

Deadly, Unna?



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PHILLIP GWYNNE

Phillip Gwynne grew up in rural South Australia and Victoria, where he was one of eight siblings. As a young man, he played professional Australian Rules football and graduated from James Cook University with a degree in Marine Biology. Before beginning to write novels at age 40, Gwynne worked as a fruit picker, a fishing boat deckhand, and a pool manager. He published his first novel, *Deadly, Unna?*, to widespread critical acclaim and commercial success. Throughout the 2000s, Gwynne published popular young adult novels, including the sequel to *Deadly, Unna?*, *Nukkin Ya*, as well as several picture books. In 2002, Gwynne collaborated on the screenplay for *Australian Rules*, the award-winning film based on his first novel. He currently lives in Bali, Indonesia with his family, and his next young adult novel is expected to be published in 2020.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The 1960s and '70s in Australia, the time when Gwynne was the same age as the main character of *Deadly, Unna?*, saw dramatic changes in the social and political standing of indigenous peoples in Australia. The 1962 Commonwealth Electoral Act gave all indigenous people in Australia the right to vote in federal elections, while the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 was the first in a series of acts that allowed indigenous communities to reclaim land taken by the colonial government. These political changes led to a greater awareness of the struggles of indigenous peoples in Australia, which is reflected in the way that Blacky gains a greater understanding of the discrimination against aboriginal people in his own town. Despite these successes, racial tensions and discrimination in Australia persisted throughout the 1970s. Specifically, Gwynne has said he based the events of the novel on the 1977 shooting of two aboriginal teenagers accused of robbing a hotel in Southern Australia.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In 2000, Phillip Gwynne published a sequel to *Deadly, Unna?* titled *Nukkin Ya*. The sequel explores the interracial romantic relationship between Blacky and Clarence, referenced in the first book, and further develops the themes of the first novel concerning racial tensions and poverty. *Deadly, Unna?* is similar in style and subject to the novels of Chris Crutcher, who also uses stories of high school athletes to explore the larger issues teenagers face, such as racial tensions, social class, and family dynamics. In Crutcher's novel *Whale Talk*, a biracial high school

student challenges the racism of his hometown by forming a diverse swim team. Another contemporary young adult novel, *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey, also deals with issues of racism in Australia in the context of a coming-of-age story.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Deadly, Unna?*
- **When Written:** 1998
- **Where Written:** Australia
- **When Published:** August 30, 1998
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Fiction
- **Setting:** The Port, a fictional small town in rural Australia
- **Climax:** Blacky and his siblings' fight with their father over the graffiti
- **Antagonist:** The Port's pervasive racism; Bob Black
- **Point of View:** First-person

EXTRA CREDIT

Australian Rules. The film version of *Deadly, Unna?*, titled *Australian Rules*, opened in 2002 to critical acclaim and several awards. However, the movie was criticized by aboriginal activists for its alleged appropriation of aboriginal culture and sensitivity issues over the real-life events upon which the book is based.

Footy. Australian rules football, also known as "Aussie rules" or "footy," the sport played by the characters of *Deadly, Unna?*, began in Australia in the 1850s. The sport has since grown in popularity in Australia and across the world. Today, there are over 1,400,000 registered players worldwide.



PLOT SUMMARY

The Port's Australian Rules football team has advanced to the grand final of their league, but young Blacky is far from excited about this. Due to the disqualification of one of their star players, Coach Arks has made Blacky the first ruck, the most important position on the team. Blacky knows he will disappoint Arks and the whole town, because the opposing team's best player, Thumper, is larger and more brutal than Blacky is. Blacky knows that if he doesn't at least appear to try to tackle Thumper, the whole town will consider him to be "a gutless wonder," like Blacky's father already does.

Blacky lacks the support of his older brother, Best Team-man,

or his best friend, Pickles, but he knows his friend and teammate Dumby Red will always have his back. Dumby Red comes from the Point, the indigenous community outside the predominantly white Port. Though the towns are geographically close, residents of the two communities rarely interact with each other except when Arks brings the Point's players into town for football season.

On the day of the big game, Blacky is horribly nervous, knowing he has very little chance of scoring. However, his team manages to tie with the opposing team in the first part of the game, particularly thanks to Dumby's fast and skillful playing. Despite his superior skills, Dumby declines to make the winning goal himself, instead passing the ball to his cousin Clemboy, who scores one point. This means Blacky must prevent Thumper from scoring in the final seconds of the game so the Port will win. Blacky plans to fake-tackle Thumper so he can appear to try to stop him without actually injuring himself. Instead, Blacky accidentally steps into Thumper's path, winning the game for the Port but giving himself a concussion as well.

That night, the whole town gathers to celebrate the team's victory. Everyone hails Blacky as the hero of the game, even his father. Blacky and Clarence, Dumby's younger sister, leave the party to hang out on the jetty. There, they encounter **racist graffiti** reading "Boongs piss off" and meet Blacky's elderly neighbor, Darcy. Darcy warns Blacky not to hang out with girls from the Point. Blacky doesn't fully understand this warning, and he and Clarence return to the party. Blacky is awarded the "Best Team-man" trophy over his brother. The town gives the highest award to white Mark Arks, the coach's son, instead of the clearly superior Dumby. Outraged at this injustice and realizing that it's based in racial prejudice, Blacky decides he will quit the football team next year in protest.

Summer begins and Blacky has still not told Arks about his plans to quit the football team. Instead, Blacky is far more concerned with impressing a tourist girl, Cathy, whom he develops an intense infatuation with. He pretends not to know Clarence and the rest of a group from the Point when he and Cathy encounter them on the jetty. A bit later in the summer, Blacky is happily courting Cathy when a shooting occurs at the local pub. Blacky discovers that the pub owner, Big Mac, killed Dumby when Dumby and his friends were apparently attempting to rob the pub. Though the rest of the Port believes Dumby received the punishment he deserved, Blacky is devastated and cannot shake the feeling that the shooting was racially motivated.

Blacky wants to attend Dumby's funeral, but his mother, his friend Pickles, and his coach Arks all discourage him. Blacky finally decides he must go to the funeral, even though going will also anger his father. After walking all the way to the Point, Blacky runs into Clarence and the rest of Dumby's family. Together, they pay their respects. Later, Dumby's uncle tells Blacky that the family appreciates Blacky coming to the funeral.

Blacky spends the next day avoiding his angry father. While at the butcher's shop, Blacky realizes the handwriting on the store sign matches that of the racist graffiti on the jetty shelter. This leads him to the realization that someone must cover up the graffiti. Through conversing with his neighbor Darcy, Blacky realizes he must act himself, instead of waiting for someone else to act. That night, Blacky sneaks into his father's shed to steal paint and a brush. His father catches him and strikes him. All seven of Blacky's siblings come to defend him, and Best Team-man distracts their father by stealing the family car. While trying to get the car back, their father is knocked unconscious and the Black siblings escape with the paint and brush.

At the jetty, the Black siblings each take a turn painting over one letter of "Boongs piss off." Once the graffiti is covered up, the siblings walk back together to a rocky ledge by their house. They fall asleep there. Blacky is the last to fall asleep, and he thinks about how, surrounded by his family after doing the right thing, he is as happy as he could be.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Gary "Blacky" Black – Blacky is the main character and narrator of the novel. He is fourteen years old and lives in a rural Australian town called the Port. He is one of eight children from a poor family with a loving but overworked mother and an alcoholic, abusive father. He is intelligent and enjoys learning new words and facts, but he fears responsibility, especially the responsibility the town places upon him as the most important player on his football team in the final game. Blacky also fears being called a coward, especially by his father. At the beginning of the novel, Blacky accepts his town's racism as the inevitable status quo. However, Blacky's friendship with his indigenous teammate, Dumby Red, leads him to challenge the racist actions of his community. After Dumby is shot and killed by a racist local, Blacky decides he should go to Dumby's funeral and then cover up **the racist graffiti** on the town jetty, despite his community's objections. After Blacky's siblings help him escape from his father's abuse and cover up the graffiti, he feels a newfound closeness with his family. At the end of the novel, Blacky feels empowered to take personal responsibility for countering his town's racism, even if that means facing disapproval from his father and his community.

Dumby Red – Dumby Red is Blacky's friend and teammate who comes from the indigenous community known as the Point. Dumby is handsome – well-dressed. He is the fastest runner on the football team and one of the most skillful players. Despite this, he always makes sure his teammates get a chance to play, showing how considerate he is toward others. Dumby saves Blacky from assault by an opposing team player, which

leads Blacky to decide they will be friends forever. Dumbly has a sister, Clarence, to whom he introduces Blacky. Though Dumbly is the best player on the team, he does not receive the top award after the final game, a decision Blacky believes is motivated by the town's racism. Later that summer, Dumbly and two other boys from the Point attempt to rob the Port's local pub. The pub owner, Big Mac, shoots and kills Dumbly. Dumbly's death leads Blacky to confront the racism of his town by attending Dumbly's funeral and later painting over **the racist graffiti** on the town jetty. Dumbly and Blacky's friendship is one of the most important relationships within the novel because it is the catalyst for Blacky's development toward racial consciousness and personal responsibility.

Tim "Best Team-man" Black – Tim, whom Blacky calls Team-man, is Blacky's older brother. Despite receiving the "Best Team-man" trophy every year on their football team, Team-man does not usually sacrifice anything for his family. For example, when Blacky and Team-man get in trouble with their father for fishing too far out in the ocean, Team-man blames Blacky. However, at the end of the novel, Team-man heroically steals their father's car to keep him from punishing Blacky, and this act of selflessness changes Blacky's perspective on his brother. Blacky realizes Team-man is willing to sacrifice himself to protect his family when they need it most, and he starts calling his brother Tim because the nickname no longer seems like a joke. This fits into Blacky's larger realization about needing to be close with his family so that the siblings can take care of and take responsibility for each other.

Darcy – Darcy is Blacky's elderly neighbor. Darcy grows and sells maggots for the local and tourist fishermen and is often out fishing on the jetty. He tells Blacky stories about his time in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II, but the other residents of the Port say he never actually served. Darcy plays a father-like role for Blacky, offering him advice when Blacky's own father is absent or belligerent. However, Darcy also spreads many of the racist views of the Port. For example, he warns Blacky against hanging out with Clarence, saying that all indigenous women have STDs. After Dumbly's death, Darcy says that racism and violence have always been the norm and there's nothing a person can do about it. Blacky's realization that the adults he's most familiar with, and even those he likes the most, are either active or complicit in the discrimination prevalent in his town is an important step in his decision to take direct action against racism.

Coach "Arks" Robertson – Arks is the coach of the youth football team and the owner of the town's general store. Blacky calls him "Arks" because of his thick accent, which makes the word "ask" sound like "arks." Arks used to be a famous football player himself, until an injury ended his career. After the injury, Arks's wife abandoned the family and Arks had to buy the general store to make a living. Arks's past disappointments with football increase the pressure Blacky feels to succeed in the

grand final. Blacky looks down upon Arks for being foolishly optimistic about football, and Arks's character represents the excitement and pressure surrounding football in a poor town like the Port. Arks is responsible for bringing the players from the Point to the Port to play football, thus partially bridging the racial divides within the community. However, Arks is often mad at the Point players for their different playing style and he does nothing when Blacky suggests that the team should honor Dumbly at his funeral. Arks shows how the adults in Blacky's community, even if they may seem sympathetic to oppressed minorities, can still be complicit in deepening racial divisions.

Gwen "Mum" Black – Gwen Black is Blacky's mother. She labors constantly to care for Blacky and his seven siblings without the help of her absent, alcoholic husband. Whenever she appears in the novel, she is usually doing a domestic task, like washing clothes or cooking dinner. Her two escapes at the end of a long day of chores are baths and romance novels. Though she was once young and beautiful, her teeth have all rotted and been pulled out, which Blacky thinks is because she was pregnant so many times. Despite the burdens upon her, she is loving and affectionate toward Blacky and wants all of her children to be educated and speak properly. Her constant work and physical deterioration represent the extreme side of Blacky's fear of responsibility. She serves as a contrast to Blacky's father, whom Blacky resents for never taking any responsibility for the family.

Bob "The Old Man" Black – Bob Black is Blacky's father. He spends every night at the pub instead of eating dinner with his family. He works as a fisherman but lacks the talent and knowledge required for successful fishing. He drinks heavily and has a temper, which often causes him to lash out at Blacky and his brother, Tim. Despite, or possibly because of, Bob's withholding nature, Blacky craves his father's approval. Bob calls Blacky a "gutless wonder" when Blacky is afraid of a dangerous storm while fishing out on the ocean. Bob embodies the impossible and illogical standards of masculinity prevalent in Blacky's town, where one must appear to never be afraid or sad even when the situation clearly calls for these emotions. Blacky overcomes Bob's violence and disapproval in order to challenge the destructive, racist attitudes of his town. by stealing the paint from Bob to cover up **the racist graffiti**. Challenging his father is a crucial moment for Blacky's character development as well as for the strengthening of his relationships with his siblings, as they help him escape from their father.

Pickles – Pickles is Blacky's best friend. Pickles has poor hygiene and a bad rash, and he tells outrageous tales about girls he's allegedly dated. He grows and sells maggots for fishing bait but fails to compete with Darcy's superior business. He is a horrible football player, but Coach Arks picks him for the team every year because Pickles's parents spend a lot of money at Arks's store. He makes several discriminatory remarks against

the residents of the Port. Like the majority of the Port's residents, Pickles comes from a family of fishermen and intends to become a fisherman when he grows up as well. Pickles represents the typical resident of the Port, as he is fishing-obsessed, sexist, and racist.

Slogs Kneebone – Slogs is the town butcher. He often hangs out at the pub with Blacky's father. He laughs the loudest out of all the pub patrons when Big Mac tells a racist joke. Towards the end of the novel, Blacky realizes that Slogs is the one who wrote **the racist graffiti** on the jetty. This realization is key to Blacky's growing awareness of the commonplace and deadly racism prevalent in his town. While knowing Slogs's responsibility initially makes Blacky feel hopeless to fight racism, the knowledge eventually drives Blacky toward the important act of painting over the graffiti.

Victor "Big Mac" McRae – Big Mac is the local pub owner and the football club president. He shoots and kills Dumby while Dumby and his friends are allegedly trying to rob the pub. Before the shooting, Big Mac told a racist joke and was rude to the indigenous customers of the pub. Big Mac shows the violent, extreme consequences that follow when racism becomes an accepted status quo. Despite Big Mac's actions, the townspeople defend him after the shooting, showing how a community can perpetuate racism and unite to protect racist individuals.

Clarence – Clarence is Dumby's younger sister. She plays netball with Blacky's sisters. Blacky experiences a hint of romantic feelings for Clarence when the two of them leave the football party to hang out on the jetty alone. However, he later pretends not to know Clarence when he's spending time with Cathy and his friends from town. This shows how Blacky struggles to overcome the racial divides of his town (and his own internalized racism) in the beginning and the middle of the novel. However, Blacky reconnects with Clarence at Dumby's funeral, suggesting a future where they can overcome the segregation of their communities and form a closer relationship.

Cathy – Cathy is a "camper," the local name for the tourists who come to the Port in the summer. Both Team-man and Pickles think she is "stuck-up" because she comes from the city and goes to a private school. Blacky is infatuated with both her appearance and her wealth. Cathy is ignorant when it comes to both people in the country and to indigenous communities. In this way, she represents how Australian city people are often detached from the issues prevalent in the countryside. Blacky initially denies knowing Clarence in order to court Cathy, but as Blacky becomes aware of racial injustice, he chooses attending Dumby's funeral over going to Cathy's goodbye party. As a result, she dumps him, but Blacky knows he made the right decision.

Lovely – Lovely is Dumby's older cousin. Lovely plans the pub

robbery and Dumby agrees to help because he admires Lovely. Lovely was once a rising football star like Dumby but has now begun a life of crime, showing the likely future for even a talented member of the impoverished, segregated community of the Port.

Tommy Red – Tommy Red is Dumby and Clarence's father. He is cheerful and friendly. After the grand final football game, he drinks at the front bar of the pub instead of the back bar with the rest of the indigenous patrons. The white patrons of the pub believe that Tommy is one of the few good residents of the Port, showing how discriminatory communities can hold up one person as a "model minority." Tommy's good reputation, however, can't protect his family from racist violence, as shown by the murder of his son, Dumby.

Thumper – Thumper is the star player of the Wangaroos, the team the Port is playing in the grand final. Blacky fears him because Thumper is a much larger and more aggressive player than he is. Thumper embodies the ideal of toughness that Blacky's town expects of their young men, an ideal Blacky doesn't believe he himself can live up to because of his fear. However, Blacky's accidental tackling of Thumper allows him to win the approval of his town because it makes him look brave and tough.

Andrew and Craig McDermott – Andrew and Craig McDermott are wealthy tourists around Blacky's age who come to The Port every summer. Blacky thinks they are dumb jocks and sees them as romantic rivals for Cathy, a fellow tourist. They attend Kings College, showing the privileges wealthy people enjoy in the city which Blacky, in the poor countryside, is excluded from.

Mad Dog – Mad Dog is a player from a team the Port plays against before the grand final. He is a violent player on the field and attacks Blacky after the game. This allows Dumby to prove his worth as a friend by rescuing Blacky. Mad Dog calls Dumby a racial slur and punches him, showing that racism against indigenous people is not exclusive to the Port.

Carol/Colin Cockatoo – Colin is the former first ruck of the Port's football team. He is known as Carol until members of the opposing team discover that the real Carol is actually Colin's younger brother. Carol is too old to be on the team and is disqualified, making Blacky the first ruck and most important player on the team.

MINOR CHARACTERS

"Mum" Red – "Mum" Red is Clarence and Dumby's mother. She chooses not to associate with the Port or any of its events. Despite this, she is kind and helpful to Blacky when he attends Dumby's funeral.

Dazza – Dazza is Blacky's friend. After Dumby's death, Dazza suggests that Dumby got what he deserved for trying to rob the pub. Dazza represents just part of the prejudiced

community Blacky must defy in order to attend Dumby's funeral.

Mark Arks – Mark Arks is the son of Coach Arks and the captain of the football team. Though Dumby is the better player, Mark Arks receives the top award at the end of the season, an event which causes Blacky to realize the racism in his town.

Greggy Black – Greggy is Blacky's younger brother. Blacky describes mature concepts such as love and racial injustice to him. Greggy, because he is young and innocent, still looks up to their neglectful, abusive father. Part of this naivety is shattered when he witnesses Bob hit Blacky.

Sharon Black – Sharon is Blacky's eldest sister. Despite the chaos of her lower-class family, she is a very neat and proper person. On the rare occasions their mother is absent, Sharon takes over the roles of cooking and cleaning.

Mick – Mick is Pickles's father. Mick regularly drinks at the pub with Bob Black. Like many of the men in the Port, Mick is rough in both appearance and manners. Mick is originally Bob's fishing partner, but the two separate over disagreements.

Shirl – Shirl is Pickles's mother and a frequent patron of the pub. She is skinny and frail. Like her husband, she drinks and smokes heavily.

Rocker – Rocker is the town mechanic and a regular at the pub along with Bob Black. His wife often calls him at the bar because he is not taking care of their kids at home. His abandonment of his children mirrors Bob's neglect of Blacky and his siblings.

Jimmy Downes – Jimmy Downes is a boy from Blacky's school who is constantly in trouble. He starts fights and brags about his sexual conquests. Jimmy represents the hypermasculine ideal that Bob Black and the rest of the town expect Blacky to live up to.

Clemboy – Clemboy is Dumby's cousin from the Point. Dumby's pass to Clemboy shows Dumby's supportive and sportsmanlike attitude.

Mrs. Ashburner – Mrs. Ashburner is the town Sunday school teacher, swim instructor, and librarian. She is very religious and strict.

Kevin Black – Kevin is one of Blacky's younger brothers. He often speaks with improper grammar.

Jenny Black – Jenny is one of Blacky's younger sisters.

Claire Black – Claire is one of Blacky's younger sisters.

Sid Red – Sid is Dumby and Clarence's uncle and Lovely's father.

Deano – Deano is one of Blacky's friends from the Port.

The Local Member – The local member is the number one ticket holder of the football club and is responsible for giving speeches and handing out awards at the football party.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



RACE, INJUSTICE, AND ACTION

At the beginning of *Deadly Unna?*, Phillip Gwynne's novel about interracial friendship in southern Australia, white fourteen-year-old Gary "Blacky"

Black is already aware of the racial divide in his community. He only sees the harmful nature of that divide, however, once he becomes friends with Dumby Red, an Aboriginal, or "Nunga," player on his football team. As Blacky begins to recognize the discrimination around him, he wavers between standing up to such prejudice and passively allowing racism to go unchecked. But when Dumby dies while trying to rob a racist business owner, Blacky eventually decides he must work against the racism in his community. Through Blacky's development, the novel argues for the power of interracial friendship to foster invaluable understanding of discrimination and segregation. With recognition and empathy, Gwynne suggests, people will feel compelled to take direct action against racism in their communities.

