

INT. BOXING TENT, OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - NIGHT

1958

In a smoke-filled boxing tent a meagre twenty male PATRONS cheer their local hero, FATTY NELSON, during the final moments of a fight. Some patrons drink beer from bottles in brown paper bags. SCORPION 38, a massive Aboriginal boxer, in boxing shorts, who's seen better days, easily evades the thrashing haymakers of the exhausted Nelson who is bare-chested and wearing trousers.

NELSON'S BACK-UP

Kill the boong!

Scorpion looks to HARRY CORBETT 60, referee and owner of the boxing troupe. Harry tugs his left ear, a sign for Scorpion to put Nelson away. Scorpion smiles, feints to one side then rips Nelson to the midriff, sending him to the sawdust floor.

The crowd moan as Harry counts Nelson out.

Scorpion smiles, self-satisfied, while KATE CORBETT 19, quickly unlaces his frayed gloves. ONE-ARM SNOWY 45, collects stools, buckets and fighting paraphernalia. BUTCH CORBETT 10, puts a record on a portable turntable.

Credits begin.

Jim Reeves's, *He'll Have To Go*, plays as the disappointed patrons leave and members of the Boxing Troupe, including boxers, MICK 27, and LES 21, pack up.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Patrons are still leaving the boxing tent which has been set up in the town reserve. The facade to the tent consists of a platform rigged on scaffolding (the boards), canvas backdrops with paintings of fighters, including a younger Scorpion, and ticket box.

An old bus, with *HARRY CORBETT'S BOXING TROUPE* painted on the side, is next to an improvised Hamburger Stall run by a local WOMAN 45, in grubby white t-shirt and tattoos. Two young BLOKES, drinking beer, wait to be served.

From the tent door Harry dejectedly watches patrons disappear into the night. One of the young blokes hurls his empty beer bottle at the painting of Scorpion on the canvas.

1ST YOUNG BLOKE
Friggin Boongs!

HARRY
Hey! Piss off!

2ND YOUNG BLOKE
Root yer boot, Kactus!

Les runs from the tent ready to take on the world. Now dressed in white t-shirt and stove-pipe jeans he shapes up to the young blokes, who bolt. The Hamburger Lady is left holding two hamburgers.

Les, out of Harry's eyesight, cheekily winks at Kate as he returns to the tent.

Kate, indicating the cash tin, shakes her head at the minimal takings. Her tough exterior masks a raw beauty. Harry pockets all the money.

HARRY
It'll be better in the next town.

Harry flips the Hamburger Lady two-bob who gives Harry and Kate each a hamburger.

LATER: Everything has been dismantled. The weary troupe load the equipment aboard roof racks and trailer attached to the Boxing Bus.

LATER: Les corners Kate behind the bus and attempts to kiss her. She cautiously checks no one's looking before dutifully returning the kiss.

EXT. BENCH - NIGHT

On a nearby bench, Harry whispers to an unrecognisable MALE. In the background, a car of young blokes, including the two from earlier, slowly circle.

INT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

The Troupe are ready to depart. Snowy, the driver, finishes his beer, throws the empty into an overflowing rubbish bin. It falls to the ground next to a discarded hamburger.

EXT. OUTBACK TOWN, MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Snowy, using one arm plus his knees, drives the bus slowly up the main street of the deserted town. He sings the Jim Reeves song. Harry and Kate are in the driver's cabin, the rest in the back of the bus.

INT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

Butch looks mournfully out a window at passing homes. He spots the car following.

BUTCH

Dad!

Snowy, spying the car in his rear vision mirror, plants his foot on the accelerator.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The car, with frenzied drunks, tailgate the bus. Suddenly the back window of the bus opens and Scorpion points a shotgun. The Driver swerves the car into a ditch.

EXT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

The bus, silhouetted in moonlight, speeds along a deserted outback road.

Credits end.

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD/RAILWAY LINE - MORNING

BENNY 30, a mean-looking knockabout, hitchhikes on an outback road running alongside a railway line. He wears a Digger's hat and carries a weathered Gladstone bag. The intense morning sun creates a shimmering effect. A Blue-tongue lizard scampers across sleepers.

EXT. OUTBACK DESERT - MORNING

Snowy sings, *It's A Long Way To Tipperary*. The bus speeds through the outback past a group of TRADITIONAL ABORIGINES carrying tribal weapons.

Some distance behind is BLUE TONGUE 19, an Aboriginal, dressed only in jeans and a silver heart shaped locket round his neck. His chest and upper arms bear recent initiation scarring. Across his back is tied a didgeridoo and small carry bag.

EXT. OUTBACK/RAILWAY GANG - MORNING

Benny passes a gang of WORKERS on the railway line. RONNY 35, sun bleached and the size of a haystack, leans on a shovel,

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD - MORNING

The bus speeds across the barren outback. A shotgun blasted sign reads, *DENTON, 50 miles.*

INT./EXT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

SNOWY drives. Harry, asleep in the passenger seat, snores. On his lap is a paperback of *Peyton Place*. Kate, in the middle, holds a transistor radio which she moves to pick up the reception. It plays rock'n'roll music.

Snowy sees Benny in the distance. Be-bopping to the music Snowy heads straight for Benny. Kate anxiously glances at Snowy.

Benny, watching the bus approach, sticks his thumb out.

EXT. OUTBACK/RAILWAY GANG - MORNING

The Railway Workers watch. Benny sees the bus veer towards him.

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

Snowy smiles and hits the accelerator.

EXT. OUTBACK/RAILWAY GANG - MORNING

Benny freezes.

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

At the last moment Kate grabs the steering wheel and avoids Benny who simultaneously jumps for safety.

Harry wakes with a start. Kate glares at the laughing Snowy.

EXT. OUTBACK/RAILWAY WORKERS - MORNING

The Railway workers abuse the bus, none more so than Ronny.

INT. BOXING BUS CABIN - MORNING

Harry smiles and continues reading.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF DENTON - MIDDAY

The bus passes a shotgun-blasted sign: *Welcome to Denton, population 2000.* 1999 is scribbled over the 2000.

EXT. DENTON RECREATION AREA - AFTERNOON

The Troupe erect the boxing tent and facade. Snowy competently swings a sledge hammer one hand while Butch holds the stakes for him.

Kate, helping Les with the boards, notices Harry walking towards the town.

Scorpion, sweating profusely and exhausted, lies in the shade. Kate, concerned, looks at Snowy who shrugs his shoulders.

INT. DENTON PUB, MAIN BAR - MIDDAY

Benny enters a classical outback pub. A horse-shoe bar is partitioned into male and female bars. A sign displays, *whites only.* Half a dozen LOCALS drink in the main bar. A solo WOMAN 35, drinks in the Lady's Lounge.

Benny ambles to the bar. The pub quietens. RANKIN 30, at a table, elbows VINNIE 30 as Benny empties his pockets on the bar. The publican, BOB 45, notices Benny's parole papers and calluses on his knuckles.

BOB

(quietly)

If you're on the Blackfellow's Act I can't serve you.

BENNY

Lemonade.

RANKIN

Lemonade! She wants a lemonade.

BENNY

Dash of raspberry.

RANKIN

With a bow.

Vinnie shrieks with laughter. The woman appears at the bar, smiles at Benny who winks.

BENNY

Got a room?

BOB

Five bob a night

(Benny nods)

In advance.

Benny carefully sorts five separate shillings. Bob gets a key from the key-board as Rankin and Vinnie stand either side of Benny.

Vinnie opens Benny's bag, playfully removes a skipping rope. He freezes when Benny glares at him.

RANKIN

You a boxer?

Benny explodes with a short jab to the midriff, stiffening Rankin. Benny turns to Vinnie who backs away. Bob watches with interest. Benny takes his bag, heads for the stairs leaving the onlookers flabbergasted.

Harry enters. Curious eyes check him over. He surveys the talent, ambles to the bar. Bob pours him a beer.

BOB

Harry Corbett. I must be a year older.

Harry puts five quid on the counter.

HARRY

Set 'em up.

Bob pours drinks for the appreciative customers.

Scorpion enters, obviously sick. The locals bristle as Scorpion indicates he wants a beer.

HARRY

Another beer.

BOB

You know better than that, Harry.

(to Scorpion)

I don't want any trouble from you.

Harry holds his hand out. Scorpion removes a card from his pocket. Harry shows the card to Bob.

BOB
Honorary White. What's that mean?

HARRY
Can go where he likes now. And drink.

Vinnie and Rankin scoff.

BOB
Not in here he can't.

SCORPION
Keys, Boss.

Harry tosses Scorpion keys. Scorpion stumbles as he catches them. Harry indicates for Scorpion to leave. He does.

VINNIE
Canvasback!

HARRY
None of you could beat him.

VINNIE
If he were any good he'd be fightin' main events.

RANKIN
Instead of king hittin' drunks.

HARRY
Put your money where your mouth is.

Harry's broad smile is a challenge, but there are no takers.

INT. DENTON BAKERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Kate enters the bakery, removes two loaves from a rack. She carefully counts her money. A GIRL serves.

KATE
Interested in boxing?

The girls eagerly nod. Kate hands her a flyer.

A sign on the counter displays: *Yesterdays cream cakes, 3d a box.* Kate checks her money and nods to the girl who fills a box with stale cream cakes.

A nose pressed against the window startles Kate. Blue Tongue eyes the cakes. His hair is matted, long and wild. Blood seeps through his initiation scars. Strapped to his back is the didgeridoo and bag.

SHOP ASSISTANT
Get away! Get away!

EXT. DENTON BAKERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Kate exits with bread and the cakes. Nearby sit three fringe-dwelling ABORIGINES. Blue Tongue watches Kate who smiles. His Face warmly lights up. She offers him a cake.

The girl observes through the window.

Blue Tongue mistakenly takes the entire box, continues smiling.

An ABORIGINAL WOMAN grabs a cake from the box. The others descend leaving Blue Tongue with an empty box. He offers Kate the empty box.

INT. DENTON BAKERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Kate reenters the shop. The girl immediately removes the cake sign from the counter. Kate snatches the flyer from the counter.

EXT. DENTON BAKERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Kate angrily exits the shop.

An ABORIGINAL MAN ritualistically dabs cake-cream handprints over the Aboriginal Woman. The Aborigines shriek laughing. Kate and Blue Tongue laugh at each other.

A police car approaches. Kate looks for Blue Tongue but he's disappeared.

EXT. DENTON PUB, BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Bob and the woman watch the experienced Benny skipping.

BOB
You're Benny Sykes, the boxer.

Benny ignores him.

BOB

Interested in making some easy money?

Benny stops, smiles. Bob grins.

BENNY

Long as I get paid...in advance.

Bob nods. Benny tosses Bob the skipping rope.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

A moderate crowd have gathered outside the boxing tent, including the Bakery Girl and Railway Workers, with Ronny the centre of attention ready to take on the world.

The boxers, dressed in boxing gear and gowns, are on the boards alongside Harry with microphone and Snowy who beats the drum. Kate works the ticket box.

Harry acknowledges Bob and his group from the pub. The fringe-dwelling Aborigines, including Blue Tongue, arrive to hostile glances from the white crowd.

Blue Tongue is impressed by Scorpion who impassionately stares straight ahead.

Harry holds a pair of boxing gloves high in one hand.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove? Who'll take a
glove?

There is no reaction from the crowd. Harry glances at Snowy who gives the drum a double beat.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove?

Les observes Blue Tongue wave to Kate who smiles. An ONLOOKER 40, pushes his way to the front.

ONLOOKER

Glove? That's not a glove! It's a bloody
mitten!

Les and Mick annoyingly glance at the Onlooker.

HARRY

Ladies and Gentlemen, come in and watch our boxers take on all comers in the ring of life.

ONLOOKER

He thinks it's a ring, the old Fool! It's a bloody square!

The crowd laugh with the Onlooker. Snowy beats the drum harder.

HARRY

A five pound purse to anyone who goes three rounds with one of our boys.

Mick and Les pose boxer style. They've been doing this a long time and know how to react to Harry's comments.

ONLOOKER

And they fight for purses and belts. Aren't they ladies' accessories?

The Onlooker's comments are causing agitation among the crowd. Harry rolls his eyes at Snowy, implying *there's always one*.

At the back of the crowd Butch plays chasy with an Aboriginal BOY the same age.

HARRY

Five bob a ticket. Who'll take a glove?

ONLOOKER

I will, if you throw in the other one...you old fool.

HARRY

Next time you see your missus, Sport, tell her I want me undies back?

The Crowd laugh and jeer the Onlooker.

ONLOOKER

Why, are they the only pair you've got?

HARRY

Who'll take a glove? All you have to do is go three rounds with Mick or Les and you'll take home three quid for the little lady.

ONLOOKER

I'd want more than three quid to go home
to my missus.

The crowd roar laughing. Harry attempts to ignore the
Onlooker.

HARRY

And if you wanta chance your luck with
Scorpion you might get to take home ten
quid.

Scorpion stands still and proud, despite appearing sick.

The LOCAL CONSTABLE appears. Blue Tongue carefully moves out
of his eyeline. Ronny winks at Kate but she ignores him.

ONLOOKER

What if they lose?

HARRY

Then you get the experience.

ONLOOKER

If experience was worth anything we'd all
be millionaires.

At the back of the crowd Harry notices an elderly WOMAN holding
a sign: *SAVE OUR CHILDREN - BAN BOXING*. *She is incongruous in
her lone protest but Harry is momentarily thrown by her
foreboding presence.*

HARRY

Give it a rest, Sport. Sorry, Ladies and
Gentlemen, you know what it's like with
some idiots, the ceiling has a leak,
there's no grain in the silo...

ONLOOKER

Yeah, you'd know, you dill.

Les angrily points at the Onlooker.

LES

If you were any more stupid you'd have to
be watered twice a week.

ONLOOKER

Get down here and say that, Pickle! Any hero can fight in the ring with a bloody chaff bag on either hand!

HARRY

This bloke's depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

The crowd laugh. Some push the Onlooker away. The Onlooker thumbs them as he leaves. The crowd hiss. The LOCAL CONSTABLE enjoys the banter.

ONLOOKER

(shouting)

Not much to show for a million years of evolution.

RONNY

(excited)

You've got me. I'll fight 'em all for a kiss from the little lady.

KATE

No thank you!

Ronny climbs onto the boards.

LES

Give him to me, Boss.

HARRY

What's your name, Lad?

RONNY

Dynamite.

HARRY

Are you a Protestant or a Catholic, Dynamite?

RONNY

(winking at Kate)

I'm a convertible, mate.

(blessing the crowd)

In nomine patre...I can beat you at dominoes. Oh no you can't. Boom.

The crowd erupt.

HARRY

Well, Dynamite, you get to fight Catholic Mick here.

Les, disappointed, glares at Ronny.

RONNY

Who're you looking at, you poofter?

Les attempts to jump into Ronny but Harry separates them. The crowd cheer. Snowy beats the drum.

HARRY

Who's gonna be next up on the boards?
Who'll pit themselves in a gladiatorial contest, test their skills in the sawdust amphitheater? We'll make the next fight four quid.

The group of Aborigines push Blue Tongue forward. Blue Tongue attempts to retreat but they won't let him.

OLD ABORIGINAL WOMAN

This one, Boss, Bluey. You give him four quid.

HARRY

I'll give him four quid if he goes the distance, Sister.

Blue Tongue tries to keep his back to the Constable. When he notices the Constable is laughing along with the crowd he relaxes and smiles at Kate who shakes her head for him not to fight. Les bristles.

LES

I'll fight him.

HARRY

Come up here, Bluey.
(The Aborigines assist Blue Tongue)
You been in the ring before?

The Aborigines erupt into a dance of pretend boxing. Blue Tongue does the same on the boards.

HARRY

How old're you, Lad?

Blue Tongue holds his hand out head high and winks at Kate

BLUE TONGUE

This old.

HARRY

Where you from, Bluey?

Blue Tongue looks to his group. They all point in different directions. Blue Tongue points north and south.

BLUE TONGUE

That way, Boss.

HARRY

Tonight you will see the warrior from Never
Never land, where trees shed their bark
instead of leaves, where the biggest bird
can't fly.....

(Blue Tongue imitates an emu)

Tonight ladies and gentlemen, you will see
a boy become a man, a real live initiation
ceremony. You will see...Blue Tongue
here fight the bodgie from Woolloomooloo.

The drum reflects the moment. Blue Tongue imitates a lizard.
The Aboriginal group cheer wildly.

HARRY

Now the big one. Who'll fight the
greatest tent boxer in the land, the one
and only, the maestro himself, the Black
Scorpion?

RONNY

(indicating Les)

I thought this goose was supposed to be the
best!

No one shows interest. Scorpion glares at the crowd

HARRY

What, no hay left in the loft, no coins in
the fountain?

Benny, head down, stands at the back of the crowd.

BENNY

I'll fight him.

Harry attempts to see who Benny is but Benny stares at the ground.

HARRY
(uncertain)
Ah, okay...

The crowd murmur.

BOB
I've got five hundred quid here that say
this bloke goes the distance with the Abo.

The crowd are astonished at the mention of five hundred. Snowy notices Benny's hands are bandaged ready to fight. He tries to attract Harry's attention but Harry purposefully ignores him.

HARRY
You can have even money he goes the
distance or threes he wins. What'll it
be?

KATE
Dad!

Harry indicates not to worry. Bob, aware Snowy's seen the bandages, quickly walks forward, hands money to the Constable.

BOB
Threes for a win.

Harry walks along the plank to Scorpion. Snowy and Kate indicate for Harry not to accept the challenge. Harry looks Scorpion squarely in the eyes. Scorpion drops his eyes. Harry shakes his head.

HARRY
As much as I'd love to take your money, Bob,
tonight I'm gonna let you off the hook.
(Kate and Snowy are relieved.)
But come this time next year...

BOB
Two's. I'll take two's for a win.

HARRY
Sorry.

RANKIN

Yer black coward. Gutless. When it comes to the crunch your mob always turns it up.

VINNIE

And yer sheilas are fulla syphilis.

Snowy indicates to Scorpion not to tumble in.

OLD ABORIGINAL WOMAN

He'd know, this one. Always sneaking into our camp.

SCORPION.

Take it. I'll fight him.

HARRY

Two's it is, for a win only.

Snowy bangs the drum in disgust. The Old Aboriginal Man waves money.

OLD ABORIGINAL MAN

I'll back Scorpion. Scorpion can walk on burning sand. Can white fella do that, ha, ha, ha...?

He mimes a white fellow barefoot on burning sand. Vinnie holds up money.

EXT. BEHIND BOXING BUS - NIGHT

Harry slips the Onlooker a ten shilling note.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Inside the tent, people ring the mat which is surrounded by sawdust. Kids sit at the front. Many adults drink beer from bottles wrapped in newspaper.

Butch holds the back of the tent up for the Aboriginal boy to crawl under. Other Aboriginal KIDS follow.

Harry, whistle round his neck, indicates sawdust on the Aboriginal boy's jumper to Kate.

KATE

Where's your ticket?

The Aboriginal boy unsuccessfully searches his pockets.

ABORIGINAL KID
Musta dropped it.

LOCAL
Throw him out.

Kate bends and 'picks' up a ticket, gives it to the boy.

KATE
Don't loose it again.

The boy flashes his brilliant white teeth. Kate winks at Butch who's sitting among the Aborigines. Blue Tongue grins at Kate.

Snowy, with stop watch round his neck, gloves the bare-chested Ronny.

Kate acts as a Second for Mick. She laces his gloves and towels him down in preparation for the fight.

Harry indicates for the fighters to come to the centre.

RONNY
Armageddon, brother....
(to Les)
Then you, you poofter.

