

Reunion Day: A Play for Television

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Foreword

Ninety minutes on a small screen and it is all over. Sometimes less. One performance and the television play is gone beyond recall. It is likely, in its one night of life, to have been seen by twenty million people, yet it plays to audiences of one or two people in their armchairs at the mercy of interruptions from the telephone, the children, or friends coming to call. A television play is the most ephemeral of all dramatic forms. Without the dignity of the stage, or the distribution of the cinema, without the fusion of a collective emotional reaction from a group audience, it can be ended by each tiny individual audience at the flick of a switch. Then what makes those of us who earn our livelihood as writers, continue to persevere with television plays?

Each of us has our own answer. For me, there are plays I want to write that can be written best in this medium. Television is best at exploring a character, or small groups of characters, at condensing incident into an hour or an afternoon, and I like to write this way. Television is not dependent upon box office returns, or the whims of film financiers, and this is one of our freedoms. And besides, it's quite a challenge, that man and his wife in their armchair. I'd like to write the kind of plays that make them take the telephone off the hook, and ignore any sleepless kids, and pretend they're not home if friends ring the doorbell—just because they want to see the play through to the end.

I wrote *Reunion Day* in the summer of 1961, in London. It took a month almost to the day. But for three years I had had this theme in my mind, an image of a group of men celebrating a time when they were younger, but the image was indistinct and twice I had abortive starts on the play that had to be abandoned. In one of these, I tried to tell the story through a young boy of eighteen, a son of one of the men killed during the war. This idea was submitted to Sydney Newman of ABC's Armchair Theatre, and promptly turned down. The following year the BBC asked me for a play, and in desperation I searched for two pages of paper which should have been gathering dust in a drawer, and in which the theme of my play was written down. I couldn't find them. And never have to this day.

Instead, I began again. My main theme was clear. As a boy in my native Sydney I remembered Anzac reunions, emotional, excited days when old soldiers gathered together and drank far into the night. Living in the past for one drunken day, for when they got together the past was all they had in common. But though this interested me, it was clearly insufficient. Their nostalgia to the past was obvious. Their reaction to the present was vital, if I was to make a play out of this subject.

So they grew as characters. They stepped out of anonymous soldiers' uniforms and became people: Jack Hudson who was a Sergeant, and who married a girl he slept with on victory night; Colin Bailey, who had been a 'Casanova' during the war and who these days lived on the stories of past conquests; David Rubin, Jewish and sensitive enough to see how far they

have all grown away from their past comradeship; Tim Anderson, who at the age of 23 was a major, and ever since has been a failure . . . they and their friends and their wives became living people, who met and drank and faced the truth about what they had become during the afternoon and night of one celebration day.

If this was an article about the play, I could write on at length. But here it is. Read it for yourself and form your own opinion. It is a pleasant change to be here on the printed page, and not at the mercy of the man in the armchair with his hand poised over the switch of the television set.

Peter Yeldham, 1963

THE CHARACTERS (Cast of BBC production)

Jack Hudson (Ken Wayne)—He was a Sergeant. Once he was in love with . . .

Grace Hudson (Madge Ryan)—His wife.

Colin Bailey (Alan Tilvern)—The Unit's 'Casanova'.

Val (Patricia Conolly)—A girl in her twenties.

Dave Rubin (Ron Haddrick)—He was a private. Now a successful estate agent, married to . . .

Judith Rubin (Nyree Dawn Porter)—An attractive woman in her thirties.

Tim Anderson (Ray Barrett)—At the age of 23, he was a Major. Time has moved on seventeen years.

Jerry Grant (Frank Leighton)—An ex-corporal.

Gordon Shand—Another former member of the unit, now a businessman.

Greg Porter (Jerold Wells)—He owns a pub these days.

Kitty Porter (Lyn Ashley)—His daughter, aged 18

Mother (Ethel Gabriel)—Grace's mother, in her sixties.

Carmody (Reg Lye)—An ex-artillery man.

THE SETS

The Hudson's home; Rubin's living room; Bailey's flat; private bar; park bench.

The action of the story takes place on an Anzac Day in Sydney during the morning, the afternoon, and the night.

1. EXT. HARBOUR. DAY. FILM (NEWSREEL STOCK)

Establishing shot of a troopship moving into a harbour berth in Sydney. Ships' hooters and harbour sounds.

MIX TO:

2. EXT. THE TROOPSHIP.DAY.FILM. (NEWSREEL STOCK)

Troops lining the deck rail, waving to the crowd on the shores. Crowd effects.

MIX TO:

3. EXT. MARCHING TROOPS.DAY. FILM (NEWSREEL STOCK)

Victory March, troops in uniform swinging in formation down Martin Place and past the Cenotaph. March music and crowd.

OVER THIS SUPERIMPOSE THE FOLLOWING:

'In 1945, all over the world, men came home from their wars. Many of them never met again. This is the story of some who did.'

MIX TO:

BLACK SCREEN. ON WHICH THE TITLE NOW APPEARS:

REUNION DAY

Credits.

MIX TO:

4. INT. HUDSON'S HOME. DAY

The jacket of a blue suit hangs from a hook on the back of the kitchen door. Prominent above the breast pocket is a row of campaign ribbons.

As the camera pulls back to the full kitchen, Jack Hudson and his wife are at breakfast. Jack is in shirt sleeves, immersed in a paper, from which his attention occasionally strays to the meal in front of him. Grace Hudson has been a pretty woman, in the days when she took more interest in her appearance.

The house is neatly kept, the furniture indicative of one of the modern suburban bungalows that have spread like a rash through the Western industrial suburbs of Sydney.

JACK: (*engrossed in the paper*) It says here the march is going to be bigger than ever this year.

GRACE: It says that every year.

JACK: Maybe it's right.

GRACE: (*with more indifference than interest*) How could it be?

JACK: Eh?

GRACE: I said how could it be? Each Anzac Day the march gets smaller. Not many of the old Gallipoli veterans still about.

JACK: There's a few. Plenty from our war.

GRACE: You know yourself. They drop out year by year.

JACK: I was just telling you what it said in the paper.

He puts it aside, takes a last piece of toast and still eating it, rises. He takes his coat from the kitchen door.

GRACE: Like some more tea?

JACK: No thanks. Might spoil a good thirst.

GRACE: I'd hate to do that. If it wasn't for the grog up afterwards, I doubt if any of you would go.

JACK: Reckon? It wouldn't be that we still want to see our mates.

GRACE: It's been seventeen years, Jack. You never see them any other time.

JACK: That's why we go. (*with a certain relish*) Up in the private bar in Greg's pub afterwards. Imagine Greg Porter owning a pub. He never had a bob to bless himself with in the old days.

He moves into the living room, through an open connecting doorway and checks his appearance in the mirror. Grace moves after him, watching him.

GRACE: I take it I won't worry about a meal tonight.

JACK: I'll see you when I see you.

GRACE: Sometime after midnight.

JACK: Depends on what happens. Last year when the pub shut, we went to Dave Rubin's place. Up on the North shore. You ought to see this joint. All glass and thick carpets.

GRACE: You told me about it.

JACK: Must be money in the real estate business.

He is about to leave—then hesitates.

JACK: Look, why don't you go in and watch the march?

GRACE: Mum's coming over for lunch. We might look at it on T.V.

He shrugs.

JACK: Suit yourself. *(He hesitates wondering whether to say this, then says it anyway.)* You'd have gone once, like a shot. I'd have had a few beers with the boys, then met you afterwards.

GRACE: Well, I could put Mum off. If you really mean it.

JACK: Don't suppose we could get a sitter for the kids anyway.

GRACE: *(pause)* No, I don't suppose we could.

JACK: Well, I'll be off.

GRACE: Have a good time.

JACK: Thanks.

He goes to the front door which leads off the living room, and exits. Grace looks after him, then turns back to the kitchen.

5. INT. COLIN BAILEY'S FLAT. DAY

A girl sits on the edge of a rumpled bed, pulling on her stockings. The room is a mess. Empty bottles and dirty glasses on the small dining table—full ashtrays spilled on the chairs. It is a one room bachelor flat with a kitchenette and small bathroom leading off.

The girl is attractive, but untidy. Her name is Val. She is in her twenties. She fixes her stockings, buttons her blouse, then glances towards the open bathroom door from whence an off-key burst of a popular wartime song is heard.

VAL: Getting in the mood?

BAILEY'S VOICE: Ehh?

VAL: I said you never took singing lessons.

Col Bailey comes to the bathroom door, in trousers and singlet, wiping the shaving soap from his face. He is a man in his middle forties, outwardly assertive, a salesman by profession.

BAILEY: I never did, either. Why pay for lessons when you've got a natural voice? (*He looks around.*) Gawd this place is horrible.

VAL: Want me to clean up?

BAILEY: Don't bother. I've got an hour before the march.

VAL: I can't imagine you marching.

BAILEY: I never missed it, since the war ended.

VAL: Never?

BAILEY: Well, only one year. I was on a weekend with a blonde at Surfers Paradise.

VAL: (*giggles*) You would be. Mind if I use your comb?

BAILEY: Help yourself.

From the bedside table she takes a comb, and tries to repair her hair. Gazes at herself critically and applies lipstick. Col meanwhile continues.

BAILEY: Her name was Sandra. Society sheila. Her old man was a big noise.

VAL: (*indifferently*) Where is she now?

BAILEY: Married some property owner up Queensland way.

VAL: What do you do for a living?

BAILEY: Peddle insurance. That's a laugh, eh? Door to door stuff.

VAL: Doesn't sound too exciting.

BAILEY: You'd be surprised. Get invited in for a few cups of tea, sometimes. Occasionally a bit more besides.

VAL: You're a bit of a lad then.

BAILEY: I don't pass up anything if it's offering.

Val rises, puts on her coat which is slung over a chair and takes her handbag.

VAL: Well, I better be going.

