

CLOUDSTREET

THE OPERA

PERFORMANCE LIBRETTO: APRIL 12 2016

LIBRETTO

TIM WINTON AND GEORGE PALMER

MUSIC

GEORGE PALMER

ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL BY TIM WINTON

NB Text in red was cut from performance but should be restored.

CLOUDSTREET
was developed by the South Australian Opera Company, under the
Musical Direction of its CEO, Tim Sexton,
and
Direction by Gale Edwards.

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PROLOGUE

Bob Crab: Will you look at us
by the river!

All: The river ...
Remember,

Bob Crab Wherever the river goes
every living creature which swarms
will live,
and there will be many fish,
for this river goes there,
that the waters of the sea
will become fresh –
so everything will live
where the river goes.
where the river goes.

All Will you look at us
by the river!

Will you look at us
by the river,
the whole restless mob of us
on spread blankets in the
dreamy, briny sunshine
for one day,
one clear, clean sweet day,
one clear, clean sweet day.

SCENE 1

Late afternoon on the Margaret River. LESTER and ORIEL LAMB have brought their family. The kids play, Oriel prepares for dinner, once the prawns are caught.

Lester: Come on, boys, let's get some tucker.
Don't grin so much, Fish,
you'll frighten the prawns away.
Come on, Quick,
don't be so slow.

Quick: You're one to talk, Dad.

LESTER and QUICK take the net into the river. ORIEL leads the GIRLS in a hymn.

Oriel:
The Girls join in: Shall we gather at the river,
where bright angel feet have trod,
with its crystal tide forever
flowing by the throne of God.

Fish:
Fish, Oriel Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful, the river,
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.

ORIEL hugs FISH. FISH does something silly. The others laugh and make a fuss of him.

Hattie: You're such a nong, Fish!
Fish: Takes a nong to sing a song –
as bad as you do, Hattie!
Red: Don't you just hate boys to hell and back
Lester (*affectionately*): Cheeky blighter!
Oriel (*calling*): Cheeky blighter!

QUICK watches FISH with a wistful smile.

Quick: Everybody loves him.
He's the funniest, cheekiest kid
in the whole bloody world!
Fish, the handsome kid,
Fish, the smart kid!
Fish

Lester: Come on, boys, the prawns are runnin'.
We're gunna feast like kings tonight, Oriel.
Oriel: No prawns, no dinner!

QUICK and FISH run into the water to join LESTER. ORIEL joins the GIRLS at the fire.

The Girls: Shall we gather at the river ...
Oriel: I don't mind being poor,
like he does ...
Girls: ... with its crystal tide forever ...
Oriel: I can cadge and patch to make ends meet,
keep the farm swaying on its feet
and still be proud
and happy.
Girls: Yes we'll gather at the river ...
Oriel: And for me it's enough,
all of us together at the river
in the summer, in the evening,
seeing them out there,
hauling the net,
like they're walking on water.

FISH disappears under the water. ORIEL senses something is wrong ...she goes to the water's edge, straining to see the boys.

Oriel: Lester? Lester? Where's Fish?
Lester: Quick, where's your brother?
Quick: Dunno!
Lester: Muckin' around again?

They all start calling wildly - growing panic. LESTER peers, trying to see with the lantern. Projection of FISH drowning, entangled in the fishing net.

All: Fish/ where are you/ coo –ee.

QUICK sees the shape in the water.

Quick: He's under it, he's under the net!
Get it off, get it off!

ORIEL and the CHILDREN run into the water splashing about trying to find FISH.

All: I can't see, do you see him/Where is he/I can't see.
Oriel: Fish, you better not be joking!

O Lord!

Lester swings the lantern wildly and drops it into the water.

All: I can't see, I can't see/ Where is he?
I can't see, I can't see/ Where is he?
Quick: There he is!

ALL drag FISH ashore and struggle to untangle him from the net. LESTER slashes at the net with a fish knife and ORIEL pulls the net apart. FISH is cut free. He lies motionless. RED has turned away, unable to look,

Red: Is he dead?
Lester: O Lord!
Oriel: No! No!

ORIEL begins thumping on FISH'S chest.

Oriel: Blessed Saviour,
bring him back!
Show us all Thy tender mercy
and bring this boy back.
God, Jesus Almighty,
now, you raise him up!
Lester: Yes, Lord, yes.
Oriel: Lord Jesus!

Lester: *(weeping)* Yes, Lord, yes.
The Children: Fish/wake up!

ORIEL smashes FISH on the chest one more time. Water spews from his mouth. He screams in agony, but all cry for joy as he starts to breathe.

Lester: He's alive! He's alive!
We got him back!
Oriel: It's a miracle! A miracle!
Girls: A miracle!
Oriel: Praise the Lord of miracles!

LESTER leads them in a hymn, all except QUICK, who cradles FISH'S head in his lap and looks at him intently. QUICK tries to gain their attention while they sing.

Lester: What a friend we have in Jesus,
All: all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!

Quick: Dad! Mum!
Dad! Look! Mum!
Look, look,
look, look. . .

FISH lies still, staring upwards, eyes unblinking. Not all of FISH has come back.

SCENE 2

ROSE runs headlong across stage.

Rose Mum! MUM.....!!!

TED and CHUB, pass in the other direction. They pay ROSE no attention.

Ted, Chub, wait. Dad's had an accident.
He caught his hand in a winch.

Ted: Come on, we're goin' down the jetty.
Rose: He's hurt real bad.
Chub: Mum clobbered him with a beer bottle again!
Ted: Kicked in the nuts by some nag at the track!

The BOYS laugh.

Rose: We should be there.
Someone should be there.
Chub: We'll be there, later, Rose
Rose: Don't drown from cryin'!

ROSE runs to her mother's room and stands outside at the door. Inside, DOLLY is sitting on the lap of an American PILOT, kissing him passionately.

Rose: Mum! Mum ...

DOLLY puts her hand over the PILOT'S mouth.

Mum?

DOLLY removes her hand from the PILOT'S mouth and licks his neck.

Pilot: You're a damn good-looking woman, Mrs Pickles.
Dolly: You Yanks are really something.
Jesus Christ, I love the salt of your sweat.

She licks his chest and armpit.

Rose: *(still outside)* Mum! Dad's hurt.

No response. Mum! I know you're in there.
He's in hospital. I'm scared.

Hospital: SAM propped up in bed, his right hand bandaged.

Rose: I knew something bad
was going to happen,
something really bad
this time.
He's always on about luck!
Luck!
He gambles away our house,
loses two jobs in a year,
now this!

Sam: Luck, Rose. The Shifty Shadow!
Dark luck!
When it's blowin' in the air
like the smell of somethin' dead,
Dark Luck,
when it's pressin' on your chest
like a bloody lump of lead
you just roll yerself a smoke
and you don't get out of bed
if yer smart.

I smelled it this mornin', Rose,
the Dark Luck.
Shoulda followed me own advice, eh?

Yer old man's not that smart, I reckon.

Rose: I hate you sometimes, you're so useless!
You're a grown man
and you don't have a pinch of sense.
But you're not mean, like her.

DOLLY comes in. ROSE glares at her.

Dolly: What's eatin' you, miss?
Rose: Nuthin'. Great you could
drag yourself away and come.
Dolly: What d'ya mean by that, girl?
Rose: He's lost four fingers
and the top of his thumb.
Dolly: Christ! His workin' hand.
If I had any sense
I'd just pack a bag
and buy a ticket!
Whatcha gunna do for a quid, now, Sam?
Sam: Cousin Joel's just bought a pub,
he'll give me a job for sure.
Just in the nick of time, eh!
How's that for luck?
Lady Luck's smilin' again, Doll.

DOLLY makes a gesture of disbelief and contempt.

Dolly: Thank you, Lady Luck,
you rotten slut!

SCENE 3

Margaret River. The LAMBS are packing their bags.

Red: Do we have to go?
Oriel: That's enough, Red.
Elaine: Why are we leavin', Dad?
Lon: Why are we leavin', Mum?
Lester: Time we showed you a bit of the world.
Hattie: What about the farm?
Quick: We can't just leave the farm.
Lester: Sold up from under us, son.
Oriel: Nothin' left for us here.
Come on, Fish. Fish?

FISH appears. He is transformed. He walks slowly past ORIEL. He doesn't see her.

Oriel: Why does he see you, Lester.
Three weeks and he still doesn't see me.
My son doesn't know his own mother.

ORIEL steals herself.

Quick, have you changed him?

Quick: Yeah, Mum. Come on, mate.

QUICK takes FISH by the hand.

Lester: How can you stay in a place
where the only miracle
that ever happened
blew up in your face.

SCENE 4

SAM, dejected, finishes reading a letter and gives it to DOLLY.

Sam: Joel!
Dolly (*reading*): A heart attack at fifty. You call that luck?
Sam: Joel! Who'd a thought it?
Dolly (*reading*): It says he left two thousand pounds
to his cousin, Samuel Manifold Pickles ...
Chub: Who's that?
Rose: Shut up!
Dolly: ... together with his property at Number One
Cloud Street, Perth ...
Ted: Perth!
Sam: Good old Joel, I knew he wouldn't forget me.
Dolly: ... on condition that the property not be sold
for twenty years.
Twenty years!
We're not movin' to Perth!
Nowhere else to go, Doll.
Dolly: I didn't know Joel had a house in Perth.
Sam: Joel said he bought it off a rich old widow
who took in native girls
to make 'em ladies' maids.
Dolly: So what happened?
Sam: He wouldn't say.
Must've been bad, but,
'cause when she died
they boarded up the house
and no one went near it.

SCENE 5

The LAMBS are travelling from place to place and sleeping rough. It's taking its toll. Fish needs constant supervision.

Oriel: Fish ... (*calling*) .. Fish ...
Lester: Quick! I told you to keep an eye on him.
Quick: (*to Fish*) Come on, mate!
Gotta keep moving.
gotta get to the city by tomorrow night!
Fish: The city?
Quick: Yeah. Perth.
Fish: But the water ... the water ...
Oriel: Fish
Lester: Don't worry, love,
he'll come good, alright.
Just give him time.

SCENE 6

The PICKLES FAMILY arrive at Cloudstreet.

Sam: Cloudstreet
Got a good sound to it, don't ya reckon?
Chub: I'm hungry.
Dolly: Suck your thumb.
Ted: I hate it.
Chub: So do I.
Sam: Go on, take a look around.
Rose: A bit run down, needs a coat of paint.

TED and Chub run off to explore.

Sam: I've had a big win, Doll, a big win.
The Shifty Shadow's shifted, can't you feel it?
It's bloody huge!
Dolly: It's bloody weird!

TED and CHUB s run in.

Ted: All the doors on one side of the house are locked.
Chub: I told you I hate it.
Rose: What's going on, Dad?
Sam: Rosie, we're skint
but we got this place,
too big for all of us.
I've had an idea.
I'm renting out half the house.
Dolly: I'm gunna be a friggin' landlady.
I'm too young to be tied down
for twenty friggin' years.
Sam: There's a horse running today, it's called Silver Lining.
That's got to be a sign.
Dolly: Sam Pickles!
Sam: Have some faith, Doll.
Don't worry, I always come out ahead.

SAM is off.

Dolly: You bastard!

