

The Wainwright Operas

Chester Eagle



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Chester Eagle

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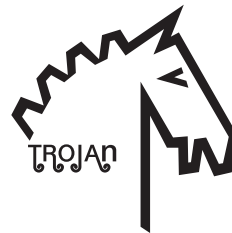
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The Wainwright Operas is published by Chester Eagle, 23 Langs Road, Ivanhoe 3079 Australia, operating as Trojan Press. Phone is (03) 9497 1018 (within Australia) and email address is cae@netspace.net.au

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First published 2005. Design by Vane Lindesay. Electronic preparation of the text for publishing by Karen Wilson and Chris Giacomi. Text font is 10 point Palatino.

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Introduction

With this book I offer my second collection of opera librettos. The first, *Love in the Age of Wings and other operas*, was published in 2003, and in it I explained how I turned to the writing of librettos and why I had adopted new approaches to an old form. In writing this new collection, I have gone back to a story which had been in my mind for something like forty-five years before I began work on *The Wainwright Operas*. Let me explain.

Many years ago, I was teaching in Bairnsdale, a town in eastern Victoria which liked to think of itself as lying beside the Gippsland lakes, but which was more distinguished, for me, by its position at the foot of rather daunting mountains, which I set out to explore. I found myself fascinated by a peak known as Mount Baldhead, bald because it was just high enough to have a patch where tree cover gave way to snow-grass. Then, by chance, if there is any such thing, I was told a story of people who had lived and events which had happened very close to this mountain. Story and place began to merge in my mind. I was wary of the mountain, but when I ventured onto its top I saw that the river originating at my feet could be observed making its way to the sea, flanked by guardian ranges. I already knew that I had only to go to the edge of the town where I worked to see Mount Baldhead on the horizon. From the beginning, one could see the end and from the end one could look back to the beginning.

The human story and the storied place captivated me, and when I left the Gippsland area I settled down to write about it,

telling the tale as it had been told to me, knowing, though, that there was more to be said. Thirty-odd years later I was ready, and I wrote *Wainwrights' Mountain*, a novel which, I told my friends, should interest any film makers or script writers who came upon it. More years passed, I started writing librettos, and the film scripts of *Wainwrights' Mountain* turned into something else.

So here is the novel as a sequence of fourteen librettos. It has been a fascinating transformation to make, easy at first, then more demanding as I shifted my thinking from the printed page to the form of stage presentation, with music, as yet unwritten, to be considered. Over the course of seven months, the transformation was completed, and we have a sequence of librettos which I have tried to write so as to allow composers to pick up parts which happen to interest them, while leaving the rest to one side. This is enabled by the fact that the librettos, like the novel, follow the fortunes of two dissimilar families, one in the mountains, one in the city (the stories merge in Opera 11). So it is available to composers to pick single librettos that interest them, coherent groupings (Operas 2, 4, 5 & 6 form a self-contained sequence), or to pick out scenes from anywhere they wish; plenty are suitable, I believe, particularly as the sequence develops. Eventually, I would like to hope, there will, or might be, enough sections of the sequence set to encourage one or more composers to unify the whole. If this sounds grandiose and/or over-hopeful, I can only say that the whole sequence is about vision, and the way in which it comes into the world, frequently rejected!

I can't conclude without placing on record the fact that when I first wrote about the family with a tree house in the Gippsland mountains (*Hail and Farewell! An Evocation of Gippsland*, Heinemann, 1971), I gave them the name Wainwright as an act of homage to Hal Porter, a writer of rare abilities who had been librarian in the town of Bairnsdale for some of my stay there. Hal had written a novel, *The Tilted Cross* (Faber, 1961), which drew on the life of the nineteenth century water-colourist and forger Thomas Griffith Wainwright, and I, in writing about the central discovery of my life in Gippsland, wanted to indicate the debt I owed to, and the admiration I felt for, Hal. (He would have noticed, long before I did, that I hadn't got the spelling right!) Hal never commented on my use of this name, but, as we can see if we read *The Extra* (Nelson, 1975), he had idiosyncratic ways of deciding whether writers qualified to be regarded as real writers or merely others 'for whom a palmful of counterfeit change will do'. I fear I was not accorded the higher status by Hal, but my intentions in giving this family the name I associated with him remain unaltered.

Finally, my thoughts on the production of these operas are set down at the back of this book.

CAE

The tree house

1. Into the silence

The action begins at the door of a convent. The sisters and a priest are standing as a group, farewelling Annie and Giles, who have been joined in marriage, and then given a farewell luncheon because Giles is taking his wife to his tiny farm, somewhere in the mountains. The sisters have only the haziest idea of where this might be, or what her life will be like.

Brigida Will our daughter be able to practise her faith where you are taking her?

Giles I will respect it, as long as she respects my vision of the world.

Brigida An unusual answer; is your vision unusual too?

Giles My vision included everything, until I saw that I lacked a partner. Thanks to you, I have taken that step. Come, my love, if you are ready?

Annie and Giles move to the side of the stage to check their horses and cart.

Sisters A few pots and pans. No comforts there. Where is he taking her? He must have found that cart under a tree. He's very sure of himself. She can come back, I suppose. Are there storms out there, and fires? Where will they live? He'll have a hut. A hut? What place for a woman is that? Her faith must be strong.

Brigida Everyone wave! Goodbye Annie, and God attend you! Night and day he'll hold you in his care!

Giles and Annie move back to the centre of the stage.

Giles This is your moment, my love. To say goodbye is to start something new. (He bows to the group on the convent steps. Annie kneels.)

Annie Give me a blessing, father, if you please.

Priest May the blessing of God the Father and Jesus Christ his son be with you always, and wherever you are going. (He continues as if uncertain.) Even in the wildest bush, God will be with you. Pray to him, and be comforted ...

Annie rises, Giles bows again, and they move out of sight.

Brigida She was a mystery when she came and she goes into a shroud. Clouds will hide her, and the darkness of the night. We'll never see her again. (to the priest) She never knew who her parents were. We told her she was a foundling. (The priest nods sagely.)

Priest Necessary, I'm sure.

Brigida Some evils are overcome in ignorance. We protected her. Now she has...

Priest ... a husband ...

Brigida ... a man ...

Priest Why do you choose that word?

Brigida Her marriage is an acceptance of fate, and yet I think she's strong.

The priest makes no reply, then turns his attention to the couple moving away. They all wave.

Sisters God bless you Annie, and God be with you always. God protect you in the darkness where you're going. Write to us, and tell us about your life. God protect you, Annie, forever and always ...

The convent party stands waving on the steps for a moment or two, then they disappear, and the screen at the rear shows a forest of tall, dark trees. The country is already steep; there is a deep valley to one side and on another a glimpse of the distant sea.

Giles Take a look at the lowland, my love. We are leaving it behind.

Annie What do I get in recompense, I ask?

Giles A home we have yet to make, a life in isolation where our minds can be clear.

Annie And what are we clearing our minds to see?

Giles I have a mountain from where I see the world.

Annie Is this mountain mine to share?

Giles It is not forbidden, and yet it is not yours.

Annie I am to make the home for our children, is that in store for me?

Giles We are married now. In the years ahead, we'll live out our agreement.

Annie You are strange ...

Giles I see further than most. We have two rivers, my love. One flows through our clearing, and the other has ranges attending it, all the way down to the sea. From the beginning, I can see the end. At the end, I can see the start. From the top, I can see everything in the world.

Annie (sharply) God himself has little more.

Giles Except responsibility for the foolishness of his world. From which we have withdrawn.

Annie This is our agreement? (Giles nods.) Very well, we know where we stand. Let us be silent, and read each other's minds. I will get out of the cart, and walk. I need to accept, inside myself, what I have agreed upon, with you.

Giles The sisters have trained you well. You think it is a *via dolorosa*. It is an undertaking of pride, and comprehension of all that matters.

Annie And love, shall I not have that from you, Giles? Love?

Giles You will have nothing else; we will live our lives together.

Annie Nevertheless, I will walk a while, so I can think.

Giles indicates with a movement of his hand that she is free to do as she wishes. He will keep the cart behind her as she walks towards the mountain which, apparently, they will share in its presence but not in the vision he says it offers.

2. Trees

Giles and Annie are in a clearing; their few possessions in a heap. Trees tower over them.

Giles (indicating) These are the two.

Annie (to herself) The fool has no sawbench.

Giles She thinks I'm stupid. (He glances at the trees he means to fell, then shifts their possessions to a spot he believes will be safe.)

Annie There must be a fire. (She scrabbles some forest debris into a pile and lights a match. A fire begins to burn. She looks cunningly at Giles, as if she has met her side of the challenge, and now he must build a house.)

Giles It's poised to fall. Only a few cuts to be made.

He goes behind one of the trees he's been digging around and hacks at the as yet unsevered roots. Each blow is measured carefully in the music, then we hear the tree creaking and groaning as if something fearful is about to happen. It does. With a rushing sound the first trunk of the tree house heads for the ground a metre or so to one side of Annie and her fire. As it falls, she sings to herself.

Annie Aaaaaaaahhh! Death and life hold me in the grip of a moment ...

The tree hits the earth, and its upper branches settle.

Annie After death by terror, he offers life in fear. No!

Giles This is good. She is strong.

Annie I must bring the next one down myself. I can't face that fear again.

She rushes to her husband, seizing the axe. He moves near the fire.

Giles She's becoming what I want. Chop, my love. The same distance on the other side. The fire is your centre. You are a woman after all!

He stands, and we hear the sound of chopping. It goes on for some time, since she isn't as practised with the axe as he is.

Annie Whatever I am, I'm making it myself, with this ghastly Giles. (more chopping) He's freed himself from morality, and in freeing himself, he frees Annie Wainwright too. That's how I signed my name for our wedding. It's in the book. Annie Wainwright. I'm equal to any man on earth, yes, even Giles! (She chops; the mighty tree begins to tremble.) He wanted a partner! (She's ecstatic now as she hacks at the roots.) How did they describe me, Giles? Demure? Chaste! Perfection in the kitchen, and her sewing too! Excellent with children, and reading and writing like the priest himself? They never told me who I was. I was a foundling, they said. Note that 'ling', a little one. Diminutive! Haaaaaaaa! They thought they'd send me away and never see me again, not knowing that was what I wanted! Haaaaaaaa! The big tree's getting ready to topple! (chop, chop, chop) It's too heavy to push, I need a wind. I'll sing to summon

a wind! Haaaaaaaa! Is heaven getting lazy? Lying down for a sleep? Leaving it for Annie to do the work? (chop chop chop) It's starting to go!

Giles The branches are caught. We'll sleep, and in the night, we'll be transformed! The second tree will fall, and we'll have our home. Two trunks will lie side by side as long as our union lasts. She is mine, this Annie Wainwright, a whirlwind waiting to arrive. I chose her well!

Annie It needs a wind. The branches are caught. We'll sleep, and in the night I'll change with him. This is more than ceremony can do! This is force. There's no stopping me, and I realise what's happening. To be fully alive and to know it is a peak we rarely see. I've found a mountain of my own. My years of being a valley, with life finding its way through me, lie ahead. I'm right for this mountain he wants to have on his own, the swine. I'd love to drop this tree on you Giles, but it's stuck!

Giles rattles a spoon against a cup, and she realises she's being called. She comes to him, carrying the axe. He takes it from her, and puts it down. He offers her the cup, and takes up one himself. They drink. They hold each other.

G & A Aaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaahhh!

They lie under a blanket beside the trunk they've felled. Night falls, the fire dies down until it's only a glow. A rushing wind stirs itself,

the second tree strains and groans, trembles, then falls beside them, where Giles intended it to be. Giles and Annie wake. He comes to the glowing fire, she moves back to the thicker end of the trunks.

Giles We're joined. We have a home.

Annie He's mine, I'm his. This cannot be undone.

Giles Much will happen to us, here. We are alone, but events will seek us out. They always do. I'm inclined to wonder, but why? Events will always step around our plans. We act in the middle of forces that are too great for us. Even my mountain cannot show me our future. We are here for what will happen. We must be ready and accepting.

Annie He is calm, at last. And I am ready, no longer needing love. Forces greater than love rule the universe, and I am theirs. Strange that I'm submissive now as never in the convent. I've been discovered, for the second time, and the last! My husband's by the fire.

Giles She's in the dark. She'll hear my thought.

Annie I know his mind.

Giles Together now, and joined, my fate, my partner, my ...

Annie Together now, and joined, my fate, my partner, my ...

Their voices fade away with a question in the minds of the audience: what do they mean to each other, now?

3. Alone

Giles is on his peak, looking at the world.

Giles There are people in Cornwall who would claim me. They would try to grab my farm. Some would ask me how I did it; some would ask me why. Those who wanted to rob me would never look inside my mind. They want gold, diamonds, jewels, fabrics, necklaces and rings ... aren't they aware of their minds? The answer's no. The poorest man is as rich as any other, and I've brought Annie to live within that clarity of mind. We'll greet the sunrise every morning as our brother. We'll send him off to sleep as we lie down ourselves. Creation's very heart can be discerned. I lack nothing. I am the happiest of men.

4. Inside

Annie They trained us to be helpless, but useful to our men. The priest was first of all. Our path, he told us, led to God. He would lead us, so he said. To God, the great unknown. He fooled us into thinking he knew what couldn't be known. Giles was right to bring me here. Even the unknown is simple: it's unknown, and doesn't bother us. There will be snow in winter, fire in summer, and we'll put up with both. Unknowing's a comfort, even, almost, a friend. I welcome what I can't control. My husband's on his peak. The val-

leys he talks about run away on every side, and I, though he doesn't see it yet, am each and every one. Everything goes through me. I don't fear him any more. He brought me here, and what could be more than that?

5. Creation

The voices of Giles and Annie come to us through the flames of their fire. They hurl on wood, then almost disappear. We catch only glimpses of them as the wood catches fire.

Giles We do this every night, my love.

Annie And how many times a day?

Giles You will outlast me, and our children will outlast us. This is the only way I can imprint myself on the rush of things.

Annie My body's made for it, and since I live in my body, I must assume my mind is made for it too.

Giles We are never closer, and never further apart.

Annie How so?

Giles In joining, we deceive ourselves, in order to deceive each other.

Annie Love is the first deceiver. I see that clearly now.

Giles You and I are its agents. We deceive each other.

At this stage we realise that the flickering of light on the stage is more than the flames from the fire between the trees, but is also the presence of spirit people, attending on the couple, watching, and, some of them, waiting to be born.

Annie My body will make boys, there will be girls, and one of them will continue me.

Giles She will have a special mind. I'll give her part of myself.

Annie The others?

Giles Must fend for themselves.

Annie I wonder if they're listening ...

Giles This place is crowded with spirits, wanting to be here.

Annie (laughing) Do we have to chop down another pair of trees?

Giles (also amused) Two's enough! Children have to be fed.

Annie And loved, looked after ...

Giles That's your work, my love.

Annie You're thankless and demanding. There's no end to what you want.

Giles Don't disguise it from yourself that you are just the same.

Annie I don't deceive myself. I know what I am.

Giles Which is?

Annie I am the valley beneath your mountain. Everything passes through me on the way to where it's going.

Giles And I?

Annie Watch over everything, like the god you think you are.

Giles You think I am mistaken?

Annie We go so far in this world, then we have to return. You'll go back to Cornwall.

Giles That will be the beginning of my end?

Annie You'll say you will return, but you'll be starting your second journey, leading who knows where.

Giles You see as far as I do, my love, but in another way.

Annie Each of us must be the other's guide, but help for each other will be limited. I'll cook on the fires we make, for the children we breed, but what can I do for a man who sees a vision of his own?

Giles We're in a place of spirits. You see them more than I do, but see them I do, from time to time.

Annie They are superior to us, but full of envy.

Giles They want to be back on earth.

Annie And they can't return, unless ...

Giles ... we cause them to come back, my love.

They turn to each other and their sexuality takes them over, expressing itself to us, since we cannot see Giles and Annie behind the flames, in the music that we hear.

6. The flightless bird

Giles is at the front of the stage, watching Annie moving restlessly at the rear.

Giles I call her the flightless bird, as she goes around the clearing. How heavily she moves. She's almost become a mother. Her change will force a change in

me – here in the house; on the mountain I will be as I always was. I'll walk there now, and when I come down, her labour will have begun. The flightless bird! What a mighty nest!

He disappears; Annie moves to the front, to lie down between the trunks of their home. She is out of sight as her labour begins, though we hear her calling. Until Giles reappears we can only see - or perhaps half-see - the spirit people crowding about, trying to find a position to watch her labour. Their voices are clear enough but to the eyes of the audience their presence is mostly a matter of flickering flame, a continuation left, right and centre, high and low, of the fire burning at one end of the tree house.

Annie Aaaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaaahhh!
Spirits Mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmm-
 mmm, mmmmmmmmm.
Annie Aaaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaaahhh!
Spirits Mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmmmm ... He's coming
 to see your child!
Annie (a triumphal, pain-carrying cry) Aaaaaaaaahhh!
Giles returns; the spirits flutter wildly.
Giles (aware of all this psychic activity) It's come! What is
 it, my love?
Annie (calling) The same sort as its mother!
Giles She – she! - must have a name.
Annie What are we going to call her?
Giles Have you noticed how they're crowding to look?

Annie They're envious. They wish they could do what I've
 done.
Giles Let's make them more jealous still. Let's call her ...
G & A Hope!
Spirits (a triumphant cry, tinged by sadness) Aaaaaaaaahhh!
 (then a more dubious sound) Aaaaaaaaahhh. (then a
 cry of mourning) Aaaaaaaaahhh.
Annie I see.
Giles She won't be ours for long.
Annie We've been betrayed.
Giles We have to look after her for the days we're given her
 to share ...
Annie ... before they take her back, those bloody, blasted
 spirits.
Giles I want to ask them why they do this, but there's no
 answer now, nor has there ever been.
Annie She's weak. I'll make her strong. I'll give my own life
 to keep her here.
Giles (looking about, at the dwindling presence of flames)
 They're slipping away. They gave us Hope and
 they're taking her back again. Life on earth is sad.
Annie They've got a struggle on their hands!
The spirit people fade. The fire burns low; darkness takes over the
stage. Nobody moves, and only Annie, and Giles commenting, can
be heard.
Annie Take what I give you, darling one. Draw what you
 need from me. I'm a bottomless lake, filled with what

you need. When you weaken I give you strength. You and I are one. I won't let you leave this earth without me. You're mine, and I belong to you. We're connected, little one, and I won't let you slip away. See, you're beside me in this bed. The creases in your brow run through my brain. It's my blood running through your veins. Your fingers, clenching, are the determination of my will! The spirit people brought you here because they knew you would be safe. Two trees protect you, and a forest surrounding you for miles. Mountains hold you, and rivers flow past to drink. Our fire's there to keep you warm ... You're growing cold. Giles, she's slipping away ...

Giles Cling to her my love. She's our hope. We didn't give her that name without reason.

Annie Reason? I'm pouring myself into her, but she's growing cold. Without me she'd be gone. She's sucking me away to where she's going. Oh Giles, I can't bring her back. There's a great darkness, and I'm following, holding as hard as I can ...

Annie falls asleep. Giles considers her, and their daughter who has died.

Giles Annie will wake in the night, crying, or be called by the sunrise in the morning, in sorrow to bend over our fire. The little one, our Hope, has gone. Her stay was short. Why did she come at all? There's only one answer. She came to change the woman who held

her for a time in this imperfect home. The woman became a mother, two worlds a world apart. Let me look at her, weakened and asleep, between this world and the place where Hope has gone. Annie. (He considers his wife.) She is in every way my equal. Even my mountain cannot make me more than she is! (He looks around, though he fails to notice a flickering flame at the top of the stage.) Where is our child? There's only a shell, a husk, waiting to be buried. Where is our child? I feel you hovering, little one. (He sees the flame above him.) Ah! Say goodbye to your mother. Better still, come back to us again, if you are allowed, when next she bears a child. (The flickering flame disappears.) Come back, little one, if you can.

🌀 End of Opera 1 🌀

War

1. Waratah Bay

Two young people, barely visible because it's night, are finding their way to a beach.

Michael Through the tea tree, down to the sand.
Helen There are mountains over the water. I haven't been there yet.
Michael Put your clothes with mine.
Helen When your family arrives, we won't be able to do this.
Michael I'll move my tent so you can come to me!
Helen What a night!

We've lost sight of them by now, but their voices drift back to us.

Michael I wanted this so much but I never dreamed it would happen. Is that a contradiction?
Helen Who cares? Hold me. Loosely, tenderly.
Michael Wet fingers. You can think it's the sea reaching out for you ...
Helen No thanks. I want you.
Michael You've got me. I'm full of giving.
Helen You must never block me, Michael.
Michael I'll do whatever you want.
Helen I can see lights.
Michael Stars ...
Helen A car.

Michael Shit! It's my family. I didn't expect them till morning.
Helen My people think I'm asleep.
Michael And so you would have been. Let's get dressed.
Helen Where are the clothes?
Michael Over here.

Headlights flicker on the scene as a vehicle approaches.

Michael Come to me tomorrow, Helen. When my tent's close to yours.
Helen We'll remember these nights for years.
Michael Keep them to ourselves. (Now we see him properly for the first time. He waves his arms to direct.) Uncle Max! That's it, don't come any further. Kids asleep?

Steve No!
Mark No
Rosie No!
Di No!
Lily (a squeak) No!
Max Morris Your dad not here yet? They were in front of us.
Michael No sign of them. What sort of a trip did you have?
Steve Long!
Mark Long!
Michael I get the idea. I'll show you where your tents are. Same as last year.

Muriel I'm dying for some sleep.
Max I know you, you'll talk till dawn, then Yatty'll arrive, yatter, yatter, yatter.
Muriel There's some more lights! Look, Max!
Max Must've taken a wrong turn.
Michael Put your lights back on, so they know.

A second car comes to the edge of the clearing.

Max Hey there you old warmongers! Don't drive into the tent!
Yatty (calling from her car) It has happened, Max Morris, as you well know!
Max Years ago, a little hiccup ...
George Everyone out! Grab your things. Everything all right, Michael?
Michael Best two weeks of my life!
George Sounds good! Tom! Adrian! Karen! Nell! Stir yourselves. Finish your sleep when we've settled in. Yatty, I'll light a fire for breakfast darling.
Yatty You and your fires.
George A camp without a fire is like a house without a kitchen. Plenty of wood, Michael?
Michael (indicating) Still burning. Throw some bits on.

George does so and in a minute we have a blaze.

Muriel When're we expecting the others?
George Bill's coming down with Cyril and Dawn. The others have got further to come, could be a while.

Max The minute Bill opens his whisky the Boer War will start.

Muriel Well don't you open it for him. I want some peace.

Yatty How are we going to get that, you tell me.

George War, war, it's all the world knows how to do!

Max We have to defend ourselves.

George That's a nice way of saying make mincemeat of someone ...

Max ... who'll make mincemeat of us if we don't get in first!

Michael Excuse me saying so but it's not even daylight yet.

Max We don't need any advice from you Michael, you were here to protect the camp.

Michael Well, there weren't many invaders ... (He giggles, betraying himself.)

George What is it, son?

Michael (recovering) There's a few others, further down. No hostilities ...

George I wouldn't expect any. Give your mother a hand with the littlies. Thanks, son.

Muriel Another car, I think.

The lights of a third car flash across the clearing, showing tents, especially the large, central one which is the holiday headquarters of the Bowden and Morris families. When it stops four people get out and there is a flurry of greetings back and forth.

Bill First light! That's the time to arrive.

George Good trip, Cyril? Dawn?

Dawn It's cool when you're travelling by night. How long have you been here?

George Not long. I'll put the kettle on. Michael's had it here all night.

Cyril How's he been?

George He's in a funny mood, I think he found the solitude agreeable.

Bill Solitude? (He laughs.) You don't have to be alone if you don't want to be!

George You like it well enough.

Bill Ah, who'd have me? An old soldier with a head full of war.

Max Brought your whisky Bill?

Bill Course I did. First light. That was when you needed a sip.

He pulls out a bottle. They look around, and see that the sky is beginning to lighten.

Bill Many a time I did this, thinking it might be my last. They mostly attacked at dawn. You couldn't see to shoot'em.

There is a pause while they reflect on what he's reminding them of. Then Luke, Cyril and Dawn's boy, returns.

Luke Michael's moving his tent. Why's he doing that?

Bill Where's he moving it to?

Luke He said he wants to be further back.

Bill We won't be making a soldier out of you. You have to watch.

Max He might be a soldier before he's much older. The way things are going ...

Luke Should I join up, Uncle Bill, if there's a war?

Bill I'm the last person you should ask. I've seen too much of war.

Luke That's why I'm asking.

Bill Your Uncle George doesn't believe in it. Your Uncle Max does. I should know best, but I don't know what to advise ...

George A change of heart Bill? What's happened?

Bill The world's a beautiful place. Look around. It's why we come here every year. Water, mountains, birds. What's wrong with us? We cause all the trouble. We're always trying to finish off the last brawl, or we're starting something different, so nobody remembers what's gone before. I despair of the human race.

Luke So what am I gonna do?

Yatty (from inside the big tent) I need a hand in here. I can't get this contraption open.

Max We're on duty George.

George Never off till Yatty's asleep. (He and Max go into the tent.)

Luke You're getting old, Uncle Bill. Older every year.

Bill Too true, my boy. When I was your age, I did everything for the first time. Now I'm a cliché. You know what that means? (Luke shakes his head.) Things we say and do get so worn out they lose their meaning.

Luke What happens then?
Bill Good question. The answer is, nobody admits it. They pretend that what used to be true is still true. It's bullshit but it makes the game easy to play ... Get some sleep. I'll mind the fire till Michael gets back.

Luke disappears, and after a few moments, during which we notice that the sky is filling with light, Michael returns.

Bill Who is she, lad?
Michael Oh Uncle Bill, really ...
Bill You've got that light in your eye. Spring in your step. It's one thing that can't be hidden.
Michael Old soldiers are not supposed to notice. You're supposed to be wiping people out.
Bill I'm finished with that. We need to be made new.

Michael looks fondly on his uncle, who puts an arm around him.

Bill She'll be welcomed by your mum and dad if she's anywhere half decent. You know that.
Michael When we get back, she's going to live with me.
Bill In the loft above the lane? The old stables, is that where you mean?
Michael (smiling) Plenty of room.
Bill (tapping his head) This is the only space that counts. Most people don't know how big it is until they have to share.
Michael I never thought of that. I saw it as a conquest. A victory I'd won.

Bill It's all right to think that way. (He pauses.) For ten seconds. After that, when you're sharing, everything becomes different.

Yatty emerges, studying the two of them shrewdly, then glancing down at the fire.

Yatty Something's being handed on.
Michael I think it is.
Yatty Lucky boy. How's the wood pile?
Michael Heaps of it, mum. Over there.
Yatty Good boy. I'm proud of you.
Bill You can be, I think.
Yatty You two have been talking. (loudly and over her shoulder) Muriel! Dawn! We've got to plan this lunch. We'll serve breakfast first, they'll all be starving ... Muriel? Dawn? Don't tell me they've gone to sleep. You boys keep that fire ready, I want a big, deep, scorching bed of coals when I start to cook! (She disappears.)

Bill You've got a wonderful mother.
Michael Why aren't you married, Uncle Bill?

He is getting ready to answer when we notice that Michael's sister Karen has approached.

Bill Karen! You're so grown up darling, and here we are talking about marriage.
Karen (curious) Is Michael getting married?
Bill He wants to know why I'm not. He's feeling sorry for me.

Karen What's that a sign of?

Michael Curiosity, nothing more.

Karen Why aren't you married, Uncle Bill? You should be I think.

Bill Because there wasn't anyone like you around ... I tell a lie, there was. (He's got their interest now.) I was in South Africa, I got wounded, they moved me back to a hospital, and – how many times have you heard this – the soldier fell in love with his nurse.

Karen Was she beautiful, Uncle Bill?

Bill She was the loveliest creature that ever walked the earth. I wasn't with her long because as soon as I was halfway recovered they sent me back into action. But we knew each other's mind by then ...

Michael She'd agreed to marry, Uncle Bill?

Bill I had a charm around my neck that kept me from being killed. Anyone as lucky as I was couldn't die.

Karen And she?

Bill The fighting ended. We made an arrangement. I was to come home and buy a farm, then I'd send for her, and she and her parents would come over. She was the only one they had. Then her dad died. He'd been ill for a long time, but then came the real shock. Amy got a fever ...

Karen Amy ...

Bill I haven't said her name in years. How odd! Amy. Something in you brought that out, darling.

Michael (prompting) A fever ...

Bill She died on the ship, and they buried her at sea. I wish they'd buried me too.

Karen Instead ...

Bill ... I've lived to be old and crusty. Just ask Yatty. Or Muriel. Or Dawn! Or Edna or Jean when they get here ...

Michael Which shouldn't be long ...

Bill We should lie down for an hour. None of us got much sleep.

Michael Oh ...

Bill You're not fooling anybody lad.

Karen (interested) What've you been telling Uncle Bill?

Michael Nothing, nothing ...

Karen When people say 'nothing' there's always something.

Bill He'll tell you soon enough, darling. Let's get some shut-eye.

They go off, and for a few languorous moments the scene is empty. Then, although we don't see it, we hear the sounds of two more families arriving by car – Norman and Edna Rowe with their three children, and Varney and Jean Bowden, with their two. Each party is greeted by the sound of Michael's voice, welcoming them.

Michael (to Norman and Edna) Uncle Norman! Auntie Edna! Have a good trip? I'll show you the tents, then I'll help you with your things.

And a minute later, when the last of the Bowden and Morris families arrive:

Michael Uncle Varney! Auntie Jean! Welcome to Fort Teatree!
Everyone's having a sleep. You probably need one too. I'll get you settled. Grab your things. Same tents as last year ...

Everything is quiet. The water laps placidly on the sand, and the day warms up as the sun mounts in the sky. There is a long moment of vibrant peace, then Yatty inspects the fire, bringing pots and camp ovens with her, which she places on the ashes. Muriel and Dawn join her, with practised movements as they start cooking Xmas lunch. Once the camp ovens are in position, they move inside. Again there is a pause, the sun gets higher in the sky, and we catch glimpses of the mountains of the Promontory, far behind. The sky seems endless. Then Karen and Luke come to where the cooking's being done.

Luke Michael's asleep. Well, he's in his tent.
Karen Are you spying on him?
Luke More or less.
Karen Why?
Luke I think he's got a redhead. She's part of the next camp to ours.
Karen How far along have you been?
Luke Right to the end.
Karen How long have you been here and you've searched every camp on the track?

Luke Uncle Bill says if you're gonna be a soldier you have to learn to watch.

Karen If there's a war, are you going to fight?

Luke What else is there to do?

Karen You know what my mum and dad think.

Luke They're not realistic.

Karen Is war realistic?

Luke It is really. It can't be avoided.

Karen Please don't try and persuade Adrian. It's going to be a conflict for him.

Luke He might surprise you. He mightn't have any conflict at all.

Karen (depressed) Everyone's talking about war. It's like a storm cloud, and everybody wants it to pour down on us. Even when they say they don't, they do. Really. I don't know what to do.

Luke Do nothing, Karen. Here's your dad.

George enters, with a tripod and camera, which he sets up to one side of the scene, pointing towards the tent where the family will have Xmas lunch.

George We'll have to get someone to take it for us. So we can all be in it.

Luke There's a smart lookin redhead in the camp next door. I reckon she might be available.

George Have you been speaking to her Luke?

Luke No. No. No. No, no, no, no, no. No. No, no. She looks pretty smart though.

George We might send you in to ask her, later.

Luke Michael's the one to do that, I reckon. (George, although saying nothing, catches the drift of this remark. He starts to leave, as Yatty comes out of the big tent.)

Yatty We've got the tables set up inside. Turkey'll be a while yet, and the pork'll be longer. Let's do the photo while we're waiting.

George Some of them are still asleep, some of them are down the beach. They'll take a bit of rounding up.

Yatty Well, round them up! Anyone who comes into this clearing, sit them down and take their picture. I've got a feeling ...

George (they know each other well) A feeling, darling?

Yatty Yes, one of those! That it may be years before we're here again, together, as we are today. And it may be never! (most decisively)

Luke (awkwardly, humbly) Auntie Yvonne, Uncle George, can I ask you something?

Yatty What do you want to know?

Luke You've been married a long time now. How did you come to get married?

Yatty and George look tenderly at each other, smiling at the question, and the troubled young man who wants to know.

Yatty It was in the Great War. Our Prime Minister wanted to send young men off to fight. A lot of people didn't want this, so it was put to a vote.

George Twice, actually. He didn't get the result he wanted, so he tried again. Bloody bastard.

Yatty And George didn't agree with conscription – that's what it was called – and neither did I.

George We didn't know each other at that stage. That came later.

Yatty One night we were in the streets, sticking up posters, and there were police trying to catch people doing what we were doing ...

George ... so, not being brave, we hid in a lane. Around the corner from where we live today.

Luke In East Melbourne?

Yatty That was it. We hid in a lane, and we started to talk ...

Yatty ... and we talked for a long time ...

George ... the police would have been back in their station by the time we finished ...

Yatty ... well, we never finished, really ...

George ... because we slept together at my place that night ...

Yatty ... and we've been together ever since ...

George ... the funny thing is, I was renting a couple of rooms in an old stable, at the back of a big house ...

Yatty ... and the next day I went home just long enough to get my things ...

George ... and that's where Michael's living now ...

Yatty ... because we made some money after a while, and finished up buying the big house ourselves ...

George ... and moving in. Michael was conceived in that stable ...

Yatty ... where he's living today ...

George ... so that tells you something, though what I couldn't say!

Max, Norman and Varney come on, each having had an hour's sleep. They are not close in any way and one senses that only the family tie holds them together.

Varney (not saying anything, really) Well, what do you reckon, Luke?

Luke I don't know much about anything, Uncle Varney.

Varney You'll have to make up your mind pretty quickly, when the call goes out.

Luke The call?

Norman That the Empire needs men.

Luke To fight, you mean?

Max What else would he mean? When the call goes out, there'll be some'll get their tails between their legs, and hide ...

Varney ... and others'll bare their teeth for the brawl ...

Norman ... ready and waiting ...

Luke You make it sound like it won't last very long. Short and sharp.

Yatty comes out of the big tent. The men go quiet, and she notices this.

Yatty (sarcastically) If you want to do something useful,

you could round up everybody and bring them here. We're having a family photo.

Luke I'll go down the beach, Auntie Yvonne. Straight away?

Yatty (to Luke) This very minute. (to the others) Gentlemen?

Max (sarcastically) Come on boys. We'll drum up a bit of business ... for Georgie's camera. (Then, as he passes it, he salutes, and calls very loudly.) Ugh-tairnshun!!!

Members of the family start to move on; at first they are Yatty's children who, sensing that their mother is beset by something hostile, gather close to her – Michael, Tom, Adrian, Karen and Nell. George rushes on to inspect his camera.

George Did he touch it?

Yatty No. (She shakes her head.)

Steve and Mark come on, Mark carrying a cricket bat, and Steve a ball. We can see that they are twins. Not far behind are Rosie and Di, two more twins, and, like Steve and Mark, they are the children of Max and Muriel Morris. Muriel comes out of the big tent in time to call the fifth of her children - Lily, a toddler who hasn't much idea what's going on.

Muriel This way darling. Sit here on the sand. I'll be in the chair behind you.

Lily sits. Then Cyril and Dawn appear.

Cyril Photo, George? We didn't have one last year, did we?

George I forgot until people started to leave, so this year, I'm taking it before we serve up.

Cyril Ah, here's Luke now. He stopped us going down the beach. (Luke returns.) The problem with taking a picture, George, is that someone gets left out.

George We can handle that. Michael, could you go along the camps and get someone to take this picture for us?

Michael (understanding what he's being asked) No sooner said than done. (He leaves.)

Yatty There's a lot of things going on that I haven't worked out yet.

Norman and Edna Rowe (Morris) come on with their three, Virginia, Stanley and Jessica.

Edna A photo? We're going to need some chairs ...

There is general confusion as the more active members of the group head for the tent. This enrages Yatty.

Yatty Hold on a moment! I'm not having flies in that tent! That's where we're serving lunch! Everyone into the airlock. Zip up the zipper behind! Nobody move until you've checked there's not a fly! Then open the inner zip, and go in. Get a chair! Come out the same way, a few at a time! Letting a fly in is a capital offence!

Max Worse than shooting a Hun in the trenches!

Yatty We're celebrating Xmas, Max Morris! It's a family affair!

Varney and Jean Bowden come on, with their children Honoria and Howard. They too help bring chairs from the tent. Uncle Bill is last of all, but quick to take command.

Bill Grown-ups take a seat, please. Littlies on the sand. Squat down, or sit on your bottoms. Yes darling, just where you are. Face this way. Big kids along the back, standing straight and tall. This is how we're going to be remembered, so put on a good face, and smile! (He turns to George.) Where's Michael? The young fella's gone missing?

George He's gone off to get someone to press the ... (He makes a gesture with his fingers.)

Bill Oh ho. Who'll that turn out to be, I wonder?

Michael appears at the edge of the gathering, with the red-headed Helen, whom we see properly for the first time. The whole gathering goes quiet, as they sense that a new member is being added to their family. Helen, too, is still, and Michael tries to rise to the occasion he's created.

Michael Okay everyone, this is Helen Orbiston. From the camp beside ours. She's agreed to take our picture. We're honoured, if you only knew ...

George (amused) If we only knew what?

There is nervous laughter. Yatty stands.

Yatty Welcome Helen. Happy Xmas. Thank you for joining us. (She considers Helen for a time.) George, we should have Helen in the picture, not taking it. Michael, see if you can get someone else!

George (understanding, and accepting the newcomer) Yes, that's the idea. Someone else to take the picture, and Helen to be with us!

Karen You stand with me, Helen. I want you beside me!

Michael is grateful for this acceptance, and smiles at his parents, and his sister, before he moves away to see who else can be persuaded to do the family a service. Helen moves to the back row of the group, and takes up a place beside Karen, behind the chairs of Yatty and George.

Karen I'm Michael's sister Karen. These are my mum and dad. Now listen everybody, Helen doesn't know us yet. We're going to play our game. Story!

Norman Goodness me, you know this can ramble on for hours ...

Karen (insisting) Story!

Mark I've got one!

Karen No. You have to be asked.

Norman I'll ask. Let me think. How old are you Mark?

Mark I'm ten.

Norman Well, I'd like to hear you tell us ... what you'll be doing in ten years time.

Mark Just what I wanted, Uncle Norman. First, is tomorrow Boxing Day?

Norman Yes.

Mark Well, on this day in ten years time I'll be oiling my bat (he waves it) because the next day I'll be opening the batting for Australia!

There is some amusement, and some scorn. Max, Mark's father, butts in.

Max That's the right attitude. You'll never get anywhere if you don't aim high. What about you, Steve?

Karen Against the rules. All questions have to be from one family branch to another. Sorry Uncle Max. Who's next?

Max I'll tell you a story about your future. Your husband's going to have to beat you because you're cheeky!

Yatty (rising) He will not! The day that sort of thing happens I'll have something to say. You bite your tongue, Max Morris, for saying such a thing!

Luke (awkwardly) I've got a question for you, Auntie Jean. I'm asking you to tell us how you met Uncle Varney.

Jean Heavens above! Why did you ask that? Well ... (she's following the rules of the family game) ... it was through a song. To imagine what happened, you have to put yourself where you can see on both sides of a fence ...

Varney Don't beat about the bush, Jean. It happened in Carnegie. I was living with my parents and this new family moved next door. There was a high fence and I couldn't see much but I got a few glimpses of Jean

and I liked what I saw. I'd heard her high heels on the path. I reckon you can tell a lot about a woman from the way she walks ...

Yatty ... and a man from the way he talks!

Varney One warm night I could hear this piano. They had the window open, I could hear it very clearly. Go on, love, it's your story.

Jean My mother had invited some people around. One was a fellow she'd met at church. I could tell two things about him. One was that he was thinking of becoming a minister ... and the other was that mum thought he might be a suitable husband for me! Not on your life, I thought. (She strokes the back of Varney's hand.) Then mum asked me to sing. So I sat at the piano and started up with Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez-vous? She was a lady of the night, you understand. Mum was horrified, she said that song's a little too ... she wanted to say vulgar but even to say the word wasn't polite, so she said give us a nice folk song. So I obliged.

Varney Go on darling. Sing it now.

Jean All right, here goes.
 Gin a body meet a body, comin' through the rye,
 Gin a body greet a body, need a body cry?
 Ilka lassie has her laddie, ne'er a ane hae I,
 But all the lads ...

Varney has joined in by now, singing lustily with his wife of many years.

J & V ... they smile on me, comin' through the rye.
 Jean That's what he did when I sang! From the other side of the fence. Everybody laughed, except this poor man who was going to be a minister. And next morning, when I was in the garden, I could hear him whistling the same song!

Varney She was calling for someone better than this fellow to come and save her!

Jean Well darling, I don't know if save is the word.

Varney Someone had to do something, and I'm happy to say it was me. There's your answer, Luke. That's how we met. I hope something like that happens to you!

Adrian I've got a question now ...

But nobody is taking notice, because Michael has returned with four women whose clothing is more formal than the holiday garb of the Bowdens and Morrisises. Their clothing is white, though each has a band of colour somewhere - red, blue, yellow or purple. They have an air of detachment, and are silent as Michael brings them to the camera on its tripod. George rises to explain its workings, but they seem to know.

Michael These ladies have set up an artists' camp a little way down the track. From what I saw, they've got a pretty good idea of composition, so we'd better put ourselves in order.

He goes to the back of the group and places himself on the other side of Helen from Karen.

George I see you don't need anything explained, so ... is everyone ready?

The four women gesture to the assembled Morris and Bowdens, slightly rearranging the group, closing gaps, causing the little ones at the front to look at the camera, and so on. The first photo is taken, then the first woman steps aside, leaving the camera to her successor. This second woman appears to want something before she operates the shutter again.

George Come on, everyone, let's sing! Let's make a noise!
All Golden sunshine, glorious days,
 Lapping waters, morning haze,
 Opulent midday, slumbering sun,
 Everlasting night, and you're the one
 To give me happiness, long may it last.
 All clocks are robbers, and time's too fast,
 So capture this moment and don't let it die,
 This picture will hold us for ever and aye.

They wave and cheer. They stand and the children jump about. George and Yatty come out to thank the four women, but they stay only a moment, before disappearing into the scrub. Then Yatty, turning around, notices some of the youngsters approaching the doorway of the big tent.

Yatty Keep out of there! Don't go in till I call you!

Max It'll be hot in the tent, Yatty. What say we bring the tables out here, in the shade?

Yatty (determined as ever) I'm not sharing my food with flies! I'm serving lunch in the tent! I don't care if it's hot, we're eating inside!

2. Pacifists

At the beginning of the second scene we see a grouping somewhat similar to, though much looser than, the photo group at the end of Scene 1; however Norman and Edna Rowe and their children, and Varney and Jean Bowden and theirs, are no longer present. Not yet present, at the beginning of Scene 2, are Uncle Bill and Luke Bowden. George and Yatty are still central, Helen is with Michael, and they are listening to a broadcast by the Prime Minister.

PM Fellow Australians, you will be aware that the British government has had no alternative but to declare war on Germany. It follows, from our membership of the great family of nations which is the British Empire, that Australia too is at war with Germany ...

George (switching off the radio) How many lives is this going to cost?

Max Morris steps forward and we sense that he views things differently, but before he can speak, Uncle Bill and Luke come in.

Bill You clear, son? It's what you really want?

Luke It's them or us.

Yatty It's never that simple.

Bill It's how he sees it.
Yatty It's not how you see it. I know how you think these days.
Bill Events are out of control. There's nothing we can do.
George (to his family) It's going to be agony!

Helen holds Michael, Karen holds Tom and Nell; but Adrian steps forward.

Max You know what your duty is. You make sure you do it.
Adrian It's not because of duty. It's something else.
George Adrian. We're going now. You coming son?

Adrian follows his family as they go off. Max and his family leave also, though Max will be back soon. Cyril and Dawn come forward to embrace their son. This is a formality Luke would rather be without, but the presence of his Uncle Bill causes him to submit as graciously as he can.

Cyril You'll be in uniform next time we see you son.
Luke I will.
Dawn We'll be praying that no harm comes to you.
Luke God'll find that hard to work out because I'll be trying to harm others.
Dawn Don't say that darling ...
Bill The times have changed, and the times are never any different. (to Luke) You tell me anything you want and I'll see if I can get it for you. Time to say goodbye now, for all of us. Wars bring about partings.

Luke marches off with hardly a thought for his parents and the years he's putting behind him; Bill pats Cyril on the back, kisses Dawn, and leaves also. There is a visual interlude -- presented by rear-projection -- of pictures of a nation preparing for war. In particular, the streets are shown to be full of soldiers, marching, training, boarding ships. Then Max reappears, in coat and cap; he's now a recruitment officer. Beside him is a private soldier, middle-aged and plump.

Max How're the numbers?
Private Not so many this week, sir. Ones that got excited joined up early. The ones that are scared ... we need to turn up the heat on them.
Max We will. Especially the ones we know are ratting on the rest of us.
Private Someone in mind, sir?
Max One or two.

The private disappears, but Max remains on stage, detached from, but observing Karen Bowden whose face lights up as a brigade of American soldiers is shown on the screen at the rear, after which a number of Americans cross the stage, among them Colonel Sanderby. He raises a glass when he sees the beautiful Karen, inviting her to join him; she does, and takes a glass also.

Sanderby Great city you got here. Shame if you let the Japanese overrun the place.
Karen I'm afraid.
Sanderby If being afraid makes you look like that, it's doing you an awful lot of good!

Karen I wonder what my life's going to be like. I've lost control.

Sanderby Whole world's lost control. We're in a pitched battle. Good on one side, evil on the other. Mankind faces a thousand years of darkness if we lose. So guess what? We're going to win!

Karen (wanting to believe) Yes. I believe you're right.

Sanderby Dance with me tonight, and you'll increase my faith, because I need you to make me strong.

They move off; images of them dancing appear on the screen from time to time. Adrian comes on alone, and sits by the radio. After checking that there's nobody around, he switches it on. The screen shows images of war – explosions, planes crashing, ships bombarding islands, cities burning, soldiers sweeping through villages with bayonets freely employed.

Radio The Japanese rush to occupy New Guinea is meeting resistance from Australian forces. Troops moving up the Owen Stanley Ranges, together with commandos operating behind enemy lines, are halting the Japanese. General Blamey, Australian Commander, said yesterday that the Japanese had met with their first reverses since they started their drive through Asia ...

Adrian starts to leave the room, clearly tempted, yet troubled. As he does so, George enters.

George Morning son. (Adrian leaves without replying.) He's got war on his mind. He's tempted. What's that? (He hears a heavy knock on the door.) One minute please! (George goes to the front door, offstage to the left, and we hear him talking to two men whom, at first, we cannot see.) Yes, George Bowden, and who are you?

MP1 We're from the Department of Manpower, and we've got a warrant.

They come forward.

George Let me read it.

MP1 You don't need to read it. Here it is. See at the top? See the signature at the bottom? See the name in the middle? That's all you need to know. Where is he?

George He's at my practice, grinding lenses. It's a protected occupation, so you can't put him in the army, if that's your idea.

MP2 He'll be sent to war, which is where every young man ought to be!

George (pulling out a card) That's where you'll find him. I don't want you coming here again. My home is a peaceful place, and it's going to stay that way.

MP1 There's a war on, mate, and you're in it with everyone else.

George There's the door, gentlemen.

MP2 Hiding people who are eligible for service is a crime with penalties. That's a warning. Watch out it doesn't apply to you.

George The door, gentlemen. (They go. George sits down, and Yatty enters.)
Yatty Who were they?
George Humanoids from the Department of Manpower. After Michael. They were sent here by Max.
Yatty Max!
George He's made a mistake. It shows what a fool he is. But he can get Tom, or, after his next birthday, Adrian ...
Yatty ... who's troubled enough already.
George We'll have to be smart.

While the two of them think, images of war abound on the screen behind them. Helen enters.

Helen Something's wrong? (George and Yatty nod.) Michael?
George His Uncle Max tried to grab him for the army. He's exempt, but his brothers aren't. They'll be next.
Helen The army? That's impossible.
Yatty (voice full of contempt) My brother. He wants to kill my boys.

They leave as the images of war become even more alarming. Then the images moderate a little as Karen and Colonel Sanderby appear on the other side of the stage.

Sanderby Time's running out. They won't leave me here much longer.
Karen Are you afraid?
Sanderby Yes. But when I'm with you, it goes away.

Karen How can that be, when I'm afraid myself?
Sanderby A woman's love is the strongest thing on earth.
Karen And a man's love?
Sanderby Is fine, when it's given to a woman. Left to ourselves, there's nothing we won't do. You've only got to look at the war. Women didn't start it. Women can help us end it, though. Women can change us by giving us love.
Karen (believing him) I want to change you, then. And I want you to change me.

Sanderby We don't have long. Come in with me now.

They disappear. Adrian returns, and the images on the screen redouble in intensity and rapidity. His imagination is seized by what the war-makers are doing, and what the public's being told about the war. He wants to kill, and destroy. He leaves without saying anything. Then the screen goes quiet and we're with Michael and Helen in a tiny room, part of the loft at the back of George and Yatty's property. Helen has her viola close by.

Helen They were after you.
Michael Max has been after me since the day that war was declared.
Helen You're in a protected occupation.
Michael He fired a warning shot. Tomorrow, it's Tom, and then it's Adrian.
Helen Who's in trouble. He's incredibly mixed up.
Michael He'll put on khaki soon. They won't ask questions about his age.

Helen We have to stop him.
Michael Can't be done. Play me something. Bach.
Helen I haven't felt like music lately.
Michael When the world goes mad, that's when we need
 Bach.

Helen plays a few bars of Bach, then breaks off.

Helen We've got to save Tom.
Michael How?
Helen He can hide with Uncle Bill ...
Michael Ah, good thinking!
Helen Those rooms full of old men. No one would look for
 him there.

Michael (looking out) There's a taxi in the lane.

Helen looks out the window too.

Helen (calling) Uncle Bill! What are you doing?

Bill Can't stay long. I'm in a hurry.

We hear his footsteps on the wooden steps, then he enters.

Bill I've been having dinner with the war-party. If we
 want to save Tom there's not much time. I told the
 taxi to wait.

Helen You're taking him to your place?

Bill Mate of mine'll give him a job. Only cleaning, but
 he'll be safe until ...

Michael (with a sweet indifference to the foolishness of the
 world) ... it all blows over!

Helen Spare us the smart remarks. Go and get Tom!

Bill George and Yatty'll need to hear it from me. It's odd.
 I went through all my medals, my pictures and my
 diaries yesterday morning, and I wondered what it
 was all about. I wasted my life, I'm not letting anyone
 waste Tom's.

Helen Get him, Uncle Bill! Go and save him! (very emotion-
 ally)

Bill (rushing out) See you again. Don't do anything I
 wouldn't do.

Michael Doesn't stop much, does it! (He listens to Bill's feet
 on the stairs, then looks at Helen again.) How's that
 Bach, darling?

Helen takes up her viola and plays rushing music by the master,
until, a minute later, she sees, looking through the window, that
Tom and Uncle Bill have returned to the taxi, and we know she sees
this because the music she's playing turns into one of the contem-
plative works of Bach, which Helen continues to play until more
footsteps are heard on the steps to the loft, much lighter this time,
and Karen comes in. Helen stops. She looks at Karen, trying to enter
her mood.

Helen He's gone. Your man's gone off to war?

Karen I'll never see him again.

Helen That's only fear speaking.

Karen Then fear's my voice. I can't remember when it
 wasn't.

Helen Your memory's short darling. It's what happens in a
 time of trouble.

Karen When's it going to end?
Helen Nobody knows. We've got to hang in there, and not let anything grind us down.
Karen I'm down already. I want him back.
Helen If he came now, you'd love him. Half your love would be from fear of losing him again. But if he comes back in a year, he'll be changed ... and if he calls you to America when it's over, you'd be mad to go, because he'd be calling you to a different world, where the feelings were ones you wouldn't know.
Karen You're so realistic, Helen.
Helen I have to be.
Karen What made you that way?
Helen I've got a long way to go, in music and in life. I'm only at the start.
Karen Aren't you afraid?
Helen No. I'm wary. When I take a step, it's the next one that I'm thinking about.
Karen I envy you.
Helen Don't. There's something heartless about being this way. That's what Michael thinks ... (Michael smiles, saying nothing.)
Karen Michael's like me. We've been surrounded by love. It's marvellous, and it's unreal. The world's never the way we think it is. It's always going to shock us!

She starts to cry. Helen embraces her. Michael picks up Helen's viola and plays, not very well, the *idée fixe* of Berlioz.

Helen (of Michael) Silly man!
Karen He's right, though, because it's the theme of treachery, and I'm its victim.
Helen (quickly) Victim?
Karen The last night we were together, he reached down when we were becoming one. He thought I didn't know what he was doing ...
Helen What was he doing?
Karen He wanted to leave me pregnant. He was taking off his condom.

Michael has stopped playing. He puts the viola down. Helen waits for Karen.

Karen I think he's given me a decision to make.
Helen (holding Karen tenderly) Hold me. Empty your mind of thoughts. Feel the love I'm giving . Let it pour through every part of you. It'll always be there for you.

They hold each other for a time, then Karen slips away, and after a moment or two, Helen and Michael too disappear. There is a moment's darkness, then we hear, once again, the knocking at George and Yatty's door of the men from the Department of Manpower. George, sensing who it is, moves angrily to the door and opens it.

MP1 Warrant. Search. Tom Bowden. Produce him at once.
George Not here.
MP2 Liar! Hunt him out to us or we'll hunt him down!

George Not here. Search to your heart's content.

The Manpower men come in. They look around. Yatty opens a door, on the first floor above, and so does Karen, on the other side.

Yatty You cowardly men! Why didn't you bring the man who sent you? My brother Max? Is he in the car? Where is he?

Karen (Taking a different tack, she begins to sing.)
 Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will pledge with mine,
 Or leave a kiss but in the cup, and I'll not look for wine.
 The thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink divine,
 But might I of Jove's nectar sup I would not change for thine.

MP1 Shut up the pair of you. What a bloody madhouse! Produce Tom Bowden, or we'll open every drawer you've got!

George If he could fit in a drawer he'd be too small to fight! Ever thought of that?

MP2 Shut up! Traitors! Cowards! Afraid to fight!

George Aren't you afraid? Isn't everybody?

Yatty Out of my house you murderers!

Karen I sent thee late a rosy wreath, not so much honouring thee,
 As giving it hope that there it could not withered be ...

MP1 Stop that bloody cat-wauling or I'll arrest you too!

George Crime? Singing a song of love?

MP2 Every room in the house. Quick, before he gets away!

The two men rush about, while Adrian and Nell come out of their rooms, and Helen and Michael come in from the stables at the rear.
 Karen sings on.

Karen But thou thereon didst only breathe, and sent'st it back to me,
 Since when it grows and smells, I swear, not of itself but thee.

Helen (of the Colonel) He'll write darling, when he can.

Michael (scornfully) The Yank?

Yatty (to the MP men) Haven't you finished yet?

George They can have all the time they want, they're only humiliating themselves.

Adrian (ready for his announcement) Everyone's stressed, and it's suddenly clear.

George (to the manpower men, who've come back to him) Gentlemen?

MP1 Where've you hidden him?

George (innocently) You're paid to find people. Find him.

MP2 We'll be back.

Yatty Good riddance to bad rubbish!

George (sarcastically) They're doing their duty, darling.

Yatty They're doing my brother's dirty work.

The door closes on the manpower men.

George I'm sorry to say we can't get rid of your brother so easily.

Karen Dad, mum, everybody; I've got something to say.

George Darling?

Karen My American, my man of wings, has gone away. (They look at her.) He got me pregnant, because he wanted to. I haven't worked out why he did it, because I've been thinking about myself, not him. I know how this is going to look, when I'm big. The papers are full of stories all the time. The word they use is slut.

Michael Don't say that about yourself, ever!

Helen She doesn't and she won't.

Karen Some girls accept they've been sluts because they feel ashamed. That's the biggest mistake anyone can make. Live with honour, and never apologise for what you are!

George My daughter. My lovely girl!

Yatty Go on, darling, we're with you. Always.

Karen What I did, I did with love. Where there's love enough, the world can be made different. That's the first thing I believe. The second is that we never get things the way we'd like them. Faced with things we don't like, we can either give in – that is, we can be sluts, we can even call ourselves sluts – or we can work, always with love, to make things the way

they ought to be. That's what I'm going to do for my child!

George My beautiful daughter! (Yatty is embracing Karen.)
Flowers! Flowers!

Helen I'll help you George! (Helen and George run into the night.)

Yatty Men think they run the world, but we make things go on!

Michael (to Adrian) Not a good night for your announcement, mate.

Adrian If I slip away, could you tell everybody later?

Michael (shaking his head) It's your song, you have to sing.

Adrian A terrible time to say what I'm going to say.

Michael They'll forgive you tonight. You can't hold it in any longer.

Adrian Listen everybody, I've got something I need to say too. Father! Helen! Please come back. (They do so, only a few flowers in hand.) I'm going to war. (He has everybody's attention.) This won't seem like a good idea to anyone in this house, and I can see as clearly as anybody what's wrong with fighting, but the trouble is, the wrong's in me, now, and there's only one way I can get rid of it. Sorry, two. I can kill it in others or they can kill it in me. I've considered every argument, and I can't find an answer because I'm a slave of the problem, and I can only do its will. This is our last night together. Sorry, Karen, you've

given us good news and I'm offering something bad.
Funny world, isn't it, eh?

George

(to his wife) My love?

Yatty

You're part of us, son. Go to war if you must, but peace and love will always be hovering above you, waiting to come again, as they will one day. That's something we all know, if we stop to think. Peace and love will return. The other thing I need to say is that you can't take all of yourself away, because part of you is locked inside us where you can't get at it. It's ours. A family's a group of people so connected that they can't break themselves apart, whatever they might do. (in an outburst of anger) My brother!!!

The lights darken; they all go to their rooms except Adrian, who sits in a chair. The screen behind him fills again with pictures from the war. The musical accompaniment see-saws for some time, suggesting stillness which is denied, of course, by the images on the screen; then the darkness softens. Adrian rises from his chair and goes from room to room. We can hardly see him, but we hear Helen, first, and then each of the others, say the same words.

Helen

Cling to us when you need us. We'll be strong for you.

These words follow Adrian as he moves from room to room. Before he can enter his parents' room, they come out. George stands on the balcony, while Yatty goes to the door with her son.

George

Cling to us when you need us. We'll be strong for you.

Yatty

(as the door closes) Cling to us when you need us. We'll be strong for you.

She sits in the chair where Adrian was sitting, and there she remains until the end of the opera, watching the images on the screen. The images are repeated, getting worse, if possible. We see again the image of a plane crashing into the sea.

Karen

My little one, your daddy's dead! He'll never see you, when you're born!

The images flicker on, while members of the family come and go. We see them in the flickering semi-darkness, entering and leaving, sitting down to eat. Helen's viola is heard occasionally, for a few bars at a time. Then there is a shocking crash, and Yatty stands.

Yatty

Aaaaaaaaahhh!

George comes down to his wife, and Nell to her mother. Karen comes out too, noticeably pregnant. Helen and Michael come in from the stables at the rear. Uncle Bill and Tom arrive. They sit, all of them, near Yatty; we sense that she can see things that the others can not. The screen shows us a ship, looking tiny against the ocean, then a submarine. We see the ship from the viewpoint of the submarine; then we see the deck of the ship, where prisoners are being herded into line. Food is about to be served, when a guard spits in the rice. A fight breaks out. The guards are on the verge of being thrown overboard when a machine gun fires and the prisoners are divided by a row of dead and dying. An officer runs among the prisoners,

pointing out which ones are to be tied up, and these men are seized. One of them is brought forward and we see that it's Adrian. Wool bales are brought from somewhere in the hold of the ship and five young prisoners of war are tied to these bales with rope, then the Japanese commander starts to make a speech, its menace clear. Yatty appears to hear every word, because she is reacting to what the commander is saying. Five guards fix their bayonets and then with the utmost savagery they thrust them again and again into the mutinous prisoners.

George What can you see, darling?

Yatty points, unable to do more than murmur and indicate what's obvious to her.

Yatty Aaaaaaaaahhh.

Karen Mother? Can you see Adrian?

Yatty Aaaaaaaaahhh.

George Is he dead, darling? Is that what you can see?

Michael This was always going to happen.

Nell What, Michael? How can you know?

Bill (to Tom) You're well out of it, lad.

George (to Bill) Can you see what I can't see, Bill?

Bill No, but I can guess.

Yatty Aaaaaaaaahhh.

There is a dreadful scream from the blood-drenched Adrian, his stomach torn apart by a bayonet.

Adrian Aaaaaaaaahhh!!!

The Bowden family rises in shock and grief, aware of, though only Yatty can see, what must be happening. They group, as if for our examination, and we see, on the screen behind them, the stricken Adrian, supported by the four women who took the photos at Waratah Bay.

Michael So they've come back! I knew there was something strange about them.

George (not recognising them) Who are they son?

Yatty How strange. We've got helpers ...

Bill When we need help, which is something we do to ourselves.

Helen People say God loves us when we can't love ourselves.

Yatty No, it's mercy, pity, tenderness ... that's what they bring into the world. I want to be one of them, when I'm wise. When's that day going to come, George?

George Darling I can't tell because I can't see what you see.

The vision of the four women holding the dying Adrian disappears. The screen, which has been projecting horrible images for so long, is suddenly blank, and the body of Adrian, clad only in boots and khaki shorts, and grossly disfigured by the death he's suffered, is flung on the floor to join the group.

🌀 End of Opera 2 🌀

The Mountain

1. Fire

We are at the edge of the clearing. There is a cross, and Annie drives another into the soil. The flame women are with her, mourning.