When the novel begins, Blacky can identify the ways in which his town is segregated by race but he doesn't yet see how this segregation is harmful, nor does he fully comprehend the extent of the discrimination the Nungas face. Blacky notes that the part of town known as the Point, where the Nungas live, and the part called the Port, where the Goonyas (white people) live, are geographically close to each other, but people the two areas don't intermingle. He also notices that in his football team's locker room, Nungas congregate on one end and Goonyas on another. Blacky relays all this information to the reader in a matter-of-fact tone, stating that it "was just the way it was." This underscores how one can become so accustomed to racial prejudice that they see segregation as a harmless norm. Blacky and his white friend Dazza also readily believe the outlandish stereotypes that the adults of their community promote about Nungas—for example, that the Nungas run wild in the Point, attacking people with spears and boomerangs. Because of this, Blacky and Dazza are too afraid to go to the Point. Their fears reveal the ease with which unquestioned stereotypes can become an integral part of one's opinion about another community. Early on in the plot, Blacky recognizes that, while his white friend Pickles is a horrible football player, the coach chooses Pickles for the team over much better Nunga players, because Pickles is from the Port. Blacky doesn't feel outrage at this blatant preferential treatment of Goonya players, because he has not yet realized the full injustice of

discrimination against Nungas. Being disconnected from members of another race, the novel suggests, can lead to accepting discrimination against that race.

When Blacky becomes friends with the talented Nunga Dumby Red and Dumby's sister Clarence, he finally begins to recognize the common racism of the Port's white community as injustice. Having lived his whole life accepting such discrimination as the norm, however, he struggles and often fails to speak out against it. While hanging out with Clarence on the Port's jetty, Blacky sees graffiti reading, "BOONGS PISS OFF" ("Boongs" being a slur for Australian native peoples). He feels uncomfortable and guilty because he has never tried to remove the graffiti. However, in the months following this scene, Blacky still does not remove the graffiti. When Mark Arks, the white son of the football team's coach, wins the best football player award over the clearly more skilled Dumby, Blacky feels outraged and declares to himself that he will quit football in protest. Yet he doesn't tell his coach or any of his teammates about his plans and eventually wonders if quitting football in protest is worth the personal cost. He convinces himself that maybe Mark deserved the award over Dumby. Blacky is unwilling to act against racial injustice because to do so would mean personal sacrifice, so he instead convinces himself such racism doesn't exist. While Blacky hangs out at a local pub with his father and Pickles, they all listen while the bartender, Big Mac, makes a racist joke about Nungas. Blacky has laughed at this joke before and even repeated it, but now he doesn't find it funny because he knows the joke concerns his friends Dumby and Clarence. Even though he realizes this joke is wrong, he doesn't say anything in the moment. All of these instances make clear that although Blacky is beginning to recognize the harmfulness of his town's discrimination against Nungas, he doesn't yet turn his anger into action.

The danger of accepting any prejudice, no matter how small, becomes stark when Dumby and two other Nungas attempt to rob Big Mac at gunpoint. Big Mac shoots and kills Dumby, claiming he acted out of self-defense. Blacky doubts the claims of self-defense because he knows Dumby is a kind friend rather than the violent thug the town makes him out to be, and also because Blacky has seen Big Mac's racist behavior in the past. After Dumby's death, Blacky realizes he can no longer passively observe the racism of his community. In his grief for his friend, Blacky imagines "grey" as the only color in the world. To Blacky, grey represents a transitional state, one that exists between the sharp racial divides of his town. Unlike his previous, ultimately fleeting feelings of injustice, he cannot shake his sadness over Dumby's death. This will lead him to finally act against the racism he witnesses. The most tangible example of this racism is the graffiti reading "BOONGS PISS OFF." When Blacky brings this graffiti up to his elderly neighbor Darcy, Darcy agrees that someone should do something about it but does not press the issue further. Blacky realizes that this

passive attitude, relying on "someone" to solve the issue of racism, only allows racism to thrive. While discrimination in his town goes beyond graffiti, Blacky decides he should still do everything in his power to confront racism wherever he can. Blacky covers up the racist graffiti. He also explains to his younger brother, Gregg, how the word "boongs" is a derogatory term for indigenous Australians that shows the writer of the graffiti is racist.

In *Deadly, Unna?*, Blacky's relationship to the racism of his town transitions from acceptance, to passive rejection, to active opposition. His journey, sparked by his friendships with Dumby and Clarence, highlights the power of connection between members of different races, further underscoring segregation as a tool that only serves to preserve prejudice. The novel ultimately suggests that the key to fighting discrimination is both empathy and action. It is not enough to acknowledge the existence of racism—instead, as Blacky comes to learn, one must actively stand against it.



COURAGE AND MASCULINITY

At the beginning of *Deadly, Unna?*, Blacky aspires to embody an ideal of "toughness," a state of fearlessness and aggression expected of boys in his town. He specifically seeks the approval of his traditionally masculine father, whom Blacky refers to as "the old man". In Blacky's world, men must always appear both physically and mentally strong, and never show any fear or weakness. These expectations weigh heavily on Blacky when he worries about being injured in the grand final football game or fears being shipwrecked while out on his father's boat during a storm. But as Blacky grows as a character, he comes to reject the hypermasculine ideal of toughness in favor of a more nuanced form of courage. Genuine courage, the novel suggests, entails standing up to one's fears in order to do what is just.

Blacky's struggle to appear tough highlights the unrealistic and superficial nature of masculinity in his town. When talking about football fans' expectations of his team, for example, Blacky states that the worst thing a boy living in the Port can be called is a "gutless wonder." He goes on to say that no one in town cares if a girl is gutless—just a boy. And once deemed gutless, a boy can do nothing to erase the label. This shows the immense pressure boys in Blacky's community are under to appear strong and fearless. Blacky's father uses the same phrase—"gutless wonder"—to shame Blacky for being terrified when the old man drunkenly steers his boat into a storm. Though Blacky's fear is entirely reasonable, his father responds with anger and disappointment and bans Blacky from future fishing trips. The specific form of masculinity the old man expects of Blacky clearly doesn't allow for any vulnerability. Blacky assumes his father would prefer him to be more like Jimmy Downes, Blacky's schoolmate who is always starting fights. The fact that his father has implied that physical violence

is an admirable trait shows the destructive nature of the old man's masculine ideals.

The pervasiveness of these expectations is further emphasized when Blacky wins the town's approval during the grand final football game by tricking spectators into thinking he courageously tackled an opposing player, when really it was an accident. As Thumper, a much bigger, stronger player, barrels down the field, Blacky decides to make a small sidestep out of the way so he can dodge him without appearing too scared to tackle him. Instead, Blacky accidentally steps directly into Thumper's path, thus colliding with him and preventing him from scoring in time. The town celebrates Blacky for his perceived act of bravery, because the perception of bravery is more important than genuine courage. Blacky at first feels embarrassed by the town's admiration and refers to himself as a fraud. When his father shakes Blacky's hand and invites him back on the boat, however, Blacky starts to reason with himself that if the rest of the town thinks he acted intentionally, perhaps he actually did. This self-deception on Blacky's part underscores the immense pressure boys in this world are under to conform to societal dictates of what it means to be a man.

Dumby's death pushes Blacky to abandon his town's hollow performance of toughness and instead act with true courage. For example, Blacky decides to go to Dumby's funeral to honor his dead friend, even though none of his teammates agree to come with him and he has never been to the Point. Blacky goes against his peers in order to do what he believes is right, displaying a strength of character more genuine and admirable than his performance at the football game. In response to Dumby's death, Blacky also decides to paint over **the racist graffiti** on the town's pier. To get the paint, he must sneak into his father's shed, an action that fills Blacky with terror. Nevertheless, he gathers the nerve to steal the key to the shed and find the paint. This action shows that courage doesn't mean one never feels fear, but rather that one overcomes that fear in order to do what is right. The clearest display of Blacky's newfound genuine courage is his defiance of the main bully in his life, his old man. The old man catches Blacky stealing the paint from his shed and orders him to put it back. Blacky refuses, despite knowing the old man may physically abuse him for disobeying. By overcoming his fear of a real and present threat, this quiet moment shows far more bravery than Blacky's accidental tackle on the football field. The novel thus suggests the importance of embracing genuine courage over a hollow, performative toughness.

At the beginning of the novel, Blacky aspires to meet his town's and his father's ideal of "toughness," one in which men have to appear to be completely fearless. But as he matures and experiences the trauma of Dumby's the death, Blacky learns that meaningful courage acknowledges the existence of fear and moves beyond it. By standing up to his old man and

confronting his town's racism, Blacky displays a depth of bravery and strength not found in superficial stereotypes of toughness. Only by abandoning impossible expectations of masculinity does he truly become a man.



DUTY AND SACRIFICE

Blacky resents any expectations placed upon him by his coach or his town in the beginning of *Deadly, Unna?*. For Blacky, duty means unfair sacrifice, such as putting himself in the way of physical harm in the grand final just because his coach expects him to. However, after Blacky must confront the injustice of Dumby's death, he realizes that sacrifice is required to do what's right. Through making sacrifices, such as going out to the Point alone to fulfill his duty to his dead friend, Blacky learns that not only does taking responsibility cost him less than he fears, he is also happier doing what is just.

Blacky's position on his football team is a "ruck," the most important position in Australian Rules Football. Blacky was initially the second ruck, but after the first ruck is disqualified for being too old, Blacky moved up in position and therefore the hopes of the entire team rest upon his shoulders. Blacky believes these expectations to be unfair, given that he didn't ask for the whole town to be counting on him. His resentment of the town's expectations shows his fear of duty to others. One can see how Blacky's fear of responsibility might stem from watching the destructive effects of immense duty on his mother. Blacky's mother takes on all the responsibility for caring for the family, doing all the cooking and cleaning for a household of ten while her husband stays out drinking. She has lost all her teeth because, Blacky believes, during her pregnancies her children absorbed her body's calcium, an idea that symbolizes the extreme sacrifices she has made for her family. Blacky's father represents the opposite attitude toward responsibility from Blacky's mother. He stays out drinking all night and he doesn't show up to any of his children's important events, including Blacky's football games. Blacky criticizes his father for failing to sacrifice his own time to fulfill the duties of fatherhood. With these two extremes, one sacrificing so much time and energy she is withering away and the other shamefully avoiding responsibility altogether, one could see why Blacky fears any external expectations that come his way. In general, his behavior shows how one can resent duty if they think the only possible outcomes are complete personal sacrifice or total failure.

As Blacky witnesses the pervasive and harmful racism of his town, however, he realizes it's his duty to confront discrimination and honor his dead friend. This shows how when faced with a great injustice, one can no longer avoid responsibility, even at personal cost to oneself. Blacky decides to cover up **the racist graffiti** on his town's pier because adults like his neighbor Darcy are always saying that *they* should do

something about problems like the graffiti, without explaining who “they” exactly refers to. Blacky realizes that using the word “they” is a way for people to shift responsibility onto some unknown other person, rather than sacrificing their own time and energy to solve a problem like the graffiti. Blacky’s realization shows his development as a character, as he realizes denying responsibility only allows society’s problems to continue. Blacky realizes it’s his duty to cleaning up the graffiti, because he has time to spare, unlike the unknown *them*. Blacky follows through on his convictions and paints over the racist graffiti, even though he knows his father will punish him for using his paint. This shows a significant change in Blacky’s character, as not only does he willingly take on responsibility, he does so at great personal cost to himself. Through this change, the novel suggests that responsibility eventually becomes unavoidable, no matter how much one might wish to escape it.

Blacky believes that his team has an obligation to honor Dumby at his funeral, but his coach says the circumstances of Dumby’s death, given that the shooting stirred racial tensions between the Port and the Point, go beyond football. Blacky’s friends and teammates agree with the coach, choosing to ignore their duty to their teammate because of the sacrifices that might come with defying their community’s segregation. Blacky decides, however, that his obligation to Dumby is greater than his own discomfort with going to the Point alone, and that it also has to come before his wish to please both his father and his love interest, Cathy. After attending Dumby’s funeral and feeling a sense of peace at his coffin, Blacky acknowledges that not only did he survive the sacrifices he had to make to go to the funeral, he is happy he chose to fulfill his duty to his friend. Unlike his parents, Blacky finds a way to fulfill his duties that is both responsible and personally satisfying.

By the end of the novel, Blacky realizes not only that one must embrace personal duty in order to overcome society’s problems, but also that sacrifice will leave one happier for doing what is right. Blacky overcomes the fear of responsibility instilled by the opposing examples of his parents because he is confronted by an injustice he cannot ignore. His friendship with Dumby and Dumby’s possibly racially-motivated death call Blacky to acknowledge his duty and make sacrifices for what is truly important.



TEAMWORK AND FAMILY

At the beginning of *Deadly Unna?*, Blacky views “family” and “team” as empty words. His football teammates don’t defend or care for each other off the field, while his family seems to create problems for each other more often than they solve them. After Dumby’s death, however, Blacky comes to appreciate the power and importance of supporting members of one’s closest communities. Merely being part of a family or team does not always equal consistent support, and the novel suggests that

such relationships require effort and dedication from all members in order to be meaningful.

In Blacky’s experience, neither his family nor his teammates offer him the care typically associated with such relationships. Blacky’s disappointment in this is evident in his description of his brother Timothy, whom he nicknames “Best Team-man.” Timothy is always winning the “Best Team-man” trophy on their football team, but Blacky dismissively describes his brother as a lemming—meaning that Best Team-man would do anything for the team, even something as extreme as jumping off a cliff. Blacky clearly believes such dedication to the team to be pointlessly self-sacrificing—a viewpoint that is understandable in light of the team’s refusal to offer such dedication in return. For example, when Thumper, a member of an opposing football team, attacks Blacky, none of Blacky’s own friends step in to help him. Only Dumby, Blacky’s aboriginal teammate whom the white teammates resent for both his skill and his race, ends up helping him by pulling the player off of him. Dumby himself is an outsider by Blacky’s community’s standards, since he is indigenous, but he proves that he is the only one truly capable of acting like a supportive teammate. After Dumby’s death, Blacky tries to convince the rest of the team that they should attend the funeral in order to honor their fallen teammate. Both the coach and the other players refuse, citing the differences between their white community and Dumby’s aboriginal one. Despite the perception that a team is supposed to act as one unit, this response shows that a team can be easily divided by prejudice and underscores the fragile, shallow nature of the players’ supposed bond.

Blacky is similarly disappointed in his family for not caring for each other as they should. Blacky states that he hates the television show **The Brady Bunch** because it presents an ideal family in which the parents always solve their children’s problems. In Blacky’s experience, parents only *create* problems—a perspective informed by having an alcoholic father who physically and emotionally abuses him. Best Team-man’s treatment of Blacky also lacks the solidarity and support one would expect between brothers, and Blacky laments that Best Team-man’s selflessness on the football field doesn’t translate to their family relationship. For example, when Blacky and Best Team-man get in trouble with their father for taking the boat too far in the ocean, Best Team-man claims the expedition was completely Blacky’s idea. In both instances, blood ties prove weaker than Blacky wishes.

However, when faced with Dumby’s death and the pervasive racism of the town, Blacky takes it upon himself to strengthen these disappointing bonds. He shows his commitment to his true friendships by attending Dumby’s funeral, and he also learns to work together with his siblings to escape their abusive father and paint over **the racist graffiti**. At Dumby’s funeral, Dumby’s sister Clarence mentions how much it means to their family that Blacky came. Blacky is able to make a grief-filled day

for Dumby's family a little bit better, exemplifying the power of simply being a supportive teammate in a time of great tragedy. Similarly, when Blacky's father catches him stealing paint in order to cover up the racist graffiti, Blacky's siblings come to their brother's aid as their father screams at and hits Blacky. Best Team-man even begins to roll their father's car towards a cliff in order to distract him, causing Blacky to remark that Best Team-man is living up to his label of lemming by literally almost leaping off a cliff. This time, however, the label has a positive connotation, as Best Team-man proves his love for his brother by risking his own life to save him. By working together, Blacky, Best Team-man, and their other siblings are able to escape their father. Blacky and his siblings then cover up the racist graffiti together, presenting a united front against the racism of their town. Afterwards, Blacky remarks how happy he feels to be with his family on that night. This shows that, while family isn't always inherently supportive, when family members actually choose to work together, they can create happiness for each other in times of crisis.

At the beginning of the novel, Blacky thinks that the concepts of family and team usually fail to provide the support one expects them to. However, when faced with the tragedies of death, abuse, and racism, Blacky realizes he must put in the effort himself to support his teammate Dumby and his family. Afterward, when Blacky's siblings unite to save him from their violent father, Blacky realizes family can in fact love and rescue an individual, if its members choose to show up for each other. This realization leaves him with a sense of security and happiness completely foreign to him at the beginning of the novel.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



GRAFFITI

Blacky's opinion on the graffiti on the inside of the shelter on top of his town's jetty, which reads, "Boongs piss off," evolves throughout the novel. Blacky's changing opinion on this particular piece of graffiti, which contains a derogatory term for the local indigenous population, symbolizes his changing opinion on the general racism present in his community. While all other graffiti on the jetty lasts only a week before someone covers it up, this piece of graffiti has been there longer than Blacky can remember, showing the pervasive nature of racism in Blacky's small town. Blacky feels guilty about the graffiti once he sees Clarence, his friend's sister and a member of the local indigenous community, standing under the words, because although he didn't write it, he has never tried to scratch the sentence out. This shows how

personal relationships with members of a different race can increase one's awareness of racial issues, a theme which will become more apparent as Blacky's friendship with Dumby is tested by their community's racial divisions. Later in the novel, Blacky realizes that Slogs, the town butcher and his father's friend, wrote the graffiti. This shows Blacky that acts of racism can be committed even by people he knows well, an important realization for the development of Blacky's attitudes towards racism. After his friend Dumby dies in a potentially racially motivated act, Blacky decides someone should clean up the graffiti. By talking to his neighbor Darcy, Blacky realizes that he must be the person to clean it up; there's no point waiting for someone else to take action. Blacky's decision to cover up the graffiti shows a greater development in his character where he learns to take more responsibility for addressing his community's issues. Blacky's changing understanding of the graffiti ultimately represents both how powerful racism can be and how important it is for individuals to take responsibility for combating it.



THE BRADY BUNCH

The Black family's ongoing argument over whether to watch *The Brady Bunch* or *Gilligan's Island* on television symbolizes Blacky's evolving attitude toward his family and the concept of responsibility. The TV show *The Brady Bunch* portrays a harmonious, supportive family, an ideal Blacky does not believe his own chaotic family could ever achieve. Blacky especially dislikes how *The Brady Bunch* always portrays its adult characters giving useful advice to its child characters, because in Blacky's experience real-life adults create more problems than they solve. Blacky's preference for *Gilligan's Island* at the beginning of the novel shows his initial orientation toward survival and self-sufficiency, which *Gilligan's Island* promotes, over the values of mutual responsibility and interconnectedness that *The Brady Bunch* portrays. However, as Blacky is faced with the larger societal issues of racial injustice, he realizes he must depend on his family and take on more responsibility himself, shown in the climatic event when Blacky and his siblings defy their abusive father by stealing the paint needed to cover up racist **graffiti**. After Blacky and his siblings paint over the racist graffiti together, they sing the theme song from *The Brady Bunch*. Blacky hesitates at first but then decides to sing along. His participation shows his acceptance of and love for his family, as *The Brady Bunch* symbolizes the values of familial love and responsibility that Blacky embraces at the end of the novel.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *Deadly, Unna?* published in 1998.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Next Saturday we play Wangaroo for the Peninsula Junior Colts Premiership. The whole town is talking about it, it's the biggest thing to happen here since the second prize in the S.A. Tidy Towns Competition (Section B). Just shows what sort of town I live in. Hopeless.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is Blacky's introduction to his town and the main concern of his life. It sets up the central conflict of the first half of the novel (the upcoming final game in the league) and introduces the essential characteristics of the novel's setting. The "sort of town" Blacky lives in is one where youth football is the most important event. The reader later learns that the town's excitement is partly due to the poverty of the town's residents and the rundown nature of the town itself. Blacky's description of the town as "hopeless" characterizes his avoidant attitude toward the expectations of others, and his dismissive language regarding his town's excitement suggests the resentment he feels for having the duty to win placed upon him by others. The "hopeless" comment could also refer to Blacky's pessimism and his doubts about his own football abilities, as he knows he fails to embody the ideal stature and strength of a star football player. Blacky will struggle with his community's expectations and his own doubts throughout the novel.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ You've got to look like you're trying to stop him, though. If you don't then you're a gutless wonder. A gutless wonder is about the worst thing you can be in our town. If you're a boy that is.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Thumper

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky says this while explaining the impossibility of his: he'll soon have to face an opposing player, Thumper, who is far bigger and stronger than Blacky is. This quote embodies

Blacky's town's expectations of masculinity. The town expects its boys to never show any fear, even in clearly scary scenarios such as facing off against a much larger person. As Blacky points out, these expectations are based on appearance, what one "looks like," rather than any form of genuine courage. This fear of being labeled a "gutless wonder" will motivate Blacky throughout the novel, as he worries about looking like a coward in the grand final. What's more, Blacky's father will use the same phrase, "gutless wonder," later to describe Blacky's fear over a storm while they are fishing. This frames the issue of performative masculinity not only as a conflict Blacky has with his community, but also as an issue with his father as well. In order to grow as a character, Blacky will have to reject this status quo of shallow bravery and learn to show real courage in standing up for what he believes is right.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ Even though the Point was only a half an hour's drive from the Port, the two towns didn't have much to do with one another. The footy was really the only place where Nungas and Goonyas got to hang around together.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Dumby Red

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky explains the relationship between his community, the Port, and the local indigenous community, the Point. This moment comes while he's describing meeting Dumby, an indigenous player, at the beginning of the football season. "Nungas" is local slang for the indigenous residents of the Point, and "Goonyas" are the white members of the Port. As Blacky explains, although the two communities are geographically close, their members rarely interact. Blacky delivers this information in a matter-of-fact tone, showing that he accepts this segregation as the status quo and does not see anything wrong with it. Nor does he yet see the significance of football being the catalyst for white boys and indigenous boys to form friendships. Eventually, the friendship Blacky forms on the football team with Dumby will lead Blacky to question the racial divides he so casually states here.

