

MUM: The march and everything.
 HUGHIE: I wasn't after the march. You'll see half a page of all that crap in the Tele tomorrow. Oh, golly, and to think I nearly didn't want to go. Came to my senses all right once I saw it again.
 [Slight pause. MUM and WACKA exchange a glance.]
 WACKA [tentatively]: What sort of pictures did you take, son?
 HUGHIE [sitting up; faces them seriously]: Anzac Day. As it is. I got some beauties.
 MUM: How do you know if they're any good?
 HUGHIE: When we finished this arvo we shot in to a mate of mine runs a photography place in town, and we could see right away.
 MUM [irritably]: But what was they pictures of?
 HUGHIE: Everything. [Sarcastically] The celebration. There's one, one terrific one - pure fluke how I got it - of an old man lying flat on his back in a lane near a pub. Boy, had he had it!
 [WACKA starts to laugh, picturing it. MUM silences him with a look.]
 MUM: What'd y' want to take a picture of that for?
 HUGHIE: That's the point of it. They're all like that. Outside a pub near Central there was a character sitting on the footpath leaning up against a post. He had the most terrific face, hadn't shaved, fangs teeth missing, very photogenic. I snuck up near him and squatted down and ... oh, just as I got it framed up, it was wonderful. He vomited. Just quietly. All down his chin, all down the front of his coat. I took it.
 [WACKA has been about to drink from his glass of wine, lowers it and pushes it away from him.]
 MUM [evenly]: You're goin' to put that in a paper?
 HUGHIE: Are we ever?
 MUM [after a blank pause]: Why?
 HUGHIE: Because we're sick of all the muck that's talked about the day ... the great national day of honour, day of memory, day of salute to the fallen, day of grief. ... It's just one long grog-up.
 MUM: But -
 HUGHIE: No buts. I know what you lot think about it, everyone your age is the same. Well, I've seen enough Anzac Days to know what I think of them. And that's what I got today in my little camera. What I think of it.

MUM: You can't put that sort of thing in a paper.
 HUGHIE: Just watch us.
 MUM: It's more than that. Anzac Day's more than that.
 HUGHIE: Yeah, it's a lot of old hasbeens getting up in the local RSL and saying, Well, boys, you all know what we're here for, we're here to honour our mates who didn't come back. And they all feel sad and have another six or seven beers.
 MUM: Hughie -
 HUGHIE: Look, no argument. You think what you like, I've had to put up with that all my life, well now you can just put up with my views. If they don't agree, bad luck.
 MUM: Y'd better not let yr father hear y' talkin' like this. 'E'd better not know nothin' about this thing goin' in the paper.
 HUGHIE: He's got to know sooner or later.
 MUM: Yr gettin' carried away. Just because a coupla blokes get a few in -
 HUGHIE: Couple? Everywhere you look - every suburb you go through - and we went through them today - every pub, every street - all over this damned country today men got rotten. This is THE day. [In a dinkum-Aussie speech-maker's voice] 'When Awstrylia first reached maturity as a nation.' [His own voice] Maturity! God!
 WACKA [shyly]: Scuse me, lad.
 HUGHIE: What?
 WACKA: That's not all it is.
 HUGHIE: Oh, Wacka.
 WACKA [gently]: Can't you let 'em enjoy it? You don't have to agree. But they've got a right to their feelings.
 HUGHIE: Wacka - you've been brought up on the speeches. They say what it's officially supposed to be. I've been looking at what it is. As far as I'm concerned, that's all it is. A great big meaningless booze-up. Nothing more.
 MUM [snapping]: Well, y'r wrong.
 [From outside a crash. Then ALF's voice in a burst of drunken profanity.]
 HUGHIE [gently]: Am I?
 [Another crash. A burst of bawdy song.]
 MUM: Alf.

WACKA [listening]: 'E 'ad too much?

[ALF roars again.]

MUM: No. Not enough. [To HUGHIE] Now you be careful what you say.

[The door flies open. ALF totters in. He is dishevelled. Hair flies wild, face is heavy with grog, trousers hang below his waist, shirt hangs half out. Clothes are sodden with spilled grog. He carries bottles, wrapped and unwrapped, and lurches to table, starting his dissertation as soon as he gets in.]

ALF: 'Ulllo!! You buggers on the plonk? [Wags finger at MUM.] Y'know what it says on the wileless, when yr drinkin' don't drive when yr drivin' don't drink, Christ, 've I 'ad a day? I've had a bloody lovely day. I seen everybody, Dot - Wack - Wack - I seen everybody, what y'doin', 'Ughie, sidown yr makin' me giddy, I seen everybody. Old Bert Charles, y'oughter see old Bert Charles, he's eighteen stone an' pisspot, c'n 'e drink? Oh, Jeez, we started at a pub in King Street straight after the march, I was with Bluey Norton an' Ginger Simms, did we get on it? We bin there 'bout an hour in comes ole Fred Harvey, I sung out You old bastard and 'e come up t'me y'know wot 'e did, 'e put on a voice like a bloody panz and 'e sez up high like, 'Darl, 'ow ARE yer? An' 'e kisses me right in the bloody public bar, front of everyone, laugh, thought we'd bloody die, I hit him one and then we all 'ad a couple of grogs and then Ginge said I gotta meet me ole mate down the Quay, come n' meet me ole mate down the Quay, so we goes, whole lot of us goes and all the way down Fred does this act makin' up to the other blokes, laugh, I never laughed so much, on the way we picks up Johnny 'Opkins with 'is gammy leg - [A foggy glare towards WACKA.] He marched, he was in the march - and 'e was sittin' in the gutter lookin' for the lav so we got 'im to 'is feet and shot 'im into a public lav and in the lav there was a brawl, broken bottles flyin' everywhere and blood, Gawd, blood, and off we all went to Plasto's and there's Ginge's mates, we was there hours, hours, then we says let's get out f'ere and we're off up Pitt Street, we went into every pub, every pub we come to, we went in every pub, there was ten of us by then, ten of us so someone says Come on let's get some other bastards 'n' make it a round dozen, so we grabs two ole

