

ALF: He's the same to me. I never seen no difference in my son and I never will. He'll always be the same to me.

MUM: Have it your own way.

ALF: Right. Hughie's O.K. Hughie's O.K. Where's my cuppa tea?

MUM: Your - ? [She gets up, goes to pot, pours furiously, banging everything she touches, brings cup down and slams it in front of him.] There, and you know what you can do with it.

ALF [stirring sugar and mumbling]: You make me sick, criticizin' the kid. Y'ought to be proud of him, like she said.

MUM: Don't drag her in.

ALF: Pick, pick, pick, why don't you leave the kid alone?

MUM: I never said nothin' to the kid.

ALF: No y're not game to out with it and give 'im a piece of yr mind, y'drive me barmy instead.

MUM: Oh, shut up, Alf.

ALF [standing now and beginning to roar even more irritably than when he was drunk]: I - WILL - NOT - SHUT UP. You get orf my back. You think I'm not sick of havin' people on my back all day goin' up and down, up and down, up and down, pick, pick, pick, think they're God Almighty and treat you like a bitta furniture, I'm a bloody Australian and I'm as good as anybody gets in that lift -

MUM: How did that get into it?

ALF: Don't you go me. [He has worked himself into a fury again and is standing over her.] You can try my patience just so far, Dot, but you overstep the mark and I'll - I'll -

MUM [looking up at him unperturbed]: Y'll what?

ALF [flinging away from her]: Arr, why don't you leave a man alone? [He sits. She takes a mouthful of tea, looks down into cup as though suddenly wondering how and why she is drinking it, then gets up, takes cup to sink.]

MUM: I'm getting ready for bed.

ALF [mumbling]: Get ready - and bugger you.

[He sits, sulking. MUM makes sure gas is off, goes to their bedroom door, turns to him.]

MUM: You let Hughie get his work done. Don't you start on him. [He doesn't answer.] You leave him alone.

ALF [turns slowly, eyes her coldly]: When did I ever stand in Hughie's light?

MUM: There's a cuppa tea there if he wants one. You better get to bed too.

[She goes. ALF still sits, staring at nothing. Then, strugging if off, he gets up, takes cup and saucer to sink, refills cup, tries pot, and slips a cosy over it to keep tea warm. Returning to table, he begins putting boot polish and brushes back into kit.]

[HUGHIE comes back to his bedroom, collects his books, and with a certain restlessness gets notepaper, etc., together. The moment before he switches the light out in his bedroom he looks about the room, a hard, critical look.]

[He moves into the main room and stands there alone a moment, looking up and about the whole room with a sudden excess of displeasure. Then with a shrug he moves into the kitchen.]

HUGHIE: Where is everybody?

ALF: Yr mother's going to bed. Wacka went home. [Carefully] She scared him.

HUGHIE: Who, Jan? [He laughs a little unconvincingly, starts putting books on table, thumbing through exercise books, looking through pockets for Biro.]

ALF: There's a cuppa tea there.

HUGHIE: No thanks. [He sits, finds place in book and is ready to begin work.]

ALF: Where'd you pick her up?

HUGHIE: Mmm? [Transfers his attention from book to ALF.] Oh, she's in my year.

[ALF nods. HUGHIE goes back to work.]

ALF: Sure you won't 'ave a cuppa tea?

HUGHIE: No.

[A break.]

ALF: I'll get it for you.

HUGHIE: Don't worry.

ALF: It's no trouble, son. Won't take half a sec.

HUGHIE: Don't feel like it, thanks.

[A break.]

ALF: It's nice 'n' hot.

HUGHIE: Mmm? - Oh, no thanks.

ALF: Wouldn't take a minute. [*Impatiently, HUGHIE shakes his head.*]
All right, I won't press you.

[*ALF sits down, watches HUGHIE. Gradually all the resentment in him fades. His head a little on one side, he begins to smile, eyes fixed on his son at work.*]
What are y' studyin' at tonight?

HUGHIE: Statistics.

[*HUGHIE continues to work. ALF sits watching him with a smile that is part-envy, part-awe.*]
ALF [*after a little while*]: You must be clever, Hughie.

[*HUGHIE looks up, a little embarrassed. His father is sitting back contentedly, smiling at him. HUGHIE manages a smile, returns to his work. Another pause.*]
What are y' gonna be, Hughie? I mean, what are y' studyin' for?

HUGHIE [*as patiently as he can*]: I've told you.

ALF: Yeah, but I mean - well, tell me.

HUGHIE: Well, there's different things I could qualify for, I'll get my Economics degree - [*grins*] I hope - and then - see what's going on.

ALF: Oh. [*Thinks about this.*] Don't you wanta be anything special, you know, when you leave?

HUGHIE: You know me, I'd like to spend my life taking pictures - but what you want to do and what you've got to do, to earn a living, are two different things, aren't they?

ALF: Huh! You're tellin' me that. But - you'll have to make up your mind sooner or later, won't you?

HUGHIE: I wish I could. I think I've always wanted to be educated for the sake of - [*Breaks.*] Well, you always wanted me to - [*Hesitates.*] So I did. Oh, I'm glad I did.

ALF: You still like goin' to University?

HUGHIE: I like it all right. Why shouldn't I?

