



INSTRUCTIONS

The Suitcase Series is an experiment in interpretation. Be bold. Make strong choices and have fun!

1. Each class has 20 minutes of performance time

This time will ensure that each school gets an equal opportunity to show their work in the theatre and to have their work discussed afterwards. You may have multiple ensembles in your class but you need to ensure they can all be performed within the 20 minute time allocation. Your 20 minute allocation is for performance only, it does not include set-up time and feedback.

2. Everyone is an artist, everyone has a role

As teachers your role is to facilitate your students to devise their own works for The Suitcase Series. Encourage your participating young artists and students to make their own creative decisions.

Not everyone needs to be an actor. Theatre is a collaborative art form. You might consider allocating roles such as: director, writer, set designer, costume designer, lighting, sound design and composition along with performers, musicians, singers, dancers, contortionists ... it's up to you! When considering casting actors, remember that you can vary the quantity of actors in each scene as well as the setting. What if the first scene of the play (DENIAL / LOVED ONE) was performed as a chorus? What if the Rock star, Jay in DEPRESSION / AN ICON was replaced by an entire band of aging rock stars? What if the characters in BARGAINING / A MEMORY were a group of people at a bus stop? The possibilities are endless...

3. The Script is only a stimulus

Your artists have full creative license to do whatever they like with the script. You can follow it word for word, or you can use it as a starting point. You can rewrite. You can edit lines. You can add characters or scenarios. You can improvise. You can do a dance work or a musical. You can use a range of theatrical styles. The script is a starting point – the rest is up to you.

4. Bring everything in a suitcase

On your performance day, your class will be able to use the set and props (table and chairs) that we provide along with the contents you provide in a suitcase that you can carry. There will be set lighting states that can be used and lighting will be operated by our Stage Manager. Sound will to be operated by someone from your group and needs to be on an ipad, iphone or laptop that can be plugged into our speaker. You can use one suitcase per ensemble and yes, you can wear your costumes or bring a larger prop or musical instrument if it doesn't fit. It's the spirit of it that counts – see how creative you can be using Poor Theatre conventions.

5. The Suitcase Series is about Climate Change

Don't forget that part.

6. Rules are meant to be broken

If you need advice, you're stuck or you want to ask about something, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to help you and your students get the most out of this experience as possible.

**The Suitcase Series**

Vanessa O'Neill, Youth and Education Manager, Malthouse Theatre

Phone 03 9685 5164

Email voneill@malthousetheatre.com.au

<http://malthousetheatre.com.au/education/the-suitcase-series>

Victoria University is proud to be the Education Partner of Malthouse Theatre.

Malthouse Theatre acknowledges the support of the Department of Education and Training through the Strategic Partnerships Program.

Malthouse Theatre wishes to thank our Muse donors for their support.

Turbine

By Dan Giovannoni

Copyright notice:

The person who has downloaded this script is granted a non-exclusive, limited license to print or make up to 20 copies and distribute them to Year 9 and 10 students in the state of Victoria, for the express purpose of participation in the Malthouse Theatre's *Suitcase Series* programme.

These copies must be made available to those students free of charge.

Neither this pdf (digital document) nor its printed copies may otherwise be copied, distributed, emailed, stored or saved on a shared or public server or file service, in whole or in part, without the express prior written permission of Malthouse Theatre.

This copyright notice must be preserved in its entirety on all copies.

Malthouse Theatre owns the exclusive right to license this script for performance.

August 2016.

Foreword from the Playwright

I pitched the idea for this play after then-PM Tony Abbott referred to wind turbines as “visually awful”. I was so furious at him – for a leader to do something like that, to turn something we desperately *need* into something worthy of *hate*, is so deeply irresponsible and dangerous – that I decided to cement the word *turbine* in something else, something hopeful, future-looking, and (at the time, I wished) beautiful.

The word made me think about cycles, and movement – going forward, staying still. Turbines generate energy, power, but if that power isn’t harnessed then it goes unused, wasted. It seemed like a pretty good match for how I see our relationship to climate change – we have great power, but if we don’t use it, that power is wasted.

Before I began writing, I spoke to a group of teenagers about climate change. We talked about it as a challenge, an inheritance that they didn’t ask for; we talked about dystopian futures where the world floods or dries up or both; we talked about loss, about animals and landscapes and natural wonders that are vanishing; and we talked about the grief of losing those things. Then we talked about ways of understanding loss – and specifically about Kübler-Ross’ 5 Stages of Grieving. Could this be an interesting way for me to talk about climate change and sustainable living? What would the world look like if we were to live in denial of climate change forever? (The answer is likely catastrophic, FYI). What would the world look like if we were to get stuck in a depression about what’s ‘coming for us’? More than that, how could each of these states – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance – be *helpful* to us as we negotiate climate change? How could they be helpful to *you*?

I wanted the form of the play – the way it’s written – to somehow reflect these ideas, too. I wanted to see if I could embed the idea of movement into the writing. So, each section of the play has a pretty different writing style, and it evolves as we move through the play. For example, in *Denial* I removed all the punctuation, stage directions and character description in order to reflect the confusion and uncertainty that denial can bring. It evolves from there, becoming clearer and clearer as we move toward *Acceptance*. There isn’t one straightforward narrative or story in *Turbine* – instead, I was interested in how you can move through a feeling, cycling through from one to the next to the next.

This is how my dramaturg Mark and I defined each stage of grieving as we worked on this play. Don’t feel like you need to stick to these if they don’t suit – make up your own.