Mick obliges by going to the center but Ronny charges Mick who sidesteps. Ronny crashes through the audience.

The audience assist Ronny to his feet. Ronny cocks his fist, swings it round and round and wildly runs at Mick, who again sidesteps, but clocks Ronny to the side of the face. Ronny hits the mat, face down, unconscious. Snowy shakes his head.

Mick raises his arms and puts one foot in the middle of Ronny's back. Blue Tongue roars laughing. The crowd cheer. The kids go wild and Harry holds Mick's hand aloft.

HARRY
(aside to Mick)
Couldn't you have carried him for a bloody round?

Snowy and Mick drag Ronny away by the trouser cuffs.

HARRY

Yes folks, Dynamite here's a bit like the window cleaner who stepped back to admire his own work.

Kate watches Les professionally warm up.

Snowy assists Blue Tongue but Kate indicates for Snowy to prepare Les. She goes to Blue Tongue's corner. Les is disappointed in the switch.

Kate holds the gloves for Blue Tongue. He smiles, awkwardly puts his hands into the gloves backwards.

KATE

You've never fought have you?

BLUE TONGUE

Hah, my mob invented these.

She frowns, pulls them off, puts them on properly.

Harry indicates for Les and Blue Tongue to come to the centre. Les races in. Blue Tongue backs in, smiling at Kate.

HARRY

Three two minute rounds. No hitting below the belt. Shake hands and come out fighting.

Snowy rings the bell. Les immediately hits Blue Tongue in the face with a flurry of punches sending Blue Tongue into the crowd. They push him back onto the mat. Blue Tongue smiles at Les who hits him with another flurry of punches.

Kate cringes.

Harry indicates for Les to carry Blue Tongue, make the fight last longer. However, Les charges. Blue Tongue deftly steps to the side causing Les to slip. The Aborigines laugh and jump around. Blue Tongue smiles at Kate who closes her eyes expecting the inevitable.

Furious, Les chases Blue Tongue but due to Blue Tongue's deftness is unable to land a blow. Blue Tongue trips backwards. Les pounds him to the floor and continues hitting. Harry blows the whistle, quickly stepping between them. He puts the count on Blue Tongue who's unaware of what a count is. The Aborigines scream for Blue Tongue to get up.

Blue Tongue sits, smiling. Harry looks at Snowy who prematurely rings the bell. The whites boo. The Aborigines cheer.

Kate helps Blue Tongue to his corner. Les glares at Snowy who nonchalantly hands him a drink bottle.

The Old Aboriginal Man shows Blue Tongue how to throw a flurry of punches.

Snowy rings the bell and Les charges. Blue Tongue ducks away. The Aborigines cheer. Again Les charges but Blue Tongue evades. The crowd egg Les on. Les traps Blue Tongue, hits him relentlessly but Blue Tongue absorbs the onslaught.

KATE

Go down. Go down and stay down.

Les reacts by hitting Blue Tongue harder. Blue Tongue doubles over. The Aborigines boo. The whites cheer. Harry sends Les to his corner and puts a count on Blue Tongue.

HARRY

Six...Seven...

The Aborigines scream for Blue Tongue to get up.

HARRY

...Eight...Nine...

Blue Tongue looks at Scorpion whose face is expressionless. Blue Tongue gets up, still smiling. Les sets himself to finish Blue Tongue.

OLD ABORIGINAL MAN

(screaming in dialect)

Fight! Fight back!

Blue Tongue throws a round arm punches taking Les by surprise and forcing him back. The Aborigines go wild and the crowd scream louder for Les. Harry glances at Snowy, indicating Blue Tongue may have talent.

Blue Tongue continues throwing punches but Les easily evades them and rips Blue Tongue to the chest causing Blue Tongue's scars to bleed.

Les grins at Harry, indicating he's about to finish Blue Tongue. Harry tugs his right ear, signaling Les to throw the fight. Les

angrily gestures but Harry is adamant. The crowd are none the wiser.

Blue Tongue throws round arm haymakers which Les easily evades. He allows one to hit him on the chin then falls to his knees. Harry puts a count on Les who stays on his knees despite the white crowd urging him to get up. The crowd boo.

HARRY

(quickly)

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
eight, nine, ten. You're out.

He holds up Blue Tongue's arm. The Aborigines go berserk to the extreme disappointment of the whites. The bakery girl is mortified. Kate smiles warmly at Harry who winks. A disappointed Les walks away, past a snoring Ronny.

HARRY

It's four quid to Blue Tongue. That ought
to put you through school, Bluey.

The Old Aboriginal Man takes the four quid off Harry and the group gather round him. Blue Tongue smiles at Kate who shakes her head disbelievingly. The Old Aboriginal Man holds the four quid up.

OLD ABORIGINAL MAN

Scorpion to win at five to two?

Rankin covers the bet.

Scorpion moves to his corner and Benny, head covered by a towel, sits on the stool next to Snowy. Bob pushes Snowy away.

BOB

I'll look after him.

Snowy glares at Bob. Harry indicates for Snowy to go to Scorpion's corner.

A young CONSTABLE enters, acknowledges the Local Constable before observing the crowd. He edges towards Blue Tongue.

Benny removes the towel from his head, grins. Snowy hardens at the recognition of Benny. Snowy whispers to Harry who immediately goes to Benny and the smiling Bob.

HARRY

Bet's off.

BOB
(looking at the Local Constable)
I don't think so.

Vinnie and Rankin block the tent entrance.

BOB
Or we'll tar and feather the lot of you.
(indicating Butch)
Starting with the Runt.

The young Constable moves among the crowd, whispers to the Local Constable who looks to where Blue Tongue was. Kate looks for Blue Tongue but he's disappeared.

HARRY
You set me up.

BOB
You've been doing the same thing for years.
It's just caught up with you, Harry.

Snowy prepares Scorpion to fight.

HARRY
A three round contest between the one and only Black Scorpion, winner of three hundred and fifty-one fights, and the challenger, Benny 'Death Adder' Sykes...

Benny drops his gown revealing a death adder tattooed across his chest. The crowd hush.

HARRY
...ex Australian and Commonwealth
Light-heavyweight Champion.

The crowd cheer. Benny, the consummate professional, walks straight to the centre. Scorpion slowly approaches. As Harry gives instructions to the boxers the crowd increase their support for Benny.

Benny opens with a flurry of punches that hit Scorpion hard, but Scorpion stands his ground. Bob smiles at a concerned Harry.

Les and Mick stands next to Kate and barrack loudly for Scorpion.

SNOWY

Use your feet more! Move!

Scorpion is hit hard to the jaw and clings to Benny.

BOB

Separate them!

Harry allows them to wrestle. Benny pulls free and lets fly with a flurry of short jabs to the midriff. Scorpion doubles over and Benny smashes him hard to the side of the face.

The bell rings and a dejected Scorpion ambles to his corner. Snowy furiously works on him with Mick and Les encouraging.

Benny sits in his corner breathing evenly and staring at Scorpion. He declines any assistance from Bob.

The bell rings and Benny races to the centre. Harry indicates for Scorpion to meet in the centre which he slowly does. Harry steps back and they both throw punches.

Benny wears Scorpion down. A hard right sends Scorpion to his knees. Benny continues punching. The Aboriginal Kids gloomily watch. Harry immediately points Benny to a neutral corner but Benny wants to continue. Harry, applying the count, stands between Benny and Scorpion.

HARRY

One...two...Three...four...five...

Scorpion is still on his knees. He puts one foot on the ground.

BOB

You're slowing the count!

HARRY

Six....seven....

Scorpion is nearly standing.

BOB

Eight, nine, ten. He's out!

HARRY

Eight....nine....

The Aboriginal Boy put his hands over his eyes. Scorpion stands. The Aborigines cheer. Harry rubs Scorpion's gloves on his jumper.

HARRY

Fight on.

BOB

That count was longer than a boat trip to England.

Benny descends on Scorpion smashing him with lefts and rights.

KATE

You've got to stop it.

SNOWY

You got the money for a bus fare?

KATE

He's sick. He doesn't deserve this.

The bell rings. Benny remains in the centre waiting for the fight to continue. Snowy works furiously on Scorpion.

The bell rings for the last round. Scorpion gingerly approaches Benny. He holds his hands out to Benny who arrogantly laughs. Suddenly Scorpion smashes Benny in the shoulder joint so hard it appears Benny's shoulder is dislocated.

Benny grimaces in pain, unable to raise his arm. Scorpion reigns blows on Benny. Harry separates them, attempts to raise Benny's arm, who cries in agony, then shakes his head at the Constable who nods. Bob is devastated. Harry raises Scorpion's hand.

HARRY

The winner by a TKO, the one and only,
Scorpion.

There is a hush over the crowd. The Constable hands Harry the winnings. The mortified Bob angrily glares at a smiling Harry.

HARRY

To see the horizon, Bob, one must sometimes
look up.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

The group hurriedly pack their tent and equipment onto the bus and trailer. Snowy sings: *It's a Great Day for the Irish*. Les joins in. Kate shakes her head at Les who breaks into a laugh.

Les comes up behind Kate and playfully traps her. Kate evades him but accidentally rips her t-shirt on the trailer. She frowns at Les who implies it wasn't his fault. Annoyed Les is getting a 'free look' at her partly exposed breast she enters the bus and closes the door. Les is furious with himself.

INT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

Kate removes her t-shirt, checks her bra for damage. Aware of a presence she turns quickly. Blue Tongue grins at her. She gasps loudly, covers her breasts. Blue Tongue laughs.

LES O.S.
(knocking on the door)
What's wrong?

KATE
Nothing.
(composing herself)
Absolutely nothing.

Les bursts through the door. Immediately he sees Blue Tongue and attacks but Kate stands between them.

KATE
No! Stop it, Les!

Harry and Snowy quickly enter.

LES
I'll kill him.

KATE
Kate covers herself with the torn t-shirt.

KATE
He hasn't done anything.

Harry indicates for Les to settle.

HARRY
What d'you think you're doing?

BLUE TONGUE

Wanta fight, Boss. Make you a lotta
money, Boss.

Les rolls his eyes. Harry looks at Snowy who shakes his head.
Harry puts his arm out shoulder high.

HARRY
You're too young, Kid.

LES
So piss off.

HARRY
We can't afford another mouth to feed.

BLUE TONGUE
I live on grass-hoppers and raindrops,
Boss.

There's a loud knock on the door. Blue Tongue freezes.

KATE
You know there's police looking for you?

Blue Tongue shakes his head.

HARRY
Shit!

The knocking continues louder.

VOICE O.S.
Police.

Harry pushes Blue Tongue under the bed.

HARRY
You're not with us, okay?

BLUE TONGUE
Sure, Boss.

Harry spies the didgeridoo on the floor.

HARRY
Bloody hell!

VOICE O.S.
Open up! Police!

The door violently opens. Benny enters swigging a bottle of beer. Scorpion stands in the background. There is a moment of unease before Benny smiles then swirls his 'crook'arm.

BENNY

What've you got for a dislocated shoulder,
Pop?

Harry laughs. Kate is bewildered. Scorpion grins. Blue Tongue, shocked, sticks his head out from under the bed.

EXT. DENTON RECREATION AREA - NIGHT

Blue Tongue, with didgeridoo tied to his back, leaves the recreation area, illuminated by silvery moonlight. Hearing a noise he stops.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Everything's been packed into the bus. Butch sleeps in the front seat.

Scorpion finishes the remains of a bottle of beer. Bob and his group, armed with cricket bats and chains, surround Scorpion. Benny's nowhere to be seen.

BOB

Where's Corbett?

Harry, holding half a crow-bar, steps from the dark.

HARRY

Looking for someone, Bob?

BOB

You twined me!

Les, Snowy, Mick and Kate, armed with mallets and iron bars, appear. Bob pulls a gun on Harry. The Troupe freak.

BOB

I want my money!

Bob aims his gun at Harry's face. Suddenly Blue Tongue smashes Bob across the back of the head with his didgeridoo. Bob falls unconscious. Blue Tongue grabs the gun and waves it madly at Bob's group. It accidentally fires in all directions, sending everyone scattering.

Harry apprehensively approaches Blue Tongue, takes the gun. Butch has slept through it all.

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD - MORNING

The next morning the bus drives along a red earth road. Blue Tongue, grinning, watches out the window. Snowy can be heard singing.

SNOWY

*Goodbye Denton town, Denton town goodbye.
We are leaving you today for a country far
away.....*

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

Kate, sitting between Harry and Snowy, is furious.

KATE

You never tell me anything!

HARRY

You would have worried.

She turns on Snowy.

KATE

And you!

Snowy smirks. Harry hands Kate an *Australian Post* Magazine.

HARRY

Good article in there about university
courses for women.

Kate pushes it away.

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

Les glares at Blue Tongue who grins and winks at Butch. Scorpion snores.

EXT. OUTBACK FARM -- AFTERNOON

The bus is parked in the shade of a deserted farm house. The midday sun burns directly overhead.

Harry busies himself with paperwork on a portable card table.

Kate supervises Butch's schoolwork as she washes dishes. Blue Tongue plays his didgeridoo.

Mick is skipping and Les shadow boxing. Les continually glances at Kate who ignores him. Snowy observes.

Kate throws Blue Tongue a tea towel. He looks at it as if it's the first tea towel he's ever seen. Kate snatches it back.

KATE

Forget it, you're all the bloody same, you men!

Blue Tongue grins.

Later: Kate hangs washing on a rickety clothesline.

Scorpion cooks damper and boils the billy on an outdoor fireplace.

Les and Mick spar using large training gloves. Blue Tongue watches.

SNOWY

(to Les)

Use your feet more.

(Les ignores him)

Use your bloody feet!

LES

We're fighters not dancers.

SNOWY

And you wanta be world champion, what a joke!

BLUE TONGUE

Can I have a go?

SNOWY

(dismissive)

Later, mate. Fighting's all about good footwork.

LES

That's why Fred Astaire's such a good fighter.

Blue Tongue goes to Scorpion who's checking a .22 rifle. He smiles but Scorpion looks straight through him, puts the rifle over his shoulder and wanders off.

Later: Blue Tongue laughs at Kate hanging her underwear on the line. Kate feigns annoyance. Les, resting, is unimpressed by Kate's familiarity with Blue Tongue.

LES
(to Mick)
Give him the gloves.

Blue Tongue eagerly puts the gloves on and Mick laces them. Snowy watches carefully.

MICK
Go easy.

LES
He'll be right.
(cynically)
They're all natural fighters, aren't they,
Snowy?

SNOWY
One percent of the population, but they've
won fifteen percent of Australian Titles.

LES
They didn't put up much of a fight when the
Poms landed.

KATE
You wouldn't say that if Scorpion was here.

LES
Scorpion's a whiteman.

Blue Tongue throws a flurry of shadow punches then turns to Les. Les touches both his gloves on Blue Tongue's and throws some easy left jabs which Blue Tongue evades. Kate and Butch watch. Snowy observes Blue Tongue's footwork which is messy because of over-stepping.

Les throws a straight right. Blue Tongue ducks making Les miss by a mile. Butch laughs. Mick nods knowingly to Snowy. Snowy points at Les' feet

SNOWY

Yer feet are bloody everywhere!

Les throws another right and again Blue Tongue evades. Butch mimics the fighters. Blue Tongue grins. Les winks at Mick before feigning with his left and delivering an over the top hard right which hits Blue Tongue flush on the chin. Blue Tongue falls backwards.

KATE

Les! It's only practice.

Blue Tongue quickly jumps up. Harry indicate for Kate to let them go. He moves Butch out of the way. Blue Tongue jabs, catching Les on the jaw. Suddenly Les unloads with savage blows sending Blue Tongue to the ground. Kate intervenes, pushing Les away. Les grins at Mick.

KATE

You know he's not as good as you.

LES

Concerned, are yer?

Blue Tongue springs up, moves Kate aside and attacks Les, who deftly puts him down again.

SNOWY

That'll do.

Blue Tongue staggers up and stumbles towards Les.

SNOWY

I said that'll do!

Harry grabs Blue Tongue but he continues pushing forwards. Les laughs.

HARRY

That's enough, Son.

LES

Let him go. Let's see what he's got.

Blue Tongue attempts to pull away from Harry. Harry brutally shakes him.

HARRY

You want to be a bloody fighter or not?
Well do you?

(Blue Tongue nods))
Then learn to do what you're damn well
told!

(Blue Tongue relaxes)
You listen to Snowy. You understand?

(Blue Tongue nods)
Then one day you might be good enough to
fight on your own merits!

Snowy observes Kate's disappointment at Harry's outburst. As
Harry returns to his paperwork he points at Blue Tongue.

HARRY
And do the bloody dishes!

Les laughs cruelly. A gunshot is heard. Blue Tongue instantly
looks in the direction of the shot but the others don't react.
Another shot. Snowy puts his arm round Blue Tongue.

SNOWY
It's your footwork. It's all over the
place. That's alright if you're going
walkabout, but in the ring you need to
control it.

Les does a double step, sending up footwork. Snowy pulls a
glove off Blue Tongue, throws it to Mick and holds his hand out
for Mick to put the glove on. The others watch with interest.
Snowy shapes up to Les but talks to Blue Tongue.

SNOWY
Watch my feet.

LES
Turn it up, Snowy.

SNOWY
You only need one good hand if you've got
two fast feet.

LES
I don't want to hurt you.

SNOWY
I'll remember that.

Snowy turns sideways then suddenly whacks Les hard to the side of the face with the back of his glove. It hurts but Les doesn't react. Kate, concerned, moves to Harry.

HARRY

The turtle never makes progress until he sticks his neck out.

Snowy moves round Les demonstrating effective footwork.

SNOWY

The best boxers don't need to throw a punch. It's all in the footwork, Son. Balance and weight transference.

(grinning at Les)

Though some blokes are too thick to know what that means.

Snowy moves behind Les and clips him across the ears. Les doesn't respond.

SNOWY

The secret is to glide, not jump, light movements on the balls of your feet. Fred Astaire would've made the ideal fighter.

Snowy does an impressive double-kick movement which puts him on the other side of Les. He clips Les over the ears again.

LES

I'm warning you.

Les moves on Snowy who retreats purposefully using long steps.

SNOWY

(to Blue Tongue)

You're advancing and retreating too much.

Snowy advances using a long step. Les clips him on the jaw.

SNOWY

See.

Snowy avoids Les by moving only a few inches.

SNOWY

Only a few inches will take you out of reach. The same with advancing. Inches, not yards.

Snowy clips Les on the jaw, whispers to him.

SNOWY

He's only a youngster but one day he'll box
your ears.

Les moves around Snowy who baulks to one side then jumps behind
Les and boots him in the behind. All except Les laugh.

LES

Right!

Les charges. Snowy turns sideways and as Les passes he punches
Les hard to the side of the face. Les madly throws punches all
of which miss because of Snowy's agility and evasion. Snowy
allows Les to punch himself out before throwing a flurry of
pretend straight jabs which could have hit the exhausted Les
had he wanted. Snowy holds his hand out for Mick to remove the
glove. Blue Tongue is impressed.

SNOWY

We'll start with footwork

Kate offers to remove Les's gloves but he angrily pulls away.

Later: Harry watches Blue Tongue slowly and painfully follow
Snowy's foot movements.

Harry throws Blue Tongue a pair of boxing boots. Blue Tongue
indicates he doesn't want them.

HARRY

First measure of civilization, Son, is put
shoes on the feet of its inhabitants.

Blue Tongue reluctantly puts the boxing boots on.

HARRY

Maps of life are on the soles of your feet,
Son. Old sea captains knew that.

Blue Tongue walks awkwardly.

HARRY

That's why they put the cat's paws in the
cauldron when the ship's in port.

