

## Open Category – Winner 2021

# Oranges

By Thomas Alan

I'm the goddamn Tennby leper. The yellow-bellied, black snake with flat feet and scrawny, chicken-shit knees. The dickhead with a dizzy stomach. The bracken-boy who tried to drown Debbie Ives out in the Newcastle rip.

It's all bullshit, mind you – despite what the rest of Tennby reckons.

Hell, I don't give two fucks about Debbie Ives – old crow that she is.

It's not my fault the wobbly bitch can't swim, and it sure as hell ain't my fault that I didn't hear her yelling over the thrum of the shore break. We were distracted – both the ocean and I – caught up in a competition to see who could tangle themselves round a beautiful girl most.

The girl stood looking out towards the horizon – eyes hidden away behind her leopard-print sunnies, similarly oblivious to the drowning screams of her mother. Honey Ives – the daughter of soon-to-be-dead Debbie. The whitewash swelled and flustered at her

feet. It folded like silk around her wood-knot ankles and lifted out of the horizon to steal her gaze off the sky. It wrapped itself around her. Reached for her. It cast waves solely to drop down and swallow her whole.

And in our competition, I stood against them.

Like a rock wall between the break and the inlet – like the jagged black rocks at the foot of a lighthouse – I stood, and the waves threw themselves against me.

She was utterly gorgeous, you know. Skin kissed pink by the sun. A river of freckles that trickled off her shoulders and ran across her arms, chest, and legs. Dimples like ditches, and one of those bikini tops that pinched at the bottoms and made it look like she was wearing a pair of damp, baby-blue seashells. Even the ocean salt clung to her, glistening in the fine blonde hairs that covered her patchy thighs.

Yet despite it all – despite the salt on her skin, despite those little plastic rings that sat on the points of her hips, and despite the ocean spray that crashed against my back and floated through the air like flecks of glitter across her cheeks – it was her mother that demanded my attention. While I yearned for a moment with Honey, Debbie was out drowning in the rip.

By the time I did eventually notice her, she was already being rescued. A local boy had ridden out on his surfboard and was using it to drag her back to the shore. She looked like a half-drowned rat – all matted and pale and sobbing – and she stared at me with sore, red eyes.

‘What’s the matter with you!?’ she yelled.

To be honest, I still don’t know what she expected. Perhaps she’d been yelling for a while, trying to get my attention and thought that I was ignoring her. Perhaps, as I stood against the waves and she’d gotten sucked out towards the horizon, she’d made eye contact. Perhaps I’d seen her and didn’t notice. I don’t know. But, in any case, this was suddenly and utterly my fault.

And it doesn’t mean I don’t feel guilty. Hell, the cold, wet, two hour-long drive back to Tennby was enough to make me feel like I murdered them both. We sat in silence. All

of us wrapped up in our towels and soaked through. Bare, wet skin sallied up on the old car's hot leather seats – the chair's stitching digging up into my under-thigh and rubbing against my chafe. Debbie's breathing was laboured – hollowed out and gutless. She sniffed loudly as if she were trying to drag all the saltwater out of her lungs and snort them across the car. Each hideous sniff was an accusation. Every breath was injured. The more she struggled, the more she despised me. It was as if, in her silence, the saltwater in her lungs was bubbling and boiling and causing all her heart and her insides to broil and turn brothy and hateful.

She waited for an apology.

I wondered if I should just get out and walk.

The car's engine snarled as it struggled up the range, drowning out Debbie's sobs for long enough that my twisted dog-gut could return its attention to Honey. She stared out the window – eyes still tucked behind those sunnies – watching some tatted-up lug twist his wrist a half-inch and rev the guts out of a Harley. I felt her shift beside me – felt her breath lift and her eyes blossom like young tulips opening for the sun. She dawned – carelessly and beautifully – and beside her, in the shadows, I drowned.

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The footy field and the hills around it are floodlit by the eyes of God. He stares down at me accusingly with those same piercing, betrayed eyes. Hell, the whole crowd stares at me and I'm not even playing.

Two boys – Blake and Andy Koh – walk past stinking of cigarettes and wet turf. There's rumours that they killed their dad a couple years back. But I don't know. I reckon he just pissed off like most other kids' dads.

Blake winks. 'Manslaughter,' he says, acknowledging me – as if we're colleagues, as if we're brothers in the same bloody crime.

