

Sleeping Giants

a play

by

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“The time has come
To say fair’s fair
To pay the rent
To pay our share

The time has come
A fact’s a fact
It belongs to them
Let’s give it back”

- Midnight Oil, “Beds are Burning”

“Whitefella Blackfella
It doesn’t matter what your colour
As long as you’re a true fella
As long as you’re a real fella

We need more brothers if we’re to make it
We need more sisters if we’re to save it
Are you the one who’s gonna stand up
And be counted ?”

- The Warumpi Band, “Blackfella, Whitefella”

Characters

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Alan WALLACE | a land owner and publican, 48 |
| SARAH Wallace | his wife, 42 |
| ARTHUR Moggatt | Manager of Wallace's local pub, 63 |
| GEMMA Lacey | an ambitious local Aboriginal girl, 19 |
| PENNY Warren | (formerly Bula Lacey) Gemma's half-sister, 25 |
| LLOYD Stanley | local Aboriginal jackeroo, 40s |
| ANNE Michaels | Regional DOCS Officer, 27 |
| Alderman Tim QUAYLE | Alderman of Tainoga, 52 |

Setting

Tainoga, a small town near Myall Creek in the New England tablelands of northern New South Wales, Australia.

Time

The action takes place over two weeks a few years ago.

Act 1**Scene 1 Wednesday**

The study, Wallace's property. Night.

Alan WALLACE sits at a desk covered with papers. Enter SARAH, carrying some letters.

SARAH: Thought you already got the mail.

WALLACE: Sorry.

SARAH: Saw these on the ground on the way back from the far paddock. We really should buy a new post box.

WALLACE: Yes.

SARAH: There's one from Susan. (HANDING IT TO HIM) I think this one's a bill. Do you want me to read Susan's letter ?

WALLACE: (OPENING BILL) Not right now. No.

SARAH: You sure Alan ?

WALLACE: Later.

SHORT BEAT.

SARAH: Bad news.

WALLACE: It's nothing.

SARAH: It doesn't look like nothing.

WALLACE: It'll be alright.

SARAH: Come on - give me a look.

WALLACE: Jesus Sarah - just back off.

BEAT.

SARAH: (LEAVING) All right.

WALLACE: Sarah. It's just the bill for the tractor repairs. It's a bit more than I expected. (BEAT) It's been a long day.

SARAH: Listen, you've got to promise me something. If there's ever anything really wrong, it doesn't matter how bad it is - you'll tell me straight away.

WALLACE: I promise.

CHANGE.

WALLACE: So how was the big fella ?

SARAH: Getting a bit stropky in his old age - just like you. And a bit tired. I'm not sure he's up to it any more. There's a lot of very keen young ladies in that paddock.

WALLACE: He's up to it.

SARAH: We'll see. You want to come to bed.

WALLACE: Yes.

A KNOCK OFFSTAGE.

WALLACE: Jesus, who's that ?

SARAH: I'll get it.

SARAH EXITS.

SARAH: (RETURNING) It's Arthur.

WALLACE: Send him in

SARAH: But I thought we were going to bed.

WALLACE: This can't wait.

SARAH: You can see him tomorrow.

WALLACE: I'm sorry Sarah.

SARAH EXITS. SHE RETURNS WITH ARTHUR MOGGATT.

SARAH: (ENTERING) Come in.

ARTHUR: (ENTERING) So how is everything little thing Mrs. Wall ?

SARAH: Fine Arthur. And you ?

ARTHUR: Oh, you know. Nothing much. G'day Wall. How are you ?

WALLACE: Hello Arthur.

SARAH: Would you like a cuppa Arthur ?

ARTHUR: Yeah, actually I wouldn't mind a tea.

WALLACE LOOKS AT ARTHUR.

ARTHUR: Hold on, I'll give it a miss Mrs. Wall. Bad for the ulcer.

BEAT.

SARAH: Well I guess I'll be going to bed then.

WALLACE: I won't be long.

SARAH: Good-night Arthur.

ARTHUR: See ya Mrs. Wall.

SARAH EXITS.

ARTHUR: You didn't tell her did you

WALLACE: What do you think ? I don't want her worrying too.

ARTHUR: She could've rifled through your desk mate.

WALLACE: Arthur, Sarah would never rifle through my desk.

ARTHUR: Guess not. So how much did the little bastard pinch ?

WALLACE: Well, with bar takings, phoney wages, accommodation payments he pocketed and booze sold on the side - I reckon about eight hundred and fifty thousand.

ARTHUR: Bloody hell. What're you gonna do mate ?

WALLACE: You tell me. I've thought about selling both of them off but then I'd have nothing coming in and the farm's not doing well enough to support anybody at the moment. I need a couple of hundred thousand to get at least one of the city hotels up and running again.

ARTHUR: You gonna get a loan ?

WALLACE: I'm not what you'd call a good risk at present mate.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: You're not thinking of selling The Palliser ?

WALLACE: I'm sorry but I can't see any other way.

ARTHUR: But what if the new owner's already got a manager in mind ?

WALLACE: Then I guess you're out of a job.

ARTHUR: But Wall, I'm sixty three mate. You think I can get another job ?
I got a wife too, you know, and the boys aren't sending me nothing.
The house isn't even paid off.

WALLACE: Neither are the builders who did the renovations on this place. And
my kids are at two bloody expensive private schools. You know
how much they cost ? Where are me and Sarah going to go if I
lose the property ?

ARTHUR: You could sell some of the far paddocks off.

WALLACE: This land's been in the family for one hundred and seventy
years. And who's going to buy a couple of square miles of dirt ?

ARTHUR: Why don't you sell off the hotels in the city then ?

WALLACE: And live off the takings from the Palliser ? Don't think so mate.

ARTHUR: So I'm paying for your mistake.

WALLACE: The only mistake I made was that I trusted someone who
shouldn't have been trusted.

ARTHUR: My mistake too. (BEAT) Listen, Wall, there might be another way out.

WALLACE: Arthur.

ARTHUR: No listen to me mate, I'm serious. You know that Grandfather
Macquarie bloke's farm ? The one that was left to the council ?
I was thinking that you might apply for it.

WALLACE: That place is worth one hundred and fifty thousand tops. And
they're not going to give it to me to sell off.

ARTHUR: Who said anything about selling ? Have a look at this.

ARTHUR PULLS A ROCK FROM HIS POCKET.

WALLACE: Opals. So what ?

ARTHUR: Guess where that came from ? Scott found it when he was up last
weekend. He went for a ride over there - used to play there as a kid
and that - and he found this old mine. Chocka block with this stuff.
I popped over and had a look myself. I reckon there's about half

ARTHUR: (CONT) a mill's worth hiding down there. Macquarie must have died before he got it all out.

WALLACE: Why are you telling me this ?

ARTHUR: Well by myself, I couldn't get hold of the property. But you - illustrious local business man with two city pubs - now that's a different story.

WALLACE: I don't think Alderman Quayle will give us the property to turn into an opal mine.

ARTHUR: So we don't tell him about it. The proposal says you're planning to build a luxurious new hotel - he'll jump at it. Encouraging tourism and all that crap. Then, when it looks like you're laying foundations, you're actually mining the opals. After a year, you suddenly discover the project is unfeasible and give him the land back. We're out clear with half a million bucks.

WALLACE: We Arthur ?

ARTHUR: Well I'd take a small percentage, of course.

WALLACE: Of course.

ARTHUR: So, what do you reckon ?

BEAT.

WALLACE: I'll have to take a look myself, but ... it might be worth a try.

ARTHUR: Bloody oath Wall. (BEAT) Unfortunately there is just one slight problem. Sally down at the Town Hall let it slip. Someone else is applying for the land.

WALLACE: Who ?

ARTHUR: She doesn't know. But don't worry. Quaylie comes in every day for his lunch time schooner of Old and tomorrow - just gently - I'll oil him for the information.

WALLACE: Quayle's not gonna tell you anything, Arthur.

ARTHUR: People tell the man behind the bar everything. Once we know who we're up against, we'll set out to discredit the opposition.

WALLACE: Discredit ?

ARTHUR: Well, how should I say - influence popular favour ? You know what I mean.

WALLACE: Yes. I'm afraid I do.

ARTHUR: Meanwhile, you'll be putting together the glossy proposal.

WALLACE: I've got a few left in the bottom drawer. I'll just change dates and places.

ARTHUR: That's the stuff. It's good to be working with you Wall.

WALLACE: And you, Arthur.

THEY SHAKE HANDS. BLACKOUT.

Scene 2. Thursday.

ANNE's office, the Watch House. Next morning.

ANNE IS WORKING AT HER DESK. A KNOCK OFF.

ANNE: Come in.

GEMMA: (ENTERING) Hello Anne.

ANNE: Hello Gemma. You're late.

GEMMA: Sorry. Running on Kwiambal time.

ANNE: Well the rest of the world runs on real time.

CHANGE.

ANNE: Did you hear the radio this morning ?

GEMMA: We got no radio.

ANNE: Another young boy hung himself last night.

GEMMA: Where ?

ANNE: Gravesend. How's that for irony ? It's less than a hundred kilometres from here. How does it happen Gemma ?

GEMMA: Some Kwiambal don't like those walls. They see them all around and they think they're never going to get out. Then those walls they start to close in - squashing them. Outside they hear their mother and sister crying. It's enough.

ANNE: Would you do it ?

GEMMA: I don't know. I might.

BEAT.

ANNE: So what have you got for me ?

GEMMA: I wrote it out last night. Three pages.

ANNE: What's this ?

GEMMA: Oh, spilt some billy on it.

ANNE: It's very red for tea, Gemma. (SHE READS) What does this word say ?

GEMMA: Unemployed.

ANNE: UN - NB - LY - D is unemployed ?

GEMMA: Never was much good at words.

ANNE: But Gemma, you're going to have to be if this proposal has any chance. What do you think Quayle will say when you put this on his desk ?

GEMMA: I dunno.

ANNE: He won't even read it. It, and all your plans, will go straight in the bin.

GEMMA: But why can't I just tell him about it ? It's simple enough. I want to turn Grandfather Macquarie's farm into a meeting place.

ANNE: Refuge.

GEMMA: Refuge for young Kwiambals -

ANNE: Indigenous Australians.

GEMMA: Indigenous Australians in the area who don't have nowhere to go. People can sleep there, get something to eat, have a talk or play a few games or something. A place where no-one's going to hassle them about nothing. A place run for us - by us.

ANNE: Now when you tell me, that sounds fine. But Quayle won't let you tell him. It's got to be down in black and white. Well presented and clear.

GEMMA: But why ?

ANNE: Because you have to follow the guidelines of the application process.

GEMMA: Bloody stupid process.

ANNE: Gemma - if you want the farm you have to write a proposal.

GEMMA: But I don't know how to write no proposal.

ANNE: Well you're going to have to learn. There's a type-writer over there. I'll help you with the spelling.

GEMMA: But I can't type. Can't you do it ?

ANNE: I could, but then any time you got in trouble you'd come running to me. And one day I'm not going to be there. This is yours Gemma - not mine. You have to make it live.

GEMMA: But all these rules.

ANNE: Are the rules of the society we live in. Now I don't like them and neither do you. But we have to play by them or else we lose.

GEMMA: It be hard Anne.

ANNE: I know. But you have to toughen up or you're not going to make it.

BEAT.

GEMMA: You good lady. Why you come to Tainoga ?

ANNE: Because I wanted to help.

GEMMA: And there be something else too. I can feel it.

ANNE: Yes. Back in Sydney I was engaged for seven months. The week before the wedding he ran away. To New Zealand. With a tennis player.

GEMMA: Tough time eh ?

ANNE: Yeah. So I had to become tough. (BEAT) So, you want me to show you how the type-writer works ?

GEMMA: Not right now.

ANNE: What day is it ?

GEMMA: Thursday.

ANNE: And when does the proposal have to be in ?

GEMMA: Friday. Five P.M.

ANNE: Time's running out.

GEMMA: I know. I'll come back this afternoon.

ANNE: It won't take very long.

GEMMA: I gotta take a walk. Feeling a bit funny.

ANNE: I can guess why. (BEAT) Well, since you're going to be out - you can do something about our other problem.

GEMMA: What other problem ?

ANNE: If we do manage to get the property, I'm sure we'll be able to get a grant early next year. But the council won't award us the property unless we can prove that we've got some kind of financial backing right now.

GEMMA: I ain't got no money Anne.

ANNE: Neither do I. But there are people in this area who do.

GEMMA: I never met 'em.

ANNE: I'm going to give you the address of a man in Ben Lomond. He's quite sympathetic to good causes. I want you to go home, put on your best clothes –

GEMMA: These are my best clothes.

ANNE: Well, put on some clean clothes then. And go and see him.

GEMMA: But how I gonna get there ?

ANNE: It's twenty five minutes in the train. You'll be back before mid afternoon.

GEMMA: To start typing.

ANNE: We'll get there Gemma.

GEMMA: Yes Anne. We will. You know how I know ?

ANNE: No.

GEMMA: Cause there's no-one else applying is there ?

ANNE: We don't know that for sure. There's still two days left.

GEMMA: There's no-one else applying. I can feel it.

ANNE: You and your - "I can feel it". Go on. Get lost.

GEMMA: Yes boss. (LEAVING) Oh and Bula said -

ANNE: You mean Penny ?

GEMMA: Penny said she wants you to go out and see her today. Something about those jobs in the city.

ANNE: But I already told her she wasn't eligible for that programme.

GEMMA: Ooh, she won't be happy to hear that.

ANNE: Well she already heard it.

GEMMA: You better tell her again then.

ANNE: All right.

GEMMA: Ta Anne. Be back soon.

ANNE: Bye Gemma.

GEMMA EXITS. ANNE ALONE. BLACKOUT.

Scene 3.

The Palliser Hotel. Noon.

ARTHUR IS OPENING THE BAR. LLOYD STANLEY ENTERS.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: What do you want ?

LLOYD: To see you Arthur.

ARTHUR: And what do you want to see me about ?

LLOYD: To have a beer.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: Come on then. Haven't got all day.

LLOYD: (APPROACHING THE BAR) The usual, thanks Arthur.

ARTHUR: And what would that be ?

LLOYD: You know Arthur.

ARTHUR: I forgot.

LLOYD: A middie of New. With a bit of lime.

ARTHUR POURS THE DRINK. HE HANDS IT TO LLOYD.

ARTHUR: There you go.

LLOYD: With a bit of lime, please.