SAM ducks away. DOLLY, furious, takes the remaining suitcases inside.

SCENE 7

The Lamb family grow weary of life on the road. LESTER is checking Accommodation For Rent in the newspaper.

Lester: Cloudstreet...substantial house...half to let.
What do you think?
Oriel: Cloudstreet.
Lester: Cloudstreet.
Got a good sound to it, don't you reckon?
Oriel: Cloudstreet. Maybe. . .

Lester: Not just another stop along the road.
Not just another shabby room,
filled with broken odds and ends
of other people's dreams.

Not just another place you have to leave,
tearing up all the hopes you planted there,
trying to believe that somewhere,
trying to believe that somehow,
there's got to be another chance –
somewhere, somehow,
there's got to be another chance.

What's in a name?
Cloudstreet!
Cloudstreet!
Is it the answer to a prayer,
the last page of defeat,
a castle in the air,
a rock beneath our feet?
Cloudstreet!

Oriel: Maybe ...

SCENE 8

The Lamb family arrive at the dilapidated ruin of Cloudstreet.

Hattie Crikey! Is that it?
Elaine: It's awful!
Red: What a dump!
Lon: I hate it!
Hattie: So do I!
Quick: Looks flamin' haunted!
Lon: I hate it
Oriel: Well, it's all we can afford

ORIEL points LESTER to the front door.

Go on, Lest.

SCENE 9

DOLLY opens the door, a fag in her mouth. She looks blowsy in a low cut dress and leans seductively against the door post. LESTER gawks.

Dolly: Sorry mate, we're not buyin' nothing.
Try up the street.
Lester: Jeez, you're as white as a ghost.
Limestone dust.
We came from up the country.
Margaret River.
Dolly: Knew a bloke from there once.
Had hair growin' out his nose.
Lester: It's about the house.
Dolly: Sam! Sam!

Stop buggerising about and come here.

DOLLY puffs her fag while LESTER shuffles awkwardly, trying not to stare at DOLLY'S cleavage.

Lester: My name's Lester Lamb.

SAM arrives in a dirty singlet.

Dolly: His name's Lester Lamb.

Sam: Come and have a look.
You get half the house, half the yard,
your own dunny.
The hallway is everyone's.
Big joint, eh?

Lester: I got six kids.

Sam: *(spoken)* Cath'lics, eh?

Lester: *(spoken)* Nah ... nothin'.

Sam: Can youse pay?

Lester: We'll pay.

Sam: You'll do.

SAM offers his left hand. They shake awkwardly.

My name's Pickles, Sam Pickles.
It's gunna sound like a counter lunch,
Lamb and Pickles.
Well, bring 'em in.

ROSE, TED and CHUB watch ORIEL directing as the LAMBS move into their half of the house.

Oriel: Right! Get movin'! Quick smart,
haven't got all day.
Elaine, Red, Hattie,
off your bums!

LESTER and ORIEL head into the house.

Elaine: Yes, Mum!

Hattie: God, here she goes again!

The Girls: Sergeant-Major Oriel!

The GIRLS give ORIEL a mock salute, behind her back, as they begin to walk into the house.

SCENE 10

Suddenly, the families are frozen for a moment frozen in time SHADOWS move over the walls of the house. BOB CRAB enters. Only FISH can see him.

Fish: Hello Mister.

Bob Crab: I know you. I see you.
This house bad place,
Got a story to tell.
Tell you one day.

The moment passes.

Quick: Come on Fish. What you doing?

FISH points to BOB CRAB as he exists.

Fish: The man. The man.
Quick: There's no one there, mate.
Fish: But I saw...I saw...

QUICK gently drags FISH away

Chub: There's three boys, too.
Ted: One's a slowbo.
Rose: Is not.
Ted: Betcha.
Rose (*to SAM*): Who are they, Dad?
Sam: They're called the Lambs.
Ted: God, we're livin' with sheep.

SAM shoos them off. TED and CHUB go. ROSE watches FISH who is staring at SAM's hand.

Fish: Mister ... who stoled your fingers?
Quick: Come on, Fish. (*To SAM*) Sorry.

ROSE watches as QUICK begins to lead FISH away..

Sam: Who stoled your fingers?
That's a good 'un, eh?

FISH passes ROSE.

Fish: (*to ROSE*) Hello, I'm Fish Lamb.

QUICK gently leads FISH off.

Rose: They're weird, Dad, really weird.
That Mrs Lamb, shoutin' orders
day and night, she'll drive us nuts
And I don't like the look of those girls.
The big one acts tough, the middle one
walks around like she's dyin',
and the pretty one looks mean.
You shouldn't have done this.

Sam I'm your father!

Rose You should have thought of that.

SAM goes. FISH runs on and off excitedly.

There's that boy, but . . . Fish . . .
Fish Lamb.

Ted thinks you're a slow-bo
but I think you're beautiful.

Rose enters the house.

SCENE 11

QUICK's bedroom – the walls are covered with heart-rending photographs torn from newspapers and magazines: eg a blinded prisoner of war, a crying baby in bombed out ruins, wounded refugees fleeing.

Quick: Everybody loved him.
 He was the funniest, cheekiest kid
 in the whole bloody world.
 Fish, the handsome kid.
 Fish the smart kid...
 Fish . . . Fish . . .

QUICK cries quietly. FISH enters watching him.

Fish: You sad, Quick!
Quick: I'm okay.
Fish: No. You always sad now.
 The pictures on the wall.
 They sad too.
Quick: They remind me ...
 I'm alive, I'm Quick Lamb, I survived.
Fish: Don't want you sad, Quick.
Quick: Mate, everybody gets sad.
 You get sad.
Fish: When I want the water.
Quick: What water?
Fish: The water, the water ...

FISH cuddles up to QUICK on the bed and goes to sleep. QUICK looks at his gallery of misery on the walls.

Quick: My gallery of misery!
 The cripples, the reffos,
 the starving, weeping wounded ...
 they all look down at me:
 “You're Quick Lamb, who survived.
 You're alive, you're lucky, you're healthy
 and your brother is not.”

PROJECTION of FISH drowning in the net.

 That moment in the river.
 That terrible, silent moment in the river
 when Fish is gone.
 He's under it, he's under the net!
 It floats above him like the Angel of Death.
 It should have been me!

QUICK rushes out. FISH remains asleep, until....

SCENE 12

THE SPIRIT GIRLS wail as their shadows move on the walls. FISH wakes and cowers in fear then runs off as BOB CRAB comes forward.

Bob Crab: I'm here, house!
 I see you.
 I'll catch you,

you wait.
One day I come back.
Finish the story proper way.

SCENE 13

Night, a bedroom. SAM and DOLLY have been making love. SAM tries to give DOLLY a kiss but she seems elsewhere.

Dolly: I'm not that old.
Sam: Anyone with an arse like yours
isn't old.
Dolly: I dunno what I'm doin'.
Sam: Do ya ever?

DOLLY comes forward, alone in her thoughts. SAM goes.

Dolly: Most nights I lie here, wide awake,
in the dark,
the place beside me, where love ought to be,
as empty as my life.
I'm so alone,
oh God, I'm so alone!
Give me one good reason to go on.

Some nights I go down to the railway track,
all alone.
Just sit there by the silver rails,
like being with a friend.
Cold-shiny bright,
take me into the night
and no-one will ever know where I've gone.

When I was just a little kid
my dad would ride down to the station,
up behind him on the saddle
I'd hold on tight and wave at trains.
He was strong and sunbrown-tall
and when he laughed the world would stop
as if he laughed for everyone
and everything
and just for me.

He said "those rails will take you far away
to the world.
They go forever, you just follow them,
you'll find where you belong."
Was love too far,
was love a place too far?
Give me one single reason to go on.

SCENE 14

The LAMB FAMILY – ORIEL is at work folding washing.

Lester: We can make something here, love,

Oriel: I can feel it.
 We need things.
 We need work.
 Lester: I been thinking.
 Oriel: I thought I smelled rubber burnin'!
 Lester: There's no corner shop
 this side of the railway line.
 Oriel: What are you talking about?
 Lester: A shop. Our shop.
 We'll use the front room of this house
 for a shop.

Makin' a start and
 havin' a go at it.
 Startin' out slow but
 we'll make a show of it.
 Can't you just see up there
 in big red letters
 "Lamb Smallgoods."

Oriel: Might work, I s'ppose.
 Lester: Nothin' too fancy,
 nothin' too funny,
 just fresh and wholesome and
 value for money.
 Can't you just see up there
 in big red letters
 "Lamb Smallgoods."

ORIEL'S enthusiasm is fired. She imagines slogans for signs for the shop. LESTER matches her.

Oriel: "Quality nice, "
 Lester: "Best price",
 Oriel: "Guaranteed goodness ..."
 Lester: "not too dear."
 "All that you need ...
 Oriel: "and just round the corner,
 Lester: We're Local
 Oriel: We're Honest
 Both: We're Here."

*The LAMBS start bustling about setting up counters and goods for sale.
 DOLLY comes on, looking bleary and frowsy in a dressing gown.*

Dolly: Christ almighty! What's all the racket?
 Oriel: Settin' up in business, Mrs Pickles.
 Dolly: I'm tryin' to sleep, for God's sake.
 Oriel: Sleep it off, you mean.

Oriel and the Girls: We're Local –
 Lester and the Boys: We're Honest –
 The Lamb Family: We're"
 Oriel: ... just getting' on with it.
 Lester! ... the cabbages!
 Hattie, don't just stand there!
 Elaine, there's a customer!
 Lon, get movin' with that broom
 or get outta town!

Lon: Yes, Mum
 Hattie: Yes, Mum.
 Elaine: Yes, Mum.

Lester: Twenty seven customers
just this mornin'!
We're gunna make a go of it!
I knew we'd do it, Oriel.

Oriel: Not if you keep sittin' on your bum, Lester.
Come on, all of you,
Hop to it.

Hattie, Red): Sergeant-Major Oriel, Sergeant-Major Oriel!
Elaine, Lon): Sergeant-Major Oriel, Sergeant-Major Oriel!

TIME PASSES as the LAMB FAMILY keeps bustling about. DOLLY comes in, now in a casual day dress.

Dolly: So, how's it going, ducks?
Oriel: Made two pound and fourpence today.
Dolly: You'll get rich at that rate.
Oriel: And you'll have a regular income, Mrs Pickles.

The Lambs: Makin' a start and just getting' on with it ...

Oriel: Lester! The brussel sprouts!
Quick! You'll break those eggs!
Elaine, the beetroots!

The Lambs: Sergeant-Major Oriel!
The Pickles join: Sergeant-Major Oriel!

Chub: Hey Fish, what's two plus two?
Fish: Um ...
Chub: Come on, slowbo!
Every dunce knows two plus two.
Fish: Hey Chub, you want an ice-cream?
Chub: Oh yeah!
A Lester Lamb Amazing Double Vanilla Ice-cream?

Lester: They're selling like hotcakes

The Lambs: Quality nice, best price,
guaranteed goodness, not too dear ...

Lester: Mornin' Mr Pickles.
Here's the week's rent. Right on time.

Lester hands over cash.

Sam: As always. Goin' good, eh?
Lester: Great, and getting better every day.

