

# ATOMIC

by  
Amelia Chandos Evans

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Welcome to **ATOMIC**, the fifth play that Malthouse Theatre have commissioned for The Suitcase Series program!

We hope that you enjoy exploring this exciting new work within your Drama classroom and we look forward to seeing the performances that you devise in response to the play in October-November of this year.

Both the Playwright Amelia Evans and our Dramaturg Mark Pritchard have written notes as part of the introduction to **ATOMIC**. Allow their thoughts and insights to act as a provocation for your own engagement with the play.

As you read through this script you will see that each of the many scenes allocates lines to A, B or C. Keep in mind that in every scene the letters A, B and C refer to a new set of characters. It is entirely up to you to decide who might say which lines in each of these scenes. The sections which are spoken by the Chorus of Atoms can be divided up in any way that you wish – it might be a large ensemble, it might be divided up between various actors, it might be a monologue. These are options that you can explore during rehearsals.

### **Further information about The Suitcase Series program:**

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

#### **1. Each class has 20 minutes of performance time**

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

#### **2. Everyone is an artist, everyone has a role**

Not everyone needs to be an actor. Theatre is a collaborative art form. You might consider allocating roles such as: director, writer, set designer, costume designer, lighting, sound design and composition along with performers, musicians, singers, dancers, contortionists...it's up to you! When casting actors, remember that you can vary the number of actors in each scene as well as the setting. The possibilities are endless...

#### **3. The script is only a stimulus**

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

#### **4. Bring everything in a suitcase**

On your in-theatre performance day, we ask you to bring your set items and props in one suitcase. (If you need a table or chairs we can provide them). There will be set lighting states that can be used, operated by our Stage Manager. Sound will need to be operated by someone from your group and needs to be on an iPad, iPhone or laptop that can be plugged into our speaker. You can use one suitcase per ensemble and yes, you can wear your costumes or bring a larger prop or musical instrument if it doesn't fit.

#### **5. The Suitcase Series is about Climate Change**

Don't forget that part.

#### **6. Rules are meant to be broken**

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



#### **The Suitcase Series**

Vanessa O'Neill

Youth and Education Manager, Malthouse Theatre

Phone 03 9685 5164

Email [voneill@malthousetheatre.com.au](mailto:voneill@malthousetheatre.com.au)

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

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## **A note from the Playwright, Amelia Chandos Evans**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

- Margaret Mead, cultural anthropologist

The world is in pain, that’s for sure. News of ice sheets melting, the last male white rhinoceros dying and the damage caused by plastics is unavoidable and overwhelming.

What is our responsibility for this crisis and for the future? Why are we here? How did we get here? How do we course-correct? Is it naïve to hope that this is even possible? Is the climate crisis linked to other issues we are currently facing – sexism, racism, and inequality of all kinds?

Atoms don’t die, they only change.

Atomic means both big and small, it can be female, male, black, white, water, land, plastic or petals. And if all the matter on earth today is the same matter that has always been here (save for a few meteorites) then the history of our planet is a history of constant, relentless change. What is different today is our skill; our ability to transform the natural to plastic, fuel to warmth, and how we have used these skills to support a population explosion. It is our control of transformation that has led to the current geological age some people are naming the “Anthropocene” – in which human activity has been the dominant influence.

My intention with this play was to present small moments of transformation against the epic backdrop of history. To zoom out and have the history of the universe told by its smallest elements, to disrupt our ideas of time and the dominant narratives of history – and encourage you to seek your own meaning from the past. I believe when we do that - new futures are possible. And so this became the BEFORE, AFTER, WHEN and NOW sections.

And then I wanted to zoom back in, to kitchen tables and beaches and parklands. To people struggling to come to terms with how to act in the face of headlines like “Scientists agree this is the last year to save the reef!”, or what to do when a whale beaches itself at your feet. And also to explore ideas of radical change – whether that be quitting your job to devote yourself to a tree, or just picking up rubbish.

From there the sections emerged: CRISIS, RECKONING, REVOLUTION and REGENERATION. Each section centered around a question:

**CRISIS:** what keeps us inactive when the world seems to be spiraling out of our control?

**RECKONING:** Do we deserve forgiveness for the damage we’ve caused? Have we forgotten that we are ourselves, part of the natural world?

REVOLUTION: What can we do to get our relationship with the natural world (and so, ourselves) back on track?

REGENERATION: What does hope look like? What do we want our future to look like?

The characters don't have names or descriptions, they could be anyone in Australia. I see parts of myself in all of them, and I hope you do too. In doing so – I hope to inspire you to recognise your own power, as well as respect for all the atoms in the world, including the ones that make up your own bodies and minds.

I kept thinking of that prokaryote that somehow taught itself to be alive, of the first creature that dared leave the sea and make its way to land. Of the small shrew like mammals that survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and thrived. And when I think of their tenacity and will, the sheer odds these ancestors of ours had against them – I think there's plenty of reasons to hope.