- **Denial** is refusing to believe something, even if it’s clear as day.
- **Anger** is an overwhelming feeling of displeasure, or hostility.
- **Bargaining** is an attempt to buy time, to make a deal, without addressing the cause.
- **Depression** is a feeling of severe despondency, or hopelessness.
- **Acceptance** is when we embrace mortality, allow reality, and can once again look to the future. It should be hopeful.

A note from the Dramaturg, Mark Pritchard

What stops us from taking action on climate change? Why do we continually get in our own way? When the science has been clear for so long, what is it that keeps us from seeing things clearly?

Dan began the development of this play with a bold proposition – that our relationship to the climate change crisis is a kind of grief. What is it exactly that we're grieving? What's being lost? People, places, a memory of simpler times, a sacred icon, a way of life?

He matched Kübler-Ross' 5 stages of grieving up to five scenarios in which people were struggling with the impact of climate change, but the grieving process was stopping them dealing with it. Denial, anger, bargaining and depression are all familiar feelings around climate change. In each one, we wrestled with the positive and negative effects of this emotion in helping us deal with the issue. Are we better off denying it exists? Is anger helping us get things done, or just starting more fires?

We also played with reordering the scenes, because the grieving progress isn't just a straight line. Are we going round in circles, going backwards, mixing them up? While some of us are bargaining with the issue, are other people retreating into denial?

Acceptance for us was one of the hardest to understand. But what does it mean to accept climate change? What does it mean to accept mortality? Is it giving up? The experience of grief can throw you around, but it can also make you embrace life even more. To take it as a challenge, to live fully and bravely, to take responsibility for the way we live, to let go of the past and look to the future.

Time may be a straight line, but life moves in cycles. As one thing dies another is reborn. We were interested in finding the life force hidden underneath, that might be born from the ashes, like the new growth that appears after a bushfire. Planet Earth is a lot older than the human race. Does acceptance awaken new possibility?

As a dramaturg, I've worked with Dan throughout the development process. We met early on to talk about the concept and cultivate the ideas, considering different ways to explore them. We needed to understand each scene individually, and as part of the bigger picture of the play. We workshopped the second draft with a few actors, reading it out loud and discussing, seeing what works and what doesn't work, and working out where to go next. Following the workshop, Dan and I met regularly to discuss each draft, editing and polishing it, ready for the director to interpret.

Each section could have gone in so many directions. Anecdotes, jokes and observations from the whole team have found their way into the script. Theatre is very much a collaborative process, capturing a variety of perspectives, and that will continue right through to the final production. This script is our personal response to the provocation – what's yours?

1. DENIAL / A LOVED ONE

my eyes are still closed when my brain comes back to me
lands like a rock right in the centre of me

ripped from the black of a dreamless sleep by the sound of wings
a bird in a flight

but with my eyes shut tight i cant tell my left from my right

so i open my eyes but as i do they stick with something thick

a crust across my face

weird

they wont adjust

all i see is bright

my sight all white

if light was sound i hear a bear a cow a high-pitched

ow

my arm

it hurts

ive slept funny on my arm

and slowly slowly my eyes adjust and the world comes fast

a roar a boil a kettle roll a train coming in to focus

if sound was shapes its a flat white wall bearing down on top of me

mum

the first thing that catches my eye is the afternoon sky

darkening fast

ash clouds black and rolling back across the city

circling round

and then a piercing sound

a siren blasting into silence

im on a hill halfway up overlooking some little town

and looking down

i see it all in perfect sight

a street a path a cul-de-sac

weirdly familiar but slicked with black

that doesnt seem right

my eyes playing tricks

i blink and wipe to fix the scene and it helps a bit but thats when i see

its *my* town *my* street

the way it sweeps

up and to the left and flanked by trees the familiar curve where ive grazed my knees

coming off my bike as a little girl – but

its different now different somehow

i think

i think i might need to find my mum

dinner

i have a feeling i should call ahead to let mum know im running late – the buses will be down or at least delayed but it shouldnt take long to clear this mess

yes i really should head for home else dinners gone cold my homework late the dog unfed should make my bed and check the post and dump the bins and mow the lawns and feed the dog and make my bed and check the post and

i go to stand but i get jerked back – and i realise then that im on the *road*

my jeans ripped up and legs askew

my clothes wet through

my hair a mess and my arm its trapped
twisted metal wrapped around

i try to pull but theres something puncturing my skin
a dark grey pole rusted and thin

its not so bad
it doesnt hurt
a bandaid maybe
or a sling at worst

i rip through the flesh and haul myself down the hill

i push through the shit past trees and bricks

climb over cars and twisted bars

and familiar things mixed in too
forks and bottles
a hose
a shoe

stacks of sandbags never used spilling open torn in two

i want to move fast but have to drag my feet
soon enough im on my street

its... its all ripped up

trees smashed to bits

concrete crumbled and deep gouged pits

of blackened water all around

no difference between sea and ground

number 9s still got walls but its roofs a boat threatening to fall
a power line down across the path
and in a rose bush the sun reflects off broken glass

i look around and destruction abounds ...
but im sure its fine and look the time –
shell be mad if im not sat down to tea
at 6 oclock, just her and me
and then i see her – *mum*

i see her
there
at the end of the street
her fire-red hair just a trace in the breeze as she slips around behind some trees
mum its me im on my way i gotta beat her back or therell be hell to pay
i crawl across the softened ground but it doesnt feel like ground at all
im atop a pile of... carpets
yes
it must be that
some washed up rags left out to dry
they stink theyre torn... and then i see an eye