Annie The soul is a transitory thing. Parents want their little ones to grow up, and grow old. But my life is not to be that way. None of my children will replace me, and Giles, the man of the mountain, will never consider his passing. Fool! It could be his boys who do it to him. (She greets George, Robert and Ned, who are curious to know what she's doing. She points to one of the crosses.) This one is Hope, who lasted a few hours, and left me changed. This one is Nicholas, whom you remember. Nick? (They're not very interested.) You are your father's sons, centred on yourselves. How strange! (She says this because the flame women are increasing in number, and in the brightness of their flickering presence also; the three boys, though seeing nothing, are aware of something happening to their mother.) Your father's approaching, yes you see him, there is much you cannot see. He's been to the settlement in the valley ...

She watches as Giles approaches, and the boys rush to their father, who takes little notice.

Giles I have something for you. A book. A pencil. And a thing to keep it sharp.

Annie For the boys?

Giles They have all they need.

Annie Why do I need a book? Am I going to write?

Giles There should be words to set down what we do.

Anna You admit there will be an end?

Giles Every end is also a beginning; everything starts somewhere, and returns to where it began.

Annie To return, it must go away.

Giles This is clear. What do the flame women say?

Annie There is something they want me to know.

Giles They know things we were forced to forget ...when we returned to earth.

Annie (joining him) ... when we returned to earth.

Giles I'm going to the mountain to hear what it's telling me.

Annie There are fires about, so be careful.

Giles The fires are hardly a problem for us. (to the boys)
Stay with your mother.

He disappears, and, despite his instruction, the three boys dive into the bush to follow him, hidden discreetly and some distance behind.

Annie They are learning the pathways of his mind.

She disappears as the screen shows Giles passing through trees as he walks to his mountain. We see also the three boys, climbing high, and pointing out where their father's going. He's aware of them but shows no interest. Soon the trees thin out and we reach an open plain of snow-grass.

Giles The water at my feet will end up in the sea. (He looks at it, far away.) Winds will sweep it up, turning it into cloud. Clouds will roll around the earth, and bring the water back, bucketing down in storms. My animals will nibble the grass, growing lean and strong. My vines and vegetables will flourish. There's little use for words in this place, but some poetry is needed; it seems we can't experience anything without putting it in words. Annie will record, but the events she details are mine. I feel something near me ... (He looks about. We see, as does Giles, after a moment, that the spirit people are gathering, considering the majestic view he's claimed.) Why are they showing themselves today? They're getting brighter, they're turning into fire! (He shouts the word ecstatically.) People on the lowland will look out to see what's loose. They'll smell the smoke and their hearts will fill with fear! My heart will be full of fire because I've learned, as they have not, to become the thing we dread. To merge with it, forming one! To let it enter the mind, raging and storming ...

Giles is walking back to his clearing now, surrounded by flame, treetops burning, flames running up the mighty trunks. He is without fear because he has merged with the danger; taken sides with it against himself. We lose sight of him as he strides through the blazing forest, then we see, once again, the tree house. Annie is rushing towards it with George, Robert and Ned.

Annie Inside! Put something over your noses to block out the smoke! (The boys rush into the tree house. Annie pauses, watching as her husband comes out of the burning forest.) He's on fire! What we believe makes us what we are! How strange is faith. I left a crazy faith to marry another. Go down to the river, Giles, get wet! Your clothes are burning as madly as your mind! To the water, and save yourself! The mind can't exist without the body it lives in! Put yourself in the river, and live another day!

The boys, hearing her, come back to the opening at the end of the trunks to look at their father.

Annie (shepherding them back inside again) You must learn to be different. If you try to be the same, we'll have nothing but destruction in this place!

Giles moves out of sight. Annie follows the boys into the tree house, the fire rages wildly, then slowly quietens, allowing us to become aware that fire is an embodiment of the spirit people, allowing themselves to be, for a time, quite out of control.

2. The journal

We are in the space between the trunks of the tree house; Annie is at a table, writing.

Annie The weakness of my position is that I understand Giles' position. He lives as if he's not subject to change. How foolish, yet how tempting. In the mornings, my waking glance is to the fire. Then I get water. The springs are as pure as he promised. We toast our bread, we drink our milk. Sometimes it's frozen. I know the seasons now, the storms, the lightning fires. When he bought cows I thought they'd wander but they stay close to the salt, and he milks them. He makes his deep-chested moan, and they come to him; the sight of them straggling across our clearing makes me feel that poverty is richness inverted. Having little, our imaginations need no more. But there is the loneliness, which I never feel more keenly than when I write in this book ...

Annie stands, listening to the sounds of the animals outside.

Someone's coming; this is rare.

Voice Anyone there?

Annie Annie Wainwright. Step where I can see you.

A man comes into the space between the trunks, and stands close to the fire.

Hughes My name is Hughes. I teach school in these mountains.

Annie What's your business with us?

Hughes To spread such learning as I possess.

Annie You have been told about my boys.

Hughes I don't see them.

Annie They saw you first. They're good at disappearing.

Hughes Have they been trained to disappear?

Annie Visitors are rare in this place. They do what's natural.

Hughes An interesting idea. In places of great refinement they talk about what's natural as if they are in touch with it. This seems strange to us, out here. (He waves his hand, indicating the bush outside.)

Annie Have you been here long enough to say that you belong?

Hughes Many weeks now. It seems like years.

Annie It's only a day.

Hughes You've been here longer, Mrs Wainwright?

Annie I've not forgotten the world outside.

Hughes You don't regret it, away from it as you are?

Annie I am inside myself, and secure.

Hughes Are not we all inside ourselves, and isn't that why we need an education, to bring us out?

Annie That may be.

Hughes You are married, Mrs Wainwright?

Annie There was a ceremony, at the convent in Sale. What use is that to me, out here?

Hughes Life is hard in these mountains. The only ones with hope are those who search for gold. They have their illusion to comfort them.

Annie There's no comfort in illusion. My husband has his vision, which I choose not to share. The everyday seen clearly is quite enough for me.

Hughes Your husband is a remarkable man, from all I hear ...

Annie People tell you that he's mad.

Hughes (surprised by this) Ah ...

Annie He trusts his vision ...

Hughes ... in a way that you do not, Mrs Wainwright?

Annie It's his, not mine. You're wearing spectacles. If I wore them, they would distort the world for me.

Hughes You're clever! You see that there are many ways of seeing!

Annie I have as much pride as Giles. It takes a different form.

Hughes Then you are well married. I shall leave you Mrs Wainwright.

Annie I've not yet offered you a cup of tea.

Hughes I shall share it with you if I visit a second time. I must not outstay my welcome.

Annie I'll walk to the edge of the clearing, and see you find the track.

Hughes I'm still learning my way about these places ...

Annie and Hughes leave the tree house; a light shines on Annie's journal, and her voice sounds in the emptiness, reading out the words she will write when she returns. (Hughes' voice can be used for the quotation of his words, if required.)

Annie He commented, as I took him to the track, that I didn't wear a ring. I said we couldn't afford one, and, I said, we knew that symbols would not be needed when our isolation would tell us what we were. And so, I said to the teacher, in learning to trust nothing, we have learned to trust. He didn't know what to make of this, and he looked about. I saw him guessing that we had no title to this land. 'My husband,' I told him, 'is a man who brooks no interference. He has often told me how easy it would be to make someone disappear.' That closed that line in the teacher's thinking. When he left, however, he put aside his wish to possess Giles' wife and Giles' land, and became the courteous man it's natural for him to be. 'Mrs Wainwright,' he said, 'it's been a pleasure talking to you. There are not many educated people in these wilds. If I can ever be of assistance, send a message to the settlements I visit.' He stepped off down the track, trying to appear jaunty, and I felt less lonely, not so much for the visit as for the knowledge that there was someone whose loneliness was greater than mine. He was longing for a wife. I wept. I had despaired of my prison until I found someone who wanted to be in it.

3. An announcement

The space between the trunks grows quiet, then we sense, behind the flames of the fire which Giles and Annie use for cooking, that other flames are filling the space which is their home.

Annie They've come.
Giles Get them to speak; they have a reason.
Annie I never know whether they think, or materialise
 because forces tell them they must.
Giles They have a meaning every time.
Annie Sssssssshhh.

The flickering around Giles and Annie increases in intensity, and then it begins to spread, until the whole clearing that surrounds the tree house is filled with spirit people, like so many flames. Four of the flame people stand beside the bed where Giles and Annie lie, two on either side.

Flame 1 Everything returns ...
Annie Giles!
Flame 2 Every return is an entry ...
Flame 3 An entry is a doorway to your world ...
Annie And I am the door! (proudly)
Flame 4 The door must be worthy of what passes through.
Annie What am I having this time?
Flame 1 You are to repeat yourself.
Annie A girl!
Flame 2 Name her, and she's yours!

Giles and Annie think.

Annie Lucy. That will be her name.
Flame 3 What thought will enter the world, embodied in her
 flesh?
Annie Light ...
Giles Lucifer ... fire brings light ...
Flame 4 You are flattering us. We bring you a child ...
Annie Let me see her now ...
Flame 1 She's been here many times these last few days ...
Flame 2 She's been here tonight.
Flame 3 We've shown her where she'll live ...
Flame 4 Now her memory has to die ...
Flame 1 She leaves her present world, and comes back to
 yours ...
Annie Through me!
Giles Will she look like Annie?
Flame 1 Be sure she won't look like you!
Annie Ha! Giles, you weren't expecting that!

Giles chuckles somewhat awkwardly, trying to take it cheerfully.

Flame 2 The place she comes from will attend her, but she'll
 remember nothing.
Flame 3 She won't know what she doesn't know ...
Flame 4 She must try to hold the worlds together. We will
 always be close.
Giles Will she live long?

Flame 1 She will outlive her father, and then her mother,
 before she returns to us.

The flames inside the tree house and those in the clearing outside
begin to blaze, now, with enormous intensity.

Annie Giles! I can feel her coming to life inside me. It's a
 miracle, a miracle every time!

Giles Bring her into the world, my love, this paragon of
 light!

Annie Soon, when I'm used to her and my body lets her
 go!

Flame people Mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmm-
 mmm ...

The whole space of the clearing in the forest is humming with hap-
piness as the conception occurs. The flames are blazing brightly,
and rushing about as if a great wind has seized control.

Annie Aaaaaaaahhh!!! Lucy will be mine!

Giles Lucy will be ours!

Annie The worlds are touching! A life is crossing from one
 to the other! I am the world, Giles! I am the world,
 and you are its creator!

Giles My love, my fountain of humility ...

Annie ... which you rarely drink! Ha! How useless is a
 man!

Giles We play our part, my love, and it lasts as long as
 yours.

Annie Believe that if you wish. Hold me tenderly. This is a
 night we must not forget. I'll write it in my book.

4. The pit

The scene changes to a forest on the side of a valley: deep and dark.
The three Wainwright boys come down from the trees, and inspect
a former mineshaft. George, the oldest, picks up a rock and throws
it down the shaft; there is a splash, then a rumble. The boys laugh,
and toss down another rock; this time there's a rumble, and no
splash. They toss down a third rock, and there is a whirly-whirly
of voices, as if they are disturbing the people of another world. The
boys are excited, and throw down more rocks, causing wails and
screams, as if people are being tortured, out of sight below. There
are rumbling sounds, and crashes, more screams, voices pleading;
a chamber of horrors has been contacted. George seizes hold of a
vine and tears it away from the tree it's been climbing, then tosses
it down the shaft. Without a word the boys climb down, but some
moments after they've disappeared, we hear the deep voices they're
going to have come back from the shaft.

George People are being torn apart!

Robert Nobody rules down here. We can do as we like!

Ned Nothing gets back to the top. We can lure people here
 and be free ...

George Our voices!

Robert We're changed.

Ned There's nothing to stop us!

GRN Aaaaaaaaahhh! (It's an exultant and fearful sound, dangerously triumphal.)

George Up again! Quick! Before we're trapped!

The three boys reappear, no bigger or more dangerous than they were before, except that the shaft is aware of them now, and wants them back again.

Voices You know about us now. You've seen what goes on down here. We're waiting for you to come back.

5. Arrival of a girl

Annie Aaaaaaaaahhh, I'm being pulled apart.

Giles Once again, my love, she's coming now.

Annie At my cost. The squeezing is killing me.

Giles Her eyes, her nose ...

Annie Aaaaaaaaahhh, how much more? I've time to breathe and I'm screaming again.

Giles Her lips!

Annie Let her do the screaming!

Giles Time enough for that, when she's seen the world!

Annie Aaaaaaaaahhh! Her shoulders, are they through?

Giles Coming, coming, push again!

Annie (louder than before) Aaaaaaaaahhh!!! She's in the world! Lucy's in the world! Are they happy, Giles, those bloody spirit people, are they bursting into flame?

Giles looks about him, and the whole clearing is full of rejoicing, flickering flame.

Giles (looking around in amazement) It's never been like this before! She's something special they've given us, this time. This one! Heeeeeeeeyyy! She's in the world already, glowing with light! You can write about this in your book!

Annie Bring her to me!

Giles Now?

Annie Bring her to me! (He does.) This is what I'll say. (Her voice becomes neutral, though exalted, a sort of plainchant as she rehearses what she'll write down in the book Giles has given her.) Lucy began her journey today, from obscurity to light. That's how I tell it, but I must pray – pray, why would I do anything so silly, when there's no one to hear? – whatever I do, I must accept that a new life has entered the world. Why is this one so special? It's because she brings a level of mind that the spirit people have guaranteed. At the convent, they said heaven opened; if it did, it wasn't obvious to me. No, I think that nothing opened at all except mouths expending what foolish minds produced. But I've joined them now in telling the world good news. Lucy's here. (triumphantly) Lucy's here! (to George, Robert and Ned) Sit by your mother and wonder at what's she's done. No, my love, lie there, rest!

Annie Rest be damned, I want to show her where she is!
 Give me the child!

She puts on a wrap of some sort before striding to the fire at the end of the trunks.

Annie (to Lucy) Fire! That's where you came from, and that's what you were. Now come and see where you're going to live. This is our clearing, little one, our pigs and cows, our vines and vegetables, our fruit trees and the forest we can never own because it's too big. There's the river, and there's the sky, and there, though he'll say it isn't for you, is your father's mountain, what a blessing and what a curse because it means the centre of your father's world is not the same as mine. Consolation: it's not so far away, either. And these are your brothers; watch them closely, they're doing things my mind can't understand, but they're docile enough this morning. Play with them when you're ready, listen to them and talk; and there, my love (she's inside the tree house again, and a light is burning on the table near the fire), there is the book I write in. You'll take it over one day and the message of our lives will be yours to write; this, that, my love, is your mother's greatest gift!

Annie comes proudly forward, holding her baby Lucy close to the fire that burns at the end of the tree house, she turns to make sure her husband and her three sons are watching, and she kisses the child she's brought into the world.

❧ End of Opera 3 ❧

Peace

1. Luke

The Bowden/Morris family group is in view, as at the end of Opera 2, War, though Yatty has moved back to being with her immediate family, which has moved to the left, because they have been joined by Cyril & Dawn Bowden, in the centre, and Max & Muriel Morris, with their five children, to the right. All are listening to an announcement.

Radio (after a fanfare) Here is an important announcement. Shortly after eleven o'clock this morning, eastern standard time, Emperor Hirohito contacted the Allied High Command offering the unconditional surrender of all Japanese forces. The offer has been accepted. The war is therefore at an end ...

Luke enters during the radio announcement, dressed in military uniform which he's taking off.

Luke (in his underpants) At fuckin last!

Dawn, his mother, offers him clothes, which he puts on slowly and ungraciously, making us feel that he's unwilling to be home.

Luke There's nothing wrong with my body. I wish I could say the same for what's in here. (He taps his head, then glances at the picture of the family on the screen behind him.) What happened to Adrian?

Cyril I only know he's dead.

Luke (casually) In the wrong place at the wrong time. It could have been any of us ... and for a few million, it was! (after a pause) You still broke, pop? Mother?

Cyril Struggling, son.

Dawn Trying to make ends meet.

Luke How's Uncle Bill?

Cyril Getting old.

Dawn He'll be pleased to see you. He's only been waiting for you to get back ...

Luke Still like his whisky?

Dawn Hardly touches it. He looks at it as if he can see something nobody else can see.

Luke A reason to live! I must ask him ... Ah! (as he sees Bill)

Bill enters, frailer than when we saw him last.

Bill You came through, lad. Good effort. What next?

Luke Ask me an easy one. That's too hard.

Bill The human race can only go a few years without fighting. We don't know what else to do.

Luke Too true. However, we're looking at one of those times ...

Bill Come here, lad. What I want to say is not for everybody's ears.

He leads Luke to the front of the stage, and from this point to the explosion of the hand grenade (see below), the other characters disappear, except Luke's parents, Cyril and Dawn, who move to the side, waiting to see what develops.

Bill You watch what happens. The city'll go mad. People who never fired a shot are going to run around, going crazy. Getting drunk. Kissing everybody in sight. (It starts to happen on the screen behind the characters even as he's talking about it.) People have been afraid, and suddenly the pressure's off at last, and that's when you see how people need pressure. Without it, they go nuts. (He turns Luke's attention to the screen.) Look at the buggers! (The screen shows unruly, wildly excited crowds running in all directions.) When this finishes, they're going to build a new world, but I won't be part of it.

The four women we've seen taking the photo at Waratah Bay, and holding Adrian's mutilated body (in *Opera 2, War*), are approaching, dressed in white, each of them with a coloured collar, or ribbon – red, blue, purple, yellow. They seem tenderly disposed to the old man.

... as you see, they're coming to take me away. Won't be long, darlings, I've got some advice to give, and then I'm yours. (to Luke) Don't pretend you aren't lost. When you signed up, you signed your life away. Go shearing. Run pubs in remote places. Wander. One

day, in some unlikely hole, you'll find bits of yourself again. Stop there and enjoy what's left. You'll be surprised at how merciful the world is when you make no demands. I've made a will ... (The four women are holding him tenderly.) ... I've left everything to you. It's enough to get you started ...

The four women begin to lift him gently, and Bill starts to rise. He floats, horizontally, in the air, the light on his face getting brighter as he rises. One of the four women hands Luke the will which Bill has left, then the four of them slip away. Luke looks at the will.

Luke Eighteen thousand pounds. It'll buy you a house, pop, mother. A decent bloody house in a decent bloody town. You can walk off that property that's been breaking your hearts for years. And no, I'm not going to work it. I'm going walkabout. (He produces a hand grenade.) First, I'll give the simple solution a chance! If it doesn't do the trick, I'm off for the long haul. Which way's it going to be? (He drops the grenade, there's an explosion, and none of the metal particles hit him.) Still here! What a bummer! All right, I'm heading north ...

2. Partners

Some people we've not seen before come on; at the left of the stage, Tom and Margaret Courtney and at the right, John and Gillian Urquhart.

Luke (as he leaves) Who are these people? They look unsuspecting, don't they? Could be deceptive, though, so (to the audience) watch'em.

Tom (on the left) Where's our daughter, darling?

John (on the right) Where's our daughter? I haven't seen her for three days!

Margaret (to Tom) She's having afternoon tea with a young man in college.

Tom Good prospects? (Tom sounds genial, but shrewd.)

Gillian (to John) I think there's a bit of wildness there ...

John There's a bunch of cricketers from the city, playing a game against the locals; don't tell me she's attached herself to them!

Gillian (uncertainly) Some of her friends are engaged to some of our players ...

John Well, that makes them respectable, but Jane ...

Margaret (to Tom) He's doing engineering. His father's got a lot of money ...

Tom How did he come by it? (We sense that his judgments may be severe.)

Gillian (to John) She's impulsive, darling, just as you are.

John Me? It comes from your side, not from mine!

Margaret Selling cars. Only prestigious brands, I believe.

The screen behind these two pairs of characters is showing scenes from the activities of the daughters being discussed. Tom and Margaret's daughter Tricia is going through the motions of having afternoon tea with Steve Morris, in a study inside the tower of a

university college. It is a polite, if inhibited, scene; on the other side, however, John and Gillian's daughter Jane is engaged in vigorous lovemaking with Mark Morris, their sighs indicating that a climax has been reached.

Jane (pushing Mark aside) How many times is that?

Mark (pleased with himself) I've lost count. But there's plenty more to come!

Steve Do you take milk, Tricia? It's fresh. I got it from the shop this morning.

Tricia Thank you Steve. What a lovely view from this tower. You're ever so fortunate!

Tom (to Margaret) The lad will need polishing. The money will help, though of course it may hinder. It's always a transition, isn't it, from money to wealth. Being ghastly to being acceptable. We'd better have him to dinner.

Margaret If she asks us, darling. She needs to feel she's in control.

Tom Of course.

Tom and Margaret disappear, to be replaced by Steve and Tricia, the young woman he's entertaining. On the other side, John shows his concern to his wife.

John I'll be going into town this afternoon. I'll see what I can see.

Gillian She's a young woman now, John, and she's got a mind of her own ...

John ... which she can use to make mistakes!

John and Gillian also disappear, and Mark and Jane sit up in bed.

Mark How're you feeling?

Jane You're asking me now?

Mark Had to get around to it some time!

Jane Distinctly uncertain. I haven't been home for days. I'll face a lot of questions. Are you going to drive me? You'll get questions too ...

Mark Take the initiative, that's what we've got to do. When the team goes back to the city this afternoon, you're coming with me. We'll buy a ring. Then when you go home, you're engaged! (It sounds wonderfully simple.)

Jane Engaged?

Mark You want to, don't you? After what we've been doing?

Jane I suppose we should. (She's rather confused, and Mark sounds very confident.)

Mark Right. Up and dressed! Let's have a look at you. Gee you're beautiful!

Jane I never thought I was much at all.

Mark You're mistaken, Janey. You're a beautiful sight!

She's embarrassed, and pulls on her clothes as quickly as she can.

Mark (pulling on his pants) We'll find out when the bus is leaving. We'll have that ring by tonight.

Jane It's all a bit sudden.

Mark That's the way I like things to happen. What about you?

Jane Are we going to be like this all our lives?

Mark Can't tell yet! Have to wait and see!

Mark and Jane move out of sight, leaving only Steve and Tricia in view of the audience.

Tricia Do you mind if I take another look out the window?

Steve Please do. It's a wonderful view, and yet ...

Tricia And yet?

Steve I'm rather isolated, here. I see everything without being part of it. I've got a feeling that the big things are still to happen.

Tricia Is there something that you're waiting for? (provocatively)

Steve (thoughtfully) I'm waiting for a feeling that I'm part of everything else.

Tricia You've been a very good host. Take me back now, Steve, please.

3. More twins

They leave Steve's room in the tower. The stage is empty for a moment, then a light shows us Max and Muriel, at a kitchen sink. Max is washing and Muriel wiping.

Max (speaking of Mark) He's engaged to a country girl. Broad acre people. You know ...

Muriel What're you thinking, Max?

Max Jane's an only child. If our boy plays it right ...
 Muriel What?
 Max He'll be the owner of that property one day!
 Muriel You speak as if it's going to change him.
 Max Of course it will. Hmmm! (He's delighted.)
 Muriel Well, what about Steve?
 Max Even better. Courtneys of Toorak! Five generations in the city's best address.
 Muriel We wouldn't want people to think we were snobs.
 Max (his mood changing) But the girls ...
 Muriel They're doing fine!
 Max Yes ... but ... you know what I mean ...
 Muriel I don't Max, actually. You'd better say it. Come on. What?
 Max The girls ...

He doesn't say whatever's in his mind. Instead, the light fades on Max and Muriel, and becomes brilliant further forward, where a dance party quickly develops. A leafy bower places itself towards one side, and the dancers come on via its arch. The first two to appear are Claude Stubbs and Laurie Mason, two ex-service students, and they are followed by numerous dancers, male and female. Then Rose Morris appears and the music hesitates, drawing attention to her. A few moments later the music pauses again because Diana, Rose's twin sister, emerges from the bower, identically dressed. When the music resumes, Laurie comes forward.

Laurie Rosie! (taking her hand)

Rose (correcting him) Di. You can tell us by the flowers. (Rose is wearing a white corsage, and Diana is wearing red.)
 Laurie You might be able to tell each other apart, but I'm blown if I can.
 Rose (meaning to confuse him) I'm in white, and Rose is wearing red.
 Claude (coming over) The colours of Lancaster and York! (He tries to take Di's hand.)
 Diana You can't have a war of the dyes! What a mess that would make of our gowns!
 Laurie (suggestively) There's more than one way to mess up a gown.
 Diana They'll be secure while we're free ...
 She flits away and is followed by Rose into the bower, where they exchange bouquets.
 Laurie (confused) You get muddled, don't you?
 Claude I don't care which one I'm with, so long as I've got one.
 Laurie A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ...
 Claude Whatever that fuckin means ...
 The young women approach them again.
 Rose (as Rose this time) Dance with me, Laurie, lead me around the floor.
 Claude (to Di, thinking he's got Rose) What about it Rose, a little of the light fantastic ...

Di (as he swings her away) Have you got something you want to say to me?

Claude As sure as hell I have. It's a little proposal ...

Di This is very sudden, Claude. My parents are not here tonight.

Claude Not that sort of proposal. I'm getting a party to go skiing. Mount Hotham, four days, stay in the chalet, lots of fun on the slopes, lots of fun at night.

Di And my sister?

Claude Laurie'll take care of her.

Di Will we get home intact?

Claude Let's say, we'll return you safe and sound. And better for the experience.

Di In what way better?

Claude Better for the next time. Because more experienced.

Di We'll need to discuss it.

In a moment she's broken away from Claude and whipped into the bower, leaving, as she enters, her spray of roses on the shrubbery. Just as quickly, Rose breaks away from Laurie, leaving her flowers with her sisters', red with white, and joins her in the bower.

Laurie How're we gonna tell'em apart?

Claude Who wants to?

Laurie Suppose we get married to'em, don't you wanta know which is which?

Claude If it got that far, I suppose we'd need identification.

Laurie So would we pin it on'em, get'em tattooed, or what?

Rose and Di emerge again, sans flowers, and make for the men, whose confusion is evident.

Rose (to Laurie) You should know me by now.

She pulls his head to her cleavage and holds him there, a willing conquest.

Di (to Claude) You should know me better than you do.

She pulls Claude so that his nose is buried in her gown.

The men Weekend in the snow! Grog. Nights between the sheets. Writing our names on the walls. We did it here. An X every time. Walls and walls of Xs! Willing women! Long drive home, on a wide back seat...

Claude ... hard at it till the last!

Laurie How's that sound, Rosie? Sorry, Di?

Rose If you can't even get my name right, it's definitely not on.

Di Nothing doing, mate!

Rose and Di are gone in a moment, followed sadly by Claude and Laurie.

4. The viola

Michael and Helen are in the loft at the back of George and Yatty's house; Helen is playing her viola, and Michael is sprawled on their bed.

Helen (pausing) I've had an offer ...

Michael (appraising her) And you're going to accept.
Helen It's a matter of how much I accept ...
Michael Why's everyone got a goal? Don't go anywhere. Stay with me.
Helen I wasn't planning to move out ...
Michael ... but it's what he wants ...
Helen There is a he ...
Michael He's in your voice. What's he offering, and what's he want?
Helen He's starting a quartet ...
Michael (jealously) He plays first violin!
Helen He doesn't play at all. He's an impresario.
Michael A big fat jew!
Helen Well, he is, actually ...
Michael What's his name? Wolf-o-witz? (He stresses the first syllable savagely.)
Helen Try again.
Michael What's the offer?
Helen Fifteen to twenty engagements the first year, and if we're good, the sky's the limit.
Michael Money?
Helen We haven't got to that yet, but it'll be good.
Michael Sex?
Helen I'll keep him at arm's length ...
Michael (getting up) Play!

Helen plays something uncertainly, while Michael moves against her, rubbing his body sexually across hers until she stops playing.

Helen He doesn't do that to me, Michael.
Michael Give him time!
Helen (shifting the argument) You tell me what you've done for me.
Michael I've brought you home.
Helen And it's where you want to keep me.
Michael What's wrong with you that you want to move?
Helen I've been happy here, but something in me wants to move on. You're not made the same way, but don't pretend you don't understand.
Michael (still very close to her) I know who's restless. It's Wolfowitz.
Helen His name is Gleitzmann.
Michael Moshe! Moses!
Helen That's his name. How do you know?
Michael What else would he be called? Itzak?
Helen Michael, he wants to start a quartet, and I've been offered a place. Okay? (She slashes the strings with her bow, making a sharp sound.)
Michael The first night you play for him is the last night you live here!
Helen Don't be silly. You're so selfish it isn't true.
Michael Life's a very slender thread. (He puts his hands around her neck, threatening to choke her.) The brain needs oxygen. In a continuous supply. A slight interruption ... (He moves away, back to their bed.) Come and tell me you're saying no to Wolfowitz ...
Helen Gleitzmann!

Michael It's the end, isn't it?
Helen It's an opportunity that's too good to be refused.
Michael Love me!
Helen Love?
Michael Put me first, or die!

Helen jumps up, grabs the viola and slashes the bow across the strings as a way of sounding an alarm. Michael tries to grab her but she keeps herself on the other side of a chair, still slashing at the viola's strings in an appeal for help.

George (below) What on earth is wrong? Helen? What's going on?
Helen Come up George, please! Quickly!

We hear George's feet on the stair, then he enters. By this time Michael is back on the bed, sobbing his heart out, and Helen is standing in despair by the chair.

George Come into the house. Yatty can make tea. You too, Michael, when you're ready. A bit of talking needs to be done.
Michael (still sobbing) It's over and finished. I can see it all.

George and a shocked Helen leave, while Michael, on the bed, turns his back on everything.

5. The ring

The verandah of John and Gillian Urquhart's property, near the Victoria/NSW border. There are drinks on a table. Present are the Urquharts, John, Gillian and Jane, and Jane's fiancé, Mark.

Mark That's a pretty big tree down there. It looks really ancient.

Gillian How old would it be, John? A hundred years?

John More than that. A smaller one was taken out on a property nearby and they counted the rings. Two hundred and seventy years!

Mark None of us are going to last that long.

John The human life span's shorter. It makes you think ...
Gillian (tenderly) What thoughts have you got in your mind?

John This is a special moment in our lives. (to Mark) Jane's our only child. The property will be hers ... one day. A woman can't run a property without a man. Gillian and I (still to Mark) have put our lives into this place, and we'd like to hand it on ... (He pauses.)

Gillian Go on, darling. Say what you want to say.

John The best thing you can have in this world is continuity ... but it's never easy. Things decline, or go bust. Gillian and I have high hopes of you and Jane. There, that's all I can say.

He reaches for his glass, and indicates that the others should do so too.

Gillian (solemnly, though trying to keep her voice light) Mark and Jane!

Jane (after sipping) Mum and Dad!

Mark (to her parents) What shall I call you? I've got a mum and dad of my own.

John Gillian and John. Always.

Glasses are raised, then lowered.

Mark So it's older than that other tree. It might be three hundred years ... if we knew its birthday we could give it a celebration.

Gillian (lightly) What could you give a tree for its birthday?

Jane A bird's nest!

Mark Crows, maggies, galahs ...

Gillian A kookaburra laughing!

John A tree's no different from anything else. We all thrive on respect, and love.

Gillian Show your father your ring, darling.

The four of them draw close so that they can consider the ring that binds them.

6. The photo (1)

Mark is with his sister Lily. She is showing him a photo.

Mark What about it? (He's not very interested.)

Lily It changes all the time.

Mark Don't be silly. (He roars with laughter.)

Lily It does.

Mark Bullshit. A picture never changes. Photos, my little sister, are outside of time! When you want to recapture something, you look at a photo. It's there, forever!

The screen behind him shows the photo that was taken at the end of Scene 1, in Opera 2, War.

Mark Have a look at that!

Lily It's you that needs to look!

Mark Shit! Adrian's dead!

Lily (looking at both the photo in her hand and the screen behind which shows it to the audience) The women that took the photo are in it.

Mark They are too! They're looking at mum and dad.

Lily They've got sorrow in their eyes.

Mark Where am I? Someone's moved me ...

Lily You've lost your bat ...

Mark Look at the look they've put in my eyes! Who did this?

Lily It's the future, trying to tell us what's in store.

Mark That's a steering wheel I've got hold of! I'm gonna crash! You can tell!

Lily You know what dad says about your driving.

Mark He was the same at my age. I don't listen to him. What's it say about you?

Lily It's the doll. It's older than I am. Little rag doll aged twenty-five, with the wildest look in her eyes. I've got a risky path in front of me.

Mark This is weird! What in the name of buggery's going on?

Lily We're getting a warning, if we only know how to take it!

Mark I only know one way to drive. Flat out!

Lily I'm going to become that doll.

Mark (very fearful) Isn't there some escape?

Lily Adrian didn't find it.

Mark What happened to him has already happened. (He fumbles for a way to go on.) But for you and me, it's still the future. We can save ourselves.

Lily Only by not being what we are.

Mark How does anybody know what we are?

Lily When things happen, that's when we know.

Mark Yeah, that's what I mean.

Lily We're trapped. There's no avoiding what it says.

Mark Lily. Hadn't you better put this thing away?

Lily puts away the photo. The picture on the screen behind them disappears too.

7. Settled

The screen shows a small but sunny apartment in Toorak, simply but tastefully furnished. The apartment is to be Steve's, and it is being admired by Tom and Margaret Courtney, with their daughter Tricia.

Tom (to Steve, benignly) You'll learn how to cook, and keep house, and when you need us, we're just over the hill.

Margaret There'll always be an extra place at table. Don't hesitate. Tricia darling, we're relying on you.

Tricia You don't think we're getting everything too organised?

Tom No. If you create a good circumstance, people can act well. Put'em in squalor, and that's how they act. I've seen it a hundred times.

Margaret If you want quality ...

Tom ... you build it. Carefully. The best things are done by people who know what they're doing.

Steve That's the difficulty, isn't it.

Tom Set your sights on a goal; don't deviate. Sounds simple, but it's hard. There's plenty of temptations, but they have to be put aside. The best is always the thing you know is best. The human race can do things well, and we have learned, by now. Be happy, my boy. How much longer till those exams?

Steve Two terms. I'll manage all right. It's the next stage, getting a career underway ...

Margaret One step at a time, Steve. Tom's right. And you, my darling ...

Tricia I want to do something wonderful too.

T & M (airily) You will, darling. Always be sure you will!

8. Karen

Karen is pacing up and down outside the Grainger Museum at Melbourne University, waiting for her sister Nell. The accompaniment to her movement borrows something from the music we shall soon hear played loudly inside, Grainger's 'Handel on the Strand'.

Karen This is not like Nell. She's never late. Unless she's punishing me for playing badly. (wistfully) I only play well when I'm in love! It's easier for men. They don't know when something's wrong inside. But who wants to be in love, when you see what happens ... every rotten time!

From the museum we hear the sound of 'Handel on the Strand' played with enormous boldness.

Karen Why can't I play like that? It's humiliating ... Music shows us our passions ... I want someone to show me mine! (She knocks on the door, but the music goes on, with strings joining the joyous piano. She knocks again until there's a contest of rhythms, the striding music and her insistent knocks. Then, although the music doesn't stop immediately, the door opens, and Percy Grainger appears.)

Karen Oh! Who are you?

Percy What brings you to my door?

Karen I can never make anyone be true to me.

Percy (studying her) They want you and then they want to leave.

Karen It's always the same. I've got a little boy ...

Percy And where's his father I want to know?

Karen His plane crashed in the sea. Or so we believe. Nobody saw it happen.

Percy In the war.

Karen In the war.

Percy The human race is mad. Nothing makes sense but art.

The room behind him produces more of the music we heard before, striding jauntily along.

Karen Is that you, playing in there?

Percy It's me, practising.

Karen I play this music, but not as well as you.

Percy Give up all restraint. Live exactly as you wish.

Karen Not possible.

Percy Then be reconciled to defeat. There's more than one sort of war!

Karen No! I'm the type that's made to last.

Percy Then sing! Go on, sing!

Karen takes a step forward, so that when she sings it's directly in his face.

Karen Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will pledge with mine,

Or leave a kiss but in the cup, and I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink divine,

But might I of Jove's nectar sup, I would not change for thine.

Percy (somewhat softened) What's your name?

Karen Karen.

Percy (very disconcerted) Karen! Oh Karen! I have to

go back to England now. I'm playing at a concert tonight. You heard me practising ...

Karen I want to listen! I want to learn!

Percy No! I must be on my own! Oh, Karen! Oh!

Karen Why are you frightened? I'll do you no harm! My father's bought me a piano. I want so much to learn ...

Percy I didn't play very well at my last concert. I must do better.

He disappears. The music strikes up again, bolder than ever. Karen flings herself at the door.

Karen There's so many secrets! So many riddles, and I need to know the answers. Come on, let me in!

She pushes the door, and it opens. The music has stopped. Percy's voice sounds instead, as if from an echo chamber, authoritative but sad.

Percy You remind me of the love of my life. I had to leave. There is a star, an astral place, a plane, where we are together always. Much that we desire cannot be granted, here on earth. Our longings exceed the given. Yearning is our doom. I would stay if I could, but what could I give you? Only music, and it surrounds us. Take it from the air, and make it sound across the earth. This is the best I can do. Do not ask for more.

As his voice dies away, Nell appears.

Nell Karen! Sorry I'm late ...

Karen (in a daze) Are you music? Or a sound that hasn't been transformed?

Nell Your sister darling, your sister who loves you. Why are you so vague?

Karen Why am I vague? Why do I exist at all?

Nell You've come to hear that talk. I've got lunch for us in my bag.

Karen Talk? I've got music in my ears ... no, it's in my mind. Let me sit down, somewhere, and listen.

Nell leads Karen away.

9. The photo (2)

Max and Muriel are at the kitchen sink. Muriel is washing this time, and Max is wiping.

Max ... and that was when I put the papers on the table and I said, sir, do you want this car or not?

Muriel He signed, of course. (She's heard this sort of thing before.)

Max (smugly) And he'll get another one next year ...

Muriel I want to get a photo taken.

Max Who of?

Muriel A photo of the family.

Max We haven't seen Norman and Edna for ages, and as for the others ...

Muriel Just us.

Max A little group of seven?
 Muriel And Tricia, and Jane, and their families ...
 Max (the snob coming out in him) Not a bad idea. When?
 Muriel We'll have a party to celebrate their engagements, at a really nice place ...
 Max Mmm. (Murmuring approvingly, he imagines the setting, and we see what he's thinking of appear on the screen behind him.)
 Muriel ... we'll have the best band in the city, the Courtneys' friends will be there, and the Urquharts, down from New South Wales, and all the people they mix with ...
 Max It's a pity about the girls ...
 Muriel They can order new gowns, there's a place in Toorak Road, very stylish ...
 Max I meant, why can't they get themselves decent men?
 Muriel They've got plenty of friends, darling ...
 Max What's the use of friends? I want husbands so loaded with cash, and titles would be nice, that they can't stand up! Off the floor, I mean!
 Muriel There'll be plenty of nice young men at the party. They can pick one or two to have in the picture we're going to get taken.

Max, again, and Muriel consider the picture they see on the screen; the Courtneys, Urquharts and any number of fashionable, wealthy friends gather around the rather pedestrian Max and Muriel who form the core of the group.

Max Muriel, what on earth are we thinking about? Steve and Tricia aren't actually engaged, not yet!
 Muriel The Courtneys wouldn't have found that place, close to where they live, if they didn't have plans ...
 Max Plans don't always turn into reality, that's the trouble ...

10. Marriage (1)

Max and Muriel fade from view, and we become aware of the couple they are thinking of, Steve and Tricia, in the little apartment which the Courtneys found for him.

Steve I'm nervous, Trish. It's not really happening to me.
 Tricia I'm the same. At least you'll have a degree ...
 Steve Your dad's pretty confident of getting me a job, but the trouble is, will it suit me? You know what I mean?
 Tricia I'm only making hats.
 Steve They're very smart ...
 Tricia You don't need to be smart to make them. Obedient, that's all I need to be. Henri gives the orders and I do what I'm told.
 Steve That's true.
 Tricia Steve! It's not true! I'm not nobody!
 Steve I'm on your side. Henri's too bossy. He fawns on all the women who come through his door ...
 Tricia I want to get married so I don't have to work for him.

Steve I'm frightened of getting married ...

Tricia So am I.

Steve It's everything I want, but I'm not ready ...

Tricia I'm the same, but it's up to us, you know. We have to make each other ready.

Steve I've just thought of something. Many years ago ...

Tricia We're getting old when we can say that. 'Many years ago ...'

Steve ... the big family, all the uncles and aunts and cousins, and Uncle Bill ...

Tricia Was he special?

Steve He was, but he's gone now. We were camped by the water at Waratah Bay.

Tricia Where's that?

Steve We had a picture taken, the whole crowd. There was something funny about the picture, which I don't really understand ...

The screen shows the picture he's talking about, and the changes in the people since it was taken.

Tricia Something funny?

Steve When I saw the photo afterwards, it seemed really powerful. But I haven't seen it for years.

Tricia Your mum and dad will have it.

Steve Someone will have it, but they'll have power over us too.

Tricia That sounds odd, darling.

Steve It is odd. I want the picture. I have a feeling that if I

could change the picture, I could change myself. I'd be what I want to be. Then I'd feel that if we married, I wouldn't be disappointing you.

Tricia I don't want you to disappoint me, Steve. I don't want to let you down, either.

Steve That's beautiful Trish. But how to do it, that's the question.

11. The photo (3)

Lily is in the room she uses as a study. The screen behind her is blank. She makes sure there is nobody near her, then she picks up a large book. She studies a photo she's secreted between its pages. The screen behind her shows us a variant of the picture taken at the end of Scene 1, Opera 1, War. Adrian is tied to a wool bale, about to die. The four women in white are by Lily's parents, Max and Muriel, steadying them. Uncle Bill is at the top of the picture, horizontal and rising towards a blazing light. George and Yatty have their heads in their hands. Helen is holding her viola, and it is her music that threads through this scene.

Lily There must be hidden strings. (viola music) I want to find them, and pull the future about. Who's controlling things? (viola) Who decides? There's Bill disappearing ... (He does.) These women ... They're more powerful than fate, but when I see them in shops or on a train, they give away nothing. They've got power to make things happen, but the power's only

shown when the thing can't be stopped. Or is there someone back behind, pulling their strings? I want to know. No ... I want to be one of them, but I want to be conscious of my power. I want to know, and I want to know that I know, and I want to know that others don't know what I know, don't see what I see, and thus I want to have the power to live on two levels at once. To live among normal people with a secret dimension.

She steps back from the picture to study it, then steps forward to the screen.

These four are the key. (She steps up to one of the women in white in the photo – the one with a band of purple at her collar - and kisses her.) Tell me your name. If I dress myself in white, can I join you?

Purple We're not free to tell you. You'll find a way, because you're determined.

Lily (to the woman with collar of blue) Tell me your names?

Blue Fate, fortune, fable ...

Lily (cheekily) Fantasy, fog?

Blue What you call us doesn't take away our power ...

Lily (to the woman with a collar of red) Blood. ...

Red ... is life.

Lily You didn't save Adrian?

Red He lost his blood.

Lily (to the woman with a collar of yellow) Flowers?

Yellow Everything that lives and breathes and grows ...

Lily Will all that be mine?

Women For a time. The time will be short.

Lily I have to pack things in?

Women A short, expensive holiday ...

Lily To be paid for at the end?

The four women smile faintly, they fade back into the photo, and then they disappear.

12. A decision

Steve's apartment; Tricia is with him. They are discussing an idea of Max and Muriel which unnerves the young people.

Steve It's putting us on the spot.

Tricia It's meant to. They're forcing us to make up our minds.

Steve We're going to look silly if Mark and Jane are dancing around, showing off how happy they are ...

Tricia If they are.

Steve Mark never knows what's inside himself. He'll put on an act and believe it.

Tricia Letting Jane be sweetly confused ... (She's amused, and a little scornful.)

Steve (making up his mind) Tricia darling, we're getting engaged. Only question: do we announce it before, or on the night?

Tricia Announcing it's the easy part ...

Steve True. But when?

Tricia Now. This very minute. You announce it to me, and I'll announce it to you.

Steve You mean it?

Tricia I do!

Steve (after preparing himself, and making his approach very formal indeed) Tricia Courtney, I, Steve Morris, hereby declare my lasting ...

Tricia Won't you say 'everlasting'?

Steve I mustn't exaggerate. I have to get this right, because we'll remember it. Think of that, my love ... (he almost breaks down) ... in years to come, we'll look back.

Tricia (also getting upset) Finish what you're saying!

Steve ... my lasting love for you. I wish to marry you. Will you marry me, and be my lawful, wedded wife, with all other et ceteras which are part and parcel of this business, as long as our two lives shall last?

Tricia Stephen Morris, I'm trembling so hard you may think I don't know what I'm saying, but I do. I, Tricia Courtney, will marry you, and live faithfully by you, as long as our lives shall last ...

Both ... so help us God!

They take each other's hands nervously, tenderly. Then they are interrupted by the ringing of a phone, which Steve picks up. His father's voice comes out of the device, amplified.

Max Steve my boy, mum and I are getting the invitations

printed, and there's something I need to ask you. And Trish, hmm hmm, er hum, er ...ah ...

Steve (to his father, and smiling at his fiancée of a few seconds) Tricia Courtney, who will be Tricia Courtney-Morris, and I, will be home to deal with this matter shortly. (in great good humour) In the meantime, hold the presses!

Max (to Muriel, out of sight) He said Tricia Courtney-Morris!

M &M (both out of sight, their voices coming through the phone) Aaaaaaaaahhh!

13. Finale: a party

The first indication of what's to follow is the reappearance of the bower associated with Rosie and Di in Scene 3. Their voices are heard before we see them.

Rosie You've chosen blue.

Di You've chosen gold.

Claude Stubbs and Laurie Mason are listening to the voices coming from the bower.

Rosie No tricks tonight on those poor, silly men.

Claude and Laurie know who she means.

Di Two girls are getting engaged. Everyone's going to look at us ...

Rosie ... and ask ...

R & D (mockingly, but sadly too) When's it going to be your turn?
 Di Rose?
 Rose Di-ana?
 R & D When?
 Laurie Makes a man feel like proposing.
 Claude You've done it half a dozen times already.
 Laurie She might change her mind.

The men stand up as Rosie and Di come into view.

Rosie We have to make a night of it ...
 Di ... for our brothers ...
 Claude ... and Jane ...
 Laurie ... and Trish ...
 R & D ... everyone but us!
 Claude Tell us what you want.
 Rose Look after Lily, our sister ...
 Laurie Won't be hard to do!
 Di And our father, Max; he can only talk about cars
 Rose He'll try to take pictures. There's only to be one.
 Di One!
 Claude One it is.
 Rosie Interrupt him.
 Di Take his camera.
 Rosie And look after mum.
 Di Call her Muriel.
 Rosie Don't leave her side.
 Di She has to be made to feel it's her special night.

Rose Her boys are turning into men.
 Di Or so they think. It's going to take a while!
 Claude What about you two? You announcing anything?
 Rosie Not tonight.
 Di Not this evening, thank you very much.

Max and Muriel appear, over-dressed, and with them are Tom and Margaret Courtney, suave, polished and sure of themselves, as are John and Gillian Urquhart, down from New South Wales. They are accompanied by friends and relatives, and the screen behind them shows that the reception house is packed with people and liberally endowed with flowers. The Urquharts and the Courtneys are pressed by friends, while nobody takes much notice of Max and Muriel, except for the amateurish, if well-meant attentions of Claude and Laurie.

Claude (to Max) Great camera you've got Mister Morris. Let me get a few snaps for you. (He takes the camera away.)
 Laurie Make sure you get one of Mrs Morris when her boys come in!
 Claude My word!
 There is a fanfare, and Lily comes through the door, daringly confident.
 Lily (announcing) Stephen Morris and Tricia Courtney.
 Steve and Tricia enter, looking very handsome; they bow.
 Lily Mark Morris and Jane Urquhart. (She pronounces it 'Urkuutt'.)

Mark and Jane enter and stand by the other couple. Mark looks as if the world belongs to him, and Jane, as Tricia predicted, looks sweetly confused.

Lily The Morris, Courtney and Urquhart families invite you to enjoy yourselves, and to watch the event of a three-family portrait being taken, immediately before supper is served. Thank you one and all.

She is about to make a gesture to the band, inviting them to start the music, when she notices a man who is obviously, from her reaction, unknown to her and unexpected. Margaret Courtney and Gillian Urquhart recognise him, and approach him courteously, though it is clear that they are surprised at him being present.

Margaret Rupert! It's ages since I saw you.

Gillian Mr Bunny! I adore those portraits you did in France!

Rupert Bunny, for it is he, even though he has been dead for eight years, smiles faintly.

Rupert I'll have a smoke and look at the gowns. People think fabric's only fabric, but it's a way of life. If I had my way, there'd be nothing but silk ... but I'd be stripping variety from the world, wouldn't I? (He smiles.) Variety is everything, after all. Without peasants, the lords wouldn't know they were lords ... and ladies wouldn't exist! (He manages to make this sound unthinkable.)

Margaret You miss your wife, I think.

Rupert I can't live above that shop when I hear music up the

street. I've got to be where the dancing is. I want to hear it strike up now!

Gillian (to Lily and the band) Start the music! Everybody dance!

Claude (trying to be useful) Start the music! Everybody dance!

The music starts, and Rosie and Di are first onto the floor, swirling about, clasping the hands of everybody they pass, pulling them onto the floor, getting behind the reluctant and causing them to join in. Before long, the majority of those present are on the dance floor, though Rupert is strolling about near the front of the stage, studying things closely.

Rosie (to Margaret Courtney) Who is that man?

Margaret It's Rupert Bunny, who was our finest society painter.

Di Was?

Gillian Ah yes, unfortunately ...

Margaret ... some eight years ago, or thereabouts ...

Gillian ... it would have to be eight. I don't think it's nine ...

Margaret It's certainly not ten!

Gillian Oh no. Eight seems right to me ...

Di What happened?

Margaret Well, the fact is, he died.

R & D Died!

Margaret Stone cold dead.

Gillian He was, of course, eighty-three at the time, so he'd had a good life ...

Margaret A good innings, I think, is what the menfolk call it ...

Gillian Those that are interested in cricket ...

Di He died?

Margaret I'm not sure where he was buried. I was overseas at the time ...

Gillian ... and you've got that lovely painting in your living room, so really, for you and Tom, he's with us still ...

Margaret Always ...

Tom (coming over) You sound ever so serious, darling?

Margaret The girls were asking about Rupert ...

Tom Yes, it is unexpected. But he was always a charming man. Had a marvellous eye for fabric. The fashioning of it. I never knew anybody who knew better than Rupert when a fabric should ... billow a little, and when it should hang sheer ...

Di He's dead?

John (who's joined them now) Artists never die. Their work lives on. Take Beethoven ...

Tom Now John, you're mentioning him only because you know I prefer Mozart.

John smiles, his ruse uncovered.

Di Their work, yes, but ... what's he doing here? Tonight?

Margaret In his last years he lived a stone's throw from this place.

Gillian Above a shop ...

Margaret A newsagent's, today, and you can buy cards and things ...

Tom It sold recently, for a handsome price!

Di (her eyes on Rupert) He isn't touching anybody ...

Margaret He was always a fastidious man ...

Gillian ... tactful about arriving, tactful about his time to go ...

Rose What's he want?

Margaret I think there's nothing he'd like more than to be invited to help in the grouping of the photo we're taking, later tonight.

Di Let's do it straight away!

Margaret If you feel uncomfortable, darling, about Rupert being here, yes by all means! Gillian? John?

Gillian Why not? We're out to make a night of it! (John's nodding too.)

Tom But who's going to take the picture? The photographer hasn't arrived.

Rose Claude!

Claude (coming forward) Di?

Rose Rose, darling. Rose. We're having the photo now. You're taking it.

Claude Me?

Rose You. But don't press the shutter till ... that man over there gives the nod.

Claude Who's he?

Margaret Really, fame does die quickly. I never thought the day would come when Rupert wasn't known.

Gillian No more, I dare say, did he. You know how to use that camera, young man?

Claude I can take a snap.

M & G Snap! (They're scornfully amused.) What we want tonight is a portrait, of us all, to last down the years ...

John We don't want to be forgotten.

Gillian (to Rose) Now Diana, please call your parents over.

Rose I'm Rose. Diana's in blue. There's no such thing as a blue rose yet.

Gillian I dare say there will be one day. Ah, Mister and Mrs Morris (as they approach). Muriel. Max. We're having the photo earlier than we planned. It's your daughters' wish. We're having the city's leading artist arrange the grouping. Do exactly as he says because he cannot be with us long.

Margaret Rupert! We're ready for you. Please direct!

Rupert comes back to the group at the front. He make a gesture towards the ceiling, and the screen behind the characters produces the features he asks for.

Rupert Underneath the trellis, please. Couples in the centre. Lovely! But tell me who you are ...

Mark (boldly) I'm Mark Morris. And this is my fiancée, Jane.

Rupert Let her speak for herself, my boy. I'm sure she knows her name.

Mark (amazed) Who is this fella?

Margaret Do as he says. He's been dead for eight years, he can't stay very long.

Muriel What?

Rupert Tell me about yourself, Jane. But first let me tell you how beautiful you are tonight. That gown is a perfect fit with your complexion, and the lovely way you stand. Your parents must be very proud, tonight.

John They are. Thank you, Rupert, it's most kind of you.

Rupert Jane?

Jane I don't think anybody's ever sure about taking a step like this. But I'm doing it, and I think it's going to be right.

Rupert Stand here, darling, and your man a quarter of a pace behind, supporting. (He gives the word the strength of a short lecture.) And now the others. We've got twin boys I see.

Steve I'm the older by seven or eight minutes. It wasn't timed very carefully.

Rupert These things never are. It's the same with things that go before; if people know the time, they're not in love! But you didn't say your name.

Steve I'm Steve, and this ...

Rupert (preventing him from repeating Mark's mistake) This is ...?

Tricia Tricia Courtney, and when we're married I'll be Tricia Courtney-Morris!

Rupert A name to make your family happy for generations yet to come! Squeeze close to Mark and Jane, you're doing this together. (When he's satisfied with the two couples, he turns to Margaret and Tom.) Margaret. It's lovely to see you again. I didn't think I would.

Margaret It has been a great surprise.

Tom It's wonderful to have your expertise on such an occasion.

Rupert I always said I'd come back from the grave if I could be useful ...

Gillian ... and here you are.

Rupert Gillian, you're as beautiful as ever. And handsomely presented. John's never let you down.

Gillian He hasn't. And I've never failed you, have I, my love?

John We've been as solid as a rock, for each other, always.

Rupert (indicating) Ladies to the centre, men to left and right. Now, the parents of the boys, which are they?

Max I'm their dad. Call me Max.

Muriel (humbly) I'm only Muriel. That's who I am.

Rupert Your boys have made you important, and it's their partners who've done that for them. Stand at the back, please, behind the couples we're celebrating. Now the sisters, the golden girl and the cerulean blue. I'll place you by your colours, not by family ... (He considers the group.) No no, all's well. You can

stand to left and right of your ... (somewhat scornfully) ... mum and dad. (He looks around for Lily.) The one who made the announcement; what are we to call you?

Lily

Lily.

Rupert

The loveliest of names. You shall stand above the others. (He indicates, and Laurie places a low stool behind Max and Muriel. Lily steps on it, and the group's complete.) This is not how you are. Artifice replaces reality, thank God, or what would become of us all? We'd face the future unredeemed, and that would never do. Where's the camera? (Claude comes forward, ready to do as he's told.) Stand here. (Claude does as he's told.) I'm going to move back a little, and when I call out to you, smile. Imagine the future you'd like to invent, and you (he means Claude), capture the split-second when everything's as it should be ...

Rupert's already moving back, into the crowd watching the photo being taken, and we lose sight of him, though we hear his voice a little longer.

Rupert

Ready please. Ready. I want you living in this moment as if it were your last, because none of us knows our time. Ready? Think of the darkness surrounding us, and smile. Look at the shutter. It's going to capture you, and while it can, you're alive. Aaaaaaaahhh ... blessed souls ...

Rupert is gone, there is a powerful flash, and the picture is taken. The music starts up, movement takes place in the gathering, the composed family grouping breaks up also, and the picture that has just been taken replaces the group to appear, greatly enlarged, on the screen at the rear.

❧ End of Opera 4 ❧

Twins

1. Breakfast

Steve is at a table in the Courtneys' dining room. Margaret and Tricia are in the nearby kitchen.

Tricia I'll have my breakfast here.

Margaret You're making this hard.

Tricia Who's being hard? Tell me that!

Margaret takes Steve a tray with coffee and cups.

Margaret Try to enjoy this, Steve. Nobody's ready to talk, just yet. (She leaves.)

Steve (singing passionately to himself beneath a painting by Rupert Bunny) These people know who they are. It's not easy ... when I'm nobody that matters.

Tom (passing through, and summing up the situation) Morning Steve.

Steve Morning sir.

Tom (in the kitchen by now) Having a tiff? What shall I say on your behalf?

Tricia (angrily) Not one single word!

Tom What's he done? Something dreadful?

Margaret Steve has applied for a job in the Snowy Mountains ...

Tom Engineer on the scheme? Eh?

Margaret He wants to go away for a year. To delay his marriage ...

Tom Hmm. Darling?

Tricia I don't mind him going so long as he takes me.

Tom Pretty rough up there. No place for you.

Tricia Then it's no place for him.

Tom The male is different from the female. Men like to be crude ... for a while, then they want refinement, tenderness, intimacy: things women give.

Margaret You think he should have his chance?

Tricia On his own? Without me?

Tom Yes I do. (to Tricia) Look back over your life, darling. Who do you think made the decisions? Your mother, not me. I've lived in the world of business, making money. But how do we spend it? What's worthwhile? That's what your mother decides. She lets me have a say, but I know who's having the last word, and, you know, after a few years, I came to see it was a good way to manage. (to Margaret) There you are darling, I don't think you expected that!

Steve (coughing in the next room) Ah-hm.

Margaret (moving to the door) Serving up now, Steve. Won't be a moment.

Tom See how she does it? She's not the servant, but she pretends to be, and that's how she rules us. (He chuckles.) Most men never see it. They think they're boss when they're surrounded by invisible decisions.

Don't be impulsive, darling. You've got a wonderful guide. Practise the art of letter writing. You'll be surprised at what you can do.

Margaret, back in the kitchen, serves a plate; Tom makes as if to take it in for Steve but Margaret indicates that it's her job, and carries Steve's breakfast to him. Tom glances at Tricia to make sure his daughter has noticed, then goes in to Steve.

Tom How far today, my boy?

Steve I'll cross the river about lunchtime, go on to the Urquharts'. Then through the mountains. Tomorrow night I should be there. Next morning I front up for my interview.

Tom Don't try to impress, but keep your mind sharp. Say what they want to hear, with one or two intriguing little suggestions ... so long as you can deliver.

Steve You've been watching people for years.

Tom Too many, I think. It's getting easy. (pause) Tricia's very hurt. You've got to soothe her. That means making her feel that she's having an adventure too. A different one from yours, back here, but just as important.

Steve She wants to be where I am. She thinks I might slip away.

Tom Ask her up for a visit once you know the lie of the land. I want her to start her own business. Give her a push with that. You need a year on your own ...

Steve A year? (He's picking up on Tom's concession.)

Tom (making the concession clear) One year. It must have a limit if she's to get through it. At the end of the time she needs a success of her own. Then, you'll be equal partners ...

Margaret (entering) Tom's right. Equal partners. That's the way to think, Steve. Tom and I will leave you alone now. When you and Tricia are ready, you'll find us in the garden. Bring your coffee, love.

Tom and Margaret leave the house. There is a painful silence, Steve in one room, Tricia in another. Neither wants to be first to move. Steve weakens, and moves to where he can see Tricia.

Steve Shall I pour coffee for you, Trish?

She nods, angry, close to weeping. He moves back, pours the coffee, and looks up as she enters. She indicates where he should put it. They sit.

Tricia Daddy's given you a year. I heard.

Steve Did you hear his advice? (She nods.) Then we must do it.

Tricia Apart. That's what hurts me. Two days drive between us. Feeling troubled, or getting excited, by things we can't share. It'll pull us apart.

Steve It might be the making of us.

Tricia And it might not. What guarantee have I got?

Steve I don't think there's any such thing.

Tricia No guarantee? Look where I've grown up ...

Steve If I say I'll give you the same, or better, I'm whistling in the wind. I don't know yet what I can do.

Tricia You don't think you're a man yet, do you?
 Steve I'm not.
 Tricia Then let me make you what you want to be.
 Steve I will, when we marry. I'm not ready to start. Yet.
 Tricia How long will that be?
 Steve Your father's given me a year.
 Tricia That means mummy's told him he can.
 Steve That's what he was telling me.
 Tricia They're too clever for me.
 Steve You must come up and visit.
 Tricia He told you to say that.
 Steve I want you to come up. I'll be alone.
 Tricia That's what all men say ...
 Steve Yes well, I'm saying it.
 Tricia See you make it true.
 Steve I'll be true to you. As long as we both shall live. We know that.
 Tricia We've sworn it!
 Steve I've sworn it to you and you to me!
 Tricia There are telephones up there, and such things as letters. Every day.
 Steve I'll call your parents now.
 Tricia I'll come with you.

2. Phone call

Rose is on the left of the stage, Diana on the right. Each has a phone.

Di Where are you?
 Rose Brisbane.
 Di What are you doing there?
 Rose Talking to you. Silly, isn't it.
 Di But why?
 Rose I needed to get away.
 Di From me?
 Rose You know that.
 Di We can't get away while there's phones.
 Rose What else can I do?
 Di People tell me to fall in love.
 Rose I don't want to fall.
 Di What about love?
 Rose I can't because half of me's locked up in you.
 Di You've got half of me in you, and you fly off without telling me.
 Rose If I tell you first I'm asking permission.
 Di If you don't tell me you're stealing half of me without asking.
 Rose Permission! I'm not asking you for that!
 Di Well don't decide things for me. It's inconsiderate.
 Rose You hate me. I know you'll say no.
 Di I don't hate you. It's me I can't love.
 Rose We have to let each other go.
 Di You occupy my mind. It's worse than sharing a body.
 Rose I don't want to be there. It's why I'm here.