BAILEY: (*after a moment*) Yeah.

She hesitates.

VAL: Got to go home and pay my rent.

He fumbles in his pocket and brings out two pound notes. Hands them to her without a word. Then turns away to study the view through the open window.

VAL: Thanks, darl.

BAILEY: Okay.

VAL: Like to see me again?

BAILEY: Don't count on it.

VAL: *(shrugs)* Well, if ever you want to . . .

She is near a telephone table on which is a pad and pencil. She leans forward and scribbles a number on it.

VAL: *(continues)* I'll leave my number just in case. If I'm not there. They'll take a message. The name's Val, remember?

BAILEY turns violently.

BAILEY: Get one thing straight about last night. I was to meet a model. A model, understand.

VAL: *(unconcerned)* I know, you told me. She had a film call. Never mind, darling.

BAILEY: Why don't you just blow?

VAL: *(Without malice or disappointment she blows him a kiss.)* 'Bye.

She exits. Bailey moves to the telephone table. Rips the paper from the pad, looks at it for a moment, then crumples it and throws it into the waste paper basket. Now, as if the phone gives him an idea, he picks up the directory and flicks through the pages until he finds a name and number. He dials (6 times)

BAILEY: *(with new eagerness)* Hello, Dave Rubin? Dave, it's Col. Col Bailey. Yes, you going to the march? Fine. Just wanted to make sure some of the boys would be there. Great, fella. We'll have a ball.

CUT TO:

6. INT. DAVE RUBIN'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Open close on Dave Rubin at the telephone. Dressed in a well cut suit with his service ribbons. A thoughtful, hard working man in his forties. Neither in his looks or speech is there any particular emphasis of his Jewish origin.

DAVE: Yes, see you, Col.

He hangs up.

JUDITH'S VOICE: Who was that?

DAVE: Col Bailey.

Now in wider shot we see the living room. It is, as Jack Hudson described it, all glass and thick carpets. It is the home of people who have chosen every item with care, and when we see Judith Rubin we immediately credit much of the taste to her, for she is a decidedly attractive woman, well groomed and smartly dressed and about five years younger than her husband. She crosses the room.

JUDITH: Who, darling?

DAVE: Bailey. One of the boys in the unit. You've met him—he came home last year.

JUDITH: Oh, the Casanova one.

DAVE: *(smiles)* That's him. That's Col.

JUDITH: I thought it was mostly talk. Woman's feeling.

DAVE: You're talking about the greatest ram in the brigade.

JUDITH: *(smiling)* And the rest of you were all so pure.

DAVE: Bailey was a trimmer. Nurses, army girls—he practically had a harem.

JUDITH: *(fixes his tie)* You didn't hear me, did you? Were the rest of you so pure?

DAVE: *(grins)* There was talk of striking a special medal for old Bailey. But I won't tell you what it was for.

JUDITH: Well, have fun remembering it all.

DAVE: I'm sure you send the kids off to their parties like this.

JUDITH: Like what?

DAVE: *(quotes)* 'Have fun, darlings. Enjoy yourselves'.

JUDITH: Not for a minute do I think you're going to a kid's party.

DAVE: But you reckon it's pretty childish just the same, uh?

JUDITH: *(She shakes her head, smiling)* No. I think once a year it's awfully good for you. I'd be sorry if you didn't go.

DAVE: And I'll be sorry tomorrow that I did.

JUDITH: The aspirin's in the kitchen. We'll all be very quiet in the morning.

His voice is deliberately light.

DAVE: Did I ever tell you that I'm glad I married you?

JUDITH: Not for ages.

They look at each other. Two people who plainly enjoy being in love. Dave kisses her.

DAVE: Well, I am.

JUDITH: Me too. Now get off with you.

DAVE: *(He goes to the door)* Put some beer in the fridge, in case I bring anyone home.

JUDITH: I will. 'Bye.

He gives a brief wave and exits. Through the glass he can be seen crossing the patio outside. Judith moves to the glass and looks out, her eyes following Dave as he moves O.S.

The sound of a car door slamming is heard. She picks up a book and puts it back in the bookcase. She straightens one or two objects, the automatic reactions of a tidy woman, rather than a fussy one.

Now across the patio a man carrying a suitcase approaches, looking about him tentatively. Judith does not notice him. He comes to the living room door and taps to attract her attention. He is of medium height and in his early forties.

Judith turns and sees him. She crosses the room and opens the door.

JUDITH: Yes?

TIM: Is this where Dave Rubin lives?

JUDITH: You've just missed him.

TIM: You're Mrs Rubin.

JUDITH: Yes.

TIM: I'm Tim Anderson *(at her lack of recognition)*. Major Anderson.

JUDITH: Oh, you were with Dave in the army.

TIM: Yes, I think you could say that. *(a slight smile)* I was the unit's commanding officer.

JUDITH: *(smiles)* Oh—then he was with YOU wasn't he? Do come in.

TIM: Thank you.

He enters, putting down his case.

JUDITH: You must have almost walked right past him. He's only been gone a minute.

TIM: I saw a large white car that turned the corner as I came down the street. Would that have been Dave?

JUDITH: Yes.

TIM: Nice car. (*He looks about him*) Nice house too, Mrs. Rubin. I knew old Dave would do well. I suppose he's told you about me?

JUDITH is rather at a loss for what to say.

JUDITH: He never talks much about his army days.

TIM: I should've telephoned from the station. I only got in an hour ago, from Brisbane. But Dave always said . . . just turn up.

JUDITH: Well. Let me say it in his place. Any friend of my husband's is welcome Mr.—

TIM: Major Anderson.

JUDITH: Oh yes. Look, if you're going to the march, why not leave your case here?

TIM: That's very kind of you.

JUDITH: If you should happen to miss them, they always meet at the same pub afterwards. Porter's Hotel in Castlereagh Street.

TIM: I'll find it.

JUDITH: Near the park. The private bar, upstairs.

TIM: (*nods*) Thank you. Porter? We had a Greg Porter in the Unit.

JUDITH: Yes, he's the owner.

TIM: Really?

JUDITH: You seem surprised.

TIM: Just a little. He was the worst soldier in the battalion.

JUDITH: (*laughs*) I thought my husband might've been.

TIM: (*seriously and rather quickly*) Oh no. Well, I'll be getting along. Goodbye for now, Mrs. Rubin.

JUDITH: Goodbye, Mr.—Major Anderson.

He exits. Judith watches him crossing the patio until he is out of view. A slightly thoughtful smile on her face . . . almost as if she is trying to categorise him and finds it difficult. She picks up his suitcase and puts it in a corner of the room.

MIX TO:

7. INT. PRIVATE BAR. DAY.

It is about two hours later. The bar is an upstairs room, with the buildings on the other side of the street visible from the windows. There is a wide display of bottles on the shelves, behind the bar counter, and tables and chairs in the main body of the room. A door leads to the stairs and landing. Another door into the private part of the hotel.

At one of the windows overlooking the street is a pretty girl of eighteen, Kitty Porter. As she leans forward to look out, the distant sound of a military band can be heard.

KITTY: *(After a moment—turning)* Here they come.

A thickly built man in his middle forties is behind the bar. He joins his daughter at the window. This is Greg Porter, whose round friendly face and easy going manner cloaks a keen business mind. Together they look down and along the street.

CUT TO:

8. EXT. STOCK FILM. ANZAC DAY MARCH. DAY.

Shot from a high angle, as if from their P.O.V. Military bands leading the March—behind them long rows of mufti clad men. The sound of the music rising.

CUT TO:

Closer shot of the military bands, with the music full and martial. Now they pass and behind them comes the first marchers, the veterans of the Gallipoli Campaign. Old men, but proud, their shoulders back and their heads held high—the music stirring their memories of nearly fifty years ago.

CUT TO:

Columns of men in mufti, veterans of the Second World War, their ages ranging from the late thirties to the fifties, long lines dominating the march. (March music)

CUT TO:

Unit of nurses or women's army, but not in service dress.

CUT TO:

Further columns of Second World War men, building up from the newsreel stock available a composite picture of the march.

CUT TO:

9. INT. HUDSON'S HOME. DAY.

Grace Hudson and an older woman (her mother) are sitting watching the march on television. From the set comes the sound of the same march music, and on the screen the

lines of veterans marching past the cenotaph. Over the music is heard the commentator's voice:

COMMENTATOR:

(radio) Now the men of the second ninth division are approaching down Martin Place, towards the cenotaph—past the saluting base and the empty chair once occupied by Billy Hughes, ‘The Little Digger’. It’s eyes right as they pass, and turn into George Street past the main post office building . . .

Camera has slowly moved to Grace Hudson, sitting watching the screen, the tears welling into her eyes. Now she gets up abruptly and leaves the room.

Her mother has noticed—she turns the sound of the set down, leaving the picture and follows Grace into the Kitchen.

MOTHER: What is it love?

GRACE: *(angrily)* Have you ever seen anything more pathetic in your life?

MOTHER: Pathetic?

GRACE: The march. The whole stupid march. What are they trying to pretend?

MOTHER: I don’t know what you’re talking about, Grace. Look, are you and Jack getting along alright.

GRACE: What do you think?

MOTHER: Well, are you or aren’t you?

GRACE: Not exactly.

MOTHER: I thought not. No, I thought not.

GRACE: You go back in and watch it. I can’t bear to.

MOTHER: Why not?

GRACE: All those men, trying to imagine . . . *(she stops)*

MOTHER: *(puzzled)* What?

GRACE: That they’re like they were. Jack and all the others.

MOTHER: Honest, I don’t know what you’re getting at.

GRACE: Then it doesn’t matter. *(There is a pause.)* It was after a march like this I first met Jack. 1945, remember?

MOTHER: I remember you came home babbling about some feller.

GRACE: Jack. In his uniform. They came off the boat, the whole division, back from the islands. They were all so young then.

As her mother watches her, now with sympathy and pain, Grace is suddenly no longer apathetic but alive with a memory.

