



Now that right there is some damn fine fancy shootin'.

The Governor-General and Prime Minister host a sumptuous formal dinner for the Duke and Duchess of Chelsea along with the US President & First Lady.

And what a cartload of Australian celebrities and dignitaries
(dressed to the nines) rock up to Admiralty House!

In case one of the celebs takes ill (*or worse!*), a smaller dinner is also provided for second-level guests.

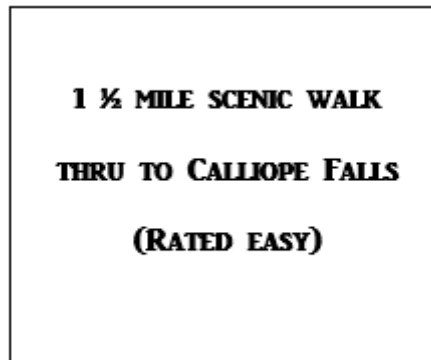
**However that may be, the substitutes seem to be having
a more thrilling time than the top-flight diners ...**

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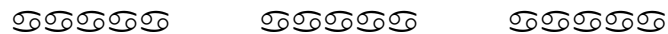
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PROLOGUE

At dawn in May 2020, a mist cloaks a superb Arkansas forest. We can make out a signpost:



A sturdy roan mare (ridden by Adelaide) comes into view from a riding path in the forest. Adelaide canters out of sight.



Adelaide has ridden to her ranch. A female stable-hand jogs out of a robust farm building. She takes the mare's reins as Adelaide dismounts. Adelaide absently thanks the girl as she takes leave of the mare with cooing blandishments. Adelaide strokes the mare's forehead.

Adelaide *quiet voice* Hatchette ... My lovely lady. You know that without you my life would be an empty, useless, meaningless ...

The stable-hand is grinning. Adelaide chuckles in a self-deprecating way as she strides away with a farewell wave.

END OF PROLOGUE

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Luke And then you'd have it transferred onto a DVD I suppose and bore us all shitless with it whenever –

Louise *forceful* You had to notice how my crapola sister got the shut-out. That's usually **me**.

Luke All I noticed was that the wine was beyond inferior. Victorian slosh! Total rubbish.

Louise You don't know this but before I even met you, she had a hot fling with a crim. If **I'd** done that, mother-dear would have screamed the house down. But oh no! When it was Claire-bear, that was fine. He was just a handsome adventurer who looked amazing with his arm around her shoulder. God I'd like to scratch their eyes out. Both of them! They're both tarred with the same brush.

Luke *confused* Hey! I thought that wine was supposed to make you ladies flirty and giggly.

Louise *nasty* Not this baby, Honey! No, the wine has merely elevated my sense of triumph. Shit-faced Claire and that snot she's married to had to sit there and listen to my triumph. The whole table focused on **me**. Mother with her mouth agape. Bloody fantastic!

Luke I still don't get this "substitute" thingo. I don't get it one little bit.

Louise Yes, you do.

Luke *flatly* No, I don't.

Louise They do it all the time at Buck House.

Luke Yeah ... So ...

Louise It's usually the Queen but in this case it's the Chelseas. Admiralty House. Top shelf dinner with all the trimmings. Best flatware, silverware – the works. It's the first time they've done it ... That

big nob from Broken Hill ... Aw I can't remember his frigging name

...

Luke The only one I know is Ben Oatley.

Louise Ben Oatley! That's him!

He died on the plane to Sydney ...

No ... it was Canberra!

No ... they were having the dinner at Gov House in Canberra.

That's right! It was for Her Madge and Phil. Anyway, his not being there mucked up the table seatings.

Luke *chuckles* What a genuine pisser!

And his demise drew a solemn pall over the royal conversation, one imagines.

Louise Nuh. It didn't actually.

Everybody expected him to die at any moment. He was so overweight and red-faced. Rampant obesity or whatever they call it.

Luke Morbid obesity.

Louise Yeah, that.

Is our taxi ever coming?

So ... what? Oh, yeah Ben Oatley.

And he was no loss anyway. So, some bright spark said: "Okay let's have a substitute dinner like they do at Buck House." And then if anybody dies or can't make it at the last minute us understudies are slotted in.

Luke The reserve bench.

Louise Bingo!

Luke Fuck only knows how or why **we** were selected. Probably a machine with balls like they use in Tattsлото ...

Louise *joking* Your immensely important work at the CSIRO.

Luke emits a very loud crack of laughter.

Louise They'd hardly look at my CV and get a hard-on. Witchy bitchy ex-hairdresser turns advertising guru-ess.

Oh, and by the way we can't use our phones once we're inside because the signals are blocked and that. They don't want the peeps to spend all night wanking on their phones.

Good idea, I suppose.

[Long sigh]

Anyway

No, it's all on account of **you**, baby.

A big fat Melbourne Cup has got to be worth something. "Go you good thing!"

Luke *extremely pleased* Well ... That's very gratifying ...

Yeah ... If that's the case, then I'm stoked.

I hope the wine is an improvement on the cat's piss they served up tonight.

Louise *excited* Everything will be brilliant! The wine, the food, the conversation. Plus it's like a game of Russian roulette. We all might get a shot at dining with the Chelseas. And the Prez.

Luke And that would mean –

Louise And that would mean that I could really put my arsehole sister’s nose out of joint. This is the best thing that’s ever happened to me. And I have my gorgeous fiancé to thank for it. I’m going to strip off all my clothes when we get home and let you fuck me like a wild boar. Promise!

Luke *drawls* `Kay.

I pre-taped the boxing ... So yeah ... Okay. You’re on!

They go into a big pash as the taxi rocks up. They quickly pile in. The doors close. The taxi drives off.

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

*The camera wanders around. Sydney really is beautiful at night. Maybe find The Rocks and simply drink it all in. Lovely!*

*The next speech is a male voice-over by a manic depressive so the lovelier our Sydney scenery, the better!*

The Noirist *voice-over* I am a confirmed noirist.

And I’m sorry to tell you but I can’t get it out of my head ... That zither music. And the clickety sounds that their shoes make on the streets of post-war Vienna. The long walk that Valli makes at the end. How she passes him by because he doesn’t matter.

*[Sings]*

Dung-da-dung-da-dung-da-dung ...

The twisted logic of Harry Lime ... The chase along the sewer ...  
The perfect casting of Ernst Deutsch to play the Baron ...

And you know I get almost savage when people groan about black and white movies because with the shadowy effects and the camera angles they just don't get it –

How great does a plume of smoke look as it spirals to the ceiling – you only get that charisma in black and white.

*[Sings]*

Dung-da-dung-da-dung-da-dung ...

That's who I am and what I am ... Even had my name officially altered to reflect that ...

I love noir. Film noir. "Get thee behind me, Satan".

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene ii:** Calliope Falls, Arkansas – Adelaide part I.

May 2020.

*Adelaide sits in a tiny, darkened room. The only light emanates from a laptop screen. Adelaide is typing on the laptop. She wears an audio headset with microphone.*

*Adelaide is in almost constant conversation with a variety of people (usually males).*

*She is cool, confident and in control. A framed photograph of the mare Hatchette is visible.*

Adelaide

If you need cash, Leon, I can get you cash.

There's a hefty slush fund concealed away in some nebulous bank account in one of those weird Arctic Circle countries: Iceland?

Greenland? Finland? Ireland? Somewhere like that. Randy has all the details. Take as much as you need. Get the job done. I want

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quick, quiet, clean and undetected. Go to it! Now!

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      Blackmail? Listen I don't do "blackmail", Troy-boy. As the only sister of the P, I hardly need to even raise an eyebrow let alone a fist. Things get done when I whistle for them to get done. QED.

Simply explain to the Governor that it would be in his best interests to comply with my wishes (speaking on behalf of the P, of course). And a gross error of judgement *not* to comply ...

Here's a tip for you: use as few words as possible. He'll get confused if you over-speak it. That's right! That's right! You got it.

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      Sam? What is going on?

Well, I wanted that stuff in my e-in-tray 10 minutes ago. What's the holdup, Samuel?

Okay. Get yourself out of that room now and go into hiding in Miami. I'll shove a few thousand dollars direct into your mud money account. Get yourself to Orlando airport. Right!

And remember to travel under one of your fake monikers. How come I have to think this out for you, Sam?

Do nothing suspicious – okay? -- and don't let them frisk you (whatever you do).

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      Nunzio. Speak to me.

No. The P is in Australia. Sydney, Australia.

Can't tell you. A gigantic shindig of some sort ...

Yes. I will have full access to him. His boys and I will be in total communication. I just have to remember that it's already



bona fide Aussie. Mmmm ...

Go on about Screaming Lord Sutch.

Jay No, no, no ... His handle was Jay Hawkins. Screamin' Jay Hawkins (he was called). And my Granpappy and my Daddy and my older brother Liam and me all used to sit around on the back porch while my Mamma played that old song until it hurt. We had a cassette player thing ... They smoked or chewed 'bacca, but me and my brother just munched on old bits of straw.

I can see that little boy that I was even now, Baby ... I stayed home on Sundays because I had a choice of hearing the word of God spoken by a hell-fire preacher or I could listen to that music by stayin' home from church ... Ain't that somethin'?

Miranda Well, that sounds like a very beautiful memory (even though it's slightly irreligious).

Jay Yeah, it sure was ...

*Jay is enjoying himself. He sings part of a blues song (Put A Spell On You)*

Jay *singing* I love you, anyhow  
I don't care if you don't want me  
I'm yours right now  
I put a spell on you  
Because you're mine.

*The song appears to be playing through Jay's head. He continues with the hand beat and the head nodding.*

Jay So, what did I do?

Miranda Sorry ... What?

Jay Sittin' on that old porch with the menfolk of my family ... With my kin on the spear side ... What was my next move?

Miranda Um ... I don't know. Perhaps you decided to become a rock star?

Jay Heck! Ain't you learned nothin' off of me, Baby?

They made such a fuss of that old song and claimed it was a cherished paving stone on the road to rock 'n' roll. But y'all gotta know that by my reckonin', that is a **blues** song. That there is blues, pure blues. It ain't rock 'n' roll at all. Not by a long whisker. No sir!

Miranda Ah! So, you campaigned to right that wrong?

Jay Heck no! I went out with my buddies and drank and smoked and screwed, singin' along to the words of that crazy old song. Talk about "wasted youth"!

Miranda Good grief!

Jay Yeah! You got that right. And then some honky girl named ... Now what was that chick's name, again? Anyhow, she went around trying to find out the pappy of her unborn child. And she pointed at me. So, my Granpappy laughed his head off saying: "Well at least we know that his sperm works".

*[Laughs delightedly]*

But my Mamma had other ideas. She got it all hushed up. The girl left our district post-haste, and I was bundled off to college. And so that was that!

*Miranda is stunned. She has no idea what to make of this weird tale. However, she wants to keep the conversation rolling along.*

Miranda *confused* So, what's the point of this narrative? That you have a love-child or that --

Jay *stern* I just want you to know, woman that I don't want to be a **substitute** for anything or anyone. Not no how!

*Now it clicks! Miranda can now spot the issue which is upsetting Jay. She sighs heavily.*

Miranda Oh! Is *that* what all this is about? We're here.

*Using an official swipe card provided for the evening, Miranda has negotiated the gates and swung the car into a parking spot. From their vantage point the views of Sydney Harbour are unbelievably breath-taking and amazing (even though not elevated).*

Miranda You don't much mention your brother.

Jay *too quickly* No, Ma'am. He's dead.

Miranda *stricken* I'm so sorry.

Jay That's alright. Weren't any of your fault.

Hey! The view here is pretty. Where are we anyhow?

Miranda Admiralty House.

Jay Well, you know ... This is amazing! Just God-damn amazing!  
Sydney Australia is just amazing!

*Jay stands arms akimbo looking about in appreciative awe.*

Jay Just rest up a minute. Y'all tell me again what this whole shebash that we is going to is all about.

Miranda Please try to remember your grammar, Jay. That "Good Old Boy" veneer lasts a mere 3 minutes and then it palls.

*Jay leans right into her face.*

Jay *staccato* What -- are -- we -- here -- for, Baby?

Miranda His Royal Highness Prince Alfred Ernest is currently visiting Sydney with HRH the Princess Melabie. They will one day be King and Queen of this country. They must be wined and dined at the highest level. To that end --

Jay And my President Taylor Medford and his lovely wife Amanda-Kate ... Why! They're here too. I guess you gotta get your priorities right, there.

You shoulda said: "The President of the USA is comin' along with

his lovely wife, and also their Royal Highnesses”.

Miranda Well, that might work if we were in Buffalo. However, in Oz one bows or curtsies to the Prince and Princess but not to the Prez. The Royals must come first.

Get it right, “Baby”.

Jay And us. We’re here, too.

Miranda *nods* And us.

*[Rolls her eyes]*

It’s an invasion.

Jay Yeah ... If I play my cards right, some poor Aussie might curtsy to me. Or bow ...

*Miranda groans. She has checked herself in the car windows (using them as a mirror) and now indicates to Jay that she is ready to move on. Jay busies himself with a camelia.*

Miranda The Governor-General **and** the Prime Minister are holding a vice-regal dinner for 54 people. Formal dress code. And in case any of the official guests is struck down then --

Jay For instance, food poisoning. “A suspect Morton Bay bug took me out, doctor!”

Miranda Yes! That might happen. Well, the clever plan is to have --

Jay Or maybe ... Just maybe one of the official guests (all dolled-up in his dress uniform) might keel over just as the loyal toasts are being made.

Miranda Ha-ha. Most amusing. There is a second dinner, made up of supremely eminent folk who are ready at a moment’s notice to take their place at the genuine event (if that is required).

