

RAIN, LOVE AND COAL SMOKE

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These 'mystery' plays have been developed separately over the last four years, and performed for events in Blackball.

The style is generally 'storytelling theatre' i.e. a story told by a small group of actors, playing many parts; although the last two plays, as the content 'settles' and becomes more domestic, are more conventional pieces.

In putting these together into a cycle; (as they used to put together religious cycles) there will be some adapting to be done in terms of how many actors are involved at any one time and the general distribution of parts.

The set is four hangings with the dates on them: 1908, 1931, 1964, 2008, the veranda of a miners cottage which can move, and pieces of furniture. A digital projector

will be used to project slides
during transitions.

PROLOGUE

The actors assemble. KEHUA carries
with him a seed stick which marks
the passage of time.

KEHUA

(to audience)

Nau mai piki mai haere mai...So, where do we begin our
hikoi? Pounamu- turning the woman into stone? He tauranga
waka a Maui? Kupe? Gondwanaland? The cooling mass of lava
shifting, moving. Where do we begin? The first people
moving around in their waka, hunting the moa, the seal?
Until there were no more. So they had to garden- and you
garden up north, not here. And then the few people down
here, processing the pounamu. Cold, wet, but home.
Aorangi watching over them. Where do we begin? Ngai Tahu
coming through the pass, the battles? Te Rauparaha? The
pakeha arriving? Poor old Thomas Brunner traipsing
through the Gorge? The gold seekers? Where do we begin?

ACTOR

(to audience)

We're actors who've come down here to live. In the city
we found ourselves being products- you know, ads, being
in soaps.

Takes pose

ACTOR

The rest of the time we seemed to be consumers, sitting
around in cafes, going shopping.

ACTOR

Anyway, we decided we didn't want to be products or
consumers.

ACTOR

(smiling and whirling)

I wouldn't mind being a dervish.

ACTOR

I wouldn't mind taking part in a revolution.

She raises her fist

KEHUA

Tell that to Tame Iti.

ACTOR

So we came down to the Coast to try and work things out.

ACTOR

We got here and it pissed down non stop.

ACTOR

(to audience)

But I don't mind the rain. I've even written a poem about it. "All my life I have run from the rain, or through the rain, glumly listening to a forecast of rain, staring balefully through splattered windows, thinking of it as a danger to motorists, spoiling holidays, stopping cricket matches, closing airports, flooding shops and homes. But now, finally, after all these years, I learn to stand in the rain, as still as a tree and to feel this wondrous life."

KEHUA

Us fullas used to have these special rain capes. When you sat down they formed a tent over your head.

ACTOR

Before we all turn into mystics, we better start working. What are we gonna do a show about?

ACTOR

(looking over shoulder of
ACTOR who is reading a
newspaper)

Anything happening?

ACTOR

The Yanks turn their gaze onto Iran; The Israeli's bulldoze more Palestinian homes.

ACTOR

My God look at that: the average annual earnings of the majority of people down here are between ten and fifteen thousand!

KEHUA

And the wealthy fly in to their holiday homes- from London, LA, Hong Kong.

They exchange glances. They sing:
It's the same the whole world over,
it's the poor what gets the blame,
while the rich has all the pleasure.
Ain't it all a bleeding shame. KEHUA
chants a Maori chant underneath.

ACTOR

(picking up some notes)

So we decided to have a go at telling the essential story of this place.

ACTOR

A story you can't avoid.

KEHUA

The strike of 1908.

ACTOR

The story around which all other stories seem to revolve.

ACTOR

Research time-

'On yer bike mate

ACTOR

I immediately had an image of the hewer at the coal face reciting to himself a passage from the Communist manifesto.

An ACTOR gets pick and shovel and helmet.

YOUNG ACTOR

(with cell phone)

How do you spell that?

ACTOR

Don't worry. They'll eventually turn it into text.

Music: Red Flag. ACTOR mimes working at a coalface.

ACTOR

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie has simplified the class antagonisms. Society is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

ACTOR

(moving to the manager's side of the set, half acting him)

On the road to the mine is perched the manager's villa, a two storied house in the village of shacks and cramped cottages. From his office on the second floor he watches the men go forth white and come back as blacks. Sometimes his children stand beside him, smiling that smile. Daddy! On the other side of the road is the paymaster's house, single storey but assuming enough. When the mine finally closed the men wanted to torch both buildings, as symbols of their oppression.

Music.

ACTOR

(singing)

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night alive as you and me
Says I, But Joe you're ten years dead, I never died says
he
I never died said he...

ACTOR

A town of 2000 with a simple situation - company, workers, isolated, contained.

ACTOR

And from this we began to imagine the activists, the movers and shakers: Semple, Hickey and Webb.

The three move to a table.

BOB

Blackball's a place the rain comes straight down.

PAT

Like the bosses.

BOB

Arse end of the world. Living conditions dodgy. Slack union. British company. But it seems there're stirrings.

PADDY

You sure you want to go?

PAT

If what you say is true it's worth a shot.

PADDY

We need to get them out of this arbitration nonsense.

BOB

Get all these company unions to start joining together.

PAT

That's our mission Brother Semple.

BOB

Agreed Brother Pat.

PADDY

Sound like priests don't we?

BOB

Don't give me any of that blarney.

BOB and PADDY lead PAT to the bicycle.

BOB

On your bike with you. Talk to Rogers. Will Rogers. He's your man. Off you go mate. I'll stay here in Runanga, Paddy's off to Denniston.

ACTOR PLAYING PAT

Plotters of the world. Men with faith. Men of certainty. How do I act it? A position of the mouth. The hands. An expression in the eye.

trying these things out

ACTOR

If I were this person, Pat Hickey, in this situation - riding his bike to Blackball to start the revolution.

Everyone laughs

ACTOR

(*laughing*) Nowadays the idea's ridiculous.

Gets on bike and starts pedalling.
Music

ACTOR

(commentating as slides are shown)

Brother Hickey, hitting the plateau, sees the coal buckets passing overhead, the cleared hillsides, stumps like raw teeth, the beginning cottages, roughly sawn, roughly built, roughly papered.

ACTOR

A woman in a doorway shaking a tablecloth, the long drop leaning against the rain.

ACTOR

He sees a shift of men, teeth and eyeballs gleaming, traipsing back to crouch over a bucket of water prepared by the woman.

ACTOR

The rows of huts for the single men, big enough for a narrow bunk and a wedge of table - windowless, cold, draughty.

ACTOR

And now the shops: butcher baker candle stick maker, pubs, boarding house, union hall. Everywhere the coal smoke rises in coils from the necessary fires.

PAT

Jesus, what a dump.

ACTOR

The mine is run by a shipping company. The demand for coal fluctuates. Ideally the owners require an on-call workforce, working long hours when demand is high, to be laid off when demand is low.

Men assemble in the pub.

ACTOR

The men from the mines at home want regular work, regular wages, safe conditions.

ACTOR

These are the tensions that drive this village.

ACTOR

These are the tensions the men down with their beer, trying to wash the dust away, the dust which is distorting their lungs.

LOCAL

Who the hell are you?

PAT

The names Pat Hickey. I'm looking for a bloke by the name of Rogers. I'll have a pint love.

LOCAL

Man doesn't drink much. You'll find him at the union office.

PAT

Where can a man stay around here?

LOCAL

Auntie Flo's. That's about it. *(after a pause)* You looking for work then?

PAT

Aye.

He shakes hands.

ACTOR

(playing the barmaid)

The woman behind the bar has flesh like dough. And eyes that barely look outward. She's seen it all before.

Music

She sings.

ACTOR

It's the same the whole world over
It's the poor what gets the blame

While the rich have all the pleasure
Ain't it all a bleedin' shame.

PAT goes into the union office.
ROGERS sits at the table downstage
right.

ACTOR

In the Blackball Industrial Miners Union office he finds
information about a small welfare fund, a token library,
a billiard table and a man with glasses reading a letter,
glancing up at him with the watchful eyes of the self-
educated.

