THE STORY OF TOM BRENNAN: EXPLANATORY NOTES

From Beginning to END
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Inspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Editing Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Quotations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authors use a variety of sources of inspiration for characters, plot ideas and settings for their novels.

Burke's 'inspirations' were kept together in a small notebook that she carried with her everywhere. In this notebook she wrote notes as ideas came to her, pasted in articles, pictures and any other bits and pieces she found that might have been useful to her when writing the novel.

Some examples of items used for inspiration for *The Story of Tom Brennan* include:

- Her own childhood experiences of Catholic education *(Slide 15)*;
- Newspaper articles *(Slide 16)*;
- Brainstorm of possible characters and names *(Slide 17)*.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Using *(Slide 15)*, have students write down which saint’s painting appeared in which room of The Grandmother’s house. Reading the slide (notes about each saint,) have students write down why they think that saint was chosen for that particular spot.

**ACTIVITY 2**

Using a blank notebook, have students create their own ideas scrapbook. Each time they find inspiration for a story idea, they can write or paste it into this notebook. (You might want to set up the notebooks at the start of term, have students add to them throughout the term at home then check the notebooks at the end of the term).
**PLANNING**

**ACTIVITY 1**

Brainstorm with the students what they think is involved in writing a novel.

To quote Burke, “writing isn’t about sitting there with a bottle of scotch at two in the morning.” Rather, it is a methodical and carefully planned process.

When writing *The Story of Tom Brennan*, Burke kept many notebooks, folders and completed a number of drafts before the final product was achieved.

To ensure she had effectively developed the plot, Burke created a list of events to be included in the novel *(Slide 23).*

**MAIN CHARACTERS**

One of the very first things Burke did when planning her novel was to have a clear idea of what her main character would be like. *(Slide 19)* shows her very first notes on Tom; what he is like as a person, his age, appearance and so forth.

However, the main storyline in the novel is Tom’s emotional journey, so this was also important to have clear in her head. *(Slide 20)* contains a t-chart from Burke’s notebook, outlining the positive and negative steps in Tom’s emotional journey.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Using *(Slide 19)*, have students find examples from the novel which show this trait/experience.

Have students create a similar list for the main character in their own stories.
**ACTIVITY 2**

Write on the board the steps shown in the t-chart on Slide 20, muddling up the order. Have students put the steps into a t-chart of their own, explaining why that step was either positive or negative.

Once they have finished, show students Slide 20, and discuss their responses.

**PERIPHERAL CHARACTERS**

One of the hardest parts of editing is deciding what to leave out. For example, Burke included a character, Matt, as Tom’s best friend. Her intention in including Matt was to show the reader that Tom was ‘normal’ and included some scenes where Tom and Matt were having conversations about the accident and how life ‘sucks’.

The editor, however, had other ideas. The editor felt the novel was centrally about Tom’s journey and Matt didn’t help with this. In turn, Burke had to change Matt’s character to reflect more about Tom; his role in the story should be to show us how Tom had emotionally ‘shut down’ in the way he no longer talked to Matt. The editor’s notes in this regard are contained in Slides 10A, SLIDE 10b, SLIDE 10C and SLIDE 11.

Examples of keeping the novel focused on Tom’s emotional journey are also shown in the editor’s comments about ‘secrets’ and the correct place to reveal this sort of information about the other characters.
**ACTIVITY 2**

Discuss with the students the role peripheral characters play in a novel or story (i.e., their role is to tell us more about the protagonist).

Have students list the characters in *The Story of Tom Brennan* and explain what role they fulfil/what they tell us about Tom.

**RESEARCH**

Even though *The Story of Tom Brennan* is a work of fiction, a great deal of research was involved. This helps make the story realistic and therefore more interesting to the reader. For example, Burke researched Daniel’s sentencing, as well as what prison visits are like.

*Slide 12a & 12b* is an e-mail written by Burke, researching sentencing periods for crimes similar to that committed by Daniel.

*Slide 13* is Burke’s research notes on prison visits.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Have students create a list/discuss which areas of *The Story of Tom Brennan* they think might have been researched.

Compare their answers to *Slide 14*, which is Burke’s list of topics she felt needed to be researched.
ACTIVITY 2

Have students go over one of their own stories. What areas could be researched more thoroughly to give the story greater plausibility?

THE EDITING PROCESS

To quote Burke, ‘writing isn’t sitting there with a bottle of scotch at two in the morning’. It is a methodical and carefully planned process.

ACTIVITY 1

Slide 7a, b, c is a letter from the editor, suggesting changes for the novel. This would be an excellent resource to discuss the process of writing and seeking feedback.

ACTIVITY 2

Slide 8 includes the first, second and final drafts of the Prologue. Have students track the changes in each draft and write or discuss why they think the changes were made. Discuss or write if there are any changes they would make to the Prologue and why.

Another example is Slide 9a & b, which is the novel’s ending.

You might also wish to use Slide 21 & Slide 22.

CREATION OF MOOD

When writing a novel, it is important for authors to convey the correct mood/tone. This is especially important when writing rites of passage, as the character’s journey is essential to the story.

In The Story of Tom Brennan, Burke completed a number of drafts to create the
right mood. One way she did this was to create a Mood Chart for Tom (see Slide 1, and Slide 2), highlighting how he should have been feeling at each particular part of the story and making the language and tone of the text reflect this.

**ACTIVITY 1**

**Step One:**
Either in pairs or individually, have students create a timeline of events in *The Story of Tom Brennan*. You could also jot these down yourself and create a ‘cut and paste’ activity for the students.

**Step Two:**
Using a highlighter or different coloured pens, have students track the changes in Tom’s mood. You might wish to have them track his feelings of grief/hopelessness, compared to happiness/hope.

**Step Three:**
Have students share their responses with the class.

**Step Four:**
Show students Burke’s original ‘Mood Chart’ (Slide 1) which she used when writing and editing her novel. Discuss.

**ACTIVITY 2**

Using Slide 2, have students find quotes/examples of the mood in each chapter. An example has been provided for you.

**ACTIVITY 3**

Slide 3 is the original concluding paragraph to Chapter 2 written by Burke. Compare this to the published version on Slide 4.
Discuss with students the different moods created in the two versions. Do they think the final version was the most effective? Why or why not?

