

NEW AUSTRALIA

- EPISODE 01 -
'THE STRIKE!'

Written by:
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Based on: "A PECULIAR PEOPLE" By Gavin Souter
& "THE WORKINGMAN'S PARADISE" By William Lane

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WRITERS NOTE:

What you're about to read is a true story. The characters are real, their names, locations and conflict authentic. It all actually happened. However, some timelines have been fiddled, characters combined and dialogue invented in the name of dramatic timing and anachronistic impact.

Pete.

EXT. VALLEY - DAWN

Fog fills a beautiful rural valley. Red dust rises on the horizon.

TITLE: QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1891

EXT. HILLTOP - DAWN

A young WATCHMAN (19), wears a broad-brimmed hat and rests against a Mulga Tree reading 'The Worker' (Australia's first union owned newspaper).

He eats a 'johnny cake' wrapped in a red handkerchief. He raises what's left to his horse. The horse eats from his hand and nibbles his ear asking for more.

The Watchman swats flies from his face. Finishes reading an article. Smiles. Then places the newspaper on the ground.

A pyramid of sticks holds a steaming billy over a small fire. The Watchman checks inside. Tea leaves float on top of boiling water.

The Watchman taps the billy with a stick, then picks it up and swings it round and round over his head. SWOOSH! SWOOSH! SWOOSH! FLING!

On the forth swing the billie goes flying into the scrub below. The young Watchman stands stiff. DEER IN HEADLIGHTS. He spots a clouds of red dust on the horizon.

He squints, straining to see. He can't quite make it out. Then finally it's revealed... A RED COACH AND HORSES.

The Watchman snaps into action. He unties and mounts his horse and gallops off in the opposite direction.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAWN

MAJOR P RICARDO (45)(Commanding Officer of the Moreton Mounted Infantry) wears a neat blue uniform with shiny brass buttons. He leads six troops guarding a red COBB & CO coach, four Officers ride in front, two behind.

The coach overflows with YOUNG MEN inside and on top. A scraggly COACH DRIVER (sixties) WHISTLES 'THE MARSEILLAISE'. Next to him sits a BEAUTIFUL GIRL (twenties) in a blue dress.

A WOODEN ROADSIGN: **BARCALDINE 5 MILES**

Ricardo raises his hand. His men slow. The YOUNG MEN scan the surrounding valley. Some look worried.

RICARDO
(stiff British accent)
Company. Affix bayonets.

The Officers methodically attach long sharp knives to the ends of their rifles. Officer FRED WHITE (35), grizzled and sinister, glows with excitement at the coming violence.

The Young Men look at the shining daggers with increased anxiety. They chat in hushed tones and continue to scan the surrounding hills for an unknown enemy.

Ricardo and White lead the party forward. All men on high alert, except the Coach Driver who whistles joyfully.

White gives the Coach Driver an EVIL EYE - "shut up". He obeys like a scolded child, then pulls a funny face as soon as White turns his back. The Beautiful Girl smiles.

White spots something up ahead. He raises his hand. Everybody stops. Except Ricardo who continues forward.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
(passing White)
I give the orders round here.

Ricardo rides beyond White to show his authority. He sees smoke rising up ahead. Beat. He turns and rides back through the stationary coach party.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
Men of the Mounted Rifles. I have no fear that you will do your duty like men and soldiers. To do your work faintly would be a grave mistake. If the order is given to fire, don't let me see any rifle point to the sky. Fire low and lay them out, so the duty will not need to be repeated.

The Young Men are now hysterical with fear. One speaks of escape. Another berates his friend for talking him into this trip. A third prays.

Ricardo motions to move forward slowly. The four Mounted Officers out front point their rifles in the direction of the rising smoke, it's source still hidden behind thick scrub.

The coach party creeps forward. Sweat drips from foreheads. Frightened Young Men duck down low. The scrub begins to clear. The source of smoke slowly reveals itself...

It's a DUSTY OLD SWAGMAN sitting alone by a campfire. He examines the rifles pointed at his head without fear.