Maybe the first step is cleaning up what we put out into the world, what we say and what we dream. Maybe it's not naïve to dream of a healthy world where we live in alignment with the other life forms of this planet. Maybe it's the most important dream to have.

I hope you dream big. I can't wait to see what dreams you come up with.

## **A note from the Dramaturg, Mark Pritchard**

What is the dramaturgy of the history of the universe?

The task Amelia set herself in approaching this play is no easy feat – to understand humanity’s relationship to climate change. To answer it, we have to go back to the beginning of it all, and the beginning before that, and before that... because the truth is that the climate has always been changing. The history of the universe is one of constant relentless change, full of incredible chain reactions and miraculous coincidences that have made life on this planet possible. So what’s that got to do with us? Why is climate change our mess to clean up?

It is and it isn’t. We’re all just individuals, and we’ve inherited a world in which we are the dominant species. By living the way we’ve grown accustomed to we’re having a huge impact on the planet – we’re heating up the globe. With great power comes great responsibility, and so this play became about how we each wrestle with that responsibility. When do we feel powerful? When is it all too much? When do we want to shift the blame? And when do take up the challenge in spite of it all?

We couldn’t sum all of this up in one single hero’s journey, or any classic dramatic structure – we had to find a new form. We had to break this monumental issue of humanity’s role in climate change into tiny parts, so we could see all the little moments that might appear disconnected or unimportant or futile, and start to join the dots. If all of the characters in this play realised they were all part of a bigger story, facing the same problems – what would happen?

So looking back at this play, you might imagine it as a galaxy of tiny stars and planets that are all different but all connected. Or maybe it’s the chaos of the big bang, blowing open history with all the little scenes inside it firing off in different directions. Or a wall of tiny photographs that, as you step back from it, start to form patterns or even a whole picture. When you zoom out on this play, what do you see?

As dramaturg, I’ve been working with Amelia to develop this script, feeding back on the different versions of the scenes that she writes. My role is to read them thoroughly, to pick up on the details, and feed back to her what I’m getting from the scenes. What ideas resonated with me? Where do I get totally lost? And, playing around with different structures, what connections do I see when we put the scenes together in a certain order?

We made our own journey out of it all in this version, but there are lots of fascinating scenes that didn’t make the final cut. So when you jump into the script, I’d recommend mixing it all up for yourselves, adding in your own scenes, and finding your own way through the mess. Do any characters cross paths again or come back in other moments? How do you find new connections and contrasts that might make new meanings that ring true for you?

There are no easy answers in this play – just a maze of questions, and tiny moments between people trying to make sense of it all.

**Notes on the text:**

PROLOGUE : BEFORE

PART 1 : CRISIS

PART 2 : RECKONING

PART 3 : REVOLUTION

PART 4 : REGENERATION

The characters in each scene are completely different. A, B and C have been used to delineate characters in a scene – but in each scene they refer to a different character.

The play is intended for between 3 and 6,000 actors.

## PROLOGUE: BEFORE

A Chorus of Atoms:

Before the seven billion billion billion of us atoms, that make up you  
walked into the theatre and took your seat

Before the seven billion billion billion of us that make up you were  
standing in the foyer scrolling Twitter and read the headline 'Scientists  
agree – this is the last year to save the reef'

Before Twitter

Before Twitter and Insta and Facebook and Facetime and Snapchat  
and Tramtracker and 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians'!

Before you knew what a Kardashian was

Before you were even a twinkle in your father's eye

Before 'one small step for man...'

Before the electric can opener

Before the Twin Towers, showers, Armani wraparound sunglasses

All sunglasses

All sunglasses and SUV's, AR15's, Boeing 747's, air conditioning,  
atomic bombs

Microfibre, microbeads, microphones, microplastic

All plastic!

Before the last Tasmanian tiger died

Before everyone alive today was even a twinkle in their father's eye!

Before Captain Cook was even a twinkle in his father's eye

Before the word Australia

Before the letters A-U-S-T

Before English and Portuguese and Mandarin and Farsi and Sanskrit  
and Boonwurrung



Before all languages

Before all homo sapiens were even a twinkle in their fathers' eyes

Before lions and tigers and bears

Before the bit of Earth we're standing on split from the rest of Pangea and drifted east

Before Pangea

Before trees and flowers and moss and coral

Before the earth was formed from leftover solar dust

Before the sun

Before every star that's ever been seen

Before our universe

(Or before some dude called God got bored and decided to put in a solid six days of work)

(Or before the white giant Mbombo got a tummy ache, shoved his fingers down his throat and up-chucked the world)

(Or before the cosmic egg split and became the heavens and the earth)

(Or before a snake twisted its way across the land singing the names of the things it saw)

Before that...?

Maybe only darkness and silence

Maybe silence and darkness and chaos

Darkness and matter – dark matter and chaos and maybe it is

Glorious

...