Scorpion returns, two rabbits draped over his shoulder. Harry
looks at the boots Scorpion wears.

HARRY
(To himself)

Burn his maps and he's got nowhere to go.

Scorpion remains expressionless.

SNOWY
Watch. Feet always eighteen inches
apart.

Snowy shows Blue Tongue a foot movement by advancing with the left foot. Blue Tongue practices it. Blue Tongue looks to Scorpion for a positive reaction but Scorpion's only interested in skinning the rabbits.

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD - AFTERNOON

The bus leaves a trail of red dust as it travels along an outback road.

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

The troupe have set up camp on the side of the road. Two rabbits roast over a small campfire. Harry reads *Peyton Place* in the shade of the bus.

Butch draws pictures on a small blackboard with white chalk.

Mick skips but Les, sulking, sharpens a stick with his knife.

Snowy works with blue Tongue on footwork.

SNOWY
Weight on your right foot. Your right
foot. That's your left foot. Right
foot, your back foot.

Blue Tongue is confused. Snowy demonstrates.

LES
You're wasting your time.

Butch draws an L and an R on Blue Tongue's left and right boot. Blue Tongue indicates thanks by touching his nose with his thumb.

Blue Tongue successfully moves to Snowy's directions.

SNOWY

Weight on your left. Slide the left foot forward. Follow with the right, quick, quick. Tap, tap, I wanta hear the tap. Good, that's it. Eighteen inches. Good. Slide, follow quick.....

Butch touches his thumb to his nose. Blue Tongue grins. Kate smiles at Butch.

LATER: Blue Tongue's footwork has improved. He moves forward and backwards smoothly, all the time glancing at Kate for approval but she feigns disinterest.

SNOWY

Okay, now concentrate on where your hands are. The biggest fault with your mob is you drop the other arm when you throw a punch. That's how Les caught you.

(demonstrating)

Throw a straight left as you go forward.

Blue Tongue awkwardly attempts to throw a left as he advances.

SNOWY

Left hand lands as the left foot comes down. When you go back throw up both arms, first your left then your right.

BLUE TONGUE

That'd be a bit hard for you, eh?

SNOWY

(ignoring the joke)

That way you defend yourself against the rusher.

Butch smiles at Blue Tongue who intensifies his training.

LATER: The troupe eat rabbit and drink tea around the campfire. Les is the only one using a knife and fork. Harry tosses a bone aside.

HARRY

Beautiful.

Blue Tongue sucks on a rabbit bone.

BLUE TONGUE

Les, you know something, mate?

LES

What?

BLUE TONGUE

You got the table manners of a dingo.

Blue Tongue spits the bone out. All except Les, who's close to smiling, laugh.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Around the campfire Scorpion plays guitar. Harry does paperwork but during the following song he watches Kate and Les, aware of their relationship. Kate walks round the camp. Mick softly sings.

MICK

*It seems like only yesterday I sailed from
out of Cork...Now on my way from Eirens
Isle I landed in New York...*

Snowy closes his eyes, reminiscing.

MICK

*There wasn't a soul to greet me there, a
stranger on the shore...*

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Snowy removes a large wooden box from under his makeshift bed. He looks at it without opening it, then slowly pushes it back with his foot.

MICK O.S.

*But Irish luck was with me here and riches
came galore...*

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Mick plays up to Butch who is dying to sing.

MICK

*Shake hands with your Uncle Mike me boy and
here's your sister Kate...*

Kate looks at Les who smiles at her.

MICK

*And here's the girl you used to swing down
on the garden gate...Shake hands with all
the neighbours and kiss the colling's
stone...*

Kate sits next to Les.

MICK

*You're as welcome as the flowers in May as
dear old Donegal...Then came...*

Mick throws to Butch.

BUTCH

*Brannigan, Flannagan, Milligian,
Gilligian, Duffy, McGuffy,
McLockie....ah...Malloy....*

All except Les join in with different names. The song erupts into laughter. Les is still playing at sulking. There is a moment of silence.

Scorpion plays *Waltzing Matilda*. They all look at Les who is unable to help himself from smiling.

MICK

I knew that'd get him.
(to Blue Tongue)
It's the song he thinks they'll play if he
becomes world champion.

LES

When I become world champion. When.

KATE

Sing it, Les.

Les sings part of the song beautifully.

LES

*And his song may be heard as you walk down
by that billabong...Who'll come a waltzing
Matilda with me...*

Scorpion quietly hums it then all except Blue Tongue sing.

LES

What's your problem?

Blue Tongue is painfully silent.

LES

Eh?

BLUE TONGUE

You fellows...you pinched that one from us.

LES & HARRY

What!

BLUE TONGUE

That's old blackfellow's song.

LES

Bullshit!

Blue Tongue plays *Waltzing Matilda* on his didgeridoo then sings the part Les sung but in dialect. Kate is enthralled. All laugh heartily and sing along.

EXT. OUTBACK ROAD - MORNING

The bus speeds through the outback as *Waltzing Matilda* in dialect continues.

LATER: The bus passes Aboriginal humpies in a creek bed. Blue Tongue observes them closely, Les with disdain. Scorpion sleeps.

EXT. OUTBACK TOWN - MORNING

The bus drives through an outback town. RESIDENTS watch. Some wave.

EXT. TOWN RESERVE - MORNING

Everybody helps set the tent up. Blue Tongue works extra hard and fast.

LATER: Blue Tongue holds a metal stake, closes his eyes. Snowy hits it with the sledge hammer.

EXT. TENT - AFTERNOON

The tent and boards are up. The troupe sit in the shade of the bus. Harry gives Scorpion *Peyton Place*.

Blue Tongue watches Scorpion read the last page first.

LATER: Harry tosses Blue Tongue a tracksuit top. He puts it on pulling the hood over his head. Kate laughs. Les, jealous, pulls Blue Tongue aside. Snowy observes.

LES

Keep yer eyes to yerself, okay?

Blue Tongue glares at Les. Les pushes him in the chest.

LES

Okay?

SNOWY

Let's work on that footwork.

BLUE TONGUE

Later, Boss.

Blue Tongue leaves. Snowy is unimpressed. Butch runs after Blue Tongue.

BUTCH

Where you going?

BLUE TONGUE

To the Never Never.

BUTCH

Can I come?

Blue Tongue shakes his head.

BUTCH

You coming back?

Blue Tongue leaves a disappointed Butch.

EXT. ABORIGINAL HUMPIES, EDGE OF TOWN - LATE AFTERNOON

Blue Tongue, hood over his head, stands at the perimeter of Aboriginal humpies. Two elderly women sit around a fire. Blue Tongue approaches. The women's eyes lock on Blue Tongue.

ELDERLY ABORIGINAL WOMAN ONE

Don't I know you?

Blue Tongue sadly shakes his head.

ELDERLY ABORIGINAL WOMAN TWO
Come here. Sit here.

She refers to Blue Tongue.

ELDERLY ABORIGINAL WOMAN TWO
This one, he my cousin.

EXT. TOWN RESERVE - NIGHT

An average crowd is gathered outside the boxing tent. The lone woman Protestor sits in the background.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Harry watches the Protestor through the tent door.

Mick, Les and Scorpion are having their hands taped by Kate and Snowy.

HARRY
Where's Blue Tongue?

Snowy shrugs his shoulders.

HARRY
Bloody great!

LES
See, they're bloody unreliable.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Harry, Mick, Les and Scorpion are on the boards. Snowy bangs the drum. Harry anxiously scans the crowd for Blue Tongue. Butch also looks for him.

HARRY
Who'll take a glove? Who'll take a glove?

Harry points to a strapping YOUTH.

HARRY
You look like a worthy warrior, Lad...

The youth eagerly climbs the boards. The crowd cheer him. Harry is still anxiously looking for Blue Tongue. Snowy shrugs his shoulders as he bangs the drum.

HARRY

Do we have any other challengers?

No one puts their hands up. Harry and Snowy give each other disappointing glances. Suddenly Blue Tongue's sad face appears among the crowd. Harry points to Blue Tongue.

HARRY

What about you, Son?

Kate beams. Les is not amused. Blue Tongue acts drunk. He staggers everywhere. The Protestor is horrified. Kate is mortified.

BLUE TONGUE

(dialect)

Too bloody right, Boss.

HARRY

Can you speak English, Son?

BLUE TONGUE

Spreiket de Deutsche, Boss?

HARRY

Climb up here then.

Blue Tongue attempts to climb the boards but falls back. The crowd assist him onto the boards. Harry smells his breath and realises he's not drunk. Scorpion glares at Blue Tongue. Blue Tongue immediately stops playing the drunk. A relieved Kate smiles at Snowy.

HARRY

Where were you born, Son?

BLUE TONGUE

In a hollow bamboo log, Boss, next to that bandicoot ridge on that bank of that billabong...

HARRY

Hollow log, eh? We'll call you that Didgeridoo Kid from that billabong up that way.

BLUE TONGUE

Too complicated, boss. Call me Blue Tongue.

Kate laughs.

HARRY

Blue Tongue, you get to fight Les. He was born and raised in St Vincent De Paul's Orphanage. That's somewhere
(pointing)
down that a way. Now who's gonna fight Protestant Mick?

Half a dozen contestants put their hands up, to the relief of Harry.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

The boisterous crowd cheer Les as he fights Blue Tongue. A CONSTABLE enters, stands at the back. Blue Tongue's footwork has improved and he easily evades Les. Snowy winks at Kate but shakes his head as Blue Tongue is caught by a good right.

SNOWY

Bloody hopeless!

The more Blue Tongue evades the harder Les goes. When Les catches Blue Tongue the crowd roar for Les. However, Blue Tongue matches Les and a few OLD TIMERS applaud Blue Tongue.

LATER: Harry tugs his right ear. Les's frustrated look says it all. Les allows himself to get hit on the chin and falls to his knees. Snowy rings the bell.

Harry holds the excited Blue Tongue's hand aloft and gives him five quid. The crowd clap Blue Tongue.

Les storms off, brushing Kate aside. The Constable hurriedly leaves.

LATER: The show's over and the troupe get ready to pack up. Blue Tongue happily waves the five quid at Kate. Harry snatches it.

BLUE TONGUE

Hey!

HARRY

For the shoes, Son.

BLUE TONGUE

But...they're bloody old.

HARRY

They belonged to an Australian Champion.

BLUE TONGUE

Yeah, who?

Harry glances at Snowy. Kate nods. Blue Tongue smiles at Snowy.

SNOWY

You were pathetic! Bloody pathetic!

Blue Tongue's smile disappears. He leaves the tent.

EXT. BOXING TENT NIGHT

The troupe load the equipment aboard the bus. Suddenly they are surrounded by POLICE. The Constable shrugs his shoulders to SERGEANT O'HARA.

SERGEANT O'HARA

Where is he?

HARRY

Who?

SERGEANT O'HARA

Don't give me that, Harry.

HARRY

Dunno who you mean.

Sergeant O'Hara angrily shakes his head and indicates for the police to leave.

SNOWY

You wanta work on your footwork, boys.

HARRY

(to Scorpion)

Where is he?

Scorpion doesn't answer.

LES

Gone bloody walkabout!

EXT. ABORIGINAL CAMPSITE - NIGHT

From the shadows Blue Tongue searches the faces in another Aboriginal campsite.

EXT. BOXING BUS, OUTBACK - NIGHT

The troupe are ready to go.

LES
Are we leaving or what?

Harry looks earnestly at Snowy. Although Snowy doesn't react Harry senses his concern.

HARRY
We wait.

LATER: Snowy anxiously walks up and down. Butch is in the bus looking out a window. His eyes light up. A dejected Blue Tongue emerges from the dark.

SNOWY
You pull that stunt again and you're out.
You understand?

Blue Tongue gets in the bus.

BLUE TONGUE
Whatever you say, Boss.

SNOWY
Don't Boss me! We're a bloody team. We
fight as a team. We work as a team.
Understand?

Blue Tongue looks at Scorpion who is looking at the floor.

BLUE TONGUE
The team that works together fights
together, eh Boss?

Snowy shakes his head, disappointed.

EXT. OUTBACK - EARLY MORNING

Snowy watches Blue Tongue work half-heartedly on footwork.

Les and Mick work flat out on the speed ball and punching bag.

Butch, wanting to punch the bag, gets in the way. Les brushes him aside. Kate considers admonishing Les but doesn't.

Snowy pushes Blue Tongue in the shoulder, points to his missing arm.

SNOWY

See that! I lost that saving a Corporal who was too bloody lazy to get out of his own bloody way. I sure as hell ain't losing any time on a smart arse wouldbe who couldn't give a shit. You either piss off or you get fairdinkum!

Snowy turns away. Harry points Blue Tongue to a stack of dirty dishes.

BLUE TONGUE

Ah, come on, Boss.

LATER: Harry watches Blue Tongue work out how to do the dishes. Kate shoos Butch back to his homework. Butch shapes up to her and she playfully cuffs him over the ears. When Kate attempts to grab Butch he uses footwork to evade her and hits her on the bum.

BLUE TONGUE

Never hit a woman.

BUTCH

Not even when she's your sister?

Blue Tongue covers Butch in suds.

BLUE TONGUE

Especially when she's your sister.

LATER: Blue Tongue's arms are covered in suds as he washes the dishes. He purposefully exaggerates footwork with every movement. Kate picks up a tea towel and dries. Blue Tongue smiles.

KATE

What's in the locket?

Blue Tongue opens the locket round his neck and shows Kate a small four-leaf clover.

KATE

Who gave you that, a girlfriend?
(Blue Tongue laughs)
Who?

BLUE TONGUE
My mother.

KATE
Oh. Where does she live?

Blue Tongue doesn't answer.

Les drops his socks and underwear in the dishwasher. Blue Tongue is disgusted.

LES
Don't your mob wash yer undies?

LATER: Harry does the book work. Kate looks over his shoulder. In the background the boxers rest. Scorpion reads *Peyton Place*.

KATE
How's it looking?

HARRY
Your mother used to say *wisdom is knowing what to do next* but be blowed if I know what's around the corner, Luv. We're just not drawing the big crowds anymore.

Kate puts her arms round Harry and watches Blue Tongue teach Butch how to mime an emu.

LATER: Snowy rubs Vaseline into boxing gloves. Kate sits next to him. They observe Blue Tongue teaching Butch didgeridoo.

KATE
How good is he?

SNOWY
You once asked me that about Les.

KATE
And you said he could be a champion.

SNOWY
Presently, very average.

KATE

Could he be a champion?

SNOWY

The world's littered with people who could be champions, Luv, but they're never going to be.

KATE

Perhaps he needs someone to show him how.

SNOWY

What d'you think I've been doing?

Kate gives him her special look. Snowy smiles and dabs Vaseline on her nose.

LATER: Blue Tongue lies in the shade. Snowy stands over him with a pair of boxing gloves. Blue Tongue smiles and puts the gloves on.

BLUE TONGUE

Is that how you really lost your arm?

SNOWY

Na, got pissed and fell asleep on a railway line.

BLUE TONGUE

Hah ha ha, and you reckon my mob's stupid.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Kate sits in the back of the bus. She peruses a photo album. Through the window she can see Snowy working with Blue Tongue. Les enters. She immediately closes the photo album. Les attempts to hug her but she avoids him.

EXT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Harry holds a map against the bus. He points to cities on the map.

HARRY

Next town, then Christmas here, then Cockatoo, maybe Lassiter, Toby. Then the big one, the Easter Show.

SNOWY

That's where the boxing promoters'll be.

LES

Les throws a flurry of punches.

LES

Look out world, here I come.

Blue Tongue traces his finger down the map.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

The bus approaches an outback town. Red desert slides into large properties, then small properties. Kate sits between Harry and Snowy who sings his shortened version of *MAGGIE* as they talk.

SNOWY

I wandered today to the hill, Maggie. To watch the scene below. The creek and the creaking old mill, Maggie, as we used to long long ago. The green clove is gone from the hill, Maggie, where first the daisies grown. They say that we've outlived our time, Maggie, but to me you're as fair as you were, Maggie since you and I were young.

KATE

What was Mum like?

(Harry doesn't respond.)

Hmmmmmm?

Snowy looks with interest at Harry's reaction. Kate turns to Snowy.

KATE

When did Mum meet Dad?

SNOWY

(singing)

Nine months to the day you were born, Maggie.

KATE

(elbowing Snowy)

I wanta know.

HARRY
(surprised at her question)
It was when I was a flim flam spruiker at
the Brisbane Show,

Harry grabs the microphone. Snowy switches it on, unbeknown to Harry.

HARRY
Step into Harry Corbett's tent, Ladies and
Gentlemen, because never again will you
enjoy the delights of yesterday's
curiosities, those marvels of matinee
nature. You might say they are freaks...

Curious onlookers stop and listen. Kate angrily turns the microphone off.

KATE
Don't make fun of my mother!

Harry gestures he didn't know the mike was on. Snowy grins.

EXT. RIVER BANK - AFTERNOON

Harry fishes by himself on the banks of a swift flowing river. In the background the boxing tent has been set up. Butch plays precariously close to the river's edge. Blue Tongue mixes mud on a stone to make a body painting mixture.

Kate, sitting next to Harry, dangles her bare feet in the river.

KATE
Was she a freak?
(Harry doesn't respond)
Is that why you left her? Were you ashamed
of her? Butch, keep away from the edge!
Why won't you talk about her?

HARRY
She was the Princess from Zanadu.
(laughing)
But she was born in the Rob Roy Hotel in
Fitzroy. Now Butch's Mum, she was a
different kettle of fish.

KATE
Did you love her?

Butch climbs high up a tree. Blue Tongue paints his face with the mud.

HARRY

She could tie you a worm on the end of a safety pin, like you'd tie a parcel at the GPO. Most people, they don't know how to tie a proper knot. They tie a bow, flop it in, jerk, goodbye fish. They'd rather be led by the nose into the fish shop. Not your Mum. For a couple of moments in their lives she'd take them onto the pier of make believe and set up their tackle for them.

Harry has a bite.

HARRY

She taught them all how to catch a fish in the big pond, Luv.

KATE

Is that how she caught you?

HARRY

I was just a minnow, hopelessly out of my depth.

The fish escapes. Butch, up the tree, laughs.

KATE

Was she pretty?

HARRY

Have a look in the mirror.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Kate carefully examines her image in the mirror, unaware Les is watching. She's not happy with what she sees. When she realises Les is watching she pretends she has something in her eye.

LES

Let me.

Kate passes Les.

KATE

It's okay.

LES

Kate?

(she stops)

You're beautiful, you know.

She smiles warmly. Les softly kisses her lips. Blue Tongue, face painted, watches from the doorway.

EXT. OUTBACK DESERT - MORNING

The bus is camped on the side of the road. Snowy shows Blue Tongue more advanced footwork. Blue Tongue has progressed remarkably. Rock and roll plays on the transistor.

Les trains flat out on a punching bag. Mick skips and Scorpion shadow boxes. Kate rolls up bandages.

SNOWY

Let's see what you're like on the swinging sack.

Blue Tongue rushes the punching bag and pommels it.

SNOWY

Hold it! Hold it!

Blue Tongue stops, confused.

SNOWY

Never hit anything, never, unless your hands are protected.

Butch bandages Blue Tongue's hands.

SNOWY

Your hands are your investment. Protect them at all times. Show him, Les.

Les walks away. Mick, whose hands are bandaged, demonstrates punching the bag as Snowy talks.

SNOWY

Forget knock-out punches. They make the sack swing away but it's the correct-style punch with snap and speed that'll win you the fight. The best punches only travel two inches. Practice your straight left.

Kate watches while preparing lunch. Blue Tongue hits the bag with short straight lefts.

