

CLOUDSTREET

Text Amendments
15 November 2018

Replace the character name 'Black Man' with 'Storyteller' throughout entire script

Replace the following scenes in the original script with the amended scenes:

Prologue

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Scene 8

Scene 48

Scene 53

Scene 67

Scene 102

Prologue

STORYTELLER: Back in time there was a big empty house. It was owned by a very respectable woman who had cheated several people to get it. The local Anglican priest secretly thinks this widow is a nasty piece of work, but he also believes that there's good in every heart and it only needs to be nurtured.

He put a proposition to her: 'Why not make your house a mission for young native women? Then all of Perth will remember you with gratitude.' Missionary purpose came upon her like the flu. The widow filled the house with black girls. She aimed to make ladies out of them so they could set the standard for the rest of their sorry race. She showed them how to serve at table and how to wear hats in Church and... she locked them in at night. The girls climbed into bed with one another and cried. They'd been taken from their families and were not happy. They crawled out of windows and tried to escape, but were tracked down and returned to the house.

Number One Cloud Street, Perth Australia.

But... we're not quite there yet...

SCENE 1

ORIEL: I think that's done it.

LESTER and ORIEL LAMB have brought their family - QUICK, HATTIE, ELAINE, RED, FISH and baby LON - for a sunset prawning expedition. LESTER strips to his underwear to go into the water as:

ORIEL: Red, Elaine, you get some wood. Hattie, you stay and look after Lon.

RED drags ELAINE off. HATTIE cuddles baby LON.

LESTER: I'll take the boys.

ORIEL: They're too young.

LESTER: The girls grizzle too much. Drives me mad.

ORIEL: Put on your shoes or you'll be stung. Can't stand your grizzling.

LESTER: What are you talking about?

ORIEL: Last time a cobbler stung you we had to load you onto the flatbed -

HAT: - And I had to drive! -

ORIEL: - And we delivered you to that doctor, naked and screaming like a breech birth.

The KIDS laugh. LESTER puts on his shoes.

LESTER: All right, no stings tonight. Give us a kiss then. Quick, you wanna go, right?

QUICK: Yeah.

LESTER: Where's your brother?

QUICK: (looking around)... Dunno.

ORIEL: Fish? Fish?!

LESTER: Where are you, boy? Fish?

Everyone starts calling up and down the riverbank, getting a bit worried:

ORIEL: Fish?

QUICK: Fish?!

GIRLS: FISH!!

They stop as QUICK looks straight out, speaking directly to the audience, as he and other characters will do from time to time throughout the play.

QUICK: Everyone loves my younger brother. Fish Lamb. The handsome kid, the smart who makes us all laugh. Even his sisters, Hattie, Elaine and Red love Fish... and they hate boys to hell and back.

FISH finally appears, running on stage, full of life:

ORIEL: There he is!

LESTER: Where ya been?! Come on boys, let's get some prawns.

QUICK, FISH and LESTER wade into the water. LESTER holds a lantern. They spread the net.

ORIEL dawns on the beach; HAT cuddles LON singing softly to the baby; RED and ELAINE collect firewood as:

LESTER: Come on, Quick, don't be so slow.

LESTER and the boys have fanned out across the water. The girls talk, hushed, on the riverbank:

RED: Oi, look at Dad. He looks like a statue in a fountain with that light. Wants to be careful someone don't toss a penny in and make a wish.

ELAINE: What would they wish for, you reckon?

RED: Prolly wish they could get their money back.

The girls laugh.

LESTER: Okay, start runnin' 'em towards me, boys.

The boys start the net towards their father, as:

RED: Ow! Ow! Ow!

ORIEL: What's the matter, love? You get stung?

RED: No! No! It's a crab! Oh, he's gone! Bugger!

ORIEL: Red!

RED: He bit me on the bum, Mum. What a perve!

LESTER: Where'd you learn such language?

RED: Elaine!

Directly to the audience again:

QUICK: The water has never been so quiet. Quick, Fish and their father move through it like a cloud. But then... Fish goes down. He feels the mesh against his face. All his life Fish will remember this dark plunge – where sound and light and shape are gone.

ORIEL: Lest?

Stage suddenly darkens, as if a dark shadow has descended, and there is only a single lamp...

