CURRENCY PLAYS

General Editor: Katharine Brisbane

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Foreword

The unique collaboration and friendship between Jack Davis and Andrew Ross dates back to 1979 when Andrew directed Jack's first play, *Kallang*, which toured extensively in Western Australia for the Perth Playhouse Company. By 1982 the Swan River Stage Company had been formed and Jack Davis's second play *The Dreamers* was seen at that year's Festival of Perth.

The production was such an important step in the history of Aboriginal drama that the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust toured the Playhouse Company's re-production for seventeen weeks around Australia. For many of the cast of ten it was the first time out of their home State, but they adapted to venues as different as the Sydney Opera House and the historic Theatre Royal in Hobart.

It was important that more Australians, and indeed the world, had an opportunity to learn about Aboriginality through the words of this amazing storyteller; so in 1984 the AETT commissioned two more plays with the support of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Literature Board of the Australia Council. The result was *Honey Spot*, a play for children that deals with the issues of race relations and the conservation of our environment; and *No Sugar*. *No Sugar* tells the story of a family's fight for survival during the Depression years and was staged in a semi-promenade setting in which the audience followed the players on their journey through the action of the play.

The first season of *No Sugar*, directed by Andrew Ross and presented as the inaugural production of the newly-formed Western Australian Theatre Company in association with the Trust, was an exciting success at the 1985 Festival of Perth. The production was seen by the producer of the World Theatre Festival and this resulted in an invitation to represent Australia at Vancouver's Expo '86. Performing alongside the Beijing People's Art Theatre from China and the Kirov Ballet from the USSR, *No Sugar* proved a sell-out success and received a standing ovation from its audience. After a further season as
guests of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa the Company returned to Melbourne to promenade with an equally responsive audience around the grand old Fitzroy Town Hall.

Wendy Blacklock
Director, Australian Content Department
Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Sydney

Jack Davis as Billy and Richard Walley as Bluey relive the Garma massacre in the W.A. Theatre Company production. Photo by Tony McDonough.
Left: from the original production, Jeddia Cole as Mary with John Pell as Joe; and Ernie Dingo as Billy. Photos by David Cruse. Above: Dorothy Gillard as Gran. Photo by Tony McDonough.
No Sugar was first performed by the Playhouse Company in association with the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust at the Maltings, North Perth, for the Festival of Perth on 18 February 1985 with the following cast:

JIMMY
GRAN
MILLY
SAM
JOE
CISSIE
DAVID
FRANK BROWN
SERGEANT CARROL
CONSTABLE KERR
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
MR A.O. NEVILLE
MISS DUNN
MR N.S. NEAL
MATRON NEAL
TOPSY
TURVY
SISTER EILEEN
MARY
BILLY
BLUEY
PETER
Dancer
Musician

Jim Holland
Dorothy Collard
Lynette Narkle
Morton Hansen
John Pell
Lynley Narkle
Kelton Pell
Shane McNamara
Bill McCluskey
Shane McNamara
Dibbs Mather
Dibbs Mather
Annie O'Shanessy
Bill McCluskey
Sally Sanders
Charmaine Cole
Brooke Michael
Annie O'Shanessy
Jedda Cole
Ernie Dingo
Richard Walley
Colin Kickett
Colin Kickett
Richard Walley

The play was then revised and remounted for participation in the Expo '86 World Theatre Festival in Vancouver. This version was first performed on 15 May 1986 at the West End Community Centre, Vancouver, with the following cast:

JIMMY
GRAN
MILLY
SAM
JOE
CISSIE
DAVID
FRANK BROWN
SERGEANT CARROL
CONSTABLE KERR
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
MR A.O. NEVILLE
MISS DUNN
MR N.S. NEAL
MATRON NEAL
TOPSY
SISTER EILEEN
MARY
BILLY
BLUEY
Ernie Dingo
Dorothy Collard
Lynette Narkle
Morton Hansen
John Pell
Lynley Narkle
Kelton Pell
Shane McNamara
Ben Gabriel
Shane McNamara
James Beattie
James Beattie
Annie O'Shanessy
Ben Gabriel
Doreen Warburton
Charmaine Cole
Annie O'Shanessy
Jedda Cole
Jack Davis
Richard Walley

Directed by Andrew Ross
Designed by Steve Nolan
Choreography and music by Richard Walley
CHARACTERS
JIMMY MUNDAY
GRAN MUNDAY, Jimmy's mother
MILLY MILLIMURRA, Jimmy's sister
SAM MILLIMURRA, Milly's husband
JOE MILLIMURRA, their eldest son
CISSIE MILLIMURRA, their daughter
DAVID MILLIMURRA, their younger son
FRANK BROWN, an unemployed farmer
SERGENT CARROL, sergeant of police at Northam
CONSTABLE KERR, of the Northam Police
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, a Northam cocky farmer
AUBER OCTAVIUS NEVILLE, Chief Protector of Aborigines
MISS DUNN, his secretary
MR. N.S. NEAL, Superintendent of the Moore River Settlement
MATRON NEAL, (Koonja), his wife, matron in charge of the Settlement hospital
TOPSY, a Settlement girl, assisting Matron
SISTER EILEEN, a missionary
MARY DARGURRU, a young girl from the Kimberley region
BILLY KIMBERLEY, a black tracker
BLUEY, a black tracker

SETTING
The play is designed for a dispersed setting on an open stage. On one side is the Avon Valley town of Northam, including the Police Station with two cells, a main street and the Government Well Aboriginal Reserve. Also on this side should be the office, in Murray Street, Perth, of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, with an entrance front and rear for whites and blacks respectively. The scene on the other side is the Moore River Native Settlement, near Mogumber in the Victoria Plains district. The areas include the Superintendent's office, the Millimurra tent and camp at Long Pool, a clearing in the pine plantation and a dais and flagpole. Other parts of the stage serve as an area by the railway line at Moulameen and a meeting room of the Western Australian Historical Society.

ACT ONE, NORTHAM

SCENE ONE

Government Well Aboriginal Reserve, Northam, morning, 1929. SAM MILLIMURRA prepares mugs of tea, talking generously with sugar. He passes one to JOE who is absorbed in the special centenary edition of the Western Mail. GRAN and MILLY sort clothes for washing. DAVID and CISSIE play cricket with a home-made bat and ball. JIMMY sharpens an axe, bush fashion.

DAVID: Bowl overarm!
CISSIE: I can't.
 DAVID: Well, try.
[She does, clumsily. JOE bashes the paper into shape and reads aloud, rather hastily. His father, SAM, listens with great interest.]
JOE: 'The—blood—was stirred ... as if by a trumpet . . .
by the historic . . .
[CISSIE beams again. DAVID bashes the ball out of sight.]
DAVID: Woohah! Don Bradman.
[DAVID and CISSIE scamper after the ball.]
JOE: ' . . . Headed by a tab-leau .
MILLY: David, where you goin'? Gimme that shirt, it's filthy.
[DAVID removes it and inspects it but continues after the ball.]
JOE and CISSIE exit.

JOE: ' . . . Commemorating the pioneers whose lives .
GRAN: [To JIMMY] James, you put that bucket a water on?
JIMMY: Yeah, Mum, bolin' and waitin' for you by now.
JOE: ' . . . Were a steadfast performance of duty in the face of difficulty and danger. With them was a reminder of the dangers they faced, in the shape of three lorries . . . carrying Aborigines.
[They all stop what they are doing and listen.]
. . . Aborigines, incongruous . . .
SAM: Come on.
JOE: All right! ' . . . Dancing to a brass-band.'
[SAM laughs.]
SAM: Koorawoorung! Nyoongahs corroboreeein' to a wortjala's brass band!
JIMMY: Ah! That beats everythin': stupid bloody blackfellas.
NO SUGAR

ACT ONE — SCENE TWO

GRAN: Ay! You ... dawara you mirri up and get them clothes down the soak, go on!

[JIMMY gets up, but can't resist the final word.]

JIMMY: You fellas, you know why them westjala marchin' down the street, eh? I'll tell youse why. 'Cause them bastards took our country and them blackfellas dancin' for 'em. Bastards!

[He nicks his finger with the axe and watches the blood drip to the ground. GRAN gives him a piece of cloth for it.]

MILLY: Don't worry, if you woulda been there you woulda been right with 'em.

JIMMY: No bloody fear I wouldn't have.

[He drives the axe savagely into a log.]

GRAN: Eh! Now you take them clothes down the soak, you 'ear me?

[JIMMY reluctantly obeys. DAVID and CISSIE return with the bat but no ball. DAVID wears his shirt inside out.]

DAVID: You're the fielder; you're supposed to chase it.

CISSIE: Well, you shouldn't hit it so hard.

DAVID: Yeah, well it's lost now.

MILLY: Come on, you two, get to school. [Reaching into a pocket] Here's twopence, you can buy an apple each for lunch.

[She gives it to them.]

DAVID: Aw, can't I have enough for a pie?

MILLY: It's all the money I got.

CISSIE: Aw mum, Old Tony the ding always sells us little shrivelled ones and them westjala kids big fat ones.

JOE: Here's thruppence each.

[JOE flips them sixpence.]

DAVID: Aw, thanks, Brudge.

MILLY: Where's that shirt?

DAVID: [lapping his chest] 'Ere.

MILLY: Take it off.

DAVID: But it's clean on this side.

MILLY: Come 'ere.

[She tugs it off him and sweeps it for a clean one.]

And you go straight down the soak after school. [To SAM and JOE] And you fellas, we got no meat for dinner or supper; you'll have to go out and get a couple of rabbits.

[GRAN and MILLY exit. JOE continues to read to himself.]

SAM: Ba, ba, what else?

JOE: 'The pag ... page ... page-ant presented a picture of Western Australia's pre-sent condition of hopeful optimism-optimistic prosperity, and gave some idea of what men mean when they talk about the soul of the nation.'

SAM: Sounds like bullshit to me. Come on, let's get these rabbits.

[JOE springs to his feet and walks off. Dogs bark.]

Bring Ruffy and Moonie; don't bring Spring, he's too slow.

[JOE returns with a dowak. He picks up the camp oven.]

JOE: Allahah wilbra, gnuu barmy barking.

[He mimics throwing the dowak at a rabbit and runs off after his father.]

SCENE TWO

A street in Northam, day. FRANK BROWN rolls a cigarette from stoopers. SERGEANT CARROL enters from the police station and approaches him.

SERGEANT: Hey, just a moment you!

FRANK: Yes?

SERGEANT: How long you been in Northam?

FRANK: About a fortnight.

SERGEANT: Where are you camped?

FRANK: Down near the salleys.

SERGEANT: By yourself?

FRANK: No, there's about ten other blokes.

SERGEANT: White blokes?

FRANK: What?

SERGEANT: Not abos or half-castes?

FRANK: No, why?

SERGEANT: Your name Francis Brown?

FRANK: Yes.

SERGEANT: You've been seen hangin' about with natives.

FRANK: It's not against the law.
SERGEANT: No, Mr Brown, it's not, but it is an offence to supply liquor to an Aboriginal native under the Aboriginal Act.
FRANK: Thanks for the information.
SERGEANT: Oh I've got plenty of information, mate. Last Friday, James Munday, a native, took a bundle of fox sculls to the Shire Office and collected a bounty of three pounds.
FRANK: Very interesting. And?
SERGEANT: And, on Friday night he was apprehended drunk in Bernad Park after you were seen purchasing two bottles of port wine in the Shamrock Hotel.
FRANK: I'm a wine connoisseur.
SERGEANT: [intimately] Listen, mate, don't try being smart. This time I sent Munday back to his camp with a warning; next time I'll nail him and the bloke that buys wine for him. The last bloke I nabbed for supplying is doing three months hard labour in Fremantle.
FRANK: Thanks for the tip.
SERGEANT: Why don't you think about movin' on?
FRANK: Where to? I been on the road already for six months. Kondinin, Merredin, Kalgoorlie: no work. Headed up the Murchison, Mullewa, Northampton: nothing. I got a wife and two kids staying with her parents in Leederville. I can't even raise a train fare to Perth to go and see them.
[The SERGEANT takes out a packet of cigarettes and gives a couple to FRANK.]
SERGEANT: Look, mate, I understand; I hear it every day a' the week, but I got a job to do, so don't forget what I said.
FRANK: Thanks.
SERGEANT: Natives best left to keep to themselves.
FRANK: I was only tryin' to do —
SERGEANT: [interrupting] You might think your doin' 'em a good turn, but your not. Take it from me, I been dealin' with 'em for years. I got nothin' against 'em, but I know exactly what they're like.
[FRANK carefully puts the cigarettes away as the SERGEANT enters the police station. MISS DUNN enters an office with a sign displayed, reading 'Government of Western Australia, Fisheries, Forestry, Wildlife and Aborigines'. There are two desks, each with a telephone. She goes immediately to one, takes a note from

ACT ONE — SCENE TWO

her handbag and diats. FRANK exits. The SERGEANT settles behind his desk and busies himself.]
MISS DUNN: [into the receiver] Hell . . . Hello, good morning. Is that the West? Yes, thankyou . . . I'd like to place an advertisement, 'Wanted to Sell'.
[NEVILLE enters. He takes some files from his briefcase and settles down at his desk with the West Australian.]
NEVILLE: Good Morning, Miss Dunn.
MISS DUNN: [into the receiver] A motor cycle. [To NEVILLE] Good morning, Mr Neville. I'm sorry, it's a personal . . .
[into the receiver] sorry. Twelve pounds, in, Douglas, 1923 Model, one forty-eight Stirling Street, Highgate . . . Please . . . [To NEVILLE] Sorry, Mr Neville, it's a personal call . . . [Into the receiver] Thankyou Dunn . . . Miss E.
NEVILLE: I didn't know you were a motor cyclist.
MISS DUNN: No, it's my brother's. He's down the South West, looking for work, and his wife and children are with me.
NEVILLE: Couldn't find anything in Perth.
MISS DUNN: No, and not for want of trying. He eventually got work selling wireless. Door to door.
NEVILLE: Doesn't sound very suitable.
MISS DUNN: He only sold one in three weeks, didn't even cover the cost of the petrol.
NEVILLE: Well, he's certainly not on his own. Unemployment's hit thirty per cent according to the West.
MISS DUNN: There's some mail for you, and an urgent internal one from the Minister's Office and one from the Northam Town Clerk.
NEVILLE: Goodness me, the West's scraping the barrel for a bit of good news. Results of the 'Most Economical Housewife Contest' . . . What next? . . . I'm afraid you're not the lucky winner, Miss Dunn.
[He shows her the paper.]
MISS DUNN: 'Mrs Hill of Greenmount on two pounds five shillings a week .' Rent, seven shillings; light, one and threepence.
[MISS DUNN reads to herself.]
NEVILLE: She's ingenious, alright: makes tap washers out of old car tyres.
MISS DUNN: Yes, and slippers from her husband's old felt hats.
[NEVILLE picks up the mail and starts to read it.]
NEVILLE: Perhaps the West could run a contest for the most
frugal civil servant . . . Could you get me Sergeant Carrol
in Northam on the line, please?
[He gets out files and makes notes while MISS DUNN deals the
exchange.]
MISS DUNN: Trunks please . . . Hello . . . Northam nine
please . . . Yes, BM nine seven oh seven . . . Thankyou
operator.
[She hangs up.]
NEVILLE: Can you take down a note for the Minister, please?
[He shuffles through the files and documents.]
My dear Minister, herewith the information requested. I
know I don't need to remind you of the extreme
budgetary constraints under which this Department operates.
Item one: the native weekly ration currently costs this
Department two shillings and fourpence per week. Perhaps
this bears comparison with the subsistence paid to white
unemployed which I believe is seven shillings per week.
[The phone rings in the Northam Police Station. SERGEANT
CARROL answers it.]
SERGEANT: Hello, Northam Police Station. Thanks, Sybil.
NEVILLE: Item two: of the cuff, the proposed budget cut of
three thousand one hundred and thirty-four pounds could
be met by discontinuing the supply of meat in native
rations. Soap was discontinued this financial year. Item
Three; of eighty girls from the Moore River Native
Settlement who went out into domestic service last year,
three returned —
[The phone rings in NEVILLE's office. MISS DUNN picks up
the receiver.]
MISS DUNN: Excuse me, Mr Neville . . . [Into the receiver]
Hello, Chief Protector of Aborigines Office . . . Thankyou,
operator. [To NEVILLE] Northam.
[NEVILLE takes the call and MISS DUNN hangs up.]
NEVILLE: Sergeant Carrol. Neville, Aborigines.
NEVILLE: It's an awful line, Sergeant. Are you on the line?