SNOWY

Move. Never stand still. Never.
Footwork! What's happened to your bloody
footwork?

Blue Tongue demonstrates perfect footwork.

SNOWY

Raise the left shoulder up high, keep your
chin in behind the shoulder. Get your
right hand up, up, up, up!

LATER: Blue Tongue spars Mick. Snowy yells at Blue Tongue.

SNOWY

Only use footwork and your straight left.

Blue Tongue's footwork is good but when he throws a straight left he drops his right and Mick collects him on the chin.

SNOWY

Keep your bloody right up!

LATER: Mick and Blue Tongue have finished sparring.

MICK

You're getting good, Bluey.

Les scoffs.

LATER: Blue Tongue writes in an old exercise book while Les skips. Les shakes his head at Blue Tongue's apparent disinterest.

Kate looks over Blue Tongue's shoulder. He hides his writing from her. Harry watches them.

KATE

Left handed?

BLUE TONGUE

(demonstrating)

I can write both hands.

Harry listens with interest.

KATE

Where'd you learn to write?

Blue Tongue gives her a savage look.

KATE

I just thought...

BLUE TONGUE

(walking away)

Mission.

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

Harry searches Blue Tongue's belongings. Through the window he observes Kate absorbed with Blue Tongue playing didgeridoo.

Harry looks at a recent photo of two small white girls holding hands, then reads writing on the back.

EXT. OUTBACK DESERT - MORNING

Snowy has a folded sock swinging on a line at Blue Tongue's chin height. Blue Tongue works on his straight left.

SNOWY

Don't just stand there. Move in, feint.
Feint I said. Learn to feint.

Blue Tongue feints.

SNOWY

First a slight movement of the hand and
shoulder towards your opponent's body,

Snowy demonstrates.

SNOWY

Then snap with the left to the head with
a fast step in. Practice it.

Snowy leaves Blue Tongue to work by himself. He grabs a piece of sliced tomato. Kate hits his hand with the knife. Snowy feints and pretends to throw a straight left. Harry approaches Kate and Snowy. He puts envelopes on the table for Kate.

HARRY

Post these at the next town, Luv. Entries for the Easter Show. It'll make or break us that one.

(referring to Blue Tongue)

What d'yer reckon, is he just another tent boxer?

Kate is interested in Snowy's answer. Blue Tongue dances Western dance steps. Les and Mick shake their heads in disbelief.

SNOWY

Got more natural talent than any of his mob I've seen.

HARRY

Has he got the fire in his belly?

SNOWY

Usually they'll do anything to escape their lot but there's something else going on upstairs. He's got guts though...

Snowy looks at Scorpion cleaning his rifle.

SNOWY

...but he doesn't hate enough.

HARRY

Give him time.

EXT. OUTSIDE COUNTRY SWIMMING POOL - AFTERNOON

Les, Mick, Kate, Butch and Blue Tongue line up for entry to the local swimming pool. They wear their togs under shorts and singlets. Blue Tongue admires Kate's figure from behind. It's hot and the small pool is crowded. Rock n Roll music plays.

Mick and Les pay for their own tickets. Kate pays for herself and Butch. Mick hurries inside. Les waits for Kate.

LES

I'm gonna teach you to swim.

As Blue Tongue puts his money on the counter Les grabs Kate's hand and whisks her inside.

CASHIER

Sorry, Luv.

She points to a *WHITES ONLY* sign. Kate glances back and realises what's happening but allows Les to lead her inside.

EXT. INSIDE SWIMMING POOL - AFTERNOON

Kate and Les lay their towels on the grass. Kate watches Blue Tongue through the cyclone wire fence dejectedly walk away.

Mick has his eye on two local GIRLS parading around the pool. He winks to Les before perfecting a massive dive bomb that showers the girls.

BUTCH

Beauty.

Kate grabs her towel and runs from the pool.

LES

Hey!

(to Butch)

What's eating her?

Butch shrugs his shoulders before dive bombing a GIRL his age. Mick gives Butch the thumbs up as Les watches Kate catch up to Blue Tongue.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Kate walks along side Blue Tongue. He quickens his pace. Across the street a mixed group of TEENAGERS muck around.

BLUE TONGUE

What happened?

KATE

Didn't like the colour of the water.

(Blue Tongue laughs)

I know what it's like.

BLUE TONGUE

Do you?

KATE

Yes I do.

Kate is aware of LOCALS watching them. They pass two TEENAGERS passionately kissing.

BLUE TONGUE

My people used to own this land.

Blue Tongue points in all directions.

BLUE TONGUE

From there to there to there.

Kate walks in front of him, turns, walks backwards.

KATE

People don't mean to act that way. They just don't know any better.

Blue Tongue scoffs.

KATE

I don't own any land either you know. Half the time I don't know where the next meal's coming from.

He grabs her hand and walks her into the local milkbar/hamburger shop.

INT. MILKBAR/HAMBURGER SHOP - AFTERNOON

TEENAGERS at a table stare at Kate and Blue Tongue. Kate, aware of their hostility, politely releases her hand from Blue Tongue's. Blue Tongue studies the menu board. The Greek male OWNER watches him curiously.

BLUE TONGUE

I'll have the special hamburger with heaps of tomato sauce and my girlfriend here, because she's pregnant...

The teenagers gasp.

BLUE TONGUE

...with twins, she'll have the same with two eggs.

Kate is flabbergasted.

MILKBAR OWNER

Sorry, we don't serve ah...

BLUE TONGUE

Abos?

MILKBAR OWNER

That's right.

BLUE TONGUE

(pretend surprise)

Oh!

KATE

Well you should!

MILKBAR OWNER

I don't make the laws.

Kate angrily leaves.

KATE

Yes you do!

EXT. MILKBAR/HAMBURGER SHOP - AFTERNOON

Outside the shop Kate looks at Blue Tongue expecting a positive response. The Teenagers watch from the doorway. Across the street the other teenagers are watching. Suddenly Blue Tongue kisses Kate, passionately. She spontaneously jerks away, embarrassed. Blue Tongue looks deep into her eyes before laughing. Kate cautiously looks at the teenagers in the doorway.

The teenagers across the road abuse Blue Tongue. Blue Tongue moves to fight them but Kate grabs him.

KATE

You'll get arrested.

BLUE TONGUE

So?

KATE

Please....

The teenagers across the road advance.

KATE

Please, Bluey.

He grabs her hand and they run up the street. The teenagers scream abuse.

LATER: They slowly walk along the footpath.

KATE

I didn't pull away because...

BLUE TONGUE

Didn't you?

KATE

You can't just kiss someone because you feel like it.

BLUE TONGUE

Why not?

KATE

Because they've gotta...want you to.

Blue Tongue stops and moves as if he intends kissing her. She immediately looks around. Blue Tongue smiles and shakes his head.

A car packed with the teenagers appears. The teenagers get out, circle Kate and Blue Tongue menacingly.

The TALLEST attacks Blue Tongue, who deftly sidesteps and knocks him to the ground with one punch.

Two GIRLS push Kate. She punches one in the stomach. The other quickly backs.

Blue Tongue throws punches at the other teenagers but they wrestle him to the ground. Kate unsuccessfully attempts to pull them off Blue Tongue.

Les and Mick, screaming, run towards the melee. The teenagers scramble into their car and drive off. Kate helps Blue Tongue up. Butch arrives.

BLUE TONGUE

(to Les)

Took your time, Brother.

EXT. BOXING BUS - DAY

The group return to the Boxing Bus where Harry, Snowy and Scorpion are getting ready to unpack.

LES

Might be wise to give this town a miss, Pop.

Harry looks at the disheveled Blue Tongue who's flexing his injured fist. Kate nods her head.

The car with the teenagers slowly drives past, followed by another car. Snowy moves to the bus.

SNOWY

Let's go.

EXT. OUTBACK CAMP - NIGHT

The Troupe sit around a campfire. Scorpion strums guitar, Mick hums along. Harry, Snowy and Les drink beer. Blue Tongue's hand is bandaged.

KATE

Why don't you put Blue Tongue on the boards with the others?

HARRY

Why not just tell the coppers here he is?

Les winks to Scorpion but talks to Blue Tongue.

LES

Hey, Jacky, how come your mob guzzle so much grog?

BLUE TONGUE

Maybe we guzzle to forget the old days.

Butch is gazing at the stars.

BLUE TONGUE

Butch, d'you know the sky is suspended on invisible gum trees

Les winks to Scorpion who politely smiles.

BLUE TONGUE

Created by Ancestral Father?

KATE

That's poetic.

BUTCH

Why can't we see them?

BLUE TONGUE

(looking at Les)
Because when the demons arrived looking for a good place to set up camp they didn't like our tucker and they became worms and burrowed into the earth and poisoned the trees...

Les laughs and elbows Scorpion who ignores him.

BLUE TONGUE
...and the trees that lived became invisible so they could stop the sky falling down.

Blue Tongue walks away. Kate follows, stands next to Blue Tongue who's looking at the stars.

KATE
What was your mother like?

BLUE TONGUE
Dunno.

Les hands Kate a mug of tea. She takes it. Blue Tongue walks away.

EXT. CABELL'S SIDING - MORNING

The bus approaches an outback town. A sign reads: *CABELL'S SIDING*.

SNOWY O.S.
This town is the hole that was left when someone pinched the black stump.

The bus stops. Blue Tongue gets out. He looks at Kate in the passenger seat, but she looks away. However she watches Blue Tongue in the rear view mirror as they drive away.

EXT. MAIN STREET, CABELL'S SIDING - MORNING

The bus drives along the main street of Cabell's Siding. Shop windows are protected with steel mesh. The picture theater is advertising *On The Waterfront*. LOCALS watch the bus. MURPHY, 35 and two MATES, each drinking from beer bottles, exit the barber shop which has a red and white canvas awning. A sign on one window reads: *MURPHY'S BARBER SHOP*. Written on the other window is: *THE MAN FROM IRONBARK*.

The bus stops. Kate runs to a letter box and posts letters. Murphy and his mates cat whistle her. Les glares at them.

INT. BOXING TENT - AFTERNOON

The troupe, exhausted, sit glumly inside the tent.

HARRY

What's say we catch a flic?

No one responds.

HARRY

It's about a boxer.

Les eagerly jumps up. Mick, Les, Kate and Butch follow. Scorpion walks away. Blue Tongue remains sitting.

BUTCH

(to Blue Tongue)

You coming?

HARRY

Someone's gotta look after the tent.

BUTCH

But Scorpion...

Les grabs Butch.

LES

Carn, let's go.

Kate looks at Blue Tongue but he doesn't return her look.

INT. PICTURE THEATER - AFTERNOON

Kate, Les, Mick, Snowy, Butch and Harry sit in one row of the theater, which is filled mainly with kids. The front stalls are empty. The lights go down and a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon starts. The kids cheer. Les subtly holds Kate's hand.

Half way into the cartoon ABORIGINES are ushered into the front stalls.

LES

Sit down!

Kate removes her hand from Les.

LATER: The sequence about *I could've been a contender*, from *On The Waterfront* is screening. Kate allows Les to hold her hand.

LATER: Just before the end of the film the MANAGER ushers the Aborigines out. Although Kate is used to this practice her expression reflects concern.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

The Boxers prepare. Their hands have been taped and Les, Mick and Scorpion warm up. The noisy crowd can be heard outside the tent.

Snowy and Butch put buckets of water at strategic spots around the tent.

LATER: Les, Mick and Scorpion are ready, in dressing gowns. Les pulls Harry aside.

LES

Let me fight on me merits.

HARRY

Then fight with the pros.

LES

I'm sick of taking a dive to someone who's not fair dinkum.

HARRY

We're not in the fighting game, Son.
We're in the entertainment game.

LES

I'll give them a good show.

HARRY

Son, you're the preliminary. It's Scorpion they want to see get beat. And if the black kid bashes the white boy they want to see it all the more.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

The crowd is raucous, pushing and shouting. Murphy and his group rule the roost. Les, Mick and Scorpion are on the boards. Harry looks for the Protestor but she's not there. Blue Tongue stands at the back.

HARRY

We've gotta show for you that'll make the hair on the back of your neck go up and down like a bride's nightie.

Kate rolls her eyes. The crowd respond by being more raucous.

ONLOOKER

Hey, Captain?

HARRY

What's that, Son?

ONLOOKER

You reckon blind people oughta pay electric light bills?

The crowd scream laughing.

HARRY

Your sense of humour is nearly as bad as mine.

The crowd respond with mock laughter.

HARRY

Now settle down a little so I can introduce the boys.

But the crowd, especially Murphy and his group, take no notice. Blue Tongue is unsure of what to do.

HARRY

Come on, Boys, don't act like a box of rocks...

LES

Leave it to me, Boss.

Suddenly Les struts around like a bantam rooster. He thumps his chest and gives a Tarzan call. The crowd quieten, watch him. Les points to Blue Tongue.

LES

You havin' a go are yer? Are yer? Pineapple Head, I asked you a question.

The crowd look at Blue Tongue.

LES

Get up here, Juicy Fruit and have a look
at a decent body.

Les winks to Harry who's as surprised as the Crowd. Les whips his dressing gown off, tosses it on the boards and thumps his chest. The crowd erupt into laughter, some pointing at Les's lower body. Les has forgotten to put his shorts on and wears only jock strap and groin protector.

Kate laughs as an embarrassed Les hurriedly puts his dressing gown on.

HARRY

He's a good fighter, folks, just a little
absent minded.

The crowd laugh.

BLUE TONGUE

I'll fight him, Boss.

The crowd watch Blue Tongue wearily as he makes his way to the boards.

LATER: A LOCAL selected to fight Mick is on the boards alongside Blue Tongue.

Murphy and his group stare at Scorpion. MURPHY keeps pointing his finger at Scorpion.

A fight between two young TEENAGERS erupts in the crowd.

HARRY

Hey! Hey! Sort it out inside, according
to the Marquis of Queensberry?

The crowd separate them and scream their encouragement for Harry's suggestion.

HARRY

Bring them up here.

The lads are hoisted onto the boards and immediately jump into one another. Harry gets between them.

HARRY

There'll be plenty of time for that inside,
Boys.

He pushes one of the teenagers to the end of the boards.

HARRY

We need one more fighter for the main event. Ten quid if you go three rounds with the mighty Scorpion. He's not only got a sting in the tail but his hands have been registered as lethal weapons.

A group up the back push a reluctant YOUTH'S hand up. However, Murphy steps forward.

MURPHY

He's mine.

Murphy's mates cheer.

MURPHY'S MATE

He'll rip his sting out and stick it up his arse.

Harry glances at Snowy who shakes his head. Harry ignores Murphy and points to the back of the crowd.

HARRY

Did you have your hand up, Lad?

The group push the reluctant YOUTH forward.

HARRY

You it is then. Up here, Son.

The reluctant youth moves to the bottom of the boards. Murphy blocks him. The youth backs.

MURPHY'S MATE

The coon's fighting Murphy or we'll torch the tent.

The crowd vocally support Murphy. Scorpion nods to Harry who wearily glances at Snowy.

HARRY

Murphy it is then.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

It's near the end of the third round and the two tired teenagers are going hell for leather. They're only average fighters but

neither takes a backward step. Snowy rings the bell. Harry steps between the bloodied combatants and raises a hand of both. The crowd roars its approval. Harry indicates for Butch to put the blanket down. Butch opens an old grey blanket on the boxing mat and the crowd shower the blanket with silver coins. The kids shake hands and hug each other.

Butch collects the coins. Snowy congratulates his fighter and Kate likewise.

Butch shares the money between the happy fighters.

LATER: It's the third round between Les and Blue Tongue, who, although only using his right, holds his own with Les. Blue Tongue gets behind Les and attempts to pull Les's shorts down. The crowd roar as a furious Les attacks Blue Tongue.

Harry tugs his right ear. Blue Tongue is aware of the signal and disappointed. Les pretends he hasn't seen and goes for Blue Tongue who counters with solid punches. Les clocks Blue Tongue a hard round arm right to the side of the head. It shakes Blue Tongue. Harry angrily jumps between them.

HARRY

Foul.

Harry sends Les to the neutral corner while Blue Tongue recovers. The crowd scream abuse at Harry who whispers at Les.

HARRY

You do as you're bloody told!

Les grins and races at Blue Tongue who counters with a beautiful flurry of rights. The crowd quieten. Les is momentarily stunned. Harry puts the count on.

HARRY

One...two...three...

Les brushes Harry aside and charges Blue Tongue. The crowd wildly cheer. But again Blue Tongue connects with rights sending Les to the canvas. Harry jumps between them.

HARRY

It's over.

He raises Blue Tongue's arm. The crowd boo. Les storms off. Harry follows.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Harry confronts a disappointed and frustrated Les. Kate watches. They can hear the crowd becoming hostile.

HARRY

I run this outfit.

LES

I could've beaten him. It's not fair.
Listen to them.

HARRY

They're not booing because they thought you won, Son. They're booing because they can't accept you losing to an Abo. We're in the entertainment game. I'm only interested in the blanket of shillings.

LES

If you don't think we're in the fighting game you're a fool.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Harry returns to the ring. The boisterous crowd push and shove. One of Murphy's mates pushes Blue Tongue in the back. Blue Tongue careers across the mat. Snowy indicates to Mick that all hell's about to break loose.

Blue Tongue angrily turns, but mimes being punch drunk. Butch laughs and hops onto the mat, pretending he's going to flatten Blue Tongue, who playfully avoids him. Some of the crowd laugh, others quieten and watch. Blue Tongue allows Butch to belt him. The crowd laugh at the two clowns. Finally Butch KO's Blue Tongue. Mick drags Blue Tongue out and the crowd clap. Butch bows. Some of the crowd toss coins on the mat. Butch picks up the coins.

Murphy is stripped ready to fight. He combs his hair before tossing the comb to a mate.

Harry calls the fighters to the centre. The bell rings and the fighters slug it out toe to toe.

Scorpion is knocked into the crowd where Murphy's mates rough him up. One king hits Scorpion from behind. Scorpion staggers, then straightens. He glares with glassy, almost

crazy, eyes. Snowy, realising something is wrong with Scorpion, races to his assistance. He moves Murphy's mates away from Scorpion by backing into them. When they refuse to move he swings his elbow back clocking one in the face.

Saliva drips from Scorpion's mouth.

The fight continues. Scorpion feints to one side then rips Murphy to the stomach sending him to his knees. Before Harry intervenes Scorpion smashes Murphy in the face knocking him unconscious. Momentarily the crowd is stunned. Scorpion lifts Murphy's head to punch him in the face. Harry glares at Scorpion whose eyes are glazed, trance like. Suddenly Scorpion realises the enormity of what he's about to do. He drops Murphy's head and hurriedly exits. Some clap, followed by others. Murphy's mates turn on the clappers. A pushing contest threatens to explode. Harry puts himself in the centre of the shoving.

HARRY

Turn it up. There's women and kids!

The pushing settles.

HARRY

We're here to have fun. Not to fight.

Harry returns to the ring but keeps his eye on Murphy's mates as a groggy Murphy is assisted by Snowy.

Suddenly one of Murphy's mates king-hits a BYSTANDER and the tent erupts into an all in brawl. Blue Tongue rushes in. Les and Mick join him. Snowy grabs a baton and clocks anyone who comes near him. Kate takes Butch outside. The brawl is ferocious and ugly.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Scorpion, trance like, stands with his back against the tent. Kate and Butch watch but say nothing.

INT. BOXING TENT NIGHT

Just as someone is about to clock Les from behind, Blue Tongue smashes them using his left hand. Les nods appreciation as Blue Tongue shakes his injured left hand.

