

EXTINCTION

Hannie Rayson



HANNIE RAYSON a graduate of the University of Melbourne and the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from La Trobe University. Rayson was a cofounder of Theatreworks, and has served as writer-in-residence at the Mill Theatre, Playbox Theatre, La Trobe University, Monash University, VCA and New Writing North (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK).

Her plays have been performed extensively around Australia and several have been produced overseas. They include *Please Return to Sender*, *Mary*, *Leave It Till Monday*, *Room to Move*, *Hotel Sorrento*, *Falling from Grace*, *Scenes from a Separation* (co-written with Andrew Bovell), *Competitive Tenderness*, *Life After George*, *Inheritance*, *Two Brothers*, *The Glass Soldier* and *The Swimming Club*. Hannie's most recent play, *Extinction*, was commissioned by The Manhattan Theatre Club in New York through the Alfred P Sloan Foundation. Hannie's plays have won AWGIE Awards; Green Room Awards; Helpmann Awards; NSW Premier's Literary Awards; Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the Age Performing Arts Award. *Life After George* was the first play ever to be nominated for the prestigious Miles Franklin Award.

Hannie's memoir, *Hello, Beautiful!*, was published by Text Publishing in February 2015. She adapted the story for a one-woman show, also called *Hello, Beautiful!*, which opened at The Malthouse Theatre in May 2016. She is touring the show nationally in 2017/18.

Hannie also writes for newspapers and magazines and in 1999 she won the Magazine Publishers' Society of Australia's Columnist of the Year Award for her column in *HQ Magazine*.

Her television scripts include 'Sloth' (ABC, 'Seven Deadly Sins') and she co-wrote two episodes of the award-winning series 'Seachange' (ABC/Artists Services). A feature film of *Hotel Sorrento* (1995) was nominated for ten Australian Film Institute Awards, winning two, including Best Screenplay Adaptation.

Extinction was first produced by Black Swan State Theatre Company at Heath Ledger Theatre, Perth, on 19 September 2015, with the following cast:

DR PIPER ROSS	Hannah Day
HARRY JEWELL	Matt Dyktynski
HEATHER DIXON-BROWN	Sarah McNeill
ANDY DIXON	Myles Pollard

Director, Stuart Halusz

Set and Costume Designer, Bryan Woltjen

Lighting Designer, Trent Suidgeest

Sound Designer and Composer, Ben Collins

Voice Coach, Luzita Fereday

Fight Director, Andy Fraser

This play was written with the support of the Manhattan Theatre Club in partnership with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

CHARACTERS

DR PIPER ROSS, 30, a zoologist on secondment from the San Diego Zoo

HARRY JEWELL, 45, CEO of Powerhouse Mining

PROFESSOR HEATHER DIXON-BROWN, 50, director of the CAPE Institute

ANDY DIXON, 35, a vet, brother of Heather

SETTING

The action takes place in three separate locations:

A wildlife rescue centre tucked away in the Cape Otway rainforest. This is also the local veterinary clinic.

A Melbourne CBD apartment.

The office of Professor Dixon-Brown at the CAPE Institute (Conservation and Public Education) in Geelong. The CAPE is a university centre.

All characters and locations are fictitious.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A wildlife rescue centre tucked away in the Cape Otway rainforest. It is a wet and windy night.

An American woman, DR PIPER ROSS, dressed in khakis (like a park ranger), enters and hurries to her computer.

The Google homepage appears on the back wall.

PIPER types in the words 'tiger quoll' and presses Google search. She flicks through various sites that display pictures of the tiger quoll and scrolls down searching for information.

The sound of a buzzer.

The back wall image clicks off.

PIPER leaps up and exits, then returns, holding open the door to a man in a heavy rain-jacket, dripping wet. HARRY JEWELL enters, cradling an animal wrapped in a towel.

PIPER: What a night.

HARRY: There's a tree down on the Cape Otway road.

PIPER: May I?

HARRY hands her the bundle wrapped in a towel. She carries the bundle to the table.

Ooh. It's okay. Sssh.

Can you hit the switch? It's just there.

HARRY: This?

PIPER: Yes.

The examination table is illuminated. PIPER unwraps the animal, making a quick assessment of the damage.

Thunder.

HARRY: You said there were white gums at the top of your drive. You know how many white gums are out there?

PIPER: It's a wild night. Sorry.

She wraps the animal in a blanket.

HARRY: Have you treated one of these before?

PIPER: No. She's my first. We just have to keep her head covered. Make sure she's warm and safe.

HARRY: I thought it was male.

PIPER: [*to the animal*] It's okay, little one. [*To HARRY*] We're just trying to settle her down. Ssh.

She delicately unwraps a section of the blanket and quickly examines the animal.

HARRY: What about all that blood?

PIPER: That's just a cut. It's the internal bleeding we need to worry about. I'll just have a look.

She rolls back the quoll's eyes.

... Oops ... hold tight.

HARRY: Sorry.

PIPER: Not a problem. Those gums look pretty pale. Tummy feels alright.

HARRY: Great.

PIPER: She may have a punctured lung ...

HARRY: She's not moving.

PIPER: She's had a big shock—

HARRY: That leg. Doesn't look good.

PIPER: It's broken. That's the least of her worries. [*To the quoll*] Ssh ssh. It's okay. You're gonna be okay.

[*To HARRY*] Gloves. Put them on and then I need you to keep her very, very still.

You're doing great.

We're going to keep her very quiet. Hold her head like this.

She demonstrates.

That's good. Nice and gentle. Reassure her.

She puts on a stethoscope and listens to the heartbeat.

The soft sound of the quoll's heartbeat. This underscores the action to the end of the scene.

She's breathing very rapidly.

HARRY: At least she's breathing.

PIPER: She's in shock. How long ago did it happen?

HARRY: An hour. Give or take. About fifteen minutes before I called you.
And then I couldn't find the road.

PIPER is looking at her wristwatch.

Are you counting the number of breaths?

She nods.

There used to be lots of tiger quolls round here, when I was a kid. My mother kept a little bloke—just like this—as a pet.

PIPER: Fifteen ... twenty ... twenty-three.

PIPER looks anxious.

HARRY: What? What does that mean?

PIPER: It means we need to get some fluids into her. Are you alright?

HARRY: Yep.

PIPER: Hold tight.

PIPER leaves him holding the quoll. She goes to the cabinet and takes out a syringe and draws up some saline.

HARRY: Errol, she called him, Errol Flynn.

What's that?

PIPER: Saline. For shock.

She works on the quoll.

I don't think I'm going to be able to get this into a vein.

HARRY: Am I holding her right?

PIPER: Perfect. I'm just going to inject this into the abdominal cavity.
That'll be fine. There we go. Ssssh. Sssh. Should bring down her breathing.

The tiger quoll cries.

HARRY: She's in a shitload of pain.

PIPER: Where did it happen?

HARRY: 'Bout thirty k's back. Just as you come into the national park.

Thunder.

Is there something you can give her?

PIPER: I'll just get her breathing under control.

HARRY: For the pain?

PIPER: There is. In a minute.

HARRY: Shit. Don't die. Please don't die.

PIPER: [*gently*] Tell me about Errol Flynn.

HARRY: If it'd been up to us, we would have taken to Errol with a shotgun.

PIPER: [*to the quoll*] Don't you listen to this.

HARRY: Like all the farmers round here, we hated quolls.

PIPER: How come?

HARRY: They'd get into the chicken runs. And that'd be it—just carnage in there ... And we liked shooting stuff, basically.

The quoll cries.

PIPER: What kind of farm?

HARRY: Dairy cattle.

PIPER: I think her breathing is settling a bit ... [*To the quoll*] Ssh. It's okay.

HARRY: So what do we do now?

PIPER: We wait for the vet.

HARRY: You're not the vet?

PIPER: No. I'm just helping out.

HARRY: Where's the vet, then?

PIPER: He's out on a call.

HARRY: [*taking out his phone*] What's his number?

PIPER: He's out of range. He'll be here soon.

HARRY: Shit.

PIPER: I was hoping there might be a baby in the pouch. Sometimes ...

HARRY: Is there?

PIPER: No.

HARRY: Are you sure?

PIPER: [*snapping*] I know what I'm doing!
Sorry.

I'm sorry. No-one has seen one of these for a long time. A lot of people around here have given up hope. The last sighting was ten years ago. And that was just a hair in a trap.

HARRY: What do you do, then?

PIPER: I'm a zoologist.

HARRY: Okay.

He strokes the quoll with a tenderness that could break your heart.

PIPER: Most people wouldn't have stopped. Why did you stop?

HARRY: I saw it run out onto the road. I just saw the spots and I thought, shit that's a tiger quoll and then I hit it.

I was speaking on the phone to my daughter. She's fourteen. She rang to let me know that I've destroyed her life.

Pause.

PIPER: Fourteen-year-old girls can be very melodramatic. As I recall.

The quoll cries.

Ssh. Ssh. Come on, girl. [To HARRY] You're sopping. You wanna take off your coat?

HARRY: Thanks.

He removes his coat.

More thunder.

PIPER: Would you like a whisky?

HARRY: Most people round here drink tea in a crisis.

PIPER: I'm not from round here.

She holds up the whisky bottle.

HARRY: American?

He pours two glasses.

PIPER: Michigan. Originally.

HARRY: Nice.

PIPER: You been there?

HARRY: Years ago. I did postgrad at Columbia.

Beat.

My wife is having 'sexual relations' with my friend Damien Gore. That's what I wanted to scream down the phone to my daughter. I'm not the one who destroyed this marriage. Ask your mother what it's like going down on Damien-fucking-Gore.

But you can't say that to a fourteen-year-old girl.

PIPER: Best not!

HARRY: According to my wife, it's all my fault.

PIPER: Wow.

HARRY: Sorry, I'm blathering. What's he doing, this vet?

PIPER: He's pulling out a calf.

HARRY: Okay.

PIPER: It's dead. He has to chop it up and pull it out piece by piece. It's been dead for three days.

HARRY: Yeah. Gross. Poor guy.

Can you phone him and tell him this is a bloody tiger quoll?

PIPER: He's going as fast as he can.

HARRY: Look. I don't want to be responsible for killing the last one of these things.

PIPER: If there's one, there'll be more.

HARRY: How do you know? Maybe this is the last one. There is always a last one, isn't there? The last thylacine. The last dodo. Maybe this is the last tiger quoll.

So ... maybe this makes room for something new.

PIPER: More cats. That's all it makes room for.

HARRY: So cats replace quolls. That's what evolution's all about, isn't it? Natural selection.

PIPER: But it's not natural. It's unnatural. Millions of tiny relationships hang off the fangs of the quoll. And when those relationships break apart—

HARRY: What are you doing here? In the bush on your own.

PIPER: I'm a volunteer. I work at the university.

At the Institute for Conservation and Public Education. The CAPE Institute. In Geelong.

HARRY: I'm impressed.

PIPER: You know it?

HARRY: Never heard of it.

So what do you do at this CAPE Institute?

PIPER: I do koalas.

HARRY: I thought I'd seen you somewhere. You were in the paper a few weekends back.

PIPER: I'm on leave from the San Diego Zoo. We have the biggest koala breeding program outside of Australia.

HARRY: That's right. You're the koala girl.

PIPER: Do you know that female koalas choose their mate by smell?

HARRY: Really? That's very intimate.

PIPER: I've been taking samples from the scent glands of male koalas. And pretty soon I'll be able to create an artificial scent, like a male cologne which will trick girl koalas into falling in love with a better type of boy.

HARRY: Really? So what will it smell like, your perfume?

PIPER: It's a very sexy combination of urine and faeces.

HARRY: So, just a dab.

PIPER laughs.

The sound of tyres on gravel outside.

PIPER: Here he is.

What happened to Errol Flynn, by the way?

HARRY: One night he didn't show up and we never saw him again. My mum said he'd found a good woman.

PIPER: Not likely. They're party boys. As soon as their gonads fire up, they go crazy and have as much sex as they can. Then they collapse and die!

HARRY: I could think of worse ways to leave the building.

ANDY enters.

PIPER: Andy!

ANDY: G'day. How'd you go?

PIPER: We're hanging on. Only just.

ANDY: Sorry, I stink.

Is it a quoll?

PIPER: Mm hm.

ANDY walks directly to the table.

ANDY: She's a tiger, alright. What happened?

HARRY: I hit her on the road.

ANDY: Obviously.

PIPER: Andy, this is ... Sorry, I don't even know your name.

HARRY: Harry.

PIPER: Harry.

ANDY: G'day.

ANDY checks the quoll, expertly.

PIPER: Her lungs sound terrible. I thought maybe she had a diaphragmatic hernia.

ANDY: Why would you think that?

Beat.

PIPER: The diaphragm feels as though it's separated and shooting forward ...

ANDY: You reckon?

He continues examining the quoll.

Did you check the pulse?

PIPER: Of course I checked the pulse.

ANDY: And?

PIPER: Sounds okay.

ANDY: What about refill?

PIPER: I checked the gums. And the eyes.

ANDY looks unimpressed.

I didn't want to stress her any more than necessary.

ANDY checks the animal in silence.

I did everything I could.



Myles Pollard as Andy and Hannah Day as Piper in Black Swan State Theatre Company's 2015 production of EXTINCTION. (Photo: Gary Marsh)

Beat.

ANDY: Where did it happen?

HARRY: I'm not sure exactly.

ANDY: You'll have a GPS in that car, I'm assuming?

HARRY: Yeah. D'you want me to check it out?

ANDY nods cursorily.

HARRY exits.

PIPER: What is your problem?

ANDY: I don't have a problem.