blokes and turned out they was real old diggers, real Anzacs, 'ear that Wack, Anzacs, they was sittin' 'avin' a quiet yarn to themselves, we soon fixed that - we got 'em and shouted 'em and Ginge 'e made a speech, 'e said these are the blokes wot started the Anzac legend, these done the trick, soldiers and bloody gentlemen and we poured bloody beer into the poor old cows till they couldn't stand up, they was rotten, then silly bloody Johnny 'Opkins 'as to go 'n' muck things, 'e turns round too quick and gets all dizzy and spews, did 'e spew, brought it all up all over the bloody bar, all over the mob, in their beer, all over the floor, all over 'mself, laugh ...

Jeez, I never laughed so much in all me ...

[Very early on HUGHIE has turned to face his mother and WACKA. As ALF drives remorselessly on HUGHIE watches their faces gradually change. MUM, who has been laughing at first, looks at HUGHIE long and steadily then slowly sits. WACKA looks completely embarrassed, not at first but very gradually, finally drops his glance, can't face HUGHIE, makes feeble attempt to quieten ALF, then stands looking down uncomfortably.]

[ALF has at last realised something is wrong. His voice dies away. He turns, looks groggily at them all.]

ALF: What's the matter? What's up?

[Nobody speaks.]

HUGHIE: You've just proved something.

ALF: What? [Sways, tries to focus.] What'd I prove?

HUGHIE: Y'didn't prove nothin'. [To HUGHIE] You leave him alone, Hughie.

HUGHIE: Nothing to say. It's all been said. [He starts to go.]

ALF [bleatily]: What'd 'e say? What'd 'e say?

HUGHIE: Forget it. You had a great day, that's all that matters.

ALF [suddenly swinging HUGHIE around]: You bein' funny? You playin' up again, Mr Bloody Brains Trust?

HUGHIE [quietly]: Why couldn't you leave them alone? Those two poor old boys having their quiet talk? Does everyone have to be as rotten as you are before you can enjoy Anzac Day?

ALF [very quietly]: Watch y'self. Watch y'self, mister. [To MUM] Is that what he's on now? 'E's pickin' on the old diggers now?

HUGHIE [*breaking away in sudden burst of complete exasperation*]: Oh, fring the old diggers.

ALF [*weaving after him unsteadily*]: Why - you ... you ...

HUGHIE [*swinging on him*]: Do you know what you're celebrating today? [*To MUM*] Do you? Do you even know what it all meant? Have you ever bothered to dig a bit, find out what really happened back there, what this day meant?

MUM: I bin talkin' to Wacka about it just tonight -

HUGHIE: Oh, Wacka - what would he know about it?

ALF: Don't you insult my mate, don't you insult him. He was there, wasn't he?

HUGHIE: What does the man who was there ever know about anything? All he knows is what he saw, one man's view from a trench. It's the people who come after, who can study it all, see the whole thing for what it was -

ALF [*with deepest contempt*]: Book-learnin'. [*Points to WACKA.*] He bloody suffered, that man. You tell me book-learnin' after the event's gunna tell y'more about it than he knows?

HUGHIE: Wacka was an ordinary soldier who did what he was told. He and his mates became a legend, all right, they've had to live up to it. Every year on the great day they've had to do the right thing, make the right speeches, talk of the dead they left there. But did any of them ever sit down and look back at that damn stupid climb up those rocks to see what it meant?

ALF: How do you know so much?

HUGHIE: How do I know? Didn't you shove it down my throat? [*He has plunged over to the bookcase against wall, drags out large book.*] It's here. Encyclopedia for Australian kids. You gave it to me yourself. Used to make me read the Anzac chapter every year. Well, I read it. The official history, all very glowing and patriotic. I read it ... enough times to start seeing through it. [*He has been leafing through book, finds the place.*] Do you know what that Gallipoli campaign meant? Bugger all.

ALF [*lunging at him unsteadily*]: You -

HUGHIE: A face-saving device. An expensive shambles. [*Evading his father*] It was the biggest fiasco of the war. [*Starts to read rapidly.*] The British were in desperate straits. Russia was demanding that the Dardanelles be forced by the British Navy and Constantinople

taken. The Navy could not do it alone and wanted Army support. [*His father by now has stopped weaving groggily and stands watching him, trying to take it in.*] 'Kitchener said the British Army had no men available.' [*He looks up.*] So what did they do? The Admiralty insisted it be done no matter what the risk. Britain's Russian ally was expecting it. There was one solution. Australian and New Zealand troops had just got to Cairo for their initial training. Untrained men, untried. [*He looks quickly back at book.*] 'Perhaps they could be used.'

[*He snaps the book shut.*]

Perhaps. Perhaps they could be pushed in there, into a place everybody knew was impossible to take from the sea, to make the big gesture necessary ... to save the face of the British. [*He turns on his father.*] ... the British, Dad, the bloody Poms. THEY pushed those men up those cliffs, that April morning, knowing, KNOWING it was suicide.

