



Shakespeare's Prince Hal was renowned for being careless of his
dignity, for having unsavoury drinking mates.

And so it was with Antoninus Tudio Tribulates (of whom much was
promised).

He must shake off his wild youth to become Caesar's hero.

AFL centreman Paul McDermid has the same issues as Tribulates.

Can he (like Tribulates) become the hero of the hour?

Pronounced "Trib-yew-LAH-tays".



ACT I

*And we understand him well,
How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,
Not measuring what use we made of them.*

William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act I

Prologue and Titles:

September 2010

The Senior Girls Break-Out Room at the Sanctuary.

Snare drums. Mysterious music rolls over the top of the drums. A topographical map of Ancient Gaul vaguely appears on the screen, moving south-east towards the boot of Italy. Titles roll through here.

In the background, a group of 17-year-old girls have their backs to the camera. They wear footy fan gear: scarves, beanies, guernseys, and so on, all in the Wondong colours of white with navy hoops. We can just hear their very excited barracking for Wondong ("The Wild Dogs"). They are hugging, jumping, tense and nervous. The commentary on the TV is faintly heard over the top of the girls' noise.

Onward the music rolls, becoming more fervent. The map rolls on over the screen, until it focuses on Ancient Rome. The music now reaches a triumphant pitch at exactly the moment when the AUS Preliminary Final siren blows (marking the finish of the game). The music stops immediately, and the map dissolves.

Now, the TV commentary is very dominant. Even from behind, we can tell that the girls are savagely disappointed in the outcome of the game. They more or less freeze in position, except for one girl (Lucy) who rushes off, weeping unrestrainedly. Singly, or in groups of two, the girls sadly wander off, with the TV in the centre of the scene, facing our camera. On the TV, we can see the despondent Wild

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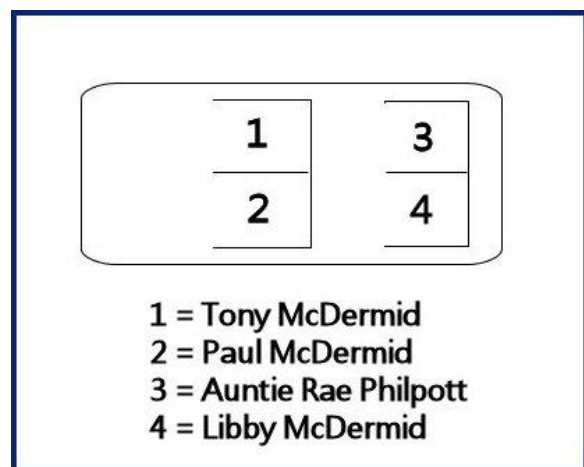
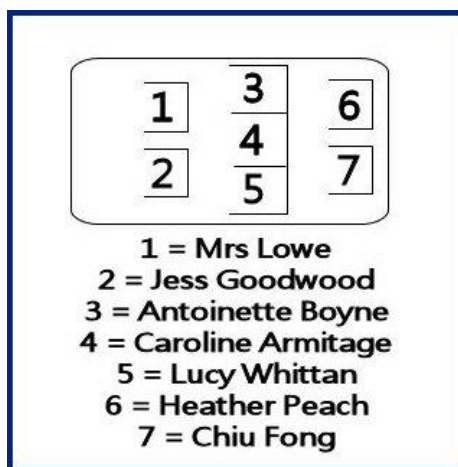
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Dogs, grief-stricken that their season is over. Also, we see the other team (the Sainters): jubilant, ecstatic.

[Footnote: the girls had been given permission to attend the Grand Final on the following week (if they had been lucky enough to procure tickets). That still applied. However, the girls would no longer wish to attend the big game at the MCG, since Wondong's season was now over.]

END OF PROLOGUE

[Below: car seating plans for the Lowe car and for the McDermid car.]



I, Scene i: Interior, Night September 2010

In Mrs Lowe's car, Juxtaposed With Tony McDermid's Car.

First Car: *The camera faces the driver (Mrs Lowe) of an up-market SRV. Jess sits in the front passenger seat. It is nighttime, on the following Saturday (the Grand Final). The seven passengers are travelling to Ocean Grove. Lucy's head rests on Caroline's shoulder. Everyone has had a full week to recover from the tragic loss of Wondong. Yet, this being Victoria, they have not got over it. This Grand Final party will be a wake rather than a celebration. The girls wear The Sanctuary "going-out" uniform, such that their school badge is clearly visible on their windcheaters. They have all added Wondong footy scarves to this ensemble.*

Mrs Lowe *as she drives* And I don't want to see anyone smoking. You may drink in **extreme** moderation, but definitely no smoking. Also, please keep the young gentlemen at bay. If you must "pash-on", do it in private. Just remember, girls, that you are representing the school: a school which as you know has a very proud tradition. Your behaviour indirectly affects the possibility of future outings for other girls.

The girls groan or giggle at Mrs Lowe's words.

Lucy *sniffing, weebegone* I feel like I'm going to a funeral. It should have been the Wild Dogs winning today. I'm gutted -- totally gutted, Mrs L.

Mrs Lowe *desperately cheerful* Just try to enjoy yourselves without any spectacle. I know all you girls, and I know that I can trust you.

It was very kind of my cousin to invite you all. She's an old Sanctuary girl, as was I. The honour of the school ...You really must cheer up.

Jess *irritated by the speech, mocking* Yes, ladies ... there's always next year.

Mrs Lowe *oblivious to the sarcasm* Exactly! We'll have a bonzer year in 2011.

Swap over to the Second Car:

The McDermid family are returning from the Grand Final, along the Highway. The camera faces the driver, Tony McDermid, who is driving to the family vineyards at Rosevear. Tony, Rae and Libby all talk at the same time about how important it will be for Paul to show up (showered and shaved) at tomorrow's Pleasant Sunday morning at Helicon Stadium (also known as Djerribah Park). The Sunday morning will be devoted to post-Grand Final chatter, and the awards will be presented. Paul sits in the front passenger seat, beside his father, gazing indifferently into the darkness.

Swap back to the First Car:

The Sanctuary girls and Mrs Lowe have arrived at Ocean Grove, at the Badger-Fyfe home. This is a modern, stylish, split-level house: large, rambling and featured about 18 months previously in Home Beautiful magazine. The girls immediately begin mingling with the other guests. The entire tenor of the conversation is everyone's disappointment at Wondong's loss the previous weekend. People of all ages stand about in groups, drinking at the Wondong wake. The girls head for a gathering of younger people out the back, around the food-cooking area. There we find barbeques, trestle-tables laid out with food, crockery, and so on, and another long trestle-table covered in bottles (wine and beer) and cans of beer and mixed spirits.

Swap back to the Second Car:

Silence has broken out. The passengers are all unsmiling, as if they are mulling over the big game, but still keen to stay awake if anyone might start a conversation. Paul does so.

Paul I may as well tell you now that I was involved in that drug bizzo in June. It was totally innocent, of course, but I had to lie to the journos.

The other passengers squirm in discomfort.

Paul Just so that you know.

Libby glances at her husband.

Libby Do you want to expand on your theme?

Paul *sighing heavily* I just don't like that clinging stuff that girls do. You know, that's half the reason I don't like going to Wild Dog parties and that ... Don't get me wrong! They're all beautiful models ... all good-looking ... I'm not gay or nothing.

Tony *grim* Get on with your story about the drugs.

Paul In the middle of June, we had a bye, right? One of the married players and his missus threw a party, and for the umpteenth time, I got stuck with a Miss Australia who wanted the usual three things.

Auntie Rae Let me guess. One is that she wanted to be seen on your arm.

Paul Correct.

Auntie Rae And number two is the photos. She wanted media attention.

Paul Correctamundo. And three?

Auntie Rae *racking her brains* Three ... ? No, I can't quite --

Paul *bitter* And three is that Miss Bimbo 2010 wants to name-drop and big-note herself, as if I'm even moderately interested. And I find the whole thing an unbelievable turn off.

Tony *still grim* For Christ's sake, get on with your story about the drugs!

Paul Like I said, I was at the party, completely cheesed off. One of the players said that they were going off to play night cricket. That's much more my thing. So, I jumped into the back of someone or other's car and fell straight to sleep.

I woke up later because someone was nudging me and all I could smell was weed. They were smoking some rubbish, or snorting something ... I dunno. Next thing, just as I'm about to get out of the car to take a leak, I can see blue flashing lights through the tea-tree. So, I fling open the door and make a huge run for it. I absolutely, dead-set bolt.

END OF SCENE

I, Scene ii: Interior Ocean Grove September 2010

The Badger-Fyfe Grand Final Party

A huge plasma screen is watched by many guests, as the replay of the Grand Final is being shown.

We can hear a steady stream of conversation about the game, or in opposition to it. There are some vintners among the guests; they argue on the merits of a certain Chablis.

Jess Goodwood wanders up a low, wide flight of steps. She turns back, in time to see a couple of very well-known Wondong footballers arrive (Jarrod Hurst and Glynn Unmac) in company with wives and small children.

Jess sips a glass of white wine as she saunters about, studying the Badger-Fyfe artworks and bric-a-brac. On several shelves, books are piled in a disorganized fashion. Jess runs a finger along the spines of the books, then stops at an ancient leather-bound tome.

Jess reverent whisper Perron! Oh, my God!

Lovingly, awe-struck, Jess turns over page after page. We clearly see the charcoal sketches of the Roman soldiers, fighting the tribes of Gaul as she riffles the pages. There is a magnificent sketch of Caesar on horseback, with a Gallic captive kneeling at his horse's hooves.

With a gasp of delight, Jess tears off, book in hand. We follow Jess as she runs to the busy, noisy kitchen, where she brings Mrs Badger-Fyfe to earth. Jess startles Frances by waving the book at her.

Jess thrilled to the back teeth I actually found "Tribulates" -- I can't believe it. Have you read it, Mrs B-F?

It's Perron's take on Caesar's Gallic Wars. It's just the most exciting -- Henry the Fifth, when he was Prince Hal. You know, how he wasted his time with Falstaff. Well, it's kind of like that.

Do you mind if I borrow it for a few days? I'll be extra especially careful, I promise.

Frances *trying not to appear flustered* What is it, dear?

Jess *full of enthusiasm* Justinus Perron's massive work: "Tribulates". It's just the most wonderful story ever. I've read bits and pieces, but never the whole thing. It's so amazing to find it like this.

Frances wipes her hands on a tea-towel, puts on reading glasses and then takes the volume from the hands of the eager girl. We see that Frances is studying the title page.

Frances Oh, yes. That's one of John's father's books. Better ask him. But I'm sure it'll be alright. John will probably be tickled pink that somebody is finally going to actually **read** it; although the artwork is quite lovely.

Yes, take it away. Have it for as long as you need. The sausage rolls are calling.

Frances cannot escape the girl without being thanked profusely, on top of being showered with kisses.



Starry-eyed, Jess drifts off, to snuggle up in a quiet corner and lose herself in Perron's classic. (We assume she asked Mr B-F for permission, but that does not concern us here).

Jess *softly to herself as* "Prologue ...

she reads and translates

It was as William Shakespeare had written on the subject of Prince Henry: he that became that much-loved, much-lamented King Henry of England and France, Fifth of that name. That he would forever be branded as a hooligan of no worth, even though the lessons learned in his wild youth would prove of immense value to his Kingdom in future years.

Such would it be for Tribulates."

END OF SCENE

I, Scene iii: Exterior, Ancient Rome, 58BC.

The Quentax Estate, A Shady Courtyard

The scene is one of superb bucolic loveliness. A courtyard which forms part of the vineyard has a rough wooden pergola stretched over its entirety. A large grape vine has taken over this pergola, giving to this scene a delightful, Mediterranean feeling. On one side, a beautiful, covered archway leads from the courtyard to the fields of grapevines.

The sun streams through the pergola and vine, onto the rough flagstone ground. Around the courtyard stand 0.5-metre-high rock walls, on which sit a variety of potted herbs and plants. Elderly female slaves also sit about, sewing, or plucking dead fowls. A couple of old male slaves wander towards a covered archway, toting empty barrels on their shoulders.

Jess *voice-over* "The beauty of the Roman villa was never so evident as ... er ... was self-evident? Hmmmmmm ... On this beautiful day, could there be such golden warmth from the sun, as it touched the rich purple grapes of Quentax."



Suddenly, the men (who have dropped their barrels) scamper out of the covered archway, frightened. The women also take fright and run off as a brood of hens, squawking and flapping, interrupt the pleasant scene. Not far away are the geese, honking and scurrying as if taking umbrage at some undisclosed rudeness. Two dogs, tails between their legs also tear across the courtyard from the archway, looking back anxiously.

Jess *voice-over* "Into this divinely tranquil scene which the very gods themselves would crave, came one of Rome's necessary events: the training of young Roman men for warfare."

The actor who plays Paul McDermid also plays Antoninus Tudio Tribulates.

Hashmi and Tudio are practising the martial art: singlestick. We hear their grunting, and the smack of the sticks coming from the archway. Then Tudio rolls dramatically out of the archway. As Tudio

leaps to his feet, Hashmi strikes at him, missing him by centimetres. During the martial arts practice, the two men shout at each other.

Hashmi *severe* Concentrate, Antoninus! Focus on the task at hand!

Tudio *taunting* Better be careful, old man, or I'll stick this right up your freckle!

Then follows a breath-taking sequence of jumps, rolls, engagements, lunges and pirouettes. Although Hashmi is older, he is still lithe and skilled. Tudio is athletic and keen. During this exciting action, they both attempt to strike the other, or fend off the other's stick. Hashmi is intent on the practice, whereas Tudio thinks it a great joke, and laughs throughout.

Tudio swings himself up onto the pergola, running along it as if he is a trapeze artist on the high wire. This is extremely dangerous since the wood is mostly rotted away. We hear snapping and creaking wood as Tudio moves gingerly above Hashmi. The latter looks up as he tries to regain his breath, frowning.

Hashmi *warning* Careful, boy! You'll rip your legs on these rotten logs if you take a bad step.

Tudio, with a loud crack of laughter, surprises Hashmi by swinging himself down into attack position and setting on his tutor.

Tudio Not me, mate. You'd better be the one to concentrate, old man!

The practice continues with electrifying moves. Up onto the walls, tumbling on the flags, and fighting stick-to-stick. Then, of a sudden, Hashmi has the upper hand. He locks Tudio down, stick against stick with Hashmi pushing down on his pupil's neck. Tudio sets his teeth, pushing back with all his might. But having the upper position, Hashmi must be the victor.

Hashmi *through* Pax! Say "Pax!"
clenched teeth

Tudio *hardly able to* Not until you admit that I can box better than you. And I'm the
speak slipperier wrestler.

Hashmi I admit nothing. Pax! Now!

Tudio *with shout of* Pax, then, you bastard!
pain

Hashmi releases Tudio, then helps the younger man to stand. Promptly, Hashmi removes the stick from Tudio's hand, then steps back. It is as if Hashmi does not trust the younger man; that the latter will resume the fight. Tudio gasps for breath, with hands on hips.

Jess *voice-over* "When once the great men of Rome realized that it was by training and healthy exercise that battles might be won, then -- "

BREAK AND SEGUE IMMEDIATELY INTO NEXT SCENE

I, Scene iv: Interior, Ocean Grove September 2010.

The Badger-Fyfe Grand Final Party

Jess, curled in her corner of a room in the Badger-Fyfe home, is dramatically interrupted (as she translates "Tribulates" for herself) as Chiu Fong bursts in.

Chiu Fong *shocked* What are you hiding up here for? Come on ... we're all having a great time downstairs. Read that grotty old book tomorrow.

Jess, startled out of her reverie, snaps shut the book. The other girl heads back downstairs.

Jess Yeah ... sure ... coming ...

Jess follows in Chiu's footsteps.

END OF SCENE

I, Scene v: Interior, The McDermid Car September 2010.

Returning Home After The Grand Final

The passengers in the McDermid car are just as we left them.

Tony You heard the cops coming, and high-tailed it out of there. Is that

how it happened? Which is totally the wrong thing to do if you were completely innocent.

Paul *reasonable*

Oh, yeah ... Well ... the police would have been okay. They could have taken a breath-test or a swab or whatever and found me clean. 100% clean, I was. Absolutely. But that would inevitably have been followed by a media feeding-frenzy. Can you just see the headlines?

Anyway, I scarpered, like I said. I wasn't waiting around. I thought a dog was chasing me, so I ran across paddocks, in the dark. Then to some houses. Then I just walked along proper roads past new houses, in the Parkland Estate. I walked all the way home.

Auntie Rae

And you were seen by a lady who was putting out her garbage.

Paul *shrugs*.

Paul

It put me miles away from the car, whatever way you look at it. Jack Renfrew was still asleep when the cops rocked up. He's been on and off drugs for years. The police checked him out and he was clear. But he had to flex up at the clinic on the Monday and they found traces of recreational drugs on him. So he got read the riot act. There were so many ratty rumours floating around about **me** that I rocked up at the clinic at the same time, just to get me name ticked off, and I was as clean as a whistle.

Tony

So what's the problem?

Paul

Well, there's no problem, is there? I just wanted to be honest and say that although I denied ever being in that car, and none of those dickheads can even remember that I was a passenger in it, it was all completely innocent. Alright?

Tony *severe*

I'll say it again, for what it's worth, Son. You have to get yer finger out and put in the hard yards next season. You looked bloody shocking out there last Sat'day. Put some meaning into your life.

And you can't be found in druggies' cars, however lily-white you say you are.

The two female passengers smile, and wriggle about to get comfortable. There seems to be nothing more to say on that head.

Auntie Rae Do any of us feel like the traditional Grand Final party at Ocean Grove?

There is general dissent, so Auntie Rae makes a silent "Oh!" and then sighs.

Auntie Rae *sotto voce* The lad complains that he can't get a nice girlfriend. He might have met a nice young lady at the Badger-Fyfe's ... But, since we're not going ...

END OF SCENE

I, Scene vi: Interior, Wondong October 2010.

A Meeting Room at Helicon Stadium

Camera focuses on a whiteboard, which completely dominates the scene, until the camera begins to take an interest in the men speaking. A man's hand puts four magnetic signs on the whiteboard, each written in thick black text: RUSSELL, CARMODY, McDERMID and LOWTHER.

As the reasons are stated, another man tabulates the Good and Bad points to left and right of the signs.

Reg Ellis Okay, we have to make the usual tough decisions, made somewhat easier by the fact that we should have been Premiers this year, however, as you know, we shot ourselves in the foot the other Saturday. We reckon that we can keep **one** of these boys, but only as a borderline case. I think I know which way you'll go, but each player has to receive a fair hearing anyway.

Frank Bilton I'd scrap the lot of them.

Reg Ellis Why? Give me your reasons. You know, we have to be clear and impartial here, Frank.

Frank Bilton Start with Lowther. He's finished, in my book: too slow, too old. His best years are behind him.

Reg Ellis No-one for "one more year" for Lowther?

"Moppsy" Karney No, mate. He struggles to barely make the team, let alone be the star in home-and-away games. Let him go.

There is general agreement.

Reg Ellis Okay. McDermid?

Frank Bilton A potential champion. But he just won't apply himself.

There is general agreement.

"Bluey" D'Argent No ... no dedication, no passion. Treats it all as a big joke.

"Mopsy" Karney He'd rather be out with his mates on the piss than be getting involved with Club business.

Frank Bilton Which is a shame, because Carmody can't do enough for the Wild Dogs, but his shoulder injury just gets worse and worse.

Reg Ellis What about Russell?

Everyone speaks at Not good enough. Not up to standard. He works his guts out, but, once. Nah. He's only a seconds player at best.

Reg Ellis Okay, so scrap Russell straight off, then Lowther. Which leaves Carmody and McDermid, and we've already discussed that we won't get our value out of Carmody for at least the next 18 months, due to deep-seated shoulder issues.

Frank Bilton Bloody shame, that is!

"Bluey" D'Argent Yeah, we're not a kids' benevolent team, after all. They're grown men and they have to cop it sweet. Life's tough.

Frank Bilton Right! We have a young man (what is he ... 24? ... 25?) who's had all the privileges. Sent to Wondong Grammar and got great

results. Then shoved it all in his parents' faces and went off skylarking with his bkie mates. Is there any likelihood at all that he can straighten himself out?

"Mopsy" Karney I tell you, Frank, if I ever found that he was involved in that Renfrew drug business, I'd sack him on the spot.

Reg Ellis He wasn't in on that!

"Bluey" D'Argent Someone **saw** him near the scene.

"Mopsy" Karney Aw, that's mischievous slander. Forget it.

"Bluey" D'Argent No, someone **saw** him.
determined

"Mopsy" Karney Bullshit!

Frank Bilton Well, it pisses me off good and proper that a loyal, hard-working clubman such as Carmody gets shafted so that a bludger like McDermid undeservedly gets the nod to stay, when we all know about his track record.

"Bluey" D'Argent His father was a terrific Wondong man, you know. This must be killing him.

"Mopsy" Karney What are ya talking about? This bloke's twice the footballer his father was ... just no commitment, no dedication ...

The male hand then removes the three other signs and erases the other notes, leaving only McDermid's name and notes on the whiteboard.

Reg Ellis So, McDermid gets another chance. His **last** chance ...

Then, the crowning humiliation: Paul slides to the ground, wrestling feverishly for the ball with a squirming mob of other players when the siren goes. The players from the other team leap about, hugging each other (because they have now made it to the Grand Final). McDermid is on the ground, face in the turf, beside himself with grief. His flashback sees him dragging himself off the ground. Nobody -- none of his teammates -- comes to haul him to his feet. He is a pariah. Slowly, in slow motion, head hanging low and grim-faced, Paul staggers off the MCG oval. As he makes his way down the players' race, in the near background, angry Wondong fans and jubilant opposition fans hurl abuse over the fence.



We are back in the treehouse.

Paul, face streaming with tears, leans his head back against the wall of the treehouse. He gasps for breath, in trying to control his overwhelming emotion.



There is a further flashback: to the post-match commiseration session following the Preliminary Final of 2010.

Now Paul sits on the floor of the dressing room, with bottle of Gatorade in hand. Around him on the cold floor sit the other young men who played in the big game for the Wild Dogs. All are stuffed, miserable and inconsolable. Paul watches, bleary-eyed, as older men in suits and ties or in the official Wondong leisurewear, wander about. These men pat each player on the head, stopping to talk in encouraging tones. Paul overhears the ubiquitous words: "Next year". No-one comes near him, however. It is as if he bears the entire disgrace for the 3-point loss. The man against whom he had played for two hours has clearly bested him. They were of a similar height, weight and build. And yet the other bloke had torn himself apart to get the ball and help win the game. No-one came anywhere near Paul McDermid, despite his kicking a couple of early goals.

Paul bitter, to the

My agent won't come near me. Look at him! He's staying as far

player next to him away from me as is humanly possible in a crowded dressing-room.

Lowther Yeah ... my bloke looks like he wants to piss on me. He must reckon that I'm brown bread.

Paul *bitter* You just watch! I'll be traded. I'll be shown the door. Given my marching orders.

Lowther *totally despondent* Me too! We'll end up at Subiaco, what's the bet ...



We are back in the treehouse.

Paul stares at his mobile phone, then makes a call. He is put on hold by the receptionist, then given a lame excuse. His face hardens.

Paul *very bitter* Come on! Where's Sonny? I want to have a word with him. This is about my 13th message. Can you ask him to please get back to Paul McDermid? Okay?

Angry, humiliated, Paul snaps the phone shut.

At the foot of the oak tree, Paul's father yells up at his son. Beside him stands his wife Libby (who is also Paul's mother).

Tony McDermid *angry* Hey, Paul! Stop acting like a tosser. We're all sorry that the Wild Dogs lost. None more so than myself. But it's been over a week now. Get onto yerself. You have to get your life back on track. Come down! D'you hear me? Your mother wants you to do something.

[Frustrated, to his wife]

Aw, you see if you can get that idiot to behave like a man instead of like a pounce.

Tony strides off, leaving Libby to gaze thoughtfully up into the tree.

Libby *pleasant* Oi! Son of Macca! Come down, will you, please? I have a little outing in store for you. Quite exciting, really.

From above, we see Paul lean out of the treehouse window, in order to speak to his mother.

Paul *rueful* I get it ... I'm on my obedience lessons now, aren't I? The Wild Dog needs taming ... Okay, I'll come back to Earth, then. But let it be agreed that it's under sufferance.

Libby Since when does anyone take a mobile phone up into a treehouse? Isn't that defeating the purpose of leaving the world behind?

Paul Yeah, well, Sonny Flaherty's giving me the bum's rush.

Libby He's not the only one.

Paul elegantly and athletically swings himself out of the treehouse, then drops to the ground.

Paul This outing you have planned: where, what, why?

Libby Hudson House.

Paul swings away, disgusted.

Paul *very unimpressed* Aw, no! You can't do this to me!

His mother approaches Paul, laying a hand on his upper arm.

Libby *calm* The plan I have in mind is that you start displaying a public face which is **caring**. Hudson House is filled with community-minded people, and they'll appreciate your visit. We'll get some photos in the local paper. It's a small start, but it's a start.

Paul *appalled* You're joking!

Libby *firm* No, Paul ... I'm not joking. Dad's heard on the grapevine that you're a heartbeat from being washed-up. "Washed-up" ... You're 24 years old, and you're a fantastic football player, but here we have people throwing you on the proverbial scrap heap.

I'm handing you a very small lifeline. If the public talk positively about McDermid from the Wild Dogs, we've made a bit of

progress.

Paul jams his hands into the pockets of his jeans, and looks devotedly, sullenly at the ground.

Libby You really don't get it, do you? The entire Melbourne press corps was prepared to believe that you were one of Renfrew's druggies because it sounded like the sort of thing you'd be involved in. They had you marked as "guilty" just based on your track-record. Think about it: brawling in a wharfies' pub, knocking-around with your outlaw bikie friends, turning up late for training, not turning up at all for kids' footy clinics, swearing at that female journo --

Paul *outraged, fired-up* That bitch had --

Libby *louder, shouting* In front of witnesses, Paul. There are ways to deal with difficult
him down media questions. And don't start raving at me, young man, because (many years ago) I was part of the Commonwealth Games gymnastics team, and I had microphones and cameras stuck in my face from the time I struggled out of the sheets at dawn until the time I dropped like a stone back into bed again at night. You have to mentally prepare yourself for that crap, and not fire-up at any of the rubbish they talk.

And I know that you find it a real turn-off going to Club functions, but you have to attend all those things, and at least try to look like you're enjoying yourself.

"Washed-up", Paul. That's what they're saying about you. So it's up to you to prove them wrong.

Paul glares angrily at his mother, wanting to tell her to shut-up. But that was not going to happen.

END OF SCENE

I, Scene viii: Interior, Hudson House, Wondong October 2010.

Paul has driven his mother to Hudson House, which is a former large homestead, now dedicated to community projects and programs. There are craft groups, art classes, self-improvement sessions, and so on in progress. When this scene opens, a very reluctant Paul (who stands much taller than the folk gathered around him) is being told how to play football by a very wizened old man. Paul looks like he is finally making an effort to be patient. He nods and smiles as the old man gets quite worked up. Those around him look sorry for Paul: that he has to put up with this rubbish. We do not have to hear what either man says. The gestures and facial expressions tell the story.



Now, Paul is shown some of the craft work which has recently been produced and is now for sale. It is just like the Queen being ushered about. Paul desperately tries to appear interested. We cannot hear what is said: once again, the smiles and gestures do the work.

END OF SCENE

I, Scene ix: Exterior, Hudson House Car Park, Wondong October 2010.

Out in the carpark, Paul seems about to deposit himself in the driver's seat of his car, when Libby rushes up.

Libby *breathless* Sorry, Love. Listen! I've met up with an old Sanctuary friend,
Alison Goodwood. We've been trying to get together for months.
You know how it is ... She has some stuff I need at her house
over in Braesyde. So, she'll drive me over with her, and you'll
follow us. Okay?

Paul shrugs. He is utterly sick of the whole thing anyway. His mother rushes off, and Paul watches to check which car he is to follow, then (with a grimace) drives slowly off in their wake.

END OF SCENE

I, Scene x: The Goodwood Home and Garden at Braesyde October 2010.Interior:

Libby and Alison are found in a dark, small, overcrowded storeroom which is attached to a large sewing room. Clearly, Alison has dedicated her life to collecting fabrics, braids, laces and all the usual bric-a-brac associated with craftwork. The two women fossick about amongst the boxes and bags of remnants as Jess strolls up. She is dressed casually but wears the Sanctuary school jumper. They chatter away at the same time.

Jess What are you ladies up to?

Alison *dishevelled* Ah! Here's Jess. She's home on swat vac. Have you seen Paul?

Jess *lost* Paul who?

Libby *smiling* My son Paul. He's a bit of a monkey. I hope he hasn't done a runner on me.

Alison Jess, this is one of my dear schoolfriends, Libby Polglaze.

Libby *laughing* That was!

[To Jess]

Hello, dear! I hope I haven't disturbed your studies.

Jess *smiling* Hello. Um ... no, I needed a bit of a break, anyway.

Alison She's nicked one of Frances Badger-Fyfe's Latin books, Lib, and we can't crowbar her away from it.

[To Jess]

Why don't you scoot around and see if you can see Paul, and tell him that we've found the bits and pieces we were looking for ... This very busy lady wants to go home.

Jess Okay.

Exterior.

Jess is seen looking for her quarry out in the garden, on the verandah, in the tool shed. She can see his car parked outside, so she shrugs her shoulders and wanders back to the room where she has been studying.

Interior.

Jess stands in the doorway to this room, pulling up short to see none other than Paul McDermid standing beside her desk. She mouths "Paul McDermid?" with eyes wide open. Paul is flicking through "Tribulates". He glances at her, then does a double take. Paul frowns as he looks the girl over. She, in her turn, steps forward, sitting at the desk, as a means of breaking the ice. Paul waves the book at the girl.

Paul The inscription inside this book reads: "Stanley John Badger-Fyfe, 1902".

Jess Yes. The book belongs to Frances Badger-Fyfe's husband, John. Do you know them?

Paul Yeah. They're out at Ocean Grove. Been there a few times ... nice place. Nice people.

Do they know you've got their antique book? Looks pretty valuable to me.

Jess Of course they do. It's only a loaner.

Paul *mispronouncing* "Tribulates".

Jess *correcting* It's actually pronounced *Trib-yew-LAH-tays*. It sort of means "the one who has been afflicted", but in this case it implies that the guy (the hero) is really the one doing the afflicting.

Paul makes a face as he leafs through the book.

Paul And what crappo language is it written in, anyway? Is this Greek?

Jess No, it's Latin.

Paul *almost accusing* Latin? You can read Latin?

Jess *smiling* Yes. I'm just about the only girl left at The Sanctuary who takes Latin. I'm doing it via a correspondence course as part of my VCE. Our last Latin teacher died about two years ago. I was being tutored by the Roman Catholic priest for a long while, which is really funny because, of course, we're an Anglican

school. Bit of cross-denominational instruction, you might say.

Paul studies her intently as she speaks, then flicks through "Tribulates" again. At about 60 pages in, he holds the pages open with his fingers, passing the book to the girl.

Paul Read that. In English, obviously.

Jess takes the book, quickly scanning over the pages. Jess reads and translates.

Jess Oh ... okay ... funny that you should pick this bit ... So, the hero has been campaigning in Gaul with Julius Caesar as a member of the eighth Legion. He's come back to Rome for the Winter at the head of a triumphant procession. There's a party in his honour. He's heard that his three praeceptors (his teachers, or tutors, we'd say) are there fussing over a very lovely girl, whom he also wants to meet. Her name is Ursillina.