The end of the tent is ablaze. Harry throws a bucket of water over the flames.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

The FIRE BRIGADE hose the tent. The flames are doused but a section of the tent has been destroyed. Kate and Harry assesses the damage. Tensions are running high. Most of the crowd from the boxing tent mill around.

POLICE separate Murphy's group who still want to fight. Murphy screams at Scorpion.

MURPHY

You and me, Cinders, one out. No referee,
just you and me. Yer gutless wonder.

Scorpion grins to himself. Snowy watches him carefully.

HARRY

Ignore him.

MURPHY

Keep out of it, Granddad. This is between
me and the Coon.

Murphy waves a cut-throat razor.

MURPHY

I'll even give the Coon a shave, on the
house...

SERGEANT SULLIVAN

Put it away, Murphy!

MURPHY

What about it, Cinders? You gonna dog it
like the rest of your mob?

Blue Tongue runs at Murphy but Snowy stops him.

MURPHY

That's right, One-Arm, put him on a leash,
or I'll have him for pet food.

SERGEANT SULLIVAN

(to Harry)

You'd better pack up and get out of here.

MURPHY

Gutless wonders.

SERGEANT SULLIVAN

That's it. Go home. Show's over. Go
on, the show's over.

Blue Tongue is upset with Snowy. Harry sadly watches the group disperse. Murphy and his group continue to scream abuse as they leave. Harry is aware the police are taking an interest in Blue Tongue.

HARRY

Get in the bus.

Blue Tongue hesitates.

HARRY

Do it!

Blue Tongue reluctantly gets in the bus.

SERGEANT SULLIVAN

They're not usually this bad.

HARRY

Just the grog, eh?

SERGEANT SULLIVAN

You'd probably want to think twice about
coming back next year, Harry.

INT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

The bus drives through the deserted main street, passing
Murphy's Barber shop.

LATER: The bus reaches the outskirts of the town.

Blue Tongue stares at an emotionless Scorpion. Suddenly Blue
Tongue bangs on the wall of the bus. The bus stops.

EXT. BOXING BUS - NIGHT

Blue Tongue appears at the passenger window.

BLUE TONGUE

Ten minutes.

He runs off carrying a knife.

SNOWY

Shit!

EXT. OUTBACK DESERT - MORNING

The bus is stopped by the roadside. Blue Tongue, smiling, sits by himself. The Troupe are replacing the burnt canvas section with the barber shop canvas awning. Kate jokingly shakes her head at Blue Tongue.

EXT. CAMP SITE - NIGHT

The Troupe sits around the campsite. Scorpion drinks beer by himself some distance away. Blue Tongue is finishing the washing up. Les writes in a Christmas card. Harry indicates Scorpion.

HARRY

It was the Referee's fault, the idiot. Scorpion had him beat. Didn't want to hit him anymore. But the idiot Referee tells Scorpion to fight on. Ronny Grieves dies that night.

SNOWY

Could've happened to anyone.

HARRY

Should never have happened.

Scorpion appears behind Harry. He hands Harry *Peyton Place*. Kate immediately throws off by looking over Les's shoulder.

KATE

Who's it to?

Les playfully hides the card from her. She feigns displeasure.

LES

Me Mum, okay?

BUTCH

(to Blue Tongue)

What d'you want for Christmas?

Scorpion walks away.

BLUE TONGUE

Throw away plates.

LES

Your mob don't believe in Santa Claus.

BLUE TONGUE

In my mob everyone's Santa Claus. That's why we gave you our land.

The others laugh at Les.

KATE

What d'you want, Les?

LES

A Championship belt.

BLUE TONGUE

What about you? Eh?

BUTCH

Nothing really. Sometimes to go to a real school. But I really want you to be World Champion.

LES

That'll take a bit of doing.

Blue Tongue ruffles Butch's hair then picks up *Peyton Place*.

LES

Don't tell me you can read too.

Blue tongue turns to the last page.

BLUE TONGUE

Better than you.

LES

What is it with your mob, always reading the last page first?

KATE

I would too if I were them.

BLUE TONGUE

Your mob always pinch our books. That way we know how they end.

LATER: Kate sits next to Blue Tongue who's drinking tea.

KATE

Tell me about the mission on Palm Island.

Blue Tongue looks at Scorpion who purposefully walks away.

BLUE TONGUE

Not worth talking about.

KATE

Did they mistreat you?

Blue Tongue doesn't answer, but they want a response.

BLUE TONGUE

Them films on concentration camps.
That's Palm Island.

LES

It's a prison?

HARRY

It's a reservation, Son.

BLUE TONGUE

Same thing.

BUTCH

Is that where you learned to fight?

(Blue Tongue doesn't answer)

How'd you get away?

BLUE TONGUE

They didn't want me.

Blue Tongue walks behind the bus. Wind blows embers high into the night sky.

Scorpion appears, locks eyes on Blue Tongue. Suddenly Scorpion pins Blue Tongue hard against the bus with the V of his hand under Blue Tongue's chin.

SCORPION

You look the white man in the eye and tell
him your bullshit, but don't you ever look
me in the eye!

Scorpion pushes him away, grabs his rifle and walks into the bush.

LATER: Mick plays guitar and sings. A drunken Snowy, bottle in hand, dances an Irish jig, barefoot, over a cross of thistles. The other's clap. Snowy tosses the half-full bottle to Blue Tongue and increases the pace of his dancing.

Kate looks at Blue Tongue, suggesting he shouldn't drink. He doesn't. Les grabs kate's hand and pulls her behind the bus. Blue Tongue hears them laughing, sees them kissing. He swigs from the bottle. Gunshots are heard.

LATER: Snowy and Blue Tongue, arm in arm, stagger round. The others have gone to bed.

SNOWY

I'm gonna tell you something, Son.

Snowy pulls Blue Tongue's face close.

SNOWY

Don't tell anyone, right? Right?

BLUE TONGUE

Right, Boss.

SNOWY

Mum's the word, okay? Okay?

BLUE TONGUE

(swigging from the bottle)
Okay...Mum...

SNOWY

I could've been a contender.

BLUE TONGUE

A what?

SNOWY

(screaming)
I could've been a bloody contender....

HARRY O.S.

Shut-up and get some sleep!

SNOWY

That's no way to talk to a contender.
Where's yer bloody respect?

LES O.S.

Lay down, yer imbecile!

SNOWY

I'm gonna tell yer something. Yer with me? Are yer?

Blue Tongue stares, grins stupidly.

SNOWY

You're a contender. What're yer?

BLUE TONGUE

A what?

SNOWY

A bloody contender!

BLUE TONGUE

A bloody contender.

SNOWY

But you don't know it yet. I didn't know it either. Too bloody smart.

Snowy puts his arm round Blue Tongue, drags him round. Scorpion returns. Blue Tongue wants to talk to him, but Scorpion ignores him and enters the bus.

SNOWY

Forget him. He spent too much time on Palm Island.

BLUE TONGUE

Yeah? When?

SNOWY

Shut-up. Listen. Listen to me, mate, because I've been there. Right? Boxing, mate, bloody boxing. You'll go straight to the top of the queue, mate, because you've got me. Right?

BLUE TONGUE

Bloody oath.

They collapse. Snowy lays on his back.

SNOWY

Let me give yer some good advice, yer
pisspot. Right?

BLUE TONGUE
Right, bloody oath, mate.

SNOWY
Give the grog away.

LATER: It's dawn. Snowy and Blue Tongue are asleep on the side of the road. Snowy's arm is on the road. A truck appears, flat-out, with no time to stop.

Les pulls Snowy out of the way at the last moment. The truck speeds on. Blue Tongue continues sleeping. Snowy wakes, oblivious to the truck.

SNOWY
(growling at Les)
What'd you wake me for?

LATER that morning, Blue Tongue, a massive hangover, drinks tea as Harry divvies the wages on a card table. In the background Snowy supervises sprint run-throughs for Les and Mick.

Kate flashes Blue Tongue a calculated look of disapproval. She turns to watch Les easily beat Mick. Blue Tongue burps.

HARRY
With the greatest deal of respect, Son, you need a little more cunning if you expect to survive in the fight game. That's where your mob let themselves down badly.

BLUE TONGUE
Hah, my mob's been drinking for forty thousand years.

HARRY
Then it's time they gave it away.

Les and Mick jog over. Kate hands them cold cordial.

KATE
That was fantastic, Les.

LES
(for Blue Tongue's benefit)

You're never gonna get anywhere if you don't train properly.

Harry indicates each person's wages. Les quickly picks his up.

BLUE TONGUE
He's a cunning runner, eh Boss?

LES
Whip your arse any day.

BLUE TONGUE
Cunning Les, how's about I race you over one hundred yards, give you twenty-five yards start?

Les laughs. Blue Tongue pushes all his money into the center of the table.

LES
Twenty-five yards start?

SNOWY
Can't be done.

Les puts half his money on top of Blue Tongue's, covering the bet.

LES
Wanta double it?

BLUE TONGUE
Okay. I win the bet, you wash the dishes.
You win the bet, I wash your socks.

Harry shakes his head at Blue Tongue.

HARRY
That's the point I was making about your mob.

LATER: Blue Tongue and Les are ready to race. Les has a twenty-five-yard start. The others are at the finishing line.

BUTCH
Who do you want to win?

KATE
The best runner of course.

SNOWY
(screaming)

Go.

They both take off like the wind. Les is fast but Blue Tongue hauls him in nearly catching him on the line. Everybody, including Les, is amazed at Blue Tongue's speed.

HARRY
Geeze, that was great. I've never seen anything like it.

Les goes to take the money.

LES
Bad luck though.

Blue Tongue snatches the money first.

BLUE TONGUE
What d'you mean bad luck?

LES
I won the race.

HARRY
A bet's a bet.

BLUE TONGUE
Who said anything about winning the race?
I said I'd race you over a hundred and I did.

Blue Tongue winks at Harry who nods his head and grins. Les is flabbergasted.

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

The bus is camped at the edge of the desert. Mick, in shorts, lies in the sun. Les washes dishes. Blue Tongue dumps stones and sticks into the washing. Les jumps back.

BLUE TONGUE
Sacred objects, mate. Give 'em a good scrub.

The Troupe laughs. Kate smiles warmly at Blue Tongue.

LATER: Blue Tongue sits on the ground and writes in his exercise book. Les, carrying the dishwater, *accidentally* trips, spilling the water over Blue Tongue and the book. Kate gives Les a filthy look.

LES
Sorry, mate. Accident.

Blue Tongue laughs, pretends to wash himself.

LATER: Les manoeuvres Kate behind the bus.

LES
I know a good water hole. We'll be back before anyone knows.

Kate considers before shaking her head.

LES
Why not?

KATE
I haven't got a costume.

LES
Neither have I.

She allows Les to slowly back her against the bus.

LES
You know how I feel about you.

He kisses her and she returns the kiss. He cups her breast. She moves, indicating she doesn't want him to. He leaves his hand on her breast.

LES
Why not?

KATE
Because.

LES
Because why?

She doesn't answer. He continues caressing her breast. She allows it then gently pulls away.

LES

Don't you like it?

KATE
It's not that.

LES
What then?
(she doesn't answer)
What's wrong?

KATE
I dunno.

Les brushes her neck with the back of his hand. Her eyes are fixed on passing clouds. She speaks softly to herself.

KATE
I miss not having a mum.

EXT. OUTBACK DESERT - MORNING

The bus is camped at another place along the roadside. Blue Tongue looks across the desert to mountains. Kate joins him. She looks warmly at Blue Tongue. For a moment Blue Tongue is unsure how to react. He laughs at her. Kate is aware Harry is observing them.

KATE
Where do you come from?

Blue Tongue looks to the mountains. Harry motions Kate over.

HARRY
You know, Kate, with your Mum and me, it wasn't that we didn't love each other. It was the others, everybody. They couldn't except it.

Kate looks at him aghast.

LATER: Kate, dressed in tight jeans, a blouse tied at the waist, cap and Dunlop Volleys, packs an army water bottle and sandwiches into her shoulder handbag. Harry and Les watch.

HARRY
Where you off to?

KATE

Blue Tongue's showing me where he comes from.

Harry quickly looks at Scorpion but he doesn't respond.

LES
Bloody stupid!

Blue Tongue, bare-chested and bare footed, but wearing jeans, walks off.

HARRY
Is that wise?

Kate angrily tosses her bag across her shoulder and follows Blue Tongue.

LES
You could...

KATE
Get lost!

LES
...get lost.

SNOWY
(to Les)
You'd wanta improve your footwork, Son.

Harry frowns.

EXT. ROCKY DESERT - DAY

Kate and Blue Tongue have walked miles. The sun is intense. Exhausted, Kate sits on rocks and empties sand from her shoes. She drinks from her water bottle.

KATE
Nothing but sand. How d'you people survive?

She offers Blue Tongue the water bottle but he digs among the rocks then holds up a large frog.

KATE
Yuk!

Blue Tongue squeezes the frog's belly. Water squirts out. He holds the frog in front of his face and makes out he's drinking from it. Kate is horrified. He offers her a drink from the frog. She grimaces and drinks more from her water bottle. Blue Tongue releases the frog.

KATE

You didn't really drink that did you?

Blue Tongue laughs and plucks an almost invisible desert flower. He holds it against her face. She smiles and puts the flower in her hair.

LATER: The desert merges into rocks. They approach a pristine billabong. Blue Tongue removes his jeans, throws them on the bank, dives under in his undies and disappears. He emerges in the middle of the billabong.

KATE

What about crocodiles?

Blue Tongue, grinning, shakes his head.

KATE

How d'you know?

BLUE TONGUE

Come in.

KATE

I can't swim.

Kate removes her shoes and sits at the edge of the billabong, her feet dangling in the water.

Bubbles appear heading for the unsuspecting Kate. She sees the bubbles too late and is dragged under the water by her feet. She surfaces to a laughing Blue Tongue waist deep in water. She playfully attacks him.

KATE

You bastard.

She chases him and dunks his head. He grabs her hands and swims out pulling her with him.

KATE

(frightened)

No...don't...

He lets her go. She sinks but he swims under and supports her.

BLUE TONGUE
Relax, float. Kick your legs.

He lets her go. She momentarily panics but floats by kicking her legs and moving her arms.

BLUE TONGUE
Watch.

He demonstrates floating on his back without kicking. She relaxes and tries to float but sinks. He swims under and supports her with his hands in the small of her back so she is floating. She arches and relaxes. He removes his hands and she floats. Her smile is generous.

He shows her how to frog kick her legs and propel herself backwards through the water. She's amazed at her ability.

He swims further away.

BLUE TONGUE
Come on.

He demonstrates dog paddle.

BLUE TONGUE
Like this.

She cautiously dog paddles.

BLUE TONGUE
Relax.

They dog paddle side by side returning to the bank where they sit.

BLUE TONGUE
My people were always here.

He touches her cheek with the back of his hand. She shivers and holds his hand tight against her cheek. He turns to kiss her.

KATE
No.

BLUE TONGUE

Why?

KATE
I don't know.

BLUE TONGUE
I do.

KATE
I'm not like...

BLUE TONGUE
Yes you are.

KATE
I'm not.

He nods. She pulls away, turns her back on him.

KATE
I'm just not that type of girl. Really.

She faces him. He nods.

KATE
I'm not.

BLUE TONGUE
You kiss Les.

KATE
I've...I've never done it with anyone.

His face lights with glee. He gently kisses her on the lips before turning around and walking into the water. He swims to the middle of the billabong.

LATER: Kate is dressed in jeans and blouse and her underwear dries on a rock. Blue Tongue playfully holds her bra across his chest. She laughs.

LATER: Kate lies on her back. Blue Tongue washes his hands in the water. He farts.

KATE
(genuinely not knowing)
What was that?

BLUE TONGUE

That was the fresh-water crocodile that
lives...

Blue Tongue points to some reeds.

BLUE TONGUE
...just over there.

KATE
Bloody hell!

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

Harry, Butch, Snowy and Scorpion sit around the campfire.
Harry looks at Scorpion who shrugs his shoulders.

SCORPION
Not my country, Boss.

A Cooeeee is heard then the smiling teeth of Blue Tongue appear
from the darkness followed by a grinning Kate. Les jumps up.
Harry reads, feigning disinterest.

LES
Where the bloody hell...!

KATE
Put a sock in it, Les.

LES
Everyone was concerned!

Blue Tongue gives Butch a hand made spear.

BUTCH
Ripper.

Showy glances at Harry, forcing himself to read.

EXT. ROADSIDE CAMP - MORNING

As the sun rises Blue Tongue works out intensively with the
skipping rope. Everybody else is asleep.

LES O.S.
Shut-up, you black bastard!

Blue Tongue laughs.

BLUE TONGUE

If you're gonna be world champion, mate,
you've gotta get fair dinkum.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Les and Blue Tongue slug it out in front of a moderate crowd. It's an even fight. Harry winks to Snowy to indicate he's impressed with Blue Tongue's improvement.

Snowy rings the bell to end round two. As the fighters return to their respective corners Snowy notices Scorpion among the crowd talking and smiling to himself. He subtly draws Harry's attention to Scorpion.

It's near the end of round three. Harry is about to tug his right ear when he glances at Kate barracking for Blue Tongue. Harry decides to let them fight on their merits. Snowy and Mick watch with added interest. Les and Blue Tongue continue, neither getting the upper hand. At the end of the third round Harry reluctantly raises both hands and the crowd cheer. Blue Tongue and Les smile at Kate who acknowledges both fighters.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Blue Tongue trains flat out on the punching bag. Snowy nods approval.

LATER: The Troupe enjoys a meal of sandwiches. Scorpion grins to himself. Harry speaks to Snowy.

HARRY

I'm gonna put him on the boards.

Blue Tongue smiles.

HARRY

But no more walkabout, okay?

Blue Tongue nods. Kate smiles warmly.

SNOWY

Is that wise?

Harry looks at Scorpion, recognises the onset of punch-drunkness.

HARRY

Sooner or later we all move up...or on.

KATE

What about the coppers?

HARRY

Leave them to me.

INT. BOXING TENT NIGHT

It's another town. Harry has already selected FIGHTERS for Les and Mick who are on the boards with Blue Tongue, Scorpion and Snowy. POLICE mingle among the crowd. Four CHALLENGERS indicate their willingness to fight Blue Tongue.

Harry observes Kate smiling at Blue Tongue.

Boxing boots protrude from a kitbag belonging to a ferocious looking CHALLENGER. Harry points to the ferocious challenger.

INT. BOXING TENT NIGHT

Harry calls Blue Tongue and the Challenger to the center. Blue Tongue and the Challenger meet in the center. Kate is concerned that the police are watching Blue Tongue. Les observes from the side.

More POLICE enter and spread among the crowd.

HARRY

Before we start tonight's event, Folks,
we're gonna pass the bucket...

Butch brings a bucket to the center.

HARRY

...for a worthy cause, the Policeman's
Ball. I know some of you have probably had
your differences with the law but when
you're in trouble, who do you turn to?

The Police acknowledge Harry. Butch moves among the crowd. Most of the crowd indicate for Butch to buzz off.

Snowy rings the bell. The Challenger rushes at Blue Tongue catching him with a flurry of good punches. Les grins, looks at Kate barracking for Blue Tongue. Blue Tongue counters with a similar flurry. The fighters stand toe to toe slugging it out.

SNOWY

Feet! Use your bloody feet!

Blue Tongue dances around the challenger, picking him off at will. Every time the Challenger attacks, Blue Tongue evades with perfect footwork. Snowy is ecstatic, Harry surprised and Les disappointed. Blue Tongue hits the Challenger hard. Harry steps between them.

HARRY

(whispering)

For Christ sake, carry him till the third.

