The Pickles arrive at the huge twenty room tumbledown house in Cloud Street. Dolly and the children are not impressed. The children explore the house. Sam goes off to bet his inheritance on a horse called Silver Lining. Rose discovers the windowless piano room.

Scene 8: Rose explores the piano room while the Black Man/narrator tells the story of the house, formally owned by an old white woman who cheated others to get it. At the urging of her priest, the woman has taken in aboriginal girls stolen from their families to train them as servants. When one of the girls commits suicide in the piano room – the old woman closes up her house and sends the girls away. Weeks later she dies at the piano. The spirits of the old woman and the girl remain.

### **1944**

Scene 9: Sam has lost all his two thousand pounds and the family is broke once again. He has decided to divide the house in half and rent out the other half. He is hanging a "Rooms for Rent" sign on the front of the house when the children come home from school to discover that the bedrooms that were theirs are now locked and half the house is out of bounds. The boys have to share a room. They are not happy. Dolly laments the prospect of being a landlady for twenty long years.

Scene 10: The LAMBS arrive at Cloudstreet. They are greeted skeptically by Dolly and are welcomed by Sam – so long as they can afford to pay. Ted ogles at the girls, Chub remarks on the 'slowbo', Fish, and Rose is impressed that the Lambs look more like 'refos' than her own family.

Scene 11: Fish discovers the windowless piano room in the dark of night. He sees and greets the ghosts. Rose appears at the doorway. She says he is beautiful and offers to read him a story. QUICK takes Fish back to bed. Fish asks Quick if he can hear that the house is sad.

Scene 12: 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.

## 1945

Scene 13: Lester and Oriel are at the doctor's surgery with Fish. The doctor is irritated and silences Oriel when she repeatedly tries to answer on Fish's behalf. Fish is confused by the doctor's questions – which are intrusive and clinical. Lester is upset for Oriel and Fish when Fish fails to recognise or even see Oriel. The doctor suggests they put Fish in an institution. Oriel is incensed by that suggestion, grabs Fish and rushes him out of the surgery followed by Lester.

Scene 14: 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.

Scene 15: The Lambs set up the shop. Dolly's comments are withering but she takes some spuds at no charge. Elaine tries to sell her on Lester's cakes. Ted waggles his penis at Hat, the Lamb girls give chase with a pair of scissors. Chub returns from school with the news that Hitler is dead and the war in Europe is over. Dolly berates Sam for not being gainfully employed. Rose heads off to cook the dinner.

Scene 16: QUICK (now 12) reads the paper and devours lists of those missing and lost. He is glad that Lester was too old, and he was too young to fight in this war – but he is drawing the destruction and the suffering into his soul and absorbing the darkness. Oriel gives QUICK food to take to school, where he sees that Wogga McBride has no lunch. He offers his. QUICK is hoping to make a friend of Wogga before his last primary school year ends. Later he sees Wogga at the railway line gleefully having a tug of war for his satchel with a stray dog. Wogga trips, falls backwards and is hit by a train. A devastated QUICK runs home.

Scene 17: QUICK weeps inconsolably in his room. Fish thinks he is laughing. QUICK asks Fish to go and play. FISH wants to talk about why QUICK is sad – why the house is sad. QUICK sends him away and begins to cut grim pictures from his stack of newspapers which he tacks to the wall – he is haunted by the image of Wogga as he fell. Lester comes in to plead with him to stop – to come and be with the family again, for his mother's sake, for Fish's sake. QUICK does not respond and Lester leaves

## 1946

Scene 18: PICKLES side of the house. ROSE comes home from school with TED and CHUB. Sam comes home and Rose asks where he's been – he's been gone two days and she's been afraid he had left her alone with Dolly forever. He tells her he won at two-up and has gained a job at the mint from a union boss. Dolly appears all 'dolloed up' – Sam asks her to come and celebrate. Dolly has plans and refuses.

Scene 19: Sam has been feeling dejected and weary – he can't help Rose much around the house because of his hand, he can't seem to keep Dolly happy and at home, and he is having trouble not blowing all his wages as soon as they reach his pocket, but suddenly, he is on a winning streak. A horse called Blackbutt just won't lose and he is in the money. Sam invites Lester to come and share some of the 'Shifty Shadow's providence which has brought luck his way this time. They strike up a friendship and go to the races.