GRACE: The whole city seemed to be there, cheering and throwing down streamers and paper, because the first of our boys were coming home. And they were like Gods—so young and straight and tanned.

MOTHER: Made a hell of a mess though didn't it. All that paper.

GRACE: He picked me up. But it didn't seem to matter. Everyone was meeting someone new that day. He picked me up, and we had some drinks with a few of his friends and afterwards . . . *(she looks at her mother)*—afterwards we found a room in a hotel down by Central railway, and we went to bed together.

MOTHER: Grace . . . you never let on you two were beating the gun.

GRACE: That day, it seemed the only right and proper thing to do.

MOTHER: I'm going back to look at the set.

GRACE: There was a kind of fever, and we were both caught up in it. As if there'd never be another day like it.

Her mother hesitates, then stays.

GRACE: *(continued)* And there never was. Afterwards, it was all a sort of anti-climax.

MOTHER: I've never heard you talk like this.

GRACE: I've thought about it a lot. It's not easy to say things out loud.

MOTHER: Grace, there's nobody else, is there?

GRACE: *(not comprehending this sudden question)* What?

MOTHER: You and Jack. He hasn't been running around, has he?

GRACE: *(she shakes her head)* No.

MOTHER: Then what's wrong?

GRACE: Don't you know why they go back year after year, the march, with their wartime mates, and go drinking with them afterwards?

MOTHER: It's a reunion.

GRACE: They're trying to get a bit of it back, Mum.

MOTHER: A bit of what back?

GRACE: What they had then. The youth that they had. The freedom.

MOTHER: Go on. It's a chance for a few grogs and a bit of a chinwag. No harm in it.

GRACE: If that was all. But it's a pipe dream. Today when the drinks start to work, they feel as if they're young again. Tomorrow morning they wake up with hangovers, and catch the eight o'clock to work, and feel as if they've been cheated somehow.

MOTHER: Cheated?

GRACE: Because they're middle aged men, with mortgages on their backs, and families to tie them down.

MOTHER: You've been thinking about it, alright. Too much if you ask me. No harm in it, one day in a year.

GRACE: Unless it becomes the only day in the year. The only day they really care about.

MIX TO:

10. INT. TOP OF STAIRS. OUTSIDE PRIVATE BAR. DAY

The first of the group we see coming up the stairs is Jack Hudson, with Bailey behind him, and then Dave Rubin with a rotund man in the same age group. This is Jerry Grant. Behind him is Gordon Shand, another ex-member of the unit, a business man, older than the others.

JACK: *(calling as he comes upstairs)* Where is he? Greg?

BAILEY: Come out you profiteering old publican. Greg!

As the door to the bar opens and Greg appears, beaming, there is a general chorus of welcome mixed with cheerful abuse.

JACK: Here he is. Fatter than ever.

BAILEY: It's all that grog.

GREG: Hello, Jacko.

JACK: How're you mate, alright?

GREG: Good as gold. Col Bailey you old lecher. Been at it again?

BAILEY: What do you mean again? Still.

He pumps each man's hand in turn as he greets them.

GREG: Dave, good to see you.

DAVE: How're things, Greg?

GREG: Can't complain. Jerry—boy you're putting on some weight.

JERRY: Here, speak for yourself. You've got a real brewer's goitre there, mate.

He taps Greg's stomach, and they both laugh.

GREG: Gordon, struth, haven't seen you in ages.

GORDON: I got a trip overseas on the firm last year, Greg.

GREG: Get him, eh? Big time, now Gordon. Where did you go?

GORDON: England, Europe, the States . . .

GREG: Half your luck . . . Come on in boys.

They all enter the bar.

CUT TO:

11. INT. PRIVATE BAR. DAY.

Greg crosses to serve behind the bar, as the others crowd around. During the following he fills some of the glasses which are set up and waiting.

GREG: How was the march?

BAILEY: Hot. I'm dying for a cold beer.

JACK: Bailey's getting a bit long in the tooth for it.

BAILEY: I'll still be marching, when they're wheeling you along Jacko.

DAVE: The sort of time Bailey had last night, it's a wonder he could march at all.

JACK: After the sheilas, was he, Dave?

DAVE: I think he got one, Jacko. To hear his talking on the march.

JERRRY: Trust old Bailey.

JACK: The sheik. *(He makes a mock gesture of salaam.)*

Through all this Bailey grins, enjoying the banter and his reputation of long ago.

BAILEY: I don't want to make you family men envious, but she was a model actually.

JACK: You rotten hound.

DAVE: He doesn't want to make us envious.

BAILEY: You should worry Dave. With a wife like yours.

JACK: Boy, she turned on a good supper for us last year.

GREG: Too right, she did.

BAILEY: Who's going to volunteer to feed us when we get kicked out of here tonight. (*He points to Jack, Jerry and Gordon in turn.*) You, you or you?

JERRY: Volunteer? That used to be a dirty word in the army.

BAILEY: How about you, Jack?

JACK: (*reluctantly*) Well, I . . .

GREG: Never mind all that yet. It's early days. Hand them round, lads.

He passes out the beer glasses—at this stage they are on beer. A few empty glasses remain on the bar.

GREG: (*cont'd*) We're still a few short on the numbers. Dan Thornton, or any of the other boys on the march?

JACK: Didn't see them.

GORDON: I ran into Dan about a month ago. He wasn't sure he could come this year.

BAILEY: Why not?

GORDON: He had some back luck. His wife died. They had a couple of young kiddies.

JERRY: Hell.

BAILEY: Sorry to hear that.

DAVE: I don't think Rex Murphy will be here. His firm sent him interstate.

GREG: Never mind. We're down to the old and bold, now. And here's to the only other joker I'd like to see with us today . . .

JACK: No need to ask who that is.

BAILEY: Well, let's drink to him. Old Tim Anderson. Wherever he is.

JERRY: A gentleman. Even if he was an officer.

ALL: To Tim . . . To the Major . . . *etc.*

GREG: Drink up, boys. It's on me, today.

DAVE: How about us all kicking in, Greg?

GREG: Anzac Day, this bar's reserved for the few of us who still want to get together. And drinks are on the house.

JERRY: In that case, I've got a thirst like an empty camel.

JACK: Good on you, Greg. Your blood's worth bottling.

GREG: We had some good times, didn't we Jacko?

JACK: You bet we did, china.

JERRY: (*tasting his beer*) This is better than the old jungle juice we used to make up north, Greg. You must've got a new recipe.

GREG: Remember the night the stuff exploded?

BAILEY: (*chuckling*) And the Lieutenant we had with us—the kid from the officer's School, thought the Japs were attacking.

JACK: Whatever happened to that drongo?

JERRY: I bet he's a bloody Brigadier by now.

Kitty enters through the private door, with a tray of sandwiches. As she crosses to Greg behind the bar, Bailey notices her first.

BAILEY: (*A soft whistle—then audibly to those nearest him*) Who's the dish?

Jerry is standing beside him. Nudges him sharply.

BAILEY: What're you drumming on my ribs for? How about that sheila?

CUT TO:

Behind the bar. Kitty has heard the last remark. She smiles at Greg, who takes the tray.

KITTY: Is that enough for now?

GREG: I think so, Kitty.

KITTY: I'll cut you some more later. Things are warming up in the public bar downstairs.

GREG: Call me if you need any more kegs put on.

KITTY: Not for a while.

She starts to leave.

CUT TO:

Bailey, centre of the group, watching her with open admiration.

BAILEY: (*calls*) Hey, beautiful.

Kitty flashes him a quick smile and goes out. The others are temporarily hushed and unsmiling. But Bailey is unaware of any blunder.

BAILEY: Where did you get her Greg? She can park her nylons on my bed any time she likes.

JERRY: You prize ape!

BAILEY: *(now sensing something amiss)* What's the matter with you bunch of morons?

DAVE: That's Greg's daughter.

BAILEY: Eh? Hell, is that right, Greg?

GREG: Don't tell me you didn't know, Col?

BAILEY: But she was just a schoolgirl.

GREG: A couple of years ago. Since the wife died, she's been helping me run things.

BAILEY: *(genuinely contrite)* 'Struth Greg, I didn't realize. I'm sorry.

GREG: *(relaxing)* S'alright, Col. Forget it.

BAILEY: Yes, but—

GREG: I said skip it.

He turns as the private door opens and Kitty reappears.

KITTY: Dad, there's a phone call . . .

GREG: for me?

KITTY: No, Mr. Rubin.

GREG: Ohh, take it inside there, Dave.

DAVE: *(as he goes)* Can't be business today. Must be the wife. *(as he enters the private door)* Thank you, Miss Porter.

She follows him inside, leaving the door ajar.

GREG: Well, who's for another. Come on boys, you're dragging the chain.

JERRY: Drink up. It's not going to get any better with old age.

They finish their drinks, moving to the bar, so that Bailey is temporarily isolated with Jack Hudson. He looks in the direction Kitty has taken, then at Jack.

BAILEY: I never meant any harm, Jacko. Honest, I didn't recognise her.

JACK: Greg said to forget it. Come on, enjoy yourself.

BAILEY: You know me. Any piece of skirt that's going—but I draw the line at a man's daughter.

JACK: They're all somebody's daughter.

BAILEY: Yeah, but when I don't know their old man—that's different.

JACK: I suppose so.

BAILEY: Listen, you and me ought to get out on the tiles—

JACK: (*idly*) When?

BAILEY: Tonight. Have a bit of fun, like we used to.

JACK: Might be in that.

BAILEY: After we break up. There'll be plenty going on in town tonight.

JACK: See what happens.

BAILEY: Now come off it. Don't give me the old palarver about a family man, and all that. Let's fix it definite.

JACK: (*after a moment*) Okay.

BAILEY: You mean it?

JACK: Sure. Why not?