Another example is Slide 5 and Slide 6. Again, compare and discuss the mood created by the different versions.

**OPENING QUOTATIONS**

Many authors like to open their novels with a significant quote. Such quotes range from lyrics to a pop song, or words of wisdom from a philosopher and can be extremely useful to set the tone of the novel.

*The Story of Tom Brennan* contains no opening quote. (moved from below)

**ACTIVITY 1**

*The Story of Tom Brennan* contains no opening quote – DELETE THIS LINE. Have students research and come up with a quote that could be used at the start of the novel to effectively set the tone.

**ACTIVITY 2**

In *The Story of Tom Brennan*, there is no opening quote. However, Burke toyed with this idea in the drafting stages – DELETE THIS LINE. Add instead: In the drafting stages of writing the novel, Burke toyed with the idea of including a quote.

Her opening quote ideas for *The Story of Tom Brennan* are shown in Slide 18.

Discuss these unused quotes with the students.

- Which of the three quote ideas would they use and why?
- Why do you think she chose to do something unusual and quote the novel’s protagonist, even though he is fictional?
- Would the novel be better with an opening quote? Why or why not?
Tom's mood line

Yellow = blackness/grief/despair/hopelessness
Pink = hope/happiness/sense of a future

hole in guts — 7 becomes a knot

1. Monotone
2. No point talking to [censored] / no hope / more / fear / guts / hole / empty
3. No answer / confusion / you don't talk / he / says it / bullying / nothing in it / begun
4. Long black tunnel / hole part / present / black / not hungry / antisocial
5. Guilt / turn / not wanting to talk / fearful / safe / topics only / speaking / lose / intro of his identity / TB / now he was
6. Reaction / weakness / not know / lying / panic / says / still / discharged / black tunnel / panic / black car / tried / friends / not believed / in / fear
7. Matt denial / black hole / communication / confusion / dark / respondent / slight / 1st / 2nd / last / spoken / PO
8. [censored]
9. Agree / depressed / lies / disbelieving / family denied
SLIDE 2

Chapter 1 – not verbally communicative – eg ‘I nodded’ ‘I shrugged’

- Chapter 2 – no point talking – ‘What was the point in saying anything to her, or anyone for that matter?’ / no hope/ monosyllabic – eg ‘huh’ ‘yeah’ / fear ‘I held my breath’ / hole in guts

- Chapter 3 – nervous/ anti chicks/ confusion ‘Daniel crossed a line that night, a line I didn’t know my brother was capable of crossing.’ / Kylie says to Tom ‘You don’t ever want to talk about the – the stuff I want to talk about.’ / Tom feels there’s nothing to gain from talking.

- Chapter 4 – memories suck Tom into a long black tunnel/ he hates the past and present/ can’t even contact Matt, his best friend/ not hungry/ anti social . (p63) Gran says to Tom ‘I hope you’ve made some friends this week....it’s important to try...there are lots of nice lads at the school....’ I felt like spitting my beans back into the bowl.’

- Chapter 5 – guts turning/ not wanting to talk except on safe topics only/ reluctance in speaking to Fin/ tense (p75) / introduction of Tom’s identity and who he thought he was (p76) ‘...everything I thought I knew about who I was and who the Brennan’s were changed forever.’

- *Chapter 6 – emotionally exhausted ‘... seeing Fin took up every ounce of energy.’/ unsatisfying time with Mum/ panic (p85) ‘The knowledge made me want to tear my insides out.’/ Kylie accuses Tom of having no friends and being ‘shut down’/ still not contacted Matt/ disinterest in Rory and footy/ panic/ fighting not to be sucked into black tunnel/ (p93) at Coghill pool * a small taste of enjoyment*

- Chapter 7 – Difficulty keeping conversation up when he does contact Matt/ confusion/ darkness (p99) ‘I curled myself into a little ball, hid my head in my knees and let the darkness suck me deep into its belly.’/ despondent/ retrospective from Mumbilli

- Chapter 8 – despondent about fitness and playing footy at St Bennie’s (p114) ‘For me, playing footy would never be the same. Here in Coghill, it would just be something to fill in the time –the endless, endless time.’/ no appetite

- Chapter 9 – melancholy/ avoiding footy selection excitement/reminiscing about footy with Daniel/ retrospective from Mumbilli
**Chapter 10 – Depersonalisation of mother - ‘palm felt rubbery’ ‘dirty nails’/ non communicative with Brendan/ denial about who the Brennans have become (p134) ‘ Didn’t they realise we weren’t like anyone else’/ *Seeing Brendan help Daniel/ the idea of good pain/ *starts running with Brendan/ ‘hungry/ fight with Kylie. She accuses Tom ‘… locked away in your dark room in one of your dark moods…’

***** Chapter 11 – Talk of Fin ‘zapped away my appetite/ * (p157) Seeing the positive in Mum being out of bed. ‘Us Brennans had a lot to ask for and not much reason to give thanks. But I was thankful. Mum was up.’/ *plan to make a scrapbook for Daniel/*appetite returned/ *interest in Chrissy/ *finds Gran’s scrapbook/THEN finds ‘accident article’. (p164) ‘The whack came hard and fast and I wasn’t prepared.’

***** Chapter 12 – *Able to go back to Gran’s scrapbooks a couple of days later/*concept of a future. ‘If he had to face a future, then so did I’/ * ‘starving’/ *starting to feel positive about Bennies and the boys’ talk of Brianna tightens the knot in Tom’s gut/ growing paranoia/ negative reaction to Kylie’s speech YET feels defiant ‘she’s not taking us down with her/ fear of consequences yet the fear amounts to nothing/ *feeling impatient – a desire to move from the past

*****Chapter 13 - *Feeling lighter as their secret is out. This releases Tom from one of his greatest fears/* talking with Kylie/Tom’s discomfort at Fin’s birthday ‘the debt was overwhelming’/ *happy to be leaving the past and Fin and returning to Coghill

*****Chapter 14 - *running/ *interest in Chrissy ‘dinner was fun’ (p203)/ revealing conversation with his dad at footy camp. ‘Tom turned it into a positive ‘I accepted his challenge and turned it up.’
As I was walked back to the UFO, I could feel myself smiling. In a weird sort of way, I'd just seen the first speck of light down the end of that long dark tunnel.