But every moment tires

Starts yearning

Wants to

Has to

Change

We got tired

Started yearning

Wanting to having to

So we banded together, rattled against each other till

## **PART 1: CRISIS**

### Scene 1.1: BANANA SHORTAGE

*A supermarket*

- A           Excuse me? Hello. I'm looking for the bananas?
- B           Next to the apples
- A           I checked next to the apples – there's none there
- B           Must have sold out - there's a shortage
- C           I want a lollypop
- A           What have I said about refined sugar JD?
- B           Cute kid
- A           Sometimes. Sorry you were saying – a shortage?
- B           Floods in Queensland
- A           Floods. Yes I saw that on the news, terrible
- B           The price was bumped sky high but they're still selling out. People love their bananas eh?
- A           Bananas are a fabulous fruit. And they go fabulously in my famous upside down banana cake. It's my JD's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday party tomorrow see, and it's a bit of an event, isn't it JD?
- C           I want a lollypop
- A           You wouldn't mind checking out the back, would you?
- B           Everything we had was out
- A           Maybe you missed two or three?
- B           There's plenty of peaches. What about a peach cobbler?
- C           LOLLYPOP!

- A JD, calm down. A peach cobbler is a great dessert – I agree. The thing is I'm not famous for my peach cobblers, I'm famous for my
- B Upside down banana cake
- A Could I speak to the manager?
- B I am the manager
- A Of course you are
- B Excuse me?
- A I find it very difficult to believe you don't have three bananas out there
- B Listen mate
- A Mate? I'm not your mate, I am a loyal, paying customer and I don't think it's too much to ask – is it? Is it? For three measly bananas. it's not my fault there was a drought in Queensland
- B Flood
- A Flood whatever!

*JD has unwrapped the lollypop and is sucking on it*

- A JD - Spit that out right now. We're in a public place, you're making a scene!

## SCENE 1.2: FLAT ON THE FLOOR

*B is on the kitchen floor.*

- A Why are you on the floor?
- B I can't get up. One second I was waiting for my toast to pop, next thing I'm on the floor. I should have been at work an hour ago
- A Can you feel this?

*A pinches B*

- B Owww

A It's not your legs. How many fingers am I holding up?

B None

A Not your head. OK. You say you were just standing there?

B Waiting for my toast, looking at my phone – oh – and I read his article 'Scientist agree – this is the last year to save the reef!'

A I saw that one. Awful.

B Did you see the one about the last white male rhino dying?

A No? Awful

B And the one about the amazon being logged for cattle farms. Or the one about the recycling crisis now we can't just ship it to China

*Somehow – A has found themselves on the floor*

A There's a rally about that this afternoon. We should go

B I have to work

A Can't work if you can't get off the floor

B I'll have to call in sick

A Then you could come to the rally

B Yeah maybe. If I can get up

A Oh... I can't seem to get up either...

### SCENE 1.3: THE MESS

A It's a disgrace

B I'll clean it later

A There's no time like the present

B I'm busy now

A You're not busy – you're catching Pokémon

B What's the point? It'll just get dirty again  
A The point is you made the mess – if you didn't make the mess it wouldn't need to be cleaned  
B I didn't make all of it – some of it is Sophia's, and Kali's  
A I don't care whose mess it is all I care about is that it gets cleaned  
RIGHT NOW  
B Actually, I don't feel like it right now ok? I just don't feel like it

#### SCENE 1.4 : VEGAN

B I think I have to go vegan. Will you do it with me?  
A We already gave up meat. And we only ever get free range.  
B But I just watched this video on YouTube  
A I know – I know, the cages the hormones we ALWAYS get free range  
B No – the dairy cows  
A What? No – don't tell me  
B They have to keep them pregnant  
A If you ruin ice cream for me I'll never speak to you again. It's my favourite thing.  
B Because they only lactate if they have a baby  
A I said don't tell me

*A does their best to block out the sound.*

B Imagine that! Forced to be constantly pregnant and when you give birth the calves are taken from you and killed for meat while you breastfeed six metal pumps for some dude's ice cream sundae. Your ice cream sundae  
A I said don't tell me! Great – ice cream is ruined. And cream and yogurt  
B Don't forget cheese  
A Cheese is my second favourite thing

SCENE 1.5: BUSHFIRE

*A fire can be seen on the horizon.*

- A            Yeah, nah - we're gonna stay  
Yeah nah, I can see it across the hills it's burning alright  
But still over 100 K's away.  
So as long as the wind doesn't change we'll be right  
...  
Look mate – you gotta do what you gotta do  
We'll be right. Talk soon
- B            They heading into town are they?
- A            Yeah they're gonna see a movie
- B            Thermostat says 47
- A            Feelin' hot hot hot...
- B            What movie are they seeing?
- A            'Marley & Me'
- B            That looks good that one. Maybe we should go with them?
- A            I'm not interested in a movie
- B            Well maybe we should get out of here anyway. Grab the photos and  
head into town, go to the pool, see your mum?
- A            Are you worried?
- B            Of course
- A            There's nothing to worry about – not yet. Still over 100 K's away
- B            I know but
- A            You go if you want to
- B            I'm not going to leave you
- A            Well I don't see why I have to waste my Saturday going to a terrible  
movie when we've got a perfectly good TV here

B Because it's right there – you can see it, same as me  
A That's well over 100 K's away  
B I can smell the smoke  
A As long as the wind doesn't change  
B What if it does?