So, he wants to make a good impression, but he ends up swinging onto the porch like Tarzan just where the girl of his dreams is sitting with his old teachers. That sort of makes him look like a buffoon, see. So, it says:

[She laughs as she reads.]

"After his tour of duty in Gaul-At-Hand (that which Caesar names *Hither Gaul*), Antoninus Tudio Tribulates could not divest from his youth that vigour and sense of fun which was at once both misplaced and mischievous. His unlooked-for entrance was that of an ape out of Africa; neither well-judged nor politic, in view of his social standing. However, Tudio thought nothing of that, such was his eagerness to eat and be merry.

"In earnest delight, he did greet Hashmi, Zeffron and Dravidus; this with playful slaps on the shoulders and especial hugs and cuddles for tubby Zeffron. These older men, in great pleasure to see their pupil come back safe from Caesar's most recent campaign, quickly introduced Tudio to the lovely virgin around whom they had previously clustered.

"The beauteous face and form of the girl so affected the young man that he could not find speech ... er ... that he was unable to easily speak." Sorry.

"Those eyes that had but lately looked with such murderous longing at the forbidding ranks of the savage enemy, now stared in homage at a small woman. Thus it was. This would be Tudio's fate."

Jess, blushing for some reason or other, looks up from the book to find Paul staring at her.

Paul *smiling* Funnily enough, I thought that you'd ask me for my autograph.
But you're not a --

The shrill, annoying ringtone of Paul's mobile phone rips through the relative quiet of the room. Jess looks down at her study table, whilst Paul moves away a little.

Paul Excuse me.

[On the phone]

Yeah? Is that my old mate Xavier Flaherty? How are ya, Sonny?
How are they hangin'?

[Pause as Paul listens intently.]

Yeah? Really! Oh, that's great news. Thanks, mate. No, I'll drop in and see you later today. Okay, if tomorrow's better -- that's super. Thanks, mate! Cheers!

[To Jess, elated]

That was my agent, who's been treating me like a stoogy old uncle on the bot and won't come anywhere near me. He reckons that Wondong want me to stick around for at least another year, even though I thought I'd get cut.

Jess That's wonderful! Congratulations, Paul.

The young man is obviously thrilled at the news from his agent. He walks over to stand beside Jess, looking out of the window.

Paul I'll drop by at his orrifice tomorrow and sign the all-important papers.

 Hey, I'm sorry. You know my name, but I don't know yours ...

Jess It's Jess. Very short and easy to remember.

Paul smiles and nods. We see him mouth the word: "Jess". He looks back out of the window, utterly pleased with life.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT I



ACT II

II, Scene i: Early Morning, The Beach At Anglesea

October 2010

Long-shot of Paul McDermid jogging along the beach at Anglesea very early in the morning.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene ii: The Cafeteria, The Sanctuary Girls' School

October 2010

Six girls (Jess Goodwood, Antoinette Boyne, Caroline Armitage, Lucy Whittan, Heather Peach and Chiu Fong) are eating lunch together at the school. Plates of food are in the middle of the table: everyone helps themselves to the food. The girls are listening open-mouthed to Jess.

Jess *very excited* -- were rummaging around in Mum's sewing room, and this lady asked me to tear around to find her son. I had no idea what sort of "son" she meant!

Heather Peach What, you thought he was a little boy or something?

Chiu Fong God! You might have been worried that this little kid, this lady's son, had fallen into the dam, or into the fishpond.

Antoinette *outraged* He could have drowned! You'd have had to apply that CPR process.

Jess I don't know *what* I thought. Anyway, I couldn't find this "boy" anywhere, so I rushed back to the house, and saw a strange man in my room, the room where I study. So I headed that way: it was

none other than Paul McDermid from Wondong!

The other girls squeal with thrill.

Jess I just froze. He was looking at my schoolbooks, and at that Latin book I borrowed from the Badger-Fyfe's. And I had to **translate** some of it for him! It was so eerie! So weird!

More excited squeals.

Jess He is **so-o-o-o-o** tall. And his shoulders are **t-h-i-s** wide. The players don't look very big when you see them all together on the footy field. But in my study room ...wow! And then he got a good phone call from his agent, so he looked very pleased with himself.

Caroline Has he rung you up since then?

Jess *dismissive* God no! He's probably forgotten all about me ...

END OF SCENE

II, Scene iii: A Small Meeting Room At Helicon Stadium

October

2010

Three senior members of the Wondong Players Group and Paul McDermid sit around a table. There are no writing materials: the table has a couple of cups of coffee and an open packet of Wheaten biscuits, and that is all. The atmosphere is very relaxed. A couple of the guys have been razor-lazy, and are scruffily dressed. Paul seems to have dragged himself straight out of the vineyard.

Jarrold Hurst As members of the Senior Players Group, we have to have a chin-wag with all the senior boys, just to get things off to a good start. Now, we know that next season is a helluva long way off, but if we can set early goals for you boys, then all the better.

So you can start the ball rolling, Macca. Tell us what your expectations are for next season, from the point of view of the

whole club.

Paul *serious, recalling his thoughts* I guess that I'll want the full support of my teammates and from the officials. You know ... So that I can give my best.

Paul looks about at the others, who nod solemnly, and then Paul shrugs his shoulders.

Glynn Unmac What does it mean to you to be a Wild Dog?

Paul It's about pride in the team. Wondong is a great footy club, with a strong tradition. A family tradition. I followed Dad to the Wild Dogs on the father-son rule.

Glynn Unmac Right. But how do you personally feel about being a Wild Dog? What qualities make a Wild Dog?

Paul *sucks in a breath* It means to me ... well, working hard, running hard ... Tenacity ... you know, wanting to be first to the ball. Risking your own safety (within reason) to get to the ball, or to help another Wild Dog.

Mike Collie What else?

Paul Kicking goals. Kicking straight. Taking the big mark.

The men shift about, grinning. Mike dives into the Wheaten biscuits, grabbing a handful, and shoving each biscuit whole into his mouth.

Jarrold Hurst Okay, Macca, the reason we wanted to have this chat with you was that we wanted to point you in the right direction. It's all about "focus" and "dedication".

If you set up for yourself what the Yanks call "a mantra", then focus on that mantra, you can put aside all those pesky elements in your life that are making you lose that all-important focus.

Glynn Unmac Wake up each morning and go through those points you said about being a Wild Dog: what's important to you yourself. You can write them on a sheet of paper and pin them to the kitchen notice board, or to your dunny door, or whatever you do. But the important thing is to go through those bullet points every morning.

Paul nods, grinning.

Paul Yeah, right, Glynn. Sounds like a plan ...

Jarrood Hurst Every other thing is nothing. You only concentrate on the bullet points. "I wanna be stronger, faster, better. I wanna put in more and take out less. I wanna stand tall and fearless and proud."

Paul nods again.

Mike Collie Ring up your shit-kicker friends and all the pests in your life. Ring them up today, this afternoon. Tell them that you're not available until the last Sunday in September. Or visit them. Just look these people straight in the eye, and tell them: "I'm off the party list until next year's Bathurst 1000 motor race."

Camera close-up of Jarrood Hurst.

Jarrood Hurst From now on until the next footy season ends, your only friend is the man you're handballing to ... the man you're kicking to ... the bloke who needs you to bump his opponent out of the way. Your only confidante is the conditioning coach, the dietician and ... guys like that.

Close-up of Paul looking from one man to the other, lips pressed close together, nodding.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene iv: Night Time, Marram Grass Reserve, Anglesea October 2010

There is enough moonlight and starlight for Paul McDermid to be able to stand at the lookout, gazing out over the sea.



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Paul recalls in flashback some hijinx on the back of a motorbike. In an uneven paddock, the lads are trying to play a combination of hockey, basketball and football, whilst they all ride motorbikes. There is a rich combination of laughter, swearing and yelling.



The flashback ends as Tim Keenau rides up on his Kawasaki road bike. He looks every inch a bikie: hairy face, tattoos, leather clothing and decorative chains. As he swings his leg off the bike, Paul approaches. There is a high handshake, then a man-hug and shoulder-pat.

Paul G'day, mate. How's Tim-boy going, eh? Keeping outa trouble?

Tim *gravel-voiced* Aw, you know me.

Tim nods towards the sea. Both men wander over to the lookout, where they lean on the railing. Tim hawks and spits into the marram grass.

Tim Keenau I know what this is all about.

Paul Yeah? What?

Tim Keenau I'm the shit in your dirty nappy. And you have to get potty-trained.

Paul shouts a crack of laughter.

Paul Yeah, sort of ...

Tim Keenau You're doin' it hard, then?

Paul *sucks in breath,* I've been given a wish-list which I've nailed up in the shithouse,
and drops low over the under instruction.
railing

Tim Keenau *nods* I've been expecting that. I reckon I've always known that this day would come. "Dear Santa, Please keep me away from my naughty friends."

Paul tries for some humour to get over this rough ground.

Paul "Dear Santa, If I behave myself in the apple orchard, can I have a

bigger dick?"

No, seriously ... my footy future hangs by a thread. I've *really* gotta be a good little Boy Scout.

Tim Keenau *nods solemnly*

If that's what you've gotta do, mate ... No more fish'n'chips at Lewie's. No more pub crawls on New Year's Eve. And forget all about the pleasant Sunday mornings with your pals.

Paul *sad*

Except if they're sponsored by the Club.

Tim Keenau

Good old Long-gone Wondong. Why don't ya stick it up 'em!

Paul *ignoring the question*

No more darts nights at the Wollaroo -- What the hell did we call that bloody stupid game we used to play, with the ball and motorsickles? I can't for the life of me remember.

Tim Keenau *wicked*

We called it "Far Queue".

That's a thought, actually. Why don't you just tell them to go and fuck themselves? You can do whatever ya want ... you don't care a thing about being cashed-up. You don't care about anything, seems to me ...

Paul *wistful*

I dunno ... I've gotta prove something to myself ...

Tim Keenau *nasty*

Prove away, then. See ya!

Tim Keenau stomps off to his motor bike, revs it up loudly, then charges off into the night.

Paul continues to stare out at the sea, his face rigid, uncompromising.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene v: The VCE Examinations at The Sanctuary Late October 2010

As is traditional, the November examinations for the VCE at The Sanctuary Girls' School take place in the large school hall. Desks are arranged in regimented ranks. A camera shot from above shows the

girls working busily as a large clock ticks relentlessly, as teachers and other administrative staff silently move up and down the aisles between the desks.

Close up of Jess Goodwood, writing her Economics paper. It is clear that she is quite happy with the responses she is giving. She nods at her written answers, smiling slightly.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene vi: Daytime, In The Treehouse, Brindlebury Late October 2010

Paul sits in the treehouse, again with his mobile phone.

Paul Yeah, goodday, Glynn. It's Macca McDermid. Yeah, good thanks, mate. Look, I just wanted to run this by you. You know that stuff about the Wild Dogs and focusing ... No, I found that really helpful. It's been bloody hard, but --

 Fair dinkum! That's good to find out ...

 What I wanna know is ... I'm having a bit of girl trouble right now. Not really that but ... Here's the plan. I want to get myself into a steady relationship with a nice young lady I've met. I wondered if that wouldn't help me. But I know you guys said that I've gotta get rid of --

 Sure! No, she's the exact opposite: really clever and a really good sort.

 Yeah, my mother knows her and I think she likes her. Is that important?

[Laughs heartily]

 Yeah, she's the sort of girl you can squire around and not get up to any mischief with. Okay? Goodoh. See you in the New Year. Thanks heaps for your help. Thanks, 'bye!

Paul stares at the phone, smiling in genuine happiness.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene vii: The VCE Examinations

Early November 2010

Latin Oral held at the University of Melbourne

[Because there is such a small demand for the examination of VCE Latin students, the Orals are held at the University, and not at any of the Victorian schools.]

A small tutorial room at the University of Melbourne holds the stern Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne (Gerald Tate, in full vestments, and resting his jaw negligently on his bejewelled hand), an august Professor of Languages from the University (who nods in time to the spoken words), and Jess Goodwood, who stands up straight, facing the two men as she recites a memorized work. Jess wears the complete and correct Sanctuary school uniform.

Jess *reciting* ... parcere, parce seni.' Dixerat haec; sed et haec et multo plura
licebat dicere: regressus non dabat ille uiro. Quod simul ut sensit,
'nunc, nunc, o Daedale,' dixit: 'materiam, qua sis ingeniosus,
habes. Possidet et terras et possidet aequora Minos: ...

END OF SCENE

II, Scene viii: The Sanctuary Girls Celebrate End of Exams November 2010

At a crowded nightclub, the six Sanctuary girls (Jess, Antoinette, Caroline, Lucy, Heather and Chiu) dance about, shouting "No more exams! No more exams!"



Heather and Jess are in the Ladies, doing their hair and makeup in front of a large mirror. The music is very loud, even in the Ladies: the girls are forced to shout.

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Heather *shouting* I meant to ask you ... Did Paul McDermid ever ring you up?

Jess *also shouting* He did! Yes! The night before the Latin exam. He wished me good luck.

The girls look at each other in the mirror, then start squealing, and jumping about holding hands.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene ix: A Gents Toilet in the Members at the MCG

Boxing Day 2010

England and Australia play for the Ashes: this Test Match at the MCG which begins on Boxing Day is the highlight of the Summer of cricket. Paul McDermid sits at the hallowed ground on Boxing Day with his family, in the exclusive MCG Members' area. Which means neat casual wear for Paul. Tony wears a lightweight suit. In order to miss the least possible play, Paul decides to visit the Gents in plenty of time for the first ball.

Just as Paul is finishing his business at the urinal, zipping-up, a well-dressed man comes up to him, asking him to autograph his cricket program. Paul looks shocked, but retains control.

Paul Er ... yeah ... just wash m'hands. Excuse me.

Paul gives his hands a thorough wash, inappropriately remembering his now-deceased Uncle Martin, who said that: "A man shouldn't have to wash his mitts after pissing, unless he's accidentally pissed on his hands!"

With as good a nature as possible, Paul takes the program from the man, and signs it. There follows an immediate barrage of autograph hounds: all male (of course) but of varying ages. Other men at the urinal glance over their shoulders. Paul bears the flattering attention stoically, then escapes swiftly.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene x: The Members Area at the MCG

Boxing Day 2010

A huge roar goes up from the crowd as an Australian batsman smashes a 6 towards the Jolimont side of the oval. The over ends, and a burst of keen applause rises from the huge crowd. The camera roves about the crowd, soon finding the McDermid family.

Cricket commentator And that's Paul McDermid, a very popular Wild Dogs player. He's with his father, Tony and other family members. Of course, Tony also played for Wondong.

It's always fascinating to look for celebrities amongst this Boxing Day crowd, because --

Paul sees himself on the big screen, and decides that it would be politic to acknowledge the camera. So he smiles, waves, then digs up a small Australian flag, which he waves. Just as the camera drifts off, he mouths "Hello, Jess!". Paul's appearance on the screen is met by some cheers and some boos. Paul simply laughs it off.



At the lunch break, Paul rings Jess.

Paul Did you have a good Christmas? Yeah, me too. What are you doing for New Year? We'll be lazing about at our beach house in Anglesea. Do you want to sleep over for a couple of days? All above board ... no, no hidden agenda. Bring that Latin book with you, will ya? I want to find out how it all ends up. Okay. I'll come and get you tomorrow.

Paul smiles as he packs away his mobile phone. Libby has returned to her seat, armed with some fast food. This she passes to Paul, who immediately tucks in.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xi: The Holiday House at Anglesea

Last Days of December 2010

Jess and Paul stand at the large, wide picture window which overlooks the sea.

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Paul Yeah, it's pretty special, isn't it? But you're here for a reason, not to admire the view. Let's get going. I'm fairly itching to hear more about this Roman stuff.

Jess *reverent* Paul! ... This view is simply sumptuous. I can't believe it. You can see Melbourne so clearly ...

Paul Yeah, yeah, yeah ... Sit down, Girlie, and get busy translating.

Jess *sitting* You'll have to excuse my translation. It's a bit hit and miss, but you'll get the general drift, I expect. "Tribulates, A Tale of Sober Dedication", by The Honourable Justininus Perron. There's a prologue which doesn't really lead anywhere ... It's just about the values of drilling and practising ... I don't need to tell **you** about that!

[This speech spills over into the next scene, as voice-over.]

"His bronze sword was the finest example of the art, and his father had called it 'Cosimo'. The horse he mounted, in that manly splendour of his shining armour, did he call 'Acron'. The man himself was known as Antoninus, son of Tudio, a brave and fearless Roman warrior. Yet, Tudio's father was dead, that event having occurred when our hero had seen but two or three Summers. So, out of a strong friendship with Tudio, and out of a compassion for his infant son, Aurelius Publius Quentax did adopt the male child as his own son.

"The child grew up in the lap of luxury, to be feted far and wide as a beaming boy, who grew into a healthy man, full of promise. All loved him. Yet there were some who thought that young Tudio did not show enough self-care, both physically and spiritually."

MORPH INTO NEXT SCENE

II, Scene xii: Ancient Rome, A Palm Grove at the Quentax Estate 58 BC

On a steep hill, amidst a luxuriant grove of varied species of palmtree, an ornamental gutter wends its way downwards. Heavily mosaic-encrusted and quite beautiful, the gutter is about a metre wide and 1/3 of a metre deep. Crystal clear water gurgles unresisting down the ornamental gutter. This is a delightful, aesthetic sight.

Four male slaves of the house of Quentax stand at the top of the hill, 2 on either side of the gutter, holding a contraption consisting of wood and ropes. The slaves strain to keep the construction from washing downwards with the flow of water.

Antoninus Tudio appears with a small bamboo raft held over his head. He is dressed in the briefest of loincloths. Lowering the raft onto the contraption, Tudio appears to be deep in discussion with the slaves about the logistics of the exercise which is about to unfold. The slaves try to appear knowledgeable, but are in fact terrified for their young master.



At the foot of the hill, where the gutter spills into a larger gutter, and from thence works its way to a large ornamental pool, sit two young men: Cratton Nidus and Linus Paulliac. They are reclining at their leisure, surrounded by female slaves who serve them drinks and food, or fan them.

Linus lifts his hands to his mouth.

Linus shouting Come on, Tones! Get a move on!

Tudio shouts back from the top of the hill.

Tudio voice-off, I'm on me way!
shouting

Cratton aside to Linus He'll break his bloody teeth, if not his neck. Nothing surer.

Linus confident He hasn't broken it yet, not our Tones ...



Back to Tudio at the top of the hill. The young man is now seated on the raft, with the nervous slaves straining to take the full weight of man, raft and apparatus.

Tudio *to the slaves,* Okay, boys! When I hold up 3 fingers, you let go your ropes. One
shouting -- two --- **three!**

The slaves obey their master, such that at the count of three fingers, Tudio and raft shoot forward, whirling about on the racing gutter-water. Tudio yells in a mixture of fear and pleasure.

We follow the perilous journey of man and raft down to where the friends are sitting, applauding and laughing. The female slaves simply look scared.

At the foot of the hill, man and raft part company. Whereas the raft bumps its way along the larger gutter, Tudio lands unceremoniously on the stonework almost at the feet of his friends. Tudio jumps up, ignoring his many hurts, looking around for the raft.

Tudio *laughing* Where is the little bugger?

Spotting the raft, Tudio dives onto it, surfboard-like (egged-on by his friends) and shoots forward into the bigger pool. He rolls off the primitive craft, to splash about in the water, laughing loudly with delight at his outrageous adventure.

Tudio Do either of you guys want a go?

Craton No thanks, mate. If you want to knock your teeth out, that's your affair.

Tudio looks a question at Linus, who sips his drink, and shakes his head.

Linus No way! My teeth are dodgy enough as they are. One more sharp knock and I'll be sucking pap through a straw.

Tudio grabs the raft and once more holds it over his head.

Tudio Awright, suit yourselves. You don't know what youse are missing.

We watch Craton and Linus (from behind) watching Tudio take off up the hill.



As the slaves watch Tudio striding manfully up the hill, raft overhead, a small man (Gaius Ranillus) comes up behind them, unannounced. He carries a small palm frond, which he uses to idly flick away stray flies. The slaves mutter amongst themselves of Tudio's foolhardiness. Gaius is grim-faced to overhear some part of their strictures.

Gaius *haughty* Hi, there! You filthy slaves. I am come to seek one Antoninus Tudio Quentax, he that the mighty Julius Caesar has raised up to great rank. They told me at the winery that I'd find him here.

The slaves immediately behave with an obsequious and downcast demeanour. Heads bowed, they indicate with raised palms that Tudio is even now coming up the hill towards them. Gaius (with unstudied ease) slaps at the slaves with his palm frond. Just at that moment, Tudio (raft still held over his head) reappears.

Tudio *cautious* What's going on?

Gaius *flashing a false smile* Do I address Antoninus Tudio Quentax, newly appointed Centurion in the glorious 8th Legion?

Tudio *frowning* Yeah ... what of it?

Gaius *nodding, whilst still flashing that vicious smile* Your Commander-in-Chief, Praefectus Caesar, wonders if you might like to join your cohort as they prepare to Summer in Cisalpine Gaul. It was just a passing query, you know.

Tudio scowls, looking the messenger up and down with disdain.

Tudio I'm having one more gutter slide and then I'll head off.

Gaius *loathsome, unctuous* "Just one more gutter slide" ... Shall I take that message to Caesar? I'm positive that the mighty Caesar will be most impressed that you are putting your ... ah ... pleasure before your duties. But he'll understand ... no doubt ...

Angry now, Tudio dumps the raft on the ground such that he can stride forward to front the smaller man. The latter takes fright, as Tudio looms over him, with face-of-thunder.

Tudio *very angry* Listen, runt! I've gotta go down the hill to get my gear and my horse, anyhow. See? This might prove to be the quickest way. So just shut-up about your boss and let me alone, will ya?

[Sharply turning towards the slaves.]

Get it lined-up again boys. That was real good, what ya did last time. And while I'm gone to the Alps and the Po Valley, you blokes are charged with looking after Zeffron and Dravidus for me. Make

sure of their comfort and care, won't you? Hashmi will be able to take care of himself.

[Laughs delightedly.]

And don't get any of the girls preggers. Save that for me when I get back.

At this, the male slaves appear relieved and amused. Just as Tudio is about to prepare for launch, he turns and points back at the uptight Gauls.

Tudio *smartarse* Oh, and by the by, Shortstuff. I've taken the cognomen "Tribulates" in place of "Quentax", with my adopted father's kind permission. So you'll know me as "Antoninus Tudio Tribulates" from now on. See you in the soup!

With that, Tudio gives the 1-2-3 with his fingers, which sends the man and raft flying down the gutter water. We see the progress from an aerial shot, noting that this time, Tudio negotiates the turn, landing safely in the pool in one piece, to his friends' delight.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xiii: Ancient Rome, Antechamber to Caesar's Porch 58 BC

The antechamber is a-buzz with various persons, milling about. Directing this throng is Caesar's usher, Osirinus Perdenter. Haughty and forbidding, with his henchman Frastus Lirrin at his side, Perdenter deals with supplicants for Caesar's regard. This mob of humanity includes Romans of all orders, but mostly military types.

Into this assemblage strides Tudio. He is magnificent: by far the tallest man in the room. He wears a red tunic under bronze breastplate, pouldrons, skirt and belt. Over his shoulder hang baldric and sword, and his feet are shod in leather sandals. Short vambraces protect his wrists, and under his left wing, he carries his galea, which is trimmed with a red brush.

Frastus Lirrin is seen to smooth his oiled hair back with an effeminate flick of his hand, prior to wafting in Tudio's direction. Tudio's face hardens upon this approach.

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Lirrin *a little frazzled* Do I address Antoninus Tudio Quentax?

Tudio *stone-faced* That'll be it.

Lirrin indicates the porch with an aesthetic wave of his hand.

Lirrin Caesar awaits.

Tudio looks the usher's assistant up and down in a derisive manner, then marches past Perdentor, brushing him aside with his impressive pouldrons, as Tudio enters the porch of Caesar.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xiv: Ancient Rome, Caesar's Porch

58 BC

Praefectus Caesar (a younger Caesar than the hero of the Shakespeare play; likewise clad in battle gear) stands beside a column in his sunlit porch, staring out at the action on the busy street below. Several male slaves stand about. Tudio strides purposefully into the porch, slapping his right fist onto the left clavicle, as is the salute of the Roman soldier. Still perched under his left wing is his galea.

The actor who plays Wondong coach David Bryce also plays Julius Caesar.

Tudio *loud, resonant* Caesar! Antoninus Tudio Tribulates presents his unworthy person before the great General in order to hear Praefectus Caesar's pleasure.

Without turning, Caesar addresses the bold young man.

Caesar At ease, Centurion Tudio.

Tudio immediately relaxes, looking about him. He props the galea on a nearby bench.

Caesar You may take wine, if you wish. We have an arduous journey ahead of us.

[Telling pause]

If we can ever get started, that is ...

Tudio nods at a nearby slave, who promptly provides goblet and wine. Tudio sloshes the liquid down, dragging the back of his hand over his mouth.

Tudio Ah, that's a nice drop. Thanks.

Caesar slowly turns, looking Tudio up and down as if studying him.

Caesar Yes, you are like your late, lamented father, in both face and form. I fought beside Antoninus Tudio ... many years ago. He was a clever fighter, not just a brave one. I see that you carry his famed sword, Cosimo. That is encouraging.

And your other father, Quentax: he, too, showed valour and cunning in battle. And, of course, great things are expected of **you**, Tudio.

I hear that you have dropped the Quentax cognomen in favour of the rather esoteric "Tribulates". What does this imply? 'Tis a wondrous thing ... as if I had named myself Gaius Julius Dolour.

Tudio I mean to dish-out tribulations on Rome's enemies, Caesar.

Caesar *gentle* One usually **earns** these epithets after the deed is done, rather than before ... but no matter ... I'm all in favour of self-confidence.

Restless and uncertain, Tudio looks around at the slave who has previously given him the wine. Tudio lifts his eyebrows, shaking his goblet indicatively. However, the slave remains stony-faced and does not serve him.

Caesar Before we undertake our arduous trek to Hither Gaul, I want to ask of you one great boon, noble Tudio.

Tudio Caesar?

Caesar strolls about a bit, then walks straight up to Tudio (who towers over him). Caesar looks up at the young man, very close to him.

Caesar I want you to consider what it is to be a Roman Centurion. How noble is the calling of such a man. And what this position of power and authority brings to a man, should he survive the future fierce

encounters with our Gallic enemy. You, Tudio, owing to my intervention, my activity on your behalf, have been pushed up into this glorious rank ahead of men who are more battle-hardened than you. For you are young, to be sure, but not untried. You are seen to be a wastrel by some; yet others find your athletic prowess and skill uplifting. Most important to myself, however, is the stable in which you were foaled. This colt of Tudio and Quentax, this glad-faced boy who fears nothing and nobody, will (in time, and with the right encouragement) become a fine, strong stallion, pawing the ground, aching for military action.

Do I make myself clear?

Tudio *risking all*

You are unsure that your gamble (to put your faith in a bloke like me) will pay off. You've been advised that the activities of my youth make me ineligible for greatness. But in your mind, Caesar, those youthful follies might just have prepared me well for what lies ahead. Yeah?

Caesar *measuring the Centurion with his eyes*

Yes.

Tudio

So, my guess is that the "great boon" that you ask of me is to shake off my former evil, drunken ways, and put in the hard yards as one of your centurions. That's it, isn't it?

Caesar smiles and nods.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xv: Ancient Rome, At the house of Theronius

58 BC

A very dignified, stylish sunroom. Enesta Theronius reclines gracefully, fiddling idly with the silk tassels hanging from one of many cushions and bolsters supporting her. Many small dogs frisk nearby. A number of solemn female slaves stand about. The lady smiles winsomely, as if in the midst

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of a delightful dream. A pair of brightly coloured parrots dangle from copper rings, which are suspended from beams above.

Then, the woman starts, as if hearing something. Without effort, Enesta summons the head slave with a brief gesture. The head slave approaches.

Enesta Has my unmarried daughter returned from her walk? If so, bring her to me immediately. Or, at least, if she is --

Just as the slave glides away, Ursillina and her two female slaves enter the room. The dogs rush up to bounce at them in excitement. Whilst Ursillina speaks with her mother, she must deal with the jumping dogs.

The actress who plays Jess Goodwood also plays Ursillina Enesta Theronius.

Ursillina *bright* Good morning, Mama. You look very pleased with yourself. Was your breakfast delicious, then? Oh, yes, Ora ... stay down!

Enesta My love! How radiant you look! Walking obviously suits you. Although I began to worry that you had been gone so very long ...

Ursillina We went for miles, up into the woods. The girls now ***hate*** me. *[This with a chuckle. To the slaves]* Go off now to the kitchens and feed yourselves. You've earned a rest.

The two female slaves obey. Ursillina lowers herself very gracefully into a chair.

Enesta *to her head slave* Bring up a tray of fruit, cheese and grain bread for my daughter.

The head slave imperatively clicks her fingers, and two other slaves dash off. The dogs continue to bound about in high alt.

Ursillina Thank you, Mama. I trudged farther and farther until --

Enesta My dear one ... You are truly in your best looks. This is all very promising.

Ursillina *head to the side, suspicious* Are you planning something?

Enesta Since your intended has unfortunately been carried-off with a

head cold, I've been racking my brains to find a quick and eminently suitable replacement. Of course, I need hardly say that I've been working in complete consultation with your dear Father on this matter.

Ursillina I have to say that I'm so very glad that he did pop-off, Old Trannulus: what a favour the gods did me there!

Enesta *pretending to be shocked* My dearest love! Marriage to Onyx Tiberius Trannulus would have given you a great deal of social status. Much more than any of your married sisters has, anyway.

Ursillina *matter of fact* Mama, he was very old, gouty and decrepid. If the head cold hadn't done for him, then most probably the wedding-night would have.

Enesta *admitting defeat* Yes ... I had in fact considered that ... he was a veritable antique, to be sure ... At any rate, that's all past history now, so no use dwelling on it.

No, I've found somebody else. Probably much better, in the long run. And a young man in the first flush of masculine eagerness. Your wedding-night will be all that you hoped for, I should imagine.

[Note of triumph]

Tudio! Antoninus Tudio Quentax.



Return to Paul McDermid and Jess Goodwood at the beach house. Paul, standing at the picture window, looking out at the choppy seas, whips around.

Paul *shocked* **Married?!**

Jess is obviously surprised at the interruption.

Jess Apparently so.

Paul Jeez ... we're gonna get hitched, you and me. Is that right?

Jess *lost* Wait a minute ... why is this about you and me?

Paul *argumentative* Come on! Here's a bloke who's upset everything with a pulse, and he's currently skating on very thin ice, as they say. Caesar is fed up with him, and so is everyone else. Well, that's me all over, isn't it?

Jess is so surprised and stunned by Paul's words that she can only open her lips to speak, without actually making a sound.

Paul *heavily ironic* Look, Jess-girl. I have to pull myself together, don't I? Otherwise, I can kiss goodbye to my footy career. I have been told to chuck aside mates that have stood beside me for years through thick and thin, only because all these high and mighty Wondong pricks think that they know how to deal with footy players on account of they've glanced at a book or two about Sports Psychology.

Again, Jess is unable to come up with any clear words. She seems to be having immense difficulty in speaking.