ANDY holds up the whisky bottle, accusingly.

PIPER: The guy is upset. He's had an accident.

ANDY: Hope he didn't damage that cruise missile he's got out there.

PIPER: You're judging the guy by the type of car he drives?

ANDY: Why d'you think blokes like him buy wheels like that?

PIPER: Andy! The guy hit an animal and he stopped.

Thunder.

On a night like this.

ANDY: Come here.

PIPER: Why?

ANDY: Just come over here.

PIPER: No. You totally undermined me, in front of him.

ANDY: Piper. I'm cold. I'm tired. And I've had my arm up the arse end of a cow for the past three hours. Now if you come here I will show you what you needed to feel for. The quoll has a broken back. It's paralysed from the waist down. It's not fair to try and resuscitate an animal in this condition.

HARRY re-enters, dripping wet. He holds up his phone.

HARRY: Wild Dog Creek Road.

Just before the old Colac turnoff.

ANDY: From around here, are you?

HARRY: Used to be.

ANDY takes a large syringe. He draws up a substance into it.

PIPER: What are you doing?

ANDY: She can't survive these injuries.

PIPER: Andy!? What are you doing? Andy?

He euthanises the quoll. It dies.

The heartbeat stops. Silence.

ANDY: Do you want your towel?

HARRY stares coldly at ANDY while he wraps the animal up and puts it in a box and seals it.

PIPER: I don't believe you just did that.

HARRY: This was not somebody's mangy cat, you know.

ANDY: Really?

HARRY: You don't just pull out your needle and dispose of the problem.

PIPER: We needed to at least *try*.

ANDY: You snapped its spinal column.

HARRY: You do what you can to keep an endangered animal alive.

ANDY: Not if it's paralysed, you don't!

HARRY: Yes, you do! Unless you're the village idiot posing as the fucking vet.

HARRY picks up his coat and heads for the door.

ANDY: Nice meeting you too, mate.

PIPER follows HARRY to the door.

PIPER: I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say.

HARRY fishes for his card. He gives it to PIPER.

HARRY: Call me.

PIPER: I'm Piper.

HARRY: I figured that.

PIPER: Thank you. For what you did.

HARRY is about to leave, but turns back.

HARRY: Is there somewhere I can read about your koala project?

PIPER gives him her card.

PIPER: That's my website.

HARRY leaves his card on the desk and exits.

Oh. He's left his phone. Harry?

She runs out after him.

ANDY begins to tidy up. He pours himself a whisky, keeping an eye on PIPER and HARRY outside.

Eventually the car starts up and we hear tyres on gravel as HARRY drives away.

PIPER re-enters. She collects her motorcycle helmet and her pack.

ANDY: What are you doing?

PIPER: What's it look like?

ANDY: Piper? I had no choice.

PIPER: You did so. You just opted for the most convenient one.

She exits.

ANDY examines Harry's business card. He leaps up, brandishing it in the air.

ANDY: [calling] You know who this dude is?! Piper?! Piper?! It's Harry Jewell! Piper?! It's Harry bloody Jewell!

The roar of a motorbike.

ANDY becomes unsteady on his feet and falls to the floor.

SCENE TWO

The small balcony of an apartment looking across at a sea of other apartments in the centre of the city. This is the home of Professor Heather Dixon-Brown.

She is reading messages on her phone and consulting papers in her briefcase. It is early evening. The noise of the city and peak-hour traffic rumbles below.

DIXON-BROWN: [calling] No ice with mine!

PIPER enters, carrying drinks.

PIPER: Happy birthday!

DIXON-BROWN: What's this?

PIPER: Watermelon tequila.

DIXON-BROWN: [sipping] Oh, my God.

PIPER: Nice?

DIXON-BROWN: *Oh, my God!*

Did I tell you I had a meeting with the vice-chancellor today? Apparently we're at war. I swear to God, he leaned across the table and started to talk to me urgently about defending our territory. It was like we were in the White House Situation Room.

PIPER: Who's the enemy?

DIXON-BROWN: Other universities.

PIPER: Right.

DIXON-BROWN: He wants to 're-brand' us. As 'Harvard Down Under'.

PIPER: Wow.

DIXON-BROWN: *What is* in this drink?

PIPER: Just watermelon, all mushed up with ice, sugar syrup, blueberries and tequila. My mom used to make it for her bridge nights.

DIXON-BROWN: How is your mum?

PIPER: She's on a hunger strike.

Pause.

DIXON-BROWN: Meaning ... like a diet?

PIPER: Meaning like Gandhi. Like non-violent resistance. The Dean of her university is amalgamating her beloved Philosophy department with Cinema Studies.

DIXON-BROWN: And I thought we were insane.

Good for her.

She toasts PIPER with her own delicious tequila mush.

To Alison.

PIPER: People who have normal mothers don't understand the horrors of having a weird one.

Yours is totally ... sane ... She makes soup and knits you jumpers. Mine is like this mad, moulting hen.

She dashes around the country promoting veganism, but do you know what she actually eats?

Corn chips. That is all there is standing between Alison and malnutrition.

PIPER refills her glass.

DIXON-BROWN: We have to talk about what you're going to do.

PIPER: About what?

DIXON-BROWN: Your funding here runs out in three months. You either have to go back to San Diego, or we find you a new project.

PIPER: What sort of project?

DIXON-BROWN: I had a meeting with the Environment Minister this morning.

She wants me to update the Dixon-Brown Index and include birds.

PIPER: [*finding this awkward territory*] Oh, Dix ... the index.

DIXON-BROWN: What?

PIPER: When would this be?

DIXON-BROWN: Next month.

PIPER: Oh, no. I can't. I'm sorry. We're collecting scent samples from my koalas on Phillip Island.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper—

PIPER: I need this data. My whole project depends on it.

DIXON-BROWN: But you don't have to collect the samples yourself.

PIPER: I do.

DIXON-BROWN: You have money for a research assistant.

PIPER: I know.

DIXON-BROWN: You have to learn to delegate.

PIPER: I know. I just don't think you can be an ecologist from a desk in the Jean Prouse Building.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: [*coolly*] I run the institute. I don't have the luxury of spending months at a time in the bush.

PIPER: I didn't mean you.

DIXON-BROWN: I would love nothing more than to get back to my own research.

PIPER: I know, I'm sorry, I'm talking about myself and the index—

DIXON-BROWN: I look at Stuart Decker and I think, 'How come you get to spend six months collecting coral from the Great Barrier Reef?' Oh, that's right. Some mug spends all her time in her dingy little office writing your applications so you can win the Humboldt Award and get a suntan.

PIPER: [*looking out at the city skyline*] You live up here and you never even see a bird.

DIXON-BROWN *pours herself another glass.*

No wonder you're stressed.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm not stressed!

PIPER: But how do you renew yourself—if you never see a flock of birds sail across the sky in the morning light?

DIXON-BROWN: You drink.

PIPER: You can't experience awe in a city.

DIXON-BROWN: That is ridiculous.

PIPER: It's not. You have to be in the wilderness to feel reverence. You have to be someplace where life is unfolding *beyond* human control.

Why don't you come with me into the bush, just for a couple of days? That'll sort you out.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper! I'm not the one who needs to be sorted out.

PIPER: I know zip about birds.

DIXON-BROWN: They fly in flocks across the sky in the morning light.

Look, the question is, do you want to stay or not?

PIPER: I want to stay. You know I do.

The muffled sound of ANDY'S voice.

DIXON-BROWN *talks into the intercom.*

DIXON-BROWN: Hiya. Come on up.

PIPER: Is that Andy? What's he doing here?

DIXON-BROWN: It's my birthday. He's my brother.

PIPER: I'm outta here.

DIXON-BROWN: Please, Pipe. Mum and Dad will be at the restaurant too.

They adore you.

PIPER: Andy and I aren't speaking.

DIXON-BROWN: Jesus, Piper.

The tiger quoll had a broken back.

PIPER: It may have had a chance. Maybe it was just a damaged vertebra.

How do we know?

DIXON-BROWN: He's a vet.

PIPER: He's not God.

DIXON-BROWN: Remember when the two of you rode that motorbike across the Simpson Desert?

PIPER: What about it?

DIXON-BROWN: You should have been married to Nigel. His idea of

extreme adventure was buying his socks from a different department store.

Beat.

He sent through the divorce papers.

PIPER: No wonder you're depressed.

DIXON-BROWN: I am *not* depressed. What is it with you? I'm just over being single. But I have no room in my life for a relationship. There is no empty space that is boyfriend-shaped.

Pause.

PIPER: You have to create the space—

DIXON-BROWN: There are twenty-five people on staff at the institute—most of whom have families and mortgages and they rely on me to come up with their salaries. So, as much as I would love to be out there in the bush or cruising bars looking for a bloke, I just can't.

She sighs.

PIPER: Cruising bars?

DIXON-BROWN: Whatever.

PIPER *giggles*.

The sound of the intercom buzzer.

ANDY: [*offstage*] Hey, Sis.

DIXON-BROWN: Come for dinner. Please?

Before waiting for an answer, DIXON-BROWN opens the door. It is ANDY. He kisses his sister. He is sporting a cut across his forehead and a black eye.

ANDY: Happy birthday!

He hands her a present.

DIXON-BROWN: What happened to you?

ANDY: Hey, Pipes.

PIPER: Omigod.

ANDY: I had an altercation with a door.

DIXON-BROWN: Whereabouts?

ANDY: At bloody Pascoe's. [*By way of explanation to DIXON-BROWN*]
This massive dairy farm, out at Ryler's Ridge.

DIXON-BROWN: That looks as if it needs a stitch. Come here.

ANDY: She'll be right.

DIXON-BROWN: Let me look.

ANDY: What's this?

PIPER: Watermelon tequila. Want some?

ANDY: Sure. [*Fending off his sister*] It's okay.

DIXON-BROWN *represses the desire to fuss.*

DIXON-BROWN: I'll get you a glass.

She exits.

ANDY: I'm sorry.

PIPER: Have you seen a doctor?

ANDY: Yeah, it's fine.

PIPER: You haven't, have you?

ANDY *grabs her arm, whispering to her urgently before DIXON-BROWN gets back.*

ANDY: I hate it when we fight.

PIPER: Well, stop arguing with me all the time.

ANDY: I didn't start it.

PIPER: You did.

ANDY: I didn't. You got into a big sulk and left.

PIPER: Andy, I am not the kind of person who sulks.

Beat.

Alright. Sulking is part of my repertoire. But that was not a sulk. That was like fury.

ANDY: You're so sexy when you're furious.

PIPER: There has not been a confirmed sighting of a tiger quoll for ten years.

ANDY *remembers something.*

ANDY: Oh, by the way, your Mr Jewell is in the news.

PIPER: Who?

ANDY: Your Harry Jewell. He's the Managing Director of Powerhouse Mining.

PIPER: No!

ANDY: Your Mr Evil.

PIPER: He's not *my* Mr Evil.

ANDY: He's applied for a license to explore for brown coal. In the Otways ...

PIPER: You're joking.

ANDY: Eighty thousand hectares of prime agricultural land.

PIPER: The government won't let him.

ANDY: You just watch 'em.

PIPER: What is the matter with these people! Are you sure it's the same Harry Jewell?

ANDY consults his phone. He types.

ANDY: J. E. W. E. Double-L.

'Mr Jewell founded Powerhouse last year, after two decades' experience in the coal and gold sectors.'

[Summarising] Holds a Masters degree in Mining Engineering from Columbia University in New York. Married with one daughter.

PIPER: That's my Mr Evil.

ANDY is scrolling down through his emails.

ANDY: The locals are furious. Here's an email from Corkie Dent. 'If any bastard tries to shift any of my dirt, looking for coal, I'll blow his arse off.'

PIPER laughs.

PIPER: Good ol' Corkie.

ANDY draws her to him and kisses her passionately.

DIXON-BROWN enters, then does a double-take and exits.

ANDY: Dix!

Come and open your present.

PIPER: You and I need to sort out some things, Andy.

ANDY: *[flirting]* I like it when we sort things out.

PIPER: *[flirting]* Do you just?

ANDY: I do.

DIXON-BROWN enters again just as ANDY is scooping PIPER toward him.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, purlease.

ANDY: Dix! Here.

He hands DIXON-BROWN a little box left on the table.

DIXON-BROWN: This doesn't look like a book about climate change.

ANDY *grins*.

DIXON-BROWN *holds up a very pretty necklace.*

Did you choose this?

ANDY: I did.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy, it's beautiful.

ANDY: Here.

He fiddles with the clasp and attaches the necklace around her neck.

PIPER: That's lovely.

ANDY: Mm. You have a very nice ... thorax ...

DIXON-BROWN: Excuse me, did you just pay me a compliment?

ANDY: Cheers!

He takes a sip.

You should see this dairy farm. It's all computerised. They've got one bloke managing a thousand cows. No human supervision of the milking. No-one to check the udders. I'm just there, doing the rounds. Like a robot.

DIXON-BROWN: It's work, I suppose.

ANDY: That's not why I became a vet.

DIXON-BROWN: Is that when you hit your head?

ANDY: That's when I thought, 'I'm going to sell the practice'.

DIXON-BROWN: Sell the practice?

PIPER: And do what?

ANDY: Maybe go back to El Salvador. Or Zambia. Somewhere where it means something to be a vet.

DIXON-BROWN: What about Piper?

ANDY: Piper's leaving.

DIXON-BROWN: No, she's not.

ANDY: [*to PIPER*] What?

DIXON-BROWN: She's going to work on updating the Dixon-Brown Index with me.

PIPER: Oh, Dix. I don't think so.