ALF: It'll make a difference, you know, son. You kids today, you get everything. I wish I'd had your chances. [*A pause.*]
HUGHIE goes on working. ALF is looking dreamily into space now. I always wanted to be an engineer, did I ever tell you that? [*HUGHIE is about to signify that he has but refrains when he sees his father's mood.*] I useter muck around with cars and engines and that all the time when I was a kid. But in those days ... well, the old Dad goin' off at

the war and things bein' a bit hard - me Mum couldn't afford to do much for me, see. I had to get out and work. What work you could get. But I tell you somethin', son. Tell y' somethin'. All through the depression I tried to study, orf me own bat. I used to go to the Muni-cipal Library to get the books 'cause it was free, like, technical books and that, I spent hours over 'em, years. [*Grins.*] Fat lot of good they did me. [*He turns to HUGHIE quietly.*] I hope you do somethin' good with yr study, son. We can't do much for you, we've got no money, but we always do what we can, you know that, don't you?

[*HUGHIE looks away, conscience stung.*]

HUGHIE: Yes, Dad. I know. [*A pause. He tries to work.*]

ALF: What was her name?

HUGHIE: Jan. Jan Castle.

ALF: She's a funny girl, isn't she?

HUGHIE: Is she?

ALF: Yeah, she's a funny girl. I thought poor old Wacka'd wet himself. Do you really think she's the type for you to be goin' around with?

HUGHIE [*getting angry, holding on*]: What do you see as my type, Dad?

ALF: Well, she bungs it on a bit, don't she?

HUGHIE: Now listen -

ALF: Now you don't have to take offence, I haven't said nothin' but it just strikes me -

HUGHIE: What just strikes you?

ALF [*growing a little heated*]: You're only a kid, when you grow up a bit you'll see all her kind are the same. Got their money by keepin' the working man down and that's how they're gonna hang onto it.

HUGHIE: Oh, come off it.

ALF: Now, listen, my boy. I oughta know something. I know something about what goes on in the world. And I'm telling you, take it or leave it, I'm telling you, that young lady's too lah-dee-dah for us.

HUGHIE: Oh? What do you mean when you say us?

ALF: Our family. Us. [*A pause.*] Or don't you see eye to eye with us any more?

HUGHIE: I'm trying to work.

ALF: Yr mother spotted it first. You're gettin' big ideas - tryin' to move up in the world.

HUGHIE: Of course I am. Why shouldn't I?

ALF: Because we're working people, we've always been working people, and working people we're gunna stay.

HUGHIE: I am doing what you want. Haven't you rammed it down my throat all my life, get an education, get out of the rut. Well, you can't do that without changing some way. If I'm changing it's through you, it's all through you.

ALF: That's not what I meant. A bit of study's all right to get you through exams, get you a good job, but all this standin' around spoutin' big ideas, going round with smart-arsed little sheilas from the North Shore - [*He breaks, softens.*] It's all wrong, son. Can't you see?

HUGHIE: Look, I -

ALF: Yeah, I know something, I oughta know something. You'll see, son, you'll come round in time. Now you get on with your work.

HUGHIE: But -

ALF [*magnanimously*]: I don't want to argue with you. You know I can't stand fightin'. You just get into your study. You're right there, son. The study's the thing. [*HUGHIE, still furious, goes head down into his work again.*] Like me to clean yr shoes for tomorrow?

HUGHIE: Leave them, I'll do them.

ALF: I don't mind doin' 'em. Which ones are y' wearin'?

HUGHIE [*trying not to be irritable*]: Haven't thought. These probably.

ALF: Well, give us 'em. [*He is on his knees, dragging shoes off.*]

HUGHIE: I said leave them.

ALF: No. No, let me. I c'n do yr shoes for you, can't I? Gawd. [*HUGHIE shrugs, gives up the shoes. ALF takes them up to do them near sink bench.*] Hah! If anybody else asked me to clean their shoes for 'em ...

HUGHIE: I don't like you doing that, Dad.

ALF: It's all right, it's all right, you get on with yr work.

[*HUGHIE does so but after a few seconds looks up and watches his father at work. Gradually he smiles.*]

HUGHIE: Ay, Dad. Thanks for doing them.

ALF [*looks up, hesitates, grins*]: She's right.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Anzac Day. Behind the house the sky is dark. It is before dawn. A light is on in the kitchen. MUM, in her dressing-gown, is getting a cup of tea. ALF, dressed in an old but neat blue suit, comes out of bedroom at rear, crosses lounge switching on light, and goes to door of HUGHIE's bedroom. He knocks gently on door. His manner when he calls to HUGHIE is unsure.

ALF: Err - er - wakey, wakey. Rise and shine. [*Louder*] Hughie! Err - Hughie! [*Listens.*] Come on, matey. 'Urry up.

[*ALF hurries back across lounge, switches off light, switches it on again immediately and glares at a television set sitting in downstage corner facing up into room.*

Grunts, snaps light off again, goes into kitchen.

[*Grins at DOT.*] Got that cuppa tea ready, Mother?