#### SCENE 1.6: BEACHED WHALE

##### *The beach*

C Is that?  
A What is that?  
C It is  
B What?  
A A whale – see? Right there  
C Hey mate, you right?  
B Hey careful – could be a shark  
A It's not a shark there's no fin. Why is it so close to the shore? Do you think it's beaching itself?  
C You're heading in the wrong direction mate  
A What do we do? Should we call someone? I think we're supposed to keep them wet – we don't have a bucket.  
B Maybe we should just leave it be  
A We can't leave it  
B Maybe it's old maybe it wants to be left alone  
A You don't know that – it could be the sonar – the noise of the ships and the submarines messing with its navigation – we have to do something  
C Wrong way – go back – back out to the deep



- A Hey look – there’s another
- B Where?
- A There. And another there. Maybe it’s a pack – a herd. And maybe this is the leader, they follow the leader don’t they?
- C Mate – your friends are following you
- B Wow. There’s so many
- A We’ve got to do something. Should I call someone? Who should I call?
- B Look at its eye
- A The ranger? 000?
- B Ok. Yep – call 000
- A Ok. I’m not getting any signal. OK. I’m going to the car – I’m gonna go to the car and call someone ok? You stay here and I’ll – bring a bucket. Ok?
- C There’s nothing to see here I promise. You gotta go back. Your mates will follow you – go back, back out to the deep

## PART 2: RECKONING

### AFTER

A Chorus of Atoms:

After the universe was born

After we were just dust floating

After gravity had its way with us and we merged into bits and then  
bigger bits and then the sun and the planets and a huge ball of lava  
now called Earth

After the heaviest of us sunk to the core and the lightest of us rose up  
up to form the crust and the atmosphere

After we fell as rain for millions of years till oceans formed and the  
planet cooled becoming a Goldilocks Earth not too cold not too hot  
just right for

Life

After life

After we taught ourselves to eat chemicals and light and so became  
prokaryotes

And algae and coral and moss and flowers and trees trees trees

And trilobites and fish and sharks and whales and amphibians and  
lizards and dinosaurs and lions and tigers and bears

And Homo sapiens

After one of us learnt to make fire and tools

And one of us learnt that a seed of a wild plant will grow wherever  
you want as long as you make sure it has light and water

And so those seeds grew and grew into an agricultural revolution

After forests became farms and cities and neon lit supermarkets and  
food became money and surplus and that's yours and that's mine and  
them and us and I don't think it's too much to ask – is it? Is it? For  
three measly bananas!

After that

After those humans turned a stone into a wheel into a coal fired  
steam train burning burning into an industrial revolution into a piece  
of plastic to keep my chips fresh into a pacific trash vortex into  
microplastic into a fish into my intestine

After they split just one of us

After they turned that knowledge into a bomb

After they dropped that bomb and then another

After they multiplied and became seven and a half billion humans

After they caused the temperature on our Goldilocks planet to heat  
just a bit

And the icebergs to melt

And the drought and the fires

And the hole in the ozone layer

After they did that – not us

After they meant well

After they realised what was happening and kept on going regardless

After all – there is no they

After we realised what was happening

After all - we have to do something

After we get out of bed and put the kettle on

We're gonna – We're gonna

What do we do?

SCENE 2.1 THE WILDFLOWER AND THE CHIP PACKET

*A is a wildflower, B is a chip packet.*

A Ahhhh

Feel that... sliver of sunlight flitting its way through the canopy to

The delicate tendrils of my stalk, my stem, my bud

All my atoms fizzing with the knowledge that this is the moment, my moment – to bloom.

Ahhhh – when you think of the infinite number of permutations, errors and adaptations it took for this moment - a history as violent and impossible as any other form of life

Well if you think of it your brain might go POP

Lucky I don't need a brain

To know that actually – this moment was always – inevitable

The moment I open my petals and

*B blows in on a breeze*

B AHHHHHH

*B stops caught for a second, sees A*

Pretty

A Excuse me.

B Yes?

A I'm fulfilling my destiny

B Cool

A I'm about to bloom here and it's very rude to stare so get away – get away – shoo!

B Sorry to say matey, there is no 'away'. Plus I'm not alive, so I don't have a choice where I go

- A Not alive? What are you then?
- B I'm a chip packet!
- A 'Chip packet'? I don't get it
- B Nothing to get matey. Just a bit of plastic to hold chips in. Salt and Vinegar they were.
- A Salt and Vinegar
- B Chips yeah – you don't get out much eh?
- A I regenerate
- B That must be nice. Not me – I'm stuck as a chip packet with no chips left to hold!
- A Where did they go?
- B Well, a dude bought me to a picnic with his mates. And they popped me open and ate the chips and they loved them! They really loved them because I kept them fresh, see?
- A Fresh yes I see

*The breeze takes B a little way, sways A as well*

- B AHHHH!

