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CHARACTERS

Bryce Palmer Bar owner/councillor. Gruff, wily.
Shel Millard Bar person/hairdresser. Sharp, wants away.
Kerry 'Biff' Oaten Sheep shearer. Works hard, drinks hard. **Cal Byford** Sheep shearer. Works hard, thinks hard.
John 'Sloop' Boyes Shepherd/mechanic. Thief, stoner.
Chep Evans Farmer/handyman. Sarcastic, cynical.
Reece Biggerstaff Australian shearer. **Barbie Biggerstaff** Trophy wife.

Marty Shufflebottom Australian shearer.
Murray Tussock Head of the New Zealand Sheep Shearing Federation. Gambling addict.
Dick Handler Commentator (pre-recorded, optional). **Kent Balding** Commentator (pre-recorded, optional).

SET

The Ramshackle Bar is a simple Kiwi pub with a main entrance, a door leading to a beer garden, and an internal door behind the bar that provides access to the back rooms, toilets, and cellar. On the wall there's a flat screen TV, a jukebox, and a dartboard. The furnishings consist of several tables, chairs, and four barstools. The bar itself boasts a top shelf lined with premium spirits.
For the sheep shearing set, two fenced platforms are required.

PROPS

Newspaper
Watch
Older flat screen TV and remote
Laptop and mobile phones
Antennae-style radio with telescopic aerial in sections
Tube or bottle of Super Glue
Tradie radio
Dartboard/darts/cards
Rugby ball, beach cricket set
Suitcases
Sheep and wool (real sheep not needed), shears and clippers
Bar props (bottles, glasses, etc)

ACT ONE

Scene One

The Ramshackle Bar, Chipton Valley, somewhere in New Zealand. Bryce Palmer, bar owner and councillor, sits at the bar reading the paper. He checks his watch and points a remote control at an old TV. It doesn't work.

BRYCE. Oh, for Christ's sake! Not now, you grumpy old bastard.

(Goes to the TV) Like the old man used to say, ain't nothing that can't be fixed with a good, hard slap. *(Slaps the TV, which falls from its bracket and hangs)* Violence is never the answer. *(Sits back at the bar, opens an old laptop which lights up with an error message)* That's weird. *(Flips open a phone and makes a call)* Nick, what's up with the old internet? I got nothing, and I'm trying to watch the boys in the semis. They're on soon. *(Listens)* It can't be the tower. It's a new one - only been up a week. *(Listens)* Nicked? Again? But we put it behind a bloody great steel fence with more barbed wire than a bull paddock. *(Listens)* They nicked the fence. *(Beat)* And the wire. Thieving mongrels. Did you get a picture of 'em this time, or did they nick the camera, too? *(Laughs but abruptly stops)* They nicked the camera too. Look, I know it's your day to be the town's IT guy, but can you pop your policeman's hat on for a sec and get me a report done? *(Listens)* Okay, on the bar for lunchtime. Good man.

He goes behind the bar, plugs in the radio and pulls up the aerial. It detaches. He holds it in place, trying to tune into a station. Once tuned, he lets go. The aerial falls, there's nothing but white noise. He tries again, and the radio resumes playing. Still trying to hold the aerial in place, he edges towards the beer taps, but the radio's power cable stops him. He stretches for a glass but can't quite reach the tap lever. The radio commentary starts.

DICK. "Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to this year's 'Golden Shears' semi-final. I'm Dick Handler, here with Kent Balding, and we're live today from the beautiful Australian town of..."

Bryce loses grip on the aerial, and static fills the room. He gives up, pours a beer, sits, and holds the aerial in place.

KENT. "...South Africa versus New Zealand. The South Africans are a well-known quantity. But what do we know about Team New Zealand, Dick?"

DICK. "Well, Kent, these boys have been the surprise package of this year's competition. Hailing from the tiny town of Chipton Vale..."

BRYCE. Valley. It's Chipton Valley. Bloody Ignoranuses.

Three people enter the bar from the main entrance. Shel, hairdresser/barperson, heads out the back straight to the toilet. Sloop, shepherd/mechanic, exits to the rear beer garden. Chep, farmer, sits at the bar.

BRYCE. We're closed.

CHEP. Who made you the boss?

BRYCE. The town did. When they voted me in as councillor.

CHEP. Yeah? It could vote you out, too.

BRYCE. That's how a democracy works, numb nut. Maybe you could try voting next time. Shake up the system.

CHEP. Yeah, I might just do that. Start a revulsion.

Shel enters, lipstick applied and sits next to Chep.

BRYCE. Until that day comes, this is my town and my bar. You're kinda screwed all ways, Cheppy boy. I'm head honcho, whether you like it or not.

SHEL. You're not the boss of me.