SWAGMAN

Alright lads I'll give you some tea
but I'm damn near out of damper
myself!

The Swagman laughs at his own wisecrack. The Officers lower their weapons. The Young Men relax. The Swagman continues to mutter, incoherently at first, then his words take shape.

SWAGMAN (CONT'D)

...The beer at The Exchange's got
more Darling River in 'em than
hops... Look out for the Shearers
Cook at Acacia Downs, he's killed
two 'Rousies' already...

The Officers and Young Men laugh at the mad Swagman. The Coach Driver tips his hat with respect. The convoy continues forward. Then out of nowhere - BANG! A GUNSHOT!

AN OFFICER AND HIS HORSE FALL FLAT ONTO THE DIRT ROAD. Heads spin searching for the attackers.

DAVE STEVENSON (29), a bronzed, muscular shearer with a swashbuckling mustache, sits calmly on his horse blocking the road ahead. He raises his hands showing he holds no weapon.

The Fallen Officer rises to his feet. He looks meekly at Ricardo, then toward his gun - "It must have malfunctioned". Everything is still and silent. All eyes are on Dave.

Dave tilts his head to one side and smiles gently. His shirt rolled up at the sleeves. His eyes innocent as a child.

BUSHMEN slowly emerge from the scrub on either side. Some on horses, others on foot. They file in behind Dave.

Ricardo looks back to see an equal number of Bushman move in behind the coach. They're trapped. THERE'S NO ESCAPE.

The Bushmen are rough-looking men, mostly in their twenties and thirties. Many sport beards or thick mustaches and all share broad shoulders and sunburnt faces.

YELLS SPIKE THE AIR, quiet at first but swelling to a symphony of threats and insults.

BUSHMEN (VARIOUS)

Scabs!
 Filthy Blacklegs!
 We'll send ya scalps back to
 Victoria...

Dave gently whips his reins. His horse walks forward. He moves straight past Ricardo and White without a sideways glance. He tips his hat to the Coach Driver.

DAVE

(to the Coach Driver)
 How was the ride up Clancy?

Clancy leans down. He puts his hand over his mouth pretending to whisper, but making damn sure everyone hears.

CLANCY

(referring to The Girl)
 The company up here's been
 terrific!

Dave smiles. He turns his attention to The Girl. He removes his hat with deep respect. It's been months since he's seen beauty of this magnitude and HE'S A CONNOISSEUR.

DAVE

Ma'am.

The Beautiful Girl blushes. She's intrigued by the wild bushman, maybe even a little in love.

Dave puts his hat back on and moves forward to inspect the coach passengers. He taps the coach window. The Young Men inside can't bare to look. Dave sizes them up and smiles.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(to Ricardo)
 This the best you could find down
 there mate? A bunch a stringy-
 looking saplings?

Ricardo turns his horse to face Dave.

RICARDO

These men are free laborers.

The Bushmen quickly close in around Ricardo, mocking his accent and authority. Bushmen push past the other mounted Officers, smiling in their faces. Fearless and disrespectful.

Bushmen grab at the Officers horses, causing them to shy. One-by-one they start leading the Officers horses into the scrub. The Officers don't put up much of a fight.

Bushmen file past the coach like a circus freak show. A particularly ROUGH BUSHMAN taps shear blades on the window.

ROUGH BUSHMAN

(double meaning)

You fella's know how to use a pair of these? We do!

Officer Fred White slaps hands away from his horse's reins and raises his fists threateningly. Bushman eventually overpower him and lead his horse into the bush.

Ricardo is now alone in the middle of the rabble. Bushmen on all sides grab at his uniform and shout jeers and taunts.

The Young Watchman knocks off Ricardo's hat. RRRRAAAAAYYYY! A huge cheer erupts through the crowd.

This jolts Ricardo into action. He reaches into his jacket and pulls out a piece of paper. He unfolds and reads.

RICARDO

(reading)

Our Sovereign Lord the King
chargeth and commandeth all
persons, being assembled,
immediately to disperse themselves,
and peaceably to depart to their
habitations...

