

SHRINE

by Tim Winton

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SCENE 1

When the audience are seated:

TENIELLE, NICK and KEITH enter.

TENIELLE Hi. This is Keith.

KEITH This is Nick.

NICK This is Tenielle.

TENIELLE On behalf of the company, we'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this story will be told.

KEITH The Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nation, whose sovereignty was never ceded.

NICK And we pay our respects to their elders, past, present and future.

TENIELLE The story we're about to tell takes place on Noongar booja, on the lands of the Wardandi people, on the southern coast of Western Australia.

NICK We're on the edge of a forest, next to the highway that leads north to Perth.

KEITH A large tree, with a great scar in its trunk.
And a man -

Lights change. We see ADAM's hand, holding a knife, hit the tree.
- with a knife.

TENIELLE At the base of that tree stands a white cross.

KEITH Festooned with beer cans.

NICK Bourbon bottles.

KEITH And an advertising placard.

TENIELLE JACK LIVES HERE.

ADAM Sometimes I wish there'd been blood. Something left behind. Sick, I know, but a stain on the ground, maybe there'd be a comfort in it. A man could indulge himself in a bit of nature romance – blood, soil, presence – all that mystic nonsense.
But there was hardly a mark on you. Nothing to show but a scar on a tree.

He snaps the knife shut.

TENIELLE He kicks over the cross.

ADAM lashes out with his feet.

NICK He smashes at the beer cans.

KEITH The bourbon bottles.

NICK The advertising placard.

TENIELLE JACK LIVES HERE.

Perhaps he turns, to see:

SCENE 2

A bolt of light reveals MARY. Between them, a hospital gurney.

MARY It isn't right.

ADAM No, it doesn't look right.

MARY Don't tell me he looks peaceful. Don't you dare!

ADAM Mary.

MARY Is it him? Is this still him?

ADAM I don't know.

MARY (Unblemished.)

ADAM The impact –

MARY *Trauma* – they said the word as if they knew what it meant. What it actually felt like.

ADAM You just couldn't see the damage. His organs all adrift within him.

MARY Not a mark.

ADAM Momentum makes us superhuman.

MARY Angelic.

ADAM You fly.
 There you are, flying.
 Inside half a second, you're not even human anymore.
 You're just meat.

MARY flinches.

ADAM By the time we drove down – Christ, or did we fly? By the time we got there he'd been refrigerated. Or maybe I imagined that. I expected a boy and there he was, a man, so heavy, so solid he seemed... plausible. And despite the stink of antiseptic, it did smell like him.

MARY Lanolin. Coconut.

ADAM That sweet scent they put in surfboard wax these days.

MARY No.
 That's the smell of a girl.

ADAM I kept asking myself, is this our son?

MARY [*of ADAM:*] Why won't he speak?

ADAM And she's looking at me like I'm a stranger.

MARY Adam is silent. A monument to his own dignity. Can't stand it another moment. So I run.

ADAM The bloke says, 'Is this your son?'

MARY Bolted. Blind. Just a mad creature. Trolleys, locked doors, glass threaded with wire I try to sieve myself through.

ADAM 'This?' I say.
 Thinking: It looks like him.
 Is this Jack, or just the stuff that made him possible? A body's just the plant and equipment, not the enterprise itself.

MARY I'm trapped, hurling myself against the walls and windows to get free.

ADAM Smiling, they said. Smiling. But I can't see it.

MARY Until everything goes blank.

ADAM Nothing.

MARY Cold and dark.

ADAM Bloke's talking to me. Fella with a clipboard and a lab coat, like some consultant flown in to oversee the vintage.

MARY I come to and I'm on the floor.

The lights intensify.

Feet and legs all round me – not Adam’s.

ADAM ‘Mister Mansfield?’ he says.

MARY Arms and soft hands. Crooning voices, soft and kind, but nothing to console me because I want Adam. I want him to haul me out of the white, shiny horror I’ve slipped into.

ADAM ‘Is this your son?’

MARY And I knew. That I’d keep breaking. Forever.

ADAM ‘Yes,’ I say. ‘Yes, this is my son. This is Jack Mansfield.’

MARY Like a man unbroken.

ADAM And I sign for him.

MARY Unbreakable.

ADAM Take delivery of the facts.

MARY The end.

SCENE 3

KEITH June Fenton.

NICK Nineteen years old.

KEITH She approaches the ruins of the shrine.

JUNE Fucksake.
Again.

She gathers the broken pieces together. JACK watches on.

JACK Strange that it should make a difference.

JUNE Weird how you see the Point from here. That white flash – see? – the wave breakin on the end. Wonder if it’s any kind of comfort, havin it right there, close by. I know you loved it.
Remember your big white smile all those mornins, runnin down to the water with your board.

JACK Remembering, June... It’s not like a job, or anything.

JUNE I’ll never forget.

JACK I know.

JUNE Hardly imagine it all now.

JACK It was half a day. Barely that.

JUNE Not a whole night, even. But the whole sea, that’s what we had.

JACK Barely a moment.
JUNE Must have been out of our minds.

SCENE 4

ADAM enters, bottle in hand.

ADAM God, will you look at that. A sea mist. Rolling up the headland, hanging over the paddocks like a promise. How's a man account for that wanton bit of beauty? The cold, dark, pitiless ocean, giving off a vapour so benign... in a world so utterly bereft of promise. Christ, man, listen to yourself.

From the label:

‘North-facing slopes, maritime air, and red karri gravel: such are the building blocks of the wine we call Ocean Ridge.’
Wrote that before the first vines even went in – that's confidence.

He opens, pours, swirls, sniffs, fills the glass.

Then drinks it off in one gulp.

When you're young you make things happen just by thinking of them. If you want them enough. Provided you've done your homework. Least that's what you tell yourself, what you tell him when he comes home with his schoolboy tales of woe.

June.

JUNE Sorry.

ADAM Fuck me running.

JUNE – ?

ADAM I... I beg your pardon, love. I wasn't expecting anyone.

JUNE Didn't mean to creep up on ya.
Well, actually, that's not true. Sorry.

ADAM Do we /know each other – ?

JUNE Um well I know you, of course, Mister Mansfield.
Ah, I'm June?

ADAM June.

JUNE Ocean Ridge. The winery. It's /just –

ADAM I know where it is. I own it.

JUNE I know.

ADAM Well, used to own it.

JUNE I know.

ADAM Didn't hear a vehicle.
How'd you get here, June?

JUNE Parked out on the beach road.
Gate's locked.

ADAM Which traditionally means something.
What'd you say your name was?

JUNE June.

ADAM Family /name – ?

JUNE I used to pick for you. Started when I was at school, when it was just
sheds.
Cellarhand now.

ADAM What name?

JUNE Fenton.

ADAM Oh. Right.

JUNE My dad –

ADAM I know.

JUNE Yeah, everyone knows.

ADAM And no one's holding it against you.

JUNE Nah, that'd never happen. Not in this town.

ADAM So.
We're old colleagues, then. Comrades at arms. Fellow toilers in the
field.

JUNE Ah – whatever you reckon.

ADAM Well, June, you gave me quite a fright, there.

JUNE –

ADAM No harm done.
Anyway, I'm off.

There's no way he's going anywhere.

JUNE Where?

ADAM Well, Perth.
Told the missus I'd be home by tonight. And I hate to be on the road after dark.

JUNE Roos.

ADAM That, and I start to see things.

JUNE Not worth the stress, is it?
Drivin in the dark, dodgin animals.

ADAM Yes.
No.

JUNE You're in real estate.

ADAM Yes. In quite a state – you're rather observant, June – but this is me on a good day.

JUNE That's not what I said, what I /meant –

ADAM I know what you meant.
I heard what you said.

JUNE I'm sorry.