and its not carpets but fur
a dog
a mutt
a scruffbag heap with a clean sliced cut
a slash of red from ear to ear

i turn away
the carpets stink
im going to gag
and when i turn-
mum

theres muffled sounds all around like underground or undersea
the greenish tinge of sea drenched gunk
my clothes they stick to me like rice
hey mum i call but she doesnt hear she just threads her way through the mess
im dripping sopping bone chill cold and a tiredness passes through my bones
but i follow her in to the junk strewn maze work through my haze

i twist left and right but i cant quite catch her
she slips away as my fingers snatch at her
im scratched on metal twisted and bent
but i almost have her i can smell her scent
and as i claw at her back to make her stop
the junk gives way and im in a clearing
but shes not

where did she go

shes gone

was she ever there

i turn a circle to look around and instead of her i see a tv a 32" flat-screen lcd
it looks just like ours but its cracked in two
it cant be ours cos ours *isnt* cracked in two
its smashed black screen smeared with muck like its final picture is frozen stuck
a tv just like ours at home where we sat and watched as the waters rose
channel surfed for days exposed
itll never happen darling dont be silly
i hear mums voice a memory behind me
mum
i try to call her name out loud
but i cant nothing comes not a single sound
my feet are sinking stuck deep in the mud my arm a leaking trail of glittery blood
i have the feeling that ive been here before
my lounge
impossible
there isnt even a door
this isnt my home i dont know this place theres nothing i recognise not a single trace
i must have taken a wrong turn
i think
ive done it wrong
im a fool
i shouldve turned left back at the pool

my arm
its kinda sore
maybe ill wait
i look high up on the hill above right behind where ive just been
the turbine farm an unsightly scab watching over this scene
turbines bent snapped in half their blades twisted up and smashed apart
like broken-down clocks stuck in time like bodies unfurling against a darkening sky
stillness fills the dampening air my heart slows down and i can feel it
here
like beating wings like a bird in flight the sound of wings cutting through the coming
night
i sit and wait by this bit of glass for mum or my friends or the bus to pass
despite the pain thats in my arm despite the rain despite the night that looms ahead...

its not that bad.

2. ANGER / A PLACE

A mob gathers

- I'm sick of what's happening to this place
- *Sick and tired* as my mum would say
- Sick to my stomach
- Did you read about the rainforest?
- Yeah I read about the rainforest, *and* about the reef
- Yeah the reef, *exactly*, and the beach, and the bears
- I read about the bears!
- I was so angry about the bears
- I was FURIOUS, and the birds
- The birds, the bears, the beach
- And the buses
- What?
- The buses. I'm angry about the buses. They are never on time, you may as well throw out the timetable altogether if you ask me

- I'm angry that cafes don't know how to make a vegetarian sandwich without roasted vegetables, I mean STOP MAKING ROASTED VEGETABLE SANDWICHES, THEY'RE BORING
- I'm angry that my housemates don't cover the cheese properly so it gets that crust on it, and I'm angry at the guy who sold me my washing machine online who left a gross ball of lint and pubes in the middle thing, I'm angry at negative gearing, deforestation, men in blue ties and ladies who lunch, fake flowers, fake candles, the guy who killed Cecil the lion, anyone who kills lions, racist musicals-
- We should start a list, I'm starting a list
- Don't you feel like
- Like
- The anger
- It just builds?
- Inside of you?
- Til sometimes you just wanna go in a room, alone, and snap something, smash something, really wreck something til it's broken beyond all recognition, til you don't even know what it used to be?
- Yes!
- They tell us we're angry
- "You're so angry"
- But that we don't know who we're angry at
- "You're so angry but you don't know who you're angry at"
- Yeah we do
- We do?
- We're angry at *them*
- Yeah *them*
- Grey haired, grey faced, desk-sitting maggots
- Their... inaction
- Their bad decisions that *we're* going to inherit
- We didn't ask for this
- No, we definitely did not ask for this
- So why is it up to us to sort out their mess?
- THAT'S OUR INHERITANCE
- That's what we're gunna have to deal with
- It just makes me so – FURIOUS

- I am just so sick of... sick of... The Man
- The man?
- Yeah like The Man, y'know? We gotta bring him down
- Did you just say "The Man"?
- Hate The Man
- HATE The Man
- Yeah we're gunna... gunna rip his head off and feed it to some pigs, film it and post it online with no content warning, pull his insides out and string them between the fence posts, as a warning to whoever's next – *this is what we can do...*

Too far?

- Bit
- So what are we gunna do?
- We could make signs
- Yes! Signs!
- BETTER SANDWICHES AT CAFES
- BRING BACK CECIL
- SAVE THE BIRDS
- SAVE THE BEACH
- SAVE THE BEARS
- I can't even hold my hand still, it's shaking, look!
- OI! You're getting paint on the carpet
- No, that was already there-
- The carpet was FINE before you got involved
- Well it wasn't ME, I didn't do it -
- What the HELL is wrong with you? Why can't you just do ONE thing like you're meant to? You were MEANT to be in charge

- I don't care about paint on the CARPET, ALRIGHT, or SIGNS, what GOOD have *SIGNS* ever done for ANYONE?
- Fair call
- We need to raise the bar, go Next Level
- I've tie-dyed some t-shirts, maybe we could wear them?
- Stuff the signs. Let's take this to the streets