Paul *stirred up* My dad's ready to punch me face in, and who can blame him? I've got every yahoo with a shotgun in hand poised to shoot me down. So tell me ... how is any of this different to what our mate Tudio's going through?

Him and me ... we're the same bloke.

You know what we're like? That Shakespeare play thingo that I had to read at school. Henry the Something. This French dude gives the English King a box of tennis balls to represent the general contempt that people hold this King Henry in. And, like, Henry does this famous speech where he says: "I know why you're having a go at me, but I'm gonna turn the tables on you, you French bastards, and clean youse right up." Which he eventually does at Edencourt, Wars of the Roses.

Jess *stifles a giggle* Actually, "Agincourt: 100 Years War". But, you're 100% right,

there, about Prince Hal! That's what Perron was actually intending in this book ... to depict a Roman whose experiences were like those of Prince Hal, who then became Henry Vee (that is, the fifth King Henry).

Paul strides about, as if this will help relieve his angst. Then he stops in front of the girl.

Paul *gentler tone*

And the girl. Beautiful, polite, a real sweetie. That's you. That's gotta be you. It has to be you. Anyway, I'm imagining her as you. This is the girl I first saw when I swung onto the balcony, Tarzan-style. When I hugged fat old what's his name.

[Forestalling any response from Jess, he hurls himself into a chair]

Keep going. We got up to the part where your Mum tells you that I'm the number one bridegroom prospect.

Jess, stunned, flattered and discomposd, takes up the book again and mouths a few words.



Return to the Ancient Roman scene into which Paul broke. However, Enesta delivers a slightly different interpretation.

Enesta

Your wedding-night may be all that you might have hoped for, I should imagine.

[Note of triumph]

Tudio! Antoninus Tudio Quentax.

The breakfast tray arrives. It is set down on a small table which slaves bring closer to Ursillina. She begins to eat in a dainty, pleasing way.

Ursillina *unimpressed*

Ah! "The boy who kept Caesar waiting." And he's changed his name, by the way. He's now calling himself "Tribulates".

Enesta *surprised*

Why?

Ursillina *off-hand*

Because he thinks it makes him interesting (which it doesn't). And because he thinks that he can thumb his nose at all his betters, on

account of the glorious family who raised him.

Enesta

The 8th Legion are taking all before them. Quentax will apply to Caesar for Tudio to return home for a brief visit. It all fits in rather well, you know, for Caesar wishes to levy two more legions. What it is to be "a great man" ... Hmmm ...

All that aside, the 8th return to Rome in glory, with a showy parade as a resounding public relations exercise. Then, you'll be introduced to Tudio and the thing is done.

Ursillina *very
unimpressed*

Let's hear three resounding cheers for the invincible 8th and for their stalwart Centurion Tribulates.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xvi: Ancient Gaul

58 BC

A Battle in Northern Cisalpine Gaul Between Romans and Helvetii.



Straight into full strength fight: a real slug between Caesar and his legions, and the savage, determined Helvetii warriors. Tudio is right in the thick of it, mounted on Acron, slashing (with teeth clenched) at the ferocious Helvetii foot soldiers. He uses his shield to great effect, and he appears to be a virtual killing machine.

During this scene, there is a constant voice-over by Jess, who translates Perron's narrative. There is still meaningful sound from the battles, along with this voiceover. The fight slips out of focus, as a superb topographical map of Cisalpine Gaul moves across the screen. This map then fades off as we see and hear Roman foot soldiers marching over rough terrain. This is followed by Tudio riding through more difficult terrain, looking about him. Then more fighting: a Gallic ambush goes wrong, and the once-favoured enemy is slammed from all four sides by the might of Caesar's army.

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Jess *voice-over*

The tribe called the Helvetii intended to march in the direction of Rome. Caesar realized the very real danger of having these warlike men, who openly hated Rome and her people, bivouacking in the widespread and fertile country to Rome's North, with only the Alps and the Po River as natural boundaries to their savagery. Leaving a strong force behind him, Caesar (with three of his legions) undertook forced marches back to Italy, there to levy two more legions.

Tribulates let it be known amongst the officers that he and his close boyhood friends, Cratien and Linus, had once run from trouble and had hidden in these hills. He had thought at the time that the terrain would provide a perfect cover. The captains of the 8th Legion discussed this long and hard, then nominated Tribulates and other similar men to scout ahead in order to avoid what would obviously be likely sites for an ambush. Caesar's men were famed throughout the Known World for this style of fighting, whereby the enemy was tricked into surrendering their dominant position, only to fall into Rome's cleverly-laid trap.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene xvii: Ancient Gaul, In a Large Tent Made of Skins.

58 BC

There is a gathering of "heavies" from the 8th Legion, standing about in a tent, fully armed.

Facing them is a group of Gauls, male and female. Some larger men stand in sullen silence to the back. With sullen contempt, Tudio inspects them, with his superiors and other elite officers in the background watching him.

Tudio suddenly grabs a tall bloke from the back, and hauls him bodily forward, speaking to him in a tongue which he appears to recognize. Tudio and the Gaul are the same height, and they stare into each other's eyes.

Tudio in menacing tone Trenna brassock doss thet wrothic bwet-id?

The man mutters in terror, something unintelligible, such that Tudio must push his ear closer to the man's mouth.

Officer #1 How is it that you are conversant with this savage's lingo, Tudio Tribulates?

Officer #2 You're not a secret Celt, I trust?

Tudio Nah! I told you about Linus Paulliac ... how he got into a tiny bit of trouble a few years back ... Me and Cration Nidus scarpered with him until the heat died down. We made a helluva journey, to Gaul-Too Far.

Officer #1 And you still remember the language? Most odd!

Tudio Plus a couple of my slaves are Gauls. We jabber on at each other, when I'm in the mood.

Officer #3 So what did this wretch tell you?

Tudio *snorting* That you can't trust the Sequani.

The officers laugh at Tudio's words.

Officer #2 Hah! Tell us something newsworthy, old boy!

Officer #3 Well, we already knew that, Tudio! Romans cannot trust **any** of these heathens, if truth be told. If he's in the mood to blab, get him to blurt out the battle plans of these vile folk.

To the hostage, eye-to-eye and very close.

Tudio *nasty snarl* I don't need him to describe what they'll do.

They are fickle, these heathens. Aren't you, Billy? Eh? *Ladmil cots vrand penroth to-blarn, croth ne ladmil.*

Easily gulled, they are. Or at least, seem ... They hear what they

want to hear, then steal the cattle and grain, and burn the villages behind them. Crawling to Caesar's enemies: lying, fighting and planning to stop the power of Rome. It's all about rape, pillage, burn and turn-tail.

When I said that **we** can't trust them, I implied that **nobody** can trust them.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xviii: The Beachhouse at Anglesey, Just As We Left It

Jess looks up from the book, closing it over her fingers.

Jess That might be a good place to stop for a while. What do you think?

Paul is silently musing, as he continues to sit in the chair. He appears to be in a brown study, looking out of the window without actually seeing the view. Just as Jess is about to stand, Paul breaks the short silence.

Paul Here's the thing. As I just said before, I'm under orders to behave myself this year. Which means going to Club functions that I can't stand with some hare-brained bimbo model on my arm. Big turn off!

So, I was wondering ... if I had a nice girl like **you** to take around ... someone I like ... someone that I can actually talk to and have jokes with ... Would you be up for that?

Jess *amazed* Sure!

Paul It wouldn't be like "dating" or anything like that. It would just be the WAGS (Wives and Girlfriends) stuff ...

Jess I understand completely. We won't be going out together as such

(as a couple), but when there's a footy turn coming up and you need to escort someone, then you'd ask me. Correct?

Paul Yeah! And it would work really well for me because they'll see that I'm with this one, beautiful, clever girl from a good family and it will give me some bonus Brownie points.

Jess *not flattered* Well thought out.

Paul Plus, you'd have to get some glamour duds. I guess that at Uni you'll all live in jeans and Tees. Well, you know --

Jess I understand perfectly, Paul. I'll go on a shopping spree with Mum and my sister. We'll get the "clothes-horse" thing all sorted out with ball-gowns, cocktail frocks -- the lot!

Paul Good! Great! Oh, this is extra good! I was a bit nervous about asking you, because I thought you'd hate all those WAGS. But some of them are alright ... as WAGS go ...

Jess *reassuring* Look, I'm positive that I'll make lots of friends, Paul. It'll be good. I mean, it'll be as good for me as for you, because then I won't have to worry about organizing a social life. It'll come ready-made.

Paul Yeah ... oh, and ... from time to time I might have to ... you know ... put my arm around you and stuff, for when the media people want to take photos. You won't mind that, will you?

Jess No problem.

Paul And ... sometimes ...

Here, Paul's voice trails right away.

Paul *immensely shy* Sometimes ... Is it okay for me to kiss you, now and again? It won't mean anything. I won't try to root you or that. I just don't want you to misunderstand if I do it --

Jess When the occasion arises?

Paul *trying to find firm* Sort of ... Will you be okay with that?

footing

Jess

Sure!

Paul *very pleased with* That's good, that's good ... all settled.
himself

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II

TRIBULATES

ACT III

III, Scene i: Morning

Early January 2011

The Beach, Then The Balcony at the Anglesea Beach House

Camera is positioned at the edge of the water. Paul McDermid is seen running towards the camera, splashing through the shallowest wavelets, running past. He pulls up at the steps to the balcony.



The footy commentary is played alongside slow-motion shots of Paul (from the AUS season which has not long finished) showing occasional brilliance, and occasional stupidity or carelessness. The speed of the commentary drags/slows right down to a deathly groan. Paul the footballer falls to the ground in a heap, as seen in very slow motion.



Paul, gutted by his memories, stands hands on knees, sucking in the big breaths. The sweat from his head drips into the sand. He pulls it together, mounting the timber steps two at a time.



Jess is still in bed, having a quick phone catch-up with Chiu.

Jess Chiu. He wants us to be like ... casual. Opp-gender friends who have to lay it on thick for the camera (when the need arises).

Chiu *voice off* Oh, Jess Oh, you'll hate that!

Jess I get a social life along with a male friend who never lays a hand on me.

Chiu *voice-off* That's sterile ... Horrible!

Jess *sighs* I'll give it a chance. See how it pans out.

[*Pause*]

Hey! I think he's come back from his run. Keep in touch. 'Bye.

Chiu *voice off* And don't sell yourself down the river.



Breakfast is eaten on the balcony. The setting appears to be quite civilized; almost like a seductive TV advertisement.

Paul McDermid (who is sweaty from his beach run) wades into a very large but healthy breakfast.

Jess's morning repast is more modest. Propped up against the juice jug, in front of Jess, is the open book: "Tribulates".

Jess So things get a bit exciting just about now. But before I rabbit-on about Tudio's triumphant return, and the waving crowds, et cetera, et cetera, I need to fill you in about this evil dude, Lucilius Sextius Quentax. He's not Quentax's biological son; he's the son of Quentax's wife (Magula) and Publius Sextius Sabinus, during a former marriage.

They used to do that in Ancient Rome: divorce each other amicably so that they could remarry up the social scale. Quentax then adopted this Lucilius --

Jess looks up to notice that Paul is questing the air, frowning.

Jess *frowns* What's the matter?

Paul *worried* It's half-past eight and already I can feel the heat. You know that scorching, dry heat, and the northerly wind. What's the temp gonna be today, did you hear? ... 38? 39? I'm thinking "bushfires", for sure. This is a typical bushfire day, I'm afraid.

Jess Maybe ... It's a total fire ban today. Fingers crossed ...

Paul *unconvinced* Yeah ... Well, let's hope the peeps are careful with their blowtorches ...

 Anyway, go on about Tudio's step-brother. So this bloke is another adopted son of Quentax, is he? I think you said he was a nasty piece of work. Who did you say he was again?

Jess He's Tudio's adopted brother; Magula's son. And he's a **very** nasty piece of work ...

END OF SCENE

III, Scene ii: Ancient Rome

57 BC

The Private Room of Magula Drusilla Quentax

This gracious, sunlit room is superbly furnished, and filled with bric-a-brac pertinent to the era. Magula stands near a large picture window (of course, glass-less). Before her, holding a welter of parchments stand Zeffron and Dravidus, the latter holding a little bag of bones. Hashmi stands back. Zeffron and Dravidus have on their faces the expressions of exam cheats having been found out.

Magula *scolding* But you did not predict that my beloved son, Lucilius, would surprise us all by returning to my bosom from far-away Iberia. You missed that well and truly, Dravidus. For shame ... and you a well-respected augur!

Here, Dravidus hangs his head. But Magula has moved on.

Magula My Lucilius! And just in time to welcome the victorious Centurions in their homeward march from Gaul-At-Hand. I believe that the boy has ridden out (even now), all impatient, to ride beside the conquerors as they re-enter the gates of Rome.

[Turning accusatively on Dravidus]

That should have appeared in your auguries, little man.

Dravidus *desperate to* Yes ... Yes! Don't you remember, gracious Lady, that I pointed out
recover lost ground the course of Sirius across the transit of Venus. "Surely that
betokens," I thought --

Zeffron *helpful* Audibly!

Dravidus *inspired* Yes! Quite! I spoke my thoughts aloud ... "Can this not betoken (oh wondrous Lady Magula!) that your son from Spain would travel to your open arms and -- "

Magula *dismissive* Well, I can't recall your having said that. Surely I must have remembered ...

Anyway, returned to me he has. I cannot describe my happiness!
We must feast. And you must make a sacrifice to Diana.

Zeffron eager to please A goat, perhaps. Or ...

Magula *wafting off* Moreover, my gorgeous son, Tudio, is one of the triumphant centurions come back to Rome. My adopted boy will once again hold me in his arms and kiss my cheek. Could any mother know such joy? His betrothed and her parents will stand beside myself and Quentax to greet and celebrate Rome's triumph.

You must make a terrible fuss of the beautiful Ursillina. You know (better than anyone) how I must hate these blue-stockng ladies who try to frown one down with their weighty knowledge of bloodlines, of family histories -- of history in general! Oh, but dear Ursillina is the sweetest child, even though she might appear to be very bookish. I dote on her; be assured! She will be the loveliest

and best wife for our dear boy, Tudio.

Hashmi *bowing*

We three mere males can only dream of your untrammelled delight, gracious lady.

Magula *dismissive*

Then go! I must prepare such a feast that will make Rome tremble.

Tudio! Tudio! ... Where are you my brave boy?

Go! Go!

The three praeceptors quickly bow, scurrying out of the room.

STRAIGHT INTO NEXT SCENE

III, Scene iii: Ancient Rome

57 BC

A Narrow Corridor in the House of Quentax

Zeffron and Dravidus (still clutching a multitude of parchments to their chests) scurry along a corridor, congratulating themselves thankfully in having pulled that piece of chicanery off without a hitch. They are followed by the stern-faced Hashmi.

Out of the gloom, in front of the camera, with his back to it, steps Lucilius. He wears the toga and stole of a Roman patrician.

We see Zeffron and Dravidus pull up, surprised and not pleased. Hashmi is more in control of his features. Camera moves such that we are able to see Lucilius.

Dravidus *feigning
delight*

Ah! Dear Lucilius Sextius! We understood that you had scampered off to the gates of Rome in order to greet your beloved kinsman, Tudio and the other victorious Roman heroes.

Lucilius shrugs indolently.

Lucilius *contemptuous*

That were my intention, little schoolman. However, the gods decided otherwise. My horse is lame.

Zeffron *helpful* Well, you could have found another horse in the -- aaaaaagh!

Hashmi kicks Zeffron in the ankle. Zeffron tries valiantly to ignore the pain.

Hashmi My friends, let us not importune Lucilius Sextius Quentax any further. He is a busy man whose time is not limitless.

Lucilius tweaks several sheets of parchment from the hands of Dravidus. With a decided sneer, he glances over the sheets.

Lucilius *full of contempt* And from this I can guess that you've been interpreting the wishes of the gods for my Mama, have you? With bones, no doubt, and the viscera of chickens, hmmmmm? And of course, these redoubtable star-charts?

[Looks up, with withering contempt]

What did you promise her? The fountain of youth? A life free from care?

Zeffron and Dravidus quickly glance at each other. Dravidus rushes into speech, feverishly pointing at the sheets which Lucilius holds.

Dravidus You can see, noble Sextius, that the course of this very mysterious red star here, rising up in the North, gives to our house of Quentax that --

Lucilius shoves the parchments back at Dravidus with force.

Lucilius *contemptuous* Enough! Enough of this witless chatter, you rogue! My mother might be deceived by your prognostications, but I am not so. Be on your way!

They bow as one, then continue their egress. Lucilius, however, touches Hashmi on the shoulder as he passes. Lucilius appears to summon the other man, with an imperative beckoning finger. Hashmi halts, raising an inquisitive eyebrow. The two men withdraw into an alcove. The light from a wall-bracket flambeau plays reflectively on their faces.

Lucilius Have I understood a-right that my less-than-useless brother has been promoted with unseemly haste into Caesar's 8th Legion? Commanding his own cohort? And actually strutting before us

today in the latest of Caesar's self-promotional parades? Have I that right?

Hashmi You have. Due to the noble standing of the Quentax family, and to the love Caesar bore Tudio-once-that-was, this scion of Tudio is pushed very quickly into an exalted position. And yes, he has command of his own cohort. Of one of the finest in the legion, I gather.

Lucilius *open-mouthed* Incredible! And I've heard that he's dropped-in a new cognomen to impress the punters ... Can that really be true?

Hashmi *nods* That's right. "Tribulates": "I shall meet-out great suffering unto mine enemies."

Lucilius *appalled* Incredible! Impossible! I thought I'd heard the worst of his scandalous, outrageous stunts, but **this** -- And Quentax approves of this?

Hashmi Wholeheartedly. He seems very proud of the boy.

Lucilius *derisive* "Boy"! Yes, "boy". By Jove, I'd like to --

Well, no need to bother about him, then. He'll obviously do himself a nasty damage through his headstrong, impetuous, thoughtless ways. Or else he'll earn Caesar's displeasure. Either way will serve ... I'm a patient man ...

In an angry pet, Lucilius strides angrily in the direction of his mother's private room. Hashmi watches him, bowing in mockery with an expansive theatrical gesture (arms flourished aesthetically). Then Hashmi, stone-faced, resumes his walking.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene iv: Ancient Rome

57 BC

Caesar's Triumph, As Seen From The Quentax Balcony

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Since this "triumph" represents the end of only the first in a series of campaigns, it is not the huge Imperial triumph we might have expected. This is really only a military parade: a trooping of the colours. Tudio riding his Acron beside other centurions looks very manly, proud and happy as he waves to the adoring populace.

The "triumph" snakes its way through the main Roman streets, passing by under the Quentax balcony. Flower petals and laurel leaves are strewn over the troops from on high. Calls of "Caesar's Army!", "Rome!" and "Triumph!" can be heard. Ursillina and her family have joined the Quentax family (minus Tudio, who is at the head of the parade alongside four other young men). The three praeceptors, as expected, are stationed near Ursillina, and are armed with parchment scrolls.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene v: Ancient Rome, Night, On the Quentax Balcony

57 BC

In the midst of a luscious garden, on a low wall, sits Ursillina Enesta Theronius. She is delightedly studying unscrolled parchments filled with sumptuous Etruscan drawings. All three praeceptors stand about, watching the girl as she admires the historic scrolls. Their faces are wreathed in smiles, for it is not often that they are either thanked or appreciated.

Ursillina glowing with praise My dear professors, these are absolutely fascinating. Look at the workmanship which must have gone into -- Oh!

A sharp blast from a volley of trumpeters disturbs the academic interlude. Ursillina, allowing the parchments to drift about as she stands, rushes to the railing.

Ursillina surprised Why, what is this clarion-call? Are we summoned to battle?

The three praeceptors join the young lady. Over the noise of the crowd gathered below, at ground level, can be heard Magula, shrilly giving out orders and commands to all and sundry.

Hashmi smiling Ah! This will no doubt be the arrival of your betrothed, my dear. He is a tempestuous boy, indeed, but filled with the sweetest nature --

Dravidus leans over the edge.

Dravidus *frowning* No ... I don't think it is the real thing. This is just a practice ... a dress rehearsal.

Zeffron There are 20 trumpeters to greet young Antoninus.

Dravidus And three Egyptian dancing girls, as well as 15 Nubians, beating drums (thank Jove that they need no further practice at drumming! They quite give me a headache!) and --

Hashmi A bevy of tiny girls dressed *à la Grecque*, who are supposed to scatter rose petals under the hooves of Acron whilst they themselves skip about, gleefully.

Ursillina makes a face, then wanders back to the wall where she previously sat and to the scrolls, which she now rescues. Her gallants lazily follow in her wake.

Ursillina And all that Tudio will wish for is a square meal and a hot bath, I've no doubt. Does he despise such a show? Does he hate all this obsequious fawning?

Hashmi He will find all this adulation vastly entertaining, good lady.

Zeffron Magula had only one day to prepare, you know! No warning came until a breathless slave on a heaving hack cantered up this very morning, shouting that Caesar had sent a few of his cohorts home to give the people a good show. And that our wondrous boy would be at the very head of this cavalcade.

At this very moment, with a blood-curdling cry, the "wondrous boy" (in his complete Roman battle dress minus the weighty helmet) swings onto the balcony using a rope as if a jungle vine. Tudio leaps up to the surprised group, yelling his greetings happily, loudly and breathlessly.

Tudio *wild with joy* Here are the three best teachers that a young wastrel ever had. Hashmi! Your teaching me the manly arts when I was just a shaveling has held me in good stead. I'm now a fully-fledged fighting man. Put 'em up!

Tudio playfully shadow-boxes Hashmi (all unprepared), who works hard (and with profound grunts) to fend off the punches that are aimed at his upper arms and chest.

Hashmi *groans* Welcome home, Centurion Tribulates ...

Then Tudio turns to the beaming Dravidus, shaking his hand firmly whilst patting the older man's shoulder.

Tudio *smiling warmly* Dear old Dravidus. How's the fortune-telling business going? You may write me up a star-chart and check out some chook guts before I head back to Hither Gaul. Wait until you hear what I have to tell you about those arsewipes, the Gauls! You'll reckon that I've been snorting wild mushrooms, fair dinkum!

Dravidus *effusive* It is a special boon to have you returned to your precious family in one piece.

Then Tudio turns to Zeffron. He simply squeezes Zeffron, picking him up off the floor as he does so.

Tudio *grinning with strain* Zeffy! You still have these great pudding guts, I see. Why don't you reduce like that Egyptian doctor told you to? You'll burst, old cock!

Zeffron can only squeak. Tudio laughingly puts Zeffron down. He pats the three praeceptors on the arms, still overcome with joy to be back home again.

Then he seems to quickly wind down, for he has spotted Ursillina.

Zeffron Have you been reunited with your friends: Cration Nidus and Linus Paulliac? Have they told you that Magula had them thrown out of the estate, without a word of warning? They are shiftless fellows, to be sure, and apparently dependent upon you for sustenance. We made sure that they'd come a-begging to be re-instated in the house of Quentax.

There is no reply. Tudio's eyes are fixed on Ursillina. He stares at her, unbelieving.

Dravidus Your chief slave, Phrasus, found them lying about in a drunken stupor in the arboretum. Once told of this, the lady Magula (for all her appearance of airy carelessness) fairly leapt into action, and had the men hurl your friends bodily into the roadway. What a commotion that caused!

There is still no reply. Tudio is transfixed. Hashmi, ever on the alert, follows Tudio's gaze.

Hashmi Dear Lady Ursillina Enesta Theronius ... may I introduce to you my former pupil of whom I spoke: this is Antoninus Tudio Tribulates.

Tudio Ursillina ... My father Quentax sent a message to me not that long ago about an arranged marriage. I wasn't particularly thinking about getting spliced. But then I thought "Might as well as not."

Ursillina has no idea how to respond to this. So she simply smiles and nods.

Tudio They told me that you were beautiful beyond words. That pretty much sums it up: there are no words at all, not in any language, to describe what I'm feeling right now, when I look at you.

To the surprise of all (especially Ursillina), Tudio drops onto one knee, gathering the folds of the girl's gown to his face, and kissing them fervently.

Tudio *with adoration* I vow to love and protect you for the rest of my days. All my love will be --

[Interrupting himself; speaking to his former tutors]

Hey! Ya know what? Maggs has organized some sort of a fanfare for my homecoming. She's probably pacing around downstairs as we speak wondering where the hell I am. I'd better piss off quick. Better not keep her waiting. See yers all later at the banquet.

Tudio quickly kisses the hands of the startled Ursillina, leaps to his feet and charges off. At the edge of the balcony, as Tudio firmly grips the vine/rope, he jumps nimbly up onto the barricade, looks back and waves cheekily to the stunned quartet, then launches himself off into the night.

The three praeceptors and the girl maintain a stunned silence for a few seconds. Then Ursillina clears her throat.

Ursillina Uh ... erm ... Your former pupil is a larger-than-life character, to be sure. How on earth did you manage to control him?

Dravidus simply shrugs his shoulders.

Dravidus *matter-of-fact* Oh, but we didn't. He was always wild and untameable. Perhaps Hashmi, here, had the greatest success ... since he was the martial arts instructor.

Hashmi He soon outstripped me in the pugilistic arts, however.

There is a loud shout from below. Trumpets sound a glorious fanfare, accompanied by the insistent beat of drums and the joyous shouts. The four people on the balcony look at each other.

Hashmi *smiles* Lady Ursillina: it would appear that your intended husband has arrived in triumph at his ancestral home. Shall we all descend to greet him?

Hashmi assists the girl to stand. The small party saunters off.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene vi: Ancient Rome, The Feast to Honour Tribulates

57 BC

A group of men lie stomach-down on couches as they feed and drink lavishly. All the men listen intently to Tudio, who has Aurelius Publius Quentax on one side of him, with Lucilius Sextius Quentax (who assumes an interested demeanour) on the other.

Tudio You can't trust these depraved Gaulish Helvetii: total hooligans, every one of them. They have all these scummy ideas about what is fair and right, and they almost **blame** Caesar's armies for being able to build bridges in one day to cross, say, the Saone River, whereas they fart about for a full month without getting any further along.

Such bestial primitives! They swear to Caesar this and that, then immediately go behind his back to make covenants with Caesar's darkest enemies and think it right and just to do so! And, by Jove, you should hear of the slaughter which one lot of these savages meets out on another lot. Makes us Romans look like innocent Vestals ... No, really!

Another dinner guest I had heard it said that Julius Caesar has no peer as a military

strategist.

The men grunt their agreement.

Tudio You're right there, mate. He's a jucking fenious. You know what: he tries to empathize with the enemy. He can figure out what they'll do, how they'll react. And he tries little things all the time to see if he can lure them here and there in order to effect an ambush. Cunning as a shithouse rat, he is.

But it's bloody hard yakka fighting them. All these Gaulish bludgers ever do is to throw hefty missiles at us ... while you're manning a barricade or that, out of the blue, you'll cop a barrage of stones and rocks. Bloody heathens!

Another guest And so, Tudio, is the subjugation of these Gauls now complete?

Tudio No! Not by a long chalk! There's a whole herd of them that we haven't even seen yet. Gotta rein 'em in ... bring 'em under Roman control. We want total subjugation.

Quentax Then what was the purpose of your little triumph today, if there's more fighting to be done?

Tudio Aw, ya know ... Just a bit of a show to keep the peeps happy. It's not all beer and skittles up North. Sometimes the terrain gets in the way. But we're learning. Plus, I had to slip home to get married.

[Takes a swig of wine]

... Not all beer and skittles ... Yeah, we lost some good men when their cavalry got the better of us in a tight corner. I was spitting with rage to hear those arseholes dancing about, celebrating their little win: like they'd annihilated Rome itself. That just made me want to stick it right up 'em! Jove, I was angry.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene vii: Ancient Rome, In the Garden

57 BC

Amongst the cover of high bushes, we find Quentax & Tudio pissing, side by side.

Tudio You'd better get moving with this marriage. I've gotta get my troops back to Gaul-At-Hand. Re-join the mighty Caesar.

Quentax Don't ask me. It's all your mother's idea.

The men have finished pissing. They re-adjust their attire, then move into a more spacious part of the garden, in order to talk.

Tudio It's no big deal, is it? Maggs has friends in high places. Just a doddle, don't ya reckon?

Quentax shrugs.

Tudio That girl you've chosen for me is a real dreamboat. I've gotta thank you very much for that. But I don't have time to muck around. Need to get things chugging along.

Oh, and I'll need to borrow a couple of slaves to take back to the Alps with me. I'm too busy to look after m'self in camp, and I don't wanna drag the troops away from their duties.

Quentax Certainly. I'll make Orbex and Cartos available for you.

Tudio Goodoh! Yeah, and more food ... They don't feed us properly. I'm a growing boy.

There's a lot to consider.

I've learned heaps of stuff from Caesar. Like, tomorrow, I'm taking my boys down to those fields near the dog-and-bear pits for some serious drilling. I tell you what, Aurelius: I really love this soldiering stuff. Suits my style.

Quentax Excellent! Do you wish me to discuss your impending marriage with my wife?

Tudio Nuh! It's okay, I'll manage that. Gotta thank her for the celebrations at the same time. And something has to be done

about Cration and Linus. Can't leave them lying in the road; but if they're a nuisance for the family, then go they must! I'll have to organize all that with Maggs.

Quentax *looking at* You'd better be careful, Son. You're beginning to impress me!
Tudio afresh

They laugh. Tudio playfully slaps Quentax on the upper arm.

END OF SCENE



The marriage between Ursillina and Tudio has taken place.

III, Scene viii: Ancient Rome

2 months later, 57 BC

In Ursillina's Bedchamber on Her Wedding Night

Ursillina's long, sleek hair falls deliciously over her shoulders and down her back in a magnificent fall. All she wears are two flags of the purest silk; these are knotted at the shoulders.

Magula, holding Ursillina's hand, leads the demure bride into what will be her bedchamber. Along the lines of all the marvellous and romantic ancient bedchambers of cinema history, this one is no different. The bed stands on a raised dais, and is completely surrounded by silk curtains, which waft to and fro in the gentle breeze. Magula has gone to a lot of trouble placing beautiful classic statuary and earthenware on display in this vast room. Female slaves stand about awaiting their orders.

Ursillina is overwhelmed. She looks about her in wonder, which seems to delight the other woman.

Ursillina *rapt* Magula! This is the finest room in the world. Thank you ... thank you so much!

Magula gestures about her.

Magula As the new wife of Antoninus Tudio Tribulates, you could not have received less attention. Now, there's an army of drabs to serve you, bathe and dress you. Not all of them speak Latin, but sign-

language works, I've always found. They'll make themselves scarce when your husband arrives, which event will happen through **that** door over there. **Which-you-can-lock** should you desire privacy.

[Secretive, whispering to the girl]

There are times when the last thing you'll want is a romantic visit from your mate. Tudio will understand the locked door, and will not force his attentions upon you. I've told him that he must be the soul of gentleness and patience with you on this, your night-of-nights.

Ursillina From what I've seen of my husband, the locked door won't faze him a bit. He'll simply launch himself in the manner of a monkey over the balcony.

Magula *shocked* I don't think that he would dare to ...

[Diverted; claps to the slaves]

Come, girls, prepare the lady for the entrance of her husband, Tribulates.

The slaves, armed with brushes, perfumes, creams and oils, rush up, surrounding Ursillina and ministering to her beauty needs. Then, seconds later, they scamper out of the room, leaving Ursillina alone, sitting on her bed. The camera starts off outside the bed area, such that we see Ursillina in silhouette. Then, the camera is on the bed, behind the girl.