PAT

Mr Rogers?

ROGERS

Aye.

PAT

Pat Hickey.

ROGERS

Ah yes- I have a letter from Bob.

PAT

Will there be a job?

ROGERS

(assessing him)

Should be. They need men. As long as your reputation
hasn't travelled this far. Irish are you? Been to the
States I hear?

PAT

Aye.

ROGERS

Tough?

PAT

I've been to hell and back and seen the thugs that run
it. But the men were staunch. *(after a pause)*
Well then, that's all fine and dandy.

ROGERS

We better have a chat. Come home for some grub.

Music. Kids playing hopskotch

ACTOR

(as PAT and ROGERS mime the
walk)

Conspirators. Organisers. The rapid glance to see who's
listening. For these men seek war, the war of class
against class.

ACTOR

Rephrase that. They see that the classes are at war and
they want the battle to be fought out in the open, so
that people can understand.

ROGERS

So you're thinking we need to get rid of the arbitration
court?

PAT

It's the employer's tool man. Means the workers never
experience action. Never confront the reality of capital.
All these small isolated unions. We need to join
together, form a national organisation.

ROGERS

Here we are then.

They enter.

ROGERS

We're home love.

They sit down.

PAT

You see with a national organisation we could take on the
capitalist class, take over the means of production,
create a society based on justice and equality.

ROGERS

Steady on Pat, this is a small community. They're too
busy surviving to save the world.

PAT

Not save the world man, change it. And you can't change
here without changing the way things are run everywhere.
You must understand that.

ROGERS

Of course man, I'm a socialist. I'm just saying there's a need for caution. They don't like outsiders coming and trying to pull down what they've made for themselves.

Mrs Rogers now joins the men with a tray of tea and biscuits.

MRS ROGERS

And how do you see the place of women in this Mr Hickey?

PAT

Women?

MRS ROGERS

Yes.

PAT

Same as everyone... working class- middle class...

MRS ROGERS

Not exactly. You men earn the money, we women perform the domestic tasks.

PAT

Well, division of labour Mrs Rogers.

MRS ROGERS

But ours is unpaid. Where does our negotiation with the boss take place?

PAT

Behind the bedroom door perhaps. We still know who's boss don't we Will?

He laughs but quickly realises no-one is joining in.

MRS ROGERS

There has to be a revolution between the sexes as well.

PAT

(exasperated)

We can't do everything at once.

MRS ROGERS

I thought we could?

ROGERS

She has a point Hickey.

PAT

I know man, but if we took that on board, I mean where would we begin? Anyway, is there an issue locally we can begin working on?

ROGERS

The men are pretty hot about this crib. Fifteen minutes for lunch. Hardly got time to fill the belly and have a pee, let alone have a smoke.

PAT

Sounds a good one to agitate around to me.

ROGERS

Wouldn't hurt to get a speaker over here. Someone who can rouse the masses.

PAT

Bob'll be the one for that.

He gets up to go.

PAT

Well I better find myself a bed. And then get a job.

MRS ROGERS

And think about women.

PAT

(laughing)

I often do that missus - being a single man and all that (*embarrassed*) Sorry- I didn't mean.

MRS ROGERS

(amused)

You have sexual fantasies- is that what you're saying?

PAT

Yeh. I mean no. I mean. Well thanks for the cuppa.

MRS ROGERS

Sorry Pat. Was I too adult for you?

PAT

No, not at all. That's alright then. I'll see you again.

He leaves.

PAT

(to himself)

Oh Jesus, what've I struck here?

Music. A slide show of images of suffragettes.

ACTOR WHO PLAYED MRS
RODGERS

(she talks to other actors
who form appropriate still
images, finally to
audience)

He'd struck a woman who thinks, influenced by new ideas: equal rights, education, socialism, the freedom of love, who saw amongst her sex the close mindedness that oppression produces, saw the way a young woman full of life could be sculpted by children, drudgery and men into something like a rock, or a log. Saw the stupidities the current relationships created in men; dogged little boy patriarchs with big fists and pebble minds.

A new sequence.

ERIC LEACH

And what of management? The company is listed, has a board of directors in Christchurch who have appointed a manager who lives in the big house on the hill, a petit bourgeois who started as foreman, did his degree by correspondence became manager. A suit and tie, a house on the hill, a marriage into the Christchurch middle class changes a man.

He takes a pose, becoming Mine
Manager Eric Leach. One of the
actresses dons a shawl and plays his
wife.

ERIC

(practising speech)

The world runs along principles formulated by the natural scientist Charles Darwin; that species have evolved, from simple to complex, that competition and adaptation are the rules determining survival. The market place reflects these principles : competition, adaptation. The labour market is no different in this regard. The worker must be

adaptable, competitive. Of course a total free for all between labour and capital is unwise in such a small and new country so the state has intervened to provide a legal process for dispute resolution called the arbitration system. If a dispute occurs between management and worker there is no need for extreme behaviour such as strikes. Instead there are conciliators who talk with both parties. If that fails a court that hears the case and makes a binding judgement. (to a *listening wife*) What do you think?

MRS LEACH

Excellent my dear.

ERIC

The delivery? Suitable for the Country Women's Institute? Not too confrontational?

MRS LEACH

Splendid.

ERIC

Bit of a step up.

MRS LEACH

You do wonderfully well Eric.

ACTOR

Time for the activists to start acting I think.

They assemble for meeting of union.

BOB SEMPLE addresses the audience.

ROGERS in chair.

BOB

(in Aussie accent))

The names Bob Semple brothers and I've come with a very simple message: it's perfectly obvious that the system as it is, is set up to benefit the parasites: the bosses and their wives in silks and furs, their lackeys: the lawyers, the managers, the politicians as well, living a life of luxury on the backs of the workers. But we have the strength of our solidarity. If we join together, union and union into a unity of unions, a federation at the national level, even the international level, we can confront capital and smash its structures and run the world for the good of all. (*singing*) 'It is we who ploughed the praires, built the cities where they trade,

it is we who built the workshops endless miles of railroad laid, now we stand outcast and starving 'mid the wonders we have made.' What do you reckon brothers!

Pause. Muttering.

PAT

(in audience)

Well comrades, I think the speaker's right and I think it's time we started doing something locally. I reckon this crib time's ridiculous. Fifteen minutes. Haven't even got time to have a decent shit.

Laughter

PAT

The union's been bloody slack, snuggling up to the manager. Yessir, no sir, don't mind if I do sir, very kind of you sir. We're not bloody serfs we're workers. As the speaker said, We're the new class, the class of the future.

Applause

PAT

I move that we inform the company that we will take half an hour crib time from next week. Let's show them who's really got the power. (*looking at the audience*) Applause here please. What do you think you're doing? Sitting on the fence watching?

ROGERS

Do I have a seconder?

ACTOR

Aye man.

ROGERS

I'll put the motion then.

Cheering.

Music. ROGERS and PAT walk slowly over to LEACH and gives him the motion. LEACH slowly reads it.

ERIC

(half to himself, half to audience)

Who's running the place, that's the point. Who is boss.

To ROGERS

ERIC

Perhaps half an hour is reasonable but ask me - don't inform. It's bizarre how you people think, as if we're enemies instead of inevitable allies. Without capital there is no work. Without management there is no order.

He looks up at the workers who stand watching defiantly.

ERIC

So, you are determined.

They raise their fists, then go back to working.

ERIC

(consulting his law books.)

Well, let me be slightly devious. Not the arbitration act but the mining act. Obeying the manager. Yes, I'll order them to return to work. The law is on my side.

Music. PAT mimes working in the mine. He and his partner stop, open their lunch boxes. LEACH walks up, times PAT, orders him to return to work. PAT gives him the fingers and continues eating. LEACH makes a note in his book and walks away.

Music.

ACTOR

Great themes played out in a village in the sticks. Where the rain comes straight down and the sun seldom shines.