MUM: No. I bin bakin' a cake. [*Hands him cup.*]

ALF [*taking it*]: Wouldn't be surprised what you did. Gawd, that kid can sleep. [*He sits, starts putting new lace into shoe.*] Why do your laces always snap when y'r runnin' late? They never go when y'got all day to fix it, only when y'r runnin' late. [*Laughs.*] That's life, ay, Dot? [*He looks towards HUGHIE's room, listens, the smile momentarily vanishing and a certain tension returning.*] [*Calls*] Hughie!

MUM: You make a fool of y'self over that boy.

ALF: Oh get out.

MUM: Y'give in to him. One minute you can't say enough about him, next thing you're all over him like a rash.

ALF [*smiles*]: Don't pick me, Mother. [*Sits, sugars tea.*] Not today.

[*Grins happily.*] It's the old digger's day today.

[*ALF suddenly looks around restlessly.*]

Knew there was someth'n wrong. No Wacka.

MUM [*nods*]: Mmm. Funny without Wack.

ALF [*a bit piqued*]: Never thought I'd see that you know. Wack not gettin' up to go to the Dawn Service. Not marchin' either.

MUM: Y'know 'is leg nearly went on 'im last year. It was me made him promise he wouldn't do no marchin' again. Standin' on his feet all that time with that leg.

ALF: You c'n be 'ard, Dot. Where's yr sentiment?

MUM: I face up to things. Not like you.

ALF: It's not the same without old Wack.

MUM: Lots of old blokes are droppin' out of it. Y'can't expect 'em to go on forever.

ALF: He's not that old. Lot of 'em older than him still march.

MUM: On a gammy leg? He'll be with y'in spirit, if that cheers you up. We'll be watchin' - in comfort.

ALF: Comfort. I dunno what this country's coming to. If I ever thought I'd see the day when people'd think of their own comfort on Anzac Day -

MUM: Well, I'm not sorry. It was Wack's idea and it was a very nice thought hiring the television.

ALF: Television.

MUM: Don't you go 'im. If he gets 'ere before you go, don't you go 'im.

ALF: Television.

MUM: I noticed you looked at it last night.

ALF: Bloody cowboys and Indians. Bang, bang, bang - had a headache all night. I'll give 'im television.

MUM: You leave him alone. It was his idea and he's gunna enjoy it. [*Laughs.*] Best idea Wack's had since we knew him.

ALF: Only one.

MUM: His landlady'll be wild he didn't put it in there.

ALF: I wouldn't care where he put it, he could shove it up his jumper for mine. [*Jumps up, drinks down last of tea.*] Well, while you two sit back like Lord and Lady Muck the two patriotic members of the family'll be there - in person. [*Yells*] Hughie!

[*The slightest pause.*]

MUM [*softly*]: Hughie won't be goin' to no march.

ALF: Hughie's never missed a Dawn Service yet and he always come and watched me march after. What are y'talkin' about? Where's my medals? Hughie!

[*He marches across darkened lounge and raps on HUGHIE'S door.*]

C'm on, matey. Nearly dinnertime. We'll never get there. [*A pause.*]

Hughie!

MUM [*voice muffled, drowsy, from dark bedroom*]: What do you want?

ALF: Y'know the mob they get in Martin Place - if we don't get

goin' we'll be stuck up the back. Come on, hurry it up.

MUM: I'm not going.

ALF: Come on, son, we haven't got that much - [*Then he registers.*]

What did you say? [*HUGHIE doesn't answer. ALF suddenly rages*]

What did you say?

[*ALF throws the door open, switches on the light. HUGHIE,*

in pyjamas, rolls over, props himself up on one elbow.

They look at each other in silence.]

HUGHIE: I'm not going.

ALF: You get up out of that bed or I'll -

HUGHIE: I'm tired.

[*He reaches up, switches off light switch near bed. Out of the dark comes ALF's roar of rage. He flings out of the room, slamming the door. And charges across the lounge into the bedroom at rear.*]

[*MUM has heard it all from kitchen, now goes into lounge. She is about to switch on light when ALF comes charging out of bedroom. He is viciously jabbing his long-service medals into his coat and almost collides with her in centre of room. She grabs him by shoulders, steadies him. They stand still facing each other.*]

[*Light spills across the room from open door of kitchen and their bedroom.*]

MUM: ALF -

ALF: Who does 'e think he is?

MUM: Gimme those. [*She takes medals from him and pins them carefully.*]

You want them to look right, don't you?

ALF: What's the matter with the lot of yz? What's come-over-er?

MUM: Now ...

ALF: Well ... Gawd ...

MUM: Don't get y'self worked up, love.

ALF: Well, you know what day this is. This day used to mean

something' once. [*She opens her mouth to speak.*] Don't shut me up, I'm not ashamed of it. I'm proud to be a bloody Australian. If it wasn't for men like my old man this country'd never bin heard of. They put Australia on the map they did, the Anzacs did. An' bloody died doin' it. Well, even a snotty-nosed little kid oughta be proud of that. What's happened to him? Why isn't he?

MUM: Don't you go using this as an excuse for one of your -
ALF [*quietly*]: One of my what?

MUM: You know what.

ALF: I don't need no excuse today. It's my day, see.

MUM [*as he moves towards door*]: What time'll y'be home?

ALF: When I get here.

MUM: Alf -

ALF: You know I never know what time I'll get home on Anzac Day.
MUM: And what d'you think you're gunna get up to?