Di Tell me what you see there.
 Rose No!
 Di Sorry, I shouldn't have asked. But why did you ring?
 Rose To tell you that I refuse to tell you.
 Di We're mad.
 Rose It isn't our fault. How do we get out of this?
 Di Darling, if I knew, the problem would go away.
 Rose That's what I've done with myself.
 Di This is too painful, Rose. I want to hang up.
 Rose Are you in love?
 Di I can't be. I'm the same as you.
 Rose That's why we have to part. We can't do anything in the presence of the other.
 Di I dare not ask when you're coming back, but I want to. I'm going to hang up. (She does so.)
 Rose Miserable woman. What does that make me?

The lights fade on the sisters.

3. Family line

John, Gillian and Jane Urquhart are on their verandah, with Steve, their guest. The screen behind them reveals a large garden, old by Australian standards, densely planted, with huge trees, and various sheds not very far from the homestead.

Gillian (to John) If you don't show Steve the property soon, it'll be dark. He's got to be off early in the morning.

John Ready Steve? I'll show you what's come down to us ...
 Gillian Ask him what he's done to it, Steve. You'll find it's quite a lot!
 Steve I will. You coming, Jane?
 Jane I've seen it all before.

The rear-projection screen shows us parts of the Urquhart property as the two men drive about. They need not move from where they are, simply look about as things the audience can see on the screen keep changing.

Steve How long have you had the place sir?
 John John. Eighteen forty we arrived. It's never been owned by anyone but an Urquhart. I'm the seventh, and Jane is next in line. After Gillian. If I died, they'd run it together.
 Steve My brother's taking on a huge responsibility.
 John It is ... but when you love it as much as I do, it's the lightest of burdens.
 Steve The earliest members of your family ... they must have worked hard, clearing ... do you think they loved it as you do?
 John It's in their letters. We've got them in the house.
 Steve (as the screen shows a broad and golden vista of grassy slopes) I don't think I've ever owned anything that mattered.
 John You've got Tricia.

Steve I don't own her. Though I suppose we own each other well enough.

John As you get used to being married, you wouldn't want it any other way.

Steve Do you have dry years up here? Drought?

John We do. But there are two streams flowing through the property, and they join down here. (proudly) Even in the worst years, we've got water.

Steve That's security, I suppose.

John As much as you can have in this world. I'll show you where the waters meet, and then I'll take you back to the house. Jane'll give you a sherry. I've got to fix a pump or we won't be having showers in the morning.

The screen continues to show views of the property; Steve returns to the homestead verandah, Gillian puts a bottle of sherry and two glasses on a small table, arranges two chairs, and then the views of golden grass give way to the verandah of Scene 2. Jane appears.

Steve Shall I pour?

Jane I'll do that. (She doesn't do so, however.) I can't tell you apart.

Steve From Mark?

Jane If he was here, I could. Perhaps. I might. I wonder? What would it be like?

Steve I'd feel very confused.

Jane I feel confused already.

Steve senses desire rising in her, and him, at the same time.

Steve Has he sat here, where I am?

Jane He did. My parents were in the town ...

Steve They left the house to you?

Jane I wish I had it now. We had it now.

They are silent for a moment; we can hear John hammering on a pipe, somewhere in the distance, and the clatter of some pots in the kitchen.

Steve You haven't poured.

Jane I got lost in my thoughts. I'm still lost.

She drops the cork of the sherry bottle. Steve gets out of his chair to pick it up, she bends down, and they press against each other, her shoulder to his groin. They stay thus for a few seconds. He hands her the cork. She rams it in the bottle. He takes his glass nervously, she does the same.

Jane I think the word is ...

Steve ... cheers!

Eyes full of desire for each other, they sip. Sounds of John and Gillian at their tasks are the only contrast with the silence that's fallen on the verandah.

Steve Shall we ... can we ...

Jane We will if we can!

Night falls. Lights come on in the house, then, over a short time, they go off again. The voices of Jane and Steve rise from the darkness.

J & S Overwhelming darkness ... desire. Overwhelming me ... desire ...

They meet in the darkness of the verandah.

Steve My room? Your room? Where?

Jane I can't do this in the house.

She leads him away to one of the outbuildings. The screen shows the silhouettes of two figures climbing on a stack of wool bales, and giving themselves to their lust for each other. We notice, as well, that a pale light has come on in a window of the house, and as we watch it becomes brighter, until it's quite intense, and then it fades to nothing again.

Steve I want to do that again.

Jane Yes! But let me catch my breath!

There is a pause of sensuous intimacy, then the silhouettes show us that their desire to possess each other has risen again. At the same time the light in the window of what must be Gillian and John's room grows bright, then, as the couple reach a frenzied point, it darkens again.

Jane What have we done? Everything's upside down!

Steve I don't care what we've done! We've got to go on!

Jane I'm going inside now. We'll be lucky if we get a minute in the morning.

The lovers steal inside, Steve to his verandah room, Jane into the house.

Gillian Are you all right darling?

Jane (to her mother, in the dark) It was puppy. I heard him whimpering outside my window so I went out to soothe him. He's all right now.

Jane moves to her room. There is a pause, then we hear Gillian's voice, thinking to herself.'

Gillian Puppy's chained up for the first time tonight. I'll let him loose in the morning so she doesn't know. Doesn't know that I know.

4. Into the mountains

It's morning at the Urquharts' property.

Voices Good morning Steve. Good morning John. Good morning Gillian. Mother, good morning. Good morning Steve. Good morning Jane. (The phone rings.)

Gillian Good heavens, so early. Gillian Urquhart.

Tom Tom Courtney, Gillian. Have you got Steve with you? He was going to ring us last night.

Gillian He did try, but the exchange told him nobody was answering.

Tom (annoyed) We were here the whole evening, waiting.

Gillian Well you see, we can't dial long distance ourselves. The exchange does it for us. They must have made a mistake. He certainly tried to get through.

Tom I've got a very distressed daughter. She was upset enough before he left, then he didn't ring as he'd promised ...

Gillian As I say, he certainly tried. I'll get him for you ...

Steve Good morning sir. The exchange told me there was nobody answering. Then they closed down early, about eight, I think it was ...

Tom Been any developments?

Steve (gulping) Good heavens, no! It's less than twenty four hours since I was with you. Sitting under the painting. Trying to get Tricia to accept ... Any developments with you sir?

Tom Not at my age. I'll put Tricia on. Here you are darling.

Tricia Steve! Why didn't you ring?

Steve I did! You see, we're a long way from a town, here, on a little country exchange, and they close early. Eight o'clock, I believe ...

Tricia You should have rung before eight.

Steve I did. You see, they do the dialling, so if they dial a wrong number, as they must have done, then I can't see to check. They said the phone rang at the number I gave them but nobody answered, so I took it that you'd all gone out.

Tricia How could I go out when I was waiting for you?

Steve Well I was surprised, but I knew I could ring you this morning and make sure all was well.

Tricia How are you? Are you changed?

Steve No. Nothing's changed. Heavens, I'm not even there, yet. I've got to drive through the mountains today.

I'll find a hotel, and ring you from there. I promise. I don't know what went wrong last night ...

Tricia What did you say?

Steve (loudly, because embarrassed) I don't know what went wrong last night!

Tricia Ring me tonight. I can't rest until I know everything's all right.

Steve I will. From the hotel. When the big drive's behind me. Once I'm settled we'll be close again.

Tricia That's what you say. I'm not sure.

Steve (stupidly) You can be sure. As sure as it's possible to be.

5. Talbingo

Steve has stopped his car beside the road, and is sitting on a log, in a tiny clearing in dense forest. He has his head in his hands, overwhelmed by what he's done.

Steve How could I do it? How can I live without her? I want to do it every night, every day. I'm nothing but lust. If she walked out of that bush we'd seize each other, and do it all over again! I've lost every ambition but one! I want Jane rolling on me, under me. I want to go back. I can't go back. I said goodbye this morning. I can't go on. I have to go on. I'm in trouble. What in the name of God am I going to do?

He looks up and sees a figure approaching. Steve is an engineer, not

a student of literature, so he doesn't recognise Miles Franklin as she was in her early twenties. She's carrying a whip.

Steve What are you doing here?

Miles This is my childhood home. It's you that is intruding.

Steve Here?

Miles You passed it half a mile back. With all this beauty about you, is it that you can't see a thing? You weren't looking?

Steve I've got something on my mind.

Miles (examining him closely) Don't try to hide. You're an open book to an intelligent woman, and there's more of those by far than men are willing to concede!

Steve It's something I'm finding hard to face.

Miles You've been as busy as can be in trying to ruin a young woman's life, and in those cases, when the young man's as personable as I fancy you were until the shame overtook you, then there's always another young woman's life to be ruined too, or maybe more than one if the young man is as careless, and as wanton, as you appear to be!

Steve You talk like a book.

Miles You'd have read *My Brilliant Career*?

Steve I'm trying to start a brilliant career. It's a mess at the moment.

Miles Gone bung!

Steve Is that another book?

Miles Ignoramus! If you don't know your country's books, you can't know where you are, and it's ignorance of every possible choice, most importantly the moral choice, that makes us crippled fools. Wisdom's what you must acquire!

Steve How can I get wisdom, sitting on a log, being lectured by someone who thinks she knows all?

Miles is infuriated by this. She raises her whip. Steve sees that it's intended for him, so he scampers to his car, and jumps in. Miles belts the car with her whip several times, then disappears into the bush. Steve starts the engine and roars away, defeated all over again.

6. A drowning town

Steve pulls up in a very early town, built of stone and brick. Four women running a street stall are the only people we can see. They are dressed in white and there is something familiar about them, but Steve doesn't notice; instead he looks at the things they have for sale.

Steve Jellies and jams; all home made.

W1 What else?

Steve Yes ... it doesn't look like you've got a factory here.

W2 We don't even have a future.

Steve Why's that?

W2 The Hydro Authority is going to build a dam, and when it's full ...

W3 ... everything will be under water.
W4 (a girl of perhaps sixteen) Flooded.
W1 There'll be fish swimming where we are now.
W2 They call it progress ...
W3 ... but it's the end of everything we've built in the course of our lives.
Steve They'll be moving you, won't they? Somewhere else?
W4 I don't know any other place!
W1 It's very hard. They're wiping out our lives.
Steve I can see that would make you unhappy ... but they must be paying compensation ...
W1 You tell me, young man, what are my memories worth?
Steve I don't think I could put a value on something like that.
W4 (who's been looking) You've got a Victorian car!
Steve I drove up from Melbourne yesterday .
W1 Having a look around?
Steve No, I'm an engineer. I've got an interview tomorrow. I'm hoping to get a job ...
W2 ... working for the people who are going to drown our homes.
Steve Well, I doubt if I'll be doing that.
W4 What will you be doing?
Steve Designing things. Concrete's what I know best. Tunnels, I suppose ...

W2 Dam walls?
Steve (He sees the danger.) I don't know what they'll put me on. They'll find out what I can do.
W4 Turn your car around and go home. Back to where you came from.
Steve Ah, that'd be ... that's not ...
W1 ... possible?
Steve I have to go forward. If there's any escape from what I am, it's by going forward. I don't have any choice.
W1 Take some jam. It'll sweeten your breakfast.
Steve Thanks. (He starts picking up jars.) The Courtneys, I've got to do something for them. Tricia. She's my fiancée. The Urquharts. Jane ...
W4 Have you got another fiancée?
Steve Good heavens no. She's the daughter of the people I stayed with. She's engaged to my brother. I'm a twin. So's my brother, that is, he's a twin. Like me.
W2 Is he like you?
Steve Even people who know us find it hard to tell us apart. (He chatters on.) Twins run in our family. I've got sisters who are twins, too. Rosie and Di. Diana. Rose. They say they can't live together and they can't live apart. They have trouble with boyfriends, but we'd better not get into that ...
W3 Do their boyfriends have trouble with them?
Steve Very much so. But I'd better be on my way. I'm sorry about your town. But we're building a nation, don't forget. Progress is inevitable ...

He rushes away to his car, starts it, and leaves. The four women each put a band of colour on their collars to remind us of when we've seen them before.

W1 A thoughtless boy. He means well ...

All four ... he's got so much to learn!

7. Arrival

Steve is sitting in a tiny telephone booth in a Cooma hotel, talking to Tricia, who can be seen on the other side of the stage.

Tricia Why did these women affect you so much?

Steve I had this feeling that they weren't who they appeared to be.

Tricia What does that mean?

Steve I felt sure that I'd encountered them before. I don't know where.

Tricia What was it about them?

Steve They seemed to know things. I felt I was a crystal ball, and they could read me.

Tricia I wish I had half their skill!

Steve Darling, be kind to me please. You've no idea how much I need you.

Tricia You haven't said that before. You've always been so confident.

Steve Well that's disappeared. I've got my interview tomorrow and I don't know what I'm going to say. The fact is, my confidence has gone down the drain.

Tricia It'll come back darling. It always does.

Steve There's range upon range of mountains, with tunnels beneath them, and mighty dams blocking the rivers, it's all so big and I'm nothing. Nobody up here would notice if I disappeared off the face of the earth.

Tricia Someone down here would die, Steve, if you disappeared. I'm in love with you. I'm willing your success. I'm beside you in everything you do.

Steve Everything?

Tricia Everything. We swore it to each other. I'm true to you my love. Don't try to think what they'll ask you. Tell yourself the answer's there, and it'll come when it's needed. And it will. That's the miracle of confidence and you know I'm confident of you.

Steve I don't deserve you darling. I'm not good enough for you.

Tricia I don't deserve you darling, but I'm strong enough for you.

Steve For both of us, thank God. As soon as I know my way around up here, you'll come up and visit ...

Tricia Yes! Be strong, darling, I'm with you in everything you do.

8. Music

Steve is in his room at the Hydro-electric Authority barracks. He's reading, but the screen tells us that his mind is reliving his ecstasy with Jane. Faintly, distantly, we become aware of a soprano voice,

soaring magically. Steve notices, and listens. He leaves his room and listens in the passage, passing door after door until he's outside, in the dark. The soprano's voice is closer by now. There are lights in another building, and he enters it, listening door by door, until he finds the source of the music. He knocks. The door is opened.

Wendy Hello?

Steve Sorry to break in, but what's that music, please?

Wendy Come and listen. How did you hear it? I try to keep it down.

Steve I'm in the next building. Number seventeen. (She has a disc and its cover in her hands.) Tell me all about it.

Wendy Listen first. Nothing's more important than that.

She puts the Four Last Songs of Richard Strauss back on again, then stretches on her bed to follow with a score. As the soprano voice enters, a man – it's Walter Legge, the husband of Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, the singer - appears mysteriously, and taps Steve on the shoulder.

Legge Listen closely, my boy. You'll never hear it sung better.

Steve What is it?

Legge That would take a lifetime to explain.

Steve A lifetime. I'm just starting.

Legge Let me teach you something. You'll never be lost if you choose the right star to steer by. And somehow, by walking in here, you've done just that!

Steve Who are you?

Legge I'm Elizabeth's husband, the luckiest of men.

Steve We need women, don't we.

Legge I think that's called Square One, in your country.

Steve Where are you from?

Legge It doesn't matter. It's where I'm taken. (The music soars and the soprano, his wife, describes dipping, rising, floating melismas of sound in the air.)

Steve This is your wife?

Legge (smiling) I can see you're new to music. When Strauss was a young man, he married a singer. When he was very old, he wrote these songs. In every bar he put a lifetime's study of the voice he loved best. His wife's. I don't know that Pauline was such a great singer – not in Elizabeth's class, you can be sure – but when he listened to all the great singers of his day and heard what they could do, he wrote for all of them, but at bottom he was only ... ever ... writing for the one. Marriage is a wonderful thing, not at all easy to achieve. People do it all the time, or think they do it, but they haven't got anywhere near.

Elizabeth's voice soars, then comes slowly down, in a curvaceous arc.

Steve It's more than I'll ever achieve!

Legge You may surprise yourself. Genius is scattered in a whimsical way. I often wonder who's tossing it in the air. I must go. I'm wanted in London, Vienna and

Berlin ... but I needed to share these songs with you.
Goodbye now Steve. Live well! (He disappears.)

Steve He called me Steve? Someone knows who I am?

He sits up, he stands; Wendy, her room and the music disappear,
and Steve is in the mountains, with a party of men.

9. The hand of man

The view is vast, and the picture projected on the screen shows little sign of the hand of mankind. Snow lies along deep blue ranges. The party consists of the Hydro-electric Commissioner, four representatives of American companies (Hiram, Eugene, Linton and Cal), a man called Anton who is an engineer working on a nearby tunnel, and Steve, who is standing in for the Commissioner's secretary. They are dressed to keep themselves warm.

Comm. We're standing on your tunnel, Anton. Show us where it begins and ends.

Anton The dam we've just seen is behind that range. As the Commissioner said, the tunnel's beneath us now. We passed this point last week, and we're pressing for that next range, there, by the end of the month. Still a way to go. The outlet will be another dam you'll see this afternoon.

Hiram A mighty work!

Comm. A vision, nothing less. Ours is a ruthless land, giving nothing away. Life's a struggle, as the black people knew, and our farmers know only too well. What

we're doing here will change that. The country will never be the same.

Cal What you want done, we can do it. Have no doubts of that!

Comm. That's what we want to hear, because that's the mood we're in. We saw the world devastated by war, and we're making it better.

Eugene Set your sights high, and go for what you want!

Linton So the water that's been wasted in the sea ...

Comm. ... will irrigate land out of sight. (He points to the horizon.) You're very quiet Steve.

Steve It's a wonderful sight ... I'm afraid to disturb it. Excuse me, sir, I know what we're here to do.

Comm. No apology needed. It's daunting, but it's grand, and we're going to do it. Which means bringing in expertise ...

Hiram You've come to the right people. We've got vision and to spare! Not to speak of men, machinery and know-how!

Eugene It's the know-how that's important!

Comm. How are the workers, Anton? Morale's high?

Anton They're well fed, sir, warm, well paid ...

Comm. ... and they'll use their money to bring out their families. This country's going to change. (He looks around.) Dare I say it, it will change forever! Look at it Steve, remember it. It won't always be like this. The hand of man's upon it, and man will reshape it as he

Mark Don't feel sorry for'em or you'll be doing it with everyone, instead of only me.

Sophie You done this before?

Mark (lying furiously) Only once.

Sophie Once more than me. Hey!

Mark Yeah?

Sophie Every time we do this, it's one more for me, one more for you ...

Mark Yeah ...

Sophie How'm I gonna catch up?

Mark That's easy. Next time, you come twice, I only come once.

Sophie Eh?

Mark Don't talk about it, I'll show you.

Mark and Sophie become silhouettes again as she's guided towards her second – and third – sexual climax. Downstairs again, Ian shows interest in the sounds he hears from upstairs.

Ian (listening) He can't keep it up forever! I reckon Sophie can though. Could be something in this for me!

11. Travel

A travel agency. Rose is seated at a table, facing Verity Maclellan.

Rose (reading the name on his table) That's an unusual name.

Verity It looks English, but my grandmother on my mother's side was French, and she wanted everyone in the family named after a virtue.

Rose Verity Maclellan. It's an unusual combination ...

Verity It might have been worse ...

Rose Are there other ... names in the family?

Verity Granma wanted one of my aunts to be christened Chastity, but the parents objected!

Rose It's a name with, shall we say, some barriers built in!

Verity Would you like me to get those railway timetables for the continent?

Rose Please. We'll need those. (Verity leaves the room.) Chastity. It's burning me. It makes me feel I'm a joke. I'm in a state of denial, like the moth that says there's no such thing as flame. (softly) And then flies into it. Question for you to answer, Rose: did the moth know what it was doing? Did it think the flame wouldn't hurt? Or was the flame so alluring that the moth (her voice rising) never had a hope!

Diana comes into the agency.

Diana Sorry I'm late. They kept me waiting.

Rose We've got lovely names, darling.

Diana Not helping much, are they?

Rose The young man's getting us a timetables.

Diana We need two.

Rose (crying) We'll be together on the boat ...

Diana ... and then ...

Rose ... and then ...

Diana ... we have to do it ...

Rose It really is now or never.

Diana So we have to make it now.

Rose Then.
Diana It's not far away.
Rose My heart's going to break.
Diana And mine.
Rose It has to be done.
Diana It's like loving a deformity because you're used to it.
Rose It's become a part of you.
Diana Us.
Rose We mustn't let it go on.
Diana I think I'll die when you go away.
Rose We have to die so we can start again.
Verity (returning with the timetable) Ah! If you were wearing the same clothes I'd never be able to tell you apart.
Diana It was like that for everyone, so we bought ourselves different clothes.
Verity (unsure) Yes ...
Rose Do you have two timetables? You see, we're taking different trains.
Verity Yes I do, yes. I'll get another.
He leaves, and the sisters embrace.
Rose (with great tenderness) We are, aren't we, Di?
Diana (with great love) We are, aren't we, Rose?

12. American Steve

Steve is resting on the bed in his room in the barracks. The screen behind him shows views of the mountains where he's been travelling, and then, as the scene develops, they give way to the Rupert

Bunny painting at the Courtneys' house, then to Tricia, then to the silhouette of Steve and Jane on the wool bale.

Steve When people look back in a thousand years they'll see my work. They'll find towns beneath the water. They'll see a parched land brought to life. Oh! (The painting appears.) Nothing ever went wrong in those rooms. Tom and Margaret know what to do. (Tricia appears.) And Tricia's the same. She'll manage me like her mother does. Taste, unerring skill. She walked into my life when I was empty ... because her parents thought she should. They knew me better than I knew myself. (The silhouette of very active lovers appears.) That's for bloody sure! Aaaaaaaahhh! I want her to walk in here. This minute! This second! (He's in a rage. The screen shows us Miles Franklin lashing his car with her whip. Steve sags, deflated and ashamed.) How could I do it? How could I not? I'd do it right now and I'd be ashamed. I am ashamed. (The images rotate on the screen behind him.) I want to live my life with honour. I want to be honoured when I die. But I don't know what I am. I'm still being assembled. The nuts and bolts are loose. Nobody's seen the thing work ... (There is a knock at the door.) Yes, come in.

In walks an engineer we haven't seen yet: American Steve (USS). He looks like Steve, which means he looks like Mark.

USS Hi, Aussie Steve. I'm American Steve. Can we talk?
(Steve is even more confused than he was a moment

ago.) You look stunned. I guess I've taken the advantage.

Steve You're the image of my brother. And he's the twin of me.

USS You've got a twin? They'd better not put the three of us together, we wouldn't know who we were!

Steve That's quite a problem.

USS They've just taken me on. You and I are going to work in the same section.

Steve (groaning) Oh.

USS Hey, you're not being very welcoming.

Steve Your name's Steve?

USS No, it's not, but when the guys saw me they said I reminded them of a guy in a film who's called Steve, and he's got all these girls falling over themselves for him so I decided it might be a lucky name. Then they told me about you, so they said I had to be American Steve, and they'd make you Aussie Steve ...

Steve Just what I needed.

USS It's a joke. We don't need to get excited. What do you want to be called?

Steve Good question. A wise and happily married man.

USS With all your mistakes behind you ... and all your fun too!

Steve You might be right, but I'm not out of the woods. There's trouble every way I look.

USS Well, here's a bit more for you. The guys decided that since we look alike, and we've got the same name,

that you should have the job of showing me around. I have to tell you I am very competitive, so you're going to have to be at your best if you want to stay level. I said level. I won't be letting you get in front.

Steve Just what I bloody well needed.

USS Come on Steve, be smart. We're going to turn this into one good thing for both of us. What're you going to do for me tomorrow, eh? What am I going to learn?

Steve I'm asking myself the same thing.

USS You make me a coffee, and tell me about yourself. Then I'll tell you about me, and when we're ready for bed we're ready for tomorrow. Eh?

Steve Whatever you say ... Steve. One of the reasons I'm absolutely tossed by you is that I have a twin brother Mark, and you look horribly like him ...

Steve ... which means I look like you. That'll be uncomfortable until we work it out.

Steve Twenty or thirty years should fix that.

USS You guys got a different sense of humour from us. Start there!

Lights fade, and the two Steves disappear.

13. Wild oats

Max Some man who runs a fish and chip shop in a town where they don't buy any of our cars.

Muriel What did he say?

Max He was Greek, and very excited. He said Mark had to marry his daughter.

Muriel What was his name?

Max Oh, it came out in the flood ... Pan ... Pan ... Panzopoulos!

Muriel Never heard of them!

Max Nobody's heard of them. He said his wife was shrieking ... well, she was like a fire alarm! I said, You got a bushfire up there in ... I forget the name ...

Muriel What did he say about his daughter?

Max (coughs) There had ... apparently ... been a period ... of intimacy ... lasting seventy-two hours ...

Muriel And then?

Max Mark sent her back to Mister and Mrs ... Panzopoulos. Unharmed, as far as I could tell.

Muriel Those people do make a lot of fuss about ...

Max (another cough) I know. But really ...

Muriel He does do it all the time ...

Max Wild oats, my dear, wild oats ...

Muriel Rosie and Di, my dear, what about them?

Max Virtue is a load for women to carry, and nobody's more aware than I ...

Muriel What do you mean? Max!

Max Nothing, my dear, I'm speaking on behalf of men ...

Muriel I'm desperate to see them all married ...

Max Me too. Trouble is, one day I'm desperate to have them off my hands, and then I'm terrified of being on my own.

Muriel Max, we are married. That way, we are never alone!

Max (miserable) You know what I mean.

14. Quarrel

John and Gillian Urquhart are in bed, reading. The voices of Mark and Jane, very loud at times, can be heard somewhere outside.

Jane You are rotten to the core! There's nothing you wouldn't do!

Mark I reckon there might be a few skeletons in your cupboard, if you had the honesty to look!

John Oh my goodness.

Gillian Don't interfere. They've got to sort it out.

Jane Don't touch me! Get away!

Mark So fuckin full of yourself!

John How long since they saw each other?

Gillian It'd be a month.

John It might be better if it was six.

Gillian It might be worse.

John Worse?

Mark Don't you compare me with my brother, that's the dirtiest thing you can do!

Jane How many women are you comparing me with?

Mark The more the merrier. We're only young once. You understand me, or are you too bloody thick?

Jane I understand you well enough. Thank God I've woken up in time!

Gillian Uh uh. I thought they'd get to this.

John We can't let this go on.

Gillian (raising her hand) A peace that's imposed is no peace at all. It's something they have to find for themselves.

John Love ...

Gillian All the world wants love, but when we go looking for it, it ends up further away.

John That's a dismal appraisal.

Gillian Perhaps, but fair.

John (wondering at his wife) And yet you never lose hope.

Gillian Hope, faith, call it what you will ... without it we die.

John We all die. There's no avoiding that.

Gillian There's no need to fear it, either, so long as we've lived well.

John Things have gone quiet.

Gillian Not for long, I dare say.

There is a knock at the door. Then Jane appears, with Mark close behind.

Jane (formally) Mark and I are going for a drive. We apologise for the noise.

John Is that wise? I think you're a little too excited to be driving.

Mark We need it sir, to make peace.

Jane If we can.

Gillian Why not a walk? By the time you've crossed a few

hills, you might be listening to each other.

Jane Mark wants to drive. I've got to let him have his way, it seems. In everything!

John Don't start again darling. Go for a drive if you think it will help. We'll be here when you get back.

Jane and Mark disappear. John and Gillian stare into each other's eyes, each holding, but not looking at, a book. Suddenly a car engine starts, very loudly, and the car, driven by Mark, roars away at dangerous speed.

John We're in the hands of fate, my love.

Gillian Or worse.

15. Burial of Mark

We are in the cemetery of a tiny country town. Mark's coffin is beside an open grave, with two funeral directors beside it. There is an Anglican clergyman, robed, and around him are John and Gillian Urquhart, Max and Muriel Morris, Tom and Margaret Courtney, Steve, with Tricia, and Rose, Diana and Lily Morris. Jane Urquhart, very pale, and still, is sitting on the passenger seat of a car which has been brought close to the graveside.

Tom (to Max Morris) It had to be here, you understand. Otherwise the doctor wouldn't have let Jane attend.

Max My wife agreed. I'm still accepting.

Tom Of course.

Margaret (of Jane) Her feelings are more important than anybody's. She has to start her life again, if she can.

Max So do we all, if we can.

Margaret It's a great loss for you, but your other children remain.

Max They smashed into that tree. I want to chop it down.

Margaret (reproving) I'm told it's been there three hundred years.

Max Then it's been there long enough!

Tom (amused) Careful! If we say that of others, they may say it of us.

Max It's only a tree! Did you see the car?

Tom I did. Not pretty.

Max How did she survive when Mark didn't?

Margaret It was his side of the car that hit the tree.

Max I know what you're saying.

Clergyman (beginning the final prayers) Remember not the sins and offences of my youth: but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness.

Max God went to sleep. God looked away. God wasn't any use.

Muriel Say goodbye to him, Max. They're going to lower him soon.

Clergyman The days of man are but as grass: for he flourisheth as a flower of the field.

Max (feebly) I want him back. I want him to have his life all over again.

Muriel Some mistakes are fatal, Max. Mark made one of those.

Jane I hardly know what's happening. It's something very solemn. There's so many people about ...

Gillian Only family, darling. I made that clear at the church ...

Jane Look.

Numerous figures present themselves at the back of the scene – George and Yatty, Michael, Helen, Karen and her son Jesse, Nell; Uncle Bill, Adrian too; Cyril, Dawn and Luke; other members of the family that we saw assembled for the photo in War, Scene 1; and then, depending on numbers of people available, members of Mark's cricket team, and cricketers he played against; Sophie and her parents, Ian the barman, etc etc.

All The body's going to join the soul. They'll find each other and fade away.

Clergyman For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more.

All He's going ahead now, with none of us far behind. There's nothing to hang onto that will hold us here on earth.

Clergyman But the merciful goodness of the Lord endureth for ever upon them that fear him: and his righteousness upon their children's children.

All Grieving drains us. We need to be strong.

Muriel Such a waste! Oh, such a waste. I spent myself in the making of him, and he threw it all away.

Max We should have stopped him. We should have made him a different boy.

Jane I can't wake up. It's all a dream.

Steve (to Tricia) When they lower him, we'll go around to Jane.

Tricia I'm with you darling. Always!

Clergyman We commend unto thy hands, most merciful Father, the soul of this our brother departed, and we commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

All The world forgets. Memory lives on in us. We mustn't let it fade.

The funeral directors loosen their ropes and Mark's coffin is lowered out of sight.

Clergyman The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

All Summer will come again, and winter's cold. Grass will grow, and grass will die.

The figures at the back, the living family portrait, fade from view, and we see instead the Urquhart family property which Mark, had he lived, would one day have shared with Jane. The views of rolling countryside which we saw in Scene 3, Family Line, reappear on the screen at the back. Steve and Jane move around the grave to be with Jane. She rises, as best she can, from the car seat to embrace them. The three young people put their arms around each other. Others, feeling a similar impulse to be close to Jane, move around them, so that for a few moments we can hardly see the three young people at the centre of what's happening.

All He took himself away. In a rage, he brought his life to

an end, leaving his problem ... leaving his problem with ... (softly) ... us.

But Jane, recovering slightly, and Steve and Tricia think otherwise.

Tricia I never knew till now, and now I know. How strange!

Jane I was afraid till now, but she's bringing me back to life.

Steve Tricia's wrought a miracle, and I'm cured.

Margaret (to Tom Courtney, very quietly) Our daughter's done something. We'll see it for a miracle, when we understand.

Tom The poor girl's standing up. Something's made her strong.

John (to Gillian) Darling? You see? This is amazing. I thought we'd lost her.

Gillian Mark's gone. We've said goodbye. She's moving on!

Jane In my darkest hour, I give thanks. I've been made strong. I say to everyone here ... and I want to ask, I wonder, did you see them all, as I did ... (Four women in white, whom we've seen several times before in these operas, with flashes of colour on their collars - red, yellow, purple, blue - are suddenly close to Jane, as if they had thought, a moment ago, that she needed support, or even that she had called them to take her away.) ... I say to you all, I will go on. I can start again. It will be hard, and I will be lost, or weak, many times, but I am starting again. Mark didn't take

me with him, though he might. I think we know what he meant by this. He spared me, and I forgive him, as I have been forgiven!

She puts her head on Tricia's shoulder, and Steve, who was for so long torn between the two of them, does the same. Tricia puts an arm around Steve, an arm around Jane, and looks tenderly on her parents, who see that their daughter has taken over at last.

❧ End of Opera 5 ❧

A Generation

1. Waiting

Jane Urquhart is sitting on the grave of Mark Morris, her former fiancé. The grass around the cemetery is dry, and shimmering in a breeze.

Jane I'm sorry about Mark but he chose his own end. Most of us don't get the chance to do that. I can't sit here forever. Where shall I go? I don't know and that's why I'm here. (She lies on the grave and stares at the sky.) I loved two brothers and where did it get me? We're only alive when we're doing something for someone else, and I'm locked up in myself. Home. There's nowhere else to go. It's where we start, and where we end. I haven't left it yet. How weak I feel ...

Jane leaves the cemetery; the grass ripples a little longer before it disappears.

2. Home

The verandah of the Urquharts' homestead; John and Gillian are at the table where Steve and Jane became aware of their desire for each other.

Gillian Sherry, John?
John Please darling.

They touch glasses, and sip.

Gillian You've been thinking ...
John There are two great currents in life; swim against them and you won't get very far.

Gillian They are ...
John There's a great outward journey we all have to make ...

Gillian ... and then...
John ... late in life, perhaps, there comes a time ...
Gillian ... when ...
John ... whether or not we know it, we turn for home.
Gillian I take it you mean, to die.
John To prepare ourselves to die.
Gillian And where do you think we are, my love? Is the tide beginning to turn?

John If you watch the sea, you know when the tide's coming in. You can tell when it's going out. But there's a time in the middle when you're not sure ...

Gillian ... if it's going anywhere at all.
John The ocean's getting ready to swing, one way or the other. (He smiles.)

Gillian And where are we, my love?
John Swinging ...
Gillian Which way will the waters go, when they decide to move?

John We have a daughter ...
 Gillian ... who's paralysed by pain and shame ...
 John ... who needs to catch a new tide.
 Gillian One that's coming in, or our lives have been wasted!
 John You are never wrong, my love.
 Gillian Shall I fill your glass?
 John We have to be ready for the moment, when it comes.

3. Two Steves

Steve and American Steve (USS) are together in Steve's room.

Steve (holding a letter) It's great, I want her to come up, but
 the timing's bad.
 USS You've got some news?
 Steve From Tricia. She wants to bring a family party here,
 they'll stay a week or two, then she'll stay on, to be
 with me.
 USS Lucky man.
 Steve Trouble is, I got news today. They're sending me out
 to the tunnel.
 USS You want me to look after your girl?
 Steve No thank you! But something in that line, yes.
 USS Explain. I'm not backward in this sort of thing!
 Steve Tricia wants to bring Jane. Jane's the one who was
 engaged to my brother.
 USS She needs a chaperone to show her round.
 Steve Tricia's not even sure that she'll come.
 USS What's the problem?

Steve She doesn't want to do anything.
 USS You get her here, Steve, and I'll give her a good time.
 It's not easy when everything's gone wrong.
 Steve Thanks mate. I knew you would.
 USS We mustn't think we can bring about a miracle. It'll
 happen inside her when the time's right, and if we're
 lucky, we'll know.
 Steve I suppose you're right. Who knows?

4. Letter from Rose

Max and Muriel are sorting through their mail.

Muriel Listen to this. (reading) They talk English, but why
 they say what they're saying, I never know. I keep
 expecting signs of friendship, but they never come.
 They're curious about where I'm from. When I tell
 them, they think they've forced me into an admis-
 sion. I'm furious with them then.
 Max That's our girl! What does she say about a job?
 Muriel (reading) I went to the Jaguar address you gave me,
 father. I've never seen cars gleaming so brightly, even
 on a Sunday. (Muriel looks at Max.) I announced my
 name and it was as if I'd blown a trumpet!
 Max Wonderful!
 Muriel Wait, Max! (reading) I was ushered into the office.
 The man in charge was oh so charming. 'You've come
 around the world to see us!' I was a colonial, return-
 ing home. Capital H. He said, 'With these recommen-

dations, we've got to do something for you ...'

Max (trying to grab the letter) Let me see!

Muriel (keeping the letter away from him, she continues to read, but at some point in the reading, it is suggested that Rose's voice join and/or replace her mother's) And he went on, 'But if I offer a position according to what I've been told, everyone in this place, myself included, would have to move down a step, and I would be most unpopular! So I'm giving you a position, to start with, you understand; I know you'll work your way up' ... and he smiled with a wily charm which told me I was a very young chicken in a country where the foxes are born old ... 'with one of our outer-London agencies, a brand new position, wonderfully stimulating and marvellously challenging' ... and he beamed as if he was elevating me to a knighthood when he was throwing me what no one wanted ... 'because I know that few people would have the energy or the intuition to make the success of it that you're going to do.'

Max Am I supposed to laugh or cry?

Muriel That's what her letter's about Max! Let me finish. (again, Rose's voice can be used as well as her mother's) I was in a brand new Jaguar being delivered to an agency on the edge of a city which is exciting in the middle and more miserable than anything I've ever seen on the outskirts. I'd been dumped. And yet,

they must expect to sell cars, or they wouldn't have an agency. I'm to run the office, and they'll find out tomorrow what that means. They think they're going to give me orders and tell me to make tea ... but there are surprises in store for them. And she finishes ...
With love to you all ...

M, M & Rose ... Rose.

Max and Muriel look at each other, understanding each other only too well; proud of their daughter, unable to do anything to help.

5. An accident

A party of visitors is reaching a vantage point for looking over the mountains: Max and Muriel Morris, Tom and Margaret Courtney, John and Gillian Urquhart, American Steve, Tricia, and Jane, who is last to arrive. She sits without saying anything.

USS Steve's under that next range. Almost on the other side.

Muriel Will they burst out in the sunshine?

USS No ma'am. They're way down deep. No light down there except lamps, blazing night and day. Working twenty four hours. Never stop.

Tricia Until?

USS Until they meet up with the drilling crew from the other end. That's miles away, you can't see it from here.

Max What if they miss each other? They'd look silly then!

USS We're engineers, sir. We don't miss.

Tom How precise a meeting is good enough for you?

USS We're working in rock, sir. We're not polishing diamonds. I'd say ... one eighth of one inch.

Others So close, when you've come so far!

USS We're surveying day and night. Laser beams. We're not guessing.

Tricia Is there a man called Anton, down there with Steve?

USS He's in charge of concreting, not the same shift as Steve.

Tricia You know him?

USS (cautiously) I've met him.

Tricia Is he as accurate as you say the tunnel has to be?

USS Tunnel's been dug when he gets to work. He pours concrete, so the water can flow through.

Tricia And Steve?

USS Same thing, but they take turn about.

Gillian Is it dangerous?

USS Not meant to be, ma'am, but people take risks. There's slugs of slurry shooting out of a tube like a big gun firing shells. You don't want to get in the way!

John How does all this slurry turn into a pipe?

USS We make another pipe sir, from pieces of steel. We fire the slurry between the steel and the rock, filling the space. When we can't get any more slurry in, we move on. Sixteen hours on, we shift the steel. Steel pipe makes concrete pipe. When the pipe from one

end meets the pipe from the other, you've got a tunnel!

Margaret It sounds dangerous to me!

USS Safe enough, ma'am, so long as you're not in the wrong place!

Tom (chuckling) That's the secret of life, young man! Always be in the right place, avoid the wrong ...

Margaret ... if you can do it. (to Tricia) Darling, what does Steve tell you about this?

Tricia He wouldn't work with Anton. He insisted on another shift.

Tom Why? I didn't know that?

Tricia He said that Anton was likely to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, because he wanted to be there.

There is a silence, then Jane speaks for the first time.

Jane If there's danger in the work, Steve would know.

Gillian Why do you say that darling? What can you see?

Jane I see what we all see ... but I can hear ...

Gillian What do you hear, darling?

They are silent; we hear the rhythmic thudding of shots of slurry being pumped at high speed through tubes into reverberating spaces, then we hear a scream. In the tunnel far beneath the visitors, Anton's leg has been ripped off, thanks to his carelessness, or perhaps his death-wish, and men are rushing to get him out of the confined space where the slurry is being pumped in. It takes some

time for the concreting to be halted, then the work of getting the wounded Anton out to an ambulance begins. Some of this is made visible on the screen behind the visiting party, then the previous vision of mountain ranges returns, except that a siren begins to wail.

USS We don't hear that very often!

John Should we stay here out of the way?

USS We're told to clear the area, sir, in the event of any accident.

The party gets ready to go, but Jane sits quietly.

Jane Unless the accident is already there, inside ourselves.

USS Pardon, ma'am?

Jane Most of them are, you know. That's where they come from.

USS Give me your arm, Jane, please. We're not allowed to stay around when there's trouble. (Tricia and others assist him in getting Jane to her feet.)

Jane I don't think I caused it. I think it was ready to happen.

The party leaves.

6. Questions

The Commissioner's office; he is questioning Steve.

Comm. I'm told you refused to work with him. Why?

Steve He wasn't safe, sir. He had a death wish.

Comm. What made you think so?

Steve He read me letters, sir, and I heard the music he played. His room was next to mine.

Comm. Letters?

Steve Ones he'd written to his wife, years before, when he believed she'd been unfaithful.

Comm. Why on earth did he read you those?

Steve He had a troubled heart, sir, and he wanted me to know.

Comm. You're engaged to be married, I think?

Steve I am sir. My fiancée's been here the last three weeks.

Comm. You didn't take leave?

Steve There was no one to replace me. Anton had no support but me.

Comm. Yet you wouldn't work with him?

Steve I did another shift. I saw everything he did.

Comm. And?

Steve His work was good, but he did it dangerously. He put himself at risk.

Comm. How?

Steve When the slurry's being fired, you have to stand behind.

Comm. And?

Steve He tempted fate. He wanted it to seize him.

Comm. How strange. You didn't report this?

Steve There was nothing to report, sir. Only a feeling that I knew ...

Comm. ... what would happen?
 Steve I felt so, sir.
 Comm. You're right. We can't operate on intuition, though we hear it at times. We're engineers. We calculate risk and design it into what we build. Nothing can go wrong in the world we design ... and then something happens to tell us what fools we were. When are you getting married?
 Steve We haven't set a date, sir, though we'll have to do it soon.
 Comm. No difficulty there, I hope?
 Steve No sir. We're very happy. I've told Tricia, who's going to be my wife, that I've one more thing to do before I'm ready to move on. (The Commissioner looks at him, waiting.) I have to write to Anton's widow.
 Comm. He was Austrian, wasn't he?
 Steve She lives in Vienna. He read me letters he wrote to her, wretched letters, full of jealous rage ...
 Comm. Unjustified, in your view?
 Steve He told me so himself. I came to understand him. It was a burden, and a part of my growing up.
 Comm. Draft a letter for me to sign. She'll need all the support she can get.
 'Steve Sir.
 He withdraws, and the Commissioner follows him out.

7. Letter from Di

Max and Muriel again, with another letter. Max has hold of it this time.
 Max It's from France. Perhaps I should check it first ...
 Muriel Don't be silly. Let's hear what she says.
 Max She says ... (reading; and as with the earlier letter from Rose, the voice of the writer can be used with or instead of the voice of the reader) The last week has been crazy. Next week's going to be the same. If I don't write today I'll never write. (Max comments.) In great big letters. (reading again) Never say never! Never say no, say *c'est possible, mais un peu plus tard*. (Max comments.) Whatever that means.
 Muriel Let me see.
 Max (clinging to the letter) You didn't let me. (He goes on.) It's a romp. One of them wants to take me flying, one to take me on a boat, and I don't even know which river, but there are lots of chateaux, he says. One will get me a job in a vineyard, and all I have to do is look beautiful ... which reminds me, my mirror has been flattering me since I got here ... and another says he's going to dress me so that I become a new woman ...
 Muriel (shocked) A new woman! What sort?
 Max (ambivalent) An exciting one!
 Muriel (primly) Keep reading.
 Max It's a watching and waiting game. I drink almost nothing, though I keep a glass in my hand. I'm laugh-

ing all the time, a little out of body, flitting about for my own amusement ... (Max comments.) Out of body, she says. All the time, I wonder?

Muriel She should go back to England at once.

Max We're only young once ...

Muriel That's what you used to say about Mark!

Their interaction comes to a painful halt.

Max (sadly) Mark ...

Muriel Our boy we've lost.

Max We haven't lost Di. She's being courted in France.

Muriel We're losing her with every minute that passes. Unless she comes back married.

Max She's taking a different path. Her sister's the organised one. She's going to climb up the ranks in that company ...

Muriel Don't read me any more.

Max (glancing at the letter) I think it's all much the same. (seeing something) Ooh!

Muriel What does she say?

Max He bet me that I wouldn't put my clothes in his bag and walk out of the church with only an umbrella. That was an easy bet to win!

Muriel Oh!

Max (from later in the letter) I told him to take me to a bar, where I would dress while he undressed. He's not as good to look at as I am, but he did what I told him ...

Muriel She's making this up! It isn't true you know! Max!

Max I don't know actually. I've no idea at all.

Muriel That's what she's working on. She knows we've no way of checking.

Max Then she's still connected with us, because if she wasn't, she wouldn't care. We'd never know.

Muriel Who wants to know?

Max We lost Mark without knowing.

Muriel I don't want to find out that Diana's ruined herself.

Max Young people have to be free. They can't grow up if their parents tie them down.

Muriel They must learn to restrain themselves!

Max You're always right, Muriel. (meaning she isn't)

8. Under the Rupert Bunny

The Courtneys' house. Tom, Margaret and Tricia are seated beneath the Rupert Bunny painting.

Tom Set a date yet, darling?

Tricia Sort of. But not final.

Tom What are you waiting for?

Tricia We'd love it if Jane got married on the same day.

Tom Has she got anyone in mind?

Tricia We have. American Steve.

Margaret (catching the idea) American Steve ...

Tricia He told Steve that she touched him, and he felt she was calling him to pull her out of where she is.

Tom He wants to think it was full of meaning, but that could come from him. It may not mean anything at all.

Margaret And it could mean everything.

Tom So how do we know? Something else has to happen ...

Tricia Something else has to happen ...

Margaret Something else has to happen ...

Tom Lord, what creatures we are ...

Tricia Unpredictable ...

Margaret Never knowing, from one moment to the next, what we're going to do ...

Tricia (referring to the marriage date) I'll let you know as soon as there's anything firm.

Tom I've spent my life wishing I could see into the future. But who knows? Maybe it's better that we can't.

Margaret Unless of course we can.

Tom Darling?

Margaret American Steve will bring her back to life ...

Tom How will he do that?

Tricia Mother?

Margaret She must think he's the same man, come back for her again. He must be almost, but not quite, the same. He has to work on the Urquharts' property, become part of the family. I think everything would flow from there.

Tricia I'll pass it on.

Margaret Pass it on to Steve. I'll speak to Gillian and John. I think we can make it happen. (She looks at her husband.) Tom, you're smiling ...

Tom Show me the power, in heaven or on this earth, that could stop it once it had been decided! Tricia my darling, you are already on the way to becoming like your mother.

Margaret What else could she be?

Tricia What else could I be?

Tom I'll have to give Steve some lessons. Men, you see, believe they're in charge because they can't see the forces flowing round them.

Margaret And when did you see, darling?

Tom When you joined me on that ship ...

Margaret The ship from Adelaide, and I wished I'd got on in Perth.

Tom You might as well have done. Once you decide to tell a fib, it doesn't matter how big it is. Something's either true or it's not.

Tricia What's all this about?

Tom I was coming home to be married, and your mother joined me on the ship.

Margaret We've never told anyone before.

Tricia Family secrets! I see I'm in the club!

Margaret You've got some of your own, I'm sure. It's an initiation for people of our class.

Tom All classes, darling. The secrets are merely a little different, here and there.

Tricia I wonder if Jane knows what we're planning?
 Margaret She has a way, now, of seeing into the heart of things.
 Tom She knows, then, and she's waiting.
 Margaret Waiting ...
 Tricia Waiting ...
 T T & M ... for her world to change, by bringing her more of the same!

9. Anton's letter

Steve is in his room in some barracks; on the screen behind him is a view of the mountains where he's working. He is reading Anton's letters to his wife, written years before.

Steve What a devastated mind! He torments his wife as a way of torturing himself. (Thinking of the woman to whom he's going to write.) Helena. She must have wanted to escape him, but he escaped her. Australia! Are all these people mad, who come here to work? The men send money home, if they don't lose it gambling. Fools! Throwing money on the ground. Fighting. Men without women are worse than dogs. Men with women ... can be like Anton. (reading: again, Anton's voice can be used here as well as Steve's) I see Bohumil knocking on your door. I see lust like fog in your eyes ... I see the two of you on the bed, rubbing each other with the wine I gave you, licking with greedy tongues ...(Steve puts the letter

down.) I have to write to her. I have to make something she can live with from the wreckage of his life. (He stands.) That will be hard, Steve Morris, not to say impossible! Hey? (The barracks have disappeared and he is alone on a vantage point overlooking the mountains which are his place of work, and were Anton's. Addressing the mountains, he writes a letter in his head.) Dear Helena, You do not know me. I am Steve Morris, an Australian engineer. I worked with Anton. I knew him well. His room, which is empty now, is next to mine, and I heard the music that he played when he couldn't sleep. It was like listening to the workings of his mind ...

Steve looks across the ranges, and hears, or thinks he hears, the thudding of the machinery that fires slugs of slurry into the space between the tunnel and its surrounding rock. The siren of an ambulance wails for a moment or two, then all is quiet again.

I knew he was troubled when he played songs about love that wasn't returned. I'm sure he was unjust to you when he played those songs. I'm sure he was telling you a lie, in the hope that you would believe it about yourself. I am writing to say that he was wrong, and I know that you will wonder who I am and if I am to be trusted, so I will swear to you that what I say is true, and since we have to swear by something we think is holy, I will swear to you ... by the earth itself, by these mountains that ring me round, which will

enclose your Anton forever, that he loved you, that the love had become as twisted as his heart and that he knew, deep down, how wrong he had been. That is why he brought his life to an end. He wanted his lie to live no longer. I write, this one time, to share these thoughts with you, to wish you well, and to urge you that you must go on ...

The barracks reassemble around Steve as he finishes his letter.

... because we are foolish if we think we hold any importance in ourselves. Our lives and the love that's brimming in us are nothing unless they're offered to another. (He signs) Steve Morris.

10. The change

John and Gillian Urquhart are on their verandah.

John Is Jane lying down? Or reading?
Gillian She's gone for a walk.
John Not very far, I hope?
Gillian Only to the end of her days.
John Darling? What?
Gillian He's working where the two streams meet, building you a shed.
John (looking at his watch) Oh yes, I said I'd pick him up.
Gillian I'll pour you a sherry darling. They'd prefer to walk.
John Is something happening that I've failed to see?
Gillian You weren't here. A couple of hours after he left, she

stood up, quite agitated. She didn't say a word, but her eyes told me it was now or never. I rushed up with her hat, and she strode away. I watched her walk. She was stronger than I'd ever seen her. She'd taken a grip on the future, to make it hers.

John And after that?
Gillian We shall see, I think, before too long.
John (lifting his glass) Will you join me?
Gillian There's nothing else to do!

They sip. The verandah darkens, John and Gillian leave, and lights come on inside the house. Jane and American Steve walk onto the verandah, hand in hand, then to their rooms.

Gillian (out of sight) Dinner will be on the table in ten minutes. If you want to freshen up, do it now.
Jane (happily) Thank you mother. Steve!
USS Hey!

The lights stay on a few more moments, then they darken. The accompaniment tells us that people are moving about on bare feet, and we see again the silhouette of lovers on wool bales that we saw when Steve was visiting the Urquharts (Scene 3, in Opera 5, Twins). As the silhouetted lovemaking continues, the light brightens once again in the bedroom of Gillian and John, before fading slowly.

Gillian All is well, at last, I think. All is well. My love?
John (sleepily) What darling?
Gillian All is well. With Jane.
John All is well?

Gillian All is well.
 John I never know how you know things.
 Gillian I never know how I know them either, but I do. I hear them as they happen.
 John (sleepily) Darling you'll have to tell me in the morning. I forget things you tell me in my sleep.
 Gillian I'll tell you, darling, in the morning. You sleep now, but for me, the morning's here!

At once the day begins to grow bright, and the household to bustle. A phone rings. Throughout the following dialogue we see little or nothing of those speaking, but their words become louder as the phone conversation goes on until the intimacies become ridiculous.

Gillian John, answer that could you?
 John Hello?
 Voice Hello, this is Rosemary Wishart, and I'm sorry I don't know what time it is down there. We always think you people live upside down.
 John Rosemary, I think you're Steve's mother, is that right?
 Rosemary I surely am! Right from the day he was born, and quite a while before, come to think of it.
 John I'm not sure if he's awake. I'll get him for you. (after a pause) Steve!
 USS (drowsily) Sir?
 John Your mother's on the phone. She wants to know how you are.

USS Tell her I'm coming, sir.
 John He'll be right with you Mrs Wishart.
 Rosemary Rosemary, that's what I like to be called. (very loudly) You there Steve?
 USS Mother I am.
 Rosemary You well?
 USS Mother, I've never been better.
 Rosemary I rang your office, they said you hadn't been there, I got worried!
 USS I took leave mother, as I told you.
 Rosemary That was ages ago! I got worried!
 USS When you meet the people I'm with, mother, your worries are going to end!
 Rosemary Have you got as far as that, son?
 Jane (not on the phone, but joyfully) He has! And so have I!
 Rosemary Who's that I hear in the background?
 USS (proudly) That's Jane, mother, the daughter of the people I'm with.
 Rosemary I don't know who you're with! Who are they?
 Jane (very loudly) Come out and meet me! Look me up and down!
 Rosemary Is she beautiful?
 USS Oh yes! Oh yes and yes and yes!
 Rosemary Is she good enough for you?
 Now it's the turn of John and Gillian to enter the conversation.
 J & G Good enough for anyone in the world!

Rosemary I'll get your father!

J & G No more telephone talk! Bring him out to meet us!

Rosemary They wanta meet me? And your father?

USS Of course they do!

Jane You come out here if you're game!

Rosemary Hey! This is a challenge! There's something going on!

Jane (mock-American) There shore is, pardners! (She bursts into laughter.)

Rosemary Here's your father now. He wants to know what's happening.

Jane Hey there Mr Wishart! You get yourself down to the travel office and book yourself a plane. You have to meet me, or you'll be missing out on something! Hello? You there, Mr Wishart?

Rosemary He's gotten shy all of a sudden.

J& G, J & USS Oooooooohhh! (They're mocking this shyness.)

Rosemary He's getting out a cheque book, I think we're going to come.

J&G, J & USS Aaaaaaaahhh!!! (They're triumphant!)

11. Miles Franklin

Tricia and Steve are boiling the billy near a stream in the mountains of New South Wales.

Tricia I'm not sure that what I'm making you do is right.

Steve Why's that?

Tricia These are the mountains of your youth. Exaggerated and grand!

Steve They're worn, darling. This is the oldest of lands.

Tricia It's all in how we see things. For me, they'll be forever young.

Steve Young if you like, but nothing's forever. Everything grows old.

Tricia I don't like to think so.

Steve If nobody died, think how crowded the earth would be.

Tricia I want to be the exception.

Steve I'll let you be an exception, darling, but who takes notice of me?

Tricia I do!

Steve (pointing) Someone coming.

In the distance there is a figure leading a horse. Both are moving slowly.

Tricia (scared) That person's coming to speak with you!

Steve I don't know what makes you think that. Hang on. I've seen her before.

Steve stares at the approaching figure, who turns out to be Miles Franklin, whom we last met in Scene 5, of Opera 5, Twins. She is old now, tired, and her horse is weary too. The approach can be shown on the screen, then Miles can enter the stage space without the horse.

Steve It's Miles, and she's grown old.

Tricia Miles who?

Steve Franklin. The writer. She came on me when I was troubled. She had some harsh words to say, and she was right.

Tricia (standing up as Miles gets near) We're making tea. Will you join us?

Miles I mustn't deviate. I'm going home.

Steve If you mean Talbingo, it's over there. (pointing back where she's come from)

Miles I was brought up in this country. I don't need any city-based youth to tell me the way home.

Steve You'll find I'm right. Stay on the road. If you get on your horse you'll be there in five minutes.

Miles Your mind's too full of opinions to let you see that I'll be here forever. Where else can I live but my eternal home?

Tricia When you say that it frightens me.

Miles So he found you at last, young lady. Make something of him, if you can.

Tricia We're doing it for each other. It's something we understand.

Miles Then give me a blessing, for I'm as weary as my horse.

Steve It's your blessing we should be asking, not giving you something we've no authority to give.

Miles Authority can move around. Remember the Cheshire

cat? It disappeared, leaving only its grin. A silly story, but true, when you get to my age.

Steve (directing again, as Miles moves toward the stream) Talbingo's straight down that road. But is there anything there these days?

Miles I don't need anything but rest. I'm waiting to hear the old Jounama whispering as it's done since eternity opened its face on the world. And where are you two off, this fine morning?

Tricia We're going back to Melbourne, to marry. It's time for Steve to take on everything that makes a man. He's ready, I'm proud to say, and I'm ready to be his wife. Did you ever marry?

Miles No. No. No. That's a sad answer, perhaps. Who can say? I never found the man I wanted. Perhaps he was never born. Dreams fly about in our minds until we lose touch with what we think.

Tricia Is that what happened to you?

Miles I grew old, and my dreams grew stale, and now I'm finding my way home.

She moves to cross the stream, but Steve intervenes.

Steve I'm sorry, I have to say this. (firmly) You're heading in the wrong direction!

Miles (as she vanishes) What would you know about it? You're leaving the mountains, and I'll be here forever!

12. A wedding

The scene is near the front steps of Saint John's Toorak, a bluestone church of the Anglican faith. Max and Muriel Morris are waiting for their guests, while a photographer stands to one side.

Muriel I rang the reception before we left. There's thirty seven telegrams already.

Max Rosie and Di?

Muriel One from England, one from France.

Max They're with us then. That's good, isn't it? (He sounds desperately relieved.)

Muriel This is the biggest day of our lives, Max.

Max What about when we got married?

Muriel One generation gives way to another. That's the way it's got to be.

Max Is that why we're so early?

Muriel We're not going to miss a moment. They're too precious. That's why he's here. (indicating a professional photographer)

Max When's everybody going to arrive?

Muriel They're coming now.

Cyril and Dawn Bowden appear, and with them are Norman and Edna Morris, Varney and Jean Bowden (not seen since Scene 1, in Opera 2, War), and some grown up children.

Cyril It's good of you to ask us. The gap's grown wide, with the years.

Muriel Steve insisted. He made us get out a picture taken ever so many years ago ...

Dawn At Waratah Bay! Steve was only a boy! I wonder that he remembers!

Muriel He did! He said, if they're in this picture, and they're still alive, they've got to be invited. (She whispers.) His father wasn't so keen, but Steve's very firm, once he's made up his mind.

Cyril Max'd be in his element today, wouldn't he? Organising the cars?

Muriel It's done him the world of good.

Dawn Tell us about the girl Steve's going to marry.

Muriel High class. We don't have a lot in common ...

Dawn Are they going to get on?

Max (butting in) Of course they are. I'm giving them a car!

Muriel A very special car, need I tell you?

Cyril What sort?

Max When she arrives in it, you'll see! (He's very proud of his gift.)

Muriel (as two more cars pull up) Here's some of the people Mark played cricket with. Steve said they had to be here!

Max It was Jane's idea. The girl Mark was going to marry. She said she wanted Mark's friends here to approve of what she was going to do.

Cyril (amused, and puzzled, as the latest arrivals approach) What if they didn't approve?

Muriel She's got confidence, that girl. Seemed to know they would.

Max I've spent my life looking at these people, and I still don't know what they've got.

Dawn Money!

Max And something else. They think they're right. And it's a funny thing, if you think you're right, it somehow makes you right. Ever noticed?

Cyril I think I'd say the opposite.

Dawn Now don't start an argument, Cyril.

Cyril It's a day for making ourselves clear ...

Max ... to each other, yes, I agree.

Muriel Good heavens! And we haven't even had a drink!

Another car pulls up, and we see George and Yatty, Michael and Tom, Karen and her son Jesse (quite a young man), and Nell. They approach a little awkwardly, unsure of their reception. Max and Muriel move to accept them, also somewhat stiffly.

Muriel Yatty and George. Long time no see!

Max (looking at the once-youngsters) We're all a little older than we were. I reckon you must feel the same?

Yatty You've got a man over there to take pictures. I wonder what he'll do with us, today?

George He can't do any harm that we haven't done to ourselves.

Max We choose the way we live. It brings things we never expected.

George One of them is that we don't matter any more. Quarrels that divided one generation mean nothing to the next.

The implications of this statement are still being considered when a car pulls up, allowing Steve and American Steve to step out. They approach the church, shaking hands left, right and centre.

Max My son.

Muriel Our son.

George Everybody's man. And who's the other?

Muriel Here's his parents now. They've come from America, to be here today!

The Wisharts, Rosemary and Jordan, come forward to greet and be greeted.

Jordan You surely know how to turn things on in this town! We got caught in a traffic snarl, but the driver said he'd get around it, and he did!

George It's the Olympic Games; they're bringing everybody out.

Max Bringing in people I'm not sure we want!

George Better than making war on them!

Yatty Peace and goodwill, George, that's the message for today.

Rosemary It surely is. Now! We'd better go in. The brides won't stop if they see us all out here. Stevey! You lead the way. Get these people inside!

USS Up to us is it mother? Come on Steve, we've been told to show the way!

Steve and American Steve go into the church and others start to follow, though Max and Muriel hang back, waiting for somebody. Then she arrives, Lily, their last child, and her suave and rather menacing partner, Rinaldo.