SOund of rain. PAT sits at the table. ACTOR plays FLO who is doing some ironing.

PAT

By Jesus, does it ever stop raining Flo?

FLO

Yeh, we had a sunny day last year. When was it again? The Maoris reckon the sky once lay on the earth - if you take my meaning, a perpetual embrace. (*making a rude gesture*) Sounds like hell to me- but then the kids pushed them apart and the sky's crying for his lost love.

PAT

Well I wish he'd get over it. Anything left in the teapot?

FLO

Could be. Help yourself.

PAT

You know, it's bloody strange, we've been taking half hour for crib and not a peel out of management.

Knock on the door. They look up.

FLO

No-one knocks except cops and bill collectors.

PAT

Which will it be then?

FLO

Better go and find out hadn't you.

PAT goes to the door.

COPPER

Patrick Hickey?

PAT

Aye.

COPPER

You are hereby summonsed to appear in the District Court charged with disobeying the lawful command of the mine manager...Good day. And make sure you're there or I'll have to arrest you.

He gives him the summons and retires, laughing to himself.

COPPER

Smartarse that one.

PAT studies it as he walks back in.

PAT

The cunning bastards. Using the mining act. Making it a safety issue rather than an industrial one. 'Mines require obedience'. They've got us.

FLO

They've always got you Pat.

PAT

We'll see about that.

ACTOR

(half to the other cast,
half to audience)

Politics, politics, politics. At this stage I want to go for a walk in the bush, commune with the trees, listen to a Gregorian chant, swim naked in the creek, fall in love, do something human. Did they? Did these men? Play? Sing? Love? Commune with nature?

MRS ROGERS

(coming to join him)

The very thing I try and teach my youth group. To cultivate the spirit. To want more than survival. This place can feel like an engraving by Goya at times. The damp. The coal smoke. The black faces. The rattle and roar. When all around is such beauty- which we help to destroy, to get at the so called riches beneath. Sold for 300 pounds. The forces of capital operate. Oh I know the party line - we can't escape these forces. To do so is to be irrelevant. A dreamer, a dilettante. And out of this destruction will come a new world, a rational world, a just world, one that will provide for all. A world that is slowly happening, born from material conditions- not some whim, but necessity. Of course there are setbacks, sufferings, tragedies even, as people are dragged into new consciousness.

She gets up and goes back onstage.

MRS ROGERS

And funnily enough always when it seems hopeless, hope comes.

ERIC sits at his desk doing some calculations. His wife brings him tea.

ERIC

There's going to be a shortage of coal this winter. We could make a killing if we stockpiled a surplus. A bonus would be in order. That trip to England could become a reality. How to do it. (*brooding*)

He turns to the workers.

ERIC

A double shift. Run the aerial for an extra period each day. Some overtime for some of you. Why not? And if you agree you can have your half hour crib.

PAT smiles at LEACH then comes forward and addresses union meeting.

PAT

Brothers I move that when management gives us our bloody half hour crib, then we'll talk about these other matters. (*turning to ERIC*) And by the way- no overtime. An eight hour day. It's in the union's rules. We fought for that.

ERIC

(turning away to hide his anger)

The insolence of that man. That look in his eye. (*moving to PAT*) I will not tolerate that attitude. I am the manager.

PAT

You're a fart in the wind boyo. History will blow you away.

ERIC, absolutely furious, turns away.

PAT

Did you see him turn red boys, like a blushing girl.

ERIC

Contempt. Utter contempt. After all we've done for them.

Into office, on phone.

ERIC

Alright. I'll reduce output. Downsize. Get rid of some troublemakers. We have the other mine which can meet our current orders. We'll teach these bastards a lesson.

Music. PAT and OTHERS mime working.
ERIC goes to them.

ERIC

On your bike boyo.

PAT

What!

ERIC

The company no longer needs your services.

PAT

I see. (*turning to PARTNER*) What do you reckon lad. Don't union rules require a ballot when men are laid off?

ERIC

(*physically grabbing him*)

I'm the manager. I'll do what's required. And by the way, you're off to jail man - non payment of fine.

He heaves him away.

ERIC

Obedience Hickey. Obedience.

PAT

I know Leach, and obedience you will not get.

He goes to the other workers.

PAT

That's it comrades. They want obedience. This bloody arbitration court, a 'sympathetic government'. Us workers get muddled. Don't know shit from clay. It's only when we act, negotiate directly with the employer that we see reality. Like now. Reality. The greed of capital and behind it the iron fist of the state. So then- we're going on strike? Aye?

Cheering

PAT

And we're de-registering from the act?

Cheers.

PAT

Aye lads, that's the way. And lads, I'd like a bit of a send off if the coppers come to get me. We need to get the public informed. We need to get on our bikes.

PAT rides away on bike pursued by COPPER.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra extra, Strike in Blackball.
Extra extra Worker sent to jail for taking half an hour for lunch.
Extra extra. Hickey released. Mysterious payment of fine.
Extra extra Trouble in the mines
Extra extra Housing conditions appalling. Extra extra, what's become of God's own country?

ACTOR raises the red flag on the flag pole during the following and begins to sing RED FLAG

PAT

(addressing a meeting -
muttering, interjections
etc)

Brothers, I urge you to put your hand in your pocket and support the Blackball workers. We've got families same as you and we're going to have to stay out for some time. This arbitration court nonsense has to be clobbered once and for all. It's controlled by the employers. I ask you when was the last time the workers got a decision in their favour? It's time for all of us to pull out. Time for us workers to get a national organisation. Dig deep boyos. Dig deep. The women and children of Blackball will thank you from the bottom of their hearts.

He joins in the song and takes the hat around.

ACTOR AND PAT

(singing)

So hoist the scarlet banner high, beneath its folds we'll live and die. So cowards flinch and traitors sneer, We'll keep the red flag flying here.

They stand beside the flag in heroic pose. ACTOR comes forward and speaks to the audience.

ACTOR

The strike continued and the matter went to a hearing of the Arbitration Court.

JUDGE bangs the table. The scene is played in a Chaplinesque fashion.

JUDGE

Silence in the Court. We are here to hear the case of the Blackball Miners Industrial Union versus the Blackball Mining Company. Whereas within the meaning of Section 15 of the Act an award was made on the 3rd day of March 1902 by the Court of Arbitration to which the Blackball Miners Industrial Union of Workers was a party and whereas the said award is still in existence and whereas on the 27th day of February 1908, members of the said Blackball Miners Industrial Union of Workers struck within the meaning of the aforesaid Section 15 of the Act, and whereas the said union aided and abetted the said strike, the Conciliator wishes for a judgement.

He yawns.

ACTOR

(as lawyer for the company)

Your honour the union has been taken over by an unholy band of socialists who want to destroy the capitalist classes. Mines are dangerous places. Order must be maintained. A manager must be able to hire and fire. And let us remember the Court forbids strikes.

The judge yawns and puts a blackball into his mouth.

LAWYER FOR UNION

(as lawyer for the union)

Your honour this is about decency, a man being able to have a civilised lunchtime. Conditions in the mine are hardly those of a gentleman's club. There are no sanitary arrangements, there are rats as big as cats, there's the damp. It often takes five minutes to find a place to sit. This was victimisation of the worst order. In addition the Court recognises the right of unions to set rules for its members.

The judge yawns.

JUDGE

Well, all very interesting. What is the time gentlemen. 12.30pm. Lunch I think. Back at two. The Court is adjourned.

He leaves.

PAT

(watches him go then
addresses audience)

An hour and a bloody half. And they expect us to have fifteen minutes.

Comrades, was there ever a better illustration of the hypocrisy of the system they call democracy. It must be smashed brothers and sisters. The working classes must take over the legal system, the newspapers, the schools, the hospitals. We must banish these parasites from this land. Let them come down mine and do a decent days work. Let them pick up a shovel and grovel and push. Let them shit in a corner. Let them kneel and gobble a sandwich and take a swig of tea and say a prayer that the bloody roof's not gonna fall in. Let them live in a 2 room cottage with a coal range and buggar all else- with the washing hanging above the fire and no bathroom and the rain's pissing down. Let them experience our lot.