DIXON-BROWN: Why not?

PIPER: You need someone who's good at math.

DIXON-BROWN: That would be me. I have a PhD in Statistics. In case I forgot to mention it.

PIPER: Being such a self-effacing person.

DIXON-BROWN: Being such a fucking *doormat*.

PIPER: For Stuart-fucking-Decker.

DIXON-BROWN: And every other fucking *fucker* in this department. I love this drink. Is there more?

PIPER: Sure.

ANDY: How much tequila is in this?

PIPER: A shitload.

DIXON-BROWN: I better have some more, then.

PIPER re-fills her glass from a jug.

What is your problem, Piper?

ANDY: Her problem is that she would no more work on your fucking index, than fly to the moon.

PIPER: Andy!

DIXON-BROWN: I am assuming that you both agree that the rate of extinction is out of control.

PIPER: Of course we do.

DIXON-BROWN: And there is only so much funding to go around to deal with this.

Beat.

You do accept that?

Beat.

Piper! People with expertise—people like you and me—have to be able to advise government about the best use of the conservation dollar.

PIPER: I know the argument.

DIXON-BROWN: We need an objective measure that allows us to say which species are worth saving and which are beyond the point of no return.

PIPER: That's not our call. They are all 'worth saving'.

DIXON-BROWN: But we don't have the money to save them all!

ANDY: So what's your latest magic number?

DIXON-BROWN: Five thousand. Populations below that can't survive a catastrophe like a flood or a cyclone or a bushfire.

ANDY: I thought it was two thousand.

DIXON-BROWN: I've refined the algorithm.

PIPER: And this is supposed to apply to every mammal on earth. That's what your 'algorithm' says. Regardless of whether we are talking about killer whales or teeny potoroos.

DIXON-BROWN: Government departments need a strategy that will deliver the highest probability of success.

PIPER: So now we're doing birds. Which means consigning the orange-bellied parrot to the trash!

DIXON-BROWN: Probably.

ANDY: There are only twenty-one left.

DIXON-BROWN: Functionally extinct.

PIPER: This is assassination by numbers.

DIXON-BROWN: This is living in the real world.

PIPER: This is signing the death warrant.

ANDY: See what I have to put up with?

PIPER & DIXON-BROWN: [*together*] Shut up.

PIPER: What about the tiger quoll? Are you prepared to say, 'There's a species that's done for'?

DIXON-BROWN: Probably. The quoll you treated the other night—

PIPER: The quoll *your brother* killed.

DIXON-BROWN: The quoll *my brother* killed—

ANDY: The quoll your brother *humanely euthanised* had no chance of surviving through the night.

PIPER: You know what I think? Your index is a calculus of death.

DIXON-BROWN: Nice.

ANDY: Punchy.

DIXON-BROWN: But not, I think, a line we'll be using on the website.

Are you going to wear that [*park ranger outfit with shorts*] to the restaurant?

PIPER: Have you got a change of socks?

DIXON-BROWN: Go grab something from my wardrobe.

PIPER: Like a suit or something?

DIXON-BROWN: You can wear a ball gown if you want.

PIPER: Andy?

ANDY: You look beautiful just as you are.

DIXON-BROWN: We're going to the Florentino.

PIPER: They have a no-shorts policy?

DIXON-BROWN: It's my birthday. No shorts.

PIPER: Have I got time for a shower?

ANDY: No.

PIPER: I can't go if I don't shower.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper!

PIPER exits.

ANDY polishes off the remaining watermelon tequila.

Can you please find me a man to marry? I want to be a housewife.

ANDY: I told you. I found you a man.

DIXON-BROWN: What man?

ANDY: Alan Dodd. Recently divorced. Teaches meditation part-time.
Works in IT.

DIXON-BROWN: You know what Nigel used to say to me? 'You're one of those women who looks better with your clothes on.' What sort of a man says that?

ANDY picks up an invoice on DIXON-BROWN'S desk.

ANDY: What's this?

DIXON-BROWN: Excuse me?

She tries to take it off him, but he won't let her.

ANDY: Full leg and bikini: forty-five dollars; lip and chin: twenty;
underarm: fifteen; eyebrow—Do you have your eyebrows *sculpted*?

DIXON-BROWN: Give it to me, Andy.

ANDY: Two hundred and sixty-seven dollars.

DIXON-BROWN: That's for a haircut as well.

ANDY: How often do you get this done?

DIXON-BROWN: Every five weeks.

ANDY: Every five weeks, you spend two hundred and sixty-seven dollars on hair removal?

You could get a tree lopped for that.

DIXON-BROWN: What's he look like—this Alan Dodd? If he's in IT, he's probably overweight, lives with his mother. Shy to the point of autism.

ANDY: Dix.

DIXON-BROWN: What?

Beat.

ANDY: I fell over last night.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy.

ANDY: I just walked into the house and fell down.

DIXON-BROWN: W—what's this about?

ANDY: [*with a shrug*] That hasn't happened before.

DIXON-BROWN: Did you see a doctor?

ANDY: Tomorrow.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy!

ANDY: I think this might be the start.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: You have to tell her.

ANDY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy! You have to.

ANDY: Dix, you know what she's like. She'll stay up all night looking after a bloody possum.

DIXON-BROWN: So?

ANDY: So. She'll want children. I'm not going to ask her to waste her life. I'm not doing that.

SCENE THREE

The animal shelter.

PIPER is Skyping with her mother. She is talking on a headset with a built-in mic. The computer-camera is on the desk. She is also carrying a possum around in a papoose.

PIPER: Mom, I am not being passive aggressive. I am just trying—

...

What?

...

It's a possum.

...

No, it is not a baby substitute.

...

Andy. I'm at his place.

...

[To ANDY] Hello, Andy.

ANDY: Hello, Alison.

PIPER: [to Skype] Hello, Alison.

...

Hang on ...

ANDY *is leaving.*

[To ANDY] When are you back?

ANDY: I've got an appointment up in town.

PIPER: For work?

ANDY: No.

PIPER: What?

He gives her a mind-your-own-business look.

Andy?

[To Skype] Hang on, Mom—

...

What?

...

[To ANDY] She wants to speak to you.

ANDY *indicates he doesn't want to.*

[To Skype] He's in a hurry.

...

ANDY *is annoyed.*

What's this about, Mom? He's racing out the door.

...

[To ANDY] Andy, please. She just needs a minute.

ANDY *takes the headphones off PIPER, irritated. He then sits in front of the computer transformed into a smiling, calm and sweet man.*

ANDY: Hey. Alison. How's it going, mate?

...

Oh. Shit.

...

Oh.

...

Oh, no.

PIPER: What?

ANDY: Oh, that's no good.

PIPER: What's going on? Andy?

ANDY: [to PIPER] Beast is sick.

PIPER: Beast? What's the matter with Beast?

ANDY: Ssh.

PIPER: Tell me! Tell me!

ANDY: [to Skype] Hold on, Alison. Piper's losing it, here. [To PIPER] He's got cancer.

PIPER: Cancer. Beast has got cancer? What kind of cancer? How does she know? Put her on. Has she taken him to the—?

ANDY: Yes. Calm down.

PIPER: Put her on. Don't tell me to calm down.

ANDY: Let me just get the facts.

PIPER: Why didn't she tell me?

Pause.

ANDY: [to Skype] Right. Okay.

PIPER: What?

ANDY: [to PIPER] He has a tumour on the lung.

PIPER: Can they operate?

ANDY: Hang on. [To Skype] Sorry, Alison. What was that?

...

'Course. And that's what they said? You've seen this guy before?

PIPER: Dr Kurtz. Is it Dr Kurtz?

ANDY: [to PIPER] No. They have a specialist oncology unit.

[To Skype, for PIPER's information] They can operate to remove the tumour and then do a course of radiation.

...

PIPER: Andy?

ANDY: That sounds about right. But once you factor in the CT scans, the surgery and follow-up therapy—

PIPER: He's my dog!

ANDY: Alison, I think Piper needs to speak to you.

...

Yes.

...

Of course. I understand.

...

Mm hm.

...

I'll put her on.

PIPER *grabs the headphones.*

PIPER: [to Skype] Why didn't you tell me? You sat on the phone and you didn't say a word.

...

I just knew something like this would happen. You don't care about animals. You have no idea about how to care for anyone. You can't even look after yourself. I should never, *ever* have left him with you.

ANDY: Piper, come on. [To Skype] Alison. We'll call you back, okay?

He pulls the headset lead out.

Alright. Calm down.

PIPER: I'll raise the money, Andy.

ANDY: Yep.

PIPER: I'll sell my bike.

ANDY: Mm hm.

PIPER: How much is it going to cost?

ANDY: Fifteen, twenty thousand.

PIPER: This is so not fair.

ANDY: Beast is an old dog, Pipe.

PIPER: Nn nn. You don't understand.

ANDY: I do.

PIPER: He understands me more than anyone in the world.

ANDY: Thanks.

PIPER: I should never have left him with *her*.

ANDY: This is not her fault, Pipe.

PIPER *paces.*

PIPER: Will his hair fall out?

ANDY: We're not going down that path.

PIPER: What do you mean? I'm talking about chemotherapy.

ANDY: Animals get sick. And they die.

PIPER: Not Beast.

ANDY: Even Beast.

PIPER: No. I'm not ready.

ANDY: Piper, remember when Bryan took Twinkie in for a pacemaker?

PIPER: That was different.

ANDY: You were scathing!

PIPER: Beast is a person. He's like a brother.

ANDY: And Alison treats him like a son. She *paid* for him to have a hip replacement, remember? [*Incredulously*] She takes him to Central Park every day and feeds him cubes of fruit salad from a plastic fork at that café.

PIPER: You don't understand New Yorkers.

ANDY: Piper. Listen to me.

PIPER: If you loved someone and they were dying, you would do everything you could to help them.

She buries her head into the possum and sobs.

ANDY is about to hug her when the bell dings for reception. He exits.

PIPER talks to the possum.

You'd do everything you could, wouldn't you? Because life is precious, isn't it, you poor little thing.

ANDY re-enters.

ANDY: It's Mr Evil.

PIPER: What's he want?

ANDY: [*with a shrug*] He wants to have sex with you.

PIPER: He does not.

ANDY: His wife has just left him.

PIPER: You have such a rudimentary understanding of human psychology.

ANDY: Some people aren't that complicated.

PIPER: Tell him to piss off.

ANDY: Okay. Listen, babe, I have to get to Melbourne. Shit. It's nine o'clock.

Are you gonna be okay?

PIPER nods.

ANDY: You need to call Alison back.

PIPER: Why?

ANDY: She drove from New York to San Diego to collect Beast. To look after him for you.

PIPER: I am not gonna apologise.

ANDY: You sure about that?

PIPER: Of course I'm sure.

ANDY: Okay.

He kisses her.

PIPER: Andy, can you ... deal with him?

ANDY: Will you be here tonight?

She shrugs.

Okay. Give us a call, later.

He leaves.

PIPER *puts the possum back in its cage.*

She busies herself putting things away and collecting her stuff.

When she looks up, HARRY is waving to her at the window.

HARRY: Sorry about your dog.

PIPER: What are you doing?

HARRY: I need to talk to you.

PIPER *lets him in.*

PIPER: You're going to get lynched.

HARRY: Who's going to lynch me?

PIPER: I am. With a few thousand other people in this community.

You didn't happen to mention the other night that you're a coalminer.

HARRY: It didn't come up.

PIPER: No, it didn't. Interesting, that.

HARRY: What's the matter with your dog?

PIPER: He has a tumour on his lung.

HARRY *sees she is about to cry.*

HARRY: They can treat that. How old is he?

PIPER: Twelve.

HARRY: Whatever they can do on humans, they can do on dogs.

PIPER: If you've got a spare fifteen thousand dollars.

HARRY: Fifteen grand. Come on. This is your best friend we're talking about.

PIPER starts to cry.

What sort of dog?

PIPER: American water spaniel. He was a rescue dog. I got him when he was six weeks old.

She pulls herself together.

You had me convinced you were someone who cared about the environment.

HARRY: Actually, it's the *word* I really don't care for. 'The environment'. Mostly because it's associated with *environmentalists*.

PIPER: We're not the ones turning this country into a big empty hole.

HARRY: Not true. We fill in our holes. It's called 'rehabilitation'. We are required by law to do it!

PIPER: After you've caused massive damage to the ecosystem.

HARRY: Look—I'm not a hero, Piper. I don't want to talk about this.

PIPER: I'm sure you don't.

HARRY: I can't save the world, okay? But I *can* help to bring jobs and people back to my home town.

PIPER: We don't want your jobs.

HARRY: Who's this 'we'? You don't serve your cause by being indifferent to the interests of working people.

Beat.

Anyway, show me something else that'll turn the lights on.

PIPER: Solar. Wind. Tide.

HARRY: Yeah. Tell the Chinese. They'll go on buying coal wherever they can get it, because the lights don't go out when the sun goes down.

PIPER: Blame the Chinese. Good work.

HARRY: They have a right to electricity.

Piper, can we talk about the other night?

PIPER: What about it?

HARRY: I know you feel hostile towards me. But can you just hear me out? I had hoped we could talk about setting up a project to save the Otway quolls.

PIPER: What sort of a project?

HARRY: Getting rid of the cats for a start. Then you tell me. How do we find the tiger quolls? What do we need to do, to fix up that forest? You're the one with the know-how, Piper. I'm just the investor.

PIPER: What sort of investment?

HARRY: You mean how much money? [*He shrugs.*] Whatever it takes.

Beat.

I spent yesterday with my mother.

Beat.