Every effort will be made to prevent this scene from becoming salacious, by use of camera angles.

Tudio, wearing a light, white tunic, whips open one of the silk curtains which shelter the bed. He stands there, every inch the ideal of a Romantic Hero, holding open the curtain, staring in wonder at his bride. Then, he spoils the whole effect by jumping at full stretch onto the bed with a loud grunt, dragging off his tunic with unseemly speed as he does so. We are unable to see his groin area, as this is hidden behind Ursillina.

Tudio Woo, woo! You look hot. How does this come off?

Without allowing the girl breathing room, Tudio tugs open the silken knots at Ursillina's shoulders, hauls off the silken covers such that the frightened girl is naked. He buries his head in her bosom. The young man makes animal noises whilst foraging at her breasts, then he leans back, gasping for breath. This is NOT by any means a Hollywood love scene!

Tudio *admiring, grinning* You're a bit of alright, aren't ya? You've got me all excited. Cop an optic at me old fella. Have ya ever seen anything as terrific as that? Makes ya tired just looking at it, doesn't it? Here ... have a touch-up.

Tudio grabs Ursillina's hand and we understand but do not see that he plonks it on his groin area. She lets out a gasp of horror.

Tudio *proudly* Gives yer goose pimples, don't ya reckon? Tell ya what: I'll root you a couple of times, then we'll get our duds on and stroll around the garden in the moonlight. Make it a memorable night. Zat sound good?

The girl gasps, then bursts into tears, sobbing desperately.

Tudio *worried* What's a-matter? What's wrong, Darl?

Look, we don't have to have the walk if you don't want to ...

Ursillina *sobbing* Your adoptive mother told me that you'd be gentle! I suppose I'm lucky that you didn't take me from behind!

Tudio *confused* Well ... I just thought that on our wedding night, we could be face-to-face, so that I can kiss you and that. We'll save the backend stuff for later ...

Ursillina manages to get her tears under control as her partner strokes her.

Ursillina *sniffing* I want to be a wonderful wife for you, I really do. But you jumped on me without any warning. I'm a virgin, Antoninus. Please remember that and don't bounce onto me.

Tudio *floundering* I'm a bouncy sort of person, I guess ...

Ursillina *wan smile* Perhaps we could start by kissing ...

Tudio moves in on his beautiful young wife.

IMMEDIATE SEGUE INTO THE NEXT SCENE

III, Scene ix: Back At The Balcony, Anglesea Beach House

January 2011

Paul pretends to vomit. Loudly.

Jess surprised Are you okay?

Paul sour-faced Don't read that romantic crap. The sex bit is okay, but the kissing is a real turn-off.

Jess crestfallen Oh ... Actually, the sex bit wasn't as raunchy as I made out. In the book, I mean. I fluffed that up a bit to be entertaining ... Old Perron would never have gone into that amount of detail. But I won't add my own take on it, if you'd rather not.

Paul You know those scenes in movies where the man and woman go into a clinch? Well, most blokes hate that. Chop all that smooching stuff out. It's just chunder-thunder.

Jess confused So why do guys flock around blue movies? What about bucks' turns and that sort of thing? There's always a porn flick, isn't there?

Paul You don't get it do you? "Love" is boring, "sex" is not. Keep the sex bits in, but no romantic guff ... please!

Jess even more confused So, shall I finish this chapter?

Paul giving in, but only slightly If you skip over the shitty stuff ... yeah, okay.

Jess reading and translating "The bold young bridegroom took pity on his bride and gently coaxed her with ..." Oh! Um ...

[With her finger on the words, moves forward in the narrative until

she arrives at a "safe" passage.]

"Tudio and his Ursillina slept naked through the night in the lady's bed. They agreed to be as close as two people could be, given that (all too soon) Tribulates would return to Gaul."

Jess closes the book. Paul is standing at the edge of the decking, frowning. He looks about, slapping his palms on the deck railing.

Paul *worried* I can't see any smoke, but I feel it's out there ... It's just too hot and windy. I'm not happy. I'll give Dad a ring.

Jess You're thinking of fires ... I can't smell anything.

Paul *going into the house* Well, you wouldn't ... we're on the North coast of the Peninsula and it's a northerly wind. Smoke would be blown away from us.

Jess *following Paul* I was just going to say that ...

In the large, spacious lounge room, we see a close-up of the TV (news channel), which Paul has switched on.

TV news reporter ... and strong northerly winds are causing havoc for fire fighters on the Bellarine Peninsula. With high temperatures predicted today, local fire fighters have moved into action to try to get the scrub fires under control. As yet, there is no danger to homes or buildings ...

We see newsflash shots from a helicopter of the Bellarine Peninsula with great plumes of smoke rising.

Paul is in another room, barely audible. He marches back into the lounge room.

Paul *disgusted* Apparently, this morning, some wanker didn't douse his campfire according to the prescribed method, and one gust of wind got hold of his glowing embers -- Whoosh!

[Change of tone: taking command]

Dad says you're welcome to stay here. Or I can take you home. Maybe better stop here. It won't get this far. I'll have to go back, of course. But you'll be alright here. You won't be frightened on

your own?

Jess I can't stay here.

Paul The house has got a u-beaut security system.

Jess No, I mean I can't stay here.

Paul Do you want me to take you home, then?

Jess That's not what I meant.

She goes for her handbag, then wallet, and pulls out a laminated card. This she flashes in front of Paul.

Jess *forceful* See this? It's a genuine Victorian First Aid certificate.

You know how they always set up a rescue area for the fire fighters and evacuees ... They could probably use me at the nerve centre. I'm sure I'd rather be helping people than sitting on my arse regurgitating Tudio's escapades ...

Paul Are you sure?

Jess Paul! I'll be 18 in a few weeks. I should be doing something really important. I'm not a little kid anymore.

Paul acknowledges this with a lift of his eyebrows.

Paul If you want adult excitement, there's other ways to get it.

Jess *appealing* I should get out of my comfort zone. This would be great for me. A real step forward.

Paul *sarcastic* For you who have recited Latin poetry before the Most Reverend Archbishop Tate, this would be a little doddle, wouldn't it?

Jess *excited* Yes!

Paul Okay. I'll take you back to the real world, to the big bush barbeque, and then I'll meet up with Dad and me brothers to fight the fires. And you can shore-up the rescue brigade. Is that alright?

She grabs his hands, bouncing about.

Jess *squeaking*

Let's do it!

END OF SCENE

III, Scene x: Aerial Reconnaissance of Brindlebury Estate as Fire Approaches

Early January 2011

Aerial shots from a moving helicopter, taken as approaching and then flying over Brindlebury Estate.

The fire front can be seen approaching the vineyards. The helicopter and camera move around the estate, such that we can see Libby and her married daughter evacuating: with pets, trailer, etc.

Down, down, down into the house moves the camera, via a back window. Into the toilet. There on the toilet wall, near the window (so that a man will see it whilst urinating) hangs the paper on which Paul has written up (in large, thick, black letters) this mantra from the Senior Player group.

On the paper is written:

FOCUS

POWER

COMMITMENT

MOTIVATION

DEDICATION

INVOLVEMENT

A sharp gust of wind blows the paper off the wall, to the floor.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene xi: A Road on the Side of a Hill, Then To Brindlebury January 2011

Paul's ute is seen bowling along the rough road, up the hill. But ahead, there is a blockage of men, road equipment and huge machinery. The northerly wind crosses the road from left to right, bringing

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with it the heat of an oven, grit, sand and dirt. It is a foul, dangerous wind. To the right can be seen a large eucalypt forest capping the hill, over which a large cloud of dark grey smoke gathers as it is immediately blown south.

Paul pulls up as a chap wearing fire-fighting gear and a Foreign Legion sun cap strolls up. The man holds up a STOP sign. Paul winds down the window to shout above the wind.

Paul *loudly* I've got a young lady here who's volunteering for the First Aid booth. Any ideas where we can find that, mate?

Jess strains to hear what is said, but the man's answer to Paul is drowned by the howling wind. Paul turns to his left, squinting past Jess down into a valley. Paul turns back to shout at the sign-holder.

Paul *loudly* Down there, is it? At the school? Okay, well she'd be better off to get herself down the hill by foot. I'll turn back ... don't worry.

Again, we cannot hear what is said by the man. There's a lot of pointing, and some instructions which Paul listens to keenly. He nods, then thanks the man before turning to Jess.

Paul Yeah, will do. Okay thanks mate!

Jess *unsure* Down that hill, is it?

Paul *to Jess* Yeah. The Mullum Mullum School is where they've set up the Assembly Area. You can see the oval from here. Hike down there as quick as you can. You've got your phone?

Jess Sure!

Paul pats her leg a couple of times.

Paul I'm going around to Wheeler's Road, then onto the vineyard. Got to try and save the property. We've had fires before. You can outsmart the buggers if enough of you get onto it ...

Jess *opening the passenger door* You be careful now. See you. 'Bye.

Paul, frowning with worry, watches Jess scamper down the bushy slopes, away from the fire front. Then he drops a vigorous u-turn, and tears off, revving his ute mercilessly.

Paul *to himself* I know a smartarse way down to Brindlebury from here, don't I?

Now, where did that crazy Timmy and I come on our sickles that time?



Paul, Tim Keenau and other bikers are jinking and weaving through the bush. They hare across a huge green, sloping paddock. On three sides of this paddock, thick dry sclerophyll forest stands. The motorbikes slew around the paddock, then off in the opposite direction, into the eucalypts. The laughter of the young men rings through the air.



Paul *pleased with self* And here it is!

The same paddock is no longer green, but brown and tinder dry. With thick smoke blanketing the scene, Paul guns his ute across it, hurtling into the forest on the other side.



Paul has skirted the fire and all roadblocks and is very pleased with himself as he drives back to Brindlebury Estate, the road is covered with smoke and wind-blown dust, which seems to obscure everything. Suddenly, Paul slams on the brakes. In the rear vision mirror, we see a young man (Travis Goodwood) running up to the ute. The young man rips open the passenger door, leaning in. He is breathless.

Travis Goodwood Hi! I thought you didn't see me back there. I'm supposed to be fire-fighting with the McDermid family.

Paul *pleased* Yeah! That's right. That's me. I'll take you there.

Travis laughs as he hops into the passenger seat of the ute, closing the door just as Paul guns the motor.

Travis Yeah, I recognized you. I'm Jess's brother, Travis.

Paul glances quickly at the young man, looking both surprised and pleased.

Paul Ah! G'day!

The men shake hands awkwardly. Paul is trying to drive through thick smoke.

Travis Dad thought I might be able to help out. The fire's nowhere near us, you see.

Paul *nods* Goodoh ... I've sent Jess to the school, to the Assembly Point. She wants to practise her First Aid. Now, we've got to pick up some equipment from the sheds before we do anything else ...



Long shot of the many sheds connected with running a vineyard. Palls of smoke, burnt leaves and burning embers rush over the scene, as the wind is fierce. The ute is left running whilst the two young men jump quickly out. What looks like a gigantic toolshed is padlocked, so Paul must unlock it with keys in the pocket of his shorts. Paul and Travis rush inside, then fill the ute quickly with impedimenta.



Back in the ute.

Paul *shouts* I hid that stuff after the last fire we had so that I'd be ready.
There's nothing worse than not being able to find your fire fighting stuff. Almost as bad as losing the fishing tackle.

Travis Nice work!

END OF SCENE

III, Scene xii: The North End of the Brindlebury Estate; Fire fighting In Earnest

January 2011

At the far end of the vineyard, among the undulating hills, fire has taken hold of the thick bush backing onto Brindlebury Estate. The scene is very frightening, with the silhouettes of the people fighting the fires seen against a backdrop of flames. Eucalypts and scrubby bushes are all quickly engulfed by the bushfire. The men and women use hessian bags and water-spraying knapsacks. The heat and wind are intense.

Tony McDermid, Auntie Rae Philpot, Paul's elder brother Mick, and Tony's son-in-law Graham are in the thick of it. All are sweaty and filthy. They wear sunglasses, and have large cloths or handkerchiefs over their mouths, Wild West style. They are joined by Paul and Travis. The ute is now parked back some distance from the fire front.

The fire pushes everyone back onto the back fence of Brindlebury. We see (but cannot hear) a desperate Tony rip off his face protection to roar instructions. Clearly, the battle is being lost. Mick draws Auntie Rae back. This is very dramatic and heart-wrenching.

Two fire trucks drive in from the West. The fire fighters play hoses on the flames, dousing them. Frantically, everyone works to control the fire. With a massive effort the fire moves to the East, and away from the Brindlebury property.



The fire trucks now move Eastward, with sirens blaring. Once clear, the only sound emanates from the disappearing sirens, and the sound of dead branches dropping to the ground. Travis, Mick and Graham wander about, spraying any bushes which are still smoking. The ground crackles and crunches under their feet. On hearing his name called by Paul, Travis turns. Paul hands to Travis bunches of keys.

Paul You're in charge of the ute. When you think it's safe, get everyone back to the house. Don't let Auntie Rae out of your sight. She's a bit gung-ho about fires, and she's just as likely to sprint off to take on the whole fire front on her own. She has to stay with Dad -- with Tony. Alright? You got that?

Travis Yeah, sure. I thought we were goners until the fires turned up.

Paul affectionately pats Travis on the upper arm.

Paul Yeah, mate ... I know ...

Paul looks about him. His father is overcome and has moved back to the fence. Auntie Rae comforts him. Then Graham rocks up.

Paul I'm going down the hill to catch up with the fire trucks. Are you staying here?

Graham I'd better ... just in case. It could flare up again. Anything's possible.

Paul Good man! Try to keep Dad calm, will ya? Maybe we can contain this thing ...

[Yelling at his brother]

Hey, Mick! I'm headed down the hill to lend a hand. You coming?

END OF SCENE

III, Scene xiii: Quick Medley of Scenes Related To The Bushfire

Jan 2011

The fire trucks which were seen in the previous scene have advanced on the fire, by travelling eastward. We can see Paul and Mick jogging down a rough dirt track. On reaching the trucks, they step up to the flaming trees beside the fire squad.

Aerial shots indicate the huge menace of the fire. A crackling radio news bulletin can be discerned, but it is barely intelligible.

Shots of men and women working frantically to save houses. Amidst wind-driven smoke, burnt leaves and twigs, and dust, these people soldier on without rest.

Mick takes a quick swig of a bottled drink, passing it to his brother, Paul, who also drinks greedily.

An AFS (Oz Fire Squad) bloke holds up a large map. Several tired, dirty fire fighters stand around him, as the man points to both the map and to the terrain.

Eternal trails of smoke billow over a line of cars as they slowly move along a road deep in the bush.

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The camera catches shots of small children howling in fear, and mothers trying to calm them. People wander along the road back and forth.

A dog sits alone near a fence howling mournfully, with its head back.

There is a real danger of injury as large eucalypt branches, licked by flames, crash down onto parties of fire fighters. A woman's scream is heard, and many men rush into the scrub, indicating that someone has been injured.

SEGUE INTO NEXT SCENE

III, Scene xiv: Dawn, At The Fire Front

January 2011

Choosing a firebreak, several men have bedded down where they stand, in sheet exhaustion. Mick inelegantly drops to his knees, then keels over. Paul drops like a stone beside him. In the background can be seen the skyline (the crown of a wooded hill) where flames can be seen, along with other fire fighters.

Paul begins a series of tummy-tucks, breathing words from his mantra with each exercise.

Paul *breathy* Focus, Power, Commitment, Motivation, Dedication, Involv --

Suddenly, his arm is grabbed, catching him mid-tuck.

Mick *ropeable* ***What - the - fuck - are - you - doing?***

Paul *lying down again* Nothing! Remind me to ring Jess when I wake up.

Mick grunts in response.

The camera moves back then up into aerial shot of dawn rising, with the fires continuing to burn.

However, the wind is not so strong now.

END OF SCENE, END OF ACT III



ACT IV

IV, Scene i: The Mullum Mullum Assembly Point

January 2011

There is a vast crowd of people of all ages assembled in the tent city on the Mullum Mullum School oval. The fire can still be seen in the background but is far enough away to not endanger the inhabitants. The sun's heat is kicking-in, and the northerly wind is again in evidence.

Paul and Mick, each unbelievably filthy and sporting two-days' growth, find Libby, their sister Geraldine (married to Graham), Auntie Rae and Jess. They are all busy with their First Aid work, but Libby and Geraldine find time to kiss both men. Paul nods towards Jess but speaks to Libby.

Paul Did Travis Goodwood stay on at the vineyard, or ... ?

Libby Yes, yes ... Dad, Graham and Travis are holding on there. Luckily, no major damage. They're just putting things back to rights. But the wind could change again ... we just don't know.

Libby smiles bravely.

Libby Come on! You're next. Let's get those eyes bathed.

Paul No, it's okay. Do Mick. I want Jess to look after me.



Jess has finished attending to Paul. His eyes are bathed, and his many cuts and abrasions have been disinfected.

Jess There you go. All done. Next please.

Paul stands with difficulty.

Paul *groans* I'm as stiff as a board. I slept on the hard ground last night, in a firebreak.

Paul looks Jess over in a measuring way.

Paul Are you sure you're coping with all this?

Jess Yeah, I'm fine. Your mother, sister and I are a team. We don't need to speak ... we just know what each other is thinking. And when it all gets too horrible, we all hum the school song together.

Paul I know a really rude version of your school song. You must remind me to sing it to you one time.

Okay, I'll leave you to it. Thanks for lending your brother to the cause.

Paul turns to go, then turns back.

Paul I'm really proud of you. When I was 17 going on 18, all I thought about was flexing off to get pissed. And here you are, patching people up, giving support.

See ya!

Paul marches off, to grab a lift back to the fire front. He hauls himself and his equipment into someone's Landrover, in which Mick is already a passenger. Then the vehicle speeds off.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene ii: The Bushfire Continues

January 2011

Paul is once again performing his Wondong mantra of tummy-tucks and buzzwords. This time, Mick starts belting his brother with a fire-damaged hessian bag.

More firefighting. The brothers have followed along with everyone else, keeping at the forefront of the fire, trying to back-burn and contain it.

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They make a real effort to save a very stylish house, nestled in the bush. The female householder, on the verge of evacuating under AFS instruction, begins to scream at her husband. She looks at Paul in the manner of a frightened animal. Her husband lies on the ground as if dead.

Paul *concerned* What's happened? Is this a heart attack, do you know?

Mick *also concerned* Did he complain of chest pains at any time?

The woman can only cry. The brothers drop to their knees beside the man, checking him over. Paul makes a face.

Paul *to Mick* It's probably just a faint. Well, whatever is wrong with him, we have to get them out of here. I'll carry him, and you take care of his missus.

[To the woman]

Come on ... it's alright. We're going to get you and your husband down to the road, then evacuate you both. And then we'll come back to fight this fire, and hopefully save your house. It's going to be alright, so don't get yerself into a state.

[To Mick]

Help me stand him up so that I can sling him over my shoulder, will ya?

Mick assists Paul to promptly deposit the man (who is now gaining consciousness, and is babbling incoherently) onto Paul's back, such that Paul can support the man's body by using the fireman's lift. Mick totes the small case which is all that the couple could salvage. The little party moves off down the hill. In the background we can see fire fighters snuffing out spot fires.

We hear snatches of conversation between the woman (who is now more composed) and Mick as the party reaches the road.

Mick *cheery* I'm impressed. You and your husband have certainly taken all the precautions. I really believe that we can save your house. If you've got bushfire sprinklers and sarking in the roof, and the gaps in the brickwork have been sealed and ember-proofed, and there's no exposed timber or decking --

Paul has gently lowered the incapacitated man such that he will be comfortable beside the road.

Paul *sarcastic* What are you? An AFS expert all of a sudden?

Mick *defensive* No, it's true! If you do the sensible stuff before the bushfire season (which these people have obviously done), then you've got less chance of fire damage. It's all about the use of pebbles for mulch and banks of fire-resistant bushes. You keep the flammable trees (as in gumtrees) well away from the house ... and like that.

Ya know, if more people did the right thing ...

Paul stands out in the road, ready to flag an approaching truck.

Paul *waving* Here's a likely truck. I'll get him to stop.

You know what, Micky, you oughta receive the Prime Minister's Good Neighbour Prize.

Paul waves, stepping into the path of the truck.

Mick *jovial* Bite yer bum, little brother.

The truck obligingly pulls up, allowing Paul to athletically climb up the steps and address the tired-looking driver face-to-face.

Paul This bloke's crook. He probably needs medical attention. I think the woman's okay, but she's frightened.

Driver Yeah, we'll take 'em. Are you blokes coming too, or ... ?

Paul Nuh, nuh ... we'll get back to knapsack duty.

Driver You're never Paul McDermid from the Wild Dogs?

Paul jumps down, so that he is able to assist his brother to lift the man and woman up onto the truck.

Paul Yeah, that'll be me.

Once the people are on board, with the woman giving profuse thanks to Paul and Mick, Mick shouts "Righto!" and the truck moves forward.

Driver *calling out* Cool change on the way. The wind'll turn!

Paul Yeah ... hooroo ...

Paul and Mick leave the couple in the hands of the truck driver, wave goodbye and then sprint back up the hill.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene iii: Quick Medley of Scenes Related To The Bushfire January 2011

At the chaotic Assembly Point, Jess is seen to be crying as two other women weep. Their children cry and bawl in sheer fright. Jess seems to be powerless to act. She looks about helplessly.

Mick and Paul, filthy, with their faces covered by hankies, sweat profusely as they work tirelessly on the spot-fires.

With people charging about around them, Jess assists Libby to dress wounds sustained by a group of volunteer fire fighters.

The blazing skeleton of a house can be seen, with its owners, silhouetted against the conflagration, sobbing in each other's arms.

Paul takes a swig of water from his canvas bag, then races off like a startled hare after Mick. As we watch Paul running down the hill into the scrub, he appears to fall heavily.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene iv: In A Dark, Ancient Corner Of The Casualty Room, Wondong Base

Hospital

January

2011

Jess rushes along a crowded corridor, bearing a small, cold bottle of lemonade. She quickly passes a room where several patients sit about watching a news special on the fire situation. As she flits past, we see and hear the following snippet of news.

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Female newsreader ... and as yet, have been able to identify all but one of the victims, who is believed to be a male ...

Then Jess turns a corner, to re-enter the depressing room where the orderlies have put Paul. Because of the heavy demands put on the Casualty Room (mainly due to the bushfire emergency and heatstroke victims), Paul has been shunted into an almost forgotten corner of the clinic. A high window lets in bright light, which is at immediate odds with the dull, oppressive darkness of the corner where Paul is stationed. There is almost a Dickensian feel to this scene.

Paul (face covered in a 4-day growth) sits on an old chair, with his heavily bandaged left leg extended. His eyes look hideous, and he is utterly filthy and unkempt. He is bored as well as upset, so he sighs gustily. Jess approaches, handing Paul the drink, which he grabs, twisting off the cap, drinking the cold, sweet liquid down immediately with several gulps. He slakes the back of his hand over his mouth.

Paul Thanks. That barely touched the sides.

Jess *laughing* I didn't even get a chance to say: "Here's your lemonade". Do you want another one?

Paul *depressed* Not just yet.

Jess I've been up at the nurses' post, trying to scunge that drink for you. Everyone's talking about the cool change that's on the way. It'll turn the fires in on themselves. What a relief! We'll be able to sleep tonight.

Paul *impatient* I don't give a fuck about --

[Softening]

Sorry, Jess. I'm a bit scared about my leg. I wanted to be in perfect form for the footy. We're coming up to full strength training in about a week. The holiday is over ... ya know how it is. And now I'm going to be hobbling around on a gammy leg. I'll probably get tetanus out of this. "Pissed-off" isn't the word for it!

Jess *reasonable* You should ring the people at the footy club and get the club doctor to wizz over to look at you.

Paul *trying to control his anger* With what? My phone was destroyed somehow during the fire.

With a cheeky look, Jess dives into her handbag, smuggly dragging out her stylish mobile phone.

Jess The battery hasn't run out yet, thank goodness.

Paul *nasty tone* And what effing number will I ring? All my phone numbers were stored in my mobile. All lost. All gone.

Jess takes charge, swiftly dialling a number, then listening intently.

Jess Hi, Dad! Are you okay? Everyone safe? Ah, that's great news.

No, I'm ultra-fine, but Paul's not. He's hurt his leg.

Listen! Can you get onto the Wondong footy club and get me a phone number for the club doctor? Paul and I are at Casualty up at the Hospital, but we've been triaged out of existence. It's a hell-hole here on account of the holidays and all the unexpected injuries due to the fires. Paul really needs attention on his leg: it's injured.

... Sure! That will be great. And as quick as they can. Okay?

Jess snaps the phone shut and replaces it in her handbag. She looks pert and prim as she makes a face at Paul. He grins in spite of himself.



Jess once again returns to the horrible spot where Paul is encamped, with another small bottle of cold lemonade, to find Paul's father Tony and Dr Monaro from the Wild Dogs standing about, chatting with Paul.

Paul No, I don't know what it was. We were running down a slope to get to some fresh spot-fires when I crashed to the turf. At first, I didn't notice it. Jess cleaned it, deloused it, then put on the bandages.

Silently, Jess passes the bottle to Paul. He nods his thanks.

Paul This is Jess. My life-saver.

Dr Monaro *to Jess* It was you who treated the wound, was it?

Jess Hi, Doctor. Yes, I touched and did as little as possible. I cleaned the wound with pre-boiled water and sterile swabs. Then I tried to dry it, and then I found some Iodine spray, which I used on it. And then, you can see, I tried to hold the gash together with some band aids. I sprayed again with the Iodine.

Dr Monaro *nods* Good!

 I'll stitch that up and he'll be fine. Okay, we'll get you a tetanus shot, Paul, and a painkiller jab. And your eyes are very smoke-affected. I can get some drops for that. I'll quickly treat you here and then we'll drive you home.

The doctor begins his ministrations. Paul looks at Jess, seeming to be much less worried now.



Outside the hospital, as Paul is assisted into the doctor's car, Tony moves up towards Jess.

Tony The cool change is here. It's almost cold now.

Jess I hope he'll be alright. He's terribly worried about his footy future.

Tony *ironic* Yeah ... so he should be ...

Jess looks uncertain how to take that.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene v: Anglesea, The Beach House, The Balcony

January 2011

Close up of Paul's lower leg, on which can be seen a long, clean gash, now neatly stitched. Camera backs away, to show Paul leaning over, staring at his wound.

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Jess *voice off* And now for the news. Valuable Wild Dogs centreman, Paul McDermid is today recovering from life-threatening injuries sustained while running down a hill. He is expected to make a full recovery. And now for the other news: World War III has broken out amongst all the countries on the Atlantic and Pacific rims.

Paul *voice off* McDermid was airlifted to safety when his life raft went down in Port Phillip Bay during a snow storm. 255 grey nurse sharks were attacking the rubber raft as Macca was rescued just in time by a helicopter from HMAS "Lost Cause". And the only injury to this brave young man was a short gash to his left leg.

Jess *voice off* Received when McDermid decided to shave his hairy legs with a rusty razor. But will McDermid ever play footy again? Find out in our next gripping episode of "Doc Furphy, Bringing Hygiene and Wellbeing to the Ozzie Bush".

Camera backs away, such that the balcony and its occupants can be seen. Both Paul and Jess are dressed in warmer clothes than previously, and the weather is not good. However, Paul smiles broadly.

Paul So ... we're back at the beach house. Funny how things turn out ... You'll be able to grind on with that Roman book.

Jess Don't know if I will, though. I think you might have had enough of old Tudio and his hijinks.

Paul Funnily enough, I'm actually very keen to hear more. Where were we up to?

Jess Tudio had married Ursillina. They were just about to become passionate when you threatened to throw up.

Paul Yeah, but after we skipped that mushy stuff ... He was going to drill his troops, then re-join the legion in ... where was that place? Dithering Gaul?

Jess Are you really sure that you want me to go on with this ...
Sometimes I get the impression that it's a Chinese water torture

for you. It can't possibly be very comforting. I mean, you might just be being nice or polite to me, asking me to translate it.

Paul No. When you know me a lot better you'll find out that Macca is never nice, polite, tactful or patient.

You've read it before, haven't you? What's coming up? Is it just more of the same?

Jess I've read bits and pieces of it over the years, but not the entire work until now. There's tons to cover. No, it's really involved from now on. There's fighting and tactics with Caesar, of course. But there's also a couple of plots and sub-plots. Quite interesting ...

Paul Fire away!

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene vi: Ancient Rome, On The Quentax Estate, The Kitchen 57 BC

Zeffron, looking very eager, sits in a corner of the Quentax kitchen, where a slovenly, obese female slave slops some sort of gruel into a wide, wooden bowl that the tutor holds between his knees.

There are many slaves of both sexes wandering slowly about in the background. Note that the only metal objects are made of tin, and all implements are wooden.

Nearby to Zeffron's perch, the kitchen fire is roaring. As Zeffron lifts his spoon to his mouth, the scene is frozen.

Paul *voice over, upset* No! Cut out the fire! I've had enough flames to last me a lifetime.

Jess *voice over, sighs* So how do they cook the food?

Paul *voice-over, laughing* Like normal people: in the microwave!

As Jess speaks, the "frozen" shot becomes active again, and the film rolls on with Zeffron continuing to eat. Three male slaves carry a large piece of tin over to a position in front of the fire, and deposit it there, as if reacting to Paul's demand.

Jess *voice-over* Yeah, good on you! We're only in the kitchen for a few moments, and anyway, it's all contained. The slaves are in complete control.

 So ... where are we? You've sent a letter back home with Cartos, who is one of the slaves you took with you to Gaul. Dravidus rushes into the kitchen to tell Zeffron about it.

Dravidus appears, waving a rolled parchment (which is strapped and sealed). He is breathless from rushing. Zeffron continues to eat hungrily.

Dravidus *panting* I divined that you'd be here, feeding your face.

Zeffron *thickly* Well, you wouldn't be much of a soothsayer if you couldn't figure **that** out. Where **else** would I be, old boy?

Dravidus again waves the sealed parchment roll.

Dravidus *full of news* I have here the latest missive from our Tudio!

Zeffron is thrilled. Although this must take priority over his breakfast, nevertheless, he hurries to scoop down the last morsels of his gruel. Then, he puts aside the bowl.

Zeffron *excited* Oh, tell me! What does he write?

Dravidus *feeling* No, no! We must share this with Hashmi.

important

 For here we have an eye-witness account brought to us directly from the war zone. Portentous and momentous. News from the battle front, allowing us to imagine ourselves (clad in shining armour) routing the vile Gauls. "A Valiant Soldier's Recollections of His Sojourn With Caesar."

 However, nothing may be known until we three are together. We shall read this bulletin as one.

Zeffron But where -- ?

Dravidus holds up his hands for silence and closes his eyes. Humming one note, he seems to "see" even though his eyes are closed.

Dravidus I see him in the garden, meditating.

The two men bustle out of the kitchen.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene vii: Ancient Rome On The Quentax Estate, The Lovely Garden 57 BC

Hashmi (in meditative mood) is found to be wandering about in a very delightful, aesthetically pleasing informal garden, dominated by a massive cypress tree.

Zeffron and Dravidus enter this garden in a rush, then slow down (looking relieved) when they spot Hashmi strolling around at the far end of the garden.

As Dravidus steps forward, he is stopped by Zeffron.

Zeffron Should we not **also** share our news with the young mistress?