Jay A dinner made up of possible substitutes.

Miranda Yes. It’s the Substitute Dinner. That’s its proper title. And we two

are attendees at that function in the glorious Asquith Room.

Jay And who will I be standing-in for (should I be called upon)?

Miranda The Prez. You have after all portrayed the US President on more than one occasion.

Jay And won an Academy Award along the way in the process.

Well ... I'm not so crissed-off about all these shenanigans now that I know that.

So, tell me ... am I permitted to activate the situation or do I have to wait for the Fates to act in my favour? Can I expedite the action?

Miranda *appalled* Jay! You wouldn't dare!

*Jay swaggers along, humming "Put A Spell On You". Miranda totters along on high heels. They have nearly reached the entrance to Admiralty House.*

Jay Say, do y'all expect that I'll be frisked?

Miranda Certainly! I mean ... I imagine so ...

Jay That's good! Right neighbourly! I like fine to be gone over, especially by a female officer of the law.

Miranda *tart* My humble suggestion is that you don't purr like a contented cat during the frisk. Might send the wrong message, mightn't it?

Jay *amused* My messages are always right on the money, Baby! I'd like fine for y'all to remember that.

*Jay shouts his laughter and slings his arm over Miranda's shoulder. The couple now enter the building.*

END OF SCENE

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**The portrait of H H Asquith**

|             |         |             |
|-------------|---------|-------------|
|             | SEAT 20 |             |
|             | JOEL    |             |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 19     |         | SEAT 1      |
| SHERLEEN    |         | KATHY       |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 18     |         | SEAT 2      |
| EWAN        |         | WAYNE       |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 17     |         | SEAT 3      |
| MIRANDA     |         | LOUISE      |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 16     |         | SEAT 4      |
| THE NOIRIST |         | TRENT       |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 15     |         | SEAT 5      |
| EVELYN      |         | DUNCAN      |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 14     |         | SEAT 6      |
| MURRAY      |         | JAY         |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 13     |         | SEAT 7      |
| ROXEANNE    |         | SUKIE       |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 12     |         | SEAT 8      |
| LUKE        |         | DENNY       |
|             |         |             |
| SEAT 11     |         | SEAT 9      |
| TRISHA      |         | THE PARTNER |
|             |         |             |
|             | SEAT 10 |             |
|             | MARTIN  |             |

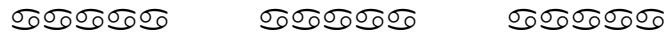
*Usually, the person occupying seat 5 would be female.*

*However, since Martin and Joel are in a unisex relationship, there are 11 male guests and 9 female guests.*

*It is very doubtful that Duncan (seat 5) would ever realize that – so no-one is offended.*

*Anyway, Duncan is right on the money having Jay beside him. No harm done!*

**I, Scene iv: The Guests Settle-In, Finding Their Seats**May 2020.*We are going to be a bit sexist here as Admiralty House cleaves to the old traditions.**Male: throughout the dinner, male drink waiters will be attending to the guests.**Female: the food waitresses will appear (bearing plates) as indicated.*



*The guests have been mingling in an anteroom. Now they enter the Asquith Room where a superb and grand dining table awaits them. They carry in any unfinished drinks.**There is a hubbub of general conversation as the guests find their names on the table. "Here's me", "You're over there" and so on.*

Sukie *pouting*                      Oh! I'm not next to you Ewan. That's a bit ordinary ...

Ewan                                      Don't stress, Suke. It's only while we're eating.

*As the diners find their seats and sit, drink waiters approach to take any extra orders. As Martin strolls in (trying to look above his company) he speaks to no-one in particular.*

Martin *firmly*                      No sport please! No cricket or footy or tennis. I don't do sport.  
End of story.

*The camera will dodge here and there to capture this sense of "arrival".*

Denny *very merry*                I'm here to raise the comedy quotient.

Trent                                      Well, I'm here as the token drunk.

*This is met be some polite laughter. However, Trisha gives her husband a look of withering contempt.*

Jay                                        Trent, my golfing friend. You were explaining to me what a "G-G"  
is when we were rudely interrupted.

Trent                                      By the waiter. Plying me with drinks. Bloody nuisance.  
  
Now! The "G-G" is our bloke (or in this case woman) who stands  
in for the Queen. "G-G" stands for Governor-General. The  
monarch is on the other side of the world in grey, cold, mouldy old

England. And her representative is over here in warm, sunny, beautiful Sydney. Works like a President.

The Prime Minister is elected by the peeps. The "G-G" gets appointed.

Wayne You see, it's like this. The "G-G" lives and works from Government House in Canberra (the nation's capital) or from here when in Sydney. The Prime Minister in Canberra lives in The Lodge and here in Sydney at Kirribilli House (which is quite nearby but hidden from view by trees).

*Jay nods, taking a long breath. He whispers to Duncan.*

Jay *aside to Duncan* Hope there won't be an examination on all that. If there is, I'm gonna have to cheat.

*Denny immediately lusts after Sukie. Denny is never tactful. He blurts out whatever he thinks.*

Denny *smarmy* Of all the ladies at this table, Darl, you are the most beautiful. I'm gonna demand a photo of the both of us if one of them roving photographers wanders by.

Bewdy! Let's get drunk together, eh?

*Sukie is embarrassed and put off. But before she can speak, Denny rushes on.*

Denny *hurried* Come on! We've got a long night ahead of us. Let's try and enjoy it. You know what they say: "Beauty is in the eye of the holder".

Sukie *cold* "Beholder". It's "beholder".

*Denny has made a joke. He now roars with laughter (discomforting Sukie) even more.*

Denny *laughing* Or "A-holder" or "C-holder". Did ya get it?

*Several people take selfies as they get comfortable. Ewan speaks to both Sherleen (to his left) and Miranda (to his right). But he is overheard by others.*

Ewan I just bumped into a bloke I've known for years. He's doing a gig upstairs as a drinks waiter, see? He reckons they all got read the

Riot Act earlier on. All the waiters and that. Like before the Melbourne Cup the stewards take all the jocks into a locked room and tell them in no uncertain terms what *is* and what is *not* allowed.

Anyway, he reckons (this mate of mine reckons) ...

He reckons that when the President wants to have a slash (or whatever) two of his secret service blokes have to go into the Gents and get everyone out. They do a quick reky and then they escort the Prez in. And they hang around until he is finished. One on the door and one inside.

How's that? What a gross-out. What'dya reckon?

Sherleen Godfather! And what about Mrs President?

Ewan *shrugs* He didn't say.

Miranda I think she probably has a lady companion who goes with her. That's what it will be. And the Duchess of Chelsea of course has a woman who is dedicated to that kind of thing. (As you would expect for the future queen).

Sherleen Godfather!

Miranda *to Ewan* What would you do if you were busting for a snake's hiss and the Gents was all blocked by Secret Service heavies for the President's needs?

Ewan *grins* I would march like an infantryman out into the garden and piss on the nearest bush. And whistle while I did it.

Sherleen Unless there were people out there smoking.

Miranda Or having a punch-up.

Ewan *laughs* I'm not sure that any of these blokes are going to have a barney.

*Miranda snorts in disagreement.*

Miranda                    Every time I attend one of these soirees, and I wander outside to accompany a female (such that she can have a drag on a ciggie) there they are. Punching on.

*Ewan tries to think of a response.*

Miranda                    They drink too much and then they get into an argument. Over a girl, or over money or just if Holden cars are better than Fords ... fisticuffs. And then a whole lot of other gentlemen rush out to subdue them. It seems that some men never fight: their role in life is to grab aggressive males from behind (pinning their arms down) and then hauling them away. Calming words are spoken. Fight over.

Joel *fay*                    Confidentially, I seem to give people the impression that I'm a bit of a fluffy softy. But I love a fight! Got a very nice upper cut. Get picked-on a bit, you see. Leave them on the footpath wondering what hit them. My trusty upper cut.

Sherleen                    That's incredible!  
  
Denny and I have two sons. When they were little, they were ***always*** tussling. I just got at them with the straw broom.

Ewan *thoughtful*            I'm like that. The "fight-stopper" ... never the fighter. Do you know what: I've never been pinged for striking. On the footy field, I mean. Not once.

Joel *giggles*                Oh, if I'd been a footy player, I'd have been dragged off to the bench every time. Couldn't help m'self. I'd be up at the Tribunal every week!

END OF SCENE

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**I, Scene v:** Calliope Falls, Arkansas – Adelaide part II.

May 2020.

*Adelaide sits in a tiny, darkened room. The only light emanates from a laptop screen. Adelaide is typing on the laptop. She wears an audio headset with microphone.*

*Adelaide is in almost constant conversation with a variety of people (usually males).*

*She is cool, confident and in control. A framed photograph of the mare Hatchette is visible.*

Adelaide                      Sounds like he's hiding under a veil of protection money. Find out who he's paying out to and then give me a name. My strong arm guys can handle it from there.

And good work, Walter! Thanks.

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      Shell. He's arrived at the shindig, has he? Make sure he has a fabulous evening.

Oh, and the password for this evening is "nutmeg". Let Mrs P know that in good time, won't you?

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      What hasn't he done? Ah ... Money laundering ... Mishandling funds ...

But that crafty little devil meets his match in me. Silas, take that stretcher-case aside to warn him that messing with the P (and especially with his sister Adelaide) can cause him serious health issues. When you tell him that, why don't you point to his kneecaps?

END OF SCENE

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END OF ACT I

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## ACT II

### II, Scene i: Some of the Substitute Diners Get Along

May 2020.

*Basically, the seating arrangements for the Asquith Room diners are below par. That is, diplomacy has been thrown out the door.*

*Our camera will focus on just four pairs of diners who have managed to strike up a conversation. We will move from one pair to the next in a steady slide. Everyone else is “grumpy-bum” because their next-door neighbour is crap and/or they cannot use their mobile phone (except as a camera). This tedium/boredom will be noted by our camera as an aside as we move 360 degrees around the table, beginning with seat 1 and working around to seat 20.*

Kathy and Wayne Hit It Off

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*Kathy (seat 1) and Wayne (seat 2) have met before in relation to wildlife forays. They discuss Kakadu in northern Australia. Kathy nods with keen interest as Wayne rehashes one of his trips thereto. I want this full speech covered.*

Wayne                      The wet season in Kakadu (the monsoon) is really oppressive. It's all drowning salty rain that falls almost horizontal (so low are the clouds). No hope of sheltering from it. It's a bizarre weather situation – emanating from south-east Asia. The "Barre" they call it. No sun for weeks. Just these ferocious, dark, brooding skies.

Of course, if the rain stops then the humidity kicks in. If you are lying down, then no possible hope of getting to your feet without help. Simply can't move. But the birds do come out. Fork-tailed swifts, lorikeets (after the blossoms which suddenly burst forth) and the ever-present magpie geese. It's amazing! You'd definitely appreciate it. The water monitors catching small fish that leap out of the water into their mouths ... and the variety of frogs is breath-taking ...

#### BOREDOM UPDATE:

Louise (seat 3) is bored. She looks about as she fiddles with her cutlery. Maybe she can pick up on someone's conversation ...

Trent (seat 4) is not bored in that he can eavesdrop on Jay's trio. As with Louise, he fiddles with the cutlery as he listens. He drinks too much.

#### Duncan and Jay Hit It Off, With Sukie As A Sidebar.

*Duncan (seat 5) is very aware that Jay (seat 6) can hardly understand a thing he says (due to Duncan's very strong Australian accent).*

*Duncan tells Jay to do all the talking because he (Duncan) can understand Jay okay.*

*Having said that, Duncan loves to talk. Somehow (with actions) he gets his message across. Jay has played a boxer in one of his films so he can relate.*

*Duncan leans onto the table facing to his left. Sukie (seat 7) mirrors Duncan (to the right) as she leans on the table. Sukie is so pissed-off with Denny (seat 8) that she wants to completely shut him out. Jay is the centre of attention in the middle of this trio. As mentioned, Trent listens in.*

Duncan *laughing* Can you understand one word I say?

Jay *chuckling* Every third word.

*Duncan sees that Sukie is avidly listening-in. He quickly points to her and winks. Jay turns to her and waves slightly. But his attention is with Duncan.*

Duncan Okay. I fight in the super middleweight division. I currently hold the Commonwealth title, mate. Does that compute?

Jay *nods* Sure. You fight somewhere around 168 pounds?

Duncan Correct (in the "old). In Australia (we're decimalized) when I'm fighting I'm 1.77 metres tall and weigh 76 kilograms. Now, for you in the "old" that's 5' 10" and 168 lb. There you go!

Jay Are you currently training for a future fight?

Duncan *nods* Yeah, mate. Yeah. Gotta get meself sharp.

I'm slated to fight the Philippine boxer Fidel "Crunchtime" Cabello in 4 months' time.

*Duncan nods many times and then shrugs.*

Jay Good luck, man! "Crunchtime" ...

I played a boxer once in a corny movie called "Hard Cheese".

Boxers are under enormous pressure. I get it. I get it.

Duncan Hey! It's your turn. You can't follow what I'm saying. I need subtitles. But I can totes understand you. So why don't you talk and I'll listen. Whatd'ya reckon?

Jay *smiling* Talk about what?

Duncan *shrugs* Stuff you done.

When you act in those tough guy movies – what ya did. Tell us that.

*Jay nods slowly. He gets it. But where to start?*

Jay *musings* Mexico. That was some fun in old Monterrey. This is what I did ...

*We fade out on this conversation.*

### BOREDOM UPDATE:

Denny (seat 8) tries to sleaze all over Sukie (total fail) and The Partner in seat 9 (even worse fail).

Martin (seat 10 at head of table) is so self-obsessed that he looks about him haughtily.