*DOLLY enters, dressed up to the nines, and takes the cash from SAM.
She is on her way out.*

Oriel: Off for a night on the town, Mrs Pickles?
Dolly: Well, you know what they say,
All work and no play, Mrs Lamb ...

Oriel: Whatever they say, Mrs Pickles,
I say it's hard work gets the rent paid
and puts food on the table!
Godawful woman!

Dolly (*going*):

All: Nothin' too fancy,
nothin' too funny,
just fresh and wholesome and
value for money.

Don't it look grand up there
in big red letters
"Lamb Smallgoods."

Quality nice, best price,
guaranteed goodness, not too dear.
All that you need and just round the corner,
We're/They're Local – We're/They're Honest – We're/They're Here!"

SCENE 15

QUICK on the LAMB'S side of the house, ROSE doing her homework at the PICKLES' kitchen table.

Quick: Half a house in a strange city!
I hate this house ...
Rose: I hate this house ...
Quick: I hate this city.
Rose: ... it stinks of misery.

Quick: If I could get away ...
Rose: If I could get away ...
Quick: ... to paddocks where the air
is stronger than memory ...
Rose: ... from all the stupid people
in this family ...
Quick: I'd be shot of that moment ...
Rose: I'd stop being so angry ...
Quick: ... that moment in the river
when Fish is gone.
Rose: ... angry with people
too hopeless and stupid
to know how to change.
Rose: If I could get away
Quick: If I could be some-one else

Rose: If I could be
Both: just an ordinary kid
in an ordinary family.

Quick: An ordinary kid
goes fishing with his brother and his Dad
on a Sunday afternoon.

Rose: An ordinary kid
comes home from school each day
and her mum is there with chocolate cake and milk.

Quick: Cricket in the back yard, Mum keeping score,
She's not too good at counting so
she let's you cheat a bit.

Rose: Homework at the kitchen table, Dad helping out,
he's not too good at maths and spelling,
or so he says, so he says.

Both: That's what it's like
for ordinary kids.

That's how it is
in ordinary families.
Rose: That must be how it is ...
Quick: That must be what it's like ...
Both: I suppose.

QUICK goes. FISH comes running in.

SCENE 16

Rose: Hello, Fish. Whatcha doin'?
Fish: Nuthin'. Playin'
Rose: Can I play with you?
Fish: If you want to ...
Rose: What do you like doin'?
We can play that.

Fish: I like to stand in the yard and see birds.
I like the way things move in the wind.
I like when the wind is on my face.
I say "Hello, wind, hello wind!"
And I like to sing!
But best of all I like ...

Rose: What do ya like best?
Fish: I like spinnin' the knife!
Rose: Fish, can I kiss you?
Fish (*giggling*): Well, if you want to ...

ROSE kisses him. FISH squirms and giggles. QUICK enters with the net.

Fish: Quick, we're playin' spin the knife,
me and Rose. You play too.

Quick: Sorry, mate, gotta fix this net.
Fish: I can! I can!

Fish takes the net and starts to run off.

Rose (*to Quick*): So, what's the story with Fish?
No response
Sorry. Your mob and mine don't talk much.

QUICK shrugs and turns away.

Neither do you.

FISH runs back and smiles at Rose.

Fish: Bye Rose. See you tomorrow.

ROSE goes.

SCENE 17

The LAMB FAMILY, exhausted after a long day in the shop. ORIEL tries to attract FISH'S attention – he ignores her.

Oriel: Fish! Fish!
 Lester: Thanks kids, you done good today.
 Oriel: Fish, Fish,
 Fish, can you see me?
 Elaine: *(indicating Oriel)*
 She didn't say thanks.
 Lon: She never does.
 Red: Nothing's ever good enough
 Hattie: She doesn't really love us.
 Oriel: Try, Fish!
 Lester: 'course Mum loves you.
 It's just her way.
 Go on now, go give Mum a hand.

ORIEL gives up in despair. ALL go except Lester, who slumps onto a box in exhaustion and misery. SAM is on his way home from a day at work.

Sam: G'day. You look knackered.
 Lester: Yeah, too right.
 Sam: Me too.
 Still gettin' used to regular work
 after the accident, you know,
 'cause of this.

SAM holds up his fingerless stump. LESTER scrutinizes it with concern.

Lester: How did you ... how did it ...?
 Sam: A winch. On a boat.
 Just bloody stupidity and bad luck.
 You believe in luck, Mr Lamb?
 Lester: Call me Lest.
 Sam: *(spoken)* Alright, Lest.
(sung) Call me Sam.
 I been on wharves and boats all me life.
 Now I'm at the Royal Mint.
 Just pushin' a broom, though.
 Not a lot a fella with one hand can do.
 Lucky I got the job.

Lester: So, you believe in luck, Lest?
 Can't say.
 Sam: Well, mate, I'm on a run.
 Lester: What do you mean?
 Sam: There's a horse I been bettin' on, Blackbutt.
 Never lets me down. Never.
 Tell you what, you come with me today
 and I'll show you.
 Lester: Well, I dunno ...

Sam: It's no good sayin' please,
 cos she knows how to tease you
 Luck! Lady Luck!
 You can beg, you can plead
 but she wont ever heed you,
 Luck! Lady Luck!
 But when that fickle fancy lady
 gives a wink and hooks her finger
 you're a fool if you snub her
 and a moron if you linger.
 Sure as eggs it's your fate,

mate, you're goin' on a date
With Lady Luck

Sam: (*spoken*) Come on, Lest!

SAM happily leads a dubious LESTER off.

SCENE 18

*A Pub. DOLLY is drunk and brazenly flirting with GERRY CLAY.
GERRY whispers something in her ear and DOLLY screeches with laughter.*

Gerry (*spoken*): Yer a bottler, Doll!
Dolly (*spoken*) An' you're a smooth one, Mr Gerry Clay.

They kiss passionately. Rose is at the door.

Rose: Mum! Mum! Come home, Mum.
 You've been here since this morning.
Dolly: Only this morning, was it?

DOLLY and GERRY laugh.

Rose: Please, Mum. No-one's home.
 I don't know where Chub is.
Dolly: He'll be home when he's hungry.
Rose: Mum, you should be home.
 Someone should be home.
Dolly: Where's yer father?
Rose: Gone to the races.
 I'm on my own.
Dolly: I'm busy. Go and do your homework.
Rose: I've done it.
Dolly: Well, go and read one of them books.
 She's always reading, this one.
 Christ, ya look like a bloody skeleton.
 Go home and feed yerself.
Rose: Isn't that your job?
Gerry: You heard yer Mum.
 Go on, go home.
Rose: So she can carry on all night
 with you drunken bludgers?

DOLLY slaps ROSE, who falls to the floor.

Dolly: Don't you ever come after me again.
 Never!
Rose: All right, I won't.
 Never!

Gerry: What's all that about?
Dolly: Filthy little bitch!
 Starves herself out of spite,
 just to make me look bad.
Rose: Wait till Dad finds out!

GERRY takes DOLLY'S arm.

Gerry: Come on, Doll.
 Let's get some air.
 There are too many people
 can't mind their own business.

Dolly: Well, they can get buggered.

DOLLY gives GERRY a drunken kiss on the mouth. GERRY drags her out.

Rose: Damn her, damn her, damn her to hell
 and shit and piss and stink!

ROSE runs off, weeping.

SCENE 19

Very late the same night, the house in Cloudstreet. LESTER and SAM, back from the races and very drunk, tiptoe towards the house.

Lester: Sure as eggs
 it's your fate,
 mate, you're goin' on a date
 with lady Luck.
 It's no good sayin' "please" ...
Sam: *(spoken)* Sush, shush shush ...
 Please, Lest, will ya keep the noise down

They pause and peer about anxiously.

(loudly) 'cos she knows how to tease you,
Both: Luck! Lady Luck!
Sam: You can beg, you can plead ...
Lester: *(spoken)* Shush, sush, shush,
 shush, mate, Oriel will kill me.

They pause and peer about anxiously.

(loudly) but she won't ever heed you,
Both: Luck! Lady Luck!

ROSE, TED, CHUB, LON, QUICK and FISH come out sleepily in pyjamas. ORIEL comes out in her dressing gown, looking angry. LESTER is legless on the ground.

Sam: But when that ever-lovin' Blackbutt
 gives a wink and ...

SAM sees ORIEL and slinks off sheepishly.

Lester: Good ole Blackbutt!
 you're a fool and a moron ...

LESTER sees ORIEL glaring at him and falters to a stop, looking very foolish and guilty.

and a moron ...

ORIEL shoos the children in and storms off. Only QUICK stays.

SCENE 20

QUICK helps LESTER to his feet.

Lester: You should be asleep, son.
Quick: Okay.

LESTER gives QUICK a clumsy hug. QUICK tries to pull away.

Lester: Dad ...
I love you, Quick.
You okay?
Quick: I'm fine.
Lester: Those pictures on the wall in your room ...
all sad ... too sad ... I worry about you.
Quick: I'm fine.

QUICK starts to go. LESTER has an idea and follows him.

Lester: I won a lot of money at the races today, son.
What say we go to Freemantle tomorrow,
the whole family.
Quick: Come on, Quick, how does that sound?
Sounds good, Dad.

QUICK goes into the house.

Lester: That's what we'll do then.
'Night, son.
I ...

LESTER follows.

SCENE 21

SAM staggers into the kitchen where ROSE is waiting for him. SAM looks around for DOLLY.

Sam (spoken): Dolly!
Rose: She's not home.
Sam: Ah ...

SAM pulls out a wad of notes and puts it on the table.

Rose: I got lucky today, Rosie, real lucky!
I'm on a run ...
How can you stand it, Dad?
Sam: You know what she's doing.
Leave your mother alone, Rose,
she's a good woman ...
Rose: A good woman! God! I don't understand you.
I hate your weakness.
I hate her.

Rose storms off. SAM is seated at the kitchen table, in despair.

Sam: Dolly! Dolly!
After all these years

I forgot I love you.
I guess I'm just a man,
a foolish man, who loves his wife.
I see what you've become,
I know what we've become,
but I can't bear to lose you.

(Cut but to be restored)

Dolly! Dolly!
For how many years
did I forget to say I love you?
I know it's too late now,
it's too late now to say
I love you.
I see what we've become,
I know what I've become,
but I can't bear to lose you.

Night after night
I walk the streets alone
in the dark.
Night after night
I call you
"Dolly, Dolly, Dolly".

SCENE 22

The Shadows of the SPIRIT GIRLS move over the walls. FISH wanders through the house. BOB CRAB follows him. As the wails of the SPIRIT GIRLS grow more agitated and the shadows twist, FISH panics.

Fish (*spoken ad lib*): Lestah! Quick!
 No! No! Bad!
 Don't you do that!
 Leave them alone.
 Don't take them away!
 No! No! Bad! Bad! Lestah,
 Quick, make her stop.

QUICK runs to FISH and holds him. ROSE watches from the shadows as QUICK comforts FISH.

Quick: It's alright, mate ...
Fish: I see them, I see them..
Quick: It's ok now.
Fish: They sad ... all sad.
Quick: No-one's there, mate, no-one's there.
Fish: But I saw, I saw.
Quick: Everything's alright now, Fish.
 Come on.

BOB CRAB and the SPIRIT GIRLS vanish. ROSE emerges from the shadows.