She was impressed that an American might devote herself to our koalas. We saw about six of them. In the manna gums on the lighthouse road. We also saw crimson rosellas. Heaps of them. Mum goes, 'I've been unfaithful to your father. I keep falling in love with birds.'

PIPER softens a fraction.

PIPER: How did she take your news? Your separation?

HARRY: On the chin. Like she takes everything.

PIPER: She didn't side with your wife?

HARRY: No, actually she was quite loving.

Beat.

Listen. I'm on my way to Kangaroo Island. You been there?

PIPER: No.

HARRY: You have to see this place. It's a wildlife paradise. Totally pristine. They don't have foxes or rabbits. No feral cats, so the bush is teeming with birds. Goannas. Wallabies. You name it. Bone-white beaches with sea lions flopping about. It's the kind of place where people make their own cheese and honey. Farmers advertise for wives on community noticeboards.

PIPER: Is that why you're going?

HARRY: I'm not in the market for a wife.

Beat.

Why don't you come?

PIPER: Now?

HARRY: I've chartered a plane. There's a bloke at the airport waiting for my call.

PIPER: No carbon footprint too great for such important work.

I have to work this weekend.

HARRY: Really? I can't tempt you to fly along the coastline, over the Twelve Apostles—following the line of the Great Southern Ocean? Then along the Limestone Coast. Over the Coorong? Only take a couple of hours. Ever been to any of these places?

PIPER: No.

HARRY: Piper!

PIPER: Life is long.

HARRY *smiles*.

HARRY: That's why I like you.

PIPER: You don't know me.

HARRY: I don't get to meet people like you very often.

PIPER: What kind of people do you get to meet?

HARRY: Dickheads mostly.

PIPER: No-one around here wants a coalmine, Harry.

HARRY: No-one will touch the forest. I'm looking at an area about sixty k's west of here.

PIPER: Why are you going to Kangaroo Island?

HARRY: So I can show you one of the most beautiful places on earth.

PIPER: You don't give up, do you?

HARRY: Never.

PIPER: I'm in a relationship.

HARRY: No worries. You'll be home in time for dinner.

PIPER: I've always wanted to see the Coorong.

HARRY: Get your stuff then.

PIPER: No.

SCENE FOUR

Dixon-Brown's apartment.

It is very late. Maybe three a.m. DIXON-BROWN, in her nightgown, opens the door to ANDY.

ANDY: I'm drunk.

DIXON-BROWN: Is that right?

ANDY: Can I stay?

DIXON-BROWN: That depends. Are you going to vomit?

ANDY: Probably.

DIXON-BROWN: Where have you been?

ANDY: Bar 66.

DIXON-BROWN: That's a gay bar.

ANDY: Yeah.

DIXON-BROWN: You've turned gay?

ANDY: I need to lie down in that room in there.

DIXON-BROWN: Not in there. Not on my sheets. [*Indicating the sofa*] You can lie down here.

ANDY: Could you turn the ceiling off?

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, Andy.

ANDY: I went with Mickey Chin.

DIXON-BROWN: Is he gay?

ANDY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: You want water?

ANDY: No-one tried to pick me up.

DIXON-BROWN: Disappointing.

ANDY: Why do you think that is?

DIXON-BROWN: Maybe because you're a screaming heterosexual.

ANDY: Is it that obvious?

DIXON-BROWN: Here.

She hands him water and pills, and watches him take them.

What did the doctor say?

ANDY: Oh, the doctor.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy?

ANDY: He told me my life is over. No, that's not true. I asked him how I could *make* it over, but he wouldn't play ball on that one. Even when I said to him, people bring their dogs to me and I put them down. Because that's the loving thing to do. That's the caring, humane course of action, Doctor Wynn. But he told me we had a long way to go before we got to that stage of the game.

DIXON-BROWN: How long?

ANDY: Oh, anything up to five years. Which is a long time. In dog years.

DIXON-BROWN: I wish I'd come with you.

ANDY: No, you don't.

DIXON-BROWN: Did you tell him about Grandpa?

ANDY: Of course I told him about Grandpa.

DIXON-BROWN: Told him what?

ANDY: The facts. That by the time Grandpa was my age, he'd lost all muscle co-ordination. He trembled. And then he went blind. Then he lost the ability to speak. And after a few more years he went mad. And still, there is no treatment.

Silence.

This is the reason I don't tell Piper.

DIXON-BROWN: Did you tell Mickey Chin?

ANDY: No. Why would I tell Mickey Chin?

DIXON-BROWN: He's your friend, isn't he?

ANDY: There is nothing anyone can say, Heather. Nothing. Not even *you* can think of anything to say.

You just stand there. And to be perfectly frank, that makes it worse.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm sorry. I just want to be there for you, Andy.

ANDY: You assume that this will help me bear the burden. Is that right?

This public announcement you're hell-bent on me making.

DIXON-BROWN: Not a public announcement.

ANDY: A private confession then.

DIXON-BROWN: I just think it would help to tell your friends.

ANDY: Help who? You think it will help *me*?

DIXON-BROWN: Yes. I think it will help *you*.

ANDY: Well, it won't. It will not lighten the burden. It will make the burden worse. It will make the burden heavier and harder. I have to lug around the weight of another person's misery in addition to my own.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm sorry, Andy. I really am.

ANDY: I'm sure you're sorry. I'm sorry as well. And everyone who eventually learns about my illness will be very sorry too. We'll all be sorry. So *terribly* sorry.

DIXON-BROWN: I wish I could be better.

ANDY: What an asinine thing to say—better than what?!

DIXON-BROWN: More comforting.

ANDY: Yeah, it's all going to work out in the end. Fuck. Off.

DIXON-BROWN: Okay.

ANDY: See, this kind of conversation just brings out the *idiot* in people.

And to think that the very person you're closest to could be so grotesquely inept at helping you—that's actually a reason for despair.

DIXON-BROWN: Maybe we should talk about this in the morning. When you feel better.

ANDY: I'm never gonna feel better. The gun's gone off, Heather. And I'm running as fast as I can towards blindness and gibbering dementia. I am never going to feel better. Do you hear me?

DIXON-BROWN: Yes.

ANDY: Can you understand what it means?

DIXON-BROWN: No. I can't really.

ANDY: Good. Good. Now we're getting somewhere.

ANDY has made his point. He exits.

SCENE FIVE

Dixon-Brown's office at the CAPE Institute. Big windows look out over bushland. The institute is attached to a small provincial university.

Lights come up to reveal DIXON-BROWN on the floor in a yoga pose.

She is wearing earbuds—listening to a meditation tape.

The desk blocks her view of the door.

There is a knock.

More knocking.

The door opens gingerly. HARRY pokes his head around the door.

HARRY: Hello?

DIXON-BROWN: Is that you, Alan?

HARRY: [*looking around, confused*] Hello?

DIXON-BROWN stands up from behind her desk, looking slightly discombobulated.

DIXON-BROWN: Sorry. Meditating. I've decided this is the only way to deal with my IT traumas. I'm not going to get stressed. I'm just going to breathe.

When I came in this morning, this [*computer*] said, 'Windows Memory Diagnostic Disabled'. It's not even a sentence.

HARRY: I'm Harry.

DIXON-BROWN: Pardon?

HARRY: Harry Jewell.

DIXON-BROWN: Did Alan send you?

HARRY: I'm Harry.

DIXON-BROWN: From IT?

HARRY: From Powerhouse.

DIXON-BROWN: Are you my ten o'clock? Come in. Sorry. My PA has just deserted me. She's decided to have her baby six weeks early.

HARRY: How insensitive.

DIXON-BROWN: Zero commitment to the workplace.

HARRY: Young people.

DIXON-BROWN: Who needs them?

HARRY *laughs*.

HARRY: If my computer said, 'Windows Memory Diagnostic Disabled', I could become quite ... irrational.

DIXON-BROWN: You call IT and they tell you to turn your computer off. And then turn it on again. They go to university for three years, these people, so they can tell you that.

HARRY: I just lie. I tell them I've already tried that.

DIXON-BROWN: Ah. But they know. They can tell from their end.

Heather Dixon-Brown. How can I help?

HARRY: I've come to talk to you about a project I have in mind.

DIXON-BROWN: Please.

She indicates he take a seat.

What sort of project?

HARRY: I want to launch a program to save the tiger quoll.

The phone rings. DIXON-BROWN puts on her glasses and looks at the display window to see who's ringing.

DIXON-BROWN: Sorry, it's Alan Dodd. The turn-on, turn-off man. Do you mind? I'll be one second.

HARRY *gestures with his upturned palm: 'Go right ahead'.*

[*On the phone*] Alan ...

No need to apologise.

...

No, I'd like to be here.

...

Yes. Say ten-fifteen.

...
Thanks, Alan.

She hangs up.

Alan.

Which means that you're Piper's quoll man. Of course!

HARRY *smiles*.

HARRY: That's me.

DIXON-BROWN: We have your dead quoll here in the lab. It's created quite a lot of excitement.

HARRY: As long as it's not the last one.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm sure there are one or two more out there.

Beat.

So you want to save the tiger quoll? You do realise they haven't been seen in the Otways for a decade. Not even as roadkill. Until you came along.

That's a pretty sure sign that the numbers are too low to be sustainable.

HARRY: According to the Dixon-Brown Index.

DIXON-BROWN: You've done your reading.

HARRY: I liked the sound of your index. Showed me you were living in the real world.

DIXON-BROWN: No point squandering your money on a creature that has passed the point of no return. I'm an ecologist. Not an environmentalist. Use my head, not my heart.

HARRY: Sounds good to me.

DIXON-BROWN: We have to be careful not to dramatise ourselves as saviours; snatching a poor little animal from the jaws of extinction. It makes us feel good. But we rarely succeed.

HARRY: But *sometimes* we do.

DIXON-BROWN: As I say, rarely. Species are like commodities, Mr Jewell. You should only invest in those that are going to give you a good return. In any case, I just don't approve of this 'charismatic fauna' push—making celebrities out of pandas and polar bears.

HARRY: What have you got against pandas?

DIXON-BROWN: They're far too cute. They take people's minds off the real challenge. We need to understand whole ecosystems.

HARRY: That's why I'm proposing a cat eradication program.

DIXON-BROWN: Good luck.

HARRY: A comprehensive survey of all the plants and animals. You could do that.

DIXON-BROWN: It's why we're here.

HARRY: Followed by habitat restoration. I want to see that forest restored to its former glory.

DIXON-BROWN: All very ambitious.

HARRY: I don't have a problem with ambition. Do you?

DIXON-BROWN: And how do you imagine I would fund this crusade, Mr Jewell?

HARRY: Through my company. Powerhouse.

DIXON-BROWN *appears not to know what he's referring to.*

Mining.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh. And what do you mine?

HARRY: Coal. Mostly.

DIXON-BROWN: Ah.

An institute committed to ecology accepting money from the biggest greenhouse polluters on the planet. Some people might think that was compromising, Mr Jewell.

HARRY: And what do you think?

DIXON-BROWN: I think it's dirty money.

HARRY: I know what you're up against. It's been my experience that most academics are glass-half-empty people.

DIXON-BROWN: Tell me about it.

HARRY: We need scientists to stop being gloom-and-doom merchants.

DIXON-BROWN: We need scientists to do the science.

HARRY: I thought universities were strapped for cash.

DIXON-BROWN: We are. But we're not guns for hire. My scientists are fully engaged with their own research. They can't just stop their important work to take up pet projects.

HARRY: Have you ever met a tiger quoll?

DIXON-BROWN: Not a live one.

HARRY: They're not cuddly. They're ferocious.

DIXON-BROWN: So what's the attraction?

HARRY: I grew up with them.

We sort of had one as a pet. Most nights after dinner we'd see him running along the roof of the milking shed and down the drainpipe.

One night we were sitting at the dinner table. He climbs through the window, onto my sister's shoulder, then down her arm onto the table. Helps himself to a chicken wing off her plate.

DIXON-BROWN: Cute.

HARRY: Two million dollars. Just to get you started. It's on the table.

DIXON-BROWN: This is not a casino.

HARRY: But we're both willing to take a risk. I can tell that about you.

DIXON-BROWN: Why do you care so much, Mr Jewell?

HARRY: Harry.

DIXON-BROWN: Why do you care so much, Harry?

HARRY: Did you grow up here?

DIXON-BROWN: No.

HARRY: Mum's people were sheep farmers and Dad's were timber cutters. I come from people who've always earned a living off the land. The greenies hate people like us. But my grandfather understood this forest. He respected it. He allowed the mystery of it to be part of his life.

DIXON-BROWN: So you *are* being sentimental.

HARRY: Perhaps.

He smiles.

Long pause.

I was happy when the tiger quolls were running about.

But I mean what I say. The world has changed. And mining has to change with it.

Longer pause.

DIXON-BROWN: How long are you in town?

A knock on the door.

That'll be Alan.

If we're very quiet, he might go away.

HARRY: What about your 'Windows Memory Diagnostic Disabled'?

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: Would you like to have dinner with me tonight?

HARRY: I'm on a six o'clock flight.

DIXON-BROWN: Cancel it.

SCENE SIX

The animal shelter.

It is late afternoon.

ANDY enters. *He is wearing boxer shorts. His hair is tousled.*

ANDY: Just stay!

PIPER appears looking definitely post-coital. She is wearing one of his t-shirts ('Vets Do It Better').

PIPER: I can't.

She picks up her possum and cradles it.

[*To the possum*] Hello, lovely.

ANDY: Why not?

PIPER: Your sister has arranged it. Some meeting.

ANDY: Take the car, then. I don't like you riding on the Great Ocean Road at night.