Trisha (seat 11) weeps into her table napkin.

Luke (seat 12) looks bored and lonely. He is hungry and looks forward to the first course.

Roxeanne (seat 13) is bored. It appears that she is accustomed to Duncan ignoring her.

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| Murray and Evelyn Hit It Off |
|------------------------------|

*Murray (seat 14) and Evelyn (seat 15) have met before in relation to wildlife forays. They discuss Kakadu in northern Australia. They will discuss with keen interest. I want this full speech covered.*

Evelyn Wayne and I focused on a superb paperbark swamp in the Kakadu park. It was the middle of the year. What would you say? The early dry season?

Murray That's it. The time of flowering lillies. We collect the seeds of the giant water lily. Good bush food. Sweet tucker.

The turtles dig themselves into the mud to protect themselves from the long dry ahead. We get them to eat. Traditional. We get them with turtle sticks. Cook `em on a fire. Good tucker.

Evelyn Murray, we found aestivating crocodiles. Estuarine crocs. Marvellous!

Murray Yeah, them too. And like I say. We eat that stuff. That's how the old fellas survive. Cook up nice on a fire.

Evelyn And I've never in my life seen so many flying foxes!

Murray *chuckles* Yeah. They come for the blossoms and the fruit. But no good tucker them. We don't eat them ...

#### BOREDOM UPDATE:

The Noirist (seat 16) is off with the fairies.

### Ewan and Miranda Hit It Off

*Miranda (seat 17) is indifferent to the etiquette of not speaking across the dining table. Every so often, she calls out to Jay.*

Miranda *to Jay* How are you coping, Cowboy? Got a loyal band of fans there, I see.

*Miranda awaits some response. Our camera does not leave her, so Jay's response is unseen by us.*

Miranda *to herself* He's okay. A short friendly wave. That's all that wife number three can expect. A short friendly wave. Notice how he doesn't concern himself with **my** welfare.

*Miranda realizes that she has caught the attention of Ewan (seat 18).*

Miranda *to Ewan* Cricket. Do you play cricket?

Ewan No. Footy me. Sorry.

Miranda *persists* But you ***understand*** cricket? You maybe watch it on the telly?

Ewan *nods* Yeah. I don't mind. Yeah, I catch it if I can ...

Miranda Okay. Well tell me this ... You're from the West, aren't you?

Ewan Yeah, sure. I play for Fremantle in the AFL.

Miranda Tell me what is the Fremantle Doctor when it's at home.

Ewan The Freo Doctor? It's just a cool breeze that comes through in summer. Because the Indian Ocean is so big it's cold. The land around Perth and Freo gets real hot. That's what causes it, but. And then in the arvo this lovely breeze blows through. Fixes you up. That's why they call it "The Doctor". Fixes you up ...

Miranda *giggles* That's amazing! I had this crazy idea that he was a real guy: a medical man who arrived on the cricket pitch and revived everyone's heat stroke.

*Ewan and Miranda laugh.*

Miranda And Fremantle is way, way away ...

Ewan As the crow flies it's over 3,200 kilometres from Perth to Sydney. Over 4 hours in the plane, direct. In the footy season I have to fly that every second week.

It's total shit (pardon my French).

Miranda I read that your state (Western Australia) is actually so big that you could fit the whole of the UK ten times in it! My mind just can't take that in ...

Ewan Loads of people in WA have their own little planes because the state is too big to drive around in. It takes the lady on the TV nearly half-an-hour to deliver the weather for our state. But there's hardly any people.

Miranda *to Jay*

Hey! Calling Dry Gulch Jay!

This tall dude here lives in an Australian state that fits Texas in it three-and-a-half times. Isn't that something?

But with a total population (the whole state) only as big as Chicago.

*Miranda clicks her tongue in a self-satisfied way as she winks at Ewan.*

Miranda

He insists on needling me about how very tiny everything is in England. But I got my own back with Western Australia.

My luck was in when I was told to sit next to you, Ewan my main man!

*Ewan and Miranda give each other a high five.*

### Sherleen and Joel Hit It Off

*Sherleen (seat 19) would never allow good taste or fine conversation to get in the way of her enjoyment. Joel (in seat 20 at the head of the table next to Sherleen) is the kind of man to throw himself into whatever is going forward. Their conversation is giggly, off-colour and in poor taste. We don't really hear it (nor do we want to). The two actors here may make up something ghastly as they go along: the worse, the better!*

**The entrée course will now be served.**

**II, Scene ii: I Am A Confirmed Noirist**

May 2020.

*The Noirist has gone off into one of his reveries as the waitress tries to serve him his entrée.*

Noirist *voice-over*            What makes a film "noir"?

The absence of light. Moving about in almost pitch black. Except that this time there is neon light beaming through windows.

Dormand crouching in fear in the bathroom. The window slamming on the gumshoe's hand to be followed with the screaming chill of the knife stuck into his trapped paw.

Who can forget --

Waitress *smiling*            Your entrée, sir.

The Noirist *worried*            What is it?

Waitress *smiling*            Dorigo duck served with heritage beetroot and lavender.

*The plate is placed in front of The Noirist. The waitress moves on.*

*The Noirist looks about – almost frantically. Miranda is to his left; however, she is completely shut off. Evelyn is to his right. She seems like a good person.*

The Noirist *to Evelyn*            What did they give you to eat?

Evelyn                            Ah ... She did say ...

*[Clicks her fingers]*

It's Tasmanian salmon. Not sure about the accompaniment ...

*[Refers to a nearby stiff paper menu]*

Oh yes! Here: brown butter and blood orange.

The Noirist *concerned*            I would rather have had that ... I don't think that I could face the duck ...

Evelyn *kindly*                    Would you like to swap? I'm a great fan of poultry.

*The Noirist nods and the swap is made. The Noirist gobbles down his food in record time.*

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The Noirist *voice-over* Fish, fish, fish ...

Yeah. Who could ever forget Dan Hadaya crawling along the road? He won't die ... He won't go down. And the girl's boyfriend whacking him over the head and back with a spade. And the fat guy's cigarette lighter being a "tell" under the fish.

And --

Evelyn *to the Noirist* What a shame you dodged the duck. It was brilliant. The chefs here must be of international standard.

*The Noirist stares at Evelyn.*

The Noirist What ... What's your very favourite Jack Nicholson film?

Evelyn I don't know about "favourite". I really enjoyed "A Few Good Men".

The Noirist *shocked* But ... He wasn't in that film.

Evelyn *surprised* Of course he was! He played the officer – the one who bellowed "You can't handle the truth".

The Noirist *appalled* No! No! No! I meant Jack Nicholson in "Chinatown". as J. J. who roots out all the cheating husbands. You gotta love that film best.

The ... the ... the bandage's over his nose ... and the haunting beauty of Dunaway – so captivating under that black fascinator and the plumes of smoke drifting up to the ceiling.

Ripping the page out of the book (as he coughs) ...

The ... the ochre tones of the LA desert in --

*Murray touches Evelyn's arm. Evelyn politely excuses herself to The Noirist and then turns to her right, focusing her attention on Murray.*

The Noirist *whispers* Roman Polanski. With the knife. It was his movie after all ...

## The Noirist Momentarily Loses The Plot.

Other conversations intrude into The Noirist's thoughts. He imagines (and we will go with him) that the Asquith Room is set in the 1930's. The colouration is sucked out: we are totally in black-and-white. Now the diners are kitted-out in 1930's formal dress. All the diners smoke. The man sitting directly opposite The Noirist is Trent. He and his wife Trisha have just that morning decided that divorce is their only solution. Now Trisha is weeping. Martin (to her right) is unsympathetic and unsolicitous. It is left to Luke (on her left) to comfort her.

*Trent leans forward. His voice is that of John Houston as he addresses The Noirist.*

Trent/Houston *to the* Mr Giddes, you're dealing with a disturbed woman who just lost  
*Noirist* her husband. I don't want her taken advantage of.

*The Noirist reels back.*

*The colouration returns and everyone is as before: modern, contemporary. Trent's voice is back to normal. His anger rises as he speaks.*

Trent We'll kick back and let the lawyers divvie-up my property, my earnings, my life so that that ungrateful toe-rag witch can maintain her nail polish lifestyle. Oh yes! And she'll fight to have custody of my kids. All she'll leave me is my golfing trophies.

*[Yelling to Trisha]*

Won't you, Precious?

*The waitresses clear off the entrée plates and cutlery with military precision. The Noirist appears to be completely stunned.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene iii:** Calliope Falls, Arkansas – Adelaide part III.

### May 2020.

*Adelaide sits in a tiny, darkened room. The only light emanates from a laptop screen. Adelaide is typing on the laptop. She wears an audio headset with microphone.*

*Adelaide is in almost constant conversation with a variety of people (usually males).*

*She is cool, confident and in control. A framed photograph of the mare Hatchette is visible.*

Adelaide                      The President? What's it to you?

                                         Nunzio! Are you serious? Give me that name again. "Louise Jenkins". And she is?

                                         Okay! Okay! Nunzio – if this pays out you are being awarded a special presidential commendation. You know that?

*Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide *frowning*              What? ...

                                         She's not on the guest list?

*[Finger tapping pause]*

                                         That's ... That's funny ...

                                         Okay ... Just keep an eye on the P. Thanks, Shell.

*Adelaide is really puzzled, as evidenced by the frenetic finger tapping. Next call after slight pause.*

Adelaide                      Downstairs? How many fucking dinners are they having in that place? I thought that Down Under everyone gathered around the barbeque in shorts and flip-flops, downing beers.

                                         Okay. Okay. And she's on **that** list? The substitutes? My God this

is beyond belief ...

Leave that with me, Shell. I'll double, triple, quadruple check her and get back to you. We may have to extend ourselves to a sprinkle of nutmeg ...

*Adelaide now smiles, rubbing her hands.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene iv:** The Noirist Writes His Own Ending

May 2020.

*Trisha wails. The Noirist rushes to the Gents toilet.*

*He is seen from the back urinating.*

The Noirist *voice-over* Stanwyck's face. She is psychopathic and dangerous. Murder. Her scheme is to get very rich on the back of her murdered husband. And poor deluded MacMurray will take her there. Deceit. Lies and loathing ... The play of light and shade (the hallmark of all good noir) ... Stanwyck's face ...

*The Noirist adjusts his clothing then heads to the basin to wash his hands. His face in the mirror is replaced by the final scene in "Double Indemnity" when Robinson lights MacMurray's cigarette as they await the arrival of the police and ambulance.*

The Noirist *aloud* Police and ambos ...

*Denny enters as he whistles happily.*

Denny *joyful* The food's bloody good. I'm next to a dreamboat girl. Have to get out the old Egmont magic. Sherleen will get the usual migraine

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and want to go home. Then I'll ditch her and come back for the hot babe. Sweet!

**The Noirist** That girl sitting next to you is in love with the AFL footballer. He could crush you between his elbows. Why would she want you when she's got him?

**Denny** Because he probably has a one-inch dick. Once she sees my equipment, there'll be no contest.

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

*The Noirist has returned to his seat.*

**The dinner is now served.**

*The Noirist hovers near his chair as he stares down at his beautifully presented meal. His serve is the beef Bourguignon accompanied by pearl onions, fungi and Mansfield bacon.*

*The Noirist sits down, glancing to his right to check out what Evelyn has received. Evelyn spots the Noirist's interest.*

**Evelyn** Mine is lamb. Cutlet and fillet of lamb. With caramelized onion and ... Ooo I'm not sure ...

**Miranda** *butts in* Grilled okra. It's very nice.

*Evelyn acknowledges Miranda.*

**Evelyn to The Noirist** Are you okay with your meal or do you want to swap?

*The Noirist shakes his head. Again, the Noirist gobbles down his food, swallowing gulps of wine when finished.*

**Miranda** *amused* Were you hungry? Don't they feed you at home?

*The Noirist turns to his left to look at Miranda. She is laughing at him. The Noirist gulps. He is now in freefall.*

The Noirist *to Miranda*    Absence of sound except for the music sweeping over all.

Corruption. Moral degradation. The soul torn apart.

Me emitting a long poignant sigh.

I am a confirmed noirist.

The face of the woman seen in a mixture of shadow and light.  
Darkness. A deep sense of foreboding. Or do I mean a sense of  
deep foreboding? Duplicity ...

Thus, we chunder off to watch our noir classic (Bette Davis in  
"The Letter") at somebody or other's beachside bungalow and  
then sit around getting pissed and eating unhealthy food whilst we  
thrash it out.

*[Staccato]*

No. You're right. They don't feed me at home. I'm basically  
starving to death.

*[Dreamy]*

You know how it works ... The moon peeping from behind clouds.  
The delicacy of Davis's lacework. The lawyer (brilliantly played by  
James Stephenson). He's guessed her guilty secret. And the Asian  
bloke absolutely knows it. That moment when Davis stoops at the  
feet of Gail Sondergaard to collect the incriminating letter. Magic!!

*[Snaps fingers]*

The Asian bloke was played by Victor Sen Yung. Of course!

Miranda *very amused*    From the "Charlie Chan" flicks. And "Bonanza". Yeah ... great

casting there.

Noirist

You're sneering ... But the direction on this film ...

They are all trying to sleep when the movie starts and she comes boldly down the steps, shooting as she goes. Magic!

Noir ... God! I love "noir" ...

Miranda *surprised*

"The Letter"? The old rubber plantation? She comes swanning down the outside stairs, plugging some poor stiff with bullets? Is that the one?

You've got to be joking.

"The Letter" is melodrama. It's not a noir film at all. Nowhere – not even close.

The Noirist *outraged*

Yes, yes it is!

Miranda

No it's not. Go and watch it again.