ARTHUR: We haven't got any.

LLOYD: It's on the shelf.

ARTHUR: I said we haven't got any.

LLOYD: I'll just have it plain then.

LLOYD PAYS ARTHUR. ARTHUR GIVES HIM BACK HIS CHANGE.

LLOYD: You can keep that Arthur.

ARTHUR: Take it.

LLOYD: It's a tip.

ARTHUR: Take it.

ARTHUR HOLDS OUT THE CHANGE. BEAT. LLOYD TAKES IT.

LLOYD: Thank you Arthur.

HE PUTS THE CHANGE ON THE COUNTER. LLOYD SITS AT A TABLE.

ARTHUR: You know the rule.

LLOYD: What rule's that Arthur ?

ARTHUR: The rule that says you'd be more comfortable outside.

LLOYD: I'm pretty comfortable here, thanks Arthur. Bit cold outside today.

ARTHUR MOVES TOWARDS LLOYD.

ARTHUR: Still, I think you'd be more comfortable outside.

ALDERMAN QUAYLE ENTERS. BEAT.

QUAYLE: Is everything alright ?

ARTHUR: Yes Alderman. No problem. Lloyd here was just saying that he might like to sit outside and drink his beer.

QUAYLE: Is that right Lloyd ? Bit chilly out isn't it ?

LLOYD: No Oldman. Much better outside. There's a funny smell in here.

QUAYLE: (SNIFFS) I can't smell anything.

LLOYD: Takes a while till you notice it.

ARTHUR LOOKS AT LLOYD.

QUAYLE: Hope you haven't got any health concerns Arthur.

ARTHUR: Place is spotless Alderman.

QUAYLE: Fine, well then we'll see you later Lloyd. Make sure you don't catch a cold out there.

LLOYD: I will. Nice talking to you Arthur. Goodbye Oldman.

QUAYLE: Morning.

LLOYD MOVES DOWN RIGHT, OUT OF THE PUB, AND SITS ON A MILK CRATE.

QUAYLE: Pleasant young man.

ARTHUR: Don't let him deceive you. Comes in here everyday looking for trouble that one.

QUAYLE: Quite.

ARTHUR: The usual Alderman ?

QUAYLE: Thank you Arthur.

ARTHUR: How's Dot ?

QUAYLE: Fine. And Emma ?

ARTHUR: Same as ever.

QUAYLE: Good.

ARTHUR GIVES QUAYLE THE DRINK. QUAYLE REACHES FOR HIS POCKET.

ARTHUR: Forget it. This one's on me.

QUAYLE: Thank you Arthur. That's very kind.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: So, how's things at the Council ?

QUAYLE: Busy as always.

ARTHUR: You decided who to give that Macquarie place to yet ? Bet you had heaps of offers.

QUAYLE: No thank god. Only one.

ARTHUR: You seem relieved.

QUAYLE: I am. The way to remain popular is to avoid making decisions. And at present, on this particular matter, no decision will be necessary.

ARTHUR: Afraid I might have some bad news for you then.

QUAYLE: Oh ?

ARTHUR: Someone else is thinking of applying.

QUAYLE: Who ?

ARTHUR: A friend of mine.

QUAYLE: A member of the community ?

ARTHUR: A prominent one.

QUAYLE: Bugger.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: Alderman ... ?

QUAYLE: Yes Arthur.

ARTHUR: You couldn't give me the nod as to who the other applicant might be ?

QUAYLE: Not really. It would be a little out of order for me and – especially in an election year - one must be very careful to remain beyond question.

ARTHUR: Understood, it's just that I'm not sure how dead set my friend is about applying. If he was to ... find out that the other applicant was, how should I put it, obviously worthy of being given the

ARTHUR: (CONT) property, I'd say he might pull out. Then you wouldn't be forced to make a decision after all.

QUAYLE: Quite. (BEAT) You really think he might withdraw ?

ARTHUR: I do.

QUAYLE: It would be highly improper.

ARTHUR: No one else needs to know.

BEAT.

QUAYLE: No one else Arthur. I'm trusting you on that. It's that young girl who did so well at the State athletics a couple of years back.

ARTHUR: Young Lacey. But she's only -

QUAYLE: Quite.

ARTHUR: She want to set up an athletics camp ?

QUAYLE: No. A refuge. For the young aboriginals in the area.

ARTHUR: A refuge ? For Abos ? Pardon me for asking, but is that exactly the type of thing you want in Tainoga ?

QUAYLE: According to Government policy that is exactly the sort of thing we want in Tainoga.

ARTHUR: Big brass applying the screws eh ?

QUAYLE: It's a directive I'm happy to comply with. Unless of course there was another more worthy applicant.

ARTHUR: She got any money behind her ?

QUAYLE: I haven't as yet received the application. Thus I wouldn't like to comment on their financial position.

ARTHUR: Their ?

QUAYLE: Anne Michaels is helping her out.

ARTHUR: I'll bet she is. (BEAT) So what do you think of their idea Quaylie ?

QUAYLE LOOKS AT HIM.

ARTHUR: Sorry. Alderman.

QUAYLE: Well as I say I'm yet to receive the proposal but from what I've heard it's very worthwhile, if slightly ...

ARTHUR: Impractical ?

QUAYLE: Quite. But far more important, what do you think your friend will make of the proposal ?

ARTHUR: I'm not sure but I reckon there's a fair chance he might knock his application on the head. He's very sympathetic to good causes.

QUAYLE: Really ? Good. (HE GRIMACES.) Oops ! Straight through. Pardon me.

QUAYLE STARTS TO EXIT.

ARTHUR: Hey, while you're in the toot, I'll get on the blower. Try and talk him around.

QUAYLE: I'd appreciate that.

ARTHUR: Have an answer for you when you come out.

QUAYLE: Excellent. Must dash.

QUAYLE EXITS. ARTHUR PICKS UP THE PHONE. HE DIALS.

A SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON WALLACE. WE HEAR A PHONE RINGING.

WALLACE: (ANSWERING PHONE) Wallace.

ARTHUR: Giddy Wall.

WALLACE: How d'ya go ?

ARTHUR: Piece of piss. It's that skinny little darkie girl. The one who won all those races a few years back.

WALLACE: Gemma Lacey ?

ARTHUR: Wants to turn it into a drop-out centre for all the other darkies.

WALLACE: What does Quayle say ?

ARTHUR: He's already a bit dubious on her and he hasn't even seen our proposal.

WALLACE: Why ?

ARTHUR: Sounds like they've got no money.

WALLACE: They ?

ARTHUR: Bloody Michaels is giving her a hand. But don't worry. I've got her number.

WALLACE: I'm heading off to the Macquarie Place now. (SLIGHT BEAT)
Good work Arthur.

ARTHUR: My pleasure.

SPOTLIGHT OFF. ARTHUR SEES QUAYLE RETURNING.

ARTHUR: (INTO PHONE) Yes I think it's a very worthy cause. I reckon it's something this area desperately needs.

ARTHUR WINKS AT QUAYLE. QUAYLE LISTENS IN.

ARTHUR: I agree it is a great responsibility to put in the hands of one so young./ No, I don't know if she has any financial backing./ Yes, I guess you could call it a little up in the air, but she has the best of intentions./ I take it you won't be withdrawing your application then ?/ Well, you're the boss.

ARTHUR HANGS UP. BEAT. ARTHUR SHRUGS.

QUAYLE: Bugger.

ARTHUR: Sorry Alderman. As you heard I tried to talk him around. But as you said yourself the whole thing does sound highly impractical.

QUAYLE: Who is he ?

ARTHUR: I wouldn't like to say. Stealing his thunder.

QUAYLE: (STRONGER) Who is he ?

ARTHUR: Alan Wallace. He's going to build a brand new hotel. Not a pub mind you - a real hotel. Had a few of his financial mates do a survey. They reckon this place is going to explode.

QUAYLE: Is that so ?

ARTHUR: I think if it had of been anybody else apart from young Lacey he might have thought twice.

QUAYLE: Why would that be ?

ARTHUR: I thought you would've been told. She's got a bit of an elbow problem.

QUAYLE: I don't get your point.

ARTHUR: She likes to bend a bit too often.

ARTHUR MIMES BENDING HIS ELBOW TO DRINK.

QUAYLE: Is that so ?

ARTHUR NODS.

QUAYLE: I didn't know.

ARTHUR: Thought you knew everything that went on round here.

QUAYLE: Well, at present then it would seem some kind of a decision will be unavoidable.

ARTHUR: Not much of a decision though is it ? I mean we've got to be practical in these hard times.

QUAYLE: Quite. Good afternoon Arthur.

ARTHUR: Afternoon Alderman. Love to Dot.

QUAYLE MOVES ACROSS STAGE TO LLOYD.

QUAYLE: Everything all right there Lloyd ?

LLOYD: Fine Oldman.

QUAYLE: Lloyd ...

LLOYD: Yes Oldman.

QUAYLE: If ever you thought you were being harshly treated, people weren't being ... fair to you -

LLOYD: You mean discriminating against me ?

QUAYLE: Quite. You do know that you can come to me or Anne down at the Watchhouse at any time ?

LLOYD: I do Oldman.

QUAYLE: Good.

GEMMA ENTERS.

GEMMA: Giddy Lloyd. (SEEING QUAYLE) Oh, hello Oldman.

QUAYLE: Good morning Gemma. Little early for the pub isn't it ?

GEMMA: I just come to see Lloyd.

QUAYLE: Quite.

QUAYLE STARTS TO EXIT.

GEMMA: You in a bit of a hurry ?

QUAYLE: Yes. Must be off. Goodbye.

GEMMA: See ya later Oldman.

QUAYLE: (STOPPING) Gemma.

GEMMA: Yes.

QUAYLE HESITATES, THEN:

QUAYLE: Good luck.

GEMMA: Thank you.

QUAYLE EXITS.

LLOYD: You want that land eh Gemma ?

GEMMA: Yeah, I'm applying for it. Gunna set up a place for us.

LLOYD: We movin' in together.

GEMMA: No. Me and the other young Kwiambals 'round here.

LLOYD: I thought you meant me.

GEMMA: You can come too. Better than sitting on the back steps of The Palliser.

LLOYD: It's alright.

GEMMA: Don't know why you let that bloody Maggot push you around.

LLOYD: His name's Moggatt.

GEMMA: Close enough.

LLOYD: Whatever his name is - he got good beer. So I sit out here instead of in there. Not much difference.

GEMMA: There be plenty of difference.

LLOYD: This very short time in white man's land Gemma. Very short. The

LLOYD: (CONT) big time - up there - (IHE POINTS TO THE SKY) that goes forever. And that belongs to us.

GEMMA: But you gotta make it through this time first.

LLOYD: And I do. By taking what I can, when I can. And keeping my mouth shut. If the surf's against you - you don't hit the waves head on. You let them wash over you.

GEMMA: What would you know about waves ? You never been to the beach in your life.

LLOYD: It's a figure of speech.

GEMMA: You ain't much good at figures either.

LLOYD: Eh, that's not what the ladies say.

THEY LAUGH. BEAT.

GEMMA: I'm gonna get that land Lloyd.

LLOYD: It's very big.

GEMMA: What is ?

LLOYD: That brick wall you're banging your head against.

GEMMA: Maybe. But if I bang it long enough and hard enough - one day - it gotta fall down.

LLOYD: You have a pretty bad headache but.

GEMMA: You an expert on walls now too ?

LLOYD NODS AND TAPS HIS HEAD.

LLOYD: And hard heads.

GEMMA: We gotta fight Lloyd.

LLOYD: We not fighters.

GEMMA: (STANDING) Well I am.

LLOYD: Where ya going ?

GEMMA: To have it out with Arthur.

LLOYD: Blimey. Wait a sec.

GEMMA: What for ?

LLOYD: I gotta hide.

GEMMA MOVES ACROSS TO THE BAR. ARTHUR SEES HER.

ARTHUR: What do you want ?

GEMMA: I want a middie.

ARTHUR: Two bucks fifty and you drink it outside.

GEMMA: I'll drink it in here thanks.

ARTHUR: Troublemaker eh ? I'll show you what we do with darkies like you.

ARTHUR MOVES TOWARDS GEMMA. HE STOPS.

ARTHUR: Hold on. Ain't you that runner ?

GEMMA: Gemma.

ARTHUR: Gemma Lacey. We'll so you are. Couldn't see your face in the gloom. Well lucky me.

GEMMA: Aren't you going to throw me out anymore ?

ARTHUR: Of course not. Knew your mother. Good woman. Come in and take a seat. And I wasn't going to throw you out - just escort you to the ... door. But Gemma Lacey. That's different. You're welcome here anytime.

GEMMA STARTS TO LEAVE.

ARTHUR: Hey. Where you going ?

GEMMA: To get Lloyd.

ARTHUR: Steady on. He's not allowed.

GEMMA: Why not ? Because he's black.

ARTHUR: No. Not at all. You're black aren't you ? And where are you ? Sit down and I'll tell you why. Come on. Sit yourself down.

GEMMA SITS. ARTHUR PLACES A BEER IN FRONT OF HER.

ARTHUR: Go on. Drink up. Don't let it get warm.

GEMMA DRINKS. SHE GULPS DOWN THE WHOLE GLASS.

ARTHUR: Thirsty eh ? Here. Have another. On the house. Expression of my good faith.

HE PLACES ANOTHER BEER IN FRONT OF GEMMA.

ARTHUR: You see ? I'm a fair man. I'll give your ... kind a chance. Just like any other ethnic -

GEMMA: I was born here you know.

ARTHUR: Of course.

GEMMA: And so was Lloyd.

ARTHUR: Yes but Lloyd's had his chance and he blew it.

GEMMA: What did he do ?

ARTHUR: Seven hundred bucks damage - that's what he did.

GEMMA: But that was drovers from out of town. Most of them were white.

ARTHUR: He was drinking with them. Now once he's showed me that he can behave, he'll be welcome back inside. But until then he drinks out back on the steps.

GEMMA: So that means I can come here and drink anytime. And bring all the other Kwiambals.

ARTHUR: Of course you can - within reason. Yes. You and your sister are welcome here anytime. How is young Bula anyway ?

GEMMA: Penny now.

ARTHUR: What happened to Bula ?

GEMMA: She change her name. Don't like being black.

ARTHUR: Well that's not good form is it ? She should be proud of her ... upbringing.

GEMMA: She's alright. You're wrong about Lloyd you know.

ARTHUR: He'll be back in soon enough.