Dravidus Oh, no. No doubt she has received her own letter from the young master, filled with quotations from romantic verse. For she will not care to hear of blood-bathed battles nor of the violence attendant on the warrior's life.

Zeffron *nods with understanding* No, indeed! The language of love ...

They then resume their bustle in the direction of Hashmi, who has seen and heard his colleagues, and awaits their arrival. Hashmi studies the pair under frowning brows.

Dravidus waves the tightly rolled parchment.

Hashmi *unwelcoming* Well?

Dravidus *glowing* A letter from abroad! From the lad. News of his triumphs. Of his conquests. But we would not read it until you were by.

Hashmi Go ahead!

Zeffron, who has been nodding wisely, sits, smiling with anticipation. Hashmi stands, with frowning brows. Dravidus clears his throat, breaks the seal and leather ties, then majestically unrolls the letter, full of importance, and begins to read it in the grand manner.

Dravidus *reading* "The tucker here is substandard. Send more food."

Hashmi snorts derisively. Zeffron tries to appear impressed. Dravidus looks at his audience, as if hoping that there is more substantial news to follow.

Dravidus Er ... Yes ...

[Reads, as if the missive had come from the gods]

"I've returned Cartos alone with this letter, as I need Orbex and his lyre to remain near me. I find the music soothing since I'm badly missing you all.

Send more wine. The plonk here is rubbish. See you soon."

Somewhat crestfallen, Dravidus rolls the parchment, looking at Zeffron (who tries to find something positive in this memo) and then at Hashmi, as if the letter's content had been of some moment. However, Hashmi's feet are firmly on the ground.

Hashmi *disgusted* This proves to be more of a shopping list than an informative missive. He tells us nothing of his health, of his occupation --

Zeffron *eager* I'll organize for Cartos a dray loaded with dried fruits and meats, plus leather pouches full of our best vintage wine. Cheeses! Some hams and --

Dravidus And we should write to Tudio, giving encouragement. Note that he informs us of his nostalgia. That we are very much missed.

Zeffron Yes! Yes! Courage will flow in our words. Tudio will be comforted by our good thoughts.

But Hashmi is distracted. He stares, heavily frowning, towards the trunk of the large cypress tree.

Hashmi Why is Cartos hovering in the background in that furtive manner?
What can this mean?

Dravidus and Zeffron turn to look at the tree, as we glimpse Cartos dodging behind the impressive trunk of the cypress.

Hashmi *authoritative* Come here, slave! Why do you cower?

The camera now focuses on Cartos, frozen in fear, spread-eagled with his back against the tree. In the distance, we see the three praeceptors watching. Then, Hashmi marches forward, followed by the other two men. Hashmi stands before the terrified slave, glowering at him.

Hashmi *frowns* Well?

Relaxing a little, Cartos looks with frightened eyes from one to the other of the three praeceptors.

Cartos *servile* I need to speak with you, gracious Hashmi. However ... However, these words I speak must not be shared with my master Aurelius Publius Quentax.

[The three praeceptors are astonished]

There exists a foul design to murder Caesar.

Gasps of shock are heard from Zeffron and Dravidus. Hashmi remains stone-faced, grabbing the upper arm of the slave, who winces in pain.

Hashmi *blunt* Whose design?

Cartos *flinching* The men whose brains formulated this dastardly plan are ...

Cartos is too scared to continue. Hashmi tightens his lips, applying more force to his grip on the slave's arm. The latter yowls in pain.

Hashmi *darkly* You'll tell me now!

In very fear, the slave's eyes are almost popping out of his head.

Cartos Sir, it was ...

[Drops his head, and almost whispers]

Publius Sextius Sabinus and Marius Robinus Tresca.

Again, Zeffron and Dravidus gasp in shock. Hashmi finds the slave's words risible. He releases his grip on Cartos, then strides away with a loud "Hah!" Then he once again confronts the terrified slave.

Hashmi *contemptuous* What a load of poop!

Sabinus cares for nobody but himself, unless you count those very unfortunate boys whose drudgery it is to court his corporeal

pleasure.

Hashmi, laughing, looks at Zeffron and Dravidus, to see if they are also filled with mirth. They are not.

Hashmi *scathing* And Tresca, did you say? One of Caesar's most trusted friends.
The valiant and much-decorated centurion. Have you lost your
mind, slave?

With the back of his hand, Hashmi lightly slaps Cartos, who is used to brutality.

Cartos Sabinus means to promote his birth son, Lucilius, who appears to
suffer by comparison with Master Tudio.

Dravidus *confused* But how can Lucilius hope to be elevated in Caesar's army when
he will not even join up?

Zeffron *nods* He is a battle-coward, certainly.

Cartos It is believed by many that Caesar loves Tudio; the General always
has our young man beside him, as he finds Tudio's battle
strategies quite resourceful, and thinks the boy will one day
become a great Roman General himself.

Dravidus *gravely* As do we all think this. (If only he would apply himself a little
more assiduously.)

Cartos Yes. So, Lucilius cannot make any headway as matters stand. But
should Caesar disappear, to be replaced by Marius Robinus
Tresca, and if the latter were beholden to Sextius Sabinus in this
way ...

Hashmi *riven and
appalled* Then that useless Lucilius would climb the stairs in a rush, booting
our star-struck boy downstairs to the cold hard ground below.
Further, Lucilius would climb without ever having faced the enemy
in anger.

Zeffron *wondering* Novel ... How real can this threat be?

Dravidus Zeffron, I **told** you last evening of my unease ... This must then
be the hidden cause ...

Hashmi *impatient* Wait! Zeffron raises an interesting point. Cartos, apprise me of this plot. How is it that you are aware of such a heinous plan? This is not simply mess hall gossip, I trust?

Cartos *earnest* Sir. You instructed me to study young Master Tudio most closely: if he should be wanton or lustful or --

Zeffron *offended* Are you about to tell us that our dear boy has sullied the name of Quentax before the most glorious warriors of Rome? That would be too much to bear!

Cartos *diverted* No! That cannot be, for --

Dravidus Thank the gods for that! I mean, we know that the lad is a boisterous, ungentle --

Hashmi grits his teeth and closes his eyes.

Hashmi *harsh* Will you two give leave to this rascal that he may clearly tell his tale uninterrupted?

The other two men back away, shamefaced.



As the slave speaks, scenes which echo his words are shown. It is night at the Eighth Legion's encampment in Transalpine Gaul.

Cartos *voice-over* As I said, my unarguable instruction was to keep a watchful eye over Antoninus.

I was well-hid amongst the horses. Tudio was overseeing the care of the beasts which belonged to his cohort. You would be proud, Sirs, to find out how well-respected do the men think of our Antoninus Tudio Quentax. So well-regarded he is, and his word is not only "law", but they all agree that he ever speaks what is called "common sense".

Zeffron and Dravidus are heard to gasp.

Dravidus voice-over, Tudio? Common sense ... ?
gulping

Hashmi voice-over Shush! Go on, Cartos!

Cartos voice-over Tudio gathered his men, to give them a pep-talk (or so they call it). He motivates his inferiors to reach for the stars, does our Tudio. There followed a loud "Huzzah!" of support for the men in the cohort. And then they simply trooped away.

Just as I extracted my poor self from all that horse flesh, along comes Osirinus Perdenter and Frastus Lirrin. You will know that it is these two men who bear the heavy charge of minding Caesar; as the inner sanctum to whom all must appeal. But why should they (so high and mighty as they are) deign to sneak about in hooded cloaks, at the stables ...

Hashmi voice-over Go on! Tell us what next!

Cartos voice-over As if a secret meeting had been preordained, several other furtive men (also heavily cloaked) approached Lirrin and Perdenter to inform them that they must ever be vigilant, and to never leave Tresca alone with the General, even despite all the years of friendship between them. They even wondered aloud if a fatal accident might not be compassed to befall Tresca.

These unknowns pledged that they were faithful Romans (faithful to Caesar), but that Lucilius had been heard to inadvertently blab the plot to kill Caesar during one of his drunken tantrums. You know, Hashmi, how he blusters at those times.

Jess voice-over "Frastus Lirrin, his own face white with horror, asked these faceless men if they knew of the means which Tresca might employ to commit this appalling deed. He proffered poison, perhaps, or a dagger.

But the men answered Lirrin by stating that a black mamba out of

Africa would dispose of Praefectus Caesar. That this vicious reptile would be supplied to Tresca by Sabinus, that old man who flirted so repugnantly with smooth-faced boys."

The flashback continues. All the characters quickly vacate the scene in different directions. Only the horses remain.

Jess *voice-over* You're falling asleep.

Paul *voice-over drowsy* No ... Yes ... Night-night. I want to hear what happens, but ...

Jess *voice-over,* We might have trouble catching up with each other from now on.
doubtful Tomorrow's out and ...

[We hear Paul's heavy breathing. Jess sighs]

Okay, good-night.



END OF SCENE

IV, Scene viii: An Escarpment in Southern France, with Commanding View⁵⁷ BC

Dramatic, rich and powerful music. The camera is in the distance, then moves in over and around the subject: that subject being the fully-armed Praefectus Caesar. He is magnificent and riveting, as he stands on the edge of this escarpment, one foot raised on a rock, looking out.

THIS SCENE MORPHS IMMEDIATELY INTO THE NEXT

IV, Scene ix: A Training Session At Djerribah Park

February 2011

Caesar morphs into David Bryce, seen from a distance, watching a heavy pre-season training session. He points here and there, appears to roar out the occasional order, and listens to comments from subordinate coaches. A taciturn man, he nods rather than speaks. All of the noise comes from the players yelling to each other.

Paul rushes through, handballing and tackling. We hear someone roar encouragement.

Player *voice-off* Nice work, Macca! Keep going!

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene x: The Carpark of The Black Swan Hotel

Mid-February 2011

It is a very hot Sunday afternoon. Jess, her family, Paul and some other friends are celebrating Jess's 18th birthday with a very convivial Sunday lunch. Paul strides into the busy carpark, to his ute.

Whistling happily, he unlocks the car, retrieves a roadmap book, then commences to relock the car.

Quickly, he flips over several pages, staring narrowly at one of the maps and then gives a loud "Hah!"

Just as he is about to stride back into the hotel, with the book, Tim Keenau's voice stops him in his tracks.

Tim Keenau *voice-off* What are ya -- Lost, mate?
shouting

Paul whips around and spots Tim standing almost out of sight, where the far side of the carpark meets a slender grassy pedestrian laneway. Tim is with other bikers, who all drink from cans. It is too hot for leathers, so they have made do with black clothes. With their gruesome tattoos, chains, scruffy hair and facial hair, these rough men look extremely forbidding. Paul is not put off, however, and approaches the group, grinning. He forces the customary handshakes, although the members of the bikie group appear somewhat reluctant. Tim himself looks very ill, as if suffering the after-effects of many drug-related problems and an over-indulgence in strong alcohol.

Paul *as he shakes* Timbo ... Rennie ... Banna ... Rosco ... G'day Wal ... and Flattie.
hands How ya going? What are you up to?

There is an awkward silence, with the men looking at each other furtively and muttering to each other.

Rennie *heavy with meaning* Aren't you under a ban from speaking with us? You'd better be careful, Macca, or the big guns'll shoot ya.

Paul looks at the men under frowning brows. They had been his mates for such a long time. Why were they standing off? Tim seems to feel the discomfort. He reaches forward to touch the book.

Tim *laughing* What's up? Are you lost? Or don't ya know where yer goin'?

Paul relaxes.

Paul Aw, I've gotta settle an argument. I'm here with a mob of very happy people, and everyone thinks they know all about everything. It's my girlfriend's birthday, see. And some idiot in there is arguing with me that Warneet isn't right opposite Scrub Point on French Island. But it is! I knew I was right.

Tim *jovial* Now you usually settle arguments with the Milton's Sports Facts book. Like who kicked the winning goal in the 1973 Grand Final.

Just as Paul laughs, making to walk off, the other men mount their cycles, gun them into life, and with a few motorcycle tricks, they take off. Tim stays with Paul. There is a telling pause, as Paul and Tim eye each other.

Paul *concerned* You don't look too good, mate. Are you crook?

Tim *joking* I always look like crap. And compared to you, everyone looks ordinary. What do they say about you? You're "buff". Fit and hard. Is that right?

Paul *self-effacing* I should do after all the hours I've put in.
Hey! I meant to ask you. Did your place survive the fires alright?

Tim's face undergoes a complete change of expression. It is as if a dark cloud has passed over him.

Tim *hollow* Some poor bastard is carrying the cross of Jesus on his shoulders over those fires. A stray flicker from a campfire ...

Paul *confused by that* But that's not what I asked you. Was your place saved? That area

comment where you are --

Tim *annoyed* Yeah, yeah ... I'm fine. The 17 people who were burned to death aren't fine, but that's not our problem, is it?

Paul *frowning in confusion* What are you talking about? What's wrong? Did you know some of the --

Tim *quickly* No! I know nothing. They're all complete strangers, sharing the common theme that they're now all deadie-bones.

Anyhow, you're not allowed to muck around with a scumbag like me. We'll catch up for the Bathurst 1000, eh? See ya!

Paul watches under frowning brows as Tim awkwardly mounts his cycle. Tim gives a comic wave to Paul as he goes. Paul watches, makes a quizzical face, shakes his head, then saunters back into the hotel.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene xi: Jess and friends Orientation Week Uni of Melb

March 2011

It is a very bright, marvellous March day in Melbourne. During Orientation Week at the University of Melbourne, there are "freshmen" students everywhere, loud rock bands, japes and amusing stunts. As Jess, Chiu and Heather wander about, with maps in hand, a line-up of blind-folded students are being led about holding a rope. Then, a fake horse runs backwards past them. We next see the girls wandering about in a very old, mysterious room in Babel Tower. On a table they spy delicious, but strange-looking food. There is a sign (beautifully executed in Gothic script) advertising "Beetroot and caramelized onion chocolate cake".

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene xii: The WAGS Easter Parade At A Shopping Centre

April 2011

A catwalk has been set up. The signage explains that this is the annual Easter Parade of Winter fashions for charity, modelled by real models (some of whom are already WAGs) and other Wondong WAGS, including Jess. Sarah Collie (wife of Wondong's Mike Collie) is the compere. She is brash, with loads of personality. Funky music plays, as if in an echo chamber.

Sarah

This lovely young lady is not a professional model at all. Which is hard to believe, as she looks really at home on the catwalk. She's at the Uni-bloody-versity studying Economics, and when she graduates, we hope that she can help lick this country back into shape.

Ladies and Gentlemen, will you please welcome to the catwalk Jess Goodwood from Braesyde. She's a past student of The Sanctuary Girls Grammar School, she's lived on the Peninsula most of her life, and I'm going to make you all *really* jealous by telling you that she's the steady girlfriend of none other than ... Number 11, Paul McDermid!

The crowd gives Jess a very warm welcome, as she wriggles and prances on the catwalk, dancing about, and trying to look like a model.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene xiii: Paul & Jess Manage To Get Together At The Peugeot Hotel

Mid-April 2011

Jess and Paul wander about in the fire-ravaged bush, inspecting the regrowth on the gum trees following the January fires. Up the charred trunks, fuzzy regrowth (like mistletoe) is bursting forth.

Jess

It's all growing back so quickly.

Paul

Dad always calls this fireweed. But I don't think that's right.

Jess Fireweed? That's a noxious weed isn't it?

Paul Yeah ... Look how close the fire came to the hotel!

The pair stand about, looking from the thick, fire-ravaged bush up to the unoccupied balcony of the hotel. Then they wander back to the hotel.

Paul Did you bring the book?

Jess Of course.

Paul We'll grab that little balcony up there and you can read to me.

Jess Really? Sit at a pub on a lazy Monday afternoon and read an old Latin tale?

Paul Yep!

Jess *pretending offence* You only like me for my skills as a polyglot.

Paul hugs Jess jokingly as they walk along.

Paul *naughtily* That sounds like fun. Which way do you "polyglot": to the left, or to the right?

The man and girl laugh merrily. The conversation drifts off as they wander along.



The pair are now stationed at a small table on the balcony, which overlooks the burned bush they have just walked through. Farther across, there are panoramic views of Port Phillip Bay. On the table, they have drinks on coasters, Jess's handbag, and the ever-present book "Tribulates".

Jess *flicking through pages* We're up to the bit where Cartos told Hashmi all about the plot to murder Caesar.

Paul Right!

Paul takes a quiet sip of his beer. In spite of the desecration caused by the fires, this spot is very relaxing. Birds sing and fly past. Being Monday, there is a scarcity of clientele, leaving Paul and Jess to enjoy themselves undisturbed.

Paul Let it be known that I'm having just the one light beer, and then

soft drink only. And in view of my dietary requirements, I've ordered a plate for 2 of that Baja California stuff.

Jess worried

What's that?

Paul flippant

You know, that Mexican food. I can't remember what it's called.

Jess

You mean nachos?

Paul

Yeah, that'll be it.

Jess laughing at Paul

What's hard to remember about "nachos"?

Paul pretending to be put out

It's all these Latin names you keep throwing at me. "Justinius Tribulus Rootimus Hectalactorus Tresco" ... and all his mates.

Jess laughing

You idiot!

Jess cracks up. They both laugh. Jess shakes her head, and takes a big breath.

Jess turning back to the book

Okay! " ... that a black mamba out of Af --

Paul interrupting with delight

That's right. The "dastardly plot" involves one of the most venomous snakes in the world. So these guys aren't messing around, are they? They're gonna sneak this deadly snake into Caesar's sleeping bag --

Jess laughing

Sh! Sh! The plot can't go ahead because Caesar gets assassinated years later by Brutus, Cassius and all those Roman conspirators. Anyway, there's a clever twist, so just hang on.

" ... that a black mamba out of Africa would be employed to dispose of Praefectus Caesar. They held that this vicious reptile would be supplied to Tresca by old Sabinus, that profligate who flirted so disgustingly with under-aged boys, not yet old enough to shave."

Paul finishing his beer

Shame! Shame! Ought to be strung up by his balls.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene xiv: Ancient Rome

57 BC

A Private Room At The Back of the Quentax Temple to Juno

In a very small room, which provides storage for all kinds of lumber and junk associated with a Roman temple, Hashmi, Zeffron and Dravidus have found a clear bit of bench and some stools. They all three lean forward such that they can speak in conspiratorial tones. The camera is close up to their faces.

- Hashmi *alarmed but determined* We must take ourselves to Further Gaul! Caesar may even now be shuddering his last ... And without Great Caesar, our boy is in the gravest danger.
- Zeffron *agonizing* What can have **possessed** Lucilius to give way to such murderous jealousy?
- Dravidus *doubtful* I'm not sure that any such plan could even be feasible. Caesar is guarded by strong, ruthless men who themselves are guarded. And, besides, Perdenter and Lirrin **must** have warned Caesar by now.
- Zeffron Yes, but a snake ... That could be brought stealthily to Caesar's compound by just about **anybody**. Or in his garments that had been hung out to dry ...
- Hashmi Listen! Caesar thinks himself invincible. He lives and breathes by the vagaries of soothsayers, bone-tossers, and those who see visions in chicken innards.
- Zeffron *rueful* As does the Lady Magula, more's the pity ...
- Hashmi Yes, how well you know what pains **you** must go to in order to humour our lady with taking the auspices on her behalf. Think how much more searing must be the pains for those whose job it is to keep sweet with Caesar!
- Dravidus *at war with reason* We must advance to Gaul-Too-Far. That is certain. The three of us. Or no ... and Cartos too ... Four. Very well. But ... then will not Lucilius suspect that ... perhaps Lucilius could be turned back to Spain ... An outbreak of blight on his estates ... or a wild-fire

which threatens his property. Is that something we could compass?

Hashmi *authoritative, laying a hand on Dravidus's shoulder*

Calm! Calm!

We'll put it about that Tudio has some sickness ... or injury of a minor kind, but that he pules for his beloved praeceptors, begging us to fly to his aid.

Zeffron and Dravidus are struck by the brilliance of this plan.

Hashmi *warming up*

The plan, then, is that Tudio ails in some way. And because Tudio is such a girl when it comes to ailments, our plaint will be that Zeffron is the only man alive who is able to physic him. That is what we shall say.

Zeffron *musng*

But she is very shrewd and cunning, is Lady Magula. We had better be able to furnish some kind of letter from our young Master.

Hashmi *with wave of hand*

Good notion! Dravidus, you can and will forge Tudio's malformed hand. You will write that letter.

Dravidus *horrified*

I?

[Zeffron nods eagerly, wishing to please.]

Hashmi

Yes! We'll concoct this bogus letter from Tribulates which calls us forth without delay. Let that be our excuse, gentlemen. That must suffice!

The three men look closely at each other. Hashmi slams his palms down on the table, startling the other two. Then he stands, moving to another part of the room. There, Hashmi gathers a clean parchment and writing equipment. Returning to the table, he dumps the stuff down in front of the startled Dravidus, then resumes his seat.

Reluctantly, Dravidus takes the stylo and prepares to begin his letter.

Zeffron concludes the scene with his next speech, during which, both Dravidus and Hashmi are gobbled, and stare at Zeffron as if he were from Mars.

Zeffron *staring off into*

And not only will you have to ape Tudio's bilious scrawl, Dravvy,

space

but you will also have to parody his style. Grammar was never his strong suit, you know; even though I wasted hour upon hour in his instruction. Can't decline a noun even if the instructions are etched on a slate. Can't conjugate a verb to save himself. It's almost as if Latin was not his birth language.

[Expansive shrug]

Utter crap, really ...

The other two praeceptors continue to stare in disbelief at Zeffron, who still stares into space, musing, shaking his head and sighing.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene xv: Ancient Rome In Front of the Quentax Villa

57 BC

This is a huge, colourful, busy scene, taking place in front of the impressive Quentax villa. The plan for Hashmi, Dravidus, Zeffron and Cartos to leave Rome for Transalpine Gaul has been scuppered in that Magula (desperately upset on hearing of Tudio's supposed injury and illness) has responded by forming her own plan to visit her adopted son. This is all on the grand scale with elephants, horses, chariots, ponies, donkeys, mules, drays, wagons, slaves, and soldiers to accompany her and her daughter-in-law on this hazardous journey. Quentax's private soldiers wear dark blue shifts instead of the customary red ones of the Roman legion. Magula has left the organization of this huge expedition to Hashmi and his co-conspirators.

Thus, we find Hashmi, Dravidus and Zeffron, armed with parchments and stylos, overseeing the formation of the cavalcade. They are all deeply frazzled.

Dravidus disgusted

Could there be such a foul mischance. It was that bloody letter which you made me write, Hashmi, that has caused this calamity!

Zeffron equally miffed

For here is Lady Magula ***insisting*** on accompanying us to Further Gaul, along with the Lady Ursillina Enesta. And a tribe of

tirewomen.

Dravidus And no doubt Lucilius will be apprised of our every move via his darling Mama! Was anything on Earth so badly conceived!

Hashmi *grim* If you value your head as an adjunct to your body, then you'll shut up right now.

Together, the three praeceptors count the horses and check their tallies.

Hashmi *consoling himself* This may turn out for the best. For Magula will draw Lucilius to her side, which maybe will also draw the other would-be murderers in that direction. We may be able to ...

Dravidus *somewhat shocked* Are you planning a judicial murder?

Hashmi What other choice do we have? To save our boy (through saving Caesar) must be our only thought. Whatever course our river takes shall be taken, my friends.

Hashmi extends his hand imperatively, and Cartos rushes to him, holding a large conch shell. The other slaves (Loni and Phrasus) each hold the halters of 2 geldings. The three praeceptors and Cartos mount up, then Hashmi takes the shell from Cartos. He blows a long, resounding blast, adding a big arm movement, indicating "forward" to the leaders of the expedition. Slowly, with great fanfare, the cavalcade moves ponderously off.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT IV



ACT V

V, Scene i: Ancient Transalpine Gaul, Dawn

57 BC

There is romantic music, indicating tenderness, and dawn approaching. In the gloom of dawn, within the confines of a small tent, the silhouette of the heavily-bearded Marius Robinus Tresca can be seen, as he holds his mistress, kissing her sweetly. The man sits on the cot, whereas the woman kneels up, to be near him.

The Woman *seductive* You must tell me, Tresca! No, tell me!

Tell me of Caesar's weakness, my love. You may well keep secrets from that ugly wife of yours, but you will not mask your intent from me ...

Tresca *softly, in caressing tones*

I was merely lost in thought ... Sorry my dear ...

But if you must know ... after all, I've nothing against telling you ...

Alright, here is the nub of the matter.

Apparently (so Gaius Cassius Longinus was telling me), he and Caesar once had a dare about crossing the Tiber during a patch of bad weather.

Cassius (he was decked-out in full body armour, mind you) ... Cassius took Julius up on this dare; he dove in, then swam to the pre-ordained rocky point.

But Caesar soon tired of the sport. We all know that he hates losing. Or he may genuinely have been tired. What's the odds?

To be brief:--

Cassius has put it about that Caesar bleated and whined like any herder of goats. "Help! Help! --"

Suddenly, afraid that Tresca's voice will be heard, the woman places her fingers ungently over his lips.

The Woman *urgent whisper* Shush! You will be heard! No-one else must be aware of this business!

Tresca *chastised and in soft voice* Yes, you are right ...
"Oh, help!" he cried out in real fear.

The upshot was that Cassius had to hoick Caesar (and he's no lightweight!) up onto his shoulders to get him out of the drink. Cassius carrying the weeping Caesar: can't you just imagine the scene?

And many worthy men have been apprised of this occurrence. Cassius has made sure of that. You know his way ...

What think you of that?

The Woman *not very impressed* A third hand account of J. C.'s foibles is not enough, my love ...The task is to demonstrate to the rank-and-file that **you** are their true leader; and not **him**. Can you do that?

Tresca Easily.

Caesar fears even the wind as it dashes over him. He is utterly averse to any kind of pain or discomfort.

[Stands swiftly, so that he can stride about]

He that sends many men into the field of battle, to die in agony by the spear, or by being burned alive is too terrified himself to finger a naked flame.

He doesn't just fear that lions will gorge on his flesh ... he dreams night after night of wild beasts roaming about his palace.

Screams in the night: I've heard them. Lirrin looks haggard just on the strength of this great man's winsome demands.

He is a spoilt child. And we are meant to follow his commands as he sends us to our deaths.

[Sitting heavily beside the woman]

The Woman *stroking
his arms*

You must be the stronger and braver!

Organize some kind of contest ... a challenge offered ... trick Caesar into an ordeal of pain, whereby **you** will stand four-square against the buffets of Fate, whilst **he** moans in cringing cowardice.

Tresca *lightly laughing*

How apposite! Yes, just such a thought had already entered **my** brain, dear girl.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene ii: Ancient Transalpine Gaul, Dawn

57 BC

In order to expedite the plan to warn Caesar of the known danger to his person, Hashmi sends Zeffron, Dravidus and Cartos ahead on horseback, along with 30 fully armed cavalymen from Quentax's private army. They cross the Alps in the West, then come into the more open country of Gallia Narbonensis.

As the progress is shown in stages, the beautiful topographical map wafts over the scene, along with superb, sweeping music.

The men stop to watch the dawn, as the sun rises in the east. The soldiers continue on the journey. Then Zeffron, Dravidus and Cartos head off. Dravidus breathes in, obviously enamoured with the vista.

Dravidus *voice-off,
spellbound*

How does one find words to describe this glorious, verdant country?

Cartos *voice-off,*

It may look picturesque, but the people are decidedly **un**lovely,

disconcerted Sir. We must take much care.

Zeffron voice-off, confident Tosh! We have this magnificent troop to guard our persons; the finest soldiers in Rome. Quentax would have no other. There is no danger.



The ambush strikes immediately. Just as the Quentax party (with fear on their faces as their horses rear and sidle) is surrounded by shrieking Gauls, the Eighth Legion swoops in from all sides, trapping the Gauls. Thus ensues a full-scale fight, hand-to-hand combat with swords, shields, and knives. Cartos, Zeffron and Dravidus manage to escape, ushered to safety by a group of Roman soldiers. The Quentax soldiers join in the fight alongside the Eighth Legion.

The fight becomes a brawl, then becomes a bloodbath. Finally, the Gauls who are still standing prostrate themselves as a token of surrender. Thus begins the arduous task (for the Romans) of rounding up the hostages in chains.



Our three friends are pushed roughly into a large tent. We see Zeffron and Dravidus try to compose themselves, whereas Cartos falls straight into "slave-mode", bent on helping his masters. Orbex rushes up and everyone greets everyone else like Old Friends' Week.

Orbex servile May I revive your good Sirs with wine and bread?

Zeffron looks about him, clutching his leather medical satchel to his stomach, as is his way. There are many crude stretchers lying about. Cartos assists Orbex in serving the masters.

Zeffron Yes, yes! Wine and ...

Wait a minute! Will they bring the wounded men here, to patch them up?

Cartos Only the officers. The regulars will be stitched up in their own tents, unless Centurion Tudio gives the order otherwise.

Orbex *proud* Our young master is the very best of officers. He takes his work seriously.

Cartos *chuckling* No more scudding down waterslides! I think he has found an outlet for all that boundless energy in fighting these strange men of Gaul. Begging your pardon for my outspokenness.

Sounds of the bustle of arrival are heard in increasing volume.

The men are startled by the sounds emanating from outside the tent: horses trotting up, men shouting, scraping sounds, and banging. Into the tent bursts a worried Cration Nidus, holding open the flap such that Tudio can struggle in, carrying the wounded Linus Paulliac in his arms.

Tudio *grunts* I'll put him on this cot here ... there you go!

With a huge whooshing grunt, Tudio lays his friend down as gently as possible on the cot.

Linus throws his head about, moaning and groaning in agony. As more wounded men are brought in on litters, or are helped into the tent, Tudio bends over his friend, holding Linus's hands in his own hands. Cration beside him looks worried. Then Dravidus and Orbex speedily approach, followed by Zeffron who scrabbles about in his satchel.

Zeffron *taking in the* Oh!

situation at a glance

[To Cartos, handing over two cauteries]

Hurry! Put these cauteries into the fire, just as I taught you. There will be much letting of blood here, and we'll need to act promptly.

[To Tudio, as he (Zeffron) attends Linus]

That was fortuitous for us, your having arrived just in time to save us from those screaming heathens. A thousand, thousand thanks!

All the men about Linus's cot work to make him more comfortable, with Cartos ripping off the fabric of his blood-soaked tunic. They speak as they work.

Tudio *surprised* Did you think that that was a piece of well-timed "luck"? No way, mate. We had the whole thing planned. We knew all about Magula's moving circus, and that you blokes had rushed ahead. We were watching youse all the time and decided to be clever

about it. You guys became our decoy!

Anyway, you're just the blokes we want right now. As you can see, Linus Paulliac has been speared just under the heart. Can you fix him?

Dravidus Whatever can be done will be ... Zeffron (as you see) has brought his medical implements to this outpost of Rome, just in case ...

Zeffron Yes, I have my stock in trade: powder of borax and dust of talc, and a host of tools. But I must staunch this bleeding.

[To Orbex]

Quick! Run and assist Cartos. I must have white-hot metal here!

Onto the edge of the cot on which Linus lies, Zeffron quickly arranges his other medical implements: forceps, spatulas, pliers, bone-nippers, a probe, a catheter, clamps, phials of various sizes, pipettes, lancettes, a specula, flax bandages and many sponges of varying sizes. There are also a few small papyrus rolls, on which are written some remedies and potion recipes.