And it was precious.
automatic. I propped off my left foot and came back inside. He should’ve expected it but he was still busy sulking, not thinking. He couldn’t change direction quick enough, I left him clutching at thin air. 1-0, thank you.

Jonny, Rory and I carved them up. We were quite a trio—cut-ours, flick passes, scissors and soft hands were the flavour of the day. We ran the north side ragged, they were puffing and spitting after eating dust for an hour. We were too good. Final score, 12-3.

Everyone shook my hand, saying things like ‘good game mate’ and ‘you’ve played before’. I went along with it, shaking hands and slapping backs too, but in the pit of my guts I could feel the emptiness returning.

‘We blitzed ‘em,’ said Rory.

‘Yeah.’

‘See you tomorrow, eh?’

Tomorrow! I felt my heart slip to the ground. That was the thing I couldn’t quite get my head around—there would be a tomorrow, and a day after that, and a day after that. The world went on regardless of how I felt.

---

**Three**

The next morning, Dad dropped Kyle and me at the side entrance to our new school. I think he knew how she’d react if he dropped her at the front gate; he’d read that well ahead.

The morning had been tense. I kicked a ball around to settle my nerves while Kyle spent hours in the bathroom. At first I thought she might’ve been throwing up but she was doing stuff to her hair. What, I couldn’t tell you. It looked like she’d stuck her head in a fan then dipped it into a cement mixer. When she got in the car she stank. There was so much gunk in her hair, I thought I was going to suffocate with the fumes. For a joke I started doing choking noises, and did I cop an earful.

It started with just a ‘Fiss off, Tom,’ which wasn’t enough to stop me. It grew to a ‘Tommm!’ through clenched teeth. ‘I said — pissa oifff!’

Kyle had a habit of clenching her teeth when she was mad. It cracked Daniel and me up. We called it her ‘need to do a crap’ face. So naturally I had to get my money’s worth out of that. Then I went back to the
And that's another reason I didn't like seeing Fin. There was nothing you could say. Every word had another meaning and every story led you back to the same place – here. A spinal unit, mostly full of young men like Snorter where risk and danger was what pumped their hearts.

Not the case with Fin. Our cousin, the responsible only child of Aunty Kath took one risk always the same and that was trusting my brother Daniel. It was a bad decision like so many other bad decisions made that night.

‘Wash your hands for dinner Thomas.’

Gran was stinking out the kitchen cooking lambs fry again. There was no way I would ever eat that stuff but I was starving. A few bowls of cereal and half a loaf of toast was going to have to be my dinner for the fourth night in a row. Not that I minded but a good hunk of protein go down a treat. The roast pork on Australia day was the last decent meal I’d had and that was Monday.

Today was Friday. I didn’t know what was more tragic, how hungry I was or the fact I craved another one of Gran’s pork dinners.

I was feeling like I was at Gran’s mercy. Maybe that was her masterplan. Feed’em up big on arrival then let them choke on lambs fry until they’re starved into submission. I wouldn’t put it past her.

‘Thomas, what are you looking for?’ I swear Gran had eyes in the back of her perm.

‘The weetbix.’

‘Finished mate,’ Dad winked.

‘What?’

‘I don’t know why you can’t eat the normal dinner like the rest of us.’
men like Snorter, where risk and danger was what pumped their hearts.

Not the case with Fin. Our cousin, the responsible only child of Aunty Kath, took one risk — always the same — and that was trusting my brother Daniel. It was a bad decision.

‘Wash your hands for dinner, Thomas.’

Gran was stinking out the kitchen cooking lamb’s fry again. There was no way I would ever eat that stuff. A few bowls of cereal was going to be dinner for the fourth night in a row. Not that I minded. I wasn’t hungry and nothing tasted good anyway.

I calculated that the roast on Australia Day was the last decent meal she’d served. Now I wished I’d eaten that charred slab of cow’s shit.

The others were at Gran’s mercy. Maybe that was her master plan: feed ’em up big on arrival then let them choke on lamb’s fry until they’re starved into submission. I wouldn’t put it past her.

‘Thomas, what are you looking for?’ I swear Gran had eyes in the back of her perm.

‘The Weet-Bix.’

‘Finished, mate,’ Dad winked.

‘What?’

‘I don’t know why you can’t eat the normal dinner like the rest of us.’

‘Not hungry,’ I muttered.

‘At least have some baked beans on toast tonight,’ Gran said. ‘You can’t go all week without protein. Don’t they teach you these things at school?’
Dear Jane and Zoe,

Re: THE STORY OF TOM BREN NAN (copy-edit)

You’ve done a fantastic job with Tom Brennan! The story reads very much as Tom’s journey now, and the other characters (Kylie, Fin, Chrissy) integrate extremely well into his story. It’s a great book—well done!

All my comments are marked on the manuscript. Generally where I’ve suggested changes, it’s to correct punctuation or tighten the sentence structure. I’ve also tried to avoid repetitious words or phrases—for example, Jane, you have a tendency to start sentences with “Well”, “So” and “In fact”, so I’ve suggested cutting some of those. You also use a lot of very short sentences. This works well to increase tension in suspenseful scenes (e.g. the car crash) but it can feel disjointed at other times, so I’ve suggested joining some sentences. The same goes for characters stammering when they speak, i.e. “it, it...” or “it— it...” — while this is effective at times, I’d suggest you not overuse it.

I do have two niggling structural comments:

1) Now that Tom knows about Brendan being gay (and about Jonny) from the start, the two scenes on p.154/155 and 225/226 don’t feel quite right. In the first scene, where Tom sees Jonny in his boxers, Tom still thinks Jonny has turned up early for work. This doesn’t make sense now that Tom knows about their relationship. (Although one option would be to use this as an opportunity for the penny to drop?) In the second scene, where Brendan tries to give Tom the “gay talk”, Tom still seems to be very uncomfortable with the whole situation, yet this discomfort doesn’t feel quite plausible by this stage, and is never really resolved. I’d suggest you have another good look at those two scenes in light of the fact that Tom knows about the relationship. I don’t think they’ll need much altering at all to feel plausible—it’s more a change in emphasis and tone.