*Then stops*

Looks like a storm's coming. Might not be sticking around long.

- A Where will you go?
- B Probably the Pacific Trash Vortex.
- A What's that?
- B Giant whirlpool of trash like me spinning round and around and around forever. So you don't need to bother about me, I'm nothing special. You just keep blooming.
- A Well I
- B Go on. I'll look the other way. Pretend like I'm not even here

A Well I guess I'll  
B Must be amazing to be a living thing  
A Reach out my petals and  
B Lovely  
A Bloom  
B AHHHHHHH

*A breeze blows the chip packet 'away'*

## SCENE 2.2: BATTLING NATURE

*A camping area. C wields a can of bug spray like a weapon, listens intently for the bug that they're hunting.*

A It's so good to get out of the city!  
B The air is so much clearer!  
A The sky is so much clearer. You can actually see the stars  
B Really puts things in perspective doesn't it. The whole universe – right there

*B is cut off by C spraying bugs with abandon*

A Put the spray down  
C I can't, it's after me, I can hear it but I can't see it, can you see it? I think I'm being bitten, I am, look!  
A I can't see anything but the stars  
B Chill, enjoy the universe  
C I can't chill till I know it's dead  
A Why did you even come camping?  
C Because I wanted to enjoy the universe too but I can't, can I? Because of the bugs and the ants and the spiders and leeches and dirt and birds squawking every morning at 5am and there it is there it is!

*C hears a bug and sprays it*

SCENE 2.3: BABY

*A and B are in the park with Felix the Golden Retriever*

- A Stay. Stay. Fetch. Good Felix puppy, so clever
- B He loves you
- A He's a smart dog
- B He doesn't usually like people
- A He's a very smart dog – people are the worst. Aren't they Felix?
- B I feel like this is going really well?
- A Fetch?
- B No. No.... You and me
- A Same
- B I've never felt like this before!
- A Neither
- B I feel like I can ask you anything!
- A You can!
- B Do you want to have a baby?
- A No
- B I didn't mean – today. I meant – theoretically
- A I know. No
- B Oh
- A Do you know how much money and natural resources it takes to keep a baby alive?
- B But they're so cute.

- A They're literally the worst thing you can do for the environment. Not just babies either. You and me. We're nothing but giant leeches sucking mother nature dry, you know?
- B I recycle
- A But what about your carbon footprint? What about the paper you write on and the water you drink and the oxygen you breathe! You know the best thing we could do for the environment is like, die, right now. And then be put in hessian sacks, covered in essential oils and buried in the bush.
- B Right
- A And we wouldn't donate our organs either because that would allow more people to be alive and like Felix knows, people are the worst
- B That does sound romantic... but unfortunately I plan on being alive for quite some time. Sorry earth, sorry air
- A Haha.
- Do you?
- B What?
- A Want kids?
- B At least three. Maybe four or five
- A Oh... That's a shame
- B Is it? ... Ready Felix? Fetch.

#### SCENE 2.4: THE BAD GUY

- C OK – so, he's on the bridge. And the secret's out
- A Everybody knows
- B His wife, his kids
- A Everybody knows that he is the bad guy
- B That it was his company that was poisoning the river



A And he knew it! All along – he knew and he kept it a secret while the fish kept dying and the people kept getting tumors and dying.

C Ok ok. So he's on the bridge and he knows everyone knows. Then what?

B He climbs up the barrier

A Yeah. He's on the edge, over the edge

B That's right – traffic's backed up

A Yeah and the police are there

B Special rescue op's

A Could be? Maybe it's better if it's just the local cop

B Yeah – you're right just a regular local cop way out of their element

A They approach – very cautiously, very slowly and say "It's ok mate. Why don't you come down from there and we'll have a chat, alright?"

B Yeah yeah

A And our man, he says – "I failed"

B Yeah that's good

A "I failed the company"

B Yep

A "Failed my kids, my wife"

B Yep

A "Failed the whole human race"

B Yeah – that's good. That's really good

A And the cop says "I'm sure that's not true, come on, come down"

B Then maybe he looks the cop in the eye and smiles

A Could do – a gentle half smile

- B            Yeah exactly, nice
- A            Then he jumps
- C            He jumps?
- A            Yeah – he has to
- B            There's no other way
- C            Well he could not jump
- B            No but he's trapped, see? His web of lies has been exposed, everyone knows he's the bad guy
- C            Yeah I know but
- B            And it's a metaphor, see? He ends up at the bottom of the river he poisoned
- C            That's not a metaphor, that's dramatic irony, but yes I get it
- B            Pure tragedy. I love it – so clean
- C            But isn't it the easy way out? He never has to face what he's done, face his wife or the families he's ruined
- A            It's the only way – he's the bad guy – he has to jump
- C            He doesn't HAVE to. He can do whatever we want him to do
- A            He has to jump
- B            Yeah, he's got to jump
- C            Ok – so he jumps and he sinks to the bottom of the river... but he doesn't die
- B            He survives? So what, he can go home to his wife to 'face what he's done'?
- C            No – not yet. He's not ready yet, he doesn't even understand what he's done yet. No he just stays at the bottom of the river
- B            I don't get it