SERGEANT: Yes, I can hear you.
NEVILLE: Good. We seem to have encountered a few
obstacles with the new reserve. The Guilford Road site isn't
acceptable to the Council. Apparently the adjoining
landholders have lodged objections.
SERGEANT: I thought they might. What grounds? Did they
say?
NEVILLE: [looking at his letter] A Mr Smith . . .
NEVILLE: Oh, yeah . . .
NEVILLE: . . . Claims he wouldn't be able to go out and leave
his wife home alone at night.
SERGEANT: And he's generally down the Shamrock Hotel till
stumps.
[GRAN and MILLY approach the Police Station.]
NEVILLE: Well, the upshot of it is that the Lands Department
won't be able to gazette it, so you as the local Protector
of Aborigines will have to recommend an alternative site
. . . The Council's concerned that it's well away from any
residences.
GRAN: Sergeant! . . . Sergeant!
NEVILLE: What's that terrible racket?
GRAN: Sergeant!
SERGEANT: [to NEVILLE] Ration day.
GRAN: Sergeant.
NEVILLE: All right, letter to follow, I'll leave you to it.
SERGEANT: Thanks, Mr Neville.
NEVILLE: Cheerio.
[The SERGEANT and NEVILLE hang up.]
SERGEANT: Alright Gran, come in.
NEVILLE: Where was I?
MISS DUNN: Of eighty who went out in the domestic service
last year . . .
NEVILLE: Thirty returned to the settlement in pregnant
condition, yours et cetera . . . If you could type that straight
away I'll run it up to the Office myself.
[The SERGEANT places flour, sugar and two small packages
on the bench and marks them off in his ration book.]
SERGEANT: Flour, sugar, tea . . . And how you been keepin',
Granny?
GRAN: I'm awright.
GRAN: They not slaves, Chergeant!
SERGEANT: Well, they'll have to work if you want luxury items like soap.
MILLY: Look, last week my Joe cut a hundred posts for old Skinny Martin and you know what he got? A pair of second-hand boots and a piece of stag ram so tough even the dawgs couldn't eat it; skinner than old Martin 'imself.
GRAN: And we couldn't eat the boots.
MILLY: You wait till brother Jimmy hears about this no soap business. He'll make you fellas jump.
SERGEANT: Yeah, and you tell that bush lawyer brother of yours, if he comes here arguing I'll make him jump: straight inside.

[They turn to go. As he leaves he raises his voice after them.]
You hear me?
MILLY: [calling] Yeah, I hear you. Can't help hearin' you.
[They walk down the street.]
GRAN: [calling] You don't want to shout like that, Chergeant. You'll 'ave a fit, just like a dingo when he gets bait.
MILLY: [calling] Seein' you're drinkin' down the Federal every night, Sergeant, you can tell old Skinny Martin to stick his stag ram right up his skinny ki-sun!
GRAN: [calling] Yeah, an' the boots too.
[They exit, laughing and hosting Nyongah fashion. The SERGEANT returns to the police station, puts the ration box away and settles down to reading the newspaper. MISS DUNN finishes typing the letter, she hands it to NEVILLE, who reads it quickly.]
NEVILLE: [signing it] Thankyou, Miss Dunn. We'd better get a thankyou note off to Mr Neal.
MISS DUNN: I can do it straight away for you.
NEVILLE: All right; Mr N.S. Neal, Superintendent, Moore River Native Settlement, eetcera.

Dear Mr Neal, just a short note to thank you for your ... thank you and Matron for your hospitality on our recent visit to the Settlement. The Settlement is looking splendid, considering, obviously a credit to you both. The conduct of the ceremony was a tribute to your military precision, and the afternoon tea, especially Matron's home-made lemonade, was splendid on such a hot day. As I
mentioned, I was a little concerned to see so many dirty little noses amongst the children. I’m a great believer that if you provide the native the basic accompaniments of civilisation you’re half way to civilising him. I’d like to see each child issued with a handkerchief and instructed on its use. Funds as always are short so I’ve taken the liberty of ordering several bolts of cloth from Government stores. I’m sure the girls in the sewing room could run up the handkerchiefs. I take your point about losing them and suggest attaching them to their sleeves by way of a tape. Likewise, as discussed, the stores branch will henceforth be supplying limited supplies of toilet paper for use in the dormitory lavatories. I think some practical training from yourself and Matron in its correct usage would be appropriate. If you can successfully inculcate such basic but essential details of civilised living you will have helped them along the road to taking their place in Australian society. Again, many thanks to Matron and yourself. Australia Day at the settlement is something I’ll always look forward to.

Yours, etcetera.
I’d better get this off to the Minister. I’ll be back after lunch.

SCENE THREE

Government Well, dusk. Maggie’s carolling. Cissie is preparing a damper. Joe and David play two-up with bottle tops. David has the headers.

David: Come on, set me up. Not beer tops, wine tops.
Cissie: [calling] Joe! Make a place for the damper for me.
Joe: [laughing, to David] Don’t make no difference.
David: It does.
Joe: Why?
David: Wine cost more than beer.
Cissie: Joe! Joe, come on.
Joe: Okay. Okay.

[act one — scene three]

Cissie: Calls impatiently. The dough is beginning to fall apart.
Joe: Hurry up! Alright.
Cissie: Joe, come on!
Joe: [stand by the fire holding the dough. Joe uses his dowel to make an impression in the ashes. Cissie puts the damper in and covers it with ashes.]
David: [spinning] Woah! Heads!
Joe: Let’s have a look.
David: Moorditji, umma?
[The dogs bark.]
Cissie: David, git me some more wood.
[David spins.]
David!
David: Wait till I’ve finished spinnin’.
Cissie: Shoo-i, tail them.
[David spins them high.]
David: Have a look at them, Ciss.
[He looks. They’re tails.]
See what you made me do.
[He goes for the wood.]
Cissie: Joe, better chop some more wood up.
Joe: Yeah, okay.
[He spins.]
Bastard.
[He picks up the axe and goes to the woodpile. David returns with a load of wood. He puts it down and begins to count his bottle tops.]
David: Boy, look at my boondah.
[Jimmy enters.]
Jimmy: Wait till I see him tomorrow. I’ll give him no soap.
Sam and Billy follow. Jimmy on. Frank follows them.
The men are slightly drunk. Finally, Gran and Milly enter.
Cissie: About time.
David: Took youse long enough, got any boiled lollies?
Gran: No. No lollies.
Milly: Ain’t even got no soap.
Joe: [indicating Frank] Oneeaa baal?
Jimmy: He’s our friend.
SAM: Ay! Mate! That’s me eldest boy Joe, and that’s Cissie and that’s the youngest, David.
FRANK: Hello.
[CiSSie: don’t reply.]
GRAN: What you got in the camp oven?
[CISE looks.] 
MILLY: Don’t git soap in the rations no more.
GRAN: [Peering into the camp oven] No onions or taters.
CISSE: Why? What for?
[She feels her hair.] 
MILLY: Just what I said, darlin’, Sergeant ain’t giving no soap any more.
GRAN: Don’t worry, we can use jabang bush. I know where some growin’.
JIMMY: Don’t worry about Sergeant, I’ll give him a piece of my mind.
GRAN: You know what he’ll give you? Six months.
[JIMMY takes a drink.] 
JIMMY: Six months.
[He laughs.] 
Mother, I can do that standing on my head.
[He passes the bottle to FRANK.]
Hear, mate.
DAVID: Ay, Dad, fixed my bike today. Wanna see it?
SAM: Yeah.
[DAVID runs off, followed by CISSIE.]
DAVID: It’s goin’ real good.
[GRAN puts onions and potatoes in the camp oven. JIMMY produces turnips from his pocket.]
JIMMY: Here, Mum, chuck them in.
MILLY: Ay! Where d’you git them from?
JOE: He never grew ’em and I bet he never bought ’em.
[MILLY takes them, prepares them and adds them to the rabbit stew. JIMMY produces a mouth organ.]
MILLY: You lookin’ for gaol awright!
JIMMY: [to FRANK] You been inside?
FRANK: Inside? Inside where?
JIMMY: Gaol. You been in Freeo?
FRANK: No.
GRAN: You’ll be in gaol if Chergeant catch you here.
SAM: Ne’mine ’bout Sergeant, Mother-In-Law, give him a feed.
MILLY: Won’t be long; stew ain’t proper cooked yet.
[JIMMY takes a drink.]
JIMMY: Ay wejale. You know how many time I been in gaol?
[Hold up four fingers] That many times.
FRANK: [shyly] What for?
JIMMY: Aw, drinkin’, fightin’ and snowdroppin’.
SAM: You know what snowdroppin’ is?
MILLY: Pinchin’ things off other people’s clothes lines.
JIMMY: Hey, wejale, mate, you know when I was a little fella, ’bout twelve, thirteen years old...
JOE: Aw, here we go...
JIMMY Shut up, you. [To FRANK] You know what I was?
FRANK: Ah, no.
JIMMY: Choir boy. I tell you I was the leadin’ choir boy at New Norcia Mission; wasn’t I, Mother?
SAM: Didn’t do you much good.
MILLY: He used to sing ‘Ave Maria’ solo, real good.
JIMMY: Yeah! [To SAM] ‘Ow do you know? You wasn’t even there.
SAM: ’Course I was there. [To FRANK] That’s where I met her, wanna Mill?
FRANK: Did you get married at New Norcia?
SAM: Too right.
GRAN: In the church too.
JIMMY: An’ engaged under a Government blanket.
MILLY: Shut up! Dawaara, niitja wejale.
GRAN: [clicking her tongue] Choo, kireya.
JIMMY: I’m only jokin’. Anyways, who wants to ‘ear a song?
[JIMMY produces a mouth organ and plays ‘Springtime in the Rockies’. MILLY begins to remove the damper from the ashes and dast it off.]
MILLY: Cissie! David! Mum, see if the stew’s cooked...
Cissie! David!
[GRAN checks the stew.]
GRAN: Yeah, it’s cooked.
[CISSIE AND DAVID return with the bike. JOE spreads a wogga on the ground.]
Cissie, plates, plates. David, put the billy on.
DAVID: Me bike’s moordijf; we went right down the rubbish dump.
CISSE: Yeah, an’ I had to push you back through the sand.
[DVIAG: lop the bike on its side and they sit and serve the food.
SAM breaks up the damper.]
SAM: [to FRANK] You eat this before?
FRANK: Damper? Plenty a’ times.
SAM: Cooked in the ashes?
FRANK: No.
JOE: You eat underground mutton before?
[MILLY gives him a plate of stew.]
JIMMY: Underground mutton?
JOE: Rabbit.
JIMMY: You try that, dip the damper, moordijf!
FRANK: Yeah, we used to live on 'em when we was on the farm.
GRAN: James, you come an’ get your supper.
JIMMY: No, leave it, I’ll get it dreckly.
[He takes a long drink of wine as the others eat.
[To GRAN and MILLY, indicating FRANK] You see that fella there, Mum, Mill? He had his own farm once. You wouldn’t believe it, eh?
JOE: [to FRANK] Yeah? Where?
FRANK: Out Lake Yealering.
JOE: What happened?
FRANK: Aw, between the rabbits and a couple of bad seasons and the bank, the bloody bank, I lost it; the lot, even the crop in the ground.
JIMMY: [drunker] Yeah, fuckin’ gubnet. Fucks everybody up; everybody, eh? Eh? You allowed to walk down the street after sundown? Eh?
FRANK: Yeah, don’t see why not.
JIMMY: Well I’m not. None of us are; you know we’re not allowed in town, not allowed to go down the soak, not allowed to march . . .
[He mines handcuffs and gun by first putting his wrists together and then placing a hand downwards over his forehead with the fingers spread over his eyes.]

Manapj grab us like that. Bastards . . .
FRANK: Who?
GRAN: Politijmans.
JIMMY: They can shoot our dawgs, anytime they want to.
[To SAM and MILLY] Eh, you ‘member Streak. Kill and show dawg, used to catch meat for every blackfella in Northam and they shot him. [Miming]
Just like that. [Maudlin, almost in tears] Ay, Mill, he’s married; got three kids and a wife.
MILLY: [sympathetically] Nyorn, winya.
GRAN: [to FRANK] Where they now?
FRANK: When we walked off I sent ‘em to Perth, stayin’ with her parents.
[JIMMY drags a wallet out of FRANK’s pocket.]
JIMMY: Show ‘em that photo. Go on, mate, show ‘em.
[JIMMY gives FRANK the wallet and stands.
[Wandering off] Go on, show ‘em.
SAM: Where you goin’
JIMMY: I’m gonna strain the spuds
[FRANK takes out the photo and passes it around.]
MILLY: All girls, eh?
GRAN: Nyorn, winya, pretty koolangah too.
SAM: Nice lookin’ yorgah.
CISSE: She come from Lake Yealering?
FRANK: No, met her at a dancin’ contest; Charleston, at the Lax, in Perth.
SAM: How long since you seen your kids?
FRANK: Six months; haven’t even sent ‘em any money.
[JIMMY returns and falls over the bike in the dark.]
JIMMY: Oh, Jesus, me bloody leg! Fuck that bike!
[JIMMY kicks at the bike savagely.]
DAVID: Oh, Uncle Jimmy, don’t do that; I just fixed it up.
JOE: [jumping up] Eh, Koezi, David’s been workin’ on it all day. Kienya.
[He runs to rescue the bike, but collects an accidental blow from JIMMY.]
Owl me nose!
[SAM jumps up, runs to JIMMY and pushes him.]
SAM: You cut that out, you hear me?
JIMMY: You git!
[He swings an ineffectual punch at Sam.]

Sam: Just stop it, awright?

Jimmy: attacks and they engage in a ragged brawl. After a
moment they separate and circle one another. Jimmy takes his
coat off.

Jimmy: Awright, come on, come on.

Sam: Stop it, you hear me? And none of your bitin'.

Frank: I'd better go, Mrs Millimurra.

Milly: Yeah, awright.

[Frank stands.]

Frank: And thanks for the really nice meal.

Milly: That's all right. Eh! Cut it out, you two.

Frank: Tooroo!

[Frank leaves. Jimmy and Sam are locked together, carrying
each other. Cissie and David rescue the bike from under their
feet. Joe blows his nose and looks for blood on his sleeve.]

Gran: Don't you hit him, Sam.
Sam: I will if he bites me.

Gran: I'll stop you two fellas.

[She charges at them, grabbing both by the hair and pulling
violently. They separate and she falls on her backside. Milly
laughs.]

Milly: Aw, Mum, you're cruel.

[Joe goes and tries to pick her up. Sam seizes his chance and
sits on Jimmy, who thrashes about helplessly.]

Joe: Granny, git up, you're getting dirt all over you.

[Gran gets up with help from Joe.]

Jimmy: Who do you think you are, fuckin' Jack Johnston?

Sam: You think you're fuckin' Jack Dempsey.

Gran: I'll stop youse, I'll stop youse.

[She takes herwashing stick and gives them both a solid poke in
the ribs. They separate and get up, reluctantly.]

[To Sam] Now git off him. You know he's sworn koot
mindy.

Sam: He ain't sick in the chest, he's sick in the bloody head.

[Jimmy creeps for his coat, then for the bottle. Milly heating
him to it.]

Milly: This is real fightin' stuff, eh? Real fightin' stuff.

[She pours it onto the ground. Jimmy sits, head between his
knees, and grows.]
NO SUGAR

CONSTABLE: What do you want?
JIMMY: Tell your boss the koomp bucket's got a hole in it.
CONSTABLE: [to the SERGEANT] He reckons the piss bucket's got a hole in it.
SERGEANT: Bullshit; he can't aim straight.
CONSTABLE: There's nothing wrong with it, you not aimin' straight.

[The CONSTABLE returns to the bench.]

JIMMY: [calling] I'm aiming straight, all right. I'm a good shot. I can knock a rabbit's eye out at a hundred yards, and I could blow the sergeant's head off with a three-oh-three at six hundred, bloody oath.
SAM: Eh, Goooby, dubakieny.
SERGEANT: Listen, Munday, if you know what's good for you, you'll shut up.
JIMMY: Him, he don't care. He's happy he's got us here.
Fack 'em! Fack 'em! Fack 'em all!
[He hurfs the bucket against the wall.]
SAM: Goooby, you flamin' idiot.
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] That's government property. Stop him.

[The CONSTABLE goes to JIMMY's cell carrying a bucket.]
CONSTABLE: Put that down!
SAM: Stop it, Goooby, steady down, steady down!
JIMMY puts the bucket down and turns around as if to urinate in it. [The CONSTABLE returns to the bench.]
SERGEANT: Damage to government property, to whit, one shit bucket. Add it to the charge sheet.
[The CONSTABLE gets out the charge sheet. Silence.]
JIMMY: [calling] I don't give two hoots of a lama's tail. Never mind, Serge, I'll sing you a song. I'll sing you a hymn, if you like. [Singing]
'“Hail, Queen of Heaven, the ocean star,
Guide of the wanderer here below,
Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy care;
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for — ‘

[He stops abruptly.]