PIPER: [*pleased*] Andy, I've ridden a hundred thousand miles on that motorbike.

ANDY: Just take the car.

PIPER: Okay.

He puts his arms around her. They kiss.

ANDY: You are so ... *gifted*.

PIPER: Yeah, right.

ANDY: You *are*. That was unbelievably nice.

PIPER: High praise. Coming from you.

ANDY: That was right up there.

PIPER: Top hundred?

ANDY: Top ten. Easy.

PIPER: Who were the other nine?

ANDY: All with you.

PIPER: No, they weren't.

ANDY: Well, there was that very cute little nurse.

What was her name? Can't
remember, but gorgeous.
With a really beautiful—

PIPER: Once seven is seven,
two sevens are fourteen,
three sevens are twenty-one,
four sevens are—

ANDY: Twenty-nine.

PIPER: —twenty-nine. Twenty-eight! Brute.

ANDY (*the Brute*) embraces her and kisses her.

ANDY: Ring my sister and say you have a very urgent series of follow-up meetings which will go on most of the night.

PIPER: She already thinks there's something weird about us.

ANDY: Weird is good.

PIPER: Andy. What if I didn't go back to San Diego at the end of the year?

ANDY: I thought you were keen to try out your love potion on your American koalas.

PIPER: Sure. But what if—you know—I came back?

ANDY: You just want me for sex.

PIPER: Sure. I want you for sex. But—

ANDY: Pipe, we've always said, 'Two years'.

PIPER: What happens if one of us wants to extend?

ANDY: Your life is set on the most amazing course. Don't get stuck here.

PIPER: I love it here.

Beat.

ANDY: Sure. Okay.

PIPER: Maybe you don't see it anymore.

She looks out the window.

The kangaroos and wallabies that come boinging in, in the late afternoon. The rainforest. And the ocean just down the road. The old scribbly gum trees. Adorable little koalas. The freshest air anyone could ever breathe. And the people—so funny and kind. And real. This is paradise, Andy.

ANDY: [*teasing about the possum*] This is kidnapping.

PIPER: Don't change the topic.

ANDY: Its mother is probably beside herself.

PIPER: There's no sign of a mother. Anywhere.

ANDY: How many times did you get up last night to feed it?

PIPER: Five.

ANDY: You're a madwoman.

PIPER: We're good for each other. I'm sick of one day at a time. I love you.

ANDY: Piper.

PIPER: I'm serious.

ANDY: I'm not good for you.

PIPER: Why not?

ANDY: There's something wrong with me.

PIPER: Just say it. Say, 'I love you. I want to marry you and have babies and live in a house together.'

ANDY: I can't give you what you want.

PIPER: How do you know?

ANDY: I can't commit for the long haul, Pipe. I can't explain why. I'm not that sort of person.

PIPER: I'm not the woman you want to do it with. That's the truth, isn't it?

Beat.

ANDY: Some creatures survive perfectly well on their own.

A possum has all the instincts it needs to survive, you know.

PIPER: Like you. Mister Solitary.

ANDY: Yes.

PIPER: So I should understand that this relationship has no future.

He moves to embrace her.

Don't.

SCENE SEVEN

Dixon-Brown's apartment.

HARRY and DIXON-BROWN are seated at the table, drinking gin and tonics and enjoying each other's company.

HARRY: So. Divorced?

DIXON-BROWN: Not quite. I have the papers in there.

HARRY: Can't bring yourself to sign them?

DIXON-BROWN: Silly, isn't it? You know something? I went swimming on that stinking hot day last week. At Urquhart's Bluff. And when I

came out of the surf, I looked down and my wedding ring was gone. After twenty-two years.

HARRY: The fates have spoken. Do the paperwork.

DIXON-BROWN: I shall. Absolutely. This weekend.

HARRY: Any kids?

DIXON-BROWN: One son. Max. He's a skiing instructor in the Italian alps.

HARRY: Gee, that's tough.

DIXON-BROWN: He used to live with us here. It seemed like every morning he'd stride bare-chested into the kitchen with a different half-clad girl.

Then one morning I was making the coffee and he barrels in with two girls.

HARRY: Wow.

DIXON-BROWN: That was my husband's reaction. Green with envy. I said to my son, 'Max, maybe it's time you found a place on your own'.

But he didn't take any notice. It was my husband who decided to move out.

HARRY: When was that?

DIXON-BROWN: Three years ago.

HARRY: That sounds like your party story. What really happened?

DIXON-BROWN: I stopped wanting him.

HARRY: I don't know how people keep it going.

DIXON-BROWN: Neither do I. Would you believe I wrote X-E-S on my side of the bed? It was to remind myself to have sex with him.

There is a buzz from the intercom. DIXON-BROWN crosses to it.

PIPER: *[on the intercom]* Hi, Dix.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper. Come on up.

[To HARRY] Does this happen to you often? Complete strangers tell you their most intimate secrets.

HARRY: *[smiling charmingly]* You're not a complete stranger.

DIXON-BROWN: Tell me about your wife? Stephanie. Does she work?

HARRY: She used to be a primary school teacher. But that was a long time ago. She doesn't need to work. She's Clovis Carter's niece.

DIXON-BROWN: Sheesh. Is that how you got into mining? You married a Carter?

HARRY: No. I built Powerhouse from scratch. But Uncle Clovis did manage to muscle his way onto my board.

DIXON-BROWN: Is he as big a bastard as they say?

HARRY: Nah. He's a pussycat. You just have to tickle his tummy.

DIXON-BROWN *shudders*.

A knock at the door.

Should I steel myself?

DIXON-BROWN: You invited her. Probably.

She opens the door. PIPER enters. She is wearing a black cocktail dress. She is transformed.

PIPER: Hi.

DIXON-BROWN: You look ... amazing.

HARRY: Piper.

PIPER: Mr Evil.

HARRY *laughs*.

DIXON-BROWN: You didn't bring Andy?

PIPER: No.

DIXON-BROWN *gives her a look*.

I'll tell you later.

HARRY: Is this the vet?

PIPER: Yes.

DIXON-BROWN: My brother.

HARRY: Oh! Shit! Andy is your brother?

DIXON-BROWN: He is.

HARRY: Great guy. Amazing. Tough. Stubborn.

DIXON-BROWN: Rude.

HARRY: Rude. *[To PIPER]* He's your partner?

PIPER: No. We're just ships in the night.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, gawd.

They've been together for two years.

HARRY: Oh.

DIXON-BROWN: They met in Africa.

PIPER: Zambia.

HARRY: Doing what?

PIPER: Tracking wild dogs. Well, that's what I was doing. Andy was working with the Zambian Wildlife Authority.

DIXON-BROWN: Treating elephants. [*Pointedly to HARRY*] Those African wild dogs are endangered. They're on the Red List.

PIPER: But their population has made a big comeback, Dix. Case in point. That was a population way below five thousand. Virtually no sightings. But gradually, gradually they're coming back up.

HARRY: Okay. So you've had experience working with endangered animals?

HARRY and DIXON-BROWN exchange meaningful glances.

I didn't realise this was such a family affair. Champagne?

PIPER: Are we celebrating?

HARRY: We certainly are.

He pours champagne into her glass.

We're celebrating our friendship.

DIXON-BROWN: Cheers. To us.

They clink glasses.

PIPER: You're more chirpy than the last time I saw you. You both are.

HARRY: I had dinner with my daughter last night. You were right about the emotional roller-coaster of fourteen-year-old girls. I am now forgiven and my daughter has decided that I am the superior parent.

PIPER: And so begins a lifetime of competition between you and your wife.

HARRY: No. My daughter's just so excited about the tiger quoll project.

She wants to come down and volunteer—

PIPER: What tiger quoll project?

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: CAPE is going to oversee a project to save the quolls.

PIPER: Powerhouse Mining involved in this?

DIXON-BROWN: It's the biggest biodiversity monitoring program we've ever undertaken.

HARRY: We'll claw this species back from the brink.

PIPER: If there are any out there.

HARRY: 'If there's one, there'll be more.'

DIXON-BROWN: The issue—as I understand it, Pipe—is that they're hard to find. They're shy. Plus they're nocturnal and they can move quickly over vast distances in the forest.

I'm thinking we could base this on a scat analysis. Like you did with the dogs in Africa.

HARRY: Which means?

PIPER: Quolls use communal latrine sites.

HARRY: They all shit in the one place? Fascinating. So how would we find their poo?

PIPER: You'd train dogs.

HARRY: Like the ones at the airport?

PIPER: Except you'd have to train them to detect tiger quoll poo.

HARRY: But how do you get the poo—to train them?

PIPER: Ah. Good point. There are tiger quolls in captivity. In zoos.

HARRY: Right. So we buy a truckload of poo from the zoo.

PIPER: No, you bring in some live quolls. Keep them in an enclosure—and collect their scats. Nice and fresh. Then you train your dogs to sniff out the poo.

HARRY: It's very *basic* all this, isn't it?

PIPER: Mm hm. Then you take the dogs into the forest. Find the latrine sites. And you've found your quolls.

HARRY: But we need to know how many quolls.

PIPER: Oh, yes you do. So you do a DNA analysis of the scats. Because each animal has a unique DNA obviously—you can determine how many animals are using each latrine site. There might be twenty or thirty.

HARRY: And you'd compile a population census from there. Sweet.

PIPER: But of course you'd need to find five thousand quolls to make it worth your while. Wouldn't you, Dix?

DIXON-BROWN: Move on.

HARRY: I think what she's trying to say is don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

PIPER: Listen. There has not been a confirmed sighting of one of these animals in the Otways for ten years.

HARRY: Until I blundered along.

PIPER: One dead tiger quoll.

HARRY: And a massive project to find the remaining population.

PIPER: And to mine coal.

HARRY: We're not mining the forest.

PIPER: Okay. Destroying agricultural land, then.

HARRY: I give you my word, I'll do everything in my power to restore this forest to how it was when the quolls were running about.

And something else. The coal industry. Its days are numbered. Take the money now, while it's being offered.

DIXON-BROWN: We want you to run the project.

PIPER: No way!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Night. The Australian rainforest.

A tent is illuminated—a small intimate space in the vast blackness.

The sounds of a hot summer night: crickets and a couple of distant owls.

Inside the tent, two naked people are making love in silhouette. The sexual energy progresses from tender to frenzied; it peaks and then stills.

PIPER emerges from the tent, and pokes the fire.

PIPER: You do believe in global warming, don't you?

The man half emerges. It is HARRY. He is bare-chested.

HARRY: That is one thing you really should have checked.

He climbs out of the tent.

I think it's thirty-four per cent of greenhouse gas comes from burning coal.

Maybe thirty-seven per cent. I'll bring my notes next time.

PIPER: How do you know there's gonna be a next time?

HARRY: Because when you make love like that, you wanna do it again.

PIPER: Let me get this straight.

HARRY: I make a shitload of money.

PIPER: Is that supposed to be erotic?

HARRY: It's pretty erotic.

PIPER breaks away.

PIPER: This isn't going to work, Harry.

HARRY: Hey. Come on.

PIPER: I've made a mistake.

I'm not a very good judge.

The day after my dad died, I met this guy in a bar in Brooklyn. We had sex twice and then a week later he was on the news—holding up a convenience store.

HARRY: I'm pretty straight up and down, Piper.

PIPER: You're the most confusing person I ever met.

HARRY: [*pleased*] Really?

She punches him.

The gentle whoosh of an owl. They watch it as it flies over their heads.

PIPER: Oh, look. See?

HARRY: Whoa!

They watch.

PIPER: An owl!

HARRY: A barking owl. He's a beauty.

PIPER: It's a big one. You sure it's not a powerful owl?

HARRY: Maybe. Hard to tell 'em apart.

PIPER: I think the barking owl has vertical stripes in the front. This one's more horizontal. See.

HARRY: Yep. You're El Supremo. The archduke of the predators.

PIPER: This is a lucky sign. If he's in the forest, there must be enough prey to sustain him.

HARRY: He can eat a possum, that fella.

PIPER: He'll have a nest in a hollow tree close by.

HARRY: Good news for the quolls. Plenty to eat. Somewhere to live.

PIPER: I hope so.

I love the birds here.

The owl flies off.

Oh, there he goes.

HARRY: I'm not used to this either, you know. I've been married for fifteen years, remember.

PIPER: I know. I'm sorry. You end up with a loon on your first date.

HARRY: I end up with a mysterious, intriguing woman.

Beat.

PIPER: Oh, man. I knew this was a dumb thing to do.

HARRY: Piper, I think you need to give it a chance.

PIPER: That's ridiculous. You're my boss.

HARRY: Heather Dixon-Brown is your boss.

PIPER: I don't want her knowing about this.



*Hannah Day as Piper and Matt Dyktynski as Harry in Black Swan State Theatre Company's 2015 production of EXTINCTION.
(Photo: Gary Marsh)*

HARRY: I'm not tellin' her.

PIPER is relieved.

Look. You know what money means? It means a big life.

PIPER: I thought you wanted a simple life.

HARRY: That's why I love mining. It's big and it's simple.

You find minerals—dig 'em up—and sell them. By the shipload. So many people, they lead such myopic lives. They agonise about building a fence, paving a driveway. But I've built highways and bridges and railroads.

PIPER: Exactly. You're the problem.

HARRY: If you want to make a difference to 'the environment', you have to be rich.

This mine comes wrapped in a fifty-year plan. Return here when you're an old lady, Piper. You won't see a trace of the mine. The cats'll be gone. And the quolls will be back, ruling the forest.

PIPER: This is not about one Master of the Universe saving the planet. This is about everyone transforming the way they live.