Scene 20: Rose (now 10) tries to bring Dolly back from her daily drinking binge at the hotel. Rose runs the gauntlet of the hotel patrons and their suggestive and body shaming comments. Rose pleads with Dolly to come home because she doesn't want to be alone. Dolly becomes angry and aggressively adamant that she is staying right where she is (supported by her drinking buddies and new admirer, Gerry Clay). Rose is upset and runs out. Gerry sidles up to Dolly and begins his sleazy seduction. He leads her out of the hotel.

Scene 21: Sam and Lester are rolling home to Cloudstreet after celebrating another win by Blackbutt – they had each won one hundred and six pounds. Non-drinking Lester hasn't taken his liquor well and is feeling chunderous.

Scene 22: They attempt to stagger inside without waking anyone. QUICK and Rose are in their own rooms, QUICK cutting & tacking up pictures and the studious Rose is reading. Rose goes to give Sam the meal she cooked for him – he asks after Dolly and tells Rose that he won.

Scene 23: Lester creeps unsteadily in - Oriel catches him. He tells her how much he won – she is not impressed. Lester goes to QUICK's room to check on him. He tells him he loves him and worries for him and that he has won a lot of money that day. He suggests that they celebrate by going to Fremantle and throwing a line off the wharf – the whole family. QUICK agrees that sounds good.

Scene 24: A rooster crows as Dolly rolls home drunk and dishevelled carrying her shoes. Ted comes out of the house to meet her, asking her where she has been. She tells him how fast he's growing up and how much he reminds her of his Dad – only he has more steel, and how jealous she is of all the girls who are interested in him. She asks for a cuddle.

Scene 25: The LAMBS are at the Fremantle wharf. ORIEL is fishing. HAT counts the fish in her bucket. FISH stares at the water. QUICK sits near, watchful of FISH. LON, RED and ELAINE play on the beach. LESTER is nowhere to be seen, but eventually turns up having bought a boat from a man down by the shore. Oriel observes it won't fit on the truck, LESTER realizes she is right and asks QUICK to row it back from Fremantle to Perth – a very long row. QUICK says he will take FISH with him as mate.

Scene 26: The family, minus QUICK and Fish have returned to Cloudstreet. ORIEL is beside herself with worry for her boys, they didn't even have a light. She cannot believe LESTER would be so stupid not to learn from their terrible mistake and trauma with FISH at Margaret River. She tells LESTER that he doesn't deserve to have children.

Scene 27: 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.

Scene 28: It is dawn and LESTER is running along the shore cursing himself for being such a fool, frantically looking for his boys as he weeps.

Scene 29: QUICK and FISH float in the boat. The magic moment has passed and they have drifted. Fish begins to whimper. QUICK holds him. 'Like a baby', he thinks, 'and he's as big as me'. All the excitement has disappeared. QUICK knows the old misery again but doesn't let himself break as he gives in to sleep.

Scene 30: Lester is exhausted by the time he finds them, but the minute he sees them he dances for joy. They paddle ashore. He apologises profusely - he's an idiot and is so sorry he was such a fool – QUICK says it's fine, they are OK, and he feels better for having done the river journey.

Scene 31: Lester, QUICK and Fish return to Cloudstreet watched by Rose, Ted & Chub. Oriel comes out to confront them. Lester is singing happily. He tells her they ran out of petrol and he had no money. She hugs her boys and is dismayed at the state of QUICK's blistered and bloody hands. Fish announces he has been in the stars and is hungry. He pushes past Oriel as though she didn't exist.

Scene 32: QUICK goes to his room and cuts out pictures. Rose sits in hers and reads. Fish finds QUICK in his room and wants to talk about flying in the starry water. QUICK moves away to cut more pictures, refusing to listen.

Scene 33: 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.

Scene 34: 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.

Scene 35: HAT, RED, ELAINE, LON and FISH spruik Lester's ice-cream, extolling its virtues on a hot day. FISH rings a bell. CHUB watches, until he scores an ice cream. They hand out ice-cream to anyone in the audience who wants one (helped by the crew).