*The Partner appears behind The Noirist who is much startled by her approach. Her voice is abrasive.*

The Partner

I wanna go home. I don't like it here. I'm not havin' a good time. The food is shit and I'm not enjoyin' meself.

The Noirist *confused*

What?

The Partner

They're arseholes. The bloke there is so far up himself that he refuses to talk to me and the other bloke is trying to get into that other bitch's knickers. I just wanna go home.

Give us me money (will ya?) so's I can grab a taxi and get outta here.

## The Noirist Attempts The Big Dirt Dive.

*The Partner drops her hand onto The Noirist's shoulder. She is gripping her bling-covered evening bag. The Noirist allows many moods to pass over his face: confusion, doubt, unrest. Then he grabs her evening bag from her hand. He opens the bag. From it, he extracts a tiny pistol. Standing he raises the pistol to his right temple and shoots.*

*Due to his uncontrolled shaking, The Noirist misses. The shot only grazes his forehead. The bullet travels to the portrait of H H Asquith where it creates a neat hole right between the eyes.*

*Several guests gasp in fright. Before pandemonium sets in, Ewan and Murray leap into action, subduing The Noirist from behind. Murray abstracts the pistol from The Noirist's fingers. He chucks it further up the table. Ewan maintains a strong grip on The Noirist's arms.*

*Terry is quickly into action.*

Terry                                I'll buzz for the police. Luckily, we have a small contingent already stationed here for security reasons.

Are you able to hold the fort? I'll have to buzz them from the bar.

*There is a hubbub of concerned voices and frightened voices. The words "gun" and "frisked" are often heard. Still Murray and Ewan hold The Noirist (who shrieks and shouts).*

Miranda *waspish*                He should have watched "The Big Sleep".

*Jay reaches over the table to take the gun (using a napkin). He folds up the pistol without touching it.*

Jay                                    I got the gun (if the cops need it for evidence). I done so many cops-and-robbers shows that I know the drill. Yeah?

And I gotta tell y'all that your quick action (Ewan there and Sir GulGul) brings it all back. All back ...

*Several people concur with Jay. There are many confused utterances. Everyone is in shock.*

*Over and over we hear the concern of the guests: "How did he manage to bring in a gun?" and "What happened to the security check?"*

*The Partner suddenly calls out in alarm and denial.*

*Jay moseys over to the wall in the manner of a cowboy. Jay stares at the damaged portrait. He nods as he grins and points.*

Jay *amused* Doggone! Got him right between the eyes.

*[Drawls]*

Now that right there is some damn fine fancy shootin'.

🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵 **Break** 🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵🎵

*Everyone has resumed their seat. They look askance at The Noirist who has slumped his body over the table on folded arms, weeping.*

*The unflappable Charles (bursting with dignity, diplomacy and tact) whispers to The Noirist as he escorts The Noirist out of the Asquith Room. We hear a murmured: "Police ... outside in the garden ..."*

*Charles quickly returns. He has a strong, resounding voice as he addresses the remaining 19 guests.*

Charles I apologize for that unfortunate incident. The guest will receive all possible assistance from the members of the Commonwealth Police who will deal with this matter as discreetly as possible.

We'll be serving your dessert very soon.

Please continue to enjoy yourselves.

*Jay approaches Charles, holding out the pistol (wrapped in its napkin).*

Jay *dour* Are you talking to the police? Here! You'd better take this with you. Oh! And let them know that Sir GulGul's prints are on it because he grabbed the gun off of the nutcase.

*Charles takes in the situation immediately as he receives the pistol from Jay.*

Charles Thank you, Sir.

*And then Charles whisks himself off, to return outside.*

*Terry and the drink waiters assure themselves that each individual diner is okay.*

~~~~~

Prior to the botched suicide attempt, the guests were becoming inebriated.

After the botched suicide, a pall seems to descend upon them. Those who have finished their dinner have their plates cleared by the waitresses. Others eat on. The staff appear to be working hard to make everything run smoothly -- as normally as possible.

~~~~~

*We focus on Murray. He is looking up at the far wall in the Asquith Room. A magnificent didgeridoo hangs there in pride of place.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene v:** Calliope Falls, Arkansas – Adelaide part IV.

May 2020.

*Adelaide stands in a tiny, darkened room. The only light emanates from a laptop screen.*

*Adelaide is shaking, no longer cool and collected as we had previously seen her.*

*She wears an audio headset with microphone into which she yells.*

*A framed photograph of the mare Hatchette is visible.*

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Adelaide *unsteady*

Shell! Have you contained the situation? What is the condition of the President?

How many people have been injured?

Are all our men safe? And Mrs P? She's secure?

*[After a long sigh, she sits again]*

You're telling me that the shooting was at the downstairs dinner (the substitute folk), where Louise Jenkins is? Is there a connection or ...

Okay. I got it. The guy had a meltdown, yeah? No-one hurt. Aw, that's just too weird ...

Say! Tell me how in the name of **everything** was that possible? Did nobody check the pockets ... the ... the handbags ... ?

Fuck! The P is in the building, and they let people wander in and out carrying firearms. This is beyond belief! Are they crazy?

*Adelaide is very upset. She squeezes her lips hard together.*

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

Adelaide

Shell, push ahead with the nutmeg plan. Mrs P will feel ill. She will need to return to the Consulate. The P will invite Jenkins to dance with him, then take her aside. The P must charm her. I don't need to send you guys an instruction manual, do I?

Now listen up! Listen good!

The husband trains racehorses. Got an offsider who has a phenomenal way with the horses. An offsider with a Yankee accent ... That might be our boy!

*Adelaide is very tired. She rips off the earphones, chucking them near to the bright screen as she flops off towards her bed.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene vi: The Didge Gets a Workout**

May 2020.

*Murray cannot take his eyes off the superbly crafted didgeridoo which has been mounted high up on the wall of the Asquith Room. Murray sits opposite Jay and thus almost opposite Duncan. When he can catch Duncan's eye, Murray motions with his head that he wants Duncan. Murray points up at the wall. Duncan takes it in quickly.*

Duncan                      Do ya want me to help you get the didge down off the wall, mate?

Murray *nods eagerly*      Yeah, please ...

That old fella is calling out to this old fella: "Come and give me a workout".

You taller than me. Can you reach up to that? By standing on a chair, maybe?

*Duncan and Murray step over to the wall to suss out the situation. Duncan looks around, searching for Ewan.*

Duncan                      Ah ... Listen! The footy player is much taller than me.

*[Calls out loudly]*

Crates! Ewan! Mate! Come and give us a hand, will ya?

*Kathy (who is fascinated and thrilled at this turn of events) quickly approaches. Ewan strides over, carrying his chair with him. Jay (also fascinated) rocks up.*

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Kathy *excited*                    There are some absolutely marvellous orchestral accompaniments for the didgeridoo. Superb!

*Meanwhile Ewan stands up on the chair, reaching for the wooden instrument. With Jay and Duncan giving timely advice and ensuring that the didgeridoo lands safely, Ewan is able to unhook the instrument from its mooring. He climbs down from the chair, handing the didgeridoo to Murray.*

*Murray lovingly strokes the instrument.*

Murray                            I wonder how many years since you been played, mate? I just wonder ...

*[To the others]*

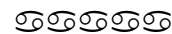
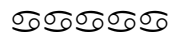
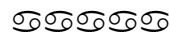
I come from South Oz meself, but when I play I do the Arnhem melodies.

*Murray sits. He taps his fingernails on the wood as he warms up the didgeridoo with his breath. Then the Asquith Room is filled with the haunting, evocative sounds of the kookaburra, dingo and so on.*

*Murray is an extremely talented player.*

*Martin seems to be the only guest not enjoying the recital. He speaks to no-one in particular.*

Martin *sullen*                    Next, they'll have us doing a haka!



*Charles is seen upstairs listening to the noises from below. He appears to frown slightly.*

*A uniformed officer approaches Charles to whisper in his ear.*

*Charles nods, then quickly tears downstairs.*

*On spotting Charles, Terry is somewhat alarmed. Charles reassures Terry by patting Terry's shoulder as he moves quickly onwards.*

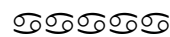
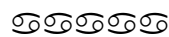
*Charles locates Murray and bends to speak in a low voice.*

Charles *pleasant*                    Sir Murray. I wonder if you would be willing to indulge me?

Their Royal Highnesses and Mr President have expressed a wish for you to join them in the Gibbes Room upstairs in order to play this native instrument for them. They would be more than delighted to hear your recital. If you would follow me?

Denny *calls out*                      What? Has somebody up there carked it?

*Charles cannot trust himself to look at the catcaller. He merely gives a quick shake of the head as he attends to Murray. Charles even carries the instrument. Murray gives a quick wink to Ewan, Jay and Duncan then toddles off in Charles's wake.*



*In front of this larger audience (and positioned on the dancefloor) Murray is led to a chair. He sits and the didgeridoo is handed back to him. Charles addresses the audience.*

Charles *grand*                      Your Royal Highnesses, Mr and Mrs President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Sir Murray GulGul is a hero who valiantly saved two boys from certain death at the hands of a deranged kidnapper. His act of supreme courage was rewarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in that Sir Murray received the Order of Australia in her Birthday Honours.

A talented player of the didgeridoo, Sir Murray will now entertain us with a rendition of bush animals as found in Arnhem Land.

Playing an instrument which was created to commemorate Federation in 1901, please welcome Sir Murray GulGul.

*There follows warm applause. Murray quickly gets into rhythm. There is a small group of musicians nearby. The drummer takes his drumsticks (upside down) and taps the ends in time to Murray's playing. We stay with this setting for maybe a minute. Murray indicates to the drummer with head nods that the addition of tapping works a treat.*

~~~~~