Muriel You look gorgeous, darling ...

Lily This is Rinaldo, mother. Father, Rinaldo.

Rinaldo (smoothly) Mrs Morris, buongiorno. Signore!

And he's gone, with Lily, into the church. Max and Muriel follow, and then, as the last of their guests enter, two more cars arrive, bringing Tom and Margaret Courtney, and John and Gillian Urquhart. A number of people who've been keeping to the shade of trees now come forward to greet the Courtneys and the Urquharts.

Tom It takes an event to bring everyone together.

Margaret Tom thinks he's growing old.

Tom Tom knows he's growing old when he presides over his daughter's wedding.

John If he presides, he's doing better than most!

Gillian You're looking wonderful, Tom. If you're feeling half as good, you're a lucky man.

Margaret You're the fortunate ones. You've got Jane back on her feet.

Tom We'd better go in. We mustn't hold up the occasion.

The Courtneys, the Urquharts and their friends go through the door of the church and move as quickly as possible to the back of

the stage; then the rear-projection screen is drawn aside, so that the audience is looking down the church from the viewpoint of the celebrant. The Courtneys, Urquharts and their friends now move to their positions in the church, which means they are approaching the audience again. There is a fanfare, and we see the brides, brilliantly lit, at the back of the stage, attended by four bridesmaids, who, as they get closer, we can see are a little older than Tricia and Jane. Each carries a bouquet, and from these bouquets hang ribbons – purple, blue, red and yellow. The clergyman who is to officiate follows immediately behind, and moves through them as they stop beside Steve and American Steve. The clergyman reaches the front of the stage, and turns his back on the audience.

Clergyman Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God, and of this congregation, to join these couples in holy matrimony ...

Jane I never thought this day would come.

USS I don't want it to end, and yet it will.

Steve I hardly feel I'm fit to be here.

Tricia We make ourselves fit by love and dedication.

Clergyman ... an honorable estate ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity, into which holy condition these persons present come now to be joined.

Margaret Watching them makes me feel I'm watching myself.

Tom And you are; but the eyes themselves are growing old.

Gillian Accepting age is our only way of staying young.
 John We make ourselves light so others can be heavy on
 the earth.
 Clergyman If any man can show any just cause why they may not
 lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else
 hereafter for ever hold his peace.
 All Join them. It's why they're here.
 Clergyman When I join these people, do I act for you all?
 All You do.
 Clergyman When I speak to these people, do I speak for you all?
 All You do.
 Clergyman Let us pray for a blessing on those who are to be
 joined before us this day.
 George (from the congregation) Let them lead their genera-
 tion away from mistakes of the past.
 All Yes.
 Yatty Let goodwill fill every heart that's here today.
 All Yes.
 Karen Don't resist change. Let yourselves be made new.
 Steve Change me then, I'm in your hands.
 Tricia Hear the silence in my soul as I tremble.
 Jane Hey, what's going on? I'm feeling strange!
 USS I'm far from home, and it's how I chose to be!
 Tom We're doing it to each other, and together ...
 Margaret ... and none of us will leave unchanged!
 Clergyman (to the couples) Take each other by the hand and say
 as I say: I want to, I mean to, I am decided, I am here

for no other purpose; I will; and I do.
 All I want to, I mean to, I am decided, I am here for no
 other purpose, I will, and I do.
 Couples I want to, I mean to, I am decided, I am here for no
 other purpose, I will, and I do.

A tremendous fanfare breaks out.

Clergyman The register. You must put your names to what's been
 done!

The clergyman, the couples and the four bridesmaids move to the
 back of the stage and for a moment, though a brilliant light fixes
 itself on their presence, they are almost out of sight.

Margaret They've done it Tom. It's happened ... all over
 again.

Tom ... all over again. The oldest trick in the book, and the
 most moving of all.

Clergyman (at the rear) Your names as you sign.

Jane Jane Urquhart.

USS Steve Wishart.

Clergyman Jane and Steve.

Steve Steve Morris.

Tricia Tricia Courtney. (She laughs, or shrieks, it's much the
 same.) No! Tricia Courtney-Morris!

Clergyman Steve and Tricia.

The fanfare again, and the two couples move to the front of the
 stage. The clergyman makes a sign of blessing as he disappears at
 the rear, and the photographer moves to centre front, with his cam-

era. The congregation moves forward to be with the couples and the rear-projection screen moves across behind them to show that we are outside again.

Tom The day looks different.
Margaret Because it is.
John Nothing's ever the same.
Gillian We make a new normality. We pretend we don't know what we're doing.
Karen And we never do!
Jesse Mother!
Yatty She's right Jess. It shocks you, but it's true.
George We see more clearly when it doesn't matter what we see.

The photographer is trying to get separate pictures – the couples, the bridesmaids, et cetera, but the crowd is pressing and he has to take what's forcing itself on him. Accepting this, he indicates that everyone is to move into position more or less as he directs them, behind the two couples who are the centre of it all. So, over a short period, one large group forms itself, with Jane and American Steve, Tricia and Steve Morris, at the centre.

Couples Heeeeeeeey! Hooooooooooh! Haaaaaaaaah!
Photog. Wonderful! Lift those flowers!

There is an affirmation in the music as he takes his picture.

USS Thank you everybody. Here's to us!

Another acclamation in the music as the two couples are taken.

Steve The parents! Those who made us!

The group rearranges itself so that the parents are at the centre – Tom and Margaret, John and Gillian, Rosemary and Jordan and, somewhat awkwardly but rather touchingly, Max and Muriel Morris. The four bridesmaids press close behind Max and Muriel, giving them a dimension of awareness that they normally lack. The Courtneys and the Urquharts reach their hands sideways to link with the families they don't normally associate with and there is a moment of bonding.

Margaret We have no choice. Events have swept us where they wanted us.
Gillian Isn't that always the way?
John Nothing continues unless it adapts.
Tom First law of life!
Muriel I never know what you mean, Tom.
Margaret He's giving us a thought to unfold as the years go by.
Max We do all the giving, who does all the taking away, that's what I want to know!

The photographer signals that he wants the newly married couples back at the centre so the group swiftly rearranges itself. The photographer indicates with much motion of hand and arm that he wants the next picture to be definitive, and he fusses about the location of everybody, their visibility, their smiles, the proximity of suitable colours, et cetera.

All (as they're being arranged) Wonderful, wonderful wedding, happiest of days! Some of us never made it; from those who got here, praise!

Steve I'm changed. I'm ready for you, my love.

Tricia We've come through our growing pains ...

Margaret, Gillian and Muriel can see that this isn't right.

M G & M Ah well ...

Tricia Don't tell me there's more!

M G & M More, more, more ...

All Lots and lots and lots and lots, ever so much more!

Jane They mean we're only starting. Okay! Come on, whatever's still to come!

USS She's strong in a way I don't understand.

Max We've all got some learning to do!

He indicates to the photographer that he ought to finish the job. There is a tremendous flash as the last and final photograph is taken.

All Wonderful, wonderful wedding, happiest of days!
Some of us never made it; from those who got here, praise!

End of Opera 6

Sons

1. Cloud

The opera begins, like Opera 3, The Mountain, at the edge of the clearing. There are now five crosses, and Annie, watched once again by grieving flame people, is driving in a sixth. Her three eldest sons are with her, and Lucy is somewhat apart.

Annie (naming the children she's lost) Hope. Nicholas. Prudence. Faith. Mercy. (and the latest) Charity.

George What do they mean?

Annie Nick was a Christmas child. The others carried the name of virtues.

Robert What are they?

Annie Things that it's good to be.

Ned A bird in a tree.

Annie A bird is better than us, but it's never virtuous.

Ned What's wrong with it?

Annie There's nothing wrong with it, so it can't be virtuous.

Ned Beats me.

Annie Will you be beaten, though?

Ned Eh?

Annie You're still thinking of schemes ...

George (acting as leader of the trio) Schemes?

Annie To do away with your father.

George His eyes are failing.

Annie No.

George We watch him. (gesturing towards the mountain) He can't see any more

Annie What's failing is not his eyesight but his vision.

Robert Same thing to me.

Annie You mistake your man.

The boys – young men – think this funny. There is a rumble of ugly laughter from them, a current of evil waiting to be released.

G R & N Aaaaaaaahhh ...

Lucy (apart) That noise is evil. It wasn't always there.

Annie (overhearing) Perhaps it was. It became obvious when they turned into men.

G R & N (again) Aaaaaaaahhh ...

Their sound reveals a bottomless awareness of the power they now contain.

Lucy They're out of your control now, mother.

Annie Come to me my daughter. I have something to confer on you.

Lucy No!

Annie Come to me.

Lucy No!

Annie Our lives are tied as closely as mine with Giles.

G R & N Aaaaaaaahhh ... (Their hatred for their father is apparent.)

Annie You must record whatever happens. You know, I think, what that will be.

Lucy No!

Annie You will outgrow your resistance because your eyes will show you what you cannot deny. You will write it down.

Lucy Write it down?

Annie In the journal which I am passing on to you.

Lucy What use is writing?

Annie Truth is the soul's only protection. You've never seen the world outside, so your idea of what we're like is pure.

Lucy (pointing) Where does that track lead?

Annie To the world where you will live one day, and your brothers, I dare say.

George Where will we live?

Annie Far from here.

The three sons are exultant, having feared that they might never get away.

Robert How soon?

Annie Soon enough, from what I see and hear. (The flame people blaze brightly, then begin to disappear. Annie watches them.) Always a bad sign. They're fearful.

Ned Who is, mother? Not me!

Annie No, you're not fearful. Nobody's broken you open, to show you what's inside.

Lucy The world down there ... Are we higher than other

people, mother?

Annie We live on a mountain.

Lucy Higher in that other way I know you understand?

Annie Nobody is. But being on a mountain gives us clearer sight. That is why we're here.

G R & N Aaaaaaaahhh ...

This is caused by the arrival of Giles, down from his mountain, and in a dark mood. He touches Lucy's shoulder as he moves to join his wife. The three sons look sullenly on him.

Annie What did you see?

Giles There was cloud.

Lucy (to her father) When will I go down this road, to see the world outside?

Giles One day there may be a man good enough to take you away.

Lucy What if I go by myself?

Giles When I am gone, you will be free, and not before.

G R & N When you are gone!

Giles I'll live for a thousand years to keep you under control.

Annie Be off you boys! Watch them, Lucy, but keep away when they go down the shaft. When you come back, I'll give you the book.

Giles The book?

Annie Lucy's sight is clear. I am complicit in what we've done. She is helpless in the face of what will happen, and will write it down.

Giles Writing? Whoever thought it would be so strong?
 Annie I did, when you brought me the book, which now I hand on.
 Giles Strange ...
 Annie Come with me, Giles. Inside.
 Giles Read me what you've written.
 Annie No. You live and the book records. That is how things are.
 Giles I am troubled, Annie. I cannot see, any more.
 Annie Cloud ...
 Giles Cloud ... in the sky, and in the mind.

He and Annie go into the tree house, watched by the last of the flame women, flickering still.

2. The pit

We are again beside the mineshaft we saw in Opera 3, Scene 4. George, Robert and Ned come to the shaft, and see at once that the vine they use to climb in and out is dangling into the pit, instead of twining around a rock, as they normally leave it.

George Someone's been here?
 Robert Lucy!
 George She's too clever to let us know.
 Robert Mother. Spying on us.
 George She doesn't need to look.

They look at each other, then burst into the ugly, potent sound they make.

G R & N Haaaaaaaah!
 Ned Father! Cut the vine and trap him!

They laugh again at the thought that their father might be in their power. George pulls the vine to see if it's carrying any weight. It isn't, but when George tugs it, a sound comes up from below. Someone is playing a harpsichord piece by Johann Sebastian Bach, and the sonorous music confuses the young men.

Ned Weird!

Robert picks up a stone and tosses it down. There is a splashing sound, and the music shifts to another piece of Bach. Ned hurls a rock down to stop the unfamiliar sound, but it goes on, resonant and wonderfully articulate.

Ned Something bigger!

The three drag a boulder towards the shaft, put their shoulders behind it and push. They wait. The music stops. There is a pause, after which we hear a chorus of screams and wails as if we are outside a row of torture chambers.

George That's better!
 Robert The vine!

They grab the vine and disappear into the shaft. Then their three voices – deep and brutal – join the clamour, exulting in it, cruelly participating.

George Whip them to death!
 Robert Cut him loose from his skin!
 Ned Make a parcel of him and send him home!

Lucy appears at the edge of the bush, and listens. Her face reveals her contempt.

Lucy They're the same flesh as me. I need to cut them away!

She pulls in the vine, then stands by the shaft, considering what she hears from below.

George Tie him up and starve him, let him grovel for his food.

Robert Cut out his guts then give him food.

Ned Get father and tie him here so we can end his days with pain!

Lucy Enough! (She has a knife and moves to cut the vine.)
I'll cut off your escape and let you live in your thoughts until you die. Then I'll shovel earth on you until you're forgotten!

Annie too comes out of the bush and looks at her daughter.

Annie There's no improving them, and to become as they are is worse. Throw them the vine. Give them their way back.

Lucy No, mother. Did you hear them?

Annie I've heard every sound they've ever made. Nothing's hidden from me. Lives are determined by things we can't control. Every once in a while there's a miracle. See, one's happening now.

The forest around them fills with flame people, flickering, dazzling, and singing too, in voices full of anxiety and pain.

Women Aaaaaaaaahhh!

Lucy They don't want my brothers back up! Surely?

Annie They cry in pain. Sometimes in pride. They yearn to get back on earth, until they see the horror it serves up to us!

Lucy My father! I want to protect him.

Annie His vision protects him, and he's lost it. It only comes in rare moments. He'll be leaving us soon, to find his way back. He's nothing without the thing his mind provides, and it's gone blank.

Lucy My father?

Annie Your father. He's in a danger of his own creation. These ... those ... (contempt in her voice) are offshoots of his mind that he doesn't know how to own. He has a problem to solve.

Lucy How long will he be away?

Annie Who knows? Years ...

Lucy (in deepest anguish) How did this come to be mine?

Annie Pull the vine. See what it's like down there.

Lucy pulls the vine, and dreadful screams of people being tortured can be heard, together with the exultant approval of George, Robert and Ned, using their recently-made-male voices. Lucy, in an extremity of anguish, pulls the vine some more, and once again we hear Bach's harpsichord, rippling with a stream of notes.

Lucy What sort of place is this?

Annie Now you know why Giles needs his mountain. Now you know why he brought me here. Now you know why he loves you, because you can see what he sees. Now you know why he scorns those boys. Now you know, if you think about it, why they'll kill him – because he can't make them any better. His vision can't be handed on. Now you know why I'm the useless woman that I am. I can't do a thing about what's to come. Neither can you. Except you have a job. Write in the book. Others, one day, may learn. Our experience will be like the pain of those people below – a prelude to something better, somewhere, some day. Now you know why the flame people hang about, hoping, scorning, longing to walk the earth another time, to do a little better if they can. We live the lives those people wish they had. How does that inspire you?

Lucy It makes me weak, mother. Weak.

Annie Drop the vine. My sons will need to get out.

3. The journal

Lucy is in the tree house, at a table close to the fire. She has in front of her the journal which Annie has handed on to her. She is overwhelmed by the task she's been given.

Lucy I never expected this. How heavy my life's become. (Four other children – her brothers Gordon and Sam,

and her sisters Faith and Dorothy [Doll]) come in and sit by the fire, occasionally glancing at Lucy, her table and her book.) Knowledge is a curse these ones don't have to bear. What is there to say? My father's in a crisis I can't understand. He wants to go back where he came from, and find his way to us ... if he can, again. What if he loses his way? Could anything be worse? To wander, lost, forever? I think not. I have a home my father made. A little place of sense, surrounded by trees. Above our clearing is the place my father goes, to look over the mountains beyond his control. At the edge of his vision there's a sea, nibbling at the land. There's no order in nature, so the mind, in desperation, imposes. Mother says he can't do this any more. How strange. I fear that when he's gone my brothers will let loose things from that pit. The flame people, who give us glory, won't protect us. I feel lost. How many more times will I write until this matter finds its end?

She draws a line under what she's written, closes the book, and touches Gordon, Sam, Faith and Doll tenderly. They respond with smiles.

4. Vision lost

Giles is on his mountain, hoping that what he had will be restored.

Giles The evil's rising like smoke from that shaft. I could fill it in but there are others. Evil's permanent and it

blocks out everything else. My view's the same but the mind considering it has changed. I saw it as my expanded soul but now it's only bush. The evil from that pit is poisoning my mind. I want to go down there and snuff it at its source, but who could do that? The church has tried for centuries, and how little they've ever done. I thought it would be easy. Escape the world. Begin again. This we did, Annie and I, and where are we today? Breathing the fumes I thought would never follow. There was never any escape and yet I must go home, and retrace my steps, checking carefully with every one, making sure I bring only strength, and no new evil, as I return. Return I must. There's nowhere I belong but here. I have to make this place pure, or die. (He thinks.) Is my end approaching? I sometimes think I see it, flickering in the silences of Annie's mind. She says the flame people are frightened, she says the spirits are wary of us, not as sure, now, as they were. I must be strong.

We become aware that Giles is being observed by George, Robert and Ned, who are in the upper branches of trees at the side of the clearing.

G R & N Mmmmmmmmm. (a sullen, rumbling roar)

Giles They want to wear me down. They'll find the irresistible and the immovable combined in me.

He walks off his mountain, passing beneath his sons without looking up.

5. Letting go

We hear Lucy's voice; presumably she is writing.

Lucy A strange thing happened. Mother was by the fire, cooking. Father was on his peak, trying to regain composure. The boys were in the trees. I was on the ground, wondering where I should be, when the most amazing cacophony burst from the shaft that I call The Pit.

As we watch, the pit and the forest around it come into view. The pit is smoking, and a sequence of most horrible sounds come from it. People are being torn limb from limb, somewhere out of sight.

Lucy (still writing) I kept away. I went to the edge of the clearing, and waited. George, Robert and Ned rushed to watch. My father: my faith in him is wavering. He too left his mountain and went to the pit. I heard him shout 'You fools! You fools!': the voice of someone who is angry but can do nothing. I realised that forces he thought he'd put behind him had burst into the world he'd created for himself ... and for us. He'd made something special but what he'd locked out in making it had found its way back in. My heart filled with fear.

Annie Seclusion is no answer. It took me years to learn. Giles has locked out the sense that people foolishly call common.

We hear George, Robert and Ned wildly mimicking the noises from

the pit. The smoke billows from it, encouraged by their voices.

Lucy The things that happen down there might overwhelm us. There's no protection. My father must kill the boys before they find a way to connect the bottom of the pit with our clearing. They must not make a ladder! I have to cut the vine, even if it means trapping them below. Giles, my father, must kill them. Kill! Kill!

Annie Silence, Lucy!

Lucy I'm writing, mother. As you told me I must do!

Annie Your father's coming home.

Now we see Giles. The pit turns into the fire where the tree house cooking is done. Annie is beside it, and Lucy, at a table, writing.

Giles (to Annie) They won't hurt you when I go to Cornwall. It's me they want to destroy. All will flow calmly when I've gone.

Annie Defeated.

Giles I will be stronger. I'll work out what to do as I find my way back.

Annie (quietly) They'll kill you.

Giles Never! They'll live quietly when I've gone, and be gone by the time I get back.

Annie So says the fool.

Giles What do you say will happen?

Annie I say nothing. I cause nothing. I am like the pit myself; an entry to the world.

Giles Never! You brought Lucy, Gordon, Faith, Doll and Sam.

Annie We have to make something of them.

Giles And we shall! I'll set them to work!

Annie Doing?

Giles I'll divert the river so it flows down the pit, and extinguishes the fires ...

Annie (sadly; giving up) Go to Cornwall. Go soon. Come back when you're ready. We'll survive without you. The children will grow up, and leave. I'll stay here. I've been true to you for years, I'll not leave you now.

Giles Even though I'm leaving you.

Annie If that is how it is, then that is how it is.

Giles Speak to me.

Annie I've already spoken. Go.

Giles Not yet. I've things to do.

Annie So you say.

Lucy (writing) This is tearing me apart.

Gordon, Faith, Doll and Sam come by the fire where their parents are seated.

Giles (loudly) George! Robert! Ned! Here by me!

George, Robert and Ned enter the tree house quietly. They acknowledge their mother, then sit at the table where Lucy is writing.

George Say something good about us, if you can.

Lucy studies her brothers, then writes.

Annie Lucy? (meaning, what did you write?)

Lucy The book is mine, mother, now.
Giles (to Annie) It seems we must both let go some power.

6. A visitor

Annie is in the tree house; from outside, we hear the voice of Curcio, a wandering miner.

Curcio I'd love a cup of tea!
Annie (in good spirits) You must find it then.
Curcio (humorously) I'll come in, unless there's someone to strike me down.
Annie I'm alone, and I have no weapon, apart from axes, knives, pokers, saws with teeth ...
Curcio Harmless!

He enters, a hairy, unkempt, heavily-laden man who is active and quick of mind.

Annie Leave your things outside. Unlikely as it seems, this is an orderly house.
Curcio Then I've passed through a sea of murderous schemes to get here!
Annie You have.
Curcio There are people in the settlement who say your husband is going home.
Annie This is home.
Curcio Back where he came from.
Annie People talk.
Curcio People know.
Annie (conceding) It is his plan.

Curcio Why will he separate himself from you?
Annie His soul is searching. I may assist, but I am not the goal.
Curcio A good woman is the goal of every man, believe me.
Annie I don't.
Curcio What do you say?
Annie Not a word.
Curcio Silence is rare. Why have you chosen it?
Annie I have a certain vision of how events will move. I would rarely be believed, if I spoke, so I don't speak at all.
Curcio This is admirable.
Annie Tea. (She can pass him a cup, or, preferably, mime the action.)
Curcio This is only a fraction of what I need.
Annie Don't tell me the rest. When Giles leaves, I shall live here until his return.
Curcio If he goes to England, as they say in the settlement, why would he come back?
Annie Why are you in these mountains?
Curcio I'm looking for gold.
Annie Do you find it?
Curcio (laughing) I am a thorough man. I specialise in painstaking search. The gold watches me. It slinks away. When I'm in despair, it slithers into my dish. I see it shining. I take it out with tweezers and put it in a jar. In the settlement they weigh it. They give me money for my gold ...

Annie ... and ...

Curcio ... fool that I am, I return to the mountains, always alone.

Annie So there is another object of your search?

Curcio How well you've guessed.

Annie Can you name it?

Curcio Love, kindness, understanding, all these ... Let us say, the affinity of souls.

Annie This affinity, like gold, is common, but finding it is rare.

Curcio (weeping) Hardest of all is to recognise it before me, and to find it unavailable. An affinity in denial is the cruellest thing the heavens created.

Annie What you say is true. Yet it is also true that one affinity denies another. We have it in us to know many affinities, but to experience the strongest, we must put the others aside.

Curcio Am I answered then?

Annie There has been no question. There has been no answer.

Curcio Your husband is returning to England. You will be alone in a place the boldest hearts might shun.

Annie I am here by choice. I love this place as much as Giles does, and now I must say I love it more.

Curcio When it is yours alone, will you not feel a need to share?

Annie I am never alone. It is an illusion popular among men that women are alone. I am never alone, nor likely

ever to be.

Curcio I am filled with sadness by your reply.

Annie Then you were asking a question which I never heard.

Curcio Did I speak so poorly, then?

Annie No. You spoke so much that you did not finish your tea.

Curcio I shall leave it. I shall leave your house. Thank you for having me in.

Annie The universe is empty. Most people never know. It is your curse that you know it. It may be your blessing that the truth is not hidden from you. If you pass this way again you may ask for the cup you never drank. It will do you no harm.

Curcio Will you wish me luck, good searching, and a wife?

Annie I wish you all your heart desires.

Curcio picks up his things and leaves. Annie picks up Lucy's journal from the table and considers writing in it, but puts it down again, aware that what we have witnessed will never be written down because Lucy wasn't there

7. Meditation

Annie is outside, looking across the Wainwrights' small farm to the river which runs off the back of Giles' mountain. The tree house can be seen some way behind her; Lucy, as we shall soon hear, is inside, writing.

Annie The king who abdicates has nowhere to go but the grave. Giles must know this, but he says he's going home. Home is a place we leave to make a new home. Homes are the envy of those who have none. (The clearing around her begins to fill with flame people, flickering about her, and the stream she is looking at.) Pitiful as we are, they envy us. Not one of them will follow you, Giles, do you hear?

Lucy (out of sight, inside) Even the boys are stunned. They don't know what to do. They've had a victory without a fight, and this confuses them. Rams lock horns with their rivals, but my father says he will go ... and he says he will return. I think he knows he can't, because his departure will change us. He cannot come back to the same place.

Annie The mountain won't be the same without him. I have been content to live on its side, knowing, always, that he was at the peak. One of its rivers has been mine; I've had no envy of the other. I can afford to share. Full possession of one's soul is the greatest wealth on earth, and I've had it, with him, here. And yet he knows he's failed. Thank God there's no smoke, today, from that hole!

Lucy When the boys dream at night, they whisper in strange sounds. On earth there is nobody who understands but them. They want to kill their father, but they want him to resist. In overcoming him they hope

to find themselves. They must fight, to know what they're fighting for. My father refuses. He wants to slip away. This means he fears to fight because it will be final. He wants another chance. I fear we only get the one. Am I right? Am I right, father, am I right? We only get the one? Am I right, mother, am I right?

Annie My daughter's putting her misery in that book. Someone, some day, will read her sorrow. The track is the only way out of this clearing, but death is hanging over us, and the first to take the track will die. It will be Giles. Our joint endeavour, our creation, will die when he dies, and I shall be left ... not alone, I said I was never alone ... so what shall I be? I shall be surrounded by the fragments of a life that once was whole.

Giles (coming into the clearing from the mountain) Sorrow, and grieving, fill the air.

Lucy (still inside) When he leaves us, he'll be giving up his chance. From a peak, the only way is down.

Giles I hear voices, but not the words.

Gordon, Faith, Doll and Sam come out of the tree house and move towards their mother.

Annie Here, my loves! But give your father a hug as you come to me!

They don't. Something about their father scares them, or perhaps they sense that he's not their security any more.

Annie Hold me, little ones. Gordon, you're growing big. You'll be a man for me, when your father's gone away!

This distresses Gordon. Lucy remains inside, writing still.

Lucy The forces working on us have years to run their course. This is only the start!

A puff of smoke drifts across the clearing and we hear the voices, rather subdued, of George, Robert and Ned, somewhere near the pit.

G R & N Hmmm, hmmm, hmmm ...

Giles They will be gone. The pit will close, eventually, when I'm forgotten.

Lucy I write this book to prevent him being forgotten.

Annie The rivers will never forget, and the mountains will yearn for you.

Giles And you, my love, when I am gone?

Annie I will wait here for your return.

Giles Even though ... ?

Annie Even though.

The scene grows dark.

8. Something for the boys

The same setting as for Scene 8; indeed, as the light returns, it could be that the gap in time is only a few moments; or it could be weeks.

Giles I must get my money. And I have it in mind to do something for the boys.

Annie A wand, perhaps, for you to wave, turning them into swine?

Giles There would be little change in that. You have made me aware of my neglect of them. I wish to alter this.

Annie So?

Giles You must wait. I will be back tomorrow.

He heads for the track. Lucy rushes out of the tree house.

Lucy Take me with you! Father! It's not safe to go alone!

Giles I'm going to the settlement, my love. Tomorrow I'll be home. This is not the departure that you fear.

Lucy Why are you going down there?

Annie Your father says he's doing something for the boys.

Lucy Get a plate of steel and seal the pit!

Giles There are shafts all through the bush. They lead to a dimension that cannot be locked away.

Lucy Then purity is our only defence!

Annie Or acceptance. You'll find it just as good.

Giles I am more of Lucy's mind. But you know this. Until tomorrow, my wife, and Lucy mine. Tomorrow you will see what I bring.

He sets off for the track and as he enters the bush we feel the power and the centrality of the home he and Annie have made, far from anywhere else. Thunder rumbles not far away.

Annie His mountain misses him, every time he goes.

Lucy It will be lonely as we will when he goes to his other home.

Annie His illusion.

Lucy You say he has no hope, then?

Annie None at all, nor ever had.

Lucy (defiantly) I'm going to own that mountain! One day it will be mine!

Annie You'll find it a docile nag. It won't throw you from its back.

Lucy He owns it now, but when he's gone, it's mine.

Annie My daughter will be my lord! What next?

Lucy You're wiser than any of us, mother, but you never say what you know.

Annie When I have onions to hoe, I hoe them. When I have potatoes to dig, I dig. I leave nothing that should be done undone. If you live long and say that, you'll have lived well.

Lucy You're dutiful, and lasting, but it's my father who has the vision.

Annie Who wants to see far and not see everything? If you want to see everything, why not start at your feet?

She leaves, and Lucy goes back into the tree house.

9. The gift

The screen at the rear shows Giles returning. He is mounted, and leading three horses with ropes to the halters around their heads.

Two horses are fine-looking beasts, while the third seems lame. Giles dismounts, and ties his horse to one tree and the new horses to another tree some distance apart, then he comes to the tree house.

Giles Where's my welcome? Where are my sons?

From high in the trees near the track Giles has used to enter the clearing, we hear a sullen, rumbling sound which contains, however, a little excitement, because the boys have seen the horses.

G R & N Hmmmmm, aaaaaahhhhhmmmm ...

Annie Giles!

Lucy Father!

Giles Home!

Annie More horses than we've ever owned.

Giles We'll have peace in our clearing, and an end to that smoke.

Annie For a while.

Giles For as long as there's goodwill.

Lucy (disappearing inside) I need to write!

Giles She takes her task seriously!

Annie She knows it's not hers alone.

Giles A skinny book such as children use at school.

Annie When time sweeps us away, her book will be our voice.

Giles (asserting himself) My voice will grow stronger as I grow older!

Annie The day will come when nothing will speak for you but the pages she's writing.

Lucy (inside) Between these trees I see nothing but events seen by my inner eye. My brothers are coming down.

They are; George, Robert and Ned are walking across the clearing to the horses they sense are theirs. Giles is expecting to be thanked, but they are making themselves known to the horses, letting them sniff their hands and get used to them.

Giles They'll have to take turns. The third one is lame. One hoof clips the other as it moves.

Annie Sharing? That will be a lesson for them.

Gordon, Faith, Doll and Sam come out of the tree house to see what's going on.

Lucy (still inside) The forces are gathering. Events are taking shape.

Giles (calling to the boys) You can ride them bareback. They're used to it.

The boys release the horses, climb on, and begin to move about the clearing. Smoke begins to issue from the pit again, disturbing Annie.

Annie Something's not well. I didn't expect this.

Lucy It's a fire that won't be put out now. He's doomed.

The screen shows us the boys riding about the clearing, skilfully enough.

Annie (to Giles, of the boys) Now! Chase them away! They'll fend for themselves.

Giles (to the younger children, and ignoring Annie) Follow them. See how they ride. Soon it'll be your turn.

Annie Watch. Gordon senses danger.

Gordon watches from behind, or close to, his mother. Faith, Doll and Sam rush about the clearing, attracted to the antics of their older brothers. Doll and Sam find it exciting when the horses rush past them, almost close enough to knock them down. Faith is not so reckless. She's a little afraid of the horses, and ducks behind trees when they come close to her.

Lucy (as if she can see) Duck down, Faith, whenever they get near!

The boys are well aware of the reactions they are causing. They take pleasure in extracting squeals of delight and fear from Doll and Sam; Doll is simple and Sam is tiny enough to think it's fun. As the riding becomes more crazed, Faith ducks down behind a fallen tree. George, Robert and Ned, aware of her hideout, jump their horses over the log. Faith, squeezed against the log, is frightened. George brings his horse back for a second leap, followed by Robert. When Ned makes his move to do the same thing, he is a little slower because he's riding the lame horse. As it thunders towards the log, Faith's fears become too much for her. She screams, jumps up and begins to run, then screams again as Ned's horse lands on her.

Lucy (still inside) That's the end! He's killed her!

Gordon clings to his mother. Lucy rushes out of the tree house, calling to her father.

Lucy No, father, no! Give way to tears, not rage! There are

two paths. One is painful, the other fatal! Let's not have two deaths, here today!

Giles stands where he was when the accident occurred, and for a moment his reaction is in the balance, then he is consumed with rage. He screams at his second son.

Giles Robert! Bring me that horse!

The screen shows us that Robert hasn't the strength to defy his father; he gets off the horse and gives it to Giles, who leaps on its back. Ned, by now, is riding the lame horse as quickly as it can go towards the track that leads from the clearing. Giles follows. The crack of his whip can be heard somewhere in the bush, then we see that cloud is gathering around the mountain at the rear of the Wainwrights' little farm. Thunder and lightning tell us, throughout the lines that follow, of Giles' rage at his son.

Annie (kneeling beside Faith) Oh, the brain!

Lucy The bleeding. There's no thought!

Annie You foolish boys! Why do I blame you? It's because I'm loyal!

Lucy Faith! Her death destroys any faith I ever had.

Annie Robert! George! Kneel beside me and hold this child.

The boys do as their mother tells them.

Annie Never go down that pit again, as long as you live. Swear this for me, in the name of my daughter who's dead!

Robert As you say, mother, as you say.

George Your will's too strong for me, mother, I'll do what you say.

Annie It may protect you and it may not. (looking at the body) Faith!

Lucy Let's all say the name together. Let's see if we can bring her back.

Robert I can't say it. You're making me feel I'm to blame.

Annie George? What about you?

George I'm struck dumb. This death is a trick that's been played on us. Ned didn't mean to run her down!

Annie And yet he did. A crime's no less fearful because someone says they didn't mean to do it.

George But he didn't mean to do it!

The thunder rumbles and the lightning flashes on the mountain, not far away.

Annie Your father means to make Ned look on what he's done.

George Bury her quickly. Make her disappear.

Annie (savagely) You want to throw her down your shaft?

George No, bury her. Quickly. I'll get a spade.

Lucy We won't bury her until we've all said how we're going to remember her. She has to leave us knowing we won't forget.

George Nobody meant this to happen. She was safe but she got up and ran. It was crazy.

Annie How wise, how clever, do you think this world is? There's nothing so stupid that it isn't lurking nearby,

waiting to happen. Do you know something? Terrible actions pick their marks. They choose stupid people to bring them into being. If we do a terrible action we can't pretend we're innocent. The action chose us because it knew we couldn't keep it out. That's why a state of wariness is the only viable life on earth.

George Nobody knows what you mean.

Annie (looking at her bewildered and grief-stricken children) Then learn from your father if that's all you can understand!

Giles re-enters the clearing, mounted on his horse, and leading behind him the lame horse that Ned was riding. Ned is running before his father's horse. Giles dismounts, and points at the body with his whip.

Giles Pick up the child. (Ned does so; it is a moment of great discomfort for the others gathered there.) Say to us all: I am the cause of this!

Ned (nervously) I did not mean to be the cause of this.

Giles (in a rage) Say what I tell you or I'll slash you with this whip. Can I leave you in charge of events after what you've done?

Lucy Mercy, father, must wrap its arms around rage, and be more powerful.

Giles You are right to remind us, Lucy, but mercy must wait its time. Guilt and shame must bring the wrongdoer to his knees before mercy can arrive.

Ned I thought it was fun. I didn't mean her any harm.

Giles Get a spade and dig. How many crosses have we now? There will be another. Dig! Without a word. Dig! Speak and I'll bind another cross with the vine you use when you go down the shaft which is where you choose to belong. Speak, and the cross will be the last and only sign that ever you lived upon this earth. Dig now, until the hole's deep enough to bury the child.

Ned takes the spade that's near the other graves, and starts to dig.

10. The grave

Giles, still enraged, watches over his son. Ned digs. And digs. And digs. At some stage Annie comes out with a piece of cloth, or canvas, and covers Faith. Giles indicates with a raised hand that the body is to remain where it is.

Giles George! Robert! Get wood and make a box. Be quick!

George and Robert disappear around the back of the tree house. From time to time we hear hammering. From time to time, also, we hear Lucy's voice as she writes.

Lucy (inside) We're changing. What's happened will affect us long after the sun sets. Nothing can be the same. Where are the flame people to help us? The Wainwrights are lost. What brought us down, and when was it all decided? Father thought to make the

boys happy with the horses. His action showed the evil in us all.

Giles (to Ned) Dig!

Annie (wanting to do something for Ned) He needs strength. I'll make a meal.

Giles (ignoring his wife) Dig!

The hole grows deeper. Ned, who is not a tall person, has almost disappeared. The hammering continues intermittently.

Lucy (inside) The boys keep the accident outside themselves. It happened to them as well as Faith. That is how they see it. Therefore their father is crazed and vengeful. They want retribution. They'll take it the moment he looks weak. That will be when Faith is buried and he decides to leave. They'll pounce on him when, benevolently, he says goodbye. He'll farewell his life as he turns his back. Can we be judged by the way we end? In my father's case, the answer will be yes. This will take a lifetime to understand. How many more books must I fill?

Annie Is the coffin ready?

G & R Mother, it is.

They appear with the box they've made.

Annie I'll put my daughter in her box.

She moves to where Faith is lying, and uncovers her.

Giles (to Ned, in the hole) That's enough. Go to your mother, and watch.

Ned struggles to get out of the hole. Giles flicks the whip in Ned's direction, he grasps it, and climbs out. Ned and his father move beside Annie as she puts Faith's body in the box. While this is being done, Lucy, Gordon, Doll and Sam straggle out of the tree house and stand between their grieving mother, their angry father, and the sullen, confused, older boys.

Annie (to Faith) Today, there is nothing for you, my child. We'll grieve tomorrow. Today is only shock.

Giles We must begin again. The end of our first road is here.

Annie (pointing to the graves at the edge of the clearing) There.

Giles As you say, my love. Everything has to change. (He looks at his two eldest boys.) This is my demand on you. (to Ned) Faith's body will lie beside yours tonight. Consider what you've done.

George and Robert carry the box into the tree house, followed by Ned, Giles, Annie, Lucy, and the smaller ones. The clearing becomes dark, then fills slowly with grieving flame people, flickering lightly before their flames darken, and night has charge of the clearing. Thunder and lightning are active for a time on the mountain behind the little clearing, then rain falls. The night grows darker and we hear the thoughts of the family before light fills the eastern sky again.

Annie Our experiment has failed. It would have been better if we'd never come.

Giles My beginning; I must seek it out. Was this disaster present from the start? I need to know.

Lucy Faith left without a word, only that scream I'll hear as long as I live. (She relives the moment of Faith's death.) Aaaaaaaahhh!

G R & N (stirred by the scream to express their own frustration and fury at their father) Aaaaaaaahhh!!!

Gordon (a voice just breaking) This is unbearable. I want to die and be buried in a box like Faith.

Annie It's for me to hold it all together. What would the sisters say if they knew me now?

Darkness again, the passing of time, and then light in the eastern sky.

Giles We'll bury her before we eat.

The Wainwrights come out of the tree house: Giles, Annie, Lucy; Robert and George carrying the box which contains Faith's body; then Ned, with his burden of guilt, which is transforming to anger and a lust for revenge on his father; then Gordon, Doll and little Sam. They move to the hole which Ned dug, beside the crosses at the edge of the clearing.

Giles Ropes.

Gordon produces two ropes and lays them on the ground. George and Robert rest the box on them. Giles signals, and his four boys each take an end of a rope and lift the box above the grave. Giles looks at his wife.

Annie Nobody knows where we come from. Nobody knows where we go. Nobody can start their own life, and when their end approaches, nobody can send it away. Our lives are stories told briefly, remembered for a while, then forgotten. We repeat what others have done before us, but this we neither admit nor know. Love clings to the dead one, but love never had any sense, and never will. Life is its own justification, and there isn't any other. Faith Wainwright, bless you for being with us for a while, and ...

She pauses, indicating to the boys that they should lower their sisters' box. They do. At Giles' signal, they pull the ropes out of the hole.

Annie ... and think of us now and then, Faith Wainwright, when you're in that place where we all come from, and we, my little love, will think of you every time we pass your tiny hill of soil.

Giles Amen. Let me hear it from you all.

W family Amen.

Giles Yesterday is ended. We will eat.

They trudge back to the tree house. The clearing isn't quiet, however. Birds flash everywhere, and the flame people begin to flicker among the trees. Smoke rises from the grave where Faith lies in her box, and begins to belch in volume until we hear her scream once again, a pathetic, poignant cry of resistance now, but strong enough to stop the smoke and eventually to clear it away. Then the ground

rumbles, as if displeased by having to accept the young body, cloud settles on the mountain to the rear, and the mountain itself finds voice.

Mountain This is not good. To live so high, looking down, requires more.

Faith Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

The mountain grieves for her.

Mountain Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

The flame people flicker, then find voice.

FP There's worse to come, worse, much worse. They're eating together for the last and final time. Watch, watch, here they come.

The Wainwrights file out of the tree house, with Giles the first to appear.

Giles Everything will begin again. The past is to be put behind. I am leaving for Cornwall. One journey there, and a longer one back. If I die along the way, the farm, Annie, is yours. Yours is the record, Lucy; be just. Spare me a kind thought, when you will. George, Robert and Ned, you must redeem yourselves. Keep away from the pit. Gordon ... you are growing to be a man; I'll not know you when I see you. Doll. Sam. (He acknowledges the last two, then turns to Annie.) My wife ...

Annie Your life. Strange how the words go together. You're leaving.

Giles To return, better than I was. My journey starts today.

He embraces Annie, touches Lucy, and Gordon, nods to the others, then walks quickly to where the track enters the bush. His family watch, then, as he leaves, Annie, Lucy and the young ones go into the tree house. George, Robert and Ned glance at each other, sending and receiving signals of agreement. They rush for their horses and ride after Giles. We hear the horses' feet on the track, then the sound of a brutal blow.

Giles (a scream of desperation and pain) Aaaaaaaaahhh!

Annie (in the tree house) They've brought him down!

Lucy They'll throw him in the pit!

A & L (screaming) Aaaaaaaaahhh!

The earth rumbles, and the smoke we associate with the pit begins to foul the air of the clearing.

Earth Rrrrrrrrrmmm ...

Mountain What else did he expect, having made them what they are!

W family Aaaaaaaaahhh!

Lucy appears at the doorway of the tree house as her brothers ride back into the clearing, Ned and Robert together on the second horse, George on the first, and the body of Giles slung carelessly, almost falling off, on the lame horse, which is hurrying to stay with the quicker animals. From the direction of the horses' movement

it's clear that the boys are heading for the pit. The terrible noises we've already heard from the pit begin again, as if there is exultation down below at what the boys are bringing. The boys dismount, seize the body of their father, and fling it into the pit. As if to amuse themselves while rubbing into their father the ignominy of his end, they hurl rocks down after him.

Giles Aaaaaaaahhh ...

George You're there forever, we'll keep the vine away, so don't expect to climb out.

Robert You can plant a garden and persuade all the corpses to dig!

The boys are very amused at this.

Annie (inside) Keep away from them, Lucy, keep away.

Lucy I'm not like you, mother. Accepting's not easy for me!

Annie You'll find other ways to know the world if you live long enough.

Lucy Will I live long, mother? Tell me now!

Annie (coming to the doorway of the tree house to be with her daughter) You will outlast me Lucy. You will outlast us all. Whether you will welcome long life, or find it unendurable, is still to be known. One thing we know, you and I ...

Gordon, Doll and Sam come out as she is speaking, and cling to their mother, shaken terribly by what they sense has happened.

... is that there will never be a greater peak in our lives than what's been done today.

🌀 End of Opera 7 🌀

Lucy

1. Aftermath

George, Robert and Ned are in the trees on the side of their father's mountain. They are bored.

Ned We should have kept him alive ...
Robert ... made him suffer.
George She wouldn't have let us. (He means their mother.)
Ned So what're we going to do?
George Someone coming.

They look to the earth below where there is a man finding his way through the trees. It's Tim Hughson, a clergyman.

Hughson What's this? (He picks up a bag lying under some bushes beside the track.) Strange ... Where on earth am I?

He's surprised to see Lucy Wainwright approaching

Hughson Good morning. May I ask, who are you?
Lucy You may. And what have you got there?
Hughson A bag. It was lying under a bush.
Lucy Where?
Hughson There.
Lucy My father lost it, and we've lost him.
Hughson What's that you say?
Lucy You must show it to my mother. She'll tell you what's in it and you'll know it's hers.

Hughson You said it was your father's ...
Lucy Man and woman are one flesh. It's hers now that he's dead.
Hughson You've lost your father?
Lucy Lost indeed! Walk with me. (She leads him into the clearing.) Mother!

Annie Wainwright comes to the opening and studies the new arrival.

Annie Your mission, sir?
Hughson The salvation of souls.
Annie They must first be lost. We know where we are.
Hughson More than I can say. I've been struggling in this forest ...
Annie Where do you want to go?
Hughson Wherever there are people in need.
Annie You're in need yourself.
Hughson There's more than one meaning to the words 'being lost'.
Annie You'll interpret them I'm sure.
Hughson (feeling encouraged) We find ourselves when we find God. Being without God is the true meaning of being lost.
Annie Does God have a fire? Does he offer tea, and a bowl of stew?

Hughson It is said that there are fires in hell for those who reject him. As for meals, he offers spiritual fare.

Annie You are like my late husband. You think the spirit needs exaltation, whereas I know it needs a square meal. Will you eat with us?

Hughson Let's speak of your souls before I sit down to table.

Annie I need no conversion. Put that thought from your mind.

Hughson It's God himself that you're rejecting. This needs to change.

Annie Leave this clearing. If God knows the bush he'll show you the way home.

Hughson You'll not have me in and hear what I've to say?

Annie I'll have you on my terms. In this clearing, no other terms prevail.

Hughson Is this your kingdom then?

Annie If there must be kings and queens, then I am the latter.

Hughson (of Lucy) And your daughter?

Annie What of her?

Hughson She must marry one day.

Annie No doubt, but she's not seeking guidance.

Hughson Am I then of no use?

Annie Those are your words.

Hughson I'll leave your clearing then. I had hoped to find things otherwise. (looking around) Are those your sons in the trees?

Annie They choose to be there.

Hughson Strange, strange. What did your husband die of?

Annie (after some thought) Of causes internal to his mind.

Hughson A strange answer.

Annie Your track keeps to the left of the range. Cross no ridges and you'll get home.

Hughson So I'm being expelled ...

Annie You believe in the superiority of souls. I do not. Courtesy is more than morality because morality thinks it's right, and courtesy knows that to be an exaggerated claim. Good day, sir. Travel well.

Hughson leaves Giles' bag, and walks to the track, watched by Annie, Lucy, and the boys.

Lucy Will there be more of these people, wanting to change us?

Annie Wanting to change people is wanting to devour them. People cannot help themselves. We are lucky to live where we are.

Lucy The boys, mother? What's to be done about them?

Annie Their charmed life will come to an end.

2. Sergeant Benson

Still in the Wainwrights' clearing; we hear a horse approaching at a leisurely pace. The rider, Sergeant Benson, dismounts, ties his horse to a sapling, then approaches the tree house. Lucy watches him from the edge of the clearing. Benson is carrying a rifle.

Benson Good morning there! Anyone home? (From the entrance emerge Gordon, Doll, little Sam, and Annie Wainwright.) Mrs Wainwright? (Annie nods.) I want to speak to your husband. Where is he, please?

Annie bangs a saucepan on the chimney, and George, Robert and Ned file out. They look gawkily at the stranger. Sensing who they are, and what they've done, he raises the gun, and fires. Sticks from a fallen tree fly in the air as the bullet hits it.

Benson (to George) Sit over there.

George goes to the log. Benson fires a second and a third time, and bits fly from two other logs. Robert and Ned sit on them at Benson's direction.

Benson (to Annie) I'm Sergeant Benson. According to my information, your husband got money from the bank, and has disappeared. Where is he now?

Annie Who knows?

Benson Where's the money?

Annie It's in a bag under my bed.

Benson How did you get it off him?

Annie It was found on the track where it crosses the shoulder of his mountain.

Benson His mountain?

Annie It was always his.

Benson Did you not visit this mountain, Mrs Wainwright?

Annie No. I am a woman.

Benson Why was he leaving his mountain?

Annie It no longer gave him what he wanted to see.

Benson And what was that?

Annie Only he could say.

Benson Where is he now, then?

Annie Only he could say.

Benson Wait there please. (He strolls to Ned, sitting on a log.)

When did you see your father last?

Ned (confused) Long time ago.

Benson Where did he go?

Ned Fell down a hole.

Benson moves to the second log.

Benson I need to talk to your father. (Robert looks confused.) Tell me where he is.

Robert Won't be seeing him any more.

Benson Did he go away?

Robert (scornfully) Not very far!

Benson moves to George's log.

Benson Have you heard about the war that's started? Over there in France?

George What's a war?

Benson I might help you find out. But first, you help me. Who's that girl, near the crosses?

George Lucy.

Benson Your sister? (George nods.) Did she kill your father?

George Course not!

Benson How can I find him? (There is an angry rumble from the pit. Benson glances idly over his shoulder.) Storm brewing over there. Now, what about your father? He was good to you, wasn't he?

George Wouldn't let us go away.

Benson I might do something about that. Would you like me to help?

George My oath we would!

Benson signals to George, Robert and Ned that they are to join him at the tree house, to which he walks, a man sure of himself in a way the Wainwrights have never seen before.

Benson We have a problem, Mrs Wainwright, and a simple solution. Your husband is missing, you've got his money, and whatever happened to him was done by the boys. I could charge them with murder and yourself as an accessory. Since I have no evidence at this stage, I'd take you into custody for questioning. There'd be a court case. You might never see this clearing again. Such a lot of bother. It would be simpler if I dropped the case, which I'm prepared to do, if your boys (he points) join the army in France.

Lucy (a little closer now, and not wearing very much) Where's France?

Benson You should go there one day. I think the French might find you appealing. What I'm speaking of, however,

is an invasion by the German army. The Huns! The Boche! Civilised people are being called to force them back. Men are needed. Strong, brave men and true! This country is sending its finest to assist the Empire in its struggle. Good is fighting evil on the other side of the world. Your sons want to know what the great world's like. They shall see it! Their father would be proud ... if he knew! (There is another tremendous rumble from the pit.) The heavens are calling the boys to fight. Say yes, Mrs Wainwright. Say yes.

Annie Or?

Benson Or! (It's a short but threatening word.)

Annie Or?

Benson Or the truth comes out, and if that happens, they die. (He fondles his gun.)

Annie There's never any choice. George, Robert, Ned, go with this man. He'll arrange for you to go to war. When you get there you will find what was already in you ...

Benson Soldiers of the King, my lads. March down the track. I'll follow behind. Say goodbye to your mother, your brothers and sisters, the forest where you were born. Say goodbye to your mountain! (There is a tremendous rumble, whether of anger or approval it isn't easy to say, from the pit where Giles' body was thrown.) Storm on the way my boys, we need to be moving. Mrs Wainwright, goodbye!

3. Her father's mountain

Lucy, alone, is at the edge of another clearing, the top of Wainwrights' mountain. She has entered puberty, and is wearing her usual tattered garments.

Lucy He'll never be here again. Be with me, father, and let me have it for my own. (She starts to walk.) What did he see? Water runs off, and there it is, far away, spilling into a lake. And beyond the lake is that fate of rivers, eternal sea. As I look down, everything lies before my eyes. Eyes down there could see me standing here. The end can see the beginning, and the beginning the end. A noble vision, father, but what's to become of me? I'm bleeding for the second time, and I have to live, father, as you did before you brought yourself, and mother, here. I have a vision, father, that I must turn into a life. The Wainwrights are going to leave your mountain father, as you did. For us it will be the new beginning you never got to enjoy. I shall read about the war when I reach a town. I shall follow the boys in that greater, fouler pit they call the world. You will know about me, father, because I'll talk to you. (There is a tremendous rumble from the pit.) Be still. The flame people will bring you back one day into a world that may be halfway ready ...

Bach's harpsichord ripples faintly in the distance.

... halfway: and what will my end be like, when it

comes? Not a lake, not even the sea, but something I have to find. Goodbye father, I shall perhaps join you one day.

Lucy stands a while, then, followed by a low rumbling, she leaves what is now her family's mountain, hoping to take the vision it offers into the world below.

4. The Hollis Family Hotel

Male drinkers are at the bar of the Hollis Family Hotel, talking quietly, when Lucy enters. Never having been accustomed to societal forms, Lucy has no way of reading the situation. The men stop drinking to look at her. Bill Hollis, behind the bar, is an actor playing to his drinkers, yet also a well-married man.

Bill What ya lookin for, love?

Lucy My brothers. And Sergeant Benson. He's sending them to war.

Bill He's had'em doin jobs in his garden.

Lucy They've never done that in their lives.

Bill He's training'em to be useful. Would you like a drink?

Lucy Yes. I've ridden a long way.

Bill Whereya from?

Lucy, shapely in her few, ragged clothes, moves forward, drawing the attention of the drinkers.

Lucy My father's farm. It's my mother's now, and mine.

Bill And where would that be?
Lucy Beside a mountain, way out there. It's got no name but Wainwright. That's who we are. And my father's in a pit beside Mount Delusion.

Drinkers (very amused) Delusion! Delusion!
Lucy (surprised) That's its name. Is that my drink? Are you short of water?

Bill Gently with it.

Since the drink occupies only a small glass, Lucy tosses it down in one gulp.

Lucy Ah! Ah! I'm on fire!

Bill and the drinkers are amused; Bill takes pity on her and calls his wife.

Bill Jan! Jan! There's someone here who needs you!

Jan Morris enters and studies Lucy sympathetically.

Jan This is the men's room, darling. You come with me.
Lucy Am I poisoned? Am I going to die?
Jan It'll take sixty years. (Jan leads Lucy through the hotel to a tiny sitting room.) Let's have a look at you. Aren't you cold?

Lucy I never wear more than this. If we get cold, we put another log on the fire.

Jan If you get hot?

Lucy We swim in the river.

Jan Nature girl. So why are you here?

Lucy My father's dead. I'm making my way in the world.

Jan Your mother?

Lucy She's still out there. I'm going to buy her a house.

Jan Does she know this?

Lucy We read each other's minds.

Jan Families are like that. I never know if it's good or bad.

Lucy It's both. I know nothing, but I know what families are like.

Jan You speak well.

Lucy I know my own mind.

Jan Tell me your plans.

Lucy I'll watch my brothers go to war. I'll buy a house for my mother so she can send the young ones to school. I'll bide my time, but when it's right, I'll enter the great world that I've only seen from afar.

Jan Stay here a while. Let me be your guide.

Lucy Do I need a guide? I can read and write.

Jan There's ever so much to learn. Stay with us a while. I'll show you a room, and tomorrow we'll have a lesson in the bath.

5. To war

The road passing through the settlement; outside the Hollis Family Hotel. Sergeant Benson is there with George, Robert and Ned.

Benson (to the driver) If you get some more passengers you'll need to put the boys on top. They'll enjoy the freshness of the air.

Driver The passengers?

Benson Both, I dare say. Aha! (to Lucy, coming out of the hotel) You slept well last night?

Lucy I wasn't used to the bed.

Benson The boys told me the same thing so I put them in the lock-up. They won't get many luxuries where they're going.

Lucy To war.

Benson Soldiers of the King, though the King will neither know nor care.

Lucy So who does know, and who does care?

Benson There should be an answer for every question, but in this case, there's not. In you get, boys! (The boys climb in and Benson shuts the door firmly.) Good soldiering! (more loudly, as the coach moves away) Good luck!

Driver (yelling back) They'll need it!

Benson stands with Lucy as the coach moves away. It's a long way to the horizon and it's clear that Lucy intends to watch until they disappear.

Benson You'd like to be going somewhere too.

Lucy (after a pause) I am.

Benson And where might you be going, Miss Lucy?

Lucy (when she's ready to answer) Somewhere. After I've bought my mother a house. It will need to be near a school.

Benson Now. Tell me yes or no. Do you blame me for sending

the boys to war?

Lucy You're a clever man. You punished them without them knowing.

Benson (laughing) Are you going to see through everyone as quickly as that?

Lucy I say what I see, and if people won't listen, I write it down.

Benson Not a bad policy. (looking down the road) You're not waving?

Lucy If they ever come back they'll be worse than they are.

Benson How come you know so much ...

Lucy ... when I was brought up in the wild?

Benson You're a fascinating girl. You've got such a long way to go ...

Lucy ... and I travel alone.

Benson You don't have to be alone.

They watch the coach in the distance as he waits to see if she's gathered what he's suggesting.

Lucy (after a time) I'm sorry to say I do. I see too much and know too little. I won't be able to love until I've got those things in balance.

Benson That's quite a hurdle you've set yourself to jump.

Lucy No higher than the mountain that belongs to me now!

Benson (looking down the road) They're out of sight. If you ever need me, come and ask.

Lucy (as he goes) I don't know what I need and I don't know what to ask.

6. The bath

Inside the Hollis Family Hotel. There is a bath, a chair and a screen. Lucy is in the bath and Jan Hollis is near her; she's been washing Lucy's hair.

Jan You're a lucky girl. You'll make my mirror proud.

Lucy Of what?

Jan Of reflecting you, my dear.

Lucy I don't want to be reflected.

Jan What about in a lover's eyes?

Lucy Tell me what you mean.

Jan The love of another person changes us. Some of us ridicule men's love. It's hard to live with, and it's hard to live without. Excuse me. I have to get some clothes.

She leaves the room for a moment, during which time Lucy gets out of the bath, and looks around.

Lucy (calling) Where's this mirror?

Jan (coming back) Lucy! Hop behind this screen. Dry yourself now. (handing her a towel)

Lucy I want to see myself in another person's eyes. Let me look in yours.

She comes around the screen, embarrassing Jan.

Jan I'm used to my own children but my husband dresses in another room. Or I look away.

Lucy (surprised that Jan doesn't want to look at her) Am I ugly?

Jan No. You've been made beautiful. You only needed to be clean.

Lucy Can I show everyone?

Jan (amused and embarrassed) There's plenty that would like to look, but we won't let them. With clothes on, they can be controlled. (pressing garments on Lucy)

Lucy Must I be hidden?

Jan We say made more enticing.

Lucy I don't want people near me unless they matter to me.

Jan You'll look good in these. Put them on, Lucy, put them on for me.

Lucy (still naked) I'm a little frightened. (She takes the clothes.) They're going to turn me into something.

Jan Put them on and I'll tell you what they've made of you. (Lucy holds up some knee-length panties.) Undies! (Lucy pulls them on.) Now this! (a singlet with a sort of bodice built in) On it goes. Over the top! (Lucy pulls it on.) Now a skirt! A blouse! The loveliest thing I ever wore ...

Lucy Am I putting on your clothes?

Jan When I was getting ready to marry, I told my mother I needed something to make Bill proud of me. She

came home with this. (Jan puts the jacket on and fiddles with a belt.) You need shoes and stockings, now, and a hat ...

Lucy Have I been turned into you?

Jan No, but you're starting to walk the path I walked, all those years ago.

Lucy It doesn't feel right. (moving as if to undress)

Jan Don't take them off! There's nothing as good in a hundred miles!

Lucy We never cared about clothes ... where I came from.

Jan You left there. You're going to buy a house. You're going to do it up. You're going to join the world.

Lucy I want to get back in the bath!

Jan The bath was the first step. This is the second.

Lucy How many more?

Jan There's no end to the path now you're on it. Not while you're alive.

Lucy There's no end to it then. When we die we become flame people, and they're reborn on earth.

Jan Who told you that?

Lucy My mother and I see them all the time!

Jan Then keep it to yourself. People will say you're mad. You'll have to protect your mystery. Do the clothes make any sense, now?

Lucy Perhaps. Let's see what people say when they see me.

Jan (teasing) Someone might ask to marry you!

Lucy No thank you!

7. The new house

A simple cottage, still in the forest, but in a valley to the north of where the Wainwrights used to live.

Lucy This is the stove. With these pots and pans, we do the cooking.

Annie I never thought I'd see a room again.

Gordon What's a room, mother?

Annie Ask Lucy. She knows everything now.

Lucy When you go through a door, you're in a room.

Gordon Can I get out of it?

Lucy Silly! You step back through the door.

Gordon Then I'm in another room.

Lucy Then go outside.

Gordon Where am I then?

Lucy You're wherever you are of course. Where else would you be?

Gordon Who invented rooms?

Annie (stepping in) Nobody knows. It was ever so long ago.

Gordon Can you have magic in one room and something else in another?

Annie Enough questions. We 'll need firewood. There's an axe on the woodheap.

Gordon Father ...

Annie You're the man about the house. Chop!

Somewhere in the distance is the sound of rumbling.

Lucy He heard you.
 Annie He hears everything we say.
 Lucy We'll ask him about the boys.
 Annie It'll enrage him.
 Lucy His anger is all that's keeping him alive.
 Annie He's dead.
 Lucy He's waiting.
 Annie He's not. He refuses to let them give him another life.
 Lucy They'll wear him down one day, and he'll be reborn.
 Annie Far from here, please God.
 Lucy So you say, and yet I couldn't get you any further than this. You've only half left.
 Annie The tree house is still there. I can go to it, in my mind.
 Lucy Gordon! Chop some wood!
 Gordon (leaving) Bossy.
 Lucy The Hogans are going to sell their hotel.
 Annie So?
 Lucy When they move, I'm going where they go. (proudly) I'll get a job!
 Annie And some sensible clothes.
 Lucy Jan Hogan bought these for when she was married.
 Annie (sourly) A good many years ago, I'd say.
 Lucy I can't tell, mother. You know that.
 Annie I'll have to watch you go away, as you watched the boys.

Lucy Let's not quarrel, mother. You're making a second start.
 Annie The first time, you don't know what you're going to do wrong. The second time, you're well aware.
 Lucy Father withdrew from the world. You mustn't do the same.
 Annie You can enter it on my behalf.
 Lucy I will, if your love and support are with me.
 Annie You must write.
 Lucy You must write back.
 Annie What are you doing Doll?
 Lucy Those rags are the boys' beds. She's put them by the fire.
 Annie (to Doll) Bless you darling. You've started to make a home!