For example, perhaps on p.154/155, Tom might know about Jonny but be incredibly embarrassed and uncomfortable to see him in his boxers i.e. to be confronted with the reality of their relationship. At this point he might know they are together but not really want to deal with it. Then on p.225/226, Tom might reflect that, now that he knows Brendan so much better, he’s completely comfortable with Brendan & Jonny and he’s bemused that Brendan even needs to talk about it. (You might even be able to move some of Tom’s thoughts about getting to know Brendan as an individual from p.140/141 to p.225/226, where I think they’d fit better.) [Jane, I agree with Eva’s thoughts on changing
these scenes to better reflect that Tom knows Brendan is gay. Perhaps he doesn’t know about Jonny to begin with, though, so that could be a shock. ZW]

(2) After Tom sees Matt at the rugby game and refuses to talk to him, running off with Chrissy, we never see Tom in contact with Matt again. I feel this needs some resolving (even if it’s “off camera”), so we know Matt understands, and that they are still friends. You could look at inserting a paragraph or two about how Tom deals with this around p.246.[Good idea. ZW]

And a few general comments:

- The Peer Support Facility seems to change into the Crisis Centre at some point – did I miss something? Or should it be the Peer Support Facility the whole way through?
- Burger King, Kentucky Fried and Maccas: Jane, you’ve mentioned these throughout, sometimes in a somewhat derogatory way i.e. as places for people to go to get fat. I think Zoe is going to look into whether this might cause any legal concerns. (Probably not, but better safe than sorry!)[Jane, I’m checking this out. Coming from a country town, I think these little towns are quite defined by what takeaway joints they have! Perhaps the names could stay, but the references don’t have to be derogatory? Tom’s a teenager, after all, and still hangs out at Maccas with his friends, so maybe he doesn’t need to be so down on them. ZW]
- Elton John lyrics: Have you sought copyright permission for quoting the lyrics on p.229 (from ‘Daniel’ by Elton John)? Zoe, is this an issue or will it be okay??? [Jane, you know I didn’t even realise it was a lyric when I read it! Will teenagers recognise it? It is a problem re permissions if it’s straight from the song, and believe me, the copyright owners could want over a thousand dollars for us to use it (song lyrics are shockers for permission costs!), so perhaps you could remove this line? Let me know. ZW]
- Swearing: There is a lot of swearing in The Story of Tom Brennan, all of it realistic. But Zoe, are you expecting this book to have a big educational market? Personally I think it has huge appeal for schools and could easily be a best-seller if it gets on school reading lists – so it’d be a shame if they were put off by the swearing. I don’t think anyone could object to some swearing i.e. in the car-crash scenes, but there are other places where the swearing could perhaps be toned down if necessary. (Jane, how would you feel about this?) Zoe, has anyone at ASO seen the manuscript yet? What about Larissa? I’d suggest getting some feedback on this & discussing with Jane before you go to print. [Jane, I’ll get some feedback from Larissa on the educational market. I think swearing in books is most effective when it’s only used in dramatic or appropriate circumstances, to really make a point about a character’s anger, heightened emotions etc, eg Daniel at the party and car-crash scenes, so perhaps you can look at this as you go through, and tone down some swearing. ZW]
- Drug use: Ditto the pot-smoking by Tonelli, that scene still feels a little extraneous to the main action to me, so if the schools are going to object to Tonelli being a dope smoker, perhaps it could be cut? Again, maybe get feedback from ASO etc.[Jane, I agree with Eva that Tonelli smoking dope is extraneous to the action – it comes a little out of nowhere for me, and doesn’t seem necessary. I will ask Larissa whether
she thinks it will be a problem for the educational market, but I think it might be better to cut it. [ZW]

Finally – I know absolutely nothing about rugby! I’m sure you do, Jane, but Zoe – perhaps it would be worth getting a proofreader who understands rugby, just in case any odd inconsistencies have slipped through? What about my husband!!! He wrote the stuff.

Well done again, Jane – this is a brilliant book and I’m sure it will do really well!

All the best,

Eva Mills

[Jane, hope you’re feeling better soon!!!! Can you send the edit back by Tuesday 14 June? Give me a yell if you want to chat about anything. Talk to you soon, Zoe]
**SLIDE 8**

**Draft 1**

Prologue

At 4.30 am on Friday the 23rd of January, my father, Joseph Brennan closed the front door of our home for the last time. My sister Kylie carried her bags to the boot while Dad, gentle as always, led my mother to the car.

I waited by the bonnet for Dad to slip the handbrake off and give me the signal. I pushed our Ford Falcon station wagon out of the garage and along our street until we reached the crest of a steep hill my family named ‘Daniel’s Whine,’ after my brother. Then I jumped in the front seat. Dad lifted his foot off the brake and down, down we glided in silence.

The silhouettes of houses slipped past before I could catch them and remember the people we were now leaving behind. In a couple of hours they would wake and find us gone, far away, so as not to remind them of their pain and what our family now meant to this town.

My name is Tom Brennan and this is my story.

---

**Draft 2**

Prologue

At 4.30 am on Friday the 23rd of January, my father, Joseph Brennan closed the front door of our home for the last time. My sister Kylie carried her bags to the boot while Dad, gentle as always, led my mother to the car.

I waited by the bonnet for Dad to slip the handbrake off and give me the signal. I pushed our Ford Falcon station wagon out of the garage and along our street until we reached the crest of a steep hill my family named ‘Daniel’s Whine,’ after my brother. Then I jumped in the front seat. Dad lifted his foot off the brake and down, down we glided in silence.

The silhouettes of houses slipped past before I could catch them and remember the people we were now leaving behind. In a couple of hours they would wake and find us gone, far away, so as not to remind them of their pain and what our family now meant to this town.

My name is Tom Brennan and this is my story.

---

**FINAL DRAFT**

**PROLOGUE** At 4.30 am on Friday the 23rd of January, my father, Joseph Brennan, closed the front door of our home for the last time. Then gently, as we now had to be, he led my mother step by step to the car and helped her into the back seat. My sister Kylie and I followed, carrying the left-over bags and suitcases. No one spoke. Only the sounds of our feet shuffling along the concrete and my groan as I dumped the last of our belongings into the boot broke the near-dawn’s silence.

I waited by the bonnet for Dad to slip the handbrake off and give me the signal. I pushed our Ford Falcon station wagon out of the garage, past the ugly words that told us we were no longer wanted, and along the street.

