

QUICK

QUICK sees kids at school who are poor. Through the winter, Quick notices Wogga McBride. He has a queer way of eating his sandwich, hiding it under his hand. Maybe it's Quick's misery radar, but he can't let it be, till eventually he sees that Wogga hasn't got a sandwich at all.

He watches WOGGA McBRIDE pretending to eat.

The Lambs are patched and barefooted, but at lunchtime their mother always brings warm pies and pasties from the shop.

He takes food to WOGGA.

I'm full. Want this?

WOGGA runs away: QUICK watches him go.

Wogga lives further down the tracks towards West Perth, but he crosses at the walkway below Cloudstreet. Today is the last day of primary school, and if Quick doesn't make friends with him today, he never will. He tails him down Rokeby Road, past the football ground and up the embankment behind West Leederville station. Down beside the tracks Wogga's fooling with a stray dog that's got hold of his school bag. Quick hears Wogga laughing, even over the sound of an approaching train. Quick wants to go down and run the dog ragged with him. And then Wogga tears the bag free of the dog and sways back, shrieking with glee, and the sleeper catches his heel and he staggers and the engine smacks him with the sound of a watermelon falling off the back of a truck, and he's gone.

Noise and light. WOGGA disappears. QUICK runs.

SCENE 17

Cloudstreet. QUICK runs headlong into his room. He finds a large stack of old newspapers. He starts to cry. FISH comes in.

FISH: What you laughing for, Quick?

QUICK stops crying, ignores FISH.

QUICK: Off you go, mate.

FISH: Off you go, mate. You happy, Quick?

QUICK: Go away, Fish.

FISH: You sad?

QUICK: Mate, everybody gets sad. You get sad.

FISH: When I want the water.

QUICK: What water?

FISH: The water, the water.

LESTER sees them together.

QUICK: Fish, go and play with Lon, mate. Or the girls. Go on.

FISH goes. QUICK is alone with the stack of old newspapers. He starts searching through them. LESTER watches.

Quick doesn't let himself think about what happened to Wogga. Quick thinks about nothing at all. He just hears the scissors going as he cuts out pictures, hears himself thumbing tacks into his wall. And the people in all the pictures, the burnt babies, the amputee diggers, the walking dead, they laugh at Quick, all of them, and they dance with Wogga McBride along the tracks.

LESTER: A lot of sad people, Quick. What are you doin' with them?

QUICK cuts, or puts the pictures up.

Knocks me round to see you like this, boy. Three days we haven't seen you downstairs. You'll starve to death. Look at these poor sods. You don't want to be like them. You don't need to be. You've got a roof over your head, family... well, we're not much, but strike... Look, come downstairs. For your mother's sake.

QUICK goes on cutting.

Well, do it for Fish. Come on. He's worried sick about you.

QUICK goes on cutting.

You know damn well your brother is busted in the head and he'll never grow up right. The least you can do is let him be happy. Don't torture him, Quick. And us. You're feeling sorry for yourself and it's making me sick. You and me understand about Fish. We were there, we were stupid enough to drown him trying to save him. You remember that. We owe him things, Quick. All we can do now is let him be happy. I can sit here and talk and get nothing back for as long as it takes to get angry enough to swat your arse and send your mother up to deal with you. But Fish, he'll wait. He'll wait till you say something to him. Don't you