ADAM And yes, I was, in my way, in real estate. Property developer.
Let's just say I retired – hurt.

JUNE You went broke?

ADAM –
Lost interest.

JUNE Last year.

ADAM Yes.

JUNE Why'd you – sell the winery?

ADAM You know, I can't remember.

JUNE Must've hurt.

ADAM –

JUNE Lettin it go.

ADAM I suppose it must've.

JUNE I... we – couldn't believe it.

ADAM Divestment.
Sounds, ah, rather rational and precise, doesn't it?

JUNE –

ADAM But here I am. Free and clear. Free. And clear.
He turns as if preparing to leave, but can't figure out which to do first – put his glass down or try finding his keys.

JUNE So, what d'you do – all day?

ADAM Do?

JUNE God, I'm sorry, that's rude. I'm –

ADAM Not at all. Perfectly reasonable question.
And by the time I reach the outskirts of the city, I'm sure I'll have come up with a plausible answer.

JUNE I just wanted to say how sorry –
– what a terrible thing.

ADAM Listen.
What're they doing to the sav blanc? It's...

JUNE ...what – ?

ADAM Flabby, sweet.

JUNE Too slow gettin it off. Too many cooks, y'know?

ADAM Hm.
Well, it's their funeral.

SCENE 5

ADAM and MARY stand separated.

MARY The funeral is its own exquisite indignity.

ADAM All of them there. Every name on the database – school, business, sport. Jack's friends. People you've never seen before in your life. I stand there and suck it up, every platitude, every Olympian feat of insincerity, every Hallmark moment.

MARY In flames. (show us)

ADAM Taking it, just taking it.

MARY I'm on fire. Tongues of fire from my head, ears, mouth, streaming from the ends of my fingers.

ADAM Until the moment the coffin slides away through the velvet curtain.

MARY And I feel it, pure and horrible, strong as the shock of pushing him free.

ADAM She starts screaming.
Falls down, beating her hands on the floor.
Jesus, the moaning and yowling, it's – awful.
Bovine.

MARY Like making him.

ADAM Frightening.

MARY Feeling him live outside me.

ADAM After that, where do you go?
In a week, the fridge is all festering leftovers.
The livingroom's a dead zone, at the silent heart of a house suddenly
too big.

MARY Empty. Curtains drawn.
Separate rooms.
/Nothing.

ADAM Nothing but thinking it through and over, chewing at it, knowing this
– this – box of ash –

MARY The poison runs up your spine.

ADAM – it should be someone else's.

MARY I lie in bed and feel it seep and pulse.

ADAM Can't say it, but the truth is you want the other two dead.

MARY His mates.

ADAM Them for him.

MARY Smarmy Ben, sleazy Will.

ADAM He was twice the man they'll ever be.

MARY Never did buy their neat little story.

ADAM They were full of food and booze, from my fridge, my cellar.

MARY Reeking.

ADAM The cops said it.

MARY Stank of it.

ADAM And Jack was sober.

MARY Took blood. Adam insisted.

ADAM Clear his name.

MARY Blood from his unblemished body.

ADAM I bought him that little car.

MARY Gave him the keys the day he finished school, and not a moment before.

ADAM How wild can you go in a Corolla, for fuck's sake. Engine like a sewing machine. Had an *airbag*.

MARY Not a mark on him.

ADAM But that bend.

ADAM is in the forest.

Day or night, it wouldn't take much to come unglued there. Cops said it could happen to anybody.

Which is of great consolation when they're covered in blood and alive, and he's out there in the wet bracken, pure and whole, slowly dying inside.

MARY It should have been them.

ADAM We're not bad people, not reckless.
This sort of thing doesn't happen to people like us.
She –

MARY –

ADAM I can feel her glower at me through a closed door – all the closed doors.
What can I do? One of us has to keep it together. Best to keep mum.
No knowing what wounded banalities you could utter.
Who needs to hear that shit?

MARY Say something! Anything.

ADAM Shame'd kill you both.

MARY For God's sake, speak, I can't stand it.

ADAM You take it in silence, like a tree, soaking up the impact.

MARY Endlessly, pointlessly, bravely silent.
As if they'd both died, father and son.

ADAM And then, incredibly, a year passes.
It's his birthday. You've quit the firm, sold off the winery, and the weekend trips go from quarterly to monthly and then every fortnight, until you've gone as often as you're home because even you can't bear yourself silent in her presence, can't stand your mighty self-control.
She won't come down.

MARY I don't want to go there.
ADAM But you love the beach house.
MARY I don't want to drive past that tree.
ADAM But when we are together, it's... bloody frightening.
Your bodies are there. But there's nothing, no connection.
Love? That old, quiet, bone-murdering ache... that's there, but it's –
MARY Unbearable.

She vanishes.

ADAM I watch those kids out there rolling down the Point like seals, scanning the water for the broad triangle of him, sat up in his wetsuit. Alive, laughing, seething with thoughtless youth, the future still trundling at him like waves spilling in from across the horizon. How bloody stupid is that?

SCENE 6

ADAM comes back to the beach house.

ADAM Jesus, you're soaked.

JUNE It's nothin.

ADAM Come stand by the fire.

JUNE moves. She removes her coat.

He offers her a towel. She takes it.

He offers her a glass.

ADAM ...the temperanillo.

JUNE, still burdened by all items, examines the wine, swirls, sniffs, sips, sluices, spits it back into the glass.

ADAM Yes, well, I was against that planting.

JUNE It's good, but.

ADAM Obviously.

JUNE Nah, it's gonna work.

ADAM Why'd you gob it up, then?

JUNE Don't really drink wine.

ADAM So why am I asking your opinion?

JUNE It's good fruit. Structure's there.

She puts the glass down.

ADAM Well, there's whisky.

JUNE I'm fine.

ADAM Warm you up.

JUNE Milo?

ADAM Milo?

JUNE Sorry.

ADAM There isn't any Milo.

JUNE There used to be.

ADAM –
 ... kettle.

He retreats to the back of the stage, still holding the bottle. He speaks with his back to her. We see her face.

Wild out there.

JUNE Yeah, it's rough.

ADAM Thank God you're not a sailor, eh?

JUNE I spose.

ADAM Storm like that, forcing you in against the cliffs. Nowhere safe. Night falling. Be purgatory.

JUNE I – I guess.

ADAM Horrible.

JUNE I guess.

He turns back, a steaming mug of Milo in his hand.

He gives it to her.

ADAM Thoughts like that really cheer me up.

He scoops up and drinks the wine she's spat back.

She stares at him.

ADAM So you don't drink my wine.

JUNE Any wine.

ADAM Beer, I suppose. Bourbon.

JUNE Nah. Nothin now.

He refills his glass from the bottle.

ADAM June.
 Aren't you a puzzle.

JUNE Coz I don't drink?

ADAM Why would you climb over a locked gate?

JUNE Wanted to talk to you.

ADAM And what about me? The Householder. What about what I /wanted
 – ?

JUNE I was angry. Wasn't thinkin.

ADAM Angry? At me?
 Girlie, you've still got your job. I can buy and sell what I want, I don't
 answer to the likes of /you –

JUNE It's not about that.

ADAM What is it?

JUNE I was filthy coz ya did it again.
 Ya keep doin it over and over again. I've seen ya.

ADAM *Doin* what, exactly?

JUNE Kickin things over.

ADAM What?

JUNE On the highway. That bend. The cross. The – stuff.
 Happens every time you're down. You knock it over.
 I've seen you.

ADAM It's you, then, is it. The little roadside shrine.
 The beer cans, bourbon bottles, all the bogan placards –

JUNE You don't understand.

ADAM I *was* picturing a Commodore. Muscle ute. Boys with stubby holders,
 beanies. Sticker saying NO FAT CHICKS.