ALF: I'm gunna celebrate this day the way I always celebrated this day.
That's all. [*He shoots one glance towards HUGHIE'S room.*] Little runt.
[*He goes out quickly.*]

[*A pause. MUM walks back to kitchen, switches off light. Stands thoughtfully in lounge. Crosses, stands outside HUGHIE'S room.*]

MUM [*quietly*]: Hughie. [*A pause.*] You're not asleep.

HUGHIE [*quietly*]: What do you want?

MUM [*after a pause*]: Do you want me to get you a cup of tea?

HUGHIE [*softening a little*]: No thanks, Mum.

MUM: All right. [*She is about to move away.*]

HUGHIE: I thought you were going to go off at me.

MUM: Hughie, what's the good in goin' off at you? [*Slight break before she manages to say it.*] Y'don't see things the same as us any more and that's that. I knew you wouldn't go with him. Y'might've give 'im a bit of warning, that's all.

HUGHIE: I'm sorry. How did you know?

MUM: I didn't come down in the last shower.

HUGHIE: Why didn't you tell him then, Mum? You could have softened the blow.

MUM: You fight your own battles. I'm not buyin' into any arguments. I get enough of 'em around here.

HUGHIE: Mum ... [*He stops.*]

MUM: What?

HUGHIE: Nothing.

MUM: Go to sleep. I'm going back to bed. [*She goes towards bedroom.*]
Wacka can let himself in.

[*She goes into bedroom, shuts door. Its light goes out. General lighting fades momentarily to suggest a passing of time.*]

[*Light fades in again, held down very softly. The sky behind the house has traces of pink through it. Very gradually it begins to lighten.*]

[*In HUGHIE'S bedroom some slight movement. He lights a cigarette, lies back, hand behind head. Then he flicks radio on. Its small light glows softly in dark.*]

[*Steps are heard approaching. The front door opens, WACKA is silhouetted against light from sky spilling through door. He comes in, leaving door open to give himself some light. Crosses to lounge windows, quietly pulls up blinds. Dawn light comes in. He looks around, moves quietly back to door.*]

[*He is about to close it but a sudden quickening of light all through the sky stops him. He takes a step outside, looks up at the sky. It is dawn. He stands very still as though listening for something.*]

[*WACKA turns, comes back to door. Stands another second or two then shrugs, laughs quietly to himself. But still he stands, looking out and up. There is absolute silence.*]

WACKA [*to himself, so quietly it can hardly be heard*]: It was now. [*He stands still, remembering.*]

[*And out of the silence comes, soft and distant, the sound of a trumpet playing 'The Last Post'.*]

[*WACKA stands as though paralysed. As it plays through, the bedroom door opens and MUM stands there without putting on the light. She is fussily wrapping gown about her but the sound stops her. She sees WACKA'S face, the dawn gradually lighting it, and she does not move. They both stand listening. The last notes die away.*]

[*For a moment neither one moves.*]

[*Shakes his head, comes back to earth.*] Where'd that come from?

MUM: Hughie's room, I think. [HUGHIE switches the radio off.] He must've put the wilson on to hear the service.

WACKA: Didn't 'e go?

[MUM shakes her head, stares across towards his room, her usually set expression about to break into a grudging smile.]

MUM: Funny kid. [Snaps out of it.] Waste of time tryin' to sleep. May as well stay up now. I'll get you a cuppa tea.

[They go towards kitchen.]

[Lights fade.]

SCENE 2

A few hours later. Daylight.

WACKA sits in lounge room, his chair pulled out near centre of room, watching TV. Noise is heard from the set ... marching feet, a band playing in the distance, a commentator's voice. Light from the television set plays up into the room and over WACKA's face. The front door is shut and some of the window blinds down. One blind is up and lets some daylight into the room. WACKA watches in a kind of stupefied delight, wriggling in his chair, grinning, a look of half-disbelief on his face.

WACKA [yelling]: Ay, Dot. Come'n' ave a look. Ay, Hughie.

[HUGHIE comes out of his room. He wears sports slacks and thong sandals, is in T-shirt and carries coloured sports shirt and shoes.]

Look at it. Look at it.

[Over his shoulder WACKA sees that HUGHIE is occupied with his shoes and socks.]

Come on, Hughie.

HUGHIE [irritably]: I don't WANT to look at it.

[Then is immediately sorry.]

March still going?

[WACKA nods without taking his eyes from it.]

HUGHIE [unable to resist a glance or two at it]: See anybody you know?

WACKA: Oh, don't be mad. Y'wouldn't see anyone.

HUGHIE: Why not? They get in very close.

WACKA: Y'see it better than bein' there. I reckon you do. Y'see it better than bein' there.

[MUM comes out of bedroom, in old floppy frock, loose cardigan, and slippers.]

Come'n look at this, Dot.

MUM: I've got to get into these dishes.

HUGHIE: Leave 'em.

MUM [she joins him as he says above]: Leave 'em. I know. You and yr father.

HUGHIE: It's a holiday, isn't it? Why don't you sit down?

MUM: Where?

HUGHIE [making room for her on the lounge]: Sorry.

MUM: I want to sit closer than that, I'll never see it.

HUGHIE: If we must look at it, this is the right distance. [But despite himself he still keeps glancing at it.] You're supposed to sit back from it.