Rose: You're true blue, Quick Lamb.

 It's funny,
 you live in the same house,
 you pass me each day on the stairs

but I don't know you,

QUICK gently leads FISH out.

You're the boy across the hall,
the boy in the room across the hall,
with the sad, funny smile
who looks as though he'll speak
if you wait ... for a while.

There are pictures on the wall
in the room of the boy across the hall.
And he looks at them and cries
for the sadness in the eyes
of the lonely damaged people in the pictures,
the pictures on the wall of the room
of the boy across the hall.

It's funny ...
when Quick and Fish play,
they're in their own little world ...
but Quick won't let me share it.
If I smile and say hello
he'll just turn away and go.
Is he rude?
Or just shy?

There is sadness in the eyes
of the boy in the room across the hall
and he sits there all alone
with the people in his room,
the lonely, damaged people in the pictures,
the people in the pictures
on the wall of the room
of the boy across the hall.

ROSE goes.

SCENE 23

The LAMBS, on the beach at Freemantle, are carrying on a row boat which Lester has just bought. Oriel sees it and disapproves.

Oriel (*grimly*):

What's that?

Lester (*deadpan*):

A boat.

Saw it on the beach,
walked up to the bloke
and made him an offer.

It's ours.

Oriel:

And just how do you think you're gonna get it home?

Lester:

(to Quick)

What about you row it home, boy?

Quick:

On my own, up the river
all the way to Perth?

Hattie:

It's miles, Dad!

Elaine:

It'll be dark soon.

Red:

He's nuts!

Lester: You can take someone.

ORIEL storms off and stands with her back to them.

Quick: I can do it.
Lester: Good boy, Quick.
Who's goin' with him as first mate?
Lon: Me, me! I wanna go. I wanna go.
Red: Shut up, Lon.
Quick: Fish. I want Fish.
Lester: All right. If he wants to.
If you're careful.
Oriel: Don't be a fool Lester!
They're only kids

Fish: (*shouting*) Whacko! Whacko!

FISH runs excitedly towards the boat. He trips and falls heavily.

Fish: Ow! Ow!

ORIEL rushes to pick FISH up and comfort him but he doesn't see her. ORIEL, grief-stricken, looks at LESTER.

Oriel: He doesn't see me, Lester.
Two years now and he still doesn't see me.

QUICK and FISH get into the boat and cast off. All but ORIEL wave goodbye.

Elaine, Red, Hattie: Bye, bye.
Lon: I wanna go.
Elaine, Red, Hattie: See you soon.
Lester: Take care, boys.
Lon: I wanna go.
Elaine, Red: Bye, bye
Hattie: See you soon.
Lester: Be careful, be careful.

The boat pulls away into the river, leaving the family behind.

SCENE 24

In the boat. QUICK rows, slow and steady, through the golden afternoon. FISH hangs over the stern, staring dreamily into the water.

Quick: You okay, Fish?
Fish: The river's big.
Quick: My oath!
I'm nearly pooping myself!

FISH giggles and QUICK rows on.

Cracker boat, eh?
It's ours, Fish.
Fish (*dreamily*): Whacko! Whacko!

QUICK continues to row. The light begins to fade.

Fish: It's a long way.
Is it a long way, Quick?

QUICK pauses to rest.

Quick: Yeah, mate, it's a fair whack, alright.
Fish: Can I do the sticks too? The rowers?
Quick: Alright, we'll share.
Then we'll go faster, eh?

QUICK places FISH'S hands on the oars and rows with him. FISH soon tires and gives up. QUICK resumes rowing. The light fades to black and the stars come out brightly. FISH reaches up to the stars and down into the water.

Fish: The water. The water.
I fly. I fly.

FISH spreads his arms like a bird. The boat seems to lift off and fly slowly through the starry sky. As FISH sings, he is transformed into his true self.

The river is full of sky.
There are stars and swirl and space down there
and just above my head.
The water is all around,
above, below and everywhere,
cool and soft like morning air,

and I fly. Ah!

In the water the light comes down like a vine.
The fish come to me
and let me pass.
The true faces smile at me,
they call to me "Samson Lamb, Samson Lamb!"
They call to me, call to me "Go down into the light!
Go down into the sky."
I fly down to the light, in the sky.

Quick: The river is full of sky.
There are stars and swirl and space ...
Fish ... space and stars,
Both: down there
and just above my head.
The water is all around,
cool and soft like morning air,
and I fly.
Ah (and) I fly.

The starlight fades. Moonlight is focused on FISH'S face alone.

Fish: In the water, in the sky
I'll burst into the moon and stars
of who I really am,
being Fish Lamb.

FISH becomes again the damaged boy he is.

Perfectly. Always. Everyplace.
Me.

SCENE 25

SAM is coming home from work. MRS CLAY is waiting for him. She stares fixedly at him as he walks past. SAM raises his hat awkwardly. MRS CLAY hesitates, then confronts him.

Mrs Clay: Mr Pickles? Are you Sam Pickles?
Sam: That's me.
Mrs Clay: You don't know me.
I'm Mrs Clay, Gerry Clay's wife.
I got nothing against you or anything
but I think you should control your wife.
Sam: And I think you should
mind your own business, lady!
Mrs Clay: It is my business.
It's my husband and my marriage.
I got young 'uns to look after.
She's got no right.
If you were any kind of man
you'd put a stop to it.

MRS CLAY storms off. SAM surveys his stump bitterly.

Sam: And what am I supposed to do?
Stump the bastard to death?

Night after night
I walk the streets alone.
I raise my fist
"Come on, come on,
just try it on me,
I'll kill you all!"

A man like me
is a weak and useless thing.
Still being alive,
still being alive
is the cruelest joke of all.

SCENE 26

The backyard at Cloudstreet at dusk. ORIEL is moving into a tent. The rest of the LAMB FAMILY stand around in disbelief.

Lester: She says she's gunna live in that tent.
She won't say why.
Lon: Don't you love us, any more?
Oriel: As much as I ever did.
Elaine: What kind of an answer is that, Mum?
Oriel: The best I can give.

The LAMB CHILDREN stare at ORIEL, mortified. All except FISH, who wanders about playing happily.

Lester: Oorry, don't you love me?
Don't you love me any more?
Oriel: I married you before God, Lester.

Lester: What kind of answer is that, Oriel?
 The best I can give.

The LAMBS drift away, except QUICK, who stands alone and still, Fish, who plays unconcernedly, and Oriel. Night has fallen.

ORIEL reads from her Bible.

Oriel: “Give ear to my prayer, O God,
 and hide not thyself from my supplications ...”
 Lord! Lord!

No.... there is nothing there.

ORIEL tries again with FISH. QUICK watches at a distance.

Oriel: Fish! Fish!

Quick: She sees only Fish.

Oriel Try to see me.

Quick She lives only for Fish.

Oriel Try, Fish! I’m your mother! Fish! Fish!

Quick Can’t she see our hurt, our guilt, our pain?
 Does she blame us,
 does she blame me,
 for what happened to Fish?

Did she ever love us?
Did she ever love ...
me?

QUICK leads FISH off. ORIEL goes.

SCENE 27

SAM is alone at the table in the kitchen. ROSE brings him his dinner.

Sam: Sit down and eat something yourself.
 Jesus, Rose, you look like a corpse these days.

Rose: I get fat.

Sam: You haven’t been fat
 Since you were hangin’ off a tit.
 Now you’ve grown your own.
 You got to start eating, Rose.

Rose: I can’t, Dad. I toss it back up again.

Sam: Bullshit! Go on, do it, bugger you!
 I didn’t go through a fuckin’ Depression
 and a bloody World War to see
 my kid starve in my own house.
 Eat, Rose.

Eat.

ROSE can't eat and sits sobbing. SAM, despairing, gives up and goes.

SCENE 28

Night in the backyard of Cloudstreet. ORIEL is outside her tent, reading the Bible by her lantern. The LAMB CHILDREN (except QUICK) begin setting up for a party on Guy Fawkes night. LESTER goes to the tent to entice ORIEL to join them.

Lester: Come on, Orry, it's Guy Fawkes Night.
Can't we have some fun?
Oriel: You all go ahead.
Lester: You're still part of this family, Oriel.
It's been twelve months,
you've been living in that tent,
but you're still part of this family.
Oriel: I do my duty.
I do everything I did before,
except live with you.
Lester: The kids need more than duty.
They need you.
Come on, Orry!

The CHILDREN (except QUICK) cluster around.

The Children: Please, please!
Lester: Just for once.
The Children: Just for once.
Lester: Can't we have a bit of fun,
just like the old times.
The Children: Please, please, please.
Lester: The kids'd love it.
Oriel: Okay, just for once, I s'pose.

Well, if we're gunna do it,
let's do it right.

ALL start building a bonfire around the "guy", except QUICK, who is withdrawn and doesn't participate. FISH rushes about, eagerly trying to help, but not understanding what is going on.

Fish: Whacko!
Oriel: Come on, you lot, shake a leg!
Fish: Whacko!
Hattie: More straw ...
Red: we need more wood ...
Lester: .. that's right, Fish, that's the way ...
Lon: ... give me some, too ...
Hattie: ... more straw ...
Lon: ... give me some too ...
Lester: ... that's the way ...
Elaine: ... come on, Quick ... Quick!
Red: ... we need more wood.
Oriel: Quick!
Lester (to Fish): Where's your brother?
Fish: Dunno.
Oriel: ... come on you lot, shake a leg, shake a leg!
Lon: I want some ... give me some ... more straw!
Hattie: ... more straw more straw ...

Red: ... we need more wood ...

Fish: Whacko!
Whatcha doin', Lestah?

Lester: It's Guy Fawkes Night, Fish.
We'll have a real old party
and a sing-song
and let off crackers
and set this bloke on fire.

Fish: *(spoken)* Fire? Fire?

SCENE 29

ORIEL sees DOLLY, SAM, ROSE, TED and CHUB watching.

Oriel: Come on, Mrs Pickles, come on over.
Look, I'll call you Dolly and be done with it!
Lester's got all the gear for the kids.
They'd love it.
There's spuds for the fire
and cakes and every-what-all.
So come on over.

Dolly: *(not interested)* We haven't got any crackers.

Oriel: Plenty to go around. Bring the whole tribe.

Lester: Come on, Sam, just bring 'em over.
It's time we all had a good old get together.

Dolly: No thanks

Ted: I'm goin' out.

Chub: Look at all that tucker.

Sam: We're comin' over, Lest.
Rose!

Oriel, Fish, Lon: Whacko!

DOLLY and TED go out. SAM, CHUB and ROSE join the party.

Lester (shouts): Strike up the band!

ALL except QUICK gather round the bonfire in a circle and join hands. As they dance, ROSE grabs a reluctant QUICK by the hand and brings him in.

Lester: You put your left foot in
you put your left foot out...

All: you put your left foot in
and you shake it all about,
you do the hokey-pokey
and you turn yourself around
and that's what it's all about.
Hey!

Lester (shouts): Okay everyone ...
here she goes!

LESTER sets fire to the bonfire. ALL cheer except FISH.

Fish: *(screaming hysterically, ad lib.)*

No! Burn the man.
Don't burn him. He's the man..