JUNE They weren't country boys.
 He didn't really know any, did he. This lot showed up in a Range
 Rover.

ADAM Range Rover?

JUNE Brand new. P plates. Four boys, posh-lookin. It was them put it all up,
 the cross and the rest. Two of them I – recognised.

Took pictures with their phones n that. Opened cans, poured ‘em out on the ground.

ADAM Grammar boys. *Love* their liturgical moment.
That’s training for you.

JUNE But they never came back.

ADAM Ah, peace be with you, boys.

He makes the sign of the cross.

And also with you.

JUNE And you keep –

ADAM What a fucking joke.

JUNE Stop that. Stop knockin everything down!

ADAM What! You? You’re telling me?

JUNE Askin.

ADAM June.

He puts his glass down, carefully, struggling to maintain control.

A boy’s life, a woman’s only child, a man’s son –

JUNE It’s a sacred place.

His struggle fails.

ADAM That *squalid* little *shrine*? That – roadside cliché – that sentimental white cross, you think that’s *sufficient* to the sacred memory of my son? All that other dross hanging off it like birdshit – you think spilled bourbon and moronic slogans *speaks* for Jack? Who he was? JACK LIVES HERE, you reckon that does him justice?
YOU CAN GET IT FLYIN’, YOU CAN GET IT DYIN’... MATTER OF FACT I GOT IT NOW.
Or what about what about –

He laughs, painfully.

STAY A LITTLE LONGER. That’s a goodie, eh? Eh? His mother and I, June, we wouldn’t have minded if Jack *had* stayed a little longer.

JUNE is struggling to stay, fighting back tears.

See him grown up, married maybe. Kids. Yes. Some things are sacred, love.

But they’re sacred to us. To the people that loved him.

JUNE can’t do it. She exits.

ADAM *watches her go. He tries to move, and falls.*

He lies there. The lights begin to fade.

He begins to sing 'Stay'¹.

'And your mama won't mind... And your daddy won't mind...'

SCENE 7

We see MARY, as she drifts in her empty house, singing 'Stay' to herself.

Suddenly, an insistent knocking.

MARY Don't get up. Don't get it.

The knocking persists.

 No. Please.

The knocking persists.

MARY If we don't answer the door it'll never happen. It'll just pass by.

She dials.

Still on the ground, ADAM gropes for his phone. He answers it, still confused.

ADAM June?

MARY –

 Who's June?

ADAM What?

MARY Who is she?

 Tell me.

ADAM I tried to.

MARY You never say a thing!

ADAM It's – her. This business at the... scene, the roadside.

MARY I've told you. I don't want to know about that.

ADAM See?

MARY I don't want to see it.

ADAM I know.

MARY What does she look like?

¹ 'Stay' was written by Maurice Williams in 1953 at the age of 15, and recorded by his group The Zodiacs.

ADAM What *possible* difference could –
 She's a Fenton.

MARY All these months, there's a girl.

ADAM No. Well, yes.

MARY In town.

ADAM She turned up at the house.

MARY This total stranger, this creature, you're talking to her?

ADAM Well –

MARY You bastard.

ADAM You're not jealous.

MARY Of course I'm bloody jealous.

ADAM Christ, she's a Fenton.

MARY I'm jealous that you're sleeping.

ADAM S'not sleep, love, it's anaesthesia. I'm drinking the cellar just to get
 over.

MARY And you're talking to a stranger. Some girl.

ADAM I'll tell you everything.

MARY Don't. You won't. I know you won't.

ADAM I will. I'll call you. Maybe I'll write it down. Just settle down, love –
She hangs up. They are both alone. MARY speaks to us.

MARY This is why they say don't have them.

ADAM That's why people don't have kids.

MARY Because of the fear.

ADAM You're either afraid of them or for them.

MARY This apocalypse, this annihilation.

ADAM When they're gone the hole they leave's bigger than the space they
 took.
 How can that be?

MARY I wish I'd listened. I'd still be myself.
 Childless, coherent, consistent, strong.

She presses a button on her phone.
We see JACK, next to the tree.

JACK You know the drill. Leave a message. Love you, Mum. I know it's you.
You can't keep doing this. Still love ya.

A long, eerie beep.

KEITH and NICK appear, ready for court, preparing for the next scene (bandages, etc.)

On the other side of the stage, JUNE is alone.

JUNE It's orright, you're orright. See? June, you're orright. Just tell him. You
have to. You owe him that. Just tell him.

SCENE 8

NICK and KEITH are now WILL and BEN. They crack cans.

JACK By the wounded tree, two teenage boys.

They pour them on the ground.

They finish them off.

They are caught, as if in headlights. JACK remains, watching.

WILL Jack was at the wheel.

BEN Yeah, yes, it was Jack driving. Sir.

*ADAM appears, playing their LAWYER in his memory, at once inquisitorial and
conspiratorial.*

ADAM And yet the Mansfield boy, his body was found outside the vehicle.

WILL No seatbelt?

ADAM And, of course, the car in three pieces.

WILL Right.

BEN Just shit – like, sorry, stuff –

WILL Everywhere.

BEN Clothes.

WILL Door.

BEN Boards.

WILL In bits.

BEN Bits.

WILL And it was raining. And quiet. For a long time it was quiet.

BEN Birds. I could hear the wind in the trees.

ADAM Were you conscious when the first vehicle arrived.

BEN Think so.

WILL I dunno. Don't remember. But I remember the lights.

BEN The ambulance. The fireys.

WILL Yeah, I remember the fireys.

ADAM As they cut you free?

BEN Right.

ADAM Yet it was several minutes before they found young Jack.

WILL I don't know anything, we don't know anything about that.

ADAM It's in the record. That you, Will, that you told the paramedic Jack had already left the scene, that he'd gone for help or just run off.

WILL No, I don't remember saying it. Maybe I did. I was pretty –

ADAM Concussed, yes, it's there in the record.
Did you hear him say this, Ben? Did you hear Will say this?

BEN Um. I don't, I don't recall?

MARY appears, at a distance - next to the audience, stage right.

MARY He always wore a seatbelt. You little shits.

ADAM Remind me again, son. What are you studying?

BEN Geology. Sir.

ADAM And you, Will?

WILL Well. [*Shrugs.*]
Law. Sir.

ADAM Your father, Ben?

BEN He's flying back from China.

ADAM And Will, I spoke to your Dad this morning.

WILL The office?

ADAM No, we both swim at North Cott every morning.
Now, had you boys been drinking?

BEN Um.

WILL Yeah. Yes. All night.

BEN Fair bit. That's why.

WILL Like, why –

ADAM Why this other boy was driving.
Because neither of you was in a fit state.

WILL Yeah, that's it.

ADAM And how fast were you going?

BEN Don't remember.

ADAM You were... what, passed out?

WILL Yeah, that's it.

ADAM In the back, in the rear seat of the vehicle? With your seatbelt on?
WILL nods carefully.

ADAM At seven forty five. In the morning.

BEN I feel bad.
That we, you know, left him to - drive. Like, I feel a bit, you know,
responsible?

WILL Like, we coulda told him to slow down?

ADAM If you hadn't been asleep in the back?

WILL [*cottoning on:*] Yeah.

BEN He was a good bloke, but.

ADAM Jack Mansfield?

WILL Yeah. We'll... he'll, you know, he'll be missed. He'll be sadly missed by
all and sundry.

MARY Christ. I've heard politicians sound more sincere. You're already suing
us, you scum!

ADAM has broken from his lawyer's persona.

ADAM It's just the insurance company, love. It's not personal.

MARY He's not even cold and you want recompense for your injuries? Your
interrupted pre-season? Your inability to drive yourself to uni, to lift a
pint? When you left him out there in the rain so long he was beyond
saving?
You lying shitheads!