WACKA: You was sittin' too close last night. Ruins yr eyes.

MUM: Ay? Oh well, all right. [She goes to lounge, collapses in it. Sinking back into its deepest hollow and spreading herself.] I didn't put me stays on. Not going out.

WACKA: Y'don't wanna get all dolled up. Relax'n' look at this.

[MUM watches it awhile.]

MUM: It's different to what I thought.

HUGHIE [still playing truculent]: Why?

MUM: I thought it'd be all blurred. Where's that from? They're up high there -

HUGHIE: Bebarfalds' corner. Camera must be on the awning.

Catches each lot as they come round the corner.

MUM: It's real clear, look at their medals.

WACKA: It's good, isn't it?

MUM: Look, it's rainin'. You c'n see it comin' down. Tt! Ever know an Anzac Day it didn't rain?

WACKA: Dozens of 'em.

MUM: Always seems to be rainin' to me. [To HUGHIE] You goin' out?

HUGHIE: I told you at breakfast time -

WACKA [suddenly almost screaming, recoiling in his chair]: Look! Look!

MUM: What the hell's the - ?

WACKA: Fred! Freddie Watson! 'E's comin' right into it . . . look! . . . 'E's gone. [He sits again, mouth open, turns to MUM, who is laughing at him.] I never thought . . . [Shakes his head.] Well. [Can't stop shaking it.] Well.

MUM: Keep lookin'. Y' might see Alf.

WACKA [after staring at her open-mouthed as he registers this new thought]: No. No, our mob ain't come down.

[A car's brakes squeal outside. Horn starts honking.]

MUM [looking over her shoulder]: Make a noise, why don'tcher?

[HUGHIE jumps up, looks out of window.]

HUGHIE: It's Jan.

MUM [startled]: Ay?

HUGHIE [tucking shirt in]: Jan. I told you I was going out with her.

MUM: You didn't say nothin' about her comin' here.

WACKA [eyes on set]: Ssh, ssh.

[HUGHIE has hurried to door, opens it, waves.]

HUGHIE: Hi.

MUM [sitting up]: She's not comin' in? [In panic, struggling to get up from lounge.] You little bugger. Why didn't y'tell me, I could've put on something decent. [Grabs her spare tyre.] Oh! Oh, Hughie!

HUGHIE: She won't look at you. [Yells out of door.] Come on!

WACKA [registering for first time]: What's the matter?

MUM: It's her.

HUGHIE [turning quickly to her]: You said she could come again.

[JAN hurries in.]

JAN: Couldn't find my cigarettes. [Coming down to MUM] Mrs Cook - no, stay there, don't get up. Oh, Mr - Mr -

HUGHIE: Dawson.

JAN: Dawson. This must be a thrill for you.

[WACKA is hit with shyness again, nods, grins, looks wildly at MUM then back at set.]

HUGHIE: Where do you want to sit?

JAN: Anywhere. [She and HUGHIE perch up on arms of chair behind and higher than the others, looking down on the proceedings. They are close to each other.] Good picture.

HUGHIE: No outside aerial either.

JAN [takes one long look at picture on screen]: My God. Will you look at them? What do they look like?

[A pause. WACKA and HUGHIE look at screen, commentator's voice drones on. MUM's head slowly turns around and she looks up at JAN.]

MUM: Well? What do they look like?

JAN: Oh, I wish Australian men would learn how to dress -

MUM [she thinks about this, then]: What's dress got to do with it?

HUGHIE: You've got to admit, Mum, they are conservative. Look at all those double-breasted suits -

MUM: Your Dad's got 'is double-breaster on same as all of them. What d'you think 'e'd wear? Overalls?

JAN: Ray! Single-breasted suit. Nice stripe too.

HUGHIE: Off the hook.

JAN: Oh, of course, but quite smart. There's another. Younger chaps, of course.

MUM: You seem to know a lot about men's fashions.

JAN: Mmm? Don't know anything about them but, naturally, we're all interested in clothes -

[MUM nods, lips pursed, looks back at set.]

HUGHIE [half-smiling]: They don't look real bad, you know.

[JAN looks up at him, surprised.]

JAN: Hughie!

HUGHIE: Look at them. Serious as anything. They're sort of proud but not -

JAN: Not what?

HUGHIE: I don't know. Not military. Not aggressive. You know?

JAN: Hughie, really.

WACKA [suddenly]: Ssh!! [He is pointing, almost paralysed with excitement.] Ssh!

MUM: What? What is it? [Looks at set. Flats.] There's Alf.

WACKA: Look at him, look at him - he's up the back, he's comin' close now. [On his feet.] Look at him! Look! He's comin' straight towards us.

JAN: Who is it?

HUGHIE: Dad. [He stands up, oddly excited.]

[WACKA is crouched in front of set.]

MUM: What's he got his chest stuck out like that for, silly old cow?

WACKA: Gee, he looks good. He looks real good.

MUM: His suit looks awful. I don't know, I pressed it.

WACKA: Get the walk, will ya? Get the walk on it!
MUM: Cocky? Look at him!