ORIEL: Lester, where's Fish?

LESTER: Quick, where's your brother? He mucking around again?

QUICK: Fish?

LESTER: Fish! Come on, boy!

ORIEL: Fish?! Where are you?

QUICK: (realizing) He's under it, he must be under the net!

All run into the water searching for FISH.

ORIEL: Do you see him?

QUICK: No, I lost him.

HAT: Where is he?

RED: Fish! Fish, are you joking? You better not be ...

QUICK: He's under the net!

LESTER: What?

QUICK: The net. He's caught in the net

HAT: Where is he, Quick?

LESTER: I don't see him! I don't see him!

Lights up, Fish is revealed on the ground...

RED: Fish!

ORIEL: Oh, Lord!

QUICK: There he is!

They see a shape in the net and run to it. LESTER and ORIEL untangle FISH.

LESTER: Oh, Lord.

No breath or movement from FISH. HAT and ELAINE cry.

RED: Is he dead?

ORIEL: No! No!

She beats on FISH 's chest.

ORIEL: Blessed Saviour, bring him back. Show us all Thy tender mercy and bring this boy back-

LESTER: - (overlapping) Get the truck! We got to get him to hospital! - . . .

ORIEL: - God, Jesus Almighty, raise him up! Now, you raise him up.

LESTER: Yes, Lord, yes!

There' s still no sound or movement from FISH.

ORIEL: Lord Jesus!

She smashes FISH on the chest one more time. Water spews from his mouth. He screams, but all cry with joy as he starts to breathe.

LESTER: He's alive! He's alive!

ORIEL: It's a miracle! Praise the Lord of miracles!

LESTER leads the LAMBS in singing: 'What a friend we have in Jesus ... '

QUICK: They drive Fish back into town. The Lambs barrel down the hill like mad bastards, singing and shouting. They swing into the dirt yard of the Church of Christ, ready to beat the door down, to find the minister, to tell the people: We got him back! Fish Lamb is back! Praise the Lord!

QUICK cradles FISH 's head in his hands.

But Quick holds his brother's head in his hands and knows it isn't quite right. Because not all of Fish Lamb has come back.

QUICK looks towards the singing LAMBS.

Dad? Mum? Look... Dad, Mum ...

SCENE 2

SAM screams as he catches his hand in the winch of the guano barge on which he works.

SAM: Aaagh! FUCK! Help! HELP!

QUICK: Dad? Mum?

ROSE runs headlong through the space.

ROSE: Mum! Mum!

She passes her brother, CHUB, heading in the other direction. He doesn't listen to her.

ROSE: Chub? Wait. Dad's had an accident. It's his hand ...

CHUB: Come on, we're goin' down the jetty!

She runs into a hotel towards her mother's room. PICKLES sits on the lap of a PILOT, fucking him well.

ROSE: Mum ...

DOLLY puts her hand over the PILOT's mouth.

ROSE: Mum?

ROSE retreats. DOLLY removes her hand from the PILOT's mouth. She licks his neck.

PILOT: You're a damn good-looking woman, Mrs Pickles.

DOLLY: You Yanks are something. Jesus Christ, you're something. I like the salt when you sweat.

They keep fucking.

SCENE 3

Hospital, Geraldton. SAM, his fist bandaged up in a salute, sits in a chair, groggy with pain killers. ROSE is with him.

ROSE: Rose's dad, Sam Pickles, believes in luck, though he never says the word. He calls it the Shifty Shadow of God. And you never know which way it's going to fall. Rose has never felt the shadow the way she did today. She knew something bad was going to happen, something really bad, but she never thought the shadow would make her father lose his fingers working on a barge loaded with birdshit.

DOLLY and CHUB arrive.

DOLLY: How is he?

ROSE: Four fingers and the top of his thumb.

DOLLY: The sister told me. His right hand?

ROSE: Yup. He caught it in the winch.

DOLLY: His bloody working hand. A man can hardly pick his nose with a thumb and half a pointer. Well, we're done, kids, we're cactus. Thank you, Lady Luck, you rotten slut. He been awake?

ROSE: No. I just been watching him. Wondering where you were.

CHUB: Can we go down to the jetty? If he's not gunna wake up ...

ROSE: Supposed to be in school, youse.