Bushmen mock Ricardo's pomposity, others pay no attention at all. Dave continues to calmly circle the coach, examining the Young Men inside and on top.

Clancy starts whistling again. The Beautiful Girl can't keep her eyes off Dave, the archetypal Aussie bushman.

RICARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...or to their lawful business,
upon the pains contained in the act
made in the first year of King
George, for preventing tumults and
riotous assemblies.

Dave draws eye-to-eye with Ricardo. He smiles, then slaps the paper right out of his hand. Ricardo states the final words of 'THE RIOT ACT' from memory.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

(god save me)

God Save the King.

Bushmen on all sides of the Ricardo make 'WOAH' and 'BOO HOO' noises and wave their arms to scare his horse.

Ricardo's horse rises up on its hind legs. Bursts through the crowd and gallops away to safety, taking Ricardo with it.

The Bushmen CHEER! Dave raises his hand for hush. Beat.

DAVE

(to the Passengers)

By the looks on ya faces, you fella's aren't sure who we are and why we're here...

The Young Men nod agreement.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Alright. So I'll tell ya! We're shearers and we're currently out on strike because the fat man refuses to pay us a fair days wage for a fair days work... and the fat man's paid these pretty boys in blue to bring you lads up and take our jobs and end our strike.

(beat)

And we're here to stop ya!

The Bushmen CHEER and YELL INSULTS. Dave raises his hand again for quiet. His loyal Bushmen obey. Beat.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Now... We're fair blokes. So we'll give ya the benefit, that when you got on this coach at Bendigo or Ballarat or Fitzroy or wherever ya from... you didn't know you were taken another man's job and rob'n him of his bread and his dignity.

(beat)

Right?

The Passengers shake their heads - "We didn't know".

DAVE (CONT'D)

But ya know now.

So lads, it's time to decide... Are you working men or strike breakers?

The Passenger negotiate among themselves while the Bushmen educate them on a few alternative words for STRIKE BREAKER.

A Young Man from the top hangs over the side and chats with the lads inside, upside-down. He flips back up. The coach window slides open. A young man pokes his head out. Beat.

SCAB

(to Dave)

I ain't worked in nine months and
I've got a missus and kids in
Melbourne and one of em's sick...

The Scab breathes deep. A reassuring hand from inside the coach squeezes his shoulder.

SCAB (CONT'D)

(to all the Bushmen)

But I didn't come up here to take
no other blokes job and I ain't no
scab!

(beat)

And the rest of us boys here...

(beat)

We're with ya's!

HUGE CELEBRATIONS! The Bushmen shake hands with their new chums as they exit the coach. Clancy throws his hat in the air. Dave winks at the Beautiful Girl, her eyes flame with desire. The mad Swagman dances a crazy dance beside his fire.

INT. THE WORKER HQ - DAY

Copies of 'The Worker' are printed in a large newspaper press. A freshly printed page is placed on top a huge pile. A hand reaches down and grabs it.

HIS nose buried in the paper, he follows it forward. His left foot drags. A walking stick dangles from his elbow. He enters an office.

INT. LANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Hundreds of books line the walls of a well-designed but modest office. The desk is covered in newspaper proof-sheets.

WILLIAM LANE (29), a delicate looking man with a heavy drooping mustache and keen blue eyes behind thick gold-rimmed glasses, inspects the print quality of a political cartoon.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Mr. Lane.

Lane is so focussed he barely hears the frail voice.

OLD MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mr. Lane.

Lane peers over the paper to see an EXTREMELY OLD MAN (nineties) sitting on his sofa. He sports a rough grey beard and dark brown skin, revealing a life spent under a hot sun.

The Old Man struggles to stand. He extends a shaky hand to Lane, who tenderly grasps it in his. Their eyes meet.

Lane speaks with a unique accent, a mixture of his Bristol childhood, his Irish father and the ten years he spent working in Detroit, USA.

LANE

Sorry mate, I didn't see you there.

The old man's eyes are watery and bloodshot. He looks at Lane like a long lost son. Every word he says is a struggle.