When we reached the crest of the steep decline my family named ‘Daniel’s Whine’ after my brother who hated climbing hills, I jumped in the front seat and Dad lifted his foot off the brake. Down, down we glided in silence.

The silhouettes of houses slipped past before I could catch them and remember the people we were leaving behind. In a couple of hours they would wake and find us gone, far away, so as not to remind them of their pain and what our family now meant to this town.

My name is Tom Brennan and this is my story.
I couldn’t take my eyes off her. I ripped my boxers off and dived in.

Chrissy swam towards me, her giggles bubbling in the water.

‘Hello,’ she smiled.

I took her in my arms, her skin smooth and slippery against mine. I kissed her neck over and over.

‘I love you.’ Chrissy’s fingers clawed at my hair. ‘I really love you.’

‘I love you.’

‘Do you?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘More than you’ll ever understand.’

I gripped her hands. We tressed the water, gasping in this moment. ‘You are everything. Everything!’

‘Really?’

‘You helped me find my old self. Believe me, that’s everything.’

Chrissy wrapped her limbs around me. For a second she held me tight then whispered, ‘This is the place.’

I looked at her. She smiled and nodded.

‘Are you . . .’ I began.

‘Ssh.’ She touched my lips. ‘It’s perfect.’

In silence we swam to the rocks. I took her hand as we climbed out of the water, our bodies trembling. We lay beside each other, our faces close, our breath warm and fast with hunger. And there on the riverbank she took me inside her, our bodies rocking gently as we melted into one.

That was the morning we swam and loved each other and that was the morning Tom Brennan came back, forever.
In silence we swam to the rocks. I took her hand as we climbed out of the river, water our bodies trembling. We lay beside each other, our faces close, our breath warm and fast with hunger. And there on the riverbank she took in my inside of her, our bodies rocking gently as we melted into one.

That was the morning we swam and loved each other and that was the morning I felt I could stay in Coghill forever. But I wanted to be Tom. I wanted to be Tom. Every
gran and I wanted to be Tom. Exhausted, hungry and giggling like idiots, Chrissy and I took turns dragging each other up the hills and back to Gran’s. Sometimes we’d stop ‘cause we were laughing so much. Other times we’d stop ‘cause the urge to kiss and touch each other took over every sense.

‘I’m starving,’ I groaned. ‘When I get back I’m going to have four eggs, a packet of bacon and a loaf of bread.’

‘I’m going to drink the whole tank of water,’ Chrissy puffed. ‘With ice. Lots of ice.’

‘Yeah.’

We reached the top of the last hill.

‘Downhill to home,’ I said. ‘Easy.’

‘Do you really think of it as home now?’

I stopped. In the distance I could see the rusted red roofs of the sheds.

‘I s’pose I do,’ I answered. ‘I mean where else is home?’

‘Tom?’ Chrissy slipped her hand in mine. ‘I reckon you should tell your story one day.’

‘Huh?’

‘About Daniel and your family and how you moved to Coghill. All that stuff.’

‘Oh yeah,’ I mocked. ‘And what would I call it? ‘The Curse of the Brennan’s’?’

‘No!’

‘Well what then?’

‘How about “The Story of Tom Brennan.”’ She stopped and kissed me her fingers touching my face. ‘No,’ she whispered, ‘“The Great Story of Tom Brennan.”’
Jan Burke
105 Riverview Rd
Clareville
NSW 2107

12 November 2004

Dear Jane,

Re: The Story of Tom Brennan

I’ve just finished re-reading The Story of Tom Brennan, and was impressed all over again by the power of this story and the strength of your writing. I love the way you don’t shy away from exploring really big issues and complex relationships. I think Tom Brennan has the potential to be an outstanding YA novel (and win you lots of awards!), though I do just want to stress again that to really turn this into a masterpiece, you’ll need to do some very careful thinking about your central message, and completely overhaul some sections (not just clean up the rough edges as with The Red Cardigan and Nine Letters Long).

I also want to reiterate that this is not a structural edit. All I’ve done is list a few of my major concerns in this letter for you to consider, and scribbled a range of comments on the actual manuscript - but they should be taken simply as indications of areas that weren’t quite working for me. It’s up to you to do the hard work of thinking about what you want this novel to say, and revising accordingly.

NB: I think the first 8 chapters are working very well. I’ve made a few specific comments on the manuscript, but structurally I don’t think you need to revisit this section at all. It’s from chapter 9 onwards that we start to lose sight of Tom’s journey. I think (chapters 13 to 16 were particularly episodic, and everyone else’s stories start to get in the way).
Main Issues

1. Give the novel more focus

I feel the central issue that needs resolving is what is Tom's journey? If you can nail this and make it the focus of the book, then many of the other issues discussed below will resolve themselves. Obviously Tom's journey involves moving from a dark place to a lighter place with some hope, but how does this manifest itself in his day to day life? I think you need to choose one central problem for Tom and make that the focus (without completely excluding the other issues, but so that every chapter advances the central problem). Currently I can see three issues which seem to have equal weight in Tom's story:

(a) Refusing to move on i.e. not wanting to have left Mumbilli and refusing to engage in his new life in Coghill (school, friends, rugby) - so the resolution of this problem would be beginning to see that he is better off in Coghill, and gradually coming to like & accept his friends & the new rugby team etc. I'm not sure this is strong enough to be Tom's central problem as it seems a little trivial in comparison with the enormity of the accident.

(b) Holding onto a shameful secret and doing his best to make sure no one finds out - so the turning point for this problem would be telling someone about the secret and/or realising it's not so bad if people know & then actually better if it's out in the open. However I think there's a difficulty with making this Tom's central problem as it's actually Kylie who reveals the truth, so Tom is a passive agent - plus Brendan and Kylie have much juicier secrets to reveal (see #2 below).

