

**EXTRACT**

# **A REGION WHERE NOBODY GOES**

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[[australianplays.org](http://australianplays.org)]

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*A room in a modest house in Canberra. There is a desk. The desk has a laptop, a lamp, a phone, and a pen. Also in the room is a lot of rubbish, a window, and a cricket bat.*

## **Scene 1**

*Bree (30s) sits at her desk holding a glass of water. She sniffs a glass of water suspiciously. Decides it's a bit risky, begins typing on her laptop. She speaks aloud as she types.*

BREE: We've heard about this for a very long time. From Scott Ludlam, yes, but also from AC/DC. We are well and truly Thunderstruck. Adele wanted to set fire to the rain. Fleetwood Mac told us that thunder only happens when it's raining. Midnight Oil asked how we can sleep when our beds are burning? How can we dance when our Earth is turning?

I'm obviously not going to use this. Just so we're all aware.

*She takes a swig from her glass of water without thinking. It's horrible. She spits it out.*

## **Scene 2**

*Bree dials the number of the Water Corporation. She puts the phone on speaker.*

*We hear the phone ring, and then the automated message.*

PHONE: Thank you for contacting the Water Corporation. If you need to report a problem, press 1. If you have an enquiry about your watering days, press 2. If you need to speak to one of our operators, press 3.

*Bree presses 3. The phone dials again, before going back to the automated message.*

PHONE: Unfortunately we have no-one available to take your call at the moment, but we are working as hard as we can to get to you soon. Please stay on the line.

*Jazzy 'on-hold' music starts to play.*

*Bree watches, hoping against logic that someone will pick up. No-one does. Bree opens up her laptop. Types a few words, but is distracted by the phone. As the music fades, Bree thinks someone is going to pick up. But the loop starts again.*

*Bree, dejected, starts on her laptop in earnest. She speaks the speech aloud as she types.*

BREE: 'It is undeniable: This is a time of trouble for Australia as a nation. It is only natural to experience fear, and uncertainty. But we as a nation have the courage, strength, and perseverance to carry on. To continue on. Have the perseverance to continue on. We will mourn our many losses.' No, 'many' is a bit negative. 'We will mourn the losses we've sustained. And we will. We will mourn the losses we've sustained and we will.'

No. It's gone.

*She picks up a pencil case and moves to the window. She peers out as she pulls a small tape recorder from her pocket, presses record.*

BREE: Today is the... 7<sup>th</sup>? Possibly the 7<sup>th</sup>.

*She checks her watch.*

It's the 9<sup>th</sup>. Landscape hasn't changed much from yesterday, except I usually have a stunning view of parliament house, but something got set on fire two doors down and there's been smoke all morning.

Not much to miss. I know what the building looks like.

*She pretends to light the end of the pen like a cigarette.*

BREE: I'd like to know what flag they're flying. Yesterday it was the maritime flag that means "I am carrying explosives." I thought, you're telling me, mate.

*She takes a drag of her pen.*

BREE: Everything feels a bit *Twilight Zone* at the moment. Strange flags and news broadcasts at all hours of the day and night. Telling us to stay inside our houses but to look out for our neighbours. It's no good staying in my house if that fire gets big enough to burn down the block, but it's not like I can really go out to check.

No. I should write.

You know how the wording of a sentence sometimes contradicts the meaning? Like if someone says “I’m not trying to brag, but” they’re almost always bragging.

What I’m saying is that I’m not trying to brag but I’m generally quite good at writing. It’s on my bachelor’s degree and my resume. But this speech has been like pulling teeth, and if the issue isn’t with me then it’s with the topic.

Everyone’s written on it. I’m supposed to compete with Atwood and Orwell before lunchtime. There’s nothing I can say that isn’t regurgitating someone else’s work. Like a high schooler writing an essay on the Great Gatsby. There are only so many times you can talk about the green light and the eyes on the billboard.

*The jazzy on hold music is still going, but the beep of an incoming call interrupts it. She ‘smokes’ her pen while staring at it.*

BREE: Gossip. That’s what it is. Trying to make facts out of other people’s opinion.

It’s probably Avery calling. Chief of staff. He’s going to pop a vein worrying about this speech. I asked if he was looking for anything in particular, and he said ‘something clever’. Idiot. People like a clever politician even less than they like a clever writer.

*The phone stops ringing. Bree relaxes. She picks up the phone and hangs up on the Water Corporation.*

BREE: Every Chief of Staff I’ve ever worked with likes to feel like they’re in control, even if every fact points to otherwise. I strongly believe Avery would walk into a cyclone and insist it’s drizzling. Which could be a likely turn of events, things being as they are.

*She takes one last puff of the pen and returns it to her pencil case.*

BREE: Back to it.

*She returns to her desk and puts the recorder to the side.*

BREE: I was up to...

*The phone rings again. She very seriously considers not picking up, but does.*

BREE: Hello?

I know, sorry. I was on a break. I'm still working on union standards. Don't be a fascist.

Do you have water?

It's on but I don't think it's drinkable. It tastes metallic. Lead pipes in Rome situation.

You know, in Ancient Rome they used lead pipes because they didn't know it poisoned you.

I know we don't have- I'm just saying I can't drink it. I called the Water Corporation-

I didn't expect anyone to pick up but I didn't know who else to--

Do you have water or not?

The- ? Oh, yes, it's nearly done. Is your internet working? Mine's been on and off. I'll put it on a USB if you want but you know we're not supposed to leave our houses.

What? No, I don't have a fax machine. Jesus.

Can you send one of your people to pick it up? Not Hugh. I'm dead serious, I won't give him anything. Write that down.

Alright, I've got work to do. I'm hanging up.

*She hangs up.*

BREE: Old bastard. Thinks that town in Tasmania dropped into the sea just to personally inconvenience him.

I do understand his frustration though. This has been a good term for us. People liked our immigration policy. No-one was making a fuss about live exports, the

opposition leader called his deputy by the wrong name in public. We made some good speeches, which is obviously what counts. Avery was one election away from quitting politics and writing a tell-all book.

He's a smoker, I can tell. I've never seen him actually doing it, but he brushes his teeth at lunchtime. Can't get rid of the yellow. Maybe it's cigars. That'd be typical.

*There is a shout from the street and Bree realises she's forgotten to shut her curtain.*

BREE: Oh for-

*She rushes to shut them, then stands with her back pressing against the window for several moments. Curiosity gets the better of her and she peers around the corner of the curtain.*

BREE: I can't see anyone so it's probably nothing. Or if it is someone it'll just be someone looking for their pet, or water. No-one ever riots in Canberra, it'd be too awkward. We all know each other. You'd try and cross the picket line and bump straight into your orthodontist.

*She returns to the desk.*

BREE: I was talking about... God knows. Pride in being Australian. Our great nation of men thinking they're important. 'Sunburnt country' is starting to look a bit prophetic.

I could've started writing this six months ago. It's not like the signs weren't there. Trees? Gone. Wombats? Going. Turtles? Ha! Fuel? Fossil. Prime Minister? Fucked.

That was the speech I *was* writing six months ago. I want to say the Prime Minister is having an affair but that's inadequate. The Prime Minister has had lengthy romantic and sexual encounters with a woman that he is not in a monogamous marriage with. It was so close to leaking. They woke me up at 3:13am to write it. I can still see the numbers lighting up the dark room from the clock on my bedside table.



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