BEN and WILL flinch and wince.

ADAM Mary, it's only money. And it's not even our money, it's insurance.

MARY It's the principle.

ADAM It's a process.

MARY Like grief, d'you mean?
How do you let an outrage become a *process*? Only a man could call a bushfire a *process*. Stand in your burning house and tell me that!

They leave. BEN and WILL are back in the forest.

BEN Fuck.

WILL Women.

BEN Why'd you tell 'em?

WILL Fuck, man. Wouldn't've made any difference. It was like fifteen minutes before anyone showed. He was rooted.

BEN But why'd you say it?

WILL I didn't. I don't remember saying it.

BEN Bullshit.

WILL Don't be a pussy.

KEITH Will exits, pulling out his phone.

NICK Ben stares into the gloom of the forest, as if into the fresh grave itself.

JACK He is haunted by his guilt, his collusion.

KEITH The entire adult world of privilege and patronage has become clear to him.

SCENE 9

ADAM appears from inside the house.

ADAM Dolphins!

He has a pair of binoculars and a bottle of wine.

Mary, love, you should see this.

His joy curdles to anger.

You should let yourself. Why the hell don't you ever *come* here? He loved it here.

JUNE appears, as before (next to the audience, stage left) with a box of groceries. A moment in which ADAM drunkenly tries to remember whether he should be surprised or not.

JUNE I work two days at the IGA. Expired stuff. I thought /maybe –

ADAM Oh. Great.

They swap box for bottle.

That's... that's a *lot* of noodles. And – asparagus...

JUNE From Peru.

ADAM Peru.

JUNE Makes ya wee stink.

ADAM What?

JUNE Like twenty-year-old semillon.

ADAM *What* makes your wee stink like semillon?

JUNE Asparagus.

ADAM From Peru?

JUNE All of it. Thought you'd know that.

ADAM Consider me freshly enlightened.

He regards her.

Thought you didn't drink wine.

JUNE Not now, no.

ADAM N'we never planted semillon.

JUNE –

ADAM Where'd *you* come across a twenty-year-old /semillon – ?

JUNE Um. Jack? Jack showed me.

ADAM My Jack?

JUNE He was tryna – explain.

ADAM He didn't know anything about wine.

JUNE Oh, nah, he knew a lot, eh. Truly. N' downstairs, there's heaps –

ADAM Downstairs.

JUNE He showed me...

ADAM My cellar?

JUNE ...the old Peter Lehmanns, the Tyrells. A couple from Margaret River. One from Balingup. So different.

ADAM He *showed* you?

JUNE Well, he opened 'em, and we tasted 'em.

Sorry. I mean we didn't *drink* 'em all, we just, spat, mostly.

ADAM –

JUNE [sheepish:] ...that's worse, in't it.

ADAM [wondering:] I didn't realise.

JUNE [encouraged by his lack of anger:] Gotta love the Hunter Valley stuff though, hey. The old Elizabeths. The Lovedales. Labels all curled off. All gold in the glass.

ADAM *has found an old bottle. He holds it up, like an exhibit.*

ADAM Exactly. Gorgeous.

JUNE That pineappley, burnt-toast kinda –

ADAM [shaking his head ruefully:] Ugly duckling of Australian wine, June. Can't give this shit away.

JUNE But that's what's special. It's beautiful and no one sees it. Jack saw it.

ADAM He never showed the slightest –

He puts the bottle down, absently.

I didn't know.

JUNE Shoulda seen him with the Lindemans.

ADAM The bloody Lindemans! They were stashed, buried. How'd he even find 'em?
He must've been reading my notes.

JUNE [carefully] ...maybe.

ADAM Cunning little... God, does he even know what those museum releases are *worth*?

JUNE You might wanna think about the '74.

ADAM –

JUNE S'kinda tankin – ? I'd drink it now or sell 'em.

ADAM Jesus, why not rip the scab off the '71 while you're at it?

JUNE winces, guilty.

ADAM Why didn't he tell me? Why couldn't he do that with me?

JUNE ...I don't know.

ADAM What was it like?

JUNE –

ADAM The '71?

JUNE Like – him. Like Jack.
 Had a kind of, I dunno, afterglow? Is that the word?

Pause.

ADAM Geez. You've got a real nose, June.

JUNE Yeah. That's what they said at school.

ADAM I meant – in the olfactory sense.

JUNE My mum couldn't smell a thing.

ADAM Some people aren't gifted.

JUNE Wasn't that. Dad bashed her.

ADAM (– ah.)

I did notice a few gaps in the cellar. Thought it was me. Seem to have developed quite a thirst.

JUNE No one could blame you. The time you've had.

ADAM I was hitting it pretty hard, even before.

JUNE I know the feeling.

Pause.

ADAM You really knew him then.

JUNE Yeah.

ADAM Things I didn't know.

JUNE You're surprised.

ADAM Well, yes.

JUNE That someone like me could know him.

ADAM Not – in those terms. Of course you'd know *of* him. It's a small place.
 But I just didn't think you'd be –

JUNE – be here. In your house, your cellar.

He hands her the binoculars.

Silence. They look out to sea.

ADAM So, you like the surf. The – surfers.

JUNE lowers the binoculars. She looks at him.

ADAM I mean, I'm the same. I could watch 'em all day. Always regret I never did it as a young bloke.

JUNE Because the girls liked it?

ADAM No, no. Just... the freedom.
Don't spose you surf yourself?

JUNE Fell in one day when I was a kid, when they were opening the rivermouth.
Remember getting sucked along, and all these snapper bumpin into me on their way out. Someone pulled me out with a gaff. Catch of the day.
Nah, I just watch.

ADAM Me too. I envy them. Some days it's all I do.

JUNE Spose it passes the time.

ADAM No.
He drinks deeply.
Time passes anyway. It doesn't require any help from us.

JUNE It's normal.
Being angry. When someone dies.

ADAM Jesus. Spare me the self-help section, willya?

JUNE Sorry.

ADAM No.
I'm the one who should be saying sorry.
Yes. I am angry. But it's nothing to be afraid of. It'll pass in a minute.

JUNE But it doesn't, does it. I've seen you. Out on that bend, at the shrine.

ADAM I told you. That's different. That's not how I want him remembered.

JUNE With alcohol, you mean?

ADAM What?

JUNE Or is it just beer and bourbon you don't approve of?

ADAM It's ugly, and it's shallow.

JUNE His mates put it up.

ADAM He wasn't their son. And they weren't his mates.

JUNE I know.

ADAM You wouldn't have a clue.

JUNE Orrright.

ADAM No, June, I won't have it.

JUNE It's better than nothin. Better than – not remembering him at /all –

ADAM It's not where he lived, it's not *how* he lived, it's just where he died.

JUNE And you come down anyway. More and more. With no real reason; you're out of the wine business. You drive by all the time. You slow down, you get out. You stand there for hours.

ADAM I stop and get out because of that *travesty*. Because of what those cowards, those suckholes put up to make 'emself look good, feel better. *That's* why I'm angry.

JUNE Nah. You're angry at *him*.

ADAM Oh, June. Very clever.

JUNE For a local yokel, y'mean.

ADAM For a person of your tender age.

JUNE [*bitterly*:] 'Tender. Age.'

ADAM You're young, that's /all –

JUNE In court, once. In front of everyone. The lawyer said I was, and I quote: 'wise beyond her years as a result of things witnessed at a tender age'. All my life I wanted to forget those words. But, as y'see, I learnt them by heart.

ADAM Well, you've made a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

JUNE – make it sound disgustin.

ADAM Well, I am, in fact, disgusted. But not at you.

JUNE (Whatever.)

ADAM It's just that he had so much more. He had everything. A safe, happy home, every advantage, every privilege. And he's wasted himself.