☞ ‘Nukkin ya?’ said Pickles. ‘Geez, you’re talking like one of them now.’

‘So what,’ I said.

‘Well I s’pose he is a mate of yours and all,’ said Pickles.

‘Matter of fact, he is,’ I said.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black, Pickles (speaker), Dumby Red

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Pickles and Blacky have this conversation after Dumby Red saves Blacky from a bully and Blacky says goodbye to him using the Point slang for “See you later.” Blacky’s acknowledgement of his friendship with Dumby is an important development in his character, because before this, he professed he hated Dumby, even though he knew he really didn’t. Because Dumby proved himself as a valuable friend and supportive teammate, Blacky now can defy the racial divides of his community which would expect him and Dumby not to be friends. This shows progress toward Blacky’s larger character development of learning to take personal responsibility for dismantling the racism of his community. This quote also shows how Gwynne often uses slang to show closeness between characters, such as when Blacky uses his father’s slang later in the novel to show their seemingly improved relationship. Here, Blacky’s use of “Nukkin ya” shows his appreciation and acceptance of Dumby even though Dumby comes from a different community.

introduction to Blacky’s attitudes towards his family, which relate to his perspectives on duty and community. To begin with, Blacky describes them as a “tribe” rather than his family or his siblings. This language distances himself from them, because as the reader will later learn, he doesn’t believe his family lives up to the expectations of support that one might associate with the word. The reader also sees here for the first time Blacky’s father’s alcoholism and neglect of the family. Blacky’s father’s complete abdication of his duty to his children, as shown by his consistent absence from the dinner table, explains part of the reason why Blacky himself fears any duty placed upon himself, such as the duty to play well for his team.

☞ ‘I don’t know what Arks, I mean Mr Robertson, expects of me.’

‘That you do your best. That’s all anybody expects of you. Do your best and he’ll be happy as Larry.’

Related Characters: Gwen “Mum” Black, Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Coach “Arks” Robertson

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky talks with his mother about his football practice and the upcoming grand final. Blacky expresses his exasperation over Arks’s expectations, because although he says he doesn’t know what Arks expects, Blacky clearly does know; he has previously stated he knows Arks wants him to win the grand final for the team. Blacky’s words express his frustration over others placing expectations upon him—it’s not so much that he doesn’t know what they want, but rather that he doesn’t want them to expect things of him at all. Mum’s response shows her characteristic care for her children, as she attempts to comfort Blacky and not put the same pressure on him as the rest of the town. Blacky wonders at his mother’s odd sayings such as “happy as Larry” but he will use the phrase himself at the end of the novel, showing the closeness and appreciation he will develop with his family over the course of the story.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ The whole tribe was there, sitting around the kitchen table, waiting for dinner to be served. Except for the old man, of course. As usual, he was down the pub.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Bob “The Old Man” Black

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky comes home from football practice to find his whole family sitting in the kitchen. This is the reader’s first

Chapter 7 Quotes

☝☝ I reckon a family is a lot like a team. Perhaps it's the original team. You'd think, wouldn't you, that given his lemming-like qualities, Team-man would be just about the best sibling you could have? Do anything for you, for the family. Good theory, but wrong.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Tim "Best Team-man" Black

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky compares a family to a team when describing how his older brother, whom he has ironically nicknamed Best Team-man, always wins the team's best "team player" trophy but fails to support his family in the same way he supports the football team. Blacky's description of his brother as "lemming-like" shows Blacky's attitude toward sacrifice, because he sees sacrifice for the greater community as pointless and foolish, just like a lemming running off a cliff. He also believes that where a family should work like a team, with each member supporting the others toward a common goal, that's not reality as he knows it. This pessimistic attitude explains both Blacky's resentment of personal sacrifice and his ambivalence toward his family. This quote also establishes Team-man's main character trait as a person who will sacrifice anything for the team but nothing for his family, a trait he will try to overcome in the climax of the novel.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ That word again – responsibility. I'd been hearing it so much lately. From my teachers, from my parents, from everybody. Because I was tall (was that my fault?) and I played footy [...] I ended up with all this responsibility. It didn't seem fair.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Darcy

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 50-1

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky contemplates all the responsibility he feels about the upcoming grand final after his neighbor, Darcy, asks him about it. Blacky sums up his attitude toward responsibility.

He believes responsibility is something unfairly forced upon him. This is why he resents any sense of duty others may expect of him because of his position as first ruck on the football team in the grand final. While Blacky's views on responsibility are fairly immature at this point, his mention of fairness also shows that the values of justice and logic are essential to his character. This value system will become important later on: when Blacky realizes his town is not just, he will be horrified and want to things for the better. Blacky will later learn, when faced with the injustice of Dumbly's death, that not only must he take on responsibility and personal sacrifice in order to do what is just, he will actually want to bear these burdens in the future.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ My poor Mum didn't have any teeth. She'd gone into hospital and they'd taken them all out, every last one. It was because of us kids.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Gwen "Mum" Black

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky wishes that he had a nice smile instead of teeth that people make fun of, so he asks his mother how much it costs to go to the orthodontist. However, he feels guilty for asking because his mom had all her teeth pulled out because they rotted, which Blacky thinks happened due to her multiple pregnancies. Mum's physical sacrifice of her teeth for her pregnancies represents her sacrifice of her time and effort for her children. Blacky's referring to her as "poor Mum" shows that he acknowledges she has suffered, and that he sometimes feels guilty about it. This explains Blacky's fear of duty, because he has seen how his mother's complete dedication to her duties as a mother has cost her both physically and emotionally. "It was because of us kids" speaks to Blacky's guilt at being what he perceives as a burden and also reveals the vulnerability he associates with connections to family.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝ I'd never been to the Point [...] Once Dazza and I decided we were going to do it. [...] But then we started thinking about those stories they told in the front bar – wild Nungas with spears, boomerangs that come from nowhere and knock you senseless. We got scared and ran all the way back to the Port.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Dazza

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

As Blacky sits in the Port and looks out at the Point, he remembers the time he and his friend, Dazza, attempted to walk the three hours to the Point. This memory details how intense the discrimination against the indigenous community is in the Port, given that the myth the Port's residents spread characterizes the residents of the Point as violent and primitive. Dazza and Blacky not only think about the stories as they go to the Point, but they actually become scared enough to turn around, showing that these racist myths are deeply ingrained in the minds of Blacky and the other youth of the Port. The fact that these rumors are spread around “the front bar” is also significant because the bar will later become the scene of a violent, racially charged act that will radically alter Blacky's perspective on racism. Finally, the story of Dazza and Blacky's failed attempt to visit the Point will become more significant toward the book's end, when Blacky decides later walk alone to the Point in order to attend Dumby's funeral.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝ ‘My own son a gutless wonder. A gutless fucking wonder.’ I rubbed my forehead. I'd never felt so ashamed in all my life.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black, Bob “The Old Man” Black (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

The old man, Blacky's father, calls Blacky a “gutless wonder” for being afraid of a dangerous storm while they were fishing in a boat on the ocean. As Blacky has previously stated, a “gutless wonder” is the worst thing a boy in his town can be called, because the expectation is that all boys

should be courageous and tough, no matter the circumstances. So to be called this name by his own father is incredibly shameful for Blacky. Blacky's feeling of shame shows how impactful and personal his community's expectations of masculinity are for him, and foreshadows how hard it will be later on for him to defy the norms of his town. This accusation explains why Blacky both resents his father and craves his approval throughout the novel, as Blacky will later state that he wants his father to come to the grand final so he can prove that he's not a “gutless wonder.” This adds to the pressure Blacky feels to perform well in the grand final, which already feels overwhelming to him.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☝ It's just a game of footy, Blacky. The team, the town, the glory – that's all crap. What's important is your life [...] If you try to stop the Thumper, you'll be killed. If not killed then crippled.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Thumper

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

During the grand final football game, Blacky contemplates the cost of trying to block Thumper, the much stronger opposing player, as Thumper barrels toward him with the ball to score the winning point for the opposing team. Blacky has the option to fake tackle Thumper, so that he will not actually have to stop Thumper but also will not appear cowardly in front of his town. Blacky's thought that “it's just a game of footy” shows he does not believe that the sacrifice of his personal safety is worth the chance to win the grand final. He makes this decision both because he is still at the stage in his development where he is unwilling to make sacrifices for the sake of duty and also because he has not yet been presented with a cause worth fighting for. Blacky's attitude toward sacrifice will change once he is presented with the challenge of fulfilling his duty to his friend, Dumby, in the face of his town's racism. But for now, seeing his life as more “important” than serving his team will motivate Blacky to attempt to dodge Thumper in the next scene.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ ‘Then why’d you pass it?’
 ‘Dunno.’
 ‘C’mon, you must’ve had a reason.’
 ‘Cos Clemboy hadn’t had a kick all day.’
 [...]
 ‘Christ, Dumby, I’ll never understand you blackfellas.’
 ‘And I’ll never understand you whitefellas.’
 We both laughed.

Related Characters: Dumby Red, Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Clemboy

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 116-17

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky asks Dumby why he chose to pass the ball to Clemboy in the grand final instead of taking the shot himself. Dumby’s decision to help his friend and teammate Clemboy shows that Dumby truly embodies the sense of camaraderie one would expect from a teammate, even if that might not make him the most popular player. Unlike Blacky at this point in the novel, Dumby is able to make sacrifices in order to be a good friend to others. Blacky and Dumby’s agreement that they’ll never “understand” members of another race is significant because, for the first time, they are able to admit the racial divides present in their society. Their laughter after this admission offers hope they will be able to overcome these divides to maintain their friendship. More broadly, the conversation shows how friendship with a member of another race can allow one to recognize and openly discuss racial and cultural issues.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ ‘BOONGS PISS OFF’ had been there for ages [...] I wasn’t sure if Clarence had seen it, she didn’t say anything. Still, I didn’t feel comfortable. I felt guilty in some way. I hadn’t written it, but I hadn’t scratched it out either.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Clarence

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 121-22

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky and Clarence leave the football party together to go hang out on the jetty. Inside the jetty’s shelter, Blacky sees the familiar piece of graffiti, reading “Boongs Piss Off,” written above Clarence’s head. Blacky’s attitude toward this piece of graffiti reflects his attitude toward the other racist behaviors of his community. He knows the graffiti, which contains a racial slur for aboriginal people, is wrong, but he has not made any effort to erase it. Similarly, he recognizes the racial divides and injustice of his community, such as no one from the Port ever going to the Point, but he has not done anything to challenge this racism. However, when Blacky sees Clarence underneath the graffiti, he feels a new motivation to scratch it out and a sense of responsibility for the fact that it’s there. This moment foreshadows Blacky’s deeper transformation later in the book, when he sees how his friend Dumby is affected by racism and feels motivated to take personal responsibility for combatting that discrimination.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ I could do the same, couldn’t I? Protest. Not by setting fire to myself. That was a bit over the top. I’d retire, that’s what I’d do [...] I’d tell them why, too. Because you cheated Dumby out of his medal, you lousy bastards.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Dumby Red

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky storms out of the football party after the town gives the white player (and coach’s son) Mark Arks the best player trophy over Dumby, a clearly superior indigenous player who scored half the goals in the final. Blacky’s outrage at this injustice is shown by his harsh language when he calls the townspeople “lousy bastards.” Blacky knows he must do something about this injustice and decides to protest by quitting the football team. The fact that Blacky’s mind immediately goes to setting himself on fire shows his attitude toward responsibility and justice; his instinct is to believe that fulfilling one’s duty requires total sacrifice. However, Blacky’s decision to retire, as the middle ground between doing nothing and sacrificing everything, shows his character development at this point in the story. But Blacky

will later go back on this promise, showing he has still not matured enough to follow through on his promises to make personal sacrifices for the sake of racial justice.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☝☝ ‘He’s a character ain’t he, that Tommy Red?’ said the old man, when he’d gone.
 ‘He sure is,’ said Slogs. ‘Pity there’s not more like him out there.’
 ‘Hey,’ said Big Mac. ‘Did ya hear the one about the boong and the priest?’

Related Characters: Slogs Kneebone, Victor “Big Mac” McRae, Bob “The Old Man” Black (speaker), Tommy Red

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis

Tommy Red, Dumby Red’s father and an indigenous resident of the Point, has a friendly chat with the white patrons of the front bar before going to meet the indigenous patrons of the back bar (which the white patrons call the “black bar”). Slogs’s comment that it’s a “pity there’s not more like [Tommy] out there,” shows how prejudiced people tend to view evidence against their bigoted beliefs as exceptions to the rule, rather than proof that their views are altogether inaccurate. That is, Slogs doesn’t see Tommy as evidence that indigenous people aren’t bad; rather, he decides that Tommy is a unique exception.

This moment challenges Blacky’s relationship to his racist community and his friendship with Dumby, because he starts to learn here that it’s not enough for Blacky to just be friends with Dumby; he must also confront the racism Dumby faces, which is easier said than done. Slogs’s participation in this conversation is also significant because, as the reader later learns, he has actively committed a racist act by writing the “boongs” graffiti on the jetty. Big Mac’s joke, which contains the same racist slur as the graffiti, is similarly significant because Big Mac will later shoot and kill Tommy’s son, Dumby.

☝☝ And they all laughed, all the regulars. Especially Slogsy. But I didn’t. I don’t know why, I’d laughed at the joke before. But tonight it didn’t seem so funny any more. And I knew it had to do with Dumby and Clarence and Tommy.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Slogs Kneebone, Tommy Red, Clarence, Dumby Red

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis

All the pub patrons laugh after Big Mac tells a racist joke about indigenous Australians, but Blacky cannot laugh at this joke as he has before. The detail of “Slogsy” laughing especially hard will gain significance when Blacky later realizes that Slogs is the one who wrote the “Boongs piss off” graffiti, thus connecting this joke to other acts of racism in the town. Though this moment of laughter might seem harmless at this point, the novel later reveals that jokes like this one can be the precursors of much more violently racist behavior. Blacky’s admission that he “[doesn’t] know why” he can’t laugh at the joke also shows his inner turmoil over his desire to fit in with his racist community while also honoring his friendships with the indigenous residents of the Point. However, by saying he knows that “it has to do with Dumby and Clarence and Tommy,” Blacky shows how he is beginning to realize how his connections to members of another race can challenge the racism he formerly accepted.

Chapter 26 Quotes

☝☝ ‘BOONGS PISS OFF’ was still there. Seeing it reminded me of the night of the grand final Do. I hadn’t seen Clarence since then. Dumby either. I was having second thoughts about my retirement [...] And maybe I’d been wrong about the McRae Medal. Mark Arks had played really well. And that pass of Dumby’s was lunacy.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Mark Arks, Victor “Big Mac” McRae, Dumby Red, Clarence

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

During the summer, Blacky goes squid fishing off the jetty and sees the racist graffiti he previously saw while there with Clarence. Blacky’s realization that he hasn’t seen Clarence or Dumby since the party after the grand final shows the normalization of the racial divides in Blacky’s

community, because he does not even think about this separation until he sees the graffiti. Blacky's statement that "maybe" he was wrong about the injustice of Dumby not getting the award also shows how Blacky is still unwilling to make sacrifices for the sake of justice, so much so that he chooses to convince himself of something he knows not to be true rather than make a personal sacrifice in order to protest racism. The mention of the award as the "McRae Medal" is a significant piece of foreshadowing, as McRae ("Big Mac") will later commit another, much worse act of racism by shooting and killing Dumby.

Chapter 31 Quotes

☞☞ That's exactly how everything looked after the shooting. That's how I felt, too. Inside and outside. Grey and heavy, like lead, like a sinker. If they dropped me off the jetty I'd plummet straight to the bottom.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Dumby Red

Related Themes: 

Page Number: Page 201

Explanation and Analysis

After Dumby Red dies in a possibly racially motivated shooting, Blacky feels as if the whole world has turned grey. The "greyness" inside of Blacky represents his complicated internal conflict, as he struggles to reconcile the disparaging comments his community is making about the robbers with his own knowledge of Dumby's friendly and caring character. The "greyness" Blacky sees outside of himself also represents how, before his friendship with Dumby and Dumby's death, Blacky saw his society as black and white, with clear divides between the Port and the Point, white and aboriginal people. He once accepted these divides as the norm. Now, however, he sees that there are grey areas, such as his friendship with Dumby, that challenge the racism he once accepted. The "heaviness" Blacky describes shows his deep sadness at the death of his friend, which he can only express in the language and culture he is familiar with, by using a fishing metaphor.

Chapter 32 Quotes

☞☞ 'Yeah, the footy club. Are they doing anything for Dumby's funeral? He was one of our players, wasn't he?'

'No, I don't think so, Blacky. Sport's one thing, this is another. It's better not to get the two mixed up.'

Related Characters: Coach "Arks" Robertson, Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker), Dumby Red

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 205

Explanation and Analysis

After Dumby dies in a shooting and the death causes racial tensions to escalate between the Port and the Point, Blacky asks Arks if the football team will do anything to honor their late teammate. This conversation shows a reversal in the two characters' views on teamwork and duty. Blacky, who previously rejected any sense of duty, now wants to honor his responsibility to his friend and teammate because Dumby's death has changed his perspective. Meanwhile, Arks, who previously spoke about the importance of one's duty to their team and their community, as well as about how football is more important than just a simple sport, now rejects the idea that his players' obligation to each other might extend beyond the game. This moment shows how racism and racial divides affect every aspect of life in the town. It also reveals that the idea of a "team" is hollow unless, like Blacky suggests, each member puts in the effort to support and honor their teammates.

Chapter 33 Quotes

☞☞ But I knew Mike would still give Greg some good advice. Mike always gave good advice [...] That's why I hated 'The Brady Bunch' so much. It was unlike real life. My life anyway. Grown-ups didn't solve problems, they made them.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 214

Explanation and Analysis

All throughout the novel, Blacky hates *The Brady Bunch* and always argues with his siblings about watching it. However, he only explains why he hates it after Dumby's death, saying that it's because the adults on the television show give unrealistically good advice. This moment further illuminates Blacky's avoidance of duty, as he sees adults as always failing their duty to help children. However, this opinion also explains why Blacky chooses to take on responsibility for covering up the graffiti at the end of the book, because he

knows the adults in the community will not do it. Blacky's hatred of *The Brady Bunch* also relates to his difficult relationship with his family, as he sees the adults in his family as failing to help their children. This attitude will transform after his siblings help him escape their abusive father and Blacky realizes that when his family puts in the effort to support each other, they actually can live up to the ideals of love and problem-solving portrayed in *The Brady Bunch*.

Chapter 34 Quotes

☝☝ In the distance I could see the jetty – a blurry line floating above the water. Maybe Pickles and Dazza were sitting at the anchor right now, looking toward the Point, telling each other stories they'd heard in the front bar. [...] What had Dazza said? Play with fire and ya gunna get burnt. Maybe, Dazza, but not burnt to death.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Dumby Red, Pickles, Dazza

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

After seeing Dumby's body and feeling a moment of peace, Blacky walks off alone to give the family some privacy during the burial. The mention of the jetty here shows how not only has Blacky's perspective physically shifted (in that he's looking at the jetty from the opposite direction) but his perspective has also metaphorically shifted by going to the Point. He sees the grief of the Point community and faces his sadness over Dumby's death, feeling a greater empathy for what this community has lost due to the racist actions of Blacky's town. Blacky's language about not being “burnt to death” refers back to his thoughts about people burning themselves to death, which he briefly contemplated doing in protest when Dumby didn't win the top football award after the grand final. At that time, Blacky's instinct was to see such dramatic sacrifice as the only way to fulfill a duty. But now, after journeying out to the Point to fulfill his duty as a friend by attending Dumby's funeral, Blacky sees that not only will he survive the sacrifices he must make for duty, he will feel better for doing what is right.