[*And suddenly they all burst into laughter. Just as suddenly HUGHIE's laughter stops. He looks at picture, a battle of feelings inside him, and chokes up. MUM and WACKA don't see. JAN, still laughing, looks up at HUGHIE as he turns away quickly.*]

MUM: He's gone. [*She sits back.*]

JAN: What is the matter, Hughie?

HUGHIE: Right as rain. [*Covers up quickly.*] Gee, he looked an old idiot, didn't he?

MUM [*who has been laughing to herself, stops*]: No, he didn't.

HUGHIE [*recovering*]: Well, you were laughing.

MUM: It was just the shock, seeing him, plain as day. I wasn't laughing at 'im.

HUGHIE: Well, I was! [*But the feelings are still mixed.*] He looked such a big aleck, marching along as though he'd won both wars single-handed. It was - pathetic.

JAN: Oh, they all are.

MUM [*huffily*]: Turn it off, Wack.

WACKA: Ay?

MUM: Haven't y'seen enough?

WACKA [*looks from her to JAN, gets up reluctantly, goes to set*]: Oh. Yeah, yes, Dot. It's all the same. [*He switches it off.*] Good seen, yr mates, but

MUM: It was very nice. Pity more people don't appreciate it.

WACKA: Oh, they still get a good rollop. Well ... [*He stands about uncomfortably.*]

JAN: Are we going?

HUGHIE: Suppose so. Do we still want to do this?

JAN: I want to do it very much. Don't you?

HUGHIE [*slight hesitation. Nods*]: It's just not as easy for me as I'd thought. I'll get the camera. [*Moves away, turns suddenly to face her. She has turned to watch MUM and WACKA. He turns and goes to his room.*]

[*A silence. MUM sits drumming her fingers on arm of couch. WACKA goes up to windows, pulls up blinds. He begins to whistle softly 'Take me back to dear old Blighty'.* JAN watches him, smiles, relaxes.]

JAN: Mr Dawson seems bright today.

[*indignantly*]: He is not. He 'asn't 'ad a drink. That's what I mean. The other night he had had a drink and he seemed very quiet.

MUM: No one gets a look-in when Hughie's Dad's around.

JAN: Mrs Cook ... Hughie thought I was rude the other night. I was too. I'm sorry.

MUM [*embarrassed*]: Hughie's dopey. It was all right. [*WACKA comes down.*] Hughie's friend reckons she likes you better sober.

JAN [*laughs*]: I didn't say that, really. But this is your day, isn't it?

MUM: Oh, don't start him on that, get enougha that from Alf.

JAN: But isn't it? You *were* there. Do you still remember it, Mr Dawson?

WACKA [*nods shyly*]: Yeah.

JAN [*prompting him*]: What do you remember?

WACKA: Not much. It was a long while ago. [*Silence again.*]

JAN: Were you at the actual first landing? On this very day?

WACKA [*nods*]: Yeah. Thought about it this morn'n'. Before sunup. Just about the time we started up them rocks.

MUM: What was y'thinkin' then, love?

WACKA: 'Ow do I know, it was years ago.

MUM: No, I mean th's morn'n'.

WACKA: Oh. [*To JAN*] I was standin' in that door lookin' at the sky, I was miles away, dreamin' about it. And I 'eard the Last Post.

Thinkum, I thought they was comin' for me.

MUM: Hughie had the service on on 'is wiless.

JAN: Hughie did? I thought he hated Anzac Day.

MUM: Hughie? Hughie hate - ? Why should he?

JAN: Well, all it stands for. [*She looks at them as though they will understand. They don't.*]

MUM: Such as what?

JAN: The same old clichés in the newspapers year after year. All the public hoo-ha - it's so damned -

[*MUM and WACKA exchange a look. She sees they are not with her, struggles to explain.*]

I mean - I'm sorry - but - to us, to the people coming on, there's something quite - offensive in the way you all cling to it. Not Mr Dawson, it really happened to him, he knows what he feels today and why, it's not just because it's expected. But with so many people it's -

MUM: It's what?

JAN [*struggling*]: Well, isn't it all rather phoney?

[*HUGHIE is back.*]

HUGHIE: Right? [*No one speaks. He looks around.*] What's up?

MUM: It's on again. [*She looks at JAN with the old disapproval.*]

[*HUGHIE crosses quickly, gets JAN to her feet.*]

HUGHIE: Best we get going.

WACKA [*looking at the camera*]: Going for a picnic?

HUGHIE: What? No. [*Grimly*] A little job. A job I've been promising myself I'd do for years. [*To JAN*] But I'd feel happier if you weren't so - [*He stops.*] Come on.

[*They start to go out.*]

MUM [*calling after them*]: What time'll you be home?

HUGHIE: Expect me when you see me. Don't save tea.

JAN: 'Bye.

MUM: I wish someone in this house'd tell me occasionally when they're goin' and when they'll be back.

WACKA: What's the job? What was he talkin' about?

MUM: I don't know. What was *she* talkin' about?

WACKA [*shakes his head*]: Didn't foller it. Didn't get a word. Never when she starts.

MUM: Hughie's the same when he gets goin'.

WACKA: Gawd, we must be gettin' old, Dot.

MUM [*grimly*]: Either we're old - or they're terrible young.

[*Lights fade.*]

SCENE 3

Anzac Day. Evening. MUM is in kitchen, washing dishes at the sink, for a meal she and WACKA evidently shared. The rest of the house is in darkness.