Annie and Lucy look around, wondering what the house is going to mean to them.

Lucy (thinking of Doll's simplicity) She'll need you mother. We'll all need you for a long time to come.

8. The pit, again

Lucy is beside the pit where her brothers threw their father's body. With some amusement, she tosses a stone down. There is a splash, then a rumble.

Lucy Tell me about the boys.

Giles' voice comes back, clear enough, but changed by a murmuring, sometimes rumbling, accompaniment.

Giles Vast armies face each other, firing guns they hold in their hands, and there are bigger guns, destroying towns.

Lucy George, Robert, Ned?

Giles Have lost identity, their uniforms caked in mud. Every man shits in a common hole. Every man eats the same food. Every man ducks the same bullets – or they don't see them, and they're dead.

Lucy The boys have taken to this?

Giles The boys were made for war.

Lucy What responsibility do you take for that?

Giles (after a fierce rumbling displays his reaction to the question) Every man finds what suits him. Words like destiny and fate deceive us. Words have little value. There is no truth but what we do. They are at home where they are.

Lucy And you father, now you're in that pit?

Giles Get me back, Lucy. Throw down that vine.

Lucy The flame people say you have to be reborn.

Giles One place only is right for a man of my kind ... (He pauses, because he, and we, can hear the rippling sound of Bach's harpsichord.) That is a very old man who refuses to go back. The spirits humour him. They polish the keys of his instrument, and they gather when he plays. He fills me with yearning, but he speaks a tongue I cannot understand ...

The harpsichord ripples on, before fading away.

Lucy Have the boys killed anybodyyet? Anybody else?

Giles They look pleased with themselves, if exhausted, after battle. The fighting, I must say, stretches out forever. From my mountain to the town where I married your mother ... imagine an endless line of war.

Lucy Is there no one to stop it?

Giles It's done with encouragement of everyone in power. What a world I left, and what a world I live in now.

Lucy Visions must be made real, father. You taught me well.

Giles Go with my blessing, Lucy. Marry, if you can find a man ...

Lucy What sort of man, father? That's the question, isn't it!

Giles I can answer. You have the vision. You need a man who can make it real, in front of you, as you watch. You will travel far before you find him.

Lucy I'm leaving, father. I'm going to the lowland to see what I can do.

Giles The mountains are your home, Lucy. You will return before you find the man who knows what you need, and can make it for you.

Lucy Have I your blessing, father?

Giles You have my blessing, Lucy. Have I yours?

There is a terrible, anxious rumbling, which Lucy calms with two gently waving hands.

9. The lowland

A tiny cabin at the bottom of a garden, in a town on the lowland, with a northerly view to the mountains. Lucy is being settled in by Jan Hogan.

Jan Everything's new for both of us.
Lucy I'm a little frightened.
Jan You'll be doing the same things you did in our hotel.
Lucy You were my rescuers. Tomorrow, I'll be on my own.
Jan We'd been too long in that place. When you came, it made us think of moving.
Lucy You're doing different work now.
Jan In a real town, not a little line of shacks anyone could push over.
Lucy I'll move on again, when I'm ready.
Jan You want to know your mother's story, before she had you ...
Lucy ... and the boys.
Jan You fear she made a mistake.
Lucy She married from a convent. Nobody told her who she was.
Jan That means she only knew what others thought it good for her to know.
Lucy A weakness that's been passed down to me.
Jan Weakness is usually strength of another sort.
Lucy A strength I mean to find.
Jan Your mother is strong, from all I hear.

Lucy She has the strength of acceptance, not the strength that shapes events.

Jan She's written you a letter.

Lucy Which I've still to read.

Jan I'll leave you.

Jan leaves and Lucy takes out a letter, and opens it. As she unfolds the paper, we hear Annie's voice as if she's in the room.

Annie Gordon tries hard to be a man, at home; he goes to school as a boy, and learns his alphabet, and his tables too. He sits at night with a faraway look in his eyes and I know he's trying to work out numbers. 'My sums'. The teacher says he's good at them, but he has high standards for himself. Sam goes to school, though he's too young to understand. He's happy to be with other children. He's forgotten the tree house. Doll, who forgets everything inside a minute, hasn't forgotten where we lived. I see her staring into the bush as if it reminds her. When I ask what she's looking for, she says, 'I forget'. Those words will rule her life. She'll never know. Everything will be a surprise for her, or a shock. And you, Lucy? What is your life like? Can you look out and see us, see where we are now?

Lucy (springing up) Yes! Yes, mother! I can see a mountain that I know is mine!

She looks around to see a priest, Father Moloney, who's come to the bottom of the garden.

Moloney I didn't mean to surprise yer. Mrs Hogan sent me down.

Lucy Why?

Moloney She's of our faith. She thought I might be able to help yer.

Lucy I've settled in. I've nothing to unpack.

Moloney Only your little bits and pieces ...

Lucy (not understanding) I own nothing. (looking at her mountain) No. I tell a lie.

Moloney (beaming) Now that's what we call sin. Not a big one, perhaps. Forgiveness can be arranged, I'm sure.

Lucy For what?

Moloney For sin. It's the human condition. Always in a state of sin. Mankind, you know, is fallen from what God told us we ought to be.

Lucy If we ought to be something, then we ought to be rising towards it.

Moloney Precisely.

Lucy It's not precise at all. You're saying something different from me.

Moloney We must all say what God says and that's come down to us in holy scripture.

Lucy What's scripture?

Moloney God's writing.

Lucy I was reading a letter from my mother when you came.

Moloney That can only be good.

Lucy (reading; this means that part of what follows is a duet between the voices of Lucy and of Annie) Part of me travels with you to learn what I might have been if I hadn't married Giles. I never had a choice. I wonder if you have choice, Lucy, or whether you are struggling to free yourself from his grip. We shall both wait and see.

Moloney That's your mother's idea?

Lucy And mine. We're not separate yet.

Moloney We're all united in the faith.

Lucy She was brought up in a convent.

Moloney (pleased) Then she's one of us. Always!

Lucy I think not. Never!

Moloney She'll come back to us when she's old.

Lucy (uncomfortable with him) I should be helping Mrs Hogan.

Moloney Oh no. She wouldn't have sent me if she'd expected you.

Lucy (feeling trapped) What more do you want to say?

Moloney You carry God's greatest gift in your body, that of womanhood ...

Lucy I'm well aware.

Moloney It needs training, and to train it you have to use it ...

Lucy As I choose! And when!

Moloney There are Irish boys in this town who want to go to war for England because they think that soldiers get leave to go to ...

Lucy To go to?

Moloney I was going to say brothels, though it's not from a priest you should be hearing the word.

Lucy What's it mean?

Moloney It means a place where men give women money to do what should only be done by wives in marriage.

Lucy My family did better than this, and so will I!

Moloney If those lads go to war, they're likely to lose their lives, and even more likely to lose their souls.

Lucy How?

Moloney Committing the mortal sin I speak of. Do you understand, or must I say it?

Lucy Don't speak another word. I feel corrupted by this talk.

Moloney I'm saying that a little corruption may be a way of preventing a very large one.

Lucy What you're saying is that I'm to be used for the purposes of others, and your own purposes too!

Moloney (trying to get closer) Oh Lucy, no!

Lucy Stay away. Look! The mountains are moving closer!

Moloney (surprised) You're mistaken. It's not possible for that to happen.

Lucy They'll come if I call them.

Moloney Only God can move mountains, though the saying has it that faith can do it too.

Lucy Then my faith is stronger than yours because I can do it.

Moloney This is a twist to our conversation.

Lucy Which has ended. I'm going to the house. You can go before me, or after, but you can't walk with me. Decide!

Moloney I'll go before you, then, and tell Mrs Hogan you weren't as helpful as she thought.

Lucy Don't spread corruption. The ideas were yours, not hers.

Moloney goes, not at all pleased. Lucy picks up the letter and looks out to the mountains.

Annie (the letter speaking again) Your father was the stubbornest man I knew. He refused to test himself against the ideas of others. You will not be able to avoid those challenges, and the yielding to compromise that he hated. Write to me soon and tell me the state of your soul.

Lucy So far so good, mother. Standing up well, so far.

10. The larger pit

In the kitchen of the Railway Hotel in Lucy's adopted town. Josie is preparing food and Lucy, an apron around her waist, is carrying things here and there. Above the clatter we hear the sound of a distant roar.

Lucy Heavens! What's that?

Josie It's the football. They'd be in the last quarter by now.

Lucy The last quarter? Is that the same as the moon?
 Josie I suppose it is. It happens a bit more quickly.

There is another roar.

Lucy They're shouting. It reminds me of something.
 Josie It reminds me of the noise they'll make if they get
 here and there isn't any dinner!
 Lucy They could go somewhere else.
 Josie Lucy. Are you a nut?
 Lucy A nut?
 Josie A nut case. Not the full shilling? Something missing
 up there, maybe?
 Lucy You mean, am I mad? Not that I know of.
 Josie That's the point, isn't it? How would you know? If
 you were mad, you'd be the last to know!
 Lucy Who tells us if we're mad or not?
 Josie Everyone who knows us. They tell us. If everyone
 starts saying there's something wrong, then there's
 something wrong. If you see what I mean.

There is another roar from the nearby ground.

Lucy Ah! I know what it is!
 Josie And I know too. It's a mob of men drinking who'll
 be here in half an hour and we've got to feed'em. Get
 cracking, Lucy. Get those tubs washed, I'll need'em.
 Lucy It's the pit. That's what it's like. There must be another
 pit somewhere near.
 Josie What're ya talking about?

Lucy I can't explain, but when they roar ... (There is another,
 much louder roar from the nearby ground.) ... it
 reminds me of a terrible place where I used to live, in
 the mountains. (She points to the north.)

There is another roar, from much closer this time.

Josie Don't worry about your pits, that's the booze crying
 out. Some of them don't bother going to the football,
 they stay here all afternoon. (another roar from the
 nearby bar) Listen to'em. Doesn't say much for us,
 does it.

Lucy Us? It's no judgement of us.

Josie It is, in a sort of way. We're here to look after'em. That
 makes us their servants, but who'd want to serve that
 mob? (another roar from the football, another roar
 from the bar, one echoing the other) I'm not responsible
 for where I am! I can't help it if I'm the servant
 of a lot of drunken bastards. I never gave them booze.
 I never brought them into this world to abuse anyone
 they felt like abusing. I learned my trade properly ...
 (She points to the kitchen.) ... I can't help it if I came
 down in the world ... (She starts to cry; Lucy moves
 tenderly beside her.) Don't you get all gooey. We've
 got things to do. Take these into the lounge.

Lucy takes a tray of nibbles and enters, first the passage, and then
 the lounge, where couples are seated near a fire. One couple, a little
 to one side, are embracing passionately.

Lucy (calling) Nibbles.
Jackson No thanks Lucy. Offer'em to Mavis and Joe, they'll need'em if they're going to keep this up all night.

Lucy moves to offer the tray of things to the embracing couple. However, a door opens behind her, and Russ, the husband of the passionate Mavis, appears in the doorway with a rifle, which he aims at Joe. Joe, seeing this, makes a sound of terror, and stares at his impending fate.

Russ (to Lucy) Get outa the way!
Joe (to Lucy also) Stay where you are!
Russ Get outa the way!
Joe Lucy! Stay where you are!
Russ Get outa the way. This isn't meant for you, it's meant for him!

There is a roar from the football, so loud that it must be the winning goal in the last minute of play, and another roar from the drinkers in the main bar.

Lucy (very loudly) I know where I am! I know at last!
She jumps clear of Mavis and Joe, turning to see Russ, the enraged, wronged, husband raise his gun and shoot Joe. Joe's face streams with blood as he collapses on the floor.

Russ (giving the gun to Lucy, who is nearest him) You hold this. Don't pull the trigger. Give it to the cops when they arrive. And now, my wife, we'll resume our mar-

riage, if that's not too much to ask. Where were we? You wanted to run off with Joe. Looks like that can't happen, so what's Plan B?

Mavis Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
Lucy The pit is the world I'm in. There's no escape. There's nothing but pits, down here. I'll never get back again, or will I?

Josie has run into the lounge, and two men from the main bar too.

Josie Everyone out of here! Ring the police and the hospital!
Russ Undertakers would be better. You serving dinner soon, Josie? My wife and I got something to celebrate.

Josie You mad bastard Russ Willoughby. Couldn't you restrain yourself?

Russ Couldn't I restrain myself? I did for six weeks and then I couldn't any more. Clears the air, doesn't it, when you shoot someone ya don't like. Things are simple again. Rather nice, really. Old times, eh? (to his wife)

Mavis Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
Lucy The pit! People live in it, all their lives, and never know there's a world where we can live with clarity and vision! That's where I want to be!

Josie What were we saying about people being mad?

Two policemen walk into the room.

Russ Here I am, gentlemen. You're going to lock me up, so would you mind if I had a beer before you took me away?

Cop 1 Full marks for cheek, Russ Willoughby. You can have one while we make notes of the scene. Don't mention it in court, if you please. Now, who was here at the time? (to Lucy) Did you see what happened?

Lucy I saw everything. I heard every word.

Cop 1 You're going to be a witness. What're you doing with that gun?

Lucy He gave it to me. He said be careful. (She hands it over.)

Cop1 It wasn't you that fired it, was it?

Lucy My father never let me fire his gun.

Cop 1 Your father? Who was he?

Lucy Was. That's the pity of it. He was. Like this man on the floor.

Cop 1 Joe Houlihan. Had it coming, I suppose. He was silly enough to get mixed up with you, Mavis. You and Russ. You had quite a reputation in this town, it'll be a hell of a lot bigger now.

Lucy Reputation?

Cop 1 I suppose it means ... when everyone thinks they know what you are. But I can tell you this, in my job it's not reputations that count, it's the surprises that

come around the corner, any corner, every corner, when you're least expecting. We'd better get that poor bastard out of here. (to Josie) You got a stretcher, love?

🌀 End of Opera 8 🌀

Love and death (shoot it out in a bungalow)

1. Death in the family

The screen shows us a beach scene – perhaps an island – in far north Queensland. Palm trees move in a breeze that stirs the tips of the waves. Luke Bowden is lying in a hammock, reading a newspaper.

Luke Bowden. My God! Bowden. Dawn. Mother! Died at Benalla, April twenty-five, after a long illness. Beloved wife of Cyril, mother of Luke. Resting in a long-desired sleep. If you read this, son, come home. (He leaps from the hammock and stares at the water.) It's caught up with me. Here! (He looks around, then picks up the paper for a second read.) Bowden, Dawn. Long illness. Wife of Cyril, mother of Luke. Resting in a long-desired sleep. Long-desired? If you read this, son, come home.

2. Toorak (1)

The tropical scene gives way to one or more of the Bowden-Morris family photos seen earlier in this sequence of operas, and then to a portrait of Tom Courtney, whom we met – while he was still alive – in Operas 4, 5 & 6. This portrait is hanging above the fireplace in the sitting room of the large house, once Tom's, which is now home to Steve Morris, Tricia Courtney-Morris, Tricia's mother Margaret, and, temporarily, Steve's youngest sister Lily.

Tricia I don't seem able to read. My concentration's gone.

Lily You're thinking of your child.
Tricia Lily! I didn't tell you that!
Lily I knew.
Tricia How did you know?
Lily I've been looking at photos. They tell us all sorts of things.
Tricia Let me try you out. What was father thinking of, when he was being painted?
Lily He was wondering why he had to sit for hours when a camera could do the job.
Tricia He never liked losing time.
Lily I'm with him there. I want to be able to control my life.
Tricia We can't do it. Chance strikes us down, or burrows from within.
Lily Not with me it doesn't.
Tricia Steve says you're very determined.
Lily He ought to know. He's like me.
Tricia He's growing like my father. It's a combination of me, mother, and this house.
Lily The house is an influence I feel keenly.
Tricia I hope it will help you sleep. I hope it will help me.
Lily You're going to bed?
Tricia I need to.
Lily And so do I.

Tricia You're not expecting any friends, tonight?

Lily I shall be all on my own.

Tricia Sleep well, then.

Lily And you, and the little one inside you. (They are curious about, not fond of, each other, and don't separate, though it seems they've said goodnight.) There was something in the paper I was going to show Steve.

Tricia He's at a meeting. He should be home soon.

Lily If you could show him this ...

Tricia What is it?

Lily It's a death notice. I came on it by chance.

Tricia Death? Who?

Lily hands her a small piece of paper she's torn from a newspaper. As she does so, we hear Luke's voice:

Luke Bowden, Cyril, loved husband of Dawn, deceased, father of Luke. (then, parenthetically) Their first and only son. They never had a girl ... (resuming) Bowden. At Benalla, May sixteen. He lost his true partner, and couldn't go on any longer. Sorry, dad, for disappointing you. Rest in peace.

Tricia That's rather upsetting. I'm not very good on Steve's family tree.

Lily Neither was I, but now I am. It's grown on me to want to know who I'm connected with.

Tricia Who was Cyril Bowden, then?

Lily An uncle by marriage. He had a son, whom I must have known but don't remember.

Tricia Families are like that. Full of connections ...

Lily I wanted Steve to know.

Tricia I'll see that he gets it.

Lily Good night then, Tricia. Sleep well.

Tricia And you, Lily, sleep well.

Both go out.

3. Money

On the back lawn, between a bungalow and the small house where Helen Orbiston (see Opera 2, War) and Gus Jespersen, a flautist, live. Helen and Gus are drinking on a warm evening with Luke Bowden, who's arrived in Melbourne after burying his father.

Luke I'll sell their house. It was Uncle Bill's money, he gave it to me, I gave it to them, and now it's back with me. Am I the only guy you know who runs away from money?

Helen No! Gus is just as bad!

Gus Bad?

Luke What's bad about it?

Helen What's good about it! The stuff's quite useful.

Luke Corrupting though.

Gus The smart people are the ones that haven't been tested. None of us are smart when we run up against something too big for us.

Luke That's never happened to me. Not yet.

Helen Touch wood. There's always something we can't

handle. If we avoid it long enough, we become curious. It catches us when we sneak up for a look.

Luke (laughing) Moral: never get close!

Gus Except we can't live that way. I came down from the north, like you, and I found Helen.

Helen And?

Gus It was the best thing that ever happened. So (to Luke) what I say is, if you feel like jumping, jump!

Luke (musing) I always say this city's cold, but it's giving us a lovely night.

Helen You're getting ready, Luke. Something tells me you're going to jump!

Luke I need a job. I think driving a truck would suit me.

Helen You know anyone that needs a driver?

Luke I'll go to the market tomorrow, see what's around.

Helen Are you missing the north?

Luke It was time for something new.

Gus And for something new you came back to your old haunts.

Luke Not really. I never felt this place was mine. It's full of family, but then, I never knew them very well. I went north and started again.

Gus Be cautious, mate, there's a lot of ghosts waiting to claim you.

Helen Gus? Why did you say that?

Gus I don't know. It just came out.

Helen We've drunk enough. It's time we went to bed. Do you really want that bungalow, Luke? It's only a box.

Luke Call me a savage if you like. I don't belong inside. This is the place for me.

Gus Goodnight then, mate.

Luke Sleep tight.

Helen You too. Sleep well.

Luke I'll sleep as if tomorrow's never going to come.

Gus Don't do that. Get yourself up bright and early. Tomorrow's another day.

Luke If I get a market job I'll have lots of early mornings ...

Helen They'll be good for you.

They separate, Gus and Helen going inside, and Luke to his little bungalow.

4. Toorak (2)

The Courtney home in Toorak. Steve and Tricia are in bed. There is a streetlight shining not far from their window. All is quiet, and then a car enters their street at speed, brakes, then crashes loudly into the pole of the streetlight, which goes out. Seconds later another car enters the street, and screams to a halt.

Police Down that lane! There! After him! (We hear the sound of clattering feet.) Search the car! I'll go down this lane!

Tricia What on earth's going on?

Steve We're not going to get much sleep.

Tricia Go down and check that the doors are locked. Make sure mum's all right, but don't wake her, Steve.

Steve And Lily. She was on her own tonight. She went to bed early.

Tricia The police were chasing that car. Why on earth would it come here?

Steve Someone on the run. Didn't know where he was.

Steve leaves to check everything downstairs. Tricia muses while he's away.

Tricia Someone on the run. (She fondles her stomach.) I want a beautiful life for my little one. Peaceful, prosperous, and happy. (She muses.) Happiness? Is that the best of things? Or can we have better? Happiness is what you get when your life's lived well. That's a lot to ask. I want it for my child.

There is a knocking at the front door; Steve opens it to find a sergeant of police.

Sgt. Sorry to get you out of bed sir, but we were chasing a stolen car, and he drove into your street. Crashed the pole outside.

Steve And left us in the dark.

Sgt. We saw him rush down that lane. Where's it go?

Steve It goes around the property and back into the street. It touches on this place and one, two, three, four others.

Sgt. You wouldn't have a torch sir, would you?

Steve Yes, come in.

Tricia (still in bed: thinking) He only ran a little way, then we didn't hear him. He must have been on grass.

Steve (giving the sergeant a torch) That's the best I can do for you.

Sgt. Thank you sir. How many people in your house?

Steve Me. My wife. Her mother. My sister, in the wing at the side.

Sgt. Make sure they're all right. Funny things can happen.

The sergeant goes off. Steve stands at the foot of the stairs, thinking, before he comes up again.

Tricia There's something odd about this.

Steve There is.

Tricia Was mother all right?

Steve (remembering) Oh.

Tricia Go and check darling.

Steve opens the door to the wing where Margaret Courtney sleeps, and he listens.

Steve All's well.

Tricia See if Lily's on her own.

Steve On her own? You don't imagine the man they're after is with Lily?

Tricia They're still trying to find him. He must be somewhere.

Steve He might have jumped a fence.

Tricia It might have been ours!

Steve What are you trying to tell me, darling?

Tricia I don't know. I've got a feeling I can't explain.

Steve I'll check.

He goes downstairs again and knocks on Lily's door. Almost at once the door is opened, and there is Lily, glamorous, in a white dressing gown, her long black hair brushed.

Lily Steve? What's all the noise?

Steve Police were chasing a car. The driver crashed, ran away, and they're trying to find him. You didn't hear anybody in the garden, I suppose?

Lily Not a sound.

Steve I've checked all the doors except that one of yours onto the tennis court.

Lily I keep it locked. You can be sure of that.

Steve They should be able to find him, but they can't. It's odd.

Lily I'll listen when I get into bed. I won't sleep for a long time, after this.

Steve We'll all find it hard, tonight, I think. Good night, Lil.

Lily Sleep well, Steve, when you can.

She closes the door and he goes upstairs again. Tricia has her bedside lamp on by now.

Tricia Was she on her own?

Steve Yes. She said her outside door was locked.

Tricia You didn't check it yourself?

Steve No. Why would I do that when she said ...

Tricia I know I'm protective of our baby but something's not right.

Steve It's all because someone crashed a car. It could be called chance, you know.

Tricia Chance is a word for something you can't explain.

Steve Have you got any explanation, then?

Tricia No, darling. Get in beside me.

Steve Turn off the light.

Tricia turns off the bedside lamp.

Tricia Rub me darling. Where I'm large.

Steve That's a polite word!

Tricia I know I'm big! Sometimes I'm wobbly and sometimes I'm tight.

Steve You're beautiful darling. It's a wonderful thing you're doing.

Tricia We're doing.

Steve It's nice to be included.

Tricia You did have something to do with it.

Steve Quite a lot.

Tricia The woman's part takes longer.

Steve And isn't as much fun.

Tricia Men, men ... their ways are strange, to me.

Steve Women are strange to us.

Tricia We're always curious about each other ...

Steve We're always ignorant and we want to know ...

Tricia So we lie in the dark, talking ...

Steve I'll have to go down for that torch ...

Tricia They'll leave it at the door when they see the house is dark.

Steve 'The house was dark.' It sounds like a story.
Tricia It is a story, darling. The story of our lives.

5. The market

Luke is unloading from a truck at the Furlingieri family's stall at the market. Lily approaches the stall, carrying a basket. Zeppe is looking cheerfully on the scene.

Zeppe Arseholes are cheap today,
Cheaper than yesterday!
Rosa Shut up Zeppe. Our customers are good people.
Zeppe Our customers are beautiful people, and here is the most beautiful of all, Signorina Fiordiligi! (He bows to Lily.)
Rosa He's always singing the praise of women, signorina. When he stops I will know he is going to die.
Lucy (lightly) We're all closer to dying than we realise.
Zeppe Don't say that, signorina. I'm much older than you!
Lily (laughing) I might beat you to it, Zeppe!
Rosa Signorina, no! Even in joke, you must not think that.
Lily Jokes let us think about the unthinkable. We need them.
Zeppe Give me your list, signorina, I'll get your things.

Lily hands him a piece of paper. He glances at it, puts it down, and goes through the motions of getting small quantities of fruit and vegetables for her basket. Luke enters the stall, puts things down and then, before going back for more, he glances at the note she's given Zeppe.

Luke (back at the truck, to himself) It wasn't a list, it was a map.

Lily (to Zeppe) Be careful. Pick up my note!

Zeppe turns, sees no problem because there's nobody near the note, puts it in his pocket and continues getting her things from the stall.

Luke (at the truck, musing) There was an X. It said 'your car'. There was another X. Drop off. And it said eleven ten. She isn't watching what he gets her. She only came to give him the map.

Zeppe Tomatoes, signorina? Very fresh. Squeeze them, see how they feel.

Lily No tomatoes, Zep. No blood oranges either.

Zeppe Signorina Fiordiligi, your jokes are dark today.

Lily My sleep was disturbed last night.

Zeppe (taking this humorously) You are lucky, signorina. When Rosa sleeps, I cannot wake her, even when I want to be a husband to her wife.

Luke (bringing a box of fruit) Rosa's wife? You're getting things mixed up, Zeppe!

Lily (of Luke) Who's this?

Zeppe This is Luca. He works for my brother. He is our driver.

Lily examines Luke closely. He, in turn, studies her, afraid and yet attracted.

Lily You depend on him, then.

Zeppe He is very punctual. Always on time.
 Lily Has he been taught to forget?
 Luke I've got fifty years behind me I'm happy to forget.
 Lily And in front of you?
 Luke Nobody's told me yet.
 Rosa It's time you got married, Luca. Somebody young
 who needs an older man. That is what you want!
 Luke All my life there's been someone telling me what to
 do. I had six years in the army. Orders, orders ...
 Lily Freedom is more dangerous than bullets. Bullets are
 fired by enemies, but choice is something we operate
 ourselves, and we never know what we're doing.

Zeppe taps his shirt pocket in which Lily's note has been placed.

Zeppe Usual account, signorina?
 Lily Everything as usual, Zep.

6. Shooting

At the Furlingieri's vegetable farm. Luke is on a mattress beside the loaded truck he will drive to market in a few hours. He is reading the paper before he goes to sleep.

Luke Abduction outside a bank. Stall holder from the mar-
 ket. Wow! Where was this? Hey, North Melbourne ...
 (He thinks, then it comes to him.) Shortly after eleven.
 Shortly ... after ... eleven. Witnesses said the man
 was dragged into a car, then driven away at speed.
 Shots were heard as it rounded the corner. Hey, this
 is no place for me!

He jumps up, just as Carlo, the farmer whose vegetables he takes to market, appears. Carlo is Zeppe's brother.

Carlo You not sleeping, Luca. You have to get up early.
 Luke Not yet. Won't be long though.
 Carlo (pointing to the truck) You got everything ready.
 Luke Everything's fine. Alarm's set for half past two.
 Carlo Could be visitor tonight. If so, you don't hear.
 Luke Carlo, I'll have the light out in five minutes and I'll
 be asleep in six. What happens after that I'll neither
 know nor care.
 Carlo Take care with the truck. Maybe someone try to run
 you off the road.
 Luke For a load of cauliflowers?
 Carlo For something else. I put a gun under your seat.
 Luke I'm not sure that I ...
 Carlo You got a valuable load. You don't stop for anybody.
 Not if they wave a gun in your face!
 Luke I'm not going to sleep so well tonight, Carlo.
 Carlo Not good to sleep too much, need to be watching.
 Buona notte Luca. You turn out your light pretty
 soon. (He goes.)
 Luke (turning to the paper again) The note said ten past
 eleven. North Melbourne ... That's where it was! My
 God, Lily's my cousin. What's she doing mixed up
 with these people? How did she get herself into this?

He hears an engine in the night outside. At once he turns off the light. The sound comes closer. It's someone on a motorbike.

Voice Carlo! Parlatemi in pace! Pace! Pace!

There is a pause, then the sound of a shot. The motorbike engine starts up again and the rider takes off at speed. Carla, Carlo's wife, can be heard screaming, wailing, calling for help.

Carla Aaaaaaaaahhh! Oooooaaaahhh! Pace? Assassine! Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

Luke (turning the light on again) Pretty quick payback! What's Lily going to do about this? Who's her boss? My God, if I fall out with them, they'll send a message to me. When I look in her eyes I'll see my end. Ugh! (He shudders. He pulls on some clothes.) Coming, Carla! Coming! Coming! Is he dead?

Luke races out of the shed.

7. Family

Luke is at the door of George and Yatty Bowden's East Melbourne home. After a moment's hesitation, he knocks. The door is opened by Nell, George and Yatty's youngest (aged 32).

Luke I'm Luke Bowden. Which one are you?

Nell I'm Nell. You're a Bowden?

Luke Can't escape it. Cyril and Dawn brought me into the world. I'll find my own way out, I guess.

Nell Have you been here before?

Luke Not that I recall ...

Nell Come on in. (He follows her.)

Luke Are you on your own?

Nell Dad's at work. He still goes in. Mum's off somewhere...

Luke I should tell you why I've called, but I'm not sure that I know.

Nell You're not a true Bowden then. We know too much about ourselves.

Luke That's uncommon, surely?

Nell It's the family fault, navel-gazing. In my case, photos. Lily's just the same.

Luke (startled) Lily!

Nell I don't think you'd remember her. She's a real good-looker now.

Luke (trying to sound vague) I may have seen her picture in the paper ...

Nell She's very photogenic. Hang on. (She looks into a pile of stuff she's got on a table, and offers Luke a photo.) That's her.

Luke (meaning he knows who the mysterious woman is) That's her!

Nell That's her all right. I wish I had her looks.

Luke They could be fatal.

Nell They could, couldn't they? I've often thought of that, when I'm looking in a mirror.

Luke (trying to be gallant) You're fine!

Nell But not very. Lil's a stunner!

Luke Who does she mix with?

Nell She's got a secret life. She mixes with the social set, race clubs, parties ... but when she's out of sight, nobody knows what she does. Even Steve and Tricia, where she lives, they don't know ...

Luke Is this good, do you think?

Nell I've suddenly realised who you are! You're the one that went away!

Luke Fifteen years!

Nell Why did you come back?

Luke What a question! I felt I was avoiding something.

Nell Interesting. And what were you avoiding?

Luke The really important things ...

Nell Love and death.

Luke Love and death.

Nell Have you found them yet?

Luke I think I have. Can I have this picture?

Nell Are you going to look for Lily?

Luke I think I am.

Nell She's easy to find if you mix in the right circles ... but I think you want to solve the mystery ...

Luke ... of everything! Silly, aren't I?

Nell I wish I was like Lily, and I'm glad I'm not. I wish I knew what she was going to become, and I don't think it's going to take long to find out.

Luke (starting to go) I'll tell you what I find.

Nell Mum will be home soon.

Luke I'll come back, if something brings me. (holding the photo) Thanks for this.

8. Bungalow wall

Luke is pinning the photo of Lily to his bungalow wall.

Luke Love and death! Men's ideas. I feel sorry for women, who have to be what we want them to be.

Lily (a voice from nowhere) Which would you have, if I gave you a choice?

Luke A choice! That's unexpected. A short and beautiful love, then a swift death. That's my choice. What's yours?

Lily Come close, and hear what I have to say.

Luke presses against the wall, and kisses the photo of Lily on the lips.

Luke Lie in my arms. Give me the love you've never given before. You've given your body, but with contempt. Everything's about to change ...

Lily Are you ready for the change, Luca mio?

Suddenly her photo is no longer a little scrap of paper tacked to the wall, but a life-size image of the elegant and alluring woman Lily is. Luke is overwhelmed by her loveliness.

Luke Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

Lily Swear to me that when I come to you, you will be mine.

Luke I swear to you that I will be yours!

Lily As long as we shall live.

Luke As long as we shall live!

Lily As short a time as that may be!
 Luke As blessed a time as that may be.
 Lily This I swear ...
 Luke This I swear ...
 Lily ... with a pistol at my brain ...
 Luke ... with a pistol at my brain ...
 Lily ... facing my certain end ...
 Luke ... facing my certain end ...
 Lily ... meaning to give myself completely before I die.
 Luke ... meaning to give myself completely before I die.
 Lily (in a more practical tone) Our bargain has been sealed. Now. There are things I've still to work out.
 Luke You'll have to break through my wall.
 Lily The impossible is something that hasn't yet been done. It changes every day.
 Luke Tomorrow ...
 Lily Tomorrow ...
 Luke ... it will be easy ...
 Lily ... as we shall see.

The big image of her fades, replaced by the little photo Luke got from Nell. He kisses it, and begins to rub it with his fingers, filled with desire. She rebukes him distantly, from out of sight.

Lily When I'm with you will be soon enough.

9. Back in time

At George and Yatty's home in East Melbourne once again. Luke is there, with George, Yatty, Karen, her son Jesse (aged 16), and Nell.

Yatty Cyril and Dawn's boy. You don't look like them at all.
 Luke Mum never had any visitors in her bed.
 Yatty She was rare. Most of them were rabbits, where she grew up.
 Luke I've never found it hard to live on my own.
 George And yet you've unsettled yourself to come back here?
 Luke I don't know if I'm settled or unsettled ...
 George That means you're unsettled, then. Question: what did it to you?
 Luke Ah, now that is a question ...
 George Well ...
 Yatty I was going to say ...
 George Go on, darling.
 Yatty How long are you here for?
 Luke Just a few months. Until I die.
 George That's two answers. Which do we believe?
 Karen He means both, father.
 George How can that be?
 Karen He's going to live intensely, but not for long.
 Luke I don't think I'm a survivor.

Behind them the screen shows the photo of the Bowdens and Morrisises at Waratah Bay (see Opera 2, War; everyone is much younger than they are in the present scene.)

George Our son Adrian died in the war. It made me realise that Yatty and I are survivors, but not unconditionally; I don't want to live without honour and honour, for me, comes from leading a good life.

Luke Honour, for me, comes from leading a true life.

Karen What's that mean?

Luke I don't know for certain, yet.

Karen You mean to find out?

Luke I do. (after a pause) We're getting a bit serious. Jesse! (to Karen's son) Ever been up north?

Jesse No.

Luke Would you like to?

Jesse I suppose ...

Luke I've got an island. An hour's trip off the coast, in a sea of perfect blue.

Jesse Sounds good. You own it?

Luke It's mine. I bought it from people who had big plans that fell through.

George A hotel?

Luke That was their idea.

George They'd have spoiled the place. It's better off with you.

Luke I think so. But it won't always be mine ...

Karen So?

Luke My affairs have to be put in order. I'm giving the island to your boy. (This causes amazement.)

Karen Jesse ... will own the island... when you die?

Luke Jesse ... will own the island ... when I die.

Yatty That's very generous of you, Luke, but why ...

George ... why are you doing this for him?

Luke I don't know anything any more. I'm pushing ahead by instinct, now. I can only tell you that it seems right to me. If I die, I don't want the island to be on its own.

George Islands are always on their own. They don't get married ...

Luke Then I'm an island because I'll never get married either.

Yatty Don't rule it out. Amazing things can happen.

Luke Amazing things will happen, and I do rule it out.

While they are considering this, Michael Bowden comes in, in his early forties now.

Michael Hello stranger! After all these years!

Luke and Michael greet each other warmly.

Luke I didn't think you'd know me.

Michael Nell's always showing us your picture and asking where you are.

Luke My picture ...

Nell I need to get a recent one. Or we can take one now.

Luke No.

Nell No? (She's surprised and offended.)
Luke (realising his mistake) Sorry. I beg your pardon. Of course. All together. In case we don't get the chance again.
Nell This is good. I've needed one of you. (picking up a camera) I'll take it. Luke. You in the middle, with Jesse. Jesse, next to Luke ... (The old, Waratah bay photo begins to fade, and the screen shows, faintly at first, the group as it assembles before our eyes.) Karen, beside Jesse. Michael, on the other side. Right. Mum and Dad ...
Yatty I'll sit in a chair.
George Me too.

So George and Yatty sit at the front, with Luke, Jesse, Karen and Michael behind them.

Nell Ready! Look this way! Now smile! Everyone think of that island.
Jesse I've never seen an island.
Nell Imagine one! You know what they're like!
Jesse I don't think I do. Has it got a house?
Luke It's got a shelter ...

He pauses so Nell can take the picture.

Nell Thank you everyone. The moment has been caught.
George It'll never come again.
Yatty Like anything else ...

Luke (to Michael) I'm sorry you're not with Helen any more. She's with a muso called Gus, and I'm staying with them. They're good to me.
Michael (a little wistfully) Ah well, that's how things go ...
Yatty She was always dear to us.
George (taking Karen's hand) Another daughter, really. Or that's how we felt at the time.
Yatty That's still how I feel.
Michael She wanted to move on ...
Luke None of us can avoid that. Moving on.
George You sound like you've got an appointment and you have to get there fast!
Luke I think that's how it is.
Yatty Then go your way, lad. None of us knows where we're going. We have to keep moving in order to find out.

10. Arrival

Luke is in his bungalow, looking at his picture of Lily.

Luke If I had a picture of my island, I'd put it beside her. My perfection – but which is which? (The small picture of Lily changes as he looks at it to the larger image which means she's preparing to arrive.) Welcome, lover. Come in. If mystery could be measured it wouldn't fit in this room. Mystery fills the mind, as love the heart. I want you!

Luke looks over his shoulder as Lily begins to arrive. He shuts a door and draws a curtain so that we can't see her magical entry. We hear his and Lily's voices.

Lily I follow my mind!
Luke Follow your heart!
Lily It's here! And you?
Luke Whatever you ask!
Lily Everything! Nothing less!
Luke It's yours!
Lily Let's have nothing between us but desire.
Luke Hold me hard, so I know I'm yours. (They embrace.)
L & L Aaaaaaaahhh! So long I've waited for this.
Lily We're driving each other, neither of us leads.
Luke We're in a long passage taking us where we want to go.
Lily (groaning) We're almost there.
Luke Harder. Hurry. No lingering. Don't stop now!
Lily I've wanted to be in your hands.
Luke I've been longing to be yours.
Lily You wanted to lose yourself in me.
Luke Lose myself where you could find me.
Lily Pick you up and play with you ...
Luke ... like a bomb!
Lily Ready to explode, longing for its end!
Luke There's no sense in anything, but we see everything in the last second ...
Lily ... in the last second before we see nothing at all.

Luke That's when we see everything we're ever going to see!
Lily I've seen it now and I'm alive ...
Luke (realising) I hadn't thought of that. Yes ...
Lily Let the daylight in.
Luke reaches out and pulls the curtain back so we can see the two of them lying in his bed.
Luke Not our last day yet. We've got a few to come.
Lily Someone facing death has a few mornings and then they sleep forever.
Luke If the prisoner felt like I do, he wouldn't care.
Lily Then we've had a perfect love. I'm coming back for more.
Luke Don't go yet. Leave the curtain open. Let the sunlight in as if it's ours.
Lily The illusion of living every day.
Luke Some creatures last a day. Others a hundred years.
Lily We're butterflies, something brief.
Luke Imagine if we had children, going down the years ...
Lily Time's too short. Rinaldo wants you dead.
Luke Rinaldo ...
Lily He does exist, though I put him out of mind ...
Luke He has to wait. There has to be a second visit, and a third ...
Lily Who knows how many we'll get?
Luke Lily doesn't know, Luke doesn't know, we live in the curve of a question ...

Lily Like the moon swelling to the full, then fading back
 ...
 Luke We won't fade, my darling, we'll be dead when they
 come.
 Lily So be it. Love me again before I go.
 Luke You broke down the wall; I've got to learn a miracle I
 can do for you.
 Lily Caress me my love. You can do no more.

11. Washing

As in Scene 3, we are in the garden of Helen Orbiston and Gus Jespersen. Luke is hanging sheets and pillow slips on a line where there is already a load of washing. Gus appears in the kitchen as Luke goes into his bungalow. Gus looks at the line and begins to chuckle. When Helen appears he points to the washing. After a moment she finds it funny too.

Gus Remember when we first got together?
 Helen I couldn't get you out of bed.
 Gus I couldn't get you into bed, so when I did, that's
 where I wanted to stay!
 Helen He's put a new lot on the line.
 Gus Must have had a visitor last night.
 Helen Have you ever seen anybody?
 Gus Never. Night nor day.
 Helen We'll have to get a dog to bark when she comes.
 Gus They!
 Helen You think there's more than one?

Gus I don't know.
 Helen He wouldn't bring lots of women here. They'd see the
 sheets!

They both snicker as quietly as they can.

Gus It's a drying day. He'll have the line clear in an hour.
 Helen (studying the sheets) There's something desperate
 about it, don't you think?

Gus I'm a bit envious!

Helen Silly man. Why don't we see hear footsteps on the
 path?

Gus She must go past our window.

Helen She might be climbing over the fence!

They snicker some more, trying to restrain their voices.

Gus When Luke came, how many sheets were in that cup-
 board?

Helen I think he's bought some more.

Gus I never saw him walk in with them, either.

Helen You don't think it's all a ...

Gus ... fantasy he's living? I don't know, it could be.

Helen Hey!

Gus What?

Helen Listen. There's someone there.

They listen. We hear the voices of Luke and Lily, very faintly, but
 profoundly intertwined.

L & L Oooooooooohhh ... Oooooooooohhh ...

Gus I'll be buggered!

Helen Come inside. I'm going to play. You watch.

Gus and Helen go inside. A moment or two later, we hear Helen's viola.

L & L (as if responding) Aaaaaaaahhh Aaaaaaaahhh ...

The wind stirs the washing on the line, which revolves slowly, letting the sheets dry out. Helen plays on. We can see Gus watching from a window.

Gus Nothing. Not a sign.

Helen (no longer playing) Amazing.

L & L Oooooooooohhh ... Oooooooooohhh ...

12. Toorak (3)

As in Scene 4, we are in the Courtney home in Toorak, and can see both Steve and Tricia's room upstairs and Lily's apartment on ground level. At the beginning, the action is in Lily's rooms, where she's with Rinaldo, her underworld lover.

Rinaldo I've told you to get rid of him. I've given you a gun.

Lily I'll use it.

Rinaldo When?

Lily When the time's right.

Rinaldo The time's now. I want him dead within twenty four hours.

Lily He knows he has to die. He keeps asking for another day.

Rinaldo His days have run out, or else yours have.

Lily I have the gun, Rinaldo. I can shoot him, or you, or myself. It's my choice!

Rinaldo Don't play games with me. There'll be a sudden end.

Lily (hearing Steve on the stairs) Sssshh. Out of the way.

Rinaldo goes into her bedroom, Steve knocks, Lily opens the door.

Lily Steve! What news?

Steve Tricia's had her child. We're calling her Juliet.

Lily Somewhere in the world there's another child and they're calling him Romeo.

Steve Maybe. It's a nice idea.

Lily For everyone, there's someone, waiting to meet, if they can find a way ...

Steve You think so? Perhaps ...

Lily I'm sure of it. Everyone needs to find their great love.

Steve I've found mine. When are you going to find yours?

Lily (mysteriously) Perhaps he's not far away.

Steve Can I quote you on that?

Lily You are the master of the house, my brother. You may do as you please.

Steve Come up and have a drink with me. I'm on my own until tomorrow.

Lily I have to go out soon.

Steve When you get back ...

Lily ... it will be tomorrow. I'm on a mission ...

Steve Saving someone's soul?
 Lily I've captured it already!
 Steve You were serious, then?
 Lily I was. And you, my brother, you are a happy man.
 Steve She's an adorable little thing. And Tricia is beautiful beyond belief. You wouldn't believe your eyes if you could see her now.

Lily I'll see her tomorrow then. Good night.
 Steve (as Lily closes the door) Good night, Lily. (to himself) What's she going to do? There's something dark in store. (He leaves. Rinaldo comes out.)

Lily You heard?
 Rinaldo I heard. Off you go ... on your mission.
 Lily I'm not leaving while you're here.
 Rinaldo And why not, may I ask?
 Lily You may not. Please go.
 Rinaldo (as he goes to the outside door) Don't lose sight of the fact that I'm coming back. There are six bullets in that gun. I want to see five.

Lily (amused; teasing) One for you and one for me will leave three. (savagely) Go!

Rinaldo slips away. She touches a switch and the lighting fades. Then she moves to a sideboard where there is a framed photo of herself. She stares at it, concentrating, then she disappears.

13. An island

Luke is lying on his bed when he hears the rustling sound in the wall which means Lily is about to appear. Adoration in his eyes, he watches as she comes through the wall.

Luke (reaching for her) My love who makes me helpless.
 Lily My love who makes me grand!
 Luke Do you really feel bigger because you've got me?
 Lily I own you. I can walk around inside.
 Luke I never knew a personality was so huge until I had you to explore.
 Lily You're like a garden. I can rub the fruit, admire. And I can sing!
 Luke Sing to me my love. Your voice is all I want to hear.
 Lily What shall I sing, my love?
 Luke Something sacred.
 Lily The stars are pale.
 Old is the Night, his case is grievous,
 His strength doth fail.

Through stilly hours
 The dews have draped with love's old lavishness
 The drowsy flowers.

And Night shall die.
 Already, lo! The Morn's first ecstasies
 Across the sky.

An evil time is done.
 Again, as some one lost in a quaint parable,
 Comes up the Sun.*

Luke A thought has filled my mind.
 Lily Tell me, my love.
 Luke I have an island. It's far away, and waiting.
 Lily An island? Is it yours, or a dream?
 Luke It sits like a jewel on a pad of sea. The water is blue,
 but when you enter it, and look up, its splashes make
 every drop a pearl.
 Lily Shall I wear these pearls for you?
 Luke Better still, you shall be the island, you, the love of
 my life.
 Lily And I shall be your death.
 Luke We'll share it, when the moment comes. I'll not have
 anything apart from you.
 Lily (joining him) I'll not have anything apart from you.
 Luke Come to my island. It's far away, and waiting.
 Lily Can we live there alone?
 Luke I have a boat. We'll cast off for our place of wondrous
 love.
 Lily We have it already, my love, and it's here.
 Luke Our island, far from the sight of men, will be lasting.
 Lily Lasting?
 Luke We'll live free of time, free of everything but love.
 Lily Can this be?
 Luke I have an island, calling. Come back, it says, and
 bring your lover: she too will be mine.

Lily Shall I be owned?
 Luke You will be free. As long as our love shall last, you
 will walk my island, and we'll know each other as
 lovers have never known each other before.
 Lily Can we fly there, as I come in mystery to you?
 Luke We are there already, my love. Do you see the waters?
 The sand, and sky?
 Lily I see them, my love, with eyes the same as yours.
 Luke Are we there, then, my love?
 Lily This bed is our island, my love, the last we'll ever
 know. These walls are our sky, our sea. Our heavens
 are nothing but a roof, and yet they've been heavens,
 for a while.
 Luke Has time passed while we dreamed?
 Lily Time is always passing. It's a slave. Only you and I
 have been free.
 Luke And this must end?
 Lily Next time I come ... that will be soon enough ... for
 me.
 Luke I'm in your hands, my love.
 Lily I'm in your arms, my love, never wanting any other.

14. Three shots

As in Scene 11, we are looking at the home of Helen and Gus, who
 are inside.

Gus (excited and amused) Listen! She's coming!
 Helen Hang on, there's more than one!

Gus Luke's having an orgy!

Helen Just a minute ...

Two detectives, wearing suits, come into view.

Gus Cops!

Helen If ever I saw them!

Gus What are they after, I wonder?

The detectives knock on the bungalow door, and Luke opens.

Luke Yes?

Det. Bianco A few questions, Mr Bowden. Shouldn't take long.

Luke (reluctantly) Sorry there's only the bed to sit on.

The three men move into the bungalow. Luke sits on the bed and Bianco sits beside him. Nero, the other detective, sits too, but studies the photo on the wall of Lily, then relaxes. He's got the connection they've come for.

Bianco It's the Furlingieri shooting. We've come across some photos. Lots of people, some of them could be involved. We need to know who they are.

Luke I'll tell you anything I know.

Bianco (to Det. Nero) Show them to Mr Bowden. (to Luke) Anything that comes to mind, let's have it.

Nero shows Luke the pictures. As he does so, they appear on the wall, as if being screened.

Luke (in response to each one) No. Don't know who they are. No. Strangers to me. (Nero shows him a picture of a paddock full of vegetables in rows.) Looks like

Carlo's place, but it could be anywhere. (A picture of a truck.) That's the truck I drive. It's been repainted. (A wedding group.) Partying. Nobody there I know. Hang on, there's something familiar about that bloke at the back. In the corner.

Nero Here's another picture of him.

The next picture is of Rinaldo, close up, and he has Lily in his arms, looking glamorous. The detectives are watching Luke's reaction. Luke becomes unsteady, not least because he is aware of Lily's image - the full size one, meaning she's near - looking down from above him.

Bianco She's worth a look, isn't she? But tell us if you know the man she's with.

Luke That must be Rinaldo!

Bianco Could be. You know his second name?

Luke (desperately) No!

Lily's eyes are blazing.

Nero Anything else you know about him?

Luke Take that bloody picture away! It's haunting me!

Bianco What do you think of this?

The detectives show Luke a photo of a naked Lily on a bed, enticing, yet deeply disturbing.

Luke I don't know who she is!

Nero Mr Bowden, you've got her picture on your wall. Like to tell us her name?

Luke chuckles drily, aware that his life's end's approaching.

Bianco Don't worry. We're not here to make you uncomfortable. We've got the connection we were after. Feel like a smoke?

Luke I don't smoke.

Bianco You're wise. It kills you, they tell us, in the end. I won't smoke in your room, Mr Bowden, but when this job gets to me, I like to have a puff.

Luke (sadly) You're most considerate.

Nero It's not our job to upset people. The people we deal with can usually do that for themselves.

Luke I'm sure.

Bianco Don't take it too hard, Mr Bowden. We'll have this matter cleaned up pretty soon.

Luke I think it will be. You're right.

Nero Thanks for your help.

The detectives leave, going past the house on the way to their car.

Helen Didn't stay long.

Gus I'd better have a talk to Luke. See if he's okay.

Helen Give him some time to himself. Let him settle down again.

Gus I guess you're right. Okay.

In the bungalow, a depressed Luke sits on the bed. Lily, whose picture has been rageing on the wall because of what she's heard, appears in the room and sits by Luke. She is carrying a gun, which she presses to his temple.

Luke Don't hesitate. Shoot.

Lily Look at me first. I want your eyes.

Luke You won't be able to do it. Shoot. Have no regrets.

Lily I want to watch as the light goes out in your eyes.

Luke Treat me like a dying animal. Press the trigger. I'll do it for you if you wish.

Lily (touching him) Love me first. One last time before you die.

Luke (starting to feel angry) Before we die. We'll go together. (starting to rage) Curse you! Curse you! Curse the love that brought us to this point! (He snatches the gun in her hand, and they struggle for control of it.) You first! You first! You first! You first! (He gets control of the gun, waves it and screams hysterically.) You first! You first, then me! We said we'd die together!

Lily leaps off the bed and dashes into the wall. In a flash the bungalow disappears, as does the house where Gus and Helen live, and we are back in the Courtneys' home in Toorak. The house begins to rumble and shake, and we see Lily's picture appearing here and there on the walls, as, panicking, she tries to get back to her rooms. She appears to have lost her bearings. She screams from time to time.

Lily Aaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaahhh!

Tricia, her mother Margaret and her baby Juliet appear, panic-stricken at the way the house is shaking.

Tricia Aaaaaaaaaahhh! Outside! Mother! Outside! In the garden, where it's safe. Steve! Where are you!
Steve (in the lounge) What the hell's going on? Is it an earthquake? The bloody house is going to fall over!

The door of Lily's wing of the house opens and we see her come flying through the wall. At more or less the same time Steve rushes past to reach the garden, his wife, his daughter and his mother-in-law.

Tricia The house is falling apart! Darling, stop it falling on us!

As Lily screams again, a bullet comes through the wall and hits her in the back of the head.

Lily (as she dies) Aaaaaaaaaahhh ... aaaaaaaaaahhh ...
Steve What was that?

He rushes to her door. It shuts in front of him with a bang and he flings it open again to see Rinaldo, holding a gun, which he fires at Steve, bursting in. Steve falls dead. Tricia, holding Juliet, and Margaret rush to the door but not quickly enough to block the escape of Rinaldo who runs out, vaults the fence and disappears. Tricia and Margaret are standing in the doorway, looking in confusion at the bodies of Lily and Steve, when we hear a third shot, far away, as Luke brings his life to its conclusion too.

Tricia We'll never know what's happened here.
Margaret We'll ring the police. They'll sort it out.
Tricia They'll only clear up the mess. What made it, and how, we'll never know.

🌀 End of Opera 9 🌀

12. Poem in Scene 13 is 'The Break of Day', by John Shaw Neilson, from *A Book of Australian and New Zealand Verse*, chosen by Walter Murdoch and Alan Mulgan, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 4th edition, 1950

The source

1. Return to the convent

Lucy is in a street, outside the convent where Annie married Giles (see Opera 1, The Tree House).

Lucy Mother's town. Her secrets lie beyond that wall. Am I making a mistake? There's only one way to find out.

She rings the bell. After a time, the door is opened by Sister Maria. The sister examines Lucy.

S Maria You have a story to tell. Come in.

Lucy (hesitating) This door frightens me.

S Maria It will open again when you ask.

Lucy enters, the door closes behind her with a boom. The screen behind her shows an austere chamber. Lucy sits on a bench with Sister Maria.

S Maria What do you have to tell us?

Lucy I was born in the mountains. My father died. My brothers went to war. I bought a house for my mother and I entered the world. I'm searching.

S Maria We who live here have left the world. We live in it only to do God's service, which is to provide for those in need, as perhaps we are too.

Lucy You have everything here?

S Maria We are in the presence of God and we hope to please him.

Lucy How can you know?

S Maria It's a question I put to myself. My answer is perfection of humility. God's is the glory. Invisibility is ours.

Lucy Yet God must see you?

S Maria Through and through. If there's so much as a speck of pride he will condemn. We serve his creatures. We are nothing in ourselves.

Lucy I am nothing too. At least not yet. I don't know what I can do. If I work hard, day and night, can I live here with you?

S Maria It's Mother Therese who must say yes, but I believe she will agree.

Lucy A tiny room to sleep, a few hours every night.

S Maria The bell will waken you for prayer. That's how our days begin. Every single one.

Lucy This pleases me. May I see my room?

S Maria I'll take you to Mother Therese. Follow me. (She studies the somewhat unworldly Lucy.) Move without a sound. Getting yourself noticed is a sin.

Lucy That word!

S Maria Follow without talking.

Sister Maria brings Lucy into the presence of Mother Therese, who is standing by a statue of Christ on the cross.

S Maria Mother, this is Lucy. She's lost, she wants to stay with us.

Mother T Let her speak.
 Lucy People say a meaning can be found by living here.
 Mother T It can.
 Lucy I'm searching.
 Mother T You may find God one day.
 Lucy (haughtily) Can he not see me?
 Mother T Nobody speaks of God in that way.
 Lucy (submitting) I have been taught to speak plainly.
 There's no offence in that.
 Mother T Can you read and write?
 Lucy I can, and very well.
 Mother T Then humility will be your study. You will learn it here.
 Lucy What must I do?
 Mother T You will start in the kitchen. When your spirit is humble, we will rebuild it in the image of our lord.
 (She indicates the figure on the cross.)
 Lucy This is the man of suffering?
 Mother T This is he.
 Lucy I have heard of him.
 Mother T You will hear more. Maria, give Lucy the room between yourself and Brigida. She will have tutors young and old.

Sister Maria bows and leads Lucy down the passage; she opens the door to a tiny room.

S Maria This is where new arrivals make their home.
 Lucy Has this long been so?

S Maria It's always been done this way.
 She leaves Lucy in the doorway of the room.

Lucy Mother must have slept here. (reflecting) They're out to break me; it's what they always do. I'll never tell them who I am. With luck, I'll force them to give me what I need, or perhaps it lies outside these walls. Mother was conceived in these parts. Why do I need to know? I'm searching for things that flowed into me before I was born. This is where I start.

Mother T (appearing) To the kitchen, girl. I'll not call you by name until you show us you know how to work. (Mother Therese disappears again.)

Lucy She takes my obedience for granted; that's something I'll exploit.

2. Child

Night. Lucy is in her tiny room, with Sister Maria to the left, and Sister Brigida on the right.

Lucy (waking) What was that? (She listens, and we hear footsteps.) There's someone at the door! (She slips through the convent in her nightgown. She goes to the back door and opens it as a shaft of light reveals a baby in a basket.) Oh! Where did you come from, darling? (She picks up the child.) My mother arrived like this! Someone felt smeared in sin! What a wonder is a child! (She looks around.) Someone's watching. (Lucy

calls softly into the night.) I'll look after him, but I have to meet you! Tell me what to call the child!

Voice (calling) Bobby!

Lucy Bobby! He'll be mine. Let me see you! I need to know you when I meet you in the street. I'll give you news of him.

Two figures approach Lucy from the darkness.

Voice I'm Lisa and this is Bobby. Bobby's dad.

Lucy I'll give you back the basket.

Lisa I stole it for him. They'll trace him back to me, through the basket, I didn't think of that ...

Lucy Take it with you. (to Bobby, the father: a boy of fourteen) Kiss your son. (Bobby kisses his son, then Lucy turns to Lisa.) How can you bear to leave him?

Lisa I I want him to have his chance. He will be safe here, won't he?

Lucy I'll love him as my own. When he's old enough to understand, I'll tell him how I found him, and perhaps he'll find his way back to you.

Lisa Please do that. I want him back one day, when ...

Lucy When! The world's full of possibilities. Impossibilities too.

Bobby 'senior' is clutching at Lisa, afraid of being caught.

Lisa We have to go. Take care of Bobby. (She breaks down, but Bobby 'senior' pulls her away, and they are lost in the night.)

Lucy (A shaft of light illuminates Lucy, standing with the child.) The flame people sent Bobby. I'll repay what mother did for me. I'll make him mine!

3. Brigida remembers

Sister Brigida is talking to Lucy, as she changes Bobby's clothes.

Brigida Girls can't control themselves. They give in to men. They bear a child they can't support. Everything should be done within the Church. It's the only way.

Lucy (dissembling) Of course, of course.

Brigida Where did you come from, Lucy?

Lucy We lived in the mountains. My father died, then I ...

Brigida I've heard all that. Tell me where you came from.

Lucy I thought I was telling you.

Brigida Old tales! You tell everyone that stuff. I want the truth.

Lucy What truth am I supposed to tell?

Brigida If I could ask God about you, what would he say?

Lucy How should I know?

Brigida If you can't speak God's own truth, you're lost. You're damned!

Lucy These frightening words! Sin! Everyone says it all the time!

Brigida Aren't you afraid of God?

Lucy I don't think I am.

Brigida How can you not be scared when you think of his power?

Lucy The worst thing that could possibly happen to me has happened ... and I'm still here.

Brigida You remind me of someone. I feel I ought to know.

Lucy Who do I remind you of, Sister Brigida? Can you say?

Brigida Many years ago, an orphan was brought to us by a wealthy man. A girl. Her name was Annie.

Lucy Annie?

Brigida Annie. He said one of his maid-servants had produced the child. (Reflecting) If you live here, doing God's work, you have to swallow people's lies. You can do more good when you pretend.

Lucy You can see what lies behind the lies.

Brigida Very true, my girl, you're clever. Bobby's got a good mother. This man brought Annie to our door. We guessed that he was her father, and that one of his daughters was the mother, because his wife had died some years before.

Lucy (excited) You guessed ... but what did you do?

Brigida The child had to be protected. It's strange, isn't it; truth isn't always sacred. It can do a lot of harm. We taught Annie, we brought her up, and when we got the chance, we married her to a man we never saw again.

Lucy What was he like, this man?

Brigida I'm getting old, I forget.

Lucy Try hard to remember!

Brigida He wanted a wife. He was taking her into the mountains ...

Lucy You saw them go?

Brigida The priest married them, we gave them a meal, they set off, and we never saw them again.

Lucy You think about them?

Brigida I never married, and I was envious. For years I thought of them, in those dark mountains, and I wondered. Were they happy? Did she have children too? I never knew.

Lucy Would you like to know?

Brigida (surprised) Yes. I'd like to know. What can you tell me?

Lucy Nothing today. But if you give me the name of the man that brought Annie to this convent, I might be able to tell you a great deal.

Brigida You're a mystery to me, but then everything is, as I grow old. I'll give you his name, and the name of his property. I've got them written down because I remember nothing without help.

Lucy Can we do it now? (She picks up Bobby and holds him tenderly.)

Brigida It's only a scrap of paper but it'll tell you all I know.

4. The name

Michael Roche is sitting on the verandah of his homestead, built on a hill overlooking a considerable estate. Large trees surround his house.