HARRY: Yeah, sure. Change the light bulbs. Save your lunch wrap. Take your own scruffy bag to the supermarket.

PIPER: That's making a difference.

HARRY: Piper. Most people don't have time to be the idealists you want them to be. They're too busy paying off the mortgage and feeding their kids.

PIPER: Maybe you hang with the wrong crowd. I know heaps of people who spend their weekends planting trees or cleaning up riverbanks.

They hear the screech of a white cockatoo flying above.

HARRY: I love this place. I've been away far too long.

Long pause.

PIPER: Was your wife turned on by the cash?

HARRY: Not so turned on by me, apparently.

PIPER: Your friend Damien Gore—is he wealthy?

HARRY: He's a friggin' poet.

PIPER: See, women don't care about the money.

HARRY: What planet do you live on?

PIPER: They don't.

We live in such different worlds. That's why this relationship can't work.

HARRY: It's not a relationship. It's just sex.

PIPER: Oh well, that's clear, then.

HARRY: Piper!

PIPER: That's fine. That's good.

HARRY: Piper? I do want this to be more than just sex.

PIPER: It's only a month since you split up with your wife. You don't think it's a bit soon.

HARRY: There's no waiting period. It's not dental insurance.

PIPER: I just don't want you to have unreal expectations—that's all.

As soon as this project's done, I'm outta here.

HARRY: Is that the arrangement you had with the vet?

PIPER: Yep.

HARRY: And that's finished?

PIPER: Oh, yeah. He's made that very clear.

HARRY: [*hearing her wounded tone*] Ahhh.

PIPER: Let's set up the cameras. That's what we're here for.

HARRY: Andy's a good bloke. Hardworking, knows his stuff. He was probably right about putting down that quoll. I shouldn't have bawled him out.

But I know the type—knew him the moment he came through that door.

He's the kind of greenie who's always saying no. No dams. No mines. No roads.

You've got to believe in your own species, Piper. In the human capacity to achieve great things.

PIPER: This is a bit rich, don't you think?

Coming from you.

HARRY: Look, I am not some multinational corporation devouring the Amazon. I'm just a bloke who's come back home. I know what I'm doing here. What I don't understand is what you're doing here.

PIPER: In Australia?

HARRY: In this forest. Saving other people's animals? It's like you're burdening yourself with the responsibility of keeping everything alive—

PIPER: You think there's something wrong with me because I care about sick animals?

HARRY: It's the dying that worries you, isn't it?

PIPER: Maybe we should have breakfast.

HARRY: You're frightened of it.

PIPER: Everybody's frightened of it.

HARRY: I never think about it.

PIPER: Yeah well, you're a special case. You're invincible.

HARRY: How come you're so defensive?

PIPER: I am not!

Beat.

You make me defensive.

HARRY: I'm sorry. I won't mention it, again.

He holds up a frying pan.

Breakfast?

He busies himself.

Nothing like eggs and bacon fried on a camp fire.

PIPER: I don't do bacon.

HARRY: Of course you don't!

He reaches into his pack and produces a packet of bacon.

Just as well I brought some.

PIPER: When I'm with you, I become like this humourless ideologue.

Which I'm not with other people.

HARRY: Why do you think that is?

PIPER: People are not independent entities. We all exist in relationship with one another. You're a businessman polluting the planet.

HARRY: Why don't you just think about me as a great fuck? Then *in relationship*, you're a great fuck and we're all happy.

PIPER: [*affectionately*] You're a great fucker. That's what you are.

Let's put this [*camera*] up there. Can you reach that branch?

HARRY: I thought we were having breakfast.

PIPER: These cameras are triggered by movement. I put in ten at Stumpy Gully: I got one thousand photographs of Mitchell grass blowing in the wind.

HARRY: Oh, no.

PIPER switches on the monitor which shows what the camera is looking at—the forest late at night.

PIPER: I think we should try some of these cameras pointing back into the trees. Since the quolls are such good climbers.

HARRY: Good idea. How many of these gadgets have we got?

PIPER: Sixty.

HARRY: [*placing the camera*] Here?

PIPER: [*watching the monitor*] That way a bit. Left. Bit more. Bit more. Ah, too far. That's it. That's good.

HARRY *attaches the camera to a branch.*

HARRY: What have you decided about Beast?

PIPER: He's booked in to have the operation next week.

HARRY: Whoa. Great.

PIPER: Andy is very disapproving, of course.

HARRY: It's not his dog.

PIPER: That's right.

Beat.

Do you think I'm doing the wrong thing? Just delaying facing the inevitable?

HARRY: [*with a shrug*] I think you've got a lot of grief in that big heart of yours.

PIPER: My mother had this friend Betty, right? They were like best friends. For twenty-five years. Then Betty's son, Axel, jumped off the roof of his Upper East Side apartment. My mother goes, 'I can't deal with suicide'. Like Betty was way more equipped and didn't need her best friend to call or hold her hand. My mother just went AWOL.

I don't want to be that person.

HARRY: But you're not. You looked after your dad. For two years.

PIPER: I want to be a person who faces up to things. If you can't face death, you can't face life. Right?

HARRY: Caring for your dog, so that he can enjoy a few more years of life. That's not wrong. Or weak. That's a testament of love.

PIPER: I'm sorry, Harry. I just don't know what I'm doing here, anymore. I really did think Andy and I had something going?

HARRY: Why don't you go and see Beast?

PIPER: You mean, go home?

HARRY *pokes the fire.*

HARRY: Just check in for a week or so?

PIPER: Really?

HARRY: Why not?

PIPER: Just jump on a plane?

HARRY: Mm hm.

PIPER: What about my carbon footprint?

HARRY: We'll plant some trees.

PIPER: [*clearly excited*] I could just book a ticket?

HARRY: Yep. Do it. Book two. I'll come with you.

PIPER: Harry.

HARRY: Why not?

PIPER: You don't even know me.

HARRY: I wouldn't mind a few days in New York.

PIPER: You can't get everything you want, you know.

HARRY: Why not?

PIPER: Life isn't like that.

HARRY: Mine is.

Come on. Let's rustle up some breakfast.

SCENE TWO

The animal shelter.

ANDY *enters. He is wearing a white coat and carrying a travelling box containing a cat. He puts it on the table and peers in through a small hole.*

ANDY: How's it going, Schrödinger?

Beat.

That'll teach you to get involved with a snake.

He peruses the medicine shelf.

Tempazadine. Here we go. One tablet a day. Don't drive and don't use heavy machinery.

He peers into the box again.

Hey, look sharp. Your old man's out there and he's very keen to see you.

There is a knock at the door and DIXON-BROWN appears.

What are you doing here?

DIXON-BROWN: Thanks for that warm greeting. I've just driven three hours down the Great Ocean Road.

ANDY: I'm working.

DIXON-BROWN: You've broken up with Piper.

ANDY: News travels fast.

DIXON-BROWN: Mum told me.

ANDY: I draw the line at claiming coalmining is good for the environment.

DIXON-BROWN: Who's making that claim?

ANDY shakes his head and picks up the cat in the box.

Is that a cat?

ANDY: [*to the cat*] Are you a cat?

DIXON-BROWN: There is a cat in there, Andy.

ANDY: I am a vet, Heather.

DIXON-BROWN: You—the great advocate for our native flora and fauna—are patching up cats.

ANDY: It's a pet. He was suffering. I cured him.

He walks offstage to the reception area.

[*Off*] Hey, prof. Here he is. Old Schrödinger. One hundred per cent alive. Make sure you keep him in at night, okay?

ANDY returns.

DIXON-BROWN: I brought you some food.

ANDY: She was just my girlfriend, Dix. She didn't like *cook* or anything.

I am perfectly capable of looking after myself.

DIXON-BROWN: Mum sent you some strawberry jam.

ANDY: Very kind.

DIXON-BROWN: Tomato pickles. Peaches. Pâté. Cheese. That Persian fetta you like.

ANDY: There's a supermarket two miles down the road. I don't need food parcels.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy?

ANDY: I don't need *a carer*.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: We just thought you might need some cheering up.

ANDY: That's a joke. That really is.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: So whose decision was it, to break up?

ANDY: Not that it's any of your business.

DIXON-BROWN: Whose decision?

ANDY: I don't want to be with someone who would even contemplate environmental vandalism on the scale you two are planning.

DIXON-BROWN *splutters.*

DIXON-BROWN: We are restoring the forest! The disappearance of the tiger quoll is just the tip of the iceberg.

ANDY: I'll say it is.

DIXON-BROWN: We are monitoring the entire bioregion, Andy. One hundred and sixty thousand hectares. Ninety-two rare and threatened species.

ANDY: If you don't rein in your CO₂ emissions, you won't have a bioregion!

Nor any icebergs.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy!

ANDY picks up the box of groceries. As he swings around, the box slips from his arms and the produce scatters on the floor. He is shocked.

Here. Let me.

ANDY: Leave it.

DIXON-BROWN: I'll do it.

ANDY: Leave it.

DIXON-BROWN: I'll get a broom.

ANDY: [*shouting*] Leave it! Leave me alone. I don't want you here.

DIXON-BROWN: Don't treat me like this, Andy.

ANDY: 'Don't treat me like this, Andy.'

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, for godsake. Hundreds of institutions are funded by mining money.

ANDY: So? Are you stupid as well as corrupt?

DIXON-BROWN: Don't push it. Just don't. Okay? Don't. Because if I turn my back—

ANDY: So, how big's the cheque, professor?

During the next sequence, he repacks the box with the grocery items scattered across the floor.

DIXON-BROWN: Mind your own business. Here, let me do that, for godsake.

He lets her take over.

ANDY: See? You can't even be transparent with your own family.

DIXON-BROWN: Two point eight million dollars.

ANDY *gestures*: 'I rest my case'.

DIXON-BROWN *mimics the gesture*.

It's not a secret. It's on their website.

ANDY *repeats the gesture*.

Money has to come from somewhere—

ANDY: Not from coalmining, professor.

DIXON-BROWN: —as most grown-up people understand.

You want me to close the CAPE. Is that what you want? Then we can all bask in ideological purity. Andy, this is a massive project. One that will deliver major outcomes to the forest.

ANDY: There is no point delivering *major outcomes to the forest* if Harry Jewell keeps spewing crap into the atmosphere.

DIXON-BROWN: Every person on this planet wants to find a solution to the energy crisis, Andy. Not just you. Even the energy sector wants a solution.

ANDY: No, they don't.

DIXON-BROWN: Of course they do. You think you're the only musketeer in the story.

ANDY: Big Coal does not give a stuff about climate change.

DIXON-BROWN: And yet people have to be able to turn the lights on, across the globe. Not just here. Even you would have to acknowledge that.

ANDY: Oh my God, you really have bought into their propaganda.

Once again he drops an item.

Shit.

He clutches the side of the desk.

DIXON-BROWN: I don't know why we're having this fight.
Your splitting with Piper has nothing to do with fossil fuels.
I came down to see if I could help you patch things up.

ANDY: I don't want to patch things up.

Pause.

DIXON-BROWN: It's going to be very lonely up there on the moral high ground.

An automatic bell indicates that someone has come into the waiting room.

ANDY: Excuse me. I have a client.

ANDY moves towards the door. DIXON-BROWN catches his arm.

DIXON-BROWN: Listen, Andy, I'm gonna be blunt—

ANDY: No, I'm gonna be blunt—

ANDY closes the door to the waiting room firmly so they cannot be heard.

DIXON-BROWN: You need me. Don't do this. Don't drive me away.

He takes her arm and pulls her across the surgery so they can have this out in private.

ANDY: [*hissing*] I have a disease.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy, you're making a mistake.

ANDY: Did you hear me? I have a terminal illness.

DIXON-BROWN: I know that.

ANDY: A genetic disease—

DIXON-BROWN: I know.

ANDY: Which you don't have.

DIXON-BROWN: Look, Andy, I understand what you're going through—

ANDY: No, you don't. You have no idea. It's not happening to you.

DIXON-BROWN: But I live with it— Stop it, Andy. You're hurting my arm.

ANDY: I'm the one who inherited the mutation. Not you.

DIXON-BROWN: Yes, alright. It's not happening to me.

ANDY: No, it's not. It's happening in *my* body.

DIXON-BROWN: Yes, Andy.

ANDY: In every cell. Of my body.

DIXON-BROWN: Stop this! Hey. Stop it! Don't push me. Ow! Listen, you shithead, I'm the one who's gonna have to fucking look after you.

ANDY: Oh! Excuse me?

DIXON-BROWN: I'm sorry. I didn't mean—

ANDY: Oh, yes you did.

DIXON-BROWN: No, Andy, I didn't—

ANDY: What a burden for you.

DIXON-BROWN: That's not what I meant.

ANDY: What a rod for your back.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm sorry, Andy.

ANDY: Being sorry is totally fucking useless. I am not going to be your 'onerous responsibility'. I'm not playin' that game. Is that understood?

DIXON-BROWN: Andy!

ANDY: You are relieved of any obligations toward me from this day onwards. Let's make that very clear.

DIXON-BROWN: You need me—

ANDY: I do not. And another thing.

I don't have time to pander to social niceties. I don't have time to debate the pros and cons of university funding arrangements. You're destroying the forest and the earth and I will fight you until the day I can no longer stand up or form words that make sense.

I won't have a relationship with anyone who is prepared to be a pin-up girl for coalmining. And even though you're my sister, you have to know, you did this. You destroyed the relationship between us.

He ushers her out the door and slams it firmly.

Lights off on ANDY.

DIXON-BROWN bumps into PIPER who is just coming in. They both jump in shock.