OLD MAN

I thought you might like to hear something about Eureka?

Lane smiles and nods agreement. Men of all sorts drift into 'The Worker' office day and night, this isn't a surprise.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Here's my license, which is what the whole thing started over...

The Old Man pulls a little metal case from his pocket and opens it with pride. He draws out a piece of discolored paper and hands it to Lane like a sacred chalice.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

...and here's a bayonet mark that settled me as nearly as you could think.

The Old Man unbuttons his shirt and just above the bone, between ear and throat is a mark that stood out white and jagged against his wrinkled bronzed flesh.

OLD MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They killed thirty diggers that day. I was one of the fella's who helped Lalor get away.

Lane inspects the license with respect. His eyes drift up to the wound. He reaches up and touches it reverently.

LANE

That's a medal no queen could give.

The Old Man smiles. His eyes well with pride.

OLD MAN

Peter Lalor thought the same about his wounded arm when he refused his knighthood.

Lane smiles wider still. The Old Man speaks fast, eager to share his story as if chasing a fast approaching deadline.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

After Eureka I mostly lived by hunting roos out west, where the pelican builds her nest. I lost hope. I used to mutter to myself and wandered alone in the wilderness. Then one day a mailman dropped a copy of 'The Worker'. I took up my swag as Christ took up the cross and walked here. I thought I'd be satisfied to see the place and take an order from Billy Lane before I die.

A lump forms in Lane's throat but he does his best to hide the emotion. He takes the Old Man's arm and leads him to the office door. Both men limping.

They stand arm-in-arm looking out over Lane's little empire. It's a buzz of activity - Journalists write, cartoonists draw, photographer expose, composers composite...

LANE

Hope it was worth the walk mate?

ALF WALKER (55), a white-haired and jolly compositor, wiggles metal letters into a print frame. He spots Lane.

ALF WALKER

How's it that the editor of 'The Worker' never seems to be doing any blanky work?

Lane smiles at his friend. He takes in the sights and sounds of 'The Worker' one more time then turns to the Old Man.

LANE

You play chess?

The Old Man smiles and nods - "Yep".

Lane leads him back into the office and closes the door.

Gold-leaf lettering on the bubbled glass:

WILLIAM LANE - EDITOR

INT. STAGE COACH FACTORY - DAY

A sinewy young male hand dips a brush into gold paint and completes the lettering of COBB & CO. with precise strokes.

He drops the brush into a glass of water and steps back to examine his work. Every detail of the red stagecoach is impeccable. But THE BOY isn't happy. He looks for the flaw.

He picks up a fresh paintbrush. Covers it in red paint. Gets down on his knees. His eyes are level with a UNION JACK FLAG painted on the side of the coach.

He paints over it in three considered strokes. It's gone. Erased. THE BOY smiles.

A stern-looking FACTORY MANAGER walks through a different part of the factory holding an unopened letter.

MANAGER

Lawson! Lawson!

The Manager approaches an OLDER FACTORY WORKER screwing wooden spokes into a large wagon wheel.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You seen Barmy Harry?

The Worker points further down the warehouse. The Manager continues walking, scanning and yelling.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Lawson! Lawson!

He rounds a stack of wooden pallets, then stops to admire the perfectly painted coach in front of him. Then his eyes drift down to the floor. He spots two large boots pointing up.

He walks forward, revealing lanky legs, then a skinny torso and finally the boyish face of HENRY LAWSON (24), awkward, gangly and delicate, with a thin mustache (Later crowned Australia's national poet... 'The Poet of the People').

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You deaf mate?

Lawson doesn't respond. He's lost in the beauty of the clouds and birds passing over the factories glass peaked ceiling.

The Manager steps over Lawson, interrupting his view with his crotch. He drops the letter on his chest. Lawson smiles.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Stop getting your love letters sent
here will ya!

Lawson rises awkwardly, examining the envelope. He looks at the Manager for approval. The Manager weakens. He clearly likes Lawson. Everybody likes Lawson.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Go on then.

Lawson opens the envelope and unfolds the letter. The header reads 'The Worker'. The Manager watches him read.