- Can you feel that? I can feel something. Running through my veins, what is that?
- Anger
- Rage
- PASSION
- I did have two cordials so it could just be a sugar rush?
- My hands are shaking, look
- *Rise Up!*
- *Get Down!*
- *There's revolution in this town!*
- Did you just say "get down"?
- *We are a bird in soaring flight*
- *We are the beating of its wings*
- *We are its talons, open wide*
- *So you better run and hide*
- Stop!
- What's that smell?
- There
- That bloke
- With the coffee
- Look at him, with his coffee
- His grey old face, the way he sucks at that cup
- Thinks he runs the world
- You Keep Cup schmuck!
- Too little, too late, MATE

- Think bringing your own cup's gonna save you? Hey?
- TAKEAWAY COFFEE IS RUINING THE OCEANS, DICKHEAD
- YOU BETTER WATCH YOURSELF, OR THE OCEAN'S'LL RUIN *YOU*

- He's not listening
- He's not even BLOODY listening
- Why does no-one ever listen? Huh? Why does NO-ONE ever LISTEN to me
- I gotta DO something!
- Smash something
- Really wreck something
- Til it's broken, yeah?
- Til it's so smashed up you don't even know what it used to be
- You know what I hate?
- What?
- Cars
- YES
- Cars are *definitely* ruining the ocean
- And the rainforest, and the reef, and probably the lions too
- HATE CARS
- Let's flip one
- What?
- Go on, flip it
- How is that going to help us-
- Look at it! Flip it!
- It's quite heavy
- FLIP IT
- FLIP IT FOR THE BIRDS, AND THE BEARS, AND THE BEACH

They flip a car

- Whoa
- Alright
- That felt

- That felt good
- Look at my hand, it's shaking!
- Another one?
- YES
- Just think of that grey faced shmuck with the coffee
- And flip it for the dolphins
- Yeah do the dolphins have coffees? NO
- MORE COFFEE FOR DOLPHINS!

They flip a car

- EVERYONE DESERVES REEFS, EVEN BABIES
- MORE REEFS FOR BABIES!

They flip a car

- LESS LION HUNTING FOR DENTISTS!

They flip a car

- MORE CONSISTENT SUNDAY TIMETABLING FOR THE BUSES

They flip a car

- Let's head for the square. To the centre of this rotten place!
- Go! Smash those windows
- Tear out those street signs
- Ransack the buildings
- Steal whatever you can
- No, don't *steal*
- Start fires wherever you can
- I mean I don't want to sound like a naysayer here
- Smash those doors off their hinges, rip up that road, flip those cars
- But what exactly are we going to do?
- Smear the walls with blood
- What are we going to do when we do take power?

- Look at them
- Watching us
- The people

- Look at them all
 - Listen up, people!
We've taken the square!
 - We're here
 - And we're angry
 - And we've taken the square
 - Alright?
 - And now that you're listening...
 - The cameras are coming, look!
 - We want change. We want to change things
 - And we want to be heard
 - We've got demands
 - Yeah, we've got a list of demands, of things we want to change, of things we demand you change.
- Gimme the list.

Uh. We've left the list of demands back at my mum's place but once we get the list back-

- You wait
 - Yeah, you just wait
 - We've got demands alright
 - We have so many demands they can't even all be met
 - What? No, that's not
 - No, we'll have *all* our demands met
-
- What – what are they doing?
 - The people, why are they... turning away?
 - They've stopped listening
 - Why does no-one ever listen?
 - We've taken the square for crying out loud
 - What more do we have to do?

- Oi! Oi! Look over here! Please!
- How the hell are we meant to make them
- Make them
- Make them *listen?*

- Look. That bloke
- Bloke, what bloke?
- Coffee in his hand, see?
- Coffee?
- *Coffee?*
- He's back
- He's *laughing* at us, look
- That Keep Cup suck
- OI.

- YOU
- YOU AGAIN
- Grab him. Bring him up here, drag him up here by his ankles
- STOP KICKING, KICKING ISN'T GOING TO HELP YOU NOW
- Look. They're turning back, they're watching again
- Didn't we tell you
- You grey-faced maggot, you blue-tie suck
- Didn't we tell you that if you mess with the oceans that the oceans'll mess with you?
- Well you know who we are?
- We are the ocean, alright?
- And we can't
- Can't
- We can't stop ourselves
- Look at them. They can't look away
- See how my hands shake and my lip turns up?

- And my vision goes white at the edges and I
- Mate
- Buddy
- Pal
- I can feel the rage rising up
- Are you watching, people? Are you watching this?
- You see his face?
- We're gunna rip it off
- Right here, right now
- Really?
- Yes
- But that's not why we came here. They're not going to listen to our demands if we-
- Do it
- While they watch
- Rip him, limb from limb, rip off his head and feed it to those pigs, film it and post it online with no content warning, pull his insides out and string them up between the fence posts, as a warning to whoever's next – *this is what we can do when we're angry*
- And all while the people watch
- We're going too far, they were listening and now we're going too far
- You can march till your feet hurt. You can rally until the end of time. Only anger brings change, because without it all you get is silence
- This isn't what we came to do.
- A fire is coming for you. It has started in the forest, which burns with fury; it will take first the mountains, and then the oceans, which will reach a raging, rolling boil; it will claim the highlands, and the lowlands, the outskirts, the cities, this city, these streets, this square, your flesh and your bones. It will annihilate you. Eliminate you. Because the world is mad at you. Because we're mad at you. For condemning us. For sealing our futures and setting us adrift. For ruining this place. And we want to see you burn.

3. BARGAINING / A MEMORY

Three oldies, in their usual spots. A fourth spot is empty. They look to the empty spot.