WACKA [*roused*]: You don't know that. 'Ow could anyone know that? HUGHIE: You know what it was like. [*Grabs the book open.*] Show them the maps. Show them the photos. A child of six could tell you men with guns on top of those cliffs could wipe out anyone trying to come up from below. And there were guns on top, weren't there, Wacka, weren't there?

ALF [*almost shocked sober*]: More credit to 'em, that's what I say, more credit to 'em they got up there and dug in.

HUGHIE: Oh yes, great credit to them - if you happen to see any credit in men wasting their lives.

ALF: Well, that's war, that's any war -

HUGHIE [*turning on him*]: Yes, and as long as men like you are fools enough to accept that, to say that, there'll always be wars.

ALF: You're tryin' to drag it down.

HUGHIE: It was doomed from the start, it was a waste! Every year you still march down that street with that stupid proud expression on your face you glorify the - bloody wastefulness of that day. [*He turns away quickly, sits panting and trembling.*]

ALF [*speechless for a moment, then, furious, he turns to the others*]: They don't care, do they? They don't believe in anything. What'd I tell you? What'd I tell you? The whole country's goin' down the drain. [*Then, turning on HUGHIE*] You telling him [*pointing to*

WACKA] everything he's believed for forty years is wrong? You telling me what I've believed in is nothin'?

[*He makes a sudden dive at HUGHIE, drags him to his feet but HUGHIE grabs him tightly and looks into his face.*]
HUGHIE [*quiet and firm, less hysterical now*]: Believe in the men if you want to, they had guts. But the day... it's a mug's day.

ALF: Get away.

HUGHIE: Why remember it? Why go on and on remembering it? Oh yeah, that's war, that's war... Well, war's such a dirty thing I'd have thought as soon as it's over you'd want to forget it, be

ashamed, as human beings, ashamed you ever had to take part in it.
ALF: Ashamed? To fight for your country?

HUGHIE: What did your country do for you after you'd fought?
ALF: ... don't feed me all that.

MUM: Alf! [*HUGHIE breaks away from his father. To HUGHIE*] Was you thinkin' all that today when we watched him on the television? Was you thinkin' that and never said a word?

HUGHIE: I've been thinking it for years.

ALF [*turns to her*]: Did you see it? Did you see me in the march on that thing?

MUM: We did.

ALF [*to HUGHIE*]: There! You seen 'em. Decent blokes, decent lot of blokes marchin' with their mates. Two wars that represents, two wars you don't know nothin' about, you jumped-up little twerp. You can stand there and knock those men?

HUGHIE: Yes, I can. [*But he is faltering.*] They looked ridiculous.

ALF [*threateningly: a step closer to him*]: Yeah. Did they? How'd I look?

HUGHIE [*with sudden energy*]: I don't care how you looked then. It's how you look now. When you came in that door - when you came in that door - [*words, feelings tumble out of him*] - Oh, God, you only knew how you looked. [*Pointing furiously at his mother and*

WACKA] THEY laughed at you. [*To them*] How could you laugh? Why is a drunk man so funny? [*Then turning on his father again*] Funny? Drunk or sober, you're not funny. You disgust me. You disgust - me.

ALF: My kid! [*He flings himself at HUGHIE. WACKA gets hold of ALF and holds him back.*] ALF shouts and struggles. HUGHIE turns his back on them and strides to his bedroom, slamming the door.]

MUM [*to WACKA*]: Get him out. I want to talk to Hughie.

WACKA: C'm'on, Alf. C'm'on. [*Struggling, swearing, shouting, ALF is dragged into kitchen where he collapses in chair, buries his head on table.*]

[*When they have gone MUM goes slowly, deliberately, to HUGHIE'S door, knocks on it.*]

MUM [*sharply*]: Hughie! [*Silence.*] Hughie, listen to me. [*Silence.*] Hughie!

HUGHIE [*pressed against closet, shoulders heaving*]: What?

MUM: I want to know one thing. You going to publish that article?
HUGHIE: Leave me alone.

MUM: Because if you are and your father sees it, it's the finish, Hughie. You can pack your bags and leave. I mean it. [*He doesn't answer.*] Right?

HUGHIE [*defiantly*]: Right!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Early evening, some days later. ALF is in the kitchen cleaning his suit with white spirit. MUM is putting away last of dishes from evening meal, hang up tea towel. Looks at him as though she wishes to say something. He avoids her eye.

She goes into lounge, switches on light. The TV set has gone. She does some half-hearted tidying up, stops near middle of room, stands aimlessly, thinking, restless. Then she goes to bookcase, takes out the encyclopedia HUGHIE read from and sits in near-by chair. She is reading when ALF crosses through lounge on his way to their bedroom to hang up his suit. He glances at her without stopping, goes into bedroom. She turns a page. ALF comes back from bedroom. He seems about to return to kitchen but stands, hesitates, is unable to contain himself.

ALF: What d'yer lookin' at that thing for?

MUM [not looking up]: Ay?

ALF: What d'yer wanta read that thing for. Never looked at in yr life before last week.

MUM: Free country.

[ALF seems about to burst into argument, restrains himself with a grunt and goes towards kitchen. Steps are heard outside. He turns. Looks toward front door.

HUGHIE comes in. He has been hurrying, looks disturbed, unhappy. He and his father look at each other, look away.

HUGHIE closes front door. ALF goes into kitchen.

HUGHIE starts to go towards his bedroom, unzipping briefcase he carries. MUM has registered all this. As he moves she speaks. Quietly.]