Chapter 36 Quotes

☝☝ Then it clicked. What Darcy had said earlier that day when I said they should paint over the graffiti – ‘I daresay they should.’ Now I understood what he meant. They should, but they couldn't because there was no *they*. Well, maybe there was but *they* were too busy. [...] They had no time, but I did.

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black (speaker), Darcy

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky comes to this realization after he discovers that the local butcher wrote the racist graffiti on the town's jetty. Initially, he feels helpless to do anything to oppose this act of racism, but through talking to his neighbor Darcy, Blacky suddenly understand that individual acts of resistance are actually the only way to fight racism. This realization shows an essential development in Blacky's character. Like the vague “they” he discusses here, Blacky also used to dodge any responsibility for solving the problems of his society, as shown, for example, by his choice to deny his friendship with Clarence in front of the white campers. Now, because the tragedy of Dumby's death has forced Blacky to see that he has a duty to confront racial injustices, Blacky is willing to sacrifice his time and even his own safety to fulfill his duty to his friend—and to the community of the Point in general—by painting over the graffiti.

Chapter 40 Quotes

☝☝ ‘And what does this graffiti say?’

I considered a slight deviation from the truth. I could say it said [...] ‘BOB BLACK IS A BASTARD’. And all I was doing was protecting the good name of my father. No, that was too outlandish – I persevered with the truth.

‘Boongs piss off.’

Related Characters: Gary “Blacky” Black, Bob “The Old Man” Black (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 264

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky and his father face off in their shed after the old man catches Blacky stealing paint to cover up the shelter graffiti that uses a racist slur for aboriginal people. Blacky's decision to "persevere with the truth" is significant here because throughout the novel, he has lied about his genuine feelings and opinions in order to avoid his father's wrath and gain his approval (and the approval of the community more generally). By telling the truth about the racist graffiti, even though he knows his father will yell at him and possibly hurt him, Blacky displays a true sense of moral strength and courage, different from the performative bravery his community expects of him and other boys. By standing up to his father, Blacky shows he is now willing to make personal sacrifices in order to fulfill his duty to combat racism.

Chapter 41 Quotes

☝☝ I closed my eyes. Tomorrow there'd be hell to pay, but at that moment, down there at Bum Rock, my brothers and sisters around me, I was happy. Happier than a pig in mud. I was as happy as Larry.

Related Characters: Gary "Blacky" Black (speaker)

Related Themes:



Page Number: 273

Explanation and Analysis

Blacky gives these final thoughts after he and his siblings paint over the racist graffiti on the jetty shelter and then go to sleep on the rock by their house. Blacky's use of the phrase "as happy as Larry" shows that he has finally accepted his family and recognized their ability to work together and support each other. Previously, his mother's use of the phrase confused Blacky and he didn't understand its meaning, but here, he intuitively grasps the sense of joy that comes from supportive family connections. The fact that Blacky acknowledges his happiness also demonstrates that he has progressed beyond his former pessimism and discovered that taking on a sense of responsibility can actually lead to satisfaction rather than resentment. While Blacky must still face the failure of the adults in his life and continue combating the pervasive racism in his town, this moment makes it clear that he will have the support of his siblings to help him, and what's more, that he's ready to fulfill his duty to them as well.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Blacky's football team has progressed to the final game of their league. His entire hometown, the Port, is ecstatic because, according to Blacky, the town doesn't have anything else to be excited about. Blacky's team is also excited, including the coach, Mr. Robertson, whom Blacky calls "Arks" behind his back because of the coach's thick accent. Arks's son, Mark, is team captain.

This opening sets up the major conflict of the first half of the novel: the external pressure Blacky feels with the upcoming football game. This also establishes Blacky's dissent from the mainstream opinions of his community, which will become more important as he further challenges his town's norms.



Blacky is the second ruck. The first ruck, the most important position on the team, is Carol Cockatoo. Carol is strong and tall and an excellent football player, meaning that Blacky doesn't need put a lot of effort into his job as second ruck.

Carol embodies the masculine ideals of strength and physical stature that Blacky aspires to. Carol's impressive ability also allows Blacky to avoid duty, as he often does in the beginning of the novel.



Half the football team comes from the indigenous community known as the Point. Blacky and the other white players call the indigenous players Nungas, whereas white people from the Port are called Goonyas. While the Point players play very well, Arks often yells at them because they do not follow his strict directions. Blacky remarks that the Point players act as if they are playing a completely different sport when they pass the ball between them.

Though the indigenous players are talented, their abilities are rejected for being different from the white players. This shows how the Port in general discriminates against the indigenous community for having different customs. Arks's objections also show how although a team is supposed to support its members, division is already brewing on the Port's team.



The football league discovers that the player known as Carol Cockatoo is actually Colin, the real Carol's 18-year-old brother. As a result, Colin is disqualified and Blacky becomes the first ruck. The whole town constantly questions Blacky about his physical ability as the team prepares for the important game.

Blacky is confronted with one of his biggest fears, the expectations of others and a sense of duty. The community's questioning of Blacky's physical ability also feeds into gendered expectations that he should be strong and tough.



CHAPTER 2

The opposing team, Wangaroo, depends entirely on their star player, Thumper. Thumper is as big and strong as Colin, but he plays football with the straightforward strategy that Arks prefers. Blacky uses his academic skills to calculate just how little of a chance he stands against someone as big and fast as Thumper. Still, Blacky knows he must at least try to stop Thumper, or else the town will label him as a "gutless wonder" (a coward) for the rest of his life.

Thumper embodies the masculine ideal of being big and strong. Blacky, by contrast, is bookish and logical, traits not valued in a boy in his community. Blacky's fear of being perceived as a coward will be the driving motivation with for his character throughout the novel.



Knowing he cannot successfully tackle Thumper, Blacky devises a strategy to simply pretend to tackle him. This way, the town will still think Blacky is brave enough to face Thumper. Blacky also contemplates poisoning Thumper so he cannot play at all. He tells Arks of his poisoning plan, but Arks tells him to stop kidding around.

Blacky's plan to fake tackle Thumper exposes the flaws of his community's expectations. His community does not value genuine courage, but instead only cares that one appears tough. Masculine toughness in his town is therefore shallow and performative.



CHAPTER 3

Arks himself was a star football player as a young man. A picture of him in the prime of his career hangs in the local pub. According to some of the older residents of the town, Arks returned to town to be both team captain and coach.

Arks's enduring reputation as a football star emphasizes how important football is to Blacky's community, thus increasing the sense of duty Blacky struggles with.



Arks calls Blacky and tells him to come to the football oval after school and practice rucking. Blacky wonders if it's too late to practice and whether he should ask his mom first. Arks says it's fine and he will see Blacky soon.

Blacky attempts to avoid his responsibility to his coach and team. Arks's objection shows how an individual's wishes are considered inferior to the greater good of the team, a subservience Blacky comes to resent.



CHAPTER 4

Blacky's friend Pickles asks Blacky if he wants to hang out after school. Blacky declines because he has practice with Arks. Arks picks up Blacky in his rundown car. He asks Blacky if he is nervous about the big game. Blacky says only a little bit. Arks recounts how he panicked before the biggest game of his own football career, back when he played in front of fifty thousand people. Blacky can't even imagine playing in front of that many people.

Blacky minimizes his feelings of anxiety in front of his coach, because men in his society are not allowed to show signs of weakness or emotional distress. Arks's recollections of his past career are important for understanding the glory and importance he and other adults in the Port assign to football.



Arks remarks how as both a player and a coach, he never won the grand final, the final game of the season. Blacky senses Arks wants him to say they'll win the game this time. But Blacky cannot bring himself to promise that, even though he knows football is supposed to encourage optimism.

Arks's past failures only add to the pressure Blacky feels. Blacky's characteristic pessimism and worry prevent him from being able to feel optimistic, once again showing how his attitude diverges from that of his community.



Blacky and Arks begin practicing on the football oval, which stinks of the nearby pig farm. Even though Blacky knows all the technical theory about goal scoring, he cannot seem to connect that knowledge to his body's actions. Blacky recalls how at a recent game, a spectator mocked his skills, causing all the other townspeople to laugh and Blacky to miss a goal.

The smell of the pig farm emphasizes the poverty of Blacky's hometown, highlighting how significant hope and excitement for sports is. Meanwhile, Blacky's fear of appearing inadequate is so great it effects his physical ability.



Blacky and Arks switch from practicing goal-scoring to practicing rucking. Blacky struggles at first, but then manages to “thump” the ball into the goal. He feels accomplished. Arks makes Blacky continue practicing until Blacky is exhausted and the sky is too dark for him to score. Arks says they can finish for the night, but Blacky can tell he is disappointed. Blacky feels sorry for Arks, knowing all the disappointments in Arks’s past. Blacky feels worse knowing the upcoming grand final may be Arks’s last chance at winning the league, and thinks it’s unfortunate that Arks has only a player like Blacky to depend on.

Because high expectations for youth football players is the norm, neither character in this scene is aware of the absurdity of a grown man being disappointed in a fourteen-year-old for becoming tired and of a child carrying the ambitions of an adult. All of this highlights the immense pressure Blacky feels and explains why Blacky has come to fear and resent the responsibility placed upon him by his team and his town.



CHAPTER 5

The Point, the local aboriginal community, used to have their own successful football team, but the team ended after the spectators started too many fights. Now Arks travels out to the Point to recruit aboriginal players for the Port’s team. Though the Point and the Port are only a half hour from each other, the children of each town do not socialize outside of football. Even when the players from the two towns meet at the beginning of the season, they instinctively sit on opposite sides of the changing rooms.

Here, the novel introduces the extreme segregation between the two communities, which will become more apparent as racial tensions escalate as the plot progresses. This also sets up the significance of Blacky and Dumby’s friendship, because they overcome the status quo of racial division. The locker room separation also shows how, though a team is supposed to unite all its players, a team alone cannot overcome racism.



Blacky thinks back to the beginning of the season. In the memory, he is sitting waiting for his friend Pickles. Mark Arks is confidently strolling around the changing room in his jockstrap. Someone sits down in Pickles’s spot. Blacky notices that this stranger has perfect teeth, an athletic build, and very nice “boots” (football shoes). Blacky asks the player what position he plays. The stranger says he doesn’t know because they do not have positions out on the Point. Blacky notices the stranger is wearing the jersey of a famous footballer. The stranger introduces himself as Dumby Red.

Dumby defies Blacky’s preconceived notions of what an indigenous player should look and act like, thus showing how contact with a member of another group can broaden one’s perspective. Dumby’s major character traits, his stylish appearance and his nontraditional playing style, are introduced here.



Arks instructs the players to run laps to warm up. Mark is usually the fastest runner on the team, but now Dumby outruns him. Blacky decides that Dumby is annoying. Arks tests Dumby’s shooting ability. Dumby proves that, in addition to his speed, he’s an incredible goal scorer. When Arks posts the team’s roster, Mark’s name is first, Dumby’s name is second, and Blacky and his friends’ names are further down on the list.

Despite the fact that Dumby runs faster and plays better than Mark, Mark’s name comes first on the list, foreshadowing how Mark will be picked over Dumby at the end of the year awards because Mark is white. Blacky’s name being lower down on the list sets up his initial resentment of Dumby and highlights how being part of the same team doesn’t necessarily unite people.



After the first practice, Arks is cheerful, knowing his team will have many skilled players this year. As Arks drives the indigenous players back to the Point, Dumby yells goodbye to Blacky. Dazza and Pickles, Blacky’s friends, question Blacky about this and Blacky says he hates Dumby.

This scene establishes the obstacles in the way of Dumby and Blacky’s friendship, mainly the disapproval and judgement of Blacky’s community. Later, Blacky and Dumby will overcome these obstacles to establish a genuine connection.



A couple of months into the season, the team is in another town playing a game. The opposing team has a player named Mad Dog who is an unskilled football player and who beats up other players during the game. Dumby scores many goals and the Port's team wins the game.

After the game, Blacky and the other Port players are walking around the opposing team's town. They pass by Dumby and Clemboy, another Point player, and Blacky tells his friends he still hates Dumby, even though he's actually started to like Dumby. Blacky is beginning to think he was just jealous of Dumby; he realizes now that Dumby is a skilled player and a good teammate, even if he is vain. Blacky also appreciates that Dumby makes life interesting.

Blacky and his friends run into players from the opposing team, including Mad Dog. Pickles bickers with one of the players. Blacky grows bored and tries to walk away, but Mad Dog attacks him. Mad Dog holds Blacky in a headlock he can't break free from. Blacky yells for help while Mad Dog spins him around and threatens to throw him into a nearby concrete pole. But just as Mad Dog is about to throw Blacky into the pole, he suddenly lets go. Blacky sees that Dumby has pulled Mad Dog into a headlock.

Dumby lets Mad Dog go. Mad Dog tells Dumby there's no hard feelings and offers to shake hands. As Dumby goes to accept, Mad Dog punches him in the face. Mad Dog says he doesn't shake hands with "boongs." Dumby punches Mad Dog and breaks his nose. All the members of Blacky's team walk away with Dumby. Blacky thanks Dumby and decides that now they will be friends. Blacky even uses slang from the Point, "Nukkin ya," to say goodbye to Dumby.

CHAPTER 6

Back in the present, Blacky returns home from practicing with Arks to find his family in the kitchen. Blacky's old man is absent, at the pub, as he always is. Mum is cooking. Blacky remarks on how much she knows about football, even though Arks won't take her opinions seriously because she was never a football player and she's a woman. Blacky expresses his doubts about Arks's expectations of him, but Mum encourages him to just do his best, saying that Arks will be "happy as Larry." Blacky wonders why his mother uses that phrase; he has no idea where it comes from.

Violent and unpredictable players like Mad Dog explain Blacky's general fear of being hurt in football, a fear he cannot express because of his society's expectations of courage.



When talking to his friends, Blacky must deny his secret approval of Dumby because it goes against the racial divisions of his community. However, this scene suggests the foundations for the friendship that will later allow Blacky to challenge the racism of his community, which currently keeps him from expressing his genuine thoughts.



Blacky's friends and teammates who do not help him show that being a team does not inherently mean its members will support each other. Notably, Dumby, who is an outsider because of his race, is the one who helps Blacky, showing that being a supportive teammate depends on the strength of one's inner character.



Mad Dog's use of a racial slur and violence against Dumby shows how racism against indigenous people extends beyond the Port. Blacky's use of Dumby's community's slang also shows the beginnings of Blacky's character development where he embraces his friend regardless of his society's racist divides.



This is the reader's first introduction to Blacky's father's neglect of the family, which partially explains Blacky's fear of taking on responsibility himself. The hypermasculine prejudice of local football is also on display here: Arks denies good advice because it comes from a woman. The phrase "happy as Larry" will reappear at the end of the novel to symbolize Blacky's acceptance of his connection to his family, so it's notable that at this point, he simply finds the phrase confusing.



Blacky greets his siblings, using advanced vocabulary words that he's proud of but that his siblings ignore. He notices the table has been neatly set, probably by his sister, Sharon. But even though Sharon always does things neatly, none of the dishes or silverware in their home match. Blacky thinks how he never noticed how disorganized his house was until he stayed with a wealthy family for a football tournament.

The mismatched silverware represents not only the family's poverty, but the chaotic and disconnected relationships of the family members themselves. But at the same time, Sharon's dedication to keeping the home as nice as possible foreshadows how individual effort can foster group connections.



Blacky chats with his little brother, Kevin. Mum corrects Kevin's grammar, even though their father speaks without proper grammar. As with most nights, the siblings argue about whether they will watch *Gilligan's Island* or *The Brady Bunch* tonight. Blacky argues for *Gilligan's Island*. He can't believe his siblings could be so stupid as to prefer *The Brady Bunch*.

*Mum's devotion to her children is shown by her high expectations of them. Blacky's preference of *Gilligan's Island* over *The Brady Bunch* shows his character's preference of independence and self-sufficiency over interconnectedness and family bonds—a preference that will change over the course of the novel.*



As is custom in the family, the siblings vote on what to watch, with each person's vote equaling the number of their age. **The Brady Bunch** wins. Mum serves them all dinner before sitting down on a stool to do a crossword. The siblings groan when they find out they will again be having bread and butter pudding for dessert.

Blacky's mom literally does not have a place at the table, showing how much she sacrifices to take care of her family. This sacrifice explains in part why Blacky himself would fear taking on responsibility.



After dinner, not wanting to watch **The Brady Bunch**, Blacky goes to his room. He unfortunately has to share the bedroom with his brothers, including one whom he calls Best Team-man, who has the smelliest feet in the world. Blacky doesn't know how Best Team-man could be so unlucky as to inherit the stinky feet gene.

Blacky's comments about Team-man's smelly feet gene shows how Blacky interprets connections to family as placing an unfair burden upon the individual. The crowded conditions of the bedroom further emphasize the poverty and chaos of Blacky's family.



Blacky lies down in their messy room and tries to focus on his opponent, Thumper. He can't think of any real weaknesses of Thumper's and he doesn't want to even imagine his strengths. Blacky stares up at "the scar," the crack in the ceiling where his father took the house apart and put it back together after moving it from a government auction to the Port.

"The scar" not only shows the poverty of the Black family's living conditions but also represents the estrangement within Blacky's family. It also suggests the larger division within Blacky's society, between the Point and the Port.



Team-man comes in and discusses the upcoming game with Blacky. Team-man tells Blacky that he doesn't stand a chance against Thumper. Blacky says if he's doomed, then the whole team is doomed, since he's the first ruck. Team-man agrees. Blacky mocks him for being a great "team-man." Team-man leaves the bedroom.

Team-man fails to provide the emotional support one would expect from a family member or teammate, which is why his nickname (essentially meaning "team player") is ironic. Blacky's attitude here communicates that at the moment, he doesn't feel lucky or grateful to be part of his team or his family; he just experiences them as burdens.



CHAPTER 7

At football practices, Best Team-man (whose real name is Timothy) appears to be a great player with technical skill. However, on game days, Best Team-man can't seem to get a hold of the ball. Arks says that Best Team-man can't "read the game," unlike Dumby, who follows the ball like it's second nature.

Even though Team-man can't score on gameday, he dedicates himself to his team. Blacky thinks Team-man would jump off a cliff if Arks asked him to. This is why Team-man always receives the "Best Team-man trophy" at the end of the year. One would think that dedication to the team would also mean dedication to the family, but Blacky says this is not the case with Team-man.

Blacky recalls a time last summer when Team-man found two crayfish on the reef outside their town, while they were spearfishing on their father's boat. Even though they are not allowed to be that far out in the ocean, they go diving for the crayfish. Blacky scares one out from its hiding place, but Team-man is not there to catch it. Instead, Team-man is floating on the water, having passed out after diving too deep.

Blacky drags Team-man back into the boat and rows to shore. He sees their neighbor, Darcy, and calls for help. They take Team-man to the doctor. He is fine except for a burst eardrum. When their father asks why Blacky and Team-man were so far out on the reef, Team-man says it was all Blacky's idea, thus proving his disloyalty and selfishness toward his brother.

CHAPTER 8

Blacky goes for a walk outside. He looks up at the night sky and thinks about how he once heard that most of the stars one sees have already died. He sees his neighbor, Darcy, outside bottling up maggots. Blacky helps Darcy and the two chat about which maggots are better for catching different types of fish. Darcy begins to tell Blacky about his time in the Royal Australia Air Force. Blacky listens even though Darcy has told him this story many times and people in town say Darcy was never actually in the RAAF.

Blacky encourages Darcy to recite a famous poem, "Kaiser Bill." Blacky enjoys the fact that Darcy doesn't censor the swear words in the poem. Darcy continues to count out the maggots he is bottling, recounting to make sure he's not selling any of his customers short.

Being a successful football player is something instinctual that cannot be taught, thus adding to Blacky's self-doubts about the responsibility placed upon him and emphasizing Dumby's natural talent as a player.



Blacky views the fulfillment of duty as requiring total illogical sacrifice, similar to that of a lemming throwing itself off a cliff. Even with that total sacrifice, one can still fail, just as Team-man fails as a family member. Blacky's attitude here sheds some light on why he himself is reluctant to take on responsibility.



Fishing is essential to the men of Blacky's community. Being successful at fishing is another way Blacky can earn the approval of his father and the other men of the Port. However, as with Blacky's other attempts to live up to these unrealistic masculine expectations, he struggles.