I sink into myself. I'm tired. I feel like a tomato that's been squeezed too hard – that all my insides are churned-up and bruised, like the hands of Tennby have wrung me out for the last time. I sigh. It's hard to keep my attention fixed on the footy game. The Tennby

Terror are dog-shit and Newcastle haven't been playing any better.

Beside me, Greg Lossly drags his teeth through the fleshy white rind of an orange quarter. He looks like a dog with its snout buried deep in the middle of a pig's carcass – nose vanished, eyes gazing out over the field ahead of him to watch the break in play. He sucks on the last of the peel. Chokes a bit. Coughs a little. Smacks his pulpy lips together and snorts. He watches – *hungrily*.

Glossy's eye is purple and swollen. His lip is split, and he hisses a bit whenever the citrus gets down deep into the cut. I figure I know how it happened. Glossy's dad's a bit like a gorilla trapped inside a shipping container – 'cept the shipping container is Tennby and the people around him are the suffocating cast-iron walls that he beats his fists onto. Glossy won't say as much though – 'coz walls don't talk.

'How'd that happen?' I ask.

'Footy practice,' he lies. 'Don't worry about it.'

He sinks his teeth back into the peel, scraping the last of it onto his tongue. He reckons the zest gives him energy – reckons he can lipread the opposition and hear the umpires' whispers across the field. He reckons it keeps him alert. Says that the taste stops him from tripping over his words and that it stops him from choking on his spit or tripping on his tongue. But I don't know. I reckon it's just the footy that gives him so much energy. It's as if he breathes it in – as if the stench of Deep Heat and cigarette stink wets his throat and put a hum in his lungs. But, in either case, it's what he reckons. And, in fairness to him, he's a bloody gun at what he does.

Glossy raises the microphone to his lips. The airhorn blares.

*'Start of the second quarter,'* he says, voice echoing out through the amplifiers placed around the field. *'Trolley taps it long – over the pack and towards the wing. Ball tumbles. Benson and Number Nine are after it like a pair of bloodhounds. Benson gets a foot to it and boots it up off the ground towards the centre-half line. Mongrel kick! Absolute worm-burner!*

*'Newcastle's Number Six picks it up and runs head-over-toes down the opposite*

*wing. He's got space but — Oh! It's fumbled. Six picks it up again. Then drops it again! Does he bother picking it up again? No—no, he says "stop looking at me" and shepherds off Folley for Number Forty-Two. Forty-Two picks it up and sends it back downfield over the heads of... one, two, three good options. Straight out of bounds.'*

The crowd chuckles. A couple of the supporters on the Tennby hill shout abuse.

You got to realize that Glossy ain't good at much. Numbers confuse him worse than letters do, and he can't kick a footy straight if it meant winning himself a new car – one that doesn't need a Flintstone's-runup to start. But he's good at this. If running your mouth and cracking jokes could get you drafted, he'd be All-Australian. Hell, he'd be Team of the Century.

*'Brutus steps out of field to take the kick. There's not much moving for him at the moment. Wetz and Kingy are in the mid-field but the Newcastle boys have them pretty well tagged. He puts a hand in the air, screaming for someone to make a run.'*

'Move for him!' shouts Myrtle Brute – the big centre-half-back's mum. She sits forwards on the wet grass, wringing her palms together and chewing on the inside of her cheek. Her hair is like old, grey straw, and her frown lines are deep – like tyre treads carved into tired, black rubber. 'Down the guts!' she screams, cupping her mouth.

Perhaps I'm jealous of Brutus – big, idiot lug, that he is. I mean, the whole bloody town gathers to watch these boys. Hell, they practically worship them. Kalgoorlie's got its salt lakes. Newcastle's got its ocean baths. And Tennby's got its shitty Aussie-rules team. But what I reckon truly bothers me is that snotty, shifty Jason Brute – the dimmer who once pissed in the school's chicken coop, who used to throw my backpack over the boundary fence into snake-infested brambles – is held in higher regard than me. That I am the subject to his tales of glory – that I am the hen to his golden glow.

Boot slaps leather.

*'Monster kick!' Glossy yells, standing. '—Torps it right across the field from hip to shoulder, straight over the midfield towards Pokey at the half-forward line.'*

The ball sails through the air, hits the turf, and bucks. It's like a mad stallion, kicking

and twisting, toppling head over tail as it lifts high into the air over the heads of the players then lands flat and bellies sideways across the field. It wobbles, spurs upwards again, and bounces miraculously towards the goal line.