All (shouting ad lib.): Fish, it's not real, it's grass/O God not again/ grab him Quick

ORIEL shakes him by the shoulders but FISH looks through her and rages. QUICK tries to hold FISH . Suddenly through the smoke of the bonfire FISH sees images of the SPIRIT GIRLS. They are hanging from nooses. FISH runs in terror to BOB CRAB, who stands, looking on in helpless anguish. No-one else sees BOB CRAB.

Fish: Help them, help them mister!
Help them, you gotta help them!

ALL stare in shock at FISH.

FISH falls to the ground, convulsing. QUICK cradles him in his arms and FISH lies still, staring into space while the FAMILY gather around. RED has turned away, unable to look. The FAMILY gabble in confusion.

Red: Is he dead?
Lester: What happened?
Oriel: Who did he see?
Lester: What did he see?
Red: Is he dead?
Lon: Fish is crazy, Fish is crazy.
Hattie: Shut up, Lon.
Lester: It was only grass.
Oriel: Who did he see?

Quick: I'm goin', Mum. I'm gettin' out.
I can't take this anymore.
Oriel: You're not goin' anywhere.
Quick: I'm goin' bush, Mum,
and you can't stop me.

QUICK tries to run off but ORIEL holds him back.

Oriel: You got to stay with Fish, son.
He needs you.
Quick: Why me? Why always me?
Oriel: Fish sees you, he sees you.
Quick: No! No! I'm going, Mum, I'm going.
Let me go!

QUICK pulls away from ORIEL

Oriel: Quick!
Lester: Son!
Oriel: Quick!

QUICK rushes off, knocking over ROSE.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE 30

Time has passed. The LAMB and PICKLES families are bustling about in their separate parts of the house. ORIEL and LESTER are carrying things back and forth. LON is waiting to be fed. FISH is sitting in an old orange crate, rowing with tomato stakes. CHUB lounges, picking his nose. TED is lovingly combing his hair and checking the results in a hand mirror.

HATTIE hurries in, trailing a white table-cloth as a wedding veil.

Hattie: I'm gettin' married, I'm gettin' married.
Goodbye to all this.
Lester (*with a sack*): Give us a hand, Lon.
Lon: Yeah, in a minute.

LON doesn't stir.

Red: (*to Hattie*) I saw what you did in his car last night.
Disgustin'.
Hattie: Jealous!
Red: Erk!

SAM comes in from work. TED and CHUB don't even look up.

Sam: Dolly? Mum home?
Ted: Yeah. Goin' out, but.
Hattie: I'm gettin' married, I'm gettin' married.
Chub: And Rose isn't home yet.
So who's makin' dinner.
Sam: God almighty!
Elaine: When am I gunna get a man?

ORIEL bustles in carrying a crate of spuds.

Oriel: When are you all gunna get a move on?

CHUB snatches TED'S mirror away. TED snatches it back.

Ted: Fat-arse!
Chub: Up yours!
Oriel: Lon, help Lester! Quick smart!
Haven't got all day.
Lon: Mum!
Oriel: Elaine! Red! Hattie!
Stop that silliness.
Elaine: Yes, mum.
Hattie: God! Here she goes again!

HATTIE wafts around dreamily, trailing her wedding veil.

Lon: I'm gunna be Mrs Hattie Birch of Pemberton.
I'm gunna starve to death.
When's dinner.
Red: He's dull.
Lon: Am not!
Red: Not you!
Mr Hattie Birch of Pemberton.

Hattie: Jealous! He's gorgeous!
Oriel: He's got knees like soup-plates.
Hattie: He's gorgeous.
Oriel: Hattie! Get that flim-flam off your head!
Where's your sense, girl?
Lon, Chub (*loudly*): Where's me dinner!
Red, Elaine, Ted, Hattie: Shut up!

DOLLY comes in, dressed up for a night out.

Dolly: For Gawd's sake,
what's all the racket?

DOLLY goes to TED and admires his handiwork with the comb.

Dolly: And where's this handsome young feller
goin' tonight?
(*flirtaciously*) Comin' down the pub with yer Mum?

Ted: Nah. Meetin' someone.
Dolly: Some cheap tart in a tight sweater
tryin' to get her hooks into my beautiful boy.

DOLLY embraces TED, not quite maternally.

Ted (*tongue in cheek*): No cheap tart's any competition
for you, Mum.
Dolly: Aw! That's my darlin'.

DOLLY gives him a sloppy kiss. ORIEL meets ROSE, who bounces in chirpily.

Rose: Good ev'ning, Mrs Pickles!
Oriel: Well, young lady,
you look like the cat that swallowed the canary!
Rose: Too right! I just got myself a date and I
just got myself a job
on the switchboard at Baird's, the Department Store.
Oriel: Baird's! That's pretty swish.
You'll have to learn to talk
like one of those society ladies.
Dolly: You'll be right at home, then,
won't yer, little Miss Smartypants!
Oriel: Good on yer, love.
You'll do.

DOLLY is on her way out.

Dolly: I'm off then.
Chub: Mum, when's dinner?
I'm hungry.
Dolly: Suck yer, thumb!
Ted: Fat-arse!
Chub: Up yours!
Sam: Dolly!
Dolly (*aggressively*): Yeah, what?
Rose: Don't worry, Dad, I'll get dinner in a minute.
Sam: Who's the new boyfriend?

ROSE gives DOLLY a withering look. DOLLY and TED go off. HATTIE floats around ecstatically with her wedding veil.

Hattie: I'm getting' married, I'm getting' married,

Lester: I'm getting' married
Give it a rest, Hat!
Oriel: Hattie! Put a sock in it!
Lester: S'pose we'd better start puttin' aside
a few bob for the weddin'.
It's gunna be a big shindig
with all of their mob
and all of our mob.

Oriel: No! Not all of our mob.

The LAMBS' good humour suddenly evaporates.

SCENE 31

Fish: No Quick. He's gone.
He didn't say.
You should say.
Want to go in the boat with Quick.
Oriel: Oh God!
Lester: I know, son.
Elaine: Where's Quick?
Hattie: Quick ...
Fish: Quick ...
Lester: I know, son.

The OTHERS drift away.

Fish: We seed the stars. Up in the water.
Lester: Quick's gone away for a while, Fish.
Fish: It's a long time.
Is it a long time, Lestah?
Lester: Yeah, mate, a long time.
Two years.
Two years and it feels like twenty.
Fish: But Quick's coming?
He's coming so I can go back to the water.
Lester: Don't know, son.
I don't know where he is.
Oh God, I don't even know
if he's still

LESTER can't finish.

SCENE 32

The middle of nowhere. Dusk. QUICK is stalking roos with a rifle. BOB CRAB follows.

Quick: I hear them out there.
Roos - they come into the clearing,
down to the grassy bank of the pool.
Listen. They are close now.

Wait ...
Must be twenty of 'em,
some with joeys in the pouches.
Wait ...

QUICK raises the rifle. BOB CRAB has moved into the rifle's sights.

Bob Crab: We stand shoulder to shoulder by the pool,
rigid, and open our eyes to him.
Our necks curve richly, ears stand twitching,
haunches tick with muscle and nerve.

Quick: Shoot, load, aim, shoot
load, aim, shoot,

Silence.

I try not to think too much.
I think about guns
and roos and killing ...
anything but Cloudstreet ...
anything but Cloudstreet.

SCENE 33

An Italian restaurant. TOBY is taking ROSE out to dinner on their first date. ROSE is dressed up but feels awkward in an unfamiliar social setting.

Rose: Toby, where are we?
Toby: Maria's.
This is where the real people go.
Hungry?
Rose: Starving! I could eat a horse.
Toby: You're out of luck, then.
Horse is off the menu tonight.

They laugh.

Toby: So, how do you like your spaghetti?
Rose (confused): Oh ... like my tea ... just as it comes.

TOBY laughs. ROSE is angry and embarrassed.

Rose: Listen. I don't know a thing about spaghetti
or the real people.

ROSE calms down a little.

I'll have what you have, Toby.
Do you come here often?

Toby: All the time. Terrific place. Terrific people.
Rose: We're different.
Toby: You don't know a thing about me.
Rose: Then tell me. What do you do?
Toby: I'm not really a reporter.
I'm a social column writer.
A hack,
writing poetry on the side.
Rose: Poetry? I love poetry!
Toby: You read?
Rose: Oh yes, I read. I love books.
My room is full of them.

When I was a kid
I read the whole Geraldton library
end to end.
Toby: Who are your favourite writers?
Rose: I remember stories, not names.
You name some.
Toby: Hammet, Steinbeck, Hemmingway, Camus,
Mailer, Lawrence, Sillitoe, James Joyce.

Rose is overwhelmed..

Rose: See, we are different.
You've been to University
and I'm just a switch girl.
Toby: No Rose, you are much more than that..
*The moment I saw
that cheeky, mischievous smile*
I knew it was love.

Rose: You're just being charming, Mr Raven.
Tell me what you're really like.

Toby: Well, no great catch as a beau, for sure.
I'm naturally clumsy,
I'm often vague and quiet
when I'm thinking of a poem
that I'm writing in my head.

I'm utterly impractical,
a pretty lousy driver,
no good at any kind of sport
and never know the cricket score.

But I know where I'm going with my life, Rose ...
the life of a poet, wait and see.

One day I'll get away from here
and find the life I'm truly meant to have.
One day I'll get away to where
a man can have a life that's filled
with books, ideas and poetry
and endless late night argument
with fascinating people
in those smoky little bars
in the back streets of la Rive Gauche.

*Just imagine, Rose,
a poet's life there –
writing in the morning,
making love all afternoon.*

*I know what my life is meant to be, Rose ...
the life of a poet, wait and see.*

*An artist needs the courage to explore
the light and darkness of the soul,
to love and hate like gods and beasts,
and then distil artistic truth in books,
ideas and poetry and
endless late night argument with
fascinating people*

in those smoky little bars
in the back streets of la Rive Gauche.

Rose: Rive what? Jeez, you can talk too!
Toby: Come here. I'm not just talk, Rose.

Toby kisses her. She kisses him hungrily.

SCENE 34

Night. QUICK, with his rifle, is listening warily. BOB CRAB is watching.

Quick: Listen. A noise. Like gasping.

QUICK raises his rifle and goes to investigate.

Quick: I must have just winged one.
He's out there somewhere,
poor bugger ...

QUICK reels back in terror, fighting off a nightmarish beast in the darkness.

Bob Crab: Huge, I rear out of darkness,
death in my eyes,
savage claws ripping and tearing.
I lunge at his chest and throat,
claws like meat-hooks
gouge at his mangled flesh.
He reels back,
he sees for a moment
stars falling from the sky
and falls, and falls.

QUICK lies on the ground, covered in blood. BOB CRAB is beside him.

Quick: I can't move. I can't move.
No-one knows where I am.
Am I gunna die out here?

BOB CRAB points to the stars. FISH in a boat descends and hovers over QUICK. Water shimmers around the boat as if it is on the river. FISH leans out.

Quick: Fish? Fish?
Is it the river?
The river
(panic-stricken) I'm under it,
I'm under the water.
God Almighty, I'm gunna drown,
I'm gunna drown.

Fish: Come on, Quick, let's go fishin'.
Quick: I can't. I can't

Fish: Do ya love me?
Do ya love me, Quick?

FISH reaches down to QUICK. Their hands almost touch for a moment.