Team-man fails to live up to his titles of brother and teammate, showing why Blacky believes that these labels are really just words which do not translate to any genuine loyalty or support. This anecdote also presents Team-man's selfishness when it comes to his family, which he will overcome at the end of the novel.



Blacky's affinity for facts and knowledge is a key aspect of his character and stands in contrast to the rough, physical strength expected of boys in his community. Darcy is a complicated character. He brings support and joy into Blacky's life, but he also may be lying about his past. Blacky will struggle with his relationship with Darcy as racial tensions in their community escalate.



Darcy appears to be an ethical, honest man, which Blacky appreciates. Blacky will later have to challenge this perception when he is faced with Darcy and the rest of the town's tolerance of racism.



Darcy comments that Blacky seems distracted. Blacky says he is worried about the upcoming game. Darcy notes that the game is a lot of responsibility for Blacky. Blacky thinks about how he feels a lot of pressure from everyone in his life, even though it's not his fault that he's tall, that he plays on a football team that made it to the grand final, or that Carol was disqualified. He thinks having so much responsibility is unfair. Darcy tells him to just try his best. Blacky wonders what will happen if his best isn't good enough. Mum calls Blacky back into the house for bedtime.

Darcy plays the role of a supportive father figure, something Blacky's own father does not do. This scene explains Blacky's rejection of duty more explicitly than before. He believes that duty is something unfairly assigned to an individual. Expectations from others, as Blacky sees it, will lead to unnecessary personal sacrifice. This is the resentful attitude toward duty which Blacky's friendship with Dumbo will come to challenge.



CHAPTER 9

Blacky has only seen one dentist in his life. She recommended he go see an orthodontist to straighten his crooked front teeth. Blacky wishes he had a perfect smile, like Dumbo's, instead of teeth that others make fun of. While his mother is hanging up laundry, Blacky asks her how much it costs to go to the orthodontist.

Blacky's desire for straight teeth emphasizes how much he cares about the opinions of others, although he would like not to. The fact that Blacky has only even seen one dentist in his life also highlights the poverty of his family.



Mum herself doesn't have any teeth. Before she got married, she had a beautiful smile. But because eight pregnancies drained the calcium from her body, her teeth all became rotten and she had to have them removed (or at least, that's what Blacky believes happened). Blacky feels a little guilty for even asking about the orthodontist. Mum tells Blacky to ask his father about going to the orthodontist, but Blacky knows his father will simply say, "Negative."

Blacky's mother presents an extreme example of fulfilling one's duty, which Blacky fears in part because her sacrifice has drained her physically. Notably, Mum is performing a domestic task in this scene, as she always is, showing how she sacrifices nearly all her time to her family duties.



CHAPTER 10

The next day, Mark asks Blacky if he's coming to the oval for more practice. He tosses Blacky a ball, which Blacky immediately drops. Blacky says he's going home, but he walks down the main street of his town instead. He looks at the anchor which serves as a memorial to the town's past as a port for English ships. Next to the anchor is a map for summer campers, though Blacky doesn't think anyone could get lost in a town as small as the Port.

Blacky once again fails to perform successfully with his football skills. His tour of his town and his dismissiveness of its small size show the hopelessness he sees in his community, thus further emphasizing how important the upcoming football game is for everyone.



Blacky sits on a bench and looks out at the jetty. Blacky loves the jetty and can't imagine living without it. On the jetty is a shelter where the local boys carve graffiti into the wood. Only boys graffiti the shelter. If a girl's name appears in the graffiti, the words are usually derogatory and sexual.

Blacky's beloved jetty and its graffiti will become a key point of the racial conflicts of the town. Now, the jetty shows the misogynistic attitudes toward women in Blacky's community.



Blacky can see the Point off in the distance. He's never been to the Point, though once he and his friend Dazza, decided they would go there together. But then they remembered the stories they'd heard at the local pub about residents of the Point carrying spears and boomerangs and attacking people. These thoughts scared the boys, so they returned to the Port.

Pickles, one of Blacky's best friends, approaches Blacky. Pickles farts and spits out something disgusting before sitting down, and Blacky reflects on how gross his friend's behavior is. Pickles is a worse football player than many of the players from the Point, but because Pickles is from the Port and his parents spend a lot of money at Arks's store, Pickles remains on the team. Pickles is more interested in girls than football anyway.

Pickles talks about how if the team wins the grand final, many girls will want to date them, while Blacky thinks about how Pickles always has a filthy rash. Pickles says they have to win this game, for the sake of his romantic life. Blacky notes that's just one more responsibility for him. Pickles begins bragging, and lying, about his most recent sexual encounter.

Blacky believes Pickles has truly terrible hygiene, but he hangs out with him anyway because there aren't very many kids his age in town and their fathers are friends.

Pickles spots Blacky's father's fishing boat out on the ocean. According to Blacky, Pickles sees the boat before Blacky does because Pickles is a born fisherman. As soon as he can, Pickles will drop out of school and begin fishing for a living, just as his father and grandfather did. Blacky doesn't want to be a fisherman, but he is jealous that Pickles at least knows what he wants to be when he grows up.

The boats pull into the jetty, meaning they have fish to sell. Pickles wants to go see what the fishermen caught but Blacky makes an excuse to go home. Pickles knows this is because Blacky doesn't want to be near his father's boat, which Blacky has been afraid of since being caught in a bad storm. Blacky thinks about how the storm is only part of that night, and only he and his father know the whole story. Blacky notes that he'll have to tell the truth about what happened, even though he doesn't want to.

Blacky's separation from the Point, although he can literally see it from the center of his town, shows the segregation of the two communities. He and Dazza's failed journey shows how ingrained racist myths are Blacky and his peers' minds.



Racism is so normalized in Blacky's community that he doesn't challenge the unfairness of Pickles being picked for the team essentially just because he is a white member of the Port. Pickles embodies a typical male in Blacky's community, rough in appearance with hypersexualized attitudes toward women.



Pickles's obsession and hypersexualization of women continues. Blacky feels increased pressure on his football skills, even if that pressure is comes from something as absurd as Pickles's romantic aspirations.



Community and the approval of others is essential in Blacky's life because he doesn't have anyone else to spend time with in his rural small town.



There are limited options for what role a man can play in Blacky's poor community. Blacky's society is also one that values fishing skills (which Pickles possesses) over academic skills (which Blacky possesses). This moment emphasizes Blacky's outsider status within his community and his hopelessness about ever finding his place there.



Blacky cannot express his true feelings of shame and fear to supposedly one of his oldest and closest friends, because men in his community cannot show weakness or negative emotion. The reader can tell that whatever memory he's referencing deeply affects him, however, because Blacky says that he has to bring up the memory for the sake of the narrative.



CHAPTER 11

A few months before, Blacky, Team-man, and their father were out on the boat fishing. Blacky likes the boat because although it is old, it has lots of character, like his neighbor, Darcy. Blacky's father doesn't know much about sailing or the ocean, because he grew up in a city instead of in the Port. He usually goes fishing with his more experienced partner, Mick, but Mick is unable to come that day.

Team-man tricks Blacky into thinking there are sharks in the water. Then they see dolphins swimming in the ocean. Blacky interprets this as a sign it'll be a great day. Their father asks Blacky if he's finished preparing the bait. Blacky describes his father as big, but not strong, always wearing overalls and sporting uncombed hair. His father tells Team-man to untangle the fishing lines.

Blacky remarks that his father (whom he calls "the old man") is in a good mood; he can tell because his father addressed him by his first name. Blacky usually doesn't like fishing because his father is usually angry when he's fishing. Blacky thinks this is because the lines are always tangled, especially when Blacky handles them. The knots only get worse as Blacky gets anxious and his father gets frustrated. His father brings him along anyway though, because they seem to magically catch more fish when Blacky is there.

Blacky and Team-man discuss how tourists in town eat squid, whereas locals only use squid for bait. The boat passes over a reef, a place where they expect to catch a lot of fish. All three of them drop their lines in the water, but they don't catch anything. They try again and again, but still they don't catch any fish. The old man begins drinking. Their boat drifts west. Blacky can tell that a storm is coming because of what he's heard in Darcy's stories, but both he and Team-man are afraid to upset the old man with the news.

The old man discovers another reef. Team-man and Blacky throw their lines over and both catch large snappers. They begin catching more and more fish, with the old man helping Blacky reel in the bigger ones. When they finally pause, they notice the sky has turned black with the coming storm. Blacky suggests they go back to shore, but the old man insists they keep fishing.

Blacky intellectualizes the act of fishing because he takes comfort in understanding his world through an intellectual lens. Blacky's father's failure as a fisherman is one of the many ways he fails to fulfill his duty as a father, in this case by not providing for his family financially.



Team-man points out Blacky's anxious nature, a shameful trait for a man in their community. However, Blacky finds aspects of his environment to enjoy. This creates a cheerful mood that will contrast with the chaos and fear of the following scenes on the boat.



Nicknames in the novel are a way of characters distancing themselves from each other, as shown by Blacky calling his father "the old man" or his brother, "Team-man" or by his father using Blacky's real name only when they are getting along. Fear of his father's anger is a major factor Blacky will struggle with as the novel progresses.



Blacky and Team-man's conversation about squid reveals the class differences they must struggle with in larger Australian society. The old man's drinking is a bad sign because of his issues with alcohol, though it's also a normal part of being a man in their town. The storm brewing off in the distance not only represents a tangible threat to Blacky but represents the storm of his father's anger approaching.



The abundance of fish and the men's happiness over it will contrast with the coming fear and anger when the storm hits. Here, Blacky's father exposes one of his major flaws: his inability to quit and his valuing of fishing success over the safety and happiness of his family.



Blacky silently begs the fish to stop biting. Eventually, he starts pulling in fish half-eaten by sharks and the old man decides they can go back to shore. Blacky is increasingly worried about the storm. His father continues drinking and scolds Blacky for worrying. Exhausted from fishing, Blacky falls asleep below deck and has a nightmare about vengeful fish below him.

Blacky wakes up when the boat, rocking violently on the waves, throws him to the floor. Team-man has thrown up from motion sickness. It's dark outside and neither boy knows where they are. Blacky checks the time and realizes six hours have passed since they started sailing home. Blacky goes up to the deck. Huge waves crash over the side of the boat. He finds his father still steering the boat. The old man is smiling like he is enjoying the challenge of the storm.

Blacky asks the old man where they are. The old man refuses to answer him and gestures for him to go back down below deck. The rocking boat continues to throw them back and forth. Blacky starts crying and shouts that the old man must be trying to kill them. The old man grabs him by the shirt, swears at him, and tells him to go back to the cabin below. Blacky goes back down below. He sits with the still sick Team-man, believing they are going to die.

Somehow, Blacky falls asleep. When he wakes up, the storm has passed and the boat is almost home. His father doesn't speak as they moor the boat and begin driving home. Finally, the old man says that he never wants Blacky to come on the boat again. He can't believe that his son is a "gutless wonder." Blacky feels the most intense shame of his life. He has not been near the boat since that day.

CHAPTER 12

Back in present day, Blacky leaves Pickles and walks alone along the coast. He enjoys looking at the rocky shore because the rocks house a community of diverse sea life. He stops beside Black Rock, a rock he and his siblings have claimed as their own because it is near their home. Blacky thinks the rock looks like an indigenous person's bum, so it should therefore be called Bum Rock (but no one agrees with him). His siblings are already on the rock, playing football. Blacky realizes, hopelessly, that his little sister Jenny is better at kicking the ball than he is.

Blacky cannot express his legitimate worries about the storm because of his father's expectations of bravery. This shows the illogical and dangerous side of Blacky's father's and the community's expectation that boys should be completely without fear.



The old man embodies the illogical, reckless courage expected of men in Blacky's community. The darkness and violence of the waves emphasizes Blacky's understandable fear in contrast to his father's disturbing enjoyment. All of this creates a tense atmosphere for the following confrontation between the two characters.



By crying and begging his father, Blacky completely violates the expectations of total courage placed upon men in his community. This violation explains his father's angry and violent reaction. Blacky's certainty they are going to die explains the lasting trauma of the memory on his character.



Blacky's intense shame regarding his fearful actions on that day and his father's furious reaction is a major motivation for his character moving forward into the grand final, as he will later mention that he wants his father to see that he's not a "gutless wonder" after all.



Blacky Rock/Bum Rock is an important object for Blacky and his family and Blacky's attitude toward the rock symbolizes his relationship toward his family. Right now, he is attempting to claim the rock for his own by naming it himself, showing how he prefers independence over community; right now, he doesn't care that the rest of his family prefers the name "Black Rock."



Blacky goes inside to see his mother, who is reading a book and doing laundry. Blacky notes that his mother spends a lot of time in the laundry room, not just because their large family produces a lot of dirty laundry, but also because the room offers her a brief escape from her children. His mother is currently reading a romance book, the only kind of book she reads. Blacky reads her romance books from time to time when he finds them lying around the house, but he never finishes them. He worries this is a bad sign for his future dating life. His mother, being a fast reader, always finishes the books.

Blacky and Mum discuss the big game on Saturday. Mum tells him the whole town is coming to watch the team play. Blacky wonders if his dad will come. The old man has never shown any interest in football. Blacky doesn't know why, but he hopes his father will come to the game, maybe so he can show his father he's not a coward after all. Mum assures Blacky that his father said he's coming. Blacky says he'll probably forget because of all his drinking. Mum tells him not to talk like that.

Blacky wonders why his mother ever married and had kids with his father. He remembers an old photo he saw of his father as a young man on a motorbike where he looked tough. He thinks that maybe a girl would fall for that man. The picture reminded him of a boy at school named Jimmy Downes. Blacky knows there are three types of tough: those who act tough but aren't, those who don't act tough but are, and those who both act tough and are tough. Downes both acts tough and is truly tough.

Jimmy Downes is always in trouble at school and often gets into fights. He dates a rich, smart girl. Blacky has heard Downes brag about what he's done with this girl. Blacky realizes that Downes talks with the same incorrect grammar as Blacky's own father.

CHAPTER 13

Blacky is too nervous to fall asleep the night before the grand final football game. He goes looking for his mom, hoping she may give him one of her sleeping pills. He hears that his mom is in the bath, one of the few times of day she relaxes. Although it is past midnight, his father is not home yet. Like always, his mother will wait for her husband to come home so she can serve him dinner.

Once again, Blacky encounters his mother while she's doing a domestic task, showing that her entire life is consumed by her duty to her family. Her preference for romance novels suggests a lack of romance in her own life, given that her husband is absent and volatile. What's more, her fast reading suggests that she might be particularly intelligent, making one wonder what opportunities she sacrifices in order to devote herself totally to her children. All of this paints a dismal picture of duty for Blacky.



Blacky's desire to impress his father with his courage shows his internal motivation to perform well in the grand final. Blacky's mother is still loyal to her husband, even though her husband doesn't appear to show her any care. Once again, Mum sacrifices herself for her duty as a mother and wife without receiving anything in return.



"Toughness" is the ultimate ideal that boys in Blacky's community are expected to embody. This standard also appeals to Blacky's internal desire for closeness to his withholding father, as he sees his father as tough. Here Blacky emphasizes one of the key aspects of his community's expectations: toughness is not just an internal trait, but something one must perform externally.



Downes exposes the flaws of Blacky's community's masculinity by portraying violence and misogyny as positive traits. Blacky's sense that his father and Downes might somehow be similar suggests that he might be starting to accept how flawed his father is, even though Blacky still badly wants to impress him.



The contrast between how Blacky's mother and father handle parental duties is clearly apparent in this scene. Blacky's mother is stealing relaxation wherever she can find it in her busy life, whereas his father is absent as always. Neither is a positive role model for Blacky, which is part of why he can't imagine responsibility as something worth aspiring to.



Blacky asks his mom for a sleeping pill but she says no, she will make him some hot chocolate instead. Blacky says he can make it himself. He drinks the hot chocolate and looks at all of Team-man's Best Team-man trophies. He begins to read from a book called "Great Finals in Football History." He reads about the player Ron Barassi and how he led his team to a historic victory. Blacky wonders how someone could become as great a player as Barassi. Feeling a little calmer, Blacky decides to go back to bed. This time, he is able to fall asleep.

As always, Mum is completely devoted to her child and willing to sacrifice her own comfort to help him. Blacky is not comfortable with this sacrifice, so he instead chooses to be independent and help himself. That fact that looking at the book of successful adult football stars helps Blacky calm down enough to fall asleep suggests that he deeply desires the kind of positive role models that he can't find in his own town.



CHAPTER 14

Blacky wakes up and becomes incredibly nervous when he realizes today is the day of the big game. He wonders why he's putting himself through so much stress when he doesn't even have to play football. Arks would say that one plays football for the glory of the sport, but Blacky doesn't feel glorious.

Blacky reemphasizes the he finds expectations of duty to be unfair burdens that others place upon an individual. He dissents from his coach once again by being unable to feel the glory associated with sports.



Mum has made a large breakfast for Blacky, but he's too anxious to eat. He says he will go lie down for a while. His mother reminds him that they have to be early to the game. Blacky goes and lies down on the couch. His siblings, excited for the game, run around him. They all crowd into the car to go to the game. The old man is still asleep from coming home late the night before, but Mum assures Blacky he will be coming later.

This scene further emphasizes Blacky's anxious mood, building up the tension of the plot leading up to the big game. His mother continues to express love and care for her children through domestic tasks like cooking. Meanwhile, Blacky further craves his father's approval, despite the fact that once again, his father fails to show up for his son.



The grand final is in another town called Wangaroo, because this town has a nicer football field. This also means that the opposing team has the hometown advantage. The family arrives early to the field. Team-man suggests that he and Blacky play a while to warm up. On the first kick, Blacky successfully scores a goal. He decides he should quit while he's ahead, so he doesn't run out of good kicks before the big game. He explains to Team-man that football is all about probability, and he must save his good chances for the actual game.

The superiority of the Wangaroo's football field emphasizes the poverty of the Port. Blacky attempts to approach the game through an academic perspective, which is the perspective he's more comfortable with. Notably, his thoughts on probability are incorrect, as previous results do not affect future probability. This shows that one cannot approach football (or indeed, life) from a purely rational standpoint, much as Blacky would like to do so.



People from the town begin to arrive. Pickles's parents, Shirl and Mick, begin to grill, smoke, and drink. Blacky notes how the couple looks cleaner than usual, but still worn out and frail. Arks arrives with the Point players. Blacky worries that he doesn't see Dumby in Arks's car. Clemboy tells him Dumby is arriving with his family.

Blacky's worry over Dumby's absence shows how much both Blacky and the whole team depend upon him as a player and a friend, despite the racial divisions in the town.



Dumby's family arrives and parks far away from the townspeople. Blacky walks past the opposing team's cars alone to meet Dumby. Dumby looks handsome as usual and is sitting with his younger sister, Clarence. Blacky realizes he's seen Clarence before because she plays netball with his sisters. He remembers Clarence because she is such a good player. Blacky also meets Dumby's father, Tommy, who is as stylishly dressed as his son, and Dumby's uncle, Sid.

Dumby's family's physical distance from the other families shows the Point residents' cultural distance from the Port. Blacky's walk alone to Dumby's car foreshadows the important walk from the Port to the Point he will take later in novel for the sake of his friendship with Dumby.



Arks calls the players together. Clarence wishes Dumby and Blacky good luck and Blacky blushes. As the team gathers around, Blacky sees other players' fathers but not his own. Blacky and Dumby sit together to watch the first game of the day. Thumper walks by and everyone on the team remarks how big he is. Dumby calls out to Thumper, despite Blacky's protests, and smiles at him, saying, "Best team win, unna." Blacky thinks this is typical of Dumby's behavior, doing something reckless just for the sake of recklessness.

Here the reader sees the beginnings of Blacky's romantic feelings for Clarence, feelings which challenge the racial divides of their society. While Blacky sees Dumby's interaction with Thumper as reckless, Dumby's words also show the sportsmanship and consideration essential to Dumby's character. However, recklessness will later get Dumby into trouble during the robbery.



The team goes to the locker room and Blacky realizes that all his teammates, even Dumby, are nervous. Arks is the most anxious. He writes plays across the blackboard, but Blacky knows the only strategy Arks has is to go directly down the field. On the wall of the locker room, Blacky sees a sign that reads: "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing." Blacky's father is always talking about how the world is made of people who are either winners or losers.

Once again, Arks disapproves of the indigenous players' indirect style of play just because it is different from his tradition. Blacky remembers his father's strict expectations of success in football and other physical activities. This moment calls back to his insult about Blacky being a "gutless wonder," reminding the reader of the stakes of this game for Blacky and how much pressure he feels to live up to others' expectations.



Arks gives the team a pep talk, saying how the whole town is there to support them and the team won't let the fans down. He says this isn't just about a game. Blacky wonders if winning really matters, since no matter what happens, his town will still be rundown and poor and his father will still think he's a coward. Blacky knows, however, that for Arks this game means more than just football. Arks tells them to play for their team, their town, and for glory, because glory can never be taken away. Even Blacky begins to feel excited and hopeful after the pep talk.