No hymns. No good to you, you're a proper mummiari. Proper mummiari, fuckin' both of youse ... [Singing]
'When its springtime in the Rockies,
I'm comin' back to you ...'
SERGEANT: I think I preferred the mouth organ.
SAM: See you gettin' six months tomorrow, goooby.
JIMMY: [calling] Six months! I can do that on me fuckin' head.
SERGEANT: I'll see what we can do.
JIMMY: [calling] Yeah, you would. [Singing]
Mammy, Mammy,
How I love you, How I love you,
My dear old Mammy ...'
SERGEANT: Oh, gawd!
JIMMY: [singing]
'I'd walk a million miles
For one of your smiles,
My Ma-a-a-amy.
[Calling] Hey Serge, Serge.
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] Ignore him.
JIMMY: [calling] I seen that talkin' picture at the Palace, sittin' right up the front, the roped off section for blackfellas. Al Jolson make it he was black, poor white bastard.
SAM: Eh, dubakieny, wahkingy.
JIMMY: [calling] Sergeant! Sergeant!
CONSTABLE: [to the SERGEANT] Jesus, I wish he'd shut up.
JIMMY: [calling] Eh, Sergeant! You bin, you bin out to Gumport Wel and told Mum and Milly and Sam in here? ... Eh? No, you wouldn't think of that.
SERGEANT: [standing, to the CONSTABLE] I'll leave you to it. I'm going to interview a few publicans.
CONSTABLE: Had enough?
[The SERGEANT exits towards the main street.]
JIMMY: [calling] Fack you, you white bastard, fack you.
[Singing feebly]
'I don't give a damn for any damn man,
That don't give a damn for me.
SCENE FIVE

The court house at Northam, morning. The SERGEANT stands near the JP, a local cocky, who sits at the bench.

JP: What have we got?
SERGEANT: Not much.
JP: Good, I’m in a hurry.
SERGEANT: Two natives. One supplying.
JP: All right, let’s get moving. I’ve got to go to a bank auction in Wongamine; tryin’ to pick up a cheap binder.
FRANK enters and goes to the dock. The SERGEANT passes the JP a paper bag. The JP pulls the port bottle out of it and looks at it curiously.

Evidence.
[The JP examines it and sniffs it.]

JP: Are Munday and, ah, what’s his-name, natives within the meaning of the Aborigines Act?
SERGEANT: Yes, sir.
JP: What do you plead?
FRANK: Guilty with an explanation, sir.
JP: If you’re guilty I can’t see much point in an explanation.
FRANK: I’d still like to say something, sir.
SERGEANT: The accused has been warned on two previous occasions about associating with natives.
JP: All right, make it brief.
FRANK: I arrived in Northam a few days ago, and I was broke and I didn’t have anything to eat for two days and I ran into Jimmy in the park and he—

JP: [interrupting, to the SERGEANT] Who?
SERGEANT: James Munday. He was one of the natives arrested along with the accused.
JP: [to FRANK] All right, get on with it.
FRANK: Well, he was a real mate to me. He took me to his home and gave me a meal of—

JP: [interrupting, to the SERGEANT] His what?
SERGEANT: His camp at Government Well.
FRANK: He gave me a meal of—
and used indecent language. He threatened to ‘blow my head off’.

JIMMY: I did not.

SERGEANT: Silence in the court.

JIMMY: [to the JP] What I said was that if I had a —

SERGEANT: [interrupting] Silence!

JIMMY: [to the JP] But he’s telling it wrong. What I said was, that —

JP: [interrupting] Order, order. Now you be quiet, Munday, you’ll get your chance shortly.

JIMMY: But all I was guuana say was that what —

JP: [interrupting] Shut up, you bloody idiot, or I’ll charge you with contempt of court.

SAM: Yes, sir.

JP: [indicating JIMMY] Not you, him. [To the SERGEANT] Are there any previous records?

SERGEANT: Munday has several previous convictions for the same offence and one of unlawful disposal of government rations.

JP: And Millimurra?

SERGEANT: One, drinking, when in the company of Munday.

JP: Are they related?

SAM: He’s my goonja, sir.

JP: He’s your what?

SERGEANT: They’re brothers-in-law. Millimurra’s married to —

JP: [interrupting] All right, I see this is your sixth offence related to alcohol. On the last occasion you were sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment. This time your sentence is three months imprisonment with hard labour.

[He stands.]

All right . . .

SERGEANT: What about Millimurra, sir?

JP: Ah, fine of twenty-five shillings. Any costs?

SERGEANT: Two and sixpence.

JP: And two and six costs, in default seven days imprisonment.

SERGEANT: He’ll need time to pay.

JP: All right, fourteen days. Stand down.

[The JP hurries out.]
ain't goin' post cuttin' today, and David, you walk to school.

DAVID: Aw, Mum!

MILLY: Don't, 'Aw Mum' me. Joe, you git on that bike and go and ask Uncle Herbie for a lend of his horse and cart. We takin' her to the doctor straight away.

[JOE takes the bike from DAVID.]

SAM: Aw Mill, can't you and Mum take her? I only want another hundred posts and I'll have enough bountee to pay you fine.

[GRAN grabs JOE before he rides off.]

GRAN: Ask him for some gummittari for me.

MILLY: You can go this afternoon.

JOE: Okay, Gran.

SAM: What doctor you takin' her to?

[DAVID gets on the bike behind JOE and they ride off together towards the main street.]

GRAN: More better take her straight to the hospital.

SAM: [calling after JOE and DAVID] We'll wait down the road for you.

JOE: Okay!

[JOE and DAVID exit.]

MILLY: [to SAM] You better ask Skinny for a couple of dozen bags.

SAM: He'll want me to cut an extra one hundred and fifty posts for that.

MILLY: Well, cut 'em then, and get a lend of some bag needles and don't forget binder twine.

SAM: Another twenty posts.

MILLY: You an' Joe can patch up the sides, then go down the dump an' see if you can find more tin for the roof. Bloody place is colder than the North Pole. And that old baldy had better cough up with some more blankets.

SAM: Come on girle, I'll carry you.

[SAM picks up CISSIE and they all leave. The dogs bark.]
ACT ONE — SCENE SEVEN

CONSTABLE: [to the SERGEANT] I kicked a couple of goals.

JIMMY: [to MISS DUNN] I wanna see him.

MISS DUNN: All right, what's your name?

JIMMY: Jimmy Munday. I wanna train fare; mixed goods leaves at eleven o'clock.

MISS DUNN: All right, I'll ask him ... [She goes to NEVILLE's desk.]

That native, Jimmy Munday, is waiting to see you. He wants a train fare.

NEVILLE: Well, he'll just have to wait.

MISS DUNN: [returning to her desk] I'm afraid he's very busy at the moment.

[The phone rings in Northam.]

He'll see you later on.

[The CONSTABLE answers the phone.]

CONSTABLE: Hello, Northam Police ... Yes, JIMMY: [together] [to MISS DUNN] Look, Missus. I just got outa goal an' I wanna train fare back home.

[The phone rings in the Chief Protector's Office.]

Constable: [to the SERGEANT] Niggers' Department.

[The SERGEANT takes the phone.]

MISS DUNN: [to NEVILLE] He says he's just been released from goal. [Into the receiver] Hello, Aborigines Department.

NEVILLE: Then he should have the price of a train fare.

MISS DUNN: [into the receiver] Yes, hold the line please. [To NEVILLE] Northam.

SERGEANT: Hello.

NEVILLE: [to MISS DUNN] Oh, he can have a travel voucher if he comes back after two.

[He picks up the phone. MISS DUNN hangs up and relays NEVILLE's message to JIMMY.]

SERGEANT: Hello.

NEVILLE: Sergeant Carrol ... Neville, Sergeant, we seem to be running into problems again. I've received correspondence from the Town Clerk to the effect that they are opposing the gazetting of the Guilford Road site as a native reserve. They consider it unsuitable.

SERGEANT: It's got a water supply and a couple acres of grazing land.

[MILLY and GRAN approach the police station.]
NEVILLE: Apparently the Council has plans to develop it.
SERGEANT: What as?
NEVILLE: [reading] As a ‘recreation park, for boy scouts and picnic parties’.
SERGEANT: Pretty recent plans.
GRAN: [shouting] Chergeant! Chergeant!
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] For Christ’s sake, see who that is.
NEVILLE: Sorry, Sergeant.
SERGEANT: Between you and me and the gatepost, the Council’d prefer it if you sent ’em to Moore River or somewhere.
GRAN: Chergeant!
[The CONSTABLE goes to the door.]
NEVILLE: Most councils would prefer that, Sergeant, but the place is bursting at the seams.
GRAN: [to the CONSTABLE] I wanna see him.
CONSTABLE: He’s on the phone.
NEVILLE: You can only do your best, but I’m afraid you’ll have to come up with another alternative.
CONSTABLE: [to GRAN] You’ll have to come back later on.
GRAN: You ain’t the boss .... Chergeant!
NEVILLE: I’ll be in touch soon.
SERGEANT: ’Bye, Mr Neville.
CONSTABLE: [to GRAN] I don’t want any lip from you.
NEVILLE: Better leave you to it.
[NEVILLE and the SERGEANT hang up.]
GRAN: [to the CONSTABLE] And I don’t want any from you.
[To the SERGEANT, shouting] Hey, Chergeant, your man gettin’ cheeky out ‘ere.
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] For God’s sake, let ’em in.
GRAN: Choo, choo. Mum, don’t shout.
SERGEANT: They can be heard all the way down the bloody street ....
[They enter. JIMMY barges into the Chief Protector’s Office.]
JIMMY: Mr Neville.
NEVILLE: I thought you were told to wait outside.
JIMMY: I only want a train fare.
NEVILLE: I distinctly heard Miss Dunn tell you to come back after two.

JIMMY: Too late, mixed goods leaves at eleven.
NEVILLE: You can catch the Kalgoorlie train at five.
JIMMY: I don’t want to go to Kalgoorlie.
SERGEANT: [to GRAN and MILLY, taking out the ration book] Why weren’t youse here yesterday?
NEVILLE: [to JIMMY, exploding] Wait outside, then.
GRAN: [to the SERGEANT] Had to go t’hospital.
NEVILLE: A travel voucher please, Miss Dunn.
MILLY: [to the SERGEANT] My gal’s sick in ‘ospital.
JIMMY ambles out and stretches out on the bench.
SERGEANT: [taking out packets of rations] Sugar, tea.
MILLY: We need blankets.
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] See if you can find some bi-carb. There. Here’s your stick of nigger twist, Gran.
MILLY: What about blankets?
SERGEANT: [taking out a packet] Flour .... What?
MILLY: Blankets. My girl’s in ‘ospital with ‘monia and pleurisy.
GRAN: An’ we want blankets.
SERGEANT: Sorry, blankets not here yet, Milly.
GRAN: Her name Mrs Millimurra. Proper church married, New Norcia, white dress an’ all.
MILLY: Got paper to prove it, and birth ‘tificate.
GRAN: [at the approaching CONSTABLE] Not like some people, I bet.
CONSTABLE: Here’s your bi-carb.
GRAN: What about them wabara?
CONSTABLE: What?
MILLY: Blankets!
SERGEANT: Look, there’s nothin’ I can do about it except put in a reminder to the Department in Perth. Why don’t youse go around to St John’s and ask the vicar?
MILLY: For blankets? He’ll give us nothin’, he’s like that.
GRAN: [adopting a praying attitude] Yeah, when he come to Gubment Well he goes like that with his eyes closed and he says the Lord will help you, and now he prays with his eyes open, ‘cause time ’fore last Wow Wow bit him on the leg .... musta wanted a bit ‘a’ holy meat.
MILLY: You forgot our meat order.
SERGEANT: No meat this week.
SCENE EIGHT

Government Well, day. JIMMY is mending a pair of shoes. GRAN and MILLY see bags together. SAM enters with buckets of water and sits down, exhausted. JOE enters with a sugar bag slung over his back.

JIMMY: There y're, Joe, good as new.
JOE: Woolah! Moondity!
JIMMY: Learnt me trade well, in Freeo.
MILLY: [to JOE] What did you get?
JOE: Fat, taters, onions.
SAM: You get meat?
MILLY: No bowndah for meat.
JIMMY: Wish I'd known the meat ration was cut out when I saw Mr bloody Neville the other day.
GRAN: He take no notice of you.
JOE: Cissie ready to come home from hospital.
SAM: When, today?
JOE: She's waiting there now.
MILLY: Why didn't you ask him to give youse a lift 'ome?
JOE: Him? Hah!
JIMMY: Only time blackfellas git a ride off him is when he's takin' you to gaol.
MILLY: Well, she ain't walkin' home, anyways. Sam, you better get a lend of Herbie's cart.
JOE: It's got the wheel broke, Mum.
MILLY: Then you'll have to get a lend of old Skinny Martin's.
SAM: Another hundred posts, I bet.
MILLY: Ne'mine the posts, long as we git her home.
JIMMY: Yeah, go and ask him, Goonoolya, and I'll solve the meat problem at the same time.
MILLY: What you talkin' about?
JOE: Yeah, Kongi, I know where his wethers runnin'.
JIMMY: Him, I know that bastard's farm like the back a me hand.
JOE: Old Skinny might be bony but his sheep are cruel fat.
GRAN: You wanna watch out. Sergeant catch you, he give you six months just like that.
JIMMY: Oh, bugger old baldy.
JOE: Woalah, sheep guts and lo-o-o-vel-y hot damper.
GRAN: Don’t git tjeunyiny, you ain’t got the horse and cart yet.
SAM: Don’t worry ’bout that, Mother-In-Law, as long as he reckons he’s gettin’ somethin’ for nothin’ he’ll be in it, kuwanna tiyellara.
JOE: Come on, let’s get goin’, I’m hungry.
JIMMY: Well, he ain’t gitten it for nothin’ this time.
SAM: Better bring Wow Wow, help round the sheeps up.
GRAN: Put them shoes on, Joe.
JOE: Don’t need no dawg. Don’t need no shoes either, Granny, I can run better barefoot and faster than Wow Wow.
JIMMY: Come on, Guoolya, we’ll git one of the skinny old bastard’s sheep and bring it home on his own cart.
MILLY: Me and Mum, we’ll wait for youse in the park, all right?
GRAN: Youse be careful now, you hear me?
MILLY: Come on, Gran.
JIMMY: [miming slicing the sheep’s throat] Mirri-up, miri-up.
Alleeuah koorkantjeri gnurny nooniny dininy, uoor dininy.

SCENE NINE

The Chief Protector of Aborigines’ Office, Perth, day. MISS DUNN types while MR NEVILLE dictates from a list of warrants. SERGEANT CARROL approaches.


[There is a knock on the door. MISS DUNN rises to answer it.]
SERGEANT: Sergeant Carrol, Northam. I’m meant to be seeing —

NEVILLE: Sergeant, I wasn’t expecting you until later. Train on time?
SERGEANT: [entering] Not exactly, sir, I caught the seventwenty mixed goods.
NEVILLE: When are you returning? Come through, sit down.
[They sit at NEVILLE’s desk.]
SERGEANT: On the five-fifteen Kalgoorlie train.
NEVILLE: Right, I don’t want to delay you, so we’ll deal with the matter in hand. Miss Dunn, would you bring the Northam file, please, and the warrants?
[MISS DUNN locates the file, collects the warrants and brings them to NEVILLE.]
Sergeant, as I mentioned on the phone, Doctor Aberdeen examined the natives camped at Government Well. [He goes through the file and finds the doctor’s report.] And found them to be ... ‘rotten with scabies’, and as a result of — ah, well, various submissions, it’s been decided to transfer the entire native population to the Moore River Settlement.
SERGEANT: Yes sir. We can give up looking for a site for a new reserve, then.
NEVILLE: The transfer is a temporary measure, Sergeant. Well, I’ve got all the warrants, following your own census, Sergeant; a total of eighty-nine natives. [He hands over the warrants.]
If that list changes at all, let me know and I’ll obtain any additional warrants. It’s essential that the town and shire are quite devoid of natives after the seventeenth.
SERGEANT: Yes, sir.
NEVILLE: I’ve arranged with the railway authorities for an AR coach and brake van to be at your disposal on the seventwenty a.m. train on the seventeenth. It will arrive, I am assured, at ten-twenty-nine a.m. at Midland and I’ve arranged for the Midland Railway Company to attach both to a train to leave immediately for Mogumber. Should arrive at three p.m. You’ll be met and proceeded on foot to a quarantine camp at Long Pool, just east of the settlement. [Handing him an order form] I’ve authorised expenditure of one and sixpence per native for food en route to be purchased in Northam, and for buckets of tea to be available
SERGEANT: [standing] Thank you, Mr Neville. All the best for Christmas.

NEVILLE: And to you and yours.

[The SERGEANT moves past MISS DUNN’s desk.]

MISS DUNN: Goodbye, Sergeant. Have a happy Christmas.

SERGEANT: Same to you, madam.

[The SERGEANT exits.]

SCENE TEN

Government Well, Northam, day. CISSIE, with the aid of a knife is looking for lice in DAVID’s hair. MILLY and GRAN saw. A car approaches.

CISSIE: Keep still!

DAVID: Well stop diggin’ a hole in me head.

CISSIE: Hold still, I got a big one.

GRAN: [looking up at the car] Gnee na kooring?

MILLY: Alleluia, manah!

CISSIE: They got Dad and Joe and Uncle Jimmy.

MILLY: Gawd, hope they haven’t been caught stealin’ a sheep.

[Everyone is silent. The three men are escorted to the camp by the SERGEANT and CONSTABLE.]

What’s up?

JIMMY: [nodding at the SERGEANT] Just listen to him.

SAM: We’re all goin’.

[He gestures Ngapang fashion as the CONSTABLE goes through a pile of warrants.]

SERGEANT: Millimurra and Munday.

GRAN: Goin’? Where?

SERGEANT: I’ve got warrants here for the arrest and apprehension of all of you.

MILLY: What for? We ain’t done nothin’.