JUNE – It wasn't really his /fault –

ADAM [*not listening*:] It's killed us, me and his mother. I mean, what's he left us? Pain, that'll never go away. We're nearly finished. As a couple, as functioning people, because he didn't have the guts to stand up to the Hooray Henries he ran with.

JUNE No, that's not /right –

ADAM No consolation, nothing noble to cling to. What do we have, June, but a wasteful death, another indulged, meaningless schoolboy road

death? The empty phrases, the awkward posturing, ‘Cut down in the prime of his life. Happy-go-lucky. Would’ve done anything for ya. TOP BLOKE.’

It’s pitiful, shameful, it’s actually embarrassing –

JUNE You’re embarrassed?

ADAM Yes, and ashamed for feeling it.

JUNE (...fuck’s sake.)

It’s the *country*. People die in cars. They die on the toilet. You can’t judge someone by his death.

ADAM You do. If you’re honest. You do.

JUNE He had an accident. He was barely nineteen. He didn’t get time for a Nobel Prize. What do you want?

ADAM I want him back.

You hear me? I want him back!

The sound of the roaring ocean.

June seats Adam in the audience, as the space changes.

SCENE 10 • 1

JUNE speaks to ADAM, who is where we are.

JUNE Whenever the swell’s up, half the tradies in town are in the water. Wetsuits, shiny as seals. Locals, mostly. And some blow-ins.

BEN and WILL in wetsuits, as if exiting the ocean. They shiver.

WILL Fuckin tide. Gone all fat’n mushy.

BEN God, it’s hell cold.

They look out to the ocean.

WILL Look at him, willya. First in, last out.

BEN has noticed someone else approaching along the beach.

WILL What?

BEN That chick again.

WILL The bushpig.

JUNE Wood-ducks, we call ‘em. Fly in, shit all over the joint and flap away again.

BEN Fuck, man, she's like a stalker.

WILL Ugly bitch.

BEN [*laughing:*] Shut up, she'll hear ya.

JUNE But Jack always stood out. I remember him when I was still in school. I watched him for years. That makes it sound kind of weird. It wasn't. Nothing wrong about it.

JACK is visible, upstage right.

Seemed lonely to me. Different. Apart from that creamy-smooth look private-school city boys have. Used to walk the beach, pick stuff up – coloured glass, sand dollars. He had a thong collection.

JACK Yeah!

He brandishes a sunbleached thong, examines it like a connoisseur.

JUNE Must've had hundreds of 'em. Specially after I noticed. Coz I used to go down at night, or sometimes early in the mornin and plant 'em. Thongs. Yeah. When I started at the IGA it's what I spent half me money on. Used to bleach 'em and bake 'em, drop battery acid on 'em. Make 'em look all weathered and beaten up, like they'd floated from Brazil or Africa. And I never told him. He saved me.

ADAM –

JUNE But I never got to tell him. That all those years it was really just me, stickin 'em out there for him to find.

JACK has moved. JUNE watches him.

He had no idea who I was. Not even on the beach that last day.

WILL Inbred deviants.

JUNE Okay, maybe I was a bit obsessive.

BEN Show us ya harelip, mate!

JUNE But isn't that just, like... love? Doesn't it need somethin unreasonable, somethin wild to break free and fly?

WILL Here we go, local genius.

BEN Come on, son, use your arms.

WILL Like ya mean it, ya gumby.

BEN Uh-oh.

WILL Ugly.
BEN Sinus-flush.
WILL Suck it up, son!
JUNE I was a ghost out there at the Point.
 Until that afternoon.
BEN End of first semester.
WILL And raining.
JUNE The rivermouth was open.
 The sea was the colour of stewed tea.

SCENE 10 • 2

JACK stumbles on, shivering. He fiddles with his wetsuit zip but can't get hold of it.

JUNE You look blue.
JACK Nah, I'm quite cheerful, actually.
 Can't feel me fingers but.
JUNE Your lips.
JACK Lips?
JUNE Your lips're blue.
JACK Ah. That's kind of embarrassing.

Pause.

 Hey, you wanna get warm?

Jack puts together a driftwood fire.

Will and Ben join him.

JUNE And that's how I got to spend a day with Jack.
 And those two.

They're around the fire.

 It rained all afternoon. Waves piling into the bay. Peppy scrub drippin,
 granite headland grey and streaked. And the light started to bleed
 away, like – like the minutes leakin from the day, and the weaker it
 got, the more wired I felt.
 Like... mad. Too excited.

BEN Bundyburger with the lot!

WILL Rumdiddlyumptious!

JUNE Four of us. The fire. Rum. A bong. And him right there.
It got dark.

BEN Get that into ya.

WILL Yeah, suck on that.

BEN Jack's friend.

JUNE June.

BEN June.

WILL June, June, loves her goon.

ADAM And what'd you talk about, you and Jack?

JUNE Nothin. Talked shit, really. With them there, it was... we were just getting bombed.

ADAM What did he say? My son. What was he saying?

JUNE He was shy. It was kinda agonizin – *they* did all the talkin. I was just happy. Sittin next to him. Jack. By the fire. Up close. Breeze pourin in off the sea. His knee against mine. *Mine*.
Don't you remember what that was like?

ADAM Yes.

JUNE He smelt of coconut. And that clean sea smell, and all smoky from the fire. And we're chuggin and smokin mull and the sea's roaring in me ears and... I was so happy I thought I'd die.
And then the fire's spinnin, the sand's kinda pulsing, everything rushin up inside me like –

ADAM Love?
Hope?

JUNE Nah, I puked.
The boys roar and recoil.

WILL She's chirped!

BEN Chick. Chirp.

JACK Yeah, I get it.

JUNE I staggered out onto the beach.
Totally wasted.
And I've yacked all down me jumper.

BEN Look out, you inebriate!

WILL Invertebrate!
JACK Fuck, man, she's a mess. Gimme a hand.
WILL Piss off.
BEN You go, mate, we'll shepherd.
JACK Wankers.

He goes to JUNE, helps her to her feet.

They look into each others eyes.

JACK Should walk her up the track to the house.
ADAM What'd he do?
BEN Nothing!
JUNE Nothin I could've said.
WILL No-one there to see.
JUNE Nothin you could say in front of strangers.
JACK She's cold.
JUNE Soaked. Freezin.
JACK Here. By the fire.
BEN He brings her back.
WILL She unbuttons her shirt.
JUNE I pulled off the wet stuff. The fire was warm.
BEN Fuck! Look out!
WILL Man, that's full-on.
JACK What is it?
ADAM June?
JUNE Shouldn't have taken it off.
ADAM What're those marks?

JUNE is isolated in light.

JUNE When I was thirteen, fourteen.
Used to sit by the wood stove at night. Mum'd drink herself to sleep,
hopin the old man wouldn't come home.
Once she passed out I used to get a knittin needle. Stick it in the fire.
Just keep meself awake.

ADAM They look like –

JUNE Stretchmarks.

ADAM How long did you do this?

WILL Sick little piggy.

BEN She's gunna fall in the fire.

JACK What're you doing?

BEN Nothin.

JUNE falls. BEN and WILL hold her, lay her down, her head towards us.

JACK Her skin's sandy; in the firelight, fine hairs like on a peach. But those scars. Like she'd pulled herself through barbed wire. Not once. But again and again.

BEN and WILL are standing. Their faces are obscure.

BEN Giss a look.

WILL Fuck, man.

BEN Fuck.

JACK Suck of breath. Everyone's heart rate leaping.

JUNE Numb.

JACK Damage.

JUNE Too numb, to feel it comin.

JACK Sight of damage; did something to them.
To us, maybe. I thought:
they're only muckin around.
But they had their hands on her.