CHUB: We'll be back dreckly. Dad might be awake then, eh, Mum?

ROSE: Don't drown from crying, Chub.

CHUB: You don't want to come 'cause last time you got a jellyfish up your bathers.

ROSE: No, 'cause someone thought you were my brother.

CHUB: But I am your brother.

Rose gives CHUB a withering look and shakes her head at his stupidity

CHUB: Know what I reckon? I reckon it'll be pretty good having a dad with bits off him. Everyone'll think he's a war hero.

DOLLY: Chub?

CHUB: Yeah?

DOLLY: Shut up and go to the jetty.

CHUB runs off. DOLLY stares after him.

A war hero? Wounded in the battle for birdshit? You can't get much mileage out of that.

DOLLY goes. ROSE stays by SAM.

ROSE: Rose watches Sam sleep. She hates him sometimes, he's so useless. She wants to hit him, to pick up a lump of four-by-two and snot him with it. He's a grown man and yet he doesn't have a pinch of sense. But he isn't mean like the old girl. Rose knows something sour is coming into everything, and it's been happening all year. Everything is falling to bits.

SCENE 4

Margaret River. The LAMBS pack the truck.

RED: Do we have to go?

ORIEL: That's enough, Red.

ELAINE: Why are we leaving? Dad?

LESTER: Time we showed you all a bit of the world. All aboard.

ORIEL: Come on, Fish. Fish?

FISH doesn't respond.

Quick, have you changed him?

QUICK: Yes, Mum. Come on, mate.

FISH: The water.

FISH gets in the truck.

LESTER: When the Lambs roll down the main street, no-one even pauses in their business to wave. At the Margaret River bridge, their Cousin May mutters: There they go, poor silly Bible-bashing bastards. (beat) You can't stay in a town when everything blows up in your face, especially the only miracle that ever happened to you.

SCENE 8

STORYTELLER: ... it was in this room, the library, where I was brought back against my will.
(Soft) I wanted to go home, but... I wasn't allowed to so... I drank ant poison and died. The widow kicked out the rest of the girls and burned their linen under the fruit trees in the backyard. (beat)
A few weeks later that woman was at the piano – lace gloves, a corset and hat – when her heart stopped. Her nose hit Middle C. (sound of Middle C) The room soaked her up and the summer heat worked on her body. And that's how the vicar found her. Her smell knocked him over like a shot from a .303. The house was boarded up and it held its breath. Until today, no-one ever lived in it again - though some swore they could hear Middle C ringing from it at night.

ROSE hits Middle C. She feels the presence of the ghost and flees the room.

SCENE 48

QUICK wakes in a bed at a homestead.

LUCY: You're bloody lucky a man was goin' by on the off chance. You would have died sure as shit, I reckon. You'll have to stay here till you're back on your feet. (softens) You had us worried, Quick Lamb. Must have lost a bucket of blood out there. Still, the doctor reckons you'll pull through. God, you got yourself burnt, but. I can feel the heat comin' off you in waves. Never mind, I'll fix you up.

QUICK: What's that?

LUCY: Goanna oil. Takes the sting out.

QUICK: Thanks.

LUCY: How come you never been round to see me?

QUICK: 'Scuse me?

LUCY: All the other fellas come sniffing around, giving it a try, not that I'd look twice at any of 'em, pack of no-hopers. You, you've been in the district three years and never come near me.

QUICK: I like living bush by myself.

LUCY: Why's that?

QUICK: I come from a big family, that's why.

They both smile.

LUCY: Is that really your name? Quick Lamb?

QUICK: Yeah.

LUCY: Because you're fast?

Her hand goes under the sheet.

QUICK: No.

She grabs his dick.

I didn't get burnt down there.

LUCY: It's all right, Quick.

She starts to jerk him off.

Heard a lot about you.

QUICK: Yeah?

LUCY: Cockies reckon you're the best shot the district's ever seen.

QUICK: I... I've got my mum's eyes. Long-distance eyes ...

LUCY: Is this your first time? It is, isn't it? You're blushin'.

QUICK: It's sunburn.

LUCY: Yeah, but you just went red in the white bits. You've got a huge whanger, Quick. I like that on a man. *[She looks under the covers]* A head like that, it ought to be eligible to vote.

He gives in to the experience.