SERGEANT: I never said you did. You’re bein’ transferred, every native in Northam’s goin’!

MILLY: Goin’ where?!

SAM: Mogumber.
CONSTABLE: You’re being transferred to the Moore River Native Settlement.
GRAN: I ain’t goin’.
CONSTABLE: You’re all goin’. You’re under arrest.
GRAN: What for? We done nothin’ wrong.
SERGEANT: It’s for health reasons. Epidemic of skin disease.
JIMMY: Bullshit, I’ll tell you why we’re goin’.
CONSTABLE: You wouldn’t know.
JIMMY: You reckon blackfellas are bloody mugs. Whole town knows why we’re goin’. ‘Coz weyjalas in this town don’t want us ’ere, don’t want our kids at the school, with their kids, and old Jimmy Mitchell’s tight ‘coz they reckon Bert ‘Awke’s gonna give him a ludin’ in the election.
CONSTABLE: What the hell would you know? You don’t even vote.
JIMMY: I know more about weyjala’s gulment than you do, and what I’m tellin’ you’s the truth.
CONSTABLE: Bullshit.
SERGEANT: Shut up, will you? I don’t know whose idea it is, it’s got nothin’ to do with me.
CONSTABLE: You barkin’ up the wrong tree, Munday.
JIMMY: Bullshit, Jimmy Mitchell’s —
SERGEANT: [interrupting] Look, I know this much; Jimmy Mitchell’s got nothin’ against blackfellas, or anybody else, for that matter.
JIMMY: No, he’s got nothin’ against ’em. Not worth losin’ a bloody election over, that’s all. I’ll tell you somethin’: you’re wastin’ your fuckin’ time.
CONSTABLE: Hey, all right.
JIMMY: ‘Coz weyjalas aren’t gonna vote for ‘im. You know why? ‘Coz he’s got all them Chinamans workin’ on his farm at Grass Valley and weyjalas don’t like that. He’s gonna get rid the blackfellas, he should get rid of them Chinamens too.
SERGEANT: Oh, Jesus, shut up will youse? You’re all goin’ and that’s that, an’ if you don’t co-operate you’ll just go along for resisting arrest and escaping legal custody.
SAM: When are we supposed to be leavin’?
SERGEANT: On the seven-twenty mixed goods train in the morning. You’ll be camping in the goods shed overnight.
MILLY: What about all our things?
SERGEANT: You can pack personal things belonging to you. Herbert Munday is too old to go by road, Sam and his family will be going on the road party, with his horse and cart. Jimmy and Gran can go on the train.
GRAN: I ain’t goin’ on no train, I’m goin’ with Sam and Milly. You’re not makin’ me go on no train.
CONSTABLE: You’ll get pretty hot walkin’.
SERGEANT: Listen, Granny, the road trip will take four days. You’ll be better off on the train.
GRAN: Charge, I ain’t goin’ on no train. You can put me in gaol if you want to.
[She begins to warl and cry.]
I’m not goin’ by train; what we leaving Gubment Well for? Weyjala warrah, warrahmut, oohh!
SERGEANT: All right, all right, Gran, you can go by road if you want to.
GRAN: [recovering instantly] I am, too.
CONSTABLE: It’s her funeral if she doesn’t make it.
JIMMY: It’ll be your funeral.
SERGEANT: That’s enough, Jimmy, you’re comin’ with us. The rest of you better start packin’ and go and get Herbie’s horse and cart.
SAM: What about our kangaroo dogs?
SERGEANT: I’m under strict orders that no dogs are allowed to go.
SAM: What, leave the dogs behind?
JIMMY: Come off it, Sergeant, how are they gonna get meat on the way?
CONSTABLE: You won’t need to worry, you’ll be on the train.
SERGEANT: There’s plenty of rabbits.
JOE: What, are you gonna run ’em down?
SERGEANT: According to Dr Aberdeen you’ve got a serious heart condition, so you’ll be going on the train, Jimmy.
JIMMY: I’m not goin’ on no fuckin’ train.
GRAN: Charge, I’m not leavin’ Wow Wow behind. If I can’t take him, I’m not goin’.
MILLY: Who’s gonna look after our dogs?
CONSTABLE: We’ll attend to them.
MILLY: Yeah, we know that.
JIMMY: With a police bullet.
GRAN: [frantically] You’re not gonna shoot Wow, you’re not gonna shoot Wow Wow. You hear me, Chergeant? I’m not goin’.

[GRAN is frantic now. She tears her hair and throws plates and mugs about.]

SERGEANT: Oh Jesu, take your bloody mangy Wow Wow, whatever you call it. Take the bloody lot, just remember to be ready to move out tomorrow morning.

[The police escort JIMMY away. The family looks on in stunned silence. CISSIE clings to her mother and cries.]

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO, MOORE RIVER

SCENE ONE

The track to Moore River, day. The family enters. They are laden with possessions, hot, dusty and tired. In a clearing at the Long Pool Camp, Moore River Native Settlement, JIMMY erects a bush shade over a tent. The family is approached by a tracker, BILLY KIMBERLEY. He smokes a clay pipe and carries a whip.

BILLY: Mornin', mornin'.
SAM: Gawd, who the fuckin' hell are you?
BILLY: I'm a politician, name Billy Kimberley.
DAVID: [amazed, to CISSIE] He's a policeman!
SAM: More like Tom Mix.
[BILLY holds out his pipe.]
BILLY: You got kilderka?
CISSIE: He might be Buck Jones.
SAM: Ain't got none.
GRAN: You ain't politician, you just black tracker.
BILLY: All right, you fellas follow me, now. I show you where your camp. Come on now, this way.
[They follow BILLY towards the clearing.]
CISSIE: [to DAVID, nodding at BILLY] Gawd, he's black.
DAVID: He ain't black, he's purple!
GRAN: Choo, you fellas want to dubakiny waunginjia.
He might be boolyaduk.
JOE: Ah, Granny, he's yurt. [Making an open gesture] He's like that.
[They approach JIMMY.]
JIMMY: 'Ullo! 'Ullo! How's everybody?
SAM: Tired, bloody tired.
[They start to unload their possessions.]
BILLY: Now, you fellas sit down along this place, you hear me? Matron comin' bye and bye.
MILLY: Who?
JIMMY: Matron, Superintendent's Missus. She runs the hospital.
MILLY: When's she comin'?
BILLY: Dunno, 'morrow, must be next day. She comin' you fella all wait this place now.
[ BILLY exits.

JOE: Gawd streath!

[JIMMY turns to the departed BILLY.

JIMMY: Anyway, how you, Mill? Joe and you kids? Mum?

MILLY: We're all right, I s'pose.

JIMMY: And how you, Mother?

GRAN: I'm avarah, gunny jamma mindij, and I got no gnummari.

JIMMY: Never mind, Mother, here.

[JIMMY takes some tobacco from his pocket and gives it to her.

GRAN: Winja kaap?

JIMMY: Straight down the pad, there.

MILLY: You kids get a billy each and go and get some water.

DAVID: Oh boy, I'm gonna have a swim.

MILLY: No, you ain't. Might be biltar, dugajij, anything down there.

DAVID: Aw, Mum.

MILLY: I said no.

JOE: I'll come with youse.

MILLY: All right, you can if Joe's with youse.

DAVID: Come on, Cissie!

MILLY: Take the water bag.

[They take it and run off.]

JIMMY: Kimberley tell youse where to get the tucker tonight?

MILLY: No.

JIMMY: Down the kitchen.

SAM: Where?

JIMMY: Soup Kitchen.

SAM: Good tucker?

JIMMY: More like three-course bloody pig swill. Treacle and bread or bread and fat, take your pick.

SAM: What about dajij?

JIMMY: Meat? You gotta be joking.

MILLY: What about a sheet of iron for the fireplace?

JIMMY: Don't worry, I know where I can get one. Come on, Sam, I'll knock it off, you can watch.

[ JIMMY exits, followed by SAM.]

GRAN: Coo, coo! You come back now, Jimmy, you hear?

[ MILLY unrolls a blanket. She and GRAN are left alone.]

MILLY: Come on, Mum, lay down and have a rest.

SCENE TWO

A clearing near the Moore River, day. JOE, DAVID and CISSIE fill a water bag from BILLY cans.

JOE: Don't spill it.

CISSIE: I'm tryin' not to.

[DAVID tries the water.

JOE: Good kaap.

CISSIE: Don't spit in it.

DAVID: I ain't.

[Unison, two girls approach: TOPSY and MARY, who carries a bag of meat. DAVID takes his shirt off.

Where we gonna swim?

CISSIE: Dunno, let's find a place.

[DAVID sees the girls.

DAVID: Tjinungn, yorgahs!

[They all look.]

JOE: Gidday.

MARY: Hello.

TOPSY: You fellas amongst the Northam lot?

JOE: Yeah, that's Cissie, and that's David. I'm Joe, Joe Millimurra. We're all Millimurra.

TOPSY: I'm Topsy, that's Mary. She's from up North.

JOE: They grow 'em pretty up there.

[DAVID, CISSIE and TOPSY giggle.

What you got in the bag?

TOPSY: Yonga, we're takin' it up to Uncle Herbie.

CISSIE: Uncle Herbie's our uncle too.

JOE: How come he's your uncle?

TOPSY: His cousin is our grandfather — I think, on our mum's side. How come he's your uncle?

CISSIE: He's married to our aunt. You know, not really married.
[She and DAVID dissolve into the giggles.]

JOE: [to MARY] Are you related too?

MARY: No.

[DAVID and CISSIE laugh.]

DAVID: Eh, Goon, you’re cruel!

JOE: Shut up. Take the water back, you two.

DAVID: What about our swim?

JOE: I’ll take youse later, get goin’!

[CISSIE and DAVID run off.]

CISSIE: [together] Joe’s got a girlfriend, Joe’s got a girlfriend.

DAVID: [They exit.]

TOPSY: I got to get goin’ to set the tables for supper.

[TOPSY exits.]

JOE: [to MARY] I can take the meat for you if you like.

MARY: [approaches with the bag of meat.]

What’s your name?

MARY: Mary.

JOE: I know that. Your full name?

MARY: Mary Dargurr.

[She runs after TOPSY, still carrying the meat.]

JOE: Mary!

MARY: [stopping] Yeah?

JOE: The daij.

MARY: Oh, yeah.

[She returns to him with it.]

JOE: [taking the meat] When will I see you again?

MARY: Dunno.

JOE: Can you be here tomorrow?

MARY: I’ll try.

JOE: Don’t say ‘try’, say you will be.

MARY: All right.

JOE: Same time.

MARY: I’ll try, I mean, yes.

JOE: I’m glad we’re not related.

MARY: So am I.

[She runs off. JOE watches her into the distance.]

SCENE THREE

Long Pool Camp, Moore River, a hot day. CISSIE and DAVID play knuckle bones. MILLY and JOE enter with water. GRAN sits in the shade. The dogs bark. BILLY trudges on, followed at a distance by MATRON NEAL, TOPSY and MARY.

BILLY: [calling] You fella got them doothoo tied up?

SAM: [calling] Yeah.

BILLY: Come on, Missus, come on.

SAM: [to JOE] Nothin’ to bite on him, he’s all skin and bone.

JOE: Plenty of meat on the matron.

BILLY: You fella stand up straight, now.

DAVID: Hey, that’s them girls.

BILLY: [poking his whip at DAVID] You shut up now.

JOE: Hey, old man, dishonker.

MATRON: Good morning, good morning. Now, all the family here?

GRAN: My boy Jimmy ain’t.

MATRON: [checking her list] Monday, James Emanuel. Oh, yes, with the train party. It’s all right, we’ve seen him. Now let’s see. Samuel, Millicent, Joseph, David and Cecilia, and the grandmother. Good. Now I’m the matron, Matron Neal, and I’m in charge of the hospital and Topsy here is helping me.

DAVID: We already seen her.

JOE: Shut up, goon.

MATRON: Now, seeing you came here for health reasons, I’d just like to examine you.

GRAN: What for?

MATRON: For any skin complaints, Granny.

GRAN: Scabies? We ain’t got it.

SAM: Even the dogs ain’t got it.

BILLY: You be quiet now, Matron make you no more sick fella.

JOE: What’s he yakkin’ about? We ain’t sick.

[BILLY threatens JOE viciously with the whip.]

MATRON: All right, Billy. Now David, you first. Come on.

[He doesn’t move. BILLY prods him with the whip.]

Billy!
DAVID: I ain’t takin’ me pants off.
JOE: Me either.
   [TOPSY giggles.]
MATRON: Just your shirt will do for a start.
   [She begins to take DAVID’s shirt off. TOPSY moves to help him but he jumps away and does it himself.]
DAVID: Git!
MILLY: David.
   [MATRON examines his hands, elbows and knees, ankles and abdomen.]
MATRON: Good boy. Now you, Cecilia.
MILLY: She checks her much the same way.
MATRON: None of us got it.
   [MATRON checks her and SAM.]
MATRON: No, they’re a healthy lot, a credit to you, Millicent. All right Joe, take your shirt off.
JOE: There’s nothin’ wrong with me.
MATRON: No, I’m sure there’s not. I just want to check.
   [She checks him in the same way.]
JOE: How old are you, Joe?
JOE: Dunno.
MILLY: He’s seventeen next burnin’ season.
MATRON: He’s a strapping lad.
   [GRAN gets up.]
   No need to get up, Gran, I’m sure you’re all right.
GRAN: Joe, show Matron your belly button, go on.
   [She pulls JOE’s shirt up.]
   What do you think of that, Matron?
JOE: Aww Gran, kienja.
GRAN: Isn’t that the naesiest belly button you seen? Have a look, Matron. I brought him into the world with me own two hands.
SAM: [laughing] Mumma!
MATRON: You did a very good job, Granny.
GRAN: I brought plenty koolajah into this world, Matron.
MATRON: Well, there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong with your family, Millicent. I won’t bother putting you on the sulphur, but I want you all to use the washing facilities every day before every meal and after you’ve been to the toilet. Now, look at those fingernails, David; perhaps you could set an example by going off and scrubbing them.
   [DAVID exits reluctantly.]
Well, Milly, here are a few more cakes of Lysol soap and some handkerchiefs for the children. Well, busy, busy, Topsy, one more family visit. ‘Bye for the present, Goodbye, Gran.
   [She goes to leave, then stops.]
Oh, how many dogs have you got in the camp?
   [They look at each other in silence, then:]
SAM: A couple of kangaroo dogs, and Granny’s dog.
   [MATRON strides off, followed by BILLY, who stops her some distance away.]
BILLY: They got that many, missus.
   [He holds up seven fingers.]
JOE, DAVID and CISSE: Wabirung, wabirung, black crow!
   [MATRON exits. BILLY glares at the children.]

SCENE FOUR

Moore River Native settlement, a clearing in the pine plantation, night.
JOE creeps on and lets out a moans call. Pause. He calls again, and the call is returned. MARY approaches, carrying a crumpled parcel.

JOE: You got here all right.
MARY: I brought you a present.
   [She hands him the crumpled parcel and they sit on a log.]
JOE: What is it?
MARY: Damper, oven cooked, mixed with emu fat and they’re real raisins, not weevils.
   [They giggle and eat.]
JOE: You comfortable? Sit closer. How long you been here?
MARY: About five minutes.
JOE: I know that, I mean how long you been here at the settlement?
MARY: This was my third Christmas ... I wish I was back home. I hate this place, I hate everything in it.
JOE: Even me?
MARY: No, I don’t hate you.
JOE: Them wetjjas treat you all right?
MARRY: Goddammit! Matron and Sister Eileen are all right. They try to be nice, but I don’t like Mr Neal. He scares me.
JOE: He don’t scare me.
MARRY: I don’t like the way he looks at me.
JOE: Well, you got me now, for what I’m worth.
[He laughs.]
MARRY: He’s always hangin’ around where the girls are workin’ in the cookhouse, in the sewin’ room. And he’s always carryin’ that cat-o-nine tails and he’ll use it, too.
JOE: Bastard, better not use it on you or any of my lot.
MARRY: He reckoned he was gunna belt me once.
JOE: What for?
MARRY: ‘Cos I said I wasn’t gunna go and work for goddamned on a farm.
JOE: Why not? Be better than this place.
MARRY: No! [With shame] Some of them goddamned real bad. My friend went last Christmas and then she came back boodjari. She reckons the boss’s sons used to belt her up and, you know, force her. Then they kicked her out. And when she had that baby them trackers choked it dead and buried it in the pine plantation.
JOE: What? You dinkum?
MARRY: That’s true.
JOE: [stunned] The bastards. The fuckin’ bastards.
[MARRY starts to cry.]
Come on, Mary, stop that. You know somethin’?
MARRY: What?
JOE: I don’t like you.
[She draws away.]
I love you.
[They embrace.]
MARRY: I have to go back, Matron will find out.
JOE: Stay a bit longer.
[She kisses him.]
MARRY: I have to go now, or she won’t let me out again.
JOE: When will I see you again?
MARRY: Tomorrow.
JOE: Same time?
MARRY: Yeah.

ACT TWO — SCENE FIVE

JOE: Same log?
MARRY: Yeah, Joe, I don’t like you either.
[They laugh and embrace. MARRY runs away. JOE watches after her.]