~~~~~

~~~~~

We have returned to the Asquith Room. Jay can just hear the sounds of Murray and the drummer playing.

Jay determined I gotta get me one of them didges. I gotta learn how to play that thing.

Duncan You gotta do a raspberry with your lips. That's all it is. And then to get the different noises you sing or hum in the background. Takes years of practice to get as good as that bloke ... But that's all it is. Raspberry.

Jay astounded I could sure do that ...

END OF SCENE

II, Scene vii: Denny Goes Down For The Count

May 2020.

Sherleen decides that the dinner has become dolorous (now that The Noirist has tried to neck himself). She starts a conga line. Sherleen shakes herself about which given her bulk is not a pretty sight. Her preferred beat is 6 followed by a long 7th which includes a sideways kick (alternating sides). She sings the beat in a high-pitched, squeaky voice that is immediately annoying. Because she will be in the van, she is able to pretend to shake maracas in her hands.

Sherleen loudly That bloke who was off his cruet – He's put us all off. That's what's wrong.

We need to liven ourselves up. This shivoo is dying in the arse.

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Denny's body lies on its back on the cold tiled floor of the Ladies toilet. An ambo (complete with the usual medical equipment) squats beside the body. He looks up into the faces of Terry, Louise and Evelyn. A chair has been provided for Sherleen who sits to the side, being comforted by another ambo. Sherleen cries noisily.

Ambo What was this gentleman doing in the Ladies Lounge?

Evelyn His wife Sherleen decided that we needed cheering-up after the long-haired chap tried to commit suicide. She organized a conga line. We snaked through the Gents. Luckily no-one was there. Came out.

Louise That's when it was all too much for Sherleen. She took a spell from the dancing, flopping down into someone's chair. Then I took over as leader, at the front of the line.

Evelyn And then into the Ladies to be fair.

Louise It's such a shame. We were having so much fun. About five or six of us doing a conga line. That's all it was.

Evelyn Denny had some sort of fit. He grabbed at his chest. He was groaning really in awful pain.

Ambo *to Terry* What about you?

Terry The in-charge steward for this floor. I rang for you guys.

Ambo *to Terry* You witnessed the episode?

Terry Of course not. I wouldn't be part of a conga line dancing through the Ladies toilet, would I? But as soon as the commotion started, I belted in here to see if there was anything I could do.

 Unfortunately, this is not the first heart attack I've witnessed. I knew as soon as I saw him. And by then he was already gone. So, I rang triple-0.

Sherleen wails.

Ambo *nods* Okay. I'll get you to sign the papers when they're ready.
[Points to Sherleen]
That's his missus?

Terry Yes. I was just about to escort Mrs Egmont (Ms Crosby being her performing name) to our sick bay.

Ambo *to Terry* Yeah. Good. Let's go with that. Give her a tumbler of brandy to sip. Settle her down.

Also, you'll have to find other facilities for the ladies until we stretcher the body to the undertakers.

Terry is even now helping Sherleen to progress to the sick bay.

Terry Yes, of course. I promise you that I'll ensure that the ladies from the Asquith Room have access to the Ladies Lounge upstairs.

Sherleen *sobs* I was hoping to sing for the President and them.

Evelyn *sympathetic* Oh dear ... She told me that she was so looking forward to it. She had a number rehearsed in case she was asked.

Sherleen It isn't fair that that blackfella bloke got to play the didge for the Prez and not me put on a turn ...

Louise *tart* The Prez gets all the luck!

To visit the toilet, the ladies of the Asquith Room will be ferried upstairs in the lift. Louise and a couple of other ladies avail themselves of that opportunity. Louise does not return (this will be explained later).

END OF SCENE

Amanda-Kate *weakly* You go back and sit down with the people, Taylor. I'm going back to the Consulate.

Don't wake me when you come in, will you dear?

Taylor Of course not. I'll be careful.

Billy! You look after Mrs President, will you now?

As Amanda-Kate is escorted away, Taylor catches the eye of another presidential aide. They lock into a significant look. Then Taylor spins around to return to the Gibbes Room.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene ix: Pudding or Pav?

May 2020.

This scene picks up the theme from the previous-to-last scene.

As already mentioned, there is now no facility for the ladies to visit the toilet on the Asquith Room floor. Denny's body has been removed, but it has been decided by Terry, Charles and some of the ladies that it would be inappropriate to use the toilet under the circumstances. As promised by Terry, the Ladies toilet upstairs will be available for the girls. They will just have to use the lift under the aegis of Terry/Charles.

Louise, Trisha and Kathy travel upstairs together. Louise and Kathy know that Trent and Trisha have decided to split. They are both totally supportive of Trisha and fuss over her.

Kathy *to Trisha* Men have not a single clue how obnoxious they can be. I mean, Murray is a real gentleman ... but he still comes out with the most crass, inane sexist rubbish.

Louise *to Trisha* You've had his kids, you've kept him clean and fed, you've probably been called on to perform marital duties at all hours.

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Honestly! You're a goddess for him. He doesn't know how lucky he is.

Trisha *sniffs*

Do you know, I can't even remember what the argument was all about? And now we're splitting up.

Twelve years of marriage. I can't take it in.

Both Evelyn and Louise put their arms around Trisha as they escort her into the Ladies.

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

Louise, Evelyn and Trisha have crept over to the open door which gives access to the Gibbes Room. There is a band. Couples are dancing. They can see that dessert is being served upstairs.

Trisha

Dessert! They're getting their dessert.

What is it? Looks like pav and ... ?

Louise drags a copy of the menu from her handbag.

Louise

Wait on! "Botany Bay pavlova covered in mixed berry sauce OR Woollahra sticky date pudding served with cream, toffee sauce and smashed kiwi fruit". Yum!

Trisha

"Smashed kiwi fruit"? What's that when it's at home.

Louise

My cousin can't say "pavlova". She says "pabbaloba". Really weird. Take a look at all the tiaras! Oh my God! Is that the Duchess of Chelsea? She looks unbelievable!

Evelyn

My daughter Rose says "pav" in a really funny way as a joke. You press your lips tight together and then mutter "pav" out of the very corner, in a deep voice.

The ladies give the "pav" mispronunciation a try. They rock about laughing.

Sukie *frowning*

Four unclaimed sweets ...

So -- one for Denny who is now coffin fodder.

And one for Sherleen who is in the sick room. She may come back for that later. Widows get hungry, don't they?

And the headcase with the greasy hair who tried to neck himself and has gone off to be sectioned.

That makes three.

Sukie looks quickly around.

Sukie Oh, and Louise. Missing in action. Four.

Ewan Where's Louise gone, then?

Sukie shrugs. Ewan signals to Terry who comes straight to his side.

Terry Sir?

Ewan Yeah ... Do you know what happened to the lady who was sitting over there?

Terry Charles escorted her up to the floor above.

Sukie Why?

Terry She needed to visit the lavatory, I believe.

Sukie Did she stay up there? We haven't seen her for a while.

Terry considers his words carefully.

Terry Um. The First Lady was taken ill. So, Mr President requested one of the substitute ladies from the Asquith Room to double for her.

President Medford chose Ms Jenkins (that is, Louise).

Terry smiles a little. In good maitre d' style, Terry glances at the table. He calls the drink waiter over.

By now, Ewan is eating all four of the leftover desserts. To everyone's surprise, Martin joins the conversation.

Martin *incredulous* He chose Louise over Sukie? I'm sorry ... I don't mean to sound ...
But Sukie is **hot**. She's a babe ...

[Directly to Sukie]

You don't mind me saying that you're hot, do you?

Sukie *surprised* No, I don't mind.

Ewan *laughs* Yeah, well I always thought I was punching above my weight ...

Sukie *to Martin* That's the first words you've uttered all night.

Martin *artistic* You are beyond beautiful, my dear. I'm a museum curator:
surrounded by loveliness all day long. Naturally I'm drawn to you
aesthetically.

I cannot even begin to believe that you were passed over for the
other lady.

Sukie I thought you batted for the other team. No offence intended.

Martin *grins* That would never preclude my admiration for you.

Ewan *cheeky* She scrubs up alright, doesn't she? My Sukie girl?

Sukie *to Ewan* Are you polishing-off the extra sweets, Ewan?

Ewan *shrugs* Growing boy ... Need to maintain my strength.

Martin All I can think of is poor Mrs Medford being stuck in the sick room
with Sherleen. Jesus Christ!

Can I hear the strains of her singing "The Star-Spangled Banner"
wafting over us?

Terry *smiles* The First Lady has been motored back to the US Consulate where
she is staying.

[Rueful smile]

To retain her sanity, I should think.

Everyone laughs. Sukie spots Luke approaching Jay and Duncan.

Sukie *calls out*

Mr Luke Bentick! Did you know that your missus is upstairs doing the quickstep with Mr President?

Luke *calls back*

No, that's news to me. But I can assure you that she'll tell me all about it when I see her again. Over and over again ... In fact – won't hear the end of it!

Luke laughs and waves.

END OF SCENE

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	SEAT 20	
SEAT 19		SEAT 1
TRENT		ROXEANNE
SEAT 18		SEAT 2
TRISHA		THE PARTNER
SEAT 17		SEAT 3
EWAN		KATHY
SEAT 16		SEAT 4
SUKIE		MURRAY
SEAT 15		SEAT 5
		WAYNE
SEAT 14		SEAT 6
MARTIN		EVELYN
SEAT 13		SEAT 7
JOEL		
SEAT 12		SEAT 8
		MIRANDA
SEAT 11		SEAT 9
LUKE		DUNCAN
	SEAT 10	
	JAY	

We must review the configuration of the Asquith Room dining table now that four of the diners are no longer present:

- Denny has died
- Sherleen is lying down in the sick room
- The Noirist has been carted off to hospital for assessment
- Louise has been seconded into the role of Mrs President upstairs in the Gibbes Room

The 16 remaining guests have formed into 6 discrete groups:

- Jay, Duncan, Luke and Miranda are enmeshed in the history of President Medford (with relation to his younger brother's death).
- Kathy, Murray, Wayne and Evelyn discuss wildlife issues. They are extremely happy to do so.
- The two women (Roxeanne and The Partner) who are covered in tattoos discuss their tattoos. They are oblivious to everyone else.
- Trent and Trisha have made up big time. They pash on regardless.
- Ewan and Sukie are pashing on regardless.
- Martin and Joel are pashing on regardless.

Thus, our **background** noise at this point is from the people occupying seats 1 to 6 (inclusive).

~~~~~

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## II, Scene x: A Dark Secret Is Revealed

May 2020.

*At least now the guests are in more convivial groupings (as detailed above).*

*Jay is still seated next to Duncan. They mutter to themselves. Luke plonks himself down (seat 11) next to Jay.*

Luke *a bit nervous*            Can I sit here?

Hi! I'm Luke Bentick.

*Luke and Jay shake hands. Then Duncan leans over to shake hands with Luke.*

Duncan                            You're the racehorse trainer, aren't you?

Duncan Dalglish me.

Luke *nods & smiles*            "The Destroyer". Yeah, I know who y'are.

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And I know Jay. Love yer work. Really! Love yer work.

Yeah, I'm a trainer ... that's right. Reckon that's why I got a guernsey.

*Duncan sees Jay frown.*

Duncan *explains* "Getting a guernsey" means that you made it onto the team. In AFL footy – football – you wear a guernsey. In NRL football you wear a jersey.

Either way, it means you haven't been cut from the team and you're up and running to play on Saturday.

Jay *nods* Okay. I got it.

*Duncan points to Luke.*

Duncan And this bloke trained the winner of last year's Melbourne Cup: Geneva Contention. It's huge. The Melbourne Cup is like super huge.

Jay Yeah, I heard of that. Two mile handicap. Yeah, I know.  
Well done, my main man.

*Luke and Jay shakes hands again. Then they high-five. Luke glances around.*

Luke Geez, mate, they're dropping like flies, eh. We'll have to send upstairs for reinforcements for our crappy substitute ranks.

*The three men laugh (as discreetly as they can).*

Duncan You might not know this Luke, but you know how we have a public holiday for Cup Day? Well, that's only for Melbourne, right? So, in Canberra if Parliament is sitting on the first Tuesday in November (it usually is) well one of the MPs has to nick off and listen to the race, then he has to come back into the chamber and make a speech naming the winner so the other MPs know who it is. Dinkum. Tradition. Bit funny, but.

*Jay stands to be excused. He is getting out of his depth here. However, Luke restrains him.*

Luke                                 Sorry Jay. I wanted to ask you something. Do you have to rush off, or ... ?

*Jay resumes his seat, interested.*

Duncan                                You don't need to sprint off to the dunny or that, do ya?

Jay *lost*                                The **what?**

Duncan                                Doesn't matter ...

Jay                                        Okay. Luke! Go on. Fire away. I'm all yours.

Luke                                       "Burgers With Slaw".

Duncan                                Oh yeah! That's a great movie. Jay that's one of your best. Shit title ... But who cares?

Luke *nods*                                The cowboy who gambles and sleeps around.

*Jay laughs aloud.*

Jay                                        Hey! I really loved making that film. It was a barrelful of laughs.

Luke                                        Okay! This is about your President.

Did you ever hear a rumour about him having killed his little brother?

*Jay is nonplussed. He looks closely at Luke and then at Duncan. He seems unsure about whether or not to answer Luke's question.*

Jay *careful*                                I might have done ... Go on ...

Luke                                        My stable foreman is like what they'd call a "horse whisperer". Bloody amazing what he can do! He calls himself Johnny England. But my gut tells me that's not his real name.

I don't want to drag you through all the bizzo ... Johnny is an American. Things he says (like) ... You can tell that he's from the USA. (Or else he just watches too much American TV).

Anyhow ...

Louise was chatting to him in a horse stall th'other day and out it all came. He was real upset.

He sobbed and spoke and sobbed and spoke. Along the way, he mentioned that he had been a friend of your late brother Liam.

I'm sorry about yer brother by the way ...

*Jay does not have a poker face. His eyes bulge as he stiffens noticeably.*

Duncan *frowns*                      What's this got to do with "Burgers With Slaw"?

Luke *to Duncan*                      Johnny told me that if I met Jay at this Substitute Dinner tonight, I was to say to him "Burgers With Slaw" and that he'd know what it was all about.

What I mean – Johnny's totally bolted. Packed a bag in 15 seconds and shot through. Like an arrow. I don't know where he is ... Or if he'll ever come back or ...

Jay                                          He might be referring to the girlfriend ... Adelaide. That was the girlfriend's name in the movie. Tryin' to run the hero's life for him ...

Luke *nods*                                  Well ... Anyway ... Johnny reckoned that all this was about the Prez and his little brother.

That the Prez had killed his little brother (when they were younger of course).

*Jay does not respond. He seems to stare at the table setting. Luke shifts about.*

Luke                                          That's it then ... "Burgers With Slaw", your brother Liam, the Prez and his dead brother ... And Johnny has pissed off like he's shit scared of something ... I dunno ...

*Jay frowns. He gestures that he needs time. Jay paces about, deep in thought. He pulls up at the large portrait of H H Asquith, staring at the bullet hole with his hands deep in his trouser pockets.*

*Suddenly, Jay returns to his new seat (seat 10) and plonks down with a grunt. He looks at each face in turn: Luke, Duncan and then Miranda. They are entranced.*

Jay *softly*

Adelaide Medford. She's the President's sister. Runs a ranch.

But her life's work is to clean up the "rumours" and "innuendo" and "gossip" and "scuttlebutt" and "fake news" and "insinuation" that Presidents naturally attract. In other words, the P's sister is his hatchet-woman.

Okay.

Now, my brother Liam came home on furlough from the Army for Christmas when I was about 21. He woke me up. He woke me up and ...

You know what? I never saw Liam alive again after that Christmas. There were four teenaged friends. Vernon had already died age 22. Liam died age 25. Otis died age 29. Nobody knows where Sandy is ...

Horses ... Sandy had a real way with horses ...

*There follows a taut silence. Jay nods slowly.*

Duncan *shrewd*

You're thinking that Luke's foreman (Johnny) might turn out to be this missing Sandy?

Jay *musings*

Yeah ... Guess so.

He was a genuine genius with horses. And your stable foreman ...

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II

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## ACT III

### III, Scene i: Our Homage To Film Noir – Compton’s Bestiality

You guessed it!

The sections where we follow the Compton Medford episode will be presented in “film noir” mood. These will be scattered throughout the remainder of the Substitute Dinner (following the removal of The Noirist in police custody).

By now we have gathered (from The Noirist’s rants) that the most telling characteristics of “noir” are: --

play of light and shade, withering silences, evocative camera angles,  
and almost stilted dialogue.

And murder.

And guilt.

And double-cross ...