Scene 36: MRS CLAY intercepts SAM on the street on his way home. She accosts him about Dolly's wanton behavior with her husband. She tells him he should keep his wayward wife under control – she has a family to protect. Sam tells her to mind her own business.

Scene 37: Sam goes inside where he finds Rose dishing up in the kitchen. He wants her to sit down and eat with him. She says she will get fat. He gets angry and pushes his meal in front of her and orders her to eat. When he leaves in frustration, she spits out the food.

Scene 38: Sam is overwhelmed by everything – Dolly’s drinking and sexual betrayals, Rose’s anorexia, his own reduced capacity and a sense of failure as a father and a man. When Rose finds him in the bathroom with an open razor, she knows what his intentions are – she holds him while he sobs and expresses her anger and distress that he would do that to her and leave her alone with Dolly.

Scene 39: CHUB is eating a Lester ice-cream. Oriel and Lester are clearing up, pleased with sales after another good day in the shop. Chub announces that the Clay shop has closed down. Dolly passes at this point, dishevelled and bloody (holding a bloody handkerchief to her nose and eye), having been assaulted by Gerry Clay. She refuses Oriel’s help. Lester expresses concern for the Clay children – Oriel heads off to the Clays to offer a compromise to Gerry. When she arrives, she learns that Gerry has taken off for parts unknown – leaving his family without a bent penny. Oriel offers a home and a job in the store to Mrs Clay, who unceremoniously tells her to go to hell.

Scene 40: TED is at Pelican Point chatting up MARY, attempting to convince her that she should let him feel her breasts. Mary says he is too young but relents anyway. Ted announces he is going away to become a jockey.

### **1947**

Scene 41: 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.

### **1948**

Scene 42: QUICK is in his room with his magazines, the BLACK MAN is outside reflecting on the images in the magazines. Quick is conflicted in his thoughts about the morality of ordinary lives being destroyed in war – including women and children. In the backyard FISH watches LESTER put up a guy. LON, HAT, ELAINE and RED bring kindling. ORIEL is laying out food on a table. DOLLY, SAM, TED and CHUB are watching. Oriel invites the Pickles to come over and join the party – plenty of food and fireworks for them all. Sam and Chub join them. Lester calls to Quick to come and help light the Guy – fish becomes distraught at the idea of burning ‘the man’ and is inconsolable. Oriel insists that Quick take care of his brother – because he is the one that Fish ‘sees’. Quick reaches tipping point – he can’t carry the sole burden of care for Fish any longer – he packs his rucksack and tells Oriel he is leaving. She pleads with and threatens him, but he takes off for the bush anyway, ending the party.

### **END OF PART ONE**

INTERVAL (20 minute)

### **1949**

Scene 43: ORIEL reflects as she sets up her tent in the back yard, taking everything with her - bed, desk, books, lantern. She has no idea why she is there but is determined to stay until something in her life changes.

Scene 44: 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.

Scene 45: 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!

#### **1950**

Scene 46: 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 operations, ALMA, DARLEEN & MERLE, who show her the ropes. They demonstrate with speed and tongue often firmly in cheek.

#### **1951**

Scene 47: 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.

Scene 48: QUICK wakes in a bed at a homestead with MR WENTWORTH beside him, with daughter LUCY. They tell him how lucky he is to be alive – if someone hadn't passed by when they did, he wouldn't have made it. Wentworth offers to have Lucy take care of Quick until he recovers – for a weeks' free culling. Lucy treats Quick's severe sunburn with Goanna Oil, moving her cool hands over his injured body as she chats about his hunting prowess and why he hasn't come sniffing around like all the other men in the past two years. He explains he likes to be alone. Lucy hand persuades him to think otherwise as it glides beneath the covers. They continue a breathless conversation until QUICK and the conversation climax.

#### **1952**

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.

Scene 50: TOBY is waiting when ROSE arrives to meet him at the GPO. He is impressed by her looks and says so. She greets him as Mr Earl Grey and hopes he hasn't strained himself waiting. As they walk Toby guesses her life story and she returns the dubious compliment. Rose finishes the conversation by suggesting that Toby ask her out that Friday. She declines his offer to pick her up at home and they agree to meet at the Shenton Station.