- C He's on the bottom of the river and he opens his eyes and realises – he can breathe down there
- B That's impossible
- C That's right – it's impossible – and he can't believe it – that something impossible has happened to a bad guy like him
- B Alright – so he's breathing underwater. Then what?
- C He sits there, on the poisoned riverbed, with only the algae and the eels for company. Till he learns, till he remembers – how to grow moss from under his fingernails, reeds from his bellybutton and water lilies from his eyes
- A I think it's a cleaner story if he jumps and that's that
- B I agree

#### SCENE 2.5: CROCODILE

*A is a human, B is a snail*

- A Help! Help! I've been bitten! I've been bitten by a crocodile
- B Barry's at it again
- A Is someone there?! Hello? I need HELP!
- B Not someone, honey – I'm a snail
- A I'm hallucinating
- B Hallucinating or paying attention?
- A HELP HELP
- B Shhhhh. You get bitten one time and you're screaming louder than the crows. I'm almost stepped on every single day
- A I don't want to die. Help!
- B You want help, I'll give you help: relax
- A But I'm dying!!

B Maybe you are, maybe not – what’s the point in screaming about it either way? It’s hurting my ears and on top of that – it’s probably making your heart beat faster pumping the blood out of that hole in your leg

A Oh no

B Yes. And I’m sure the dirt appreciates the nourishment – but I have a feeling you’d prefer to keep that blood to yourself eh?

A Yes

B Yes, so lay back. Relax. And look – here’s Ray. Say “Hey Ray”

A Hey Ray

B Ray’s come all the way from the sun

A That’s a long way. Ray must be tired. I’m tired

B So rest

A Ok. Just for a second

B There you go. Ray’s gonna warm up your face, how’s that?

A That’s nice

B There you go

A I was just having a quick dip and then it bit me in the thigh! Got me in a death roll. I was almost gone but I poked it in the eye.

B He does that, Barry. Wasn’t personal

A It felt personal

B No no, to him you’re a tasty breakfast

A I was just a bit of meat?

B That’s right

A I stepped on a snail once.

B That’s not a very nice thing to do

- A It wasn't personal but it wasn't an accident either. I wanted to hear its shell crack.
- B That's a terrible thing to do
- A I know. I'm messed up. It's good that crocodile bit me. It's my punishment and I'll pay it. I'm sorry snail
- B It's not a very nice thing to do but don't die on my behalf, I have enough to carry without that burden...
- A Ok – then if I live – I'll live on your behalf!
- B How about if you live – just don't step on any more snails ok?
- A Ok. Ok. I promise. If I live I won't step on another snail ever again.

## **PART 3 : REVOLUTION**

### **WHEN**

A Chorus of Atoms:

When we're ready

When we hear the clock tick tick tick

When we've had enough

When enough is enough

When the moment's right

When we're older

When we're smarter

When someone tells me what to do

When the clock strikes 12

Or when we stop

For a second

A month

A year

When the rain falls and is sucked into the earth into my body into the ocean into the air into rain again

When we take a step and the gravity of the earth rises up to meet our feet

When we remember we were once small shrew like mammals and amphibians and prokaryotes and dirt and water and lava and stardust

When we respect our elders and our young and our girls and our boys and all our humans no matter what defines them or how they define themselves and our animals and our trees and our water and our air

When a neutron is hit with another neutron it causes a supercritical chain reaction

When that knowledge is turned into an atomic bomb it changes everything

When you smile at me it changes everything

When we lose ourselves in the moment and the moment is not lost on us

When a ladybird lands on our fingertip

When we admit we're scared... and do it anyway

When we know there is no going back

When we get up off the floor

When the mud settles and the water's clear

When we see clearly – we can't look away anymore

When we get up and put the toast on we are going to

SCENE 3.1: RIDE

*A is teaching B to ride*

A           Ok put your left foot up

B           I'm shaky here

A           You've got this! It's easy. Left foot up and push off with your right

*B gives it a go, but fails*

B           I can't do it

A           You're doing great

B           I'm terrible

A           Let's go again. Think of how good it'll feel when you're zooming past peak hour traffic, the wind in your hair

*B tries again, fails dismally*

B           I told you I couldn't do it!

A           You need to practice, that's all

B           What's the point of practicing if I'll never get it! Crashing into everything making a fool of myself. No. No. I have to keep driving.

A           You hate driving

B           I don't have it in me, alright?

A           Ok. Give up then. If you don't believe you can do it – I'm sure you'll prove yourself right

B           Sorry. I just don't have it in me

A           Who says?

What about, for one week, you tell yourself you do have it in you?

And like you learned to walk and read and project manage multi-million dollar developments, you'll learn this. And every day for a week, we'll practice. Just like you practiced those things.



What do you say? You want to go again?