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*We'll have that lot in spades ...*

~~~~~                      ~~~~~                      ~~~~~

August 1980.

Taylor Medford is 19 and his brother Compton is 15.

We are in a gloomy barn where animals take shelter. Compton is lying face-down over haybales while Taylor beats him with a leather strap. We hear Compton's groans and cries.

Young Taylor *angry* God hates what you just did. We are not animals. We don't have congress with animals – not in that way. You just broke about half the Lord's commandments, Compton. I'm gonna just keep whippin' you and whippin' you until you understand your sins, Brother.

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

*As Taylor mutters the following speech to himself, he drags a wooden structure across to where Compton lies (stiff and unyielding on the haybales). Compton's moans punctuate the speech.*

Young Taylor *muttering*                      I know it's not your fault that you have these brain fades. One day I'm gonna tell you what I saw Pappy do to Mamma. When you were ... Before you were born.  
  
I swear it, Compton.

Young Taylor *aloud*                      I'm taking you home, like it or not.

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

Taylor is seen to drag the wooden structure out of the barn. Compton is still stiff like a surfboard. He is now tied to the wooden litter with ropes. Compton continues to moan.

In the father of all bad moods, Taylor charges off homewards.

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

*Almost running along a narrow track which wends its way beside the rapids, Taylor huffs and puffs as he drags his brother along. The sun is almost set. Our camera concentrates on Compton’s moaning (he is still as stiff as a surfboard) or on Taylor’s face (panting with extreme fatigue).*

Young Taylor *agonized* ... bring Pappy to book for what he’s done to you ... not your fault ... it all comes down to what Pappy did to Mamma when you were on the way ...

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

Taylor collapses. He lies face down on the path, gasping for breath. This continues for a few seconds. We see and hear Taylor’s heavy breathing. Then we hear the sound of the litter (with Compton tied to it) slipping down into the rapids. We hear the sound of the wood smashing onto the rocks. We hear Compton’s scream of terror.

Suddenly, Taylor scrambles to his feet, his face raging with fear and despair.

We see him calling desperately. But we do not hear anything further except the raging of the rapids.

END OF SCENE

formal ID. Y'all understand ...

They drive on through the darkness. Our camera will concentrate on the headlights every so often. Otherwise, the camera will cover the two males in the police car.

Detective Mullins I'd better ask: "What happened there?" My guess is that yo' reply might be somethin' like: "Well, I was playin' ball with m'brother but he slipped over."

Young Taylor Yes, Sir.

We were playing catch. That's right. But the light got too dim. So, I told Compton that he should go home ... That **we** should go home. He kept throwing the ball around. Next thing, I look around and he's gone from the path. The path beside the rapids.

There follows a long pause.

Detective Mullins And you called out to him. And waded into the water to try to save him. Calling for him over and over and over again. Is that correct?

Young Taylor *nods* That's right.

Detective Mullins How long did you search for your brother?

Young Taylor No idea, Sir. It was dark.

Detective Mullins You were dripping wet. You went home for help. The wind in the valley dried off your clothes as you sprinted home. You got home and shouted out that your brother had fallen into the rapids. While you played catchy with him in the gathering darkness. That you couldn't find him. Your parents were devastated. They called my office. And then I came by a couple hours later to tell y'all that a boy's body had been found.

Is that summation correct, Taylor?

Taylor nods.

Young Taylor Yes. Yes. Yes, Sir.

Detective Mullins chuckles then turns it into a cough.

Detective Mullins This ain't gonna make it any easier on you Taylor but ...

 But your brother has been caught molesting animals. Female animals. God and all the angels ain't gonna make me tell your Pappy and Mammy that, though.

 It was Toby Bartholemew saw him. Poor boy! It was a ewe if you want the details (and probably you don't). I understand that.

 I asked Mr Bartholemew to keep his mouth shut.

Taylor begins to weep.

Detective Mullins Real courage. That's what it takes to look after a half-wit like your brother. When we found Compton, we couldn't make any explanation for the smashed-up wooden flatbed and the rope tying Compton to the broken boards of that flatbed. Must have been the action of the rapids, we thought.

Taylor tries to speak. He is riveted with anguish.

Detective Mullins You nearly home, boy. Your Pappy is a good man. A fine, good man. He likes everything to run smoothly. No matter the cost.

[Pause]

 I'm gonna make sure that your story (about the game of catchy) is never doubted. Never called into question. At the inquest and such.

 No-one will mention those boards ... or the rope ...

 There's a chute of mud down from the path. Compton must have run away from you down that chute and lost his footing.

 What a naughty little scamp your brother was! To do that ... To worry you like that ...

Detective Mullins reaches over and pats Taylor on the knee.

puberty kicked in. And she's *always* right.

Young Taylor *disgusted* It was so revolting that I can hardly deal with it in my mind. I was close to throwing-up.

Adelaide Pappy has settled a handsome sum of money on Toby Bartholemew. He's not going to let on. That's the last you'll ever hear about Compton having congress with a sheep.

Young Taylor *exploding* A sheep! Jesus ... Jesus ...

Adelaide Pappy dedicated his life to caring for Compton.
At least ... He dedicated *our* lives to that noble cause.

Because our brief was to mind Compton, you and I were not allowed to attend college.

But that's all changed.

Now that Compton has been taken by the raging water spilling over Calliope Falls --

Young Taylor Stop it, will ya?

Adelaide Taken by the angels. Poor boy!

I've already spoken to Pappy about my attending Skatchenak College next Fall. Majoring in journalism. He's all for it!

And you? Your school grades have qualified you for Yale. Now that your baby-sitting duties are at an end, Pappy would be more than willing to send you off in style. You can study the Law just like you always wanted.

Young Taylor *offended* That's ... That's a horrible way to look at it.

Adelaide Oh! Meant to ask: did anybody witness the accident?

Young Taylor No! Why do you ask that?

Adelaide Because everyone is paid off. Which means that you got away with it. Unless someone comes forward to refute your iron-clad

story.

Young Taylor *scared* You're thinking of the inquest.

Adelaide Damn sure I am.

However, if you can make it through the inquest, then it's no sweat!

You've bagged it.

Calm as you like, Adelaide walks away. Taylor quietly sobs.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene v: Rorting Pollies

May 2020.

Somehow the conversation has wended its way to Watergate. Jay must have commented that Aussies probably know nothing of that scandal.

Wayne No, Jay. We were so up on Watergate news. It was on the teve every night. The whole story as it unfolded. We could all recognize every single player by sight. Total inundation.

And how it could never happen in Australia because our political system is based on the Westminster system whereas --

Kathy The most interesting observation that I heard during the Watergate scandal was this. In the USA, people feel part of the infrastructure. It is **their** political setup, **their** parties, **their** senators, **their** president.

The opposite is true in Australia. We watch the Canberra comings

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and goings as if we were enjoying an amusing spectator sport. Sex in official offices on ministerial desks with frilly knickers left in the ashtray. That sort of thing. Entertainment. Something to laugh about.

Americans wept over Watergate. They'd been slapped in the face. Well, that would never happen in Australia.

Joel Here's another one for Jay. "Rorting pollies".

Murray Now don't get me started on them, mate. If I were a literary bloke, I could write a book. The sexy, frilly stuff is only the tip of the iceberg.

Joel Spill your guts, Sir Murray. We're all ears.

Murray erupts with a passion that no-one had guessed he possessed.

Murray Horse trading (in the sense of vote trading). That's a nice start. Using their political influence to assist their business ventures. This is amazingly found in many weird churches. Did ya know that? Of course, the pollies only get into religion in the first place to clean themselves up.

Ewan Yeah ... I remember something about bags of concrete --

Murray Not paying duty on colour TVs that have been imported into Oz. Toy Paddington Bears. And my people! Rorting to gain the indigenous vote because there's loads of moolah sloshing around there.

Tell me I'm not wrong. The real people who should be running the country got weeded out of the process onks ago. The only ones left to fight are the corrupt, evil bastards who can wank the system to suit their own ends.

Martin Hear! Hear! You got that right, cobber.

Jay *frowns* "Cobber?"

Martin Friend, pal, mate, digger, cobber, copain, ami ... Even "Bro".

Jay *thumbs up* Got it!

END OF SCENE

III, Scene vi: Our Homage To Film Noir -- Halloween Ghost Stories,
October 1980.

Liam, Sandy, Otis and Vernon sit on the floor of the vacant possession house with crossed legs. The boys have organized for themselves "best-effort" Halloween costumes. They giggle and chatter as they gobble food from paper bags. The only light comes from a lantern beside them on the floor. Several soft drink bottles lie about.

Liam *goads* C'mon Vernon. I told my ghost story – now you gotta tell yours. Your special Halloween ghost story. Come on!

Vernon I wish I had even *seen* a ghost.
Heck, I ain't even seen a dead body.

Otis What about when your granny died?

Vernon Shit! They never let me in the house (even when she took her last breath). Had to bum around in the yard. I never saw nothin'.

Liam I don't even know one person that died. What about you, Sandy?

Sandy *nods* I seen someone just as they was dyin'. As they was bein' murdered, actually.

There is a hubbub of denial and disbelief. Sandy stands by his statement.

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Sandy You know him. You all of you know the murder victim.
Otis Who then?
Sandy Compton Medford. The real, actual story of his death will curl your
 toes up. Guarantee it.

Liam, Otis and Vernon frown.

Vernon But he drowned. He weren't murdered.
Sandy I'll tell y'all what I saw. Then you can make up your **own** minds
 about it.
 My old man gets into a wild, angry temper near every night these
 days. Won't surprise me one bit if someone slugs him full of lead.
 Probably it'll be me!

Otis Did he kill Compton?

Sandy No, no, no ...
 I'm just sayin' that that's why I was hidin' out in my cave near the
 rapids so's my Pa wouldn't find me. That's all I'm sayin'.
 Now ...
 Taylor Medford was spewin' out all kinds of filthy talk when he
 come past where I was hidin'. Sprayin' his vile spit as he prayed to
 God to save him from his misery. Like that.
 He was haulin' Compton behind him on a flatbed. Had his brother
 tied to that thing. Like a cart without wheels ...
 There he was a-rantin' and a-ravin' for the Lord to take his mad
 brother into His care and end this thing.

There is a taut silence. Liam, Vernon and Otis stare at Sandy with goggle eyes.

Liam Are you saying that Taylor Medford killed his own brother?

Sandy Yep.

That's what I'm sayin'.

Pushed that old flatbed into the water. I saw it. I heard Compton scream as that thing hit the water and rocks. And the flatbed just sort of shot off into the distance – bobbin' about in them churnin' rapids. By my reckoning, Compton was face down from then on. Never stood a chance. Which would be what Taylor intended all along ...

Otis *round-eyed*

That means that this was a planned murder.

Vernon *scared*

This weren't no accident, then. Taylor made sure that his kid brother never stood a chance. Jesus! I mean ... Jesus!

Liam *frowning*

But I was at the hearing. They brought in a verdict of accidental death.

Otis

That's right! At the inquest they said that Taylor was playin' ball with --

Sandy *firmly*

There weren't no ball. How can yo' play ball with somebody if you hog-tied to a sturdy wooden flatbed?

Liam

Let me get this right! Taylor Medford was so sick and tired of being his crazy brother's keeper that he made a raft out a flatbed, tightly secured Compton to it with ropes, and then pushed that raft out into the swirling, dangerous waters of the rapids. Is that what you're saying?

Sandy

Yeah. That's what happen, man.

There is silence. The boys shift about, looking at each other.

Sandy

I said to myself: "This is odd."

You know ... when the folks at the hearin' brought in their verdict of "accidental death" ...

Well, I thought: "That's odd".

When they found that poor simple boy's body, it would have been still tied to the flatbed. Now wouldn't it?

There would have been scorin' on his wrists and on his ankles where the ropes dug in. Now wouldn't there be? Ain't I right, there?

Liam *nods*

Yeah ... that's odd alright ... That's damn odd ... Crazy odd ...

Vernon

Them Medford folk have got so much money that thing's around this neck of the woods run all their way. So maybe they paid off the people who found the body. What d'ya think of that idea?

Maybe they even paid off all of the folks at that inquest.

Sandy

Course they did! Can't be no other explanation.

Otis

Wow! That's the neatest ghost story I *ever* heard.

Liam

Taylor got off scot free – That's what you're saying, Sandy.

And Adelaide. She's free, too.

Jesus!

Sandy *smug*

Anyways ... Now y'all have to find a story good as that to tell.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene vii: Danger! Danger In The Bush

May 2020.

The Asquith Room diners all join in with the wildlife people discussing Australia's dangerous animals. Everyone has horror stories about near/close encounters with some of the 72 dangerous Australian animals. This will be a free-dialogue scene. The actors will read out from their Google searches the

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various horrible Australian insects, spiders and beasts that will easily kill humans. There are a few short speeches to hold the scene together.

Although they cannot phone out or in using their mobile phones, the available WIFI allows the guests to search on Google via their phones.

Murray I remember the story about some bloke (it would have been in the 60's) who bought a second-hand car and he didn't know that there was already a snake hiding up in the material. You know, under the top of the car there's material. Anyway he's driving along and a snake's head comes down out of a rip in the material.

Duncan What happened?

Murray Aw, he screamed and that.

Ran the car off the road, smashed it up and died later in hospital.

Funny thing was – It was just an old grass snake. Don't hurt nobody.

~~~~~

~~~~~

~~~~~

Kathy *giggles*            My Dad always says "googies" for eggs. Always has.

Murray                    Cackleberries.

Wayne                    I once heard a wharfie say "bum nuts" for eggs ...

*Sukie dissolves into giggles. She tries to speak but finds it hard.*

Sukie                    My Mum calls vanilla slices "pus cakes".

Murray *nods*            Snot blocks.

END OF SCENE

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**III, Scene viii: Halloween Ghost Stories****October 1988.**

*Taylor's bedroom. The only light is from a tiny bedside lamp. We start this scene by focusing on a small alarm clock which ticks annoyingly. Adelaide sits beside Jay on his small bed in his tiny bedroom. Again, Adelaide is under strict self-control.*

Adelaide                      Taylor, you told me there were no witnesses.

Young Taylor                Has someone come forward?

*Taylor is agitated. He rises from the bed to wander about.*

Young Taylor                It was – what – eight years ago. Why come forward now?

Adelaide                      He was a kid of 14 at the time. One of the Tuck brats. He and his pals sat around on Halloween in a vacant house that was up for sale telling ghost stories and out it all came.

*Taylor paces about, still agitated. He mutters something that we cannot discern.*

Adelaide                      Not from the Tuck kid. No.