Once again, children (the players) are expected to live up to the wishes of adults (the spectators). This duty is a burden unfairly placed upon them. Blacky realizes the absurdity of this expectation when he acknowledges that winning will not change the actual conditions of the town or his relationship with his father. But because of the pressure of his community, even Blacky gets swept up in the excitement for once.



Arks reminds them to play the game straight down the middle of the field, rather than wasting time on the sides. The teammates come together and egg each other on before going out onto the field. Blacky feels swept away by something bigger and more powerful than himself.

Blacky begins to realize that perhaps, when teammates actually come together and encourage each other, a team really can be a source of support and solidarity. This realization of the emotional power of putting in effort for one's team foreshadows Blacky's devotion to his family later in the book.



The game begins. Blacky sees Thumper and feels sorry for him, because Blacky feels so confident in that moment. Blacky runs toward the ball and jumps, believing that he has outplayed Thumper, who is now nowhere to be found. Then Thumper throws Blacky to the ground and steals the ball, scoring the first goal. Blacky loses all his newfound optimism as the opposing team scores again.

By the end of the first quarter, the team feels completely hopeless, and Blacky knows this is his fault because he is the first ruck. His younger sister, Jenny, comes onto the field to talk to him. Jenny tells him that their mother's advice is for him to run at the ball from the side and then jump later than Thumper. Blacky follows this advice and his team begins to score, because his mom is a genius at football. With the help of Dumby and Mark, the teams are tied by the end of the third quarter.

With only a few minutes left in the game, the teams are still tied. Mark kicks the ball too far and the Wangaroo players are about to take possession. Then Dumby, running fast, climbs over the other players. He jumps higher than anyone Blacky has ever seen and catches the ball. All the spectators, even the Wangaroo fans, cheer. Everyone waits for Dumby, the best kicker on the team, to score the winning goal. But instead, he passes the ball to Clemboy. Arks cusses at Dumby. Clemboy kicks the ball and scores only one point, meaning that the game is won only if the team can stop the Wangaroo team from scoring another goal.

Thumper catches the ball and Blacky knows he is the only one who can stop Thumper from scoring. Blacky sees the gigantic Thumper barreling towards him. He thinks about how he shouldn't get himself killed over a stupid football game. He plans to do his special Thumper tackle, where he won't actually stop Thumper but also won't look like a coward. He hears Shirl screaming for him to stop Thumper and Arks begging him to win. Then the field goes silent. Thumper is almost there.

Blacky looks toward the beer tent but doesn't see his father. Blacky steps out of Thumper's way, but at the last second, Thumper unexpectedly turns. The boys collide and Blacky is knocked unconscious. He wakes up to find Mum, Team-man, and Arks standing around him. They tell him that his tackle slowed Thumper down enough so he couldn't score until after the final siren, meaning that Blacky's team won. Suffering from a concussion, Blacky passes out again.

Blacky's optimism turns out to be shallow, as it's easily shattered by the reality of Thumper's superior size and strength. This reinforces his previous pessimistic attitude that he doesn't stand a chance against Thumper's innate ability and will fail his team and his community.



Despite the fact that Mum is a woman who has never played football, her advice is successful, showing the foolishness of Arks's misogyny. When the team actually works together and all members are contributing, they are able to improve their performance as a whole, thus reinforcing the ideal that teammates must actually put in effort to help each other.



Dumby proves here that he's a better football player than Mark, which will make the racism of the following scene, where Mark is awarded the best player trophy, even more apparent. Dumby also shows his inherent morality as a teammate and a friend by passing to Clemboy, who otherwise wouldn't get to be involved in the win. Blacky will learn from this generosity when he too must fulfill his duty to his friend later on in the novel. For now, however, the act puts more pressure on Blacky to succeed as the first ruck.



Blacky has not yet grown as a character, because he still wishes to avoid the responsibilities placed upon him while also still appearing to be as tough as a man should be in his community. Tension grows as time runs out for Blacky to either stick with his plan or change his behavior and try to win the game at personal cost to himself.



Blacky's father's absence is the deciding factor in Blacky not making a sacrifice for his team. By chance, however, Blacky manages to stop Thumper while injuring himself in the process. The fact that he does not intend to make the sacrifice that everyone will later praise him for shows the flaws in the expectations his community places upon him. That is, it doesn't matter whether a boy like Blacky is truly brave; it only matters that he looks like he's being brave.



CHAPTER 15

Back at home, Blacky begs his mom to let him attend the victory celebration along with the rest of the town. His mom refuses because the doctor said he should rest after his concussion. Blacky insists, saying he could die of a random shark attack tomorrow, knowing his mother's fear of sharks. Finally, his mom agrees to let him go.

The whole town is gathered for the party. Blacky goes and sits with Dumby and the rest of the team. All of his teammates clap for him. Dumby has saved Blacky a seat even though no one thought he'd be able to come. Arks sits at the head of the table, basking in the glory of finally winning a grand final. Everyone from the town keeps congratulating him. He tells Blacky that he loves him and Blacky feels embarrassed.

Blacky and Dumby go to get food. Blacky asks Dumby why he passed the ball to Clemboy. Dumby says Clemboy hadn't gotten to kick the ball all day and he didn't want Clemboy to be embarrassed, because he's Dumby's cousin. Blacky says that all the Point players seem to be Dumby's cousins, and Dumby agrees. Blacky says he'll never understand indigenous people and Dumby responds that he'll never understand white people. They both laugh.

Blacky sees his father, who is drinking and laughing. He decides not to go talk to him. He and Dumby go to get more food. Blacky begins talking to Clarence. He asks where their mother is, but Clarence says their mother doesn't like coming to the Port. Blacky realizes that, even though half the team is from the Point, there aren't many indigenous people at the party. Clarence invites Blacky to come smoke with her outside and he agrees, even though he doesn't especially like smoking.

CHAPTER 16

Blacky and Clarence go outside. Blacky suggests that they walk down to the jetty so no one sees them. Clarence asks him how many siblings he has, and after he tells her there are eight kids in the family, she says his family is like an indigenous one. They spot Darcy down at the end of the jetty. They sit underneath the shelter. Blacky is uncomfortable, because he realizes Clarence is sitting underneath **the graffiti** that reads, "Boongs piss off." He feels guilty, even though he's not the one who wrote it, because he didn't try to erase the words either.

Blacky's mother cares for her son even if it means they both must sacrifice the chance to go to the party. However, Blacky knows exactly how to manipulate his mom to get what he wants.



Dumby once again proves his value as a friend by looking out for Blacky even when Blacky wasn't there yet to appreciate it, demonstrating how baseless the racial divides in their town are. Arks's adoration embarrasses Blacky both because he knows he does not deserve it and also because his own father never shows him any affection.



Dumby embodies what it means to be a team player by putting the feelings of others above his own. He learned this value from his community, the very community the Port looks down upon. Blacky and Dumby's honest but lighthearted discussion of these different values shows how connection and dialogue can begin to breakdown racial misunderstandings.



When Blacky is feeling secure and happy, like he is at that moment, he feels less inclined to seek the approval of his father. Blacky's conversation with Clarence causes him to realize that there are few indigenous people at the party and in fact, that members of the Point don't feel welcome in the Port. This shows how simply talking to a member of another race can increase one's awareness of racial issues.



By talking to Clarence, Blacky is able to see the similarities between their divided communities. Spending time with Clarence on the jetty with the racist graffiti also leads Blacky to realize that not only is writing racist graffiti morally wrong, but it is also morally wrong to do nothing to cover it up. This is the beginning of Blacky realizing that one must take personal responsibility to combat racism.



Blacky suggests that they keep walking. They pass by Darcy, who greets Blacky but not Clarence. As Clarence walks on, Darcy tells Blacky to be careful, because all indigenous women have “the clap.” When Blacky meets up again with Clarence, she says she doesn’t like Darcy, but she doesn’t elaborate on why. Blacky doesn’t understand what “the clap” is, but he trusts Darcy’s advice to be careful since Darcy is wise.

Clarence smokes and she and Blacky chat for a little bit. Eventually, the conversation dies and Blacky feels awkward because he doesn’t know how to talk to girls. He tells Clarence the fact about many of the stars they see being dead. She laughs at him, and Blacky feels stupid for being unable to impress her. He says they should go back inside so that they don’t miss the awards.

CHAPTER 17

When Blacky and Clarence return to the party, Big Mac, the football club president, is beginning the awards presentation. A local member, the number one ticket holder of the club, gives his usual long and boring speech. The crowd becomes restless. The local member then gives a medal to each player on the team.

Blacky thinks he hears the local member give the Best Team-man trophy to Team-man, yet again. But he mishears the local member. The award actually goes to Blacky. Blacky hesitates, because he didn’t genuinely intend to stop Thumper from scoring. He accepts the trophy anyway and sees his mom, Clarence, Arks, Dumby, and even Team-man smiling proudly at him.

When Blacky gets off the stage, his father shakes his hand and says he’s gutsy. Then he says they should go fishing soon. Blacky tears up. Blacky begins to think maybe he does deserve the award. Maybe he subconsciously meant to tackle Thumper.

Big Mac introduces the last award, the Best on Ground trophy, the highest honor on the team. Blacky expects Dumby to receive the award, since he had the most kicks and scored half the team’s goals during the final game. But the local member gives the award to Mark Arks. The whole party claps for Mark. Blacky realizes Dumby has disappeared. Blacky complains to Pickles that the trophy should go to Dumby, but Pickles tells him to move on. Filled with anger, Blacky storms out of the party.

Darcy, whom Blacky likes and respects, expresses a racist view by saying all indigenous women have STDs. This shows that those one feels closest to and most familiar with can nonetheless be guilty of upholding racist beliefs. This familiarity is the challenge Blacky must face in order to confront the racism of his community.



This scene shows how the racial divides in their society still get in the way of Clarence and Blacky’s relationship, as she becomes quiet after the comment from Darcy. It also shows Blacky’s innocence and naivety as he is awkward and shy around girls he is attracted to.



The reader sees Big Mac’s importance within the community from his first introduction, which will become important later on after Big Mac commits a violent and potentially racist act.



Blacky knows he does not deserve the “team player” award because he did not truly intend to make any sacrifices for his team. This connects to his dislike of Team-man for being a team player in name only and his community’s respect of appearances over genuine effort and sacrifice.



Blacky is so desperate for his father’s approval, he’s willing to deny the truth to change his thinking about the grand final. This habit of denial will appear again when Blacky encounters his town’s racism.



Dumby’s obvious superiority to Mark exposes the racism of the Port. Though they cheer Dumby on the field and benefit from his skills, they are unwilling to give an award to an indigenous person. Since Dumby disappears, it seems that he’s hurt by this event. Blacky’s closeness with Dumby allows him to realize for the first time how discriminatory his town really is.



Blacky runs down main street and then stops on a bench. He decides that he must protest the fact that Dumby did not get the trophy. He will retire from football and tell everyone in town it's because they didn't give Dumby the award he deserved. He realizes he is still holding his Best Team-man trophy and kicks it away from him. All the activity causes Blacky to lose consciousness again.

Blacky's friendship with Dumby encourages him to take action against this racist act, which draws a sharp contrast with his inaction against the racist graffiti. However, Blacky's character development is incomplete, because he will not follow through with the sacrifices he promises to make here.



CHAPTER 18

Blacky doesn't believe that summer starts until at least three people on main street mention to him how hot the weather is. He walks past Big Mac in front of the pub, Rocker fixing a car, and Arks at his store. They all mention the hot weather, even though Arks usually only talks about the grand final win. Blacky celebrates the official beginning of summer. Arks discusses the coming football season with him. Blacky still hasn't told him about quitting the team, and he still has the Best Team-man trophy, too.

Blacky is struggling to commit to the promises he made to protest racism, showing how difficult it can be for an individual to stand up to the racism of their community and sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of what is right. Blacky still wants the approval of community leaders (especially male authority figures) such as his coach.



Blacky finds Dazza and Pickles sunbathing on the anchor sculpture. Pickles announces that he is selling his own maggots, competing with Darcy. A car full of "campers," the local slang for tourists, rolls by. Blacky, Dazza, and Pickles meet more campers when they go down to the jetty and the beach. One of the campers is a girl close to them in age. Her name is Cathy and she takes a look at the boys' maggots. Then her parents tell her they need to get going to meet the McDermotts. When she leaves, Blacky is in a daze.

"Campers" contrast with the local residents of the Port because they are wealthy and from the city. The locals give the community another way to unite against outsiders, like they do with their discrimination against indigenous people. Blacky's sudden infatuation with Cathy can also be understood as a result of his own identity as an outsider and his desire for the privileges wealth provides.



CHAPTER 19

Blacky comes home and tells his younger brother, Greggy, that for in the first time in his life, he is smitten with a girl. Greggy is confused and asks Blacky if being smitten hurts. Blacky says not yet, and Greggy says that he hopes he himself is never smitten. Blacky marvels at Greggy's naivety.

Greggy's innocence allows Blacky to articulate his theories on mature subjects such as love, hinting at the various ways that confiding in family can strengthen bonds between members. This conversation also shows how instantaneous and overwhelming Blacky's crush on Cathy is.



CHAPTER 20

The McDermotts are a wealthy family who have a summer home in the Port. They have expensive jewelry and a boat. Their sons, Andrew and Craig, are about Blacky's age and all the local girls think they're attractive. Blacky admits that Andrew and Craig are better at talking to girls than he is. The McDermotts go to a private school called Kings College and support the school's football team, but Blacky doesn't understand how people as stupid as the McDermotts could go to college.

The McDermotts represent the wealth and privilege Blacky does not have access to, coming from a poor family living in rural Australia. Blacky resents them for both their wealth and their attractiveness. He also shows his ignorance of the larger world by assuming that intelligence is all that matters in determining whether or not an individual goes to college.



Even though Blacky doesn't like the McDermotts, he still hangs out with Andrew and Craig because interesting events happen around them in the summer. Every year, Blacky promises himself he's not going to spend time with the McDermotts, and every year he breaks that promise. Additionally, Cathy is staying with them for the summer and Blacky wants to spend time with her. He figures it's easy to break a promise one makes to oneself.

Blacky's breaking of his promise not to hang out with the McDermotts foreshadows the breaking of his promise to quit the football team. Perhaps Blacky has not told anyone about his promise of quitting because he finds it easier to go against his own personal convictions than to show others his weaknesses.



CHAPTER 21

One hot night, Pickles and Blacky are sitting on the anchor. Blacky keeps asking about the McDermotts and whether or not either of them is dating Cathy but Pickles only wants to talk about his maggots. Pickles suggests they go play eight-ball at the pub, but Blacky hesitates. Pickles accuses him of waiting around for Cathy, who's not coming by. Blacky denies that he has a crush on her and agrees to go to the pub.

Once again, Blacky must hide his genuine feelings from his oldest friend, Pickles, because boys in their town are not encouraged to openly express their feelings. Being dependent upon a woman would also make Blacky look weak in the eyes of his community, so he denies his infatuation.



CHAPTER 22

Inside the pub, the regular customers, including Blacky's father and both Pickles' mother and Pickles' father, are all drinking. Big Mac is tending the bar. His hands are down his pants, "adjusting." This is a gesture Blacky frequently sees from men in his town, but not from people from cities, and Blacky wonders if this is because people from the cities don't have "beer guts" pressing on their genitals. Big Mac and Rocker compliment Blacky on how big he's grown and what a good footballer he is. Blacky's father looks proud and Blacky notes that his father has been paying more attention to him lately.

Big Mac's "adjusting" is a display of manhood common in Blacky's hometown. The differences between rural people and city people that Blacky describes here also expose the class differences between those groups. Here, Blacky's father makes it clear that his approval is dependent upon Blacky's physical ability as a football player, showing the shallow nature of his affection for his son. Though Blacky is aware of this shallowness, he still craves his father's attention.



As Big Mac serves Pickles and Blacky, someone from the back bar asks for a beer. The townspeople call the back bar "the black bar," because this is where the indigenous customers sit. Big Mac tells the back bar customer to wait because he's busy. Shirl asks why Blacky's mother never comes to the pub, but Blacky can't imagine his mother ever being in such a rough place.

The segregation of the two communities is represented by the separation of the front bar and the black bar. Big Mac shows his racist attitudes by refusing to serve the patrons of the back bar until he serves his white customers, Pickles and Blacky. Blacky's mother is at home because she always takes care of the children while her husband is out drinking, again highlighting how the models of responsibility in Blacky's family are ones he doesn't want to emulate.



Blacky and Pickles play pool with Rocker and Slogs, another bar patron. Blacky catches himself using some of his father's slang. They are interrupted when Rocker's wife calls. She is always angry that he spends so much time at the pub while she is home with their children. Rocker ignores her call. He continues playing pool and drinking while his wife keeps calling.

Blacky's use of his father's slang shows how he is becoming more a part of the rough, masculine society his father inhabits. Meanwhile, Rocker's neglect of his own wife and kids mirrors Blacky's father's abandonment of the family, showing this is a common problem in Blacky's town.



The bar patrons are carrying on as usual when Tommy, Dumby's father, walks into the front bar. He has become a regular at the front bar after the grand final. He greets and shakes hands with all the other patrons. He tells a story that makes them all laugh. Noises start coming from the back bar and Tommy goes to check on the indigenous customers there.

Once Tommy leaves, the patrons remark on how much they like him. Slogs says he wishes there were more like him. Big Mac tells a common joke about "the boong and the priest." All of the regulars laugh, but Blacky doesn't. He used to laugh when he heard that joke, but now he doesn't think it's funny. He knows now that the joke involves his friends: Dumby, Clarence, and Tommy.

Tommy appears to be overcoming the racial divides in the Port through the football team and through his friendships with the white bar patrons. At first glance, these relationships seem similar to Dumby and Blacky's impactful friendship.



Although the white patrons all like Tommy, their comments show that because they haven't thought about how to challenge their society's racism, they just see Tommy as the exception to his racial group, not the rule. Big Mac's racist joke will be recalled later after the pub shooting. Blacky is beginning to question the racism of his town by remembering how it concerns those with whom he has a personal relationship, demonstrating the next step in Blacky's growing racial awareness.



CHAPTER 23

Blacky wakes up excited to go see Cathy on the jetty. He knows he has a big crush on her. He hurries to eat his breakfast and finish his chores so he can go see her. The jetty is crowded that day. Little kids are learning to swim and campers are fishing off the jetty. The campers discuss how Darcy's bait is better than the bait Pickles sells. Blacky spots his local friends, Pickles, Mark, Deano, and Dazza, and then spots the McDermott boys and Cathy with them. The locals are wearing sports shorts and the campers are wearing bathing suits.

Feeling overwhelmed by his attraction to Cathy, Blacky approaches the group of young people. But he's too afraid to put his towel down next to Cathy, so he settles down next to Pickles. He stays there for the rest of the day, watching Cathy. She doesn't talk much, except to the McDermott boys. Blacky can't stop thinking about how perfect she is.

Blacky's concerns have shifted far away from the larger issue of racism and toward the more lighthearted teenage concerns of friends and dating. This shows how smaller distractions can easily derail even worthy goals like Blacky's desire to challenge the town's prejudices. The difference in swimming attire between the locals and the campers shows their economic differences.



Even after the grand final, Blacky still struggles to overcome his fears, perhaps because he didn't genuinely practice courage in the game. Blacky still tries to live up to his town's impossible standards of masculinity and feels like a failure when he can't.



CHAPTER 24

Blacky comes across Darcy at his usual fishing spot on the jetty. Darcy talks about the fish he just caught and about the new maggots he's been experimenting with. Blacky admires his dedication. Blacky tells Darcy how Pickles has been selling maggots he found on roadkill. Darcy says he's not worried because his maggots are higher quality.

Again, Blacky's concerns are now completely separate from the racism that once troubled him deeply. Still, Blacky admires the qualities of determination and dedication he sees in Darcy, traits Blacky lacks himself.



Blacky asks Darcy if he was ever married. Darcy says yes, but it didn't work out. He says he doesn't understand women because he's spent too much time alone. Darcy can tell Blacky is worked up over a girl and tells him that if he likes a girl, he should tell her so, because life is short.

Darcy again takes on a fatherly role by giving Blacky romantic advice. Unfortunately, he recommends that Blacky do exactly what he so often fails to: act quickly and decisively. At this point, Blacky is completely preoccupied with his crush on Cathy and doesn't think much at all about how to combat the town's racism, showing how easy it is to prioritize self-interest and accept the status quo.



CHAPTER 25

Blacky imagines that the next morning, he will go to the jetty and set his towel down next to Cathy. She will immediately understand his feelings for her and will kiss him on the cheek. He imagines the scene like a romance novel in his head. He decides he must finally make his fantasy a reality and take Darcy's advice to express his true feelings while he's still alive.