Quick (*weeping*): Yes!
Fish, Quick: Quick! /Yes!.

Fish, Quick: The river is full of sky.
There are stars and swirl and space
out there
and just above my head.
The water is all around,
above below and everywhere,
cool and soft like morning air

FISH pulls gently away and starts to row off.

Quick: Where you goin'?
You goin' home, Fish?
Fish: Home. The big country.
Quick: Fish!

The boat rises and FISH goes.

Bob Crab: Come on, Quick.
Time to go now.
Back to your place,
back where you belong.
Home.

BOB CRAB picks up QUICK and carries him off.

SCENE 35

ROSE is setting the table for dinner. DOLLY staggers in, disheveled and half drunk, with a black eye. ROSE stares at her with disgust and hatred.

Dolly: Jesus! What a mess!
This is what you get from men.

Rose: Some men. Other men.
The sort you deserve.

DOLLY restrains herself and tries to make peace.

Dolly: I used to wish
you wouldn't grow up to hate me, Rose.
And then you grow up
and hate me anyway.
Well, yer have yer hopes.

Rose: Hoping is what you do
when you're too lazy
to do anything.

Dolly: You shouldn't hate me.

Rose: Didn't you hate your mother?

Dolly: Okay, you hate me,
let's leave it at that.

(viciously) You know, it's hate keeps you so bloody skinny.

Rose: Hating you is the best part
of bein' alive.

DOLLY comes at ROSE with a raised fist. SAM comes in and grabs her.

Sam: Leave off! Don't you touch her, Dolly, or ...
Dolly: Or what, you weak mongrel?
Sam: Or you'll be out on the street
where you fuckin' belong.

DOLL, shocked and confused, goes. SAM slumps at the table.

What am I gonna do, Rosie?
What are we all gonna do?

ROSE rushes off, leaving SAM sitting alone at the table. He picks up a knife and slowly moves it to his throat.

ROSE returns.

Rose: You can't do this to me, Dad.
I'd piss on your grave.

Sam: You're a hard bastard.
You're the fuckin' business, you are.
Do you hate me?

Rose: No. I pity you.
Because you still love her.

Sam: Rose, people are ... what they are.

Rose: Then they should change.

SCENE 36

Cloudstreet at dusk. ORIEL, to one side, is reading her Bible by a lantern, which casts her shadow on the wall of her tent. LESTER is alone.

Lester: Most nights I just go to my room,
see the light burning in the tent
see your shadow on the wall...
and think about us
and what we once had.

Life throws a million things at me,
good and bad.
Most times I hardly understand
what any of it means ...
I go on the best I can.

For too long I have been waiting
alone in that room.
For too long I've been
a shadow on a wall,
re-living the past,
the life that we had.

LESTER goes towards ORIEL.

Nothing makes any sense to me now,
good or bad
but you could always give me
something to hold onto..
I need something to hold onto
now.

Oriel: What?

Lester: I just wish I knew
what to believe in.

Oriel: You believe in what you like, Lester Lamb.
That's one thing I can't show you.

Lester: You've got hard, Oriel.

Oriel: That's life, Lester, it's a war.
Raisin' a family, keepin' yer head above water,
it's all war.
And since Fish and then Quick ...
I've been losin' that war.

Lester: But you believe in things ...
you believe in the family.

Oriel: Families aren't things you believe in,
they're things you work with.

Lester: Don't you believe in love?

Oriel: No.

Lester (*shocked*): No? No?

Oriel: I feel love.
I'm stuck with the love I've got
and I'm tryin' to work up the love
I haven't got.

Lester: So, what do you believe?

Oriel: God tells me to believe in love, Lester,
but he takes from me
those I love.

SCENE 37

Toby's flat. TOBY is asleep in the bed, where he and ROSE have just made love. ROSE looks at him, longingly but unsure of herself.

Rose: I meet him at bus stops,
I never mention Cloudstreet
out of shame.
I never talk of my world,
he'd never understand.

Toby's world is cool and elegant,
Toby's friends are clever and confident
and he talks to them like he never talks to me
and I listen like a kid at a keyhole.

We meet every weekend.
I type up his poems while he sleeps.
I really don't know what they mean
but who am I to tell?

Do I love him all the more
because I know he's out of reach?
Do I love him all the more
because he's nothing like anyone I know?
Would he love me just the same
if he saw the world I live in?
Should I just keep on pretending?

I can't bear to lose him.

TOBY wakes and gives ROSE a playful kiss and hug.

SCENE 38

Cloudstreet. BOB CRAB carries QUICK forward. ORIEL is the first to see him. She restrains the urge to run to him. QUICK seems in shock, remote, unresponsive, unsteady on his feet.

Oriel: You're thin.
Lester: You're home!
Red, Lon: Quick is ...
All (*except Hattie*): Home! Home!
Fish: Quick!

LESTER capers like an idiot. The FAMILY crowds around QUICK, hugging him, and jabbering questions - except HATTIE, who is struggling with her emotions.

Lester: Halleluja! Halle – bloody –luja!
He's back, he's home.
Fish: Quick!
Elaine: You look terrible.
Red: Where were you?
Lon: Where'd you go, Quick?
Elaine: You look terrible.
Fish: Quick!
Red: I missed you.
Lester: Halleluja! Halle – bloody –luja!

HATTIE has been hanging back, struggling with tears.

Hattie: Quick!
You turn up out of the blue,
lookin' like a train-wreck,
just before my weddin'!

You'll spoil everything!

HATTIE runs to QUICK and embraces him.

Hattie: Oh, Quick!
All: Quick!
(*except Oriel*): Halleluja! Halle – bloody –luja!
Fish: Quick, Quick!

QUICK staggers, on the point of collapse.

Hattie: You look terrible.
Red: I missed you.
Lester: He's back!
Fish: Quick! Quick! Quick!
Elaine: You look terrible.
Oriel: What's wrong, Quick?
Why can't you say something?
Can't you say something?

QUICK points to BOB CRAB, who is standing to the side, watching. FISH also points to him. No-one else sees BOB CRAB.

Quick: The black angel! The black angel!
Fish: The black angel ... there's the man ...

BOB CRAB goes and the FAMILY begins to carry QUICK off.

Oriel: There's something wrong with him, Lester.
Get your mouth out of gear
and help me get him into bed.
Lester: Tell me you're happy, Oriel.
Tell me you're happy to have him back.
Oriel: I'm happy! I'm happy.
But not all of Quick is back yet

SCENE 39

Cloudstreet, the backyard. FISH is rowing in his crate as TOBY CRAVEN comes in, looking around in amazement at the gothic pile of the house.

Toby: Is this the Pickles' house?
Fish: Lestah sells pickles. In the shop.
Toby: The Pickles family.
Fish: The Pickles family.

FISH carefully ticks them off.

There's Mister Pickles an' Missus Pickles
an' Ted Pickles. There's Rose Pickles
an' Fatty Chub Pickles.

DOLLY comes out, a loose low-cut dressing-gown over her nightie, smoking and looking sleazy. She still has her black eye.

Toby: Mrs Pickles?
Dolly: Who's askin'?
Toby: I'm Toby Raven.
I'm looking for Rose.

TOBY doesn't know whether to shake hands and tries not to look at DOLLY'S cleavage.

Dolly (*bitterly*): Rose?
Rose, there's a bloke here.
Says his name is Tony.

DOLLY looks TOBY over, flirting out of habit but without much interest. TOBY doesn't know whether to shake hands or just stare at DOLLY'S cleavage. ROSE comes out, flustered.

Rose: What the hell are you doin' here?
Toby: Someone's taken one of my poems.
Dolly: Hope you're insured.
Toby: No, no. It's going to be published
in an east coast literary magazine.
And I'm on the short list for
the State Poetry Prize.
They're announcing it tomorrow night
and we're invited.
Dolly: All of us?
Rose: Go way, we want to talk.
Dolly: Okay, okay.

Dolly goes.

I know when I'm not wanted.

Toby: Rose, I've cracked it at last.
Come on, come with me tomorrow.
We'll drink champagne and stand around
looking interesting.

Rose: I don't know, Toby.
I never feel quite at ease with your friends.

Toby: Please.
I'm sorry I barged in here.
I know you never wanted me
to see where you live

TOBY looks around in comic astonishment.

or meet you're family.

TOBY rolls his eyes in mock horror.

I mean, my God, your mother ...!

He points to FISH, who watches them.

And is he one you thought you loved once,
the retard?

ROSE is horrified.

Rose: Toby! Toby!
Don't talk about Fish like that.

Toby: Sorry, no harm intended.

TOBY kisses ROSE jauntily.

Toby: So, will you come tomorrow?
Rose: I suppose so.

Toby: Pick you up tomorrow night.
Six sharp. Don't be late.

TOBY goes. FISH has been hurt. ROSE goes to comfort him.

Fish: Is he your boyfriend?
Rose: You'll always be my best boyfriend, Fish.
Fish (*happily*): You'll always be my best girlfriend, Rose.
Rose: Fish!

FISH laughs cheekily.

Fish: But you're not gunna kiss me again!

FISH runs off, chased by ROSE.

SCENE 40

Cloudstreet. Late afternoon. SAM, bloodied, disheveled and looking jumpy, hurries on carrying a suitcase. The suitcase spills its contents.

Sam: Fuck!

SAM scrabbles to cram his clothes back into the case. LESTER comes in.

Lester: You off then, Sam?

Trouble with the bookies?

Sam: Nah, the union. The union boss
paid off the bookies for me.

Wants the money back. Nasty cove.

Lester: So I see, mate.

Sam: Well, you know how it is, Lest.

The Shifty Shadow goes dark on ya

an' you're up the creek!

Been that way a while now.

Every horse I been backin'

comes home hangin' its arse

like its back legs have been sawn off.

Every one!

Lester: How much do you owe?

Sam: Two hundred quid.

Lester: Two hundred quid!

No wonder they're punchy.

They'll come here lookin' for you, won't they?

Sam: Too bloody right.

Lester: There's an old fishin' shack up the coast.

You stay put there, Sam.

I'll bring you the money to pay 'em off.

Sam: Why would you do that, Lester?

What's in it for you?

Lester: Insurance policy.

Sam: What does that mean?

Lester: Just come on.

LESTER leads SAM off.

SCENE 41

Cloudstreet. Early evening. QUICK and FISH bring out a net and fishing gear. QUICK begins mending the net.

Fish: Quick, you goin' on the river?
In the boat?

Quick: Yeah, mate. Goin' out tonight.

Fish: Me! Me! I wanna go. I wanna go.

Quick: You know you're not allowed.

Fish: But the water the water ...

ROSE comes home from work.

Rose: Hello, stranger. The prodigal returns ...

Heard you were back

and feelin' a bit crook.

Feeling better now?

QUICK just shrugs.

Rose (*impatiently*): As chatty as ever, I see.

You've been gone awhile.

Anywhere interesting?

Quick: Coupla places.

Rose: Must've been really wonderful!

Pity your postcards got lost in the mail.
 You were keen to get there, though.
 Remember? You knocked me flat.
 I thought you'd busted my nose.
 Quick (*awkwardly*): Sorry
 You look okaynow.
 Rose (*drily*): Thanks. I'll take that as a gushing compliment.