LATER: Blue Tongue floors the Challenger. Harry raises Blue Tongue's hand. The crowd are silent. Blue Tongue grins at Snowy and Kate. Les reluctantly claps.

LATER: The crowd have gone. The local SERGEANT remains. Blue Tongue sneaks a glance as he prepares to pack up.

Harry checks the bucket. The contributions are meagre. He puts a handful of notes in and hands the bucket to the sergeant who gives Harry a piece of paper. Harry's surprised at what he reads.

SERGEANT

Didn't you know?

Harry folds the paper and puts it in his wallet.

SERGEANT

Keep him out of trouble.

HARRY

Thanks.

Blue Tongue shadow boxes as the others pack up.

SERGEANT THOMAS

I hope he's worth it, Harry.

EXT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Another town and Blue Tongue presents himself professionally on the boards with Les, Mick and Scorpion. Harry spruiks to a large crowd. Snowy bangs the drum. Eager LOCALS raise their hand to fight Blue Tongue.

Snowy observes Scorpion grinning and mumbling to himself.

INT. BOXING TENT NIGHT

Blue Tongue, executing perfect footwork, knocks his OPPONENT out. Snowy smiles. Harry watches Kate eagerly applaud.

LATER: Scorpion savagely punches a weaker opponent. Harry stops the fight, raises Scorpion's hand. The crowd boo. Snowy puts a towel over Scorpion's shoulders. Four CHALLENGERS indicate their willingness to fight Blue Tongue and leads him out.

INT. BOXING BUS - MORNING

The bus speeds along an outback road. Harry, reading a newspaper, sits in the middle of Kate and Snowy. The by-line of the section he's reading is: *Medical Experts Want Boxing Banned.*

Kate, leaning against the passenger window, gazes at the passing outback.

In the back of the bus Blue Tongue also gazes at the landscape. Les, on the opposite side, does likewise.

LATER: The bus slows behind Les who's jogging. It stops. Les hops on and immediately does push-ups.

EXT. BUS - DAY

The bus approaches the outskirts of a large town.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Les looks excitedly at the looming horizon of the town.

LES
Civilization at last.

Mick's eyes light up. Blue Tongue grins at Les. Scorpion sleeps.

EXT. TOWN - AFTERNOON

The bus drives through the town. Easter eggs are on sale in shop windows.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHOWGROUNDS - AFTERNOON

The bus approaches the Showgrounds. At the entrance is a large group of PROTESTERS waving *BAN BOXING* placards.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Harry, Snowy and Kate, silently but grimly, watch the Protestors furiously wave their placards at the passing bus.

LES
(screaming)
Piss off!

EXT. SHOWGROUNDS - AFTERNOON

The bus drives into the showgrounds. The Protestors remain outside the entrance. SHOW PEOPLE busily prepare stalls and groom cattle for the show.

The bus drives up the main street of the showgrounds. Stall holders and workers wave to Snowy and Harry.

The bus approaches a bar which is situated in the prime position. Next door is a large Music Tent with signs displaying Rock and Roll acts. Black material hangs across the entrance. WORKERS apply the finishing touches.

The showground's manager, SCOTTIE, hurriedly follows the bus.

SNOWY
(inferring the Music Tent)
Hallo, hallo.

Harry jumps from the bus before it stops. He hurries to the workers.

HARRY
What's this doing here? You can't set up here!

The Workers appear confused. Scottie arrives.

HARRY
We're always next to the bloody bar, you know that.

SCOTTIE
When we didn't get your application...

HARRY

I sent the bloody thing.

SCOTTIE
Late and when we couldn't contact you...

KATE
It was sent weeks in advance.

SCOTTIE
That's the PMG for you.

HARRY
They have to move.

SCOTTIE
There's a new Committee, Harry, with a
different approach.
(whispering)
One of the singer's old Man's on the
Committee and...

HARRY
Where are we?

SCOTTIE
I saved you the perfect spot.

Harry returns to the bus. Scottie follows.

SCOTTIE
Even though your application was in late.

Harry gets in the bus.

SCOTTIE
Things have changed, Harry.

EXT. END OF STREET/SHOWGROUNDS - AFTERNOON

The bus pulls up next to stables and a manure pit. Scottie
proudly points to what is obviously the worst site.

HARRY
I'll say they've bloody changed.

SNOWY
Shit!

LATER: The troupe have just finished erecting the tent and boards. They're tired and disappointed.

HARRY

If that's how they want to play it. Butch
I've got a job for you.

Butch's eyes light up.

INT. BOXING TENT - NIGHT

Butch paints flyers. Kate spreads white singlets on the mat. Harry enters carrying black material. He gives Kate the material.

KATE

Where'd you get this?

HARRY

One of the tents was more than helpful.

LATER: Kate stitches black letters on the back of singlets.

EXT. MAIN STREET/SHOWGROUNDS - MORNING

It's early morning, opening day. PEOPLE arrive. The troupe, all wearing white singlets with *HARRY CORBETT'S BOXING TROUPE* on the back, proudly march past the Music Tent, now minus its black material. A Gigantic sign across the Music Tent reads: *JOHNNY O'KEEFE* and *ROCK'N'ROLL*. The bar is already open. Blue Tongue grins at Les.

LES

What're you grinning at?

Blue Tongue points to the singlets.

BLUE TONGUE

Black and white.

They pass another tent advertising Country and Western music, featuring a large painting of Chad Morgan emphasising his famous teeth. CHAD MORGAN appears and waves to the troupe. Blue Tongue rushes over and shakes his hand.

Scottie, somewhat bewildered, watches the Troupe.

EXT. OUTSIDE FRONT GATE TO SHOWGROUNDS - MORNING

The Protestors have swelled. As the Troupe march through the showground gates the Protestors chant.

PROTESTORS

Down with boxing...down with
boxing...What d'we want? No boxing.
When d'we want it? Now...

The Troupe heads towards the Protestors. Les and Mick loosen up as if preparing for a fight. Scottie, fearing the worst, hurries to intervene. The MALES among the Protestors bravely, but apprehensively, stand in front of the WOMEN.

Just as it seems a confrontation is inevitable Snowy stops the troupe and orchestrates training for Les, Mick and Scorpion. They skip, shadow box and spar.

Kate and Butch distribute flyers to arriving PEOPLE.

LATER: Butch dances an Irish jig to Snowy playing harmonica.

Harry spruiks through a megaphone which drowns the Protestors' chanting.

HARRY

We have the show of the century, ladies and gentlemen, specially designed to provide the whole family with entertainment. You can find us in our special position right at the end of the Main Street. And if you don't know where that is

(referring to Protestors)

ask one of these lovely wowers of our free and democratic nation for directions. Did you know what wower stands for, folks? Wowers, We Only Want Social Evils Remedied.....

Scottie hurries over.

SCOTTIE

I don't think this really accords with the new Committee's outlook.

HARRY

You tell the new Committee to go and bag their collective heads.

Scottie is horrified.

EXT. BOXING TENT - DAY

Later that morning the Protestors demonstrate opposite the Boxing Tent. The crowd for the boxing is meagre.

Les looks out the tent to check the crowd.

INT. BOXING TENT - DAY

Les is disappointed in the crowd size and the Protestors. Harry walks among the Troupe. They're dressed ready to start the show. Harry is aware their spirits are down.

LES
Bloody Protestors!

HARRY
Forget them. They're a side issue. This
is your big chance.

Les, anxious, erupts into an intensive warm-up.

HARRY
Where's bloody Blue Tongue?

SNOWY
Where's Butch?

Kate holds the tent flap open and indicates outside.

EXT. BOXING TENT - AFTERNOON

Blue Tongue and Butch mime punch drunk boxers to PASSERSBY.

An elderly, COUPLE wheeling a trolley laden with cakes, passes. Blue Tongue pretends to take a cake. The couple angrily shoo Blue Tongue and Butch out of their way.

The troupe file out of the tent and take their positions on the boards. Immediately Snowy beats the drum Blue Tongue robotically climbs the boards. The crowd clap. Blue Tongue grins at Scorpion who amusingly shakes his head. The crowd swells.

The fighters climb onto the boards, Snowy bangs the drum, Kate operates the ticket box and Harry grabs the mike.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove? Who'll take a glove?

PROTESTOR

We don't want boxing in this town!

LES

(screaming)

Why don't you get over here and have a go?

One of the Protestors taps his finger to his head at Les.

LES

You're so stupid, pal, you'd have to climb over a glass wall to see what was on the other side.

Kate and Butch laugh. Les winks at Harry who nods approvingly. Scottie arrives with two POLICE OFFICERS. The police gently move the Protestors back. Les and Mick clap.

LES

(yelling)

And your missus, she's so stupid she failed her blood test.

Scottie goes to Harry.

SCOTTIE

You know they're holding a public meeting in the town hall tomorrow morning to ban boxing tents?

(Harry is unconcerned.)

We can't afford to get the town offside, Harry.

HARRY

Course not.

Harry dismisses Scottie by addressing the crowd.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove?

Three MEMBERS of the crowd put their hands up.

INT. BOXING TENT - AFTERNOON

Les easily evades an opponent, then scans the audience for Promoters.

LATER: It's the last fight. Scorpion side steps the wild haymakers of an overweight CONTESTANT, then, grinning, sticks his jaw out, allowing the contestant to easily hit him. Snowy prematurely rings the bell to end the fight. The crowd boo. Harry holds Scorpion's hand up as the winner. The crowd angrily leave.

HARRY

Give the contestants a big hand, Ladies and Gentlemen. And tell all your friends we have another show later this afternoon at four o'clock.

Harry smiles at Kate, but is concerned for Scorpion, who's still grinning as Snowy towels him down.

LATER: Scorpion lies in the sawdust.

HARRY

You okay?

SCORPION

Sure, Boss.

HARRY

Get this inta yer.

Harry tosses Scorpion a bottle of *HYPOL*. Scorpion considers it suspiciously.

SCORPION

Bloody white man's poison!

EXT. MERRY-GO-ROUND - DAY

Harry sits on a bench, watches an old style merry-go-round packed with children and parents.

EXT. SIDESHOW ALLEY/SHOWGROUNDS - DAY

Kate, Les, Mick and Blue Tongue stroll through Sideshow Alley. They wear their singlets and hand out flyers. The crowd is festive. Kate is aware of the curious glances given to Blue Tongue.

Harry approaches from the opposite direction. Just as Kate sees Harry, Blue Tongue puts his arm lovingly around her shoulder. She freaks but Blue Tongue is undaunted, almost challenging her to pull away. But before she can react Les similarly puts his arm round her. Relieved, she smiles as Harry joins them.

One tent is decorated in exotic paintings of animals, including a large monkey with a long tail, and Pygmies. MAKKA, colorfully dressed, spruiks.

MAKKA

Step right up, Ladies and Gentlemen. Come in and see a real live...

Makka points to the painting of the monkey.

MAKKA

...orangutan from deepest Africa perform his remarkable tricks with Tam Tam the Leopard Man...Gedday there Harry, me boy.

Harry acknowledges Makka.

MAKKA

This amazing beast known to jungle cognoscentes as Pongo Pygaesus is the cunningest orangutan ever captured by man...

Directly opposite, CLARRIE spruiks on a platform outside his tent featuring a large drawing of a great white pointer. Blue Tongue is captivated by the white pointer.

HARRY

Orangutans come from Borneo, Makka.

MAKKA

Is that so, Harry?

HARRY

And they don't have tails.

MAKKA

They don't have tails? Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, come in and see the world's only orangutan with a tail. That's right, Ladies and Gentlemen, this unique creature

is the only one of its kind ever to be
discovered in deepest Africa...

Harry acknowledges Makka's cunning.

BLUE TONGUE

A live man-eating shark?

Clarrie speaks directly to Blue Tongue.

CLARRIE

Son, I guarantee you , if you don't see live
on stage a real, live, man-eating shark,
then I, Honest Clarrie Smith, personally
promise to refund double your money.

BLUE TONGUE

Double?

HARRY

Forget it, it's a con.

Harry walks off. Blue Tongue pulls Kate towards the shark tent.
She resists. Blue Tongue buys a ticket for the Man-eating
Shark.

Les hugs Kate who notices Butch grinning and politely pulls
away. Kate grabs Butch.

KATE

Come here you.

She hugs Butch round the neck and kisses him.

BUTCH

Yuk!

INT. SHARK TENT - AFTERNOON

Blue Tongue is disappointed to see a MAN on a stool who is eating
a piece of flake.

EXT. SIDESHOW ALLEY - AFTERNOON

Blue Tongue emerges from the tent. The Troupe laugh at Blue
Tongue's disappointment.

BLUE TONGUE

You bloody white fellas!

LATER: Blue Tongue's face is covered in fairy floss. Les shakes his head in mock jest as he hands out flyers. Blue Tongue dabs fairy floss in Les's face. Kate laughs.

LATER: The Troupe arrives at The Fortune Teller tent opposite the Vaudeville Tent. Both have crowds watching the two SPRUIKERS.

KATE

These are new.

CINDY

Step inside, Ladies and Gentlemen and meet the world's funniest woman...

HONEST JOHN

Come inside our tent and have your fortune told by Princess Isabella...

The WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN appears on the platform next to CINDY. Dressed in black she is devoid of any facial expression.

WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN

My mother asked me what I said to my husband on my wedding night. Geeze, that's a hard one, I said...

The crowd laugh. Kate is aware PRINCESS ISABELLA, dressed in Middle Eastern attire, is staring at her.

HONEST JOHN

Princess Isabella has been chosen by the gods as their personal medium. There is nothing this lady does not know.....

Kate is mesmerised by Princess Isabella's gaze. A PLANT in the crowd yells to the world's funniest woman.

PLANT

We want tits.

WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN

You'd look real funny with tits, luv.

The crowd love it. Honest John has to work harder. He points at Kate.

HONEST JOHN

She can even tell you what you're thinking.
Who're you searching for, Darling? That
tall...

Les appears next to Kate.

HONEST JOHN
...dark..

Blue Tongue appears the other side.

HONEST JOHN
...handsome stranger...

Princess Isabella's eyes lock on Kate's.

WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN
(returning to her tent)
Stick around to the end, folks and you
might get to see a little pussy.

The World's Funniest Woman returns to her tent. Cindy acts
shocked.

HONEST JOHN
Disgusting!

LES
Who's gonna win the Melbourne Cup?

Princess Isabella smiles at Les.

HONEST JOHN
Come in and find out.

LES
If she's so good, tell us.

HONEST JOHN
She hasn't got a form guide on her, mate.

LES
She shouldn't need one.

Princess Isabella continues staring at Kate.

HONEST JOHN
I'll ask her.

Honest John goes to Princess Isabella who whispers in his ear.
Honest John immediately glances at Kate.

HONEST JOHN
Princess Isabella says that a great horse
will win the Melbourne Cup...

Blue Tongue roars laughing.

HONEST JOHN
...and that just proves what a remarkable
oracle she is. I'll tell you something
for free. You're Harry Corbett's
daughter, aren't you?

Kate looks to where Princess Isabella was but she's gone. The
World's Funniest Woman reappears.

WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN
I promised you a little pussy so here it
is.

Blue Tongue and Les's eyes light up as she slowly lifts her dress
to reveal a tattoo of a cat high on her thigh.

WORLD'S FUNNIEST WOMAN
I call her Tabby.

Blue Tongue shrieks laughing and turns to Kate but she's
disappeared.

EXT. JEWELRY STALL - DAY

Les looks at a collection of cheap jewelry. He points to a
friendship ring. An elderly STALL-HOLDER smiles at Les as she
gets the ring.

INT. PRINCESS ISABELLA'S CARAVAN - DAY

Kate cautiously enters Princess Isabella's caravan at the back
of her tent. It is illuminated by candles and cosmically
decorated.

On a wall are photos of Sideshow Alley people. Kate is drawn
to a larger photo of a young Princess Isabella along side a
female DWARF who has Kate's facial features.

Princess Isabella appears behind Kate.

PRINCESS ISABELLA

You never knew your mother, did you?

Kate is stunned.

EXT. PIER - TWILIGHT

Harry fishes off the end of a pier. Kate, dressed in loose blouse and shorts, approaches him. She holds an old photo. In the background Les jogs knee-deep through water. Butch balances precariously along the edge of the pier as would a tight-rope walker on the high-wire. He shadow boxes.

KATE

You were ashamed of her.

A SMALL GIRL rides her bike close to the edge of the pier.

HARRY

I just wasn't strong enough.

Kate sits next to Harry. She notices his misty eyes, puts her arm round round his shoulder.

HARRY

She had the biggest smile you've ever seen.
Her hair was made of silk. You know what
her motto was?

Kate shakes her head.

HARRY

Think big.

Kate laughs.

HARRY

And those crystal clear eyes. She was the
most perfect woman in the world.

The small girl on the bicycle accidentally bumps Butch who hits his head on the edge of the pier and falls into the sea. Kate drops her line and runs to where Butch fell in. All that's visible is the surging sea.

KATE

(screaming)

Butch.

Harry attempts to rise but falls back. Kate hesitates before jumping in feet first and is taken down by the strong undertow.

EXT. BEACH - TWILIGHT

Les sees Harry stumbling towards a life buoy on the pier. He races out of the water.

EXT. UNDERWATER - TWILIGHT

Kate swims under the limp body of Butch and grabs him round the waist then kicks upwards.

EXT. PIER - TWILIGHT

Les runs up the pier.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Les opens the door on Kate standing solemnly over a bed containing the unconscious Butch. Harry, exhausted and breathing heavy, sits on a chair.

Snowy enters with the wrapped box from under his bed. He puts it under Butch's bed.

DOCTOR

He's down for the count but you know better than I do that champions sometimes get back up.

The Doctor leaves as Mick enters.

SNOWY

He'll get up.

Mick sits next to Butch, and softly sings, *Dear Old Donegal*

INT. CORRIDOR, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Scorpion, grinning and mumbling to himself, sits on a bench in the hospital corridor.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

The moon bounces off a swift flowing stream. It illuminates Blue Tongue covered in ceremonial clay and dancing traditional style.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Harry sleeps next to the grinning Scorpion. A shadow and footsteps pass and enter the hospital room. Scorpion looks straight ahead.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Butch is still unconscious. Kate sleeps, her head resting next to Butch.

In the eerie darkness a hand places something next to Butch's head.

NEXT MORNING the sunrise slowly moves over Kate's face. She wearily awakens and sees a four-leaf clover next to Butch who is not moving. She glances round.

KATE

Dad!

Les, Snowy and Mick are there but not Harry.

INT. TOWN HALL - MORNING

Harry pushes open the double doors of the town hall. The anti-boxing crowd in the hall are baying for blood. The MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE sit up front. The Woman Protestor speaks from the stage. Behind her sit a veritable committee of Local COUNCILORS. Scottie sits at the front of the audience.

WOMAN PROTESTOR

It's just horrible allowing grown men,
some of them not even grown men, doing that
to each other...

Harry enters the hall.

WOMAN PROTESTOR

...all the time, broken jaws, fractured
this and fractured that, concussions and
contusions.

She speaks directly at Harry.

WOMAN PROTESTOR

It's not human.

The Audience watch Harry walk up the middle of the isle. The MAYOR jumps up.

MAYOR
The boxing Tents have to go, Harry.

HARRY
Haven't they been good for your business over the years, George?

MAYOR
It's a changing land, Harry.

HARRY
The boxing tents have always kept your bars full.

WOMAN PROTESTOR
That's the point. We want our kids growing up in a healthy environment.

MAYOR
We don't want them learning how to knock each other's blocks off.

WOMAN PROTESTOR
Those tents encourage disorderly conduct, hooliganism and crime.

HARRY
Boxing builds character, gives the kids something to do. Keeps them off the streets.