Lawson's smile grows as he reads down the page. Great pearly drops start to form in his dark brown eyes. He turns his back to hide the emotion.

Lawson folds the letter and places it in his shirt pocket. He bends down and folds his brushes neatly into a leather wrap and starts walking toward the warehouse door.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Hold on a minute mate...

Lawson doesn't react. He walks toward the light. Beaming.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Where do ya think you're going?

Other workers notice. They shout blue-collar farewells and clap. Lawson's grand exit has been a long time coming.

A young APPRENTICE opens the warehouse door wide and gives Lawson a little bow as he approaches. Lawson throws him his leather paint wrap. The Apprentice catches it with joy.

APPRENTICE

Cheers Harry! We'll miss ya mate!

Lawson walks out. He doesn't look back. Tears stain his cheeks. His chest heaves. He's never been happier.

EXT. LANE FAMILY HOME - SUNSET

William Lane limps through the front gate of his beautiful 'Queenslander' home. A warm glow from gas lamps comes from inside. Lane hobbles up the front steps.

INT. LANE FAMILY HOME - SUNSET

Lane opens the door to an unusual silence. He drops his bag and walking-stick in the entry hall and nervously peers around into the living room.

His family sit together around the dining table, complete with gingham tablecloth, lit candles and piles of untouched food.

Lane's two eldest children; NELLY (8) and CHARLIE (4) are close to sleep. His youngest HAZEL (2) is already asleep in her mothers arms.

Lane enters the room and takes off his hat, revealing his prematurely balding head. His wife ANNIE (24) looks up with sad eyes. She speaks with a sullen American accent.

ANNIE

Surprise.

Lane is utterly confused, he looks at his children for clues. They're too tired to help. ELEANOR (19), ANNIE's younger sister, is the only sympathetic smile in the room.

ELEANOR

I'll grab the chicken.

Eleanor walks past Lane and whispers kindly in his ear.

ELEANOR

Happy birthday.

Lane is surprised by the news. He never thinks of himself.

CHARLIE

(sleepy)

Happy birthday daddy.

NELLY

Daddy, you're thirty!

LANE

Thirty!

(Beat)

Can't be? That makes me an old man!

Lane already looks much older than his age, but he pretends to be A REALLY OLD MAN. He hunches his back and accentuates his limp. His old man act energizes the sleepy kids, even little Hazel wakes up with the excitement.

HAZEL

Daddy!

Lane's old man act morphs into a monster act. He chases his children around the huge house. Hazel jumps off Annie's lap to join in the fun. Kids scream. THEY LOVE IT!

LANE

RRRAAAAAA! I'm gonna get ya!

ANNIE

Alright you kids. We've waited long enough. Come and get it.

LANE AND HIS KIDS

Coming Mum.

Annie smiles at her husbands childish energy. Eleanor carries the hot chicken in using oven mitts and places it in the centre of the table.

Annie clutches Lane's hand under the table as he takes his seat, the spell is broken. The happy family turn to Lane for permission to begin.

LANE

OK, who's gonna to say thanks?

Everyone looks at Lane, confused. This is not a religious house.

HAZEL

Thanks.

LANE

There we go. Dig in.

The table erupts into action. Hands pass bread, cut chicken and grab corn.

EXT. LANE FAMILY HOME - SUNSET

The Lane Family are the picture of familial bliss. They laugh and eat together, perfectly framed in the dining room window.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

MARY CAMERON (24) tall, slender, with brown alert eyes and a serious face, washes a glass with a damp cloth, while looking out the kitchen window.

Mary (Later Dame Mary Gilmore, Poet, feminist and national icon, her portrait graces the Australian \$10 note) checks her unfashionably short auburn hair in the kitchenware.

THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Mary lets out a little YELP, whips off her apron and rushes to it.

Henry Lawson stands nervously behind the screen, holding a bunch of native Australian flowers behind his back.

INT./EXT. FRONT PORCH - DUSK

Mary calms herself then opens the door slowly.

LAWSON
Miss Cameron.