*‘The ball is tumbling!’* Glossy yells, standing as the ball angles its way towards the goal posts. *‘It’s bounced up and over Pokey’s head and through the defenders! Number Eighteen dives for it but there’s no chance! It’s already there! Goal! Goal from the backline! What a humongous kick!’*

Brutus kisses the tips of his fingers and points to the sky.

Myrtle is up on her feet, bouncing on her toes and clutching her hands against her chest. For a moment, her sour lips crack into a gentle, iron-creased smile. The second’s team are up on their feet, chanting.

—*‘Matty Brutus walks on water! Newcastle lambs walk to their slaughter!’*

*‘Absolutely brilliant!’* Glossy says into the microphone. *‘The most beautiful donkey-kick I’ve ever seen. He’s got a leg on him like a trebuchet. What a goal!’*

The Tenny hill is on its feet. Car horns blare in celebration. Dog whistles pierce the cold, night air, and a group of girls along the boundary fence slap their hands on the old, washed-out fence signs that ensnare the field. The sound rattles up through the tall floodlights. The picture of Mr. Simster holding his dappled strawberries quakes and winces under the barrage of flat palms and sharp-ringed fingers. His face turns red. His eyes half-shut and he lets out a shivering, metallic scream. And I can feel my heart screaming too. And I reckon she can sense it, because I see her – all of a sudden – standing beneath the paperbarks, staring up at me.

Debbie’s hair is wet from the shower. Pools of damp have started to appear on the shoulders of her flea-worn cardigan, and her face is washed bare. She stares. The women around her stare. The whole damned footy field stares. Hell, even Glossy stares. He doesn’t say it, and he doesn’t show it. But I can feel his consciousness turned about to face me. I can feel the judgmental face – the second face inside them all – turned about to stare and gawk. And it’s as if I’m an old movie that’s running through for the thousandth time – as

if everyone watching already knows my fate and are just waiting for me to finish. I feel as though my fate has been prescribed – as if my *character* has been scripted – and I am to wear it all, because to remove it would be to remove my own skin. I am the leper now, whether I like it or not.

A sickness.

An outcast.

Well, if Dale Walsh must wear his skin, then so too should everyone else.

Glossy sits back down and begins sucking on the peel of yet another orange. ‘Amazing,’ he says, pretending that he doesn’t stare. ‘Imagine being able to snap the ball like that. Telling you now, he’ll either end up playing for the Swans or being one of those kickers over in the States.’

I scoff. ‘Sure, so long as the blokes down in Sydney are cool with a half-brained fuck selling meth to high schoolers.’ Glossy is silent for a moment, but I press on. ‘I mean ... Hell, it’s like you forget who these assholes are sometimes.’

Glossy just shrugs. ‘Sometimes life gets hard.’

‘So because he’s an alright kick we can excuse him?’

Glossy gives me a look – as if I’m speaking too loud and he’s worried someone might hear. He doesn’t realise that they’re all already staring – that they’re *always* staring.

‘Matty Brutus – meth-king and lord of the on-field coat-hanger. What a bloke.’

Glossy ignores me. He turns his attention back to the field and clicks on the microphone. ‘*Ball up,*’ he says, ‘*The Terror need to use this momentum here to put them ahead. Trolley gets a good tap to Wetz. Wetz shrugs off Number Eight and handballs over his head to Kingy. Kingy hands it back to Trolley who is wrapped up and tackled exactly where the ball started.*’

‘Ball!’ the Newcastle supporters shout madly from their side of the field.

‘*Piss off,*’ Glossy dismisses with a chuckle.

‘There’s not a single bloke out there worth his salt,’ I say, leering.

Glossy tries to ignore me.

‘Brutus is a bloody drug pusher. Wetz and his brother steal cars from all over Meringal, and Kingy’s got girlfriends all up and down the bloody eastern coast. Hell, even Trolley’s half an asshole. You should hear him yelling at his dogs. He goes berserk – like proper ear-biting-throwing-plates ballistic.’

Glossy ignores me. *‘Trolley is pushed off by Number Twenty-Two who taps it upfield. They’re all after it – like a pack of greyhounds. It bounces up over Number Twelve and Monty Parks, rolls into Yuko’s fingers who punts it back upfield to space. Good defence.’*

‘Monty’s started more bushfires than God, and Yuko’s a shameful drunk.’