Roche	The sun shines after rain. A blessing, surely. And yet my house is cold. Nobody wants to live with me. Why is this? We only have an hour in the sunlight, then we enter the shade. Our homes grow cold and empty. Who's that? Riding through my gate? A woman. Am I dreaming? Nobody like that comes now.	Lucy	I can. I will.
Lucy	(approaching, but still some distance away) Michael Roche?	Roche	Stand beside me.
Roche	You have my name; give me yours.	Lucy	(pointing) Your daughter married a man who saw in the mountains the opportunity to find meaning in his life.
Lucy	It will surprise you.	Roche	Did he find it?
Roche	That's of no account. Your name?	Lucy	Every day. And yet it brought him down. Your daughter lives out there alone, with the last of their children.
Lucy	(approaching his verandah on foot) I've come to tell you about your daughter.	Roche	Why are you not with them?
Roche	Who are you?	Lucy	Every child has to grow, and that means move away.
Lucy	I'm the daughter of your daughter. You are a part of me.	Roche	(looking at the mountains) Lucy, Lucy ... that was her name ...
Roche	I admit nothing as yet.	Lucy	You have the wrong one in mind. You should be calling Annie. Annie Wainwright was her name, once she married.
Lucy	Yet there is something to admit. That's the word spreading over your life, isn't it?	Roche	(loudly) I've never heard of her!
Roche	(conceding) Like a mighty shadow. A darkness terrible to name.	Lucy	You took her in a basket to the nuns. She was your daughter's child.
Lucy	I am the daughter of your daughter.	Roche	Not conceived in the proper and righteous way!
Roche	(beginning to crack) Where is she now?	Lucy	How many people are? Your wife was long dead. Your daughter had your child.
Lucy	You can see the mountains.	Roche	Whose lies are you speaking? You're not old enough to know!
Roche	I see them every day.	Lucy	But old enough to find out. What will you do for my mother?
Lucy	My mother, your daughter, lives out there.	Roche	(He picks up a whip from the verandah beside his
Roche	Can you tell me where she lives?		

chair.) I'll drive you away! You'll scream for mercy as I force you through the gate!

Lucy (angrily) I didn't come here for that!

Roche You want to grab everything I own! You're claiming a connection that never existed. You're nothing to do with me!

Lucy seizes him and throws him to the floor of the verandah, then grips his throat in her hands.

Lucy Oh yes I am! Your daughter called Lucy has come back, though I sense she's been long dead. She gave birth to Annie, and Annie gave birth to me, and if you don't acknowledge us, you'll die!

Roche Aaaaaaaahhh! Help!

Lucy (squeezing his throat) There's nobody in the house. I checked before I came! You took Annie in a basket to the convent. You left her there. Your daughter Lucy, what became of her?

Roche (gasping for breath) She went away. I never saw her again.

Lucy She tried to get away from shame but it would have followed her till she died. You've never found out where she is!

Roche How could I know that?

Lucy You've never tried. Get up in that chair!

She lets him struggle back into the chair where he was musing not so long ago.

Roche I can't do anything now, except pray to God for mercy.

Lucy You can do better than that.

Roche What do I have to do?

Lucy You must visit Annie Wainwright, the daughter of your daughter, in the cottage where she lives, in the mountains you can see from here. See that one there? (The screen behind them shows us the mountain the Wainwrights claimed.)

Roche I see it.

Lucy You'll go there, and you'll kneel before a woman who deserves better than you.

Roche Spare me. No.

Lucy I won't spare you. You'll save yourself, if it's to happen at all.

Roche Let me think.

Lucy No.

Roche I'm weak.

Lucy No.

Roche Then give me time. I need to pray.

Lucy You need to face yourself. In a mirror, to see what you are.

Roche I've done more than I can forgive myself. You and your mother must forgive.

Lucy It's your first daughter, who bore my name, who bore my mother, that must forgive, and how can you find her now?

Roche I fear she's dead.
Lucy Then so are you!

Lucy strides off the verandah, into the distance, jumps on her horse, and rides away.

5. The show

It is the day of the town's show, and the church has a marquee. Various sisters of the convent are there, as are members of the congregations of the district, serving tea to Catholics who come to pay their respects to the Monsignor and also, an honoured visitor, the Bishop. These gentlemen are drinking sherry from tiny glasses which they fill frequently. We can see little outside the marquee, but the sounds of animals – cows, horses, sheep – are heard during the scene. Lucy, Sister Brigida and little Bobby are at one side.

Bishop (of his sherry) Where's this from?
Mons. Yereth. That's how the Spaniards say it.
Bishop (jovially) Yereth? Let's call it sherry!
Mons. Call it a good friend!
Bishop I've no quarrel with that. (offering his glass) Who's that with the child?
Mons. Lucy. She found the baby at the door one night.
Bishop Not her own, I suppose?
Mons. No. She never changed shape. She's a good mother, I'm told.
Bishop I can believe it. She's a fine woman. Who's the real mother then? And the father? Do we know?
Mons. The whole town speculates, but nobody knows.

Bishop There are two people who know. They ought to be uncovered.

Mons. (in good humour) They uncovered themselves, for a little while.

Bishop They'd be young, I dare say.

Mons. There's a lot of that going on.

Bishop Let's have them over here.

The Monsignor signals to Mother Therese, who signals to Sister Mary, who signals to Sister Brigida, who nudges Lucy, who wheels little Bobby to the Bishop, who picks up the child.

Mons. You're Lucy? And this one, what's he called?

Lucy He's Bobby.

Mons. Who gave him that name?

Lucy I did. It was my idea.

Mons. How did you choose it?

Lucy In the mountains, we had a horse of that name. I knew if this little boy had the same name, then I would be tender with him.

Bishop You named him for a horse?

Lucy I named him for my love.

Bishop And is your love unceasing?

Lucy It has no end.

Bishop If your love has no limits, does that mean it roams unfettered?

Lucy My love has direction, a purpose, and that's to make Bobby a beautiful boy.

Bishop (handing Bobby back to Lucy) A good answer, Lucy. Look after him well.

Lucy Have no fear. I will.
She moves to the side of the marquee, and looks out in hopes of seeing Bobby's real mother and father passing by. Sister Brigida stays with the two men.

Brigida Holy Father, she worries me, she's so good with that child.

Mons. Why are you worried, sister?

Brigida She doesn't pay respect to you when she speaks.

Mons. You must teach her the proper forms of address.

Brigida She's deceiving us.

Mons. That's a serious thing to say.

Brigida For a long time I thought she'd had the child herself ...

Mons. No no, that's been checked. It isn't so.

Brigida I'm not so sure ...

Mons. Girls change shape before they give birth, and she was with you every day. You saw nothing?

Brigida It's what she doesn't say that matters.

Bishop Sister, you must excuse us. I need to talk to Mother Therese.

Mother Therese approaches, intent on stopping Brigida talking to men above her in the Church. Brigida returns to Lucy and Bobby, at the entrance to the marquee.

Mother T Ignore that silly woman. She's losing her grip.

Bishop I think that's clear. I have something else to talk about with you.

Mother T My lord bishop?

Bishop Things are running smoothly, but to win souls we need to impress.

Mother T I have something to tell you, my lord.

Bishop Ah? (offering his glass to the Monsignor to be filled)

Mother T A benefactor is thinking of building something our convent needs.

Mons. (jealously) Something for your convent?

Mother T So I believe.

Mons. How big a something?

Mother T Something I've dreamed about for years.

Bishop The extension to your chapel?

Mother T I told him it needed to be twice as big, and twice as high, so our voices could rise to God ...

Bishop An idea to make the spirit rejoice. What did he say?

Mother T He said he should do more. He'd heard we had a child in our care ...

Mons. Bobby? The little one over there?

Mother T Bobby. The little one over there. He reminded me that a boy couldn't stay with us forever, and said he was willing to be responsible for his care ...

Mons. Michael Roche? An old man on his own?

Mother T You knew, then, who it was?

Mons. I hear things ...

Mother T I don't see how you could have known that.

Mons. Secrets are whispered when there's nobody else to hear.

Mother T (deflated) Since you know, what do you think of the idea?

Bishop He will build us a chapel, and we'll give him the child when he's got someone to look after it. Lucy would go with the boy, would she not?

Mother T She offers temptation to a man of his sort. She's too free to enforce restriction.

Mons. So, when you find someone else for Bobby, Lucy will stay with you?

Mother T Lucy has no vocation for the religious life. She will be moved on.

Bishop Mother Theresa, there are too many ears in this tent. Let's move outside.

'The Bishop, the Monsignor and Mother Theresa move out of the marquee to join the throng outside; as they do, Lisa, Bobby's mother, passing by, notices a signal from Lucy.

Lisa (feigning, but also deeply affected) What a gorgeous boy!

Lucy Here, hold him. I want to rearrange his things.

She gives Bobby to his real mother and pretends to be rearranging his blankets.

Lisa Little lost one, gone away forever, didn't go far at all.

Lucy (pretending) I'm missing something.

Lisa Growing up so quickly, getting strong.

Lucy Where is it, now? Where did I put it?

Brigida (looking on; to herself) So that's who it is! That's the child's mother!

Lisa We have a secret, little love. You're mine, and I'll never lose you now.

Lucy We'll share him while we can. Who knows what will happen in this world?

Lisa You're my best friend, and my enemy, because I depend on you.

Lucy We both depend on Bobby, and he depends on me.

Lisa And yet he's mine.

Lucy He is ... and yet he's mine.

Lisa He's mine.

Lucy He needs us both, though he doesn't have words for it yet.

Lisa Words, words ... I never want him to grow up ...

Lucy ... into a world of words.

Lisa Let me hold him longer.

Lucy Oh! I've dropped his blanket. I've got a clean one somewhere ...

She moves to the side of the marquee and rummages in a bag. Michael Roche appears in the entry to the marquee.

Brigida Mister Roche! It's so many years since I saw you!

Roche Sister ... ah ... Brigida! It is, isn't it?

Brigida If you knew me it means I haven't aged!

Roche Hardly at all. I'm a little forgetful when it comes to names.

Brigida Remember this name then. This is little Bobby.

Roche (looking at Lisa and her child) Bobby? And who is this?

Lisa I'm Lisa.

Roche You're young to have a child.

Lisa I'm holding Bobby while ...

Roche While?

Lisa ... while Lucy gets a blanket.

Roche (darkly) Lucy?

Brigida That's her, over there.

Roche Ah yes. I may have seen her in the town.

Brigida Not likely. She's busy, day and night.

Roche We all need to be occupied. We find trouble otherwise. Don't you agree, Lisa?

Lisa I do sir, I do.

Lucy returns.

Lucy Put him in his pram, and cover him with this.

Lisa does so while the others watch, appraising each other.

Lisa He didn't wake up. Is he saying any words?

Lucy Not yet.

Brigida Not yet.

Lucy Sister Brigida tries to teach him the Lord's Prayer, but he's not ready.

Roche He will be. Ah! The people I came to see.

The Bishop, the Monsignor and Mother Therese re-enter the marquee. Roche moves to greet them, Lucy, Lisa and Bobby go to the side, with Brigida close to them, but trying to catch what's being said by the central group.

Brigida (aside) He's rich. I'll do something for him. He wants the child ...

Roche What do you think of my plan?

Bishop An excellent plan. It will aid Bobby's spiritual development, and be good for the convent too. Mother Therese?

Mother T We're longing to improve our chapel. The life of the spirit needs a home.

Lucy (catching what she says) The life of the spirit needs a home. Is she saying that to me?

Mons. You must have someone to help you, Mister Roche. You can't bring up the boy on your own.

Roche No. I'll need help with that ...

Brigida (to Bobby 'senior', who's entered the marquee) What do you want young man?

Bobby Someone told me Lisa was here.

Brigida And what's that to you?

Bobby (hardly knowing what to say) I wanted to talk to her.

Brigida You can wait, my boy.

Roche (noticing this, and seeing his chance) Young man, are you looking for work?

Bobby Well yes, sir, I am in need of something to do ... now that ...

Mons. Now that what?

Bobby Now that I've got nothing to do.

Lisa He means he wants to be useful.

Brigida Shoosh. It's not for the likes of you to talk in the presence of the Bishop.

Bishop Perhaps it is. Lisa! Could you manage this child?

Lisa I could sir. I believe I could.

Bishop Mister Roche: what if Lisa, and this young man ...

Lisa My brother! His name's Bobby too! Isn't it funny? Real peculiar.

Bishop Can you employ them, Mister Roche?

Roche (pleased) Bobby will have the best room in my house, after mine. Lisa will have the room next to Bobby's, across the passage from me.

Bishop And Lisa's brother, also Bobby?

Roche Will sleep in the shed. He'll help me on the property, and Lisa in the house.

Bishop Mother Therese?

Mother T I'll get a builder to draw up plans!

Bishop Monsignor?

Mons. (seeing into the arrangement) We can get a good outcome, I think, if I look into the years ahead.

Bishop I think so too. Sister Brigida, have you heard what we've been saying?

Brigida Most of it, sir, I think.

Bishop Mother Therese will advise you. You are to see that what we say occurs.

Brigida (inclining her head) My lord bishop, it will.

Bishop (noticing that Lucy is preoccupied) Mother Therese, see that Lucy understands what needs to be done.

Mother T I will.

Lisa How soon can this be done?

Bishop (looking about him for acceptance of his answer) Tomorrow should be soon enough.

Lucy Tomorrow!

Mother T (meaning to enforce the Bishop's command) Tomorrow!

Lucy Tomorrow?

Lisa (joyfully) Tomorrow!

Roche (lustfully) Tomorrow.

Lucy Then Bobby will have only one more night with me.

Mother T If that is what it means then that is what will happen. Foolish girl!

Lucy Mother Therese, I have never been foolish. Do not misjudge me if you wish to be thought intelligent.

Mons. Obedience within the church is wise, Lucy; you must accept, or go.

Lucy I see it the very same way, sir. I shall go, and it will be tomorrow.

Mother T Back to the mountains is it, then?

Lucy I'll take tomorrow's train to the city, though I've not a penny to pay my fare, and nothing for when I arrive.

Mother T You would be wiser then to stay!

Roche You shall have what you wish, Lucy. (He reaches in his pocket and gives her a ten pound note.) There are rules of poverty where you are living, but they can be broken, I'm sure. Mother Therese will look away. Take this, and journey on.

He knows he's triumphed over her, not least because he thinks she won't say anything about him in front of the others. As Lucy prepares to say something, the sound of the animals outside grows louder.

Lucy The parade! (looking out of the marquee) Brushed and groomed, looking splendid, not knowing when they're to die, or who they're to benefit while alive. They never know who's leading them or why! Come on Bobby, you shall be with me one more night, then you'll never be mine again.

6. Annie's letter

Lucy is at the railway station, and with her is Sister Brigida.

Brigida This letter came yesterday. Mother Therese told me to give it to you as you got on the train. But, since you've ordered me away ...

Lucy I'll read it now. (She takes the letter, opens it, and stares sharply at Sister Brigida.)

Brigida Shall I leave you then?

Lucy What else is there to do? I've lost the only child I'll ever have, and so, you unhappy woman, have you. (looking at the letter) It's from my mother.

Brigida I thought you'd read it on the train.

Lucy No doubt I will.

Brigida It's not ready to leave.

Lucy My spirit's already some way ahead.

Brigida When we die, we go to God. On earth, we have to do well ...

Lucy Thank you sister. Let me be alone.

Brigida I don't want to be alone. They'll bully me again when I don't have you.

Lucy ... and I don't have Bobby. We're worthless, aren't we, without someone to love. There's a lesson there, Sister. Now let us part, and let us do it in peace.

Brigida Peace. It's ever so hard to find.

Lucy You must search for it on your own.

Brigida leaves, desperate for somebody to love. Lucy opens the letter, and begins to read, but almost at once the voice of Annie takes over. As we listen to her message, the screen at the back shows a woman finding her way through smoke-filled bush, and then a fire, growing ever more spectacular, as the tree house is burned by George, Robert and Ned.

Annie My daughter, join me in mourning. The tree house has been destroyed. Your brothers came with malice in their hearts and set alight to it. They had oil to start a quick, hot fire, and horses to drag logs beside it. Where we slept and ate for my years of child-bearing there is only a scar. Your father had been rumbling for days; I should have been warned. When there were paroxysms of thunder and the earth shook, I knew something was wrong. I hurried up the mountain. I realised what was burning. Dawn had entered the sky when I got to the clearing. The flames were high as the tallest trees, laughing and dancing while your brothers lay sodden with rum. 'Here's the old lady!' they yelled, laughing themselves sick. I snatched

their bottle and threw it in the fire, but George pulled another from a box. I went to the graves at the edge of the clearing. George followed me. 'We've no quarrel with those ones, mother, nor with you. It's him we're wiping out, every trace!' I looked at the crosses of my children, buried there, and I left the clearing, ruin in my heart. I want you to share my mourning. You will have the courage, Lucy, as I have not, to speak to the spirit in the shaft. Speak to him, my daughter, come back and speak.

On the screen behind Lucy, the smoke clears, and we see Giles Wainwright's mountain, Lucy's mountain, noble and clear, standing above the deep valley before it, then we hear Giles' voice.

Giles I was powerless to stop them. Lucy, come. After flames, there is the redemption of love. You alone did I love properly. My need for you, will never fade.

The image of the mountain does fade, however, to be replaced by the train.

Guard All aboard. Train now departing! All aboard! Train now departing! All aboard!

Lucy stands, torn between going on and going back. Desperately unhappy, she gets on the train as it starts to move.

❧ End of Opera 10 ❧

The island

1. Homeless

Juliet Courtney Morris and a young man called Tim are on a beach, looking at a bathing box.

Juliet How do you get in?

Tim Easy. (He dives under the box, and pushes up a panel in the floor.) Come on in.

Juliet gets into the box. For a short time their voices come to us from within, then a wall dissolves so that we can see them.

Juliet I'm cramped.

Tim You get used to it. Tell me why you're here.

Juliet My mum dropped a load on me. Nasty surprise about my dad.

Tim On with someone else?

Juliet Shot by a crook he didn't even know.

Tim Sounds bad.

Juliet It flashed across my mind that she'd made it up to explain why he wasn't around. But if it was true, why didn't she tell me earlier? (Tim shrugs.) I got in a rage. I told her I was going for a walk.

Tim Far away?

Juliet Bracken Street.

Tim Close.

Juliet I won't be going back. Until it's mine.

Tim How old's mum?

Juliet She had me when she was twenty-four.

Tim Got a long wait.

Juliet Got a long way to go.

Tim All of us.

Juliet Both of us.

Tim You want a relationship?

Juliet Didn't mean that. I mean we're in something we can't see an end of.

Tim To live like this we have to be cunning. You want a meal. You want a blanket. If you get it, that's success, and it never comes easy. Got that?

Juliet I can see I have to learn.

Tim You don't get the luxury of seeing. You learn.

Juliet I learn.

Tim You learn.

Juliet I learn.

Tim You're getting the hang of it.

The beach box grows dark. It changes, and becomes a battered, rusty American V8 abandoned by a river in a poor area of the city.

Juliet winds down a window and puts her head out.

Juliet Worse than I thought.

She withdraws as she notices Sam looking at her from the other side of a fence.

Sam What sorta night d'ya have? I'm talking to you, sweet-

heart! Get any sleep? Or didya customers keepya busy?

Juliet (flinging open the door) Who do you think you're talking to?

Sam (amiably) Nobody else around.

Juliet (angry, but not knowing what to say) Well ...

Sam Expect me to knock on the front door? Ring the bell, maybe?

Juliet It's what I'm used to.

Sam Whereya from?

Juliet Brighton. I've got a very good home!

Sam (looking at the car) Yeah ... Time to trade it in though. Ya pretty good lookin. Wanta meet my sister?

Juliet (not seeing anyone else) Where's your sister?

Sam Works in bed, knocks off and stays in bed. Only gets up to eat.

Juliet What?

Sam She's a workin lady, see what I mean. Opposite the racecourse. (He points.) She's always lookin for girls. Fifty dollars for half an hour. Twenty for Flo, twenty for the girl, ten for Alex and me.

Juliet Who's Alex? Who are you, for that matter?

Sam Sam. Flo's my sister. Come and meet her.

Juliet I wasn't ... I wasn't planning on ...

Sam Can't stay there, whatever ya name is. Two girls been murdered there. Heard one of them screaming, kicked myself when I heard what they'd done to her.

Shoulda come down, but I didn't bother. Ya get used to noises after a while.

Juliet From here?

Sam Yeah. If ya had a quiet night, don't count on it. Two in a row'd be lucky.

Juliet You want me to live with you?

Sam If Flo says so. She'll accept you, but. You look the goods I hafta say.

He leaves, she grabs her small bag and follows.

2. The brothel (1)

Flo is leaning on a bar, and Juliet standing before her.

Flo Let's have a look at ya. I must say I like something a little more curvaceous, but plenty of men shy away from that. Dunno why. Yeah, we gotta place for you.

Juliet You're going to pay me to ...

Flo They pay Sam, you get a share. He's honest even if he doesn't look it. My little brother.

Juliet Ah ...

Flo Ya not havin doubts?

Juliet I never had any plan to ...

Flo Nobody gets here by planning! You find your way, I think I'd say.

Juliet I never thought I was lost.

Flo Anyone that sleeps on that riverbank is lost. Ya had a home, ya musta left it for a reason.

Juliet I'm starting to wonder.
 Flo Well don't think aloud. If ya stay here ya gotta be useful. Start tomorrow. Takes getting used to, one man after another. Some of them have ... difficulties and ya hafta help them. (She laughs.)
 Juliet Tell me something.
 Flo Whadda ya wanta know?
 Juliet Don't you finish up being like the people you work with?
 Flo Huh! Ya think you're too good for this. Darling, I'm no better than the men who pay me but I'm a hell of a lot smarter. Think about it! The money flows in this direction! (pointing to herself) Any crap from anyone, Sam and Alex chuck'em out. Who's the boss around here, I'm askin you?
 Juliet I start tomorrow?
 Flo Mid morning, it's a race day. They'll go all night, some of'em, but I'll let you off early. Gotta break you in.

3. The brothel (2)

A variety of men find their way to the bar, one or two at a time.

Sam Takeya pick from the photos. We got a new girl. Haven't got a picture yet.
 Maori I'll have her.
 Sam Reckon she'll be good? Fifty dollars. In advance!
 Maori Maybe I don't like her.

Sam If ya seen her ya wouldn't say that. Best tits you ever had ya hands on.
 Maori You had her yourself?
 Sam Nuh. We only sell it. Don't consume. Huh!

Other men come in, study the pictures, then look with surprise when Juliet's door opens, a spindly, jockey-sized man comes out, and behind him, only partially visible, is Juliet.

Maori She's the one for me!
 Sam Ya gotta wait. Two before you. If ya getting horny we'll getya someone else.
 Maori No. That's the one!

He lies down on the floor, staring in happy anticipation at the ceiling until Flo comes in.

Flo Get up you! This is a respectable lounge. No rolling on the floor. And don't start arguin or you'll be outside, quick ...
 Sam ... fuckin ...
 Flo ... smart!

The Maori man gets onto a sofa. Juliet's second customer comes out, looking pleased. And the third goes in. The sounds of desire and its commercial fulfilment come from the various rooms.

Sam No wonder I feel so fuckin superior.
 Alex (beside him) Then ya go off to get yourself fitted.
 Sam Ah, that never takes long.
 Alex (mocking) True love! We're never gunna find it, mate!

Sam Doesn't exist, the way I see it.
 Alex I never seen it.
 Sam Makes ya think it might be somewhere, waitin to waylay us!
 Alex Whaddaya think, Flo? Is true love real?
 Flo Course it is. We're makin money outa those who haven't got it.
 Alex I'm gonna ask Juliet to go out with me.
 Flo No ya not. You and Sam are takin her out for a drink, then home early. She's getting used to the work. Look at that queue! She's gonna be the makings of this place.

Juliet's door opens and the third customer comes out. The Maori dashes in.

Juliet (from behind her door) Aaaaaaaahhh!

Flo is listening hard, but nothing further develops.

Sam Musta got a surprise at what she saw!
 Alex Make a man envious, some of'em.
 Flo He's her last one for the day. Get yourselves lookin smart, quick ...
 Sam ... fuckin ...
 Alex ... smart!
 Flo Take her out for a drink. Make her feel okay.

The Maori leaves Juliet's room looking pleased with himself. She looks at Flo from her door.

Juliet Can I have a break? I'm not used to this.
 Flo Boys are gonna take ya out, Judy. Three drinks the limit. Big day tomorrow.

4. The brothel (3)

Flo Race day. Ya gonna be hard at it, Judy. But a roll of notes under your pillow tonight, think about it.
 Juliet I'm thinking about it. (She means the day ahead.)
 Sam They're lining up at the barriers. Inta ya stall, Judy, ready for the ride!

Juliet goes into her room. A line of men can be seen in a waiting room. They can be 'real', or shown on the screen, and they are a varied lot. Some of them go to other rooms, but Juliet (Judy to the brothel) is in demand and man after man, not to mention a few boys, go into her room, and out again. We can see enough of Juliet to make us aware of what she's doing with her customers: on her back, on her front, standing up, taken from behind, helping the clumsy to find their way into her, customer after customer. Sam takes money from these people and stashes it in a drawer. Alex looks in the rooms occasionally if he senses there's any lack of satisfaction. Then Jesse Bowden enters the brothel, a tanned young man with blond hair and an easy manner.

Sam (indicating the pictures on the wall) See anyone ya fancy? It's your call.
 Jesse (amused) That's the one.
 Sam She's real popular, ya'll have to wait.

Jesse No hurry.
Another two or three clients go in and out of Juliet's room, then she opens her door.

Juliet I'm buggered. I'm taking a break, Sam.

Sam In a while, Judy. One more before you stop.

Juliet I'm taking a fucking break, Sam. Got that between your ears?

Sam Didn't hear a word. One more and ya can wind up.

He indicates to Jesse that he should go into Juliet's room. Jesse sits on the end of her bed.

Juliet And how do you want to do it? Got a favorite way?

Jesse Forget about that. Just sit down.

Juliet Like to talk first, do we? That the idea?

Jesse How did you get caught up in this?

Juliet Don't ask me things like that.

Jesse You're not lost, then. You still know who you are.

Juliet Only just. When people pay to have me, I don't let them in that far.

Jesse Have you got anywhere you can go?

Juliet Do you think I'd be here if I did?

Jesse Do you want somewhere or are you settling in?

Juliet Have you come here to torment me? That's the nastiest trick!

Jesse I came for something quick, but you've changed me. I want you out of here.

Juliet Where the fuckin hell can I go? Only money I've got's in Sam's drawer.

Jesse What about an island, set in the sea like a pearl on satin? How's that sound?

Juliet Scriptwriter. Trying his lines in a brothel to see how they sound.

Jesse You don't trust me, do you?

Juliet You gave Sam your money. Have your fuck and go.

Jesse He can have the money. I'm giving you your freedom.

Juliet (crying) There's no way out. I've watched the other girls. When they're not young any more, they get thrown out. Till then ...

Jesse How can I make you believe I mean what I'm saying?

Juliet What are you saying?

Jesse I've got an island, in the north. I live there. It's mine. I want to share it. I want you out of here.

Juliet So what are you doing here if it's as bad as that?

Jesse Getting sex off my mind so I can be happy when I meet my mum at the races.

Juliet Is that her hair you've got?

Jesse Hers is lovelier by far. She's the bravest woman I've ever known.

Juliet You love your mother?

Jesse I couldn't love her more.

Juliet She gives you freedom, though?

Jesse She says, you know how to live, she assumes you're living that way.

Juliet You want to take me with you? I'm pretty short on trust after this place.

Jesse I'll give you time to think. How long do I have to wait?

Juliet (thinks hard) A month.

Jesse Four weeks from the day. I'll see you then.

Juliet Maybe.

Jesse I will.

Juliet If you don't change your mind. There's plenty of girls ...

Jesse There's never been one on my island. You'll be first.

Juliet Yes, maybe, we'll see ...

Jesse ... in four weeks from today.

5. In flight

Juliet and Jesse are sitting in a plane.

Voice Good morning ladies and gentlemen. We're approaching Canberra now. Passengers on the right hand side of the plane will see it if you look out. Forecast top for Cairns today is twenty-eight degrees. I'll speak to you later; enjoy your flight.

Jesse Warm up north.

Juliet (laughing) I don't even have a toothbrush!

Jesse (nonchalantly) We'll get you one.

Juliet I ... don't ... own ... a thing!

Jesse Travelling light.

Juliet No past, no expectations. I'm flying. I'm never going to fall again.

Jesse Don't say that. It's the quickest way to make something happen.

Juliet Too much has happened already. There can't be any more.

Jesse Sure as hell will be.

Juliet Then it's going to be good.

Jesse Usual mixture, I predict.

Juliet I want better than that.

Jesse We'll have to work hard to make it happen.

Juliet (sombrely) Work.

Jesse Don't think about it. It's behind you now. Forever.

Juliet I'm flying, Jess, I'm flying.

Jesse Flying, Jules, flying ...

Juliet Flying, flying, free.

Three flight attendants move down the aisle; they're wearing the white tops with coloured collars and/or belts which we've seen a number of times in earlier operas.

6. Juliet's boat

Jesse and Juliet are on a launch heading out towards the Barrier Reef. He stops the engine because they are near a sand cay.

Juliet Why are we stopping?

Jesse We're going to baptise you.

Juliet In the water?

Jesse jumps in the water, which comes up to his chest.

Jesse Your turn.

Juliet What's it going to do to me?

Jesse Try it and see.

Juliet For some reason I'm scared.

Jesse Think of that boat as connecting you with Flo, and Sam, all those pricks.

She jumps. There's a slight splash, and she's beside Jesse, who puts his arms around her.

Jesse You're reborn.

Juliet I am. It's true.

Jesse It's yours, you grab it.

Juliet Is it as easy as this?

Jesse We don't know what's before us. Grab the moment, and cling.

Juliet Is that how you live?

Jesse It's how I've always wanted to live, and now we're doing it.

Juliet You and I.

Jesse You and I.

Juliet What a miracle. All this water, these islands ...

Jesse One of them's mine. Ours. I'm giving it to you.

Juliet A kingdom of joy!

Jesse A kingdom that's empty, until we fill it with joy.

Juliet We will!

Jesse I think so too. Back on board. Let's go and find it.

Juliet (clambering onto the boat again) You know where you are?

Jesse (clambering on also) Got a fair idea.

They both laugh with happiness, relief, and release.

Juliet What's that? In the sky?

Jesse Nothing there. Birds, maybe.

Juliet I thought I saw some people, guiding me.

Jesse Angels, call'em what you like.

Juliet Perhaps they were. Good spirits are leading me today.

Jesse It stands to reason if bad spirits hang out in bad places then good spirits take people where it's good.

Juliet (musing) Does anything stand to reason? The world's not run by reason.

Jesse Where we're going, there's everything we need.

7. The island

Jesse and Juliet are sitting under The Mushroom, as Jesse calls it. They are at a table, with a lantern, sipping beer.

Juliet Do you feel we're alone, or do you think there's others here?

Jesse Everyone that's ever lived is out there in the night.

Juliet (after a pause) Some of them happy and some of them alone.

Jesse Most of them envious, I'd say.

Juliet Of us?

Jesse Of us.
 Juliet I didn't think it could be this good.
 Jesse (musing) Why isn't it always?
 Juliet I don't know who you are, and you don't know me.
 Jesse We're finding out.
 Juliet I want it all worked out. Give me that paper, Jess.
 Jesse unfolds some wrapping from the parcels they got in Cairns.
 Jesse What are we going to do?
 Juliet (writing) Juliet Courtney-Morris. Put your name beside mine.
 Jesse (writing) Jesse Bowden. I think I see what you're about.
 Juliet Mother and father now, both of us.
 Jesse Karen Bowden, my beloved mother.
 Juliet Father?
 Jesse An American pilot. Was.
 Juliet How did he die?
 Jesse His plane crashed in the ocean, somewhere out there.
 Juliet Call him in. I want him with us tonight.
 Jesse Mum never told me his name. It'll die with her.
 Juliet Write, 'Unknown airman'. Write that, Jess.
 Jesse (after writing) Your turn, my love.
 Juliet Tricia Courtney-Morris. Strange how strange that makes me feel ...
 Jesse Now your dad.
 Juliet (writing) Steve Morris.
 Jesse What happened to him?

Juliet A gangster shot him. It's a weird story. I never knew.
 Jesse And then?
 Juliet Mum dropped it on me, and I hated what I heard, and I cleared out ...
 Jesse ... and found your way here. (They think about this.)
 Juliet We haven't finished.
 Jesse It'll take all night.
 Juliet We've got all night. We've got tomorrow and tomorrow night ...
 Jesse We've got forever, my love.
 Juliet We've got forever. We have to take this quietly, Jess, we mustn't rush it.
 Jesse I'll sleep on the boat, you have the bed over there.
 Juliet Other way round. I'll be on the boat, finding my way to you.
 Jesse Are you saying goodnight?
 Juliet Everything's saying goodnight. This list ...
 Jesse ... which we've hardly started ...
 Juliet We'll go on with it tomorrow.
 Jesse There's plenty of tomorrows.
 Juliet We're rich, my love. And I forgot to buy that brush.

8. On the water

They're on a yacht, an elegant thing with white sails. The ocean is around them, and there are islands not far away.
 Juliet Three islands. Do they have names?

Jesse They would have, but who cares?
Juliet I feel they're watching me.
Jesse You're new up here. They're curious.
Juliet (looking at him) You said that as if you meant it.
Jesse Put yourself in their place. There's a man living by himself, then he's got someone with him. I reckon islands like a bit of news.
Juliet Am I news, darling?
Jesse Best thing that ever happened.
Juliet It's hard to think of myself as new.
Jesse You didn't have long in that place. It'll soon be wiped from your mind.
Juliet We've got our family chart to finish, tonight.
Jesse As far back as our minds can go.
Juliet And the future?
Jesse As far as our eyes can see.
Juliet It's not far, is it.
Jesse We only know the next thing when it happens.
Juliet Next thing is for you to give love to me.
Jesse It's yours already, darling. (He notices something about her.) What is it?

Juliet looks toward the horizon, with its islands, as if she can hear something that he can't.

Juliet They're singing, darling. Your islands are singing to me.
Jesse What are they saying? Are there words, or only noises?

Juliet I can hear their names. That one's my mother.
Jesse Tricia.
Juliet That one's her mother.
Jesse Margaret, you told me that.
Juliet And that one's your mother, your beloved Karen.
Jesse Is she there?
Juliet I can't see them but I know they're there.
Jesse My mother. (He touches her arms.) She's very broad-minded.
Juliet It's time we loved. We really are starting now, Jesse, my love.
Jesse Here on deck, or go below?
Juliet In their sight. With them included. That's how we're going to love.

They lie down. The boat spins, the light darkens then glows brightly, each of the three islands intensifies in colour for a few moments, then normality resumes. The boat turns to its previous direction.

Jesse What have we done?
Juliet We've bonded and it's made us new.
Jesse The boat knew something was happening. (He looks at the islands.)
Juliet They knew. And if they didn't, they know it now. There's three of them and they want me to join them.
Jesse (rubbing her waist) You might have joined them already.
Juliet I have! I have! I have!

Jesse So it's only a matter of time. Events are pushing us along, my love. We don't control where we are.

9. A letter

Lucy Wainwright, last seen at the end of Opera 10, The Source, is reading a letter from her mother.

Annie's voice There are men cutting trees where our family lived. There is a mill. One of the workers is called Bill. He talks to me and I give him tea. He's cleaned up the mess your brothers made. He's buried the rum bottles they drank while they made their fire.

Lucy Mother!

Annie He's given me two souvenirs. Do you remember the thermometer on the back of the door? He found the little strip of copper. At thirty two it says Freezing and at two hundred and twelve it says Water boils. Life should be so simple!

Lucy This is how I began.

Annie His other gift was the angry-looking head of Giles' mattock. The blade reaches out in a curve and rests on my table. I can see it now. Your father used it in his garden.

There is a tremendous rumble of thunder, not so far away.

Lucy Father, be still.

Annie I told Bill your father was no good at growing tomatoes. Year after year they wouldn't do any good. Bill said, We all have to have a failing. I nodded, pleas-

antly close to him, and I thought of you, my daughter. You must feel my need to see life pass through you. We are all expendable, and I have been spent. Refuse no longer what life demands of you. Let me know the arrangements for your return.

There is another rumble from Giles, in his pit, somewhere in the mountains.

Lucy Peace, father, and mother, you must wait. Everyone has to find their way.

10. A name for a child

Jesse and Juliet are under the Mushroom, looking out.

Juliet Why did Luke build this?

Jesse He didn't want a cyclone blowing him away.

Juliet Are we safe?

Jesse It depends what you're afraid of.

Juliet What is there ... to be afraid of?

Jesse If you've got a problem, you can be afraid of it, or you can look it in the eye.

Juliet So?

Jesse Luke was smart. If a storm hit the island, he'd get in here, then he'd look it in the eye!

Juliet That was smart?

Jesse Pretty smart, I think. Let's go back to our chart.

Juliet (spreading it) Between Jesse and Juliet there's room for a name.

Jesse Boy or girl?

Juliet Boy.
 Jesse (writing) Don.
 Juliet Don.
 Their voices play with the name.

Jesse Where will he go when he wants to get away?
 Juliet Where will we be when he's gone?
 Jesse Together, always.
 Juliet Names on a scrap of paper.
 Jesse Written on each other's hearts.
 Juliet There's nothing that lasts.
 Jesse Make the best of it if that's how it is.
 Juliet It's wonderful to be nothing ... and yet I have to join that line.
 Jesse You'll know when they need you.
 Juliet Why will they need me, Jess?
 Jesse To make them strong as they grow old.
 Juliet Will Don do that for us?
 Jesse He'd better, when I can't stand up any more.
 Juliet Everyone gets a moment, Jess, and this is ours.
 Jesse Let's not light the lamp tonight. Let's let the darkness invade ...
 Juliet ... and we'll fill it with our light!

11. The asylum

Lucy is working in an asylum, and she is welcoming a visitor, a baker called Johnny. We hear, throughout this scene, the wails, shrieks and cries of mad people serenading the moon.

Lucy Your beautiful bread rolls, Johnny, and a jar of jam.
 Johnny Not many good things make it in here.
 Voices Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
 Johnny They're in voice tonight.
 Lucy Full moon.
 Johnny It makes you wonder who's crazy. I feel like singing, but I don't want people to think I'm mad.
 Lucy The crazy people have got the sensible ones locked up?
 Johnny That's about it. Don't you think?
 Lucy The trouble is, there's nobody to decide.
 Johnny Nobody we can trust.
 Lucy (wistfully) Trust ...
 Johnny Precious, isn't it? I wish I had someone I could trust.
 Lucy That's why you bring things for the people in here.
 Voices Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
 Johnny I often think they're crying for love.
 Lucy They are.
 Johnny That's where the mad ones and the sane ones meet.
 Lucy All needing love?
 Johnny It's one thing we can't deny. If we do, we're dead on our feet, walking around ...
 Voices Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
 Johnny ... pretending we're alive!
 Lucy Give them their rolls, Johnny, they love you when you do that.
 Johnny I want to give them more, but I haven't got it to give.

Lucy You've got love a-plenty, Johnny, you're burdened by your gift.

Johnny You think anybody could love me, Lucy? I'm a very ordinary man.

Lucy You're special, Johnny, because you never forget to care.

Johnny To hear you say that gives me back my heart.

Lucy (tenderly, firmly) I can tell you want to give it, Johnny.

Johnny (questioning her) You can tell?

Voices Aaaaaaaahhh ...

Lucy There's a great need surrounding us.

Johnny They're in here because everyone's given up on them.

Voices Aaaaaaaahhh ...

Lucy You haven't given up, Johnny, you never will.

Johnny Sometimes I wonder, Lucy, if anybody cares ...

Lucy ... for you?

Johnny (pleading) I do.

Lucy Look where we are, Johnny, on a night when the moon is full. We're in with the mad ones, surrounded by the sane, and we're not sure which is which.

Johnny (laughing) You've got vision, Lucy. People with vision are the ones who save the world!

Lucy I had it briefly, then I lost it. My father had it, and my mother in a way. I think I'll have to go home if I'm ever to have it again.

Johnny You don't find a home, Lucy, you make one. What do you think? You and I ...

Lucy (breaking in) ... could never build the building you desire. Out there, Johnny ...

Voices Aaaaaaahhh ...

Lucy ... in the suburbs of the sane, where the maddest roam unchecked ...

Johnny What's there for me, Lucy? Why do you think I come in here?

Lucy ... is someone waiting for your love, every instinct primed to take it and turn it into something else.

Johnny Oh Lucy, have some bread and jam! Let's talk about something else!

Lucy And if they're cunning, you'll find, when your love's been changed, that you don't remember what it was!

Johnny I'll butter the rolls before I take them round. I mustn't be leaving any knives about. Must I?

With overwhelming sadness Johnny prepares the tray on which he'll carry the rolls and jam.

Voices Aaaaaaaahhh ...aaaaaaahhh ...

Johnny Hi, poor bastards, Johnny's got some rolls for you!

12. Poverty

A derelict man is looking over a fence at a line of stalls, each containing a beautifully groomed horse. Lucy is moving among the stalls, with water in a bucket. The man (Fred) calls.

Fred Hey luv, them horses look well fed.

Lucy They are.
 Fred What's ya name? I'm Fred. Ya hear me? Fred!
 Lucy Who gave you that name?
 Fred Who called the cook a bastard? Who called the bastard a cook? Ya know that one?
 Lucy Heard it a thousand times.
 Fred Still good for a laugh. (Lucy looks at him, both disgusted and determined.) Ya fed the horses, reckon it's my turn now.
 Lucy How long since you ate?
 Fred Years.
 Lucy You'd be dead.
 Fred I'm dead as it is. Living dead. Walking dead, but only just. I'll be under that tree and rotten if ya don't give me a feed.
 Lucy I'm under orders. Don't talk to them, my boss says. He means you.
 Fred I reckon good food goes to waste on his table.
 Lucy What can I do?
 Fred Bring it here for me.
 Lucy And I'd be out there with you.
 Fred (grabbing her) Ya not getting away, miss smartarse, ya stuck with me now!

He manages to get a grip on Lucy's hair and she can't break free. Then her boss calls out.

McMurray Lucy! (She screams.) What's going on? (He appears from behind the stables and sees what's happening.

He strides over, a domineering man.) Get out of here! Scum of the earth! (Fred tries to hurry away, but is too weak to move very fast.) I warned you, Lucy, not to go near them. Don't let it happen again or you'll be on the road like him!

McMurray storms off, a man used to using his power. Lucy watches him go.

Lucy Strength is with the strong. The weak haven't a hope in hell. (She opens the gate to the horses' yard, then she moves along the stalls, letting the horses out.) We'll return a little justice to this world. The beggars can ride ... if they can get on! You hear me, mother! I'm coming home! You hear me, father, in that pit? I'm ready at last! To take upon myself what's mine! Home, mother, home, father, home! I'm coming home!

There is a tremendous, stormy rumble from Giles in his pit, and Annie's voice is heard, far and high, jubilant at what she's heard.

Annie Ever my daughter, and still! The mountains are your home!

Giles (amid rumbling) A message of joy from the lowland to the hills!

13. Welcome

We are looking at the Hollis Family Hotel, first encountered in Scene 4 of Opera 8, Lucy. Bill Waterman is waiting for Lucy Wainwright's

arrival, and the surroundings of the hotel are crowded with spirit people, represented by anything from 'actual' people to flickering flames. We see, projected on the screen, a very early bus pull into the street; a few people get out, including Lucy. Bill steps off the verandah to greet her.

Bill Good afternoon, Lucy. I'm Bill.
Lucy My mother's written to me ...
Bill ... telling you I'd be here. I've got a horse for you and a horse for me.
Lucy Then we can ride together. (She's appraising him.)
Bill It's not a long way, to people who know the country.
Lucy I think you know it well.
Bill I know my way about.
Lucy You found our family clearing, I believe.
Bill It's full of spirits. They like to gather there.
Lucy Spirits? You see the spirits?

The spirit people near them become excited by this exchange, and crowd upon the two of them, flickering, swirling, rustling, creating a mood of expectation.

Bill They're everywhere, but most people wouldn't know.
Lucy You see the spirits?
Bill (looking at the flickering lights playing on his body)
 They're hanging about us now. I rather like it.
Lucy We can't escape them. Bill!
Bill They're ours, Lucy. They've got us and we've got them.

Lucy Nobody but my mother and my father has ever seen them before.
Bill There's more of them in your clearing than I've seen anywhere else.
Lucy Truly? How wonderful, Bill!
Bill They sit out there on your father's mountain. They're hoping he'll come back.
Lucy And he won't.
Bill No, the boys wiped him out, your mum says. It was a blow to her.
Lucy And yet she hears him still ...
Bill ... rumbling away out there. People think it's storms ... (He laughs.) We know better, you and I!
Lucy You think so Bill? Can that be true?
Bill Nothing wrong with knowing better, so long as you're humble. Nobody should ever give themselves airs.
Lucy You're humble, Bill.
Bill I've got plenty to be humble about.
Lucy And yet you see the spirits ...
Bill They let themselves be seen. It's their gift, Lucy.
He says her name tenderly.
Lucy I've waited so long ...
Bill ... and now you're nearly home.
Lucy What if I've forgotten the way?
Bill The spirits'd take you there, I reckon.
Lucy (tenderly) Would one of them be called ... Bill?

Bill You have a servant of that name. You'll find him willing.

Lucy To my mother first, my humble servant, and eventually, to the mountain ...

Bill They're excited!

This refers to the spirits who are swirling about as if they are playthings of a divine wind. They flicker in the air, everywhere, but particularly about Lucy and Bill, whose bodies seem to be penetrable by their flames. A low rumble starts up as Giles, in his pit of disgrace and death, becomes aware that his daughter is near.

Lucy Bill ...

Bill Say it, Lucy! What's in your mind?

Lucy It's not what you own, it's what you understand, that makes a kingdom, and we're at the edge, and you've been asked to lead me in. Isn't marriage supposed to be like this?

Bill Said to be, Lucy, but I bet it's not half as good. Show the spirits you're worthy of them. Tell'em to come along. Distance means nothing to them!

Lucy raises her hands and the flickering lights cluster around her outstretched fingers. She's in ecstasy as Bill leads her to his horses. They mount, they move quietly away, and the hotel, and the village, disappear to be replaced by the mountain ranges of Lucy's early years. Giles' rumbling underscores everything they do as they make their way into the mountains.

14. Return

We are at the cottage Lucy bought for Annie and the younger children, years before.

Annie My daughter.

Lucy Mother! You've grown old.

Annie (considering her daughter) Nobody's exempt.

Lucy Yet still the same.

Annie I vowed never to change. Only to be worn away ...

Lucy ... eroded ...

Annie ... like the banks of a stream.

Lucy Father's river flows down to the sea.

Annie It's not his any more. The world's been given it back.

Lucy (pointing to Bill) You sent me a chaperone.

Annie You never heard that word out here.

Lucy I learned much, mother, while I was away.

Annie Now you must learn to love.

Lucy I've begun.

She puts an arm around Bill, and squeezes him to her.

Bill Gently, Lucy, don't crack my ribs.

Annie (scornfully) Wainwrights can't do things by halves.

Bill I like to take a bit of time.

Annie I put flowers from the bush in your room.

Lucy We'll stay one night, mother, then ride on, learning the boundaries of our kingdom, and when we know them, we'll come home.

Bill Home.
 Annie Home.
 Lucy Home.
 Bill We'll have the dogs and horses singing soon. Home!
 Lucy (with humour) Home!
 Annie (ditto) Home!

15. The kingdom

The screen shows Bill and Lucy riding along a ridge. Their horses' feet clip-clop quietly on the track. Bill and Annie can move independently of their images, closer to the audience, among the trees and flowers, while birds and the great mountains surrounding them move across the screen.

Bill Silvertop on this side, messmate over there.
 Lucy They know where they belong.
 Bill It's not hard for them. They don't have to bother with a brain.
 Lucy We put our minds aside when there's more pressing things to do.
 Bill You wore me out last night, but I'm ready for you now.
 Lucy Let's love in the sky, looking down.
 Bill Do we need to?
 Lucy Let's burrow in the earth and come out when the snow's melted.
 Bill That's a wintry option.
 Lucy Let's have a love so hot it sets the bush on fire!

Bill We'll rush about like wind, spreading the idea!
 Lucy We'll set the world on fire, in one gigantic flame ...
 Bill ... consuming everything, and last of all itself ...
 Lucy ... then rest, then start again!
 Bill That's what I think, anyway.
 Lucy Hold me, Bill, but do it from over there!
 Bill We're holding each other's minds, we're locking ourselves in place ...
 Lucy ... never to part, Bill, never, ever to part.
 Bill ... never to part, Lucy, never to part ...
 Lucy ... sure of each other, we can turn our minds to the world ...
 Bill ... it's in fine fettle this morning ...
 Lucy ... the world's in love with us, Bill ...
 Bill ... it's in love with itself, but it's big enough not to notice ...
 Lucy ... that's a funny way of thinking ...
 Bill ... it's a funny world, if you ever thought ...
 Lucy ... I never saw it otherwise, in all my life ...
 Bill ... and you won't, as long as you stay with me ...
 Lucy ... you'll never get away, no matter how hard you try ...
 Bill ... grip me, Lucy, and now I want you close ...
 Lucy ... our minds are sure ...
 Bill ... lock yourself inside me ...
 Lucy ... one shall be one shall be one ...
 Bill ... and never the twain be two!

Lucy What are you talking about?
 Bill You know what I mean.
 Lucy How do I know what you mean when you talk rubbish?
 Bill You've got the same rubbish between your ears as I have.
 Lucy What silly brains we have!
 Bill Let's move our thoughts down lower!

They seize each other in an ecstasy of passion, while the images of themselves and their horses clip-clop quietly down the mountain track.

16. Breaking the bed

Lucy and Bill are in a room at the Dargo Hotel, cavorting on a bed.

Lucy Everything off, Bill! Every last unbuttoned thing!
 Bill Everything off, Lucy! Everything that blocks my view!
 Lucy Everything off, Bill! Shirt!
 Bill Pants!
 Lucy Socks! Oops, a hole!
 Bill Somewhere to poke through. Shoes!

He flings his shoes at a wall. They are making lots of noise as they undress each other.

Lucy These buttons are bastards!
 Bill Buggers won't cooperate!
 Lucy Off!

Bill Off!
 Lucy Press against me! I need something to keep me going!

They grip each other and rub themselves lustfully against each other.

Bill Standing up or lying down, which way's it going to be?
 Lucy Up here! Bill! In mid-air! That's where it's going to be this time!

She leaps onto the bed. Bill flings off another garment or two.

Bill Don't be silly! What's the good of a flying fuck?
 Lucy Here or nowhere! I didn't get up here ... (she means, on the bed) ... to look down on you. You're supposed to be my lord and conqueror!
 Bill All right, it's all-in war!

He takes a mighty leap onto the bed, which is too weak to take the extra weight. It collapses, its legs splaying to four points of the compass, while the mattress sags to the floor.

Lucy Haaaaaaaaahhh!
 Bill Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ...

They are shrieking with laughter when Mrs Lawson, the publican's wife, comes in.

Mrs L In the name of heaven what's going on?
 Bill Bit of frolicking, Mrs Ell. We thought we might sleep on the floor tonight.

Mrs L Not in this hotel you won't! You've wrecked that bed!

Bill Temporary, I'm sure. Nothing that can't be fixed.

Mrs L You'll have to replace it.

Lucy We don't carry beds around. It'll be you that replaces it.

Mrs L With money you're going to give me. Twenty pounds! Here and now! Then take yourselves out of this place!

Bill (humble again) Lucy, if you pass me my pants ...

Lucy hands him his pants and he pulls a small roll of notes from a pocket.

Mrs L (snatching the note Bill offers) Out! Not another minute in my hotel!

Lucy Angry woman, aren't you.

Mrs L And you're the most dangerous harlot that ever spread her legs on a bed.

Bill Didn't actually happen, Mrs Ell, but we understand what you mean ...

Mrs L Out! Not another minute!

Bill (to Lucy) Gather your dignity, my dear. Our bag. Mrs Ell, we'll leave you for another place.

Lucy We'll sleep by the river, Bill. At least we know it's a friend.

Bill There's a spot we can camp, up north of the town.

Mrs L You can get yourselves out of here!

17. The island

Water is lapping the beaches of Jesse's island. His yacht can be seen on the screen at the rear. Juliet is at the water's edge, with baby Don. Jesse appears, and sits beside her on the sand.

Juliet Where does all this water come from?

Jesse It doesn't come from anywhere. It is.

Juliet Don came from us.

Jesse So where did we come from?

Juliet Our parents ...

Jesse And where did they come from ...

Juliet It's the chicken and the egg ...

Jesse Not worth thinking about.

Juliet But we can't stop ourselves asking.

Jesse Some questions have no answer.

Juliet Like?

Jesse Where did we come from?

Juliet Mum and dad. (She grabs his leg.)

Jesse Where did they come from?

Juliet Out of the sea!

Jesse They crawled on the beach one morning ...

Juliet That's evolution, isn't that right?

Jesse Whatever they're saying this year. Hey!

Juliet Got a bright idea?

Jesse Remember my big plan?

Juliet The big trip?

Jesse Want to do it?

Juliet I want you to do it, while Don and I wait.

Jesse For me to come home?
 Juliet For you to come home.
 Jesse You'll be my home while I'm sailing ...
 Juliet You'll be away and we'll be waiting.
 Jesse You'll have the same chart that I have.
 Juliet We'll work out where you are, every day.
 Jesse Until ...
 Juliet ... until we see your sail.
 Jesse Island Queen. (the name of his yacht) Are you sure it's okay by you?
 Juliet You always said you'd do it, so get yourself ready, and go!
 Jesse Fiji. Auckland. Cairns.
 Juliet Three great lines across the sea.
 Jesse Leaving you, and coming home.
 Juliet I'm home these days; that's a change! (She laughs.)
 Jesse Home's wherever we are.
 Juliet Even while we're apart.
 Jesse That's the test, isn't it. Can we be together when we've got water between us?
 Juliet Not hard. Go for it, Jesse. There's a world of water, and islands, birds and whales. It's all there waiting, and I'll be waiting too.
 Jesse And Don.
 Juliet He'll love you when you get home.
 Jesse I'll love him all the more for being away.
 Juliet I'll love you all the more for being away.

Jesse I'll love you all the more for having been away.
 Juliet When you come back, we'll all be home.
 Jesse All be home.

They look on their child, and the sky and the ocean, and they are very certain of each other.

18. Riding home

Lucy and Bill are riding by night. This can be shown as two horses and riders on the rear projection screen, with the singers appearing as required on the stage.

Bill You're quiet, Lucy. Thinking?
 Lucy My brothers killed my father.
 Bill Not good.
 Lucy (after a pause) My mother's growing old.
 Bill Only one escape from that: die young!
 Lucy Silly man. (after another pause) We'll never have any money, Bill.
 Bill I got this far without it.
 Lucy My brother Gordon makes me sad.
 Bill Why's that?
 Lucy He's so poetic, but he hasn't got any skill.
 Bill I'll make a horseman out of him.
 Lucy (another pause) There's no trees ...
 Bill This is the highest bit of the road.
 Lucy Are you happy, Bill?
 Bill Too right I am.

Lucy How could I make anyone happy? If I did, they wouldn't stay that way.

Bill Like to stop and light a fire? Make a cup of tea?

Lucy Why did you ask me, Bill?

Bill You sound a bit low. We've been riding the whole night through ...

Lucy The horses are getting tired.

Bill They're all right. (a grin in his voice) Just working unusual hours.

Lucy You and I in each other's arms while they can only watch.

Bill They pick a bit of grass.

Lucy (chuckling) While we love ...

Bill What made you think of your brothers?

Lucy I want to be good for you Bill, but I come from the wrong family.

Bill You're the one for me, Lucy. No doubt about that.

Lucy The sky's lighting up, Bill.

Bill Be daylight before long.

Lucy Bill, I want you to take me to the sea.

Bill You're a mountain girl, Lucy. You don't want to go down there.

Lucy Once in a while. Everybody needs their opposite.

Bill I suppose you're right. I don't know what my opposite is.

Lucy It might sneak up one day and challenge you.

Bill I'll be ready for it, when it does.

Lucy Are you ready for anything and everything, Bill?

Bill I am, my love.

Lucy An end to the world?

Bill If you're with me, that'd be okay.

Lucy Do you love me, Bill?

Bill I do.

Lucy Why Bill? Why do you love me?

Bill There's no whys or wheres or hows about it. I love you, Lucy, and once I've said that, there's nothing more to say. Yes there is! I'm the proudest man alive, this bloody cold morning, because you're mine and I'm yours, and there's nothing in this world can get between us. How's that? Lucy my love, what do you say?

Lucy You're a miracle, Bill, and you've caused another in me. I'm in love, Bill, and it's wonderful to be alive.

Bill The sun's getting up, and the sky's growing pale. You're too much for the night, it knows it's beaten!

Lucy Be careful, Bill!

Bill What's there to be frightened of?

Lucy We mustn't over-reach ourselves.

Bill How can we do anything else? Where we are, we can see the edge of the world!

Lucy That's where the frightening things will come from.

Bill They won't worry me.

Lucy The spirit people are avoiding us.

Bill Only being discreet. Let's have them with us, Lucy mine. Look!

He raises his hands, and lights flicker about him, then Lucy imitates him and they gather about her too. They raise their arms and it seems as if flickering spirits fill the sky from the mountain where they are to the edge of the world, far away.

Lucy We'll never have another moment like this one, Bill.
Bill Maybe once is enough, Lucy, when we've been as high as this.

They ride on, along the dividing range, until they're out of sight. The sun comes up, and when it's at its brightest, it lights up a different world, far to their north.

19. The journey

Jesse and Juliet, with Don, are at their island. Jesse is about to set off on his voyage – Fiji, Auckland, Cairns – in his yacht *Island Queen*, while Juliet and Don will return to land in the motor boat to wait for his return.

Jesse I'm scared.
Juliet Silly man!
Jesse You go, Jules. I'll stay home with Don.
Juliet You've got an appointment. It's one you have to keep.
Jesse With water. Bloody treacherous stuff.
Juliet With yourself. Your eyes can see a dream.
Jesse You can see it too?
Juliet Because you put it in my mind. That's why I can see it.

Jesse It's mine, then.
Juliet Yours to welcome. Yours to achieve.
Jesse You don't mind me feeling nervous?
Juliet It's a big thing to do. That's why it's worth the doing.
Jesse It might make a man of me.
Juliet It might turn you into a dreamer ... or it might satisfy you, so you can live without a dream.
Jesse Islands, water, whales ... nothing but me and my boat.
Juliet Juliet and Don.
Jesse Happiness.
Juliet It's ours.
Jesse So why do I need to go?
Juliet To bring something back. To make us happier still.
Jesse I suppose it's worth the risk.
Juliet All aboard! You on your boat, Don and me on mine!

The two boats are shown putting out from the island, side by side, then, because the motor boat is faster, Juliet takes it in circles around *Island Queen*. Jesse circles the island with his yacht, and Juliet circles his yacht with the motor boat. The viewpoint for the audience recedes as the scale of their movements becomes broader, and the voices of the lovers recede.

Jesse Take yourself back to land.
Juliet What a day!
Jesse The gods are with me! They're giving me a breeze!
Juliet A wind as wide as the world!

Jesse To bring me home!
Juliet To take you far away!
Jesse Out of sight, never out of mind!
Juliet We'll call you. You'll hear our voices in the wind!
Jesse Kiss me my love. Your boat next to mine!

We see the circling launch close in on the yacht, the two boats touch, the lovers kiss, then the boats move apart, Jesse to his dream, Juliet to the land, where she's to wait with Don.

Juliet Go for it, Jesse! You've always wanted it, now it's yours. Enjoy it, Jesse, you've got everything in your hands!

The screen shows us Juliet's boat moving quickly in one direction and Jesse's yacht moving, with the certainty of the breeze that's powering it, towards the open sea.

❧ End of Opera 11 ❧

Mimmo

1. Loss (1)

Lucy and Bill are on a track somewhere in the bush, and their horses are not far away, grazing.

Bill It's a good time of year. The bush is full of flowers.
Lucy I never thought I'd be a bride ...
Bill You're married to the world and I'm the luckiest part
 of it.
Lucy I'm not sharing you with anyone, Bill.
Bill I've no plans of that sort, Lucy.
Lucy Sharing you would be like cutting you up!
Bill Spare me that!
Lucy Was my mother as happy as I am? I doubt it.
Bill You'll know when you get home. You won't have to
 ask.
Lucy I know already. I feel sorry.

They are interrupted by the rumbling we associate with Giles, and then his voice.

Giles Lucy!
Lucy Father?
Giles Your mother's dying. She's picked up your book to
 write.
Lucy Her last words? To me?
Giles Make your way home. Think tenderly as you ride.
Lucy Father. Bill?

Bill I heard.
Lucy Quickly then. Our horses. (They catch their horses
 and ride away.)

2. Loss (2)

Juliet is back on the island, with little Don, looking out to sea.

Juliet Your daddy's late, darling. When I call, there's no one
 there to hear.

We hear a distant wailing; it comes from one of the nearby islands, and it's Karen's voice.

Karen Aaaaaaaaahhh ...
Juliet What's that?
Karen I lost my lover in the sea. He gave me a child, a boy,
 a man ...
Juliet (calling) Where is he?
Karen The sea ... the sea ...
Juliet What happened?
Karen A wave towered over him, swallowed him down ...
 he never knew ...
Juliet Aaaaaaaaahhh! What a terrible sea.
Karen Aaaaaaaaahhh, my lover and my son ...
Juliet Those other islands? Is there no one there?
Karen They're weeping for you, wondering if they've lost
 their child.

Juliet (to Don) They have and they haven't. Come on darling, we've got to get back to land. Jesse was afraid of us being on our own.

Karen (distantly) We die on our own and we grieve on our own.

Juliet No!

Karen No?

Juliet I'm with you now. You'll never be lost, for me.

Karen Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

Juliet (calling, crying) Karen!

Karen Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

Juliet Karen!

Karen Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

Juliet Karen!

Karen (faintly, her voice dying on the wind) Aaaaaaaaahhh...

3. Loss (3)

The scene is the cemetery of a little township. Lucy is there with Bill; so too are George and Robert, Gordon, Doll and Sam. A man with a shovel is waiting to fill in the grave.

Lucy She asked for a simple monument. It's to say Annie Wainwright ...

