

## CHARACTERS

HARRY KNOTT, in men's wear  
MAVIS KNOTT, his wife  
ROY CHILD, her brother, a teacher  
CLIVE POGSON, a business executive  
GIRLIE POGSON, his wife  
JUDY POGSON, his daughter, studying the violin  
JOYLEEN (PIPPY), their little girl  
DEEDREE, her little friend  
ERNIE BOYLE, a sanitary man  
NOLA BOYLE, his wife  
ROWLEY MASSON (DIGGER), a mate  
RON SUDDARDS, a post-office clerk  
JULIA SHEEN, a model  
MR ERBAGE, an important person  
TWO AMBULANCE MEN

## SETTING

Mildred Street, Sarsaparilla, a fictitious outer suburb of Sydney, summer, 1961.

## ACT ONE

*When the lights go up on the three homes in Mildred Street, there is an outburst of BARKING as from a pack of dogs somewhere in the distance. PIPPY POGSON appears in the kitchen from one of the invisible rooms of the POGSON home, c. A forthright and astute small girl. Runs through the kitchen, very determined, opens the invisible back door, pauses for a moment, looking and listening. Runs down the steps into the yard. Comes FORWARD, pulls open an invisible back gate. She is perhaps out to investigate the barking dogs. She stands at the gate (i.e. at the footlights) listening, shading her eyes, looking up and down the lane.*

GIRLIE POGSON, her mother, is heard calling from front part of her house.

GIRLIE (*calling, off stage*) Pip-py? . . . Pip-py?

(PIPPY scowls. Explodes under her breath. Runs and hides under the house.)

(BARKING continues spasmodically, gradually dying.)

(GIRLIE POGSON ENTERS her kitchen. A small spruce woman in her forties. Not a hair out of place, and never will be. Everything must be nice, even if you pay the price. MRS POGSON wears all the marks of anxiety and a respectable social level.)

GIRLIE (*calling, quite viciously by now, as she looks out of back door*)

Joy-leen!

(Returns in despair into the kitchen.)

It's the holidays. It's the holidays. Always like this in the holidays. And now those dogs! It shouldn't be allowed.

(Glances at herself in a wall-mirror in passing. Corrects a hair, touches her frown, sighs. Goes out, BACK, into front part of her house.)

(At the same time DEEDREE ENTERS from the front garden. Slightly younger than her friend PIPPY, more innocent, easily put

upon. DEEDREE is the eternal stooge. She is carrying two milk bottles, a loaf, and the newspaper.)

DEEDREE (tentatively, calling) Pip-py? Pip-py? Where are yer?  
(PIPPY sticks her head out from under the house.)

PIPPY (scowling) I'm here. Gee, you're early, Deedree. Didn't you have your breakfast? Mum won't give you any if you haven't.

DEEDREE Course I had me breakfast. Didn't you?

PIPPY (angry) No. Yes!

(She comes out from under the house.)

I wasn't hungry. But I had some to keep her quiet.

DEEDREE Is she going crook?

PIPPY Always.

DEEDREE What about?

PIPPY Oh, everything.

(DEEDREE just stands.)

Says I know too much.

DEEDREE (devotedly) You do know an awful lot, Pippy.

PIPPY Well, I can't help that. It just comes to me.

(During the foregoing, GIRLIE POGSON re-enters her kitchen, starts (in mime) to get the next round of breakfast.)

DEEDREE Monica Jeffreys is gunna read through the dictionary.

PIPPY (contemptuous) Monica Jeffreys! Sooky thing!

DEEDREE She's got as far as B.

PIPPY I don't have to read the dictionary.

DEEDREE (indicating loaf, milk and paper which she is carrying) What am I gunna do with these, Pippy?

PIPPY (jerking her head at the kitchen) Give them to her. It'll sweeten her up.

DEEDREE (doubtful) Ah!

GIRLIE (calling back into the house) If you're not careful, Clive, you'll miss the bus... and who's to blame....

(DEEDREE has mounted the back steps.)

DEEDREE (at kitchen door) Mrs Pogson! It's me, Mrs Pogson. (Simpering) Always bright and early!

GIRLIE That is something you need never tell me, dear. (Comes and takes DEEDREE'S offering) But thank you, Deedree, all the same.

(GIRLIE glances out of the door, catches sight of PIPPY.)

That is where you are, Pippy. Did you hear me call?

PIPPY (kicking the ground) Yes.

GIRLIE And why didn't you come?

PIPPY I didn't feel like it.

GIRLIE Ooh, you bold little girl! I'll tell your father, Joyleen. One day you'll catch it.

PIPPY (chanting) One day, one day

I shall learn to fly.

I'll pin little wings on me shoulders,

And fly...

GIRLIE Ooh, you are the rudest little girl! And my, not me, Joyleen.

(DEEDREE has a fit of the giggles.)

What's the matter with you, Deedree Inkpen?

DEEDREE Oh, nothing, Mrs Pogson.

GIRLIE Well, if it's nothing, there's every reason for controlling yourself. (Looking out) Now, you children, I don't want you running in and out, marking the lino. The holidays are always death to anybody's lino.

DEEDREE Yes, Mrs Pogson.

(PIPPY sticks out her tongue as GIRLIE retreats into the kitchen to continue with breakfast preparations.)

(At the same time HARRY KNOTT comes into the KNOTT kitchen from front part of the house. He is a young man, probably younger than he looks, but responsibilities have been thrust upon him early. He is wearing his business pants, well-pressed, and beautifully-laundered white shirt. Arm-bands. There is nothing distinctive about him.)

HARRY (calling back into the house) You stay there, dear. Take it easy. Can't afford to take any risks now that it's so close.

PIPPY I'm glad you came, Deedree. There's such a lot to tell you.

DEEDREE What, Pippy?

PIPPY It's the dogs...

(NOLA BOYLE comes into her kitchen. In her forties, she is dressed in a chenille dressing-gown. Generous of figure. Tawny of head. A lioness. Stretching and yawning.)