Craton *deeply* Can you mend my poor friend, Zeffie?

concerned *[To Linus]*

Linus! Hang on, mate! Stay with me, soldier!

Tudio *diverted* Maggie didn't think to bring along me Missus, did she?

Dravidus *surprised at* Oh, yes. The Lady Ursillina Enesta is travelling safe and well with -
the question -

Tudio *overjoyed* Bewdy! I'll be able to throw the leg over. Nice to know if the wedding tackle is still in good working order, eh?

Zeffron *naughtily* You could always test it on your own, Master Tudio, you know.

Tudio *outraged* Bloody Hell!

Hey! Orbex! What have you been sayin' about me? Ya little shit!

Tudio storms off. Craton is not at all surprised. However, Zeffron and Dravidus glance meaningfully at each other. Cartos and Orbex quickly wiggle up to the cot, holding the white-hot metals within jute

scraps. As Zeffron delightedly relieves them of the cauteries, and applies the application to Linus's bare flesh, Linus roars in pain.

Amidst the confusion, Caesar, Perdenter and Lirrin arrive, with attendants bearing a large, ornate rosewood chest. Tudio bobs up, smacking Orbex across the back of the head. Then Tudio turns jovially towards Lirrin, as Caesar and Perdenter chat with other officers.

Tudio *indicating Zeffron to Lirrin* Frastus Lirrin. G'day, mate! Are you able to supply this man of medicine with any of your potions?

Lirrin By all means, Antoninus Tudio Quentax.

With a snap of Lirrin's fingers, the slaves wrench open the lid of the rosewood chest, revealing a panoply of ancient medicines, tonics, potions and amulets. Dravidus (impressed) gasps.

Lirrin *pointing elegantly* This jar contains an amazingly good infusion of bruise wort. And this, yarrow leaves. And this, calendula petals. All of which bring immense relief to those who have suffered bodily injuries.

Zeffron I have some efficacious salves to hand ... a little poultice of yarrow ...

Lirrin *raising the bid* The bruise wort will relieve the sufferer from the deadly ache of --

Zeffron *gently* My decoction of hare's foot ... 'Tis a recipe handed down to me by my great-great-grandfather.

Lirrin *on his high horse* Here is a tincture of wolfsbane. I insist!

Zeffron takes the hit to act humbly since Dravidus has nudged him.

Zeffron Ah! Much thanks!

Lirrin *patronizing* Which school of medicine do you favour?

Zeffron *proud* I follow the Egyptian thinking, of course. *Simila similibus*. And I always call in the eli to assist in the healing process.

[This with a nod towards Dravidus]

Lirrin *to Dravidus* Your amulets hang from a leather belt. Ingenious! Do tell me ... from what beast were they derived?

Dravidus *mysterious* Many years ago, when still a strong young man, I slaughtered an ox belonging to the wisest man in Egypt. 'Twas in sacrifice to Ptah, the god of healing. This wise man instructed me in the sculpting of the holy bones therefrom. And they remain as you see them.

Lirrin *lofty* And you two gentlemen work as a team? Marvellous! I trust that your partnership runs smoothly, without dissension, jealousy or disharmony?

Zeffron We are as brothers.

Lirrin Brothers who do not fight, one assumes. And your success rate?

Zeffron *blushing* Not too bad. Modesty will not permit me to advertise our skill as healers.

Caesar wanders over. Dravidus and Zeffron look alarmed but continue with their work. Graciously and gravely, Caesar extends a jewel-encrusted hand such that it lightly touches the chest of Linus.

Caesar *majestic* There is a divinity in Caesar's touch; a power of remedy to bring the almost-dead back to the sphere of the Living. Caesar grants that this valiant soldier (who risked his all for Rome) shall survive the rigours of the battle, to be whole once more.

Caesar lazily withdraws his hand and moves away.

Tudio *to Linus* There ya go, mate! Can't say fairer than that: the General himself blesses you.

[To Zeffron]

How does he look, Zeffie?

Zeffron begins to babble incoherently. Dravidus rushes into speech as a cover.

Dravidus *confident* I note an **immediate** and tangible improvement already, Master Tudio.

Lirrin takes the credit and bows a little, then wafts a waving, elegant hand.

Lirrin You two healers will follow me, when you have finished your

ministrations to Tudio's boon companion. You shall patch-up these other men who groan in their death-throes. And with Caesar's munificence, the toll of dead and wounded will plummet as our men regain their strength and health. His holy touch ...

[Postures and speaks theatrically]

This is our Golden Age: Rome conquers all comers!

END OF SCENE

V, Scene iii: Ancient Transalpine Gaul, Night, A Tent

57 BC

Tudio finally finds the tent where his beautiful wife reclines. The Quentax slaves have erected a bed similar to that seen in Act III Scene viii, with silken curtains which waft in the breeze. Ursillina is naked and alluring. Tudio rips off his tunic and climbs into bed with her, immediately taking her in his arms.

The scene freezes with Tudio and Ursillina caught in mid-embrace.

Through the tent flap wander Paul and Jess (holding the Tribulates book and her handbag). They look about, just as if on a trip to a museum, in the muted light. The bed with its soft, translucent curtains dominates the small space. Paul lifts a curtain to get a better look.

[Since Jess is Ursillina, and Paul is Tudio, they are effectively looking at themselves.]

Paul *grinning* Is that what you look like in the raw? Hmmm ... not bad, really ...

Jess *reasonable* Most girls of my age look like that. It's called "nubile". This is the very best you get. And then comes marriage and kids. Everything starts to sag and droop after that. So make the most of it.

Paul *rueful* You've been spending too much time with the WAGs. They're souring your mind.

Jeez! I look like a boxer on the canvas!

Jess You want to skip over this bit, don't you? They haven't seen each

other for months, and they're about to spend a night of passion, in each other's arms. I think it's utterly beautiful. Besides, I have a funny feeling that she gets preggers around about this time. But if you want to fast-forward ...

Paul Yeah. Wind it on. Otherwise, I'll need the sickbag ...

Jess *sighs* At least Ursillina **gets** kissed. Unlike some of us ...

Paul What? Do you want me to start pashing on? You want your neck covered in love-bites?

Jess *unemotional* Yes, of course I do. Well, not the hickies exactly, but I love being kissed.

Paul I told you when I took up with you that --

Jess You asked if it was alright if you kissed me for the photographers, if it ever came up. And I said "Sure". And so far ... diddly-squat.

Paul *reasonable* Then blame the bloody photographers. Don't blame me.

Jess seems to accept defeat. She wanders around in the small confines of the tent, viewing the married couple as if she were at an art museum. Paul watches her, his jaw working.

Paul *giving in* Okay. I'll start kissing you. Here in this tent. And then when I get all barred-up, you'll start screaming. I won't want to stop and it'll all end up in a big fight.

We've got a really good friendship going, and I don't want to spoil that by dragging love into it.

Jess That's the biggest load of crappola ... Everyone blabs on about "friends can't be lovers". It's a crock, Paul. What they're saying in reverse is that people who have sex together on a regular basis have no grounds for friendship. It's just stupid. If a male and female find pleasure in each other's company, and that then blossoms into love, romance, sex (whatever you want to call it), then so be it.

Paul is also wandering around the room. He goes to the tent flap and looks out, meditatively.

Paul I'll have to go out to the ute and get a packet of frangers out of the glove box. You're way too young to be having babies.

Jess points to a small Roman cane table.

Jess *somewhat shamefaced* They're not in your ute. At least, I took out one packet ... there they are, over there.

Paul appears to be impressed.

Paul Oh ... Okay ... Good thinking!

Jess *light and breezy* And it's nice to see a young man so well-prepared. Enough condoms to supply the Royal Navy. How long will it take you to work through that lot? There must be about eight packs crammed in your glove box.

Paul Well, the cheer squad can be very demanding.

[Laughs uneasily]

No ... I'm joking. I don't use them all. Sometimes I lend them to other --

Jess **Lend** them?

They laugh. Jess walks up to Paul, puts her arms around his stomach and hugs him lightly. He responds by stroking her arms and hair. Then he pushes her head back.

Paul Okay, it's blast-off.

I'm coming in now for true love's first kiss. I'll go straight in, by the way. None of this hanging back in nervous anticipation, like you see in the movies. We'll have none of that, thanks.

Jess *laughs* How do you know that they hang back? If you never ever watch romance in movies, you can't have seen that.

Paul Yeah ... When someone else is in charge of the fast-forward switch on the remote ... And you **happen** to glance at the screen when ...

Jess *diverted* There should be beautiful music. Something like "L'Apres Midi

D'Un Faune".

Paul Are you ever gonna stop spouting that Latin stuff?

Jess That was French.

Paul *adoring her* Yeah ... right ... There should be beautiful music ...

Jess Aw, shucks! Now you **are** getting romantic!

Jess and Paul start kissing. It gets quite involved. Then, they freeze (mid pash) as Tudio and Ursillina [their alter egos] come back to life.

Tudio D'you get the feeling someone's perving on us? It'll be that little shit, Orbex. He's a dirty little bugger.

[Lifts his head and shouts]

Hey! Orbex! You little prick ... why don't you hurl yourself in here and give us a bit of lovey-dovey la-de-da on your lyre. And keep your face to the wall. I don't want you to watch me rootin' the missus.

As Ursillina and Tudio speak, Orbex scurries into the tent, sits cross-legged on the floor, facing away from the bed and begins to pluck out a lovely tune on his lyre.

Ursillina *chuckles* Words of love simply roll off your tongue. How can a woman resist your fatal charm?

Tudio Yeah ... yeah ... Come on! Let's get stuck into it. I've been missing you for months ...

With the tender love-song being played in the background, Tudio and Ursillina go into a very romantic, passionate embrace. In another part of the tent, Paul and Jess have also come back to life. They, too, are into it. Fade out.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene iv: Gallia Lugdunensis Capture by the Nervii Chieftain, Boduognatus 57 BC

Caesar considered the Nervii the most difficult of the Gallic/Teutonic tribes to overcome.

A chieftain of the Nervii, Boduognatus, has treated with Caesar, such that Caesar, Perdenter, Lirrin, Tudio, Hashmi, Tresca and a large contingent of Roman officers and sub-officers visit the Nervii headquarters in far-off Gallia Lugdunensis. In a small vale surrounded by jutting rocky outcrops, the Nervii have dug a deep pit, in which a huge raging fire burns. In a ring surrounding the Roman visitors stand savage-looking Nervii warriors.

On entering this scene, Tudio is stripped to the waist, wearing only a dark loincloth. He is bound by jute ropes to a large upstanding log, which is positioned in such a way that it can be dropped over the flames and suspended there. This would mean that Tudio would be face-down over the flames, bearing immense heat.

Caesar (as with lofty contempt) faces Boduognatus. The latter speaks in an over-blown, theatrical way, as if he is the ringmaster in a huge show.

Boduognatus The chief may only win the eternal love and respect of his men if he can prove to them, through heinous tribulation, that he strides with the gods.

The Nervii warriors whistle their assent. Alarmed, the Roman contingent look about.

Perdenter *loudly* That's not how it works, King Boduognatus. Our Roman chiefs are naturally selected through their prowess on the field of battle.

Now the Roman soldiers stamp their feet. Lirrin must shout loudly to be heard above the noise of Nervii whistling and Roman stamping.

Lirrin *shouts* There is no requirement for our men to undergo any other test of courage than that.

Boduognatus holds up his hands imperatively. The whistling and stomping cease.

Boduognatus *with evil laugh* I require it!
To save his youthful protege, the mighty Caesar must undergo a ritual torture, just as the captains of the Nervii undergo.

The log with Tudio strapped to it is hauled over the flaming pit. We see Perdenter and Lirrin blench, whereas Caesar remains controlled and majestic.

Boduognatus See? The lusty young man does not scream nor cry out. So must it be with Caesar!

[Mighty, theatrical. Points towards Caesar]

I challenge Caesar to bare his hands to the flame, without tear ... without sound ... with his eyes fixed firmly on mine.

Tudio is shown suspended over the violent heat. His body glistens with sweat, and his lips are pressed firmly shut.

Lirrin *whispers urgently* No! Caesar cannot do this! Call off the dare!
to Perdentor

Perdentor *aloud to* And if Caesar should blench as his hands burn?
Boduognatus

The Nervii king points towards Tudio.

Boduognatus *with evil* Then die Tudio in the midst of cleansing fire.
laugh *[Majestic, authoritative]*

Summon Caesar! The ordeal begins!

The Nervii whistling begins again. Meanwhile, the Romans appear awe-struck that Caesar appears to be accepting this mad dare.

Without demure, Caesar stretches his arms before him. Boduognatus himself grabs a flambeau from one of his henchmen and shoves the wickedly-dancing flame under Caesar's outstretched hands. A gasp goes up from the Romans. However, without a single tremor, Caesar stares haughtily into the steely eyes of Boduognatus. The latter then removes the flame from Caesar's palms, holding the flambeau aloft.

The Roman soldiers once again begin to stamp. The log onto which Tudio is tied is hauled up, away from the heat.

Boduognatus It seems that Caesar does truly stride with the gods after all. I can see by the looks of admiration on the faces of Caesar's men that their mighty eagle flies above the commonplace in winning their regard.

[Turning dramatically]

I turn now to you, Marius Robinus Tresca; you who wish to take Caesar's place. In front of these men whose minds you have worked ceaselessly to poison against Caesar --

The stamping draws to a close. The Roman eyes are on the hapless Tresca, who looks about him in the manner of a hunted dog.

Tresca *blustering* Lies! You worthless turd! Dare you speak such foul lies of Tresca!

Boduognatus I dare because you are now playing in my arena, on my stamping ground.

Caesar and Tudio have come through their tribulation unscathed. Will you prove your mettle as they did? Can your hands be held over the searing heat of the naked flame without your crying out?

[To the ranks of Roman officers and men]

What respect do you now have for Caesar? To rescue his worthy subaltern, he subjected himself to my torture; neither flinching, nor vocalizing.

Would not this man Marius Robinus Tresca (who wishes his leader out of the way) want to prove to the valiant soldiers of Rome that he is as good as Caesar? That he is the man to replace Caesar?

There is a restless movement among the Roman men.

Boduognatus *with* Do the Romans accept my challenge, that Tresca prove himself
sneering the worthy successor to Caesar?

understatement *[Once again, the stamping sound rises]*

I will take that as consent, gentlemen ...

The sound of the stamping becomes louder. Some men even bang their swords on their shields.

Perdenter Hold, Boduognatus! You say that if the noble Marius Robinus Tresca does your bidding, to manfully fight the natural repugnance of the flesh in the heat of the flame, then he will become the

General of the Romans in Gallia? And that Gaius Julius Caesar then must step back?

Boduognatus *arms crossed* Granted.

Perdenter But then ... what fate befalls Tresca should he fail?

Boduognatus points to the fiery pit. The stamping and banging continue.

Tresca *afraid* This is preposterous!

Boduognatus *angry* You would take Caesar's place at the head of his army! Now take his tribulation. Your men can expect no less of you ...

Tresca shakes and sweats. He looks at Caesar, whose calm demeanour makes his own nervousness appear even more unmanly. Tresca holds his trembling hands out. As soon as the flame is held beneath his palms, he screams in agony. Without pause, the men push him into the pit. For a couple of seconds, all that can be heard are the death agonies of Tresca. Then silence, but for the crackling of the flames. A few Roman officers jump forward, as if to rescue Tresca, but they are subdued by their fellows. The men now look at Caesar (who has assumed a regal, god-like pose) with awe-struck eyes.

Caesar bows to Boduognatus, who returns the bow, then Caesar regally strolls away, with Perdenter and Lirrin a couple of paces behind him. The Roman soldiers follow. Some Nervii men free Tudio from his captivity. He stands, looking thoughtfully into the pit, where we see the charred and still-burning remains of Tresca. Boduognatus steps up beside Tudio on one side, whilst on the other side, a very frightened Hashmi appears.

Tudio *shivers then laughs* Thanks, Boddy. I nearly yelled out when me dick togs started to singe, but.

I thought me old fella was a goner.

Boduognatus Glad to help, Tones. See you in the soup.

Tudio Yeah, righto.

Tudio sees Hashmi trembling beside him. Tudio smiles and shakes his head.

Tudio Don't start crying on me, Buddy.

Hashmi *aghast* What in the name of all that was wonderful just took place here?
I've never been more shocked in my life. And you've certainly
given me some heart-stopping moments during your dizzy career.

Tudio Okay. In a nutshell.

We had to pull a swiftie. Tresca could not be just knocked-off;
there would have been a revolt among the regulars. So we
devised a plan to make Caesar look good, whereas Tresca looked
crap. Now, instead of bemoaning Tresca, and wanting to take
vengeance on Caesar for his demise, the boys are happy to rock
along with Head Honcho Julie, because they think him the better
man. Job done!

Hashmi *completely lost* How did you persuade this Gallic chieftain to contribute his time
and effort to this bizarre plan?

Tudio *laughs* Actually, it was Boddy who came up with it. I've known him for
years. You've probably blocked it out of your memory bank, but
Linus Paulliac was mischievously accused of raping a senator's
daughter when we were kids, and all of Rome was after his guts.
So, Linus, Cration Nidus and me ... we scarpered up here, to Gallia
Lugdunensis. The three of us rescued Boddy from a fate worse
than death, and --

Hashmi Don't tell me! You became life-friends. That's what this was then
... a *quid pro quo*.

Tudio Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Hashmi *quietly* Julius Caesar is widely known to be a coward with little things like
mice and pinpricks. How on earth did you --

Tudio The flames under the hands trick? Oh, Zeffie made an invisible
paste from his medicine chest, and we smeared it all over Caesar's
mitts. You should have heard the kerfuffle when we tried to road-
test it on him.

[Chuckles delightedly]

Hashmi And you were suspended over that pit of fire. Were you not afraid, Antoninus?

Tudio *self-effacing* Nuh! Well ... maybe just a fraction. Boddy can be a bit of a joker when he wants to be ...

Hashmi *whispers* You risked your very life for Caesar ...

Hashmi shakes his head in wonderment. The two men look at each other. Then, they go into a man-hug.

END OF SCENE.

V, Scene v: Wondong, The Belvedere Hotel, A Shady Courtyard End April

RECAP, from Act I, scene iii: The scene is one of superb bucolic loveliness. A courtyard has a rough wooden pergola stretched over its entirety. A large grape vine has taken over this pergola, giving to this scene a delightful, Mediterranean feeling. On one side, a beautiful, covered archway leads from the courtyard to the outside (a picnic and barbeque area). The sun streams through the pergola and vine, onto the rough flagstone ground. Around the courtyard stand 0.5-metre-high rock walls, on which sit a variety of potted herbs and plants.

This scene is identical to that of Act I, scene iii, except that it is set in Wondong, and not in Ancient Rome. This turns out to be the beer garden of the Belvedere Hotel, which is a popular local watering-hole. Holding a glass of Coke, Paul saunters into a brilliant shaft of sunshine. His attention is arrested by a bright metallic object on the ground which glints brightly in a shaft of sunlight. Paul grins.

Paul *musings, aloud to himself* *And like bright metal on the something ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more thingo and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no something ... something ...*

Rosco the biker *voice off* *If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;*

But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come ...

I didn't take you for a Shakespearian, Macca.

Paul swings around, to see Rosco the biker (beer in hand) standing in the beer garden.

Paul I'm not. I got a girlfriend who's into that shit.

Rosco *matter of fact* You'd better drop her, then. Get yerself a cheap tart like everyone else does.

Paul What's your excuse?

Rosco *lost* What?

Paul What's your excuse, Rosco, for being able to quote Shakespeare?

Rosco *laughs* I got kids at high school. That'll do for an excuse!

Listen! I didn't come out here for literary highlights. Tim's havin' a rave on Saturday night. You're the guest of honour. Be there.

Paul Can't make it.

Rosco *insulting* Have they got your balls in a vice?

Paul *frowns* No, course not ... whoever "they" are.

Rosco downs the beer, then chucks the empty glass negligently onto a clump of succulents in the garden.

Rosco Your footy people.

Paul It's all about "focus", mate.

Rosco *insulting* On what?

Paul *forceful* I've made a commitment. Signed up. Taken the pledge ... call it whatever you like.

Rosco *belligerent* And what about your mates? They can go and fuck themselves, I suppose.

Paul *getting angry* Look! The footy season comes first. I've told everybody that.

Rosco *also angry* Dallas Moynahan went to the Bluestone college instead of you. Mattera fact, I think he might still be there, breaking rocks so that

you can run around on a patch of grass after a bit of pigskin which surrounds an air-filled bladder.

Paul is stunned by this tidbit of history.

Paul *in consternation* Christ! That was five years ago. I was a 19-year-old kid. I was just following along with you blokes. I absolutely did nothing but watch that robbery.

Dallas went to gaol because he had priors up to his armpits. I was justifiably seen as a bystander more than anything.

Rosco *very firm* Tim expects you to make the right choice.

Paul *dismissive* Which I will. I won't be going to Tim's knees-up, because I'll be tied-up at the footy club. End of story. Sorry and all that, but --

Rosco *bitter* You're not sorry, Macca. Not one bit. You could take one night -- **one night** -- out of that very demanding regime of yours to bolster up one of your oldest, closest friends. **One night!** Tim's going through a real rough patch. Something's eating him away. So, get your arse over to his shack on Sat'day night. Cheer him up. What'll it cost ya? And you'd better rock up or I'll personally make your life Hell.

Paul stares at the very angry Rosco.

Paul *evenly* Friends offer support, not opposition.

Rosco *quietly* You're all set then, eh? -- with your little adages that you can live by.

[Sneering]

"Friends offer support and not opposition" ... Is that one of your dunny memos, that you have to chant before bedtime?

You're a sick puppy, mate.

I'll tell Timmy that ya can't make it. See ya!

Burning with anger, Paul savagely watches Rosco saunter back into the hotel.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene vi: Close Up of a TV, The Footy Show

Very End April

We can instantly understand that this is a footy show due to the oversized action photos (snapped during games) which adorn the set. The panel consists (from left of screen) of large ex-footballers:-- Bryant, Bunce, Xavier "Sonny" Flaherty, Jones, and Lincoln.

The Footy Show has been going for a few minutes. Bunce arrived late, not wearing the "uniform" of suit and Footy Show tie, but dressed in baby blue tutu and made-up as a kewpie doll.

The four other panel members (Bryant, Flaherty, Jones and Lincoln) are red-faced and almost weeping with the hilarity of seeing this huge ex-footballer appearing in drag. Bunce himself is composed, almost serious. We can hear the crew and sundry guests laughing in the background.

Bunce *severe tone* Get on with it.

Sonny Flaherty *giggling* I can't talk seriously when you look like that, Bunce. Shouldn't you
hopelessly have a long pole up your backside, if you're a kewpie doll?

The laughter continues. The camera closes-in on Bunce, who taps his biro on the counter, then points it at the camera.

Bunce *severe tone* I made a controversial statement about ruckmen not being able to
handball. I laid a bet with "Chicken" Walters. It was wrong. I have
to live up to my end of the bargain. My viewers, my fans, need to
know that they can trust me to come through for them. I'm sorry.
I was wrong. End of story.

The camera backs away. Apart from Bunce, everyone is gagging in uproarious mirth. The anchorman, Bryant, must restore order.

Bryant *trying for* Come on. Let's get back to the footy, Sonny. Tell us about your
control boy, Paul McDermid. Give us a profile of his first six games so far
this season.

Flaherty speaks, but keeps breaking into giggles as he goes. There is a screen diagram, featuring a masculine photo of Paul McDermid in his footy strip, and alongside, loud figures to indicate Paul's success.

Sonny Flaherty

Yeah. Let's go through his last six games, and the opponents he's faced.

Morrison: McDermid just left Morry standing, and they had to move him off Macca. Now, this is the bloke who totally crushed McDermid in every one of their meetings last year. Crushed him! McDermid simply turned the tables on him in the season opener. Left him flat-footed.

Then in the rain, Macca gave Nybrace a bath (excuse the pun). He scored five goals in the next match, and was BOG (best on ground, sorry, not allowed to use acronyms) in the following week. Then, the Wild Dogs went over to the West. That's always been a graveyard for the Wondong boys, but Macca just burst out of the centre and drove the ball goalwards. He was completely unstoppable. And that meant that the whole team benefitted. They won by a record 81 points (I think it was). Amazing stuff!

Lincoln *controlling his laughter*

And that's always been my argument. Macca's always been a better than average player. He's strong, has great skills, an arsenal of amazing kicking styles. He's electrifying. And you can't predict anything that he'll do. On the footy field, he's a genius. So why haven't we seen that from him until this season?

Bunce *trying to be controversial*

A little twitter told me that the Wondong hierarchy met at the conclusion of season 2010, and earmarked Mr Paul McDermid as a reject.

Bryant *points biro at Flaherty*

Sonny?

Camera on Sonny. He fiddles with his biro and paper, looking down, and making empty vocalizations. Then, grinning, he turns to his right.

Sonny That's an affirmative.

Into the sudden silence, there are many "oooooooohs" of interest.

Sonny *trying to* Look! The Wild Dogs big guns met and discussed options. They
extricate himself decided to keep Macca for the time being.

Jones "For the time being" ...

Bryant They'd be bloody glad they did now, don't you reckon?

One of the off-camera crew calls out to Sonny. He looks confused, then the penny drops.

Sonny *looking around* ... Last six games? What? ... Oh, yeah and on Friday night he
played a blinder. ... I just don't think anyone so far has got the
better of him. I don't think that any player has got near him so far
this season, and they've played the six other best sides in the
comp, Wondong has.

Jones So what's the answer ...? Why were they thinking about dropping
him?

Lincoln He had a really bad game in the last one they played last year--

Bryant The Preliminary Final against the Saints.

Sonny Flaherty That's right.

Lincoln And there were issues with his off-field interests getting in the
way. They like the players to be dedicated and focused at
Wondong, and up until this season, Paul McDermid wasn't.

Bunce Then they virtually gave him his marching orders, only he held on
by his teeth.

Lincoln And now he's playing like he's found whatever it was that was
missing.

Bryant Well, I don't know what they're putting in the water down there at
Wondong ...

Jones Phoenix rising out of the ashes, is it?

Sonny Flaherty Something like that ...

END OF SCENE

V, Scene vii: A Small Meeting Room at Helicon Stadium

End April 2011

The three senior members of the Wondong Players Group whom we met previously (Act II, Scene iii) sit across one side of the table. These are Jarrod Hurst, Glynn Unmac and Mike Collie. Unlike last time (in the interview with Paul McDermid), when the trio looked like they had been lost in the Wilderness for a week, the men are now clean-shaven, sit straight in their chairs and are dressed in the correct Wondong Club "meet-and-greet" attire. There are plenty of writing materials on the table. This all looks very serious.

The scene begins with Glynn Unmac reading from sheet of paper. At this point, the camera remains focused on the three senior players, even though there is movement aside.

Glynn Unmac *reading in serious tone* "A Perth journalist has contacted the Wondong Football Club asking for its comments on a story which is about to break in the media regarding a young lady whose name for the moment is being withheld. This female claims that on the night of Saturday April 15th following the game between the West and Wondong, she was raped in Room 18 of the Everton Hotel, Subiaco by several players from the Wondong team."

Mike Collie She's produced her birth certificate which indicates that she was just short of her 15th birthday. She's turned 15 years old now. 15!

An audible gasp is heard in the background. We hear an unidentified male voice mutter: "You're joking ... 15?"

Mike Collie Yeah ...

Okay, we'll need to talk to each of youse alone. So everyone else but Ben, please leave the room, but stay within cooe.

There is an audible sound of men leaving the room, the scroop of a chair, and the sound of a door closing. Throughout, the three senior players retain a serious demeanour. In a succession, each member of a group of young players who visited Western Australia recently will be interviewed and will be the total focus of the camera. We will now see a MEDLEY of these interviews.

Jarrood Hurst Ben, you were one of the blokes in Room 18. Tell us your side of this. And be 100% truthful, because we'll probably offer DNA samples if it comes to that point.

Sitting in the hot-seat is rover Armide. He faces directly into the camera as if addressing the senior playing group. He constantly slaps his hand on the table as he speaks, often in time with his words.

Armide There was about five or six of us stuck in that hotel room at Subiaco. We weren't drunk or that. We were sort of having a council of war, if you know what I mean. Macca was all fired-up and wanted to talk footy. He was strutting about, in his Reg Grundy's, yelling and you know ... flapping his hands about.

Sitting in the hot-seat is full-forward Grant. Similarly, he faces directly into the camera as if addressing the senior playing group.

Grant Then this gorgeous girl comes in. She's in the nuddie except for some ribbons ... bows ... over her tits and her puss ... and us guys start to whistle and we undo the bows ... Before too much happens, Macca completely loses it.

Sitting in the hotseat is ruckman Ramon. Similarly, he faces directly into the camera as if addressing the senior playing group.

Ramon Macca just went ballistic. He reckons it's our year. It's our Premiership year ...

Sitting in the hot-seat is back-pocket player, De Vulio. Similarly, he faces directly into the camera as if addressing the senior playing group. Lots of gesticulation.

De Vulio Paul grabbed this girl and just shunted her without a word of a lie out of the room and then locked the door on her. Apart from taking off the bows, nobody touched her. I mean, no-one!

Returning to ruckman Ramon.

Ramon Macca was troppo. That's it! He just blew up. You know how he was injured fighting those fires in January? Well, he just ...

Sitting in the hotseat is centreman McDermid. Similarly, he faces directly into the camera as if addressing the senior playing group.

Paul McDermid *sour,* Trouble! ... I could ***smell*** trouble ...
angry

Returning to full-forward Grant.

Grant You know: [*imitating Paul McDermid*] "I haven't gone to hell and back so that youse effing bastards can stuff it up for us. We have to keep clean ... blah, blah, blah ..."

Returning to rover Armide, and his table-beating palms.

Armide He was talking about the Club, that's all. He just ... Wondong was set to win the flag and he was just about prepared to commit murder to get there. That's sort of how he was talking. I've never seen or heard anythink like it.

Returning to back-pocket player De Vulio, with his gesticulations.

De Vulio Nothing at all happened because Macca wouldn't let it happen. That's it in a nutshell. So this girl is just blatantly lying if she says we raped her.

Returning to ruckman Ramon.

Ramon *shocked* 15? I just can't ... She wasn't never 15 ... I arsed her, and she told us that she was nearly 21. And believe you me, she looked every day of it!

Returning to full-forward Grant.

Grant His eyes! His eyes are popping out of his head, he's that worked up.

The three members of the Senior Players Group are back in camera focus, side-by-side, on one side of the table.

Jarrood Hurst We've heard everybody's take on this, and we are agreed that there's no case to answer to. It's grotesquely evident that this young girl is lying. She might have been raped or whatever, but that it had nothing whatsoever to do with our Wild Dogs. This is a media beat-up, and we'll get Kon Konstansis from the legal department to run-up a statement refuting all this child's claims.

Glynn Unmac And if it goes any further, we'll put it out that you blokes were having a post-match discussion, all grouped in one room. That there was no drinking or stuff. Then this scantily dressed girl walks in (she must have been let in by some troublemaker) and that you blokes summarily threw her out, believing her to be under-age (in spite of what she told youse).

Mike Collie I don't need to say this, but this situation could have turned out **so-o-o-o-o-o** bad!

 We're very much aware of your exemplary role in this, Macca. What you did was absolutely terrific. But we'll put it out in the media, if it comes to it, that it was **all** you blokes, as a group, that decided not to mess around.