BAILEY: Good on you, Jacko. We'll take a walk downtown, and see what's offering. Hey, do you remember when you and I came off that boat—after the big march?

JACK: (*snort*) Yes.

BAILEY: (*unaware*) And we got ourselves a couple of bints. Hey, what about that night? The Railway Hotel. (*nudges him*) Remember?

Jack nods.

BAILEY: What a welcome for the boys coming home! Mine was named . . . no, I can't remember. Can't remember the name of yours either.

JACK: Grace.

BAILEY: Was it? Well, one name's as good as another, I always say. Wonder what happened to her?

JACK: I thought I told you, Col. Years ago. I married her.

In the short pause that follows, Jerry hands out two beers to them. Then registers their expressions.

JERRY: Somebody dead?

GREG: Only the Padre. He went mad and they shot him.

JERRY: What are these two going to be? Pallbearers? *(as this fails to register)* Sorry fellers. Did I interrupt a serious conversation.

He goes back grinning, to the others.

JACK: I thought I told you.

BAILEY: Not really. Grace? Yes, that was her name. The dark one.

JACK: Yeah.

BAILEY: Well, she was a good looker. Still is eh?

JACK: Pretty good.

BAILEY: Heard you speak of the wife often enough. Never realized who it was. You've got kids, haven't you Jacko?

JACK: Three.

BAILEY: Well, well. Small world.

JACK: Keep it to yourself, will you?

BAILEY: Look, we're mates, aren't we? And tonight we'll have some fun, like in the old days. Grace needn't know a thing about it.

CUT TO:

Dave re-entering through the private door, rather preoccupied and thoughtful.

GORDON: Here's your beer, Dave. We're ahead of you.

JERRY: What was it? The old lady checking up on you?

DAVE: I have to duck out for a while.

BAILEY: Hey, come off it. We're just starting.

DAVE: I shouldn't be long.

GREG: Not trouble at home, is it, Dave?

DAVE: No, nothing like that. I'll be back soon.

Dave exits. There is a short, puzzled silence.

JERRY: Search me. (*mimics a stage Jewish accent*) Probably got a client wants to buy a house, eh?

JACK: (*sharply*) Cut that out, Jerry.

JERRY: We all know the yids are pretty sharp. Nothing against Dave, but he is one of the tribe.

BAILEY: He was one of us, too. I think you ought to shut your mouth, Jerry.

GREG: 'Specially when he's not here.

JERRY: That the general opinion?

GORDON: Yes.

JERRY: Okay, consider my mouth shut. (*He picks up his glass*) You don't mind if I open it for a moment to pour a draught down the old esophagus?

As they laugh, good humour is restored, and Jerry takes a mighty drink.

MIX TO:

12. EXT. PARK BENCH. DAY.

Tim Anderson is sitting alone. Behind him railings and shrubbery obscure the nearby road. But distantly, the sound of traffic can be heard.

After a moment Dave Rubin appears at a break in the railings—and approaches the bench. Tim rises. For a moment they look at each other, Dave grinning broadly. They shake hands.

DAVE: You secretive old so-and-so.

TIM: Did you tell the others?

DAVE: No, but they'll be mad when they find out. Of all the days to be in Sydney. Why didn't you come straight over. Why here?

TIM: Sit down, Dave.

DAVE: Come on—come back and meet the boys.

TIM: I want to talk to you first. (*as Dave nods, slightly puzzled, and sits*) How long's it been? Sixteen years?

DAVE: Nearly seventeen.

TIM: I didn't know if I'd recognise you. But you haven't changed much.

DAVE: (*lying*) Nor have you.

TIM: You're doing well.

DAVE: Yes.

TIM: Good.

DAVE: You?

TIM: Oh, fine.

DAVE: You were on a newspaper?

TIM: Yes. (*rather quickly*) I told you on the phone, I only arrived this morning. Went straight to your home.

DAVE: Pity you missed me.

TIM: Your wife told me you were all at the Porters. Nice woman, Dave.

DAVE: Why didn't you come straight along?

TIM: Who's there? Big crowd this year?

DAVE: No, there's just a few of us. Col Bailey, you remember old Casanova Col, don't you?

TIM: (*a near smile*) I'll bet he's married with ten kids by now.

DAVE: No, he's still a bachelor. Got half the models in town on his books, so he says. There's Jack Hudson—you remember Jack?

TIM: Sergeant Hudson, of course.

DAVE: And Jerry Grant, getting fat as a fiddle, and Gordon Shand. Greg of course.

TIM: That all? What happened to all the others?

DAVE: They've been dropping out, one by one. Look we can tell you all this over at Greg's. Heck we were only talking about you a half hour ago. (*a smile*) We even drank your health.

TIM: You did? (*ironically*) Well, well.

DAVE: (*after a pause*) Tim, what's the matter?

TIM: Does anything have to be the matter?

DAVE: There's something wrong.

TIM: I'm not sure you'll understand, Dave.

DAVE: Try me.

TIM: (*without any conviction*) Maybe you ought to go back to the rest of them. Forget I'm here in Sydney.

DAVE: Come on, Tim, what is it?

TIM: I'm broke.

DAVE: Ohh? (*then—easily*) Well, that's no problem. I can lend you a few quid.

TIM: I'm flat, Dave. Busted. (*almost angrily*) Maybe you don't know what that word means.

DAVE: (*after a moment*) Stoney broke?

TIM: That's it. Stoney.

DAVE: What happened?

TIM: (*bitterly*) It would take about seventeen years to tell you.

DAVE: But you had a good job as a journalist . . .

TIM: I was eighteen when I joined up. True I was on a newspaper. I was a copy boy. When I went back six years later, I happened to be one of the youngest Majors in the army, Military Cross. (*with irony*) What they called a leader of men. Well, it didn't cut much ice in that office.

DAVE: This happened to a few people . . .

TIM: Boy, it happened to me. 'Mister Anderson', they said to me 'You people are quite a problem to us.' I was a Major at twenty three, but the war was over and I was a problem. Well, that was how it started.

DAVE: And how bad are things now?

TIM: Rock bottom. Funny, isn't it?

DAVE: Not very.

TIM: I mean you and me—like this. You weren't much of a soldier Dave. You know what I mean.

DAVE: (*suddenly tense*) I don't need reminding of that.

TIM: Nobody's dragging it up. All that's forgotten. You did your best, but you weren't cut out for it. And now you're in clover. Whereas I . . . well, I told them what I could do with the kind of job they offered me. And I tried to start a business with my deferred pay. There's no point in earbashing you with my list of failures.

DAVE: Did you ever think of joining up again?

TIM: They didn't want us in the peacetime army. Not my kind. We got promoted too quick, and the army was already top heavy with brass. I didn't fancy starting again as a junior officer.

DAVE: Tim, I'm damned sorry.

TIM: I'd rather you weren't. My wife used to be sorry, until the strain got a bit much and she walked out. Not that I miss her at all. No, I had enough money to come south to Sydney, so I decided to look up old friends. With the crazy idea I could start off fresh in a new place.

DAVE: Why not, Tim? There's plenty of chances here.

TIM: You fellers who've had things easy. Nothing's a problem to you, is it?

DAVE: I didn't have things easy. I rented an office with my last hundred quid and nearly starved for a year.

TIM: Look, go back to the pub. Forget you saw me.

DAVE: I'll go back if you come with me.

TIM: I told you . . .

DAVE: (*jumping cue*) That you've got no money. I can fix that.

He takes out his wallet and extracts some notes.

DAVE: There's a fiver.

TIM: I don't want any bloody charity from anyone.

DAVE: Call it a loan. When you're on your feet you can pay me back.

TIM: It's getting on my feet that I'm trying to talk about. How do you think I can face those men—knowing I've got no job, no prospects, nothing. I meant something to them during the war, Dave. Well, didn't I?

Dave nods slowly.

TIM: I looked you up in the phone book to get your address. You've got three estate offices.

DAVE: Yes.

TIM: (*a pause*) Are you going to make me ask you, Dave?

DAVE: Do you know anything about the real estate business?

TIM: I can learn. I knew nothing about the army when I enlisted.

DAVE: It's a different world, Tim.

TIM: You'd better come right out and say you don't want me. Come on, you've got the guts for that, haven't you?

As Dave says nothing, distressed.

TIM: (*contd*) I've got no illusions. There are no props you can knock from under me. But I thought of everyone I knew, and you seemed to be the only one left.

DAVE: Is that why you came direct to my place?

TIM: No. (*with something near contempt*) I came to your place because seventeen years ago, you said 'Any time you're in Sydney, Tim, come and stay with me'. You probably don't remember.

There is a long pause.

DAVE: (*finally*) If we called the fiver an advance against salary, could you start next week?

TIM: Look, if you mean it, I'll start any time you say.

DAVE: Next week will be soon enough.

TIM: Dave—look—if this is on the level, you won't be sorry. Boy, you don't know. The jobs I've been through. Nothing ever lasted, because nothing was ever worth while. But all I want is something with a meaning to it.

DAVE: (*awkwardly*) Tim . . .

TIM: Other men were snapping up the positions with decent expense accounts. For heaven's sake, I can run an office, I can do anything, given the chance.

DAVE: Tim, don't get the wrong idea. It's nothing special. Just a salesman's job.

TIM: (*after a moment*) Salesman?

DAVE: It's the only sort of job I've got to offer. I don't need anyone to run my offices. I run those myself.

TIM: Well, beggars can't be choosers, can they? Major at twenty three. What do they stay? Start at the top and work your way down?

DAVE: Look, it's the best I can do.

TIM rises—Dave follows suit.

TIM: (*completely unconvinced*) Sure. Let's go and meet the men.

He moves away from the bench. Dave looks after him, deeply regretting the position in which he has been placed—then slowly he starts to follow.

MIX TO:

13. INT. PRIVATE BAR. DAY.

Some time has gone by and the group has broken up slightly. Jack is at the bar talking to Greg Porter, both with half empty glasses in front of them. Bailey, Gordon and Jerry are laughing over something around one of the tables. Bailey has switched to whiskey and is holding court.