QUICK doesn't know what to make of ROSE'S sarcasm. ROSE regrets her jibe and waits for a better effort from QUICK. She gives up.

Fish: Well ... well ... I'd best be off, then.
 I'm goin' to a swanky party tonight.
 With Toby?
 Rose: See you 'round.

QUICK shrugs and ROSE goes.

Quick: Toby?
 Fish: But I'll always be her best boyfriend, but.

QUICK goes back to getting the fishing gear ready.

Fish: Quick, I wanna go in the boat too.
 You took me once,
 remember?

We goed in the stars.

BOB CRAB emerges from the shadows. Projection of The Spirit Girls in water.

Quick: We were kids, Fish,
 just kids..

Fish: The river was full of sky.
 There were stars and swirl
 and space
 down there
 and just above my head.

Quick: It was a dream
 a dream,
 just a dream,
 a magical dream.
 We were kids.

Bob Crab: The river is full of sky
 There are stars and swirl
 and space
 Down there
 and just above your head

The water was all around
 above, below and everywhere,

The water is all around
 above, below and everywhere,

cool and soft
 like morning air
 and I fly.
 Ah !

Water
 cool and soft
 like morning air
 and I fly.

cool and soft
 like morning air
 and I fly.

Quick: Alright, let's get you ready, then.
 Come on.

Fish: Come on.
 We're going to the river.

We're goin' on the river

Wherever the river goes
 every living creature which
 swarms
 will live ...

Just like we used to.

All: ... and there will be many fish

for this river goes there,
that the waters of the sea
will become fresh,
so everything will live
where the river goes,
where the river goes.

SCENE 42

Cloudstreet. Night. DOLLY is preparing to go out to the pub. LESTER comes in.

Dolly: So where is he?
Lester: Up the coast.
Out of harm's way.
Dolly: What am I supposed to do?
Lester: Sit tight, I reckon,
unless you got some way of raisin' the money.
Dolly: I could stand on the street corner ...
Sorry, I'm a bit rough for you.

Their eyes meet. They see each other's loneliness and need.

Dolly: What if they come after him?
Lester: If they do, tell 'em to see me.
Dolly: You're not the fightin' type, Lester.
Lester: There won't be any fight.
Dolly: You'll pay 'em? How much is it, anyway?
Lester: Two hundred quid.
Dolly: You haven't got that kind of dough.
Lester: There's savings.
Dolly: It'll be money down the dunny.

DOLLY comes closer to LESTER.

Lester: If these blokes come round to collect
and Sam's not here
they'll take goods to the value of.
Guess which end of the house they'd pillage.
It's insurance, I reckon

DOLLY kisses LESTER full on the mouth.

Dolly: You sure that's all you're buyin'?

LESTER kisses DOLLY passionately. He pushes her roughly onto the table, kissing and groping her hungrily.

SCENE 43

ORIEL outside her tent. She has her Bible in her lap.

Oriel: What a friend we have in Jesus
all our sins and grief to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to

No!
There is nothing there.

I know I am a sinner
I know I am proud.
I know nothing about your Heaven, God,
But I know Hell.

Hell is a forest on fire,
a cauldron boiling and spitting flame,
trees exploding like bombs –
a cauldron boiling and spouting fire.

The smell of ash and burning flesh
rises up to the sky
and, falling down, falling down,
coils through the dark cellar
where a little girl cowers,
crying for her mother and sisters to come.

Hell is the sound of men's voices
when light bursts into the cellar
with a swirl of ash and charcoal
and the burning taste of air,
and they drag you out,
past the black bones and the belt-buckles
that are the others
who never came down

Hell is when it's only you left.

Keep your heaven, God.
You made me hard and blunt and strong.
I will be a fortress for my family.
You will not break me.
You will not have them.

SCENE 44

QUICK joins ORIEL.

Quick: G'day.
Oriel: Hello.
Quick: I thought you wouldn't speak to me.
Oriel: I'm your mother, you know.
Quick: How could I forget it.
Oriel: Not by running away.
Why did you come back?
Quick: Fish.
Oriel: Fish.
Quick: You loved him more than the rest of us.
Oriel: Everybody loved him.
Fish was everyone's favourite.
Didn't you love him
more than any of us?
Did you feel guilty about leaving us,
or leaving Fish?
Quick (*angrily*): Why do we have to talk about this, Mum?
Oriel: Because we're family.
Quick: Jeez, I hate this family stuff.
Oriel: It's all we've got.

Quick: What?
Oriel: Each other

SCENE 45

The Poetry Award party. TOBY looks miserable and already a little drunk.

Toby: Well, that's it, then!
Rose: Don't be so disappointed, Toby.
There's always next year.
Toby (*impatiently*): Next year, next year,
always next year.
You'll never understand, Rose.

GUEST cluster around the Poetry Award Winner, congratulating him. TOBY gulps down another glass of wine.

Rose: Toby, we should go now.
Toby: Just when I'm having so much fun.
Rose: You've had enough to drink.
Please, let's go.
Toby: You're such a killjoy!
I'm gunna party tonight.

Boy 1: You should write a novel.
Girl 1: Something seriously wacky.

Toby: Well, actually... actually ...
I've been working on a novel,
a gothic, comic novel.

Chorus: Tell all, tell all.
Rose: Toby, come on.

Toby: There's this writer ... and this shop girl ...
there's some very weird material
around, if you know where to find it.

There's a tumble-down house
near the railway track ...
tell them, Rose, tell them where you live.

Chorus: Yes, tell us, tell us.
Toby: Tell 'em, Rose, tell 'em.
Rose: About what?

Toby: About your father's stump
and his job at the Mint
and the lady in the tent in the backyard ...

Chorus: A lady in a tent! Priceless!
Toby: Tell 'em, Rose, tell 'em ...
Rose: Toby!

Toby: ... about your mother's little problem
with booze and men
and the boy called Quick because he's slow

Chorus: and the tumble-down house
which is haunted, of course,
and goes by the name of Cloudstreet.
Cloudstreet?

Toby: Perfect title for a novel!
Chorus: Brilliant title for a novel!

TOBY and CHORUS laugh uproariously.

Toby: There's actually a shop
in the front of the house
and the house is split in two
with the Lambs on the one side
and the Pickles on the other side.

Chorus: Lambs and Pickles! You're kidding!
Toby: Honestly!
Rose: Please stop.
Chorus: No! Don't stop! Don't stop!
What a bunch of weirdos,
you wouldn't read about it!
Rose: Toby!

ALL laugh uproariously.

Toby: And funniest of all –
now this is really gothic –
Rose had a sweet-heart
– one of the Lambs ...
Rose: No, Toby, no!
Toby: .. a boy called Fish ...
Chorus: Fish! Fish Lamb! Fish Lamb!
Toby: ... and Fish is a retard, a drooling retard,
tell them what he's like, Rose,
the retard you used to love ...

Chorus: There's a boy called Fish
and he lives with Rose
and Rose loves Fish, who's a retard
and they all live together,
the Lambs and the Pickles,
in a tumble-down house that's
haunted, of course,
and goes by the name -
brilliant title for a novel -
it goes by the name of Cloudstreet.

ALL laugh. ROSE rushes out. TOBY stands there, suddenly grief-stricken . . .

SCENE 46

A shack, afternoon. SAM, looking very scruffy, is flipping a coin, seeing if heads or tails.

(Cut and to be re-inserted)

Sam: Heads!
Thirty heads in a row!
Pickles, ya prize dill,
ya didn't even call.

Ya dunno if yer winnin'
or bloody loosin'.

LESTER comes looking for SAM.

Lester: Sam!
Sam: Got the money?
Lester: Said I would.
Sam: Thanks mate, you're true blue.
Lest: Come on, then.
Sam: Lest ... I'm feelin' lucky.
Lester (*drily*): Yeah, ya look lucky.
Sam: There's a big two-up game today
Lester: Two-up? Don't be stupid.
Sam: You said you got the money.
Lester: To pay your debts and keep trouble away
from Cloudstreet.
Sam: I'm gunna do just that
an' make us some money.
Lester: Where've I heard that before!
Yer a born bloody loser, Sam Pickles.
Sam: Lest, the Shifty Shadow's shifted.
No mistake, me stump's tinglin'
fit to sin.

LESTER hands over the money.

Lester: I should be horse-whipped.
Sam: For what?
Lester: For this ...
and a lot of things.

(Cut and to be re-inserted)

Sam: When there's gold in your veins
and the light's shinin' on you,
Luck, Lady Luck ...
Lester: How can you deny a man a chance ...
Sam: ... all the world's smilin' on you ...
Lester: when you've just had his wife
on the kitchen table!
Sam: Come on, Lest,
don't keep Luck waitin'.

SCENE 47

QUICK and FISH, in a boat. QUICK rows through a golden afternoon. FISH hangs over the stern, gazing dreamily into the water.

Fish: I like the water.
Quick: Do you remember what happened to you
in the water, when we were little,
at Margaret River?
Fish: Is it a story?
Quick: It happened ...
but it can be a story.
Fish: A story! Quick!

FISH sees ROSE, in her party dress, crying on the river bank.

Fish: Look, Quick! It's Rose. She's crying.
Quick: Rose! Are you okay?
Rose! Rose!
Rose: Any chance of a ride?

The boat lands, QUICK gets out and helps Rose into the boat. ROSE struggles to control herself,

Quick: Hop in.
Fish: Tickets, please.

ROSE laughs, then starts to sob uncontrollably. QUICK doesn't know what to do and just rows the boat. ROSE calms down.

Quick: Want a fag?
Rose: Thanks. I don't smoke.
Quick: I've got some brandy
if you want a swig.
Rose: No, it's alright.
Quick: No smokin' , no drinkin' .
Do your parents know about this?
Rose: S'pose it's a bit of a laugh really.

ROSE looks at QUICK. They smile.

Rose: I might have a swig after all.

She swigs, coughs, splutters and laughs.

Quick: Well, that's cheered you up.
Rose: It's so beautiful out here ...
Quick: Too right.
Rose: What are you like, Quick Lamb?
Quick: What sort of a question is that?
Rose: Can't you answer it?
Quick: What am I like?
A bit lost, I s'pose.
Rose: The lost Lamb.
Quick: I feel a bit sheepish about that.

ROSE laughs.

Quick: God, you're laughin' .
Rose: Nah, it's only a rumour.

QUICK keeps rowing. FISH has fallen asleep.

Rose: What do you think about all day?
Quick: Tryin' to figure out what I lost.
Rose: Something to do with him?
Quick: Reckon my whole life's to do with him.
Rose: You really love him, don't you?
Quick: Everybody loved him.
You would have loved him.
Rose: I probably did.

She pauses.

You reckon we'd be any good
married to each other?
Quick: Gimme that bottle!

QUICK grabs the brandy bottle.

Rose: What'd you do that for?
Quick: Reckon you've had enough.
Rose: I'm still pretty bloody sober,
thank you very much!
It was just a question ...
hypothetical ... you know ...
Quick: Fair enough ...
Both: Fair enough.
Rose: You're true blue, Quick Lamb.
Now answer the question.

QUICK lifts ROSE out of the boat. They seem about to kiss.

Fish: Watch out or she'll kiss ya, Quick!

The boat, with FISH in it, lifts off into the sky.