The teller of the ghost story was so afraid of his violent father that he was hiding out in a cave on the banks of the rapids. He sees a wooden flatbed go hurtling over into the galloping water. He hears a kid screaming. He sees the flatbed bobbing about. A kid is tied to it with ropes. It was all over in a coupla seconds. So he said.

*Taylor is mortified.*

Young Taylor                But that's no tie-in to me ...

Adelaide                      He heard (even above the water's roar) your voice yelling out: "Compton! Oh Lord! Compton! I'm sorry you had to die."

Young Taylor *whispers,*    I never said that! Or thought that!  
*appalled*

Adelaide                      Oh, things always get exaggerated. Stories retold are magnified

ten times. You know that.

However, the drowned boy and the flatbed are now linked directly to you, Taylor. To you.

Young Taylor

But why come forward *now*?

Adelaide

Because this Tuck fellow -- he's a habitual drunk. Because it's Halloween. Because he finds himself in the bar on Halloween with the very man who later bought that vacant possession house.

It's a tale that's full of melodrama and pathos. He can tell that whimsical story to the other guy in order to impress him.

Young Taylor

But if he saw it, he ought to have spoken out at the inquest.

Adelaide *patient*

I knew it was too twisted of a plot for you to follow without illustrations.

Listen to me and pay close attention to what I say.

The Tuck kid did not hear about the "ghost story" until the Halloween which *followed* the inquest.

Do you get what I'm saying?

We have several teenage boys in October 1980 (eight years ago) huddled up in a vacant house telling ghost stories to each other. And one of these boys (we don't know how many there are and we don't know which one) blurts out that he saw Compton die.

That's some weeks *after* the inquest.

Young Taylor

Oh ... I get it. The boy who saw me ... or heard me ... That's not this Tuck kid. Right! I follow you now.

Adelaide

We got two things to do here: find out which one of those boys it was saw you and shut this Tuck guy down.

Young Taylor

No, it's three things. Also, we gotta pay off the house owner who heard the ... Wait up! We gotta pay up everyone in the bar that

heard that story. Sheesh!

Adelaide Pappy is taking care of that. It was late at night so maybe no-one else was involved.

But I have got to ask you this: who was it had a violent father back in 1980?

Young Taylor *shrugs* They all were violent. All the fathers were.

I can still see Pappy belting Mamma when I was four.

Adelaide Okay then ...

I'm gonna put my fine journalistic talents to good use. The Tuck boy was with his friends. Should be easy enough to identify his friends. And from there, look at their fathers. Which daddy was so violent that his son sought refuge at the rapids?

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene ix:** The Footy Clinic In The Asquith Room

May 2020.

*Many table napkins have been tied together in a huge knot such that this object might be used as a football. Joel holds this object. Those left in the Asquith Room applaud and cheer. Jay is very pleased: the footy clinic seems to be for his benefit.*

*Martin and Ewan face Joel's back, each pushing a shoulder against the other man. The two men chuckle and grunt as they "tag" each other.*

Roxeanne *shouting* Woo hoo! Here's the guy who refuses to discuss "sport" in any form.

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Martin *laughing* Since I'm the only one here who can approach Ewan's height and bulk, I drew the short straw. Righto. I'm ready now.

Ewan Okay, Jay. The umpire will throw the ball backwards over his shoulder and we shove against each other, both trying to get the upper hand. Then when the ball arrives, one of us has to hit the ball down to their rover.

Joel Umpire whistle and away we go!

*Joel heaves the "ball" over his shoulder as high as he can. Martin and Ewan jostle. As expected, Ewan wins the tap-out. The napkin ball rolls about on the floor.*

*Everyone claps.*

Ewan Do you wanna try it, Jay?

Jay Yeah, but not with you, Big Fella.

Luke! Come and play ball with me as your partner.

*Luke and Jay get into position (there is loads of random backchat), jostle each other and then try to tap the ball as Joel throws it over his shoulder. There is more clapping and laughter.*

🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭 **Break** 🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭🎭

*Duncan can do a very creditable handstand. The Partner is able to do a balletic leg mount (a sideways arabesque). She does this in such a way that her underwear does not show.*

*Terry has been sent off to retrieve a hula hoop from the property office. This he hands over to Roxeanne who proves very adept.*

Evelyn No one will believe that I was once a hula hoop champion.

*The crowd of diners attempt to persuade Evelyn to give an exhibition. She is very unwilling.*

Joel What's wrong with Sir Murray GulGul? I've been watching him.  
He's ... He's not ...

Kathy Oh, he's in a trance. He does that. His ancestors call to him and he goes off with them (in his mind). This could cause problems for me ... I won't be able to get him home until he comes out of it.

*[Change of mood.]*

Which of course means that I am now free to put on a turn for you all.

*Humming "Tea For Two" Kathy goes into a very creditable soft shoe shuffle (which is warmly received).*

Joel I can't believe that this extremely talented group of celebrities has been corralled under the adjective "substitute".

Do you know what? We need Sherleen.

Everyone else *in unison* **No! We don't!**

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene x:** Halloween Ghost Stories – Liam Fesses Up To Jay

#### **Christmas 1991.**

*Liam wakes Jay up. Liam is 25 (wearing the uniform of an Army private) and Jay is 21. It is very late on Christmas Eve. Jay sits up in bed.*

Liam Come home for Christmas and what do I find? Vernon Tuck is dead. What's goin' on, Jay?

Jay Poison. It was poison. You know how he became the town drunk. Oh, it was worse than that ... He stole other men's drinks ... From the bar. He got warned off I don't know how many times for that.

---

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Liam                                 Someone laid a trap for him, I guess. Left a tainted glass on the bar for him to swipe.

Jay                                    Reckon that's what happened ... Yeah ...

*Liam takes a big breath. He nods several times, looking determined.*

Liam                                 I'm not gonna write this all down but you gotta remember this stuff I'm gonna tell you. There was Vernon Tuck, Otis du Bois, Sandy Ingles and me. Commit those names to memory, Jay.

It was October 31<sup>st</sup> 1980. We had a Halloween party in the Teasdall house after they split up. It was unoccupied and ready for sale. No power. We sat around inside with a lantern after we toasted marshmallows on their barbecue outside.

*Liam checks the door.*

Liam                                 Now listen! Listen to me real good!

That were never no accident about Compton Medford. His brother killed him because Compton was a dummy and he was holding Taylor Medford back. He and his sister Adelaide. Holding them back. They could never have a proper life while they had to take care of Compton.

Sandy saw the whole thing. The inquest was rigged so that Taylor came out lookin' like some kinda hero.

But he killed his brother alright. No question. Intentional murder.

You gotta take that to your grave, Jay.

Vernon, Otis, Sandy and me.

Jay                                    Sandy's gone.

Liam *shocked*                    He's dead, too?

Jay                                    No. No. He's vanished. Left Calliope Falls. We all thought maybe ... His Pa being so mean to him ... Always belting him. We thought

maybe he went because of that.

Liam

Cut and run ...

Well then ...

Oh, he'd be alright. He was a genius with horses. What they call a "horse whisperer", I guess. Heck! You can always get work anywhere in the world with a special talent like that.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT III

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## ACT IV

### IV, Scene i: Trent's Blatant Outrage Regarding The Hawaiian Flag

May 2020.

*Trent (wandering about aimlessly) is extremely drunk. He buttonholes Charles who happens to cross Trent's path.*

*Trent slurring*                      Are you um ... Do you um ... Are you able to arkse a quezzy to the Prezzie?

*Charles pleasant*                If you tell me the nature of the question, Sir, I'll tell you if I'm able to help you out.

*Trent aggressive*                 Well, I want ya to arkse that bloke from ... The Prez ... You know ... why our flag is in the corner of the Hawaii flag. Do we own Hawaii or somethink? Arkse him that. For me, will ya?

*Charles almost loses his aplomb. However, he rallies quickly.*

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Charles *tactful* That may not be --

Trent *getting very worked up* I played in the Hawaii Marksters and I done good. I think I come third ... No! fourth ...

But no-one would tell me why they've got **our** flag in **their** flag. So, I wanna know if those **bastards** took it off us.

Or pirates maybe ... What about the Russians? They might have--

Wayne *helpful but not quite accurate* Mr Goodall. I've got the answer for you. The Union Jack appears in the canton of our Australian flag and in the canton of the Hawaiian flag as a way of honouring Captain Cook. That's the common theme. He discovered both the east coast of Terra Australis and the Pacific islands of Hawaii.

Trent *satisfied* Right. Good. Captain Cook ...

*[Gives strong thumbs up]*

Yeah, good upon you ...

*As Trent saunters off (muttering to himself) Charles smiles and nods to Wayne as he (Charles) rushes off.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene ii:** Calliope Falls, Arkansas -- Adelaide Receives The Payback

May 2020.

*This scene is very film noir: moody, stark.*

*Adelaide tries to sleep but she is deeply haunted by her past. In and out of her consciousness slip these memories. She tosses and turns in her bed, messing up the sheets as she does so.*

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*Dream Sequence: 1980.*

*Adelaide recalls Taylor falling apart after Compton's death.*

*Dream Sequence: The 1988 poisoning of Vernon.*

*Adelaide edges up to the bar of an old, rustic hotel. She causes a distraction such that she can secretly pour poison into her half-finished glass. Adelaide is soon seen playing on a slot machine away from the bar. A male arm stretches across the bar, taking Adelaide's half-finished drink.*

*Dream Sequence: The knifing of Liam in 1991.*

*We have returned to the bar three years later. Liam is a 25 year old soldier. Some tough bikers start a fight in the bar and Liam is drawn into it. He is dispatched quickly and quietly. Then the attackers flee.*

*Dream Sequence: Otis and the lawnmower explosion (1995).*

*Rather than watching Adelaide being involved in causing the explosion, we see her laughing helplessly as she passes a wad of cash over to the motor mower technician.*

*[As this is a ranch there would obviously be guards and/or workers awake at all hours. We have to assume that Sandy has moved the horse well away from the ranch buildings.]*

*There is a noise from the stable. Adelaide awakes in alarm. She goes out to investigate armed with a hunting rifle. Sandy (riding the horse) causes her beloved mare Winsome to rear up and strike her. Adelaide is quite unable to shoot her beloved mare.*

*Then the horse tramples her body under Sandy's direction. Sandy collects the hunting rifle and slaps the mare such that she will leave the confines of the ranch.*

*He stands over Adelaide's body, still holding the rifle.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene iii: Louise Is Smarter Than She Looks**

May 2020.

*Taylor has manoeuvred Louise into a very private room. Clearly Taylor wants to grill Louise. He tries to seduce her. However, Louise is well above that ploy.*

*Louise laughs as she escapes the presidential embrace. She tries to continue dancing with Taylor.*

Louise *bright*                      You are the highest of the high. Even the bar-o'-soap isn't as grand as you.

Taylor *lost*                        "The bar of soap?"

Louise                                Aussies speak in rhyming slang. So I was comparing you to the Pope. Get it? You're much better than him, by the way.

Taylor                                Louise, I want to warn you about one of the men who works for your husband.

Louise                                Fiancé.  
  
If you're very, very, very good I'll teach you Aussie rhyming slang. You'll be able to go back home to the US – you can impress your senators and all the other bigwigs in Washington. They'll be blown away.

Taylor                                Great!  
  
Now, you have a Yankie-boy working at your property --



Louise *feigning contrition* I'm really, really sorry for lying Sir.  
When I said that he comes from Boomanoomana that was not quite right ...  
It's not quite correct to say that, Sir.  
I'm so very, very sorry.  
Mea culpa (as the Latins would say) ...  
*[Telling pause]*  
It's really called Boomanoomana **North** (where Johnny comes from).  
*[Whispers]*  
Sorry.

*Just as Taylor threatens to explode there is a knock at the door.*

*Trent wanders in. Two of the President's guards rush in after Trent and hover about (ready to leap into action if required).*

Trent Ah! There y'are!  
Are you the President of the United States of Thingo or what?

Taylor *sighs* Yeah, well I thought I was.

Trent *with gestures* Okay then.  
Whatever was wrong with Hawaii is now all sorted out. You can go back to being confident about that. All fixed! Fixed or it's free!  
Wayne Thingamebob downstairs has cleared up all the problems and outstanding issues. Nothing further to do. All clear. Close the ledger. Tig-a-lock.

Taylor *appalled* Hawaii? What?