1 Wasn't it awful the way she ended up?

2 Awful, chook. Seeing her ripped apart like that.
1 I never thought it'd come to that.
2 So cruel. Violent, really.
1 Bit by bit, disappearing. Whole body grey.
2 Losing all her memories, and then finally snatched by the heat.
3 I thought she just went to the hairdresser.
1 What's that?
3 The hairdresser. Her grandson came and took her. Worried about going grey she was. Remember? "I'm going greyer than the curtains," she said.
2 No. No, she lost all her memories and faded away. She didn't even recognise us.
1 Didn't remember who we were.
3 Are you sure?
2 Mind you I did see it coming.
1 Yes, it was so obvious, looking back.
3 What, her greys?
2 No, pet. Started with the little things, names and all that.
1 Awful.
2 She'd have seen the vultures circling if she'd just looked up.
3 I'm positive she just went for a colour. And hot rollers too. Afterwards they were going for a cake.

1 and 2 look up.

1 That won't be us. Will it?
2 It will. It's started already.
3 Oh, so morbid you both are.
1 I can't bear the thought of disappearing like that.
2 Well some things are just inevitable aren't they?
3 Nonsense. A cheeky rinse, that's all it is.
1 I don't want to remember her like that. I want to remember her like she used to be. Like we *all* used to be. You know?
2 Yes, pet, but it's all so long ago. I can't remember a dot. Can you?
1 What?
2 Remember.

1 Well...

2 What about you?

3 Yes, of course I can. Of *course*.
Bits, anyway.

1 That's all I remember, too, bits.

2 They'll start circling soon, circling round above us.

3 Red copper, that's what she gets. Red copper and hot curls.

1 We need to put our heads together. Put our heads all together and pick a time when...

2 When?

1 When we were *happy*.

Beat.

2 What about your kids?

3 God no, not for me. They were the dullest years of my life.

1 You girls. A time I was happy with you girls.

Beat.

3 I hate to admit this, but for the life of me – I'm finding it a bit tricky to remember anything. Isn't that funny?

2 It's OK, pet. Happens to the best of us.

3 Can you?

2 Can I what?

3 Remember. Anything.

Beat.

1 We took a holiday. Didn't we?

3 Did we?

1 Yes, I'm sure we did. Come on. Yes, remember, to a – forest or something?

3 Yes. Yes I think we did. Trees, there were trees everywhere.

1 Remember?

2 I think so. Yes. Yes I think you're right. And wasn't there a sort of-

1 Waterfall, yes.

2 Yes!

1 Cascading over-

2 The ground.

1 No.
2 The... rocks?
1 Yes, the rocks. Look, see? There.

She points.

3 Yes. Look at that! Cascading down onto those great, big rocks, and the sound of it, can you hear that?
2 I think so, yes, it's like a... a...
1 Listen. Like a roar, remember?
2 The freezing mist all in our faces. Feel that?
1 Yes. And the sun, burning hot on our backs!
3 All around us, waterfalls, a wall of water, roaring.
1 Yes, I can barely hear you for the sound of the water.
2 And where are we?
1 Us girls?
3 We're... we're...
2 We're sat in the water, aren't we? Sat right there, in the middle of the water. That's where I remember feeling...
1 Happiest.

2 gets up to go into the water but wobbles and has to balance.

1 Watch out, pet, your legs! You need your chair.
2 I don't mind losing the chair if I can get in that water, chook, remember how it was?

As they speak, the three of them slowly struggle to their feet – they're very shaky. At different points in the memory they might manage a small step away from their spots.

3 Trees all around us.
1 So tall, right to the sky.
2 Bright blinding light, so bright.
3 The colours.
2 So many colours.
1 I'm so happy. I've never felt this happy.
3 The water, so warm around us.
2 And the birds.
3 Look, at the birds!

2 And the bugs, on the top of the water.

3 Everything so green.

2 So loud.

1 Like a picture.

Those sticky green vines drooping between trees, like fingers, see? And the black earth at the banks, the smell all in our nostrils, damp and sweet and rich. I've never seen flowers like this before, nor since, the colours, look! And the slime on all the rocks, the – the – I forget the word, I – slime.

2 Gunk.

3 Mud.

1 Moss, all over, see? And us slipping about, like fish or-

3 A rainforest, isn't it?

1 Yes, a rainforest, that's it!

All four of us, here, together, in the rainforest.

2 Four?

1 Yes, she's here, too, isn't she? Wasn't she?

2 She was?

3 Yes, I think she was. In fact I'm sure of it, the four of us all went there, together.

2 No.

1 Yes, we were – laughing. I can hear her laugh, listen. Throwing her head back, her bright red hair glowing in the sun, and you must've told a joke or something, and she just let rip this beautiful ... song. What was the joke?

2 I don't remember that.

1 But her laugh.

2 I don't remember.

1 It was either her or a bird, singing.

2 I can't see her there, in my memory of it, I can't see her there at all, just the three of us, sat in the spa.

3 The spa?

1 Not a spa.

2 Pool.

1 No, it was a... a...

2 No, yes, that's not what I meant, not a pool, more a sort of-

Bath?

I think I need my chair.

She looks around for it, but she's too far away to reach it. Maybe they all are.

1 It was... *us*. Wasn't it? That it happened to? That is our memory?

2 Yes.

1 Or did we see it in a magazine?

3 Oh.

Oh, maybe that was it. We just saw it in a magazine.

Or... a book perhaps?