Others Annie Wainwright ...

We hear Annie's voice, high above.

Annie No. I've put myself out of reach.

George We'll leave the grave open, mother, if you don't come when we call!

Annie Put the monument there.

Lucy ... and it's to say, 'We shall all be changed.'

Robert Who's going to do that?

Gordon I'll do anything mother asks.

George You would if you knew how to do it.

Gordon You can't do anything but kill!

Robert We'll use you for target practice, any day.

Bill Steady on now, we haven't filled in the grave.

Bill looks at the grave digger but the man prefers to keep away.

George What's the use of him? (He moves to the open grave.) What have you got to say, mother? How are things where you are, eh?

Annie Leave me in peace. My next life is arranged.

George We still need you here!

Annie Say that to your father!

There is a fierce rumble as Giles makes his contribution.

George Quiet in that bloody pit?

There is another rumble.

Robert We'll have to fill it in. Only way to shut him up.

Another rumble.

Lucy These are the Wainwrights, Bill. Your family, now.

Bill (to Doll and Sam) Take your brothers off for a drink. Come back another day, when the monument's in

place. (They go off.)
Lucy We shall all be changed. You're right, mother.
Annie When was I ever wrong?
Bill You're a great old lady, and you made sure I got a wife.

Lucy is apart, stilled with anger and grief.

Lucy I've to make another start. How many times can we do it, mother? (Annie remains silent.)
Bill Don't ask more than anyone can give.
Lucy You never go too far, Bill. I'm a Wainwright and I want to step over every boundary in the world.
Bill Wars are made that way. Live quietly, and close, that's the thing to do.
Lucy (to the grave digger) Cover my mother now. Please.

With George and Robert out of the way, the man starts to shovel dirt onto the coffin.

Lucy It's a dismal sight.
Bill How's it feel to be head of the family?
Lucy There's no future in any of us, not a single one.
Bill You're on the bottom now, Lucy. Only way from here is up.

4. Loss (4)

The back garden of a house in Cairns. There is a pool.

Juliet I need a sleep, Denise. Can you mind Don, for half an hour?

Denise Sure thing, Jules. The mob's coming round ...
Juliet ... they love to play with him ...
Denise ... he's so cuddleable. Come here, Don, let mummy lie down.

She takes the child, and Juliet kisses him.

Juliet Mmm, darling. Denise is going to look after you. Mummy needs a sleep.
Denise Good little feller!
Juliet Don't let him near the pool.
Denise Haveya sleep, Jules, he'll be right! (Juliet goes inside. A moment later, cars can be heard arriving.) Here's the mob now! (as people come beside her, at the pool) Whereya been, ya buggers! (to her husband) Ian, bring out those glasses!
Ian Sophie took'em next door!
Denise I never said she could do that!
Ian She took the beer too.
Denise Jeezus bloody Christ, what's goin on around here?
Sophie (from next door) It's better in here! (There's an explosion of 'music' from the sound system.) This is where the grog is! You want it, you come and get it!
Denise Fuckin Sophie, always trying to undercut me! Ian! Look after Don while I go in and sort her out!

Denise follows the recently arrived mob of party-people next door. Ian, who hasn't heard what she said about Don, or hasn't bothered to take notice, climbs on the fence to see what's happening. Don, meanwhile begins to play with a toy boat in the pool.

Denise (from next door) Sophie you're a bitch! You're trying to steal my party!

Sophie You're the bitch, Denise! It's better in here! Have a look!

Denise Nothin here that we haven't got.

Sophie Your place is dead! Dead! Dead!

Don is standing by now, and trying to grasp the toy boat, which has drifted out of reach.

Denise I'm not havin it from you Sophie. The queen of fuckin dirty tricks!

Ian, seeing that a fight is likely, clambers over the fence. Don falls in the pool, lost to sight. Time passes; this is indicated by alternating waves of sound from next door – violent music, quarrelling between Denise and Sophie and their supporters – and ominous, apprehensive sounds expressing the audience's awareness that Don is underwater. After a time, Juliet appears.

Juliet Where are they? (She sees Don in the water.)
Aaaaaaaahhh!

Voices What's up? Who's that?

Juliet plunges into the pool, and lifts Don above her head. People come back from next door.

Ian He's not breathing! Ring the ambulance. Ring the hospital.

Juliet Doctor, Don needs a doctor!

Ian John Grey! He's the man. Lives nearby.

People try to resuscitate Don, who is almost covered by people trying to help.

Juliet You were going to look after him, Denise!

Denise (guiltily) That fuckin Sophie stole the party! She needed sortin out!

Ian Don't argue about that! He just took a breath!

Juliet Try, darling! Try ever so hard! I want you breathing, Don!

Two ambulance officers come on and take up the task of resuscitating Don.

Juliet How's it going? Someone tell me something! I have to know!

John Grey the doctor arrives.

JG Any breathing?

Amb 1 Weak. We're trying to stabilise it.

JG Eyes?

Amb 2 Haven't opened.

JG Sounds?

Amb 1 Not a squeak.

Denise (to John Grey) It wasn't my fault, whatever they tellya. It was fuckin Sophie, conned everybody into going next door.

JG (ignoring her) Where's the mother? (Juliet comes forward.) Come with me, in my car. Where's the father?

Juliet Lost at sea.

JG Oh.

Juliet (shouting) Better than a pool!
 JG (trying to calm her) We don't know how bad he is yet.
 Juliet Any hope?
 JG We don't know. Next few days will tell.
 Juliet It's all I needed. This is the end.
 JG It's the beginning, I think, if you see it more clearly, of a long hard road.
 Juliet (savagely) Where does the road end, doctor?
 JG It starts here, moves to the hospital. The end, I'm afraid, is nowhere in sight.

5. Don (1)

The hospital. Juliet is beside Don's bed. A nurse comes in.

Nurse They're bringing a bed for you. (She sweeps out.)
 Juliet Nobody wants the problem. They never stick around. (Two men roll a bed in, then leave.) I will never see those men again! You won't see them either, Don. You can't! (She weeps.) What a wreck! Jesse! Come and help!

John Grey enters, and studies the child.

JG I don't like the look of this.
 Juliet (angrily) You don't like the look of my son?
 JG (ignoring the challenge) I'm not seeing any recovery. Sometimes it's slow, but it does take place. Sometimes ...

Juliet ... nothing fuckin happens!
 JG There's nothing at all, sometimes.
 Juliet How sure are you?
 JG I'm not sure. I'm worried.
 Juliet (angrily) How do you think I feel?
 JG I think the word is ratshit.
 Juliet (surprised) Ha! I didn't expect you to say that!
 JG It's best to call a spade a spade.
 Juliet That's okay for you. You're passing me the spade and I have to dig with it.
 JG You'll have to dig very deep within yourself.
 Juliet He's going to be a burden. Is that what you're telling me?
 JG It's something that may have to be faced.
 Juliet Meanwhile?
 JG (with finality) Sleep, support him, sleep.
 Juliet Who's supporting me?
 JG We provide the care. You provide the hope.

6. Only happens once

At the cottage in the mountains that Lucy bought for her mother, some years before.

Lucy Guess what, Bill? (He looks at her.) I'm going to work with you.
 Bill Be good to have you. Will I tell the others, or d'ya wanta just turn up?
 Lucy Turn up.

Bill Surprise packet?
 Lucy They'll get a surprise when they see I'm stronger than them.
 Bill They're in for a lot of surprises.
 Lucy Why aren't you frightened of me, Bill?
 Bill I'm not frightened of anything very much.
 Lucy What about dying, Bill?
 Bill Only happens once.

Lucy thinks this is very funny. She seizes Bill in a rush of passion, and throws him on the table.

Bill Table's stronger than that bed!

Lucy shrieks with laughter and jumps on top of him.

Bill Not soft enough for what you've got in mind!
 Lucy Have you ever thought of this, Bill?
 Bill What's that, Lucy?
 Lucy The hardest thing in the world is the human will. The softest thing is a woman's love. Humans – that's us – are the measure of everything.
 Bill What about a man's love? Where does that fit in?
 Lucy It fits into a woman, very snugly. That's where it belongs ...
 Bill (laughing) I'm lucky I've got you!
 Lucy You're lucky to have anyone at all!
 Bill I haven't got anyone at all, I've got Lucy Wainwright, a woman of these parts.
 Lucy Look outside, Bill.

Bill Bush. Bush. And more of the same, as far as the eye can see.
 Lucy Great protective ranges. To put people off. Nobody comes this way.
 Bill Only silly buggers like me, cutting trees.
 Lucy I'm going to work with you Bill.
 Bill In the mill?
 Lucy Beside you, that's where I want to be.
 Bill Forever, Lucy? That's our plan?
 Lucy Forever Bill. That's our plan.

7. Home

The house of Denise and Ian, where the accident happened. They are upstairs and Juliet is downstairs, with Don in a bunk where he lies with a small tank supplying a drip to his veins.

Juliet How's it feel up there, Denise? Still in denial?
 Ian (singing, or trying to) 'A star fell from heaven ... '
 Juliet Blocking it out, are we? It's going to be hard!
 Ian 'Lotsa, lotsa girls like me, lotsa, lotsa boys like you...'
 Juliet Don't give me the shits, you dirty lying bastards! It's your fault and you know it!
 Ian Stop screaming. You take care of the kid, that's what you've got to do.
 Juliet What you did was worse than killing him. I'm going to come up there and cut your balls off!
 Ian (righteously) Okay, if you're gonna make threats,

you're out. Get yourself somewhere else, quick fuckin smart. We're not livin with savages any more!

Juliet You were supposed to look after him. Between the two of you, you let him drown ...

Ian Except he didn't, okay, that was bad luck ...

Juliet Bad luck that he didn't drown!

Denise Shut up that screaming, an accident happened, okay, they happen every day ...

Juliet Accident! You like that word, don't you! It lets you off the hook! You're on the hook, Denise, you're guilty! Guilty! You're going to suffer for what you did!

Denise You asked me a favour, it's just that something happened ...

Juliet Go on, call it an accident! My Donny's an accident! Hear that, darling, they're calling you an accident now!

John Grey comes in, appears to take no notice of the screaming match, and examines Don closely.

Juliet What do you want? You sent him home from hospital, isn't that enough?

JG (ignoring the rage) No change. It's not looking good.

Juliet (sarcastically) No, it's not. Were you expecting good news? I'll try to arrange it.

JG Let me arrange something for you. You've got to get yourself out of here.

Juliet You want me to work in a brothel? I've done it, you know?

JG I own a house, on the edge of town. (He points.) It's empty. Get your stuff and I'll take you there.

Juliet I want to stay here until I make them admit what they did to him.

JG You've got a bigger battle to fight.

Juliet Who am I fighting if I move?

JG Good question. The obvious answer's yourself. And you're fighting Don's battle for him, because he can't. But really, you're fighting to get on top again, after being crushed. It's going to be the struggle of your life.

Juliet There's been a few already.

JG There's going to be more. How long to pack? Ten minutes?

Juliet What've I got to pack, apart from misery, that is?

JG Okay, Juliet ...

Juliet (gathering her dignity) Juliet Courtney-Morris! That's my name!

JG (pointing) And his?

Juliet He's a Bowden, after his dad!

JG Where are all the Bowdens, that should be helping you?

Juliet They're in Melbourne, and the Courtneys, and the Morrises, they're down there and I'm up here, and it's because I wanted to be! Okay with you?

JG You're in charge of your life, not me.

Juliet Do you think I'd have made things like this, if I'd

been in charge?

JG I don't think there's anybody in charge. We're all struggling.

Juliet Some of us more than others!

JG Do you want to see this house, or will you take my word for it?

Juliet You watch me pack. I can tell you're curious. You can see everything I own.

JG How strong are you? That's what you need to know.

8. The mill (1)

We are at a small, under-equipped timber mill in the mountains near Giles' farm.

Mimmo (to the audience) Hey there. I'm Mimmo. Heard of me? You will. M. I. M. Another M, yes, double M. Oh! Mimmo! I'm easily bored so I like a few distractions. Men working here are too old for the war, or they're gutless. Then there's Bill. He doesn't want to leave Lucy. If I can get rid of him, I'll try her out myself. The warrior woman. You see that pit over there? (He points to the pit where the mill's rubbish and off-cuts are burned.) I never get between her and the pit. We've had a few accidents around here, you understand, and she blames me. She'd like to get rid of the problem. I'd like to get rid of Bill, then I could have the problem under me in my little hut. Luxuries are scarce, out here! (He looks about him at the mill.)

We make a lot of noise. First, we start the motor. (He does so, and the heavy chugging sound of the engine penetrates the forest.) Then (loudly) we start the saw! (The blade of the saw revolves.) Then we get into the logs! (Other workmen appear, pulling out the timber as Mimmo pushes it through the saw.) First we trim off the flitches! You've seen this before, of course! (A flitch flies off to one side as he pushes a log through the saw; the man nearest to it ducks as it flies past.) The way to run a mill is to keep the saw busy. Never run out of logs. There's men in the bush falling them, then someone's gotta haul them in. Hear that? (another noise) That's Bill on his engine, bringing in logs. Bill! He's not much of a worker. You need a sense of danger because, believe me, there's plenty of it here. You make a mistake ... (another flitch flies off the saw) ... Hey, sorry boys, good job you know how to duck! Some of these logs got minds of their own! (A steam whistle blows loudly.) Morning tea! Smoke-oh, boys, sit down a minute before we start'er up again!

Mimmo and the men sit down to drink tea and smoke cigarettes. Bill comes to one side of the group and Lucy to the other.

Bill Your cuts are not right, Mimmo. You're wasting wood.

Mimmo No shortage of timber, out here.

Bill There's wood going in the pit that ought to be useful.

Mimmo You get the logs in. Cutting'em's my job.
 Bill It's everybody's job. We're in this together.
 Mimmo Some of us are in this so they can be out of something else.
 Bill What?
 Mimmo There's a war on, Billy. (The form of the name is meant to be insulting.)
 Bill So I've heard.
 Mimmo Fellas with guts are fighting it.
 Bill So what are you doing here?
 Mimmo I was in the first one. Damaged my foot. I volunteered this time but they wouldn't have me. How about you?
 Lucy The mountains are full of peace.
 Mimmo Except when you wake in the night ... you don't mind a little skirmish then.
 Bill Steady on, now.
 Lucy You mind the way you talk. You don't know where you are.
 Mimmo You think you know better than me?
 Lucy I know a lot better than you.
 Mimmo Been a lot of strange things happen around here.

We notice that quite a few spirit people are looking in on the mill workers, but keeping at a distance, as if wary of them. Lucy smiles faintly as she becomes aware of them.

Mimmo I reckon you might be able to tell us about some of them.

Bill My wife talks about what she wants to talk about, nothing else.
 Mimmo She wears the pants, eh?
 Bill is about to respond angrily when the whistle blows again and the workers stand up.
 Mimmo Get on that engine, young Billy. I want a pile of logs, high as the mill!

9. Lovers

Juliet is sitting beside Don's bed in the cottage at Redlynch, outside Cairns, where she has been moved by John Grey. The doctor knocks and comes in. He nods to Juliet, then examines Don.

Juliet No change.
 JG No change.
 Juliet How many years of this?
 JG We're sustaining him. That's all we can do.
 Juliet Who's sustaining me?
 JG You're living on reserves. It's a question ...
 Juliet ... of how much I've got in the tank.
 JG You even know how I think, these days.
 Juliet Better still, I know what you think.
 JG That doesn't sound healthy.
 Juliet It sounds natural, though. Let's be natural. You want me, I want anything but being bored ... and desperate ... and hopeless ...
 JG (defensively) I'm his doctor.

Juliet And I'm his mother. Where do you think he came from?

JG We know how we get here, but where ...

Juliet Stop talking. My bed's in the other room.

JG (touching her) I wonder what we're doing?

Juliet Who cares?

They go into the other bedroom, leaving only Don in the view of the audience.

JG It's a long road ...

Juliet You said that before.

JG We haven't done this before ...

Juliet Always a first time, and never a last.

JG That's a young woman speaking.

Juliet You on top, and then it's my turn.

JG Don't be so hard to hold!

Juliet I don't like to exist for someone else, I want to exist for me!

JG The voice of youth ...

Juliet What other voice do you expect me to have? I'm twenty, Doctor John, twenty years on earth. I'm half your age, what do you expect?

JG I've learned to expect what happens, and put everything else out of mind.

Juliet You like to control. That's clear to me.

JG And why? Because we can't. Life's never under control, and when it is, it's boring.

Juliet I like that John. I want to be born again, with a differ-

ent hand to play. You can't do it, but make me feel as if you can.

JG Illusions are the real-est things, at times.

Juliet Ha! (She's almost happy.) You're full of ideas today. I had to get your clothes off to make you talk!

JG We'll talk every time I come ...

Juliet How many times, I wonder. How long will it go on?

The light fades on the unconscious Don without the lovers returning to his room.

10. The mill (2)

Mimmo Hey there! Boys are a bit upset. They think a bit of timber flying around is dangerous. What they don't want to tellya is there's a war on, and it's a bloody sight more dangerous than anything here. (to the men) I was in the first show. The trenches, ya know? If I didn't have a bad foot I'd be in this one. The old dog for a hard road! Any volunteers? It's a protected industry but you could march down to town and sign up. Action! Who's gonna kill the Japs if we don't? Ha! Call yaselves men, y're hiding in the bush. Imagine if all them trees were Japs, ya'd be shittin yaselves!

Sam Give it a break, Mimmo. We heard all this before.

Mimmo And what haveya done about it? Sweet fuck all. Ya not men. In France one night, we got wind the Huns were comin over in the morning, so we snuck into their trenches, we knew where they'd be by the

talkin, and we jumped'em. Sixteen gutted by the bayonet before we slipped back again. We had a tot of rum in the morning, though, it was better than being attacked! That was men being men, not the sort we get around here.

He glares about him, hoping to provoke Bill. Lucy intervenes, however.

Lucy You're not half the man you say you are. You couldn't even wrestle me to the ground.

Mimmo And where would you be thinking of a wrestle? In ya bed? You should be raisin kids, not workin in a mill.

Lucy I've got a better place in mind.

Bill Lucy ...

Mimmo Where would that be?

She walks until she's only a few steps from the firepit, and marks the earth with her foot.

Lucy Here.

Bill Lucy!

Men Eh! That's a challenge. Ya mean it, Lucy?

Lucy I'm ready.

Mimmo You get out of the way. I'll fight Bill.

Lucy If there's a fight, you'll fight me.

Bill Who started this talk of fighting? Haven't we got a job to do?

Mimmo We've got something to settle first. Ya ready, young Billy? Shift ya woman and I'll meet you over there.

Lucy Nobody's going to shift me. I was brought up here. You've brought evil into a place that was good ...

Mimmo Until certain young men got it in their heads they didn't like their dad!

Lucy They've gone, and you've to follow, and the bush is clean again.

Mimmo The world's a wild place, Lucy. Don't think you're going to make it any different. Fighting belongs to men.

Bill If they're mad enough to do it. What's wrong with living in peace?

Mimmo seizes a bayonet that's been thrust into one of the poles holding up the roof of the mill.

Mimmo Because this is what rules the world! The fear of getting this in ya guts! At the bottom of everything, there's nothing but this! I've used it, it's mine! Any man ... man ... wanta challenge? (The whistle blows to end the smoko.) On the other side of the bench, you fellas, and watch what ya doin!

The mill resumes work.

11. Fighting evil

The mill fades from view. Lucy and Bill are in their cottage, and feeling sad.

Lucy What is it, Bill?

Bill Something's shifted inside me and I don't know what it is.

Lucy Is it your love for me?

Bill (dismally) That's still there.

Lucy Tell me your thoughts.

Bill It's not me, it's the world.

Lucy What's it doing, Bill? Has it changed?

Bill It has.

Lucy How's it different, Bill?

Bill The mountains don't protect me any more. I've got no armour. Only weak and watery flesh ...

Lucy And?

Bill ... my courage, which is strong.

Lucy You think Mimmo's right?

Bill I hate him, but I do. Him and his bloody bayonet. I reckon if you checked, you'd find he was never in France. Only saying it to make the men afraid.

Lucy His foot?

Bill Who cares? But he's telling us death rules the world, and the world's showing us he was right.

Lucy Then the world's mad.

Bill (laughing) He should be chucked in the pit! Ha! He knows very well you could do it, Lucy, so he'll never take you on.

Lucy (quietly) What do you want to do, Bill?

Bill I want to put the world to rights.

Lucy Nobody does that on their own.

Bill The trouble is, there's evil in the world, and once it sees you, it wants to fight.

Lucy Fight?

Bill Fight.

Lucy Who do you want to fight?

Bill I want to fight evil.

Lucy You have to find it first.

Bill It's everywhere. It's in that little bastard ...

Lucy He's not the whole of it.

Bill He's the bit I saw first.

Lucy If the world's full of evil, you can't beat it. Stay here, alone with me.

Bill I have to go away, and fight the evil, then come back.

Lucy Bill ...

Bill My love?

Lucy What you said is what my father said ...

There is a gentle rumble from the other pit where the soul of Giles is refusing to be reborn.

Bill He hears you, He loves you too.

Lucy We said we'd never let anything break in.

Bill It snuck up on us, Lucy, and it's changed us. Me first, and now it's got hold of you. There's no undoing that.

Lucy The world's a big place Bill, big enough to have a few quiet corners ...

Bill The world's a good place, by and large. The problem's in the mind.

Lucy When do you want to leave?

Bill Is tomorrow too early, my love?

Lucy It's already happened, hasn't it, so tomorrow, yes. I'll ride with you to the town.

Bill (wretched) And ride back on your own.

Lucy Married to the mountains, with my husband in the world ...

12. Looking down

The screen shows us, once again, Bill and Lucy riding along a mountain track. Their voices are separate from our view of them, and as the scene progresses, the track and the surrounding ranges are seen from an ever-higher vantage point. The singers taking the part of Bill and Lucy can be placed wherever the director thinks fit; the distinction to be made is between the view of two people travelling and the thoughts, rising ever higher, that they have as they ride.

Lucy (looking at the world) Everything's natural, Bill.

Bill There's always something in flower.

Lucy Mimmo said I had no child.

Bill When I come back we can try again.

Lucy When ...

Bill If! We're both thinking that.

Lucy Why are you smiling, Bill? It's deadly serious.

Bill That's the best time to laugh. Maybe it's the only time.

Lucy When we face our death?

Bill I told you before, it only happens once.

Lucy Are you ready for it, Bill?

Bill Not now, but I will be, I reckon.

Lucy Have you always been ready for it, Bill?

Bill Many years. But I'm not downhearted, Lucy, I'm doing what I think is right.

Lucy I'm downhearted Bill.

Bill Then I'm downhearted too.

Lucy (looking about) Shall we fly?

Bill Let's do it one more time.

The vantage point of the view of the mountains shown on the screen behind them begins to shift, and over their next few utterances it becomes higher and higher, as they look down on, and over, the mountains and valleys beneath.

Lucy Freedom's always with us.

Bill Not many people take the chance.

Lucy They don't see the spirits, either.

Bill They're flying high, today ...

Spirit people are flickering in the air, clouds of them, rising with Lucy and Bill.

Lucy You're very special, Bill.

Bill As ordinary as I can be.

Lucy Don't you want to be different?

Bill I want everyone to live well, the way they would if ...

Lucy If?

Bill ... there wasn't any evil in the world.

Lucy It's part of us, we're the world's evil too, Bill, my love.

Bill Good job I'm getting rid of myself then, Lucy, eh?

Lucy Silly man. The day they kill you you'll tell a joke.

Bill I hope I've got the guts to do it.

Lucy Have you got it ready, Bill? In that little brain of yours, tucked away?

Bill (soaring now, and beaming on the earth below) I reckon it's there, somewhere. Don't ask me to tell it now!

Lucy When you're going to die, Bill, come back and see me, one last time.

Bill I'll do that, my love. I couldn't leave without that.

Suddenly the two of them are on the ground again, close to their horses, by a bridge on the edge of the little settlement, while the spirit people begin to vanish, fluttering, in the air above them.

Lucy Back on earth.

Bill (glancing up) On our own.

Lucy That's how we're both to be.

Bill Take my hands, Lucy ...

Lucy ... for the very last time.

They touch hands, they turn away from each other, a few last spirits rush about them, between them, and through them, then they are on their own. Bill walks towards his horse, the town, the war and his death, and Lucy takes her horse by the bridle and leads it back into the mountains.

13. Mimmo

The workmen are having a smoko at the mill.

W1 Bill signed up last week.

W2 He's younger than us.

W3 What age would he be?

W2 Who knows.

W1 Lucy's on her own, then.

W3 She won't come back here.

W2 More's the pity.

W1 Ya wanna see the fight?

W3 Ha ha ha.

W1 Ya do!

W3 She had Mimmo bluffed.

W1 She's not that big ...

W3 ... but strong. And balance. I wouldn't take her on.

W2 Ya reckon ...

W1 I reckon ...

W3 ... she had Mimmo's measure. He was scared.

Mimmo appears behind him.

Mimmo What are you saying?

W3 (unnerved) Nothing, Mimmo.
Mimmo What are you saying?
W3 Nothing at all ...
Mimmo Scared?
W3 You never been scared in your life!
Mimmo I know what you were talkin about. It was a lover's quarrel you saw.
W1 Lovers?
Mimmo When Bill was out in the bush, Lucy used to come to me.
W2 Nobody ever seen that, Mimmo.
Mimmo She was quick, and I was quicker. In and out. We had an understanding ...
W1 What was that?
Mimmo I could have her any time I liked, so long as Bill never knew. That was the agreement.
W1 First I heard about that!
Mimmo You weren't meant to know. What you saw that morning, that was her trying to upset the arrangement ...
W2 How's that?
Mimmo She had an idea Bill had woken up to it, so she put on a turn for his benefit. That was what that was about.
W3 Funny you say that, I thought she was fair dinkum and you didn't feel up to it.
Mimmo (grabbing him, and dragging him towards the firepit) I feel up to it now! Ya wanna go in?

W3 Aaaaaaaaahhh!
Mimmo Ya wanna go in?
He's got the workman frighteningly close to the pit and is strong enough to throw him in.
W3 No! Mimmo no! No! I never said nuthin!
Mimmo Well ya don't wanta have thoughts! Understand!
W3 I understand, Mimmo. Not a word. What you said was the way it was, abso-fuckin-lutely!
Mimmo Don't let anybody forget!

14. Letter

Lucy is alone in her cottage with letters. She begins to read, then Bill's voice takes over.
Lucy We've done our training, we'll get a posting soon. We all want to know where. The officers are guessing the same as we are.
Bill's voice 'Somewhere in the Pacific'. It's a bloody big place ... (The screen shows scenes of the great ocean, with its islands.) None of us cares where we go, we want to know what's going to happen.
Lucy Bill. (She picks up another letter.)
Bill's voice An island. Some ... (The accompaniment makes sounds of censorship at this point, indicating that the words of the letter have been blacked out.) decided to put us on this island, to make a few raids. Trouble is, the Japs know we're here. (More blacking out of

the words, with 'censorship' sounds from the accompaniment.) They've had planes flying over, checking out the lie of the land. We expect'em any day now ... (More censorship sounds.)

Lucy Send me a message, Bill. What's on your mind? If you're a prisoner, send me a message. (More censorship sounds.) What's preventing you Bill? I'm waiting, Bill, the bush is waiting, the mountains are waiting. What's happening, Bill?

She goes out and the screen behind her shows, first, the bush surrounding the cottage, then the mountain views from on high that we saw towards the end of Scene 12, Leaving. Nothing comes from Bill.

15. Don (2)

Don is lying on his bed, with his plastic container held above him on a stand, connected by a tube to his body. After a time John Grey comes in, glances at him briefly, then sits down.

JG You've got a year or two, mate. At least, I'd say. Strange how we can hang on, without a mind. It makes you wonder what a human is, and of course we're not one thing, we're a collection of functions, and when they're all working, we're normal. We can rise to peaks. Something goes wrong, and we fall apart. We can live, or so we say, without even knowing. Little Don. Will never say another word. He

won't die, and it's killing his mother, who wants to live.

Juliet comes in and sits on the other side of Don.

Juliet You want to keep him alive, because while I've got him, you've got me.

JG It never occurs to you that while we've got him, you've got me.

Juliet What?

JG We're going through this together.

Juliet Bullshit.

JG We have a triangle. One side runs from me to you. You think of it wrongly.

Juliet How do I do that?

JG You think you depend on me. You won't allow that I depend on you.

Juliet There's no way you depend on me.

JG You're so stressed by Don that it blurs your vision.

Juliet Vision? (as if she's wondering what the word might mean)

JG It's what makes life worthwhile.

Juliet Don wasn't old enough to have it.

JG He never will.

Juliet He's missing out on everything.

JG But he still casts his burden.

Juliet I wish I was free.

JG What would you do?

Juliet I'd party like a loony, for months at a time.

JG And then?

Juliet You know I don't know. I'm locked in this room, hoping for a sign.

JG Give up hope. There's nothing to do but wait. No! I've had an idea!

Juliet (seeing him smile) Come on, John. Don't keep it to yourself. Share!

JG I'll need a few weeks. There's something I'm going to get you.

Juliet Subscription to a magazine? Some wool and needles?

JG (tickled by her sarcasm, and touched by her desperation) I can do better than that, I think.

Juliet You can't change a thing.

JG I can't change Don, but I might be able to do something for you.

Juliet (throwing her head back) I'm in despair, John, can't you see? (He gets up.) Don't leave now! I can't bear it on my own!

JG (holding her) What I've got in mind will put you on your own, to start with, and then it'll make you better. Or so I think.

Juliet John. Don't touch me! No! Hold me, love me, useless as I am!

He leaves, after a time. She puts her head on Don's bed, grieving. The lights darken, then come up again.

16. Don deserted

Still with Juliet and Don. The lights darken, and come up again, several times, during the course of Juliet's monologue, meaning that days are passing.

Juliet He doesn't say a word. I'm turning into nothing myself. John's run out on me. He hasn't. He thinks it's good for me to be on my own. I'm not on my own. Don, fucking Don! Die, you little bastard, and come back to haunt me. You'll talk to me then, won't you, when you've got me afraid! You will die, won't you Don? Or are you planning to outlast your mum? I wouldn't put anything past a little person who knew they had control. No, you don't control me! I've got a lover out on the water. I've got a choice. You can wait for your turn, Donny boy, I'm going now. John'll be kind. Nurses galore. Useless things at Chrissy. Jesse left me too, but I wanted him to go. The great adventure! He had it, and it swallowed him. Not a bad way to go, Donny boy! And I'm going too!

She bends to kiss the child, then dashes from the house.

17. Water

Juliet is in her motor launch, trying to start the engine. It's giving difficulty, but finally it roars. She 's trying to untangle a rope when John Grey runs along the wharf and jumps into the launch.

Juliet You're not coming with me! I'm doing this on my own!

He's trying to push her out of the way so he can turn off the engine, and she's resisting. A squall of rain makes things difficult for both of them. They wrestle for control of the ignition key, and, slippery as they are, they're scrambling on top of each other in the bottom of the boat.

Juliet No! No! No! You're not stopping me, John!

JG You're not going anywhere!

Juliet Jesse! Come and help!

JG Jesse's gone. I'm your only help!

He manages to get the key from the ignition and the engine stops. She claws at him to get it back.

JG Wants the key, does she? Juliet wants the key? Juliet wants to swim?

He throws the key as far as he can from the boat and it sinks in the water. There is a silence.

Juliet Frustration. Total fucking frustration.

JG You are coming home with me. You will sleep. You and I will talk in the morning, and if you still want to go on with it, I'll stay out of your way. You can do it, if you still want to, in the morning.

Juliet I don't want to see another morning. I don't want to see him.

JG I read your note.

Juliet (in the depth of misery) How did you know where I was?

JG I gave myself one guess. I was right, thank God.

Juliet Thank God? What have I got to thank him for?

JG A long and wonderful life. It's a rotten start, but it's going to improve. If you give it a chance.

Juliet I don't want to stick around.

JG I'm not blind. I'm not deaf. But you are going to see it through, and one day you'll get another start.

Two cops approach along the wharf, flashing torches, and wondering what's going on.

Cop 1 (surprised) That you, Doctor Grey? You okay?

JG I'm ... rendering a little help. Give us a hand, would you please.

The first policeman reaches out to assist Juliet from the boat.

Cop 2 You're wet love. Not a good night to go boating.

JG Not a good night for anything much.

Cop 1 We saw your car, doctor, with the engine running ...

JG I was in a hurry!

Cop 2 Before she got away?

Juliet I was never going to get away. Not with the highly respected Doctor Grey in pursuit.

JG Half a minute and you'd have been gone.

Juliet (looking at the sea) Nearly made it, Jess. Sorry, lover, you've got it on your own. (She looks resentfully yet dependently on John Grey.) I'm in the doctor's care.

Cop 1 We have to make a report on this, Doctor Grey. Perhaps you could fill us in, in the morning.
JG Of course.
Cop 2 G'night young lady. Do what he says. Better in the long run if you do.
Juliet I wanted the short run, but he wouldn't let me. He thinks he loves me, but what a mess he's got on his hands!

18. The van

Juliet is in her house – John Grey's second house – and Don is on his bunk, as before. She hears the sound of an engine, and pushes the curtain aside.

Juliet Who's this? A van. (pause) John! (She watches, then draws back from the window as John comes in.) Where's your car?
JG It's at home. This is yours.
Juliet Where am I supposed to be going? Are you kicking me out?
JG There's a bunk for Don, a bunk for you. Everything he needs is in a cupboard. Water. Fridge. It's a mobile home.
Juliet (suspiciously) Who's going to live here?
JG It'll be empty while you're away.
Juliet Where do you think I'm going?
JG There's a map in the van. It's a big state. Lots of people you've never met. I'm a bit envious, you know?

Juliet What if something happens to him?
JG Ring if you need to. You know him well enough by now.
Juliet Are you coming with me?
JG I've got to work. Someone has to pay for this.
Juliet Who'll I talk to?
JG People outback like to talk to strangers. It's something they miss.
Juliet Talking to me!
JG You'll be surprised at how much you'll have to say.
Juliet Swearing at all the cattle on the road ...
JG Swearing at fate, until you realise it's given you freedom.
Juliet You're giving it to me, John. John.
JG I'm giving it to you.
Juliet Why?
JG Call it love. It takes many forms.
Juliet Don't you want to be with me?
JG No. I want you to be on your own. To make a life where looking after Don is easy. You left home looking for something, then you got stuck. Well you're not stuck any longer. It's a big wide land ... go and explore!
Juliet I want you to come with me, John.
JG Buy postcards. Write to me now and then.
Juliet Are you sending me away?
JG I'm giving you freedom. It's what you need.

Juliet What if I never come back?

JG Then I'll remember you as you are ... today.

Juliet almost breaks down, then she recovers.

Juliet Show me the van.

They go out to the van. She opens the rear section and inspects. Then she looks into the cabin.

Juliet Where's the map? (He presses the glove box door. She takes out the map, and finds a roll of notes.) I'll never spend this. (He waves his hands, indicating that she can spend whatever she wants.) I'm going to leave today, John. (He nods.) Little Don, and me. We'll spend the night ... out there. That's what you want, isn't it? (He smiles.) We'll have dinner at a pub in the back o' beyond. And you'll be staying at home.

JG I'll get cards, and I'll hear your thoughts, when you send them.

Juliet I want to go now, John. Help me carry him out.

They carry Don to the van; in a few moments Juliet has her clothes and Don's bedding outside again.

Juliet John. When I drive away, I want you in the house. I know what you're doing and I can't bear to look. I'll make it up to you when I come back. I promise, John. Please don't watch me leave. I'll feel a traitor if you do. Wait till I've gone before you look. I'll be okay if I can't see you. Sorry about that. John, my lover, giver of my gift.

JG Go darling. It's all ahead of you.

Juliet I'll come back. I promise.

JG Good.

Juliet I'm going to start now John. Inside now John. Please.

He returns to the house and places himself near the window she was looking through at the start of this scene. She starts the engine, and drives away. He takes a look through the window, then he sits. The house disappears, though John remains in his chair, and the screen shows us Juliet's van winding its way up the coastal range, and then into the gulf savannah lands beyond. John listens attentively, and we hear Juliet's voice until it fades away.

Juliet Big trees, Donny. Mighty big trees. Orchards. Paw paws, mangoes. I'll put one in your hand, so you know where we are. Not a bad town, but it's too soon to stop. We want a little bush pub for our first port of call. How're you riding, Donny? Pretty good? Eh? I want you to talk, Donny. Once in a while. Otherwise I'll have to say words for you. I'm going to talk all the time. I'm so excited. I've never been this far on my own in all my life. Even before I had you. Never. Hey! That's a big truck! Move over, you're too big for me! Whoosh! Nothing to worry about. He saw me. I'm better with a boat than with a van. Enjoying the ride, Don? Mummy's loving it. We've got weeks and weeks and weeks. I'm driving forever. I'm never coming back. But I am. I have to be strong. That's

what John wants. Or does he? What's he want me to find? You don't know, do you Donny? You didn't tell me, did you John?

John Grey, seated on his chair, is nodding.

You left it up to me. I call that trust, John. You called it love. They go together, don't they? They belong, the one thing with the other. Trust and love.

Juliet's voice is very faint by now.

🌀 End of Opera 12 🌀

The book

1. The journal (1)

Lucy is in her cottage, having a dialogue with her journal.

Lucy I'm going mad. This book reminds me of when I was sane. (She reads.) 'You're married to the world, and I'm the luckiest part of it.' The world's mad, Bill. You know better than I do. 'I want to put the world to rights.' You want to die in the doing. 'I want to fight evil.' You know the answer, Bill. 'The world's a good place, by and large. The problem's in the mind.' Soldiers get rid of their agony in killing. Like Mimmo with his bayonet, stuck in that pole. Those who don't kill, go mad. Like me. (She reads again.) 'Married to the mountains, with my husband in the world.' Come back, Bill . Let me see you one last time.

2. In the west

Juliet is beside her van, close to a bush pub. Vi, the publican's wife, is making her welcome.

Vi What can we get you?
Juliet I need a shady spot for my van.
Vi Something in it you need to keep cool?
Juliet My son. He's asleep.
Vi Oh. Those vines give a good shade. What will your boy have for lunch?

Juliet Nothing. He's on a drip.
Vi What happened?
Juliet Nearly drowned. I pulled him out too late ... or too soon ...
Vi ... depending on how you look at it?
Juliet I'm showing him a world he's never going to see.
Vi You must be very close to him, by now.
Juliet Too close, until I got on the road.
Vi And you're travelling well?
Juliet I'd have started earlier, if I'd thought of it.
Vi Someone gave you the idea?
Juliet Someone gave me the van.
Vi (studying the beautiful young mother) Someone generous ...
Juliet Someone who loves me ... and I'm not sure what I feel about him. I'm at a disadvantage with Don, and he treats me as if I'm his equal. It's not easy to handle.
Vi Many of us have difficulty with gifts. The simplest thing to do is take them.
Juliet But in return?
Vi Your friend must get a lot from you. You might be giving him more than he's had before, and you don't notice, because your thoughts are with your boy.
Juliet I want a new life, a better life, and John's given it to me.

Vi John's your friend?
Juliet He's everything I've got, at the moment, apart from
 this.
Vi Stay with us a few days. I'll try to change your
 mind.

3. Card (1)

John Grey is reading a card. The scene starts with his voice, then Juliet's takes over.

JG I stayed five days, then I felt strong enough to go.
Juliet's voice The lady who runs the pub rang people and told
 them to expect me. They take me everywhere. I've
 seen so many things you'd never see from the road.
 When I go walking, someone sits with Don. If I think
 they won't tell anyone, I tell them about you.
JG My love.
Juliet's voice Johnny John John. You're beside me, day and night.
 You're the van, the wheels, the road, the reason.
 You're the map I follow and the voice in my mind. I
 love you, John, but I'm not secure. When Don's gone,
 I'll have to change ...
JG You've a long way to go, my love.

4. Bill

Lucy is outside her cottage, near a stream.

Lucy The horses are frightened. They liked him to rub
 them, but they're afraid of him now. That means he's
 dead. What happened, Bill? Was there too much evil

for you to fight?

A mist rises from the water, then, after a time, a figure emerges. It's Bill; the features of his face have almost disappeared, and we recognise him by his voice.

Bill We were taken prisoner and they put us on a ship. We
 were lined up for rice and one of our boys knocked a
 Jap down. A fight broke out. We gave as good as we
 got, but they had the guns, and they lined us up. It
 was that or get shot. Then they got the boys that did
 the fighting, and they tied'em to bales they found on
 the ship. Five Japs ripped the guts out of our boys
 with bayonets. They screamed so loud it's a wonder
 you didn't hear.

Lucy Go on.

Bill When the killing was over they locked us down
 below. A torpedo hit us. (The mist surrounding Bill
 starts to swirl, and it becomes harder to see him, yet
 his voice grows more insistent.) We were done for if
 we stayed down there. Someone got a door open and
 we rushed on deck. There were only four boats and
 they were full of Japs. The brawling started again. If
 you didn't get in a boat, you drowned. I got in a boat
 full of Japs ...

Lucy The evil you went to fight.

Bill We were just as bad. There were blokes grabbing
 bayonets and putting them to use. Some died bleed-
 ing in the water. That brought the sharks ...

Lucy And you?
Bill The boat I got in was too full. They didn't notice until it was in the water, then it started to sink. They grabbed me, half a dozen of them, and threw me over the side.
Lucy Did you drown, or ...
Bill (faintly) It was quick, Lucy, quick. Sweet, easy, quick.

Lucy watches as Bill disappears, and the mist clears slowly until she is again looking at the stream.

Lucy Evil's loose in the world, and nobody protected Bill. He went to find his end, and it was waiting. Sweet, easy, quick. But how many years of pain, and madness, lie ahead for me? (There is a low rumble of sympathy from her father, Giles, in the underworld far below.) Be still, father. Get yourself reborn. Find a peaceful corner of the world and live as quietly as you can. Madness is strutting everywhere. I should have stayed in the asylum, and got them to lock me in. I'd have had the madmen protecting me. I'll go inside and sleep. Pat the horses, Bill. Get them to rub against the house. It'll help me if I know you're outside. The horses, Bill. Calm them, if you can.

5. Hope

Juliet and her van are at a roadside camp. Three men are tending a fire, and talking to her.

Carl Those fish look good, Petro. You cookin tonight?
Petro Bugs.
Luigi (to Juliet) Bugs're little fellas ...
Petro Little!
Luigi Ya know what I mean. They catch'em in the Gulf ...
Carl ... where you're goin tomorrow.
Luigi An' if y'around when they're loadin the truck ...
Juliet Are they good?
Carl Delicious! Who ya gunna stay with?
Juliet The Hardys.
Carl Get'em to showya how to catch the bugs.
Juliet I'll have to stay with Don.
Carl They'll look after him. They'd love it if you went in the boat.
Petro They look after you. Go with them.
Juliet Everyone's good to me, out here.
Luigi We all got the word ...
Carl Knew who you were, soon as we seen the van.
Petro Julie and her boy!
Luigi Had the fire burning, ready.
Carl Gets lonely out here. Good to have people.
Juliet I'm very dependent.
Carl We look after you.
Petro Our job.
Luigi Miss Julie, what you do before you have your boy?
Juliet Well ... I ran away from home. I had Don up here.
Luigi One of us!

Juliet I guess I am.
 Luigi Anyone who lives out here ... got somethin funny about'em. I'm gonna say, welcome!
 Juliet Thank you. I feel welcome.
 Petro Good to have you!
 Juliet I didn't know what to expect. The map frightened me a bit.
 Carl Map don't show the people ya meet.
 Petro Might be good thing. Picture of us, they wouldn't sell any maps!
 Luigi Ya know where ya goin after the Gulf?
 Juliet Wherever the Hardys tell me, I guess.
 Carl Y're in good hands.
 Petro How long you carry him in the van?
 Juliet As long as he lives ... I don't know.
 Petro Ya say he got no dad any more.
 Juliet No. He's got a doctor, and he's got me.
 Petro What else he needs? I think nothing.
 Juliet Thank you. You're very kind.
 Carl Julie's hungry, Petro. Put on y'apron, get that pan sizzling!

6. Card (2)

John Grey is reading, as before.

JG They took me out on the water. They got fish every time. They cooked them on board and they were delicious ...

Juliet's voice I'm getting stronger every day, and I'm becoming more aware. Don's well, and I'm having a marvellous time. I camped with some road workers and they made me feel like a goddess. It sounds vain, but to them, I was. They envied me, being the mother of a child. I felt ashamed of all the things I thought about Don, in your cottage at the edge of town. Those men taught me holiness. A lesson from an unusual place. I can't wait to see what the road brings me ... tomorrow. I send you my love. Be with me tomorrow, and share ...
 JG Good night, my love. Sleep well.

7. The journal (2)

Night time again, by Lucy's hut. She's sitting beside the stream where she saw the vision of Bill.

Lucy Mother dead, father dead, Bill ... How long before my brain shuts down. While I grieve I'm alive. I'd love to bring him back but he's been. What did I write? (She opens the book; it's dark but she knows the words by heart.) He was the other half of my heart, and he had to say goodbye. Am I divided, or restored to myself? Whole, or halved? How can I know? I could climb my father's mountain, and lie in the dark. The sun would find me in the morning. I'd love to die there, in the night. I want to die possessed of vision, and that's what I value because I've been abandoned by

love. Silly man. A noble man, a plain man, too good to know how to fight. The spirits sat on his shoulders. There was your mystery, Bill. You live in my book, and I live nowhere else, with you, in the dark, where I can't see a single word.

She stands, as if to throw the book in the stream, then goes inside, clutching it to her.

8. Brighton

Three people are sitting at a table in a fine home in Brighton, Melbourne. They are Juliet's mother Tricia Courtney-Morris, Tricia's mother Margaret Courtney, and a relative, Timothy Argus, who has returned from a trip to Mount Isa, in Queensland. He is showing them a cutting from a newspaper.

Argus This is what it said.
Tricia The boy's in a coma.
Margaret She's carting him around the bush in a van!
Argus It was given to her by her doctor.
Tricia What's that supposed to mean?
Margaret She's quite a woman now, as we see.
Tricia Your meaning's clear, mother. The van is payment.
Margaret A token, darling, perhaps.
Argus She was travelling on her own. With the boy.
Tricia She never told us.
Margaret She cut herself away from her family. No wonder the boy had an accident.

Argus It says she manages him with ease.
Tricia Journalists write anything.
Argus And yet she says she's having a wonderful time.
Margaret Tricia! Get onto the travel agent. We're flying up!
Tricia It's what I want to do ...
Margaret ... but?
Argus It doesn't seem right to break in.
Margaret Of course it's right! She can't run away from her family like that!
Tricia She did, though. She doesn't want to come back. We're helpless, mother.
Margaret Not at all. If Tom were alive ...
Argus (looking at the paper again) I think he'd admire her.
Margaret What is there to admire ...
Tricia She took nothing with her. Look at her now. I'm awed, mother, truth to tell. I think I'm proud of her.
Argus It mentions the boy's doctor ...
Margaret She talks about him more than the boy!
Tricia I'll write to him. I don't see anything wrong with that.

9. Letter to the doctor

John Grey is reading a letter from Tricia Courtney Morris.

JG Dear Doctor Grey. This is not an easy letter to write, and I fear you will think it an intrusion ...
Tricia's voice I am the mother of Juliet Courtney Morris. I learn that she has a child that her family have never seen.

Don. From what I read in the paper, this boy is under your care. My daughter is estranged from me, not through any wish of mine. I long to be reunited with my daughter, and to give her the support she needs. If you can assist in bringing this about, you will have my lasting gratitude...

JG ... Tricia Courtney-Morris. An island wants my help.

10. Redlynch

John Grey and Juliet are at a hotel across the road from the house he has given her. (Don is in the van outside.) She's taking him through a pile of photos.

Juliet These people asked my advice! They run a huge property, and they asked me what I thought!

JG What did you say?

Juliet I said they knew each other too well. It was spoiling things between them.

JG So you offered them the van?

Juliet I did, you clever man. I said, one of you can come with me. Penny thought I was trying to steal Bob, but I told them they had a trailer ...

JG ... and he could travel behind ...

Juliet ... sitting up ...

JG ... like Jacky ...

Juliet ... I did say that, then I felt ashamed ...

JG ... and they knew you weren't robbing her of him ...

Juliet ... they agreed that she would take a holiday, then she'd run the place while he had a break, and then they'd have a holiday together ...

JG Did they want you to run the property while they were away?

Juliet If I'd offered they'd have grabbed it, but I said I wanted to get back.

JG Why did you need to be back?

Juliet Oh John, what a question.

JG Tell me the answer, then.

Juliet I wanted to show you how strong I was.

JG And?

Juliet I wanted you to see Don.

JG And?

Juliet I wanted to be close to you.

JG And?

Juliet I knew that I was strong as anyone in the world, and I still had a long way to go. There. That's all.

JG So why didn't you go further?

Juliet The journey you gave me, John, filled me with love. I have to put it to use.

JG I had a letter from your mother.

Juliet Oh! (He shows it to her, and she reads.) Are you going to write back?

JG I must.

Juliet What will you say?

JG Tell me what to say.

Juliet Tell her I think about her a lot. All I need right now is to know that she and gran are there. When I need them I'll go back. They've got a beautiful house by the sea, and it'll be mine one day, in the line of succession. I want them to know that I have to feel ready to take it on.

JG You're still adventuring?

Juliet Trying to find out what the world's really like. Most people seem to know, or they pretend, but me ... I'm still discovering.

JG What do you want to discover next?

Juliet I'm waiting for Don. He's holding me back.

JG Am I holding you back, my love? I'm trying to push you on ...

Juliet I love you more than I can say, but I don't trust myself. I fear what's inside, undiscovered. Anything might come out, and break your heart. I don't want that to happen.

JG Then we must wait. We'll have each other until a bad time comes.

Juliet Perhaps it won't, but who can say? I really am a handful, John.

JG My hands are big.

Juliet Why don't you say 'my heart'?

JG You know every space in me. I've never hidden anything from you.

Juliet I'll change when Don dies. That's the thing we have to fear.

11. The journal (3)

Lucy is writing in her book as if it alone is keeping her alive.

Lucy I want to close this book, but I have to write about something that happened when I became used to being alone. I let the horses go, but they hung around until finally they went wild. They grazed in the clearing which was my parents' farm, then they went further because they didn't like the men from the mill. Mimmo. How could anybody not be filled with loathing? Years passed, and I slipped out of time. I rose and fell with the sun, and later the moon. I became nocturnal, then I came back to the day. I'm moving again, and I think it's to the land of dream, but I hardly know. Every life needs a base, and mine are dead. Bill dies every night, for me, and sometimes in the day ...

The screen shows some of the events that happened on the ship carrying the Australian prisoners of war in the brutal custody of their Japanese captors. This screening recapitulates the events already shown in Scene 2, Opera 2, War, but should extend what was shown at that point because it is now Bill, not Adrian, who is the focus of attention. Lucy writes on without looking at the screen but we should feel that we are being made privy to her thoughts.

Lucy After years on my own I heard a knocking at my door. 'Hello! Hello! Is there anybody home?' This man could see the fire in my stove. I kept back. 'I

won't hurt you,' he said. 'I only want to talk.' That's what people say when they want to inflict themselves on you. I'm here to be alone. Bill could never swim. They threw him in the water. It didn't take long, he said. Sweet, easy, quick. My dying's slow. I sometimes think it's a punishment, but what have I done wrong? I've little use for guilt, and none for sin. Sin! (She says it scornfully.) We're at our silliest when we draw lines through ourselves. But I was talking about a man who wanted to come in ...

We now see John Grey and Juliet, sitting in the doorway of the van, with Don lying on his bunk behind them. Lucy remains visible.

JG I want to tell you about something that happened when I was young.

Juliet First love, John? We're not starting a confession, are we?

JG Not exactly, though I had a lot to apologise for, in those days.

Juliet Don't say that, or I'll have to unburden myself of so many wrongs.

JG We have to make mistakes. It's a law of learning.

Juliet (tenderly) Thanks for getting me out of that.

JG I was in a mountain town. Whenever I had a day off, I went for a drive ...

Juliet Handsome young doctor ... on his own?

JG It was exciting to be alone.

Juliet Why was that?

JG We can't be safe with others unless we know ourselves, and I was the last person I understood.

Juliet Do you think I'm like my mother, John?

JG You must be, unless you're an opposite, which is another way of being the same.

Juliet What?

JG Let me go on, darling. I've got so much I need to say.

Juliet Is this a way of talking about love?

JG Yes. It was my way of finding out what we are.

Juliet All of us?

JG Yes. I'm very sure.

Juliet I love you for being sure.

John Then that's a danger, because when you change you might want someone you can shape in a new way, and I'll be fixed, instead of pliable.

Juliet I'll never turn you away! Never!

JG No, but it may be that you won't respond ...

Juliet I'm frightened, darling. Go back to where you were.

JG I drove in the mountains whenever I could, exploring.

Juliet Yourself, or the mountains?

JG Both. We were almost the same thing, the mountains and I.

Juliet And you uncovered a mystery.

Focus moves to Lucy, writing in her book.

Lucy I heard this knocking at my door. 'I need someone to

	tell me where I am. I'll leave the moment you want me to go.'	JG	He said his mother had owned the cottage where I knocked at the door ...
Juliet	John. You were tender, even then.	Juliet	... and she'd sold it to this Lucy?
Lucy	He said he wouldn't hurt me, but how could he? The worst possible things had happened. I was alone, and I would never join anyone any more.	JG	He wanted to go back, to have a look, I suppose, and talk to Lucy, who'd been on her own for years ...
Juliet	You hear, darling? She's talking about you.	Juliet	You went?
JG	Go on, Lucy. Tell it as it was.	JG	I stopped the car well back, and Tim knocked on the wall. The door was open, and I could see the flames in the stove. She'd put on a bit of wood.
Lucy	(writing) I didn't answer. I gave him no permission to walk into my life.	Juliet	She came out?
Juliet	That was harsh. What did you do next, John?	JG	She hid in a room. Tim was a sad man when he got back in the car. 'I was sure she'd talk to me,' he said. 'She was there. I called out who I was. She didn't say a word. She's cut herself off. She's alive, but only just.'
JG	I drove home. A week later, at my practice, a man walked in.	Juliet	What did she eat?
Juliet	Some people are silly enough to think that things happen by chance.	JG	The mill workers used to pick up these notes, and bring things from the store. They'd leave them in a box by the road. Nobody ever saw her.
JG	We know it's not chance, but we don't know what it is.	Juliet	What else did this ... Tim?
Juliet	This man ...	JG	Tim.
JG	... said he heard I'd been driving where he'd lived as a boy.	Juliet	... tell you, as you drove along?
Juliet	Who told him that?	JG	He told me everything he knew about these people. Their name was Wainwright ...
JG	In that town, everyone knew everything. People were talking all the time.	Lucy	Aaaaaaaahhh!!!
Juliet	Gossiping!	Juliet	(at the cry) My God!
JG	He'd heard about me calling at Lucy's house ...	JG	Don't be surprised.
Lucy	Aaaaaaaahhh ...		
Juliet	She can hear you John, so watch what you say.		

Juliet There's a story to tell?
 JG There's a story to tell.
 Juliet Tell it to me, John.
 Lucy Aaaaaaaaahhh!
 JG Not here.
 Juliet Another time.
 JG A long way away. Start the van.

They close the side of the van, and Juliet drives away, with John in the passenger seat.

12. The journal (4)

Lucy has her book open in front of her. Behind her, on the screen, we see, again, the events that took place on the POW ship, the death of Bill at the hands of the Japanese who threw him into the water from the overcrowded lifeboat, followed by similar happenings in a lifeboat full of prisoners who throw a Japanese guard to the sharks because they recognise him as being one of the men who bayoneted prisoners after a struggle on the deck of the ship that's now sinking. (See Wainwrights' Mountain pages 62 – 64.)

Lucy I'll never be reconciled. They went to fight evil. Some of them knew, and some of them didn't, that the evil would be released from them. They'd been carrying it round inside. When they couldn't control it, they unleashed it on each other. They were complicit, every one. I hated my father for thinking he was God,

but that was better than being one of them. (She looks at the screen and it goes dark.) My mother put up with him until those crudest men, my brothers, broke free of his control. His vision was his superiority, and his weapon against what they were.

There is a rumbling, and then we hear Giles' voice for the last time.

Giles I am yielding, Lucy. The spirits have prevailed on me to be reborn. This means forgetting my life with you. I pity you in your loneliness. What lies ahead I've yet to know. My mind is emptying, Lucy ... farewell, my daughter ... find understanding, if you can ...

Lucy And so a life ends. The memory of my father is dying. Mother too has become a cloud. Nothing's firm any more ...

Annie The spirits have a place for me. They say I should be comfortable, happy and secure. There must be other planets. Nobody on earth can have those things ...

Lucy Farewell, mother. Accept what you're given. You were never made for rebellion. It was your greatest strength. How I admire you, a woman who never lost her way. (She looks at the book in which she's been writing.) Almost full. A page or two more. Next time I write will be my last, and the dissipation of my mind can begin.

She clutches the book desperately as the lights darken on her.

13. The gorge

John and Juliet are sitting in canvas chairs, near the open van, and close to a sheer-sided gorge.

Juliet So what did you learn?

JG I was a brash young man. I knew everything. Tim had few opinions, but he kept his eyes open, and behind that, his mind. He blocked out nothing.

Juliet You copy him?

JG He was my best teacher. Watch. Notice. Ask yourself, how does that person feel?

Juliet Is that what you did with me?

JG I thought, this one's tormented. If she can get through the pain, she'll come out burnished like copper ...

Juliet Not sure about that.

JG ... and if she can't turn something terrible into something good, she's wrecked.

Juliet Sometimes I thought of jumping off, over there ...

JG And sometimes you thought of driving the van over the edge, with Don.

Juliet I didn't think you knew about that.

JG Even after you got back from your trip.

Juliet How will he die?

JG He can't clear his lungs. They'll fill up with phlegm. Then there won't be enough oxygen, so he'll breathe faster and faster. Then it'll slow down. Then it'll stop.

Juliet Like that?

JG Then he'll start breathing again. Faster. Stop. Slower. Stop. Until it doesn't start again.

Juliet And then?

JG We'll bury him, and you'll be free.

Juliet I've told you everything about my life ...

JG Your past. The future's to be revealed.

Juliet Are you scared, John?

JG Nervous. Not scared. Whatever happens, I'll bear it somehow.

Juliet You're braver than I am.

JG Oh no I'm not.

Juliet I tried to drown myself, and you stopped me.

JG Stubborn, I suppose.

Juliet A wonderful love that saved me. To fight another day.

JG Humans are like that. We give in, or, if we're strong, we fight again.

Juliet Until?

JG Until.

Juliet Part of me will die when Don dies.

JG The rest of you will start again, stronger. You'll be surprised.

Juliet What will I be like?

JG We can't tell.

Juliet The day we bury him, John ...

JG We?

Juliet We'll do that together. Then I have to go home.

JG It's a powerful word. But once we leave home there is

no home until we make another.
Juliet I don't feel I can do that for you, John.
JG Then home will be where we are. Have you thought
of that, my love?
Juliet It's in my mind, every minute, night and day.

14. Closing the book

Lucy is writing in her cottage, sitting at her table near the stove.

Lucy How strangely my life started. How soon before it ends? My father made a house of trees, my mother made it a home. I got mother a new place, but couldn't make it a home for myself. It's a trap, a cage, but that's only because I can't escape turning everything into what I am myself, and that's a woman incapable of creating good. I've looked to the world to provide, like a pauper, and it doesn't care whether I live or die. It leaves me as I wish to be: alone. (She goes to the door of her cottage, and looks out. Spirit people come to the edge of the bush, apprehensive, yet curious too.) Waiting for me. If I wander into the bush they'll tell the wild dogs where to find me, when I die. I'll frustrate them. I'll die in the house, with the door closed, and they'll have to find a way in. Down the chimney, when it's cold! (She's amused at the thought.) They can carry me away. They'll leave the mountain, and they'll never erase the vision it gives, on view on every side. My father saw it every day.

Then he lost it, and his life. I've always known it to be there, but never to be mine. I know what it is, and I can't have it. (She addresses the spirit people.) Soon. You won't have long to wait. (She takes up her book and writes a few last lines.) Everything unresolved in Giles and Annie was handed down to their children. It broke the boys and laid a burden on my shoulders that I could never bear. Now it's broken me. My only consolation, if it is one, is that the young man who brought Tim Hurley here will be talking about me, and they'll try to work out why I'm alone, and Tim will tell him a story, which the young man will pass on, and those who tell it will change it, until my life becomes a drop of water slipping down the side of a vase, changing colour, changing shape, until it hits the bottom. When a story's run out of life, nobody tells it any more.

She closes the book, puts it on the table, and goes into her bedroom, out of sight.

15. School

John Grey is at the Redlynch Primary School, where he has been giving a talk. With him are two teachers, Glenys and Sam, and a number of the children.

Sam Thanks Doctor Grey. That was very useful.
Glenys You could see how interested the children were.

JG I got the feeling they were curious about me.
 Glenys They do see you come and go a lot ...
 Sam ... to the house across the road...
 JG Professional calls. There's a little boy lives there who needs a lot of watching.
 Children Sir!
 JG Yes!
 Children What's he like?
 JG The little boy?
 Children Mmm.
 Sam Now you shouldn't be asking that.
 Glenys They're curious, Sam.
 JG (to the children) His mother's a good friend of mine. I know she'd let you visit. Just a few at a time. (to the teachers) It might help if you went too.
 Sam You mean it, Doctor Grey?
 JG Juliet sees the children watching. She told me to tell you to come. Knock on her door.
 Children Mmm!

John disappears, and the children and their teachers cross the road. Juliet has the door open, and they file in to the room where Don lies on his bed.

Children When's he wake up, miss?
 Juliet He doesn't. He lies there like that, all the time.
 Children Do you show him places in your van?
 Juliet I show him, but he doesn't see.
 Children How's he eat, miss?