*‘Benson to Wetz. Wetz up and over to Dane who steps one, shrugs another, and is away!’* The whole crowd lifts. Everyone knows Dane Penn is the fastest bloke in the league and there’s nothing but space out ahead of him. *‘This is a massive run!’* Glossy yells. *‘It’s Dane! The Great Dane!’*

‘Shame he broke Manny Shultz’s legs...’

Glossy turns away from me. *‘He’s up and he’s gone!’* he shouts.

Dane practically lopes up the field. His legs are like pistons, and his boots cleave a path through the sodden turf. He almost looks like Manny – back when Manny was a state sprinter and Dane was just a shadow runner. Apparently, Manny Shultz’s legs were broken in an ‘accident’, but I don’t know how you accidentally break your legs checking cray pots with Dane’s older brother, Gill. Tonya Harding eat your heart out.

Suddenly, there’s a Newcastle player – as if, *somehow*, the bloke has appeared out of thin air, as if he’s sprouted from the ground under Dane’s shadow and is now right on top of him and coming in from the side.

‘Where the hell...?’ Glossy starts.

There’s an almighty crack as the player hits Dane from the side. Their bodies twist. Dane’s shoulders crumple into his stomach and his knees kick up into his own chin. They



struggle through the air like broke-winged birds and slam down hard against the turf.

There's a huge outroar from the crowd. Blake and Andy are up on their feet, pointing fingers and swearing, Kingy's dad is screaming at the nearest field ump, and Coach Tim has thrown his clipboard down and started running across the oval. Dane's aunt has started around the boundary fence. She looks terrified – she's got those same worried eyes Aria Hall's mother did when they lost little Ben down by Hero's Creek.

Everyone stands – everyone, 'cept me.

On field, Dane lays flat on his back. Blood trickles from his nose and he's breathing as if his lungs have been stapled down into the grass. His leg twitches. His arm lays across his body. One of his legs is turned the wrong way around. And the Newcastle player – a big, huge lug that's about as wide as he is tall – stands proudly. He pumps his fists in the air and then jogs towards the boundary line, back to where the Newcastle supporters are awaiting him. Some of them are laughing. Most of them, though – to their credit – remain silent.

'—just wearing a goddamn club jumper!' Kingy's dad yells, pointing at the tackler. 'He's from the damn Seconds! He ain't even got a *fucking* jersey on!'

Glossy squeezes an orange peel in his fist. 'He's not even a player,' he says, looking down at me. 'Dane's properly hurt here, and it's 'coz this idiot's tried to stop the run from the sideline.'

I'm neither surprised nor apathetic. I'm tired – less a bloody tomato, and more a torn-up plastic bag kicking back and forth between the tyres of passing cars.

'All cause this bloke has decided to cheat,' Glossy groans.

Immediately, the field is flaring. Trolley is locked-in against the Newcastle ruckman. They hold each other's jerseys and punch through the fabric – up into the underside of each other's jaws. A single Tennby player – Kingy, I think – is being marched backwards by three of the Newcastle players, and blokes from both teams are scrambling like gulls to swarm round one of the many fights.

Matty Brutus has jumped the boundary fence and hunted down the Second's player responsible for flattening Dale. He's grabbed the great boof by the ass of his pants and is

forcing him back towards the field.

‘Bloody hell,’ I say, exhaustedly, watching as the Newcastle Seconds gather to try and protect their player and begin to hassle Brutus. Some of the Tennby boys race over and begin jumping the fence into the crowd.

‘Good on them,’ Glossy says. ‘If he wants to play, bring him back to the field. Takes a lot of guts to jump into an angry crowd – good blokes, good *teammates*.’

‘Get out of it,’ I say.

‘What?’ he asks.

‘Nothing.’

‘Jesus, Dale... what’s wrong?’

My blood’s boiling. My skin feels like its being constantly pricked by a hundred red-hot, tiny needles – like I got bloody, bubbling sunburn on my forehead. ‘*Good blokes*,’ I mock. ‘Games ruined. They’re all a bunch of dicks, and now we’re celebrating a brawl.’ I stare up at him. ‘I’m being treated like a *fucking* murderer, and these blokes are kings.’