MRS ROGERS

And let their women experience the grind of dawn to dark: the washing, the baking, the feeding, the childbearing, the sewing, the patching, the making do, the veins turning varicose and never a moment to ourselves. No beer in the pub for us. And once a year a picnic if we're lucky. And love is snatched twixt dawn and the hooter. And oh the cost of another mouth to feed. Let them experience our lot.

The Judge enters.

JUDGE

Gentlemen. I have considered the arguments for and against and I come to a simple conclusion. The purpose of the Act is to prevent strikes. Arbitration and strikes cannot exist together as remedies for disputes. That is the law, clear and simple. Workers cannot have their cake and eat it. Accordingly, the Blackball Miners Industrial Union is found against and fined 75 pounds.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra extra. (*singing*) It's the same the whole world over.
Extra extra Blackball miners fined for striking.
Arbitration Court finds for management.
Extra extra. (*singing*) It's the poor what gets the
blame...

ACTOR (as a miner on strike) slumps
in the chair downstage right. ACTOR
(as ERIC sits in his chair, tapping
the arm impatiently. ACTOR: 'Oh my
darling...") Others mime fishing,
sleeping, panning.

ACTOR

There's a tedium to a strike after the initial
excitement. There's the financial worry. There's the
boredom of not working, of the missus getting scratchy
because you're under her feet and no bloody use. There's
the ones who sneak away, leave town to get a job
elsewhere. There's the rumours: They're gonna settle.
They're gonna close the mine. No more credit at shop. The
governments gonna step in...
The leaders are busy, going off raising funds and the
like but for us ordinary blokes it gets tedious. You
begin to wonder what it's all about. Of course you get
out into the garden, you go hunting, try a bit of panning
but still- it's the not knowing. But at least its autumn.
And its long and its hot. Unusual. With just the odd
moment of light relief.

COPPER comes forward wheeling a
bicycle, His assistant has goods in
a wheelbarrow. He addresses the
audience.

COPPER

Citizens of Blackball, I have been instructed by the
Court to seize the household goods of the officials of
the Miners Union for non payment of fines due, which I
have duly done. And I have been further instructed to
auction the said goods which I duly do. So the usual
rules, raise your right hand to bid, full payment upon
receipt of goods.

LOCAL BOXING CHAMP

And I've been instructed to tell you citizens of
Blackball that I'm bidding on behalf of the union.

(*pause*) Got that. (*pause*) Everyone understand. (*smiling at ACTORS*) Good.

COPPER

(*looking uncertain*)

Now I won't have any intimidation. Right, what have we got. Here's a bicycle in good condition. Lamp, brakes, carrier. Not a scratch on the paint work. A bargain at fifteen quid. Who'll start the bidding then.

BOXING CHAMP

(*after a pause*)

Sixpence.

COPPER

(*irritated*)

Come on get serious man.

BOXING CHAMP

(*staring at him*)

Sixpence.

COPPER

(*exasperated*)

Right, I've been offered sixpence. Any advance on sixpence. (*pleading*) Come on ladies and gentlemen, a bag of blackballs is worth sixpence. This is a bicycle. I see. Sixpence. Going going gone. (*understanding*) Smart arses. Nothing but troublemakers in this town. (*impatient now*) What's next. A sewing machine. I suppose its worth a halfpenny Eddie.

BOXING CHAMP

Tuppence mate. I bid tuppence. I'm a reasonable man.

COPPER

I see, I see. Alright, sold for tuppence.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra extra Blackball strike into third month No sign of resolution. (*then he hums solidarity for ever*)

ACTOR

(*studying notes*)

But the strike began to be an embarrassment for the Liberal government, which after all was supposedly on the side of the working class and the Prime Minister stepped in.

PRIME MINISTER.

(on phone to Head of Labour
Department)

This Blackball business is not good for the Liberal Government's reputation Harry. The press are making a meal of it as usual. I think it should be resolved- if you take my meaning. I'll have a word with the company. You might like to speak to this Hickey fellow. He's in town I understand, raising funds. What's that?

The company was thinking of suspending operations indefinitely in Blackball.

Oh dear. Well I suppose that would be a resolution. But then it appears the Taylorville mine at which they were going to concentrate operations has unexpectedly flooded? Unusable? (*a wry grin*) So, they should be willing to settle? Luck is on the workers side. Have to have a word with the Almighty about that.. Oh well. Get the aggrieved parties together then. And a little word beforehand. Indeed.

He watches approvingly, sets up the chairs as DIRECTOR and PAT come over stage left and shake hands before sitting down.

DIRECTOR

Right, let's not waste time. I'll outline our position. Drink by the way? A pleasant enough Scotch I think you'll find.

He pours him one.

DIRECTOR

(reading)

Well then - we agree to thirty minutes for lunch. We will re-instate the dismissed men and you may hold a ballot when layoffs are necessary. We are also proposing that the Taylorville men move to Blackball and that two shifts be worked. (*after a pause*) Agreed?

PAT

Eh?

DIRECTOR

A bit deaf are we? Dynamite and all that I suppose. I said, Thirty minutes for lunch, we'll reinstate the men and you can hold a ballot when layoffs occur. And the

Taylorville men will move to Blackball and we'll have two shifts.

PAT
(astonished)

Bloody hell.

DIRECTOR

You agree?

PAT

Ah- Yeh. The men will have to vote on it but I don't think we'd have any problem with recommending acceptance.

DIRECTOR

Well let's drink a toast to industrial harmony shall we.

She raises her glass.

DIRECTOR

Speechless are we. Unusual Mr Hickey.

PAT recovers his aplomb.

PAT

Well, it's been a pleasure dealing with you. Direct bargaining that's what the country needs. Produces the results doesn't it. Not some useless bloody court hanging around our necks. (*Downing drink*) Right I'll be off to spread the word.

DIRECTOR

The PM's insisted on announcing the settlement himself. He's in the area. Election's coming up. Well, we do have to humour our politicians don't we?

PAT

I see. (*pause while he thinks*) But I'm at least going to tell the men. This victory sir is a victory for the proletariat, as we pursue economic, moral and political emancipation. And from this victory will be built federation, the establishing of the NZ Federation of Miners. And the other, real unions will join us and we'll have a Federation of Labour, the Red Feds you'll call us and we'll preach revolution, aye we will. This is just the beginning of the story and never let us forget, it began in Blackball.

DIRECTOR
(still as boss)
Oh yes indeed. We shall not forget.

PAT
(shouting to audience and
jumping for glee)
We've won lads. We've bloody won.

PAT begins to sing Solidarity for
ever, shaking hands with audience
members.

Transition 1

ACTOR
The beginning, the beginning. And if it could continue.

KEHUA
Men and women, women and women, men and men, Maori and
pakeha, Asian and African, all the workers of the world.
United.

Music. Some slides of WW1, people
mime bayoneting, wounded etc. Pai
Marire chant.

ACTOR
But the war comes and workers become cannon fodder.

ACTOR
Those who refuse are locked up.

KEHUA
Te Puea leads her people.

Slides of revolution.

ACTOR
In Russia the workers are victorious.

ACTOR
An uneasy truce descends.

KEHUA
We are caught now in the pakeha world. His system, his
rangatiratanga overwhelms. Even down here, capital
surrounds us, gold money, coal money, tree money.

ACTOR

(consulting notes)

Blackball workers remained militant.

Slides of the depression.

ACTOR

When the depression hits they go on strike. To try and retain wages.

Music: Solidarity.

KEHUA

Now the pakeha is as poor as us. (*He muses*) Some things happen. Some things can only be imagined as happening. Some times the truest things never happen, so we have to imagine them happening.