BAILEY: One of them had a mole on her left cheek. Honest, it was the only way you could tell them apart. Anyway, one night this twin sister came in and . . . *(He whispers the rest and they laugh)*

JACK: Col Bailey never changes does he?

GREG: Never.

JACK: Wonder what's happened to Dave?

GREG: Funny, his going off like that. *(after a moment)* It's a bit quieter than other years, Jacko.

JACK: Pity to see the old mates dropping out.

GREG: Has to happen, I suppose.

JACK: One day in a year. It's not too much to ask them to turn up.

GREG: Well, some of them hated the army. They couldn't wait to get out. How's the missus?

JACK: Uh? Oh, alright.

GREG: I—er—heard you talking to Bailey before. Are you really going off with him, tonight?

JACK: Why?

GREG: Well, it's none of my business, of course. Just thinking back to the first couple of years after we got out. You used to go out and meet the wife, afterwards.

JACK: It was a while ago, Greg.

GREG: I met her once, didn't I? You brought her in. Seemed a nice girl.

JACK: She's okay.

GREG: Alright. I'll stop poking my nose in.

Greg looks toward the door and reacts.

GREG: Holy smoke—it can't be.

JACK: What?

He turns, and stares.

JACK: Major?

Now the others, too, are on their feet, starting towards Tim Anderson and Dave who are just inside the door.

BAILEY: Stone the crows. Tim Anderson.

JERRY: It's the C.O.

Tim is grinning. They converge on him—ad libbing their greetings, and seize his hand, first one then another, as he greets them according to the way he remembers them.

TIM: Sergeant Hudson. Good to see you Jack. Bailey, how're you?

BAILEY: Great, Tim.

TIM: Still knocking them over?

BAILEY: Better than ever.

TIM: Corporal Grant

JERRY: Nobody's called me that for years, Skipper.

TIM: Nobody's called *me* that for a long time, either, Corporal. Gordon Shand . . . Greg Porter. Good to see you.

GREG: I'll get you a beer, Major.

TIM: Wait on, Greg. I think this is one time when it's my shout.

GREG: Old rule, sir. On Anzac Day, it's all on me.

TIM: Except when the C.O. turns up, after seventeen years. This time I claim the privilege to buy one for the boys.

GREG: (*grins*) Well, just for you, sir, I'll break the rules.

TIM: And not too much of the 'sir'. We're all civilians now.

JERRY: Come and sit down, Skipper.

TIM: Thanks, Jerry.

There is a touch of the patron about his acceptance of the old relationship. Even when he says 'we're all civilians', it is said with the authority of an officer talking to one of his men, and this is phoney—because in war these men had a much more natural relationship than this.

Throughout it all, Dave Rubin has rather stood back and watched, missing very little, particularly the Major's insistence on buying the drinks.

JACK: *(calls to Dave)* you're a dark horse, Dave. This why you went out?

TIM: You know my old tactics, man. Find out the size of the reception committee before you move in. I did some reconnoitring through Dave.

BAILEY: The old Tim. You haven't changed.

TIM: They tell me you haven't either, Col.

There is slight laughter at this, during which Greg brings drinks on a tray.

TIM: Take it out of this, Greg.

He hands a note to Greg.

GREG: You're the only one I'd let buy a drink today, Major.

TIM: I appreciate the privilege.

BAILEY: *(raising his glass)* Here's to the days back in Tobruk, Tim. When you were just one of the boys.

JERRY: Before they started loading him down with hardware, eh?

TIM: I'll drink to that. But even after they gave me a key to the officer's mess, I think I was still one of the boys.

JACK: You can say that again.

GREG: Well, here's to it . . . and to seeing the Major again.

The rest echo the sentiment . . . they drink..and the scene slowly

MIXES TO:

14. INT. TOP OF STAIRS. DAY.

A short time later. A wiry little man, (his name is Carmody) comes from a door on the landing marked Gentlemen. He is slightly drunk and very happy . . . and singing to himself as he stands for a moment combing his hair. Distantly from the public bar below comes the sound of a hubbub of voices and laughter. He moves to the stairs and starts to descend—then turns and looks at the door to the private bar. On an impulse he crosses and opens the door.

CUT TO:

15. INT. PRIVATE BAR. DAY.

The reunion is well under way. Coats have been removed, ties loosened, in fact Dave Rubin is the only one still dressed as before. Several of the group have switched to shorter drinks. Tim is holding forth:

TIM: The trouble with the army these days, they've all gone soft. Beds and feather pillows. The ground was good enough for us . . .

CARMODY: *(at the door)* How would you know?

Attention pivots to him. He comes fully into the room.

CARMODY: Is this a private booze-up, or can anybody join in?

GREG: It's private, mate.

CARMODY: *(goodnaturedly)* Class distinction, eh? Bunch of bloody officers.

JERRY: *(getting up)* Nobody calls me an officer and gets away with it.

CARMODY: Hold your fire digger. I've got forty mates downstairs. What're you lot from?

JERRY: Second fifteenth infantry. Want to make something of it?

CARMODY: Yeah, you're a bunch of pie-eaters. Never would have had a chance without the artillery.

BAILEY: Artillery? Never heard of them.

JACK: If you're an artillery man, where's your gun?

CARMODY: Ah, I left it downstairs, mate. Too heavy to carry around.

TIM: They're a weird mob, the artillery.

CARMODY: *(bristling)* Weird. Let me tell you . . . who won the war?

SEVERAL VOICES: We did.

CARMODY: Oh did you? Well done chaps. Good on you.

He insists on shaking several of their hands.

BAILEY: *(grinning)* You'll be alright, digger. Need a compass to find your way downstairs?

CARMODY: You think I'm drunk, don't you?

BAILEY: Yes.

CARMODY: Let me tell you, sir, an artillery man is never drunk. Give us a straight line, and I'll walk it.

JERRY: A quid you can't.

CARMODY: You're on soldier.

BAILEY: Me, too.

JACK: (*grinning*) I'll have a quid on that.

CARMODY: You're set. You're all set. Here.

He pulls a wad of notes from his pocket and hands them to Gordon with a flourish.

CARMODY: You hold the stakes, general.

BAILEY: Hey Greg . . . got some rope?

GREG: (*for a moment mystified*) What do you want rope . . . (*as he sees it*) Oh boy . . . yes, I've got some rope. Hang on.

Greg hurries through the private door.

CARMODY: Well, where's the straight line?

BAILEY: It's coming mate. It's on its way.

CARMODY: Who else is going to set me? Come on, are you a bunch of pikers?

GORDON: Alright, I'll have a quid of it.

TIM: And me.

JACK: Make it two more for me.

GORDON: If you insist, I'll have another one myself.

The notes are flourished—passed to Gordon as the men's faces light with eager anticipation. Greg returns with a length of rope . . . Bailey sets out two chairs about ten feet apart and now they loosely tie the tops of each chair and pull it taut.

BAILEY: Right, the two heavyweights. Come on Jerry . . .

JERRY: Who're you calling a heavyweight?

BAILEY: Come on Greg . . .

Greg and Jerry sit on the chairs holding the rope taut . . . so that it forms a tightrope about two feet from the ground . . . All are grinning with expectancy . . . Carmody peers at it and seems to see nothing wrong.

CARMODY: Are you sure that's a straight line?

JACK: As straight as your guns used to shoot, matey.

BAILEY: I've got another couple of quid to say he doesn't get two feet on the rope.

GREG: I'll take that.

BAILEY: Come on, is everybody set? (*He sees Dave standing slightly apart*) Dave?

TIM: Go on, Dave, what's wrong with you? Somebody set me another pound. Give me two to one, he won't make the middle.

CARMODY: You're on.

Notes are flashed as the final bets are made. Now the group are gathered around, in joyous anticipation.

BAILEY: Are we set? Are we ready? (*A chorus in reply say they are*) Right, lift him!

Bailey and Jack lift Carmody so that his feet are on the rope. He sways—they steady him—the group rock with laughter.

GREG: Come on, gunner, my last two quid's on you.

BAILEY: Are you right?

CARMODY: (*roars*) Right . . .

BAILEY: Let him go . . .

They step back. Carmody sways and balances.

Cut from face to face as the men barrack and urge him on . . . or down.

Cut to feet on the rope—one of them slips and recovers.

Cut to C.V. Carmody's face as he sways.

Cut to Greg and Jerry straining to hold the rope . . . The feet moving closer toward Jerry . . . slipping, recovering.

Cut again from face to face as the expressions become open mouthed amazement, in Greg's case jubilation. There is a roar as his feet reach the end of the rope.

GREG: He's there.

BAILEY: (*weakly*) He made it.

GORDON: Catch him, somebody . . .

But before they can do so, Carmody jumps down. Looks smilingly and rather drunkenly around the stunned faces.

CARMODY: I could use a drink after that.

He picks up the nearest one and downs it with one large gulp.

BAILEY: Give the man the money, Gordon. (*Bailey takes it from Gordon and hands it to Carmody—shakes his head*) I just don't believe it.

CARMODY: Thanks, boys.

And with a wave and a lurching walk that is not a straight line, he exits amid a deathly hush.

JACK: (*finally*) He could never have done that, if he was sober.

Jerry gets up, the rope dropping to the floor.

JERRY: Hey, that character drank my beer!!

They start to laugh, at the same time as they commiserate with each other.

BAILEY: What a turn up. We wouldn't have taken his money—it was a gag.

GORDON: If that rope'd been on the ground, he'd have fallen flat on his face.

GREG: If you could've seen your faces, the lot of you. Since I'm the only winner, I'll buy you a drink.

He goes behind the bar and starts serving drinks. As the group splits up slightly, Tim moves to where Dave is standing.

TIM: You were the smart one, Dave. You didn't have a bet.