2 Was it a picture in a book? A photograph.

3 It could have been a photograph.

1 Or something on the television?

2 Yes I think that's right actually.

You're right. It was on the television.

It's so long ago I can't remember.

My chair. I can't get back.

3 It could have been a screensaver.

Silence.

1 I just wish we could ... remember.

2 If we could remember what that time was like, if we could just get *back* there in our memories then maybe...

1 Maybe we wouldn't...

3 Disappear.

They look up.

I looks to the empty chair.

1 I hate to admit this, but for the life of me – I can't remember her name! Isn't that funny?

3 It's OK pet, happens to everyone.

1 Do you remember it?

3 Of course I do.

Beat.

1 Well. What was it?

3 What was what, pet?

1 Her name.
3 Her name?
1 Yes.
3 It was...
1 Pet?

Beat.

2 It's OK. Happens to the best of us.

4. DEPRESSION / AN ICON

A stadium concert. Jay's on the mic – Ballad of Green River. Halfway through the chorus, she indicates to cut the music

Jay *(to her tech)* Can we just – lights?

Yes, the lights. Turn them up.

No I'm not going to finish... They already know the words. *(to the audience)*
Right?

My god. You're all... kids. Were you even... You, when were you born? How old are you?

Ha. I've been away from this business longer than you've been alive.

You think this is funny? Do you? You know what I think's funny? I'm sat in my hotel room before I came tonight, and the television is on – an ad playing. A blonde family in a shiny red car with the top down and not a care in the world. You know what's playing on the radio? Gimme a shout if you knew that my song, *this song, Ballad of Green River, Greatest Protest Song of All Time* ... was being used to sell a car.

Well it was a surprise to me.

Does no one else see the irony in that? Am I the only one who sees that?

Beat.

I've just been ... stumbling. Through the dark. Haven't I? For... twenty years. The light. Was at the end of the – tunnel. And, and I thought if I just kept going... but there is no light, just more dark. And it might be dark but I can – see. The truth. We're all just... characters. Aren't we? In very own tragedy. And for some reason it's been left to me to tell you that it's our... hubris. Our hubris that's going to destroy us. Thinking we can avoid a disaster, that we're clever enough to outsmart something that's been around much longer than we have. We're not.

Look at you. Phones out. Dull blue light of mediocrity just- NO, no I WON'T “sing the bloody song”. Do you even know...

Silence.

It's not just a "bloody song". It's... magic. Yeah? *Accidental*. An accident that I even – found it. Green River. This perfect little... bend. Rocks, moss. Clear – water, right down. Bright red parrot in the tree. Vines. Bugs on the surface of the water... You'd think it would be quiet out there, in bush like that, but it was so full of. Noise. And life. Magic. I couldn't *not* write a song about it.

Jay rubs her tattoo.

Green River. What's the point? You've killed it anyway. You'll never get it back. You're better off forgetting. Once you start thinking about everything that's been lost, stacking it up... What's the point?

I thought if I just – *tried*. To make you care. That would be my legacy. But you don't care. And my legacy's just... four blondes in a convertible.

Forget it, I ...

Forget it.

Jay drops the mic. Walks away. Nothing, then black.

Hours later, backstage. Carla is on the phone, pacing and sweating. Simon is staring into space.

Carla Of course we didn't plan it, genius, I've got a thousand bucks worth of vegan sushi platters backstage that no-one's gunna touch.

For the last time, I don't know where she's gone, alright?

I'm hanging up on you in 5, 4-

Carla hangs up.

Forget rising oceans, if we don't get some air in here I'm going to drown in my own *sweat*.

Simon Kingston?

Carla Look at me, I'm dripping.

Simon 'Prince of Biscuits' she used to call them.

Carla *Dripping.*

Simon Always had them in the rider.

Carla That makes it the third best biscuit, Simon.

The Prince. He's third best, after the Queen and the King. Right?

Simon bites the biscuit sadly.

Ok. I get it. You're upset. You've lost a childhood hero and a sense of there being a greater meaning to all of this. It's a big day. But mate – think of the *bigger picture*. We also just lost *millions*. More, if you add in merch, a Best Of, a Singles album, endorsements, I was doing a deal

for a range of enzyme waters... Tsk. She's right, once you start stacking up everything you've lost it gets a bit-. (*yelling to anyone who'll listen*) Hey, hey! Can we get some of these FANS turned on in here, it's hotter than a Hemsworth in a forest fire.

- Simon She just walked away.
- Carla (*yelling*) Hello? Yes you, with the rat's tail.
- Simon She literally just walked out of our lives. Forever.
- Carla (*yelling*) Ah, screw you too.
- Simon I hate her.
- Carla You love her, calm down.
- Simon An hour and forty-five minutes ago I loved her – *loved*, past tense – and now, I hate her.
- Carla What about your tattoo?
- Simon I'll get it removed.
- Carla Because of one little tantrum?
- Simon Did you hear what she said? Were you listening? She *gave up*.
- Carla She was knackered!
- Simon We all feel like that, we all feel the weight of the world on us, but you don't just walk away. I thought she was better than that.
- Carla Listen. Kid. When I got this job, a stack of faces landed on my desk, right? I could have signed any new 19-year old with two hands and shiny hair and made a mint-
- Simon You'd have been better off if you had.
- Carla At the bottom of the stack is this tired old contract, written on a bloody typewriter it looked like. A Grammy-award winner with a conscience *and* a smash hit, ripe for a revival? *That*, I thought, *I can do something with that*.
- Simon Yeah, give her a chance to *do something* and then have it thrown back in your face. She could've been a rocket up the arse of this place, she could have led a revolution.
- Why?
- Carla Mate you didn't know her.
- Simon I know her. I know her music-
- Carla It's exhausting, Simmo. Giving a crap about things, every day, someone pecking at you for not doing this thing, forgetting to do that thing, sign here, cry over that, call the waambulance.