#### **1954**

Scene 51: 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.

Scene 52: 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.

## 1955

Scene 53: Lucy is beside herself with happiness to have her ticket out of town. 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. 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.

Scene 54: Fish returns to Margaret River to find a job with Cousin Fred as a transport driver.

Scene 55: LESTER seeks ORIEL out in her tent. He wants to talk. Oriel is uncommitted. He asks her if she has heard from Quick, which she hasn't and tells her that he doesn't know what to believe any more. Oriel reminds him that nobody can help him with that. He says she has got hard and she responds that it is the war that has made her that way – not the world war but the big one - of raising a family. Lester doesn't understand – Oriel has always personified motherhood, hard work and family – he can't understand why she is living in the tent, why she won't come back to them. He doesn't understand what has happened to her beliefs. He asks if she still loves him – she replies that she married him before God – as though that is an answer. She says they don't belong anywhere, and that she won't come home until the miracle is completed, until it is finished off.

## 1956

Scene 56: SAM arrives home, bloodied and disheveled. He admits to DOLLY that his luck is running up hill, that he has lost money to the union boss – the man who owns all the fellas. He says he needs to disappear for a while. Lester comes in with cauliflowers for Dolly, for soup. He sees Sam is in trouble and offers to take Sam to a safe place he knows.

Scene 57: ROSE tells DOLLY that she has heard from Ted. He rang her to tell her he was married and had just had a baby boy. Dolly is cranky that Ted didn't ring her, that he didn't invite her to the wedding, that she is a grandmother without the benefits of having a grandchild to spoil.

Scene 58: LESTER brings SAM to a beach shack he has the use of. They talk and Sam admits that he owes over two hundred pounds to the union boss. Lester says he can't lend him money – that Oriel wouldn't allow it – he leaves Sam and heads home.

Scene 59: When LESTER returns, 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?

Scene 60: LESTER returns to SAM at the shack. 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. That 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.

Scene 61: LESTER comes home. DOLLY intercepts him. He is filled with shame and confusion. He tells her what Sam is intending to do. She acknowledges that puts the Lamb's 'in the poo' as well. She can't understand why Lester gave him the money. Lester explains – after what he himself has done how could he deny the man? Dolly realises Lester will not be visiting her that way again.

Scene 62: It is dark. ORIEL's shadow can be seen as she reads her Bible alone in her tent. HAT returns from a dance. RED and ELAINE see her and descend on her with questions about her beau, Geoff. They companionably insult both Hattie and Geoff until Hat tells them that Geoff has asked her to marry him and will be coming to ask for her hand the next night. Elaine squeals with excitement. Red says that's never going to happen to her if she has anything to do with it. They see Rose come home and note she has been out with her smart university type. They chat with her for moment and go their separate ways.

Scene 63: Oriel wakes, remembering her childhood when everything was good and unbroken. Then she remembers how it all became broken - her mother who died and left her to bring up a family, her brother shot by a Turkish bullet, and now her own losses. Her boys lost to her, & Hat to be married, leaving another hole in her world. If she thinks about everything that's been taken from her over the years, she is furious. It's a sickness, self-pity, that will eat the day and worm into your labour and weaken you. Sometimes she wakes alone in the dark, dreaming of hell, being the only one left. She 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 alone again - Quick's bed is empty while Fish snores. She looks in on Lester. There's no malice in the man, and she still loves him. She's a sinner, that 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. Its good and 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.

Scene 64: DOLLY is at home waiting. When SAM walks in she can't work out what's happened. He is exhausted and dishevelled. He tells her it was a long haul – he hasn't had a drink all night (and notices with surprise that Dolly hasn't either), or a smoke – but he stuck it out and he in the end he did it. He won the bank. Sam pulls out wads of bank notes as Lester walks in. Sam gives him money, LESTER stares at it, pockets it, and goes inside. DOLLY opens her arms to SAM to pull him to her.