BRYCE. *(Looks at his watch)* I will be in three, two, one... *(Shel ambles behind the bar)* You're late. This prick's been chewing me ear off with his political agenda. Get him a beer, for God's sake.

CHEP. Hey Bryce, you putting the shearing on? Biff and Cal are gonna be on the telly. Big day for the boys. It's starting soon.

BRYCE. I know. I'm trying to. Got no wi-fi. Tower's gone.

CHEP. Wanna speed it up? Or do we need to go up to the new bar on the ridge? *(Bryce bristles)*

SHEL. Get Nick to give it a kick. Turn it off and on again. Shouldn't take long. It's on soon.

BRYCE. I know! I mean, the tower's 'gone'. Been flogged again. All I've got's the radio, and that's playing silly buggers. Bloody aerial's busted. Got nothing on FM, AM keeps drifting in and out, but there's a sweet spot if I hold it just right.
(Stares intently at the radio, making minor adjustments. The show fades in.)

DICK. "It's been a great competition, Kent. The Boks are the firm favourites here, especially given Vander Van der Veen's current form."

KENT. "That's right, Dick. Van Der Veen and his penman, Hok Herbershausen, are the bookies' choice to take this year's title."

CHEP. Jeez, sounds like they're up against it. Shame. Cal's been bloody brilliant getting this far.

SHEL. Cal? What about Biff? You know - the guy actually doing the shearing?

CHEP. Yeah, I s'pose. Biff too. Yeah, GCs, the pair of 'em. In fact, **(Rummages in his pocket)** Hey, Bryce, is the T.A.B. working?

BRYCE. Nah, mate, it's down with everything else. I'll open a book for you, if you want. Five to one on the Boks. Long odds on our boys. Could be worth a punt.

CHEP. Bugger that! Twenty bucks on the Ropes to win. **(Hands Bryce a crumpled twenty-dollar note)**

SHEL. Unbelievable.

Sloop enters. Shepherd and town mechanic, he also grows and smokes top-quality weed. He stares at the juke box.

SHEL. Beer, Sloop?

SLOOP. Has this thing paid out today?

SHEL. What are you talking about?

SLOOP. Has anyone hit the jackpot? I'm feeling lucky.

SHEL. It's the jukebox, Sloop.

SLOOP. *(Snaps out of his stare, looks up and grins)* Hmm. Yeah, a beer sounds good. Got the boys on yet, Bryce? It's gonna be on soon.

BRYCE. *(Irate)* Yes, I know! But it doesn't help when some bastard's nicked the...

SLOOP. *(Too quickly)* It wasn't me.

CHEP. What? What wasn't you? *(Gives him a hard stare)*

BRYCE. *(Struggling with the radio)* Somebody give me a hand with this bloody contraption.

SLOOP. *(Escaping Chep's stare)* What's up, boss?

BRYCE. Jeez, Sloop. You been drinking the sheep dip again?

SLOOP. Nah mate, just had a smoke. You legalising it was the best thing ever. The smartest thing any politician ever did.

BRYCE. I didn't.

SLOOP. Really? Coulda sworn...

BRYCE. Just hold the aerial, eh?

Sloop holds the aerial. The radio fades in.

DICK. "Tell us, Vander, how are you finding this part of the count..." *(The radio fades out)*

BRYCE. Did you move?

SLOOP. Yeah, nah... I was, like, I... didn't.

BRYCE. Sloop, you're as much use as tits on a bull. Cheppy. Over here.

SLOOP. Nah, mate. I can do this.

SHEL. We girls like the strong, silent type - the hunters, the gatherers. Guess that explains why you lot are single.

The radio fades in again, and a South African voice is heard.

VANDER. "...tuck the sheep between the legs and away I go."

CHEP. The old 'tuck and shear method'. Can't go wrong with that. That's what I'd be doing, too, if I'd been given the bloody chance. ***(Bitter)*** It should be me out there with Cal.

SHEL. Bro, you had your chance. You lost fair and square. Let it go.

DICK. "Let's meet the Kiwis. Biff Oaten and Cal Byford."

They all cheer, Chep half-heartedly.

SHEL. They're on!

KENT. "You're very much the wild cards, but the numbers don't lie. There's a real chance you could go through to the finals. Are you feeling the pressure, Cal?"

CAL. "Nah, we're in pretty good nick. Staying chill."

BIFF. ***(Massive burp)*** "Hello mum. Love you, Shel!"

SHEL. Love you, babe.

BRYCE. Biff sounds like he's had a few.

CHEP. No change there, then.

SLOOP. Didn't his old lady cark it last year?

DICK. "You're being called to the pens. A quick word for the folks back home?"

BIFF. "Yeah, back to work, you lazy pack of wan..."

The radio fades out.

SHEL. Quick, quick. Get it back on.

CHEP. I've got it! Got any glue behind the bar, Bryce?

BRYCE. Why would I?