ACTOR

In the middle of the long and hopeless strike the Secretary of the union and the leader of the Blackball branch of the Communist party suddenly started a tribute mine, a co-operative, selling coal to the company.

ACTOR

The town was in an uproar and thirty cops were brought in to maintain control.

LIGHTS FADE

Toil and Trouble

LIGHTS UP

Discordant music. Sound of angry crowd. JOHNY and some others rush in and stand outside the closed front door of a miner's cottage. There is a sense of a crowd behind them (the audience). A couple of cops run in.

JOHNY

Williams, come out you rotten bastard. Come out you scab. Show your face.

JOHNY grimaces at the crowd who shout insults. The COPS come over to stop trouble.

JOHNY

All that stuff you rammed down our throats. Workers of the world unite. The clock of history ticking away. The brave new world. All those words Williams. Now what. What sort of a communist are you, hiding behind a closed door protected by the cops. Thirty cops patrolling Blackball, protecting you. Come on you lying shit, come out and face the people you've betrayed.

Silence from within.

COP

Come on you blokes. Go home.

ACTOR

This is a public street. We're allowed here.

COP

Not with bloody stones in your hands. Drop them.

JOHNY paces back and forward, begins to feel sad.

JOHNY

Jesus Bill, we trusted you. (*to others*) Didn't we? When did you start sneaking off to the bosses? When did you start talking behind our backs - doing the deal, establishing a co-operative, supplying them with coal. You- secretary of the union; head of the party branch. When did you start talking to them you rotten bastard?

He starts getting angry again.

JOHNY

In the middle of a bloody strike. We've been out eight weeks. Tribute mine my arse. Co-operative my arse. All bullshit. You're helping them out. Delivering coal to the company. What's the point of a strike? Deny them our labour. How often have you told us that. (*singing*) In our hands there is a power greater than their hoarded gold.'

He turns to crowd.

JOHNY

Mind you it doesn't feel like that right now. No bastards supporting us. No money coming in.

Turning back to door.

JOHNY

You you bastard, you voted along with the rest of us. The Blackball miners have never been frightened to face hard times. That's what you said. What we all said.

ACTOR

Judas! Judas! Judas!

ACTOR

Our kids are hungry.

ACTOR

There're no jobs anywhere.

ACTOR

Swaggers stalking the land.

JOHNY

I've been down mine since I's fourteen and I've never had to deal with this sort of shit. Come out and face us you bastard.

He throws a stone through the window.

COP

Alright. I warned you blokes.

Suddenly the door opens and Annie stands there. Her expression is strangely serene.

ANNIE

(to cop) Leave them alone. What's all this racket about?

JOHNY

Where is he?

ANNIE

Resting.

JOHNY

So he sends out his wife.

ANNIE considers him for a moment.
The dream's gone Johnny. What use is bitterness.

She waves it away

ANNIE
There- did you see it? Gone. You know those feathers
people have in their windows- to catch bad dreams. Well-
it's been caught and sent off again.

JOHNY
What're you talking about. All we got here is fucking
cobwebs and they catch flies.

She goes to him.

ANNIE
Send the others home Johnny. I need to talk.

He decides whether he can trust her.

JOHNY
Leave us.

The others leave.

ANNIE
(to cop)
You can go.

COP
You sure missus?

ANNIE
Yes.

He leaves

ANNIE
News has come Johnny. Bad news.
From Russia.

She hesitates.

JOHNY
Well.

ANNIE

They've been killing people. Two million peasants murdered. They've got labour camps. Stalin's a lunatic. It's a betrayal. Secret police- the lot. The originals- tortured- false confessions- show trials.

JOHNY

What're you talking about?

ANNIE

News has leaked out.

She wrings her hands.

ANNIE

Things leak out. We've known for months. We didn't know how to tell you all.

He turns away from her.

JOHNY

I'm not having this. You're just making excuses for him.

She smiles.

ANNIE

I, I, I...

She gathers herself

ANNIE

I have such grief Johny. For everything. Such grief. The dream's gone. (singing) The peoples's flag is deepest red. It shrouded oft our martyred dead. And ere the corpse was stiff and cold, its blood had stained every fold. Too much blood. Too much.

She weeps. He looks at her worriedly.

JOHNY

You've gone mad.

She smiles

ANNIE

When I had my Sunday school I would look at the kids' faces. So innocent as I told them about equality. From each according to their ability, to each according to

their need. It seemed so right. Faith, to teach faith. They were so willing to believe.

She looks regretfully into the distance.

ANNIE

ACTOR's belief went. Why didn't he tell me. He could've gone you know. Left. But he decided not to. He's a stubborn man.

JOHNY

You're just trying to make excuses.

He gets angry again. She restrains him.

ANNIE

Sit down now. Sit.

She looks him in the eye. Music: Joe Hill- very softly. The others can whisper their own needs. A sense of liturgy.

ANNIE

Answer my question. A *pause*. What do you want?

After a pause.

JOHNY

Work.

ANNIE

Why?

JOHNY

Food for the family.

ANNIE

Yes. And-

JOHNY

Warmth. Light.

ANNIE

Comfort.

JOHNY

(guiltily)

Yes.

ANNIE

It's alright. Nothing wrong with that.

Motherly now.

ANNIE

What else?

JOHNY

An education for my kids. A night out now and then.

ANNIE

And-

JOHNY

People around me I can trust.

ANNIE

Go on.

JOHNY

Good health.

He tries to think of anything else.

ANNIE

Love?

JOHNY

What?

ANNIE

You want love?

JOHNY

Suppose so.

ANNIE

And-

But he's had enough.

JOHNY

You're messing with my head Annie.

He stands up. Music stops.

JOHNY

Get him out here.

But she won't give up.

ANNIE

Dignity?

He nods.

ANNIE

A little power in the world.

He's confused now.

ANNIE

So why is it so hard? Is that why he got this co-operative idea into his head.

JOHNY

You know what those things are about. Undermine the union.

To just go and do it. Not tell anyone.

She's a bit desperate now. Music-
softly- Bandierra Rosa.

ANNIE

Perhaps he was just trying to think it through. He didn't talk to us because he didn't have the words. Even I haven't got the words. I'm still finding them. Instead of pursuing this hopeless strike- in hopeless conditions- with no support. It'll be the end of us as radicals. Don't you see that? Instead of that, instead of waiting for the clock of history - let's all get our co-operatives. And let us join up, each with their contract- internally equal - no bosses- no workers - all one. Let's work the mine - the periphery first, the marginal seams. If the company tries to stop us just keep on digging it out. Bit by bit. If they won't buy it, we'll sell it anyway. Even give it away. Let the spirit of co-operation reign. Not the spirit of antagonism. Fuck the union. Buggar wage slaves. Let's skip the dictatorship of the proletariat...

To herself

ANNIE

Is that what he was trying to say?

JOHNY laughs at her. Music stops.

JOHNY

That Sunday school's got to you. You might have called it socialist but you sound like a parson to me. The opiate of the masses.

ANNIE

Better that than labour camps.

He starts to go.

JOHNY

I'm not listening to this shit anymore.

ANNIE

Johny.

JOHNY

What.

ANNIE

Wait.

She stares at the sky.

ANNIE

Looks like rain.

JOHNY

So.

ANNIE

The bush- it'll win in the end.

They examine each other.

ANNIE

How many have gone gold mining.

JOHNY

Some.

ANNIE

How many?

JOHNY

Plenty.

ANNIE

So really, the strike's over.

He reluctantly nods.

ANNIE

Sometimes I think I'd like to be a scholar. I sometimes think that. I'd enjoy learning a lot about one thing. Study the French revolution. Or biology. What would you study Johnny?

JOHNY

Beer.

ANNIE

Seriously.

JOHNY

Bridges. Maybe I'd study bridges. Or the moon.

ANNIE

A female thing the moon. We got to studying class warfare far too much.

They're happy now.

ANNIE

And then again, I'd like to sing opera.