JUNE Everythin turnin, like I'm still tumblin in the water. Creatures nippin at me. Tentacles, mouths.

WILL You do it anywhere else?

BEN Giss a look.

WILL Let's slip this off. Looky here.

JUNE What? What're you doin?

JACK Hands everywhere. She's shivering.

JUNE Like I'm looking up through water.

WILL Aw yeah.

JUNE I can't find his face.

JACK Got dark.

His face has vanished.

JUNE No.
BEN Bushpig.
WILL Mm-mm. Country bacon.
JUNE Stop.
JACK Like she's a thing.
WILL Get ya phone, mate.
BEN Nah, I don't reckon.
JACK 'Stop it'. Should have said it.
 But she did.
JUNE No!
 Get off!
WILL Fuckin bit me!
JACK She's up.
BEN Running.
JACK Right past me.
JUNE Runnin.
JACK Out into the dark.
JUNE The rain, the night.
JACK With no one.
JUNE Just runnin.
ADAM Jesus Christ.

SCENE 11 • 1

JUNE No wind at all.
 Like the world holdin its breath.
 I ran into the water. Right up there against the Point, close to the
 rocks. The rip suckin at my legs. My skin felt scorched. And the water
 was so clean and cold.
 Good to feel clean. Even if it hurt.
JACK Just a white flash. That's all.
He runs off upstage right.

WILL Stupid bitch.

BEN Maybe we shouldna.

WILL What?

BEN Feels weird.

WILL Pussy.

BEN Should make sure – maybe.

WILL I’m outta here.

BEN She got in the water.

WILL Didn’t see.

BEN Straight in, like it was nothing. Like it was a warm bath.

WILL Never saw. Dark. Didn’t see a thing, constable.

BEN She’s probably just tryna get his attention.

WILL Creeps me out.

BEN Hope she didn’t do anything stupid.

WILL Something wrong with her.

BEN I mean we’re just mucking around.

WILL I don’t recall.

BEN What?

WILL My Memory Is Unclear.

BEN Oh.
Right.

WILL That’s all I know.

BEN Coz it was dark.

WILL And she was pih – Um.
A great deal of alcohol *was* involved, officer.

BEN And if anyone got with her, y’know, it was –

WILL Flash Jack Mansfield.

BEN But we didn’t see it.

WILL We were up at the house, playin –

BEN Monopoly.

WILL Scrabble.

BEN Monopoly.

WILL Have it your way, Sherlock.

They turn and stumble off, upstage left.

SCENE 11 • 2

JUNE The cold as hot as the fire. The rip, like the river. Smooth rocks goin
by. And I'm awake again. Happy.

ADAM Happy?
You were being dragged out to sea – !

JUNE Maybe not – happy. Just resigned. Like this was what I was always
comin to, dragged out like the trash built up in the inlet.
Out past the Point it was calm. No rocks, no trees. After a while I
could see stars. And when I moved there was a kind of twinkly trail.

ADAM Phosphorescence.

JUNE Sparkles, creamy smears and swirls in the black. I thought, I don't
know why I ever worried. Like if this is it, I don't mind. I felt light,
beautiful. For once.

ADAM June, you were in the ocean. Pissed. At night –

JUNE That's how I felt. I want to tell you, give somethin –
She breaks off.

ADAM (When half in love with easeful death...)

JUNE What?

ADAM June.
Those boys –

JUNE Forget 'em.

ADAM How can I *forget* them?

JUNE Some people – you forget. They're forgettable.

ADAM I need to know. That is – can I ask you? Those boys, did they –

JUNE – rape me?

ADAM Christ –

JUNE You could feel it. In the air. Breathe it.
That's where it was goin.

ADAM –

And Jack?

JACK I did bloody nothing.

JUNE It's not clear. I dunno. I was out of it.
It just took me too long to feel it coming. Way too long.

ADAM And Jack? What did he do?

JUNE –

ADAM Just sat there?

JACK Stood there. Stupid as a bit of driftwood.

ADAM Tell me.
No. Don't.

JUNE It's orright. It's okay.

ADAM How can it be?

JUNE I've tryin to give you somethin.

ADAM What, a –

JUNE I just want you to listen.

ADAM Look – if he hurt you, if he did anything untoward –

JUNE No.

ADAM Tell me the truth.
No, *don't* – I can't –
I've got nothing left.

JUNE looks at him. She talks to us.

JUNE He's frightened of, what, hearing somethin worse?
How does it get any worse than what he thinks of Jack? His own son?
What do they all *want*, these people with children?

ADAM Look, June. I'm so sorry –

JUNE Just let me *tell* you.

SCENE 11 • 3

I felt him comin towards me. In the water.

JACK What d'you do?
It's night, and she's out there somewhere in the water. Black as a dog's
guts, truly, and there's these little white flashes. Something flickering.

That's her, that'll be her out in the channel.
Finally I'm doing something. Running. I get me board and paddle out.
Swell's gone, no waves at all, just the rip goin out along the rocks. And
I'm flying, the current's really fast. Every time me fingers go through
the water, there's this creamy light, like milk coming off me fingertips.
I'm a *bit* stoned, but I know this is real.
And suddenly there's things moving out here, not just water, bodies,
water slapping against things I can't see. And I'm way the hell out past
the Point and the fire on the beach's gone. There's this big, smooth
rock sliding by and I'm thinking: Mate, there's no rocks out this far,
you've got turned around in the dark, you're lost, this girl's gunna
drown out here in the dark. And you've let it happen.

JUNE The water gets colder, starts to smell bad. Now I'm shiverin. See these
flashes, and I call out.

JACK Jack!

JUNE Jack!

JACK That's what I hear, real close.

JUNE And there's this –

A great, funnelling expiration. A deep, resonating moan.

JACK Fuck!

JUNE And starlight everywhere.

JACK There's a face.

JUNE It's him.
I reach out and touch his hand.

JACK And behind her –

JUNE Behind him this black hole.

JACK Stars in it.

JUNE Sequins.

JACK And I pull her on.

JUNE He's warm, like blood, and he doesn't even say anythin because he's
lookin at something there in the water, so dark it's like all the nothin
of your life gathered into one place, this incredible starry black –

JACK Whale.

The moan again.

Arm's length away. Breathing on me.

JUNE Two, three, four. All round us.

JACK Just lying there.

JUNE Breathin.

JACK Breathing.

JUNE Stinkin like... anchOvy breath.

She laughs.

JACK You alright?

JUNE I can't believe it.

JACK Are you alright?

JUNE What? Yeah.
Like I'm freezin me arse off and I'm lost in the sea at night and I'm surrounded by giant mammals but yeah, I'm good.

JACK We stay here –

JUNE Ages.

JACK Forget what I'm supposed to be doing out here, how far out we are, what the plan is.

JUNE Shiny black skin. Stars reflected in it.

JACK And that eye.

JUNE Unblinkin.
I can feel it all over. I dunno the right words for it, the feel of being noticed, watched over. The buzz in the water, goin right through me. Jack that afternoon, lookin up, when he finally saw me. Made me real. That's how it is in the water, like I'm whole, like I exist.
And I feel calm, safe.

JACK We're both a bit hysterical by now, nearly gone. Hypothermic, floaty.

JUNE Happy.

JACK Half a mile out to sea. And she's holding me.

JUNE He's holdin me.

JACK Like she's safe already.

JUNE On the beach, by the fire, with only him.

They are surrounded by stars.
A torrential whoosh of whale breath.

Their voices and breath shiver with cold.

Are you kicking?

JUNE Course I'm kickin. These boards aren't all that big, are they?

JACK Feel that?

JUNE Like an eddy.

JACK They're turning. They know we're here, even in the dark.

JUNE They see us.