GEMMA: I'm gonna hold you to that.

ARTHUR: I expect you too.

GEMMA FINISHES HER DRINK.

ARTHUR: Another ?

GEMMA: Got some things to do.

ARTHUR: Getting your application ready ?

GEMMA: Who told you about that ?

ARTHUR: No one. Just heard about it. 'Round the bar - you know how it is.

GEMMA STARTS TO LEAVE.

ARTHUR: Don't be a stranger now.

GEMMA MOVES ACROSS TO LLOYD. LIGHTS FADE ON ARTHUR.

LLOYD: Is he dead ?

GEMMA: We just had a little talk. He says you're on a good behaviour bond. Cause of them drovers. Says we welcome in there anytime.

LLOYD: Arthur ? You got the wrong fella.

GEMMA: He even give me a free beer.

LLOYD: You watch Arthur. He don't give nothing free.

GEMMA: I will. (CHANGE.) So, what you doing today then ?

LLOYD: Doing some work for Alan. Sarah come to pick me up soon. What about you ?

GEMMA: Anne says I gotta go over to Benlmond.

LLOYD: What you do there ?

GEMMA: Anne says we need to get money first or Oldman Quayle'll never give us the land. She give me the address of this man who might help us.

LLOYD: You sure are serious ain't you ?

GEMMA: I sure am Lloyd.

LLOYD: Don't know why you goin' to Benlmond then ? You should ask Alan. He a good man. He'll help you.

GEMMA: Alan Wallace ?

LLOYD: He owns this place, and two big ones in the city. He got lotsa money.

GEMMA: Could I see him today ?

LLOYD: Ask Sarah. She coming now.

SARAH: (ENTERING) Hello Lloyd. Sorry I'm late. The Rover's playing up.

LLOYD: You come any earlier and I wouldn't have time to finish my beer.
This here be Gemma.

SARAH: Yes I know Gemma. Our famous athlete. Gemma. That's an unusual name.

GEMMA: Short for Jeremiah.

LLOYD: It's a long story Sarah.

SARAH: I see. We'll we had better get going. Nice to meet you Gemma.

GEMMA: Bye.

SARAH STARTS TO EXIT. LLOYD IS STILL.

LLOYD: Gemma. Wasn't there something you wanted to ask Sarah ?

GEMMA: No Lloyd. I don't think there was.

LLOYD: Yes Gemma. I do think there was.

SARAH: What is it Gemma ?

BEAT.

GEMMA: There was something.

LLOYD: Well go on. She waiting.

SARAH: That's alright Gemma. Take your time.

BEAT.

GEMMA: I want to set up a refuge for the young indigenous Australians –

LLOYD: Who ?

SARAH: Quiet Lloyd.

GEMMA: Indigenous Australians in the area and I'm trying to find some support.

LLOYD: She means she needs some bucks.

GEMMA: And I thought maybe ...

SARAH: Yes ?

GEMMA: Your husband might like to become involved.

SARAH: Where would this centre be ?

GEMMA: I am applying for the use of Grandfather Macquarie's property. Council are interested in the proposal but I must find a financial backer. Miss Michaels -

LLOYD: She means Anne.

GEMMA: Miss Michaels, the local Department of Community Services Officer is arresting me with my proposal.

SARAH: I think you mean assisting.

GEMMA: Sorry. Assisting me with my proposal.

SARAH: That's quite a mouthful Gemma.

LLOYD: Starting to sound like Anne.

SARAH: How much backing are you after ?

GEMMA: Not that much and he be repaid when we got the grant next year. Which we are expecting to be approved, I mean.

SARAH: Do you really think you'll get the land ?

GEMMA: I know we can.

BEAT.

SARAH: Well I must say you certainly are a confident young lady.

GEMMA: Sorry.

SARAH: No. Don't apologise. Never apologise for wanting to achieve something.

GEMMA: It was like when I used to run. Everybody always ask me if I'll win. I just answer: I don't know. But I do know one thing - if I don't run in the race then I'll never win. I'm just running in the race. Winning and losin' will look after themselves.

SARAH: And good for you.

BEAT. SARAH LOOKS AT GEMMA.

SARAH: Come on then. Alan's out at the moment but he'll be back in an hour or so. You can hit him with your proposal then.

GEMMA: Oh, but I haven't typed up my proposal yet.

SARAH: Well then - you'll just have to give it to him verbally.

GEMMA: Do you think he'll be interested ?

SARAH: Yes. I think he'll be very interested.

LLOYD PATS GEMMA ON THE BACK AS THEY EXIT.

Scene 4.

Wallace's Property. Later.

GEMMA, SARAH AND LLOYD ARE HAVING AFTERNOON TEA.

GEMMA: Alan be coming soon then will he ?

SARAH: Should be any minute now. Another shortbread Lloyd ?

LLOYD: Won't say no.

SARAH OFFERS LLOYD THE PLATE OF SHORTBREAD. HE TAKES ONE.

LLOYD: This bread tastes good Sarah. Wish all bread tasted like this.

SARAH: Then we'd all get very fat. (CHANGE) So, what do you think your chances are like Gemma ?

GEMMA: Okay. I mean Oldman Quayle's on our side a bit - I think.

SARAH: Oh ?

LLOYD: He stopped in the street and wished her good luck today.

SARAH: Well that's a good sign. Another cup of tea Lloyd ?

LLOYD: No thank you. But I will have some more of that bread.

SARAH SMILES AND PASSES LLOYD THE PLATE.

LLOYD: Better get to work now. Don't want Alan to catch me slacking off.

SARAH: The posts and the wire are all in the four wheel. Just drive straight down to the far paddock. You'll see the damaged section when you get there.

LLOYD: Thanks for the nice bread Sarah.

SARAH: And Lloyd, watch that bull. He's got a bee in his bonnet about something.

LLOYD: Probably because he's missing out on your nice arvo tea Sarah.

SARAH SMILES. LLOYD EXITS.

SARAH: He's a good man.

GEMMA: Yeah. He okay. Bit laid back though.

SARAH: He works hard for us.

GEMMA: No I mean he don't burn much with things that I do.

SARAH: You want some more tea ?

GEMMA: Thank you.

WALLACE ENTERS.

WALLACE: I didn't know we were expecting company.

SARAH: Oh Alan - you're here. There's someone I'd like you to meet. Alan Wallace meet Gemma. Gemma Lacey.

GEMMA: Please to meet you Alan.

ALAN SHAKES GEMMA'S HAND.

WALLACE: And you. (BEAT.) What can we do for you ?

SARAH: Gemma has a very interesting proposal to put to you. The floors all yours Gemma.

GEMMA: Well. You know the old Macquarie farm ?

WALLACE: Yes.

GEMMA: Well me and Anne Michaels, at the Watch house have put in a proposal to get the property.

WALLACE: Why ?

GEMMA: I want to set up a community centre for the young Aboriginals in the area. A place for Kwiambals who don't have no place to go. They can get something to eat, have a chat. Stop 'em hanging 'round the streets or the Palliser. Not that I'm saying that the Palliser is a bad place. Just they shouldn't be hanging out there all day.

WALLACE: How do I fit in ?

GEMMA: Well council are interested in our proposal -

WALLACE: Are they ?

GEMMA: But there's one problem. We need a financial backer to put up some money. Anne is positive we'll get a grant and we can get the money back - but she doesn't think the Oldman will give us the farm unless we have some money now.

SARAH: What Gemma's trying to say, if I understand her properly, is what they really need is a short-term loan.

GEMMA NODS. BEAT.

WALLACE: I'd like to help you Gemma, but I'm afraid this time I just can't.

SARAH: Well perhaps you'd like to think about it for a couple of days, Alan. Gemma can give us a call.

WALLACE: No Sarah. I am sorry but I really can't help.

SARAH: Alan.

GEMMA: That's all right. Thanks for the billy Sarah. I better be going.

SARAH: Hold on. I'll give you a lift.

GEMMA: No. Don't worry. I feel like a walk.

SARAH: It's a long way back into town.

GEMMA: I be okay.

GEMMA EXITS. BEAT.

SARAH: Alan, that's not you. What's going on ?

WALLACE: I'm also applying for that property.

SARAH: What do we want the old Macquarie place for ?

WALLACE: I'm going to build a new hotel.

SARAH: Alan - this town doesn't need a new hotel. It needs that Community Centre.

WALLACE: No, believe me Sarah. We do need a new hotel.

SARAH: What is wrong ? Tell me.

WALLACE: I can't.

SARAH: Why not ? I'm your wife.

WALLACE: It's better I handle this alone.

BEAT. SARAH STARTS TO LEAVE.

WALLACE: Where are you going ?

SARAH: To find Gemma and give her a lift home. She's so upset she could do anything.

ALAN: I didn't mean to upset her.

SARAH: You don't mean to upset anybody, do you Alan ?

SARAH EXITS. WALLACE ALONE. BLACKOUT.

Scene 5

Outside Gemma and Penny's place. Later same day.

PENNY AND ANNE. PENNY HOLDS AN APPLICATION FORM.

PENNY: But I just don't understand why you won't put me up for one of the jobs ?

ANNE: I can't.

PENNY: Why not ?

ANNE: I've told you before Penny. Because you don't qualify.

PENNY: Why don't I qualify ? I'm an aboriginal. I'm living in a country area. Haven't I displayed potential ?

ANNE: Yes you are an indigenous Australian, yes you do live in a rural community and yes of course you've shown potential. Great potential. But you're too old.

PENNY: And Gemma isn't ?

ANNE: For this programme you have to be between nineteen and twenty three.

PENNY: But what difference does a couple of years make ?

ANNE: Those are the rules Penny.

PENNY: Bloody stupid rules. (BEAT) You could tell them that I'm only twenty three. They'd believe you. They'd never check up. You could do that Anne.

ANNE: I could ... but I won't.

PENNY: Why not ?

ANNE: Because I'd be abusing my position. (BEAT) A lot of people have trusted me to the task of nominating people for this scheme. If I lie so that someone who didn't qualify becomes eligible - then I jeopardise the whole project. This is the first year of the scheme. If I get caught - and I admit it's unlikely but I might - the whole thing will be scrapped. Now is that fair to everybody else coming through.

PENNY: No. But Gemma doesn't want to go - so who'll get the job ?

ANNE: Well this year - I won't be nominating anybody.

PENNY: Then what's the point of having the scheme ?

BEAT.

ANNE: Penny, I can't nominate you for one of these particular jobs - but there is another scheme coming up in March.

PENNY: But that's almost six months away.

ANNE: It's all I can do.

PENNY: You don't understand. I've got to get out of here. This town - my life - it's all tin and dirt and fibro. I'm dying here. Do you hear ? Dying. I've got to get to the city. I can do things there. The buildings, the cars - all the people. I know I can.

ANNE: Well, we could write letters to a few sympathetic companies ...

PENNY: "Dear Sir, Penny Warren - a bong from Woop Woop - worked in the local cake shop on Thursday nights and Saturday mornings and helped Mrs. Greig with her hems every Wednesday." "Gosh", he says, "there's a Managing Director if ever I saw one."

BEAT. A BABY STARTS TO CRY OFF.

ANNE: Who's that ?

PENNY: Night. Our cousin's little kid. We're looking after her.

PENNY EXITS. SHE RETURNS WITH NIGHT WRAPPED IN HER ARMS.

PENNY: Look at me Anne. I'm twenty five. I've got no money, no training, no future. I'm a black woman in a white man's world. You gotta help me.

SHE HOLDS OUT THE APPLICATION FORM.

PENNY: Please. Sign my application form.

BEAT. ANNE LOOKS AT THE FORM.

ANNE: I'm sorry Penny.

BEAT.

PENNY: You know what I wish sometimes ?

ANNE: What do you wish ?

PENNY: I wish you never came to Tainoga.

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A CAR OFF. SOUND OF DOOR CLOSING.

GEMMA: (ENTERING) Thanks for the lift Sarah.

PENNY: Well, if it isn't little Miss Nineteen herself.

GEMMA: Nice to see you too Bula.

PENNY EXITS.

GEMMA: Hi Anne.

ANNE: Who was that in the Landrover ?

GEMMA: Sarah Wallace. She give me a lift.

ANNE: What was she doing in Benlomond ?

GEMMA: She wasn't in Benlomond ?

ANNE: Gemma.

GEMMA: Wait a sec. Don't pop your cork. I can explain. I was on my way to the Station when I saw Lloyd.

ANNE: At the pub ?

GEMMA: Yeah, but I told him where I was going and what I was doing there and he said I shouldn't bother. I should ask Alan Wallace, for some money. Sarah turns up - and she be nice lady - so I head out with them to hit Alan with our proposal.

ANNE: I hope you didn't hit him too hard. What did he say ?

GEMMA: He said no.

ANNE: I'll bet he did. Wallace's applying for the farm too. Wants to build yet another hotel.

GEMMA: How you find that out ?

ANNE: A very guilty Alderman Quayle rang me. Seems he let slip to Arthur Moggatt that we were applying for the property. Moggatt of course would've run straight to Wallace.

GEMMA: No wonder he said no. (CHANGE) We can't beat him.

ANNE: Yes we can. Tainoga needs a black community centre. It doesn't need another place for everyone to get pissed.

GEMMA: Anne - don't you mean Indigenous Australian Community Centre ?

ANNE: Gemma - this is serious now. Quayle is still on our side. All we need is some financial support.

GEMMA: But where we gonna get that ?

ANNE: From the man in Benlomond.

BEAT.

GEMMA: I'll try again.

ANNE: Good.

GEMMA: You couldn't give me a lift ?

ANNE: What did I say this morning ?

GEMMA: I got to do it on my own.

ANNE: Exactly. However I will take you to the station.

GEMMA: You going now ?

ANNE: If we could. I have to let them know in Sydney that no one will be applying for the Youth Job scheme from our region.

GEMMA: Don't worry. I'll walk in. Gotta talk to Penny. She seemed pretty angry.

ANNE: I can't put her up for the scheme Gemma.

GEMMA: She be okay.

ANNE: Don't be too long. It's nearly three and the train leaves at half past.

GEMMA: Yes Boss.

ANNE: Drop in and see me when you get back. I'll be at the Watch House till about eleven.

GEMMA: I'll do that Boss.

ANNE: See you Gemma.

GEMMA: See you Boss.

ANNE EXITS. PENNY ENTERS FROM THE HOUSE, NIGHT
STILL IN HER ARMS.

PENNY: Stupid white bitch.

GEMMA: Anne's okay.