She sings for a moment.

ANNIE

Maybe my kids will learn that.

She flinches at the word kids.

ANNIE

They're off somewhere. I sent them off- somewhere.

It's getting darker.

JOHNY

I wouldn't mind a full belly.

ANNIE

You could do a study of full bellies. And why we haven't got one. But that might lead us back to the beginning.

She laughs. But he's had enough.

JOHNY

This is all shit Annie.

ANNIE

Possibly. You got an alternative?

He shouts once more at the house.

JOHNY

Williams you scab- get out here.

ANNIE

Hatred. You want to study hatred.

He turns on her.

JOHNY

We've still got the bosses to confront.

ANNIE

(vehemently)

They're just people. Why hate them so vehemently. So obsessively. It poisons us. Let's learn guile. Head for the hills. I think that's possible. Buggar the state. Buggar Lenin. Let's start up there in the hills.

He suddenly realises.

JOHNY

You're mad. Where is he? Where?

ANNIE

ACTOR's asleep.

She grimaces.

ANNIE

Very asleep.

JOHNY

(fearfully)

What've you done Annie?

She shivers.

JOHNY

What!

She turns away, silently screams. He goes inside. She wrings her hands. He comes out.

JOHNY

You've killed him.

ANNIE

Is that why the police are here?

She turns to him.

ANNIE

I couldn't stand the shame. I tried to reason with him. Then I tried to work out why. I almost managed. But I couldn't. I have to keep believing.

JOHNY

Oh Jesus.

ANNIE

He'd become a scab. A traitor. What'll I do? He didn't get a trial, even a mock one. It's getting dark.

JOHNY

Yeh.

He's trying to think. She looks around.

ANNIE

All quiet. No-one about.

He knows what she's suggesting.

JOHNY

I'll take him down bush. They'll never know.

ANNIE

I'll know. So will you.

JOHNY

He ran away. Buggared off.

She nods.

ANNIE

Yes.

JOHNY

No-one'll care.

ANNIE

No.

After a pause

ANNIE

It's true about Stalin.

He nods.

JOHNY

If you say so.

ANNIE

Perhaps I'm just as bad.

She looks around at the town.

ANNIE

This place'll never be the same again.

He grins

JOHNY

No. Have to put up with a Labour government. The farmers and the shopkeepers will vote for them.

ANNIE

They'll sing the Red Flag-

JOHNY

At party conferences.

ANNIE

Paddy'll be Minister of Mines.

JOHNY

Make sure we never go on strike again.

ANNIE

The fascists are rising up. It's going to be a brave new world. No more radicals.

JOHNY

I better do it.

He goes inside. Music.

ANNIE

Yes, a brave new world.

JOHNY comes out with body wrapped in
a blanket.

JOHNY

I liked your dream Annie.

ANNIE

Mmm. Which one?

JOHNY

You must have hit him hard.

ANNIE

Yes. He was asleep.

JOHNY

Never knew a thing.

ANNIE

No.

JOHNY

Better do it then.

ANNIE

Thanks Johnny. You're staunch.

He goes.

ANNIE

Yes- we have to be staunch.

She sings for a moment: The People's
flag is deepest red, it often
shrouded our martyred dead, but e're
the corpse was stiff and cold, it's
blood had stained every fold.

She looks into the distance as the
lights fade.

ANNIE

No-the world'll never be the same again

A popular musical song. Oklahoma perhaps. It continues during the fade, changes to a Beate's song.

LIGHTS FADE

Transition 2:

LIGHTS UP

KEHUA

The strike petered out and the men went back to work,
having to accept the company's demands.

Slides of 1935 election victory

KEHUA

In 1935 a Labour Government was elected.

ACTOR

The mine was nationalised.

ACTOR

Things were sweet.

Slides of Ratana meeting Savage.

KEHUA

Ratana paid his visit.

Slides of Hitler marching into
France etc.

KEHUA

Another war. The pakeha is good at war.

Slides of Macarthyism; Holland

ACTOR

And then the red devil had to be defeated. Us against the
Russians. Get rid of the commies.

ACTOR

After the watersider's strike of 1951 the national
government decided to get rid of coal as a major fuel.

ACTOR

Maybe they wanted to get rid of workers.

Someone nails a for sale sign onto
the verandah.

KEHUA

(laughing)

When the mine closed in 1964 they just about got rid of
Blackball

LIGHTS FADE

Changing of the Guard

LIGHTS UP

A miner's cottage in blackball; the front door and veranda. A hippy, JO and his pregnant partner, KATE, enter. JO knocks on the door. KATE is obviously tired. The door opens and GEORGE, a middle aged miner stands looking at them.

GEORGE

What do you want?

JO

The house is for sale?

GEORGE considers them with distaste.

GEORGE

Yeh. What of it?

JO

We might be interested in buying it.

GEORGE

Is that right!

KATE

We need to settle down mister. I'm having a baby.

GEORGE nods, staring at her stomach. He rolls a cigarette.

GEORGE

How would you pay for it?

JO

We've got some money.

GEORGE

I want three hundred quid.

JO

That's okay. I'll give you cash.

GEORGE is surprised for the price is high.

GEORGE

You'll give me cash?

JO

Yeh.

GEORGE lights his cigarette, coughs. He is suddenly angry.

GEORGE

Where'd you come by three hundred quid. Not by bloody working. Dope money eh?

JO

Money's money where I come from.

JOAN

(from inside)

Who is it George?

She appears, takes in the scene. She is middle aged and thickening around the middle.

GEORGE

They want to buy the house.

She sighs with relief.

JOAN

At last.

GEORGE

Dope money.

JOAN

Better than burning it down. The insurance company wouldn't pay anyway. They've cancelled Blackball.

GEORGE

I'm not having it.

It's an old argument this one.

JOAN

What do you mean you're not having it? We have to get out George. Ken's made you the offer. A job in Blenheim. But we can't go up there with nothing.

He sneers

GEORGE

Working for my son in law. Yes sir, no sir, can I wipe your arse sir.

JOAN

He's made you the offer. You're not a young man anymore.

She suddenly notices KATE's condition.

JOAN

George- she's pregnant and you're not offering her a chair to sit down on.

She unfolds a canvas chair for KATE.

JOAN

You're got no respect anymore. Did she close down the mine? Well, did she? Did he?

GEORGE

No. You'd have to do some work to close a mine.

JO is getting exasperated at all this.

JO

Look, cool it man. Peace. We come in peace.

GEORGE

Peace. Fuck me.

JOAN

George, I will not have that language.

She turns to KATE, is a bit desperate that the sale shouldn't be ruined.

JOAN

It's a good town to bring up kids in. Safe. Bush all around. Kids spend all their time there.

GEORGE

The town's dead.

The sound of a tui is heard.

KATE

Listen- a tui. Did you hear it Jo. A tui.

GEORGE

What use are tuis. Can you earn a living out of tuis?

He stalks off in a temper. They can hear him coughing.

JOAN stares after him for a moment.

JOAN

He's not been the same since the mine closed. It's been his life. He doesn't like being unemployed, living off the dole.

She pauses, as if listening for something.

JOAN

It has got quiet around here. So many leaving town. You mind the quiet?

JO

We want to get back in touch with nature. The world's gone toxic: pollution, motorways, concrete, war. It's gone mad. People need to make contact with the earth nother, with Gaia, Papatuanuku. With the primal forces.

JOAN

The what?

JO

The primal- never mind.

JOAN

You want to have a look around?

KATE

I'll sit here for a minute. My back's aching. I fell off a horse when I's a kid and it's giving me hell now I'm pregnant.

JOAN

I know the feeling dear. I've had five.

JO and JOAN go inside. KATE massages her breasts and her stomach through her cotton shift. GEORGE has come back and stands watching her. She catches his eye.

KATE

They've got so ginormous. I feel like a bloody cow.

GEORGE looks around shiftily wondering if she can see his erection.

GEORGE

So, how do you like it?