PIPER: Dix!

DIXON-BROWN: Piper!

PIPER & DIXON-BROWN: [*together*] What are you doing here?

PIPER: I left my iron.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh.

PIPER: And my breadmaker.

DIXON-BROWN: Right.

PIPER: And some clothes.

Beat.

Are you alright?

DIXON-BROWN: [*she's not*] Yeah.

PIPER: Andy's not here?

DIXON-BROWN: He's in there.

PIPER: It's Wednesday. He usually goes into town on Wednesdays.

DIXON-BROWN *shrugs*.

DIXON-BROWN: I wouldn't go in if I were you. He's pretty agitated.

PIPER: What about?

DIXON-BROWN: Coalmining.

PIPER: He never lets up.

DIXON-BROWN: He's up against it, Piper. I can't—

PIPER: Andy's okay when he's *protesting*. He's the kind of person who's always saying no. No dams. No mines. No roads. But you have to step up to make things happen. You've got to believe in your own species.

DIXON-BROWN: Really?

PIPER: Oh. Just for your information, I told ... er ... Harry Jewell that I'm fully committed to the Powerhouse project.

DIXON-BROWN: When did you do that?

PIPER: Yesterday. I, he came with me ... we got the new cameras yesterday.

DIXON-BROWN: Sorry. I'm not following.

PIPER: The delivery arrived. Of the cameras we ordered? So we decided to get started. We went down to Stony Creek and installed them. The new software is brilliant. I can access the cameras on my own phone. The phone just goes bing whenever a camera detects movement. Bing! Up pops an image. Hopefully of a tiger quoll. See?

PIPER *shows* DIXON-BROWN *her phone*. *An image of the forest appears on the back wall.*

DIXON-BROWN: Is that the only problem between you and Andy?

PIPER: What?

DIXON-BROWN: Harry Jewell.

Beat.

PIPER: What do you mean?

DIXON-BROWN: I'm feeling uneasy—

PIPER: About what?

DIXON-BROWN: Listen, Piper, I feel responsible for talking you into this tiger quoll business—

PIPER: You didn't talk me into it.

DIXON-BROWN: You know I did. And it's just a wild goose chase.

PIPER: According to the Dixon-Brown Index.

DIXON-BROWN: According to any sensible person's assessment. We're not just talking about any apex predator with low densities. This is a population which could be non-existent here. It's madness throwing your best people at something like this.

Whereas addressing the causes of the decline of the manna gum woodlands. That's real. That has to be prioritised because there are demonstrable outcomes. Restore the habitat. Ensure the future of the koalas on the Cape.

PIPER: There is no more funding. You've made that abundantly clear.

DIXON-BROWN: For godsake, Piper. There will be money. I will find money.

PIPER: I'm not dropping the tiger quoll project.

DIXON-BROWN: This is not about your career. It's about your life.

PIPER: My life?

Oh, I see.

My life is fine. Andy is fine. The weather is fine. Yep. We're all just fine. Except that Andy does not want to have a relationship with me. He may not have mentioned this to you, Dix. But he has made that abundantly clear to me.

I have tried everything I can to make this work. I don't know what more I can do.

DIXON-BROWN: There is something you need to know about Andy.

PIPER: [*snapping*] What?

ANDY opens the door with a box which he shoves into PIPER'S arms.

ANDY: Here's your stuff. Off you go. Both of you. I have clients in here with sick animals.

PIPER: [*shouting*] What is the matter with you?! You are such an emotional retard!

ANDY slams the door closed.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: What time did you get back to town, last night? You and Harry?

PIPER: We didn't get back until the morning. We camped.

DIXON-BROWN: You camped out?

PIPER: In separate tents. Of course.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper. You've done great work setting this up. We'll find a couple of postgrads to take this on.

PIPER: Postgrads can't do this.

DIXON-BROWN: They can start next year.

PIPER: Next year? What are you talking about? This is not some lifestyle choice; some way of shoring up a salary for myself.

DIXON-BROWN: Nevertheless there are processes.

PIPER: Processes. Jesus Christ. This is our chance to get an important project up and running. And you're pulling the plug.

DIXON-BROWN: I'll clear it all with Harry tonight.

PIPER: Clear what? He doesn't want postgraduates running this.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm the director of the institute. I call the shots.

PIPER: The money is on the table.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm fully aware of that, Piper.

PIPER: He's going back to the Hunter this afternoon.

DIXON-BROWN: He's at a function with me and the vice-chancellor.

PIPER: The planet is emptying. But what do you care? You have to go to drinks with the vice-chancellor. What's it matter if we wake up and half the species on earth are dead? Because your index can't measure how lonely and lost the human race is going to be.

She is about to walk off.

DIXON-BROWN: You're not the only person who cares, okay?

PIPER: Is that so?

DIXON-BROWN: Piper, it would be very, very inappropriate for you to get involved with Harry Jewell. Regardless of the obvious professional compromise, it's never a good idea to get mixed up with a man on the rebound from an ugly separation.

PIPER: I can assure you, there is nothing going on with me and Harry Jewell.

SCENE THREE

Dixon-Brown's apartment. It is late at night.

The intercom buzzer sounds. It rings again. DIXON-BROWN emerges from her bedroom, pulling on a kimono.

She crosses to the intercom.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy? What are you doing?

ANDY: [*on the intercom*] Just passing by.

DIXON-BROWN: It's one a.m. What's up?

ANDY: [*on the intercom*] I'm looking at a very clean, very upmarket Range Rover.

DIXON-BROWN: And you felt you needed to share this?

ANDY: [*on the intercom*] Hybrid. Silver colour. Black trim.

DIXON-BROWN: [*to herself*] Shit. [*To ANDY*] Are you alright? I'll come down.

ANDY: [*on the intercom*] No. I know why you're so keen to help me patch things up with Piper. Because that gets you off the hook.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm coming down.

ANDY: [*on the intercom*] No. I wouldn't dream of crashing your party. Gotta dash. Got a cab waiting.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy?

She rushes to the window and sees the cab drive away.

HARRY appears in his boxer shorts.

Where did you leave your car?

HARRY: In your parking space.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, no.

HARRY: You told me to leave it there. Is it okay?

DIXON-BROWN: Does Andy know what kind of car you drive?

HARRY: Was that Andy?

DIXON-BROWN: Does he?

HARRY: No. Why would he?

DIXON-BROWN: That's alright, then.

Want a nightcap?

HARRY: I think I might go back to bed.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, come on. Just a little one.

HARRY: You sure that's okay? About Andy?

DIXON-BROWN busies herself pouring drinks.

DIXON-BROWN: I've had a lot worse boyfriends than you.

HARRY: That's nice to know.

DIXON-BROWN: Piper told me she took delivery of some cameras yesterday.

HARRY: Great.

DIXON-BROWN: I think she went down to install them last night.

Pause.

She's plucky, isn't she? Going into the forest on her own, at night.

HARRY: She won't come to any harm in the forest.

DIXON-BROWN: Still. Pretty vulnerable out there. On her own.

I'd be worried that some psycho might come into my tent.

Did you see your wife last night?

HARRY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh. I thought you were up in the Hunter.

HARRY: I was. Well, I was going to, but Stephanie cancelled on me. She's going through a tough patch. Her relationship isn't going so well.

DIXON-BROWN: Poor Stephanie.

HARRY: She's pretty mad with me.

DIXON-BROWN: Poor you.

HARRY: She'll get over it. Hopefully.

DIXON-BROWN: So, where did you end up last night? Ice?

HARRY: No. Thanks. I went to the hotel.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: I'm worried about Piper.

HARRY: Why?

DIXON-BROWN: She's been behaving very oddly. I don't know if you know—she and my brother have split up.

HARRY: That's no good.

DIXON-BROWN: No. It's not good. She really loves him, you know. He's a bit of a hero, my brother.

HARRY: I thought he was the one who pulled the plug?

DIXON-BROWN: I don't think so. He adores her. It's just your coalmine.

By the way, I've got a conference coming up in Queensland. On the Sunshine Coast. I thought you might have some business up there.

HARRY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: Are you sure? I'm staying at the Sheraton. I only have to work for an hour delivering a paper and the rest of the time I'll be lying by the pool sipping cocktails.

HARRY: Sounds lovely. But no.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: Why not?

Beat.

HARRY: I think you know.

DIXON-BROWN: No. I don't.

HARRY: You need someone, you deserve someone who wants to be—
who's ready for a proper relationship.

DIXON-BROWN: I don't think you should speak for me.

HARRY: Sorry.

DIXON-BROWN: You don't know what I want.

HARRY: Fair enough. I should speak for myself. And I'm not ready for
this.

DIXON-BROWN: This?

HARRY: This 'thing' between us. I'm not ready. I'm not comfortable.

DIXON-BROWN: Because ... you would prefer a younger person?

HARRY: Don't be silly. You're a very attractive woman.

DIXON-BROWN: But a bit old?

HARRY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: What then?

HARRY: Dix. For heaven's sake, I just told you. I'm not ready for a
relationship.

DIXON-BROWN: And who says I am? You're making assumptions here.
I'm five years older than you. But that doesn't make me predatory.
I don't *need* a relationship.

HARRY: Your age has nothing to do with it. I didn't even know you were
older than me.

DIXON-BROWN: Yes, you did. You asked me.

HARRY: I did not.

DIXON-BROWN: You asked me when I was at university. Because you
wanted to find out and I told you. I told you the truth.

HARRY: So?

DIXON-BROWN: So?

HARRY: What's it matter?

DIXON-BROWN: It matters to you, obviously.

HARRY: It doesn't. It really doesn't matter.

DIXON-BROWN: What does matter then? Since you are calling this off. I think. Is that what's happening here? You don't want to continue. You don't want to see me anymore.

HARRY: Dix. Come on.

DIXON-BROWN: I just want to know, Harry. I don't play games. If you are rejecting me, I'd like to know why. I think you owe me that. I think you need to say that you would prefer a younger woman—

HARRY: Dix, for godsake.

DIXON-BROWN: Of course!

You've never been with a woman who has pubic hair.

HARRY: Don't be so ridiculous. Of course I have.

DIXON-BROWN: But it's a bit off-putting.

HARRY: I should go.

DIXON-BROWN: Why? Because you can't stomach a woman who stands up to you? That can be a turn-off. I understand that. You're frightened of me. You are. You're shaking in your nylon socks.

HARRY: Oh, Dix. Come here. Come on.

DIXON-BROWN: No. I want to know. Is it Piper? Is that the problem? You're sleeping with Piper as well.

HARRY: No! Of course not.

DIXON-BROWN: Even though you just lied about the hotel.

HARRY: Dix—

DIXON-BROWN: Harry?

HARRY: I went into the forest with Piper last night.

DIXON-BROWN: I know.

HARRY: Did she tell you?

DIXON-BROWN: She told me you slept in separate tents.

Beat.

So why did you come here tonight?

HARRY: I'm sorry.

DIXON-BROWN: You're obviously quite smitten with Piper, then? Is that how she feels?

Beat.

Harry?

HARRY: I don't know.

DIXON-BROWN: Get out of here.

HARRY: Dix. I've been with the same woman for fifteen years. I'm not in the habit of doing this. I was never once unfaithful to my wife.

DIXON-BROWN: What do you want? The Victoria Cross?

HARRY: I thought you wanted the same thing.

DIXON-BROWN: To be humiliated? No. As it happens.

HARRY: That's not what I meant.

DIXON-BROWN: You thought I wanted to compete for your affections. With my brother's girlfriend.

HARRY: No.

DIXON-BROWN: No, you're right. You're a marketplace guy. What's the problem? Everything's about competition. Competition is good. Competition is invigorating.

HARRY: I made a mistake. I'm sorry.

DIXON-BROWN: Sleeping with me?

HARRY: No. Of course not.

DIXON-BROWN: What was the mistake then?

HARRY: Thinking that you were in the market for some ... not market. You know what I mean. You were, you were, up for ... just having a nice time together.

DIXON-BROWN: But I'm not having a nice time.

HARRY: No. It's taken a bit of a dive.

DIXON-BROWN: Go home. Do whatever you want. To make yourself feel better.

HARRY leaves, then turns back.

HARRY: Life is messy, you know.

DIXON-BROWN: Really.

HARRY: You cannot reduce what happens between people to numbers you record on a chart. I'm sorry to tell you, professor, you can't judge human feeling by algorithms.

DIXON-BROWN: No? And yet here you are: scoring ten out of ten for bastardry.

HARRY: You seem to have reverted to some nineteen-fifties idea of relationships. These days, when you have sex with someone, you are not automatically making a lifelong commitment.

DIXON-BROWN: You did not have sex with some stranger you met on a dating site. You had sex with Piper. I don't care what time zone you live in. That's a betrayal.

HARRY: Piper is a grown-up. It's not like I forced myself on her.

DIXON-BROWN: Yes. Well, there'll be repercussions for Piper.

HARRY: Like what?

DIXON-BROWN: The tragic part, my friend, is that I fell for your scam.

HARRY: What repercussions?

DIXON-BROWN: Mine the forest to save the forest. Like: let's make friends with Afghanistan by dropping bombs on them.

HARRY: And what have you ever done for 'the environment'? Really? Dumping shit on the rest of us from your professorial chair.

DIXON-BROWN: Ha. Nothing so high and mighty, I'm just like any other head of department—forced to sell out to any sleazebag who walks through the door with a fat wad of cash.

HARRY: Dix.

DIXON-BROWN: You're a con man, Harry. Congratulations. I fell for it.

HARRY: Fine.

He exits to the bedroom to get his clothes.

DIXON-BROWN checks her email on her phone.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, my God.