PENNY: It's alright for you. You're not stuck in this dump. You can get out.

GEMMA: I don't want to get out.

PENNY: You don't know how lucky you are. You're nineteen, you're smart, you're good looking -

GEMMA: Very good lookin'.

PENNY: You've got a job in the city waiting for you. And here you are, rotting out here with the rest of us.

GEMMA: This is where I belong. There's a lot of things I want to change 'round here. If I can change just a few of them - I be happy.

PENNY: You can't change people.

GEMMA: You can change their attitudes but. That's enough.

PENNY: Not for me.

PENNY HOLDS OUT NIGHT.

PENNY: It's your turn to look after night.

GEMMA: I can't.

PENNY: I've been taking care of her all day.

GEMMA: I've gotta go to Benlmond. Get some money for the centre.

PENNY: But I want to go and see a picture. It's your turn.

GEMMA: I've gotta go Penny.

PENNY: Then take her with you. She got a little basket.

GEMMA: It's too far. She too small.

PENNY: Fuck you Gemma.

GEMMA: I'm sorry.

BEAT.

PENNY: Go. Just go.

GEMMA: Thank you Penny. I'll make it up to you tomorrow. I promise.
Just have a bit of a wash.

GEMMA POURS WATER INTO AN IRON BUCKET. SHE WASHES
HER FACE AND ARMS WITH AN OLD RAG.

GEMMA: You want me to talk to Anne ?

PENNY: No. She's right I suppose. I'm not eligible.

GEMMA: What kind of job you after then ?

PENNY: I'm easy.

GEMMA: So I've heard.

PENNY: Shut up. I'll do any job - as long as I get paid enough to buy
some new clothes and rent a small flat.

GEMMA: Why don't you ask Alan Wallace then ? He owns two big hotels in
the city. He always be looking for people. He's even thinkin'
of expandin' at the moment.

PENNY: He won't give me a job.

GEMMA: Why not ? People know you 'round here. You got references.

PENNY: But working in a big hotel ?

GEMMA: You could do it. "Night Manager."

PENNY: Ha ha. Do you really think Wallace might give me a job ?

GEMMA: Worth a try.

PENNY: What have I got to lose ? Next time I see him I'll walk straight up and ask him for a job.

GEMMA: Why don't you go around to his place ?

PENNY: Give me a chance. Who do you think I am ? You ?

GEMMA FINISHES WASHING.

GEMMA: I got to be going then.

PENNY: This is a chance Gemma. It must be a chance.

GEMMA: It is Penny.

GEMMA EXITS. PENNY SMILES. NIGHT STARTS TO CRY. PENNY ROCKS HER GENTLY, TALKING TO HER SOFTLY. LIGHTS FADE.

Scene 6.

The Palliser. Soon afterwards.

ARTHUR BEHIND THE BAR, WALLACE SITTING IN FRONT OF IT.

WALLACE: Guess who popped around to see me this afternoon ?

ARTHUR: Who ?

WALLACE: Gemma Lacey.

ARTHUR: Yeah ?

WALLACE: She wanted a short-term loan to finance her community centre.

ARTHUR: Bet that Michaels bitch put her up to it.

WALLACE: No one put her up to it. She came to me because she heard I was the sort of bloke who might support her.

ARTHUR: You're not going soft on me are you Wal ?

WALLACE: I was, but then this arrived.

HE HANDS ARTHUR A LETTER. ARTHUR READS.

ARTHUR: Bloody hell.

WALLACE: Seems our little mate was underpaying all the staff as well. I'm up for another twenty seven thousand in back wages and if they don't get it by the end of the month they'll have my balls in court.

ARTHUR: Jesus wept.

WALLACE: You were wrong by the way.

ARTHUR: About what ?

WALLACE: There's not a half a million down there mate.

ARTHUR: No ?

WALLACE: There's at least two and a half. Macquarie never touched those rocks at all.

ARTHUR: Bloody beauty. Old prick probably thought it would be a sin to have a go at 'em. Hope you dropped that proposal off.

WALLACE: Hope it's enough.

ARTHUR: Piece of piss.

WALLACE: Put yourself in Quayle's position for a moment. Young aboriginal, community based project, support from government employee. Politically correct and all that shit.

ARTHUR: And no money.

WALLACE: They'll get some money sooner or later.

ARTHUR: They've only got till tomorrow arvo.

WALLACE: Gemma seems pretty confident Quayle's on their side.

ARTHUR: I've talked to Quayle too you know ? He's got real doubts about their whole proposal and when I'm finished with young Gemma there'll be no way he'll give them one square foot.

WALLACE: What are you planning ?

ARTHUR: I've discovered our young Gemma has a big weakness. She likes a drink.

WALLACE: How do you know that ?

ARTHUR: Should've seen her in here this morning. Sculled one schooner like that and another just a couple of minutes later. And all before lunch.

WALLACE: You got some hard evidence there Arthur.

ARTHUR: Remember when she made the All Australian athletic championships a couple of years back ? She got a bit nervous the night before right - and what did she do ? Went out and got herself on the tequila. Completely blotto. Next day they pretty well had to carry her onto the track. Didn't even get out of the starting blocks.

WALLACE: So what are you gonna do ? Tie her down and inject it ?

ARTHUR: Won't be that difficult mate. She passes by here pretty well every day. I'll just invite her in for a few drinks and a chat. Get her nicely plastered.

WALLACE: And then what ? Invite everyone around for a barbie and ask her to make a speech.

ARTHUR: There's only one person who's got to see her a little under the weather mate.

WALLACE: And you'll make sure that he sees her.

ARTHUR: Every little bit.

WALLACE: I don't like it Arthur.

ARTHUR: You don't have to like it Wall. It'll work.

WALLACE: Yeah, but maybe we should just let her have the land. I'll survive.

ARTHUR: Will you ? Do you know how much one of those court cases costs mate ? Bastards could even chuck you in jail.

WALLACE: It wasn't my fault.

ARTHUR: You hired the guy - he was working for you. Where does the buck stop ? Think about it Wall. Two and a half million.

WALLACE: Yeah, I know.

ARTHUR: You got a bit of a responsibility to me too mate.

WALLACE: What responsibility ?

ARTHUR: I've worked for you for seventeen years and you think you can just pull the rug out from under me now. I must've been reading you wrong all these years. (CHANGE) She's nineteen. She's got plenty of time to set up her community centre. We haven't got much time to stop you going bankrupt. Think of Sarah - and the kids.

BEAT.

WALLACE: If anything goes wrong ...

ARTHUR: Nothing is going to go wrong.

GEMMA ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. SHE STANDS IN THE LIGHT
OUTSIDE THE PUB.

ARTHUR: (SEEING GEMMA) Here we go.

WALLACE: What is it ?

ARTHUR: It's her. Quick, out the back. Go !

WALLACE: What ?

ARTHUR: Hurry. I'll call you later on, if you haven't already heard.

WALLACE: Am I sneaking around now ?

ARTHUR: Unless you want to go out front and say hello.

WALLACE LOOKS AT ARTHUR. HE EXITS, LEFT. ARTHUR
WALKS DOWN TO GEMMA. GEMMA STARTS TO EXIT.

ARTHUR: You're in a hurry.

GEMMA: Gotta get the train.

ARTHUR: Where you off to ?

GEMMA: Over to Benlomond.

ARTHUR: What you up to in Benlomond ?

GEMMA: Got to see this bloke.

ARTHUR: Yeah ? I know some people in Benlomond ? What's his name ?

GEMMA: Dick Walsh. (STARTING TO EXIT) See ya.

ARTHUR: Dick Walsh ? Heard he'd moved to Sydney.

GEMMA: Anne gave me his address. In Benlomond.

ARTHUR: She talk to him on the phone ?

GEMMA: I don't know.

ARTHUR: Well, I'd get her to ring him first. Long way to go for nothing.

WE HEAR SOUND OF A TRAIN APPROACHING OFF.

GEMMA: I'm here now. Might as well go and check it out for myself.

ARTHUR: Your time - I guess. What you going over to see Dick for anyway ?

GEMMA: Got to borrow some money. (LEAVING AGAIN) Bye.

ARTHUR: I thought Dick sold tractors. When did he open up a bank ?

GEMMA: He didn't. I'm asking him to support a project I'm involved with.

WE HEAR THE TRAIN STOPPING AT THE STATION.

ARTHUR: Yeah, well Dick's your man then. Good old soul Dick. That is if he's still there of course.

GEMMA: Are you sure he's gone to Sydney ?

ARTHUR: Just a rumour - but then again it might not be. If you're looking for some funding I'd look closer to home if I was you. There are some people around here who are very interested in supporting worthwhile projects.

GEMMA: Already tried Alan Wallace.

ARTHUR: I'm not talking about Alan Wallace. I'm talking about Arthur Moggatt. I got a bit of money put aside. We should have a talk sometime. When you get back from Benlmond.

WE HEAR A WHISTLE OFF. SOUND OF TRAIN DEPARTING. BEAT.

ARTHUR: I think you missed your train.

BEAT.

GEMMA: How about that talk then ?

ARTHUR: What about Dick Walsh ?

GEMMA: Heard he's moved to Sydney.

THEY GO INTO THE PUB.

ARTHUR: What can I get you ?

GEMMA: Just a lemonade thanks.

ARTHUR: Don't you like my beer ?

GEMMA: Just a bit thirsty.

ARTHUR: Nothing kills a thirst like an ice-cold schooner. One's not gonna kill you. Come on - ain't gonna get much more done today.

GEMMA: Okay.

ARTHUR GOES BEHIND THE BAR. WITHOUT GEMMA SEEING, HE POURS A LARGE NIP OF TEQUILA INTO A SCHOONER GLASS. HE TOPS IT UP WITH BEER AND GIVES IT TO GEMMA. SHE DRINKS.

GEMMA: This tastes a bit strange Arthur.

ARTHUR: Put a bit of lime in it. Speciality of the house. Now tell me - what's this project of yours all about ?

GEMMA: It's a secret.

ARTHUR: How am I meant to decide whether I should support it then ?

GEMMA: Well, it's got something to do with Grandfather Macquarie's farm.

ARTHUR: Yeah ?

GEMMA: Want to set up a refuge.

ARTHUR: For all the young Kwiambals in the area eh ? Sounds like a good idea to me.

GEMMA: Kwiambals ?

ARTHUR: I'm not as stupid as I look. I know about the true owners of the land.

GEMMA: So you'll support us then.

ARTHUR: Let's just say I'm definitely interested. But don't rush me. We should talk this over a bit more.

LLOYD ENTERS.

LLOYD: Hello Gemma. What are you doing in here then ?

GEMMA: Talking to Arthur. He's thinkin' of supporting the refuge.

LLOYD: Good on him. Alright if I join you ?

GEMMA: Okay with me. Arthur ?

ARTHUR: Sure Lloyd. Pull up a seat. Let's let bygones be bygones.

LLOYD: (SITTING) Middie of new thanks. With a bit of lime, thank you Arthur.

ARTHUR: (HANDING OVER BEER) Two twenty five thanks Lloyd.

LLOYD: (PAYING HIM) Was two-twenty this morning.

ARTHUR: Five cents extra for the lime.

LLOYD: Well, wouldn't this be good then ? Both of us sitting at the bar like we be Oldman Quayle.

GEMMA: And Alan Wallace. You're not the bastard I thought you were after all Arthur.

LLOYD AND GEMMA LAUGH. ARTHUR RELUCTANTLY JOINS IN.

LLOYD: Nice of you to help Gemma out Arthur.

ARTHUR: Just doin' my civic duty. And of course I still haven't heard her full proposal yet.

LLOYD: Would'a thought you'd be backing Alan's proposal.

ARTHUR: Where'd you hear about that ?

LLOYD: Blowin' in the breeze.

LLOYD LAUGHS. GEMMA LAUGHS AS WELL.

ARTHUR: Well it's true Alan and I have done some work together in the past. But that doesn't mean I can't also lend a hand to one of our community's finest youngsters. (CHANGE) Speaking of Alan, thought you'd be out giving him a hand with the fencing.

LLOYD: I was. Run out of coil. Come into town to get some more.

ARTHUR: Didn't go past the house on the way in ?

LLOYD: Didn't bother. Drove straight here.

ARTHUR: Well you should'a checked in. They've been looking for you. Sarah's rung here twice. Some of the stock got loose.

LLOYD: The old bull ?

ARTHUR: That's the one.

LLOYD: He ain't got into the wheat has he ?

ARTHUR: 'Fraid so.

LLOYD: (CHANGE) You sure about this Arthur ?

ARTHUR: There's the phone. Ring 'em yourself. Just passin' on a message.

LLOYD GOES TO THE PHONE.

ARTHUR: Course they're probably not there. Both out trying to rope him down I expect. Before he does too much damage. Pity you didn't get that fence fixed quick enough.

BEAT.

LLOYD: See ya later Gemma.

LLOYD EXITS.

GEMMA: (STANDING) I'll come and help too Lloyd.

ARTHUR: What about our talk ?

GEMMA: Lloyd needs help.

ARTHUR: Haven't those proposals got to be in tomorrow ?

GEMMA STOPS.

ARTHUR: Don't give you much time to find a sponsor. Lloyd'll be alright. You'd only get in the way. You ever see a picture of old Macquarie ?

GEMMA: No.

ARTHUR: There's one on the wall over here. Taken when he first arrived at Tainoga. Left it to The Palliser in his will.

GEMMA: Yeah ?

ARTHUR: Humble sort of bloke.

ARTHUR LEADS GEMMA OVER TO THE PHOTO.

ARTHUR: I'll pour you another beer. Then we'll get down to figures.

GEMMA: Okay Arthur.

ARTHUR GOES BACK TO THE BAR. HE POURS ANOTHER LARGE NIP OF TEQUILA INTO A GLASS AND TOPS IT UP AGAIN.

GEMMA: (LOOKING AT PHOTO) Why he wear such funny clothes ?

ARTHUR: He was a missionary. Descended from Governor Macquarie himself.

GEMMA: This man. He look evil.

ARTHUR: You can tell, can you ?

GEMMA: I can feel it.

ARTHUR SMILES. HE PLACES THE SPIKED BEER ON THE COUNTER. GEMMA LOOKS AT THE PHOTO. LIGHTS FADE.

Scene 7.

The Wallace's property. Soon afterwards.

SARAH ALONE. LLOYD ENTERS.

SARAH: Oh Lloyd, good. I want to talk to you.

LLOYD: I sorry Sarah. I thought it would hold him till I get the extra coil.