JACK They use sonar. That's how they keep track of each other, how they navigate. Echolocation.

JUNE You mean they can feel us?

JACK Heartbeats, movement. I suppose the bigger, the darker your world is, the better you get at it.

JUNE Look.

Their skin looks like sky. Full of light, of stars.

We're kickin away. And he's talkin, talkin all the time, words are just bubblin out of him. I love the sound of his voice.

JACK There's no moon. The fire on the beach is out. The only light is the house, up on the hill.

See that? That's where we're going.

JUNE The whales let us through and for a while we hear 'em behind us.

I'm goin so numb and my legs won't work. And I know if he just lets me go he'd get in on his own and I start to feel like I'm killin him, like I'm just a load he has to carry. And I start to cry. He tries to stop me but I'm hopeless. Made him promise -

JACK June. No-one's gonna die.

JUNE He tells me to look up at the light on the hill and tells me somethin he saw when he was a kid that he'd never told anyone in his life.

The light behind them changes.

JACK It's summer, a hot night. We're down for the holidays, just the three of us, Mum and Dad and me. You can smell the peppermints and the sea and the straw smell of the vines pouring down off the ridge in the breeze.

I wake up and go downstairs and they're both out there on the deck at the rail.

Mum's looking out to sea and he's behind her. Lifting her skirt.

ADAM Jesus!

JACK It's so thin and fine you can see the ocean through it, fizzing in the moonlight.

JUNE And her legs were smooth and milky. And there was this song on the stereo.

We hear it, faint.

And she was holdin the rail. And you were –

ADAM What's he doing telling you something like that?

JUNE And you pressed into her.

JACK So... gently.

JUNE And you were whisperin at her. He said it was –

JACK Beautiful. Like they're one thing, one person.

JUNE And he knew, he said, that you loved each other, and he was yours. He knew it. He always knew it.

I can feel his chest against my back, his arms against my arms.
Whiskers at the back of my neck. I can feel all of him, like I'm wearin him.

JACK When I finally see it, the beach is as white as a summer bed.

JUNE I think he carried me.
Up the beach, the track. It's messy in my head, this bit. Soon as we were out of the water I couldn't feel him, couldn't feel anythin.
But he got us to the house.

JACK Help her upstairs.

JUNE He pushes me into the shower. The room is full of steam, like the inside of my head. Feet just stumps. Can barely feel my hands. And then the water starts to burn. God, it's like boilin chip fat.
I look around and there's no one in the steam 'cept me, and it hurts.

JACK I'm watching the kettle come to the boil. She's still in the shower. I'm shaking, still in me wetty. Ben and Will just lying there. And I open the drawer, see the knives.
That boning knife. Their heads tossed back, throats right there.
I can feel the knife in my hand before I reach for it. But then she starts crying, upstairs.
Moaning.
My hands are shakin. I have to remember what I'm there for. Milo.

I'm there for Milo. I close the knife drawer. I make her a hot drink. If she hadn't made that sound I would have killed them.

JUNE This arm comes in through the shower curtain and it's a mug and then I see Jack's face and he's totally white, just so scared, like I've really frightened him.

JACK She pulls me in.

JUNE And we stand under the water like that. Hours, it feels like. Just feelin ourselves come back.

SCENE 11 • 4

We get in bed.
And he just held me like that, except –

ADAM Well, that's probably enough /detail –

JUNE No, listen, I was embarrassed, like he must've been able to feel, to see me scars. I wondered if we'd got into it, if he'd want to, and I didn't know if I'd want to. I think I *did* want to, and now of course I wish. Except that Ben came in.

ADAM What?

JUNE I woke up and he was there in the doorway.

BEN Felt crook. Like really crook. Go to the bathroom and there's water and clothes everywhere. Follow all the water to the big room.

JUNE And he just hung there, staring.

ADAM You woke him? You woke Jack?

JUNE I don't even know if he was asleep. He didn't say anything. I guess I felt safe. So I shut my eyes.

ADAM And Ben's still there?

JUNE No.
It was like, like... I closed my eyes and I'd killed him.

BEN vanishes.

ADAM They weren't his friends.

JUNE I think he knew it.

ADAM I always saw it.
But it suited me. Their fathers, you see. Good school, good networks,
good grounding.

JUNE I don't –

ADAM I wanted the best for him.
You gotta do everything you can to maximise a kid's chances. You're
parachuting them into hostile territory the moment they're born. You
want him mixing with the right people, even if they're shits, because
that's who they'll have to get on with if they want to crack a few nuts
in the big smoke.

JUNE It must be embarrassin, then. About him and me.

ADAM Not at all. I'm glad of it.

JUNE Yeah, now you're glad. But a year or two ago you wouldna been.

ADAM A year or two ago I didn't know you.

JUNE Bushpig from the IGA. He falls in love. She's pregnant.

ADAM But it didn't happen.
Christ. You said nothing happened.

JUNE *Everythin* happened.
Everythin – important to me.

SCENE 12 • 1

JACK At dawn she's gone.

BEN Jack was spewin.

WILL Angry as.

BEN At us. For fuck's sake.

WILL As if it's our fault she does a runner in the wee hours.

BEN And that's the truth. That's why.

WILL He gets the chick into bed, something happens – or nothing happens,
knowing him – and she takes off. I mean, shit, she's from the country.
She's expecting a bit of action.

BEN But she's off.

WILL Like *she* was something to brag about.

JUNE It was just too much. Too much to take in.
I should have stayed. But I was so embarrassed. And hurtin all over. I
didn't want him to wake up and be horrified.

JACK I can't believe it. Just gone. And all I've got is the smell of her.
Woodsmoke, salt, wet wool, soap.
It's like I've been shot.

He shakes in humiliation.

JUNE If I'd stayed. If I had the guts. Why didn't I? Why couldn't I keep him?
Alive?

BEN He just cuts sick and wants to go home, right there and then, moment
he wakes up.

WILL We're like half asleep and he's chuckin our stuff in the car.

BEN Down the steps, everywhere.

WILL Callin us fifty kinds of shithead.

BEN Piled us into the car and just fanged it.

WILL Like he was tryin to scare us or something.
I mean, you've seen the road there, through the forest.

JACK Fucked everything up. Those bastards.

WILL Man, I was brickin it.

BEN We're takin bends on two wheels. He's doin it deliberately, like he's
gettin us to crack. Like he's tryin to force somethin out of us.

WILL Like what? What the fuck's he want from us?

BEN I dunno. Some kind of apology?

WILL Nothing to apologise for.

BEN I dunno. I feel bad.

WILL That's the hangover, you goose.

BEN The trees flash by. The morning light flickering through like an
epileptic fit. Want to chuck but I'm too scared to move, the car's
sliding on the bends and he's like a maniac at the wheel. Hasn't even
put a seatbelt on. I'm shitting myself.

ADAM looks on. JUNE talks to us.

JUNE I can't tell him, the father.
I know I killed him.

She exits.

JACK I know I'm being stupid. But they're afraid. And I like that. The rage feels good.
Believe me, it doesn't choose you; you choose it. You just let it have you. That's what I'm doing. I know it's stupid and dangerous, I know it's wrong.
But I like it. I don't have the guts to stop, to get what I really want.

WILL No shit, I think I'm gonna die. I think about grabbing the wheel, but mate, that's the movies. One side's the valley and the high side's all trees the size of fuck knows what.

BEN I can still see it coming at me. Pink and green. Bigger every second.

WILL Drifting. Everyone real quiet like we don't believe it's happening.

JACK It just grew out of the ground in half a second. It's like the very moment I see it I'm there, in it, mixed against it, half here, there, present, gone, panicked, calm.

Impact.

Sudden silence.

Out here
in the sappy bracken
and that cat-piss smell of understorey
you get beneath the karris.