Jarrood Hurst Okay. That's it. Good work! Thanks, guys. Thanks, Macca.

The camera swings around to the five young men who now stand together, opposite the three senior players. As they leave, the boys pat Paul McDermid on the back, shoulders and bum.

Mike Collie *sotto voce* Looks like our words to Macca hit home. He's a changed man.
off-screen Were we responsible for that?

END OF SCENE

V, Scene viii: The Back Patio, Braesyde

End April 2011

On a sunny Sunday in late April, Ron and Alison Goodwood are alone, cooking a small amount of meat on a barbeque. Ron is master of meat-turning. Alison is making notes in a small diary. As always, Ron is not listening to one word of his wife's conversation.

Ron *pontificating* Everyone thinks it's a sport. But that's not true anymore. It's a business. It's multi-million-dollar business.

Alison *writing* So we'd better get two more crates of that Beaujolais.

I'll check the freezer. I think we've got enough party pies and sausage rolls. Remember when I bought them on special a couple of months ago? They'll still be alright.

Ron You look for your rival's weakness, and you go for it.

Alison *writing* Cakes. I'll phone Phoebe's tomorrow and ... no I'd better go down there in person with a sketch of what I want the icing to look like on the big cake. I can't describe a waterfall over the phone.

Ron Now, somebody (someone with an evil turn of mind) has looked at the Wondong boys and said: "Let's bring them undone via one of their star young players. Our target will be Tony McDermid's son."

But they've come undone themselves because young McDermid wasn't playing their game. They thought that he'd be turned on by this little bitch bimbo ... then they could have her examined by a doctor, match up her body fluids with --

Alison *stops writing* Oh, please! You're touching meat. Don't say that!

Ron *not to be diverted* -- match up her body fluids with his DNA sample, and then --

POOF! He's finally dropped by the Club, because there's nothing else they can do. They've got to take the "moral high ground". And that stuffs up everything because McDermid's had such a good start to the year. That was the plan, I reckon. But it came unstuck, didn't it?

Because ... what did Macca do? He simply wasn't interested in that

distraction. He just put his mind into focus, tossed the bimbo tart out on her ear, and got on with the game plan.

Alison I'm trying to follow this. Was that girl left standing in the hotel corridor in the raw? I'm imagining her finding one of those cleaner's trolleys, reefing out a tablecloth or towel, then running off ...

Ron I'd like to bet that the bimbo and her cronies had the "rape" statement already typed up before she did the deed. They were so sure of McDermid's weakness that they issued the statement prematurely to the press. So now they've got a huge pile of egg on their collective faces.

And you know what else, little woman? I heard from someone 4th- or 5th-hand that Macca thinks our Jess is much prettier than that girl anyway.

Alison *laughs* I certainly hope that Paul hasn't seen Jess naked except for some tizzy ribbons!

Ron laughs loudly, continuing to turn the meat.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene ix: Djerribah Oval

End April 2011

On Djerribah Oval, with a small crowd of loyal fans and family members in attendance, the Wild Dogs train. The coach is seen at a distance, giving orders. We hear scattered comments, orders and shouts from the players. The coach is always seen at a distance, as if he is a mythical figure. [Remember that the Wondong coach is the alter ego of Caesar.]

END OF SCENE

V, Scene x: Ancient Rome, Subiaco

57 BC

We view the gorgeous vista of ancient Subiaco; a luscious villa atop a hill. This is the home of Publius Sextius Sabinus. From the outside, it is the beautiful, soignée home of a wealthy, privileged Roman. Inside, it is an homage to homosexuality, bestiality and venal pleasures.

The camera smoothly ascends to the villa, then enters seamlessly via a wide, impressive orifice. From there, the camera moves across a room, then down to the cellar which is constructed of large slabs and stones. As the camera moves down the dark, steep, narrow stairs, we become aware that it is Hashmi who descends with stealthy step.

Hashmi comes to this cellar, where Lucilius Sextius Quentax is found with two male slaves. The slaves hold flambeaux, which dimly illuminate the cellar. The slaves start and stare in fear at the sight of Hashmi. Lucilius has his back to Hashmi, and is unaware of his presence, as he pores over many earthenware jugs of wine. Lucilius mutters to the slaves as he potters about. Hashmi stands, watching him, whilst the slaves continue to blench and tremble. One of the slaves (his eyes fixed obsessively on Hashmi) leans towards his master, and whispers some words. This message causes Lucilius to swing around, to face Hashmi.

Lucilius *affecting*
hauteur

Why? What is this? What do you do here, Hashmi? Has General Tresca sent you to fetch me to Gaul-At-Hand for the victory celebrations?

Tell our new Praefectus that I shall go to Gaul in my own good time. When ready. In fact, I'll not go at all. There! I shall be one of the welcoming committee. Tell the General that those are my wishes.

Hashmi *granite-faced*

It is Centurion Antoninus Tudio Tribulates who summons you. I'm afraid that you dare not disregard your adoptive brother's command. Er ... your dear biological father is included in this edict. I trust that he will be well enough to travel such a distance ...

Lucilius *appalled and*
suspicious

And what has Tresca to say about this? What is **his** command?

Hashmi *satirical*

Tresca's command? I believe that he has none ... nor is he in any

fit state to give commands, having been burnt to a crisp by King Boduognatus of that Gallic tribe which calls itself the Nervii.

Lucilius starts and stares in shock.

Lucilius Tresca dead!? ... And ... Caesar?

Hashmi *again satirical* Proconsul Gaius Julius Caesar sends to you and to your Pater his very warmest regards, and bids you to obey Centurion Tribulates's very earnest command.

Oh! You might like to read his epistle. This will spell it out for you, Sir, should you misunderstand Tudio's import.

Hashmi holds out an official scroll. Looking very put-out, Lucilius snatches the scroll, jerks it open, unrolls it and reads. He is astounded. As Lucilius reads, Hashmi continues.

Hashmi *urbane* Having informed Quentax of your imminent departure, all is in readiness. Will you not accompany me to the waiting wagon?

Lucilius has worked himself up. Chucking the scroll aside, Lucilius bellows out his denial, then flees up the narrow, stone steps. Chased by Hashmi, Lucilius screams "Nymphidias! Nymphidias!" to his father's chief slave.



Publius Sextius Sabinus watches naked Greek boys dance for his pleasure. [We will view these poor lads from the back; that will be enough to indicate the state of play.] The old man smiles lasciviously, as he drools over a large serving of some sweet confection, which has been served up to him in a casing of vine leaves. The huge buck slave Nymphidias stands behind Sextius's chair, arms crossed. Sextius and Nymphidias are surprised and alarmed to hear Lucilius calling for help. As Lucilius and Hashmi erupt into the room, the poor naked boys scurry about, screaming and crying.



A huge fight ensues between Hashmi and Nymphidias, with Lucilius trying ineffectually to add his mite to the fray. The fight involves everything to hand which can be thrown as a missile or used as a clobbering weapon. Hashmi cannot match Nymphidias in strength and weight, but he is clearly the

cleverer, fitter fighter. Sextius merely watches from his chair, keen to finish his sweets. The combatants are involved in a lengthy, exciting brawl.

The deathblow to Nymphidias finally comes (after some breathtaking minutes) as Hashmi stabs him with a wicked gold dagger. This is achieved over Sextius's chair, such that the old lush sits in abject terror to find these bold men wrestling over him. Dying, Nymphidias slumps onto his master. As this occurs, Hashmi becomes aware of Lucilius lunging at him from behind.

At the crucial second of impact, Hashmi whirls aside, bringing up the right hand of Nymphidias (in which is clutched a large sharp knife) into Lucilius. The latter's thrust goes astray, and into the shoulder of the erstwhile slave. In his turn, Lucilius (in his death-throes, having been stabbed with Nymphidias's knife) slumps over the body of Nymphidias, thus totally trapping Sextius under this overwhelming weight. The grey eyes of Sextius almost pop out of his head, as he starts to babble incoherently and breathlessly.

Calmly, Hashmi (who has speedily locked the only door giving access to this room) lays aside his golden dagger, with which he murdered Nymphidias. He looks over at the banks of votive candles laid out along one side of the effeminate room. Slaves begin to bang on the door and shout, as Hashmi extracts a small pouch from his belt. The contents of this pouch are crystals which he sprinkles over the candles, causing them to flame with bright, iridescent yellow flames.

Hashmi *shouts* Help! Ho!

Hashmi flings open the door, pretending to be terror-stricken. He shouts to the swarm of startled slaves crowded about in the doorway.

Hashmi *affecting alarm* Help! Quickly! Summon the guard!

The frightened slaves disperse in disarray. Silence descends upon the scene, except for the shuddering moans of the dying men. Again, with immense calm, Hashmi closes-in on Sextius.

Hashmi *with* Where is the deadly serpent?
undercurrent of
menace

Using his terrified eyes, Sextius indicates a small cupboard, at eye-level. Hashmi opens this cupboard, then calmly uses tongs from the fireside to extract the black mamba stowed therein. Hashmi deftly bags the snake.

Hashmi *with continued undercurrent of menace* What will you tell the guardsmen who will soon accost us, keen as mustard for the perpetrators of this heinous crime?

Sextius *paper-thin voice, with eyes rolling* There was a calamitous fight ... Nymphidias turned out to be a filthy traitor ...

Hashmi *honey-sweet* That's good. Let's stick with that. Not that you will ...
Oh, and by the by ... you didn't **really** think that Caesar could be got by a reptile, did you?

Hashmi finds one of Sextius's hands and pushes the jute bag containing the deadly snake into it. With his dagger, Hashmi promptly slits the bag enough for the snake to slither out.

Hashmi *jovial* As my young charge would say:
[Imitates Tudio]
"Hold this for a minnie, will ya?"

As the guards rush boldly into the room, Sextius cries out. Hashmi holds up an imperative hand to the guards. (Whilst this scene unfolds, the camera keeps the black mamba on set such that its progress towards Sextius's terrified face may be charted.)

Hashmi *frowning and serious* Hold! There has been a foul murder here. The slave is the villain of the piece. I have only acted in the cause of Right and Justice.

Hashmi points imperatively towards the votive candles, where the flames continue to flicker an iridescent yellow.

Hashmi See the yellow flames! I speak true!

This seems to satisfy the guards, who desist in their forward motion.

Chief of Guard Announce yourself!

Hashmi *earnestly* I am summoned by Antoninus Tudio Tribulates on behalf of Praefectus Julius Caesar to bring Lucilius Sextius Quentax and this man Publius Sextius Sabinus to Gaul-At-Hand. But, when I made my presentations to them --

Chief of Guard *not to* And who are you then, may I ask?

*be diverted from his
duty*

Hashmi I am one Hashmi: the humble and devoted servant of the
venerable Aurelius Publius Quentax; he that is the adoptive father
of this, my poor dear dead young master.

Chief of Guard And your orders?
frowning

Hashmi *feigning a lost* Why ... I believe that they may have been left in the cellar when --
look

A slave pushes forward, bowing and presenting the rewound scroll to the Chief of the Guard.

Hashmi *feigning* Ah! This worthy soul has rescued the edict which was signed and
contentment authorized by Centurion Tribulates. Now we may settle this
business with all speed, I trust.

*The Chief of Guard, having scanned the unrolled scroll, nods. He hands the scroll to the man beside
him. As before, we can see the snake getting ever closer to the face of the old lush.*

Chief of Guard Yes. That is all in order. So, tell me what has gone forward here.

Hashmi Briefly, my arrival caused a fracas between the adoptive son of
Quentax and this rather large slave here. At daggers drawn, I
intervened to try to save my young master. But I was
overwhelmed by this very large brute of a man. Lucilius and I
struck together. My dagger struck home, killing the brutish slave,
but that of my poor young master missed its mark, and the
traitorous slave managed to deal the death-blow to Quentax. And
I am under orders to escort my former charge to Caesar in Hither
Gaul. Ah! What a weary heart I bear! Empty-handed must I go
back to Proconsul Caesar ...

Hashmi pretends to sob into his hands.

Chief of Guard But look here! You still have the old man to present to Caesar.
reasonable We'll extricate him from --

[Discovering the snake, and jumping back in huge alarm]

What! Ho! A vicious serpent slithers here!

The camera is in close-up on Hashmi's hands, which cover his face. A piercing scream is heard from Sextius, along with yells and shouts from the guards. Slowly, Hashmi removes his hands from his face. He wears a very strange look: as if he has woken from a beautiful dream.

Hashmi *mysterious, to himself* No ... there is no old man for Caesar to admonish. Death to the traitors! Death ... and no-one the wiser that Tudio and I managed this just punishment on these enemies of Rome.

The camera backs away to take in the scene of confusion. The guards are bent on killing the snake. Sextius (still trapped under the dead bodies of his son and his head slave) has died. His face, slashed by the black mamba wears a grizzly look of absolute terror. Hashmi feigns consternation.

Hashmi *alarmed* Oh! What is to be done? I should be returning to Caesar and Tudio, to deliver this heinous news ...

Chief of Guards Yes, yes! Go! I'll deal with this mess.
annoyed and frazzled

Hashmi *thankful* Sir! Thank you most kindly.

Hashmi bows in mockery with an expansive theatrical gesture (arms flourished aesthetically) just as he did in the end of Act III, scene iii. Walking backwards, bowing, Hashmi leaves the frenetic activity of the room, turning abruptly to resume his station aboard the wagon, which patiently waits outside the villa.

END OF SCENE

Here follows a medley of scenes, switching back and forth promptly (wherever this is humanly possible) between AUS footy and Ancient Gaul. Build-up of snare drums mixed with low-key drum-like tune.

The following action scenes (xi, xii, xiii, xv, xvii, xviii, xix, xxi and xxii) snap from one to the other, with the beat continuing underneath. The footy scenes occur over several months. The scenes from Gaul happened over a more extended period. There are longer scenes including dialogue, which will have to pace along as instructed.

V, Scene xi: An AUS Footy Game

End April 2011



Paul McDermid is involved in a melee during a footy game. He has his shirt ripped. However, all his efforts appear to be towards quietening the other boys down. He is shouting orders, as he pulls and drags Wondong players away from the fight.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xii: Ancient Gallia Lugdunensis

57 BC to 56 BC

Tudio is in charge of a group of soldiers (all the men are attired in light tunics). They are busy constructing walls and ditches. Tudio not only organizes, but pitches in to help.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xiii: An AUS Footy Game at the MCG

End April 2011

At the MCG, Paul wrestles for the ball with opposition players, near the boundary line, then sneakily takes the ball over the line. He jumps to his feet, running back from the white boundary line into the field of play. His teammates congratulate him with backslaps. Chest heaving, McDermid sucks in big breaths as (bracing himself) he keenly watches the ball being thrown in.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xiv: Ancient Gallia Lugdunensis

End April 2011



The Roman cavalry charge up to the fleeing Gauls. Tudio, riding the armoured Acron, tightly clenches his teeth as with his sword (Cosimo) he hacks into the enemy, shouting "Tribulates! Tribulates!" at intervals.



Screams of the Gaullish women and girls are heard, as these females try to evade capture. Lusty Roman soldiers run after them, in the manner of a contest of speed and strength rather than a definite desire to "have" the females. Tudio and Dravidus (mounted as are other officers in their vicinity) watch the sport. Tudio and the officers roar with laughter, as some of the females lash out with kicks and bites. The passionate chase becomes a bit of a confused melee.

Dravidus is all horrified concern. His horse sidles and fidgets as the screams and grunts continue. In the background, several Romans can be seen mounting the fiercely resisting women.

Tudio *conversational* A few more Roman whelps on the way ...

Dravidus *appalled* Quentax! You must put a stop to this unseemly display. This ravishment goes all against Nature and against the Proper Course

whisper of Civilized Rome.

Tudio *dismissive* Aw, they're just giving tit for tat. Usually, the boot's on the other foot.

Funnily enough, the savages don't think much of our Roman women. They'll outrage and rape them, of course, but only as a matter of punishment. I understand that they don't really enjoy it.

Dravidus *pouting* I should hope not! This is unthinkable behaviour ... not in the Roman mould ...

Tudio *as if uninterrupted* They're a bit too well-mannered, the maids of Rome ... The Gaul-boys like their girls to show a bit of grunt.

Dravidus *offended and appalled* Oh, Master Tudio! Pray do not mention such unseemly --

Tudio *annoyed* Dravvy! What on earth did you think you were gonna see here? What do ya reckon man's warfare is all about? Did you think it'd be a leisurely punt along the Rhine?

Dravidus *blushing* No ... but ... You used to be such a caring little boy ...

Dravidus fights back his tears.

Tudio watches the Roman soldiers violating the women. His face becomes as hard as granite.

Tudio *darkly* I care desperately, mate ... for the Romans.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xv: An AUS Footy Game

Mid May 2011

Paul handpasses to a teammate so that that bloke is able to kick a goal. The jubilant goalkicker races past the adoring fans, gee-ing them up, then on towards Paul, whom he high-fives.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xvi: Ancient Gallia Lugdunensis

57 BC to 55 BC

The sword Cosimo glints brilliantly in the sunlight. The camera moves back: Tudio is dressed in full battle gear; everything fully polished, clean and gleaming. Behind him, patient and beautifully caparisoned stands Acron.

Tudio is clean-shaven and postures heroically with a slimy, cheesy grin. Obviously in pain (as he holds the cheesy grin), Tudio speaks through his teeth, as if a ventriloquist.

Tudio *grinning falsely* Come on, will ya? How long does it take?

The camera backs away further. A Roman artist is using a piece of charcoal on parchment. He creates a lightning sketch of Tudio.

Roman Artist Sorry, Sir. Not much longer. As this sketch is intended for statuary, I will need to capture the dimensions, as well as the look.

May I compliment you on your horse? A magnificent beast!

Tudio looks pleased and tries to improve on both the physicality of the pose, and the smile. The artist, with a few more strokes, is finished.

Roman Artist There you are, Sir. Thank you for your patience. I only hope that our marble effigy does you and your mount justice.

Tudio pats Acron. He nods to a slave, who grabs Acron's reins and walks the animal off. Meanwhile, Tudio stretches, and strides up to the artist.

Tudio Give us a decko.

Tudio inspects the finished sketch.

Tudio *pleased* Not bad! That even looks like me ...

Roman Artist Sir, have you considered changing your cognomen to "Gallicus"?
Following in the footsteps of "Scipio Africanus"?

Tudio No, mate ... I can't.

Roman Artist Oh ... that's a pity! I should have liked to see the bronze plate on the finished statue lauding your triumph.

Tudio *somewhat shamefaced* Yeah ... would have been good. But the Missus and her sisters have just finished embroidering some tunics ... you know

[Gestures to indicate a slogan]

"Tribulates -- Go You Good Thing!" Can't let 'em down ...

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xvii: An AUS Footy Game

June 2011

At the MCG, the camera finds and homes in on the WAGS as they excitedly jump about, waving their Wondong scarves. Jess is in the midst of these lovely ladies, and obviously is a welcome member of the group.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xviii: A Battle in Ancient Gaul

57 BC to 55 BC



Tudio is in charge of a fortification. Shouting and cajoling the troops (who come under a volley of stones and rocks, from which their shields offer protection), Tudio calls up javelin throwers and slingers to come up behind his frontline, surprising the unprotected enemy, who flee in disarray. Tudio blows desperately into a bull's horn, which resonating sound causes 250 cavalymen to ride wildly after the enemy, cutting them down mercilessly.

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END OF SCENE

V, Scene xix: An AUS Footy Game

June 2011

In the midst of plashy ground and slush deep in the forward pocket, Paul manages to juggle the greasy ball, swing clear of a diving opponent, then slosh through the slippery grass goalwards. He kicks a miracle goal, in front of a huge contingent of Wondong fans. Stopping in the goal square, just as the goal umpire signals that a goal has been kicked, McDermid holds both arms high in triumph, roaring to the crowd. The army of Wild Dogs supporters copies his movement, waving banners, and jumping up and down. This is an electrifying moment.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xx: The Children's Footy Clinic

June/July 2011

The Wondong district is large enough to support its own television station, which relays the main shows from a national channel, plus its own news and current affairs specials. In this case, every evening at 5:30 pm, the "Wondong File" is presented. It includes interviews, special features and items of local interest. On the first Tuesday of the Winter school holidays, the following special goes to air. Kate Sanders is a very pretty, personable, utterly confident presenter.

At Djerribah Park, the scene is enchanting. Children (mostly dressed in junior versions of the Wondong strip) rush about in groups. Towering over them are most of the Wondong players. Prominent is Paul McDermid.

Now the camera closes in on Kate, who is standing at the players gate. Her actions will suit her words.

Kate Sanders

Well, as you're probably aware, it's school holidays here in Victoria right now; and finding something for the kids to do for two whole

weeks can be pretty stressful for most parents.

Now, the Wondong Footy Club have set up a two-week-long children's footy funfest at Djerribah Park. And judging by the comments of parents and children, I'd say it's a real winner. The weather's been great, and just look at all these kids having the time of their lives.

Each attendee has scored one of these Show Bags full of games and treats. (I think I might try to snaffle one for myself.) There will be loads of competitions and prizes to win over the entire fortnight. So, it's a great way to spend the holidays.

Now, I've been given the job of looking for the wackiest, wildest Wild Dogs hairdo. I was on the look-out for some dark blue and white ribbons, and I found this very chic young lady, who has the best bunch of ribbons in her hair that I've ever seen. She's won this \$25 voucher from Egmonts Stores. I'm sure that will be very welcome. Come over here, Kelly!

An eight-year-old girl with a very strange hairdo comprised of many plaits and ribbons, nervously approaches. She holds a small blue and white football. Kate squats down elegantly.

Kate Sanders Now, this is Kelly. She's eight years old and she lives at Mount Moriac. Kelly: how have you enjoyed yourself so far?

Kelly *shy* Good.

Kate Sanders And what have you been doing? Have you kicked a footy around yet?

Kelly Yes ... And I played on the gym.

Kate Sanders Played on the gym! Wow!

Who's your favourite player, Kelly?

Kelly Paul McDermid.

Kate Sanders I think he might be **everybody's** favourite. He's certainly mine!
Have you got number eleven on your back? Let's have a look ...

Yes, there it is. Mum sewed on the numbers for you, did she?

Kelly Yes.

Kate Sanders Have you said "Hello" to Paul yet?

Kelly Yes. And he showed me how to do a hand football.

Kate Sanders *laughs* Really?! "A hand football." Let's have a look.

The girl tries to handpass. It is very ordinary, but she has the right idea.

Kate Sanders Oh, that's great Kelly. Well done!

This has been a fabulous way for the local children to have loads of fun with their football heroes. And I hope you enjoyed watching the youngsters of Wondong and surrounding areas mixing it with the Wild Dogs for this school holiday entertainment.

This is Kate Sanders and young Kelly saying "Bye Bye" from Djerribah Park.

They wave, as Kate hands over the prize to Kelly, as her smiling mum rocks up.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xxi: Ancient Gaul, Dealing with Hostages

57 BC to 55 BC

Tudio, Caesar and several other high-ranking generals stand about, in full battle dress, as several Gauls (in chains) kneel before them. In the background, a vast troupe of hostages wander along listlessly, escorted by strong, lean Roman soldiers.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene xxii: An AUS Footy Game

August 2011

The siren blows in the final home-and-away game for season 2011. The players gather in the centre square at Djerribah Park, watching the vanquished rivals slump off the field. The coach can be seen coming down the steps to the adulation of the fans.

Then the victorious Wild Dogs, with four weeks of finals football ahead of them, jog towards the Members area and applaud the faithful fans. No-one in the crowd has left the ground. They applaud and cheer the players, and vice versa.

Then, on the huge scoreboard, a sign appears:

Wondong for Premiers
2011 -- The Year of the Wild Dog

Everyone erupts into even more enthusiastic spontaneous cheering and clapping. The players are buoyed by the enthusiasm, as is the crowd. The camera finds Jess. She is clapping along with all the other WAGS. They start to sing the Wondong theme song.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT V



ACT VI

VI, Scene i: Ancient Gaul, Tudio's Tent

51 BC

Camera travels 360° to film this brief scene. Superb, enticing music. Tudio sits on a rough stool in a tent, studiously poring over a piece of fine leather on which has been etched a detailed map. A soldier ushers a pregnant Ursillina into the tent, along with a small fair-haired girl and a male toddler. The children rush forward as they reach out for Tudio, who welcomes them with huge delight, chucking the map aside. Then Tudio takes Ursillina in his arms to hold her close, kissing her very affectionately whilst gently stroking her belly.

The music flows into the next scene, then abruptly stops.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene ii: Paul's Bedroom, Brindlebury Estate

August 2011

Very early morning, just prior to sunrise. Paul's bedroom is a bit of mess, as it is filled with cardboard boxes and loads of sporting equipment. Libby swings open the door and tries to awaken her son. Paul stirs, opening a bleary eye.

Libby trying to be calm Phone call for you. Come on. There's been an accident ...

Paul tries to wake up, then sits up quickly.

Paul *alarmed* Accident? What ... is somebody ... has somebody been killed?

Libby Yes. Tim Keenau. His bike has run into a tree. Instant. One of his

friends is on the phone now. Rosco, I think it is. You'd better talk to him. He's very upset.

Paul struggles out of bed, looking appalled.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene iii: The Aftermath of the Tim Keenau Funeral

August 2011

Paul wears a dark suit and tie to Tim's funeral. He seems to be the only man in a suit; all other males are in black leather. Some have large swastika, dragon or werewolf emblems clearly visible. The mourners, apart from Paul, are the roughest bunch ever witnessed. They would be called "rednecks" in the US. The women look awful, and bawl inconsolably. The men are scruffy, rough-looking bikers, or wanna-be bikers. Paul looks extremely uncomfortable. Everyone who possesses a motorbike will take part in the cortege. This is a really gruesome, horrible funeral. Paul can be seen to grimace. Banna speaks aside to some of Tim's friends. Then he approaches Paul, rather warily. The two men shake hands. In the distance, Rosco nods briefly to Paul, then turns away.

Banna <i>shy</i>	Yeah ... thanks for comin'. It would have meant a lot to ... you know ...
Paul	Look, I'm sorry that I couldn't come to that ... you know, that thing ...
Banna	No worries. He knew ya wouldn't come. You've got talent and ya wanna use it. That's understandable ... That's cool ... No ... He's been real upset since the fires. I think it affected him, all those people doin' the dirt-dive an' losin' their sheds and that ... Anyhow, thanks for comin'. His mum said thanks ... and that ... see ya ...

Banna strolls off, back to the group. As the hearse takes off, there is an even louder wail from the women. The stone-faced bikers rev their machines loudly, do some party tricks, then take off.

Paul looks like he finally realizes that he has moved on from this milieu.

END OF SCENE.

VI, Scene iv: The Trip to the Cinema

September 2011

Jess and Paul have gone to see "Galley Slave", which is an epic 3-D movie starring just about everyone in Hollywood.

They are shown watching the movie, criticizing the fights.

Jess *appalled whisper* That's an iron sword there! They didn't have iron in those days, only bronze.

Paul *whisper* That's not how we fought. That bloke would never have stayed on his horse jumping over that ditch ... and who does this ponce think he is?



The pair come out of the cinema and begin to walk along the street.

Paul *looking down* Sorry about that. I thought we'd both be interested in a film about ancient Rome. But the director and his research crew (if there was any, which I doubt) got it all arse-about.

Jess No, it was fun. I could feel you squirming during the love scene, by the way. But isn't it funny how these guys have so many preconceptions about what belonged to ancient Rome. They just didn't have siege engines like those we saw ... they were all medieval. How could they get that wrong? Or do they just not care?

They wander along for a few seconds, looking about. Paul then clears his throat.

Paul I know you're only 18. I'm six years older than you. You're smart and lovely, and I'm just a big hoon who can play footy. They're

talking me up for the Buckley, Jess. I'm a bit nervous. Can I ask you for a big favour, please?

Jess *airy*

Sure!

Paul

Stop! Don't keep walking, because I want to look you in the face.

[They stop, facing each other, oblivious to others on the footpath]

This year would never have happened for me if it hadn't been for you and that Canadian Latin bloke. So, this is what I want. This friendship that we have is the best I've ever known. You and I have been really terrific together. I've been watching you, and I think that you've enjoyed my company too. Anyway, to cut to the chase, I want us two to get engaged. Diamond ring, party: the works.

Jess

Engaged?

Paul

And then get married. Like Tones did. We should do the same. He just seems to be so happy with his Ursillina. We could be happy like that.

Jess

This is really weird.

Paul

No it's not. It's a marriage proposal. Do you want me to get down on bended knee?

Jess

Oh, no. I just didn't think you cared that much.

Paul *flippant and joking*

I don't. But I saw the way those blokes in your study group were looking at you, and I think that I'd better nip-in before someone else does.

[Change of tone]

No, seriously ... You're not that impressed, are ya? You're going to turn me down ...

Jess

No! I'm going to accept. I do accept. It's wonderful. I'm really happy.

Paul *eager and hopeful* So ... we're engaged, then? It's official.

Jess laughs and nods. Paul drags his girl aside, into a bit of seclusion. Thus follows the big clinch after they stare at each for a couple of seconds. All the other kisses have been kisses for form's sake. But this one is the real thing.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene v: On the Monday of Buckley Medal, Wondong Beach

Sept 2011

The coach calls all the players together to have a beach run on the Monday before the Grand Final. The "night-of-nights" for the Buckley Medal count is on that Monday night (which is far from ideal for the players of both sides who will take part in the Grand Final). The run draws some local athletic lads to follow suit, quite a few club people, and a media contingent.

At the end of the run, David Bryce gathers the boys into a huddle, presumably to read them the Riot Act about their behaviour at the big count, which is one of Melbourne's biggest social events. The camera remains outside the huddle.

David Bryce *unseen as he is in the huddle* It is "lemonade only" tonight. And I want all of you who are going to the bash tonight to remember this: at any time a TV camera might be staring at you, so that three and a half million people can watch your behaviour. I can't stress this enough, boys. Don't do anything that's going to be on UToob tomorrow! Keep it nice.

Good luck to all you boys who are up for the count. I'm already very proud of youse all, whatever happens. Okay! Off you go ...

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene vi: On the Monday of Buckley Medal, The Event Itself

Sept 2011

Late evening, at a famed Melbourne ballroom.

At the gala venue chosen for the Buckley Medal Count, a glittering array of stunningly beautiful models (who are also WAGS) pose for photographs as they arrive. A seemingly endless parade of stylish, sequined, sexy frocks stretches across the entrance to the venue. The players are in dark dinner suits, tuxedos, or something more flamboyant. There is a great deal of noise, and loud background fanfare-type music.

Paul and Jess (holding hands) try to sneak in, but they are pounced upon. Jess wears a very understated Grecian-style ruched frock in baby blue. Her hair has been styled, and she really does look fantastic. Paul wears a black dinner suit.

Female journalist What's your name, Hon?
indifferent

Jess *overwhelmed by* Jess Goodwood.
the flashing lights
everywhere

Female journalist Who designed your frock?
indifferent

Jess *flumoxed* Nobody ... I mean, it's just from a boutique in Wondong ...

Suddenly, just as Paul is about to whisk Jess into the relative quiet of the venue, the female claws at Jess's left hand.

Female journalist Is that rock an engagement ring, by any chance? It's on your ring-
surprised finger ...

Paul has had enough.

Paul *testy* Yeah, we got engaged today, actually. Excuse me --

Paul and Jess do not get very far. The journalist/presenter has a big story on her hands and will not let go.