SARAH: Hold him ?

LLOYD: The old bull. Did he do much damage ?

SARAH: When ?

LLOYD: When he got out. Did you and Alan get 'im back in ?

SARAH: I didn't even know he got out.

LLOYD: But you rang Arthur. Lookin' for me.

SARAH: No I didn't.

LLOYD: About half an hour ago.

SARAH: It wasn't me.

LLOYD: Where Alan be ?

SARAH: He's gone over to the old Macquarie property again.

LLOYD: Why he go there ?

SARAH: That's what I wanted to talk to you about. He has this crazy idea of wanting to turn it into a hotel.

LLOYD: I heard Sarah.

SARAH: Then you know how crazy it is.

LLOYD: Did he take someone over to 'ave a look ?

SARAH: Not that I know of. He went by himself.

LLOYD: I would'a thought Alan know it pretty well by now.

SARAH: So would I.

LLOYD: (CHANGE) Can I borrow the ute ? Gotta find Anne.

SARAH: Of course you can. What's wrong ?

LLOYD: I see the sky way above us Sarah. Dark clouds closin' in. Big storm comin'.

LLOYD EXITS.

SARAH: But Lloyd wait - I want to talk to you about Alan. (ALONE)
What is going on ?

BLACKOUT.

Scene 8.

Outside Quayle's House. Later.

ARTHUR ENTERS, HOLDING UP GEMMA.

GEMMA: Left, right, left, right.

ARTHUR: Good girl. Not far to go now.

GEMMA: Sorry about this Arthur.

ARTHUR: That's okay Gemma. We all get a little under the weather
sometimes. (HE STOPS) Here we are.

GEMMA: That's not Anne's place.

ARTHUR: Of course it is. Your eyes under the weather too are they ?

GEMMA: Then where's Anne ?

ARTHUR: In there. I'll just knock on the door.

ARTHUR GOES TO THE FRONT DOOR. HE KNOCKS LOUDLY
THEN HIDES FAR RIGHT. QUAYLE EMERGES, WEARING A
DRESSING GOWN. GEMMA FALLS.

QUAYLE: Who's out there ?

GEMMA: Oh. (GETTING TO HER KNEES) And they're on their marks. (TAKES UP STARTING POSITION) Young Gemma Lacey, the rank outsider from Bingarra High is in lane five. Set, and they're off. (SHE STARTS RUNNING) Gemma Lacey comin' last by miles. But suddenly she accelerates. She's third, she's second, she's first. She's gonna win. (SHE BREAKS AN IMAGINARY FINISHING LINE.) She's won. Gemma Lacey is God. The crowd goes berserk. Some boo. Some cheer. Some say "Fuck off Darky !"

QUAYLE: (APPROACHING GEMMA) Gemma ? What are you doing here ?

GEMMA: Oh, it's Oldman Quayle - the big fat snail, with his little piggy tail. (SHE POKES HIM IN THE BUM) What are you doing at Anne's place, eh ?

QUAYLE: Get out of my roses. (HE COMES CLOSER) Gemma - you're drunk.

GEMMA: And you're fat. (GRABBING QUAYLE'S STOMACH.) Look at your belly, your very smelly belly. Feels like jelly. Wobble, wobble, wobble.

QUAYLE: Stop that. Go home Gemma.

GEMMA: But I came to see Anne. She's gotta drive me home.

QUAYLE: Anne's not here.

GEMMA: What have you done with her ? You've eaten her ! Quaylie - Snailie's eaten her. She's in there. (SHOUTING INTO QUAYLE'S STOMACH.) Don't worry Anne. I'm coming to save you.

GEMMA BACKS UP THEN CHARGES AT QUAYLE AND HEADBUTTS HIM IN THE STOMACH. QUAYLE FALLS BACKWARDS.

GEMMA: (HOLDING HER HEAD) Sorry Oldman Quayle.

LLOYD ENTERS.

LLOYD: Here she is.

GEMMA: Hello Lloyd. I feel sick.

LLOYD: Hello Gemma. What are you doing here ?

GEMMA: Came to see Anne.

LLOYD: Why would she be at Oldman Quayle's ?

QUAYLE GROANS.

LLOYD: Who's that ?

GEMMA: That be Oldman Quayle. I was trying to save Anne.

LLOYD HELPS QUAYLE UP. ANNE ENTERS.

ANNE: (TO GEMMA) There you are. We would have found you earlier but Lloyd didn't know I was still at the Watch House. (SEEING QUAYLE) Gemma - what have you done ?

GEMMA: I was looking for you.

QUAYLE: And headbutting me in the process.

ANNE: (GOING TO QUAYLE) Are you alright ?

QUAYLE: I'm alright. I don't think the roses will recover though. Ooh ! I think I've got a thorn. Would you Lloyd ?

LLOYD EXTRACTS THE THORN. GEMMA THROWS UP.

QUAYLE: There go the carnations too.

ANNE: (HELPING GEMMA) Oh Gemma.

GEMMA: Where's Arthur ?

ANNE: I'd like to know.

GEMMA: He bought me here.

ANNE: Why ?

GEMMA: To see you.

LLOYD: (HOLDING UP THORN) Got it.

QUAYLE: Aah. Thank you Lloyd.

ANNE: Alderman Quayle. I can explain.

QUAYLE: No Anne - you can't.

LLOYD: It be Arthur.

QUAYLE: What does Arthur have to do with it ?

ANNE: He got Gemma drunk then brought her over here to make a fool of herself.

QUAYLE: Well she certainly succeeded in doing that.

ANNE: You won't take this into consideration when you view our proposal ?

QUAYLE: No I won't.

ANNE: Thank you.

QUAYLE: Because I won't be viewing your proposal.

ANNE: But it wasn't Gemma's fault.

QUAYLE: It doesn't matter who did what to who, someone with as little self-control as Gemma cannot possibly be given such a great responsibility.

ANNE: But Alderman -

QUAYLE: I'm sorry Anne. I have made my decision. It's not what you want, it's maybe not even what I want, but on Saturday morning the council will give the property to Alan Wallace. Goodnight.

QUAYLE GOES INTO THE HOUSE. ARTHUR EXITS, ELATED.

GEMMA: I sorry Anne.

ANNE: Don't say sorry to me. It was your dream Gemma - not mine. Damn you Moggatt.

LLOYD: Patience Anne. There be a time when when Arthur curse himself for what he done.

ANNE: I wish I had your optimism. (TO GEMMA) I wouldn't like to be you tomorrow morning.

GEMMA: I sorry Anne. I sorry.

ANNE AND LLOYD SUPPORT GEMMA AS THEY EXIT.

BLACKOUT. END ACT 1.

Act 2

Scene 1 Saturday Morning.

The entrance to the Opal Mine, Grandfather Macquarie's farm.

ARTHUR IS PLACING TWO PIECES OF WOOD ON THE STAGE OVER THE ENTRANCE TO THE MINESHAFT.

WALLACE: (ENTERING) Where'd you find them ?

ARTHUR: Shed around the back

WALLACE: Will they hold ?

ARTHUR: Tested them out.

ARTHUR JUMPS ON THE WOOD.

ARTHUR: Hey Wall. Look at me. I'm jumping for joy.

WALLACE: Don't gloat Arthur.

ARTHUR: Why shouldn't I ? I was brilliant. Nine she had - all with something special added. Like talking to a petrol pump.

WALLACE: Suppose you been bragging about it to everybody.

ARTHUR: Only you Wall. I'm not that stupid.

WALLACE: Aren't you ?

SARAH ENTERS.

WALLACE: (SEEING SARAH) Where've you been ?

SARAH: I went for a walk. I remember this place from when I was a girl.

WALLACE: You still are a girl. You alright ?

SARAH: Fine.

ARTHUR: Giddy Mrs. Wall.

SARAH: Hello Arthur.

GEMMA AND ANNE ENTER, LLOYD BEHIND THEM. THEY SEE SARAH, ARTHUR AND WALLACE AND STOP. THEY CONTINUE TO ANOTHER PART OF THE STAGE.

LLOYD: Hello Alan. Hello Sarah.

ARTHUR: Giddy Lloyd.

LLOYD: Hello Arthur.

LLOYD FOLLOWS GEMMA AND ANNE.

SARAH: Lloyd wait. (TO WALLACE) I want to talk to Gemma.

WALLACE: Do you think that's wise ?

SARAH: I don't care whether it's wise.

SARAH FOLLOWS LLOYD.

WALLACE: Shut up Arthur.

ARTHUR: I didn't say anything.

LLOYD: Sarah Wallace, this be Anne Michaels.

SARAH: I've heard a lot about you.

ANNE: All good I hope.

SARAH: And how are you today Gemma ?

GEMMA LOOKS DOWN.

SARAH: Head up. A few disappointments are good for you. Make you stronger.

ANNE: Help her grow up.

LLOYD: She get upset about things that not important.

GEMMA: To you Lloyd.

LLOYD: Short time Gemma. Very short time.

QUAYLE AND PENNY ENTER. QUAYLE IS CARRYING A BOX AND SCROLL.

QUAYLE: (TO PENNY) I'm sure it wouldn't hurt to ask. Now that he's building a new hotel in town, he'll certainly be looking for good people.

PENNY: But I want to work in the city.

QUAYLE: The big smoke eh ? Well again, all you can do is ask. (POINTING TO WALLACE) That's him over there. (SEEING WOOD) Oh look. Someone's set up a stage. That's helpful.

QUAYLE PLACES THE BOX RIGHT ON THE MIDDLE OF THE TWO
PIECES OF WOOD. HE GOES THROUGH HIS SPEECH.

PENNY: (TO ARTHUR) Could I talk to Mr. Wallace ?

ARTHUR: I wouldn't bother him now if I was you.

PENNY: Oh. Sorry. (SHE MOVES AWAY.)

ARTHUR: Hold on, you're the eldest Lacey girl ?

PENNY: My name's Penny Warren. But I am Gemma's sister.

ARTHUR: Knew your mother. Good lady. Arthur Moggatt's my name.

PENNY: I know who you are Mr. Moggatt.

ARTHUR: Smart girl. I run The Palliser. Pop around tomorrow morning. I'll
tee up something up with Alan.

WALLACE: Arthur.

ARTHUR: (TO PENNY) Excuse me. (GOING TO WALLACE.) That's Lacey's
big sister.

WALLACE: What are you talking to her about ?

ARTHUR: Insurance.

WALLACE: Look where Quayle's put his bloody box ?

ARTHUR: I told you. It'll hold.

QUAYLE STANDS ON THE BOX. SPATTERED APPLAUSE.

GEMMA: Do we have to stay ?

ANNE: Yes. We do.

QUAYLE: Thank you. Welcome honoured guests and ladies and gentlemen to
Grandfather Macquarie's farm. As you all know Father Macquarie
left this property to the Tainoga Greater Council on his passing. The
Council, keen to see the land used to its full potential held
a competition to see who in our community could make best use of
the land. After some very careful consideration of a number of fine
proposals, the Council has decided to entrust Grandfather
Macquarie's farm to a prominent member of our local business
sector - Alan Wallace. (MORE APPLAUSE.) Alan plans to develop
a new Five star hotel to give a much needed boost in the tourism
industry in our district. (MORE APPLAUSE.) I should now like to

QUAYLE: (CONT) call upon Alan to accept the deed to the land and say a few words on the eve of a new project for him and a new beginning for Tainoga.

MORE APPLAUSE. WALLACE STEPS FORWARD. QUAYLE STEPS DOWN FROM THE BOX. AS HE DOES THERE IS A LOUD CRACK AND THE WOOD UNDER QUAYLE'S FEET BREAKS.

QUAYLE FALLS INTO THE MINESHAFT.

ANNE: Alderman Quayle !

LLOYD AND GEMMA ARE FIRST TO THE ENTRANCE.

LLOYD: (CALLING DOWN) Oldman Quayle. Are you alright ?

SILENCE.

GEMMA: Oldman Quayle.

SILENCE. EVENTUALLY:

QUAYLE: (FROM BELOW, WEAK) I'm okay. I think.

WALLACE: (TO ARTHUR) I thought you said you tested them.

ARTHUR: (TO WALLACE) I forgot how bloody fat he was.

ANNE: Are you injured ?

QUAYLE: (BELOW) I don't think so.

LLOYD: I'm coming down Oldman.

LLOYD CLIMBS INTO THE HOLE.

QUAYLE: (BELOW) Ow ! Careful Lloyd. That's my hand.

LLOYD: (BELOW) Sorry Oldman.

BEAT. SLOWLY QUAYLE EMERGES FROM THE HOLE. LLOYD SUPPORTING HIM FROM BENEATH. GEMMA PULLS QUAYLE OUT.

QUAYLE: Thank you Gemma.

GEMMA: Are you injured ?

QUAYLE: I don't think so. With falling into holes and getting headbutted in the stomach - I'm not having a good week.

GEMMA: Know how you feel.

LLOYD HAS A ROCK IN HIS HAND.

LLOYD: (HOLDING OUT ROCK) Look what he fell on.

ANNE: (SEEING ROCK) What is it ?

QUAYLE: Opals.

LLOYD: There be millions of them down there.

QUAYLE: Alan - do you know anything about this ?

ARTHUR: Comes as a surprise to me Alderman.

QUAYLE: I asked Alan.

BEAT.

WALLACE: No.

QUAYLE: With this new development the Council must unfortunately withdraw our decision to award the property to Alan Wallace.

ARTHUR: You can't do that.

QUAYLE: I just did. Council will discuss what will happen to the property at our next meeting. Lloyd - would you make sure this mine is secured before you leave ?

LLOYD: I will Oldman.

QUAYLE: Good afternoon.

QUAYLE EXITS.

ANNE: Thank god for Mrs. Quayle's cheesecake.

GEMMA: Somebody up there must like me. Where's that typewriter Anne ?

ANNE: Calm down Gemma.

GEMMA: No Anne. I be serious. I swear that until we get this land I'm not gonna touch a drop. We gotta a second chance and I not gonna blow it.

LLOYD: That's a pretty heavy promise.

ANNE: And who knows if you're even going to get a second chance ? We have to wait till after the meeting to see if they'll even call for new proposals. And if they'll allow you to apply.

LLOYD: Gemma - give me a hand.

LLOYD PICKS UP A PIECE OF METAL FROM THE BACK WALL. WITH GEMMA'S HELP HE LOWERS IT OVER THE ENTRANCE TO THE SHAFT.