DAVE: I've never been much of a gambling man.

TIM: But you're taking the big plunge on me. That's real large of you, Dave.

DAVE: (*quietly*) Take it easy, Tim.

TIM: Easy? I'm home, boy. I'm enjoying myself like I haven't in years. This is living. (*He calls to Greg*) Give old Dave a drink. I've got to look after him.

He moves to the bar and takes one beer and returns handing it to Dave. Now the others are aware something is happening.

TIM: (*to them all*) Fellers, I wasn't going to let on, but we were all mates together. What do you know about Dave . . . he's gone and turned the tables on me, after all these years.

BAILEY: What do you mean, Tim?

DAVE: (*awkwardly*) Tim, don't you think . . .

TIM: It's alright, Dave. No harm in telling the boys. As from next week, gentlemen, Private Rubin is employing Major Anderson in his flourishing real estate business.

GREG: (*taken aback*) Are you serious?

TIM: Nine a.m. on the dot. (*with a mock bow to Dave*) Reporting for duty, sir.

JACK: *(to Dave)* Well, how's your form?

JERRY: Big employer, eh, Dave?

BAILEY: He'll be signing generals next.

This is their normal banter, but perhaps Dave senses the edge beneath it—the hint of envy.

JERRY: You know that old song. 'I've got my Captain working for me now'.

BAILEY: Watch it, Tim. He'll be a bit of a slave-driver.

JACK: You look out, Skipper. Old Dave will get his pound of flesh.

There is a sudden stillness in the room.

DAVE: Thanks, Jacko. I didn't really think that'd come from you.

JACK: Hell, sorry. I never meant anything.

DAVE: From some others, perhaps, *(he looks at Jerry)* not from you.

JERRY: What's that crack supposed to mean?

GREG: Scrub it, will you, Dave. Nobody here thinks like that.

TIM: Come on boss. Can't you take a bit of kidding?

There is a touch of malice in Tim's remark, and Dave looks at him for a long moment while the others watch them both.

DAVE: Tim, can I talk to you?

TIM: Go ahead, Dave.

DAVE: I mean alone.

TIM: We're among friends.

DAVE: I'd rather talk privately.

TIM: You say whatever you've got to say in front of the boys.

JERRY: Speak up.

BAILEY: We're all mates.

DAVE: *(dogged)* just the same, Tim, do you mind talking to me alone?

GREG: *(uneasily)* Fellers, let's break it up.

TIM: Wait on. The boss man wants to talk to me. Very well, sir . . . *(he picks up his drink and swills it down, handing it back to Greg)* I'll have that again, Greg.

He moves down the room, Dave accompanying him. The others watch then, then look at each other uneasily.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT. DAVE and TIM ANDERSON.

TIM: *(quietly)* What's eating you, Dave? Can't you take a joke?

DAVE: *(quietly intense)* I'd like to know what you think you're doing.

TIM: Get off your high horse. I thought it'd give the boys a laugh to know I was working for you.

DAVE: It was a cheap and lousy way to go about it.

TIM: The laugh was on me.

DAVE: It was on me, and that is how you meant it.

TIM: Boy, you ought to calm down. It's a reunion. We're having fun.

DAVE: What's got into you? Across the road, it was life or death. You had to have a job . . .

TIM: So I just about got down on my hands and knees, and asked you for one. Well, you don't know how much that hurt. And the longer you stalled trying to wriggle out of it, the more it hurt. And then you offered me what? A crummy salesman's job.

DAVE: *(bewildered)* Crummy?

TIM: Something I could get anywhere.

DAVE: What?

TIM: So before you tell me we're not suited after all, I'll tell you I quit.

DAVE: *(a pause)* Suit yourself.

TIM: I'll tell you even more. It was a joke, a gag, the whole thing was for a laugh. As for the fiver. I'd pay it back—

DAVE: You don't have to.

TIM: Well, I can't. I've spent it. So that's that.

DAVE: I'm sorry, Tim . . .

TIM: There've been times in the past when things were slightly different, eh, Dave?

Dave senses the meaning behind his words. He looks carefully at Tim Anderson, and finds he no longer likes him.

DAVE: You're going to need some more money, aren't you?

TIM: Your kind comes right out with the obvious, don't they?

DAVE: I can let you have another ten pounds.

TIM: Well, don't pull your wallet out here, in front of the others.

DAVE: I'll see you outside in a minute.

TIM: Don't go away.

Without another word, Dave exits the bar.

Tim walks back to the rest of the group, who have been joking in a rather self conscious effort to chatter amongst themselves . . .

TIM: Well, chaps. My beer getting warm?

GREG: Here you are, Tim.

BAILEY: What was the big confab all about?

Tim glances at the door, and sees Dave has gone. He sees also that most of these men are on his side.

TIM: Well, we had a board meeting, my boss and I.

There are a few laughs.

TIM: Now there's a slight correction to standing orders. Next Monday, I will not report to Rubin and Company at 0900 hours.

BAILEY: Why not?

TIM: Because Mr Rubin is my ex-boss now. *(He swills down his drink)* Excuse me while I take a look at the plumbing arrangements.

He goes to the door with the rest of them looking at each other. Bailey moves after him.

BAILEY: Tim!

TIM: What is it Bailey? Nature's calling me.

BAILEY: *(awkwardly)* About a job—I could talk to my firm. It's insurance.

TIM: For God's sake, don't take me seriously man. Anyone would think I needed a job.

BAILEY: *(rather taken aback)* Well, it's alright if you do. I could speak to the district manager.

TIM: District manager? That sounds like high level stuff.

BAILEY: Tim, I'm only trying to help.

TIM: (*flaring*) Why the hell should you presume I need help? You've been looking me over since I came in. What is it, Bailey? Does my suit need a clean? Are the cuffs frayed? You and your tinpot little standards. You and your cheap remarks.

BAILEY: What did I say?

TIM: You've just been looking. Well, let me tell you, this is my drinking suit, and there a dozen better ones at home. As for your job, Private, thanks for the offer, but that sort of thing's not really for me.

BAILEY: (*stung*) Private? For Chrissake, we're not in the army now.

TIM: More's the pity. Now do you mind if I take the weight off my bladder?

He goes out. In stupefaction Bailey turns to the others who are equally shocked by the outburst.

BAILEY: What's got into him?

JACK: What's got into all of us? Needling Dave like that.

BAILEY: If Dave can't take a joke, it's time he learned how to. But Tim . . . struth. What's happened to Tim?

GREG: Look fellers, I say we forget it. When they come back, we act like nothing's happened. (*Jack moves towards the door*) It's the first on the right, Jacko.

Jack goes. A buzzer sounds behind the bar and Greg picks up a house telephone.

GREG: Yes? Okay, I'll be down.

He hangs up.

GREG: Got to go and set up a few new kegs. Somebody take over the bar.

CUT TO:

16. INT. TOP OF STAIRS. DAY.

Jack is moving to the door marked 'Gentlemen' on the landing. From below the distant sound of hubbub from the public bar can be heard.

Jack hesitates, then opens the door.

CUT TO:

17. INT. WASHROOM. DAY

In front of the mirror and the washbasins Dave Rubin and Tim Anderson are standing. Dave is counting out notes, which he hands to Tim—and almost the same time they see Jack at the open door.

TIM: Come in Sergeant. Don't be shy.

Jack enters.

TIM: A matter of an old debt, of many years standing. Eh, Dave?

DAVE: That's right.

TIM: Well, I can tear up the IOU now.

He goes out.

JACK: *(after a moment)* Dave, I'm sorry.

DAVE: Forget it.

JACK: Come back and have a drink.

DAVE: Thanks just the same, Jacko, but I think I'll be making tracks.

JACK: You can't push off this early!

DAVE: Make my apologies to the boys, will you?

JACK: Look, if it's what I said about 'a pound of flesh' . . .

DAVE: *(smiles)* Don't be silly. I know Jews are supposed to be sensitive, but I'm one of the tough ones. Once in a while some kid tells my boys at school that they killed Jesus Christ, and that hurts. But the rest doesn't matter. It's not what you said, Jacko . . .

JACK: If it's Jerry . . .

DAVE: Jerry's a funny man, but he happens to be anti Semite. He doesn't count.

JACK: Look, come back in there, and it'll all be the same.

DAVE: No.

JACK: It's sour grapes, because we needled you.

DAVE: So long, Jacko. Say goodbye to the others for me.

He puts out his hand. Jack ignores it.

JACK: You walk out now, and you'll break the whole thing up.

DAVE: All we do every Anzac Day is try to put the bits together. It broke up years ago.

He withdraws his hand. He moves to the door and exits.

For a moment Jack stands immobile, then exits after him.

CUT TO:

18. INT. TOP OF STAIRS. DAY.

Dave reaches the head of the stairs and is about to descend. Jack moves quickly behind him, pulling him round.

JACK: Dave, please stay for a bit longer.

DAVE: Jacko, you're a fool if you care about anyone left in there.

JACK: That's your philosophy, is it? To hell with the rest of them, I'm alright.

DAVE: I'm suddenly sick to death of keeping up a pretence.

JACK: We were mates for six years. We were lucky, the ones who didn't die. Don't we owe some loyalty to each other.

DAVE: Jacko, you're talking like a recruiting rally. There's no bands playing now. No posters calling you to join the glorious A.I.F. They weren't the best years of our lives, they were the worst.

JACK: Not for me, they weren't.

DAVE: Then I'm sorry for you. But if you're honest, you'll admit we've all grown so far apart from each other, that what happens in there every year is just a mockery.

JACK: Boy, how you've changed.

DAVE: If you haven't it's time you did. It's people like Tim, who can't change. Who have to be pathetic imitations of what they were when we were kids.

JACK: So nobody in there means a damn to you?

DAVE: If you want it straight, Jacko, who am I supposed to care about? Col Bailey, still playing the part of the unit wolf? Tim? Jerry Grant?