The Crowd howl Harry down. He considers challenging them but appears reconciled to the inevitable.

WOMAN PROTESTOR
(softly)
But people get hurt.

An OFFICIAL enters through a side door, hurriedly goes to the Mayor and whispers in his ear.

MAYOR
(standing)
We'll adjourn for fifteen minutes.

Harry is isolated, the crowd reflected in his eyes.

EXT. TOWN HALL - MORNING

Harry stands on the steps outside the Town Hall. He takes a pill as he watches the protestors with their CHILDREN glaring at him. A small kid throws a stone across the street. It nearly hits a passing car. The MOTHER shakes the kid.

A taxi pulls up. Kate hops out, all smiles. Harry hurries over. In the back seat, next to Snowy, Mick and Les, sits Butch, pale and weak.

BUTCH

Look what Snowy gave me.

Butch points to a piano accordion on the floor of the taxi.

A tear rolls down Harry's face. The young kid throws another stone.

Kate hurries off, past the mother smacking her kid.

LES

Where you going?

Kate doesn't answer. Harry shouts at the mother.

HARRY

That's right, take away his youthful dreams.

(shouting to the protestors)

March him off to the fluffy gamboling lamb parade, why don't you, where you can bore him to the back teeth! You come back after the tapestry parade, Kid, and Harry Corbett'll give you a free ticket to the real world where you'll have a ringside seat to watch your hero slug it out in the golden square.

EXT. CHEMIST - AFTERNOON

Through the window of a chemist shop we watch Kate searching the shelves. Unable to find what she's after she asks the male CHEMIST. Both the chemist and Kate are embarrassed.

INT. TOWN HALL - MORNING

The meeting has resumed. Harry has the floor.

HARRY

I don't teach my boys how to throw a punch....

MAYOR

(scoffing)

Harry...!

SNOWY

He doesn't.

The crowd scoff. Mr and Mrs GRIEVES arrive, stand at the back of the hall alongside Les, Snowy and Mick. The crowd hush. The Mayor acknowledges and motions them to sit. The Grieves make their way to the front, sit at the end of a row. Harry is slightly thrown by their arrival.

HARRY

I teach them how to avoid one.

LES

That's right. He does.

HARRY

You do that, I tell them and you'll be able to remember your name at the end of the day.

LES

Bloody oath!

(to the Mayor)

What was your name again, Cobber?

Les turns to Mick and they laugh. The audience is not amused.

MAYOR

We have to consider complaints from ordinary people, Harry.

HARRY

Ordinary people eh?

Harry addresses a Councilor.

HARRY

Dick, your mob run the cattle pavilion?

Councilor DICK nods.

HARRY

You people have wanted to get rid of the boxing tents since day one.

Harry addresses Councilor ARTHUR.

HARRY

Arthur, your missus still winning the embroidery each year?

ARTHUR

We're talking about bringing our kids up in a better place to live.

MAYOR

You have to admit, Harry, the boxing tents are a thing of the past. You no longer get the crowds...

HARRY

It's that plug-in-drug people are watching. It's got everyone staying at home...

MAYOR

When's the last time you paid your boys the basic wage?

HARRY

This is not about the boxing tents. You want to replace Sideshow Alley with your bitumen and fast rides...

The Mayor glances knowingly at the Councilors.

HARRY

...Instant action and fast thrills.

MAYOR

Look around you, Harry.

The crowd reaffirm their anti-boxing stance. Scorpion appears. Stands at the back. Harry immediately looks at the Grieves.

INT. BOXING BUS - AFTERNOON

Kate enters the back of the Boxing Bus. Blue Tongue, wearing only boxing shorts sleeps on a bunk. Kate gently sits on the bunk. Blue Tongue wakes. Kate's smile tells Blue Tongue Butch

is okay. He grins. She puts her fingers to his lips, stands and draws the curtain.

She slowly undresses. Blue Tongue's eyes balloon as she removes her bra. Kate tosses him a packet of condoms.

BLUE TONGUE

What're these?

KATE

You've got to the count of ten to work it out.

BLUE TONGUE

My mob invented these.

Kate rolls her eyes.

BLUE TONGUE

Out of possum gut. When we finish we blowed them up and played footy.

She pushes him down. They make slow and passionate love, like two embracing swimmers in the ocean.

MARY V.O.

People are scared to walk past your tent. Decent people.

MRS SMITH V.O.

Hitting somebody until he submits or is unable to defend himself is barbaric...

MARY V.O.

We don't want our children growing up that way!

MRS SMITH V.O.

It's uncivilized!

HARRY V.O.

Your average bloke, he doesn't appreciate the finer arts of pugilistic science.

Kate and Blue Tongue are in the throes of ecstasy.

INT. TOWN HALL - MORNING

The crowd is visibly vocal. Scottie runs in waving a telegram.

SNOWY

Let's go. You can't grow hair on potatoes.

Mrs Grieve breaks down. Mr Grieve assists her from the room. As she passes Scorpion she stops, looks deep into his eyes before leaving. The Mayor reads the telegram.

MAYOR

These proposals will deliver your knockout punch, Harry.

SCOTTIE

In case you didn't know, Harry, that woman...

HARRY

Was Ronny Grieve's mother. I should know. I refereed the fight.

Harry immediately looks at Scorpion, who remains dispassionate. The Mayor hands Harry the telegram. Harry reads it.

HARRY

You can't be serious.

MAYOR

Boxing is down for the count.

INT. BOXING TENT - AFTERNOON

The Troupe is in the tent. Snowy reads the telegram. Les conceals the ring in his hand.

SNOWY

A boxer can fight only once a week!

MICK

What!

SNOWY

If a boxer is knocked out he must refrain from fighting for one month.

MICK

That's impossible.

Blue Tongue and Kate enter. Both are apprehensive. Les smiles warmly at Kate. When Kate avoids eye contact Harry realises what has happened between Blue Tongue and Kate

LES

(joking)

Blue Tongue, that means you'll never be able to fight.

Butch goes to Blue Tongue, holds the four leaf clover out. Blue Tongue closes Butch's hand over the four leaf clover.

BLUE TONGUE

Might bring you more luck, eh?

Butch hugs Blue Tongue. Les looks at Kate. She looks away, puts her handbag down and begins darning a singlet.

SNOWY

Boxers have to be medically examined by a doctor before each fight.

Les opens Kate's bag to put the ring in. He notices the packet of condoms and immediately assumes Kate's purchased them for him. He looks at Kate warmly.

MICK

Bloody stupid.

Les realises some condoms are missing. He is unable to hide his disappointment. He sees Kate smile at Blue Tongue, an implication he doesn't want to acknowledge. Les closes the bag and pockets the ring.

A MAN in a suit enters. Blue Tongue sees him and slips out the back. The Man winks to Harry who acknowledges, and watches from the sidelines.

SNOWY

Can they do it?

Harry indicates to the Man the direction Blue Tongue left. Kate is apprehensive. She blocks the Man. Les hurries over.

MAN

I'm looking for a fighter, name of Blue Tongue and...

Les considers before replying.

LES
He isn't here, Pal, so get out.

MAN
But...

HARRY
Les!

Les pushes him out the tent.

LES
I won't tell you again!
Kate smiles at Les but he refuses to look at her.

HARRY
You know who that was?

LES
Bloody coppers!

HARRY
Jack Lean, the boxing Promoter.

LES
Shit!

Les runs out the tent after him.

HARRY
This could be our last show.

Butch is devastated.

INT. BUS - DAY

Blue Tongue sits in the back of the bus, almost hiding. Kate enters, sits next to him. Blue Tongue is uneasy. She puts her hand on his.

KATE
Carn, we're going out.

He smiles.

BLUE TONGUE
Where?

INT. BOXING TENT - AFTERNOON

Kate and Blue Tongue enter the tent. Kate wears make-up, Blue Tongue a new shirt.

KATE
We're off to the pictures.

Les shakes his head. Harry can't hide his disappointment.

BUTCH
Can I come?

KATE
Next time.
(to Blue Tongue)
Come on.

HARRY
I need to talk to you two.

KATE
We'll be back in time for the next show.

Kate hurriedly pushes Blue Tongue out and hands Scorpion his darned singlet as they leave.

EXT. LOCAL PICTURE THEATRE - AFTERNOON

Kate and Blue Tongue queue to purchase tickets for the Sat-arvo flick. Kate hugs Blue Tongue. The WHITES in the queue show resentment at Kate and Blue Tongue being together. A group of ABORIGINES hover in the background.

KATE
What's the matter? Don't you want to be with me?

Blue Tongue smiles warmly.

KATE
Two, back stalls.

The TICKET PERSON can't see Blue Tongue and pushes two tickets across.

INT. PICTURE THEATRE FOYER - AFTERNOON

In the foyer the Aborigines stand in a group by themselves. Kate holds two boxes of Jaffas. She gives Blue Tongue a box but he is unresponsive.

KATE

If you let them get you down they've won.

Kate hands the USHER two tickets. The usher tears them in half, returns one half and looks queryingly at Blue Tongue as they enter.

INT. LOCAL PICTURE THEATRE - AFTERNOON

Inside the theatre kids rush to get the best seats. Kate and Blue Tongue sit in the middle of the theater. WHITES move away. The front of the theater is reserved for Aborigines. As the lights go down the Aborigines are ushered in. Two male USHERS shine their torches looking for Blue Tongue. Kate grabs Blue Tongue's hand.

KATE

I don't want to see this film anymore.

Blue Tongue defiantly jerks her hand.

KATE

It's not worth it.

BLUE TONGUE

(smiling)

You can't let them get you down.

One usher points Blue Tongue out to the other.

KATE

What if we sit down the front? I Don't mind, really.

BLUE TONGUE

With all those Abos?

Kate laughs loud. The Ushers appear behind them.

USHER

You can't sit here. It's white's only.

BLUE TONGUE

This is my land. I'll sit where I like.

KATE

Bloody oath!

The shocked Ushers look at each other, then angrily turn on Blue Tongue. But before they touch him a strong hand grabs each Usher by the shoulder. The Ushers turn to see the defiant face of Scorpion, grinning.

SCORPION

You're blocking my way.

Both Ushers simultaneously move allowing Scorpion access to sit next to Kate and Blue Tongue. As the Ushers hurriedly leave the Aborigines wave excitedly.

SCORPION

And you two'd better behave yourselves.

Scorpion warmly smiles at Blue Tongue who hugs him round the shoulder.

The first film, a short, is footage of an Aboriginal corroboree. Aboriginal Kids keep turning and waving at Blue Tongue who returns their wave.

LATER: The cinema doors open and five POLICE armed with truncheons are led in by the Ushers. The Ushers point Scorpion and Blue Tongue out. The kids warn Blue Tongue the police have arrived. Blue Tongue motions to Scorpion.

SCORPION

Beat it.

BLUE TONGUE

No.

SCORPION

This is my fight.

BLUE TONGUE

I'm not leaving.

SCORPION

You want her to get hurt?

Blue Tongue grabs Kate's hand and they race through the Aboriginal section with two police chasing.

Scorpion throws himself among the other police taking them to the ground.

The Aborigines block the police chasing Kate and Blue Tongue but the two Ushers grab Blue Tongue and hold him. Kate struggles with the Ushers but one of the officers smashes Blue Tongue in the ribs with his baton. As Blue Tongue falls the officer kicks him in the ribs. Blue Tongue clutches his chest.

Scorpion throws wild punches at the three police who back away. He runs to the front and punches the officer kicking Blue Tongue. The officer is knocked unconscious. Scorpion indicates for Kate to escape. Kate goes to assist Blue Tongue but Blue Tongue pushes her away. She leaves through a side door. The Aborigines passively block the door after her.

All the officers converge and pummel Scorpion to the ground. They are relentless in their attack. In the film on screen an Aboriginal tribe perform a dance ceremony.

EXT. POLICE COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

Scorpion, handcuffed behind his back, is roughly dragged from the back of a police van. He struggles violently but is no match for the five officers. Officer KELLY, gigantic, stands in a doorway and nods to an OFFICER to turn a fire hose on. Scorpion is hosed around the compound. Blue Tongue, horrified, watches from the back of the van.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Harry, Kate and Snowy arrive in a taxi outside the police station.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Sergeant MULLENS is at the counter. Another OFFICER whispers to Mullens about Kate.

SERGEANT MULLENS

They attacked my officers for no reason.

KATE

That's bullshit!

Harry motions for Kate to be quiet.

KATE

The police started it!

Mullens indicates he wants a private word with Harry. They move to the end of the counter.

SERGEANT MULLENS

The old one, we know all about, but the young buck, he started it. He could be looking at a hefty jail sentence. I'm letting your daughter off with a warning...

KATE

I haven't done anything wrong!

HARRY

Listen to him!

KATE

No!

Suddenly Harry clutches his chest.

KATE

Dad!

Harry holds himself up by clinging to the counter. Snowy assists.

SERGEANT MULLENS

You alright?

HARRY

Just an old war wound.

SERGEANT MULLENS

But if I hear one word, one complaint about my officers I'll throw the book at you and it won't just be for resisting arrest. It'll be a morals violation. You understand?

KATE

I've got nothing to be ashamed of.

HARRY

This is what's in store for you...wherever you go.

SERGEANT MULLENS

They're staying here till Monday morning
to front the Magistrate.

Harry puts a wad of money on the counter.

HARRY
I'll put up bail.

SERGEANT MULLENS
(scoffing)
They're Abos.

HARRY
Can we see them?

Mullens shakes his head.

HARRY
Why not?

SNOWY
They're Abos.

SERGEANT MULLENS
You want to spend the weekend with them?

Harry leaves five pound on the counter.

HARRY
Get them some decent tucker.

Harry leaves, assisted by Snowy and Kate. Mullens pockets the
fiver.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The Boxing Bus is outside the police station. Les and Mick are
waiting as Harry, Snowy and Kate leave the police station. Kate
circles the footpath in anguish. Harry removes the paper
Sergeant Thomas gave him from his wallet.

KATE
You should go to hospital.

He hands Kate the paper.

HARRY

I want you to go to this address. Ask for the Simpsons. Explain what's happened to Bluey.

KATE

Why?

HARRY

You'll find out. Take Les. Les, you go with her.

Les gets into the bus.

HARRY

Don't worry about me.

Harry slumps to the ground

HARRY

I'll be alright.

Kate drives the bus away. Snowy looks at a seemingly distressed Harry.

SNOWY

What war did you fight in?

Harry jumps up, sprightly.

HARRY

She's gotta find the truth out for herself.

EXT. BOXING TENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Outside the boxing tent is deserted.

EXT. BOXING BUS CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

The bus slowly drives down a leafy street in an affluent suburb.

LES O.S.

I, ah....

KATE O.S.

Not now, Les.

INT. BOXING BUS CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Les has a street directory open on his lap.

LES

Whatever I can do for you two I'll do it.

Kate forces a smile. Les look at the numbers on the passing houses.

LES

There it is.

EXT. SUBURBAN MIDDLE CLASS HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The house is beautifully groomed with a long driveway winding through an immaculately kept garden. As Les and Kate approach the front door Kate notices a well-constructed tree house, a swing and hanging rope. Two young GIRLS, the same girls in Blue Tongue's photo, peep through a window in the tree house.

LES

This a lawyer's house?

KATE

Dunno.

The two girls scramble down the tree.

EXT. VERANDAH - LATE AFTERNOON

The door is opened by Mrs SIMPSON in an apron and flour covered hands.

KATE

Mrs Simpson?

MRS SIMPSON

Yes?

KATE

Um...ah, Mrs Simpson...I...um, we have a friend, Blue Tongue...

LES

Bluey.

MRS SIMPSON

Yes?

KATE

Um...he's in trouble...

MRS SIMPSON

So?

LES

He's Aboriginal.

MRS SIMPSON

(excited)

Did Barry send you? Have you seen Barry?
How is he?

KATE

Um...

MRS SIMPSON

Come in. Girls go and call your father.

INT. SIMPSON'S LOUNGE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Kate looks at the numerous photos adorning the mantelpiece and grand piano. Most of the photos are of Blue Tongue as a child. In one photo he is dressed in ballet costume, another he plays a violin and another he holds athletic trophies.

LES

Bloody hell.

Mr Simpson, imposing, enters from another door.

MRS SIMPSON

They know someone who knows where Barry is.

LES

Barry!

The two girls are ecstatic. Mr Simpson doesn't share their enthusiasm. The girls immediately back away.

KATE

Um...Barry needs your help. They might
send him back to Palm Island.

MR SIMPSON

Palm Island?

MRS SIMPSON

Barry was never on Palm Island. Whatever
gave you that idea?

Kate looks at the photos and realises they cover most of Blue Tongue's life. Les and Kate look at each other queringly.

KATE
I thought...

MRS SIMPSON
Where is he?

KATE
He's um...been locked up.

Mrs Simpson is visibly shaken.

KATE
He didn't do anything wrong.

Mr Simpson scoffs.

KATE
Really, he didn't.
(breaking down)
We just went to the pictures together.

Mrs Simpson pats Kate on the arm and sits her in an armchair. She hands Kate an exercise book that was on the piano.

MRS SIMPSON
He loved writing poetry. I didn't like them all.

Kate looks through them. Some are on loose paper. She indicates one.

KATE
Can I...?

Mrs Simpson nods. Kate puts the poem in her pocket.

MR SIMPSON
We did everything for that boy...

Mrs Simpson, with tears in her eyes, looks at the photos.

MR SIMPSON
You know his mother didn't want him. Left him in a basket on our doorstep.

MRS SIMPSON

That's not fair, John.

(to Kate)

The Aboriginal Protection Board wanted to take him from her. She knew we'd look after him.

MR SIMPSON

She was a drunk! A no-hoper!

MRS SIMPSON

She gave him to us.

YOUNG GIRL

Is Barry coming home, Mum?

MR SIMPSON

No!

Les winks at the girls who cautiously smile.

LES

He needs help.

MR SIMPSON

It's out of the question.

Mrs Simpson picks up her handbag.

MRS SIMPSON

Oh no it's not!

INT. POLICE CELL ONE - NIGHT

Blue Tongue sits on a bench in a locked cell. He stares straight ahead.

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

An elderly man talks in whispers to Sergeant Mullins. It is Mr Grieves.

INT. OUTSIDE POLICE CELLS - EVENING

A hand opens the trap door of one of the cells. Inside Blue Tongue sits staring straight ahead. The trap is left open.

The next cell is opened. Scorpion, still handcuffed behind his back, sits on the floor, grinning and mumbling to himself.

OFFICER KELLY

Get up! You've got a visitor.

Scorpion stands and slowly walks from the cell. Officer Kelly, in blue singlet and trousers, flexes his muscles. Two Officers watch.

KELLY

Get a kick outa bashing white people, d'ya?

Kelly shadow boxes before shaping up to Scorpion. Kelly jabs Scorpion with continuous lefts to the face. When Scorpion bends to protect his face Kelly hits him with uppercuts. Scorpion charges but is no match for the ferocious Kelly. Blue Tongue screams through the trap. Scorpion charges another Officer, pins him against the wall and bites hard into his shoulder. The Officer screams. The other Officer pommels Scorpion senseless.

Blue Tongue is frozen in anguish.

EXT. SUNSET - TWILIGHT -- AFTERNOON

Beautiful sunset resembles the Aboriginal flag.

INT. POLICE CELL TWO - EVENING

Scorpion's legs dangle a metre from the ground.

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Kate, Les and Mrs Smith enter the police station. The Sergeant warmly nods.

MRS SIMPSON

I've come for my son.

The Sergeant shakes his head. An eerie sound of an Aboriginal death chant can be heard coming from the cells. Mrs Simpson hands the Sergeant a card.