Beat

Simon I grew up listening to her songs. Me and my cousins, we'd push the speakers out onto the windowsills and make my dad play us her records while we lay on the grass and looked at the sky.

Carla Yeah, everyone's got a story about how she changed their life. If I told you how much I made from the car ad you'd cry.

Simon My dad he dug a pond, for us. We made a little street sign – *Green River: that way*. Kept turtles in it and-

Carla Don't tell me your childhood, Simmo, I literally do not give a rat's arse.

Simon We looked up to her because she had... hope.
She was full of hope.

Beat.

Carla It wasn't just the ad. That sent her over the edge, I mean.
They built a highway through the middle of it. Through the middle of Green River. We were gunna cut a video. She managed to come down from the clouds long enough to remember the directions, took us three days driving round the bloody bush, but we found it.
It took us that long because... the road we were driving cut right through the middle. We were on it the whole bloody time. It'd be funny if it wasn't so depressing.
Hoo. Look at me. Sweat right through. Everything's busted.

Carla crunches on a Kingston and leaves.

Simon is alone. He rubs his tattoo.

He hums the last few bars of Ballad of Green River.

Simon *(singing)* Green River sister, secret sister sound
Water in my pockets, wetted earth and ground
Keep this place a secret, man preys, violent
Hear the roar of wild call, hope can not be silent.

Long silence.

5. ACCEPTANCE / A WAY OF LIFE

Deep in the Australian bush. A butterfly research camp is strewn with boxes.

It's early morning, and Walter – 30s, balding, and with a look on his face like he's just smelt a fart – is packing a box.

Philomena is beside him, holding a clipboard. In her 50s with her hair tight in a bun, she wouldn't be out of place running a prison.

Philomena Research materials by the cabins, personal effects by the generator and we'll find a spot for 'misc', yes?

What?

Don't look at me like that, Walter.

Walter I didn't look at you like anything. I have no look. I am expressionless.

Philomena You're never expressionless, you're *full* of expression.

Walter Well it's not me you need to worry about. She'll be here any minute. You're going to have to tell her.

Philomena Well, obviously we'll tell her-

Walter *You.*

Philomena Me, yes.

Walter I'd do it, but I'm afraid I'd enjoy it too much.

Philomena Walter.

Walter What? I'm not *happy* about it, but I do see their point. And besides, I learnt long ago to just do what I'm told. I am not in the habit of giving a flying whatsit about anything the Department does. She will, obviously. She'll be hysterical. Maybe she'll cry!

Philomena She won't cry. Will she?

Walter Fifteen bucks she cries.

Philomena I'll have to be gentle-

Walter Twenty.

Philomena Stop that.

Marta enters.

Marta Stop what?

Early 20s, she's bright-eyed and filled with the energy of someone who hasn't yet lost hope. Her car keys are still in her hand.

Walter Yeah, stop what, Phil?

Philomena Nothing.

Marta ...OK.

Don't rush me, guys, it's nice to see you, too.

Silence.

Weirdos. Help me unpack the car? I have enough supplies to survive an apocalypse.

What's going on?

Philomena Nothing.

Walter She's lying.

Marta (*clocking the boxes*) What's that?

Philomena Nothing.

Walter She's lying.

Philomena We have to tell you something.

We...

Well...

Gosh. This is harder than I thought.

Walter You're fired.

Marta What?

Philomena Walter!

Walter You were taking too long.

Philomena Gently.

Walter Fine, sorry. We're *all* fired.

Marta What do you mean?

Philomena Our research, it's been... what's the word they used?

Walter Expunged.

Philomena De-funded.

Walter I prefer expunged.

Philomena They pulled our funding.

Walter Unit disbanded, effective immediately. AKA today. AKA now. Start packing.

Marta What?

Walter You take the things that you own and put them in boxes-

Marta Why?

Walter Yeah Phil, why?

Marta Can one of you please tell me what's going on? Why has our funding been cut?

Philomena Because, dear. The... *subject* of our research...

Walter The Fenix is extinct.

Philomena Walter!

Walter You were taking too long.
Marta Extinct?
Philomena Functionally.
Marta I don't understand.
Walter Not enough breeding pairs to bring it back from the abyss.
Marta I know what 'functionally extinct' means Walter, I've been to university. I mean ... I've only been gone a week, what happened?

Walter holds up a letter from the Department.

Walter It's not the sassiest breakup letter I've ever received but it does cut to the chase – let me paraphrase for you: *it's too hot, your butterflies are dying, everything's stuffed, give up-*

Philomena That's *not* what it says-

Walter *We trust that you accept the terms laid out in this letter-*

Philomena Walter.

We sent the data through, along with our analysis, and the Department decided, in their infinite wisdom, that given the situation, shutting us down made the most sense.

The temperatures, dear. It's cold when it should be hot, hot when it should be cold.

The Fenix isn't breeding.

Marta This isn't happening.

Walter Surprise!

He pinches Marta. She punches him back.

Marta They've made a mistake. They've mixed us up with another unit.

Walter No.

Marta Yes.

Walter Marta, no offence, but denial does *not* suit you.