JACK: *(quietly)* How about me?

DAVE: Did we ever have much in common, Jacko? I don't think so.

Jack hits him. Dave stands unyielding—then smiles faintly.

DAVE: See what I mean?

JACK: You're a bludger. Walking out on your mates.

DAVE: We fooled ourselves a long time. We really did.

JACK: How can you say that?

DAVE: The same day every year, cracking the same jokes, going over the same memories. Nobody ever refusing a beer they didn't want—because that might have been a sign of getting old.

JACK: All the time, you were thinking like this?

DAVE: No. I was as much a part of the make believe as you were. I think it took a real good look at Tim Anderson to make me realise how deeply we'd fooled ourselves. Seventeen years ago, Jacko, he was the best man among us.

JACK: Now you despise him. Because he's made a mess of things, you lend him money and despise him.

DAVE: I don't despise him, Jacko. I think this is what I'm trying to say. He couldn't change—the Army was his life. And it was all over when he was twenty five years old.

JACK: On your way. We're better off without you.

CUT TO:

19. INT. PRIVATE BAR. DAY.

Jack closes the door quietly behind him. The others seem not to notice. The disintegration of the reunion is imminent, for no-one any longer seems to have anything to say.

Jerry is staring moodily into his beer. Bailey is at the window looking out. Tim is at the bar with several drinks lined up in front of him, talking to a disinterested Gordon.

TIM: So you really saw the world, did you Gordon? I rather fancy South America, myself. Did you go to South America?

GORDON: No, I didn't get down there.

TIM: Pity. They tell me it's a great place. Come on, have another.

He flourishes a note.

GORDON: No, I'm right, Major.

TIM: What about the rest of you. I'll pay—Jerry can be barman till Greg gets back.

He sees Jack at the door.

TIM: *(contd)* You've got room for another one now, Sergeant.

JACK: *(making an effort)* Yes, sure.

TIM: Give the man a beer, Corporal. *(as Jerry makes no move)* Never mind, I'll do it myself.

He goes behind the bar.

TIM: Anybody else? Bailey?

BAILEY: Still finishing this.

TIM: Here it is, Jack. On me.

Jack looks at him for a moment, then nods.

JACK: Thanks.

GORDON: Where's Dave?

JACK: He's gone.

Jerry looks up.

JERRY: Gone?

JACK: Yes, he's pushed off.

BAILEY: What made him do that?

JACK: I don't think he was feeling too well. He said to say goodbye to you all. See you next year.

BAILEY: That's a bit casual.

JERRY: Couldn't he take us kidding him?

JACK: *(uneasily)* No, I don't think it was that.

There is a short silence.

BAILEY: A bit casual. 'See you next year'. That's a bloody nice way to say goodbye to your mates.

TIM: I think I know the trouble with Dave. He was a bit upset that I turned up today.

Nobody says anything until Jack, uncomfortably puts in the denial he thinks the Major is expecting.

JACK: I'm sure it wasn't that, Major.

TIM: I think it was. You see, old Dave had just about forgotten that night. He was okay with the rest of you, because you know nothing about it. But me turning up today brought it all back.

Now their curiosity is aroused.

BAILEY: What night?

TIM: Remember that hill outside of Finschafen, overlooking the airfield? Remember, it Jack?

JACK: We'd hardly forget that one.

TIM: We were holed up in that stinking place, as you boys well know for nearly a week. The Japs held the peak, and the airstrip was beyond it, and they'd been told to blast us out, or die there.

BAILEY: I used to dream about that place, afterwards. First time in my life I was really scared.

TIM: Maybe we were all scared. But Dave was the only one who showed it.

Now he has their attention, and he knows it.

TIM: *(contd)* You can tell, you know when a man's going to crack. But I didn't think he'd bust wide open, the way he did. You know the way the moon had been getting bigger all that week, and they were stripping the jungle looking for us. The first four nights were bad enough, but the fifth, that damned moon was like a balloon up there, and not a cloud in the sky. And we knew their bombers were going to try and burn us out. That was the night Dave Rubin cracked.

BAILEY: I never knew about this.

TIM: None of you did. I found him in a dugout, the rest of you had gone to eat, and he was sobbing his heart out. He was lying on the ground, and he was crying out that he didn't want to die. That he was too young, and he had a future in front of him, and he hated the rest of you because none of you seemed to care.

Gradually unrealised by him, the men's expressions have begun to change. Jack is stunned, staring at the Major. Jerry and Gordon are appalled.

TIM: *(contd)* I had to take him in my arms like a baby, and after a while he calmed down. Well, you might remember he went back to base hospital for a couple of weeks, and we said he was suffering from dysentery, which in a way was true. But the dysentery was fear. He was scared to the very bottom of his guts, and it's something all these years, that none of you have ever known.

GORDON: Then why, in God's name, do we have to know now?

TIM: What's the matter, Gordon? When he came up again, things were easier, and he was back on balance. *(He looks around at their expressions)* Well, I'm only telling you what happened.

GORDON: All this time you didn't tell us, and that was the right thing. Why drag it up now, like a dirty story.

TIM: I'm telling you why he walked out on this reunion. He never really belonged. He would've walked out on us that night. In effect he *did*. Some good men were killed, taking that airstrip.

Gordon drinks his glass and puts it on the bar.

GORDON: I think I've had enough. Anybody coming?

Jerry rises.

JERRY: Yeah.

TIM: (*angrily*) For God's sake, any other Commander would have slapped him on a charge. I could've shot him!

Jerry and Gordon go to the door. Collect their coats. Jerry turns.

JERRY: I'm no friend of Rubin's, Major, but that damned night was over eighteen years ago. You've got something wrong with you, remembering things like that.

He nods to the others abruptly, and they go out.

TIM: Well, what a couple of pikers. Jeez, some of these boys have changed.

JACK: (*uncomfortably*) Major . . .

TIM: Jack—Sergeant Hudson—you don't have to worry, Jacko. You were the best of the bunch.

JACK: Major, it's getting late.

TIM: Don't tell me you've got to get home, Jacko. Not afraid of the wife, are you? It's always the way, the best soldiers get home, and they're henpecked half to death. Come on, let's take a look at this town. Let's go and pub crawl all the way down George Street, to the Central Station, like we used to do in the old days on leave.

BAILEY: Jacko, you're coming with me.

JACK: (*indecisive*) Yes, well . . .

BAILEY: We've got a date, remember?

TIM: Well, can I make it a threesome.

BAILEY: (*with sudden violence*) No, you bloody well can't.

TIM: (*after a pause*) Okay. You've got your plans. Don't let me keep you.

BAILEY: (*dropping a hand on Jack's shoulder*) Come on, boy, let's get out of here.

Jack is watching the Major. He pushes the hand from his shoulder.

JACK: Major, I'll come with you.

BAILEY: Wait on, Jacko. You said . . .

JACK: I said I'll go with him.

TIM: You mean it?

JACK: Too right, I mean it. Let's start right down at the harbour, and drink our way uptown. One at every pub.

TIM: Both sides of the road.

JACK: And two at every pub on a corner! Let's show the whole stinking lot of them we're not dead yet.

TIM: The way we used to do it, Jacko.

JACK: You bet, Major! The way we used to do it.

They move to the door.

BAILEY: (*bitterly*) Thanks, Jacko. Thanks for letting me down.

JACK: (*turns back, awkwardly*) Look, Col—I'm sorry.

BAILEY: Ah, forget it. I've got a book full of phone numbers here. I won't be on my own for long.

Jack exits. Bailey shrugs. Then, alone, he looks around at the shambles of the reunion, and without worrying, collects his coat, straightens his tie and exits.

CUT TO:

20. INT.TOP OF STAIRS.DAY.

Kitty is coming up the stairs as Bailey shuts the door. He stops and she comes level with him.

KITTY: (*with a smile*) Enjoying yourselves in there?

BAILEY: It's a bit quiet for me.

KITTY: Quiet? Different to last year.

BAILEY: Oh it is. Quite different. You know, I really didn't recognise you. Grown up, haven't you?

KITTY: Is your name Col Bailey?

BAILEY: How did you know?

KITTY: (*mischievously*) I thought it might be. I've been told all about you.

BAILEY: (*becoming interested and flattered*) Nothing nasty, I hope. How old are you? Eighteen?

KITTY: How old are you?

BAILEY: I'm not one foot in the grave yet. Listen, I was thinking . . .

GREG'S VOICE: Kitty?

They both turn. Greg is on the stairs, looking up at them. His voice to her is mild.

GREG: There's a bit of a rush on the snack bar, love. Will you help them out?

KITTY: Alright, Dad. (*She smiles at Bailey*) Goodbye.

BAILEY: I'll drop by some time.

She smiles and goes downstairs, as Greg ascends.

BAILEY: Just talking to the daughter, Greg. She's a smart kid.

GREG: Leave her alone, will you Bailey?

BAILEY: Keep it friendly, Greg. I just said I'd drop in and say hello some time.

GREG: I wouldn't bother. Stick to your broads.

BAILEY: Broads? Just 'cause a man gets a bit, and the rest of you are all frustrated . . .

GREG: You know something? That's beginning to sound like a record that's stuck in the groove . . . some of us think you're a bit of a bull artist. If you want another drink, come in, but give it a rest, and leave Kitty alone.

BAILEY: Thanks. (*He starts down stairs*) It's all been great fun.

He goes out of shot. Greg stands at the top of the stairs, his good natured face showing his regret.

GREG: (*calling down*) Col, never mind what I said. Forget it. Don't break up the party now.

There is no answer. He ponders a moment as if debating whether to follow him down, then shrugs. He turns for the door of the private bar and enters.

CUT TO:

21. INT. PRIVATE BAR.DAY.

Greg stops short, seeing the empty bar.

GREG: Hello, where's everybody gone?