SERGEANT MULLENS

Your husband's Judge Simpson?

INT. POLICE CELL ONE - NIGHT

The eerie sound continues as the police hurriedly unlock Blue Tongue's cell.

Blue Tongue chants as he clubs his head against the wall. His face is covered in blood.

The Officers are apprehensive.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The Officers push Blue Tongue into the foyer of the police station. Blue Tongue has a hard stare and appears not to recognise anyone. Kate wants to go to him but Mrs Simpson hugs him first. Blue Tongue doesn't respond. Mrs Simpson wipes blood off his face with her hanky.

SERGEANT MULLENS

The other Abo hanged himself.

Kate and Les are visibly shocked.

EXT. OUTSIDE POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Mrs Simpson gets in her new car which is parked next to the bus. She looks out the window tearily at Blue Tongue, who is unresponsive, before driving away.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Sergeant Mullens shows Harry and Snowy through to the cells.

INT. POLICE CELLS - NIGHT

Harry and Snowy look through the open door of a cell. An Officer mops the floor.

SERGEANT MULLENS

He used his boot laces.

HARRY

I want to see him.

SERGEANT MULLENS

Are you his next of kin?

Harry's glare cuts to the quick.

INT. STOREROOM - NIGHT

Sergeant Mullens opens a storeroom. Scorpion lies on the floor.

SERGEANT MULLENS

We're waiting for the undertaker.

Scorpion's feet are bare and covered in old scars.

HARRY

Where's his boots?

SERGEANT MULLENS

In a bag somewhere.

Snowy looks closely at Scorpion's face before undoing Scorpion's shirt. His upper body is covered in bruises. Snowy looks at Harry.

SERGEANT MULLENS

He had to be restrained.

Snowy gives Mullins a threatening look.

SERGEANT MULLENS

You know what they're like some of them.

HARRY

I want his boots.

SERGEANT MULLENS

I don't know if I can do that.

Harry's eyes plead.

SERGEANT MULLENS

I'll see what I can do.

EXT. BOXING TENT, SHOWGROUNDS - NIGHT

Sideshow Alley is packed but the boxing tent, boards and ticket area is deserted. A sign reads: *Performances canceled - death in the family.*

INT. BOXING TENT, SHOWGROUNDS - NIGHT

The troupe is depressed. Blue Tongue sits on a stool. His eyes burn with rage. Butch, carries Scorpion's boots around. Kate hands Butch boot laces.

SNOWY

What're we gonna do?

Harry shrugs his shoulders. Butch laces Scorpion's boots.

LES
I can fight three different blokes.

MICK
Same here.

HARRY
You've gotta have a drawcard.

They look to Blue Tongue. Snowy walks behind Blue Tongue and shakes his head.

Benny, carrying his bag, enters the tent.

BUTCH
Benny.

BENNY
Heard you were in a bit of strife.

Butch hugs the boots. Benny smiles.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

It's a beautiful morning. At the back section of a local cemetery a small service is proceeding. Only the Troupe and a PRIEST are present but during the service numerous ABORIGINES, urban and traditional, appear. An OFFICIAL attempts to prevent them entering the cemetery but they ignore him. Blue Tongue stands well back. His eyes are a void.

The Priest blesses a cheap coffin before it is lowered into the ground. Kate drops a rose into the grave. Butch and Harry each throw a boot into the grave. Snowy's eyes are watery. Les and Mick shovel dirt into the grave.

Kate reads Blue Tongue's poem during the above. Blue Tongue doesn't react.

KATE
You take us from our beautiful
valleys...On the Island I felt my mother's
warmth upon my spirit...Touch gently the
foreheads of my children...and I will sing
to them in whispers...and although lost
and hungry...they will treasure the bird
too bright for the forest.

Harry unwraps a small marble headstone which he puts in the earth at the head of the grave. The Aborigines place rocks around the grave.

EXT. BOXING TENT, SHOWGROUNDS - DAY

The noise of placard-carrying Protestors overawe the small crowd waiting outside the boxing tent. The Protestors have increased in numbers, some appear militant.

Scottie watches from the sidelines.

Harry stands on the boards, microphone in hand. Snowy bangs the drum.

Benny, Les and Mick climb the boards.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove? Five quid to go three rounds with one of my lads.

PROTESTOR

Why don't you get a proper job, Fatso?

HARRY

You know why I'm fat, Cobber?

PROTESTOR

Tell us why you're fat, Bozo.

Scottie laughs.

HARRY

Because every time I make love to his missus she gives me a biscuit.

The crowd laughs.

PROTESTOR

You can see by the size of the crowd no one wants you.

Honest John and The Sideshow Alley people appear swelling the crowd to respectable numbers. They acknowledge Harry.

HONEST JOHN

(inferring Scottie)

If we let these bastards go up the bloody hill ahead of us they'll have our graves dug by the time we get there.

Honest John waves ten shillings.

HONEST JOHN
And we're paying.

POLICE arrive, led by Sergeant Mullins and Officer Kelly.

Aborigines arrive en masse.

Scottie nods to one of the crowd, JIMBO 25, who then backs into a Protestor.

JIMBO
Don't push me, you moron.

PROTESTOR
I didn't push you, mate.

JIMBO
You having a go, are yer?

PROTESTOR
No I'm not.

JIMBO
Because if you are.....

Part of the crowd angrily mill around the Protestors. The Police simply watch.

HARRY
Come on, Boys. Don't waste your energy out here. Come inside and step into the ring.

Jimbo pushes the Protestor hard in the chest.

PROTESTOR
I'm not going to fight you...

JIMBO
He's a coward.

HARRY
He's got a right to his opinions.

JIMBO

Not when he has a go at me he don't!

PROTESTOR

I didn't have a go at you.

Suddenly Jimbo king hits the protestor in the face. The Police step in.

HARRY

Show a bit of common sense. We're all here for a good time.

Jimbo pulls away from the Police.

JIMBO

I'll smash anyone who has a go at me.

HARRY

Then have a go at one of my boys.

JIMBO

I'll take them all on.

Scottie indicates for Jimbo to cool it, but Jimbo is out of control. The crowd roar support.

HARRY

That won't be necessary, son. You can fight Benny here.

Benny impassionately watches Jimbo as he climbs the boards.

The police have formed a cordon between the crowd and the Protestors.

Snowy bangs the drum. Harry recognises Jack Lean at the back of the crowd. Jack Lean nods to Harry and indicates one of two seasoned FIGHTERS accompanying him. Les, aware of Jack Lean, moves excitedly.

Kelly sneers at Blue Tongue.

HARRY

Who'll take a glove to fight the one and only...

(indicating Les)

...the Bondi Rumbler?

Half a dozen men put their hands up. Harry points to FRED, one of the fighters with Jack Lean. Les is delighted.

The Management Committee and the Mayor appear. The Mayor hands Scottie papers. The Protestors eagerly gather round.

In the background the elderly couple wheel their trolley of cakes, including cream sponges, past. They acknowledge Scottie.

Blue Tongue glares at Kelly who mimes putting a noose around his neck and hanging himself.

HARRY

We need a contestant to challenge...

Harry is about to match Blue Tongue with Jack Lean's second fighter when Blue Tongue climbs down from the boards and runs to the cake trolley.

HARRY

...Blue Tongue.

Blue Tongue puts his hands into a cream cake and immediately bursts into singing *Mammy*. The elderly couple are horrified.

BLUE TONGUE

*The sun shines east, the sun shines west,
but I know where the sun shines best...*

He slaps his back with his cream covered hands leaving white handprints across his body. The crowd are confused as are the troupe. Blue Tongue slides on his knees in front of Kelly.

BLUE TONGUE

*I walk a million miles for one of your
smiles, Mammy...*

He slaps his chest with his hands. The crowd laugh. The police are not amused. Mullens is ropable. Kate takes Blue Tongue's hand to lead him away but Blue Tongue pulls back to Kelly.

BLUE TONGUE

You gonna turn the hose on me? Wanta hose
Blue Tongue away? Eh, Lawman, what about
it? You and me one out.

(whispering)

Coward!

Kelly looks to Mullens who nods. Kelly grins. Jack Lean gives Harry a *this could be interesting* look.

HARRY

Get your tickets, ladies and gentlemen,
for the fight of the century. The Local
Constabulary verses...

SCOTTIE

Show's over, Harry. We're closing you
down.

HARRY

You can't do that.

Scottie waves papers.

SCOTTIE

I can and I am.

Harry snatches the papers. The crowd boo.

SCOTTIE

These are the new Rules and Regulations of
the Boxing Commission. You haven't been
abiding by them.

HARRY

They haven't been passed yet.

SCOTTIE

I have the power...

HARRY

To do what?

SCOTTIE

To prevent you putting on any show in these
showground that
(reading)
*Charges patrons an admission fee to view
such show.*

Scottie smiles.

HARRY

They can't stop me putting on our last
show.

Kate takes the papers from Harry, reads them.

KATE
They can, Dad.

HARRY
Only if we charge admission. Well we're
going to give them the show of a
lifetime...for free.
(into microphone)
Ladies and Gentlemen, this show is on the
house.

The crowd rush the entrance. Scottie looks to the Sergeant who
shrugs his shoulders.

HARRY
(to Kate)
Then again, nothing to stop us passing the
bucket.

INT. BOXING BUS - DAY

Blue Tongue is packing his few belongings. Kate enters, stands
behind him. Although aware of her presence he doesn't turn.

KATE
Why did you let us believe you escaped from
Palm Island?

BLUE TONGUE
All my people are on Palm Island.

KATE
The lies...and the stuff about reading the
last page first.

BLUE TONGUE
Our stories are different from yours.

KATE
You're leaving, aren't you?
(he doesn't answer)
I love you.

He turns, looks deep into her eyes.

BLUE TONGUE

Sometimes our children change into trees
or mountains. Then the mountains
disappear. Now the children can't hear
the songs. Songs of the Emu Maidens,
Spider Woman, Windaru the Magic Child...

She hugs him tightly round the waist. Blue Tongue winches from
the pain in his ribs. Les enters the bus.

LES
Let me fight him.

Blue Tongue shakes his head.

LES
Scorpion was my friend too, you know.

BLUE TONGUE
He's my cousin.

LES
You know the Promoter's here to see you
fight.

KATE
Your ribs are broken.

BLUE TONGUE
(grinning at Les)
Ancestral Father gave the great lizard two
bodies. One for the white man's prisons
and the other for when the sky rises again.

INT. BOXING TENT - DAY

The fight between Benny and Jimbo is under way. It's obvious
Benny is carrying Jimbo.

Butch takes a bucket among the crowd. They generously donate.

The bell rings to end the first round. Jimbo staggers to his
corner.

JIMBO
That's it. I've had enough.

The crowd boo.

JIMBO

(to the crowd)
You having a go are yer? Eh? Yer
peanuts! I'll take yer all on.

The crowd laugh as Jimbo leaves the tent.

SPECTATOR
Don't call us, we'll call you.

LATER: Harry motions Les and his opponent, DANCING FRED, to the centre. They touch gloves. Snowy rings the bell. Fred's forte is speedy footwork and he flashily dances round Les, clipping him round the ears in the process. Les angrily chases him.

SNOWY
Don't tumble. Match him for footwork.
Plant yourself in the centre and make him
come to you.

Les retains his composure and takes centre position.

SNOWY
Jab, jab with your left, jab, jab...Plant
your left foot and jab.

Les jabs and connects but Fred ducks under and clocks Les with a hard uppercut.

SNOWY
Use your feet. Use your feet.

Les evades, then using good footwork hits Fred with hard lefts and rights. The crowd cheers.

SNOWY
Good boy.

Harry looks to Jack Lean who nods appreciation at Les's effort.

LATER: It's near the end of the third round and both fighters slog it out in the centre, neither getting the upper hand and neither taking a backward step.

Snowy rings the bell and Harry raises a hand of both fighters. The crowd cheer and shower the mat with coins. Butch puts the money in the bucket. Les, exhausted, sits in his corner. Snowy pats him on the back. Kate is happy for him.

Jack Lean holds a card out for Les.

DICK LEAN

Harry said you were a good kid. You come
and see me.

Kate takes the card for Les who is all smiles. Jack Lean drops
a bundle of notes in the bucket before going to Harry.

JACK LEAN

I'm hoping this Aboriginal's good, Harry.
What's he like under pressure?

HARRY

Wait and see.

Harry notices the Police angrily gesturing at Blue Tongue. He
goes to the Sergeant.

HARRY

A small wager?

SERGEANT

I'm listening.

HARRY

Your boy wins, I forget how Scorpion died.

SERGEANT

Go on.

HARRY

My boy wins, you forget all about him.

SERGEANT

You know betting on boxing's illegal,
Harry.

Blue Tongue holds one hand up for Kate to put a glove on. Snowy
gives two police who were with Kelly when Scorpion was killed
the gloves for Kelly.

Kate holds the second glove out but Blue Tongue can't raise his
arm.

BLUE TONGUE

(smiling)

It's only the pain that's hurting.

She lowers the glove. He pushes his hand into the glove. Snowy joins Blue Tongue.

KATE
His ribs are broken.

SNOWY
(offhandedly)
You don't punch with your ribs.

HARRY
(to the crowd)
This is a special match in more ways than one. It could be the last time you see Harry Corbett's Boxing Tent.

SNOWY
(simultaneous to Harry talking)
I've seen them all and I know a good fighter when I see one. You can go all the way, Son. I've never asked anything of one of my lads. But I'm asking you to win this one for Scorpion...and me. Win it.

Blue Tongue stares unemotionally at Kelly.

HARRY
Tonight we have the fight of the century, a real grudge match between the local constabulary, that hurly burley of law enforcement, that helped make this great nation of convicts and larrikins what it is today...

The crowd half clap and mock boo.

HARRY
...and the original inhabitants who roamed this vast country in their hundreds of thousands, those magnificent warrior kings.

Some of the crowd boo. Snowy motions for Blue Tongue to keep his right elbow tucked into his side.

Mick rings the bell. Kelly races at Blue Tongue who easily evades him then catches Kelly with left jabs to the face. A

section of the crowd roar for Blue Tongue's blood. During the fight Harry watches Kate's concern for Blue Tongue.

The police scream for Kelly to attack the ribs but each time Kelly attempts to hit Blue Tongue's ribs he dodges and counters with jabs to the face, all the time holding his right hand by his side.

Mick rings the bell. Both fighters go to their corners.

SERGEANT

Don't make a fool of us, Son.

KELLY

I'll kill him.

SNOWY

When he turns to his left he opens up.

Blue Tongue nods.

Mick rings the bell. Harry indicates for the fighters to fight. Kelly rushes to the centre. Blue Tongue skirts the edges of the mat. Kelly chases. Blue Tongue fakes to the right. When Kelly moves to his left and throws a punch Blue Tongue hits him hard to the jaw sending Kelly to his knees. Before Harry can intervene Blue Tongue repeatedly hits Kelly. The Crowd boo. Harry pushes Blue Tongue back and applies a count on Kelly.

HARRY

One...two...three...

Kelly waits till the last moment. He jumps up and charges. Again Blue Tongue fakes and when Kelly throws a punch Blue Tongue hits him hard to the face. The crowd are silent as Blue Tongue easily outscores Kelly. Kate apprehensively grips a towel.

Mick rings the bell. The fighters return to their corners. Kelly, showing the signs of Blue Tongue's onslaught, gasps for breath.

Blue Tongue, although in pain from his ribs, is emotionless. Kate wipes the sweat off his forehead. Jack Lean smiles and nods appreciatively to Harry.

Harry observes the Sergeant and police whispering. One of the police mouths to Blue Tongue: *You'll get what your mate got.* He mimes hanging. Harry notices the Sergeant nodding.

KATE

Just keep away from him and you've won.

SNOWY

Keep working him to his left.

BLUE TONGUE

This round's for Scorpion.

Blue Tongue stands, ready to go. Harry looks at Kate before subtly tugging his ear, indicating for Blue Tongue to throw the fight. Blue Tongue can't believe it. He looks at Snowy.

KATE

No, Dad, you can't.

Harry goes to Blue Tongue's corner.

SNOWY

Not this one, Harry. Please.

HARRY

This is my troupe and as long as I'm in charge you do what I say. End of story!

Blue Tongue shakes his head.

KATE

You don't understand. You don't know his people.

HARRY

(to Blue Tongue)

I may not know much about your people, son, but I certainly know a lot about my people.

Blue Tongue looks around the sea of angry faces. Harry looks at Snowy who's caught between a rock and a hard place, then looks Blue Tongue hard in the eyes before shaking his head.

HARRY

I'll stop the fight.

Mick rings the bell and Blue Tongue races to Kelly smashing him hard in the face before he's hardly off his stool. As Kelly goes down Blue Tongue reigns blows to his face. Harry blows his whistle.

KELLY

Enough, I've had enough.

But Blue Tongue keeps hitting Kelly. Harry pushes Blue Tongue away. Kelly stands. The crowd scream for Kelly.

HARRY

I told you what to do. Do it!

Blue Tongue looks into the audience. All he sees, in slow motion, is a crowd of Aborigines cheering for him. At the back he sees Scorpion smiling.

SERGEANT

(screaming)

The ribs. Hit him in the ribs.

In slow motion Kelly smashes Blue Tongue hard in the ribs sending him to his knees. The crowd roars. Kate winches. Blue Tongue is half paralysed, dropping to his knees. Harry hesitates allowing Kelly to again hit Blue Tongue in the ribs.

KATE

Dad!

Harry pushes Kelly back and puts the count on Blue Tongue.

HARRY

One...two...three...

(whispering)

Stay down.

Four...five...six...seven...eight...

Blue Tongue staggers up at the last moment. Harry checks his gloves. Blue Tongue grins through the pain and limps forward. As Kelly attempts to deliver a knockout punch Blue Tongue spears a left sending Kelly to his knees.

Again Blue Tongue sees only cheering Aborigines in the crowd. Scorpion talks directly to him.

SCORPION

You're a true warrior, Son. A Warrior King.

BUTCH

Look out!

Blue Tongue moves in slow motion to hit Kelly but suddenly Kelly is to Blue Tongue's side and smashes him hard to the ribs sending Blue Tongue to the mat. Kate gasps. The crowd quieten. Harry is about to stop the fight when Blue Tongue grabs his arm, shakes his head and struggles to his feet. Kelly rushes Blue Tongue, hits him in the face. Blue Tongue absorbs the blow and with his hands by his side walks forward. Kelly looks at the Sergeant.

SERGEANT

Smash the black bastard!

Kelly hits Blue Tongue hard in the face nearly rendering him unconscious. Harry considers stopping the fight but doesn't. The crowd are eerily silent. Blue Tongue, his arms still by his side, walks closer to Kelly who appears uncertain. Some of the crowd clap Blue Tongue. Kelly hits Blue Tongue half-hearted in the face but still Blue Tongue advances. More of the crowd slow clap Blue Tongue's courage.

SERGEANT

Put him away!

Kelly goes to hit Blue Tongue but Harry steps in and raises Kelly's hand. Blue Tongue continues advancing. Harry grabs him.

HARRY

It's all over, Son.

The police cheer but the crowd continue slow-clapping Blue Tongue and toss silver coins into his corner. Butch collects the money. Kate, tears in her eyes, smiles at Blue Tongue, standing in the middle of the mat. His expression is non committal.

Jack Lean leaves as the crowd continue slow clapping.

CREDITS roll with Blue Tongue, alone in the middle of the ring. *Waltzing Matilda*, in dialect, plays.

Still Photos of the famous Boxing Tents and their fighters are shown. They slowly transform to photos of modern day showgrounds of bitumen and fast rides.

THE END