LLOYD TAKES A PADLOCK FROM HIS POCKET AND LOCKS THE METAL IN PLACE.

ARTHUR: (TO WALLACE) I probably should've used that too.

WALLACE: Moggatt. I will kill you.

ARTHUR MAKES A QUICK EXIT

LLOYD: That should hold it.

ANNE: You want a lift Lloyd.

LLOYD: Thank you Anne. I think I stop off at The Palliser and get a beer. Like to see Arthur's face.

GEMMA, ANNE AND LLOYD EXIT. PENNY LOOKS TO WALLACE, THEN:

PENNY: Gemma - wait.

SHE RUNS AFTER THEM. BEAT. ALAN ALONE. SARAH EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS.

SARAH: It's a strange feeling but I'm suddenly realising that I don't know the man I've been married to for fifteen years.

WALLACE: Sarah.

SARAH: Don't. I need some time alone. Please don't try and contact me.

WALLACE: Not now Sarah. Not now.

SARAH: I'm sorry Alan.

SARAH EXITS. ALAN THROWS BACK HIS HEAD. BLACKOUT.

Scene 2. Sunday.

The Palliser, the following afternoon.

WALLACE AND ARTHUR.

ARTHUR: Alright, so they scored a converted try just before the whistle. So we're a couple of points down but it's only half time. We come out fighting in the second half and we'll soon be back in front. I'll tell you what we're gonna do -

WALLACE: No. I'll tell you what we're gonna do. We're gonna withdraw our proposal and get out while we still can.

ARTHUR: Didn't figure you as a quitter Wall.

WALLACE: I'm a businessman and when a project is falling apart, you cut your losses and you get out.

ARTHUR: I'll admit it doesn't look good.

WALLACE: My name is shit, I'm further in debt everyday, my wife has taken a leave of absence and you say it doesn't look good. (CHANGE) I'm selling The Palliser Arthur. It's over.

BEAT.

ARTHUR: It's only just beginning. Nine three five two - two seven four three.

WALLACE: What's that ?

ARTHUR: The phone number of Gary McQuinn's barrister. Remember him ? He's one of the managers you owe seven grand in back wages. His barrister thought I might know something about your business dealings. Whether you'd be the sort of bloke who'd rip off his employees. I told him I thought you weren't but I'd make a few enquiries. Looks like I'm just about to make a very revealing discovery or two.

WALLACE: What are saying ?

ARTHUR: You sell The Palliser and you're looking at the prosecution's star witness.

WALLACE: They'd never listen to you.

ARTHUR: Maybe. Maybe not. But after two years' of court cases what's gonna be left of your name, your business or your family - my little mate.

BEAT.

WALLACE: You wouldn't do it.

ARTHUR: Why wouldn't I ? You would. You'd sell The Palliser and get rid of me. Just like that. You don't seem to care that I'm sixty three. That I've got bills comin' in and no chance of getting another job. In all the years I worked for you I never realised the sort of bastard you

ARTHUR: (CONT) were. I thought you were my friend, but the second anything goes wrong you turn against me. Is that what you call cutting your losses, eh Alan ? Dumping the dead wood. Is that all I am ? Hear me mate. It's every man for himself from here on in - and thanks to Gary McQuinn, I'm in the driving seat. From now on - I'm tellin' you what to do.

WALLACE: And what am I going to do ?

ARTHUR: You're going to type up an even glossier proposal. You're going to say that the opal mine is gonna be turned into the biggest tourist attraction this side of the Dog on the Tuckerbox. You're going to promise an even bigger hotel. You're going to draw diagrams. You're going to show projected returns. You're going to make him beg us for it - and you're going to have it on his desk at nine A.M. tomorrow. (BEAT) How do you like it now Wall ? When the boot's on the other foot. We're sticking together - whether you like it or not.

BEAT.

WALLACE: What about Lacey ?

ARTHUR: Leave her to me.

WALLACE: You can't get her drunk again.

ARTHUR: I can do whatever I want.

WE HEAR A KNOCK OFF.

WALLACE: Who's that ?

ARTHUR: Calm down. It's just the insurance lady.

ARTHUR EXITS. HE RETURNS WITH PENNY, WHO IS CARRYING A RESUME.

ARTHUR: Nice to see you again. What do you know ?

PENNY: Not much Mr. Moggatt.

ARTHUR: Please. Call me Arthur. And this is Mr. Wallace. Alan.

PENNY: Pleased to meet you ... Alan.

SHE SHAKES ALAN'S HAND.

ARTHUR: Now, what can we do for you ?

PENNY: Well, I actually only came to see you Arthur ... to make an appointment to see Mr. Wallace.

ARTHUR: Alan. Well you've hit the Quinella. Here's Alan now so you don't have to make an appointment. I'm sure he's got plenty of time to talk to you - don't you Alan? Come on, don't be shy. Big voice.

PENNY: This is probably a bad time ...

ARTHUR: Not at all. Go on.

PENNY: I was wondering whether you'd consider considering me for a job at one of your hotels in the city.

WALLACE: You lookin' for a job?

BEAT. WALLACE STARTS TO LAUGH.

WALLACE: Jesus.

ARTHUR: Wall.

PENNY: I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't've come ... I'll just leave my -

ARTHUR: Hold your horses Penny. Alan's just pullin' your leg. Isn't that right Alan?

WALLACE: Whatever you say Arthur.

ARTHUR: Got a funny sense of what's funny. (TAKING RESUME) This your resume? And a couple of references as well. Very impressive. I think Alan just might be able to use someone like you in one of his establishments.

PENNY: I'll work hard and I don't want all that money.

ALAN: That's lucky.

PENNY: You wouldn't have to pay me the Award wage or nothing.

ARTHUR: Alan would never think of paying less than the award wage, would you Alan? He knows you can get in serious trouble for doin' stuff like that.

ALAN: Thanks for reminding me.

ARTHUR: I think you've got yourself a job young lady. But you'll have to do something for Alan in return.

PENNY: Tell me. I'll do it straight away.

ARTHUR: That's what I like to see. Enthusiasm. We'll be in touch in a day or two. Then - you're off to the big smoke.

PENNY: Thank you Arthur. Thank you Alan.

ARTHUR: No, thank you Jennifer.

PENNY: How did you know my middle name ?

ARTHUR: I know a lot of things.

PENNY: I won't let you down Alan.

ARTHUR: We know you won't. Be on your way now. We'll talk again soon.

PENNY: Sorry. Bye Arthur. Bye Alan.

PENNY EXITS.

WALLACE: What the fuck was all that about ?

ARTHUR: Geez your quick Wall. That's Lacey's big sister.

WALLACE: She's not going to turn in her own family.

ARTHUR: People'll do anything if they get desperate enough.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 3.

The Watch House.

ANNE IS READING AT HER DESK. GEMMA ENTERS, WEARING NEW CLOTHES. SHE CARRIES HER OLD ONES.

GEMMA: What do you think ?

ANNE: God look at you. I didn't think they'd fit.

GEMMA: You got nice clothes Anne.

ANNE: You can have them. I can't wear things like this anymore.

GEMMA: Thank you Anne.

ANNE: Don't thank me. I'd do anything to get you out of those tatty old jeans.

GEMMA: What do you use those cells for ?

ANNE: Absolutely nothing. Why ? Do you want to test them out ? This used to be a holding place for prisoners being moved from Brisbane

ANNE: (CONT) to Sydney. Or vice versa. They're meant to be building some new offices for me. But until then I'm stuck in the Watch House.

GEMMA: Must be spooky sometimes. All those old spirits.

ANNE: It is a bit. Just like your handwriting.

GEMMA: Not too good eh ?

ANNE: This page is completely undecipherable and some of the sentences on the others are atrocious. But all in all it's alright - except for the part about the mine.

GEMMA: I thought the people who come to the centre can help mine and sell the opals. The money we make can be used to keep us going.

ANNE: Do you know anything about mining ?

GEMMA: I can learn.

ANNE: Roof supports, generators, cave-ins. I'd be a lot happier if we could find someone to back us. Then we can give the mine to the council and forget about it. Which is what I imagine Quayle is expecting us to do.

GEMMA: But who we gonna get ?

ANNE: There must be someone.

GEMMA: Yeah. You got anymore paper ?

ANNE: Bottom drawer.

GEMMA: (OPENING DRAWER) What's this ?

SHE PULLS OUT A FOLDED ABORIGINAL FLAG.

ANNE: A souvenir. From my marching days.

GEMMA: Wild youth eh ?

ANNE: I did my bit. Well, I tried.

GEMMA: What's that smell ?

ANNE: Damn. Silver worms. Hang it up in one of the cells for me. I'll give it a spray later.

GEMMA: Better not let Arthur see it. He'll get us arrested for being a terrorist.

GEMMA EXITS. SARAH ENTERS.

SARAH: Good afternoon Anne.

ANNE: Sarah.

SARAH: I've come to talk to you.

ANNE: Okay. Please, sit down.

SARAH: (SHE SITS) It's about the Macquarie property. Are you still looking for a sponsor ?

ANNE: Desperately. Why ? Do you have someone in mind ?

SARAH: Yes. (CHANGE) I've thought about it a lot - and I'd like to sponsor you.

ANNE: We can't take Alan's money.

SARAH: You won't be. It's my money. My father left it to me.

ANNE: Are you sure ?

SARAH: Yes.

ANNE: What about Alan ?

SARAH: My husband has a little problem seeing things in perspective. He'll survive.

ANNE: Thank you Sarah. (CALLING) Gemma.

GEMMA: (OFF) What ?

ANNE: There's someone here I want you to meet. Our benefactor.

GEMMA: (OFF) Our what ? (ENTERS) Sarah ?

ANNE: Sarah's decided to put up the money for the centre.

GEMMA: Oh. Thank you Sarah. Thank you so much.

GEMMA HUGS SARAH.

SARAH: Gemma, you're squashing me.

GEMMA: Sorry. Just got a bit excited.

SARAH: Now I hope you won't let me down by putting in a shoddy proposal.

GEMMA: I'm gonna start typing it up right now.

SARAH: When do they have to be in ?

ANNE: Tomorrow morning.

SARAH: You better get working then.

ANNE: Alderman Quayle's called a Public meeting at lunch time so everyone can have their two cents worth.

SARAH: Assess popular decision ?

ANNE: Try to avoid making a decision by getting everybody else to make it for him. It is an election year.

SARAH: As he keeps reminding us.

GEMMA: Will you be there Sarah ?

SARAH: I wouldn't miss it. Ring me when you've got some figures for me. I'll draw up a cheque. I'm staying at the old servant's house on our property. (WRITING NUMBER) I've left the number.

ANNE: Is everything okay ?

SARAH: Not really but I'll pull through. Thanks for your care.

GEMMA: You're the most wonderful person in the world Sarah.

SARAH: Stop. No more hugs. I'm still recovering from the last one. This is not a totally selfless act Gemma. I'm doing this for myself as much as I'm doing it for you. I need to know that I can do something on my own. (EXITS.)

ANNE: She's got guts, that one. Type.

GEMMA: Yes boss.

ANNE: On seconds thoughts - write. I'll type. And so I can read it.

GEMMA: Yes boss.

ANNE: I'll start by typing us up a new title page.

GEMMA: Okay Anne.

GEMMA SMILES. THEY SIT ON EITHER SIDE OF THE DESK. ANNE TYPING AND GEMMA WRITING.

GEMMA: I am writing to re-apply for the use of Grandfather Macquarie's farm.

ANNE: Property. Good.

LIGHTS FADE.

GEMMA: It is my intention to set up a refuge for the local Indigenous Australian youths -

SPOTLIGHT ON GEMMA AS SHE STANDS AND CONTINUES:

GEMMA: youth - in the region. It has long been my feeling that the Tainoga district has lacked a base or ... focus for young people of my age and background.

Scene 4. Monday.

The Town Hall. Noon, the next day.

GEMMA APPEARS STANDING IN A SPOTLIGHT.

GEMMA: (PROPOSAL IN HAND, THE VOICE OVER FADES.) There has been no central meeting place where we can feel safe from the tensions and press - (SHE YAWNS) press-ures -

LIGHTS UP. QUAYLE BEHIND DESK. AROUND THE ROOM - WALLACE, ARTHUR, ANNE, SARAH AND LLOYD.

QUAYLE: We keeping you up Gemma.

GEMMA: Sorry Oldman Quayle. Me and Anne be up all night doing this.

QUAYLE: More reason for you not to waste all your hard work.

GEMMA: (READING) ... tensions and pressures of an outside world that is often harsh and un-understanding.

ARTHUR: I think she means mis.

GEMMA: I believe that a refuge - (STOPPING) Bloody hell. You don't want to hear all these fancy words.

ANNE: Gemma.

GEMMA: Sorry Anne. But I just gotta say it straight out. Now what I'm asking is for you to give us the land. I know I've made mistakes - gettin' drunk, bein' crazy -

ARTHUR: I'll say.

QUAYLE: Arthur - please.

GEMMA: And I'm sorry but I can't change me past. But I can do this. Anne's gonna help me. -

LLOYD: And me.

GEMMA: And I'm gonna work hard. Harder than I ever have before. You gotta give me a chance.

QUAYLE: You have been given chances before Gemma.

GEMMA: And now I'm asking for another one. Oldman - look at me. This is all I'm living for. All I want is to set up this centre. Please - give me - give all of us - some hope.

ANNE, LLOYD AND SARAH CLAP. GEMMA SITS.

QUAYLE: Thank you Gemma for a passionate if a little unorthodox proposal. You've now heard both sides of the case for the Macquarie property and before the fellow councillors and I retire to make our decision, is there anyone who would like to speak in favour of either of the parties. Please feel free. So(BEAT) Anyone ?

LLOYD STANDS.

QUAYLE: Thank you, Lloyd. t

LLOYD: This not me. I don't get up and say me bit - but this time I think I gotta. Kwiambal's got a story about the mountains. A long time ago, before the Sorry Times, the earth was walked on by giants. Now one day these giants got tired and they all lie down and go to sleep. They sleep so long that they get covered up by trees and rocks and snow. And that's how the mountains came to be. But the giants still down there, sleeping under the earth. And one day these giants gonna wake up and bust out - and then we all be in deep shit. Now Gemma, she just like those giants. She been sleeping, and what we be seeing not her - but the dirt and tangled bushes covering her up. Well now she start to wake up and come out of that mountain - and we all stop and think - "Hey, we never seen her proper before." We all be surprised how big and strong she can be. Gemma be good. She gonna help a lotta people with this place. We don't need no twenty storey hotel. We don't need no Opal Museum. Yu give her the land Oldman. Keep those sleepin' giants - sleepin'.