(c) Refusing to deal with what's happened, withdrawing into this shell, not wanting to talk to anyone, coping by denial - so the resolution of this problem would be Tom's gradually opening up to those around him and talking about the issues that are bothering him, even though they make him feel bad. I'd suggest making this Tom's central problem, as the basis for this emotional journey is already there in the novel, and it's a powerful and complex journey. So, if you do decide this is Tom's central problem, you need to go back over the entire novel and ensure Tom starts out reluctant to speak to anyone (even Brendan) and is emotionally withdrawn, and gradually comes out of his shell. Chrissy then represents a hope for a new future, and the fact that he finds it so easy to talk to her is an indication of how far he's come. If you decide (c) is Tom's central problem, then you should ensure every scene is supporting Tom's gradual change (e.g. Tom should cut Brendan off when he wants to talk, Kylie should accuse him of being withdrawn and shutting her out etc.). You'd also need to de-emphasise (a) and (b) so that (c) becomes very clearly the central problem/journey.
(4) Relationship with Matt

Something about Tom's relationship with Matt doesn't quite work for me. I suspect it's the fact that, like Brendan, Matt seems too good to be true. Given that there are so many characters already - and that Matt doesn't actually help Tom on his emotional journey in

Matt cut from Fin party scene.

(5) Kylie telling everyone at school about the accident

He wants to be judged and he's not. Anger not in Coghll.

I love the final resolution of this - the scene where Kylie apologises to Tom for telling everyone because she hadn't considered the impact on him. It's a lovely scene. However, there seems to be a whole section missing before that, just after Kylie tells everyone at school. This is a crucial turning point for Tom, so I feel it needs a lot more 'screen time'.

He freaks out at school when he finds out Kylie's blabbed, but then we don't see the outcome for him. What happens the next day when he goes back to school? It wasn't clear to me why the parents then send them to counselling - is it because Tom & Kylie aren't speaking to each other (which isn't made clear), or because Kylie told everyone, or some other reason?

Tom's identity/sense of self from his family & pride. This is challenged in the accident.

*/ COGHILL INTENTIONALLY MADE A BIGGER TOUS SO 'SECRET - SHAME' DISAPPEARS IN THE CROWD.*/

* COMPARISON / FIRST & FINAL STRUCTURE / DRAFT.
Kylie - Tom knows about Claire & Fin but not made such a big deal about. Presumes really.

Brendan - Mention early on that he's gay.

ASK GROUP HOW IT WAS DEALT WITH

I think when we talked about Tom Brennan all those months ago, you said one of the things you wanted to explore was secrets and how everyone has their own secrets - hence the Brendan subplot (revealing that he's gay) and Kylie subplot (revealing that she knew Fin & Claire were an item). However, the fact that Tom doesn't actually have his own secret (other than the shared family 'secret' which everyone knows) means that these two subplots become more interesting than Tom's story i.e. they undercut the simple power of Tom's more direct emotional journey. I'd strongly suggest you reconsider both Brendan's and Kylie's secrets and allow Tom's incredibly powerful story to carry the book - it is without a doubt strong enough to maintain interest on its own.

On re-reading the novel, I was struck again by the fact that Brendan doesn't really need to be gay. There seems no reason for this revelation (sorry). If you want him to be a gay character, perhaps it needs to be clarified to the reader very early on so it's not a climactic revelation i.e. Brendan could be still "in the closet", but Tom might find out early in the book. (We discussed the possibility that Brendan might have been about to come out, but held back because of the accident.) Also, if you keep Brendan as gay, be very careful to give him some flaws - he's too good to be true at present. But I would suggest you think very hard about whether he needs to be gay at all. - drinking, messy, photos of b.

I think Kylie's revelation, on the other hand (that she knew about Fin & Claire), is important to the story as it helps explain her behaviour. But again, I'm not sure it needs to come at the end of the book. This subplot in particular runs the risk of taking over the story - it would be fine if it were Tom who knew about Fin & Claire, and if this were only revealed to the reader near the end (hence explaining Tom's anger, guilt & withdrawal), but since it's Kylie I think it undercuts Tom's story. I'd suggest revealing this earlier in the story, allowing the second half of the book to focus on Tom coming out of his shell. Tom's early reluctance to communicate meant it was something he wouldn't talk about.

(3) Resolution with Fin

Tom's refusal to talk to anyone is particularly poignant with Fin - you've described particularly well the awkwardness he feels around Fin and his inability to talk to him. Yet Fin would like nothing better than to be able to talk about Daniel & the accident to Tom. I think to really show that Tom has grown and moved on, we need a final scene where Tom talks to Fin about what it's like to be involved with Daniel, or the accident, or Claire, or whatever Fin wants to talk about - and show that Tom now feels more comfortable talking to Fin.

* HOW DOES AUDIENCE FEEL THIS WAS RESOLVED *
SLIDE 12a

1. sentence and prob period

Daniel would be charged with "Driving in a Manner Dangerous Causing Death" (x2) under s 52A(1) and one of DMC occasioning Grueling bodily harm under s52(3) of the Crimes Act. The first charge is a purely indictable offence which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years. If you go with the intoxication then charges (ie death) are under s52(2) and the maximum available penalty is 14 years.

The case of Jurors, which you know about, is the guideline judgement. The recently decided case of Whyte was even more useful to you. (See John Stratton's website, under "latest developments"). On a plea of guilty, where someone has died, the starting point is a total sentence of 3 years. Daniel's problems is that 2 people died and another was seriously injured.

You may also have heard about that guy who got a wack from Judge Tupman at Parramatta District Court. (Read Roger, lads; lost unborn baby so charge was only GBH; he tried to influence witnesses much worse than Daniel really.) Unfortunatley, I can't remember what he got right now.

I had a girl who killed one person and nearly killed her sister (broken neck) who ended up getting a sentence of 2 years. (I think possibly 3) that was to be served by way of periodic detention (aka "weekends"). She was a mother of 2 and there was no other aggravating feature of alcohol (over the legal limit: she did register some - I think it was about 0.03). This was a very unusual result. Mostly they get full-time custody.

The sentencing laws are changing again. The court first sets a non-parole period, before calculating the parole period (See John Stratton's website under "latest developments").

John Brogen is threatening to be even tougher on crime than Bob Carr. The election result may effect the potential penalty Daniel may get... depending on when he committed the offences. (Better let him know.)

You should also know that if the sentence is not more than 2 years, it can be deferred. A deferred sentence is supposed to viewed as a custodial penalty, nevertheless. A bond to be of good behaviour is imposed for the extent of the suspension. A sentence of 18 months or less can be served by way of Home Detention. (They wear an electronic cuff around their ankle!) Periodic Detention is viewed as more serious than community service.

My estimate at this stage: 3 years, with 18 months non-parole. I'll think about it some more, but that's fairly conservative. I think.

Daniel's co-operation with police is a mitigating circumstance on sentence. See below re: Court process.