MUM: Thought you was comin' home for tea.

HUGHIE: I had it up there.

MUM: What's the matter?

HUGHIE [after hesitation]: Nothing's the matter. [But he doesn't move off.]

MUM: All right. [She returns to book.]

MUM: I had a row with Jan.

ALF: What about?

[He hesitates then whips a newspaper out of his briefcase and holds it up for her to see.]

MUM: Ah, nothing. This. [Throws it on table.]

[She gets up, gazes at newspaper.]

MUM: You didn't ...

MUM: It's more than the story, we disagreed over the whole thing.

ALF [all eyeing paper]: Well? Go on.

MUM [about to speak, then]: It's private.

MUM: Please y'self.

MUM [suddenly miserable]: Mum - we agreed on everything, Jan and I, I thought we did.

MUM [comes towards him, with a shade more sympathy than usual]: Is she worth worryin' about?

MUM: Yes, she is. She's the first girl I ever met I really feel - [He stops.]

MUM: Don't see it meself. [He starts to go.] Hughie ... talk to your father.

MUM: He won't talk to me.

MUM: I've had about enough, Hughie. Even when yr not here he gets round the house, won't hardly open his mouth. It's been days -

MUM: I can't help it.

MUM: Yes, y'can. I'm sick of it, son.

[ALF comes in quickly, heading for bedroom. HUGHIE turns his back to him. With barely a glance towards

HUGHIE, ALF speaks on the move.]

ALF: I'm goin' up the pub, Mother.

MUM [as he reaches bedroom door]: Alf. [He doesn't stop, goes into bedroom.]

[She turns to HUGHIE.] Hughie, please ...

[ALF comes back, getting into old raincoat.]

ALF ... [He strides towards door, she speaks more urgently] Alf! [He stops.] Hughie. [She is suddenly beginning to break, tries to toughen up]

MUM, both of you, listen to me ...

[They are both embarrassed.]

I can't take much more. If you think it's any fun you two comin' and goin' never sayin' a word to each other ... I can't stand much more.

ALF [softly]: Now, Dot.

MUM: Make it up. Both of you. Please. Make it up. For my sake.
 [She sits down abruptly, takes out handkerchief, blows her nose.]

[ALF and HUGHIE look at each other, neither giving an inch.]

ALF: It's not my place. It's not my place to -

MUM: I don't care whose place it is. Someone has to go first.

ALF: It's not goin' t'be me.

[HUGHIE hasn't moved.]

MUM: I s'pose it's not goin' to be you neither. [She looks from one to the other as they stare angrily across the room at each other.] You couple of stiffnecked -

ALF: You get off me back. [He turns away, sits, his back ostentatiously to the door.]

HUGHIE. A pause. HUGHIE walks down, stands beside his father.]

HUGHIE [a pause]: I'm sorry. [Quickly] I'm sorry, Mum. [ALF sits head up, defiantly.]

MUM [to ALF]: Go on. 'E's said 'e's sorry.

ALF [without turning to HUGHIE]: All right.

MUM: Alf.

ALF: 'Pology accepted.

HUGHIE: Thanks, Dad.

[HUGHIE goes towards his room.]

MUM [to ALF, sharply]: That all?

ALF: Well, what d'y want me to do? I accepted his apology.

MUM: Don't strain y'self.

HUGHIE: It's all right.

ALF: Hughie! [Turns to address him directly, with attempt at dignity.] Just one thing, my lad. I'll never agree with what you had to say - you know what I'm referring to - and I reckon you 'ad no right to say it in the same room as me and Wacka after what we went through for you. For you. Just don't mention it any more. That's my feelings. Understand?

HUGHIE: I wish I'd never said it either.

ALF [expansively]: Well! That's more like it. There y'are, Mother, nothin' that a bit of friendly talkin' can't straighten out.

[He has moved up towards table. HUGHIE has spotted university paper lying where he dropped it and as his father nears it attempts to pick it up quickly.]

What's this? [ALF picks it up, looks at front page. Excited] Mother

Look at this! Look at this! [Beaming] 'See Inside. Our Story on ... Anzac Day.' [He fumbles through pages to find it.]

He done it. Fancy not tellin' us. There y'are, I knew the silly little cow had his heart in the right place all the time. After all that row he still put a wrap-up of the old diggers in, after all. [The paper is open.]

MUM watches apprehensively.] Listen to this. 'Anzac Day, we are told every year, is the day which comm - which commemorates Australia's coming-of-age as a nation. One would never know from the way it is ... [He is suddenly doubtful] 'observed.' [Looks up quickly at MUM and then down at page again.] 'Look at these frank pictures below. This is the way Australia celebrates her national day ...'

[He stares pop-eyed at the pictures. Then roars.]

Hughie!

[HUGHIE appears in the doorway.]

You - ! You - ! [He is almost speechless.] You take these pictures?

MUM: Alf, don't start again.

ALF [almost shrieking]: Look at 'em! Look at 'em! Men drunk - men fighting - look, a bloke vomitin'. You put that in there?

HUGHIE: You're not going to tell me it didn't happen.

ALF: Of course it happened, it always happens, you don't put that sorta thing in the paper -

HUGHIE: Why not?

ALF: You little hypocrite. A minute ago you was crawlin' to me, you was sorry y'd ever said -

HUGHIE: I didn't say I took it back. I don't take any of it back. I'm sorry because of the way I did it, to you and Wacka.

ALF [looking at paper]: Who wrote this? You write this? No, it was that girl.

HUGHIE: It was both of us.