ANNE AND SARAH CLAP LOUDLY. GEMMA CHEERS. QUAYLE IS JUBILANT. ALAN ALSO APPLAUDS.

QUAYLE: Congratulations Lloyd for those well chosen and obviously very popular remarks. If there's no more speakers I should like to call this meeting -

ARTHUR: Alderman.

QUAYLE: Yes ... Arthur.

ARTHUR: I believe Alan should have the right of reply.

BEAT.

QUAYLE: Of course. Alan.

ARTHUR: (TO WALLACE) There's a good boy.

BEAT. WALLACE STANDS.

WALLACE: Alderman - I'll keep this short. I only have one thing to say. Good speech Lloyd.

WALLACE SITS.

ARTHUR: (ASIDE TO WALLACE) You fool.

QUAYLE: Thank you Alan. (HE LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.) Well on further consideration I don't believe any further delay is required. I'm sure the other Councillors would agree with me when I say that I would now like to declare -

ARTHUR: Alderman.

QUAYLE: Yes Arthur.

ARTHUR: I haven't spoken yet.

QUAYLE: Quite. Is that really necessary ?

ARTHUR: I have a right to speak.

BEAT. QUAYLE GESTURES FOR ARTHUR TO CONTINUE.

ARTHUR: (STANDING) We've been listening to some very nice, romantic speeches from the other side. But as we all know - all this fancy giants stuff just doesn't hold water. The blood, bone and brass tacks of the matter are that Miss Lacey's proposal still has one fundamental flaw that makes it impossible for the Council to grant them the property. Money. They still don't have a financial backer. All the stories about mountains and phoney promises about givin' up the beer are just that - stories. They're not going to pay the

ARTHUR: (CONT) electricity bill on their fantasy ranch. In a perfect world it'd be nice to give them a go but Councillors, Alderman - we don't live in a perfect world. You all know it and so do I. So do they. For the good of Tainoga and the reputation of the Council, Grandfather Macquarie's property must be granted to Alan Wallace. There can be no other way.

ARTHUR SITS. SILENCE. QUAYLE IS LOST.

ANNE: (STANDING) Alderman Quayle.

QUAYLE: Yes.

ANNE: May I say something ?

QUAYLE: Why not ?

ANNE: If Gemma had read the whole of our proposal, Arthur would've realised that there are a couple of major differences from our earlier version and stopped making a complete idiot of himself.

ARTHUR: Free shot.

ANNE: I am proud to announce that we now have a sponsor who is backing us for the entire project.

ARTHUR: Who is it ? (LAUGHING) Dick Walsh.

ANNE: No - it's Sarah Wallace.

QUAYLE IS SAVED.

QUAYLE: Is this true Sarah ? Sarah.

SARAH: Yes.

ARTHUR: (TO WALLACE) Don't look at me. She's your wife.

QUAYLE: Well then now I have -

ARTHUR: That's all very well but there is still one more huge hole in Miss Lacey's proposal. They still have not made provision for utilising the Opal Mine. Is this remarkable and important natural phenomena to be simply discarded - untapped and unused ? By not even addressing this fundamental issue the opposition have once again displayed how impractical their whole approach to this matter has been.

BEAT.

QUAYLE: Quite. Anne ?

ANNE: You should've quit while you were ahead Arthur. (HOLDING UP PROPOSAL) It's on page twelve. (READING) "The Opal Mine will be returned to the council so they can carry out mining in an organised way and use the profits to restore the real tourist attraction of Tainoga to it's former glory - our century old Town Hall.

QUAYLE: Here, here ! This meeting is closed.

ARTHUR: But -

QUAYLE: No Arthur - enough. Our decision will be available at ten AM tomorrow.

QUAYLE EXITS.

ARTHUR: (TO WALLACE) You coming ? (BEAT) I'm gonna have to do everything myself am I ?

ARTHUR EXITS.

GEMMA: I didn't write nothing about the Town Hall.

ANNE: I put it in after you fell asleep. Didn't you like it ?

GEMMA: Yeah but I wish I could've done it on me own. If it was just Kwiambal what I said would've been enough.

ANNE: But it wasn't just Kwiambal was it ? You alright Sarah ?

SARAH: I'm fine.

GEMMA: Wait a sec. (SHE GOES TO WALLACE.) Good luck, Mr Wallace.

WALLACE IS SILENT.

ANNE: Come on Gemma.

ANNE, GEMMA AND LLOYD EXIT. BEAT.

SARAH: The old bull's dead. You better go out and bury him. I've been staying in the old servant's house. I went for a walk this morning and he came right up to me with this blank, hollow look on his face - like suddenly it was all too much. Then he just lay down and closed his eyes. Like he didn't want to live anymore. I knew he was dead. (CHANGE) I'm doing the right thing. In time you'll be a see that.

ALAN: Where are you getting the money ?

SARAH: I'm taking it out of what Dad left me.

ALAN: What ?

SARAH: In the will. I was saving it for an emergency.

ALAN: Jesus - I'll give you emergency. One of my employee's has embezzled me for half a million. I'm in court for fraud and I'm in danger of losing both hotels in the city.

SARAH: Why didn't you tell me ?

ALAN: If you'd told me about your father's money in the first place we never would have had this problem. (CHANGE) At least it's over now.

SARAH: Is it ? Did you tell Arthur about this ?

ALAN: Of course I did.

SARAH: Why would you turn to him before your wife ? (CHANGE) I'm going to go down to Sydney for awhile. I don't want you to try and contact me.

ALAN: Sarah ...

SAR ACALLACAH: No Alan.

SARAH EXITS. BEAT.

ALAN: I can not survive this.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 5.

The Palliser, that afternoon.

ARTHUR IS LOOKING AT AN OLD PHOTO, SIPPING A BEER.
THE QUIET BEFORE ...

WE HEAR A KNOCK OFF. ARTHUR HIDES THE PHOTO.
HE GOES TO THE DOOR. PENNY ENTERS.

ARTHUR: Good on ya Penny. Thanks for coming so quickly. It seems a possibility has arisen sooner than we expected.

PENNY: You mean I've got a job ?

ARTHUR: I think so. But you must of course fulfil the obligation we talked about.

PENNY: What do you want me to do ?

ARTHUR SMILES.

ARTHUR: You weren't at the Town Hall this morning ?

PENNY: I was looking after my cousin's baby.

ARTHUR: We were discussing the Macquarie Property. You do realise that your sister is competing against your possible future employer ?

PENNY: Yes.

ARTHUR: What do you think about Gemma's scheme ?

PENNY: Never thought about it much.

ARTHUR: Well then, I'm asking you to think about it now. Do you think Tainoga needs a drop-in centre or a fantastic new hotel ? Should the council set up a place where people can hang around all day grogging on or a great opportunity for new development ? Well Penny ?

PENNY: New development I guess.

ARTHUR: And that's not Gemma's centre is it ?

PENNY: No.

ARTHUR: Now Alderman Quayle's gettin' a bit soft in his old age. He's not seeing things as clearly and as coldly as us two. Gemma and Lloyd made a few emotional outbursts and the scales may have just been tipped slightly in their favour.

PENNY: Really ?

ARTHUR: Unfortunately, yes. How old's Gemma, Penny ?

PENNY: Nineteen.

ARTHUR: And how old do you think Alan is ?

PENNY: I don't know. Fifty.

ARTHUR: Now Gemma has a long way to go in her life. Opportunities will come for her again. She doesn't really need this land. But Alan, he's getting on isn't he ? Like me. This could be his last chance to do something really worthwhile for his home town. Do you think it would be fair to have that chance taken away by someone with their whole life in front of them ?

PENNY: No.

ARTHUR: Exactly. So then you must agree that it would be best, both for the community and the individuals concerned, if the property was given to Alan.

PENNY: Yes.

ARTHUR: Good. Now you see how easy it is for you to see the situation reasonably. We believe we can ... help Gemma see the situation as reasonably as you are now - but we have to get her away from Anne Michaels to do it. Anne is a very selfish lady who we understand is not motivated by Gemma's welfare but personal gain.

PENNY: What do you mean ?

ARTHUR: We hear there's a big job opening up in her government department.

PENNY: That'd be right.

ARTHUR: And something like this centre would boost her chances immeasurably. Her type of people are impressed by that kind of hollow achievement.

PENNY: Anne's a bitch.

ARTHUR: Is that so ?

PENNY: She never helped me. There was a program for jobs in the city and she wouldn't put my name. She's selfish.

ARTHUR: Exactly. And she's not helping Gemma either. So you see our predicament. Miss Michaels must be put out of the picture, so we can help your sister see reason.

PENNY: I could get her out to the house tomorrow.

ARTHUR: No. It must be tonight. Alderman Quayle is announcing the council's decision in the morning. So we must make Gemma re-consider her stance before then.

PENNY: But what could I do ?

ARTHUR: You'll think of something.

BEAT.

PENNY: I'd like to ...

ARTHUR: Don't you trust me ?

PENNY: It's not that.

ARTHUR: Do you want the job in the city or not ?

PENNY: I do, but I can't do it to my sister.

ARTHUR: You'll blow your chance with Alan.

PENNY: He'll understand.

ARTHUR: He might. But the bloke who you are going to replace is the bloke who's meant to be coming up here to set up the new hotel. If there's no new hotel then he stays put and you lose your job. Your window of opportunity closes. (BEAT) I've been watching you Penny, from a distance. You always seem to be the loser, don't you ? Always get the rough end of the stick.

PENNY: What do you know about my life ?

ARTHUR: I've been around a long time. I know how hard it's been for you. How some drover forced himself on your mother and then disappeared over night. How you grew up with no father and then when your mother finally met the right man and had Gemma he rejected you because you weren't his kid.

PENNY: How did you know that ?

ARTHUR: I've always taken an interest in you Penny. Because like you I've always been in second place as well. All your life Gemma's been the number one. She had a father who loved her in those first crucial years, a chance to go to school. A chance to get out - which she's not even taking. That must burn you up. What did you ever get ? A mother who died when you were sixteen, and her father who pissed off shortly after leaving you to bring up Gemma all by yourself. Do something for Penny for once. Stop sacrificing your whole life for someone who isn't even really your sister. You've got a new job, a new life. Don't stuff it up before it begins. It's time for us number twos to stand up for ourselves.

BEAT.

PENNY: I'll do it.

ARTHUR: That's what I wanted to hear. Go to The Watch House at eight o'clock tonight and get Anne away. Come back at nine and it'll be all over. Tomorrow morning - you're off to Sydney. You're doing the right thing Penny.

PENNY: No. I'm not. But I can't live if I don't get out. Gemma'll be alright.

PENNY EXITS. BEAT. WALLACE THROWS OPEN THE BACK DOOR. HE IS DRUNK, BOTTLE IN HAND.

WALLACE: You bloody worm.

ARTHUR: You can talk.

WALLACE LUNGES AT ARTHUR. ARTHUR EVADES HIM.
WALLACE FALLS ON TO THE FLOOR.

ARTHUR: Looking good Wall. Lemonade a bit too strong for you ?

WALLACE: You think you've got it all worked out, don't you Moggatt ? Well, I know you -

ARTHUR: What do you know Alan ? What do you know about anything ? Sittin' out there on your one hundred and seventy five hectares, with your tennis court and walk in cupboards. I used to have a farm too you know. Nearly as big as yours. I ran sheep, dairy - even had a few racehorses. Then one day Dot discovered some old clay paintings on a ridge, down by our creek. Weedy black men with pointy faces and long spears. Fire comin' out of their arses. She was quite proud of them. Our own little Art Gallery. Would've been alright if she kept it to herself. But then - she had to start blabbing. Couple'a weeks later this bloke turns up. Pin striped suit, cheesy smile, briefcase. He'd heard about Dot's discovery and had just "popped out to full us in on the procedures." Turned out the paintings marked a sacred burial site and the spears were a warning to keep away. And that wasn't fire comin' out of their arses. It was their spirit passing to the next world. In the current political climate we'd understand that the land would have to be returned to the original owners. We'd be reimbursed of course at market value, which was unfortunately low at present. Two days later a ten foot high fence - from one end of the property to the other. They'd just drawn a line, it seemed easiest. Only problem was the best pastures were on the other side of the fence - not my side. Stock started dying off, couldn't afford the extra feed. So we had to sell up and move into town. Got a pittance for it. I got a job, looking after a pub. And now twelve years later I still haven't paid off my house. The Premier of New South Wales gave me that land because I fought for this country. I fought for the blacks. Their spears wouldn't've been much good against the Japs. And then thirty years later some other Premier took my farm back. Okay they were her first but if it hadn't of been us shoving them off the land, it would've been somebody else. Now they stand on their soapbox and tell us to go home - but my father was born here, and his father, and his father before that. This is my home. There is nowhere else for me to go. I don't care who they are or how long they've been here. I'm sick and tired of feeling guilty. This is a new country, a young country, my country. And I'm part of it. I've done my bit and I don't deserve to lose everything now. I'm fighting for what's rightfully mine and no black man or black woman is gonna stop me.

BEAT. WALLACE STARTS TO APPLAUD. ARTHUR GRABS A BOTTLE OF TEQUILA, A CLOTH AND A SMALL BROWN BOTTLE.

ARTHUR: Look at you. You're pathetic. Why don't you slither away and die before everybody discovers just how much of a nobody you are ?

ARTHUR EXITS. WALLACE TAKES ANOTHER SWIG. LIGHTS FADE.

Scene 6

The Watch House, that night.

GEMMA, ANNE AND SARAH, SITTING ON A SUITCASE - WRITING A CHEQUE. LLOYD ENTERS.

LLOYD: Ready Sarah ?

SARAH: Almost.

GEMMA: Like the speech you give today Lloyd. Mountain giants.

LLOYD: Someone had to say something after you stuffed it up.

GEMMA: I wasn't that bad.

ANNE: You want to make a bet. All that work and you didn't even read the proposal. I could've killed you.

GEMMA: Sorry.

SARAH: (STANDING) Ready.

LLOYD: I get the Rover started.

LLOYD EXITS WITH SUITCASE.

ANNE: You sure about this Sarah ?

SARAH: I need some time to put things in order and I can't do it out here.

ANNE: But wouldn't it be better to talk things over. Aren't you just running away ?

SARAH: Please stop analysing me Anne. I appreciate your concern but this is really none of your business.