Rose: This isn't really happening.
Quick: Not yet.
Rose: Suddenly, I know you.
Quick: And I know you.

You're the girl across the hall,
the girl in the room across the hall,
frightened eyes, never smiled,
hiding in a book,
that was you – as a child.

Now you're beautiful, and tall,
the woman in the room across the hall
and suddenly I see
what was always there to see,
all the tenderness and passion,
all the love
in the eyes of the girl
across the hall.

They are about to kiss. QUICK pulls back.

Rose: We're nuts.
We're gunna be embarrassed afterwards.
No, we're gunna be something else afterwards..
Come here, Quick Lamb.

They kiss.

SCENE 48

Cloudstreet, the next morning.

Dolly: A two-up game! You bastard!
Sam: But Doll, I broke the bank

SAM begins pulling wads of cash from his pockets.

I cleaned 'em out, Doll,
I took the lot,
cake and candles.
We're bloody rich!

SAM grabs DOLLY and they dance wildly, laughing.

When there's gold in your veins
and the light's shinin' on you ..
you never believed it could happen, Dolly!
We'll have some good times ...

ROSE rushes in.

Rose: Dad! Dad!
Sam: ... just like we used to, Dolly ...
Rose: Dad!
Sam: What?
Rose: I'm getting married.
To Quick.
Sam: Quick Lamb? He seems a good boy.
Dolly: You up the duff?
Rose: No, but if I was
you'd be the last I'd tell.

Dolly: Don't hate me.
Rose: Too late for that.

Dolly: She's right, Sam –
I haven't been much of a mother.
I never really knew what mothers
were supposed to be like.
I hated mine.
Rose: Why?

Dolly: I reckon she was like you.
She must've prayed that I'd die.
God knows that I wanted to.
My mother was my grandmother.
My father was my grandfather.
Rose: What?
Dolly: My older sister,
the one who treated me like shit,
the whole of my life,
the one who always told me:
"You're rubbish,
you'd be better off dead,
we'd all be better off
if you'd never been born" -
she was my mother.
That one was my mother.

Rose: My God. My God, Mum.
Who was your father?

Dolly: I never knew.
The man I called my dad,
the man I loved most in the world,
died when I was ten.
No-one else really cared about me,
all my life, except you, Sam.
You're the only man who's never gone and left me.
God knows why.

SAM puts his hand on DOLLY'S shoulder.

Sam: Because I love you.

DOLLY puts her hand on Sam's hand and breaks down.

Rose: Oh Mum, you should have told me.
Why did you never say?
Please, Mum, don't cry.

ROSE takes DOLLY'S hand.

SCENE 49

Cloudstreet. The Wedding party. The LAMBS, the PICKLES mill about.

Lester: Families!
Oriel: Families!
Oriel: Sometimes they're hurtful,
Lester: sometimes they're crazy,
Oriel: sometimes you wish they were
pushin' up daisies!
Lester, Oriel: No-one gets under your skin
quite like
your own family.

All: Whether you're up ..
or down,
some-one to say
"you're not alone."
Some-one to say
with a laugh or a tear
"you're here now,
you're welcome,
you're ..."

Lon: ... such a guts, Chub,
you've eaten all the lamingtons.
Elaine: I think I got a headache comin'.
Chub: Lon is getting' shickered.
Hattie: Red, I'm pregnant.
Red: Well, don't expect a medal, Hattie!
Chub: No more pickle relish?
Ted (*groping Red*): Wanna dance, Red?
Red: Bugger off, Ted,
you're such a pain!
Lon: Elaine, Hattie ..
I'm gunna throw up.
Chub: See, I told you Lon was shickered.

Lester: Ladies and Gentlemen, a toast!
All: A toast! A toast!
Lester: For ten years the Lambs and the Pickles
have lived in this house as two families.
Now we'll be livin' together
in this house
as one family.
A toast! Families!

ROSE takes QUICK aside:

Rose: Quick! I don't want to live in Cloudstreet.
It's full of other people's memories.
I want a new life in a new house,
my house.

Quick: We've got no money.
Rose: I've been savin'.
Quick: I'll need two jobs.
Rose: We'll get you two jobs.
I want a new house,
and a new life,
my life.
Quick: Our life.
Both: Our life.
Rose: We're movin' out of here
as soon as we get back
from the honeymoon.

Sam: Ladies and Gentlemen!
The Bridal Waltz!

ROSE and QUICK take the floor alone.

Quick and Rose: How do I love you?
Deeply, quietly.
Your eyes can say
what words can never say.
All hearts have secrets,
things we cannot show.
Our love has told us
all we need to know.

ORIEL asks DOLLY to dance. DOLLY accepts hesitantly. Somehow, something grows between them. They move gracefully. All watch in amazed silence. Orchestral interlude.

Sam: It's time to send 'em off
on their honeymoon.

FISH holds onto QUICK.

Fish: Quick, Quick, I wanna go! I wanna go!
Lester: No Fish.
Fish: Please! I wanna go. Please!
Quick: No! No, Fish! You can't.
This is just for me and Rose.

FISH is about to burst into tears. ROSE goes to him and embraces him.

Rose: Pack his bag
Quick: Rose, it's our honeymoon.
Rose: It's Fish, for God's sake.
I always said I'd take you away with me, Fish.
Where will we go?
Fish: The water, the water.
Come on, Quick!

FISH starts to drag QUICK and ROSE off. The FAMILIES wave goodbye.

All: Goodbye!
Fish: Quick!
All: Goodbye!

QUICK, ROSE and FISH exit. ORIEL begins to go to her tent. THE LAMB CHILDREN bring her suitcase. LESTER and THE CHILDREN mutely appeal to ORIEL to come home. She hesitates, smiles and comes with them.

SCENE 50

QUICK, ROSE and FISH are on a picnic in the bush under the stars. ROSE is visibly pregnant.

Rose: Will you look at those stars!
Quick: You could reach up and touch them
Fish: I need a poo.
Quick: In a minute, mate.
Fish: Quick!
Quick: Look at those stars, Fish.
Aren't they beautiful?

FISH groans.

Quick: Oh my God!
Fish: I told you, Quick. But I told.

FISH starts crying.

Quick: Ah, fuck a duck, he's shat himself.
Fish: I told you, Quick.
Quick: Now what!

ROSE hands QUICK a towel.

Rose: Now you clean him up.
Quick: Come on, mate, let's get you fixed up.
Don't cry, Fish, you told.

QUICK takes down FISH'S pants and gently cleans him up.

Rose: You really love him, don't you?
Quick: Reckon my whole life's to do with him.
Rose: Reckon my whole life's to do with this.
Quick: What? Being out here
under the stars?
Rose: No! Getting to live
an ordinary life.

Building our own home,
fresh and new and clean
with a backyard and a nature strip out front.

Quick: Making our own place,
where we don't have to share
every moment of our lives
with mum and dad.

Rose: Saving for new furniture ...
Quick: soon we'll get a car....
Rose: one day we'll have a television ...
Quick: money in the bank ...
Rose: a house that's neat and tidy
with nothing out of place ...
Quick: a house for just the two of us
and two or three kids ...
Rose: maybe four.

Both (doubtfully): That's what it's like
in ordinary lives,
that's what it's like
in ordinary families.
Rose: Is that what we'll be like?
Both: And is that all we want?

SCENE 51

BOB CRAB emerges from the shadows. QUICK goes him.

Bob Crab: You go back now,
your house, eh?
Quick: What do ya mean?
Bob: That old house happy now.
New life gunna start there now.
Your kids, all your family,
that's your place now,
always.
Quick: Nothin' lasts forever.
Bob: Breakin' a place is bad.
Some fellas leave their place,
some fellas get it stolen –
taken away -
family, kids, home –
taken away.
Your place, when it's gone,
can't ever bring it back.
After that, you better be
the strongest fella.

QUICK returns to Rose.

Rose: You won't believe this.
Quick: Try me.
Rose: I can't leave Cloudstreet.
We belong to it, Quick.
I want to go back...
Quick: What about our new house,
our own place, our own life?
Rose: We have our own house,
we have our own place,
we have a new life –
at Cloudstreet.
Rose, Quick: We have our own house,
we have our own place,
Bob Crab joins them: we/you have a new life –
at Cloudstreet

SCENE 52

Cloudstreet. ROSE and QUICK rouse the FAMILIES to hear the news.

Quick: Come on, we're having a picnic!
To celebrate.
Sam: What picnic?
Lon: Celebrate what?
Oriel: What's this foolishness?
Chub: Celebrate what?
Lon: Dunno.
Dolly: Gawd, I never been up this early
unless I never went to bed.
Red: What are we celebratin'?
Rose: We're coming back.
Oriel: You're coming back?
Quick: No new house in the suburbs.
Rose, Quick: We're moving back
to Cloudstreet.
Oriel: To do what?

Rose: To grow old and die.
To count angels on the head of a pin,
until the walls come down, Oriel.

BOB CRAB enters ... he gestures at the walls of the house.

Lester: Not such a bad place after all, eh,
Cloudstreet?
Sam: Most of 'em hated it at first.
Grows on you, though.
Lester: It brought us all together, alright.

Sam: Some place that somehow tells you 'now you're home'.
Both: Some place you take your time to know,
learning all its tricks and moods
and all its secret smiles.

All: Some place you know your heart will never leave,
sharing the memories you planted there,
knowing you can hold your head high,
knowing you can tell the world
"This place is not where I hide,
this place is where I belong ...
this place
Cloudstreet."

Oriel: Don't just stand there, you bludgers!
Lock the shop, grab a basket.
We're going to the river.

The FAMILIES run off to prepare for the picnic, leaving BOB CRAB, ROSE and QUICK alone.

Scene 53

The shadows of the SPIRIT GIRLS appear on the walls of the house.

Bob Crab: Love is in this place.
These two bring love to this place.

Love breaks the bars of hate and pain,
love opens wide the door
and sets you free
to come home
like the river comes home
to the sea.

ROSE and QUICK go, leaving FISH with BOB CRAB. BOB CRAB leads the SPIRIT GIRLS out of the walls as FISH watches. Orchestral interlude.

SCENE 54

The FAMILIES slowly enter, setting up their picnic by the river. FISH begins to walk towards the water. No-one sees him except QUICK, who knows that FISH'S time has come and he must let FISH go.

Fish: The river! The river!

Bob Crab and Fish: The river.
Remember.

Wherever the river goes
every living creature which swarms
will live,
for this river goes there,
that the waters of the sea
will become fresh –
so everything will live
where the river goes,
where the river goes.

Bob Crab, Quick: Your time has come, Fish.
Now, for one second, you'll know,
you'll be a man, then it won't matter
because you'll be free,
free to come and go,
free of the net of time,
free.

Fish joins:

Projection – FISH descending through the water.

Rose: Quick, where's your brother?
Where's Fish?

Quick (weeping): He's okay now.
You're okay now, Fish.

The FAMILIES gather around the river bank, in anguish, knowing that FISH has gone.

Fish: In the water, in the sky,
I'll burst into the moon and stars
of who I really am ...
being Fish Lamb ...
All: for one day ..
Fish: Perfectly.
All: for one clear, clean sweet day ...
Fish: Always.
All: ...in a good world ..
Fish: Everyplace.
All: ...in the midst of our living.
Fish: Me!

END