KATE

I don't care. As long as I can stand still. We been on the move too much. And Jo needs to get out of the city. He's made a few enemies. Needs to get his head straight as well. That last trip left him a bit wonkey. Seeing snakes.

GEORGE smiles to himself.

GEORGE

So what you gonna live on out here?

KATE

We'll manage. Don't want to get hung up on money, that's what Jo says.

GEORGE

And what do you say?

KATE

As long as the kharma is good. What you take in. What you give out. You seem very uptight. I hope you haven't put that into the house.

He feels hurt at this comment. JO and JOAN come back during the following speech.

GEORGE

You know, in a mine, when you're taking down the tops you have to listen to the seam. It tells you when it's gonna fall. You study a face. There's the spot to put in the charge. Is that kharma.

JO

That's fossil fuels man. We have to stop using them. They're on the way out. We're so stupid to think we can keep burning fossil fuels, base our economy on them. Head in the sand man. Head in the sand.

He turns to KATE

JO

Nice house Kate. Bit suburban but I reckon we take a few walls out and it'll be neat.

GEORGE

Improve the kharma eh.

He hits the verandah post; is suddenly very angry.

GEORGE

Listen to me. How the fuck you going to keep yourselves warm in winter if you don't use coal. It's there. It's cheap. You gonna chop down trees instead?

JO

Solar panels man.

GEORGE

There's no sun for six months of the bloody year!

JOAN goes to KATE.

JOAN

You want to have a look now dear? I'll get us a cup of tea. You come in and have a chat. Best leave them to it I find.

They leave. GEORGE calms down. JO takes out the makings, begins to prepare a joint. Music, Beatles.

GEORGE

I wonder whether there's any meaning to it all. All this. The place had two thousand people. The union employed a doctor. There were kids everywhere. Football teams. Basketball teams. A brass band. I've spent my life here and now it's gone. Bloody birds taken over.

JO lights the joint, sucks in.

JO

Ever tried this?

GEORGE

No. *(He smiles cynically)* Does it keep you warm?

JO offers it to him.

JO

Go on.

GEORGE is tempted but still shakes his head.

JO

It won't hurt you man. Take a leap into the unknown.

He laughs. GEORGE takes the joint, puffs, releases the smoke.

JO

Hold it in. You have to hold it in.

GEORGE does so, breathes out, takes another puff.

JO

Feel anything?

GEORGE laughs.

GEORGE

You used to hear the bloody ventilator fan twenty four hours a day. *(more laughter)* The trains grumbling past.

JO laughs

JO

That's good man. The trains grumbling.

They both laugh.

GEORGE

The pubs were always full. Workers of the world.

Much laughter.

JO

Keeping the capitalist system going.

GEORGE grabs him. Music stops.

GEORGE

What the fuck did you say?

JO

Cool it man. You heard of Vietnam.

GEORGE

A bit.

JO

They're gonna win. They're gonna teach WACTORN civilisation a lesson.

GEORGE laughs

GEORGE

You the messenger?

They both laugh.

JO

Daedelus. Call me Daedelus.

GEORGE

(still laughing)

Listen sonny. I could take you and throw you over the bloody clothesline and paddle your arse like I did to my own kids.

JO shakes his head wearily.

JO

Their army's not like ours. They base it on the human body: the regular battalions are the heart, the lungs. But in every toe, in every finger is a village squad- no uniform, a villager one minute, a soldier the next. The Yanks are lost. They can bomb them, have helicopter

gunships flying around, all the modern shit- hopeless. The Vietnamese carry their stuff on bicycles. An army of bicycles. They're in touch with the earth man. They're teaching us a lesson. They're teaching the indigenous people of the world a lesson. You pakeha, you come and take our land, you exploit it, you dig it up, you abuse it. Then it rejects you. Bye bye.

GEORGE is a bit spaced out.

GEORGE

You Maori eh?

JO

A bit of me. My mother, but she rejected it. Wanted to be more pakeha than the pakeha.

GEORGE

Used to be a crowd of Maori boys come here each winter. Off season for the works so they'd come here.

He sings a popular Maori song for a moment.

GEORGE

You blokes did a pretty good job on the moa eh? Burnt down most of the east coast as well. Respect.

He sings some more, laughs.

JO

We want the land back.

GEORGE

Not up to much. River bed. Rain leaches it. Down below's better. Ah See had a market garden there. When he buggared off I went down and got some of his soil. He'd worked it the CKEHUase way. All the human waste went onto it. So where's that fit into the picture.

He laughs.

GEORGE

You're full of bullshit.

JOAN and KATE arrive with tea and scones.

JOAN

Here we are. She's Irish George. Like us.

He laughs.

GEORGE

She's a randy bitch.

JOAN

Why you acting funny.

He keeps laughing.

JOAN

You been taking drugs.

She turns on JO.

JOAN

Now listen, I won't have you coming here and giving George drugs. It's illegal.

GEORGE is still giggling. She shakes him.

JOAN

George. *(to herself)* The world's going mad.

GEORGE

You want to sell the house to them? They'll be smoking up all day long. In touch with the earth mother.

JOAN

(to KATE)

He's sillier than when he's on the booze.

She looks around for normality. GEORGE has shut his eyes. JO plays on a mouth organ.

JOAN

Rubbish is Fridays.

KATE nods.

JOAN

You two married?

KATE

Jo don't believe in it. Makes you a possession. If you want someone go for it. What's it matter?

GEORGE opens his eyes.

GEORGE

I want you. I want to feel your tits.

KATE is embarrassed.

JO

Be cool honey.

KATE

He's an old man.

She turns to GEORGE

KATE

Sorry. That wasn't fair.

JOAN is furious.

JOAN

George I am going to give you such a clip on the ear.

GEORGE

Peace girl. You fancied Charlie. Remember? Bastard was hanging around you all the time after his missus died.

JOAN

We were just friends. He was lonely. Anyway he was your mate.

GEORGE

Mate my arse. Sniffing around like a randy goat.

JOAN

Anyway, how about you and Gladys.

GEORGE

What do you mean?

JOAN

I caught you outside the Club that night.

GEORGE

We were talking. She was upset.

JOAN

Upset alright.

GEORGE

Her husband had buggared off. Anyway, what's it matter.

JO

That's it. It doesn't matter. Cunts don't wear out. Nor do cocks.

JOAN

His seems to have.

GEORGE

What did you say?

JOAN

Nothing. Drink your tea. It's going cold.

They all stare into space for a moment.

KATE

I'm a bit scared. I'm scared of this baby coming out.

JOAN

They come out. I had five. They all came out.

KATE

You have them here? In this house?

JOAN

Yes. Here.

GEORGE

All of them on night shift.

KATE

Where are they now?

JOAN

John's in WACTORn Australia- in the mine there. Jeanette's in Blenheim, that's where we're going. Barbara's in Auckland. She's a teacher. Married to a teacher. Bob's down south in the works. Billy died.

A difficult pause.

JO

How?

JOAN

He was killed in the mine. He was Dad's favorite 'cos he'd gone down mine. And the mine killed him. Dad cried. The only time I've seen him cry.

GEORGE

Why you telling this to bloody strangers.

JOAN shrugs.

JOAN

I'm sick of holding it in. The milkman comes Monday Wednesday and Friday.

She pours more tea.

JOAN

Anyway, we talking a lot about us. Where you's come from?

KATE

Auckland. Out West. My Mum and Dad fought a lot. He met her during the war. Got married quick. Not suited. I didn't know who's side to take so I ran away. Did this and that, met Jo at a festival. He was at university but he dropped out. He'd got into Buddhism, then into Native American wisdom. Now he's discovering his Maori ancestry. His father's a lawyer. Jo's against Vietnam. He wondered whether to be an urban geurilla or head for the land. With the baby we decided to head for the land. Someone told us about Blackball. Reckoned there could be a community here.

GEORGE

What the fuck you talking about girl.

JOAN

George!