Juliet This bottle's the only thing that feeds him.
 Children How do you know if he's sick, miss?
 Juliet He's sick. He won't recover, but we're keeping him alive.
 Glenys Doctor Grey gave the children a talk. They see him when he visits Don.
 Juliet He's keeping me alive too.
 Sam It must be hard on you.
 Juliet It's been a terrible two years ... yet Doctor Grey says that one day I'll realise they've made me.
 Glenys What's he mean by that?
 Juliet I ran away from home. I made terrible mistakes. This happened. I want to give in, but I don't. It's making me strong. I think that's what he means.
 Sam Ah, Juliet ...
 Juliet (guessing what he wants to know) Not a great deal longer. Listen to his breathing. The lungs are filling up.
 Glenys What will you do ... I'm sorry, I shouldn't ask ...
 Juliet I'll go home to my mother and grandmother, and I'll start again.

The children are studying Don while this conversation goes on.

Children Can you start again, miss?
 Juliet Don can't. I can, because I'll have to.
 Glenys Is it starting again, or going on?
 Sam Or both?
 Juliet I've yet to find out, but I don't think it will be long.

The teachers take the children out of Juliet's cottage, and she, after seeing them off, goes back to Don's room, listening carefully. The lights lower and come up again, meaning a day has passed. After listening to her boy for a time, she picks up the phone.

Juliet (asking) Yes, Doctor Grey please. (pause) I think it's happening, John. All right, I will. I'll let you know. (She listens to Don's breathing, counting the breaths he takes in a minute, and recording the numbers on a pad. The screen behind the scene shows the children playing in the school yard across the street, with occasional interventions by the teachers Glenys and Sam. The music describes the breathing of Juliet's child, speeding up a little, all the time, then stopping, then starting again. Juliet watches over her son, sometimes desperate, sometimes detached. After a time the door opens and John Grey sits on the opposite side of Don's bed from Juliet; she hands him the notepad she's been keeping. He studies it, then passes it back.)

Juliet Listen.

The doctor listens, timing the breathing himself. He and Juliet say nothing, and it is the breathing that dominates the music, speeding up slightly, quickening a little more, stopping for a while.

JG Go for a walk.

Juliet No.

She gets up, though, and looks through the window at the children across the road. Then she sits again, keeping watch over Don.

Juliet He doesn't know.

JG It may be the best way to go, it may be the worst.

Juliet (after a pause) Everyone finds their own way, or it finds them.

JG There's no avoiding it ...

Juliet ... when your time comes!

She stands. The breathing takes over the music again, and again she goes to the window to look at the children at the school across the road. They are running with mad vigour around their school yard, then we see Sam stride to a bell on the verandah and pull a cord. The bell sounds, five times, and the children form a line in front of their teachers, before going in.

JG Afternoon's begun!

Juliet Night's falling for Don.

The lights darken, then brighten again. We see a happy child rush out onto the verandah, opposite, and ring the bell happily. In the minute or so that follows, the children come out, carrying bags and books, and go home. Parents pick up their children, some of whom point to the house where Don is fighting for his life, attended by Juliet and John.

Juliet They know.

JG Next talk they hear should be given them by you.

Hours pass. Lights come on in the pub on another corner, not far from the house where Don is dying. Very faintly, we hear a voice announcing the headlines of the TV news.

TV World leaders have gathered to do honour to the former South African President, Nelson Mandela. Bomb outrage shatters peace hopes in Tel Aviv. Australia's rugby coach resigns amid allegations that he ...

Juliet What a world! And Don's leaving.

JG Time's nearly up. You want to sleep for an hour or two? I can wake you if you're needed.

Juliet I'll stick it out. Don't go home now John. You want something to eat? Pub's across the road.

JG I'm right. I'll stay with him too.

They watch, wait, and listen. Don's breathing is most of what we hear. Juliet puts her head on his bunk, weeps a while, then dozes. John dozes too. Hours pass. The breathing sound gets slower and slower, stops, and doesn't restart. They sit up, they look at Don, and at each other.

Juliet That's it, then?

JG He's gone. And you, my love, are free.

Juliet stands, goes to the front door and flings it open, welcoming the night.

Juliet Ring the funeral people, John. Please.

JG Would you like to be with him for a while, on your own?

Juliet Something else has to happen now. Let it start. (He's watching her.) I'm going for a little walk, to give him to the night. Don't worry, I'll be back. (She doesn't move, however, from the house into the night.)

JG They'll ask how soon you want him buried. Are you going to have a service. What do you want me to say?

Juliet I'll tell them when I get back. Will you stay with him, John? It was a short life, mostly lived through me. (She's thinking, as she stands in the doorway.)

JG Walk, my love. Clear your head. He's gone, and now it's you that must get ready to go.

She looks lovingly on him, then goes out the door.

❧ End of Opera 13 ❧

Cloud

1. Earth and sky

There is a gathering at Juliet's place at Redlynch. Front centre is a small white coffin, containing the body of Don. Numerous locals are in attendance, as are the children of the school across the road, and their teachers; some of the drinkers from the hotel nearby, Vi from the hotel where Juliet stayed five days, her husband, a handful of people Juliet met on her journey in the van, John Grey and of course Juliet. She has music playing because she wants to make it a joyful farewell, then she turns it down to address the children.

Juliet I want you to draw something for Don. (She hands out textas and pieces of paper.) Imagine he's watching and you want him to say, that's a good one! (The children start drawing.) There's going to be a prize, and you all know the judge. It's Don's doctor. John.

JG (surprised) What do I have to do?

Juliet Decide which picture says the best goodbye to Don.

JG Me?

Juliet You. That's for me to decide!

JG (looking at what the children are doing) How're they coming on?

Vi (to John) Julie's leaving the moment this is over?

JG That's right.

Vi You're going to miss her.

JG For a year. If not for ever.

Vi She depends on you.

JG She needs to build strength of her own. And she will.

Vi (thinking of him) That's a risk.

JG I don't like possession. If love's not given freely, it's not worth having.

Vi You believe that?

JG Maybe I'm foolish, but I do.

Vi She'll go back where she came from.

JG She has to start again.

Vi You expect her to come back here?

JG No. If she wants me, I'll go anywhere ...

Vi If ...

JG If she doesn't ... I'll go anywhere!

He's laughing, but aware of the risk in what he's saying.

Vi I hope God's on your side, Doctor John.

JG The gods ... who can say?

Juliet (to the children) All finished? Put them on the table for the judge. Doctor John!

JG Thank you. Thank you. Oh that's a good one ...

The funeral director comes to Juliet and says something to her.

Juliet Okay everyone, while we're waiting, get yourself a balloon. Hang onto them! Watch them putting Don in the hearse, then watch me. When I let my balloon go, everybody, please, let yours go too. They'll fly up

together. We're letting him go. All do it together! (She turns.) Who's the winner, John?

John indicates a boy of seven or eight, who holds up his drawing. At once we see it enlarged on the screen at the back of the scene. It shows a bright yellow aeroplane rushing at an orange sun, with the pilot a tiny figure visible through a window near the nose.

Juliet (reading out what the boy's written) Flying high! That's the idea. Hang on to those balloons, everyone. (The funeral director and his men pick up the tiny coffin and put it in the back of the hearse.) Okay now? Ready? Let'em go! This is Don's moment ...

JG ... of release.

Hundreds and hundreds – thousands, if possible – of balloons fly into the air, on stage and in the auditorium if possible, so that the audience is surprised by the sudden proximity of the spirit making its way out of this world. The hearse moves away, and the car behind it, carrying Juliet and John. The screen shows the vehicles only as long as it takes them to round the corner, and then the image becomes an airliner lifting above the land, then above the clouds until it floats in an empyrean of blue. Juliet is flying south. The people who've attended Don's service disappear, and we are left with John Grey, watching a man filling Don's grave with dirt.

JG I'm the only witness to see it end.

John gives the grave digger a small roll of notes. The man lifts his hand in acknowledgement, and returns to his work. John leaves. The plane on the screen behind them is flying into a darkening sky as it nears the end of its flight.

2. Home

Juliet is at the door of her Brighton home, standing on the verandah, near the door.

Juliet My novitiate is about to begin. Resume? I'm not sure which. I'm not sure of anything much, now it's over. John. Let me look. (She presses against a pane of glass in the door.) Nothing's changed but me. How am I changed? I'll know when I go in. I'll wear white tomorrow, like mother, like gran. And Karen; I'll show her the photos I've brought. They've got a right to know. I don't know what I'm giving up and I don't know what I'll get in return. Will it all be loss? I must have gained something in those years away. (She looks at the door.) It's not locked. Mother would never do that to me. (She turns the handle and opens the door, allowing us to look into a hall that is sombrely lit.) My home ... but only when I make it mine. Quietly, don't wake a soul. Ha! (She puts her bag at the bottom of the stairs, so her mother and grandmother will see it in the morning.) A sign! The prodigal daughter has nothing left to spend! (She laughs, and starts to go upstairs.) Mustn't make a sound. (She takes off her shoes.) I can feel the house closing round like a habit. I'll have to be on guard. (She reaches the door of her room.) I was sixteen years in this house. It owns me, and one day it will be mine. (She goes in.) Everything the same. New sheets, mother darling.

(She tosses off her clothes quickly, and gets in.) It's as if nothing's happened, but that's all going to change!

3. Wearing white

Tricia Courtney-Morris comes downstairs, passing the bag Juliet left at the bottom of the stairs. She stops, turns around, and grasps its significance. As she does so, Margaret Courtney comes in from the rear. Both are wearing white.

Margaret (glancing at the bag) What's that doing there?

Tricia (pointing) It's been on an airline. Yesterday's date.

Margaret Is she back?

Tricia (calling upstairs) What would you like for breakfast, darling?

She breaks down. She quivers. Her eyes search her mother's eyes, and she listens, her life depending, for a sound from above.

Tricia (bravely) Good morning, Juliet!

Margaret (fiercely) Why doesn't she answer, then?

Tricia She's asleep.

Margaret Then go up and wake her!

Tricia It's too tender for that. When she comes down, she'll be born again.

Margaret After putting us through years of pain!

They listen. They hear a voice floating down.

Juliet Some fruit, two boiled eggs, and tea. Thank you, mother darling.

Margaret Let her get them herself.

Tricia They'll be waiting for you, Juliet. Don't be long.

Juliet appears at the top of the stairs, and comes down quickly. When she reaches the bottom, she looks at the others penitently, expecting rebukes.

Tricia Where's the little boy?

Juliet Dead, mother. Buried in Cairns. They were filling his grave when I left.

Margaret Who was his father?

Juliet Jesse Bowden. Son of Karen, whom you know.

Margaret What happened to him?

Juliet Died at sea. Went on a big trip and never came back.

Tricia You were travelling around the north. We read in the paper.

Juliet For weeks and weeks. Courtesy of John.

Tricia The doctor. Was he ...

Juliet He was.

Tricia Was?

Juliet Still is. Maybe. We're apart for a year, while I sort myself out.

Margaret That's going to take a bit of doing.

Juliet (calmly) It is. I have to start again.

Tricia He knows that?

Juliet He agrees. He tells me so himself.

Margaret He's too old for you.

Juliet Perhaps I'm too young for him.

Tricia What plans have you got? What's to happen ... in this year?

Juliet It's too soon to say. I think I'm waiting.

Margaret And what are you waiting for, exactly? The heavens to open?

Tricia Gently, mother. (to Juliet, pointing at her bag) You'll need to buy clothes.

Juliet I will. I want to wear white, the same as you.

Margaret I never wore white at your age. I always had bright colours ...

Tricia You changed, mother, when father died ...

Margaret I couldn't wear black. I went the other way, in mourning.

Juliet And you, mother? When did you start to wear white?

Tricia I wanted to, when you left, but it took me ages. Why do you want to wear white? You're still very young.

Juliet Not so young now, mother. I grew up while I was away.

Tricia Come inside, and tell us all that happened.

Juliet The gap has to be closed. You and gran must tell me what you were doing too.

4. A letter goes north

John Grey is reading a letter from Juliet.

JG You told me about finding the house where the old lady lived. In the bush.

Juliet's voice takes over from John's.

Juliet When you write to me John, and please, please write to me because I still need you ... tell me more about the mountains when you were young. Tell me the things you haven't told me yet, and what they meant to you, because that was when you were in the stage I'm going through now. We can go through it together, and be close. You had a friend, I think his name was Tim ...

JG Tim.

Juliet ... who took you to meet the woman who lived in the bush, but she wouldn't talk. He felt deflated. Somebody from his past wouldn't speak to him any more. That was cruel, I think. We need our past, even if it's a past we wish we'd never had, because we can't steer ourselves today without remembering yesterday. With no past we have no future, it seems. Tell me everything, John. I'm happy enough down here, but there's an emptiness that only you can fill. Write to me, John. I want to see pages of your writing so I can feel your pulse ... sorry about that! ... and diagnose ... how you are. I think of you at the end of every day. I go to the garden, I bring you beside me, and we sit together as darkness falls. Will you do the same with me?

JG (joining his voice with hers) Juliet.

5. What to do?

Tricia and Juliet are in the large house in Brighton, at the foot of the stairs.

Tricia It's a group set up by the Council. They visit people, run a telephone hotline, take food to the needy, and they help people getting off drugs.

Juliet Good causes, every one.

Tricia They need people to help. They've never got enough.

Juliet People are still making messes of their lives.

Tricia (a little surprised) That never ends. What do you think about that?

Juliet If I do that, I'm stuck in the old problem. I have to move on.

Tricia You had help when you needed it. Others need it now.

Juliet True. But I don't want to lead a life that isn't going any further.

Tricia So where's your life going? You've been back a month, and I haven't seen a sign.

Juliet I'm concentrating, mother. I talk to John every day.

Tricia (surprised again) Does he ring?

Juliet In my mind. I know what he would say. Find the new problem. Don't get caught up in the old.

Tricia You said he was a man of charity ...

Juliet ... and he is. But he's hard as nails, and he knows what happens when you go down a path.

Tricia Meaning?

Juliet You find what's at the end of that path. And maybe it was wrong for you. You should have been on another.

Tricia That's the advice I would expect you to give. If you were willing.

Juliet Have you thought about this? Every idea that anyone's ever had, is in the air. People reach out and grab the ones they want. I don't want to add to the babble. I want to take Juliet's next step.

Tricia (hurt, as she sees her daughter's about to go upstairs, leaving her) Juliet should take someone with her.

Juliet (starting to climb) I think so too.

6. A letter reaches the south

JG (writing) Tim and his wife were good to me. I wasn't married. Their children had grown up, they loved me to drop in. They were more considerate than anyone I've ever met. I didn't know, then, how lucky I was.

Juliet appears on the other side of the stage, reading as he writes.

Juliet They asked me to take them out again, to Lucy's house. I did. It was a lovely day, the wattles were in flower. We had a picnic, high on a range, then we dropped down. Tim stopped me, getting close to Lucy's. The smoke from her chimney was wisping through the bush. 'She's there,' he said, 'and she's not

expecting anyone.' 'She'll have heard the car,' said his wife. Rosa. 'It'll make her curious,' Tim said. He had a cheeky grin. 'Let's go up here.'

JG He scratched around a while among the trees. I thought he was lost, but he was looking for something he knew. Someone had made steps, in the mud near a pond. 'Dad did that, and he got little Tim to help.' That's what he said. 'I wasn't much use to him, then or now.' He had a way of talking like that, ideas off in one direction, always looking over his shoulder at something else.

Juliet He said, 'This was the track where kids went to school. Up the other slope was the store. They were all closed by the time we left. Lucy was the last who ever lived here, with her mother, then her husband, then alone.'

JG We got back to the car, and then we all froze. She was there.

Juliet (reading intensely) She was the saddest thing I ever saw. Suddenly I knew how terrible life could be. Some of us experience everything as loss. Lucy had lost hope, purpose, everything except the memory of pain. I saw agony in her eyes, and her little hands – she was a big woman – fluttered as she ran inside. She knew who we were, but she wanted to be on her own.

JG Why?

Juliet Because if she showed us her eyes, we'd be mirrors, telling her the state of her soul. That she couldn't face. She disappeared. I knew at last why I'd been roaming those endless ranges. I'd seen what I needed, but didn't want, to see. I'd seen human failure, a life wrecked before it got properly underway.

JG Since then I've heard more about her and I think my first impression was too simple, but, true or not, it was a first impression, and they stay with us forever. I knew I must not fail, as she'd done, but what, exactly, was the failure?

Juliet (looking across at him) Are you asking me, John?

JG I'm asking myself, I'm asking the world, and yes, I'm asking you.

7. Gallery (1)

Karen Bowden and Juliet Courtney Morris are in a gallery of Australian paintings. Sometimes they are together, sometimes apart. Producers will have to decide whether or not to show the paintings, or leave the audience to imagine what the singers are seeing.

Karen (about one picture) I read somewhere that he had a chaotic studio. Yet ...

Juliet ... his picture's ever so fussy about order.

Karen You feel he'd shout if anyone tried to move a thing!

Juliet What do you think of this one?

Karen He's the opposite. He's hammered everything into place. Getting it all to fit is his way of creating order.

Juliet We all have to do that, I suppose.
 Karen There's no order in this world. We make it in the mind.
 Juliet Some of us ...
 Karen It's a challenge that's always there. Look at this.
 Juliet How whimsical!
 Karen There's another of his over there. Ever so silly. That's what he's telling us.
 Juliet I like these little ones.
 Karen Nine by five.
 Juliet You know about them? Is there a story?
 Karen There is, and I've forgotten it. Oh dear.
 Juliet Don't worry, I forget things too.
 Karen I'm getting old. Things pop up in my mind that I've forgotten for years. Yet I go into a shop and I can't remember why I came in.
 Juliet Then it couldn't have been very important.
 Karen All these pictures ... (she waves her hand) ... are things the painters wanted us to see.
 Juliet Some of them they made up for themselves. Do you notice? Some of them you only see properly from the end of the room ... (She approaches a nine by five painting.) ... and some of them you have to get close to see what's going on ...
 Karen Like God looking into the world.
 Juliet You think he does?
 Karen No.

Juliet Who's looking, then? Isn't there anyone?
 Karen There's nobody, no.
 Juliet (still peering into the tiny painting) And yet, when we look, we can see.
 Karen Some of us can. I'm never sure whether we're fortunate or not.
 Juliet Why didn't you marry, Karen, and have another child?
 Karen It never came over me to do that.
 Juliet Is that how it happens? Something has to come over us?
 Karen In my case. We're all so different, though.
 Juliet What do you think will happen to me?
 Karen All these painters have got their vision on show. You're choosing ...
 Juliet What if none of them suits me? I like them, but they're not really mine?
 Karen Then you must do what everyone does. Go back into the world, and see what happens.

8. Letter going north

Juliet is writing, and John is reading on the other side of the stage.
 Juliet There were many pictures I liked, some of them state-ly, and full of importance. Some of them had pompous frames. Others were tiny. I went up close and thought how strange it was that I could study them in a building that overpowered them, except it didn't.

The little ones struck back. They lasted longest, in my mind. I took hope from this.

JG (reading) It seemed to me that if I held to my feelings – and that means knowing what they are – then I might know where I was. Then I told myself I hadn't got very far! I felt ashamed of being helpless. Then it seemed to me that I was fortunate. I remembered what you told me in your letter, about Lucy hiding in her house, and the smoke in the air. There are not many things that are solid, and a clear mind is our only guide ...

Juliet (writing) ... so I'm longing for our year apart to end, and I'm afraid. There's a terrible test before us, and I know how easily I might ... not fail myself, perhaps, but you. That would be unforgivable, yet most of us forgive ourselves whatever we do. I want to start again, but I know that it's impossible to start without a beginning we've already had. How much of me will go on and how much will I discard? It's terrible to say these things, but it would be worse to think them and not to let you know ...

JG (reading) ... so you see, I'm sharing because I must, but it's a troubled mind I show you. Look into it, John: are there any hopeful signs?

Juliet John? Tell me your thoughts, when you write, and write to me soon. I need you, I need you still.

9. Music

The house in Brighton. Tricia is putting flowers in a room which gives onto a deep garden. In the distance we can see a gazebo. She is, we feel, waiting; and then her mother comes in with more flowers, which she puts on the grand piano.

Tricia Lovely, mother. (The two women are wearing white.)

Margaret They should be here soon.

Tricia I'm thinking we should invite others. Turn these little afternoons into occasions.

Margaret I think Juliet would welcome that. She's on her own too much.

Tricia She's winning you over, mother.

Margaret I want to see her happy.

Tricia I don't think she's unhappy.

Margaret She's in between. Between everything. Waiting.

Tricia In a process that won't be rushed.

Margaret (hearing something) Here they are.

Juliet leads Karen Bowden and Gus Jespersen into the room. (We last saw Gus in Opera 9, Love and Death, when he was living with Helen Orbiston, now deceased.) Karen and Gus are greeted by Tricia and Margaret. Karen and Juliet are also wearing white.

Juliet I'll bring in the tea. (She leaves for a moment.)

Gus Your garden's as lovely as ever.

Margaret It's taken years to grow.

Karen Everything that's worth while takes time.

Gus And none of us get enough!

Margaret We have to cherish what we've got. It slips away so fast.

Juliet returns. The pouring and drinking of tea goes on throughout the lines that follow.

Juliet You're talking about time.

Tricia If we're not using it up, we talk about it. It's the way we're made, it seems.

Juliet I like watching it pass me by.

Gus You're young. That's okay for you.

Tricia (considering) Young ...

Margaret We were all young once ...

Tricia I often wonder if I would do anything differently, if I could have it all again.

Juliet I think my father would ...

Tricia Perhaps. Have you heard from the Urquharts, mother?

Margaret Not for ages. Juliet, it would be lovely if you gave them a ring. Drove up and visited, perhaps.

Juliet The Urquharts? Who are they?

Tricia People your father and I were close to. A long time ago.

Gus Time! We're stuck on it, still.

Karen We've all got a past, Gus. We can't escape.

Gus (not entirely happy) We can't, it seems.

Juliet The Urquharts ... you said 'drive up'; where are they?

Margaret In New South Wales. Not far from the river. It's a property that's only ever been in the one family. I'm afraid I've lost touch since John and Gillian ...

Juliet (after waiting for her gran to end) Died?

Tricia Lovely people. Their daughter Jane has the property now, with her husband ...

Margaret (regretfully) The American.

Tricia I must give him credit for working very hard.

Margaret Yes, you could never criticise him for that.

The two of them seem lost in their thoughts.

Juliet And your family, Gus? Where are they?

Gus On the other side of the world. They wouldn't know me if I walked in. They'd say, who's he?

Karen Gus lived with Helen Orbiston, until she died, earlier this year.

Juliet Helen Orbiston ...

Karen A musician. Played the viola.

Gus I often told her she played me. Something died in me when she passed on.

Karen We're getting melancholy, Gus. It's time we played some music.

Gus Bach?

Karen Bach.

Karen seats herself at the piano, and Gus takes out his flute. They play 'Sheep may safely graze'. There is a silence when they stop.

Juliet (to herself) I wish John would walk in now.

Tricia Pardon, darling?
 Juliet Thinking to myself, mother. More tea, anybody?
 Nobody asks for tea, so she pours herself another cup, and sips, by way of taking herself out of the conversation.

Karen There's an error built into the human mind.
 Margaret Only one?
 Karen It's to believe that the world as we first see it is fixed, and stable. We need it to be that way, but it's not.
 Gus So?
 Karen The effect is that we long for permanence. Stability. When it's not to be found.

Tricia Everything's moving on.
 Margaret Events have to be seized, and acted on.
 Juliet (suddenly) Bach's music is so active, even when it's sweet. He's thoughtful, but he's never at rest.
 Karen It's the ideal way to be ...
 Gus ... if you can achieve it, but that's never easy.
 Karen What would you like to play now, Gus?
 Gus You know I love a joke!
 Karen Oh, Nielsen!

She returns to the keyboard and begins the music written for the noisy trombone towards the end of Nielsen's Flute Concerto, while Gus plays the protesting, unhappy music given to the flute. They are enjoying themselves, and Tricia and Margaret, who don't know this music, are captivated.

Tricia Marvellous!

Margaret What was that?
 Gus Great favorite of mine!
 Karen There's no stopping Gus when he gets to Nielsen!
 Then they notice that Juliet is crying. They stop, and wait for her to say something.
 Juliet I wish someone could turn me into music. I'd give anything for that!
 She stands, trembling, bows, and leaves the room.

10. Gallery (2)

Juliet is back at the National Gallery of Victoria, and again with Karen, who is out of sight at first.

Juliet (thinking about the pictures) There's nothing sharp, yet I can tell her mind is clear. (She moves to another painting.) A light or two, and blurry shapes. Goodness, this is hard. (She looks at the catalogue in her hand.) Oh. (She sits to read more carefully. An attendant strolls behind her to a seat.) She had to look after her parents. She painted early in the morning, or at the end of day, when all her jobs were done. (She stands.) Women. I suppose it's different now. (This thought disturbs her.) No it's not. What would I have done?
 Attendant (helpfully) There's more in the next room, miss.
 Juliet More? Thank you.
 Attendant You think there's nothing in them, then you see.

Juliet Are you in here all day?
 Attendant I was, but I asked to be relieved.
 Juliet Why was that?
 Attendant They say too much, once you look into them.
 Juliet Really? Yes. I see what you mean.
 Attendant The second room's in there. (He heads off to the second room.)
 Juliet (seeing for the first time) She was caught by what she had to do, but it didn't imprison her entirely. Freedom came to her in glimpses. Sensations that wouldn't be denied. She must have painted them in minutes.
 Karen (coming in) Oh, I've found you. I didn't know where you were.
 Juliet I've found myself, Karen, I think. What a wonderful surprise!
 Karen (laughing) How did you know yourself, when you met?
 Juliet There were bits of me in all these pictures, that's how we knew each other.
 Karen How wonderful! (She looks at the catalogue.) I haven't heard of her.
 Juliet It says she was unknown for many years ...
 Karen Isn't that always the way!
 Juliet It's a shameful world.
 Karen (gesturing at the paintings on the walls) And yet her time arrived.
 Juliet It intersects with mine.

Karen It's a miracle when something brings us to life.
 Juliet And misery when we want something, and nothing happens.
 Karen It's always around us, every day. It's up to us to make touch.
 Juliet If we can.
 Karen When's that man of yours coming down?
 Juliet It won't be long. We said a year.
 Karen That's a test. I hope it doesn't prove to have been too long.
 Juliet I hope so too. But I want to see it through. When are you and Gus coming to make music again?
 Karen Oh! Three weeks, I think it is. On a Sunday. Your mother's garden should be full of flowers.
 Juliet There's blossom forming already. But it's really gran's garden. She's difficult, now she's old, but she does have a touch, with the flowers.
 Karen What would you like Gus and I to play?
 Juliet Let me think about that. And you too, for me. You know my tastes by now.
 Karen There must be music to say what these paintings say.
 Juliet That's the music I'd love to hear.

11. Finale

We are in the garden of the Courtney-Morris home. The roses trailing over the gazebo are in flower. Afternoon tea things have been

placed on a table. Juliet is in attendance, and then Tricia, Margaret, Karen and Gus come into view.

Tricia We can have tea now, or shall we have music first?
 What do you think?

Karen I don't mind, either way.

Tricia Gus? It's up to you.

Gus Oh, it's six of one, and half a dozen ...

He stops because he's noticed someone approaching around the side of the house.

Margaret Who on earth is this?

Juliet (realising) It's John! (For a moment she's overcome, perhaps embarrassed, then she moves to welcome him.) John!

JG Juliet.

Juliet (quickly poised again) Mother. Let me introduce John. John Grey.

Tricia Doctor John. At last. You're most welcome, John, to our home.

JG (very formally) Thank you, Mrs Courtney Morris.

Tricia Tricia, please. We're of an age.

Juliet My gran, Margaret Courtney.

JG (bowing) Mrs Courtney.

Margaret Doctor John.

Juliet Karen Bowden.

JG Karen. I think you are Jesse's mother?

Karen That is what fate bestowed on me.

JG It isn't always kind.

Juliet And ...

Karen ... this is Gus Jespersen ... who lives in my house with me.

JG Gus.

Gus Goodday, John.

Karen I hear Gus every morning, practising the flute ...

Tricia ... which we'll hear when we've had afternoon tea. Your arrival, John, has settled the question.

JG Which was?

Tricia Whether we would have tea, or music, first.

JG How did I settle that?

Tricia Now that you're here, it seems silly to go in and come out again. Tea.

Juliet I'll pour, mother.

She does so. Savouries are passed around, sugar stirred, et cetera.

Juliet John, you've come from the tropics and you haven't got a hat!

JG I don't want to bring that climate down here. It would spoil the roses!

Margaret It's been a difficult year!

JG (slightly taken aback) For the roses?

Margaret For all of us!

JG I dare say that's true, but it's ended. For all of us.

Tricia I have a feeling that events are on the move, again.

There is a silence.

Karen You knew about my son, Doctor John?
JG Juliet told me about him. Do you think he died a happy man?
Karen I'm glad you asked because yes, I think he did.
Tricia As far as we can tell.
Karen We impose our wishes on events. I couldn't bear to have him die in fear, or pain.
JG Then he died a happy man, sailing ...
Juliet ... as he dreamed.
Gus That's the point, isn't it.
Karen Gus?
Gus We try to be realistic, and we try to live out our dreams, but ... which is which?
Margaret We have to set down, that is to state, our plans, and carry them out.

She looks at her garden, feeling vindicated.

JG You at least can be sure. If you were on trial, you would have all the evidence you need.

The garden glows with the beauty of a spring afternoon.

Juliet More tea anybody?

Cups are passed, and filled.

JG (to Tricia) Has your gathering some purpose beyond admiring the roses?

Tricia Karen and Gus are going to play. Their music-making is a treat.

JG Ah?

Karen I'm only an amateur. Gus is much, much more than that.
Margaret Last time they were here they gave us a snorty piece ...
Juliet Naughty?
Margaret Sssnorty! It was meant to be a trombone chasing a flute ...
Gus Well ...
Karen That was Nielsen ...
Margaret I'd like some more of him! Very honest fun!
Tricia We'll go inside in a moment. Juliet will want to talk to John.
JG Yes, of course, but ...
Gus We'll play loudly so you two can hear. How's that?
Juliet Lovely, Gus. Thank you.

They all stand. Formalities are gone through, then Tricia, Margaret, Karen and Gus go into the house. During what follows, snatches of music float through the garden.

Juliet I'm sorry that I asked about the hat. If I hadn't snapped at you, I'd have cried, and I cannot, cannot, cry in front of them.

JG I've left my hat in Cairns.

Juliet Tell me what that means.

JG I've given the practice to my wife. I've sold the house you and Don lived in, and given the money to my daughter and my son. I threw in my car and the van you drove, as well. I told them that was all I was

able to give them, so they had to use it wisely. And I caught a plane, like you.

Juliet Will you be a doctor, here?

JG I suppose I will. I can do it well enough.

Juliet You can do it very well.

JG People in need bring out the best in me ...

Juliet And the worst?

JG I'm at my worst when I'm in need myself.

Juliet Is that my effect on you?

JG Only when I doubt. I worry then, and I start to fear...

Juliet We should never go to the edge of our feelings.

JG We're at our best when they're strong, and clear.

Juliet Then that's a difficulty for me.

JG You're not clear?

Juliet I'm as clear as can be that you're the best thing that ever happened to me, but ...

JG ...but ...

Juliet I don't know where the doubt, the hesitation, comes from. So I don't know how to deal with it. That means I don't know how to answer you.

JG We need ... forgive this idea ... another wave to sweep us away.

Juliet I forgive the word, because we do. Tell me a story, John.

While he's thinking, we hear some music from inside the house.

JG I only know the one.

Juliet Tell it to me, John, again.

JG (beginning) Many years ago, a man and his wife went into the mountains ...

Juliet ... and somebody I know went after them, trying to find out ...

JG What?

Juliet I don't know. You have to tell me that.

JG They went to a place he'd found, long before. He'd started a farm, but he needed a wife.

Juliet So he went away to get one.

JG He found her, and he took her back.

Juliet And found that she was much, much more than he'd bargained for.

JG That was certainly true. But between the two of them, they made a home.

Juliet Between two trunks of a tree.

JG Between the trunks of two trees.

Juliet Pedant! I always get that wrong!

JG This man, according to those that knew him, was overbearing. Impossible to live with. Yet he had vision too.

Juliet He looked down from his mountain and saw the world.

JG He wouldn't let his children leave. They were servants to his will.

Juliet Bastard!

JG He was. Yet he saw ...

Juliet ... the world. So what? We see it every day.

JG He saw it whole, and clear. He insisted on putting himself above it.

Juliet Is that what you expect of me?

JG You know that isn't so.

Juliet Why do we tell this tale to each other?

JG To see what there is to find.

Juliet I love it too. It puzzles me.

JG There's a mystery I never seem to solve.

Juliet That's what keeps us going.

JG Mystery? Pressing against our limits?

Juliet I have a feeling that he was a wonder ...

JG ... to himself.

Juliet That's what makes us talk about him.

JG And of course, once I'd heard of him, I had to go and see.

Juliet The view from his mountain?

JG I had to be taken there.

Juliet Tim. He was your friend.

JG He gave me life's greatest gift.

Juliet You always promised you'd take me there ...

JG ... when we lived in the north ...

Juliet ... which we've left forever ...

JG Let's make our journey now.

Juliet When I went north I hadn't even a toothbrush. Not a thing.

JG Let's travel the same way ...

A mist comes over the once-sunny scene, as the two of them are caught up in an obliging cloud. We lose sight of the house where

Gus and Karen are playing; we can still see John and Juliet, but they seem to be floating, as if being carried through the air. Their calls to each other can be heard, as they're moved together and apart by forces we cannot see.

Juliet John! Hold me! I'm afraid I'm going to fall!

JG Hang on hard! It can't go on forever.

Juliet Where's it taking us?

JG Who knows? I have a feeling that somebody's in control!

Juliet What nonsense! There are birds way, way, way below us!

JG It's getting cold.

Juliet I want to go back!

JG Forward's the only way!

JG & Juliet Oh! Ah! Oh! Are you all right?

They have bumped onto a patch of snow-grass, and the cloud that brought them is thinning.

JG God knows where we are.

Juliet I've an idea ...

JG Tell me. Stand up, if you can.

They get up from the grass. We're aware of figures in the cloud, watching them.

Juliet There are people here.

JG That was part of the story.

Juliet Who are they? What do they do, out here?

JG According to Tim, the woman saw them all the time. Lucy saw them too.

Juliet Ah, Lucy ...

There is the sound of a high, wailing, but over-arching voice, sum-
 mating what's gone before.

Lucy Aaaaaaaaahhh ...

JG That's her. Her house is halfway to the town.

Juliet Will we see it when it clears?

JG There are mountains in the way.

Juliet (referring to the spirit people) They're closer, John.
 They're pointing.

JG They want us to go that way.

Juliet There's a track.

JG Going down, past Lucy's place. I remember, now.

Juliet Tim brought you here.

JG On a day when we could see.

Juliet What did you see, that day?

JG The whole world, spread before us as it was for
 Giles...

Juliet That was the name of the man? (There is a rumble of
 thunder from not far away.) Storm?

JG No. He's close. Or maybe it's the mountain, remem-
 bering him.

Juliet You think it can?

JG Who knows? We're out of our depth, my love.

Juliet Will you call me that, in the years to come?

JG I will. I will.

Juliet Even if I change?

JG We'll develop. Nothing stays the same.

Juliet You think that love can last, though, John?

JG I think it can.

Juliet You want to put it to the test?

JG I do.

Juliet Then we will.

Suddenly the figures that have been looming in the cloud are carry-
 ing lights, flames, burning bits of wood. They are gathering to one
 side, showing John and Juliet the track they have to take.

Juliet They want us to leave now.

JG We haven't seen a thing.

Juliet We've seen everything there is. They've shown us a
 way, and it's ours.

JG The world should be so simple!

Juliet Are you leading me, or am I leading you?

JG You and I, my love, are travelling together.

Juliet Down?

JG Away from here.

Juliet Is the story told?

JG Yes. And it's beginning again.

Juliet Who'll tell our story, my love? Beloved John?

JG Those who come after. We can't know who they will
 be.

Juliet These people around us, John, will they tell our story,
 do you think?

The spirit people are moving their lights exultantly, and singing, in
 wordless, surging sounds.

Spirits Aaaaaaaaaahhh, aaaaaaaaaahhh, aaaaaaaaaahhh ...
Lucy (very high, very distant) Aaaaaaahhh ...
Juliet Voices, John! We're surrounded by voices, telling us
 where we are ...
JG & Juliet (joining the other voices, exultantly) Aaaaaaaahhh!!!
 Aaaaaaaahhh!!!

The cloud begins to clear. The lights being carried by the spirits become more stable, until they are no more than the lights of a well-lit house overlooking its garden. The spirit voices, too, become the earthly voices of Tricia, Margaret, Karen and Gus, calling the lovers inside.

Tricia Juliet, darling! It's getting dark!
Margaret You'll catch cold if you stay out there.
Karen Gus and I have one more piece to play. It's something
 we want to share!
Gus Mighty Bach! The spirit uniting god and man!
Juliet We're coming mother. And we've got news for you!
JG It seems that happiness is possible at last.
Karen (appearing in the garden, wanting to welcome them
 inside) It always was. Sometimes it blesses us, and
 sometimes it eludes. But it's always and forever
 there.

❧ End of Opera 14 ❧

Production notes

The operas in this sequence might appear, at first sight, to make considerable demands in scenery and staging. This is not my intention. The whole sequence is meant to focus on characters, situations, interactions, predicaments and meanings, and I would like the narrative to have at least some of the speed and freedom of movement which we take for granted in film. Hence the use of a rear projection screen. For example, in Opera 1, Scene 2, a forest is shown. This may seem like a call for a 'setting'. Not so. When the screen shows tall trees, deep valleys, etc, this is merely an announcement to the audience about how their imaginations are being asked to work. It is a producer's decision as to how long the 'scene' is shown on the screen, but to my mind it need only be a few seconds before we are left to concentrate on the characters. Similarly, in Scene 1 of the same opera, the convent where Annie and Giles have married needs to be shown only briefly, and the horse and cart which will take them away can be suggested even more briefly, if at all. Later in the sequence there are occasions when the singers are separated from the actions being shown. Like most members of my generation I have memories of productions in which teams of carpenters were needed to construct and then take down sets. This is the opposite of what's expected of the rear projection screen. I see it as a device allowing the action to move as swiftly as the imaginations of those looking on.

Consistent with the above, I would suggest that the use of things named in the scripts should be kept to an absolute minimum. Mime can be used to suggest their presence; for instance in the very

last scene of the sequence, the finale of Opera 14, Cloud, afternoon tea is taken in the gazebo of the Courtney-Morris family's garden. I see no point in having teapot, cups, savouries and so on passing from hand to hand when mime can do the job. Similarly, a producer may decide that even the gazebo can be placed in the imagination by a few twining roses. Simplicity of narrative is to be sought at all times.

Let us now consider the operas in turn.

1. The tree house

The background presences in this opera are simple, although in the case of the forest entered by the Wainwrights, overwhelming. Things needing to be represented to the audience include:

- the convent
- the forest, including the trees felled to make the Wainwrights' home
- the fire where the Wainwrights warm themselves, and cook
- the spirit people, sometimes represented in shadowy form, and sometimes by flame.

Trees are everywhere so that when Giles and Annie make their home between two great trunks, it should seem that they are merging with their place.

2. War

Scene 1, Waratah Bay, is simple. All that needs to be suggested are tents and a cooking fire, with glimpses, if desired, of sand, water,

and mountains across the bay. George's camera is one of the few stage props in the whole sequence which I think needs actually to be there. It is worth mentioning at this point that the business of gathering for a photo to be taken provides a visual thread unifying the operas which deal with the Bowden & Morris families.

Scene 2, *Pacifists*, is another matter. The screen needs to show images of the war which is causing convulsions in the lives of those on stage. Initially, these suggestions of war can be given by extracts from newsreels, showing the allure of war for young Adrian Bowden. The image of a plane crashing into the sea may need to be repeated in order to make clear what happened to Karen's lover, Colonel Sanderby, and these filmic images become a part of the narrative itself when we reach the point, late in the scene, when Yatty can see, though the others can't, what's happening to Adrian, including his death and the torpedoing of the ship. (This filmic narration of what happened on the ship and in its lifeboats is further developed in Scene 11 of Opera 13, when it is not Adrian but Lucy's Bill who is the object of attention.) Finally, we see the four women in white supporting the disfigured Adrian for his mother to behold, after which they let him go, and he falls from one level of reality to another as his corpse tumbles onto the stage.

3. The mountain

The requirements for this opera are much the same as for Opera 1, except that fire plays a larger part. Fire rages through the forest surrounding the Wainwrights' farm, and Giles identifies himself with it. There is also the need to establish the top of his mountain, a place

to be visited again in the sequence, including the finale of Opera 14 when it is the mountain's top which resolves the theme of vision running through the operas. There is also the matter of the pit, that doorway to a world full of evil which is also a statement about the world in which the sequence takes place. There should be no doubt in the audience's mind that evil happening in the pit is only just out of sight: the pit is the world, seen in a certain way.

4. Peace

The family and its photo run through this opera. Its beginning picks up from the end of Opera 2, *War*, but before long the four women in white exert their influence on the way we see the photo and the family. Their presence makes it clear to Uncle Bill that his life has reached its end. Nor is the picture permanent; Lily is first to realise that it can change, and then it starts to rearrange itself according to the hope of Max and Muriel that their children's marriages will add lustre to the family. In Scene 11, the four women emerge from the picture then merge back into it, giving it an inexplicably numinous character. The ultimate statement about the family photo as both a depiction and a creation of reality comes in Scene 13, when the resurrected Rupert Bunny asserts that 'Artifice replaces reality, thank God, or what would become of us all? We'd face the future unredeemed, and that would never do.' A moment later he tells the group, 'Look at the shutter. It's going to capture you, and while it can, you're alive.' This new picture is no sooner taken than it's shown on the screen, renewing the family's idea of itself.

5. Twins

The visual themes of this opera are lust and land. There is also the Rupert Bunny painting in the opening scene, to remind us of Rupert's appearance at the end of Opera 4, but lust and land are powerful presences, each of them connecting with the underlying theme of family continuity. The land is shown to us at the Urquharts' property in New South Wales (generations in the family) and again as the last scene (Burial of Mark) moves to its conclusion. Visually, the centrepiece of the opera is the great vision of the mountains in Scene 9, which should bring to mind the view enjoyed by Giles Wainwright when he looks from his mountain. This time it is a group of engineers and contractors who look over the land, full of plans to change it.

And lust. It's the force which marriage is meant to make manageable, and yet it's forever breaking the banks built to contain it. The presentation (preferably silhouetted) of the lust-filled scenes should be unrestrained, so that audiences are filled with an urge to do likewise, yet also forced to concede that the successful marriages of Tom & Margaret Courtney, and John & Gillian Urquhart, are considerable and very beautiful achievements. That they may not have come easily is made clear by the struggles of the young people. The production should try to show that for such struggles to be resolved it may be necessary for someone – in this case, Tricia, who has reason to be aggrieved, but rises above it – to offer the miracle of forgiveness to those who need it. This miracle which happens inside Tricia contrasts with her sulkiness in the opening scene and makes her, for a moment, the central figure of the sequence.

6. A generation

Opera 6 concludes the sub-sequence about generational change in the Bowden and Morris families. It moves from a graveyard (Scene 1) to a double wedding (Scene 12), and along the way there are opportunities to link the two strands of the complete sequence – the Wainwright and the Bowden & Morris stories – by showing the mountains in which Steve, Anton, and many others, are at work. When, in Scene 9, Steve writes to Anton's widow, Helena, and realises that his words must be convincing, he swears to her by what he thinks is holy – 'the earth itself, ... these mountains that ring me round.' For a moment he speaks as Giles might have done.

Now a word about the wedding. Production should be based on an Anglican ceremony, except that the participants and the congregation are articulate in this setting. All voices are equal because all participate in the arrangements being enacted. It may also be worth mentioning that when the American visitors, Rosemary and Jordan Wishart, remark on how busy Melbourne is, it is because the city is hosting the (1956) Olympic Games; production should therefore grasp any opportunity to show the excitement of the final scene as metropolis-wide as well as familial.

Finally, and to go back to the beginning, the dry grass rippling in the breeze at the cemetery gives an opportunity to base everything that follows on the insight provided by the Japanese haiku:

Over the soldiers' graves, summer grasses wave:
The aftermath of dreams, however brave.

7. Sons

This opera is at one and the same time simple, concentrated, and difficult. The difficulty, I think, is in knowing when to let events and characters speak for themselves and when to support them. The important thing to establish, if possible, is that the pit is the human mind. It produces the screams of the tortured and the music of Bach. Quite a hole! Giles talks about filling it but he realises that there are any number of other shafts in the area, that is to say, the problem of the pit can never be wiped away. It is as permanent as the peak from which he overlooks the world. Smoke from the pit fills the clearing at times, then blows away, but the Wainwrights are never free of its influence, once the older boys have realised the pit's attraction. Lucy is cast, in this opera, as the receiving, observing mind, a painful position. The power of these beyond-the-personal forces needs to be established by the point in Scene 11 when Faith's body is carried inside and the clearing fills with the impersonal forces of night, thunder and lightning, and the grieving flame people. Dawn brings light, birds, and smoke: the world is alive, even if Faith is dead. The final triumph of the pit is seen when the boys have murdered their father, and throw his body down. Annie gets the last word but the dominance of her understanding has been established in Scene 2, in her long outburst beginning, 'Now you know why Giles needs his mountain ...' Giles is not a character that audiences will find easy to accept, but in this passage his wife gives him the apology he needs. It is, as stated above, a difficult opera, as much for the audience as for the producer, because it offers no escape.

That is why Scene 6, the dialogue between Annie and the

visiting miner Curcio, is important. He wants a woman and thinks, with Giles out of the way, that Annie can be his. He's gracious enough to accept her refusal, and they reach an understanding that lies outside, but parallel to, the understandings and inevitabilities of the rest of this piece.

8. Lucy

Lucy's move into the world is farcical enough, but the production should leave an audience feeling that there is a morality, and a viewpoint, embodied in what she does. The severest test is when she gets out of the bath and is dressed by Jan Hogan. Nobody ever gave Lucy a sense of shame, but audiences may not read her nudity as intended. She needs to show us that to be naked is more 'natural' than to be dressed. For this reason it's important that Jan Hogan's clothes make her look silly. And Scene 9, where Father Moloney tries to embroil Lucy in his guilt-laden faith, is another test of the production's capacity to balance a serious statement with a situation that is unpleasant. The difficulty is that an audience may fall into interpreting what they see as a modern version of the wild woman of the woods type of narrative, in which the outsider is amusing while the onlookers have right on their side. It might be best to try to disturb the audience's ideas of 'common' sense because they can hardly know where Lucy is if they are allowed to be too sure of themselves.

Sergeant Benson, in Scene 1, needs to begin the audience's acceptance of Lucy as a commentary on the world she's entering as well as a figure of fun, though she is sometimes that as well. His

attraction to her, and his worldliness, make this possible, I think. Scenes 7 and 8 also give opportunities for establishing that Lucy has a viewpoint of considerable power. She does purchase a new home for the family, and she does make peace with her father. When we feel that she's inadequate, and/or amusing, it needs to be clear that the people she's trying to understand are not very sophisticated either, and that there's much to be said for her view that the world around her as she journeys into civilisation is at least as odd, to her, as she is to it. The testing time for this comes in Scene 10, The larger pit, when the roaring of the drinkers and the crowd at a nearby football ground, followed by the murder by a jealous husband of his wife's lover, are meant to be as disturbing for the audience as confusing for Lucy. Her struggle to understand what's going on should become our struggle too.

9. Love and death (shoot it out in a bungalow)

This opera presents difficulties. The first of them it borrows from the novel on which the operas are based: *Wainwrights' Mountain* is a vast exercise in, or examination of, the power of metaphor, and this opera is taken to its summit of passion by the metaphor – also a reality – of an island. Luke, who gives his island to Karen's son Jesse in Scene 9, dreams of, and attains, however fatefully, an island of love. He asks Lily to journey with him to this island but she points out that they are already there, and sings him a song based on a poem by that purest of poets, John Shaw Neilson.

The haunted, ecstatic nature of the love being enacted in the bungalow is pointed up by the ribald observations of Gus and

Helen, who can't help noticing how often Luke is washing sheets. They think this is funny, as, to them, is the arrival of two detectives whose visit is the immediate cause of the death of Luke, and Lily, and even, some distance away, of Steve. The death of Steve and the shaking of his mother-in-law's Toorak home as Lily tries to get back to it set off events to be explored in the later operas. The passion of Luke and Lily is, in a way, the trigger releasing the forces that will, finally, fill Juliet Courtney-Morris – a babe in arms as Opera 9 comes to its bullet-strewn conclusion – with the hard-won acceptance and understanding which, in reaching a scale that compares with Giles Wainwright's lordly vision, allows the sequence to conclude.

So a good deal hangs on staging this opera well. It needs to be both a dream, a fantasy lived out, and a bitter, aware examination of life taken to extremes. Gus and Helen, as stated above, are very important, though their parts are small. So too are those of the detectives, Bianco and Nero, who have nothing against Luke, even though they precipitate his death. Normality – the ordinary, the everyday – is the measure against which we judge the extreme. The detectives will move on to another job, but Luke, Lily and Steve will be dead.

10. The source

This opera separates the Wainwright story from its sources – the tree house and the mountain. The story it tells puts Lucy in an unusual position, early on: she becomes the confidante of two children – they are no more – who have had a child of their own and see in the convent its best opportunity for a passage into respectability.

Lisa and Bobby 'senior' can give it nothing, or not yet. So Lucy looks after a child not so different from her own mother, Annie, years before.

Lucy visits Annie's father and wrests an admission of guilt from him, but hardly knows what to do with it. She orders Michael Roche to visit Annie, in her cottage near the mountain, but he's unwilling to go, largely because he thinks he has a better chance of achieving redemption within the church rather than via the home-grown spiritual code of the Wainwrights. The scenes at the convent and even more the scene in the marquee at the town show make it clear that the world of the church is closely controlled, with clerics managing everyone for their own long-term benefits. The libretto is not overtly critical of this, even though the audience will see that Lisa, Bobby's mother, will be in a position of deepest ambivalence because she will have her lover Bobby with her as well as being at the service of the ageing Michael Roche.

This manipulation and arrangement undercuts the position of Lucy, loving a child that is in parallel with her mother. Lucy is too proud to stay at the convent once the child is no longer hers, nor is she wanted. She goes to the train with an unhappy Sister Brigida, who will again have nobody as her inferior. Lucy reads a letter from her mother telling her how the tree house has been destroyed. George, Robert and Ned have completed the work of destruction that began when they murdered their father. The tree house, with all its memories, is destroyed, only the mountain remains, and it is Giles who gets the second-last word; the guard, calling passengers to board the train, is telling us that the world in which the sequence began has come to an end.

11. The island

In Opera 9, Lily and Luke dream of an island. In this opera, two of the characters get there. But not at first. When the opera begins, Juliet has run away from home. She moves from a bathing box on the beach to an abandoned car. Her journey has begun.

With a bad start. Production should make it clear that working in the brothel is awful. Juliet finds it hard to believe that Jesse is genuine about taking her somewhere else. And yet she goes. Jesse is a counter-culture type, unafraid of fringe ideas because he doesn't take ideas of any sort seriously. His influence on this opera is to make it seem credible that three islands should call to Juliet, revealing themselves as Tricia, Margaret and Karen. This, silly as it may seem, is prepared for by three air hostesses wearing white on the plane flying north. Three, not four: Juliet's long journey towards understanding – which, when achieved, will be comparable to Giles' vision – has begun. Only Opera 14, *Cloud*, will bring us to the end. The last four operas are parts of each other, even though Opera 11, for the first time in the sequence, deals with characters from both family lines: the Wainwright story and the Bowden/Morris story. Audiences may need help with this adjustment.

Back to the brothel. Clients go in and out of Juliet's room. She's fucked about once a minute, in stage terms. It's contemptible, but nobody is spared. Notice though, that she's not shown naked. That belonged to Lucy in Opera 8, when nakedness expressed a lack of conventional shame or even modesty. When Lucy gets out of the bath in the Hollis Family Hotel, we are invited to consider what sort of an animal humanity is. Lucy's nakedness is not a sexual state-

ment. In Opera 9, Lily and Luke are hidden when they first come together, and this treatment also applies when, later in this opera, Jesse and Juliet join sexually. The boat spins, the islands watching over them glow intensely, but their activity isn't shown, because to watch people making love can't tell us what their experience is like. They may not know themselves until much later, if then.

Lucy's story enters, or re-enters, halfway through this opera. In her words, 'Everyone has to find their way.' Lucy's experience as she moves from one low-paid job to another is meant to be understood as a journey, apparently endless until she responds to her mother's call to come home. Home? Questions surround this word in the sequence. Giles and Annie make a home, and a home is waiting for Juliet, back in Brighton, as she comes to realise, but there are always doubts. A stronger word in this opera is 'kingdom': there is a feeling that if Lucy and Bill possess a kingdom – which they set out to explore – then there must be a home at its centre. This has to be created however, meaning that Bill and Lucy have to develop before they can properly possess the cottage where Annie lives.

A similar process is taking place in Juliet. She runs away from one home, and begins to create another, on the island, when she accepts Jesse's idea that everyone who's ever lived is in the night surrounding them. She is undergoing the great initiation by which she will become one of those women clad in white who have been in the sequence since Opera 2, War.

Scene 11 introduces another theme. Are those in the asylum mad, or sane people imprisoned? How can we tell? Johnny the baker is close to being the most lovable figure in the whole

sequence, a simple man who gives what he has to those who need it. Lucy feels tenderly for him, though she doesn't accept him as the partner for her journey ...

... which will take her to a lonely end, though she doesn't know that yet. The later scenes of this opera should be as optimistic as it is possible to make them, even when Lucy is a little glum after an all-night ride in the mountains. Brooding as she is, and plain as Bill is, they are in love, and have as fine a setting for their love as the land affords, to which they add the spiritual dimension which is theirs. Scene 18, in which Bill and Lucy call the spirits to join them, is probably the peak of the sequence. Alas, it's not sustainable. Much has to be suffered, and learned, before Juliet and John Grey find a basis for the life they're going to share.

12. Mimmo

In a project as extended as *The Wainwright Operas*, there is always the danger of *longueurs*. Steps will have to be taken in the production of Opera 12 to avoid a feeling of uncertainty. I don't believe that there is any uncertainty, but audiences may be unready for the realignment of the two stories that is happening in the first half of *Mimmo*. The deaths of Annie, and of Jesse, important as they are, are presented early on because the opera is about what follows rather than the deaths in themselves. The death of someone important to us is not only the loss of that person, it is the creation of a gap into which other people, events, or thoughts may intrude. The intrusions in this case are the near-drowning of Don, child of Juliet and Jesse (himself a drowning victim, as Karen's island-voice

makes us aware), and the evil of Mimmo. I take the word 'evil' to mean something more than the destructive forces already let loose in the sequence by war (the death of Adrian, et cetera) and George, Robert and Ned Wainwright. I use the word evil to describe those forces when they are unleashed with knowledge of the effects they will have. Mimmo, who claims to have been to war, is well aware, for all his limitations, of how he's challenging the mill workers. The bayonet that he pulls out of a pole, and sticks back in again, is his law of life. Those who won't recognise this haven't got guts. Bill thinks Mimmo's slipping away from war himself, but then Bill decides that he too is avoiding the fight. Lucy perceives that her man is falling into a classic error – that is to say that evil can be overcome, and that the man who fights can put down his weapons once it's vanquished and be 'normal' again – but she can do nothing to make him think differently. He has to leave, and both he and Lucy know that he's unlikely to come back. Lucy is lost all over again. Everything wonderful that Bill brought to her is disappearing. The tragedy of Lucy is almost complete, though it will take years to work itself through.

Juliet, on the other hand, has a shrewder ally in Doctor John. As stated earlier, their first sexual encounter occurs out of view; what the audience sees is the apparatus keeping Don alive. The character of Juliet has to develop behind, and emerge from, this diversion as long as Don is alive. John Grey's two additions to the thinking of this sequence are that (a) a weakness, a problem, can be turned into a strength if you invert your thinking suitably, and (b) that love does not have to be a matter of possession. At the

end of this opera he gives Juliet her freedom and she half-realises that something life-changing has come her way. Trust and love go together, in her thoughts as she drives, and in the spirit of her lover who stays behind. Giles Wainwright's vision was connected with his unthinking dominance over his family, which his eldest sons set out to destroy. From the troubles of Juliet and the liaison she forms with her son's doctor, an alternative begins to emerge. Two more operas will be needed to bring it into the thinking of the audience, and the characters themselves.

13. The book

The task in this opera is to keep things moving while suggesting that they're coming to an end. There's a mood of recapitulation at the start, where Lucy reads words from her journal which we have already heard. Bill is dead, as we know, but the events of his ending are brought to us, via the screen, in Scenes 11 & 12. Bill dies forever, in Lucy's mind. Her sanity, her grip on the world, her understanding, are linked, now that he is gone, to the book. When she closes it, at the end of Scene 14, she is resigning from life. Lucy's life merges at this point with the version of herself which she knows will live on in the stories which the young doctor whose name she doesn't know will tell about her. Everyone who participates in this story telling – the writer, performers who may render this opera, and you too, dear reader - is keeping her alive, whether or not she so wishes or cares. Lucy lives in us.

What has been done to her – the death of Bill – is a small particle of a world at war, and one has only to consider warfare on such

a scale to see why Lucy says, in Scene 4, that she should have stayed in the asylum, and got 'them' to lock her in. Are 'them' the sane, or the mad? Which is which? The question has been asked before, but Opera 13 is in recapitulatory mode.

The question about the madness of the world is not absent from the other strand of events. Juliet, travelling with the unconscious Don, says to John-in-her-mind, 'You're the van, the wheels, the road, the reason.' The world's madness has control of her situation too, and although John makes it bearable, she doesn't want to bear the situation, she wants to be free of it, hence her ambivalence about the feelings she will have for John when her boy dies.

Don's book closes too, in Scene 15. The children from the school across the road, after being given a talk by Doctor Grey, come to look at him. When they've left, Juliet looks at them, normal, active, full of energy, passion, fears and doubts. Alive, as Don is not. And yet she clings to her boy, supported by Doctor Grey. When Don stops breathing, she goes for a walk, relieved, yet only at having been passed, as it were, from one problem to the next. The recapitulation, and the ending of stories, is over, and the sequence is ready to take its next step. In the words of Lucy, closing her book, 'When a story's run out of life, nobody tells it any more.'

14. Cloud

It should be a joy to watch or to perform this opera. The danger is that it may seem an anti-climax, after all that's gone before. The best way to prevent this is to suggest by every means that events no sooner end than they start again, and also that the everyday and

the world of magic are separated only by a tissue, or a realisation. The magic, of course, is the magic of story, which is the magic of the imagination. Towards the end, when no clarity is available - Juliet's undecided, and John, though persistent, is unable to achieve the decision he desires - Juliet and John turn to the story which has kept the sequence alive, the only story John knows, and no sooner has it gripped them again than the flame people's lights, flickering on the misty mountain, tell them that all's well. Why is this? Because the characters are in a good alignment with themselves, with each other, and the fluid forces of their own imaginations. The story has been told, and it's beginning all over again. In the novel from which these operas are derived, there is an introit before the story starts:

In the beginning was the need to say there had been a beginning. Beginnings take place in the present. The beginning is always now.

As the last of the operas ends, the audience should feel that they've been through something both linear and cyclical, and that the former quality is subservient to the latter, that is that the whole thing could go on forever, and, in the real world, as opposed to that of the theatre, it does.

A few points. The first scene, the funeral of Don, should move quickly. It ends with the images of Juliet's plane taking off and climbing, then entering the darkness above her once-home city. The audience should get the feeling that events will be kept moving swiftly.

Scenes 4, and 8, the letter scenes, maintain the connection between Juliet and John so that Juliet's indecision, in Scene 11,

Finale, is, for the audience, if not for Juliet, largely rhetorical. The audience should be fairly clear, after watching Scenes 4 and 8, about how she will decide.

Scenes 7: Gallery (1) and 10: Gallery (2) can be handled in a variety of ways. Producers must decide whether, or not, or how much, they show, or suggest, actual paintings. For what use it may be, I record here that in my imagination the painters referred to in Scene 7 are, in order, Godfrey Miller, Roger Kemp, Peter Purves Smith, and any of the 9" x 5" painters, possibly Tom Roberts. In Scene 10, Juliet and the attendant are affected by the paintings of Clarice Beckett.

Scene 9, set in the Brighton house, and overlooking its garden, should be a sign to the audience and to the performers that the opera is conscious of nearing its end. The production of this scene needs, I think, a certain restlessness, or uncertainty, only resolved, if somewhat oddly, by Juliet bursting into tears. 'I wish somebody could turn me into music. I'd give anything for that.'

The Wainwright Operas

In 1997 Trojan Press published Chester Eagle's novel, *Wainwrights' Mountain*. Offered here is a conversion of that book into a sequence of fourteen opera librettos, which, for the most part, stay close to the events and motivations of the novel from which they derive. There are differences of course, dictated by the new form of presentation. Everybody sings! The lordly Giles looks down from his mountain, cruelly indifferent to his sons, who turn into the agents of frustration and revenge when, first, they kill their father, and then go off to a war which suits their natures uncommonly well, before returning to burn the tree house where they grew up. Lucy, the eldest surviving daughter of Giles and Annie Wainwright, carries the burden of everything her parents couldn't achieve. After years of loneliness she finds a husband and the two of them soar to the operas' greatest heights, in the mountains where their stories belong. In another sequence, there are families from Melbourne whose lives present an even greater variety of fates and passions. The novel was always wild in its imaginative life, and here it sits today, waiting for the music which will bring it to life in a new way.