He looks around him, bewildered. And on his puzzled, honest bewilderment we.. FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

22. INT. BAILEY'S FLAT. DAY.

The door opens and Col Bailey enters. It is about half an hour later. The room is still in something of a mess it was this morning. He looks around him in distaste. Then pours a drink, but after considering it, puts it down without drinking it.

He looks at the telephone. Then crosses to the waste paper basket and takes out the crumpled slip of paper on which the prostitute wrote her phone number.

He smoothes it out and dials the number.

BAILEY: Hello, is Val there? Oh, it's you. Yeah, it's me. What do you mean, who the hell's me? Col. Last night. Forgotten it already have you? Well, I thought—that is if you're doing nothing . . . ohh, you are. In that case, forget it. (*airily*) No, I'll go back to the reunion. Yes, real good time. (*He suddenly pleads*) Listen, come around, will you? Ohh, to hell with you then. I said to hell with you!

He hangs up. Moves moodily away to where the drink is standing. He picks it up and drinks it in one gulp, then stands with the glass in his hand looking like a man faced with an evening that will be as futile as all the other evenings of his life. Suddenly, violently, he throws the glass against the wall, smashing it to pieces.

MIX TO:

23. INT. HUDSON'S HOME. NIGHT.

It is several hours later, and dark outside. Grace Hudson is tidying up toys that have been strewn around the living room. She is in a simple dress, her hair brushed shoulder length, and in the artificial light she looks attractive and relaxed.

As she picks up the last of the toys, she hears from outside the approaching sound of a drunken voice, the slam of a gate, and another voice cautioning silence. She frowns, then puts the toys away. From without we hear:

TIM'S VOICE (*drunk*): Got to have another one before we get to the railway, Jacko.

JACK'S VOICE: Shh. Tim. Shh.

TIM'S VOICE: (*loudly*) You know what I told the Brigade Commander? Give me Jacko, sir, and I'll clean up every Jap in the island. And the Commander, said . . . Jeez, what did he say, Jacko? He let us do it, didn't he, china? We won the war.

JACK'S VOICE: Sure we did, Major. We won.

TIM'S VOICE: And all the rotten bastards have forgotten it.

Grace moves to open the door. On the small enclosed porch outside, Jack has been supporting the drunken Major and trying to fit the key in the lock. Now both men stare at Grace . . .

TIM: Ahh, Mrs Jacko. *(with the dignity of the very drunk)* I'm Major Anderson.

She looks at him, and for a moment it seems as if in open revulsion, she might slam the door in their faces.

JACK: *(quickly)* Hello, Grace. This is our old C.O. I've told you about him, haven't I?

She looks at Jack, and sees the pleading in his eyes . . . and she puts out her hand.

GRACE: Hello, Major. Nice to meet you.

He takes her hand and holds it.

TIM: He told me plenty about you, Mrs Jacko. The best little wife a man could have.

He drops her hand and she moves back. Tim Anderson walks carefully into the room and sits down on the sofa. But Grace is looking at Jack, as he shuts the door and follows the Major in.

JACK: Thought we might have something to eat, and some black coffee. *(There is a plea in his voice)* Bit crowded in town, love, the cafes were all full.

TIM: So am I, Mrs. Jacko. A bit full, I mean.

JACK: *(quickly)* Grace doesn't mind, do you?

There is a moment's silence. She looks at Jack, then at the Major—and she smiles at him.

GRACE: Of course I don't. It's Anzac Day after all. What would you boys like to eat?

TIM: You're a beauty, Grace.

GRACE: Like some chops and eggs?

JACK: We better start with a cup of coffee. I'll put the water on.

He goes into the kitchen. The Major has lowered his head into his hands after his last speech—now as if his head has cleared he looks up, and almost seems sober.

TIM: Your husband was the best damn soldier in my unit.

GRACE: *(uncertain of what to say)* I'm—I'm glad.

TIM: Six years of it, y'know. Takes a chunk out of a man's life. And they expect you to forget—go on as if nothing ever happened. It's a dirty word, the war, when it's all over. People don't want to know. Here . . .

He beckons her to him. She moves rather tentatively forward.

TIM: Told you about me, did he?

GRACE: Lots of times.

TIM: Did you hate talking about it? (*before she can answer*) People do, you know. 'Specially women. My wife. (*He nods to himself*) You can't just put it away like a book you've read. You're alright Mrs Jacko. He told me you were. (*He sighs*) Oh, brother. God, how they've all changed, except him.

He leans back against the headrest of the sofa his eyes wide open.

GRACE: (*after a moment*) I'll see how Jack's getting on with the coffee.

He makes no sign that he has heard. She moves away, into the kitchen where Jack has put out three cups and is ladling instant coffee into them.

JACK: Is he okay?

GRACE: I think so.

JACK: How much do I put in?

GRACE: One and a bit.

He does so.

JACK: Sorry I couldn't leave him in town the way he was.

GRACE: What happened?

JACK: It's a long story (*not looking at her*). Grace, I don't know how I'm going to turn him out tonight.

GRACE: Then let him stay. He can sleep on the sofa.

JACK: Is it okay with you?

GRACE: We can keep the kids quiet in the morning.

JACK: I appreciate this, love.

GRACE: (*stiffens slightly*) There's no need to.

JACK: Well, you know what I mean.

He turns away to attend the kettle from which steam is rising. As he turns out the gas.

GRACE: I thought you'd be drunk, too.

JACK: Just about the first time I haven't been. But today was a different sort of day, somehow.

GRACE: Not at first, I don't mean. But when he said you'd told him all about me—the best wife or something—(*she is finding it difficult to continue*)—well, then I thought you must be as drunk as him. I mean . . .

JACK: (*He turns*) I know what you mean. We haven't exactly set each other on fire the last couple of years, have we?

GRACE: Well, why did you say that to him?

JACK: Because we were in a pub, people pushing and shoving all around us, and he told me how he'd left his suitcase at Dave Rubin's and had nowhere to stay the night. I suddenly felt so damn sorry for him. I wanted to do something for him, because everybody else today walked out on him.

GRACE: Why?

JACK: It's difficult to explain. I suppose it had to happen. Rubin was right . . . we've all been fooling ourselves. (*with something close to anger*) But Grace, there was a time when he was a real man, and we loved him.

GRACE: (*gently*) I know.

JACK: And there he was today, in that pub, sort of middle aged and lost, and there was nothing I could do. Until I thought of you. It just seemed the only place to bring him.

GRACE: I'm glad you did.

JACK: So am I.

GRACE: (*after a moment*) Well . . . the coffee . . .

JACK: Yes, it's going to be stone cold. (*quietly*) Grace, next year we get a baby sitter, and you come with me.

GRACE: Yes Jacko.

JACK: (*almost roughly*) Here, I'll take Tim his coffee.

GRACE: (*moved*) No, let me.

She puts the cups on a tray, and they go into the living room. They stop. On the sofa, Tim Anderson is fast asleep.

MIX TO:

24. INT. RUBIN'S HOME. NIGHT.

About an hour later. Dave is sitting alone, brooding. A cigarette is burning in the ashtray in front of him, almost unnoticed.

Now the camera shifts to the interior door where his wife is standing at the door—in night attire.

JUDITH: Coming to bed, Dave?

He makes no move.

JUDITH: Dave?

DAVE: In a little while.

JUDITH: The children thought they saw you on the march.

DAVE: Did they?

JUDITH: They went with the Mortons remember? They were all in a group at the corner of Macquarie Street . . .

His interest is not in it, and she knows it.

JUDITH: *(after a moment)* Goodnight, Dave.

DAVE: Goodnight, honey.

There is sound that makes them both start, and turn. Someone is crossing the terrace. Dave rises and switches on the porch light, and sees the late visitor is Jack Hudson.

JUDITH: *(surprised)* I thought you said no-one was coming back?

DAVE: I'll see to this, Judy. Don't wait up.

JUDITH: Alright, darling.

With a quick puzzled smile, she goes. Dave crosses to open the door.

DAVE: It's a hell of an hour to call, Jacko.

JACK: The Major's suitcase.

DAVE: Ohh. Just a minute

He crosses the room to get it, and brings it back. Jack takes it and seems about to go.

DAVE: Where is he?

JACK: At my place. Passed out. We tried to do the full pub crawl from the harbour to the Central Station, but like everything else today, it didn't work.

DAVE: That's a young man's caper.

JACK: I suppose it is.

DAVE: Where will he go tomorrow?

JACK: I don't know.

DAVE: Look, I gave him some money . . .

JACK: He'll be alright.

DAVE: I can't give him a job, Jacko. It wouldn't work, and you know it.

JACK: I said he'll be alright, Dave.

DAVE: But what is he going to do?

JACK: Well, it's not your worry, is it?

DAVE: I feel bad about it. There was a time—I (*he hesitates*)—I cracked up once in New Guinea. You never knew that did you?

Jack looks at him and then says quietly.

JACK: No, I never knew.

DAVE: He saw me through it. It was on that hill, near the airstrip outside of Finschafen—

JACK: (*brutally*) Stop thinking you owe him something for that. It was his job. It was all over a long time ago. It was another world. (*He holds out his hand*) Goodnight, Dave.

Dave takes it.

DAVE: Goodbye, I reckon. I don't think I'll be along next year.

Jack nods as if this is expected.

DAVE: (*contd*) Look after yourself, Jacko.

JACK: You too.

He steps outside. Through the glass Dave watches him walk away, then when he is going turns out the light. Only the lamp in the living room remains.

Judith comes to the interior door.

JUDITH: What really happened today?

DAVE: It was nothing important.

JUDITH: Was it Major Anderson?

DAVE: In a way. But I think it had to happen, even without Tim. We were all strangers trying to be like we used to be. (*He frowns*) Or maybe we were never like that at all.

JUDITH: I don't think I know what you're talking about.

DAVE: (*He smiles*) It doesn't matter. It's too long ago, Judy. It doesn't really matter anymore.

He switches off the lamp, and they go out.

FADE OUT.

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