## **1957**

Scene 65: TOBY and ROSE lie together at the beach. Toby dreaming of escaping Perth to Bloomsbury, or the Left Bank - at a pinch Sydney. ROSE is happy lying on Cottesloe Beach, no need for fancy places and fancy friends; spending an afternoon dressing up to impress Toby's friends is enough. Toby says Rose would look pretty whatever she wore and seals that statement with a kiss and the suggestion that they don't have to wear anything. He has a gift for her that he asks her to read from aloud – a plain paper wrapped 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. Rose is surprised he has managed to acquire the banned book but won't read it aloud – playfully suggesting he is obsessed with sex and would be better off coming for a swim with her. She daydreams of life married to Toby – a tidy new house in a clean new suburb with a mown lawn and sweet children adored by everyone. She will never take Toby to Cloudstreet out of shame and the desire to escape her own origins.

Scene 66: FRED tells no-one that QUICK is one of the bible-bashing Lambs with their dud miracle. Quick works 6 days a week for Fred, for a long hard year of stiff steering and slack brakes, his only diversion covering the walls of his caravan with his cut-out images. One night, Quick loses his brakes on a hill with a full load on, before a rail crossing. There's a train coming and he's going to hit it sure as shit. The train punches past, an inch away, and he just makes it, bogging the truck beside the rails. Fred is unimpressed when Quick asks him for time off to recover - the truck was insured after all - but relents when reminded that he nearly lost of fertilizer. Fred lends him his boat and gives him a week without pay.

Scene 67: Out in the boat QUICK hears laughter and voices from the past as he fishes – Fish, Lester, Oriel. Sounds swell as the memory washes over QUICK until the memory turns bad and Fish is in the water trapped underneath the net. The BLACK MAN observes the change begin as fish take Quick's line one after another, jumping into his boat on their own until Quick falls back with bleeding hands into the mass of their shiny flip-flopping bodies. He sees a man walking on the water and laughs. The Black Man lifts Quick from the sinking boat.

Scene 68: FISH laughs and dances around the house while LESTER pursues him, trying to get him dressed. ELAINE and RED are getting HAT into her wedding dress. On the PICKLES side, SAM makes breakfast, DOLLY sleeps and ROSE dresses for work. The house is buzzing with pre-wedding angst and Oriel threatens to cancel everything if they don't all behave. The BLACK MAN is approaching the house carrying the glowing QUICK in his arms and knocks on the door. The joyful Lamb contingent carry Quick inside. The Black Man explains Quick is oaky he is just a little bit lost. Hattie is royally miffed that her wedding has been upstaged. They put the glowing Quick to bed and leave as bells toll.

Scene 69: As the bells fade QUICK lies in bed asleep. FISH sits at the foot of QUICK's bed, guarding him from the GHOSTS of the house. The light emanating from Quick fades. Fish tells the sleeping Quick that they can go to the water soon.

Scene 70: ORIEL sits on the bed. QUICK stirs. Oriel presses Quick for answers about what he saw out in the bush. Quick counters, asking why Oriel is living in a tent. They continue to frustrate each with cross-questioning until Quick admits that what he saw was himself – running. Oriel confides that she couldn't accept that he had abandoned Fish and wants to know if he thinks she has been a crook mother.

### **1959**

Scene 71: LESTER is making breakfast in the kitchen. FISH is making a racket and annoying LON who just wants to eat in peace and go to work. He calls Fish a Clydesdale and a retard. Lester is furious. Oriel tries to keep the peace as Quick comes in and greets his siblings. The girls share what they are up to and Oriel has an attack of the smiles at having her family around her again.

Scene 72: ROSE types a poem. TOBY stands behind her and asks if she likes it. Rose's underwhelmed reply offends Toby's ego and they argue. Rose wants to do something normal for a change – something unpretentious and fun. Toby laughs at her and she tells him to phone for a taxi – she wants to go home. He makes a snide aside about her 'mysterious' home. Where all the gothic strains come from. Rose leaves.