2. what type of jail he'd be in

If he's 18, then he would ordinarily go to an adult gaol, such as the ITC (Industrial Training Centre) at Long Bay, Parklea or the John Memory Centre at Windsor. However, the court has the power to send a person under 21 years, who was a child when the offence was committed (ie under 18 years), to serve the whole or part of a sentence in a juvenile detention centre, such as Cobham (at St Mary's), Kenong (near Gosford), and Yasmar (Haberfield). There must be "special circumstances" justifying detention in a detention centre, or any non-parole period must end within six months after they turn 18.

Your guy would probably have a low classification in jail, and would quickly be classified for work release.

3. what courts/procedure etc he'd have to go through

After Daniel is charged, the police consider bail. Because he is a "clean skin" bail should not be a problem. If it is, and it is a weekend, he will be brought before a justice in the Local Court at the earliest practicable opportunity. This is a weekend Bail Court. If it's a week-day, it goes before a magistrate who considers the question of bail. A plea can be entered.

Because there is a purely indictable offence, brief orders will be made. If Daniel pleads guilty, the matter goes to the District Court after a "s51A committal" in the Local Court. If he decides to run a trial, then it goes through either a paper committal process, or some witnesses are called for cross-examination (I will give you the names of the sections if you need them.)

After the matter is first listed in the District Court, it is adjourned for sentence (or trial???) with a time estimate. During the adjourned period a "Pre-Sentence Report" may be ordered by the court. It is prepared by the Probation and Parole Service. It is a kind of background report and looks at alternatives to full-time custody or things like the need for a longer than usual parole period, in comparison to the non-parole period. Daniel's lawyer may also want to have him psychiatrically assessed, so that the effects of the incident on him emotionally and psychologically can be put before the court.

Then there is the appeal process to the Court of Criminal Appeal.

The character, Daniel, 18 years old, no prior record - gets into his car extremely drunk. So much so that he has no idea where he is driving. He is the driver and has 3 passengers, also all pissed. He exhibits signs of recklessness: he speeds away from party (post yr 12 celebraties) he has an accident killing the 2 passengers on the passenger side of car and other passenger behind driver suffers a spinal injury (not sure if he'll be par or quad) this person is Daniel's cousin.
so he's over the limit/ dangerous driving causing deathx2and grey bodily harm. Also (but does it make a
difference) there are witnesses to his behaviour. When police arrive he doesn't flee from scene, perhaps
he's trapped in car too with some minor injuries.
So tell us what you think and if there's anyone I should talk to/ other websites/ books etc. Take your time
there's no urgent rush but a few basic details soon would be good.
Thanks so much for this. Motta appreciated.
see ya - Janex

----- Original Message -----  From: Meredith Phelps  To: janeburke@bigpond.com  Sent:  Friday, February 07, 2003 9:29 AM  Subject: Criminal Law Website

Jane

Good to see you at Wendy's shower for Liz.

Here is the website for John Stratton's "Criminal Law Survival Kit", which is very useful. (You may
already have seen it. It is linked to the Public Defenders' Website.)

Hope it is helpful. Email me any questions.

http://www.users.bigpond.com/JohnStratton/

My niece, Isabelle, hasn't read "White lies" yet. So we know what she's getting for her birthday.
(Shes turning 13. Old enough??)

Meredith
Justice actual

hand panel pressure to rabbit area

visit time 1 hr. Often inmates may lash out if they don’t want it to end.

shook up guards

concrete, line, steel - Feels damp and sticky.

Cooking smell - fried stuff

tatoos

about survival

tense, rage, threats

youth = request for protection first - timers 5

special correction centres

Little girl: Kimberly & Brian climbing up over the wall. I wondered not if it was her dad & how they made it. Faces worn, like they knew the system or had been visit for years - just the way they spoke.
www.goodbeginnings.net.au/prisoners_family
PRISON VISITS Junte Detection
- medium security
- strip search before & after family visit
- physical conduct
- prison booklet - what they can & can't get
- Does D know they've moved to Loghill?
  Yes, must when
- Families lined up waiting
- line count/search/metal detectors/wait room before visit room
- Like an airport
- sit at table. Inmates file out. Wait to get their attention
- Vending machine
  Long Bay 8304 2000
  PO Box 13 Anzac Pte Matraville 2036
- Coins allowed up to $10 for vending machines
- not many places to stay for people who were more far away
- visitors on a database
- loud in & out room
- couples usually having it off & another family fighting - contact noise
- smells b.o. - disinfect
SLIDE 14

RESEARCH AREAS

- land use - orchard / vineyard
- town industry
- league or union / coaching
- football partnership halfback / 5/18
- DVI
- paraplegia and equipment
- Tonic minor unjury
- jail virids
- book betting system
- Philippines or Islander to Samoan
- Motor Neurone △
- Aggravated dangerous driving
- K-Valley accident (Sep 20)?
Saint Jane
FRANCES DE CHANTAL

Here is a wonderful saint.
She was a saint as a little girl. She was a saint as a child. When she was a child, she was a
saint. Then she became a nun and was a saint in the convent.
When she was a very little girl, Jane Frances asked Our Lady to take care of her. Our Lady
always did.
Then she married a nobleman. She made him a
beautiful home. She loved her husband. She was
devoted to her children.
But sorrow came to her. Her good husband died.
Two children and a sister died. Her friends bother-
ed her to marry again. She was said and her life
was very hard.
At last her children grew up. She knew that
God wanted her to be a nun. So with St. Francis
de Sales she started the Visitation Order.
Her daughters, the Visitation Sisters, to this day
pray, do penance, and teach children to love and
serve God as Jane Frances did.
Her Feast is: August 31st.

Saint Cecilia
Martyr

Cecilia was a lovely Roman girl. She loved
Jesus with all her heart.
But a young Roman wanted to marry her. She
said: "I belong to Our Lord alone. At first
he and his brother were very angry. They tried to
force marriage on her.
But when the young man walked toward Cecilia,
he saw her strong, beautiful Guardian Angel stand-
ing at her side.
The young man at once became a Christian. So
did his brother.
The Roman soldiers came and took all three of
them prisoners.
They cried, "Offer sacrifice to our gods."
But Cecilia, though just a young woman, spoke
for all of them:
"We love and serve only the true God." she an-
swered.
So all three went to Heaven together in martyr-
dom.
Just a few years ago, Cecilia’s body was found
in its grave in Rome. Though she had been dead
for almost eighteen hundred years, her body was
still fresh and sweet and beautiful as if she were
college. Thus God protects those who love Him.
Her Feast is: November 22nd.