MARY
Mr. Lawson.

Mary breaks the stiffness by slapping Lawson's hat and erupting in childish laughter. She leaps on him, wrapping her legs and arms around him like an octopus.

Lawson stands stiff and awkward, his arms trapped behind his back holding the flowers. Mary peaks over his shoulder.

MARY (CONT'D)
(frenetic)
Are they for me?
Oh, they're beautiful!
I love 'em Harry!
Let me find a vase!

Mary snatches the flowers and dashes back inside. Lawson peers down at a 'ROOM TO LET' sign in the front window.

Mary rips some perfectly good flowers from a vase in the kitchen and replaces them with Lawsons. She runs back to the front door. Lawson is unmoved.

MARY (CONT'D)
Do you wanna come in for a bit?
Nah, let's get out of here!
Man, I've missed you!

Mary tosses the perfectly fine flowers into the garden, then loops arms with Lawson, leading him toward the front gate.

EXT. SYDNEY STREET - DUSK

Lawson lopes and Mary bounces along a not-so-pretty Sydney street. 'ROOM TO LET' signs appear in most windows - MONTAGE:

1. A butcher shop swarms with flies. Shopmen and women hang outside their dingy stores and wipe sweat from their faces.

2. Rough-looking, malnourished children scream obscenities and tangle with naked limbs on the ground.
3. Young women lean half-dressed from ground floor windows. Smoking or swearing at their fighting kids.
4. Three men hammer away fixing boots inside the ground floor window of a particularly shabby-looking terrace house.
5. A vile-tongued woman abuses another. They stop their fight to observe the young couple pass.

MARY

So. Where do ya wanna go?

LAWSON

Anywhere you like. You know best where to take a fella!

MARY

Come on then!

Mary yanks Lawson's arm half off as she leads him toward the glittering harbor in the distance.

INT. LANE FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Young Nelly Lane finishes building a fire in the family room. She blows on a small flame. It catches. She runs back toward William Lane, who sits in his comfy chair packing tobacco into his large meerschaum pipe.

Little Hazel sits on his knee half asleep. Charlie and Nelly surround his feet. They've waited all day for this.

Annie Lane gives Eleanor a piano lesson in an adjoining room. She looks through the doorway at her happy little family preparing for story time. She smiles - "I'm a lucky woman".

Lane lights his pipe and picks up a book - 'THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM'. He licks his fingers and flips pages. Light from the fire flickers on his face.

LANE

OK... Ya ready?

Charlie and Nellie nod their heads with excitement. Little Hazel is fully asleep.

LANE (CONT'D)

(dramatic reading)

In certain valley's there was hunter...

Annie interrupts the story to take Hazel off to bed. She gives Lane a tender kiss on the forehead. Lane looks up to admire the woman he finds more beautiful every day.

ANNIE

Sorry to interrupt. Carry on.
(I'll see you later)

Lane blows Annie a kiss and watches her walk away. He turns back to the book. Eleanor stops playing piano to listen too.

LANE

In certain valley's there was
hunter. Day by day he went to hunt
the wild fowl in the woods and it
chanced that one day he stood on
the shores of a great lake.

Lane's story-telling skills are top shelf. He instantly transports everyone into the fantasy of the story world.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE (STORY WORLD) - DAY

An ANIMATED HUNTER stands on the shore of a great lake. He looks exactly like Lane only stronger, more heroic and without walking-stick or glasses.

Lane's reading voice continues briefly, but pretty soon we're fully submerged into the animated story world.

LANE (V.O.)

A great shadow fell on him, and in
the water he saw a reflection.
He looked up to the sky... but the
thing was gone.

The Hunter looks up into the sky. He hears the sound of a great bird but can't see it. He runs through the rustling reeds searching. He looks up into the sky, but sees nothing.

The Hunter explores all day hoping to see the bird. He walks across vast salt plains, red sandy deserts and crosses a great river. Day changes to night.

He walks through a dense rainforest, filled with monkeys, wild cats and tropical birds. His hunting bag empty.