LUCY: I'm going to live in Perth. I'm gonna have a flower shop. A floristry.

QUICK: Mmnggh?

LUCY: My dad's gonna set me up ...

QUICK: Hhhyeah?

LUCY: Though he doesn't exactly know it yet.

QUICK: Hhhhow long have you planned to do that?

LUCY: I just thought of it. Three minutes ago. I got it all figured out. I like the smell of flowers.

QUICK comes.

SCENE 53

QUICK: Lucy is beside herself with happiness. She's got her ticket out of town. She begins negotiations with her father for a flower shop. But Quick can't hang around. It's not that he doesn't like her. He never minded wrestling around with her, and having her grabbers in his shorts. But he's never thought about her much. So he packs up the Dodge and heads off.

We see QUICK leaving, then:

QUICK: Outside Bruce Rock, he sees a blackfella with his thumb out.

QUICK sees the storyteller hitching.

QUICK: Quick takes his foot off the pedal a moment, but then drives on.

QUICK doesn't stop, the storyteller moves position until...

QUICK: A few miles down the road he's out on the gravel shoulder again, thumb out...

This time QUICK stops.

STORYTELLER: Ta.

He climbs into the ute.

QUICK: Weren't you just . . . back there?

STORYTELLER: No.

QUICK looks at him for a moment and drives on.

QUICK: Wanna smoke?

STORYTELLER: Yeah. Ta. Hungry?

QUICK: Yeah, I could do with a bite.

From his bag, the STORYTELLER pulls out bread and a bottle.

Whacko. [QUICK speaks to the audience.] They drive all night. And the fuel gauge never goes down. Something drags Quick on, drags him forward, but he doesn't know what. He's been going along without any feeling for so long, without caring either way, he doesn't know what to feel now. So Quick keeps driving. [To the STORYTELLER] How we doing for time?

STORYTELLER: Well as can be expected.

QUICK: Where you from, mate?

STORYTELLER: All over.

QUICK: I mean, where's your family?

STORYTELLER: All over.

ROSE: ... I better be getting home. I have work in the morning.

TOBY: Let me drive you.

ROSE: No. I can take the bus.

TOBY: (smile) You ashamed of me? Don't want your parents to meet me?

ROSE: No. No... it's... Cloud Street. I live in a nuthouse.

TOBY: Ohhh, I must see it then.

ROSE: No.

FISH playing the piano throughout all of this, getting more and more animated, louder, as we come back to QUICK and STORYTELLER:

QUICK: That's a nice suit. Never seen an Aborigine in a pinstripe before. You must have a bit of a job.

STORYTELLER: Bit of a job.

QUICK: Family business?

STORYTELLER: Always family business.

QUICK: Headin' for the city?

The STORYTELLER nods. And QUICK smiles to himself.

Family business ...

FISH even more animated, excited, playing louder – he senses QUICK is getting nearer and nearer.

FISH: Quick... Quick! Quick!!

QUICK slows the truck and looks at the STORYTELLER.

QUICK: Where can I drop you?

STORYTELLER: Just follow the railway line a bit further.

QUICK: (getting a bit worried/suspicious about where they're headed) ...Any place in particular?

TOBY: Please, let me drive you home.

ROSE: No. No, Toby... I have two lives and they must stay apart. You can never go to Cloud Street.

FISH is getting more and more excited, all overlapping:

FISH: ... Quick? Quick! HE'S HERE!

STORYTELLER: Just up there a bit. Corner of Cloud Street, mate.

QUICK: No . . . I... I'll drop you here.

FISH: Quick! Quick!!

LESTER finally appears in the windowless room, just woken from the house:

LESTER: Fish, stop! What's the matter?

FISH: It's Quick! He's here... he's...

LESTER: No, son, he's not. He's far away.

FISH: He's here!

The girls pile into the room – just woken:

RED: What are you doing?! It's two in the morning!

ELAINE: Some of us are trying to sleep!

FISH: Quick... he's here!

LESTER: I wish he was, Fish. I wish he was. Go back to bed, son.

HAT: Now I'll never fall asleep again!

FISH: Lestah...

Lester kisses FISH and settles him – then heads out with the girls as:

ROSE kisses TOBY quick:

ROSE: Sorry

TOBY: Rose! Wait!

She rushes off as...