Blacky imagines the amazing things that could happen if he committed to his feelings and acted decisively. Later in book, these fantasies will come true, but not in the way that Blacky expects here. The idea of life being short also foreshadows Dumbo's coming untimely death.



At breakfast, Team-man invites Blacky to go spear fishing, but Blacky says he's busy. Team-man guesses that Blacky's preoccupied with that "stuck-up" camper and calls him pathetic. Blacky then steals Team-man's nicer flip-flops and puts on his lucky football shorts, even though Cathy has made fun of the locals for always wearing football shorts to go swimming.

Cathy's teasing of the locals for not wearing swimsuits suggests she may be as classist and pretentious as Team-man suggests she is. This shows how blind and all-consuming Blacky's infatuation with Cathy is.



Blacky approaches the group of his local friends and the campers on the jetty. He walks past the boys to where Cathy is sunbathing. He is working up the courage to lay down his towel when a cloud moves in front of the sun and Cathy wonders where the light has gone. Blacky loses his nerve and walks away. Once he is off the jetty, he runs all the way home. He crawls into bed, crying. He knows he is as cowardly as his father said he was.

Blacky realizes he has not yet overcome his fears. This brings him great shame because his father and his society expect a boy to always show courage. Later on in the story, however, when Blacky is presented with an issue that really matters, he will be able to overcome his fears and show genuine courage; he'll see later that feeling comfortable talking to girls doesn't have much to do with true bravery.



CHAPTER 26

The next day, instead of going to the jetty and seeing Cathy, Blacky goes snorkeling with his siblings at Black Rock. Blacky realizes Cathy is the same as the other campers, meaning she is an insincere snob who goes to a private school. He's lucky he isn't dating her, he thinks, because now he can date someone who isn't so stuck-up.

Blacky again shows his power to lie to himself about his genuine thoughts and opinions. This foreshadows the coming scene where he will convince himself that his football team doesn't have a problem with race, when he clearly knows that it does.



The temperature drops and the sky becomes cloudy. Darcy suggests Blacky go squid fishing off the jetty. Blacky decides to ask Pickles, because although Pickles is annoying, he is the best squid fisherman in town. Pickles agrees to go because his maggot business isn't doing well.

Pickles's superior fishing ability explains why Blacky is still friends with him, as their community values fishing and sports ability over traits such as kindness or moral character.



The next day, Blacky wakes up early to go squid fishing. His mother worries about his clothes getting covered in squid ink and makes him go change. Blacky walks to the jetty feeling happy that he is no longer consumed by thoughts of Cathy. He and Pickles drop their lines off the jetty and then sit down in the shelter. Blacky notices that the **graffiti** saying “boongs piss off” is still written there. It reminds him that he hasn’t seen Clarence or Dumby since the party.

Blacky begins to doubt whether or not he will really quit football. Quitting would mean he’d have nothing to do in the winter. Maybe, he thinks, Mark deserved the trophy over Dumby after all, especially because Dumby made that reckless pass to Clemboy.

Blacky loses his train of thought when Pickles farts. He goes to check on his lines. He thinks Pickles is following him and tells him not to fart again. When he turns around, he realizes he has just said that to Cathy. He is horribly embarrassed, but she smiles at him. They chat about catching squid. Blacky lets her try catching one on a line. Cathy says she’s never been squid fishing before. Cathy mentions that Blacky doesn’t talk much, to which Blacky replies that the McDermott boys talk too much.

Pickles joins Blacky and Cathy. He’s mad that Cathy is there because he thinks girls can’t catch squids. But Cathy lures in a squid and Pickles brings it up with a tool called a jig. Blacky realizes that Pickles is going to spray Cathy with squid ink. Blacky jumps in front of her and gets sprayed in the face instead. Pickles throws the squid on the jetty and kills it with a knife.

Blacky sees Cathy’s father walking towards them. He appears angry. He tells Cathy everyone’s been waiting for her. Cathy says she’ll see Blacky again soon and leaves. After she leaves, Pickles says that Blacky has a crush on her, and Blacky denies it.

CHAPTER 27

Blacky goes home, where Greggy says that he looks sick again. Blacky says he’s smitten again by the same girl, only worse this time.

Though he has gained a greater awareness of his community’s racial issues, he has still not taken the initiative to cover up the graffiti. This shows how difficult it can be for one to act against racism even if one knows that one should. The fact that Blacky has not seen his indigenous friends recently also emphasizes just how separate the Port and the Point are outside of football.



Blacky’s thoughts show how challenging racism involves personal sacrifice, which Blacky isn’t yet ready to accept. Because he’s still looking out for his own desires first, Blacky ends up denying what he knows is true rather than doing what’s right.



Blacky makes assumptions about his surroundings, because he believes he always knows what to expect with his community. His assumptions are comically challenged here by the appearance of his love interest, Cathy. Cathy will continue to challenge Blacky’s assumptions about her as a girl from the city, showing he doesn’t know as much as he thinks he does about the world.



Pickles shows the misogyny frequently displayed by residents of the Port (his attitude here is similar to the one that Arks takes when he ignore’s Blacky’s mom’s football advice). This prejudice portrays the Port as a traditionally patriarchal, close-minded place.



Cathy’s father’s anger suggests class tension between urban and rural Australians, but Cathy’s goodbye to Blacky suggests they may overcome this divide. In some ways, the way that the people from the city discriminate against rural people like Blacky mirrors the way that the Port residents discriminate against the indigenous people from the Point.



Blacky once again relies on a family member to process his feelings, though he still feels disconnected from his family as a whole.



CHAPTER 28

The next day, Blacky goes to meet his friends and the campers on the jetty. As he approaches, he hears Cathy excitedly telling the McDermott boys about the squid. Blacky begins to set his towel down next to Mark, but then Cathy tells him to move over by her. Blacky helps one of the McDermotts define a difficult word and Cathy remarks that Blacky is pretty smart for someone who lives in the country. She says he should go to Kings College. Blacky asks how one gets into college and Cathy says anybody can go if one pays the fees.

Cathy asks Blacky to apply tanning oil to her back. He thinks that if he were to die right then, he would die happy. Deano approaches and says that a group from the Point is coming their way. Usually people from the Point come into town, buy their supplies, and immediately leave, but occasionally a big group will walk over to hang out at the beach. Blacky has heard some of the pub patrons talk about the “good old days” when white people and indigenous people used to fight on the jetty.

Cathy asks if indigenous people are allowed on the jetty. Pickles says they are allowed but they shouldn't be, since the jetty belongs to the Port. The Point group begins swimming in the water. Blacky realizes that Clarence is among the group. Cathy comments on how all of them are swimming in regular clothes instead of bathing suits. The group walks up the jetty. Blacky hides his face so that Clarence won't recognize him.

When the group begins climbing on the lighthouse at the end of the jetty, Mark says that they should call the cops. Pickles says that he sees Blacky's girlfriend, Clarence. Cathy asks if Blacky is really dating “that Abo.” Blacky tells her that Pickles is only joking; he doesn't even know who that girl is. Blacky goes back to rubbing oil on Cathy's shoulders, but he no longer feels perfectly happy.

CHAPTER 29

Team-man wakes Blacky up early in the morning and tells him there's been a shooting at the pub. Blacky first thinks it's a joke, but then agrees to go to the pub to check out the situation. They find police cars, ambulances, and detectives all around. Everyone in town has gathered around to watch. Blacky is excited that at least something interesting has finally happened in the Port.

Exposure to the city people teaches Blacky about the economic inequality present in his society, just as exposure to members of a different race teaches Blacky about racism in his community. The growing bonds between these various groups of young people show that connection and friendship with people who are different from oneself broadens one's perspective.



Blacky's memory of the pub patrons' words shows that the Port has a historic problem with racial tensions, as well as a current one. This fond memory of fighting foreshadows the violence that will later take place in the pub, particularly in the lighthearted way the white people remember something that may have been horrific. It also frames the jetty as a battleground for the community's racial tensions.



Here, Cathy shows urban Australians' general ignorance of the racial tensions present in rural Australia. Blacky participates in the racism of his community by pretending not to know Clarence, because doing so may affect his good relationship with Cathy. He is not yet willing to make personal sacrifices for his friends.



Blacky is beginning to realize that when he refuses to make sacrifices in order to be loyal to his indigenous friends, he ends up feeling worse. It's at this point that Blacky realizes how deeply uncomfortable he is with participating in his town's racism.



Blacky's enduring naivety is shown by his initial excitement over the shooting in the pub. His coming realization of his personal connection to the shooting will challenge his innocence, thus allowing him to mature as a character and develop his moral and racial consciousness.



Blacky hears the people around him talking about how robbers had broken into the pub and Big Mac had shot three of them, killing two. They don't know who the robbers are, except that they are "boongs." One person says that the robbers got what they deserved and Big Mac made the right choice.

The ambulance officers carry a stretcher with a body on it covered in a sheet. Blacky pushes his way to the front of the crowd and asks the officers who's on the stretcher. The officers cannot answer him. Then Blacky sees the body's shoes, with red laces and red stars on the side. Blacky realizes those are Dumby's shoes. Blacky runs away from the crowd and sits down on the anchor. He's in shock, but he knows that this must mean Dumby is dead and Big Mac killed him. Blacky vomits.

CHAPTER 30

People in town only want to talk about the pub shooting. Everyone has their own version of what they think happened that night. Blacky says that he knows for certain that Big Mac was the only person in the pub late at night. Big Mac was sleeping when he heard something outside. Then his dog started barking and Big Mac heard footsteps and glass breaking.

Three men wearing stockings over their heads came into the bedroom. One carried a gun. They demanded Big Mac unlock the safe. Big Mac said he had to go get the keys out of the closet, but instead, he took his gun out of the closet. He began shooting into the room and didn't stop until the gun was empty. Then Big Mac called the police.

CHAPTER 31

Blacky remembers a time far in the past when he was babysitting his younger brother, Greggy. Greggy was coloring in a picture while Blacky watched cricket on TV. When Greggy showed Blacky the picture, it was only one color. Everything in the picture was grey. In the present day, Blacky believes that everything after Dumby's death looks like Greggy's picture. Everything inside and outside of Blacky feels grey and heavy.

The town will maintain this racially motivated opinion throughout the novel. Blacky will later learn to challenge this status quo, where white members automatically side with white individuals, in order to honor his indigenous friend.



Dumby's death is the most pivotal moment for Blacky's character development. Where Blacky used to care primarily about his dating life and football skills, he now has no choice but to confront the racism of his town, because he knows about Big Mac's past racist acts and now Big Mac has taken his friend from him. Blacky's personal relationship to Dumby will challenge him to take responsibility for confronting racism.



The community constructs their own facts around the reality of the shooting according to their own prejudices. This selective interpretation of the facts mirrors Blacky's previous denial of the racism of the football awards so he could continue to play.



The issue of responsibility for the shooting is an ambiguity the novel never resolves, an uncertainty reflected by Blacky's "grey" mood in the following chapter. However, Blacky has reason to believe Dumby's death was caused by racism, because Big Mac did not stop shooting and has also behaved in racist ways in the past.



Greyness not only represents Blacky's sadness but also characterizes Blacky's shifting perspective. Whereas before he identified clear black and white categories (the Port and the Point, white and indigenous, good and bad) he now sees how complicated the grey areas of his society actually are.



CHAPTER 32

Mum tells Blacky that she's worried about him because he hasn't left the house in days. She suggests that they go to the doctor, but Blacky doesn't know how he'll explain the greyness of his vision and feelings to the doctor.

Blacky cannot express his grief because not only is a boy in his community not supposed to show emotions, as a white person he's not expected to grieve over an indigenous person.



Blacky reads the story of the shooting in the local newspaper. The paper reports that Big Mac has left town as tensions increase between the Port and the Point. Blacky also reads that Dumby's funeral will be on Sunday in the Point. Blacky tells his mother that he wants to attend Dumby's funeral. His mother is sympathetic, but she says that Blacky probably wouldn't be welcome at a funeral in the Point so he should just stay away.

Blacky's mother's response to his request shows that even kind and caring individuals struggle to overcome the racial barriers of their community. Mum herself presents the first obstacle Blacky must overcome in order to make the decision to pay his respects to his friend.



Blacky goes to see Arks, who has lost a lot of business since the people from the Point stopped coming to town. Blacky mentions the time of Dumby's funeral. Arks reminisces about how talented a football player Dumby was. Blacky asks if the football team is going to do anything for Dumby's funeral. Arks says that what happened to Dumby is completely different from football and they shouldn't get involved.

Arks's dismissal of Blacky's idea shows how a team can fail to support its members by letting larger societal issues such as racism take over. Notably, Arks used to speak about how football was more than a game and the team had a responsibility to each other and the town. His attitude here, however, shows how "team" can become an empty word.



Arks tries to speak with Blacky about the next football season, but Blacky storms out in anger. He knows there won't be a football team next year because the Point players won't play for the Port team after the shooting.

The connection between the Point and the Port over football here proves to be a shallow connection that can be broken by the larger racial tensions between the communities. Again, a team is only as strong as its members' genuine sense of responsibility toward each other.



Blacky finds Dazza and Pickles sitting in the jetty shelter. **The graffiti** that reads "boongs piss off" is still up on the wall. Blacky suggests to them that they should do something for Dumby's funeral. Pickles says that his father said Dumby got what he deserved for committing armed robbery. Dazza agrees. Blacky shakes his head and walks away.

Blacky's mention of the graffiti foreshadows how Dumby's death will later motivate him to cover the words up. Pickles and Dazza, however, fail as Dumby's teammates due to their racial prejudices, leaving Blacky to be the only one to support Dumby by attending his funeral.



Darcy is in his usual fishing spot. Blacky asks Darcy his opinion about the shooting. Darcy says that this isn't the first time someone has been killed in town. Blacky argues that Dumby was just a kid who didn't deserve what happened to him, but Darcy says that killing is human nature and there's nothing that can be done about it. Darcy goes home, leaving Blacky alone on the jetty.

Again, Darcy shows how even the members of Blacky's community that he most respects can be complicit in racism. Blacky is, as usual, desperate for at least one person to approve of his actions, but the narrative makes it clear that Blacky will have to act against his community's expectations to do what is just.



Blacky climbs beneath the jetty. He sits above the water and thinks about how everyone told him not to go to the funeral. He can smell a storm coming before it begins to rain. Once the rain stops, he climbs back up on the jetty. Blacky realizes that, despite everyone else's opinions, he is going to go to Dumby's funeral.

The coming storm represents the emotional turmoil within Blacky as he weighs personal sacrifice against his duty to his friend. His friendship with Dumby pushes him to defy his town's prejudices and go to the funeral, even though the costs to him personally might be high.



As Blacky walks home, he accidentally passes Cathy without greeting her. She calls after him and invites him to walk to the end of the jetty with her. He says he has to go home. She reminds him of the goodbye party she is throwing tomorrow, the same day as Dumby's funeral. Blacky says he'll see her tomorrow, but he knows he won't.

Blacky's denial of Cathy represents a major shift in his character, as before he denied his connections to the Point in order to please her. Now, he knows he will sacrifice even things that are important to him (namely, his relationship with Cathy) in order to honor Dumby's memory.



CHAPTER 33

Blacky meets his sister, Sharon, outside their house when he arrives at home. She says their father wants to see him. He passes his three youngest siblings, who tell him their father seems mad. Blacky finds his mother in the laundry room, but she doesn't know what the old man wants to talk to Blacky about. The old man is out in his tool shed, which he always keeps locked and tells the kids to stay out of.

While it previously appeared that Blacky's decision to attend the funeral was complete, the narrative throws another, more significant obstacle in his way as he tries to make this sacrifice. Now, Blacky must overcome both his fear of his father and his intense desire to please him.



Blacky steps into the shed, where his father is working with tools and drinking beer. The old man reminds Blacky that he always told him to do a job properly, or else not do it at all. The old man asks him why he hasn't been mowing the "lawn," meaning the dry patch of rocky yard outside their home. Blacky says he forgot. The old man lectures him about taking more responsibility around the house.

The old man's lecture is hypocritical and ironic, as he never takes any responsibility for the family. Later in the novel, Blacky ironically must disobey his father in order to take responsibility for covering up the racist graffiti on the jetty.



The old man has ended his fishing partnership with Mick and has struggled to catch fish because he doesn't know enough about the ocean. His new partner is an alcoholic who can't come fishing the next day, so the old man wants Blacky and Team-man to come fishing with him instead. Blacky says he can't, but he doesn't want to tell his father about Dumby's funeral. Instead, he tells his father about Cathy's barbeque. The old man tells Blacky they're going fishing tomorrow and refuses to discuss it any more. Blacky knows if he doesn't agree to go fishing, his father will pressure him.

The old man criticizing his partner for drinking is, again, hypocritical of him. Blacky's omission of Dumby's funeral shows that he is still unwilling to make the most extreme of sacrifices for the sake of his friendship and his opposition to racist divisions. Though he will still go to the funeral, Blacky is not yet brave enough to challenge his father directly, even for the sake of his dead friend.



Inside the house, Blacky's siblings are watching **The Brady Bunch**. On the TV show, one of the Brady children is asking their father for advice. Blacky hates *The Brady Bunch* because he knows that in real life, adults create more problems than they solve. On the show, the father tells his son to do whatever his heart tells him to do. Blacky storms out and sits on Black Rock until the sun goes down. He tells Sharon that he can't stop thinking about the advice to listen to his heart.

Blacky goes to his room and stares up at the scar in the ceiling, thinking. Then he gets up and packs his football bag with his pants, white school shirt, and dress shoes. He can't find his school tie, so he goes to find his father's tie. He passes his mother, who is asleep at the kitchen table, on his way to steal the tie from his father's closet.

CHAPTER 34

The next morning, Blacky wakes up early and sneaks out of his room through the window. He begins walking down the road toward the Point. Beside him, the sea is calm. Blacky feels happy, despite the fact that he's on his way to a funeral and his father will be angry with him when he gets home.

Blacky gets halfway to the Point and is worried he will arrive early and be told to leave. He lies down on some seaweed and thinks about Dumby and how he always used to say, "Deadly, unna?" He wonders if Dumby would go to heaven. He knows Dumby broke into the pub and he might have had a gun, but he knows Dumby would never hurt anyone. He wonders if Big Mac would go to heaven after killing Dumby.

Blacky changes into his nice clothes. He thinks his tie looks silly, but he has to wear a tie to a funeral. He walks to the spot where he and Dazza turned around when they first tried to go to the Point. There, a sign reads: "The Point Aboriginal Reserve – No Entry Without Prior Permission." There are bullet holes in the sign.

The Point comes into view, and Blacky can see that the land is dry and barren, far away from the sea. He passes a lot of garbage on the side of road. He sees an abandoned car and remembers how in the pub, the regulars say that indigenous people don't take care of their cars, just driving them till they break down and then expecting the government to buy them new ones. Blacky wonders if the car he sees is the one involved in the robbery.

This passage explicitly connects Blacky's hatred of The Brady Bunch to its message of family supporting each other, which he doubts is really possible. However, Blacky takes the show's message to heart here, showing how his relationship to duty and responsibility is beginning to shift due to his decision to go to the funeral.



Blacky's shows a newfound courage by stealing his dad's tie. He does this because he has learned that doing what is just is more important than avoiding personal sacrifice. This foreshadows his later bravery of stealing the shed key from his father.



Blacky's happiness shows that not only should one make personal sacrifices in order to fulfill one's duty to friendship and justice, but also, one will actually be happier for doing what is right. Sacrifice, Blacky starts to realize here, doesn't have to be a bad thing.



Dumby's death is causing Blacky to deal with the complicated issues of morality he previously avoided. Blacky chooses to honor his friendship with Dumby and the truth he knows of Dumby's character over the rumors and opinions spread by his prejudiced community.



Blacky's decision to go to the Point shows how much he has overcome his own racially motivated fears and prejudices, especially when compared to the memory of him and Dazza fearing the Point as kids. He makes this progress in order to fulfill his duty to his dead friend, showing how interpersonal connections can lead to profound individual growth.



The details of the barren land and the garbage highlight the economic inequality between the rundown Port and the even poorer Point. The racist views of the pub patrons may be challenged if they could see the conditions of the Point, but the two communities remain separated except for Blacky's journey into the Point.



All the houses in the Point have doors and windows, which surprises Blacky, because pub regulars always say indigenous people live in houses without doors and windows. Blacky passes a couple of boys playing football. When he tries to greet them, they run away. He runs into more kids, who all keep their distance from him.

Blacky passes the elementary school and a brick building that looks exactly like the Port's town hall. He realizes that, although his school taught him all about Port history, he knows nothing about the Point's history. Blacky keeps walking toward where one of the local children points, far out of town. He worries the funeral is too far away and he's going to miss it.