SCENE FIVE

The Moore River Settlement, a hot morning. JIMMY ambles about outside the Superintendent’s office. MR NEAL approaches. He has a hangover.

NEAL: Hey, you, you’re with the Northam lot, aren’t you?
What are you doing here?
JIMMY: What’s it look like I’m doing?
NEAL: You’re supposed to be up in the quarantine camp.
JIMMY: Quarantine camp, me arse.
NEAL: You’re out of bounds and you know it.
JIMMY: Come off it, you know that quarantine camp is a load of bullshit, so don’t try and tip it over me.
NEAL: I’ll attend to you later.
[He heads for his office.]
JIMMY: You know, if fertiliser was in short supply you’d make a bloody fortune.
[He sniggers.]
NEAL: [mumbling] Another bloody troublemaker.
[He sits at his desk. MARRY brings him tea on a tray. He leers at her body. MATRON enters, almost catching him.]
MATRON: Where did you get to yesterday?
NEAL: You know very well I had to go to Moora to see about —
MATRON: [interrupting] To spend the day in the hotel drinking. Don’t imagine no one sees you come in, the condition you were in — fine example.
NEAL: I’ve got to get away from the place now and again.
MATRON: What about me? I was at the quarantine camp from dawn till dusk again yesterday.
NEAL: Done them all?
MATRON: Yes, eventually.
NEAL: How many have got it?
MATRON: Scabies? Mrs Mason and her three youngsters.
NEAL: Yes.
MATRON: That's all, just the four of them. I've isolated them, put them on sulphur and regular bathing.
NEAL: Four of 'em, only cases of skin disease? Only four?
MATRON: Yes, Alf. I can recognise a case of scabies when I see one.
NEAL: And you've examined the lot of them?
MATRON: Yes, I haven't been going up the Long Pool for a picnic.
NEAL: Are you telling me out of eighty-nine dumped on me, only four of them have got the bloody disease?
[She puts the record book in front of him.]
Good God, woman, what's the bloody game? Eighty-nine natives in a bloody quarantine camp I've just bustled me gut to get ready on time, and there's nothing bloody well wrong with 'em?
MATRON: Alf, there's no need to lose your temper and no need for bad language. They should be cleared up in a few days.
NEAL: The whole job's a waste of time. They could have been treated in Northam.
MATRON: The only health hazard in the camp are the dogs.
NEAL: What dogs?
MATRON: There's about fifty of them, and a good many in less than healthy condition.
NEAL: How did the dogs get here?
MATRON: With the road party, apparently.
NEAL: No one told me anything about dogs.
MATRON: One per family.
[She exits.]
NEAL: That's one too many. [Calling] Billy! Billy!
[He unlocks the armoury cupboard and gets a rifle and ammunition.]
BILLY: [off] Yeah, comin' boss.
[NEAL counts out the ammunition. BILLY enters.]
Yeah, Boss?
NEAL: Get the horses and a length of rope, Billy.
BILLY: Yeah, boss.
[NEAL takes a rifle and ammunition. They exit.]
river and for the fish to jump up high so he can catch them in the fish traps.

SAM: [pointing to BILLY's body point] Eh! Eh! Old man, what's that one?

BILLY: This one hungarri, an' he lookin' for berry bush. But he know that fella eagle watchin' him and he know that fella is cumnin' fella. He watchin' and lookin' for that eagle, that way, this way, that way, this way.

[He rolls over a log, disappearing almost magically. BLUEY plays the didgeridoo and BILLY appears some distance away by turning quickly so the firelight reveals his painted body. He dances around, then seems to disappear suddenly. He rolls back over the log and drops down, seated by the fire.]

BLUEY, SAM and JIMMY: Yakk! Moordi! Woolak!

JIMMY: Eh? That one dance come from your country?

BILLY: Nah. That one come from that way, lo-o-ong way. Warumulla country. Proper bad fellas.

SAM: Well, I won't be goin' there.

JOE: Me either!

[JIMMY, JOE and SAM laugh. SAM jumps to his feet with the clapsticks.]

SAM: This one yakhlarah! Everybody! Yakhlarah!

[He starts a rhythm on the clapsticks. BLUEY plays didgeridoo.

JIMMY, and then JOE, join him dancing.]

Come on! Come on!

[He picks up inji sticks. The Nyongeams, SAM, JIMMY and JOE, dance with them. BILLY joins in. They dance with increasing speed and energy, stamping their feet, whirling in front of the fire, their bodies appearing and disappearing as the flame catches the firelight. The dance becomes faster and more frantic until finally SAM lets out a yell and they collapse, dropping back to their positions around the fire. JIMMY coughs and pants painfully.]

[To JIMMY] Eh! Eh! [Indicating his heart] You wanna dakhilyi, you know your heart mindi?

BILLY: This country got plenty good dance, eh?

BLUEY: Wo-ah!

JIMMY: Ah, yuurt, not too many left now. Nearly all finish.

BILLY: No, no, no. You song man, you fella dance men. This still your country. [Flinging his arms wide] You, you, you,

you listen! Gudeeak make 'em fences, windmill, make 'em road for motor car, big house, cut 'em down trees. Still your country! Not like my country, finish ... finish.

[He sits in silence. They watch him intently. JOE puts wood on the fire. He speaks slowly.]


[Long pause.]

SAM: Nieljuk?

BILLY: I bin stop Liveringa station and my brother, he bin run from Oonbulgarri. [Holding up four fingers] That many days. Night time too. He bin tell me 'bout them gudeeak. They bin two, three stockman gudeeak. Bin stop along that place, Juada Station, and this one gudeeak Midja George, he was ridin' and he come to this river and he see these two old women, kurrie, there in the water hole. He says, what you doin' here? They say they gettin' guga.

[He mimics pulling icy roots and eating.]

Midja George say, where the man? They over by that tree sleepin', and Midja George, he get off his horse, and he bin belt that old man with the stockwhip. He bin flog 'em, flog 'em, till that gudeeak, he get tired. Then he break the bottle glass spear, and he break the chabell spear.

[He grunts and mimics this.]

And that old man, he was bleedin', bleedin' from the eyes, and he get up and he pick up that one chabell spear, and he spear that one Midja George.

[He demonstrates violently.]

And that gudeeak, he get on his horse, he go little bit way and he fall off ... finish ... dead.

JIMMY: Serve the bastard right.

BILLY: No, no, no bad for my mob. Real bad. That old man and his two kuyi, they do this next day.

[He indicates running away.]

Two gudeeak come looking for Midja George. They bin find him dead.

[Silence.]

[Holding up a hand] Must be that many day. Big mob gudeeak. Big mob politijsmans, and big mob from stations, and shoot
NO SUGAR

She begins to cry. He checks that they are alone and sits close beside her on the log.

JOE: Eh? What's up? Come on, tell me what's up. You been fightin' with someone?

[She shakes her head.]

Come on! Tell me what's the matter.

MARY: Mr Neal.

JOE: Yeah, what about him?

MARY: He's tryin' to make me go and work at the hospital.

JOE: Well, what's wrong with that?

MARY: Everything.

JOE: You get better tucker.

MARY: It's more than that, Joe.

JOE: What d'ya mean?

MARY: When Mr Neal sends a girl to work at the hospital, it usually means ...

JOE: Means what?

MARY: That he wants that girl ... for himself.

JOE: What?

MARY: Everyone know, even the wagalas.

JOE: Rotten, stinkin', lowdown bastard. I'll kill him!

MARY: Joe ...

JOE: I'll smash his head in with a dock!

MARY: Joe, listen!

JOE: Filthy pig. You not goin' anywhere near that hospital!

MARY: If I don't, he reckons he'll send me back home.

JOE: Home? Where?

MARY: Wyndham. He reckons he send me up home 'coz I'm a give girl.

JOE: Like hell you are.

MARY: I don't want to go up there to marry no old man.

JOE: You're meant to be gettin' married to me.

MARY: Mr Neal not gonna let us get married.

JOE: [exploding] Jesus! [Indicating running] We're doin' this tonight, right this fuckin' minute.

MARY: Joe, you'll get in big trouble!

JOE: I'll get in bigger trouble if I have to chip that walrus-fanged bastard. I'll kill him.

MARY: Joe, listen! Where we gunna go?

JOE: Home, Northam.
NO SUGAR

MARRY: What about your mum and dad?

JOE: We'll tell 'em now, come on, come on.

[MARRY just stands there.]

Come on. I'm gonna show you my country. Got a big river, swans, beautiful white swans.

[JOE picks up his shirt and a billy of water, which he tips on the fire. He leads MARRY off into the darkness.]

SCENE SEVEN

Long Pool Camp, Moore River, night. Dogs bark. JOE and MARY appear as shapes in the darkness. JOE tries to quieten the dogs. He approaches the tent.

JOE: Mum, Dad? You wake?

[He looks back at MARRY, who stands alone.]

Mum, Dad!

MILLY: Hmm, who is it?

JOE: It's only me.

MILLY: It's Joe.

[The tent lights up as a match is struck and a hurricane lamp lit.]

SAM: What's he want?

[He crawls out.]

Where you bin? We been home for hours.

[JOE appears behind him.]

MILLY: Mary's with me.

[JOE takes the lamp and goes to MARY.]

MILLY: Mary! You should be in the compound.

JOE: She ain't goin' back there.

[MILLY appears, sleepy and dazed.]

JIMMY: What's goin' on?

JOE: It's only me, Kongi!

MILLY: She can't stay here. Joe, she's a compound girl.

JOE: I know, Mum, we're runnin' away — tonight!

SAM: Now? What for?

JOE: 'Cause Neal's givin' Mary a bad time.

SAM: Can't be all that bad.

JOE: Neal's after her for himself. He's tryin' to make her

work in the hospital and he keeps sayin' he's gonna send her back to her lot to marry some old man — and he won't give no permission for us to get married.

MILLY: [comforting MARY] There's gotta be some other way than clearn' out.

JOE: Only other way's to stiffen that bastard in the dark.

[He goes to MARY.]

MILLY: They'll catch you sooner or later, son, and you'll go to gaol.

JIMMY: That right, Neph, you clear out. Gaol's porta, only a yougola thing. Don't worry about it.

MILLY: No, I'll do the worryin'.

SAM: Where's Granny?

MILLY: She's stoppin' with Aunty Woolen.

[She picks up a camp oven and breaks damper and crams it into a billy.]

There's a bit of merrang, it's all we got.

[She gives it to MARY. SAM gives JOE a blanket. He begins to roll it.]

Where will you go?

JOE: [smiling] Northam. I'm gonna show Mary the swans. Well, 'bye Dad, Uncle Jimmy! Say goodbye to Gran.

[He moves towards the tent. His mother stops him.]

MILLY: Don't wake the kids. Less they know the better.

JOE: [kissing her] Bye, Mum.

[MARY kisses MILLY, then she and JOE walk away swiftly. They look back and wave, then vanish into the darkness. MILLY cries quietly.]

JIMMY: [calling after them] You can jump the rattler 'bout half a mile outside a Mogumber. Keep to the gravel country. Trackers won't find your tracks.

SCENE EIGHT

The Superintendent's Office, Moore River Native Settlement, day. MR. NEAL is sitting at his desk reading The West Australian, 10 April 1933. The headlines read, 'Government Routed', 'Three Ministers
BILLY: [off] Comin', boss.

MATRON: It seems she was terrified at the prospect of working in the hospital.

NEAL: They're all scared of the dead.

MATRON: I think she was scared of the living.

NEAL: [entering, buttoning his jacket.] Two runaways, Billy! You know Joe Millimurra, Northam native?

BILLY: Yeah, boss.

NEAL: And Mary Dargurru?

BILLY: That one Dargurru, my countryman. [Painting with his chin] She got go back Oombulgurri.

NEAL: You better get movin'! They'll be at the railway line by now.

BILLY: Ne'mine boss. I find 'em. Take 'em whip?

NEAL: Yes, take your whip, and pick up some tucker from the store. Here!

[He throws a stick of tobacco onto the floor. BILLY picks it up.]

BILLY: Thanks, boss.

BILLY exits. MATRON turns to follow him.

MATRON: As matron in charge of the hospital, I thought it was my job to allocate nursing aides.

NEAL: I was only trying to help you.

MATRON: Or yourself.

[She exits. NEAL collapses into his chair.]

SCENE NINE

A clearing near the railway line at Moooloomberri, early morning. MARY is curled up asleep under a blanket. JOE appears with a billy can of water and his hat full of quandongs. He gently wakes MARY. She wakes in fright.

JOE: Look, quandongs.

MARY: Oooh, my feet still hurt.

JOE: Let's have a look.

[JOE washes and rubs her feet. She flinches.] They're a bit skinned. [Nodding at the quandongs] Eat 'em.
MARY Oh, that feels good. [She bites into a quandong.] Aagh! They're sour!
JOE: They're nice with sugar on 'em.
MARY jumps up and begins to vomit. JOE supports her. A magpie warbles.
You all right?
MARY: Gawd! Oh! I've never been sick like that in my life before.
[She retches again.]
JOE: You'll be all right once we get on the rattler. We'll get a nice easy truck.
[JOE sits her down and puts a blanket around her. She sits against him and recovers. A magpie squawks and JOE, immediately on his guard, jumps up and grabs his dook. BILLY KIMBERLEY appears and rushes at him with a stockwhip in one hand and handcuffs in the other. JOE dodges him. MARY is sick again as BILLY advances slowly and menacingly on JOE.]
BILLY: You two fellas, silly fellas. Everyone run away. Wait here for the choo choo. [Swinging the whip at JOE] Choo, choo, choo, choo.
[JOE dodges the whip and threatens him with the dook.]
JOE: Go back, old man. I don't want to hurt you.
BILLY: [pointing with his chin to MARY] She got to come back, she my countryman.
MARY vomits. BILLY drops the handcuffs and the two men crunch and circle each other.
JOE: She's comin' with me.
BILLY: She give girl. Mitjer Neal says she gotta come back.
JOE: Fuck Mr Neal!
BILLY: You bad boy. Tjenna Guppi gunna git you!
JOE: And fuck the Tjenna Guppi too.
[JOE grabs the end of the whip and wrenches it from BILLY, sending him tumbling forward. JOE leaps on him and twists the whip around his neck. MARY staggers across to them. The train whistle blows in the distance.]
MARY: Joe, Joe you choking him!
JOE: I'll kill the old bastard!
MARY: Get up off him. Please! Please, for my sake!
JOE: Gimme them handcuffs! Handcuffs, quick!
[MARY throws him the handcuffs. JOE handcuffs BILLY's hands in front of him, releases the whip and throws it down. He starts to go through BILLY's pockets.]
[To MARY] You run, run, ru-un flat out to the hill! I'll catch you up!
[MARY starts to pick up their possessions.]
Leave them! Just run ... Run!
MARY runs, hopping painfully on bruised and lacerated feet. JOE finds the keys to the handcuffs and throws them away. He picks up their gear.
You shouldn't fight young fellas, old man. Here, tucker.
[JOE thrusts quandongs into BILLY's pockets, pushes his hat down over his head, and runs after MARY.]
BILLY: That awright, that awright. Gudahal policisman git you bye and bye, you see.
[BILLY picks up his whip with his handcuffed hands, pokes it in his belt and walks off slowly. The train thunders past.]

SCENE TEN

The Superintendent's Office, Moore River, day. BILLY, still handcuffed, limps past the Long Pool Camp followed by DAVID, Cissie and Topsy, all shouting 'Black cross, black cross'. MIR NEAL reads the paper at his desk as BILLY approaches.

BILLY: Mitjer Neal, Mitjer Neal! Eh boss!
NEAL: Come in.
[BILLY enters.]
Jesus, what the bloody hell happened?!
BILLY: He bin chuck me off my 'orse and he bin knock me silly fellas with a woddi.
[MATRON walks briskly with an armful of linen. She stops in her tracks when she sees BILLY.]
MATRON: Goodness me, what happened?
NEAL: Well, he never caught Millimurra, Millimurra caught him.
MATRON: [putting the linen on NEAL's desk] Oh, you poor man, where's the keys?
NEAL: Listen, Billy, where did you catch up with them?
BILLY: I bin find ’em Moolambenee.
NEAL: Where were they heading?
BILLY: And that fella bin say he gunna hang me from
Christmas tree like that.

[He demonstrates.]
Eh boss, you bin take ’em off handcuffs now?
MATRON: Where are the keys?
NEAL: All right, which way did they go?
BILLY: They bin run along train line. Train comin’, whoo,
whoo!
NEAL: All right, which — way — was — the — train —
going?
BILLY: Goin’ along train line.
NEAL: I know that, you blithering stone-age idiot!
MATRON: [pointing left and then right] Billy, was the train going
that way or that way?
BILLY: [pointing with his chin to her left] He bin go that way,
Kaggardu.
NEAL: You bloody fool of a man! What did you let him jump
the bloody train for?
BILLY: He bin knock me silly fella, with a big stone.
[Indicating his back and then ribs] He bin kill ’em me here,
here, and in the guts. Aw, he bad fella. [Desperately, almost
in tears] Eh boss, you bin take ’em off handcuffs now?
NEAL: [to MATRON] Get the keys out of his pocket.
BILLY: No key, boss.
NEAL: Where are they?