GEORGE

There was a community here. A flaming big community. You couldn't move down town on a Friday night. There was a big game every Saturday at the domain. There were pictures, there was everything. And you come here and talk about community.

JO

We'll start another one. We'll get it going again.

GEORGE

Based on what? Growing dope.

JO

Based on different values. Alternative lifestyle.
Respect.

GEORGE

Based on selling dope and bludging. You's on the dole?

JO

Yeh.

GEORGE

And I'm gonna go to Blenheim and lick arses and pay my
tax to support you sitting on your bum and smoking dope
all day long.

JO

The system's collapsing man. When a system's collapsing
there's no parasites.

KATE

Aren't you on the dole George?

GEORGE shakes his head.

GEORGE

Not because I want to be.

He glares at JOAN.

GEORGE

I suppose you told her what hand I wipe my arse with.

She raises her eyebrows and looks
away. Eventually he turns to JO.

GEORGE

What you like at shovelling coal?

JO

I dunno. Never done it.

GEORGE

How old are you?

JO

Twenty two.

GEORGE

I'm fifty two. I'll give you thirty years and still beat you. Come on. Over to the coal heap.

JO sighs but goes with him . They mime the competition downstage left.

JOAN

Men. They're like billy goats. Don't you think? Charge, butt, squeal. I won't mind leaving this place. Have some grandkids down the road. My daughter. Too many memories here. Too much bitterness. When the Minister came to tell us the mine was closing, we all stood along the main road, all the women and kids. We didn't wave. He didn't look.

KATE

You love him?

JOAN

Who?

KATE

George.

JOAN thinks for a moment.

JOAN

I don't know. It's gone past love. We're like the river and the river bed. We belong together.

KATE

I'd like to be like that.

JOAN

It can have its problems. You slept with other blokes?

KATE

Yeh.

JOAN

Before you met him?

KATE

And after.

JOAN
He doesn't mind.

KATE
No.

JOAN
I've only had George. Too old now to start playing around.

She thinks.

JOAN
Are they different? Different blokes different?

KATE
Yeh. They're all different. But in the end it's just a fuck.

JOAN considers this statement.

JOAN
You smoke that stuff too?

KATE
Yeh.

JOAN
What's it like?

KATE
Just a buzz. Sometimes you see different. Hear things.

JOAN
It's so quiet here.

KATE
It's nice.

JOAN
(agitated)
I can't stand it. The doctor had to give me these pills. I started getting panicky. Like I'd go mad from the quiet. Bloody trees growing everywhere, springing up out of the ground. Taking over. The trees are taking over.

KATE doesn't know what to say as GEORGE and JO come in. GEORGE is feeling JO's bicep.

GEORGE

You're all flab Jo. Need to do some work. Take up boxing. Get into training.

JO

Relax George. You beat me. You're stronger. It's okay. I don't mind. (*Quoting*) The stream gurgles its infinite present. Stones shift in the bed of past. Thus the future is created.

GEORGE

I tell you something. I'd just started working at the face. We were doing the tops and Carrot- he had a face like a rabbit and he had red hair as well, that's how he got his name - he says to us, Boys, if it goes, run that way. Not back, but forward into the tunnel. Anyway, we work a bit longer and he says, I think we better have a bite to eat. So we forward and sit down, open our lunch boxes and boom- the whole bloody roof caves in. But we were safe. Just had to wait for them to dig us out. You trusted a man like Carrot.

JO seems unimpressed. GEORGE stares into space. KATE wriggles her back.

GEORGE

(giving up)

So Mum, we gonna sell are we?

JOAN

Yes George, I want to go.

GEORGE examines JO.

GEORGE

You got the money?

JO nods.

GEORGE

Give it to her.

JO takes it out of his coat and hands it to JOAN.

GEORGE

Give him a receipt Mum. And the title. We don't need lawyers. Just go to the transfer office. I know the bloke

works there. May as well do it tomorrow. Nine o'clock suit? We'll be out by the end of the week. You can shift in Monday.

JOAN

(as she goes inside)

What about the chooks?

GEORGE

You want the chooks?

JO nods.

GEORGE

They're yours.

JOAN

(coming back with writing paper)

When are you due then?

KATE

Next week.

JOAN

Just in time eh.

KATE

Yeh. Thanks.

JOAN

There's a midwife down the road. Getting old but she'll help out. I'll tell her. Be nice having kids in the house again.

GEORGE

We'll leave the key on the table. Don't use it much mind.

JO nods to KATE and she gets up.

JO

Well. See you tomorrow then. Don't worry, we'll look after the place.

KATE

You'd better leave us an address.

GEORGE

On the table. Under the key.

KATE

(to JOAN)

You take care now. Don't let the quiet get to you.

JOAN

It'll be better where we're going.

KATE

(singing to JOAN)

When the rooster crows at the break of dawn
Look out the window and you'll be gone
There's a reason you're travelling on
Don't think twice it's alright

You're going down that long lonesome road
Where you're bound you cannot tell
Goodbye's too good a word girl
You'll just say fare thee well

GEORGE

What's that supposed to be.

JO

A song. Dylan.

GEORGE

Sounded like someone with toothache.

They go. JOAN and GEORGE stand
watching. He comes to her, takes her
hand.

GEORGE

Well then, that's that. Thirty years. That's how long we
been here eh?

She smiles

JOAN

Three hundred quid. You're a bloody robber.

GEORGE

We need it.

JOAN

Think they'll last?

GEORGE

Wouldn't have a clue. Not our problem is it?

He starts to roll a smoke.

GEORGE

Well then old lady, what's for tea?

JOAN

Got some corned beef.

She examines him.

JOAN

What was it like smoking that stuff?

GEORGE

Made me laugh.

JOAN

Might try it sometime.

GEORGE

Go down well at the Country Womens Institute.

She punches him on the arm.

JOAN

Go and chop some wood and I'll put the tea on.

He starts to roll a smoke. KEHUA
begins to chant.

GEORGE

Might go down cemetery first. Tell Billy what's
happening. You think he'll mind?

JOAN

He'll understand Dad. Break it to him gently and he'll
understand.

GEORGE

Yeh. He'll understand.

She goes inside. He lights his smoke
and leaves.

LIGHTS FADE

Transition 3:

LIGHTS UP

KEHUA stands there.

KEHUA

So- the whare changes hands. People come, people go. We come for the pounamu, the gold, the coal. When it finishes, we go - leaving behind our hopes, our dreams, our struggles, our stories, our bones. The pakeha begins to leave his bones here. He begins to belong.

Slides of globalisation

ACTOR

And now the world ferments.

ACTOR

The coming and going increases.

ACTOR

Globalisation.

ACTOR

All the races scatter.

Slides of Land March

KEHUA

For us some little justice at long last. The pakeha acknowledge the theft of the land.

KEHUA

So. Our saga is over.

ACTOR

Our korero.

ACTOR

Many stories, many lives.

ACTOR

Is there hope?

ACTOR

Hope in belonging.

ACTOR

To the ancestors.

ACTOR

Who teach us how to live.

KEHUA

In this whenua. (after a pause) Which is under threat.

The young ones come to the front.

KEHUA

These ones need a future. Can the market give it to them?
(give audience time to respond) Can capital? (Same again)
We have our doubts.

ACTOR

What have we learnt from our stories?

ACTOR

Solidarity.

ACTOR

Tenderness.

ACTOR

Toughness.

ACTOR

Humility.

ACTOR

And that's what we're celebrating this weekend. That's
what workers are always celebrating.

ACTOR

When we get the chance to speak.

KEHUA

And why do we get so few chances to speak? To express our
culture.

After a silence

KEHUA

Slowly, inexorably, the decision time creeps closer.

ACTOR

And the question will be asked of everyone.

ACTOR

(singing)

Which side are you on? Which side are you on?

KEHUA

No reira. It is finished now. Be safe.

They sing Nga Iwi E....

LIGHTS FADE