A car passes Blacky and stops. Clarence gets out of the car and asks Blacky what he's doing. He tells her he's going to the funeral. She invites him into the packed car. No one in the car seems happy to see him there. Blacky realizes that the driver, Lovely, is a former football player for the Port, who disappeared from the game years ago due to getting into some sort of trouble. Lovely angrily questions Blacky's opinions, until Clarence tells him to leave Blacky alone to pay his respects.

The car arrives at the cemetery. Blacky notices that he is the only white person at the funeral and feels self-conscious. Then Blacky sees the open coffin. He doesn't want to look at Dumby's body but can't help himself. Dumby is wearing a suit and black shoes, as opposed to his iconic basketball shoes. His hair is combed the wrong way, and this makes Blacky angry. Then suddenly, all the background noise around Blacky seems to disappear and he feels a sense of peace. His feelings of anger and self-consciousness fade away.

While the community buries the coffin, Blacky sits on the beach next to the remains of a wrecked boat. In the distance, he sees the Port's jetty. He imagines his friends Pickles and Dazza sitting back in town and telling themselves the common myths of spears and boomerangs in the Point. He thinks about how Dazza warned him not to come to the funeral because he would get hurt, but Blacky thinks he hasn't been hurt that much.

Even the most absurd of racist assumptions, that the Point doesn't have houses with windows and doors, persists because of the societal (though not geographic) distance between the Port and the Point. This distance also explains the Point's kids' suspicion of Blacky.



Just by being exposed to the sights of the Point, Blacky realizes that the two communities are not as different as residents of the Port assume. He also realizes the injustice of the Point's history being left out from his and his peer's education.



The roles are reversed as Blacky feels like an outsider in the Point, just as the residents of the Port treat Dumby, Clarence, and Tommy like outsiders. But because he has a personal bond with Clarence, she offers him a way to connect with the Point and defends him against Lovely, who would rather ostracize him. Again, individual relationships go a long way toward bringing divided parts of a society together.



Dumby's body's lack of stylish clothing, a characteristic essential to his character, shows how his violent and untimely death has robbed him of his identity, and this is what angers his friend Blacky. However, viewing the body brings Blacky closure to his grief, showing that when one chooses to do what is right, even if it's difficult, one can find peace and healing.



Blacky makes the essential realization that while one must make sacrifices in order to fulfill one's duty to others, one will survive the sacrifices they have to make. This realization diverges completely from Blacky's opinion on duty at the beginning of novel, where he resented any sacrifice he made because of the duty forced upon him.



Blacky tries and fails to skip stones on the water. Clarence comes up behind him. She's crying, but she successfully skips a stone. She thanks Blacky for coming to the funeral. She tells Blacky that Lovely was there at the robbery with Dumby and that Dumby participated in the robbery because he idolized Lovely. She said Lovely left Dumby behind in the pub to die. She continues to cry and Blacky doesn't know what he can say to comfort her.

Blacky intends to walk home, but Clarence insists he let her family drive him. He meets Clarence and Dumby's mom, who agrees to give him a ride. He also sees Tommy, who looks nothing like his lively former self. Clarence's mom says that before they find someone to drive Blacky home, he should stop at their house for refreshments.

Clarence's house is crowded with funeral guests. Blacky sees Lovely talking to Uncle Sid and realizes that Lovely is actually Dumby's first cousin. Blacky sits down on the living room sofa and realizes that the sofa's springs are busted, just like his own family's sofa. Clarence invites Blacky into the kitchen, where he sits down with her mother for tea.

Uncle Sid offers Blacky a ride back to the Port. Blacky says to Clarence that he'll see her later and she says yes, maybe they'll see each other on the jetty. Blacky wonders if Clarence saw him that day he was with Cathy and he hid his face. Uncle Sid drives Blacky back home, stopping at the sand hills so Blacky can retrieve the bag he left behind. When they arrive at Blacky's house, Uncle Sid tells him the family appreciates him coming to the funeral, even if they have difficulty showing it.

As Blacky enters his house, his worried mother asks where he's been all day. Though he's nervous, he tells her the truth. His mother almost smiles at him, before telling him to eat and go to bed.

Clarence thanking Blacky for coming shows that he made the right choice by attending the funeral, despite his relatives' and peers' objections. Clarence's admission about Dumby and Lovely also shows that, despite the separation between the Point and the Port, boys of both towns have older male relatives they are desperate to live up to—even though those role models might not set positive examples.



Clarence's family's generosity toward Blacky on the day of their family member's funeral shows how wrong the people of the Port are for demonizing the people of the Point. They also show a model of a loving, supportive family Blacky doesn't believe he has at home.



The crowd at the house shows the strength of community in the Point as well as how many people loved and lost Dumby. Blacky's noting of the busted couch shows that his family is more similar to Dumby's than he previously thought.



Clarence and Blacky's goodbye leaves open the hope that their relationship might progress in the future despite their community's racial divides. Similarly, Uncle Sid's goodbye shows that Blacky brought a little bit of happiness to the family on their most difficult day, showing the power of what happens when one shows up for friends regardless of societal divisions.



Blacky's mother's reaction suggests she is proud of him for being brave enough to go to the Point alone to honor his late friend. Still, she doesn't exactly say so, which again shows how deeply ingrained racist norms are in the Port.



CHAPTER 35

Blacky wakes up in the dark to find Team-man getting undressed for bed. Blacky can tell that his brother's been crying and sees blood on his mouth. Team-man says that their father wouldn't stop looking for the ledge where they previously caught all those fish. Eventually, the old man passed out from drinking too much and Team-man had to steer the boat. When the old man woke up, he threw Team-man out of the wheelhouse, injuring his lip.

The old man wanted to continue fishing but they were running out of fuel. He started ranting about how their bad luck was all Blacky's fault because he didn't go out fishing with them and didn't prove he wasn't a coward. Team-man swears to Blacky that he'll never go fishing with their father again. Blacky hears crashing coming from the kitchen and hides in his bed until he falls asleep.

Team-man defies society's masculine expectations by crying, but he can only do so within the privacy of his dark room. Their father remains violent and erratic, showing once and for all that there is no hope of Blacky earning his approval, as it briefly appeared he would be able to after the football team one the grand final.



Blacky's fear and his father's anger increase the tension of the final chapters of the novel, as Blacky must defy him in order to paint over the racist graffiti. However, his father's behavior here also frees Blacky from his previous desire to please him.



CHAPTER 36

Blacky wakes up late in the morning the next day. Team-man is still asleep. Greggy is on the bedroom floor playing with a toy. He tells Blacky their father has gone out. Greggy asks Blacky about the funeral he went to. Blacky tells him not to ask so many questions. After Blacky showers, Greggy tells Blacky that their father is very angry, and Blacky replies that their father is crazy. Greggy gets mad at him for saying this and leaves. Blacky doesn't blame him for idolizing their father, because Greggy is still young.

In the kitchen, Blacky finds his mother, smoking and looking tired. She warns him not to bother his father. Blacky knows that if he stays away from the house, his father won't come looking for him. His father always handles his anger by stewing on it until he explodes. His mom says she may have to leave town today because her own father is sick.

Blacky hears his father pulling into the driveway and quickly climbs out through his bedroom window. He decides he'll go to Pickles's house, since his father and Pickles' father don't get along.

Greggy's blind adoration of their father shows his youthful ignorance and how easy it is to idolize male role models. By contrast, Blacky's complete dismissal of his father shows Blacky's progress and maturity as a character. It's clear from this moment that acting independently to attend Dumbly's funeral has made Blacky much stronger than trying to conform to expectations ever did.



Blacky's mother's tiredness, after his father's ruckus the night before, suggests that the old man's violent temper weighs upon her just as it does Blacky and his siblings. Still, she does what she can to protect Blacky from the old man, showing her care for him.



Despite his growth, Blacky still avoids confrontation with his father, even though he believes he made the moral choice by going to the funeral instead of going fishing.



Pickles's house is poorly constructed and filled with old fishing junk. Blacky goes in and wakes Pickles up. Next to Pickles's bed are jars of dead flies. Blacky knows Pickles blames him for his failed maggot business, because Blacky is friends with Darcy. Pickles says Cathy was looking for Blacky yesterday and left him a note breaking up with him.

Pickles is leaving for the day but allows Blacky to stay in his room after Blacky tells him about his father's anger. Blacky waits in Pickles's room for a half hour but decides it's too disgusting, so he leaves for the library. Before he goes, he tries to free Pickles's one last living fly, but the fly is already dead.

At the library, Blacky meets the librarian, Mrs. Ashburner, who is also the town Sunday School teacher. She greets him by calling him his brother's name and then tells him that all the Black siblings look alike. Blacky agrees. He looks for the romance novel his mother was reading earlier that year because he never got a chance to finish it. He can't find the book and feels sad that he'll never know what happens to the characters.

Blacky picks an adventure book from the children's section, but the library has no chairs to read in, probably so that the town drunks don't hang out there all day. Blacky stays there to read anyway, until Mrs. Ashburner makes him leave because the library is closing.

Blacky walks down main street, hoping no one recognizes him. He sees his father through the pub window. His father is talking to the new pub owner, who is just as fat and sweaty as Big Mac. Blacky knows he'll be safe for a while now because his father will be drinking all day.

Darcy is the only person on the jetty. He is fishing in front of the graffitied shelter. Blacky talks to him about maggots and gets him to recite the usual poem, "Kaiser Bill." The wind becomes too strong to fish so they go inside the shelter, where Blacky asks Darcy who he thinks wrote the "Boongs piss off" **graffiti**. Blacky asks whether or not someone should do something about the graffiti. Darcy says someone should and smiles, but Blacky thinks Darcy might be making fun of him.

Pickles's house represents a typical house in a rural Australian fishing town, poor and crowded with junk. Cathy's breakup with Blacky is part of the sacrifice Blacky willingly made in order to fulfill his duty to his friend, and this moment underscores just how much Blacky gave up in order to do the right thing.



Blacky's attempt to release the fly, only to discover that it's dead, aligns with his previous pessimistic attitude, that even if he tried to do something for his team or his community, he wouldn't succeed. However, Blacky does not let this failure slow him down now, since he realizes that it's up to him to do what is right no matter what.



Blacky's sadness over not knowing what happens to the character echoes the loss of not knowing what would have become of Dumby's life with his incredible talent and moral character. This sadness also encourages Blacky to act decisively at last, so that his own story may have a satisfying ending.



The mention of the town drunks and the lack of chairs reemphasizes the hopelessness of Blacky's town. Mrs. Ashburner is yet another adult who fails to help Blacky, reinforcing the idea that there's little use in relying on conventional role models for moral guidance..



The replacement of Big Mac with a man similar in appearance to him symbolizes the repetitive, cyclical nature of racism when it goes unchallenged as the status quo of a society.



Blacky cannot return to his casual conversations of fishing and the "Kaiser Bill" poetry. Because of his friendship with Dumby and Dumby's death, he feels compelled to struggle with the racism of his town. Darcy is perhaps smiling because he's waiting for Blacky to realize that Blacky himself must be the "someone."



Sharon is peeling potatoes in the kitchen when Blacky finally returns home. Their mother is still out of town looking after their sick grandfather. Their father is supposed to be watching the children, but as usual, he is at the pub. Mom took her false teeth from the drawer and left the kids some money to buy meat for dinner.

Blacky goes to the town butcher, Slogs, to buy meat. He buys some sausages and is about to leave when he notices that the handwriting on the butcher shop sign looks exactly like the handwriting on the “Boongs piss off” **graffiti**. Blacky remembers how on the night in the pub when Big Mac told the joke about the boong and the priest, Slogs laughed more than anyone else there. Blacky wants to take action now that he knows Slogs wrote the graffiti, but he knows calling the police or confronting Slogs wouldn’t be effective.

On the way back home, Blacky passes Darcy’s house. He thinks of Darcy’s response to **the graffiti**: “They should really do something about that. They really should.” Blacky realizes there is no “they,” and even if there were, “they” would probably be too busy. But Blacky isn’t too busy. He will get rid of the graffiti himself.

In the absence of their mother, it is the older siblings, not the father, who take care of the household chores. This shows both their father’s failure to perform his duty as a parent and the siblings’ ability to make an effort to support each other.



Blacky’s realization that Slogs wrote the graffiti shows how even the most normal, unassuming members of one’s community can commit racist acts. This opens Blacky’s eyes to the pervasiveness of racism in his society, since racist language is so normal even the town butcher is graffitiing it.



Blacky realizes how the adults in his town use language to put off responsibility for confronting racism. He knows now that if he wants to oppose racism, he must take responsibility himself and sacrifice his own time and comfort to do so. In other words, just thinking that racism is wrong isn’t enough; it’s necessary to take action to combat it.



CHAPTER 37

Even though their parents are gone, the Black siblings have a normal, slightly quieter dinner. Team-man is silent. He now has a bruise on his face. Blacky decides he must paint over **the graffiti**, but this means he’ll have to get into his father’s locked shed to get the paint.

After dinner, the siblings wash the dishes, watch television, brush their teeth, and all go to bed on time. Blacky wants to stay awake and wait for his father to come home, but he falls asleep anyway.

The Black siblings care for each other as family in this scene not because anyone is making them, but because they choose to make the effort. Similarly, Blacky decides he himself must make the effort to combat racism, regardless of the costs.



The siblings do their duty without adult supervision, showing on a small scale how even young people can take charge of themselves and their choices. Blacky prepares to face off against his greatest bully, his father, in order to cover up the graffiti.



CHAPTER 38

Slogs is writing “Boongs piss off” **graffiti** all over town. Blacky and Dumby are chasing after him. Blacky wants to show Dumby something but he can't get Dumby to look at whatever it is, because all they see is the graffiti. Blacky feels more and more ashamed. He tries to rub the graffiti away, but he can't. Slogs keeps writing faster and faster, until he has written all over the peninsula.

Blacky wakes up and realizes he was having a nightmare. He looks out the window and sees his father's car in the driveway. He looks for his father's keys in the kitchen but discovers that they're not there or in the car. This means they're still in his father's pocket.

The graffiti represents the racism which Blacky now realizes affects every aspect of life (as shown by the writing all over Australia in his dream). Blacky also realizes the connection between the graffiti and Dumby's death (shown by Dumby's distraction), expressing how indirect harm like the graffiti connects to direct harm like the shooting.



Blacky realizes that combating the racism of his community will require great sacrifice on his part. But because of his friendship with Dumby, he is now willing to make that sacrifice.



CHAPTER 39

Blacky is paralyzed with fear but eventually manages to push himself to open the door to his father's bedroom. He sneaks around his sleeping father. Once again, he has to pause because he is so afraid. Finally, he crawls over to his father's discarded overalls and sneaks his hand into the pocket. His father stops snoring and rolls over. His face is so close to Blacky's that he can smell the beer on his breath. Blacky carefully pulls the keys out of the pocket.

Blacky orders himself to move out of the room. He hurries around the room and out the door. His heart is pounding. He finally has the keys to his father's shed.

Blacky expresses true courage by overcoming his fear of his father in order to steal the keys and do the moral action of covering up the graffiti. This contrasts with the shallow expectations of courage placed upon boys in his community, where they can never show fear and must express bravery through sports or violence.



Blacky overcomes his fear of his father's anger, showing how much his character has developed since the beginning of the novel.



CHAPTER 40

Blacky unlocks the shed and goes inside. He finds his father's paint brushes. The old man treasures the brushes because his own father was a painter. Blacky contemplates how his father treats the brushes better than he treats his own children. Blacky knows he'll be in serious trouble if he takes a brush, but he'll be in serious trouble no matter what he does. He picks his father's favorite brush along with a can of black paint.

The old man appears behind Blacky and asks what Blacky is doing in the shed. Blacky says he is just borrowing a brush and some paint to paint over **graffiti** on the jetty. His father asks what the graffiti says. Blacky contemplates lying but instead decides to tell the truth about wanting to paint over “Boongs piss off.” His father repeats Blacky's story, then swears and screams at him.

Blacky has completely changed in his attitude toward his father. Whereas before Blacky either wanted to impress his father or minimize his father's anger, now Blacky realizes he cannot do either, so he must choose to do what is moral, regardless of what his father will think.



Blacky's choice not to lie about wanting to cover up the racist graffiti shows that, whereas at the beginning of the novel he always denied his true opinions and feelings in order to fit in, now he will stand up for what he believes to be just, no matter the consequences to himself.



Team-man arrives at the shed along with the rest of Blacky's siblings. The old man tells them to go away, but they don't. He then tells Blacky to put away the brush and paint. Blacky thinks his life will be easier if he just puts the paint back and waits until he can cover up **the graffiti** another way. But then he looks at his father, who is smiling smugly, and Blacky refuses to put away the brush and paint.

Blacky steps toward the door. His father hits him and knocks him to the ground. Gregggy begs their father not to hurt Blacky. Blacky lies on the floor, questioning his choices. Suddenly, his sister Claire starts shouting about the car. The family goes to see the car rolling down the driveway with Team-man in the driver's seat. The old man runs after the car but can't catch it. The car is rolling toward the cliff over the sea.

The old man tries to stop the car but runs into a post and falls to the ground. The car breaks just an inch from the cliff. Tim gets out of the car. Blacky has decided to call Team-man by his first name (Tim) now because the nickname isn't ironic anymore. Blacky thinks that Tim truly is the best team-man because he was willing to almost jump off a cliff for his family.

The old man lies motionless on the ground. Darcy, hearing the commotion, comes outside. Tim lies and says someone was trying to steal the car and their father chased after the thief before getting hit. Darcy examines the old man and determines he'll be fine in the morning. They all help the old man back to bed.

Blacky is leaving to go to the jetty and all his siblings want to come with him. Blacky agrees to let them come. For once, they have set aside their differences, sisters and brothers, younger siblings and older siblings, fans of **The Brady Bunch** and fans of *Gilligan's Island*, to go to the jetty together.

CHAPTER 41

The Black siblings walk through town. They pass the campers in their park but no one pays any attention to them. The full moon lights up the jetty. Blacky points out the "Boongs piss off" **graffiti** and explains to Gregggy that "boong" is a slur for an indigenous person. Gregggy asks why someone would write that and Tim explains that it's because the writer is a racist who doesn't like indigenous people.

Team-man and the siblings prove they can actually support Blacky as family is expected to, despite Blacky's previous doubts. In a similar way, Blacky sacrifices his personal safety in order to take responsibility for combating the racism of his town, as shown by his refusal to put away the brush.



Blacky's actions here mirror his confrontation with Thumper in the first part of the novel, except this time he intends to sacrifice his personal safety to fulfill his duty to oppose racism. Team-man shows his character development by choosing to sacrifice himself in order to save his brother.



Blacky realizes that, when faced with a crisis, Tim is truly willing to sacrifice himself (like a lemming jumping over a cliff) for his family. This challenges his previous assumptions about mutual responsibility and shows that when family puts in the effort, its members truly can support each other as they should.



Tim's lie here harkens back to when he lied and blamed Blacky for the day they tried to catch crawfish. Now Tim lies again, but for exactly the opposite purpose: he does so to support Blacky and show how he cares for his brother.



Blacky's perspective on his siblings shifts after they help him escape from their father. Now he sees how his family can come together to support each other despite their differences.



Blacky and Tim's conversation with Gregggy shows how there's hope for less racism in the future, as they're able to have an honest, frank conversation with their younger family member about the racism of their town. This contrasts with the denial and avoidance that Blacky has encountered from the adults in town.



All the siblings want to help cover up **the graffiti**. Going from youngest to oldest, they each paint over one letter. By the end, only the letters “SS OFF” are left, but Blacky insists that they finish the job and cover the whole sentence. Blacky knows the graffiti won’t be gone forever, but he’s content that it’s gone for tonight.

When **the graffiti** is all gone, the Black siblings clap and cheer. Then, everybody becomes quiet. One of the siblings, Kevin, wonders what they’re going to do now about their father. They decide they’ll go sleep by Black Rock. As they lie down by the rock, Jenny suggest that they sing **The Brady Bunch** theme song. Blacky protests, but then joins in singing. They sing a few more songs, including the *Gilligan’s Island* theme song.

Blacky tells them about how many of the stars they’re looking at are already dead. No one responds and Blacky realizes that all the siblings have already fallen asleep. Blacky knows they’ll be in serious trouble tomorrow but for the moment, surrounded by his family, he is “as happy as Larry.”

The family working together to cover up the graffiti represents how everyone can (and must) collaborate to confront racism. The fact that the graffiti won’t be gone also indicates that confronting racism is a continuous responsibility that one must undertake over time, rather than a single act.



Blacky’s participation in The Brady Bunch song shows that, thanks to his siblings helping him, he has realized that the show’s message of family support is not unrealistic after all. Their gathering around the Black Rock symbolizes the new sense of belonging and community Blacky feels with his siblings.



Blacky’s contentment with his family offers hope for the future. Even though he’ll likely continue to struggle with his father and his town, he will have the love and support of his siblings to help him. Thus, he finally understands his mother’s phrase (“as happy as Larry”) because he finally understands his place in the family.





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