Marta Phil, I mean – I mean it's not that bad, right? The numbers are low, but we've had low numbers before.

Philomena Yes, that's true-

Marta So they've got it wrong.

Philomena No. It's the middle of March and this is the fourth day above 43. The animals stop feeding at 39, and once they stop feeding they stop growing. Half of them won't make it to the end of summer, and the ones that do won't be big enough to lay many eggs, which means the next generation will be smaller, and we'll lose half of them again.

The life cycle of the Fenix is breaking down. It's broken.

Based on the numbers... I give it three years.

Walter There's some sort of irony in a butterfly that literally looks like a little ball of flames being killed off by extreme heat, right?

Marta This is insane. This is... this is the stupidest thing I've ever HEARD.

She pushes a box over, then another.

Walter You're just going to have to pack that up again, you know that right?

Philomena Marta, I think it's best if you just calm down-

Marta Don't tell me to calm down!

They're going to ignore the problem, the *actual* problem, ignore *why* it's happening and instead just... give up?

Philomena Getting angry isn't going to help anything.

Marta Why not? I *am* angry. Why can't I be angry? What am I supposed to say? Oh great how excellent that another butterfly has gone up in flames? Another species down the drain?

Walter No offence but your metaphors are all over the shop, *down* the drain, *up* in flames-

Marta WOULD YOU SHUT UP?

Walter You can't take offence when I say *no offence*, that's how *no offence* works.

Marta Angry people make things happen, Philly, angry people can *do* things.

Philomena Why don't you take a seat and a deep breath?

Marta We should start a closed breeding program. To boost numbers. We'll find some space somewhere, build an enclosed facility, get them back to a manageable level-

Philomena Why?

Marta Why?

Philomena The same thing will happen when we release them back to the wild. You're just delaying the inevitable..

Marta There has to be a way that we can fix it. We have to do *something*. We can't just...

Philomena It's over, Marta. Very soon the Fenix Firewing will-

Marta Don't say it. *Please*.

Philomena It'll be extinct.

Walter She's right. Look out there. We should be up to our necks in their freaky little faces.

We haven't seen one for nearly three days.

Silence.

Marta My grandma discovered that butterfly.

Philomena I know dear.

Marta It's basically my first memory, standing here with her, surrounded by them. It's why I became a lepidopterist.

She asked me to look after them.

Philomena My dear, we've tried, no-one's tried harder than us.

As much as it pains me to say it, we just have to ... accept it. Accept the Department's position. And move on.

Walter And as much as it pains *me* to say it... Phil's right.

Philomena It's sad, but sometimes things are out of our control.

Walter And look, the world keeps spinning. Right? It's just one butterfly.

Silence.

Marta The world keeps spinning.

Walter Exactly.

Marta The world keeps... *spinning*.

Walter You want me to put it on a t-shirt?

Marta Yes.

Walter Really?

Marta No, I mean. You're right. *We do* have to accept that the Fenix Firewing will die out.

Philomena I mean it won't happen immediately of course-

Marta And so will the birds, and the bears, the beaches, oceans, tiny islands in the Pacific, rainforests and bushland and jungles, it'll all die out. Dry up. Disappear. Won't it?

Unless we do something.

Walter I'm sorry?

Marta *Do something*, Walter. It's when you, y'know, do things.

Philomena Like what, dear?

Marta I don't know, but whatever it is, people like you shouldn't be involved because – *no offence*, Walter – you're both completely useless. You know exactly what's happening to the Fenix *and* why, but you're just taking it lying down.

Philomena Now hang on a minute-

Walter Our job is to analyse data, not fight the Department, not to paint signs and march down the street-

Philomena This is not new, Marta, this butterfly joins a long list of others, 60-odd alone in my time here.

Marta And how come you can just say that so easily, huh? Why isn't that *terrifying*?

Walter It's just a butterfly!

Marta And you're just an idiot, but for some reason we do everything we can to keep you alive.

I'm sick and tired of this. It's like every little bit of bad news carries this little bit of grief with it, and we're all just walking around waiting for things to fall apart, to wake up in the middle of the street with the whole world destroyed. Well you know what, I've spent too long being... sad. Grieving all the things we've lost, all the things we're *still going to lose* - the butterflies, and the birds, and the bears. Yes, it's the worst, but if everyone just sits around *accepting* it then what's the point of getting out of bed? We may as well just crawl under the covers, hit 'play all' and wait for the end, right? I want a better answer than that, Walter. I want someone to say something better than just *accept it and move on*. It's like we're waiting for some sign, a bolt of lightning or a burning bush or something – *THIS IS THE SIGN*. I'm not listening to anyone who tells me not to be angry, or not to be sad – it's crap. You *have* to feel all that stuff, that denial and anger and fear and sadness, because that's what gets you moving, that's the energy that eventually turns into something useful. And if the Fenix has to die, if it's too late and we failed it, then fine, but it won't go down quietly, it'll go up in a ball of fiery noisy glory, and I'll be fighting alongside it.

Instead of letting that grief beat us down, it should fan our flames.

OK?

Silence.

Walter Righto.
Sorry.

Marta Save it. I'm not interesting in being sad, or tired anymore – I just want us to do something about it.

I won't accept it and move on, Philly.

I never accept anything apart from a challenge.

Walter Look.
There.
At the base of the... the... turbine.

They look out.

They watch as a pair of butterflies flit between the trees.

Philomena They really do look like little flames, don't they?

Walter They're beautiful.

They keep watching, and watching, and then Philomena and Walter look at Marta.

Blackout.

The end.