ALF [holds the paper out to MUM]: Look at it, read it. Read it. [Grabs it back from her.] 'It is a strange thing that men who for three hundred and sixty-four days have never given the nation a thought will on this day proclaim its greatness. How can it be great when -' [His eyes bulge] - the winge-ers, whiners, and no-hopers shoot their big mouths off on Anzac Day and do nothing the rest of the year round?' That little bitch! That -

MUM: Alf -

ALF: Shut up! Listen to it! LISTEN to it! 'This is the day we supposed to be proud. But ...' [He is suddenly very quiet.] 'I new feel more ashamed of being an Australian than I do on Anzac Day' [A pause. He can't do anything but look at the paper and then stare HUGHIE.] Ashamed. Ashamed.

HUGHIE [walking away from him]: I'm not fighting with you over Dad.
 ALF: You can't see past a few drunks. You can't. Is that all you say the other day? Is it? [HUGHIE won't answer.] Is that all that da means to you? [HUGHIE won't answer.] Then I'm sorry for yer. I an I'm sorry for yer. Well what y'got to say to that? [HUGHIE shakes his head. In disgust ALF turns to MUM.] Are they all like that? A the kids today? They think like that?

HUGHIE: I don't care how the others think, that's how I think.
 ALF: You'd take away everything. You'd take away the ordina bloke's right to feel a bit proud of 'imself for once. You know what that march means? You saw it, on your television, you saw it. You know what that is? [HUGHIE doesn't answer.] March without uniforms, that's what that is. Y'don't get out there 'show what great soldier y' was, y'r there as mates. Y'r there to say it was a job Y'had to do it and y'done it. Together. Argue with that. Go on Argue with that.

[HUGHIE shakes his head.]
 No, 'cause you can't. Every city, every little town in this countr puts on its service and its march on that day. Every year for forty years they done it and they always will do it. Y'think this [shakes newspaper] c'n make any difference to it, a few pitchers and few big words from a little squirt like you? Do yer?
 [HUGHIE doesn't answer.]

[To MUM] HE can't say anything. 'E can't say a word. [HUGHIE has turned away, sits down. His father stands close, leans over him Y'know why y' can't hurt it? Y'know why it's as strong as a rock You ought to, cause you showed me. You said it yourself a wee ago. And in that week I've seen it clearer than I ever did before. All them blokes like Wack'n' me and the lot of 'em get out there for someth'n' there's not too many men in not too many countries in this world'd want to do. That's not a victory we're celebratin', son It's a defeat. All right, you said it couldn't never be a victory. Well

it wasn't. They lost. But they tried. They tried, and they was beaten. A man's not too bad who'll stand up in the street and remember when 'e was licked. Ay?

HUGHIE [quietly]: Why not? Maybe it helps the great Australian laziness. Why worry about doing a good job? Fair enough's good enough. The only time we won our name was the time we lost.
 ALF [is momentarily taken aback at this jesuitical reasoning; covers quickly]:

That's real cunning, Hughie. Real cunning. [Turns to MUM] Y'know what I think? Y'c'n get too smart for y'r own good. That's what that boy's doin'. [He hits his fingers against his own forehead.] Everyth'n' comes from there. Nowhere else. Here. [He turns to HUGHIE.] Where's yr heart, Hughie? Hearts outa style with your new mob?

HUGHIE [gets up quickly]: I think I'd better go out.
 MUM: Leave 'im alone, Alf, he's just had a row with his girl-friend.
 ALF: Her? That little North Shore tart. That's where all 'is ideas are comin' from. She started it.

HUGHIE: No, Dad. You started it. You started it years ago when I was a kid. When you dragged me by the hand through mobs of them like this - [gesturing towards newspaper] just exactly like this. That's all I ever saw on Anzac Day, every year, year after year, a screaming tribe of great, stupid, drunken no-hopers.

ALF [approaching him; very quietly]: Hughie. I didn't hear that, did I? You didn't say that?
 HUGHIE: I said it all right.

ALF [evenly]: Would you say it again?
 HUGHIE: You've got to know, you'd better know once and for all how I feel. That's your famous old diggers to me. Great, stupid, drunken -

MUM: Alf!
 [For he has back-handed his son viciously across the face.]
 [HUGHIE staggers and is almost knocked off his feet. He collapses in chair, where he looks up at his father, astonished, but suddenly without anger.]

MUM: You get away from that boy.
 ALF: That's men like my father he's talkin' about. Men who give their all.
 MUM: Oh, give their all, where'd you read that? Don't talk rot.

ALF [*stunned*]: ROT?

MUM: Didn't cost yr old man much to go out in a blaze of glory. It's the ones like Wacka who come back knocked up and get nothin' just about nothin' and go on without a word the resta their lives, they're the ones who give their all.

ALF [*furiously, almost choking*]: Don't you turn on me now. I've had enough, Dot, don't you -

[*The front doorbell rings.*]

MUM: Who the hell's that.

ALF: I don't want any visitors. Don't want any visitors tonight.

[*MUM has gone and opened door. It is JAN.*]

JAN: Oh, Mrs Cook, I'm sorry. I had to see Hughie.

[*HUGHIE, still nursing his face, gets up, startled.*]

MUM: Come in. [*JAN comes in. MUM shuts door. JAN smiles nervously at HUGHIE. MUM comes back into room.*]

JAN: Mr Cook, I had to see Hughie. You don't mind?