A very low roar.

And you can hear the sea
like the tide of blood
going out between your ears
and there's no time to feel sorry and stupid
no time to take the moment back
only to feel.
The ground is still shaking. And I can hear them, every living thing.
Beetles and slaters working through the leaf litter.

The sound of rain.

BEN Fuck, it was awful.

WILL And he's not movin out there.

BEN But he's saying something.
I can't hear it over the rain.

WILL I just wanna run. But I can't feel my feet.
And Ben's like touching the roof, the doors, like it's not real. Coz it's

all out of shape. We're scrunched in, trapped in this thing like a screwed-up bit of paper, like a used tissue.

BEN Will was bawling.

WILL Fucking liar.

JACK There's rain falling. Falling such a long way. I watch the rain come down from beyond the trees.
And just...

Massive sound of impact. Darkness.

SCENE 12 • 2

MARY is seen.

MARY Jack?

ADAM is heard on a microphone.

ADAM Chrissake, Mary, what is it?

MARY No.
Please.

ADAM I have to answer it. What if it's business?

MARY Why do I keep remembering it this way, as if we were in bed, when the call actually came at 10.36 on a Tuesday morning? I wasn't even home. Neither was Adam. Both at work, of course.
But it's what you've been dreading. The midnight call. You've lived it a thousand times already, trained yourself for it. It's just one long wait for the axe to fall.
So when it comes –

The phone rings, once.

When it comes.

The phone rings, twice.

Then it's midnight wherever you are.
And you know.

ADAM Mary, darling, it's me.

MARY You know.

ADAM I'm in a taxi. I'll be there in five minutes.
Mary?

MARY And it – renders you... a creature.

ADAM Love? You still with me? You there?

MARY Something shameful, shocking, disgusting. But it's real.
You recognize it, you know yourself in it, and it's kind of a relief. To know you're real.
You don't feel old and superfluous, that moment. You feel like a girl with a swollen belly and a vein worming wild across her temple.
Pushing.
They tell you you're supposed to recover your self, to individuate. It's expected. As if, in the wake of childbirth, you need civilising.
Schedules and peer reviews. KPIs and sales targets. That's what you need. Steely smiles, tears in the stairwell.
But the sense memory lingers. Of being full. No man can give you that, no sisterly friendship, no intellectual triumph can compete with that sense of being filled up. *Replete* with your baby. You feel him completely, he's of you, in you, he fills you entirely. Pressing against your backbone, your lungs, your bladder, rolling, floating, swimming in you.
At first just the idea of him, but then he grows, bigger, more insistent than any idea, he's frightening, he owns you, possesses you and it's terrible. Love. It's a horror. Because there it is, waiting, the call, and when it comes, your legs give way.
The world is black and red and you bellow and writhe and press your head against the steel to bring it on, to finish the job.
But you don't bloody die. You just writhe there in your own slippery mess, full again, of nothing -

She can't go on.

SCENE 12 • 3

BEN Did you see her? His mum. At the funeral.

WILL [*disgusted with him:*] Fucksake.

JUNE I wasn't invited. Why would they invite *me*? No one knew.

BEN It was awful.

WILL I didn't look.

BEN I couldn't bear it.

WILL Just shut up about it.

JUNE But I went anyway.

BEN I mean, it's like proper, our kinda people. And she's making this *noise*.

WILL Leave off, willya/

BEN My father's hand on my arm, like a pincer. And people are embarrassed, annoyed really, even the priest, who does all the heavy hitters' funerals. And –
I'm just keepin it together and she –

*MARY can't escape the gravity of grief any longer. She falls, groaning.
It is very difficult to listen to.*

WILL (Enough!)

JUNE I just want to lie there with her.
It's like she's – calving. A cow in a paddock, the way steam comes off her when she's pushin, like a blanket over her, and her moan goes up the valley through the trees –

MARY [*a cry:*] Jack?

BEN Horrible.

JUNE It's awesome. A fight she's havin.
I want to be like her. A hero.
I'm jealous.
I hate her.
No-one sees me.

BEN It's the end; everyone's filing out; wiping sweaty hands on their pants, 'thank Christ that's over' –
I see her. The bushpig.

WILL What the *hell*?
Hadn't been for her he'd still be alright. What right did she have? She drives five hours just to, what, look at what she's done? Why didn't he just let her go, let her drift off to Antarctica?

BEN Man, I went cold.

WILL She did us a favour though.
It was a heads-up.

BEN Oh, bullshit. You were already lawyered up.

WILL [*amused:*] You ungrateful bastard.

BEN Okay, he's my lawyer, too.
But why didn't you /say – ?

WILL Was I conscious?

BEN Why couldn't you tell 'em? When the fireys were cutting us out. Why? Mate, whyn't you tell 'em he's lying out there in /the bush – ?

WILL Shit, I dunno. I was scared. I could smell petrol. Thought we'd be cooked alive in there, trussed up like pigs. And then later I'm angry, cause he's nearly killed us. And then –
I'm in the ambulance and they've got that space blanket thing on me and I'm warm and safe and I'm thinking THANK FUCK THANK FUCK and honest to God, no bullshit, I just forget.

BEN What?

WILL Jack. Fucksake. I forgot he's even out there.

He begins to weep.

I didn't remember him at all.
How could I forget he's out there?

SCENE 13

ADAM and JUNE.

ADAM You're one out of the box, you know.

JUNE Yeah, the IGA box.

ADAM I think you've got the wrong impression about us, June.

JUNE Nah. I think I'm a realist.

ADAM Those boys.
If you wanted to press charges –

JUNE No.

ADAM I mean, we'd do everything in our power. Lawyers, /everything –

JUNE I don't need it.

ADAM But if you did. I mean to say –
You should treat us like family.

JUNE –

ADAM What? What are you smiling at?

JUNE Nothin.

ADAM Maybe you can swing by now and then? Would you do that?

JUNE Oh, I dunno. Maybe.
ADAM Or come up to the city for a visit? Meet Mary?
JUNE I don't think so.
Actually, you know, I think I'll head off.
ADAM Stay. Please.
JUNE Nah.
ADAM Oh. Right.
JUNE That's it.
ADAM But June, before you go, just –

He holds the bottle of wine from scene 9, forgotten until now.

One thing.

JUNE –
Yeah?

Pause. They look at each other.

ADAM Nothing.
Thanks. For telling me.
I feel like we owe you something –

JUNE Nah.
Nothin.
Seeya.

She goes.

ADAM I can't ask because I don't want an answer that'll – break the spell.

He looks back at the bottle of wine.

Maybe it *is* all just bullshit, a fantasy, every bit of her story; she's made it up to let herself feel better.

She said she wanted to – give us something.

What the hell. I believe her.

I just... choose to.

The dim stage begins to flood with golden sunlight.

SCENE 14

MARY, barefoot. JACK ten years old, in boardies and rashie, zinc on his nose and cheeks, boogie board under his arm.

Near us, JUNE rebuilds the shrine.

JACK Mum! Mum? Hey, Mum. Did you see?

MARY Of course, darling. Did you think I'd sit here all day and not watch?

JACK I went left. All the way to the beach. I did a reo.

MARY Like a god.

JACK What?

MARY Like a little golden god.

JACK Hey, look.

He scampers forward to pick something up, near JUNE.

MARY Leave it, love. It's just rubbish.

JACK It's got barnacles on it.

Pause.

What? What're you lookin at?

MARY The colour of joy.

JACK You're a nut.

MARY I'll have you know I'm a very important person, I have my own car space at work.

JACK Nah, you're a nut.

MARY Yes I am. Thank you for noticing.
Jack love, it's just a thong.

JUNE hangs a single thong on the shrine.

JACK Hey, maybe the other one will float in too.

MARY Maybe.