Scene 73: Quick finds the old boat on the bank at Crawley, the one he and Fish rowed from Fremantle, still sitting where they left it. He intends to fish to earn his keep. LESTER watches Quick put the boat in the water and comments he is wasting his brain, that he needs some ambition. Quick replies that he has no need of ambition, that being a good man like Lester will be sufficient. Lester responds that it is easy enough to be a good man out alone on the water, but being a good man where people need him is the test. Quick rows the narrows remembering the places he has been and realises that every important thing that ever happened to him had to do with a river. Oriel sells his catch and Fish pleads to be taken along on the boat. Quick refuses, knowing that he is putting something off.

Scene 74: TOBY RAVEN arrives at Cloudstreet. He sees FISH and asks for the Pickles. Fish provides a lengthy description of Lester's pickles in the shop, the Pickles family - Mister Pickles! Missus Pickles! Ted Pickles, Rose Pickles and Fatty Chub Pickles. Toby says who he is and asks for ROSE, who is not pleased to see him at Cloudstreet uninvited. He explains one of his poems is being published and that he has been short-listed for the state Poetry Prize – they have been invited and will she come and bring him luck. Rose reluctantly agrees. Toby asks her to look pretty for him.

Scene 75: QUICK has relented and he and FISH go out in the boat.

Scene 76: ROSE and TOBY are at the literary reception. GUESTS chat and drink and mostly ignore them. MEREDITH passes and wishes Toby luck. The master of ceremonies, HEADLY, welcomes the guests and announces that from a strong field of promising young poets, the judges' have never-the-less made a unanimous decision, the prize money and handsome medallion will go to Anthea Bradley. Toby takes another drink to mask his disappointment and continues to drink as Rose goes off to congratulate Anthea. He is in full scathing, drunken flight to his friends as Rose returns - about the parochialism of Perth and its desperate ambition for big city status. He declares that poetry has had its day and fiction is the future – that there is ample fodder in Perth for the perfect comic novel, and he has just the material; a great tumble down old ruin full of misfits - a slow boy, a man with a stump of a hand, a drunken lush of a woman and a strange lady in a tent – the perfect grotesquery. Rose is stricken by this cruel parody of her family and runs out in tears.

Scene 77: QUICK has relented and he and FISH are out in the boat when they hear someone crying on the riverbank. They realise it is Rose and pull in to shore to see if they can help. Rose climbs aboard and they row towards home, sharing a bottle of Chateau Tanunda as they go. Fish goes to sleep, and Rose poses the question of what she and Quick might be like as a couple. Rose strokes the sleeping Fish while Quick ponders this surprising question. They row home.

Scene 78: ROSE & QUICK pass through the silent sleeping house watched by the Black Man. They sneak into the GHOST filled piano room where they tenderly and passionately make love, as the Ghosts fall back and press themselves against the walls. In the early morning they hurry out into the daylight house – their sudden love remaining, hanging like incense in the windowless room.

Scene 79:

QUICK and ROSE each go to their family's side of the house to tell their surprising and happy news. The house erupts with excited questions, and discordant plans are made on either side of the house divide. Fast forward six weeks and Cloudstreet is being set up for the wedding. Hattie and Geoff Birch arrive as the bridal waltz begins and Quick and Rose step out. Quick and Rose are discussing where they want to live after they are wed - Rose wants a clean new house and Quick wants Cloudstreet asking how they will support themselves. Quick announces he will join the police force, to fight against the evil in the world – and Rose that she will remain working at Baird's, while they use her savings to make the down payment on their own home. Rose dances with Sam. Quick asks Oriel for a dance. She gets up but crosses the floor and asks DOLLY to dance. Dolly puts out her cigarette and rises. Oriel steers Dolly round the floor as the family watch. Then all danced out, FISH sleeps, watched by the BLACK MAN.

END OF PART TWO

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Dinner Interval (40 minutes)

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PART THREE

**1960**

Scene 80: 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.

Scene 81: The BLACK MAN narrates as the murderer kills again and is after them all. Then again and again, until everything goes still quaking at the thought of him. Perth's streets are empty. QUICK, in uniform, is at Nedlands Police Station with SARGE, his boss, begging to be allowed to go on patrol. Sarge refuses – it is not their problem. The MONSTER's shadow slinks through the darkness. The murderer kills again, in Nedlands this time, and Quick is finally on patrol - armed with handcuffs, torch and truncheon. He can smell fear in every lane. There's someone out there killing and doing evil and he's losing the fight.