[MATRON starts to find quandongs.] 
BILLY: Dunno, boss . . . that one, he bin —
NEAL: [interrupting] You bloody incompetent savage. Where
are the fuckin’ keys?
BILLY: He bin chuck ’em away. He bad boy that one!

[MATRON has a handful of quandongs but no keys. NEAL puts
his hat on and prepares to leave.]

NEAL: Come on, looks like a blacksmith’s job.
MATRON: Then you’d better send him down to the hospital.
I’ll examine him and give him some dinner.

[MATRON looks at them and at the quandongs.]
BILLY: They good tucker, missus.
[She laughs.]
ACT THREE, NORTHAM

SCENE ONE

Government Well Aboriginal Reserve, Northam, day. A few burnt out relics of the camp remain. JOE and MARY stare about blankly.

JOE: Grass ain't burnt.
MARY: What d'ya mean?
JOE: Man... [Bitterly] Burned everything, those bastards!
[He looks at the rubble.]
We camped just 'ere.
[He leads MARY to the spot.]
[Pointing up and off] See them rocks up there? Me and Cissie used to slide down them on pieces of tin when we was little. Magpies used to nest in that white gum tree.
MARY: Probably still do.
JOE: Yeah, s'pose so.
[He sifts through the rubble and unearth a rabbit trap.]
One a' Dad's.
[He finds a wine bottle.]
One of Uncle Jimmy's.
[He puts it down carefully and continues the search.]
MARY: Where did you get water?
JOE: Soak, down the creek.
MARY: Good Kemp?
JOE: Sometimes. Mum used to always growl about it. She used to reckon it was harder than Uncle Jimmy's head. She'd be real upset if she saw the place now. Gran too. 'Specially Gran.
[She sees something, off.]
Oh, no!
[He drags on the burnt remains of DAVID's bike.]
MARY: Whose was that?
JOE: Bastards! They reckon they was gunna look after everything we left behind.
MARY: Never mind, it's all over now.
JOE: It'll never be over!
[He throws the bike down viciously.]
MARY: Come on, dubakiya.
SCENE TWO

A street in Northam, day. JOE and MARY carry their swag, billy can and the rabbit trap. SERGEANT CARROL approaches.

SERGEANT: Hey . . . You’re one of the Millimurra, aren’t you? . . . Joe?
JOE: Yeah.
SERGEANT: What are you doin’ back in Northam?
JOE: We’re livin’ here.
SERGEANT: Who’s this?
JOE: Me missus.
SERGEANT: Where are you stayin’?
JOE: Not at the Shamrock, that’s for sure!
SERGEANT: You can’t camp at Government Well.
JOE: What did you burn everything for?
SERGEANT: We’re simply following orders.
JOE: What, to burn a push bike? I thought you were meant to look after our stuff till we come back.
SERGEANT: Look! I don’t know nothing about no push bike.
JOE: What about rations?
SERGEANT: I can’t help you there. Since all the natives have shifted out, Northam is no longer a ration depot.
JOE: We never shifted out, we was booted out. Anyway, what happened to the horses?
SERGEANT: They were in terrible nick. We had to shoot one, the other one’s down at Martin’s, I think.
JOE: Trust him to grab one.
SERGEANT: He didn’t grab it, it just wandered onto his property.
[MARY grabs JOE’s sleeve and tries to lead him away.]
MARY: Come on, Joe!
SERGEANT: Where’s the rest of your lot? Not here, I hope.
JOE: You oughta know where they are, you dragged ’em there.

SCENE THREE

Northam Police Station, day. SERGEANT CARROL enters. At the Protector of Aborigines’ Office, Perth, MISS DUNN steps briskly and settles to typing. SERGEANT CARROL picks up the phone.

SERGEANT: Hello, Hello, operator, a Perth number: B-M-nine-seven-o-seven. Nine-seven-o-seven. Yes, thanks Sybil, can’t complain. Yourself?
[He hangs up as MR NEVILLE enters his office, carrying a briefcase.]
NEVILLE: Good morning, Miss Dunn. You’re bright and early.
MISS DUNN: Good morning, Mr Neville. I thought I’d get a few pages of your Royal Commission submission typed before the telephone starts for the day.
[Her telephone rings. She answers it.]
Hello, Aborigines Department . . . yes . . . [To NEVILLE] It’s Sergeant Carrol, Northam.
[The phone rings in the police station. SERGEANT CARROL answers it.]
NEVILLE: Thank you. Would you mind having a look at the mail when you have a moment?
[NEVILLE goes to his desk and takes the call. MISS DUNN hangs up.]
SERGEANT: Hello.
NEVILLE: Hello, Sergeant. Are you on the line?
SERGEANT: Hello, Mr Neville. It’s a crook line.
NEVILLE: There's an appalling cracking noise, but I can hear you. Did you find out how many —

SERGEANT: [interrupting] As far as I can ascertain, the only natives here are Joe Millimurra and girl who he claims is his wife — Mary, I think. They're not actually camping in the town.

NEVILLE: Dargurru.

SERGEANT: Pardon?


[The SERGEANT fumbles for a pencil and writes on the desk.]

SERGEANT: ... Double R, U. Yeah ... Haven't had any bother with them. Millimurra's working at Lockyers, they're not collecting rations.

NEVILLE: Well, I've had two letters from the Town Clerk. The Council's still adamant that no natives remain in the Northam area.

SERGEANT: I know, I had a yarn with the Town Clerk last week; they're putting something into this Royal Commission, apparently.

NEVILLE: Well, you'd better apprehend them, anyway.

SERGEANT: What about warrants?

NEVILLE: Dargurru's a minor, and Millimurra's guilty of absconding with her: it carries a mandatory six months. You can hold him on the existing warrant; the girl can be sent down here under escort. I'll organise to have her met at Midland. Can you pick them up today?

SERGEANT: Yeah, I suppose so.

NEVILLE: Good, and let me know if any more natives return to the district. I've written to the Town Clerk letting him know that any Northam natives released from the settlement have undertaken not to return to the Northam District.

SERGEANT: Good-oh, Mr Neville.

NEVILLE: And let me know which train you're putting the girl on.

SERGEANT: Good-oh, sir.

NEVILLE: Thankyou, Sergeant.

[They hang up as MISS DUNN puts a thick pile of typing on NEVILLE'S desk.]

MISS DUNN: That's the section on settlements completed.

ACT THREE - SCENE THREE

NEVILLE: [taking a pile of notes from his briefcase] Oh thankyou.

Here's the next lot, keep you busy for a while. Did you get a chance to do the mail?

MISS DUNN: Yes; a couple of accounts and a letter from the Western Australian Historical Association.

NEVILLE: What do they want?

MISS DUNN: They'd like you to present a paper at their next meeting. Shall I write and tell them you're too busy at present?

NEVILLE: No, I'm very interested; I'll reply myself.

[He begins drafting a reply while she commences typing.

CONSTABLE KERR enters the police station and begins to remove his hat and coat.]

SERGEANT: Leave them on, your coming with me.

CONSTABLE: Where's the fire?

SERGEANT: Picking up a couple of natives, Joe Millimurra and Mary ...

[He reads the draft and copies the name onto a scrap of paper.] Darg ... something.

CONSTABLE: What for?

SERGEANT: Absconding, Council, George Withnall and Ray Brew and so on have been getting on the Chief Protector's back. [Starting to search] Do you know where those warrants for their removal are?

CONSTABLE: Haven't seen them for months. What's the panic? They've been here for weeks.

SERGEANT: Oh, you know all this Royal Commission business. Some mob of do-gooder women are kicking up about them being shifted out before the election.

[He finds the warrants.]

You can stop looking now, Constable ... [reading]

'Lawrence' ... 'Lawson' ... 'Millimurra'. Come on.

Royal Commission on Natives; they had one about thirty years ago. A waste of bloody time, like the bloody referendum; they'll just stick it in some government filing cabinet and forget about it.
SCENE FOUR

A street in Northam, day. JOE is approached by SERGEANT CARROL and CONSTABLE KERR.

SERGEANT: G’day, Joe. Where’s the girl?
JOE: What girl?
CONSTABLE: Don’t be smart, just answer the question.
SERGEANT: Where is she?
JOE: What do you want her for?
CONSTABLE: Listen, you cheeky bl —
SERGEANT: [interrupting] I’ll handle this. Come on, Joe, where is she?
JOE: Out at Lockyers.
SERGEANT: You are under arrest under Section Twelve of the Aborigines Act for absconding from the Moore River Settlement, um . . .
[He takes the piece of paper out of his pocket and peruses it.]
JOE: What for? We’re not livin’ in town.
SERGEANT: . . . With Mary Dargurr.
JOE: Why are youse worryin’ about us now? We been back in Northam for nearly two months.
SERGEANT: Because Mr Neville only contacted me this morning.
JOE: What about Mary?
SERGEANT: The girl? She’ll be returned to the settlement.
JOE: Back to that bastard.
SERGEANT: What do you mean by that?
JOE: It’s my business.
CONSTABLE: Hold out your hands.
[He produces handcuffs.]
JOE: You ain’t puttin’ them on me.
CONSTABLE: Are you resisting arrest?
JOE: No I’m not . . . I just don’t want them things on me.
SERGEANT: [to the CONSTABLE] Don’t worry about them. If he runs he’ll only get an extra couple of months.
JOE: I’m not gonna run.
SERGEANT: Take him down the lock-up.

ACT THREE — SCENE FIVE

AUBER OCTAVIUS NEVILLE, groomed and dressed smartly, addresses the Royal Western Australian Historical Society. Behind him is a portrait of the King, the Union Jack and the Western Australian flag. He nears the end of a long speech.

NEVILLE: Ladies and gentlemen of the Historical Society, it has been a great privilege and pleasure to address you here tonight at a time when, with Mr Mosley’s Royal Commission, the welfare of our Aboriginal and coloured folk is somewhat more than usually in the public arena. If I may beg your indulgence for a few more minutes, I shall conclude with a brief word about those early years when that little band of pioneers, fewer than one hundred souls, led by Captain Stirling, laid anchor in the Swan River, little knowing that they faced in the fertile valleys of the South-West alone some thirteen thousand savages.

Stirling’s first acts was to issue a proclamation regarding the treatment of the native inhabitants.

[He reads:]

'And whereas the protection of the law doth of right belong to all people whatsoever who may come or be found within the territory aforesaid, I do hereby give notice that if any person or persons shall be, convicted of behaving in a fraudulent, cruel, or felonious manner towards the
aboriginal race of inhabitants of this country, such a person or persons will be liable to be prosecuted and tried for the offence as if the same had been committed against any others of His Majesty's subjects.' In the same proclamation, all male persons between the ages of fifteen and fifty were required to enrol in the militia, to secure the safety of the territory from invasion and from the attacks of hostile native tribes as might be necessary.

[Pause.]

From the beginning the natives provided the settlers with bush food and assisted exploring parties, and a happy relationship between settlers and blacks continued for some eighteen months. The newcomers were yet to impress the blacks with the significance of their invasion. In November of that year, an Aborigine was shot while stealing flour. That was the beginning of the end. Constant pressure from the whites drove back the erstwhile native inhabitants, depriving them of their water and food supplies. Naturally enough, the bolder spirits among the blacks resented this, and we cannot wonder that the murder of isolated whites occurred during this period, with a heavy toll of black life being exacted in reprisal. On the twenty-seventh of October, 1834, Governor Stirling led a detachment of soldiers and civilians to the Murray River at Pinjarra. In the early morning they came across a camp of some sixty or seventy natives. The detachment took up positions on both sides of the river. Rain, which had been threatening for some time, began to fall heavily. The party opened fire and more natives appeared from shelters. The men defended themselves with spears, while the women and children sought shelter in the river. For one hour they were subjected to crossfire from twenty-four guns from both banks. The official estimate was fifteen to twenty dead, but only eight women and several children were finally rounded up.

[He pauses and takes a drink of water.]

One more word and I shall have finished. When referring to Australia's treatment of her Aborigines we are apt to refer somewhat scathingly to Tasmania's harshness in ridding herself of her natives within the first seventy years of settlement. In that time some six thousand natives disappeared and only one was left alive. Yet here, in the south-west of our State, within an area about twice the size of Tasmania between 1829 and 1901 — seventy-two years — a people estimated to number thirteen thousand were reduced to one thousand four hundred and nineteen, of whom nearly half were half-caste.
ACT FOUR, MOORE RIVER

SCENE ONE

Moore River outdoor Sunday School, a hot day. SISTER EILEEN, CISSE AND TOPSY sit in a group. SISTER EILEEN is telling a story from memory. Next to her are several sheets of paper.

SISTER: After the shepherds had visited the baby Jesus in the manger, Mary and Joseph and the Holy Jesus had three very special visitors. Can anyone tell me who they were?
TOPSY: The Three Wise Men, Sister Eileen.
SISTER: Yes, very good, Topsy. And the Three Wise Men brought the Holy Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But on the way to visit Jesus the Three Wise Men spoke to the King of Judea. Who can tell me the name of the King of Judea?
[TOPSY's head goes up.]
Well, do you know, Cissie?
CISSE: No, Sister.
SISTER: Topsy, can you tell us?
TOPSY: King Herod, Sister.
[CISSE notices DAVID enter at a distance. BILLY enters behind DAVID and sees him.]
SISTER: That's right, King Herod. And when the Three Wise Men heard that a Saviour was born to be King of the Jews, he wasn't pleased at all, because he was king and he didn't want any other king. So what did he do? Can anybody tell me?
[BILLY puts a hand on DAVID's shoulder. CISSE puts up her hand.]
BILLY: Eh, boy, where you goin'?
DAVID: Swimmin'.
SISTER: [surprised] Yes, Cecilia.
[BILLY holds DAVID on the legs with his whip.]
CISSE: Look, Sister Eileen, look.
BILLY: [to DAVID] You s'posed to be Chunday School. G'day, waitin' for you.
TOPSY: Billy Kimberley's belting one of the boys.
BILLY: [to DAVID] Now you git to Sunday School, straight away now, git, git, git.
home in Nazareth, where Jesus grew up to be a man. Now wasn't that a splendid story? Did you like it, David?

DAVID: S'all right.

[SISTER EILEEN hands out a sheet of paper to each.]

SISTER: Now, here are the hymn sheets for today. It's a hymn I'm sure you all know, and want you to sing in your very best voice, because this is the hymn we'll be singing for Mr Neville in the Australia Day celebrations.

ALL: [singing]

There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day:
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
'Worthy is our Saviour King!'
Loud, let His praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye!

Bright in that happy land,
Beams every eye:
Kept by a Father's hand
Love cannot die.
Oh, then, to glory run,
Be a Crown and Kingdom won
And, bright above the sun,
Reign, reign for aye!

Amen.

[They gather around for their humbugs. DAVID holds out his hand.]

CISSE: You've already had one.

DAVID: Shut up.

[SISTER EILEEN gives him a humbug.]
MATRON: She's here.
NEAL: Dargurr? MATRON: Yes.
NEAL: Oh, good. Aren’t you needed down the hospital? MATRON: Just remember, that girl is pregnant, and unwell.
NEAL: Don’t worry, I won’t touch her.
[MATRON exits.]
NEAL: Billy? Billy?
BILLY: Yes, boss.
NEAL: Bring her in.
[BILLY brings MARY into the office.] You wait, all right? Don’t go walkabout.
[BILLY goes outside to wait.]
Dargurr, you finally got caught, eh? And you got yourself pregnant? Well, you’ll be all right here. You can stay in the nurses’ quarters.
MARY: No, I wanta stay with Joe’s Mum and Dad.
NEAL: Don’t be stupid, girl, you’re meant to be pregnant and sick, so you can stay in the nurses’ quarters and do a bit of light work in the hospital.
MARY: I don’t want to work in the hospital.
NEAL: You’ll work where I think fit, digging graves if I say so.
MARY: I’m not gunna work in the hospital.
NEAL: You’ll do as I say, do you understand?
MARY: No.
NEAL: So you intend to defy me, do you? Billy!
[He takes the cat-o’-nine-tails from his desk.]
Do you know what that is?
[BILLY enters.]
MARY: I don’t care. You can belt me if you like, I’m not workin’ in the hospital.
BILLY: Boss talkin’ to you.
MARY: Go to hell!
BILLY: Don’t be cheeky, now.
NEAL: [to MARY] What did you say?
[ Silence.]
BILLY: Boss talkin’ to you.
NEAL: What — did — you — say?
MARY: Go to hell! Fuck youse!
GISSIE: Mary, a letter from Brother Joe.