SHEL. Yeah, we have, somewhere. Wait a second. **(Rummages beneath the bar and finds a large tube of Super Glue)** Here you go, will that work?

CHEP. Perfect. Right, we know where the aerial sits best, so let's just glue the bastard in.

SLOOP. Good idea. Give it here.

BRYCE. Not a chance, numb nuts. You'll end up sticking yourself to 'Little Sloop'. I'll do it.

Bryce takes the glue and drips some into the hole where the aerial goes. He carefully positions it, the radio fades in, and he lets go. The aerial falls over.

SLOOP. Glue it at the skinny end. It'll go further into the hole.

BRYCE. Good idea. **(Pulls the aerial out, drops some glue onto the skinny end and puts the glue back on the bar)**

CHEP. Don't touch the other end.

BRYCE. I'm not stupid. **(Pushes the skinny end into the hole, and the radio fades in)**

KENT. "It's a terrific start by the South Africans. Vander Van der Veen's shearing away like a man possessed. Two ewes in, and he's really..."

The commentary becomes barely audible.

SLOOP. Give it here! **(Grabs the top of the aerial, which sticks to his hand, and he pulls it out of the radio)** Bugger.

BRYCE. I knew it. I knew you'd do something bloody stupid. **(Grabs the skinny end and is now also glued to the other end of the aerial)** Now look what you made me do.

CHEP. Christ Almighty. Stop messing around. Jeez! ***(Bangs his hand down on the bar in anger and spurts Super Glue across Shel's top)***

SHEL. Careful, oi! This is a new top. ***(Wipes the glue with both hands, but they stick fast to her top over her boobs)*** Oh, well, that's just brilliant. Someone, give me a hand. ***(The men stare at her until Bryce and Sloop jump into action, leaning over the bar, trying ineffectively to wipe off the glue with their free hands)***
Oi - easy!

BRYCE. Make your mind up! Christ, I just want to listen to the bloody radio. Is that too much to ask?

SLOOP. Can we pull the aerial apart? I've got a plan.

BRYCE. That doesn't fill me with a great sense of hope, to be fair.

SLOOP. Just give it a try, yeah? ***(They pull the aerial apart by stepping away from each other)*** Nice.

SHEL. Chep, help me get this top off.

CHEP. Thought you'd never ask.

SHEL. Touch my tits, and I'll feed your balls to the dog.

Chep goes behind the bar and tries to take Shel's top off without actually touching her.

SLOOP. Right, Bryce. Put your end of the aerial in the hole, yeah?

BRYCE. It'll be too small to pick up anything.

SLOOP. Hold my hand.

BRYCE. Now is not the time.

SLOOP. C'mon man. No worms, mate. I promise.

Bryce holds Sloop's hand and regrets it immediately as they become stuck together. Sloop puts his other hand, still with half

the arial stuck to it, in the air. The radio commentary gets louder.

BRYCE. It's working! Go to your left, just a little. ***(The commentary resumes)***

DICK. "They're running away with it. They've only got the clock to stop them but wait. It's a disaster! There's a loose ewe. It's Herbershausen's. Yes, it looks like Hok's lost his flock."

BRYCE. Come on, lads.

Chep has managed to pull Shel's top over the back of her head, and she's now leaning forward with just her hands visible.

SHEL. What's happening? I can't hear a bloody thing. Chep, just keep pulling. ***(Chep tugs a little more)*** Harder, pull harder.

CHEP. ***(To the boys)*** That's what I said to her last night.

SHEL. No, you bloody didn't, dickhead. Hurry up.

Bryce and Sloop turn to watch, and the radio, again, fades out.

BRYCE. Well, isn't this just great? If I find the little shit who nicked that tower, I'll string him up by his..

SLOOP. It wasn't me.

They all look at Sloop.

BRYCE. And I would've got the radio working, I swear. But then you lot turned up to 'help' me fix it. Thanks a bunch. I've seen nothing, heard nothing, and I'm super-glued to a medium-wave moron.

SLOOP. Hey Chep, is your radio in the car?

CHEP. Yeah, bro. Hang on, back in a jiffy.

Chep runs out to the car and comes back with an ultra-modern 'tradie' radio.

BRYCE. Jesus wept! You've got to be bloody kidding me.

Chep tunes in the radio, and the commentary comes through in glorious stereo sound.

DICK. "And what a fantastic end to this year's 'Golden Shears' semi-finals. What an absolute thriller. That was massive, Kent."

KENT. "Huge, Dick. We have just witnessed history being made. I've been in this game for over thirty years, and I've never seen anything like it. It had it all - drama, heart, blood, sweat and tears. Unbelievable. We're tracking down the winners for their take on what will surely be dubbed, 'Shear Gold'!"

BRYCE. ***(Flat, dejected)*** Did you hear that? Once in a bloody lifetime... unbelievable... historical... sheer bloody gold.