Scene 82: SAM is visiting ROSE in the spotless caravan she and Quick are living in while their house is being built. Sam hands her a bunch of flowers and she offers tea. Sam launches straight into the real reason for his visit – he wants Rose to come and visit DOLLY as she has lost control altogether in her grief for Ted. Rose feels slighted that the visit is about Dolly and not for her own sake – reminding Sam that Dolly hasn't visited her once since she lost her baby, that she has her own grief to cope with. She lost her childhood caring for her drunken mother and wants no part of it. They share harsh words and Sam pleads with her to come – for his sake.

Scene 83: 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.

Scene 84: (cut)

Scene 85: RED comes home in a nurses' uniform announcing that she had to shave a man's bits that day before an operation. ELAINE doesn't want details. Red says if she is ever going to get married, she'll need them. LON comes in with a black eye. He tells ORIEL that a grown man hit him – when asked if he deserved it he confesses that “there's a girl pregnant”. Oriel grabs him by the ear and insists he will do the right thing whether he likes it or not. His marriage to Pansy Mullett is not negotiable.

**1961**

Scene 86: 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.

Scene 87: 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 away 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.

**1962**

Scene 88: The third Cloudstreet wedding is underway, with the minister hearing LON and PANSY's vows. They will make their home at Cloudstreet – the only affordable option – about which Pansy is openly disgusted, and the fact that she won't even get her hoped for honeymoon. She tosses her bouquet to ELAINE and it is caught by RED.

Scene 89: A torch lights an ominous dark night as QUICK patrols. He shouts out “Is anybody there!”. Reaching down, he rises with his hands covered in blood. He calls for help and calls to ROSE in the caravan. Now visibly pregnant, Rose is alone and afraid – she trembles, calling quietly for Quick.

Scene 90: Back at Cloudstreet, FISH is chanting QUICK and ROSE's names softly over and over in the dark. LESTER comes to sooth him. Oriel emerges followed by LON and PANSY. Lon complains loudly, telling everyone to cut out the bloody noise, Pansy wants her sleep. Lester explains that Quick and Rose have their own place now and Elaine tells Fish to go back to bed, cries louder. SAM & DOLLY emerge saying it sounds like someone is being murdered. At this point ROSE leads QUICK into the gathered family, asking if there is bunk going spare as they have come to stay. Lester takes their suitcases and Oriel ushers them (too Rose's dismay) to the Piano room – which is the only room big enough for them and a cot – saying they will fix it up and put a window in. Rose insists at this point that they have only come for a week or too her baby will be born in a hospital. Fish put his hand out to feel the baby move – it loves him he says.

Scene 91: 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.

Scene 92: QUICK paces the yard, kicking things angrily. FISH comes out and wants to play footie – Quick sends him back inside. He passes LESTER, who has come to check on Quick. Quick tells his father he has decided - it's time he chucked it in – drive trucks again maybe - when Pansy rushes out with Lon in tow. Rose is in labour – the baby is coming. It's too late for the promised hospital delivery so they turn to the only alternative.

Scene 93: The baby is on the way. LESTER, QUICK, ELAINE, PANSY and LON hurry in to join ELAINE and ORIEL with ROSE. FISH arrives too. Pansy stares at Rose in horror, but Oriel has things well under control. SAM arrives and laments that Dolly is out to it. Oriel has no time to dilly dally as the baby's head has crowned, she insists that they all stop shouting or they'll frighten the poor little blighter. The BLACK MAN observes the room go quiet and the GHOSTS begin to retreat – Rose sees them go too. The baby arrives, a boy. Oriel holds him up for everyone to see – Fish thinks the baby is smiling at him. Oriel asks for a bucket for the placenta. They cut the cord. Quick is awed by the waxiness of his brand-new child – they will call him Harry – Wax Harry, Lester chimes in. They feel sorry for Dolly and Red who missed this momentous event – new life coming into the world in Cloudstreet. CHUB arrives to discover he's become an uncle – he is more interested in delivering the news that the Nedland's killer has been caught. Dolly comes in unnoticed. She tells everyone to go and leave Rose alone – she wants to stay with her daughter, she is the grandmother after all.