ALF: Mind? No, this is the new branch, the Uni's just opened a new wing 'ere. Make y'self at home. [*Then firmly.*] But I'd be obliged if y'd say what y've gotta say and get goin'. You've started enough trouble round here -

HUGHIE: Will you get it through your head Jan didn't start anything? The newspaper stunt was all my idea.

JAN: Oh, it's that.

ALF: I don't believe yer. Yr standin' up for 'er. Well, I stand up for what I believe too. And if that little jumped-up snob can put a story like that in a newspaper there's someth'n' the matter with this country.

JAN: Why? We all have to agree with you before we can get into print?

ALF: Don't you cheek me, young lady. I dunno what y'do in yr own home but yr not comin' here upsettin' things.

JAN: I'll upset who I like.

ALF: Don't you talk to me. I'm a bloody Australian -

JAN: You're so right, Mr Cook. [*To HUGHIE*] Excuse me. I'm sorry I came. [*Starts to move away.*]

ALF: You hear 'er? You hear what she said to me? Nobody talks to me like that. I stood up and fought for this country ...

JAN [*turning quickly to face him*]: Mr Cook -

HUGHIE: That'll do.

JAN: Mr Cook. My father went to the war too - but he doesn't go on and on about it.

HUGHIE: O.K., let it go -

JAN: You're nothing special, Mr Cook. You're not the only hero on earth. You're just an ordinary little man.

ALF: Get her out! Get her out before I -

MUM: Leave her alone.

ALF [*beside himself with exasperation as they all gang up*]: I won't leave anyone alone, comes insultin' me and buggerin' up my son, who does she think she is, bringing her bloody upper-crust ways here. She talks about me, what did they ever do for Australia? Ay? What did they ever do?

[*JAN faces back into room. Hesitates, then coolly.*]

JAN: I just told you, Mr Cook, but you never listen. They fought for it, as you did. They haven't done any more than you - but they haven't done any less either.

[*It pulls him up short. He looks at each of them.*]

ALF [*to HUGHIE*]: Get goin' with her. Go on. She wants t' talk t' yer. Get out in 'er car, talk about the great country it's gunna be when the whole mob's bright and clever like you. Go on. Get. Y'know where y' stand.

HUGHIE: Don't you push me around. Jan just tried to make you understand, you threw it back in her face. I'm sorry I stuck up for you now.

ALF: When did you ever stick up for me? [*They are both startled by this slip. ALF is thrown a bit.*]

HUGHIE: A while ago. Up there. We had a row about the whole thing. I took your part. Don't worry, it won't happen again.

[*ALF suddenly caves in, almost breaks down, he sits. HUGHIE looks closely at his father and drops his aggressiveness, clumsily.*]

The paper just came out today. All the week I've been asking myself, why did I do it? After that night here - I didn't know what I was doing. One part of me said go ahead, print it, publish it. I wanted to all the more out of - sheer spite. But another part of me was fighting all the time. Saying to me: That isn't all the story, there is something more in Anzac still, even now, even if I can't see

it. Then the deadline came up, I had to make up my mind. You weren't talking to me, home was pretty rotten to be in, I wanted to hit out. So ... I did it. I went ahead with the story. I still don't know whether I should have or not.

[A silence.]

ALF [roughly]: It's a free country. You got your opinion, you stick to it.

HUGHIE: But - [Hopelessly] Oh, I don't know. Up there - at Uni - it seems terrific to be - outspoken and - critical and everything. But ... [He manages to face his father.] I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you.

ALF: Yes you did. Don't try to back out now. Go on. You go with her. She's right. [Slowly he turns to face JAN; then quietly] D'y remember that job I was tellin' you about? [With a half-smile] The executive position?

JAN [very quietly]: Yes, Mr Cook?

ALF: I didn't get it. Missed out. [Quietly] Too old. No qualifications. [He turns to HUGHIE and MUM.] I would've told you before - if we'd bin talkin'. You see? She's right.

[He sits very stiffly, head up a bit, stiff-necked, and manages to say it without self-pity.]

I'm nothin'. I never bin anythin'. I know it. I was gunna be some-thin' when I was your age. I was. Well ... now I drive a lift. [A pause.] It meant a lot to me, that new job. [Looks up at HUGHIE.] You don't think I haven't known for ages what you think of me? That job it would've been - my last chance to show my son I could - be somethin' ...

HUGHIE: Dad ...

ALF: I'm not the only one. Some of me old mates ... when I think back to how we talked durin' the war ... when I think back to what they wanted outa life. Some of 'em done all right. But even those in decent jobs - [Hesitantly, feeling it through] It's more than jobs. It's ... [He stops. The others all watch him, reluctant to break in.] Boys I've known all me life. Went through the Depression with me, then the War. They're nothin' much either. Nothin' much. ... [Beneath his control he is trembling.] But for one day they're some-thin'. [Quietly] Anzac Day. They make a fuss of y' for oncc. The

speeches and the march ... and y're all mates. Y're mates an' everyth'n' seems all right. The whole year round I look forward to it. Me mates, some grogs, and - and the feelin' y're not just ... not just ... [He shakes his head.] Y'know. [He gets up, seems about to go, but turns to them.] It's the one day ... the one day ... [He is almost unable to speak.] I ever feel ...

[They all look at him in profound embarrassment. He turns and goes quietly to kitchen.]

MUM [uncomfortably]: Poor old bugger. [To JAN] He knows 'e ain't up to much, why'd y'ave to rub it in?

JAN: Mrs Cook. [Goes to her.] I'm sorry, honestly I am -

MUM [patting her hand without thinking]: Never mind, love, it's not your fault. That Hughie started it.

