

SPOILER SHEET

don't ask what the bird look like

By Hannah Belanszky

Please note this show covers themes of loss including loss of culture, language, family connection, country, parents, and children.

For a detailed understanding of the show please continue to read the full scene break down below.

Scene 1:

Joan arrives at her father Mick's house in a remote Australian town beside a river. Her father didn't collect her from the bus stop despite previously agreeing to do so. It is evident he didn't expect her to turn up for the visit. He makes them some tea and they struggle for small talk after many years of not being in touch. When Mick asks her about her mother it is revealed that Joan's mother, (Mick's distant ex-partner) has recently passed away in a car accident. Mick realises this is why Joan has come to visit and learns Joan will only be staying for a long weekend. She also wanted to come and visit her father because she has never been on country before. Joan tries to get information from her father on what there is to do in this small town and learns that her father will be working all the time she is here and that the best entertainment in town is the Post Office. When she asks her dad about swimming in the river. Mick tells her no one goes swimming in the river.

Scene 2:

Mick returns from work late Saturday afternoon and questions Joan about not eating the ham sandwich he had left her in the fridge. Joan did not eat the sandwich because Mick has not communicated that he had made it for her. She eats it now. Joan suggests they play scrabble like they used to do every Friday after school when she was younger. She tries to get him to call in sick the next day so they can spend time together, but he declines. Instead, she suggests she comes with him to work. Begrudgingly he agrees.

Scene 3:

Joan and Mick get up very early Sunday morning to leave for work. Mick in work gear and Joan in inappropriate singlet and shorts. They discuss what she's wearing, and Joan goes back inside to change. Mick is in a rush and tries to get her to leave in what she's already wearing. But it's too late she's already gone inside to change. Mick calls out to her to hurry, but ultimately leaves without her. Joan comes out in a new outfit and realises her dad has left without her. She heads out on her own.

Scene 4:

Joan comes to the river. She tries to give herself a Welcome to Country but isn't sure how. Joan tells the story of how she once tried to self-tan her skin darker but ended up ten shades darker with streaks everywhere.

Scene 5:

Joan arrives home in the afternoon to find Mick already there. He tries to explain why he left without her. Joan is unimpressed. Mick offers that they play Scrabble. Joan agrees and gets their old board. They reminisce on the games they used to play and memories of Joan's childhood. Joan suggests they go down to the river after Mick finishes work the next day. Mick abruptly ends the game, conceding Joan wins and leaves.

Scene 6:

Pattie arrives at the house for the first time, she brings a new upbeat energy to the space. It is unclear what her relationship to Joan's father is, but she is friendly and very comfortable in the house. She is ecstatic to meet Joan and scolds Mick for not telling her that she's here and taking time off to spend with his daughter. She offers to take her into town to show her the sights.

Scene 7:

It's now the afternoon, Joan and Pattie hang out on the front verandah. Pattie asks Joan about what her mother thinks of her coming out to the country like this. Joan changes the topic and reveals to Pattie that she went to the river yesterday and how she felt a connection to the space. Pattie also tries to change the subject. Joan asks Pattie why no body swims at the river and is once again shut down and is warned not to go there again by herself.

Mick comes home and the three joke around together before Mick reveals that he has to work the next day as well. Joan starts to get upset, demanding to know why he won't take the time to show her their country, even after her mother died. This is the first time Pattie learns of Joans mothers' death and is upset with Mick for not communicating this to her.

Scene 8:

Joan and Pattie go to the river in the morning. Pattie attempts to show Joan how to fish for booglies (crayfish/yabbies). They discuss reasons why Mick might not be able to give Joan the story of her country that she's searching for. How Micks Gran knew their language but wasn't able to speak it because of the whitefellas knowing she knew it. She goes on to explain that Micks Gran survived but that survival came at a cost and meant Mick didn't get the opportunity to learn language or many other parts of his culture. Pattie suggests listening to the river for the answers to Joan's questions. She tells Joan how she will often sit for hours at the river and listen for the ancestors. They discuss how Joan feels that she is only "part Aboriginal" Pattie encourages her to change her thinking "you either are or you aren't". Joan presses again why she shouldn't come to the river alone before the subject is changed again by the two of them catching a booglie.

As the booglie is caught the river begins to change colours. A bird sings a song that only Joan can hear, and she sings back to the bird mimicking the call. Pattie immediately stops what she's doing and says the name "Rosie" before she starts pulling Joan away from the water. She puts the booglie back in the water and they quickly leave.

Scene 9:

It's now late afternoon Joan and Pattie are preparing a curry. Pattie lets slip that she and Mick once maybe shared a house where they cooked a similar meal a long time ago before Joan was born. They set up the table for dinner. Joan apologises for asking prying questions. They both become distracted by the stove burning. Mick arrives home and Joan encourages everyone to sit at the table together for the meal. As Mick eats, he realises that he's eating booglie curry and comments that it tastes like how Pattie's Mum used to make it.

Mick asks where the booglie's came from and Pattie reveals that she and Joan went to the river today. Mick and Pattie both go very quiet. Mick grabs Joan's plate and starts to clean up, turning his anger at the burnt pots in the kitchen. Joan confronts Mick about not being there for her and demands to know who Rosie is. Mick goes inside and Joan turns her questions at Pattie. Patie tries to encourage Joan to slow down, take more time to connect to her father and culture. In frustration Joan leaves the house.

Mick lets Joan go and gets Pattie to play a game of scrabble with him while he lets Joan calm down. While they play Mick asks Pattie why she told Joan about Rosie when she knew it was the one thing he didn't want to talk about. Pattie tells Mick that she never spoke to Joan about Rosie, that Joan heard it herself from the river. Mick turns on Joan, telling her that she always places the blame on something else, "the river, ancestors, some bird" so she doesn't have to ever take responsibility for her actions. As they talk, we see Joan approach the river. Pattie tells Mick that she loved Rosie as much as he did. Mick counters that it wasn't he who left Rosie alone. Pattie reminds him that she didn't leave Rosie it was the bird that pulled her attention for a second and called Rosie into the river. But Mick doesn't want to hear it. Joan begins to wade into the water. Mick tells Joan that he blames her for killing their daughter and that he doesn't know how to forgive her for this. A bird calls out. Mick and Pattie look towards the river, calling out Joans name. **Fade to total black out.**