The Storyteller is out of the truck, looks back at Quick

STORYTELLER: Comin'?

Quick looks across the space to Fish:

QUICK: No.

The STORYTELLER just shrugs and walks away as QUICK looks at FISH and we settle on FISH in the windowless room.

Fish stares up at the ghosts on the wall, soft:

FISH: I hate youse. (then). Stop crying. Please.

Fish looks out, so forlornly:

FISH: Come home, brother boy. Come home.

SCENE 67

In the boat QUICK hears laughter and voices from the past.

VOICES: Fish! Fish! Fish!

Laughter.

LESTER'S VOICE: Come on, boys, let's get some prawns!

ORIEL'S VOICE: Fish?

LESTER'S VOICE: Where are you, boy? Mucking around again?

Sounds swell as the memory washes over QUICK.

RED'S VOICE: Oi, Look at Dad...

LESTER'S VOICE: Don't smile too much, Fish, you'll frighten the prawns away.

The memory turns bad.

ORIEL'S VOICE: Do you see him?!

QUICK: No, I lost him!

LESTER'S VOICE: Fish!

QUICK: Just pull! Pull!

ORIEL'S VOICE: Oh Lord! No!

LESTER'S VOICE: Get the trnck!

ORIEL'S VOICE: Blessed Saviour, bring him back! Jesus Almighty, raise him up! Now you, raise him up!

LESTER'S VOICE: Yes, Lord, yes!

ORIEL'S VOICE: Lord Jesus!

LESTER'S VOICE: He's alive!

ORIEL'S VOICE: It's a miracle!

ALL: Fish!! Fish!

QUICK fishes.

STORYTELLER: Then it all begins. The first bite rings in his wrist like a cover drive. When he hauls the fish into the boat, it's two fishes, one fixed to the tail of the other. He baits up and casts

again. He gets a strike the moment the hook hits the water. And then another, and another. He drags in four fish, two hooked and two biting their tails. He catches them cast after cast. His hands bleed and his arms ache and his boat vibrates like a cathedral with all these fish arching, beating and bucking. Quick throws out baitless hooks to drag in great silver chains of them. They shine like money, and in the end he stops casting and lies back in the smother and squelch of fish as they leap in the boat of their own accord. He feels them slide across his chest as his head sinks into them, against his cheeks, along his lips with the briny taste of Lucy Wentworth's bits. He breathes them in and he looks up and sees the figure of a man walking upon the water. And it makes him laugh. 'He's on a sandbar,' thinks Quick. 'He must be. And he's black. But everyone's black at a distance.'

At the piano FISH cries, banging on Middle C, growing more discordant and guttural. The GHOST watches.

FISH: Quick. Quick. Quick!

STORYTELLER: When Cousin May found him the next day, Quick was lit up like a 60 watt bulb and he wouldn't stop crying. Cousin May didn't understand it, but she knew one thing: Quick Lamb needed his own.

SCENE 102

As the families cross the stage and head off to set up their picnic:

QUICK: On a long grassy bank beneath peppermint trees and the Moreton Bay Figs, we set out blankets and white tablecloths. Out of crates come ham and cold chickens; lettuce salad and hardboiled eggs and a flash of Chateau Tanunda.

QUICK looks pass his family, as:

QUICK: Quick can see that another crowd has also gathered. He can see them in the shade of the trees – a river of faces from before: the forgotten, the silent and the missing. That’s another thing Quick learned: the lost stay with you.

FISH comes on stage and QUICK looks to his brother:

QUICK: But Fish sees nothing but the water. The sound of it has been in his ears all his life and he’s hungry for it.

FISH runs.

QUICK: Quick watches as Fish runs down the jetty, fat and barefoot. His shirt tail out, a great slack grin on his face. (beat) Fish leans out and the water is beautiful. Quick wants to stop him but... he lets Fish go – and already he’s crying.

FISH is alone.

FISH: I know my story for just long enough to see how we’ve come, how we’ve all battled in the same corridor that time makes for us and I’m Fish Lamb for those seconds it takes to die, as long as it takes to drink the river, as long as it took to tell you all this, and then my walls are tipping and I burst into the moon, sun and stars of who I truly am. Being Fish Lamb. Perfectly. Always. Everyplace. Me.

He goes into the water.