WACKA comes in through back door of kitchen. He has had a couple drinks, is not, however, even remotely drunk, just a little loosened up. He carries a bottle wrapped in newspaper.

WACKA: There, wasn't long.

MUM: Y'ave a drink?

WACKA: Coupla short snorts. [*He has put bottle down on table. Starts to get glasses to pour them a drink.*] Y'oughta see the mob in the wine bar. Real old blokes - and all the old girls.

MUM: I wouldn't be seen dead in those places. What did you get?

WACKA: Bottla muscat. All right?

MUM: It's too sweet, that stuff. I won't have any.

WACKA: Go on, be in it.

MUM: May as well. Right. [*The latter as she finishes drying dishes and puts tea towel up. Comes to table, sits.*] What's the time, Wack?

WACKA: Seven o'clock nearly. [*Looks at her quickly.*] He oughta be home soon now the pubs are shut.

MUM: I'm not worried about Alf. I'd like to know what that young Hughie's up to.

WACKA: Now. Give 'im a go with 'is girl. [*Drinks.*] Beats me, that girl. She's got Gallipoli on the brain.

MUM: Same as Alf. [*Then with a laugh.*] Wouldn't he be wild if he heard that? Him and her the same. [*Drinks.*] It's not Gallipoli with him, it's Anzac Day. This time o'year I get sick of the sound of it.

WACKA: He'll be right tonight when he gets home.

MUM: I hope he's had too much to drink.

WACKA: Ay?

MUM: I hope he's had too much. If he's had too much he's just sick, he falls straight into bed. If he hasn't had enough to make him sick he just gets steamed up and we'll cop the lot. Australia for the Australians.

WACKA [*smiles*]: Poor old Alf.

[*She looks at him suddenly and is serious.*]

MUM: Well, that's a turnup. Him, he's always Poor old Wack and how y'need lookin' after.

WACKA: Oh, I let him say it.

MUM: Yeah, y' gotta nurse 'im a bit. [*Quietly.*] I don't begrudge him his few drinks with his old mates. Let him enjoy it, he doesn't play up much. [*WACKA laughs quietly, thinking about ALF. She looks at him.*] You've had a quiet old Anzac Day, haven't you?

WACKA [*shrugs*]: Oh ...

MUM: Tell y'someth'n'. That upset Alf a bit before he even got goin' th's morn'n'. No Wacka.

WACKA: I didn't get on it with him last year, year before either, come to that.

MUM: No, but it was the Service, not goin' to the Service.

WACKA: Oh I'm gettin' too old to care about all that, Dot. [A sheepishly.] That's terrible, accordin' to Alf, but -

MUM: You do as you please, don't let him bluff you. I d'know what he still sticks to it.

WACKA [thinks about it; quietly]: Alf still hankers after things. I older, Dot. I don't hanker any more.

MUM: I wonder what he thinks about. Lotta nights he can't sleep y'know. Lies there thinkin'. [They have become very quiet, speak in desultory fashion almost to themselves.] He always wanted to be engineer, y'know.

WACKA: I know. He told me often enough.

MUM: 'E should've gone into the Engineers during the war, then worried him all the war. He told me after.

WACKA: I know, I was there. [Chuckles.] The bloody Poms was runnin' the whole show and stoppin' 'im goin' where he wanted accordin' to Alf.

MUM: They wouldn't take him without any qualifications, couldn't expect 'em to. HE expected 'em to. Well, what qualifications would he have had? Done no trainin', went through the Depression pickin' up somethin' here, somethin' there, workin' on the road anythin'. He never even got started in engineering.

WACKA [bottle over her glass]: Want another one?

MUM: Just a little one, may as well be silly as the way we are.

WACKA: All the best.

MUM: All the best. [They drink.] Poor old Alf. I s'pose he hasn't had much of a go. [She flashes glance at WACKA who is smiling sympathetically into his plonk.] Neither've you for that matter.

WACKA: Me? [He is a little surprised.] I been right, Dot, I always been right.

MUM: Go on. You was hurt worse than him, bin on the pension. WACKA: I'm right.

[MUM looks at him for some moments. He is rolling cigarette and doesn't notice in her gaze there is a long held rarely-expressed affection.]

MUM: Y'know somethin'? All the talk Alf does about the Anzacs,

don't reckon I've heard you say more than five words about it all these years.

WACKA [laughs]: When Alf's around I leave the talkin' to Alf.

MUM: Now today when she was here - that's the first time I've heard you mention Gallipoli in years. Not that you said that much. WACKA: I wouldn't tell her.

MUM: I think she was dinkum. She just wanted to know about what it was like bein' there. [A pause.] What was it like, Wack?

WACKA [he doesn't answer right away, thinks about it, immediately becomes self-conscious]: Oh, I d'know.

MUM: Go on. Tell us.

WACKA: Nothin' to tell. It was just - Oh, I d'know. [But he is dreaming away about it as he speaks.]

MUM: Y'can't say y'dunno. You was at it, you seen the whole thing. WACKA: No, I didn't. Nobody did. Want another one?

MUM: Haven't finished this. You can taste the grape in it all right.