[MARY takes the letter and reads.]  
DAVID: Willy Knapp give it to me. He just came back from gaol, and Joe give it to him.  
GISSIE: Gave it to him, not 'give'.  
DAVID: That's what I said.  
GISSIE: Nyammi.  
DAVID: ... Give it him to gave to youse so Mr Neal wouldn't read it and tear it up or something.  
JIMMY: Bastard reads everybody's mail.  
MILLY: How is he?  
MARY: Good, reckons the tucker's all right. Here, you read it, Cissie.  
[GISSIE takes the letter and reads in silence.]  
DAVID: Out loud, nyammi!  
GISSIE: I'm giving this to Willie to give to youse 'coz if ...'  
[Pause.]  
[Spelling] 'F-U-C-K F-A-C-E gets it, he'll most likely tear it up. How is everyone? Mum and Dad and Gran and the kids and Uncle Jimmy ... And my little brother and sister? But really, how are you and the baby? I've only got eight weeks to go and I'm counting them days, every one of them. We are getting married when I get out. If the Aborigines Department give us permission. I am going to ask Mister Neville myself. I'd sooner we got married at New Norcia like Mum and Dad. Though I ain't really a Catholic. You know, I don't know what you are, I forgot to ask you. It not too bad here, plenty of Nyongahs and some from up North. Tucker's not too bad, better than the Settlement. At least they don't give us bread and fat, and we get real bacca, not nigger twist. Tell Willy to behave himself now he's out and not to go hitting any more policemen. Well, darling, I'll close.  
[GISSIE sniggers.]  
'I love you and I think of you day and night.  
[She laughs.]  
'I even dream about you. Lots of love and kisses to you and Baby, Joe.'
SISTER: [interrupting] It won't cost the Department a penny, I can get the books donated. Good books.

NEAL: It's quite out of the question.

SISTER: But why?

NEAL: Look, my experience with natives in South Africa and here has taught — led me to believe that there's a lot of wisdom in the old adage that 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing'.

SISTER: I can't believe what you're saying.

NEAL: Look Sister, I've got a big mob here, over seven hundred — you know that — and there's enough troublemakers without giving them ideas.

SISTER: But Mr Neal —

NEAL: [interrupting] I don't think there's anything more to be said on the subject.

SISTER: Well, I'd like to say something on another subject.

NEAL: Yes?

SISTER: The use of violence by your native policemen to enforce attendance at my religious instruction classes.

NEAL: If I didn't make attendance compulsory, you'd have none of them there.

SISTER: I'd prefer that they come of their own free will.

NEAL: Look, Sister, if you're not happy here, I could arrange a transfer for you to another settlement; perhaps Mulla Bulla, on the edge of the Gibson Desert.

[SHE GOES TO LEAVE, BUT STOPS BY THE DOOR.]

SISTER: Getting back to the books, what do you classify the Bible as?

[She exits.]

NEAL: [To himself] Bloody do-gooders.

SCENE FIVE

Moore River Native Settlement, Australia Day, 1934, a very hot afternoon. MR NEVILLE, MR NEAL, and MATRON are seated on a dais. BILLY KIMBERLEY and BLUKEY, dressed in new but absurdly ill-fitting uniforms, stand beside a flag pole with a flag furled ready to raise. SISTER ELLEN addresses the assembled population of the settlement, including the Millimurr family. JOE is still absent.

SISTER: It gives me great pleasure to be with you all on this very special day, when we gather together to pledge our allegiance to the King and to celebrate the birth of this wonderful young country that we are so fortunate to be living in. We must remember today not just our country and King, but the King of kings, the Prince of princes, and to give thanks to God for what He has provided for us because our sustenance in life is provided by Him. Even we here today, Mr Neal, Matron Neal and myself, are just His humble servants, sent by Him to serve your needs.

The Lord Jesus Christ has sent His servant, Mr Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, to speak to us on this special day. Mr Neville is going to say a few words before leading us in a song of praise to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[NEVILLE rises. The whites clap while the Aborigines remain silent.]

NEVILLE: Today we are gathered here to celebrate the birth of this nation of Australia one hundred and forty-six years ago at Sydney Cove in the Eastern States. As I was driving up, I remembered that it is only a hundred and four years since the British flag was first raised on our West Australian shores. As I drove through Guildford, Midland and Bullsbrook, I saw men on the road, hundreds of men, and I was reminded that the world is in the grip of depression and that many people are suffering from hunger and deprivation of many of the essential elements which make for a contented existence. But you, in this small corner of the Empire, are fortunate in being provided with adequate food and shelter.

JIMMY: [muttering] Yeah, weevil flour.

NEVILLE: ... And to be with family and friends. Occasionally some of you might ponder why you are here —

JIMMY: [a little louder] Too bloody right.

SAM: [to JIMMY] Dabakiny wakgingig, gwoolya.

NEVILLE: ... It doesn't hurt to remind yourselves that you are preparing yourselves here to take your place in Australian society, to live as other Australians live, and to live alongside other Australians; to learn to enjoy the privileges and to shoulder the responsibilities of living like the white man, to be treated equally, not worse, not better, under the law.
[Pause. He looks around at the others on the dais.]

SAM: What's he talkin' about?

JIMMY: He's talkin' outta his Kiwan.

SISTER [aside to NEVILLE] The hymn.

NEVILLE: We are now going to sing the song ... ah, hymn.

NEAL: [aside to NEVILLE] The hymn, then the flag raising.

NEVILLE: Sing the hymn before we raise the flag and sing the national anthem. [To SISTER EILEEN] Sorry, I've forgotten.

SISTER: 'There is a Happy Land'.

NEVILLE: 'There is a Happy Land'.

[SISTER EILEEN stands.]

ALL: [singing]

There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day:
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
'Worthy is our Saviour King!'
Loud let His praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye!

[As the whites continue, the Aborigines break into full clear voice with a parody of the words.]

There is a happy land,
Far, far away.
No sugar in our tea,
Bread and butter we never see.
That's why we're gradually fading away.

NEVILLE: Stop, stop. Stop that immediately.

[The Aborigines repeat the parody even louder.] Stop it. Stop this nonsense immediately. Never in my life have I witnessed such a disgraceful exhibition.

[The song stops.]

I'm appalled by this disgraceful demonstration of ingratitude. I can tell you that you will live to rue this day.

There will be no privileges from now on.

JIMMY: [calling out] Rotten spuds and onions?

NEVILLE: Be quiet! And there will be no Christmas this year! No Christmas!

JIMMY: What, a dried up orange and a puddin'?

NEVILLE: Will you be quiet? Who is it, who is that fellow? Monday, isn't it? Northam. I've got police reports on you. You're a troublemaker and a ringleader. You must listen to me.

JIMMY: [approaching NEVILLE] No, you listen to me Mr A.O. You come an' eat supper with us, tonight, right? Bread and drippin' and black tea. Are you game to try it?

NEAL: [stands to leave, then turns back.]

NEAL: Look, Monday, what's your bloody game?

JIMMY: Did you vote for Jimmy Mitchell's lot?

[Silence. JIMMY sniggers. SISTER EILEEN stands and starts to sing 'God Save the King'. The other whites join in. The Aborigines laugh.]

Yeah, you musta done, eh?

[NEAL stares at him in disbelief. The blacks, with the exception of the Millimurras family, gradually disperse. BILLY and BLUEY remain by the flag.]

Nothin' to do with bloody scabies. And that's why we got dragged ere; so them witeyars vote for him.

[JIMMY is left alone, shouting. SAM looks on.]

So he could have a nice, white little town, a nice, white little fuckin' town.

[JIMMY runs out of breath, heaves and clutches his chest. SAM catches him as he collapses, clutching at the flagpole. The official party continues to sing 'God Save the King'. JIMMY's family rushes to him.]

MARY: Matron, Matron, help! Help us!

NEAL: [to the whites] Ah! He's only fainted.

[The singing stops. MATRON breaks ranks and rushes to JIMMY's aid, loosens his clothing, checks his breathing and pulse.]


[MATRON and the Millimurras exit with BILLY and BLUEY. NEVILLE and NEAL exit in the other direction. SISTER EILEEN remains, unsure which way to go.]
SCENE SIX

The Superintendent's Office, day. NEAL reads the West Australian, Monday 30 January 1934. MATRON enters.

MATRON: What's the latest?
NEAL: A cool change tomorrow.

[He looks at the date on the paper.]

That's today.
MATRON: Not much sign of it.
NEAL: Pictures of cars stuck in the bitumen on Crawley Drive
... Hmm, a truckload of eggs in Fremantle hatched out chickens... Hot, all right.
MATRON: No news from Kalgoorlie?
NEAL: Oh, yeah... Three dead.
MATRON: Oh, dear.
NEAL: Yeah, besides Jordan. One of us stabbed — typical
... and one a them shot. The foreigners have dug themselves
in around Ding Flat... They're recruiting specials.
MATRON: Who?
NEAL: Volunteers, special constables. A man with a military
background has a responsibility to volunteer in an
emergency like this.
MATRON: Why don't you?
NEAL: Can't leave this place.

[MILLIE and SAM approach the office.]
MATRON: Got your own civil war?
NEAL: Don't be stupid, woman, I can handle a mob of unruly
niggers.
MATRON: Yes? Yes, Milly? Hello, Sam.
MILLIE: [pointing inside] We want to see him.

[MATRON beckons them in.]
NEAL: [to SAM and MILLY] What do you want?
SAM: We want to know if you can get Joe out for the funeral.
NEAL: Who?
MATRON: Joe Millimurra.
NEAL: Impossible.
MILLIE: Why? Other Nyoongahs get out when the 'lations
die.

SAM: You could ring up Mr Neville and ask him.
NEAL: Too late. Funeral's tomorrow.
SAM: Well, hold it the day after.
NEAL: What, in this weather?
MILLIE: You could if you wanted to.

[MIllie starts to cry.]
MATRON: Don't get upset; there's nothing we can do about it.
MILLIE: And don't you go wrappin' him up in the gumment
blanket. You put him in a proper box.
MATRON: Don't worry, he'll receive a proper burial.
SAM: Will you ring the prison and tell 'em to tell Joe?
NEAL: As a member of the family you can write to him
yourself.
MILLIE: You scared to tell him. You scared to tell him.

[SAM puts his hands on her shoulders and tries to steer her to
the door. MILLY struggles against him.]

You're scared to tell him. You're scared at what he'll do
when he gets out. You're wayward. Waywardy bridgair, you're waywardy.
SAM: Come on, Milly, we get Cissie to write to him. Come
on, Milly. Come on, come on now.
MILLIE: I'll tell him all about it when he gits out, you hear
me? You hear me?
SAM: Come on, Mil, dubakery.
MILLIE: An' Matron, you don't forget put him in a proper
coffin box, Matron. Matron, coo-coo, coo.

[They exit.]
NEAL: [to MATRON] A classic case of emotion comes in
through the door and reason goes out the window.
MATRON: [exciting] I couldn't agree more. Seems to be
happening frequently in this office lately.

SCENE SEVEN

Long Pool Camp, Moore River, night. The campfire is blazing.
DAVID is asleep. MARY, GRAN and MILLY are silhouetted inside
the tent. MARY suffers a contraction.
MARY: Help, help! Joe! I want Joe!

[The contraction continues.]

Don't let them take Baby. Don't let them take Baby.

[She cries in panic.]

GRAN: Nobody's goin' to take Baby, darlin'. Nobody. You'll be all right, darling, Matron comin' to see you directly.

MARY: I don't want her to come here. Granny, tell her to go away. Please, I don't want to see her.

GRAN: You shut up, now. What will Joe say if anythin' happens to you and Baby, eh? We gotta look after youse.

MARY: I wish Joe was here.

[Another contraction starts and she yells.]


[The contraction continues.]


[MARY cries out while MILLY collects ashes on a sugar bag, packing out the pieces of charcoal. She takes the ashes, water and rags back to the tent.]

Come on, darlin', breathe deep. Push down, keep pushin', keep pushin'. Hurry up, Milly, come on. [To MARY] Come on, darlin', you doin' good.

[MARY yells and stands.] Firestick! Firestick, live one, quick!

[MILLY races to the fire and takes a burning stick back into the tent.]

I got you a little Nyoongah. Now I cut your cord and tie it, make a real pretty belly button for you, just like your daddy's. Now cover you in ashes. More better than Johnson's Baby Powder, eh?

[The baby cries.]

You got a great big handsome Nyoongah boy. Come on, darlin', one more push, come on...

[MARY pushes.] Keep pushin', eh? Good, it's all over.

[DAVID wakes.]

GRAN: There you are, darlin'. He's yours for life.

DAVID: Hey? What's goin' on?

MILLY: You're an uncle now.

DAVID: What? Dinkum?

[DAVID rushes to the tent and looks in.]

Geez, look at him. Why don't he open his mouth?

MILLY: 'Cos he's just been born, son. He's only five minutes old.

[SAM appears, breathless.]

Where's Matron?

SAM: They comin'.

DAVID: We don't need her, everything's all right.

SAM: Dinkum?

GRAN: That's what David said.

SAM: Here's Matron comin' now.

[MATRON appears with a hurricane lamp and a satchel followed by CISSE and TOPSY.]

MATRON: Hello, Granny. Hello everybody.

MARY: No! Don't let Matron see Baby. Granny, go and hide him. Please, please, don't let Matron take him away.

[The three approach the tent.]

MATRON: Well, well. How is she? Hello, Mary.

GRAN: Baby boy.

CISSE: Oh, he's beautiful.

MATRON: Come on, Mary, don't be a silly girl. I just want to check him over.

MARY: No, don't touch him! You're not havin' my baby, leave him alone!

MATRON: But Mary, it's for your own good and the baby's and I only want to help.

MARY: No, don't take him to hospital. The trackers will get him and kill him.

MATRON: What on earth is she talking —

MARY: And bury him in the pine plantation.

MATRON: I think she's delirious.

MARY: Like Lillian's baby. Mr Neal tell them to do it, to kill Baby.

MATRON: She's delirious.

SAM: No she ain't.

MARY: Gran, Gran, don't let 'em take him.

GRAN: [soothingly] No one's takin' Baby, darlin'. You're all
right, you're all right. [To MATRON] She's all right. Better go.
MATRON: Gran evidently seems to have done a good job.
GRAN: I brought plenty of babies into this world, Matron.
MATRON: [reaching into her satchel] Well, here's plenty of clean cotton wool and baby powder and Lysol soap.
GRAN: Don't need powder, use me own.
MATRON: All right, see you tomorrow when she's calmed down. [To MARY] Bye, dear. You have a good sleep now.
MARY: Yes, Matron.
MATRON and TOPSY leave the tent and vanish into the darkness with the hurricane lamp.

SCENE EIGHT

Long Pool Camp, Moore River, day. GRAN seems to have aged suddenly. She sits and stares into the smouldering fire, quietely grumbling and singing. CISSE and DAVID play knucklebones. MILLY and SAM play cards. MARY watches over the baby who sleeps in a kerosene tin. A loud whistle is heard in the distance.

SAM: Who the hell is that?
DAVID: Boys whistling at girls, I bet.
MARY: No.
[The whistle is heard again.]
I know that whistle, that's Joe. It's Joe, it's Joe!
[CISSE and DAVID start to run.]
MILLY: Come back, you two! Come back!
DAVID: It's Joe, Mum. It's Joe.
[The kids run off.]
JOE: [off] Hey! Where are all you blackfellas?
[JOE enters carrying a sugar bag and with DAVID on his back. They are followed by CISSE. He sees MARY and they embrace. He waves her around and around. DAVID falls off, laughing and yelling. JOE wears a yellow shirt and black pants.]
How's everybody? Gawd, it's good to be back.
SAM: Yeah, son, we wasn't expectin' you for another two weeks.

DAVID: [yelling, pointing to the tin] Your baby in there? [Quietly] Sleepin'.
JOE: How are you, Gran?
GRAN: Bit crook. [Rubbing her leg] Me leg git tired, little bit, this one.
MARY: Come and see baby.
[They walk to where the baby sleeps.]
JOE: Gawd.
[Pause.]
Can he sit up?
MARY: Give him time. He's only ten weeks old.
JOE: What did you call him?
SAM: We call him koolkardi, Nyoongah name.
GRAN: Magpie.
MARY: We waited for you to come home to give him a wejula name.
[Silence.]
JOE: I wanna call him Jimmy.
[Silence.]
MARY: Yeah.
[GRAN begins to wail and cry.]
JOE: Eh, Gran, got somethin' here for you.
[He dives his hand into the sugar bag and produces a wooden pipe and a tin of tobacco.]
Here y'are, Gran, real pipe and real gnummarri, not nigger twist.
GRAN: Woolah, kwoobidak, coo-oo.
JOE: [pulling out coloured ribbons] Here y'are, Cissie, ribbons for your hair.
CISSE: Oh thanks, brother, they're mooondit.
[She ties yellow and red ribbons in her hair.]
JOE: Here y'are, gnoon.
[He gives DAVID a pocket knife.]
Here y'are, Mum.
[He produces a needle and cotton.]
And Dad.
[He produces tobacco and papers.]
SAM: Hey, real papers. Ridulas. Good on ya, son.
MILLY: Didn't you get nothin' for Mary?
JOE: Course I did, Mum.
[He pulls out a larger parcel and gives it to her.]

Go on, open it.

[She tears the paper off: it's a red dress.]

MILLY: Go and try it on, dear.

SAM: Hey, son, where did you get the boondah?

JOE: Wages. Earned a few bob and they give it to me when I got out. Not like this place.

[He takes out a packet of cigarettes.]  
Had enough left for a packet of Luxor!

[They share them. MILLY returns with the dress on, unbuttoned down the back. She goes to JOE to do it up.]

Geez, what happened to your back?

MILLY: Neal belted her.

DAVID: With the cat-o-nine-tails. Tracker held her down over the flour bags.