Saint Rose of Lima

This little girl is an American saint.
She was born in Lima in Peru. Columbus had
discovered America less than one hundred years
before.
Her name was really Isabel. But she was so
beautiful that people called her Rose.
Her parents were poor. So little Rose became
a maid servant.
Everybody noticed how beautiful she was. That
made her afraid. Perhaps her good looks might
lead her into sin. So she cut her lovely hair. She
worked until her hands were rough. She wore old,
unattractive clothes. She wanted her soul to be
beautiful. Only God could see that.
Then she decided to become a Dominician nun.
So many people around her were sinful. Rose
wanted to do penance for their sins. She lived in a
little hut. She slept on the floor. She begged God
to forgive sinners.
When the fleet of her country’s enemies attacked
Peru, her prayers drove them away and saved her
city.
When she died, all Peru wept for the little Rose
they loved.
Her Feast is: August 30th.
Tragedy... emergency crews work to release the injured, trapped youth from the crushed car

Youths crash

Photo: Carmela Roche
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finbar</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Mate killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendan</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Sports master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jono</td>
<td>Runs Refbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>gf of Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalind/Marietta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina</td>
<td>gf of Jono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leno</td>
<td>Younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whelan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaneassey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Rourke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brennan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mchone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This was what I'd originally written for an opening quote. Usually writers use 'poignant' quotes taken from 'famous' people. This differed as it was a quote from the story's narrator Tom.

"Daniel did everything louder.

He burped louder, farted louder, cheered louder, laughed louder and hurt louder. But that was just Daniel."


Consider changing quote

le -v The State vs Daniel Brennan

"...accident waiting to happen"
- repeating yr 11 - turning 18
- accident happened year before when he was in yr 11 - turning 17
- Daniel is his hero / inspiration
- smarter, quieter
- never felt she was as talented as D
  → PRE ACCIDENT - idolize, can’t see the flaws
  → GAOL - can’t handle D’s so retreats into himself
  → after SUICIDAL attempt plays footy to keep D going / he becomes D survival
  → EVENTUALLY realizes she has always been the stronger one.
  → Sees the cost of arrogance, develops a whip to Brendan

⇒ ST THOMAS (Aquinas) ‘dumb ox’
or doubting Thomas
Reshuffle scenes/timing

- counsellor in The Billi - to reorientate
- get Claire overseas earlier
- see Claire leave the accident scene
- video for her leave & call and
- Counsellor session place as T is
  - mmm... realizing Daniel’s negative role.
  - Kyle, Saty, RJ, M, F, etc.
  - showing Tom’s journey & growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+ve</th>
<th>-ve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- not talking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not caring about anything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time in room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- coping by denial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- appetite</td>
<td>sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- churning, guts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not engaging with anyone etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- noticing weather
- in text
- caring about footy
- CHRISSY
- talking more
- initiating awkward discussions
- laughing
- looking forward to something
Who’s going to say grace,’ announced Carmel, self-appointed messenger of
God and also my grandmother.

It wasn’t a question. Choice, your standard, everyday human right was
something that didn’t exist in my grandmother’s house. Knowing her she
considered it evil and indulgent, her two favourite words.

She’d obviously decided I was the one as she was glaring in my direction.

‘Thank you Tom,’ she smiled. ‘That would be lovely.’

Thanking God was about the furthest thing from my mind but lamely, as one
leans to be around her, I began. ‘In the name of the...’

She’d interrupted before my finger had touched my forehead.

‘I’m sorry Tom,’ she coughed. ‘I don’t think everyone’s ready. Kylie, where’s
your mother?’

My younger sister looked at Gran like she’d been hit by a serious brain
drain. Sure, Dad, Kylie and me had the last twenty-one weeks to adjust but
Mum’s condition was hardly subtle.

‘Theresa!’ Gran called.

The rest of us sat there in silence watching Gran pretend there was nothing
wrong.

‘Theresa!’ she called again. ‘We’re not starting without you. Come on girly,
don’t be so indulgent. Be thankful for food at the table.’

Too tired to argue Mum shuffled in taking the same place at a table she’d sat
around for the first twenty - two years of her life. A table we now had to join
whether we liked it or not.
Tom's mood more despondent

1.

'Who's going to say grace,' announced Carmel, self-appointed messenger of God and also my grandmother.

It wasn't a question. Choice, your standard, everyday human right was something that didn't exist in my grandmother's house. Knowing her, she considered it indulgent, one of her favourite words.

She'd obviously decided I was the one as she was glaring in my direction.

'Thank you Tom,' she smiled. 'That would be lovely.'

Thanking God was about the furthest thing from my mind but family, as one tends to be around her, I began. 'In the name of the...'

She'd interrupted before my finger had touched my forehead.

'I'm sorry Tom,' she sighed. 'I don't think everyone's ready. Kylie, where's your mother?'

My younger sister looked at Gran like she'd been hit by a serious brain drain. Sure, Dad, Kylie and me had the last twenty-one weeks to adjust but Mum's condition was hardly subtle.

(3) Theresa!' Gran called.

The rest of us sat there in silence watching Gran pretend there was nothing wrong.

'There!' she called again. 'We're not starting without you. Come on girly, don't be so indulgent. Be thankful for food at the table.'

Too tired to argue Mum shuffled in taking the same place at a table she'd sat around for the first twenty - two years of her life. A table we now had to join whether we liked it or not. This was our new home.
EVENTS TO FIT IN:

- Leaving town ✓
- New home, new school
- Accident & court
- Meeting Chrisxy
- Avoiding foot injury
- Coach & Tom
- Deciding to play
- Discovery of Brendan gay
- Good visits
- Running & Brendan
- Contact with old friends, P’s gf
- Hospital visits
- Playing ED “Danny”
- Telling Chrisxy the truth
- Game with visiting team
- Chrisxy’s mum freaking out
- River scene
- National school boy selections
- Mental journey to Tirana
- Planning to trek in Nepal
- Kylie’s anger & trouble & essay
- Knott camp