### **1963**

Scene 94: FISH is alone outside. The BLACK MAN comes – he tells Fish he will soon be a man – soon he will be fully himself – not yet but soon.

Scene 95: The Nedlands monster has come to trial and LON hears that the death sentence has been handed down. The city stinks of happiness. QUICK reads it in the newspaper, as ROSE feeds the baby. 'Whacko! They're going to hang the bastard', is Quick's response – "thanks God and good riddance" is Rose's. ORIEL asks them to leave God out of it – killing is man's business not Gods. Quick thinks his mother doesn't even believe what she's saying – she's read the bible, an eye for an eye. He tells her to go read the bits about justice. Oriel can't reply and runs out. She can't love that God, Quick thinks – not since Fish.

Scene 96: One day when QUICK is eating his sandwich by the river he sees a child face down in the river – he jumps in and carries the boy back to shore – but his skin is doughy, and his eyes clouded and Quick is an hour too late to save him. When he looks at the boy's face, he sees his brother's face, he sees Wax Harry's face, his own boyhood face. It is the sight of the world ending, someone's dead son. SARGE tells him the child is the son of the serial killer, been missing since the morning.

Scene 97: SAM is on his way out to vote. He gets out a cigarette. The BLACK MAN lights his fag. Sam asks him if he has cast his. The Black Man laughs that it is not much use as it's the bosses' country straight up. He asks Sam if he lives at Cloudstreet – Sam says he owns it. The Black Man tells him not to break the place – too many places busted and Sam better be the strongest man. The Black Man laughs again and moves on.

Scene 98: ROSE, Harry and all the LAMBS are gathered in the LAMB side of Cloudstreet. PANSY nurses her baby, Marilyn Gaye. The PICKLES arrive - ORIEL welcomes them in. Rose asks them to sit. Oriel realizes they have something to say and asks them to get on with it. DOLLY, bluntly, says SAM is thinking of selling the house, the twenty years embargo is up – he tells her to shut up, he wants to air his reasoning – the town is going mad over real estate, buyin' the old, and buildin' the new, now is the time to sell. – they'll make a packet. The Lamb's should take the opportunity and get their own place too. Oriel says she's happy to rent – it reminds you of your true position in life. Dolly reminds Sam that the Lambs rent is paid up until Harry's about twenty – they'd have to pay them to leave. He argues she's always hated the place. Ultimately no-one seems to be in a hurry to go, except Quick and Rose whose new house is finished. Chub and Lon and Pansy are staying, even Dolly, so Sam relents. They all celebrate with a song. Quick and Rose slip out with Harry.

Scene 99: FISH sees QUICK & ROSE leaving in the truck with baby HARRY. He wants to go too. Fish won't let up begging and Rose tells Quick to get him packed. Quick argues that would be taking on a world of trouble, but Rose is adamant – Fish can come with them. If they don't take him they will drive away feeling like a pair of bastards, Fish will have to be locked in his room, and Quick will go dark for a week. Quick brings a bag for FISH and they take to the road.

### **1964**

Scene 100: 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. Sleep takes them once more as the tide of naked children swirls around them taking all night to pass.

Scene 101: QUICK, ROSE, HARRY and FISH arrive back at Cloudstreet in the early morning. ELAINE is opening up the shop and is surprised to see them back so soon. Quick calls them all to get up, they are all going on a picnic to celebrate. The PARENTS come out of the house asking what it is they are celebrating. We're stayin' says Rose, for as long as it takes. To get old, to die, to count the angels on the head of a pin. A day, a week, a Test Match, a session of Parliament, a decade. Till the bloody walls come down! They pack the truck, grab a hamper, lock the shop and head for the river.

Scene 102: On the riverbank the LAMB and PICKLES families make their picnic. The BLACK MAN is watching. FISH watches, then heads for the water. QUICK thinks to stop him - but lets him go. FISH speaks his story, that he has known it just long enough to see how far they've all come. He is truly Fish Lamb for those seconds it takes to die, to burst into the moon, the sun and stars of who he truly is. Being Fish Lamb