ANNE: Of course.

GEMMA: Can't help thinking it's all my fault. I should never've come to you with my plan.

SARAH: Sooner or later these things would've come to the surface. Actually I'm quite relieved this has happened now.

GEMMA: You and Alan good people. It'll work out for you.

SARAH: I hope so.

LLOYD: (ENTERING) You ladies finish your chin-wagging yet ?

ANNE: Goodbye Sarah. Sorry about the analysis. Hazard of the job.

SARAH: Forget it.

GEMMA: You be okay at the station ?

LLOYD: I sit with her till the train come.

SARAH: Thank you Lloyd. Don't blame yourself Gemma. You set up a wonderful refuge. Make us all very proud. (HANDING HER CHEQUE) Don't spend it all in one place.

GEMMA: (LOOKING AT CHECK) I don't think I could.

SARAH: Hope it's enough. Goodbye Anne and good luck.

LLOYD: After you Sarah.

SARAH AND LLOYD EXIT.

ANNE: (LOOKING AT CHEQUE) Bloody hell. This is double what we need.

GEMMA: We done it Anne. We done it.

ANNE: Not until ten AM tomorrow - we haven't.

GEMMA: They gonna give us the land. They gotta. We got money. We got support. We got everything. We did it Anne.

ANNE: Yes, I think we have. Did you see Arthur's face when I said we were giving the mine to the council ? I thought he was going to explode.

GEMMA DOES AN IMPRESSION OF ARTHUR EXPLODING. THEY BOTH LAUGH.

GEMMA: What we gonna buy first ?

ANNE: Well we need some new gutters for the house and there's sure to be a couple of holes in the roof after all these years.

GEMMA: Call the men to fix them.

ANNE: Some paint for the doors.

GEMMA: Red and black and yellow.

ANNE: We'll need a fridge.

GEMMA: Some new curtains.

ANNE: A television.

GEMMA: A television ?

ANNE: Sure. Why not ? Maybe even a table-tennis table.

GEMMA: Table tennis ? I can't believe it's finally coming true. Our dream is coming true.

PENNY ENTERS.

PENNY: Anne. You gotta come quick.

ANNE: What's the matter ?

PENNY: It's Night. She's all hot and her little face is red. I would've brought her in but I was scared to move her. You gotta come.

ANNE: Did you run all the way here ?

PENNY: I had to. She just kept crying.

ANNE: Quiet. It's alright. I'll just get the First Aid kit. We'll take her over to Myall Creek.

ANNE EXITS.

GEMMA: Poor night. She really bad eh ?

PENNY: Yeah.

GEMMA: I come too.

PENNY: No. You stay here. You shouldn't see her Gemma. You'll just get upset.

ANNE: (RETURNING WITH KIT) How long ago did this start ?

PENNY: About half an hour.

ANNE: You coming Gemma ?

GEMMA: I stay here. Just get in the way.

ANNE: Probably best. Someone should wait for Lloyd. I'll ring you when we get to Myall Creek. Let's go.

THEY EXIT.

GEMMA: Bye Anne. Bye Penny.

SILENCE. GEMMA SITS AND TAKES OFF HER SHOES. SHE READS THE PROPOSAL, HUMMING TO HERSELF.

ARTHUR ENTERS. HE POURS SOME LIQUID FROM THE BROWN BOTTLE ON TO THE CLOTH, THEN CREEPS UP AND PLACES THE CLOTH OVER GEMMA'S MOUTH.

A BRIEF STRUGGLE THEN GEMMA IS STILL. ARTHUR PICKS HER UP AND CARRIES HER OUT, HUMMING GEMMA'S TUNE.

LIGHTS CROSS FADE TO:

Scene 7.

A cell in The Watch House, moments later.

THE ABORIGINAL FLAG HANGS FROM ONE WALL.

ARTHUR, STILL HUMMING, ENTERS AND LAYS GEMMA ON THE BED. HE RIPS HER STOCKINGS AND SOME BUTTONS OFF HER BLOUSE. HE FINDS THE CHEQUE IN GEMMA'S POCKET.

HE LOOKS AT IT AND PUTS IT IN HIS POCKET.

NEXT HE SMEARS SOME DIRT FROM THE FLOOR ON HER FACE AND ARMS. HE TAKES OUT THE TEQUILA BOTTLE AND POURS IT ALL OVER GEMMA'S CLOTHES AND FINALLY IN HER MOUTH.

GEMMA COUGHS AND BEGINS TO WAKE. ARTHUR LOCKS THE DOOR AND HANGS THE KEY ON THE HOOK BEHIND HIM. HE TAKES THE CHEQUE OUT OF HIS POCKET.

GEMMA: (WAKING) Anne ? Penny ?

ARTHUR: There's no one here but little old me.

GEMMA: What's that smell ?

ARTHUR: You should know. You must've drunk enough of the stuff. Tequila.

ARTHUR HOLDS UP THE EMPTY BOTTLE. GEMMA LOOKS IN HER POCKET. SHE PANICS.

ARTHUR: (HOLDING UP CHEQUE) Looking for this ?

GEMMA: What happened ?

ARTHUR: You mean you don't remember ? You were so drunk you passed out.

GEMMA: No I didn't. I was sittin' in the chair.

ARTHUR: Are you sure ? I found you wandering outside the pub with this (HOLDING UP CHEQUE) in your hand. You got violent when I asked if you were alright. Luckily you passed out. I had no alternative but to bring you here. Thought Anne would be here. Sadly I discover she's not.

GEMMA: You're lying.

ARTHUR: Am I ? Look at your blouse and your stockings - and what happened to your face. It's fortunate I came along when I did. Who knows what would've become of you ? Don't tell me you haven't got drunk before and forgotten what trouble you've got yourself into.

GEMMA DOES NOT RESPOND.

ARTHUR: I'm just off to phone Alderman Quayle. Ask him what I should do in this tricky situation.

GEMMA: You can't. Anne and Penny'll -

ARTHUR: Penny ? I don't think she'll be sayin' anything. She's seen the light that one. Realised that you couldn't be trusted with Grandfather Macquarie's property. That you're too young. Too unpredictable. She's working for me and Alan now. Night isn't sick. Penny just removed Miss Michaels so that I could discover you in this alarming state.

GEMMA: Night's not sick ?

ARTHUR: And Anne. Of course she's gonna stick up for you but how seriously can we take her ? Everybody knows she only wants to get this drop-out centre set up so she can impress the big-wigs in the city.

GEMMA: No.

ARTHUR: You think she cares about you ? Not a squat. You lose Gemma. Penny's turned against you. Anne lied to you. And Alderman Quayle's going to be so disappointed when he hears about your latest hi-jinks. You've let everybody down - again.

WALLACE ENTERS.

GEMMA: No please.

WALLACE: Let her out.

ARTHUR: Oh look, it's the local AA rep. Sorry sir, bar's closed.

WALLACE: Arthur - it's over. You can't win.

ARTHUR: I already have.

WALLACE: I'm going to tell Quayle everything. You'll be thrown out of town.

ARTHUR: Straight after you.

WALLACE: I don't care. Anything's better than letting you get away with this.

ARTHUR: Aren't you forgetting your little trial ?

WALLACE: It'll take awhile but I'll eventually get off. Sarah'll stand by me.

ARTHUR: This the lady who's pissed off to Sydney ? (CHANGE) Don't stuff it up now Wall. As soon as Quayle gets a whiff of her behind those bars - lookin' like that - he'll give that land to us. Michaels'll rant and rave - they'll be some sort of enquiry - but it's Gemma's word against ours. And how can you take a nineteen year old alchy seriously ? The opals will be ours. You'll settle with those pricks in Sydney out of court. Sarah'll come back. The hotels'll get back on their feet and everything will be back to normal. Gemma'll find something else. She's young. Michaels'll be pissed off and with a bit of luck she'll leave. We won't have to worry about her anymore. Quayle'll want to forget the whole thing. We've almost won. It's over.

WALLACE: Yeah, maybe you're right. We have won.

SUDDENLY WALLACE LEAPS ON ARTHUR. THEY STRUGGLE.

EVENTUALLY ARTHUR HITS WALLACE OVER THE HEAD WITH THE TEQUILA BOTTLE. WALLACE IS UNCONSCIOUS.

GEMMA: Let me out. You can't get away with it now.

ARTHUR: What are you gabbin' about ? It's beautiful. "She became so deranged Alderman - we couldn't hold her. She hit poor Alan over the head with a bottle and punched me in the mouth. I don't know how I managed to get her in the cell by myself."

GEMMA: No. Alan will tell them.

ARTHUR: Who says Alan's ever gonna wake up ? And even if he does it'll all be too late. Cry Gemma. Cry all you want. It's not gonna change nothing.

ARTHUR EXITS.

GEMMA: (CRYING) Alan. Please wake up. Please.

LIGHTS DOWN. WE HEAR A BABY CRYING.

Scene 8.

Gemma and Penny's house, moments later.

LIGHTS UP ON A BASSINET. ANNE ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY PENNY.

ANNE: (INTO BASSINET) Sssh. It's okay. It's okay. She looks alright.
Bit hot. We better take her to hospital, just in case. Quickly Penny.

PENNY: I can't.

ANNE: What's the matter now ?

PENNY: I lied. I lied.

ANNE: When ?

PENNY: To you. There's nothing wrong with Night.

ANNE: But why Penny ?

PENNY: I had to get you away so Arthur could talk to Gemma.

ANNE: Jesus. No.

PENNY: It was my only chance.

ANNE RUNS OFF. LIGHTS DOWN ON PENNY.

WE HEAR A PHONE RINGING.

Scene 9.

Quayle's house, moment later.

LIGHTS UP ON A PHONE ON A SMALL TABLE. QUAYLE ENTERS,
WITH A NOTE PAD AND PEN.

QUAYLE: (READING FROM PAD) I am convinced that Gemma Lacey has
turned over a new leaf and left her days of drinking far -

HE ANSWERS THE PHONE.

QUAYLE: (INTO PHONE) Tim Quayle

SPOTLIGHT UP ON ARTHUR, ALSO ON PHONE.

ARTHUR: It's Arthur here.

QUAYLE: Yes Arthur. How can I help you ?

ARTHUR: It's about Gemma Lacey.

QUAYLE: Arthur, I've told you. The council will make -

ARTHUR: I'm not calling about that. There's been some trouble. She's broken into The Palliser. I found her wandering along the road - drunk off her face.

QUAYLE: Where is she now ?

ARTHUR: I've got her down at The Watch House. Don't know where Anne Michaels is. Thought she'd be on duty. And there's something else ?

QUAYLE: What now ?

ARTHUR: Lacey got quite violent. She hit Alan Wallace over the head with a bottle. He's out cold. Scared to move him.

QUAYLE: I'll be right down.

LIGHTS DOWN ON QUAYLE.

ARTHUR SMILES. HE PLACES THE CHEQUE IN AN ASH TRAY AND LIGHTS IT. AS IT BURNS HE STARTS TO LAUGH.

THE LIGHT REMAIN ON HIM AS:

Scene 10.

The cell and The Watch House, moments later.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON GEMMA, ALONE IN THE CELL.

BEHIND HER WE SEE:

SPOTLIGHT UP ON PENNY, HOLDING NIGHT. SOUND OF A BABY CRYING.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON WALLACE, BLOOD TRICKLING DOWN HIS FACE.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON ANNE AND SARAH. BOTH HOLD PHONES.

SARAH: Anne - what is it ?

ANNE: There's been an accident. It's Alan ...

SARAH: Not Alan - no.

ANNE: Gemma didn't mean to do it !

SPOTLIGHT UP ON QUAYLE.

QUAYLE: I was willing to let bygones be bygones. How could you do it ? Getting drunk again - and attacking people.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON LLOYD.

LLOYD: Short time Gemma. Up there you be happy. They be kind to you. They know you -

ALL: Innocent.

ALL SPOTLIGHTS OFF, SAVE GEMMA'S.

GEMMA RUNS TO THE FLAG. SHE RIPS IT DOWN AND TEARS IT IN HALF. SHE TIES THE ENDS TOGETHER AND STANDS ON A CHAIR. SHE TIES ONE END ON TO A PIPE.

LIGHTS DOWN ON GEMMA.

LIGHTS UP ON ARTHUR, SITTING AT ANNE'S DESK. LLOYD ENTERS.

LLOYD: Hello Arthur.

ARTHUR: Stay out of it.

LLOYD: Out of what Arthur ?

ANNE ENTERS.

ANNE: Where is she ?

ARTHUR: Now calm down Anne. She got a bit wild. She's hit Alan Wallace over the head and who's to say what she'll do next.

ANNE: Where is she ?

ARTHUR: Had to put her in one of the cells.

LLOYD AND ANNE RUN OFF. QUAYLE ENTERS.

QUAYLE: A regrettable incident.

ARTHUR: Ah, Alderman Quayle. Thank god you're here. This is an unfortunate moment for all of us. Hopefully we can keep the police out of it.

QUAYLE: Quite.

SUDDENLY WE HEAR A BLOOD CURDLING CRY OF RAGE AND DESPAIR. WE HEAR THE RATTLING OF BARS.

LIGHTS UP ON THE CELL. IT IS WALLACE, GRIPPING THE BARS.

WALLACE: No !!!

GEMMA IS HANGING FROM THE PIPE, THE ABORIGINAL FLAG AROUND HER NECK - SWINGING GENTLY.

ANNE IS CRYING, HANDS COVERING HER FACE. LLOYD IS MOTIONLESS. WALLACE SCREAMS AGAIN AND RATTLES THE BAR.

LLOYD CALMLY TAKES THE KEY AND SLOWLY OPENS THE DOOR. HE STANDS ON THE CHAIR.

QUAYLE ENTERS THE CELL AND HELPS LLOYD TAKE GEMMA'S BODY DOWN.

ARTHUR APPEARS NEAR THE CELL. HE WATCHES IN HORROR.

ARTHUR: Jesus wept. I didn't want this to happen. I didn't think she'd hang herself. Jesus wept.

THE LIGHTS BEGIN TO FADE.

THE LAST IMAGE - LLOYD HOLDING GEMMA IN HIS ARMS. NO TEARS. NO ANGER. JUST A DEEP UNBEARABLE SORROW.

IN THE DISTANCE WE HEAR A RUMBLE SLOWLY BUILDING.

IT IS THE SOUND OF THE SLEEPING GIANTS - FINALLY AWAKE.

BLACKOUT. END PLAY.