CISSIE: And she was seven months bootjari.

JOE: Dinkum?

GRAN: Kunarn, kunarn!

JOE: Bloody stinkin' walrus-faced bastard. I'm gunna kick his teeth down his fuckin' throat.

[He starts to run off, but MARY stops him.]

MARY: Joe, please, please, please, don't go near him. Please think of Baby and me. He'll put you in gaol again.

JOE: But why did he have to belt you?

MARY: 'Cause I told him to go to hell.

JOE: Dinkum?

MARY: Yeah.  
[They embrace and laugh.]

He got wild 'coz I wouldn't knuckle under to him. Don't go, Joe, not now. Go on Monday and ask him if we can leave the Settlement. Koodjie'll be there, an' he's scared a' her.

JOE: Who?

MARY: Koodjie, Matron. He's frightened a' her. Come an' see Uncle Herbie before Baby wakes; he's cruel hungry and he's got a cruel loud voice.

[They exit.]

SCENE NINE

Superintendent's Office, Moore River, day. TOPSY brings NEAL a cup of tea on a tray in exact repetition of Scene Five. JOE walks outside as NEAL ransages through drawers until he finds a piece of paper. He reads it, adds a few words, and places it on his desk.

NEAL: [Yelling] Millimurra!

[JOE walks in, stands and stares at him in silence.]

SIGN this.

JOE: What is it?

NEAL: Read it.

[JOE takes the paper and reads it slowly to himself.]

Oh, Jesus, give it to me.

[He snatches it from JOE.]

I want you to understand this. Are you listening?

JOE: I'm listenin'.

NEAL: 'I, Joseph Millimurra, undertake not to domicile in the town of Northam, nor anywhere in the Northam Shire. I fully understand that if I return to Northam I am liable to be returned under warrant to the Moore River or other Government Native Settlement.'

JOE: You mean if I put me name on this, me and Mary can take off?

NEAL: That's what I mean.

JOE: Right, give us the pen.

NEAL: Hold your horses. Billy! Billy!

BILLY: [off] Comin', boss. Comin'.

[BILLY enters the office.]

NEAL: [to JOE] Witness.

JOE: Gawd, some witness.

BILLY: Yeah, boss?

NEAL: I want you to watch him sign this.

[NEAL picks up the paper and shows it to BILLY]

You can understand this?

BILLY: No, boss.

NEAL: Good. [To JOE] Go on, sign it.

NEAL: Good, now get out. The sooner you leave, the better.
JOE: [leaving] I'll see you one day, in hell. And you won't have your cat-o'-nine-tails.
[He laughs and walks out with BILLY.]
BILLY: Hey, what that one milly milly?
JOE: Me an' Mary dearin' out, an' that one say we not allowed to go to Northam.
BILLY: Augh, gudnath, silly fella.
JOE: If I go back to Northam he put me this one.
[He puts his fingers across his face, indicating good.]
BILLY: That your country, You back sit down that place.
[MARY enters with some baby clothes.]
MARY: Everything all right?
JOE: Couldn't be better.
MARY: What happened?
JOE: He told us to get outa the Settlement.
MARY: When?
JOE: Tomorrow, next day, soon as we like.
MARY: Why?
JOE: 'Coz the bastard's scared of us.
BILLY: You watch this one, she go Kargudda but she still Ooomoolgari girl.
JOE: She'll be all right.
BILLY: You want this one?
[He hands him his whip.]
Kill rabbit, snake, bungarra.
JOE: No, Billy, that's yours.
BILLY: Ne'mine, ne'mine.
MARY: Take it, it's a gift.
JOE: Thanks, old man.
[JOE walks off, leaving BILLY and MARY together.]
MARY: Goodbye, dumbart.
JOE: [returning to BILLY] Here, gumnari.
[He gives BILLY the rest of his packet of Lucor. BILLY breaks one up and puts it in his pipe. He goes at them as they walk off.]
NEAL: [off] Billy!
BILLY: Comin' boss. Comin'.
[He exits.]

SCENE TEN

Long Pool Camp, Moore River, morning. The fire is burning. JOE rolls a swag. MILLY gives MARY a sugar bag. The others stand around.

MILLY: There's enough flour there for three dampers, a fryin' pan, billy can and two mugs. A bit of drippin', too, and a spud and a couple a' onions.
MARY: Thanks, Mum.
SAM: Where will you go, son?
JOE: Back to Northam.
GRAN: You wanna watch them manadji, they warrah there now.
JOE: Yeah, Gran. Don't worry, if they git rough we just move on.
[MARY straps the baby to her chest.]
GRAN: Just as well you a good milker, girl. Least he won't go 'ungry.
GISSIE: You got him right next to the tit.
DAVID: Eh, brother, you want my pocket knife? You might need it.
JOE: No, Budgie, I can use glass if I wanna gut a rabbit.
[SAM hands JOE a home-made knife.]
SAM: Here, son, take this one.
JOE: No, I'll be all right.
SAM: Take it. I can git another bit of steel and make another one. Here, take it.
[Magpies squawk. GRAN begins to sing. They farewell each member of the family, then walk off into the distance.]
GRAN: Weet miny, jinna kooring, weet miny.
Jinna kooring
Wayanna, wayanna, wayanna,
Weet, miny, weet miny, weet miny.
Jinna kooring
Jinna kooring
Jinna kooring
Yay, yay, yay
Geo oo-oo-oo-oo.

THE END
TRANSLATION OF SONGS

JIMMY'S SONG

Look, who is this coming?
Crabs, crabs, crabs, crabs
In the river mouth,
They are coming in the river mouth, river mouth,
Coming in the river mouth.
Fish coming up the river,
Up the river, up the river,
Fish in the river mouth,
Fish in the river mouth,
Coming up, coming up, coming up,
Fish and crabs, fish and crabs, fish and crabs,
Shout of praise!

GRAN'S SONG:

Woe, woe, woe.
My boy and girl and baby
Going a long way walking,
That way walking,
That way walking.
Pity, pity, pity,
Hungry, walking, hungry,
Pity, pity, pity,
Hungry, hungry,
Walking, walking, walking,
Yay, yay, yay,
Coo-coo-coo-coo.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY OF ABORIGINAL TERMS

The Aboriginal language used in these plays is usually called Nyongah but occasionally referred to as Bibbulmun. Nyongah literally means ‘man’ but has become a general term denoting Aboriginality in the South-West of Western Australia. Bibbulmun is one of the fourteen South-West languages that have combined over the last 152 years to create the modern Nyongah spoken in the play.

Nyongah words here are spelt phonetically, however the pronunciations of certain sounds are as follows:

NG has a silent ‘g’, as in ‘sing’
Y is always short, as in yet
A is always long, as in ‘raft’
R is rolled, as with a Scottish burr
TJ is pronounced ‘ch’, as in ‘change’
B is pronounced ‘p’, as in ‘pit’

ALLEWAH, watch out
BAAL NOONINY BARMINY, he’ll hit you
BARKINY, bite
BARMINY, strike
BILBARL, black goanna
BOOLYADUK, magic man
BOONDAH, money
BOOTJARRL, pregnant
BRIDAIR, boss
BRUDGE, brother (from the English)
BUNGARRU, goanna
CHOO, shame
CHUBEL, spear
CLAPSTICKS, two short sticks which, when struck together give a musical beat for the corroboree
DATJ, meat
DAWARRA, bad mouth
DAWARRA, NTJA WETJALA, bad mouth, this is a white man
DING, Italian (W.A. slang)
DOAK, throwing stick
DOOTHOO, dogs
DUBAKIENY, steady, slowly
DUBAKIENY WAHINGNY, talk steady
DUGAFTJ, dugite snake
DUMBART, people of the same tribe
FREEO, Fremantle, Fremantle Gaol (W.A. slang)
GNEEAN BAAL?, Who's he?
GNEEAN NITJA KOORLING?, Who's coming there?
GNUNY, me, I
GNUNY TJENNA MINDITJ, my feet hurt
GNOOLYAA, brother-in-law
GNOON, brother
GNUMMARRI, tobacco
GUDEEH, white people, white person
GUGJA, lillyroot (North-West language)
INJI STICKS, decorated sticks used in the corroboree
JEERUNG MEEAR, medicinal leaves
KAAL, fire
KAEP, water
KARGUDDA, south
KIA, yes
KIENYA, shame
KILLARLA, tobacco (North-West language)
KONGI, uncle
KOODJIE, bony, the Sister and Matron’s nickname
KOOLANGAH, children
KOOLBARTI, magpie
KOOMP, urine
KOORAWOOROONG, an expression of disbelief
KOORIES, women (North-West language)
KOORT, weak
KOORT MINDITJ, weak heart
KULIYA, yes, (North-West language)
KUNARN, true
KWOMBINYARN, excellent
KWON, arse
KWONNA TJUELLARA, bony arse
MANATJ, police, black cockatoo
MEEOWL, eyes
MERRANG, flour, bread

MINDITJ, sick
MIRRI-UP, hurry
MIRRI-UP, MIRRI-UP. ALLEWAH KOORKANJERRI GUNNY
NOONINY WOORT DININY, WOORT DININY, hurry, hurry.
Watch out sheep, I'm going to cut your throat
MOORDITJ, good
MUMMARI, little spirit beings
NEMINE, corruption of ‘never mind’
NIETJUK, why
NITJA BRIDAIR YORGAH KOORLING, the boss’s woman is
coming
NYOONGAH, Aboriginal, literally ‘man’ in the languages
of the South West. Some time after 1829 it entered common
usage as a term denoting Aboriginality, similar to Wangai
in the eastern goldfields, Yarai in the Murchison and Koorti
and Murri in the eastern states.
NYORN, pity
NYORN, WINSYARN, pity, poor fellow
NYUMMI, slow learner
RIZIAS, a brand of cigarette papers
SHOO-I, a shout or warning of evil
TIENNA, feet
TIENNA GUBBI, an Aboriginal secret executioner
TJEURIPINY, glad
TJINUNG, look
TJIRRUNG, fat
TJUELLARA, bony
UNNA?, Isn't it?
WADDI, club
WAH, where
WAHING, talk
WANBRU, blankets
WANMULLA, cannibals
WARRAH, WARRAHMUT, bad
WAYARNININ, frightened
WEE-AH, cry of grief, yes
WEEERNY, weak
WETJALA, white person, a corruption of the English ‘white
fellow’
WILBRA, rabbit
WILGI, specially prepared paint for ceremonies
WINJAR, where, which way
WINJAR KAEPI, Where's water
WINYARN, poor fellow, weak-willed person
WOGGA, (coll.) a blanket made up of four or six wheat sacks
    sewn together.
WOOLAH, shout of praise
VAHILLARAH, group dance
YORKEI, shout of praise
YONGA, YONGARAH, kangaroo
YORGAH, woman, girl
YUAR, nothing, no
YUMBAN, children (North-West language)

Moore River Native Settlement
One of the most vivid accounts of Aboriginal life at the time of No Sugar is to be found in Nat: Negro Nation by Peter Bishop, University of Queensland Press, 1973. Here is part of his account of the Settlement:

"The land was unsuitable for cultivation. In summer there was an acute shortage of water, alleviated only by the fact that the inmates were 'content to drink the river water which is slightly brackish'. The settlement was constructed to house 200 inmates; after the transfer of the Carrolup Aborigines, in June 1922, it had a population of almost 400. In the customary official jargon, the inmates were 'perfectly happy and contented', but anyone with eyes to see would have found little to substantiate this claim. Fenced compound, camp police and the settlement "boob" were a part of daily life. Compound inmates were not allowed to leave the compound without written permission from the superintendent or the matron, and outside visitors had to have similar approval. Association of adults and children was prohibited, even in the dining room, where there were separate sittings for women and children. Female inmates were subjected to particularly strict discipline. Girls under the age of fifteen were segregated from older girls who in turn were kept apart from women with young children. Children's dormitories were locked and bolted from outside at six o'clock in the evening, even in summer. For the 'camp' Aborigines (those not housed in the compound) institutional care meant little more than a weekly ration of 1½ pounds of sugar, 8 pounds of flour, 4 ounces of tea, 1 stick of tobacco, and 3½ pounds of meat, mainly kangaroo or brush flesh caught by the Aborigines themselves. Wages for work performed were nominal. The inmates were also bought to buy, through the superintendent, such items as books, magazines, sewing material or "anything of improving nature". The education of the one hundred-odd settlement children was entrusted to one teacher. Boys who were not "likely to improve further" were put to work on the farm before they reached school-leaving age, while girls were sent to work in the sewing room or in the kitchen. The spiritual welfare of the inmates was entrusted to a resident Church of England missionary but her work was hampered by recurring clashes with the superintendent who objected to her "familiarity subservient of discipline" and the "lack of dignity
which is so essential in one making an attempt to uplift, control and bless this childish race."

It is hardly surprising that the southern aboriginal should have come to regard Moore River as a prison. Recaptured absconders were invariably sentenced to fourteen days of solitary confinement in the "boob". Habitual absconders were occasionally sentenced to imprisonment in the Fremantle goal. Girls who became pregnant after being sent to service were sent back under warrant, together with the child — in some cases almost white. Still, it would be wrong to regard the settlement as a concentration camp, or even as a place of permanent segregation. The administration was genuinely convinced that the harsh measures, and in particular the separation of the children from the parents, were absolutely necessary if the young generation was to be uplifted and weaned away from its Aboriginal background. (pp. 156-57)

This book also contains an account of the character and career of A.O. Neville, including his antipathy towards missionaries and his book *Australia's Coloured Minority* which he wrote after his retirement. Bishop quotes Neville's conclusion:

"The native must be helped in spite of himself. Even if a measure of discipline is necessary, it must be applied, but it can be applied in such a way as to appear to be a gentle persuasion ... the end in view will justify the means employed." (p. 70)

There is also an account of his attempt in 1927 to establish in the Kimberleys a Home for Criminally Minded Natives; and the protest in 1930 by the Road Boards Association of W.A. against the reopening of property for reserves where indigent Aborigines could live under the supervision of the Police. The scheme was abandoned, leading to incidents like the transfer of natives from Northam in 1933; and severe overcrowding at Moore River. (p. 164)

A fuller comment on A.O. Neville and his work may be found in G.C. Bolton's essay, "Black and White After 1887," in *A New History of Western Australia* edited by C.T. Stannage, University of W.A. Press, 1981. In it Professor Bolton writes:

"A considerably able man than his predecessors, Neville dominated the working out of Aboriginal policy for a generation. As an administrator he was astute, gentlemanly and fully aware of the limitations on manoeuvre in a government department of lowly status and funding. His assessment of Aboriginal capacity reflected the conventional wisdom of his day, perceiving the Aborigines as most attractive when most remote from the mainstream of Australian society; "The uncivilised natives have a code of their own which is in a way superior to ours but which seems to disintegrate as soon as they get in touch with civilization." " (pp. 137-38)

**The 1933 Election and the Seccession Vote**

A description of the secession movement which led to a referendum at the electoral ballot in 1933, and of the election itself which turned with equal decisiveness against the State's foremost local patriot, may be found in *A Fine Country to Starve In* by G.C. Bolton, University of W.A. Press, 1972. He writes:

"Not only was Sir James Mitchell's government beaten by the biggest election landslide in twenty years, but he himself and half his cabinet were thrust out of their seats in Parliament. Sir James Mitchell was apparently amazed at this result, but Lady Mitchell was not. Going the rounds among the housewives of Northam, canvassing for her husband as she always did, she kept coming across old acquaintances who told her apologetically that this time they were giving Labor a go, because of the Depression ... A.R.G. Hawke, the young Labor organizer contesting the seat ... was a relative newcomer to the district, only five years over from South Australia, but he found the Northam voters tremendously eager for a change of government. "You could get a thousand to a meeting if you just stood in the street and rang a bell." " (p. 256)

**The Gumbadguri Massacre (Act Two Scene Six)**

Billy's account of the massacre of his people in the Kimberley region is adapted from a report of such a massacre by Daniel Evans, taken down verbatim by the novelist Randolph Stow and quoted in full in his book *To the Islands*, Picador, 1983.

**Western Australian Historical Society (Act Three Scene Five)**

Mr Neville's paper to the society is adapted from a paper delivered by him in 1936, in the possession of the society.

**Mary's Punishment (Act Four Scene Two)**

The origin of the incident of Mary's whipping is from evidence to the Moseley Royal Commission of 1954 by Annie Morrison:

"Sir, I have six children, three boys, three girls, and at Moore River, they haven't enough to eat. Water soup no meat and bread and fat for breakfast, and tea no green vegetables and fruit. They haven't warm clothes for winter; my children have only one blanket between three of them Winter and summer I have..."
Jack Davis brings his playwriting to further maturity with this spirited story of the Millimura family's stand against government 'protection' in the Australia of the 30s. "The native must be helped in spite of himself", wrote the Chief Protector, A.O. Neville, with the wisdom of the day. "The end in view will justify the means."

No Sugar received international acclaim when it represented Australia at the World Theatre Festival in Canada in 1966, and was co-winner that year of the Australian Writers Guild award for best stage play. Jack Davis himself is the recipient of many awards for his writing and for services to the Aboriginal people of Western Australia. In 1985 he was named citizen of the year.