The spectators are going nuts. Kingy’s dad is now throwing fistfuls of chips at the boundary ump, some of the mums are shouting and screaming like baying dogs at the fence, and the new Pastor – Pastor Bassett – shakes his head and walks away. Spectators are jumping the fence and running out into the fray. The Newcastle Seconds are laughing and rushing out to meet them. Parents and players are being beaten, dragged, and kicked left, right and centre, and, in the middle of it all, standing like a lighthouse against the ocean, there is the on-field umpire – broad, tubby, and with a beard as white as snow.

He braces himself with his legs and arms star-fishing. His back is to the brawl, and he forces them away as the field medic tends to Dane. He holds them at bay – whistle screeching and squealing in vain – waiting for them all to collapse over his shoulders and fall upon the injured boy.

‘Ugly,’ Glossy says. Microphone clicked off.

I stand and walk away.

I reckon you shouldn't be surprised when the kettle boils.

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I make my way down the short foothill and through the maze of old Commodore beaters and rusted-out lemons. Harry and Mel Barmy sit in their crappy smooth-tyred Camry.

*Reliable as all get-up*, Harry always says. *White goods on wheels*.

Right now he's leaning out the car's window and calling the nearest boundary umpire weak and *erroneous*. Mel is leaning across him to press down on the horn, half-deafening the fight and causing some of the kids under the bleachers to stick their fingers in their ears and wince. Kirsty and Karen are standing like bloody witches under the trees – screeching and wailing, pointing fingers and calling people names too vile for television.

I don't even bother looking back. I know it all already. Men chucking *wobblies* spurred on by women, piss, and testosterone. Boys pretending to be men. Spectators screaming and circling like cowardly birds. Punches and headlocks being dealt out like bread and wine. The same cyclical bullshit that'll end with Brutus being a champ coz he gave that dirty Seconds player a good flogging.

I sigh. Perhaps I'm not a torn-up plastic bag, but a big, fat, bloated pig's carcass – just laying out here in the mud, nothing in me but bad air and black juice. No guts. No thoughts. No decisions. Just tired, rancid juice. The ravens peck at my flesh and I just bloody wheeze.

At the back of the carpark – back where the rainwater flows through trenches and disappears into big, child-sized pipes – there is a lonely, blue ute. The driver's door is stalled half-open, and I can see the ass-end of Pastor Bassett sticking out as he searches under the seat for something. He's youngish – probably somewhere in his mid-thirties. His hair is a flash of hot-iron red, and he's got a nose on him like a curling ibis beak. His radio blares. A woman screams through the hash and buzz. He looks over his shoulder as I pass. 'Is it always this mad?' he asks, dipping his sunnies to lock eyes with me. There's a little, pink flamingo dancing on the dashboard of his car and he's got a pair of old, stained workmen's ear buds dangling from the rear-view.

‘Just about,’ I say.

‘*Jeezus.*’ He shoves his arm further under the seat. ‘You need a lift?’

I’ve never spoken to Pastor Bassett. Hell, most of Tennby tries to avoid him like he’s got the plague. ‘I don’t know you, mate.’

‘Joe Bassett,’ he says, grinning. ‘The wife and I moved up a couple of months ago from Victoria. I took over from Pastor Gary at Lighthouse? Seems everyone I meet in town already knows who I am, ‘cept you.’

‘People aren’t talking to me right now.’

‘Oh yeah?’ He bites the inside of his lip as he struggles. ‘That’d make you Dale Walsh, then.’

I grimace.

‘Tell me... truthfully, as witness under God, did you see her?’

‘What?’

‘Did you see her drowning? Half the town reckons you saw Debbie.’

‘Saw her and didn’t help, you mean?’

He gives an agreeing shrug.

My chest tightens and I can hear the absolute weight of the ocean – the screaming of water over sand being drawn back and thrown over and over again. I see the waves slipping and spilling over one another. Jostling. Rearing. And, for a single moment, I wonder if I did see a hand between the waves – or whether it was a bird, or maybe a reflection.

‘Maybe. I don’t know anymore. It’s like... it’s like I’m seeing waves I don’t even remember. Like I can imagine every single goddamn person at that bloody beach but can’t remember which ones of them are real.’

‘Too much thinking and not enough knowing.’

‘Yeah, probably.’