HUGHIE [with a kind of wonder]: I was sorry before. But I'm not now. I don't know why but I'm not. [Very close to his mother] Gee, I love him, Mum.

MUM [not cracking]: Yeah. All right.

[She goes to kitchen. HUGHIE and JAN face each other uncomfortably. He goes to table, gets cigarettes.]

HUGHIE: Cigarette?

[She nods. He gives her one and lights up for her.]

JAN: Do you want me to go?

HUGHIE: What's the use? The whole thing was so easy for you.

JAN: Hughie, I know that. You had to make your statement - as a man. Force them to accept it. I'm glad you did, still glad.

HUGHIE: A man? [Quietly] I feel as though I've been a priggish, hysterical kid, shooting his mouth off at something he's never understood. I thought I understood, I'd read all the books. The books don't tell you enough. [He is struggling to make it clear to himself] It's funny ... I still dislike it as much as I ever did. But I know what they feel about it now.

JAN: Oh, don't be so damned sentimental. Nothing's changed just because one old man got upset. Anzac Day's still the same ghastly thing it always was.

HUGHIE [exploding]: Who CARES about Anzac Day? I've got all that off my chest. [Excited at his self-discovery.] You see, it wasn't just that, it never was.

JAN: I know. It was him.

HUGHIE: It was him. I was hitting out at him. Everything about him.

He's yesterday, he's the past. They both are. So they are. So I've got to put up with it. [*Suddenly almost breaking*] Avea cuppa tea, luv, go on, avea cuppa tea. I don't want, I don't want, I don't want a cuppa tea. [*He collapses into a chair.*] Jan, I hate it here. Hate it.

JAN [*rushing to him*]: Then don't stay. Leave. Break free. You'll have to sooner or later. They're wonderful people, Hughie, I should never have spoken as I did, but - you'll never grow up properly until you can stand on your own feet without them.

HUGHIE: Maybe. Maybe I'll never grow up until I can learn to accept them as they are. And not be ashamed of them.

JAN: Ashamed? Hughie.

HUGHIE: My father thought you were a snob. I'm the snob. I can't help it. Jan, I can't breathe in this house. Everything they say and do just jars and jars on me. They're so - they're - I don't know - they're so - oh, I can never find the word. It's just that they're so ... [*a long moment as the word comes to him at last*] they're so - Australian.

JAN: Are they? They're what it was. We're what it's going to be. [*Smiles.*] You're going to stay, aren't you?

HUGHIE [*nods*]: I'll walk out that door one day, Jan, I know I will. But not now. When I saw him sitting there, I made a pact with myself. I won't walk out on him now. You saw what losing that job's done to him. I don't care how rugged it gets here. For the time being I'll stay.

JAN: And I'm no use any more? [*He doesn't answer.*] But I'll help you. Help you.

HUGHIE: All right, you'll help me. And patronize my family without meaning to. And fight with your mother all the time - until you get sick of the whole thing and drift back to the Yacht Club.

JAN [*hurt*]: Hughie.

HUGHIE: You'll be able to laugh and tell them about your proletarian phase. . . .

JAN [*quietly, stabbing out cigarette*]: As nice and polite a - brushoff as I ever heard. Well . . . so long, Hughie Cook. [*She moves towards door.*] See you around.

HUGHIE: I don't know that you will. I think I might ditch my course. Leave Uni.

JAN [*coming back*]: You can't do that. Hughie, you mustn't.

HUGHIE: That damned University's taking me farther away from them every minute.

JAN: I see. You do all the giving-in. To your father. Why shouldn't he give a bit too?

HUGHIE: He'll meet me halfway. After tonight it'll be better. He'll meet me halfway. And even if he can't . . . [*He smiles.*] I made a pact with myself. Goodbye, Jan.

JAN: Hughie. You've got to believe one thing. Please. About you and me. I wasn't just -

HUGHIE: Slumming?

JAN: Hughie, don't. Can't you - ? Can't you see I - ?

[*She can't manage to say it and hurries blindly to door, opens it, takes one last look back at him, then composes herself and walks out slowly with an attempt at self-possession and pride.*]

[*He stands staring after her, then moves quickly after her. But as he reaches door he restrains himself, comes slowly back, sees cigarette in ashtray, slowly stubs it out. Then, bracing himself, he goes steadily towards the kitchen.*]

[*ALF sits at table, beer in front of him, head down. MUM is at sink making tea. HUGHIE goes to her, with forced brightness.*]

HUGHIE: Going out tonight, Mum?

MUM: Haven't thought about it. Don't think so.

HUGHIE: Why don't we all go to the local flicks? There's a musical on - a good one, I mean, not just rock-'n'-roll. It got good writeups. . . . You like a good musical, don't you? Why don't we all go and have a look at it?

MUM [*a doubtful glance at ALF*]: See how we all feel later on. [*Very gently*] Wanta cuppa tea?

[*He shakes his head.*]

[*WACKA appears at back door of kitchen.*]

WACKA: G'day all. How y' goin'?

ALF [*roughly*]: Come in and sidown.

[*WACKA sits. ALF pours beer for him.*]

WACKA: 'Ow are y', 'Ughie?

ALF [*quietly*]: We had a fight. [WACKA looks from father to son.] I hit him. That's what it's come to. I hit my son.

WACKA [*a pause*]: I bin waitin' for that.

ALF: All right. You know everything. [*To the room at large*] He knows everything. He'd stand there and be insulted. You stood there and let him insult you. Well, not me. Not me.

MUM: Where'd it get you?