Female journalist Whoa, there! Now, I'll ask you about the engagement first, and
then about your chances for tonight, Paul. It's Jess Goodwood,

right? Jess Goodwood. And make sure that your left hand is in view of the camera, Love.

The cameraman is in position and holds up a small mirror. The journalist/presenter ensures that she looks good, then waves the mirror away. In business-like fashion, she stands poised beside the startled couple, waiting for the cue from the cameraman, who is awaiting the go-ahead from the control room (which he will receive via his earphones). It comes, so the cameraman holds up a finger. With that, the disengaged journalist becomes the queen of gush.

Female journalist *over the top* Hi! Well, I've got the news story of the night right here. I'm standing with Paul McDermid (one of the favourites for the medal, and one of the players who'll take part in Saturday's Grand Final). He is here with his beautiful **brand new fiancée**, Jess Goodwood.

How did that come about, and how do you feel? Have you set a wedding date yet? And tell us about your gorgeous outfit, Jess.



The huge ballroom is filled with well-presented dinner tables. This is a huge media night, whereby television people, lights and roving cameras abound. The lights have dimmed, and the actual medal count is now in progress. The boss of the AUS Football League takes the microphone.

Official This is a duly convened meeting of the AUS Football League, and I welcome members, players and guests.

As you know, at each home and away game, the umpires choose the three most outstanding players on the day, and cast their votes (3, 2 and 1) secretly. These votes are locked in a box, which is then sent on to us at headquarters, whereby those votes are transferred unseen into this vault here.

Our job tonight is to work through those votes. At the end of the night, the player with the most votes wins the coveted Buckley Medal, so long as he has not been cited for a level-1 infringement during the season.

In the event of a tie, a medal will be presented to each of the winning players. There is no count-back.

I shall now read out the names of the players who received 3, 2 and 1 votes for the season opener, Round number 1.

There is a quick round of applause.

The night is very long and features several reviews of the highlights from each round.

Quick Medley of Highlights from the Buckley Medal Count.
--

We will include about eight really top grabs of football highlights from the 2011 season. At the conclusion of the highlights, there is a round of applause from the guests.

A huge buzz of excitement travels around the large venue. The TV cameras are now stationed beside the Wondong table where Paul and Jess sit. Paul nervously sips his soft drink, and tries to conduct a rational conversation with the others at the table. Jess, extremely nervous, also tries for calm normality.

Announcer Allan Bryant Ladies and Gentlemen.
voice off

There is only one round to go in the Buckley Medal count, and we have a very interesting situation. Our leader in the count, on 30 points, is Wayne Sullivan of the Leopards. He cannot receive any votes for the last game as he was out injured. So his score will remain at 30.

Behind him by one single point, on 29 points, is Paul McDermid from the Wild Dogs. If Paul receives no votes in the count --

[A loud "No way" goes up from some of the crowd]

-- for Round 22, then Wayne Sullivan will be the clear winner of the medal.

However, if McDermid receives 1 vote, it will be a tie, and 2 medals will be awarded.

Should Paul McDermid receive a 2 or a 3, then he is the winner.

The crowd are very restless, and sporadic applause breaks out. Jess and Paul are hand-locked, and extremely tense. As before, the TV camera is tightly focused on them.

Official

Round 22, which concludes this evening's count.

Croydon versus All Saints: Croydon, M. Tillgarth 3 votes, Croydon, J. Brenning 2 votes, All Saints, I. Murphy 1 vote.

Redcliffe versus Hayden: Hayden, L. Miner 3 votes, Redcliffe, J. Angus 2 votes, Hayden, X. Wytcliffe, 1 vote.

Wondong versus Mooraduk: --

There is a gasp of thrill from the audience. Paul drops his head, and Jess appears to comfort him. Everyone is aware that Paul's played extremely well in Round 22. The official will drag out his words for maximum impact.

Official *dramatic*

Wondong, P. ... McDermid 3 votes, --

The rest of the count goes on in the background. Paul, head still down, has won the medal by two votes. The other players at his table (all from Wondong) are ecstatic. They reach out to shake his hand such that he has to look up and respond to the well-wishers. A small burst of applause can be heard, and every eye is now focused on Paul. He is crying. He holds Jess's face in his hands, mouths "I love you", and then kisses her for a long time.

Official

That concludes the votes for Round 22, and I declare that the 2011 winner of the AUS Football League's Buckley Medal, on 32 points, is Paul McDermid from the Wondong Wild Dogs.

If you can make you way up to the stage, Paul, I'll get last year's winner (Laurie Miner of the Hayden Harriers) to hang the medal around your neck.

Hero-type music is heard. As Paul unsteadily stands, then weaves his way through the tables, he receives a standing ovation. Through a maze of people, cameras, and reporters, Paul manages to get himself up onto the stage, standing beside the previous year's winner, who shakes his hand then gives him a big man-hug. As this goes forward, the announcer gees the crowd on.

Announcer Allan Bryant Let's hear a big round of applause for Wondong's centreman, Paul

voice-off

McDermid.

This is one of footy's legendary stories. Paul is the son of well-loved Wild Dogs forward, Tony McDermid, and came to the club as a teenager under the father-son rule. He's never before enjoyed the success he has had this year, and even thought about giving up footy at one stage last year. He was injured fighting bushfires in January, which put his training regime out of whack. But he worked hard to gain match fitness. And then, towards the end of the season, one of his childhood mates was tragically killed in a road accident. So, it's been a very hard year for Macca. But this makes up for it all.

The medal is duly placed around Paul's neck, and he stands at the microphone, looking down at the coveted trophy, which will give him footy immortality.

Official

Ladies and Gentlemen, please be upstanding for a toast to the proud winner of this year's Buckley Medal, Paul McDermid.

To Paul!

The crowd echoes "To Paul!" as they sip their drinks. Then they yell "Speech!" Paul appears tongue-tied. But then launches into his acceptance speech.

Paul *choked with emotion*

I'm getting a bit teary, which is a huge embarrassment right now. I guess I'll blame it on a dose of hayfever.

I don't deserve this medal at all. This goes to all my team-mates and to my coach (David Bryce), and to all the administrators at the Wild Dogs who thought I was worth another go. Thanks, boys! A special thanks to all the coaches and trainers, and to the Senior Players group (Glynn, Jarrod and Mike) who took me aside and told me what I had to focus on for this year. Good work!

We've got a big week ahead of us, culminating in a certain footy game at the Gee on Saturday afternoon. I've gotta get myself ready for that, so I'm told.

[Laughter from the crowd, plus a few "Go Wondong!" shouts]

So, I'm not allowed to stay up too late ... And it's a bit rich drinking soda water. I guess I'll sink a few ales on Sunday ...

And, of course, to my long-suffering family, who stood by me when I was letting them down just a bit. Again, thanks guys!

[Slight pause]

But there's one very special person I have to thank, and without her, I'd be rubbish on the scrapheap. Jess Goodwood was a cute little schoolgirl when I first met her, when she took me in hand after our heart-breaking loss in the Preliminary Final last year. Without my lovely, lovely fiancée Jess, I'd be lucky to get a game in the bush, let alone at such a great club as Wondong: the Wild Dogs.

So, if there's any toasts left on this great night, they should all be directed towards my beautiful, clever fiancée, who's going to marry me one day and make me a very happy man. Here's to you, Darlin'.

As the toast to Jess is taken by the entire crowd, Jess, face streaming with tears, smiles shyly as the camera focuses on her. She is hugged affectionately by a couple of WAGS who are stationed at her table. She gives a slight wave to the camera.

Paul *gripping his medal* Yeah, thanks to the AUS footy league, and to the terrific sponsors, who've made this award possible. I'm very proud of it. I also hope to be holding the big cup on Saturday afternoon. Go Wild Dogs!

Camera long-shot of the ballroom, filled with applause. The heroic music continues.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene vii: Tuesday Morning in an Inner City Melbourne 5-Star Hotel.

September 2011

Paul and Jess are naked in bed together. They are locked in each other's arms, trying to sleep. There is a loud, startling knock at the door.

Sonny Flaherty *voice off* Hey! It's Sonny. Come on, you two. Reporters are waiting.

Bleary, the pair untangle themselves. They grope about. The knocking is repeated.

Paul *irritable* Yeah, yeah ... we're coming. Give us time to have a shower.

Sonny Flaherty *voice off* Get yourselves down to the foyer by 9:30. And make sure you wear the medal.

Paul *grumbling* Okay, okay ... *[To Jess]* Do you want first go of the shower?

Jess *half-asleep* No. We'll go together.

Paul laughs.

Paul *smiling* Now, if we do that, it's only going to end up with another root. Do we have time?

Jess *still drowsy* We'll make time. You've just won the Buckley, so you get certain rights and privileges.

Hey! I just thought. Are you allowed to have sex before a big game? I thought it sapped your strength.

Paul spies a breakfast tray which has been sneakily brought into the room as they slept. He launches into the food.

Paul *thickly* Nah! That's only for boxers. And it's a furphy anyway. They treat sex as normal exercise now. Come and eat this! Did you order the fruit? Looks great!

Jess, with the sheet wrapped around her, stumbles over to the breakfast tray, yawning prodigiously.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene viii: The Last Wondong Training Session Prior to the Grand Final

September 2011

The last training run on the Thursday before the Grand Final draws a huge crowd. Plus, the street parade is the next day.

Seen from a distance, Paul stands to the side of the oval, sparring into Glen Tucker's padded/mitted hands. A group of young boys watches from the fence, as close as they can be to their hero. If we get to see their backs, they are all wearing Paul's number eleven.

The coach, David Bryce, approaches, and the three men can be seen to be in discussion.

Camera close-up of Paul, who continues to spar throughout this scene, and is dressed in the Wondong training outfit throughout. He is not just throwing punches in a mechanical fashion; he genuinely tries to break through Tucker's guard, giving both men a hefty work out.

Paul How come we got this far? The enemy clearly outnumbered us, plus they had the advantage of knowing the terrain. How in Jove's name did we conquer them?

The coach is now Julius Caesar in full battle dress. Tucker apparently is oblivious to the fact that Bryce is now Caesar.

Caesar We had sound strategies with additional fall-back plans. We tried to double-guess what path the heathen warriors would take, and how they might attack us. We were disciplined, drilled and cunning. It was inevitable that we should win.

Paul *frowning as he spars* But it just dragged on for years and years. You'll remember that I came home to get married at the start of hostilities. Now, I've got quite a little family. In fact, they've just brought me word that Ursillina has had another little son. Apparently he's got lungs on him like a bull.

What I mean is ... it's all just been about hearing the complaints of ambassadors from the various Gallic tribes, trading hostages, building any amount of fortifications, bridges, and ditches ... then fighting the bastards with sword, javelin, slings ... it was the same

thing over and over again.

Caesar

Our secret, Tudio, was in our men. We were prepared to drag ourselves out of the mud even where we had been trampled almost to death.

Tomorrow, if the weather holds, we'll return to Rome in triumph. The city will never before have seen the might of Rome at such a pitch. Drayloads of once-proud captives will be paraded before the goggle-eyed populace, whilst we ride through the streets, covered in tributes, wallowing in fame. All the captured gold, silver and jewels which once adorned the heathen tribes will be on display ... and our citizens will shriek our names as if we were gods. Can you not feel, Tribulates, that all this was worth it? Won't you be thrilled almost to the point of sickness to have the laurel wreath of glory placed upon your head, as if a crown?

McDermid glances at Caesar as he continues to spar.

Paul *unconvinced but pliable* Yeah, I suppose so.

Caesar vanishes. Coach David Bryce now stands in Caesar's stead.

David Bryce

Paul, I know you don't like these media stunts, but just remember that the fans will have trooped a long way to watch the parade. And you'll be one of the highlights. If memory serves, you'll be in a car with Ben Armide. Just relax and wave. Alright? Try to look happy.

And hold up your medal so that they can all see it.

Paul *reluctant*

I can do that.

The coach begins to move away.

Paul *urgent*

Hey! I wanna say something. About Saturday ...

David Bryce

You know what? I've got a sociable bet going with "Mopsy" Karney that it'll be all over by quarter time. You blokes will just have to

keep the momentum going for the last three quarters.

Oh, and well done for the other night. I didn't really have a chance to congratulate you properly. Whatever happens this weekend, you've still had a great year, and I'm super proud of you.

But just try to keep the emotions down. Okay? And insist that you have to get to bed at a decent hour, even if you have to be rude to the journos.

Paul *lost in thought* They've calmed down a bit, now. But Jess is still "flavour-of-the-month". One of the female mags wants to interview Jess. They won't leave her alone, I'm afraid.

It's all happening too fast ... I've asked Jess to marry me.

David Bryce Everybody knows that. You announced it on national television. Just focus on Saturday. About how you'll feel when you touch the cup, and it's festooned with blue and white ribbons. Everything else can be put on hold until after Saturday.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene ix: AUS Grand Final, Opening Bounce

October 2011

The big day has finally come. The Croydon Leopards are matched up against the Wondong Wild Dogs.

The packed MCG crowd produces a deafening roar. The players are hugely gee-ed up, bumping each other. Nerves are frayed, and the atmosphere is electric. The umpire steps up, holding the football in one hand above his head.

Allan Bryant *voice-over* ... as umpire Doolan holds the ball aloft. Here we go! It's Grand Final time!

The umpire blows the whistle, then bounces the ball as the ruckmen go into action.

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BREAK

Paul McDermid suffers a sickening blow to the head from an opponent's knee during a marking contest. As the commentator describes with great drama, we see Paul helped from the ground by trainers. He is groggy, unable to walk unaided, and looks like he has no idea where he is.

Joe Bunce *voice-over* We've only been playing for nine minutes. That has to be a heart-breaking loss for Wondong. Their fabulous centreman, who of course won the Buckley on Monday night, has been taken out of this game. This is a shocking injury.

Ivan Lincoln *voice-over* Will he be out for the rest of the game, Bunce?

Joe Bunce *voice-over* The Wondong doctor will not mess around. If that's concussion, they'll keep him off. I'm afraid that we've seen the last of McDermid in this Grand Final, Ivan.

BREAK

Through his blurred vision, Paul can see Cratton Nidus and Linus Paulliac hovering in front of him. They are asking him something, but he can't make it out. Words like "drink", "feel" and "watch" float in and out of Paul's brain. With a huge effort, Paul focuses on Cratton and Linus, with the backdrop of the Grand Final and the crowd's barracking very evident. Also in strong evidence throughout this scene are the staccato instructions from the Wondong bench to runners and trainers. Paul focuses on Cratton and Linus.

Paul *voice-off to himself* Come on, Macca! Don't blow it. Just ride this thing. If they ask you if you can you see this or that, just answer "Yes". Don't blow this! Come on, mate! You've gotta get back onto the field. It's October 1st 2011. It's the Grand Final. You've worked all year for this.

When they ask you, your name is Antoninus Tudio Tribulates, and your horse is Acron. And your sword --

[Sounding distraught]

... where's my sword? And my shield? I can't fight without --

Now Daniel Monaro, the club doctor, squats in front of Paul.

Paul *voice-off to himself* Don't talk to him. Don't say anything you don't have to. You're gonna screw this right up if you start blabbing on about the Quentax Estate.

The doctor holds up his index finger, moving it in front of Paul, who follows it with his eyes.

Paul *aloud and uncontrolled* "And we understand him well, How he comes o'er us with our wilder days, Not measuring what **use** we made of them."

Dr Monaro *nonplussed* Eh? That's the first time a player has quoted Shakespeare at me.

Paul *trying to sound confident, brash* Just want to keep you on your toes, Doc.
My name is Paul Anthony McDermid. I was born in the Wondong Base Hospital on the 16th of June, 1987. My mother is Libby and my father is Tony. This is the Grand Final between Wondong and Croydon (who suck) and it's the first day of October 2011. And I want to get back on the ground.

The doctor is closely examining his eyes and carefully feeling around his neck and jaw.

Dr Monaro *nods* Do you have a headache, or any feeling of pain in your head? Do you feel sick at all?

Paul *alarmed and uncontrolled* Cosimo!

Dr Monaro *confused* What was that?

Paul *wildly inventing* Just wanted to let you know that I can remember everything. My dog ... Cosimo.

Nah, I'm okay. No pain. Nothing. I'm okay, Doc. Let me back on the ground!

Dr Monaro *nodding* You're just going to have to rest for a while. I'll check you out again at quarter time.

Paul is now a spectator. The game continues. Jarrod Hurst rolls about on the ground, writhing in pain.

Cration *enthusiastic* Get up and walk about a bit. Go for a stroll along the cinder path.

The boys in your cohort will give you an almighty cheer, and that'll fix you right up.

Paul stands, trying desperately to appear in control.

Linus *supportive* Grab your weapons, mate, and put your galea on. We have to clean up these filthy savages.

Paul walks, brushing past Cratien and Linus, trying to pretend they are not there. For if he responds to them, his chances of resuming his place in the game are null and void.

END OF SCENE

VI, Scene x: AUS Grand Final, End of Half Time

The camera pans the playing field of the MCG, at the conclusion of the half-time entertainment. The players from both sides run out from their respective races and a cheer goes up. The players jog about, some bouncing practice footballs. During the following commentaries, the players go into their huddles, and the field is cleared, but for players and umpires.

Allan Bryant *voice-over* Well, we were hoping for an electrifying battle in this year's Grand Final between the Croydon Leopards and the Wondong Wild Dogs ... and that's what we've got! Both sides have gone in hard. And as Shakespeare said: "They bleed on both sides." And how!

Wondong are now struggling with only about a dozen of their 18 players anywhere near Premiership fitness. The missing Dogs are the top Dogs, and that means that their prospects for the last two all-important quarters are looking pretty lousy. On the other hand, the Croydon Leopards are playing undermanned as well, but their top five or six stars are still intact.

There's only nine points in it, in favour of the Leopards. Their tough, "take-no-prisoners" game will now be very hard for the

luckless Dogs to overcome.

Teamon Jones *voice-over* Allan, the Wild Dogs have McDermid back.

Ivan Lincoln *voice-over* Which is not a good sign if he was concussed. The Leopards will target the gun centreman, who won this year's Buckley Medal following a stellar season. But human nature being what it is, McDermid is going to be a focus for all the Leopard hard-ball gets.

Allan Bryant *voice-over* I don't like concussed players coming back onto the field. But the Wondong doctor wouldn't let him resume the game if he wasn't able to do so.



The camera sees the view which Paul now sees as he turns around: the huge expanse of the oval, the other players, the overwhelming crowd, the gigantic scoreboards.

Paul *to himself, voice-over* Come on, mate! Concentrate! You can do it!
You're okay ... just settle down ... you don't have concussion.

Then Paul rests his hands on his knees, so the camera looks down.

Paul *to himself, voice-over* Come on! Stand up! They'll think that you're losing it ...

Suddenly, the roar of a motorcycle is heard. A very healthy-looking Tim Keenau (as if still alive) rides up close to Paul.

Paul freezes.

Tim Don't freak out, mate. Pretend I'm not here. Rub your hands a few times for a "Yes" and do that windmill arm stretch thing for a "No". Do ya understand?

Paul looks away, and steps away, rubbing his hands together.

Tim Good! Now listen. You're gonna see some really ratty things in your mind. Just float with them. Do not under any circumstances

react to what you will see. Keep going. Keep trying. Without your football genius, your pathetic team is going way down, and will get trampled on, because all your good players have been wiped out. Looks like it all rests on you, Macca. You got that?

Paul runs on the spot, rubbing his hands together. As Tim speaks, Paul keeps exercising.

Tim Oh, and it **was** me and me mate Chloro who started the fires in January. What was it? 17 dead? Bloody shame! I want to blame it on the vodka, but then, no-one makes you take a drink by force. Maybe it was the acid ...

We just wandered off from our campsite, leaving quite a decent fire happily burning away. Chloro wandered the wrong way. He's the "unknown" whose body they're still trying to identify. So ... naturally, I took myself out after that. Number 18 on the deadie-bones list.

For what it's worth, my death was utterly painless. The tree trunk came up against my nose before I knew anything about it. I didn't know that I possessed a conscience, but so it seems.

I just told you this shit in case you were flogging yourself over my "unfortunate" demise. Do you follow me there?

Paul is very angry. He paces around, sawing the air with windmill-like movements.

Tim *shouts* I was a screw-up, Macca, and you were bloody right to ditch me. So just float with the nightmare visions which are on their way, boy. **Don't let them get at you.** And don't let old Wondong down. Make me proud, mate.

Paul turns, watching Tim rev his motorcycle.

Paul *aloud, desperate* Do we win?

Tim laughs, waves, then guns his cycle. And disappears. The siren blows long and loud.

The ruckmen are in place for the opening bounce to the 3rd quarter. Paul and his opponent roughly jostle each other. A huge roar goes up as the umpire holds the ball aloft and blows his whistle.

Allan Bryant *voice-over* And the third quarter of the 2011 Grand Final is in progress, with Croydon nine points up.

The ball is bounced and the play begins.



~~~~~ The Big Run ~~~~~

From above, it can be seen that nearly all the players have gravitated towards that end of the ground where Croydon are kicking for goal. Croydon look destined to kick a goal, so close is the play.

However, a desperate Wondong player steals the ball, handballs out, and McDermid (somehow!) takes possession of the ball. He begins to run the length of the MCG, around the boundary, towards the Wondong goal. He can only take nine long strides before he must bounce the ball, but he can run as far as he likes, while bouncing. Behind him, two Croydon players take up the chase. Other players from both sides run in parallel paths to Paul.

The only sounds are a deep heartbeat, the thud of Macca's boots in the turf and the thwack of ball on turf or into his hands. This takes place in very slow motion. Paul sees clearly that there is no-one ahead of him, but he is a long, long way out. The goal square will be clear if he can only keep running and retain possession of the ball. The two chasers are always just too far behind to catch Paul.

From overhead, a volley of javelins rain down on the path he is to take. Unflinching, remembering Tim's words, Paul runs directly through the javelins. Rocks, stones, hot embers and more javelins continue to pound on the grass which encompasses Paul's journey to the goal square. If they had been real, Paul would have been dead thousands of times over. Onward, calling on all his inner strength, Paul runs.

Suddenly, 120 savage warriors of the Helvetii run towards Paul, shrieking their terrifying warcry. Along with the battle-cries, the heartbeat, the footsteps and the thumping of the ball continue their rhythm. Paul decides that a couple of these Celts are real as they bear down on him from the side. He baulks, jinks, then pirouettes neatly away from his attackers.

The screaming of the MCG crowd now comes into our hearing. The player who has been dogging Paul's every step reaches out, brushing Paul's back with his fingers. With deadly accuracy, Paul kicks the goal from 45 metres out, trapped in the pocket such that it is like threading a needle to get the

ball to travel through the big sticks. The Wondong supporters go beserk with joyous excitement as they can see the goal umpire position himself to watch the ball go through the big sticks.

Ivan Lincoln *voice-over, hysterical*

That was a huge kick after a sensational run. Wondong inch closer. That will lift them. That heroic McDermid goal will lift what's left of his team, as injuries to crucial players have decimated the Wild Dogs ...



To give some continuity, we shall show a tranch of exciting play from both sides, to get us from the start of the second half to its near completion.



~~~~~ The Winning Mark ~~~~~

Ivan Lincoln *voice-over very excited*

What a game! What a game! With only three or four minutes to go, there's one single, solitary kick in it. Wondong lead by six points. A Croydon goal will level the scores. We could have a draw on our hands ...

Paul is heavily involved in the play, as the ball nears the Croydon goal area. Every player is pulling out all stops and fighting determinedly for the ball. A Croydon player kicks wildly.

Paul sees the ball swoop over the goalpost, but on the wrong side of it, to record a behind for Croydon.

Allan Bryant *voice-over, hysterical*

One solitary point! What a costly miss that was! Croydon are only five points in arrears. They could have levelled the scores with only minutes to play. Can Wondong hang on?

Sonny Flaherty *voice-over*

This kick-out by the full-back is crucial. He needs to settle down. If he can kick this to a Wondong player, I'd say that Wondong have won. On the other hand --

Allan Bryant *voice-over* On the other hand, if a Croydon player can take a mark, he'll line up for goal and put the Leopards one point in front. I don't know about you, Sonny, but I can't take much more of this excitement. Is there time? Is there time?

The camera does a huge pan of the MCG. Almost everyone in the crowd is frantically shouting encouragement to their players, as the Wondong full-back lines up to kick out. The Wondong WAGs are shown jumping up and down in a frenzy, hugging each other, shouting encouragement. The players, pumped to maximum by the closeness of the scores, flood the area in front of the Croydon goal as the ball leaves the full-back's boot.

Slowly, the scene freezes, except for the activities of Paul and the superbly armed Roman cavalry of the Eighth Legion (stationed in front of the Croydon goal area). Paul has moved somewhat away from the action in the goal square. As if divorced from the play, Paul studies the horses and riders ahead of him. Caesar turns, his magnificent stallion beneath him. The sun glints wickedly on the polished armour of Caesar and his mount.

Caesar *calling back to Paul in resonating tones* Caesar is an eagle who laughs at the fierce, burning Sun and who scorns the terror of the storm.
Fly, Tudio! Take wing! Soar above these mortal men and take all the glory this little world can offer.

Paul *savagely gritting his teeth* For Caesar! For Rome!

Paul braces himself. He strides forward at a run towards Caesar, and leaps into the air on reaching him. He launches himself up from the back of Caesar's horse. With this spectacular mark, Paul grabs the ball, as it skims over the tops of the many outstretched fingers of the other players going for the mark. Tightly gripping the ball, Paul falls earthwards, his fall being broken by other players. Paul lands with a loud "Whoof!". He is hauled to his feet by Wondong players, who scream at him in a jumbled confusion. [Later, the replays will show McDermid climbing up the backs of players to take the mark, rather than on Caesar's horse.]

Allan Bryant *voice-over, screaming* McDermid has marked! He's taken an absolute screamer! The siren will blow at any second. That's it for Croydon; they can't win now. All Macca's fellow Wondong players have rushed up, urging

him to be calm. He walks back to take his kick -- But it's all over, it's all over ...

In the background, Croydon players are deflated, inconsolable and lost. Slowly, slowly, with the crowd roaring in anticipation of a Wondong win, Paul walks back, head bowed, to take his kick downfield (which is pointless, as Wondong now have the game firmly in their grasp, provided that he can force the ball well out of Croydon's scoring range).

We see Jess, in tears, being hugged by the other WAGs who are overjoyed. Nearby, we see Tony McDermid, Mick, Auntie Rae and Libby, in the crowd, hugging. Tony is clearly very emotional.

We see Wondong fans in the crowd, jumping and screaming in delight.

Ivan Lincoln *voice-over* His heart must be thumping right now. All he has to do is kick long and hard --

The siren is heard. Wondong has won by five points.

There is a jubilant rush of players to where McDermid becomes buried under a stacks-on-the-mill. The ebullience is stunning. We can hear the overwhelming joy of the Wondong supporters in the crowd. We see the despondent Croydon players flop to the ground, many of them in tears.

The camera portrays Paul's ecstatic agony as he is mauled by his fellow players.



A younger Tony McDermid, with his two little sons holding his hands, stands inside Helicon Stadium, before a huge mural featuring Wondong's greatest sons.

Tony *pointing* There's Daddy. I'm that one there, taking the mark. We won the 1983 Grand Final. Everybody said that it was Daddy's mark that won the game that day.

Little Mick *awestruck* Did you win the Grand Final, Daddy?

Tony *proud* Yep! The Wild Dogs are a very good team. We're the very best!

[To little Paul, who is playing with his gloves]

What do you think, mate? Do you think the Wild Dogs are a good side?

Little Paul *serious,* I'm gonna be the best player **ever** for Wondong!
looking at his gloves

Tony shakes Paul's arm, laughing.



END OF SCENE

EPILOGUE, ANCIENT ROME:

Tudio and Ursillina wander along beside the superb ornamental waterway at the Quentax estate.

The camera moves back. Hashmi, Dravidus and Zeffron stroll along behind the married couple, giving their attention to the three children. It is clear that they will stay on with Tudio, in order to help rear his and Ursillina's children. The three men look delighted and very contented. This is a delightful, poignant theme.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT VI

MOCK POST-MATCH INTERVIEW

Whilst the credits roll through, half the screen will be devoted to a humorous take on a post-match interview.

As Paul McDermid, captain Jarrod Hurst and David Bryce enter (from the side of the podium), the crowd of fans flanking the press corps breaks out into rapturous applause and shouts of appreciation. The three men acknowledge this, their faces wreathed in smiles. There are other people who will take part in the press conference; they are seated off-camera, out of our view. The fans and other people settle down.

Press question	Most Reverend Tate; may I put the first question to you, Sir? Gerald (Your Grace): was that the most exciting finish to a Grand Final that you've ever witnessed?
Most Reverend Tate	Certainly. Paul's spectacular mark in the dying minute of the game will become part of football's folklore, I've no doubt. Had he not taken that mark, with the ball thus remaining in play, the outcome might have been decidedly different.
Press question	Paul! You've capped a stellar season with the Buckley, now the Grand Final win, plus the Best-On-Ground award. To what do you ascribe your outstanding success this season?
Paul <i>smiling</i>	Don't forget Jess. I won Jess.
Jess <i>serious</i>	The moot point (Your Grace) is that Caesar's motives here were self-evident. He was broke, he was power-hungry and these Gallic Wars (culminating in the hugely successful Battle of Alesia) gave him both political and fiscal strength.
David Bryce <i>argumentative</i>	Just a moment there ... Rome was obligated to keep these foreigners at heel. Their incursions into Italy were at once a threat and a treaty violation. It wasn't just about Caesar acquiring clout.
Press question	Back to Gerald ... Sir ... Your Grace ... Is Jess on the right tram? What in your opinion was the ultimate catalyst which spurred Julius Caesar to take on the mighty tribes of Gaul?

Most Reverend Tate How can one know how the minds of the Great and the Good work? After all ...

Several journalists immediately grab onto the Most Reverend Tate's calling Caesar "good". They call out at the same time, frantically asking the Archbishop to elaborate on his words. The Most Reverend Tate appears to be surprised and flummoxed by the press attack.

David Bryce *trying to bring order* Gentlemen! Gentlemen!

Paul *backing David up* Come on , fellas ...

The footy fans begin to heckle the press corps. The journalists turn about, looking at the footy fans with a mixture of scorn and ridicule.

Press question,
shouted over the cacophony Sir! Most Reverend Tate! Sir, you are considered to be one of Australia's leading lights in the field of Roman History. Now, when Paul McDermid went for that mark, he was understood to call out: "For Rome"! Were you aware of that?

Most Reverend Tate No. I'm sorry ... I wasn't aware of that. But please, let me first answer an earlier question. Both Miss Goodwood and Mr Bryce have put forward quite valid and pertinent arguments. Julius Caesar was universally reckoned to be a superb tactician.

The footy fans begin to cheer and applaud. Again the journalists view them with scepticism and scorn.

Most Reverend Tate Thank you. That's very kind.
smiling, self-effacing As I say, a superb tactician, whatever his ulterior motives might have been.

Paul and David nod wisely, and applaud the Archbishop's words. Jarrod Hurst reaches over to shake his hand. There is continued cheering and applause from the footy fans.

Press question In what way was Caesar "good"?
shouting to be heard

Press question *also shouted* How can you support Julius Caesar in his merciless attacks on the Gauls? It was their country; they had a valid right to protect their

homeland.

The scene trundles on. We lose the thread of conversation as more and more people become involved in the argument. The skat words are buried under the music which takes us through to the end of the credits.

~~ FINIS ~~

END OF FILM