B Ok

A Alright. Left foot up and push off with your right. There you go, there you go

B There I go!

### SCENE 3.2: PROTEST

A What do I want? Clean Oceans. When do I want em? Now! What do I want – clean oceans! When do I want em?

B Excuse me

A Morning officer

B Do you have a permit for this protest?

A Do I need one?

B We've had a complaint

A Was it from the frozen yoghurt shop?

B I'm not at liberty to say. Listen, it's obvious no one is going to join you and this is a shopping centre so maybe it's time you went home eh?

A But the oceans aren't clean yet are they? So I'm not done yet

B No one's listening

A You are. And the frozen yoghurt people are. And anyway it's not my job to make anyone listen, it's my job to protest. What do I want? Clean oceans. When do I want em? Now

*C enters from the frozen yoghurt shop*

C You can't do this – you can't do this. This is hurting my sales. I object!

A What do I want? Clean oceans.

C Do something officer

B Listen, please – I'm going to have to ask you to desist

A How old are you?

B 34

A Well I'm 94 so this is more for you than me

B That may be so but the law says this is private property and if you don't have a permit

A Pssst. Your law. It's too small – I'm here for the bigger law – see? Law of life itself. And what does life itself want? It wants to be. And the rubbish in the ocean – that's killing life see?

C But my customers

A Your customers don't need frozen yoghurt, they need clean oceans. But If your law says I gotta be arrested, harmless 94-year-old senior citizen - then go ahead go ahead

If not, I'm actually in the middle of a protest

What do I want?! Clean oceans. When do I want em? Now.

### SCENE 3.3: ONLINE SHOPPING

A Do you think I should get this? It's half price

B It's exactly the same as the one you have on

A This? This is old – I need to chuck this out – the button's popped. That one is new. 100% wool. Made by a local designer

B And then shipped to London and sold online so they can ship it back to you?

A Don't you like it?

B I reckon the one you've got on looks great

A I suppose I could sew the button back on... Do you really think this one is ok?

B Looks a million buck. A++, 11 out of 10

SCENE 3.4: TREE

- A I'm afraid I have to tender my resignation, effective immediately
- B Are you sure?
- A Afraid so. I want to thank you both for the past 11 years but
- C Have you been headhunted? Whatever they are offering, we'll match it
- A That's very kind, but it's not about the money. I'm in love and it's quite serious so I've decided to move away from the city
- B Oh
- C OK. I didn't know you were seeing anyone
- A Oh – no – it's not a someone. It's a tree
- B Haha
- C Haha
- B A tree?
- A A Mountain Ash, yes. You remember I took a trip to Tasmania last month? Well I was on a hike up Mount Wellington and about halfway up I had this urge to stray from the path. And there it was. 10 metres tall. Covered in moss. Strong branches. Deep deep green leaves. I mean – you can barely imagine...
- C Um
- A And that was that
- B To be clear – you're quitting because you're in love with a gumtree?
- A With the consciousness of a gumtree. It's – unconventional. I'm aware.
- C Does this gumtree have a name?
- A I told you, it's a Mountain Ash
- C I mean like Kurt or Mabel

- A No. It's a tree. Trees don't have names like Kurt or Mabel.
- B Are you going to get married to this tree?
- A Well, we're in a contract. I suppose that is similar to your idea of marriage
- C How does one consummate a marriage with a tree?
- A It's not like that. We're in a contract, yes. But it's obviously not a contract that you would understand. No bits of a tree have been made into a piece of paper and signed. No. It's not as flimsy as that.
- This is a contract of listening. I listen to it and it listens to me.
- B How does it listen? It doesn't have a brain
- A Maybe not, but maybe brains aren't all they're cracked up to be. I assure you – it hears me.
- B How do you know?
- A I just do. The same way I know that after I found that tree I can't sit at my desk for one second longer

### SCENE 3.5: RUBBISH

*A and B are outside. A starts picking up some rubbish*

- B What are you doing? That's filthy
- A I know. It's rubbish
- B Yuk. Don't touch it. That's why we pay taxes
- A I watched a video online about a beach in Mumbai. 2 years ago it was a dump. Rubbish piled up to here, you couldn't even see sand. Since then it's been completely cleaned up. And you know who did it? Just regular people. It two years but yesterday – turtles hatched there again. There was so many of them, tiny, coming out of their eggs and flipping their way down the sand into the water.

*B sees a used salt and vinegar chip packet*

- B There's another one. I'll get it.