ALF: Well, now I know. I know what my son and his mob think of me. Well, all right, if he prefers to get around with that lot - [*He has still not looked at HUGHIE.*]

HUGHIE: I'm here, aren't I?

ALF [*turns to him; quietly*]: Yeah? For how long?

[*A break. HUGHIE is having one of his small battles with himself. Finally he turns to them.*]

HUGHIE: Dad. Mum ... I want to talk to you about something. Dad ... [*He moves towards table.*] I think I might leave Uni.

MUM: What for?

ALF [*gaping at him*]: Leave - ? Leave University? What the hell do you want to do that for?

HUGHIE: I thought you knew what for. I'm sick of feeling - mixed up. You know it's changed me, I can tell how you both feel. Well - I want to do the right thing.

ALF: And what sort of work d'y' think y'd do?

HUGHIE: Drive a truck, take photos, anything.

ALF [*on his feet*]: Oh no you don't. Oh no you don't!! You think I spent my whole life trying to get you somewhere to have you throw it away now? What's the matter with you? Don't you want to better y'self? Yr gettin' chances blokes like me and Wacka in our young days we'd've given anything to have. And you're not satisfied.

HUGHIE: I'm never sure of myself. Wherever I am, whoever I'm with, I feel - I just feel - I'm forever uncomfortable.

ALF: Well, who said life was s'posed to be comfortable? Where'd y'ever get the idea it was anythin' but a bloody battle all the way? Battle! That's what it is. Just like fightin' in a war. You dunno whether you're gunna win or lose and in the long run it don't much matter, it's the fightin' that's important. Some people fight all their lives for someth'n' and never win, never win, end up with

bigger-all. But at least they had a go. You'd give it away as easy as that. Gawd. What's the country coming to?

HUGHIE [*exasperated*]: I was thinking of you. God, I don't know, whatever you do round here's wrong.

[*ALF has suddenly grabbed him by the shirtfront and in a final complete fury is shaking the boy.*]

ALF: I felt like knocking your block off in there and I still might, I still might. You're gunna stay at that University till y've done the lot. And if it's a battle for you, right, it's a battle.

[*He releases him, sits abruptly, pours a beer.*]

[*HUGHIE turns to his mother.*]

MUM: He's right.

[*A moment as HUGHIE thinks of his future.*]

HUGHIE [*firmly*]: But you won't like it. Because I can't - just to make you happy - I can't change how I think and feel. About - the most important things. [*He turns to WACKA.*] Wacka, I haven't apologised to you for last week. I'm sorry if I offended you or hurt you. But - [*to his father*] I'm not sorry I said or did those things. I still believe them. I'd do them again.

MUM [*looks from ALF to HUGHIE*]: I dunno who's worst.

HUGHIE [*to ALF*]: I want us both to know how we stand. [*ALF nods, but won't look at him*] I don't respect what you all do on that day. I never will. And I don't respect what it stands for. But now I respect the way you feel about it, and if I'm going to stay here ... [*ALF looks up at him quickly*] that'll have to be enough. Now - do you still want me?

ALF [*hating*]: I want you to have an education. I do. I do. But - [*Suddenly unable to cope with it any more bursts out to WACKA*] He goes too far, he gets above himself. They're all the same now, they think they run the country. Kids! Kids! You scrimp and save and give'm everything. For what? For what?

WACKA: Alf [*It is quiet enough but they all turn to him. He hesitates, self-conscious as ever, then gently*] Your boy's growing up. You've got to face that. He's got the right to think and say what he likes. Any fightin' we ever did, you n' me, in any wars, it was to give him that right. And if we don't agree with what he thinks - [*stops, then*] - well, it's his world. We've had it. He's got it all ahead of him.

[*He turns to HUGHIE. A little shy smile.*]

Only – give the old blokes a bit of a go sometimes, son.

[He looks down at table. ALF pushes a glass toward WACKA, ignores HUGHIE. MUM looks to her son to see what he will do.]

[HUGHIE has listened intently and with sudden respect to WACKA, and now, managing a smile, he comes slowly towards his father. But as his father begins to speak, the smile vanishes.]

ALF: That's all right about him. That's all right. I'm a bloody Australian and I'll always stand up for bloody Australia. I seen these jumped-up cows come and go, come and go, they don't mean bloody thing, what did they ever do for the country, they never did nothing. It's the little man, he's the one goes out and gets slaughtered, we're the ones they get when the time comes, we're the ones, mugs, the lot of us, mugs. He said that. He said it. Did my son say that? Did he say that about me and my mates? That's good men he's talking about, men who give their all, that's decent men. I'll show the little cow. Someone's gotta show these kids. I'll show him. I know what he thinks, I'm nothin', but I'll show him, I'll show the lot of 'em. I'm a bloody Australian and I'll always . . .

[Through this MUM has stood very still, watching ALF. Then her gaze has gone to HUGHIE as he backs away slowly, hurt and disappointed. When he reaches the kitchen door he turns and hurries blindly into the main room.]

[ALF has continued non-stop but as he reaches his last words he falters and stops as though really hearing his own voice for the first time. Slowly he pushes the beer away, looks off after HUGHIE, head raised a little, almost waiting to hear a door slam.]

[Alone in the other room HUGHIE stands, angry and bewildered, and then charges towards the front door. He flings it open, but as he is about to dash out something holds him. He stands trembling, battling, and then slams the door. Head back, ALF listens, listens. Slowly HUGHIE comes back into lounge and sits down.]

CURTAIN

DOUGLAS STEWART

Ned Kelly