WACKA [pours his slowly. Sits thinking, continues quietly, almost to himself]: Nobody seen the whole thing that day. All you seen was what y'was doin' y'self. And then y'couldn't hardly see more than a few feet ahead of yer.

MUM: Why, love?

WACKA [reluctantly]: Well ... [feels for the words] it was the terrain. [He thinks about it, continues, gradually warming up] Y'never seen such hills in yr life. They musta thought we was bloody mountain goats to send us up 'm. [Pause. She waits. He continues quietly] When we landed on the beach it was still dark. The current'd carried us down a bit far, everything was disorganized. Well - we had to get up them hills just the same. Y'didn't know where the old Turk was or how many of 'm was up top, but y'knew they was sittin' up there like Jackie waitin' to pick y'all off as y'climbed.

MUM: Was you scared?

WACKA [nods]: Yeah.

MUM [with rather automatic sympathy]: Must've bin terrible.

WACKA: It was the feelin' of not gettin' anywhere, that was the worst. [He is hardly conscious of her now: stares straight ahead: goes over it all continually to himself. Jerks his attention back to her again.] It was all declivities, sec. Declivities. 'Oles and slopes and dirty big boulders. And bare. Bare. I never seen country like it before or since, even out here.

MUM: But where was the fightin', the battle, like?
 WACKA: All round yer. Noise, crikey. Y'd never know who'd come over the next rise at yer, burst of gunfire or bloody Turk. [*He slows: then gravely*] Then when the sun come up y'could see y' mates ... bodies ... corpses everywhere ... blood and everything ... [*A pause.*] Sometimes y'd be runnin' and y'd hear a noise as it'd be y'self sorta screamin'. Y'd have yr bayonet out and when they came at y'. ... [*He stops.*] Y'couldn't stop 'n' help yr mate that was the worst ... y'had to keep pushin' on.
 MUM: What happened in the end?

WACKA: We got together again, some'ow. Some of us. Soon we was all dug in, up and down them hills. We stayed there in the stinkin' heat with the stinkin' flies 'n' the bully beef 'n' dysentery and sometimes the Turk trenches not ten yards away - we stayed there nine months. Then we pulled out, whole bang lot of us. [*He pauses. Laughs softly.*] When we went in there we was nobody. When we come out we was famous. [*Smiles.*] Anzacs. [*Shakes his head.*] Ballyhoo. Photos in the papers. Famous. Not worth a crumb pet. [*Drinks.*] Sorry, Dot. Didn't mean t'bash yr ear. Gettin' like Alf. MUM: Except you've got somethin' to talk about. 'E's all winn' [*Studies him a moment.*] Well, I d'know. Y'bin through the lot. Two wars 'n' a depression. Y'got no family, a room in a boardin' 'ouse and us. And that's the issue. Now, if Alf was you he'd have reason to be crooked on the world. But - y'never say a word.
 WACKA [*reflects: smiles*]: Well, I'm all right. I've settled for what I've got.

[*The front door opens, light goes on in the lounge. It is*
 HUGHIE, home again and full of excitement.]

MUM: That you, Alf?

HUGHIE: Me. [*Goes to his room, puts on light, is singing '77 Sun Strip' or 'Surfside Six' or some such. Holds camera tight and up to his face.*] Oh, you beauty. You little beauty. [*He kisses camera, puts tenderly on top of cabinet.*]

MUM: Have you had any tea?

HUGHIE [*calls*]: We had a hamburger at the Cross.

MUM: What was y'doin' up there?

[*HUGHIE is whipping shoes off, getting into his things. At her question he looks up impatiently.*]

HUGHIE: I just told you. Having a hamburger.

MUM [*to WACKA*]: I d'know what we're sittin' in here for. Come on.

[*WACKA and MUM rise, WACKA taking his glass and bottle. They go into lounge.*]

WACKA: Don't y'want another drink?

MUM: No, I've had enough of that stuff.

WACKA: Will we put the television on?

MUM [*impatiently*]: In a minute. Hughie!

[*HUGHIE is lying flat on his back on the bed.*]

MUM: What do you want?

MUM: You gettin' changed?

MUM: No.

MUM: What are y'doin' in there?

MUM: Smoking a reefer.

MUM: What?

MUM: Having a drag. Marijuana. Feelthy pictures on the ceiling.

MUM [*to WACKA*]: What'd he say? [*To HUGHIE*] You wouldn't say

Hullo when you come in, would you?

MUM: Hullo.

MUM [*sharply*]: Hughie ...

MUM: Oh, all right. [*He rises, gets pullover, comes out putting it on.*]

MUM [*before he gets there*]: I'm gunna have a go at that boy before he's

finished. Haven't said a word to 'im for weeks, he's gone his own

way but I'm gunna have a go at 'im.

WACKA [*looks at his muscat bottle, grins*]: It's a good brand all right.

[*HUGHIE has joined them. He stands looking a little defiantly at his mother, then relents.*]

MUM: Hullo.

MUM: What y'bin doing all day?

MUM: Had a ball! [*Going to lounge, flops into it.*] Oh, the pictures I

got! You oughta see the pictures I got.

MUM: What pictures?

MUM: For our story. I told you - for the Uni paper, story on

Anzac Day. Jan's writing it.

MUM: You started late enough, it was all over practically before you

even left.

MUM: WHAT was all over?