SCENE 3.6 – THE MAYOR

*A community meeting.*

- C            One last question for the Mayor. Yes – you in the blue
- A            Good morning your excellency.
- B            Good morning. What's your name?
- A            Sunny
- B            And how old are you, Sunny?
- A            Nine and three quarters
- B            Almost double digits! Great to see the kids of today taking an interest in local council. What was your question?
- A            I want to ask why can't our shire be carbon neutral?
- B            That's a great question. Here at council we are currently in in preparation for our draft action plan that aims at halving our carbon emissions by 2056
- A            That's ages away though. Why not do it tomorrow?
- B            Well Sunny, at council a lot of thought goes into these decisions, a lot of community consultation, like we're doing here, as well as with local businesses and we believe our plan is ambitious
- A            But my cousin's council has already done it. And Brisbane. And the whole of Bhutan and Denmark
- B            Your teachers have been busy
- A            They didn't tell me that. I looked it up on the internet. There are lots of strategies online too. I can email you the link if you want?
- B            That sound great. Please do. Well, you've certainly given me a lot to think about Sunny. So thank you.
- A            Thank you
- C            If there's no further questions
- A            I have one

B            Yes Sunny?

A            Have you thought about it yet?

## **PART 4 : REGENERATION**

### **NOW**

A Chorus of Atoms:

Now – the sun is travelling at 72,000 kilometers an hour – dragging all of us along in its vortex

Now billions of people made of billions upon billions of us are sitting eating dinner or sleeping or stuck in traffic jams or high

Or doing this

Or this

Or this

*We see the characters of the play getting up off the floor, keeping a whale wet, playing fetch, having a baby, riding a bicycle, listening to a gum tree, protesting, picking up rubbish et cetera*

Now the seven billion billion billion atoms that make up you are in this room with me and you and you and you and you

Now we are in this room together

Now we are here

SCENE 4.1: NEW YEAR EVE

ABC                      FIVE – FOUR – THREE – TWO – ONE – HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

A                          Good riddance

B                          Happy new year babe, give us a kiss

A                          You can't kiss me

B                          Why not?

C                          Because you're out of the closet now. You can't go back in  
once you're out

B                          That's so boring

A                          That's the rules

C                          Let's do resolutions

A                          Ugh. No. I always break them straight away then spend the  
rest of the year feeling guilty about it

C                          What about wishes?

A                          Hate to break it to you but you're not magic

C                          What if I was? What if we all were and everything we say and  
do is a spell

A                          You've been reading too much Harry Potter

B                          I wish that Alex D would fall madly in love with me

C                          Same. And I wish that I get into nursing

B                          I wish you do too and that I get into anything

A                          It's alright for you two – you didn't fail Year 12

B                          You'll pass this year

A                          If I go back

C                          You should go back



B I wish I could kiss everyone and everything and it wasn't a big deal

A You can't have everyone – you picked a category now stick with it

B Maybe I want a new category. Category human

C Actually, I want to be category human too

A Bandwagon. What's next? Category matter, atoms, bits of the universe?

B Yes yes – I'm category bits of the universe

C Same

B Look at me – I'm just bits

C Nice to meet you bits – I'm bits too – should we go in?

B Yes Yes AHHH!

*A and B enter the water*

A Come back in – a shark will get you!

B So then we'll be bits in a shark – don't worry! Come in – the water's lovely

C Is it even water – or just other bits of the universe

B You're right! Hello other bits – you're chilly

C Come in – come in and be bits with us

A I don't want to die thank you.

C I wish I could see Alice the axolotl again

B I wish I could see my grandpa again

C I wish my dad would give up smoking

B I wish my grandma wasn't scared to leave the house

C I wish I could move out of Mum's

B Same

A Same

C Bits on the shore is wishing too now?

B Maybe we should get a house together

A I can't – I have to repeat Year 12 remember?

B Then the year after! We'll get a house with a garden and grow carrots and have a house bunny and a house axolotl

C And we'll go on house holidays

B To India and Nepal

C And see the Northern Lights

B And where my grandma was born

C And the Great Barrier Reef before it dies

B Since we're magic I wish the Great Barrier Reef not to die

C That's better

B And I wish there was a plane that ran on sunlight and had no emissions

C And cars too

B And no more trees cut down for paper

C Or metals turned into guns

B And everyone who wants a home has one and everyone who is hungry has a meal

C And no more species become extinct

B Actually I just wish for peace. World peace. And not just between countries, but between oceans and fish and sharks and grasses and trees and flowers

C All the bits

B Yes – all the bits of the universe!

A Ugh. You’re being ridiculous!

C I wish you would make a wish

B Yes – go on

C Just one wish

A I just don’t want you to forget me when you’ve got all your fancy Uni friends

C We won’t!

B Oh babe. We won’t. I promise.

A And of course I wish for world peace

C YESSS!

A But it’s ridiculous

B Why?

A It’s too big. And we’re too small

B But it’s what we want! The three of us want it and I’m sure we’re not the only people on Earth

C Or the only bits - I reckon the ocean wants it

B The ocean definitely wants it

C And the trees and the fish

B And the emus and the echidnas

C And the flowers want it

A Ok. Ok. I wish for world peace. And I wish to go back to school and pass and then to move out with you crazy bits of the universe. And I wish everyone to be honest all the time and I want to be five kilograms lighter. I wish I would stop wanting to be five kilograms lighter. I wish I was bits too

C                    Yes! You are – you're just bits

A                    I'm coming in!

B                    Bits is coming in

A                    AHHHHHH!!!!