He enters a primitive village. Thatched huts surrounded by vegetable gardens, patches of maize and groves of orange trees. Ox-drawn wagons roll past. A pre-colonial paradise.

Other MEN FROM THE VILLAGE, strong healthy men wearing pure white cotton clothes, approach The Hunter and ask why his bag is empty. The Hunter doesn't answer.

He enters his own thatched hut and sits inside, moody and silent, lost in his thoughts of the great bird.

Footsteps outside the hut draw closer and closer. BANG! BANG! BANG! There's a knock at the hut. The Hunter looks up.

ALF (O.S.)

Billy!

CUT TO:

INT. LANE FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The door knock snaps the children out of the story world. Lane lingers a little longer in his vision. Eleanor moves toward the door.

BOOM BOOM BOOM! A second more aggressive knock comes.

ALF (O.S.)

Billy! You there mate?

Lane signals - "I've got this" - to Eleanor as he hobbles to the door.

LANE

That you Walker?

Lane opens the door to reveal a very agitated Alf Walker.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

Lane exits. Alf paces up and down holding a telegram in his trembling hands.

LANE

What is it mate?

ALF

They've just arrested PAT GRIFFIN, for conspiracy, nine other men for riotous behavior down at Peak Downs station and three more for abusive language.

Lane angrily limps inside and slams the door. Alf is left outside alone and confused. The door quickly re-opens. Lane exits holding a jacket and a small cloth bag.

LANE
What time is it?

Alf looks at the pocket-watch dangling from his vest.

ALF
Almost eight.

LANE
Great. The night train leaves at 8:45. I'll be on it.

ALF
You want me to come with ya?

Lane puts his jacket on while racing down the front steps.

LANE
Nah mate. You're running the show this edition.

Alf's brain buzzes with questions but he can't speak.

LANE (CONT'D)
Send Brittlebank as soon as you can spare him.

Lane continues to yell instructions to Alf as he limps down the dimly lit street.

LANE (CONT'D)
A young fella named Lawson should be up day-after-tomorrow. He's gonna write for us.

ALF
Lawson? Like... Henry Lawson?

LANE
Yeah, you know him?

Alf slowly nods his head - "of course I know him".

Lane rushes further down the street. Alf stands on the veranda examining the telegram. He spots Elanor, Nelly and Charlie peering out from behind a curtain.

Lane stops under a gas lamp.

LANE (CONT'D)

Alf! Alf!

Do ya best to explain this to the missus will ya. Tell her I'll be back soon. Hopefully.

(beat)

Thanks mate!

Lane hobbles into the darkness. Alf gives a half-hearted wave before turning to face the front door, steeling himself for the toughest task of the night.

EXT. BOTANIC GARDENS - NIGHT

Mary Cameron and Henry Lawson look up at the Palace Garden Gate, the grand entrance to the Botanic Gardens. It's locked.

Mary hitches up her dress and grips the gate with both hands.

MARY

Give us a hand will ya!

Lawson looks around. Nervous.

MARY (CONT'D)

We pay our taxes, we own the joint.

Lawson edges toward Mary, doing his best to avert his eyes from her naked thighs. Mary plants her foot in his hands and launches over, landing with grace on the other side.

She peers through the bars at Lawson.

MARY (CONT'D)

(cockney accent)

I didn't pick 'er pocket sir.
Honest. Don't transport me. I gotta
a muva and fava what loves me.

Lawson PISSES HIMSELF LAUGHING. Mary SCREAMS LIKE A MAD-WOMAN and runs off into the darkness of the Botanic Gardens.

Lawson launches himself at the gate, not so gracefully. We hear a RIP at the top. He drops to the other side then picks himself up and follows Mary into the darkness.

Mary let's out a JOYFUL ANIMAL CRY as she runs across the lawns. Harry loses his usual inhibition and ROAR'S WITH EXCITEMENT. Both of them YOUNG, WILD and FREE.

MONTAGE: The two young trespassers explore the beauty of the dark gardens at full speed. They jump over streams, zig-zag through a hedge maze and help each other scale down rocks.