Trent *soothing* Captain Cook and the flag and that – all sorted out. You can go back to sleep on that one.

~~~~~

~~~~~

~~~~~

Taylor storms out of the private room, slamming the door behind him. He is very angry. His minders follow closely.

A few seconds elapse. Louise assists Trent out of the room.

Trent *confused* D'ya think the ... Is he ... Will ya tell him that --

Louise *very smug* All good, mate. I'd say that it's Aussies 2, US of A yet to score.

END OF SCENE

The finale is now served.

IV, Scene iv: Jay Tries To Pull All His Thoughts Together

May 2020.

The waitresses are busy serving coffee. They have placed large plates of specialty treats on the tables: crystallized fruit, vanilla meringue sticks, along with a wide selection of fine chocolate.

The waiters serve port, liqueurs and sherry. Some of the gentlemen receive cigars (which they pocket for later). Of course, the ladies might like a cigar – but none of them do. Not on my watch, anyway!

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*Jay stares at the wall. He picks up a glass absently and begins to drink. Miranda has silently joined the three men.*

Jay *distant* Calliope Falls.

Calliope Falls, Arkansas.

Miranda How come Kansas and Arkansas are pronounced so differently?

Jay *snorts* Everybody knows that. "Kansas" is pronounced the English way and "Arkansas" doesn't sound the final "s" because it's French.

*Miranda, Luke and Duncan give each other a look and say "Oh".*

Jay *to Miranda* Baby, you asked me about my brother. My dead brother.

Well, this is sure gonna shock you all but here it is.

*Jay reaches for a table napkin to wipe over his face. He swigs down the drink.*

*Just as Jay is about to speak, Louise enters the room, executing a pirouette as she does so. There is a ripple of applause. Louise appears to be radiant. She smiles broadly and speaks way too loudly. Trent strolls into the Asquith Room in Louise's wake.*

Louise Sorry, all. Been dancing with the Prez. He could easily score a guernsey in "Dancing With The Stars". Leaves you for dead, Luke.

*Jay, Miranda, Luke and Duncan seem eager to hear of Louise's adventures. Louise grabs a vacant chair to drag over to Luke and his friends.*

Ewan *contrite* Aw, sorry, Lou. I've gutsed down your sweets.

Louise Which one was it, Crates? Pav? or Pud?

Ewan Dunno. Either. It was delicious, but. Sorry ...

Louise *airy* That's okay, Hon. All those calories look better on your hips than on mine.

Louise must not discuss the President's conversation aloud.

Louise holds up a finger to her lips such that her group of friends understands. She mouths the word "biro" and pretends to write. Duncan provides a biro. Meanwhile Louise has reefed her stiff paper menu from her handbag. She writes words on the menu: "He knows about Johnny".

Again, Louise signals for silence. The menu is passed about amongst the friends. They look worried. However, Duncan realizes that if they are being bugged, it would be appropriate to maintain some kind of conversation.

Duncan                      Where's Terry? Maybe we can get you a substitute dessert since the footy legend swiped yours.

Ewan *grins*                      Me? "Legend"? I like that. I'll have more of that ...

Louise writes again: "I was a total dum-dum. He hates my guts. Took me to a private room."

Duncan *calls out*                      Terry! Mate! You there?

Luke grabs the biro and writes: "Did he root you?"

Louise reads Luke's question and then bursts into happy laughter. She shakes her head.

Jay *calls out*                      Terry! Cobber! You're wanted here.

Everyone laughs. Jay's excursion into Aussie vernacular is well-received and congratulated. Meanwhile, Jay takes the biro. "Root?" he writes.

The friends all simultaneously give a sign (using their fingers) indicating sexual intercourse. Just then, Terry rocks up. He looks askance at the finger signs.

Terry Yes, folks. What can we do for you?

Louise *challenging* If I'm good enough to dance with President Medford, then I'm good enough to dance with you.

*Louise jumps up from her chair. She and Terry jive about.*

Duncan Be nice if we had some music. Shall I go and grab the band from upstairs?

Luke *sarcastic* Don't worry mate. By the time you line up the musos, she'll have run out of puff.

~~~~~

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~~~~~

The five friends are tired and becoming dreary. Jay fiddles with things on the table. Then (with a heavy sigh)

Jay Time for phone calls. Let's get out of here.

What is the Aussie equivalent of "let's get out of here"?

Luke Say: "C'mon. Let's shoot through."

Jay Okay. What the man said. We gotta shoot through, coppers.

END OF SCENE

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IV, Scene v: The Robert Menzies Garden

May 2020.

Mobile phone calls can only be made from outside. Miranda, Louise, Duncan and Luke stroll towards the exit door as Jay trails after them. The five guests split up, using their mobile phones. However, they are all distracted.

In the garden, they find that two gentlemen from the main dining room are jobbing at each other. They groan and utter "Oof!" as they swing punches. They plunge to the grass where they push into each other's face and throw random punches.

Jay ignores the fighters and presses on with his proposed phone call. Miranda, Louise, Duncan and Luke pause in suspended animation.

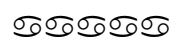
Now three men rush out the door. They head to the pair of fighters in order to pull them apart.

Miranda *to Duncan* Should you lend assistance?

Duncan Not allowed. My fists are considered dangerous weapons. Can't risk it.

Miranda *doubtful* Oh ...

The three men who launched themselves into the scuffle are able to haul the two aggressors back inside. Luke grins, shaking his head.



The action moves to the front doors of Admiralty House.

In a blaze of lights, the President leaves with his entourage of minders and aides. He stops to wave to a gaggle of guests who have trooped downstairs. Cameras flash in abundance.

The President gives off the waving to head back to farewell the Governor-General (kissing both her cheeks as he shakes her hand warmly). Beaming, the President steams back in the direction of the Prime Minister and Mrs Dahlgetty. The voices come from far away.

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Taylor Yes, I have to stand before the Press first thing in the morning. They'll ask me some posers on foreign countries. My Atlas knowledge will be reviewed in depth. However, I'm ready for 'em. I've had it drummed into me that Tasmania **is** part of Australia, but New Zealand is not. And South Australia is not the same as South Africa.

This is met with general laughter and applause.

Taylor *radiant* Prime Minister Dahlgetty, thank you for my wonderful dinner. I'm sorry that Amanda-Kate took ill. Something she ate on Air Force One, no doubt.

Prime Minister Dahlgetty responds, causing the President to laugh loudly. Then some last waves, and the President is whisked into his limousine

Jay Did anyone catch what he said?

Duncan Who? The Prez?

Jay No, the other guy. **Your** guy.

Miranda He made a joke about what the media pack usually ask **him**. Like: what is the price of a loaf of bread or how much would you pay for a dozen eggs.

Jay *bitter* "Sorry that my Amanda-Kate got sick". Boy! Adelaide Medford. I can't believe that woman!

They watch the cavalcade depart under tight police escort. Now it is the Prime Minister's turn to be driven off in a blaze of flashlights. There is a ripple of applause.

Louise The PM only lives just over there. They could walk, for God's sake!

Jay's phone rings. He wanders off as he speaks to his caller. Jay returns. He is thoughtful.

Jay He coulda given me a lift in his limo.

Miranda The PM?

Jay *sighs* No. The P.

Taylor wants to chat with me at the Consulate.

[To Miranda]

Baby ... Can you or will you drive me over there?

Miranda *worried*

Will that be safe, Honey? He ... He's not going to liquidate you, is he?

Jay *grins*

I doubt it.

Duncan

Write me in. I'll be your bodyguard.

Louise

What about your date? The girl with all the tats. How will she get home, then?

Duncan *shrugs*

Roxie? Dunno. Aw, someone'll give her a lift ...

[Waving back to Louise and Luke]

See yuz!

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene vi: Out Homage To Film Noir -- The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From The Tree

April 2007.

Lloyd *very scared*

Taylor! My son!

You've grown into an impressive, strong man. How could a father not be proud ...

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I'm old. I'm your Pappy. God counsels --

Taylor *menacing* I want nothing more to do with you, Pappy. You've hit my Mamma for the very last time.

Lloyd *trying everything* Your heart ... Your heart tells you --

Taylor *cold, hard* My childhood, my youth, and my adolescence were all filled with only one strong memory: I saw you hurt Mamma when she was pregnant with Compton.

I knew as a first-hand witness that you caused it all. Every – last – bit.

Lloyd *desperate* Married folk have disagreements. Why, I'm confident that you and your Amanda-Kate --

Taylor *very hard* I was being blocked from achieving my full potential due to the fact that I had to babysit a child that was damaged by **your** action. An action --

Lloyd *squirming* You can't prove any of that, Son. And besides, you wormed your way out of what you did to your kid brother. We made it right in the end for Compton. Why! How much money did I --

Taylor An action that you have repeated again and again over the years. It stops here and now, Pappy. Here and now. No more.

Lloyd panics. He attempts to bolt from the room. He is blocked by Cassie standing at the door. She weeps as she begs Taylor to spare his Pappy.

Cassie *weeping* You can't hurt, Pappy! Remember who you are, Taylor. You're his son! Oh, don't hurt him, please. Please, Taylor, please ...

Taylor hauls Lloyd back into the room. Lloyd whimpers desperately.

Taylor *vicious* Yes, Pappy. I'm your only living son.

But what's that old saying? "The apple does not fall far from the tree."

The room becomes dark. Cassie screams. We hear a heavy thud and the “Oof!” of breath emitted by Taylor.

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

We remain in the same room. The light is back on. Cassie sits exactly as we saw her in ACT III, scene ii with the skirt of her apron held over her mouth. A body lies on the floor covered with a superb patchwork quilt. Taylor stands near to Cassie.

Facing Taylor (with their backs to the camera) are three paramedics. When Taylor speaks, he establishes eye contact with each person.

Taylor *firm, deliberate* My father has unfortunately died of an aneurism or stroke.
As he keeled over, he unluckily hit his head on the furniture.
You will find that this terrible incident was accidental. This man died of natural causes. I’m sure that that’s how you will sign it off.

Taylor waits patiently for a response. We can see the three paramedics nod. The only sounds come from the ornate clock and Cassie’s weeping.

Taylor reaches into his pocket. He draws out a huge roll of banknotes. He peels off sizable portion of notes. He quickly counts the notes out into three equal sections. Without comment, Taylor hands a wad of notes to each of the three paramedics.

Taylor Please remove my father’s body as you would normally do.
I’ll show y’all to the door. Thank you for your assistance.

END OF SCENE

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Taylor Taylor Medford became the great humanitarian that he did because of something he saw when he was 4 years old. His Mamma and Pappy were squabbling about some old thing and that Lloyd Medford hit his wife. So hard that she fell to the floor.

Jay You're talking about yourself in the third person.

Taylor *wry smile* That's what great men do, Jay.

Well ... His Mamma was pregnant at the time. The kid was born with brain damage. They called him Compton.

Now Taylor was never ashamed of his little brother being as mentally challenged as he was because it wasn't a birth defect as such. It was a direct result of Lloyd hitting Cassie. That made Taylor hate his father more than ever because Pappy told him that it was his (Taylor's) job to look after Compton.

In August of 1980, Compton drowned at the Falls. The whole town wept.

Many, many years later, Taylor (being a well-set-up, handsome man) was put forward by some political types to go into politics. Then as you will well know, he ran for President and won.

Jay *whispers* You killed him. You killed your kid brother.

Taylor No. That's the damn fucking tragedy about all this.

Taylor was trying to drag Compton home on a litter. The boy fell to his death. It was an accident. And had Detective Mullins and Pappy kept their damn fucking noses out of it, Taylor would have told the truth at the inquest. He would have been reprimanded (sure) but the horrible innuendo would have never raised its head.

Taylor – Medford – did – not -kill – his – kid – brother – intentionally.

Jay *menacing* I can bargain with you, Sir. We can make a deal here. Right here

in Sydney Australia. On the other side of the globe from Calliope Falls. Right here underneath the Ozzie flag as we are.

Your sister for my brother.

You owe me that.

And then this whole thing goes away.

Taylor begins to sob.

Jay As far as the world knows Compton drowned by slipping down into the rapids over Calliope Falls while you were playin' ball with him. And that you pulled out all stops to find him and rescue him.

They can never know the truth, Taylor. Because they probably would misinterpret the truth. You and I both know that your pappy ultimately caused all that grief for you and your family. Yeah, him and that Mullins fool. It weren't yo' fault at all. Never was. Never will be. Your daddy caused all that and for his sins he paid ...

Taylor sobs. He holds his hands over his face.

Jay *sincere* You killed your pappy. I realize that. And in some funny way I salute you for it. You're a very good man who got caught up (unwittingly) in what you call a tragedy.

But my brother died needlessly. He weren't gonna say nothin' ...

He wouldn't never blab to anyone but me. Not Liam ...

Taylor blubs and sobs. Jay drops a hand on his shoulder.

Jay *very low voice* Adelaide has to be closed down, Taylor.

Taylor *sobs* No! No! No! That can't be.

Jay *very low voice* A sister for a brother. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth.

We're both of long-standing Anglo-Saxon blood. WASPs to the core.

That's how Anglo-Saxons deal with just this kind of slaughter. I want my brother's death avenged.

You got sweet revenge for **your** brother's death. Now give me my revenge for **my** brother. It's that simple, Mr President.

Adelaide has to go ...

There is a long silence, broken only by Duncan who coughs, hawks and spits.

The President takes a long, ragged breath and then stands.

Taylor *low voice,*
tearful

Y'all have got this plot all twisted around, Jay Stansfield.

Adelaide has been taken care of already. But not by Mr President. Jay, she has been trampled to death by her horse. My guess is that a person of exceptional horsemanship arranged the execution. For execution it was, Jay.

I guess the killer organized vengeance for all of you ...

Taylor slumps off leaving Jay (ashen-faced) watching him depart. The camera backs away. Duncan is still in the background.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene viii: News Bulletin

May 2020.

TV news headlines. A photograph of Adelaide appears on the screen.

Announcer

President Taylor Medford will cut short his Australian tour to return to the United States following the sudden, tragic death of his sister, Adelaide.

Early reports indicate that Ms Medford may have been involved in

a horse-riding accident.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene ix: Duncan Wins The Oceania Title.

September 2020.

Large TV screen.

Commentator *voice-over screaming* ... and Cabello is on the canvas. He's out cold!
The ref counts. 5-6-7 – There it is! There it is! Duncan "The Destroyer" Dalgleish of Richmond Melbourne Australia takes out the – Go you good thing! His corner lift him into the air. This couldn't be any more exciting! "The Destroyer" Dalgleish is the new Oceania Super Middleweight Champion in WBH ...

Jay and Miranda are snuggled up on a couch watching the fight on pay TV. They are both especially pleased.

Miranda *excited* Oh my God! He's won! He was so good.

Jay You got that right.

Miranda Go you good thing!

Jay Go you good thing! Right on!

Miranda *imitates Jay* Now that right there is some damn fine fancy boxing.

Jay and Miranda kiss. On the TV, we watch Duncan bouncing about, doing handstands in his excitement.

END OF SCENE

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END OF ACT IV

END OF FILM

FINIS

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