He hisses – as if his fingers were just bit by the underside of the chair. ‘Well, perhaps

this was all meant to happen? Perhaps it's part of his plan, aye?'

I restrain myself from rolling my eyes. Tennby isn't a *super* religious place, and I don't have the heart to tell him that God kinda fucking hates us back. *Deus fuck Tennby*, or some shit – I don't know, I'm not Latino.

'Whose plan?' I humour.

He chuckles. 'You know... the big fella. The bloke who finally got his revenge on Meatloaf at the 2011 grand final.' He grunts as he fishes with his arm. 'Maybe God's trying to show you some faults? Are you helpful, Dale? Or do you leave problems to others?'

I remain silent.

'Or maybe it was his plan to drown Debbie that day and he changed his mind halfway through. Who are we to guess?'

'You think God changes his mind?'

He thinks for a moment – and I reckon I hear him swear under his breath. 'I reckon anyone that thinks God's plans aren't being made up on the fly, are kidding themselves.'

There's a moment of pause.

'Aha!' he yells, 'got you!'

He stands up quickly and drags the great thing out from beneath his chair. It's black and writhing. It curls and hisses and jerks as he drags it out, and its tail kicks and slashes as the Pastor clamps his hands round the snake's massive jaw.

'Out the way, bud,' he says – almost storming over the top of me as he darts down towards the trenches to hike the thing into the drain. There's blood dribbling all the way down his arm, and, as he returns, I realise he's somehow lost his thongs in the struggle.

'What the hell!?' I yelp.

He comes back grinning. 'Just a carpet python,' he says, collecting his wayward shoes, 'but still managed to get me.' He shows me his arm and where the snake has chewed away some of the skin around his fingers and thumb. 'Anyway, I guess I'm off to the hospital to get this fixed. I'll be seeing you, kid.'

He leaps into the driver's seat and kicks the old ute into gear. He holds his hand in the air – blood trickling to the elbow – as if he's the goddamn liberty statue.

'Wait!' I shout, realizing myself.

He leans out the window like he's ordering a cheeseburger – hand still up.

'Do you need help?'

He grins. 'I'm right, mate.'

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The nights here are long and they bloat in the heat. It's that stinking Tennby heat. The sort that makes you sweat while you sleep – that turns your bunk into a waterbed and your sheets into grotty, water-clogged beach towels. I can hear the heat in the asphalt outside – in the tyres that peel across the road and disappear in the darkness. Trolley's shouting louder than his dogs, and the fan above me is lopsided and clicks without any sort of obvious rhythm. I stare up at it, waiting for it to drop right on top of me – waiting for it to unscrew itself and fly like a razorblade hurricane through my face.

For a pig's carcass, I sure do think a hell of a lot.

For a dead animal, I feel uniquely trapped out here.

I wonder if this is how Glossy's dad felt – you know, before he became a tosser and started beating on his kid. I imagine Glossy returning home – imagine him pulling the keys out of the ignition and his old man bent over the kitchen sink, looking out towards the footy ground whose lights are dead, and waiting for his son to come in and take his food from the fridge. I imagine those old lights with their eyelids shut, tearing up the dirt and concrete as they turn to look away. I wonder if this is what it feels like – to be immobilized.

Glossy's black eye haunts me, but I know that he won't be returning home.

I saw the mattress in the boot of his station wagon. I saw the loaves of bread and the tank of water buried deep under piles of clothes on the backseat. I saw the state of Glossy, and I walked away.

I imagine him now, waiting for the players to go home, waiting for the club president to lock up the canteen and disappear, and for him to come out and wander the ground in the

dark. I imagine him lining up a goal from the fifty. I imagine him sitting in the umpire's hut, sipping from the dregs of mostly-drunk beer bottles. I imagine him walking the foothills, collecting orange rinds and washing them out under a ground-water tap for dinner.

And I feel it all crash over me.

Mum's smokes. Dad's piss. The South Pacific Ocean and Debbie Ives. I picture God's eyes closing, and I picture the whole of the Tennby footy team laying into me. Fists, knees, shins, and boots. Mr. Simster's red, raw face screaming at me on the fence. Honey slapping her hands on the old, metallic signs, and them all toppling over me – falling and crashing over my shoulders like I am that feeble red-faced umpire.

But all I can hear is Glossy.

He sucks on his oranges and speaks into the microphone.

'*Ugly*,' he says.