HARRY: What?

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, my God.

HARRY: What is it?

Beat.

Dix?

HARRY appears half-dressed.

DIXON-BROWN: Somebody has sent an email to all staff in our faculty.

'The CAPE Institute, headed by Professor Dixon-Brown, receives substantial research funding from Powerhouse Mining. The company's Chief Executive Officer, Harry Jewell, is having a covert sexual relationship with Dixon-Brown ... She failed to show due diligence ... jeopardising public trust ... The Board of Powerhouse will shortly act to remove Mr Jewell and charge him with misappropriation of company funds.'

HARRY: Bullshit. Who sent that?

DIXON-BROWN: Is it your money to give?

HARRY: Of course it bloody is. It's my company.

DIXON-BROWN: It's a public company.

HARRY: Which I founded. Which I run. In which I am the largest shareholder. Who sent that?

DIXON-BROWN: I don't know.

HARRY: Andy.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy?

HARRY: When was it sent?

Beat.

Dix?

DIXON-BROWN: Two minutes ago.

HARRY: Andy.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy would never do something like this.

HARRY: On account of being such a hero.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, gawd.

HARRY: Your brother is a fanatic. He would betray his own sister. For what? It's not going to stop us mining coal.

SCENE FOUR

Dixon-Brown's office.

DIXON-BROWN *is working on her computer. There is a knock at the door.*

DIXON-BROWN: Come in.

PIPER *enters.*

PIPER: You wanted to see me?

DIXON-BROWN: Do you know where Andy is?

PIPER: No.

DIXON-BROWN: He's not answering his phone.

PIPER: Is something wrong?

DIXON-BROWN: No.

What about you? Everything going along okay?

PIPER: Yes. Fine.

I know this is really bad timing, but I thought maybe I should take a couple of weeks off and go visit my mom.

DIXON-BROWN: Your mum, or your dog?

PIPER: Well ... both. I was thinking of leaving next week and when I get back I could start full time on the Powerhouse project.

DIXON-BROWN: Let me tell you something that will clarify your situation here. Last night someone—I don't know who—circulated an email to every member of staff at the university. It described a threat to the reputation of the university because a member of staff was having a covert sexual relationship with Harry Jewell.

PIPER is horrified.

PIPER: Did it name the member of staff?

DIXON-BROWN: Yes.

Beat.

I did something very unethical. And I trust you will not repeat this to a single soul. I came in, in the middle of the night, with the head of IT and we deleted the email from the system.

PIPER: So nobody read it.

DIXON-BROWN: Hopefully not.

PIPER: Oh, Dix.

Thank you.

DIXON-BROWN: It's okay.

PIPER: I was going to tell you. I was. I knew it was a mistake. I've been such an idiot. I knew it would compromise the whole integrity of the project. I'm so sorry. I don't know what I was thinking.

DIXON-BROWN: You were charmed by Harry Jewell.

PIPER: Who sent the email?

DIXON-BROWN: Someone who doesn't like us. But to be perfectly frank with you, I don't think this is the end of it.

PIPER: What happens now?

DIXON-BROWN: You'll need to step aside from the project.

PIPER: Oh, no.

DIXON-BROWN: I've had a conversation with the San Diego Zoo. They're keen to get you back.

PIPER: I see.

DIXON-BROWN: Since it's over between you and Andy, there's not a lot keeping you here.

There is a knock at the door. HARRY enters.

HARRY: Piper?

DIXON-BROWN: What's up?

HARRY: The board has just sacked me.

DIXON-BROWN: Harry.

HARRY: They had an emergency meeting. Clovis Carter moved that the project was an inappropriate use of company funds citing 'gross misconduct'.

DIXON-BROWN: What for?

HARRY: It gets better. Clovis rang me before the meeting, urging me to resign. He said if I refused, he'd urge the board to press criminal charges.

DIXON-BROWN: Criminal charges!? What the hell for?

HARRY: He claims I misrepresented the project as an environmental impact study connected to mining in the forest. Which he's pushing for, of course.

DIXON-BROWN: Is that what you did?

HARRY: No. I represented it as a public relations exercise. Which they bought. But the fact is, I am the only one standing between them and the forest.

DIXON-BROWN: Shit.

HARRY: Then, thanks to Andy, they get this email.

PIPER: What's Andy got to do with it?

DIXON-BROWN: Nothing.

HARRY: Oh, how wrong you are. The chairman of my board gets an email from someone saying that I am embezzling their money.

PIPER: What? Is that the same email?

DIXON-BROWN: No.

PIPER: Do you know about this, Harry? Someone sent an email to staff at the university saying you and I are having an affair.

HARRY: You and I?

He glances at DIXON-BROWN.

Which we're not!

PIPER: It's okay. She knows.

Beat.

DIXON-BROWN: What did the email to your chairman say?

HARRY: It said that you and I were having a covert sexual relationship—

DIXON-BROWN: Which we're not!

HARRY: It was just sex.

DIXON-BROWN: Oh, for godsake.

PIPER: You two had sex?

DIXON-BROWN: Once.

HARRY: Twice. Maybe ten times. I'm sorry, Piper.

PIPER: You had sex with *him*!?

DIXON-BROWN: It was a long time ago.

HARRY: It was last night. Which is *why* Andy distributed those emails. He came to the apartment, saw my car out the front, and two minutes later he sprayed his emails to all and sundry. Destroying the project and clearing the way for Powerhouse to mine in the forest. Great work. He's a great guy. Confirming everything you might think about 'environmentalists'—what utter naive dickheads they are.

HARRY *stands*.

DIXON-BROWN: Harry? Where are you going?

HARRY: Where d'you think?

HARRY *exits*.

DIXON-BROWN: Andy's place.

DIXON-BROWN *jumps up and grabs her coat. She exits.*

PIPER *is left alone. She grabs her stuff and runs after them.*

SCENE FIVE

The animal shelter.

Lights up on ANDY. He is placing two books in the bookcase when the bell dings in reception. HARRY barges in. He is in a fury.

ANDY: Oi!

HARRY: You piece of shit.

HARRY is carrying a rolled ordinance map. He lays it out on the table where he and Piper examined the quoll. He switches the light on.

ANDY: What the fuck are you doing? Piss off.

HARRY *takes the books out of ANDY's hands to hold down the map.*

HARRY: You've really screwed up this time.

ANDY: Out. Get. Out.

HARRY: She's your own sister. That's what I can't understand.

ANDY: What are you talking about?

HARRY *thumps his finger on the map.*

HARRY: This is where the board of Powerhouse had a permit to explore for coal. Forest. Right on the edge of the national park.

But I persuaded them, after months of sweet-talking, to shift here. Sixty k's west.

No forest. Done deal.

Till you blunder in.

ANDY: Me?

HARRY: You gave them the go-ahead to get rid of the man—the *one* man—standing between them and the forest. Can you hear the trees falling out there, Andy?

ANDY: You've got the wrong end of the stick, mate.

HARRY: Thirty million bucks. That's what this forest is worth to Clovis Carter and his mates.

ANDY: Harry?

HARRY: You think they're gonna walk away from that? And then! All their Christmases come at once.

ANDY: I don't know what you're talking about.

HARRY: You handed them the forest on a plate. Cousin Country Andy shoots off his pathetic emails.

ANDY: What emails?

HARRY: Yeah, right.

ANDY: Harry. I don't know shit about any email.

HARRY: Clean coal. It's the only way forward, Andy.

ANDY: What part of this do you not understand?

HARRY: It's the cheapest, most abundant fuel on the planet.

ANDY: It's the absolute dirtiest.

HARRY: And it's booming worldwide. / Sorry to have to tell you.

ANDY: [*ticking off the problems*] Toxic waste; acid rain; air pollution /

HARRY: / But we can change the way we use it.

We're investing massive amounts of money—

ANDY: In bullshit. In lies and bullshit.

HARRY: This was gonna make a difference. A real difference.

ANDY: If you cared one jot for that country out there [*pointing out the window*] you'd put your money into wind power.

HARRY: Solar, wind: I can't tell you how much I would like them to be the answer.

ANDY: But your hands are tied. I understand. You make an obscene amount of money—

HARRY: Renewables are never going to generate all your baseload power.

ANDY: People like you talk like you're the future. But you're the old world. Old privilege. Old money. Old greed.

HARRY: You don't know anything about me.

Beat.

Your wife runs off with your best mate.

You hit some innocent creature—

You want your whole life to be different. Stand for something.

ANDY: Well, stand for something, then.

HARRY: What do you think I've been doing? What do you think this was all about?

ANDY: I've got no idea, mate. You're the only one who knows the answer to that.

DIXON-BROWN *rushes in.*

DIXON-BROWN: [*to ANDY*] Are you alright? I thought he was going to kill you.

ANDY: As if.

Maybe silence?

DIXON-BROWN: I had a call from our IT department. They've traced the email.

ANDY: What friggin' email??

DIXON-BROWN: It was your wife.

HARRY: My wife?

DIXON-BROWN: Stephanie.

HARRY: What?

DIXON-BROWN: Your wife is Stephanie Jewell. Is she not? She emailed every single staff member in the science faculty.

HARRY *is trying to take this in. He is devastated. He nods.*

HARRY: Stephanie sent that email? How? How did she do that?

DIXON-BROWN: Everyone's address is on the university website.

HARRY: Wow. Why would she do that?

DIXON-BROWN: She hates you. You seem to have this effect on women.

HARRY: Are they gonna sack you?

DIXON-BROWN: Don't be ridiculous. I rang Alan Dodd.

HARRY: The IT guy?

DIXON-BROWN: I rang him immediately after you left last night.

HARRY: Like one o'clock in the morning?

DIXON-BROWN: One-thirty. I told him we had an emergency. And he had to meet me at the IT department.

ANDY: At half-past one in the morning?

HARRY: Did it work?

DIXON-BROWN: Turns out, it's pretty simple. He deleted the email from everyone's mailbox.

ANDY: And he can just do that?

DIXON-BROWN: Not without authority.

HARRY: But what if someone's read it already? The cat's out of the bag.

DIXON-BROWN: Harry, it's sorted. No-one has read it. Just me.

HARRY: So, you're off the hook?

ANDY: You have no shame.

HARRY: She has no shame.

ANDY: What about Piper?

HARRY: What's it to you?

ANDY: She's my girlfriend.

HARRY: You lost that race a long time ago.

ANDY: Meaning?

Long pause.

DIXON-BROWN: [to HARRY] You need to come with me, now.

HARRY *makes to exit through reception. DIXON-BROWN directs him out through the other door.*

This way.

Andy, Piper is in reception.

HARRY: You shouldn't have let her go, mate.

They exit.

ANDY goes to the door. He pauses. He opens the door. He stands there.

ANDY: Next?

PIPER enters. There is an awkwardness between them.

Mate.

PIPER: I've just come to say goodbye. I'm going back to the States. On the weekend.

ANDY: For good?

PIPER shrugs.

Back to the zoo?

PIPER: Via New York. See my mom.

ANDY: Started eating yet?

PIPER: Just the corn chips.

ANDY: Still the barbecue flavour?

PIPER: Cheese Supreme.

How's Bluey Nicholls' dog?

ANDY: I had to put him down.

PIPER: Poor old Bluey.

So. Are you going to sell the practice? Move to El Salvador?

ANDY: I'm sick.

PIPER: What?

ANDY: I have GSS. It's a disease.

PIPER: GSS?

ANDY: It's a brain disorder. My grandfather had it. Worse luck for me, it runs in our family.

PIPER: I've never heard of it.

ANDY: It's a bit like Parkinson's. Except ... it gets you when you're forty.

PIPER: How do you know you've got this thing? I mean, are you sure?

ANDY: I've had the test.

PIPER: What's the—?

ANDY: The prognosis? Six years. That's the average.

PIPER: Does Dix know?

ANDY: She's my sister.

PIPER: Why didn't you tell me?

ANDY: I only just found out.

PIPER: You just had the test?

ANDY: No. I ... I had the test when I was a kid. The truth is, it's only just started to show itself.

PIPER: But you've known for a long time?

ANDY: Since I was thirteen.

PIPER: And you never once wanted to tell me?

ANDY: I never once wanted to live my life as a dying man.

PIPER: We've been together for two years.

ANDY: I'm sorry.

PIPER: I'm not leaving.

ANDY: Yes, you are.

PIPER: No—

ANDY: You're going to the airport on the weekend.

PIPER: —I'm not.

ANDY: You don't need to prove to yourself that you're a good person.

PIPER: No, I don't. But you can't face this on your own.

ANDY: I've been facing it all my life.

PIPER: What will happen to you?

ANDY: You don't want to know.

PIPER: I do. I want to know. You can't keep this from me.

ANDY: Piper. Calm down.

PIPER: No. I can't. This is not fair. We've only just got started.

ANDY: And this is where it ends. You can't be a part of this.

PIPER: I won't be pushed away. I won't.

ANDY: Mate, you're a traveller. You're passing through.

He turns away.

PIPER: We're all just passing through.

ANDY: I don't want to look into your eyes and see pity.

PIPER: I have a pain in here [*her chest*] that you could think of facing this without me.

ANDY: This road, Piper ...

PIPER: This road?

ANDY: It just leads to sadness.

She looks out the window.

PIPER: Do you still not believe there are any tiger quolls out there?

ANDY: I'm the bloke who killed the last one. Remember?

PIPER's phone beeps. She looks down.

PIPER: Andy. Look.

On the monitor on the back wall, the camera catches a small creature staring into the frame. Its nose twitches. Its black eyes gleam. It is a tiger quoll. Its heart is beating.

THE END