

# SAVAGE RIVER

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## **CHARACTERS**

KINGSLEY

TIGER

JUDE

## **SETTING**

The descriptions of the set are the imaginings of the writer based on research in Western Tasmania, Flinders Island and Big Dog Island in the Bass Strait. The play should just as easily work on a minimal set with only essential props and furniture. However there is a river.

## ACT ONE

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*The lights fade. The first chords of music. A tune trying to find itself.*

### SCENE ONE

*Friday night.*

*Out of the darkness as the music fades...*

KINGSLEY: Tiger!?... Tiger!?... Jesus wept—Where the... *Tiger!*

*Light spills into the space revealing KINGSLEY searching through rusted tin cans and old bottles.*

*Savage River: A dirt floor. A wood heap and axe. A smouldering fire in a cut drum. An old television, couch, machinery, rusted tools, a rusted bathtub, crockery, bottles, tobacco tins and other detritus are strewn out across the dirt. But for the natural environment—the river—we could be looking at the remnants of an antiques museum.*

Ya move things around—I can't find nothin' ... *Tiger! Tiger!?*

*TIGER comes in from out back. He stands before KINGSLEY as if in trouble.*

Where have ya been?

TIGER: What?

KINGSLEY: I come home I expect to see ya.

TIGER: I was out back.

KINGSLEY: Doin' what'?

TIGER: Just lookin'. I found this.

KINGSLEY: It's an old teacup.

TIGER: Yeh.

KINGSLEY: What ya want that for?

TIGER: It's got pictures on it.

KINGSLEY: I didn't know where you'd got to. I come home I expect to see ya here—

TIGER: [*simultaneous*] I must have been caught up.

KINGSLEY: [*simultaneous*] —I was yellin' for ya, screamin' ya name.

TIGER: You know how you can get caught up with what ya doin'. So much so that—ya ears can turn off?

KINGSLEY: They turn 'emselves off, do they?

TIGER: Um, yeh, it happens without ya knowin'.

KINGSLEY: You weren't touchin' anythin' ya shouldn't?

TIGER *shakes his head*. KINGSLEY *stares him down*.

TIGER: I wouldn't lie to ya. Nothin' [*simultaneous*] cuts you up more.

KINGSLEY: [*simultaneous*] Nothin' cuts me up more. That's right.

TIGER: That's why I wouldn't.

*Pause.*

KINGSLEY: You go cleanin' things up I can't find nothin'. The tin. [*Simultaneous*] I can't find—

TIGER: [*simultaneous*] It's above the mirror. I thought it needed a special spot.

KINGSLEY *moves to the tin quickly*.

KINGSLEY: The special spot was where I left it. [*He pulls the tin can down—searching inside it. Counting it.*] Jesus wept.

TIGER: You took most for the last dog fight.

KINGSLEY: I know when I dipped into it, dinger! Set the table.

TIGER: You got paid today?

KINGSLEY: *Set the table!*

TIGER *does as he is told*. KINGSLEY *pockets the coins and a note (something around twenty dollars). Washes his face in a water bowl and begins to dry shave.*

[*To himself*] It'll have to do.

TIGER: Is the dog fight tonight? Cassius is fightin' tonight?

KINGSLEY: In a couple of shifts.

TIGER: What are ya bettin' on tonight then?

KINGSLEY: Jesus wept.

*The razor's not shaving as it should.*

I got Thompson hammerin' me for the money, I don't need you naggin' me—look at this! Bumfluff! You've left bumfluff clogged in me razor!

TIGER *places tomato sauce on the table, coming in and out from the kitchen area.*

One of these blades lasts eleven shaves. Sometimes twelve. Stop movin' around while I'm talkin' with ya!... Twelve shaves I can get out of one of these blades. You know why?

TIGER *shakes his head.*

I rinse it out so it's clean—there's basics—if ya have ta shave that bumfluff of yours rinse the bloody thing out! [*He stops momentarily.*] What's that?

TIGER: It's a tea towel.

KINGSLEY: I know it's a tea towel. What are you wearing it like a skirt for?

TIGER: I saw a bloke doin' it on the tele. A cook.

KINGSLEY: What cook?

TIGER: A cook that shows you how to cook things on the tele. On that mornin' show with the lady who has shiny white hair that never moves... They do a cooking bit.

TIGER *continues setting the table.*

KINGSLEY: You're watchin' tele in the day?

TIGER: They were cookin' a bit of fish.

KINGSLEY: Who can't cook a bit of fish!

TIGER: They did all this stuff to it with—sweet chilli, um, shallots—

KINGSLEY: Sounds terrible!

TIGER: I dunno.

KINGSLEY: Pourin' sweet chilli and what? Shallots, over a good piece a fish is over-complicatin' things. If you're gonna eat a fish, in my book, just eat the fish.

TIGER: It still looked like a fish.

KINGSLEY: Of course it still looked like a fish, ya dinger! But it wasn't anymore, was it? People dress things up nowadays. You've gotta be able to separate ya sheep from ya goats. [*He finishes up shaving and moves over to the table.*] How much tele ya watchin'?

TIGER: Just the cookin' show. On the days you're up at Savage.

KINGSLEY *stares him down.*

Sometimes I watch one of the movies.

KINGSLEY: Go on.

TIGER: Funny ones.

KINGSLEY: How do you mean?

TIGER: I saw one with three fellas who bump into each other and slap each other's faces, get their noses stuck in doors? The fat one with short hair, he pulls faces, like this.

*He demonstrates a face with sounds—laughing. KINGSLEY is expressionless.*

It's not normal gettin' a good'n like that. They're normally ones about ladies and men, you know, I turn them off... Nights you're up at Savage I have a look, that's the end of it.

KINGSLEY: You're wearing a tea towel for a skirt, that's the sort of messed-up thing TV can do.

*TIGER leaves and gets a big roll of butcher's paper and places it on the table. KINGSLEY opens it and serves by hand.*

Two potato cakes for you. Two potato cakes for me. Dagwood Dog for you. Dagwood Dog for...

*He puts the second Dagwood Dog on TIGER's plate.*

TIGER: What?

KINGSLEY: I'm givin' ya two.

TIGER: Nah. [*Simultaneous*] You don't have to do that.

KINGSLEY: [*simultaneous*] I'm givin' ya two!

TIGER: What about you?

KINGSLEY: I know how much ya love 'em.

TIGER: It ain't fair on you?

KINGSLEY: Just shut up and put it in ya gob!

TIGER: Okay... Ta.

KINGSLEY: I like doin' it. Friday night takeaway, only happens once a fortnight.

*TIGER eats with gusto.*

I've never seen someone scoffin' down Dagwood Dogs with so much happiness. You remind me of my ol' dog.

TIGER: BD?

KINGSLEY: That dog used to eat so quick that at the end of his dinner he wasn't quite sure if he'd eaten anythin'. He'd swallow a whole tin, a kilo of meat in a few bites. Have no idea he'd eaten it! He'd be lookin' up at me, shakin', waggin' his tail, sayin', 'Where is it? Did I just eat somethin'? Uh, oh, I think I just ate a whole tin and I can't remember it.' Bloody dog.