SHEL. At least they got to the semis. No one gave them a chance.

CHEP. Would've been a different story if I'd been there. But a bet's a bet, eh, Bryce? What were the odds again? Five to one on twenty? That's a hundred and twenty bucks winnings. Pay up, bro.

BRYCE. ***(Still stuck to Sloop and the aerial, tries unsuccessfully to get to the bar till)*** There's a reason why nobody likes you. I'll pay up when I'm freed up.

SLOOP. ***(Pulls in the other direction to the beer garden)*** I'm going for a smoke. ***(Bryce looks less than impressed)*** I'll go in a bit, eh.

KENT. "And here they are, the winning semi-finalists, heading to the finals to face the Australians. How are you feeling?"

CAL. "Pretty bloody stoked, I can tell you."

BIFF. "Hard out, mate!" ***(Round of applause from the crowd)***

SLOOP. Here, those two Saffas don't half sound like Biff and Cal.

There's a moment of stunned silence. They all look at each other.

BRYCE. They did it! They only went and bloody did it!

Everyone jumps up and down, shouting and cheering, Bryce and

Sloop still glued to the two halves of the radio aerial and each other, and Shel's hands still glued to her chest.

DICK. "We'll talk about the finals in a moment. But first, have you got anything to say to the South African boys?"

BIFF. "Yeah, better luck next time, losers!"

KENT. "Great banter there from the Kiwis."

BIFF. **(Shouting in the background)** "Yeah, that's right. Piss off, limp dicks."

Shel rolls her eyes, Sloop and Chep laugh. Bryce shh's them.

DICK. **(Embarrassed)** "Er, family show guys."

CAL. "Yeah, sorry about that. He gets a bit excited. Yeah, nah, those South African boys were good value. We're just looking forward to the finals now. Maybe have a few beers tonight."

BIFF. "Too fuckin' right. Chur the bros!"

KENT. "We'd like to apologise for the language there. Now, we have the other finalists here - Team Australia. The great Reece Biggerstaff and Marty Shufflebottom. Guys, impressed with what you saw today?"

MARTY. "Not bad at all."

DICK. "Any nerves?"

REECE. "Nothing to get nervous about, Dick. Our little cuzzies from across the ditch did well against unlucky opponents. But we'll be too strong for them in the final."

KENT. "We'll have to wait and see. Now, folks, our sponsors have a surprise for both teams. This year's finals will be held in one of the three following destinations: Italy, the merino capital of the world; the United Kingdom, original home of the wool industry as we know it; or... your own hometown."

DICK. "As the highest-scoring semi-finalists, Team New Zealand get to choose. Think carefully, your first answer must be the one I accept. Rome, London or Chipton Valley? Take your time."

SHEL. Oh. My. God.

BRYCE. You'd better dig out the suitcase, Shel.

CAL. "Wow. No pressure, then. What do you reckon, Biff?"

SHEL. Shit, this is it. It's finally going to happen. I want Italy. No, England. See the family. Oh, I don't care. Anywhere's better than here! Come on, Biff, my big, beautiful man. **(She chants, and the boys join in)** UK, UK, UK...

BIFF. "Chipton Valley. That's where it's going to be. We're taking it home to New Zealand."

CAL. "What? You dumb mother..." **(Chaos erupts as a fight breaks out)**

KENT. "And there you have it. The high-flying Kiwis are heading home."

The radio is switched off. Silence. Shel stands in disbelief.

CHEP. He's not right in the head. I had a feeling he'd crack under the pressure.

SHEL. **(Devastated)** I don't believe it. Why would he do that? He knows I want to travel, to see... to go... **(Beat)** He knows I want more.

SLOOP. More than what, Shel?

SHEL. More than what this shithole has to offer.

CHEP. I'd be happy with me hundred and twenty bucks.

SHEL. Piss off, Chep.

CHEP. I know when I've overstayed my welcome. C'mon on, Sloop. **(He picks up his radio and heads to the door)**

SLOOP. **(Glued hands up)** I might stick around for a while.

BRYCE. **(Excited, punches their hands even higher)** Shit! The finals are coming here. This is a big deal. It's going to put

Chipton Valley on the map. We're not on any map, so that's a win.

Shel heads for the main door, hands still on her chest.

SHEL. ***(Quiet anger)*** I'm going home. I need to make a phone call. I'll be back later once I've... let go of myself.

BRYCE. What about us?

SHEL. There's some turps in the cellar. ***(Pointedly)*** Next to the vodka. ***(Bryce looks sheepish)*** Or you could try peanut butter.

BRYCE. Have we got any?

SHEL. No. ***(The door shuts behind her)***

BRYCE. C'mon, Sloop.

They walk towards the internal door, holding hands, half an aerial each still glued to their other hands.